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GEEK

# THE BADESTONE RUN

An Adventure for *GURPS Traveller*

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## Referee's Notes

The adventure occurs in milieu 0 in the 8th year of the Imperium in the Apge system (Core 0402). At present, Apge is the center of a pocket Empire, the Apge Consortium, an economic grouping of eight worlds.

The Apge Consortium gains most of its finance from the Imperial trade between Core and Vland. However, Apge itself is an industrial powerhouse and its shipyards are famous for their workmanship and economic prices.

The Apge system has four planets and a large outer planetoid belt. Apge is in the closest orbit followed by Tronda, Badestone, Gromet and the Cronia Belt. Apart from Apge the other worlds are frozen rocky bodies. It should also be noted that Apge has no gas giant and fuel is only available on the planet or at the Starport.

### Apge

*Starport* Class IV. A very good port with good shipyards and a large orbital port.  
*Diameter:* 1,243 miles (2,000 km). *Atmosphere:* Standard mix heavily polluted by the world's heavy metals. *Surface Water:* 26% divided into two small seas and several large lakes. *Climate:* Average 43C ranging from 0C to 134C. *Population:* 121,000, all of whom live in Port town in the Southern Polar region. *Government:* Corporate technocracy. *Control Rating:* 3. *TL:* 9.

Apge is run by an elite council of six directors, one from each of the six largest corporations. This is decided upon examination of shares very five years. The Apge Port Authority has always had a director on the Elite Council and is seen by many as the "inner power."

Apge believes in choice, and its legal system reflects this with individuals left to take care of themselves. Firearms are, however, strictly controlled and only citizens can apply for a rare gun permit. The legal system is enforced by Rent-a-cops, a private firm which patrols areas who have paid their insurance. All but the poorest citizens pay this insurance.

The technology of Apge is above Imperial Standard. The heavy metal pollutants and the world's huge gravity provided the push to develop technology such as advanced gravitics and life support systems.

The world's close orbit provides a harsh dry environment with the summer heat raging to 134C in the great uplands Equatorial deserts and 0C at the poles during the short winters. Due to the heat, the human population has clung to a line of islands in the world's southern polar sea, where it is only 68c in summer. In this 1,077-km strip around the worlds southern cap live the 121,000 people on islands now totally enclosed in residential and ore processing domes and together form one city: "Port Town."

The atmosphere is heavily tainted due to the massive amounts of heavy metals which form a large percentage of Apge's crust and core. Full face filter masks are a necessity as the pollutants can irritate the eyes. The temperature also requires the wearing of desert survival suits (often called "second skins" on Apge) for anyone going outside the Domes. In the equatorial regions, a full EVA or Vacc suit must be worn as the simple second skin will not protect you from the heat.

The world's second problem is its huge gravity (another product of the heavy metals) which requires the Domes to be built with huge gravitic grids to ensure a consistent one-g. Outside, people need to stay in vehicles or wear full grav harnesses. The grav harness is an exoskeleton suit which forms a grid over the entire body, allowing normal 1g operation in the world's 2.48g environment.

The people are happy with their corporate government. The council not only governs Apge, but the seven other worlds of the system, using a free trade association which is dominated by Apge corporations. On Apge, the main industries are mining and the starport. The mines are located in the heart of upland deserts where robots assist miners in enclosed vehicles to strip-mine the heavy metals. The shipyards and port are classed as Class IV but could soon attain Class V classification, as the Apge Port Authority continues to reinvest all its profits back into expanding the facilities.

## Flora and Fauna

Due to the high gravity, animal life tends toward multi-short-legs with exoskeleton frames, while the plants are of spreading and not rising varieties. The animal life is inedible due to the pollutants, and do not pose any threat to humans. There is no native animal on Apge longer than six inches. The plants are also inedible, but one -- called Amealia's Fire after the explorer who discovered it -- uses the heavy metals in the soil to color its leaves, making the plant a source of a rare natural dye.

## Badestone

*Starport Class I.*

*Diameter:* 4,275 miles (6,880 km). *Atmosphere:* Very thin and tainted by Badestone Syndrome. *Surface Water:* 16% frozen across the surface. *Gravity:* 0.54g. *Climate:* -174C. *Population:* 4,000 people living at the starport dome. *Government:* Corporate technocracy. *Control Rating:* 5. *TL:* 8.

Apart from Apge the only other world to be populated in the system is Badestone, the third planet. The world is governed by the Apge Frontier Development Office, a private corporation owned by Apge Port Authority and the Exortom Corporation (one of the six largest corporations) which runs the world efficiently and profitably. The A.F.D.O protects Badestone's "treasure" by enforcing a police state with people having few rights.

The technology of Badestone is just below imperial standard and lower than the home world. The technology is however high enough to provide for the world's population Badestone is the site of an ancients base in the form of a shattered dome. The world itself appears to have been damaged, with its atmosphere almost destroyed and a flesh eating disease being introduced which still requires full vacc suits to be worn. Rigorous decontamination procedures are required when entering the starport dome.

The Apge Frontier Development Office runs the facility to research the Ancients Dome and attempt to find a cure for Badestone Syndrome. However, to help finance the research the Badestone Space Port is run as a free-port with no custom dues which helps to keep a constant flow of free traders heading for Badestone and generates trade and profit for the facility.

## The Adventure

### 1. A Poor Arrival

The adventure occurs just after the "Dashgad War" [*Editor's Note: detailed in the previous adventure "Cold night on Dashgad" and its sequel, "Long night on Dashgad," which will run soon.*] The characters arrive at Apge, the homeworld of Kotin Parnaby. After the death of her husband and the destruction of Smit Town, Kotin decided to return to her homeworld with her children John Jr. and Amanda.

The characters arrival in the system however does not go according to plan, however, as the ship shudders as soon as it emerges from jump and the computer informs the characters that the jump regulator has malfunctioned.

Once the ship docks at Apge high port it becomes clear that the regulator needs to be completely replaced and that it has also caused a series of minor problems with the ships navigation systems. To buy replacements is well beyond the characters' current finances. A grateful Kotin Parnaby tells the characters that her father works at the A.F.D.O office in Port Town on Apge and that he may have a way of helping the characters.

### 2. One of those days!

The port authority shuttle has huge wings designed to assist lift in Apge's standard atmosphere and low gravity. They retract like that of a huge beetle as it settles into the deep warm water of the Gulf of Toran in the safety of the Apge Downport harbor. Port Town itself is a collection of totally enclosed islands in the Southern Polar Sea centered around huge ore processing factories whose waste colors the air orange and black for hundreds of miles.

Once docked, the characters follow Mrs. Parnaby into the harbor's main warehouse sector a large area filled with brokers' offices, handlers, pubs and warehouses covering five stories and connected via grav-chutes and walkways.

On the third level, Mrs. Parnaby leads the characters to the offices of A.F.D.O., a small but well decorated office with very plush furniture. Once inside, a droid sees to their refreshments while a holo-projector informs the characters of the great things A.F.D.O. are doing for Badestone.

After a few minutes a door opens and elderly man steps in the room wearing a very expensive suit and introduces himself as Kotin's father and a friend to anyone who helped her and the children get off Dashgad.

Once Kotin tells her father of the characters' trouble, Mr. Divin says that he can easily have the ship repaired by A.F.D.O., but for accounting purposes the party will have to perform a simple task for the development office. A.F.D.O. operates a weekly shuttle service between Apge and Badestone; the voyage takes 1.8 days, plus 1 day in port and then 1.8 days back. Each shuttle needs a pilot, copilot, engineer and at least one steward. If the players operate as unpaid crew for such a trip, leaving in two days, then their ship can be repaired.

### 3. The good ship "Express"

The characters' vessel turns out to be an old style craft using Heplar Drive. It has a contragravity system with accommodation for 14 passengers sharing small staterooms with a passenger lounge, observation room and a small cargo area.

#### The Express

**1. Bridge.** A cramped cockpit with two crew seats, though only one is usually used as the pilots take shifts during the flight.

**2. Crew Staterooms.** Simple rooms containing four bunks (two to a room), a footlocker, a head and a wash basin.

**3. Passenger Lounge and Gallery.** A large area with an open plan kitchen where the stewards prepare meals and drinks. Only the stewards have the necessary security cards to open or work the kitchen. The rest of the room is filled with three large round tables with five chairs each, where passengers can sit to eat their meals.

**4. Passenger Staterooms.** Each room has a games console, a shower, a head, two small wardrobes and two beds. All the rooms are identical.

**5. Observation Deck.** A ladder from the lounge leads to the observation dome, where passengers can view the stars. The furniture is low-set comfortable seats with a lot of neck support to help passengers while away the hours looking out at space.

**6. Cargo Bay.** Locked during flight, this half-deck is only five feet high and is designed to carry large items for the passengers, not to ship tons of cargo.

**7. Engineering.** Sealed off by electronic locks (only the engineer has a key), these areas contain the life support, fuel and Heplar drives. Only the engineer is ever required to be in these areas.

As the flight crew readies the *Express* for the journey and the ground crew finishes loading supplies, fuel and the passenger's luggage, the stewards welcome the passengers:

**Sir Delaunch.** An imperial knight in his late thirties. Delaunch is very athletic and constantly wears a Naval uniform marked with the rank of Commander. Delaunch is part of the Imperial Embassy and is visiting the Ancients site as part of an Imperial/Apge scientific exchange.

**John Dalin.** An Imperial Scout, Dalin is a squat, chubby man who always appears to be sweating and always has the remains of his last meal down the front of his Scout Service coverall. Dalin is also part of the Imperial/Apge scientific exchange program.

**Joella Lodrada.** Joella is an attractive young woman with a very wide smile backed up with the sort of perfect teeth only money can buy. She is a singer journeying to the Badestone base on a contract. She has the habit of never stopping talking or telling long and unfunny jokes.

**Captain Ian "Bonebreaker" Tabbitt.** A Captain in the Apge Protection force, Bonebreaker is famous in the consortium as a problem solver. He has often been accused of going beyond the law to win success for the consortium. Ian is a large man as wide as he is tall (and solid, not fat), with a mass of sandy blond hair cut far too long for a military man.

#### 4. Murder on the Badestone Express

Of course, the trip won't be a piece of cake. The following section deals with the death of one of the passengers, which will leave the characters with a murder to solve before they arrive at the police state of Badestone. As the strangers in the group, the crewmen are certain to be prime suspects, and the last thing they should want is to be subjected to Badestone "justice."

Sir Delaunch is on board to make sure that the Archon Hypothesis continues to gain support as the Emperor wishes. An agent of the Bureau for Interstellar Affairs, he is here to kill Dalin so that he can't continue to research his non-Archon thesis concerning the ancients.

Bonebreaker has, in medical terms, a "screw loose," and now sees anti-Apge plots everywhere and believes everyone is out to get him. The murder will of course (in his imagination) be a misjudged attempt to kill him and he will take the appropriate action to save himself.

Lodrada is what she seems -- a good singer and an innocent caught on the murder express.

Delaunch is very good at his job and will kill Dalin as smoothly as he can, placing an oxidizer in Dalin's life support mask and then creating a failure in life support so Dalin will place the mask on, causing death by suffocation.

**Guests Arrive.** The passengers are shown to their staterooms and told that lunch will be served at 1300 hours. The stewards should get an initial feel about each passenger during this time.

**Lunch.** Lunch is served in the passenger area with all the guests, apart from Bonebreaker, sharing one table. Bonebreaker makes sure he has his back to the wall and simply glares at everyone while his food-probe checks every mouthful of his meal.

The other guests chat amongst themselves, and Dalin begins to explain why the ancients couldn't be human, due to the tool, seat and many other designs discovered at ancient sites. Lodrada says that they must have been human, since she's seen the holo-vids and any way no non-humans could control so many worlds Sir Delaunch simply states that the Emperor's view is that the Imperium is taking back the worlds of the human Archon Empire.

**Dinner (2100 hours).** Dinner is only attended by Dalin and Lodrada who keep to themselves. It is clear that Lodrada is not amused by Dalin's strange ideas. Sir Delaunch is busy working on his speech for the A.F.D.O. dinner he must attend on arriving at Badestone. Bonebreaker has decided to eat his own rations in his stateroom, as no one is to be trusted.

**A Failure (0100 hours the next day).** Everyone is woken by the environmental control alarm, indicating an environmental failure. Everyone must get into their soft-suit vacc suits. Stewards may have to help some of the guests. The Engineer will quickly discover a corrosion fault in the main compressor unit; a fault which the ground crew should have spotted. It will take about 2.5 hours to repair before the ship can be repressurized.



**A Death.** At 0245 Dalin dies from bleeding in his lungs caused by the oxidizing agent; nothing can save him. He does, however, buzz the stewards before collapsing dead.

## **An Investigation**

Checking out the various leads will yield the following:

*Dalin's Soft Suit.* A close medical examination of the mask will indicate the presence of a foreign substance.

*Engineering.* The entry to engineering was hot wired, bypassing the locks. Checking the life support component that the engineer blames for the failure, corrosion damage is, indeed, found. But the damage is very precise . . . almost *too* precise.

*Room Search.* Delaunch's only error was dropping the top of the acid bottle he used under his bed. He will, of course, claim to have no knowledge of the cap and be offended at the accusation that he could kill his colleague. He will suggest Tabbitt as a likely suspect, pointing out (quite rightly) that Captain Tabbitt is crazy enough to do anything.

## **You're Not Getting Me!**

At some point in the investigation, Captain Ian "Bonebreaker" Tabbitt will lose it completely, descending into a fit of paranoid lunacy. He will begin trying to eliminate everyone he sees as a threat (that is, just plain everyone) and will attempt to escape from the ship. He has no knowledge of electronics and will kidnap a crewman in order for him to work the iris valve locks so he can escape the vessel. Of course, if the iris valve locks are forced the craft will decompress very, very quickly.

Bonebreaker must be stopped and this scene should provide the characters with a good brawl with a mad but very skillful warrior. The scene also gives the characters one very big clue which should solve the entire affair. Ian couldn't have hotwired the engineering door so it had to have been someone else.

## **Resolution**

The adventure should be resolved with Sir Delaunch being accused and held for the murder of John Dalin. Once at Badestone A.F.D.O. security officers will arrest Sir Delaunch. He will claim diplomatic immunity and the Apge authorities will be forced to release him and deport him back to the Imperium. Sir Delaunch will remain at large and, together with his fellow Bureau for Interstellar Affairs agents, may cause the characters a lot of trouble in the future.

If Sir Delaunch is not handed over to the authorities, the entire complement of the *Express* will be arrested and held over for two weeks. Genetic tests may indicate Delaunch is the guilty party . . . but he has lots of time to pull in his political markers, and there's a good chance one of the PCs may take the fall, leading to more adventures on the Badestone Run . . .

On return to Apge, Mr. Divin has made sure that the characters' craft has been fixed, and the only problem remaining is the locating of a cargo and perhaps a few passengers.

## **Library Data**

### **The Ancients**

Because of genetic evidence that all branches of Humaniti spread from one common stock, it is a

commonly-held belief that all humans come from one world and were scattered across the galaxy by a mysterious race. Ruins on multiple worlds across all known space attest to the one-time existence of a race of Ancients.

The Ancients seem to have either destroyed themselves in a huge war, moved away to another area of space or vanished for some other unknown reason.

## Archon Hypothesis

Created by the Solomani Second Imperium, the Archon Hypothesis postulates that the Ancients were actually a race of humaniti, referred to as the Archons. The Archons developed vast technology on their home world Terra before their empire was destroyed in a huge war. The minor human races across known space are the descendants of the Archons who were blasted back to a pre-technological existence.

Emperor Cleon has stated that the third Imperium is simply rejoining the Old Archon Empire and it is mankind's fate to reform the great "Archon" Imperium.

## Bureau for Interstellar Affairs (BIA)

The BIA is an imperial publicity and information dissemination agency. (Referees: BIA is the Emperor's own intelligence authority organization answering directly to the Emperor.)

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