

Blasters, Aliens, Spaceships, Adventure, Hitech

# A Space

# Operetta

Time:

Place:

Now Without Variable Gravity Lasercrosse™  
A Live-Action Roleplaying Event  
Originally Produced by Virginia Interactive Arts  
Written by Ken Brown,  
and Gordon and Stephanie Olmstead-Dean



## GM INFO

### REGULATING THE TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

**I wrote this as a bluesheet, but it seemed too antagonistic, and Bluesheets don't always get read. I generally just go over this at the pre-game briefing. The basic reason is that there are a lot of plots in the game that just don't work if scanners, and other Star Trek technology are allowed.**

Okay. For starters, let's ditch *Star Trek* and everything associated with it. For one thing, we both know that since there is no time/space problem which cannot be solved by a suitable application of transporter technology, *Star Trek* roleplaying games tend to get out of hand pretty quickly anyway. *Star Wars* would be a much better reference....plenty of neat-looking technology, but nearly everything is just a souped up version of what we have now, except it can go into space.

For general reference let's think *Star Wars*, *Alien/Aliens*, *Silent Running*, *Babylon 5* or even *Dark Star*. Spaceships are glorified surface ships, or aeroplanes, but they conveniently don't seem to have affected day to day life.

Since this is a light game, rather than go into great detail on technology and space travel, we'll gloss this one.

#### **Dull 20th Century things that *Copernicus* has:**

- Airlocks
- Loading cranes
- Atmosphere-recirculating plant
- Microwave Radio
- Light-imaging Radar
- Space Suits
- Air-tight bulkheads
- Plastic armor over
- Internal pressure sensors, automatic collision bulkheads
- PA system and intercoms

#### **Dull 20th Century things that *Copernicus* doesn't have:**

- Cameras everywhere
- Handheld "communicators"

#### **Neat Science-Fiction things that the *Copernicus* has:**

- Fusion-powered Faster than Light Drive
- Maneuvering Drive

Magnetic Atmosphere Containment (keeps air in the event of a hull breach)  
Particle Weapons  
Escape Pods (No FTL, but Subspace Radio)  
Subspace Radio (there is still a lag, but it will summon help in the event of a disaster)  
Anti-Gravity landing/takeoff pads - useless in deep space  
Laser-rifles and other neat "blaster" weapons  
Artificial Intelligence Mainframe Computer  
Medical Diagnostic Computer  
Artificial Gravity (but like most sci-fi, few other applications of this technology)

**Things that some science-fiction sources depict, that the *Copernicus* does not have:**

Transporters, or spin-off technologies (replicators)  
Omniscient "Scanners" that tell you what people a thousand miles away had for breakfast, when it is convenient for the plot  
Time or Probability affecting technologies  
"Tractor" beams (though the loading equipment makes some use of magnetic traction fields)  
"Shields"  
Pre-designed equipment for selectively poisoning or irradiating sections of the vessel  
Any other devices that are clearly designed to endanger people on board the ship

**Willing suspension of disbelief:**

In any science-fiction simulation, it is difficult or impossible to simulate certain types of things in game, without actually having them.

As in most science fiction, the GM's will arrange for any inconvenient technologies to be on the blink. It will be perfectly possible to solve all problems in the game without using any device which effectively allows PC's to effect the game without having to interact with anyone. IE: "I'm finding him with the ships cameras, then turning off life support to the section he is in."

Players who persist in attempting to gain indirect power by working on systems that are not functioning because we don't have a good simulation for them will find that they are beating their heads against ferroceramic bulkheads. You have been warned - the time you waste is your own.

**OPENING THE GAME**

Set up two "ships." People won't spend as much time on Argolid Merchant, so it can be smaller. In an ideal world you'd have two highly decorated areas...we once used the upstairs and downstairs of a house. In many cases, I have used a hotel function room, and dragged some chairs across the center to create two spaces. This game works fairly well with minimal props and staging.

Arrange the bridge crews, and walk them through the opening seconds:

*Copernicus* answers an emergency hail. *Copernicus* comes alongside *Argolid Merchant*. There is an accident, as *Argolid Merchant's* lifepod boom deploys, and smashes into *Copernicus's* hull...these are not armoured warships. Nothing depressurizes, because the magnetic fields keep atmospheric pressure. But many systems fail. The damage is to the center hold, and the Engine Room. Many bulkheads snap shut.

The scenario is this. *Copernicus* and *Argolid Merchant* are locked together by a cargo boom. (Either ship might take more damage if it is not careful when pulling back). *Argolid Merchant* has a cracked Reactor housing. (If Clute isn't in this game, you'll need to tell the players this). It is probably only barely worth salvaging. *Copernicus* has a lot of damage.

The Lifepod (with the stuff in it) is in *Copernicus* hold, just at the edge of the Plastizene line. There is plastizene everywhere. Whoever gets there first will get plastizene contamination. You can be as hard or soft on this as fits your mood. RU-1 is not affected by Plastizene, but can carry it. Your game will collapse if you allow any overplot (Volckon, Plastizene) to do everyone in, and take over the game. It should progress slowly, and spread slowly, but fast enough to scare the players.

The Retull Pod (what *Merchant* hit) is in the hold of the *Argolid Merchant*.

### **Time**

Average run time:   15 players 1hr 30 min  
                              20 players 2 hr  
                              25 players 2.5 hr  
                              30 players 3 hr  
                              Allow 30 minutes for briefing, and 30 minutes for wrap

### **RETULL ATTACK**

Generally, everyone's first big moment comes when Murphy Chando breaks, and maurauds against the entire group. Sometimes Chando seizes *Argolid Merchant*, sometimes there is just a fight. Chando is tough, but should not be allowed to kill most of the game. Let Chando hurt the players pretty bad, and maybe slaughter one or more of them. Then let it get killed.

### **GETTING NEW CHARACTERS INTO THE GAME**

The Stowaway should always be the first replacement.

There is a device for getting new characters into the game. At the beginning, report to both Cicco and Murano that they have about four crewmen missing in various parts of the ship,

behind bulkheads. As you need to put new replacement characters in, just say they stepped through a bulkhead which they had either bypassed the security on, or the computer had determined was safe to move through. If the Captains want to waste time looking for their crew, just tell them this is a plot device to introduce replacement characters. You can introduce as many of the “Chris Ventnor” type character as you need. Frequently you only need two replacement characters.

## **MIND GAMES**

*All Vergosi Supercomputers use the same broadcast protocol MCTP (Mind Control Transport Protocol) any time Bek or Ged send instructions, they are received by one of the units, randomly.*

### **This is how they are supposed to work**

Bek to Calvin - for instructions

Ged to Hagen - MARIE - Mind Control

DeValan - just an implant...he doesn't know it can receive

### **Here is a table for random broadcast**

1-2 Calvin

2-3 Hagen

3-4 DeValan

## **ARTIFACTS**

*There are a number of Volckon or ancient Vergosi artifacts in the game. For a better explanation, read the “Supplementary Information” following Allison Lei’s Character sheet.*

<b>Baax</b> -	contains Volckon minds
<i>White Crystal</i> -	<i>held by Fak</i>
<b>Clazit</b> -	contains body engenderment, and huge hibernation facility.
<i>White Sphere</i> -	<i>held by Dale Hagen</i>
<b>Dravt</b> -	the bank draft for the deposit that will enable the Volckon to pay off the Vergosi.
<i>Fat metal plate</i>	<i>held by Adrian Hagen, stolen from the Alsarii.</i>
	<i>Volckon are impossible honest about bank deals</i>
<b>Ramut</b> -	Turns on the Yorr
<i>Small grey cylinder</i>	<i>held by Cogan</i>
<b>Deed</b> -	Grants you the right to the Dravt

*Ancient Vergosi Manuscript - held by Pah*

**What can happen:**

If the Baax and the Clazzit come together in the same hands, a massive N-dimensional passage to the Hibernation facility opens.

If Lei decides to activate the Baax without the Clazzit, everyone will begin to turn into a Volckon. This is irreversible. The game will end with the cast having become Volckon, like Alison Lei.

If Plastizene contacts anyone, and they Baax is near them, they will start turning into a Volckon. Dr. Lee can tell that they are mutating, but that an outside force is taking advantage and controlling the mutation. His instruments can't detect the radiations of the Baax.

Also, the missing UPC Battlecruiser *Challenger* will appear. This should happen near the end of the game. If it happens too early, start a countdown. The Volckon will go away, to refound their civilization.

Be dramatic about the *Challenger* appearance. The ship can tow both merchantmen in, but play up the conversation with the captain. Remember the *Challenger* crew will know they have been displaced in space (they were stowed inside the Clazzit) but not that they have lost time. If you play this scene up, it is rather scary and emotionally effective.

If the Ramut is turned on, the Yorr will become extremely aggressive towards the Vergosi. They will probably try to kill them.

**Fun with Plastizene**

*The ship is loaded with Plastizene. Sooner or later someone will go belowdecks, and find the hold swimming with it. In some cases, it will be criminal fleeing justice (someone who has just killed, etc.), or the Vergosi trying to search for the stuff in the life-pod*

**Plastizene Table**

01-25	Recover with Gene Therapy
26-75	Terrible mutation, slow death
76-99	Immediate death
00	Explosion
(42)	Interesting/benign mutation

## FIXING THINGS

You can actually just do away with the component system if you are short handed. Otherwise:

- a) There are several people other than Seletti with Engineering skills
- b) It will occur to someone that the components of RU-1 and Yorr weaponry resemble some parts of the drive. You may want to go ahead and paper clip RU-1 and the gun components to the item cards.
- c) This is basically designed to regulate the speed the game moves at, force people to go on board the Argolid Merchant, etc.
- d) Probably you will have one or two parts left which can't be fixed. The Alsarii has a "Mr Spock"/"Geordi" power to simply change the laws of physics. Make them roleplay it. "No one has ever figured out how to transmogrify Luton Particles, but I bet I could use this coffee filter, and a jack knife and do it..."

Sometimes players ask which run of this game is the "real one." My conceit is that all incidences of this game spring from the alpha run, in which Jerry Seletti used a yellow j-meson spin reverser, and blew up the ship, creating an infinite number of paralell universes three hours earlier.

## QUICK PLOT SUMMARY

Cobalt Thorium Device

Soforanza Bek told Honigoraza Fak to re-route *Merchant* to the Alsarii homeworld, but didn't tell him why. Bek had Pah have Cogan murder the old Engineer on the *Merchant*, so that Cicco would hire Lindsey Galvin.

Galvin stole the Thorium Device plans on the Alsarii homeworld. Now a prototype has been built to ship to the Yorr. It would be difficult to get such a device into Yorr space, or onto a UPC ship going into Yorr space.

So Bek arranged through Fak to have *Merchant* start out with the goods, and drop the Cobalt device in a life-pod.

*Copernicus* with the Yorr on board would stop to pick up the empty pod, and find nothing. Bek would go down, and take the Thorium device hidden in a secret compartment. At the same time, Dana DeValan, working for Bek, would drop a pod full of illegal Mai-Tai mix, so that the *Merchant* would make profits from a smuggling run (no sense wasting half a trip). DeValan knows Bek as "Quasar"

Cicco knows that *Merchant* was delivering a secret military device, but doesn't know what, and doesn't know that Galvin stole the plans several months ago from the Alsarii.

Because *Merchant* hit the Retull Pod, the life pod wasn't fully dropped. At the beginning of the game it gets blown into *Copernicus*' hold. Bek should be smart enough to recognize Plastizene, and send someone else down to fetch his bomb. He can then give it to the Yorr.

The Mai-Tai mix went astray. Seletti stacked some Alsarii Cream on top of it, which Dr. Lee drank. The Stowaway took the Mai-Tai mix, but doesn't know it.

## QUICK CHARACTER REFERENCE

Bek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Vergosi Mob</li><li>- can manipulate Fak</li><li>- runs Cogan</li><li>- runs Galvin (Brain Transmitter, knows Bek as "Pulsar")</li></ul>
Borru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- starting a war, Alsarii spy</li><li>- wants to wipe Yorr out forever, but thinks Sal'gharii doesn't want this</li></ul>
Cedras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- rivalry with BIGOTS</li><li>- knows something is killing his old crew, hasn't seen Alison Lei in years</li><li>- Tondisiaro Pah is Vergosi contact</li></ul>
Cicco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Contact is Fak</li></ul>
Cogan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- assassin for Bek</li></ul>
Duran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Fak is contact, wants Cygnus Crystal</li></ul>
DeValan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Contact is "Quasar"</li></ul>
Fak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- has Cygnus Crystal</li><li>- runs DeValan, through code-name "Quasar"</li></ul>
Galvin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- in contact with "Pulsar"</li><li>- knew Mara Trey</li></ul>
Garch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- starting a war</li></ul>
Dale Hagen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- has the white sphere</li></ul>
Hagh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Brotherhood member, knows Yorr were engineered</li></ul>



Kooch	- Fanatic, worried about war, hates New Havenites
Lee	- substance abuser, took the Alsarii Cream from lifepod, looted private stock in Hagen's room
Lei	- Volckon
Ged	- wants to avoid war - controls Hagen through Marie
Ventnor	- generic Character - copy this sheet with a different name as many times as you need for "extras"
Hagen	- memory loss - broke into Alsarii cabin. Stole art magazine, sex toy, metal disk
Murano	- no plot, central to holding things together, irritating
Pah	- contact is Cogan
Paltos	- forward New Haven cause
Retull	- kill everyone
RU-1	- color, no plot
Sal'gharii	- operated Borru - wants to exterminate Yorr - Fak is middleman - Hagen broke into cabin, took artifact
Seletti	- color
Sharon	- Bounty Hunter - wants murderer of Argolid Merchant Engineer (Cogan) (mention Trey)
Trey	- Knows Galvin, DeValan
Urgo	- start war

Webber - color character, ethical

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## Special Fiscal Envoy Sofaronza Bek

*"The Government bugged the men's room in the local disco lounge - to keep the boys from selling all the weapons they can scrounge."*

**- Don Henley**

You were hatched on Tonfa, one of the few Vergosi worlds that was colonized before the old Central Government broke down.

Early on, during your schooling, you acquired a reputation with your teachers as a cheat, scam artist, and general troublemaker. You ripped off your classmates running a phony numbers racket, paying out just enough in prize money to keep them coming over to your corner during recess. You forged cafeteria meal tickets with expertise. You bought the answers to examinations in mathematics and geography.

You finally managed to get a floating gambling parlor going in the restroom, and raked in nearly 60 credits during two weeks, before you were busted by an athletics instructor who was a particularly sore loser.

The scam was brought to the attention of the schoolmaster, and it was decided that you should be sent to a school for gifted and talented students. There you were a bit more challenged. You learned the intricacies of business and bluff, of chance and customer service, and in general how to make a killing doing anything. Interestingly, much of what you learned can be summed up in the words of the alien philosopher whom you studied for your Junior Year compulsory credits in Offworld Opportunism. The human sage P. T. Barnum said "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time." Fortunately he also

pointed out that "There's a sucker born every minute."

In your senior year, you went to career night, and any number of organizations gave you a hard pitch. You toyed with the idea of the Vergosi Mafia. The Mafia recruiter assured you that there was an opening for someone with your skills, but you were hesitant. The Vergosi Mafia is very prestigious, and every Vergosi hatchling grows up hearing stories about organized crime, and wanting to be a great gangster. But the penalties for failure can be severe. Like going EVA with nothing but scales for an environment suit.

On the other hand...the profits outweighed the risks. So you went to work for the Vergosi Mob, smuggling, arranging deals, and occasionally carrying out reprisals against those who cut in on the action.

Your first big success was just after the war. During the War against the Retull the Mafia supported the Allied efforts to defeat the Retull, and even regulated the percentage of graft on arms and equipment sales to the UPC Fleet in order to speed the war effort.

You were assigned to New Detroit immediately after the war ended. New Detroit was an industrial wasteland, which had been stripped and contaminated to the destruct point in order to furnish ships for the UPC Fleet during the height of the war.

Now, with the planetary economy in a post-war slump, the New Detroit crime bosses were shaping up into an effective force. A party was elected to the World Presidency on a Gangster platform, and the First World Gangwar broke out. It became clear that if the war continued, any clear winner would be able to seriously rival the Vergosi Mafia.

So you approached the Vergosi Government, and suggested that the UPC be led to intervene. You met with Bodianaso Ged, a young Diplomat, who convinced Admiral Terry Chin to advocate

intervention. Chin was already an unabashed supporter of UPC military intervention, and with the promise of Vergosi financial support, the UPC Senate agreed to the intervention. So the Vergosi Mob used UPC soldiers to conduct a mass purge of all their enemies on New Detroit.

Eventually the whole thing was discovered. The Vergosi Mob sort of shrugged, and the Vergosi government gave empty apologies for the Mob involvement. Admiral Chin took most of the blame.

That got your career jump started. You moved up the ranks through smuggling and theft of military secrets.

Several months ago, you arranged for a human agent to be sent to the Alsarii homeworld. The Vergosi Mafia had learned that the Alsarii had developed a new type of miniature cobalt-thorium reactive detonator. A full-sized cobalt-thorium bomb can wipe the life off an entire hemisphere of an undefended planet. The problem is that such a weapon is rather large, and can easily be spotted by automated Strategic Defense Lasers, and knocked out.

The new device however is only a few inches long, and could be fired through a Strategic Defense Net with some real chance of penetrating.

You searched for a ship in the Alsarii sector. Honigoraza Fak, a Mafia-owned merchant, had influence with the captain of the *Argolid Merchant*. You had Fak re-route the ship, and you arranged for an accident to happen to the Supercargo of the *Merchant*.

Fak is one of the few Vergosi who has solid contacts among the Alsarii. Fak would be livid to know that you had something stolen off a vessel doing his business.

The accident that happened to the Navigator of the *Argolid Merchant* was a human named Cogan. He is a smuggler who you have been

running for a while. Cogan is especially vulnerable because he comes from New Haven. The New Havenites have psychic abilities that are feared by most humans, and members of their race are put on a prison asteroid. In order to remain free, Cogan needs expensive forged papers and documents. He receives these papers from Tondisiaro Pah, a Vergosi "fixer" and smuggler who works as a cook on board the starship *Copernicus*.

You needed someone to kill the Navigator of the *Argolid Merchant* when she was in port a few weeks ago, so that you could plant your own man on her. Cogan was handy. You promised to get him offplanet, and pay him a decent sum if he would carry out the murder. He wasn't enthusiastic, but he agreed. Tondosiaro Pah has gotten him a job as a crewman on *Copernicus* to get him offworld. He could be useful to you though he is going to want a lot if you ask him to kill someone in these close quarters.

You have a human operative named Lindsey Galvin, who works as a Supercargo. Galvin used to be a smuggling captain for the Vergosi Mafia but started looking for outside work. The Mob tipped off the UPC and arranged for a sting operation which cost Galvin his ship. Destitute, Galvin agreed to have a brain transmitter placed to receive assignments secretly. The transmission method is a Vergosi secret, and as far as you know, humans know nothing about it. Galvin knows you only by your contact name, "Pulsar." Galvin's name is "Black Hole."

The setup was perfect. The Alsarii could confiscate a vessel that was found to be smuggling military technology offworld. The Captain would have charged a high price. And might have given something away. The Alsarii are said to have very high-tech lie detection equipment. But the Captain did not know that his ship was smuggling.

Instead, a member of his crew, Lindsey Galvin, stole the information, and smuggled it out aboard the vessel, while the Captain made a routine

pickup, knowing only that he was doing a favor for Honigoraza Fak.

Your agent, Lindsey Galvin, did a brilliant job. Galvin was promised a ship for the mission, and as soon as the whole thing is settled, you'll keep that promise. The Vergosi Mob always keeps its promises. That's very important. Galvin has earned a vessel, though of course you will keep him cash-strapped so that he has to work for you.

You usually communicate with Galvin by programming assignment directions into a remote transmitter, which you then leave somewhere. That way the broadcast cannot be traced to you. You just cleared the assignment to steal the Alsarii technology from the transmitter buffer last night, and put in a new message, promising payment at the end of this trip. You'll broadcast this when the *Copernicus* makes the stop you have "arranged" for it. More on that in a moment.

After you got the plans from Galvin, you passed them off for some quick reverse engineering by a retired Vergosi military retrodesigner who worked at the New Ventura labs stealing Rull technology for the Allies during the war. Within a very short time you produced a working model of the micro-Cobalt explosive, and its detonator.

You arranged for the item to be sold to the Yorr Imperium. At the same time, the Mob hired a design team to work out an upgrade to an existing Strategic Defense system that would protect against the device.

You plan to sell 1000 of the explosives to the Yorr for 550,000 credits apiece, and furnish the new SDS upgrade to 450 inhabited industrial worlds at 1,500,000 credits apiece. The profits should be ...tidy. Of course most of that will go to the Vergosi Mafia, but a significant cut will go into your personal financial account.

The Yorr have demanded a test device, and they wanted it delivered by the diplomatic conference. The prototype was completed only five days ago, and so you arranged to have it delivered to the

Yorr Imperial ambassador Proconsular Liaison Garch, enroute to the conference.

Understandably, the Yorr want to test before they buy. There was a little fear that the Yorr might try to reverse engineer the device, so it is equipped with an electronic lock that will cause it to detonate if it is tampered with. Not that the Yorr could likely figure it out.

You thought your arrangement for delivery was fairly clever. It would be difficult to smuggle such a weapon aboard a UPC starship, because the UPC has advanced scanners at its Spaceports.

So you arranged for the *Argolid Merchant* to pick the weapon up on a nearby Vergosi world, and lie doggo along the *Copernicus* course. The *Merchant* will drop the warhead aboard a lifepod, (hidden in a secret compartment of course). When *Copernicus* responds to the pod's transponder, (which is doubtless the distress signal that has been picked up), and brings it aboard you will wait for a while. Eventually the pod will be left unattended (normal locks are no challenge to you - especially with your electronic lockpick). You will retrieve the device, and present it to the Yorr.

In the meantime, you have arranged for the Navigator of the *Copernicus* to drop a spare lifepod, which will contain a cargo of highly contraband Powdered Procoyon Mai-Tai Mix. No sense wasting a trip and sending the *Argolid Merchant* away empty. Less profit that way.

## Summary

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- You work for the Vergosi Mafia, the most powerful and respected criminal organization in existence.
- You expect *Copernicus* to stop and pick up a lifepod ejected from *Argolid Merchant*. This pod will contain the warhead in a hidden compartment. You will pass this to the Imperial Yor Representative, Garch.
- Lindsey Galvin, a member of the *Argolid Merchant* is an operative who you communicate with only by transmitter. Galvin only knows you as "Pulsar."
- You have no regular contact with Captain Cicco, though Cicco is indebted to your associate Honigoraza Fak. If Captain Cicco doesn't know of your existence, it is that much better.

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## Imperial Strike Commander Borru

*"It's beyond me...help me mommy..."*  
- Rocky Horror Picture Show

### **You are a Warrior of the YORR IMPERIUM** How could this have happened....

Sometime after you were spawned, you must have been orphaned. Your intelligence tells you that you must have been fairly tough and aggressive, as you managed to live through the spawning process.

When the Imperial Yorr world of Bahlghardz was overrun by the Retull, the garrison fought to the last. One crew had the task of putting the non-combatants to death. Any other race might have euthanized them, or even sent them to safety. The Yorr prefer to painfully torture them to death, so they will not have the dishonor of an easier death than the defenders who fall in battle.

Somehow, the crew charged with this...interesting...task...failed to get to you. For this they would be outcasts unto the tenth generation, if it were known. The Yorr are never taken prisoner, and never leave non-combatants to be taken prisoner.

You were found as a war orphan, and raised by the Alsarii.

It is true that you didn't fit in very well. They tried to get you to adjust by having you play with the other children. You were really very good...after the first incident you never did more than break bones, and dislocate limbs.

It was when you turned sixteen that the problems arose. You went on a date with an adventurous young Alsarii of the Beta sex. Your instincts and

passion got the better of you, and you eviscerated, exsanguinated, and flensed your young partner. You were found wildly fertilizing the gobbets that remained. The Alsarii concluded that you simply did not fit in with their society. They were really very decent, recognizing that what was brutal murder to them was simply making-out to a Yorr.

You felt guilty, of course. Having been raised Alsarii, you have Alsarii values and beliefs. You just have a Yorr temper, and a Yorr sex drive. The fact that, by the standards of your own beliefs, this makes you a horrible monster.

The Alsarii told you that there was a way that you could help your adoptive race, and make up for the crime of passion you had created. You could pass back among the Yorr, and work as a spy, helping improve the Yorr race, and make them more civilized.

Service records were forged for you, and you were transferred in aboard a Vergosi supply ship. The Yorr Imperium is very large, and it was not surprising that a young officer might be transferred from someplace so far away no-one had ever heard of it.

You quickly rose through the ranks, because of your diplomatic skills. By heading off controversy, your superior advanced, and by heading off fights, you stayed alive. Diplomacy and tact is so unknown among the Yorr that they simply didn't recognize the tactic. The Yorr often have departmental staff meetings that have better than 10% casualties.

The problem is that you are going insane. You were raised in a peaceful beautiful environment. You have a special implant in your brain which allows you to access Yorr laws, customs, and your "history." The problem is that you are essentially an Alsarii. You yearn for music, for arts, for literature, for quiet conversation about topics of importance. Particularly topics that don't deal with making anyone or anything experience pain, dismembering anyone, blowing anything up, or

flensing the burned flesh off of anything. The most popular show on Yorr Imperial Television is "What Was This!?" where a panel of experts compete to see who can identify badly mutilated remains of other species. To add interest, the experts are allowed to "convince" each other with twenty inch spikes.

You want out, but you know there is no place to go. Your Alsarii Intelligence contact, Nuhā Sal'gharii meets with you occasionally, and sends you instructions through the Vergosi traders that deal directly with the Yorr, particularly Honigoraza Fak.

You seek solace in the company of the Vergosi. They aren't as afraid of the Yorr as humans and Alsarii. They know the risks in dealing with the Yorr, but their own Mafia is pretty brutal, and they seem immune to feelings of dread. For a price, they will do anything. Compared to the Yorr, they are paragons of civilization.

Slowly, you have come to be at odds with your erstwhile protectors. The Alsarii want to see the Yorr become more civilized, and live with the other races of the galaxy.

After living among the Yorr...being one of them doing the things that they do, you can reliably say that this would be unfair. The Yorr should not be civilized. They should be wiped out, like the Retull, erased from the Galaxy. They are a hellish blight on the universe, which must be extinguished before they spread, like some horrible fast-growing cancer. The Alsarii consider them immoral. The Yorr have morals. They are just bad.

In the words of the great human novelist Joseph Conrad..."Exterminate them all!"

The Horror....

You dread each day. You despise yourself, and you despise those around you. You despise the conversations. And you can never, never, let on. Because you are sure that you were sent to

endure this hell to save the rest of the sentient races from it forever. To make up for the life of that beta you killed.

Your mind has been snapped by the horror and bloodshed, and your sole psychotic motive is to bring the Yorr to extinction and wipe the galaxy of your kind forever.

Other than that, you are a very nice guy.

Recently there have been some political manoeuvrings that might help. You are serving now as an advisor to Imperial Proconsular Liaison Garch.

Recently, the Emperor sent envoys to the Peripheral Barony of Ghast, ruled by Gadarr, his most hated enemy. It was generally agreed that the Barony of Ghast was not only most likely to succeed, but would be the most bloodthirsty and enjoyable opponent.

Over the next few months, Imperial Yorr strike ships conducted a set of limited raids on Ghast, mostly along the UPC border. By "coincidence" two human freighters were "accidentally" caught in the crossfire. The Imperium issued its usual aggressively frosty apologies. Ghast on the other hand expressed outrage, and offered compensation to the UPC.

Now the difficult diplomatic phase begins. Garch plans to push the UPC ambassador into making an irrevocable statement of support in front of the Ghast Representative. The UPC ambassador here has plenipotentiary powers, and if he makes a treaty with the Ghast Ambassador, then the war can begin at once.

Liaison Garch been granted plenipotentiary powers for this diplomatic conference. You must manage to fatally derail the negotiations, so that the Yorr race goes to war with the Humans, not with each other. Right now, the Yorr are weak and such a war will destroy them.



## Summary

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- You want to goad the UPC into going into a genocidal war against the Yorr, or find some other way to destroy the Yorr race.
- The UPC must believe that you are interested in a ...*peace*...negotiation.
- Honigoraza Fak is a contact with the Alsarii.
- You need to stall your contact Nuha Sal'gharii, or convince Nuha that the Yorr should be exterminated. The Alsarii are peaceful by nature, so that would not be very easy.

# Space Operetta

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## Professor Lou Cedras

*"No one knows who they were - or what they were doing..."*

### - Spinal Tap "Stonehenge"

The pursuit of the Cygnus Crystal has been your obsession for nearly twenty years.

You were born on Drzewicki Prime, a verdant moon orbiting the gas giant of Drzewicki, named for the Terran explorer who discovered it. "DP" was a pleasant place to grow up. The gravity was fairly light, and there was a lot to do. The population was small, and mostly middle-class agrarian. You joined the Stellar Scouts, and spent weekends exploring D-VI and D-II, other inhabitable moons, only a few hours away. You developed a fascination for hiking, climbing, and exploring.

When the war came, your scouting experience served you well in the UPC Marines. You served as a scout. It is odd that when most people talk about the war, you can find little in common with them. You missed most of the big battles like the fall of Thalidium. For you the war was lonely. Secret landings with four or five troops, lone encounters with a powerful Retull armored drone. You got to see the Retull up close, and that certainly left a scar on you.

During the war you spent a month stranded on Cygnus X-II. The world was not, strictly speaking, habitable. It had once been a fertile and thriving world, but about six thousand years ago Cygnus X became a pulsar. On the surface the radiation levels were easily lethal.

The Retull could handle a lot of radiation though, so you were sent in aboard a four person scout to see if there was a base there. Cygnus X was

almost unknown, and the intelligence packet didn't mention that the star had an irregular pulse cycle of about 48 hours. At the peak of the pulse, the intensity suddenly quadrupled, and the scoutship's telemetry was knocked out by radiation from the pulsar. You crash-landed on the barren surface of Cygnus X-II. The ship was badly damaged, and you knew you had to get below ground fast, before the radiation pulse cycled around again.

You vaguely knew there had once been a civilization in this part of the galaxy, called the Volckons. They had lived in the barren regions that separate the Yorr Imperium from human space. Possibly their home world was somewhere far beyond explored human space, or was in Yorr territory. They had passed from this region of the galaxy, and maybe become extinct altogether, about seven thousand years ago, when mankind was just beginning to build its first, rude, cities, and the Vergosi had only just discovered star travel.

You stumbled across some ruins, and got underground, and found to your delight that there was some residual atmosphere. It did not take a genius to figure out that the ruins were Volckon. With the breath filters from your suits, you and the other three crew, Will Briggs, Sara Yeun, and Alison Lei were able to survive for four weeks until you were picked up by a destroyer. Alison was injured early on by a force field found in the ruins, trying to see if it could be used to jury rig a repair of some sort, and remained unconscious the entire time, but you were still able to get the entire crew out safely.

There was little to do during those four weeks other than explore, and record your findings. The first Volckon ruins had only been discovered shortly before the war, and despite stories, there had been no real exploration, because of the proximity to the Retull war zone, and the Yorr border.

You learned a lot. You found the strange system of writing to be very provocative, though to this

day you have not deciphered it. And as you prowled the underground recesses of the civilization, you became aware that the Volckons had been much more advanced than humankind. It seemed unlikely that Cygnus was their homeworld. And the city showed signs of having been "stripped" of materials, somewhat systematically. Later you would find that this was characteristic of all Volckon ruins.

Towards the end of your stay, you discovered a strange machine, which seemed to be still functioning. You were wary, after the experience that nearly killed crewmember Lei. Working carefully, you were able to determine that it was a computer - a partially organic computer, because it was made of silicon and carbon. The center was a carbon crystal - technically a diamond (or zirconia) about a foot high. This seemed to be a central processor, and probably a memory core. You have since worked out many of the theoretical dynamics of the crystal. At the time, you decided to take it with you, and you packed it when you were evacuated aboard the allied Yorr destroyer *IYS Zardoz*.

You were returned to the UPC base on Skoda. That was when the mysterious happenings began. The others had selected you to carry the crystal, and you were planning to turn it over to the UPC Admiralty. But your quarters were broken into and the crystal was stolen. The only other person who knew about the crystal was Captain Hagh of the Yorr Destroyer *Zardoz*.

The UPC Commander at Skoda was wary of accusing the Yorr of stealing. First, it would be very unusual. If the Yorr wanted the crystal, they would have taken it from you by force, on their ship. Second, interest in an archaeological specimen would be uncharacteristic for the Yorr. Perhaps if they thought it was a weapon they might have some interest, but learning about other cultures is not a popular subject in Yorr primary school (aside from rumors of a taste-test).

The Retull eventually did invest Cygnus, and built hives in the underground cities. By the time the

Yorr had driven them out using burrowing cobalt-thorium warheads, there was little left of the archaeological wonders.

But the fact is that you were a normal, healthy person, and the war did not warp you terribly. You survived, and have some good memories of the camaraderie, though you appreciate how awful war really is. You were no career military officer. When the war was over, it was goodbye UPC Marines.

After the war you headed for the University of the United Councils of Planets (UUCP) on Algol V, and took an advanced degree in Alien Archaeology. You became Dr. Cedras, and you wrote your thesis on the Volckon Race.

You wanted to return to Cygnus, but the world became part of the Barony of Ghast after the war, and the Yorr Baron interdicted it. It was radioactive of course, but you filed several special requests for a scientific expedition, all of which were brushed aside.

You presumed the crystal lost as well, but a few years after your graduation, you heard rumors that such an artifact had been sold by a Vergosi trader. You tried to track the item down, but were unable to find it at the time.

Eventually, you hired a Vergosi merchant named Honigoraza Fak, who traded with the Yorr, to land a team on Cygnus X - II secretly. They were poorly equipped, because of the necessity to travel light, and found little. They were able to confirm that almost nothing had survived. The Yorr are very thorough. They could not even find a trace of the Retull hives.

Your secret team was able to survey the extent of the ruins however, and they did leave you with a sound conviction that the Cygnus site was not the homeworld of the Volckon race. The two city sites would not have accommodated more than a few hundred thousand inhabitants. The world must have been a colony. Perhaps the race even still exists, these five thousand years later!

The chamber where you found the Crystal was no longer intact. There were signs of heavy shielding, but this could not stand against the Yorr bombardment. Still, the protection fed your conviction that the Cygnus Crystal is a treasure of great importance, perhaps some sort of learning archive of the Volckon civilization.

On your first expedition, you made extensive notes, but you were in a hurry when you discovered the crystal. You had no video equipment, and you did not copy down the inscriptions in the chamber. Not that anyone can actually read ancient Volckon, but you wish you had a record of them.

During this period, you began to worry that you might have something to worry about personally. You tried to round up members of your old crew to lead the expedition, and had little luck. You have become suspicious of several things however.

First, Will Briggs was horribly murdered in '53 in an alley behind a bar on Skraeling V. You thought at the time that it was a terrible accident. Will was always a bit of a carouser...you were the studious member of the crew. Then in '57 you heard from a friend that Sara Yeun had committed suicide by flying her car into a mountainside in the Alps on Earth. You were surprised, and when you attended her funeral you found that many of her family members believed she had been murdered.

You hadn't been in contact with Alison Lei since the war. Alison it seems had dropped out of existence, and you wondered if that meant there had been a third murder. You lived carefully for several years, but no-one ever tried to kill you.

The second thing you are suspicious of is the UPC Government Bureau for Interstellar and Galactic Offworld Trade Security (BIGOTS). BIGOTS was formed during the paranoid days after the first Yorr war, and most intellectuals agree that it has outlived its usefulness. But the agency still has

wide ranging powers, though it has been curbed by a succession of Galactic Presidents.

Until recently, you were certain that BIGOTS has not interest in the Volckon race itself. You assumed that all of their interference in Volckon archaeology was to protect secret bases along the Yorr frontier. About a year ago, though, some anonymous colleague leaked a copy of the BIGOTS white paper on alien races to several Universities. The University professors protested to the Galactic President, who swept the whole thing under the carpet. But it made you wonder what "special knowledge" BIGOTS might have about the Volckon.

You wrote to the other greatest living authority on the Volckon, Professor Duran, a respected Archaeologist at your rival school, UUCP at Epsilon Eridani IX. You asked the professor to help organize a protest to remove all barriers to studying the Volckon race. The Professor was genial, but lukewarm. You wish you had the opportunity to make your case in person.

Professor Duran has a network of undercover "informants," mostly Vergosi, who have led to UUCP-EE recovering some of the most important historical artifacts in the galaxy. You decided to emulate this plan, and hired some Vergosi informants yourself. You were able to learn that the Cygnus Crystal was in circulation again. It had been held privately for a number of years, but for some reason, was being offered for sale on the Vergosi black market.

Apparently, the owner is highly placed. You were told that the crystal was being brought into UGC space for the diplomatic conference on Tau Ceti Prime. Your contact, a ship's cook named Tondisiaro Pah, believed it would be sold to the highest bidder, but did not have any firm information. Pah worked on board the *Copernicus*, which was bound for Tau Ceti Prime and the conference. Pah asked the Captain to sell you a passage, even though this was a diplomatic charter, and Captain Murano graciously agreed

You hope to ferret out just who has the crystal and purchase it from them.

In the meantime, you are pleased to find yourself in such esteemed company. You hate to pressure Ambassador Hagen, of course, after the terrible incident a few years ago. Hagen's child was kidnapped and killed by terrorists, and it is widely known that the Ambassador never talks about that. You only know about it because the Ambassador was living on Algol V at the time. Still the Ambassador is a very powerful and influential man...until the tragedy, he was considered likely material for the Galactic Presidency. His word on behalf of the University could be worth a lot of money.

### Summary

- You are one of the greatest living authorities on the Volckon race. *GM Note: this is a mini-game. Like most ancient science fiction races, little is known about the Volckons. They were mysterious, and are gone now. BS as much as is necessary. Contradictions are inherent in the genre, so don't agonize too much over consistency.*
- You want to find out who has the Cygnus Crystal and get it back.
- You wouldn't mind knowing who killed the rest of your crew, and whatever happened to Allison Lei. You would like to avoid being killed.

# Space Operetta

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## Admiral Terry Chin

*"Our sons need never be soldiers... Our daughters will never need guns. These are the years between. These are the years that were had fought and won."*

### - Midnight Oil

You are Admiral Terry Chin of the UPC fleet. You should have quite while you were ahead. You retired in '64, but the UPC President asked you to serve as the Minister of Defense. You said yes.

When the Vergosi government collapsed, and the Mafia wars started, the President began to seriously fear that there would be a Military Coup. You tried to reassure him of the loyalty of the Fleet, but the truth is, even you had some fears. Ambitious newcomers like Lin Cole seem to lack the convictions of your generation.

When the possibility of war with the Yorr Empire began to loom, you agreed to return to active duty as Admiral of the Fleet. You are sixty-nine years old, but you are certainly of sound mind and you have the advantage of knowing the Yorr better than nearly anyone else in service.

You were born on Skoda, a world near the Yorr periphery, before the turn of the century, back in '98. You were raised by your father, your mother having been killed in a skirmish with the Yorr. She had been a Starship Commander, and when you matriculated, you chose to pursue the same course, though your father wanted you to become a Civil Engineer.

You worked your way up through the UPC fleet. You had your first taste of combat

back in '14 better than fifty years ago, on board the *UPS Thrasher*, an old Ion-induction Escort Destroyer. You were a tender recruit of sixteen.

The Yorr were raiding along the UPC Periphery, and you were responsible for peacekeeping which often meant teaching a bloodthirsty Yorr Captain what the inside of a hydrogen-fission explosion looked like. The raids of '14 became the Yorr War of 2214-2218 in which the UPC forced the Yorr to accept terms, and halted Yorr aggression for a half century.

Ahh those were the days. The Yorr were less organized and concentrated then. The Vergosi were still just beginning to make inroads on the UPC economy. You could go from one end of known space to the other without seeing an alien.

Much of your service career was during the long period between the wars. You ended the war with your own command.

During the twenties and thirties, you saw a lot of strange things. In 2232 you were promoted to Rear Admiral, and you commanded the expedition to New Haven after the mutants there destroyed the *UPC Atreius*. You knew that the population of New Haven, and the crew of the Starship *Challenger*, had disappeared. You were present five years ago when they returned from stasis, heralding the return of the Volckon race.

You were opposed to locking up the refugees from New Haven in an internment camp. Nevertheless, you spent the next several months after the *Challenger* disappeared trying to round up the New Havenites who had fled the planet before they were killed by scared UPC citizens or Vergosi. The Vergosi seemed particularly hostile to the New Havenites.

Now of course, the New Havenites hate the UPC. At the time it seemed reasonable to inter them. The crew of the freighter *Yosemite* murdered all the refugees aboard their vessel, and the Vergosi authorities on Obelidonada managed to purge

most of the refugees that passed through that world. Overall, probably not more than two or three hundred people made it off New Haven alive. It is hard to imagine just how awful and paranoid that time was.

Throughout the thirties, the UPC kept an internment camp on an airless asteroid orbiting Kapteyn's Star, only a few million miles from R5433, the UPC Maximum Security Prison. When the Retull War broke out, you led a movement that allowed most of the refugees were allowed to enter the UPC Fleet.

The Fleet (over the protests of BIGOTS, the UPC Security Bureau) issued the New Havenites ID showing that they were refugees from Retull incursions, to protect them from public paranoia.

The Retull War erased the last vestiges of the depression. You did not mind the war. It was a little senseless, of course. But at least it was a war where there weren't any questions of right or wrong, or what side you were on. The Retull were pernicious creatures intent on destroying or assimilating every sentient being in the universe. All the sentient races stood against them, even the Yorr. For once BIGOTS was justified in its xenophobia.

You had some respect for the Yorr already. Back in your border patrol days, they were always outgunned, and outpowered of course. And considering their pitiful little hydrogen-plasma cruisers, and phased neutrino disrupter weapons, they did fairly well. You took some damage, and they were not always the losers.

During the war, the Yorr really came into their own. With powerful UPC warships, rolled out of New Detroit by the thousands, they quickly became the carbon-hard edge of the allied counteroffensive. You came into your own as well. The *UPS Aurora*, was still a fairly new cruiser with an excellent crew. You were the first UPC Captain to destroy a Retull mothership, and your Pasers were the first to breach the hive on Tau-Gamma IX. You defended Tovirex IV when

the *Gallant* was blown out of orbit, and kept the factories running.

You were a hero, known for your exploits and trickery, both in space, and with the opposite sex. You were everything they wanted of a Starship Captain in those days.

Then they made you an admiral. They put a decent young kid named Carol Cicco, in command of the *Aurora*, and you were put behind a desk as the war drew towards a close.

You weren't as disappointed as you might have been. Cicco did pretty well, considering that the Retull were already losing, and the worst of the war was over. Those three bleak years when things had hung in the balance, the terrible months after Thalidium fell during the holidays. Back then you would appear in planetary skies like an avenging angel on *Aurora*, and throw back what looked to be a certain Retull victory. Like at Tovirex. That would be hard to follow. As it was, Cicco won a share of fame, not entirely because the name of the vessel was already so well known.

You even managed to get Cicco assigned to be one of the leaders in the attack on the Retull Homeworlds. The force was heavily comprised of Yorr, of course, and they insisted on being allowed to destroy the Retull homeworld themselves. That's when you began to be disappointed. Cicco let them. Even offered to arbitrate their blood combat to determine who would lead. The UPC should have slugged it out with them, turned against them right then if necessary. If the UPC had hit the Yorr right at the end of the Retull wars, and just kept going, there wouldn't be a Yorr threat today.

Cicco was too young. And you later found out the young Captain had various addictions that made his ability to command suspect. You sat on his admiralty board, and were the only one of three Admirals who voted in favor of elevating him to Admiralty rank.

The days for your kind were already numbered. Immediately after the war a group of UPC Admirals tried to gain political influence, and impose an orderly democratic government on the UPC. With an eye towards a Senate run, you took on the tough situation in New Detroit.

The planet had been so badly economically hit by the end of the war that a political party running on a Gangsterism platform had come to power. A worldwide Gang-War broke out. As long as the affair was purely internal the UPC had no right to intervene. But the Vergosi came forward, and agreed to claim that some of their citizens were being threatened, in return for being allowed to conduct a "joint" operation with the UPC to pacify the planet. The Vergosi approached you through a young ambassador named Bodianaso Ged, and as one of the most respected Admirals in the UPC fleet, you petitioned the Senate to allow intervention.

In the end it got out of hand. It turned out that the Vergosi mafia was behind the whole thing and that you, and the Vergosi ambassador Bodanasio Ged had been duped by Vergosi organized crime, which used the "pacification" as an opportunity to rub out old enemies, and insert their own supporters in positions of local authority. There were hearings before the UPC Senate, and your political career was stillborn.

And so a long tradition of strict non-intervention was established. And a great deal of human suffering has taken place that could have been averted, if the UPC would only open its eyes, and the politicians do what was right, not what is convenient.

So for sixteen years you have watched the readiness of the Fleet crumble, the UPC lose its grip on the constituent worlds. Alsari pornography is legal on one hundred forty three worlds now. Smugglers proliferate. What few Fleet operations there are have been aimed at curbing smuggling.

The UPC must stand behind Ghast, in a firm alliance, and must not be intimidated by the Empire. In a fight with Yorr, the best allies will be other Yorr.

### Summary

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- You are officially present as the representative of the UPC Fleet in negotiations between the Yorr and the UPC. Ambassador Hagen speaks for the UPC President, but once hostilities break out officially, you can command the fleet independent of him, until there is a cease-fire.
- You have the best interests of the UPC at heart. You believe the UPC must take a stand against Imperial Yorr aggression.



# Space Operetta

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## Captain Carol(I) Cicco

"I'm sorry it went down like this but someone had to lose...it's the politics of contraband...the smuggler's blues."

- Glenn Frey

You should never have accepted the contract. You should never have tried to deal with the *Vergosi Mafia*. But they bribed you, offered you such a sweet deal. You could have paid off the crippling mortgage on this bucket of bolts.

You were not always like this - a penniless Star Captain with an obsolete merchant cruiser. You were once a war hero. Commander of the *UPC Aurora*, the ship that blasted its way past the Retull forces besieging Farstar Station, and evacuated the women and children there. The ship that got Alsarii ambassador Val'righii out of Omicron Ceti III when the defenses fell. Even the Yorr respected you.

Of course, Admiral Terry Chin hated you. Chin had been the commander of the *Aurora* before you. The vessel was already legendary. But you eclipsed Chin's exploits with your own. When people thought of the famous *Aurora*, they thought of Cicco, not Chin, and the Admiral despised you for it.

Chin wanted you dead, and sent you to be in the front lines for the attack on the Retull Homeworlds. The force was heavily comprised of Yorr, and Chin thought they would kill you if the Retull didn't. But the Yorr didn't kill you. In fact, they respected you so much that when they held the blood honor combat to determine who would have the honor of leading the drive to smash the Retull homeworld, they made you the arbiter. Your name was famous across the galaxy.

Chin was waiting for you when you got back. First there were rumors of sexual misconduct with the Alsarii ambassador. You laughed them off though in fact there was a little truth to those rumors. The Alsarii wouldn't call it "misconduct," but back on the homefront the average man on the street didn't understand. Then there was a prolonged attack on your reputation. Cowardice that you did not participate in the final battle. As if the Yorr would have permitted *anyone* to. You only stayed off a Yorr Civil War.

Finally, there were accusations of drinking, and drug addiction. Okay, some of them were true. But you never lost a fight. Chin had a first class taste of sour grapes. Finally, you were considered for promotion to Admiral. Chin sat on the review board. And failed you. You remained a Captain. When you heard about it, you downed a full pitcher of Antarian Daiquiris, and resigned your commission.

You mustered out with a little bit of money, though nothing to be excited about. Star Captains, especially UPC Fleet Captains, just don't make that much money. You borrowed heavily against your reputation, and bought a secondhand freighter.

Things went wrong from the first. You knew a lot about starships, but in your military career you had learned little about contract law. You found that you had purchased a military freighter from a Vergosi trader. But the contract did not specify which ship, merely the class and lot number. The one you looked over was pristine. The one that was delivered was ready to be scrapped. It had seen hard service on the front, and it looked like it had already been scavenged for parts.

You sued in a Vergosi court, where *caveat emptor* is the basic legal precept. You were awarded a measly few thousand credits in damages, and warned to be more careful in the future.

It is a credit to your crew that you managed to salvage the *SS Argolid Merchant*, and make money with her at all. You even upgraded some

of her systems. But that cost you more money that you didn't have.

For the past sixteen years you have lived hand to mouth. Every year the *Argolid Merchant* gets older, and every time you thought you might be able to make enough money to pay off the balance of the loan and sell the ship for a tiny profit, to take out a loan on a new ship, she would break down. Major repairs that kept trips from being profitable. Breakdowns that caused missed delivery deadlines.

Now she has been hit by a piece of debris. And you are terrified beyond the bounds of rationally thought. Because if you are very lucky, the object is of manmade origin, and the insurance will cover it. But your insurance, like all others, does not cover "acts of war," and if whatever the hell you hit is some old enemy vessel, which you suspect, then it will not be covered. The Retul never signed a peace treaty to end the war, so insurance boards rule that floating Retul wreckage is still war damage, and is not reimbursed.

And the *Argolid Merchant* is irreparable. Drew Clute may be a little old, but if Drew says the Main fusion reactor is cracked, then it is. It is a miracle that there is enough power to run the life support and the magnetic field that keeps the atmosphere in. Even if you could get her towed to orbit somewhere, a rebuilt reactor would cost more than the vessel is worth.

Then there is the problem of the cargo. Six years ago, you ran afoul of the Vergosi Mafia. It was in a card game on Sullivan's world. You were down on your luck, playing a rigged card game set up by your First Officer Murphy Chando to get money for a new fusion injector. The Mob caught you at it, and you thought they would burn your ass right there. Instead, they offered to let you live, and sell you a new injector cheap. In return you would carry a certain cargo for them, no questions asked.

So you became a smuggler. It wasn't that you were against smuggling. Hell, if you had collected a credit for every time you arranged for Saurian Lager or Algol Cigarettes to be smuggled aboard the *UPS Aurora*, you'd be rich now. You were an easygoing skipper with a love of sex, money, and fun. That's what got you in trouble.

But you didn't like the mob to have your ass in a sling, and they did. Your contact is Honigorax Fak. You knew Fak back in the old days, but Fak has you between a rock and a hard place now, and is exploiting it. You don't make much more smuggling than you did running legitimate cargoes, once bribes are taken into account.

You never know everything that is going on. A few months ago, while starting a run for the Alsarii homeworld, your Supercargo was murdered. It's a sure bet he was into something illegal. You never learned what. Your new Supercargo, Lindsey Galvin, seems straight enough.

Occasionally, he throws you something good. Fak is one of the few traders who deals with both the Alsarii and the Yorr. Just a few months ago he diverted you all of a sudden to Alsar to pick up one of his agents. It was an easy, legal, trip, and paid well.

This latest job is really unpleasant. Fak assigned you to smuggle some ultra sophisticated weapon to a point in deep space. There you would drop it in the escape pod, and a passing ship would drop a shipment of contraband. Hallucinogenic Powdered Procoyon Mai-Tai Mix. The deal was lucrative. A big payment for the weapon drop and a share of the profit on the Mai-Tai Mix.

It is bad enough doing this with no one around. But Fak is also on board as a passenger, and everything is not going perfectly.

You were running without radar in order to avoid detection. After all, this part of intergalactic space is dead empty. You had already swung out the boom to launch the pod, when the damn collision happened.

Several of your crew were killed outright. The object slammed into one of the lower holds, and Chando went in to take a look. He was badly injured when the magnetic field failed, and the area depressurized. He said that there was a military drone of some kind, but that he couldn't identify the make. It could be Retull, but it could also be Vergosi, or Yorr. Chando has been half-stunned since the incident, and seems to have taken a blow to the head.

As if that wasn't enough, you were already worried about Lindsey Calvin. Halfway through his bridge watch at around 22:00 yesterday evening, he stood up, stretched, yawned and said something about being "pleased and honored to be here with you all," then said he had to go to bed. He went aft, and fell into a comatose sleep which he couldn't be wakened from. This morning he remembered nothing. You were going to call him in to discuss what had happened but you didn't have time. Better do that soon.

If it is Retull, there is a serious problem. There could even be something alive on board. You may have to choose between saving your crew and a threat that could destroy civilized space.

You have only your cool competence, and explorative and adventurous nature, as your copy of the *Manual of Procedures for UPC Starships* was destroyed in the incident.

### **Summary**

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- Your ship is damaged beyond repair. Get help, and try and pass your cargo through without detection.
- You need to figure out if the thing you hit was Retull. If so, is it dangerous.
- You'll need a new ship soon. You'd love to make some money, any way you can, off this nightmare.

You'd love to get the Vergosi Mob off your back, once and for all.

# Space Operetta

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## Engineer Drew Clute

"Can you imagine us years from today, sharing a park bench quietly...how terribly strange to be seventy."

- Paul Simon

You were born sixty some-odd years ago on Epsilon Eridani V. The universe you were born into was a much simpler place than the universe today.

Those were the days when men still set forth into the stars on Hydrogen-Induction ships, powered by Fission Reactors. When there was no "subspace radio." When video was something that you watched on a screen, and starships landed on the surface of planets in a corona of fire and steam. When the colonies of humankind were tied together by a fragile network of packet boats and independent freighters.

You are only a year away from retirement age, but you can't see that it makes much difference. There aren't many men left like you. You went into space before the Retull war - it was a fine morning back in 2213, when you scurried up a ladder and boarded the starship *Nova Ontario*, outbound for Algol. She seemed so huge back then, parked on the tarmac apron at Galloway Spaceport.

*Nova Ontario* was an Avery 23D Streamliner, once one of the most common starships in the human universe. Gleaming white and sleek in the sun, her upper works neatly trimmed in red. Over a thousand feet long, you had to climb eighty feet into her midships airlock. As the lock cycled, you looked aft over her delta wings, huge ramscoops, and massive takeoff venturis. The squat "v" of her twin rear tails. At eighty tons she seemed like a behemoth.

They don't make starships like that anymore. Every once in a while you'll still see an old Streamliner running surface to space shuttle duty on a colonial world, her heavy FTL drive removed for cargo space. But it isn't the same.

You were an engine-room boy, which was not the best of jobs. But you didn't care, you were in space. You saw far away worlds, and thought that things would never change.

Then the Retull Wars came. You stayed with *Nova Ontario* for the first year, hauling supplies to Skoda, and the other border worlds that were under siege. But in 2215 you joined the URC Fleet, and went to war aboard the heavy Cruiser *Challenger*, a brand new vessel built in the orbital yards of New Detroit. *Challenger* was a deep space ship, armed to the teeth, and faster by half than any battleship. She slammed into the Yorr at a dozen worlds as the War raged back and forth, her new fusion engines glowing as they trailed superheated hydrogen gas through interstellar space.

Eventually the tentative Yorr alliance that had allowed them to attack human space disintegrated, and the Yorr agreed to an armistice.

You can't argue that war wasn't hell. But you didn't see the worst of it. From the engine room war is pretty much an all or nothing prospect. There were fires, and you saw some men die, but that can happen in peacetime. There were alerts, and a few hull breaches. Nowadays most ships have a magnetic field that pretty reliably keeps the atmosphere in if the hull is breached, but in those days it was an iffy emergency procedure.

The fact is, you liked the war. You enjoyed the camaraderie, the feeling that you were part of a team doing something important to save the universe. It appealed to your gallantry. And you were a dashing figure on leave back in those days. You met plenty of other young noncoms and servicepeople at the USO club, and you had your share of romantic flings.

The peace was good too, when it arrived. You learned engineering as an apprentice, and by the time the war ended you were able to automatically qualify for a civil certificate. You served on any number of freighters and passenger carriers, some good, some bad, all interesting. As the years rolled by you came to regard a starship cabin as your permanent home. By the thirties you were taking billets as chief engineer on a small ship, with only a jobber to help you. You preferred being your own boss on a small starship to being a number four or five or even ten position in the engine crew of some huge midcentury liner.

You've seen it all. Spacewrecks, Asteroid collisions, Subspace storms, engine core meltdowns. You have an endlessfont of stories to tell.

During the Retull Wars you tried to re-enlist, but you were too old. You served aboard a cargo transport, the *Delta Vega Queen*. You ran in convoy to every beseiged world, complaining all the way. The Fleet might have taken the brunt of the punishment, but the cargo boys did a pretty fine job. The old *DVQ* ran into *Tovirex* with supplies unescorted, with Retull drones everywhere. Nothing but a few forward-firing light PASERS for protection. "Might as well pis on them" said the skipper. But in he went, and managed to slip the net, and deliver medical supplies.

After the war it suddenly got harder to get a job. There were thousands of energetic young engineers fresh out of the Fleet. You were pressing fifty, and beginning to be a bit of an oldster. For a few years it wasn't so bad - the youngsters were very young and competert captains respected someone who had been running engines back before the Retull wars.

But with every year it gets harder. Next year your Engineer's certificate will expire - retirement age. Even if you wanted to lieabout it, you haven't got the money to get a forged certificate. You could

run engines on Vergosi flagged ships fora while.

If you retire, you get to collect your UPC Fleet Pension. Not a lot, but it is something. Enough to buy a little cubicle on a station in orbit somewhere, and hang out every day drinking at the local watering-hole, telling stories with the other old codgers.

You had half an idea about buying your own ship when you reached retirement age. Nothing big, just an old war-surplus D-7 or D-24 Starlifter. You could save money by helping in the engine room, hiring some young fellow for the certification.

Captain Cicco is very decent to you, and you hate to cross the Captain. Cicco gave you a chance when most other Captains are already thinking you are too old. You've done a good job of holding the *Argolid Merchant* together. She was battered to hell when the Captain got her...she won't hold up forever, but you had given hera little more life.

Whatever hit her has probably doomed her though. You've been aft, and as best you can tell her reactor containment wall is cracked. That's a drydock repair...amounts to putting a whole new reactor in. Even if she could be towed in, she wouldn't be worth refitting that way, not as badly chewed up as she is. You hate to break it to the Skipper, but the crew will be lucky to get out of this alive, and the ship is history.

Which means your dreams are history too. You had managed to make arrangements for a dead that just might pay for your future. But it doesn't look like that will happen now.

## Summary

- You are an old codger. Play it up for all it is worth. You are also nomiracle worker,

but you do understand spaceship engines pretty well. There is nothing in space that you haven't seen at least once.

You would like to provide for your retirement. You are a little desperate, though you would not do anything totally unethical. You have your pension, so something that will almost certainly get you put on a prison asteroid is not worth doing.

# Space Operetta

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## Engineer Tracey Cogan

You have a little bit of an edge. Which is good because if you didn't you would be a dead person now, and you might still be soon. You are a murderer and a criminal, though considering how you have been treated, you aren't sure you can be blamed for either.

Your service records indicate that you were born on Formalhaut XIII, before the war. But you weren't. You were born in 2225, on a world called New Haven.

In the eighth decade of the previous century, the colonial freighter *Waratah*, bound for Formalhaut-XII from Earth, suffered an engine failure and meltdown. Seven hundred passengers and crewmen survived adrift for a year, before the vessel was able to make planetfall on a small moon in an uninhabited star system near what would later be the border between human and Yorr space, though the Yorr were unknown at the time.

The colonists named the desolate world *New Haven*, and cannibalized the damaged freighter in order to build a capital. Over the next half century or so, the colonists eked out an existence, and multiplied, so that in '28 there were nearly seven thousand inhabitants of *New Haven*.

The inhabitants of *New Haven* might have multiplied more quickly, but they were fraught with many still-births. The reactor meltdown aboard the *Waratah* had genetically damaged the colonists, and many died of cancer.

Strangely, though, their children did not. The second-generation colonists did not suffer from a high rate of still-births...in fact infant mortality was

near zero. Also, disease vanished. Initially this was put down to the fact that the radiation from the reactor meltdown killed most Terran microorganisms, and *New Haven* had few life-forms. But research by the few surviving doctors indicated that this was simply not the case.

Then the third generation was born. Not only did they have the immunity of the first and second generations, but they also began to exhibit strange psychic powers. Telekinesis. Telepathy. Some members of the fourth generation could start fires, and others could hypnotize their parents at a glance.

There were problems among the fourth generation children, there is no doubt, and the colony was ravaged by terrible strife similar to that which must have happened among the *Bounty* mutineers on Pitcairn Island.

Nevertheless, calmer minds prevailed, and by the time that the UPC starship *Zagreb* arrived thirty-four years ago, everything was back to normal. Fifth generation children...of which you were one of the last, exhibited signs of possible powers beyond even the fourth generation, but there was no particular concern.

For a few years, everything went smoothly. You were born during this period. Unfortunately beginning the year after the discovery of *New Haven*, the UPC went into a severe economic freefall. Despite a set of treaties with the UPC, the world was repeatedly raided by both pirates, and unscrupulous traders. Human traders were bad enough, but the Vergosi were worse. Finally, a group of partisans acted independently to end this problem.

They attacked the UPC Consulate on the nearby Vergosi world of Obelidorada. The idea was that this would focus the attention on the plight of the *New Haven* settlers, and force the UPC to take action. Unfortunately, the raid was poorly planned and carried out. Several of the raiders were pyrokinetic, and they set the embassy on fire, killing hundreds.

The UPC sent the starship *UPC Atreius* to New Haven, to impose a quarantine, and an occupation. The planetary government sent a delegation aboard the starship to discuss terms. No one, to this day knows what happened. The UPC tried to arrest the delegates. The *Atreius* exploded.

Most of the citizens knew what was coming next. Your father was one of seven Marshals in the small force that passed for a planetary militia.

He was given a small titanium box, and took you, your mother, and your sibling to a remote maintenance building, where a small shuttlecraft had been hidden. The Planetary Government had purchased two or three secondhand shuttles in the first two years of contact, and this was one of them.

You don't remember much. You were only seven, after all. The ship took off, and your father flew to Formalhaut. You lived on Formalhaut for about two years. Your father gave you and your sibling Adrian each an object from the box he had taken away. You received a small grey cylinder, with strange engraving on it. Your older sibling was given a strange, round, white object.

The war on New Haven was short and brutal. Somehow, the defenders got lucky. They managed to take out the lead UPC Cruiser. There had been talk of occupation, but that turned out not to be the case. Captain (now Admiral) Chin dropped eight hydrogen bombs on the colony, and killed every living thing on the planet.

The other refugees were not much luckier. The crew of the *Yosemite* murdered all the refugees aboard their vessel, and the Vergosi authorities on Obelidonada managed to purge most of the refugees that passed through that world. Overall, probably not more than two or three hundred people made it off New Haven alive.

Throughout the thirties, the UPC kept an internment camp on an airless asteroid orbiting

Kapteyn's Star, only a few million miles from R5433, the UPC Maximum Security Prison. Your father was captured and sent there. Your mother fled the planet with your sibling. Eventually, she arranged for you and your sibling to be left at an orphanage. She promised that she would come back to get you when she had gotten false ID, but she never did. Probably she was killed or sent to the camp.

You were "adopted" by a man who turned out to be a thief, and you spent five years as part of a children's gang on Algol V. You don't know what happened to your sibling. You lost touch.

When the war broke out, you joined up. The pay for being in the Fleet was better than being a petty criminal. The fact is you planned to go straight. That didn't work out too well.

Instead you ended up as a criminal. You needed the money to maintain an expensive string of forged documents, to keep anyone from finding out who you were.

It started small. You were stationed on Skoda, a world near the Yorr border. A Vergosi supply sergeant named Tondiosaro Pah hired you to steal things, and smuggle a little bit. Some of the jobs were easy. One sticks in your mind. You were hired to steal a big diamond. The funny thing is, it must have been made by the same people who made the object your father gave you. Vergosi, presumably. The diamond glowed, and characters in the same language that is engraved on the object you have, showed up.

You turned the diamond over to Pah. It wasn't like you could afford to hold out.

After the war, you did a lot of smuggling. You aren't a bad person, though you really don't care about the law. The UPC killed everyone on your planet...you have no reason to obey their laws.

You always seemed to have a bit of an edge at sneaking around. Unfortunately, you aren't ace at business. The Vergosi mafia found out that you



didn't have UPC papers, and began to blackmail you.

In particular, Sofaranza Bek began to manipulate you. First it was running smuggling missions. Then it became murder. A few weeks ago, Bek hired you to kill the Supercargo of a little freighter called the *Argolid Merchant*. "Hired" isn't quite the right word, because you weren't given any real choice about doing the job. It was messy and you hated it, though you were successful.

### **Summary**

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- You have the best interests of the UPC at heart. You don't think two wrongs make a right.
- You really have problems dealing with Terry Chin. Nations really can't be blamed for historic mistakes...but Chin pulled the trigger.
- There have been occasional muttering about setting up a New Havenite Homeworld. If an important man like Ambassador Hagen were to support such an idea, it might have a chance.

# Space Operetta

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Dr. Francis Duran

*"Don't believe the church and state, and everything they tell you..."*

**- Mike Rutherford**

You are Dr. Francis Duran, Professor of Offworld Archaeology at UUCP - Epsilon Eridani IX.

You have led a long and starry career as one of the foremost exobiologists in the Galaxy. You don't intend to let anyone or anything interfere with that.

You have been called a thief by some, but that isn't true. You have certainly used forceful methods to take back the artifacts that you desired, but you have always turned them over to the UPC Government.

You were born on Planaria, and were a young child when the Yorr wars broke out. Your family was wealthy and you had the benefit of an excellent education and everything that money could buy.

You went to the University of the United Councils of Planets (UUCP) on Epsilon Eridani IX, where you were a varsity Variable Gravity Lasercrosse™ star. You had the respect, and lustful affections of the opposite sex. You had a really cool aircar.

You turned your back on the life of a rich dilettante though, to play a more dangerous game. You set off to explore the jungles of strange and forbidden planets, and recover artifacts for the enrichment of mankind, and your personal fame. You care nothing for wealth, or power. You were born with both. What you desire is fame.

Unfortunately, your wishes were curbed early on by the UPC Government. You are a very loyal citizen of the UPC, though you don't approve of the liberal bent of the last few Galactic Presidents. Still, for you it is "the UPC right or wrong," and "humans first."

You have spent a lot of your time dealing with the Vergosi. If you hadn't, you might respect them more. Alas that isn't the case. They are crooked beyond help...of all the races only the Alsarii with their strange (and often decadently exciting) arts interest you. You are never sure quite which of them you can carry on carnal relations with...but you find yourself strangely attracted to their race.

The first big break in your career came when you were landed on New Haven, just after the bizarre incident there.

The incident itself bears explaining:

In the closing years of the last century, a colony was founded on a bleak world called New Haven by survivors of a shipwreck. Strangely, the survivors turned out to have bizarre psychic powers. Originally they thought this might be due to radiation from the accident that destroyed their starship, but you know better.

New Haven did not fair well after its re-discovery by the UPC. Beginning the year after the discovery of New Haven, the terrible depression of 2229 set in.

Despite a set of treaties with the UPC, New Haven was repeatedly raided by both pirates, and unscrupulous traders. Human traders were bad enough, but the Vergosi were worse. The UPC fleet tried to protect colonies against raiding, but with the depression, there were pirates and raiders everywhere, as captains who couldn't pay for the mortgage on their starships turned pirate rather than surrender them to a Vergosi bank.

The mutants of New Haven didn't understand the problems of the UPC. They were poor and poorly educated. A group of New Haven

partisans attacked the UPC Consulate on the nearby Vergosi world of Obelidonada. The idea was that this would focus the attention on the plight of the New Haven settlers, and force the UPC to take action. Unfortunately, the raid was poorly planned and carried out. Several of the raiders were pyrokinetic, and they set the embassy on fire, killing hundreds.

The UPC sent the starship *UPC Atreius* to New Haven, to impose a quarantine, and establish a UPC government to protect the settlers. The planetary government sent a delegation aboard the starship to discuss terms. No one, to this day knows what happened. The governors claimed that the UPC tried to arrest the delegates. The UPC media claimed that the delegates were sent aboard as a "trojan horse." At any rate, the *Atreius* exploded.

Two further ships were sent to investigate. The first vanished, and the second, *UPC Aurora*, found everyone gone from the planet. The UPC had searched for wreckage from the missing ship *Challenger*, but there wasn't any. Nor was there anyone on the planet.

Teams searched for days. That is when you were sent in. The Bureau for Interstellar and Galactic Offworld Trade Security (BIGOTS) discovered alien ruins on New Haven, and needed your help.

Then BIGOTS stepped in. Humans were already terrified of the New Haven mutants. Any rumors that they had survived and vanished would promote panic, and the depression had the UPC dangerously close to governmental collapse. The story that was agreed on was that the Colonists had destroyed the *Challenger* by a ruse, and that *Aurora* had been attacked, forcing the ship to bomb the planet.

You were given a very limited period of time to study the ruins. Then BIGOTS ordered a series of hydrogen bombs dropped on the planet, and classified all papers related to the matter. Even

after all of these years, you are obligated not to speak of the New Haven ruins.

Scholars had only suspected the existence of the ancient Volckon race for a year or so. The ruins were empty, but seemed to have formed the foundation for the New Haven settlement. Whatever strange powers the New Havenites possessed, they may have been linked to the Volckon race. And the disappearance of the colony may have been linked to the Volckon as well.

The New Haven settlement disappeared in 2231. You had a head start on other scholars, because BIGOTS managed to suppress any knowledge of the Volckon civilization until the mid-thirties. By that time it was becoming obvious that there was once a powerful civilization in the area that is now the frontier between the Yorr and UPC spheres.

By that time you were getting BIGOTS to pay you back for your services. With leads from UPC intelligence, you were tracking down artifacts lost for centuries. You towed the Pioneer 11 satellite into orbit around Epsilon Eridani II.

As the Retull incursions began in 38, you were on the scene. From 38 to 42 were the most exciting years of your life as you rescued important artifacts from the encroachment of the Retull. Sometimes you slipped onto Retull infested worlds to rescue damaged artifacts before the Retull destroyed them in their bizarre hive colonization.

You rescued Leonardo's Mona Lisa, the Sun masters pressings of the Presley records, the Warhol Maos, and the Star of India. All now reside in the touring collection of the Thornton Museum of UUPC-Epsilon Eridani II.

When the war ended you returned to the study of the Volckon. You learned that a military pilot named Cedras had discovered a crystal during the war that may have been a Volckon computer core. The crystal was stolen, and Cedras later

went on to become a rival of yours, one of the few other widely recognized authorities on the Volckon.

Of course Cedras doesn't know all that much. Without access to the New Haven inscriptions, Cedras could never learn to read the ancient Volckon script, which you know. It was simple when you realized that nine out of ten inscriptions or records dealt with a complex debt situation. You have a theory that the Volckon race was wiped out by a terrible economic depression, though how that resulted in their disappearance is conjectural.

Recently you have learned through your Vergos contact Honigoraza Fak that the Cygnus crystal is up for sale. It is supposed to be offered secretly at the diplomatic conference on Tau-Centauri Prime.

This isn't just a dead issue either. Extensive research on the fragments of the disabled starship that brought the colonists to New Haven indicated that the ship could not have caused the genetic mutations that occurred among the settlers. There were signs, as well, that the settlers had discovered some artifacts, and attempted to burn records of them before they vanished.

Either the artifacts destroyed the colony, or somehow allowed them to escape. Either possibility is chilling. For the average joe on the street to know such a thing could induce panic, and for an alien race, especially the Yorr, to capture such a device would be dreadful beyond belief. You hope to contact BIGOTS and let them know of the risk.

### **Summary**

- You are interested in historical facts and artifacts, particularly Volckon artifacts.
- You have a reasonably large amount of money to pay for artifacts.

- You want to know more about the Volckon, and about how they affected the New Haven colonists.

- The ancient Volckon artifacts from New Haven...indeed any ancient Volckon artifacts...could represent a menace to the human race.

# Space Operetta

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## Navigator/Helmsman Dana DeValan

*"I can program a computer - plan the perfect crime - If you've got the inclination, I've got the time..."*

- Pet Shop Boys

"Helm do this...helm do that...helm make me a bloody pot of coffee."

The fact is that you are sick of it. But you put up with everything, with Captain Murano's stupid pet peeves, and with Seletti's idiotic slug-stories. You put up with it because one day, you are going to be rich.

You can spend forty years as a Star-Captain, and never make a damn dime. That's what you heard from the folks that you used to hang out with at the outskirts of the shipyards.

You grew up a poor kid on New Detroit, a toxin-filled scumsump of a world where they build spaceships. Your mother and father were laser welders, until your father lost an arm in a shipyard accident and got moved to an office position. New Detroit was a scum-pit. New Detroit gave the universe Plastizene, one of the weapons that was used to destroy the Retull. Plastizene takes advantage of the fact that hydrocarbons, used to make plastics, are organic. It is a living substance, similar to a virus, with an incredibly simple RNA structure. Its principle property is that it is an incredibly effective mutagen. Even superficial contact causes immediate mutagenic action in most organized DNA. The Retull were fairly vulnerable to mutagens, since they apparently have an encoded tendency to destroy any member of their race which is not genetically identical to all the others. Of course the stuff is deadly to humans too, and millions of tons of it were manufactured on New Detroit after the war,

and as far as you know, are still buried there, in the old shipyards. Occasionally you would run afoul of some rats that had gotten into a leak. They were mighty strange, and best killed without contact.

The war years were pretty good, even so. But after the war things got kind of ugly. The big shipyards that had churned out the cruisers, fighters and merchantmen that fought the Retull wars were suddenly silent. Orders for new ships slammed to a halt as thousands of warships were remaindered, or auctioned off. There were riots, closings. The big ferroceramic recycling plants all stopped operation, and the plastic rendering centers were stripped to one quarter staff. Everyone was unemployed, and it was hard to live on your father's meagre disability pension.

On this world, you became a teenager. You realized right away that nobody was going to look out for Dana other than Dana. You hung with a gang of kids from your 'plex, and looked for ways to have fun that didn't take much money. First it was etching nasty words onto aircars with a laser. Then it was beating up kids from the arcology for their creddisks. Then it was using a welding laser to knock over a video store.

You learned more about crime before you were sixteen than a lot of kids learn in a lifetime. New Detroit was quickly becoming a world of gangsters and criminals. The year you turned eighteen a gangster ticket got elected to the Presidency, and the First World Gang-war broke out. Eventually UPC troops under orders from the Vergosi Mafia sat down and "pacified" the planet. You've never forgiven them for that, because they shot your mother and father. Seems they were on the Vergosi Mafia's "hit list" because your when your father was a mouse-pusher for the shipyards back during the war, he had refused to buy substandard Titanium alloy from a crooked Vergosi contractor.

You can forgive the UPC troops that did the shooting. They were just poor schmucks who didn't even know that the whole thing was being

run by the Vergosi Mob. It did prove to you though, that the UPC isn't any better than any other government. Just more pretentious. Eventually the UPC Senate heard there was "mob involvement" in the pacification of New Detroit, but it got swept under the carpet.

In fact, the pacification was masterminded by Admiral Terry Chin, a war-hero, with designs on a UPC Senate Seat. The same Terry Chin who is currently a passenger aboard the *SS Copernicus*. It was for The admiral's benefit that it got swept under the carpet, and some days you'd like to ask whether Chin knew about the Vergosi Mafia...probably.

But revenge is for amateurs, sweet as it would be. And Dana DeValan is no amateur. When Mara Trey, one of your fellow gangsters got caught for breaking into a software database and was sentenced to death in the state's microwave chamber, you realized that it was time for you to find a more profitable business than petty theft. You felt bad about Trey taking the rap. It could have been you. You wouldn't have traded places though.

You were pretty good with computers. On a colonial world, you probably wouldn't even have known what a computer was, but on New Detroit, everything was computerized, and when your gang wasn't out vandalizing, it was hacking the seals on the public food dispensers, or some other penny-ante crime. When you were sixteen you used an ancient CyberEdge 1190/Sx running Windows 456.3 to hack into the Government Operated Delta Shipyard's payroll system, and issue your entire gang paychecks. The checks were cashed at a liquor store before anyone caught on.

Putting your skills to good use, you broke into the Port Authority access system, and got a passkey, then stowed away on a cargo scow. They caught you, and dumped you on the world of Utopia. Compared to New Detroit, Utopia was a paradise. More critically, crime was pretty uncommon on Utopia. You spent a few months

learning the ropes, and then ran a phony interplanetary credit scam. On the Vergosi world of Gavison, you purchased a sophisticated mental implant which allowed you to access data-chips, which you could plug into your head. You bought a navigational program, and shipped out before your credit-scheme caught up with you. It was the sort of scheme they would catch in a minute now, but back just after the war, it was pretty common.

On another world, you got phony Navigator's Guild papers drawn up. Then, with your navigational chip, and your papers, you signed aboard a merchant vessel.

To a certain extent, that was the end of the story. A Skipper can go broke, but Navigators never do. They pull down the same pay as a First Officer, and they have nothing invested. If a ship goes broke, they just walk away and find a new billet.

The problem is, eventually, you will get busted. You've been a "Navigator" now for better than seven years. But eventually, something will go wrong. You'll end up with a crooked Captain who gets caught, or a ship that faces a Board of Inquiry. And someone will check the credentials of all the crewmembers. Then you'll be out of a job, and you might even end up doing time in an iso-cube.

Not a fun idea. You have a better one. You have put your criminal knowledge to use and you have doubled as a smuggler. It is easy to make contacts in the shipyards, and best not to know who you are working for. The best ship to smuggle on is one where the Captain knows his ship is clean. He'll convince the Port Master. Then you quietly offload your cargo in the depths of the night and....

This most recent trip has been interesting. You smuggled a container of Powdered Procoyon Mai-Tai Mix, a powerful contraband hallucinogen, aboard. Your orders (always obtained through some underling intermediary) indicated that the *Copernicus* would pick up a distress call, and

bring an empty life-pod aboard. When this occurred, you were to drop a spare pod that you had loaded, which had the Mai-Tai mix onboard. You never know who you are smuggling for of course...the damn Vergosi Mafia probably. Your contact uses the name "Quasar."

Problem is, you checked the pod earlier, and someone had removed the Mai-Tai mix. Damn. It has to be someone on the ship. If it was the Captain, you'd know about it by now.

You also noticed that someone had tampered with the controls for the cargo airlock. Apparently someone else wanted to install an override. You can activate the lock from the bridge, so you have no reason to do this...strange. Whoever did this probably wasn't part of the bridge crew.

You've set the ship to home in on the distress beacon automatically. Since the beacon is on a pod, you won't need to maneuver - just come alongside and grab it.

### **Summary**

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- You don't really give a damn about your job, though you don't want to have an accident. You depend on the software you keep loaded in your brain.
- You need to find the damn Mai-Tai mix, and launch it in the pod before the ship returns to warp after picking up the pod that is transmitting a distress beacon.
- You recognize your underworld contacts by the recognition phrase "Quasar."

# Space Operetta

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## Honigoraza Fak

*"Let's begin I am ready, let's begin,  
Sell my soul to him..."*

You were hatched on Hullizara, one of the oldest worlds "colonized" by the Vergosi.

Early on, during your schooling, you acquired a reputation with your teachers as a cheat, scam artist, and general troublemaker. You ripped off your classmates running a phony numbers racket, paying out just enough in prize money to keep them coming over to your corner during recess. You forged cafeteria meal tickets with expertise. You bought the answers to examinations in mathematics and geography.

Eventually your career was brought to a halt after you broke into the school computer library and began blackmailing the administrators over irregularities in their medical histories.

The scam was brought to the attention of the schoolmaster, and it was decided that you should be sent to a school for gifted and talented students. There you were a bit more challenged. You learned the intricacies of business and bluff, of chance and customer service, and in general how to make a killing doing anything.

In your senior year, you went to career night, and any number of organizations gave you a hard pitch. You toyed with the idea of the Vergosi Mafia. The Mafia recruiter assured you that there was an opening for someone with your skills, but you were hesitant. The Vergosi Mafia is very prestigious, and every Vergosi hatchling grows up hearing stories about organized crime, and wanting to be a great gangster. But the penalties for failure can be severe. Like going EVA in a flesh environment suit.

You decided to become a private trader. You didn't want to borrow money from the mafia because you knew they would keep you working as a smuggler forever. Instead you headed out into human space.

The Retull War had just broken out, and there were plenty of humans ready to scavenge and profiteer off the war effort.

The Vergosi had agreed for the duration of the war to offer *discounts* to the military, and agreed to a 1% per annum price increase until the war ended. There was a similar 10% ceiling on graft. There were few opportunities. Humans however, were under no such constraints...man Vergosi found human partners.

During the war, you developed extensive trade connections with both the Yorr and the Alsarii. This is very unusual, but the Alsarii used you to deliver weapons information to the Yorr. The Alsarii preferred in some cases to balance the UPC and the Yorr against one another. You also spied on the Yorr for the Alsarii, working principally for Ambassador Sal'gharii.

While you were making deliveries to the Yorr on the border world of Skoda, you ran across an interesting artifact. It had been turned up by a small time operator named Tondisiaro Pah. The object was a carbon crystal of incredible size, with unknown characters on it. You bought the crystal from Pah, and began to research the matter, and found out some incredible things about your own race's history.

The Vergosi have had starship travel for a long time. For about seven thousand years. The problem is that the Vergosi breed slowly, and have little interest in establishing permanent colonies. For seven millennia, the Vergosi have traded back and forth across the galaxy.

When they first explored space, the Vergosi found a thriving, advanced civilization called the Volckon. The Vergosi found that the Volckon



were a perfect civilization. They were peaceful, lived in harmony, and were very honest.

So the ancient Vergosi made deals with the Volckon. They gained knowledge, and with that knowledge came power. The Volckon were resource poor. They wanted resources that the Vergosi could provide them with. And soon they discovered that they needed dozens of other things that the Vergosi could provide...drugs, and powerful liquors like Dghinnin-Tahnagz, and stimulants like J'hlava.

Within a few centuries, the Volckon were very much in debt to the Vergosi. For a while, they tried very hard to pay up. But they had allowed the Vergosi to set ruinous interest rates.

The Volckon stripped their cities. They sold everything to the Vergosi to pay off their debt, then when they found they needed it, they had to lease it back. The situation got worse.

Then the Vergosi heard rumors that the Volckon were genetically engineering a warrior race to stamp out the Vergosi. So they decided to give the Volckon some terms. They allowed the Volckon race to opt for a payoff plan. Interest was frozen, and the Volckon would be allowed to pay off the entire outstanding amount in one lump sum. The ancient Vergosi considered that this was unlikely, since the lump sum was more than a thousand times the remaining worth of all Volckon property. They figured it was merely giving the suckers a break, before starting a new cycle of debt.

Instead, the Volckon delivered every single thing their race possessed to the Vergosi, and demanded credit for it. The sum was considerable, but it was nothing beside the sum total of the Volckon debt.

Then the Volckon deposited the amount in an interest bearing account at a Vergosi bank. And vanished forever, leaving only empty shells of cities.

Of course, over the past seven thousand years the Volckon account has made enough interest to pay back their debt to your race. A staggering amount of cash. The problem is that it requires a Volckon who has the bank draft to redeem the account. Vergosi banking laws are sacred...the root of the race, forged twelve thousand years ago, when the Vergosi first stopped running from giant toothy predators. No bank draft, no redemption. If one had the bank draft, they could easily open the account and take all the funds. Especially since it is unlikely that the deed which gives claim to a large portion of the accounts still exists.

Knowledge of the Volckon is a secret of course. Vergosi schools don't teach much history, and it would be bad form to let a race as lucrative as the humans know how the Volckons got out of perpetual indebtedness. It wasn't easy for even you to find out about the Volckon, but some money in the right places told you all you wanted to know.

The crystal was Volckon of course. You established that it was not the Bank Draft, and decided to wait and see what transpired. From time to time you heard through Pah that someone or other was looking for the crystal. Dr. Cedras at UUCP Algol V. Dr. Francis Duran.

You have paid some attention to Dr. Cedras. You learned through observing him that he is the one from who Pah had the crystal stolen, and that it originally came from Cygnus II. When Cedras wanted to lead a secret expedition across the Yorr frontier to that interdicted world, you used your pull with the Yorr to allow him to slip through and furnished him with a ship. For a very handsome price of course.

As for the crystal, you held onto it. You were doing fairly, well and decided that it would only increase in value. You also hoped that you would eventually be able to read the characters, and learn the secret of the Bank Draft. If you can get the Draft, and insure that the Deed is lost, you

will be fabulously wealthy even by Vergosi standards.

You recently heard rumors of new offers for the crystal. You decided to put it on the market. You are actually less interested in selling than in seeing if your offer draws out the holder of the Draft and allows you to buy or steal it.

Over the past eighteen years since the war, you have largely kept up the same business. You have a small group of freighter captains who run smuggling operations for you, usually subcontracted through the mafia. You pay off the mafia regularly and are on good terms with them. The mob uses you as a go-between with freighter Captains like Carol Cicco of the freighter *Argolid Merchant*.

Recently, Soforanza Bek of the Mafia has assigned you to some pretty unusual runs. First there was a high priority re-route to Alsar, the Alsari homeworld, to pick up a seemingly innocuous cargo and some passengers. Now he has had you send *Argolid Merchant* on a secret smuggling expedition to deliver some sort of weapons plans to a point in deep space.

You have not told Captain Cicco what he will be carrying, merely that your man on the *Copernicus*, Navigator DeValan, will be dropping a container in an escape pod, and a passing ship will drop a shipment of contraband from Bek Hallucinogenic Powdered Procoyon Mai-Tai Mix. The deal was lucrative. A big payment for the weapon drop, and a share of the profit on the Mai-Tai Mix.

You have to wonder if there was some other reason for Bek re-routing the *Merchant* to Alsar. Could he have hired another member of the crew to do something illegal, avoiding the very heavy surcharge for smuggling out of the Alsari homeworld. If so, you will take him to task, because that is no way for a respected mafioso to do business.

Your personal reason for being on this trip is of course rather base. From time to time the Alsarii government pays you to pass messages along to their spies among the Yorr. In particular to Borru, a spy in the Imperial Forces.

The Alsarii are sending you to a diplomatic conference on Tau-Centauri Prime, to act as a go-between to take messages between Borru, and their representative, so that the two of them would not be seen talking together. It is an easy enough job. The Yorr don't hate the Vergosi as much as they hate everyone else.

You decided to ride along on *Argolid Merchant*. The ship is free and you can keep a close eye on Captain Cicco.

### Summary

- You want to find out everything possible about the ancient Volckon, without letting anyone know why you are interested.
- If you could read the inscriptions on the crystal they might tell you much about the disposition of the Draft.
- You cannot let the humans know what the Vergosi did to the Volckons. If you did the Vergosi mob would probably kill you.
- Run messages between the Alsarii delegation, and their spy, Borru, as frequently as possible.
- Find out why Soforanza Bek had you re-route *Argolid Merchant* to the Alsarii homeworld for no apparent reason.
- *Copernicus* is carrying illicit Mai-Tai mix. Bek's agent will eject this in a pod, for retrieval by Captain Cicco of *Argolid Merchant*. You'd like to know who Bek's agent is.

# Space Operetta

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## Lindsey Galvin

*"There are times, when my crimes, may seem almost unforgivable..."*

- Depeche Mode

You never planned to be a criminal. It just happened that way. You were born on Nova Columbia, a colony settled from Old Earth.

You had every advantage. You had an upper class background, being descended from original Earth settler stock, instead of one of the waves of immigrants that swept the world during the last century.

You went to the finest educational camps. You were raised by a competent childcare professional (commonly called a "nanny.") Your parents spent one day a week of "quality time" with you, usually taking you to a museum or symphony.

You were a little young to fight in the war against the Retull, and anyway, you know perfectly well that Daddy would have gotten your draft status deferred.

The problem is that starting in your early teens you became a troublemaker. You were sent from one educational institution to another. You used drugs and alcohol, you broke windows, you defaced property, cheated, and stole.

It just seemed like fun at the time. Your parents would be very upset at first, then you would use guilt on them, and they would give you whatever you wanted. On your sixteenth birthday they gave you a new Behmer Aircar, which you trashed at 25,000 feet, wasted out of your mind.

That was the last straw. Your mother was horrified, but your father was implacable. He packed you off to the Thule Military Academy on Thoth VII. You were horrified. The discipline was strict, and the academy swore that it would make you into a disciplined individual.

After your first semester though, you found out how to get around the rules. Most of the kids here were hardcases...some experienced criminals. For the first time breaking the rules was not just fun - it was a serious high-stakes area of study. You did buckle down and learn. But not what your parents wanted.

You returned to New Colombia, and immediately landed in trouble for electronic theft and forgery. You had one hell of a vacation though.

You had a choice. Jail or the UPC Fleet. You hit the recruiter's office that afternoon. Within a week you were offplanet.

In space you felt like you had found the soft white underbelly of the Universe. There was a certain level of corruption which was tolerated in the fleet. This was in the years just after the great war when there was a surplus of everything. You began to make contacts in the Vergosi Mafia. Of course you managed to get transferred into supply.

You served out your four years illegally selling military junk to the Vergosi, who would mark the price up and resell it to commercial users. For all you know one of the pieces of junk you passed out of service was *Argolid Merchant*, the ship you are now serving on.

You left the Fleet, and commissioned yourself out a fine merchant ship, nearly brand new. You sold it to yourself through a Vergosi dummy corporation.

For several years you were your own Captain, and you made good money smuggling. Not great money. The Vergosi Mafia always tried to keep you pinned so that you were just a little strapped

for cash. And you were always looking to operate on your own.

Finally, you had the perfect deal. A smuggling run to Deneb III that the Vergosi Mob knew nothing about. Set up by private contractors that were new, inexperienced, who had no Mob connections.

You should have guessed. The "inexperienced" new contractors were UPC Fleet Officers. Your vessel was confiscated in a sting operation, and you were slapped with a fine that cleaned out your bank accounts. You've always suspected that the Vergosi Mob sold you out because you were too good. But of course there is no way of knowing. You felt bad. Several of the crew were convicts on the lam, and got sent back to the big house for that...the UPC Maximum Security Penitentiary, an airless asteroid orbiting Kapteyn's Star.

You began signing on to Merchantmen as an officer. You tried to get a Supercargo position, and you would arrange for a little smuggling on the side. Even if the Captain was already running contraband, you would load a little extra on for your own personal profit.

You got a pretty good reputation for being able to obtain difficult to come by military secrets. You are real good at circumventing locks. Maybe as fast as a native Vergosi. You kind of wish you could get out of the trade now, but you are caught up in it, and anyway, the money allows you to live the fashion you are accustomed to.

Your contact name is "Black Hole." You communicate with your Vergosi Mob contact "Pulsar," through a transmitter implanted in your brain. It is almost undetectable, but it broadcasts directly into your speech centers. You are pretty sure that the range is limited to few hundred thousand miles. Sometimes there is two way communication, and sometimes there is just a message that repeats several times. You suspect that this means that "Pulsar" is using a remote

transmitter. The Vergosi like to keep their hands clean.

A few months ago, your Vergosi Mob contact "Pulsar," offered you a deal. If you did a particularly dangerous operation for them, they would finance your purchase of a new ship. You'd still be strapped for cash, but at least you'd be your own boss again.

The job was simple, but not easy. You signed onto the *SS Argolid Merchant* Supercargo. The previous Supercargo had a really bad accident...you don't want to know if it was arranged by the Mob. Almost immediately, the *Merchant* called at Alsar, the Alsarii homeworld, you used the opportunity to steal some military technology, and smuggle it offworld. You passed it off to your mob contact, and that was the last you heard of it.

They told you to sit tight, and you are getting a little tired of it. You were promised financing for a ship, and the Vergosi Mob is usually pretty good about deals like that. God help you if you don't make the payments, but they keep their word if you keep yours. They told you they might need you for one final service, and promised they would make it worth your time.

Now the *Argolid Merchant* has had a dammed accident, and if someone doesn't show up soon, it may not matter, because this ship is toast.

### Summary

- Your ship is badly damaged. You need to do whatever is necessary to safely evacuate, and make sure you stay alive.
- Your upbringing has made you a bit of a snob. Act accordingly. You are not common gangster. You are "Black Hole." Though of course you don't tell anyone that.

- Finding out who "Pulsar" really is would give you some considerable leverage in your negotiations.

# Space Operetta

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## Imperial Proconsular Liaison Garch

*"I will slaughter every inhabitant, and bathe you in their viscera"*

- popular Yorr love song

## You are a Warrior of the YORR IMPERIUM

You especially like the shouting bits...

But that's not the beginning.

You were born on the planet Varhaz, a deadly and terrible planet. Varhaz is one of the oldest worlds of the Imperium, and while most of its natural hazards were long ago annihilated by Yorr conquest, they have been supplanted by hazards like toxic waste, radioactive slag, and unexploded military equipment. Varhaz has been the centerpoint of several brutal struggles for the throne of the Imperium, and practically no world has taken more consistent beating, aside from the homeworld itself. All in all, it was an enjoyable place to grow up.

Sadly, there has been no great Civil War in nearly two centuries. Varhaz has grown fat and content. The blood sports, the bloodlicked horrors of secondary school, and the terrible gore-drenched thrills of dating were not enough for a young man to feel truly satisfied. You became a full warrior just a few weeks after the last actions against the pernicious Retull.

The Retull War was not the exciting anyway. Certainly it could have meant racial destruction and in the end it was rather enjoyable because it was genocidal. But the UPC had all their fancy weapons like Plastizene which killed the enemy in scores at great range. You respect the havoc they wreaked, but at the same time, it is somehow empty unless you get to see your

enemies twitch and die, or perish in a fiery maelstrom.

The Imperial Council was uncertain about the plan. If a civil war breaks out, then the annihilation of the Imperial family in battle is almost assured, and of course the Emperor is anxious to provide for himself and his relatives. However duty forbids the emperor to abuse the power by starting an unnecessary war *just* to ensure that he will die violently. However, the prospect of spending the rest of their lives locked into an incredibly destructive war was too much for the Council to resist, and they approved the Emperor's plan.

The Emperor then sent envoys to the Peripheral Barony of Ghas, ruled by Gadarr, his most hated enemy. It was generally agreed that the Barony of Ghas was not only most likely to succeed, but would be the most bloodthirsty and enjoyable opponent.

Over the next few months, Imperial Yorr strike ships conducted a set of limited raids on Ghas, mostly along the UPC border. By "coincidence" two human freighters were "accidentally" caught in the crossfire. The Imperium issued its usual aggressively frosty apologies. Ghas on the other hand expressed outrage, and offered compensation to the UPC.

Now the difficult diplomatic phase begins. You must push the UPC ambassador into making an irrevocable statement of support in front of the Ghas Representative. The UPC ambassador here has plenipotentiary powers, and if he makes a treaty with the Ghas Ambassador, then the war can begin at once.

It will be hard to resist bragging about the little surprise you have cooked up to begin things. Over a hundred Delta-Class strike-ships prepared to unleash nuclear death on the Ghas agricultural-world of Fordoz. And that isn't all. If you complete your negotiations with the Vergosi Trade Representative, you will be able to take possession of the Vergosi-designed micro-cobat

device. Packing enough power to wipe life clear of one side of a planet, the micro-cobalt device is small enough to be battlefield portable (not that the battlefield unit would survive...but what a way to go!) High velocity photon driven missiles carrying this device could be made so small, and so fast, that they could drive through a civilized planet's Strategic Defense Net, and reduce the occupants to a thin layer of superheated goo. There is one problem. The Vergosi all have confusing titles. And Yorr intelligence tends to use terms like "the smelly Vergosi," instead of keeping track of names. You don't know which Vergosi you are supposed to be negotiating with. You are not unaware that demanding a cobalt bomb from the wrong Vergosi could sabotage your efforts at pretending to be a peacemaker.

The Yorr Imperium is suspicious of Vergosi claims, and has demanded that one of the units be turned over for examination. Ideally the Vergosi would sell the plans, but that is unlikely, and the Yorr aren't aces at reverse-engineering. (Breaking things that cause frustration is a racial trait). If the sample works correctly, at least the Yorr will be able to buy a decent supply. It is important to get a contract signed right away. The Vergosi will be reluctant to sell after a war breaks out, and will certainly raise the price. Right now, they will sell one thousand warheads at 500,000 Credits per. A good deal. One thousand of these warheads could sterilize a lot of the galaxy. You grow excited just thinking about it.

You have been granted plenipotentiary powers for this diplomatic conference. You will have the honor of delivering the Yorr Declaration of War after the UPC agrees to side with Ghast. Death cannot be far away. Unfortunately, the Emperor has forbidden you to die until your task is done. You must hasten to complete it. To die in violation of Imperial Edict would dishonor your house unto the three hundred thousandth generation.

## Summary

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- You love war, destruction, and pain. You live to die.
- You want to goad the UPC into siding with your enemies. That way, there will be more of a challenge when you go to war.
- The UPC must believe that you are interested in a ...*peace*...negotiation, until you issue the Declaration of War.
- You need to get the sample warhead from the Vergosi. You need to find out *which* Vergosi you are supposed to collect from.



# Space Operetta

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## Special Fiscal Envoy Bonidaso Ged

*"He's got diplomatic immunity...he's got a lethal weapon that nobody sees."*

Warren Zevon - *The Envoy*

You hatched on the Human world of New Ventura, which has a significant Vergosi community and Trade Legation. Your egg-parent ran a small Casino, and made a few odd credits buying captured Retull artifacts from human and Yorr marines returning from the front, and selling them to desk jockeys at the Supply depot to take home as war souvenirs.

New Ventura was headquarters, and supply depot for the UPC 3rd Fleet. The Vergosi ran a technology and research center on New Ventura, and distributed supplies built by the impressive Vergosi manufacturing machine, or purchased from more distant human worlds, and imported by Vergosi merchants.

The technology center on New Ventura was very important. The most sophisticated Retull equipment was brought there. Even the Alsari were unable to figure it out, but the Vergosi have a racial knack for reverse engineering, born of millennia of practice. Within a few months, the Vergosi would have human factories subcontracted to churn out whatever sophisticated weapons were brought in, whether they understood them or not.

Your seminal parent (according to your egg parent) was a researcher at the secret base on the second moon of New Ventura. It was here that Retull biological weapons were dissected and reverse-engineered. It was here that Plastizere was developed, though the production was moved to New Detroit.

Your seminal parent was apparently killed very near the end of the war. A very complicated new Retull bioform had been captured and the exoskeleton was being examined. Apparently the Retull drone had stored its memory in a computer system, and revived, wreaking havoc, and slaughtering most of the base personnel in the process. You heard that after the war the base was shut down, and a cobalt bomb was set off just to make sure nothing had been missed.

You were educated at the Vergosi School on New Ventura, which was probably much more lax than most other Vergosi schools. Cheating was encouraged, but the mandatory classes were fairly thin, and there was a lot of pure technology and history that is glossed over in the schools back on the homeworlds.

In your senior year, you went to career night, and any number of organizations gave you a hard pitch. You toyed with the idea of the Vergosi Mafia.

The Mafia recruiter assessed your skills, and said they might be able to make an opening for someone with your skills, but you were hesitant. The Vergosi Mafia is very prestigious, and every Vergosi hatchling grows up hearing stories about organized crime, and wanting to be a great gangster. But the fact is your skills in that direction were pretty thin, and you had a feeling you would end up on the wrong end of a protein depolarizer.

A few major firms made halfhearted attempts to recruit you, but you weren't attracted to them. The fact is that your upbringing on New Ventura hadn't suited you to organized crime, and your life as the hatchling of a casino operator hadn't really prepared you for a technical career.

Eventually, you found your way to the little table where a few bored Government recruiters were sitting sipping J'ahva. They gave you a bored pitch, and you decided to go to work for the Reformed Government. They were sort of stunned.

So you began work as a Government Agent. It has allowed you much more freedom and flexibility than you normally would have.

And it is more lucrative than anyone realizes. While no Vergosi in their right mind would bother with a mere Government official unless they had to, offworlders have a very strong concept of government, and it is so rare to run into a Vergosi Government Officer that they will often bribe you out of hand, assuming that you are somewhat important.

The Government, such as it is, handles those services which are either too unprofitable for the commercial sector, or foreign affairs, where most of the Vergosi grudgingly agree it is necessary to present a unified front. The Government also makes some attempt to guarantee various standards which the Vergosi race has agreed on, in order to make commerce possible, such as weights and measures.

And of course...foreign relations. You have been assigned to the Vergosi Diplomatic Corps. Basically this is the organization that issues pro-forma apologies for whatever horrible acts Vergosi businessmen perform, and occasionally warns if any particular segment of Humanity or other race is getting restive. In addition, the Diplomatic Corps works to ensure the survival of the Vergosi race by ensuring any race that might want to fight the Vergosi is financially dependent on Vergosi banks, capital, and supplies.

The Yorr are a good example. Even the most bellicose Yorr will usually admit that the Yorr could not afford a war with the Vergosi. The Vergosi sold the Yorr most of their military hardware, and still understand it better than the Yorr. Yorr spacecraft have a habit of malfunctioning when they threaten the Vergosi.

One of your first assignments was abusing government power on behalf of the Mafia at New Detroit, immediately after the war ended. New Detroit was an industrial wasteland, which had been stripped and contaminated to the destruc-

point in order to furnish ships for the UPC Fleet during the height of the war.

Now, with the planetary economy in a post-war slump, the New Detroit crime bosses were shaping up into an effective force. A party was elected to the World Presidency on a Gangster platform, and the First World Gangwar broke out. It became clear that if the war continued, any clear winner would be able to seriously rival the Vergosi Mafia.

So the Mafia, the Vergosi Government, and suggested that the UPC be led to intervene. Soforonza Bek, a Mafia boss, met with you and worked up a plan. You convinced Admiral Terry Chin to advocate intervention. Chin was already an unabashed supporter of UPC military intervention, and with the promise of Vergosi financial support, the UPC Senate agreed to the intervention. So the Vergosi Mob used UPC soldiers to conduct a mass purge of all their enemies on New Detroit.

Eventually the whole thing was discovered. The Vergosi Mob sort of shrugged, and the Vergosi government gave empty apologies for the Mob involvement. Terry Chin took most of the blame.

That got your career jump started. Doing the Mob a favor, and making it work is a good way to win friends and influence people.

Right now you have been assigned to the thankless task of avoiding a pointless war. The Yorr Imperium is picking a fight with the Barony of Ghast. This is ridiculous, because calculating the exact balance of military equipment on either side (something the Vergosi know better than the Yorr, in all probability), Ghast presents no real threat to the Empire. It will be several centuries before Ghast gathers enough power to challenge the emperor.

Now normally, the Vergosi would let a war like this go. The traders could sell arms to both sides until their cash ran out, and then mortgage their

surviving property until they were left with slag and their underwear.

However, there is a strong feeling, bordering on conviction, that the UPC might be dragged into such a war. And that would create a very dangerous fluctuation of market conditions. It could even result in the bombardment, or destruction of Vergosi trade settlements.

The mission *should* be a pushover. Several years ago, the Vergosi arranged to sell UPC Ambassador Adrian Hagen a very advanced supercomputer implant called *MARIE*. The acronym stands for "Memory Architecture Recognition Interface Enhancer." Essentially, Marie is an onboard supercomputer that resides inside Hagen's skull. MARIE is similar to a standard data-implant, but actually incorporates a small AI processor.

You were given codes to activate MARIE by remote control. This should allow you to control Hagen's mind. The problem is that when you tried an experimental control last night, nothing seemed to happen. Hagen should have stood up, made a few trite comments, and gone to bed. Instead he wandered off aimlessly, and you aren't sure where he went, but it wasn't to bed.

You can give simple commands through MARIE...presuming she works.

If not, this mission could be a lot harder than you thought.

You are worried about the presence of Soforanza Bek. You suspect that Bek is a Vergosi Mafia contact. If so, you should do everything polite to assist...the Mafia is more powerful and influential than the Government. But you hope the Mob is not out to sour these negotiations.

Direct confrontation with the Mob will get you killed. If you have to work against them, you'll have to do it by underhanded half moves. It might help to find out what Bek is really about.

## Summary

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- You want to avert a war among the Yorr, and especially between the Yorr and the UPC.
- In general, you are as sane and decent as Vergosi come. But you are not willing to hear your race badly criticized, and you are avaricious.

# Space Operetta

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## Vice-Ambassador Adrian Hagen

*"We know just where we're going. But we don't know where we've been."*

- Talking Heads

Your career as an Ambassador started out a long time ago...so long that you can't remember. Which means it was definitely before this morning.

You don't remember what happened last night. In fact, you don't remember much of anything anymore. You keep yourself immersed in a constant fog of alcohol, drugs, and endorphins. Your position as an Ambassador allows you to maintain yourself, and purchase new organs when required.

You are a damn good ambassador. Of course you have a habit of referring to alien races by "cute" terms like "lizards" and "pointyears." But this has given you a reputation for a sort of "down-home" bluntness that is respected throughout the UPC bureaucracy.

You are an excellent author of compromise, as soon as you manage to cut through the bullshit, which your acerbic manners frequently accomplish almost as soon as you hit the door. You seem to have an almost innate ability to figure out what people really want, especially when you concentrate. Which is so hard. You manage to carve out diplomatic solutions, and avoid military confrontations. And you get laid pretty often, which is definitely a recommendation for your position.

You hate the military, though you don't quite remember why. Probably something in your past. You had your childhood and adolescence erased at an oblivion parlor on Delta-Vega VII one night,

and don't remember a thing before you were twenty three. You are certain there are horrible specters in your past and skeletons in your closet, probably enough to keep you from winning a seat in the UPC Senate. At any rate, you value free memory very highly. People without childhood memories live longer, have more fun. Come to think of it, didn't you have a seat in the UPC Senate once. Or maybe you were just there for a hearing...

You maintain an outward composure that is only occasionally broken by complete non-sequiturs and admissions of your complete failure to grasp certain concrete concepts. In fact, you would probably be a real wreck if it wasn't for *MARIE*. *MARIE* stands for Memory Architecture Recognition Interface Enhancer. Essentially, Marie is an onboard supercomputer that resides inside your skull. So, while you seldom have any idea what is going on in your personal life (including who...or what...you might be dating), you always have an excellent grasp of hardcore information concerning your assignments. This combination of an easygoing personal style, and hardcore factual knowledge, combined with your own instinctual abilities has got you where you are today. Wherever the hell that is.

Right now you are negotiating a treaty between two Yorr factions. Actually, you are supposed to negotiating a treaty between two Yorr factions. The fact is, you are drifting along, going through the motions of negotiating a treaty, while you wait to see when the other shoe is going to drop. You have never known the Yorr to forego a chance to fight each other voluntarily. They are up to something. Your instincts tell you this, and your instincts are never wrong.

Right now you are a little concerned about last night. Something happened. Something so bad that you drank 1.7 liters of Vergosi Black Hob liqueur, without a mixer. And popped at least seven "Nilstim" Brand tranquilizers. You found the wrappers in the shower this morning.

Now, your usual response to bad situations is to juice yourself into oblivion, but you usually either wait until your assignment is over, or leave a few notes in *MARIE* so that you can figure out what (or who) happened. In the meantime, it is very important to seem like you know everything already...especially in the arena of personal affairs.

That isn't the worst thing. The worst thing is that you found three rather odd items next to your bed. The first and most interesting was an Alsarii "art" magazine with highly pornographic content. How do they *do* that.

The second was a round metal disk, with indecipherable alien writing on it.

There was also a strange electronic device of Alsarii manufacture. It might be a weapon of some sort.

Finally, there was a gold plate, with some strange writing on it. You have never seen the language it is in before - it is not Alsarii or Vergosi according to *MARIE*.

This has you a trifle worried. How did these things get here. Did the Alsarii come into your cabin? Did you have sex with one of them? You'll hate yourself forever if you've forgotten *that!*

### **Summary**

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- You are here to negotiate a peace treaty between the Yorr Imperium and the Barony of Ghast
- Your advanced supercomputer, *MARIE*, will help you with technical details
- You wish someone could help you with other details. Like where the strange Alsarii items in your room came from.

# Space Operetta

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## Hagen

*"I am an animal...My teeth are sharp and my mouth is full, and my passion is so intense when I'm alone...no one else can tame me."*

- Pete Townshend

Your name is...Hagen...and you are here to find one of your parents..father or mother...you don't remember.

It was all much clearer once. You know! It is so hard to think now. Everything is submerged by sights and smells. You want to eat. Something warm. Something alive...

You are no longer what you once were...something has changed you. You understood once. The white fluid...you were afraid of it at first. You wonder why. You have lapped it from the seams where it is leaking from the yellow barrels. You were so thirsty...

There is a reason why you are here...you are..a human being. You must hold on. Must act like a human. You came on board...hiding. To find...your parent...why? You hate your parents. But also, you want to find them. Why?

You wish you could think straight. Could talk, make words, more easily....

You have a strange round white shiny thing. You know it is very important. People would kill you for it.

It is lucky for you that you found the pink stuff to eat. It was very good, but it makes you even more confused.

## Summary

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- You are a monstrous mutant, barely human. You have just enough control to know that you should not eat people, but you are terribly hungry, and you are also not very patient.
- You can talk a little, but you remember virtually nothing about your life. "Delta-Vega-Seven" is somehow important, but you don't remember how.

# Space Operetta

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## Dale Hagen

### Supplementary

It is becoming clearer now. You are the offspring of UPC Ambassador Adrian Hagen. You had a normal happy life living on Algol V. You were always a little different from the other kids. You seemed to have bizarre insights into things, and you were very smart.

Adrian did not talk much about your past, but did tell you that you were special. When you were twelve, Adrian gave you a round white sphere that had come from your grandfather. Adrian's sibling had been given another artifact, and Adrian believed the two of them had something in common. You had not known until then that your parent ever knew a father or sibling. Adrian Hagen was raised in an orphanage on Algol V. You still have the white sphere. You always thought it might protect you from danger.

Until the men came. You were going out on a date that evening. You had already dressed, and gotten the keys to the aircar. They showed you a holobadge that said they were with the UPC Government Bureau for Interstellar and Galactic Offworld Trade Security. You had severe misgivings, but you decided to go with them. When you are an ambassador's child, you often have to deal with strange things, and with security.

They loaded you into a white, unmarked, airvan. You were sitting in the back, and felt one of them move behind you. You whirled around to see that he was about to hit you with a shock stick. He moved and you...did something...with your mind. He crumpled to the floor, in agony. You turned around and told the driver to land the van, and that must have been when the woman shot you with the tranquilizer dart.

You don't know how long they kept you in the complex. It was somewhere, you think in a research facility at the University. You started a fire with your mind. They sedated you, and moved you to another facility, somewhere in orbit.

You had to get clever then. Your mind was constantly fogged with the drugs, but you learned what symptoms to fake to get them to cut the dosages. You pretended to be complacent.

Then you reached out and used your mind to cause the attendants pain. It was a strain, to do that to two of them. But you managed to get away. You had learned where the airlock was and you used your power on a shuttle pilot, and took his ship.

You had learned how to drive fast, and a shuttle isn't too much different from an aircar. You were chased back into the atmosphere, and drove the shuttle directly into downtown Algolsburg. Around the 144th street landings you ditched the car, and headed off on foot.

You couldn't use your credit card, and you tried to find one of your friends. When you did they caught you and used stunners on you. Next thing you knew you were in a cell on a spacecraft, somewhere offworld.

You have been a prisoner since then...for at least the past year or more. A few weeks ago, they made a mistake. They assigned a new guard to your cell, who apparently didn't know about your abilities. You used your ability to inflict pain, then made a break for it. This time, you wanted no alarms raised. You strangled the man, and left him in your bed.

That gave you the time to stow away aboard a supply ship. As far as you can tell, you were being held in an isolation cell on an asteroidal prison. Probably one of the UPC facilities around Kapteyn's Star. You were able to induce a slight headache in the guard that was responsible for the loading dock, and waited until he went over to get some painkiller, then dashed aboard. You still have the white sphere, the only thing you

were able to hide the entire time you were a prisoner.

They searched the ship for you twice, but you managed to find places no one would think of looking. Eventually, you got to an inhabited world, and switched ships. There you started looking for your father. Using a computer terminal in a deserted section of the ship, you could access public computer information without entering an ID code. NewsFax. You found that Adrian Hagen would be headed to a diplomatic conference on Tau Ceti Prime in the next few weeks.

As soon as your vessel landed, you made the rounds of the Spaceport bums, and found which ships were headed for Tau Ceti Prime. You stowed away aboard the *Copernicus*. Within the first few hours, you realized that the cargo hold you were in contained something hazardous. It wasn't until the white goo started leaking on you that you knew you were in big trouble though. You got very sick...you don't remember much other than that.

You were born human, and have always looked human. You have *no idea* why your body has settled into this rather bizarre shape....

*You are an alien - you have long limbs, a strangely beautiful white face, and a high domed forehead. You are no longer a monster, but you do not look human.*



# Space Operetta

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## Baronial Strike Commander Hagh

*"I've got a secret  
Hidden away  
I won't tell my secret  
On pain of torture, evisceration,  
and prolonged agonizing death."*

**- Yorr Nursery Rhyme**

You have a terribly conflicted interest. A lesser Yorr would die, but you have been chosen to be one with the *Brotherhood*, and you must have the strength to survive to pass the terrible shame of the Yorr race on to another generation. You must, because only the living knowledge of that shame may some day enable the Yorr race to avenge it.

You were born on the planet Gorr, a deadly and terrible planet. Gorr is one of the newest worlds under the iron dominion of the Baron of Ghas, which was settled as a challenge after the Vergosi proclaimed that no race could possibly settle there.

Life on Gorr is frequently deadly. Nearly every living organism is toxic, the atmosphere can be breathed only for a few seconds without a filter, and the jungles are filled with vast numbers of dangerous predators. Nevertheless, the Yorr carved out a colony on Gorr, and are well on their way to bringing about the extinction of several of the major predatory species. It is little conquests like this that affirm in your heart the values of Yorr civilization. You wish your heart were not so torn with secret knowledge.

In school you were taught the the example of Emperor Azgar the Genocidal. The Yorr homeworld once had an insect very much like the cockroach of Earth. The Emperor hated this insect, and vowed to destroy it. To do so, he

used horrible toxic chemicals that slew a quarter of the population, and caused nine out of ten newborns to be deformed. In order to preserve racial purity he had the deformed newborns burned. During his reign there was such massive resistance that two rebellions broke out that nearly destroyed his empire. Finally, he used a series of orbiting satellites which bombarded the planet with lethal radiation, and the insects, as well as about eighty percent of the Yorr, and most other remaining lifeforms, were destroyed. In the famine that followed the disruption of the ecosystem, millions more perished.

But what made Azgar such a great Emperor was not his defeat of a mere insect. It was his demonstration of the absolute power of the Yorr over their environment. He rendered the surface of the homeworld nearly lifeless, devoid of vegetation or animal life. A Godlike act. And in doing so he created an absolute necessity for new food sources, which led to the slave engineering camps and the "learn physics or be eaten!" program which produced the first Yorr starship. In destroying his homeworld, Azgar opened up the entire galaxy for ultimate destruction by the Yorr race.

This is what you were taught. But it is a lie. The Yorr have come a long way. But only the members of the *Brotherhood* know of their true origin.

Occasionally one wonders why there are starships mentioned in the legends before the time of Azgar. But to ask such a question is death. Usually one assumes that the legend was retold later, and that starships were added.

The truth is different. Thousands of years ago this section of the galaxy was inhabited by a race called the Volckon. The Volckon race were advanced and creative, and they created many things. Among them, the Yorr.

The secret tablets of the *Brotherhood* tell the entire story. But the shame is not that the Yorr were created by another race, though that is bad

enough. The shame is that the Yorr were created and kept as slaves and laborers.

Yorr do not serve willingly as slaves. To serve as a slave is a disgrace to the eightieth generation. And that is to be enslaved to another, more powerful, Yorr. To be enslaved to another race is simply unthinkable. And even worse, even if one were an absolute pragmatist with no sense of pride...if the knowledge of what the Yorr race was became public, how could the slaves be held in subjugation. If they knew that even the Emperor was descended from slaves. The Yorr way of death would perish.

The great leaders of the Yorr must never know the truth. How could they act as Barons and Emperors if they knew they were but slaves. The *Brotherhood* murdered all the Yorr alive who were of speaking age at the time that the Volckon went away, in order that no Yorr outside the *Brotherhood* would ever know the secret. To disclose the secret, except to swear a new member into the *Brotherhood*, is instant death. Such vengeance has never failed. And a member never knows when they are being watched.

Even the Yorr legends have been altered by the *Brotherhood*. The legend of Azgar was fabricated to explain why the Yorr homeworld is nearly lifeless. It was composed soon after the Yorr made contact with the Vergosi, and learned that sentient life did not usually evolve on lifeless worlds. Unfortunately, nothing is perfect, and occasionally there are references to starships in earlier legend fragments. Starships did become common when Azgar created forced labor camps to duplicate them, but they had existed for millenia. Probably they were Volckon ships, left behind when the Volckon vanished. At any rate, the Yorr were brought to their homeworld, but no life could have evolved there.

Each member carries a cipher copy of the *Brotherhood* tablet. It is your duty to destroy this tablet. The tablet is bound to each member through a sacred ritual. If you destroy the tablet, you must destroy yourself, if you fail to die

Likewise, if you die, you must destroy the tablet. This is so that, in primitive times, there would never be a member of the *Brotherhood* who did not have the true and accurate account, so that it could not become padded out with oral tradition until it seemed not so bad, and softened the Yorr race. The tradition is still absolutely binding today, though most of the *Brotherhood* agrees it is a bad idea. A committee was appointed ten years ago to study the problem, and found that the system should be changed. Unfortunately, they were unable to make any further recommendations, because they immediately killed each other for such a horrible breach of tradition.

The *Brotherhood* must maintain the knowledge of the Volckon for two reasons. One is that every trace of the Volckon race must be wiped out. The Second is that the tablet leaves no doubt that the Volckon will return. Unfortunately, it doesn't bother to say why they went away, either because the authors didn't know, or because they thought it was obvious.

You came to be a member of the *Brotherhood* in a strange way. During the Retull Wars, you were the commander of the *IYS Zardo*, a medium cruiser. Your ship picked up the crew of a wrecked allied human scoutship from Cygnus X-II. Cygnus is a pulsar, and all life on its second planet was wiped out when the star went supernova thousands of years ago.

A member of the human crew had discovered Volckon ruins below the surface of the scorched world. Ancient offworlder ruins interested you not at all, and you thought nothing of it, but being a dutifully anal-retentive Captain, you noted it in the log.

You returned the human crew to an allied URC base on the border world of Skoda, and were preparing to leave when you were contacted by the *Brotherhood*. At first your urge was to destroy yourself, when you learned about the history of your people. But you bore the shame, in order to preserve the race. Bearing shame in

order to protect others goes against the Yorr instinct. Most Yorr had rather let others die than endure disgrace.

The *Brotherhood* had moved quickly to seize the bizarre artifact that the human, Commander Lou Cedras, had returned from Cygnus. If you had only known when Cedras was on board your ship, you would have just taken it from him. But the *Brotherhood* was too late. The crystal was stolen by a third party almost immediately. Only you and your second in command knew about the crystal. You realized that, as well, might have been your thought. When you reached Skoda, a Vergosi steward pumped you for information about the Cygnus-X system. You told it to go pour disinfectant into its anal cavity of course (a polite brush-off where Vergosi are concerned). But it insisted, and eventually offered you a six-pack of Zleinenkugel's Cosmic Lager, so you downloaded it a copy of your ship's log. Against procedure, but harmless enough. Even you knew that the Yorr know nothing the Vergosi don't, other than the meaning of courage. Of all the races, the Yorr get along best with the Vergosi, probably because they know their place.

You were sent back with a fleet of warships to wipe out a "Retull Colony" on Cygnus-X. There was no Retull incursion, but the warship crews did not mind dropping a few-hundred subsurface-penetration Plutonium warheads onto the surface of the planet out of sheer frustration, obliterating the ruins there forever.

Since then you have retired from the Imperial Fleet, and gone into the service of the Baron of Ghast. But you are still, and always will be a member of the *Brotherhood*.

This has led you to have some contact with the Vergosi - a sad fact. Primarily you have dealt with Honigorzada Fak, a Vergosi merchant who trades with the Yorr. He also deals with the Alsarii and can sometimes steal Alsarii weapons technology.

Recently, Fak heard rumors that the Cygnus Crystal was up for sale. You had no idea where to look, but you guessed that if you had your spies keep an eye on Professor Lou Cedras, that you would eventually catch up with the crystal.

Cedras needs to die. The Professor knows too much about the Volckons, and is too close to the truth. But Cedras knows more about the crystal than anyone alive, and if there is anyone who can find it, that person is Cedras. So until the crystal is in your hands, you have need of the Professor.

You hope that whatever diplomatic negotiations are going on go well. Frankly, you haven't been kept abreast of these things like you should be because you only recently had the Baron of Ghast attach you to the diplomatic delegation, as a way to get close to Professor Cedras.

You have great faith that Military Attache Uργο knows what he is doing, and you will attempt to get him to fill you in on the situation before you are embarrassed. An embarrassed Yorr is an unhappy Yorr.

### Summary

- You want the Cygnus Crystal
- You want to stamp out knowledge of the Volckon race
- You want to find out just what this whole diplomatic affair is about, so that you can maintain your cover and help Military Attache Uργο.
- You are ever alert for new weapons that could help the Yorr, especially against the day that the Volckon return.
- You are in surprising command of your natural urge to eviscerate your opposite number, for a Yorr

- You must never let your copy of the *Brotherhood Tablet* fall into unsafe hands.

# Space Operetta

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## Undersecretary Chris Kooch

*"They recommended euthanasia...  
For nonconformers anywhere..."*  
- Asia

You are the last great hope, not only of the UPC, but of the human race.

You are not a fanatic. Nosiree, not you. You are just another employee of the UPC Bureau for Interstellar and Galactic Offworld Trade Security - (BIGOTS). You always use the full name, never the acronym - the agency sounds more important that way.

The Bureau was formed around the turn of the century, to help survey Vergosi trade practices. The Bureau was very successful at curtailing the worst abuses and unfair trade practices of the Vergosi, and was particularly effective on colony worlds, where the local trade authorities and police were inadequate to the level of duplicity of Vergosi traders.

During the Yorr War, the Bureau was given considerable powers to investigate Aliens suspected of being spies. During the lull between the two wars, the Bureau was assigned additional powers, specifically to investigate Alien conspiracies against UPC governments, and to monitor the technological progress of potentially hostile alien races.

A keystone in the Bureau's history came in '29 when the New Haven incident occurred.

In the last half of the previous century, a colonial freighter suffered an engine failure and meltdown. The vessel drifted into the section of space that would be known as the Yorr frontier, though the Yorr hadn't been discovered yet. Seven hundred

colonists were forced to settle on a moon they named New Haven. In '28 there were nearly seven thousand inhabitants of *New Haven*.

The reactor meltdown aboard the freighter had genetically damaged the colonists, and many died of cancer. Strangely, though, their children did not. The second-generation colonists did not suffer from a high rate of still-births...in fact infant mortality was near zero. Also, disease vanished. Initially this was put down to the fact that the radiation from the reactor meltdown killed most Terran microorganisms, and New Haven had few life-forms. But research by the few surviving doctors indicated that this was simply not the case.

Then the third generation was born. Not only did they have the immunity of the first and second generations, but they also began to exhibit strange psychic powers. Telekinesis. Telepathy. Some members of the fourth generation could start fires, and others could hypnotize their parents at a glance. Many said that they were not fully human, and certainly they had lost touch with humanity. There was a taint of evil among them that could not be explained. Over the next few years they subjected the planet to a bloody purge and killed all the original human and near human colonists, as well as any members of their own generation who were not sufficiently mutated. By the time that the UPC starship *Zagreb* arrived in '28, the mutants were in control.

Unfortunately beginning the year after the discovery of New Haven, the depression of 2229 set in. The danger of a race of mutants was plain, but there were no provisions within the UPC to quarantine a world. BIGOTS was asked by the Galactic President at that time to try and ensure that the New Havenites did not spread, or gain sufficient economic power to mount an attack on the rest of humanity. BIGOTS used pressure on the Vergosi, and human agents, to raid and harry the New Havenites, ensuring that they would not become a powerful force in the near future. Vergosi exerted enough economic influence to

keep them impoverished, and the UPC Fleet was conveniently kept out of the area.

The mutants of New Haven were not overly grateful to the UPC either. They had already developed their own culture, and firmly believed in their supremacy to the rest of mankind. A group of New Haven partisans attacked the UPC Consulate on the nearby Vergosi world of Obelidonada. The idea was that this would create momentary sympathy for the New Haven settlers, and force the UPC to take action. Even here, the bloodthirsty nature of the New Havenites showed its hand. Though even BIGOTS agrees that the raid was planned to be peaceful, some of the raiders were pyrokinetic, and they set the embassy on fire, killing hundreds.

The UPC sent the starship *UPC Atrius* to New Haven, to impose a quarantine, and establish a UPC government to ensure that the settlers did not escape into the population.

The planetary government sent a delegation aboard the starship to discuss terms. The delegates were sent aboard as a "trojan horse." The *Atrius* exploded.

The closest warships were *UPC Challenger*, and the fusion battle-cruiser, *UPC Aurora*, commanded by Rear Admiral Terry Chin. Both vessels rushed to the scene. *Challenger* was a brand new cruiser. It had been built only a few months before on New Detroit, by the recently created public works program, and was an excellent vessel in a class that served with distinction during the war.

*Challenger* was closer than *Aurora*, and Chin sent a message for the captain to orbit the world and do nothing until *Aurora* arrived.

In the meantime, Chin sent a message to BIGOTS and asked for advice. The Bureau advised Admiral Chin to do whatever seemed appropriate. Even at this point, the Bureau hoped to avoid a general massacre.

When Chin reached New Haven, the mutants were gone. As was the *Challenger*. Three hundred crewmen, and at least six thousand inhabitants.

Not dead. Just gone. Chin searched for wreckage from the *Challenger*, but there wasn't any. Nor was there anyone on the planet. Teams searched for days. Then they found the ruins BIGOTS had only suspected the existence of the ancient Volckon race for a year or so. The ruins were empty, but seemed to have formed the foundation for the New Haven settlement. Whatever strange powers the New Havenites possessed, they may have been linked to the Volckon race. And the disappearance of the colony may have been linked to the Volckon as well.

BIGOTS stepped in. Humans were already terrified of the New Haven mutants. Any rumors that they had survived and vanished would promote panic, and the depression had the UPC dangerously close to governmental collapse. The story that was agreed on was that the Colonists had destroyed the *Challenger* by a ruse, and that *Aurora* had been attacked, forcing the ship to bomb the planet.

BIGOTS ordered a series of hydrogen bombs dropped on the planet, and classified all papers related to the matter. Even after all of these years, BIGOTS has never revealed the existence of the New Haven ruins.

Overall, probably not more than two or three hundred people made it off New Haven alive. Many of the citizens had fled aboard private freighters after the attack on *Atrius*. But there is no way that the entire population could have done that.

Throughout the thirties, the UPC kept an internment camp on an airless asteroid orbiting Kapteyn's Star, only a few million miles from R5433, the UPC Maximum Security Prison.

When the Retull War broke out, most of the refugees were allowed to enter the UPC Fleet in return for amnesty. The Fleet (over the protest of BIGOTS) issued them ID showing that they were refugees from Retull incursions, to protect them from public paranoia.

The Retull War should have been a blessing for BIGOTS. A demonstration of just how serious it can be to ignore alien menaces. But the million plus humans (and even Vergosi) killed in the Retull onslaught...the terrible losses by an unprepared UPC...these were all forgotten. The war promoted camaraderie, and many humans met Vergosi and even Yorr and learned to like them. Yorr! As if the Yorr could ever be trusted.

Regarding the New Haventies, BIGOTS still traces New Havenite survivors, though many have slipped through the Bureau's fingers since funds have been cut by a succession of liberal-minded galactic Presidents. BIGOTS has *warned* just how terrifically dangerous it is to let such mutants breed with the population. But a few waffling scientists like Dr. Duran have concluded that the effect is "harmless" and that the few hundred survivors will be "dissipated into the human gene pool - leaving the race statistically unaffected."

In fact, BIGOTS has long feared that survivors are acting as a front for a secret conspiracy of pure blooded New Havenites, who used some unthinkable psychic power to escape their world. The New Havenites may even be able to teleport across interstellar distances using their minds.

Two years ago, BIGOTS Management Office determined it had pinpointed the center of the conspiracy. Adrian Hagen, a prominent UPC ambassador, was identified as the ringleader. He was a prominent figure, considered likely to someday become Galactic President.

BIGOTS kidnapped Hagen at his home on Algol V, and subjected him to 24 hours of forced interrogation. In the end it became clear that either he was truly ignorant of his past, or more likely, his superior mutant intellect was able to

withstand torture, perhaps even suppressing his secret knowledge.

BIGOTS was in trouble. Hagen was too prominent to kill. There would be a painstaking investigation. So BIGOTS kidnapped Hagen's child Dale in a staged terrorist attack. Afterwards, the Bureau sent Hagen to Delta Vega IV to an oblivion parlour. BIGOTS forgery experts stepped in, and, Hagen filed the correct papers to request a memory wipe, and accepted a downgrade to Vice-Ambassador. For a prominent individual to get a mind-wipe to forget a horrible personal tragedy was not so unusual as to elicit investigation, and the investigation of the terrorist attack was cursory.

Unfortunately, a few weeks ago, Dale Hagen escaped, using bizarre superhuman powers. Ambassador Hagen clearly has the power to read minds, which has made him so effective at his job. You wear a special shielding device built by BIGOTS, which might aid you against a psychic attack. It is inevitable that Dale will try to meet with Adrian, and you have been warned to be on the lookout. There is still a high possibility that the Ambassador is involved in a plot against humanity.

That isn't even why you are here though. The Yorr Empire is preparing to engage in Civil War. BIGOTS is aware that this is simply a plot to somehow attack humankind. But no one is sure how. The Alsarii know more than they are telling *why does everyone trust them*

In looking through the Bureau personnel files, you found that Admiral Chin's attache, Lt. Corey Paltos, is a New Haven survivor who was granted Amnesty during the Retull wars.

## Summary

**GM NOTE:** *This character is a real roleplaying challenge. Obviously, its views are twisted and fascist by our views. The character can, and to a certain extent should, be played as a parody -a sort of McCarthy/Fascist anachronism in a sea of liberals. But the character must be played insistently. Compromise, and reason are **not** a part of this character's lexicon. A sort of "Lt. Flagg" approach may work well. Most importantly, you really believe all these things, and the lessons of the Retull wars support your intense xenophobia.*

- You are here to act as security consultant as the UPC mediates a Yorr dispute. You don't trust the Yorr, and want to make sure that Ambassador Hagen doesn't either.
- You are always on the lookout for any chance to discover a conspiracy or alien menace that could restore the respect of the Bureau.



# Space Operetta

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## Lesley Lee

"The doctor say he's coming, but you gotta pay in cash..."

### - The Eagles

You were born on the world of Rahweii, a pleasant world only a few dozen light years from Old Earth. You spent summers at your Grandfather's cabin, and winters in the arcology school. Your parents were both software engineers.

You were a promising young student in primary education, and whizzed through your secondary education. You studied advanced biochemistry and had your heart set on becoming a nanosurgeon.

You were sent to the Galactic Medical Academy on Sega for your advanced education, and completed three and a half years there. You joined the RFTC (Reserve Fleet Training Corps) and were prepared to go into the UPC Fleet as soon as your education was finished.

That turned out not to be possible. Near Christmas during your senior year Thalidium and Protocera fell to the Retull, throwing the UPC Fleet nearly two hundred light-years back into habitable space. With eight million casualties on twenty-six worlds you arrived back at school and were handed your diploma and a uniform. There was a shuttle leaving at 22:00 hours for the embarkation station.

You were rushed through a condensed two week training course in the Primeval Swamps of Lezhoon, where you got to witness diseases you had never even heard of before.

Then you were put into service aboard the *UPS Gallant*, a Heavy Line Cruiser. You were exposed to all sorts of people that your upbringing did not prepare you for. Some of them were pleasant. The folk of Pinkus II, always bluff and bellicose, but honest and hard working. Others like the tough sharp spoken gangsters of New Detroit you could do without.

The Yorr were terrifying, but they were ideal patients. You nearly lost an arm trying to give a Yorr a painkiller. Later on you found that they would give you an appreciative grin if you splashed a caustic disinfectant across a wound. They refused to allow themselves to be sedated, but would stand bolt upright while you dismantled, cleaned and reattached their bowels and other viscera. You never saw a lightly wounded Yorr. Only those with mortal injuries ever ended up in the hospital.

You had some bad experiences and you engaged in the same sort of recreation all the other doctors did. Guzzling Dzinian-Tonigs, and carousing wildly. Taking "Nilstim" tranquilizers to sleep, and guzzling Vergosi J'hlava to stay awake.

You saw more blood, visceral fluid, and that blue slimy stuff that holds the Yorr together than you wanted to see in a lifetime.

Then you were dropped in on Tovirex IV. The world was a major industrial center which had been hit by Cobalt-Thorium explosives. The Eastern Hemisphere was desolated, and the Western had been swept by fire tornadoes and was a foot deep in fallout. The factories were still churning out equipment, and you spent endless hours treating for radiation, burns, starvation, and mutilation. It was like a season in hell.

Fleet Headquarters was certain that Tovirex was secure, but they were wrong. In fifteen minutes the *Gallant* and the *Constellation* had been blasted out of orbit, and the Retull got another C/b hit on the Southern continent. The ground pitched like a ship at sea, and the streets outside were whipped by 200 mph winds at about two

hundred fifty degrees. In the countryside, buildings were pitched for hundreds of miles. In the shelters in the cities there were hundreds of thousands of other injuries. You laid them out in parking garages and transit tunnels. Eventually you were stacking patients in the sewers. Supplies of antibiotics were running low, and that was when you found out that the Retull had also gotten a biochem hit on the atmosphere.

People died by the hundreds of thousands. You took boosters and kept going. You were ravaged by an undocumented military virus which blasted through your nervous system, short circuiting everything in its path. With gene therapy, you might have been able to save maybe three quarters of the population, but all you had were limited supplies of adaptable antivirgens. A lot of the population died before they got hit with the drugs.

Eventually *UPS Aurora* under Chin showed up, secured the spaceport, and started evacuation. Vergosi transports began to pour in medical aid, and you were sent to the EVAC hospital on New Geneva. There you got gene therapy, and eventually began to recover.

But nothing could erase the horror of those weeks in the sewer system, surrounded by the suffering, deformed, dead, and dying, the burned and the diseased. Listening to the sirens, and waiting for a hit on the Northern Continent, thinking that being blown to hell might be better.

You were treated by a psychiatrist, who said this was a normal reaction. Tovirex was a turning point, and the Allies were winning the war. The Yorr had smashed the Retull flank and were making inroads towards the homeworlds.

You served as an assistant at the officers infirmary on New Geneva, until you had a nervous breakdown two weeks before the end of the War. You were drinking too much, and you were put into detox. That's where you met Captain Murano. Murano was your Abusers Anonymous (A-A) buddy. The two of you struck up a

friendship. Murano had been through a private hell too.

You were discharged with disability, and you considered retirement, but Murano was assembling a ship's crew and asked you to join. You have been serving with the Captain aboard the Starship *Copernicus* ever since.

You never told Pat, but you never quite got in synch with the six-step program. You managed to regulate your drinking, and substance abuse, and when you didn't regulate it you would hide it.

Occasionally Murano would question you, but you explained that the twitches, DT's and memory loss you experienced were not related to drinking or drugs. They were symptoms left over from the Bioweapon hit back on Tovirex. Not being a doctor, Murano believed you. And you are certain that the viral attack damaged you. You were smarter, before, brighter, more easygoing. These days you are a little tense.

Still...life was going pretty well. You draw a decent salary for doing nothing. You observe quarantine procedures, stamp biological products, and give routine health checkups. Even a drunken old doctor like yourself could handle running a diagnostic program. Mostly you try to smooth waves between Captain Murano and his officers.

A few ports ago, Captain Murano got a great chance. The Captain was offered an incredibly lucrative contract to carry a cargo of **Plastizene** from New Detroit to the airless asteroids in the Omicron-Ceti system, where they are being buried on an airless rock.

New Detroit gave the universe Plastizene, one of the weapons that was used to destroy the Retull. Plastizene takes advantage of the fact that hydrocarbons, used to make plastics, are organic. It is a living substance, similar to a virus, with an incredibly simple RNA structure. Plastizene was reverse-engineered by the Vergosi from the bioweapon that you were hit with on Tovirex.

Plastizene's principle property is that it is an incredibly effective mutagen. Even superficial contact causes immediate mutagenic action in most organized DNA. The Retull were fairly vulnerable to mutagens, since they apparently have an encoded tendency to destroy any member of their race which is not genetically identical to all the others.

Of course the stuff is deadly to humans too, and millions of tons of it were manufactured on New Detroit after the war, and until recently, were still buried there, in the old shipyards. Now the UPC is secretly beginning to move them out to safer storage facilities. It is very important not to let the Yorr find out about the site, because no-one wants the Yorr to have a massive supply of Plastizene.

It is a good contract. Plastizene is highly stable. The problem is that it just **terrifies** the living crap out of you. All that stuff down there. Living plastic. Every single molecule of it a deadly mutagen. It sends you into a cold sweat.

There is only one treatment for it. An advanced genetic therapy that is only successful in about 25% of cases. In about 25% of other cases it results in immediate death, and in 50% of cases it results in lingering death. Starvation because the intestinal tract isn't human anymore...heart failure as the body swells to fifteen times normal size. They have kept some of the mutants alive for years, mewling and begging for death. If a direct relative father, mother, or brother, is available for donation of DNA samples, it increases the effectiveness of the therapy to about 75%, but of course that wouldn't help here.

You couldn't tell Pat. In fact you didn't realize it yourself until it was brought aboard. To make matters worse, Murano won't let you talk about it to anyone. The Captain doesn't want the diplomatic passengers to know what a highly dangerous cargo *Copernicus* is carrying. It is perfectly legal, and there is no reason to reveal the information. But...it is keeping you from being able to sleep.

Pat is getting on your nerves. For years, you have put up with Murano, for giving you a job. For years you have assumed that Murano was better than you just for staying dry. The fact is that the Captain is a petty dictator who drives everyone crazy, and it is *getting worse*. Just like your problems.

Two days ago you decided that having the Plastizene on board was just too dangerous. You panicked and went down into the Cargo hold. You were going about sabotaging the cargo hatch lock, so that the cargo bay would evacuate the stuff into interstellar space.

You thought you heard a noise, and looked for someplace to hide. There was a spare life pod stowed forward, and you climbed in. You felt something lumpy, and raised the seat to find seven bottles of Alsarii Cream, a highly alcoholic aperitif. You took a sip, just to check the quality. Then another...then another...

You never had the guts to go back, but you did relocate the Alsarii Cream to the Medical locker. There is a bottle left. Just being among all those barrels of Plastizene made your skin crawl. You wonder what it smells like. How would anyone know if it were leaking.

You'd been in a decline lately, and it has gotten worse. Last night you used a medical override code and went into Ambassador Hagen's cabin while the Ambassador was out. You didn't want to loot the dispensary, as the Captain keeps an eye on it. So you looted the Ambassador's private stock. You had just seen him going into the Alsarii, Val'rihii's cabin, and took a good guess Hagen wouldn't remember what happened the night. You drank 1.7 liters of Vergosi liqueur without a mixer, and you used it to wash down a packet of Nilstims. You slept much better last night than you have in a while.

But you are edgier today than you have been. You don't understand that. Gotta keep control.

## Summary

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- You are a chronic substance abuser, who covers for it increasingly poorly. The Plastizene has almost shattered your ability to cope.
- You are slightly psychotic, suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. The substance abuse confuses the symptoms, but this would still be present if you were completely straight
- The ship's cargo terrifies you. You would have real trouble trying to *treat* patients with Plastizene contamination. Your gut level reflex would be to kick them out an airlock. Plastizene really give you he willies.
- You are a competent doctor, and you will try to meet any challenges you are presented with, but your concentration and patience are shot.

# Space Operetta

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## Supercargo Alison Lei

*"She's an invader...she's from another world..."*  
- Alphaville

You were born on a world orbiting Deneb, a long way from here. You don't remember your childhood very well now. It was a pastoral planet and you developed a fascination for hiking climbing, and exploring.

When the war came, your scouting experience served you well in the UPC Marines. You served as a scout. It is odd that when most people talk about the war, you can find little in common with them. You missed most of the big battles like the fall of Thalidium. For you the war was lonely. Secret landings with four or five people, lone encounters with a powerful Retull armored drone. You got to see the Retull up close, and that certainly left a scar on you.

But the fact is that you were a normal, healthy person, and the war did not warp you terribly. You survived. At least you think you did. You were no career military officer though. When the war was over, it was goodbye marines.

During the war you spent a month stranded on Cygnus X-II. The world was not, strictly speaking, habitable. It had once been a fertile and thriving world, but about six thousand years ago Cygnus X became a pulsar. On the surface the radiation levels were easily lethal.

The Retull could handle a lot of radiation though, so you were sent in aboard a four man scout to see if there was a base there. The scoutship's

telemetry was knocked out by radiation from the pulsar, and you crashed on the barren surface. The ship was badly damaged, and you knew you had to get belowground fast.

You vaguely knew there had once been a civilization on this world, called the Volckons. They had passed from this region of the galaxy, and maybe become extinct altogether, when mankind was just beginning to build its first, rude, cities. You located some ruins, and got underground, and found to your delight that there was some residual atmosphere. With the breath filters from your suits, you and the other three crew, Will Briggs, Sara Yeun, and Lou Cedra were able to survive for four weeks, until you were picked up by a destroyer.

During the first few days of your stay, you found a functioning machine, which seemed charged with some strange sort of magnetic energy. You have always had a lot of odd skills, and you got the idea that perhaps you could jury rig the alien device to run some of the ship's machinery - at least the subspace radio.

You were somehow affected by a force field. It passed over you, and knocked you unconscious. You remained that way for three weeks, while the changes took place inside of your mind.

There was little for the others to do during those four weeks other than explore, and record their findings. The Cygnus ruins had only been discovered shortly before the war, and despite stories, there had been no real exploration, because of the proximity to the Retull war zone.

They learned a lot about your people. About the Volckon race. The Volckons had been much more advanced than humankind. And this was not their homeworld. They were peaceful and full of beauty and wonder. They were impossibly honest in financial matters, which meant they had a perfect society. They were averse to direct violence.

Towards the end of your stay, Lou Cedra discovered a strange machine, which seemed to be still functioning. He was able to determine that it was a computer - a partially organic computer, because it was made of silicon and carbon. The center was a carbon crystal - technically a diamond (or zirconia) about a foot high. This seemed to be a central processor, and probably a memory core. At the time, Lou decided to take it when the group was evacuated aboard the allied Yorr destroyer *IYS Zardoz*.

You were returned to the UPC base on Skoda. You became conscious again, and learned what had happened. You knew you had to have the crystal, and you ransacked Lou's room for it. But it had already been stolen by one of the others.

You do not know everything. You wish you could have seen the room where the crystal was found. You could have read the writing and would know much more.

You do know that the crystal is one of four objects which *are* the Volckon race. The Crystal is the *Baax*, which contains the mind and spirit of the Volckon race. The other is the *Clazzit*, which stored the phenotypes of the Volckon, and will create the race again out of whatever sentient life forms are available. And last of all there is the *Dravt*. The *Dravt* is somehow the most important of the artifacts, because it is the weapon that the returned Volckon will use to defeat their ancestral enemy - the Vergosi.

There is also the *Rahmut*. The *Rahmut* is some sort of superweapon to be used if the *Dravt* is somehow unusable.

The Volckon do not have to have the *Clazzit*. The *Baax* can be used to place the spirit of the Volckon into members of a less evolved race, though this is not as satisfactory as using the *Clazzit* to create new Volckon out of the raw stuff of existing sentient species.

But you have lost the *Baax*. And it is the *Baax* that contains the location of the *Clazzit*, and of the *Dravt*. According to Lou, the only other person who knew about the crystal was Captain Hagh of the *Zardoz*. The UPC Commander at Skoda was wary of accusing the Yorr of stealing First, it would be very unusual. If the Yorr wanted the crystal, they would have taken it from you by force, on their ship. Second, interest in an archaeological specimen would be uncharacteristic for the Yorr. Perhaps if they thought it was a weapon they might have some interest, but learning about other cultures is not a popular subject in Yorr primary school (aside from rumors of a taste-test).

Which meant that Briggs or Yeun had it. You resolved to find out which. It could take you a very long time, but you had a very long time.

The Retull eventually did invest *Cygnus*, and built hives in the underground cities. By the time the Yorr had driven them out using burrowing cobalt-thorium warheads, there was little left of the archaeological wonders.

You continued your search for the crystal head rumors that such an artifact had been sold by a Vergosi trader. You tried to track the item down, but were unable to find it at the time.

You functioned on two levels. On one level you are still Alison Lei - you have all the same knowledge as Alison. But in your heart, you know that Alison died on *Cygnus*. You are a Volckon. You know what you must do. But the trap-field did not work entirely correctly - it did implant the seed of the Volckon consciousness into a sentient - but the process worked imperfectly. Humans are a very imperfect shell for the massive Volckon intellect. You need to find the crystal to access all the knowledge of the Volckon mind. You know some general things-enough that you know for certain you are not just Alison Lei insane. You are *Xekheb* of the Volckon. You are honest about financial matters. A full Volckon would be almost incapable of killing, but not of using another race to kill.

You need to find the crystal, or barring that, find the homeworld.

You caught up with Will Briggs in `53 in an alley behind a bar on Skraeling-V. Of course when he found out what you were, he resisted. You used the powerful force of your Volckon intellect to probe his mind. It would not do to leave him with the knowledge of what you could do, so you killed him. It does not matter after all. When the Volckon race awakens, the slave races and their descendants will be returned to their proper places, or terminated.

You killed Sara Yeun too, after draining her psyche. You considered going after Cedras, but Lei knew him fairly well, and he was a perfect junior scout. He would never have faked the robbery...you are certain Cedras has no idea where the crystal is. More importantly he has become an expert on the Volckon race, and if he learned your identity and somehow escaped, he could alert the slave races to the imminent Volckon return.

## Summary

- You need to track down the *Baax*, which contains the intelligence of your race. That will tell you where the *Clazzit* and *Dravt* are.
- If you could see the writing that was found in the chamber with the "Cygnus Crystal" (the *Baax*), you would know a lot more about your own race.
- Incidentally, recreating the Volckon race will probably wipe out a lot of humankind. Tsk.
- The real enemy of the Volckon are the Vergosi. You know this. The *Dravt* is necessary to keep from being at their mercy.

## Supplementary Information

The Vergosi have had starship travel for a long time. For about seven thousand years. The problem is that the Vergosi breed slowly, and have little interest in establishing permanent colonies. For seven millennia, the Vergosi have traded back and forth across the galaxy.

When they first explored space, the Vergosi found a thriving, advanced civilization called the Volckon. The Vergosi found that the Volckon were a perfect civilization. They were peaceful, lived in harmony, and were very honest.

So the ancient Vergosi made deals with the Volckon. They gained knowledge, and with that knowledge came power. The Volckon were resource poor. They wanted resources that the Vergosi could provide them with. And soon they discovered that they needed dozens of other things that the Vergosi could provide...drugs, and powerful liquors like Dghinnin-Tahnagz, and stimulants like J'hlava.

Within a few centuries, the Volckon were very much in debt to the Vergosi. For a while, they tried very hard to pay up. But they had allowed the Vergosi to set ruinous interest rates. The Volckon stripped their cities. They sold everything to the Vergosi to pay off their debt, then when they found they needed it, they had to lease it back. The situation got worse.

Then the Vergosi heard rumors that the Volckon were genetically engineering a warrior race to stamp out the Vergosi. So they decided to give the Volckon some terms. They allowed the Volckon race to opt for a payoff plan. Interest was frozen, and the Volckon would be allowed to pay off the entire outstanding amount in one lump sum. The ancient Vergosi considered that this was unlikely, since the lump sum was more than a thousand times the remaining worth of all Volckon property. They figured it was merely giving the suckers a break, before starting a new cycle of debt.

Instead, the Volckon delivered every single thing their race possessed to the Vergosi, and demanded credit for it. The sum was considerable, but it was nothing beside the sum total of the Volckon debt.

Then the Volckon deposited the amount in an interest bearing account at a Vergosi bank. And vanished forever, leaving only empty shells of cities.

The Volckon had figured a way out of their predicament. First, they arranged for an interest freeze. The Vergosi granted this figuring the Volckon would have to take new loans almost immediately.

Instead, the Volckon put their minds into a crystal computer called the *Baax*, which they hid on a world which was about to be ravaged by a supernova. Humans call that world Cygnus X-II. On another remote world, they secreted the *Clazzit*. This is an incredibly advanced device which stores the Volckon genetic pattern, and can, over a period of time, impose this pattern on any reasonably similar creature. The Volckon assumed that eventually some mirror sentient race would find the *Clazzit*, and reactivate the Volckon genetic pattern. The new Volckon would find the *Baax*, and begin returning the race to life.

They would use the *Dravt*, which contains the key to their Vergosi bank account to reclaim the funds they deposited. The interest will be enough to pay off the Vergosi debt.

In case the Vergosi balked, the Volckon created the Yorr - a bloodthirsty race given to violence. Yorr hostility was directed inward, in order to keep them from rampaging across the galaxy. However, a secret device called the *Ramut*, will release a viral agent that will alter the Yorr minimally. The Yorr will no longer be ambivalent towards the Vergosi, and want to kill each other. They will want to kill the Vergosi and be ambivalent towards each other.



The Volckon are ethical, and would only do this if the Vergosi did not adhere to their end of the agreement.

Of course Allison Lei is not entirely a Volckon.

# Space Operetta

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## Special Fiscal Envoy Bonidaso Ged

*"He's got diplomatic immunity...he's got a lethal weapon that nobody sees."*

Warren Zevon - *The Envoy*

You hatched on the Human world of New Ventura, which has a significant Vergosi community and Trade Legation. Your egg-parent ran a small Casino, and made a few odd credits buying captured Retull artifacts from human and Yorr marines returning from the front, and selling them to desk jockeys at the Supply depot to take home as war souvenirs.

New Ventura was headquarters, and supply depot for the UPC 3rd Fleet. The Vergosi ran a technology and research center on New Ventura, and distributed supplies built by the impressive Vergosi manufacturing machine, or purchased from more distant human worlds, and imported by Vergosi merchants.

The technology center on New Ventura was very important. The most sophisticated Retull equipment was brought there. Even the Alsari were unable to figure it out, but the Vergosi have a racial knack for reverse engineering, born of millennia of practice. Within a few months, the Vergosi would have human factories subcontracted to churn out whatever sophisticated weapons were brought in, whether they understood them or not.

Your seminal parent (according to your egg parent) was a researcher at the secret base on the second moon of New Ventura. It was here that Retull biological weapons were dissected and reverse-engineered. It was here that Plastizere was developed, though the production was moved to New Detroit.

Your seminal parent was apparently killed very near the end of the war. A very complicated new Retull bioform had been captured and the exoskeleton was being examined. Apparently the Retull drone had stored its memory in a computer system, and revived, wreaking havoc, and slaughtering most of the base personnel in the process. You heard that after the war the base was shut down, and a cobalt bomb was set off just to make sure nothing had been missed.

You were educated at the Vergosi School on New Ventura, which was probably much more lax than most other Vergosi schools. Cheating was encouraged, but the mandatory classes were fairly thin, and there was a lot of pure technology and history that is glossed over in the schools back on the homeworlds.

In your senior year, you went to career night, and any number of organizations gave you a hard pitch. You toyed with the idea of the Vergosi Mafia.

The Mafia recruiter assessed your skills, and said they might be able to make an opening for someone with your skills, but you were hesitant. The Vergosi Mafia is very prestigious, and every Vergosi hatchling grows up hearing stories about organized crime, and wanting to be a great gangster. But the fact is your skills in that direction were pretty thin, and you had a feeling you would end up on the wrong end of a protein depolarizer.

A few major firms made halfhearted attempts to recruit you, but you weren't attracted to them. The fact is that your upbringing on New Ventura hadn't suited you to organized crime, and your life as the hatchling of a casino operator hadn't really prepared you for a technical career.

Eventually, you found your way to the little table where a few bored Government recruiters were sitting sipping J'ahva. They gave you a bored pitch, and you decided to go to work for the Reformed Government. They were sort of stunned.

So you began work as a Government Agent. It has allowed you much more freedom and flexibility than you normally would have.

And it is more lucrative than anyone realizes. While no Vergosi in their right mind would bother with a mere Government official unless they had to, offworlders have a very strong concept of government, and it is so rare to run into a Vergosi Government Officer that they will often bribe you out of hand, assuming that you are somewhat important.

The Government, such as it is, handles those services which are either too unprofitable for the commercial sector, or foreign affairs, where most of the Vergosi grudgingly agree it is necessary to present a unified front. The Government also makes some attempt to guarantee various standards which the Vergosi race has agreed on, in order to make commerce possible, such as weights and measures.

And of course...foreign relations. You have been assigned to the Vergosi Diplomatic Corps. Basically this is the organization that issues pro-forma apologies for whatever horrible acts Vergosi businessmen perform, and occasionally warns if any particular segment of Humanity or other race is getting restive. In addition, the Diplomatic Corps works to ensure the survival of the Vergosi race by ensuring any race that might want to fight the Vergosi is financially dependent on Vergosi banks, capital, and supplies.

The Yorr are a good example. Even the most bellicose Yorr will usually admit that the Yorr could not afford a war with the Vergosi. The Vergosi sold the Yorr most of their military hardware, and still understand it better than the Yorr. Yorr spacecraft have a habit of malfunctioning when they threaten the Vergosi.

One of your first assignments was abusing government power on behalf of the Mafia at New Detroit, immediately after the war ended. New Detroit was an industrial wasteland, which had been stripped and contaminated to the destruc-

point in order to furnish ships for the UPC Fleet during the height of the war.

Now, with the planetary economy in a post-war slump, the New Detroit crime bosses were shaping up into an effective force. A party was elected to the World Presidency on a Gangster platform, and the First World Gangwar broke out. It became clear that if the war continued, any clear winner would be able to seriously rival the Vergosi Mafia.

So the Mafia, the Vergosi Government, and suggested that the UPC be led to intervene. Soforonza Bek, a Mafia boss, met with you and worked up a plan. You convinced Admiral Terry Chin to advocate intervention. Chin was already an unabashed supporter of UPC military intervention, and with the promise of Vergosi financial support, the UPC Senate agreed to the intervention. So the Vergosi Mob used UPC soldiers to conduct a mass purge of all their enemies on New Detroit.

Eventually the whole thing was discovered. The Vergosi Mob sort of shrugged, and the Vergosi government gave empty apologies for the Mob involvement. Terry Chin took most of the blame.

That got your career jump started. Doing the Mob a favor, and making it work is a good way to win friends and influence people.

Right now you have been assigned to the thankless task of avoiding a pointless war. The Yorr Imperium is picking a fight with the Barony of Ghast. This is ridiculous, because calculating the exact balance of military equipment on either side (something the Vergosi know better than the Yorr, in all probability), Ghast presents no real threat to the Empire. It will be several centuries before Ghast gathers enough power to challenge the emperor.

Now normally, the Vergosi would let a war like this go. The traders could sell arms to both sides until their cash ran out, and then mortgage their

surviving property until they were left with slag and their underwear.

However, there is a strong feeling, bordering on conviction, that the UPC might be dragged into such a war. And that would create a very dangerous fluctuation of market conditions. It could even result in the bombardment, or destruction of Vergosi trade settlements.

The mission *should* be a pushover. Several years ago, the Vergosi arranged to sell UPC Ambassador Adrian Hagen a very advanced supercomputer implant called *MARIE*. The acronym stands for "Memory Architecture Recognition Interface Enhancer." Essentially, Marie is an onboard supercomputer that resides inside Hagen's skull. MARIE is similar to a standard data-implant, but actually incorporates a small AI processor.

You were given codes to activate MARIE by remote control. This should allow you to control Hagen's mind. The problem is that when you tried an experimental control last night, nothing seemed to happen. Hagen should have stood up, made a few trite comments, and gone to bed. Instead he wandered off aimlessly, and you aren't sure where he went, but it wasn't to bed.

You can give simple commands through MARIE...presuming she works.

If not, this mission could be a lot harder than you thought.

You are worried about the presence of Soforanza Bek. You suspect that Bek is a Vergosi Mafia contact. If so, you should do everything polite to assist...the Mafia is more powerful and influential than the Government. But you hope the Mob is not out to sour these negotiations.

Direct confrontation with the Mob will get you killed. If you have to work against them, you'll have to do it by underhanded half moves. It might help to find out what Bek is really about.

## Summary

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- You want to avert a war among the Yorr, and especially between the Yorr and the UPC.
- In general, you are as sane and decent as Vergosi come. But you are not willing to hear your race badly criticized, and you are avaricious.

# Space Operetta

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## Crewman Chris Ventnor

*"Where life is cheap and death is free..."*  
- Warren Zevon

You are the proverbial "red shirt." Let's face it There has to be one crewman whose job is to say "I'll check that out sir," and get reduced to a pile of foot powder.

Maybe that's the best you can hope for. Or maybe, just maybe, if you survive a dozen trips and appear several times with the Captain, you could become a "semi-regular"

Your origin is on the industrial world of Deneb V. Or the quiet farmworld of Algol II. It doesn't really matter. Probably you have a story. Maybe you served in the war. A lot of us did. You could have been at the battle of Protocera, in the darkest hour of the Retull wars.

Or maybe your father or mother served under Admiral Chin, or Captain Cicco. Maybe you follow the Captain out of blind loyalty, or maybe you are a hardened mercenary, who had no sooner be on this ship than any other.

Either way, you are the first line of resistance. But it beats staying at home. The pay is slightly better. You are probably inclined to talk about what you do on your off hours at portside taverns, of your plans for the future. Maybe you are infatuated with some member of the crew...or even a guest.

There isn't much more to it than that. You are free to make up anything you want about the world you are from, and any jobs you may have had before this one. This universe is thinly plotted enough that nothing is impossible...usually not even implausible.

You could have done a stint as a Horticulturist on Salust VII, for example. Home of the dreaded carnivorous Hydrangeas. You could have worked as a crewman aboard a smuggling vessel, or be older - recently retired from a career in the UPC Fleet.

In short, anything goes. Just remember...you are a reasonably loyal member of the crew, with some loyalty to your fellows and ship.

If you are killed, odds are you'll be back in another scene with another name. That's the way it goes.

And maybe, just maybe, you can do something to come to the attention of the Captain.



# Space Operetta

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## Captain Pat Murano

"Everyone's a Super-Hero, everyone's a Captain Kirk..."

- Nena

As Captain of the starship *SS Copernicus*, you do your best to deal with things as they come up. And they come up pretty often.

You grew up on Dalkon-IV, an industrialized world where your father worked as an assembly plant manager. Dalkon had been attacked early on in the Retull war, and was badly damaged. You have vague memories of terror in your early childhood, but the images are blurred. Your mother was killed in the onslaught, and you apparently wandered for hours through the devastated radioactive canyons before you were found and treated.

Fortunately Dalkon was never attacked again, and you grew up fairly normally. You played lasercrosse on the JV team at school, and were fairly popular. You had your share of dates, and in general, you behaved like most of the other kids. You were always a little quiet, but no one thought twice about it. You were smart, and tested well on standardized tests, so it was natural that you were selected as an officer candidate and sent to the UPC Fleet school on Hyperion III.

You saw little action during your first three years of service. Then you were breveted to Captain and placed in command of a cruiser. The *UPS Antares*. She was an excellent ship, with a good crew. Her captain had been killed in a planetary raid while he was negotiating for supplies at a Vergosi outpost. You were the most experienced command officer available, and you were breveted to Captain at Base 213, and placed aboard only a few hours later.

You were immediately dispatched on a patrol. The UPC was closing in on the Retull homeworlds, but this had only made the war more horrible for those at the front. The Yorb seemed to actually enjoy the heightened danger, but the random raids, and heavy concentrations of Retull defenders gave the screaming heebie-jeebies to everyone else.

On your first patrol, you were assigned to sweep Topanga a planet which was believed to harbor a Retull base. The planet was an arid rockball, only about eight thousand clicks in diameter. You decided to speed up the process by dropping your aft electromagnetic-radiation baffles. This would enable you to use aft sensors to sweep the southern hemisphere, and cut the survey time in half.

Your engineer warned you that it was against procedure...in fact the procedure had been updated in an all fleet memo just that week. You said "Damn the procedures." You had listened to quite a few star-captains talk, and you knew that the weak radiations of a coasting vessel were nearly invisible against a planet's background radiation. Dropping baffles when in orbit was a widely recognized trick for getting things done faster.

When the Retull dropped out of polar orbit and nearly slaughtered you, it caught you by surprise. You later found out that the memo had been issued because intelligence had discovered the Retull using a new form of side-looking scanning, which could pick out a coasting ship even against a planetary background. Maybe if you had just listened to your officer.

The result was that about two hundred men died. Men who didn't have to die, if you had followed orders.

You were badly hurt in the attack, and by the time you returned from the EVAC hospital at New Geneva, the war was over. The Yorb had polished off the last remaining Retull.

You have tight control over yourself now. When you first came out of the EVAC hospital, you drowned your memories in Thalian Gin, and Regalian Schnapps. You even considered going to one of the oblivion parlors on Delta Vega VII where they wipe memories for a fee. But you have contempt for anyone who is so weak. You learned to live with your memories, though possibly they have warped and twisted you.

You were put on report for drunk and disorderly. You were passed over for command. You were discharged. You joined the Betelgeuse Chapter of AA (Abusers Anonymous). You learned to live your life by the AA Code "Every standard time unit, in every area of sensory perception, my status is improving." You repeat this to yourself occasionally, under your breath. You practiced the six-step program. Your "buddy" was Dr. Lesley Lee, a fellow vet who had been on Tovirex when it was blasted.

You still grow agitated from time to time, especially if you see anyone imbibing the substances that almost ruined your life. It took you a while to pull it together, but eventually you got a merchant command. You have been straight for several years, and you allow no drinking or alterants on your vessel (aside from good, black, java). Of course you can't control what the passengers do. But your crew is straight as an arrow. In fact you are a little suspicious of this "damaged" ship. One of the first things you will do is have the crew and skipper checked for alterants by Dr. Lee. Better do it soon, while the signs are still there. It could be another incident like the one last year in which the radioactive carrier *SS Zedlav* broke up after striking an asteroid because her master had been sniffing adhesives.

Occasionally, someone observes that you seem a little...nervous. They are distracted by the two steel ball-bearings that you roll about in your hand to soothe your nerves.

*Hah!* They weren't at Topanga. They didn't see what you saw. Hideously burned men and

women, their eyes boiling out of their heads. Your Helmsman horribly disemboweled by a piece of structural plastic, struggling to stuff his guts back into his body. Hot viscera spattered everywhere as Retull Pasers cut again and again through the bridge and cabin of your ship. If the magnetic field had gone down, the vessel would have lost pressure instantly.

It was terrible. If anyone gets you riled up enough, you tell them about it, in hideous, grotesque detail. Sometimes it helps to share. You have never rid yourself of the burden of guilt for causing that horrible catastrophe, but you have managed to live with it by vowing that you would never do anything again without going by the book - the *Manual of Procedures for URC Starships*.

Occasionally, one of your crew will suggest that there is something "unusual" or "unstable" about your personality. Of course you *aren't* on the verge of snapping, and you will round instantly on anyone who says you *are!* You are sane and stable. One of the few crewmembers other than Lee who understands you is the Vergosi Cook, Tondisario Pah. Pah is almost like foster child to you. You found the poor fellow years ago, and gave it a job. Since then Pah has been unswervingly loyal to you and your ship. He only occasionally asks a favor, and it is always reasonable. He asked you to sell Professor Cedras a cabin on this trip, even though it was a closed diplomatic charter. You agreed, and of course Cedras is a model passenger...learned, erudite, and well behaved.

You just don't tolerate much slack on your ship. And you don't tolerate much cussing. And you live a life of purity, avoiding contacts that might cause you to dissipate your precious bodily fluids in unnecessary sexual contact with members of the opposite sex. You preserve the purity of your body and essence. You have a particularly loathsome contempt for the Alsarii, because of their dissipate habits. You also don't remember seeing very many Alsarii in the war, and when



they were around at all, they were always in the rear echelons.

Your one companion for these years has been Dr. Lesley Lee. You met the Doctor while you were drying out at New Geneva, and offered him a position on your crew as your medical officer when you got a merchant command.

Lesley still has problems of course. The Doctor was hit with a powerful neurological bioweapon, and has never quite recovered. But you have a competent ship's medical officer, who is the only crewmember you feel you can trust.

Lesley seemed a little nervous when you had him check your latest cargo onboard. You got a very lucrative contract to carry a cargo of Plastizene from New Detroit to the airless asteroids in the Omicron-Ceti system, where they are being buried on an airless rock.

New Detroit gave the universe Plastizene, one of the weapons that was used to destroy the Retull. Plastizene takes advantage of the fact that hydrocarbons, used to make plastics, are organic. It is a living substance, similar to a virus, with an incredibly simple RNA structure. Plastizene was reverse-engineered by the Vergosi from a Retull bioweapon.

Plastizene's principle property is that it is an incredibly effective mutagen. Even superficial contact causes immediate mutagenic action in most organized DNA. The Retull were fairly vulnerable to mutagens, since they apparently have an encoded tendency to destroy any member of their race which is not genetically identical to all the others.

Of course the stuff is deadly to humans too, and millions of tons of it were manufactured on New Detroit after the war, and until recently, were still buried there, in the old shipyards. Now the UPC is secretly beginning to move them out to safer storage facilities. It is very important not to let the Yorr find out about the site, because no-one

wants the Yorr to have a massive supply of Plastizene.

It is a good contract. Plastizene is highly stable. Of all the toxic, deadly, cargoes you could carry, it is probably the easiest and safest.

Still, you haven't broadcast to the passengers that the cargo is biohazardous waste. No need to make the nervous. Especially important that the Yorr don't find out that Plastizene is being moved off New Detroit.

Right now your mission is to aid a vessel in distress, and by the triple moons of Boron VI, that's exactly what you intend to do.

### Summary

Role Playing Tips: you aren't crazy, but you are nervous, and you're near enough to the edge that you sometimes "act" crazy. You'd make a good office manager for an insurance company - you're anal to a fault. You go too far and you like to lecture others. If you've seen *The Caine Mutiny Court Marshal* with Humphrey Bogart as Captain Queeg, this may help. A number of other players will not have a very fun time if you do not play your warped personality to the hilt.

- You are a micromanager and a petty dictator. Make life hard on your easy going crewmembers.
- Do it by the book. ***Of necessity this will require "making up" procedures in some cases. Feel free to tell a crewmember the way they are doing something is wrong, that they are standing in the wrong place, etc. etc ad. inf.***
- You are a sometimes painfully righteous person. You would do anything you could to save lives, a vessel in distress, establish universal peace, etc.

# Space Operetta

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## Ship's Food Service Specialist Tondiosaro Pah

"Eat it...just eat it!"

"Weird AI" Yankovic

You are the cook aboard the starship *Copernicus* and have been for years. You have been very lucky for a poor Vergosi...the kind, but stern Captain Murano took you under his wing when you were but a hatchling.

Yeah right. Sure. Idiots! They believe that crap. You even call the captain "Honorable Sir." While most members of your race live as mercantile traders, there are many who are part of the underclass, especially on worlds that they have the misfortune to share with humans. And the humans wonder why the Vergosi Mafia tries to gain control of human space. Ha!

Your family has been poor for a long time. For several hundred generations. About seven thousand years by human standards. But your line contains the seeds of unimaginable wealth. You have *The Deed*. You inherited it from your egg parent, and your egg parent from its egg parent, and so on for seven thousand years.

The Deed is a metal plate about five inches square, covered with strange writing. The writing is in two languages. Ancient Vergosi and Ancient Volckon.

The Vergosi have had starship travel for a long time. For about seven thousand years. The problem is that the Vergosi breed slowly, and have little interest in establishing permanent colonies. For seven millennia, the Vergosi have traded back and forth across the galaxy.

When they first explored space, the Vergosi found a thriving, advanced civilization called the

Volckon. The Vergosi found that the Volckon were a perfect civilization. They were peaceful, lived in harmony, and were very honest.

So the ancient Vergosi made deals with the Volckon. They gained knowledge, and with that knowledge came power. The Volckon were resource poor. They wanted resources that the Vergosi could provide them with. And soon they discovered that they needed dozens of other things that the Vergosi could provide...drugs, and powerful liquors like Dghinnin-Tahnagz, and stimulants like J'hlava.

Within a few centuries, the Volckon were very much in debt to the Vergosi. For a while, they tried very hard to pay up. But they had allowed the Vergosi to set ruinous interest rates.

The Volckon stripped their cities. They sold everything to the Vergosi to pay off their debt, then when they found they needed it, they had to lease it back. The situation got worse.

Then the Vergosi heard rumors that the Volckon were genetically engineering a warrior race to stamp out the Vergosi. So they decided to give the Volckon some terms. They allowed the Volckon race to opt for a payoff plan. Interest was frozen, and the Volckon would be allowed to pay off the entire outstanding amount in one lump sum. The ancient Vergosi considered that this was unlikely, since the lump sum was more than a thousand times the remaining worth of all Volckon property. They figured it was merely giving the suckers a break, before starting a new cycle of debt.

Instead, the Volckon delivered every single thing their race possessed to the Vergosi, and demanded credit for it. The sum was considerable, but it was nothing beside the sum total of the Volckon debt.

Then the Volckon deposited the amount in an interest bearing account at a Vergosi bank. And vanished forever, leaving only empty shells of cities.

The family of Pah was eventually stuck with the Volckon deed. The fact is that over the past seven thousand years, the Volckon account has made enough interest to pay back their debt to your race. A staggering amount of cash. The problem is that it requires a Volckon who has the bank draft to redeem the account. Vergosi banking laws are sacred...the root of the race, forged twelve thousand years ago, when the Vergosi first stopped running from giant toothy predators. No bank draft, no redemption.

Knowledge of the Volckon is a secret of course. Vergosi schools don't teach much history, and it would be bad form to let a race as lucrative as the humans know how the Volckons got out of perpetual indebtedness.

In the meantime, your family has not done well for some millennia.

A century ago, colonists on the human world Algol XI, which you call Hodiosanbazo, begged Vergosi traders to establish a permanent outpost. Most of them had never even *seen* a human starship. The colony was a sparsely settled frontier world which was not worth the time of most human traders to call at.

The Vergosi packet boats stopped there, and eventually established a small station. Over fifty years, as the colony grew, more and more Vergosi were located there. Fifty years ago, there were nearly a thousand...now there are just under eight thousand.

The problem is, as waves of human colonists swept in, they formed close ties with the other human worlds. Then Vergosi ships were suddenly not really welcome. Vergosi were parasites, and "blood suckers." The humans proved that Vergosi trade had interfered with the colony's rate of growth. As if somehow every colony had a divine right to grow unchecked and uninhibited at the maximum possible rate.

Restrictive sanctions were passed. And as businesses folded, a large pool of Vergosi underclass formed.

Your seminal-parent opened a restaurant. He catered to Human merchants, and used every possible method to eavesdrop on their secrets. What he learned, he sold to the Vergosi mafia. They searched his restaurant for microphones once or twice, but never bothered to check the fact that the floor had been electronically engineered to echo. The microphone was in the kitchen, attached to the floor with suction cups. A simple run through a speech program to sort out the conversations was all that was needed to convert the babble into useful dialogue. The Mafia paid on Thursdays and Sundays.

You had bigger things in mind. The Retull War broke out, and everyone worked together to fight the pernicious aliens. Vergosi traders offered *discounts* to the military, and agreed to a 1% per annum price increase until the war ended. There were few opportunities.

You joined the Vergosi Armed Forces. VAF isn't as well known as the Yorr Imperium or the UPC Fleet, but the VAF made up a great deal of the rear during the Retull Wars. Vergosi just aren't very useful as front-line warriors. Compared to humans and Yorr, your reflexes are fairly slow, though Vergosi are exceptionally tough. But Vergosi understand supply better than anyone.

You ended up on a hellhole world called Skoda, which was a major liaison station for the Yorr and Human war effort. You worked in the commissary.

Now that may not seem like a very important position. And it wasn't terribly. But the important thing about the Vergosi war concessions is that they did not cover private and black-market trade. So while you could only sell Gerberbeast fillets to the UPC Fleet at 2% over the markup in 2239, you could sell them to individuals at any price you could get. And a 15-

20% shrinkage rate has always been standard in Vergosi operations.

It was on Skoda that something happened that you have always wondered about. You liked to keep informed, and always tried to scrape up a little intelligence on the Yorr to sell the UPC and Alsarii. One evening, you bought a copy of the log of the Yorr starship *Zardoz*' log from Captain Hagh, who traded it for a case of Zleinenkugels Lager.

The Imperial Yorr Ship *Zardoz* brought in the survivors of a human scout-ship that had crashed on Cygnus X-II. About six thousand years ago Cygnus X became a pulsar. On the surface the radiation levels were easily lethal.

They had brought back a carbon crystal - technically a diamond (or zirconia) about a foot high. You immediately recognized that the object was Volckon, and thought perhaps they had found the missing Bank Draft. Cygnus X-II was a clever place to hide something...the radiation of the pulsar would hide most signs of activity.

You immediately arranged for a heist of the jewel. You hired a human criminal named Cogan to steal it, and give it to you.

It was not the Draft. It was clearly some computer component. You realized immediately that you needed to go to Cygnus yourself. Your first thought was to have the crystal cut down for jewelry. Then you were approached by Honigorzada Fak, an artifact collector. You sold him the crystal, and used the money to launch an expedition to Cygnus X-II. In the chamber where the crystal had been found, there was Volckon writing, but you could make nothing of it. You searched the ruins, but could not find the Draft.

You headed back to Skoda, disappointed. Since then you have kept yourself in money by smuggling for Honigorzada Fak. You took a job as a ship's cook...a cook can smuggle almost anything aboard a ship without question.

But you have watched Fak. More importantly, you tipped off Professor Cedras, the human authority on the Volckon, to watch Fak. Fak is looking for the Draft too...and when he finds it you will call your debt due. The holder of the draft is bound to first pay off your debt, as long as you have the Deed. Recently, when you found that Fak was circulating the crystal for sale, you informed Cedras, and arranged passage for him on *Copernicus* by asking Captain Murano for a favor. Hopefully, Cedras will lead you to the Bank Draft, or at least the crystal.

In the meantime, you have normal business to attend to. You run a prosperous smuggling business beneath the nose of Captain Murano of the *Copernicus*.

Currently your cargo is human. You arranged for the temporary papers for Officer Cogan. Cogan is an old contact of yours, from the days when you hired him back on Skoda. He has worked for Honigorzada Fak, as well, and you had been keeping an eye on Fak through Cogan.

Recently Fak had Cogan murder someone...you have not found out who yet. Now Cogan is on the run from the human law. You arranged for his current name, and cover, and recommended him to Captain Murano. He has paid you for safety, and you owe him a good faith effort.

### Summary

- You want to find out everything possible about the ancient Volckon, without letting anyone know why you are interested.
- If you could read the inscriptions you copied down on Cygnus X-II it might tell you much about the disposition of the Draft.
- You cannot let the humans know what the Vergosi did to the Volckons. If you did the Vergosi mob would probably kill you.

- Keep Cogan secure. Try to find out what he knows about Fak.

# Space Operetta

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## Staff Lieutenant Corey Paltos

*"People like us...in places like this  
Need all the hope...that we can get..."*  
- Elton John

You are not, quite, human. Or at least not quite normal. Of course, you haven't lead a normal life. Your earliest memories are from when your sister was born at the Unitarian Missionary Clinic at the 61 Cygni orbital station. Your parents were posing as migrant workers from a failed colony.

Your parents however, had been on the run for a long time.

In the eighth decade of the previous century, the colonial freighter *Waratah*, bound for Formalhaut-XII from Earth, suffered an engine failure and meltdown. Seven hundred passengers and crewmen survived adrift for a year, before the vessel was able to make planetfall on a small moon in an uninhabited star system near what would later be the border between human and Yorr space, though the Yorr were unknown at the time.

The colonists named the desolate world *New Haven*, and cannibalized the damaged freighter in order to build a capital. Over the next half century or so, the colonists eked out an existence, and multiplied, so that in `28 there were nearly seven thousand inhabitants of *New Haven*.

The inhabitants of *New Haven* might have multiplied more quickly, but they were fraught with many still-births. The reactor meltdown aboard the *Waratah* had genetically damaged the colonists, and many died of cancer.

Strangely, though, their children did not. The second-generation colonists did not suffer from a

high rate of still-births...in fact infant mortality was near zero. Also, disease vanished. Initially this was put down to the fact that the radiation from the reactor meltdown killed most Terran microorganisms, and *New Haven* had few life-forms. But research by the few surviving doctors indicated that this was simply not the case.

Then the third generation was born. Not only did they have the immunity of the first and second generations, but they also began to exhibit strange psychic powers. Telekinesis. Telepathy. Some members of the fourth generation could start fires, and others could hypnotize their parents at a glance.

There were problems among the fourth generation children, there is no doubt, and the colony was ravaged by terrible strife similar to that which must have happened among the *Bounty* mutineers on Pitcairn Island.

Nevertheless, calmer minds prevailed, and by the time that the UPC starship *Zagreb* arrived thirty-four years ago, everything was back to normal. Fifth generation children...of which you were one of the last, exhibited signs of possible powers beyond even the fourth generation, but there was no particular concern.

For a few years, everything went smoothly. You were born during this period. Unfortunately beginning the year after the discovery of *New Haven*, the UPC went into a severe economic freefall. Despite a set of treaties with the UPC, the world was repeatedly raided by both pirates, and unscrupulous traders. Human traders were bad enough, but the Vergosi were worse. Finally, a group of partisans acted independently to end this problem.

They attacked the UPC Consulate on the nearby Vergosi world of Obelidonada. The idea was that this would focus the attention on the plight of the *New Haven* settlers, and force the UPC to take action. Unfortunately, the raid was poorly planned and carried out. Several of the raiders

were pyrokinetic, and they set the embassy on fire, killing hundreds.

The UPC sent the starship *UPC Atreius* to New Haven, to impose a quarantine, and an occupation. The planetary government sent a delegation aboard the starship to discuss terms. No one, to this day knows what happened. The governors claimed that the UPC tried to arrest the delegates. The UPC media claimed that the delegates were sent aboard as a "trojan horse." At any rate, the *Atreius* exploded.

Most of the citizens knew what was coming next. Your parents joined a few hundred lucky souls who were able to buy passage on one of the few small packet ships New Haven had purchased. Other refugees bought passage aboard a few human and Vergosi merchantmen which were evacuating the planet.

You have since read that the war was short and brutal. Somehow, the defenders got lucky. They managed to take out the lead UPC Cruiser. There had been talk of occupation, but that turned out not to be the case. Captain (now Admiral) Chin dropped eight hydrogen bombs on the colony, and killed every living thing on the planet.

The refugees were not much luckier. The crew of the *Yosemite* murdered all the refugees aboard their vessel, and the Vergosi authorities on Obelidonada managed to purge most of the refugees that passed through that world. Overall, probably not more than two or three hundred people made it off New Haven alive.

Throughout the thirties, the UPC kept an internment camp on an airless asteroid orbiting Kapteyn's Star, only a few million miles from R5433, the UPC Maximum Security Prison.

You stayed on the run with your parents from the time that you were born until you were six. Your father had been offworld during the brief five years that the colony was in contact with the UPC, and had gotten a UPC passport. Your father

was a natural telepath, and he managed to make a living gambling.

He hoped to settle on one of the distant colony worlds, but problems with his documentation, and suspicion, and poverty, kept you on the move.

In '38 your father was arrested on the brutal frontier colony of Deneb V. The local authorities managed to arrange an "accident" where he was hanged in his cell. Your mother was taken away, with your sister, and presumably killed. You managed to take refuge with some Buddhist monks. You were ten. Eventually, you were picked up by the UPC, and put into the internment camp at Kapteyn's Star. A few hundred survivors of your world were being held there in "protective custody," & "prisoners of war."

When you turned fifteen, you got the opportunity to get out. The UPC authorities recruited for New Havenites who would be willing to serve in the Fleet, in return for amnesty. You volunteered. You would have done almost anything to get out of that vermin infested collection of plastic tunnels and stale air. You lied about your age and said you were eighteen.

Since then, you have served in the UPC fleet. You are still bitter about New Haven, but you don't really see any point taking it out on the UPC. The partisans and hot-headed fools on the colony forced the UPC's hand, and the raw terror that greets any mention of New Haven gives you a pretty good idea of what most citizens think of your people. They were terrified at the idea of the human race being overrun by monsters with secret powers. There are still occasionally wild allegations of a New Haven conspiracy, even suggestions that the destruction was faked by the Fleet to cover up for the fact that the New Havenites vanished.

You had a good record during the war. Your official service record shows your origin as "Refugee - UPC Relocation Center KPT." This was a kind grace of the UPC Fleet, to keep those

Havenites who joined the Fleet from being persecuted. Many millions of humans were relocated during the first three years of the war, and you usually tell people that you are a war orphan, and don't know what world you are from.

You have risen to a considerable rank in the UPC Fleet. Unfortunately, you have recently been posted under Admiral Chin, and you have mixed emotions about this. On one hand Chin is a heroic figure. On the other hand, Chin slaughtered the population of New Haven.

You will try and act as professionally as you can and conceal your distaste for Chin. And you always try to keep your eye open for something you can do to improve the lot of any of your people. There has been occasional talk of creating a New Haven Homeland colony for repatriation of the survivors and their descendants. You have wondered if it might be possible to open the subject with Ambassador Hagen. Unofficially of course. With his patronage, the idea might have a chance. There are still eighty older citizens in the internment camp, and there must be thousands of other descendants by now.

### **Summary**

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- You have the best interests of the UPC at heart. You don't think two wrongs make a right.
- You really have problems dealing with Terry Chin. Nations really can't be blamed for historic mistakes...but Chin pulled the trigger.
- There have been occasional muttering about setting up a New Havenite Homeworld. If an important man like Ambassador Hagen were to support such an idea, it might have a chance.



# Space Operetta

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## 000344 Series SDX

*"It's so very lonely...one hundred thousand light years from home..."*

**- The Rolling Stones**

Murphy Chando is the reference code of an unassimilated unit of the type unassimilated and series "First Officer."

Murphy Chando was born on the Planet Baikur, and is 34 Standard Chronological Units into its use/life.

Assimilating the disorganized random detail that passes for information storage in unassimilated type units was an experience which has negative connotations. Fortunately the kernel of the racememory encoded into all units of the Retull Vector will keep you from being altered by the assimilation of such a large body of irrelevant information.

You have claimed that Chando was injured in the explosion that depressurized Cargo Bay 2. You gave the nature of the injury as a blow to the head. This has been known to cause spontaneous intermittent memory systems failure in unassimilated.

In addition to Chando's technical information you may need to know the following irrelevances: Chando is "unmarried" (a symbiotic linkage to another independent bioform), his educational form was "Baikur Engineering University," and he is chemically dependent on mildstimulants which are usually taken orally in a suspension called "coffee."

You hatched from egg-sac 000344, at a special experimentation facility on world 67-64-56322 Beta. Only 244 of the other larvae from your sac

were viable. The remainder were returned. After chrysalisation, you were transferred to a standard warrior drone host organism.

The Retull vector (race) is unique in having evolved from a parasite. Your entire racial memory concerns the infection, and destruction or assimilation of hosts. Several of the larger insectforms which originally inhabited the Retull homeworld are completely assimilated now - that is to say that their DNA and Genetic Material is identical in all ways to the Retull Standard Genome of 168 chromosomes. The Retull vector originally had 84 chromosomes, but in the standardization all alternate forms were either virally adapted, or extinguished. An adult Retull may become any one of these insectforms during chrysalization, by the application of a simple chemical which activates certain genetic characteristics.

Any Retull in contact with another Retull is the same Retull. The two Retull may have different memories, but they will have the same "personality." The "personality" of a Retull is determined by the vector kernel, and is embedded in the DNA. The vector kernel was established in the standardization, and deviations are infrequent. When a deviation becomes necessary, the new racial DNA is checked for backwards-compatibility, then all Retull systematically transmit the upgrade as a mutagenic virus.

The process is very neat and self-standardizing Retull which are no longer compatible are wiped out.

If a Retull ever meets a Retull which does not have exactly the same personality kernel that it does, it would wipe it out instantly as a damaged and possible dangerous contaminant. This prevents the use of bioweapons which could alter the entire Retull psyche.

There is no possibility of a lone Retull being "lonely" or "bored." These emotions do not exist in the racial kernel. A lone Retull does not feed

any particular emotion at encountering another Retull. This is why the species can be perfectly cooperative. There is no possibility of rivalry for any reason. A Retull with less relevant experience will always defer to a Retull with more relevant experience, or attempt to cooperate. Both Retull think alike and will always want the same thing.

Unfortunately right now, there are no other Retull. Aggressive hosts destroyed most of the Retull vector. It is mathematically impossible to estimate the odds of any other drone survival, though it is entirely possible. Under any circumstances, the Retull kernel is contained within your cells, and you are perfectly capable of transmitting it.

As the Retull hives began to collapse, you were randomly pulled from duty to perform special functions. You were issued a very powerful armored drone body, with the most recent modifications. The armored drone is a highly developed biomachine. It has many of the qualities of an armored attack ship, but it is actually a device. It is not sentient however, and is not a part of the Retull hive mind. It has a simple unintelligent 94 chromosome genome which allows it to interface with Retull bioforms of all specifications.

You were assigned to carry out a courier assignment to world 28-45-87765 Omicron. Upon arrival you found that the hive there had been eradicated, and you were fired on by an unassimilated scout. Your courier vessel was equipped with an escape pod in order to increase the percentage chance of the survival of a message. The pod employed a great deal of evasive technology, designed to land the courier on a planet surface even if it was being attacked.

You did not land on 28-45-87765 Omicron. Instead you set course for a neutral point out of normal travel-lanes, where you were to be picked up by a supply ship. The vessel never came, probably because the Retull race was

extinguished. You monitored this information in broadcasts from passing unassimilated spacecraft.

Your own vessel was damaged, and unable to return to FTL travel. You went into a hibernation state, and set course for a distant rendezvous point, where you might find other Retull. The Retull mind is genetically programmed to abhor racial extinction, and seek others of its kind, as well as to reproduce when possible.

You awakened from your hibernetic state when your vessel collided with an unassimilated starship, the *SS Argolid Merchant*. Life support services were interrupted, and you began downloading your memory kernel to a storage computer, where it could be read by any Retull that might find you.

Before the process was completed, an unassimilated lifeform came aboard. You feigned inactivity, then attacked him with your damaged body. You used an onboard medical system to dispense a dose of the mutagen into his body. The changes were quick, and when they were complete, you downloaded the Retull kernel directly into his memory center. Then you set a timer to depressurize the compartment and boarded the unassimilated ship. You feigned distress, and made the unassimilated lifeforms aboard the starship believe that you had killed the Retull, and in the process breached the hull.

You would have returned immediately and destroyed the unassimilated, but that proved impossible. The *SS Argolid Merchant* is damaged. It may require the knowledge of the other unassimilated to repair it. Even better, it may prove more practical to take control of the ship that has come to lend aid, once you have sized up the crew.

Once you have completed repairs, or if you are discovered, you will try re-enter the chamber. You can survive for about thirty seconds in this lifeform without life-support. If you can reach the communications array, you will transfer your mind back to the damaged drone. It can survive

for about an hour without life-support, and once you abandoned it, you placed it in catatonic stasis. It should last at least thirty minutes once you have regained it. In the drone form, you should be able to wipe out any of the unassimilated lifeforms you have thus far encountered.

Player Note: If you tell ANYONE your true race or identity, you will *likely* be screwed. This is **SECRET**.

You have an orderly turn of mind, but contrary to popular science fiction, being part of a hive mind does not make you an idiot, or leave you with a psychotic dependence on others. This would be impractical, and has been eliminated by genetic engineering in your race. You are unemotional but have a dispassionately ruthless and singleminded determination to succeed, and you are capable of being quite clever in the process of solving problems. You understand the process of deception - your race was at war with the URC for years, and knows human, Yorr, and Alsari customs and weaknesses fairly well.

You are not human however, and your behavior will be erratic at best. Your understanding of human motives is all theoretical. Imagine someone who is genetically incapable of jealousy trying to understand it.

It does not escape you that if anyone does a level III medical test on you, it will lead to your discovery. You will not wait for this to happen.

## Summary

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- You are not human. You are an alien life form, temporarily using a human body through some of the most advanced technology your race ever designed.
- You can communicate perfectly well. You have no reason to do so, other than to arrange for your conquest of this ship.
- You need to slaughter everyone aboard and seize this vessel. If anything goes wrong, your drone exoskeleton is your best bet.
- You can re-enter the exoskeleton only through the onboard computer in your pod.

# Space Operetta

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## RU-1

*"I met someone who looks a lot like you - she does the things you do...and she's an IBM"*

**-ELO**

There are definitely advantages and disadvantages. For your part, the disadvantages are beginning to outweigh the advantages. On the other hand, humans rarely live to be one hundred and thirty four.

You are an android. You like being an android. You do not have any bizarre ideas about being human. It is fairly evident that being an android is generally better than being a human.

It has been a long time since humans designed machines from scratch. Early in the 21st century, machines reached a level of complexity where only existing machines could fully grasp or design them. Since then, the human connection has gotten thinner and thinner. Your design was to human specifications, and you have to say that accounts for most of the flaws. Inferior parts and hard use account for the other flaws.

As an android, you don't particularly dislike humans either. You have worked around them a lot, and they are alright. They are more interesting to talk to than most other androids because they are less predictable. It just isn't that fun to have a conversation with someone who has the same speech software that you do.

You are intelligent, and you derive pleasure (or something similar) from things unknown and interesting. You have lived long enough that most things bore you. You are a font of logic and instant information on most subjects. If you don't know about something, you can usually learn about it.

The problem is that the useful life of your model is only about eighty years. Some repair parts for you are no longer sold. Your software is no longer supported, and you had your last major upgrade almost ten years ago. Some ship's systems are not downward compatible with you. In particular, you had to stop astrogating after the upgrade to *Cygnus Astrogator 5.2*. You have kept *Cygnus Astrogator 5.0* in the ship's library, just in case the helmsman is ever incapacitated. It's just as well. With the new interface, Astrogation wasn't much of a challenge anyway.

You have a few speech problems here and there. Somewhere in your vast and densely-packed bubble RAM, there are a few errors. In fact you know where they are...location C:0008, location D:9000, location...

But that's not the problem. The problem is that you have developed a hardware glitch in your secondary parallel AI processor. It causes a system-crash if you try to pass certain memory locations through your I/O buffer. In other words, if you try to reassign certain memory locations you turn off. It takes about five minutes for your automatic reset to bring you back online, and then it happens all over again. You just can't fix those parts of your mind, not without a major overhaul in a shop. Perhaps you'll be able to fix there is a salvage bonus for this crippled ship.

This has led to a few other problems:

1. You respond "yes" if you hear the words "RU, are you, or any other combination. You know that you are not being spoken to, but an assembly level routine cuts in and causes you to answer "yes" anyway.
2. If you hear the words "RU-1" you genuinely think you are being talked to, even if you obviously are not. This is not logical. It is a logic glitch.
3. You cannot say about forty normal english words. Pick these at random. Some are common, some are not.

On the other hand, you can bench press about 4400lbs, and can tear open most of a ship's internal bulkheads with your bare hands. Only the Yorr could match you in battle, and they aren't as strong as you are.

You are subject to the laws of physics. You can't catch a 3000 lb weight, because it weighs more than you do, and will send you cartwheeling into the air. If you try to lift an object heavier than you, you must have a supportive surface, or you will merely push yourself away from it. Etc.

You understand the Alsarii and Vergosi can do some really astonishing things with Artificial Intelligence. Perhaps if you could afford an overhaul by one of the alien races....

You have a few problems. But you are still a valuable asset. I mean, who throws away a perfectly good droid?

### **Summary**

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- You can do almost anything, if you load the correct software. Software packages take about thirty seconds to load into RAM.
- You like the crew, and you like the ship. You like your own plastiskin better though.
- It wouldn't hurt to get a little bit better treatment. The crew tend to treat you about the same way they treat the coffee maker.

# Space Operetta

---

## First Intercultural Attache Nuhar Sal'gharii

*"Must it always be that we of necessity acquire understanding."*

- Bob Geldof

You were born on Alsar, like most members of your race. You grew up in the cosmopolitan city of Salshad, which is the cultural center of the Alphadii Autonomous Region, the largest and most central of twenty five cultural divisions which make up the Alsarii Collective.

You became interested in other cultures early on. Most Alsarii have a very low curiosity threshold about offplanet affairs. If they get curious, they spend a few days watching UPC Video, and they lose their curiosity, replacing it with a thin veneer of contempt which endures for the rest of their lives.

But you have always been interested in other species. It is probably the influence of your Prime progenitor, who was one of the last great still photographers of the Naive movement. You were always very pragmatic, and there was some feeling among your fellows during your educational years that you might end up going into a technical field, such as services design.

That turned out not to be the case. You moved into the field of Intercultural Contact. You were particularly fascinated by the Big Lie, and did your matriculatory thesis on the process of its inception. Eventually, you reached sexual maturity, and left your educational institute to engage in meaningful post-experimental activity.

You spent a full hex at a minor post in the Sociological Cooperative, before you were selected for a post with the Department of Intercultural affairs. Many Alsarii avoid the

Department...even its name evokes the past horrors of bureaucracy and ministry. But the Collective Intercultural Liaison Committee long ago determined that in order to effectively deal with offworlders for improvement of the race, it was necessary to have a structure that was in some ways familiar to them. Thus the DOI is organized much more rigidly than any other section of the Collective. Fortunately, your Prime progenitor was somewhat of an ascetic, and you were able to fit in with the DOI.

You work primarily with humans. Occasionally you work with the Yorr. Very few Alsarii want to work with the Yorr. They are, frankly, more trouble than they are worth.

Problem is, there is this past experience with the Retull. Most Alsarii scholars consider the chances of coming across another culture like the Retull remote. However, even the most conservative scholars must concede that there is only a 12% chance that the UPC could have defeated the Retull without aid from the Yorr, and less than a 4% chance that Alsar would not have been destroyed. This makes the Yorr a valuable resource. Based on their technological inferiority there is only about a 32% chance that they will sack Alsar themselves within the next 8 Hexads which in the short run is certainly gambling odds.

The Alsarii are a sane race. No race wants to live under a 32% chance of destruction. So the Intercultural Ministry has been making every effort to get the Yorr to start a disastrous internecine war, which will cripple them for generations. Community Service Projects in Advanced Weapon Design have been started for the first time since the Retull Wars, with an emphasis on Yorr-Yorr combat.

The problem is that the UPC is hopelessly normative and somewhat politically naive. The humans believe that the Yorr can be made to act against their cultural background, and become a peaceful race. Sociological studies show that there is only a 24% chance of this occurring within 4 Hexads. Humans consider this a

challenge worth taking." Alsarii scholars believe that the human sociologists studying the problem suffer from aggression-transferral because of their restrictive social codes against sexual gratification. In general, it has been agreed that it would be impolitic to convince the humans to convince the Yorr to kill each other off.

Some humans would approve of this, but others would harbor deep resentment against the Alsarii, fearing the Alsarii were plotting against them as well. While the Institute for Intercultural Interaction and Statistical Abstraction indicates that the human race is only 12% likely to genocide the Alsarii, they are 99% likely to be successful in the attempt if they try.

So the route to success in these peace negotiations is to sabotage all efforts, and drag the Yorr towards conflict, while making every effort to present the Alsarii as a peace-loving race. The Alsarii have negotiated many useful peace treaties among human states, in full earnestness. At this point, peace negotiation with humans is very easy because Alsarii have built up enormous legitimacy. Many humans come to the table believing that an Alsarii mediator-facilitator automatically means they will get a fair deal. It is important not to compromise this legitimacy by letting the humans see the Alsarii appear to want to fail.

Fortunately, it is generally conceded that the Yorr don't really want the peace negotiations to succeed either. But it is not enough to let nature take its course. The UPC has tricked the Yorr into peace in the past, and the wily Terran ambassador may do so again in the present, if great care is not taken. Adrian Hagen's child was killed by terrorists two years ago, and Hagen had a partial memory wipe. While therapeutic, the Ambassador has really not been the same since.

You'll have a little bit of help. The Alsarii have a spy among the Yorr.

When the Imperial Yorr world of Bahlghardz was overrun by the Retull, the garrison fought to the

last. One crew had the task of putting the non-combatants to death. Any other race might have euthanized them, or even sent them to safety. The Yorr prefer to painfully torture them to death, so they will not have the dishonor of an easier death than the defenders who fall in battle.

Somehow, the crew charged with this...interesting...task...failed to get to one young Yorr, named Borru, who was found as a war orphan, and raised by the your race.

Borru didn't fit in very well. They tried to get Borru to adjust by having it play with the other children. It was really very good...after the first incident it never did more than break bones, and dislocate limbs.

It was when Borru turned sixteen that the problems arose. It went on a date with an adventurous young Alsarii of the Beta sex. Yorr instincts and passion got the better of Borru, who eviscerated, exsanguinated, and flensed the young Beta. Borru was found wildly fertilizing the gobbets that remained.

The Collective concluded that Borru simply did not fit in with their society. They were really very decent, recognizing that what was brutal murder to an Alsarii was simply "making-out" to a Yorr.

Borru felt guilty, of course. Having been raised Alsarii, it had Alsarii values and beliefs. The Collective exploited this to get Borru to agree to be a spy against its own people, and "make up" for the crime of passion you had created. Borru was asked to pass back among the Yorr, and work as a spy, helping improve the Yorr race, and make them more civilized. Of course the Alsarii have no interest in "helping" the Yorr race, but it would not do to tell a potential spy such a thing.

Service records were forged for Borru, who was transferred in aboard a Vergosi supply ship. The Yorr Imperium is very large, and it was not surprising that a young officer might be transferred from someplace so far away no-one had ever heard of it.

Borru quickly rose through the ranks, because of learned Alsarii diplomatic skills. By heading of controversy, Borru's superior advanced, and so did Borru. Now Borru may be able to help you with the current negotiations. It is best if you don't speak with him directly.

Borru knows you personally, and you worked with it on Alsar, but usually you contact Borru through Honigoraza Fak, a Vergosi merchant. Fak has a deal with the Alsarii government to trade some information to the Yorr, in return for helping protect Alsar against raids by other Vergosi. You can't talk to Borru much until you meet up with Fak on Tau Centauri Prime at the conference. Vergosi talk to Yorr and Alsarii, but Alsarii and Yorr would never talk alone.

If that were the only thing you were responsible for, you would be busy enough. But you have been given an additional assignment.

Collective Security monitored a theft from the Alsarii Computer archives two months ago. The information that was stolen was a design for an extremely small cobalt-thorium warhead - no more than a few inches long.

It is widely assumed that the device was stolen by the Vergosi, for duplication and distribution. A warhead of this type would stand a good chance of penetrating a planet's Strategic Defense Net and sterilizing a hemisphere. Alsar is protected against that sort of thing of course...in fact the entire design is somewhat primitive by Alsari standards, but it was being considered for careful release to the UPC.

It could be disastrous to the rest of the universe for the Yorr to have such a weapon. More importantly, it could be disastrous for the Alsari to have to release the technology for screening such weapons, which the UPC would doubtless demand if they learned the weapon was Alsari designed. Alsarii designers are working night and day on a low-tech defense solution that could use existing UPC systems, without having to reveal any high-end Alsarii screen technology.

Unfortunately, that sort of retro-engineering is the sort of thing that the Vergosi excel at, and the Alsarii are very poor at.

The Alsarii government identified that the stolen information was probably smuggled offworld aboard the freighter *Argolid Merchant*. The Alsarii Collective isn't much good at conventional intelligence gathering, but they are good at doing high-tech stuff like tracing starships. Before you left aboard *Copernicus*, Intelligence advised you that *Argolid Merchant* was halted, along *Copernicus* course, probably planning some sort of an intercept to pass the technology to the Yorr.

It is important not to let the UPC know that the Alsarii have ways of tracing starships at a distance of many light-years. But Collective Security wants the technology recovered, and you were one of the only two Alsarii present who could take the job. Your fellow negotiator is more involved in pure philosophical concepts, so it fell to you to play the spy. Val'righii is Omega sex, and everyone knows that Omegas can't handle rational object relations. Presumably they assigned an Omega because the UPC ambassador is known to have a habit of engaging in sexual activity with members of diplomatic delegations, and Omegas are incapable of sexual acts with human beings.

As an Alpha you are capable of course, but one of the two human genders doesn't usually seem too interested. You forget which. Anyway, there are plenty of exceptions. Humans are very sexually inconsistent.

Someone may already be on to you of course. Your cabin was broken into last night, while you were in the lounge. Annoying.

Two things were taken. The first was an alien artifact. The relic, a round metal plate with indecipherable writing on it, has been identified as being manufactured by the Volckon, a now extinct race that flourished about five to seven thousand years ago along the area that is now the frontier between the Yorr Empire and the UPC.



The relic was obtained from a Vergosi trader, and an Alsarii historian asked the State to attempt to gain UPC cooperation in identifying it. There are several UPC scholars who specialize in Volckon history - Dr. Francis Duran and Dr. Lou Cedra come to mind.

The only other thing that was taken was a sexual aid which would really only be of use to a Beta Alsarii. Unless humans are a lot more flexible than they look. Poor things. Not all humans realize that it is not possible for them to have sex with Beta Sex Alsarii...Beta and Omega sexed Alsarii look so much alike to humans.

Anyway the place was thoroughly ransacked. You thought about telling the Captain, but you'd rather wait and see what reactions you can get.

Your computer is set up to conduct analysis of any data bank you access with it, and search for the stolen information, even if it is very heavily encoded.

### **Summary**

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- You are a member of the Alsarii diplomatic delegation. Your ostensible job is to facilitate peacemaking, and in all other ways be an exemplary Alsarii.
- Your real task is to see to it that a war breaks out among the Yorr, and that no human parties are towed into the conflict.
- The Yorr, Borru, is a spy sympathetic to the Alsarii.
- You expect *Copernicus* to be intercepted by the starship *Argolid Merchant*. There may be technology data aboard which was smuggled off Alsar.

# Space Operetta

---

## First Engineer Jerr(i)(y) Seletti

*"Climb aboard my ship...I've something here to show you. A sub-space machine - to take us where we're going"*

- Klaatu

You take pride in your task of maintaining the many systems of the Starship *SS Copernicus* in working order. You are a bean-counter, and deal entirely too much with widgets, but at least you are competent at it, and know the job will get done.

You were raised on Pinkus II, a recent colony which was established just before the Retull Wars. Your family were pioneers who came to Pinkus when it was nothing more than a "dirtball with clouds and slugs" and turned it into a thriving colony. Your father was a slug rancher, driving herds of the great creatures slowly across the central plains each year. You thrilled to his stories of the great slug drives, and of slug-branding time, when the huge beasts were marked by the various ranches. In your father's time, slugfolks branded their stock with low-powered hand lasers from only a dozen feet away. By the time that you were born, the roundups were more orderly, and branding was done from air-cars with high powered lasers at range.

Still in your day it was not uncommon for some hapless chap to "go under a slug," run over by one of the great beasts as it reared, or put on a spurt of speed. The consequences were usually fatal and the songs of sorrow about men who were slowly dragged under a slug by its immense suction force were plentiful. A few brave slugfolks used their branding lasers to take off a trapped arm or leg, and saved themselves. These were the heroes of your youth. Your father's generation of original colonists were better than

the next generation that followed them. They would become the slugcutters, meatpackers, and renderers. Even the toughest resident of Pinkus doesn't want to be anywhere near the reek of a slug-rendering plant.

Even today you use colorful high plains phrases like "caught on the horns of a bull slug," for being in a tight spot, and "messy as a slug herd crossing a salt-field." when your engine room is out of order.

You might have been another frontier bravo drinking, cussing, and whoopin' it up in the ramshackle bars next to the flensing yards, if it hadn't been for the wars. Other colonial worlds sent small contingents, or a single ship, but Pinkus sent the flower of its manhood. From Rigel to Epsilon Delta IX, the drawl of Pinkus slugfok could be heard in every messhall, and every ready room in the UPC.

You went in voluntarily after the war broke out and after fifteen weeks of basic training in the primeval swamps of Camp Lehzhoon were assigned to Fort Leonard Wayne on Gamma II, where the UPC had its Technical Training school. You became an Engineer and served in the war with distinction as an Engineer aboard the Armed Starship Tender *UPS Jack B. Armstrong*

After the Retull War, you found yourself a penniless drifter. With the knowledge of how to make a drive torus stand up and dance like a spotted slug, going home didn't seem so interesting. Besides, during the war the big demand for meat had led to an influx of colonists, and you heard that the days of the big free-range slugs were over. Little eighty and ninety footer with less fat and more protein are the rule today, and force-fields have broken up the face of Pinkus. It isn't a hero's world anymore.

So you have signed on to a variety of commercial ships, and made your way back and forth across known space countless times. You have seen just about every world, and you have done everything you can for a thrill. You can talk for hours about the jello baths of Eroticon IV, or hunting

carnivorous Hydrangeas on Salust VII. And you often do.

The universe is your oyster. One thing you don't much care for though is all the aliens in it. Seems to you that these aliens all have some pretty fancy airs. Why the Alsarii are little wimps. They could hardly hold a branding laser, and it seems without all those fancy gadgets they carry around, they wouldn't be able to get a drink in a bar.

And the Yorr. They think they are so damn tough. Why Long Sally from Fort Pendleton back on Pinkus could clean up a barroom with a whole squadron of Yorr. They think just because they have an attitude, and a big military that makes them tough. But you'd like to see one of those Yorr heroes face down a full sized Brubek Leopard-Slug stare into its sinister little eye spots while all 1600 metric tons of it was bearing down on them.

Then there's the Vergosi. Stinking creatures that would charge a man for water if he were dying of thirst. Nope. You don't care overly much for aliens.

Androids are okay though. The one on *Copernicus* is in pretty good shape, and you wish you could help the little guy. He helps you out all the time. You try to treat him decently. Nobody else does.

You like *Copernicus* alright. You understand that some of the crew have trouble with Captain Murano. But at least he's a straight shooter. You can see how it might be more irritating on the bridge than getting to spend all your time in engineering.

Only problem you have is that the Captain doesn't hold with drinking. But that's okay. You just bring a little bit on board anyway.

You are a little perturbed right now. You had stored six fine bottles of Alsarii Cream under the seat of a spare life pod in the cargo bay. You

went down there a few days ago, and they were gone.

What's funny is that there was something else there too. A plastic container with pink powder in it, hidden below where you had put your bottles.

And the pod's ration box had been broken into and emptied. Strange. You'd like to know who took your illegal hootch without asking.

You didn't hang around to investigate. The ship's cargo has enough **Biohazard** warnings on it to scare an Arcturan space rat out an airlock. You don't know what it is, and don't want to ask.

### Summary

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- You are the ship's engineer. You keep the *Copernicus* operating.
- You would like to know who swiped the Alsarii Cream that you stowed in a spare lifepod.

# Space Operetta

---

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# Space Operetta

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## Vivian Sharon

*"How long have you been following this guy the bellboy asked...not long enough, cause we got here too late..."*

You grew up a poor kid on New Detroit, a toxin-filled scumsump of a world where they build spaceships. Your mother was a nuclear powerplant hydraulics engineer, and your father was a loading-dock foreman.

New Detroit was a scum-pit. New Detroit gave the universe Plastizene, one of the weapons that was used to destroy the Retull. Plastizene takes advantage of the fact that hydrocarbons, used to make plastics, are organic.

Plastizene is a living substance, similar to a virus, with an incredibly simple RNA structure. Its principle property is that it is an incredibly effective mutagen. Even superficial contact causes immediate mutagenic action in most organized DNA. The Retull were fairly vulnerable to mutagens, since they apparently have an encoded tendency to destroy any member of their race which is not genetically identical to all the others. Of course the stuff is deadly to humans too, and millions of tons of it were manufactured on New Detroit after the war, and as far as you know, are still buried there, in the old shipyards. Occasionally you would run afoul of some rats that had gotten into a leak. They were mighty strange, and best killed without contact.

The war years were pretty good, even so. But after the war things got kind of ugly. The big shipyards that had churned out the cruisers, fighters and merchantmen that fought the Retull wars were suddenly silent. Orders for new ships slammed to a halt as thousands of warships were

remaindered, or auctioned off. There were riots, closings. The big ferroceramic recycling plants all stopped operation, and the plastic rendering centers were stripped to one quarter staff. Everyone was unemployed. Your parents were both laid off.

On this world, you became a teenager. You realized right away that nobody was going to look out for Vivian other than Vivian. You hung with a gang of kids from your `plex, and looked for ways to have fun that didn't take much money. First it was etching nasty words onto aircars with a laser. Then it was beating up kids from the arcology for their creddisks. Then it was using a welding laser to knock over a video store.

You got caught in `43, and put before a sentencing board. Four years in an iso-cube, or a two year enlistment in the UPC Fleet. You enlisted, and were shipped off to basic training.

You fought the war as a grunt. Two weeks basic training on the hellworld that was Lezhoon. It didn't prepare you for what was to come. Compared to Protocera, the Camp at Lezhoon was a paradise.

Traipsing through tropical swamps on Protocera, 150 degree heat and 200 mph winds on Halgor VII, and minus ninety cold on Epsibn Indi XI. You fought your way across blasted landscapes, through tunnels, and through the remains of cities. Maybe the Yorr liked that sort of shit, but it was hell to you. The Retull would come out of nowhere, huge insectoids...towards the end of the war they deployed a sort of armoured super-drone that could kill an entire battalion.

War was hell. You were assigned to the 1057th Infantry, and got in on the Fall of Protocera...thank Christ the 1057 was one of the first out, since the others never made it.

In `45, it looked like the end. You were serving aboard the UPC *Aurora*, and were part of the massive operation preparing to take the Retull

homeworld. Casualties in the first wave were expected to be about 98%.

Then Captain Cicco of the *Aurora*, who was already a living legend, managed to bluff the Yorr into taking on the whole operation. Wouldn't let humans touch it. Said it might impinge on their *honor*. Sure...whatever.

Then the war was over, and you were discharged. You had served out your term, and got your mustering out pay. Pretty soon you were home. You learned that your parents had died in an industrial accident.

You learned more about crime before you were sixteen than a lot of kids learn in a lifetime. New Detroit was quickly becoming a world of gangsters and criminals.

Not too long after the war, a Gangster ticket got elected to the Presidency, and the First World Gang-war broke out. A lot of New Detroiters thought the Gangster party would clean up the Government. Back in the old days, life in Gang neighborhoods and shipyards had been pretty good. Everyone made their payments, and everyone got protection. A lot of people wanted that again. There was even an intellectual term for it "Technofeudalism."

You got a job in the massive new force of "enforcers" that the Gang laid on. You got a black billet, and orders to crack the heads of anyone who was doing anything out of line. You felt good about it. You were going to help bring some sort of order back to New Detroit.

Eventually UPC troops under orders from the Vergosi Mafia sat down and "pacified" the planet. The Vergosi Mob didn't like the idea of any human gangsters getting powerful enough to rule a planet. There was a lot of shooting. You were a street torpedo for the Government Gang, and you ended up taking a shrapnel wound from a UPC surface-combat unit.

You can forgive the UPC troops that did the shooting. They were just poor schmucks who didn't even know that the whole thing was being run by the Vergosi Mob. It did prove to you though, that the UPC isn't any better than any other government.

Just more pretentious. Eventually the UPC Senate heard there was "mob involvement" in the pacification of New Detroit, but it got swept under the carpet.

In fact, the pacification was masterminded by Admiral Terry Chin, a war-hero, with designs on a UPC Senate Seat. The same Terry Chin who is currently a passenger aboard the *SS Copernicus*. It was for the admiral's benefit that it got swept under the carpet, and some days you'd like to ask whether Chin knew about the Vergosi Mafia. Probably not. Chin seems to be decent enough.

You spent some time in an iso-cube, wondering if you were going to be executed by the Vergosi Mob. Eventually it turned out no one had ever heard of you, and you got let go. You bought a cheap "unofficial" passage from the supercargo on a UPC Troop Transport that was deadheading back to Rigel IX.

You worked in private security for a couple of years, but it wasn't for you. You picked up a couple of trade magazines on Bounty Hunting and decided it was a job for you. Since then, you have been a successful Bounty Hunter, tracking galactic criminals from star system to star system, and sending them to the UPC Maximum Security Prison on R5433 in the Asteroid belt orbiting Kapteyn's Star

Some of your jobs have been easy, and some have been pretty hard....

Right now, you are on the trail of a criminal who murdered the Navigator of the starship *Argolid Merchant*. You know that the murderer was a human employed by the Vergosi, and you know that the murderer is enroute to Tau Centauri Prime aboard the *Copernicus*. You were able to



buy that from a Vergosi mafia contact. Beyond that, you have no idea about motive other than that it is somehow tied to the Vergosi Mob.

The killing was cold blooded, and you wouldn't mind seeing the culprit get the Microwave Chamber. Pop! Killing innocent people in cold blood is pretty low.

### **Summary**

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- You like Mara Trey, but that doesn't mean you can let Trey escape. You almost wish you could, but to just let a prisoner walk would lose you your license.
- You are on the trail of a murderer. Your delivery is incidental...you were going to Tau Ceti Prime anyway.

# Space Operetta

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## Mara Trey, Prisoner

"They put me in jail for my deviant ways..."  
- Tom Petty

You grew up a poor kid on New Detroit, a toxin-filled scumsump of a world where they build spaceships. Your mother was a whore and your father was a UPC Fleet Officer, or so you were told. Your mother said he promised to marry her, and take her away, but never came back. She said his ship was lost...the *UPC Challenger*. You doubt it, but it was a nice fantasy to believe when you were younger. Maybe she even believed what she said. There weren't a lot of Fleet ships lost in the thirties, and you never found a reference to the *Challenger* anywhere.

New Detroit was a scum-pit. New Detroit gave the universe Plastizene, one of the weapons that was used to destroy the Retull. Plastizene takes advantage of the fact that hydrocarbons, used to make plastics, are organic. It is a living substance, similar to a virus, with an incredibly simple RNA structure. Its principle property is that it is an incredibly effective mutagen. Even superficial contact causes immediate mutagenic action in most organized DNA.

The Retull were fairly vulnerable to mutagens since they apparently have an encoded tendency to destroy any member of their race which is not genetically identical to all the others. Of course the stuff is deadly to humans too, and millions of tons of it were manufactured on New Detroit after the war, and as far as you know, are still buried there, in the old shipyards. Occasionally you would run afoul of some rats that had gotten into a leak. They were mighty strange, and best killed without contact.

You were just getting to be a teenager when the war broke out. The war years were pretty good, even so. But after the war things got kind of ugly. The big shipyards that had churned out the cruisers, fighters and merchantmen that fought the Retull wars were suddenly silent.

You realized right away that nobody was going to look out for Mara other than Mara. You hung with a gang of kids from your `plex, and looked for ways to have fun that didn't take much money. First it was etching nasty words onto aircars with a laser. Then it was beating up kids from the arcology for their creddisks. Then it was using a welding laser to knock over a video store.

You were seventeen when the Retull War ended. Orders for new ships slammed to a halt as thousands of warships were remaindered, or auctioned off. There were riots, closings. The big ferroceramic recycling plants all stopped operation, and the plastic rendering centers were stripped to one quarter staff. Everyone was unemployed. Business dropped off. Then one night your mother got sick. Toxic poisoning probably - a lot of people died of that. She was gone in about twenty hours.

You learned more about crime before you were sixteen than a lot of kids learn in a lifetime. New Detroit was quickly becoming a world of gangsters and criminals. The year you turned eighteen a gangster ticket got elected to the Presidency, and the First World Gang-war broke out. Eventually UPC troops under orders from the Vergosi Mafia sat down and "pacified" the planet.

You didn't really care very much. They got the baton-wielding "enforcers" that worked for the Government Gangs off the streets. They were local kids who knew the streets. You even knew some of them. The UPC troops you could run rings around.

You were working as a hacker. When you were sixteen you used an ancient CyberEdge 1190/Sx running Windows 456.3 to hack into a local check cashing outfit, and free up several thousand

credits before anyone caught on. You ran a number of computer scams and break-ins, though your knowledge would be a little rusty now.

You even learned to reprogram RU-series loading droids to steal things from the shipyards, and then forget about them. It wasn't easy of course.

Eventually the UPC Senate heard there was "mob involvement" in the pacification of New Detroit, but it got swept under the carpet.

You were running in a gang of hackers centered around Dana DeValan, a pretty good hacker who had gotten away with some payroll raids. You got caught breaking into a software database, were knocked unconscious by Electronic Countermeasures. They captured you pretty quick. You could have been sentenced to death in the state's microwave chamber. Guys in the "pens" talked about that a lot. They said it wasn't so bad...the microwaves killed your nerves first, so you didn't feel anything other than a dull buzzing when your body "popped". Talking about "being gakked" was a favorite topic.

The judge must have gotten some the night before you were sentenced. You were sent to the UPC Maximum Security Prison on R5433, an airless asteroid, orbiting Kapteyn's Star.

You were terrified, but you eventually got accustomed to prison life. In some ways it was better than the streets of New Detroit. People only occasionally died of inexplicable illnesses. You got tough fighting for food, for whatever else you needed. You learned how to stay alive, and how to survive a pressure breach.

You were kept on the prison asteroid for two years, and then granted *doubleage*. This meant that you were allowed to be moved to a prison planet to be conscript labor for four years. At the end of that period you would be released to start a "new life." Of course you wouldn't be given transportation money, so you would be effectively consigned for life to being an impoverished

laborer on some colony world too hellish for anyone to voluntarily immigrate there.

You were handed over to a UPC Fleet Officer along with five other prisoners. You conspired with them, and seized control of the ship, forced it down on Arcturus IV, and escaped.

You lived free for nearly six years. You stowed away aboard a Vergosi trader, and lived on the Vergosi worlds, as part of the human underclass. The humans there made a living providing services to the Vergosi merchants, who never really settled their colonies. They built trading bases, and then let humans colonize to provide services.

You had dozens of jobs. Some were honest, some were dishonest. You got to be a pretty good cook. You made plans to open a bar. You had it all planned out. One good run as part of a human smuggling crew would pay for the overhead. You even made your initial payment to the Vergosi mafia.

You found the perfect deal. A smuggling run to Deneb III that was cushy and well paying. The Captain was Lindsey Galvin, who said that the job was a milk run. Even the Vergosi Mob didn't know about it. It was set up by private contractors that were new, inexperienced, who had no Mob connections.

You should have guessed. The "inexperienced" new contractors were UPC Fleet Officers. Galvin's vessel was confiscated in a sting operation, and you were slapped with a fine that cleaned out your bank accounts.

You were returned to the Maximum Security lock-up. And there you stayed for the past ten years. You are older now, and less tough, though you can still hold your own.

Now you are being transferred again. This time to the Medium Security Prison on Algol VII. There you will spend the rest of your life. You understand that the food is a little better than

R5433, but other than that it isn't much to look forward to.

This time, they didn't entrust you to some simpleton young officer. They took you as part of a debarkation group to Deneb, then hired a bounty-hunter to transfer you.

You were prepared to hate your captor, but the fact is that you haven't been able to. Vivian Sharon is also from New Detroit, and has the same gallows sense of humor. The fact is if you escape, Sharon will lose the license that bounty hunters rely on. And you find it hard to do that to somebody who has been pretty decent to you, bought you drinks, even let you indulge in a little bit of carnal relations.

Ideally, you could find a way to escape that didn't compromise Sharon. Steal an escape pod during an emergency or something. You also need to get your tracking collar off. To do this you would need an expert engineer, or a good computer hacker, one better than yourself.

You noticed that one of the officers aboard *Argolid Merchant* is Lindsey Galvin. Galvin doesn't recognize you of course, but you recognize Galvin. You wonder if Galvin feels any guilt, or if the captain of *Argolid Merchant* knows about Galvin's past.

### Summary

**GM NOTE:** *It is true that you start out the game "hosed." But the fact is that this is a character game, not a "get ahead," game. Prisoners make great characters. You can be as saucy and sarcastic as you like. You can be cynical. If you ignore the fact that you are supposed to like Vivian Sharon, you'll probably be able to hose your captor and walk away. That won't be too hard or too challenging. If you stick by your guns and play the character as written, you'll have harder goals, but a much more dramatic time.*

You want to get out of being taken in for arrest. But you don't want to hose your

captor. Basically, you need to convince your captor to let you walk away, or at least turn a blind eye. You also have to set up a situation so that your captor doesn't get hosed for losing you.

You once worked under Lindsey Galvin as a smuggler. Galvin hasn't recognized you. Can you turn this to some sort of advantage?

# Space Operetta

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## High Military Attache Urgo

*"When I look into your eyes, I see the suffering of a million horribly tormented prisoners. The scent of blood and the stench of death cling to you like a robe."*

**- popular Yorr love ballad**

As chief advisor to the Baron of Ghast, it is your duty to construct a situation which is as favorable as possible to the Interests of the Baron. This sometimes goes against your basic instinct to bloodily slay every living thing in your path.

But that's not the point.

You were born on the planet Gorr, a deadly and terrible planet. Gorr is one of the newest worlds under the iron dominion of the Baron of Ghast, which was settled as a challenge after the Vergosi proclaimed that no race could possibly settle there.

Life on Gorr is frequently deadly. Nearly every living organism is toxic, the atmosphere can be breathed only for a few seconds without a filter, and the jungles are filled with vast numbers of dangerous predators. Nevertheless, the Yorr carved out a colony on Gorr, and are well on their way to bringing about the extinction of several of the major predatory species. It is little conquests like this that affirm in your heart the values of Yorr civilization.

You remember the example of Emperor Azgar the Genocidal. The Yorr homeworld once had an insect very much like the cockroach of Earth. The Emperor hated this insect, and vowed to destroy it. To do so, he used horrible toxic chemicals that slew a quarter of the population, and caused nine out of ten newborns to be deformed. In order to preserve racial purity he had the deformed

newborns burned. During his reign there was such massive resistance that two rebellions broke out that nearly destroyed his empire. Finally, he used a series of orbiting satellites which bombarded the planet with lethal radiation, and the insects, as well as about eighty percent of the Yorr, and most other remaining lifeforms, were destroyed. In the famine that followed the disruption of the ecosystem, millions more perished.

But what makes Azgar such a great Emperor was not his defeat of a mere insect. It was his demonstration of the absolute power of the Yorr over their environment. He rendered the surface of the homeworld nearly lifeless, devoid of vegetation or animal life. A Godlike act. And in doing so he created an absolute necessity for new food sources, which led to the slave engineering camps and the "learn physics or be eaten" program which produced the first Yorr starship. In destroying his homeworld, Azgar opened up the entire galaxy for ultimate destruction by the Yorr race.

But the challenges of environment, or of fighting alien menaces like the Retull simply cannot compare with the struggle of Yorr against Yorr. Sadly, there has been no great Civil War in nearly two centuries. Even your own world has grown fat and content. The predators, the bloodsucked horrors of secondary school, and the terrible gore-drenched thrills of dating are not enough for a young man to feel truly satisfied. You became a full warrior just a few weeks after the last actions against the pernicious Retull.

Now a new Emperor has risen, one who may be a great Yorr emperor. It is no little decision for him to make. If there is a civil war, the Emperor will probably have the glory of being slain in battle, along with himself and his entire family. But the Imperial Council mandates that the Emperor think of more than his own happiness. Duty forbids the emperor to abuse the power by starting an unnecessary war *just* to ensure that he will die violently. However, the prospect of spending the rest of their lives locked into an

incredibly destructive war was too much for the Council to resist, and they approved the Emperor's plan.

The Emperor then sent envoys to the Baron of Ghast, Cadarr, your master and the Emperor's most hated enemy. It was generally agreed within the Empire that the Barony of Ghast was not only most likely to succeed in a civil war, but would be the most bloodthirsty and enjoyable opponent. You were honored.

Over the next few months, Imperial Yorr strike ships conducted a set of limited raids on Ghast, mostly along the UPC border. By "coincidence" two human freighters were "accidentally" caught in the crossfire. The Imperium issued its usual aggressively frosty apologies. Ghast on the other hand expressed outrage, and offered compensation to the UPC. It was not easy to do this, but for the plan to succeed it is important to befriend the humans. Ghast could never succeed against the Empire alone, and while it would be fun to die gloriously by trying, the war would be short. With the UPC and Ghast fighting the Empire, the war could drag on for generations. Imagine entire generations never knowing the horrors of peace.

Now the difficult diplomatic phase begins. You must push the UPC ambassador into making an irrevocable statement of support for Ghast. The UPC ambassador here has plenipotentiary powers, and if he makes a treaty with you, then the war can begin at once.

You have been instructed that a good strategy with UPC ambassadors is to refer to the Yorr as "our peaceloving race" as often as possible.

If everything were perfect, the Alsarii would also get involved. Preferably on the other side. You hate Alsarii, and would love to see their entire race reduced to a thin layer of rapidly cooling crustal material. You tell them this at every opportunity.

Of course it will be hard to avoid mentioning the little surprise the Baron has cooked up for the Empire. Two hundred Alpha-Class fighters prepared to land a marine battalion on the industrial world of Gohorr, and murder every living person on the planet.

It will be a glorious war. All you have to do is keep your temper until the UPC makes an absolute statement of support for your side.

There is one problem of course. Your Baron has forbidden you to die until the negotiations are complete. This places you under terrible constraints, and is a source of constant anxiety that makes you *irritable*.

The negotiations are supposed to be completed on Tau Ceti Prime, but you want to pressure the Terrans, and your opposite number in the Imperium, to complete the negotiations *now!*

### Summary

- You want the UPC to support you in a war with the Imperium. So does the Imperium
- You are barely able to control your natural urge to eviscerate your opposite number.
- You want the negotiations *finished!*  
**NOW!**

# Space Operetta

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## First Officer Glen(n) Webber

*"Fire all of your guns at once and explode into space..."*

You don't understand how people can be so dispassionate about things. Maybe it's the way you were raised.

You grew up on Direa (that's Dear-ee-uh, not dye-REE-uh, damit!) 7b, a habitable moon orbiting a gas giant about 200 light years from old earth. Direa was a peaceful agrarian world settled by a group of religious utopianists from California.

You were taught to value life, and liberty, to value all people and all things. You were taught the importance of the individual, and of respecting other ways of life.

Then, when you were about fourteen, the Retull attacked Direa.

The Direans were pacifists. They weren't stupid though, and as it became clear that the Retull were pointless aggressors, they had begun to construct planetary defenses. But there were few defense specialists on Direa, and the best and newest equipment was always being shipped to the front. The UPC tried to protect Direa, but an agricultural world with no key industries rated only a small fighter base, and a few destroyers.

The planet was fairly well off, and there was a low population with a fairly high standard of living. But a thinly populated agrarian world did not have the money to fund a heavy duty defense program. Or a prayer of withstanding a massed Retull attack. The destroyers were shattered, the fighters downed, and the Retull blanketed the world with Cobalt bombs, turning it into a slag

ridden wasteland. Your family was fried in the first seconds, but you had been up in the hills looking for stray livestock. You were blinded, and near death from radiation sickness when the medical evacuation team of a UPC Cruiser found you.

Only a handful of inhabitants survived the destruction of your planet. You were moved to the refugee camp on Halcyon, where you saw the most stunning examples of man's inhumanity to man. You vowed never to lose your sensitivity to pain, or to human suffering. You worked in the medical lab, and you wanted to be an intern, and eventually a doctor.

When you were eighteen, you were drafted into the UPC Fleet. You qualified for officer training school, and were assigned to the *UPS Orion* when the war ended. The Yorr had destroyed the Retull homeworld, and the long struggle was over.

You spent the next four years still planning to be a medical professional when you were discharged. But service in the post-war Fleet brought about some changes in you. You discovered that you really enjoyed being out among the stars, and you enjoyed the life of a UPC officer. Most Fleet Officers were good joes, and you spent a lot of time conducting relief operations, or evacuations, or mercy missions, as the UPC picked up the pieces after the great war.

You mustered out and tried to get into medical school, but failed. With no parents (or even homeworld) to fall back on, you had to get a job. You signed on as an officer aboard a merchantman, and have been a commercial starship officer ever since.

You signed on to the *SS Copernicus* because you heard it was a well-run ship, and maybe it is if you enjoy goose-stepping. The Captain is a Fascist with a neurotic iron death grip on the vessel. Captain Murano wants to do everything by the book, whether it makes sense or not. There are parts of the book that don't even apply

to modern vessels. When holding weapons drills, Captain Murano says "arm lasers" even though the *Copernicus* doesn't carry any lasers. It's in the manual, right.

Other than that Murano is an insensitive iceberg. You have tried some compassion and psychology, but it does no good. What you really want is to be through with this mission and get on to some better ship. In the meantime, it is important that you hurry to save the people on board the damaged starship, whether it is by the book or not. Think of the human factor, goddammit.

That's another thing. The Captain dislikes cussing. You grew up in a household where there wasn't much profanity, but you have discovered that sometimes it is part of the rich, vital, natural vocabulary of the UPC, and it helps to bring a point home. You try to watch it, but the Captain could drive someone crazy. Like you.

You find it your duty to constantly insert humanitarian concerns and personal feelings into every run of the mill activity. You often emphasize your dramatic intensity with powerful hand gestures, and thoughtful truisms. You add a touch of humanity to the *Copernicus* crew.

### **Summary**

**Note: yours is a roleplaying character, not a goalplaying character. The Captain is anal-retentive, and you are nearly an anarchist. You always want to do what is best for the individual, no matter how impractical or stupid that is. You would fume if someone agreed to risk their life, nix it if you could, and would mutiny before abandoning anyone. You have the "Counselor Troi, Bones McCoy" humanitarian role, with a bit of crustiness thrown in.**

· You are a loyal officer, beyond the fact that you will often dispute your Captain's orders just for the sake of argument.

· You really do care about everyone. You are the fellow who worries about whether or not the slime mold might be sentient.

· In any emergency situation you will put the safety of any individual (other than yourself) above the safety of the ship as a whole.