

STAR*DRIVE SESSION SUMMARY 03/28/2010

Attendance

Paul tells everyone, "I brought my balls to share with everyone! Real Kentucky bourbon balls!"

Bruce (Lambert Fulson and Taveer) shudders.

Chris (Ten-zil Kem and Rokk Tressor) has several bourbon balls and idly muses, "Anybody remember a TV series about a guy who inherited a bow from his father that shot exploding arrows? And he fought against snake men with hilariously bad masks?" No one will admit to having seen such a show.

Tim (Gerard Peppin and Haggernak) reveals to all of us the secret to cooking a good tuna steak. The horrible, sanity-blasting secret that must never again be uttered.

Patrick (Martin St. John and Lenny) enters. He partakes of *Chris*' cheap mexican cervesas while proclaiming, "These look just like sodas, they must be trying to rope in the college kids. And the under-12s."

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Spec / Level</i>	<i>Description</i>
Lambert Fulson	Bruce	FA 6	Rigunmor Trader
Taveer	Bruce	TO 7	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	Thuldand Warlion
Ken Takashi	Ernest	D (TO) 5	Star Force Captain
Ivan Stukov	Peco	D (CS) 5	Thuldand Diplomat and Retired General
Adun Zelnaga	Peco	MW 6	Fraal Mindwalker Doctor Guy
Gerard Pepin	Tim	MW 5	Borealin Professor and Ambassador
Haggernak	Tim	CS 4	Administrator and Security Officer

Dateline Vieron: Marching Against the Kroath

With the destruction of the kroath fleet by a huge alien spaghetti monster, the way is open to assault the Jaen Dome to clear away the kroath contamination. *Captain Ken Takashi* details down a detachment of Concord Marines in Paladin body tanks to back up the Vieronite troops, a mix of Thuldand legionnaires and Vieron cyborg and mutant militia.

Just before the battle, the Thuldand commander Commodore Thea Pfender gives a rousing battle speech:

"Today we break the Kroath occupational force forever. Today we liberate this planet from the yoke of an alien oppressor. Today we show the Externals what it means to be human!

"This will not be easy. The enemy is vicious, implacable. They have superior weaponry and advanced alien technology. They will fight savagely.

"But at last the alien space fleet has been destroyed, thanks to the Lighthouse crew. With the Lighthouse's help, we have the advantage of orbital bombardment. We have the advantage of native Vieronites, adapted perfectly to the high gravity and poisonous atmosphere of the planet. And, certainly not least, we have the immense courage and power of Thuldand Legionnaires! Long live the Empire!

"I have full confidence in this army to carry the day. We will accept nothing less than complete eradication of the Kroath forces.

"Good luck and the blessings of the Cosimir on you all."

A Summary of the Rules

The humans will win if they can gain 20 victory points, scoring one point for each kroath they kill, two points for destroying a kroath drop ship, three points for killing the kroath leader, and five points for clearing the dome. The kroath win if they kill all the humans, or make it impossible for the humans to fulfill their victory conditions.

The human side can call in orbital bombardments, but lose three victory points for each they call in (after all, they want to liberate the dome, not destroy it).

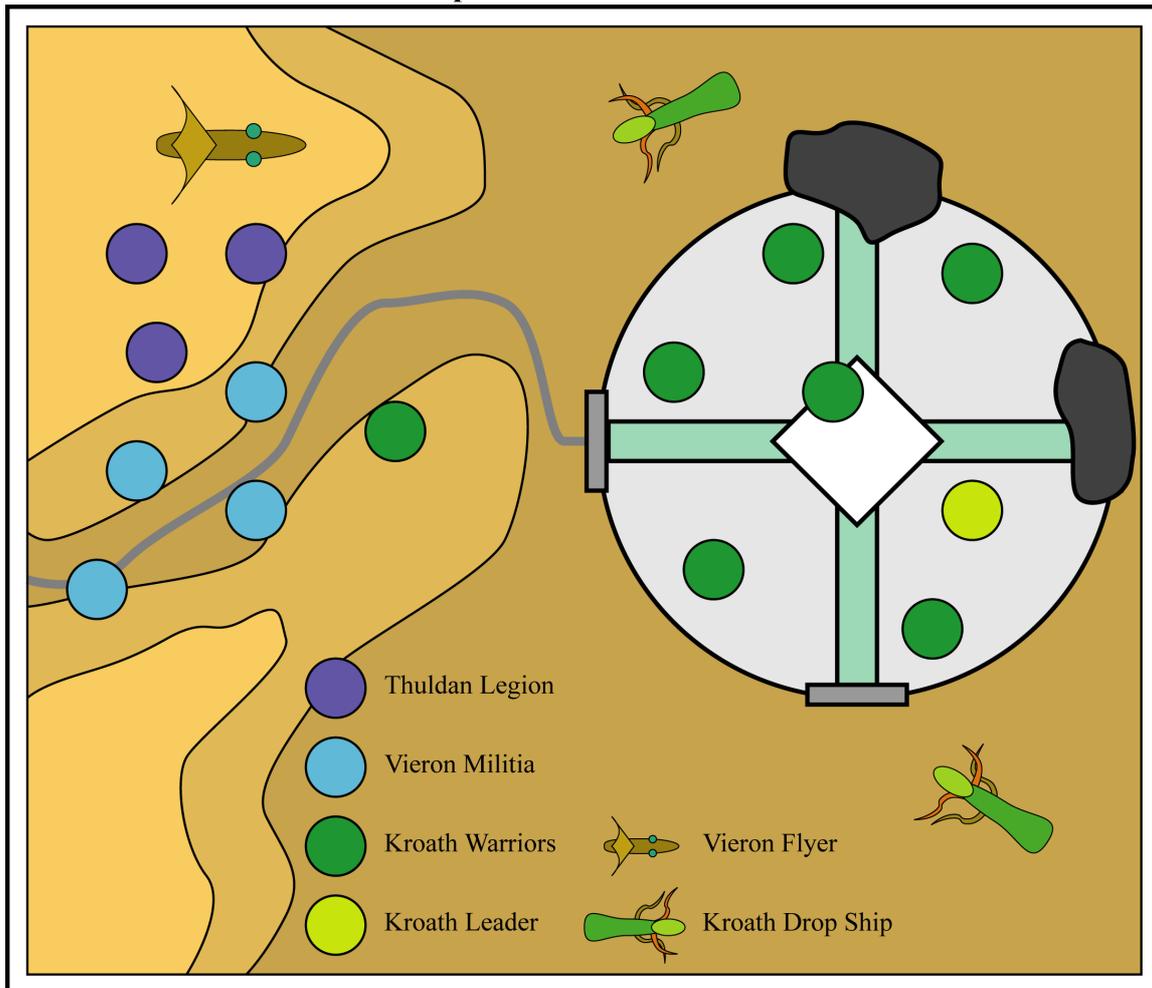
<i>Unit Type</i>	<i>Hits to Kill</i>	<i>Hits On (1d6)</i>	<i>Move (Areas)</i>
Vieronite Platoon (50 cyborgs and mutants)	1	4-	1

Unit Type	Hits to Kill	Hits On (1d6)	Move (Areas)
Thuldan Legionnaires (20 genetically enhanced warriors)	1.5	2-	1
Kroath Warriors (20 alien monsters)	1	3-	1
Kroath Leader (1 giant alien monster)	3	5-	1
Vieronite Flyer or Kroath Drop Pod	1	3-	2

A flying unit attack will attack every enemy unit in the square, but will leave friendly units untouched. An orbital strike will attack *every* unit in the square, friendly or not. A flying unit can carry one unit. Only flying units can attack other flyers, unless the flyer lands to drop off troops – this makes it vulnerable for one round.

The kroath troops start concealed. They are revealed when a human stack moves adjacent, or when they move.

Assault Upon the Kroath at Jaen Dome



The Advance Begins

The humans move in under cover of their flyer, swiftly eliminating one kroath warrior with strafing. The kroath dropships move to attack the flyer, but it evades. The kroath pilots are slow and clumsy in the high gravity.

A kroath advance patrol strikes at the Vieronites, slaughtering three platoons at the cost of only one kroath unit. But the kroath miscalculate, leaving their two dropships concentrated and vulnerable to an orbital strike. The Thuldan FAC makes the call and shatters both dropships with a missile called down from the *Lighthouse*. And the counterattack by the Vieronite militia eliminate the remainder of the kroath advance troops.

Breakthrough!

Recognizing that they are now vulnerable to air assault, the kroath withdraw into the dome. But as the human troops approach a sally force of kroath warriors emerges from the west airlock. Human guns and air strikes swiftly cut them down, though the kroath exact a horrible price from the weakly-defended Vieronite militia.

Final Victory

When the Thuldan legionnaires are able to break into Jaen Dome they find the remains of a horrible lab used to convert captured colonists into kroath. Even though the Thuldan officers and the *Lighthouse* officers already expected this, the Vieronites had not realized at all; many of them took the discovery quite hard.

When the final casualty totals come out, 350 colonists are identified as either slain or wounded in the attack. This amounts to some one-third of the entire human population of the colony.

When Shall We Have the Kangaroo Court?

Captain Takashi calls in *Haggernak* to ask for help. Takashi has talked to *Consulate Minister Thayne* and he has learned that *Klaus Otterschmidt* is backed by important factions in the Concord. The man might be annoying but he cannot simply be dismissed, even if his real problem with Takashi has roots in a personal issue (he blames Takashi for his family's death in a military action for which Captain Takashi bears some responsibility). Takashi wants Haggernak to investigate the final fate of Otterschmidt's family. So far Haggernak's team has hit many roadblocks in trying to research this, it seems as if data regarding Otterschmidt's family has been intentionally obscured by someone.

Also, the medical reports on *Gerard Peppin* after his alien encounter have come back from the lab. All indications are that his body is no more than 24 hours old – he no longer has any scars or signs of actual aging. Captain Takashi notes that *Ten-zil Kem* had asked at the time, “Why are we bringing this man back on board?” It is possible that Ten-Zil Kem was correct, at least in this instance. Haggernak and Takashi agree to send Martin St. John to keep an eye on Peppin, while Haggernak still has a security detachment observing St. John (after the recent accusations of treason against St. John).

Credit Default Whatsits? Where Did All the Money Go?

Lambert Fulson has a problem. He's leveraged to the hilt and needs to raise some money. He's gone to the local *Bank of Faith* (operated by the Orlamus, of course) to beg them to extend him additional credit. His loan officer is *Argentia Jessemen*, and as soon as he lays eyes upon her his heart starts to flutter. She has large, chestnut eyes, straight and thick black hair, a graceful build and a keen business sense – everything he could possibly desire. His need to impress her leads him to deal with someone he would normally never speak to: *Greg Ramsey*, a mysterious and powerful man with a low brow, crooked nose, and “connections”.

This leads to a meeting in an anonymous cargo container between Lambert Fulson, Ramsey and two of his associates. Ramsey indicates that he needs an object hidden until the *Lighthouse* reaches Mantebron: it is a live egg and needs to be kept warm, anywhere between 85F and 100F should be fine.

No more than two minutes after Lambert Fulson leaves the cargo container he runs afoul of two administrators. Thinking swiftly, he slips into a restroom and considers trying to swallow the egg or stash it in one of his orifices. Instead, he stashes the egg next to the warm-water supply under the sink. He's washing his hands when the administrators enter to apprehend him.

Soon, up on the security level, the fraal officer Gaythe Ahnan summons Haggernak. He meets her at an observation room. They have Lambert Fulson down below in the interrogation chamber. Haggernak takes charge of the investigation: An anonymous tip given to the Administrators accused Fulson of smuggling dangerous biological contraband, specifically an *ofuxe egg*. Haggernak suspects that Fulson may have stashed the egg inside his own body and begins hunting for some medical gloves that won't rip on his huge wren claws. Fortunately for Lambert Fulson, investigators manage to recover the ofuxe egg from the restroom before the tripod cavity-inspector robot is necessary.

While Lambert Fulson is calling up Ten-zil Kem (the first lawyer who comes to mind), Haggernak is learning more about ofuxe eggs. The ofuxe itself is both very toxic and from an endangered environment. It secretes several chemicals that have a variety of effects on humans. The egg is so toxic that even touching it without protection can be lethal. Even more important, an investigator has found three bodies in an unmarked cargo container near where Lambert Fulson was apprehended, killed by charge pistol.

Even more unfortunate, at the time he was apprehended Fulson was carrying a charge pistol.

Ten-zil Kem soon arrives and confers with Lambert Fulson. Fulson explains the context and (roughly) where to find the egg. Ten-zil Kem talks to Haggernak, who tells him about the legal issues (including the fact that charges aren't yet filed) and who also mentions that direct skin contact with the ofuxe egg could be lethal. They work out some deals, in particular Ten-zil Kem persuades Haggernak to refrain from filing actual charges in the hopes of getting Fulson to cooperate.

At this time, all ship systems go offline for a short time as the *Lighthouse* prepares to enter drivespace to leave the Vieron system. Just as the lights go out, Haggernak calls out to Lambert Fulson, “Hey! We found the gloves!” It turns out that in space, you *can* hear Lambert Fulson scream.

One Morning in Drivespace

Lenny wakes up feeling truly awful. All of his scales feel like they're flaking off. He thinks, “This isn't normal. I'd better go down to the doctor's place go get this checked out.” *Doctor Adun Zelnaga* examines him and says that he's just going through molting a couple of years early. It's a normal part of t'sa adulthood. This is disturbing to him, because it means he needs to go through the ritual of *t'ssatanka'ssa*. Unfortunately, he doesn't

have all of the necessary supplies for the ritual. The most important ingredient is the special ink for the tattooing after the chrysalis stage. Lenny suspects this ink will be hard to find on a human space station.

He decides to contact Lambert Fulson, who is usually good for this kind of thing. He quickly finds that Fulson isn't answering his phone because he's in the brig on some trumped-up charge. Fortunately, Haggernak is allowing visitors. Lenny only gets to talk to Lambert Fulson briefly before the combination of symptoms caused by ofuxe poison and medication from the administrator's medic cause Fulson to lose consciousness.

The Detectives Get To Work

Haggernak decides to ask Lenny to help with the investigation on the theory that he is a visitor/friend of Lambert's and is suspected of having illicit business ties, and so might be able to help. Haggernak, Lenny, and Ten-zil work together to try and find out what happened.

Starting with the coroner's report they determine the time of death as an hour before Lambert entered the storage container. Haggernak wonders "what was Lambert doing in there then?"

Lenny claims, "he owns that storage container."

Haggernak asks, "why were the bodies in it then?"

Lenny shrugs, "nevermind, it's not his container. I made that up."

Haggernak stares at Lenny.

Haggernak sums it up as "It looks like those three guys walked into a storage container, got lasered ("shot," corrects Ten-zil) then an hour later Lambert walked in, then walked out. However, there's no way to know who else has been in there."

The storage container does not look like it belongs to anyone currently on the station, but it was paid in advance.

Haggernak: "What are the odds that Lambert is a fall guy?"

Ten-zil: "I'd say the odds are good, he's not very bright."

Lenny pipes up, "Were the bodies moved into the container from elsewhere?"

Haggernak thinks for a moment, "The entire crime scene was scanned into the computer. Let me bring it up." He begins typing with glacial pace. Ten-zil is pained, to his core.

T: "Can I, **please**, do that for you?"

H: "Sure."

T: "Okay, what's your password?"

H: "That sounds reasonable. It's spatula."

Ten-zil discovers that Haggernak's account is infested with a multitude of weird modifications from the mechalus Taveer that the weren has no clue how to delete. Ten-zil hides a backdoor among the mechalus clutter.

Amazing success! Haggernak determines that the bodies had been moved. Weird.

Haggernak and the others go to the crime scene and Haggernak tries to track the bodies. Lenny and Ten-Zil are puzzled by Haggernak's insistence on tracking by scent. Moderate success!

It seems the bodies were moved from another secluded spot in a nearby storage facility. Haggernak doesn't actually know how to dust for prints, but he does have the Management skill. He calls down his staff. They dust for prints, and only find prints for the three dead people.

Ten-zil summarizes. "Okay, you got an anonymous tip about Lambert Fulson, he was spotted in one room with dead bodies, another room with contraband, but didn't actually have anything on him."

Lenny: "So, he's guilty of being in places?"

Haggernak examines the results of ballistics. The gun Lambert had on him was registered to the victim, and matches the ballistics for the murder weapon.

Haggernak states at Ten-zil. Dun dun DUN.

Ten-zil spills the story Lambert told him to Haggernak. Lambert went in, talked to the guys, got the egg, didn't kill anyone.

Haggernak: "He have any enemies?"

Lenny: "He's up to the eyeballs in debt."

Kem: "This is a freakishly elaborate set up."

They investigate Lambert Fulson's and Greg Ramsey's quarters.

Lambert Fulson's room: amazing success! Haggernak finds damn near every hiding hole in Fulson's quarters. There's an amazing volume of crap in there. But nothing pertaining to the case. Fulson's room doesn't indicate a chronic murderer, so Haggernak doesn't care – still, he gathers evidence for leverage on fulson in the future. Haggernak is initially frightened of, and then puzzled by, Lambert Fulson's lifesize Dalek replica. Who

knew he was a vintage sci-fi nerd?

Ramsey's room: ordinary success. :(

Greg Ramsey has luxurious quarters. Haggernak spots the T'sa Lenny being suspicious and immediately accuses Lenny of pocketing silverware, but Lenny did not. Haggernak is embarrassed; Lenny exploits Haggernak's embarrassment to fill his pockets with stuff...

The man's room was already ransacked, but very carefully. Someone took all the valuable items and emptied the safe. Whoever did this, knew exactly what to steal when they came in here.

Weird.

The wind howls outside the space station. Perhaps the stress is getting to Everyone.

The Man With the Screaming Brain

Martin St. John has been asked to keep an eye on the alien-touched Ambassador Peppin, so he gives Peppin a call. "You know those dhros? They're actually a danger. We need to ramp up the propaganda to educate people on how dangerous they are." Peppin agrees to help ("sure, I've got three telekinetic dhros in my lab!" "Really? That's a relief!"), as soon as he floats back down from the ceiling.

Peppin hasn't been told that he's a reclone of himself, but he knows that his track marks are gone and his scars are gone. His veins are open. Score!

Peppin finds he has moments of puzzlement, even disgust, at human free will. But these thoughts pass in time.

St John makes posters with Peppin (along with a couple artistic grad students and a couple administrators assigned to watch St John for treason...)

St John watches's Peppin for signs of weird. He find the standard weird.

Peppin tries to read St John's mind, and discovers 1) Peppin's powers are stonger, 2) less tiring, and 3) St. John totally caught Peppin reading his mind. Whoops!

Rokk's Unorthodox Solution

Rokk Tressor talks to his CIB handler

Handler: Haggernak is asking about sensitive data – he's looking into missing people from Olmec 9.

Rokk: Should we meddle?

Handler: It would be good if we knew why he's asking.

Rokk: I can find out.

Handler: His needs may actually override our usual security. It's just weird.

Rokk: I'll go ask. Also, have a hand written report on the peppin incident. I wonder if we should kidnap Peppin and open him up. He's just an ambassador, no one would miss him. I mean, after we blow up his embassy.

Handler: Eh, seems messy, better not. Though, he is a partier. We just need a plausably drugged body to cover up... hmm...

Rokk contacts Haggernak to find out why he is looking into Olmec 9

Rokk: Haggernack!

Hagg: Busy with paperwork!

Rokk: Oh I see... that word has two Ms.

Hagg: Goddammit.

Rokk starts by just generally asking Haggernak what cases he's working on. Haggernak shares some details about the Lambert Fulson case, they chat about it.

Rokk gets around to asking about the Olmec investigation, Haggernak indicates it's political. He tells Rokk Tressor that he's looking for the family of Klaus Otterschmidt, who may or may not have gotten away before Olmec 9 was transformed into a poisonous radioactive planet. If Haggernak could prove that Otterschmidt's family is alive, it would really help the captain. Alternatively, if he could prove that they're dead but that Captain Takashi had nothing to do with their deaths, that could also help. "Like if they died a year before the accident from cancer or something!"

Rokk offers, "I don't think whole families usually die of cancer at the same time."

Rokk also asks if haggernak has found any new evidence of hostile aliens on the Lighthouse, but all has been quiet on this front lately.

Rokk then goes to visit Professor Peppin. Peppin is with Martin St. John, still working on anti-dhros propaganda. St. John has roped in some of the UCEF orphan children to help, and Peppin has grabbed all the artistically-inclined Borealin grad students he could find.

Peppin: Hi. Want some bourbon? It's in ball form.

Rokk: Um, I'm here for the debriefing.

Rokk listens patiently as Professor Peppin tries to describe the subjective experience of being atomically disassembled and reborn as a creature of light. Rokk is uncertain if Peppin is describing his recent experience with the alien vrl'hok or if he's describing his drug-addled dreams last night. Rokk does get the sense though that Peppin's psychic powers seem to have become immensely stronger.

Rokk asks Peppin if he could use his psychic powers to solve the Lambert Fulson case. "Come down to the lab and touch stuff. That work on corpses?"

St John wants to come along, after thanking his orphan for an anti-dhros poster made from macaroni.

I See Things, I See Them With My Eyes

Peppin talks Haggernak into letting him use his psychic powers to help the investigation, even though no evidence that is directly based on the psychic visions of a non-Concord civilian can be used in a Concord court. Peppin holds the murder weapon and gets the distinct feeling that it was used in a cold, pre-meditated act of violence. He concentrates harder and sees Ramsey firing the gun. Ramsey seems to be shooting himself, or an exact duplicate of himself, anyway. (twin? Clone?)

Following that success, Peppin asks if he can touch the poisonous ofuxe egg and get impressions from that. "Sure, but you have to use special gloves."

Peppin: "I can't use gloves, I have to touch it with my bare skin. It's a psychic thing."

Haggernak: "You do understand that the last guy who touched this egg is now in a coma, right?"

Peppin: "That's no problem. I've been in chemically-induced comas lots of times. It's pretty much my standard Saturday night."

To reduce the chances of a bad reaction, Peppin uses his medical skills and doses himself with an anti-venom before touching the egg. When he touches it he gets an intense vision where he seems to become the ofuxe who laid the egg. He can feel the egg squeezing obscenely out of his ovipositor. He screams.

Rokk Tressor: "What is it? What did you see?"

Peppin: "Unfortunately nothing I can't un-see. I'm not used to the strength of my new powers!"

Peppin tries with the egg one more time and this time sees Greg Ramsey handing the egg to Lambert Fulson. He notes that Ramsey was wearing thin gloves while handling the egg. He must have known it would poison Fulson, perhaps counted on it.

Things are looking more and more like Greg Ramsey faked his own death, trying to pin it on Lambert Fulson, who still might not survive the egg poisoning. If Fulson had tried to conceal the egg by swallowing it or hiding it in or on his body somewhere, he would certainly be dead.

Forensic Accounting

Ten-zil hacks the computers to see if Ramsey's financial accounts have been active since his "murder." ("Hey, Haggernak, what's your password again?" "Spatula.") Although none of Ramsey's accounts have been activated, Ten-zil finds that Ramsey made a huge withdrawal before his murder, transferring the money onto a portable 3-D chip. Based on this it's likely that Ramsey fled the station before starfall, taking his money with him. Checking the station records, Ten-zil sees that several ships stayed behind in the Vieron system, he could have been on any of them.

Lenny asks, "So how did he get a perfect replica body anyway? If it was a clone or plastic surgery maybe somebody on the station would know where it came from."

Haggernak thinks this sounds like a good suggestion and asks the coroner to re-examine the body to look for signs of such tampering.

In the meantime Lenny is looking more and more haggard. "You know, I really need to get some of that special ink for my ritual. Maybe you can help me, Ten-zil?" Lenny bats his lizard-like eyes at the VoidCorp Ambassador. Ten-zil shudders.

Ink Madness

Ten-zil and Lenny first try an obvious stop: the local tattoo parlor. The tattoo artist there stocks several T'sa inks for use in det'sya patterns, which are very important in t'sa society, but he doesn't stock the *t'ssatanka'ssa* ink. "That stuff is nearly impossible to import legally for anyone but a t'sa. It's chemically similar to several illegal

human drugs. T'sa can have it specially shipped to them as part of the Concord Cultural Respect laws, but we can't get it. Usually a t'sa who is about to go through the change will order it themselves and bring it to the tattoo artist."

Lenny is a bit defensive, "I would have, but I wasn't supposed to molt for several years yet. This came as a surprise."

Ten-zil thinks about it and then downloads the chemical specs for the ink. "Hmm, I might know someone who has this, or something similar enough to it to work."

Lenny chuffs, "It can't just be similar! It has to be made from a tree that only grows on H'ssath'tta and then blessed by a priest seven times before being laid in a th'sshth for twenty-five cycles of..."

Ten-zil cuts him off, "Yeah, yeah. I said I can get it."

Lenny jumps up and down, "OK, let's go!"

"Oh no," says Ten-zil, "I have to do this alone. This guy is a hard-core Thuldan bigot. He won't deal with non-humans, and he probably wouldn't even sell it to me if he thought it was for you."

Lenny is dejected.

Ten-zil contacts the Thuldan drug dealer, *Marlin Dohl*. Ten-zil punches up a selection of possible drugs that he thinks will be close enough to what Lenny requires.

Marlin inspects the list for a few moments before responding, "I'll see what I can do. I mean, we're in drivespace now so I'm limited in what I can get right now. If you could wait a few days then I could probably get you exactly what you want."

Ten-zil shakes his head. "Sorry, I can't wait. Please just get me what you can."

Marlin contacts Ten-zil later that day and gets him a chemical compound that is fairly chemically similar to the vital ink. Ten-zil thanks him.

When Ten-zil gives the ink to Lenny, he claims that it is *t'ssatanka'ssa* ink. Lenny asks for a certificate of authenticity but is denied. Lenny goes off to have his ceremony.

Doctor Wizard Strikes Again!

The new forensics results come back from the lab and confirm Haggernak's suspicions. The body of Greg Ramsey is indeed a high-quality clone, almost indistinguishable from the original man. The main difference is in the brain, which is not fully developed. It appears to have been quick-grown and then kept in storage for some time. Typically this is done by certain rich unethical people in order to have a source of spare body-parts, but it is equally useful for a criminal who may need to fake his own death.

Haggernak says, "This kind of thing should not be going on in my station. I have to get to the bottom of this. Are there some sort of illegal black market doctors who do this kind of thing?"

Ten-zil chimes in, "I can think of one. He goes by the name Doctor Wizard, he does illegal cybernetics operations mostly."

Haggernak fumes, "OK, let's go talk to this 'Doctor Wizard.'"

"It's not that simple. He never operates in the same place twice. Only a couple people would know how to find him."

Haggernak thinks for a moment. "I bet if I busted a few of the right kind of criminals, then offered them deals, they would give up his location in an instant."

With this plan in hand, Haggernak prepares to hunt down Doctor Wizard. But that will have to wait for another session.

All characters gain 3 XP.