

When Dr. Peppermill got going he sounded like a different person. Instead of a witless goofball he became a real man of science.

"It sure took you a long time to try out your ideas," I said.

He shook his head vigorously. "Not at all. That is merely more evidence of the distorted way in which the press chooses to do its reporting. I was trying my ideas from the beginning—for many years. On animal subjects. I had striking success with every one of them. I even took them to scientific conferences with me, and showed them off. Many's the poster session at which I was the star attraction: Dr. Horace Peppermill and his wide-awakes! Chicks, kittens, puppies, piglets, hamsters, and never a one of them with any need for sleep! Make no mistake, my work was successful."

"That's not the way the papers report it," I said. "Understand, I'm not picking an argument with you, doctor. I'm just telling you what I read. They say, you didn't have enough evidence. That's why you were turned down with your requests to do the same treatment on human subjects."

"Now wait a minute," he began. Then he paused. Outside the bar, maybe a couple of streets away, had come a noise like distant shouting. Dr. Peppermill jerked around nervously.

"It's all right," I said. "I've been keeping my eye on the street for you. There's nobody there."

He nodded, and took another pull at the glass in front of him. "Do you know how difficult it is in this country to get permission to do anything that involves human subjects in medical work? Particularly when it is something that involves healthy people. All the laws are built the other way round. You can only experiment on the sick. It is a physician's conspiracy!"

"Sounds more like a healthy people's conspiracy to me," said Muriel. Her tone was a little colder. The third port and 7-Up tended to do that to her, make her a bit more argumentative and emotional. "Anyway, you didn't let that stop you. You did your experiments on people who were well—really, doctor, in your own apartment building, too! And without their consent."

"I knew it was safe!" Dr. Peppermill reached up and jammed his hat

## A STAR TREK ROLE-PLAYING ADVENTURE

# THE BARRIER OF ESSAI

By Michael A. DeLuca II

Illustrations by Liz Danforth

**Editor's Note:** The adventure article below is written for players of *Star Trek: The Role Playing Game (ST:RPG)*, produced by FASA Corporation of Chicago, Illinois. In this adventure, players control Klingon characters through a series of encounters with a strange world and its inhabitants. Readers unfamiliar with *ST:RPG* or role-play gaming in general may wish to read through the material below. For more information, read "Role-Playing in the Final Frontier," a RPG introduction, published in *STARDATE* #7.

—Dale L. Kemper

### Plot Synopsis

While on deep-space patrol near the Beta-Origi Nebula in the Triangle, the area of unclaimed space that divides the Klingon and Romulan Empires, the Imperial Klingon Warship *K'vinta*, a D-7 Class Light Cruiser, encounters a squadron of three Romulan *Bird of Prey* Class Cruisers which quickly open fire. In the combat that ensues, the *K'vinta* is crippled by her attackers. In a desperate attempt to

escape, Captain Kordon orders that the command boom be separated from the main hull. While that portion of the ship keeps the Romulans at bay the command boom makes good its escape and is soon out of range of the enemy ships. Before Captain Kordon can order the detonators within the main hull to be activated, it is vaporized by the concentrated fire of the Romulans, which, seeming satisfied, head for their border leaving the scarred command boom of the *K'vinta* to plod alone at sub-light speed across the enormous expanse of space that separates it from home. Dozens of light years away from the Klingon Empire, Captain Kordon has no hope of returning. Until the ship's sensors register a rather unusual contact.

In *Aboard the K'vinta*, players are introduced to their situation and the possible choices that are presented to them.

*Journey to Essai* explains the area that the characters find themselves in and offers more information on which to base their plans for getting back to the Empire.



Background Information and Gamemaster's Notes gives further details of the situation that might come into play and offers the Gamemaster a number of variations to this scenario to consider.

### Aboard the *K'vinta* On the Bridge

Play begins after the *K'vinta* has successfully escaped the Romulan cruiser squadron. The command boom is reduced to one impulse engine with four power points and eight superstructure points. The resulting lack of power makes any use of shields or weapons almost pointless. Out of the original complement of 352 crew members, 29 are left. To make matters worse, the sub-space transmitter was damaged beyond repair during the battle. The *K'vinta* is obviously no longer capable of anything remotely resembling combat, and this point should be made quite plain to the players.

The vessel is currently on course back toward the nearest Klingon outpost some 37 light-years distant. The Beta-Origi Nebula, which was formed when a Class F giant star went supernova some 600 years ago, lies on a course roughly opposite to that which the *K'vinta* is travelling. The nearest plume of the nebula is less than half a light-year away and extends ahead of the ship.

The bridge is damaged, as is exhibited by the charred splinters of consoles which litter the deck. Although the life-support systems are still functional, the air being wafted onto the bridge smells of oil and smoke. Still, the important consoles and instrumentation are working, and the Science Officer soon detects a large mass only a few degrees to starboard. Further sensor examination reveals this mass to be made up of a variety of materials, including rock, assorted metals, and an abundance of raw industrial crystals. The composition of the strange mass would suggest that it is a planet, although the tactical scan clearly shows what appears to be an enormous wall which extends hundreds of millions of kilometers from side to side.

### Journey to Essai

Whether the Captain orders a course change toward this huge wall



### Bye, Bye Lullabies...

down over his eyes in exasperation. "Not just thought it—knew it! And I was right. Look at all the reports, you won't find one that claims I have harmed the subjects of the experiments in any way. They are healthy, they are happy, and they do not need to sleep. Just as I predicted!"

"But on little children!" Muriel had tears in her eyes. "The poor little children, you never asked *their* permission—never asked anybody's permission. You just did it."

"How could I?" Dr. Peppermill banged his fist down on the bar. "How the devil could I? I knew from all my experiments that the sleep-reduction program was quite safe, but it can only work on the immature forms. Puppies, and kittens, and piglets. On anything past a certain point—a year or so, for humans—the treatment wouldn't do any harm, but it would do no good, either. More mature forms are too set in the brain functions. Don't you see, it *had* to be on babies! Even though no one would ever have agreed to let me do it."

Before Muriel could answer, we heard a sudden noise from the street outside. Shouts, curses, car horns, and the sound of running feet. Dr. Peppermill stood up, buttoned his coat with amazing speed, and pulled his hat so low that his eyes became invisible.

"The back door!" he said. "Quickly, they're coming."

He was quite right. I led him through behind the bar, and to a door that opened into an alley leading to the next street. He took a rapid look to make sure that no one was loitering there, then moved off at a slow and somewhat weaving canter. At the corner he paused.

"Just you see," he cried. "Soon as this blows over, my work will be recognized. I'll get the Nobel Prize. Just you see!"

An ungrateful man. He hadn't even thanked me for the free drink. I got back into the bar just as the first wave of people came bursting in, frenzied and furious. "Has he been in here?" they said. "Have you seen that fiend Peppermill?"

One man, hollow-eyed and stubble-chinned, was carrying a paper bag filled with chicken feathers. "Three days!" he shouted to the woman next to him. "That bastard! Three bleeding days I've been

*continued on page 48*



# ON THE BRIGHTSIDE

by Steve Stiles ©1985

**Our Story Thus Far:** Wendy hurries to wed Jason so that he can remain in-system. Colleen realizes that she may have been wrong about Robby, Roy, Tom, Grace and Marcia, while Tony, David and Marj continue to play along on the side. Wiette still yearns for Roy, but her natural resentment as the last surviving member of her race poses major obstacles to the romance. Back in the mid-Jurassic, the younger Neil, still temporarily pursuing Karen, discovers he's his own father! Again. Meanwhile...



or not, continued scanning will show that the artifact is curved, that it is made up of smaller debris closely fitted together, and that it is two kilometers thick. The Science Officer is baffled by what lies beyond.

Within another standard day, the *K'vinta* will clear one edge of the object, and a central star will be revealed. The star is positioned 600 million kilometers from the wall, which forms a huge hemispheric barrier around the star. Any player who makes a Saving Roll against his character's INT score or asks about the hemisphere's position will notice that the incredible wall blots out the view of the Beta-Origi Nebula. Soon, the Science Officer will detect one Class K (similar to Klinzhai) plant orbiting the star. No other planets or other objects are detected. If he has not done so already, the Klingon Captain should order a change of course toward this mysterious system. If he doesn't, the ship's supplies will run low in a few months as they plod on toward the Empire, and shortly after that, all aboard will perish from life-support failure. This would obviously end the scenario, so Gamemasters should ensure that the Captain gets curious.

## Intelligent Life

The Science Officer is not the only one who is occupied by this new discovery. Almost immediately after the boom clears the edge of the barrier, the Communications Officer picks up a large amount of space-normal radio activity emanating from the single planet and various other points throughout this solar system. The broadcasts are made in an unknown language, and if anyone thinks of it, three hours of translator work with the computers will be enough to break it. Additionally, there are occasional visual broadcasts made, and if the Communications Officer makes a Skill Roll against his rating in Communication Systems Operation, the image of a large, middle-aged human male dressed opulently will be seen lecturing on some unknown matter. There are also what appears to be news broadcasts showing two armies fighting in a desert while heroic music blares in the background. The fighting soon ends with one side the clear victor, and the program goes on to cover some other matter. Any

Klingon who witnesses this presentation will recognize it for what it is; pure propaganda.

## The Escort

Five hours after entering the system, a large sub-light vessel will come out to meet the Klingons. The vessel is an armored cruiser that seems to mount batteries of some kind of laser-like energy weapon. Detailed combat information on the ship is not necessary for the adventure, unless the Gamemaster wishes to allow the players to make the certain blunder of opening fire. If this occurs the most likely outcome would be the disabling of the command boom's impulse engine by the armored cruiser and subsequent boarding combat. Some or all of the



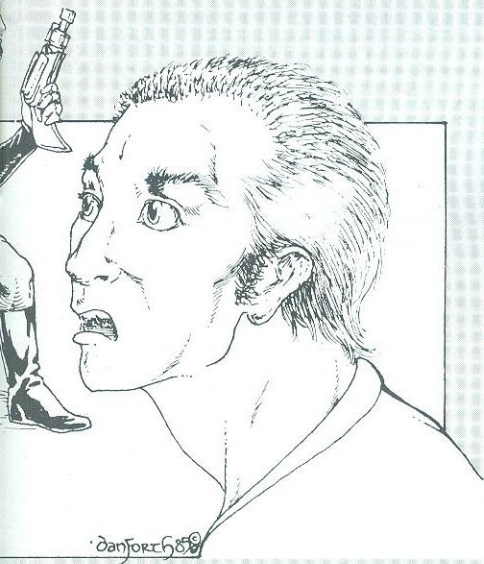
player characters might perish in such an encounter, but even if they survive the best they can hope for is becoming prisoners, since they are outnumbered ten or twenty to one.

Hopefully, someone will have thought to activate the language translator programs earlier as the armored cruiser attempts to make contact with the *K'vinta*. The signal is audio only, and its main context is an order to follow their ship or be destroyed, a philosophy the Klingons should understand. If they do not comply, then the armored cruiser will fire its laser cannon at the boom's impulse engine and after it is disabled, will energize a tractor beam to



tow the *K'vinta* towards the planet.

Regardless of how the Klingons begin their voyage in-system, it will take two days to reach their destination, the planet that the inhabitants call Essai. During the trip, there will be plenty of opportunity to learn from the Essaian broadcasts about their homeworld. The planet is controlled by a single monarch, Sai-ume, who rules with a heavy fist from the capital, Ro-Sai near Essai's equator. He seems to be in complete control of the planet's military supplies but there are frequent references on the broadcasts concerning rebels who are disrupting the supply of food and the economy in general. There are reports of rebel uprisings and the execution of thousands of women and children by them. Needless to say, however, any references to the



rebels are always followed by how the government is exterminating them and will soon "eliminate them from the face of Essai forever." Again, any self-respecting Klingon would recognize this as a rather amateurish propaganda style.

There will also be frequent references to the "Barrier of Essai" which "shelters the motherworld from the deadly effects of the blast." Additionally, the players should encounter an educational program that mentions that the Essaian System once had ten planets in it. At this point, any player who makes a Saving Roll against his character's INT score will realize that the barriers are made out of nine of

the original planets in this system. Any player who made that Saving Roll may attempt another which, if successful, will allow him or her to notice an incongruity: the Essaians are comparatively primitive people who do not possess the technology to break up nine planets and reassemble them into such an enormous undertaking as the Barrier.

### The Warp Cruiser

As the *K'vinta* Command Boom approaches Essai, they will pass several shipyards where Essaian vessels, some active but mostly mothballed or in poor condition, will be moored. All of these vessels are sub-light in nature, except one. It is important that attention is discreetly called to a small (60 meters long) ship with two cylindrical nacelles drooping beneath its hull. The players should understand what this configuration means but if they don't, a quick scan will indicate that the cylinders have a very high mass, as is typical of a warp drive engine.

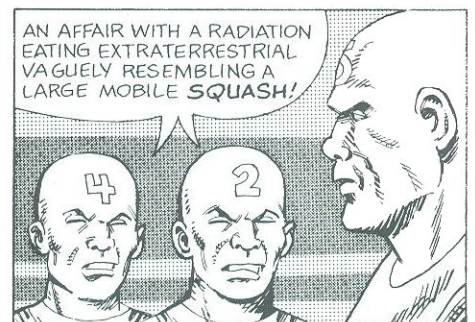
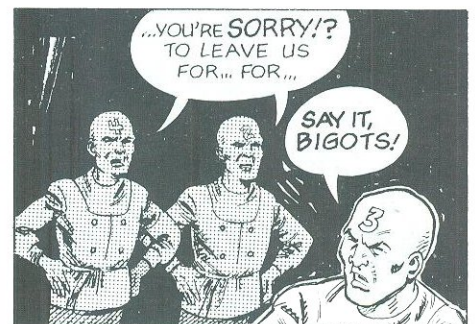
This Essaian Warp Cruiser is critical to the scenario, as it is the only hope the Klingons have for returning to the Empire, so the players *must* discover that it is, indeed, capable of faster-than-light velocities. Try to be as discreet as possible, but if the players are slow to catch on, help them get this information.

The Warp Cruiser is completely powered-down, and will require quite a bit of work before it can be made operational. If the players attempt to take the ship immediately, give them that chance, but the atmosphere within the ship has long since bled away and environmental suits will be necessary to beam over. In addition, because the ship requires so much work (as well as Essaian assistance at the shipyard) to repair, this action could seriously reduce the chances of a successful conclusion to the game. The players will still have a slim chance to talk their way out of this mistake (require Skill Rolls against the Captain's rating in Negotiation/Diplomacy for success). See the notes on Essai's history for more details on this vessel.

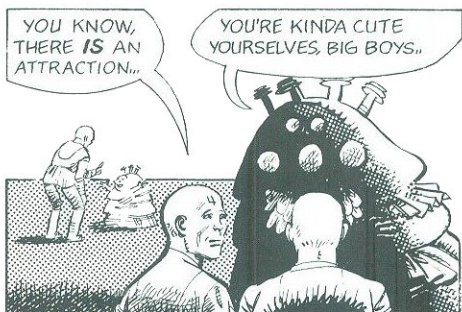
### An Entrance with Style

When the *K'vinta* reaches Essai, the Communications Officer will receive an instruction for the Captain

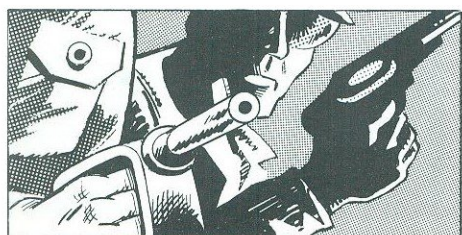
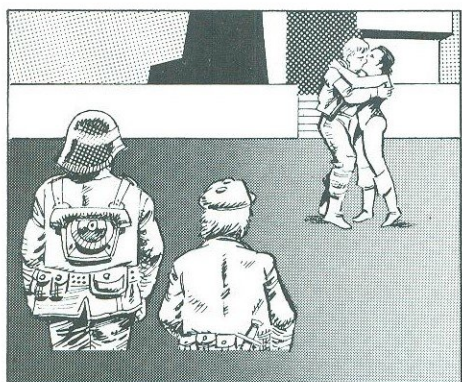
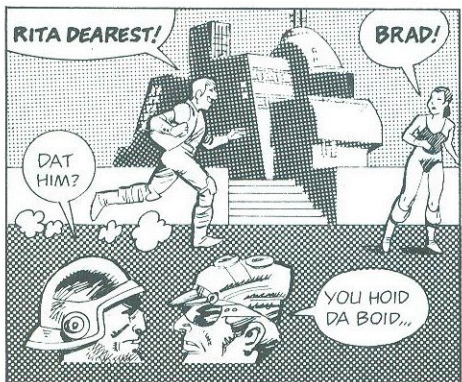
Brian suspects that his recent series of train tunnel dreams have been preprogrammed. Raised by aliens and finally returned to human society, **Kimberly** is shocked to learn that, despite an ample supply of personal coal tar, she is pregnant. **Tyrone's** breeding schedule is placed on hold by the Genex Council when testing reveals that his DNA potential is only fit for producing industrial cheese-making enzymes. Clone marriages continue to destruct. **Rogers 2** and **4** follow **Roger 3** to a rendezvous with his extragalactic lover....







**Tad** is stopped at Beirut's spaceport when religious violence unexpectedly erupts. **Cassie** evolves higher than herself after unwrapping **Ken's** wedding gift. **Johnny** is hunted down like a wild beast because of slim antennae embedded in his head. **Julia** mutates too. **Burt**, encountering a vast interstellar conspiracy of conquest, hurtles through the void in his dreadnaught, penetrating impenetrable fields of force, and launching torpedo after torpedo of incalculable soaring explosive violence at the fleeing enemy, the unspeakable Fn'Choon Empire—a war to the extinction! **Eva** cancels his work permit.



and his officers to shuttle down to the capital, Ro-Sai. To aid in the descent, the Essaians have activated a homing beacon for the players to follow. Naturally, the armored cruiser intends to escort the shuttle down to the surface.

As the command boom has no shuttlebay, let alone a shuttle, the players will have to use the transporter to reach the surface. The beacon is a convenient source of coordinates for Ro-Sai's spaceport.

The average Klingon might decide to try to use the transporter to take the capital by force, since the Essaians are obviously not expecting such a technological wonder. If the Captain decides to try this, distribute 50 to 100 Essaian Guards around the spaceport. If the Klingons are successful with their surprise they might succeed in breaking through to the palace and kidnapping Sai-ume, Essai's dictator.

It is hoped that the Captain will show restraint, and beam down as peacefully as is possible for a Klingon. It will be important to show the shock of the Essaians as the Klingons materialize within their midst. Once they have gotten over the beam-down, a small contingent of security guards will escort the players to a detention facility for 'processing and interrogation.' All weapons, communicators, translators, and all other equipment the players beamed down with will be confiscated. Any secret devices or weapons (subcutaneous transponders, hidden daggers, and so forth) will probably not be discovered.

### A Royal Audience

Several hours will pass before anything of significance happens. If the players decide to try to escape, give them some hints that this area of the capital (the Royal Palace) is the most heavily guarded on the planet. Any try to escape will almost certainly be discovered.

Eventually, the cell door will swing open, and the players will be escorted away by more guards. These guards are dressed differently than the group who originally captured the Klingons; their uniforms are a bright red, and they behave more arrogantly. They are the Palace Guards.

The players will be escorted to the Hall of Audiences where Essai's ruler, Sai-ume awaits them. Sai-ume is an

arrogant tyrant who is accustomed to giving orders and having them obeyed. He is very clever and is responsible for uniting Essai. Ordinarily, he would not waste his time interrogating prisoners, but the player's peculiar landing on the planet and the ballistic report on the potential of the weapons they were carrying have piqued his interest. Immediately Sai-ume demands that the prisoners hand over the technology responsible.

If the Klingon Captain is playing his part properly, he will realize that he now has something to bargain with. Once Sai-ume realizes that the Klingons are sick of being pushed around and that they won't simply turn over everything they know, he will agree to a truce. Obviously, the players want the warp cruiser and the help necessary to refurbish it, but that is a lot to ask for a handful of weapons. Sai-ume won't even consider such an offer. If the players also offer the theory behind the transporter, then the Essaian ruler will become interested, but Sai-ume wants something more from the Klingons. If the Captain offers the remains of the *K'vinta* and everything aboard her after the Klingons get the Essaian cruiser, Sai-ume will smile broadly and accept—with one other condition.

### The Royal Deal

Sai-ume has been having more difficulty with the rebels than the newscasts have let on. Over the past several months, they have been gaining strength and unity, and Sai-ume believes they are preparing to stage an assault on Ro-Sai in a coup attempt.

Informants in the rebel camp have reported that one man is responsible for this operation. The rebel leader H'Ravhe has been patiently amassing supplies and unifying previously fragmented resistance groups in his campaign against the Essaian ruler. Sai-ume is terrified at what this resistance leader could do.

In exchange for the warp cruiser, Sai-ume wants H'Ravhe. He feels that the Klingons could use their transporter to accomplish the kidnapping.

The Essaian ruler did not get where he is by being trusting (the Klingons should appreciate this). Accordingly, Captain Kordon will take his best officers (i.e. the player-characters) and the rest of the crew will be held as



hostages by Palace Guards even now shuttling to the *K'vinta* command boom. The Captain is advised to tell his crew not to resist or they will all be killed, either by the boarding party or by the orbital missiles now trained on the Klingon craft. Sai-ume holds all the cards at this point and the Klingons would be better off if they agree to the mission.

### Mission Preparation

Very little is known about H'Ravhe. The enigmatic leader is rarely seen, but Sai-ume has a photograph of the man, which he gives to the Klingons. He is located at one of the larger rebel bases in the mountains west of the capital. A general map of the base is provided for the Klingons as they return to the *K'vinta*.

As the players prepare for their mission, one of the Essaian Guards that came aboard the *K'vinta* will approach them, saying he is an emissary from H'Ravhe. The rebel leader has his own spies and wants the players to know he is aware of their mission and wishes to make them a counter-proposal. He is readying his forces to attack the capital and would like the Klingons' help. For this aid he will ensure the safety of the Klingon crew, give everything that Sai-ume offered, plus trade agreements between Essai and the Klingon Empire. Thoughts of the heavy dilithium concentrations in the Barrier would tempt any Klingon. The promotion and prestige of bringing in such a find would be very welcome.

The players must decide to agree to the rebel offer or continue in planning the mission to capture H'Ravhe, now knowing full well that he is expecting them. Whatever the decision the players will have to beam down to the rebel base, either ready for a fight or as allies.

### H'Ravhe's Base

The rebel base is an old military outpost with a landing field and vehicle facilities. It is built into the wall of a cliff and is well protected. Previous attempts to take the position have failed. Sai-ume has been tempted to mass his troops against the base, but is afraid of what the other rebels could do elsewhere as his main force was so occupied.

The Klingons may beam down into any part of the base they wish. They

will be greeted as friends if they have decided to work with the rebels. A plan of action must be decided upon if they are still working for Sai-ume. The Gamemaster (GM) can detail the battle as he sees fit. If the Klingons are successful in locating and capturing H'Ravhe go to the Repair Section.

### Raid on Ro-Sai

If the players decide to side with the rebels a plan to attack the capital will have to be decided upon. The GM will have to be creative in judging combat between the 500 man rebel force to be beamed into the capital (in this instance, Sai-ume's guards aboard the *K'vinta* have been neutralized) and the 750-1000 Palace Guards. For player-character participation, give each a six-man commando team and do battle with 1D10 Essaian Guards. The results of these small battles can be used to determine the success of the coup attempt. If the rebels are successful the Klingons will be given the agreed upon items. If H'Ravhe loses his bid for the control of Essai, the Klingons will have to form contingency plans for either capturing the warp cruiser in all the confusion or withdrawing and reorganizing the rebel forces.

### Repairing the Warp Cruiser

Regardless of the further adventures of the Klingon survivors and which side of the conflict they find themselves on, they must eventually gain access to the Essaian warp cruiser if they ever hope to return home. The cruiser will require several weeks of work before it is ready to depart. It has been mothballed for over 600 standard years so some degradation is expected. This need of repair makes the capture of the ship impractical as they still need Essaian aid to make her operational.

At the Gamemaster's discretion, another twist can be incorporated into the situation. The dilithium converters in the warp engines have long since degenerated. A fresh supply of dilithium crystals will have to be found before the mains can be reactivated. Essai is barren of dilithium and there are no other worlds in the system. The players may think they are right back where they started but someone may remember that industrial crystals were scanned in the barrier. An expedition can be mounted to

