

## **STAR\*DRIVE SESSION SUMMARY**

### **12/20/2009**

#### *Attendance*

*Ernest* (Captain Ken Takashi and Markus Oroszlan) rages, “All of gaming goes to the least common denominator! We need to change the landscape, people! We need to deal with challenging issues!”

*Bruce* (Taveer and Lambert Fulson) speculates, “You mean like monetary policy and incest? I’m not sure you’d be able to find a lot of people willing to play games like that. Except me.”

*Tim* (Haggernak and Gerard Pepin) explains, “He actually means games that admit to the existence of two genders and family structures. But even that is enough to make me deeply uncomfortable.”

*Chris* (Ten-zil Kem and Rokk Tressor) mourns, “Can’t I just play in a game where we carve through rank upon rank of mooks without ever being bothered by questions of morality? Just listening to you people talk is enough to make me want to tear my eyes out one by one.”

*Patrick* (Martin St. John and Lenny) singsongs, “A tragic end to a loyal son, who looooves his mother...” He pauses, deeply upset. “I don’t even know where that came from. I think I may be sick in the brain. Somebody please put me down before I start to hunger for the flesh of the living!”

*Chuck* obliges, as he’s really only here for the White Elephant Christmas and has already been thoroughly reminded as to why he only attends games on Fridays these days.

*Peco* (Ivan Stukov and Adun Zelnaga) decides that he’s got better things to do than to be mocked and slandered by the narrator. Everyone else is actually somewhat disappointed.

Ernest bursts out, “Lick it!” Nobody understands why, but they’re all okay with that because that’s just the way he rolls.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Spec / Level</i>	<i>Description</i>
Lambert Fulson	Bruce	FA 5	Rigunmor Trader
Taveer	Bruce	TO 6	Lighthouse Chief Engineer
Martin St. John	Patrick	TO 6	Lighthouse Head Pilot
Lenny	Patrick	FA 5	T'sa Ambassador
Ten-zil Kem	Chris	D (TO) 7	VoidCorp Ambassador, dressed like a 1980's Space Pimp
Rokk Tressor	Chris	FA 6	Concord Intelligence Officer
Markus Oroszlan	Ernest	CS 6	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	MW 6	Fraal Mindwalker Doctor Guy
Gerard Pepin	Tim	D (MW) 5	Borealin Professor and Ambassador
Haggernak	Tim	CS 4	Administrator and Security Officer

### *Starfall! Hammer's Star Awaits*

The *Lighthouse* makes starfall near the planet *Spes* in the *Hammer's Star* system. The original Borealin colony there was called *Silver Bell*. It had been fairly prosperous, but was suddenly destroyed: all that remained was a large crater. Since then, the Borealins have been resettling the place, carefully.

The destruction of the Silver Bell colony was originally laid at the feet of unknown pirates, up until the first Klik ships were spotted in the system. The Concord responded by massively reinforcing the area. Hammer's Star is now host to almost 200 Concord ships and a Borealin System Guard flotilla, including some of the largest ships in the Verge.

The entire Hammer's Star system is interesting to many groups because the Hammer's Star primary orbits around a black hole. The Orlamus are particularly interested because the black hole emits radiation in a way not predicted by current theory. The hope to find the words of their Creator deity in the nth-order harmonic oscillations of

the black hole and its captive star. The accretion disk of the black hole is clearly visible from the surface of Spes.

All is not without flaw on Spes, however. The local Borealins are a lot less contemplative than most of their comrades. The College of Justice Ethics is extremely well-represented here. This has created a certain amount of separatist tension, and strain with the Borealin center – some settlers fear that the Borealin Union might disavow Silver Bell, while others hope for that outcome.

*Captain Ken Takashi* orders *Martin St. John*, “Hail Vice-Admiral Adrianus Raastad!” The pilot complies. He has a long-standing friendship with the Vice-Admiral, and will be happy to see him again.

*Professor-Ambassador Gerard Pepin* receives a communiqué from *Lecturer Clea Hitiro*. “It’s so wonderful that they have sent a full Professor to us here! I would be pleased to invite you to dinner – there are many things we should discuss.” Pepin graciously accepts, then curses because he will have to bring a gift.

*Mina* pipes up, “Might I suggest a Seshy the Happy Sesheyan plush toy?”

“Shut up, computer!”

*Vice-Admiral Adrianus Raastad* finally comes on line. Captain Takashi salutes him. They arrange a meeting: his ship the *Vichyon* is two hours from matching vector and position with the *Lighthouse*. The *Vichyon* is the Concord flagship in system, and one of the strongest Concord warships in the Verge. The *Inimarada* is another capital ship, a light carrier, and the other core vessel in the Hammer’s Star defensive array.

Pilot St. John leaves the bridge with instructions to thoroughly impress upon *Rokk Tressor* the importance of having a suitable formal welcome for the Vice-Admiral upon his arrival.

*Markus Oroszlan* is cleaning up his bar when a new mechalus engineer approaches him. The fellow explains somewhat hesitantly, “Sir, I have heard that you know the engineer *Taveer*. He is an old friend of mine from years ago and I’d really like to catch up with him, but he seems to be very hard for me to get in touch with. We knew each other back in the Nature Scouts.” The mechalus gives his name as *Adaan*. Markus agrees to forward along a message; he admits that Taveer is the best friend of the station

AI, so it's hard to sneak up on him. Then he gets Adaan involved in a game of thalaat ("space holdem").

It is at this point that Rokk Tressor calls up looking to reserve a private room for gambling for a few evenings. He's also interested in organizing a bit of video entertainment and cigars. He's trying to put together a bit of hospitality for the visiting Vice-Admiral.

### *Dinner with the Borealins*

Pepin gathers up everyone in his staff who is an expert on Hammer's Star, plus *Assistant Professor Deutschmark* and his firecracker wife, and gives them invitations to dinner with the local Borealin luminaries. A-P Deutschmark is happy to brief him before dinner, "Silver Bells represents an important symbol to the Borealin nation, a sign of vitality and rebirth! However, in recent years they have started to abandon key aspects of Borealin cultural life, generating tremendous controversy. They're abandoning formal debate and extensive referencing and citation in conversation. The College of Unism and the College of Justice Ethics have become concerned, but their chosen representative has become corrupted by local ways. Professor Anthony Daarokin started as a voice for conservative tradition, but he has since embraced the anti-orthodoxy of Silver Bells. Spes is experiencing a rift with the central government of Sapphire, and might even be at risk of secession!"

Pepin is horrified, "That would be awful! We must ensure the continuity and strength of the Borealin people!" He invites Assistant Professor Deutschmark to dinner, along with *Graduate Student Lallia Daffodilia*, the bit of academic fluff currently decorating his lapels. She is giddy at the opportunity, "Ooh! I'm so excited! The Silver Bells meta-political morphism could be an excellent example of third-order post-nativist recombinant cultural dialectism! Giggle!"

*Lambert Fulson* gets wind of the fact that Professor-Ambassador Pepin is going down to the planet to talk to the local bigwigs. He thinks he persuades Pepin that he can keep up with Borealin post-diasporan economic theory. Pepin understands that the desperately practical (if a bit mafia-like) Rigunmor will be completely lost, so he assigns Lallia Daffodilia to teach him some buzzwords.

Rokk Tressor encounters Fulson in mid-lecture. “I’ve got a couple of requests for you. First, I need a list of the kinds of black market goods the locals at Hammer’s Star will be coming to you for. I don’t want to stop you, I just want to know.”

Fulson replies rather acidly, “Now, youse gotta know I don’t know nothing about that, and I certainly don’t control three-quarters of the illicit exports off this station. But I got some friends who might be able to help.”

Rokk Tressor does his best to reassure the man of his good intentions. He tells him, “Here’s how I’ll help you out. I won’t station a squad of marines outside your business.”

“You see! It’s so good we understand each other.”

Then Fulson gets a call from Markus Oroszlan, “Fulson! While we’re in system, given the political situation these Borealins might be in the market for some protection. Of the self-defense variety.” Oroszlan already knows that Silver Bells is tight with the Borealins and doesn’t have much of a black market, but the Concord base at *Alcazar* has a couple of illicit organizations: one is a pirate group concentrating on arms trading, while the other is an extraction operation rumored to be doing anything from deep-core mining to experimentation on klik bodies. Oroszlan urges Fulson to find out if anyone at Alcazar wants to buy or sell weapons.

Professor-Ambassador Pepin arranges an appointment with *Ten-Zil Kem*. Ten-Zil Kem greets him at the door wearing nothing but a rose and a look of surprise. He exclaims, “You’re nothing like your photograph in the catalog!”

Professor-Ambassador Pepin was not expecting anything like this either. He stammers, “Uhh... I was going to head down to the planet, and thought you might want to look for business opportunities down there. Umm, plus you might be able to find some local tail...”

Ten-zil Kem responds with a liquid voice, one that might melt the heart of any number of foolish Borealin graduate students, “I always thought your people were boring. Easy, though. Sure, I’ll go along. Besides, this is the sort of thing I can write home about to make them think that I’m actually doing my job.”

### *Vice-Admiral Raastad Arrives*

By the time Pepin and company have finished organizing their trip down to Silver Bells the *Vichyon* has docked and Vice-Admiral Raastad has arrived. He is 191 years old, stooped and ancient. He comes into the *Lighthouse* entry lock with an escort consisting of *Lieutenant Thomas Hale* (son of *Senator Bruce Hale* of the Orion League) and several Concord Marines.

The Admiral croaks, “It is good to meet the famous Captain Ken Takashi. You’re like a younger version of me!”

Captain Takashi salutes sharply, “You flatter me, Vice-Admiral.”

After the formal greetings, Captain Takashi leads everyone to dinner. He notes that the Admiral is pretty much reduced by age and infirmity to eating only bland nutritional supplements. Admiral Raastad is very interested in the new Thuldan missiles, so Captain Takashi sends a request down to Taveer to provide the technical data. Taveer understands that responding personally puts him at risk of talking to Adaan, so he acts like the response is being provided by an automated system.

Vice-Admiral Raastad notes that his forces are hard-pressed to gain the cooperation of the locals. He would think that the fact that the Concord is protecting them from hostile aliens would buy a certain amount of goodwill, but public opinion doesn’t follow that expectation. Beyond that, there are signs that VoidCorp is conspiring with local pirate groups. Even worse, the presence of the black hole means that mass detectors are useless in the system, which makes detecting ship starfalls difficult. Concord forces have been attacked six times by Klik forces in the last year, including an assault that overran a Marine base.

On the plus side, the Kliks never developed either neutronite or energy shields, so their ships are very vulnerable to energy weapon attacks. On the minus side, their beam technology is very advanced. Their ships are equipped with dark fusion guns, weapons that fuse normal matter into dark matter, extracting vast amounts of energy in the process. These weapons have firepower similar to that of a quantum cannon, but with a much more compact design enabling them to effectively engage smaller targets with great effect. He also reveals that when the Kliks attacked Silver Bell they did it with a meteor accelerated to about 0.1c.

## **A Break for Gambling**

After dinner, the delegation retires to a private (and thoroughly swept) room at Markus' tavern for a bit of gambling and some sensitive revelations. Captain Takashi tells the Admiral, "We didn't want to say this in a public format, but we've been having some problems with teleporting psychic alien vampires." He explains how the characters detected them, and how they might be in league with the Thuldans. He also describes the present danger of alien brain parasites, and how the efforts to catch the space vampires have not yet been particularly successful.

The Vice-Admiral is concerned, "You believe that these creatures are still on board the *Lighthouse*?"

"We have no evidence that they have left, but we have not detected any additional teleportation signatures."

The Admiral notes that the characters' interaction with the aliens thus far (including the discovery of at least a couple of humans with apparent involvement with the aliens) indicates that the entities prefer to operate through human cats' paws. The fact that *Jaina*'s last message to the characters indicated that there were *I-krl* spies on board the *Lighthouse* tends to confirm this. "It is difficult for me to put credence to all this. It sounds so much like the crazy conspiracy theories that reporter came out with four or five years ago. She is the one who first said that the kroath had human skeletons inside them and that there were worms in the brains of leaders in the Algemron system responsible for the civil war there. She tied all of these alien races into a single big conspiracy theory."

Captain Takashi responds, "I am intrigued by her theories and would like to subscribe to her newsletter."

The characters set up an encrypted communications channel for later use.

## **A Very Nice Dinner Party**

Professor-Ambassador Pepin assembles his dinner party group, which includes Ten-Zil Kem, Lambert Fulson, *Lenny*, Associate Professor Deutschmark and his wife, and three attractive grad students (including Lallia Daffodilia), and brings them to the shuttle dock. They take his pleasure yacht to the surface and then travel to the Branch College of Unism.

The Unist college is an impressive (but recent) building, constructed by the academic tradition that dominates the Borealin nation. They find their way to the office of Lecturer Clea Hitiro. She maintains the old traditions, so there's none of the provincial directness in talking to her. She takes them to a dinner of traditional Borealin food – very efficient nutrition with a logically elegant presentation, but lacking a bit in taste.

It doesn't take long for Lecturer Hitiro to start with the complaints. Professor Daarokin is the highest-ranking Borealin on the planet and the core of the College of Justice Ethics, and he has been destroying the core of Borealin cultural beliefs on Silver Bells. She is particularly incensed by the fact that he has placed community safety as a higher priority than individual rights. She is convinced that without the presence of the Professor the entire local College of Justice Ethics would be declared apostate. There is a present risk that the entire colony will end up splitting away from the Borealin Republic.

Of course, the actual conversation takes hours because everything Lecturer Hitiro and Ambassador Pepin say is expressed according to the deeply intricate and complicated syntax of Borealin discourse.

Hammer's Star is still considered dangerous, so the *Lighthouse* is only scheduled to spend three days in system. Time is of the essence, so Ambassador-Professor Pepin leads his entire delegation over to the College of Justice Ethics. He is actually a bit insulted by the fact that Professor Daarokin has not already sent him communication.

### **The College of Justice Ethics**

The Collegium of Justice Ethics is the first substantial building constructed in the new Silver Bells colony. It follows a modernist style, all polished steel and glass and neo-Bauhaus functional curves.

Pepin storms into Daarokin's office to see four completely identical men each working upon different tasks. It is clear that cloning is popular locally.

Professor Daarokin slights Pepin by addressing Ten-Zil Kem, "I have heard of your reputation! You are well-known for your various humanitarian works, which is really unusual as VoidCorp is hardly known for this sort of works. Perhaps you'd be



interested in some writing? I would like to arrange a series of interviews, perhaps something of a memoir. I could have one of my subordinates handle the actual writing.”

Pepin mentions at this point that he brought a gift of antique paper books for the local Colleges. Professor Daarokin gives him a box of alien artifacts in return, accepting the gift with scant elegance. “These were discovered on Mantibron. They are believed to be artifacts of the Glassmaker culture.” Pepin is genuinely touched. Ten-zil Kem backs up slowly, wondering why nobody else in the room seems concerned that they’re not wearing environmental suits. Like most Mantibron artifacts, the objects have a sort of pyramid theme. Current Borealin theory is that the Glassmakers lived hundreds of millions of years ago, when Mantibron had liquid oceans and a breathable atmosphere.

Lambert Fulson heads out with Lenny to arrange better accommodations and to schmooze with some of the area grad students. He finds out that Professor Daarokin doesn’t like Pepin because Pepin’s family has a reputation for being famous mostly for their social misdeeds; he’s sort of like Paris Hilton with a doctorate. Besides, he was originally affiliated with the College of Unism so everyone assumes he will be opposed to Professor Daarokin’s ideals.

### *A Clever Setup*

Back on the ship, Markus calls Taveer. “I need some tech support, got a problem with the computer down here. It’s acting strange, maybe some of that green crystal stuff.”

“Green crystals? I hate that stuff! Hate it! Hate it! Down in a minute!”

Markus takes his 50 Credit bribe from Adaan.

Taveer shows up with tools in hand and walks straight into Adaan. He is incredibly flustered, and heads off as quickly as possible. “Got to go change filters! Very important! Must go! So nice to see you, so sorry I have to run.”

Adaan is somewhat crestfallen. He turns to Markus and says, “Would you hand this to Taveer for me? I fear he won’t take it if it’s from me.” Adaan gives Markus a sealed package. Markus takes it and some money, then stands behind the bar with a self-satisfied look. He thinks, “That’ll teach that bastard to mess with the ship’s computer...”

***Alert! Alert! Incoming Alien Threat! Alert!***

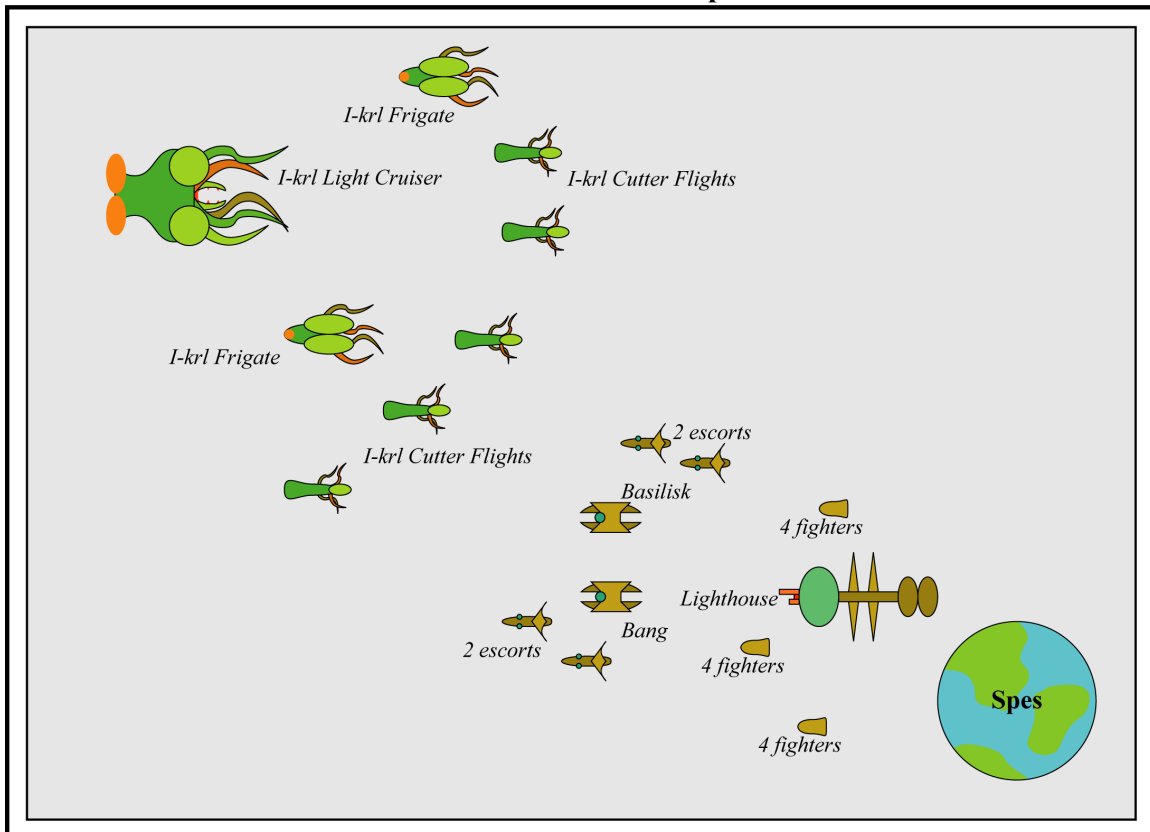
And then the klik attack. Previous Concord contacts with klik forces have mostly involved smaller vessels like Scouts, Cutters, and Attack Ships. There have also been occasional contacts with larger Frigates. But the current attacking fleet includes not just Frigates but several larger, previously unknown capital ships.

The first reports are from the Concord fleet, warning that sensors show a large klik fleet coming to the planet. Admiral Raastad immediately heads to the *Vichyon*. The flagship and its escorts light up their drives and thrust for the klik main body.

Captain Takashi orders the Lighthouse's defensive screen to launch and take up stations. This includes twelve fighters, four lightly armed escorts and the destroyers *Bang* and *Basilisk*. He watches the system control display as the Valis Orbital Station launches its ship and the crazy Austin-Ontris guys assemble their own flotilla.

Admiral Raastad does a creditable job of mounting a stiff resistance, though he takes terrible losses in the process. Then a breakaway group of one light cruiser, two frigates and a formation of twenty cutters makes directly for Spes and the *Lighthouse*.

**The I-Krl Assault on Spes**



Captain Takashi gives the order to fire missiles, timing the first two volleys to strike the I-krl light cruiser and one I-krl frigate in a wave. He hopes to overwhelm their anti-missile defenses and achieve a quick success. The *Lighthouse* double matter beam turrets engage the I-krl cutter flights as soon as the Tac officer reports a viable firing solution.

The I-krl light cruiser returns fire, targeting the *Basilisk*. The cruiser's boson cannons inflict Einsteinian quantities of damage, shattering the destroyer's spine and spilling atmosphere in a cloud. The characters on the bridge hear the screams of the *Basilisk*'s doomed crew suddenly cut off.

The I-krl frigates open fire with dark fusion batteries, raking the *Bang* from stem to stern, destroying a plasma turret and ravaging the hull.

The first volleys of Concord missiles reach the light cruiser and the two frigates just as the Concord fighters engage with the I-krl scout screen. Two I-krl scouts fall, while the Concord fighters all survive the exchange. The *Bang*'s surviving batteries tear through one of the I-krl frigates, damaging an anti-missile laser battery. The I-krl frigates return fire, delivering only surface damage.

The first wave of Concord missiles strike the I-krl frigates. Four missiles crash into the hull of one frigate. Strange chunks of bleeding metaorganic hull plating spill out into space, followed by the squirming shapes of ruptured internal systems. Five missiles hit the second frigate, burning off a layer of glutinous outer sheathing. The frigate's hull ripples in agony as the thing shakes off the damage.

Nine mass reaction, six nuclear and one zero-point missiles get past the I-krl cruiser's point defense. The zero-point missile blasts a gaping crater in its hull, rupturing vesicles and shredding internal structure. The next two nuclear warheads follow up, utterly destroying the vessel.

Admiral Raastad's fleet continues to hold its own against the I-krl invaders, though still sustaining heavy losses.

Most of the remaining I-krl ships accelerate directly towards the *Lighthouse*. Five I-krl cutters are caught out and intercepted by the Concord fighters, which destroy them in detail. Three Concord escorts take out five of the cutters.

The *Bang* fires its remaining matter beam battery and plasma cannons at an I-krl frigate. The attacks cripple the ship, destroying reactor, accommodations and sensors. Captain Takashi orders, “Mr. St. John! Let me a crew of Marines onto that ship! We’re going to capture it!” He is well aware that a klik ship has never been captured before.

Twelve plasma missiles from the *Lighthouse* tear into the surviving I-krl cutter group, utterly destroying it. Eight mass reaction missiles and eight nuclear missiles strike the last I-krl frigate. The ship’s point defenses take out half of the missiles, but enough survive to obliterate the alien vessel.

The characters receive word of one last great exchange between the main I-krl body and Admiral Raastad’s forces. The remaining klik ships split off and head out of the system. The Admiral has taken the day, but at a high cost: almost half of his ships are destroyed or damaged beyond repair.

### *The End of the Session*

The session ends with Captain Takashi and Martin St. John assembling a boarding party to take the surviving I-krl frigate. Each player should identify one character as primary and one as secondary. The primary character gains four experience points, while the secondary character gains only two.