

THE LAST PARSEC

TALES OF THE RED BAND

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THE RED BAND CONGLOMERATE

During the early exploration of the Known Worlds, JumpCorp survey teams color-coded bands of expansion. For several decades, the “red band” proved the most dangerous — and the most profitable. Eventually, several of these trailblazing charters joined together to form the “Red Band Conglomerate.”

Red Band is so large it defies any simple description, much like JumpCorp itself. Its charters participate in everything from galactic defense to the usual gamut of exploration, shipping, and R&D.

TALES OF THE RED BAND

Savage Tales of the Red Band is an ongoing serial for *The Last Parsec*, the parts of which can be assembled to form a loose Plot Point Campaign. The GM needs access to the *Science Fiction Companion* and *The Last Parsec: Core*.

Players create their heroes as usual, tailoring them to the demands of a long-range space survey team. They serve as licensed members of Quixotic-Red-6, a top-secret exploration charter and subsidiary of the Red Band Conglomerate. Their motto: *We make the impossible probable.*

One quality the heroes should all share is a lack of personal and familial ties. That’s because the travelers are a “sleeper team” headed for a newly discovered system in the Triangulum Galaxy — and they’re jumping blind. The trip can take anywhere from two to 12 years, so it’s better for everyone involved if the explorers have few connections back home.

The crew is issued a state-of-the-art research ship, the *Indomitable*, with advanced systems and armament. The pioneers are also forced to deal with the machinations of their superiors, unexpected tampering with their medical android, and a newly discovered system that seems extremely hostile to visitors.

SURVIVAL GEAR

The *Indomitable* is equipped with two astronavigational buoys which, when deployed, transmit a signal that allows other Red Band ships to join the pioneers. It takes a Knowledge (Electronics) check to launch an astronav buoy successfully.

In addition to the ship’s standard life support systems and supplies, it includes one standard JumpCorp survival pack for each crewmember, plus three extras.

Survival Pack: All-weather jumpsuit, binoculars, commlink, energy sheet, first aid kit (basic supplies for 10 Healing rolls), flashlight (10” beam), language translator, lifejacket, machete (Str+d6), medi-gel, 90× nutri-bars (food for one person for 30 days), rope (10”), rebreather, medium slugthrower pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, AP 3), spare 8-round clip, shaded goggles, small sensor suite, 2× smoke grenades, tool kit, 6 quarts water (supports one person for 3 days), water purification filter, waterproof matches (box of 50). (35 lb., C\$3,500).

R.B.S. INDOMITABLE

The team travels in the *R.B.S. Indomitable*, a research vessel designed to safeguard its small crew across vast distances. It stocks a medical android (“Rez”) and an AI (“Solution”). Quixotic-Red-6 operatives recovered the ship’s most advanced systems from an ancient galactic library (see *The Last Parsec Core*).

Medium Starship: Size 8, Acc/TS 50/650, Climb 2, Toughness 25 (6), Crew 9, Cost C\$23.84M, Remaining Mods 2

Notes: AI, Atmospheric, Crew Space, Deflector Screens, FTL Drive, Planetary Sensor Suite, Shields, Speed, Targeting System

Weapons:

- 2× Medium Lasers
- Auto-Cannon, Light

THE LAST
PARSEC

:PART I:

SAVAGE TALES OF THE RED BAND: DEATH'S FRONTIER

SECRETS AND LIES

A few events take place before the adventure begins, but they have profound effects on the group's fate and fortunes once they reach QR-6-Kalran.

- **Callers Unknown:** The team's superiors do not inform them that their mission is not purely one of exploration. They are actually zeroing in on system QR-6-Kalran in the Triangulum Galaxy because a message was received from it 24 years ago. Someone or something awaits...
- **Secret Agendas:** Even the team's immediate superiors are unaware of the mission's true parameters. Agents of the Collectors (see *The Last Parsec Core*) have infiltrated the Red Band at the highest leadership levels. They're quite aware that QR-6-Kalran harbors the remnants of an ancient precursor species and the Collectors wish to claim their secrets. To that end, they reprogram the team's medical android, Rez, with secret commands. The Collectors also send a second ship full of their insectoid soldiers to secure crucial technology, should the team fail in their mission. Worse, the insectoids aren't above hastening the explorers' demise so they can claim the salvage — and the glory!

THE TRIANGULUM GALAXY

Triangulum is a satellite spiral galaxy of Andromeda, about 3 million light years from Sol. Its distinctive appearance gives it the nickname of a "pinwheel galaxy." The explorers' mission is the first attempt to chart its contents firsthand. Generally speaking, the crew's primary goals once they reach the QR-6-Kalran system are: deploy an astronavigational buoy, catalog the system's planets, and survey any habitable worlds in more detail — collecting biological and geological samples on the surface and conducting an orbital cartographic analysis — before heading for home.

Unfortunately for the team, events begin to turn against them very soon after their arrival.

QR-6-KALRAN

Assume success on the Knowledge (Astrogation) roll to reach QR-6-Kalran, but you can roll 2d6 to determine how many years the trip actually takes. As the crew awakens from their long sleep, learning the exact timespan they've been under can provide for interesting roleplaying opportunities.

Read the following to your group:

You're dimly aware of an alarm sounding, softly. You're not sure how long it's been trying to rouse you, but you're awake now. The curved, clear inner surface of the stasis

tube is completely fogged over, making it impossible to see what's outside.

A soft hiss. The tube scissors open, revealing the R.B.S. Indomitable's stasis bay. Already, your companions have begun to rouse themselves from long torpor. No one's quite sure how long they've been asleep.

The ship's medical android, Rez, approaches with a smile to check your vital signs. One thing's for sure: You're eager to get dressed and into the cockpit. Outside the ship's hull lies a new system in a new galaxy, one never before explored by the Red Band Conglomerate.

DEPLOYING THE BUOY

The ship's AI — a pleasing, androgynous voice the crew calls Solution — is quick to remind the crew of their mission goals once they've dressed and eaten (everyone is famished). As soon as they can manage it, an





Kalran-3: About the size of Earth, Kalran-3 has normal gravity, a breathable atmosphere, and its dominant terrain is water: Oceans cover most of its surface. Forests ranging from arctic to tropical are spread over three major continents, and the polar icecaps are bare white. A sensor sweep shows many lifeforms, but there is apparently no intelligent inhabitation. The planet's forested surface hides ruins left behind by now-extinct inhabitants.

Kalran-4: A massive gas giant, Kalran-4 orbits at a vast distance from its nearest inner neighbor, and features a system of 47 moons.

astronav buoy must be launched. The buoy transmits a signal that the Red Band can lock onto, and is eventually replaced by an astronav beacon (see *The Last Parsec: Core*).

Successfully deploying the buoy requires a Knowledge (Electronics) roll to locate the optimal point in space. Then the crew must make a standard non-jump trip to that point, which could take a couple of weeks of "in-system" travel. Multiple attempts are allowed, but a critical failure means the astronav system must be rebooted (a Repair roll), a process that takes 2d8 hours. Once the buoy's sent hurtling into space, it's a simple matter to activate it. It immediately transmits its code to Quixotic-Red-6 headquarters.

PLANETARY SURVEY

The QR-6-Kalran system (named for Astrol Kalran, the scientist who first discovered the alien beacon emanating from it) consists of six planets orbiting a G-class star, with a vast asteroid belt orbiting at the farthest distance. Only one of the system's planets is habitable.

Kalran-1: This tiny, scorched world is almost molten due to its close proximity to the sun. It is completely uninhabitable.

Kalran-2: A large world of methane seas, this planet harbors traces of bacterial life but nothing the team would consider sapient.

orbits near the inner edge of the vast asteroid field that surrounds the system.

BETRAYED!

While the crew flies about the system cataloguing its worlds, Rez the medical android leaves the medbay. Programming implanted by the Collectors' agents takes effect, forcing Rez to make its way to the nearest AI console. Once there, the android logs a command to the astronav buoy to transmit its current coordinates to the Collectors' ship. Any crewmember in the cockpit sees the transmission with success on a Notice roll.

Next, Rez removes a component from the FTL engines — an electronic coupler about the size of a fist — without which the drives can't function. Solution informs the crew of the malfunction, but doesn't know the cause or where the part has gone. (The AI is acutely aware of its own functions, but cannot "see" what transpires in the ship except in the most general terms.) Assuming the android isn't stopped, it places the FTL coupler among the gear it intends to bring when the team explores Kalran-3.

♦ **Rez:** See page 5.

DEFENSIVE MEASURES

Before the heroes can figure out why Rez is malfunctioning, proximity alarms in the cockpit begin to sound. A number of small objects, each approximately two meters across, are approaching the vessel. As they grow near, the comm system picks up a signal from them. It's nothing the crew can understand, and Solution can't translate it into any known language, but the AI can at least confirm that they are transmitting the same message repeatedly at 10-second intervals.

On a viewscreen, the objects look like silvery blobs with long, luminous tendrils — space jellyfish. There are a dozen of them.

These creatures are energy drainers, a defense mechanism placed by Kalran-3's long-dead masters to protect their world from interstellar invaders. Unless they're stopped, the drainers attach themselves to the *Indomitable's* hull and begin sucking its fuel.

- **Energy Drainers (12):** See the *Science Fiction Companion*.

DIRTSIDE EXPLORATION

After the energy drainers are dispatched or distracted, the heroes may attempt to divine what's wrong with Rez. Success on a Knowledge (Robotics) or (Electronics) roll at -4 reveals that the android's programming has been altered. It is impossible to tell exactly *how* it was changed (the Collectors' agents did their work well), but Rez seems to be functioning all right now. The android insists its actions were a temporary glitch, and warns against shutting it down when its medicinal skills may be needed later. Of course, this is simply a ploy on Rez's part to remain active.

THE NATIVES ARE VORACIOUS

Success on a Notice roll using the ship's sensors detects the ruins of structures that could only be of intelligent design. The crew must fly the *Indomitable* into Kalran-3's atmosphere and land.

Dirtside, before the crew members can make visual contact, they hear a distant rustling and crashing in the forest. The sounds grow ever closer. Abruptly, a herd of huge, bright purple insects bursts from the underbrush. They move with preternatural quickness, leaping among the trees in a hunt for anything alive. Now they've found the survey team!

- **Insects, Giant (2d20):** See the *Science Fiction Companion*.

SUDDENLY...

During the battle, if it's still active Rez slips away into the forest and vanishes. If someone notices the android

attempting to depart and tries to stop it, Rez attacks with fists but inflicts only Nonlethal Damage (see *Savage Worlds*).

As if that wasn't enough, if more than a few days have elapsed since the crew deployed the astronav buoy, an urgent message arrives from Solution: Another ship has just entered the QR-6-Kalran system, and it's of a configuration not found in the AI's databanks.

TO BE CONTINUED!

Tune in for future installments of *Savage Tales of the Red Band*, where we'll explore the Collectors' cryptic goals, the ever-widening mysteries of Kalran-3, and the inscrutable machinations of Quixotic-Red-6.

★ REZ (MEDICAL ANDROID)

Rez is a standard model except for the modifications implanted by the Collectors' agents, which include combat and electronics software suites. Rez also has added chassis reinforcement and improved muscular servos. The addition of combat modules doesn't change Rez's primary goal of preserving life, so the android attempts to disable foes rather than killing them.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Healing d12, Knowledge (Electronics) d10, Knowledge (Medicine) d10, Knowledge (Xenobiology) d10, Notice d6, Repair d10, Survival d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Gear: Medi-scanner, medi-gel, personal data device.

Special Abilities:

- **Android:** Medical androids can be found in hospitals throughout the galaxy.
- **Armored Chassis (+2):** Subdermal armor plating.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; does not breathe; immune to poison and disease; ignores one level of wound penalties.
- **Edge (Scholar):** This android is designed for providing medical attention for both humans and alien species. This provides +2 to Knowledge of Medicine and Xenobiology.
- **Environmental Weakness (Electricity):** Robots suffer +4 damage from electrical attacks.
- **Fists:** Str+d4, AP 2.
- **Trait Bonus (Healing):** Medical androids are equipped with detailed files on human and alien anatomy and are even able to perform minor surgery when necessary. This provides +2 to Healing rolls.