

# STAR\*DRIVE SESSION SUMMARY 06/26/2011

## *Attendance*

*Tim* warns everyone that he will be late. How late? That depends upon the degree to which you acknowledge the concept of linear time.

*Bruce* sits upon his couch and cackles wildly. Not only was *Get Fuzzy* particularly good, but today is the day when the magical Blue Snowball gets its first real live-fire test. Bwahahaaaa!

Then *Patrick* announces that he will also be late. Bruce is stricken with doubts and fears – will anyone show up on time? Only *Chris* knows, and he isn't saying anything. Yet.

And then they all show up! *Chris*, *Ernest* and *Paul* all at the same time, in vibrant and surrounding sound, courtesy of the Alien Microphone Ball! Ernest celebrates the occasion by making some cracks about the problems inherent in hiring “manscapers” (just in case you'd like to get some manscaping done). Then he wanders off to find some red pepper to spice up his afternoon... as he puts it.

*Chris* does his best to rescue the conversation by noting that now is the season to get gutters replaced – he wanted to get some work done and found that he could get gutter contractors to call him back within an hour. Apparently, the gutter market is in the gutter...

<i>Player</i>	<i>Character</i>	<i>Deal</i>	<i>Status</i>
Bruce	Lambert Fulson	Rigunmor Guido Free Agent	Present
Bruce	Taveer	Mechalus Concord Engineer Tech Op	Present
Patrick	Martin St. John	Concord Naval Officer Tech Op	Present
Patrick	Lenny	T'sa Ambassador Free Agent	Present
Chris	Ten-zil Kem	VoidCorp Ambassador Diplomat (TO)	Present
Chris	Drest Talorgin	Pict Warchief Combat Spec	Present
Ernest	Markus Oroszlan	Warlion Bartender Combat Spec	Present

<i>Player</i>	<i>Character</i>	<i>Deal</i>	<i>Status</i>
Ernest	Ken Takashi	Concord Naval Officer Diplomat (TO)	Present
Tim	Gerard Peppin	Borealin Ambassador Mind Walker	Late
Tim	Haggernak	Weren Concord Administrator Combat Spec	Late

### ***VoidCorp – Busy Selling Out Humanity***

*Admiral Ken Takashi* convenes a council of his immediate staff to discuss the new evidence that VoidCorp has been busily selling out humanity in the Verge to the Externals. He proposes seizing all VoidCorp assets in the Verge, a policy that nobody has a problem with. The practical difficulty is that while VoidCorp doesn't have a concentrated presence anywhere in the Verge, they do have some kind of military outpost in almost every inhabited system. They have also been moving more military assets into the Verge than most other stellar nations, including undeclared assets (the battlecruiser *Poison* stands as an example of this).

After appropriate discussion, Admiral Takashi gives the orders to arrest all VoidCorp personnel on the *Lighthouse*. This comes as quite a surprise to nominal VoidCorp ambassador *Ten-zil Kem*, who doesn't initially believe that the Marines coming for him are even serious. Then they flex-cuff him and drag him off to the brig. In part, Admiral Takashi (who appreciates Ten-zil's loyalty) hopes that some of his more scurrilous co-workers might confess various misdeeds to him while they're all confined together.

Ten-zil Kem remains unconvinced that the Marines are serious. He understands a bit better when they beat him with the butts of their rifles and explain to him that VoidCorp has been colluding with the enemy. He looks at his co-workers, "Okay, who here has been colluding with the enemy?" The other VoidCorp employees look back at him with wide-eyed fear. None of them admits to anything. Ten-zil Kem himself holds a Q-level rank, not high enough to have been told about the DriveSpace wrinkle communications link. Beyond that, his traditional behavior hasn't necessarily endeared him to either the upper tiers of the VoidCorp executive classes or to the more ambitious parts of the lower ranks. Other VoidCorp rank-and-filers love him.

### ***The External Ambassador***

A small klick-built External ship arrives in the outskirts of the Bluefall system. It sends a transmission insystem, showing a thaal who announces himself as *krl'Ython Kadar*, Leader of the Exeat. He proclaims, "I bring you word from our gods the I-krl in the voice of our Ambassador krl'Vurhyr Joran, who is sent to enlighten the masses!"

*Ambassador krl'Vurhyr Joran* turns out to be a thaal, dressed in clothing even more extravagant than what fraal normally wear. The characters direct his ship (under heavy escort) to the space station *Horizon Lotus Celebration*, one of several stations owned by the Horizon Resorts Company of Bluefall. The place is mostly a luxury resort for low-g tourists, which will mean that the Verge Alliance negotiators will be comfortable while the non-squishy furnishings will make the thaal uneasy.

Admiral Takashi is in no great hurry to meet with Ambassador Joran. He has Ten-zil Kem dragged into Captain St. John's Ready Room for a quick conference. *Taveer* is listening in remotely. *Taveer's* sensors crane around like creepy snakes with lidless eyes. The main console for his interface unit has a picture of a clown on it, because everyone likes clowns!

Ten-zil Kem adjusts his somewhat rumpled robes and comments, "Admiral, I'm waiting for you to offer me a drink."

Admiral Takashi arranges for something strong for Ten-zil Kem. "I know you've been playing both sides against the middle, but we have now reached a point where you need to make a more visible break with VoidCorp."

"This isn't exactly the endgame I was hoping for, but sure!"

"So, the first thing we're going to need is information about all the VoidCorp installations in the Verge, especially the ones that aren't public knowledge. The second thing, and this is why *Taveer* is involved in this conversation, is that VoidCorp has been putting back-door access gates into software used all through the Verge. We need to know where those gates are, and we need you to help *Taveer* and the Technospiders to close them down."

*Taveer* chirps in, "I suggest that we follow a Curious Orange strategy and... none of you have any idea what I'm talking about, do you? Okay, let me just say it this way –

let's use VoidCorp's virus insertion vectors as a path to immunize the network against their own attacks." There are nods around the conference room table.

Ten-zil Kem starts listing off the equipment and personnel he will need. He's actually not very familiar with any of the embassy personnel except for *Shane* (his assistant, who has sheltered him from the rest of his people for years) and the chick from the typing pool with the great ass. He requisitions them both.

The problem of VoidCorp Grid infiltration is actually much lower in Bluefall than elsewhere in the Verge because their primary local vector was VORL, which the characters destroyed some time ago. However, other systems are likely to be highly vulnerable.

Admiral Takashi summons station security chief *Administrator Haggernak*. He explains, "You may have heard the recent news that VoidCorp has been declared an enemy of humanity. All your men have been rounding up local VoidCorp personnel and shipping them to an internment camp in the bikini mines down on Bluefall. At the same time, we have an I-krl ambassador here, waiting in some kind of resort station orbiting Bluefall. The Ambassador is a thaal, so you're in charge of security and you'll have to account for the very real possibility that he's some sort of psychic badass."

Haggernak rumbles, "Yes." The others hope that the big weren was listening.

Admiral Takashi next calls *Ambassador Peppin* to ask for the use of his camera crew. Based upon the responses he gets over the phone he suspects that Peppin is running AutoResponse 4.0 to avoid actually taking calls. Peppin eventually shows up, sweat-covered and disheveled, doing his best imitation of Hunter S. Thompson. He is more than willing to lend over his film crew to document the misdeeds of VoidCorp in a production called "VoidCorp: Traitors to Humanity."

### **The VoidCorp Admiral**

The former VoidCorp representative to the Verge Alliance Admiralty is old *WC10289TSR*. He is currently rotting in lockup on the *Lighthouse*, having been arrested for treason. Admiral Takashi summons him to the Ready Room for debriefing. Admiral Takashi explains the situation to him, and old WC responds that he would actually rather

just sit in a cell somewhere. His reasoning? He's being paid very well. Apparently well enough to be willing to sell out his entire species.

Admiral Takashi continues to press, "What exactly do the Externals have on you? Do they have your family hostage? We've rescued relatives from them before, so if that's the case maybe we can talk." WC remains uncommunicative.

The Admiral decides that it is time to bring out the big guns. He brings in Peppin to start running telepathic scans of WC's brain. Peppin comes in looking like Cancer Jesus and starts his probe. Peppin learns that WC is working for the Externals because his superiors have ordered him to. He presses for which superiors and eventually determines that the orders go all the way up to the VoidCorp CEO. On a more personal level, he is convinced that humanity has no chance against the I-kr1 Exeat: they will roll in, destroy all human outposts, and cut off human access to the Verge. He thinks that right now, the I-kr1 are in confusion and have drawn back to regroup, but all he knows is what has been relayed back through the Hathorn communications station. The characters' general assumption is that VoidCorp is pretty much acting as the I-kr1's bitch, so the I-kr1 are unlikely to send much relevant information back to them.

Right as he runs out of Psi points, Peppin makes a point of pulling out some embarrassing childhood memories from WC's mind just so he can rub them in the officer's face. "Bed-wetter!"

### **The Marketing Campaign**

The characters start to assemble a marketing campaign for the VoidCorp rank-and-file. The basic theme will be, "Your superiors have sold out you and the rest of humanity to the slimy, infected I-kr1 invaders. Do the right thing and side with your species! Join the Verge Alliance!"

The hope is that this campaign will also inspire a few VoidCorp sleeper agents lurking on forgotten asteroid bases and hidden outposts to reveal themselves to the Verge Alliance.

Unfortunately, this one time Admiral Takashi does not come across as incredibly charming. His PSA videos are competent, even reassuring, but they do not prompt many VergeCorp employees to throw in with the Verge Alliance.

### ***Negotiating with the Thaal Ambassador***

The characters travel to *Horizon Lotus Celebration*. The *Lighthouse* stands off with a zero-point missile ready to destroy the whole station if the situation goes all pear-shaped. Admiral Takashi cautions Taveer to ensure that the anti-psi shields are working properly, and even allows him to come along as long as he has a nearby guard with a taser to take him down if he starts to say insane things.

These precautions turn out to be quite worthwhile, as the I-krl emissary is of the possessed-by-alien-death-gods variety. Krl'Vurhyr Joran's eyes are filled with roiling purple glowing flames.

Krl'Vurhyr Joran fixes its gaze, "You must be Admiral Takashi. I have seen your images on broadcast many times."

"What can we do for you, Ambassador?"

"It is not what you can do for me, but what I can do for you. I can bring the Holy Word of the I-krl to the heathens! We know that you have been led astray by the heretics among you (by which he means the fraal). They rejected the teachings of the space gods and spread lies." He goes on to explain that the Orlamists are searching for truth, but have not found it yet. If only they were to directly contact the I-krl space gods they would understand immediately.

In more specific terms, the thaal also wants the return of the various I-krl prisoners taken in the recent fleet action. Haggernak points out, "Most of those prisoners were originally slave races, so we would not so much be returning your citizens as returning your property." He addresses Admiral Takashi, "Is that truly what we want to do?"

Krl'Vurhyr Joran clarifies that he wants the I-krl *citizens* back: the thaal and the sifarv. All the others are mere client races. The I-krl Empire was originally founded by the sifarv, and when they met with the thaal they adopted their religion (and spiritual goals) wholesale. More important, after the recent battles many of the sifarv have reconsidered their view of humanity as a prey species, or *shreel*. The Admiral in particular has attracted quite a bit of respect.

The Admiral tries to allow Joran to continue to wax poetic about his space Empire, his religion, his murderous space gods, and so on. Joran is absolutely willing to

oblige, starting with a basic primer on how the I-krl were confined into drivespace by “demonic creatures” and subsequently managed to partially escape.

Krl’Vurhyr Joran goes on to explain that the thaal have always worshipped the I-krl since the beginning of time, they just didn’t have the direct contact that they currently enjoy. They have maintained religious orthodoxy through their long lives and their practice of passing their memories and identities on through mind-to-mind transfer. Taveer suggests that this must be awfully rough on the younger generation, who pretty much get their identities overwritten by those of their immortal elders, but krl’Vurhyr Joran explains that the brains of the young are so empty that they enjoy having them filled with the wisdom of the ancients.

The thaal faith isn’t much for acceptance of alternative religious practice. From their perspective, there is really only one faith and anyone who doesn’t follow Space Jesus needs to either convert or die. On the plus side, he does provide some commentary on thaal religious ranks:

- krl’Xenhon - space pope
- krl’Vurhon – cardinals
- krl’Ython - archbishop (rank of krl’Ython Kadar)
- krl’Oharel
- krl’Vuryth - bishop (rank of krl’Vurhyr Joran)
- krl’Xenoth (rank of krl’Xenoth Nurhan)
- krl’noth – priest
- krl’kihl - junior priest
- krl’ojekh – altar boy

### **A Brief Intermission**

Admiral Takashi calls a recess to talk with his staff. His opinion is that krl’Vurhyr Joran is not here to negotiate so much as he is here to buy time. The general opinion is that there isn’t much that the characters can do to keep the I-krl space gods trapped forever in drivespace, but that the two ways the thaal have to bring them out involve either triggering the deepfallen on Bluefall, or inducing an extinction-level event that prompts the deepfallen to act on their own. One alternate possibility is an

experimental t'sa drive – the one ship equipped with it vanished on the first test, but periodically reappears. The only transmission from it was a single word: “I-krl.”

### ***What's Going on in Tendril***

The characters review the tactical situation in the Tendril system, both through normal intelligence gathering and by psychic contact. The planet Alaundril, a moon of the world Sperous, remains well defended against I-krl raiding. The local government keeps the aliens at bay while feeding the population propaganda insisting that help is on the way. The local I-krl fleet includes the fortress ship *Lethe*, plus additional fleet elements. Most of the *Lethe*'s complement of support ships was destroyed in the earlier action, but the fortress ship itself is still in good shape. They are based around the gas giant Pox in the outer system.

There is evidence of enemy activity in the depths of Pox's atmosphere. Given the knowledge of n'sss drivespace wrinkle technology, it seems clear that there is an effort to assemble a communications station is underway. Admiral Takashi orders Taveer to put together a team to retrofit two gas giant aerostat vessels from Redcrown into assault craft. One will be used to attack the n'sss base that must be on Sperous. The aerostat will be carried into action with the fleet. The general plan for Tendril will be to jump in as close as possible with the *Lighthouse* and the fleet, trigger drivespace denial, and destroy everything possible. As an added bonus, it is possible that the DriveSpace denial device will shake the t'sa experimental ship loose from DriveSpace. The A team will accompany this effort: Admiral Takashi, Captain St. John, Taveer, Haggernak, and Drest.

The second aerostat will travel on board the *Red Queen* to Algemron. Its mission will be to stealthily identify and destroy (or capture) the drivespace wrinkle device in that system. The B team and the elite Marine squad will accompany it: Peppin, Ten-zil Kem, Lenny, Markus Oroszlan, and Lambert Fulson.

### ***Undersecretary Thane***

Admiral Takashi goes to his superior, *Undersecretary Michael Thane*, the nominal boss of the Verge Alliance, to explain the plans for Tendril and Algemron. Thane explains that he was responsible for negotiating the Monitor Accord between the two nations of Algemron, Alitar and Galvin, five years ago. The two nations have been



fighting for at least forty years and are currently in a stalemate: Galvin has space superiority, but Alitar is stronger on planetside. The collapse of the Concord blockade is likely to have tipped the balance in favor of Galvin, now that Concord warships are not restraining Galvin's fleet. Worse yet, Galvin has a fairly substantial fleet including at least three heavy cruisers, while the core of Alitar's fleet is a battlecruiser that they can use for some raiding and defense. Finally, there is some evidence that the mysterious leadership class on Galvin is heavily compromised by teln worm infections.

The key problem for both nations is that they have been fighting for long enough that neither has the strength necessary to achieve a clean victory against the other: Galvin has more ships, but Alitar has sufficient strength to keep Galvin from bombing them to dust. Likewise, Alitar has more ground troops but not enough to actually take back the region on their world currently held by Galvin (though they can very effectively blockade that territory).

To complicate things, there is a native intelligent race on Alitar called the xe'reen. They look a bit like a cross between an oriental dragon and a river otter, and their presence means that wide-scale orbital strikes are not an option for the Verge Alliance forces (Galvin has no such compunctions, just no capability).



The xe'reen aren't naturally tool users, but recently they have started to use (and acquire) weapons to chase humans away from the northern oceans where they like to live.

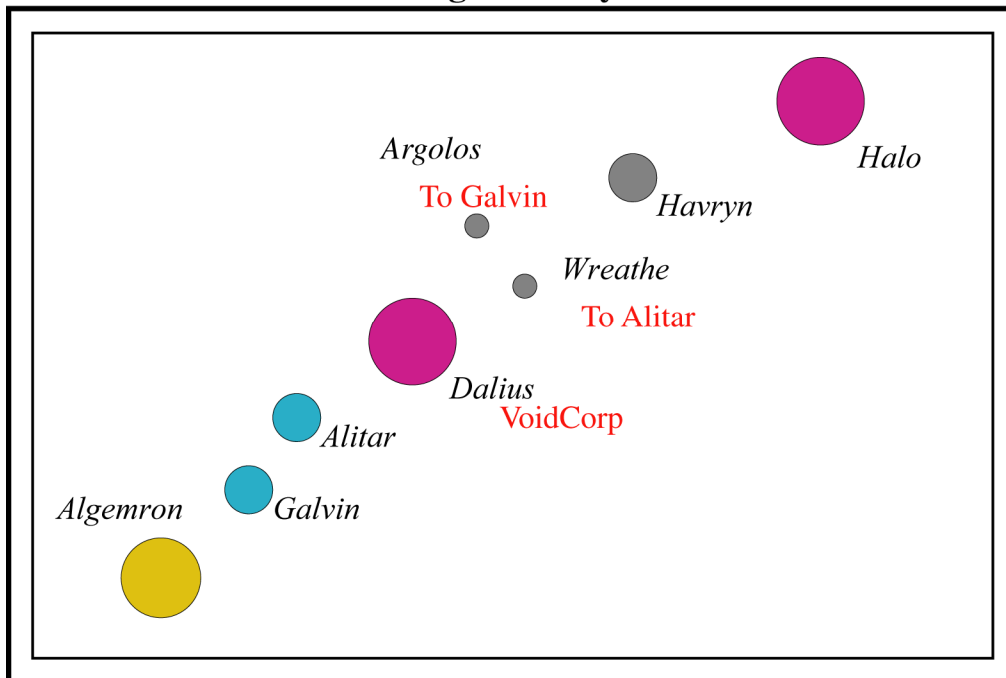
One other important location in the Algemron system is the planetoid Wreathe, a miserable remnant of a collision between a planet and the gas giant Havryn. It is technically claimed by Alitar, and is the source of the dangerous drug whitespike, distilled down from a primitive coral of the same name.

### ***The Jump to Algemron***

Peppin, Ten-zil Kem, Lenny, Markus Oroszlan, and Lambert Fulson board the *Red Queen* and head to Algemron. Their first stop will be Wreathe, where they will pretend to be criminals. Given their natural proclivities, this should not be hard. They bring along the *Baby Rattle* in the *Red Queen*'s hold to provide local color.

The characters equip themselves with some trade goods, primarily weapons and concentrated foodstuffs. Lambert Fulson oversees the process of packing every corner of the *Red Queen*'s hold with shipping containers. They also outfit the *Baby Rattle* with a n'sss decloaker device. It has a range of 10,000 km (also known as "10 map hexes").

### **The Algemron System**



The first stop is the planetoid of Wreathe, to make contacts with the local smugglers. The characters touch down at *Midas City*, the largest settlement on the planet.

The place is a cheerless mining town, cheerless mostly because all of the mines have been closed by the war: bulk carriers cannot make it past the Concord blockade, and even if they could they cannot reliably evade Galvin Navy patrols.

The characters head to a bar full of dirty, unemployed, desperate people and start spreading around the charm. Everyone looks at them with hungry eyes: they see the characters as people with money and maybe a lack of common sense. The fact that half of the bar knows Peppin from watching bootleg episodes of his television program pretty much ensures that the low-profile strategy isn't going to work. He simply buys a round of drinks for the entire bar. In short order, he is universally beloved.

Lambert Fulson starts asking after whitespike in industrial quantities ("Enough to fill my hold."). He quickly learns that the whitespike market is controlled by the Cartel. He finds a local willing to go and get him in touch with them. Or to bring back a gang of twenty friends to beat him up and take his money. Lenny trails him out of town and to a low industrial building. The place isn't obvious, but not so hidden that the police wouldn't know about it: there must be a measure of corruption in the local force.

The local spends some time in the building, then returns with one other. Lenny reports back in advance of their return to the bar. While they're waiting, Markus Oroszlan makes a deal to sell some guns in 30 minutes to a fraal in another bar.

The Cartel representative is *Alan*. It doesn't take long for Lambert to talk him up from a base price of 3 grams of whitespike per charge rifle to 5 grams per rifle. They agree, then Alan heads off to close up the other end of the bargain: the deal will take some time to close because the guns are to be delivered on Alitar, and the Cartel dealers on Wreath need to find demand for the guns down on Alitar.

### **Yet Another Dive Bar**

Markus leads the way to another grimy place, the *Auxiliary Bar*. It's a miner's bar full of filth and filthy people. He looks around cheerfully, "This place is filthy!" He notes that there is a black-robed fraal in one corner.

As the group sits down, one of the fraal approaches Markus. She intones, "You look brave and incautious, willing to take chances. I need such a man, one who will not ask too many questions." They make a deal: cash in exchange for guns to be delivered to

Alitar. From what Lambert can tell, Markus is dealing with the same people that he was dealing with earlier, just cutting out a couple layers of middle-man. The fraal does not appear to have strong allegiance to either side: she claims that she “goes where the money is”, and right now that is to Alitar. She can and will provide a landing location, but he needs to find a way to evade the Galvinite blockade. She indicates that the situation on Galvin proper is very different: they have a very strict military regime and tight controls. She doesn’t have any good contacts in the Galvinite nation, or among the Galvinite resistance. The fact that there actually *is* a Galvinite resistance is interesting news to the characters. She agrees to try and find some contacts with them, though it will take a while. Markus asks for a recommendation of a nice place to stay where his companions can unwind. The Algemrotic economy being what it is, this results in a very inexpensive Eurotrip-stype debauch where Ten-Zil Kem tries to see how many prostitutes can be physically piled atop him.

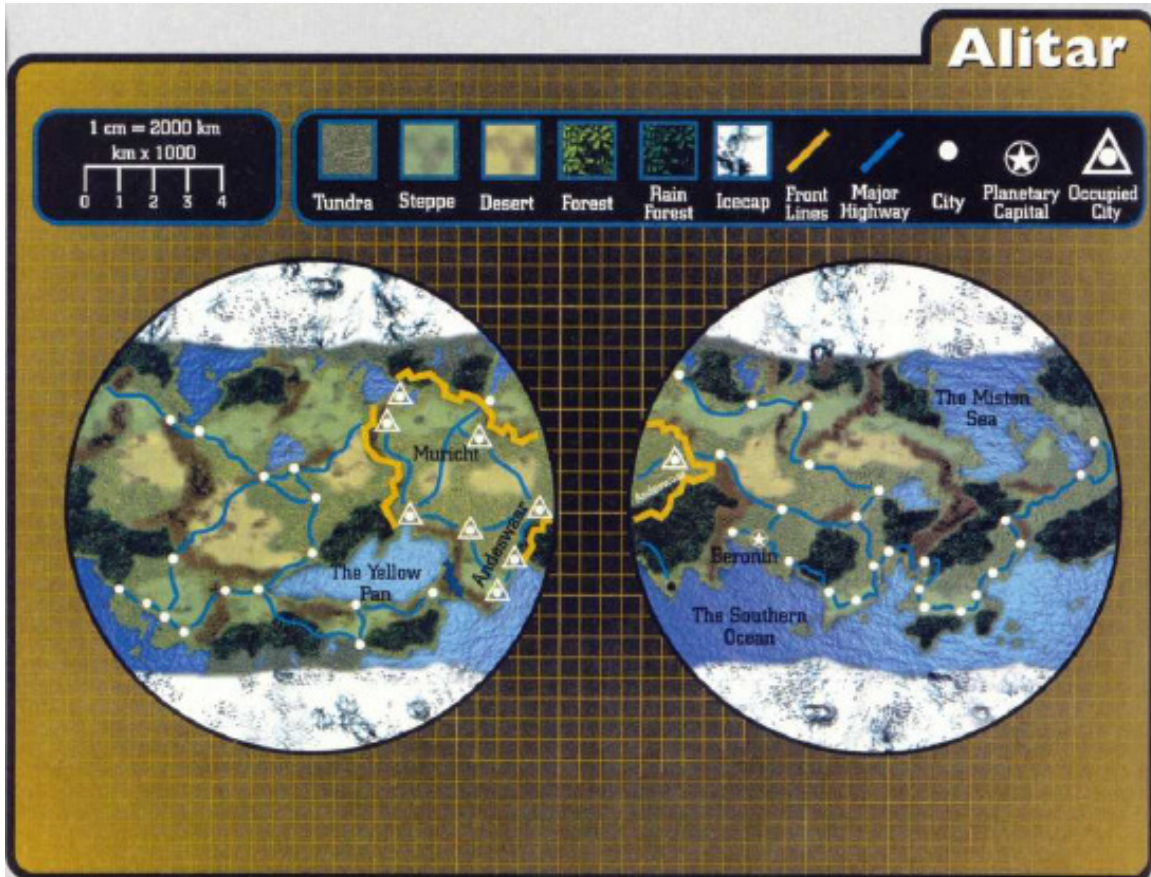
Having started on the process of chatting her up, Markus invites the fraal out for dinner. Her name is *Kiara Mantel*. Oddly enough, she finds Markus’ gruff demeanor to be truly endearing. For a fraal she is very serious-minded, with only a bit of the typical fraal mysticism about her. She also admits that she uses her mind powers to ease negotiations and ensure the trustworthiness of her business partners.

She is of the opinion (conspiracy theory style) that events are being manipulated to keep the stalemate between the two nations going. This actually suits her just fine. She’s not particularly interested in understanding exactly who might be behind the manipulation.

### **To the Otter Planet!**

Peppin is more than excited at the news that the characters are heading to Alitar, where the xe’reen otter people live. The Wreath criminals paying the characters a premium to move guns onto Alitar assume that there is some danger in the process. They don’t know that the characters have access to the *Red Queen* and alien stealth technology that makes the whole journey quite routine: there is essentially no chance that the Galvin Navy will even have a chance to detect the characters as they approach the rendezvous point.

The typical climate on Alitar is fairly cold to human taste, but has a wide variety of climactic zones. The characters' landing site is in a rainforest near the equator. It takes the smugglers some time to approach. During this time, the characters see a twelve-foot kettledrake sunning itself on a nearby rock. The creature examines the *Baby Rattle* with studied disinterest, then goes back to its own activities.



Markus Oroszlan decides to explore the area around the ship. He brings along his massive maser cannon. Ten-zil Kem and Lambert Fulson decide to explore with him. All they find is a group of four Alitaran soldiers with a big bag of money. The characters offload the guns for them. Once the deal is done, the characters ask if they (or their masters) have anything they would like to smuggle offworld. The characters parlay this into an invitation to visit the Alitarian capital of Beronin (really, New Beronin – the old one was turned into a crater).

The characters check themselves into the very nice Old Bay Hotel, overlooking the West Bay and Bankers Island (where the spaceport is). Given the state of the economy, the hotel is cheap (\$40/night) and a bit threadbare, but there is plenty of staff.

***The End of the Session***

The session ends with the characters relaxing in New Beronin, in the Old Bay Hotel. Each player gains six experience points to split as they want between characters.