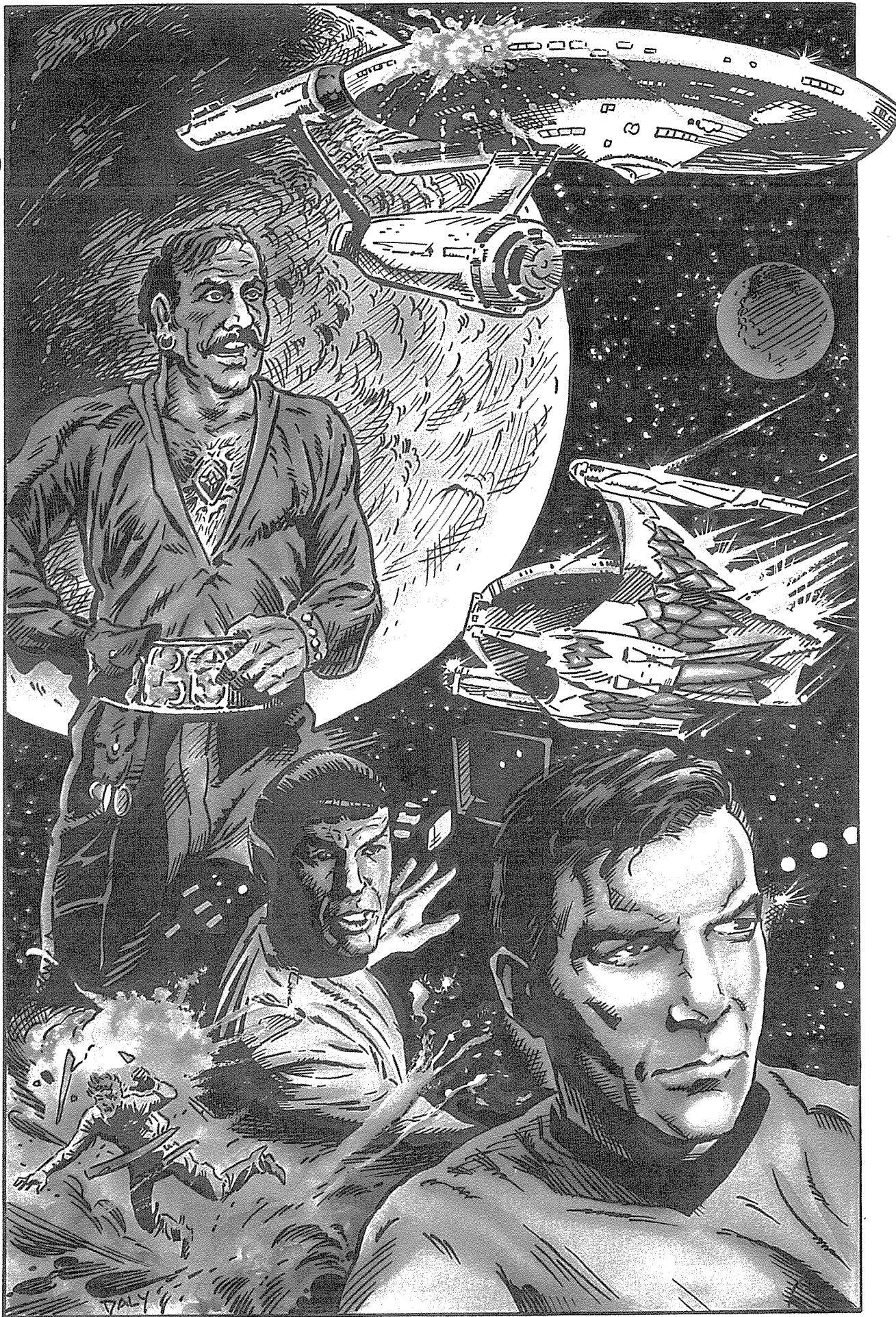


Mudd in Your Eye



By James L. Cambias

Captain's Log: Stardate 2567.4. The Enterprise has been assigned to clearing asteroidal debris from the Sadalbari system. Though this is necessary, it is fairly monotonous. I'm sure everyone on board is hoping for a more interesting assignment soon.



his adventure takes place during the time of the original *Star Trek* television series. The PCs' starship has been assigned to the extremely dull business of clearing asteroidal debris in the uninhabited Sadalbari system, not far from the Romulan Neutral Zone. The job consists of blasting asteroid chunks with phasers to prevent them from posing a hazard to shipping. Clearing the debris should take six days.

During the third day on the job, the ship's long-range sensors suddenly detect a small scout ship approaching, pursued by a Romulan *Bird of Prey*! The Romulan ship is trying to destroy the scout and has already damaged it severely. The warbird's commander will not launch a frontal attack against a Federation cruiser, so if the player characters take action to protect the scout, the Romulans will switch on their cloaking device and withdraw.

Once the Romulans have been driven off, the characters can see to the scout ship. It is irreparably damaged, but the pilot is still alive. His communicator is not working. The players will have to beam the pilot aboard.

If the player characters are the officers of the *Enterprise*, they will recognize their guest instantly: Harcourt Fenton Mudd, interstellar rogue. Personnel on other ships will have to consult Star Fleet files. Mudd's record includes smuggling, transport of stolen goods, purchase of a space vessel with counterfeit currency, sale of invalid patents, failure to pay fines, attempted theft of Star Fleet property, fraud, theft of sacred objects, perjury, failure to appear for trial, conspiracy to commit fraud, attempted piracy, failure to perform community service, failure to submit to psychiatric rehabilitation and improper use of subspace radio. In addition to these Federation offenses, he is wanted for a number of crimes on various planets.

Mudd is very grateful to the PCs for saving his life. At first, he will claim to know nothing about why the Romulans were chasing him, but if pressed, he will explain.

While doing a little "harmless commerce" in Romulan space recently, he came into possession of an unusual crystalline pendant. The fellow whom Mudd "borrowed" it from said it was an ancient artifact found on a dead world. But the Romulan authorities got on Mudd's tail, trying to get the pendant from him. And he couldn't give it to them because he can't get the blasted thing off!

WILD ABOUT HARRY

Mudd is telling the truth—he is wearing a large crystal pendant which is somehow sticking to the skin of his chest. The object glows with shimmering colors and resembles no known technology.

The crystal is a mixture of silicates, metals and organic compounds, with a highly complex structure. It emits a low-intensity electrical field. The source of the glow is unknown. The computer records have nothing on file that even remotely resembles the crystal.

A medical examination of Mudd will reveal that the crystal has extended tiny fibers into his skin, which have somehow fused with his nervous system. Removing the pendant by surgery could be very dangerous. As far as anyone can tell, the object isn't doing any harm to him.

The pendant is actually an amplifier for psionic abilities. It has gradually been raising Mudd's psionic potential. Nobody (including Mudd) is aware of this at first, but overtime his new abilities will manifest themselves. He will begin to know what people are thinking and can broadcast his thoughts to others. He will also begin to develop telekinetic powers.

Mudd's PSI ability initially is 14, but each day it doubles, reaching a maximum of 200 after four days. The crystal enables Mudd to use all the Vulcan psionic disciplines described in the *Star Trek: The Roleplaying Game* rulebook, subject to the same limitations as Vulcan telepaths.

Mudd's telekinetic powers give him the ability to move and manipulate objects at a distance, using a Strength level equal to his current PSI. This ability is not limited by range, but Mudd must be able to see what he is manipulating. He can also use this ability to create a force field around himself and protect against Vulcan nerve pinch attempts.

Mudd's power allows him to deflect damage from phasers or other weapons. Subtract his PSI from all damage that hits him. Note that a phaser set on disintegrate is assumed to do 200 points of damage, so once Mudd reaches his full psionic strength, no hand weapons can harm him.

Used offensively, Mudd's telekinesis allows him to inflict damage at will. Against a living opponent, he must roll a percentile die, subtracting the enemy's PSI level from his own. The resulting damage is equal to Mudd's PSI minus the defender's. Mudd can deliberately reduce the amount of damage he wishes to do (he will not kill anyone if he can help it). Used against nonliving targets, his power acts like a phaser and can disintegrate man-sized objects. Used against a starship in space combat, this ability lets Mudd inflict 20 points of damage, ignoring shields. He can select what part of the target will be damaged.

At first, Mudd will be as surprised as

everyone else at the strange manifestations of his powers. But as time goes by, he will shrewdly begin concealing his abilities from the PCs, using them covertly to cheat at three-dimensional chess and similar petty chicanery. Any player characters with psionic abilities will notice a strange sensation when Mudd is around—a sort of mental "static." A successful Psionics roll will enable a PC to sense enormous power emanating from Mudd. It seems to be growing.

IN MUDD WE TRUST

After several days have passed and the *Enterprise* is nearly finished with the debris-clearing mission, the Romulan warbird will attack again. The enemy will sneak up on the Federation ship while cloaked, then appear and launch a sudden barrage of plasma torpedoes. (This will probably happen while the player characters are not on the bridge.) The surprise attack damages the *Enterprise*, and it is not at all certain that the Romulans can be driven off this time.

Suddenly, Mudd arrives on the bridge. "Having a little trouble, Kirk?" he asks grandly. "Allow me." He gestures at the Romulan ship, and a huge explosion rocks the enemy vessel, destroying the warp engines. Crippled, the Romulan ship limps away.

Mudd smugly announces that he is taking over command of the ship. This is no idle boast, as he can operate all the controls mentally. He sets a new course and takes possession of the captain's chair. From time to time, he will make grandiose pronouncements over the ship's intercom. ("This is Captain Mudd. As a reward for my loyal crew, I'm ordering an extra ration of grog with dinner tonight. Afterward, there will be a dancing contest in the shuttle hangar.")

MUDD-SLINGING

The player characters will undoubtedly seek a way to regain control of the ship. Mudd's telekinetic powers make him invulnerable to harm—he can deflect damage or mentally snatch weapons from his enemies' hands. The PCs may come up with their own plan for defeating him—there are several options.

One method to regain control of the ship is to overload Mudd. Controlling the whole ship by telekinesis is difficult and requires constant concentration. If the player characters can arrange a massive amount of inputs from all over the vessel, Mudd will burn out the crystal trying to control everything at once. Arranging this will require a half-dozen successful skill rolls, including at least one Computer Operation roll, one Ship Systems roll and various Engineering rolls. If the plan succeeds, the strain of controlling the ship will burn out Mudd's amplifier.

Anyone making a Geology or Physics skill roll realizes that it might be possible to

destroy the crystal using high-frequency sound to shatter it. The PCs would have to find some way to distract Mudd's attention while a suitable sound generator is procured, then prevent him from destroying it until the crystal is shattered. (One sure-fire way to distract Mudd is to have an attractive female crewmember show interest in him.)

The characters might also make use of the fact that Mudd is a great carouser and glutton. Getting him into a guzzling bout with some hard-drinking Star Fleet officers could solve the problem. But Mudd is a formidable drinker, and it might be the PCs who wind up under the table. If Mudd is incapacitated, any attempt to remove the crystal will automatically destroy the artifact. Mudd will suffer 1D10 points of damage.

The referee should discourage any plans aimed at killing or seriously harming Harry. He is a comic character, after all, and should be played as such. Giving him a hotfoot is much more appropriate than shooting him.

Bad Timing: Unfortunately, just as the players regain their ship, the Romulans return. This time they have an entire squadron—two *Bird of Prey*-class ships and a converted Klingon *D-6* armed with a Romulan plasma torpedo and a cloaking device. (If the characters are aboard a ship smaller than the Federation heavy cruiser, the referee should adjust the enemy forces accordingly.) By bad luck, there are no other Federation ships nearby. The Romulan leader, Commander Thraz, will demand that

the PCs hand over Mudd and the crystal, or his squadron will destroy the *Enterprise*.

Without the crystal, Mudd can't do anything against the Romulans, and the *Enterprise* is outnumbered and outgunned. The characters may decide to give Mudd to the Romulans, but that would mean sending him to his death. A successful Negotiation attempt by the Federation captain might persuade the Romulans to accept the crystal and let Star Fleet deal with Mudd. A properly executed bluff might frighten them away. Or the *Enterprise's* crew can try a heroic battle against superior odds.

HIS NAME IS MUDD

Shorn of his psionic powers, Mudd will try his best to talk his way out of being thrown in the brig and hauled off to the nearest starbase. It is fortunate for him that Star Fleet regulations do not allow summary executions without trial.

Whatever the PCs decide to do with him, Mudd probably will manage to get out of prison before too long and will return unrepentantly to his usual ways.

Harcourt Fenton Mudd

Race: Human.

Age: 51.

STR 50, END 47, INT 81, DEX 48, CHA 73, LUC 24, PSI 14 (initially).

Skills: Bribery 59, Carousing 78, Computer Operation 40, Federation Law 81, Gaming 54, Language: Romulan 22, Marks-

manship (Modern) 43, Negotiation/Diplomacy 83, Personal Combat (Armed) 34, (Unarmed) 24, Psychology (Human) 71, Small Vessel Pilot 72, Streetwise 82.

Mudd is a large, paunchy man with an elaborate mustache. He dresses in garishly colorful clothes. He is greedy and unscrupulous, but basically harmless. Unfortunately for him, he is not as clever as he thinks he is, and frequently his schemes land him in more trouble than he can handle.

Commander Thraz

Race: Romulan.

Age: 49.

STR 72, END 69, INT 78, DEX 70, CHA 62, LUC 47, PSI 30.

Skills: Administration 53, Language: Federation 76, Leadership 77, Marksmanship (Modern) 64, Personal Combat (Armed) 53, Negotiation/Diplomacy 52, Starship Combat Tactics/Strategy 67.

Thraz is a typical Romulan officer, convinced that his species is superior to all others. He has been extensively briefed about the crystalline artifact and its mysterious powers, and will be a little nervous. Thraz has been ordered to recover the crystal or destroy it to keep it out of Federation hands. Initially, he will be in command of a single *Bird of Prey*, pursuing Mudd. Once that ship is damaged, the high command will place a squadron at his disposal. Like all Romulans, Thraz would rather die than surrender, and he never takes prisoners. Ω

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