

## MERCENARY DATAFILE

**RORIAN DEEVERGH**  
**Born: 2670, New Europe**

There is a saying in the poorer areas of New Europe that can be paraphrased as One only needs a plastic spoon to eat and live; One needs a silver spoon in the South for the same reason. To be born on Luyten's capital world is to automatically gain a lofty superiority over the other inhabitants of the system and to know that one is better in every way.



Rorian was born in the Southern Sectors of New Europe to parents who were particularly wealthy, even among their contemporaries. Because he was an only child, as was the custom, he found little time of his own, owing to social pressures that were entirely an invention of the rich. Like many of his generation, he rebelled and turned to a life bordering on the petty criminal, seeking thrills that everyday life seemed unable to provide. By age 16, he was organising elaborate stunts and commanded a small gang of disaffected teenagers. One of those stunts went badly wrong and three people were killed as a result. Not being old enough to execute, he was forcibly drafted into the Maxellamar Ring of Luyten Army where he became part of Five Division.

Despite his profound dislike of authority, Rorian has made a name for himself as a skilled combatant. It is unwise to insult him as he is short on temper and has an almost superhuman dislike of fools. He places nobody above himself but will honour any promises he makes - but only to those he deems worthy. Faults in others are tolerated, but only if they make an effort to put them right,

even if that effort never quite succeeds. To those outside he seems utterly ruthless when a situation like a firefight occurs, then he will apparently ignore the fact that it ever happened. In reality it bothers him greatly; he will brood about it for days afterward but never giving a hint of this to others. They need to be able to see only his strong side.

At last they were ready.

Eleven of them stood in front of Rorian. Four to go for the nukes, four to stand by in case of trouble and the remainder to stay with the Dropship. They formed a loose line and looked at him expectantly. The two robots stood motionless as always, Bonden next to them, restless, not willing to wait even this much. Kiurcher hung at the back not wanting to be seen. Desverger daring anyone not to pick him for the worst of the fighting. Clavius ready to do whatever was asked. Jennilee shying away behind him. Adele looking slightly bemused by the whole situation. Miyriel was just, well, Miyriel. Katrina was expressionless, having slipped back into her cold ruthlessness and of course Cheule, who was looking at him intently as if she should be in charge and leading them to another planet entirely.

Just four should be necessary. said Rorian. He rubbed his hands together and unshouldered his rifle.

So , he continued, who s it gonna be...?



**JENILLEE**  
**Born 2685, Tesseract**

Jenillee had a love affair early on in her life. Jase was the classic example of a childhood sweetheart that lasted into teenage years. Perhaps it was too early in her life. Never having known anything other than happiness with Jase, nothing could have prepared her for his disappearance. He was suspected of being abducted for forcible drafting into the military; a process on Tesseract that was by no means unheard of. It left a gaping hole in her life and, naively, she joined the army herself in a hope of finding him. Somehow.

Needless to say, there were no quick results. Her job in the medical team in Five Division seemed easy enough. She enjoyed caring for the few injured and working with people. Since she came into contact with people from all the divisions and all ranks and she was able to befriend some who could help her. Computer searches and lookouts took place. There were still no results but she never gave up on her dream.

Never gave up, that is, until the start of hostilities on Tharagrene where

Five Division were relocated. The horrors she saw there aged her more than any space travel and she became bitterly cynical. But the worst was yet to happen. Jase was brought in with a batch of wounded under a different name. She was unable to do anything for him, his wounds were so severe. He died by her side without ever saying a word and seemingly unaware of who he was; still less who she was. The escape from Tharagrene happened that night with her among them, helping to steal a shuttle. Before this, she would never have contemplated what amounted to treachery. Now it seemed there was no other choice.

These days Jenillee can often be found staring out of a viewport or watching the horizon. On duty, she reverts to the dedicated professional person she used to be. But when her task is done she returns to stare out of her viewport - alone. What she thinks about, no one can say.





The automatic pilot indicated its willingness to be taken over. Clavius now took control and the noise subsided slightly.

Timed message release active. intoned Cim. The robot waited patiently for instructions.

Scan and give us the highlights. said Rorian.

Accepted. Target elimination. Details follow. 10 Megs of off line data. Editing. Illegal government weapons research. Bio-engineering sites. Key installations. Retrieve backpack nukes from marked sites. Detonate at designated points. Digital terrain map supplied - Guild VII compatible. Estimated mission time 13 days plus 4 hours. Secondary objective - reconnaissance. Rendezvous Platinum Heart, co-ordinates given. Compositing mission profile from drop zone onwards.

Is that it? shouted Bonden sarcastically, Merely waste half the planet?

Too intense for you, youngster? said Desverger.

What the hell have you got us into this time?

Enough of that. Take the cash and don't ask questions. That's how it's done. replied Rorian.

Yeah, easy... said Cheule quietly, her mood becoming sombre. The vibration of the flight was making her armour plate rub uncomfortably against her neck. What made the flight worse was the absence of any form of window in the hold. She couldn't see anything unless she turned her head to the extreme left where a small patch of the windshield was visible between Clavius and Rorian. And that held only the grey of the sky.

Five minutes to zone.

Nothing on passives. We're in the radar shadow of the mountain. We'll emerge into the main beam in a half minute.

Ok. Clavius. Contour following within the next thirty seconds.

Confirmed. The ship fell to within twenty metres of the ground and kept that distance. Speed was still greater than mach 1. What's local speed of sound?

Low. 550 metres per second.

Although he will accept reasonable orders from any member of the team, it is not generally realised that everybody's instructions carry a certain weight. Rorian, of course, has top priority in this regard and can override anyone else. The MC Series are modular in construction, enabling limbs and major components to be replaced without fuss. This was how the reprogramming was accomplished initially. The mission parameter datacard was swapped with a new one. This, of course, directed loyalties to Rorian.

He pulled out the card that was already installed to show everybody and then placed it back. Activating the amp started a glow of light in front of him. There were a few gasps from those who were less familiar with holograms. A pattern began to form in the centre of the glow.

As you can see, a picture is being created of the location about - 100? 150? - about one hundred metres in front of me even with walls in the way. Is that a storage bay? Yes. I believe it is. Different cards produce different effects.

The group were looking at him in amazement. No one spoke. Cheule smiled warmly at him. So encouraged, he continued.

Radioisotope power source so it won't run out. Some effects give information, some cause destruction. And so on. I have no idea how they got hold of so many. Oh yes. No user serviceable parts inside so don't try opening them. He grinned.

The forward observation lounge was in darkness, save for a smattering of glowing green indicators, the red of a scrolling message screen and of course the faint light from the stars

themselves. The soft glow of the edge of the Galaxy was visible as a band of diffuse light across the view. One of the points of light was brighter than the rest. Schematics unfolded and folded across the window, superimposed on the scene. Cheule sat quietly in one of the lounge seats, contemplating the view. She knew she would have been pleased to discover - through deduction - that the bright star was in fact Yalhoth and the smaller point of light just next to it was Graveyard - their destination. The schematics robbed her even of this pleasure. Letters on the window flashed and indicated Yalhoth with a green box, a catalogue number and the name itself. She hated it for that.

Behind her the lounge doors opened with the soft hiss of pneumatics. Yellow light streamed in, taking on a red hue through her night vision. The metal-on-plastic clump of a robot echoed a few times and then stopped. The whine of motors was too pronounced and deep for it to be Miyriel. The crew was too scared of Cim-Lite for it to be allowed to wander the ship unchecked. There was only one droid one it could be.

Miss Siygeess it said.

Yet, it wasn't so much the team adopting her as the other way round. Rorian accepts that she is with them only because they will further her cause, whatever that might be. He knows also that her smile conceals a lot of hurt - of what, he is at a loss to say. The team mostly regards her with awe. Earth to them is an almost mythical place. Strange tales, often contradictory, get told about Earth, often about terrifying things, and someone from there could clear up a lot of fables. Anybody could claim to be from Earth of course, but no-one doubts that in her case it's true - if only for that terrible haunted look in her eyes when the subject arises.



Get the rest up here, now, he said, Then it s Bay Twelve in fifteen minutes.

He went as abruptly as he had entered.

The Bay Twelve door opened to reveal what at first appeared to be a thin corridor, circular in cross section. As they entered, it revealed a vast cavern seen through the transparent walls of the corridor which formed a tube connecting to a shape that was partially concealed. Only a half dozen or so spotlights highlighted a warning symbol, a giant exhaust, a registry number and finally a name. The Platinum Heart. To either side was what appeared to be a metal valley, the basis of a docking and construction bay in which floated the massive spacecraft. Desverger barged his way past everybody in the confines of the boarding tube, got to the top first and bowed mockingly, swirling his cloak simultaneously. He entered the craft and was swallowed up by the darkness.

The interior was a dull grey; a characteristic of all ex-military vessels. A stocky man waited inside the entrance way and greeted them each by name, which Cheule found

disconcerting. He in turn introduced himself as Moeller. Once for each of them.

Friends, said Moeller when they were all gathered. Though I regret I cannot tell you the nature of this - er - job I wish performed, you will be given full details closer to the time. Naturally the payment will not be processed through any banking system and will be delivered in Rare Earth Elements, or should you wish, Platinum. A poetic touch, no? A percentage will be distributed in a moment, more upon leaving for Graveyard and, of course, the bulk of it upon your return. We will be leaving orbit in a little over six hours. Please feel free to make yourselves comfortable. He bowed rather unconvincingly and left.

The assembled team began to talk amongst themselves but Cheule decided to follow Moeller s example and leave to find more of the ship. Rorian caught her before she made it to the door.

What s bothering you? he asked.

You promised! she said bitterly. It seemed to take him a while to realise what she was referring to.

Those days are long in the past now and he has had many adventures in his time. With his incorporation into the team, he has at least gained a pretence of a purpose. From some difficult conversations with Cheule, he now harbours a wish to learn more about Earth and intends visiting there someday. This will take many years of his life but he suspects that his creators did not set a limit to cell replication; in effect he will not age. He often relates some tales of his own to the rest of the group when there is time to be spent and has proved to be an enthralling and captivating narrator.



there as if everything he did was either so obvious it was beyond questioning or didn't need explaining at all. He obviously hadn't planned on justifying himself.

So who's the patron? she continued.

He shrugged.

Where's the meeting then. Where do we go?

Sorry, Cheule. It's a one on one meeting.

I can't, we can't just let you go by yourself.

She tried to pretend that it was only a legitimate concern for the leader. Even pretending that it was simply because only he had clearance for the ship and they would be stuck otherwise seemed false. A terrible image of holding his severed eye up to the retinal scanner to gain access to the ship sprang into her mind.

Just a single person, Cheule.

If anything happens... She remained emphatic.

Stay here. That's the plan. That's always been the plan. Anything

happens and I walk straight into it. Only me. Get it?

Boss man's right, lover chipped in Desverger, twirling his pistol. She ignored him as best she could.

Freewill's dangerous. We've never been hired from -

Stay here! he shouted. She held eye contact for as many seconds as she could before he finally snorted in disbelief and stormed through the door.

The quality of the image from Rorian's subcutaneously implanted camera was shaky and monochrome but it worked fairly well. The pictures were relayed to the terminal that he left with them. In the left of the screen, Desverger could be seen clambering into a ventilation duct. A large door occupied the middle of the screen with Cheule's concerned face reflected on it. Adele and Bonden entered from outside the lounge. Bonden bounded over to watch with them. Adele looked serious and flicked back her wet hair.

Good swim, I trust said Clavius with a trace of a smile.

Good enough. Never realised a zero-



despises him as he reminds her so much of what she used to be. Her memory of life before the service is almost non-existent and she isn't even sure whether Katrina is in fact her real name. No documents can be found which can tell her for sure and of course all computer records show a blank.





Be here now.

Crashing noises erupted from the machine. A voice clearly said Game Over. He picked a coin from the box and pressed it into the slot. The game started again. Rorian stared. Desverger glanced momentarily and caught the look.

Credit card trouble to fake.

We'll just have to catch them at the second rendezvous point in the Inner Belt.

Unlikely to be case, said Desverger not looking up from the game. One: Pilot, Morton, his own ship. No loyalty to group. No kindred sense.

What do you mean? Asked Rorian.

First better prospect, takes it. Not see him again.

He's got a few long standing things to sort out, that's all. Desverger ignored the comment.

Two: Wife. Ah, curse it! The arcade ship exploded in a fireball. He used another coin.

Surprised, Rorian? he continued. Jenelle, Morton very close. Intent was marriage. She'll support any

decision he make.

This is pointless. Rorian said and made to return to the bar area.

Three: Desverger said raising his rasping voice. The Twins. Emotionally bonded like all twins. One dead. Other emotionally crippled as result. Neither any more use.

Despite himself, Rorian continued to listen though he didn't face Desverger directly.

In effect, lost quarter of team. Good thing.

Good?! Rorian shouted, They're valuable members!

Team too large. Too unwieldy. Graveyard mission; real reason to get new hardware. They're gone, taking ship with them. That's so.

No. That's not it at all. Something delayed them and this is just a normal mission.

You speak from knowledge? No. Voice betrays you. Always your trouble. Can't read the signs. Graveyard bad news.

Money is never bad news. You see signs where there aren't any.

She is realistic enough to realise that revenge is a futile pursuit. She has no idea who could have ordered her assassination and the assassin himself is dead by her own hand. The security equipment was the culmination of her life's work so she has resigned herself to seeking out all the pleasures that life has to offer - anything else would be a waste of time and effort and would only bring hurt.

COUNTDOWN TO GRAVEYARD

Six hundred and thirty thousand million kilograms of metal, plastic and ceramics hung like a baleful star in the greying skies of New Europe. There were several of these objects in orbit around the capital planet, but Freewill was the first, built in an age when the frontier still meant something. Now the scant resources went elsewhere and the Orbital stagnated as living on planetary surfaces became fashionable once again. As with every property left to itself for a time, squatters moved in. Freewill became self-governing in all but name.

Cheule stared for a long time through a view port down at the planet and saw the same land mass that she had seen yesterday and the day before that and the day before that. It was a Single Star Hotel sort of view; all that starscape and there was a planet in the way. The Anysije might not have been the greatest place in the system, she thought, but at least it wasn't in a synchronous orbit. You could watch the planet spin beneath you. The drink was cheaper, too. Perhaps she could persuade Rorian to buy her one.

He was sitting with his terminal working, as ever, across in the lounge, with Clavius watching the screen and nodding from time to time. He obviously wished he was somewhere else. She knew how he felt. Freewill was a strange choice for R&R, but given their wanted status, it was a sensible one.

The lounge was nearly deserted apart from themselves. Desverger provided the main source of noise with an arcade machine and neglected air scrubbers gave the room a characteristic dank smell. It was late in the artificial night and the lounge had been switched to automatic. Above the entrance hung a large, jaunty sign which flickered: Your Fun is About to Go Nova! Not for her. She waved her hand in a certain way and a few seconds later a dispensing robot wheeled across. She slotted in a coin and was handed a cola.

Rorian... she said softly.

C mon then he replied without looking up. He pulled out a chair and she accepted it.

What s the situation?

See for yourself he sighed, Dark Matter s going to be in dock for a

BONDEN SPEY Born: 2690, Starscape

Bonden was born and brought up on one of the asteroidal colonies in the Inner Belt called, rather whimsically, Starscape. Because it was such a closed society, mystical and religious thinking formed a large part of his childhood and shaped his attitude. He takes things less than seriously, searching for adventure and high times without reckoning on the gritty nature of reality. He is often unable to appreciate the consequences of his actions and has the old fashioned belief that there is glory to be had in fighting for a noble cause. Noble causes are difficult to find.

Bonden is the only person in the team to have actually been to Graveyard before. He essentially did this as a bet. His friends said he couldn't manage without equipment or resources in addition to his own natural resourcefulness. He tried it because it was great fun to outwit the authorities. It was an interesting experience and not at all what he expected. He got caught up in the subtleties of the Duone religion. He retains sympathy for the Duone s willingness to pursue their own

beliefs in the face of technology and is fascinated by the fact that technology is an almost integral part of their religion. Out of all the group, he retains the most hope and optimism for the future.





## HIRED GUNS

Foolishly, when investigating the weapon truck, they had taken no account of built in surveillance systems. Only they know the truth about the massacre. The authorities, in turn, know know of their existence. That knowledge made the team led by Rorian and Desverger possibly the most wanted people in the system.

The first difficult they faced after witnessing the massacre, was to return to Luyten. This took many different turns and, in the course of that journey, they were joined by a further eight people - some they can even call friends - some don't even live up to that. Nevertheless, all of them have useful skills. The war effectively ended with the detonation of the warhead though pockets of resistance continued to fight well into the next decade. But the October 14th Incident, as it became known, was accepted as the official end of the War. Lacaille was very much the loser. And as news filtered its slow way across the light years, the War became little more than a collection of facts in history books, even before Rorian arrived back home.

NOW IT IS 2712.

## KIURCHER

Born: 2663, Tesseract

Kiurcher was born in a military base on Tesseract where such a thing was frowned upon. Since shipping him and his parents out of the base would have cost money and compromised security it was determined that he be raised to be uniquely skilled in a particular military trade. He wasn't much good at those trades but was gifted in mathematics and coupled with a business sense he was placed in charge of funding at the age of 16. By 18 he had embezzled huge amounts of cash and began his flight from job to job until his past caught up with him. Eventually he turned to crime full time.

Kiurcher doesn't display any emotions and any that he does have are limited in intensity and restricted to the entire negative range. He does this intentionally in order to play his cards as close to his chest as he can manage. Little is known of his past and he gives nothing away. This is perhaps fortunate, because if he told everything he knew, then a lot of people would find themselves in serious trouble of the kind that

usually ends in a verdict of death by misadventure.

He has no regrets about his life and tries to indulge in excess whenever possible. Since joining the team he has become more pensive and paranoid. He tries to find out as much about the next job as possible in order to assure himself that he won't be in any danger. Kiurcher is egocentric and wishes to follow up any possibility of extending his natural lifespan.



## HOW TO WAGE INTERSTELLAR WAR

Earth would certainly have gone to war with Luyten in the past, had it not been for the dozen light years that separated the two sides. It is however possible for a spacecraft to take on entire planets merely because gravity is on their side. Lasers and particle weapons aside, an attacking craft will find the most potent force for destruction is the redirection of asteroids so that they collide with the target planet; a simple and inexpensive tactic.

War was imminent and so reinforcements began to arrive from Luyten in a rota system. A tour of duty for a spacecraft was typically ten years real time. Upon return to Luyten, the warships were upgraded with the results of a further decade of research and development.

It was the Maxellamar Ring of Luyten that declared a state of war. Predictably, there was hardly any audible reaction from the civilian population - the policy of forcible draft for the war effort saw to that.

Two draftees were Rorian Deevergh and Desverger. The warship that took them to Tharagrene was part of a

Stellar Booster - a drive system that took the craft to near lightspeed. Smaller craft detached from the command vessel at the journey's end where other craft were then attached for the return trip. The forces of which Rorian and Desverger were a part were therefore effectively stranded until the arrival of the next Stellar Booster which, at that stage in the War, happened around every six months. By 2697, the War had gained momentum.

Rorian and Desverger were ground troops for the Federal Forces of Maxellamar. They had served for a number of years in Five Division as punishment for past offences and had, after a while, developed a grudging respect for each other. When it was decided that more forces should be mobilised, Five Division was designated to begin the five year journey to Lacaille. Very few people would have been willing to face the prospect but troops, of course, had no choice, especially if they were members of five division.

Time dilation from speeds close to light made the trip seem shorter for the passengers on this trip and thus more bearable and once the tortuous journey had been made, the decision

## CIM-LITE (PIRATE COPY) Built: 2710, Freewill

CIM-Lite comes under the designation Enhanced Survivability Unit. The CIM-Lite robots are more intelligent than the usual combat oriented military types. This design is dictated by the primary and to a lesser extent, secondary mission profiles. The primary mission type is essentially the same as all other combat robots which is troop support. The main difference is that a CIM-Lite model may take command of up to 16 other robot types. This is not merely giving orders to the other robots which are then carried out. It connects to them via radio link so closely that they become extensions of the CIM-Lite; effectively they become extra limbs. Sixteen robots acting in unison are vastly more effective than sixteen independent units. To exercise this direct control, it needs greater than normal intelligence. CIM-Lite possesses a personality as a consequence of the needs of a greater intelligence. Even so, it is a cold and calculating one with distinctly polarised morality. CIM-Lite's world has no shades of grey but only the black and white of the

bad guys and the good guys.

Problems used to occur with this model where civilians were concerned. The chassis is a lightweight one designed for agility and speed, sacrificing armour and firepower. Aesthetically, the model is designed on psychological principles to induce a degree of fear in the enemy. Tactical ability is far higher and Cim-Lites have a high degree of autonomy in the absence of superior officers or orders.







