

DRAGONSTAR™

STARFARER'S HANDBOOK

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GREG'S DEDICATION

To my moms, who gave me the world and taught me to dream of the stars.

MATT'S DEDICATION

To George Lucas and Dave Arneson & E. Gary Gygax for firing my generation's imagination.

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INTRODUCTION

Fantasy Flight Games is pleased to present **Dragonstar**, a unique space fantasy campaign setting for use with the d20 System. This book, the *Starfarer's Handbook*, is the first of two volumes that together define the core rules and setting of **Dragonstar**.

The *Starfarer's Handbook* provides all the rules you need to play in the **Dragonstar** universe, including new character classes, skills and feats, rules for firearms combat, new equipment and spells, and much more. The *Galaxy Guide* presents a wealth of setting information and background material to help DM's bring the adventure of **Dragonstar** to life in the players' imaginations.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The *Starfarer's Handbook* is a tool for both players and DMs. It is designed as a supplement to the d20 System core rules. This book builds and expands upon those rules, and the more familiar and comfortable you are with them, the more useful this book will be. This book should be used as a companion to the core rules and not a standalone game.

THE OPEN GAME LICENSE

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WELCOME TO DRAGONSTAR

So there I was, recruit: John Caspian, prince to a deposed and murdered king, working to someday exact my revenge on those who had betrayed my father and stolen my birthright. I wandered far and wide across my world, learning what I could as I went, making friends and gathering my power for an eventual assault to retake my homeland.

As a prince in exile, little better than a landless thief, I determined to make both my living and my name with the edge of my blade. I fought for money, for honor—even for love. Time after time, I vanquished those who dared to stand before me. Evil men, orcs, unnamable beasts—my friends and I defeated them all and many more threats besides.

In little time, bards were composing songs of our amazing exploits. As our legend grew, brave soldiers from my father's kingdom flocked to my side, swearing fealty to my name and my cause: the liberation of my homeland from the evil that had consumed it. I knew I wasn't ready then to confront the darkness that shrouded my ancestral lands, but I was confident that someday the time would come. In my heart, I didn't think it would have to wait long.

I had no idea how wrong I was.

SAILORS FROM THE SEA OF STARS

I remember exactly where I was when I first heard of the offworlders. That's funny: Throughout the early part of my life, I didn't think of my world as *a world*—I thought of it as *the world*. The only things that came from beyond were outsiders, and I always thought of them as legends. Even in my time as an adventurer and sellsword, I rarely traveled more than a few hundred miles from my homeland.

In those days, I thought I was pretty cosmopolitan, and I suppose that was true compared to most of my people. Leaving the land of my birth, I wandered and explored, learning new tongues, eating foods with previously unimaginable tastes and smells, and meeting people and creatures both wonderful and strange.

I was coming out of a tavern in Verilus, the largest city on the planet, as I was to later learn. As the seat of the Taravan Empire, this wasn't much of a surprise, but back in those days I hadn't even heard of terms like

“demographics” or “population density,” much less given the issue any thought. To me, Verilus was just *big*. Since then, of course, I've seen places that make Verilus—the height of civilization on my homeworld—seem like the back-end of the galaxy. And to most people in the Empire, I suppose that's true.

But when that first starship came hurtling down out of the midnight sky, I thought it was the end of the world.

And in a way, it was.

That great, steely, blood-hued beast came screaming down into the night above Verilus like some ancient dragon hell-bent on destroying the entire city. But this dragon didn't unleash blasts of fire from its belly. The bombs and missiles it rained on the city were almost invisible until they immolated their targets below, and the beams of brilliant light the beast spat forth looked unlike anything I'd ever seen. For long minutes, I simply stood and watched as explosions lit up the horizon. My mind simply couldn't grasp—couldn't categorize—what I was seeing.

The attack was as destructive as it was unprovoked. Within minutes, half of the city had been flattened and the rest was ablaze. The survivors panicked, trampling each other into the dirt in a desperate effort to escape the assault from above.

Only the Imperial Palace escaped the bombs unscathed.

This probably would have seemed strange at the time, but most people were too busy running for their lives to care. While I was gathering my friends about me in an attempt to find some safe way out of the carnage, my friend Günter stopped dead in his tracks and, with a hoarse shout, pointed a stubby finger up into the sky. Looking up, I saw Sir Dench—the captain of the Emperor's Guard—leading a full flight of his Sky Legion into the smoky night, the beating wings of their glorious steeds underlit by the flares of the explosions in the city below.

As we watched, lances of light speared out from the starship overhead. One by one, the pegasi tumbled from the hellish heavens, tossing their riders to their deaths as they went. Before long, only Sir Dench himself was left.

The greatest knight of the realm brought his fantastic steed Albion about, gave the beast his heels, and charged directly at the flying craft of scarlet steel. I thought for sure that he would be lanced out of the air, like an arrow through a mallard's heart. But instead, a beam reached out from the front of the ship, ensnaring both pegasus and rider like flies in some glittering, airy amber.

We could see Albion struggling valiantly, beating his wings like a hummingbird as he and his master were drawn inextricably into the ship's brightly lit maw. With all the destruction around us—the city filled with both flames and the screams of the doomed and the dying—

The contents of this chapter are designated as closed content.



it seemed as if the gods had decided to take Sir Dench and his mighty steed to sit beside them in their mythic home.

Looking back now, that seems so foolish, so parochial, but at the time it was the only way I could make sense of what I was seeing. I didn't have any other frame of reference. None of us did. We weren't stupid—just far more ignorant than we could have guessed.

We were in for the education of a lifetime.

THE TRANSFER OF POWER

I found out later why the invaders—who had all but destroyed Verilus—left the Imperial Palace unscathed. The creatures behind this terrifying show of force had done this kind of thing before. Ours was not the first population to be cowed in such a manner.

The invaders had learned something in the course of their many battles. If you wanted a leader to surrender his nation to you, then you needed to leave the leader alive. There are a lot of caveats to that rule, of course. In our case, Emperor Kendrick wasn't willing to capitulate so easily to anyone, fantastic weapons or not. When he first met with the invaders, he told them exactly that.

They shot him dead on the spot.

While the emperor's body was still cooling, the leader

of the invaders—a cold-hearted creature by the name of Captain Malizrek—was already demanding to see the next person in the line of succession. This was, of course, Princess Kendra.

Without so much as a “Congratulations, Empress,” Malizrek pointed his weapon at young Kendra and demanded the immediate and unconditional surrender of her empire. The startled young woman, standing there with her father's still-warm corpse at her feet, did what she thought she must. She bent her knee to the grinning bastard and gave him the empire.

Meanwhile, the rest of the people of Verilus—oblivious to the transfer of power that had just taken place—were busy digging themselves out from under the rubble, giving aid to the wounded and the dying, and struggling to put out the fires that raged through the streets.

It wasn't until the next day that we learned what had happened. While some cursed Kendra's name as a coward for not standing up to the invaders, I only had to look around at the ruins of that once-proud city to realize that she'd done the only thing she could. Anyhow, I was too busy lighting candles to curse the darkness. There'd be plenty of time for that later.

The next night and all throughout the rest of the week, we saw the first of the other ships—flying starcraft, many like the one that had destroyed Verilus the night



before—flitting back and forth between our shattered city and parts unknown. There were apparently dozens of them. We had no idea what they were doing, but it chilled my soul to think that there were so many. If one had been able to conquer Verilus—the seat of the empire—so quickly, what kind of damage could a fleet of these ships do?

A lot, as it turned out. Eventually, reports began to filter in from the outlying regions and beyond. It soon became clear that these visitors had attacked every major city on the continent. We discovered that the entire planet had quickly been ground under the collective booted heel of the invaders. As proud as our people had been, we had been able to offer little resistance against such weaponry as the invaders brought to bear.

MEET THE NEW BOSS

It was three days before I got my first glimpse of the invaders: great monstrous, manlike machines that strolled through the city like they owned it. Later, I'd learn that these so-called golems were in fact soldiers equipped with high-tech armor that put our finest suits of field plate to shame. It was a week before we first saw any of the invaders in person, if you can call it that.

The invaders mounted a huge, black sheet—it was several stories high and dark as night—atop the front gates of the Imperial Palace and set up a stage below it, framed by two sets of large boxes, one to each side.

Word went out that a speech was to be given by the invaders at noon on Tenday. Just about everyone who wasn't laid up in a bed somewhere gathered in the great square in front of the palace to listen and learn. People started showing up at daybreak, and by noon, a throng had filled the square.

A hush fell across the crowd as now-Empress Kendra stepped on to the stage. Amazingly, her massive image towered above us on the screen behind her, standing several times her height. At the time, we all thought this was magic most powerful. That seems laughable now, but no one found it funny then.

The empress stepped up to the edge of the stage and cleared her throat. Amplified by some unknown trickery, her simple cough was loud as a dragon's roar, yet packed with fear. The crowd pulled back, and for a moment it looked like the battered survivors of Verilus would flee, trampling over each other to leave the city behind.

But a look at the empress's face, at the tears welling in her eyes, told us all one thing. While this magic might be unfamiliar to us, the humanity in the empress's eyes, the pain we could see there, was as real as anything we'd ever seen. That quelled our own fears and put an end to any thoughts of a stampede.