

STAR*DRIVE SESSION SUMMARY 08/29/2010

Attendance

Chris (Drest Talorgin, Ten-zil Kem) notes, “I lost a character last session, so I’m feeling really bitter.” *Tim* (Gerard Pepin, Haggernak) mourns that he forgot his laptop at home, so he won’t be able to put together a summary for the game. *Bruce* (Lambert Fulson, Taveer) is barely able to contain his inhuman glee as he explains that not only does he have a laptop but he also is taking Monday off, so he’ll be around for the entire game. *Paul* averts his eyes and begs, “Contain your glee! Contain your inhuman glee!” *Patrick* (Lenny, Martin St. John) is amazed that Bruce was able to upset Paul’s sensitivities... *Ernest* (Captain Ken Takashi, Markus Oroszlan) sits back quietly, thinking, “My work here is almost done.”

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Spec / Level</i>	<i>Description</i>
Lambert Fulson	Bruce	FA 8	Rigunmor Trader
Taveer	Bruce	TO 9	Lighthouse Chief Engineer
Martin St. John	Patrick	TO 10	Lighthouse Head Pilot
Lenny	Patrick	FA 9	T’sa Ambassador
Ten-zil Kem	Chris	D (TO) 11	VoidCorp Ambassador, dressed like a 1980’s Space Pimp
Drest Talorgin	Chris	CS 11	Concord Intelligence Officer
Markus Oroszlan	Ernest	CS 10	Thuldan Warlion
Ken Takashi	Ernest	D (TO) 9	Star Force Captain
Ivan Stukov	Peco	D (CS) 5	Thuldan Diplomat and Retired General
Adun Zelnaga	Peco	MW 6	Fraal Mindwalker Doctor Guy
Gerard Pepin	Tim	D (MW) 9	Borealin Professor and Ambassador
Haggernak	Tim	CS 9	Administrator and Security Officer

The Start of the Session

The characters depart from their adventures of last time having purchased “I Survived the Thunder-Hole!” t-shirts at the concession stand. *Lenny* observes that the concession stand is placed just before the body-catching net: apparently the organizers want to catch their customers at a good moment. *Gerard Pepin* makes a point of buying a “**I Didn’t** Survive the Thunder-Hole!” t-shirt and has it sent to *Rokk Tressor’s* next of kin. The others agree that this is a very sensitive gesture.

A Reminder of the Factions on Lucullus

The characters are all out on Lucullus, a onetime Solarian world that long ago devolved into control by various organized crime syndicates. The principal groups are:

- *The Lucullan League*: the world government, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the criminal organizations.
- *Technospiders*: Currently favorable to the *Lighthouse* plan.
- *Free Trade Guild*: Mostly business interests, also quite favorable to the *Lighthouse* proposals.
- *Jamaican Syndicate*: now favorably-inclined to the characters after the rescue of the son of one of their leaders.
- *The Picts*: incredibly savage and murderous, but blue-painted.
- *Union Penantes*: Like a trade union, but thoroughly manipulated by various criminal gangs. Just like real trade unions.
- *The Supervisors*: the psychic remnants of the original Solarian law enforcement and prison administration organizations.

The characters want the Lucullan League to declare in favor of the *Lighthouse*-sponsored efforts to unify the Verge, but to do this they will need the agreement of every faction on the planet as each one of them has veto power over the actions of the League.

Organizing Rokk Tressor’s Remembrance

Martin St. John suggests, “We should have Rokk’s remains cremated, then shoot him off in a missile. I think he’d like that.” Rokk shows his approval for this plan by not sitting up and intoning for brains.

Markus Oroszlan goes one further; “I think we should load his ashes into a zero-point missile and shoot it into these bastards’ sun. Hopefully we’ll be able to destabilize it. That’ll show these chicken-fondlers who’s boss!” The others note that Rukk apparently doesn’t object to this plan either, but decide to refrain from endorsing it.

There is actually a very touching service, with several speeches. *Captain Ken Takashi* gives a particularly good one on the nature of service and duty. He notably doesn’t mention that the “station greeter” was actually a CIB agent, as there are folks who don’t have the appropriate security clearance in the audience.

The episode of *An Hour with Pepin* featuring him going down the Thunderhole is dedicated to the memory of Rukk Tressor. The end of the episode switches suddenly from video of the underground river to Rukk’s funeral procession. The viewers don’t seem to mind.

What About the Picts?

The characters can count upon the support of two of the six major Lucullan factions, but if they expect the Lucullan League to actually vote in favor of joining the Verge Alliance they need favorable relationships with all six factions.

The characters ask their local Lucullan rep how the Picts engage in diplomacy. They have the idea that beating the Pict leader in single combat might be on the table. The Technospider representative explains that the Pict leader *King Steel* is actually very fond of suddenly challenging Concord diplomats to single combat, Thunderdome-style. This has meant the deaths of quite a few diplomats, as King Steel is a heavily-cybered wren who reached his current position by wading through a pool of blood and dead bodies.

Captain Takashi proposes giving the Picts a chance for violence, perhaps by promoting the chances of hiring them out as mercenaries to fight the Klicks. They could bring home armloads of alien booty and gain a reputation far greater than that of any Pict leader in history.

The intelligence briefing from the Technospiders suggests that King Steel is vicious and dumb, but sleeps very lightly. He relies heavily upon his old gang for advice and leadership talents. He has no specific relationship with any one female – he is more of a serial abuser who simply calls out for whatever female he happens to like. *Gerard*

Pepin notes, “Just like Glenn Beck! Or President Nacho Camacho!” (In the background, *Ten-zil Kem* whispers, “Brought to you by Carl’s Jr!”)

King Steel also enjoys every cybernetic enhancement useful in combat. This provides the characters with an avenue: Taveer can write a virus to disable King Steel’s cybernetics, then put it into a device Lenny can introduce to him during his next scheduled maintenance.

Haggernak suggests, “If we’re going to work this out, I’m going to need the scummiest guy I know to help arrange the contact with King Steel. And that’s actually Lambert Fulson.”

Captain Takashi swiftly vetoes that idea, “We’re going to need Lambert to deal with the Union Penantes. Trouble is that when we use him he has to talk to people and the more of that he does the more risk that he’s going to be taken down and molested like a penguin. Especially if he tries talking to the Picts.”

The characters go with the alternative plan of simply having Haggernak insult King Steel’s loins during negotiations. Fortunately, whenever you have a guy like King Steel you also have talented newcomers nipping at his heels, guys like *Drest Talorgin* – a talented fighter who leads a small gang. The Technospiders say that he is unusual among Pict leaders in that he tends to keep his word and honor agreements. The characters make contact with him – they work out an agreement that includes the gift of a de-branded set of Concord Marine cerametal clamshell armor and the secret words necessary to shut down King Steel’s cybernetics.

Nolan Ames, the local Concord ambassador to the Lucullan League, indicates that he can get a message to Drest Talorgin without too much trouble. An actual package, sadly, would create more suspicion.

Drest Talorgin, Duke of the Picts

Drest Talorgin is a substantial individual in the Pict organization – he controls a territory of several blocks like a feudal duke, primarily maintaining his perquisites through personal force of arms. He gets a message from the Concord requesting a meeting. He promptly slays his main lieutenant, then tells his second lieutenant, “You

have been promoted! Watch the shop while I'm away, and if you get any ideas about advancing your station at my expense see Object Lesson #1 cooling over in the corner."

The new first lieutenant nods, eager to express his loyalty to his boss.

Building Bridges with the Least Murderous of the Psychopaths

The meeting between the characters and Drest Talorgin is set for a nice planetside hotel. *Lenny* protests, "Real criminals don't meet in nice hotel conference rooms with catering! They meet in junkyards far from anyone else!"

Haggernak grumbles, "You must want to get yourself shot in the back really badly. *Sensible* criminals use conference rooms and popular taco joints."

There is a round of introductions. On the *Lighthouse* side, there is Haggernak, Taveer, Lenny and a couple of other crew. On the Union Penantes side, Drest Talorgin is joined by a couple of bodyguards and his number three and four lieutenants.

Haggernak proposes a plan that has the Concord hiring Pict mercenaries to fight the Klicks. Drest Talorgin is somewhat willing to agree to this plan, and offers some suggestions on meeting with King Steel.

An Audience with the King

The characters arrange an audience with King Steel. To make it less obvious that Lenny is going to slip away to perform terrible deeds upon King Steel's cybernetics, the characters bring a dozen t'sa along.

King Steel's audience chamber is drawn directly from *Return of the Jedi*. The chamber is populated out with a remarkable array of aliens and Picts of several species. King Steel sits upon a skull-encrusted throne with two half-clad human slave girls chained to the armrests.

Lenny tries sneaking off, only to find that King Steel's guards are very perceptive: one of them swiftly catches him. Thinking swiftly, Markus Oroszlan sees one Pict tribal stealing some things and slashes at him with his chainsword, loudly announcing, "You show disrespect to the King!" Unfortunately, he cuts the wrong tribesman. Markus and the tribesman square off and chop each other silly. Fortunately, Markus is an artist with the chainsword and after three or four hits is able to mortally wound the man. By the

time he does, however, the actual thief is long since gone. Markus howls, “No stealing from the king!”

This time, Lenny is completely unnoticed when he slips away.

Markus shakes the blood off his chainsword, triggering the “autoclean” setting as he does.

The Equipment Room

Lenny sneaks into the Pictish Equipment Room. He finds King Steel’s diagnostic array. Unfortunately, he also finds a technician, an attractive t’sa female in an alluring uniform. She demands to know why he is there. He lamely answers, “To leer at your beautiful eyebuds...” She screams, so he shoots her with his rocket gun. Lenny is clearly not cut out for the role of James Bond... He shoots her twice and she falls.

Lenny swiftly installs Taveer’s sabotage device, then drags the technician’s body into the corridor. He decides to take her along with him.

Markus Impresses King Steel

By the time Lenny returns to the Audience Room he is able to hear various loud voices acclaiming Markus and offering him membership in the Picts. King Steel swats Markus on the back with his cybernetically-enhanced hand. Markus staggers, but manages to get out, “You have a very lovely war-house here.”

“Yes! These are the most powerful warriors on the planet! The most powerful warriors in the entire Verge! We are forging a new order here, an order ruled by strength! We exult in the cries of the defeated weaklings! Raaaaugh!”

Markus does his level best to avoid making any permanent promises while mentioning that there are some species out there that demand great warriors to defeat them: the clicks and the kroath.

A Career Fair

The characters persuade King Steel to hold a sort of festival or career fair to find Pict warriors brave enough to face the clicks and the kroath in hand-to-hand combat. Seven hundred Picts show up in various stages of inebriation to watch as Haggernak faces King Steel across a huge open space.

King Steel demands, "What does the Concord want?"

Haggernak answers, "The Concord wants Pict warriors for the Verge Alliance!"

King Steel sneers, "You would throw my men away on the front lines while the Jamaican weaklings and Free Trade drug addicts tap on their computers? What chance have we of victorious battles! We have seen your videos of kroath fighting!"

Haggernak needles the King, "Are you afraid of them?"

King Steel roars, "We are afraid of NOTHING!" (Big cheer)

The exchanges continue for a while, but it is clear that King Steel is not very receptive to Haggernak's proposals. Eventually Drest Talorgin challenges King Steel. He steps into the Circle of Blood, intoning the shutdown commands as he does. He is pleased to see that King Steel slows down noticeably. But then King Steel starts out with a horrific strike that Drest Talorgin only barely evades.

King Steel commences pounding Drest Talorgin into bloody gibbets. It doesn't take long before Haggernak is overcome with indignation at the unfairness of the contest and leaps in to slam King Steel with a tri-staff. King Steel turns to ram his blade-covered, pile-driver-like fists into Haggernak's midsection again and again and again. It doesn't take long for Haggernak to fall.

Markus Oroszlan attempts to plead for Haggernak's life. "King Steel! I..."

King Steel turns and charges, "Yaaaaaaaaa!" Markus is completely amazed at the weren's sheer aggression level. Markus readies his chainsword and fights for his life. He takes two gruesome wounds, but manages to drop King Steel through exhaustion. Then he quickly administers first aid to Haggernak and Drest Talorgin. And executes King Steel.

Everyone is shocked that King Steel has been defeated. Markus proclaims, "Enough talk! Who will come with us to fight clicks and kroath?" There is a great roar of acclaim. Various Picts fling slave-girls in Markus' direction. Markus joins in the celebration as he organizes the Great Pict Crusade to Bring Death to the Alien Interlopers.

A Career Change

Drest Talorgin quickly understands that he needs to change his career from Pict boss. His defeat at the hands of King Steel left him unable to hold the loyalty of his gang, so an offer to join the *Lighthouse* and fight aliens is very attractive.

Over the next couple of weeks, Markus identifies a Pict lieutenant with reasonable reputation and more intelligence than pond scum to replace him as King of the Picts. In the meantime, he is able to vote in favor of the Lucullan League.

A Conversation with Relvin Doch, Boss of the Union Penantes

The Technospiders explain that Executive Director Relvin Doch runs the Union Penantes. He is a petty, short-sighted loudmouth who is the puppet of *Far Histwin*, a kingmaker who hides in the shadows and is nothing close to short-sighted. Doch got his position through dumb luck. His management style involves bullying his subordinates, and he has a fairly brainless mob wife.

Ten-zil Kem, Lambert Fulson, *Gerard Pepin* and *Marcus St. John* arrange a meeting at a local vehicle assembly plant with Relvin Doch, nominally as Concord-associated business leaders. After a couple of false starts, Lambert Fulson finally figures out that Doch has already decided to back the Verge Alliance and just wants to get some nice contracts and kickbacks out of it. Ten-zil Kem proposes some VoidCorp contracts which go over well. Lambert Fulson finally wakes up and tells Doch about his deal to get unlicensed Happy Rainbow Dolphin products manufactured for sale on Bluefall. Doch decides that this represents a fantastic deal with only a small bit of bribery.

Lambert leaves the meeting deeply confused. The meeting didn't involve any deaths, and he actually managed to close a business deal he cared about. Captain Takashi is even more confused, "What do you mean nobody died? That's not one of the check-boxes on the After Action Report form!"

Now Only the Supervisors Remain

The Technospider representative Ronen tells Ten-zil Kem that the Senior Director of the Supervisors essentially never leaves a fortified bunker loaded with psychic crazies. He is power-hungry and has tried to sell out each of the other gangs more than once. He wants to rule Lucullus more than anything and has no measurable personal life. He and

his lieutenants have brainwashed most of their population into fanatic loyalty to the Supervisors.

Ronen explains that most of the Lucullan League meetings are done through remote conferencing and that the best way to proceed may be to ensure that the Supervisors can't vote. The Technospiders can jam their transmissions, but cannot help against any strange psychic communications techniques they might bring to the table. Beyond that, even though the Supervisors have a defined territory the specific identities of the Supervisors are closely held secrets. There is a government over their territory, but it is thoroughly controlled by the Supervisors. The ordinary citizens in Supervisor territory will reflexively deny the existence of Supervisors, even in the face of overwhelming evidence.

Gerard Pepin decides that he will try to find the Supervisors directly through a psychic trance. The Supervisor psychics will be able to see him. In the best case, this will provide him with an avenue to communicate with them. In the worst case, they should just be able to send him back to his body.

Pepin goes into a trance, leaving everyone in the room tasting strawberries. He searches for the biggest locus of psychic force he can find. He announces himself and detects a combination of surprise and curiosity. The psychic locus is quite a solipsist: thanks to its psychic mastery, it considers itself to be the only real creature. But now it has met something of equal power. Pepin speaks with it, eventually developing a strangely intimate relationship with the locus. The locus is hosted within the mind of the *Senior Director* of the Supervisors – it no longer requires a name as humans understand the concept.

As a small side favor, the Senior Director agrees to support the Verge Alliance.

The Lucullan League Meets

It is not long after that the Lucullan League holds a formal meeting, with Captain Takashi invited as an observer. The meeting is done through teleconference as none of the factions trust each other enough to meet in person. Of the six groups, only three have publicly-acknowledged leaders. The others have secret leaders who do not broadcast their identities at all.

There is a unanimous vote in favor of having the Lucullan League throw its weight in behind the Verge Alliance. Captain Ken Takashi makes yet another of his classical inspiring speeches.

The Pict Assault Force

Markus is able to recruit a fair number of Pict warriors to join the *Lighthouse*. Lambert Fulson, persuaded by a bagful of “booty” and some promises from the Concord (as delivered by Captain Takashi), refits one of his tramp freighters as a barracks ship. Markus promises that these men will mount the greatest assault upon the clicks that history has ever seen. Fulson takes comfort in the contract clause that makes the Concord responsible for repairs to his ship resulting from the actions of the Picts.

Next Steps for the Lighthouse

Captain Takashi and the staff consult with *Minister Michael Thain* on the next destination for the *Lighthouse* now that Lucullus has thrown in with the Verge Alliance. They decide that the world of Corrivale is the next place to corral support. The characters are familiar with Corrivale: it is shared between the Hatire and the sesheyans. It is also the local headquarters of the Hatire Mind Knights (the “Donut Knights”, from their uniforms) with whom the characters have had previous arguments. VoidCorp also has its fingers in the system, primarily because VoidCorp disputes the Corrivale sesheyans' claims of independence.

The *Lighthouse* enters drivespace.

Several Drivespace Interludes

Five days in drivespace provides all sorts of opportunity for people and things to spring up out of the woodwork and cut deals.

Martin St. John Gets a New Career

It is not long after Rokk's death that *David Cornet* (known to few as Rokk Tressor's CIB handler) approaches Martin St. John. They meet in a secret CIB-controlled location that only Taveer can see. Cornet explains that before his death, Rokk was acting as a CIB agent working to defend the Concord against alien infiltrators. In particular he was acting as a double agent, working with dangerous aliens while

sabotaging their goals. Cornet wants St. John to take Rokk's place. This would involve a transfer out of the military branch and into the CIB. St. John foolishly agrees to the deal. He looks forward to his new exciting life as a secret agent.

Pepin Sees a Ghost. Again.

Rokk Tressor wakes up in an unfamiliar bedroom in the station. It is very dark and he hears a gentle snoring sound. Gerard Pepin is sleeping in the bed. Rokk is very upset, and wakes Pepin. Pepin responds with alarm, "Aaah! Where'd Dave go?" (N.B.: Dave was Pepin's last ghost).

Pepin explains to Rokk, "Sometimes dead people come and talk to me."

Rokk offers, "I talked to your mother, and she says everything will be okay." As he mouths the words, he realizes that he actually has a message: "Uncle Emil warns you not to trust your cousin Luke."

Pepin offers, "Do you have any unfinished business?" Rokk obliges, providing a laundry list of intelligence assets who need to be contacted (and perhaps shut down). Pepin takes notes. Rokk also has a lot of technological hardware hidden in the base of the jukebox in his quarters that needs to be collected.

While Pepin goes off to pick up Rokk's old gear, Rokk experiments with his newfound status as a shade. He learns that he is (with great effort) able to move small objects and cause people to feel abnormal chills. This "experimental" phase is responsible for a remarkable number of Emergency Services calls in the residence blocks near the Borealin Embassy.

We Shoot Cheaters Hereabouts, if They're Lucky

Marlok Taneer approaches Markus Oroszlan and indicates that he needs a hard-to-locate substance, a *variable density bio-gel*. He needs only a small amount, less than half an ounce. Markus agrees to ask around, but cautions, "If this stuff ends up on any of the dice in my casino, I'm totally going to space you."

Marlok Taneer turns red and stammers, "I would never do such a thing in *your* casino!"

Markus Oroszlan asks around and eventually figures out that Gerard Pepin can make the stuff, but only sesheyans will have the necessary raw material. Fortunately, the

Lighthouse is going to Corrivale. Even more fortunate, Pepin has good relations with the onboard sesheyan community, to the point that he sometimes paints himself up and joins in their rituals. They tell him that they have some *aschme*, but they need it for their mysterious Child-Spookling ritual. He talks about all the advocacy he has (and continues) to do on their behalf, which persuades them to hand over a bit of *aschme*.

Markus in turn hands the bio-gel over to Taneer, in return for 10% of the winnings he is able to bring from his new loaded dice. He decides that he shall deliberately pay less attention than usual to the *Lighthouse* newspaper's obituary page.

He's Like a Big, Lusty Teddy Bear!

One of Ten-zil Kem's friends has a girlfriend who is... *interested* in Haggernak and wants an introduction. Ten-zil Kem overrides many concerns about Haggernak's ferocious temper as he agrees to introduce the two. He sets up a dinner for the two women, himself, and Haggernak at the Emperor's Lounge, a new Thuldand-style jazz bar in the basement underneath the Emperor's Delight. Haggernak is (under Ten-zil Kem's suggestion) sent to a hairdresser first, where he endures three hours of hearing someone talk about how, "Monsters lead such *interesting* lives..."

The woman in question is *Satine*. She is short, with greenish eyes and straight black hair. Ten-zil Kem leads off the conversation, "So, Haggernak – are you married, or mated, or whatever it is you do?"

Haggernak is confused, "Urrr... no..."

"And how about you, *Satine*?"

Satine stares at Haggernak with limpid eyes, "So far, I haven't managed to find the right... entity."

Ten-zil Kem continues to stoke the situation, "And haven't you mentioned many times your long-standing interest in bureaucracy?"

Satine chirps, "Oh yes!"

Haggernak finally figures out what is going on and tries his hand at flirting, clumsily. He is hamstrung in this by the fact that the only personality skill he possesses is Intimidate. Fortunately, *Satine* is able to seduce him even across species boundaries. This results in one really remarkable evening, but then *Satine* decides she's really not that

interested in weren and never talks to him again. Later she tells Ten-zil Kem, “That was too freaky even for me... It was like I was in bed with the Cookie Monster”

Even Lenny Has Limits

Lenny gets an interesting offer over the Grid, an anonymous message on a Gridboard some of his contacts forward to him. It sounds like someone is offering a large monetary reward for stealing a Medal of Honor that Captain Takashi earned for his actions on Calerose IV. He decides to ignore this request – he doesn’t feel like annoying the Captain.

Cheaters Aren’t the Only Ones We Shoot – Thieves Don’t Do Well Either

Gerard Pepin is alerted by silent alarm from his embassy. He goes straight to the lab and finds his gambling addict cousin *Luke Pepin* there scanning all of his research papers with a little handheld device. Gerard tells Luke, “Luke, this is very awkward.”

“Yeah..”

“Have you ever been shot with a stutter pistol?”

“Yeah.”

Bang.

Pepin calls up Lambert Fulson, “I understand you have some ships, and you may need some entertainment...”

Luke pleads, “Don’t put me on a ship full of Picts!” The poor boy has visions of himself suspended naked in a cage above a ravening pack of Picts.

Gerard explains that Luke is going to have a much different job: Luke will be assigned as administrator to the ship, responsible for a lot of tasks that he isn’t really good at like organizing paperwork and replenishing supplies. The camera crew will follow him around, waiting for the inevitable disaster. Gerard Pepin expects that it will be extremely popular. And if he agrees to the deal, Pepin promises not to do even more horrible things. Lambert agrees to this in exchange for a filming fee and 10% of the residuals.

After a few days, the Picts start to wear shirts reading, “I _____ Luke Pepin”. Markus Oroszlan’s various pleas that they shouldn’t mistreat him too much have less effect than he would like.

Lambert feels bad about Luke's fate, in his own fashion: he gives the lad an "I Got Thunder-Holed" t-shirt.

The End of the Session

The session ends with the *Lighthouse* starrising into the Corrivale system, hoping for the best. One character for each player gets 7 experience points; the other gets 2 experience points.