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Sample file



Star Trek: Enterprise

KEITH R.A. DECANDIDO

"Will you look at all those *ships*?"

John Crichton stared out of the porthole of the Leviathan transport pod in amazement. What he saw could only be described as a spaceship junkyard, looking for all the world like the old Margolin house that he and DK used to play in as kids. Crichton even recognized a couple of ships: one looked like a Peacekeeper Prowler, another similar to the Ilanic cruiser Moya had come across a few weeks back. But most were as unfamiliar as – well, *hell*, he thought, as unfamiliar as every damn thing's been since that wormhole shoved me and Farscape I to the other side of nowhere.

Sitting next to him in the cockpit of the pod, Ka D'Argo suddenly thrust out one of his large arms. "There: the Luxan military yacht."

"You sure 'bout this, big guy?" Crichton asked.

D'Argo fixed him with a penetrating gaze. "I know the ships of my people."

"Jus' checkin'. Wouldn't want to waste the trip."

"If you're so concerned, you should've stayed on Moya."

"Hey, I need practice copilotting one of these babies. 'Sides, you needed someone to play Chewbacca to your Han Solo."

D'Argo grunted. "Promise me that one day your ridiculous babbling will begin to make sense."

Crichton grinned at him.

Moya had come across this collection of powerless vessels a full solar day before. When they found a Luxan ship amid the other derelicts, D'Argo had insisted on trying to board it to see if it held any map fibers that could show them the way to his homeworld. D'Argo had a similar opportunity recently, but chose to rescue Crichton and Aeryn from Zenetan pirates instead.

Crichton – who was still somewhat inexperienced with the transport pods – let D'Argo do the driving while he gazed out of the porthole and took a closer look. It was eerie, really, seeing all these ships of so many colors, designs, shapes, and sizes – yet they were all lifeless. Running lights extinguished, no motion except for inertial drift...

"Hey, D'Argo, you notice something weird?"

"Besides the fact that you've gone almost fifty microts without saying anything idiotic?"

Smiling sardonically, Crichton said. "I love you, too. No, really, look around."

"I see dead ships," D'Argo said impatiently.

"Yeah, and why do ships usually die?"

Sparing an angry glance, D'Argo said. "When they're damaged beyond repair. Crichton, if you do not stop pestering me--"

"Right, damaged," Crichton continued, ignoring D'Argo's increasingly belligerent tone. "So look at these ships. How much damage you see?"

D'Argo peered at the porthole, then looked down at the readouts on his console. "None," he said in an unusually quiet voice.

"Exactly. Now if this is some kind of resting place for ex-ships, fine, but it seems to me that at least some of them should have hull breaches or weapons scarring or parts broken off, right?"

D'Argo shook his head. "It doesn't matter. We're going to board the Luxan ship."

Crichton was about to argue, then thought better of it. *The big guy isn't going to listen to me anyhow, so why waste my breath?* Instead, he activated his comm. "Pilot, do me a favor -- scan for any power emissions."

The gentle voice of the being who controlled all of Moya's functions sounded over the comm's tiny speakers. *"I already told you, Commander Crichton, that none of the ships are showing any kind of power output."*

"Not from the ships, Pilot -- I mean any power emissions in the area."

A pause greeted him. "Scanning now," Pilot said at last.

Aeryn cut in. "What is it you're looking for, Crichton?"

"A little man behind the curtain. None of these ships look broken: no ruptures or blast marks or anything of the sort. Maybe this isn't a junkyard at all. Maybe there's some kind of power drain in the area that trapped all the ships."

"You're *fahrbot*, Crichton," Rygel said. "What kind of yotz would think of something like that?"

"Apparently, the kind of yotz in this star system," Pilot interjected. "Moya is detecting a small but steady power source on a planetoid at the precise epicenter of the field of ships."

"D'Argo, we've got to turn back."

"No! We'll be at the Luxan ship within a few microts. Then we can--"

"D'Argo, if I'm right--"

"It will be the first time. Now--" This time D'Argo cut himself off, as he looked down at the console. "Something's wrong. Our velocity is decreasing." He whirled on Crichton. "What have you done?!"

"Nothing!" Crichton said, checking his own console. "Power levels are droppin' faster'n Clinton's pants."

"John, what's happening?" Zhaan asked.

"Exactly what I thought," Crichton said. "Something's draining power."

"There is an increase in power on the planetoid," Pilot said. "It is in direct proportion to the power loss on the transport pod."

"We've gotta get outta here, pronto."

"We can't," D'Argo snarled, pounding the console. "We don't even have sufficient power to change course back to Moya."

"Something else," Pilot said. "Moya is also reading lifesigns on several of the ships -- but at a very low level, as... people on board are in cryogen... asis."

"Pilot, you're breaking up," Crichton said.

"Cricht... readi... don't go... can't..."

"Zhaan, repeat, we didn't get that."

Silence.

"Whatever's affecting the pod is also affecting the comms," D'Argo rumbled.

"Is there anything we can do to get out of this?" D'Argo pounded the console in exasperation. "If there was, I'd be doing it."

Crichton looked down. All the biomechanical controls in front of him were about as useless as a Lego set. In frustration, he cast his gaze out on the field of dead ships -- and let out a gasp. "D'Argo, look over there!"

"What?"

"That big ship. Look familiar?"

D'Argo squinted at the large, black shape. The pod continued to drift forward, carried by its own inertia. Within a few microts, the large shape -- which had earlier been obscured by three or four other, smaller vessels -- came into full view.

In a low, dangerous voice, D'Argo said. "That is Crais's Command Carrier."

"Yeah, and it's just as dead as the others." The interior lights started to dim. "Only problem is, so're we."

"There has to be some way that we can--"

Before D'Argo could finish the sentence, he disappeared. No flash of light, no weird effect, nothing. One moment he was there, the next he wasn't. The only indication that anything had happened was the popping sound made by the air rushing into the space he had occupied.

Crichton blinked. "Okay, this is very bad. This is very very bad. This is very very very bad."

The lights grew dimmer. This was even worse than when he and Aeryn were trapped in the Flax. Then, at least, they had emergency lighting. At this rate, though, the lights would be completely out inside of ten microts. Plus, of course, in the Flax, he'd had Aeryn's company.

Then he wasn't on the pod anymore. As with D'Argo, there was no flash of light, no feeling of disorientation - he just found himself somewhere else.

"Somewhere else" appeared to be a planet. He stood in a clearing about forty meters in diameter, surrounded by trees with blue bark and bright orange leaves. Strange, reddish-yellow grass covered the ground, while a large hill lay about half a mile or so away. Several purple winged figures flew overhead, but Crichton couldn't make out any details.

He couldn't hear any noise at all.

A cluster of figures also occupied the clearing, Crichton counted nine. Some belonged to species he recognized. The first was a Sheyang - a lizard-like race of fire-breathers that they had encountered trying to salvage the *Zelbinion*. Another was a Zenetan - the race of pirates responsible for the Flax that had almost killed him and Aeryn. A third was an Ilanic - a race similar to Luxans, probably from the ship that Crichton recognized. A fourth was a Delvian male - like Zhaan, he had blue skin, but unlike Zhaan, had a full head of white hair. Three others, Crichton didn't recognize, but they included a four-legged creature loosely described as a cross between a panther and an alligator; an amorphous blob of gelatinous red goo; and a large, ponderous, beaked thing wearing a large black cloak.

Crichton was all too familiar with the final two figures. One was, of course, D'Argo. The other was the Peacekeeper captain who had hounded him since he first ricocheted into this corner of the galaxy: Bialar Crais.

When the wormhole spit Crichton out, his module collided with a Peacekeeper Prowler piloted, he later learned, by Crais's brother. Crais had also been in charge of Moya when the *Leviathan* had escaped. In the months since then, their lives had been a constant chase through the Uncharted Territories, as Crais stopped at nothing to hunt them down. He saved particular vehemence for Crichton, whom he blamed for the death of his brother.

Being teleported to an alien planet by some unknown entity wouldn't deter him in the least.

Crichton tried to move toward D'Argo, but the act triggered a fierce electrical charge, which kept him frozen in place.

DONT BOTHER, a voice spoke directly into Crichton's brain. YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY A FORCE FIELD.

When Crichton opened his mouth to speak to D'Argo, the voice cut in. DONT BOTHER TRYING TO TALK. EITHER. SOUND DOESN'T TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE FORCE FIELD. YOU DONT MOVE 'TIL I SAY YOU MOVE. SO DONT MOVE. ALL RIGHT?

"Fine, whatever. What's goin' on here?"

AT THE MOMENT, NOTHING. BUT NOW THAT YOU AND THE LUXAN HAVE SHOWN UP, WE CAN BEGIN.

"Begin what?"

GIVE ME A MICROT, WILL YOU? I'LL EXPLAIN.

Crichton really wished the voice belonged to a body. Or at least a face. The face behind that voice desperately needed a sock to the jaw.

SEE, YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE YOU WERE DAMN FOOL ENOUGH TO COME INTO THE FIELD. EVERY TIME SOMEONE DOES, THEY PLUCK ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM WHATEVER RACES ARE ON THE SHIP, THEY BRING 'EM DOWN AND BUNG EVERYONE ELSE INTO CRISIS.

"And then what, stick 'em in a field and have 'em choose up sides for softball?"

The voice seemed to chuckle. NOT FAR OFF, ACTUALLY. IF I'M UNDERSTANDING THE IMAGES I'M GETTING IN YOUR BRAIN. BASICALLY, ONCE THEY GET TEN OF 'EM-

"Who's 'they'?"

WHAT'RE YOU, DENSE? THE PEOPLE THAT BROUGHT YOU HERE. LOOK, DON'T INTERRUPT, ALL RIGHT? IT'S HARD ENOUGH TO GET MY SIGNALS THROUGH YOUR TRANSLATOR MICROBES, OKAY?

"Sorry."

WHERE WAS I? OH, YEAH - ONCE THEY GET TEN, THEY BRING 'EM TO THIS PLANETOID. SEE, THIS IS AN ISLAND - ONLY LANDMASS ON THE PLANETOID. ACTUALLY, THAT HILL OVER THERE'S RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF IT.

"Great," Crichton muttered.

SO YOU TEN ARE CHARGED WITH GOING OUT AND FINDING THE PRIZE. WHOEVER GETS THE PRIZE, WINS.

"Wins what?"

Another chuckle. GET THE PRIZE, AND YOU'LL FIND OUT.

"We're supposed to work together, apart, what?"

THAT'S UP TO YOU. IF TWO OF YOU FIND THE PRIZE, YOU BOTH WIN. ALL TEN, YOU ALL WIN. IT VARIES, Y'KNOW. AND IT'S DIFFERENT EVERY TIME. IN FACT, WE'VE GOT TWO NEW RACES THIS GO-ROUND - YOU AND THE HALOSIAN. THAT'S THE CHAP WITH THE BEAK.

Crichton rolled his eyes. "Christ, what is this, a *Star Trek* episode? They're testing us to see if we're worthy of the gift of life or some crap like that?"

NO. NOTHING LIKE THAT. THEY'RE JUST BORED, IS ALL. A third chuckle. THE PRIZE IS IN THE CENTER. GOOD LUCK.

With that, the voice disappeared. And so did the force field.

As soon as it went down, D'Argo unsheathed his Qualta blade. Crais unholstered his pulse pistol, the Zenetan produced his own weapon, the panther/alligator stood on its hind legs, and the Sheyang took a deep breath.

"Whoa! Hold it! Take it easy!"

Crais's face split into a snarl. "Crichton!" He fired his pistol - to no effect. Crais fired several more times, but nothing happened.

"All outta buwets," Crichton said in his best Elmer Fudd voice. "Now can we stop with the macho posturing crap and figure out how we're supposed to get out of this?"

Screaming, Crais threw down his pistol and charged at Crichton. D'Argo stepped in front of Crichton, his Qualta pointed directly at Crais. The Peacekeeper, sensibly, halted his charge.

"Do not come between me and my vengeance, Ka D'Argo."

D'Argo smiled a vicious smile. "I was more concerned with my vengeance, Peacekeeper." And he fired his Qualta.

Or, rather, tried to. It worked as well as Crais's pistol.

"Okay, weapons're obviously a big ol' no-no," Crichton said.

"Not entirely." D'Argo touched a stud on the hilt of his Qualta, and it reverted from blaster to sword form. "My blade can still separate this pewnkah's head from his shoulders."

Suddenly, Crichton felt a blast of heat. He whirled to see the Sheyang spit a huge ball of fire right at Beak-Guy - *what did the Voice of Doom call 'em? Halitosis or something?* Caught flat-footed - assuming he had feet under his big cloak - Beak-Guy let out an agonized squawk as the flames burned him to a crisp.

The Sheyang held up his hands. "Don't worry - I have no intention of attacking any of the rest of you. But that Halosian fired on my vessel when we were on a legitimate salvage operation. I owed him that."

"Great," Crichton muttered. "Now are we done with the macho chest-beating?" He pointedly looked at Crais, who eyed him savagely from behind D'Argo's blade.

In a hiss-like whisper, the panthigator said, "We have been given our task. The prize is at the center. The hill is at the center. I will go to the center and claim the prize. I will win. You will lose."

With that, it dashed elegantly into the orange forest on all fours at a rather astonishing speed. Idly, Crichton wondered if they all talked in simple declarative sentences, or if this one just used it as a shtick.

"I am willing to make you a deal, Ka D'Argo," Crais spoke in a much calmer voice. Crichton took a good look at Crais and noticed that the captain hadn't shaved recently. His goatee was untrimmed, and stubble darkened his cheeks. *I get the feeling that violates some PK dress code or other.* Obviously, Crais's single-minded pursuit of Moya was getting the better of him.

"A deal?"

"Yes," Crais said. "I will allow you your freedom. You will be exonerated of the charge of murdering your wife and be reunited with your son. All I ask in exchange is him." Crais didn't so much say as sneer that last word.

Crichton tensed. Seeing his son again was more important to D'Argo than anything - and it wasn't as if Crichton and D'Argo were best friends anyway. *Hell, back on Dam-Ba-Da Depot, we pretty much admitted that we could probably never be friends.*

Then D'Argo shook his head. "Typical. You think that I would make a deal with my jailer and betray a friend? Perhaps that is the way of your foul kind, Peacekeeper. But--"

D'Argo's words were interrupted by a screeching sound. Crichton looked up and saw one of the winged purple creatures swooping down. As it got closer, Crichton saw that it looked much bigger than he first thought - like a pteranodon on acid, with big purple wings, talons the size of Montana, and a very long beak. It dove straight down into the trees and rose a few moments later with another screech, clutching the panthigator in its talons. The alien struggled vainly as the bird thing ripped it to pieces and flew off, out of sight.

"Okay, this keeps things interesting."

The Delvian gazed at the dense woods. "The Ch'Talla was a fool. Come - we shall go in a group."

The Sheyang, the Zenetan, and the Ilanic exchanged glances. "I won't go with her," the Sheyang spat with a disdainful look at the Zenetan. "She's just a pirate."

"Look who's talking," the Zenetan said, scratching her beard stubble.

The Ilanic walked up to the Delvian. "I shall accompany you. Perhaps the Zimmm will be sated with its meal

of a Ch'Talla. If not," the Ilanic added, pulling a small stick that telescoped out into a good-sized bo staff, out of her pocket, "we shall deal with it."

Unholstering a dagger, the Zenetan said, "I'm in - provided the Sheyang and the Peacekeeper stay here. I don't like Sheyang - and I really don't like Peacekeepers."

Crais wasn't even paying attention. "What is your answer, Ka D'Argo?"

"I thought that was obvious, Crais. I will never make a deal with the likes of you."

"Looks like we're stuck in Mexican standoff territory here, Crais." Crichton peered over D'Argo's large shoulder, content to keep the big guy between him and the PK captain.

"Let these fools play their games," the Delvian waved dismissively. "Let us go."

He went into the forest, followed by the Ilanic and the Zenetan.

The Sheyang stayed behind, grumbling to himself. The red goo hadn't spoken or moved since the force fields went down.

"Look, we need to come up with some kind of plan," Crichton said. "We can't just stand here glowering at each other. If we're not careful -"

Another screech. Crichton looked up to see three more Zimmms swooping down. "Aw, geez," Crichton moaned. "This isn't looking good."

Sure enough, the three avians flew right back out, each clutching one of the prisoners. The Ilanic and the Zenetan put up a good fight, but the Zimmm had completely disemboweled the Delvian. (At least, Crichton assumed Delvians had bowels. He made a mental note to ask Zhaan.) The Zenetan's neck was soon

sliced open by a Zimmm talon, but the Ilanic woman had managed to beat her attacker to the point where its talons loosened. That may have been a mistake. With an angry shriek, the winged creature released her, and she went plummeting toward the ground.

For the first time, the red goo moved, slithering to a spot under the Ilanic and spreading itself into a wider form. The Ilanic landed on the goo, bleeding but alive.

The red goo spoke in a high-pitched voice: "Safe."

"Nice work, Jell-O Man," Crichton said, then muttered, "And then there were six..."

The goo had more to say: "Approach bad. New way."

The Sheyang rumbled, "The Koz speaks true. Simply approaching the forest doesn't seem to be working."

"Maybe," Crichton nodded, "but..." He looked up to see that the Zimmm was coming down again - this time making for the clearing.

Specifically for the Ilanic, still lying on top of the Koz.

"No!" Without even thinking, he leapt toward the other two aliens. If he had thought about it, he'd have realized that getting between this nasty bird and its intended prey was suicidal. All it would do was grab him instead.

What was, in fact, what happened.



"Crichton!" D'Argo's powerful voice cried out as Crichton found himself suddenly airlifted. It was a lot like the time he and Dad went parasailing in the Bahamas when he was a kid: the rapid rise upward, the loudness of the wind, the sudden bird's-eye view of the place where he'd been standing only moments before. *Main difference, he thought, is that then I was in a harness, not a pair of purple talons that are about to rip me into tiny bits.*

As he felt the creature's grip tighten around his stomach, he looked down at the clearing – and saw something that amazed him. Unfortunately, he was in no position to do anything about it.

The others were, though. A fireball shot up from the ground, presumably from the Sheyang's gullet. Unfortunately, it missed. *Damn pirates, can't even aim right.*

Crichton grimaced as the sharp points of the Zimmm's talons pierced his flight suit. *Any second now and I'll be astronaut shish-kebob.*

Then something else rose up from the clearing. To Crichton's amazement, it was D'Argo's blade. *You jackass, that'll leave you defenseless against Crais!* he thought as the Qualta whistled through the air towards him.

Unlike the Sheyang's fireball, D'Argo's aim was true, and the blade went right through the Zimmm's head. A rather disgusting yellow substance splattered all around him as the dying monster started to tumble through the air and plummet toward the clearing.

Nice going, D'Argo, Crichton thought. *Now instead of being cut to ribbons, I'll be a grease stain on yellow grass.* Still in the grip of the talons, he couldn't get into a proper free-fall posture. *Thank God for astronaut training, or I'd probably be sick to my stomach right now.*

At the apogee of one tumble, Crichton noticed that he was falling, not toward yellow, but red. *Jell-O Man! Great! He'll catch me, too!*

The Koz was wonderfully soft to land on – like a big, red pillow. The Sheyang immediately ran over and pried the talons loose while D'Argo retrieved his Qualta from the Zimmm's head. "Thanks, guys."

D'Argo wiped the Zimmm blood off the Qualta with his sleeve. "After you intervened on behalf of the Ilanic, we could do no less."

"How is she?" Crichton said as he got up off the Koz. "Ow!" he added as a sharp pain sliced through his torso.

"What is it?" the Sheyang asked.

"Cracked a couple ribs. I'll be fine." He waved the Sheyang off.

"The Ilanic is unconscious," D'Argo said, "but she should be fine."

Crichton nodded. "Listen, I figured out what we–"

This time the screech came not from a Zimmm, but from Crais. With D'Argo temporarily removed as an impediment, the Peacekeeper leapt at Crichton with blind fury. More pain shot through Crichton's entire body as his bruised form collided with the hard ground. "I will kill you once and for all, Crichton! You will–"

Before he could finish the thought, D'Argo's tongue, lashed out to strike the Peacekeeper. Crais blinked once, then toppled over unconscious. The Luxan then offered Crichton a hand up.

"Thanks, man," he said as he took it. Then he said, louder, "Ow, ow, ow! Man, this hurts."

"We need to find a way to get the prize and get off this dren-pit," D'Argo said.

"I think I figured out how," Crichton said through clenched teeth. The pain from his ribs was about a thousand times worse after Crais's tackle. "I got a good look at this clearing from up yonder. It's a perfect circle."

"So what?" the Sheyang said.

"So, Omniscient Narrator Guy said that the prize was at the center. We all assumed that it's on that hill, since that's the center of the island. What if he means the center of the clearing?"

D'Argo looked dubiously at Crichton. "It can't be that simple." Crichton shrugged, then immediately regretted the motion. "Fine," he said, "you go ahead and walk to the hill. Watch out for falling Zimmm's."

"It cannot hurt to look," the Sheyang said.

The Koz said nothing, but suddenly thinned itself out to a long strand that stretched across the diameter of the clearing. Then it compressed – an eerie reversal of the Ilanic's telescoping staff – into a small ball. "Epicenter here," it said.

Grinning, Crichton said, "Excellent! Let's hear it for the Great and Powerful Koz! Now we just dig a hole." He looked over at D'Argo – or, more specifically, D'Argo's Qualta.

The Luxan rolled his eyes. "Fine." He got down on one knee and shoved his blade into the ground as the Koz rolled obediently out of the way. After repeating the motion several times, he and Crichton started clearing away the dirt, digging further into the ground.

"This is ridiculous," the Sheyang said. "Stand back. Let me handle this before we die of old age waiting for you two to finish."

Crichton quickly rose and backed up. D'Argo did likewise. The Sheyang took a deep breath and then spit out a ball of fire even less impressive than the one he missed the Zimmm with. However, it was probably sufficient to get through simple dirt and grass. *Hope the prize is fire-proof.*

Crichton thought as the gaseous ball slammed into the dirt, igniting the nearby grass.

To Crichton's surprise, the Koz made a beeline for the fire and smothered it, putting it out in fairly short order. *Gotta get me one'a them...*

Peering into the hole made by the Sheyang's super-halutosis, Crichton saw a stone the size of a fist. It was small and round. And kind of dull.

"That's it? I nearly get cut in half by the one-eyed, one-horned, flying purple people-eater just so I can say, 'I got a rock'?"

THE TRICK'S FINDING THE PRIZE. NOT THE PRIZE ITSELF. INNIT?

"Oh great," Crichton groaning, looking up, even though there was, as before, nothing to really see. "You're back. So, we dug up the rock. Now what?"

YOU WIN. THE FOUR OF YOU GET TO GO BACK TO YOUR SHIPS. SAFE AND SOUND. FOR GOOD MEASURE, ALL YOUR INJURIES WILL BE HEALED, AND YOUR SHIPS'LL WORK JUST FINE. Again, the chuckle. GOOD WORK. BY THE WAY. USUALLY PEOPLE JUST BUGGER OFF TO THE HILL AND BECOME ZIMM-FOOD. YOU LOT ARE THE FIRST IN ABOUT FOUR OR FIVE CYCLES TO GET IT RIGHT.

Crichton snorted. "Bully for us."

"What about Crais and the Ilanic?" D'Argo asked. "And the others, for that matter."

THE SEBACEAN AND THE ILANIC WILL BE LEFT HERE. IT'LL BE UP TO THEIR SHIPMATES WHETHER OR NOT TO RESCUE THEM. THE OTHERS - THEY'RE DEAD. LUXAN, SO NOT A GREAT DEAL'S GOING TO "HAPPEN" TO 'EM AT THIS POINT, REALLY.

"Good," Crichton said, "that means we can get a head start on Crais while his Command Carrier picks him up."

"So that's all?" The Sheyang spread his stubby arms in protest. "No bounty? No reward?"

THE REWARD IS YOU GET TO LIVE, SHEYANG, AND YOU GOT YOUR REVENGE ON THE HALOSIAN. SO QUIT WHININ', ALL RIGHT? NOW GET OUTTA HERE SO WE CAN LURE MORE SHIPS IN HERE.

"You're just gonna keep doing this?" Crichton asked, outraged.

YUP. GOTTA KEEP FEEDIN' THE ZIMMMS SOMEHOW. GOOD-BYE. HUMAN. ENJOY YOUR TRIP BACK HOME.

"Waitasec, you know about Earth? You can get me--"

Before Crichton could finish, he was back in the copilot's seat on the transport pod. "--home. Dammit!" He turned to see the Luxan back in the pilot's seat.

"D'Argo, see if you can set course for the planetoid."

"Are you insane? We have to get back to Moya and StarBurst before Crais's Command Carrier can pursue." D'Argo suited actions to words, as he programmed a course.

"But--" As Crichton turned, he noticed that the pain of his cracked rib was gone. *They really did heal all wounds. Hot damn. But if they know--*

He sighed. *Nah, the big guy's right. It's not worth risking Crais capturing us. Besides, they may not know...*

"D'Argo, John, can you read us?"

"Loud and clear, Zhaan," Crichton replied.

Zhaan's sigh was audible even over the comm. "*Thank the Goddess. We're reading many of the ships powering up - and Pilot says that one of them is Captain Crais's--*"

"--Command Carrier, yeah, we know. We bumped into our ol' buddy Bialar. We've got a head start on 'im, though. He's out like a light on the planetoid, but we still need to StarBurst pronto."

"I don't understand: what happened?"

"We'll give you the highlight reel when we're back on board."

"Which," D'Argo added, "will be in eighty microts. Pilot, be ready to StarBurst the instant the docking web has us."

"Understood," Pilot said.

Crichton cut the connection, then turned to D'Argo. "Did you mean what you said to Crais? When you told him I was your friend?"

D'Argo did not look at Crichton as he rumbled. "A warrior does not lie to his enemy in battle."

"Well, thanks, man. It means a lot." He looked at his readout. "Approaching Moya. The docking web's got us."

"Releasing control to Pilot," D'Argo said.

Within microts, the hangar had pressurized, and D'Argo and Crichton were walking toward the exit, down the pathway between the various transport pods, *Farscape I*, and Aeryn's Peacekeeper Prowler. Unable to resist, Crichton put his hand on D'Argo's shoulder. "Louie, this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

D'Argo's reply was lost as Moya went into StarBurst.



WHAT IS FARSCAPE?

"My name is John Crichton, an astronaut... a radiation wave hit, and I got shot through a wormhole... now I'm lost in some distant part of the universe..."

Deep in space, countless light years from our little blue-green planet, lie the Uncharted Territories. It is a wild, untamed region, full of alien planets and thousands of intelligent species. Great empires border it, from the Sebacean Peacekeepers to the totalitarian Nebari, but here, in this vast frontier, they hold little power. The Territories are a haven for the cunning, the desperate, and the idealistic. Some are on the run from the Peacekeepers or similar threats. Others belong to planetary governments, trying to protect their people from the dangers surrounding them. But they all have one thing in common: they all must learn to survive in the wildest region of civilized space.

Into the Uncharted Territories comes the Leviathan Moya, a living ship crewed by exiles, escaped prisoners... and a human astronaut, John Crichton, who found himself there after an orbital experiment sucked him through a wormhole. They have faced countless dangers on their journey, and while they don't always get along, they work together through the worst the universe can throw at them. They are the heroes of the *Farscape* television show, but theirs is only one story found amid the Uncharted Territories. This book is about creating others.

WHAT IS ROLE-PLAYING?

Role-playing games (RPGs) are decidedly different from the games most people are used to. Players don't compete against each other and there are no winners and losers, at least not in the traditional sense. Instead, role-playing resembles a sophisticated form of make believe. The players get together to tell a story - like a piece of improvisational theatre - where they portray the heroes and heroines. Using rules, dice, and a little imagination, they create a band of fictitious characters, then run them through a series of adventures which another player (the Game Master) controls. The rules exist to determine the outcome of certain variables - does your shot hit or miss? do the guards hear you sneaking around? - but the main action takes place in the players' imaginations.

In many ways, role-playing games are like TV shows. Each session represents another episode, where the heroes deal with problems, resolve disputes, fight their

enemies, and fall in love. But unlike TV shows, where the script is set and unchanging, RPGs give the players a chance to affect the outcome. They decide whether they should attack the bad guy's base, sneak in through the rear entrance, or even avoid it entirely. The storyline depends on the players' decisions, giving them a chance to act spontaneously rather than respond to scripted necessity. In the end, they all share in the rewards or suffer the penalty for failure... until the next adventure, when a new threat or problem arises.

Players

One can easily look at the *Farscape* RPG as a spin-off of the *Farscape* TV show. Instead of playing Crichton, Aeryn, and the other members of Moya's crew, the players create their own crew, then set them off into the Uncharted Territories in search of adventure. Every player (save one, the Game Master) develops a single character: ranging from a burly Luxan to a cunning Sebacean or anything in between. Using the rules as a guideline, they shape that character's background, personality, and pertinent skills. They then portray him or her as an actor would: describing his or her actions, imitating his or her speech patterns, and so on. Some players even like to speculate on actors or actresses they envision playing their characters! Together all of the player characters (PCs) form a group called a "party," who must work together to overcome the obstacles they encounter. Like the bickering members of Moya's crew, the PCs need not always get along, but at the end of the day, their common goals overshadow their differences.

PCs can come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and belong to any one of a dozen races. Further details on character creation can be found in Chapters Five through Nine.

Game Masters

While most players have but a single character to keep track of, the Game Master's job is much more complicated. He or she serves as a combination of narrator, referee and supporting cast: he develops the setting and adventures, describes the environment and plot developments, and portrays any non-player characters (NPCs) the PCs may encounter. The GM also serves as an arbiter of the rules, enforcing the die rolls and making sure that the group maintains proper balance. He is, in effect, the director of the *Farscape* story which the group is telling; steering it in the right directions and giving the PCs the opportunity to play Hero.

While the GM's job involves much more work than the players, it can also be the most rewarding. The players have only their characters to run with; the GM has the

whole universe. The Uncharted Territories is a big place, and the GM has a chance to serve as ringleader for all its sights and wonders.

Tips and ideas on Gamemastering a *Farscape* game can be found in Chapter Twelve.

What You'll Need

In addition to this sourcebook, you'll need several sheets of paper, pencils or pens for writing, and dice – one or more four-sided dice (d4), eight-sided dice (d8), twelve-sided dice (d12) and twenty sided dice (d20), at least two ten-sided dice (d10) and at least four six-sided dice (d6). They can be found at any neighborhood game shop. You might also want to familiarize yourself with the *Farscape* TV show, though it's not necessary in order to play the game.

The Rules

The rules are tools to help resolve disputes and ensure that everyone has a good time. They often involve rolling dice, which simulate the odds of, say, a blaster hitting a control panel or a pilot successfully navigating through a space battle. While they are very important, they shouldn't get in the way of having fun. Sometimes that means bending or breaking rules which don't work for your particular play style. The GM has the final say on what to use, what to modify, and what to ignore. In the end, the only thing that matters is that everyone has fun.

WHAT THIS BOOK CONTAINS

This book is divided roughly in half. The first section consists of source material, providing a solid background for the Uncharted Territories and its denizens. The second half contains the rules and mechanics section. It tells you how to create and run characters and provides a complete list of skills, abilities, and other essential rules. It also includes tips and guidelines for Gamemastering, a list of equipment and vehicles, and a bestiary containing some of the Territories' most frightening aliens.

Exploring the Uncharted Territories takes brains, courage, and more than a little luck. Hostile aliens and feuding starfleets await the unwary, and even the most innocuous encounter could turn deadly in an instant. It's a wild place, but those who survive it will see things that few could ever dream of. And whatever happens, you'll have your good friends there to back your move... right?

Welcome to *Farscape*.



Sample file



CHAPTER ONE

ଓଫର୍ସ୍କାପ୍ କାଫର୍ସ୍କାପ୍

SEASON ONE

Premiere

For John Crichton, a second generation astronaut, the day began before dawn, as he sat on the hood of his convertible and gazed at the rocket that would take his experimental module, *Farscape I*, into orbit.

All his hopes and dreams were riding on this experiment - he and his friend, DK, had built the module, tested it and sweated over it every day for the last two years.

The mission, though it sounded simple, was based on an extrapolated physics theory that remained untested. *Farscape I* would use its own propulsion and the earth's gravity to slingshot at near light-speed. If successful, the experiment could pave the way for interstellar travel.

DK was calm and confident; Crichton wished he could say the same. This mission would be a vindication for him - a chance to finally step out of his father's shadow. John's father, Jack Crichton, was a space pioneer who attained fame in two moon walks. Crichton loved his father, but being the son of a hero had its drawbacks. Jack Crichton understood his son's situation, and pointed out that each man had to be his own kind of hero. Then he offered Crichton his good luck charm: a puzzle ring given to him by the Russian space legend Yuri Gagarin, to take along on the mission. Crichton promised to return it that evening.

The mission began smoothly. Speed in *Farscape I* met or exceeded expectations, and for a moment, it looked like the experiment would be an unequivocal success. Then it happened - an electromagnetic wave appeared on Cape Canaveral's sensors. The module's systems suddenly went haywire and a vortex, which Crichton would later call a wormhole, opened right in front of the module, pulling him in. Before the horrified gaze of his father and best friend, John Crichton and *Farscape I* disappeared...

...to emerge on the other end with no power, no contact with Cape Canaveral, and absolutely no clue as to where he was! All he knew was, no place in his neck of the universe had ships like the one he was looking at. Golden, elliptical and very, very big.

He had emerged in the middle of a pitched starship battle. The huge vessel was being fired on by a swarm of small fightercraft (Prowlers). As a



“What is the matter
with you... people?!”

-John Crichton

number of the small vessels sped by him. One of them clipped the drifting *Farscape 1* sending the Prowler spinning wildly into an asteroid.

Before Crichton could do anything sensible about getting the hell out of Dodge, his module was “snagged” and hauled into the huge golden ship. Little robots greeted him in the docking bay as he popped the hatch on his module. The *DRDs* (Diagnostic Repair Drones) didn't look friendly - one had a small but effective-looking gun trained on him. Crichton didn't argue, he just let them herd him to the command center. Maybe he'd get some answers there.

The battle still raged without, Prowlers streaking past the front viewport as small explosions rocked the ship. Crichton heard words being spoken (actually shouted and screamed) by the two beings in command, but they weren't in any language Crichton knew. The female, Zhaan, was tall and beautiful but very bald and very blue. The male, D'Argo, was even bigger with braids and long fleshy tentacles hanging from his head. As if they weren't enough to deal with, the bridge also contained a little, green slug-like creature with bushy eyebrows on a flying sled, Rygel, and a hologram of a purple crustacean-like being, Pilot.

Then the assorted aliens in the room finally noticed him, and Crichton rather wished they hadn't. D'Argo grabbed him by the throat, yelling unintelligibly in his face; he tried to respond, but the huge alien obviously couldn't understand him.

Then Crichton felt a sting through his boot as a *DRD* injected him with translator microbes. Words faded in and started making sense. Sort of. The fighters outside were Peacekeepers, the ship he stood on - a *Leviathan* - was a prison transport, and the beings on the ship were captives trying to escape. When *Farscape 1* suddenly appeared, the escapees thought he might have technology that would help them get away, so Crichton had been hauled in to help them... or die with them.

The prisoners were determined not to be recaptured. D'Argo, over Pilot's protests, was pulling wires and cables, trying to disengage the control collar that kept the ship from using its one defense - *StarBurst* - to get them away. The whole experience threatened to overwhelm Crichton's psyche, so perhaps it was just as well that D'Argo stung him with a three-meter-long tongue, knocking him out...

While Crichton slept, one of D'Argo's random yanks at cables disabled the command collar,

allowing the *Leviathan* to *StarBurst* away. In doing so, however, one of the pursuing Prowlers was pulled into the *StarBurst* field along with them. The escaped prisoners promptly latched onto the Prowler and brought it aboard. Meanwhile, the captain of the attacking Peacekeepers, Bialar Crais, was ready to break off pursuit of the prisoners, until he learned that his brother's ship had ricocheted into the asteroid. He vowed revenge on the pilot in the “white death pod.”

Blissfully unaware of the blood feud he had inadvertently begun, Crichton eventually woke up in a cell: confused, disoriented, and naked. As the human scrambled for his clothes, Rygel appeared and explained his personal circumstances to the bewildered astronaut. He was actually Rygel XVI, the rightful Dominar of the Hynerian Empire and ruler of six hundred billion subjects. His cousin, Bishan, had usurped his throne and imprisoned Rygel.

Rygel went on to explain why he wouldn't let Crichton out of the cell. "We can no more trust you than we can trust... *that*." It was then that Crichton noticed he had a cell mate – an unconscious soldier in a black flight suit. The figure stirred and removed the helmet, revealing a human-looking woman. Crichton came forward, smiling in greeting. The next thing he knew, he was flat on his back, as the woman pinned him down and demanded his rank and regiment. She identified herself as Aeryn Sun, and rattled off some additional credentials that placed her in a commando regiment. The only word that sounded familiar to Crichton was "Peacekeeper" "You're one of the ones attacking us?" he asked in disbelief.

Zhaan's arrival spared them both any further grilling; the blue-skinned priest told Crichton that they knew he wasn't a Peacekeeper, and therefore harmless. However, the look D'Argo gave him was less than reassuring.

On the way to the messroom, Zhaan explained the circumstances further. The Leviathan's name was Moya, a member of a biomechanoid species – living ships who sail through space like great whales. During dinner, the escapees made plans to barter on a nearby commerce planet for more iridescent fluid for Moya, to replace the amount lost by D'Argo's "renovations." Torn between excitement over making "first contact" and nervousness over the uncertainty of his fate, Crichton decided to throw in with Aeryn rather than trust the desperate prisoners.

While the others negotiated on the commerce world, Aeryn picked their cell lock, and she and Crichton took her Prowler down to the planet, where they hoped to find aid. Alerted to their escape by Pilot, D'Argo tracked them down, but before he could capture them and take them back to Moya, a squad of Peacekeepers arrived, with Captain Crais at their head.

Crais declared, over Crichton's protests, that the human had deliberately murdered his brother, and condemned him to death. Aeryn interceded on Crichton's behalf, claiming that he wasn't capable of killing Crais's brother – he just wasn't a warrior. This earned her Crais's condemnation as well – he pronounced her "irreversibly contaminated" by her contact with the human.

The Peacekeepers were securing their prisoners in a nearby building, when one of them found Crichton's puzzle ring. As the soldiers argued over its function, Crichton took the opportunity to seize a weapon. After disarming the troopers and getting the keys to their cuffs, he freed D'Argo and moved to release Aeryn. As he tried to unlock her manacles Aeryn protested that she couldn't go

back to Moya with them: she was a Peacekeeper, it was all she had ever been. Crichton replied, "You can be more." His words convinced her to return to the ship with him.

Back aboard Moya, a terse Pilot informed them that the ship still couldn't StarBurst. With all their lives at stake, Aeryn took manual control of the ship while John feverishly plotted a trajectory that would put his slingshot maneuver to the test. The plan worked, and Moya shot into space toward the Uncharted Territories, where the Peacekeepers had no jurisdiction.

Though he managed to save them all, Crichton was still on shaky ground – D'Argo warned him not to endanger their freedom. Rygel tried to steal some of his equipment, and Aeryn told him to beware of Crais: "He hasn't forgotten you." As he patched the antenna on a damaged DRD, he recorded a message to his father, letting him know that he was alive and that he wouldn't stop trying to get home. He spoke of the "weird, psychotic, amazing life" that he'd encountered and noted his father's observations about nerves: like rattlers in the pit of the stomach. Though he continued to record similar messages during his subsequent adventures, he had no idea if his father would ever receive them.



Episode 2: I. E.T.

One morning, not long after their escape, Moya's crew were blasted out of their sleep by a piercing noise. The frequency had an odd effect on Crichton, who found his eye twitching uncontrollably, much to Aeryn's annoyance. The removal of the control collar had activated a paddac beacon, attached to Moya's main neural nexus, which blared a signal to any Peacekeeper vessel within range. While Pilot could dampen the sound inside the ship, he couldn't stop it – only the removal of the beacon could do that. And the beacon was constructed so that any contact with metal would cause a major explosion, killing Moya.

contacting beings from other worlds, but never expected her first to look so much like her. She was a scientist, ostensibly working with the military, operating a listening and tracking post for celestial anomalies (a.k.a. UFOs). Crichton assured her that she had been chosen for "first contact" because she wasn't military, and wouldn't try to dissect him. He asked about the clorium, but Lyneea had no idea what it was. It was only by accident that Crichton discovered it in a seasoning called onlux in her kitchen.

With a little jury-rigging, Lyneea set up her radio equipment so Crichton could call the ship and let them know he'd gotten the clorium. Her joy was short-lived, however, when a squad of soldiers arrived, demanding Lyneea's tracking information. She hid Crichton in Fostro's room and went down to talk with the commander.

Aboard Moya, Rygel was hard at work cutting the beacon out. Zhaan, a priest of the Delvian Seek, used her empathic powers to siphon off as much of Moya's pain as possible, but time was running short – Moya would begin to take serious damage from the stress of her own weight very soon.

Meanwhile on Denea, soldiers had captured D'Argo and chained him in Lyneea's barn. Lyneea thrust a bag of onlux into Crichton's hands, urging him to flee. Crichton refused to leave without his friend so Lyneea used a recording of

John's conversation with Pilot to send the soldiers on a wild goose chase. With Fostro's help, Crichton knocked out the remaining guards and he and D'Argo returned to Moya after a heartfelt goodbye to Lyneea and Fostro.

Rygel finally freed Moya from the paddac beacon's connections just as Crichton arrived with the onlux/clorium. After liberally spreading it over the affected area, Moya managed to pull free of the swamp and the planet's gravity, returning them all to the stars.

Episode 3: Exodus from Genesis

Several weeks later, the crew caught their first whiff of Peacekeeper pursuit. Moya's scanners detected a PK Marauder, (a large vessel capable of carrying a squad of troops), suggesting that Crais's Command Carrier could not be far off. In an attempt to fool the Marauder's sensors, the crew directed Moya into a nearby cloud of debris. It blocked detection temporarily, but Aeryn believed it was only a matter of time before the

"Mother always said I was the best looking.
That's why she had my older brothers banished."

-Dominar Rygel XVI

Only Rygel was small enough to enter the maintenance conduit to remove the beacon, and even *he* succeeded, the pain of the operation could kill a Leviathan. A possible anesthetic existed – an element called clorium – but there was none on the ship. It was one of six cargo types forbidden aboard a Leviathan because of its numbing properties.

At Crichton's suggestion, Pilot took Moya down to the surface of a nearby world – an earth-like planet called Denea – and submerged her in a swamp to dampen the sound of the beacon. It worked, but only bought them a little time. If they did not remove the device soon, Moya would be crushed by her own weight in the world's gravity.

Because clorium was a common compound, Crichton, Aeryn and D'Argo went to search for it on the planet's surface while Zhaan and Rygel stayed behind and removed the beacon. Unfortunately, Denea natives detected the Leviathan's landing, and sent military patrols into the area searching for evidence. D'Argo and Aeryn distracted the troops so Crichton could get away and keep searching for the clorium.

He ended up at a nearby farm, where he found a setting very much like home – a house with a kitchen, and a barn filled with implements that could have been made on Earth. He also found a small boy, Fostro, who ran, yelling, into the house to tell his mother about the "alien" in the barn. Crichton ran after him, but dropped like a rock when the boy zapped him with a stun gun.

The effects wore off after a moment, and the boy's mother, Lyneea, approached him with a curious mix of fear and excitement. She'd dreamed all her life of

Marauder found them – its crew was highly trained, thorough, and measured success in body count.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to her crew, Moya received some unwelcome guests – a race of giant beetle-like creatures called Draks. The invaders scuttled about various parts of the ship, watching the crew, collecting hair and blood samples – and waiting. Soon, Moya's internal temperature began to climb, as did Aeryn's temper. The crew made a systematic sweep of the ship, looking for the cause of the problem: Crichton found it when one of the invaders came to collect a hair sample from his comb. He managed to throw a blanket over the giant bug and kill it, then took it to Zhaan for analysis. Her findings were startling – the creature had Crichton's DNA – and she asked for another sample for comparison. This one needed to be live.

The rising heat made Aeryn more and more uncomfortable – Sebaceans lack an organ to regulate their internal temperature. If the temperature of the ship continued to rise, Aeryn could succumb to the Living Death – a comatose state in which she would be alive and in terrible pain. "It's the only time we kill our own from mercy," Aeryn told Crichton.

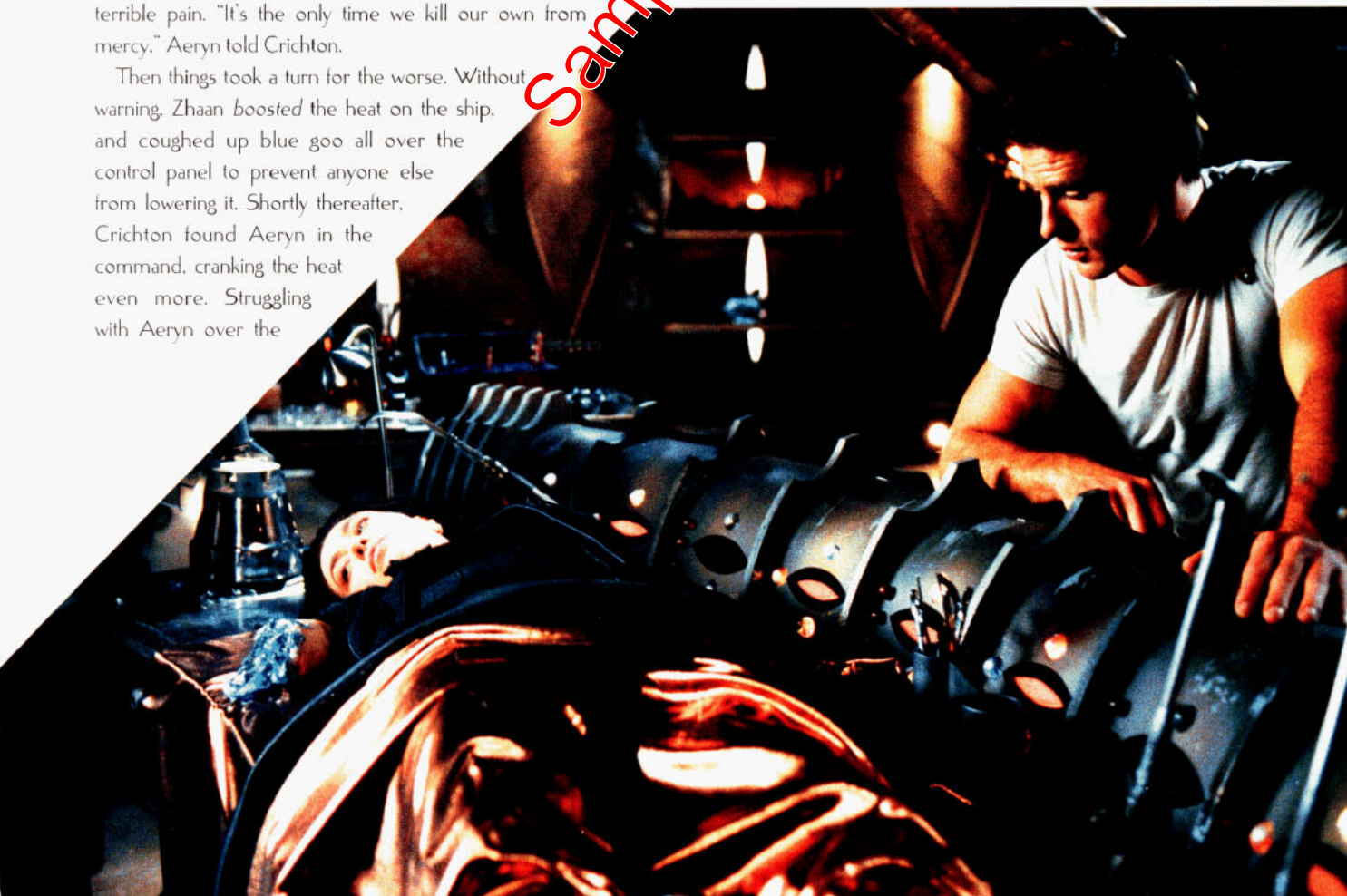
Then things took a turn for the worse. Without warning, Zhaan boosted the heat on the ship, and coughed up blue goo all over the control panel to prevent anyone else from lowering it. Shortly thereafter, Crichton found Aeryn in the command, cranking the heat even more. Struggling with Aeryn over the

controls, he ripped off her arm with suddenly, shocking ease and she dropped like a brick. His mind reeling, he almost didn't hear the real Aeryn behind him, looking at her doppelganger and demanding to know what was going on.

The "Aeryn" and "Zhaan" imposters were both exact duplicates, created by the invaders from collected DNA. With hundreds, perhaps thousands, of them aboard the ship, the crew needed some means of finding their hiding place. As Aeryn's condition grew worse, the others "volunteered" Rygel to search for the invaders' nesting ground.

One of the Draks attacked Zhaan, allowing their leader to take temporary possession of the Delvian. Speaking through Zhaan, the creature identified herself as "Monarch", the Draks' leader, and explained that she needed the ship's heat to reproduce. If they tried to interfere, she warned, they would all be imprisoned or killed. She cared little for the dying Aeryn or the potential damage to Moya – her priority was the survival of her offspring. Crichton explained that if Moya was harmed, the ship would stop producing heat and her offspring would die also.

As Aeryn slipped further into delirium, she extracted a promise from Crichton to kill her if the Living Death took over: "A friend would do it, family would," Crichton barely had time to digest the implications of his promise before another crisis arose: the Marauder crew had found Moya and boarded through the open cargo doors. As the five-member Peacekeeper team fanned out to search the ship, Zhaan, once again herself, asked Rygel to negotiate with Monarch, sovereign to sovereign.



The Monarch found the negotiations to her liking, dispatching duplicates of the crew to confuse the commandos, who were already suffering severely from the heat. With Aeryn's consent, the temperature rose even further, and the commandos collapsed. Crichton found the group's leader and warned him that if the Peacekeepers kept pursuing them, there would be trouble.

The crew allowed the commandos to leave and deliver the message to Crais, and Moya's temperature finally returned to normal. The Monarch inhabited Zhaan one last time, thanking Rygel for his assistance. The Draks then returned to space, as Crichton and a recovered Aeryn watched them leave. Aeryn asked if Crichton could have kept his promise to kill her; Crichton declined to answer.

Episode 4: Throne for a Loss

Drifting aimlessly through space wasn't going to fill Moya's food storage containers, so when an offer came from a group of nearby Tavleks to haul cargo, the crew agreed to discuss the matter. Rygel negotiated terms, and advised the crew to address him as "Your Supreme Eminence" in the Tavleks' presence. Over Crichton's objections, Aeryn insisted on carrying a weapon during the meeting - which turned out to be a good thing. Instead of bringing aboard cargo as agreed, the Tavleks arrived with weapons blasting. When the smoke cleared, the crew discovered that "Supreme Eminence" Rygel had been kidnapped.

One of the Tavleks, Kyr, had been captured onboard Moya during the battle. D'Argo appropriated Kyr's weapon, a blasting gauntlet that increased strength by pumping stimulant into the wearer's system. The gauntlet made the Luxan psychotically aggressive, paranoid and even more hard-headed than usual. Kyr told Zhaan that the gauntlet could only be removed if the wearer was unconscious or the stimulant depleted. She attempted to knock D'Argo out with a sleep mist, but it didn't even slow him down. In the end, it was Moya who finally brought him under control - a sudden acceleration threw D'Argo into the command table and knocked him out, enabling the gauntlet to be removed.

As the crew tried to puzzle out their comrade's behavior, they received a transmission from Bekhesh, the Tavlek leader, demanding Kyr's return and an outrageous ransom in exchange for the Dominar. As if that weren't enough, Pilot reported that Rygel had "borrowed" a crystal from Moya's propulsion system, thinking it would look impressive in his scepter. Moya's orbit was slowly deteriorating, so retrieving the crystal (if not the small tyrant), was imperative.

Crichton accompanied Aeryn down to the Tavlek encampment. Dressed in Kyr's armor and wearing the gauntlet, Aeryn started to infiltrate the camp, convinced that she could accomplish anything. Her efforts collapsed when Crichton accidentally overloaded their only weapon. The explosion registered on Moya's sensors, and D'Argo - now free of the gauntlet's influence - took a transport down to assist his crewmates. He arrived just in time to tongue-zap Aeryn and remove the gauntlet before she staged a one-woman commando raid on the Tavleks.

While Aeryn recovered, Crichton and D'Argo went looking for Rygel. Bekhesh had moved the Hynerian to a new location while awaiting the ransom. During the search, D'Argo suffered a grievous injury, leaving it up to Crichton to put on the gauntlet and use it to reach the location ahead of Bekhesh. While he raced off, Aeryn stabilized the wounded Luxan, pounding on the injury until his tarry black blood ran clear (a sign that the injury was healing).

With help from the captive Kyr aboard Moya, Crichton managed to convince Bekhesh that they had nothing with which to pay Rygel's ransom. Bekhesh agreed to exchange Kyr for Rygel, who claimed to have swallowed the crystal from Moya's propulsion system. Back aboard Moya, Rygel returned the crystal - after a short stop in the ship's lavatory.





Episode 5: Back and Back and Back to the Future

Aimlessly wandering the Uncharted Territories, and determined to stay one step ahead of their Peace-keeper pursuers, the crew came across a ship that was exploding at a subatomic level. Zhaan wanted to assist any survivors, but D'Argo balked until he learned that the ship's escape pod contained of two Ilanics – blood allies to the Luxans for over a thousand cycles. The crew brought the escape pod on board. Crichton went into the shuttle to check for other survivors, but received a jolt when he touched a black box on the ship. The shock seemed to create some sort of spatial distortion, and he heard D'Argo repeating that there was no one else aboard: "Yeah, I heard you the first time..." Crichton grumbled.

The Ilanics, a male scientist named Verell and his female assistant Matala, claimed that they were on their way to rendezvous with a cruiser after studying deep space gravitational fluctuations. D'Argo, obviously smitten with Matala, offered to take them to their meeting. When Matala came forward to thank him for his help, Crichton saw an erotic vision involving himself and the Ilanic woman.

As time passed, Crichton continued to catch visionary glimpses, each one stranger than the last. Zhaan dismissed his odd behavior with the simple, all-encompassing, "He is Crichton," but the human was concerned that Matala was affecting his mind. Aeryn had more pragmatic suspicions – she just didn't trust the Ilanics, especially Matala. Meanwhile, the besotted D'Argo asked Verell if Matala was spoken for, and was pleased to find that she was not. When Crichton attempted to talk to D'Argo about the visions, the Luxan warned him to "remove her from your thoughts – now."

Crichton soon experienced another vision which showed Matala killing Verell, then D'Argo and himself. He became convinced that the vision foretold the future, and that somehow Matala was to blame for it. He tried to prevent his

premonition
from coming to pass,
but each time he tried to fix
the future, the visions grew worse.

Meanwhile, Aeryn had challenged Matala to a sparring match. During the bout, Matala used a unique maneuver to incapacitate the commando, thus revealing her true identity. She was a Scorvian, surgically altered to look Ilanic and sent to spy on Verell. Since the two species were at war, her presence constituted a real danger not only to Matala and her crew, but to the entire Ilanic species.

As it turned out, the research mission was a cover for testing a new weapon, one powerful enough to end the war between the Ilanics and the Scorvians. The weapon was a piece of a black hole: when Crichton accidentally touched its container in the shuttle, it caused his premonitions.

Crichton had one more deadly vision of the future. In it, Matala escaped in the shuttle and Aeryn fired on the ship to stop it. In the resulting explosion, the fragment of black hole destroyed both the shuttle and Moya. Crichton convinced D'Argo that his visions were true by revealing what he learned from them: D'Argo had not been imprisoned for murdering his superior officer as he had always claimed... he was hiding the true crime. Thus convinced, D'Argo agreed to help Crichton.

The cruiser with which they were to rendezvous turned out to be a Scorvian ambush intended to get Verell's weapon. When the cruiser appeared, Matala showed her true colors, fleeing in the escape shuttle toward the cruiser. From Moya, Verell used a transmitter to release the containment field on the black hole particle and, just as Moya StarBursted to safety, Matala and her prize imploded.



Episode 6: Thank God It's Friday... Again

As Moya's journey continued, D'Argo experienced a sudden Luxan hyper-rage, a homicidal hormonal anger directed at the nearest available male – in this case Crichton. Luckily, the human found places to hide that not even Rygel knew about; it took the crew three days to locate him and tell him when D'Argo left the ship for the nearby planet Sykar. Despite his volatile condition, the crew followed in hopes of bringing him back. "Hopefully the rage will have had time to dissipate... or he's killed something," observed Zhaan.

Sykar was uncomfortably warm for Aeryn, but it agreed with Crichton's sensibilities: "Mel Gibson, Tina Turner... cage match..." Entering one of the larger communities, the crew found a party in progress, with a much happier D'Argo dancing away. Not only did the hyper-rage appear to be gone, but he greeted Crichton like a long-lost friend: totally unlike the Luxan the crew knew. He told the others he wanted to stay on Sykar and be a farmer.

The Sykaran leader, Volmae, invited the crew to stay, but her overly friendly manner set off alarms in Crichton's mind. His suspicions were further aroused when one of the Sykarans, Tanga, insisted that he stay to help them. Crichton and Aeryn fiercely disagreed about leaving D'Argo to his newfound happiness, but their argument was cut short by a series of explosions... emanating from Rygel. It seemed that Sykar food – based on a plant called tannot root – had a volatile effect on the Hynerian's bodily fluids. While Aeryn took Rygel back to the ship to find a cure, the others stayed behind to work on D'Argo.

After a night spent on the floor of D'Argo's quarters, Crichton awoke to find the Luxan and his companion leaving for the fields. Hadn't D'Argo told them that the party the night before celebrated the last day of the work cycle? D'Argo explained that Crichton was mistaken: tonight would be a big celebration for the end of the work cycle.

Determined to get some answers, Crichton followed Tanga out to the field, only to be jumped by three Sykarans and implanted (through his navel) with a large worm. As the pain subsided, Tanga's father explained that tannot root acted to brainwash the planet's inhabitants, and that the worm would make Crichton immune to its effects. Zhaan, unfortunately, lacked such protection, and quickly fell under the spell of the root. Crichton pretended to be under the root's effect for Volmae at the party that night, and hauled Tanga into the storage car the next morning, demanding to know what she wanted. Tannot root was an imported crop, she said, first brought by "the others," who returned twice a cycle to collect the harvest. The Sykarans were virtual slaves, and farming the vile plant had pushed their world to the brink of extinction. Tanga and her comrades wanted Crichton to take word of their plight offworld, and bring them aid and weapons for their fight. Meanwhile Aeryn and Rygel had flushed the tannot root out of Rygel by freezing him solid and painstakingly removing the chemicals from his system.

At the party the next evening (a party took place every evening), Crichton was taken to a huge storage facility, where tons of tannot root waited for shipment to "the others." As it turned out, "the others" were actually the Peacekeepers, who used tannot to make chakan oil, a vital element in powering their pulse rifles. Volmae told Crichton to bring the others down from Moya and begin loading the cargo – she planned to embezzle it from its "rightful" owners. Crichton refused to obey her, however, which sent her into a violent rage. Storming out into the courtyard after him, she was met by a stream of fiery urine from Rygel, who'd eaten tannot root again. Crichton blew the whistle on Volmae's scheme, and told the Sykarans the truth about their condition. Aeryn offered to teach them to make the chakan oil themselves, and together the Sykarans could fight to regain control of their world.

Back aboard Moya, the worm was extracted from Crichton. Rygel was flushed clean again, and a remorseful D'Argo confessed to Zhaan that he'd once dreamed of two very different lives: he always wanted to be a warrior, "the kind they write shintok sonnets about," but he also desired the peaceful life of a farmer. He thought he'd found that on Sykar, but "perhaps I was not meant to be happy."

Episode 7: PR Tech Girl

Every culture has its legends, and the Sebaceans are no exceptions. The *Zelbinion*, the greatest ship in the Peacekeeper armada, was considered invincible before it disappeared in battle over one hundred cycles ago. Missing, that is, until the crew of *Moya* found it deep in the Uncharted Territories, derelict and abandoned. For Rygel, the ship held countless ghosts of the past: he had been imprisoned and tortured there after he was overthrown. Though a long time had passed, the memories of his treatment at the hands of the *Zelbinion*'s sadistic Captain Durka were very much alive.

Aeryn, D'Argo and Crichton boarded the derelict to look for stargates or anything salvageable... and found someone alive. Crais's Command Carrier had discovered the *Zelbinion* and sent a tech squad over to decipher the cause of the ship's destruction. A ship full of Sheyang scavengers had attacked the boarding party and killed all except one, who barely escaped with her life. Her name was Gilina Renaez, and she knew Aeryn as well as the others aboard *Moya*. Crichton kept Aeryn from finishing the job the Sheyangs started, insisting that Gilina be left alone. He brushed off Gilina's thanks: "I try to save a life a day... usually it's my own." But an obvious spark lingered between the human 'tech' and the Peacekeeper one.

Meanwhile, Rygel boarded the ship in an effort to confront his demons, and finally laid his past to rest when he found Durka's body. The captain had apparently committed suicide, and while Rygel couldn't forget the pain he had suffered, he had the last laugh.

With Aeryn and Crichton still on the *Zelbinion* with Gilina, attempting to salvage a working defense screen, the Sheyang vessel returned to finish its scavenging operation and the idea of taking a Leviathan had them salivating. Zhaan and D'Argo were forced to mount an improvised bluff to protect *Moya* and give the others time to get the screen operational, shielding both *Moya* and the *Zelbinion*.

Fortunately, Luxan ferocity was legendary, even among the Sheyangs, and D'Argo was able to stall them while his crewmates got the screen up and running. The screen was activated scant moments before the Sheyangs stopped talking and started shooting. It held, barely, but gaps in the screen left them vulnerable: they'd only had time to repair one of the two overlapping components. Crichton came up with a "crazy" idea to install the second half of the screen on *Moya*.

Aeryn inadvertently walked in on a tender moment between Gilina and Crichton, but insisted that their liaison didn't bother her. She claimed that she only found Crichton "interesting... for a moment," but Crichton spotted jealousy in Aeryn's dismissive tone. He filed this information in the back of his mind for future reference ... if indeed they lived to have a future.

Finally, the Sheyangs lost all patience and made a direct assault on the ships, using small craft to infiltrate the screen. Lornus, the Sheyang first officer, boarded the *Zelbinion* and made his way to engineering. Crichton and Gilina had their hands full trying to keep the defense screen going, and were in no position to fight the fire-spitting alien. Aeryn, in true cavalry fashion, arrived in the nick of time, blasting Lornus into flaming glop on the ship's floor. "Sorry about the mess," she said as she walked away. The Sheyangs decided to cut their losses and leave, but not before their captain, Teurac delivered a warning to D'Argo "You were a clever opponent. I make it a point to kill my clever opponents."

Safe aboard *Moya*, the crew argued over what to do with Gilina. Crichton couldn't ask her to accompany them - a life on the run was no kind of life - but if they let her return to Crais's crew, she might betray them. Aeryn, of all people, put their fears to rest. Gilina would not tell Crais that she'd been with the crew - if she did, she would suffer the same fate Aeryn had: "irreversible contamination." Gilina returned to the *Zelbinion* to await rescue, but her courage had earned Aeryn's respect... and a place in Crichton's heart.

"I try to save a life a day... Usually it's my own."

-John Crichton

Episode 8: That Old Black Magic

Always on the watch for stargates to get them back home, the crew was visiting a bizarre bazaar when Rygel came down with the Klendian flu. While Zhaan flirted with Liko, an attractive herbalist, Crichton wandered away from the others. Suddenly, without warning his spirit was magically transported to a medieval-looking castle whose master displayed a wide variety of supernatural powers. He couldn't help Crichton get home, but he could grant Crichton's wish to talk to Crais and convince him to stop his vendetta. Crichton didn't know how this creature knew so much about him, but he was ready to suspend disbelief if it meant getting the Peacekeeper off his back.