

STAR FORCE RATIONALE: THE SCIENCE FICTION BEHIND THE GAME STAR FORCE

In 2317, a cyborg named Lauren Silverwolf induced the first discontinuity window. Of course, it wasn't intentional. The actual object of the experiment she was conducting was to produce a one-referent navigational system for intra-system gravity sleds. Working on the eight-kilometer-long Deep space Facility beyond the orbit of Pluto, Silverwolf had initiated two independent AID's at opposite ends of the station. The two Artificial Intelligent Devices (as Gnostechs were called before the Sentience Status Act of 2328) were being "urged" to independently generate an identical series of random numbers in the hope that the phase differential relative to each other would indicate their actuality-displacement. As she turned from AID "Happy", trailing encephlinks from her pre-occupied head, she stubbed her foot on "Grumpy's" console. Grumpy was supposed to be eight kilometers away. She took a number of comparative readings from Grump's link, strolled back to Happy, and finished her bunnyburger before she fainted from the realization of what she had done.

After satisfying herself she could re-create the effect at will, she called in the other six people on the station and demonstrated. Each could walk through the two meter circle of pale light and travel eight kilometers in a single step, but only Lauren could induce the effect.

The Solar Government was to expend several trillion Labor Credits before it discovered that... (a) the discontinuity window could not reliably be produced on or near a planetary mass; (b) only 139 people out of 19 billion could produce the effect; (c) they were all women; (d) they were all powerfully telesthetic (i.e., clairvoyant), and mildly telekinetic; (e) a window could only be created between two positions in space that the Telesthetic was "comfortable" in and felt she "knew"; (f) a Gnostech initiated by the using Telesthetic was required; (g) bionic/electronic techniques could be used to amplify and refine the effect, but no pure-machine system could create it; (h) the range of the effect was theoretically unlimited but its accuracy was subject to degradation with the square of the distance.

Fifteen years later, the first Tele-ship, *Argenta Lupa*, induced a window in trans-Plutonian space. It was never heard from again. More trillions and more lives were spent in the process of developing reliable "shift" systems and mapping procedures. The project succeeded in the formation of the first Tele-MEG (Tele-Mapping and Exploration Group) in 2337. The Group's stunning success encouraged the rapid creation of six more such groups. The Tele-Mapping effort consisted of making

relatively slow sweeps through corridors of space and gaining a telesthetic "impression" along the way. The need to psionically impress all Telesthetics with, an overall "map" was great, and the need for instantaneous communication was even greater. Psionic linking techniques and the *Telesthetics founding of the Telesthetic Guild* was the response. It is probably the heavy use of empathetic bridging in these techniques that explains the remarkable fact that no member of the Guild, even while on opposing combat teams, has ever deliberately caused another member's death.) This solidarity of Telesthetics was almost totally responsible for the virtually bloodless conduct of the Intra-Specific Wars of Autonomy in the 25th Century.

2341 saw the success of the first interstellar expedition (to the Alpha Centauri System) which was rapidly followed by the expansion of humankind into what was called the Primary Known Volume. Two developments were largely responsible for the almost wildfire spread of humanity ("The Outleap") into interstellar space in just a few decades: (1) the refinement of talent discovery and selection methods to the point of retrieving roughly one First Order Telesthetic per million females; (2) the "perfection" by Shipmaster Henrik Nordlie and Gnostech ARRON of the Standard Teleship, and the Star Gate (the basic configurations of which have remained unchanged for over 300 years).

In a sense the Outleap itself was responsible for the Wars of Autonomy: it dispersed and enlarged the human community into a multi-system race which was heavily dependent upon one socio-economic factor, one resource that could not be synthesized by technology—the Telesthetics. The number of Telesthetics available to a given system was almost purely a function of how much population was contained within or controlled by that system.

The freedom from birth-controls in the colonized systems did have the desired effects of providing the population basis for "home-grown" Telesthetic crews to operate the Star Gates and the increasing number of Teleship. It also, however, had several counter-productive side effects: (a) The vastly increased and dispersed human population became ungovernable by the institutions of the Solar Hegemony, (b) the "frontier" societies tended to produce divergent eco-political systems that either wanted independence, or worse, attempted to impose their provincial "solutions" on the rest of humanity. All these factors conspired to produce a number of essentially pointless wars.

The one great moderating influence was the Guild resistance to the use of lethal weapons and blood-soaked campaigns. There was to be no return to the 21st Century days of the White War with Conversion bombs and Murder squads. (The added fact that the race had not

fought a blood-war for over 350 years, contributed to the virtually casualty-free nature of the period of upheaval now loosely referred to as the Wars of Autonomy).

The general pattern of these campaigns was set by the first (*the Alpha Centauri Campaign*). The planetary government of Lauren declared itself independent, assembled four Teleships into a Star Force to support its system's Star Gate, and waited for the Solar Hegemony to react. With uncharacteristic alacrity, it did. 17 hours after the declaration, four Solar Star Forces shifted into Centauran space, randomized Star Force "Alpha Centauri", halfway across the volume and neutralized the Star Gate. Having achieved space-superiority, Star Forces "Tigerbane" and "Man-Gold" Tac-Shifted into range of Lauren and used the Heissen Effect to Telesthetically sedate the planetary population centers. Gravity Sleds, in an assault-boat role, landed 120,000 Agents of Public Safety who arrested and de-fanged the local politicians and militia. The former government of Free Lauren awoke in 18 hours to find itself the "rulers" of civil detention rooms and the owners of migraine headaches.

Although the first "War" of Autonomy was something of a comic-opera affair, it did lead to the formation of the Solar Pacification Command (and similar, colonial, planetary assault groups of "Star-Soldiers"). The Alpha Centauri Campaign also proved that the basically civilian Teleship was an effective vessel of war, requiring little modification to play a multi-faceted combat role. Organized into four-ship Star Forces, it could fight for control of local space, besiege and neutralize Star Gates, incapacitate planetary armies, and deliver occupation forces.

The importance of Star Gates as "space-fortresses" was another element brought to light by the first campaign. A Star Force could not assault a planetary system with an unfriendly Gate at its back. A nine kilometer ring of chanplastic, crammed with Telesthetics and Gnostechs intimately familiar with the fabric of local space, can do unpleasant things to a Star Force concentrating on the production of a Heissen field. It was shown to be possible only to neutralize the Star Gate in its trans-system orbit since the actuality-hold of its crew was too great for random-shifting to be induced. The effect of a successful combat cast upon a Gate crew was largely due to the "continuity rebound" that would occur, stunning them into ineffectiveness for as much as 30 hours. The tactical doctrine decreed that no fewer than two Star Forces should attempt to close with a Gate. A gate could hold off a single attacking Star Force indefinitely. When well supported by friendly Star-Forces, a Gate was shown to be virtually impossible to neutralize.

Almost all of the strategy and tactics (and indeed, the primary exploratory and commercial employment) of Teleships and Gates can be said to be inherent in the very nature of the telesthetic discontinuity window effect, the immensity of the spatial volumes, and the psychology of the Telesthetics themselves. Thus, it didn't seem terribly surprising when humanity first encountered the LChal-Dah, and later the Rame, that even non-human cultures used Teleships with almost identical characteristics and in almost identical ways. The Para-human LChal-Dah, a layman could argue, are so close to Solar human profiles that similarity of means and methods is not such a strong proof of the inherency case. The Rame, however, with their multiple, transferring group minds, non-mammalian physiology, and super-bionic technology are about as different as different can be. Yet, the Rame configured and utilized their ships and Gate with only minor deviations from human / Para-human practice.

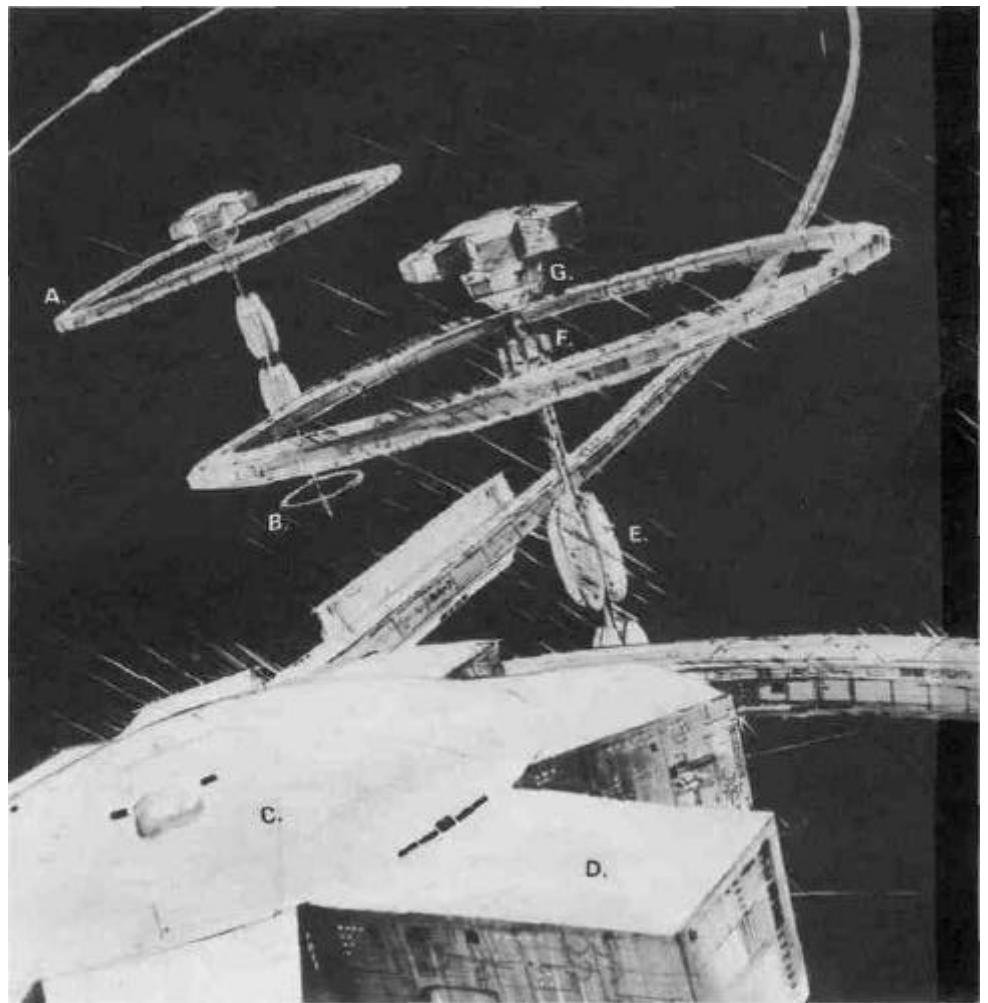
After the First Stellar Peace, and more so after the formation of the Pan Sentient League, the three races found that they could with little difficulty share psionic impressions, use common Data Display visuals, communicate psionically, and mix crews. Humans and LChal-Dah have even been able to initiate Telesymbiosis with Rame psuedo-organic Gnostechs (i.e., *7a Rame*).

The only exception to the general picture of Telesthetic star faring races as relatively temperate, pragmatic, and ultimately co-operative peoples is the Xenophobe Experience. In their manic incursions into Pan Sentient space, planting conversion triggers in stars to murder whole planetary populations, the Xenophobes severely strained the image of the Telesthetic as the pacific influence upon the wilder elements of any race. Seven billion sentients on Triple! were incinerated by induced nova because the crew of their Gate couldn't believe that the unidentifiable Star Force Tac-Shifting towards their sun was capable of such a hideous act.

It was, as they say "a pearl harbor" that mobilized the wrath of 280 billion sentients and sent the Combined Pan Sentient Star Wing to smash the Xenophobes back into their own Volume after the First Incursion. After the *Second* Incursion, the PSL forsook all temporizing and launched the Expedition of Punishment and Retribution into Xenophobe space. Thirty-seven Xeno systems were "purified" of that hateful life-form, using Conversion bombs, focused Heissen fields at lethal intensities, Rame killer swarms, and finally kilometer-by-kilometer extermination sweeps by Human / LChal-Dah Star Soldiers. The Xenophobe home system was reduced to a population of one billion, all of whom were Blanked and gene-washed. The planet was sealed with a standing discontinuity net tied to a conversion trigger orbiting the star.

THE TELESHIP

Length: 1048 meters. Ring diameter: 1224 meters. Mass: 50,402 tons. Telesthetic crew: 104. Service crew: 43. Star Soldier lift capacity: 80,000 in stasis. Maximum safe shift: 5.12 light years. Stellar shift cycle rate: 7.31 hours. Tac-shift cycle rate: 0.15 hours.



A. Primary Shift Ring. **B.** Secondary Shift Ring. **C.** Bridge. Real Flight Maneuver Center, Crew quarters. **D.** Gnostech Module, Mapping and Recovery tanks. **E.** Gravity Sled cluster. **F.** Energy Modulation Pack, Kinetic Drive. **G.** Ship systems control, life-support, and recreation garden.

The Star Gate called "The Lid" was placed in trans-system orbit to monitor the net, maintain the trigger, and to "pull the plug" should the Xenos ever so much as attempt to lift out of the atmosphere again. The Expedition took 1.7 Standard Years to complete at a cost in PSL life of 3.7 million battle deaths, 21 Teleships destroyed, 803 Telesthetics were permanently dysfunctional (Blanked). The Xenophobes lost 127 billion sentients, 98 Teleships destroyed via Telestetically implanted conversion war-heads, 34 Teleships destroyed by Rame Sacrifice Teams, 28 Gates destroyed by Rame Sacrifice Teams, 9 by Human / LChal-Dah Star Soldier assault groups using low-energy approach. Eleven Xenophobe Teleships remain unaccounted for (assumed lost in fragmented randomization).

Total PSL civilian deaths in the First and Second Incursions: 41.315 billion sentients.

Small wonder then, when in 2836 the Star Gate "Vigilance" detected an enormous in-shifting fleet of unidentified Teleships that Reserve Star Wing "Forty-One" was galvanized into aggressive action. 104 PSL Teleships under the command of Wing Toucher Claire LChe-Ral assembled in ambush to prepare the long-practiced Psionic Fist that would Blank every enemy Telesthetic caught in its cast. At Strike minus nine seconds, a warm, open-minded, peaceful thought was received by every PSL Telesthetic in the Wing and in every Star Gate in the Volume. The word equivalent of the thought is roughly: "How good to find companions at last!".

—Redmond A. Simonsen