

# AURORA

THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:  
OUR SERIALS CONTINUE  
REVIEWS FROM THE ARCHIVE  
REIMAGINING THE CHRONICLES



ISSUE 10.2

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE  
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# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## SHADES IN THE NIGHT

### *From the Editor...*

If I may digress from our regularly scheduled symposium, I'd like to talk about Zootopia. Yes, the Disney film.

It's been on a wicked tear since its release, racking up audiences and accolades faster than nearly anyone expected. It is inventive and a lot of fun, and goes even beyond with a solid philosophical core that is filled with profound meditations on what it means to be human (and I do get the irony of that statement, given it is a movie with walking, talking animals). It is a strong and glorious example of the power of story.

I am completely enamoured and, I'd even say, obsessed with it at the moment.

Not something we gamers are unfamiliar with, I'm sure.

Being extreme passionate about something can be wonderful. It can fuel great levels of action and of creativity. It can create great communities. We bond over them. We create stories, more games, art, discussions, and amazing play experiences. We have huge conventions. We produce, and read, magazines like this one that cater to our little slices of obsessions.

Obsession often gets a bad rap, and there is a reason for that. There is a rather fine line between being passionately interested with something, and with a mania that becomes all-encompassing, wrecking the balance and driving away community. But if we allow the word obsession to expand, allow its use to include those who passionately excited and still in control, then we can see that obsessions are everywhere.

And along with the rest of my musings on Zootopia, that is one thing I have gotten present to the past weeks: the wonderfulness of the diversity of our obsessions. That we have this shared human trait, of being able to be obsessed with something, and that even if I don't get why you may be obsessed about that one thing, I can be excited about the fact that you are excited about that thing.

If obsession turns into fixation, then it is time to intervene. But when someone is so over the top excited about something, rather than ridicule I choose to high-five.

My obsession with Zootopia will mellow out into a grand love for it, as my obsessions usually do. I will continue to share my passion for it, just as I enjoy and continue to share my passion for Dream Pod 9 games.

In that vein, we have a fortuitous and great new feature here at Aurora HQ for you this issue: reviews of DP9 games from nearly two decades ago! We have clearly been following our passions for a while. These reviews are by Justin Alexander, who's website is a treasure trove of

excellent gaming advice and thoughts. He's been kind enough to grant us permission to reprint them here in the pages of Aurora, and they are very fun to read with a historian's lens. I think you'll get a kick out of them.

Welcome to Issue 10.2 of your Silhouette magazine.

Game on,

Oliver Bollmann  
*Aurora Magazine Editor*

PS: I also wasn't joking about musings and philosophical explorations of Zootopia. The movie really does fire on all cylinders with multiple layers to explore and has delicious moments of possibility and transformation. If you want to read more, you can find my Zootopia page here:

<http://lynxmuse.tumblr.com/Zootopia>



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# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Justin Alexander (thealexandrian.net) -- *Archive Review: Heavy Gear 2nd Ed & Archive Review: Crisis of Faith*

Justin Alexander's published works include more than two hundred books, articles, and reviews. Today he is the Line Developer for the Infinity roleplaying game from Modiphius Entertainment, and he has previously worked with Dream Pod 9, Fantasy Flight Games, Atlas Games, and Steve Jackson Games. He can be found online at the Alexandrian (<http://www.thealexandrian.net>).

John Bell (jakarnilson@magma.ca) -- *Alfie's Tanners, Kraut Patrol*

He gets labeled a "walking-talking encyclopedia." He draws what goes through his mind. He builds what he can't afford. He walks what others would take a lift for. He'd probably trade in his bike for a real, working Ferret; but then again, who wouldn't?

Aaron Bertrand (thisnewjoe@gmail.com) -- *The Journal Part 8: Slingshot*

While a dabbler in the boardgame and video game realm, few things are quite so enjoyable over a long period as the storytelling adventure created among friends during an RPG campaign. My we all embark on many such glorious adventures!

Oliver Bollmann (auroramag@gmail.com) -- *Editor*

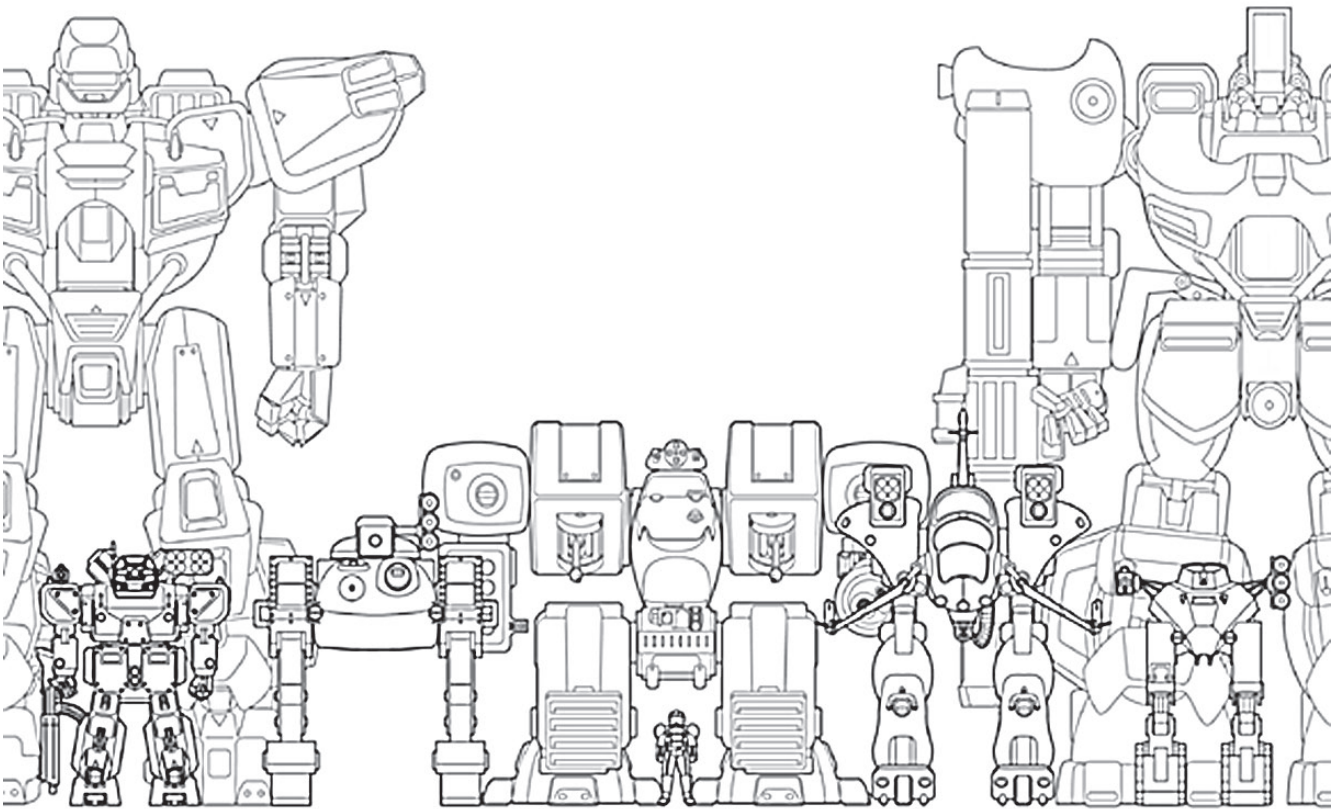
It all started in a hobby store one day thirty odd years ago with an odd box containing something called Top Secret. Since then games have just become a big part of his life. He's been in love with the DP9 universes since the first HG release and began his direct involvement with the Pod crew began numerous years ago. He also runs a gaming imprint *Kannik Studios at rpgnow*:

[http://rpg.drivethrustuff.com/index.php?manufacturers\\_id=291](http://rpg.drivethrustuff.com/index.php?manufacturers_id=291)

Christopher Gregory (chrisgregory@hotmail.com) -- *Reimagining The Chronicles - Part 5*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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*Heavy Gear is, in the words of the publisher, “not your father’s giant robot game”. One of the best games of the ’90s, the second edition of this game is everything a second edition should be and more.*

There are a lot of games out there and there are a lot of settings out there and, usually, even if I like a game or setting in general there are products for that game or setting with which I am not happy. We can all think of an example where the publisher’s of our favorite game have let us down by releasing an inferior product.

It has been a pleasant surprise, therefore, for me to encounter the games of Dream Pod 9 – although I have yet to purchase every supplement for their games, I have bought the majority of them and can testify that not a single one of them has been a disappointment. Whereas other game companies have to prove to me that their product is worth my money, Dream Pod 9 would have to prove to me that their product is not worth my money before I would consider not buying it. I may not own all the supplements yet, but I intend to the minute it is within my financial ability.

It therefore came as no surprise to me that the second edition of their Heavy Gear game proved to be a textbook case of not only how to do a core rulebook, but how to do a second edition.

The first edition of the Heavy Gear game (“A New Era Has Just Begun”) was released three years ago in 1995. I didn’t pick it up until just last year (literally the day before the second edition was announced on Dream Pod 9’s website). With fully integrated rules for both roleplaying and tactical play it had a powerful system with a lot of potential in a visually stunning package. It was possessed with some minor flaws, of course (no game is perfect): the material was very tightly packed with some degree of muddiness in the lay-out and the chapter on the world of Terra Nova (where Heavy Gear is set) was only six pages long.

Over the next two years Dream Pod 9’s general competency at laying out material would increase and it would be revealed (through supplements such as Life on Terra Nova) that the universe of Heavy Gear and the story being told there are even better than the rules.

This is where the second edition comes in. The folks down at Dream Pod 9 managed to perfectly target every problem area of the first edition, leave every feature of the first edition intact, and release a second edition which every other game publisher in this industry should take as a model. The first edition of Heavy Gear was fantastic. The second is sublime.

First, they have taken advantage of two years of experience and player feedback. Specific problem areas in the rules have been resolved and cleaned up. The overall lay-out and structure of the book has been redone in a manner which is both clean and logical – making the game easier to learn for newcomers and easier to reference for active players.

Second, they have added an extensive chapter on the background of the game – with general information on the entire world of Terra Nova along with an in-depth look at the city of Peace River in order to provide a beginning location for new GMs. This section also contains a beautiful full-color map of Terra Nova. The first edition of the game presented an odd dichotomy – everyone said the outstanding setting and developing story of Terra Nova was the biggest strength of the game, yet the rulebook contained almost no information on that setting or story. The second edition has resolved this problem.

Third, they have left intact everything which was good in the first edition. The rules are still simple, yet powerful. They still provide perfect integration between roleplaying and tactical games for those who are interested. The visual presentation is still stunning.

Too often when publishers release second editions of great games they have spoiled what was there to begin with – cluttering the elegant design of the first edition with unnecessary rules and complexity, destroying the essence of the original game, and catering towards people who are already playing the original edition. The second edition of Heavy Gear has done none of this.

## ARCHIVAL NOTE

These classic reviews of Heavy Gear and Jovian Chronicles books were originally published at RPGnet and in Games Unplugged magazine between 1998 and 2002.

This review gushes a bit, but more than a decade later Heavy Gear is still one of my favorite games and Terra Nova is one of my favorite settings. I will also say that the Heavy Gear game line during its first and second editions remains an almost perfect example of how RPG product lines should be organized. Originally Posted: 1998/05/08

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ARCHIVE REVIEW: HEAVY GEAR 2ND ED

## THE RULES

In my discussion of the rules I am only going to deal with the roleplaying components of them – as I am not an experienced tactical player with this system. The tactical system is 100% compatible with the roleplaying system (with only a simple scale change involved), however, and is (by all reports) of excellent quality in its own right.

The central mechanic of Heavy Gear is simple. To perform any task you perform an Action Test. Roll a number of six-sided dice – whichever die is the highest is your total. If more than one six is rolled, each additional six is treated as a +1 (so rolling three sixes would result in a total of 8 (6+1+1)). If you roll all 1's you have fumbled. Certain modifiers may add to or subtract from your total.

In a Standard Action Test, unless you fumble, you compare your total to a Threshold assigned by your GM to the action in question. If your total is higher than the Threshold, you have succeeded. If it is lower, you have failed. Your Margin of Success is the total of your die roll minus the Threshold. Your Margin of Failure is the Threshold minus your die roll.

In an Opposed Action Test you simply compare the two rolls – whichever is higher succeeds. A draw is a marginal success for the person resisting an action. The Margin of Success is determined by subtracting the lower total from the higher total.

This basic mechanic will be used most often to perform a Skill Check (there are also Attribute Checks and Chance Tests). In a Skill Check the number of dice you roll is equal to your rating in the skill you are attempting to use. Whatever attribute is effecting the roll acts as a positive modifier to the roll.

An example: Miranda Petite is attempting to do a backflip. She has a skill level of 2 in Acrobatics and her rating in the Agility attribute is 3. Because she has a skill level of 2 she rolls two dice. She rolls a 5 and a 4, so her total die roll is 5. She adds 3 to this (from her Agility attribute) for a final total of 8. If the GM had assigned a Threshold of 3 (Easy) to this task, Miranda would succeed with a Margin of Success of 5 ( $8 - 3$ ).

Combat is handled as a series of opposed action tests, with various modifiers applied according to factors (cover behind which your target is hiding, lighting, the amount of time you spend aiming, the accuracy of your weapon, etc.). Damage is calculated from the Margin of Success of the attack by multiplying the MoS and the damage rating of the weapon. A character has three Wound Thresholds – Flesh Wound, Deep Wound, and Instant Death. The damage is compared to the Wound Threshold of the character – if it exceeds the character's thresholds, the character takes a wound.

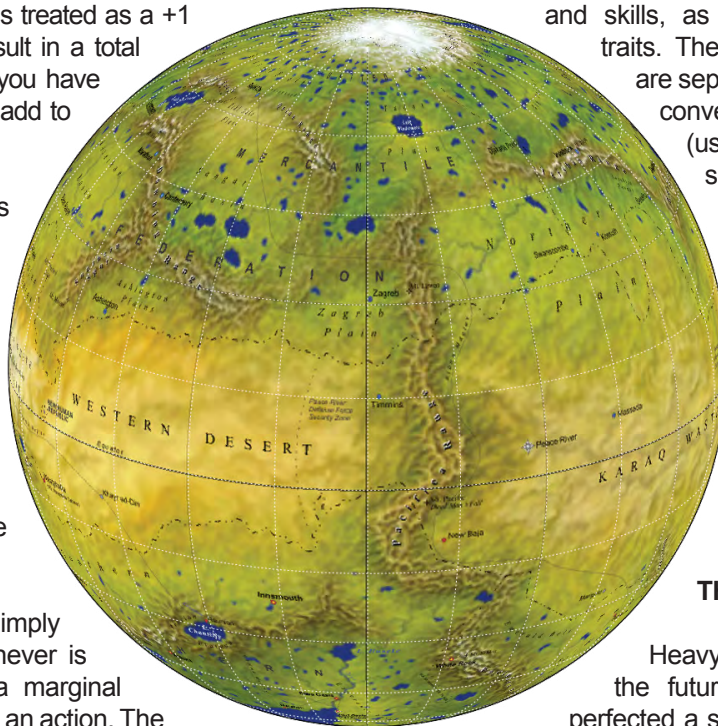
Character creation is a process of purchasing attributes and skills, as well as calculating secondary traits. The points for attributes and skills are separated – but there is provision for converting unused characters points (used for purchasing attributes) into skill points. There are ten attributes (Agility, Appearance, Build, Creativity, Fitness, Influence, Knowledge, Perception, Psyche, and Willpower) and nine secondary traits (Strength, Health, Stamina, Unarmed Damage, Armed Damage, Flesh Wounding Score, Deep Wounding Score, Instant Death Score, and System Shock).

## THE SETTING

Heavy Gear is set 4000 years in the future. During that time we have perfected a system of interstellar travel using “Tannhauser gates” (named after the scientist who’s Grand Unified Theory explained time-space discontinuities – the “gates”) and begun to settle the galaxy – including the Helios system where the planet of Terra Nova is located.

Terra Nova is a largely dry planet. Slightly larger than Earth it's equatorial region is a vast desert referred to collectively as the Badlands. Its polar regions, however are fertile and were centers of the colonization effort.

At the end of the 58th century, however, Earth decided that the benefits of the colony worlds was no longer worth the financial burden of supporting them and withdrew their support – including the massive gateships required for interstellar travel. Terra Nova suddenly found itself isolated from the rest of humanity.



# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE ARCHIVE REVIEW: HEAVY GEAR 2ND ED

Years of chaos ensued. Slowly, however, means of staying alive on this strange and hostile world without the aid of the home world were found. Political leagues were formed – in the southern hemisphere the Southern Republic, the Humanist Alliance, the Mekong Dominion, and the Eastern Sun Emirates; in the northern hemisphere the Northern Lights Confederacy, the United Mercantile Federation, and the Western Frontier Protectorate. The polar leagues eventually formed two polar alliances – the Allied Southern Territories and the Confederated Northern City-States. The Badlands, however, remained largely a hostile and volatile geopolitical area with various city-states and smaller communities.

Then Earth returned – in the form of the Colonial Expeditionary Forces (CEF). What ensued was the War of the Alliance – as the two polar confederations, typically political enemies, allied with each other against the common foe. Finally the CEF forced to retreat back through the gates and the spirit of cooperation did not last long after their leaving. Now, nearly two decades later, the two polar alliances are on the verge of war.

The rules of Heavy Gear are simple and elegant, but the setting is a work of art. The cultures of the various leagues are rich tapestries – each with their own character and individuality. The political spectrum of this world is complicated and detailed. As you delve into the supplements you get details not only on broad patterns, but also on how people actually live their lives. You will not find a better game world on the market today, in my opinion. Period.

## HEAVY GEAR: THE GAME LINE

At the beginning of this review I mentioned the supplementary products for the Heavy Gear game. There are not many games so well supported as Heavy Gear. In an industry which suffers alternatively from vaporware deadlines and large gaps of time between releases, Dream Pod 9 has committed themselves to both an adherence to deadlines and near monthly release schedule for the Heavy Gear game since its inception. And the products released do not suffer from the speed at which they are produced. Quite the opposite, the quality of Heavy Gear products is consistently among the best in the industry (they were nominated for two Origin awards this year, for example).

My favorite aspect of the entire game, however, are the Storyline books – coupled with the Timewatch(TM) system. Although only one (Crisis of Faith) has been released so far, the concept is fantastic and should, I think, be emulated by other games. The universe of Heavy Gear, like many others, has an advancing timeline – let's call it a meta-story which is told behind which the primary stories (those told by the GMs and players). The

problem many other games have is that following that meta-story becomes increasingly difficult as more and more products are released. Take Shadowrun, for example. There are dozens upon dozens of products available for Shadowrun, and through those products a story is told – but new players have very few clues available to them as to where to start. The other problem is that – because that story is told over the course of all those different products – to follow it requires an ever-increasing financial investment. I, as a new player to Shadowrun, found that investment quite daunting and – instead – chose to create the material myself.

The Storyline books and Timewatch(TM) system which are part of the Heavy Gear line, however, solve both these problems. First, the Timewatch(TM) appears on the back of all Heavy Gear products – giving the game year in which the product is set. For example, the Second Edition Rulebook is set in TN 1934. This makes it very easy for new players to know exactly when a product is set. Second, the Storyline books are designed to push the meta-story of the world forward. Although they capitalize on hints and material found in the other sourcebooks, they are stand-alone products and tell the most important parts of the evolving story of Heavy Gear.

What this means is that, first, any supplements that players buy for the game can be quickly identified as to the time period they are discussing. Second, for players who don't want to obsessively buy every product which comes out for the game, they can still follow the evolving meta-story. This means that if I wanted to run a campaign in the Humanist Alliance I wouldn't have to buy supplements for the completely unrelated area of the Northern Lights Confederacy because the NLC sourcebook contains elements of the evolving meta-story I will require to understand future products released concerning the area I am really interested in, the Humanist Alliance.

## CONCLUSION

Heavy Gear is blessed with a great system (which supports both roleplaying and tactical playing), a fantastic setting, and an excellent line of support (in quality, in timeliness, in detail, and in organization).

Dream Pod 9's recent advertising for this game has included the tag line: "This is definitely not your father's giant robot game." I think it's important to note that this 100% true. Many giant robot games tend to focus more on the technology than on the characters, but the world of Terra Nova is so deeply and richly textured that it is more than possible to adventure there without ever seeing or getting into one of the "gears" from which the game gets its name (you'll note that they have not once



come up previously in my review). They are part of the world, but they are not the entirety of the world by any stretch of the imagination.

The world is so wonderfully detailed, in fact, that I have seen games run within their fictional cultures which could just as easily have been run in a modern setting with a few minor technological changes. This game can be satisfying to those interested in any genre of play, because the world is large enough and realistic enough to realize that interesting stories can be told about anybody and anything.

I said earlier that no game is without a flaw. The second edition of Heavy Gear is no exception, although I had to look for quite some time to find it: A lot of the artwork is recycled. This would not be a bad thing if it was merely recycled from the first edition rulebook – however, many of the pieces are, in fact, from other sourcebooks. For those of us who are Heavy Gear junkies and used to every book getting a fresh and excellent art treatment, seeing these pictures a second time was an unwelcome surprise. New players entering the game will undoubtedly get the unfortunate impression that Dream Pod 9 is in the business of recycling art for their supplements.

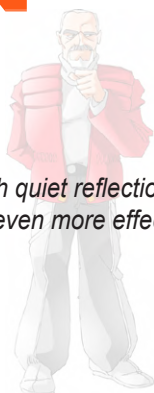
As flaws go, this one is so insignificant as to be meaningless. This is a game you should buy. Right now. In fact, get up from your computers, go to your car, drive to your game store, buy it. Right now. Go.

What are you still doing here?

Style: 5  
Substance: 5



THE NEW ERA CONTINUES...



*Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.*

— Peter Drucker

# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE THE JOURNAL, PART 8: SLINGSHOT AARON BERTRAND

WEDNESDAY, 10/10/2210 04:06 TARDIFREY TIME

I'm woken by a PA alert in my room asking me to come to the bridge immediately. They've put the navigation systems program on hold. Wanted to tell me about the new orders they received. The trip to the orbital platform has been scuttled and replaced with a wilder, hope-and-pray plan of catching the cargo in outer orbit.

I had no idea about this but Duncan said this was a maneuver developed in the early days by the early commercial and then military fleets to help reduce costs before space travel and infrastructure got as good as it is today.

When I asked for the success rate of actually catching these caches Duncan deferred to Olivia. She had the slightest hesitation, then said the success rates approached 97% for highly trained base and flight crews. She was confident in her ability to get us in the right place with all the necessary speeds and directions worked out.

Duncan chimed-in just then. "Our chances are not so good, even with Olivia's excellent piloting and a well trained crew on this ship. It's about taking into account that we're catching this while executing an orbital acceleration move around Mars, while also needing to remain on course and somehow avoid being seen by any patrols and we couldn't change course even if they we're in the way because we couldn't slow down and turn around. A couple days after the pickup, we'll meet a refueling ship in-flight and fill for the final leg of our trip."

Exodus. That's what we're on. It doesn't sound too good for us. I apparently said that out loud and Olivia and Duncan looked to each other, having a silent conversation for a moment, then she turns to me.

"Your friend is a genius with logistics, strategy, covert ops, spaceships and navigation, finance, and seems to have extraordinary insight into what's happening in politics and military movements --"

"...and mercenaries" Duncan added.

"yes, that," Olivia acknowledged, "and they have way too many connections to have this be some single rich person." she waited a moment, studiously avoiding looking at Duncan. I wouldn't have noticed how subtle it was if I hadn't been through so much with them over these weeks. "I'm not convinced this is one person anymore, but I'm quite certain she's part of -- or leading -- Ops for the Jovians."

I was stunned for a moment. I hadn't been considering all the brainpower and resources needed to have this work.

"And I," said Duncan, "am pretty sure you don't have a friend there, and that this is actually a group of people. Same idea as Olivia has, but I am not convinced there is a single person who really knows you. I think they've got a good team and they're using it well."

Olivia's skepticism came out, but quietly. "We'll see how things go down with the cache maneuver." I considered asking her more but Duncan caught my attention and made a stop motion with his hand.

"I woke you up because we need to talk." I was a bit nervous about that, but he didn't seem mad or upset, just very certain, confident, and a little entertained. He looked like he was considering something, and I felt a bit uncomfortable with it. "If the alarm isn't going off, you can take a few minutes to get ready. I woke you up because i need to run things by you before day crew starts." He smiled, and waved his hand toward the captain's room. "This way, please."

I had just been politely asked to put on pants next time, and probably run a comb through my hair.

In his office, the tone changed. He locked the door and motioned for me to take a seat in the chair in front of his desk.

"Lockdown the comms" he said to the air. Olivia gave a quick okay and announced we had three minutes.

"Until what?" I asked him, mostly surprised but not afraid.

"Until things get very noisy and tense on the ship." He sat in the chair opposite mine, not behind the desk where I had expected him to be. "Before that happens, I need you to tell me what's going on here's specifically what it is everyone wants from you."

Olivia and I hadn't talked about it other than for her to tell me not to tell anyone. "I agreed not to tell, that's why I didn't tell you."

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## THE JOURNAL, PART 8: SLINGSHOT

He nodded. "The idea of Olivia keeping things secret is normal for anyone working with her. She's proved her good judgment many times and I have no doubts that she always has the best interests of everyone in mind, and sometimes gives out important details only when necessary, even when I fight her for more." His confidence in her was also filled with affection and a clearly hard-won respect for such an anomaly within his command. I wondered, briefly, what it was like for them when they first started working together.

I knew from previous conversations with them both that she had pursued him, and his ship, and over time, had helped transform the crew into a highly competent team of ship-for-hire traders, some light mercenary work, a few search-and-rescue ops, and now, a key player in an interplanetary intrigue operation.

"Olivia the one who set up this conversation. It's too easy to plant a bug on a ship, any ship, especially one in our lines of work. That's why Liv setup a tool that interferes with them for short periods of time. It's easy to set up in here, and inconspicuous, so that's why you're telling me in here and not on the bridge."

Alright, so I'm convinced. Now how to say this efficiently? "How much time do we have left?"

"One minute, 56 seconds." He said without looking at a clock.

I want to tell him everything, but I don't have time for that, so I considered what is most important. Agram revealed some new sides to our developing technology that we hadn't considered before, so I briefly described to Duncan that we'd started a project that would cause a leap forward in medical treatments and brain-related therapies. It wasn't until we were on this ship with so much time to consider why the Venutians and the Jovians even noticed us, that we considered our tech could be used in a different way, and be applied to military applications. It could change "smart" drones into human-smart drones with computer augmentation. This would far exceed current military tech owned by anyone. It has the power to alter the entire balance of power in the system.

"War at the speed of thought, and medicine that would make a huge difference for people." Duncan took a few seconds to consider what I'd said. A warning tone chimed as he spoke again. "That's half a minute left. It's quite a difficult decision, but I support the medical application and I frankly don't think that will ever not become military tech. I want to negotiate

some conditions with our contact with regard to your work. Would you --" a tone chimed again, more urgently, beeping once each second. "Will you allow us to negotiate on your behalf?"

"Yes." I said, confident that they both understood what was at stake, and having an idea of what might be won (I had no idea what they were going to propose, and I couldn't ask right now.

Duncan started speaking again, completely without any sign that the last conversation had happened.

"So, our next maneuver on this trip hasn't been done in recent memory in quite some time. We'll turn the ship around after we've captured the cache. That's going to happen in a few days, and I want you to work on the song you heard last time."

I let some playful irritation in my voice, which was somewhat more grouchy than I intended because I was still so tired. The sickness was finally gone, but I need more sleep.

"This?! This stupid song is why you woke me up so early?!" I kicked at him, but he dodged.

"Yes, because I scheduled the turnaround maneuver for just before Mid-watch Bell." That puts it about 4am normal people time. The cocky bastard was grinning at me. I was grinning back before I realized it. Damn that trixster.

"I'm going to need those lyrics if you want me to karaoke this thing. And a lot of caffeine. An inhuman amount of caffeine."

He clapped his hands together once and moved to rise.

"I'm so glad you approve, captain, since you'll be joining me in this duet."

He shook his head. "I'd hate to take away from your premiere performance. And it's a one-person song anyway."

Olivia's voice interrupted my response. "Actually, I found a version for two people, so you'll be joining him, captain." Now it was my turn for the smug face.

He looked up, somewhat surprised, but sighed heavily. "Hey, wait," he said, "You two planned this." Not a question, but a statement.



# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## THE JOURNAL, PART 8: SLINGSHOT

"Yup!" I said, smacking loudly on the P. "I've asked Olivia to record it, too."

"Fine."

"Glad you agreed," I said, jumping out of my chair and heading for the door. Just before it opened, I turned my head and said, "Thank you, Captain Princess."

"Liv! Do not tell new crewmates my most embarrassing stories until I have one good one for each of them!"

"Oh, she didn't tell me anything. Just told me to try using it with you once. Interesting reaction. You'll have to spill the beans, but later, after I've gotten enough sleep."

I walked out, leaving the cabin door to close behind me, shutting-off the sound of Olivia giggling. It was the first time I'd ever heard her giggle about anything.

*FRIDAY 10/12/2210 15:32 TARDIFREY TIME*

I have to admit that I expected more craziness around the cache capture, but it actually went very smoothly and quietly. Duncan lead the crew to a successful pickup of the cache while flying the ship backward, then brought us down to a cargo bay to check out what was inside.

Whatever we'd expected in terms of food and other basic necessities was present, as promised. What we didn't expect was the winter gear, oxygen tanks and breathing supplies, and a few other things that the engineer got excited about. There was also a tablet with some navigational data on it, which the navigator and Olivia were going over together. A minute later, they ran out of the room and requested Duncan call a senior staff meeting as soon as he was done.

Those of us who weren't in the staff meeting sat assembled before them for the debriefing in the common room. The first announcement was that we will plan on using everything that was shipped to us. This was because the second announcement was that we are now off-track.

The slowdown they started on the way to Mars actually messed-up our plans. We're not going to hit our original target. For those of us who knew the refueling ship was supposed to be out there, we just learned it wasn't going to be waiting for us when we got out that far.

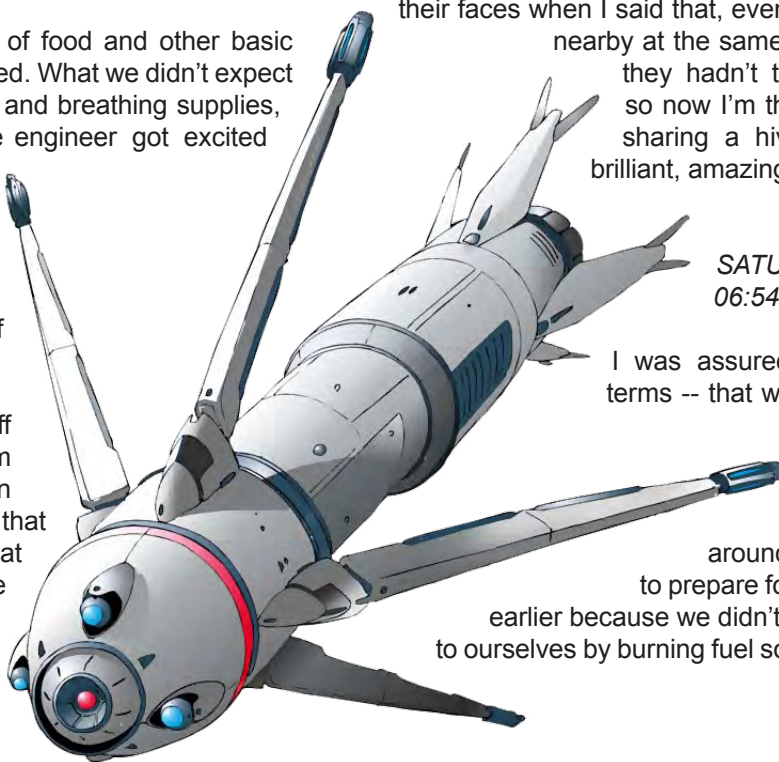
Duncan broke out duty teams to take care of preparing the ship for some time flying cold, ordering engineering teams to check everything from life supports to the bulkheads to make sure it would all work in the cold, and would work again when the heat was turned on. The galley team was going to move things to storage in the engine room, which would be warmer than the rest of the ship when everything was put in low-power mode.

We newest additions to the crew were going to be assisting with each of the teams. Since we'd been learning ship operations, we could be helpful. Agram and Clarice were assigned a team together, while I was assigned to work with the engineers. I didn't have anything I could help with in terms of navigation and piloting, so that made sense.

I am finding that I really like being up front where those kinds of decisions are made. During our work Duncan and Olivia came by separately to check on all the teams. I'd mentioned to them both that if this science thing doesn't work out, then I'd probably start working with a bridge crew. They each gave me the same "Got it" and an odd expression on their faces when I said that, even though they weren't nearby at the same time. I'm pretty sure they hadn't talked to each other, so now I'm thinking they might be sharing a hive mind. A devious, brilliant, amazing, trickster mind.

*SATURDAY 10/13/2210  
06:54 TARDIFREY TIME*

I was assured -- in no uncertain terms -- that we were still doing the turnaround duet in the morning. Duncan confirmed that we still need to turn around, and we have a burn to prepare for. We weren't doing it earlier because we didn't want to call attention to ourselves by burning fuel so close to Mars. Turns





# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## THE JOURNAL, PART 8: SLINGSHOT

out we were coasting over the last couple days, letting the gravity of the Martian system take care of acceleration and course-correction for us, with some minor pumps of the jets to nudge us now and then. Nothing that would be noticed on a scanner.

I considered warning Alastair and Clarice about the plan to wake everyone up with our shenanigans, but I kept quiet about it. Why not, right? It's noise, and harmless fun, and it's our last big moment of shipwide fun before we get ready to iceball the ship as we pass through hostile space.

Turns out they didn't mind. Everyone enjoyed the duet version of the song everyone just as much as everyone else, and the replies over the PA were a good sign. There was a chorus of tired people excitedly shouting "Great!", "Thanks, jerks!", and "Go the %#!%\$ to sleep!" over the PA when we were done. And lots of clapping across the ship.

Duncan looked way too pleased with himself. Dork. Olivia recorded the whole thing, as promised, but I wasn't as nervous about it as I thought I'd be.

It's a couple hours later now, and we completed the turnaround. I went to look out the window and noticed for the first time that I don't get space sick anymore. I looked all over, considering the galaxies and starlight and thinking how amazing it was to be able to see this.

Olivia came up and tapped my shoulder for a visit to the Captain's Quarters.

She closed the door behind us. There was a single tone, just like I heard the first time Duncan and I spoke earlier in the week.

Duncan had poured us rum into shot glasses and handed us each one. As he did this, he said, "Two things before the suppressor times-out. First, know that our contact is completely scary and I would never want to piss her off. Ever. She sent us a message yesterday reporting that our ship sent some unusual transmissions while transiting Martian orbit. We'll have to find those devices before the next leg of our journey to keep predatory lowlives, CEGA patrols and those Venusian pursuers from being able to find us."

"Secondly, I want you to know that we've negotiated an arrangement with the contact regarding the technology you've been developing." Duncan visibly lightened-up. "She won't accept our agreement until she's confirmed you're okay with it."

I looked to Olivia, then back to Duncan. "We proposed that make immediate use of the technology for their military purposes as well as applying it immediately to developing therapies and treatments for current and former military service personnel and their families." I know that would help one of the largest groups of people affected by traumatic brain injuries. The future is looking better.

He continued, "The rest of the agreement states that as soon as any foreign entity acquires the technology, they must make it available to medical universities for developing uses of the technology for the public benefit. We already promised our crew would not let the tech fall into enemy hands, regardless of the details in the rest of the agreement."

"Enemy hands" I echoed. I hadn't called anyone "enemies" before. They were, objectively speaking, some of the most hostile and predatory people I knew of. Their dedication to taking the tech by force tells me a lot about how they would apply that new power once they got hold of it.

It was in this first moment that I realized we were causing a new line to be drawn in the solar system, more than just geographically, we were declaring that the Jovians were going to behave more responsibly with this tech than any other candidates. It felt... arrogant, like we might be making an ethically bad decision not to destroy the tech. To me, though, that was less palatable than knowing free-thinking persons could apply any new technology to heal or harm, regardless of what the tech was. Atomic weaponry was developed to demonstrate power and deter future aggression, but it ended up being used widely for public benefit in medicine, power generation, and eventually space exploration.

Even now, I'm sure we're not making a mistake. It's got to be like this.

Olivia said, quietly, "We've also been given a heads-up that there is a bounty on our ship, alive and well, but a bounty nonetheless."

Duncan slapped the arm of his chair, "Damn, I forgot about that." I didn't know that was possible.

The thirty-second tone rang. "Yes, make the agreement." After a moment, I declared, "I'll pull out some data and work with Olivia to encrypt it properly. I want them to know we have it, and that we're serious about the deal, but I don't want them to have everything until we're safely within their space."

Olivia made a quiet tut. To Duncan, "You win. I see it now."

# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## THE JOURNAL, PART 8: SLINGSHOT

Duncan was all mock-seriousness when he replied, "That's why I'm the captain. Plus, what he just did puts him ahead of where I thought he'd be." They were both being rather flippant about whatever they were discussing.

While he filled the shot glasses again, I asked, "What are you two talking about?" I was going for a humored tone but mostly sounding confused.

Olivia described changes they were making to my duty roster: "Starting in an hour, you're joining my duty team and will begin attending senior staff meetings. I will be training you in bridge operations. When you've gotten that handled, I'll train you on crew and ship management." Duncan looked like he wanted to say something about that, but stopped himself. I know crew and ship management is his job, but all things considered, he's probably going to have her train me at least part of the time in that stuff.

"Why?" I asked, a little dumbfounded.

Duncan said, "Because I said so, of course." I silently thanked captain sarcasm for his lack of useful detail.

"No, jackass," Olivia snorted and Duncan's grin grew even wider, as I continued, "I mean, is this for real?"

The ten final bells rang out in the ten final seconds of secure conversation. Duncan waited until they were done before continuing.

"Starting now, and continuing for as long as you'll stay, you're part of my crew. We don't know how this will all play out, and all of us know Agram will follow the project no matter where it is. I think you kept with him because he was a good leader and good part of the team, but you weren't really into it for the research. You found yourself excelling because you want to be great at anything you do. Considering the scale of impact your team's work is about to have on humanity, I'd say you are very close to finally accomplishing that mission." He held up his shot glass in a toast, and offered, "I propose to you that you are an adventurer, and that you will enjoy this work, you'll do well with the crew, and that you'll enjoy this more than your last job."

Olivia held up her shot glass next. "I bet that you'd decline his offer on account of a certain sensibility about research or loyalty. I'm usually as good as Duncan in reading a situation, but this time, you surprised me. Well done, and welcome to the crew." Damn, they were good at this. I hadn't even formally accepted, but they're totally right. I know I'd regret some part of things if I stuck out the research side of things.

Duncan refilled the shot glasses: "Starting at Venus and continuing through the foolishness this morning, you've been a resourceful, effective, highly valued member of any team you're assigned to. You deal with problems and crises with a cool head. When you have no idea what to do, you figure out something and you make it work. You've saved my life a couple times out of sheer nerve and force of will. I know you're good when the going gets rough because you haven't lost your mind as a result of this whole mess." He swung his arm around and indicated that the entire solar system had, in fact, lost its collective mind.

Olivia added, with a wry smile, "I'm so sorry I bet against you."

"That's fine." I admitted. I would have bet against me, too, until this moment. "So what's next on this adventure?"

Olivia described how their contact already figured out we were off-course, and had sent the extra supplies anticipating it. "We're going to use everything, and probably have to rig up a few improvised solutions to a few problems we noticed in our recent review. We have to figure out how to spend a few days coasting at space-cold hull temperatures before we arrive. The engine will take a long while to cool enough to be unnoticed against the stellar background. Everything we picked-up will help us be successful. The ship is nearly ready to sleep. It'll take a few days in the cold before we should turn things back on." She nodded to Duncan.

"Next step for you is get ready for your first shift on bridge crew. We'll all be more formal with you than you're used to, and it's intentional: Respecting and following well-trained authority could save your life. It also will reduce any concerns I could have about you learning your job. As things progress, we may relax the formality some."

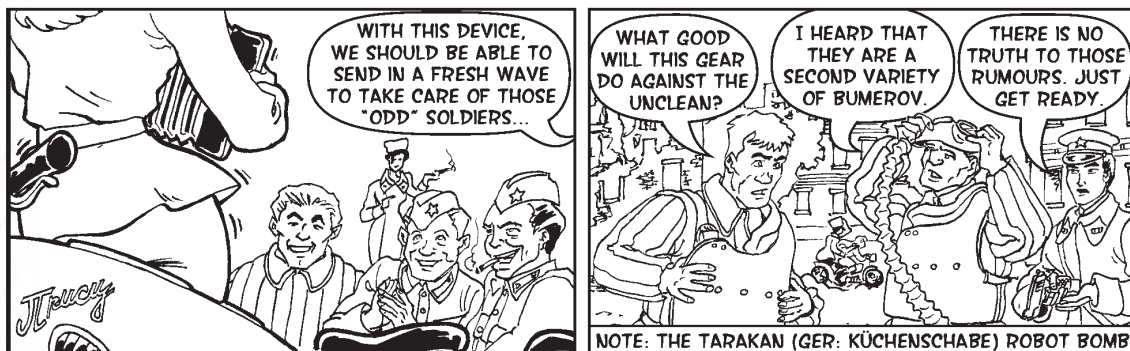
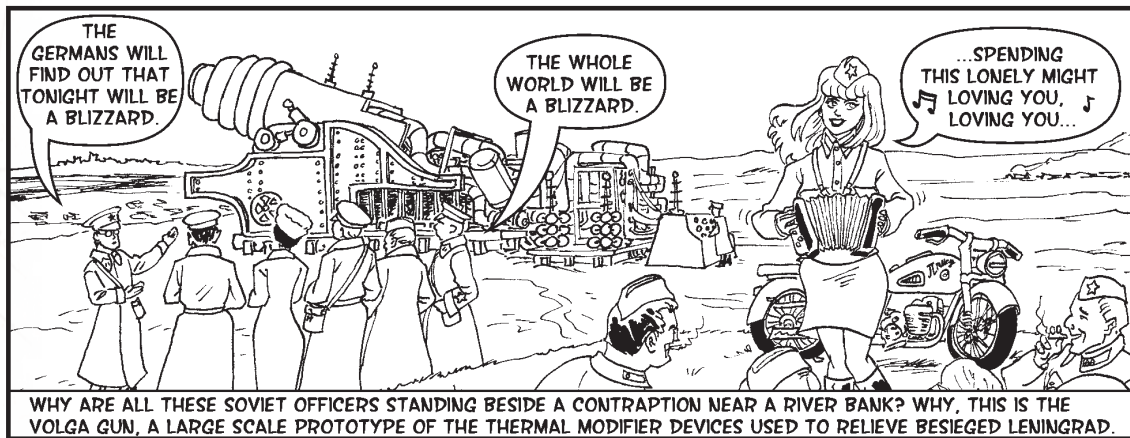
"Got it." I said. He and I downed our shots and shook hands.

I couldn't help myself. "So will we ever get relaxed enough that I can call you 'Captain Princess' in front of the crew?" I've heard the senior staff tend to have a sort of closeness and informality when behind closed doors. So I might still ask him about the story during one of those senior staff meetings, though.

"That will never happen. I will cut you. Deeply. And it will hurt a lot."

Olivia was silent, but her shoulders were shaking from suppressed laughter. She winked at me when I threw a mischievous smile in her direction. Duncan stood up, and promptly kicked us out of his office.

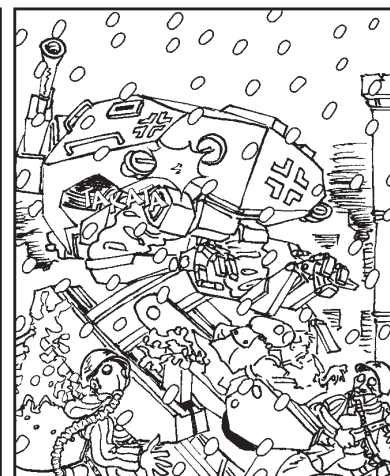
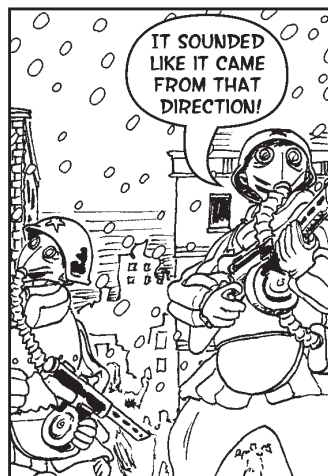
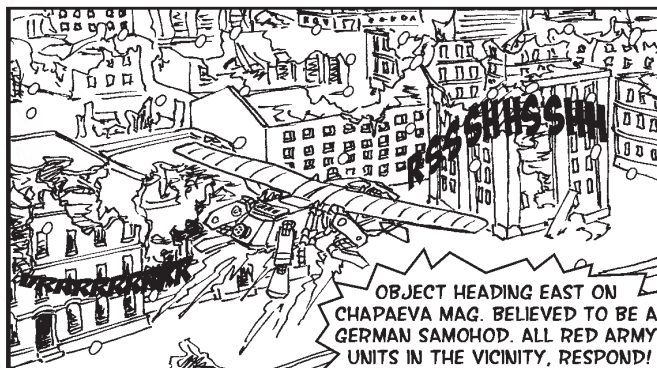
JOHN BELL



OCT. 1942, ACROSS THE VOLGA RIVER LAYS STALINGRAD. THE RED ARMY HAS BEEN POURING INTO THE CITY BY BOAT AND THROUGH THE NEWLY-DUG UNDERGROUND ROADS. IT IS IN THIS BROKEN CITY THAT OTTO NACKER AND TRAUGOTT HUNDT FIGHT ON, UNDER THE FORCEABLE ORDERS OF SS HAUPTSTURMFÜHRER SCHRAUBER AND DR. KRAUSS, LEADER OF THE...

## Kraut PATROL

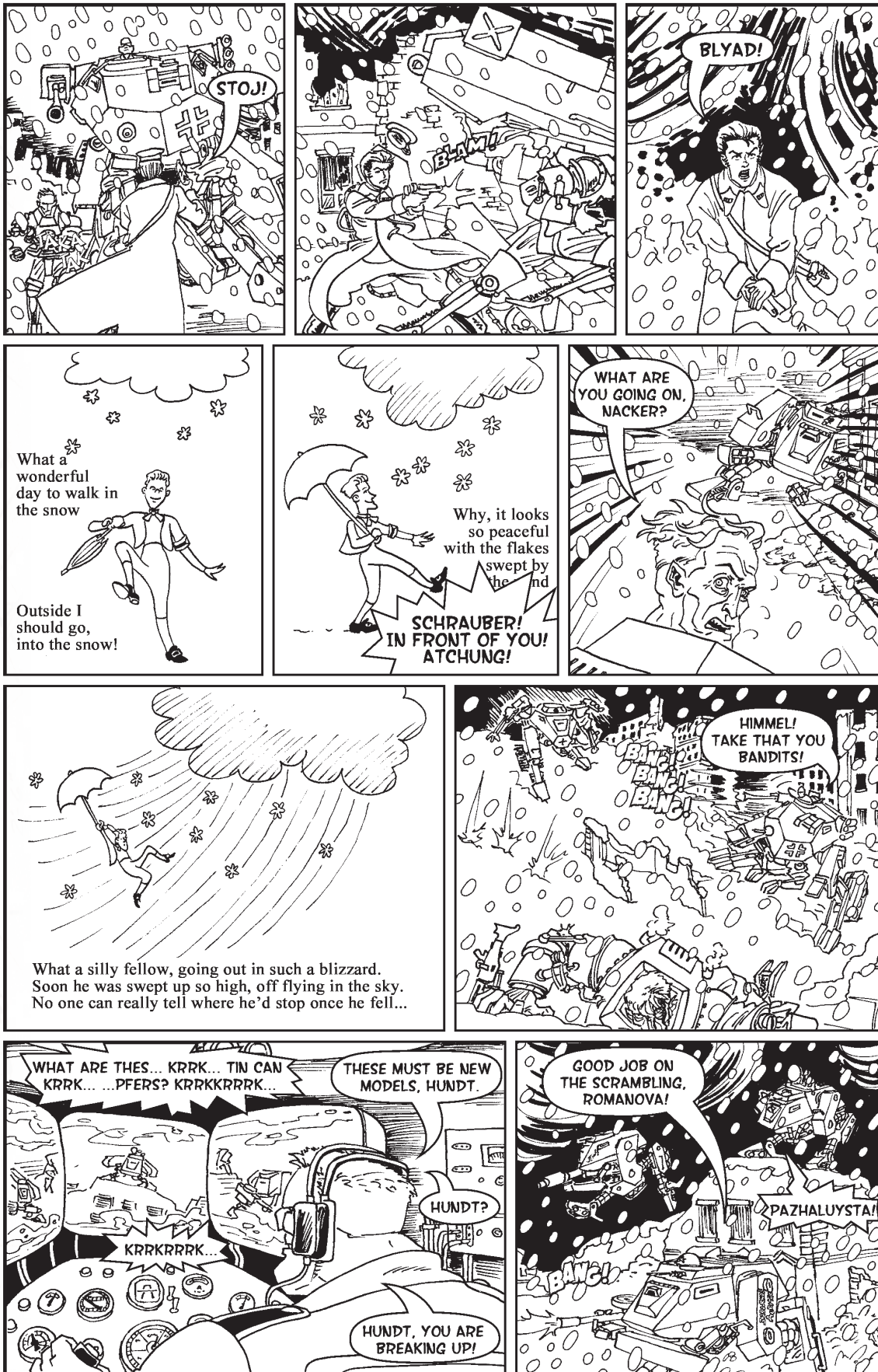
ART & STORY BY JACK BELL





# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## KRAUT PATROL





# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## KRAUT PATROL



# REIMAGINING THE CHRONICLES - PART 5

CHRISTOPHER GREGORY

*The Independence floated behind the debris of the wrecked station. There were large gashes and holes punched in it's armoured plating. A small amount of some kind of gas was escaping from some of the battle damage. On the bridge the ship's captain looked over the three dimensional display showing the situation outside.*

*"Damned Feddies. They know they got range on us." He cursed. The ship from the Martian Federation was keeping it's distance, waiting.*

*"Now what Ranger? I don't think they're dumb enough to come into our range." the executive officer stated.*

*"Then we need to force them in. Once they're close enough, our heavier weight of fire will more than even this fight."*

## PART 5 - MASS DRIVERS, RAILGUNS, CANNONS, GUNS, GUNS, GUNS

In Jovian Chronicles all the different factions were pretty much the same when it came to weapons. As a part of the reimagining Jovian Chronicles I intend to look at the different categories of weapons and, where needed, make minor changes to differentiate weapons used by different factions in the game. First off we will start with ballistic weapons, often referred to as mass drivers.

First of all, what is a mass driver?

In short, a mass driver is a device that propells an object. This can be achieved with magnetic force, electricity, gravity manipulation, gunpowder, or even a good old rubber band. Modern examples are guns, or even sling shots. With this in mind the term Mass Driver can apply to numerous devices. There are several types of mass drivers represented in Jovian Chronicles. The most common types of weapons in this category are simple, reliable guns like we have in our modern world, but other types include rail guns, coil guns, and guass guns.

Let's take a look at the different types of mass drivers in use in Jovian Chronicles.

### JAW-11A Railgun

A Railgun is, simply, a weapon with matched pairs of rails. Simpler railguns use one pair of rails, and while the use of more rails is possible, the round needs to be aligned properly during the entire launch to gain a maximum amount of force. One rail of each pair is positively charged while the second

rail of the pair is negatively charged. The projectile the railgun launches has to carry a current between the pairs of rails. This imparts a massive amount of force on the projectile, launching it at an incredible speed.

Railguns are favoured by the Jovians as their projectile weapon of choice due to the high power of the weapons and the ease with which they can launch projectiles through armour. While there is maintenance issues arising from the sheer amount of force imparted onto the rails while the projectile is launching, they have the resources and money to just have more rails waiting to replace worn out or bent ones as needed.

### LACW-1 Mass Driver

The LACW-1 is, despite the high tech name, nothing more than a simple machine gun like the ones currently in use. The ammunition is also as familiar, being bullets with a propellant filled casing capped with a shell. The round is loaded into a chamber, and then a firing pin strike the primer cap, igniting the propellant creating an explosion launching the shell down the barrel and out of the muzzle, often at speeds exceeding the speed of sound. The explosion also operates the reloading mechanism, ejecting the spent casing and loading a fresh one before a spring forces the breach closed again. The weapon is then ready to fire the next round. The rate of fire on machine guns can be very high.

Machine guns are favoured by CEGA for the simplicity of manufacture, maintenance, and use. The use of a high tech term to refer to these weapons is a vain attempt to have the weapon appear more advanced than it is. Despite how easy it is to maintain these weapons, since they are entirely mechanical in nature, there are numerous moving parts and the failure of one part can disable the entire weapon.

### FESTar-12 Rifle

The FESTar-12 is a Gauss gun. A gauss gun operates by having multiple moving metal sliders placed between several very powerful magnets. The first slider is shoved into the first magnet. When the first slider hits the first magnet the second slider, which is touching the opposite side of the magnet, is launched with a greater velocity. By using multiple magnets and sliders the final slider, the projectile the weapon is launching, will have a very high speed at launch. The sliders are moved back into their pre-firing position as soon as they have hit the following magnet in the order they are used to fire in, otherwise the weapon will fire the first slider back with nearly the same force that the projectile had. To avoid this issue the Mercurians use an alternate version, using



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## REIMAGINING THE CHRONICLES - PART 5

electro-magnets instead of permanent magnets. The electro-magnets are activated to launch a projectile, but deactivated for resetting to prevent a backfire scenario.

Mercurians favour Gauss weapons because they are rather simple, can be easily repaired with whatever is at hand, and is able to operate with rounds made from any ferrous (magnetically responsive) material. The weapon can be quite safe and reliable, but increased safety comes at the expense of simplicity as a computer is required to control the electromagnets properly.

### *K-675R Mass Driver*

The K-675R is a coil gun. A coil gun works by having multiple coils arrayed around a barrel. The coils are electro-magnets and only require power to generate a magnetic field. The projectile is loaded onto a slide roughly where the first ring is, and is held in place with a magnetic field if needed. When the weapon is fired the first coil creates a magnetic field which will repel the round at the same time the next ring is magnetized to attract the round, sending it down the barrel. As the round passes each subsequent coil its polarity is changed to repel the round while the next one is set to attract it, applying even greater force to the projectile. This means that the longer the barrel, and the greater the number of rings the weapon has the faster the round will be propelled. Due to the reliance on magnetic fields the projectile has to be made of a material which reacts to magnetic fields, and preferably be carrying a magnetic field itself to improve the interaction with the magnetic fields created by the coils.

The Venusians favour coil guns due to the reduced need for maintenance, and the elegant way it operates. The coil gun has a minimum of moving parts, but does rely on computer control to activate the rings in the proper sequence and at the proper time to make the weapon fully effective. Should one of the coils be damaged the weapon can still operate, but the computer will have to adjust the timing on every coil after the damaged one since the round will be slower than it otherwise would have been.

### The Ubiquitous KKC

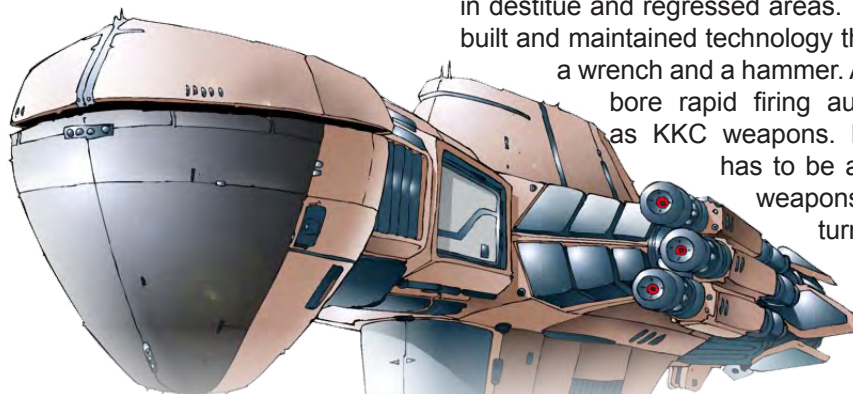
Now that we have seen an example of each type of mass driver in Jovian Chronicles, let's look at one of the most iconic ones in JC, the Kinetic Kill Cannon.

In Jovian Chronicles every ship has weapons called Kinetic Kill Cannons, or KKC's for short. They are divided into light and heavy categories, but aside from a change in damage and range, they are the same. In fact, thanks to the AP trait, both light and heavy KKC's will damage any ship in the game on a MOS 2 hit, meaning the only real difference between the two weapons is the extra point of base range the heavy KKC gets. Below is a look at what KKC's really are, and an idea of how to differentiate them by faction to give them a wider range of capability and to demonstrate the differing levels of technology some people have.

What are Kinetic Kill Cannons? For our purposes, KKC's are a class of rapid firing ballistic weapons used on many space ships in the Solar System. They are mounted on ships generally for their ability to fire a large volume of rounds at a target, and their ability to effectively penetrate armour. These weapons are broadly classified into light or heavy categories, and are separated primarily by penetration and range. These weapons are easy to supply, and draw little power when compared to lasers or particle beam cannons making them useful on ships that would otherwise not have weapons.

With the broader definition of the KKC's from a specific type of weapon to a class of weapon, we can now change how they operate to match the different faction's capabilities. First we will start with a look at the different KKC designs used by the factions, and then we'll look at the game stats to make them be different, rather than merely described differently.

CEGA generally builds the least advanced KKC's in the solar system. Despite having access to the manufacturing facilities of the Orbital and their technology, the fact is the majority of CEGA's manufacturing capability is on Earth, and often in destitute and regressed areas. They require cheap, easily built and maintained technology that can be assembled with a wrench and a hammer. As a result, they build large bore rapid firing automatic cannons for use as KKC weapons. Likewise, the ammunition has to be as easy to produce as the weapons are, and as a result CEGA turned to the tried and true cartridge system. Despite their access to higher



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## REIMAGINING THE CHRONICLES - PART 5

technology, the KKC they make would be at home on a modern seagoing warship. These weapons generate a large muzzle flash and eject spent casings as they are fired. The firing of these weapons has been mistaken for an internal explosion by inexperienced crews of opposing ships.

The Martian Republic build slightly better KKC weapons. While they don't have a massive industrial base, they do have a higher educated workforce and generally better access to technology. While still chemical ballistic weapons, they use caseless ammunition with propellant that creates a much smaller muzzle flash. While these weapons fire smaller rounds, the higher muzzle velocity of the rounds and the higher rate of fire tends to make up for that somewhat, putting this weapon on par with what CEGA fields.

The Martian Federation has better manufacturing capability than the chaotic Martian Free Republic. Combined with a generally higher technological base than CEGA this is the first category of KKC that becomes distinctive in it's own way. The Federation uses a larger version of the Gyroc Weapons technology employed by their army for their KKCs. Unlike the army's Gyroc weapons however the initial launch is done by injectign a two part binary explosive gel into the breach of the weapon after the shell has been loaded. The compounds explode upon contact, launching the warhead and igniting the internal rocket motor. The Gyroc technology in the Federation's KKC gives it greater range than most other KKC weapons, at a cost of a slower reload rate. Due to the nature of projectile motion in space, however, the weapon is not noticably more accurate than other KKC weapons.

The Mercurian Administration has created a KKC that utilizes a guass gun principle. A slug created with waste metals that could not be used any other way is loaded onto a slide in front of a magnet. When the weapon is fired a steel slider is shoved into one magnet, when then launches a steel slider on the other side at a greater velocity. After several magnet/slider pairings the force finally reached the slug which is launched with a very high velocity. The sheer speed of the weapon means that even a slug of soft metals is carrying enough kenetic energy to punch clean through some targets. Unfortunately the slug is further up in the barrel than in other KKC weapons before being luanchered meaning that there is less barrel to direct the round causing a decrease in accuracy over distance. For dealing with pirates, however, this weapon is more than sufficeint. The process to reload the weapon is also slower than usual, but the lack of automatic fire ability was considered an acceptable trade for it's power and for conservation of resources purposes.

Venusian corporations, always near the leading edge of technology, have created a uniquely operating KKC. While it uses common enough mass driver technology, the innovation is how magnetic fields are used to move multiple spherical projectiles into the breach at once. This allows the weapon to fire multiple rounds at the same time into a similar location. The result is a shotgun like blast capable of inflicting heavy damage on anything caught in the attack. This gives the Venusian KKCs great versatility with the capability of being used agaisnt both slow moving heavily armoured ships, and smaller nimbler interceptors and exo armours. This versatility alone makes them potent weapons and their ability to reliably damage mid-weight ships only makes them better.

The Jovian Confederation has some of the better KKC weapons in the solar system. The compbination of advanced technology, a highly intelligent population, and more resources and manufacturing capability than anyone else means that they can just throw materials, money, and time at the weapon until it is the best weapon created. In this they almost succeeded. They utilize a large, powerful railgun to propel daimond tipped lexan penetrators with a metal skirt at increadible speed. These weapons have been documented as firing clean through even medium weight ships with little effort. It is even able to do so with ammunition that is little more than a lump of metal since the projectile velocity is so high. Fast charging capacitor banks and a rapid reload system enable these weapons to fire as quickly as the automatic cannons used by CEGA without sacrificing their penetration power or range unlike normal railguns which require signifigant recharge time between shots. This puts Jovian KKCs in the top tier of KKC type weapons. The only real disadvantate of the Jovian KKC weapons is that the rounds tend to exit the far side of a target, depriving them of a first hit kill capability.

### Game Stats

Now for what some consider the important part, the game stats. The first change here is removing AP from KKCs in general. While this removes their ability to damage anything they hit, it also gives them the ability to kill a target. This serves to normalize the weapon's capabilities as compared to other ship based weapons. Then we work to make them different.

The following table has the revised KKC stats (on next page):



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## REIMAGINING THE CHRONICLES - PART 5

### KKC GAME STATISTICS

Name	Type	Acc	BR	DM	ROF	Traits
CEGA KKC	P	-2	6	27	3	Red
Republic KKC	P	-2	6	24	4	Red
Federation KKC	P	-2	7	25	2	Red
Mercurian KKC	P	-2	5	21	0	AP, 2x Red
Venusian KKC	P	-2	7	32	0	Scatter, 2x Red
Jovian KKC	P	-2	7	30	3	AP, 2x Red

With the stats listed for comparison, here are the thoughts on them.

CEGA KKCs are big guns firing at a steady rate. They do slightly more damage than the old light KKC weapon, mostly due to the mass of the shells being fired. With full ROF they can damage a destroyer, but they quickly become hard pressed to do the same against heavier ships. Despite being the most low tech of the KKCs, it is more effective than the slightly higher tech KKCs used by the Martians.

The Martian Free Republic's KKC is very similar to CEGA's own KKC. They trade the raw damage of CEGA's KKC for a higher rate of fire. In fact, the Republic built a KKC with the highest rate of fire of all the KKC weapons. This makes it a little more versatile, but reduces its effectiveness against destroyers due to the lower overall damage capability. Then again, their principle enemy, the Martian Federation, doesn't have destroyers so it's a fair trade off for them. Federation ships tend to have slightly heavier armour, thus the need for a higher rate of fire to increase the weapon's damage output.

At the other end of the scale is the Martian Federation's KKC, which traded the raw damage for a longer range. Like the Federation, the Republic doesn't field destroyers or above, which means the lowered damage is not a major issue. Republican ships are slightly faster, so the ability to shoot further was deemed necessary to overcome this. While the Republic has a slightly higher damage potential, the extra point of range means that there are bands where the Federation KKC has a lesser range penalty thereby actually allowing it to hit more reliably in those situations. This gap gets wider as you go up in range bands, and if positioned right the Federation ship will have the advantage.

Next up is Mercury. The Mercurians are taught early on to conserve resources, and trade instead of fight. This philosophy has spilled into their weapon design. First, by not having a ROF the weapon is not able to use a lot of ammunition in one turn, meaning that they can carry fewer rounds and thus have smaller magazines for these weapons. The reduced range comes from the shorter barrel length due to the length of the magnet/slider system the weapon uses. With the AP, however, this weapon compares more closely to heavy KKCs for damage rather than the light KKCs being used by the other factions.

The Venusian KKC is based off the Heavy KKC weapon instead of the light KKC weapon like CEGA's, the Martian's, and the Mercurian's own KKC designs. This gives it a higher damage and range stats right off the bat. They also eliminated the ROF, instead replacing it with the scatter trait. This allows the weapon to trade half its damage for an AE0 attack, meaning attackers who bunch up are all getting hit.

Last, but certainly not least, is the Jovian's KKC. The Jovians designed a weapon utilizing segmented rails which, when magnetically charged, can launch a projectile at incredible speeds. The segmentation of the rails means that multiple rounds can be in the barrel at the same time as each round is only connected to a single segment at any given time. The sheer speed of the round, combined with its engineered shape give it the AP trait. As it is also a heavy classed KKC, it already has a higher range and damage than other KKC weapons. When combined with its ROF rating, this is the most damaging weapon in the KKC category. Unfortunately it is unable to kill a target unless it gets a proper result on the damage tables, but the ability for even the lightest Jovian warship to damage any other ship in space is often considered a fair trade.



*This book is a masterpiece.*

First, let us look at the design philosophy of the Heavy Gear line of products. Like any other roleplaying game on the market the first product you are expected to buy is the rulebook. Currently in its second edition as I write this, the rulebook contains a regrettably brief coverage of the world of Terra Nova, the setting of the game. 'Regrettably', I say, because the very best thing about the game (despite the fact that the Silhouette engine on which it is based is one of the best on the market today) is the rich and inspiring world in which it is set. This isn't much of a shortcoming, however, because the main rulebook contains not only a complete roleplaying game but a complete tactical game as well (which is beautifully based on the same basic system and principles). The rulebook is a masterpiece of system design in its own right.

After purchasing the rulebook your next step should be to pick up *Life on Terra Nova* (also in its second edition as I write this). *Life on Terra Nova* is the key to a magnificent, layered, believable, living world. It is without equal in terms of its originality, depth, and potential. Don't be fooled into thinking that because the game is called Heavy Gear that the primary focus of the game is necessarily on the gears – the primary focus is on the characters and the world. The gears (as DP9 likes to point out) are merely the coolest selling point available. Like the rulebook, *Life on Terra Nova* is a masterpiece.

Once you own these two books you have the core of the Heavy Gear product line in your possession. At this point (as a roleplayer) you can go in several directions: You could purchase the host of technical supplements for the game (primarily for Tac use, but also useful for roleplaying campaigns with a technical or gear-slant to them). Or you could look at buying one of the regional sourcebooks (some of which, like *The Paxton Gambit*, double as campaign jumpstart kits). Either way you're on firm ground. I have yet to buy a *Dream Pod 9* product that has come anywhere near to disappointing me – even their *Character Compendium* is an intriguing, exciting product for god's sake! How do you pull that one off?

But the most original aspects of the Heavy Gear product line (in my opinion) are the storyline books and the Timewatch system. To understand why I feel this way you must first understand why I get frustrated with many other roleplaying game lines – such as *Trinity* or *Fading Suns*. While I feel both of those games are some of the strongest competition to Heavy Gear's title as reigning champion of setting design, those settings are damnably difficult to keep up with. *Trinity*, for example, requires you to purchase adventure supplements in order to keep up with the developments of the world with any cogent completeness. Another excellent example of this trend is *Shadowrun*, a campaign setting which has developed through several years of "game time" and which intrigues me deeply, but which will never be able to attract much of my money because trying to buy enough product to untangle what the setting is and where it has been is simply too gargantuan a task for me.

Not so with Heavy Gear (which is to *Shadowrun* what *X-Files* is to *Babylon 5*; both have over-arching storylines, but only one was worked out in advance... and it shows). First, each product (with one exception where they screwed up) has a date printed on the backcover: the cycle in which the product is set. This simple innovation (known as the Timewatch system) seems simple and obvious, but it is has never been done before. It means that it is possible to figure out when each product is set in the timeline of the setting with a simple glance – you don't have to wonder, as you stare at a shelf full of product, which ones you should buy first in order to coherently understand the development of the fictional world. You know right off the bat.

The second element which makes Heavy Gear better than *Shadowrun* or *Trinity*, however, are the storyline books (of which *Crisis of Faith* is the first – see I'm going to get to an actual review of this product eventually). The storyline books cover the major developments in the meta-story of the world over the course of a couple of cycles (the Terranovan equivalent of years). This means that you don't have to buy, for example, the campaign sourcebook *The Paxton Gambit* (which might be of negligible or nonexistent use to you) to know about the BRF uprising in *Peace River* in TN 1935; it will be summarized in the second storyline book (*Blood on the Wind*) just as the events in

### ARCHIVAL NOTE

These classic reviews of Heavy Gear and Jovian Chronicles books were originally published at RPGnet and in Games Unplugged magazine between 1998 and 2002.

Originally Posted: 1999/04/13

# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## ARCHIVE REVIEW: CRISIS OF FAITH

the campaign book *The New Breed* are summarized in *Crisis of Faith*. Other games have occasionally issued updates or new editions of products, but nothing of this methodical nature. In addition the meta-story of *Heavy Gear* is like that of *Babylon 5* (as noted above) – it was worked out in advance and as a cohesive whole, instead of merely being thrown together as things develop. If some development is hinted at and then carried out later it isn't because someone had a really cool hint and then somebody else had to ad hoc a solution to it, it's because the guys down at Dream Pod 9 are really on top of the ball. (The closest I've seen anyone else come to this currently is Andrew Bates and Trinity — I heartily encourage him to embrace the storyline book concept from Dream Pod 9 in developing the very intriguing meta-story he is developing there.)

I could go on and on about other brilliancies in the design of the *Heavy Gear* product line (such as the chesspiece system which tells you at a glance how important DP9 NPCs are to the storyline – allowing you to gauge how much freedom you have in manipulating their lives in your own campaign), but instead I'm going to fulfill my obligation to you and start talking about *Crisis of Faith* in particular now that you understand the design philosophy which gave it birth.

As I mentioned above, *Crisis of Faith* is a masterpiece. It also has the potential of being a very misunderstood one.

Specifically, *Crisis of Faith* can be misunderstood due to its size and due to its content. The first is simple to understand. Like *Making of a Universe* (a behind-the-scenes look at the development of the *Heavy Gear* setting and reviewed by myself elsewhere on RPGNet), *Crisis of Faith* is a half-sized, 112 page book. It simply looks small on the shelf and the fact that it is no cheaper than your average roleplaying product made it look skimpy for the dollar value. Personally I have no problems with this format – particularly since it allowed the inclusion of multiple full-color sections (more on the art below).

The second misunderstanding arises because, quite frankly, this book doesn't have any immediately applicable usefulness in a roleplaying (or tactical) campaign. Your average sourcebook gives you floorplans or NPCs or something of immediate, tangible use. *Crisis of Faith* gives you a narrative of events. This has led some to ask, "What good is it?"

Those of you who have read my review of *Making of a Universe* have probably already figured out where I'm going with this – in short, *Crisis of Faith* is being judged as something which it is not. Like attempting to judge your daily newspaper in terms

of how well it succeeds at being the Great American novel, judging *Crisis of Faith* as a traditional roleplaying sourcebook is a waste of time. *Crisis of Faith* attempts to do two things, and it does these things very well:

First, as detailed above, it is primarily useful to the roleplayer or tactical player by providing a narrative of events transpiring in the setting of the *Heavy Gear* game in a single resource – meaning that you don't have to buy every product released for the game in order to keep up with the major developments in the world as a whole. The storyline books (along with *Life on Terra Nova*) free you from that necessity, allowing you to pick and choose the products you need to buy (as much as you "need" to buy any form of entertainment). Naturally if you want a more comprehensive look at a particular event or a particular location then you buy the applicable sourcebook. The key here is that *Crisis of Faith* (and its sequels) means that you can keep track of the world without having to religiously deposit your weekly paycheck at the hobby store in order to keep up with every release. This is a good thing in my opinion. (The only flaw in this plan is that the *Heavy Gear* setting is so fantastic that it can prove addicting – forcing you to buy all the products anyway. Oh well. That's a flaw I, for one, can live with.)

The second function of *Crisis of Faith*, however, is to tell a good story. The design team down at Dream Pod 9 have realized the simple truth that roleplaying games provide a medium for telling stories in a way which no other medium does – both at the meta-level and at the personal level. At the meta-level the story is the comprehensive development of the world. At the personal level the story is that of the particular PCs. Both stories by themselves (if the particular campaign in question is a good one) can be enthralling and entertaining, but when you weave them together (the personal story taking place in the backdrop provided by the rich, evocative, intriguing meta-story) you have a dynamic process taking place.

And the story being told by Dream Pod 9, and as epitomized in *Crisis of Faith*, is one of the best. Intrigue, power, politics, war, love, murder, mayhem. You name it and *Heavy Gear* has got it.

And if that's all there was to it, *Crisis of Faith* would already be one of the classics in this industry. But I have yet to deal with another pillar of strength in the *Heavy Gear*: *The Artwork*.

[ A brief aside: *Heavy Gear* is a game seemingly possessed of no weaknesses and excellence in everything. No other line of games in the history of this industry can boast of such a consistent level of quality throughout their entire product line.



# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## ARCHIVE REVIEW: CRISIS OF FAITH

Usually you can find, even in the best of games, some throw-away product or another where the writing or the art or the basic concept simply wasn't all that strong. Not so Heavy Gear (or any other Dream Pod 9 product). The strength of their product methodology and their writing has already been dealt with, now let's look at the artwork. ]

Quite simply no bad artwork has ever appeared in a Dream Pod 9 product. Ever. And that's a pretty impressive thing considering the dozens of products they've produced and the hundreds of illustrations which accompany each one. Quite simply this excellence can be ascribed to Ghislain Barbe. His style for Heavy Gear has been heavily influenced by anime and this has led, occasionally, to the mislabelling of the game as an "anime game". It isn't. It is, however, superb – you merely have to flip through any Dream Pod 9 product to see that. It's simple line art which is crisply inked and then colored by computers (even when the artwork is produced in black and white for the actual book), producing a rich depth to every piece.

The reason I bring this up is that Dream Pod 9's products are the most visually dynamic and consistent products in the industry ever. And Crisis of Faith is, quite simply, the best of the best.

(To fully appreciate this you should note that Dream Pod 9 "throws away" artwork which most companies would give their left arm's for by making them smaller on the page in order to produce a visually rich and dynamic whole. Crisis of Faith is an excellent example in which almost every page has three small illustrations (smaller than my thumbnail) in the upper corner – each of which directly reinforces the text. Some of these pieces are recycled from other works, but most of them are originals created specifically for Crisis of Faith.)

Every page in Crisis of Faith shows a brilliancy of lay-out and artistic design which, if everyone else in this industry possessed only 1/10th as much skill, would improve product quality exponentially. Unlike many "artistic designs" almost no element on the page is there merely for the sake of its own existence. Despite that simple utilitarian

elements (page numbers, the date of the material being discussed, the line which separates the columns) are beautifully blended into a powerful whole in a masterful display of raw talent. Then there are the color sections, which you can just stare at for extended periods of time.

Did I mention that the last six pages contain a surprise, cliff-hanger ending so shocking that you will be begging for more?

So, to sum up: Crisis of Faith is part of the best game line in existence today. Crisis of Faith is the first in a series of "storyline books" which, if there is any justice in the world, will revolutionize the way in which game settings are developed in this industry. Crisis of Faith tells one of the best stories ever created, taking advantage of the full potential the roleplaying medium has to offer. Crisis of Faith is quite possibly the most visually dynamic and powerful roleplaying product ever designed. Crisis of Faith is one of the best roleplaying products ever. Period.

I know I've said it before (and I will undoubtedly say it again), but if you aren't involved in Heavy Gear you're missing out on one of the best things this industry has ever had. If you haven't already done so, go out and buy the second edition of the rulebook, the second edition of Life on Terra Nova, and Crisis of Faith. You won't be disappointed.

Style: 5

Substance: 5



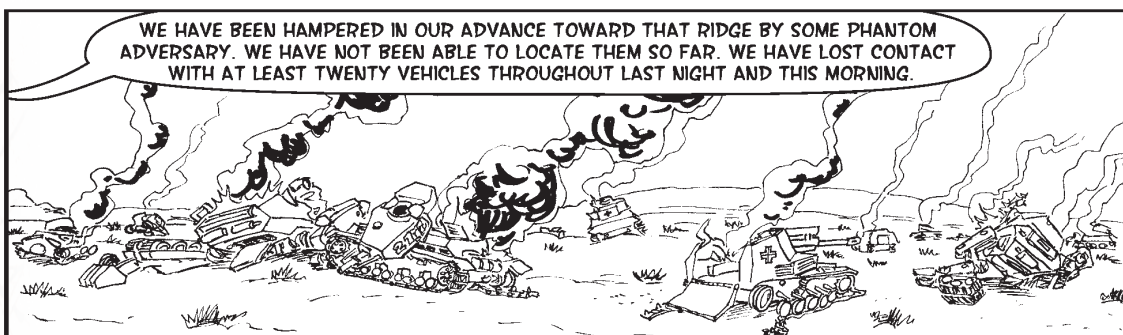


JOHN BELL

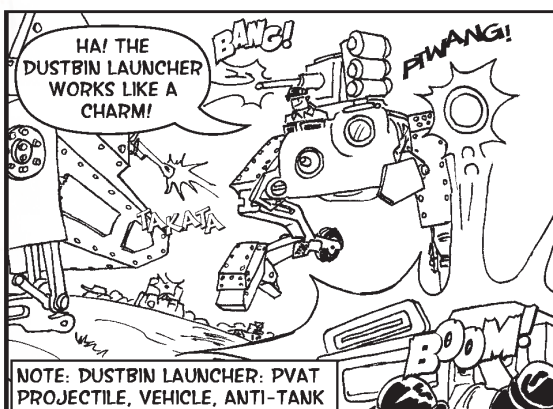
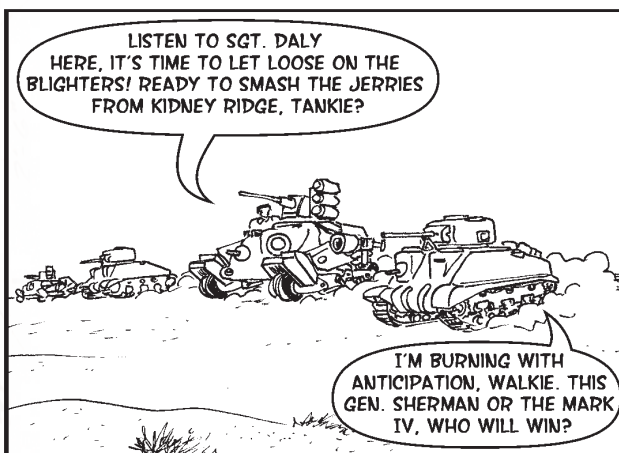
**ALFIE'S  
TENNERS**

ART &amp; STORY: JACK BELL

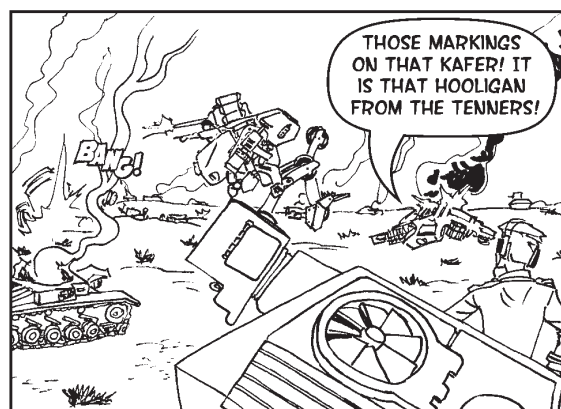
OCT. 27. ROMMEL HAS BEEN BACK IN NORTH AFRICA FOR 24 HOURS, STRAIGHT OUT OF HIS SICK BED. DESPITE ALL THE CHAOS FACING THE AFRIKA KORPS, THE DESERT FOX IS ALREADY TRYING TO GAIN BACK THE OFFENSIVE.



NOTE: THIS WOULD BE 2ND BATTALION, RIFLE BRIGADE AT OUTPOST SNIPE, WHO WRACKED UP 57 VEHICLE KILLS.

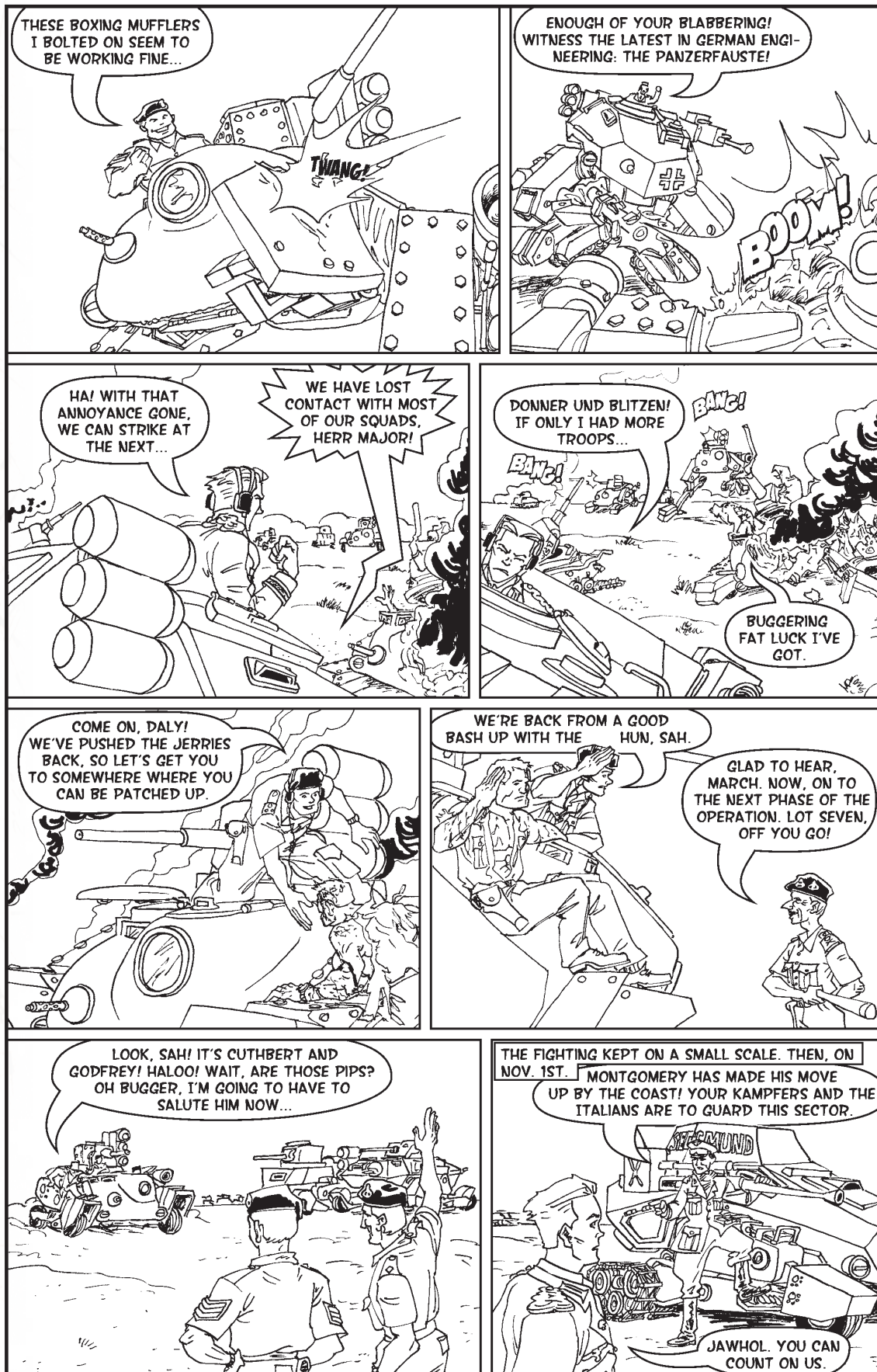


NOTE: DUSTBIN LAUNCHER: PVAT PROJECTILE, VEHICLE, ANTI-TANK



# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## ALFIE'S TENNERS





# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## ALFIE'S TENNERS





# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

### Article Guidelines

The Aurora Magazine focuses on the worlds created by Dream Pod 9. As such, we are primarily interested in, but not limited to, articles dealing with SilCore and Blitz! rules (variants, additions and explorations of the rules) and on fiction, mechanized designs, equipment, artwork and similar ideas that draw on the established DP9 universes. This does not mean, however, that articles that are generic in nature or that do not deal with unique or original material, only that the focus is on exploring Silhouette and it's attendant universes.

Any article that is a promotion piece for another product, be it an excerpt or a lead-in to another product, must be clearly defined as such within the article body.

No articles will be accepted that use another's Intellectual Property or Copyrighted material without an included signed permission to use said material.

Fiction may be a one-off or serial based, as desired. Please note that long works of fiction may be split into multiple pieces over multiple issues for length reasons; if you are writing a long story it is best to indicate breaks in the story (chapters, for example) that allow us to chose the best point to split the story, if necessary. Stories are encouraged to be accompanied by Silhouette CORE or Blitz! rules detail of some kind, be it stats for characters or equipment in the story, game scenarios, mechanized designs, new rules or explanations of how to simulate aspects of the story using the Silhouette/Blitz rules. This is not a hard requirement however, and stand-alone pieces will be considered and published.

Aurora is also looking for original artwork. Art may be used to accompany the article and/or for the cover of the APA as well as individual pieces. Please see below for copyright information regarding images.

### Submission Guidelines

All work for Aurora should be submitted in an .rtf or .doc file. The text within should be in Arial 10pt font, and single-spaced. Hard returns should be used only to separate paragraphs (with a double hard return) or with bullet points and list items. Do not indent paragraphs. You may use italics, boldface or bullets where deemed necessary.

Tables may be included in the submission. Preferably, tables should be created with minimal lines between cells, instead using background colour and/or cell spacing for clarity. Tables may also be included in courier-font/fixed-formatting. Identify these kind of tables with the following: <<<Table>>>

The article's title should be clearly noted at the beginning of the file, followed by a short (less than 75 words) introductory text. This introductory text can either be a synopsis, a quote, story, etc. It will be used at the beginning of the article to 'set the stage'.

The file should end with the Author's name(s), contact information (if desired) and a short bio (optional). This information will be placed on a Contributing Author's page in the magazine.

Please spell check and proofread your article. English or American spellings may be used as desired.

Photos, drawings or images should be accompanied by photo credits as well as a brief description/caption for each photo (optional). Indicate within your article where the images are to be included like so: <<<Image\_Filename.ext>>>. Images should be sent at a maximum of 200dpi for greyscale or colour images, 600dpi for black & white images (1-bit). Given the size of a page, images should be no larger than 7 by 10 inches (18 by 18 cm). If we need a higher resolution image, we will contact you. Images should be compressed with an appropriate method; please check the quality of your images before sending.

### Copyright Guidelines

Quotes or information that are attributable to other sources are permissible in appropriate quantities, and should be identified/cited (including page numbers), preferably within the article. Be sure that each quote is written exactly as it appears in the original source.

If you wish to include photos/drawings/images with your article, please provide the photo credits (artist/photographer/illustrator and subject if applicable). You may only submit images for which you have obtained permission to include in your article.

All articles and images used by Aurora remain in the copyright of the original submitters. You, as the author, must consent to release the article for publication by Aurora, with the knowledge that Aurora will not provide any compensation other than what has been listed above, and that Aurora, as an online magazine, will be downloaded by third-parties in a PDF format. All work for Aurora is volunteer-based. Should DP9 decide at a later time to compile and sell articles within a contract will be negotiated with the author at that time.

### The End Print

Please send all submissions to the following email address:

auroramag@gmail.com

Thank you everyone for your interest, and we look forward to seeing your submissions soon!

**Deadline for Submissions for Issue #10.3: June 27th 2016**

# AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

## ARTICLE SUGGESTIONS

### Historical Articles

Under this broad category are pieces meant primarily for illuminating or detailing something within the game universe. This can be truly historical in nature (describing history), detailing a region, the language, customs, architecture, technical systems, corporations, social structure, music, and more, to name a few. Articles may either be written from a neutral point of view (impartial observer from above) or written 'in character', that is, in the manner such information may be presented if it were available in the game world. See the Historical Accuracy note, below (especially important for this category).

### Fiction

Any story (narrative with characters) that takes place within the established DP9 game worlds falls under this category. See the Historical Accuracy note, below, and also see the submission guidelines for further requirements.

### Modules

Also known as adventures, a written collection of plot, character, and location details used by the gamemaster to manage the plot or story in the DP9 RPGs. All manner of modules are open for submission, from espionage to social to military to a combination of all three. Module submissions must be detailed enough for the GM to run the entire adventure, including descriptions and dispositions (where applicable) of major NPCs, locations, accessories and story/plot. See the Historical Accuracy note, below.

### Scenarios

These are the tactical equivalent of modules, an encounter between two (or more) factions set up for combat. A complete scenario will detail the background of the encounter (the why), the forces engaged (the who – what physical units at a minimum, regiment and designations to go the full way), the map and terrain (the where) the victory conditions (the how) and any special rules or conditions (the what). Scenarios should be designed to be balanced for each side, either via the types/numbers of units or through special circumstances or conditions. If the scenario is not balanced this must be mentioned in the background. See the Historical Accuracy note, below.

### **Note: Historical Accuracy**

Aurora is committed to accuracy within the established DP9 worlds. All articles that take place 'within' the game world should be checked for its accuracy within the established timeline, faction dispositions, available equipment, etc. Please double check your work! You may also submit your article clearly marked as "Alternate History" and if published the article too will bear this mark. Be sure, if you submit this way, to provide in the background all that is necessary to describe what has changed.

### Designs

New mechanical designs/vehicles/ships for use in the DP9 worlds. Designs must be legal and use either the latest SilCore rules (including all errata and the FAQ) or Blitz! rules. Please indicate which design rules were used. Mechanical designs should fill a void that is not already covered by another unit. Background and a description must be included with the design, while artwork is optional and preferred. See the Historical Accuracy note, above.

### Artwork

Aurora accepts all artwork for consideration, no matter the media type (rendering, sketch, painting, etc) within the rules set herein. Miniature photographs will also be accepted (dioramas encouraged!). Artwork must relate to an established DP9 universe and be easily identified as such. Artwork with nudity, racial undertones, sexism or sex will not be considered. See the submission guidelines on how to submit images.

### House Rules

Original rules for the Silhouette/Blitz! system and modifications to existing rules. All rules submittals must include an explanation of the rule's purpose, the rules themselves clearly written, and an example of the rule in play. If you are tweaking rules that exist within the game already, please clearly denote those as well as the reference to where the original rules reside. Do not copy any existing game rules text, only note what is changed from the existing rules.

Note that all rules will be clearly marked as "House Rules" or "Home Brew Rules" when published within Aurora, to distinguish them from official rules that can be used at tournaments, conventions, and etc. Around the home gaming table, however, we all love house rules!

### Tactics

Have you won countless battles? Have a strategy you would like to share? Write a tactics article. Usually this type of article will be in a step-by-step (or turn by turn) format to illustrate the tactic. An introduction and conclusion is required to create a complete package and to convey to the reader where the tactic is applicable and how it came about.

### Miniatures/Modeling

Any article on preparing miniatures, painting, terrain making, sculpting, foliage techniques, etc will be accepted. Photographs and/or diagrams are strongly encouraged.

### Something Else!

We pride ourselves on the creativity of our gaming friends. If you have something else to contribute that's not listed here, please submit it!