The Dramune Blues
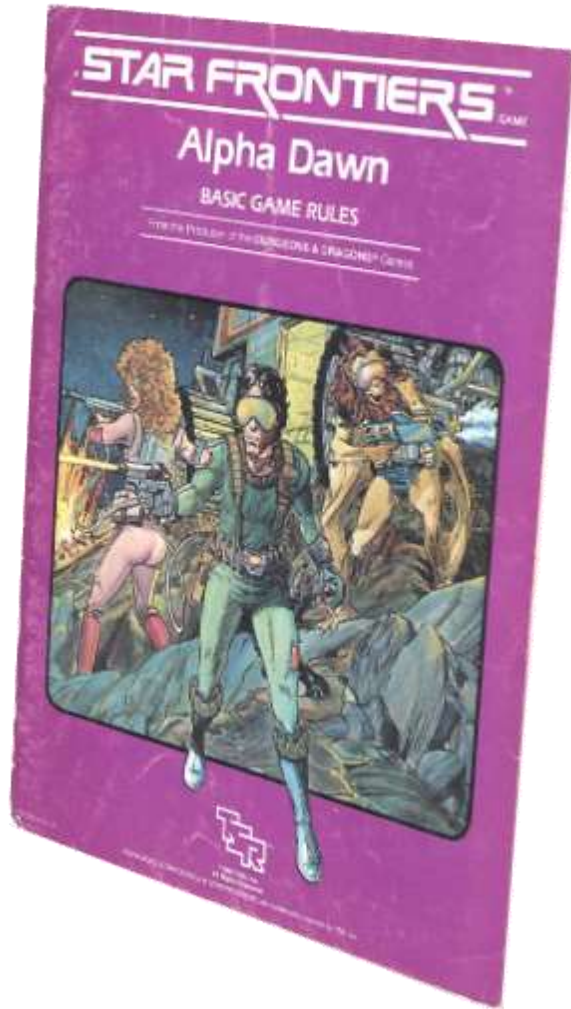
A self-contained RPG game and scenario based on "[Lady Blackbird](#)" by John Harper and *Star Frontiers* ©TSR, Inc.

THE FRONTIER is the common term for a section of the galaxy where four major races (Dralasites, Humans, Vrusk, and Yazirians) are cooperating in building colonies and trade routes on various worlds. There is no overarching political entity or empire -- each world governs itself. However, several corporate entities span several systems, the Pan-Galactic Corporation (PGC) being the most famous example. The PGC is primarily interested in trading factory goods between systems, but it is also a major underwriter for colonial expeditions. The Pan-Galactic trade lingua franca has become the common language between all the races of the Frontier. Outright warfare is uncommon, but piracy and raiding are constant threats. A mysterious fifth star-faring race, the Sathar, has been known to attack lone ships and small colonies.

SPACESHIPS - The four major races all use the same basic technologies for space travel. An ionic reaction drive provides thrust for takeoff, landing, and cruising. Pressurized gas thrusters are used for precise maneuvering.

Spaceships may be armed with a variety of weapons, including railguns, lasers, heat inducers, and missiles. Defenses include chaff dispensers, cloaking technology, albedo shields, and armor.

Interstellar travel is achieved by accelerating (usually at 1G of thrust) until 0.1c relative speed is reached. A spaceship will then enter hyperspace and travel at a relative speed of 1 lightyear per standard day. Hyperspace travel is never slower or faster than that rate. Deceleration relative to the original line of thrust will bring the ship out of hyperspace. Scientists from the four races have been trying for years to understand why hyperspace behaves this way -- all they know is that it works.

MATH

1G ACCEL = 9.807M/S/S
TO REACH .1C (3000 KM/S), 1G ACCEL TAKES 84 HOURS.
TO REACH .1C, 2G ACCEL TAKES 42 HOURS.

Player:	Based on "Lady Blackbird" by John Harper
Character: **Kazz Hal**	RULES SUMMARY

Condition Track: Dead   Injured   Stunned   Tired

Key of Persistence: All failure is simply a lack of effort. Hit your key when you keep pouring resources and energy into something that isn't going well. (Buyoff: Let it go.)

Key of Healthy Paranoia: The other crewmembers are not on the alert enough for danger. Hit your key when you test someone or something just to be sure. (Buyoff: Have some blind faith and trust for once.)

Key of the Hunt: This is going to be fun. Hit your key when you revel in the chase (or any conflict that could be considered a chase in some way). Take joy in the challenge. Be gracious in victory (maybe you'll get to chase them again). (Buyoff: Just let 'em go.)

Secret of Gliding: Given the right space and atmosphere, your gliding membranes give you aerial acrobatic abilities.

Secret of the Quick Draw: Can spend pool dice as a challenge roll to use a handheld weapon before an opponent.

Trait: Military Training (Tags: Shooting, Fighting, Strategy, Spaceship Weapons, Defense, Survival, Trauma Medic)

Trait: Computer Science (Tags: Programming, Improvise, Hack, Command)

Trait: Hunter (Tags: Scout, Recon, Identify, Spot, Evaluate Threat, Find Food & Water, Endure Elements)

Trait: Electronic Sensors (Tags: Spaceship Sensor Operations, Identify Contact, Evaluate Threat)

Trait: Language & Culture (Tags: Yazirian, Human, Vrusk)

Kazz Hal is the Yazirian computer and tactical officer for the *Apple Jack*, and the official second in command. He is still looking for a worthy enemy to dedicate his life to fighting. Recently, a human fortune-teller told him he would find his enemy through Captain diNovi, something he has not yet told anyone.

Rolling the Dice

When you try to overcome an obstacle, you roll dice. Start with one die. Add a die if you have a **trait** that can help you. If that trait has any **tags** that apply, add another die for each tag. Finally, add any number of dice from your personal **pool** of dice (your pool starts with 7 dice). Roll all the dice you've gathered. Each die that shows **4 or higher** is a hit. You need hits equal to the difficulty **level** (usually 3) to pass the obstacle.

Levels: 2 – easy; 3 – difficult; 4 – challenging; 5 – extreme

If you pass, discard all the dice you rolled (including any pool dice you used). Don't worry – you can get your pool dice back.

If you don't pass, you don't yet achieve your goal. But, you get to keep the pool dice you rolled and **add another die to your pool**. The GM will escalate the situation in some way and you might be able to try again.

Conditions

When event warrant or especially when you fail a roll, the GM may impose a condition on your character. When you take a condition, mark it on your sheet and describe how it comes about. [Note: the "Dead" condition just means "presumed dead" unless you say otherwise.]

Helping

If your character is in a position to help another character, you can give them a die from your pool. Say what your character does to help. If the roll fails, you get your pool die back. If it succeeds, you don't.

Keys

When you hit a Key, you can do one of two things:
- Take an **experience point (xp)**
- Add a die to your pool (up to 10 max)

If you go into danger because of your key, you get 2xp or 2 pool die (or 1xp *and* 1 pool die). When you have accumulated 5xp, you earn an advance. You can spend an advance on one of the following:
- Add a new Trait (based on something you learned during play or on some past experience that has come to light)
- Add a tag to an existing trait
- Add a new Key (you can never have the same key twice)
- Learn a new Secret (if you have the means to)

You can hold on to advances if you want, and spend them at any time, even in the middle of a battle.

Each key also has a **buyoff**. If the buyoff condition occurs, you have the option of removing the Key and earning two advances.

Refresh

You can refresh your pool back to 7 dice by having a refreshment scene with another character. You may also remove a condition or regain the use of a Secret, depending on the details of the scene. A refreshment scene is a good time to ask questions (in character) so the other player can show off aspects of his or her PC – "Why did you choose this life?" – "What do you think of that person?" – "What is motivating you right now?" etc. Refreshment scenes can be flashbacks, too.

| Character: **Poole** | RULES SUMMARY |

Condition Track: Dead   Injured   Stunned   Tired

Key of Keeping it Clean: You can take the messiness of other beings in stride, but it's just not how you want to live. Hit your key when you clean something whether the owner/current possessor/occupant likes it not. (Buyoff: Just be mellow.)

Key of "Give Me That!": Whatever it is, you know you can make it work better. Hit your key when you are tinkering, retrofitting, improving, dismantling, customizing, reorganizing, fixing, and just plain messing around with something mechanical or electronic. (Buyoff: Ehh...it's good the way it is.)

Key of Dralasite Humor: Hit your key when you make your crew-mates groan. (Buyoff: Hold your tongue.)

Secret of Malleability: As a Dralasite, you can extrude or absorb limbs at will, as well as stretching or compressing your protoplasmic body.

Secret of the Smell: You can detect and analyze chemicals in the air, or by touch. So sensitive, you can tell who sat in a chair and for how long for days into the past.

Trait: Engineer (Tags: Fix It, Jerry-rig, More Power, Diagnose, Build, Sabotage, Technological Know-How)

Trait: Gastronome (Tags: Gourmet, Glutton, Digest, Intoxicant Tolerance)

Trait: Clean (Tags: Make it Spotless, Mend, Get That Stain Out, Smells Like New)

Trait: Hard to Kill (Tags: Get Back Up, Shake It Off, Resist Elements, Ignore Wound)

Trait: Language & Culture (Tags: Human language, Human culture)

Poole is the *Apple Jack*'s Dralasite engineer and all-around fixit guy. He's proven his worth many times, and he's modified the ship so much Captain diNovi can't fire him now no matter how annoying he gets!

Rolling the Dice

When you try to overcome an obstacle, you roll dice. Start with one die. Add a die if you have a **trait** that can help you. If that trait has any **tags** that apply, add another die for each tag. Finally, add any number of dice from your personal **pool** of dice (your pool starts with 7 dice). Roll all the dice you've gathered. Each die that shows **4 or higher** is a hit. You need hits equal to the difficulty **level** (usually 3) to pass the obstacle.

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- Add a new Trait (based on something you learned during play or on some past experience that has come to light)
- Add a tag to an existing trait
- Add a new Key (you can never have the same key twice)
- Learn a new Secret (if you have the means to)

You can hold on to advances if you want, and spend them at any time, even in the middle of a battle.

Each key also has a **buyoff**. If the buyoff condition occurs, you have the option of removing the Key and earning two advances.

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| Character: **Captain Starla diNovi** | **RULES SUMMARY** |

Condition Track: Dead   Injured   Stunned   Tired

Key of "Not This Time!" You don't turn your back on the needy or downtrodden. Hit your key when you stand up for justice. (Buyoff: Nothing I can do.)

Key of "Yahoo!" You love it when you get to do more than take off, fly, and land. Hit your key when you perform any kind of risky stunt with the ship. (Buyoff: Not gonna risk it.)

Key of Tie Up Your Camel. Risks are fun, but always be ready. Hit your key when you reveal your "Plan B" in case the plan falls apart. (Buyoff: Risk it all.)

Secret of the Inner Eye: You have a psychic ability that was brought to the surface in a previous adventure. Allows a brief glimpse into the future in order to achieve a task. (See associated Trait.)

Secret of the Hero: You're willing to take a lot of risks in a good cause. When rolling dice for performing a heroic action, you can take back all pool dice if the action succeeds.

Trait: Brawler (Tags: Tackle, Roundhouse Left, Sucker Punch, Get Back Up, Improvise Weapon)

Trait: Athletics (Tags: Run, Jump, Grab, Swim, Lift)

Trait: Pilot (Tags: Steer, Stunt, Evade, Fly Casual, Pursue, Navigate)

Trait: Psionic Talent (Tags: Aim, Choose Wisely, Sweet Spot, Expert Timing)

Trait: Spaceship Operations (Tags: Use Computer, Fix Stuff, Diagnose Problem, Get the Most Out of It)

Trait: Astronomy (Tags: Cosmography, Known Planets, Space Politics & Law)

Trait: Language & Culture (Tags: Obscure Human Tongues, Yazirian, Dralasite, Vrusk)

Trait: Music (Tags: Singing, Ukelele, Harmonica)

Captain Starla diNovi is the Human owner of the *Apple Jack*. She's assembled a rag-tag crew (who really could all do better than be in her employ) and has set out to explore new spacelanes, defend the weak and the helpless, and hopefully make enough money to keep the ship flying.

Rolling the Dice

When you try to overcome an obstacle, you roll dice. Start with one die. Add a die if you have a **trait** that can help you. If that trait has any **tags** that apply, add another die for each tag. Finally, add any number of dice from your personal **pool** of dice (your pool starts with 7 dice). Roll all the dice you've gathered. Each die that shows **4 or higher** is a hit. You need hits equal to the difficulty **level** (usually 3) to pass the obstacle.

Levels: 2 – easy; 3 – difficult; 4 – challenging; 5 – extreme

If you pass, discard all the dice you rolled (including any pool dice you used). Don't worry – you can get your pool dice back.

If you don't pass, you don't yet achieve your goal. But, you get to keep the pool dice you rolled and **add another die to your pool**. The GM will escalate the situation in some way and you might be able to try again.

Conditions

When event warrant or especially when you fail a roll, the GM may impose a condition on your character. When you take a condition, mark it on your sheet and describe how it comes about. [Note: the "Dead" condition just means "presumed dead" unless you say otherwise.]

Helping

If your character is in a position to help another character, you can give them a die from your pool. Say what your character does to help. If the roll fails, you get your pool die back. If it succeeds, you don't.

Keys

When you hit a Key, you can do one of two things:
- Take an **experience point (xp)**
- Add a die to your pool (up to 10 max)

If you go into danger because of your key, you get 2xp or 2 pool die (or 1xp *and* 1 pool die). When you have accumulated 5xp, you earn an advance. You can spend an advance on one of the following:
- Add a new Trait (based on something you learned during play or on some past experience that has come to light)
- Add a tag to an existing trait
- Add a new Key (you can never have the same key twice)
- Learn a new Secret (if you have the means to)

You can hold on to advances if you want, and spend them at any time, even in the middle of a battle.

Each key also has a **buyoff**. If the buyoff condition occurs, you have the option of removing the Key and earning two advances.

Refresh

You can refresh your pool back to 7 dice by having a refreshment scene with another character. You may also remove a condition or regain the use of a Secret, depending on the details of the scene. A refreshment scene is a good time to ask questions (in character) so the other player can show off aspects of his or her PC – "Why did you choose this life?" – "What do you think of that person?" – "What is motivating you right now?" etc. Refreshment scenes can be flashbacks, too.

| Character: **Aristaios** | **RULES SUMMARY** |

Condition Track: Dead   Injured   Stunned   Tired

Key of the Nest: The ship and crew are like family to you, and are your constant concern. Hit your key when you watch over and take care of them, even to a smothering or meddlesome degree. (Buyoff: You know what? Forget you guys.)

Key of Fascination: You know how to hold folks' attention. Hit your key when you defuse a conflict, change someone's mind, befuddle or enchant someone with your silver tongue. (Buyoff: Fade into the background.)

Key of the Entrepreneur: You know what really fuels the ship: money. Hit your key when you try to get a little positive cash flow going. (Buyoff: Keep your gold -- this one's on the house.)

Secret of the Social Network: Rare is the place where you don't know someone, or at least know someone that knows someone.

Secret of "Go Get 'Em, Tiger!" You almost always know how to get someone to feel better and even inspire confidence. (Restore one pool dice to another character by talking to him/her.)

Trait: Language & Culture (Tags: Know Mores, Know Taboos, Well-cultured, History, Politics, Speak Like a Native, Human, Yazirian, Dralasite)

Trait: Communications (Tags: comm. equipment, protocols, codes)

Trait: Decipher Emotions/Thoughts (Tags: Deceive, Notice Deception, Gather Information, Read Body Language, Decipher "Tells," Gain Trust/Sympathy)

Trait: Eye for Business (Tags: Know Economics, Bargain, Trade, Know Legalities, Keep Track of the Money)

Trait: Science (Tags: Xenobiology, Astrophysics, Research, Identify Disease, Chemistry, Consult Science Database)

Aristaios is the *Apple Jack*'s Vrusk communications officer and business manager, in charge of keeping the ship's finances going. He is also an all-around scientist, and usually acts as the ship's cook.

Rolling the Dice
When you try to overcome an obstacle, you roll dice. Start with one die. Add a die if you have a **trait** that can help you. If that trait has any **tags** that apply, add another die for each tag. Finally, add any number of dice from your personal **pool** of dice (your pool starts with 7 dice). Roll all the dice you've gathered. Each die that shows **4 or higher** is a hit. You need hits equal to the difficulty **level** (usually 3) to pass the obstacle.
Levels: 2 – easy; 3 – difficult; 4 – challenging; 5 – extreme
If you pass, discard all the dice you rolled (including any pool dice you used). Don't worry – you can get your pool dice back.
If you don't pass, you don't yet achieve your goal. But, you get to keep the pool dice you rolled and **add another die to your pool**. The GM will escalate the situation in some way and you might be able to try again.
Conditions
When event warrant or especially when you fail a roll, the GM may impose a condition on your character. When you take a condition, mark it on your sheet and describe how it comes about. [Note: the "Dead" condition just means "presumed dead" unless you say otherwise.]
Helping
If your character is in a position to help another character, you can give them a die from your pool. Say what your character does to help. If the roll fails, you get your pool die back. If it succeeds, you don't.

Keys
When you hit a Key, you can do one of two things:
- Take an **experience point (xp)**
- Add a die to your pool (up to 10 max)

If you go into danger because of your key, you get 2xp or 2 pool die (or 1xp *and* 1 pool die). When you have accumulated 5xp, you earn an advance. You can spend an advance on one of the following:
- Add a new Trait (based on something you learned during play or on some past experience that has come to light)
- Add a tag to an existing trait
- Add a new Key (you can never have the same key twice)
- Learn a new Secret (if you have the means to)

You can hold on to advances if you want, and spend them at any time, even in the middle of a battle.
Each key also has a **buyoff**. If the buyoff condition occurs, you have the option of removing the Key and earning two advances.
Refresh
You can refresh your pool back to 7 dice by having a refreshment scene with another character. You may also remove a condition or regain the use of a Secret, depending on the details of the scene. A refreshment scene is a good time to ask questions (in character) so the other player can show off aspects of his or her PC – "Why did you choose this life?" – "What do you think of that person?" – "What is motivating you right now?" etc. Refreshment scenes can be flashbacks, too.

Listen & Ask Questions, Don't Plan

When you're the GM, don't try to plan what will happen. Instead, ask questions — lots and lots and make them pointed toward the things you're interested in. Like, the Captain picks a fight with a government official who is giving a hard time to an old lady. Ask Aristaios, "Do you react to this escalating situation?" Ask Kazz, "Two of the crew are getting a lot of attention from the official and his armed guard. Do you react?"

Also ask questions like:

"Does anything break when you do this crazy maneuver?"

"The fire probably spreads out of control, doesn't it?"

"That sounds like a bold plan. What's the first step?"

"Do the two of you end up somewhere quiet together? Does something happen between you?"

"Do you know anything about the Crimson Sky rebels? What are they like? Is it normal for them to be this far into the system?"

Keep that going at a steady pace and the game flies along pretty well.

Part of the job of the GM is listening to what the players say, catching it, turning it around and looking at it, and seeing if there's anything else to be done with it.

The GM's jobs: listen and reincorporate, play the NPCs with gusto, create interesting obstacles, and impose conditions as events warrant (especially when rolls fail).

Say Yes, Look for the Obstacles

By default, characters can accomplish anything covered by their traits.

They're competent and effective people, in other words. It's no fun to ask for a roll when there's no cool obstacle in the way. Just say yes to the action, listen, and ask questions as usual. But also, be on the look out for the opportunity to create obstacles as the action develops. Because you're asking leading questions and listening closely, they'll be all over the place, so it won't be too hard to spot them.

Obstacles can be people, weather, monsters, situations (fires, falling, being shot at, chases, escapes) or anything else you can imagine.

If a character tries something not covered by their traits, that's an obstacle right there: lack of experience and training. Lots of fun things can go wrong when you don't know what you're doing! Also, players will sometimes try things they're bad at so they can fail and add dice to their pool. It's a fine move for them and it gives you the chance to create more trouble, so everyone wins.

Conditions

A condition constrains what the player should say about their character.

It's a cue to tell the GM and players to pay attention to that thing and use it as material for the developing fiction. Gaming is just us saying stuff to each other, right? Sometimes a condition will become an Obstacle in its own right, calling for a roll to deal with it.

Adapted from Star Frontiers: Alpha Dawn ©TSR, Inc.

The Frontier region has four primary space-faring species: Dralasites, Humans, Vrusk, and Yazirians. By common consent, each of the four species freely colonize and exploit all Frontier planets, and generally tolerate each other, even to the extent of allowing open immigration on their colony worlds. Other sentient species can sometimes be found on the spaceships of the four major ones, but they do not build their own spaceships. The one exception is the Sathar, a mysterious species that only communicates with the others by violence.

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Dralasites - The Dralasite homeworld is beyond the Frontier, but they are a majority species in the Fromeltar system, which forms the center of Dralasite influence in the Frontier.

Dralasites are plasmoid, bearing a certain resemblance to a terrestrial paramecium or amoeba. Dralasite bodies are fluid and relatively undifferentiated by organs and structures (although there is usually a central "nerve" bundle and various fluid pumps). Their skin is a tough, flexible membrane. Dralasites have neither respiratory nor digestive systems. They omnivorously surround and absorb food, dissolving it within their bodies. While their normal, relaxed shape is spheroid or ovoid, they can stretch, flatten, or shape themselves as desired. Dralasites can generate limbs (arms and legs) at will, taking about five minutes to do so.

Dralasites can be male, female, or neuter. An individual will pass through all three stages (usually consciously controlling a transition with medication) during an individual's lifetime. Dralasites have all the senses a Human does, but the sense of smell and sensitivity to vibrations is much intensified. Vision is through eye-spots (usually two) on the outer membrane, and is black-and-white only.

Dralasites are philosophical and thoughtful. Their communities are small, and many Dralasites prefer to live alone. Dralasites do not care about wealth, power or status symbols. They judge themselves by the quality of their ideas and their ability to discuss important ideas wisely. Dralasites often hold large public meetings to discuss new ideas. Discussions and debates are among their favorite ways to relax. Steam baths are another popular Dralasite recreation. They mix perfumes and intoxicants with the steam. These affect Dralasites the same way alcohol does a Human or Yazirian.

Dralasites are widely known for their strange sense of humor. They love old jokes and puns that make humans groan. Many human comedians who could not find work in Human cities have become rich performing on Dralasite worlds. Dralasites are very fond of Vrusk, because they think Vrusk have funny shapes. They get along well with Humans but are careful not to upset Yazirians, who they consider too violent.

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Vrusk - Vrusk colonists entered the Frontier a few centuries before Humans. They are insectoid and somewhat centauroid in appearance, with a horizontal abdominal body with four rows of two legs, and an upright torso with two arms. Their heads have two hard-covered eyes, two long antennae, and a mouth with four mandibles. Their entire body is covered in a hard carapace, although, unlike terrestrial insects, they also have a bony endoskeleton as well. Vrusk senses are approximately equivalent to those of Humans. Vrusk breathe through multiple "nostrils" in their abdomen, so swimming is very difficult for them.

Vrusk society is highly organized around independent corporations, and is much more meaningful to the Vrusk than society is to the other three races, as a general rule. Likewise, Vrusk are less individualistic than is usual for the other three races. To a Vrusk, his or her corporation is much more than the nearest Human equivalents (family, tribe, nation, sect, cult, club, class) -- the corporation determines almost every aspect of life. This complexity give Vrusk an extreme social training that often lets Vrusk be intensely aware of verbal and non-verbal cues, even in other species. Vrusk often have a great advantage in speaking with members of other species regarding persuasion, intimidation, perception, detection of falsehood, etc. Vrusk adventurers (or other Vrusk engaged in solitary or individualistic activities) may appear (to a member of another species) to be not working for a corporation, but the Vrusk will not see it that way.

Vrusk get along well in almost any social situation, and are at ease among the other three major races, though Human motivations and emotions often confuse them.

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Humans - Humans arrived in the Frontier several centuries ago on a single, multi-generational ark. They have since explored and colonized widely, collaborating and cooperating with the other three major races. Humans are often puzzling to the other races, since anything one could say about them in general is usually met with numerous exceptions. For the most part, Humans get along very well with Dralasites and Yazirians (although Yazirian aggressiveness can sometimes cause strong reactions). Many Humans have are repulsed by Vrusk, since they resemble giant insects, though Vrusk are usually diplomatic enough to set individual Humans at ease when encountered.

Yazirians - Like the other three major species, the Yazirians originate beyond the Frontier. They are mammalian, with many similarities to Humans and other terrestrial primates, but also with terrestrial carnivore species. Their feet are just as nimble as their hands, making them at home in an arboreal setting. Their dexterity in general is greater than that of Humans, and despite their thin musculature, they are usually stronger as well. Their large jaws and teeth give them a deadly biting capability. They see better in dim light than Humans, but what a Human would consider daylight is too bright for them (Yazirians will wear shaded goggles or contact lenses in such situations). Yazirians grow a loose membrane along their sides, and under the right conditions can glide for considerable distances.

Yazirian society is clan-based, and Yazirians are usually highly aware of the relations between their respective clans, whether hostile or friendly. Yazirians tend to be bold and aggressive, and their culture encourages those traits.

Yazirians customarily choose a life-enemy, to whom the Yazirian dedicates his or her life to destroying, overcoming, or outdoing. The life-enemy could be a person or clan, but is often a much wider target (a disease, a challenge, or an abstract concept like poverty or a specific type of crime). A Yazirian that dies without having chosen a life-enemy is considered unfortunate.

Yazirians get along well with Vrusk and Humans, respecting Vrusk skill and often finding common ground with Humans. Yazirians often find Dralasite philosophy and humor trying to their limited patience.

Apple Jack, light transport, independent registry
Vrusk standard construction - Human-rebuilt engine

Owner/operator: Starla diNovi (human)

Crew/passengers: 4 crew, 4 passengers, life support for 12 standard-size beings for one week

Cargo capacity: 10 tons

Armament/Defenses: Missile launcher, 10 high-explosive rockets; Electrostatic shielding

Interior Arrangement: Cockpit, extended; Engine room; Medbay; 6 cabins; Ship storage; Airlock; Workshop; Lounge/mess hall; Cargo bay

MAP OF THE FRONTIER SECTOR