

**Campaign:** Rhylanor Express, Traveller, #2

**Date:** June 17, 2012

## **Episode Two: A Festivus for the Rest of Us**

**Campaign Dates:** 022-069 year 1111

### **Characters:**

Verdon Thuul, ex-merchant, 4<sup>th</sup> officer, 3 terms (Bob LaForge)

Dorkon the Hunter, ex-hunter, 3 terms (Bob LaForge)

Skip Jockley, ex-navy, 1-term, "Secret Space Detective" (Bob LaForge)

Screaming Jack Murdoch, ex-flyer, pilot, 5 terms (Jason Liebert)

Old Doc Spurlock, retired doctor, 7-terms (Jason Liebert)

Reginald Stuffington, retired diplomat, 2<sup>nd</sup> secretary, 6-terms (Jason Liebert)

Chum Lee, barbarian chief, 1 term (Marlon Kirton)

Rat Lee, ex-rogue, 1 term (Marlon Kirton)

Gun Lee, retired army colonel, 5-terms (Marlon Kirton)

Finn Jacobs, ex-scout, 1 term (NPC)

Dorris Starling, ex-scout, 3-terms (NPC)

**GM:** Dave Nelson

## **LOG**

### **Part One: The Adventure of Rhylanor Express**

#### *022-1111 Equus (Lanth), Starport*

Verdon and Screaming Jack boarded the subsidized liner, The Rhylanor Express, (Tukera Lines on the Equus to Rhylanor run), at the Equus starport, using the middle passages that Finrot Johnson had paid them. Old Doc Spurlock and Reginald Stuffington each bought a middle passage on the same liner, eager to sample the technological wonders of Rhylanor.

Meanwhile, Dorkon the Hunter found himself flat broke on Equus and desperate to make the trip to Rhylanor to collect his inheritance, a Safari Ship. He ended up meeting a traveler named Ace Nubunto, regional sales director for Ling Standard Products, in the starport bar. Ace offered to pay Dorkon's middle passage to Rhylanor in exchange for entering a risky expedition for him.

Skip Jockley, recently discharged from the Navy on Equus, as part of the general demobilization after the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> Frontier War, found himself broke and likewise desirous of leaving water-logged Equus for a more interesting place. He also picked the Rhylanor Express to make his way, but he decided to stowaway. He sneaks onto the vessel with the food delivery service and hides in the forward hold.

Finally, Colonel Gun Lee, retired from the Imperial Army after stellar service in the Frontier War, uses his government travel allowance to book a high passage to Rhylanor on the Express. He doesn't know that his two nephews, Chum and Rat, two young trouble-makers from a backwater frontier planet have followed him to Equus and are planning to follow him to adventure wherever he goes. They are broke, but decide to scam their way onto the liner, after their uncle tells them to get jobs and go home. Rat makes some contacts in the deep water dome city near the port and, in exchange for a stolen sandwich, gets two forged Low Passage tickets for the Rhylanor Express. The forgeries pass muster, and the pair of Lees get packed up in the ship's cryoberths.

With our nine adventurers variously placed on the liner, it lifts off and makes the transition to jump space. The high and middle passengers all meet and mingle at the opening night reception in the lounge, under the direction of the ship's steward, the ever vivacious and annoying Space Becky.

*023-1111: Jump Space, The Rhylanor Express*

At the second night's "pig" roast, the adventurers learn more about their fellow passengers. These include: **Sir Steve Hitler**: a highly decorated scout pilot; **Ace Nubunto**: regional sales manager for Ling Standard Products; **Chedru Munrok**: traveling electronics repairman; **Natasha Maratu**: mercenary coordinator for Interstellarms; **Farley Humburt**: account inspector for Hortalez; and **Baron Carlo Fossi**: nobleman inspecting his properties and holdings after the conclusion of the war. Natasha tries to interest Colonel Lee in a platoon-sized commando ticket, but makes no progress. Baron Fossi tells Dorkon that in a few months he may want to charter a safari ship, and to keep in touch.

After dinner has concluded, Ace Nubunto reveals his scheme to Dorkon in full. Apparently a Ling Standard Products ore ship disappeared on the mining planet of Heroni during the last days of the war. It has been written off by the company, but Ace has reason to believe that it crashed in the deserts of the planet itself. If Dorkon will take his ship to Heroni, locate the crashed "Bedazzled Apple", and report the location back to Ace, then he will reimburse Dorkon for crew salaries and says Dorkon and his crew can loot the Apple to their hearts content. Ace will recover the ship itself and the bulkier bits of cargo. It is absolutely crucial that the mission be secret, since Ling Standard or its insurers would want to reclaim the lost ship. Dorkon begins to recruit crewmembers for the expedition from his fellow adventurer passengers.

*024-1111, Jump Space, The Rhylanor Express*

Around 2 in the morning, in the cargo hold, Skip Jockley has become very hungry. He sneaks into the passenger deck to steal a sandwich. While in the galley, Skip spots a man dressed in a black ninja outfit creeping around the crew quarters. Skip whips out his snub pistol and attempts to shoot the assassin, but misses. The assassin attempts to flee, but the gunfire has awakened everyone and the anti-hijack program is activated, sealing all the doors. The crew beats the assassin into submission and also subdue Skip the stowaway.

Reginald Stuffington volunteers to interrogate the assassin. Steve Hitler suggests they examine his arm under black light, which does reveal a hidden tattoo "I-T", which Hitler reveals to mean "Invincible Transformation", the name of a guild of assassins. Under questioning by Stuffington, the assassin, who it turns out is Chedru the Electronics repairman, reveals that he has a partner, and that they were hired to kill Verdon and Screaming Jack. When he questions Skip Jockley, he claims to be a Secret Space Detective, sent to protect Verdon and Screaming Jack against assassins. This is actually believed by Verdon and Stuffington, and even by the vessel's Captain Higgins.

The captain begins to examine the rest of the passengers to find the second assassin. It soon becomes clear that it is Farley Humbolt, another passenger. Farley pulls a secret knife and grabs the steward, Space Becky, and holds her hostage. Captain Higgins pulls a pistol and tries to shoot Farley, but instead shoots Space Becky, injuring her seriously. The entire crew and passenger group dog-pile the assassin and Captain Higgins finally shoots him down too. The assassins are shoved into the Low Berths. Doc Spurlock fetches his surgical instruments and successfully patched up Space Becky.

Verdon agrees to pay the middle passage for Skip Jockley so that he may complete the journey among the passengers. After a night under medical slow drug, Space Becky is back to her duties and the rest of the journey passes without incident.

## **Part Two: The Adventure of the Heroni Deception**

### *029-1111 the Planet Rhylanor*

The Rhylanor Express arrives in orbit around the planet Rhylanor. The passengers go their separate ways, with our nine adventurers agreeing to join forces for an expedition to Heroni to find the lost Bedazzled Apple. Dorkon goes immediately to the shipyard and signs the paperwork for his new vessel, which he dubs the **Festivus**.

### *030-35-1111, The Planet Rhylanor*

The various crewmembers buy various goods on this high-tech planet. Rat Lee makes some black market connections and buys a pair of plastic knives, to defeat weapon scanners. Reginald Stuffington sets about recruiting a pilot (Finn Jacobs) and an engineer (Dorris Starling) for the ship, since none of the adventurers can fill those crucial jobs. Verdon is made navigator, Skip the steward, Spurlock the Medic, and the rest as "gunners."

### *The Voyage Out:*

036: jump from Rhylanor

043: arrive at Jae Tellona, skim fuel from Gas Giant

044: jump from Jae Tellona

051: arrive at Belizo: skim fuel from Gas Giant

052: jump from Belizo

060: arrive at Heroni

#### **LIBRARY DATA SHEET:**

PLANET: **HERONI**                      SUBSECTOR: RHYLANOR, SPINWARD MARCHES  
Universal Planetary Profile: E7A0614, TL-3, Desert Planet, Non-Industrial

Heroni is ruled by the Ling Standard Products Mega-corporation as a mining fief. It is a barren, desert world. The atmosphere is tainted by heavy amounts of arsenic, which requires all normal humans to breathe using oxygen tanks (not just filter masks) when outside.

There are 2-3 million native Heroni who wander the desert in small bands using TL-3, hand-made gear. The Heroni (or Hobos as the miners call them) are extremely hostile and violent, shooting at anyone they see with their primitive muskets. They live by hunting the monstrous bugs and reptiles that wander the desert, and by gathering desert weeds. They are of Vilani origin, genetically modified to breathe the poisonous air, and settled here during the First Imperium, over 4000 years ago.

Ling Standard Products maintains a landing field, called Scotlane Station, for commercial traffic, but it has very little in the way of facilities. There are several thousand employees in various, scattered mining camps which are visited by company starships every few months.

During the recent Fifth Frontier War, Heroni was a backwater world and was ignored by both sides, with the exception of one small skirmish between an imperial cruiser attempting to refuel at the local gas giant and what was described as a small fleet of Sword Worlds pirates. The Sword Worlders officially denied having any ships in the system and hailed the imperial report as nothing but propaganda. The Rhylanor Subsector had been the subject of intense commerce raiding and commando sabotage actions during the 4<sup>th</sup> Frontier War, some 30 years ago.

*061-1111 Heroni, Scotlane Station and desert*

The Festivus lands at Scotlane Station, what passes for a starport on Heroni. Dorkon signals the administrator, Bigsby, with a secret code he had gotten from Ace Nubunto. The Festivus is wheeled into one of the open hangar buildings to protect it from the Arsenic Wind, which Bigsby tells them prevents grav vehicles and space vessels from flying safely in the exotic atmosphere of Heroni.

Bigsby rents the crew a prospector's ATV for them to search the desert for the missing ship. Dorkon decides to leave Finn and Doris behind to watch the ship, but the rest of the crew pile in and begin searching the desert south of the station. Near evening, Verdon using a mineral scanner tuned to detect the Lanthanum grid of a starship hull, detects faint traces coming from the western mountains.

*062-1111, Heroni Desert*

The crew becomes lost in the desert and their ATV is nearly overturned by a stampeding herd of giant desert insects.

*063-1111, Heroni Desert*

Crew wanders lost in the desert a second day.

*064-1111, Heroni Mountains*

Verdon regains his bearings, the crew reaches the mountains. They surprise a party of the natives (a.k.a. The Hobos). Jack Murdoch kills 4 of the six by driving over them in the ATV, while Colonel Lee kills the last two using the remote mining laser.

*065-1111 Heroni Mountains*

The crew becomes lost again in the canyons of the mountains. The ATV is attacked by a dinosaur, but they drive to safety.

*066-1111 Heroni Mountains*

They finally track down the Lanthanum signals they had first detected 5 days before. The signals come from a cave on the side of the mountain. Colonel Lee uses his battle scanner to scan the cave, discovering that there is a 400-ton starship inside, surrounded by 6 robots. The crew decides to mark the location well and return to Scotlane Station.

*067-1111 Heroni Desert*

As they leave the mountains, the crew spots a second ATV moving in their direction. They stop and observe the area, seeing a party of 12 Hobos working up an ambush for the other ATV. When the other vehicle stops for the evening, the Hobos rush up, roll a barrel of gunpowder under the tracks and ignite it, blowing the entire tread system into hash. The crew decides to intervene, attacking the hobos from behind. They manage to kill or drive off the hobos, before they can ignite a second barrel of gunpowder on the roof of the strangers' ATV. When they investigate, they find that Doris and Finn are the only occupants of the second vehicle. The two crewmen explain that Bigsby had told them that the crew was in trouble with a broken ATV, and they needed to come to their rescue. He said their radio was broken, and he had only gotten a message through a laser beam directed at the station's navigation mast.

*068-1111 Scotlane Station, Heroni*

Filled with rage, the crew drives back to Scotlane and rushes the control bunker. They take the barrel of gunpowder they had captured from the Hobos and use it to blow open the front door of the bunker. Then the colonel shoots 2 of Bigsby's security men, and Dorkon shoots down another. A fourth returns fire with a shotgun, killing Dorkon. The 5 surviving security men surrender and turn Bigsby over to the enraged crew.

Reginald goes to work interrogating Bigsby. He discovers that Ace Nubunto does not work for Ling Standard Products, there is no Bedazzled Apple, and the whole trip to Heroni was part of a scam to steal the Festivus. Indeed, the Festivus is gone from the hangar. Bigsby reveals he is paid by Ace to get the crews out into the desert, and then a retrieval team lands and takes the ships off somewhere. Bigsby doesn't know what happens to the stolen ships, but has heard the retrieval teams speak of an "Immortal Master." When they are satisfied that Bigsby knows no more, Verdon shoots him to death in the head.

Meanwhile, realizing there is some chance at reviving Dorkon if he can be placed in a low berth immediately, the rest of the crew rushes over to Captain McIntyre's hangar. McIntyre owns a battered Free Trader, called the Amber Rose, whose jump drive gave out years ago. He uses the ship to collect icy asteroids which he hauls back to the station to melt and sell as unrefined fuel (the only source of fuel in system). They ask the captain to store Dorkon's corpse in his low berths, but the captain refuses. In return they beat him up and steal his ship. They freeze Dorkon for later attempts to revive.

#### *069-1111 The Mountain Cave, Heroni*

Realizing that the mysterious ship in the cave may be their only means of escaping Heroni, the crew recruits the 5 security men to help them and fly the Amber Rose to the mountain cave. They hover the trader at the cave mouth, and rush out into the cave. There are 2 large repair robots and 4 war android guarding the cave, however, they have been completely without maintenance or upkeep for at least 30 years. The crew attacks, finding most of their weaponry to be useless. However, Jack drives an ATV out of the ship and uses it to run over several of the androids. Fortunately for the crew, the robots all start to fall apart one by one as the fighting progresses, until they are all destroyed. The repair robots manage to kill 3 of the 5 security guards before being destroyed, and the war androids inflict mortal wounds on Colonel Lee and his nephew Chief Lee. Luckily for the Lees, Doc Spurlock is a truly gifted surgeon, fully equipped for serious surgery. He manages to save both of their lives and patch them up, so that they only need a week's rest or so to recover.

The crew investigates the hidden ship. It is a 400-ton armored blockade runner, called the Death Ranger. It was a Sword Worlds' commerce raider and commando ship during the 4<sup>th</sup> Frontier War 30 years ago. It has a ship's locker filled with powerful military weaponry, all of which need repair and overhaul. The various ship's systems are also in very bad condition, requiring parts and labor in spades, and the ship itself is not in flyable condition.

So, the crew of the Festivus find themselves with a dead captain, a stolen ship, a found better ship that they can't fly, stuck on perhaps the worst planet in the sector.

**IN TWO WEEKS TUNE IN FOR: ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE HOBOS!**