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Well another month has flown by and another issue of S&P is complete. This month we once again have a nice, broad range of contributors and I'm introducing you to Courtney Parsons, a long time *Traveller* fan and a new writer to Mongoose who I am sure will not fail to impress.

So after a traumatic few weeks of dog pee hell I finally escaped back to my humble, animal free abode... well unless you count Adrian! As I write this with a glass of wine in hand and another issue under my belt I am relishing the prospect of a nice bath before I begin another day, and another month, with another heavy schedule... lucky that I like being kept busy!

I have however had to come to terms with the fact that I cannot compete with an aging Liverpoolian megastar. What I mean is that this weekend my other half has deserted me to go and see Paul McCartney at Anfield! I am not sure that this is a fantastic compliment to me, but at least it keeps him happy and also has give me time to apply the finishing touches to this months issue.

I've tried to make this month's issue rather visually stimulating, with extra art and maps. Look out for the clock work horse sketch in the Elric article... the artist made it up from the picture of me and my horse from issue 55.

Well my bottle of wine is beckoning and so is my bath, so forgive me dear readers, but I am going to cut this short, recharge my batteries, and get the work on the next issue!

Sample file

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Sample file

Convention and Events Diary

Salute 08. ExCel Centre, London, UK.
Saturday 19th April 2008.
<http://www.salute.co.uk>

Mongoose Hall 08. Croft Sports Centre,
Swindon, UK.
Sunday 11th May 2008.
<http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>

Tentacles 2008. Castle Stahleck, Bacharach, Germany.
Friday 9th - Monday 12th May 2008.
<http://www.tentacles-convention.de/>

UK Games Expo 2008. The Clarendon Suites, Stirling
Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, UK.
Saturday 31st May - Sunday 1st June 2008.
<http://www.ukgamesexpo.co.uk>

Q-Con XV. Queen's University Belfast Students' Union
Friday 27th - Sunday 29th June 2008
www.q-con.org.uk

Continuum 2008. John Foster Hall [also known as New Hall],
Leicester University. UK.
Friday 1st - Monday 4th August 2008.
<http://www.continuum.uk.net>

Gen Con UK 2008. University of Reading, Berkshire. UK.
Thursday 28th - Sunday 31st August 2008.
<http://www.horsemenevents.com/>

Game '08. New Century House, Manchester, UK.
Saturday 1st - Sunday 2nd November 2008.
<http://www.game08.eu/>

ConQuest VEGAS

On April 18th-20th 2008 (the weekend before the GAMA Trade Show), ConQuest VEGAS will play host to what could potentially be the largest A Call to Arms Tournament in the US.

Check out <http://www.conquestvegas.com> for more details on this event, or call 805 218-9590

THE STARCHILD

A Traveller Adventure By Courtney Parsons

INTRODUCTION

STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The Starchild is an introductory adventure for use with the Mongoose Publishing rules set for Traveller. It serves as an excellent introduction for players and Referees who are new to *Traveller*, to The Third Imperium of Man, one of the most venerable campaign settings in the history of Science Fiction gaming. The Starchild deals with a group of adventurers who find themselves rather suddenly embroiled in the search for a missing girl on a mining installation operated by an Imperial Ministry of Defence contractor. What at first appears to be a simple act of domestic terrorism gone wrong suddenly thrusts the adventurers into the heart of an interstellar conspiracy perpetrated by back-stabbing double agents on both sides of the Fringe. Events force the group to confront a mysterious Zhodani operative who is said to be a restless, inhuman spirit denied the peace of death so he can wreak vengeance upon his Imperial enemies.

Although this adventure was originally written as an introduction to the Kinunir Trilogy and was intended to be played as a prelude to Research Station Gamma, it is not necessary to own or even be familiar with any of these materials to play this adventure; the only requirement the *Traveller Core Rulebook* from Mongoose Publishing. For more information on the Kinunir Trilogy, see FFE 003: Traveller: The Adventures, a publication containing all the original Classic Traveller adventures. The Starchild is written to either function as a stand-alone adventure or to easily be integrated into any existing campaign with just a bit of tweaking and preparation by the referee.

Time and Place

The adventure begins in the Spinward Marches Sector of The Thrid Imperium on the 300th day of the 1106th year since the Coronation of Emperor Cleon I and the founding of The Third Imperium. The date is expressed as 300-1106.

This adventure takes place in the Rhylanor Subsector. It begins on Jae Taellona (0404-A560565-8 Rhylanor/Spinward Marches) but can theoretically expand to nearly any planet in the Rhylanor subsector. To that end, the Referee may wish to have access to an Official Traveller Universe (henceforth, OTU) copy of The Rhylanor Subsector jumpgrid map like the one found in *The Spinward Marches* supplement for *Traveller* from Mongoose Publishing. If the Referee does not have access to this supplement, he should create his own subsector map according to the procedure given in the World Creation chapter starting on p. 167 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook* and place Jae Taellona as desired on the map.

Requirements

This adventure is written for 3-5 characters of beginning to moderate experience. At least 2 of the characters should have ground combat experience; it will be difficult for the players to complete the adventure if this is not the case. Experience with starships is also recommended, although it makes little difference whether this is acquired through a military background, such as the Scouts or the Navy or whether it is acquired through a civilian career such as the Merchants or the Rogues. Note, however, that if the players are creating new characters specifically to complete this adventure, it is far more likely that they will achieve the recommended

skill set through military experience or by joining the Merchant Marine than through a “knocking around” career such as Drifter or Rogue.

The *Traveller Core Rulebook* contains all the ship data and deckplans for every vessel critical to the completion of this adventure. The Suleiman (Type S) Scout/Courier, The Beowulf class Free-Trader and The Type R Subsidized Merchant (‘Subbie,’ or ‘Fat Trader’) are all detailed in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* starting on p.114. The Tigress-Class dreadnought and the Vargr Corsair will be detailed in upcoming supplements. For now, the Referee, if he does not have access to any information about the Vargr Corsair, may assume it to be equivalent to the standard Corsair on p. 129 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. The Tigress-class dreadnought is mentioned later but it is not necessary to have a deckplan or even a description of this vessel to run this adventure.

BACKGROUND

Shalini’s Tale

Note that this information can be pieced together by the adventurers by searching through X-boat feeds, library data and by talking to the girl and her father. It should not, of course, be given to them all at once.

Shalini A’ssynii is a young girl (age 10) whose family hails from the agricultural world of Belizo (3015-B895646-5 Rhylanor/Spinward Marches). The world’s atmosphere is naturally tainted, requiring filter masks for most normal humans but the populace has acquired a natural immunity over time. Agricultural and hydration techniques borrowed from higher technology worlds have allowed their crops to flourish and Belizo has grown

into a beautiful and prosperous farming community. It is said that the world is not completely unpleasant if one can adapt simultaneously to the hot climate and the atmospheric taint. The atmospheric pollution is caused by a naturally-occurring alkaline dust that causes severe irritation of exposed soft tissue, including lungs and eyes.

Before the journey that took them to Jae Taellona, Shalini's family consisted of herself and her parents. Her mother and father (Jaye and T'niri A'ssyni) were respectable Thiti Nut farmers who managed to eke out a modest but comfortable living for themselves. Jaye had one brother, Shallum A'ssyni, who left Belizo many years ago. Shallum was considered something of a black sheep by his brother's family, having forgone honest work in favour of the somewhat shady dealings involved in the life of an adventuring scoundrel. In addition to accruing a rather lengthy police record, he somehow managed to acquire a starship, a Type A Free Trader named *The Empress Iolanthe* (see the *Traveller Core Rulebook* p.117 for details), that some would later say he won in a high-stakes poker game. Several years from now Shallum's body is destined to wash up on the shores of the Regina Starport River but the precise details of his demise are to remain a mystery and not a very interesting one at that, at least, not to the Regina Starport Authority, under whose jurisdiction the case of Shallum's disappearance legally fell. Nevertheless, at the time of this adventure, Shallum has not been found and the details of his disappearance are of no particular import. What is important is that, according to Regina law, the ownership of the vessel defaults to Shallum's next-of-kin in the event he is declared dead. Since Jaye had neither need nor desire for star travel, nor a wish to so much as speak to his brother, Shallum's disappearance was to go unnoticed and the *Empress Iolanthe* was to sit rusting in a warehouse storage hangar for the next 6 years. At the same time, since Shallum was legally still alive, the storage fees were automatically withdrawn from the remainder of his somewhat large – at least, large six years ago – bank account.

Jaye, a man of deep conviction, wanted no part in his brother's likely ill-gotten booty, so he took little interest when the Regina authorities notified him that they were about to declare Shallum dead during the first half of 1105, nor did he bat an eye when the Minsitry of Ships and Shipping sent him an official Xmail notification that he would have to come to Regina to claim the *Empress Iolanthe* because Regina SPA had just declared the owner dead. Further, Jaye had every intention of letting the rapidly accruing debt go into default at the end of the mandatory one-year grace period, at which time the ship would be auctioned off to the highest bidder.

Then everything changed. About 6 months ago Shalini fell ill. She began to complain of severe headaches and her strength began to wane. She would often be bedridden for days only to suddenly wake up one day and be fine. She began to have horrible night terrors, which Jaye and his wife discounted as merely feverish dreams at first. However, one day, after Shalini had been bedridden for days, she suddenly recovered and told her father that she had dreamed of a terrible monster that had ridden in on the wind and wreaked a massive amount of damage while it killed 224 people. She described in lurid detail how the creature was spitting air and water between its long fangs as it wandered along its hideously destructive path. A day or two later a record-breaking hurricane laid waste to a small continent on the southern hemisphere of Belizo, doing millions of credits worth of property damage and killing hundreds. A few days later, the family was gathered at the kitchen table when the final death toll was announced: 224.

Shocked, her fearful parents took her to a well-trusted doctor friend of theirs, who after great difficulty, determined that she was most likely suffering from a brain tumour. His primitive TL5 diagnostic equipment did not seem to work on her and indeed, all sorts of electronic equipment began to malfunction around her. He began to suspect that there was more at work in the girl's illness than a simple tumour, so he consulted the

interstellar medical database at the local Class B Starport installation and happened upon an obscure medical paper penned by a Dr. L'leel Thorne, a corporate doctor with a background in medical research. After dealing with an unprecedented number of illnesses with strikingly similar symptoms on his own world, Dr. Thorne used the X-boat database at his world's local Scout base to detect similar patterns on worlds all across the Domain of Deneb.

Although the Belizan doctor was from a bucolic background, he was no idiot. He managed to infer from Thorne's paper that the tumours were causing the activation of latent psionic talents in the afflicted girl and knowing little (yet enough), Imperial Law to understand that the girl would be in danger from far more than just a tumour if this were ever to be discovered by the authorities, he warned her parents to remain silent. Also, Dr. Thorne had had experience with tumour removal during his posting on Jae Taellona and the A'ssynii family physician made contact with him through the Xboat network. Dr. Thorne replied that he would be glad to meet with Shalini and her family and responded that he felt he could treat the girl discreetly and perhaps remove the tumour, if that were indeed what was causing this illness.

Jaye took out a small mortgage on the *Empress Iolanthe* and bought passage for himself, his wife and their child aboard an agricultural transport headed for Jae Taellona, which was the only available transportation at such short notice. The ship was called *The Rainbow Sun*, a 400-ton subsidized merchant owned by Tukera lines. The A'ssyniis had to stay in cramped crew quarters just above the engine compartment and Shalini suffered greatly during jumpspace, at least, during the time when she was awake between doses of sedatives. The *Rainbow Sun* suffered an endless series of malfunctions and mysterious electronic fires during this time and the crew were far from sad to see the journey end when the ship finally landed on the dust-blown surface of Jae Taellona.

The A'ssynii family disembarked the Rainbow Sun, believing themselves to be finished with that vessel forever. However, the forces that govern the cruel fate of those who would travel between the stars would not have it thus. Even as the family navigated their way through the unfamiliar environment of Jae Taellona's vast underground complex, the captain of The Rainbow Sun, Lars Granhault, began to set events in motion that would fuel the gossipmongers who haunt the jumplanes and the Xnet for many Standard Years hence.

Lars was an ex-scout and seasoned wanderer of the Imperial Fringe who knew psionic talent when he saw it. Granhault also recognized when an opportunity for profit presented itself that was too good to pass up. He discreetly let himself onto the bridge while no one was watching and downloaded what was left of the vessel's surveillance data and logtapes and (illegally) removed the organic core of the Rainbow Sun's primary flight data recorder – the only piece of equipment that had recorded all of the events aboard the Sun and remained undamaged. Granhault then contacted an underworld associate of his who had connections to the Zhodani spy network on Jae Taellona and sold it to him for a rather sizeable fee. Unfortunately, Captain Granhault did not live long enough to enjoy his profits once the Zhule operatives grasped the full implications of what they had been brought.

The swiftness of the spy network's response would have received grudging admiration from even the most efficient Zhodani-hating Imperial Intelligence officer. Within 6 hours of selling the information, Captain Granhault's personal air/raft mysteriously exploded about 10 minutes after departing from a rather seedy area of East Startown, scattering burning wreckage uniformly over the partially abandoned town below. Granhault's underworld contact, N'ort Tume, was arrested soon after for the crime and was found hanged in his cell after only a few hours in custody, presumably the victim of suicide.

Meanwhile, as the A'ssynii family visited the offices of Dr. Leel Thorne, who, unbeknownst to them, had worked in an Imperial Research Station on Vanejen years before and had direct experience dealing with psionics. He verified to his own satisfaction that that the girl was one of the most powerful precognitive psions he had ever encountered, though he did not entirely reveal what he knew to the family. He immediately contacted the Imperial Intelligence Service (IIS) who wasted no time sending a pair of agents to the office even as the family were waiting. The family was being told that a treatment did exist and that although it was experimental, that there was still some cause for hope. Thorne immediately referred them to a doctor on Vanejen who, the family were told, was the man who had developed the original treatment and was therefore the most qualified to perform the surgery. Further, Thorne assured the A'ssynii that the funds existed to assist cases like Shalini's.

The family were told that time was of the essence and that the funds had already been approved by the local Ministry of Medical Affairs and the IIS officers were actually medically trained Ministry personnel, there to facilitate their trip to Vanejen. The family was assured that the government had their best interest at heart and that they must depart to a waiting starship quickly before Shalini's case got any worse. Once aboard, the plan was to put Shalini into medical cold sleep for the journey, to prevent her condition from degrading any further and to alleviate her suffering and psionic outbursts.

For the first time in many months, Shalini's parents had begun to feel hope that everything was going to be alright. It was then that everything quite literally exploded...

Planetary Data

JAE TAELLONA (0404-A560565-8 Rhylanor/Spinward Marches)

Physical Description

Jae Taellona is the only inhabited world of the single-star Jae Taellona system. In addition to the mainworld, the system contains 3 gas giants and an asteroid belt as well as a number of unremarkable planetoid-sized bodies scattered between. There is a single large gas giant locked in a solitary orbit and a pair of twin gas giants, which are fairly small. The pair of small gas giants are in possession of an unusually high periodicity, as well as being closely linked in their stellar orbits, making them all but inaccessible throughout most of the Jae Taellonan year. The remaining gas giant, which accommodates a reasonably impressive satellite system of its own, is the only other major body in the system that will remotely interest most visitors.

Refueling within the large Jovian system is perfectly legal, even encouraged, since the lone pair of class A Downports on the system's mainworld see more than their fair share of traffic, indeed, sometimes even more than they can comfortably accommodate. Plans have been in the works for quite some time by the Jae Taellonan Starport Authority to add multiple orbital elements to help alleviate the overflow of traffic but thus far, none have progressed past the planning stage and SPA officials are notably adept at avoiding questions. To this date, the only orbital elements that can handle any significant traffic belong to the Navy, who notoriously loathe opening its facilities to civilians. However, on more than one occasion the Navy has been forced to open at least one station to larger commercial vessels when traffic flow threatened to strain the Downport capacity to unsafe levels.

Although Jae Taellona boasts a Standard atmosphere, it is a desert world and daytime temperatures can become torrid and even quite deadly, even in the so-called temperate regions. There is no free standing water on the planet whatsoever and most offworlders will find the environment outside the underground complexes quite uncomfortable. Needless to say, crossing the