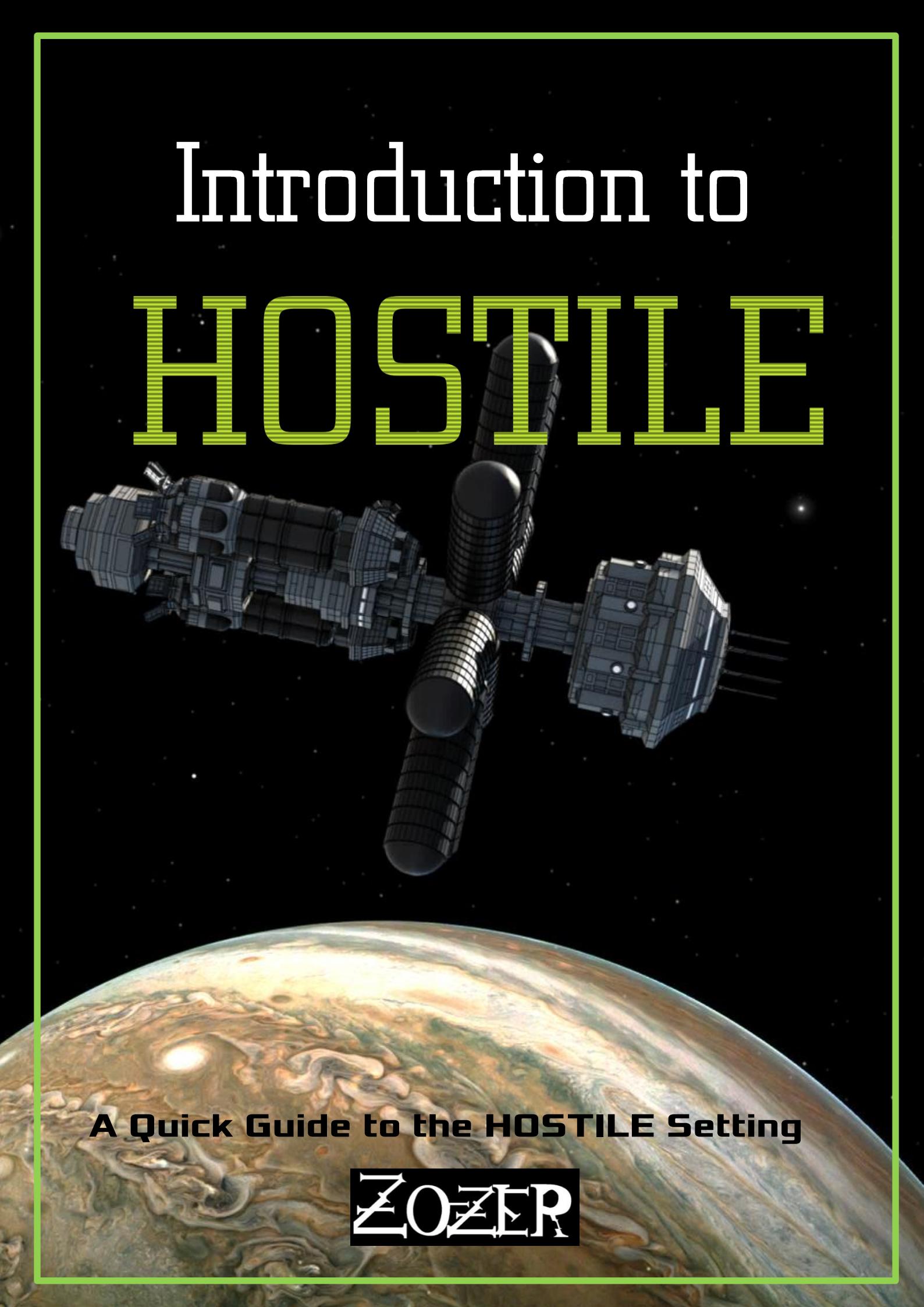


Introduction to **HOSTILE**

A detailed 3D rendering of a complex space station, likely the International Space Station (ISS), shown in orbit against a dark background of stars. The station has multiple cylindrical modules, solar panels, and robotic arms. In the foreground, the large, swirling, and colorful atmosphere of a gas giant planet, resembling Jupiter, is visible, showing its iconic red spot and white clouds.

A Quick Guide to the HOSTILE Setting

ZOZER

Introduction to HOSTILE is a short summary and taster of the gritty science-fiction roleplaying game called **HOSTILE**.

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A Handbook to Working Off-World For Leyland-Okuda

"Forward Thinking. Innovative, Relentless"



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ORIENTATION

What would an ocean be without a monster lurking in the dark? It would be like sleep without dreams.

Werner Herzog

The future is not as optimistic and rosy as many SF writers had us believe. Space exploration is difficult, hard and dangerous and the thriving interstellar society made up of hundreds of populated planets never materialized. Instead space is the preserve of the big corporations that focus on extracting minerals, oil and other raw materials from the extra-solar planets and moons to be shipped back to Earth in order to support the vast populations there.

Space is not a place for tourists or fortune-hunters; it is a hostile and brutal frontier, where blue collar men and women work hard, rely on nobody but themselves, risk death every day and face the Unknown. And out here the Unknown is real – it is horrific: there are rumours of the disturbing side-effects of hyperspace, of ancient horrors entombed on icy moons, and of monsters – killer aliens, perfectly evolved to survive the hostile wastes of space – at any cost.

People live and work on settled Off-World colonies, of course, but they work hard and they work for the big corporate concerns. There are settlements full of miners and their families, there are drilling rigs, refineries, science outposts, logging camps, vast open cast mines, production and maintenance facilities. Think of it almost as Alaska-in-Space, with the crews of the star freighters playing the role of the Ice Road Truckers... None of these habitable worlds is a paradise and most aren't even remotely Earth-like; there is always a kink that makes life tough, whether it's the biosphere, the seasons, the radiation, the atmosphere, or one of a score of other deadly effects. Like the recruiter told you, 'it's a hostile universe'.



Welcome to HOSTILE. What is this thing?

HOSTILE is a near future roleplaying setting that was first published in 2017. It emulates the gritty, uncompromising science fiction of the late-Seventies and early-Eighties; movies like Alien, Outland and Bladerunner. To play within the setting, a set of roleplaying rules called Cepheus Engine is needed, or else a copy of the classic 2D6 SF rules that Cepheus Engine was actually based on. So much setting material was included in the 2017 **HOSTILE** book (338 pages in the print book) that there was simply no room to include those rules as well.

A proposed **HOSTILE Rulebook**, however, will soon publish all of the rules needed for anyone interested in playing within the gritty **HOSTILE** setting. It will form a companion rulebook to the current **HOSTILE** setting book, with the rules tailored to both the setting and its assumptions. Some additional rules will be added from later supplements.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Player characters in **HOSTILE** are spacers – people living and working in space who work as a ‘crew’ (a team) to get the job done. The referee and players should select a type of crew for the game they wish to play.

Colony Work Crew – Tough colonists, earning a living on an alien world and co-operating to overcome challenges from the hostile environment, alien attacks and unreliable equipment.

Corporate Investigation Crew – Skilled troubleshooters for the company back on Earth, they are investigators and problem-solvers, ensuring that corporate assets out in the Off-World colonies remain profitable.

Freelance Mining Crew – Miners and skilled equipment operators moving from job to job, fixing problems, extracting the unextractable, and carrying out search and rescue operations.

Commercial Starship Crew – Star freighters keep the colonies and mines supplied and salvaging wreckage and equipment from deep space. Their crews are isolated, facing problems and horrors that only they can resolve.

Resource Exploration Crew – Explorers deal with the Unknown on a daily basis. They survey worlds for colonisation, locating sites for mines and settlements whilst dealing with extreme environmental hazards and the inevitable attacks of hostile organisms.

Marine Corps Squad – When colonies are in crisis, the Marine Corps goes in, guns blazing. They might be dispatched to deal with a civil war, uprising, terror incident or deadly alien incursion. You’d better have enough ammo because resupply is weeks away.

YOUR PRIMER

Task Resolution

Whenever your character attempts an action with a chance of failure, do the following:

- Roll two six-sided die (abbreviated 2D6).
- Add any relevant modifiers (for things like skills, difficulty and circumstances).
- If the result equals or exceeds 8, the action succeeds. If the result is lower than 8, the action fails.

This simple system is used for nearly everything in **HOSTILE** and Cepheus Engine, with variations based on the modifiers added to a roll and the effects of success and failure.

Careers

Crews are made up of individual characters from different careers. These careers fit the harsh, colonial frontier setting and provide skills as well as opportunities for advancement and improvement. The referee may allow players to design their characters by selecting skills offered by the career, or may want them to roll randomly to determine that character's progress through the career. Characters are assumed to still be in employment with their selected career as the game begins. Characters gain experience by pursuing one of fifteen different careers.

- **Android:** A bio-mechanical synthetic human, designed to carry out monotonous or hazardous tasks. There is a special player generation system for androids.
- **Corporate Agent:** A corporate troubleshooter, a spy, an agent and saboteur, who carries out the will of the corporation on the Off-World colonies.
- **Corporate Executive:** A savvy fixer and middleman with years of experience in the corporate world. Requires Soc A+ in order to qualify.
- **Colonist:** Person relocated to a new world or settler on a new planetary colony, rancher, logger, farmer etc.
- **Commercial Spacer:** Crewman or officer aboard a merchant transport starship.
- **Marine:** Member of the United States Marine Corps (USMC), trained to respond to threats in the American Sector.
- **Marshal:** Either a US Federal Colonial Marshal or Deputy assigned to keep the peace on one of the American Sector's many installations, or a colonial Protection and Security (PAS) law enforcement officer.
- **Military Spacer:** A crewman or officer aboard a United States Space Command (USSC) warship.
- **Physician:** A doctor, med-tech, nurse or paramedic.
- **Ranger:** A civilian guide and survival expert on a habitable world; *or* a paid member of the Action For Peace Foundation (a volunteer paramilitary NGO)

- **Rogue:** A criminal, making money from extortion, theft, assassination, burglary and so on.
- **Roughneck:** A resource extraction specialist, such as a miner or oil driller, working in the hazardous environments of the Outer Rim and Frontier.
- **Scientist:** Individual with expert knowledge of a science, especially a biological or physical science.
- **Survey Scout:** Member of a corporate resource exploration team, surveying unfamiliar territory in space.
- **Technician:** A skilled mechanic, electrician, computer expert or engineer.

Characteristics

Every character is defined by six basic characteristics that define what they are capable of doing. These characteristics are Strength, Dexterity, Endurance, Intelligence, Education, and Social Standing. They each have a numeric characteristic score, ranging from 2 to 12, with 7 the average for a normally capable human. As part of creating your character, you will determine how strong, smart, and tough your character is by randomly rolling their characteristic scores.

Skills

Skills represent training in a particular sort of task or knowledge, everything from starship engineering, bribery, piloting a starship and reprogramming a computer. Someone trained in bribery has a much better chance of gaining access to some off-limits area by bribing a corporate security guard, for instance, than characters without the skill. Skills are measured in levels, reflecting how much training and experience a character has in the skill. When recording skills and their levels, the skill name is written first, followed by a hyphen, and then the number of levels that the character possesses in that skill. For example, Electronics-2 means that the character has two levels of Electronics skill. Each skill level represents several years' worth of education, training and on-the-job experience with that skill. The level will act as a bonus on task resolutions rolls if the task requires the use of that skill.

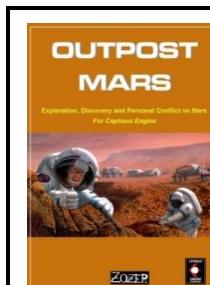
Sample Character

Vince McClellan (Tool-pusher)	A79884	Age 46	7 Terms
Vacc-suit-3, Mining-3, Mechanical-1, Engineering-2, Jack-of-Trades-1	Ground		
Vehicle-1, Brawling-2			
\$20,000, Mining Suit, Rolex, Norden LSGS Flashlight, PLB2 Personal Locator Beacon, Haruna Priority First Aid Kit.			

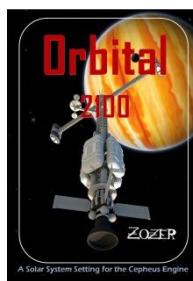
The string of six numbers represent the individual's characteristic scores. These scores are, in order: *Strength* (Str), *Dexterity* (Dex), *Endurance* (End) , *Intelligence* (Int), *Education* (Edu), *Social Standing* (Soc).

THE HOSTILE LINE OF BOOKS

HOSTILE's history, corporations, agencies and assumptions are shared by several other games published by Zozer Games. Whilst **HOSTILE**'s focus is on gritty and unrelenting sci-fi horror, these other games embrace different genres each with their own unique ideas and goals.



2030 – Set on a newly colonized Mars, this is about scientists struggling to do their job amidst a highly political landscape and the discovery of alien ruins.



2100 – Earth is now united and engaged in a solar system Cold War with Luna. The technology is realistic and familiar to any NASA engineer or fan of *The Expanse*. Characters are astronauts, colonists or corporate trouble-shooters.



2225 – No longer united, Earth has developed the hyperdrive and begun colonizing star systems to provide critical raw materials for a dying Earth. Life in the colonies is harsh and dangerous. **HOSTILE** is a gritty horror game.



2225 – What is life like on Earth within the **HOSTILE** setting? This is a fast-paced cyberpunk look at high-tech Japan and the corporate wars that are being waged by street samurai and console cowboys. Inspired by Gibson's *Neuromancer*.

- Find the **HOSTILE** setting book and its supplements as PDFs on DrivethruRPG or as softback books on Lulu.com.

<https://www.paulelliottbooks.com/hostile.html>

Current list of HOSTILE books and supplements

[Alien Breeds](#)

A book of terrifying xenomorph types, with an adventure and detailed colony.

[Colonial Freighter](#)

A 5,000 ton colony support ship, fully planned and detailed.

[Colony Builder](#)

Create and run colonies within the HOSTILE setting. (2021 release)

[Crew Expendable](#)

A campaign book for interstellar haulage and transport. Includes the Harbinger class freighter.

[Dirtside](#)

Survival rules, along with comprehensive wilderness travel guidelines.

[Explorers](#)

Equipment, vehicles and rules for long range exploration missions.

[Gunships and Shuttles](#)

Details, images, specs and deckplans for most of the small craft in the setting.

[Hostile Gunlocker](#)

An expanded look at the firearms of the Hostile setting. Illustrated in colour.

[Hostile Solo](#)

How to play Hostile alone - one player running a crew of characters on the frontier. (2021 release)

[Hostile Technical Manual](#)

The how and why of the setting's retro technology. Complete with technical diagrams!

[Hostile Tool-Kits](#)

A free compilation of equipment from all the books and supplements.

[Hot Zone](#)

An adventure on an uninhabited desert planet, in search of a lost hyperspace probe.

[Marine Handbook 2215](#)

The essential US Marine Corps manual, with weapons, vehicles, uniforms and campaign suggestions.

[Outpost Mars](#)

Although set in 2030, this book has plenty of useful material on Mars and its colonies.

[Pioneer Station](#)

An adventure set on a small Pioneer space station. Includes complete deckplans.

[Roughnecks](#)

A campaign book for interstellar mining and prospecting. Includes the Leopold class mining rig.

[Synthetics](#)

The world of androids and force-grown clones.

[Zaibatsu](#)

The high-tech side of the setting, life as a corporate agent on the streets of Tokyo.

A self-contained RPG set in the **HOSTILE** universe.

THE SITUATION

Welcome to the world of 2250. Ten billion people and their high technology lifestyles has had a great impact on planet Earth. Deserts have spread, rainforests have dwindled, sea-levels have risen and the oil crisis of 2200 has illustrated just how much we have taken from the Earth. Many of those billions live in mega-cities, vast conurbations that have swallowed dozens of older traditional urban centres. The need for resources is greater than ever.

THE NATIONS OF EARTH

Political instability on Earth toppled the world government that had kept the peace for half a century, now the biggest players on the global stage in 2250 are three political blocs, each led by a strident and powerful nation. These alliances are:

Community of American States (CAS)

This includes most of the nations of North and South America, and includes Britain. It is dominated and led by the United States of America. The CAS is a massive power bloc and has access to numerous space-launch facilities as well as the incredible Trans-Atmospheric Petroleum Pipeline that transfers off-world oil from starships arriving from distant planets.

Western European Union (WEU)

This trans-national entity once existed in the 1960's and 1970's and was re-established around sixty years ago. Its ancient predecessor, the European Union, dissolved in the early 21st century. The Western European Union is a tight, German-dominated circle of high-tech, western European neighbours.

Asia-Pacific Partnership (APP)

Following China's collapse and balkanization during the First Recession, Japan was ready to step up to lead the nervous nations of East Asia. The chaos and economic uncertainty of the recession helped to pull Japan's neighbours into that country's powerful orbit. Tokyo now rules most of East Asia through this Asia-Pacific Partnership. Raw materials and skilled migrants flow into a resurgent Japan, whilst exported goods flow out to the other nations of the APP.

The alliances are similar in nature to the trans-national groups of the 21st century; entities like the Arab League, ASEAN, the Commonwealth of Independent States, NAFTA and others. But the difference here is the lack of an equal say - terrible shocks in the global economy and aggressive threats of war by some large nations, forced smaller nations to seek the patronage of the biggest and most powerful. These powerhouses now dominate the alliances that they are (ostensibly) equal members of, but their actual power is magnified greatly by the loyalty and fealty of the other nations within the union. In the CAS, for example, US military forces conduct peacekeeping forces inside war-torn member states, and US-based corporations enjoy significant benefits within the alliance. Member nations of the blocs are still mostly free and independent, yet many have become almost dependencies of their powerful patron. A similar arrangement existed during the First Cold War, when Soviet Russia presided over a Warsaw Pact of ostensibly free sovereign nations.

THE CONGLOMERATES

Many of Earth's corporations are extremely powerful, often rivalling in economic power the nations that they feed from. The most powerful are conglomerates. A conglomerate is a corporation that is made up of a number of different, seemingly unrelated businesses.

On near-future Earth, the corporations are master. Every important or well-paid job here is within such a mega-corporation. A vast percentage of jobs are either in these corporations or one of their subsidiaries or suppliers. Their employees, shareholders and pensioners are at the top of society. Below them are the independent businessmen and other professionals who deal regularly with the corporation and are on good terms with them. To be outside the corporate structure means a wretched life in a Development Zone struggling for a living, with no regular income, no medical or security insurance and no credit.

THE BIG SEVEN

The biggest entities are the vast conglomerates; each a related family of corporations. The big seven are:

- ❖ LEYLAND-OKUDA
- ❖ EREBUS
- ❖ VORONCOVO
- ❖ WU-KETAI
- ❖ REINER-GAMA
- ❖ THARSIS
- ❖ MATSUYAMA



STAR TRAVEL

After the first hyperspace probe returned from Alpha Centauri in 2120, Mankind has explored and colonised nearby star systems. Today, in 2225, there are over 300 surveyed planets in the interstellar space surrounding Earth, the result of the scramble for the stars as mining, farming, logging and oil drilling companies desperately sought out resources that they could supply to Earth. The three sectors are the American, the European (or 'German') and the Japanese.

INDUSTRIAL-SCALE STARSHIPS

Starships in **HOSTILE** are generally very big (typically in excess of 5,000 tons). The reason for this is reaction mass; to travel through space every starship uses a fusion plasma drive that employs liquid hydrogen as a reaction mass – lots of it. The 15,000 ton Hercules-class tug, for example, has to haul around 12,000 tons of liquid hydrogen! Another big difference is the method of propulsion. As already mentioned, starships travel through space using a plasma drive, whilst smaller craft (landers, orbital vehicles, drop ships, etc.) employ more conventional rocket motors similar to those in use during the early 21st century. There is no anti-gravity drive, although ships and space stations are fitted with gravity compensators, allowing crews to walk freely around as if they were on Earth.

For the journey to a new star, **HOSTILE** introduces the hyperdrive. Rather than 'jump' a set distance as in Cepheus Engine, starships are able (once they have reached a pre-surveyed hyperspace point) to turn on the hyperdrive and punch through to hyperspace, travelling as far as their life support allows, at a speed fixed by the type or rating of the fitted drive. Rules for managing the reaction drives are included to help determine how long it takes ships to travel between planets in a star system, and whether or not a crew can afford to burn fuel in a planetary re-entry and landing.

Hypersleep stasis pods are included for every human being onboard a hyperdrive-equipped starship; epilepsy, madness, insanity or coma will affect any living creature passing through hyperspace that is not protected by stasis. One hypersleep pod carries one crewman or passenger.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

The PCs are the crew of an interstellar transport or tug that is contracted to haul X to Y, while on the way encountering problem Z. As already discussed, interstellar travel is routine but still dangerous, akin to crewing a modern container ship or bulk carrier. Of course, just like the troubleshooters, there won't be any routine cargoes or for that matter any routine trips. Here is a quick list of possible adventure seeds:

- ❖ Haul a set of fusion reactors to three different installations. One of them is improperly loaded and begins to go critical - the ship's AI computer wakes you from hypersleep with just enough time to panic.
- ❖ Ship a thousand tons of titanium building struts to a start-up colony. On arrival there are no colonists. Investigate.
- ❖ Intercept a distress signal from an unsurveyed moon. You must investigate the signal, or fall foul of ICO regulations.
- ❖ Transport a science crew with all their kit and vehicles back to Earth from the Outer Rim. Unfortunately, an unauthorized alien sample, placed in stasis by the lead scientist, escapes and starts killing crew and passengers alike, one by one.
- ❖ You are shipping twenty elite passengers out in hypersleep to join an established colony. Unfortunately, two of them are clones from the Munich Uprising and they attempt a hijacking the moment they are brought out of hypersleep.

OFF-WORLD COLONIES

Let's look at a few of the Off-World colonies. No two are alike, and each has its own set of dangers and challenges. Here are five from the scores of worlds in the American and Japanese sectors:

Abyss

Abyss is a waterworld, orbiting the star EZ Aquarii, with millions of colonists occupying the a small island chain in overcrowded and desperate conditions. They are here to exploit the seabed riches and a seabed mining economy thrives, with underwater settlements, submersibles and mining complexes. Many colonists engage in crystal extraction industries, as well as the undersea extraction of minerals which have been pouring out of black smokers on the seabed for millions of years. The undersea colonies are powered by geothermal energy and all are single arcology-type buildings - huge sprawling constructs housing tens of thousands of citizens. Regular eruptions of active volcanic islands create towering black ash clouds, resulting in terrific red sunsets that are spectacular to watch, but the eruptions are also responsible for a harmful atmospheric taint of sulfur and other trace elements.



Americo

The planet Americo, orbiting Delta Triangulum is a 'would-be' Venus, with a runaway Greenhouse Effect. The carbon dioxide component in the atmosphere makes human survival dependant on surface masks. The seas are in retreat, and highly saline, having left behind vast ocean basins, dusted white with salt and dominated by dry salt pans and playas. Salt-packed dust storms are a common problem, and the salt makes life tough for electronics and machinery. The atmosphere is dense and humid – and hot, although without the cooling influence of those long-gone oceans, the nights are frigid.

Leviticus

The colonies on Leviticus, a super-Earth orbiting the Sun-like star, Alpha Mensae, mine chromite, magnetite, bauxite, platinum and nickel from a vast impact crater which forms the only continent in the temperate zone. The colony is breaking up and fighting is common-place. The atmosphere is dense at sea-level, but thins quickly which means the mountain peaks are in virtual vacuum.

Paydirt

Paydirt is a rare 'carbon world' which has graphite crust with kilometre thick strata of high pressure diamond. During volcanic eruptions diamonds from the interior come to the surface to form mountain ranges of diamond and silicon carbide. The surface landscape features frozen and liquid hydrocarbons (tar and methane) as well as rivers of oils and methane rivers and lakes. Although of roughly Earth-like size, Paydirt has a high density and a surface gravity of 1.5G. Inhabitants are strong and tough, working in diamond extraction and processing industries.

Tau Ceti

Tau Ceti is a world covered with 'super-jungle', a living, breathing hostile environment. But the world is split between two warring colonies, the US and the Chinese. A prolonged, counter-insurgency war has raged on the world for control, and it seems to intensify every year. Gunships, terror attacks, jungle warfare, booby traps and isolated firebases are all part of this complicated and bloody conflict.

SANDS OF TIME

In the cramped cabin of the Starlifter, the dull rumble of the reaction drive cut off sharply. Connor reached over to manually reset the fuel pumps. The whir of cooling fans and the rhythmic gasps of the ventilation system were now the only noise.

"Ekard, get up here ... the deorbit burn's complete, we hit atmosphere in five minutes." Connor released the com button. After five days coasting out from the station, it was good to see solid ground once again. An ochre dust ball, smeared with a hint of atmosphere, just visible on the rim – Carcosa. The door slid open and Ekard, wearing his blue ConAm fatigues stepped past the empty passenger couches and strapped into his chair.

"O. Kay... checklist time," he murmured.

The rumble began again, not the drive this time but the atmosphere rushing past the hull, beginning to slow it down. Soon the rumble was accompanied by shaking as they traced a descending curve down towards Site 3, at the foot of the mountain chain. Connor relit the thrusters as the craft started to bite the air, and began manouevring to line up on an approach. Ekard meanwhile radioed the science base. No answer.

"Keep trying... they know we're coming, even if they ain't finished their survey, we need to pick up that module. It has to be somewhere else next month!"

There, a speck of white near a desert bluff, the science module. Connor put the Starlifter down nearby amidst a roar of retros and a cloud of blinding dust. Within moments the cockpit was silent, except for that damn ventilation fan.

"Where is everyone?" asked Ekard, peering out of the window.

Within minutes they were out of the hatch and approaching the ochre, dust-covered module. There must have been one hell of a sandstorm, it had drifted up against one side of the structure.

"Skipper, look a' that... lock's been left open ..." He stroked his beard, "no-one does that. Not even drunken prospectors ..."

He stepped gingerly forward after Connor waved him on with the barrel of his 10mm Redhawk. Whilst the skipper carried the crew sidearm, he had a flashlight. As he entered the darkness of the airlock, he swung the beam around. There was some power at least, he could see coloured lights blinking further on in the gloom, but the lighting was off.

Both men ventured deeper into the darkened module. Sand had piled up against bulkheads and walls, they could feel it crunch under their boots as they trod on the non-slip, steel deck-plates.

"Hullo...?" Ekard's voice was weak, the claustrophobic cabin interior seemed as muffled as their padded little cockpit. "Christ ... what happened?"

Connor's voice cut through the thick air, "Maybe they killed each other. Wouldn't you if you had to spend six months in this tin can?"

Ekard swept the beam around, into the lab and fresher either side of them, the cargo hold just ahead, and into a little cabin – holding a bed and little more, sprinkled with more dust and crumpled clothing. Ahead of them, the blue-white light picked out a rec area, chairs tipped over, and a white table strewn with papers, sand, and abandoned office equipment. Beyond, the rec area, there were three closed cabin doors. Connor flipped a light switch. Nothing. He looked up at the fire monitor in the ceiling, no light. "Power's off, Ekard."

"Is it? So what're those lights over there?" He gestured with the icy white beam on to a long, rectangular unit of glass and white polymer, its lights blinking eagerly in the dark.

"I guess," he stepped forward to get a better look, "it's an autodoc? They have their own power supply." He moved forward and his boot crunched on something. He'd stepped on a pile of clothing, half buried in a pile of sand or dust. Ekard illuminated the spot and Connor reached down to pick up a broken pair of eye glasses, then a wedding ring and finally a little nugget of gold.

"Gold?!" Exclaimed Ekard?

Connor rotated the nugget in the torch-light, "... tooth..." he let it fall from his fingers and then turned the Redhawk on the autodoc. Running his fingers along the lighted panel he could see it was sedating a patient – long-term medication. He pressed the 'restart-revive' sequence, and the two men could dimly see automated arms applying stimulants and shock drugs. Connor brushed off the sand from the clear canopy and saw a man inside, moving, writhing, waking up.

Then, with a hiss and a whine of servos, the transparent lid opened and the patient sat up in the semi-darkness, bleary-eyed and confused. He swung his legs out, and looked up at the two pilots.

"Who are you? I ..." Ekard's bright light lit up the man's face like a Halloween gag, it ran through a range of emotions, maybe a range of memories ...

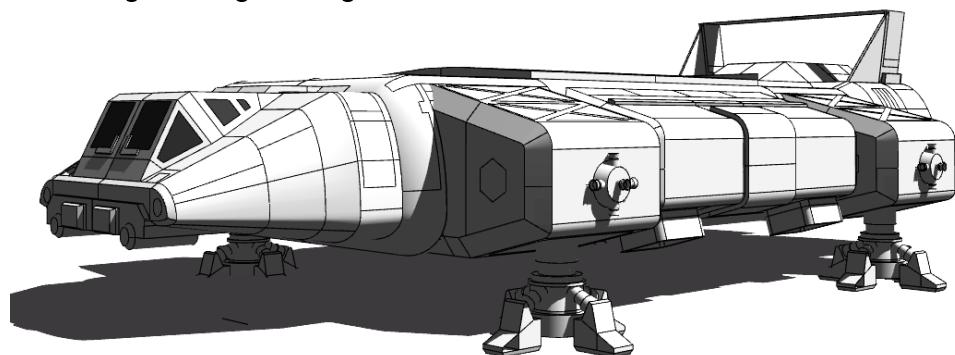
"Look buddy, we're gonna ask the questions, here, alright?"

There was a hiss of falling sand behind them in the unlit rec area. The patient's eyes widened. All three men heard more sand shifting, as if blown by a desert wind. There was no wind – not here. "I'm still HERE!" he shouted, "I'm still HERE! Why didn't you take the machine to your ship? Why have you revived me HERE?!" His voice was high-pitched, and frantic. "Put me back to sleep now, do it NOW!" and with that he began pulling the canopy back down to activate the servos, and began frantically looking at the med-panel inside the pod to re-sedate himself.

The two pilots looked at each other, they knew what the other was thinking alright. This guy was crazy, that was why the scientists here had sedated him in the first place. Well, maybe that was all for the better. Some of the sand fell from the canopy as it started to close. It fell on to the man's shirt, and flowed up towards his face. He screamed. And the dust consumed his face, his eyes, his skin, his tongue... and even as they backed away, it began consuming his limp twitching body, leaving behind the blue uniform.

Connor twisted towards the light of the open airlock, whilst Ekard swept the beam of the flashlight across the unfriendly darkness of the rec room. Something came up out of the piles of sand, a wave...? a hand ...? It wrapped around his leg, and began to strip off the flesh. Connor dragged Ekard towards the airlock, his friend screaming in agony, the flashlight dropped. He got to the daylight, and saw the Starlifter sat, patiently, like a good dog, waiting for them. Neither man, would make it back to their ship. Connor tripped and fell out of the airlock and the sack of a uniform and bones (still being digested by the 'sand-riding scavengers') fell on top of him. The dust, active and eager filled his nostrils and eyes ... burning, burning, chewing, digesting.

The Starlifter sat patiently. It waited for the crew to return. It would not lift off without them. How could it? But they would never abandon the shuttle that they depended on so much for their survival and their way of life. They would be back, perhaps weeks, perhaps months, perhaps years hence. She powered down, conserving her vital resources for the duration. Like Edinburgh's Greyfriars Bobby, this Starlifter would dedicate its remaining life to guarding the site of its crew's demise.





TYPES OF PLAY

The human setting is generally a grim and threatening place, not simply from a physical stand-point but also psychologically. Pessimism rules over optimism, profits usually come before sentiment, politics and corporate development pay no attention to the needs of humans caught up in the fray – and what can go wrong *will go wrong*. Of course this bleak vision reminds us of a cyberpunk dystopia, and it is much the same but without all of the cybernetics, street violence and high-tech virtual worlds. Corporations are brought to the fore to put a price on everything, from resources to scientific breakthroughs – everything has a cost index. Conspiracies, secret agendas, special operations and corporate espionage are also a part of this late-70s genre and form a trope that could easily be woven into any **HOSTILE** scenario.

EXPLORATION

This is a setting of unknowns and of unexplored regions. The extraction zones are huge areas of space where mining corporations and oil drillers have begun to look for resources and to set up outposts – but there has been no systematic programme of survey or exploration. Player characters can form a team of resource scouts that are experts in planetology, geology and the space sciences that look for viable resources. They are the employees of some large corporation, pioneering the industrialization and development of interstellar space for the good of Earth – and for the bottom line of their company's accounts. Resource scouts are tough, independent spacers, able to take care of themselves and thrive in a dangerous alien environment with the knowledge that no-one will come to their aid if things go wrong. They are on their own. Of course, this is roleplaying, and things will go wrong - frequently!

Here is a quick list of possible adventure seeds:

- ❖ The survey planet is about to be catastrophically struck by a large asteroid.
- ❖ Sensors suggest that lucrative mineral deposits lay under the ice. While drilling down, the PCs awaken ferocious hibernating predators.
- ❖ The PCs ship is damaged during re-entry and crash-lands. It will take a supreme effort of engineering and ingenuity to get it back into orbit. Meanwhile a killer storm is approaching.
- ❖ At the bottom of a great impact crater sits the potential for immense mineral wealth. The only problem is that another team of resource scouts from a rival corporation have gotten there first. How is this going to be resolved? Chances are that any deal struck will be reneged upon by the other team.

- ❖ During a prospecting expedition, mineral geodes are found which lead the team to a network of (what look like) lava tunnels. Inside there are mineral veins to be mapped, but also a mysterious alien creature that intends to wipe them all out after stealing a crucial part of their ship's drive. The creature can melt its way through rock, the tunnels are its lair and the geodes are its eggs.

MILITARY GAMES

Colonial populations are small; very few can afford the manpower or equipment for a standing army or airforce, and to be honest, no-one could foresee a time when such units would ever be useful. Instead, PMCs and US Marines stand by within the Core Worlds to respond to aggression on the Off-World colonies. There may be insurrections, hijackings, civil wars, coups and the ever-present threat from overly aggressive alien predators.

What kinds of conflicts can these Marines and mercenaries expect to encounter? Most encounters can be easily classified as either a Stand-Up Fight (against armed and aggressive humans) or as a Bug-Hunt (against one or more aggressive, predatory alien creatures). Here is a quick list of possible adventure seeds:

- ❖ A corporation is facing a rebellion amongst the workers within one of its mining colonies. The rebels have seized several installations.
- ❖ A commercial vessel has been hijacked by a heavily armed gang that intends to fly it into the local colony world unless they are given their own executive transport ship and \$100 million.
- ❖ Resource scouts on a colony world are mysteriously disappearing in the foothills of a mountain range.
- ❖ A guerrilla army has seized control of the starport on a colony world torn by civil war.
- ❖ Giant predatory insects have emerged from long-term hibernation to begin hunting and eating loggers and oil workers from a wilderness outpost.

HOSTILE ALIENS

Everything is hostile - from a red dwarf's x-ray flares to a planet's ammonia-tainted atmosphere, from the effects of hyperspace to a space suit depressurization. And the deadly and threatening nature of the universe extends also to alien life. A lot of alien fauna is benign, of course, life forms surviving as best they can in their own ecosystem but often these critters rub Man up the wrong way. Some attack human vehicles thinking they are mates, some creatures are parasitic much like Earth-like leeches, some others attack human colonists on sight should they wander into the creature's territory.

The universe can serve up some truly awful horrors – alien creatures that can only be described as killing machines, perfect organisms that are tough, resilient to punishment and absolutely and forensically dedicated to the eradication of human life. And yes, these things exist out there amongst the cold stars, and most of them have not been discovered yet. Pray you are not one of the humans who discovers (or should that be 'triggers') one of these super-predators.

The referee should introduce these alien horrors or 'exomorphs' to the player characters with care. Play up their horrific nature, have them attack stealthily and when the characters are most vulnerable and always out-gun or out-number the poor characters. Move the encounter from the realm of action-adventure to horror.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Working off-world is dangerous; suit leaks, hypersleep pod failures, equipment failures, radiation flares, super-volcanoes, alien wildlife attacks, explosive depressurization ... the list of ways to die is almost endless. Only the best, the toughest and the most resourceful people are hired to work out here. And that sounds like the player characters to me.

Of course the players don't want to be operating a blast furnace on a vacuum moon for three months. Instead, working characters should serve as troubleshooters. They may be independents, working for a small consulting firm that gains regular contracts with the big interstellar corporations. Or they might be employed in-house for Makita Corporation or Tharsis (for example), moving from subsidiary to subsidiary, work site to work site, solving difficult problems for their bosses. What kind of 'trouble' are we shooting? Forget balancing the mine's accounts or conducting a surprise audit, the troubleshooters are instead called to deal quickly with dangerous and/or unusual problems. Here is a quick list of possible adventure seeds:

- ❖ A colony transmitter has gone down. Find out why and then fix it.
- ❖ Attacks on workers by alien wildlife have suddenly begun, find out why and stop the attacks.
- ❖ One of the workers has gone AWOL with weapons and detonators. Find him before he causes any trouble.
- ❖ Miners at a small test rig have all come down with some mystery illness. Take a doctor out there to find out what it is and why it has stopped production.
- ❖ An 'unlucky' decommissioned ship in orbit requires boosting to a higher orbit and the reactor safely shutting down before it can be scrapped. Go and do the job. Unknown to the player characters, however, a 'hyperthing' is trapped onboard and will attempt to send each character insane.

ORCHID LIFEBOAT

The Aerodyne Orchid is a Class C Emergency Escape Vehicle (EEV) lifeboat and light shuttle often carried on-board, or attached to, a much larger starship as an ancillary craft. Using a 20-ton streamlined hull (Hull 0, Structure 1) the lifeboat is used as an emergency vessel, or as a shuttle between a planet's orbit and its surface. It mounts a Nortinghamhouse N-045 10 Megawatt Micro-Fusion Reactor and two McConnell C-102 1-G reaction drives (capable of vectored thrust for planetary landings). The reaction drives provide an acceleration of 10 meters per second². Fuel tankage comprising 2.4 tons of liquid hydrogen is used by the reaction drives and can provide coolant to the micro-fusion reactor for 12 months of continuous operation. A cockpit for two pilots is complemented by a level-1 Okuda Brightstar computer system. The ship is equipped with a standard civilian sensor package. There is no airlock fitted, but landing gear is installed for planetary landings. There are five passenger acceleration couches, as well as three hypersleep pods for emergency use. Cargo capacity is 9.15 tons. The ship requires a single pilot for successful operation, although there is second control couch for a co-pilot (or passenger) if desired. Besides the two pilots, the Lifeboat can routinely carry five passengers. The Orchid Lifeboat costs \$5.43M.

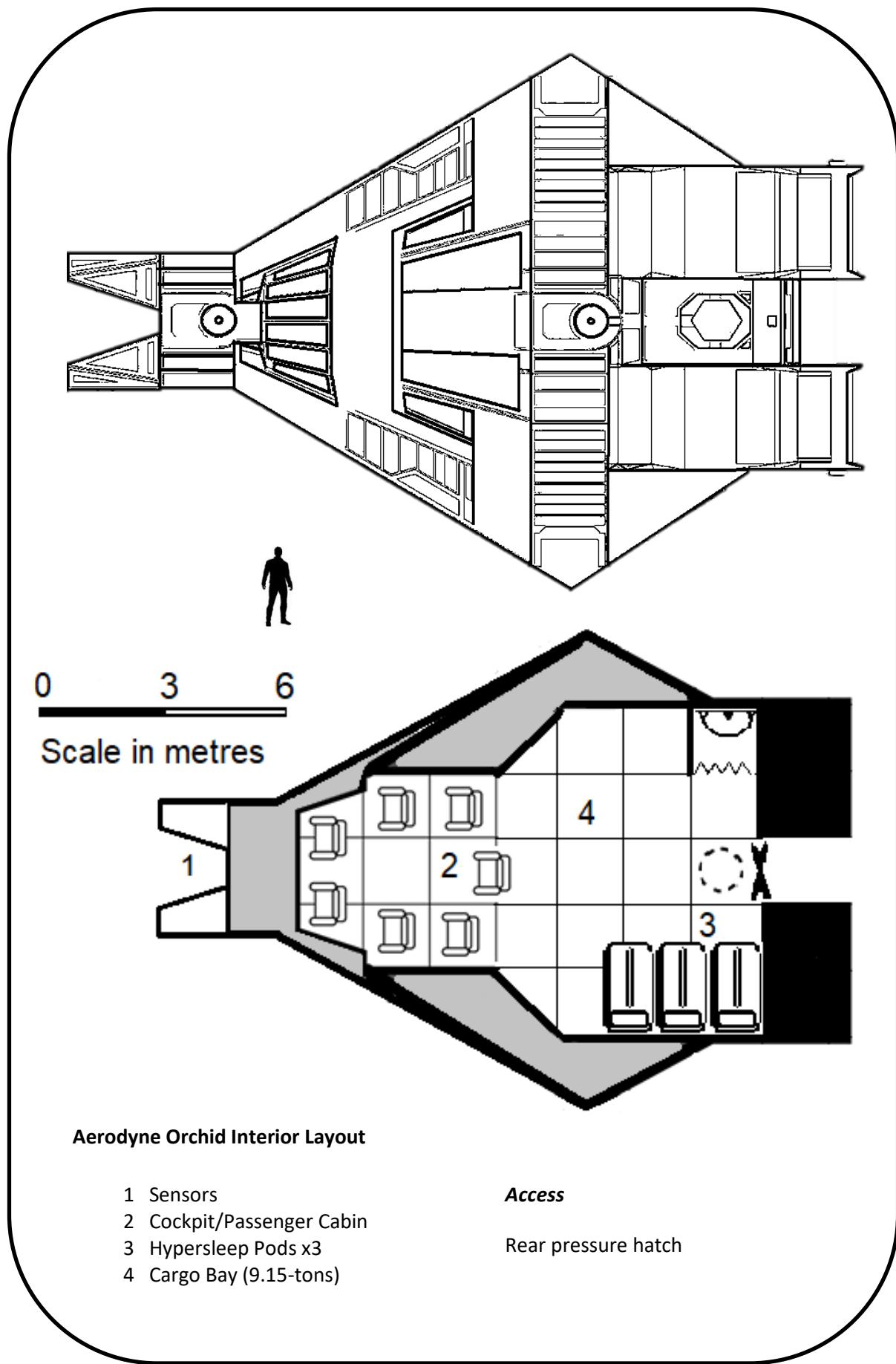
DUAL USE

Aerodyne found a niche with the Orchid. Some manufacturers were having to decide between fitting either escape pods or shuttles to their latest starships, often this was purely a reluctance to reduce the ship's payload. Payload equalled profit. With the Orchid, the starship now had a dedicated emergency escape system that also doubled as an orbit-to-surface runabout. With a 7-man crew, the shuttle could hold the entire crew of most commercial starships such as the Hercules tug and Forever West bulk carrier. It remains unsuitable for in-system travel due to its anaemic acceleration and long flight times. Mounted in ceiling racks are seven DeWitt class 4 survival kits, one for each person aboard.

DATA SHEET

AERODYNE ORCHID

Role	Lifeboat
Tonnage	20-ton (Hull 0 / Structure 1)
Fusion Reactor	10 MW, 12 months
Reaction Drive	1G
Avionics	Computer Model/1, Std Civilian
Crew	2
Passengers	5
Cargo	-
Other Fittings	3 Hypersleep Pods
Cost	\$5.43M





RED GIANT

STARSHIP CREW MANIFEST
USCS HERCULES TWV180286


Captain (male)	787988	Age 46 7 Terms
Pilot-2, Vacc Suit-1, Comms-2, Computer-2, Broker-1, Engineering-1, Loader-1		
Origins: Detroit, MI Appearance: White – black hair, beard		
Psych Evaluation: Ground down by the Company, the Captain is disillusioned		

First Officer/Pilot (male)	698897	Age 39 5 Terms
Pilot-2, Vacc Suit-1, Ground Vehicle-3, Computer-1, Electronics-2, Navigation-2		
Origins: Chesterfield, UK Appearance: White – short dark hair, grizzled features		
Psych Evaluation: Curious and scientifically minded, the pilot is an optimist		

Second Officer/Navigator (female)	477987	Age 30 3 Terms
Vacc Suit -2, Navigation-2, Medical-1, Comms-1, Computer-1		
Origins: Los Angeles, CA Appearance: White – blue eyes, short blonde hair, cowboy boots		
Psych Evaluation: Needing the pay, the navigator does her job, and that's it.		

Third Officer/Comms Ops (female)	699998	Age 30 3 Terms
Comms-2, Loader-1, Pilot-1, Vacc Suit-1		
Origins: New York, NY Appearance: White – tall, long, dark curly hair		
Psych Evaluation: Ambitious, with a fierce streak of rebelliousness.		

Fourth Officer/Medic-Scientist (male)	888AA8	Age 47 7 Terms
Medical-3, Comms-2, Ground Vehicle-1, Computer-2		
Origins: London, UK Appearance: White – clean cut, short hair, quiet		
Psych Evaluation: A calm, hard-working science officer, stubborn when pushed.		

Fourth Officer/Chief Engineer (male)	A88884	Age 40 5 Terms
Engineering-2, Brawling-1, Loader-1, Mechanical-2		
Origins: Irvine, KY Appearance: Black – tall, blue headband		
Psych Evaluation: Lively and argumentative engineer - with a temper.		

Crewman/Assistant Engineer (male)	556685	Age 53 8 Terms
Engineering-1, Electronics-3, Loader-2, Mechanical-1, Ground Vehicle-1		
Origins: New York, NY Appearance: White – thin, dark hair, Hawaiian shirt		
Psych Evaluation: Laconic assistant engineer, once an officer. Follows the chief's lead.		

Ship's Cat (male)	2B2 Instinct C	Age Unknown
Pouncer	Claws (1 point of dmg.)	Speed: 2 (12m) Armor: 0
Attack: If it has surprise		Flee: If it is surprised
Origins: Unknown Appearance: Ginger tabby cat, green eyes		



SITUATION REPORT

WORLD IN CRISIS!

Welcome to the world of 2250. Ten billion people and their high technology lifestyles has had a great impact on planet Earth. Deserts have spread, rainforests have dwindled, sea-levels have risen and the oil crisis of 2200 has illustrated just how much we have taken from the Earth. Many of those billions live in mega-cities, vast conurbations that have swallowed dozens of older traditional urban centres. The need for resources is greater than ever.



Community of American States

Dominated by the USA and creating allies of nations in North and South America, and the UK.



Asia-Pacific Partnership

When China broke apart and kick started the First Recession, the dominant nation became Japan. It has created a powerful economic bloc in the region.



Western European Union

Germany dominates the high-tech nations of western Europe. A smaller version of the defunct Euro Union.

POWER BLOCS

With the collapse of the failed world government experiment during the First Recession, the most powerful nations began to build power blocs around themselves. In a world of dwindling resources and loss of power to the conglomerates, nations turned to the strongest amongst them.

United Corporate Combine

A council of arbitration between the world's largest conglomerates. It regulates trade, international standards and licences. Established by the conglomerates themselves.



Rise of the Corporation

The biggest entities are the vast conglomerates; each a related family of corporations. The big seven are:

- Leyland-Okuda
- Erebus
- Voroncovo
- Wu-Ketai
- Reiner-Gama
- Tharsis
- Matsuyama





TODAY'S TECH

HEAVY ENGINEERING

Large fusion reactors power Earth's cities, as well as starships and colony outposts. But there is still a massive reliance on petroleum products, for plastics, industry and fuel. Unlimited deposits on the Off-World colonies have kept the oil industry alive.



SPACEFLIGHT

The heart of a starship is its fusion plant, integral to the function of the ship's powerful plasma reaction drive. To cross interstellar distances these vessels use hyperdrives - and crews must be put into hypersleep for the flight to avoid going insane.

In normal space the crews have the luxury of artificial gravity throughout the ship's decks. FTL communications are available, but the time-lag is significant (1 parsec per day).

DURABLE AND SAFE

They dreamt of a future with flat-screens, wireless connectivity, portable phones and touch-screens. Alas, repeated security breaches and the EMP strikes involving Flight 926 over Qatar and the East Asian Nuclear War of 2047 ended those flights of fancy. Today technology is tough, durable and safe. Wired networks prevail, data is stored on hard-drives or optical discs. Mechanical and hydraulic alternatives returned to replace electronic systems. Solid-state construction principles gave way to a combination of new bold electronics and mechanical engineering converting the once minute and fragile to sturdy and imposing devices.

SYNTHETICS

Androids - Expensive technical experts, androids can be found on the Outer Rim, and on Earth. They are calm and placid technical assistants.

Clones - Second class citizens, these vat-grown slaves are used to boost labour on some harsh Off-World colonies. Some clones, used for organ replacement have escaped and become psychopathic murderers.

Military Technology

Firearms still use brass cartridges, although modern armies are switching to caseless ammo. Smartguns and gauss rifles are used in support, as are new heavy plasma weapons. Troops are protected by rigid plate armour and ride into battle in APCs, jeeps, jump-jets or dropships.



Red Dragon

Taking you home ...





OFF WORLD

A NEW LIFE ...

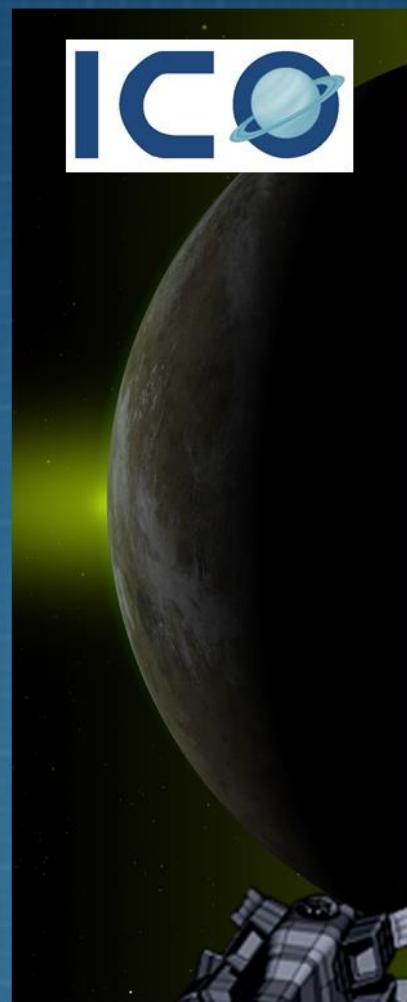
After the first hyperspace probe returned from Alpha Centauri in 2120, Mankind has explored and colonised nearby star systems. Today, in 2225, there are over 300 surveyed planets in the interstellar space surrounding Earth, the result of the scramble for the stars as mining, farming, logging and oil drilling companies desperately sought out resources that they could supply to Earth. The three sectors are the American, the European (or 'German') and the Japanese.

A HOSTILE UNIVERSE

Space is not a place for tourists or fortune-hunters; it is a hostile and brutal frontier, where men and women work hard, rely on nobody but themselves, risk death every day and face the Unknown. And out here the Unknown is real – it is horrific: there are rumors of the disturbing side-effects of hyperspace, of ancient horrors entombed on icy moons, and of monsters – killer alien organisms, perfectly evolved to survive the hostile wastes of space – at any cost.

The Off-World Colonies

Colonies in the Core, within 4 parsecs of Earth, are quite heavily settled; those further out have populations in the thousands or tens of thousands—each one working hard to send resources back to Earth. Corporate control and domination is widespread. Expect a single 'mainworld' to be the only inhabited world in a star system. Many systems also contain gas giants which are crucial for refuelling freighters and bulk carriers.





EMPLOYMENT

-CAREERS-

- ◆ ANDROID
- ◆ CORPORATE AGENT
- ◆ CORPORATE EXECUTIVE
- ◆ COLONIST
- ◆ COMMERCIAL SPACER
- ◆ US MARINE
- ◆ FEDERAL MARSHAL
- ◆ MILITARY SPACER
- ◆ PHYSICIAN
- ◆ OUTBACK RANGER
- ◆ ROGUE
- ◆ ROUGHNECK MINER
- ◆ SCIENTIST



METRICS

Your six primary characteristics will be assessed (each between 2-12, with 7 being the average):

- STRENGTH**
- DEXTERITY**
- ENDURANCE**
- INTELLIGENCE**
- EDUCATION**
- SOCIAL STANDING**

MEET YOUR CREW!

Employees make up a work crew that has a purpose, an employer and a mission. There are various types of crew to choose from on the Outer Rim, and your choice will determine the entire tone and content of the situations you will find yourself in. Common crews are:

- ◆ Colony Work Crew
- ◆ Corporate Investigation Crew
- ◆ Roughneck Crew
- ◆ Commercial Starship Crew
- ◆ Resource Exploration Crew
- ◆ Marine Corps Squad
- ◆ Private Military Contractors

Your Career Path

Starting out at 18, you will be guided through a series of 4-year 'terms' during which you can go for promotions, increase in rank and gain valuable skills in your chosen career. Who knows what interesting situations and opportunities will come your way and what kind of a person you will become at the end of it! Enjoy the ride, stay safe and learn from those around you.

Skills

Employees often leave their careers with several valuable skills. These are quantified by their skill level, beginning at level-1 but going as high as 4 or 5. Level 1 is working skill. Level 2 indicates experience and training. Level 3 is a real master at the skill, a chief engineer or doctor, for example. Depending on your age, you can expect to have three to five skills.



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