

CEPHEUS JOURNAL



Issue #013

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From The Editors

Unless you've been trapped in a sensory deprivation chamber since about the first week of January, you're aware of the Hasbro OGL fiasco. Legal analyses of the various versions, past and proposed, are flying everywhere—but as has been pointed out, it's not the legal ramifications so much as the chilling effect that matters.

In the case of the Cepheus Engine, and particularly Cepheus Journal, the damning thing has been the presence of the original SRD in the "chain" of products listed in the legal matter at the end. By descent, virtually all CE products are continuing that chain. Did that mean those products would be in legal jeopardy? Even after Wizards' climb-down it seemed possible that future products could no longer be based on older products unless the license terms for the latter were amended. Who knows?

To me, though, the most interesting thing has been the stark demonstration of how much the control of tabletop role-playing games have slipped out of corporate hands. While the initial panic made sense in light of Hasbro's lopsided concentration of strength compared to individual gamers and small publishers, the backlash has been educational. There's a saying attributed to everyone from Mark Twain to Atilla the Hun, "Never argue with a man who buys ink by the barrel", and a corollary to that has been revealed: "...especially if he uses it to print variants and rules expansions". The history of fans choosing to reject the official game rules in favour of homemade tweaks and outright replacements is very long; is it any surprise that they moved immediately to reject these new "rules"?

Hell, the whole point of the OSR movement is to stick with old rules out of a considered decision that the later editions don't offer any improvement. "Your new ideas are 'interesting'. But we've got what we need,

already, thanks. I trust you can see yourself out." It seems that the difference between (say) a spell list's verbiage and contract language is small enough that it should have made Hasbro cautious, if they had only been astute enough to realize it.

This is the last issue of Cepheus Journal that will be using the OGL in any form, and only because we had already locked things down when the news broke. Exactly how we will proceed with the next issue to come remains to be seen, but it looks as if it will not even rise to the level of a speed bump.

Paul Drye

Well, apart from the drama that was the OGL and Wizards of the Coast, there wasn't submitted for this issue along the lines of bad luck, never the less we have some good stuff for you. Ricardo Emilio has given us an article on food synthesizers as well as some ship designs. Andrew Boswell expands the K68 setting from Zoner Games, Joseph Mohr gives your players a snowball's chance of an adventure, and Jo Jaquinta continues Raiders Lament with part 7.

Our own Paul Drye gives us some interesting fantasy creatures, while P-O Bergstedt gives us a completely AI generated comic. Text was generated in ChatGPT and images were generated with Midjourney. It's a pretty cool showcase of how far AI has come, and we hope to continue to see more.

Also in the AI generated category are two adventure articles, one generated by P-O Bergstedt and the other by Timothy Collinson. Thanks for reading and keep throwing those dice!

Brett Kruger

UPDATE: Seems Wizards of the Coast have backed down and Mongoose are leaving things as is for now. So, onward for Cepheus!

Food Synthesizers

The Dawn of the Post Scarcity Civilization

By Ricardo Emilio

Water and food, the necessities of life. Shortages of either have caused much of the misery, death, and war throughout history.

At TL 7 one first sees seeds emerge that eventually leads to the technology ending food scarcity on a planetary scale. These are 3D printing and laboratory grown meat. Eventually this leads to economical food synthesizing.

TL 14; Industrial food synthesizing using only carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and a few other trace elements becomes a reality. The food is of course different in many ways from natural food. E.G. a synthesized grape has no skin but can be made in any size. You can get egg whites and egg yolk. But not as an integrated item as found in an egg. Meat, flours, milk, drinks of all kinds are the same.

Recipes are programmed to take advantage of the strengths and avoid the limitations of the system. The mass production of food using this technology puts an end to hunger on planets of TL 14 and above. People eventually forget all about "real food" because this is more than just good enough and almost cost free.

At TL 14 the synthesizers are commercial sized and produce mass food stuff to be distributed and final preparation/cooking takes place with the consumer. Tech level 15 machines are small enough for home and small ship installation.

Travelers visiting TL 14 & 15 worlds can cut food expenses by about 90% for up to High Quality Living but need to have food prep/cooking facilities to realize this savings. Elite living conditions means one does not eat synthesized food but expensive cuisine.



K68 for Cepheus

By Andrew Boswell

Put aside any prejudices you might have about the Soviet Union and ask yourself this: what would have happened had the N1 rocket worked and put cosmonauts on the moon months ahead of the Americans? Take all the Soviet science fiction of the 1950's, 60's and 70's at face value and roll that forward 200 years. Temper that with a good cynical dose of stifling bureaucracy, intrusive surveillance, and centralised planning that is not and never could be able to fulfill all the needs of the teeming millions. This is the Union of Soviet Socialist Planets (USSP).

It is a dystopia of sorts, of course, but then a good deal of science fiction is dystopic by default: the future holds threats as well as promise. All our yesteryear aspirations seem naïve in the cold light of what has happened since they were minted, and what seems likely to happen given our real-world trajectories. Every silver lining has a cloud.



Kosmos-68 (K68) is the brainchild of Paul Elliott of Zozer Games and is companioned by Outworld. Both were produced as free booklets with Classic Traveller as the stated ruleset. Where Outworld took the science fiction of the American 1980's and rolled that forward (not-Alien), Kosmos-68 took the science fiction of the Soviet Union to produce an alternate vision (almost not-Starship Troopers). With Paul's permission I've been fleshing out Kosmos-68, regearing it to Cepheus Engine where necessary.

Soviet space is divided into regions called Kosmos', equivalent to standard Cepheus subsectors. Only K68 is detailed, and the intention is that anyone who wants to continue to explore this setting can develop their own regions using all the standard tables. The standard tables are interpreted though the Soviet lens, and not rewritten.

Earth is 40 parsecs 'west' of K68, or roughly five kosmos (subsectors). Kosmos-68 is the end of the line eastwards. This gives an approximate scale of explored space as a 'sphere' (though we know in Cepheus space is depicted in two dimensions) with around 5,000 parsecs (hexes). Plenty of room for exploration.

The reason for the hard stop at K68 is the increasing sparsity of star systems and then a mysterious region of space called The Abyss. No exploratory vessel has managed to get beyond it. Space and time appear to distort, rendering any survivors of such missions shattered in mind and body. This fulfils two driving needs of the Union: to find new scientific mysteries

– the bigger the better, and to define secure borders.

Scientific mysteries are plentiful. The Abyss itself: is it a passage to a parallel universe, an uncontrolled wormhole, an alien artefact, or some combination? Or none of these at all? Near to this area of space is Helios, a planet-wide ocean that might just be a single monstrously powerful alien intelligence. Across hundreds of planets ruins from an elder civilisation have been found. The Ancients, Architects, Earthmasters, Heechee, Siddhe, or the Great Old Ones. There are many names, and very few answers. Spread across the planets of the USSP are alien life forms that are endlessly fascinating. Some have uses for humanity, others are merely a curiosity. And some are a threat.

The second major driver of the USSP, security, is directly challenged by the first genuine alien intelligence found. The space faring Zhukis have a limitless number of different forms. Some scientists propose that we face a monstrous multi-species empire. Others believe the different forms are different life stages of one species. Yet another line of enquiry proposes that they are biological robots designed to perform specific tasks within an overall plan. No one knows, because no one has managed to communicate directly with the zhuki, or to decode their language(s). All that is known is that they are voracious predators, and humans are on the menu.

Neighbouring Kosmos-70 has been devastated by the zhuki. Beaten and forced back, the mauled remains of navy (Rocket Corps), marines (Rocket Infantry), army (Union Defence Force), and scouts (Special Purpose Fleet) are regrouping and being reinforced in K68. The USSP's defeat was so severe that direct military control has been imposed from the capital of K68, Archangel, suspending

usual democratic governance. The last 150 years or so without a major war has left the USSP at a severe disadvantage. Chasing pirates and putting down colony rebellions is no sort of training for the challenges now being faced. So far, space has been substituted for time, retreating while fighting hopeless rear-guard actions. K68 is about to be the new front line.

Security is also uppermost in the mind of the Global Progress Party, the ruling elite of the USSP, in the treatment of its own citizens. An uncounted number of secret police organisations spy on the people and each other. The legal system is ludicrously porous, and the bureaucracy of state can only be called byzantine. All of this helps to create an atmosphere of suspicion and caution; a society where everyone is everyone else's keeper because they never know who might denounce them for a misspoken statement.

The final snapshot of USSP society is in trade. Production and movement of goods is what makes an advanced economy. These activities are under monopoly control of state-owned mega-corporations. The interstellar shipping



organisation Interkosmos has its own military and investigation branches. Its bulk haulers are the lifeblood of the Union. Anything convoyed between the Republic planets not directed by Interkosmos is smuggling.

Any and all of this must sound at least vaguely similar to many other science fiction settings, so what makes Kosmos-68 unique?

For me, it is that Kosmos-68 seems very close to plausible. Not exactly likely by any means because it is an alternate timeline retrofuture, but the goal is to depict things with as much 'truthiness' as possible. No weird new powers or technologies are proposed over that already described in Cepheus, itself a clean-up version of 1980's sensibilities. The motivations and emotions of the NPCs in the setting are completely recognisable to us today. It shares an awful lot with Hostile, but for obvious reasons a world of corporate greed and corruption in a dark and uncaring future seems all too plausible. K68 is the flip side of that coin: another dystopia for sure. But one at least one that has a sophisticated propaganda arm and a vision of progress for all mankind, however misguided.



Kosmos-68 is not a cyberpunk future; if it needs a label, it would be a cross between dieselpunk and cassette-futurism. Art for this exploration is being generated via the learning program MidJourney. As the algorithm improves, I'm updating older entries with more sophisticated renderings for the story I'm attempting to share. Since the historical inflection point in this alternate future occurred in the 1960's I'm homing in on the art of that period. This implies influences of Dan Dare, Thunderbirds, Weird Science, Popular Mechanics, and the classic Soviet magazines Technology for the Youth, Outlook, and Young Technician.



If any of this sounds interesting to you, please visit the kosmos-68 blog site and say hello. Your thoughts and contributions will help inform the ongoing iterations of Kosmos-68.

<https://kosmos68com.wordpress.com/>

At the time of this writing, 2022, anything that sniffs of Russia must be considered suspect. But I urge you to remember that these visions of the future come from the 1950's, 60's and 70's, and not the 2020's. By analogy, imagining a classical Roman space fantasy does not imply endorsing a modern Italian Space Empire. I stand with the free workers of all nations and oppose the invaders, wherever they come from.



A Snowball's Chance in Hell

A Cepheus Engine Adventure

By Joseph Mohr

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The travelers are approached by a representative of the mighty Sultan Omani Achmed Al Karab. The Sultan has a proposition for them. He asks that ten tons of ice be transported from the ice mining world of Saresere Prime to his home planet of Quceroos. Quceroos is known across the Sonora sector for the narcotic properties of the desert sands on that world. The Sultan is quite wealthy as a result of this valuable commodity.

He offers CR 100,000 for this mission which seems quite profitable considering the low amount of risk involved. The task has a completion deadline of one week.

COMPLICATIONS

Adventures of this sort often involve complicating factors. Sometimes patrons lie. Sometimes patrons leave out details which might discourage travelers from accepting their mission. Sometimes patrons will change a few facts in order to make such missions more enticing. And sometimes patrons do not actually know all of the potential complicating factors themselves.

This adventure has the following issues at play:

1. The Ice World Saresere Prime is a dangerous place. It is a vacuum world with a great deal of ice built up from when it still had an atmosphere. This ice often results in dangerous avalanches.

2. The miners on Saresere Prime are currently unhappy with their employers. They are considering striking and may do so at any time.

3. Pirates frequently prey on shipping in the lanes around Saresere Prime. Ice mining is a lucrative business in the Sonora sector as there are many desert worlds with little or no standing water available.

4. The ice miners on Saresere are becoming increasingly hostile with management there. Management is considering bringing in scabs to keep the mining going. Violence between the two sides seems inevitable.

5. Ice being brought from one world to another requires refrigeration. Without such refrigeration in the cargo bays the ice will begin melting almost immediately. In order to bring ten tons of ice to Quceroos in a week without refrigeration more ice than ten tons will be needed as much will melt in the mean time.

6. Quceroos is a desert world with extremely hot temperatures. The world has two large suns providing heat and light to the system. Temperatures on the world are often in excess of 130 degrees F. Transporting ice in these temperatures increases the need for refrigeration. Transferring the ice cargo to the Sultan's palace will also result in a great deal of melting before the product is delivered to the patron.

7. Local tribes on Quceroos are not as enamored with ice as the Sultan. In fact, many of these tribes, consider the use of ice to be an insult to their religious beliefs. Many of these tribesmen are armed and willing to use force to intercede.

8. The Sultan's palace is nearly three miles from the local star port.

AVALANCHES

Ships are rarely in much danger from avalanches on Saresere Prime but miners, or anyone else attempting to mine ice, are frequently at risk. Avalanches during mining activities occur on a 6+. Anyone in the area of such an avalanche will be buried alive under ice on a 12+. Damage from avalanches is 3D6.

STRIKERS AND SCABS

Miners go on strike frequently on Saresere Prime. There is a current dispute over wages and overtime and the miners are currently threatening to strike yet again. They will do so on a 5+. Miners do not like outsiders attempting to mine while they are on strike. They will attempt to use force to prevent this on a 6+. There are dozens of miners carrying picket signs in all areas of the mining on Saresere Prime when such strikes occur. The GM can randomly determine statistics for miners if necessary.

ICE MINING

Ice mining requires an ice mining laser which strip mines the ice from planets or asteroids as needed. This requires a certain level of skill. Such lasers can be purchased on other worlds and might be rented from the mining companies on Saresere Prime for CR 1000 per day and with a CR 25000 deposit. Such activity can be hazardous. Mining accidents cause avalanches. An unskilled miner attempting to mine ice may succeed on an 8+. A roll of more than three less than the needed roll, however, results in an accident and avalanche (see above).

ICE PIRATES

It is much easier to steal ice from ships leaving Saresere Prime than it is to mine it. Pirates frequently harass ships that attempt to leave this world carrying cargoes of ice. On a 6+ a 300 ton corvette with a crew of 10 will attempt to stop the travelers and board. The ship is armed with three dual pulse laser turrets. The ship will not attempt to slug it out for more than three or four combat rounds as there are easier pickings for them. But if they sense weakness they will continue.

THE SULTAN'S PALACE

The palace is several miles from the landing field on Quceroos. It is a lavish palace with fantastic domes, peaks and arches rising high into the desert sky. The Sultan enjoys throwing lavish parties for his family and friends and prefers to have ice on hand for the drinks. As he is filthy rich he can afford to pay others to bring it to him and frequently does.

REFRIGERATION IN SPACE AND UNDER A HOT SUN

For game purposes (I am no expert on the melt rate of ice) ice will melt in a cargo hold at a rate of one eighth per day spent without refrigeration. Ice under the hot Quceroos sun will melt at a rate of one eighth per hour without refrigeration.

Refrigeration, either aboard a space craft or on some kind of truck or ground transport, is not without potential failure. It will fail on a 12+ (check daily).

LOCAL TRIBESMAN WHO OBJECT TO THE USE OF ICE

A band of local tribesmen may attempt to interfere with final delivery to the palace. They will do so on a 5+. This band consists of:

Warrior Razeen al-Mansur BA784A Age 30

3 terms

Skills: Mechanical-1, Recon-1, Short Bow-1, Sword-4

Armed with a sword and a short bow. He leads this band of nomads.

Barbarian Abdul Kader el-Nour 586285 Age 27

1 term

Skills: Sword-4

Armed with a sword.

Warrior Riyaal el-Shad A97788 Age 22

1 term

Skills: Brawling-1, Instruction-1, Military Crossbow-1, Sword-3

Armed with a military crossbow and a sword.

Barbarian Uwais al-Jabbour 76376A Age 22

1 term

Skills: Sword-2

Armed with a sword.

Barbarian Faai Z el-Fawaz 79752A Age 24

1 term

Skills: Recon-1, Sword-2

Armed with a sword.

MISSION COMPLETION OBJECTIVES

The Sultan has commissioned for ten tons of ice to be brought by a certain date. Less than ten tons of ice is not acceptable. He will, in his infinite mercy, agree to pay CR 4000 per ton if less than ten tons is brought.



TORVALD

THE SPACE VIKING



I AM TORVALD THE RED, SPACE VIKING AND CONQUEROR OF WORLDS!



FOR TOO LONG, YOUR WEAKLING RACE HAS COWERED BEFORE THE MIGHT OF THE VIKING WARRIORS.

BUT NOW, THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO KNEEL BEFORE ME AND SWEAR FEALTY TO YOUR NEW MASTER!



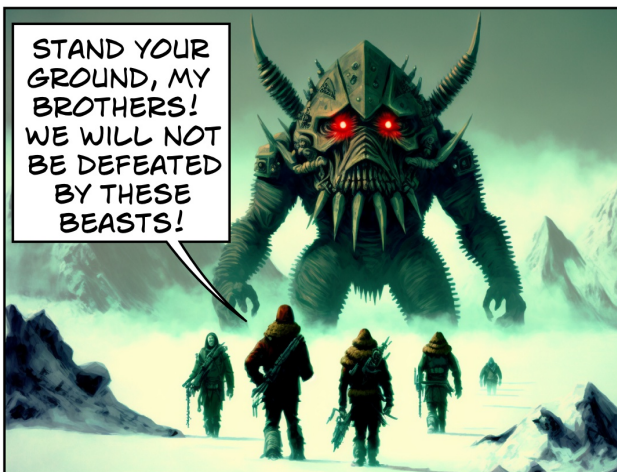
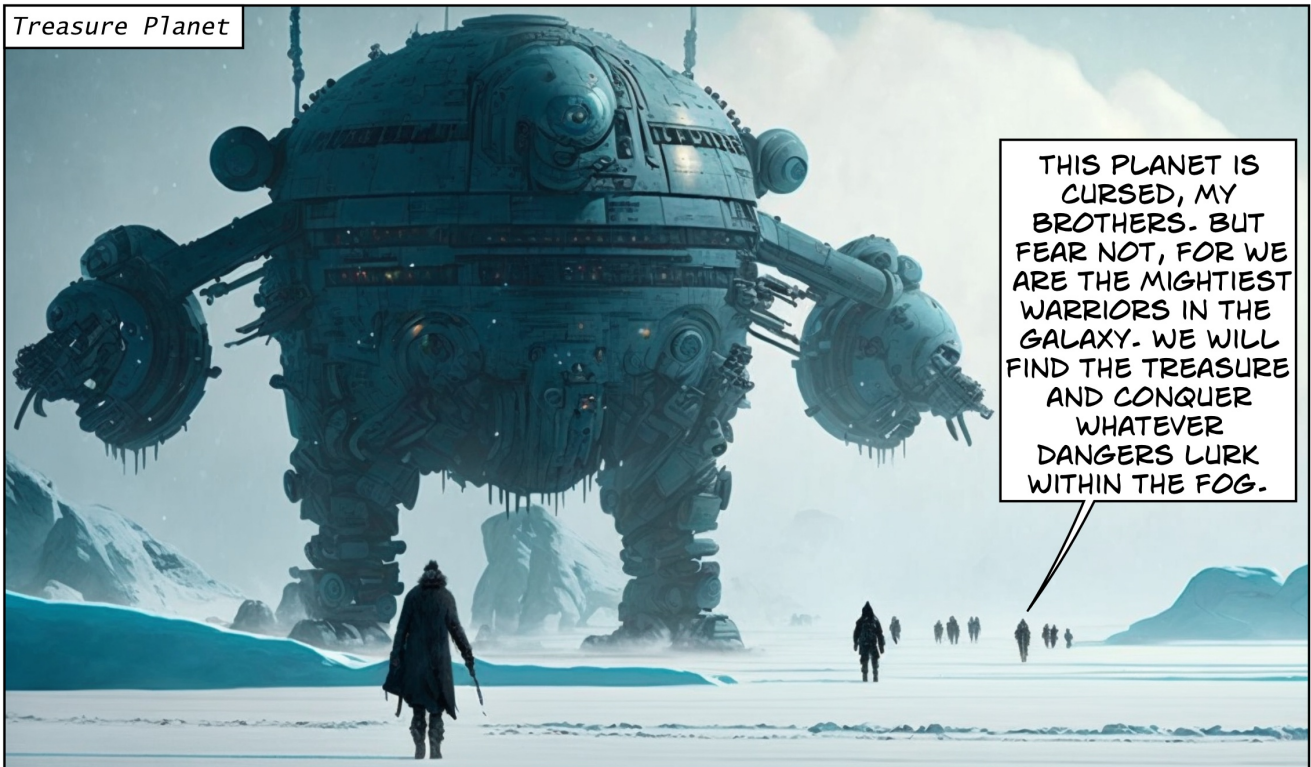
EXCELLENT. NOW, TELL ME WHERE I CAN FIND THE FABLED TREASURE OF THE ANCIENT SPACE KINGS. I HAVE HEARD RUMORS OF UNIMAGINABLE RICHES HIDDEN ON A DISTANT PLANET.



I will never tell you where to find the treasure. It is guarded by powerful forces that even the mighty space vikings fear to challenge.

HA! YOU UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE VIKINGS, ALIEN. WE FEAR NOTHING AND NO ONE. PREPARE TO MEET YOUR DOOM!

Treasure Planet





WELL DONE,
TORVALD THE RED.
YOU HAVE PROVEN
YOURSELF A
WORTHY WARRIOR,
DESPITE YOUR
DEFEAT.



THE VALKYRIES
ARE COMING
FOR YOU. YOU
FOUND YOUR
TREASURE, A
WORTHY BATTLE
THAT IS YOUR
TICKET TO
VALHALLA

And so, Torvald, as one of the mightiest warriors ever, was written in to the celestial saga of the Galaxy.



IN A REALM OF SPACE, A VIKING DID RULE,
HIS NAME WAS THORVALD, A TRUE-BORN SPACEFOOL.
WITH A WEAPON OF WAR, HE WOULD NEVER TIRE,
HIS HAMMER A FORCE, AN UNYIELDING PYRE.

THROUGH THE COSMOS HE ROAMED, A TRUE SPACE STALKER,
HIS SHIP, THE THUNDERBIRD, A MARVEL TO TALK UP.
WITH A HEART FULL OF VALOR, AND A SOUL OF PURE MIRTH,
THORVALD THE SPACE VIKING, A LEGEND OF WORTH.



Raiders Lament Part 7

Chapter 10 By Jo Jaquinta

The guard slid the grill shut between the crew and freedom with a rolling clash. The cell looked more like a minimal storage room hollowed out from the ice. It was cold, but not unreasonably so. Everything the guard found after an expert frisking was in a crate on the other side of the grill. He proceeded to adjust his chair to a point where he could sit with his feet propped up on it and gain maximum exposure to the small portable heater set on the floor.

"Well, that's got to be a new low for us" grumbled the Chief.

"Yes," agreed Seldon. "I do apologize. Whatever was I thinking?"

"A lack of structure," said Elise. "If I had had regs to operate against, I would have spotted it."

"Another fine mess" commented Juanita.

Heleni sat quietly next to Ritva, who was huddled in a corner with her knees drawn up to her face. "What you did was very brave," she said.

Ritva looked up briefly to glare at her. "He is the same animal he was. My father's faith was misplaced."

"Sometimes people change over time. Sometimes they don't. You have to give them chances and see what sort of person they are."

"I have killed my people."

"I know it feels that way. But that is a little harsh." She edged closer. "Would it not have been much worse if you had led him back, aided and abetted his takeover, only to have him usurp you and rule himself?"

"At least my people would have their independence and a strong leader." She picked idly at some protruding insulation foam.

"Strength comes in many forms. Stealing your treasure and locking you in here may show physical strength but failing the call of his people does not show great strength of character. Which is more important?"

"Why do you care?" She looked uncomprehendingly into her eyes. "It is because of your people that all of this has happened. He is right; my father was complicit in his own downfall. If he had turned your Scouts away, not been seduced by their bribes, he would not have let me live and they would not be there. But he did and they are. Now that you know who I am, why do you not kill me where I sit and have done with it?"

Heleni sat back, surprised. "How could I? I have no argument with you or your people! Just because our government does something doesn't mean that every citizen supports it. I left the Scouts because I did not agree with all of their policies."

"I am the government of my people. My will is their will."

Heleni laughed softly and looked around her. "This isn't much of a throne room. You know it isn't as simple as that."

Ritva glared at her. "Maybe so. Maybe so." They sat in silence a while more.

* * *

"Hey!" called Juanita through the bars. "Can you toss me my dice at least?" The guard shook his head and continued idly throwing his knife into the wall. "I promise there isn't a nuclear device hidden in them or anything."

"Forget it," said the Chief. "He's a soldier with orders."

"More like a thug with a paycheck," said Elise.

"Same difference," said Juanita.

"Why don't I pretend to strangle you, Elise, and see if he opens the door," said the Chief.

"I'm almost game for it" she said. A slight tremor shook the floor. The guard looked up briefly but went back to throwing his knife.

"Do we have a best guess as to the tectonic stability of this place?" asked Seldon.

"It seems to be a sea of frozen ice over some sort of rocky core," said Heleni. "If all this gas is caused by sublimation over a hot spot, then at some point there has to be some subsidence."

"I don't know," said the Chief. "There are no cracks in the floor. It can't be that unstable."

"It's pretty flexible," said Juanita. Another

tremor went through the floor, stronger this time. The guard got up and looked outside the door. A third shuddered through the room at approximately the same interval.

"Those aren't tremors," said Elise. "Those are explosions." The guard was shouting to people outside the door and trying to decide if he should stay or run.

"Hey, hey!" called Juanita. "Let us out! Don't leave us to die in here!" He ignored her.

"I would suggest that all of you line up against the wall," said Seldon. They did so and he stood in the furthest corner from them. The explosions grew louder. The guard had gone, and the Chief and Juanita were trying to pry the door loose. After the loudest one yet the following interval was missed. Seldon walked calmly over to the others. At the next beat there was another blast and searing light. The far side of the room was blasted away, and melted ice sprayed everywhere. The floor buckled, and the grate fell.

"Grab our things" shouted Seldon over the falling debris. "Then we leave this way."

"But what if there are more explosions?" asked Heleni.

"There won't be," said Seldon, stepping into the hole. It was one end of a long rough cylinder running through walls, shops, and part of the market, all the way out to the phol. At the far end floated the dory. "The cavalry is here," he announced.

They quickly passed through and began running down the shaft. There was chaos at all points as people dug themselves out of the fallen ice and foam, tried to

rescue their ruined belongings or to loot other people's. There was the occasional crack of gunfire, but no one seemed organized enough to be pursuing them.

As they got closer the dory drew off, danced on turbulence for a while, and then floated back, rear first. The gangway lowered and Kwok hung there, clipped in place, waving them on.

"Welcome aboard Captain!" he cried to Seldon as he passed. "Kwok Starlines delights in providing superior customer service." He slapped the Chief and Heleni as they dove through the hatch. "We pick up and deliver from all points." He helped pull the final crew in. "Now strap yourselves in; it's a bit of a ride."

* * *

The cargo bay rang with loud clatters as the crew divested themselves of their gear. Their coats steamed as powdered ice sublimated, leaving an odd smell.

"Thank God the ship is still here," said the Chief jovially. "After you abandoned it, I expected to come back to a gutted wreck."

"No parking tickets either," quipped Juanita.

"Would I do that to you?" asked Vikhagen, in mock hurt. "Kwok here," she slapped his passing head, "put the pintle mounts on auto fire. I suspect that kept the riffraff away."

Almost on queue, there was the sharp report of small arms fire. "Elise: top side," ordered Seldon. "Our latest stunts may have attracted the attention of more than riffraff." She double timed it up the ladder. "Kwok and Heleni, stow this gear. Chief and Juanita, get the engines ready to go. It's time we left here."

"We can't go," said Ritva. The rest paused awkwardly at the countermand. "We can't go without what he took."

"The contract was to deliver the consignment to Valio," said the Chief. "One way or another that's what we've done."

"All right," said Ritva. "I hereby hire you to retrieve the consignment." The Chief hesitated.

Elise's voice came over the P.A. "The dockmaster is very keen on us leaving. Now."

"Not all digits of the arm of the 40 Worlds can be bought," said Seldon. "Just because we are a commercial concern doesn't mean we are required to take all consignments."

"Name your price," said Ritva.

"400,000,000 silver talents," cheered Vikhagen.

Seldon gave her a warning look. "Remind me to give you the lecture about verbal contracts," he said to her.

"It's not just a question of money, Ritva," said Heleni. "It's common sense."

"In case you didn't notice there's an ant's nest of trouble out there ready to breathe down our airlock," said Juanita.

"Actually," said Elise's voice, "based on the chatter I'm picking up one gang appears to have used this as a diversion and are staging a takeover of the other."

"There's no honor among thieves," said the Chief.

"My Lady Ritva," said Seldon. "I am sympathetic to your position. When I drew steel against your uncle, I acknowledged our changing understanding of our contract." There was brief fire again from the pintle mounts. "But you put us in a difficult position. Much as I would like to honor your request we are not very well equipped for armed assault."

"I cannot pay you what I owe you unless I have that box back," she said flatly. There was a drawn-out pause. Many of the crew shifted from one foot to the other and looked at each other.

"Be that as it may..." Seldon began.

"We've got more than blades in the armory," ventured Vikhagen.

"I do not want to put my crew's lives at stake..."

"Didn't that pilot guy say his cousin had guards for hire?" said Kwok.

"Given the force against us..."

"Sounds like total chaos out there," said the Chief.

Seldon paused and looked sternly at the rest. "Did someone have some input they wanted to offer?"



"We have those two sets of mobile armor we picked up surplus," started Juanita. "We've never had a license to use them anywhere legally but that hardly matters here."

"I've trained on those," continued Kwok.

"We certainly have the leg up with Elise's surveillance equipment. The battle vision alone..." interrupted Heleni.

"I've been hankering to give The Big One a try since we got it back on..." said the Chief.

"The dockmaster is having an aneurism," said Elise. "He's offering us a free pilot."

"TAKE CARE OF IT" shouted Seldon. Everyone fell silent. He slowly ran his fingers through his hair and replaced his cap. "My Lady Ritva," he said smoothly and executed a very formal bow. "The Crew of The Raider's Lament is happy to place themselves at your service. We will, of course, set about immediately, the task of returning your property."

She bowed equally formally "You have my thanks."



A Tetrad of Monsters

By Paul Drye

Many classic pulp fantasy stories are based on, well, Classical civilization. Ancient Greek, Egyptian, and West Asian legends and cultures are mixed and matched with abandon, producing an alternative to the quasi-medieval style popular with more-recent authors. To that end, here are five monsters—or at least, beings to encounter—that will add a Classical touch to your Cepheus Engine fantasy games.

Aurochs



1500kg Beast (Grazer), forest walker, P6J096 #App: 1D in spring/summer/autumn, 2D in winter, Treasure: None

Males attack on 7+ and flee on 3-; groups with females and/or calves attack on 9+ and flee on 6-

Athletics-2, Melee Combat-1, Survival-0

Horns (3D+1), Trample (3D+1); armor 3; speed 20m/action

Neutral; Morale DM+1

The aurochs is a massive herbivore, the ancestor of the domesticated cattle that provides meat, hides, and milk to settled

peoples throughout the world. Contrary to the farm-bound variety's reputation for docility, the aurochs is a dangerous creature due to its temperamental nature, large horns, and enormous size (up to and over 180 centimeters at the shoulders). This is especially true of males in mating season, in mid-autumn, when they are at DM+2 for morale.

In fact, the aurochs is so impressive that some rustic regions treat them as an aspect of this god or that. Woe betide adventurers who hunt one in these parts unawares.

Centaur



300kg Beast (Gatherer/Sentient), plains walker, D7C743 #App: 1D, Treasure: Small

Athletics-3, Melee Combat-1, Recon-2, Survival-2

Behaves as an NPC at the Referee's discretion or per the Reaction rules.

Trample (3D) or by weapon; armor 1; speed 30m/action

Neutral; Morale DM 0

Though they were once common throughout Phaneros, most inhabitants of that land think that the centaur is a creature of myth. Rather these half-man, half-horse beings have retreated to the most-isolated valleys, avoiding humans at all costs and taking advantage of the "soft spots" between this world and the Otherworld to travel.

The human portion of a centaur is the same size as a mainstream human being of the same age and sex. Conversely, the horse portion is noticeably smaller than that of an adult horse, so that it remains in proportion to its torso. Nevertheless, this makes centaurs about three times as massive as a human being.

One peculiar aspect of centaurs is their medical knowledge. While only a few will have the Medicine skill, those that do are adept at it: Medicine-3 is not unusual, ranging up to Medicine-5. Some historians say that the practice of human medicine began with a centaur teaching what he knew to his unfortunate cousins-with-too-few-limbs.

Dryad



50kg Humanoid, 77A770 #App: 1 Treasure: Incidental

Athletics-0, Deception-1, Melee Combat-0, Recon-1, Survival-1, Sorcery-2

Behaves as an NPC at the Referee's discretion or per the Reaction rules

Special attack (spells, see description); armor 0; walks 10m/action

Neutral; Morale DM-1

The Ilex oak is common to what forests remain in Phaneros and Hirrios, particularly in highlands along the coast. A great peculiarity of the type is the presence of spirits within a few of them, the dryads. Though they appear to be beautiful young women, they present a real threat to any who are unfortunate enough to come across one.

Directly, the dryads apparently need humans to propagate, and they have the ability to ensnare mortal minds and pull them whole into the Otherworld through a gate centered on their tree; time will pass

slowly there and when (and if) they are released many years will have gone by. Indirectly, the dryads are protected by the gods, who will curse anyone harming their oak, even in self-defense. Killing their tree also kills the dryad, but it takes considerable skill or luck to avoid the divine disfavor that ensures.

Dryads are immune to non-magical weapons and disease, and can also meld with their trees to enter the Otherworld and escape detection or attack (though at that point the oak is as susceptible to damage as any other tree).

All dryads have at least two spells, Ensorcellment and Charm Person, which they will use liberally. In both cases the spell has a focus, usually an acorn taken from her tree. They may also have other spells at the referee's discretion.

Gryphon



200kg Beast (Pouncer), mountain flyer, BD7084 #App: 1D+1 Treasure: None

Athletics-2, Melee Combat-2, Recon-2, Survival-1

Attacks on 7+; flees on 5-

Bite (2D), Foreclaws (2D); armor 0; fly 30m/action.

Neutral; Morale DM+0

Also known as the shirdal to the Hirriosans, the gryphon possesses the head, wings, and forelegs of an eagle paired with the body and hind legs of a lion. In some stories they are portrayed as the most noble of beings due to their relationship to the ruling animals of land and air, but in truth they are merely dumb beasts and act according to their carnivorous nature.

Satyr



25kg Humanoid, 598879 #App: 3D Treasure: Small

Carousing-2, Deception-2, Melee Combat-1, Recon-1, Sorcery-0, Stealth-1

Behaves as an NPC at the Referee's discretion or per the Reaction rules

Special attack (spells, see description) Trample (1D-1); armor 0; walk 10m/action

Chaotic; Morale DM-2

Satyrs are highly magical creatures that appear in groups to those who have

ventured into the wilderness, particularly forests. They are an embodiment of “pleasurable chaos”, and are invariably engaged in drinking, dancing, playing wild music, and trying to seduce anyone who encounters them. At first, they will seem to be benign, if annoying, but those people who linger—or, worse, join the revelry—will find they slowly turn sinister. This stems from their association with the god of madness; one of the group of satyrs will carry His standard (as shown at right), which may provide the educated with a clue as to their true nature. If the human interlopers are extremely unfortunate, they may even meet Him as the party continues.

Each satyr encountered will know 1D spells from the following list:

- Cause Fear
- Charm Animal
- Charm Person
- Chimerical Force
- Faerie Fire
- Hallucinatory Terrain
- Mirror Image
- Sleep
- Summon Insect Swarm



This fanzine and more can be downloaded from the official Cepheus Journal Website!



Max and Elsa

Adventure Seed by P-O Bergstedt, text generated by ChatGPT.

The players are sitting at a table in the corner of the crowded inn, sipping their ale and discussing their next move. They are a band of rugged adventurers, well-known in the area for their skills and bravery. Suddenly, a young couple approaches them, standing awkwardly at their table.



"Excuse me," the man, Max, says nervously. "We couldn't help but overhear that you are seasoned travelers. We were wondering if you could help us with a small problem we're facing."

The players eye the couple suspiciously. "What kind of problem?" one of them asks gruffly.

"We need to get to Skåne, but we fear we are being followed," the woman, Elsa, explains. "We have heard that you are the best in the business at discreetly transporting people and goods. We are

willing to pay you two Marks for your services."

The players exchange glances, weighing the potential danger and reward of accepting the couple's offer. After a moment, they nod in agreement.

"We'll do it," the leader of the group says. "But you must tell us everything. Who are you, and why are you being followed?"

Max and Elsa exchange a worried look before Max speaks. "We can't tell you our full names, but you can call us Max and

Elsa. We are in danger, but we can't say from whom. All we can say is that we are being pursued by retired mercenaries who are trying to kidnap us."

The players nod, understanding the gravity of the situation. "We'll do our best to keep you safe," the leader assures the couple. "But we must be prepared for anything. Do you have any weapons or means of defense?"

Max shakes his head. "We have nothing but the clothes on our backs and the two Marks we promised to pay you. We are at your mercy."

The players nod, standing up and gathering their weapons and gear. "We'll leave at first light tomorrow," the leader says. "In the meantime, we'll keep watch over you and make sure you're safe."

The group spends the rest of the night in the inn, taking turns standing guard and watching for any signs of the mercenaries. The next morning, they set sail on their cog boat, heading towards Skåne. However, just as they are about to leave the harbor, the mercenaries attack.

The burly men storm into the inn, brandishing their weapons and shouting for Max and Elsa. The players spring into action, drawing their swords and engaging the mercenaries in a fierce battle. The innkeeper, Helga, screams and cowers behind the bar, while the other patrons scatter and run for cover.

Gunther, the old sailor, joins the fray, wielding a rusty cutlass and showing surprising agility for his age. The fight is intense, but the players and Gunther are skilled warriors, and they quickly gain the upper hand. The mercenaries, despite their experience, are no match for the players' and Gunther's coordinated attacks and superior weapons. One by one, the mercenaries fall, until only a few are left standing.

"Surrender now and we'll spare your lives," the leader of the group says, his sword pointed at the remaining mercenaries. The mercenaries, realizing they are outnumbered and outmatched, drop their weapons and surrender.

The players continue on their journey to Skåne, keeping a wary eye out for any further threats. As they navigate the Baltic



Sea, they can see a small, sleek ship following them in the distance. It is flying the flag of the Hanseatic League, indicating that it is a trading vessel. However, as it gets closer, the players can see the glint of cannons on its deck, and they realize that it is not a friendly ship.

A cannon fight ensues, but the players are able to outmaneuver the Hanseatic ship and continue on their journey to Skåne. When they finally reach their destination, Max and Elsa thank the players profusely and hand them their promised payment.



The couple disappears into the crowded streets of Skåne, their ultimate fate unknown.

The players return to the inn in Stralsund, where they are greeted warmly by Helga. She thanks them for their bravery and assistance and offers them a hearty meal and a comfortable bed for the night. The players accept gratefully, happy to rest after their ordeal on the sea.

As they sit down to eat, Gunther, the old sailor, approaches them with a proposition. "I couldn't help but overhear your story," he says. "You're a brave bunch, and I could use some help on my next voyage. What do you say, lads? Are you up for a bit of adventure?"

The players exchange glances, grinning at the thought of another exciting journey. "We're always up for a challenge," the leader of the group says.

The Ballad of Max and Elsa

Verse 1:

We set sail on the morning tide,
With Max and Elsa by our side.
The wind was strong and the sea was rough,
But we braved the storm and faced it with stuff.

Verse 2:

We fought off foes and braved the fight,
On our journey to the distant Skåne height.
Through cannon fire and treacherous waves,
We proved our worth and gained a sailor's fame.

Chorus:

We are the crew of the sturdy cog,
Defenders of the weak and strong.
Our swords are sharp and our hearts are true,
We are the brave adventurers, through and through.



The Sapphire Sea

Adventure Seed by Timothy Collinson, text generated by ChatGPT.

The merchant starship "Chance Encounter" dropped out of hyperspace above the watery world of Aquaria, a planet known for its abundant sea life and intelligent aquatic race of eroctopi. As the ship descended towards the planet's surface, the six characters on board – Captain Aria, navigator Landon, engineer Tali, medic Nya, security officer Marcus, and diplomat Zara – prepared for their visit to the underwater city of New Meridian, home to the eroctopi.



As the starship descended through the planet's atmosphere, Aria called the group together in the ship's briefing room. "We're here on a mission to establish trade relations with the eroctopi," Aria explained. "But we can't let our guard down. Not all species in the galaxy are friendly, and we don't know much about the eroctopi. So, stay alert and be prepared for anything."

The group nodded in agreement and made their final preparations before the starship landed on the outskirts of New Meridian. As the ship's hatch opened, the characters were greeted by a group of eroctopi, their tentacles gently waving in the water.

Leading the group was a majestic eroctopus with shimmering silver skin and piercing green eyes. "Welcome to Aquaria," the eroctopus said in a melodic voice. "I am Erevan, the leader of the eroctopi. We are glad to have you visit our world."

Aria stepped forward and introduced the group. "Thank you for the warm welcome, Erevan. We are the crew of the Chance Encounter, and we are here to explore the possibility of trade with your people."

Erevan smiled. "We are open to the idea of trade with other species. But first, allow me to show you around our city and introduce you to our culture. I think it is important for us to understand each other before we discuss business."



The group agreed and followed Erevan through the city of New Meridian, marveling at the intricate coral structures and the diverse array of sea life that surrounded them. Erevan led them to a grand hall where the eroctopi held council meetings and cultural events. "This is the Heart of the Sea," Erevan explained. "It is the center of our society and a place of great importance to us."

As the group explored the hall, they were approached by a group of young eroctopi, their tentacles writhing with excitement. "Hello, visitors!" one of them exclaimed. "We've heard so much about other species, and we're excited to meet you."

The characters greeted the young eroctopi and spent the afternoon learning about their culture and customs. They discovered that the eroctopi valued harmony and cooperation, and that they had a deep connection to the sea and all its inhabitants.

As the day came to a close, Erevan invited the group to a banquet in their honor. "We would like to show our appreciation for your visit and continue getting to know each other," Erevan said.

The group accepted the invitation and enjoyed a feast of seafood delicacies and conversation with the eroctopi. As the banquet drew to a close, Aria brought up the topic of trade. "We are interested in establishing a trade partnership with your people," Aria said. "We have a variety of goods and technologies that could be of value to you."

Erevan nodded thoughtfully. "We are interested in exploring the possibility of trade as well. But we have a unique way of doing business on Aquaria. We believe that [keep going!] fairness and mutual benefit are the cornerstone of any successful trade relationship. So, we propose a challenge. We will task each member of your crew with completing a task that represents a key aspect of our culture. If all tasks are completed successfully, we will proceed with negotiations for a trade agreement."

The group agreed to the challenge and spent the next few days working with the

eroctopi to complete their tasks. Landon worked with an eroctopus navigator to learn the intricacies of navigating through the planet's many underwater currents. Tali assisted an eroctopus engineer in repairing a damaged coral structure. Nya learned about the unique medicinal properties of various sea plants from an eroctopus medic. Marcus trained with eroctopi security forces to learn their tactics for defending the city. And Zara worked with Erevan to understand the eroctopi's diplomatic practices and customs.

After completing their tasks, the group gathered in the Heart of the Sea to present their achievements to Erevan and the other eroctopi leaders. Erevan was impressed by the group's dedication and understanding of their culture. "You have proven yourselves to be worthy trading partners," Erevan said. "We look forward to negotiating a fair and mutually beneficial trade agreement with you."

The group was thrilled by the success of their mission and spent the next few weeks working with the eroctopi to establish a thriving trade relationship. As they prepared to depart Aquaria, Aria reflected on their adventure. "I never could have predicted the kindness and understanding we would find on this watery world," Aria said. "I look forward to returning to Aquaria and building a lasting partnership with the eroctopi."

As the "Chance Encounter" prepared to depart Aquaria, Aria called the group together for a final briefing. "We've had a successful and memorable mission on this beautiful planet," Aria said. "But before we leave, I want to make sure we have everything in order. Landon, have you plotted the course back to civilization?"

Landon nodded. "Course is plotted and ready, Captain. We should have a smooth trip back."

"Good," Aria said. "Tali, have you finished repairing and restocking the ship?"

"All systems are go, Captain," Tali replied. "We're ready for the journey home."

"Excellent," Aria said. "Nya, have you treated any injuries or illnesses during our stay?"

"All crew members are in good health, Captain," Nya said. "I've restocked our medical supplies as well."

"Great work," Aria said, turning to Marcus. "Marcus, have you secured the ship and checked for any potential threats before takeoff?"

"All systems show green, Captain," Marcus said. "The ship is secure and ready for departure."

Aria smiled. "Well done, everyone. Zara, have you said our farewells to Erevan and the eroctopi?"

Zara nodded. "I've conveyed our gratitude for their hospitality and the successful trade negotiations. They've invited us to return anytime and continue building our partnership."

"Excellent," Aria said. "Then I think we're ready to depart. Let's head home and report our success to the Guild. But first, let's take a moment to appreciate all that we've learned and experienced on this wonderful planet."

The group nodded in agreement and took a moment to reflect on their journey on Aquaria. As they prepared to board the "Chance Encounter," they knew that they had made lasting connections and gained invaluable knowledge on the watery world. And they looked forward to returning to Aquaria and continuing their partnership with the eroctopi in the future.



100 Ton Ships

The following ship designs were created by Ricardo Emilio as submitted for free use for readers of the Cepheus Journal - Brett Kruger, editor.

100 Ton Frontier Trader

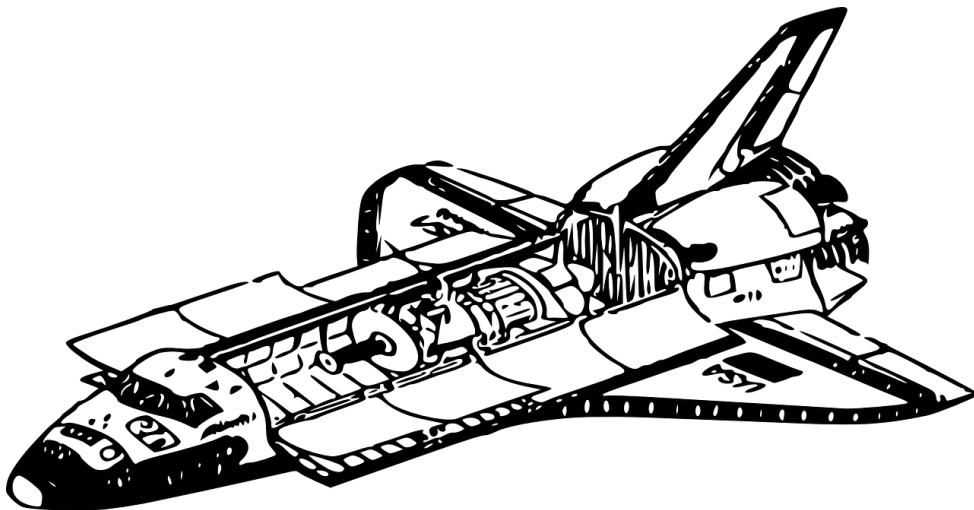
Component	Quantity	Type	Tonnage	Cost Mcr
Hull	100	Streamlined		11
Armor				
Maneuver Drive	1		0.9	2.25
Power Plant	1		1.5	3.75
Jump Drive	1		3	7.5
Fuel			10	
Bridge			10	0.5
Electronics	Model/1	DM -2	1	1
Armament				
	1	Double Turret	3	3
Other Components				
	1	Fuel processors per 5 tons/day	1	0.1
Accommodations	2	Staterooms	8	1
	15	Low Berths	7.5	0.75
Cargo			54.1	
Crew: 1 (or 2) Pilot/Captain Optionally, add Gunner/Medic				
Total before Discount				Mcr 30.85
Total after Discount				Mcr 27.765

This ship is capsule shaped, 27 meters long and 7.5 meters in diameter. The cargo deck takes up the lower half of the ship with the cargo doors opening at the hemispherical bow. The upper deck contains the Bridge, common/dining area, staterooms, Low Berths fuel processors, fuel tanks and engineering, bow to stern. A 10 ton collapsable bladder is kept in the cargo bay. This can be filled with H2O and refined into Jump fuel while in Jump. This is used for making a Jump 1 + 1. Allowing for a greater range of trading/passenger options.

Courier Long Range

Component	Size/Number	Type	Tonnage	Cost Mcr
Hull	100	Standard	10	
Armor				
Maneuver Drive	1		0.9	2.25
Power Plant	4		5	12.5
Jump Drive	4	TL 13	8.1	20.25
Fuel		1 Jump 4	40	
Bridge			10	0.5
Electronics	Model/3adv	DM +1	3	7.5
Armament	1	Single Turret	2	2
Other Components				
Accommodations	1	Stateroom(s)	4	0.5
	1	Emergency Cryotubes	1	0.1
Cargo			26	
Crew: 1 Pilot				
Total before Discount				Mcr 55.5
Total after Discount				Mcr 49.95

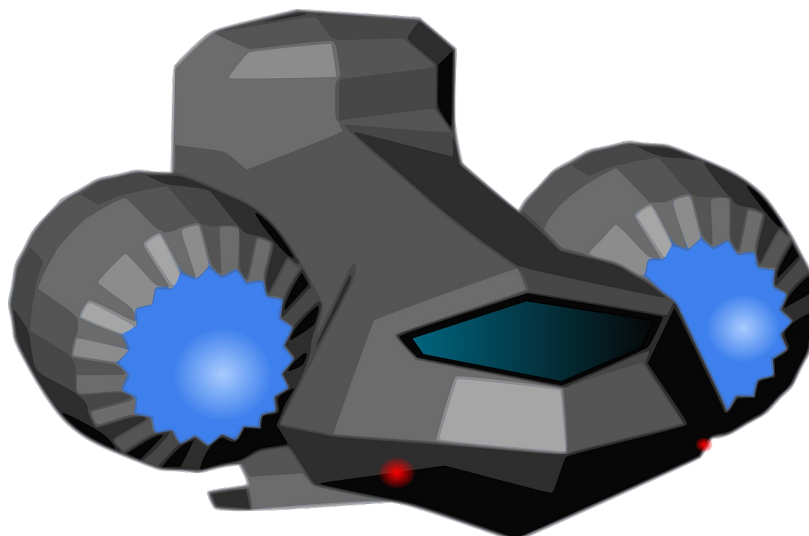
This Fast courier is designed to operate between important worlds that are more than 2 parsecs apart carrying data and time sensitive physical cargo. It is designed as a sphere just under 14 meters in diameter. Its decks are oriented perpendicular to direction of flight. It lands "tail down". The "top" deck is bridge & electronics. Next down is accommodations. Then cargo and the bottom deck is engineering. The single turret is at the "equator" opposite the cargo bay hatch. A tube with ladder connects the decks.



Intrasystem Craft 10 Ton

Component	Quantity	Type	Tonnage	Cost Mcr
Hull	10	Standard		1.000
Armor				
Maneuver Drive	1	TL 12	0.27	0.675
Power Plant	1	TL 12	0.45	1.125
1 Person cockpit			1.5	0.050
Electronics		DM -4		
Other Components				
Galley				
Lounge				
Airlock			1	0.200
Accommodations 1		Stateroom	4	0.500
Cargo			2.78	
Crew: 1				
Total before Discount				Mcr 3.550
Total after Discount				Mcr 3.195

This type of civilian small craft is common in systems with more than one inhabited world or, where the main world is an asteroid belt. Equipped with a fully appointed stateroom that sleeps two and with a separate galley and lounge, this craft is an ideal, low cost interplanetary transport for an executive. Often purchased used by retired couples and used as a live aboard or, pre-retirement for those that can work from "home" and enjoy being mobile. Its almost 40 cubic meters of storage space offers flexibility and at only ten tons it is fairly inexpensive to move to another star system as freight. The craft is rectangular in shape sloping down at the bow. It is 16 meters long, 3 meters wide and tall.



What's New

By Brett Kruger

The following products were released during the months of October through December 2022. A big couple of months for Old School Role Playing and lots of goodness from other publishers as well.

Old School Role Playing

Ignition

Collision Course

Mail Order Bride

On The Brink

Star Port Bar

Ho! Ho! Ho!

All That Glitters is Not Gold

Animals of the Frontiers of Space Volume One

The Haunting of the Dorogan

They Could be Gods

Low Passage

And the sun shined brightly

Michael Brown

Hygiene

Follow the Brightest Star

Escape From Thundervale

Perfection of Means

The Orcus Convergence

Simulacra

Becalmed

Donovan D. Corzo

Corzo Creations Limitless Lists [BUNDLE]

66 Poisons, Tonics, Hallucinogens and

Healing Herbs-List

100 Things you find in a Post-Apocalyptic

Setting-List

100 Black Market Finds Vol 2.-List

Holiday Sale Bundle [BUNDLE]

Corzo Creations Fall Sale[BUNDLE]

Independence Games

Ships of Earth Sector Pack #1 [BUNDLE]

Wendy's Guides to the Fleets of Earth Sector [BUNDLE]

Wendy's Guide to the Fleets of Earth Sector, Volume 4

Moon Toad Publishing

Bounty Hunter Random Warrant System

Bounty Hunter Handbook

Quick Ship File: Roanoke and Raccoon Class Ships

Game in the Brain

Cepheus Engine 24 Career Cards

Cepheus Engine 6 Combat Career Cards

Stellagama Publishing

Superpowered!

Cepheus Deluxe Enhanced Edition

Zozer Games

Abyss

Tau Ceti

March Harrier Publishing

Minibib 2: Michael Brown

Monachus Press

Jigsaw Puzzle

Nienhaus Games

Solar Observatory

Wild Bee Publishing

Makara's Sea



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