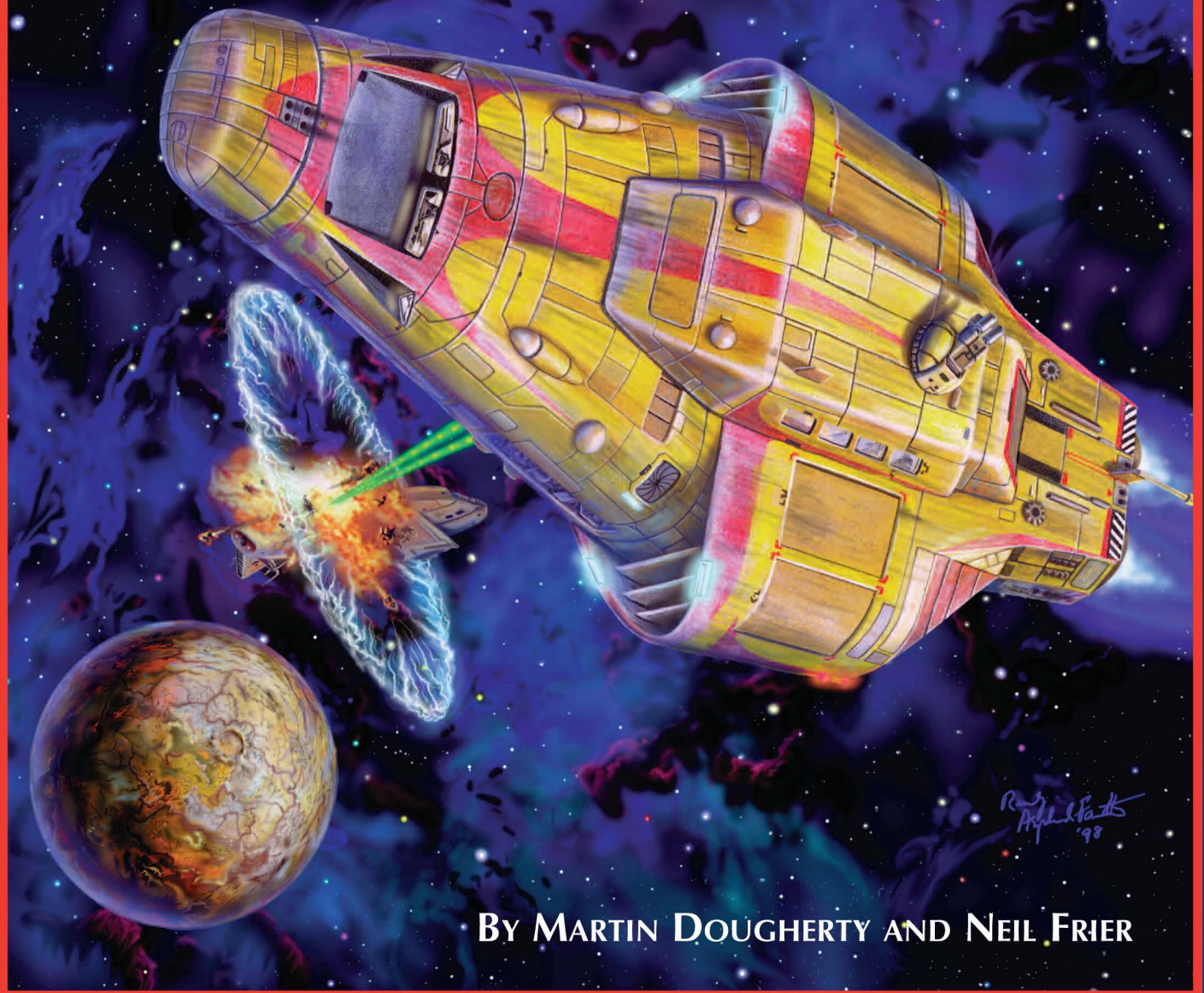


GURPS[®] *Traveller*[®]

BEHIND THE CLAW

The Spinward Marches Sourcebook



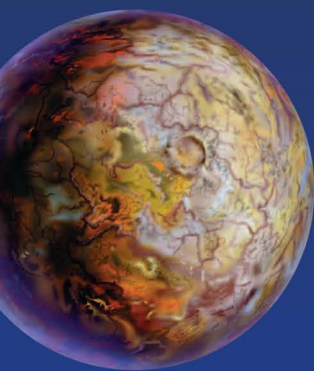
BY MARTIN DOUGHERTY AND NEIL FRIER

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

Behind the Claw: *Slang phrase referring to those regions of the Third Imperium lying beyond the Great Rift. Almost a year from the Capital by Xboat, the Spinward Marches is a frontier region, scene of five Frontier Wars and innumerable skirmishes. The Marches is one of the most troubled regions of the entire Imperium.*

Behind the Claw details the Spinward Marches, a complete sector of space for **GURPS Traveller**. Over 400 star systems are described in detail, along with essays on the Imperial nobility and system of government, a detailed history of the region, Game Master's information, current events and a wealth of adventure material. The setting is rich and diverse, with unlimited scope for campaigns.

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- Lead your mercenary company to repulse Vargr raiders . . .
- Salvage the wrecks left behind by the Fifth Frontier War . . .
- Engage in industrial espionage among the megacorporations of the Imperium . . .
- Explore ancient ruins on an airless moon . . .
- Broker a peace settlement on the volatile Border Worlds . . .
- Join the stubborn landholders of District 268, holding what's theirs against invading alien warriors . . .
- Race to the rescue of a distressed merchant vessel!



**The ultimate SF
adventure setting . . .
Behind the Claw!**



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FIRST EDITION
PUBLISHED OCTOBER 1998

GURPS Basic Set, **GURPS Traveller**, and **GURPS Space** are required for full use of this book in a **GURPS** campaign. **Ultra-Tech** and **Ultra-Tech 2** are not required, but will be very useful. The details of the science fiction universe will be of great value to any **Traveller** campaign, and will also serve as a source of inspiration for other SF games.

BEHIND THE SCENES:

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AND NEIL FRIER

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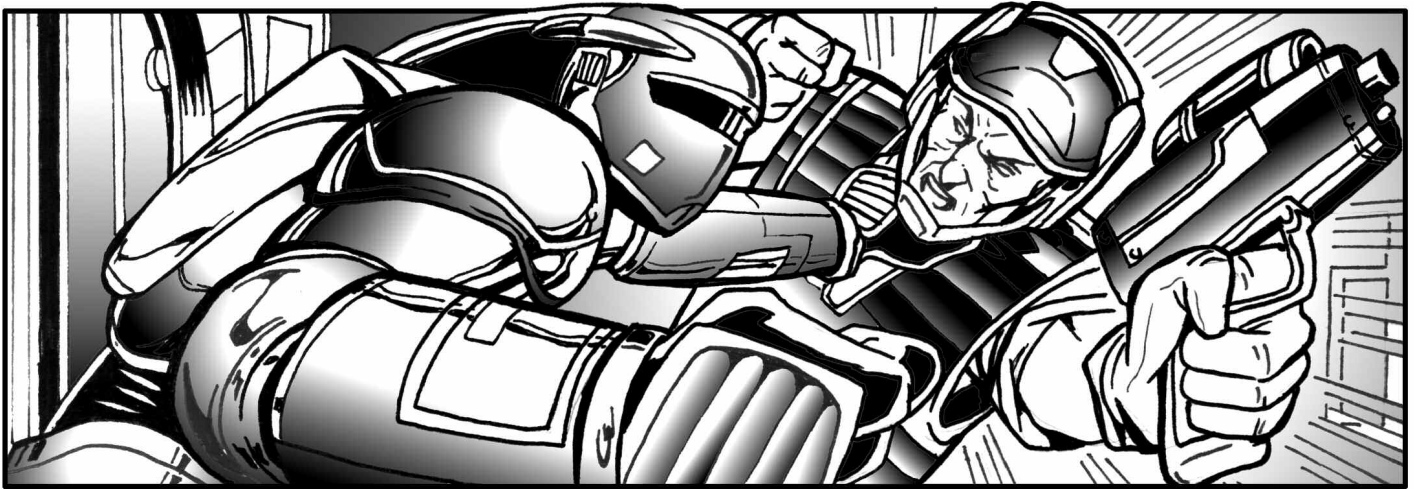
Printed in the
U.S.A.

GURPS[®] *Traveller*[®]

Behind the Claw

THE SPINWARD MARCHES SOURCEBOOK

BY MARTIN DOUGHERTY AND NEIL FRIER



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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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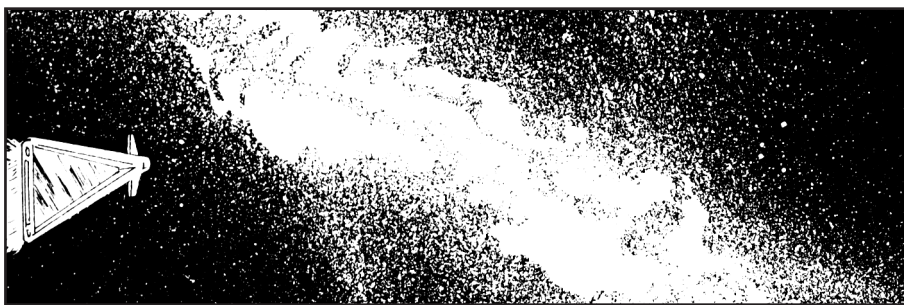
INTRODUCTION

The Spinward Marches sector is the “birthplace of *Traveller*.” It is the Third Imperium in microcosm – the great industrial worlds and the undeveloped frontiers, the megacorporations and the primitive alien species, sinister foes sharpening their knives along the borders (as well as within those borders), corporate competition, internal politics, rebellion and treachery – it’s all here.

In the 19 years since *Supplement 3: The Spinward Marches* appeared and gave *Traveller* a home, a great deal of water has passed under many bridges. There have been other settings for *Traveller* just as exciting as the Marches. But the Marches are “home.” This is where it all started.

The Spinward Marches of 1120 are not the Marches of 1105, of course. The current events of 1105 are history now. Things have changed. Time has moved along. New data has been discovered about races and worlds previously unknown. The political situation has changed, too. The Marches have an Archduke now, and a fleet blooded (and victorious) in the Fifth Frontier War. But the sector has not become a safe backwater overnight – far from it. This is the edge of the Imperium. The frontier. The fringe of civilization. This is where things happen.

Some things don’t change.



Martin J. Dougherty has been involved with *Traveller* since 1983. An electronic engineer by training, he now teaches science, and blames the game’s influence for his career choice. Other occupations have included computer games design and freelance writing. He has written several fiction and non-fiction books, and many articles for gaming magazines.

Martin’s writing partnership with Neil began in 1994, and has not been confined to *Traveller*. Current projects include a new science-fiction novel, more *Traveller* and other games material, and an attempt to get *Traveller* on television. He is married with two cats. Ambitions include paying off the credit card and Getting-His-Act-Together. Interests include fencing, firearms, gaming and annoying Neil.

Neil Andrew Frier lives with his wife and son in South Shields, England, where as a graduate of Loughborough University he pursues a career as a transport engineer for the local authority.

A keen cyclist, Neil splits his free time between this, being a dad and roleplaying. Neil’s love of the roleplaying concept began back in 1980 when he bought the original *Traveller* black box set. Since then he has played all of *Traveller*’s many versions as well as *RuneQuest*, *Pendragon* and *Vampire*.

Both Neil and Martin are members of the British Isles Traveller Support group and have been involved in producing *Traveller* material for Imperium Games and *GURPS Traveller*.

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

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Page References

See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181 for a full list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised*; e.g. p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. CI refers to *Compendium I*, CII to *Compendium II*, S to *Space*, U to *Ultra-Tech*, VE to *Vehicles* and GT to *GURPS Traveller*.

The Domain of Deneb



Recent History of the Spinward Marches

Historians consider a convenient starting point for “recent” history in the Spinward Marches to be the year 1098, when Norris Aella Aledon was invested as duke of Regina. The event proved a watershed in the history of the region.

1098

Civil war raged on Joyeuse as Norris was invested, but died down before becoming an issue outside the Sword Worlds.

The Imperial Penal Facility at Pixie/Regina was formally opened on 254-1098, seeing a return to the system of converting gutted starships into prison hulks. The *Gaesh*, a former Kinunir Class frontier patrol vessel, was said to be a very model of modern reform and rehabilitation methods, and escape-proof to boot.

Citizens on Horosho/Glisten overthrew the world’s ineffectual democratic government in a rapid and almost bloodless coup, electing an officer of the Imperial Navy to the rank of dictator. Lieutenant Lish Dervan was known for her extreme fascist values, and resigned her commission to take over the world.

1099

1099 was a mostly quiet year for the Marches, marked mainly by the preparations for the Imperium’s 12th century celebrations. The last weeks of the year saw Imperium-wide festivities ranging from organized events such as the Regina Pilgrimage – a cultural journey through the history of the Imperium – to the worldwide street parties on Mercury, which saw a breakdown of order that required marines to be deployed to break up the riots.

Reports in the latter half of the year of an unidentifiable craft sighted at various points along the spinward frontier were dismissed as mistaken, though a number of detached Scout Service vessels were ordered spinward to investigate.

Security forces on Regina/Regina captured a number of Ine Givar operatives and quantities of nerve gas in a raid just before year’s end. The target is thought to have been a mass gathering of revelers celebrating the 12th century.

THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

In theory, the governmental structure of the Imperium is simple: The worlds of the Imperium handle their own affairs subject to a few common rules. The Imperium rules the space in between. To paraphrase a great political commentator of the early days of the Imperium: “The citizens govern themselves. The Imperial authorities just make sure nobody’s shooting at them while they do it.”

But the Imperium does maintain control of its member worlds. Individual worlds can be brought into line by many means, up to and including military force. More commonly, a combination of advice, guidance and subtle economic control is used to ensure that the worlds of the Imperium do as the Emperor wishes. Within these loose bounds, the various world governments rule as they please.

The Imperial nobility both serve and rule the citizens of the Imperium. They command the fleets that protect them, conduct diplomacy in their name, represent the citizens at the Imperial Court, directly rule many worlds, advise the government on others and act as “fire brigades” to deal with threats to the citizens’ well-being. It is in return for this service that the nobility receive their privileged status.

The highest Imperial authority is the Emperor and his immediate family. Next come the archdukes who rule the great Imperial domains. Each domain is a region comprising the Imperial worlds of four sectors of space. The Spinward Marches are a single sector within the Domain of Deneb. The archduke of the Domain of Deneb is Norris Aella Aledon, whose capital is at Mora/Mora in the Spinward Marches. The Domain of Deneb covers all the worlds owing allegiance to the Imperium within the Spinward Marches, Deneb, Trojan Reaches and Reft sectors.

Deneb is smaller than other domains for several reasons. Firstly, a few worlds of Reft Sector lie beyond feasible administrative range, on the other side of the Great Rift. Secondly, the Rift itself contains very few systems, meaning that Reft Sector contains very few Imperial worlds and Deneb has three almost completely empty subsectors. Thirdly, the Trojan Reaches lie almost entirely beyond the Imperial border. Only a few Imperial outposts and client states answer to the archduke at Mora. Lastly, even the Spinward Marches and Deneb contain worlds of non-Imperial allegiance.

Despite being smaller than other domains, Deneb is still far, far too big for any one sentient, however talented, to maintain close control. Thus, as the Emperor at Capital/Core delegates authority to his archdukes, the archdukes delegate authority to their subordinates, and they to theirs.

Archduke Norris does not rule the worlds of his domain. Even Regina, of which he is the hereditary duke, does not “belong” to him. In this limited concept of rule, Norris claims authority over his domain in precisely the same fashion that the Emperor rules the Imperium.

The Imperium and its domains are a feudal organization of worlds that have agreed to surrender certain rights, such as control of foreign affairs, and the

location deters many would-be traders. Ghandi is a gas-giant's moon, situated in a system where there are no significant rocky worlds, just three gas giants orbited by various small satellites. Ghandi itself is a frozen wasteland of ice and bare rock, with the occasional dust storm stirred up by the trace oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere. Even the gas giant Oinikii filling the sky is nothing much to look at – it is at best a brownish-red ball with darker red swirls.

1817 Victoria (Imperial) – Red Zone

Starport: Class 0.

Diameter: 5,610 miles (9,026 km). *Atmosphere:* Dense oxygen-nitrogen, with taint at low altitudes. *Surface Water:* 72%. *Climate:* Normal. *Population:* 12,000,000. *Government:* Multiple societies. *Control Rating:* 0. *TL:* 5.

Victoria is a small, light and metal-poor world that has somehow managed to gain a dense, tainted atmosphere. The taint is toxic to humans, and cannot be handled by normal filter masks. Since the taint is heavier than the rest of the atmosphere, it tends to hover below 1,000 yards above sea level. Because of this, the populace lives atop a system of mesas, traveling between their high settlements in airships constructed from locally occurring balloon plants (which grow bundles of hydrogen-filled sacs). The airships are propelled by hand-cranked aero-screws.

Victoria has large numbers of ivory gazelle (Kudebeck's gazelle, or "Kudie") running wild on the mesa tops. The ivory gazelle is not native to Victoria, but appears to have been seeded along with other flora and fauna by the Ancients. Its ivory is an important resource on metal-poor Victoria.

The planet shows signs of extensive asteroid bombardment in the distant past, which most authorities link with the Final War of the Ancients. There is an Ancient site on Victoria's only moon, Albert, but no new artifacts have been found there in recent years.

1912 Dinomn (Imperial)

Starport: Class IV. Scout base.

Diameter: 6,042 miles (9,721 km). *Atmosphere:* Standard oxygen-nitrogen, tainted by toxins. *Surface Water:* 39%. *Climate:* Normal. *Population:* 2,431,000. *Government:* Oligarchy. *Control Rating:* 1. *TL:* 5.

Dinomn's atmospheric taint is lethal to unprepared humans. The local population is immune, of course, and it is possible to acquire temporary immunity through drugs or complete immunity through a complex acclimatization process. Both processes require the subject to endure prolonged illness or unpleasant side effects, and most visitors either stay in sealed units or else remain in the orbital port where most business is done. Apart from being a little dry, Dinomn is a rather pleasant world if one can survive the

atmosphere. The locals occasionally skirmish among themselves over matters of honor or noble precedence, but on the whole the world has a peaceable and free society.

1916 Ylaven (Imperial) – Red Zone

Starport: Class 0.

Diameter: 5,106 miles (8,216 km). *Atmosphere:* Dense oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 68%. *Climate:* Very cold. *Population:* 532,000. *Government:* Technocracy. *Control Rating:* 1. *TL:* 5.

Ylaven is interdicted to protect the development of the indigenous human population, who appear to be the descendants of a sublight colony mission from Terra. They are clustered in a large settlement on the coast of a shallow inland sea. Hunters and trappers wander inland for months on end, returning to civilization when they have accumulated a suitable amount of furs to sell. Other industry includes a little ore mining and primitive greenhouse agriculture.

1918 Sonthert (Imperial) – Red Zone

Starport: Class 0.

Diameter: 5,989 miles (9,637 km). *Atmosphere:* Very thin oxygen-nitrogen, tainted by high oxygen partial pressure. *Surface Water:* 63%. *Climate:* Normal. *Population:* 4,300,000. *Government:* Dictatorship. *Control Rating:* 6. *TL:* 5.

Sonthert is interdicted both to protect its human population from interference, and to protect the rest of the Imperium from the megalomaniac "Emperor of All Things" and his armored knights, who have declared their intent to conquer the universe, starting with anyone foolish enough to land on Sonthert. Sonthert's atmosphere is breathable to off-world humans, but very uncomfortable. The locals are adapted, with large lungs, thick skins and protective membranes over the eyes.

1920 D'Ganzio (Imperial)

Starport: Class IV. Naval base.

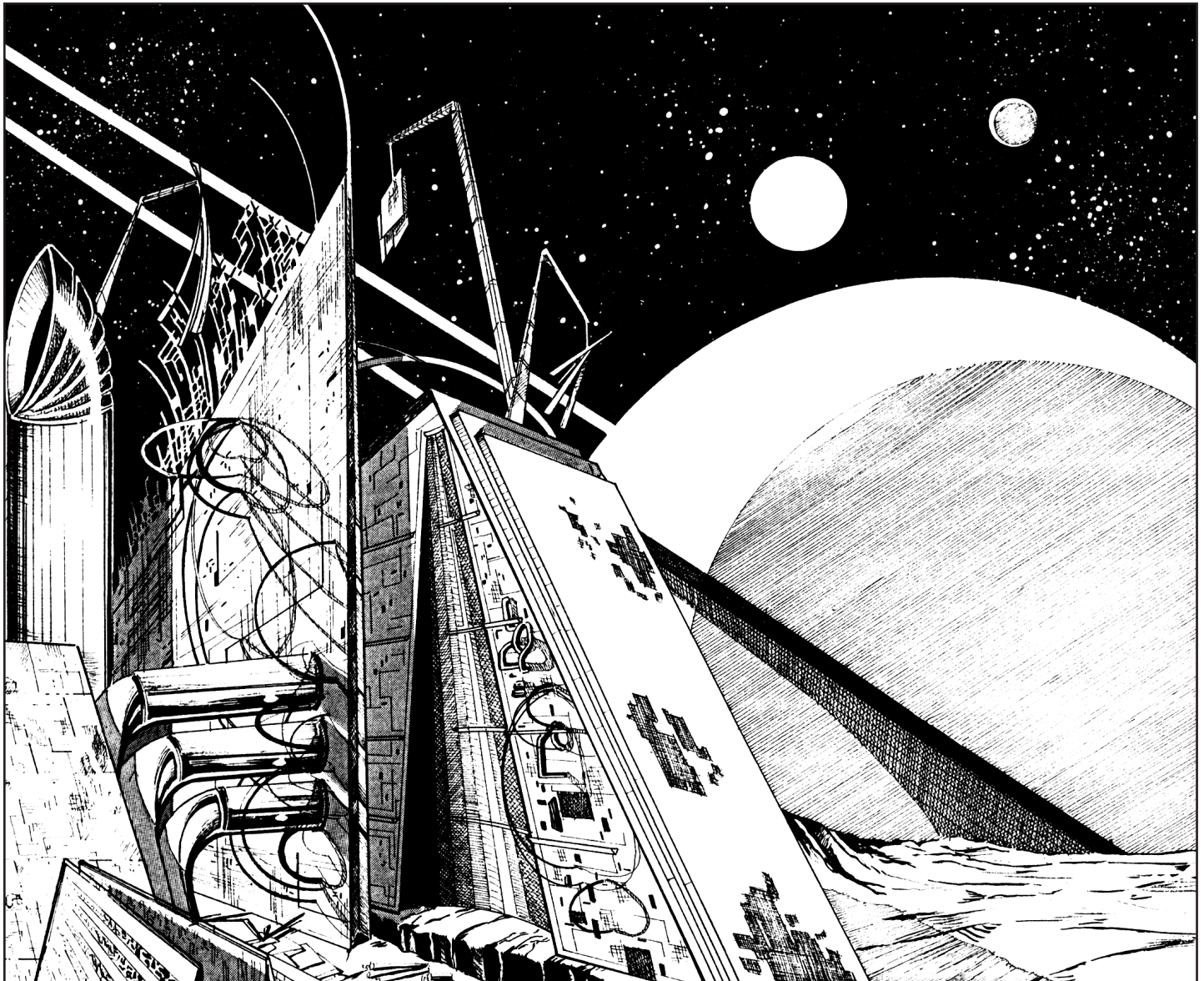
Diameter: 532 miles (856 km). *Atmosphere:* Very thin oxygen-nitrogen, with high nitrogen partial pressure. *Surface Water:* 12%. *Climate:* Normal. *Population:* 38,000. *Government:* Corporate (Instellarms). *Control Rating:* 0. *TL:* 10.

D'Ganzio is a regional depot and support base for Instellarms' operations in the sector. The highport serves as a hiring-hall for mercenary units and individuals, and the administrative complex has an extensive contracts section and several banking establishments ready to issue repatriation bonds.

2011 Wypoc (Imperial) – Amber Zone

Starport: Class I.

Diameter: 9,397 miles (15,120 km). *Atmosphere:* Corrosive atmosphere (weak sulfuric-acid vapor). *Surface*



2712 Risek (Imperial)

Starport: Class V.

Diameter: 3,033 miles (4,880 km). *Atmosphere:* Very thin oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 49%. *Climate:* Tropical. *Population:* 42,000. *Government:* Multiple societies (split between three main states or arcologies). *Control Rating:* 4. *TL:* 9.

Risek's surface is baked by stellar radiation, although the temperature plummets at night. There is little plant or animal life.

Much of Risek's income comes from trade passing through the port and the starship-maintenance facilities, which, while small, are of a high standard.

2715 Porozlo (Imperial)

Starport: Class V.

Diameter: 7,085 miles (11,400 km). *Atmosphere:* Standard oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 74%. *Climate:* Normal. *Population:* 21,460,000,000. *Government:*

Multiple societies (divided among 250 or more states). *Control Rating:* 4. *TL:* 9.

Porozlo is recovering from a recent war, and although things have quieted enough to allow the amber classification to be lifted, things are still tense in some areas.

2716 Rhylanor (Imperial) Subsector Capital

Starport: Class V. Naval and scout bases.

Diameter: 3,978 miles (6,400 km). *Atmosphere:* Very thin oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 40%. *Climate:* Normal. *Population:* 8,304,000,000. *Government:* Oligarchy (hereditary nobility). *Control Rating:* 3. *TL:* 12.

The subsector capital, Xboat link and site of two major bases, Rhylanor sees a great deal of interstellar traffic. The starport is one of the busiest in known space, and the markets there carry an immense range of goods. Rhylanor is best known as the birthplace of Olav I, first of the Emperors of the Flag (p. GT31). His birthplace is now a small museum, and attracts many visitors each year.

The first world, Elkyuln, was populated with solid-state mechanical robots programmed to observe and analyze the astrophysical life of Braykossa. In 290,000 years of study the robots have predicted a nova of the unstable star to within a decade. The second world, Kraldosk, is populated by biological robots that are duplicates of humans produced by advanced genetic engineering, and assigned to catalog and record the development of life on Prissuls (below). Grandfather's human servant in charge of Kraldosk, Na Kraldosh, has used the genetic technology to prolong his life, and has begun studies and experiments of his own.

The last world, Prissuls, was "seeded" with a variety of plant and animal life, and allowed to develop under observation of the human servants on Kraldosk.

The worlds are connected via hundreds of "pearls" each one an iridescent sphere about 62 miles (100 km) in diameter, with atmosphere and gravity. Each "pearl" exists outside of normal space in a "pocket universe" totally empty except for it. On opposite sides of each pearl are transporter portals, which directly connect to the next pearl in line. Therefore, one can travel from one Grandfather's world to the next, along the outer surface of each pearl – if persistent enough.

Unknown to Na Kraldosh, the human robots have discovered a portal to the real Regina, and have set up an outpost in a small store in Regni, a major city on that world. So far, they have done nothing but observe and record the society there.

All of this information is unknown to anyone in the normal universe, and is not yet known to Grandfather himself.

DARRIANS

The Secret of the Star Trigger

The Darrians' Star Trigger weapon was nothing more than a bluff for most of their history. The events which caused the Maghiz were not reproducible until very recently. There was, however, no need for anyone to know that, not even the Special Arm personnel who manned the Star Trigger base, fully prepared to use their ultimate weapon. Thus, not even psionics could discover that the trigger was a paper tiger, since mind-reading would show the Special Arm's total belief in their weapon. The one test/demonstration in 589 was faked, using predictions of a real nova event.

By 1100 or so, research had isolated the critical elements in the original Maghiz, and a functional Star Trigger could at last be developed. Against a certain amount of opposition (The threat had sufficed for centuries, so why go to the bother and expense of building the real thing?), the decision was made by the Confederation high command to proceed with the construction of a real Star Trigger. By late 1119, the Darrians had deployed a single example at the Special Arm base (p. 126).

The Star Trigger consists of two meson communicators and a probe, which descends into the star while venting vaporized tungsten. The tungsten column is then targeted by two meson beams, which must intersect at a very precise angle. Intense solar flares begin within 10 hours.

The angle of intersection is very obtuse, such that two meson platforms must be deployed almost on opposite sides of the star. A single vessel can do it with drones, but a pair of vessels (suitably escorted) would be used in any wartime deployment.

Imperial intelligence services know of these developments.

DARRIANS

Darrian-Sword World Relations







The Darrians and Sword Worlders are cultural opposites. The outlook of one group is a pretty good definition of insanity to the other. Darrians find it practically impossible to understand why Sword Worlders act the way they do, and vice versa. This makes it practically impossible to predict one another's actions. Living with an unpredictable, well-armed state just a few parsecs away is a frightening experience, and one which has led to innumerable incidents and short wars. Matters have not improved since the Fifth Frontier War and indeed are worsening at present.

As a result both of their nature and a deliberate policy of showing force, the Sword Worlders have made several incursions into Darrian space – some of them relatively friendly trade expeditions – and have caused a great many border incidents. In the wake of the destruction of their trade mission in Darrian space, some Sword Worlders have begun seeking vengeance. This is quite legitimate from the Sword Worlders' point of view, and also serves to show the rest of the universe that they might have been beaten by the Imperials but they haven't gone soft. The greatest proponent of the vengeance pursuit is Lord Tarmil of Aurmie, who seems determined to exact a toll of Darrian deaths equal to the number of his followers killed by Darrian aggression at Ator. His vitriolic addresses and promises of bounties for vengeance raids show a disturbing trend toward open conflict. Lack of bluster and threat from the Darrians is taken as passivity and possibly fear, and actually encourages the Sword Worlders to become more aggressive.

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