

A STITCH IN TIME

Competition Winning Ace Tale™ for Savage Worlds by Luis Enrique Torres.

A MISSION FOR DARING TALES OF THE SPACE LANES

PAYBACK

The heroes wake up with a splitting headache, sprawled on the deck of the Blazing Star. They have spent last few hours unconscious, and their ship is drifting through space. The ship's computer reports an incoming subspace call from Space Station Gemini. The last thing the heroes remember is they left the Station a few hours ago after repairing the ship.

When the heroes answer the call they see the cadaverous, scarred, vengeful face of Gunthar Krull, an old enemy:

My friends! Finally, after all these years! I haven't forgotten our previous encounter... How did you escape the law? Well, that doesn't matter now, what matters is that YOU escaped while I spent FIVE YEARS rotting in a hellish prison planet! But now it's payback time! When you docked on Space Station Gemini my minions hid a gas capsule in your ship's air system.

"The capsule released a virus that will kill you all in a few hours in the most... painful... way imaginable. I possess the only vaccine. But how will you get it? I'll enjoy watching you die trying to recover it... and if you decide to die alone, in space, I'll enjoy knowing you died begging for the pain to go away!"

A DEADLY VIRUS

This is an unusual Ace Tale that is meant to be run with real-time pressure. That's right, the players compete against a real time limit, generally the night's session's estimated length. The GM can give a sense of urgency to the proceedings by placing a clock on the table. We recommend setting up a computer with the anxiety-inducing web-based timer available at <http://countdown.onlineclock.net/>. Make sure the players understand there is no direct relationship between "real" and "game" minutes.

Krull's virus affects the heroes in stages:

- By Stage One heroes feel minor fever, sweating, dizziness, and are treated as Fatigued.
- By Stage Two heroes feel very high fever, pain, skin bleeding, and vomiting, are treated as Exhausted, and temporarily gain the Ugly hindrance.
- By Stage Three heroes pass out. Have each player make a Vigor roll. On a failure, the hero dies. On a success, the hero wakes up hours later with a new permanent hindrance such as Anemic or Ugly.

The GM must decide when it is dramatically appropriate for heroes to reach Stages One or Two. Stage Three is reached when the countdown ends. Alternatively, the GM can count down the time Stage by Stage.

This way the GM can refine the countdown time during the adventure, compensating for fast or slow groups while keeping the adventure as tense as possible.

Heroes who survive Stage Three discover Krull has left the station, leaving behind a mocking note explaining how much he will enjoy knowing the heroes will live the rest of their lives weak or deformed.

SPACE STATION GEMINI

The heroes will want to return to Space Station Gemini and find Krull. The station is a frontier military outpost that has grown into a small marketplace for both legal and illegal merchandise.

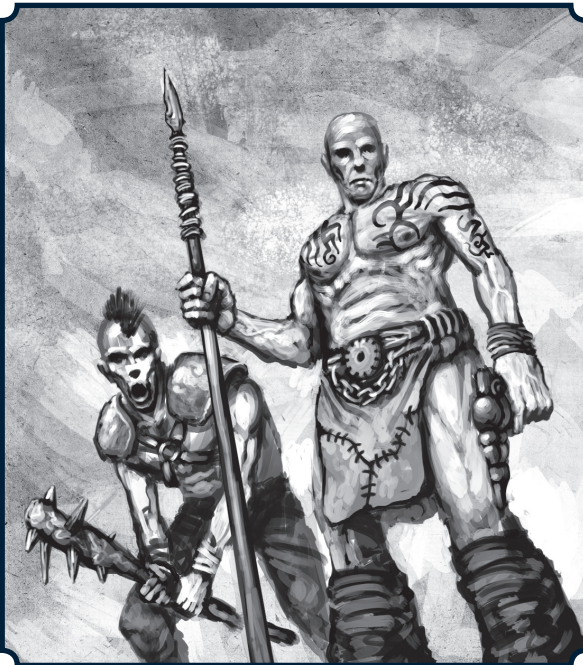
After a quick jump the heroes arrive at the station and receive this message:

"Blazing Star, this is Commander Gurden of Station Operations. Do not approach. We are having trouble with our docking computers and are unable to give you permission to dock. We expect operations to be normalized again in twelve hours or so. Please await further instructions."

Nothing the heroes say or ask makes Commander Gurden change his mind. If the heroes wait, move their symptoms up one stage, and so on, until they understand that they need to act or die.

If the heroes try to approach the Station, Gurden orders the batteries to fire. Play this with the chase rules with only six 5SU increments, and the station firing every round. The station is located on the fifth increment and does not move.

Once the heroes are in the same increment as the Station the pilot can dock the ship with a successful Force maneuver. To open the entry hatch the heroes need a Lockpicking or Repair roll at -2 or a Cooperative Strength roll at -6. They can also destroy the hatch (Object Toughness 10). As soon as they enter the station, the heroes find ten soldiers waiting to attack them.



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INSIDE THE STATION

The heroes will probably run around the Station looking for Krull. Play the search like a treasure hunt. Every clue the heroes find leads them to the next one until they find Krull. This lets the GM lengthen or shorten the adventure depending on how much time is left.

The Station is populated by Soldiers and Citizens. Citizens may be from different alien species, but all use the same stats. Citizens also hold the clues to the treasure hunt, and will offer them through good role-playing or a successful Persuasion roll.

Whenever the heroes travel from one place to another, draw two cards. With a Club on the first card the group encounters 2d6 soldiers in the station corridors. With a Club on the second card the group encounters 2d4 soldiers at the destination location.

Throughout the adventure the heroes hear Commander Gurden's voice on the PA system, ordering soldiers about, asking citizens to stay calm, and ordering the heroes to surrender.

What follows is the ordered list of clues the GM can use for the treasure hunt:

1. The contact for all things shady in the station is an insect-like alien called Grokrr. He runs the General Store (the first person the heroes talk to will have this clue).

2. Krull's goons were recently seen unloading crates in the Cargo Bay. Maybe Janxx Vultar, the cargo bay manager, knows more.

3. Krull is the station's largest dealer in illegal drugs. His main sales outlet is Thirsty's Bar. Ask Kjorgen the four-armed bartender.

4. Rathnukk Trukkhganh, the station hotel manager, told me he heard Commander Gurden talking on his communicator to someone, apparently Krull. You should ask Rathnukk what he heard. Maybe Gurden is working for Krull?

5. I heard "the Engine Room" mentioned. Maybe it's all handled from there...

Krull and his goons (three per hero) are hidden in the Station's engine room. By this point the heroes should be in Stage Two of the virus, and Krull will gloat about their painful deaths before starting a fight to the death. A vial in Krull's jacket

pocket contains eight doses of vaccine and acts immediately.

AFTERMATH

After the fight with Krull the heroes may either escape the station (use the in-station travel and chase rules above) or negotiate their way out. Commander Gurden will be with the next soldier group the heroes encounter.

Treat Commander Gurden as a Henchman soldier.

He's not really in Krull's pay, but after everything that's happened he's definitely looking for blood, so negotiation will not be easy.

SPACE STATION GEMINI

Top Speed: — ; **Toughness:** 60 (30); **Handling:** — ; **Shields Pods:** — ; **Crew:** —

Abilities: Shooting d8

Notes: Heavy Armor, Improved Stabilizer, Spacecraft

Weapons: 3 x Medium Batteries (Range: 24/48/96; Damage: 3d8; ROF 1; AP 10, HW)



GUNTHAR KRULL

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Taunt d8, Throwing d8

Charisma: -6; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Anemic, Bloodthirsty, Ugly, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Alertness, Block, Combat Reflexes, Level Headed, Marksman, Strong Willed

Gear: Light body armor (+2), blaster rifle (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 2d8, AP 2, Shots 40), 2 x frag grenades (Range: 5/10/20, Damage: 3d6+2, MBT), molecular knife (Str+d4+2, AP 2)

GOONS

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Blaster pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6, Semi-Auto), electro-knuckles (Str+d4)

SOLDIERS

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Gear: Armored vest (+2), blaster carbine (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2d6, RoF 1, Semi-Auto), frag grenade (Range: 5/10/20, Damage: 3d6+2, MBT)

CITIZENS

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Knowledge (one trade) d6, Notice d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: —

Edges: —

Gear: —

OUT NOW!

