

Feeding the Crew Adventure Seeds (Not for eating)

(originally published in Freelance Traveller #109, Jan/Feb, 2022)

It Must Have Been Something I Ate

required: ship with research lab(s), medical skill

reward: 5,000 Cr

Player's Information: You have finally exited jump space and are heading toward Rivadas Station for a brief R&R and scheduled maintenance. It is a small and out of the way location, but at least their walls look different than the ones surrounding you for the last month. You are still waiting for a response from your preliminary docking inquiry, and you're starting to wonder if the radio operator is asleep at the console. Long range scans show nothing abnormal. After a couple of repeat inquiries you get the following somewhat hoarse response punctuated with lots of coughing. "Scout Vessel *Liastri* (or insert other ship here), this is Rivadas Station. Assistance is requested. Illness has infected half the station, and the other half has isolated itself. Request diagnostic and medical assistance."

Referee's Information: Station crew have a severe sore throat with pustules, cramping, and more severe cases involve coughing up blood. Air is clean, as are water and surface cultures. It appears to be a virus infecting bacteria common in the mouths of humans and Vargr (which make up 90+ percent of the station's crew). Their small sickbay is overwhelmed and the station medic is one of the worst affected.

- 1) The virus is found contaminating the most recent pork shipments. A vegan extremist aboard a visiting freighter planted the virus, but the ship's departure was delayed and they're now stuck on station. The freighter wants to leave immediately after the illness is traced to food.
- 2) An Aslan corsair arrives after the source is identified but before everyone is healthy. (Normally it would be too small to take on a station this size if the station had a healthy crew.) If the station can't fool the Aslan raiders that few people are ill there is likely to be a fight.
- 3) As #1, but it is an Aslan saboteur on the freighter followed by the corsair, and they know the virus doesn't affect Aslan.
- 4) The virus hides in beans and has been engineered to resist most common antiviral medicines. A visiting freighter medic (rogue agent for a pharmaceutical outlet) desired to test their virus before infecting a massive harvest on a nearby major agricultural world. They have a stockpile of the effective antiviral which they plan to sell for millions, and a single vial of virus which fell to the back of their freezer.
- 5) A disgruntled fired cook contaminated a refrigerator with the virus. He is taking antivirals and was scheduled to leave aboard a freighter that was delayed from leaving because people got sick sooner than intended.
- 6) The virus is contaminating rations intended for the Imperial Cruiser *Festivus* due to dock next week. A cook accidentally removed the wrong food from storage and caused the outbreak early. The accident likely prevented the *Festivus* crew from being sickened during Jump where help was unavailable.

Profiteers to the Rescue!

required: cargo ship with a load of basic consumable goods, broker

reward: a really good price for a common cargo

Player's Information: You have just jumped into the Laurentis subsystem (change name as desired), a low population (3-5) asteroid mining system. As your ship approaches the class (B or C) starport of Laurentis Station you receive the following bulletin on the emergency channel. "Repeat, there has been an explosive decompression of cargo bays 4 and 5 resulting

in the dispersal of our food reserves. Recovery efforts have had some effect, but losses of approximately 80%-90% are expected. An emergency aid request has been sent aboard the freighter *Oresthes*, but a response will take at least 2 weeks to reach Laurentis. While not an immediate threat, individuals will NOT be able to obtain supplies from Laurentis Station. Food rationing should begin immediately for all ships and installations expecting distribution of these recent imports." While shocking, this isn't entirely a bad thing since you're carrying tons of basic consumables.

Referee's Information: Laurentis Station is the main supply depot for a small mining system. After their serious issue, many people are going to be hungry without new food supplies which the players have. Assume a reasonable broker skill for the station (1 or 2) and normal negotiations, but give a +3 DM to the players (in addition to normal trade modifiers) for their good timing. Negotiations, however, take a certain amount of time if players want to make a good profit and lots of things might happen...

1) A drunk ore miner pilot caused the decompression. A group of miners are not pleased with the 'exorbitant' prices being charged by the players. They use a small craft or docking bay access to try and steal at least some of the cargo.

2) Same as #1, but it is the station administration itself which wishes to commandeer the cargo semi-legally.

3) An accidental explosion from mining explosives caused the decompression. An enterprising freighter captain offers the players a good deal on a higher value cargo that could be sold profitably in a nearby system in exchange for the food. Too bad his cargo was stolen from that very system...

4) Some criminals rigged the explosions and have a freighter full of food coming in a few days to profit from the emergency. They are not happy to have their plans ruined and will take matters into their own hands to gain their 'fair' share of the profits by either arranging the loss of the player's cargo or stealing the credits afterward.

5) Humaniti extremists caused the decompression and threaten repeated actions unless the aliens running the station (pick one or more races) are removed. The station commander is relieved that the players don't exploit their opportunity to the fullest and gives them a profitable deal on some unrefined ore and a contact. If players are exploitative, she pays but orders a 'safety inspection' which delays the players, provides fines for any illegalities, and gives the player a rival.

6) Humaniti extremists caused the decompression as above. A group of somewhat desperate, poorly supplied human families attempt to beg for food. If they are supplied, more people come and several tons of supplies will be used but the players will be remembered fondly (treat as a contact). If they aren't supplied, petty thieves and make the players miserable the entire time they are on station and the Humaniti extremists target the anti-Human players.

Lunar Garden

required: engineering, mechanic, life science and/or medicine

reward: 3,500 Cr

Player's Information: You have just arrived at Vaidura Dome, a very small research station located on an inner moon of a distant gas giant. The 5 resident scientists are studying the the odd magnetic properties of the planet and their effect on heating the moon's surface. You are bringing them extra supplies and a few tons of spare parts. They get most of their food from a small ag dome that supplies their modest needs, but there is an odd problem with their Ag system. While they are good physical and materials science people, none of them are good at understanding living organisms. They need some help figuring out what is wrong.

Referee's Information: Vaidura Dome has been self-sufficient for the last 2 years after adding a somewhat large 400 ton agricultural dome on the lunar surface powered by solar energy. It has reduced the need for supply runs and scientists can now be exchanged only every 6 months, saving credits. Recently the dome has been having agricultural related problems.

- 1) One of the scientists is sick of the isolation at Vaidura Dome and contaminated the fertilizer supply with zinc. While not directly harmful to people, the plants are being stressed and wilting. Removing the zinc from the fertilizer (using chelating chemicals available on station) can solve the problem. The disgruntled scientist is a different matter.
- 2) Water to the Ag dome is being contaminated by hydrogen sulfide from a small crack in the cistern. The sulfur is poisoning the plants and causing a faint rotten egg smell. Adding dilute bleach in the cistern will oxidize the sulfides and make the water usable, and the cistern will have to be repaired.
- 3) Too much ammonia is being used in the fertilizer due to a stuck valve and causing the soil to acidify and the plants to wilt and turn brown. Limestone from one of the small moons nearby can increase the soil pH, but the peppers and tomatoes need to be salvaged and replanted.
- 4) Cadmium contamination of the phosphate fertilizer has poisoned the soil. Cadmium can be removed from the soil by washing with sophorolipids, but the contaminated fertilizer must be replaced. The company which supplied the fertilizer doesn't want to admit it screwed up and tries to deny the source, but must be forced to issue a recall of that fertilizer batch.
- 5) The chickens which provide most of the meat on station are failing. They are being poisoned by avocado pits and skins being composted after recently being added to the gardens. Removing the avocados and temporarily segregating the chickens will fix the conditions.
- 6) Magnesium and calcium salts coming from hard water are slowly poisoning the hydroponics system. Extra flushing using distilled water will reduce the concentrations and adding activated carbon filters will prevent it from recurring.

Adventure Among Algae

required: mechanic, explosives, melee or gunnery

reward: 6,000 Cr

Player's Information: The players have been hired to investigate the murder of Ooendyk, a senior cargo supervisor aboard Elaborn Highport. He has had a long career with hardly a blemish on his record. His primary responsibilities are animal and food imports and exports. He was apparently killed in or near his office (with or without lots of water and dead fish) and dragged to a janitorial storage closet where he was discovered when the janitorial robot finished recharging.

Referee's Information: The algal culture facilities form a critical part of life support and food production system for Elaborn Highport. 6 10cm transparent tubes filled with green algae surround a central brightly lit central LED tube, with 8 sets of tubes arranged floor to ceiling. Each section of tubing is 10 feet long with 2 feet of machinery for bubbling gasses, feeding, or draining cultures at each end. Each facility is serviced by several robots and human techs to maintain normal highport operations and may be used as obstacles or hostages. The people being hunted by the players (more background for the players is described below depending upon the seed chosen) have their own interests. Players have to not only take out the enemy but minimize damage to the culture facility itself.

- 1) The two murderers are actually agents who killed Ooendyk to hide their importation of 5 kilos of purified Cadmium, a toxic heavy metal, in a fertilizer shipment. They have a small chemistry lab in their quarters where they converted the cadmium metal into a more bioavailable form. They plan to introduce their poison into the station algal facilities to try and cripple the Highport and drive more traffic through a competing Megacorp station.
- 2) As #1 above, but they imported 500g of plutonium powder instead of cadmium. Ooendyk was killed because his radioactivity sensors detected the plutonium. The players will likely think of making a nuclear bomb, but the amount is about 1/2 of what is required for a bomb. Plutonium is also, however, extremely toxic and that toxicity is what the agents are after. The plutonium and the agents can be traced by the radioactivity.
- 3) The murderers are thugs who imported hallucinogenic mushrooms and are trying to get away from the players. While the players may (or may not) care about the culture facility, the thugs don't and are insensitive to damage to the algal cultures. The tubes are just a convenient place to hide their drugs.
- 4) An enemy agent imported *Cyanobacter microcystin*, a toxic species of algae, in a vial hidden in an aquarium exhibit. Unfortunately the vial broke and Ooendyk became worried when all of the fish in the tank arrived dead. The fish were poisoned by the *Cyanobacter* and the enemy agent killed Ooendyk and dumped the water and dead fish in his office (make sure his office is wet and full of dead fish when searched). The agent(s) plan to poison the algal system with *Cyanobacter* and force the entire system to be sterilized and reseeded, taking weeks.
- 5) Ooendyk noticed an unusual drop in algal productivity and was killed for investigating it. A cargo bay is being used to grow hallucinogenic mushrooms using decomposing algae and one of the algae techs is supplying the material from the tubes. She knows the algae rooms well and tries to flee through the area.
- 6) Some creative technicians are growing algae engineered to produce a hallucinogenic drug. Ooendyk caught them exporting it and was killed to silence him, but they did not recover all of the drug (some is in his office). The techs know the algal facility well and will do their best to get away.

Hungry Hungry Hyphoids

required: weaponry, combat skills

reward: 6,000 Cr

Player's Information: There is an incursion of hyphoids into one of the Ag domes on the highport. Two Ag Techs were chased from the dome by at least 6 of the beasts, and unless they are stopped soon they will likely ruin the entire dome's crop and potentially infect other Ag domes. Several teams are being assembled to make sure the hyphoids are only found in the one dome, and it has been sealed to prevent their further spread. Your entryway airlock will be the only way in or out. While the dome could be depressurized and depowered, the crops are ready to be harvested and killing everything in the dome would be very expensive. The goal is to kill or capture the hyphoids while doing minimum damage to the agricultural crops, then find the source of the infestation.

Encyclopedia Xenologica reports that hyphoids are 6 kg, 8-legged, scaled omnivores from (your favorite low population, low arable land, cold world here) who only become aggressive when they are ready to reproduce. Food binges in their environment stimulate the maturation of pre-fertilized larvae which are stored in a stinger in their tail. The larvae are injected by the stinger and burrow into animal hosts where they are incredibly painful for about 3 days. The larvae then form a chrysalis which matures over 3 months. When the larvae hatch they are

extremely hungry and generally devour the unfortunate host organism from the inside without medical intervention.

Referee's Information: Hyphoids are about the mass of a cat but with shorter legs and a stinger in their tail. They can bite, but their tail is their primary danger. They are quite agile, but are somewhat slow. Because they are from the tundra, players may think that heating the Ag dome will cause the hyphoids difficulty (happens 50% of the time, -1 DM on all physical actions). They are also from a planetary environment, and so may not be used to fighting in zero gravity. 2/3 of the time they are right (-2 DM on melee if the gravity is turned off). Players may or may not have trouble in zero gravity, although shooting a machine gun burst in zero-G is not encouraged :).

Hyphoid: 6kg omnivore-eater

tundra walker, # appearing: 3d6

5A4146, 1 pt armor (scales)

athletics-0, melee (natural weapons)-1, survival-1, recon-0

bite (1d6), stinger (1d6+33% chance of larva infection), speed : 4.5 m/s

1) The hyphoids are tagged as zoological specimens (a metal band around their left rear leg) which accidentally escaped from the safari ship *Botswana* that was docked near the Ag dome. The *Botswana* left the station just after the hyphoids were discovered and are not answering any hails as they boost out of the system.

2) As #1, with broad, leafy plants growing in the Ag dome which obscure normal vision but not infrared (-2 DM on ranged attacks that do not use infrared scopes).

3) The hyphoids were illegally brought onto the station by the free trader *Kenyan Masai* which docked for a routine servicing. 3 private quarters on the ship but no other Ag modules have Hyphoids in them.

4) As #3, but the sugar beets being grown in the dome act as stimulants for the hyphoids (+1 damage, +1 dodge).

5) The hyphoids were intentionally released into the dome by a disgruntled former employee. They have more in their quarters and will release them in another Ag facility if not stopped.

6) The hyphoids were introduced via #1 or #3 above. The hyphoids have eaten the squash growing in the Ag dome, but are acting drunk and are less effective than they ought to be (-1 DM). Medical tests on the hyphoids reveal they have been drugged with cucurbitacin E. The drug is being produced in the squash from a non-toxic precursor chemical introduced into the module's water supply. Humaniti terrorists calling for the removal of 'alien influences' threaten more acts against food supplies.