

REFLUX

a scenario for M-SPACE



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FrostByte Books

REFLUX 1.0

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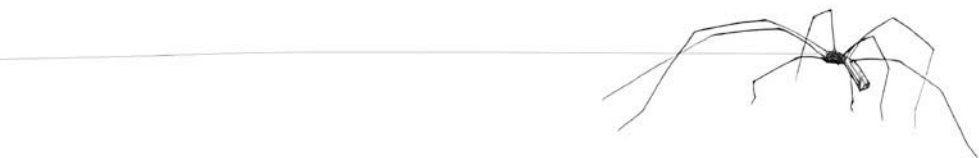
Introduction

This is an introductory scenario for *M-SPACE*, suitable for 2-5 beginner characters. It introduces the characters to *The Weaver* setting, telling an epic story about a dying empire called The Constellate. Small kingdoms and federations have risen in its wake, fighting for power, while the baroque empire struggles to keep its rotten core from collapsing. In this chaotic age, hope seems to emanate from the long forgotten teachings of The Weavers – a species almost wiped out by The Constellate’s forces, centuries ago.

The main rulebook for *M-SPACE* is required to get the most out of this book, however the scenario is useful with any BRP-based game.

How to Use This Book

Scenarios are like first draft manuscripts, describing a small part of a setting with a chain of events linked to it. The GameMaster prepares by reading the entire book, before clarifying any rules that feel unclear. On the game night (or day), the GM sets the stage for the players by describing the starting conditions of each scene. The players will then dictate the actions of their characters, with everyone creating an interactive storytelling experience together.



The entire story is summarised in the *Synopsis* chapter and the necessary setting background follows after that. The next eight chapters contain the actual scenario, with every *Passage* detailing the events of a particular site. The events described may not happen in that exact order – or even at all – but they provide a rough outline of the way that the story will unfold. The end of the scenario is quite open, offering several ideas on how to continue the campaign. After that, five chapters go into details regarding NPCs, locations, alien species, organisations and some additional rules.

Overall, the scenario is best suited to those PCs of a somewhat heroic bent, or those likely to champion the underdog against tyranny. Any type of characters included in the *M-SPACE* rules will suit the scenario – with one exception: psionic characters. As psionics does not exist within The Constellate's old domains, apart from for the mysterious Weavers, no mental powers can be chosen by the players. This may change during a longer campaign when the Weavers will play a more important part; see future additions to the Weaver setting. A POW of 16 or higher will still indicate a mind fit for psionics.

Roleplaying Games, Maps & Handouts

If you are new to roleplaying games, you may want to take a look at the introduction in the M-SPACE rulebook and the recommendations that can be found there.

Also, make sure you take a look at our website (www.frostbytebooks.com). The maps and handouts for the scenario can be found there in full color, easy to print at home or in a print shop.

Top: The small Aëlian Angling Spider hunts by letting its long thread sway in the wind. Together with the transparent, drifting seed pods of the İentje plant, they play a major – but indirect – role in the scenario.

Synopsis

The characters are asked to go to Qioria, a planet that is about to collapse from destructive mining activities by the neighboring Nurian Kingdom. Their mission is to investigate whether the Aëlian starship *Exodus III* landed there 170 years ago, in the aftermath of a Constellate attack.

Investigations will start in a small mining town called Yllm, where the oppressive regime of the occupying armed forces will become painfully apparent. The PCs will make contact with members of the local resistance, formed by the indigenous humans on Qioria, and gather various clues. The characters will eventually have to find a way to enter the sacred Valley of the Dead without being spotted.

The valley is an ancient 'field of death' for the extinct ipeoln species – a large reptilian-like species, with individuals growing to the size of a building. This valley is one of the places they went to die. Layer upon layer of mostly intact skeletal remains has been stacked here for millennia. Unknown, even to the locals, a vast system of caves have formed from the massive bodies of the dead ipeoln, which is where the clues are pointing to.

However, as the characters go below they are followed. Not only by a small team of Nurian security forces but also by an agent of The Constellate, leading to a final three-part confrontation in the bone caves. After a scorching conflict, they will finally find the sought-after evidence of the *Exodus III*. However, leaving the planet is not as straightforward as the PCs would want, as the Nurians are in pursuit of them.

Story Structure

While it is always hard to foresee how player-driven stories will unfold, the scenario is centered on three main conflicts:

Where: *Ocath Subsector, rimward of The Constellate*

When: *Y3260, Constellate Standard*

- » The first being with the local resistance, where the characters need to try to gain their confidence in a secret meeting.
- » The second is sneaking out of Yllm undetected.
- » The third, and also the climax, is the descent down a shaft in the bone caves while under fire from the security forces, stretching into a final conflict with a Constellate agent.

Several other, smaller conflicts and encounters will also occur but, unless the players or GM insist, they can be downplayed.

There are three main clues pointing characters in the right direction:

- » An ancient Simmedh symbol appears in several places: on the borrowed starship Aajege, at the shrine in Yllm, on the door handle to the semi-collapsed temple and, finally, in the bone caves.
- » The local group of resistance fighters will keep an eye on the characters from the start (for several reasons). They are also the likeliest, but not the only, path to meeting with the old hermit in the temple and getting transportation to the Valley of the Dead.
- » The old hermit in the temple provides the characters with the last clue they need: telling the story of the Weaver ship that landed east of Yllm almost 200 years ago, pointing them to the Valley of the Dead. If the characters have not already met with the local resistance, the hermit will introduce them.

The scenario can be played mostly without using physical violence. It is also worth noting, for players, that their character's behaviour will profoundly impact what NPCs think of them – thus affecting how easy it is to finish the mission successfully. Acting nonchalant or violent will get them nowhere in this scenario.



No one believed the young Empress Kunio Arav Nebot IIX would care much about the world outside court intrigues and lavish parties. She quickly proved them wrong.

Setting Background

The Constellate never fell. It faded.

When asked, no-one could tell when it happened, when the power and influence of the 800-year-old behemoth no longer mattered.

The reasons were the same as they had been on countless other occasions. Stagnation, intrigue and a sliver of madness. They believed so intensely in their superiority, they failed to see the world as it was.

When the fading became apparent, the suppressed slowly found some breathing room again. Some came up roaring, casting the shackles off, some sniffed the morning air cautiously, and some continued the habit of secrecy and hiding, not trusting that the new world order would be much kinder to them.

The year is Y3260, Constellate Standard. The Ocath subsector is free, after many years under The Constellate's brutal rule.

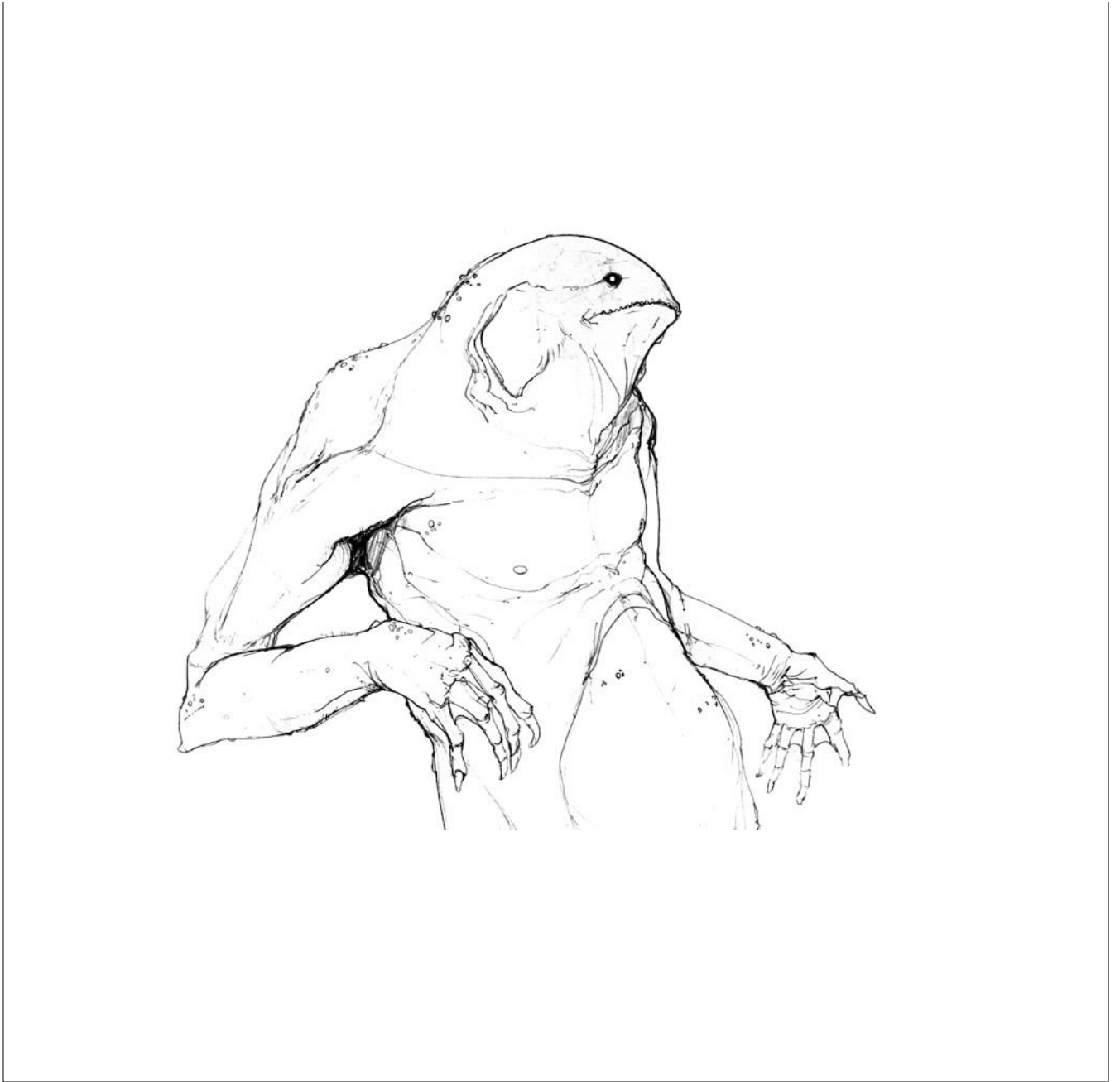
Free, but in turmoil.

The lack of power structures after the empire left, 20 years previously, has led to political upheaval where everything is up for grabs. The dominant worlds take what they want, trying to expand their territories, while the weak are subjugated – unless they form alliances of protection and trade.

What many fail to notice, is the newly installed Empress' ambition to restore The Constellate to the dominant force it once was. Sending out her agents to detect weaknesses and spread malcontent, with troops soon to follow, she uses all of her cunning to put the upstarts back in their place.

However, an unexpected power has secretly spread from an unassuming planet further rimward: the Weavers, a human species of psionics, thought to be eradicated once and for all by The Constellate many years ago. Somehow they slipped through the net, now slowly spreading their teachings across the sectors.

Opposite: The Maurin species. Living in the sponge-like mountains of Eliran, they shape communities around shallow, hot pools. In this scenario the species is represented by Goro Hom, a Weaver agent and Maurin Godchild.



The Constellate

The Constellate was founded in the Y2390s, forming the largest and most powerful unit in the galaxy. It started as a peaceful unification of several major powers far coreward of the Ocath subsector, covering a handful of sectors on the outset. By concentrating its economic, political and armed forces to the new capital world of Calinor, the small empire soon began to expand. Trade flourished, taxes were collected, recalcitrant neighbours were quickly invaded, silenced or bribed – and with the irresistible power of a flood, growth seemed unstoppable.

For many, the change of masters did not make much difference. Day to day life continued as it always had. For others, the change was quick and without mercy. If you were on the wrong side, the military and economic forces of the empire felt more like a natural disaster than anything else.

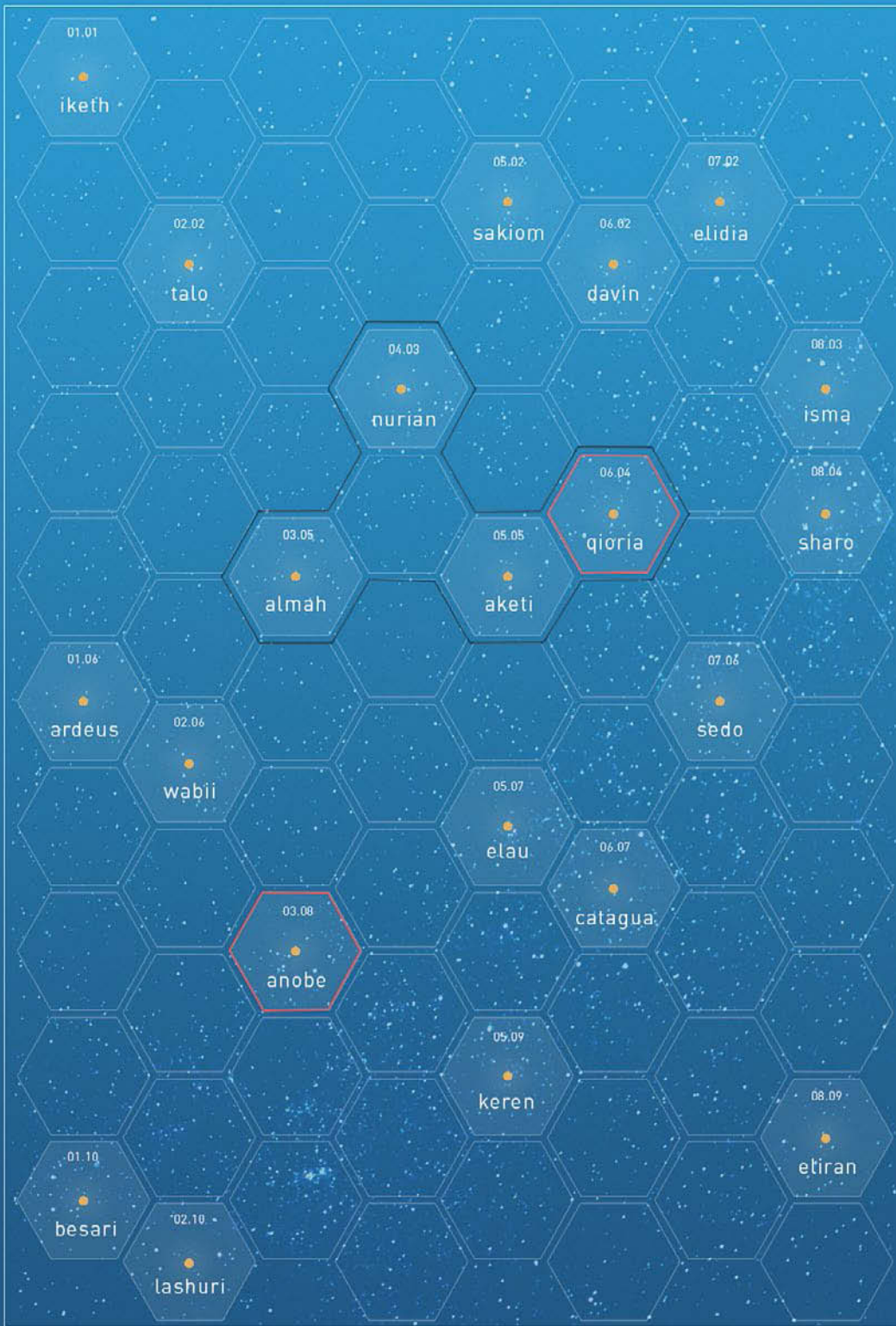
After 200 years, The Constellate reached the Ocath subsector, facing only scant resistance.

After 400 years, the first signs of internal rot became apparent. The once swift and efficient machinery had gradually burdened itself with empty rituals, hereditary incompetence and labyrinthine hierarchies. A streak of insanity in the upper echelon would have been purged naturally a few decades earlier, although the invisible cages they had wrought for themselves now made that same actions unthinkable. An age of baroque over-indulgence begun; a cornucopia of empty gestures and brutality spread through the empire.

In that period, a world called Aëlia was found. Its inhabitants, a proud people of strange powers and childishly simple lives (the Weavers), refused to bend the knee and were quickly disposed of in a surprise attack. Some were captured, some managed to escape or hide, although most were killed. The whole thing was quickly forgotten.

After 800 years, The Constellate reached its maximum. Soon after, the deflation began, almost imperceptibly. Officials kept up the air of power for

Opposite: Map of the Ocath subsector. The main planets of the scenario, Qioria and Anobe, are marked in red. The Nuri-an Kingdom, appearing as the villains, is marked in black.



ocath

The Empire in the Ocath Sector

Concerning the Ocath subsector, where this scenario takes place, The Constellate is closing in. Their agents are scouting the territory, mapping out powers and weaknesses, always trying to find inside collaborators. The armed forces are further off, 8-10 parsecs coreward, elite troops expanding on small pools of power, soon joining them together into larger areas.

a while but planet after planet at the rim found that the words and threats were only veils of deception. Eventually, even the veils fell away and there was nothing behind them. The core lived on but the rimward sectors were lost to freedom.

One beautiful spring morning eight years ago on Calinor, in Y3252, the Empress Kunio Arav Nebot IIX took the throne in a palace lavishly decorated in flowers, taken from every single world in The Constellate. In a peremptory move of executions and promotions, the Empress reinvigorated the military and declared a new offensive to reclaim the lost areas.

The Weavers

The Weavers are the indigenous human species of the planet Aëlia, two dozen parsecs or so rimward of the Coutant sector. They lead simple and mostly low-tech lives close to nature, infused with meditation, mental training and stillness. High-tech objects are not uncommon but daily life does not depend on them. Their ancient language is called Simmedh, although they speak Omni-Lang as well.

About 50% of the population has a mental disposition for psionics – highly exceptional for a galaxy mostly devoid of high-order mental abilities. Some Weavers develop their powers spontaneously but most require training. The old teach the young how to utilise the powers, the metaphysics behind them and a gentle philosophy to guide them through life.

The Weavers used to live in limited numbers on other worlds as well, often in small temples or *eremitages*, but the Constellate attack on Aëlia drove them into hiding and divergence.

Historically, the Weavers did not care much about The Constellate, keeping a low profile in the hope of being left alone. But a Constellate agent, Tavinne Curoso (later decorated Queen-Admiral), went to Aëlia as a scout early in Y3083 and her report turned out to be liquidating. Her interpretation of the Weavers described them as devious magicians without any

potential for loyalty to The Constellate. They instilled fear into the empire for the first time in centuries. An exhilarated fear giving the nomenklatura a renewed reason for existence.

The attack was launched with surprising speed, for a behemoth of this size. The Weavers managed to scramble together a few hasty arrangements, thanks to their clairvoyant powers, but only a small fraction of the population could fit into four large vessels with undisclosed destinations.

The blow was devastating. The Constellate's forces killed thousands, they hunted down every psionic within a matter of weeks and razed the villages to the ground. In the end, a massively decimated population was left under the rule and surveillance of a small fleet. An age of darkness began.

Today, in Y3260, the Weavers have managed to revive some of their old powers. The Constellate left Aëlia and the subsector about 20 years ago, as the empire's strength waned. Since then, occasional Weaver agents have been sent out, secretly trying to locate the old sites and fugitives from before The Constellate, while keeping a keen eye on the new political landscape, and also reaching out to other compatible minds from various species, to start spreading their teachings once again. However, the new Empress' hunger for glory is causing unease among the 'devious magicians'.

Psionics in The Constellate

Officially, mental powers have not been found to exist in any of the species or worlds incorporated into The Constellate. It has been declared impossible in the view of contemporary physics. This is also one of the reasons why the Aëlia incident has been kept to a select few, eradicated from the shared bureaucratic memory as quickly as possible. There do, however, exist a small clique of high-ranking Constellate individuals secretly investigating the possibilities of mental powers.

Passage 1:

The Mission

Location: Anobe

Main NPCs: Jaywa Valeri, Aliura Faaroe, Goro Hom

The characters are told a story and are then offered a job to find the traces of a long-lost starship.

The characters have been staying on the planet Anobe in the Ocath sub-sector, doing various small jobs for a local patron called Jaywa Valeri (a reasonably honest man in Anobe City). For the past two months, however, the characters have been travelling far from civilisation.

Across the Plains

Details on Anobe and the other worlds can be found in the chapters Locations. Information on aliens are in Lifeforms, while stats for all NPCs in List of NPCs.

At the start of the scenario, the characters are slowly travelling over the plains on the backs of large Sutaari. They travel together with an Ano clan, coming back from their yearly feast. Being invited to visit the temporary camp of the Ano is exceptionally rare; not many outsiders have experienced it.

The reason for this unusual invitation is up to the GM, possibly with inspiration from any of the character's backgrounds. Examples may include:

- » The PCs helped the clan get rid of poachers along their routes earlier during the year.
- » A journalist, writer or scholar among the characters has written favourably about the rights of the Ano.

- » The characters have worked with and befriended an urban-dwelling member of the clan and on her return, they were asked to join her. As she is the child of the Clan Mother, the tribe approved.
- » A medic among the characters has saved the life of a clan member, at significant risk to him/herself. While the Ano have adapted to most exo-pathogens brought to Anobe by alien species (including humans), a few remain problematic for them.

Pick one of the examples above, combine several for even deeper connections or come up with entirely new ones.

The characters are on their way back to Anobe City. Staying two and two in large, teardrop-shaped baskets hung over the backs of the giant Sutaari, the 10 days of travelling across the vast landscape have been invigorating. The winds, the tall grass and the steady rocking of the walking Sutaari have become like second nature to them. The basic jumping moves between the beasts are finally feeling less dangerous to them and they have even made a few friends among the Ano.

As they approach Anobe City, one character's datapad awakens her early, with a message from Jaywa Valeri. It is a few days old - communications on the plains have been a bit on and off - and just reads: 'I have a new job for you. Contact me as soon as you can'.

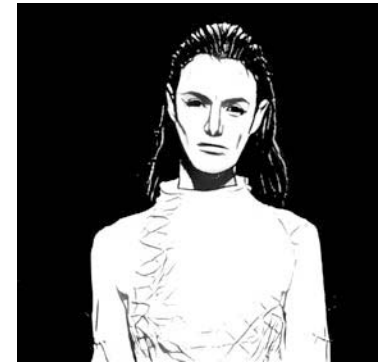
The Clan Mother bids them farewell and the clan drops the characters off close to the city edge. The Mother invites the PCs to ride with them again any time they wish.

Calling Jaywa Valeri back (or sending him a message), he tells the characters that he has got a client in need of their services. It is a slightly bigger, off-planet job this time. If the characters are interested, the client wants to meet with them in an old Ano burial ground on the outskirts of the city as soon as possible (see *Locations* chapter for a map of Anobe City).

'Treat her well. She's a precious contact for me,' Jaywa ends the call/message.

The Burial Ground

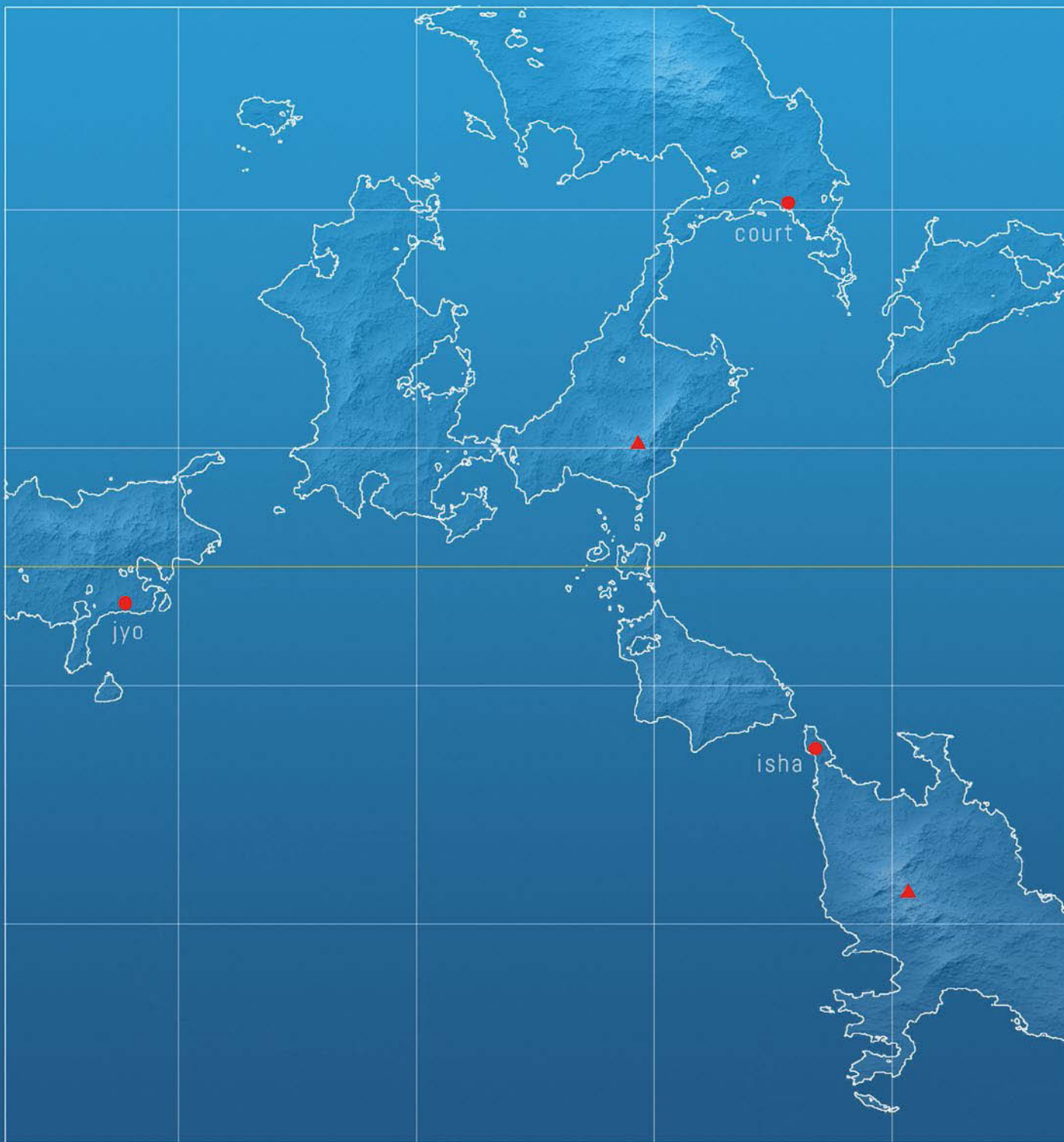
The burial traditions of the Ano are relatively straightforward. The clan members cover the body with a flat mound and they plant a seed from the Endon tree on top. The sites of the graves are carefully chosen: the microclimate is often ideal for the tree seedlings and after many years of use, the burial grounds resemble small groves. The undulating grass landscape of Anobe only has sparse forests, making these groves stand out clearly. They are considered sacred, not being disturbed even by the immigrants. Anobe City slowly engulfs this particular burial ground. No one has dared to cut a single twig yet, though in fear of the Ano's wrath.



Reading up on Aliura Faaroo

Running a check on Aliura will not turn up much. She is not listed in any of the old Constellate databases (but neither are the characters) and the only information they can get is that she has been staying on Anobe for 4-5 months.

'Perhaps she's some noble or diplomat?' is the best answer they get.





anobe

Reading up on Qioria

The major galactic database, the Constellate's World and Star Index (or C-WaS, for short), has not been updated since the Empire crumbled. Nevertheless, it is the most accurate star map available, used for astrogation and information by pilots everywhere. Sometimes you are lucky to find a snippet that has been edited more recently but not so with Qioria.

It seems Qioria was mostly over-looked over by the Constellate. The star system has six planets, with Qioria as the only habitable world. It was sparsely populated, mostly settled by humans. Small scale mining and trade seems to have been the economic focus 30 years ago.

Asking around will not turn up much either. The characters can track down a merchant or two that have passed Qioria in the last five years or so but they do not have much to tell. None of them stayed for more than refuelling and do not have anything more to say than the C-WaS contains.

Living in Anobe City

If needed, the characters can be given a place to stay in Anobe City, either as a temporary shelter or a more long-term solution they can always return to. An old Deljori man they have known for some time lets them stay in the attic of an old, empty warehouse, not far from Jaywa Valeri's block.

If they agree, Aliura Faaroo, a kind and well-spoken middle-aged woman awaits them among the trees at the agreed time, along with a curious looking alien. Its skin is grey, eyes are small and the head is somewhat froglike (see illustration on page 11).

Mission Briefing

After introductions, the client starts telling her story, walking slowly in the flickering shade from the lush canopy. Goro, the alien, walks attentively but mostly silent by her side.

'There's an old tale among my people that four starships left our planet to escape the invading forces of The Constellate 170 years ago. The Constellate wanted to change the way we lived and my ancestors believed the ships were the only way to save at least a few of our people. The four ships went in separate directions, not telling anyone where they were going, hoping to find peaceful worlds to settle on - as far from The Constellate's armed forces as possible. They were meant to leave as scant traces as possible, so as not to be found by The Constellate's agents'.

'For 20 years now, since The Constellate withdrew from the Coutant sector, we have tried to find out what happened to the four ships. So far, we have found nothing'.

She goes on to tell them about a world a few parsecs away called Qioria and the gas mining operations that threaten to destroy the planet in just a few years (see notes on Qioria).

'We need to make sure the rumours we have heard about Exodus III landing there are investigated thoroughly before the entire planet surface is ravaged. I offer you 2,000 Cr, half now and half afterward, if you go there hastily, investigate all leads and bring back any evidence you can find on the ship. This mission may be my people's last chance to follow up on this thread, even though we know the odds of finding something are very low'.

Aliura will go no higher than 2500 Cr if bargained with.

'I suggest you start your investigations in a small town called Yllm. We used to have a contact there, Garin Ebries. Unfortunately, he disappeared under mysterious circumstances five years ago'.

'I would also urge you to keep a low profile. We want to avoid drawing too much attention from The Constellate. The new Empress has eyes and ears in the subsector and she seeks to reclaim the territory lost to others'.

Reluctant Players

Most of the time, players just go along with any scenario that is thrown at them. It is part of the game. Occasionally, they will be a bit reluctant (and in many ways, that is more realistic). To get past any doubts the characters have in this particular case, there are two methods that you can use to bait them. First, hint that the Aajege is something unique. It is like a magical item handed to them, helping them through the quest. Second, their regular patron on Anobe, Jaywa Valeri, will make a visit to gently persuade them: 'I can get you a job guarding a spoiled millionaire's daughter but really... I think the Qioria mission suits you much better. You're ready for more complex tasks'.

The Aajege

At the end of the conversation, Aliura will also offer the characters to borrow a small starship called Aajege (*a spring of water* in Simmedh), in storage at a starport hangar in Anobe City.

Aliura takes them to the nearby starport in her land speeder and in a small hangar on the outskirts of an open area, a large shape looms in the dusty interior.

It is a strange old ship and the characters cannot remember seeing anything quite like it. Starship pilots especially will be perplexed by it. It is very streamlined, with curious looking feelers here and there, and the

The Lost Contact

Garin Ebries, Weaver observer, had spent almost a year on Qioria when the Nurian scientific expedition found omeril gas in massive quantities below ground. His main task was to keep an eye on the expansion of the Nurian Kingdom but also to look for evidence of Exodus III in the region. When he found out the Nurians were planning a large-scale mining operation, he feared the worst. Unfortunately, Garin was not prepared for the doggedness of the Nurians. When he tried to reason with the king's representatives, he was simply made to 'disappear'.

The Nurians had no idea that Garin was a psionic (as most people in the old Constellate, they did not even believe in psychic abilities) and left him overnight in a makeshift jail. An understandable mistake and one that almost saved Garin. If it had not been for a sleepless guard, his escape through locked doors would have gone unnoticed. A lucky shot killed him almost instantly.

The report sent to Nurian two days later was intercepted by a Constellate Intelligence Probe and eventually relayed to External Security officials. For two years it sat there unnoticed. No one seemed to have time for the Ocath subsector anymore, fortunately. However, a search subroutine slowly sifted through the material, spitting out any references to 'strange occurrences'. Labelled and condensed, in Y3259 the incident appeared in front of a pair of eyes very few men had seen. Quick decisions were made and an agent called Tye Hawke was dispatched to Qioria.

Deckplan & Starship Sheet

The Aajege is an old Weaver ship (70+ years), tailored for psionic pilots. It allows a psionic to partly merge her mind with the ship, to gain some advantages. For non-psionic pilots, these functions will not be accessible but a certain lightness is felt compared to handling other ships. It has also got one Luck Point to help the pilot out of difficult situations (controlled either by the GM or the pilot).

Psionic adjustments: Psionic pilots has +20% to add to any skill roll during a round. Can also be split between multiple skills/rolls. The technology behind this is an Aëlian secret.

SPEED	8
HANDLING	12
SIZE	87

Hit Points	79
Shields	7
Armor	2
Weapons	Laser x2 (2d6)
Hit Loc/HP	01-03 Cockpit/3
	04-21 Crew/16
	22-38 Open Sp/45, 8
	39-63 Cargo/22, 11
	64-69 Sick Bay/4
	70-71 Autodoc/2
	72-74 Hyper/3
	75-76 Weapons/2
	77-87 Engines/40, 7
	88-00 Maneuv/40, 7

cockpit is perched on top of it all. 'It looks like it has had a rough time; covered in dust, grime and occasional laser burns, but Aliura assures them it has more to it than meets the eye.

'It's a bit old but it has served us well in the past.'

Turning to the pilot, she says: 'I think you will find it's got a trick or two up its sleeves,' but she will not elaborate any further.

Inside, the ship is thick with dust and the interior shows clear signs of wear. The controls are somewhat archaic, with strange but comprehensible markings, and a few unmarked later additions, but when the pilot runs the initiation sequence everything lights up as it should, and all systems are clear.

The Aajege

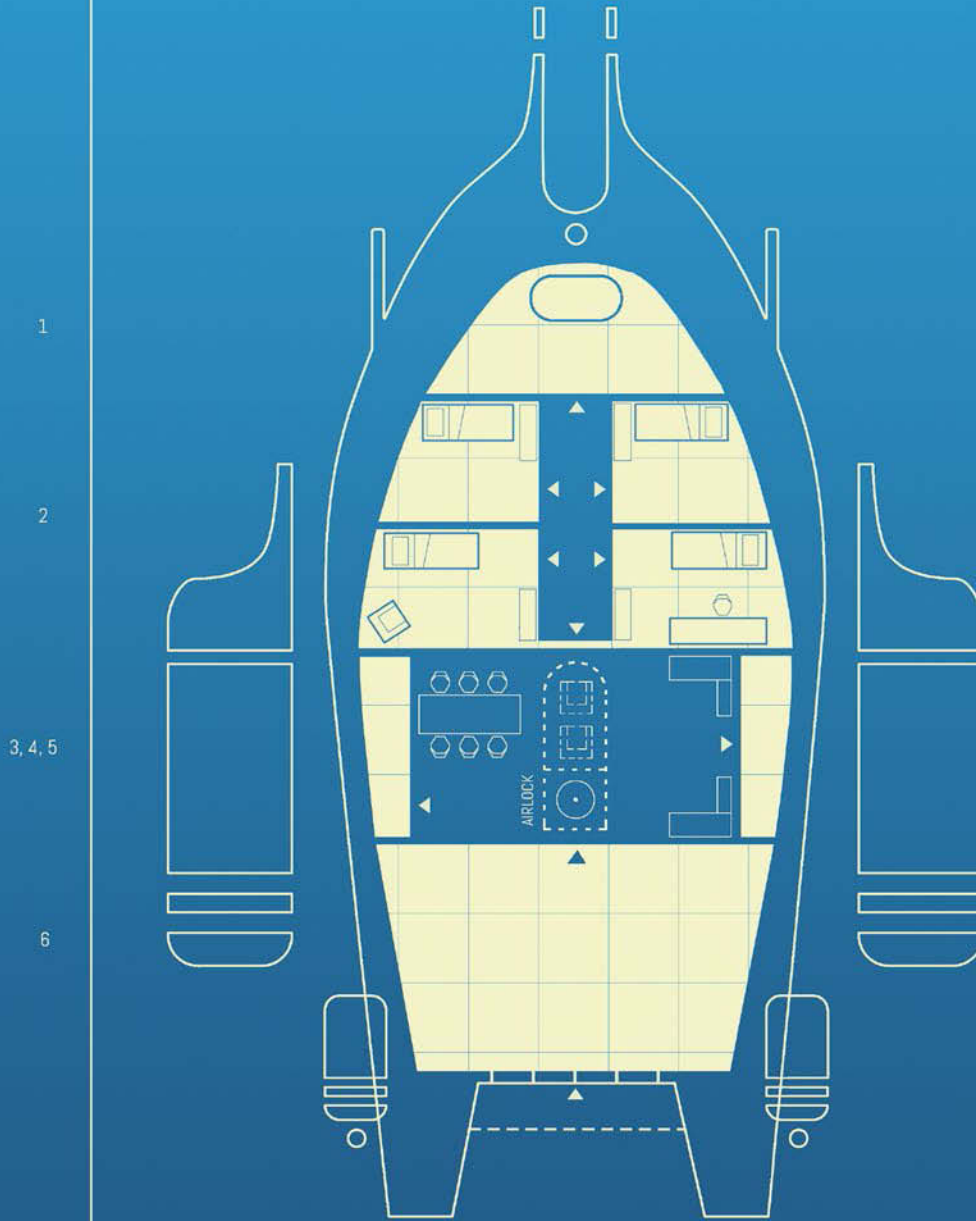
Small scout ship in slight disrepair. Tailored for psionic pilots.

Cockpit	3
Crew (4)	16
Open Space	15
Weapons	2 (2 laser turrets, damage upgrade to 2d6 each)
Engine	10 (Thrust Rating 70)
Maneuver	10 (Thrust Rating 100)
Cargo	22 (2 hidden, <i>Formidable</i> to find)
Hyperspace	3
Sick Bay	4
Autodoc	2

Stunts: Grants control over some functions for psionics. For non-psionics, 1 Luck Point is made available per game session.

Ship Condition: -20. Engines & Maneuver -3 Hit Points each, Open Space & Cargo Hold have Hit Points halved. All Pilot rolls will be *Hard*, as well as all Mechanics rolls. The GM is also free to call for Pilot rolls for standard maneuvers, and any failed such roll may result in a malfunction (see more about Ship Condition at page 101 in *M-SPACE*).

aaajege



- 1. SICKBAY
- 2. CUBICLES
- 3. COMMON ROOM
- 4. ENGINEERING x2
- 5. COCKPIT (LEVEL 2)
- 6. CARGO HOLD

Passage 2:

Arriving at Qioria

Location: Onboard the Aajege & in Yllm, Qioria

Main NPCs: Nurian Security Forces

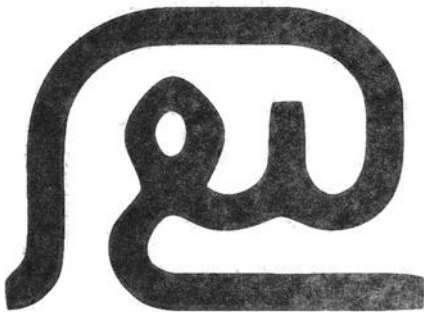
After a discovery onboard their starship, the characters arrive at Qioria and witness the security forces first hand.

After grabbing their stuff and possibly getting some equipment, the characters settle in onboard the Aajege. Every square inch is covered in layers of dust and getting comfortable on the ship is going to take a few hours.

The trip to Qioria takes about a day. Most of that time is spent in hyperspace. A short stop to recharge the hyperdrive is necessary, either in the Almah or the Elau system, from any of the manned or unmanned recharging stations.

First Clue

As the characters get to know the ship (and really, they should clean it up a bit), a strange symbol is discovered painted on the inside of the top airlock (see sidebar). The paint is worn and it will be almost invisible below all layers of grime. It will be found either by the pilot, who will be spending the most time in the cockpit, or by the character with the highest Perception skill. None of the characters will recognise the symbol, which in itself is not that unusual: The Constellate alone contains thousands of alien languages. What is slightly odd, however, is that a bit of database research will not turn up anything at all. Nothing even close.



The Weavers have used the symbol for millennia. It signifies the most fundamental concept of their philosophy: the world is a weave that can be rewoven. This is, of course, a reference to their psionic powers but it is more than that. It is more generally applicable to the way they live. They observe the world around them carefully and after that, every individual has the choice – and power – to change it if necessary. Only by first seeing the whole can the details be altered.

There are no direct consequences of finding the symbol but it will appear later in the scenario as a sort of guidance for the characters.

Qioria From Space

Seeing Qioria from space is a strange sight, even for seasoned travelers. Large black spots appear at random on the planet's surface, glowing ominously in red on the nightside. It is almost as if the spots are growing larger by the minute. Given a few more months, these open wounds from the mining operations will have devastated large parts of the world (for more on the gas extraction process, see *Locations*).

The C-WaS turns out to be heavily outdated regarding Qioria. The Constelate-run orbiting space station is abandoned, and largely dismantled, and an orbiting probe informs them to land in open areas outside of towns and that only light-weight personal weapons are allowed.

Sensor readings will not reveal anything out of the ordinary. Climate and atmospheric readings are normal and no other ships are detected. If the characters hang around for a few hours, then both transport ships and small patrol ships will be spotted.

The characters can easily find Yllm on the map transferred from the probe: slightly north of the equator on the largest continent.

FTL Travel

Faster than light travel in the Weaver setting is accomplished by entering another dimension called hyperspace. To go into hyperspace, the ship accelerates and the pilot initiates the hyperdrive. Travel times can vary, but generally, 1 parsec takes a couple of hours.

A starship must get out of the gravity well of a planet to safely perform a hyperspace jump. To simplify the rules, treat all planetary gravity wells as similar and use 2 hours of travel time before jumping. Any jumps before that require an Astrogation roll to succeed. Failed rolls result in no leap (the ship overrides the command for security reasons), fumbles will lead to a damaged drive or a misjump (50/50 chance). A damaged drive will take a successful Mechanics roll and two hours per attempt. Misjumps will end up in any adjacent hex.

At the end of a jump, starships need to recharge the hyperdrive. Most inhabited systems have small unmanned recharging stations placed in strategic positions, although larger inhabited stations are frequent too. The recharging procedure will usually take one hour per hyperdrive size (3 hours for a ship with Hyperspace 3, for example).

For uninhabited or low-tech systems, a slower method is used involving solar panels on the hull (included in all long distance ships). The meta-material used for all the panels is highly efficient but still requires the ship to orbit the star at roughly 1 Au (the distance between Earth and Sol). Recharging times will be doubled compared to at stations.





qioria

 mining sites

A Whiff of Fresh Air

Opening the airlock to a new world is always special, regardless of how many planets you have visited. Scents and sounds will be unique, evolved over millennia by all of the living organisms in unison, as well as the quality of light and air. The Yllm area on Qioria smells good. The rather flat landscape is covered with yellowing grass and dotted with contorted bushes. Despite the dry conditions, there is a tinge of the nearby ocean in the air, a freshness barely detectable. A mountain range is clearly visible to the southeast, with a snow-covered peak defying the heat on ground level.

Landing in Yllm

A few improvised sheds and signs south of Yllm, along with a couple of starships, indicate where you are supposed to put down a ship. It is not much more than a rather worn mix of grass, dirt and gravel, with something akin to wheel tracks leading through the remains of a massive skeleton, sticking out of the ground, and off into town.

At this stage, the characters may want to come up with a plan. Some ideas are likely to pop up: strolling around looking for clues and asking around for Exodus or Garin Ebries, the lost Weaver contact. This is all covered in *Passage 3: Yllm Investigations*, as well as a description of Yllm.

Yllm is densely packed with low buildings made of clay and stone, with narrow alleyways zigzagging throughout the primitive-looking town, dusty and worn. It could have been almost unchanged for hundreds of years but an energy shield betrays the image. High-tech towers, seven metres high, circle the town and sizzling orange light marks where the shield is activated.

The day the characters arrive, the open air market is in full swing. Both traders and customers flow in and out of the makeshift high-tech portal and the two Nurian guards are not really on top of the situation. To compensate for this, they strike random targets now and then, just to show who's in charge. This situation is a chance for the GM to show the brutal ad hoc ruling of the Nurians. And also to dangle the bait of physical violence in front of the players – though that approach will only lead them to the arrest eventually (see *Interlude: Security Forces*).

Example: A father and son, Meres and Dayni, are pushing an antigrav platform loaded with used machine parts, standing in line 10 metres or so in front of the characters. An argument starts to brew between Meres and the guards, although the characters cannot hear or see what is going on (the guards suspects that weapons may be hidden among the goods). The boy, Dayni, makes a sudden movement, which one of the guards mis-

interprets and so pushes him to the ground. The father yells and rushes up to the guard, arms outstretched. The second guard loses his nerve and fires a warning shot, not looking where he shoots, he blasts the antigrav platform, which then crashes into the waiting line. Machine parts scatter all over while the man is knocked out by one of the guards. The small boy screams and reinforcements are called for. All within a matter of seconds.

During all of this, the other Qiorians back off, preferring not to be involved. Cowardly, the characters may think at first. However, if they hang around for a moment, they will notice how the machine parts are collected, the antigrav platform caught and switched off, and the boy is comforted in the arms of a man and woman. Resistance is not violent but focused on helping the target. Smart characters follow their lead. Anything but violence will be rewarded with a cooling down of the situation: talking to the guards, giving the man medical attention and so forth. Jumping in with blasters drawn, on the other hand, will likely result in trouble. See *Interlude* for how to play it out.

The Market

The open air market is not as bustling as it used to be but visitors can still find most of what they need. The stalls are simple, often just a few tables, with tent-like roofs to keep the sun out. Below is a list of stalls and offers.

Food. Several stalls offer locally produced food like fermented garkki meat, various herbs (both dried, fresh and as juices) and the many different roots that count as staple food on Qioria. Synthetic rations that the characters will be more used to must be purchased at the regular Yllm food vendors (or at the vending machines that you seem to find anywhere you go in the old Constellate's domains – those squishy, tasteless packs are the last resort, however). Prices: Medium. Quality: Varies (any locals can immediately point out the good ones).

Random 'Exotic' Object, 2d6:

2. Necklace (a simple geometric shape in metal/bone/resin, with a broken chain or string)
3. Alien make-up mask in wood (applying make-up automatically, although made for some unknown species. Misplaces all facial features on humans, using mostly greys, blacks, whites and ultraviolet)
4. Worn stone figurine (3d6 cm high. Depicting: Animal, Unknown lizard-like alien or a human head)
5. Metal bottle (using a sensitive scanner, several traces of alien beverages can be identified inside)
6. Beautiful smooth rock (size 1d6 cm)
7. Tiny creature encased in glass, size 1d6 cm (depicting an alien: Lizard-like, Insectoid, Snake-like, Skeleton only, Fish-like or Random pile of sticks)
8. Small clay bowl with lid (2d4 cm in diameter)
9. Incense (Locally produced, several scents available)
10. Decorated small box (2d6 cm wide)
11. Comb carved of bone
12. Music box in wood (playing: A beautiful tune, A well-known evergreen, An unknown song, Terrible alien music or It's broken (but repairable))

**Random 'Exotic' Object,
Additional Function, 1d8:**

1. Playing soothing sounds (50% chance that it is pleasant, 10% chance it is above/below the human hearing range)
2. Scented (mimicking the scent of a planet: Iketh, Unknown, Sedo)
3. Emits faint light
4. Separable pieces. Reassembles automatically
5. Hovers a few centimetres above the floor/table
6. Projecting a small hologram of something/someone (for example: An old emperor, A beautiful human child, An insectoid alien, An unknown blue planet, An unidentified stone palace or An ancient starship)
7. Engraved (with: Alien glyphs, Swirling pattern, Crude but lovely alien beasts or Rectilinear pattern)
8. Secret compartment (containing: Nothing, A note with alien glyphs or An unknown type of data storage)

Fabric. There is only one stall selling textiles, a mixture of locally produced tight-knitted wool (from coastal herds of garkki) and imported synthetic materials. The owner is a shy young man, who recently took over the business from his grandparents. He may accept a bargain but as prices are low already, he will lose money.

Prices: Low. Quality: Medium to high.

Junk. Three stalls are laden with tech junk. Everything and nothing can be found here. Not one object is operational, but for emergency repairs and experimental setups, this is a veritable goldmine. The owner is the man the characters may already have met at the south gate, Meres, with his young son Dayni. They travel Qioria to find leftover machinery, they pick them apart and sell for scraps. The pair are kind and knowledgeable, always keeping track of where the parts came from originally.

Prices: Low. Quality: Low, with rare gems.

Hardware. This stand is the right place for a mechanic or engineer in need of supplies and a perfect supplement to the junk store. The owner is not very helpful and tends to confuse which exact part the buyer wanted, resulting in much frustration for those not double-checking the goods before leaving.

Prices: High. Quality: Medium to Low.

'Exotic'. Shops like these exist everywhere in the galaxy, with strange objects from a myriad of cultures, collected with a minimum of information on their use or history. Roll or pick from the lists in the sidebars on pages 29-30, to assemble random objects for the characters to find.

GRASSLANDS

VALLEY OF THE DEAD
TO THE EAST →



STARSHIP
LANDING AREA

1. MARKET SQUARE
2. SOUTH ENTRANCE
3. POWER SHIELD & TOWER
4. RESISTANCE MEETING
5. CANTINA
6. SECURITY FORCES' HQ AND HOLDING CELLS
7. SECURITY FORCES' BARRACKS
8. TEMPLE
9. SHRINE
10. MEDIC
11. ASHOT'S BODY
12. GENERAL STORE
13. BUTCHER
14. TECH REPAIR

Passage 3:

Yllm Investigations

Location: Yllm, Qioria

Main NPCs: The Local Resistance, Isao Om Ananth. Observer: Tye Hawke

The investigations begin and several details are revealed.

This passage is where the characters do the background work: they find clues, identify contacts and establish trust. It is divided into three sections: The Shrine, The Resistance and The Hermit. They can be played out in any order and are interlinked so that every part leads to the other two in some way. It is also possible for the players to skip any part if they feel they have enough information to proceed to the next passage, however, that will make the following tasks harder to solve.

Players are likely to stroll around Yllm to look for evidence and probably ask for either the Exodus or Garin Ebries. Places they, presumably, will gravitate towards are the market square, the local cantina, a small garden (or park) and the temple.

Polferro Mineral

Polferro is a rare-earth mineral used mainly for energy shielding around reactor cores, panelling sensitive areas and the like. It is a dampening substance that has the effect of sometimes reflecting faint echoes of energy back at the source (resulting in ghost signals). The mineral transfers to grazing animals if levels are high enough in the soil [garkki herds are monitored for this on a yearly basis].

People are friendly but somewhat guarded since the Nurians started patrolling the town. No one seems to remember either Garin Ebries nor a starship landing here 170 years ago – at least not openly. A few knew Garin but as he disappeared; they avoid mentioning it to strangers. The Exodus, on the other hand, is both forgotten and remembered by most: it has been moved into the semi-mythic realms of bedtime stories, poems and songs. Very few will make the connection between what the characters ask for and the myths.

If the PCs visit the cantina (simply called *The Cantina* by everyone but formally without a name), they will be able to chat with the friendly owner Ashot Llebot and his waitress la Veryl Nao. They both 'vaguely recall his name' when asked about Garin but nothing more (in reality, they know a lot more).

The outcome of the socialising may be disappointing to the PCs; nothing exciting at all seems to surface. They need not fear, however. All this talking has roused the interest of the local resistance group. They say to each other: 'These strangers travel in a very strange old ship and they ask too many questions about historical mysteries. Better keep an eye on them...'

The Shrine

If the characters spend any time strolling around Yllm, they will rather quickly end up in the small garden/park in the southeast quarters. Not much more than a few large trees and a gravel surface, it is greatly cherished by the inhabitants. The trees offer soft shade and a low stone wall provides a place to sit. A small drinking fountain murmurs quietly in a corner and there is a stillness to this place that even hardened characters will find deeply soothing.

As the local medic (and leader of the secret resistance movement) houses her clinic in one of the buildings adjacent to the garden, it is not unusual for patients and the elderly to linger a while, waiting for their appointment. Striking up a conversation is easy; this place seems imbued with friendliness.

For characters staying here for a few moments, a small shrine built out from a gable will soon be apparent to them (location 9 on the map of Yllm). It is made from the same material as the building and consists of a small recession, a small wooden box worn by age and a few knobby cylindrical 'cigars'. Four holes are used to hold the 'cigars' as they are lit, the glowing tops eerily reminding of the extraction sites seen from orbit. The ci-

Yllm

Inhabitants: 300

Climate: *Hot and dry. Daytime 25-35°C, nighttime 20-25°C.*

Landscape: *Bushland, dry from being in the rain shadow of the peak called The Awl, southeast of town.*

Layout: *Four main streets, mostly for pedestrians cross the town (the worn-out land speeders are kept outside of town), merging at the central market square. Ever since the Nurian forces erected the energy shield surrounding the village, only the south entrance is in use. The further you stray from the main streets, the more private the streets feel: residents handle daily chores in the shade, kids play in the streets and so on. The market square is the only place with commercial spaces: a cantina, a couple of food stores (specialising in either fruits and vegetables or meat), a general store and a few more.*

Buildings: *The dominant building material is brickwork covered by a thin layer of clay, giving a range of yellow, beige and orange tones to the facades. Two-story buildings dominate. Windows are quite small to keep the heat out. Cylindrical rain-collecting devices are attached to most buildings and small vegetable gardens pop up in the most unlikely nooks.*

Streets: *Areas between buildings are a mosaic of dirt, various types of tiles and grass.*

Economy: *Subsistence farming, gathering and hunting. Polferro mineral is mined in small-scale open pits by the indigenous humans.*



The shrine

Shops in Yllm

A small town like Yllm does not have many commercial spaces. Most inhabitants get by on a combination of their produce and bartering. A few shops are located around the market square, to provide for goods not easily found elsewhere.

***Butcher.** Together with the general store, this is the largest provider of food stuff. Mostly garkki meat but occasionally imported pieces (both Qiorian and interstellar) can be found. An old couple runs this bloody business, with their rude son doing the negotiations with herders and traders.*

***General Store.** At first glance, this is a regular all-purpose store, run by a family in Yllm. However, it has a dark side not known to most inhabitants. While the Nurian operations have supplies sent from their home world, they have locally settled an agreement with the General*

Continued...

gars are sticks of incense, locally manufactured with various herbs. Their scent is a peculiar mixture of sweetness and old books.

As the characters watch the shrine, an old man opens the box and picks up a small white object, examining it with reverence before putting it back. At this point, call for the players to make Perception rolls: successful rolls reveal the small object to be a stylised miniature starship.

Opening the lid of the box reveals a small white sculpture, carved from bone. If any of the PCs pick it up, they will indeed see that it is a stylised miniature starship – not unlike the Aajege. At the bottom is a faint carving: the very same symbol found onboard their ship.

At the same time, a vague shape watches the characters from a small window in the medical clinic as they examine the shrine and the contents of the box (Arjun Linas, the medic and leader of the local resistance). A successful Perception roll will alert the characters to the fact that they are being watched. If they decide to enter the clinic, a small waiting room, sparsely furnished, lies behind the outer door. 1d3-1 patients are present and there is a 50% chance Arjun Linas is busy. It will take 2d6 minutes before she is available, after which she will look with surprise on the PCs but invite them into her office.

'I only have a couple of minutes – I have patients waiting for me – but what can I do for you?'

She will not answer any questions about Exodus or Garin Ebries directly, instead asking the characters where they come from, their errand and so on. After a short exchange, she will invite them to a small dinner at a friends house later that night.

If the characters have not found the shrine before meeting with the hermit or the members of the resistance, they will be brought here by one of them.

The Resistance

As mentioned previously the resistance is curious about the PCs and wants to know their intentions. The most likely members of the group to make contact with the characters are Ashot (cantina owner), Ia (waitress) or Arjun (medic). It will be very casual: an invitation to an informal dinner later that evening with 15-20 other Yllm inhabitants. An address in the north-western quarters is provided if the characters accept.

As soon as the characters are out of sight of their ship, leaving for the dinner, two dark figures sneak up and quickly dial up the top airlock, soundlessly dropping down into the Aajege. The resistance takes no chances and wants to make sure that the PCs intentions are genuine. While they do not find much, they will also discover the Weaver symbol on the airlock as they leave the ship. It is a symbol they have the greatest respect for and it carries real hope. The two burglars hurry back to the dinner party, to report their findings.

The small party is, in many ways, a great event. People are pleasant and talkative, the food is delicious and once in a while, three guests take out instruments to play a couple of tunes. The dinner goes on for an hour or two and the characters are asked about their backgrounds and adventures, while the locals share their worries about the gas extraction.

All of this is just a way for the resistance to get a grasp on the PCs. The actual 'party' is in a back room: a meeting of the core members of the resistance. Unless the characters make a bad impression they will be invited.

The Meeting

If the characters appear trustworthy, in the middle of the conversation any of the PCs are approached by a young man, almost whispering:

'Arjun Linas, our medic, would like to talk you and your friends upstairs for a moment. Would you come with me?'

Store in Yllm. The smuggling is disguised as a truck delivering goods to and from the coast; the store makes a good profit selling provisions to the troops. Lieutenant Garren has arranged the deal, taking care of most of the handling himself. The local resistance has recently figured out what is going on but has so far refrained from any actions.

Tech Repairs. Sureda Jullien runs this small shop, fixing everything from speeders and droids to household machinery and datapads. Starships are a bit out of his league – although he will never admit that, coming up with increasingly exaggerated excuses for not being able to fix them if he is hired.

Guarding the Ship

If the characters leave someone to guard the Aajege, the break-in will be postponed. Given the opportunity, one of the burglars might try to lure the remaining characters away for a few minutes but they will not take any significant risks. The pretense will be a problem with the recharging station: 'There is some trouble with the charger. The current fluctuates and I'm afraid there could be a spike overloading your ship,' the 20-something woman says (dressed like a mechanic) and asks if any of the characters can have a look. There is indeed something wrong with the charger (caused by the woman, although the risk of a spike is infinitesimal). It will take 10 minutes and a skill r

Continued on page 38...



Ashot Llebot, owner of the cantina

The Cantina

This is the only place in Yllm where you can buy a simple cooked meal and a drink (the Qiorian Longneck being the most common beverage, tasting somewhere between mead and dry cider). The establishment fills a large building by the square and the locals use it as a second living room, as well as travellers and merchants passing through.

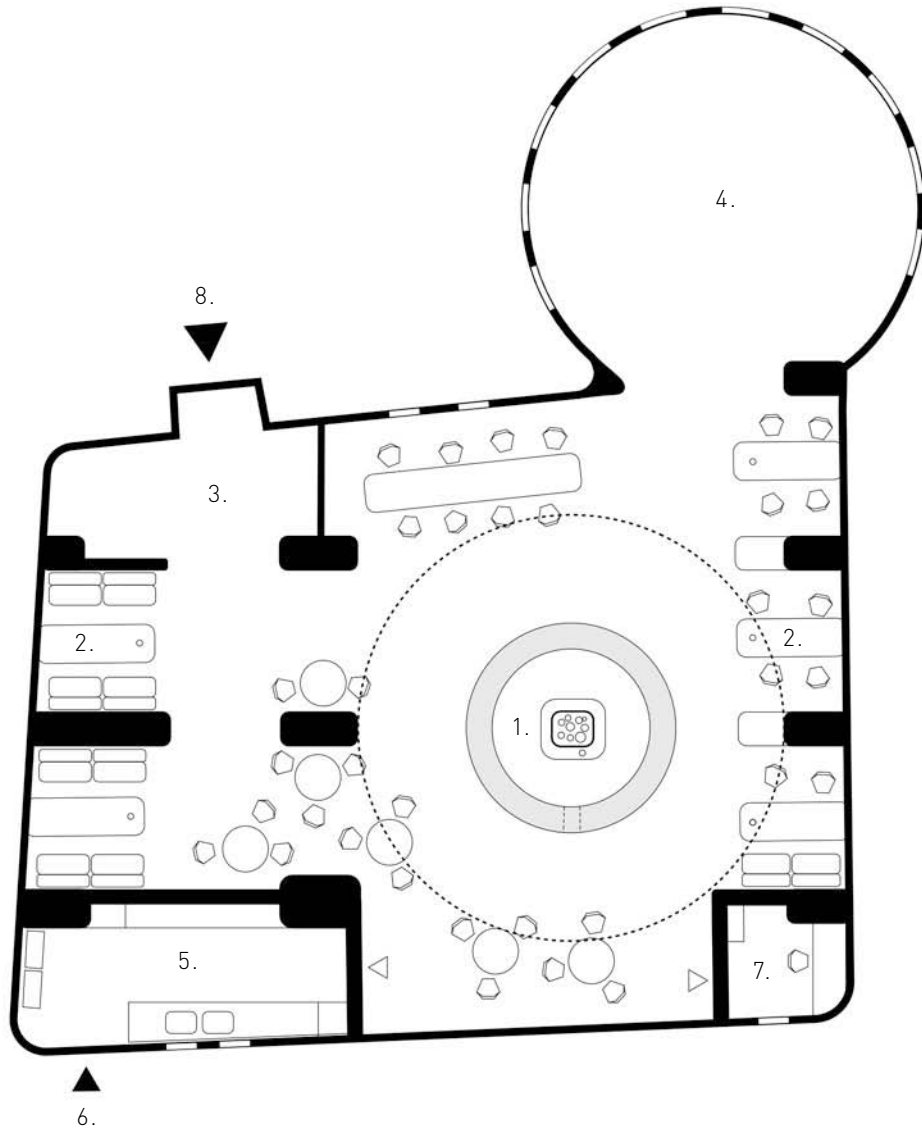
The single room is dominated by the round bar, situated under a lofty dome. A few booths offer a bit of privacy but most of the space is open. A circular area, with openable full-height shutters, is a room used for different purposes: as a bandstand, for dancing, for larger private parties and so on. The interior is dominated by rough, ochre plaster and wood, as are most buildings in Yllm.

The range of drinks is quite small but the owner brews the Longneck himself and it has a reputation for just the right blend of bitter and sweet. Meals are cooked in a small kitchen at the back. The food is hearty, if somewhat bland (examples include: garkki stew with roasted roots, root soup with eggs and stipe bread, and an assortment of thinly sliced garkki steaks served with fruits and vegetables).

The owner, Ashot Llebot, is of the Navema species, not commonly met with in the Ocath subsector. He is talkative and knows most of what goes on in Yllm. He is a generous man, enjoying his work, but the years since the Nurians invaded has taken its toll on him. His waitress, la Veryl Nao, is quieter but has a sharp tongue. She is furious with the Nurians, which motivates her work with the local resistance.

The clientele is mixed. During the days activity is quite low, with workers coming and going for a quick meal or drink. A few old hands will linger to chat about ailments, the weather or news on the mining activities.

In the evenings, the house is often full. Friends gather here, together with visitors, to play games, exchange gossip, drink and have fun. Ages and species are mixed, although humans dominate as elsewhere on Qioria. The atmosphere is quite open but newcomers are not directly approached or invited into the groups gathered around the tables. Once in a while (a 5% chance every night), something like a gloom seems to settle over the place. The gas extraction appears to be the only topic and these awkward nights often end up in fighting and screaming (with locals always moving any tussle outside, out of courtesy for Ashot).



- 1. BAR
- 2. BOOTHS
- 3. FOYER
- 4. MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM
- 5. KITCHEN
- 6. BACK DOOR TO BREWING HOUSE
- 7. OFFICE
- 8. ENTRANCE FROM MARKET SQUARE

Keeping the Mission Secret

If the characters refuse to say what they are doing on Qioria, or make something up, the social conflict will not happen. At least not right away; see if you can establish a more trusting relationship and set up a new meeting the next day. A good way to deepen the trust can be for the resistance to reveal more details on their operations, show the characters how they hide communication equipment and weapons below the floor boards and so on. If you still cannot make the characters trust the resistance members, Kalman Estope will eventually point them to the temple.



Arjun Linas

This part of the scenario soon turns into a social conflict using the rules for Extended Conflicts in the *M-SPACE* rulebook. The outcome will determine how much help the characters can get from the locals in their search for *Exodus III*.

The sturdy but steep stairs – almost ladder-like – lead to a small hallway on the second floor. The young man points the way to one of the closed doors. Whether the characters knock, or just walk straight in, a small group of people gathered around a table greet them. A middle-aged woman, Arjun Linas, rises and welcomes them.

‘Please, sit down,’ she continues and gestures towards some empty chairs. As soon as the PCs have found their places, introductions are made (see *List of NPCs*). As the characters have come this far, the members are quite open about the group of local resistance they operate. They continue by asking about the PCs’ reason for being on Qioria. Any mentions of Garin Ebries will be answered (see *Passage 1: The Mission* for the truth about his disappearance) but if *Exodus III* is brought up, a short silence will fall upon the group.

Finally, Arjun speaks:

‘What you mention here is connected to an old tale here on Qioria. Most consider it a myth. But here in Yllm, the story of a starship bringing kindness and healing has never faded altogether. It may be you have come to the right place. We do not know much about the ship but how can we assist you in your search?’

Any questions or plans drawn up by the characters are soon cut off by a middle-aged man (Saber Cas):

‘Sorry to interrupt. All this is just fine, dear guests. But really, this is not what we should be doing. It’s way too risky. We must focus on our mission. Give me one good reason why we should help you? And where the hell is Ashot anyway?’

And this is the starting signal for the social conflict!

Social Conflict

The resistance is divided into 2-3 sides in the conflict; as many as there are PCs but not more than 3. These are:

1. Quite positive towards the PCs. Influence 65%, Pool 14. Represented by Arjun Linas.
2. Neutral, unsure of their stance. Influence 50%, Pool 11. Represented by Ia Veryl Nao.
3. Negative, do not trust the PCs and/or find the mission too risky. Influence 70%, Pool 10. Represented by Saber Cas.

Skills: any social skills. PCs can augment with Knowledge (Psychology) or Acting. Let up to three players roll, with the others possibly augmenting them if they have any applicable skills.

Conflict Pool: CHA+POW/2

Round length: 10 minutes

The PC with the highest Pool goes first, then continue from highest to lowest pool. Everyone that fails their skill rolls 1d6 damage individually. If there is a critical hit, everyone on the opposing side takes 1d6 damage (unless they also got a critical). For fumbled rolls, that individual takes 1d6 damage him/herself.

The behaviour of the characters since they arrived on Qioria will affect their chances of success. If they have been acting cautious and respectful, they will be *Amiable* on the Social Table (+5% on social skills). If they have been acting foolish, been short tempered or disrespectful, they will be *Disliked* on the Social table (-10%). Keep in mind that the Aajege, the character's ship, and the hermit's interest in it (see below), will be in the PC's favour, regardless of how they act. The resistance has probably found the Weaver symbol onboard the ship and will be quite curious (and less skeptical).

Resistance Arguments

Against the PCs:

- » *It is too risky*
- » *The resistance may be exposed*
- » *The characters cannot be trusted*
- » *What is in it for the Qiorians?*
- » *These are just children's stories and old tales. Why should time and resources be spent on that?*

For the PCs:

- » *If the story about the starship holds some truth, it would be a significant piece of Qiorian history*
- » *The risk is minimal for the members of the resistance*
- » *'Wait till you have heard Isao's view. This mission is what he has been looking for all his life'*
- » *The characters seem trustworthy. And there is something about their ship and that symbol.*
- » *If there is any truth in the old tales, we received help from this mysterious star faring people many years ago. Now it is our turn to help them.*



Ia Veryl Nao, waitress at the cantina

Consequences of the conflict:

- » PCs are winning: The Resistance agrees to help them. They are taken to the hermit (giving them a good introduction), the shrine (if they have not been there already) and will provide them with transport to the Valley of the Dead if they want to go there later.
- » PCs are losing: The Resistance decides their cause is more important and so they cannot risk any involvement in the PC's affairs. When leaving, the most reliable character is taken aside secretly by the old Kalman Estope, for a couple of moments only: 'Visit the old temple'. This outcome means that the characters only get enough help to carry on (the final clue is in the temple) but not anything else.

However, there is a twist just as the conflict ends: At the very moment the Extended Conflict comes to a close, a young man tiptoes into the room and whispers something in Arjun Linas' ear. She looks shocked, collects herself after a few seconds, and says: 'The stakes have been raised. Ashot has been found shot to death a few minutes ago. Outside his brewhouse. One shot to the head; he died instantly. A professional did this'.

The murder is the work of Tye Hawke. He was identified as a spy by Ashot (although he thought it was a Nurian spy) and the agent acted swiftly to eliminate this new threat.

The meeting is quickly dissolved. The party downstairs has quietened down after the news of Ashot's death and people leave the house in small groups. Ia is consoled by two women as they disappear into the darkness. The characters are advised not to pass through the south gate at this hour, to avoid the guards, and arrangements are made for them to sleep in a couple of simple guest rooms on the second floor. If they insist, Arjun will take them to either the murder scene or the temple right away, although she will prefer to wait until morning.

The Hermit

By visiting the old temple, the characters will be provided with the clue needed to move their search to the Valley of the Dead. The easiest (and most likely) course to get here is by the help of the resistance. The characters may be lucky and encounter the temple simply by strolling around Yllm however, seeing the small Weaver symbol on the old door handle, and deciding to take a chance (the symbol will be noticed by any of the characters if they are invited into the temple).

The old temple has two striking features: its lush garden and the fact that the actual building is rather dilapidated. Most buildings in Yllm have a worn look but are often well-kept if scrutinised. The temple, on the other hand, has apparently been neglected for many years. The outer layer of mud is cracked in several places, showing the underlying bricks, and any paint has paled almost entirely. The contrast with the beautiful vegetable beds is striking.

The only resident (and user) of the temple is Isao Om Ananth, an old man keeping mostly to himself. In the daytime, he is either tending the garden or meditates inside the temple (50/50 chance). In the evening (if the characters come here straight from the meeting with the resistance), he will be found meditating in the large hall of the temple.

Isao Om Ananth is a man of few words. He will greet visitors with kindness and invites anyone with a respectful attitude into the main hall if they ask to speak with him. Annoying or disrespectful characters will be sent away (from a storytelling point of view, Isao is a threshold guardian keeping cocky heroes from receiving the help they do not deserve). If the character's meeting with the resistance went well, Arjun Linas will bring them to the temple, asking Isao to help the characters with his advice.

The interior of the temple is characterised by austerity and simplicity. Stone and wood dominate, with very sparse furnishings. Inside the main entrance, a narrow hallway goes left and right, with simple wooden doors leading to dormitories (in the western part of the building) and several

The Murder of Ashot Llebot

Ashot Llebot was shot in cold blood by Tye Hawke. Ashot was an excellent person and sensed something was wrong with the inquisitive man in black clothes. la, the waitress, had left the cantina only minutes before Tye Hawke showed up. Not many tracks have been left behind at the crime scene – Tye Hawke is a well-trained professional – but the characters may want to visit it anyway. Ashot's body is kept at Arjun's clinic.

Ashot's small brewery is housed in a small building behind the canteen. As the body has been moved, there is not much to see. No blood, no footprints and the door to the brewery is still locked. Neighbours have already been queried but no one seems to have heard or seen anything. Inside the storage room, nothing seems to have been disturbed. A couple of cylindrical containers are connected by various hoses and tubes, while the finished Qiorian Longneck is kept in a few barrels and bottles along a wall.

The body is attended to by Arjun Linas and she will only let the characters see it if they insist. Her verdict is that Ashot was killed instantly by a shot to the head. The wound is cauterised (blood vessels sealed by an energy weapon, meaning no bleeding has occurred) and quite small. 'This is not from a Nurian weapon,' she says. 'I have treated many blaster wounds over the last two years and I'm sure this is caused by a tighter and more powerful beam. It's like nothing I have seen before'.

This is as far as the characters will get with this clue.

small rooms with kitchen, storage and so forth. The east of the temple contains a large hall with a high, domed roof, these days only used for meditation and occasional meetings. The dome is made up of thousands of coloured glass beads, ranging from dark blue near the walls to a very light blue at the top, giving the daylight of the hall an almost ethereal quality. At night it is lit only by many candles and small oil lamps, scattered over the floor. The room is completely devoid of furniture, with a small shrine at the northern wall. A stack of thin cushions are placed by the door between the hall and the hallway, used to make sitting on the floor less uncomfortable.

The discussion with Isao – and Arjun, if she is there – takes place in the large hall, under the glass dome. Arjun will make a short introduction, to explain who the PCs are and why she has brought them to the temple. Isao simply nods, scrutinising the characters. When they start telling the story about their mission, Isao seems to drift into a light meditative state, closing his eyes and listening intently. As the character finishes, he remains silent, contemplating the implications of what he has been told – just a bit too long for the PCs to grow impatient. Then he starts telling his story.

'Many years ago, so long most people consider it a children's story now, a peculiar starship did indeed land here on Qioria. I do not know very much about it. I have assembled all this from small pieces of evidence I have heard, here and there, over the course of my life. Nothing of this is certain. I sometimes get the feeling it was meant to be forgotten.

'These people came out of nowhere and disappeared into nothingness. They never revealed where they came from or where they were heading. They had no name for themselves. Their ship seems to have needed supplies and repairs and in return, they cured the incurable and blessed our soil.

'It has been told that they used magic. All my life I have never believed it, thinking it was merely unheard of technology. But now, as my eyes have started to dim, I see it more clearly.

'Their ship is said to have stranded to the east of Yllm. In what our ancestors called the Valley of the Dead – a sacred place to them, full of animal spirits and strange occurrences.

'I'm not sure you will find anything there after all this time.

'You will have to follow the tails, as we say around here'.

Isao cannot tell them much more. He will listen attentively to any discussions but will not have much to say (unless asked about his vegetable garden). If the characters present plans to go to the valley, Isao will recommend that they contact Arjun Linas (if she is not already with them). This lead will take them to the dinner party and the secret resistance meeting. He will also point them to the small shrine in the park if they have not seen it.

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This concludes the investigations in Yllm. The next step is to sneak out of town undetected, to visit the Valley of the Dead in search of clues.



Isao Om Ananth, the hermit in the temple

Interlude:

Security Forces

There are many opportunities for trouble with the Nurian security forces stationed on Qioria and the characters may even end up in jail. See *List of NPCs* for details on the security forces, how they operate and behave in various situations.

South Entrance

As described earlier, the only entrance to Yllm at the moment is guarded by two Nurian soldiers. They ask everyone passing in and out for ID. Most of the time the gate sees relatively little use but on market days there will often be a small crowd, as described previously.

If the characters are caught with illegal or subversive activities (like using violence against a Nurian soldier), they will have trouble getting in and out of Yllm. Finding other ways may be necessary (for example, see *Sneaking Out of Yllm*).

Encounters

Even if the characters stay calm and legal, there is a chance they will face the patrolling guards whenever they move around in Yllm. All of them are set up to trigger violent impulses with the characters, testing their self-control. While they may very well win occasional fights, a violent strategy will only lead to trouble in the long run. Again, see *List of NPCs* for details on the security forces. Below are some example situations (use at least one each day):

- » ID Check. The characters are stopped in the middle of the street and asked to show IDs.
- » NPC Arrest. Guards arrest a Yllm resident. An argument will break out 50% of the time (1d4 residents involved), while there is only a 15% chance the person tries to resist the arrest and starts a fight. If no one interferes, the 'criminal' is knocked unconscious and dragged to the arrest.
- » NPC Harassment. Guards harass a shop owner. They flung his or her goods to the ground and tables are toppled over – all because the guards suspect weapons, explosives or some other imaginary threat. As above, there is a 50% chance of a row and 15% chance of a fight. 2d4 residents will be involved.

As soon as the characters establish contact with the local resistance, they will urge the PCs to stay low in these situations. Any undue attention must be avoided.

In Custody

Anyone putting up a fight with the guards may very well end up in a holding cell at the temporary Nurian headquarters right outside the energy shield. The buildings are appropriated from the Qiorians, built in the local style, but converted to offices and jail (see interior plan). Next, to the HQ lies the Nurian barracks. A small workshop for vehicle repairs and equipment storage is nearby.

A minimum of two soldiers always guards the HQ: one at the entrance desk and one overlooking the holding cells. In the daytime, 1d4 additional guards are in the building (doing paperwork, in meetings, picking up equipment and so on).

Any loud disturbances or shooting will attract 1d3+2 soldiers within 2 minutes.

ID Badges

While The Constellate has withdrawn for several years, some tech concepts have survived nearly intact. IDs are one of those. Most worlds have their version of digital ID badges but they always comply with the standard dictated by The Constellate. The major difference is that ID scanners are seldom connected to central servers anymore, resulting in a more hit and miss approach. The Nurian Kingdom, however, prides itself at centralised ID processing. Transfer rates are a bit slow, however, so being tagged once as a suspect will not necessarily mean an ID is flashed red until several days later.

Cells are very basic with only a bunk and sometimes a small, barred window. An energy field is used instead of a cell door. At any time 1d4-1 Qiorians are held in the cells.

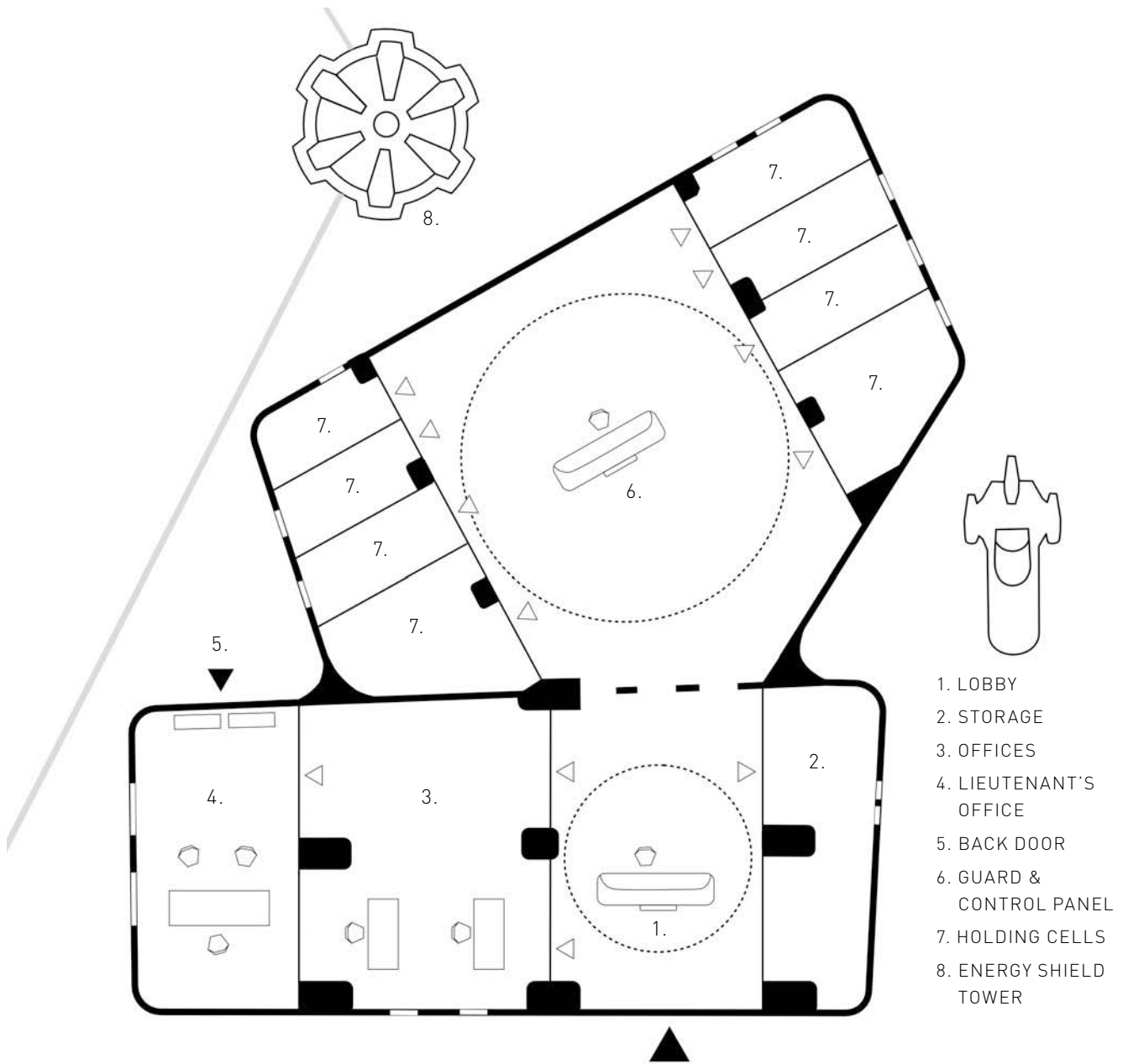
Depending on what the characters have been involved in, their treatment will differ somewhat. For regular brawls or resisting the patrolling guards, they will be kept in the cell for 2-3 days, beaten up lightly (1d3 hit points) and then released. For repeated offences, add one day and the beating will be rougher (never lowering hit points below half).

If the characters are suspected of subversive activity, the treatment starts as above, but instead of being released, a higher rank interrogator will arrive. The GM can make as much of this as they like but in most cases, the investigator will write off the PCs as simple troublemakers. They will be released in a few more days.

The most dangerous situation for an arrested character is if a member of the security forces has been killed or severely injured. This will also result in an interrogator being sent for but there is a significant risk the soldiers will avenge their colleague before that. The character will deliberately be given a chance to escape, 'unfortunately' being shot in the process.

Rescue

Rescuing one or several arrested characters is fully possible. A few different approaches exist. The safest route, and the one used by the local resistance if they are involved, is to use the back door at night. This is likely to take the guards by surprise and prevent them from calling for reinforcements. All interior doors are unlocked but the back door needs a successful Lockpicking roll to open. Jamming the cell's energy shields can be done in a variety of ways: firing a blaster at the controls next to them, hitting the right buttons on the main control desk (Computers roll needed to identify the right controls), or a Lockpicking or Electronics roll on the controls. See the list of NPCs for more on how the local resistance will act in different situations.



Lt. Garren

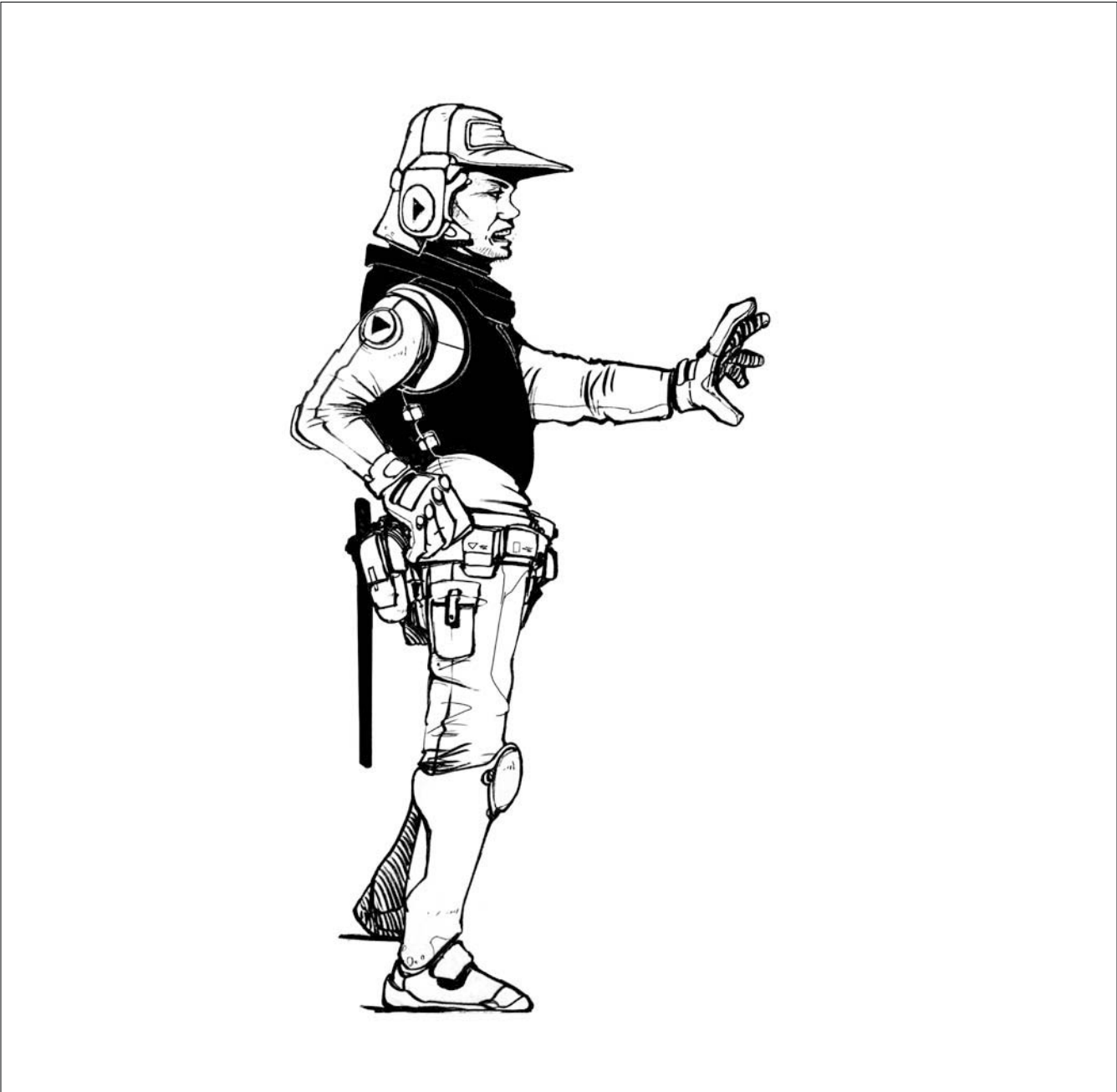
The Lieutenant in command at Yllm is not exactly effusive about the operation he has been sent on. He cannot see how the locals could disrupt the mining; they are disorganised, have no weapons and no guts. Conquering Qioria was a brilliant move by his King, of course, but this guarding duty is just too annoying and frustrating. Better to go for some other worlds to annex. He wants more action and honestly does not feel at home behind a desk – nor does he excel there. To ease his boredom, he has set up a small ‘business’, trading local provisions with other Nurian camps around Qioria (see Shops in Yllm, Passage 3).

Opposite: Nurian soldier in typical gear

Another rescuing method is to blast away or ‘unweld’ the barred window leading to the right cell. This will attract 1d3+2 guards within 1 minute, meaning the rescuers will have to work quickly (preferably with a vehicle nearby).

The most difficult way is to walk straight in during the middle of the day and just shoot at everything that moves. 1d3+2 guards will join the fight within 1 round. In addition to the tough fight, this will lead to a massive reinforcement of troops within a few hours, from nearby towns, and a brutal clamp down on Yllm is carried out. This option will not be supported by the members of the resistance under any circumstances.

Various diplomatic alternatives are viable too and can be discreetly encouraged by the GM, if possible. A skilled character, given a day or two, (with Bureaucracy, Politics, Acting and other social skills) can approach the Lieutenant in command (Lt. Garren) to see if he is willing to release the characters – if skill rolls are successful. This situation is best treated as an Extended Conflict (Garren’s CHA Conflict Pool is 16, his Bureaucracy skill is 40%). The PCs can also use bribery and threats, most likely as part of a social conflict (releasing a troublemaker will cost the characters 500 Cr). Threats can include many things but the most efficient way is to present evidence of his involvement in local smuggling (see sidebar).



Passage 4:

Sneaking Out of Yllm

Location: Yllm

Main NPCs: The Local Resistance, Nurian Security Forces.

Observer: Tye Hawke

In which the characters must leave Yllm secretly.

There are several ways to get to the Valley of the Dead but if the characters ask any of the members of the resistance, they will recommend going there by speeder bike, leaving Yllm under cover of darkness. Using the starship is too risky, they point out, as Nurian Central Command in Dester keeps an eye on Qiorian airspace.

Below is the plan that Arjun Linas and the others suggest:

- » They hide speeder bikes in the bush north-east of Yllm.
- » During the night (if they are staying inside Yllm), the characters sneak out to the northern-most energy shield tower, disable a section for a few seconds only (to not raise the alarm), dashing into darkness before anyone spots them.
- » A couple of members from the resistance oversee the operation, to distract any guards showing up.

If the PCs accept the plan, members of the resistance hide the speeder bikes the day before the actual escape.

Disabling the Energy Shield

Disabling the shield is a critical move to get out unseen. Saber Cas has done it several times before and describes how to do it to the most tech-savvy character. He is not willing to risk joining them, however. Instead, Kalman Estope and Deon Tort will show them the way, with F-AE-07 tagging along (beeping excitedly).

Energy Shield

Field strength: Low

Hit Points: 15

Tower Armour Points: 6

Getting to the energy shield tower in the middle of the night is not difficult. The GM may want to pretend to make Stealth skill rolls but in reality, the route through the dark alleys is quite safe from the Nurian guards. At least until the characters arrive at the tower.

Two guards patrol the inside of the perimeter. Placing a lookout in at least one direction will give the characters fair warning of their approach (allowing for ample time to hide but not to close the maintenance hatch entirely). An eerie red light is spread a few metres out from the energy shield, giving the scene a stark appearance but also lots of shadows where you can hide.

The actual rewiring is played out as an Extended Conflict:

Skill: Mechanics, Electronics, Engineering or Computers

Conflict Pool: INT

Damage: 1d6

Round Length: 1 minute

Opponent Rating: Pool 11, 50%

A maintenance hatch must first be pried open to gain access to the electronics inside the tower (first skill roll). The construction is not very stur-

Alternate Routes to the Valley

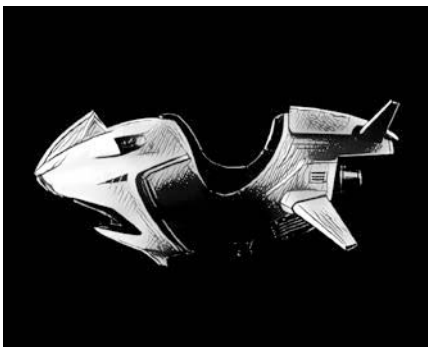
The PCs may decide to use other means of transportation:

The Aajege. Firing up the engines of the Aajege in the middle of the night will most certainly draw the attention of the guards. They will hail Central Command, asking them to track the ship, and possibly send a patrol ship if the Aajege is not leaving Qioria on a straight course.

During the day, the ship is also tracked by Central Command, sending troops to investigate, landing in the valley (double the number of soldiers looking for the characters in the next chapter); see chapter Valley of the Dead.

Stolen land speeder. There are several rather scruffy private land speeders parked outside of Yllm, many of them in small sheds or tied down with large tarpaulins. They will carry 2-4 people. For larger vehicles, the Nurian HQ right outside Yllm has at least one parked outside. Hotwiring any of them requires an Extended Conflict. Use the rules from Disabling the Energy Shield but apply to the hotwiring instead.

Remember that passing in or out of Yllm is restricted during the night. If the characters spend the night in the Aajege, they will not have to short circuit the energy shield.



Speeder Bike

dy and the tower design is meant to keep people out, not in – therefore the hatch is placed on the ‘wrong’ side of the shield.

In addition to the normal Conflict Pool damage, there is also a risk of making a loud noise (dropping a tool, banging the hatch accidentally and so on). When failing a skill roll, check the following table for results. If the characters have made preparations to lessen the risk for loud noises, allow for one failed roll before consulting the table.

- » One failed roll: Draws the attention of two guards, arriving within 1d6 rounds. Staying low is all that is required to make them continue
- » Two failed rolls: Draws the attention of two guards, arriving within 1d3 rounds. A distraction or a successful stealth roll is required to lure them away
- » Three or more failed rolls: Two guards appear after 1 round, ready to call for reinforcements and needs to be tricked away or fought (preferably silent)

Different characters can have a go at the tower if things go awry. At least one armed character must be stationed next to the person doing the hot-wiring (both fully protected from the guard’s shots by the tower), to allow her to continue working on it during a fight. If the lowering of the shield is not possible, because of lousy skills or plain bad luck, the GM may want to let F-AE-07 zoom up to the tower, extend a manipulator and lower the shield. For maximum effect, let the droid do it mid-combat. Both Kalman and Deon will, however, withdraw before any fighting starts, wishing the characters good luck.

The energy shield will only be lowered for 5-10 seconds once the characters have deactivated it. All characters within a reasonable distance will make it through, however a harsh GM may want to demand an Athletics roll for PCs further away (more than one building away from the shield). If the guards have arrived by then, they will fire at the sprinting silhouettes

at a Difficulty Grade of *Formidable*. Keep in mind that any wounded characters may need help to slip through the shield in time.

In the Bush

Once the energy shield is left behind, the characters are relatively safe. As long as they keep moving, no one will find them. If they stop to tend to any wounds, the area will soon be searched by several groups of soldiers. At least one Stealth roll is needed to get to the speeder bikes undetected in this case.

The speeder bikes are hidden approximately 400 metres from the outskirts of Yllm. Two characters fit on each. Bundles of protective parkas, first aid kits, water bottles, several glow cubes and some rations are stored on the bikes as well.

Regardless of the mode of transportation (besides the Aajege), the ride will take till dawn, the first kilometre rather slow and with headlights off. Once they are out of sight of Yllm, they can go full throttle over the bushland, lights giving them enough guidance to avoid crashing. With the Aajege, it will take less than 10 minutes to get to the valley.

Depending on how this *Passage* went, the Nurians may have sent a patrol ship to investigate the Yllm surroundings. If the scene ended in a big fight and a search party, a ship will be called in from Central Command (see *Spectacular Landing* in the next *Passage*).

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Next up is the Valley of the Dead and the last push to find any remains of the elusive Exodus. As the trip is uneventful, any lowered Conflict Pools will be raised halfway to their original values.

Speeder Bike

SPEED	13
HANDLING	16
SIZE	30

Hit Points	40
Armor	AP 5/-
Weapons	Blaster Rifle, 2d6
Driver + Psgr.	2
Cargo	50 kg
Weight	0.8 ton
Dimensions	L: 4 m W: 1 m

A common but rather old speeder bike model. Robust, easy to drive but not very fast. A small hatch at the back is big enough (barely) for personal stuff. The forward-facing blaster rifle is often dismantled when used by civilians but on outlying worlds as Qioria, they sometimes remain.

Manufacturer: Orellani Systems

Passage 5:

Valley of the Dead

Location: Valley of the Dead

Main NPCs: Nurian Security Forces, Tye Hawke

*The characters find a subterranean structure and are under attack.
They find the sought after evidence.*

This passage presents a few alternative routes to achieve the same goal: finding the subterranean passages of the valley. It can be a quick transition to the underground second part, or a more drawn-out search, depending on the choices of the GM and players. Some of the events and conditions are fixed, however:

- » Nurian marines pass nearby the characters in a land speeder. The soldiers will decide to take a closer look (eventually encountering the PCs down in the bone caves). This incident will happen whether the Nurian patrol ship lands in the valley or not; see below.
- » Tye Hawke has kept up with the characters and is observing them from a distant rock formation. He will find an alternate route into the bone caves once he realises where the PCs are going (also encountering them down in the caves, in a final confrontation over the Exodus remains). If the characters succeed with a *Formidable* Perception roll, they will notice that someone is watching them but nothing more.
- » Sensors do not work properly. The subterranean passages will

not show up, either on handheld scanners, starship sensors or probes. This is, no doubt, the work of animal spirits if you ask the locals. The scientific reason is that the ipeoln metabolism accumulates polferro mineral in the skeleton and with the massive amount of bones in one place, sensors simply cannot cope with all the reflected energy signatures, resulting in ghost signals. Readings are completely bonkers, showing one thing for a few minutes, only to show something else the next. The GM can use this to send the characters to follow false readings of structures, weak life form signals and so on.

- » Comms only work over short distances (up to 500 metres), reduced even more underground (100 metres), for the same reason as sensors are dysfunctional. Thus, no contact is possible with the world outside the valley: no emergency signals, no calls for reinforcements, no nothing. With a bit of tinkering, the comms of a starship can be improved to get a distress signal out (see *Passage 6*).
- » Small lizard-like animals live among the skeletal remains, scuttling around here and there.

Arriving at the valley is a splendid, yet slightly disturbing, view. The broad, shallow valley is formed geologically by rock formations and the valley floor is covered end to end with skeletal remains, large and small, colouring the ground off-white. Massive ribcages rise high above their heads in places and indeterminate bones and skulls stick out of the ground everywhere they look.

Dawn is quick but colourful, in green and orange, and the air is completely still. A deafening silence adds to the otherworldly quality of the scene.

How the characters set foot on the white ground will depend on their mode of transportation. For speeder bikes and land speeders, it will be a simple affair. If they arrive by starship, the landing will be a bit more challenging than they expect (see *Spectacular Landing 2* below). No matter where in

the valley they land, if they dig a hole or a starship rips the ground apart, the outcome will be the same: the bone caves described below will lay before them (call it hero's luck for landing just in the right spot).

The main options for how events unfold are as follows: *Aha-Moment*, *Spectacular Landing 1* and *Spectacular Landing 2*.

Aha-Moment

The characters move around the valley, perhaps chasing ever-changing sensor ghost signals. As they are on the brink of giving up, one of them spots a small lizard disappearing down a small crevice between a few bones. Something stirs within, a vague memory just out of reach. Words barely remembered.

Then it strikes her: 'Follow the tails!' The advice that was given by Isao, just as they parted, suddenly takes on a new meaning. Time to dig.

After a minute or two it is obvious that the crevice is leading to a larger cavity, although it will take about an hour to make the hole big enough for a person to crawl through (time enough for a Nurian patrol to spot them). Once they have squeezed down, they will be at location A on the map of the bone caves.

Spectacular Landing 1

A small Nurian patrol ship attempts to land close to the characters, not realising the ground is too unstable to carry the weight of the ship. As the landing gear starts to snap the top layer of bones, it is already too late for the pilot to lift off again: the gear is stuck among the entangling skeletal pieces. The more weight the ship places on the ground, the deeper it will sink, with a grinding sound from roaring engines, twisting metal and cracking bones.

As the belly of the ship barely touches the ground, the pilot loses control and the sleek steel vessel crashes down. The ground surrounding it starts to give way (nearby characters roll Athletics or similar to avoid 1d4-1 damage to random hit location) and it burrows down, metre by metre, almost in slow motion.

With only the top visible, the ship finally comes to rest. For dramatic effect, a cave deeper down suddenly collapses, making the ship sink even deeper as soon as the players come to their senses, perhaps slowly dragging one of the speeder bikes into the hole.

As the dust finally settles, the ship has ripped up a massive hole in the ground, about five times its size and at least twice as deep. Along one side of the hole, a natural opening has been laid bare and a passage leading down is clearly visible. This location is marked with an A on the map of the bone caves.

If the characters decide to enter the ship, they will find five Nurian soldiers. Two are knocked unconscious, the rest are only lightly bruised, but incapable to fight because of shock. Tying them up and blasting any comms may be the best option for security minded PCs.

Spectacular Landing 2

This option is quite similar to *Spectacular Landing 1* but applies if the characters are trying to land their ship on the unstable valley floor, instead of a Nurian vessel. Use the same description as above. Characters on board a crashing Aajege will not take any damage.

It is also possible for both ships to attempt a landing, first the Aajege and then the Nurian patrol ship to investigate, resulting in two crashes. The Nurian pilot is not smart enough to realize the unstable ground has caused the Aajege's crash until it's too late.

The Bone Caves

The Bone Caves are where the climax of the scenario takes place. At the bottom of a steep shaft, a small chamber contains three elaborate glass spheres, left there by the Exodus crew as a literal message in a bottle (there is a code inscribed into the glass structure but that will not be revealed until much later). While the walk down the caves will be relatively uneventful, to begin with, as soon as the characters descend the shaft,



- A. ENTRY POINT
- B. VESICULE NET
- C. IPEOLN ROOM
- D. COLLAPSED PASSAGE
- E. SHAFT

10 M

the bone caves

Nurian soldiers will catch up with them. At the bottom of the shaft, in a small adjoining chamber, Tye Hawke is waiting for them.

Regardless of how the characters reached the underground passage, they find themselves at one end of a dark corridor made up of the partly intact skeleton of a long dead animal (location A on the map of the caves). It is dark and the glow cubes from the speeder bikes will come in handy, as flashlights or placed on the walls.

The reason for the chambers and corridors to have formed are twofold: the skeletons act as a load-bearing structure and the thick calcified hides prevent smaller bones and soil filling up cavities. Sometimes whole animals are intact, allowing the characters to walk relatively unhindered through a chamber. In other places the carcasses have collapsed, however, forming narrow passages with bones sticking out from all sides (including the ground) and loose pieces littering the uneven ground, making them slow to navigate. Walls are either quite smooth (intact creature; for example location C on the map) or broken up (collapsed passage; D1-D8 on the map). All surfaces are off-white, reflecting the beams from the glow cubes. The air is still and no sounds from the outside can be heard.

Any time the characters pass through a collapsed area, they must slow down to climb over, crawl under and squeeze through. If someone forces their way through, roll a *Hard* Athletics roll to avoid falling (taking 1d4-1 damage to a random hit location).

The route through the caves is quite simple and there is only a single junction where the characters need to choose their way. Try to keep the players on their toes with the eerie silence broken by ominous cracks from the skeletal pieces, strange sensor readings, and difficult passages. Do note that this part is not intended as a classic RPG dungeon but rather a good hiding place for a 'message in a bottle'. It can, of course, be expanded if the GM wishes, with a more difficult search and numerous encounters.

The Nurian Marines

As the characters find their way down the skeletal corridors, the Nurian's land speeder will arrive at the entrance of the caves. If the PCs came by speeder bikes, the soldiers will head down right away. If there is a crashed Nurian ship, they will first attend to any comrades (none of them will join in the hunt down the caves, however they will try to send out a call for reinforcements or a distress signal, but nothing penetrates the static).

Brute force. Unless the PCs use a speeder bike, the net will only bulge if pushed. The stickiness will also present a problem.

Blaster. Petite effect. Each shot will only cut a tiny hole, quickly mended by neighbouring vesicles. Rapid firing will improve the result slightly but not enough to create a human-sized gap.

Cutting. A handful of vesicles can easily be cut loose but larger areas will not work. The self-repair properties of the net are too efficient.

Light. Intense light, like reflected sunlight or laser, forces the vesicles toward the edges, quickly opening a hole in the web. The net stays like this as long as the light is switched on and for another two minutes if switched off.

Fire. Fire kills the individual vesicles quickly. A flame thrower is recommended. Building a regular fire causes the passage to fill with noxious smoke (visibility 5 metres, breathing mask necessary until reaching the shaft; see below).

Electricity. Electricity has very little effect on the net; at least the low voltages possible in this situation.

Feeding. If the characters smear the net with some food or beverage (synthetic rations work fine), the vesicles will hurry to get to this easily digestible energy. If applied in a rough circle, a gap will open in the middle.

Psionics. A psionic can open a large gap by winning an Opposed Roll (POW x5 vs. POW x5) but can also use Read Mind to get information on if someone passed through (or got caught).

The Vesicle Net

At location B on the map, the characters face their first real obstacle: an alien species looking somewhat like a spider's web. It is a net of inter-linked vesicles blocking the tunnel.

The cone of light from the glow cubes frightens a small reptile, which rushes along in the tunnel. A few seconds later, as it disappears from view, it screams in agony before being quickly silenced.

As the characters warily proceed, a large net-like structure soon blocks the entire passage. In the lower left corner, the reptile is stuck in the net, barely moving any longer. The threads of the net have quickly expanded when touched and now form a semi-transparent membrane in the area around the unfortunate reptile.

For the characters to continue their way down, they must find a way to get past the net. Some tricks work, others do not – see sidebar for ideas.

See *Life Form* chapter for stats.

The Shaft

After about 200 metres of slow descent, a narrow passage enters the top of a large chamber, apparently shaped by some age-old collapse of many smaller carcasses. It stretches 40 metres across, 10 metres up and 50 metres down, forming a jagged shaft of bones all the way down, with a narrow, broken up ledge leading around it. The sides of the shaft show lots of chambers and corridors, cut open by the paleontological cave-in. At the bottom of the shaft, a relatively flat floor is located, covered with a massive pile of splintered bones. Laid out on the top of the stack, hardly recognisable, is a large Weaver symbol.

For the characters to see any of this, they must drop a glow cube into the shaft. As the character with the highest Perception peers down, she slowly realises that the floor has a strange regularity to it: hardly discernible,

the Weaver symbol they have encountered thrice before, has been outlined with slightly darker pieces of bone.

The descent to the bottom of the shaft can be approached in several ways. The most direct route is to climb down the sides but the adjacent chambers and passages can be used too, but will take longer and will also involve a bit of climbing, to reach lower levels. It all depends on what equipment the characters have brought and what ideas they come up with. If there were almost no discussions on what to bring, allow them to spend Luck Points for desired gear but only within reasonable limits: no jet packs or grav plates (too expensive and unusual to have lying around) but rope + hook and similar solutions are fine. To simulate the descent, use the Extended Conflict setup described below.

Regardless of the method they choose for the descent, when the first character is halfway down, 2-6 Nurian marines will start shooting at them from the top ledge (see *The Attack*).

The Descent

Skills: Athletics, Acrobatics

Conflict Pools: DEX for PCs

The shaft has a pool of 15 if the characters are climbing, 11 if they are using adjoining chambers. It has a 65% chance of damaging the characters.

Damage: 1d6

Round Length: –

Every successful roll will move the character roughly 3 metres lower.

Using ropes will make the climb *Easy*.

Everyone climbing fights a separate conflict with the shaft (with individual skill and damage rolls every round) but a kindly GM may allow skill bonuses (*Easy* rolls, not to be combined with any bonus for using ropes) if a good climber finds the best route for the others to follow.

Time aspect: In general, going through the adjacent chambers will take roughly three times as long as using ropes. Climbing the sides without ropes takes twice as long.

Falling

Fumbled skill rolls result in falling but as the wall is very jagged the character has a good chance of catching herself: a successful Athletics or Acrobatics roll is all that is needed, getting three tries, but she will receive 1d4-1 hit point damage (to a random location). Or a nearby character can catch a falling person by rolling Athletics or Acrobatics, both receiving 1d4-1 damage if successful.

A character losing the conflict (DEX Conflict Pool reduced to zero) is stuck. The earlier in the conflict someone reaches a Pool of zero, the higher up on the shaft wall he or she is trapped. To be able to continue, the character needs help in some way. Ropes, special gear or close guidance will do the trick: a new extended conflict is initiated, this time with CON+POW/2 as a Conflict Pool (mental and physical exhaustion comes into play now; the price for failing is three depleted pools) and PC skill rolls at *Easy* if the help is good enough. Losing *this* conflict means the character must be carried or lowered down (requiring two other characters to climb up there and start a new Extended Conflict).

The Attack

Despite the method of descent, when the characters are about halfway down, the security forces will strike out of nowhere. They have arrived at the top of the shaft and discovered the characters on their way down. They immediately open fire. Depending on the PCs previous actions, and the state the characters are in, there will be 2-6 soldiers.

Fortunately, the sides of the shaft are highly irregular, providing lots of small nooks and crannies for hiding. The first round of blaster shots will miss, barely giving the characters time to find shelter before the marines fire again (second round). In the third combat round, if the characters want to return fire, roll initiative as usual. The marines are in partial cover, showing only head and torso (*Hard* attack roll).

If a character gets out of cover to climb, she is relatively easy to hit. Darkness, or shifting light from drifting glow cubes, will make conditions more difficult, evening out the bonuses and penalties. Changing the angle towards the attackers (*ie.* climbing down on the same side of the shaft as the marines are positioned) will, however, make firing *Hard* for both parts and the Nurians will furthermore be fully exposed to other PCs firing if they try to shoot more or less straight down.

The Nurians will take cover if the characters return with heavy fire. Utilized like this, suppressing fire can be used to let another character climb

down relatively undisturbed for a couple of rounds, to find new cover. This way they can reach the bottom without getting killed.

The Inner Sanctum

When the characters have defeated the security forces or left them behind, they should be made to feel that the way is open, hopefully to the final piece of evidence the crew of Exodus III left behind.

Only two chambers at the bottom of the shaft are possible to enter. One of them is only one room deep and the PCs can explore them within a few minutes without turning up anything unusual.

The other passage leads to two medium-sized chambers (10x15 metres), of which the inner contains the sought-after evidence: two delicate glass spheres the size of grapefruits, covered by a few circumferences of a thin silvery thread. Both are intact, despite their apparent fragility. Unless the characters are on the run, they will automatically find the glass spheres.

The moment they have found the orbs, a man will step out of the shadows: the Constellate agent Tye Hawke has followed the characters through the maze and arrived here only moments before them but via a different route. Now he points his blaster at the characters and smiles grimly:

'Everyone takes a step back and drop your weapons'.

Tye Hawke is a hardened man, not shying away from the use of violence. He is likely to be out-gunned here but the characters are probably wounded, lessening their advantage. Solving this situation without getting killed will take some cunning from both sides. The length of the scene can vary but Tye Hawke will initially try to avoid a fight, preferring to talk his way out of the dilemma. On the next page are some pointers on how to play this scene.

Other Tactics

A couple of other methods that can be used to get rid of the marines:

Find another way up and surprise the soldiers from behind, catching them in the crossfire.

Climb the shaft on the side closest to the Nurians and after that toss a stun grenade over the edge.

Concentrate heavy fire (ie. more than two weapons at the same time) on the ceiling above the marines, forcing them back from the shaft's edge to avoid falling debris. They will retreat for 1d4+1 rounds every time this happens.



Tye Hawke, agent of The Constellate

Broken Glass

The characters will be unaware of this but the glass spheres will be valuable to the Weavers even if they are shattered (the message encoded in the silk thread is possible to extract no matter how small the pieces are). Tye Hawke, on the other hand, will lose interest if both of them break. He will withdraw, with a promise to make the character's lives miserable if they ever meet again.

Playing Tye Hawke

Tye Hawke is kind and well-spoken at the start of this tricky stand-off. He will try to be smooth, only occasionally revealing his psychopathic traits. Throughout the scene, the more pressure, the more his demeanor will tip towards a cold murderer – all the time retaining his smooth tone.

Tye knows he is a better fighter but also that he is likely to be wounded, or killed, even if he fires first. As a precaution, he holds his Aleu-Ohra Attractor in his left hand, ready to activate it (see *Additional Rules*). He immediately starts talking, trying to get a grip on the situation, still with the blaster pointing at the characters.

His premier goal is to negotiate with the characters. He is under the impression that they are merely treasure hunters, easy to buy out, and always carries a layer of gold integrated into his belt for unexpected situations (worth 2,000 Cr). If this fails, he will try to coax the characters into revealing why they want the spheres so much. How come they are so valuable to them? Who sent them?

Fighting it out

As soon as anyone starts shooting, hell breaks loose. Tye Hawke, likely to survive at least one hit, will activate his Attractor to soak up the first shots and then quickly retreat into cover. The walls of the chamber are full of hiding places and the characters will easily find nooks to dive into or large bones/pillars to take cover behind. Unless Tye Hawke is very unlucky, he will drop at least one character in the first flurry of blaster shots. The fallen character can be used as an asset later in the scene: they may be strategically placed, perhaps unconscious, in the middle of the room, blaster shots passing overhead, and can be woken up at just the right moment to perform a last heroic shot if needed. With a bit of teamwork, the characters should be able to surround Tye Hawke, with some suppressing fire and smart positioning. Just remember, he will not give up unless his chances are completely gone.

Negotiating

The characters probably realise that Aliura Faaroe will not be satisfied unless the evidence is brought back in physical form. Tye Hawke is in a similar situation. Any negotiations will, therefore, be quite difficult to pull off. It might seem like the characters have nothing to offer Tye Hawke but in fact, they do. He and his superiors are very interested in every bit of information they can get on who sent the PCs on this mission and why – at least as soon as he figures out they are not grave robbers.

Pulling a scam is, of course, possible, from any of the two sides. 'Let me just wrap the spheres, and I will hand over the gold' or 'I will give you my Attractor Sphere if you let me have the glass bubbles' or numerous other small deceptions, sleight of hands and outright lies can be a natural part of the negotiations. The GM will have to play this by ear, working it out as the scenes unfold.

Unexpected visitor

If the situation stalls completely, with both parts unable to act, the GM may want to introduce a third party after a while. This person is most likely to be a surviving Nurian marine, lost in the maze of passages, attracted by the sound of voices. She will burst in, severely damaged, fully intent on avenging her comrades – she just has to figure out who the villain is. While a three-part standoff may not be any simpler to lead to a conclusion, a change in the situation may trigger some ideas with the PCs.

o

This scene ends the search for the characters. They have now found all evidence of Exodus III on Qioria. Finding their way out will not be difficult but the characters will have to face the consequences of their actions.

Unexpected event

This is similar to the unexpected visitor but uses the natural backdrop instead: the chamber slowly starts to collapse. Small bones start falling from the ceiling and thicker ones crack under the shifting weight above. Unless the two parties react, give them a countdown of 10-20 rounds, with the cave in becoming worse for every passing round. In the end, the chamber will collapse, burying any remaining individuals and glass spheres under tons of skeletal pieces.

Tye Hawke in Future Scenarios

If Tye Hawke is left badly wounded or dead, the Nurians will soon find his body and dump it in an Autodoc within an hour. A cocktail of life-extending chemicals are used by the Constellate on their agents to increase the time between death and irreversible brain damage, and this time they saved a life. At least partly. The chemicals could not prevent all damage, and the agent needs to be given several cybernetic replacements to survive, both internal and external. As much machine as man, he swears vengeance on the PCs and is ripe for become a recurring villain.

Passage 6:

Leaving Qioria

Location: Valley of the Dead, Yllm and Qioria orbit

Main NPCs: Nurian Security Forces

The Nurian security forces try to stop the characters from departing.

This passage describes how the Nurians try to stop the characters, as they try to leave Qioria. It is a highly flexible part of the scenario. The GM can make it long or short to suit the group. If the PCs only barely survived so far, this part can be dialed back to 'quick and easy'. There are three main sections: getting to their ship, an attack by Nurian patrol ships in Qioria orbit and finally a Destroyer called in to pursue the Aajege.

Resurfacing

Once the characters get back up into daylight (possibly around noon), heading back to Yllm can be relatively straight forward – or not. If the Nurian patrol ship crashed into the porous ground earlier, it will be as they left it. Any soldiers onboard will attack or may have set out on foot to reach an area where comms work, if you want to avoid another fight.

If the Aajege is stuck in the ground, the characters will need help to get it out. The locals can obtain a tow-ship to pull it out of the hole but first the PCs must take a hike back to Yllm. It is roughly a four-hour walk to get to an area where the comms are back online, after which they will be able to reach the locals in Yllm. A skilled engineer (making a successful Engi-

neering, Comms, Mechanics, Electronics or Computers roll) may also, in a couple of hours, repurpose the Aajege's communications equipment to send out a strong enough distress call but it will be heard by both Nurians and locals nearby.

If Nurians pick up the signal, a patrol ship with 6-10 guards will be sent. Hopefully, it will avoid crashing as it lands. Let the characters make a Perception roll as the ship approaches; this will barely give them enough time to hide any Nurian bodies and speeders. When the guards arrive, a successful social skill (Deceit, Oratory, Bureaucracy, Influence, Acting) roll is needed to avoid being arrested on the spot. A skill roll will not save them if there is evidence of Nurians however. Once the ship makes it back to Yllm, refer to *Interlude: Security Forces* for how to proceed.

Back in Yllm

Arriving in Yllm can be a bit problematic. Two Nurian soldiers guard the Aajege and the south entrance is still manned.

There are many possibilities here. If the characters can communicate with the resistance on the inside, they can go in the same way they got out (see *Passage 4*) but only after dark. During the day, dressing up as locals may help to get them past the south entrance guards (one successful social skill roll will get them through, without a skill roll there is a 20% chance of being detected).

Or the PCs can go straight for the ship, either blasting away or with more cunning. This method is reasonably quick and with some good hits, they can get inside before any reinforcements arrive (10 rounds). A few crates close to the ship will provide ample cover for the PCs if necessary. Once onboard, Central Command orders patrol ships to pursue the Aajege into orbit.

Attacking Extraction Towers

There are many reasons for the characters to sabotage extraction towers during the scenario but the most tempting situation is when they leave Qioria. This threat is also the cause of the Nurian Central Command to keep such a close eye on Qiorian airspace – the towers are not built to withstand an attack from a starship. Plotting a course across a mining site will give a skilled gunner plenty of time to take down the tower in a cinematic explosion. 1d4+1 Patrol ships will be dispatched immediately, arriving within 3d6 rounds.

While it is only a pinprick in the scope of the larger operation, it will have some bureaucratic repercussions in the coming weeks. Lt. Garren will be fired and Central Command will be restructured, with a few heads rolling. Energy shields will hereafter be installed to protect the towers.

In Orbit

As the Aajege reaches orbit, sensors will warn the crew of incoming star-ships. 1d4+1 Nurian patrol ships initiate combat a few rounds later. Adjust the number of ships to the competence of the characters – the Aajege should have a good chance of escaping.

Nurian Patrol Ship

A starfighter for one pilot and a gunner.

SPEED	14
HANDLING	11
SIZE	9

Hit Points	9
Shields	4
Armor	–
Weapons	Laser x2 (1d6)
Apps	–
Hit Locations	Cockpit 01-13 Gunner 14-25 Weapons 26-51 Engine 52-77 Maneuver 78-00

Cockpit	1
Gunner	1
Weapons	2 (Laser, damage 1d6 each)
Engine	2 (Thrust Rating 65)
Maneuver	2 (Thrust Rating 50)
Cargo	1
Hyperspace	–
Shields	4
Armor	–
Apps	–

This fighter is a Nurian model based on The Constellate designs from 20 years ago.

Deep Space (Optional)

If the Aajege escaped the orbital attack, the GM might want to include a final cinematic encounter. It will mainly be to create a sweet out-of-the-ashes ending but will not provide much in the way of options or player agency.

From the Nurian point of view, the last chance to get hold of the characters is to catch them before they leave the kingdom's jurisdiction. If the PCs adhere to the safety protocols of their hyperdrive, the Nurians will

have about two hours to intercept the Aajege. The only ship within jumping range is the Archenhaud, an old Destroyer of Constellate make, in the hands of the Nurian military for many years now.

The Archenhaud drops out of hyperspace right behind the fleeing Aajege. Alarms go off onboard the character's ship as the massive Destroyer looms in the dark, powering up weapons.

The Destroyer starts firing, trying to disable the Aajege, but just as the gunners are homing in on the tiny ship, the characters initiate the jump drive (an Astrogation roll may be needed). In one brilliant move, they slip out of the net.

Alternate Ending

If you want to, you can diverge from the main storyline in the scenario and throw the characters into a new one right away. While the events are beyond the scope of this book, you may want to create your scenario from these ideas:

Central Command's orders are to not blow the Aajege up in orbit but to incapacitate it and wait for a Destroyer to arrive. The Destroyer will try to use a tractor beam to get the Aajege into its hangar and then send in a boarding party.

If caught, the PCs have two main options: fight or surrender. As they are massively outmanned, giving up will probably be their best hope.

If they fight, the cargo bay doors will be cut open, and soldiers will move in two by two, covered by suppressing fire. Again, the goal is not to kill the characters but to take them out or force them to give up.

If the characters are arrested, they will be brought to the vessel's brig (or sick bay, if necessary) and escaping the huge ship will be the primary goal of this add-on scenario. Moving stealthily through corridors and engine rooms, hacking terminals, hiding in ventilation shafts and occasional gun-fights – all of these can be used to create a memorable adventure.

Conclusion

This is not the end. This is where it all begins.

As the characters return home, Aliura does not show up for the delivery. All they get is a handwritten letter from her, passed on by Jaywa Valeri and the remaining payment inside. Jaywa cannot reach her and his inquiries will only reveal that her ship was seen leaving in a hurry two days ago. Anobe has no coordinated flight control and no registers of arrivals/departures, so at the moment she has all but disappeared.

The letter reads as follows:

'I hope your investigations proved successful, and that we will be able to add an important piece to the puzzle that the Exodus ships have proven to be. I thank you for your help.

'I also hope you will accept my apology for not being there to meet you as planned. An unforeseen danger has forced Goro and me to leave in haste.

'I would like to ask you for one more favour. Any evidence you may have found, or even the fact that nothing turned up, needs to be delivered to my good friend Onn'ohdje on Ardeus, a man of my people.

'If you accept this new journey, you can use the starship Aajege for a while longer. Jaywa will also pay you another 2,000 Cr.

'I wish you good luck and I believe we will meet sooner than any of us expect'.

At the bottom of the letter, the Weaver symbol is inscribed.

This is the end of the scenario. Enough loose ends are left for the GM to craft her own scenarios and in time more material will be published for The Weaver setting, detailing more worlds, species, cultures – with additional information on both the Weavers, the Nurian Kingdom and The Constellate.

I hope your investigations proved successful, and that we will be able to add an important piece to the puzzle that the Exodus ships has proven to be. I thank you for your help.

I also hope you will accept my apology for not being there to meet you as planned. An unforeseen danger has forced Goro and me to leave in haste.

I would like to ask you for one more favour. Any evidence you may have found, or even the fact that nothing turned up, needs to be delivered to my good friend Onightje on Ardeus, a man of my people.

If you accept this additional journey, you can use the starship Aajego for a while longer. Jaywa will also pay you another 2 000 Cr.

I wish you good luck, and I believe we will meet sooner than any of us expect..

Level of difficulty for the scenario

REFLUX is intended for beginning characters but with a few tweaks, it is easy to dial up or down the level of difficulty.

Increase difficulty:

Make sure the characters end up in trouble with the security forces and send some PCs to the brig.

Set up a fight or duel (verbal or physical) in the cantina.

Increase the number of guards patrolling the energy shield around Yllm at night and let the guards pursue the characters into the fields (perhaps fighting them from a pair of speeder bikes).

Increase the number of marines attacking in the Bone Caves.

Have marines waiting for the characters as they exit the Bone Caves.

Decrease difficulty:

Guards in Yllm will not be easily provoked into a fight with the characters.

Make the External Conflict with the members of the resistance less challenging by lowering the conflict stats for the NPCs.

The guards patrolling the energy shield will not call for reinforcements or pursue the characters into the night.

Skip the difficulties of getting back to Yllm and let the PCs slip onboard the Aajege without much of a fight. No orbital conflict at the end.

What Happens Now?

Some options for the following scenarios:

- » Deliver the glass orbs and any other evidence to Onn'oh'tje (meaning *very small* in S'immedh) on Ardeus. If the characters decide not to, Jaywa makes sure the Aajege is put back in storage for Aliura.
- » The Nurians are after the characters, sending bounty hunters to seize them and bring them to justice.
- » Two members of the Yllm resistance are imprisoned and need rescuing deep within Nurian territory, on a gas giant moon used as a labour camp.
- » The characters may want to find an efficient way to spread the news on Qioria's imminent destruction (and possibly prevent it). Jaywa Valeri can put them in contact with diplomats wishing for the Nurian Kingdom's expansion to be slowed down.

- » News of the Qiorian showdown will eventually trickle back to the Constellate. Secretive powers within the crumbling empire keep adding pieces to solve the Weaver mystery. Tye Hawke may need a replacement or sidekick, possibly seeking revenge on the characters.
- » Can the Exodus III be found, now that traces of it have been located? And what about the other three starships fleeing at the same time from Aëlia?

Both Jaywa Valeri and the Ano clan from the start of the scenario can return in later scenarios. In a longer campaign, the Ano can be like a second home or retreat for the PCs and Jaywa can provide numerous small jobs (perhaps growing into larger missions).

Wrapping Up

Each character playing this scenario will be awarded 3-4 Experience Rolls, the higher value if they succeed well.

List of NPCs

Action Points: 2

Hit Points: 11

Armour: -

Power Points: 11

Combat Style: Blaster 65%

Skills: Bureaucracy 60%, Commerce 90%, Courtesy 60%, Deceit 60%, Endurance 50%, Evade 60%, Influence 80%, Insight 70%, Knowledge (Anobe Criminal Networks) 70%, Knowledge (Coutant Trading) 80%, Locale (Anobe City) 60%, Oratory 70%, Politics 70%, Streetwise 70%, Willpower 70%

Equipment: Comlink, Datapad

STR	10
CON	11
SIZ	11
DEX	14
INT	13
POW	11
CHA	16

Jaywa Valeri

Businessman

Species: Human

Home World: Anobe

Age: 58

Demeanour: Focused, Practical,

Straightforward

Appearance: Slim, greying man in his fifties, preferring black clothes

Passions: Protect his business, Help young people in Anobe City stay out of crime

Description: A slim, greying man in his fifties, Jaywa Valeri has run various businesses on Anobe for most of his life. Starting out as a small-time crook, he gradually shifted away from crime, as he saw what it did to his older friends. Staying on the right side of the law on Anobe is not uncomplicated, however. He is well-connected in criminal circles but rarely uses them.

He is usually very straight forward and easy to talk to. He is trustworthy and will always lend a helping hand to people he trusts - unless it will hurt his own business too much. Mistakes are forgiven but he will not shy away from pointing them out.

Jaywa Valeri's profit comes mainly from buying and selling goods, often on an interstellar basis. He strikes deals with numerous independent merchants, trading all over the Coutant sector, and also has his private ship doing occasional transports. His office is located in a rather worn block he bought 20 years ago in central Anobe City. It houses several curious establishments, like a thrift shop and an Iketh doll maker, invested in by Valeri (probably not generating much profit, however). The most pecu-

liar is the large but dingy winter garden housed in the middle of the block, looking like an overgrown industrial relic, also being his favourite place for private meetings.

The basement houses another surprise. It is the high-tech intelligence branch of Valeri's business, a secret bunker resembling a military HQ more than an office. Here, his intelligence officers keep track of starships, goods and political changes – processed and delivered to him daily. In many ways, these rooms hold the secret of his success.

Aliura Faaroe	STR	11
Weaver Agent	CON	12
Species: Aëlian Human	SIZ	11
Home World: Aëlia	DEX	14
Age: 99	INT	16
Demeanour: Kind, Sad, Compassionate	POW	21
	CHA	16

Appearance: Middle-aged woman with dark hair to her shoulders. There is a wrinkle between her eyebrows, betraying her worries. Dressed in simple and practical clothes

Passions: Reestablish Weaver culture, Recover lost Weaver teachings

Description: Aliura Faaroe is a Weaver, *ie.* a psionic from the Aëlia system (two dozen parsecs or so rimward from Anobe). She is a combined agent and scout, trying to keep an eye on the new political landscape after The Constellate and at the same time, relocate old Weaver sites, objects and fugitives.

She spends her time travelling the Ocath sector, staying a few months here and there, gathering information and establishing contacts. Her primary focus is to map The Constellate's influence and at the same time keep a look out for traces of old Weaver activity – it can be physical remains like outposts, eremitages and documents, or more insubstantial

Action Points: 2

Hit Points: 12

Armour: –

Power Points: 21

*Combat Style: Weaver Agent 75%
Blaster and Unarmed*

Skills: Astrogation 50%, Craft (Meditation) 95%, Culture (Ocath Subsector) 50%, Endurance 70%, Evade 70%, Influence 70%, Insight 70%, Knowledge (Weaver History) 80%, Language (Simmedh) 80%, Perception 70%, Pilot (Starship) 70%, Research 70%, Sensors 50%, Stealth 70%, Streetwise 70%, Willpower 80%

Powers: Sense: Avoid Harm 90%, Detect 60%, Intuition 75%, Meditation 60%.

Mind: Affect Mind 75%, Mental Defense 90%, Read Mind 75%, Scream 75%, Telepathy 50%. Matter: Healing 75%, Move Object 75%, Stun 90%

Equipment: Blaster, Comlink, Land speeder, Starship

ones like myths and concepts. Alien recruits for psionic teaching are also cautiously sought.

Aliura is a very powerful psionic, trained to her full potential for many years on Aëlia. As most Weavers, she is reluctant to use her powers openly. The threat from The Constellate is still very much alive and she keeps a low profile everywhere she goes, covering her tracks with various identities.

Action Points: 2

Hit Points: 12

Armour: -

Power Points: 19

Combat Style: Weaver Agent 75%

Blaster and Unarmed

Skills: Astrogation 70%, Bureaucracy 80%, Craft (Meditation) 70%, Culture (Eliran) 70%, Electronics 50%, Endurance 50%, Evade 50%, Forgery 80%, Language (Simmedh) 50%, Mechanics 70%, Pilot (Starship) 70%, Sensors 50%, Sleight 80%, Willpower 70%

Powers: Sense: Avoid Harm 75%, Battle Meditation 60%. Mind: Mask Mind 75%, Mental Defense 60%. Matter: Leap 60%, Martial Flow 50%, Move Object 90%, Push 75%, Stun 60%

Equipment: Blaster, Forgery toolkit, Maurin Vacc Suit, Dagger (exquisite Maurin stonework, concealed)

STR	9
CON	9
SIZ	14
DEX	12
INT	15
POW	19
CHA	10

Goro Hom

Weaver Agent

Species: Maurin (see *Lifeforms*)

Home World: Eliran (Ocath 08.09)

and Aëlia

Age: 43

Demeanour: Polite, Silent, Thoughtful

Appearance: Grey skin, froglike head with small black eyes and slightly webbed hands. Prefers to be without clothes but wears a light, ankle-length tunic at times

Passions: Protect Aliura, Reestablish Weaver culture, Recover lost Weaver teachings

Description: A long time collaborator of Aliura, Goro is a both a powerful psionic and a skilled pilot/mechanic. He has a quiet and pleasant demeanour, always thinking before speaking, and few have seen him upset. Like other Weavers, he rarely uses his powers. Goro was one of the very first non-Aëlians to be trained in the Weaver ways 10 years ago.

Goro is also what the Maurin call a *Godchild*. Traditionally this meant a child reared from an egg accidentally washed from a high-level community, down to a low-status mountain. While most Maurins are non-religious these days, this still carries spiritual meaning to many.

Nurian Security Forces

Security on Qioria has been tightened in recent months, as protests against the mining operations have grown among the inhabitants. There are two types of forces: soldiers on guard in towns and well-trained marines keeping the mining sites safe. Both groups are essentially Nurian troops, here used to protect the economic interests of the king.

Town security has two major tasks: patrol and checking village entrances/exits. Patrols consist of two guards, walking around slowly with blaster carbines at their sides. They will stop anyone acting suspiciously to check IDs and will quickly try to get people to move along if any crowds appear. The troops will act strictly but are very easily provoked into physical violence; not necessarily shooting but beating people into respect. If that does not help, they will drag the victim to the arrest or a warning shot is fired. If the patrol is outmanned, they will use their Comlinks to call for reinforcements. Each town has 12 guards, about half of them on duty at any given time. They stay at simple barracks, often located at the edge of town.

Marines are stationed at high-risk targets, mostly at the actual mining sites. They have better training and are more well-equipped. They are organised in groups of 12 but often split up into smaller missions. They stay in temporary barracks in the vicinity of the extraction sites but have access to land speeders and shuttles for quick transportation, both between sites and into towns (as reinforcements or for fun). Three groups are stationed in each location, working in shifts so that 4-8 soldiers are always at guard.

Nurian Military Ranks

Private: Regular soldiers and guards.

Sergeant: Commands a squad of approximately 12 men.

Soldier (Yllm)

STR	11
CON	11
SIZ	12
DEX	11
INT	9
POW	8
CHA	10

Action Points: 2
Hit Points: 12
Armour: BioMesh AP 6, Helmet AP 6
Power Points: 8
Combat Style: Nurian Ground Troops 45%. Blaster carbine, Knife & Unarmed

Skills: Athletics 40%, Drive (Land Speeder) 30%, Endurance 40%, First Aid 25%, Gambling 30%, Insight 25%, Perception 35%, Stealth 35%, Willpower 30%

Equipment: Blaster carbine, BioMesh + Helmet (in black and blue), Comlink, Knife

Marines (Valley of the Dead)

STR	13
CON	14
SIZ	12
DEX	13
INT	11
POW	9
CHA	11

Action Points: 2

Hit Points: 12

*Armour: BioMesh
AP 6, Helmet AP 6*

Power Points: 9

*Combat Style: Nuri-
an Marines 65%.*

*Blaster, Blaster
carbine, Knife, Un-
armed*

*Skills: Athletics 70%, Brawn 50%, Drive
(Land Speeder) 50%, Endurance 70%,
Evade 50%, First Aid 45%, Insight 45%,
Knowledge (Nurian Mining Operation)
35%, Perception 65%, Stealth 65%,
Survival (any) 45%, Willpower 60%*

*Equipment: Blaster carbine, Blaster, Bio-
Mesh + Helmet (in black and blue), Com-
link, Knife, Survival Kit, Multiscanner,
Light-Intensifier Goggles, MedPak*

Lieutenant: Commands a handful of squads. There will be one Lieutenant running the operations in every major Qiorian town, the senior-most local officer.

Commandant: The executive between the Brigadier and the field. Can also be a specialist, like medic, lawyer, interrogator, engineer and so forth.

Brigadier: Commanding an entire military operation involving hundreds of soldiers. This rank is the highest present on Qioria, located at Central Command.

General: The highest rank. The Brigadier on Qioria reports back to Generals on Nurian.

The Resistance

A local group of Yllm inhabitants was formed in Y3256 (Constellate Standard) to thwart the destructive Nurian mining, only months after the operations had begun. Many of them have known each other since they were kids, setting up hikes and expeditions very early and banding together to resist the Nurians came very naturally when town medic Arjun Linas gathered them.

So far, their methods have been non-violent. However, the longer the extraction processes continue, the more the pressure to act violently increases.

Below are the core members in Yllm.

Note: many towns on Qioria have similar groups staying in contact with each other, planning sabotage missions and sharing intelligence. Should the player characters stray off course into another village, you can use the NPCs below as a template for other resistance groups, to direct the characters back to Yllm.

Arjun Linas

Medic & Informal Leader

Species: Human

Home World: Qioria

Age: 47

Demeanour: Logical,
Focused, Formal

STR	10
CON	12
SIZ	11
DEX	13
INT	17
POW	13
CHA	11

*Action Points: 2**Hit Points: 12**Armour: -**Power Points: 13**Main Skills: First Aid 90%, Medicine 90%,
Oratory 75%, Willpower 75%*

Appearance: A slim, middle-aged woman with short hair, often wearing a light-grey medic outfit

Passions: Save Qioria, Do no harm, Protect the local resistance

Description: Arjun Linas is a middle-aged woman with a sharp gaze and brilliant intellect. She is one of the few in the group to have spent considerable time off Qioria. She is not the elected leader of the local resistance but her function is apparent to even a casual observer. Her medical training has made her a strategic planner, approaching the protest actions in a scientific and highly logical way. She will remain positive towards the player characters during any encounters.

Saber Cas

Engineer

Species: Human

Home World: Qioria

Age: 35

Demeanour: Creative,
Shrewd, Talkative

STR	11
CON	13
SIZ	11
DEX	13
INT	15
POW	11
CHA	12

*Action Points: 2**Hit Points: 12**Armour: -**Power Points: 11**Main Skills: Computers 60%, Electronics
75%, Engineering 80%, Mechanics 75%*

Appearance: Slender and an almost grey overall impression. Very correct. A face in which you do not expect even the faintest smile – but it can readily switch to an open, hearty laugh

Passions: Save Qioria, Protect the local resistance

Description: Saber is, together with Kalman, the creative tinkerer of the group. Planning sabotages and coming up with improvised gear are his

main contributions. He is not very happy about helping the characters, however, as it takes away focus from the main task and introduces unnecessary risks, and will speak up against them in any meetings.

Action Points: 2

Hit Points: 14

Armour: -

Power Points: 10

*Main Skills: Blaster Rifle 75%,
Knowledge (Agriculture) 80%, Locale
(Yllm country) 80%, Stealth 60%, Survival
(Bushland) 75%*

STR	14
CON	15
SIZ	13
DEX	12
INT	11
POW	10
CHA	11

Mikio Duran

Farmer

Species: Human

Home World: Qioria

Age: 30

Demeanour: Careful,

Worried, Meticulous

Appearance: A large man with a round face

Passions: Save Qioria, Protect nature, Protect the local resistance

Description: Mikio Duran is a local farmer, mainly into garkki herds. He has excellent area knowledge. He will not support the PCs in meetings.

Action Points: 2

Hit Points: 13

Armour: -

Power Points: 8

*Main Skills: Athletics 60%, Blaster 50%,
Craft (Masonry) 75%, Craft (Wood) 75%,
Science (Construction) 50%*

STR	13
CON	14
SIZ	11
DEX	12
INT	11
POW	8
CHA	9

Deon Tort

Builder

Species: Human

Home World: Qioria

Age: 25

Demeanour: Quiet,

Mostly silent

Appearance: Slim, with unruly straight hair falling into his eyes. Surprisingly delicate hands for a builder

Passions: Save Qioria, Protect nature, Protect the local resistance

Description: Deon Tort is a quiet local builder, very loyal to Arjun after she saved his life two years ago in an accident. Neutral towards the characters.

Ashot Llebot

Bar Owner

Species: Navema

Home World: Qioria

Age: 40

Demeanour: Outgoing, Well
connected, Anxious

STR	11
CON	9
SIZ	13
DEX	11
INT	12
POW	14
CHA	16

*Action Points: 2**Hit Points: 11**Armour: -**Power Points: 14**Main Skills: Commerce 90%, Craft (Longneck Brewing) 90%, Craft (Cooking) 50%, Knowledge (Nurian operations) 30%, Oratory 60%, Streetwise 75%*

Appearance: See illustration on page 36

Passions: Save Qioria, Protect the local resistance

Description: A bar owner for many years, Ashot knows almost everyone living in and passing through Yllm. He is a friendly man but has no respect for 'idiots', as he calls people causing trouble – most Nurians among them. For being such an extroverted individual, he shows a surprising amount of anxiety for the current situation.

Ashot came to know Garin Ebries, the former Weaver agent on Qioria, quite well, and his disappearance pushed Ashot into joining the resistance. They shared stories from their interstellar travels and often compared the pros and cons of various alien beverages they had tried.

Ashot will act neutrally towards the PCs in any meetings with the resistance.

Ia Veryl Nao

Waitress

Species: Human

Home World: Qioria

Age: 22

Demeanour: Angry, Can be violent,
Sharp-tongued

STR	10
CON	12
SIZ	10
DEX	13
INT	12
POW	11
CHA	16

*Action Points: 2**Hit Points: 12**Armour: -**Power Points: 11**Main Skills: Blaster 50%, Commerce 75%, Craft (Cooking) 50%, Demolitions 30%, Knowledge (Nurian operations) 30%, Streetwise 75%*

Appearance: Young woman with long dark hair in several braids and tassels. Slim, with quick, precise gestures

Passions: Help Ashot, Save Qioria, Protect the resistance

Ia is a young woman working as a waitress in Ashot's bar. She is hot-headed and wants to take more action against the Nurians, utilizing violence if required. Any rumours or snippets of information reaching Yllm will quickly be picked up by Ia in the bar. Will be neutral to the PCs.

Action Points: 2

Hit Points: 10

Armour: -

Power Points: 15

*Main Skills: Demolitions 75%,
Electronics 60%, Engineering 50%,
Mechanics 60%, Perception 60%, Science
(Chemistry) 90%, Teach 90%*

STR	9
CON	9
SIZ	10
DEX	10
INT	17
POW	15
CHA	11

Kalman Estope

Teacher

Species: Human

Home World: Qiorian

Age: 69

Demeanour: Silent,

Analytic, Philosophical

Appearance: Thin, dark brown and slightly flimsy hair and a white, well-groomed beard. A little stooped with age but with clear and pale blue eyes

Passions: Save Qioria, Protect the resistance

Description: Kalman is a retired chemistry teacher and the bomb maker of the group. He is mostly silent during discussions but has a sharp analytical mind. As the others go quiet, Kalman softly summarises what has been said, picking out strengths and weaknesses in any plans with a few definite conclusions.

Kalman is close friends with Isao Om Ananth. He will support the characters in any meetings and try to help them despite any group decision.

Action Points: 2

Hit Points: 8

Armour: -

Power Points: 5

Total Modules: 7

STR	5
CON	10
SIZ	4
DEX	10
INT	15
POW	5
CHA	15

F-AE-07

Mech droid

This mech droid is used for various tasks, for example breaking into the Nurian's computer systems. Saber Cas is the formal owner (and the only one understanding its sounds) but this 'trashcan on wheels' is quite independent. Pronunciation: fey-oh-seven.

Modules: Manipulator 2, Communicator 1, Computer Interface 1, Compartment 1, Gadget (Welding) 1, Skills 1 (Mechanics 70%, Computers 50%, Knowledge (Psychology) 50%)

Stunts: Luck points 1, Cute/Innocent 70%

Isao Om Ananth
Hermit
Species: Human (half Aëlian)
Home World: Qioria
Age: 102
Demeanour: Silent, Wise, Moments of soft humor

STR	8
CON	9
SIZ	9
DEX	8
INT	16
POW	18
CHA	15

Action Points: 2

Hit Points: 9

Armour: -

Power Points: 18

Main Skills: Insight 90%, Knowledge (Qiorian history) 75%, Knowledge (Philosophy) 80%, Knowledge (Gardening) 75%, Perception 90%

Appearance: White beard and hair. Soul-piercing gaze

Passions: Be true to himself, Protect Qioria, Finding the Weavers

Description: The frail man called Isao is 102 years old and lives alone in the ramshackle temple in the east of Yllm. He is half human, half Weaver. While he has not inherited the psionic powers of his mother, he has got a very sensitive mind. He spends most of his time meditating, contemplating philosophical questions and tending the vegetables in the small temple garden.



F-AE-07

Action Points: 2

Hit Points: 14

Armour: BioMesh AP4

Power Points: 11

*Combat Style: Constellate Agent 75%
Blaster, Blaster Carbine, Unarmed, Knife*

*Skills: Astrogation 50%, Athletics 65%,
Comms 50%, Deceit 65%, Drive (Land
Speeder) 65%, Endurance 65%, Evade
75%, Lockpicking 75%, Mechanics
30%, Perception 50%, Pilot (Starship)
65%, Sensors 50%, Stealth 75%,
Streetwise 65%, Track 65%,
Willpower 65%*

*Equipment: Aleu-Ohra Attractor (see
Additional Rules), Comlink, Blaster,
Knife, 2,000 Cr in gold concealed in belt,
Constellate Scout Ship*

STR	13
CON	15
SIZ	13
DEX	16
INT	12
POW	11
CHA	12

Tye Hawke

Constellate Agent

Species: Human

Home World: –

Age: 30

Demeanour: Ruthless, Cold blooded,

Superficially pleasant. Border case psychopath

Appearance: Sharp features, short dark hair, physically fit. Black, functional clothing under a black parka. Weapons carried openly in the belt

Passions: Loyal to the Empress, Restore the Constellate to its former glory

Description: Tye Hawke is a Constellate agent trained to observe, subvert and attack. In short, pave the ground for the Constellate's armed forces. His operations stretch across the entire Ocath subsector. His primary target in recent months has been to follow up on a report of psionic activity on Qioria. Tye Hawke will not hesitate to use violence to reach his goals and he is not susceptible to empathy or altruism. He regularly receives orders from his superiors and returns encrypted reports to Calinor.

Note: Tye Hawke's blaster is a Constellate military model but someone with the slightest interest in weapons will notice it is a new type of blaster, fresh from the manufacturer. There are numerous old military weapons adrift in the Coutant sector since The Constellate withdrew, most of them fairly common on the used weapons market, but this model is something different. It is slightly smaller than previous models but with the same firepower.



Nurian patrol ship passing an extraction tower

Locations

Ocath Subsector

Ocath is part of the Coutant sector, consisting of Sundar Royer, Llau, Ocath and Argall subsectors. The sector is relatively unstable politically since The Constellate left the area 20 years ago. Many worlds continue on their own, free at last, but some form shifting alliances or invade their neighbours. Alliances change quickly, with everyone trying to come out on top.

In the Y3250s, the Nurian Kingdom was the most confrontational part. In just 10 years it expanded its domains to the three closest star systems, probably lusting for even more. Qioria, the central location for this scenario, was incorporated five years ago. Anobe, the character's starting point, lies some parsecs away, safe for now from the Nurians.

At the current time, Y3260, The Constellate has no visible power in the subsector. A handful of agents are secretly stationed there, trying to destabilise the region and find allies. The armed forces of the empire are not a threat right now but that may change quicker than anyone has anticipated.

Anobe

Ocath Subsector, Hex 03.08.

Planet: Size Large. No moon. Second planet from the star.

Star system: Yellow star, 7 planets. 3 small gas giants.

Species: Various

Tech Level: 2/13 (first value for nomadic tribes, second for cities)

Law Level: 5/1 (first value for nomadic tribes, second for cities)

Atmosphere: Normal. **Climate:** Normal

Starport: One full starport in orbit (remains since The Constellate), several local starports and hangars in most cities.

Pop Density: Low. Temporary clusters are formed mostly by the indigenous human nomads but small towns and occasional cities are scattered over the planet, with various species having moved there since The Constellate arrived.

Foreign Policy: Neutral. Only passively seeking alliances with close neighbours.

Special features: Large rolling grasslands. Nomadic tribes living on the backs of giant grazers. Shabby cities.

Description

The most striking feature of Anobe is the vast rolling grasslands, populated by huge eight-legged grazers called Sutaari. While the planet contains many other biomes as well, the grasslands cover large parts and sustain the indigenous species Ano.

The Ano are nomadic, living literally on top of the large grazers, in tear-shaped baskets hung over their backs. Several baskets are hung on each Sutaari, often in different levels, and storage is kept along the spine of the animal. Baskets are big enough to contain 2-3 adults comfortably. The Ano quickly move between baskets and from animal to animal, sometimes in vigorous leaps. Young Sutaari are used for more regular riding, carrying one or two riders bareback.

The herds of Sutaari travel considerable distances, stopping only twice a year for mating and childbearing. At those two occasions, the Ano set up large camps, forming small temporary towns on ground for 2-3 weeks, with several clans mingling for trade, parties and marriage arrangements.

This traditional way of living has been complemented by more regular towns, first only inhabited by off-worlders but slowly attracting some of the poorest from the nomadic clans. This combination was rather unhappy, with petty crime and lawlessness spreading through Anobe towns.



A member of the Ano species in traditional clothing

The nomadic tribes continued their lifestyle but with only the wealthy staying. With fewer to feed, the traditional food scarcity of the Ano became less of a problem and the occasional clan fights over food almost disappeared. As a consequence, the Ano culture has flourished. They do not reject modern equipment or innovations but only a few gadgets have found a good match with their way of life (miniature water vaporisers being one of them and energy weapons – the latter are kept hidden from the eyes of outsiders).

The Ano clans hold considerable power over the cities. Partly because of their wealth but also due to the huge physical impression they make with their beasts. While certainly no match for a well-equipped army, the forces available to the other Anobe inhabitants are highly insufficient against a herd of eight-legged giants.

Anobe City

All Anobe cities are rather shabby places, with Anobe City being no exception. The random mix of buildings, seldom more than 5-6 stories, have not aged very well. With the Ano being nomadic, no building style adapted to the local conditions has ever been developed. All types of infrastructure are underdeveloped and community assets are few. Small law enforcement units exist but they are painfully undermanned. Poverty is prevalent, as well as crime. While mostly concentrated in the dense northern quarters, all parts of the city are affected. The Constellate had very little impact on Anobe, placing only a small guarding force there, but otherwise left it much as it was.

Anobe City is the largest city on Anobe and also the first settlement by off-worlders. Its placement dates back to a trading post situated there, a spot often passed by the Ano/Sutaari herds. Since then, the urban centre has expanded in a rather uncontrolled manner, with regulations almost non-existent. The city's sharp border is the result of an old agreement with the Ano clans: the Sutaari herds must not be hindered in their paths and any buildings should be kept within an area defined long ago. When buildings fill up the area, upwards growth will be the only choice.

grasslands



- 1. BURIAL GROUNDS
- 2. JAYWA VALERI'S BLOCK
- 3. AAJEGE HANGAR
- 4. WAREHOUSE ATTIC

100 m



Nurian Mining

Three years ago, with Qioria annexed by the Nurian Kingdom a few years earlier, a Nurian geologist discovered large underground deposits of omeril gas. The Nuri-ans immediately set up plans for extraction and a logistic network for getting the gas off Qioria. The risk of igniting the upper layers of the gas did not seem too bad at the time but turned out to be extremely hard to control.

The extraction process is initiated by drilling down to the pockets of gas and an antigravity extraction tower is moored in place. The gas is led into the tower, needing only a light purifying, before it can be transferred to docking cargo ships. Unfortunately, underground leakage from the process slowly travels up through the geological layers and is sometimes ignited when it comes into contact with oxygen. The ground starts glowing, almost resembling lava. At first, only a small area beneath the tower is affected but the longer the process is running, the more the glowing area grows. At some point, the ground starts to collapse, forming a glowing crater with the extraction tower (or sometimes several towers) hovering at the centre.

While this may seem like just another industrial hazard on just another backwater planet, the implications are somewhat bigger in this case. The gas findings are enormous. If the extraction continues, the world will eventually be engulfed by the glowing craters. In Y3260, six sites

Continued...

Architecture and Streets

Buildings in Anobe City come in all sizes, shapes and ages. During the millennia, every species to have lived in the city has left their distinct mark, even if the constant additions and alterations have eventually hidden the original structures. Old is mixed with new, durable with temporary. The only constant seems to be the lack of ambition; only the bare necessities and functions are solved as if everyone is planning to leave soon.

The streets of Anobe City are rough and lively. Various shops and numerous hard-to-define establishments line the majority of them and traders of all varieties sell their goods from stalls. Aliens from every part of the Coutant sector (and beyond) can be encountered here.

Qioria

Ocath Subsector, Hex 06.04. Part of the Nurian Kingdom.

Planet: Size Normal. Three small moons. The second planet from the star.

Star system: Yellow star, 6 planets. 1 large gas giant, 1 small.

Species: Mostly human

Tech Level: 13. Law Level: 5

Atmosphere: Normal. Climate: Normal

Starport: Several 'starports' (*ie.* improvised landing areas), equipped as emergency starports

Pop Density: Low. Settlements in small towns.

Foreign Policy: The current ruler, the Nurian Kingdom, is quite aggressive. The indigenous population just wants to be left alone.

Special features: Rich in polferro mineral and omeril gas. Previously inhabited by enormous reptiles, now extinct (save for a few Size 1 distant relatives).

Description

Qioria was a prime example of what people consider as a backwater world: few inhabitants, lots of untouched wilderness and no resources to exploit. While the large findings of omeril gas three years ago changed some of that, the planet remains a largely undeveloped world. Which is exactly how the inhabitants want it to stay.

Living on Qioria is not difficult. Agriculture is relatively easy, nature is kind without any large predators and water is plentiful in most areas. Animal life mostly comes in the size of small rodents and reptiles, however a handful of creatures the size of sheep exist (and are herded for their meat).

Temperate forests cover large areas of the continents. Small settlements and agriculture are mostly situated by the coasts.

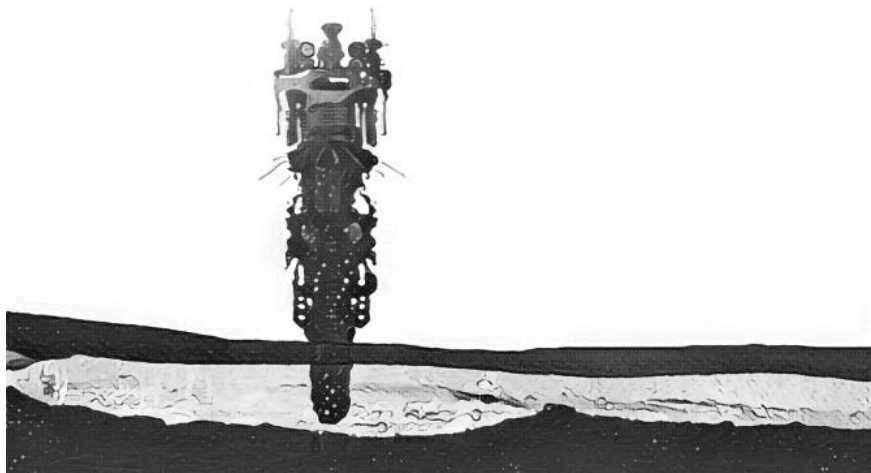
Dwellings are small independent townships, living off herding, agriculture and trade. Building materials come from local resources, with wood, brick and clay dominating. Each town has an independent Council. The Councils of an area meet once a year to sort out common problems.

The economy of Qioria is traditionally based on subsistence farming and small-scale polferro mineral trade with neighbouring worlds.

are in use by the Nurians but expansion is swift. At best, Qioria will be able to sustain higher life forms for two more years. Some people refer to much more pessimistic calculations.

Omeril Gas

Omeril gas is a type of natural gas formed by organic compounds under high pressure. It is highly inflammable and can be used in numerous industrial applications. The gas can be found in small amounts on many worlds but large quantities are rare, as the right combination of geology and organic matter must be in place.



Extraction tower hovering above a glowing crater

Lifeforms

Ano Species

STR	3d6	(10-11)
CON	3d6	(10-11)
SIZ	3d6+3	(13-14)
DEX	2d6+8	(14)
INT	2d6+6	(12)
POW	3d6	(10-11)
CHA	2d6	(6)

Move	6 m
Action Pt	2
HP	12
Weapons	Blaster Rifle, 2d6
Armor	AP 0-2 (Leather)
PP	11
Dmg Mod	-
Skills	Endurance 65%, Evade 70%, Stealth 75%, Survival (Grasslands) 80%, Track 50%, Willpower 50%

This humanoid species lead low-tech lives, literally living on the backs of giant, eight-legged grazers called Sutaari.

World: Anobe

Tech Level: 4

Law Level: 2

Pop Density: Very Low (Nomadic)

Ruler: Clan Mother

Foreign Policy: Mostly uninterested in the urban dwellers of Anobe but fiercely defend their territory, culture and rights if needed.

Strangeness: 10

Classification: Omnivore

Habitat: The rolling grass plains of Anobe, living on the backs of the large grazers called Sutaari (see stats below)

Advantages: Intelligence, Semi-Flight (long jumps up to 10 metres), Builder

Disadvantages: Food scarcity, Internal conflicts

Behaviour: Watchful

Social: The Ano clans consist of 80-120 individuals, forming tight bonds with their Sutaari herds.

Communication: Sound (own language and Omni-Lang)

Universals: -

Description

A tall humanoid species with ochre-coloured skin and a slightly bony face (see illustration on page xx). They lead simple, low-tech lives, following

the Sutaari on their slow journeys across the continent. The clans are ruled by the eldest female member, often referring to the will of the Sutaari.

The Ano's own Tech Level is low but a few select high-tech objects have been adopted (like weapons and vaporisers).

Main Conflicts

Clan vs. Clan over food scarcity (Low, Decreasing Intensity). Traditionally, the Anobe plains have not provided the Ano with enough food.

Dwellings

The principal dwellings of the Ano are the sturdy baskets slung over the backs of the Sutaari. They house 2-3 adults and each Sutaari can carry 1-2 families. The teardrop-shaped containers are woven with a variety of grasses, each type of grass used for different functions: stability, insulation, flexibility and so forth. The 'rooms' are without furniture and daily activities are carried out on the floor.

Food

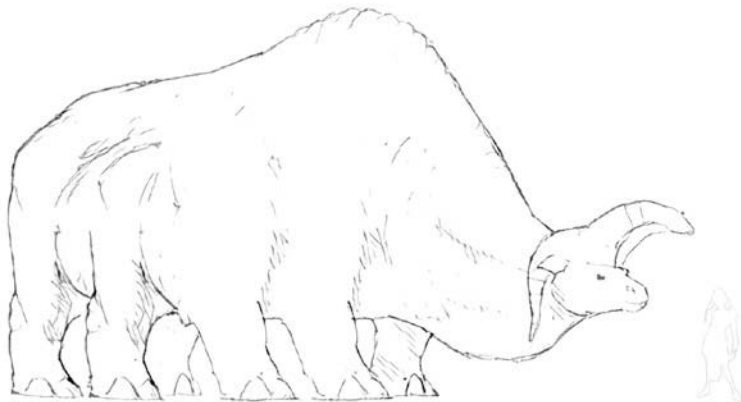
The Ano hunt small grazers and gather various plants and roots growing on the plains.

Attachments

Romantic love and life-long monogamous marriage.

Reading the Landscape by the Grass

To the untrained eye, the rolling stretches of grasslands contain nothing but grass. The Ano, on the other hand, see micro-biomes consisting of hundreds of different plants. Each type of grass signals the state of the soil, the past and future weather and what kind of grazers live nearby. For example, the knee-high, threadlike Whisker Grass reveals a poor soil and little rain, while the 3 metre high swaying Veil Grass, with its deep edible roots, indicates an underground water source. And the even taller Razor Grass, with leaf edges as sharp as knives, hides small prey within the deadly 'copses' covering a couple of acres. Perfect for hunting but dangerous to enter.



Sutaari size compared to an Ano.

Sutaari Species

STR	2d6+40	{47}
CON	2d6+40	{47}
SIZ	2d6+60	{67}
DEX	1d6	{3-4}
INT	5	{5}
POW	2d6	{7}
CHA	2d6	{7}

Move	6 m
Action Pt	1
HP	57
Weapons	Trample 75% (12d6), Horns 50% (1d6+2d10 dmg mod)
Armor	AP 6 (Fur and skin)
PP	7
Dmg Mod	+2d10
Skills	-

The eight-legged Sutaari is the largest animal on Anobe, with few natural threats to its yearly migratory patterns.

World: Anobe

Tech Level: -

Law Level: -

Pop Density: Very Low (Nomadic)

Ruler: Herd Mother

Foreign Policy: -

Strangeness: 20

Classification: Herbivore

Habitat: The rolling grass plains of Anobe

Advantages: Size, Sharp (Horns)

Disadvantages: Slow

Behaviour: Patient

Social: Herds of 20-30 individuals

Communication: Sound

Universals: -

Description

The Sutaari are a magnificent sight as they move slowly across the open Anobe landscape in herds of 20-30 animals. Their bodies easily reach 6-8 metres in height and 14 metres in length, with males being slightly smaller than females. Furs are yellowish brown and quite thick. Spending their entire lives moving vast distances, day and night, they only make short stops to gather the herd. This has resulted in a grazing technique that allows them to rip off the grass while on the move. The Herd Mother that leads the flock is the eldest female in the group (just like the Ano; surely not a coincidence). A full-grown Sutaari has no natural enemies.

They cross the southern continent of Anobe from east to west, often following the same trail year after year, only rarely meeting with another herd. Once a year, however, several herds gather in specific spots to mate and give birth, staying for a couple of weeks before departing.

Supporting species

The Anobe grass plains have a variety of grazers, the most peculiar being the winged Edula, a small mammalian with a long snout, aerodynamically spindle-shaped body and wings of stretched skin. Comes in many sizes and colours, often forming large herds. The Jeminu is a common predator, hiding in tall grass to catch unassuming passers-by. Muscular and sleek, its yellow fur makes it almost disappear. Also eight-legged, it can run up to 100 km/h.

The large Sutaari droppings also make for a rich biome, full of small animals harvesting the fermented remains, some even reshaping them as 'houses' when the heaps dry in the sun.

Below and on the next page you can find the stats for the Edula and Jeminu species.

Edula Species

Common Low-Land Edula.

Type: Herbivore (Grazer)

Habitat: Grasslands

Social: Large herds
(50-100 individuals)

Behaviour: Watchful

Advantages: Flight

Disadvantages: Hunted,
Slow ground movement

Move	Flight 6 m Ground 2 m
Action Pt	2
HP	7
Weapons	Bite 75% (1d4)
Armor	-
PP	7
Dmg Mod	-
Skills	-

STR	2d3	(4)
CON	2d3+2	(6)
SIZ	2d3+3	(7)
DEX	3d6	(10-11)
INT	3	(3)
POW	2d3+3	(7)
CHA	2d3+3	(7)

STR	2d6	{7}
CON	2d6	{7}
SIZ	2d6+3	{10}
DEX	3d6	{10-11}
INT	4	{4}
POW	2d3	{4}
CHA	2d6	{7}

Jeminu Species

A predator specialised in hiding.

Type: Predator (Pouncer)

Biome: Grasslands (Tall grass)

Social: Single or small family

Behaviour: Aggressive

Advantages: Camouflage,

Sharp (Claws)

Disadvantages: Cubs

Move 6 m

Action Pt 2

HP 9

Weapons Bite 85% (1d4+1)

Claws 75% (1d4)

Armor AP2 (Fur and skin)

PP 4

Dmg Mod -

Skills Stealth 75%

STR	2d6+3	{9}
CON	2d6+3	{9}
SIZ	2d6+8	{14}
DEX	2d6+6	{12}
INT	2d6+6	{12}
POW	2d6+8	{14}
CHA	3d6	{10-11}

Move 6 m

Action Pt 2

HP 12 (Healing Rate 4)

Weapons Bite 75% (1d4)

Armor -

PP 14

Dmg Mod -

Skills Varies

Maurin Species

A humanoid species adapted to life in shallow waters.

World: Eliran

Tech Level: TL8 (13)

Law Level: 8

Pop Density: Low (Villages)

Rulers: Democratic 'Mountain States'

Foreign Policy: Union builder

Classification: Omnivore (Gatherer)

Habitat: High altitude caves, hot ponds

Advantages: Intelligence, Psionic Affinity (not actively developed or taught by the Maurin)

Disadvantages: Floating eggs, Rare habitat

Behaviour: Peaceful but guarded

Social: Large groups and Symbiotic. Are completely dependent on a handful of microorganisms living in the cavernous lakes they build their dwellings around. In essence, their intestines are partly outsourced to the

lakes, working both by breaking down nutrients in their food, as well as taking care of waste products.

The Maurin have two sexes but are hermaphroditic and change sex in response to the needs of the local community (the cave). If there are too few of the egg-laying sex, for example, some of the members will change sex. It seems completely random, which individuals are affected. An isolated Maurin often ends up in a 'gender limbo', often changing sex constantly.

Communication: Sound (own language and Omni-Lang), Psionic (very rare)

Universals: Regeneration (Healing Rate 4)

Description

See illustration on page xx. Slightly taller than humans but similar in build, their thick grey skin and slightly webbed hands reveal their water-based biome. Originally, they waded in shallow waters, gathering plants and small animals to eat. Small, sharp teeth dot their mouths and their fingers are clawed. For protection, sometime during evolution, they moved into high altitude caves, warmed by hot springs bubbling out from the molten planet interiors.

The Maurin's Tech Level is at 8 but imported technology (TL13) is relatively common.

Main conflicts

Spirituality vs. Equality. The old Maurin religious beliefs are waning (associating the different mountains they live in as gods) but the tradition of ranking the mountains is kept alive. The highest, in both literal and symbolic meaning, have the most affluent communities, while the lowest are often poor. However, there is almost constant dissent about this.

Dwellings

In the hollowed-out porous mountains of Ourros, Maurins live in smaller caves around hot and shallow ponds keeping the micro climate pleasant despite the cold. The caves are green and blossoming, in stark contrast to the snowy mountainsides. Curved glass covers some of the large cave openings.

Attachments

Each rounded cave consists of a village gathered around a warm, shallow pool with a unique mix of microorganisms essential to the Maurins around it. All dwellers in a cave are family, they lay eggs in the hot waters and raise their children in a cooperative effort.

Eliran

The most peculiar feature of Eliran is the very porous rock making up some of the mountain ranges. They have a surface appearance perhaps best described as a sponge on a large scale: pocked with roundish caves, many of them big enough for 100 Maurin inhabitants or more. Quite commonly, a small pond forms at the centre of the cave, heated by water rising from the mountain's interior and mixed with melting water from the frozen peaks.

As Eliran's atmosphere is quite dense, the high mountains have atmospheric conditions suitable for humans. Maurins are believed to have migrated to higher altitudes to avoid predators, using the caves and hot springs to survive the harsh climate. Not being able to bring all types of plants to their new home, they became dependent on external organisms for their digestion.

Technology has enabled the Maurins to improve the cave's climate, even more, turning some of them into veritable green cornucopias. As the dense atmosphere closer to the ground is avoided, air travel was invented relatively early (today, slow anti-gravity barges are most common, although occasional dirigibles are still in use). Stone is the preferred material for many Maurin objects but often with qualities reminding both of wood and metal. They also make a variety of soft materials plants growing in the caves' ponds.

The Maurin's relation to the low altitudes can perhaps best be described as humanity's connection to an ocean filled with dangers. It is the great unknown, still very near, breathing equipment is needed and visibility is very limited due to the thick atmosphere and greenery.

Vesicle Web

Type: Predator (Trapper)

Biome: Underground (Bone Caves)

Social: Large herd/Hive mind

Behaviour: Passive aggressive

Advantages: Sticky, Poisonous, Self-repair (1d6 per round)

Disadvantages: Immobile, Vulnerable to light

Vesicle size: 1"

Description

Individual vesicles are semi-transparent, faintly blue-grey and somewhat slimy. The net lives on by-passing small animals getting stuck in it. Vesicles expand when touched, forming a continuous membrane after a few seconds. Mostly insects get caught but occasionally a reptile is trapped too. Nutrition/energy is distributed (relatively) democratically between the vesicles.

The web as a whole is immobile and only the individual vesicles move. Action Points and DEX indicate the speed of the net's contraction when touched. It is not very fast (a few seconds) but the sticky surface prevents small animals from escaping before the vesicles have expanded. The poison then kills the prey and the body is slowly broken down in a biochemical process. Touching the net with a finger, on the other hand, yields plenty of time to withdraw before the vesicles have enclosed it (and can easily be removed even after that). The poison causes a slight burning sensation on bare skin in human-sized beings. Full-body contact leads to unconsciousness and needs medical treatment (an Autodoc works fine).

STR	4d6	{14}
CON	4d6	{14}
SIZ	5d6	{17-18}
DEX	2d6	{7}
INT	1	{1}
POW	1d6	{3-4}
CHA	1	{1}

Move	-
Action Pt	1
HP	16
Weapons	Weak Poison
Armor	-
PP	4
Dmg Mod	-

Small parts of the net can be kept alive in a jar, if fed and not exposed to bright light. It breeds asexually: small vesicles form on the surface and after a few days move into position in the web structure. Dead vesicles are recycled by the surrounding vesicles. If transplanted to a sufficiently dark place, like a room or corridor, the net will grow willingly as long as it gets enough food. Growth is approximately 0.5 m² per week under favourable conditions.

Additional Rules

Communications

There are two primary systems for communication, both of them using either sound or video. Regular communications equipment is present in vehicles and starships. Tiny chips exist in helmets and datapads but they must be relayed through bigger arrays to achieve ranges above a few kilometres.

Transmissions can easily be encrypted, being tough to decrypt. The only way is to obtain the encryption key in some way. The source of encrypted communication can be pinpointed with a few successful Comms rolls, each roll increasing the accuracy of the location. To avoid this, a successful Computers skill roll is necessary (before the Comms roll).

In-System

A relatively short-ranged system, used for communications on the surface of planets and within solar systems. It uses probes, space stations and starships to relay and boost signals. This means it will be harder to establish a good connection in low-tech systems and on long distances. Probes are often left since The Constellate but are slowly being exchanged for new ones as they fail from old age.

Under normal circumstances, communications will not require any skill rolls. However, for low tech systems, a successful Comms roll is necessary, sometimes with a Hard penalty. Long range transmissions, across entire systems, may also be subject to Hard or Formidable penalties, even in developed star systems.

Interstellar

For communications between stars, hyperspace relays are used, allowing for almost instantaneous connections despite long distances. The system is much less reliable than in-system communications; thus delays and

disturbances are relatively common. Within the current borders of The Constellate, interstellar communications do not require any skill rolls but outside (like the Ocath subsector), a Comms skill roll is always necessary. See sidebar for penalties.

Distance in hexes	Skill Penalty
1-4	No penalty
5-10	Hard
11-15	Formidable

New Careers

Noble

Standard Skills: Customs, Dance, Deceit, Drive, Influence, Native Tongue, Ride

Professional Skills: Art, Courtesy, Culture, Gambling, Language, Musicianship, Oratory

Soldier

Standard Skills: Athletics, Brawn, Endurance, Evade, Unarmed; Combat Style (Military Style), Combat Style (Cultural Style)

Professional Skills: Craft (any), Engineering, Gambling, Knowledge (Military History), Knowledge (Strategy and Tactics), Oratory, Survival

Assassin

Standard Skills: Conceal, Deceit, Evade, Insight, Perception, Stealth; Combat Style (any)

Professional Skills: Culture (any), Disguise, Language (any), Sleight, Streetwise, Survival, Track

New Equipment

Energy Shield, Planetside

Energy shields are not only used for starships but also to protect buildings and secure specific locations. The most common type is easy to set up,

with circular towers relaying the shield. It will keep people from trespassing and soaks up most *Planetside* weapon damage if attacked.

Field strength	HP	Tower AP	Usage
Low	15	6	Crowd control; temporary installations
Medium	30	12	Banking, prisons
High	60	24	Military facilities, high-security prisons

There are two main ways to disable a shield. Overload it or tamper with the electronics. Overloading is theoretically very simple: inflict twice the amount of Hit Points in damage, either with energy weapons or by blunt force (like a vehicle). All within one combat round.

Gaining access to the electronics can be as easy as prying a hatch open, or welding/blasting a hole in the tower armour. Once inside, wrecking the interiors is not difficult but will likely set off an alarm. For a more subtle approach, roll for Electronics, Mechanics or Computers. Use an Extended Conflict if appropriate for the situation.

Aleu-Ohra Attractor

The Aleu-Ohra Attractor is a small device manufactured by a long gone Tech Level 14 civilisation. It looks like a dark metal sphere, 80 mm in diameter, full of intricate carvings. Function: If the top is pressed lightly, the orb drifts slowly upwards, hovering in mid-air. The metal shell breaks up in several geometrical pieces, each piece moving out to form a larger sphere, with a dark mist at the middle. When activated like this, it attracts any energy weapons fired towards it, simply engulfing the shots. It can absorb 15 Hit Points of damage before it deactivates (falling to the ground with a clang). It does not protect a target at point blank range, though. In 12 hours it is fully usable again. To deactivate it manually, the owner merely places his or her hand at the bottom of the extended sphere, and it shrinks back again, falling into the outstretched palm. Cost: –



GlowCube

A GlowCube, 5x5x5 cm, provides light in the most flexible and durable way. It can function as a flashlight, by concentrating all light in a tight beam, or as a lantern, releasing light in all directions. It is easy to stick anywhere - like walls, helmets, backpacks, inside tech - with its naturally sticky surface. It contains a weak antigrav unit, not allowing true hovering capabilities but letting it drift down at a slow pace if dropped or thrown. Some models can also be activated by movement, sound, heat, or changes to the chemical composition in the air.

GlowCubes are cheap enough to be sprinkled around. If left unattended, they burn for 12 hours and must then be recharged. One cube lights a room or works as a good flashlight (visibility for about 10 metres). Cost: 2 Cr (5 Cr with sensor included)

Constellate High-Energy Blaster

A slimmer version of the regular military blaster used for many years by The Constellate. With a more efficient construction, size has been reduced but the firepower is the same. It has been tested for a few years but small scale manufacturing was recently initiated by Perren-Kue Industries in the Calinor system. So far, only special forces are using it. Cost: -

Damage: 1d8

Range: 10/30/120

Aëlian Glass Spheres

Aëlian Glass Spheres are sculptural objects occurring naturally in the Aajvoes Meadows every autumn on Aëlia. They range in size from thumb-sized up to 12 centimetres in diameter. The transparent material is not made of glass but is a seed pod made from an organic material by the plant *ÿentje*, somewhat similar to a wild onion.

The *ÿentje* creates a gas compound in its bulb-like root during summer, and as nights get cooler, the gas slowly moves up the sturdy stem, filling

the transparent seed pod. As the gas is lighter than the Aëlian atmosphere, the seed pods drift considerable distances when they are released. On a few early autumn mornings, when the weather is favourable, the meadows will be full of drifting 'soap bubbles'. However, they are short-lived; most bubbles last less than an hour. As they land, the dust-like seeds are spread by the bursting of the pod.

Approximately once every 10 years, the release of the seed pods is early enough for the Angling Spiders to still be hunting. This small spider hunts by climbing tall herbs, with a thin line of spider silk swaying in the wind, sometimes several metres long. The sticky surface attracts small insects and to catch them the spider just has to rewind the silky thread.

However, sometimes the spider must cut the line, leaving it drifting over the meadow. Normally, this is no big deal. Yet if this happens at the same time as the ĩentje seed pods are released, the silk threads occasionally wraps themselves around the bubbles, creating a spiraling shape on the transparent surface.

The glass spheres are highly cherished by the Weavers and most have at least once visited a meadow to witness the beautiful scenery of their release. Only the orbs inscribed with spider silk are collected, dried and exhibited as sculptural objects. They are very delicate and must be handled with the same care as glass. As objects of art, they are very rare and completely unheard of outside Aëlia. Cost: –

Organisation Stats

Nurian Mining Operation

Organisation (Economic/Military)

INF (Qioria)	19
SIZ	3
RES	15

Ideas: Power, Wealth, Group (Nurian)

Attributes: Troops 90%, Fear 70%, Strong Leader 70%,
Cellular 40%

Structure: Top-Down (Traditional)

Qioria Local Resistance

Organisation (Secret)

INF (Qioria)	5
SIZ	2
RES	6

Ideas: Environment, Independence, Peace

Attributes: Cultural Heritage 90%, Secrecy 70%, Black Ops 40%,
Spread 40%

Structure: Flat

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I would like to thank Jargogle Bamboozle and Pentallion for taking the time to comment on the scenario and Charlotte Law for untangling my English.

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I dedicate this book to Katarina and Olle. Without their support it would not have been written.

'You have to die a few times before you can live'

Håkan Hellström

M-SPACE

STARSHIP

name *aajege*

type *explorer*

player

speed 8
handling 12
size 87

hyperspace 3
apps —

recovery —
ship condition -20

modules	location	ar	sh	hp
<i>cockpit 3</i>	<i>01-03</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>crew (4) 16</i>	<i>04-21</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>open space 15</i>	<i>22-38</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>157 8</i>
<i>cargo 22</i>	<i>39-63</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>23 11</i>
<i>sickbay 4</i>	<i>64-69</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>autodoc 2</i>	<i>70-71</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>hyperspace 3</i>	<i>72-74</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>weapons 2</i>	<i>75-76</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>engines (tr70)</i>	<i>77-87</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>107 7</i>
<i>maneuver (tr100)</i>	<i>88-00</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>40 7</i>
total modules = <i>87</i>				
streamlining ... <i>yes</i>				
stealth ... <i>—</i>				

weapons
2 lasers, 2d6 dmg each

other
*2 hidden compartments.
All pilot & mechanics
rolls at hard until Ship
Condition is raised to
zero.*

The Constellate never fell. It faded.

The year is Y3260. The Ocath sub-sector is free, after many years under The Constellate's brutal rule.

Free, but in turmoil.

This scenario for M-SPACE introduces *The Weaver* setting, telling an epic story about a dying empire .

A starship fleeing from the The Constellate's armed forces disappeared 170 years ago. Now the characters must go to the Qioria system to search for it. But time is short. The planet is on a slow course for destruction and the hell holes of ignited gas grow every day.

Their only hope seems to emanate from the long forgotten teachings of the Weavers.



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