

SAGITTARIUS EYE

ISSUE
May 3305

21

Hudson's MID-TERMS

Also featuring:

The Empire • Operation Ida
Fangs • Ships You Don't Fly
High-G Landings • Wolf-Rayets
Pegasi Sector
Experience Jelly

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SAGITTARIUS EYE ISSUE 21

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SAGITTARIUS EYE



Souvarine

A recent incident within our team caused us to examine what we expect of the pilots we share allegiances with. By extension, it has made us think about what 'good conduct' means for a member of the Pilots Federation, and how much we can seek to curtail or condemn the actions of others when in the flight seat.

This issue is apposite for asking this question. It's an issue of extremes: we revisit the heroes of Operation Ida (covered previously in issue 6 of this magazine) to find out how much of the Thargoids' harm they've undone since we last saw them, and meet a pilot who has tragically lost everything.


But we also cynically appraise the tactics of death in our focus on pilot versus pilot combat, and shine a light on the underbelly of the lawless Pegasi Sector.

This duality increasingly reflects this writer's conflicted thinking on the issue of violence among the stars. The logical starting point of: 'pilots who

attack other pilots are bad', does not — when extrapolated — remain flawlessly self-evident for long. How much of the victim's verbal reaction is defensible as a proportionate response to aggression? Does a person's contribution to the community elsewhere, in time and energy, make up for paroxysms of cruelty in the flight seat?

If these questions sound annoyingly rhetorical, that's because they are. Your correspondent certainly doesn't know the answers.

It is tempting to be absolutist: regardless of how chivalrous and generous you are elsewhere, an act of unprovoked violence is still an indefensible waste of someone else's time and effort. But the risks of open space are well-publicised, and 'Mostly Cuddly' is not amongst the rankings that the Pilots Federation awards.

So fly safe, commanders. And take care to know what that means. 

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THE EMPIRE

Continuing our series on what life is like on worlds controlled by the interstellar superpowers, in this issue, we turn our attention to the Empire.

The origins of the Empire date back to the colonisation of the Achenar system in the middle of the 23rd century. Marlin Duval was a wealthy woman from Earth who, disenchanted with the planet's administration and authorities, set off with her own colonising fleet to the promising world of Achenar 6d.

Her leadership ended abruptly when her brother Henson allegedly oversaw a flight 'accident' in which she perished. Achenar's democratic gov-

ernment changed abruptly to one of strict Imperial rule and, from then on, the family took direct control of the colony. Their line has been unbroken ever since.

Imperial citizens value their place and privilege as contributors to a civilisation that offers a far more orderly approach towards maintaining and improving the lives of its people. The rules and hierarchy of day-to-day life on Imperial worlds give citizens a clear set of aspirations.

Strong family bonds and a desire to raise each individual to achieve the potential of their gifts and talents remain paramount.

Status in Imperial society is a priority and usually denoted by the way in which people display their wealth. It is expected that the rich will look the part, wearing the latest fashions of Imperial high society and purchasing the most elegant of its devices, vehicles, and other machines. Design and aesthetics are prized by

Imperial media, which reflect the values of the privileged classes, who set the tone for those beneath them. In this way, aspiration towards aesthetic acceptance by the rich is the ambition of most Imperial citizens, meaning that ordinary citizens are pressured into improving the Empire's appearance of prosperity and happiness.

Lineage is prized by Imperials: tracing the ancestors of one's family back as far as they can shows one's pedigree. Demonstrating how one raised poor genetic stock to the higher social classes proves diligence and provides a story. Imperials do tend to love a good story.

Of course, critics of Imperial culture note that it can be seen as superficial. Still, when compared to the corporation-dominated Federation model, there are significant advantages.

The ingrained hierarchy and need for endorsement by the elite keep

corporate excess in check, even if it offers no better solution to the issues of poverty and prejudice which plague Imperial and Federal worlds alike. In the Empire, corporations can only exist and thrive under the beneficence of a Patron, Client or Senator (although, of course, the leaders of some of the larger corporations are Patrons themselves). This is a stark contrast to the Federation, where corporations dominate politicians.

In addition, the duty of honour towards one's compatriots, regardless of their relative rank, is inculcated in every Imperial citizen. This does guide the way in which individuals behave. Treating people well is a question of honour, and this includes slaves. Children are taught from an early age to respect both the status of a citizen and the lesser status of those who might have given up their citizenship for a period of servitude in order to repay a debt.

Citizenship itself is seen as a gift and something that an individual will

spend most of their life attempting to repay through service. Slaves serve citizens, citizens serve Patrons, Patrons serve Senators, and so on. This hierarchy is a living part of Imperial culture as well as an effective social structure. People serve their masters with pride – even members of the upper nobility will proudly say that they serve their Senator well.

In shaping its interstellar civilisation, the Empire has drawn inspiration from the socio-political structure of Ancient Imperial Rome: primarily the Augustinian period, when much of the framework of the late Republic remained intact. This society is strictly stratified, prioritising the privilege of citizenship, which a child obtains when they reach maturity and a slave gives up when they accept bondage. The emphasis on an individual's deeds and wealth outweighs their lineage and legacy, to enable some level of social mobility. It is possible, though hard, for Clients to become Patrons; and more so for Patrons to become Senators.

“Critics of Imperial culture note that it can be seen as superficial.”



Patronage: the 'cliens' system

The Empire runs on patronage: it is the blood and bone connecting and binding it together. Citizens serve Clients, who might be local nobles or the leaders of companies. Clients pledge fealty to Patrons, who might control a star system or planetary corporate concern. Patrons pledge fealty to Senators, who sit at the Imperial Senate and are incredibly powerful individuals, with fiefdoms numbering in the tens of star systems.

Politically, only the Emperor sits above the Senate – but powerful Senators can and have opposed the Emperor on particular issues. However, most Senators recognise that pledging fealty to the Emperor of the day is usually a sensible policy.

One strength of this system is that it is very flexible. Patrons are free to transfer their support (and therefore that of their Clients) to any other Senator, at any time; and, in turn, Clients are free to take their support and that of their citizens to another Patron. This creates a dynamic, fluid system, in which blocs of influence move in real time, reflecting Patrons and Senators' policy positions and popularity at a given moment.

A Senator might take up a particular policy position on an issue (say, corporate taxation) in order to win the support of a particularly popular patron (perhaps, for argument's sake, the boss of a mining concern with controlling interests in three systems, or the head of a wealthy noble family ruling several rich planets). With this Patron's backing, the Senator might bring their added clout to bear in a salient debate on the Senate floor.

The fealty is also two-way: in return for a Patron's support, a Senator is expected to protect and support them; and a Patron their Clients in return for theirs. This reciprocity acts like a powerful, decentralised social support system. Capricious transfers of allegiance are not with-

out repercussion – Senators sit for life, and can hold grudges for a long time.

This system of fluid, shifting support leads to rampant intrigue and power-broking amongst the higher echelons of Imperial society.

On Imperial worlds that embrace this 'Duval doctrine' there is little corruption, a sign of how effective these social conventions are. When properly administered, the concept of service is ingrained in the Imperial identity. Those at the top are responsible for those beneath them. Those at the bottom feel loyalty and responsibility towards those above them. Generations of people grow up with a clear vision of how to better themselves and those around them: through the system. Attempting to do so by any other means (i.e. being self-serving) is less worthy of recognition. Attempting to cheat, if found out, is criminal behaviour and punished by law and the removal of privilege.

Where corruption is found, the perpetrator is treated harshly. Exile ('banishment') is often part of such a punishment. Being an Imperial citizen is part of how an individual sees themselves, so the removal of citizenship, even for a short period, brings shame to the perpetrator and can cast a shadow on their dependents, although the ability of a spouse or a child to rise out of this circumstance is not impeded.

On Imperial colonies and worlds further away from the example of Achenar, these structures of loyalty are not so clearly upheld. There are large industrial complexes where huge slave workforces perform the work of machines, forming vast production lines that are reminiscent of 19th century Earth factories. On these worlds, human labour is cheaper than importing and installing the necessary automated technology. Debtors and criminals hack



“ Status in Imperial society is a priority and usually denoted by the way in which people display their wealth.

at rock faces alongside one another, trying to reduce their sentences and redeem their citizenship. Slavers ply their trade without much honour in the colonies too — although they are generally loathed by the rest of Imperial society. ‘Slaver’ is a derogatory term in slang Imperial-speak. Whilst the trade of a slave’s service is legal, harvesting individuals from the border worlds and from non-Imperial settlements is seen as reprehensible.

High-status Imperial citizens very rarely visit such places, and on the rare occasions they do, they are frequently shocked. However, these practices do make the Empire wealthy. Should a planetary governor’s corruption be uncovered, then the matter will be addressed and conditions improved, but this does not hinder corrupt practices elsewhere.

The veneer of Imperial society is part of these colonies, just as they are in the core worlds. For all intents and purposes, the same parade of wealth, status and privilege occurs among the fortunate; but this is a charade by comparison, and not the product of honest service and honourable philanthropy. These individuals live opulent lives standing on the backs of those who dig in the dirt for them.

There are frequently rebellions amongst the workforces in the Imperial Colonies and in Imperial-influenced systems. These are dealt with ruthlessly, provided the gaze of the media and Achenar has not turned in their direction. Many slaves are desperate to leave: ironically, many want to go ‘home’ to the more civilised Imperial worlds; not all want to go to Federal or Independent space.

Imperial justice is meted out by those duly appointed to deliver it. The most well-known of these appointees are the Senators, whose station places them in many ways above the law. For capital offences, they can order executions and even carry them out in person, though they may be held to account for their actions by the Emperor.

Practical execution of the law is the responsibility of system leaders, settlement Governors, and station commanders. However, Imperial Proctors sent from Achenar have wide jurisdictional powers and can make life very difficult for anyone who gets in their way.

The Empire today

The death of Hengist Duval in 3301 rocked the foundations of Imperial society. The succession of his biological daughter Arissa Lavigny-Duval has provoked substantial acrimony and whilst it may appear from the outside that business continues ‘as usual’, the ramifications of the political power struggle have yet to be fully realised.

Arissa has a strong reputation as a woman who roots out corruption, does not fall back on her bloodline, and proves herself by word and deed — as a good Imperial citizen should. Still, there are many who believe she did not earn the right to her new position, and that other heirs such as Hengist Duval’s granddaughter, Aisling, were more worthy of the ultimate honour. Certainly, there are questions over how matters played out.

In essence, these first years of Arissa Lavigny’s reign are a battle for the beating heart of the Empire.



Structure of a Superpower:
The Empire

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Operation Ida is an initiative that was created to restore function to stations attacked by the Thargoid menace. Over a year after

OPERATION IDA

Sagittarius Eye first had the opportunity to interview those behind it, we catch up with them again to find out how they're doing, and how they're adapting to deal with new Thargoid threats.

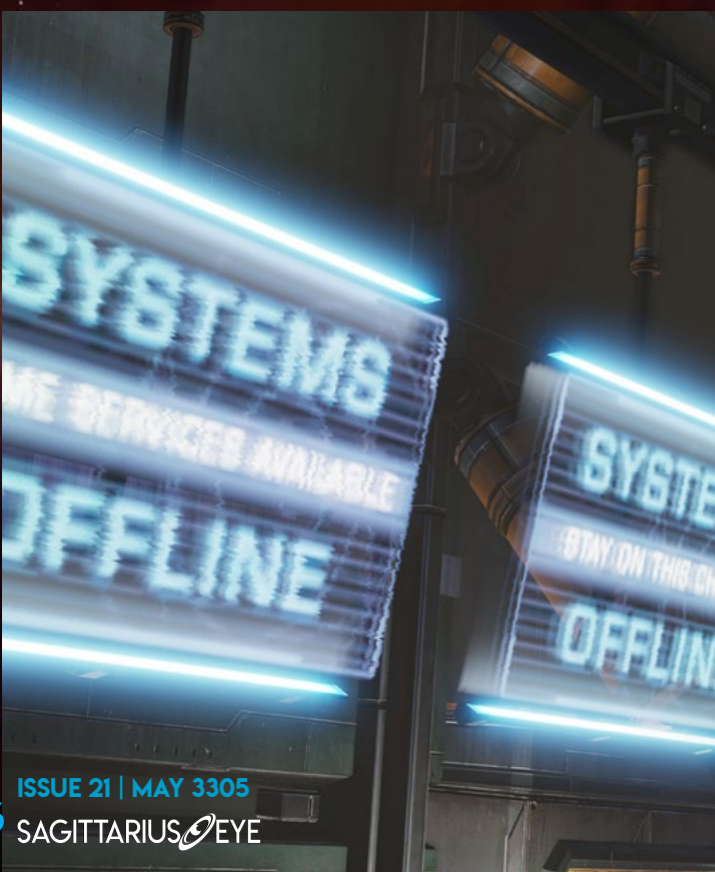
To say that the problem posed by Thargoid attacks is getting out of hand would be an understatement. It is sadly an all-too-common occurrence nowadays for freshly damaged stations to pop up on our Galaxy Map, and to the uninformed, it can feel like all hope is lost.

When *Sagittarius Eye* first took a look at Operation Ida, there were only eleven stations needing repair. At the time, a crisis — but now such a number is a dream to many people. Even then, time projections for getting these stations fixed ranged from mere weeks, to tens, hundreds, or even thousands of years. Some, even, looked unlikely to ever be repaired.

Fast forward a year, and now stations are burning everywhere, with large numbers in the Bubble as well. With more attacks every week, some wonder if anyone is doing anything. Is the initiative still up and running?

The short answer to that is an emphatic 'yes'. Not only is it still going, but it thrives, with support and momentum that grows every day. Now, dozens of dedicated haulers are working around the clock to deliver much-needed resources to damaged and crippled stations. There has actually never been more hope that an end to the crisis is in sight.

Having been granted access to the communication channels of Operation Ida, your correspondent was astounded. Haulers keep close track of how many supplies they deliver to stations in need, with countless deliveries being made per day. The next stop was the station repair



“ They fixed it in three hours and 36 minutes.



spreadsheet, where the organisation keeps track of stations that have been, are currently being or scheduled to be repaired. It was eye-opening, to say the least.

The long and short of it is this: the human eye is actually rather bad at making estimates. It may seem the number of damaged stations on your Galaxy Map never changes, but the numbers speak for themselves: as of writing, over half of the required repairs for damaged stations have been completed. That's for a total of over 120 damaged facilities! Even the untrained eye will notice by now that the Pleiades' stations are fully operational once again.

We had the opportunity to speak with Cmdr Zayn Till, a coordinator and member of Operation Ida's management team. With no time to rest for these brave volunteers, the interview was conducted while Zayn was running much-needed supplies to Mattingly Dock, in the Padhyas system. The station repairs were finished the very same night.

He spoke of how things had started, and whether they expected the operation to come this far.

We had no expectations at all, after the initial attacks, December 14th 3303, the start of the second Thargoid war, we were all kind of scrambling and it just kind of happened that two groups came up with the same idea... Actually three groups. It was a scramble to figure out how we were repairing, what's the process? Then, one group came up with Operation Ida, and merged with the other that had a better sense of logistics.



“ Time projections for getting these stations fixed ranged from mere weeks, to tens, hundreds, or even thousands of years.

Within a couple of weeks I had joined HOTPOT, the Hutton Orbital Truckers' Pleiades Operations Team, who had decided to help, but eventually it became more of an Operation Ida thing, and within a few months [Operation Ida] was autonomous, with help from a bunch of different independent Commanders and groups.

Since then, the operation has come leaps and bounds, to the point where the Pilots Federation have recognised them as a faction in their own right.

Now we're an actual faction in control of two systems and in two other systems in the Pleiades. It really is essentially a volunteer group of 'firefighters'.

It's quite clear that Operation Ida has grown massively since its inception. In these times, however, a wider effort is still required. Station repairs are naturally a key part of the process, but prevention and protection are also important. Indeed, as of writing, nineteen stations have been attacked a second time by Thargoids before repairs could even be completed from the previous assault.

At the start, however, the distances involved were a giant issue for the whole operation.

We started picking up people, even though in the Pleiades it was so difficult because distances for some of these commodities were so long. Beryllium is one of the standard commodities needed for these stations, but you'd be looking at a 500 or 600 light year round trip haul, and that's time-consuming. It was a very time-consuming gig in the Pleiades. In addition, you've got hyperdictions, and interdiction, and just a host of other issues that made it very tedious.

Finally, fifteen months later, we've finished the last station in the Pleiades, and this is after repairing an additional three stations that we'd already repaired because they got re-attacked. Operation Ida, aside from being haulers, had to turn into a defence force. Even though we had help from allies like AXI, HAAX, and Squadron 42, we had to fight and haul at the same time: it was crazy.



With their Pleiades operation finally completed, Operation Ida's efforts are now focused on repairing stations in the Bubble. While there are stations between these locations that have needed repairs for many months now, the general feeling is that resources and manpower are, right now, put to better use on Bubble systems.

Not long after speaking with Zayn Till, Operation Ida achieved what could only have been described as monumental early on in their Bubble operations. On the 6th of April, they planned something that would once have been the spoutings of a madman: an attempt to fix a station in a single day.



We identified a cluster of systems in the central Bubble that we thought we could do relatively quickly. We've been reaching out to a lot of other groups, because it's not just about Operation Ida, it's about everyone working together to try and do what needs to be done.

Now that we're in the central Bubble we're easily accessible to commanders and groups that normally wouldn't want to participate due to [the distance of] the Pleiades. 440 light years away, long-range hauling, no profit – you know, we lost so much [money] on these hauls.

The target was Jett Market, in the HIP 23395 system. The goal was simple: repair the station within 24 hours. However, this goal would turn out to be way off the mark.

Because they fixed it in three hours and 36 minutes.

This was so fast that they decided not to waste their momentum. With so many ships working at once, and less than one-sixth of their day used up, they went for a second station that same day.

Another eleven hours and 40 minutes later, Dyomin Station had also been repaired. In the space of fewer than sixteen hours, over 1.1 million tons of supplies had been delivered to these two stations as part of the repair process. Demonstrating once and for all that not only is this a fight worth fighting, but it's a fight that can be won.

Operation Ida continues. Its work will likely never be finished, with new stations being attacked every week, but one thing is for sure: humanity will not roll over.

Cmdr Zayn Till had one last thing to say:

It's called Operation Ida. Not I.D.A. Eye-dah. As in Mount Ida in Greece on Earth. We are separate from the Independent Defence Agency, but we have worked with them on occasion.

Anyone who is interested in supporting the efforts of Operation Ida can get involved by joining their [communication channels](#).

“ It really is essentially a volunteer group of ‘firefighters’.

Operation Ida

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Thanks to:
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Images:
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Caught in the FANGS of Fate

As a counterweight to this month's feature on the criminals of the Pegasi Sector, we spoke to a recent victim who lost her ship, *Lucy*, in a senseless act of violence. She has asked to remain anonymous.

We gather you were involved in a piracy incident. Can you briefly summarise what happened?

Yeah, about a year ago. We got jumped somewhere in the Eocs Bre sector, downspin of the core.

You say "we". Were you in a single-seat ship?

No. It was me and my partner.

Did he survive?

... No.

Can you elaborate a little bit on what happened?

(long sigh) We'd left the Bubble about a month prior and we were out exploring. Had a mind to try to reach Beagle Point; hadn't ever been there. We were in an Asp Explorer... we called her 'Lucy'. She wasn't much: mostly D-rated fittings, just what we could afford, all stripped for long range. No engineering or anything, we were too poor for that.

A month in, Lucy had taken some damage, which happens on cross-galactic trips. Her sensors had developed a glitch, and we got complacent. We didn't think anyone would be that far out: the odds of finding someone else out in the deep dark are pretty low.

We had some supplies on board: fresh coffee and tea, personal stores. Bastards probably sniffed that out in a long range scan. Interdicted us and smashed Lucy to pulp.



“ No. I don't know what the fuck the motivation was.

And your partner was killed in the attack?

... my husband. Yes.

We're very sorry for your loss.

(no response)

Being able to avoid or escape from pirates are vital skills that every Pilots Federation member should know about, and you've had hands-on experience with an actual attack. Could you give our readers a couple of tips for how to prepare for a journey into the black?

Wasn't much we could have done at the time. Too busy panicking and dying. Preparation? Fuck. The whole thing was over in seconds. There was barely time to scream.

Look, buddy. I'm not an idiot. I may not have a Dangerous combat rank, but I've been riding the black since I was old enough to walk out of my good-for-nothing mother's station apartment. I've read the flight manuals, done the sims, and captained my own ship. I know what you're supposed to do.

You keep another system targeted so you can punch into Witchspace if someone interdicts you. You shove your pips to engines and boost like crazy the instant you get dragged out of frameshift, find your referent star, and jump the hell out of there. Maybe you dump a couple of cans while your drives spool up, give the bottom-feeding scum something else to chase.

Do you know who attacked you?

An iron-assed Anaconda named 'Nadine'. I don't know who was flying and I don't know if they were from an organized pirate clan or if it was some random hateful son of a bitch out to get his kicks from blasting explorers. It doesn't matter.

Can you venture a suggestion as to their motives?

That matters even less than who it was. What was it they said in that old Earth flatfilm, The Circle Lord, or whatever it was called? "What can men do against such reckless hate?" What, indeed?

Sometimes the black is filled with wonder. There are things out there that human eyes have never seen and never will see — an unimaginable, unknowable, unending torrent of creation and destruction and renewal. Suns are born and die in explosions that fill the heavens with brightness, and we think we... we think we matter in all of that? That my motivation or your motivation or that... or that... that murderer's motivation... that any of that really matters when it's painted onto a canvas that big?

No. I don't know what the fuck the motivation was.

Has the encounter changed your behaviour, in space travel and otherwise?

I sleep with the lights on now. When I sleep, at least. I don't spend much time off the ship when I'm docked at a station. Sometimes when I'm flying, my hands... shake.

I won't haul cargo outside the Bubble. At least, not so far. But I can't get over the idea of seeing Beagle Point before... well, I'd like to see it. I think, if I go out there — when I go, probably — it'll be for good. Set out into the dark one more time, to spit in Old Grim's teeth.

What advice would you give to fledgeling pilots, given your experience?

Your Pilots Federation rank? Those chicken pins look great on your shoulders and collar tabs, but it doesn't mean shit. Not out here. Not when you're under someone's else's guns in the empty void with SysSec nowhere to be found.

What makes you a pilot — what makes you a commander — are the things you do alone, in the dark, where no one else will ever know or see. Being Elite (assuming you ever get there, which I know I won't) means making choices. What is the right thing to do? More than that, what are you prepared to do?

I'm sure your publication has all kinds of happy-sounding, easily-digestible tips for new pilots — greenhorns with the creases still showing on duffel bags fresh from the station supply depot. I'm sure they're all eagerly reading this with smiling faces and bright eyes. I'm sure they're all confident that they'll find a universe that will shower them with fame, glory, and billions of credits, if they can just figure out the right way to go about it.

Just remember that we are what we choose to be.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell our readers?

I got a consignment to move to Altair and the clock's ticking, so no. Thanks for the drink. Don't talk to me again.



Caught in the Fangs of Fate

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Thanks to:
David Hall, Lee Hutchinson

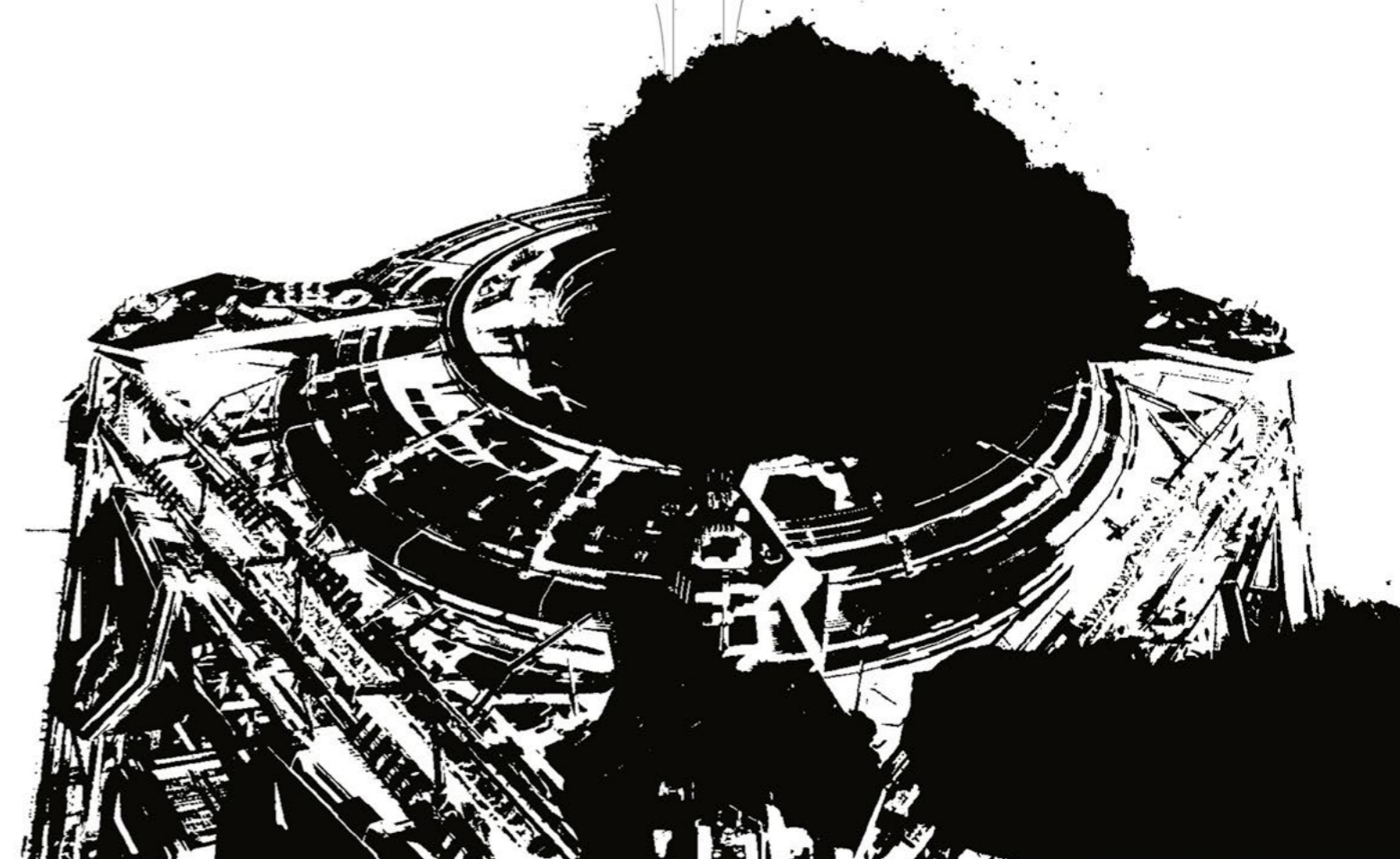
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pilot
xeno
scout
agent
trader
fighter
master
pioneer
scientist
explorer
engineer
defender
crewman
navigator
champion
dangerous



Contact Search and Rescue
agents at the nearest station.

HERO



Feeling CONFIDENT?

President Hudson's mid-terms,
and first four years in office

In June 3301, following the mysterious disappearance of his Liberal predecessor, Republican warhawk Zachary Hudson assumed the office of Federation President. He ran on the promise that he would cut taxes and bolster the military to defend the Federation against its enemies. Four years into his term, has he followed through on his promises well enough to survive the mandatory vote of confidence? ▶



Zachary Hudson's face is set in a deep scowl, and his brows are furrowed in concentration, as he levels the sleek barrel of his custom-made Fairlight Excelsior laser rifle at his prey, a pacified buck specially bred on Nanomam 1 for hunting by the rich and famous. It's one of his most popular holo-ops, one that lets Hudson show off his well-publicised connection to the wild worlds of the frontier. Naturally, the expense of the rifle and the docility of the target are beside the point: Hudson is a man's man, an old-fashioned hunter who will protect his citizens' rights to defend themselves and their homes.

Hudson is a man's man, an old-fashioned hunter

While Shadow President, Hudson frequently defined himself as the opposite of his political opponent Jasmina Halsey. He criticised Halsey bluntly and often, describing her as "completely unfit for office" and stating that "we need a commander-in-chief who understands the Galaxy we live in." According to Hudson, that Galaxy is a dangerous and uncompromising place, full of threats to human life that warrant an ever-stronger military defence. Recent events such as the Thargoid incursion have validated that perspective, although Hudson — not to mention most other humans — would probably have preferred more empty posturing between the Federation and the Empire to an incursion into human space by aliens set on genocide. Hudson is an accomplished performer, and in a less tumultuous time would have been the face of Federation resistance to Imperial aggression. It's a shame the Thargoids haven't seen his deer hunting holo-ops.

“It's a shame the Thargoids haven't seen his deer hunting holo-ops.”



Political rise

Hudson assumed the office of President in his mid-eighties: the climax of a long career in politics. His ascent has been accelerated by a policy of tax reduction, popular among Federation citizens. He claims that the Federation is built upon values of personal freedom and responsibility. Young people are a frequent target of his political diatribes: he describes them as "flabby" from excessive sim use. He has promoted recruitment to the Federal Navy through the Close Quarters Combat program since its inception. All of these factors have helped him to rise to the leadership of the Republican Party.

Young people are a frequent target of his political diatribes

He became President by default when a vote of no confidence in Jasmina Halsey's administration overturned the government for the first time since 3264. Of course, for all his boasting that he would lead the Federation well, aspiring to be President and actually serving as President are two entirely different things. So how well has he done?

Territory

A significant measure of the success of any of the Galaxy's most influential people is their 'power play' standing. While most of the Galaxy's powers are suffering from extensive cases of 'Fifth Column' (5C) activity, as well as robot-piloted saboteurs, power play remains an effective way to track a galactic leader's influence.

When the Pilots Federation (PF) began tracking these political manoeuvres a few years ago, Hudson drew support from around 500 controlled or exploited star systems, the highest of any of the powers. Since then he has assumed control over more and more systems, quickly reaching the 900s and beyond. However, this rise could not last: at the time of writing, Hudson controls or exploits just under 700 star systems.

Hudson has suffered under the rise of 5C, and his numbers reflect this. Nevertheless, as the leader of the largest government in the history of humanity, he is unquestionably the most powerful man in the Galaxy.

That said, in terms of direct influence, he began this game of powers at the top, and at the time of writing sits behind most of his rivals in GalNet's crude rankings, surpassing only Archon Delaine, Zemina Torval, and Shadow President Felicia Winters of the Liberal Party (Jasmina Halsey's successor).

Another of his political rivals, Alliance President Edmund Mahon, unexpectedly dominates Hudson in the rankings, as well as every other major power with over 1,600 controlled or exploited systems — more than twice as many.

Another, fairly direct, measure of influence is system allegiance. While this correspondent could not retrieve exact numbers on how many populated star systems are loyal to the Federation, it is widely documented that the Federation controls a much lower percentage of systems now than it did a few years ago. The proportion of systems loyal to the Alliance has risen, and the number of systems that have become independent has skyrocketed, largely due to the actions of independent pilots. So, by these measures, the Federation's territory and influence have been reduced under Hudson's leadership.

Clear and President danger

In the wake of the Liberal administration's removal, the Federation united in a show of strength behind their new President. Hudson's early days in office were focused on some of his well-known policy positions: cracking down on illicit substance abuse and pouring money into military spending, as well as his 'Close Quarters Combat' pilot training program (which most PF members will agree has not been well-received). These steps did well for some of his constituents at any rate: shareholders in Core Dynamics, a company said to be partially responsible for his political rise.

Hudson hardened the Federation's stance against the Empire, notably refusing to attend the wedding of Empire Hengist Duval in 3301 (though that may have worked in his favour, given the Emperor's assassination at the ceremony). He escalated tensions where he could, opposed by the notable Imperial warlord and Senator, Denton Patreus.



Patreus is an interesting contrast to Hudson. While the two are obviously on different sides of a long-brewing conflict, both are well-known for favouring reduced taxes and expanded militaries. Hudson one-upped Patreus by leading an utter rout of the terrorist organisation Emperor's Dawn when it was discovered in Federation space in late 3301, after Patreus's failed campaign to destroy them.



Shortly after this, the remains of a starship that had been lost five decades prior, the liner *Antares*, were discovered adrift in space. In a non-partisan move, Hudson requested that members of the PF lead a search for the remains of his predecessor's ship and those remains were recovered, along with Halsey herself. Following that success, he retired the upgraded Beluga Liners that had served the president's office as Starships One, replacing them with Farragut Battle Cruisers. He created a new branch of the Federal Navy known as the People's Navy, supported by corporations rather than taxes. Little did he know how much those ships would be needed in the days to come — or perhaps he did, given that during that time, Federal convoys were reported to be transporting alien artefacts, and Farragut battle cruisers guarded the sites of the so-called 'barnacles.'

When a crashed Thargoid vessel was discovered in the Pleiades, Hudson assured the Galaxy that the Federation was ready, while still posturing aggressively against the Empire and calling for increased military construction. When Thargoids were revealed to have attacked Federation capital ships, he publicly announced that if they wanted a fight, they would get one. His speeches became notably different in style, steering away from aggressive posturing towards his human enemies and instead appealing for galactic unity and strength.

As the Thargoid invasion grew more apparent, the Galaxy became increasingly more united. The Federation congress coalesced behind Hudson, and he withdrew his ships from their provocative positions in the Pleiades, leading to a 'thawing' of the Cold War between the two superpowers and the creation of Aegis, the cross-power defence and research initiative. He encouraged engineers such as Ram Tah who were developing anti-xeno weapons, and encouraged PF members to employ these means against the enemy.

Hudson and Patreus began echoing each other in their statements that no quarter could be brooked against the Thargoid threat, and that humanity must stand united against them. Following the takeover of Aegis' home system by criminals, Hudson moved the organisation's headquarters to Sol as a matter of security.

Finally, during the recent rise of the Imperial isolationists Nova Imperium, GalNet reported that Hudson put political and military pressure on the Empire to crush the isolationists and continue their contributions to the war effort. This may have contributed to Emperor Lavigny-Duval's decision to eliminate the faction.

Certainly at this point, Hudson has proven to be an able leader in a crisis — able to make decisive choices, and reevaluate his policy positions in the face of emerging evidence, for the good of humanity. It's impossible to know whether another leader might have put the Federation in a better place than it is today, but few doubt that his policies have been fairly successful in keeping our civilisation intact.



A verdict?

The Galaxy will need to wait for the quadrennial vote of confidence to know for sure if Hudson's administration will continue for another four years, but it seems highly likely that he and the Republican party will remain in power. Usually, presidents do serve the full eight years of their term: Jasmina Halsey was an unusual case, in that her recent actions had accumulated an abundance of bad press even before her mysterious disappearance, and Hudson had been publicly pushing for her removal for months. His opponents could point out that his reduced taxation and increased military spending policies have left the recipients of social programs in dire need, but such arguments are unlikely to carry the day. Given that the Federation is in the middle of a war, a fight for humanity's very survival, it is unlikely that its electorate would choose to oust their leader. Felicia Winters herself, while still popular, has shown no indication of leading a move to oust him.

His opponents could point out that his reduced taxation and increased military spending policies have left the recipients of social programs in dire need

In all likelihood, the interim vote will be in favour of Hudson, and he will continue as he has been. He wasn't particularly well-liked in peacetime and has overseen a massive reduction in the galactic influence of the Federation, but he has been extremely lucky that his militaristic rhetoric has been validated by the events of the times. Had the Thargoids not invaded, he might well have been ousted by pressure from citizens weary of Federation-Empire conflict and constant war. Now that war is the only hope for the Federation's survival, President Hudson's position is that he is their only hope as a leader.

What happens in four years if the Thargoid conflict hasn't ended? Presidents are barred from serving consecutive terms, but superpowers have chosen to bend such laws in periods of extended war before. It's impossible to know for sure what the Galaxy will look like at the end of this president's term, but one way or another, Zachary Hudson will find an opponent and a means to keep fighting.



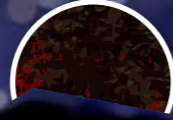
*Feeling Confident?
President Hudson's
Mid-Terms, and First Four
years in Office*

Text:
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Design:
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Images:
HVACKER,
OrangePheonix,
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SHIPS YOU DON'T FIT



LAKON T7



Webb Port, 34 Pegasi

As I launched my Type-7, with every spare piece of space filled with valuable beryllium, I saw him. The hollow triangle on the scanner. I saw him before even moving towards the station exit.

I could just turn around, but then I'd not get paid. The job was already late. Instead, I edged the ship forward, slipping out into space. Immediately, I yawed the Type-7 hard, clinging to the face of the station, and then the side.

My instinct about the hollow triangle was right. It resolved into an Imperial Clipper, much faster and more agile than my Type-7, and it was making a murderous path towards me.

I hugged station's structure, flying between the station's core and its outer modules, knowing that the Clipper couldn't risk hitting the station, and with the vital knowledge that mass lock is lost closer to the station's rear than it is to its front. Eventually, though, I would have to fly out into open space.

Reaching the rear of the station, I put full power to shields. Immediately, as I cleared the structure, the pirate opened fire. My shields rapidly depleted as the pirate flew around me, almost as if he were toying with me. But I had bought enough time — in the end he couldn't eliminate my shields. The shimmering blue tunnel of witch-space began to envelop my ship...

Once again, my Type-7 had proven itself a survivor.

The Type-7 is not a popular ship amongst Pilots Federation members. Despite accounts like this, no doubt repeated anywhere where trouble confronts the trader, the Type-7 remains unloved, with — according to recent fleet statistics compiled by Inara — less than 1% of Commanders flying the ship.

If we look at the Distant Worlds 2 expedition, the figures are even worse: only 0.45% of the fleet are Type-7s, with the Sidewinder (of all ships) being a more popular ride. Is it just luck that this trader survived a harrowing experience in 34 Pegasi, or does the Type-7 have redeeming features that most of us are overlooking? Why was the Sugar Bus of Shapsugabus a bright purple Lakon Type-7, rather than something more glamorous?



For the corporations, the low unit cost and above-average ability to escape interdictions makes it a bestseller.

Deep space explorer's loadout

A suggested loadout for a Type-7 deep space explorer, with the capability of being both a Fuel Rat and Hull Seal ship.

Engineering required: Grade 1 over-charged power plant and Grade 5 increased range frame shift drive with mass manager.

The cargo rack and vehicle hangar can be swapped over if more SRVs and less cargo space is desired. This build provides sufficient shield strength to endure accidental lithobraking incidents and other small bumps. The jump range with full fuel is 51.45 ly. There's enough power that, in the case of a severely damaged power plant with zero integrity, the ship can still limp home, with the modules required for basic travel requiring 33% of total power.

This ship will cost you 84 million credits.

Core internals

- Lightweight alloy
- 5A power plant
- 5D thrusters
- 5A frame shift drive
- 4D life support
- 3D power distributor
- 3D sensors
- 5C fuel tank

Optional internals

- 6A fuel scoop
- 6A auto field-maintenance unit
- 6E cargo rack
- 4G planetary vehicle hangar
- 5H Guardian frame shift drive booster
- 5A shield generator
- 3A repair limpet controller
- 3A fuel transfer limpet controller
- 1C detailed surface scanner

Utility mounts

- 2x heatsink launchers
- 2x A-rated shield boosters

Square choice

There's no getting away from it: the Type-7 is not pretty. The basic layout is a box with a cockpit stuck on the front as if it were an afterthought, and engines haphazardly strapped to the back. The Type-7, though, is designed for space trucking, and truckers have never really cared much about aesthetics. Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but in any case, ugliness doesn't seem to deter all that many Pilots Federation members. The Core Dynamics ships have never won any prizes for their looks, but that doesn't seem to deter their owners who tend to describe them as 'purposeful' and vigorously defend their choice of ship against those who prefer Gutamaya's more sleek designs.

That the Type-7 is basically a box with engines on the back should really not come as much of a surprise: the basic box shape has been used very successfully for cargo haulers since the beginning of recorded history. Boxes are easy to construct and easy to fill with cargo, so tend to be the favoured shape in this line of work. Even in the early Space Age on industrial Earth, as humankind took to the skies, the box still proved popular despite the importance of aerodynamics while travelling through Earth's atmosphere. Examples abound, such as the Shorts 360 Skyvan (a box with wings), road trucks (boxes on wheels), vans (smaller boxes on wheels), freight trains (many boxes on wheels, pulled by a locomotive — also a box on wheels). When the task is to haul a load, aesthetics and sometimes aerodynamics often take second place to the convenience and ease of construction of vehicles shaped like boxes.

While a box is not the ideal shape for a pressurized vessel such as a spacecraft, the box has still won out in the end. Far in the past, it was essential to use cylindrical shapes for space travel due to the strength of the cylinder as a pressure vessel, but as materials technology advanced, this need eventually disappeared. Ship designers could start making shapes for other reasons such as aesthetics, or in the case of cargo vessels, for ease of construction and loading. So, once again, the box became popular, as it's easy to construct and easy to fill.

In any case, space truckers don't really care that much what their ship looks like, and if a box is quicker to load

and unload — the box wins. We can conclude that it's not aesthetics that's made the Type-7 unpopular.

The Type-7's box has a basic and quite serious flaw when compared to other ships of similar size, such as the venerable Python. The flaw becomes obvious when you see the Type-7 parked on its landing pad: it looks absurdly small and entirely inappropriate for the large size pad it requires. This leaves many asking why it's not on a medium pad — clearly the planform fits with room to spare.

In an uncharacteristic error, Lakon designed the ship marginally too tall to fit in a standard medium hangar by only a couple of metres. It doesn't sound like much, but those two metres rule out the ability to land on an outpost — making the ship a lot less useful to independent pilots looking to run missions.

Unfortunately, due to the expense of changing the design, it's unlikely that Lakon are ever going to address this, and they have remained tight-lipped about it since the ship's introduction.



Trading outfit

A reasonably strong trading fit. Note that there are no weapons on this loadout — with four size 1 hardpoints, there's no point carrying weapons as the trader should concentrate on being able to survive long enough to be able to hyperspace away.

It's suggested that some engineering be done to the shields and shield boosters to increase their strength but even unengineered, this ship can escape many dangerous situations.

This ship will carry 244 tonnes of cargo and cost 65 million credits. If you swap the military-grade composites for lightweight ones, the cost will be 50 million credits — but then it's suggested that you stick to safer trade routes.

The Smiling Dog Crew suggests you have three shield boosters and a chaff launcher — we recommend searching for their video *The Git Gud Guide to Trading in Open* (viewer discretion: some strong language) to see how best to escape those who'd like to see you dead.

Core internals

- Military-grade composites
- 5A power plant
- 5A thrusters
- 4D life support
- 3A power distributor
- 3D sensors
- 5C fuel tank

Optional internals

- 6A shield generator
- 2x 6E cargo racks
- 3x 5E cargo racks
- 2x 3E cargo racks
- 2E cargo rack

Utility mounts

- 4x A-rated shield boosters

Box of tricks

If you're looking for excitement, the Type-7 won't be what gives it to you — but it is a reasonably competent flier for its purpose and size. The outstanding feature of the ship in terms of handling are its oversized yaw thrusters, which help it snake into tight spaces. Importantly, this helps the pilot manoeuvre through stations at busy times without it becoming a contact sport (as it often does with some of the large ships).

To quantify this, the Type-7 has a yaw rate of 25 degrees per second — as high as its maximum pitch rate. The similar-sized Python's yaw rate is less than half of this.

The ship also has very good supercruise handling for a ship of its size. While traders often overlook this characteristic, they shouldn't — a ship that handles well in supercruise will also escape interdictions more easily,



and a good yaw rate is very helpful. For the trader, being able to escape with no shots fired is a much better option than having a ship bristling with weapons. This is especially true for the Type-7 pilot, given that its hardpoints are best described as 'decorative'.

Its characteristics as an exploration vessel aren't to be overlooked, either. With recent advances in frame shift drive technology, most ships can be turned into viable explorers, but some are undisputedly better than others.

With a realistic deep space exploration loadout, the Type-7 can achieve a jump range of up to 54 light years (ly). It also has a large fuel tank for its size, giving an unrefueled range of 370 ly — good for exploring those deep nooks of the Galaxy where main sequence stars may be rare, and good for chaining neutron star boosts, where the range will exceed 1,200 ly.

While aesthetically the cockpit may look like an afterthought, for the explorer, that cockpit provides a panoramic view of what lies ahead. This makes the ship a great step-up from the Lakon Asp Explorer. While the

Asp will give a better single jump range — about 7 ly more than the Type-7 — and a longer unrefueled range, the Type-7 will carry a bigger SRV bay, a bigger auto field maintenance unit, hull repair and fuel limpets thanks to its much greater internal space. This, for many explorers, is a worthwhile tradeoff; especially when you consider that during Distant Worlds 1, the Anacondas that had been the most severely enfeebled to get maximum jump range would still be about 14 ly short of today's Type-7. The Type-7 also uses the same class of frame shift drive as the Asp, so all the engineering upgrades that an explorer made for their Asp will not go to waste should they decide they need more internal space.

This leads on to the role as a long-range trader. With a burgeoning Colonia region needing supplies of the creature comforts of the Bubble, the decently-sized fuel tank allows nearly 1,000 ly unrefueled range when jet cone boosting, while filled to the gunnels with the good stuff.

The ship does have its in-flight flaws, and we're not really talking about its unexciting handling — which, after all, is pretty much expected in a ship made for space trucking. ▶

Its hardpoints are best described as 'decorative'.

Hotboxing

The biggest flying quality issue with the Type-7 is its poor heat efficiency. Take the default E-rated loadout, and you won't even be able to hyperspace to another system without having to pop off a heatsink. Forget manoeuvres around high-G planets as an explorer if you went for an ultra lightweight build; again, you'll find yourself overheating in circumstances your old Asp Explorer handled with aplomb.

To get serious use from a Type-7 — either as a trader or explorer — you'll need to at least get your power plant A-rated to avoid these problems. Should mass and power allow, engineering for low emissions may be useful as well.

So, with the heat problems, and the inability to fit on a medium pad, why not just get a Python? The argument goes that the Python can do everything the Type-7 does, but better.

Holes can be put in this argument if you look at the price list. A fully A-rated Type-7 (and full A-rating will solve all the heat problems) which will safely carry 244 tonnes of cargo will cost just over 50 million credits, or 65 million if you equip it with military-grade composite bulkheads. By contrast, the most basic Python with all modules only E-rated will cost nearly 57 million credits, and with the exception of being able to land on a medium pad, will be inferior in nearly every way except for offensive capability.

Fully A-rating the Python will turn it into the best ship in its class, but also will bring its cost to over 140 million credits — almost three times the price of an A-rated Type-7. This increases to 189 million credits if you equip the Python with military-grade composites. Meanwhile, the Python will carry 228 tonnes of cargo, versus the Type-7's 244 tonnes.

Despite its shortcomings, there's no doubt that the ship offers excellent value for money and Lakon priced it keenly. For a pilot looking to step up their trading game on the way to bigger and better things, the Type-7 definitely should not be overlooked — and it'll have you trading in bulk far sooner than saving up for a Python. Or, indeed, doing deep space exploration with a fully-equipped ship than waiting and holding out for something fancier.

Boxing rocks

Good trade ships often make good miners. Unfortunately, the Type-7 falls short in this regard, owing to its very limited hardpoints. With only small hardpoints, the seismic charge launcher won't fit, which means that the ship — at least without the assistance of another ship — isn't suitable for deep core mining, which is by far the most profitable kind of mining. For traditional laser mining, abrasion blasting or sub-surface displacement mining though, the ship does as well as expected — although only being able to fit small mining lasers will limit the rate at which the miner can extract minerals.

Ticking the boxes

Anyone who's been flying for a while will perhaps be wondering: is the Type-7 really as uncommon and unloved as the statistics imply? They are a common-enough sight, but you'll also notice they tend to be flown for corporations and other factions by non-Pilots Federation pilots. While the inability to land on the medium pad and the unglamorous exterior of the Type-7 might turn off a Pilots Federation member, for the corporations, the low unit cost and above-average ability to escape interdictions makes it a bestseller.

No other ship with a similar cargo hauling ability comes close to the price of a Type-7, which is an advantage that can't be overstated for a corporation which might have a fleet of thousands of ships. Pilots Federation members often think of themselves as the 'be all and end all' of space travel, but there's a whole other Galaxy out there — that of the pilots who don't have the luxury of owning their own ship, and have to fly someone else's. This is where Lakon really aimed the Type-7.

Lakon designed the ship marginally too tall to fit in a standard medium hangar.

To box it all off

In the opinion of this writer at least, the Type-7 is an overlooked ship — even if only for its use as a stepping stone to better things. It nicely bridges the gap between the smaller traders such as Lakon's own Type-6 and the much more expensive but incredibly competent Faulcon deLacy Python, and it does so in such a way that a savvy trader can operate without being entirely at the mercy of the Galaxy's villainous masses.

The ship also makes a perfectly tolerable explorer, and (thanks to its excellent internal module space) is one of the lower-cost ways to be simultaneously a Fuel Rat and a Hull Seal without sacrificing your own ability to explore. The owner of the Sugar Bus of Shapsugabus was not, after all, as mad as we may have thought; although we must note that he ultimately traded his Type-7 for a bright purple Saud Kruger Orca...



Ships You Don't Fly: Lakon Type-7

Text:
Mack Winston

Design:
McNicholl

Images:
Sebastian Wehmeyer, Tolaak Grohiik, Iolair Uaine



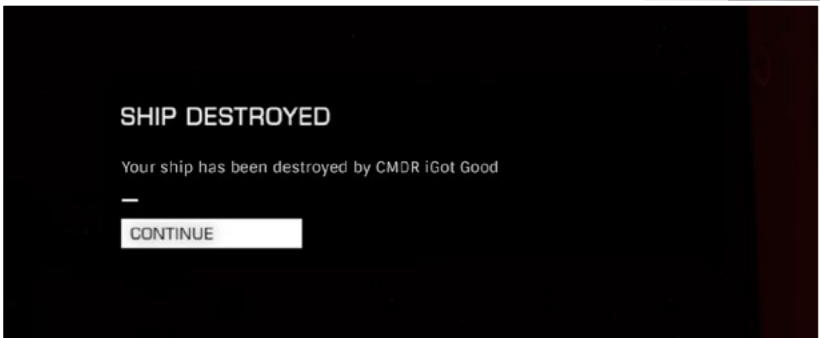
THE ART OF RP

When it comes to pilot versus pilot (PvP) combat, any discussion can easily end in a first-class bar brawl. Some consider it nasty to attack a fellow Pilots Federation commander, others see it as 'part of the deal', and some see it as their birthright to shoot whomever they want.



The acrimony that surrounds this topic impedes a neutral review of the skills and knowledge necessary to weave a multi-million credit warship through a planetary ring at twice the speed of sound and lethally strike an opponent, who intends to do the same to you. But those skills will protect you — and it's a dangerous Galaxy, after all.

The ancient Chinese book *The Art of War* (512 BCE), by General Sun-Tzu, has influenced strategic and tactical thinking for millenia. His prescriptions are based on the instincts and psychology of the earliest combatants of human history, but they remain instructive today. *The Art of War*, in its essence, was an instruction manual for overcoming any emotion that could negatively influence the possibility of victory.



Often, this does not mean simply striking down an enemy first, but instead making sure that you are aware of the outcome of a battle long before it has begun — because you are completely centered on your ship, your skills, your weapons and your survival.

The General wrote *The Art of War* whilst he was executing the steps he describes in it. So it is not theoretical, but a manual produced on the anvil of history. In it, Sun-Tzu describes five levels of ascension in the art of war.

The art of survivability and self-awareness

On a hypothetical scale of survivability, let's say that 51% represents the level at which an organism can surmount environmental challenges long enough to pass on its genes. Below 50% and the environment will whittle it out; higher than this represents higher levels of survivability and the capacity to endure in the face of the slings and arrows of nature.

It is not theoretical, but a manual produced on the anvil of history.

The necessary first step is to accept that every meeting with another commander is, by default, a potential PvP situation. It doesn't always turn out like that — but it can, and so should be prepared for, whether you like it or not.

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Macro situational awareness

We can transfer this survivalist thinking to a space pilot considering whether or not to equip a shield on their trading ship. The act of recognising that the Galaxy can be hostile, and making preparations accordingly, is to climb the first step of Sun-Tzu's five. You could call this stage the 'PvP-survivalist'. Sun-Tzu would say that your initial calculations are based on facts and experience, and classification of terrain has been achieved by research.

Weave a multi-million credit warship through a planetary ring at twice the speed of sound.



When in open space it's important to ensure that your antennae of awareness are deployed. There are two options, if trouble looms – running or fighting. Knowing and preparing for this is the first stage.

Knowing where trouble might lurk is paramount. Some parts of the Galaxy are more dangerous than others; the Pilots Federation is not as rigorously self-policing as it used to be, so heading to areas in which many other Pilots Federation members might be should get those danger-sensing antennae tingling. Call this 'macro situational awareness': know where danger is, and anticipate it.

How to anticipate it? Whether running or fighting, this can only come with practice. Other commanders are of great benefit here. Learn the hard-won knowledge that others have gained; resources abound, and many pilots are happy to share.



Micro situational awareness

You're aware of where the danger is likely to lie, you've prepared for it, and now it's found you. You're in combat.

The next stage is heightened awareness of the micro, if you will – the easily-missed details in a particular encounter that can give you the edge, or simply save your life.

At its most basic, these are the questions: what are my enemy's weaknesses and what are mine? What are their strengths? What weapons are they using, and upon what ship? What is their attack pattern, and how to best counter it?

These can seem unrealistically academic in the heat of laser burns and wailing impact warnings, but they are important. Their ship may be bigger – but yours might be more manoeuvrable. That's useful knowledge.

It's important to realise that there are certain patterns in these fights. Recognising what's happening, rather than panicking blindly, immensely improves survivability. This won't happen quickly; in fact, learning in the heat of an interdiction is much harder than while sparring with friendly pilots.



Every meeting with another commander is, by default, a potential PvP situation.

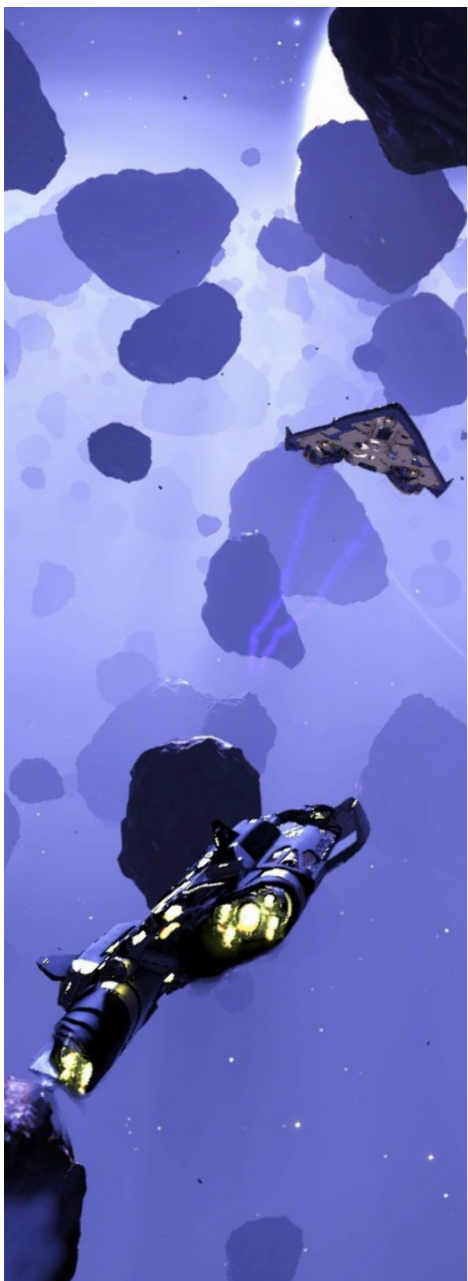


The art of instinct and intuition

Micro and macro awareness, married with experience and practice, form the foundation for the next step up the survivability scale; call it 61%+. This isn't a step in itself – more like plants entangling the whole construct with their branches, binding it all together more tightly. Experience that becomes instinct and feeds intuition enables correct and quick processing of all the information available on and around the battlefield.

Counterintuitive though it may sound, the goal is to be presented with fewer conscious decisions in combat – ideally, much becomes second-nature.

This is the hardest stage, as it takes a lot of hard practice (and insurance payouts). However, it leads to...



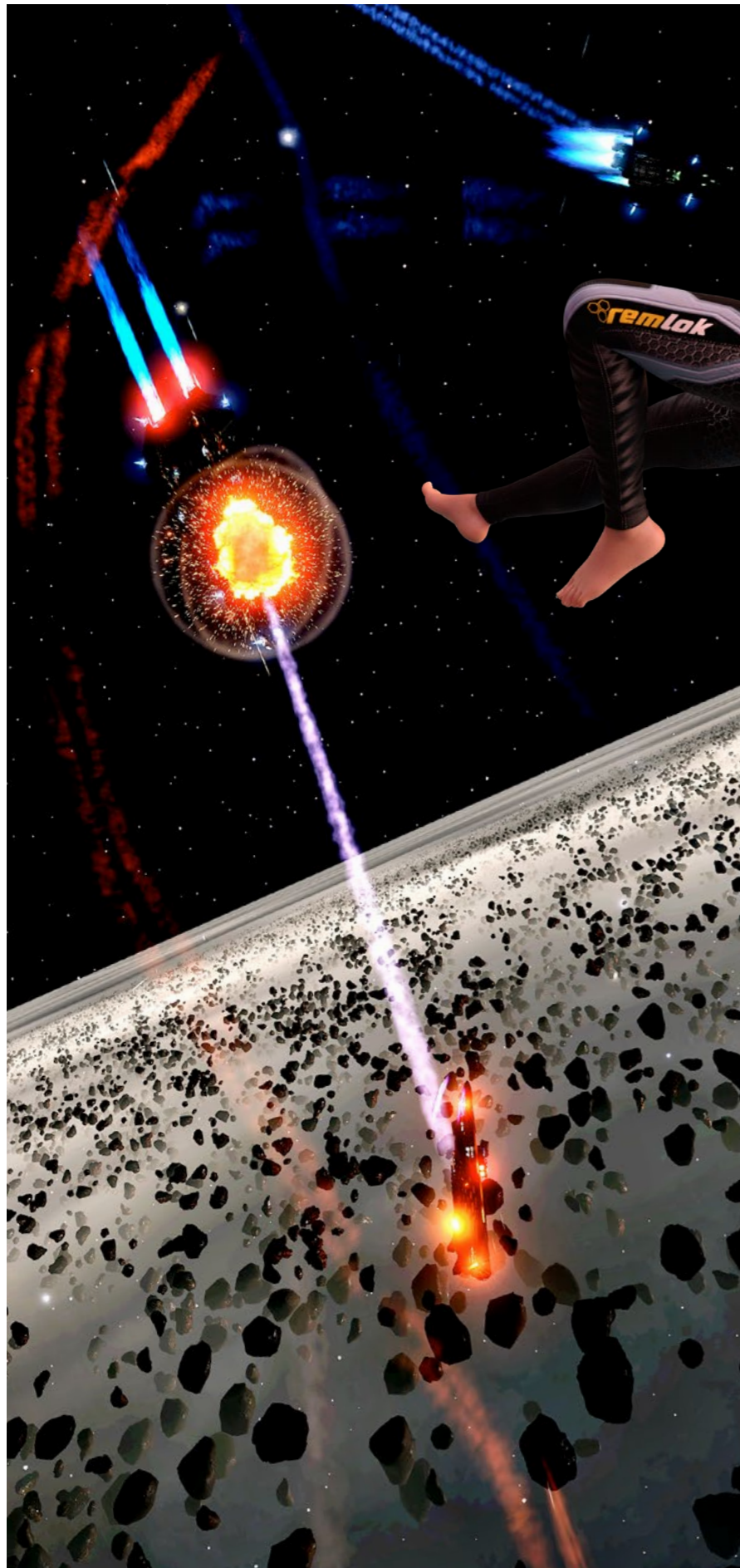
The art of control and respect

Welcome to 71%! You have now managed to successfully convert experience and situational awareness into instincts and intuition (though this process will carry on in the background forever). It's time to take control of situations.

We enter the Saloon and scan the room automatically. Billy the Kid is at the poker-table, looking relaxed. We just want to get to the bar to get a drink, so we won't interfere with him, but watch out: the drunk at the table in front of the bar has just woken up and is stumbling around. Better take the long way around him. We are in control – if something happens, we have several options for how to finish it.

In the empire, Sun Tzu has ordered his soldiers to set up forts, border-control and military outposts. They now control their sphere of influence.

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The art of danger

Danger has become your second name. The hard training has paid off; several million credits were spent on new ships, rebuys and equipment; doubts were overcome, and you became a monk at the monastery of combat.

The Pilots Federation is not as rigorously self-policing as it used to be.

At 81%, a pilot can go wherever they want with impunity. It's not that they could survive an attack by four Cutters on a Sidey — more that they would now be unlikely to fall into such a situation. Simply put, training has heightened awareness and enabled them to predict situations.

The Emperor can relax now, as no neighbour or suppressed tribe would dare to invade or revolt. Sun Tzu receives honours and the empire flourishes, ready for its expansion, which is achieved by...



The art of fear

Enemies know now that the Emperor's armies have learned how to survive or avoid attacks. That the empire's armies and their soldiers have developed battle instincts and intuition, and have trained hard. This has given them control over the country and respect from citizens, travellers and traders — as well as their neighbours, who now prefer a peaceful co-existence with the empire, where once they would gaze covetously over the border.

A pilot at 91% requires a wing of skilled assassins to be taken out. Nobody messes with you now; because you don't let them.


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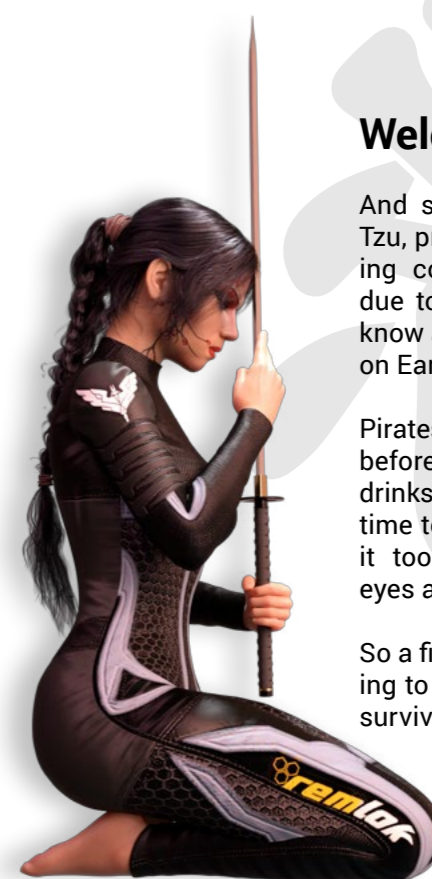
Welcome to the Elite

And so the Emperor thanked Sun-Tzu, promptly invaded all neighbouring countries which all submitted due to fear, and founded what you know as the historic Chinese Empire on Earth.

Pirates turn to get a selfie with you before you destroy them, and all the drinks are on the house. Take some time to reflect on the great sacrifice it took: bleeding fingers, weeping eyes and empty bank accounts.

So a final note to those out there trying to climb the ladder or at least to survive in a dangerous Galaxy:

Be fearless. 



The Art of PVP

Text:
Donald Duck

Design:
Donald Duck

Artwork:
ToCoSo

Images:
DasExorcist, OrangePheonix, Tolaak
Grohiik, Donald Duck

Thanks to:
Souvarine,
Mini_Watto

TAMING GIANTS:

One question often asked of experienced pilots is: what advice would you give to fledgeling commanders, starting their careers? There are worse answers than “respect planets”.

THE ART OF HIGH-G LANDINGS



Possibly the most treacherous of terrestrial dangers are planets with high gravity. Nothing kills inattentive explorers faster than underestimating these Goliaths of the cosmos.

The Heavyweight Champions Circuit expedition of 3303 was organised by Commander Nuse, and included twenty-one pilots. “The mission of

Heavyweight Champions Circuit is to provide a challenging, competitive atmosphere, testing our skills in some of the most difficult conditions known – landing the largest ships under extreme gravity,” the promotional material proclaimed. “Additionally, we hope this experience helps bring confidence to explorers landing on unknown worlds,

and allows explorers to hone their skills landing on any planet without damage.” Several of the pilots who braved these perils have kindly agreed to share their wisdom for this article.

Participants attempted to land on a number of planets, ranging from 2.11G on Outorst VV-D d12-2 2 up to 9.77G on HD 148937 3. Sometimes,



it took them almost an hour to land. Herein lies the first lesson: be patient.

If you feel that ten metres above the ground is a safe altitude to use vertical thrusters to push down towards the ground on a high-G planet, you would be wrong. At least, on an exploration-oriented ship build (low power, lightweight components) this is a very bad idea.

Your correspondent attempted to use vertical thrusters from a height of four metres when landing on Phroi Blueae IR-W F1-1530 AB 1, a recently-

discovered landable world with a record-breaking 10.66G, only 34,372 light years from Sol. The nimble Asp Explorer *Zephram* did not go boom; in fact, we reached that altitude with no hull damage, but we lost 40% of our hull integrity due to the big mistake of thrusting vertically towards the ground from four metres above it.

Thankfully, Commander Battybat99 was kind enough to repair *Zephram's* hull. Distant Worlds 2 emergency dispatch, you are forever in *Zephram's* memory banks.

We lost 40% of our hull integrity due to the big mistake of thrusting vertically towards the ground from four metres above it.

Some pilots like turning Flight Assist off for the final landing approach, but this is an ill-advised idea in the vicinity of higher-gravity bodies.

When approaching a planet for landing, set thrust to 75%, and start throttling down to achieve 2.5 km/s around 100 km from the destination. When entering glide, the throttle should be zeroed. When exiting the glide around 10 km from the surface, fire the vertical thrusters to counter any exceeding downward velocity.



A quick calculation shows that falling 4 metres under a gravity of 10.66G means that you will hit the ground at 28.9 m/s – equivalent to falling over 40 metres on a 1G world. That's definitely going to do major damage.

For the curious, the formula is:

$$v = \sqrt{(2gh)}$$

The SRV dropped out of the bay like a ton of bricks.

Once velocity in any direction is cancelled, it is safe to pitch down 5-10 degrees and – very slowly – apply forward thrust, with the intention of losing altitude in the most controlled way possible. Avoiding hilly ground is a good idea as control will be limited, and any movement unrelated to the primary goal of controlled descent will probably hinder your advance.

This is the second key piece of advice: use forward thrust and pitch to lose/gain altitude, and avoid touching the vertical thrusters. The reason for this is that on high-G worlds vertical thrusters are already working hard keeping the ship in the air automatically; the slightest touch on the downward thrust will cancel the upward thrusters, which are already at full blast. You'll plummet like a stone.

It's advisable to divert power from engines to shields, to better allow incremental thrust control. Our advice: keep the engine capacitor full

of enough energy to quickly boost if needed. Manage pips as if you were in combat: paying lots of attention!

Once landed, you might be tempted to take your Surface Recon Vehicle (SRV) out for a spin. Commander WyoWrestler44 landed on HD 148937 3, a 9.77G world about 1,400ly from the Bubble, last July 22nd 3304. They told us:

"Suffered very minor damage on impact (landing). After a sigh of relief, I decided to deploy my rover. The SRV dropped out of the bay like a ton of bricks and suffered damage on deployment! I didn't have to worry about losing surface contact, the SRV wheels stayed glued to the rocky surface as I drove around."

Having made a safe landing, the next question is: how to safely take off? If the gravity is not too high, a standard vertical takeoff may be possible. On more massive worlds it is advisable to use vertical thrusters, this time with maximum power

to engines, to get away from the surface; then pitch five degrees up, and slowly bring forward thrusters up as soon as safely able to.

Pay attention to the vertical speed indicator - use it to determine if what you are doing is appropriate. If it turns red, slow down! Use the boost to slowly gain more altitude, but don't pitch up too steeply. As soon as the ship is no longer mass-locked, engage your frame shift drive and wake out.

It is important to note that there are different techniques to landing and taking off safely, but variables such as ship size and build, piloting skills and the gravity strength involved should decide which of those techniques are valid. Ultimately, if you can get your ship to level, it will be possible to hover. Avoid purely vertical movement, be patient, and carefully control your engine power and pitch.

And that's it – go conquer some giants.



Taming Giants: The Art of High-G Landings

Text:
Buanozox

Design:
Donald Duck

Images:
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Thanks to: Battybat99, the
Heavyweight Champions Circuit
roster, Nuse, WyoWrestler44

WHAT ARE WOLF-RAYET STARS?

The bright harbingers of strong solar winds and the creators of beautiful nebulae throughout the Milky Way and beyond: Wolf-Rayet stars are among the most fascinating types of stars to observe and behold.



Most stars live their lives in an uneasy equilibrium of gravitational contraction and the outward pressure generated by radiation emission. Radiation is generated by fusing a given element — mostly hydrogen or helium — into a heavier one. This process releases energy that we see and feel as light and heat, and it lasts as long as the star has enough fuel to supply it. When a star's fuel runs out, it first expands into a red giant before degenerating into a white dwarf — and that is usually the end of it.

But not always. The more massive a star is, the faster it consumes its fuel and the more violent its end will be. Some stars are massive enough to fuse even heavier elements: more mass means higher temperatures and more energy released. Through the sheer forces of gravitational contraction, their core temperatures reach such astronomically high levels that they are able to fuse carbon, nitrogen and oxygen (oddly enough, named 'metals' by astronomers). This is called the CNO cycle, after the chemical symbols of those three elements.

Wolf-Rayet stars are among these monsters. They constitute a very special class of young and massive stars, and were named after 19th century astronomers Charles Wolf and Georges Rayet during the time spectroscopy was developed and introduced into astronomy. The two scientists found out that a number of O-type or B-type stars emitted far more radiation than expected but were, at the same time, lacking certain elements in their spectra that they were supposed to have.

Of course, this was all at a time when astronomy still lacked the more advanced technological breakthroughs we have long become accustomed to. Still, their curiosity was piqued, and in the following decades generations of scientists were able to expose these stars' mysteries.

The first thing to note is that Wolf-Rayet stars vary almost as much as any other class of star, with their own distinctions and peculiarities. This makes them not a particular kind of star with fixed characteristics, but rather members of a 'family' of young and massive stars that have a range of variables at their core — literally.

Basically, a Wolf-Rayet star is an extremely luminous and massive star that ejects vast amounts of its material — and hence fuel — at incredible velocities and at incredible rates. This quickly (in cosmic terms) strips the star naked, leaving only its still-fusing core behind. This core is still massive, ranging from a couple to dozens of Solar masses (M sol).

Beyond the basics, things become a bit more complicated, because these stars regularly push physics to its limits. It was hard enough for early scientists to understand and establish a working model of how stars above some twenty M sol could form in the first place, let alone the true behemoths of a hundred or more M sol. For a long time, this was thought impossible because of a barrier called the Eddington Limit.

This is a theoretical maximum luminosity and radiation a star can generate while still being in balance with its gravity. According to theory at the time, anything above the limit would create runaway effects strong enough to make star formation impossible. As absurd as it sounds for such a massive monster, the star's gravity would just not be strong enough to contain all that radiation.

Wolf-Rayet stars frequently exceed this limit: these stars create incredibly strong solar winds and volatile mass ejections, blowing off quadrillions of tonnes of stellar material at velocities of up to 4,000 kilometres per



“ Even the mighty Eta Carinae Nebula (NGC 3372) at least in part is thought to be the result of a massive Wolf-Rayet star

second. What is more, if this material passes the star's Roche lobe it isn't gravitationally bound to the star any more, and the star will likely eject a great portion of its mass in a matter of mere millennia. The result is a multitude of material waves travelling outward into interstellar space at hundreds of thousands of kilometres per hour. The star is quickly enveloped in a shell of its own material.


These mass ejections are particularly effective at removing the star's initial fuel: hydrogen and helium. These are the two lightest elements, so they are blown off easily, whereas heavier elements are far more resistant to these effects. In the end, only the heavier elements remain in a densely-contracted core.

This is the essence of a Wolf-Rayet star: a massive and incredibly luminous stellar core — easily dozens of solar masses — that is still fusing carbon, nitrogen, and even oxygen. It lacks the characteristic spectral emission lines of hydrogen and helium, despite its comparatively young age, and often has a volatile luminosity due to the increasingly unstable fusion processes that are characteristic of heavier elements.

However strange or exotic this may seem, the Wolf-Rayet stage is by now acknowledged to be the 'natural' course in the evolution of truly massive stars. They are extremely rare, because the Wolf-Rayet stage is a transient stage and those stars do not last long; only a couple of million years at best, compared to billions or trillions of years for lower-mass stars. When their stellar fusion finally stops, most Wolf-Rayet stars end in a core-collapsing supernova. They leave behind a black hole or a neutron star, depending on the final mass.

However, with each Wolf-Rayet star, there is the chance of a vivid legacy: the Wolf-Rayet stage is so intense that the star's radiation eventually catches up with and surpasses ejected material from an earlier outburst. This material is thereby accelerated and ionised, prompting it to glow in a variety of colours. The result is often one of the most beautiful objects in space: a planetary nebula, often in a bipolar or 'hourglass' shape, or an even bigger emission nebula.

Several of these beauties can be observed or travelled to: the Crescent Nebula (NGC 6888), Thor's Helmet (NGC 2359), or the huge but rather diffuse nebula of NGC 3199 in the Carina constellation. Even the mighty Eta Carinae Nebula (NGC 3372) is at least in part thought to be the result of a massive Wolf-Rayet star somewhere in its centre. All of these jewels in space have formed out of Wolf-Rayet stars which, in some cases, exploded long ago. Sometimes a special type of Wolf-Rayet star remains: a core of around a single M sol or less that is nearly indistinguishable from a white dwarf.



“ Wolf-Rayet stars vary almost as much as any other class of stars.

Astronomers once used a separate acronym: Wolf-Rayet CSPN, meaning Wolf-Rayet Central Star with Planetary Nebula, but the Pilots Federation seems to have grouped them with the more 'common' Wolf-Rayet stars or labelled them white dwarfs, presumably for convenience. LAWD 26 is a nice example: a Wolf-Rayet star appearing in the Luyten Atlas of White Dwarfs. Humans are much pickier in terms of categories than nature seems to be.

Out of those Wolf-Rayet stars that have not formed a planetary nebula (yet), the most prominent example may be Gamma Velorum, also known as Regor. The Regor region is completely permit-locked by the Pilots Federation, and rumours as to why abound. To use an ancient quote: "I'm not saying it's aliens..." Another prominent member of the Wolf-Rayet family is HIP 5100 (HD 6327).

A lot of other Wolf-Rayet candidates have been revealed to be especially volatile O or B-type variable stars. The Wolf-Rayet catalogue seems to be in constant flux because of this.

Here is a tip for your own search for Wolf-Rayet stars: You can use the Galaxy Map to your advantage in regions with Universal Cartographics' procedural sector nomenclature. Because of their sheer mass – and their tendency to be present in systems with companion stars – explorers are most likely to find Wolf-Rayet stars via the AA-A h, AA-A g or BA-A g denominations, although that method is not foolproof. They also tend to be located high above or below the galactic plane, for reasons that are poorly understood. Some believe high escape velocities, galactic magnetic fields or the presence of dark matter are involved, but even in the 34th century, no one is sure.

As with so many other marvels in the depths of space, for every answer we think we find, three new questions arise. That is why 'FSD astronomy' is such a blessing to science: going out and having a look has become so much easier than peering out at the void with massive and stationary telescopes.

What Are Wolf-Rayet Stars?

Text:
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Design:
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Images:
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PEGASI

THE RENEGADE SECTOR

For hundreds of years the Pegasi Sector has been a place of lawlessness and desperation, the refuge of crime lords and backward superstition alike. It is the domain of Archon Delaine and those who suffer beneath his yoke, his power unbroken by even the efforts of superpowers. To journey into the Pegasi Sector is to gamble with one's very life.

For most, the above is the alpha and the omega of this storied region of space. Yet what if there were more to Pegasi? What if the region were simply misunderstood, or perhaps even worse than the Bubble's collective imagination suggests? For this article, your correspondent embarked on a grand tour of the region — albeit occasionally with his press pass hidden.

What he found was remarkable, and both a confirmation and a rebuttal of every whispered rumor and half-truth that has clung to Pegasi's reputation like a weed.

A troubled history

It is a common enough truism that to abandon a child is to condemn it to a life of dysfunction, one where the present is uncertain and the future even less so. Furthermore, the abandoned child will more often than not find those like itself, alternately depending on and victimising its peers, perpetuating the same antisocial cycles for generations to come.

The story of the Pegasi Sector begins with that of tragic overreach during the climax of humanity's drive for the stars.

The same is true, it seems, on a macro level. The story of the Pegasi Sector begins with that of tragic overreach during the climax of humanity's drive for the stars. Before this writer embarked on his tour of the troubled sector, he reached out to Trinity Wardav, Senior Professor of Sociology at Alioth University.

Professor Wardav is middle-aged, with a warm smile and intelligent eyes. She greets us with all the bemused courtesy of a professional academic; she is surprised to hear that any member of the media is interested in the history of Pegasi and not merely its unsavory reputation. We settle down for Fujin Tea in her office; various holo-displays showcasing disparate people are prepared. The professor begins without preamble:

Like many other regions of space, the myriad of systems that comprise the Pegasi Sector were settled in a reckless, expansionist bid. Unlike other regions, the resources of many of the original sponsors were overtaxed, leading to dozens of colonies' support being precipitously cut off. The settlers of Pegasi were on their own.

From this inauspicious start, the identities of those stranded on these strange new worlds began to drift apart from those of their ancestors. Furthermore, trust and empathy broke down, surviving only at the most micro levels of society, giving rise to close-knit clans and cartels — each with their own culture, religion, and leadership. These micro-societies carved out niches for themselves even while functioning as segments of larger, more conventional factions. This arrangement has persisted to this day, with entire systems and even individual clans following no law save their own, to the unending consternation of the Bubble powers that seek to bring them in line.

The professor removes her glasses, tiny lines of information visible upon the lenses. She rubs her eyes, leans forward and sighs.

That's the sterile version of Pegasi's history, of course. A more intimate portrait will tell of generational dysfunction, unbridgeable gaps between the rich and poor, and a legal system built more on might making right than anything we would recognise as justice.



Culture wars

But in such a large swath of space, isn't there cultural richness to be found? Professor Wardav considers the point:

Yes. From a diversity standpoint, the insular nature of clan society acts as a remarkable deterrent against the 'melting pot' effect. In fact, it's very much like a time capsule. Several of the Pegasi clans are derivatives of cultures who trace their origins to Earth itself. Some have even preserved languages that would surely face extinction in the more assimilative parts of the Bubble.

Wardav points to one holo-display.

On the surface of Chun, for example, we see an amalgamation of Sub-Saharan old-Earth societies, even down to cloned animal skin accessories to compliment modern dress. On Tjakiri's main Earth-like world we see an array of Cambrian clans, with a surprising amount of bilingualism among the rural inhabitants. And these are only two of a multitude of examples.

Though the idea that such ancient cultures have been preserved to a degree is fascinating, it goes without saying that such preservation has come at a steep cost. Professor Wardav explains.

As I've said, the abandonment of the early settlers by their sponsoring organisations — and there is little in the way of sugarcoating such a term — led to an acute, widespread dis-

“ Once-unified colonies degenerated into clan-level societies, with one strongman or strongwoman after another seizing power.

trust of authority in general. Once-unified colonies degenerated into clan-level societies, with one strongman or strongwoman after another seizing power. Survival, not progress, became the order of the day.

Surely, there is more to the tale? Professor Wardav shrugs.

Much more, depending on how academic you want to get. But the overall trends remained the same: might makes right, scarcity of technology, and distrust of distant, centralised authority made for a perfect storm of stagnation and permanent hardship. It was only a matter of time before someone like Archon Delaine rose to power and when he's gone, another just like him will follow.

It's a bleak assessment, and one that only the most naively optimistic would reject. Yet we strive to bring you the unvarnished truth; and thus it was with mild trepidation that this correspondent booked passage to Pegasi to see for himself the truth behind the myths.

A journey into yesteryear

The first thing that one notices about Pegasi is that it is old. Not the hallowed air of tradition that is the Federal Congress on Mars or the enduring majesty of the Imperial Palace on Achenar, but a run-down kind of old. Much of the sector's infrastructure dates from the time of original colonisation. Construction of new settlements and starports is simply not an option for most local economies.

Potter Enterprise in the Phrases system is much like any other Coriolis starport one might encounter — awe-inspiring for those of us who spend much of our lives planetside, yet clearly run down to even the untrained eye. Paint flakes off beams in need of a fresh coat, strained hydraulics sound near the end of their life, and ad hoc power conduits run exposed along corridors and hangars. The scent of machine oil permeates the air, courtesy of barely-running circulation systems. Human labour has been replaced or supplemented by failing automated systems.

So too does human cargo blend in as one commodity among many. It was with a heavy heart that this writer witnessed lines of hapless slaves being loaded into a looming Python, wrists and ankles in chains, their destinations unknown. The Kumo spider, feared and hated across more civilised space, adorns its hull.

The second thing that one notices are the ships. There is both more and less diversity of vessel design here. The gleaming cream lines of Saud-Kruger passenger liners are absent, and Gutamaya's elegant craft are all but unheard of.

Instead, we see the no-nonsense angles of practical vessels: Pythons, Haulers, and Cobras are all standard fare, as well as ageing Vipers and Eagles. None are new, and none look particularly well-cared for. A few look pulled straight from a junkyard, with crude designs and garish spikes welded onto corroded hulls. The practice of ship modification is widespread. Thruster glows and paintjobs make for a kaleidoscope of freewheeling variety, indicating that to own a ship is to have achieved a significant level of prestige.

The third thing that one notices — and this is true of every location visited — are the people. By all outward appearances, Pegasi checks many of the same boxes as the Bubble. People go about their business in public commons. Security guards — some quite rough-looking — keep the peace. Clothing is simple and locally-made, but the popular image of unwashed, wailing masses is hardly true.

The ink on a man or woman's skin is often earned at a cost, and is almost always a source of identity and pride.

The tattoos are interesting, though. Some distinguish traditional clansfolk from ordinary people. Clansfolk of Old Pegasi (as they sometimes call it) tell their stories not only with words but also imagery, crossing any language barriers that might exist. The ink on a man or woman's skin is often earned at a cost, and is almost always a source of identity and pride. Though no standardised system is in place, the general rule is that the more ornate one's tattoo, the higher in a clan's hierarchy an individual might be.

Religion, too, is as diverse as the people. Though specific deities are worshipped, special reverence is also given to more naturalistic phenomena. Void worship is practiced, and ancestral gods are observed. Ceremony ranges from the whispered entreaty to animal sacrifice, though this correspondent had no opportunity to observe either. What's more, the spiritual pervades nearly every aspect of many people's lives. The line between folk superstition and fervent belief is often difficult to discern.

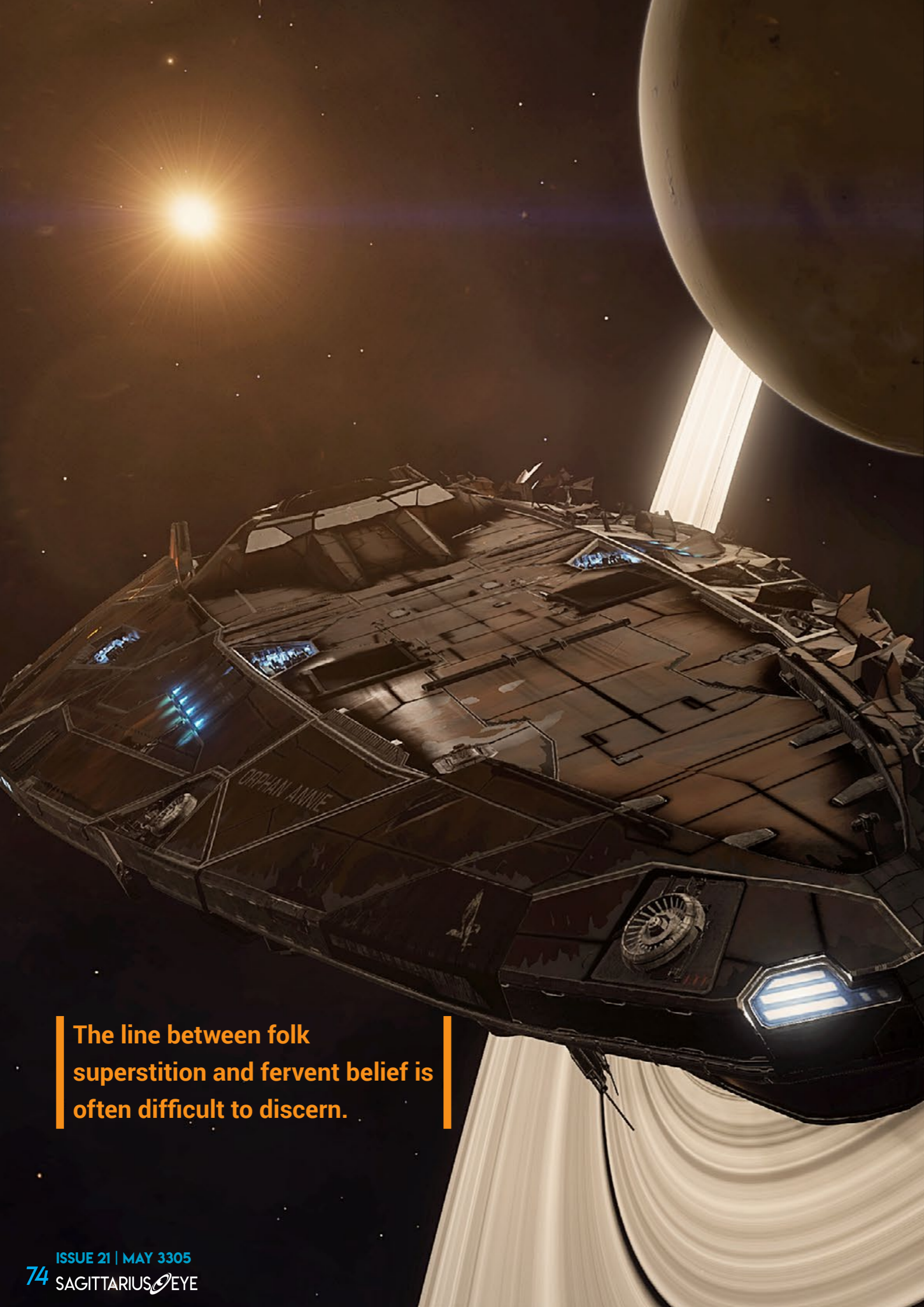
As in the Bubble, commerce provides the lifeblood of the Pegasi economy, though with a few particular caveats. It's no secret that piracy is rampant, but the degree to which one is exposed to danger isn't as severe or random as people might believe.

In systems exploited by the Kumo crew, for instance, the actual extortion takes place at a far higher level than individual traders. Indeed, as long as local governments pay their protection dues to the Crew, a private merchant will in many cases actually be safer from piracy than elsewhere in Pegasi. The Kumo Crew has its own reputation to uphold. Such paradoxes of danger, safety, criminality, and order abound.

To walk among the natives of Pegasi is to be a stranger in a strange land.

There is a final, crucial difference between those who inhabit the Bubble and those native to Pegasi: fear. It took a while to determine the source of the underlying sense of tension and unease that permeates the populace, but the wary looks on people's faces are unmistakable. The people of Pegasi spend their lives immersed in fear, for life in this sector is uncertain. Civil liberties are relative or non-existent, and stability is often fleeting. The few who consented to an interview spoke in hushed tones, their eyes either cast downward or constantly looking around for patrolling enforcers. None would speak of Archon Delaine, and none would reveal their homes for fear of being seen with an outsider. To walk among the natives of Pegasi is to be a stranger in a strange land.





The line between folk superstition and fervent belief is often difficult to discern.

Dark past, bright future?

The question of how exactly the Bubble should engage with the Pegasi sector remains an open mystery amongst politicians and their electorates. The most recent action of significance was Denton Patreus' armed incursion into Pegasi after a series of Kumo Crew raids on Imperial assets. Though official Imperial media channels claim victory, other sources talk of a bloody draw.

Yet there are others who remain hopeful. It is during a final visit to Professor Wardav's office on Alioth that a more optimistic view is presented.

The frame shift drive has revolutionised spacefaring, not least because of Sirius Corporation's decision to make the drive available for all ships and all budgets. It isn't like the vessels of yesteryear, powered by GalCop's monopolised Quirium fuel. In my view the increased diffusion of people and ideas will accomplish what arms could not, and the people of Pegasi will gradually transition into something akin to their Bubble-dwelling cousins. It's only a matter of time.

Though one can readily agree that a more docile Pegasi is preferable to the outlaw sector of today, is there a hidden cultural cost of such mass assimilation? For once, the professor vacillates:

From a strictly anthropological perspective, of course I don't wish to see any of these unique societies vanish in a generation or two. And that's the real trick, isn't it? To preserve the essence but not the practice of what makes Pegasi and its people so distinct. In truth, I fear that one cannot be had without the other.

Your correspondent thanked the professor and traveled home. Wardav's detached academic analysis juxtaposes poorly against the image of slaves being readied for transport. It is an uneasy balance, and objectivity comes with difficulty. Yet after our conversation, it is impossible to indulge in the same easy condemnation one might have before.

Ultimately, it is the Bubble that has failed the rogue Pegasi sector, not the other way around. Like an abandoned child, it must be engaged with and shown a better way before it can lash out further. Such outreach might be the only thing that helps Pegasi take its seat at the table as anything other than the black sheep of the family. In an age of superpower rivalry and Thargoid intrusion, such division is a luxury that humanity can ill afford.

Pegasi: The Renegade Sector

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Design:
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Images:
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Grohiik

RARE
COMMODITIES
SPOTLIGHT



*Motrona
Experience
Jelly*

What do you wish for? What would be your dream?

How about a bath?

How about the best bath you've ever had?

Dea Motrona is an interesting star system. It has no colonised planets and none of the celestial bodies are viable for terraforming due to their lack of atmosphere or the presence of thick, ammonia-based soups.

The system's stations change hands frequently as the various local factions attempt to assert control over trade and resources. As with many such places, control is never held for long.

Despite this, the production of, and trade in, Experience Jelly is lucrative and constant. The jelly itself is a refined neuro-narcotic, interacting with human physiology simply through prolonged contact and osmosis. The delivered 'experience' can be tailored and programmed depending on which area of the brain the client wishes to stimulate... or overstimulate.

The manufacture of the jelly is a closely guarded secret amongst those who produce it. There is ample evidence to suggest that they have based themselves in the Dea Motrona system because of its fractious politics and sporadic armed conflicts. Hiding out in a lawless system can be a good way of keeping a secret, provided you have the means to protect yourself.

Motrona Experience Jelly has always been an item of commercial repute and of dubious legitimacy, although it generally remains a legal trade commodity. But it has recently become more widely known and condemned thanks to the exploits of the Children of Tothos in 3304 and 3305.

Barnabas Cole founded the Children, who are a religious cult and classified as terrorists by most security services and planetary administrations. Cole's followers worship an entity they call 'Tothos'. The cult appears to identify this individual as a dark god or daemon of some kind.

In the first half of 3305, the cult went on an interstellar rampage, committing a variety of terrorist acts that Cole claimed would enable the summoning of Tothos into the material world. The final act was to be the destruction of Archambault Terminal in the Chun Tstar system. Thankfully, Cole was assassinated at the last minute, preventing the detonation of a weapon known as the Lucifer Device. The device was believed to be a recommissioned thermonuclear warhead.

The cult used Motrona Experience Jelly as part of their ceremonial rituals, along with copious amounts of Onionhead and Aganippe Rush, to create an unparalleled out-of-body experience for their followers. It is believed that the jelly used in these rituals was (and is) programmed to induce a generic sense of euphoria. Purist jelly enthusiasts claim that this is a waste, as the experience delivery can be refined and targeted to such a degree that the client will never know a greater moment of utopian perfection than when they climb into their own individually-tailored jelly bath.

As one might imagine, climbing into a bath of Motrona Experience Jelly is, at first, somewhat discomforting. Naked immersion into a pool of hydrophilic ooze that clings to the skin is not part of most people's regular routine. Only regular users of hibernation pods or the old Stardreamer capsules show no hesitation. The jelly is cold to begin with, to keep its osmotic processes inert, and to ensure that the 'experience' is preserved for delivery into the client's mind. However, as soon as the substance makes contact with human skin, it begins to warm, and the permeation begins.

It is impossible to describe what happens next. You have to... well... be there...



Rare Commodities Spotlight:
Motrona Experience Jelly

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Design:
McNicholl

Art:
McNicholl



Co-Pawlots

Commander name: **G-Dubya**

Co-Pawlot name: **Sarsaparilla**
(aka Sassy)

My co-pawlot plays a very important role in my vessel. Most of her time is spent inventing sneaky ways to get onto my lap so she can go to sleep. She mainly deploys her ninja-like stealth abilities when homing towards my lap, to sit. Once she achieves her objective, she usually curls up like a little cotton ball and goes to sleep – but sometimes she will accept a stroke.

She is also a very naughty cat. When in combat she sits in the middle of the scanner display, which is quite annoying when trying to track manoeuvring pirates or avoid incoming missiles. When she requires food she deploys her very loud 'meow!' to alert me to the fact she needs refuelling. She also likes to purr very loudly when she is a happy kitty.

Do you have a Co-Pawlot you'd like to share with the Galaxy? Hop on to www.sagittarius-eye.com/submissions/ and let us know! Be sure to include their name, role aboard your ship and any particular story about them you'd like to share.



Text:
G-Dubya

Design:
McNicholl

PATREON

SAGITTARIUS EYE

Sagittarius Eye is the Galaxy's leading new network – created by commanders, for commanders, and supported by commanders.

We would like to thank those who have supported us over the past month:

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