

SAGITTARIUS EYE

#10
JUN 3304



ONION HEAD

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FEATURING: HALSEY ■ OBSIDIAN ANT ■ THE RARES TRADE ■ SUMMER 3304
FEDERATION ■ LAVE ■ ZOMBIE THARGOIDS ■ FAT BOTTOMED GIRL

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THANKS TO:

ALLEN STROUD, NASA, OBSIDIAN ANT, BUCKYBALL RACING CLUB, PVP LEAGUE, INTERSTELLAR MINING UNION, PRIMETIME CASUAL, HAN ZEN

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EDITORIAL

DrNoesis

As we release our 10th issue, the *Sagittarius Eye* offices don't quite have the same light-hearted 'publish day' atmosphere that we normally expect. Breaking into double digits gives us a good reason to reflect on how the contributions of many different team members, from many disparate disciplines, have come together to form the magazine you're now reading, and how that team has helped to make each new issue our biggest and best yet.

The most obvious contribution to the magazine is articles themselves, which are developed both by reporters here at *Sagittarius Eye*, or submitted by freelance journalists from within the community itself, guided by the simple aim 'to deliver what the Galaxy wants to know'. Including articles examining various aspects of the Federation, as well as regular features such as Hot Rodder, this issue promises to continue the tradition of being our best yet!

The words, however, only make up a part of the whole, and we cannot credit their writers alone. A picture, as they say, is worth 1,000 words; and as well as our own in-house talent, we have been very fortunate to partner with a group known as Stellar Photography, Videography and Fan Art (SPVFA) who have been responsible for producing and curating a vast catalogue of imagery for use in our magazine.

The SPVFA was formed in December 3303, by Commanders Jaesyntetik, OrangePheonix and StarFox, as a living gallery for like-minded Commanders to share and enjoy both the grand spectacle of the cosmos, and the secret beauty of remote, unseen vistas. In half a year the group's numbers have swelled to nearly 1,100 members — who have contributed a vast number of breathtaking images to both their own online catalogue and our magazine.

With each image they provide for an article they certainly put those '1,000 words' to work, providing an additional layer of depth and colour for our readers (and staff) to enjoy.

And finally, with all the images and articles in place, we must thank our in-house team of designers who form the backbone of our magazine, pulling together the articles and images, adding finishing touches and style, and producing something that we feel proud to pass on to you.



CONTENTS



CURRENT AFFAIRS

8 Halsey:
Puppet or Prophet?

17 Obsidian Ant:
Voice of the People, or Shill for the Club?



FEATURE

20 The Rares Trade:
The Underbelly of Galactic Commerce



COVER STORY

28 **Onion
Head**

Fear and
Loathing
on Panem



EVENT

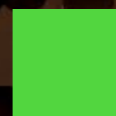
36 Sagittarius Eyes... Summer 3304



HISTORY

44 History of the Federation

52 The Recent History of Lave



SCIENCE

58 Attack of the Zombie Thargoids



HOT RODDER

66 Fat Bottomed Girl

HALSEY: PUPPET OR PROPHECY?

Three years ago incumbent Federal President Jasmina Halsey was on a goodwill tour of Federal worlds when the presidential starship was lost with all hands. Almost a year later the ex-president returned from the dead, claiming to have spoken to 'the real caretakers of our galaxy'. She was sequestered in a psychiatric clinic for months, and upon her release immediately left the Federation to become Alliance Prime Minister Edmund Mahon's trusted right arm.

The Death and Life of Jasmina Halsey

After the presidential transport *Starship One* failed to arrive at Zudov Terminal in the Saga system at the end of May 3301, local authorities raised the alarm. It soon became clear that the Narwhal-class liner had suffered an unusual hyperspace-related accident.

Nine months after her ship vanished into witch-space, Halsey's life-pod was found during a massive search effort by members of the Pilots Federation and Sirius Corp. When she finally awoke she made statements to the Galactic media, claiming to have experienced contact with powerful aliens:

It was wonderful. Amazing. I saw the universe, and our galaxy within it, as I'd never seen it before, and I felt the presence of the real caretakers of our galaxy. The paradox of their existence – tiny yet gargantuan, fleeting yet eternal. They spoke to me as I drifted in the void. It was amazing. I must share their message.

■ Halsey at the Clearwater Clinic psychiatric facility

Halsey made an appeal to the Galactic community to gather exploration data, stating: "They are out there. I have seen them. We must put aside our petty differences and work together to establish contact. There is so much we could learn from them." Shortly after the conclusion of the appeal a member of Jasmina Halsey's personal staff announced that no new evidence had been uncovered.

By July 3302, after leaving the Clearwater Clinic psychiatric facility on Mars, Halsey announced that she would soon be effectively defecting from the Federation. Two months later, in the Alioth system, Halsey made a statement sharing what she called a 'compelling vision':

I saw a place of extraordinary beauty. A paradise. It was truly wonderful. This was no dream – it was a glimpse of something very real. We must find this place. It could be our future.

Her involvement in establishing refugee camps and promoting messages of peace and unity all seem to support the assertion of this new Jasmina Halsey working for Galactic peace, though it's unclear what her position actually is within the Alliance government.

Defection to the Alliance

Given how rapidly Halsey made the transition from psychiatric patient to Mahon's right hand, she must have gone to Alioth with something significant. Mahon is no fool: his leadership has seen the Alliance grow in recent years, and developments in infrastructure and a strong connection with factions of the Pilots Federation have finally positioned the Alliance as a valid 'third Superpower'.

Mahon and the Council of Admirals must feel that Halsey is somehow valuable. Ironically, that's probably more of a hard sell than believing that a former hard-line Federal President decided to join the Cakers.

“ They are out there. I have seen them. We must put aside our petty differences and work together to establish contact. There is so much we could learn from them. ”

Halsey the Prophet

Is the the idea of Halsey meeting aliens really that strange? Until only a few hundred years ago the Thargoids were unknown to us, as were the Guardians until two years ago. There are vast areas of the Galaxy that are still inaccessible to explorers.

Halsey may be the only known human in the Galaxy to have had contact with this particular species. Given the power she claims these beings hold, maybe Halsey is indeed a prophet destined to lead humanity towards a better future.

Even if Mahon doesn't entirely believe her, it's possible he is keeping the potential prophet of a new and powerful alien race close just in case. After all, the early Alliance allegedly tried to contact the Thargoids only a few years after declaring independence. As a group, the Alliance of Independent Systems has shown itself to be both forward thinking and unafraid of poking sleeping dragons.

Halsey the Puppet

There is of course another, more concerning possibility: that Halsey is no longer Halsey.

Commentators supporting the idea of Halsey coming back 'changed' point to her new humanitarian stance and how it contrasts with her earlier, draconian approach towards taxation, civilian casualties in the Onion Head Crisis, and the scandal surrounding the assassination of her own Vice President.

The 'new' Halsey, they claim, is markedly different. At the time of her initial recovery there were comments about her personality and speech changes. She appeared distant, with disjointed speech. Jasmina's sister, Azalea Halsey, visited her sibling just after she first awoke and told the Federal Times:

Jasmina appears to be in good health, but she did seem rather distant. She said some things I didn't understand ... I'm sure she'll be back to her old self soon.

The more outlandish theories concern 'brain slugs', a conversational shorthand for any sort of parasitic alien organism that can directly influence the actions of a human. Some theories suggest that Halsey herself is a duplicate, clone or impostor. Federal politician Jacob Harris once claimed the Empire sabotaged *Starship One* to destabilize the Federal Government.

Either way, all of these distil down to the same general idea – that the Halsey we know today is not operating with free will, and is carrying out the will of beings of non-human origin (or possibly the Empire). So far, however, Halsey seems to have only been doing humanitarian work, and whilst her good deeds might be a cover for more sinister activities, there is no evidence of nefarious intentions so far.



■ Barnacles

Caretakers of Our Galaxy?

The most common theory is that Halsey met the Guardians, or an ascended form thereof. However, there are several problems with this idea.

As far as records show, that race is extinct after being killed by their synthetic creations, who are unlikely to be interested in one organic being drifting in space two million years later. The other major issue is that Halsey specifically says she spoke to “the real caretakers of our Galaxy.” It would be a stretch for even Guardian pundit Ram Tah to describe the Guardians in this way, as there is no evidence of them ‘caretaking’ the Galaxy now, or manifesting in any way.

An alternative that few have considered is that Halsey could have encountered the Thargoids in some form. If this did occur, it would have happened almost exactly a year before the Thargoids revealed themselves in the Pleiades.

Experts believe that the insectoid aliens have a hive-mind of some type, similar to insect species found on many worlds. The memories, imperatives and attitudes of the Thargoids would therefore transcend each individual Thargoid drone, and instead exist as a hive consciousness, potentially granting the Thargoids a unique ability to view time over a long period. This would give them an existence “*fleeting and eternal*” – just as Halsey said.

Considering the idea of the Thargoids being a hive-species also allows us to think of them being both “*tiny and gargantuan*”. Individually tiny, but collectively the Thargoid species is gargantuan.

We know from the Guardian records and our own discoveries that the Thargoids return to claim territory when their organic mines (‘Barnacles’) have matured, sometimes thousands of years later. Apparently the Thargoids consider any seeded area theirs, and will aggressively defend it. Both the Guardians and ourselves have fallen

foul of this truly alien concept of territory. According to this logic, the Thargoids might well be considered the ‘caretakers’ of this galaxy – they’ve been here at least two million years, and appear to have scouted out and pre-seeded large areas of it for later colonisation.

It’s not impossible that this entire galaxy is *already* seeded with Barnacles slowly maturing under the surface of every suitable planet and moon. To the Thargoids, *we’re* the new invaders to this Galaxy, having appeared only in the last few hundred years.

Halsey claims that the ‘caretakers’ spoke to her as she drifted. Many that have investigated Thargoid-Human interactions over the years will already know that the current conflict is not the first, or even second time we’ve dealt with the Insectoid Aliens. In the early 3250s a secret meeting occurred between representatives of the Thargoids and Humanity. Whilst this has never been officially confirmed, it is an open secret. It is, after all, how we know about the ancient Thargoid world Soontill, the

origin of the prized Soontill Relics. A similar myth surrounds the Peregrina system, allegedly the site of another Thargoid-Human cooperation around thirty years ago. Little is known about these meetings, but from the very fact that they occurred we can infer that Thargoids *can* communicate with humans.

We also know from Aegis’ research and the evidence of thousands of pilots, both now and in the past, that Thargoids are masters of witch-space. They appear to be able to travel in that other realm in ways currently unavailable and unknown to us, and we know they can interdict our ships from witch-space itself. It’s not a huge leap then to consider that if any known species could detect, intercept and even rescue people from a ship suffering from a hyperdrive malfunction, it might well be the Thargoids. It may even be that the Thargoids hyperdicted Starship One. They appear to have the technology and capability, and possibly even the desire to communicate with us.

Lazarus, Messenger

It's important to remember that Halsey made several statements about her experience, each one adding a new facet to her claims. Her second statement might actually have contained the aliens' message itself:

As a species we have learned nothing from our history. We plundered the Earth for its treasures, treating it with callous indifference, and now we stumble blindly into space in pursuit of wealth and glory. And all the while we are heedless of the damage we cause.

We remain a violent species, unable to cooperate, and we are therefore deprived of the prosperity that true peace would bring.

Consider for a moment what occurred over the last few years. We discovered Barnacles in the Pleiades and immediately started destructively mining them for Meta-Alloys. Could this be the "wealth and glory" Halsey referred to?

According to this reasoning, it's not a stretch to think that maybe the message the Thargoids gave Halsey boiled down to 'stop taking our stuff and destroying things'. It's certainly true that since we discovered the Barnacles we've simply been shooting them to expose the valuable materials inside. We don't fully know what we're doing to these living organisms: "all the while we are heedless of the damage we cause".

It might even be that "unable to cooperate" wasn't a reference to our continual inter-factional squabbling, but our inability to find common ground with our interstellar alien neighbours. Her comment about the 'prosperity that true peace would bring' links with her third statement, given another two months later; "I saw a place of extraordinary beauty. A paradise. It was truly wonderful. ... We must find this place. It could be our future." It's not impossible that Halsey was giving us a glimpse at the peace and beauty that cooperation with the Thargoids might bring.

The Prophet of the Thargoids

Halsey presumably knows whatever the Federal government knows about the Thargoids, given her past, and potentially the truth behind the rumours of the Alliance trying to make contact with the Thargoids fifty years ago. As such, it's reasonable to assume that she may have wanted to get her new information into the most suitable hands, and so revealed enough to Edmund Mahon to buy passage to Alioth.

Since Halsey joined the Alliance, it has established research bases in the distant California Nebula to 'study fungal growths'. It's unlikely to be a coincidence that the California Nebula is also home to Barnacles, often located near Alliance bases. It's also interesting that since Halsey joined the Alliance they have slightly

adjusted their stance, and are less antagonistic towards the Empire and Federation — instead, promoting messages of unity and peace between *all* the powers. Many were surprised when the Alliance was so quick to take part in the Aegis initiative, working with their former oppressors and direct rivals. Most recently the Alliance has developed two ships designed primarily for anti-Thargoid combat. In this they are unique amongst the superpowers in doing more than passively acknowledging the Thargoid threat and funding Aegis.

An Offer of Peace, or an Ultimatum?

Communicating with Aliens is unlikely to be as easy as plugging in some sort of universal translator and simply talking to each other. Even if the Thargoids can speak to humans, it's unlikely that we would share the same understanding of many basic concepts.

One obvious question potentially disrupts the idea of Halsey as a 'Prophet of Peace' between Humans and Thargoids: why is the Alliance making anti-Thargoid warships? The answer might come from another sort of prophet, this time from the Imperial side.

The much-discussed Senator Kahina Loren, also known as Salomé, is rumoured by her many supporters to have been embroiled in a conspiracy that involved the Superpowers and the Thargoids. Some members of her following report that the Superpowers know of two distinct 'dynasties' of Thargoids: one that we fought during the war, and another that we've never met before. These two are fighting some kind of war, and the ones we have encountered are on the weaker, losing, side.

So far, there is no direct evidence to support these rumours — but it does help to define Halsey's encounter. It's possible she met the 'known' Thargoids, that they gave her a warning about the 'other' Thargoids heading our way, told her to stop destroying the Barnacles in the Pleiades, and to unify Humanity to fight this new threat.

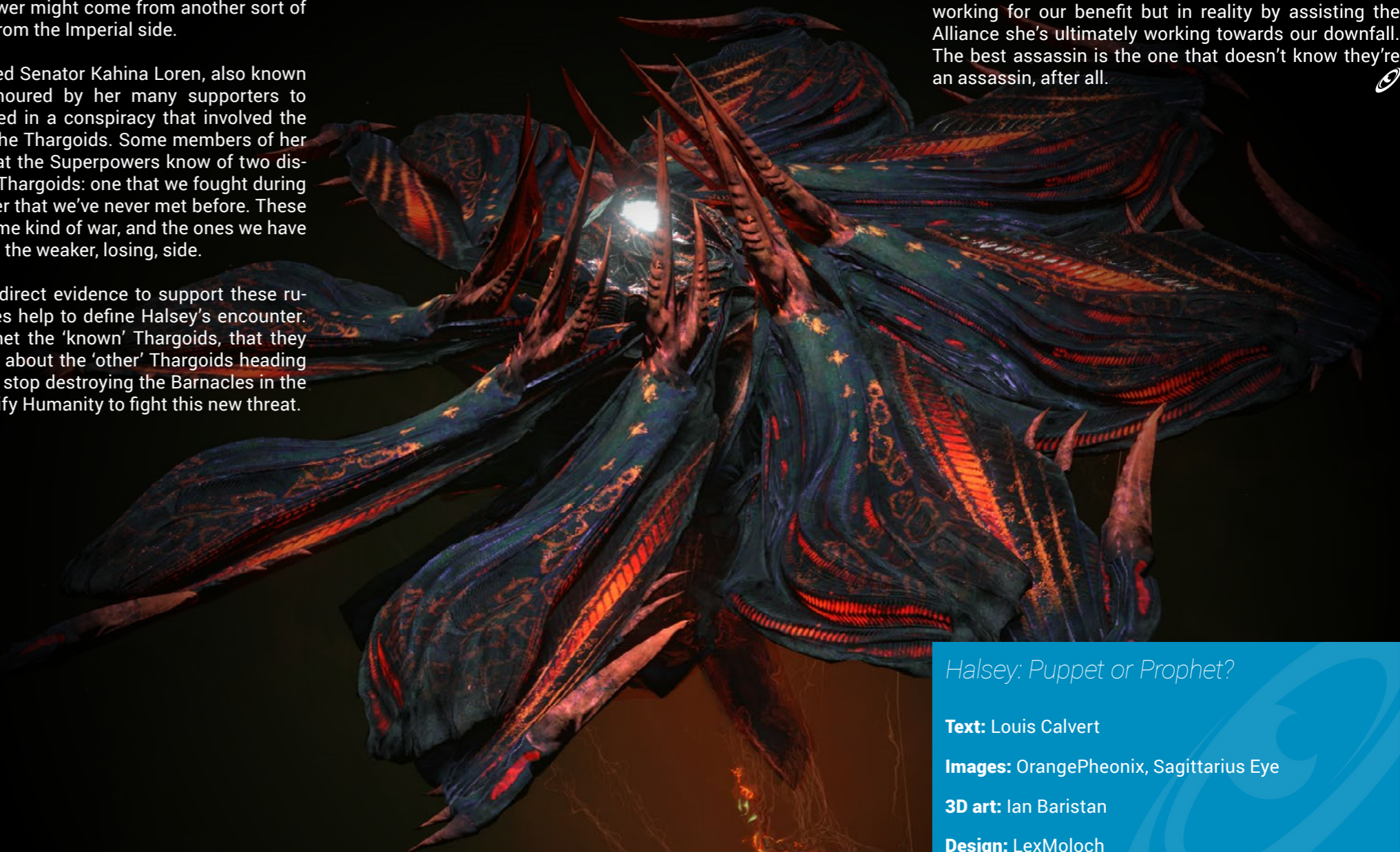
Where does all this leave us?

If we assume that Halsey underwent a traumatic near-death experience and came through the other side with a new perspective, we can rest easy. This new Halsey seems dedicated to humanitarian work and peace, both great things for the long term survival of humanity.

However, there remains the very real possibility that Halsey experienced far more than psychological trauma.

Is Halsey a prophet? Is she working to help humanity through the current conflict with our neighbours, working towards the paradise she claims to have seen in her visions? Maybe a paradise where humans, Thargoids and any other sentients out there share the Galaxy, or the Universe, in harmony and mutually beneficial peace.

Or is Halsey a Puppet? Is she in some way being controlled by the Thargoids, or some other agency — either directly through conditioning or mind control, or indirectly, by misleading information? Perhaps she thinks she's working for our benefit but in reality by assisting the Alliance she's ultimately working towards our downfall. The best assassin is the one that doesn't know they're an assassin, after all.



Halsey: Puppet or Prophet?

Text: Louis Calvert

Images: OrangePhoenix, Sagittarius Eye

3D art: Ian Baristan

Design: LexMoloch



THARGOLAX

extra-strength

WHEN YOU HAVE TO EVACUATE...
BUT YOU NEED A LITTLE HELP



VIOLENT BUT EFFECTIVE RELIEF

OBSIDIAN ANT



VOICE OF THE PEOPLE, OR SHILL FOR THE CLUB?

Of all Commanders whose voices are heard and respected in the Galactic community, Obsidian Ant is the undisputed champion of them.

His relatively brief career began on the 19th of April 3300, when he publicly shared a short, technically-challenged clip of his one-on-one face off with a Sidewinder. He didn't even speak in that first video. Since this humble beginning, his popularity has exploded, with over 120,000 subscribers to his video channel.



Voice of the People

If someone had been living under a moon rock somewhere and hadn't seen any of his videos, they might be a bit mystified upon discovering that they're simple news broadcasts, in which Obsidian Ant shares whatever interesting happenings of the moment he has uncovered with the spacefaring community. He has covered events like the Galaxy-wide tax freeze last month, notable developments in the Thargoid invasion, and the assassination of Lady Kahina Loren in April 3303. Besides sharing news, he occasionally hosts interviews with prominent personalities and shares his opinions on current affairs.

The voice of Obsidian Ant is near-universally praised for its delightful timbre.

His primary service of interest is his news video series, which is deceptively effective. Not only does he respond to each breaking news event with remarkable speed, cutting videos together and broadcasting them within hours (if not minutes), but he also employs beautiful footage of the wonders of our Galaxy to accompany each one, and—most importantly of all—shares all of his thoughts and feelings on the developments of the day in a smooth, sonorous voice that soothes the soul and delights the ear. The voice of Obsidian Ant is near-universally praised for its delightful timbre, so much so that the cockpit voice add-ons include an Obsidian offering, allowing pilots to travel the galaxy with the voice of Obsidian himself acting as their ship's Cockpit Voice Assistant. He also has a station named after him: Obsidian Orbital in Maia, itself the site of much controversy and excitement since the Pleiades erupted in conflict. He's a legend, though he's also clearly a mortal man.

It is possible that our most beloved of celebrity pilots is also deserving of suspicion.

The Club Behind the Man

Last year, the long-standing Formidine Rift mystery was solved thanks to the efforts of many independent Commanders. Even after her death, Lady Kahina Tijani Loren was able to reveal the existence of an organization known only as 'the Club': a collection of influential figures who seem to have some control over most powerful human institutions. We know that the Club has suppressed information about the Thargoids whilst preparing for the invasion by tagging several planets in the Formidine Rift with beacons as part of 'Project Dynasty'. They claim to be 'acting in humanity's best interests', but that has always been the excuse of plutocrats and autocrats, and they don't seem to care how many innocents die as a result of their 'efforts'.

We know that this organisation is the most powerful human interest in our Galaxy. We also suspect that the one factor they find hardest to account for is the activity of the rootless class of itinerant private pilots (such as comprise the readership of this magazine). It would make sense for them to seek to influence this intransigent class of spacegoer, whether directly or indirectly—and who has more influence among those pilots than Obsidian Ant?

We need to consider the possibility that Obsidian Ant himself is an agent of the Club – or even a member himself. Before you tear this magazine up in horror and plot a course straight to the Sagittarius Eye offices, there are three points we urge you to consider.

Obsidian Ant's content itself, when considered beyond its surface level, can be more nefarious than it seems.

First, Obsidian Ant spends a great deal of time out of the public view. One must consider that there is a reason most celebrities are so closely scrutinized: their voices are so influential that it is important to know what is influencing them. Obsidian Ant spends so much time away from the public eye, alone in the great unknowns of the Galaxy, that it is impossible to know.

Second, Obsidian Ant's videos are almost always very quickly produced, sometimes within hours of events being announced. One possible explanation is that he is simply a gifted and practiced filmmaker, who has

the free time to dedicate to such rapid and timely work. But who's to say that the Club doesn't have some influence over that process, coaching him on what to say through a subliminal transmitter planted on his ship, or even through direct communication? Giving exclusives on news stories is a fantastic way to get a reporter into one's debt, which certainly sounds like a tactic the Club might employ. Using one as a mouthpiece for your own curated news is another.

Third, Obsidian Ant's content itself, when considered beyond its surface level, can be more nefarious than it seems. It is undeniable that, in the past, he has repeatedly shared news of 'get rich quick' schemes. Last month, for example, he clued viewers in to the lucrative passenger missions that were earning some savvy pilots 300 million credits per hour. He's shared many such dubiously-legal schemes with his audience, such as the recently-revamped 'skimmer assault' missions and past means of exploiting systems like Quince by accepting exorbitant contracts with the local factions. These 'gold rushes' typically involve huge numbers of pilots descending on to a station or planet, overwhelming the local services and creating considerable civic disorder. Such incitements to public unrest should properly be viewed as extremely suspect.

Independent investigators might do well to study Obsidian Ant's content with a microscope, looking for subliminal messages and hidden meanings. Very few have seen or spoken to this 'pilot' – it is even entirely plausible that what we know as 'Obsidian Ant' is merely a Club-employed actor, reading scripts written for him.

One thing is absolutely certain. To blindly trust an independent correspondent to influence one's perspective on the Galaxy, just because of his artistic skill and personal charisma, is a mistake. Anyone who consumes his content should ask themselves whether there might be someone influencing the content creator out of sight, for their own nefarious ends.

Obsidian Ant: Voice of the People, or Shill for the Club?

Text: Rasudin

Images: OrangePhoenix, Obsidian Ant, Lexmoloch

Design: McNicholl

THE RARES TRADE

THE UNDERBELLY OF GALACTIC COMMERCE

Commanders have been trading general commodities across inhabited space for the past one hundred years. But it wasn't until the 'Galactic Kings' rose to power and began spreading their influence hundreds of light years across the Orion Arm that the rare commodities market blossomed into existence.

Since the routes were established, the number of Commanders trading rare commodities and the number of high-demand goods available on the market have more than doubled.

The Expendables

Nobody will ever know how many independent traders have perished while delivering rare commodities. Many have lost money due to ship damage or even total destruction, spending much of their time in frontier systems, where there are only remote outposts and asteroid bases. There, they do business in systems with low or no security, while dodging conflict zones and pirates. Despite this, they continue to criss-cross the Bubble to buy and sell rare commodities, enticed by the promise of profit.

As long as the money is good, it can be presumed that this industry will continue to grow. The list of traded goods will lengthen, including those that are less-than-legal in some jurisdictions. This will push traders onto the fringes of the law. However, no doubt the Galactic Powers will ensure that their supplies of these rare trinkets keep flowing. So, who controls the supply?

The Source

We begin our survey with Zemina Torval, a senator of the Empire. She controls two systems producing rare commodities: Kappa Fornacis—now famous for its Onion Head, covered elsewhere in this issue—and LTT 8517, where Non-Euclidian Exotanks are manufactured. But her home system of Synteini imports twelve rare commodities, including large quantities of Eranin Pearl Whisky.

Shadow President Felicia Winters has only one system producing a rare commodity: Mechucos, renowned for Mechucos High Tea. The wild tea leaves are harvested in the equatorial region of an outdoor world in the Aurora system and exported to Brandenstein Port in the Mechucos System where the brewing and bottling process occurs, and the final product is sold to traders as a rare commodity. She prohibits the rare commodity Wuthielp Ku Froth because of its alcoholic content—but does allow for the import of wine into Broglie Ring, in her home system of Rhea.

The Alliance Prime Minister, Edmund Mahon, controls two systems where three rares are produced: Helvetitj, home of the Helvetitj oyster beds, and Leesti, where both Leestian Evil Juice and Azure Milk are produced. The beautiful and highly sought-after Helvetitj Pearls come from humble oyster farms in the southern hemisphere of an outdoor world in the Helvetitj system. The work is laborious and dangerous, and it is rumoured that tens of farmers die every year while harvesting the oysters. Leestian Evil Juice, on the other hand, is an alcoholic beverage produced in the northern hemisphere of Leesti, in the system of the same name. The winemakers ferment Leesti apples that grow along a stretch of coastline that enjoys balmy temperatures for most of the year.

Zachary Hudson, president of the Federation, controls Vega, a system infamous for its Slimweed. Found on the shorelines in the southern hemisphere of Tracy's Havan, this parasitic life form is from an ancient animal group, as old as life itself on this world. Vegan scientists' studies show that the animal's numbers are so low it could be placed on the endangered species list.

They continue to criss-cross the Bubble to buy and sell rare commodities, enticed by the promise of profit.

The dictator Yuri Grom and the CEO of Sirius Corporation, Li Yong-Rui, each only control the production of one rare commodity: the former Kinago violins—fine and highly sought-after instruments produced by master luthiers—and the latter the Momus Bog Spaniel: a medium-sized domestic dog that is prized among hunters throughout inhabited space and has recently captured the attention of Federal security forces, as they attempt to create a better class of working dog to assist with law enforcement.

Princess Aisling Duval has a foothold in Karsuki

Ti, a system renowned for the Karsuki Locust. This large, sweet-tasting insect flourishes in the equatorial region of an Earth-like world. During swarming seasons, the locust population balloons to several hundred million individuals.

Nguna, well known for its modern antiques, is controlled by the 2nd Simguru of Utopia, Pranav Antal. On the southern hemisphere of Nguna 1, a desolate ice world, local craftsmen spend their days crafting authentically accurate antique replicas. Where they source their materials is anyone's guess.

Finally, the Pirate King, Archon Delaine, exercises his control over Harma and Kachirigin. In the former, Silver Sea Rum is blended and distributed, while in the latter the Kachirigin Filter Leeches thrive in the tropical regions of a swampy world. These creatures are renowned for their medicinal powers and

have garnered a following in certain religious circles.

In summary, only twelve systems out of the 132 currently producing rare commodities are controlled by a Power, and only nine Powers control systems that are producing rare commodities. So, which of these Galactic Kings import these rare goods, and what do they do with them?



The Markets

The mighty Federal President Zachary Hudson imports Indi Bourbon from the Epsilon Indi system and Pantaa Prayer Sticks from the George Pantazis system; both systems he also exploits. Both are recovering from horrible outbreaks of disease at the time of writing. As the inhabitants of these two systems suffer immensely, Hudson and his friends and family celebrate their wealth by collecting and gifting legal drugs and medicines.

Fifteen systems Mahon exploits are in a state of famine at the time of writing.

Edmund Mahon allows Bast Snake Gin and Ethgreze Tea Buds into his home system of Gateway; both systems are exploited by the Prime Minister. Bast is descending into all-out war and Ethgreze is experiencing an outbreak. If

The Money

It is more than clear that the Galaxy's precious rare commodities are used exclusively by the Superpowers' upper echelons and the wealthy citizens thriving in populated space. As commodities exchange hands, so does money — and who is paying for Hudson's Bourbon and Mahon's Snake Gin? All eleven powers use the wealth of the systems they exploit to purchase rare commodities; the wealth of those same planets that produce the goods themselves.

The work is laborious and dangerous, and it is rumoured that tens of farmers die every year while harvesting the oysters.

As the Galactic Powers muscle for territory, spread their influence, and increase their political clout with the major factions, a new industry has fully matured and taken on a life of its own. A new creature has blossomed into existence and is weaving a web across the Bubble, entangling pilots in a system that is both corrupt and unscrupulous. From a watchful distance, it's attractive and harmless. But hidden behind the fertile fields of distant worlds, the miles of enchanting landscapes boasting exotic farmland, and all of the prosperous stations offering

that's not enough to anger you, fifteen systems Mahon exploits are in a state of famine at the time of writing.

Admiral Denton Patreus of the Empire allows Coquim Spongiform Victuals and Holva Duelling Blades to be distributed among the systems he controls. He also imports Kamitra Cigars and Lavian Brandy to his home system of Eotienses, allegedly for beefing up the perks for his officers.

Yuri Grom exploits a special system that he holds close to his heart. 16 Lyrae boasts an Earth-like world that has very fertile soil in the western hemisphere, and on a large swath of land between the tropic of cancer and the equator, a flowering plant thrives. It's known as Lyrae Weed, and if it were native to planet Earth it would probably be confused with Cannabis. Grom has been accused of colluding with interstellar drug rings to distribute this narcotic (claims yet to be verified).

hope and promise, are the creature's phantom talons—damaging the fabric of our society and forcing misery into the lives of the less fortunate.

Life is hard for the poor in space, as entire families are locked away inside space stations to toil and slowly waste away. This, however, could be viewed as a blessing in comparison to the lives of some colonists. There is immense suffering on inhospitable ice worlds and a great number of ethnic groups eke out a difficult existence on little-explored worlds.

Tragic episodes have been discovered by traders and then reported around the Bubble. Every worker and family member who has perished while farming rare commodities has done so to appease the powerful and the wealthy.

The more we feed this creature, the larger and more dangerous it will become. We must understand that our own greed and wealth give it power. Millions of lives have been lost in the talons of this parasite we helped to create; and until we take back control, it will continue to kill.

The drive to advance humanity's comfort cannot become more important than life itself, and we must not forget that our economy is just another of our inventions.



*The Rares Trade:
The Underbelly of Galactic Commerce*

Text: J C Warren

Images: OrangePhoenix

Design: McNicholl

ONION HEAD

FEAR AND LOATHING IN PANEM

Scourge of our time, or just the latest in a long line of chemical intoxicants that mankind has used to escape the limited confines of their consciousness?

A quick check of Galpedia indicates that there are no less than fourteen different species of flora that are known by the common name 'Onion Head', all from different worlds. For the purposes of this article we are interested in only one: the Onion Head plant originating from Panem in the Kappa Fornacis system, *Caeli-Annuum Fornacus*, is used to produce the narcotic of the same name. Galpedia is open source and as such is prone to error; for instance, its records claim HIP 55118 as the source of the Onion Head flower of the *Flos-Fluens* genus, which is true, but this flower is a broad-leafed floating plant with more in common with terran seaweed than the narcotic.

Onion Head first came to the attention of the Galactic media in the 3290s, but has a long history that goes back several hundred years to the founding of the 'New Hope' colony on Panem in the Kappa Fornacis system. This world supported an alien biome resplendent with all types of flora and fauna. One of these indigenous plants is the source of the now-infamous Onion Head.

The Federal Navy was ordered to firebomb the Onion Head plantations on Panem.





■ Mature Onion Fruit, ready for harvest.

The gut transit itself is important as the seeds require their hard coating to be partially digested to allow them to germinate.

Cultivation

For the next century the natural degradation process prevented Onion Head being widely used beyond the rural communities of Panem. Cultivation of the plant outside of its natural climate and ecosystem also proved difficult. The ecology of the vine-like creeper has taken decades of research to uncover and tame. Pollination of the vine's flowers is only done in the wild by an insect-like species called 'Kyam's Wasp', *Fonuka Vesperus*, named after the naturalist Victor Kyam who identified the symbiotic relationship between them. The specifically-adapted body shape of the wasp allows it to enter the flower while its scorpion-like tail hooks onto the vine and is used to pull the insect free of the tightly fluted petals after it has sucked the viscous, sticky nectar. Other insect species have learned to avoid these blooms lest they become stuck in the flower like an insect caught in amber.

After pollination, the blooms quickly fall away and the fruit swell in small clusters, dragging the vine down as their size and weight increase. Though the fruit is consumed by many native species, it is only in the last two years that the importance of one of them has become known. The Panem Gujiua, *Panualus Lacertaus*, is a medium-sized omnivorous climbing reptile with a taste for Onion Fruit. Swallowed whole, the flesh of the fruit is digested, and the seeds transit the creature's gut and are deposited in faeces. The gut transit itself is important as the seeds require their hard coating to be partially digested to allow them to germinate. This holistic ecological understanding of Onion Head has really only come to light in the last decade.

Historically the 'native' colonials consumed Onion Head in various forms, most commonly as a form of coffee substitute, by grinding the dried seeds and straining them through a filter with boiling water, often heavily sweetened to mitigate the sharp taste. Some years ago your correspondent visited Panem, and was unfortunate enough to experience this local brew for himself. Apparently being able to 'take it' unsweetened is a mark of considerable prowess amongst the locals – sadly this reporter could not.

First Discovery

Within a generation of the first colony, some anecdotal records indicate that Onion Head was being used for pain relief. Early experimentation in adapting to indigenous food sources led to air-drying of the fruits as a means of preserving them in the humid climate. Initially it was the flesh of the seedpod itself that was of interest, as the seeds have an unpleasant, sharp, spicy taste. It is the appearance of the dried seed head that gives the plant, and its narcotic derivatives, its name today.

The dried seeds were utilised, in small quantities, as a flavouring in some rustic colonial cookery. It is believed to be from these early culinary experiments that Onion Head's anaesthetic and hallucinogenic properties were identified. As experimentation continued, these chemical pioneers found that the air drying process did much to degrade the plant's natural potency. Consuming the seeds fresh from the pod—if one could palate the terrible flavour and prevent the vomiting that often followed—had a much more potent effect.



It is increasingly easy for independent pilots to load up a small ship in a permissive jurisdiction and slip into systems in which the drug is banned to sell for high profit.

Interstellar Markets

Naturally it was only a matter of time before a means of extracting and preserving the Onion Head psychotropic was developed, and it quickly became a major export. This is the part of the story that most people are familiar with.

The rise of the narcotic's popularity led to its recognition and prohibition by the then Federation President, Jasmina Halsey (covered elsewhere in this issue). The Federal Navy was ordered to firebomb the Onion Head plantations on Panem, and the resulting furore became known in the Galactic media as 'Oniongate'. In addition to failing to destroy the Onion Head crop, it caused considerable collateral damage and fatalities, not least to the ecoscape on Panem itself.

The moment an intoxicant is banned, it is immediately advertised to the disenfranchised counter culture that they can get a better high than the weed they were

smoking, whilst conveniently sticking it to The Man at the same time. The ban on Onion Head so monumentally backfired that in January of 3301 the Federation military was ordered to step in and once again attempt to destroy the massive Onion Head cultivations on Panem – but this time with a genetically engineered herbicide that would attack only the Onion Head plants themselves. This prompted a massive outcry from eminent bio-scientists across the Bubble and an outpouring of rage from the farmers of Panem. The resulting civil unrest forced the Federation to retreat from Kappa Fornacis. Both civil and criminal legal proceedings for compensation will be in the Galactic courts for a decade or more to come.

Though the crop on Panem was almost completely destroyed, it was a case of closing the starport after the Cobra had jumped. The ban had prompted entrepreneurial clandestine organizations to put significant resources behind the cultivation of the plant in non-native biomes. Over the next few years new variants of Onion Head

began to appear: Alpha Strain in Xelabara, Beta Strain in HIP 112974, and Lucian Onion Head in Tanmark are the best known, but not the only, varieties that can be found.

This means that in the present day we now have three major production centres of the drug, developing stronger strains, in place of the one easily-policed world that exclusively grew the plant previously. These new sources produce a continuity of supply with a massive black market value, that no doubt finds its way through the Federation's porous borders whilst generating no tax. Not a triumph of intelligent government.

Onion Head smuggling is common. With the emergence of consumer-grade hyperdrives in recent years, and the concomitant rise of the phenomenon of the itinerant spacer, it is increasingly easy for independent pilots to load up a small ship in a permissive jurisdiction and slip into systems in which the drug is banned to sell for high

profit on the black market. The potential profits are huge, and require only a modest investment in a small fast ship capable of evading police scans. It is said that there are well over a million of these hard-to-track independent traders now.

For most people it's not so easy. In the Empire these pharma chemicals are mostly legal or at least unregulated, slimming trading profits. The Alliance is more prohibitive, but enforcement usually comes down to local legal codes. As a result there is some regulation concerning purity and safe preparation.

In the Federation, however, the entire trade exists only on the unregulated black market. Supplies are usually cut with whatever cheap, available chemicals a fixer can find, many of which can be far more dangerous than Onion Head itself.

On the streets

On the street the drug is obtained in a number of forms; sometimes as a 'baggie' which contains a woolly wadded material which has been soaked in Onion Head oil. This is usually smoked in a pipe or otherwise heated and inhaled. The most common form however is by the 'amp', or ampule: small, clear capsules that will fit most vaporizers or dermal injectors. Most addicts will consume through a vaporizer, which is preferable over the traditional smoking of the 'oil wad' for two reasons: first, it will not set off a station's automated fire protection systems; and second, handling the 'oily wad' will, over time, stain the fingers with a yellowish colouration – a sure sign of a long-term user.

In low doses Onion Head gives a mild euphoric high which can become pleasantly perception-altering. Many users report visual perception shifts: visions of 'auras' or colour seeping from one object to another. A minority also experience discontinuity in other senses – auditory, olfactory and kinesthetic senses can all be affected. As the dosage is increased, these altered perceptions become more intense and last for longer, with some users claiming to travel on 'vision quests' to other worlds, dimensions or realities.

For greater effect, a dermal injector will deliver the active substance directly into the bloodstream. Only a few seconds after injection users report a dizzying head rush, senses swimming wild and unrestrained for an instant before resolving as a rising, pulsing distortion of reality. Visions flow from one, to one, around one, like shoals of darting, brightly-coloured fish. The confusion of the scene quickly diminishes as the body and mind

relax into the vision, and reality falls away.

Bad trips do happen – nightmarish hallucinations and paranoia that can stay with users for days afterwards have been reported. The drug itself brings on a rapid chemical dependency in the neurological clusters of the brain where it inhibits and replaces natural serotonin. This can lead to terrible withdrawal effects, including crushing psychological lows and depression. This makes Onion Head highly addictive and will over time cause permanent mood swings and physiological changes in the structure of the brain. The addiction is treatable with chemical substitutes or neural implants, but these are respectively also highly addictive and invasive.

It has been noted by xenobiologists that the relatively mild strains grown on Panem in the last century were known to be far less physically addictive than the engineered strains now exported elsewhere. It has been speculated that an Onion Head industry on Panem, regulated and taxed by the Federation, could have been a safe, stable supplier of clean intoxicants. The Federation's citizens are thought to consume more Onion Head now, with more fatalities, than before the firebombing of Panem.

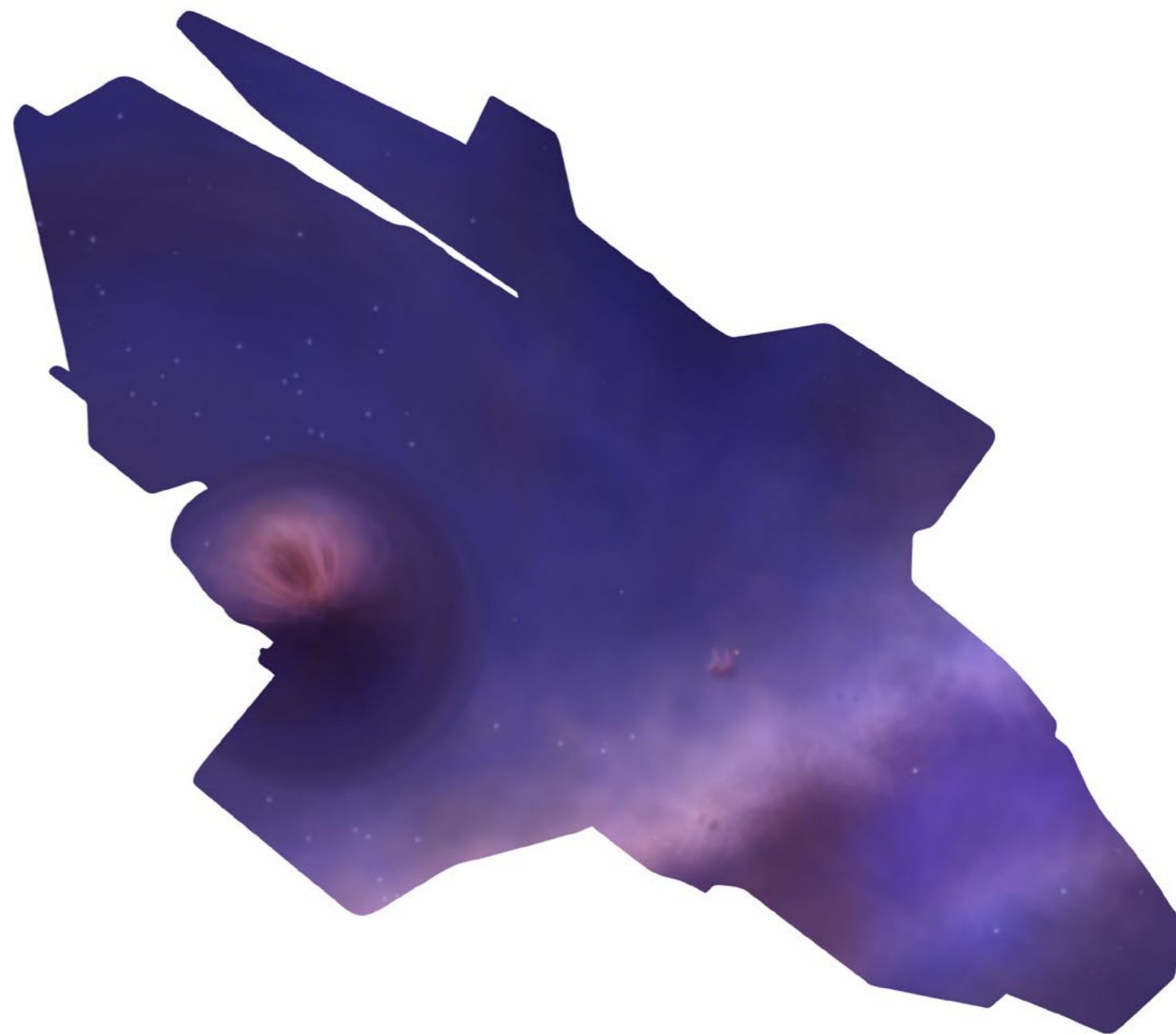
*Onion Head:
Fear and Loathing in Panem*

Text: McNicholl

Images: OrangePhoenix, McNicholl

3D Art: Ian Baristan

Design: McNicholl



LAKON

SAGITTARIUS EYES

*Summer
3304*

We at *Sagittarius Eye* thought to take the traditional idea of 'summer fun' and give you, our readers, a list of the many events and activities in the works throughout the Galaxy over the next three months. While by no means complete, it does give us a perspective on what some are doing—or have done already—this season.

If your group has an upcoming event that may be of interest to the rest of the Galaxy, drop us a line and let us know the specifics. It might even be featured in an upcoming issue!

Ongoing Challenges

ERIMUS KAMZEL'S OUTLANDER CHALLENGE

New Pilots Federation members flying the Sidewinder or anyone wishing for a fresh start!

Immediate Goal: to earn enough credits to fit a good frame shift drive, scanner and fuel scoop as soon as possible, then leave the Bubble behind for Colonia where a 'new life' awaits.

For details [click here](#).



Ongoing Challenges

THE A* CHALLENGE

The A* Challenge is simple: fly from Sol or Wolf 359 to Sagittarius A*, the supermassive black hole at the center of the Galaxy, and record the time taken.

This is considered by many to be the endurance challenge of the racing world. Pilots must maintain their focus for many hours if they want to be competitive, set a new record or a new personal best.

The A* Challenge is open for the long term and has no deadline. For full details on rules and how to enter, see the race thread: [click here](#).



Recurring Scheduled Event

FIGHTER CLUB

Do you want to prove your combat prowess, develop the skills to settle old debts, or just need to learn how to handle your ship better and survive those dicey moments after interdiction? Fighter Club may be the ticket! This is a personal combat club for all skill levels.

They meet every Wednesday, 1800 Galactic Mean Time at Chomsky Terminal in the San Tu system. Be prepared and have your insurance premiums paid up!

For more information see their public message board: [click here](#).



Recurring Scheduled Event

INTERGALACTIC MINING UNION

If the fight-or-flight response releases too much adrenaline for you, perhaps 'fishing' with a buddy and a six-pack of mining lasers is more your style. The Intergalactic Mining Union might be exactly what you are looking for. With wing and large group mining events happening every week, they also connect like-minded prospectors daily to help multiply as well as protect the profit!

Commanders old and young of all experience levels are welcome to come out and see what it takes to cash in on the rush for materials. To find out more concerning locations and times visit the [IMU Comms Channel](#).



Recurring Scheduled Event

WEEKLY PILOTS FEDERATION COMMUNITY EVENTS

For fun and profit! Open to all Pilots Federation members and a great way to meet, compete or cooperate with fellow Commanders. With new goals advertised on GalNet every Thursday, these weekly events pay out large sums for delivering specified commodities, protecting convoys and even turning in bounties. Just beware... there are others out there who are trying to make a profit on you!



Recurring Scheduled Event

MONTHLY BUCKYBALL RACING CLUB (BRC) EVENTS

Whether it flies, rolls, hops, bobbles or falls – as long as it moves, someone will want to race it. And the BRC is the place to find it. Monthly events are continuously being developed with two currently in the planning stages to be held 16-24 June and 14-22 July, 3304.

For the latest Buckyball Racing Club events [click here](#).



SMALL WORLDS 3 26 MAY TO 16 JUNE

This short exploration and tourism expedition just completed its third highly successful iteration.

The second event of this kind boasted the largest ever mass jump in history, and the numbers for the third continue to impress.

Small Worlds Expeditions are all about having fun in small ships! For new and experienced pilots alike, this event gives everyone the opportunity to meet, explore, and remember what many of the large ship advocates have forgotten: it's fun to be small!

Don't worry if you missed out on this one – there is no doubt that Small Worlds Expeditions will continue for some time to come.

For further information on rules and requirements [click here](#).

To stay in tune with Small Worlds and get notification concerning new events, visit their [comm site](#).



Expedition

OUTER RIM STATION TOUR 28 JUNE TO 29 JULY, 3304

Originally planned as a station and nebula tour intended to highlight many of the furthest outposts of humanity, the organisers are also promoting this event as a quick-paced photographers' expedition of the Southern Nebulae.

This expedition, like many other exploration-focused events, will be coordinated from [FleetComm](#).

With the relatively short distances between each of the stops, two or three waypoints per week is the goal. Smaller ships are preferred but other ships are permitted, limited only by dock availability.

For more information on waypoints and requirements check out the [tour document](#).



Expedition

DISTANT WORLDS 2 - WAYPOINT DISCOVERY JUNE TO SEPTEMBER, 3304

With over 2,600 commanders currently signed up in anticipation of the yet-to-be-scheduled main event—mooted for late 3304 or early 3305—Distant Worlds 2 already has the attention of the Galactic community at large.

If the proposed plan is approved and funded by the Pilots Federation, it will be the first major public exploration venture to use a Megaship as a mobile base. The ambitious project will use cutting edge technology to support the fleet – and may even establish one or more permanent scientific outposts along the way.

The coordinators at FleetComm are in work compiling a list of extraordinary waypoints along the projected path of the expedition, and are still looking for exceptional sites from interested contributors.

To keep up to date with the latest information on Distant Worlds 2 see their public [notice board](#).



Expedition

STRANGE WORLDS EXPEDITION 26 MAY TO 8 JULY, 3304

The Strange Worlds Expedition follows up on some of the interesting places found by Captain Skoomer in his Strange Worlds video series. Launching from the Bhare system, they plan to arrive at Sagittarius A* for the 4th of July, followed by a visit to the Great Annihilator and then continue on to finish at the Shrogea MH-V E2-1763 system Tourist Installation (about 4.5 Klys closer to the Bubble).

The sign-up form is still available for interested participants – [click here](#).



Expedition

Sagittarius Eyes... Summer 3304

Text: Michael Darkmoor

Images: Michael Darkmoor, McNicholl, Nickweb85, OrangePhoenix, DavidCooper, Craig Uchuu, Qohen Leth

Design: McNicholl



CORE
DYNAMICS



VULTURE - CULTURE

FROM 4,925,615 CR



HISTORY

OF THE

FEDERATION

Few institutions in the history of humanity span centuries, let alone more than a millennium. Of those that have, even fewer have such a rich and varied history while remaining relevant in our modern society.

The Federation, tracing its history back to the years of the mid 21st century, is the longest-lived institution humanity has ever produced.

Having brought us from the shelter of the Sol system to far and distant stars in the late 21st and early 22nd centuries, the Federation stands apart from its counterparts. The Alliance has existed for a mere 74 years, the Empire since 2324.

It has endured many tests of its authority over rogue worlds and direct military confrontations with colonies. In an age in which we are spread all over the cosmos and in direct conflict with an alien species, it is strange to consider that we were once confined to a single planet.

A single world with disparate cultures and people, all living in geographically-delineated states called 'countries' upon its surface.

Whilst it is odd to ponder such a tolerance amongst different cultures today—especially in light of the recent cold war between the Empire and Federation—it was very much the reality that defined the global society of the early 21st and 22nd centuries. It was the nature of this society that was the catalyst for our push into space.



The Third World War

WWIII was fought on a much larger scale and at a much faster pace than either of the previous two 'world wars'. It was devastating, and wrought havoc on much of Earth's delicate biosphere. Many historical sites were destroyed across many cultures, and the war served to reset human society.

Details are unclear but one of the superpowers at the time, the United States of America (USA), emerged as a unifying force and led humanity's reconstruction efforts. A hegemony before the war, the USA's overwhelming firepower and experience of maintaining a world order left it as the only plausible leader once the dust had settled. With few 'nations' left to rebuild, the USA reluctantly extended its governmental reach – becoming the first global empire. Thus was born 'the Federation of the United States'; which, due to political expediency, was quickly shortened to 'the Federation' in the late 2060s to 2070s.

The basic tenets of the Federation as we know it, and which still define it, emerged then: faith in technology, belief in democracy, an emphasis on individual freedom and a strong corporate societal structure. Companies began lunar and Martian exploration and colonization. The first few years of colonization on Mars sowed the seeds for the conflicts that would later test the foundations of the federal constitutional authority.

The earliest days of the Federation were an age without Frame Shift Drives, and it was not possible to journey beyond the solar system within one human lifetime. As we reached the colonisation capacity of our first star system, attention turned to where we could expand next.

In order for the Federation to grow, it was deemed necessary to build large 'generation' ships to travel to any 'exoplanets' (worlds orbiting other stars). Over 70,000 such vessels would go on to be commissioned and form humanity's first foray into the black.

Tau Ceti was the first system to be colonized, and where we first encountered alien life. From there, further colonisation exploded – due to the advent of hyperspace.

This leap forward came from a research team led by the legendary figure Li Qin Jao, and spurred an explosive wave of exploration and colonization beyond Sol. Suddenly the entire Galaxy seemed within our grasp. As we reached out in excitement, the concept of resource scarcity fading into memory, the Federation governed our efforts.

Governing the new colonies presented political and economic challenges. Our corner of the Galaxy was rapidly becoming a free-for-all, and the government of Earth needed to strengthen its power if it was to establish some semblance of order.

WWIII was fought on a much larger scale and at a much faster pace than either of the previous two 'world wars'.

2242 was a watershed year in the histories of both the Federation and humanity, in which Earth established the binding document of the Galactic Federation. The Federation Accord was adopted by five systems over its first year: Sol, Tau Ceti, Delta Pavonis, Altair, and Beta Hydri.

This foundation was not without controversy. Tau Ceti signed only after a short but brutal war, and as a result it is likely the other founding worlds followed suit for fear of Sol's wrath. However, this did not diminish the importance of this monumental achievement. Humanity was now spread amongst the stars, united in the black under one government.

From this moment, human and Federation history seems to speed up. Primitive yet effective hyperdrives were used to project military might and build trade between systems, which saw rapid population and economic growth. 'Post scarcity' economics allowed rampant colonisation, as we discovered many more habitable worlds the further we jumped.

During this era of apparent prosperity, several issues

which were later to plague the Federation began making themselves apparent. Corporations, the economic backbone of human civilisation, had become increasingly influential in the Federal congress. Beyond merely lobbying the government, the lines between politics and business became increasingly blurred. Then the colony of Achenar was established in the late 23rd century, and soon a new threat to the Federation's leadership arose: the self-proclaimed Empire colony of Achenar.

The Federation desperately needed reform. Congress was burdened by representatives from so many systems, many of so few colonists, that the legislative system had become bloated, unrepresentative and unwieldy. The rogue colony of Achenar, over one hundred light years away, was a constant irritant to Federal authority, as it repeatedly resisted mandates to cease killing off the native alien species. This blatant disregard for Federal authority incited Federal Military Command to issue its first real threat of retaliation against one of its colonies since the Tau Ceti war.

Though it wasn't obvious at the time, this was the end of the Federation's golden age. Never before had all of humanity existed under one government, and never would it do so again.

In response to repeated violations of instructions from Mars, the Federal congress sanctioned a full-scale military intervention against the colony of Achenar in 2323. Federal Admiral Richard Morgan assembled a large fleet

of military and logistic vessels at the founding world of Beta Hydri. Later that year, the fleet set out towards Achenar, struggling with logistics challenges and missing the support that it had enjoyed while operating in close proximity to Sol.

Throughout 2324 the Federal fleet tried repeatedly to secure a foothold in Achenar, but was beaten back by the military forces of the fledgling colony. In a surprise counter-offensive in 2325 Achenar dealt a massive blow to Federation forces. Admiral Morgan, previously desperate to secure a victory, realised immediately that the game had changed – retaking the colony had become impossible. The conflict was now between two powers. The Federal forces retreated and settled into protracted fighting along the buffer zone between the two states.

In a manner that was beginning to seem cyclical, the period of self-analysis and reform led to a period of relative peace and growth.

The Federation emerged with a clear realization of where its structural failures lay. With this in mind, it proceeded to address its other source of weakness; this one at its core – its bloated bureaucracy.

The first reforms were ratified in the year 2594. The ever-growing Federal Congress streamlined its membership from several thousand representatives to the five hundred that remain today. Presidential executive power was reduced, and Congress was brought back to the forefront of Federal power.

In the year 2600 President Sadiq Kessler offered to remove all charter requirements from Federal membership criteria in a bid to convince the independent system Alioth to join the Federation. This backfired when

pro-independence forces took root in Congress. The system was already the focus of intense conflict between the Federation and Empire, and this further cemented the Federation's loss of influence in the modern era.

In the following century, this waning influence was accompanied by a period of volatile societal change. As dynasties of original colonial settlers gained power, they were granted land claims containing ever more resources. This was much to the ire of interstellar corporations, who wanted the mineral rights on colonised worlds. Using their political influence, which had always been enormous, they pressured the Presidential administration to take action against 'stifling anachronism'. The result was forced acquisition and redistribution of the hereditary rights of colonial pioneers to the corporations.

The ensuing 'Birthright Wars' broke out on colonies across the fringes of the Federation. Though many saw the actions of the government as an aggressive violation of citizens' rights, with hindsight it's clear that these wars began a second renaissance for the Federal Navy. Thanks to accelerating commercial innovation in starship design, and increased Government funding from the wars, corporations were authorized to build and maintain armed fleets.

Anlave became emblematic of this form of high-tech warfare and the system developed into a Naval stronghold. After successfully defending against an invasion attempt in 2708, the Federal Navy stood ready, with renewed strength, to continue protecting the Federation against her enemies.

However, the Birthright Wars had begun an accelerating encroachment of corporate power into the Federal Congress. In 2866 President Isaac Gellan was at the centre of a scandal that resulted in a vote of no confidence. In what came to be known as the Gellan scandal, a number of corporations were revealed to be in collusion with not only the President, but several key members of Congress as well. This exposed systematic abuse of political influence by corporate concerns, which heavily weakened the standing of the Federal political infrastructure – a reputation which the superpower has struggled to shake to this day.

The damage done to the Federal government triggered another cleansing of the rot within the superpower. In a manner that was beginning to seem cyclical, the period of self-analysis and reform led to a period of relative peace and growth.


President Grant Keller increased government spending in the late 2900s, and the Federal navy was modernized under the leadership of President Varian Scott. After the fall of GalCop and the introduction of new Frame Shift Drives, the Federation experienced a period of economic and political stability.

The year is 3304.

Today the Federation is recovering from the fallout of former President Jasmina Halsey's disappearance and the subsequent controversy following her return. President Hudson oversees a period of uncertainty, as a hostile alien race edges closer to Sol. The early 34th Century has seen ratcheting tensions with the Empire, the old rival, as the London Treaty was abandoned and the superpowers clashed over alien sites in the Pleiades Cluster.

Thanks to accelerating commercial innovation in starship design, and increased Government funding from the wars, corporations were authorized to build and maintain armed fleets.

Yet this superpower is still held together by the basic tenets of its culture and society. They soon strike any visitor, and remain constant across great distances and disparate worlds. Explicit commitment to democracy and inviolable citizens' rights define the Federation, a pillar in today's Galaxy that has endured, and risen to challenges to its primacy, throughout its 1,300-year history.

No other political entity has endured so much, for so long. The Federation today is as strong and prosperous as it has ever been, heading confidently into its second millennium. 

History of the Federation

Text: Alexander Sepulveda

Images: SebastianWehmeyer, OrangePheonix

Design: LexMoloch





THE RECENT HISTORY OF LAVE

By Guest Contributor, Lave Station Commander Allen Stroud.

Recently, I've been made aware there have been discussions in several quarters of the Galaxy about the history of the Lave system. Given the elections and alteration of Lave's allegiance, I think it's very important that all parties who have an interest in the system, or the planet itself, understand the circumstances which have brought us to our current state.

Lave was an important planet during the Galactic Cooperative (GalCop) era. Its reputation as an interstellar location of choice came from its interstellar culture. Lave was one of the first planets that the Elite Federation of Pilots made use of, opening a training academy on the planet for new pilots to achieve their licences. For a time, the system was at the heart of all things progressive, as humanity sought to expand its reach across the stars.

The first century of the fourth millennium saw GalCop in ascendancy, whilst the second saw its rapid decline. By 3174, Lave had fallen into the hands of Doctor Hans Walden, a eugenics-obsessed dictator, determined to hold on to power and eradicate any opposition to his narrow ideology.

Walden succeeded in holding the system in his grip for ninety one years. He did this with a mixture of propaganda and violence, claiming to be the voice of peace and reason whilst secretly murdering anyone who voiced opposition to his rule.

What toppled the 'Good Doctor' was a strange confusion of events. An internal planetary rebellion, happening at the same time as a skirmish with disaffected privateers, escalated into all-out war when an Alliance battlegroup under the command of Admiral Bryce Jander arrived. Subsequent reports indicate that all parties were only peripherally aware of what was going on and what agendas were being pursued by each faction.

In the ensuing chaos, a video feed from Lave Station was broadcast, seeming to show Doctor Hans Walden dead at the hands of a Federal officer – one Pietro Devander. In that moment, the jurisdiction of the entire matter became very confusing, particularly when the Imperial Ambassador to the system, Martha Godwina, endorsed an Alliance claim on the system. This was always intended to be temporary, and in fact lasted two years, with Jander operating as a *de facto* leader until planetwide elections could be organised. When they were, the new president of Lave immediately signed an executive order that the Lave system formally request to join the Alliance.

What was not so widely reported was that when Admiral Bryce Jander returned to Alioth, he immediately retired and disappeared.

Since 3265, Lave has been an Alliance member, operating in consort with other systems in the region, after initially convincing them to adopt the green banner too.

“ It is surprising this allegiance has stuck for nearly forty years. ”

However, given the circumstances in which Lave joined the Alliance, it is surprising this allegiance has stuck for nearly forty years. The competing agendas of three factions—the Phoenix Brigade space privateers, the revolutionary movement on the planet, and the Alliance battlegroup—found common ground against a common enemy. Once that enemy was removed and the pieces were put back together, the original need for the truce was gone. It is a testimony to the good relations between the different groups that they remained together for the good of the system.

In the ensuing years, the names of the different interest groups have changed, but their agendas have remained the same.

The Lave Fortune Organisation, for instance, represents much of the old money that propped up the Walden regime. Whilst they do not advocate a return to his regime (that would be far too unpopular), they do want to see some of his previous policies brought back.

Similarly, the **Defence Party of Lave** is an organisation that engages in authoritarian activities in order to establish and maintain absolute control over its chosen field of interest. The Defence Party is a mixture of spacer descendants and Phoenix Brigade settlers who want to see Lave return to being a military force in interstellar politics.

Meanwhile, **Lave Incorporated** stands for consensus. The policies of former President James Gibson (first elected in 3283) have always been to reach out and promote cooperation, particularly in the early years when the planet's infrastructure required vast redevelopment.

The **Jet Family** are a small, wealthy family in the Lavian province of Neudaal, known to have a disdain for any laws outside their own attempts to govern their members. They are wealthy oligarchs who have risen out of the prefectorate and control a vast swathe of conservative agricultural communities.

The **Workers of Lave Liberals** are known for actively following the ideal that all members should be able to

influence how their organisation operates. The party was a grassroots movement (literally) that rose out of the fields of Neudaal in opposition to the Jet Family's attempt to take over most of the prefectorate. In recent times, the Workers have expanded to enfranchise the trade unions aboard the differing system outposts such as Warinus and Lave Station. Most dockers, technicians and the like are, or have been, affiliate members of the party.

And then there's the **Lave Radio Network** – a group born out of the strange popularity of a radio station that first started broadcasting in 3299, and which is drawn from a broad cross section of society. Some of them are pilots, some are station officers, others are technicians and deck hands. For some reason, people like them and listen.

It might be that the irreverent origin of these transmissions, coming from an orange Sidewinder often spotted in the system, tapped into some nostalgic spirit of the old revolution. Whilst other groups claim to stand for different ideals, this little band of Lave Station employees live and breathe these ideas. Which is one of the reasons we let them borrow a bit of station equipment to continue their work when they're not on duty.

The recent elections in the Lave system have resulted in a win for the Lave Radio Network, who are keen to withdraw the system from the Alliance Faction. There are many who oppose this.

Whatever your point of view is, it's important that we all consider where we've come from to get here. Lave's democracy must be preserved. No-one wants to see a return to the Walden era, or to the propaganda policies that he enacted, by anyone. If Lave remains with the Alliance, let it be for good reasons, given by those who live in the system. If it leaves, let it be for the same.

Incidentally, despite his public execution in 3265, rumours persist that Doctor Hans Walden of Lave is still alive. If he is, let's not create a political vacuum for him to return.



■ Warinus asteroid station

The Recent History of Lave

Text: Allen Stroud

Images: OrangePhoenix

Design: LexMoloch



DELACY

SPEED

IS IN OUR **D.N.A.**

ATTACK OF THE ZOMBIE THARGOIDS

Long ago, myth and legend told of practitioners of Dark Magic creating slave minions from resurrected dead bodies to do their bidding. These were called “zanbi” or “zombi” in the native language.

The idea of ambulating corpses evolved across cultures and generations. In the modern era our fictional zombies are usually created by technological or alien means rather than magical, but the fear and revulsion at the concept remains powerfully embedded in our species' psyche.

Disturbingly, not all zombies are based in fiction and myth. On ancient Earth, in Taylor Colony, in the Southern Sea of Psi Tauri 4, and in the forests of Rana 1 (to name the most famous examples) we have documented cases of 'zombie parasites'. These are symbiotic or parasitic creatures that infect an organism, take full or partial control of it and use it to serve its own purposes. These real-life 'zombies' aren't resurrected dead, but in many ways are truer to the original legend of zanbi – mind-controlled slaves, often used against the interests of themselves or their community.

Behavior-altering parasites come in a wide range of forms, ranging from parasitic fungus to larvae and worms, and can have varying degrees of influence over their hosts. While—as yet—there have been no substantiated cases of these types of creatures affecting humans to any significant degree, there are several types that infect one of the most common classes of complex biological organisms in the Galaxy: insects.



Han_Zen's Fungal Thargoids

Commander Han_Zen has proposed a theory to the Galactic community—which he acknowledges as far-fetched—based on the ubiquitous space fungus found on thousands of airless worlds. Regardless of whether the idea is likely to be accurate or not, it raises many very intriguing questions, and challenges our assumptions about the Thargoids.

Han_Zen lays out the groundwork for this concept as follows:


“Fungus is by far the most dominant life form on airless worlds. We have bark mounds, brain trees and the space puffballs. Barnacles have not been confirmed as fungal, but they are quite similar-looking to the bark mounds and [many researchers feel] are a genetically modified version of a natural life form.

Mycoid is often referred to as a virus. This is probably not quite true—both the [historical records] and the name itself points to Mycoid being of fungal origin. The ‘virus’ description probably is more linked to its aggressive viral effect, than its actual genetic background.

Common fungi are known as effective pesticides, both against insects and other fungi. [some special examples] can even do ‘mind control’ on insects and create so called ‘zombie insects’.

All in all, fungus seems like bad news for Thargoids.

Fungus is also a bit strange in the way that it’s often impossible to distinguish between an individual and a large network. A single mushroom is often part of a huge organism. They spread underground and it distributes via spores.”



Barnacles

These organic structures, we now know, operate as a type of organic mine. They are seeded by the Thargoids, often thousands of years in advance, and left to mature on suitable worlds. The Thargoids apparently consider a seeded area their territory, and such areas appear to contain hundreds or even thousands of Barnacle sites. Thargoid ships have been seen interacting with Barnacles on many occasions, confirming the link between the two.

The Barnacles are also the only known source of Meta-Alloys, the precious resource so coveted by the Federation and Empire that they nearly went to war over the Barnacles in the Pleiades last year. Researchers claim that tests reveal a structure that appears to be modified from an original, naturally evolved, form.

Fungal Life

Several types of (apparently) non-sentient fungal life have been found by explorers in recent years. ‘Bark Mounds’, ‘Brain Trees’, and ‘Space Pumpkins/Puffballs’ have been found on many airless worlds, and the Canonn Research Group is searching for a fourth type that is rumoured to exist. The three known species all seem visually distinct and have never been seen growing together. However, they all share a common trait: the same growths can be found on each, apparently parasitical or products of the fungus itself. This has led some researchers to conclude that these forms of life are somehow related.

The Alliance, uniquely amongst the Superpowers, seems to have taken a special interest in fungal life, and has established research bases in the California Nebula to study them. Mic Turner base is located only a few hundred meters from an extensive patch of what are commonly called ‘Bark Mounds’. Some fungal life has been found widely spread across the Galaxy, leading many to consider that something, or someone, may have accidentally or deliberately spread them through space in the distant past.

Mycoid

The weapon developed by the Intergalactic Naval Reserve Arm (INRA) to defeat the Thargoids and end the first war in 3152 is commonly known as the Mycoid Virus. The development and use of this weapon is still hotly debated by the Galactic community, and beyond the scope of this article.

One factor is worth bearing in mind, as Han_Zen points out: the Mycoid weapon was derived from a fungal source of unknown origin, and was developed initially by accident, in a totally unrelated project related to ending famine.

"All this has me thinking that maybe the Barnacles are controlling the Thargoids and not the other way around."

The fireflies are spores that infect the Thargoids and turn them into zombie-goids. They retain their intelligence, but their will is modified to serve their fungal overlords. They go from barnacle to barnacle, spreading the spores, and attack anything that holds devices with fireflies: Thargoid Sensor, Thargoid Probe and Thargoid Link."

Fireflies

These are tiny flickering motes that appear around some Thargoid-related artefacts, specifically the three devices Han_Zen mentions, as well as the Barnacles. Their exact function and even composition have been hotly debated over the years, and various researchers have attempted everything from pattern-analysis to shooting them – all to no avail.

Sometimes these 'Fireflies' are considered to be sensor-ghosts more than physical objects, but many people point to the fact that they are observable with unaugmented vision as well as via cameras. Han_Zen asks:

"So, how can a mushroom be capable of advanced operations like this?"

Fungus may have been the new vehicle chosen by the Guardian AI, when they had to abandon the monolith network?

[Ram Tah's translation of the Guardian data] Technology 20 says: 'the AIs recognized their vulnerability. They responded by developing their own operational hardware, independent of implanted Guardian users. Frustratingly, the details of these mechanisms have been purged from the record.'

They may have chosen to jump over to the brain trees and go on from there? It would explain why the Thargoids react so negatively to Guardian technology."

Guardians, AI and Braintrees

As many people will now be aware, the Guardians are an extinct species that lived in this region of the Galaxy around 1-2 million years ago. They were roughly comparable with humans in many ways, not least in appearance. They encountered the Thargoids in much the same way that we did. The Guardians used AI weapons to defeat the Thargoids after a protracted and costly conflict. After the victory the AI turned on its creators and apparently destroyed them entirely. The fate of the AI is unknown at this time.

In the proximity of Guardian ruins, explorers have often found what are commonly called 'Brain Trees'. They emit very weak signals that can be picked up when close by, and have long been the subject of investigation. Currently they appear inert, but they are spread across vast areas of the Galaxy, and have been found as far out as Colonia. ▶





Thargoid Reaction to Guardian Technology

Han_Zen originally proposed this idea before the war between Thargoids and Guardians had been uncovered, but it still makes sense even now. Here he refers to the extreme reaction that occurs when a Guardian technology artefact is introduced to a Thargoid Surface site, or when a pilot drops Guardian technology near a Thargoid Interceptor.

There's no particular reason for the hugely aggressive reaction from the Thargoid Device or the Interceptors, except to maybe attempt to neutralise any *infection* that might be present. Surely the Thargoids themselves are generally smart enough to know the difference between a millions-year old artefact and a Guardian war drone.

"This would leave the Klaxians as natural uninfected Thargoids, with good reason to go after their mind-controlled counterparts."

Thargoids Aren't a Unified Species

There are reports from several different sources that the Thargoids aren't a single species, but consist of at least two factions. It's claimed that the Thargoids are divided in the same way humans can be categorised by allegiance to the Empire, Federation or Alliance. Some say the split is more severe – one species but with two radically separate ideologies, belief systems and values making coexistence impossible. Others theorise that there might be hundreds or thousands of factions, similar to many insect species where each hive is a discrete society within the species as a whole.

People who believe in the idea of a stratified Thargoid race claim that there are (at least) two factions: the Oresrians and the Klaxians. These are allegedly the names they give themselves when rendered into human language, though this is hard to verify. The Oresrians are the Thargoids that we've encountered historically, and fought in the last war, the race upon which INRA used the Mycoid weapon. The Klaxians, it's claimed, we have not met before, and they are at war (in some fashion) with the Oresrians.

Does This Idea Explain Anything?

Han_Zen explores the relationship between the Thargoids and Guardians and attempts to resolve the apparent discrepancies between historical records, rumours and the actual behavior of the Thargoids we see now.

Given the total lack of information coming from the Superpowers or Aegis, it is down to individuals like Han_Zen to make sense of the current situation.

While on the surface the equation is simple (Thargoids = Bad Guys), and that's enough for some, there are many in the Pilots Federation who want more detailed answers to many outstanding questions. To many the Thargoids are not just dumb animals: they're intelligent beings. They have a civilisation that stretches back at least two million years. The idea of them being simple comic book villains simply there to provide targets for trigger-happy pilots strikes more thoughtful commentators as too simplistic an answer.

While the theories outlined here are probably off the mark, they should serve as an example to us that there are always at least two sides to every story.

What is going on in Thargoid society, if they have one? Are they suffering some internal crisis—as would occur if a portion of their population was struggling against mind-controlling parasites? Perhaps to them, the strange monkey-aliens nearby are carting around containers of the parasites and digging up more of them in the ancient ruins, having so-far ignored all attempts at warning or communications.

Many people have been vocal in calling for more transparency from Aegis and a widespread release of information relating to the Thargoids. It's widely rumoured that all the Superpowers, especially the Alliance, hold a lot of secret information on our alien antagonists. When members of the Pilots Federation act as the main line of research and defence against the Octagonal Menace, surely Aegis should be supporting them.

Attack of the Zombie Thargoids

Text: Louis Calvert

Images: StarFox, OrangePheonix, Tolaak Grohiik, Sagittarius Eye, Pexels

Design: LexMoloch

Fat Bottomed Girl



Commander PrimetimeCasual realised that one of his ships wasn't like the rest — a Zorgon Peterson Hauler.

After some uncertainty, he discovered the route he wanted to take with the humble little vessel, which he has named the Fat Bottomed Girl. He explained that this name was not only a reference to the Hauler's rather large rear end but is also a nod to an ancient song.

"All my ships are named after songs from ancient Earth — in this case, the Queen classic."

Fat Bottomed Girl

The Concept

“I’m a bit of a collector. I collect ships. I can’t bring myself to sell them once I formed a bond. Most of the time, this works well, but there are ships that just don’t... fit. The Hauler was one of those. Once I got a bigger cargo ship, I thought, what’s the point? Boy was I wrong. I read about Commanders going to Farseer Inc. to fit ‘Enhanced Performance Thrusters’ and stuff on their shiny Imperial Eagles and Vipers. That’s when it all took a turn down crazy lane, I guess.”

After arriving at Farseer Inc., his plan began to solidify. “I stop with almost every ship at Farseer’s to do some modifications to the Frame Shift Drive (FSD).” He explains. “On top of those routine checks, I took some time to ask a mechanic there if they could fit their special thrusters to my Hauler.”

He didn’t stop at thrusters. His overall plan was to create “a ship, light as could be, stripped down to bare necessities, but with insanely large thrusters and FSD modifications.” As for a motive? That was obvious for him: “All I wanted to do was to sit next to one of those self-righteous Imperial Eagles and leave them in the dust.”

Soon however, he discovered that his venture would take him far and wide:

Farseer could only get me part way but had a lot of good advice and recommendations. I spent some time working for Sirius Corp, in order to gain access to their ship modifications. Finally, I had to bring the Hauler all the way to Professor Palin for the final bits and pieces.

“I’ve been interdicted, and pirates don’t even get to see my exhaust fumes – they just fall behind out of sensor range.”

Cruise speed:	466 m/s
Boost speed:	699 m/s
Unladen jump range:	51.52 ly
Unladen mass:	23 t

Performance

There is a very real possibility that Cmdr Primetime Casual’s Hauler is the most engineered ship of its kind in existence. It is an often-overlooked vessel due to its less-than-stellar stock capabilities. Now, however, it has demonstrated what performance it can achieve when heavily modified.

“In full race configuration, I can jump 51 light-years, with a normal space boost of 699m/s! There are ships that can jump further, or fly faster, that’s true, but the combination is unique and hard to beat.”

He tells tales of where he has taken the unusual ship and what he has achieved. “I’ve flown the Okinura race loop and beaten Imperial Couriers. I’ve been interdicted, and pirates don’t even get to see my exhaust fumes – they just fall behind out of sensor range. In the recent Buckyball Beer Club—er, Racing Club—pub crawl, the Hauler surprised everyone with its jump range and posted another very good time. So, yeah, it’s fast, in normal space and in interstellar flight.”

The Problems

As impressive as these feats are in such a vessel, there are inevitably some drawbacks. “There are a few... issues. Yes. The problem is heat. The ship is all engines and thrusters: the heat vents were never supposed to deal with that.”

Unsurprisingly, such heavy customisation has inevitably had consequences for his insurance. “I spoke to a Zorgon Peterson representative, and basically, all guarantees are void on that ship.”

PrimetimeCasual, elaborating further on the day-to-day challenges flying such a ship, reveals further issues. “On a ‘normal’ hyperspace jump, heat gets up to 80%. You can imagine what happens on a bad one. Keeping to the speed limits inside stations is also surprisingly hard—but that may also be more of a personal problem.” In addition to heat, heavy stripping of the ship’s internals has also had other consequences. “Oh, and since I gutted the insides, the structural integrity is about the same as a cardboard model. For most racing events that take part around installations, I have to fit extra reinforcement modules.” Before quickly adding, “But, hey, it’s fast!”

■ Commander PrimetimeCasual’s racing exploits have taken him far and wide



Good Ship, or Gimmick?

Commander PrimetimeCasual recommends the Hauler, speaking very highly of its perks. He emphasises the substantial bang one gets for a very low buck.

“Oh, I absolutely recommend it! Especially if you aren’t a member of the Imperial Navy, or want to do some cargo running where you might have to get away fast... The Hauler is your friend! It is cheap, and it is light: both ideal prerequisites for modifications of the FSD and thrusters.”

The ship will also, understandably, turn heads at racing events. As a scene dominated by more common fighter vessels, a Hauler is sure to be a strange sight.

“Plus, if you’re looking to stand out at racing events, the Hauler will do it. For a bargain, you will stand on the line next to purpose-built Vipers and Eagles and whatnot and keep up with them! Both of them are more expensive as well.”

“That is when I realized: I’m in love with that Hauler, and that I just want to go really, really fast.”

Speed Freak

Every pilot has those experiences that they just don’t forget. Something that sticks in their memory forever. These memories often define the personalities of their ships, and for PrimetimeCasual, this is no exception.

“The one thing that stands out was my trip to Chi Hydrae,” he begins. “It started out rather harmlessly. I just wanted to test the thrusters, you see? How much they can actually take. For that reason, I looked into planets of ever increasing gravitation. Eventually, I found it. Chi Hydrae A 7. A pull of 8.73g. Against my tiny little ship? Could the big thrusters keep me alive? They could. Oh boy, could they. But, it was the way down that was simply unforgettable.”

Describing what the dangerous descent felt like, he explains “The lightness of the ship, the power of the thrusters, it all came together. Nothing else mattered, the ship was utterly silent, just the occasional creaking sound and the distant whine of the vertical stabilizers working overtime. All I could see was the number in the HUD going up and up and up, all the way to 8500 m/s. In normal space.”

“The ground rushing by, just a kilometre below, engines and thrusters screaming to stabilize me, I think I was somewhere between mortified and utterly amazed. I did backflips and barrel rolls, while the speed indicator went to the km/s scale. That is when I realized, I’m in love with that Hauler, and that I just want to go really, really fast.”

Many pilots know the feeling of falling in love with their ship. It’s a natural experience, but for it to occur with a ship that the majority of pilots wouldn’t even take a look at is very special. As a closing statement, Commander PrimetimeCasual said:

“I find that the Hauler is often overlooked in favour of more ... fancy ships. Anything I can do to give the ship the appreciation it deserves!”

Hot Rodder: Fat Bottomed Girl

Text: Mini_Watto

Images: PrimetimeCasual

Design: LexMoloch

COMING SOON
TO A HOLO SCREEN NEAR YOU

GENERATION ODISSEUS



A BEAUTIFUL UTOPIA WHERE

DEATH

IS THE ONLY WAY OUT