

STAR*DRIVE SESSION SUMMARY 11/22/2009

Attendance

Paul tells the others, “Pick out some plot cards and write down subplots for your characters.”

Tim (Gerard Pepin and Haggernak) asks, “Do we have to write them for our own characters?”

Chris (Ten-zil Kem and Rokk Tressor) answers, “Not at all! I’ve been writing subplots for Patrick’s characters all along. This time, his characters are going to get crabs. From each other.”

Patrick (Martin St. John and Lenny) groans, “Not again!”

Bruce (Taveer and Lambert Fulson) mumbles, “I bet they’re space crabs. Two feet long. Heh. And no, I’m not going to include any mention of either Chris’ fungus-and-larva *Star Wars* game nor Paul’s improper social comments here.”

Ernest (Markus Oroszlan and Captain Ken Takashi) notes that while he has seen *Dude, Where’s My Car* it wasn’t totally his fault: he saw it back in Dallas at a mall that was in the process of turning into a low-grade flea market and pharmaceutical bazaar. “It was that or stab hookers,” he tells the others. “Wait, did I just say that out loud? I should have used my inside voice.” In an effort to defuse the situation, he tells the group, “By the way, Captain Ken Takashi has taken the Celebrity background!”

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Spec / Level</i>	<i>Description</i>
Lambert Fulson	Bruce	FA4	Rigunmor Trader
Taveer	Bruce	TO5	Lighthouse Chief Engineer
Martin St. John	Patrick	TO5	Lighthouse Head Pilot
Lenny	Patrick	FA5	T’sa Ambassador
Ten-zil Kem	Chris	D (TO)5	VoidCorp Ambassador, dressed like a 1980’s Space Pimp
Rokk Tressor	Chris	FA3	Concord Intelligence Officer

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Spec / Level</i>	<i>Description</i>
Markus Oroszlan	Ernest	CS5	Thuldan Warlion
Ken Takashi	Ernest	D (TO)5	Star Force Captain
Ivan Stukov	Peco	D (CS)5	Thuldan Diplomat and Retired General
Adun Zelnaga	Peco	MW5	Fraal Mindwalker Doctor Guy
Gerard Pepin	Tim	D (MW) 4	Borealin Professor and Ambassador
Haggernak	Tim	CS 4	Administrator and Security Officer

To Trinity Space Station

As *Rokk Tressor*, *Taveer*, *Markus Oroszlan* and *Martin St. John* prepare to debark for the Thuldan station *Trinity*, *Consular Minister Michael Thane* puts in an appearance. “I hear that you are going over to the Thuldan space station to inspect the new missiles. I would like to accompany you, as I want to meet our new Ambassador.” The characters hadn’t heard, but the Borealin Embassy on the *Lighthouse* has been in chaos as they did not have a full Professor-Ambassador. But the new *Professor-Ambassador Pepin* is now on board the Thuldan station and preparing to head to the ship.

Rokk Tressor doesn’t tell the others, but he’s got two breeding pairs of dhros (“space monkeys”) hidden in his pack. He intends to give the Thuldans a gift that will keep on giving.

The characters are met at the *Trinity* airlocks by a formal Thuldan military guard. Consular Minister Thane leads the group, greeting the Thuldan Commander and his operations officer. The characters note that all of the Thuldans are remarkably similar, an indicator of their origins as clone troopers. *Professor-Ambassador Gerard Pepin* strikes an amazing contrast to the polished and uniform Thuldans with his bald head, ponytail, and tweed jacket. He was originally summoned to Trinity Station to help treat exotic injuries suffered by some technical staff who were insufficiently cautious when handling dangerous materials. He knows that Trinity Station is mostly a research and educational center; a lot of their activities involve engineering research into outré materials.

Commander Dominik Werfel of the Thuldan Imperial Space Forces greets Consular Minister Thane with all formal style. He promptly turns the characters over to the Ops Officer *Lieutenant Commander David Mumford*. Mumford is a bitter, pinch-

faced man who glares nastily at the warlion Markus Oroszlan. While Taveer chatters on like an annoying mechanized hummingbird, the dour-faced Mumford shows the group to their quarters in the Habitat Ring.

Along the way, Consular Minister Thane talks to Professor-Ambassador Pepin. He asks, “From the delay in staffing the Borealin Embassy, I had thought that the Borealins did not regard this as a particularly important post.”

“On the contrary! I had to pay top dollar for this post! I kid! I kid! But we consider this position to be of the utmost importance! This is an excellent opportunity to bring the systems of the Verge back into the great web of knowledge!”

The Consular Minister is unimpressed. He reminds Professor-Ambassador Pepin of the difficulty in communicating between the Verge and the worlds of the Core, explaining that on the *Lighthouse* diplomats cannot merely be the mouthpieces of their home governments: they must make their own decisions. In fact, the position of Ambassador on board the *Lighthouse* would be an excellent platform from which someone could become the face and voice of their entire government.

Professor-Ambassador Pepin mourns, “I guess I picked the wrong month to stop sniffing glue.”

Thuldan military quarters prove to be quite cramped and Spartan, as expected. Markus Oroszlan demonstrates that his duffel bag is specifically designed to fit underneath a standard-issue Thuldan bunk. Meanwhile, Professor-Ambassador Pepin returns to his own ship, where he has a very nicely-equipped cabin with a fluffy double-sized bunk and a hookah pipe.

Rokk Tressor performs a thorough search of the quarters. He is convinced that there are no listening devices in the characters’ quarters.

The Head Engineer

Head Engineer *Keira Armitage* is the local expert on the missile systems. They are fairly revolutionary – even their propulsion systems had to be modified to work around the space-warping effects of their zero-point warheads. She is quiet and taciturn to the point of incommunicability. Taveer is completely unconscious of this: he proceeds to chatter away at her about the missiles and their guidance systems, with the end goal of

persuading her to let him connect directly into a missile brain. She is not willing to grant him his request.

Professor-Ambassador Pepin attempts to help the situation, largely by passing around one of his cigarettes. Whatever he's smoking, it isn't Lucky Strike. It does make Taveer a lot more mellow, to the relief of all concerned.

Taveer finds that the Thuldan engineering personnel are quite edgy about giving him access to any sort of computer system. It seems like they fear allowing him to connect to anything will just lead to his breaking down firewalls and exploring through sensitive data. The fact that he starts talking about how "all information wants to be free" doesn't help his case. Professor-Ambassador Pepin does his best to try talking them into the medical wing, but the fact that he is high does not help his case at all.

What Is the Business of Trinity Station?

Markus Oroszlan and Rokk Tressor explore Trinity Station, doing their best to engage with the crew. They find that the place is quite dynamic, with a dedicated medical wing and an educational facility that is almost its own university. They also find that the station security is quite high: there simply aren't that many areas in the station that they can get to without security badges.

Maybe the Science Staff Will Talk

Martin St. John decides to talk to the science staff responsible for the zero-point warheads. He learns that *Scientist Harrison Boyes* was the genius behind the warheads, but he has trouble dealing with Boyes himself: the man is quite arrogant and grating, and is absolutely convinced that his invention will make him wealthy and famous beyond the dreams of lesser men. He is very excited about his missiles being deployed on the *Lighthouse* because he sees it as a great way to built buzz for the product.

The Missile Test

The Thuldan missile test is quite straightforward: a hauler ship will drag an asteroid into position, then a fighter will launch a single zero-point missile into it. Martin St. John volunteers to pilot the fighter. Taveer volunteers to take the second position in the fighter, hoping to be able to learn more about the missile prior to firing. The rest of

the characters accept Professor-Ambassador Pepin's offer to let them watch the test from his yacht.

On the way out, Taveer manages to hack into the missile guidance system and examine its targeting software. He learns that the targeting system is unremarkable, based upon a mass-detection system.

St. John fires the missile. The zero-point explosion is quite impressive, generating a miniature Big Bang through the use of quantum manipulation. After the explosion, there is a strange aftereffect (St. John: "I fly through it!"). On visual scan, there is a black core remaining with a blue nimbus effect, all surrounded by a giant cloud of swirling blue stuff. The whole area is generating very strange gravitic readings. This effect is also not similar to the data the characters have seen from previous test-firings of the zero-point warhead.

St. John brings the fighter in to within 1000km of the phenomenon, close enough that the ship is buffeted by gravity waves. The feed from the Thuldan science observation ship includes Scientist Boyes exclaiming, "That should never have happened! The equations say it's impossible! But if I could produce that effect on command, think of all the money I could make!"

Professor-Ambassador Pepin docks his launch with the Thuldan observation vessel. The scientists are all fairly upset – they have discovered that the phenomenon is interfering with the Bluefall drivespace relay. If a solution is not identified, the Bluefall system could be cut off from the rest of the Verge (and the Core worlds). The Bluefall government has already sent word to all local ships to not starfall until further notice, but they are unable to communicate with incoming ships to caution them not to starfall in system.

Markus Oroszlan comments, "The next 48 hours should be fairly exciting. I wonder if we're going to get ships coming in all Philadelphia Project-transformed."

What Can We Do to Help?

Taveer immediately volunteers his assistance to the Thuldan engineering and science teams in their efforts to understand what went wrong in the test. To his surprise, they accept. Martin St. John submits a report back to Captain Ken Takashi recommending that the new Thuldan missiles not be installed on board the *Lighthouse*.

And Markus Oroszlan does his best to figure out how to participate in the Trinity Station black market.

Donuts!

The characters all pitch in with the Thuldan scientific team in their efforts to unravel the mystery. St. John investigates the source of the target asteroid. The engineering and science staffs don't know: they just got a rock from the military. The military personnel claim that it came from a junkyard operation someone was running in Bluefall orbit. It got to the salvage yard because it had drifted too close to a shipping corridor and a garbage-collection expedition picked it up.

The Space Junkyard

The characters travel over to *Martilus' Junkyard*. The place is guarded by a pack of moetilus, weird dog-sized vacuum-native creatures that run in packs. They're about the size of Volkswagens with three-meter tentacle clusters. *Martilus* himself is Rignunmor mechalus, combining an unusual combination of Zen contemplation ("This is a sacred place") and capitalist impetus ("How much will you give me for this sacred place?"). Martilus claims that the asteroid the Thuldans used was a common Class II nickel-iron asteroid taken from the inner system. He's not aware of anything odd about the asteroid, but there was a strange one-minute interruption of the security camera feed a couple of days before the Thuldans picked up the asteroid. Martilus is further able to explain that the asteroid had been identified by the Trinity Station Procurement Officer as a target for weapons testing some time ago; they had just been storing it with him until it was needed.

Taveer interfaces with the security systems, looking for evidence of intrusion. He concludes that the system was not actually hacked, but the motion sensors were disabled externally. At the time the cameras went down, it seems like something was just physically placed in front of them for 24 seconds. He interfaces with Bluefall orbital traffic control and checks for spacecraft in the area at the time and finds nothing.

Markus Oroszlan suggests that whoever tampered with the asteroid might have just black-teleported in. He persuades Professor-Ambassador Pepin to use his postcognition powers at the original site of the asteroid. All he is able to pick up is a sense of pride and confidence.

Markus Oroszlan and Ambassador-Professor Pepin stay with Martilus a bit longer than is strictly necessary. They chat with him on his practice of flinging freeze-dried animals out for the moetilus to eat.

The Anomaly Proves to Be a Navigation Hazard, but It Might Be Temporary

Already one ship damaged by starrising into the system. Damage appears to be a function of distance, but most ships have poor control of where they starrise so it is only a matter of time before someone gets destroyed. Scientist Boyes thinks he has a way to destabilize the anomaly. A precisely modulated tachyon burst should destabilize it, except that they haven't figured out a way to send an unmanned probe in; remote control doesn't work because the outer shell of the anomaly blocks all transmission, and even then the tachyon pulse needs to be manually modulated within the anomaly shell by someone with respectable technical expertise.

Evidence of Alien Interference!

Markus Oroszlan talks to Engineer Keira Armitage. She reports strange particle (tachyon?) burst from the supply ring exactly at the time the surveillance cameras at Martilus' Junkyard went out.

She's been on the station since its commissioning: she was in the first batch of settlers to Bluefall in the Repopulation, about four years ago.

Markus tells the other characters this. They agree to a foray into the supply area to look for the secret dark-matter teleporters. Markus and Rokk Tressor will do the job while Martin St. John and Taveer fly into certain death to destabilize the anomaly. Rokk Tressor picks up two security passes in the men's locker room. He also borrows three uniforms for himself, Markus and Professor-Ambassador Pepin. They find Professor-Ambassador Pepin in a morphine coma, so they drag him along on a gurney until he comes around.

The supply ring is a large section of the station. Markus, Rokk and Professor-Ambassador Pepin slip inside and start looking around. The area is full of barcoded crates with no legible labels. It turns out that Pepin is able to read the barcodes – he's able to identify an anomalous crate. They force the seals on the crate to reveal a pair of

human-sized technoorganic pods. They aren't really moving, but they are *breathing*. Rokk identifies a trigger device on the crate that appears to be some kind of alarm device.

Markus examines one and determines that it is partially open, with an internal hollow of appropriate size for a human. He recommends to Rokk Tressor, "Take some holoimages. Take a lot of them." Pepin takes tissue samples from each of them.

The characters examine their options. The pods were sealed in the crate, so nobody local was regularly entering to use them. They are probably teleporter devices, and might just be used as a relay point. Options include triggering the alarm transmitter and seeing who shows up, or just destroying (killing) the two pods.

Professor-Ambassador Pepin attempts an empathic reading upon the pods. He determines that they have no more consciousness than a brain-dead human. He brings his medical gauntlet to the problem and analyzes the trace samples within the pod. He finds traces of unknown alien DNA, and no traces of human DNA.

Rokk Tressor places a spycam inside the crate, resets the security device, and seals up the crate. Then the characters press on to look for other anomalous crates.

Professor-Ambassador Pepin tells the others, "I'd like to try psychometry, but my psychic powers are drained. Give me a second here." He whips out a syringe and a rubber hose. He's able to draw out an image of warmth and security in the pod, plus a being inside the pod in a state of absolute rest. The creature looks almost human, but it's mouth is too wide, its eyes are too bestial, its limbs are too long, and it is too tall. It has grey skin and its eyes have no pupils.

The characters search the rest of the storage area. They don't find any more alien crates, but Markus does take the opportunity to pick up a few spare weapons.

Sealing the Anomaly!

St. John and Taveer fly out in a modified fighter with a tachyon transmitter, bound for the anomaly. Right off the bat, the ship is hit with a bad gravity wave. St. John is instantly knocked out. Taveer is knocked silly, but remains conscious. He struggles with the controls until another gravity wave knocks him out. Moments from collision with the anomaly and certain death, St. John comes conscious. He finally manages to pull the fighter out and return to the ship.

The two of them sit in the fighter cockpit for a while to regain their bearings. St. John passes Taveer a hip flask filled with something potent. He explains, “The *Lighthouse* crew chief distills this stuff out of reactor coolant. It’ll grow hair on your tongue.” Taveer drinks a bit down and suspects that it might also grow hair inside both of his stomachs.

Their second expedition is a lot more successful. St. John demonstrates that he actually does have some aptitude for flying, including an ability to avoid gravity waves rather than flying straight through them. And once they get inside the anomaly, Taveer is able to destabilize it easily. And to cap it all, St. John gets them back out safely.

I Knew It Was Space Vampires All Along

The group returns to the *Lighthouse*, where Captain Takashi awards Martin St. John the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroic actions. Taveer isn’t a member of the Concord Military, so he can’t be awarded a medal, but he isn’t forgotten. Captain Takashi sends a recommendation through channels to the Administrator hierarchy about his valiant acts. They award him with a “STAR Award” and a \$50 gift certificate to the restaurant of his choice. He discovers this when a Concord HR administrator shows up at his cube and drops off the certificate and a nice plaque made out to “Thomas”.

The surveillance gear planted in the *Trinity* station pays off after a couple of days: Rokk Tressor’s gear picks up a strange space-vampire type inside one of the fleshopods. The characters quickly design a plan to capture him:

- Taveer will work up a psi restraining field.
- St. John will take a "routine trip" over to the station, and drop Taveer, Markus, Rokk, and maybe some others outside the station to infiltrate through an airlock.
- The infiltration team will set up the field around the crate, pop the crate, stutter rifle the alien into unconsciousness, and exfiltrate via the airlock.
- St. John will pick them up and take the alien captive back to a psi-cell on the *Lighthouse* for interrogation.

Captain Takashi and Consular Minister Michael Thane agree to go ahead with the Thuldan missile installation. They are able to extract concessions for a year of ammo and a technical team (including engineer Keira Armitage).

The characters also scan the station for the alien teleport signatures. They find quite a few of them. Taveer works to set the scanners up to look for it specifically while the other characters snoop around to see if are any transport pods on the Lighthouse.

The End of the Session

Each character gains four experience points.