

TOMMI SALMINEN

GROOMBRIDGE LOG



Based on the universe of
STAR CONTROL
by Fred Ford and Paul Reiche III

Groombridge Log

THE UR-QUAN MASTERS SERIES

Groombridge Log
Eternal Doctrine

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Tommi Salminen

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By Fred Ford and Paul Reiche III

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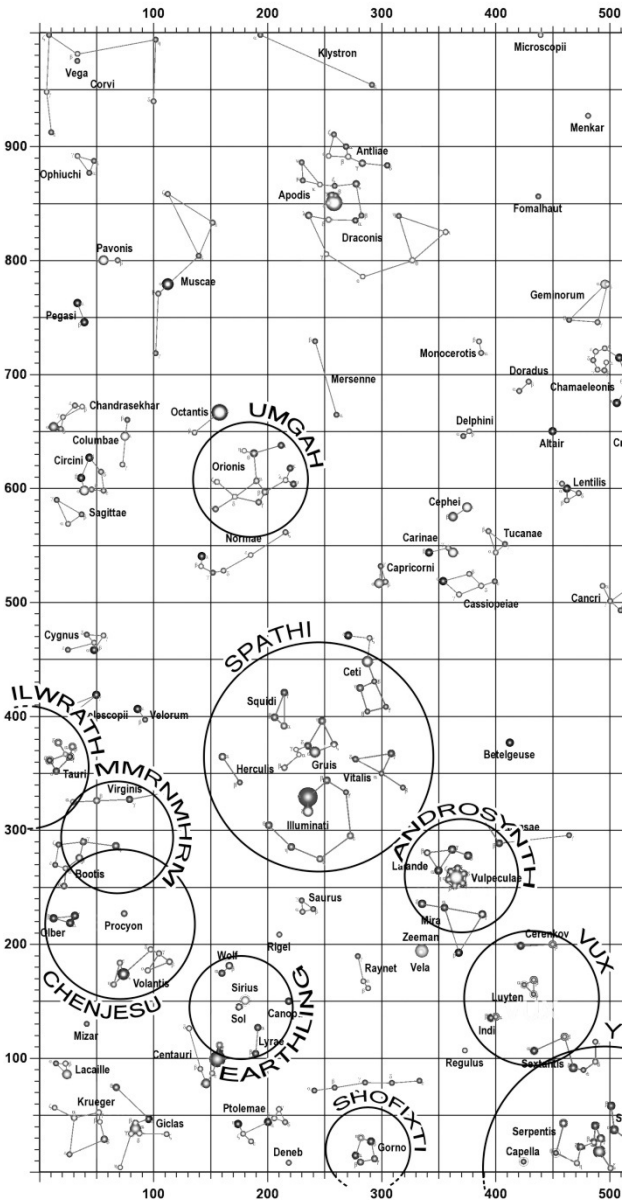
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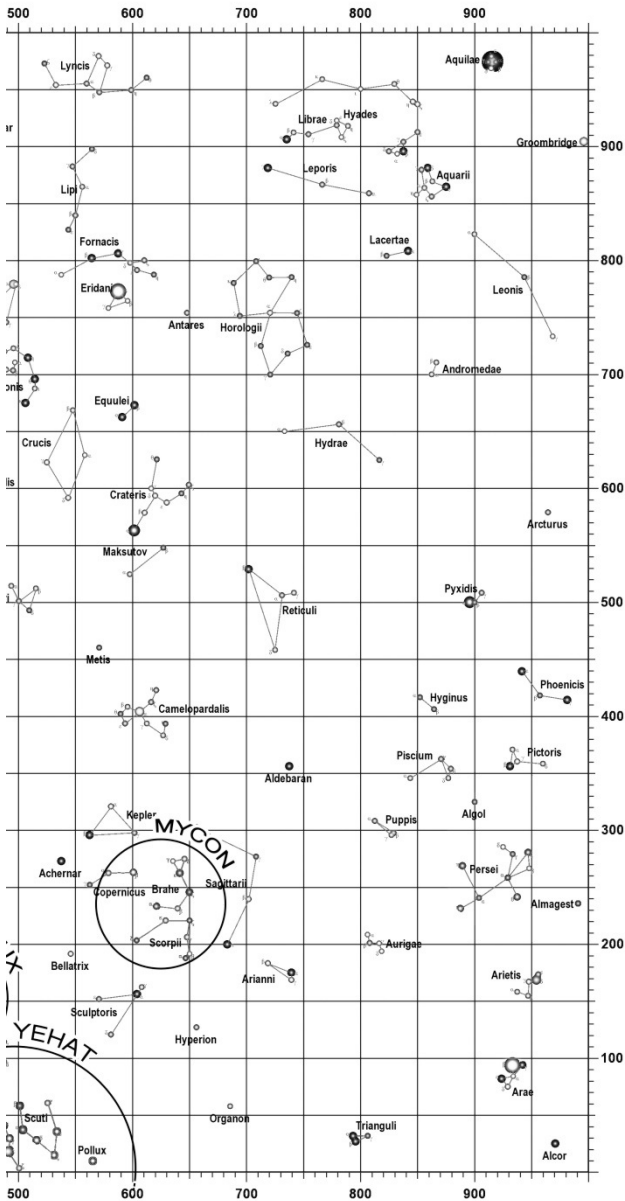
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The map on the previous pages details the spatial relationship between the stars in our known region of the galaxy, as well as the spheres of influence for each alien race as of AD 2133. The positions are based on hyperspace coordinates, which may be unsettling to some students of true space astronomy. Defined long ago by Chenjesu stargazers, the constellations are now accepted by all Alliance races as the standard.

Due to the great difficulty in pronouncing the Chenjesu language, each race has translated the names into their own tongue. When it came time for Earth to adopt this system, the United Nations decided to use traditional astrological designations, assigned at random. This has caused some confusion, but it is considered preferable to the suggested alternative: using the names of past politicians.

PROLOGUE

Neutron chain reaction, the basic principle of atomic bombs, was discovered in the 1930s. In 1939, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada started the Manhattan Project with the sole purpose of creating the first nuclear weapon. It was dropped onto the city of Hiroshima in Japan on August 6th 1945. Three days later a second bomb was used against Nagasaki. Over a hundred thousand were killed.

In the following decades humanity was on the edge of destroying itself in an all-out nuclear war. Lack of mutual trust prevented the United States and the Soviet Union from coming to an agreement on limiting nuclear weapons. The whole world was waiting for either side to make the first strike, but in the end, neither of them did. Eventually the cold war ended and the immediate threat for planet-wide destruction started to fade away, but the vast number of nuclear weapons remained.

In 2015 nuclear combat broke out between several Middle Eastern countries. Fortunately, only a dozen warheads were launched and global disaster was narrowly avoided. Still, almost a million died.

The incident forced governments around the world to sober up. The United Nations General Assembly decided unanimously to strengthen the authority of the U.N. immediately. Within six months, the U.N. had assumed control over all weapons of mass destruction. They were dismantled and their components stored in huge subterranean bunkers, later known as “Peace Vaults”, where they remained for a hundred years.

The era of large-scale wars had come to an end and humanity continued to make breakthroughs in science. In 2019 a Swiss scientist, Hsien Ho, perfected the artificial parthenogenesis – cloning – of humans. Although the clones were, to all external appearances, human, Hsien Ho modified their genes so that they were incapable of producing offspring.

The clones faced a tough world. Major religions were against cloning and fought to have the clones declared sub-human, in which they eventually succeeded. The clones, now called the Androsynth, were stripped of their human rights. As the years passed, they became little better than well-treated slaves.

By the middle of the 21st century, colonization of the solar system had begun. First there were orbital factories and lunar bases, then a colony on Mars and, not long after, outposts in the asteroid belt. But still, because of the great distances and relatively slow speed at which spacecraft could travel, humanity was imprisoned in its own solar system. A great effort was made on technology for warping to distant stars faster than the speed of light.

Because the Androsynth were stronger, smarter and more adaptable than normal humans, many of them were doing sophisticated research, but with little autonomy. The inevitable happened in the spring of 2085. The tens of thousands of Androsynth across the planet staged a world-wide rebellion with help from a sympathetic human underground.

The uprising had been carefully planned. Within 24 hours the clones had seized control of nearly every space-flight facility on the planet. The Androsynth working at the facilities had secretly prepared over a thousand spacecraft and only two days after the rebellion had begun, the clones had taken over almost all of the orbital and lunar bases. Soon

there wasn't a single Androsynth left on the face of the Earth.

Star Control, the recently established wing of the United Nations' military forces, tried to suppress the revolt. But every time their ships approached, the Androsynth burned them to ashes with colossal maser-weapons which they had fashioned out of formerly harmless energy broadcast units.

After two months the U.N. decided to open the Peace Vaults. But before the weapons of mass destruction were reassembled, Star Control patrol ships reported an amazing sight: Eight of the largest space stations were accelerating out of Earth's orbit. The Androsynth had somehow managed to modify the stations* for flight.

Star Control chase ships couldn't keep up with the space stations, but an ore freighter on its way home from the titanium mines on the asteroid belt was able to catch a glimpse of the escaping fleet during an important moment. According to the pilot's testimony, a "great red hole" appeared in front of the space stations. They flew into it one by one and vanished. Only seconds after the last one had entered, the hole disappeared. It took over 30 years for humans to meet the Androsynth again.

In 2112 the most distant human space installation was built on the dwarf planet Ceres. Three years later the base received unexpected publicity when it became the setting for humanity's first contact with extra-terrestrial intelligence: An alien ship had suddenly appeared out of nowhere, positioned itself three kilometers above the base and begun broadcasting the following message:

People from Earth: We are the Chenjesu. We mean you no harm. We come in peace with an urgent message. Heed

* including the recently finished Starlight Hilton

these words: There is a horde of conquering warriors advancing toward your solar system from deep space. They are called the Ur-Quan. They know you are here. They will make slaves of you as they have made slaves of a thousand races across the galaxy. They will enslave both our species, Chenjesu and Human, unless we stop them now. We are not alone in our struggle. There are others who will fight with us against the Ur-Quan. Together – in an alliance with the remaining free stars – we may yet turn back the enemy, defeating the Ur-Quan and its Hierarchy of battle thralls. We beseech you to join us, for we desperately need your help. But we do not have much time. What is your answer?

For over a week the only answer from Earth was stunned silence, but the Chenjesu representatives were patient. They understood the great psychological shock their sudden appearance had on the humans – a race that amazingly had never been in contact with another intelligent species.

The crystalline silicon-based Chenjesu soon became familiar to all humans. For several months they conferred with political, military and scientific leaders of Earth. Meanwhile, the Chenjesu starship transported U.N. observers to visit several worlds that had been attacked by the Ur-Quan.

One of the most amazing things about the Chenjesu's unprecedented biology was their natural means of communication. Their bodies were able to send extremely powerful hyper-wave signals that could reach across solar systems. As a gesture of good will, and to ease inter-species communication, they gave humans technological means to artificially produce hyper-wave signals, although no artificial transmitter could match the Chenjesu's natural abilities.

Amidst all the confusion, life continued on Earth. The Ice Cream King, Britain's largest ice cream manufacturer, was

about to introduce a new product. It was “The Chenjesu Icicle”, which resembled their ice-like form and had their semi-transparent, reflective texture. The authorities were horrified, fearing that the Chenjesu would feel offended, and banned the product before it reached the stores. The news of the censorship soon traveled to far ends of the world and it launched a heated debate. Some said that the icicle was a symbol of racism and would lead to hatred against humanity’s new friends. Others argued that the anti-racism campaigning had gone too far and that the icicle symbolized our friendship with the Chenjesu.

The Chenjesu themselves heard about the debate and had a hard time understanding the importance humans sought in such trivial matters. Even though the Chenjesu insisted that they didn’t have a problem with it, the ban remained.

On August 1st 2116, Earth officially joined the Chenjesu and their other allies – the Mmrmhrm, the Yehat and the Shofixti – to form the Alliance of Free Stars. The Chenjesu were the leaders of the Alliance, although they refused to formally accept the title.

The Mmrmhrm were purely mechanical beings that had a close relationship with the Chenjesu. All that humans knew of their history was that they were a product of a distant unknown culture, which sent a giant factory-ark into our region of space many centuries ago. The ark, which the media called Mother-Ark, churned out millions of robots before it finally broke down. If the Mmrmhrm had a specific purpose, they never told anyone what it was.

There was a lot of discussion* on whether the Mmrmhrm should even be called a race. It was pretty much

* Only on Earth. Other races in the Alliance didn’t see any point to the topic, least of all the Mmrmhrm.

undeniable that the robots were sentient, but many argued that they were just well-designed tools and not living beings.

The Yehat were an avian race of ancient warrior clans that had been traveling the stars for many centuries. The clans were highly competitive and sometimes waged war on each other, but they were all loyal to the Queen, who managed to unite the clans against common enemies.

The Shofixti were a race of intelligent marsupials that had been “civilized” for only a few decades. They were discovered by the Yehat, who adopted and “uplifted” them, giving them advanced technology and cultural definition.

Star Control was placed under direct authority of the Alliance Command Council. The Chenjesu expected humans to play a major role in the Alliance both as combatants and suppliers of war material. Although human technology was primitive, Earth had thousands of modern factories and millions of skilled workers able to manufacture both munitions and spacecraft. The tens of thousands of thermonuclear weapons stashed away in the Peace Vaults were an additional bonus which surprised even the Chenjesu.

On the day following Earth’s induction into the Alliance an unknown alien ship landed on the Moon. The ship transmitted a request to meet with Alliance representatives and soon afterwards a delegation of human and Chenjesu diplomats went to the lunar surface. The newcomers, who disturbingly were little green men in flying saucers, introduced themselves as the Ariloulaleelay. They explained that they too were threatened by the Ur-Quan and that they had come to join the Alliance of Free Stars. The Arilou, as the media called them for simplicity, were extremely secretive and unwilling to discuss even the location of their home world. But they provided additional strength to the Alliance and everyone welcomed them with open arms.

The Ur-Quan resembled larvae, like green caterpillars found on Earth, except that they were several meters long and carnivorous. They had arrived in this region of space from the direction of the galactic spin over ten years before humans joined the Alliance. Upon arriving here they had first enslaved the Umgah, a solitary blobbish species in the Orionis constellation. Shortly afterwards they conquered the Ilwrath, a race of overly religious and hostile spider creatures in the Tauri constellation. The Chenjesu and the Mmrnmhrm were next, but together they were able to fend off the invading armada. The Ur-Quan fleet then changed direction and subjugated the Spathi instead, a race of cowardly but highly mobile clam-like creatures, facing little resistance. Earth joined the Alliance shortly after this.

In 2119 humanity's first new-age battleships, the Earthling Cruisers, were ready. They were on their way to support the Yehat and the Shofixti when the fleet encountered a battle group of Vux, a species of green one-eyed semi-humanoids only the Yehat had known to exist. It was then that the biggest mistake of the war was made. The details are unclear, but it is said that Captain Jeffry L. Rand somehow inadvertently insulted the Vux in a way that made all Vux deeply despise humans. The Vux soon joined the Ur-Quan Hierarchy as battle thralls and became a feared enemy for the Alliance.

With their new Vux allies, the Ur-Quan immediately tried to break through Alliance defenses, but were stopped by the combined might of the Yehat and the Shofixti, supported by the first wave of Cruisers. The Ur-Quan fleet didn't waste any time and instead turned away to attack a new race, the Mycon.

Not much was known about the Mycon back then. They were more like fungi than animals and they thrived in temperatures close to the melting point of lead. In any case, they voluntarily became fighting slaves and soon the Ur-

Quan fleet returned, accompanied by hundreds of devastating Mycon Podships. The Alliance was only barely able to hold the line.

When several Earthling Cruisers were patrolling the coreward front near the Vulpeculae star cluster, the Alliance received more bad news. With a blaze of red light, unknown alien ships appeared in front of the fleet. Not giving their opponents time to do anything, they ruthlessly chopped down every Cruiser into tiny bits. It took a while for the Alliance to figure out that the attackers had been the Androsynth.

Later on the Alliance learned that shortly after the Ur-Quan had subjugated the Spathi, they moved to Eta Vulpeculae where the Androsynth had set up a colony after fleeing from Earth. After a short but intense battle the Androsynth had surrendered and become Hierarchy battle thralls.

Ever since the first encounter with the Androsynth humans were a lot more afraid during missions on the coreward front. There was nothing more dreaded than an Androsynth hit-and-run squadron. And to make it worse, everyone knew very well that the Androsynth had a good reason for despising humans.

In 2120 one more race joined the conflict. The Syreen had lost their home world in a mysterious and horrible cataclysm in 2035 and had been wandering the stars ever since. When their slow-moving habitats were attacked by the Ur-Quan, they escaped into human space and became unofficial members of the Alliance.

The media was all over the Syreen as they resembled humans in almost every way. The only external difference was that their skin had a blue tone. In addition, all Syreen starship officers were female, which made the media even

In 2155, 20 years after a lost war, humanity is imprisoned on Earth under an impenetrable slave shield. The only humans outside are a group of nearly 2000 men and women, assigned to serve their masters on a starbase in Earth's orbit.

The starbase was supposed to be resupplied every five years, but already eight have passed without a word. Energy cores are exhausted and life support is failing. But then, just when all hope seems lost, they get visitors who might have the power to change everything.

This book is the first part of the novelization of Star Control 2, a computer game released in 1992, which many still consider one of the best games of all time.

