

STAR*DRIVE SESSION SUMMARY

06/12/2011

Attendance

Paul stares at the strange device *Bruce* has parked on the table. He asks, “What on Earth is that?”

Bruce explains, “Tim suggested this whore-oriented site to me. I checked it out and discovered that they’ve got a marketplace! That’s where I got this.”

Chris hefts the object. He marvels, “It’s got quite a heft to it! Very respectable!”

Paul is horrified in spite of himself. He gurgles out, “I still don’t see how it’s whore-oriented. It’s just a huge blue ball.”

Tim suggests, “Georgina might have a lot more experience in creating that sort of an effect.” She simpers and notes that it’s really hard to create only one blue ball – they normally occur in pairs.

Ernest and just stays away from the game. This intro piece has gone into strange and horrible spaces and give even Ernest pause. *Patrick* shows up late enough to bypass not only the Huge Blue Ball discussion but also the subsequent review of the Wikipedia page on “fisting”

<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	Absent
Ernest	Ken Takashi	Concord Naval Officer Diplomat (TO)	Absent
Tim	Gerard Peppin	Borealin Ambassador Mind Walker	Present

<i>Player</i>	<i>Character</i>	<i>Deal</i>	<i>Status</i>
Tim	Haggernak	Weren Concord Administrator Combat Spec	Present

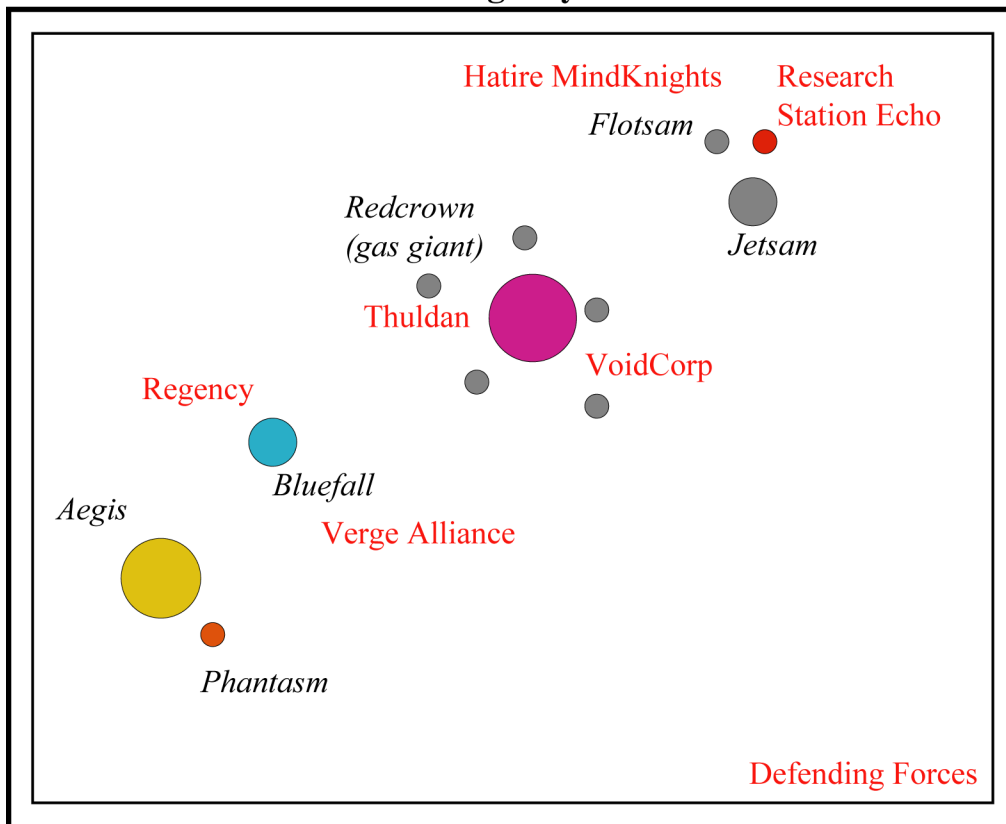
My Dearest Mina

The gardhyi have left a large number of logic traps and rogue subroutines behind in *Mina's* core systems. *Taveer* regards removing these and bringing *Mina* back to him as his highest priority. *Gerard Peppin* looks over his shoulder and muses, “That’s one screwed-up girlfriend you’ve got there...” *Taveer* ignores him and continues working until *Mina* comes back online. He cries as he types. The others consider this to be a remarkable development.

It takes *Taveer* some time, but he finally manages to clear the corruption out of *Mina's* subroutines and bring her back online. As he does this, he pulls his and *Mina's* AI daughter *Viera* from primary responsibility for ship systems.

Cleaning the Redcrown Contagion

The Aegis System



Drest Talorgin is working to organize an assault against the VoidCorp gas-mining bases around Redcrown. Strange signals from the depths of the gas giant in combination with a bizarre drivespace wrinkle and incoherent military behavior during the recent battle against the I-krl leave the racial identity and loyalties of the VoidCorp personnel in serious question. It is the massive sensitive sensor arrays at the outer world of Flotsam that are detecting the signals. He is trying to work with the surviving Picts, even though the recent military actions have left their numbers sorely depleted.

Beyond that, Drest's father is lying wounded in the *Lighthouse* infirmary. He is the only one of Drest's immediate relatives to survive the kroath purge on Lucullus, so it means a lot to Drest to see him survive. The old man is currently under the care of the fraal *Doctor Zelnaga*. Given that Doctor Zelnaga was originally a political appointee, this leaves Drest with some measure of concern, and concern only mitigated by the fact that most of modern medicine is highly automated.

Haggernak Lives!

Haggernak is recovered enough from the wounds he sustained in the recent military action to go back to running the *Lighthouse* police department. He spends his time hassling *Lambert Fulson* and enjoying the clean, usable user interface on his account now that the station is being run by the quiet and unassuming Viera. He mourns when Taveer manages to bring back both Mina and his "improved" user interface.

The New Captain's Top Priority

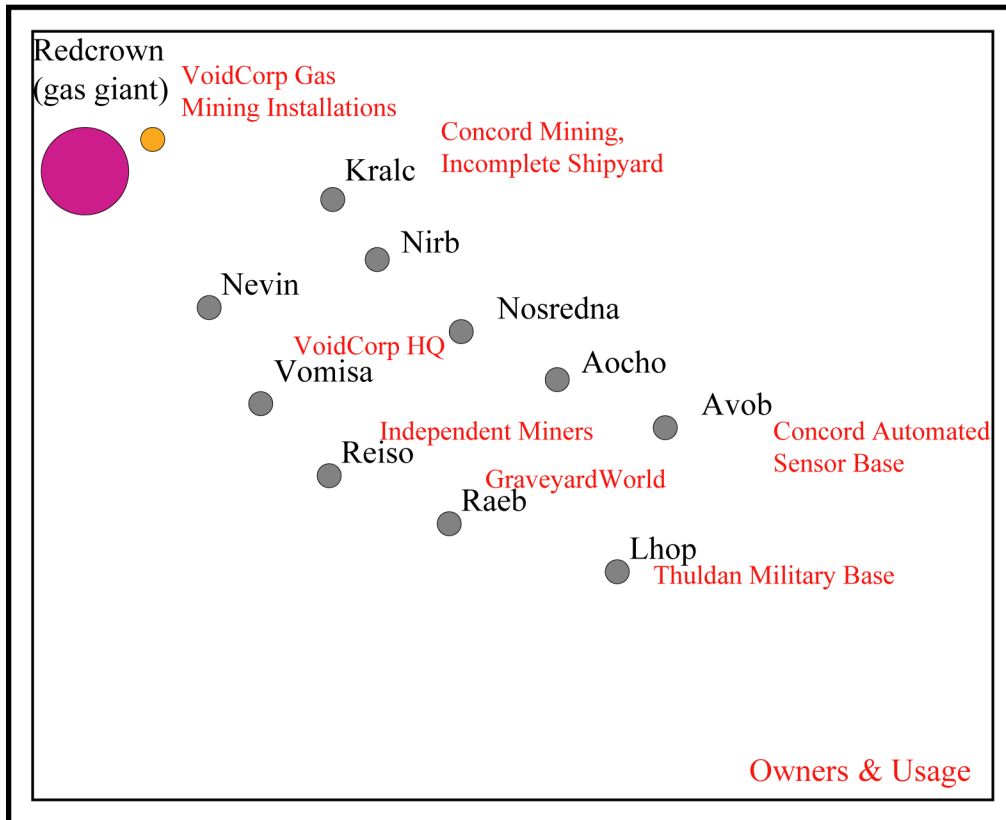
Captain Martin St. John's first assignment is to take the *Lighthouse* to Redcrown to investigate and understand the situation on the VoidCorp gas mining installations. The main VoidCorp base at Redcrown is a massive aerostat structure floating in the upper atmosphere. The mine directors report through to the VoidCorp Regional HQ on the moon Vomisa.

Knowing that the highest-quality data comes from the Flotsam sensor array, Captain St. John arranges an expedition there. He brings along Taveer, Haggernak and Drest as expert advisors. The scientists at the array describe the Redcrown signal as a "drivespace wrinkle". This is something that astrophysicists have theorized about, but

have never actually seen in practice. This could provide answers on how the Externals form a bubble around their ships to travel through drivespace.

Drest comments, “So this could be some human scientists who made a nice advance, or some aliens who are even now clacking their pincers together in anticipation.” A random crewman makes a clackety giggling noise but is swiftly silenced by the research director.

The Moons of Redcrown



The characters discuss the possibility that the Director of the gas mine is controlled by a teln colony. Drest suggests that teln colonies get crazier and crazier as they get larger, so unless VoidCorp has been rotating out directors every six months or so it would be hard to conceal the infestation. This then leads to some insightful commentary on how many buzzwords an alien infiltrator could use without raising significant suspicion among his subordinates and coworkers.

Captain St. John sits back in his chair and muses, “Well, I have no idea what to do. No idea at all.” Looking around the table, he senses that this isn’t what his staff was

expecting him to say. He tries again, “I think we need to start by investigating the automated sensor station on Avob.”

The Sensor Moon

Captain St. John heads to the bridge of the *Justifiable Curiosity*. His new pilot is *Commander Dwight Smith*, an assignee from one of the Regency ships. He orders the pilot, “Commander Smith! Set a course for Avob!”

Just because he has always wanted to do this, Haggernak rumbles up behind Commander Smith and grumbles, “Show me near...” Commander Smith grits his teeth. He’d been warned by the Admiral that the *Lighthouse* bridge crew was a bit more than slightly quirky.

Something about Haggernak’s presence has clearly upset Commander Smith – his unlatch from the *Lighthouse* docking spine is quite rough, and his orbital insertion at Avob is off by two degrees, necessitating an unduly harsh terminal impulse burn.

Taveer notes that the Avob sensor station is open and free access, so it really doesn’t have anything secret. He downloads both the sensor archives (mostly system weather data) and usage logs. He finds nothing of great interest. The sensors are primary Doppler and visual records of the Redcrown upper atmosphere, magnetic field readings of the gas giant system, and visual and gravitational records of the two Redcrown ring systems.

Now the Concord Miners

The next stop is Kralc, the Concord mining station. Aside from having spent the last couple of weeks under security lockdown, the miners have nothing interesting to report.

The VoidCorp Gas Mining Station

Captain St. John makes his introductions to the VoidCorp gas mining aerostat. He observes that the entire VoidCorp fleet is powered up and above the horizon from the gas mine’s position. He explains the mission of the *Justifiable Curiosity* to the station director, *Wayne Bailey PI79434NUW*. The director provides docking instructions then turns the conversation over to the station traffic control to guide the *Justifiable Curiosity* in.

Directory Bailey greets the characters and has them shown to a conference room where he explains the basic functions of the VoidCorp Alpha mining station (very sophisticated) and the regulatory structure under which it operates (almost none). He notes that VoidCorp has obtained licenses from the Regency to construct and operate a second mining station at the pole. Beyond that, the Orlamu Theocracy has an additional station under construction at the equator. He notes that VoidCorp's Verge operations are all directed from the Corrivale office where *Myasa Ombe* is the Security Head, but that the value and central location of the Redcrown mining operations are sufficient reason to keep a significant fraction of VoidCorp's military resources nearby.

Drest Talorgin suggests that a tour of the actual facility would be nice. Directory Bailey personally tours the characters around the facility. The characters leave the tour understanding that the facility is rife with secrets, most of which are kept by VoidCorp employees and which are only relevant to other VoidCorp employees.

By the end of the tour, the most that Drest can say is, "I got some free yogurt samples. They're really good, and they include specially-tailored bacteria cultures from the Thuldan Empire."

Captain St. John answers, "Yeah! And I got a nice t-shirt in the gift shop!"

Even Taveer is mostly impressed with the way that the critical systems on the station are all labeled according to the station's labeling standard.

In desperation, Captain St. John whispers, "Taveer – hack into the station systems and learn something useful. Drest – create a distraction." While Taveer sits down at the gift shop Design-A-Shirt computer, Drest decks Haggernak. Haggernak briefly misunderstands and really retaliates against Drest until he figures it out and proceeds to "mock fight" against the Pict.

It takes Taveer only minutes to get a channel into the VoidCorp station mainframe. He notes (and ignores) the public Grid sections, the restricted manufacturing data, and then finds the system section restricted to S-level executives and above. Even the station director isn't allowed access to it. Of course, Taveer goes there. He finds that they have substantially more formidable defenses there. They don't stop him. He identifies four secret stations exchanging messages, probably interstellar. He cannot immediately tell their location, but it looks like the messages are propagating at a speed

faster than drivespace. Most of the messages are clearly leveraging the extra speed of communication to perform arbitrage. More interesting, a few of the messages go back to Old Space. Whatever technology they are using is not subject to the same distance limitations as the drivespace relays everyone else uses.

After Taveer is done, Drest and Haggernak stop fighting. VoidCorp security makes them pay for all of the lamps they destroyed. Haggernak rumbles, “Drest, I think we have both learned a valuable lesson about respect today.”

Taveer analyzes the traffic logs to determine the communications station locations. He assumes that one of them is Redcrown and another is Corrivale, then applies different time-to-distance models to identify the others as Hathorn, two at Catalog in the Stellar Ring back in Old Space, and one at Algemron. Catalog is the VoidCorp home system. The location of a communications nexus at the I-krl forward base is very interesting.

Taveer scans through the tens of thousands of messages to determine rough content. The majority of them are about senior executives’ golf scores and photos of cats. After that are commercial messages. And then there are some messages on military activity.

The VoidCorp Admiral *WC10289TSR* seconded to the Verge Alliance Admiralty Board appears to use this system very heavily. Most of his messages to the Hathorn communications nexus include Verge Alliance fleet dispositions.

Based upon the recent messages to Hathorn, the VoidCorp officers in the Verge Alliance fleet do not know exactly why the I-krl fleet came out of drivespace in penny packets. They suspect that the drivespace problems the I-krl suffered were caused by a secret Alliance weapon, possibly of medurr origin.

The Hathorn nexus does send out some requests. The dominant theme is an interest in knowing how the efforts to prevent reinforcements from Old Space reaching the Verge. In general, the answer is that these efforts are going very well.

Correlation of the message send times to the times when the Flotsam base has observed the drivespace wrinkle is very good – VoidCorp is clearly using the wrinkle to carry their messages.

The overall conclusion the characters reach is that VoidCorp (or at least their senior executives) are selling humanity (or at least the Verge Alliance) out to the I-krl.

The Situation at Algemron

The Algemron system has dropped off the standard drivesat communications grid. Those messages across the VoidCorp fast network indicate (to no surprise) that Galvin has now pacified all of Alitar. However, the leaders of the Galvin government are surprisingly hard to reach even for high-level VoidCorp executives – their subordinates speak for them, and seem quite out of touch. The characters aren't able to determine the location of the VoidCorp executives in the Algemron system. Given that they're VoidCorp executives, a reasonable guess is that they might be located on a heavily fortified island on Alitar, surrounded by guards, kill-bots and anti-aircraft weapons.

Strike Against Redcrown! Strike from Space!

The Verge Alliance forces in the Aegis system far outnumber the available VoidCorp fleet: roughly 40,000 fleet strength against 1000 fleet strength. There is no question that *Admiral Takashi's* forces can crush the VoidCorp forces. The real question is how much of his fleet he will need to dedicate to the attack.

The other key question is how to ensure that the VoidCorp forces on the mining aerostat do not alert their (apparent) I-krl allies to the Verge Alliance action. The characters hatch a plan to incapacitate the transmitter: *Brent Turtiyev* and Taveer block communications, Captain St. John flies carefully, Taveer assembles three chains of nuclear shaped charges and programs some robot drones to emplace them on the mining station, and Drest Talorgin manages Brent's behavior.

The plan is successful, but not as successful as the characters would like. They manage to cripple the gas mine, but do not completely destroy it. Brent and Taveer keep the station's external radio communications jammed as the characters watch the atmosphere depressurize from the crippled mining station. The mine slowly sinks into the pressurized depths.

The followup strike from a quarter of the Verge Alliance fleet on the VoidCorp fleet is quite successful. The Verge Alliance losses are not insignificant, but the

VoidCorp ships are destroyed. The final coda are a couple of antimatter missiles to the mine to hasten its descent.

Landing on Vomisa

Captain St. John next orders the Verge Alliance Marines to land on Vomisa and secure the moon. The VoidCorp compound turns out to have no defenses worth mentioning. Those VoidCorp employees on the world surrender immediately.

Word from Lucullus

The communications deck on the *Lighthouse* reports that the Techspiders on Lucullus have been working through the security of those organizations suspected of aiding the Externals in suppressing the world. They found out that the HelixTech Corporation was a subsidiary of VoidCorp and had worked closely with the Externals in their effort to secure control of Lucullus.

Even more important, the HelixTech servers included data on a n'sss base buried deep in the atmosphere of Redcrown. They also contained technical details on detecting n'sss ships and breaking through the blur-field effect around n'sss battlepods.

The characters turn to plotting how to destroy the n'sss base. The key problem is one of targeting: the characters have the resources to accelerate massive asteroids into the gas giant, but they don't have a good way to identify where the n'sss base actually is located. To solve this problem, the characters turn to the HelixTech data. It indicates that a spray of nacreon particles will reveal the presence of n'sss vessels.

Drest suggests asking the T'sa what they're researching while the Verge Alliance has 7000 fleet strength floating around. The t'sa provide a short range detection web, but using it will alert the N'sss that they are visible. It won't expose the *Justifiable Curiosity*, because the stealth craft uses standard human stealth tech. The particles' effect on the Red Queen is an interesting point of speculation – the characters don't know how her stealth tech works or how it would react to the nacreon particles.

Revealing the N'sss

The HelixTech data on the n'sss base is sufficient to determine its likely altitude and latitude. The characters decide to spray the orbital region around Redcrown, and hopefully capture a N'sss ship.

The effort exposes close to a dozen n'sss craft. Sensors indicate that the ships are made of super-hard chitin. They look like tentacle fleas. Oddly, they don't look much like a T'sa demon legend ships.

The characters' initial attempts to disable the n'sss vessels are not particularly successful: attacks tend to simply destroy them; their ships are pretty fragile once they are visible. However, given a suitably large target space, the characters do manage to cripple several, who release their battle pods. The characters use fighters to take out the pods. Incidentally, the battle pods **DO** look like the t'sa demons.

Boarding the N'sss

Prior to the boarding action, the characters send messages to the t'sa station to ask for advice on the n'sss. The t'sa decline to send their own commando squad ("we're scientists, dammit!"). They have no useful information. The characters assemble a boarding party including some of their favorite Marines: Motorhead, Animal-mother, and Zipper.

The characters encounter 5 n'sss on board the crippled ship. Two have neuro-blades, two have heavy weapons, and a fifth has a blade and smaller armament. This doesn't help as much as the n'sss might have hoped: the characters unleash a massive fusillade against them. Drest gets an amazing hit and punctures a n'sss shell.

It turns out that when a n'sss pod gets punctured, the hyper-pressurized interior atmosphere violently decompresses. The pods are about 3 meters tall, but the n'sss inside look like delicate jellyfish creatures that could be killed by stepping on them. In this, they are rather like daleks.

The n'sss return fire with render cannons, which sounds terribly threatening. Drest takes a direct hit that inflicts a mere 6 stun. He shrugs off the hit, disappointing the n'sss terribly. The sword-armed n'sss engage but are unable to harm either Drest or Haggernak.

Zipper opens up with his chain gun, hitting the remaining heavy. His burst does 1 wound and 5 stun. Animal mother also fires a chain gun on the remaining heavy. His burst does 7 stun, taking him out. Motorhead fires on the n'sss officer. The officer sustains light damage.

Drest draws a vibroblade and shivs the n'sss, inflicting a deep wound. St. John fires on the n'sss officer, inflicting a light wound. The n'sss response is relatively ineffective. St. John's next shot takes the officer down. He exults, "I like fighting these guys! They fall down!"

Haggernak ignores St. John: he is too busy cracking n'sss heads with his tri-staff. St. John gets his attention with another amazing hit on a n'sss, triggering decompression and the immediate, messy end of a n'sss.

The encounter ends with the characters taking three captives. They patch in Taveer by video to get advice on disabling the battlepods without killing the occupants. Drest claims a neural blade and a render pistol. Haggernak claims a neuralblade and a render cannon.

The neuralblade is a spade shaped field of ultrasonic vibration. The slightest touch causes extreme pain as nerves and tissue are torn apart. The n'sss sliver weapons fire showers of tiny crystal needles, interesting but not particularly unique technology. In contrast, the n'sss render weapons strobe through gravitic attraction and repulsion fields to tear materials apart.

N'sss Technology. Not Like Other Technology.

The characters spend some time analyzing the captured n'sss vessel. Their technology is completely new. It is distinct not only from human tech, but also from the other External bio-tech. The controls are wildly sensitive, indented for use with delicate filament tentacles. Outside their battlepods, the n'sss have a strength of 2.

Clearing the N'sss Base

The characters check in with the listening station. The drivespace wrinkle is still there. Apparently the n'sss are using it to communicate with their base. The response is clear: rig an asteroid bomb while taking the n'sss prisoners and their ship back to the *Lighthouse*.

Once the bomb is ready, Captain St. John gives the order. Massive gravitic boosters and a tow from two of the *Lighthouse* frigates send the asteroid screaming into the atmosphere of Redcrown. A human science vessel submerges into the upper edges of

the gas cloud to provide terminal guidance. The characters' aim is true – the asteroid strike destroys the n'sss base and shuts down the drivespace wrinkle.

The End of the Session

External diplomats from Hathorn contact the Verge Alliance Admiralty, requesting peace. They ask permission to send a thaal ambassador to Bluefall for negotiations.

Each character gains 6 experience points.