

For Referees Only

Special Supplement 1
The Sydymic Outworlds Cluster

TRAVELLER^{®20}

*Science-Fiction Adventure in
the Far Future*

QLI/RPGRealms

CT - Classic Traveller
T20 - Traveller20
Gateway Domain



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT 1
THE SYDYMIC OUTWORLDS CLUSTER
CROSSROADS OF GATEWAY DOMAIN
By Martin J. Dougherty

BASED ON THE AWARD-WINNING TRAVELLER GAME SYSTEM AND UNIVERSE BY MARC MILLER

Imperial Ambassador
Martin J. Dougherty

Diplomatic Service Coordinator
Hunter Gordon

Special Envoy
Shane MacLean

Third Secretary
Jason D. Kemp

Copyright ©2004 QuikLink Interactive Inc. All rights reserved. **Traveller** is a trademark of Far Future Enterprises and is used under license.

Portions of this material are released under the Open Game License (OGL), a copy of which is available at the rear of this work, along with the designation of all Open Game Content and Product Identity specified for this body of work.

A single copy of this electronic document may be printed out for personal use and reference only. Additional copies may only be printed to replace a previously printed copy that has been lost or damaged. No part of this booklet may be reproduced in any form for any other reason by any means without permission in writing from the publisher, except as provided for under the terms of the Open Game License (a copy of which can be found at the end of the document.).

Traveller for the *d20 System*
Science Fiction Adventure in the Far Future

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



QuikLink Interactive, Inc.
2307 Braffon Ct.
Acworth, GA 30101
<http://www.RPGRealms.com>
<http://www.TravellerRPG.com>



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3	Scene 3: Rogue Male	33
About this Book	3	Act 3: Onsler Rapids.....	33
Standards and Assumptions	3	Scene 1: Arrivals	33
What You Need to Play	3	Scene 2: For The Farmer And The Factory, and All Of You And Me	34
The EPIC Adventure System.....	3	Scene 3: Field Test.....	35
Rewards and Advancements.....	4	Scene 4: Meat and Potatoes for Dinner, Again!	36
Character Types and Skills.....	5	Act 4: The Storm.....	36
Designer's Notes.....	5	Scene 1: Gathering Clouds	36
Sydymic Outworlds Cluster	7	Scene 2: The Roundup	36
Background	7	Scene 3: Halfway to Safety	37
Referee's Information	7	Scene 4: Racing the Storm	37
The Thiid Imperium.....	7	Act 5: Tighten Your Helmet Straps.....	41
Independent Worlds and Client States	8	Scene 1: Surveying the Wreckage.....	41
Ley Sector Delta Quadrant Map.....	9	Scene 2: Life Goes On... Sort Of	41
Sydymic Subsector	10	Scene 3: A Warning.....	42
Overview.....	10	Scene 4: On The Brink of Annihilation	42
The Worlds of the Cluster	10	Scene 5: A Reprieve From On High	43
Sydymic Subsector Map.....	11	Scene 6: A Consensus At Last.....	43
Igmigi.....	11	Act 6: Keepers of the Gate	43
Shurril Gami.....	12	Scene 1: Holding The Line.....	43
Brightlett	12	Scene 2: Gathering The Tools.....	44
Irdashdis	13	Scene 3: Fire and Flood.....	44
Ushlash	14	Scene 4: Crisis Point.....	44
Izirgar	15	Scene 5: Into The Breach?	45
Ma.....	16	Epilogue: Keepers of the Gate	45
Ked	16	Scene 1: A Very Minor Victory.....	45
Rumors and Scuttlebutt.....	17	Scene 2: Departures	46
Short Adventures	18	The Future: Onward from Irdashdis.....	46
Signal GKs (Amber Zones)	18	Adventure Checklist.....	47
Signal GK #1: Semi-Automatic Life Insurance	18	The Cast of Characters	47
Signal GK #2: Watching the Gatekeepers	19	People	47
Signal GK #3: Intervention Plus One.....	20	The Townsfolk at Onsler Rapids	47
Mercenary Tickets	21	Alex (Alexander Cheslen)	47
Merc Ticket #1: Fighting for peace	21	Bob (Robert Alexandrovsk Handry)	48
Merc Ticket #2: Close Protection.....	22	Maria (Maria Dhuuriski)	48
Odd Jobs (Patron Encounters).....	23	Ted – (Sir Theodore Hamilton-Coasner).....	48
Odd Job #1: A Nice Little Scam	23	Townsfolk (Generic Stats).....	49
Odd Job #2: An Unofficial Audit.....	23	The LSG Detachment	49
Odd Job #3: Signal GK, Sort of... ..	24	Anne – (Major Annekka Orvatsenn, Loyal Sector Guard Detachment Commander) .	49
Odd Job #4: On the Door	25	Kuuli (Sergeant Kuuli Jamai)	50
EPIC Adventure: Keepers of the Gate	27	LSG Technical Expert (Generic Stats).....	50
Referee's Overview	27	Animals.....	50
Playing out the adventure.....	27	Talkan's Grazer (Steakhamster).....	50
Push, Pull, Enigma and gimmick	27	Ziprip.....	51
Referee's Information	27	Kainho	51
The Loyal Sector Guard	27	Library Data	52
The LSG Detachment at Onsler Rapids	28	Developing the Sydymic Outworlds Cluster	54
Irdashdis.....	28		
Flora and Fauna	28		
Weather Patterns	29		
Liberty Port.....	29		
Onsler Rapids	29		
Plots and Episodes	31		
Act 1: Liberty Port	31		
Scene 1: Planetfall	31		
Scene 2: Stopover in Liberty Port	31		
Scene 3: A Contract	32		
Act 2: Overland on Irdashdis	32		
Scene 1: Liberty Port to Holgrund City	32		
Scene 2: Into the Backwoods	33		

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS BOOK

The Sydymic Outworlds is a game setting useable with any version of *Traveller*, or any SF game rules, though it was created with the T20 rules system in mind. This supplement details a cluster of six worlds on the very fringe of the Third Imperium, and two outlying systems. The region detailed here is derived from data in *Gateway to Destiny*, the Gateway Domain Sourcebook, and is fully compatible with that supplement.

This Special Supplement can be used without any other background materials, though possession of the *Gateway to Destiny* book will add greater depth to the setting and explain background concepts merely touched upon here. The overall concept of this Special Supplement is similar to the Cluster Books from QLI, which detail a small group of worlds and present adventures set among them. However, Cluster Books are larger and presented in greater depth than this 'taster' supplement.

STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

This supplement assumes a general familiarity with the *Traveller* game universe and the region being detailed. Basic information on the region (Gateway Domain), the sector (Ley Sector) and other concepts (the Third Imperium, the Solomani Rim War etc) can be found in the Linkworlds Cluster supplement, available for free download from the QLI website, or in print as part of the T20 Referee's screen.

This supplement is set in the "Golden Age" of the Third Imperium, around the year 990, in Ley Sector which forms part of Gateway Domain, a border region of the Imperium. The cluster lies at the very edge of the Imperium; most worlds are not Imperial members but are heavily influenced by the economic, diplomatic and military power of the Third Imperium.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Please note that this is not a standalone game. It requires that you have access to a set of Traveller rules. The adventure was created for use with the T20 rules system from QLI and the original Classic Traveller rules, but can easily be converted to other versions of the game or even other rules systems.

Assuming you intend to run this adventure with the T20 rules, you will require at least the T20 Lite rules from QLI. We recommend the following:

- The Traveller's Handbook (T20 Core Rulebook) plus either the T20 Player's Book or a d20 system core rulebook such as the *Dungeons & Dragons™ 3rd Edition Player's Handbook*.
- One or more of each of the following types of dice: four-sided (d4), six-sided (d6), eight-sided (d8), ten-sided (d10), twelve-sided (d12), and twenty-sided (d20).
- Pencil (or pen) and paper for keeping notes about your character and the adventure. Graph paper is also recommended for making maps of places your character

has visited.

- If you enjoy playing online, or are interested in playing *Traveller* online, you should also have a copy of *GRIP: Traveller*. *GRIP* (Generic Roleplaying for Internet Players) will allow a Referee and up to eight players to get together via the Internet or a local area network (LAN) and play *Traveller* (or any other RPG) no matter where they are located physically in the world. Visit <http://www.RPGRealms.com> for more information.

THE EPIC ADVENTURE SYSTEM

The adventure presented in this supplement uses the EPIC adventure system created by Marc Miller. The EPIC system is a way around one of the most common problems with many RPG adventures: the fact that they are very 'linear' in design. In far too many adventures, encounter one typically leads to encounter two, which inevitably leads to encounter three, ad-nauseum. This has several problems. Firstly, the players may not notice a critical fact and thus be left in limbo with no clue how to find the next plot element. Railroading them is sometimes the only solution, and in general railroadng is a common feature of this kind of linear adventure. This can lead to player frustration, since there is little worse than not being captain of your own fate.

Reducing the amount of leading-by-the-nose is fine until one of those gaming groups comes along, who insist on doing everything in the wrong order and generally do violence to the plot of an otherwise great adventure.

The Epic Adventure System provides a new way to design and organize adventures, incorporating enough flexibility that the player characters have the 'freedom to roam' without causing the referee nightmares. Asides, delays and additional adventures can easily be slotted into an Epic Adventure.

An Epic Adventure is broken down into 6 parts:

The Cast of Characters – A description of major characters encountered in the course of the adventure, possibly including pregenerated player-characters.

The Background – The background provides the Referee with the information needed to prepare himself, and lays the groundwork for introducing this adventure to the players.

Minor incidents and encounters – Referred to as Minor Scenes or just Scenes, are encounters or events that involve the player characters in some form. Many are directly related to the adventure, and may provide clues, equipment, or other information and materials needed to eventually complete the adventure. Others are merely to provide diversion and amusement. Scenes, unless noted in their descriptions, do not need to be played in any particular order, and may be sprung upon the player characters when the Referee deems appropriate.

Critical Plot Elements – Referred to as Plot Keys, Key Scenes or simply Keys, make up the heart of the storyline for the adventure. They contain vital pieces to the plot that must be played for the adventure to make any sense to the players in the end. You may play any number of Scenes before and after each Plot Keys, but all of the Plot Keys should eventually be completed in their proper order.

INTRODUCTION

Chapters – A Chapter or Act is made up of one or more Plot Keys. They outline the plot to the Referee, and provide tips and information for playing the Scenes and Plot Keys that are contained in the Chapter. In order to complete a Chapter, each Plot Key within must be completed. Each Chapter must be completed, and played in order to successfully run the adventure. Due to the ‘cinematic’ nature of an EPIC adventure, it is easy for the Referee to allow the player characters to temporarily deviate from the current adventure storyline to follow a false lead or pursue another short adventure that has interested them. When you are ready to return the player characters back to this adventure plot line, simply pick up with the next Scene.

Adventure Checklist – The Adventure Checklist provides the Referees with a recommended guideline of the order in which various Scenes and Plot Keys in this adventure should be presented to the players. As the player characters complete each Scene or Plot Key, the Referee simply checks it off the list. When every Plot Key in a Chapter has been played, that Chapter has been completed the Referee may begin the first Scene in the next Chapter.

REWARDS AND ADVANCEMENT

Before embarking upon a *Traveller* game or campaign, it is worth deciding what the pace of advancement will be for participating characters. For one-off games this is not important but if the same characters are going to have future adventures, advancement becomes a major issue.

If too little experience is given out, players may become frustrated. There is always a new skill or feat that a character could have done with having, or that the player really wants to have, and for many people working towards gaining such abilities is an important part of the game. If the distant mountains never seem to be any closer, what is the point of walking towards them?

On the other hand, characters who gain large amounts of experience and other rewards may become overpoweringly powerful. True, a shotgun in the back will be as detrimental to the health of a 20th level veteran as a beginner, but skill levels are critical to adventuring success; too much too fast is bad for a game even if it does not make the characters invincible. Thus the Referee should tailor the experience awards suggested by the T20 core rulebook to his or her own game style. In our experience it is better to keep characters a little bit hungry.

This brings up the question of whether to give out experience at the end of each Act or at the end of the adventure. Each Act can be treated as a separate adventure in terms of experience awards. Typically, each Act (or Chapter) is about equivalent to an Amber Zone or Signal GK adventure, leading to the conclusion that it should be worth around 2000XP X the Average party level. This is not a good parallel, since some Acts are quite short and besides, over a 5-Act adventure this adds up to a LOT of experience.

If experience is to be given out at the end of each Act, it is better to use the following system:

Base Experience for the adventure is calculated as per the THB – this is a full adventure so experience award is set as 4,000 XP multiplied by the average party level (at the beginning of the adventure). Half of this is saved up to be awarded at the end of the adventure. The other half is available to be assigned

at the end of each Act. It is possible to simply assign 10% of the total to each Act (assuming 5 Acts), but the Referee should consider assigning greater or lesser percentages to certain Acts if he/she feels that the characters would learn more from the events in that Act than from another.

The experience available for any given Act is subject to the standard multipliers listed in the T20 core rulebook; some acts are just plain more dangerous than others! The 50% block of experience is also subject to multipliers for difficulty of the overall adventure.

Remember that all experience awards are totals, and are then shared among the participating characters. Only characters present in a given Act gain experience for it. When determining who gains experience from the adventure as a whole, the Referee must use judgment. Obviously, characters who were there the whole time should gain the full amount. People who popped in for a single Act should not. If a player brought in a new character to replace one killed or otherwise indisposed, the Referee should count the character as being present for purposes of dividing up the experience but only award a portion of the total experience, based on how long the new character was involved. The rest of the experience entitlement was lost with the dead character.

Using this system, characters who were present for just one or two Acts of the adventure gain some experience, but do not share in the overall end-of-adventure award. Referees also are able to easily deal with the situation where a player brings along three friends to a session in the middle of the adventure, only one of whom comes back to play in the remaining Acts.

Example:

Alice, Bob and Candy play 6th level characters through a 5-act adventure. Ignoring difficulty multipliers, this gives a base XP award of $4,000 \times 6 = 24,000$ points for the whole adventure. The Referee ‘banks’ 12,000 for award at the end, leaving 12,000 available to be divided up among the various Acts. She decides that Act 1 and 2 are worth 1,000 each, 3 and 4 (being much more complex) are worth 4,000 each and Act 5 is worth 2,000.

Alice’s character manages to get killed during Act 2 and is replaced by a new one, who survives to the end of the adventure. She thus gains no experience for Act 1-2 (well, other than being a highly experienced corpse) but gains XP for Act 3,4 and 5.

Bob goes right through the adventure with no mishaps, but complicates matters by bringing his friend Dave along to Act 3. Dave misses Act 4 but manages to turn up for about half of Act 5.

Candy misses the very last session of Act 5 but plays throughout the rest of the adventure.

Experience is awarded as follows:

Act 1: Three characters participate. Experience is awarded: 1000 points divided by 3, or 334 points each.

Act 2: Three characters participate. Experience is awarded: 1000 points divided by 3, or 334 points each. Alice’s character is dead, so this experience is buried with her.

Act 3: Four characters participate. Experience is awarded: 4,000 points divided by 4, or 1,000 points each.

Act 4: Three characters participate. Experience is awarded: 4000 points divided by 3, or 1,334 points each.

Act 5: Three characters participate in the majority of sessions in this Act. The Referee decides that Dave's relatively trivial contribution should not take experience away from the others and awards 2,000 experience divided by 3, or 1,667 points to each of the three main characters. She gives Dave a token award of a third of this – 555 experience points.

Final Award: The Referee decides that the adventure was carried by Alice, Bob and Candy, and that Dave's contribution was relatively minor. However, Act 3 was a big one and Dave not only made his character useful but also got involved in the roleplaying. She decides that the experience Dave got from the two Acts he was actually present for is enough of a reward and awards the overall adventure experience among the three main characters. This is 12,000 divided by 3 or 4,000 points each. However, Alice loses part of this award since her character is a replacement. A 3/5 award (the new character was present for Acts 3-5) does not seem fair, since the first two Acts were quite minor. The Referee decides to award the overall experience in the same proportions as the per-Act XP, i.e. Alice loses out on 2,000/12,000 or 1/10 of her possible award.

Candy missed a single session, but the Referee decides that this is of no consequence.

Thus the experience awards for the Acts and the adventure as a whole work out as:

Alice: $1,000 + 1,334 + 1,667 + 3600 = 7,601$

Bob and Candy: $334 + 334 + 1,000 + 1,334 + 1,667 + 4000 = 8669$

Dave: $1,000 (\text{Act } 3) + 555 (1/3 \text{ of Act } 5) = 1,555$

The Referee has decided that although Dave was present in Act 3, a major part of the adventure as a whole, it would represent an isolated incident to him and thus he does not qualify for the overall experience award. This also avoids the problem of players who rarely turn up for a game possessing quite powerful characters whose experience was earned by other players.

Other rewards are of course possible within an adventure. Each Act will normally include opportunities for characters to gain advantages in terms of money, equipment, weaponry and contacts among rich and powerful individuals.

CHARACTER TYPES AND SKILLS

It is not the practice of QLI to list the skills a team of Travellers will need in order to complete any given adventure (though skills required to get hired for the job might be listed). This is because *Traveller* is an open-ended game, and there are a great many possible paths to success. Almost any group, of any level, with any set of skills, can complete this or any other *Traveller* adventure if they are able to think creatively and maximize their strengths. There are no encounters or challenges in this adventure aimed at any type or class of character. Different characters will use different approaches and may struggle in some circumstances, but adventuring is not about having the right weapons, skills or equipment to meet a challenge; it is about meeting what the universe throws at you with what you have and finding a way to win – or at least survive.

Any group of characters can complete this adventure even if they do not have access to a starship. However, the

difficulty of getting about the region using commercial traffic is considerable, so it is best if the characters do have a ship. A small Jump-2 vessel such as a Far Trader or a Scout/Courier is ideal.

Obviously, if the characters have a starship then they should be able to operate it. This implies that they need at least some level of skill between them in the relevant disciplines: Piloting the ship, navigating between systems, running the engineering plant and manning the ship's weapons (if any). However, there is no set level required for such skills.

Since this adventure assumes that the characters and their ship are somewhat impoverished, it is recommended that characters created specially for this adventure should not start with large amounts of cash from their mustering-out bonuses. The Referee should allow the purchase of a reasonable amount of equipment with this money prior to beginning play, then reduce whatever is left by 50-90%, leaving the characters with a few hundred credits to their name rather than tens of thousands.

Players who know about this in advance may decide to spend all their money before it is taken away. It is up to the Referee if this is acceptable or not. For example, it is entirely believable for a character taking a job as an engineer aboard a starship to invest her mustering-out cash in the very best hostile-environment suit available or for an amateur scientist to own an expensive personal computer. Characters who wish to buy a golf bag full of guns and a robot to carry it should be firmly discouraged.

QLI has at times recommended the T20 *Travellers* Handbook for this purpose since its sturdy construction makes it more likely to survive a collision unharmed than the cranium of a munchkin player. However, it could be noted that QLI does not, for legal reasons, condone Referees engaging in physical violence towards players.

Psychological torment is fine, however, and if demand is sufficient QLI will publish a special supplement on the subject.

DESIGNER'S NOTES

The Samurai of Old Terra had a saying – 'after the battle is over, tighten your helmet straps'. This referred to the way a sudden reverse at the last moment could leave a warrior who thought he had won unable to react. Such a situation may come to pass in this adventure. The challenges come thick and fast towards the end, and the characters may not be able to cope with the situation. They may end up burned, half-drowned, frozen and exhausted... if they're lucky and nothing worse befalls.

Keepers of the Gate is a mix of roleplaying interaction and 'disaster movie'. There is little gunplay and violence in this adventure, yet there are opportunities for heroism all the same. The adventure works best with players who will engage with the characters around them rather than looking for the next fight or bucketful of credits. This does mean that Munchkin players may be a problem. However, the writers at QLI do not believe in pandering to Munchkins.

Traveller is a game about heroes. Flawed heroes, inept heroes, dark heroes perhaps... but definitely heroes of a sort. The player who will not do anything in a game if it does not

INTRODUCTION

make his or her character more powerful is not playing a hero, no matter how many bad guys he/she can mow down in the name of all that is righteous. It is not desirable to design adventures from the point of view of pleasing Munchkins.

Instead, this adventure presents a situation and some people who are caught up in it. What the players and their characters choose to do about the matter is entirely their option. A player who is disappointed because they saved the town and all those people – but they didn't make any money doing it – is missing the point of what gaming is all about. Adventure gaming is about living an adventure. It is about experiencing the wondrous and the unknown.

And it is about 'being,' just for a time, a hero.

Heroes do not do it for the money, they do it because it needs doing. To take a real-world example: there are 320 Rescue Swimmers employed by the United States. Their job is to go into icy, oil-covered water from a helicopter to save distressed mariners. These people risk their lives every time they are called out, sometimes in truly appalling conditions... and sometimes to save people who should have known better than to be out at sea in those conditions.

Rescue Swimmers receive a moderate salary – not a great one or even a particularly good one. They receive little public adulation; indeed, most people have never heard of them. Yet they answer the call every time. Why do they do this? There are, in the words of one Swimmer, two criteria for responding to a call:

1. You're in trouble
2. They know where you are

That's it.

These people do not answer the call so they can gain money-treasure-points or the chance of leveling up; they do it because it needs doing.

Or maybe because they are heroes.

And THAT is what **Traveller** is about. It's about emulating those people – only without having to jump into the sea...

SYDYMIC OUTWORLDS CLUSTER

BACKGROUND

Sydymic Outworlds is set in the Domain of Gateway, part of the Third Imperium, in the Year 993. The Domain is a somewhat turbulent place at present, after the controversial appointment of a new Archduke to oversee its affairs and a major war raging in the Solomani Rim just a couple of sectors away. However, life goes on, commerce continues, and Travellers need to make a living.

Much of the data presented in this book is source material; it can be used in adventures long after the main one is played out. Indeed, the Sydymic Outworlds will be the official fan-developed setting for Gateway Domain. QLI will be accepting adventures and background material fleshing out the various worlds and their people, creating a fan-based resource available online.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The following data is provided for the benefit of the Referee. How much of it can be determined by the players, and with what degree of accuracy, is a matter for the Referee to decide. In many cases a simple search on the ship's computer or any library terminal will suffice to provide at least the bones of the information.

THE THIRD IMPERIUM

The Third Imperium is a human-dominated empire of some 11,000 star systems. It is not a vast, monolithic structure. The time lag inherent in interstellar communications makes this impossible. Instead, the Imperium resembles a vast federation of worlds that agree to certain common practices, and allow the Emperor and his subordinates to deal with foreign policy, military affairs and similar multi-world considerations while maintaining control of their internal affairs.

The Imperial Domain of Gateway

Gateway Domain lies at the extreme Trailing edge of the Third Imperium, a human-dominated empire of thousands of worlds. The Imperium does not directly govern its members worlds (with a few exceptions) but instead regulates trade and interworld affairs, and provides for the common defense of the member worlds by means of the Imperial Navy, Marine Corps and Army. Worlds have almost complete freedom to create a government, enact laws and to deal with internal affairs. The Imperial influence is considerable, however, with the courts of the Imperial Nobility being primarily concerned with the settlement of disputes and the finding of compromises.

The senior Imperial noble in the region is Archduke Erechs, whose capital is at Annapabar a subsector away to Spinward-Rimward. Under Erechs are the Sector Duke (Marshal Nells, who is in fact the former Archduke, deposed for incompetence by the Emperor himself) and the Subsector Dukes. Answering to them are the various Imperial Counts, Marquises, Barons, Baronets and Knights who mediate, adjudicate and generally try to keep the peace among the worlds of the Domain. This is a tall order, since the Imperial nobility is split into several factions and other influences (such as certain economically

potent worlds and the Megacorporations) also wield vast power.

The Imperium is currently at war with another human power, the Solomani Confederation. Early Solomani gains have now been slowed to almost a standstill, and the Imperium is beginning to take back some systems. The war front is far away, but the needs of the navy have pulled a large number of vessels out of the Domain, creating a potentially dangerous weakness.

Ley Sector is one of four sectors that technically lie within the Domain of Gateway; all Domains consist of four sectors, each of sixteen subsectors. In fact, the total Imperial territory in Gateway is not much more than one sector in total, split between Ley and Glimmerdrift Reaches Sectors. The remainder lies beyond the current Imperial border but is considered an area of interest. Imperial influence wanes quickly beyond the border, though commerce and the occasional anti-piracy patrol does reach far out into non-Imperial space.

Fourteen of the sixteen subsectors of Ley sector lie within the Imperium. Most of the remainder (the Rimward-Trailing corner of the sector) is either independent or part of the K'Kree League, a remnant of what was once a powerful empire that challenged the Third Imperium and was crushed.

To Rimward of Ley Sector lies the Glimmerdrift Reaches, a region of many independent worlds, a few small powers and two subsector-sized clusters of Imperial member worlds separated by the Darksky Gulf, a starless region. There is a certain amount of sympathy for the Solomani among the neutral worlds of Glimmerdrift, since the region was largely settled (long ago) by humans of Solomani origin. Other worlds are friendly to the Imperium, or truly neutral.

To Trailing of Ley Sector is Gateway Sector (not to be confused with Gateway Domain). Gateway Sector lies entirely beyond the Imperium, and is difficult to reach by vessels with Jump-2 or lesser capability. A finger of the Lesser Rift makes navigation in this direction difficult and creates a natural border. The only Jump-2 route into Gateway Sector runs through neutral space on the far side of the K'Kree League, so there is relatively little trade in that direction. Beyond Gateway Sector, far to Trailing, lies the 2000 Worlds of the K'Kree, a race of militant herbivores whose religion dictates the extermination of all G'Naak (Vermin, or meat-eaters). Relations with the K'Kree are strained at best.

To Rimward-Trailing lies Crucis Margin Sector, with is also entirely beyond the Imperium. This sector contains the oldest human-colonized worlds in the region (those of the Old Worlds and the Katowice Conquest) plus several other human and non-human polities and individual worlds. K'Kree influence is just beginning to be felt in the sector, but the main influence is the Hive Federation, a large power made up of many races led by the Hivers, who resemble giant starfish. There is also a single-world state of Droyne in Crucis Margin. Droyne are mysterious humanoid beings who resemble birds to some extent; their actions are often inexplicable to humans. The Droyne have been quite active in recent years, and have even sent ships as far as the Imperium, though for what purpose remains unclear.

Ley Sector, Delta Quadrant

The four subsectors comprising the Delta Quadrant of Ley Sector are at the very fringe of Imperial space, and outside influences are strong. One subsector lies entirely outside the Imperium. Links to the rest of Imperial space are long and a little tenuous, a situation made worse by unrest and some commerce raiding in recent years. However, measures have recently been taken to correct this situation. The Domain capital was moved into the Quadrant in 990, to the world of Annababar. The cluster of worlds around the new capital was named the Imperial Trade Cluster. Large amounts of money have recently been spent on ports, industry and security within the cluster, greatly enhancing local economy.

Solomani influences are quite strong on some worlds, and a large minority of citizens identify closely with the Solomani. Many of the worlds of Delta Quadrant are independent or client states of the Imperium. The largest single non-Imperial power is the Khuur League, which includes several developed worlds in the Khuur and Daran clusters. The Imperial company Frontier Tranship, LIC is highly active in the quadrant, providing a reliable cross-border service with its fleet of small, armed vessels.

Delta Quadrant has several clusters, of which the Serpent Main (which reaches across into Gamma Quadrant) and the Imperial Trade Cluster (sometimes referred to as the Far End) are the largest. The Daran Cluster is also quite large, but is divided politically, with the Coreward end being far more developed than the Rimward.

The Sydymic Outworlds Cluster comprises six worlds and two "outliers" that are generally considered to be part of the cluster. While most of the worlds of the cluster lie outside the Imperium, Imperial vessels are common in the cluster. Some are traders, some naval vessels and a few are official couriers or long-range traders making the long Jump-3 or -4 run into Gateway. This route is an alternative to the standard Jump-2 route but requires long-range ships and is thus viable only for extremely high-value trade and diplomatic missions.

The Delta Quadrant is a little unsafe at present. Rumors of commerce raiders and armed uprisings continue to surface. The Imperial Navy has responded with stepped-up patrols and has agreed temporary basing rights on some frontier worlds. This has brought new money into the area and, perversely, the troubles have created a boom market. The increased Naval presence has come at the expense of other regions, however, and there is pressure to transfer the assets to other areas equally in need of naval assistance.

INDEPENDENT WORLDS AND CLIENT STATES

Many of the worlds along the border of Gateway Domain are to a greater or lesser degree 'client states' of the Imperium. In effect, they are friendly independents who allow Imperial Navy vessels to use their ports and patrol their systems as a matter of course. Trade links are strong and relations generally cordial. Joint naval operations are not uncommon and extradition treaties are in place. Imperial-registered ships arriving in port on such worlds are treated more or less as if they were local shipping; papers are normally accepted at face value and customs checks are no more rigorous than usual. In return, client worlds are guaranteed protection against aggression and can request aid from the Imperium in times of

trouble.

Some worlds have formal Client status and are listed as such in the star system data. Good relations with the Imperium and its citizens can be taken for granted. Some other worlds are a kind of 'informal client state' with friendly relations but no formal treaty in place. Some words listed as Independent fall into this group.

Other independent worlds are truly that; non-aligned. Some are actually quite hostile to the Imperium and will harass ships coming through their ports with endless paperwork or intense customs inspections. Actual violence against Imperial citizens acting lawfully would be a very stupid mistake, but some worlds will do everything they can to discourage Imperial attention and Imperial visitors.

The majority of Independent worlds are fairly neutral in their attitude to Imperial citizens, and treat them no better or worse than any other visitors. Attitudes do shift, however, due to internal or external factors.

The Khuur League

The Khuur League is a remnant of the Sydymic Empire, which once ruled the Sydymic Outworlds cluster along with much of the sector. Today, it is a loose alliance based on trade and mutual assistance. Khuur (still known as Sopater to its inhabitants) is the homeworld of the Sydites, a human minor race that was subjected to heavy genetic manipulation by the Ancients. Large and strong (though not intellectually gifted) the Sydites have two pairs of arms; one for fine work and one for heavy lifting.

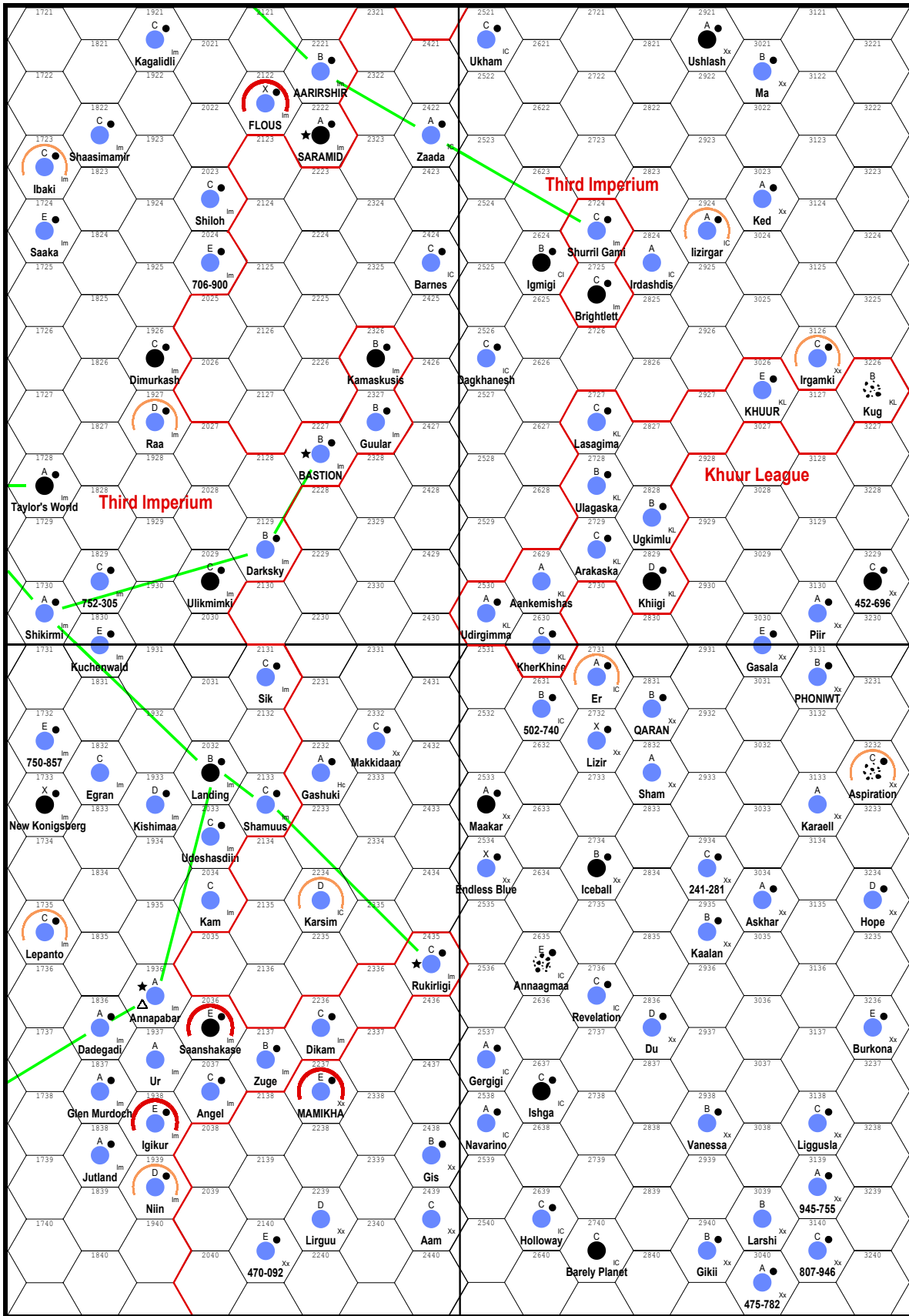
Khuur (Sopater) was once the capital of the Sydymic Empire. In the mid-late 7th Century the Imperium and Sydymic Empire clashed in a bloody war that lasted many years and was characterised by desperate ground fighting as the Imperium wrested world after world away from the Empire. The war culminated with an assault on the Sydymic homeworld.

The defenders of Sopater put up a tremendous fight, resulting in the almost total destruction of infrastructure on the planet. Nuclear weapons (mostly but not always tactical in nature) were liberally used during the ground fighting. The modern name for the world, Khuur, is derived from a Sydymic dialect word meaning "Victim".

The Khuur League was set up in the wake of the fall of Sopater and the collapse of the empire, with Imperial blessing. The League guaranteed the sovereignty of the various worlds not already under Imperial occupation, subject to certain limitations on armed forces and concerted action. These prohibitions are long since abrogated, and the worlds of the League are free to do as they please. Imperial agents watch closely for any signs of an anti-Imperial alliance among the League worlds, but for the time being the League remains a trade federation and defense pact only.

The Galian Federation

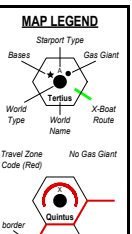
Comprising 32 star systems lying to Trailing, in the Gamma and Alpha quadrants of Gateway Sector, the Galian Federation is a remnant of the old Galian Trade League, but remains one of the most important polities in Gateway sector. The Federation holds dear the principles of free trade and democracy, and receives considerable numbers of refugees from conflicts elsewhere in the Domain. Many of these



Alpha	Beta
K	L
Gamma	P
O	

QUADRANTS OF A SECTOR

- SUBSECTORS
- A Ikhation
 - B Nightmare
 - C Noir Deep
 - D Zagathian
 - E Spearhead
 - F Quadri Drift
 - G Titanstorm
 - H Osiris Deep
 - I Highlord
 - J Matarishan
 - K Frontier Worlds
 - L Sydymic
 - M Salyressia
 - N Outrigger
 - O Diamond-Prince
 - P Outworld



- WORLD CHARACTERISTICS
- No Water Present
 - Water Present
 - Asteroid Belt
- BASES
- Naval Base
 - Scout Base
 - Naval Depot
 - Way Station
 - Prison Camp

- TRAVEL ZONES
- Amber Zone
 - Red Zone
- POPULATION
- Secundus under one billion
 - PRIMUS over one billion

Year 993 Imperial

Ley Sector Delta Quadrant

refugees are wealthy individuals who can afford to make the journey to the Federation.

There is also a sizeable Sydite community within the Federation. The old Galian Trade League skirmished several times with the Sydites during its history, but astrographic realities made it difficult for either side to drive deep enough into enemy territory to achieve anything decisive. In more recent times, the Khuur League and the Galian Federation have become trading partners, and arrangement that seems to please both.

The Galian league, diminished as it is, remains a powerful force in regional politics. Tradeships range widely across the sector and beyond, giving the Federation massive influence even beyond its borders. There is a growing sense among the Federation leaders that the old Galian Trade League should be recreated by integrating the breakaway states.

The Federation lies close to the only Jump-2 link into Ley Sector, and thus has considerable contact with the Imperium. Relations are reasonably friendly, though with the Khuur League lying on the direct route into the Imperium, traffic has to go a long way around through non-aligned space.

Some Federation ships, capable of Jump-4, enter Imperial space via the Sydymic Outworlds rather than through the Khuur League. These ships are mainly couriers or fast freighters carrying high-value, low-bulk cargoes and passengers paying a premium rate. Many of them use drive components built in Imperial space and shipped to the Federation for fitting into locally-built vessels.

The Independent World of Phoniwt

Phoniwt is a single-world power and one of the major economic driving forces in the region, not least because much of the trade from the Galian Federation comes through its large and well-developed Starport. The world was once the center of a trade alliance, and later on was annexed (twice) by the Sydymic Empire. Today Phoniwt has cordial relations with many of its neighbors and exerts considerable economic influence over the region, but has little interest in formal political power.

Phoniwt society is over-bureaucratized and further beset by internal politics, but despite this remains an important trade and industrial centre. Merchants come from across the subsector and beyond to trade at the port. Phoniwt maintains trade links through the world of Far Portal in Gateway Sector to the Galian Federation. This is the main route for trade between the Imperium and Gateway Sector. Many Phoniwt-based corporations are beginning to make their influence felt beyond the local region.

SYDYMIC SUBSECTOR (SUBSECTOR L, LEY SECTOR)

The Sydymic Subsector lies at the trailing fringe of the Imperium. Once dominated by the Sydymic Empire, the area is now somewhat influenced by its successor, the Khuur League. Some worlds still bear the scars of the Imperial-Sydymic Empire war. The League is ostensibly a commercial rather than a political grouping, but maintains close ties and a common defense strategy. A number of independent and Imperial-client worlds form a buffer zone. Cross-border

trade is common but subject to inspections and considerable paperwork in both directions. The Khuur League is known to be investing heavily in industry on worlds outside its borders, presumably as a security measure. Some of this money is finding its way into the Sydymic Outworlds; four-armed Sydite traders and mercenaries are increasingly common on the worlds of the cluster.

Sydymic Subsector has no Imperial Fleet assigned, but is patrolled by elements of the 262nd Fleet operating out of Frontier Worlds subsector.

OVERVIEW OF THE SYDYMIC OUTWORLDS CLUSTER

The Sydymic Outworlds are at the very edge of Imperial space. Most trade is internal, but a considerable amount of cross-border dealing goes on (originally mainly at Ked, now moving elsewhere) between Imperial firms and their counterparts in the Khuur League and beyond. The cluster is also important as a link on the Jump-4 route into Gateway sector and thus sees official Imperial vessels passing through its ports and some long-range ships from Gateway Sector going the other way (mainly from the Galian Federation).

Three worlds of the cluster are Imperial members. The rest vary in their attitude towards the Imperium and the League.

The vast majority of the population of the cluster are humans of mixed blood, with Sydites and Mahkakraik forming the main minorities.

The Sydymic Empire occupied most of the cluster for a long period, and was spectacularly driven out by the Imperium. This was three centuries ago, so resentment is limited to the most extremist individuals. However, the scars of battle are still visible. Many of the cluster's ports are built on the remains of Sydite installations, and wrecks of warships are sometimes encountered drifting in deep space or on planetary surfaces.

THE WORLDS OF THE CLUSTER

Six worlds lie within the cluster, and two more are considered to be part of it, though they are not within Jump-1 of any world in the cluster. Two worlds are Imperial members, three are Client States, and three are independent.

UWP Codes

Im: Imperial Member World, Cs: Imperial Client World, Xx: Independent World

UWPs: Worlds of the Sydymic Outworlds Cluster

Name	Location/UWP	Trade Class	TZ	PBG/All./Stellar
Igmigi	2624 B520676-9	De Na Ni Po		204 Cs G0 V M4 D
Shurril Gami	2724 C3337C7-9	Na Po		921 Im M9 V
Brightlett	2725 C130335-9	De Po		324 Im M3 V
Irdashdis	2824 A347849-C	Ag		100 Cs G4 V A9 D
Ushlash	2921 A1206AE-C	De Na Ni Po		502 Xx K1 IV K4 D
Izargar	2924 A4817A6-8		A	603 Cs F3 V
Ma	3021 B865134-6			513 Xx K3 V
Ked	3023 A663420-A			102 Xx F9 V

DETAILED WORLD DESCRIPTIONS

2624 Igmigi (Imperial Client State)

B520676-9 De Na Ni Po 204 Cs G0 V M4 D

Igmigi is a mid-sized world, lacking in many heavy elements and thus with a relatively low surface gravity. The very thin atmosphere is one consequence of this. Orbiting at the outer edge of the life zone, Igmigi is rather cold, and what little surface water exists is locked up in glaciers and at the poles. The result is an inhospitable world of bitterly cold, star-baked deserts of fine dust and sharp-toothed mountains separated by areas of rocky badlands.

Despite its uninviting nature, Igmigi was settled in the early years of the Rule of Man. Settlers pushing out from the old borders of Vilani space used the world as a base camp to expand further up the cluster. The original settlement, situated at the edge of a small glacier in Kanri Valley, still exists and is the site of both capital and starport.

Igmigi saw initial prosperity as a colonial marshalling point and then as a market world where the produce of the early colonies was sold on to trade ships heading Spinward into the Imperium. As the colonies became more established, the market function gained importance, but the fall of the Long Night put an end to that.

For some decades, traders from the rest of the cluster came to Igmigi to buy and sell their goods among the cluster worlds, even though the outside trade was in rapid decline.

However, a couple of pirate raids and the development of more central markets caused this commercial period to come to an end. After that, Igmigi was a backwater world with few heavy minerals and little industry. Such it remains to this day.

Over the long years, the various city-states (situated wherever there was water or a resource to exploit) went their own way. The capital declined in importance once the trade ships stopped coming, and soon all of the cities were self-governing. There was little conflict, but also little reason for cooperation. Trade continued as necessary, but industry slumped still further as each city-state attempted to develop its own cottage version of all major industries in the interest of self-sufficiency. This duplication of effort scotched any chance of breaking out of the cycle of decline, since projects like heavy-mineral mining on other bodies in the system were beyond the means of any individual city.

Some of the cities were abandoned in the Long Night, leaving just five extant when the Sydymic Empire annexed the world during the 3rd Century pre-Imperial. The annexation was a formality; a Sydite flotilla of minor ships entered orbit unopposed and landed ground troops at the cities. Surrender was almost immediate.

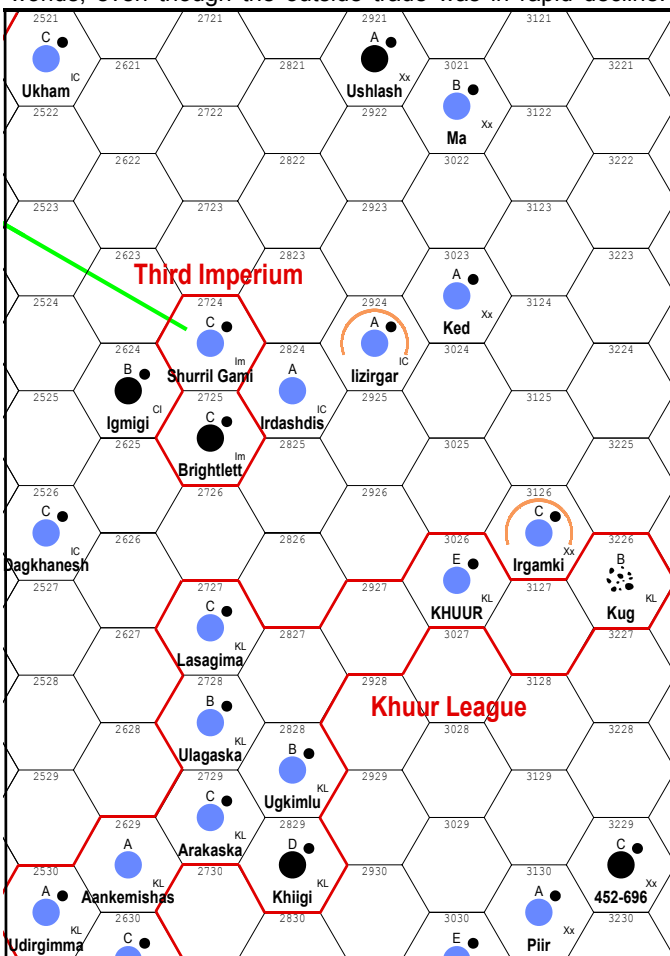
Igmigi changed little under Sydite rule, though it gained a naval garrison and a number of planetary forts, and served for a time as the base for a patrol force operating out to Spinward. Expansion of the Empire made the world once again a backwater, though the skeleton of the base garrison remained.

Conflict between the Imperium and the Sydymic Empire, beginning in 73, saw the Sydites pushed back. The naval base was reactivated and defenses beefed up. Sydite vessels operated out of the port and came back damaged, but the war did not affect the planet until around 670. Shortly after the fall of the Frontier Worlds subsector in 672, Imperial task forces began raiding into the cluster, and the planetary defenses were steadily increased to beat off the inevitable assault on the naval base.

That assault came in mid-672, when Imperial forces drove hard into the cluster even as the Sydites tried to sue for peace. Hurling aside the Sydymic forces that opposed them, Imperial vessels gained control of close orbit and bombarded the planetary defenses into ruin. Collateral damage included the utter destruction of the small city of Gimargai, and the Imperial ground assault was quick to follow.

The Imperials had at this time been fighting the Sydites on the ground for years, and had suffered immense casualties. The assault was vigorous and conducted with massive overkill. As much care was taken as possible to limit civilian casualties, but the death toll was still high. Within hours the naval base had been taken and within weeks Imperial vessels were coming in to re-arm for the final push on the Sydymic Empire homeworlds.

After the Imperial forces had passed on, the world remained an Imperial possession guarded by Marines and a small system defense force, and served as a base for a patrol and Treaty Enforcement squadron after the fall of Soper. For the inhabitants of Igmigi, the Imperial occupation was little different to the previous, Sydite, one. The cities reverted to self-sufficient self-governance and as the Imperial naval presence was withdrawn, the world drifted back to comfortable



1

obscurity.

One consequence of the occupation was a series of improvements to the starport, which had been the site of the naval headquarters and needed extensive rebuilding after the assault. The port became a conduit for trade into the new Imperial possessions of the cluster and considerable numbers of Imperial citizens came to live and work there. These citizens gradually became part of the planetary population and over the years resentment over civilian casualties in the "liberation" faded.

Today, Igmigi remains Balkanized. The population has risen to some 2 million, of whom just over half reside at the capital/port which has a TL of 9 available. The remainder are scattered in eight self-governing, self-sufficient city-states around the planet and tech levels between 7-9. The eight are officially Imperial member states, but in practice only the capital has any real Imperial presence. Since only the capital receives offworld trade and the revenue it brings, the outlying city-states are rather poor, and there is some resentment against the capital and the Imperium in general. Visitors are usually met with what can only be described as "scrupulously polite rudeness" in the outlying states, though the capital is as welcoming as any Imperial city.

Although the system has no naval base as such, a small system defense force is stationed at the capital, crewed by Imperial Navy personnel and technically part of the 262nd Fleet, although it cannot Jump so is confined to the system. Patrol vessels such as destroyers and close escorts are often temporarily base at the port when on deployment in the cluster.

2724 Shurril Gami (Imperial)

C3337C7-9 Na Po 921 Im M9 V

Shurril Gami is a small, dry world with very little atmosphere. Orbiting close to its primary, the world is characterised by dry, dusty plains and twisted badlands of black rock. However, 70 million people call the world home – and a few less pleasant things, too.

Originally settled during the Rule of Man as a mining colony, the world was a major source of minerals and industrial products for the cluster, selling ore and goods through the trade port at Igmigi. Industry on Shurril Gami was an important factor in keeping the cluster a viable economic entity well into the Long Night. However, as the demand from within and outside the cluster dropped off, the factories gradually closed and the world turned inward, striving for self-sufficiency and ultimately survival.

In this, Shurril Gami was more successful than most inhospitable worlds. This was partly due to the fact that the world is in fact marginally habitable (it has water and an atmosphere of sorts) and to a long-sighted program on the part of one of the world's industrial corporations. Realizing that the economic slump was only going to get worse, the firm Wadstone Industrial began to shift its emphasis from heavy industrial equipment to space vessels. Wadstone's rather basic yards were turning out simple trader/gunboats for the open market until the Sydites arrived with a real fleet and took over.

Under Sydite rule, Shurril Gami was once again an industrial center, albeit a very minor one. Shipbuilding was

curtailed, though the world did become a manufacturing center for other kinds of military equipment including missiles and small arms. Several thousands of Sydites settled on Shurril Gami, mainly as garrison and workers in the new armament factories. When the Imperials arrived in 672, this population was given a choice between Imperial citizenship and a one-way ticket to any Sydite world that would take them. The majority took the ticket, but enough remained that Shurril Gami retained a sizeable Sydite minority. Today, Sydites can be found in almost any line of work on-planet, and even in the small planetary defense force.

The primary industry on Shurril Gami is, as it has always been, mining and processing of the ores so extracted. Much of the ore is shipped out on regular contracts to other worlds in the cluster, though there is usually sufficient to meet the needs of passing traders or those with a special order.

Shurril Gami is ruled by the Miners' and Support Workers' Union, whose executives are in theory elected but in practice selected by those already in power. The Union is popular with the workers and even with the mine owners (some of whom are also executives). It provides a stable and supportive working environment to those who subscribe to the cultural ethic that one should work hard and pay one's own way. Conditions are good, salaries are high, and the miners spend a lot of money which keeps other people in jobs too.

Away from the populous areas, the world is undeveloped. Some areas are too hostile for commercial mining of the sort practiced here – workers would have to accept much harsher conditions, and that would require astronomical salaries. Prospecting teams have mapped out deposits in the badlands, but so far there has been little interest in setting up an extraction operation; at least, little interest from on-planet.

Sternmetal Horizons, LIC, the Imperial Megacorporation, has recently obtained a license to develop test sites in some of the more inhospitable regions. Opinions are divided as to whether this is a good thing, as it will bring foreign workers and interests to the world and may affect the cozy arrangement the locals have enjoyed for so many years. However, the deal has been struck and despite protests from a vocal minority on the Union Executive Council, seems set to go ahead.

As a border world at the very edge of the Imperium, Shurril Gami receives funding from the Imperial Colonial Office (ICO) to maintain a system watch and enhanced customs service, but for all other purposes the world is a backwater of no significance. The last time Shurril Gami received much offworld attention was 922, when prospectors discovered the remains of a Rule of Man colony ship in the sands of the Ushuumu Desert. Several universities sent teams to look for signs that a colony was established at that time, but could find no evidence.

2725 Brightlett (Imperial)

C130335-9 De Po 324 Im M3 V

Another Imperial border world, Brightlett is even less inviting than Shurril Gami. The world was sparsely settled during the Rule of Man, and later abandoned during the Long Night. Remains of a few small settlements (none larger than 5000 people) have been discovered, though in truth there has been little investigation of such an unimportant site.

After lying deserted throughout the Long Night, Brightlett

was occupied by a Sydite garrison, mainly as a territorial claim from around –250 until the late 600s when the Imperials drove through the cluster and the Sydites withdrew from the world without a fight.

After another couple of centuries lying fallow, Brightlett was again colonized, this time by the Imperials, starting in 890. The colony was nothing more than a “landgrab”; in other words it was set up merely to make the system Imperial territory, just in case the Imperium ever found something useful there. Thus far, this has not happened.

Brightlett is today home to some 3,000 Imperial citizens, all of whom dwell in a single city at the south pole, which is also the site of the world’s small starport. The colonial operation was led by one of the Imperial noble houses, that of Baron Andrea Miracaaruu, whose own fief is far to Spinward. Baron Andrea and her family largely funded the settlement (with some backing from ICO) and today the world’s leaders are drawn from the minor relatives of House Miracaaruu and rule the world as a feudal dictatorship.

Brightlett has little in the way of industry; just enough to keep the port open and the orbital defense/customs enforcement force in operation. The ODCEF (as it is known) is drawn from the ranks of House Miracaaruu’s Huscarles, which rotates personnel through Brightlett on a regular basis. The world receives funding from ICO to maintain a border customs service, and there are rumors that House Miracaaruu is skimming funds from the grant – this is about the only way this colony could be anything but a money pit. However, the present Baron Miracaaruu was one of the first to declare for the Loyal Sector Guard when it was formed, so it is possible that the colony was set up out of a sense of duty or as an operational training ground for one of the Imperium’s more militaristic noble houses.

Brightlett receives little offworld trade, and is generally considered a backwater. However, Scout Service vessels do sometimes use the port as a base to undertake deep-space missions out into the Lesser Rift.

2824 Irdashdis (Imperial Client State)

A347849-C Ag 100 Cs G4 V A9 D

Irdashdis was settled during the Rule of Man as a “breadbasket” for the rest of the cluster. Although the atmosphere is thin and requires a filter mask for safe breathing in most regions, the world has a temperate climate and plenty of water, suiting it well to human life. Thus the initial small farming colony grew and became several, with market towns and later industrial cities arising to support the growing economy.

Irdashdis has had no less than five new-build starports since the Rule of Man, as first one and then another region rose to dominance, each time more powerful and supporting a greater population. Each time, a new starport was constructed to serve the increased needs of the world-state. Each time, the older ports have also been upgraded to a higher standard. The first two ports were rather modest, created during the Rule of Man to serve the world’s scattered communities. As the Ramshackle Empire reached its Twilight, work was being completed on the world’s first Highport, part of what was then Irdashdis Prime Starport. The world was at the time a rather corrupt republic, and the new port served the capital,

where the World Government attempted to govern several dozen regions, each with their own agenda and sources of influence.

Irdashdis Prime was deeply in decline by the time the Sydymic Empire arrived in the latter years of the Long Night. Starflight within the cluster had almost completely ceased. Nevertheless, the space defense force of what by then was a dictatorship with some of the trappings of democracy fought a hard action in defense of the world’s independence aboard its Wadstone-built gunships and locally designed fighters.

The Irdashdis naval arm was destroyed in under three hours (actual combat time was measured in minutes, but some of the Irdashdis forces prolonged the campaign by the act or arriving late from their patrol zones) and the world fell quickly to the Sydites, who then discovered that Earth-like worlds with dangerous animals produce a robust caste of riflemen among their farming communities, and that robust, outdoors-experienced riflemen can cause havoc among an occupation force.

Irdashdis was not a popular posting among Sydite troops, and the guerrilla resistance went on, with occasional breaks, throughout the occupation. At times the invaders more or less pacified the world (often by savage reprisals and flooding a troubled region with troops), while at other times the conquerors were virtually prisoners in their barracks.

Irdashdis’ fourth starport was of Sydite construction, a large but temporary affair intended to replace the remains of Irdashdis Prime, which had been severely damaged in the 3-hour invasion. The highport was at times the only safe place for a Sydite deployed to the system; even in the heavily patrolled capital the resistance forces could and did strike – if only occasionally.

The fourth port was destroyed almost completely, if incidentally in the action between an Imperial strike fleet and the Sydite defenders. The Imperials, arriving in 672, were greeted with open arms as liberators – and quickly made aware of the fact that the locals had been making life hell for their Sydite overlords for 700 years, with almost no break. The Imperials got the message and made no attempt to forcibly integrate the system.

As trade began to pick up in the region, a fifth starport was constructed at the new capital, Amka City. This and other infrastructure projects were assisted by Imperial funds and organizations, a goodwill move that resulted in a general warming to the Imperium among the people of Irdashdis. The governmental system ad of course been completely crushed by the Sydites, who had imposed their own governor after discovering just how obstructionist a local governmental apparatus can be, even while appearing to cooperate fully with the invaders. The need for a new government saw a new democratic republic arise, with representatives from the various sub-regions sitting in regional houses which in turn sent representatives to three central houses – the House Legislative, House Advisory and House Executive. The system is conservative and slow-moving but thus far has remained fair and free from corruption to a great extent.

Over the past 300 years, the new Starport, simply known as Liberty Port, has been steadily upgraded until it is one of the best in the region. This was accompanied by the creation of shipyards to build first defense craft and later trading vessels.

The Irdashdis Republican Defense Force is mainly confined to the Irdashdis system (other than detachments shipped aboard armed merchant craft) but is quite a powerful force, capable of putting up a stiff fight against the next invader.

On the ground, too, the fixation with defense is obvious. Despite laws banning the private ownership of almost all weapons, numerous "permitted groups" exist. These range from independent Regional Ranger Associations to the uniformed and government funded Republican Militias. Planetary aerospace defenses are quite considerable, taking the form of missile batteries, orbital forts and ground-based interceptors.

The price tag for this defensive readiness has been high, and to some extent the defenses were paid for by low-cost loans offered by the Imperial Colonial Office. Thus the world economy is weakened by debt and the very thing the money was spent to prevent – forced Imperial membership – is now irrelevant. Irdashdis is more or less reliant on the Imperium for trade and for continued credit. The world has settled into client status quite comfortably, despite misgivings in some quarters, and full membership will probably occur sometime in the next few decades.

While the population of Irdashdis are for the most part friendly to the Imperium, there is still a great deal of resentment towards the Khuur League, successor to the Sydymic Empire.

2921 Ushlash (Independent)

A1206AE-C De Na Ni Po 502 Xx K1 IV K4 D

Ushlash is a tiny rockball on the edge of the Lesser Rift with no liquid water and the tiniest of atmospheric envelopes. A nowhere place on the way to nowhere, it is nevertheless home to 6 million sentients who live under the rule of one of the most rigid dictatorships in known space. Despite strict laws which pervade almost every aspect of daily life and a complete lack of personal freedom, the people of Ushlash actually believe that their way of life is the best that they could achieve, a fact that astounds most of the few visitors that Ushlash receives. Given that the world cannot support life without technological help, perhaps freedom is something that the people of Ushlash cannot afford.

Ushlash was settled during the very last days of the Rule of Man, but not in the same manner as most of the rest of the cluster. The settlers did not arrive via the rest of the cluster, or even by choice at all. Instead, they came in a flotilla of ships, fleeing a vicious civil war on their homeworld. Records from this period are sketchy, since much was lost in the early scramble to survive. It may be that detailed records are available to the government, but outsiders find it almost impossible to discover anything about the history of the colony.

The early settlers appear to have thought they were being pursued. Certainly they took pains to keep their colony on Ushlash secret, and did not venture beyond their system once all the colony ships had come in. The early settlements were underground and took the form of camouflaged, blast-proof bunker-cities, with population and critical industries dispersed in what are obviously damage-mitigation patterns. Having run as far as they could, the fugitives dug in and not only hid but prepared themselves for pursuit and assault.

As the Long Night drew in, the chances of discovery dropped almost to zero, though the people of Ushlash in their

bunkers or sneaking about the system in homebuilt spacecraft had no knowledge of the outside universe. Indeed, the system remained undisturbed until around 350, when Sydite scouts discovered signs of asteroid mining in the system. Scout vessels from the Sydymic Empire had been visiting the system for over 100 years at this point, and the world-state of Ushlash had successfully evaded detection.

The Sydites pondered the existence of a concealed mining operation in a system on their very border, and drew the obvious conclusion. Ushlash harbored a threat; they would crush it!

As the Sydite presence in the system was stepped up, it became obvious that the colony had been discovered at last. Deep-rooted paranoia was proven right when Sydite vessels attempted to capture an Ushlash recon vessel. Defense plans, constantly updated throughout the long years of isolation, were put into action.

Ushlash had lost the Jump drive and some related technologies but retained much of its tech base. Its population was heavily militarized and its system defense forces vastly oversized for such a minor system. Without the means to take the war to the enemy, the best the world-state could hope for was to make defeating it so costly that the Sydites would back off – a strategy, ironically, which influenced the Sydites' own in the war with the Imperials.

As battles raged throughout the system, the Sydites were awed by the ferocity of the defenders who were not only highly skilled at combat but also grand masters of stealth and deception. Weight of metal on the Sydite side told in many engagements but the mysterious defenders seemed disinclined to retreat or sue for terms. The Sydites were not aware, of course, that Ushlash was home to the defenders, and they had nowhere to go. Nor was the Sydymic Empire ready to fight a state that had been preparing for a grim, last-ditch fight to the finish for centuries.

Captured Sydite Jump drives were reverse-engineered into Ushlash ships (this proved fairly easy; the theory was known and only the technical details of Jump drive had been completely lost), and a wave of raiders poured out, launching suicidally reckless attacks on Sydite installations and vessels.

These attacks not only shocked the Sydymic Empire, which was used to grinding its enemies into submission and didn't like losing battles one bit, but also allowed the people of Ushlash to find out a little more about the changes that had occurred in local space. Aware that the Sydites were not their ancient foes but simply an alien empire that had wandered into their system, the warriors of Ushlash decided to ask for a truce.

The ceasefire request was delivered from the outsystem of Sopater itself, by a raider squadron composed entirely of volunteers sworn to complete their mission or die trying. Battling their way across Sydymic space in a series of running fights that wiped out half of the squadron, the raiders shot up everything they could find in the home system of the Sydymic Empire, then offered a truce.

It was a brilliant bluff. The Sydites could not imagine any state or empire sending out almost its entire Jump-capable fleet on a single one-way mission. Therefore, Ushlash must have ships to burn. Attacking their holdings in the Ushlash system was a bloody and painful process, and now the enemy

had demonstrated they could strike at the very core worlds of the empire. A truce suddenly seemed very attractive. The terms were simple: get out of Ushlash, don't come back. In return, Ushlash would call its ships home.

Thus Ushlash retreated to the single system once more, and set about rebuilding its defenses even more strongly. A handful of scout ships were sent out each year to watch for new threats, but until the Imperials arrived there was no cause for alarm. The Sydites kept their side of the truce.

Entering the cluster, the Imperials heard of the defenders of Ushlash and went seeking them, offering an alliance against the Sydites. Scout vessels at first found nothing, then were run off by Ushlash warships. After a couple of skirmishes, the Imperials decided to leave these militant xenophobes alone.

After the Imperials smashed the Sydyomic Empire, Ushlash braced itself for the expected invasion. Decades passed without an Imperial assault, and finally a dialogue was opened. The Imperials, for their part, invited the people of Ushlash to trade on their worlds and promised to respect the sovereignty of the Ushlash system. The people of Ushlash promised absolutely nothing, but did not actually shoot at the messengers.

Gradually, heavily-armed trade vessels began to come out of Ushlash, trading (and incidentally picking up intelligence) throughout the cluster. The dictator had seen the benefit of having trade missions and spies throughout the local region, and was flexible enough to break with long traditions. The result was not a flood of trade, but a gradual opening up to outside commerce.

Today, Ushlash is still very much self-sufficient, inasmuch as it can sustain itself without assistance from beyond the star system. The high-quality starport serves a base for missions to the Oort cloud to gather ice asteroids, to the moons of the system's gas giant for minerals and the gas giant itself for petrochemicals. Smart, efficient tradeships depart regularly for ports Rimward of Ushlash, but trade is not vital to the survival of the world economy. It was this rigid self-reliance that got the original inhabitants of Ushlash through the Long Night and has sustained them since.

Standards of living are high, especially among the personnel of the Unified Service, which provides medical, disaster and security services as well as the crews of all spacegoing vessels. Trade is heavily biased towards exports, and much of the extra revenues is spent on Jump-capable warships to protect the world's new trade fleet.

Ushlash manufactures a small range of extremely high-quality space vessels and other vehicles. Most are for local use, but a few are bought by offworld clients. The Thalax-class rugged-operations air/raft, a favorite among frontier explorers, is manufactured only on Ushlash for a long waiting list of clients.

2924 lizirgar (Imperial Client State)

A4817A6-8

A

603 Cs F3 V

lizirgar is a mid-tech world with very little surface water. Population centres are mainly close to the world's small seas, and are rather scattered. These modern settlements follow the pattern of original colonization by small groups landing in promising sites close to water or useful resources. These early colonies gradually expanded as more ships arrived. Some of

the settlements failed. Indeed, some areas were recolonized several times. Other colonies became cities and rose to dominate the region around them.

These small regional powers had an eventful history through the Long Night. Dozens of small wars were fought, alliances rose and fell, and whole regions fell back to barbarism. But the very nature of the world's population, fragmented as it was into conflicting states, prevented total collapse. There was always an incentive to maintain technology – or to steal concepts from rivals – and to regain industrial capacity after every slump.

Thus when the Sydyomic Empire moved into the cluster in the -2-300s, they found a bewildering array of city-states, alliances and leagues at tech levels between 3 and 6. Unable to put up a concerted resistance, the various states were quickly conquered, and some actively sided with the invaders, rising to positions of prominence under the occupation.

The world was fairly well pacified by the time the Imperial Navy stormed through the cluster in 672. Human units fought alongside the Sydites to resist the ground assault (though again, some states sided with the Imperials or remained neutral for a variety of reasons). The ground fighting was hard and bloody, but there was never any doubt as to the outcome.

Once the world was secured and the Navy passed on, the world retained a small garrison but was otherwise more or less ignored by the Imperials. Some of the cities and states drifted towards Imperial allegiance, and grants of membership were issued to three small states in the 800s. About half of the rest of the population is currently pro-Imperial, and full membership was expected within a few decades.

The small but efficient starport was constructed from the remains of the Sydyomic military port during the 950s by a consortium of states, for several reasons. Imperial long-range vessels headed into Gateway sector use its high-quality facilities before making the long, high-jump haul across to Galian Federation space. Trade ships from the Khuur League are also a common sight there, and the port is gradually becoming a center for commerce in the cluster.

However, all is not well on lizirgar. In 992, several states launched a surprise attack on the pro-Imperial Kleizen Republic. Members of the Imperial Embassy staff were killed in the fighting and subsequent extraction mission, triggering an Imperial intervention. Initially, this took the form of a single small naval vessel, which could do little but shoot down the ballistic missiles that the factions insisted upon throwing at one another.

One faction, the Haasi League, was foolish enough to launch missiles at INS *Dash-Hunter*, the intervening vessel. This more or less sealed the fate of the whole world. Within a month, an entire Imperial Marine Division and supporting forces had arrived and begun pacifying the warring factions. This took the form of ruthlessly eliminating from orbit the ability to fight of any state that continued trying to make war, then landing first Marines and later Imperial Army troops to finish the job.

The lizirgar Police Action was the source of the now-famous quote, "Nobody fights on this planet unless they fight with US!" from the Marines' commanding officer. Once the various factions had been battered into submission, the work of creating peace could begin.

The various pro-Imperial factions welcomed the intervention and actively supported it. They were rewarded with high status in the new world state, ruled by a Planetary Governor from the Starport, which is located at located in Brani City, capital of the old Kleizen Republic. The new state is popular with a slim majority of the population, and maintains its hold mainly through the threat of the big stick – a full Imperial Army division remains on-planet to keep the peace and comes down hard on troublemakers.

Those troublemakers are sadly too common. The world state is not popular among those who have had it rammed down their throats and while the pro-Imperials like the new situation, there are plenty who are willing to riot, firebomb or even conduct guerrilla operations to show that they are not so happy about it. The anti-Imperial faction includes several cities that have a large Sydite population, though just as many Sydites are loyal Imperial citizens.

As a result of the recent troubles, lizirgar is amber zoned.

3021 Ma (Independent)

B865134-6

513 Xx K3 V

It is possible that the highly Earthlike Ma (pronounced "Mah!") was the intended destination of the colonists who ended up settling Ushlash, although the pleasant world may have been deliberately passed over by a faction seeking a place to hide rather than to prosper. Whatever the case may be, the world was not settled until deep into the Long Night, when a small colony ship landed on the western coast of the world's single, immense supercontinent and set up an enclave that prospered for a time.

The colonists quickly discovered that they were not alone on their new world. A species of wamblooded, bipedal reptiloids rested at the top of the food chain on Ma and had discovered fire and primitive tools. After initial conflict, the well-armed colonists "tamed" the nearest tribes and used them as sepoy to drive away their primitive brethren, creating an empire that covered a sizeable chunk of the western end of the supercontinent. The natives, whose name for themselves is "Mahkahraik", which means "People of This World", learned much from their colonial overlords, and technology spread across the continent, out from the civilized region and into the interior. Rebellions among the tribes were put down with superior technology and training among the overlords and their sepoy troops, but the colony was in decline. Tech level gradually dropped to around 7.

Then the Sydites arrived and hammered the final nails into the coffin of human domination on Ma. Capturing the capital city in a ground fight that lasted less than an hour, they built a small port and stationed a couple of patrol frigates there, basing a company of fast-response troops out of the capital to smash any rebellion flat. They then forgot all about Ma until the conflict with Ushlash began, at which point the port was extended and several naval squadrons were brought in.

After the Ushlash truce, the Sydite naval presence was reduced, but Mahkahraik troops were recruited for garrison and shock duty on other worlds. Thousands died in the ground fighting against the Imperials, and when the Imperial Navy took the system in 672 the remainder were shipped home to rejoin their tribes, or else were formed into mercenary units for

deployment against the Sydites.

With the Sydites cleared out of Ma, the remnants of the old human elite tried to reclaim their place as planetary overlords. Some of the sepoy tribes rallied to their old allegiance, some remained neutral, and some fought back, assisted by ex-mercenaries. The fate of the human lords was sealed. After some years of battle, a truce allowed the humans and whatever tribes wanted to ally with them to claim ownership of a small region on the coast, with the rest of the planet recognized as belonging to the Mahkahraik.

Today, the human population numbers only 50, and the next generation will probably be the last. These overlords dwell in a fort-town around the old Sydite port, and have a sustainable tech base of about TL6. They claim the loyalty of some million or so Mahkahraik, and the ties between the two go very deep.

The rest of the planet is occupied by Mahkahraik tribes with a TL of between 2 and (in some rare cases) 5. Most tribes number several tens of thousands, dwelling in towns and villages connected by crude roads and an impressive canal system. The tribes are mostly hostile to outsiders. There are some very primitive enclaves in the forests and mountains that are just entering the iron age, and nomadic groups still living as nomadic hunter/gatherers in the same manner as their ancestors before the humans came to Ma.

The Imperium has so far left Ma alone due to its remote position, though Imperial-registered trade ships occasionally visit.

3023 Ked (Independent)

A663420-A

102 Xx F9 V

Other than being somewhat dry, Ked is an Earth-like world that was once home to a human civilization. Records from the Rule of Man, matched against artifacts found on-planet, show that Solomani colonists came to Ked early in the Twilight or Long Night period. A colony was established and for a time it thrived.

Time and isolation took their toll, however. The colony apparently regressed from about TL12 to around 8 or 9, even as the population grew. Civilization on Ked endured at this level for centuries, then came to an abrupt end around -600 Imperial. Definite evidence of nuclear weapons use has been discovered, but only at three sites. These may have been test areas rather than cities, though their location in well-watered areas makes this highly unlikely.

Star travel in the cluster was at that time rare, and there was little reason for vessels to come this far out. Thus there are no independent records of the events that led to the end of civilization on Ked. Apparently the population went into a sharp decline around -600. The cities were abandoned and by -200 the surviving inhabitants were scattered in low-technology communities on marginal land. Biological weapons have been suggested as a cause for this behaviour and for the population drop. The last of these primitive communities died out around year 50. Their existence and demise was documented by Sydite personnel assigned to the world's token garrison, but there was little if any contact.

The garrison was withdrawn in 670, but in 720 the Khuur League set up a small enclave on Ked as a token presence to legitimize later territorial claims. Never more than 1000

persons, this colony (whose frontier-democratic government structure is still listed as the world's government type in most databases) was withdrawn in 950.

Soon after, the Ked Freeport Consortium began construction of a large orbital facility over Ked. Now a large Class A starport with extensive starship-construction facilities, Ked Freeport is owned by several dozen shareholders including Imperial, League and independent business concerns.

At the port itself and in its associated city (with a population of about 20 thousand), a law level of 2 is more or less maintained. Many of the original investors have pulled out or gone into eclipse over the past 50 years. The Freeport has continued in its function as a trade port where anything goes, but has nosedived over the years from a clean, safe environment where semi-legal deals are done between outwardly-respectable firms, far from interfering tax officials and without the Ministry of Justice poking around, to something rather less pleasant.

The Freeport is now a dirty, dangerous and seedy place where blatantly illegal trade takes place and shootings regularly occur. The place is occasionally raided by the Imperial Navy searching for pirates, but a new crop of scum springs up as quickly as the last is cut down. A few of the original firms do maintain a presence, including a couple of shipyards which specialise in "frontier upgrades" for merchant ships. This is often a euphemism for cramming weaponry and military-grade electronics into a merchant for use as a corsair. The Consortium is little more than a conglomeration of semi-legal businessmen and rich individuals who do not say where their money came from.

The Freeport is defended by Consortium vessels (armed merchants for the most part) and also a couple of ships on loan from Ushlash (Ked being a vital J2 link to Ushlash). A re-rating of the port to B class, and Amber Zone status are both surely overdue.

RUMORS AND SCUTTLEBUTT

As they proceed through the various ports and worlds along their way, characters are bound to talk to people. They will likely pick up rumors about current events in the local region and the wider universe. These rumors might or might not be true. They may lead to new adventures or merely add to the feeling of a 'living' game setting.

Rumors can be presented more than once. They can be rephrased or embellished at the Referee's discretion.

RUMORS

- The number of ships coming in from the Galian Federation in Gateway sector has fallen off quickly in the past year. Various things have been blamed – tensions in Gateway perhaps, or maybe the rise in piracy across Ley Sector thanks to the Solomani Rim War.
- A whole lot of Scout vessels have been passing through Brightlett, probably headed out into the Lesser Rift. The question is, why?
- Irdashdis has made representations to Archduke Erechs, asking for yet more funding for development but at the same time asking for guarantees that Imperial membership will not be forced on the world.

- The Imperial Navy is stretched very thin in the region now that many vessels have been sent to the Solomani Rim. Smaller ships are being moved about a lot to maintain the illusion of strength.
- A diplomatic courier vessel from the Hochiken People's Assembly over in Gateway sector came through a few days ago. Whatever that bunch of totalitarian goons want from the Imperium, they'd better not get it.
- Imperial-registered trade ships have been turned back at Lasagima in recent months. This is causing tension between the Khuur League and the Imperium.
- Corsair activity in Ley Sector has shot up in recent months.
- K'Kree ships have begun coming into Imperial space via the Galian Federation and Ked. They used to go via Phoniwt. Either way, they're pretty unwelcome.
- K'Kree fleets have conducted 'anti-piracy sweeps' deep into Gateway sector. Local powers are alarmed.
- A visiting merchant crew from the Khuur League was assaulted on Irdashdis recently.
- With the shortage of naval ships, the Imperials have started using Scout Service vessels for routine patrols. How much use they're likely to be is an open question.
- A new batch of Imperial Ramada-class corvettes has been deployed to the frontier. A couple of them are rumored to have a non-standard drive system.
- Salvage ships have been quite active in the cluster recently.
- The Imperials recently sent a pair of Resolute Bastion class cruisers through the region on a flag-showing tour. As if anyone would be impressed by those heaps of junk!
- Ling Standard Products has recently recalled several batches of Air/Rafts, for reasons they have not seen fit to explain.
- A Belter ship, supposedly operating in the Brightlett system, turned up derelict in the Shurril Gami outsystem.
- Irdashdis is rumored to be under consideration as host world for Slugfest '04, an illegal underground no-holds-barred martial arts competition.

SHORT ADVENTURES

2

The following short adventures and encounters demonstrate the standard format used by QLI, which should be followed when submitting articles for the QLI website (see Developing The Sydymic Outworlds Cluster, below). Some of the following adventures are specific to certain regions, while others can be used on any suitable world.

SIGNAL GKS (AMBER ZONES)

Signal GKs (named for the standard distress signal across Imperial space) are fairly detailed descriptions of a situation into which the characters can be introduced. In other versions of Traveller they are sometimes referred to as Amber Zones. A Signal GK adventure consists of a general background and Referee's Information, and may describe the opposition that characters are likely to face or even present stats for them, but this is optional.

General background information is available to the characters if they look for it; Referee's information is secret and may include the future plans of various parties in the adventure or a likely chain of events stemming from the initial situation. The actual situation may not be as presented; if so the Referee's section will spell out the reality and how it differs from what is immediately obvious.

Of course, Signal GK adventures need have nothing to do with a distress call whatsoever. The title is simply a general one to indicate the type of short adventure being presented.

SIGNAL GK #1: SEMI-AUTOMATIC LIFE INSURANCE

Location: Any, leading to Irdashdis

Although private ownership of weapons is banned on the world of Irdashdis, there are many exceptions to the rule, including the Republican Militias and the Regional Ranger Associations. These organizations are licensed by the government but they work in very different ways. Some have a formal structure and a uniform; others are simply a group of armed individuals who have exchanged a pledge to defend their home region for the right to own weapons.

The situation has reached the point where despite strict gun control laws, large proportions of the population are legally armed. It was decided a few years ago that enough is enough, and the licensing process was tightened up considerably. It is now virtually impossible to create a new "permitted group" as they are called. No matter what pressing need is placed before the licensing committees, it is virtually certain to be rejected. This is a problem for homesteaders living in the outback, where a shotgun or rifle is a necessity for dealing with some of the more unpleasant local fauna.

There is, however, a loophole in the law.

The existing legislation was passed just after the end of the Sydite Occupation, at which time the various resistance groups that had been fighting the Sydymic Empire were granted official recognition. The law recognized the 'existing armed groups' as legitimate and pledged not to disarm them without good and specific cause. The phrasing is such that technically, if a group puts forward its application for a weapons permit as an 'existing armed group', it cannot be disarmed and therefore must be granted the permit. The actual

legal situation is tortuous, but the loophole is there. It will likely be slammed shut as soon as someone uses it, but the Karadis Farmers' Union plans to collectively be that someone.

The problem is that it is virtually impossible to obtain weapons (or to trade in them) on Irdashdis without a permit, and the penalties are sufficiently stiff that few people would sell weaponry. Smuggling guns in is also a problem, and if weapons can be backtracked to an offworld source they would be seized as illegal imports. This would disallow the claim.

The Farmers' Union therefore needs to present its license request backed by weapons that cannot be tracked back to any illegal source. It can then maintain the polite fiction that its members have always had the weapons as a legitimate anti-Sydite resistance force and have only now applied for the license. This is utter rubbish of course, but if the authorities cannot disprove the claim then the license must be granted.

The only way to make this happen is to create a small arms factory and build the weapons, then conceal or dismantle the factory so that the investigators cannot find it. There are several problems with this approach. Weapon-making components are strictly controlled for one thing, but the main problem is expertise. The weapons in the hands of the Farmers' Union must be of a 'combat-worthy' quality, and they must be able to demonstrate competence with them.

The answer is simple enough in principle. The FU will hire a team of offworlders with firearms experience to smuggle in the components needed for a weapons factory. All the farmers have workshops to maintain their equipment, so it should be possible to conceal the materials under the guise of farming and light engineering projects. However, the weapons are going to have to be made and tested (which can be quite dangerous at times), and the users trained to the point where they can maintain the fiction of being a useful local defense unit. Finally the factory will have to be concealed or (better) dismantled so that no trace can be found.

The characters may become involved in this situation in one of two ways. They may be attempting to penetrate what appears to be (and actually is, more or less) an illegal arms smuggling operation. More likely, they will be contacted by the Farmers' Union and asked to help create the weapons factory.

The task can be broken into several segments. First, it is necessary to design suitable weapons. The Farmers' Union favors large-caliber semiautomatic rifles, and also requires a quantity of shotguns. The latter are much easier to build, of course, but would not allow a credible claim that the owners were a local defense organization.

Once the weapons are designed, the characters will have some idea of what materials and machinery they need. These will have to be sourced then brought onto Irdashdis. Smuggling is possible, or perhaps the characters can find a legitimate cover story and bring in the items they need in separate shipments, hidden in plain sight. In this case it will be necessary to bring them together at some point, of course, and there is always the possibility that something will go missing.

Finally, the characters will have to set up a covert workshop and turn out some prototypes. Once these are set

up and working, production can begin.

Once the Farmers' Union has enough rifles (about 2-300) and suitable stocks of ammunition, the workshop will have to be dismantled and, ideally, the parts smuggled to other locations to be built into other projects, making them effectively disappear. The Farmers Union will then present its case to the authorities and request weaponry permits as an existing armed group. Investigators will descend upon the region and question everyone (the characters would best be offworld at this point, but they may have reasons to stay). The authorities' attempt to find out where the weapons came from will be brisk but thorough. There is a time limit on how long they can delay a permit for a defense group, so there will be something of a race to find traces of the factory, smuggling operation or whatever the source might be. If nothing concrete can be found, the permit will be grudgingly issued and the legal loophole that allowed it slammed firmly shut.

The situation will become much more complicated for the characters if there are government agents poking around during the construction phase, or someone uses one of the prototype weapons, perhaps for a crime or in self-defense, in such a way as to attract attention.

SIGNAL GK #2: WATCHING THE GATEKEEPERS

Location: Any, leading to Brightlett

Brightlett is a desert world on the very Trailing fringe of Imperial space. Were the K'Kree ever to invade Imperial space, worlds like Brightlett would be the first line of defense. Or so claim House Miracaaruu, the Imperial noble family that funded the Brightlett Colonial Project. House Miracaaruu is one of the founder members of the Loyal Sector Guard (LSG), an illegal but loudly loyalist organization dedicated to defending the Imperium from enemies within and without.

Brightlett has a population of only 3000 citizens, but plays host to moderate numbers of LSG troops who conduct desert training from a specially-built base a few hundred kilometers from the world's only city.

Recently Brightlett's Orbital Defense and Customs Enforcement Force (OCDEF) has been expanded again. While the world does receive some funding from the Imperial Colonial Office to operate a border customs service, the amount of money that has been sunk into the world recently is far greater than can be justified.

The Imperial Interstellar Scout Service uses the port as a jumping-off point for some of its operations, and has been asked to report on what is being done with all this funding. The Scouts' report was vague and noncommittal, and the Archduke of Gateway Domain has decided to commission an independent investigation.

The characters may become involved with the situation on a casual basis, working as freelancers for the Archduke's intelligence people, or they may be regular agents of the Archduke (or some other body, including the Bureaucracy or the Ministry of Justice). They are requested to visit Brightlett and find out what the money is being spent on, plus gain some idea of force levels and other important details.

Although the LSG is illegal, in that such organizations are prohibited by Imperial Law, its component forces (mercenaries, nobles' personal troops, units on loan from world governments and corporate security forces) are all legal, and in addition

there is the plain fact that the LSG really does defend the Imperium and her people. Detachments hunt down pirates and defend backwater worlds that cannot provide for their own security. The apparent 'white hat' status of the LSG, and the considerable support it has among citizens and power groups, means that while the Imperial authorities are suspicious of it, they are unwilling to shut it down without a very pressing reason.

Some things are obvious to even a casual visitor to Brightlett. All security and planetary defense is conducted by Huscarles (personal troops) of House Miracaaruu, but these have added LSG insignia to their ships and uniforms. Other LSG personnel can be seen openly walking around the port and town in uniform (either that of their parent organization with LSG insignia added or in some cases the 'official' LSG uniform). They are obviously welcome, as are the crews of the Scout ships that come through occasionally.

Among the local populace, many people wear LSG armbands to show their loyalty, and astute characters might spot one or two among visiting merchant and even Scout Service crews. The LSG has brought a lot of money into Brightlett, and this is being spent in the starport bars and shops, making the locals prosperous. In addition, of course, all those troops equate directly to better security in case the Sydites or even (most people chuckle derisively when they mention this) the K'Kree decide to invade.

The locals have also formed a citizens' militia, funded and trained by the LSG, and their loyalty seems to be (and indeed is) freely and gladly given to generous friends.

Investigating the situation too obviously will antagonize the locals, whose most likely response is to loudly and angrily tell the characters all the things the 'Gatekeepers' have done for the world, and demand to know who else looks out for the little guys like they do. If the characters' investigation comes to the attention of an LSG officer, he or she will intervene with a professional smile and offer the characters access to LSG facilities – with an escort of course.

The LSG will openly show the characters certain rather sensitive aspects of their operation. They will be permitted to talk to whatever locals and personnel they like. The usual LSG member encountered will either be a young idealistic recruit, a veteran of one of the Imperial services or a member of an organization that has pledged its loyalty to the Guard. What they all have in common is a very real belief in what the LSG is doing. With the official military scattered all over the place or off fighting the Solomani, the LSG sees itself as the 'Keeper of the Gate' for the ordinary Imperial citizen. The characters will hear over and over, variations on, "Sure the Navy can protect the big important worlds, but who's willing to fight for a Class D starport on a world with seven hundred inhabitants? WE are! And that matters to the people who live on those worlds!"

The people who say this do have a point.

The characters will also be shown the training facility, where LSG units totaling about 2000 infantry equipped to TL8 and about a tenth that number equipped with TL11 combat armor and Advanced Combat Rifles are undergoing desert operations training. They will be shown the orbital defense network with its missile batteries and (if they wish) will be taken to the small orbital station used as a base for the OCDEF. In addition to the customs force's fighters and cutters, there

are now several LSG-crewed System Defense Boats based there.

The LSG is quite happy to show the characters all this stuff, and indeed uses the tour as a recruiting opportunity. The characters will get the impression that others have been shown around like this, probably quite often, and some of them have promptly signed up. The characters can glean certain information from the tour, all of which falls into the 'open secret' category – i.e. it is not volunteered but is not deliberately kept secret. Facts include:

- The LSG is training quite a lot of troops here, mainly in desert operations. Even the lower tech troops are using basic environmental suits, which means they are gaining at least some experience in ProtFors (Protected Forces) operations, which could be transferred to vacuum or other hostile environments.
- The emphasis is on small units of mid-tech infantry of a sort that would make up a security detachment at a backwater port. However, there is a fair amount of equipment available that is almost up to Imperial Army standards, and these units are training for a more 'straight combat' role.
- The LSG is quietly rotating a lot of personnel through the orbital defense network and System Defense Boats, crosstraining many infantry personnel in technical and shipboard tasks. These seem to include a lot of gunnery and sensor skills, in addition to normal 'crew' experience.
- The LSG seems to have some open supporters among the Scouts that use the port. This may be why the Scout report was to poor.

The characters may also pick up on one or two 'real' secrets while they are poking around. These are very much 'hidden in plain sight' and can be pieced together from things seen and heard:

- The LSG has access to military-grade naval weapons, possibly including nuclear-tipped missiles for space combat. These are not openly marked as such but the technicians are very, very careful around certain missiles.
- Some of the merchant craft coming through the port stop over at the orbital station first, even though it is off-limits to civilian vessels. These ships may be delivering illegal equipment.
- There is a salvage vessel among the regular visitors to the orbital station. Presumably it is being used to obtain and bring in restricted items.

The actual situation is slightly different again from this, and the characters will have to piece the facts together for themselves. The truth is that the LSG is creating a Navy and a Marine Corps here at Brightlett. Personnel with ProtFors and Gunnery skills are quietly transferred to this force, and then gain experience aboard several small merchant ships that have been converted to gunships or Q-ships. These vessels, along with some small escort ships legitimately owned by the LSG, hunt pirates in the border region. Their existence will of course eventually be discovered, but the LSG's leaders are happy about that since it provides a cover for the deepest secret of Brightlett.

In the far outsystem, on a rogue moon drifting through

the Oort cloud, the LSG has established a small naval base. There, with the help of contacts in the Scout Service and using salvaged hulls as well as converted civilian or mercenary designs, the LSG is building a tiny fleet. Thus far it has half a dozen escort type vessels, a reasonably well-repaired destroyer and a barely-functional *Texas*-class Solomani light cruiser salvaged from somewhere in Glimmer drift Reaches sector.

The LSG is concerned that its possession of 'real' warships may be the trigger that causes the reactionary Imperial authorities to come down on it. Small infantry forces and the off pirate-killing Q-ship can be ignored (indeed, the authorities may be secretly glad these forces are in place), but a naval force is a challenge to Imperial authority that cannot be ignored.

Referee's Notes: The characters will probably discover the existence of the Q-ships and armed merchant forces and think they have uncovered the secret of Brightlett. This is what the LSG wants, since investigators tend to stop when they find 'the truth'.

The LSG is a complex and decentralized organization, with mixed motivations. Like all large groups, it has no single 'truth' behind its intentions. Some of its leaders are rabid supporters of the archduke and the Emperor, others are more self-centered. The fate of the LSG depends very much on its actions in the coming years and on who eventually gains control of it, if anyone ever does. The only thing that is certain is that LSG detachments really do protect the people of the Imperium when the Navy and the Army are not around. Its Q-ships and escorts protect merchant ships and destroy pirates. There may be some bad apples among its members, but for the most part the LSG is exactly what it says it is – a popular organization dedicated to protecting the common people of the Imperium against their enemies.

SIGNAL GK #3: INTERVENTION PLUS ONE

Location: lizirgar

lizirgar is currently the site of an Imperial Intervention, since several of the world's Balkanized states launched an attack on pro-Imperial nations and were foolish enough to shoot at Imperial personnel in the process. The aggressive states were hammered flat by Imperial Marines, and an Army division then moved in to begin peacekeeping operations.

The pro-Imperial states are currently in ascendance, backed by the Imperial military. However, even a year after the intervention things are not good. The world is troubled by guerrilla and terrorist attacks, riots and the occasional flare-up of serious hostilities (which tends to be a short-lived but spectacular event).

There are signs, however, that things are getting better. Some of the less hard-line anti-Imperial groups have recently shown a willingness to talk about the world's future, and a series of conferences is planned. There is cautious hope that the level of violence will gradually drop, but this depends very much upon the survival of the conciliatory leaders. Some have been murdered by their hard-liner peers and the rest are obviously frightened.

One such leader, General Alexis Jardin, has indicated to the Imperials that he is ready to stage a coup and take control of the small nation of Hansu, currently part of the Haasi

League. If Jardin succeeds, he will take Hansu out of the conflict in return for support and protection. There is, however, an obstacle to the plan. Jardin's only child, his 17-year-old daughter Livia, could be used as a hostage by his rivals. Jardin therefore arranged for Imperial agents to slip into Hansu and escort his daughter to safety.

The operation began well enough, but somewhere along the line the plan went awry. Jardin's enemies suspected what he was planning and sent their own teams after Livia and her escorts. They caught up in the city of Neisse and in the ensuing gunfight most of the escorts were killed. Livia is now missing somewhere in Neisse, which is in theory neutral but in practice more friendly to the anti-Imperial factions.

General Jardin has a narrow window of opportunity for his coup, and he is going to have to act soon or not at all. He will not do anything unless he knows his daughter is safe, however. Meanwhile she is being hunted through Neisse by teams of kidnapers or assassins, and has only an unknown number of Imperial agents to protect her. The agents are out of contact with their superiors and may in fact all be dead.

The characters may become involved in this situation in one of several ways. They may be approached by a desperate Livia Jardin and asked to transport her and a wounded Imperial agent out of the city, or they may be hired by either the Imperial Governor of Iizirgar or one of the factions to find Livia and deliver her to them.

The situation in and around Neisse is rather confused and deteriorating rapidly. A string of successful guerrilla attacks on pro-Imperial forces has raised the popularity of the anti-Imperial faction, and some of the city's leaders are talking about openly declaring for the anti-faction. There have been riots in the streets and clashes between pro- and anti-citizens, as well as attacks on Imperial citizens. The Governor is empowered to send in the troops and end the matter, but at present his hands are tied by a need to tread softly on the run-up to the conferences. Allegations of heavy-handedness or outright annexation might sour the attitudes of those who are finally willing to talk.

The characters will thus be very much on their own in Neisse and must make their own arrangements to get into and out of the city. They may well be pursued after they leave by agents, guerrillas or even organized military forces. They do have a chance to make a real difference to the balance of power on Iizirgar here; General Jardin's coup may be the deciding factor that starts the peace process. If Hansu remains in the anti-Imperial camp, many of the waverers will too, and the unrest will go on.

MERCENARY TICKETS

Mercenary work is very common in Gateway Domain. Mercenary troops are employed by many corporations as security forces and the profession is seen as an entirely honorable way of making a living by most people. Most mercs are ex-military personnel serving in units equipped at a variety of tech levels. Unit sizes range from a band of specialists or even an individual to battalions or brigades, though large units are relatively rare.

Not all mercenaries are soldiers. Mercenary warships patrol the spacelanes, bounty hunters track dangerous

criminals and experts offer political or military advice to those who can afford their fees. Merc work can also include bodyguard work and all manner of unusual tasks; the only common denominator is payment for a service that has something to do with armed conflict or violence.

Most mercs are professionals with a solid track record, though there are always rogue elements.

A Mercenary Ticket presents details of the job and the rewards for it, plus expanded information for the Referee.

MERC TICKET #1: FIGHTING FOR PEACE

Ticket Type: Commando

Unit Size: Squad or small platoon.

Background

Iizirgar is a very troubled world (see Signal GK: Intervention Plus One for more details), but there is a real possibility of a peaceful resolution to the conflict at last. A series of conferences has been set up to discuss a settlement and to draft a treaty that will govern the armistice. Success or failure will hinge on many factors, but the most important is the willingness of General Aleixus Jardin to take control of the state of Hansu and lead it to the conference table.

It is tempting for the Imperial Governor to offer Jardin Imperial Army troops to assist in his coup, but this is illegal for several very good reasons. It would also royally scupper the peace process if the various factions thought they were likely to be toppled by Imperial troops and replaced with a puppet government.

However, if Imperial troops are out there is no reason why Jardin could not be put in touch with mercenaries who might help him. The Imperial Governor has offered to guarantee Jardin's credit (this is not the same thing as paying for the merc force, and is just barely legal) and to obtain a suitable mercenary force for him. However, time is tight so the Governor's agents have had to round up a mixed bag of small units, squads and freelancers from the local region. This is by no means a coherent or organized force, though since Jardin has used his credit to obtain Advanced Combat Rifles and similar weaponry superior to that available locally, the force is impressive enough – at least on paper.

Mission

The merc force is assigned a number of simple and direct Commando missions. As Jardin launches his coup, the mercs are to assault and capture several key sites such as logistics depots, communications centers and logistics choke-points such as bridges and airfields. The actual arrest of government figures will be conducted by local troops; the mercs are there mainly to cause confusion and distraction, and to make a coherent response difficult.

There are several groups of mercs involved in the operation; some of them fairly dubious. The characters' team is given one of the more critical objectives; a communications center serving as a backup command post. The team is to enter the installation, secure it and use its equipment to broadcast a pre-recorded declaration, along with instructions for the military to remain in barracks and wait for further orders. The installation should be kept intact but must be denied to hostile commanders who might use it to coordinate a counterstrike.

The center is defended by a force of garrison troops at a fairly low state of readiness, numbering about a platoon in strength (30-40 personnel). In addition there are about two dozen technicians based there and possibly a detachment of Presidential Security Force troops. These are highly loyal and will probably have to be eliminated.

Izizgar armed forces are equipped at TL8. The garrison force is infantry armed with rifles and a couple of support weapons. There are no heavy anti-armor weapons available other than a few rifle grenades and disposable shoulder-fired rockets.

This is a success-only ticket (i.e. the mercs will only be paid if their objective is handed over intact to victorious forces loyal to General Jardin.) Cr 2500 is payable to each merc, double this for their commander, and reasonable expenses will be met.

Resolution

Everything is pretty much as indicated in the mercs' briefing. Unless the mercs make a serious mistake they should be able to achieve surprise and overrun the defenders. A rapid assault will stun the garrison, most of whom will surrender if given the opportunity. The Presidential Security troops are more robust and may be able to rally some pockets of resistance if they are not taken out quickly, but there are only 8 of them and they are not expecting trouble. They will put up a stiff fight and are willing to take casualties, but they are not fanatics and will surrender if things seem hopeless.

The mercs' attack will go in as the coup starts. About two and a half hours after the fighting begins, a senior officer of the Hansu Army arrives to secure the base. She has rounded up a scratch force of about a hundred infantry in trucks, plus a couple of armored cars. As a loyalist, she wants to secure the command post for use by the 'legitimate' government, and will assault the place as soon as she is sure it is in pro-Jardin hands.

The officer is not a fool; even if the base did not get off a distress call she will approach cautiously, and if her signals to the base commander do not meet an appropriate response she will come in, guns blazing.

A backup force for the mercs will be en route by this time, but they will have to resist at least the initial assault before help arrives.

MERC TICKET #2: CLOSE PROTECTION

Ticket Type: Security

Unit Size: Squad

Background:

Fergus Kariisharuu is a frightened man at present. He worked for some years as a shipping agent in Ked Freeport, gradually becoming involved in all manner of scams and criminal activities. This led to a series of deals that depended upon one another to succeed. Somebody screwed up or decided to waltz on the deal, and suddenly Fergus was left owing money to all manner of dangerous people, while holding illegal goods that his clients no longer wanted. Desperate attempts to fix things up only made matters worse. Several different groups sent enforcers after him, sometimes arriving together and fighting over who got to deliver a beating first.

It became apparent that Fergus was never going to straighten out the mess he was in, and the enforcers were now making death threats. His only option was to flee. So he booked passage on a Jump-4 liner headed for Gateway, and slipped out a couple of days before it departed aboard a tramp freighter bound for Brightlett.

Fergus managed to get as far as Irdashdis before terror got the better of him. He went to ground and sent out a requirement notice for a Close Protection Team – a squad of mercenaries able to keep the enforcers off him for the remainder of his journey.

Fergus has a fair amount of money on hand and plans to use this to obtain passage to an Imperial world (Brightlett or Shurril Gami) where he will apply for citizenship or at least a travel permit (the latter is quick and easy, but Fergus wants to disappear permanently among the Imperium's trillions of inhabitants).

Mission

A small number of security-oriented mercs are required to protect Fergus from attack while he travels to his first destination, obtains papers, and takes ship for the Imperium. He plans to travel via Shurril Gami and Zaada but this is flexible.

The mercs are constrained by local laws; their weapons may not be legal in any given locale, and certainty will have to be placed in storage while they are aboard a starship. Attempts to conceal or obtain illegal weapons may make the mission more complex than it already is.

Fergus is sure that at least one group of enforcers has been sent after him. Depending on local laws and what they can smuggle in, these enforcers may be armed or may use improvised weapons in their attack.

Fergus will pay Cr500 per week to each of his protectors, plus another Cr500 in any week they repel a serious attempt on him. Before boarding his ship out of the cluster, he will pay an additional Cr1500 to each character.

Resolution

The Ked Freeport Consortium is indeed after Fergus. A band of thugs has been sent out, plus a lone assassin. The thugs are competent but nothing special. Their tactics are direct – find Fergus and kill him messily – but fairly unimaginative. They have handguns and SMGs available but are not adept at smuggling them into high-law areas, so may be armed with an assortment of improvised weapons and the odd body pistol.

The assassin is far more skilled. She favors point-blank hits with a powerful handgun (a gauss pistol, sawed-off shotgun or similar weapon) and is very good at getting weapons into secure areas.

The assassin will probably allow the thugs to make their attempt, in order to observe the close protection team's methods. Once she has found an avenue, she will find a way to get close (probably posing as a passer-by or a local worker) to make the hit. She may decide to bribe some locals to cause a disturbance in order to distract the bodyguards, then approach from a different angle.

ODD JOBS (PATRON ENCOUNTERS)

Odd Job adventures present a brief situation and several options for where it might lead, giving the Referee a quick starting point for an adventure that can go almost anywhere depending on the actions of the characters. Normally the actual situation is determined by a secret die roll on the part of the Referee.

In other versions of *Traveller*, Odd Jobs may be referred to as Patron Encounters, on account of the usual way that they begin – with the characters being offered a fee to perform some task for a patron. However, Odd Jobs can take almost any form and often seem to come out of nowhere. The patron in these cases is not a man in a business suit with a fistful of credits but a rumor that might lead to something valuable or a set of circumstances that necessitate certain actions.

ODD JOB #1: A NICE LITTLE SCAM

Patron: Arms Dealer, Criminal

Required Skills: Stealth, Intrusion and similar

Required Equipment: None

Players' Information

The characters are approached a representative of a rather shady local arms trader, who has an idea for a nice little scam. Most of the dealer's clients are legitimate and deal in properly-documented weaponry. However, some of them seek additional purchases 'under the counter'. Some of the hardware obtained is advanced equipment that is normally restricted, but much of it is the same as the legitimate purchases, allowing a much larger force to be equipped than the receipts show and thus hiding the client's true strength. The client takes a legitimate shipment each month, plus a second one through a different channel containing the smuggled guns.

The patron has discovered that his boss receives a regular fee to obtain additional arms and pass them along in this manner. His relationship with the client is well established and the client trusts him to deliver whatever he can obtain. However, there is no way to predict what he will be able to get in any given period so although the fee remains constant, the weaponry delivered varies in type and amount from month to month.

The representative has made a deal with a different client to deliver some smallarms each month, and now that his source has dried up, the client is becoming difficult. To resolve the matter, he wants the characters to intercept his boss's 'under the counter' shipment and remove part of it. Since the boss's client does not know what to expect, he will probably take the falsified manifest the patron provides at face value and never question it.

Thus the patron can get his hands on a few weapons each month to keep his own buyer happy, and avoids the possibility of an unfortunate 'accident'. If the scam proves workable, it should be possible to repeat it every month.

The characters are offered Cr2,000 each to sneak into the warehouse where the shipment is being held, remove part of the inventory and substitute altered documents for the real ones. The patron also hints that he can help the characters obtain restricted weapons if they want them as part of a reward.

Since the weapons have been obtained illegally so nobody will want to involve law enforcement lest their own illegal dealings are revealed, so even if the characters were discovered they would be safe so long as they could evade any immediate attempts at retribution.

Referee's Information

The situation is more or less as presented. The illegal shipment is being held at a rented warehouse with relatively poor security in the form of simple electronic alarms and detectors and some patrolling security personnel. Gaining entry should not be tremendously difficult. However, there are several possible outcomes at this point. The Referee should roll 1d6 to determine which applies.

Outcomes (1d6):

1. Everything goes nicely. The characters remove a couple of dozen handguns, shotguns and SMGs from several mixed crates, replace the documentation and depart to make delivery without additional problems. The characters will have to get back out past security, transport the weapons to their patron and deliver them, which might require additional effort.
2. As 1, but the crates do not contain civilian smallarms. The characters discover several crates of Advanced Combat Rifles and Light Assault Guns with Imperial Army serial numbers on them.
3. As 1, but a rival group has heard about the shipment and decided to steal all of it. Several thugs break into the warehouse just after (or just before: Referee's option) the characters. They are armed similarly to the characters and slightly outnumber them.
4. As 3, but one of the new arrivals is an undercover Ministry of Justice agent or local police officer, who calls for backup as the theft commences.
5. As 1, but the guns are for a local street punks and crimes of violence rocket over the next few weeks.
6. As 2, and the weapons are for an extremist organization that intends to overthrow the local government or attack a particular social group (e.g. Sydites, Imperials or Vargr).

Subsequent events are up to the Referee.

ODD JOB #2: AN UNOFFICIAL AUDIT

Patron: Spy, Administrator

Required Skills: Computer, Intrusion, Stealth and similar

Required Equipment: Hand Computer or Portacom

Players' Information:

The characters are approached by softly-spoken young woman who has a surprising amount of information about them. She seems to already know that they have the skills she is looking for. The woman, who gives her name as simply 'Victoria', needs help with a rather difficult accounting matter. She has recently completed an audit on the accounts of one of the Starport businesses and was about to send off her report when she started hearing rumors that the firm had falsified its accounts to cover financial discrepancies. She needs to be sure this is not the case, or to obtain some hard evidence if it is, before she signs off on her report.

Victoria knows that the firm maintains its accounts on a computer system in its offices, which are in the Startown near the port. She wants the team to sneak into the offices and access the secure computer files there, obtaining a copy of the raw financial data from which the accounts were prepared. If there are discrepancies, Victoria will be able to find them by comparing with the doctored accounts.

Victoria offers the characters Cr 1000 each to perform the intrusion, which should not be terribly difficult, plus a flat bonus of Cr5,000 if she turns up evidence of illegal financial dealings.

Referee's Information

The office is situated in a rental unit in a large building, which has basic alarms and a couple of very complacent, inattentive and badly underpaid security guards. The place has not had a security alert in quite some time, and routines have become rather lax. It should not be particularly difficult to obtain access to the office.

Once there, the computer system is a little more of a challenge, but skilled characters should be able to break into the system. Depending upon what is on the system, there may be backup security. Roll 1d6 for the contents of the system:

Outcomes (1d6):

1. The business is 'clean'. There are a couple of mistakes among the financial data which were smoothed over in the accounting process, which is technically a breach of some minor regulations. There are no major falsifications however.
2. The accounts are a complete mess and were cobbled together from incomplete data. This is illegal and could land some company officials in trouble, but it was not done to cover embezzlement.
3. The company accountant has redirected a large amount of cash to his own private accounts. He has a rather simple alert program designed to signal him via his com if the accounts are accessed. He will flee with the money as quickly as possible if he thinks his scam is compromised.
4. The company accountant has been redirecting funds to the Loyal Sector Guard, of which he is a fervent supporter. He has a fairly sophisticated alert program running in the computer and will try to get offworld if compromised.
5. The accountant has been funding a terrorist organization using company funds, unknown to the directors. He will be alerted unless his hidden access-detection program is disabled, and will inform the local 'action cell' of the organization, which will make a hurried attempt to kill the characters and torch whatever else they could grab. They will have to improvise the destruction of the building.
6. As 5, but the whole company is a front for the terrorists, who have a pre-planned cover operation ready, just in case. A squad of thugs will arrive within 30 minutes, armed with SMGs and handguns, and will attempt to torch the building. They have incendiaries ready and know how to place them for maximum effect.

Subsequent events are up to the Referee.

ODD JOB #3: SIGNAL GK, SORT OF...

Patron: Crewperson, Merchant

Required Skills: Engineering, Shipboard

Required Equipment: Spacecraft

Players' Information

The characters may be in-system in their own starship or at a port when a distress signal of sorts comes in. The small merchant ship *Buckstop* has a truly embarrassing emergency. The *Buckstop* is notorious for trying to find new and inventive ways to turn a profit – usually with a complete lack of success. This time her crew have decided to save fuel costs by melting ice from an asteroid and processing it themselves. This is a slow process and not one normally used by merchant ships since they have deadlines to meet. However, with a mostly empty hold the captain of the *Buckstop* felt the need to make at least a few credits from this stopover. So, while the crew were melting ice they did a little prospecting.

The idea was feasible, if half-baked. There was a possibility of finding mineral deposits on the asteroid and the time spent prospecting was in effect paid for by the savings on fuel.

It could be argued that it was schemes like this one that got the *Buckstop* into a situation where she needed to save the cost of her fuel, but more important is the fact that everything has gone horribly wrong. The ship's fuelling system includes heaters for melting ice, but they have malfunctioned. Naturally this happened after the heater heads had been forced in too deep, resulting in a heat surge that created a water pocket under the surface of the ice. The ship's landing feet then broke through the surface ice, plunging into the pocket just as the overloaded heater heads cut out.

The *Buckstop* is now stuck with two of her landing feet buried a meter deep in ice, with her heaters inoperable and no way to repair them. She is, in effect, stuck to an asteroid and unable to generate enough power to break free.

The emergency is quite laughable, but it does require a rescue team to go out with suitable equipment and free the stricken ship before her life support runs out. The Port Authority, which has better things to do, offers the characters use of a cutter (if they need one) and suitable equipment for a rescue. They will be paid Cr1000 each for what should be a couple of days' work. The port director's office adds that they will probably fine the *Buckstop* a few thousand credits for stupidity on the spaceways or whatever offense seems most appropriate, and the characters will receive half the fine as a bonus if they can prevent the idiots from doing themselves any more harm.

Referee's Information

This is not the first time the *Buckstop* has landed herself in trouble with particularly stupid schemes, carried out with breathtaking incompetence. Her captain is a disreputable ex-Navy officer who carries herself with the dignity of Flag rank even though she was nothing more than a third-rate Sublieutenant who left the service early. This was after an investigation into a string of disasters only just failed to pin anything on her. The ship itself is a 'coffin ship' – barely spaceworthy at best and patched up with salvaged parts that don't fit properly. Only the most desperate or stupid crew would

sign on aboard such a ship, and anyone seeing the crew of the *Buckstop* in action will be convinced that they are both. .

Getting the *Buckstop* free should be a routine task with the right equipment, but with the help of the people who got into this mess in the first place it could turn into an epic undertaking.

The Referee should roll 1d6 for possible complications.

Outcomes (1d6):

1. The task of freeing the ship takes a few hours. The crew of the *Buckstop* insist on going off prospecting, leaving the characters to get on with the rescue. This is probably for the best.
2. The crew insist on helping. Their incredible incompetence at even basic tasks is matched only by their self-assurance. The job takes twice as long as it should.
3. As 2, but the crew blame the characters for every problem and keep starting arguments. To complicate it, the *Buckstop's* captain and chief engineer take it upon themselves to direct operations, and keep arguing with one another about what to do.
4. As 3, but a member of the crew somehow manages to fall in the ice pocket as it is melted away from the aft landing foot. Vac suits are watertight at such shallow depths but they are not very good at keeping the user warm in icy water. A ham-fisted rescue attempt results in another crewmember in the water, with hypothermia a real risk even if their shoddy vac suits don't short out.
5. As 2, but the crew have managed to strike a small vein of copper and are obsessed with taking samples and keeping the characters from jumping their claim.
6. As 5, but the crew decide to get some really good samples and begin drilling holes in the asteroid to plant some very dubious-looking homemade explosive charges. Subsequent events are up to the Referee.

ODD JOB #4: ON THE DOOR

Patron: Shopkeeper, Merchant

Required Skills: Interpersonal and unarmed combat

Required Equipment: None

Players' Information

The owner of the Flip Side Bar & Grill has a problem. His team of security people have just quit en masse after a dispute. He has booked Ricardo Mansine and his band for this evening, and without security the performance is going to turn into a riot. Ricardo is well known for his aggressive and offensive mix of music, standup comedy and outright abuse towards the audience, and nobody in his right mind would put on such a performance without a few bouncers to keep the peace.

Ricardo's fee is non-returnable, so the only option is to find someone to handle the door, floor security and to deal with anyone who gets too rowdy. This will hopefully be a matter of diplomacy and perhaps the odd restraining hold, though if there is a major incident the security staff will have to use whatever means they can to end the matter. Since no weapons are allowed in the club, this will usually mean a bit of fistfighting, but just in case things do 'kick off' the owner has provided several telescoping batons (treat as cudgels). These are to

be used as a last resort, of course, since the establishment and the security staff could end up in legal trouble if excessive force is used.

The characters are offered Cr250 each to work the gig.

Referee's Information

A few additional security staff have been hurriedly recruited, but the previous door team were well respected and many of the local bouncers won't take the job out of respect for their colleagues. This means that the security team is a mix of inexperienced personnel, passers-through the port and one or two staff that normally would not get hired for this kind of job.

Note that the security staff are there to deter and defuse trouble rather than clobber people. Diplomacy, intimidation and interpersonal skills are the main tools in use, but if the security team has to fight someone they are expected to end it quickly and eject the perpetrators.

If things get really bad (sometimes someone slips a gun into the club despite the best efforts of the door staff and the detection equipment) there are a couple of shotguns stashed under the bar. They are there for absolutely last resort, but there is a possibility that a scared barman might grab one if he feels threatened enough. There is also the possibility that some of the security staff are inadequate and will be flattened, or are violent individuals who will pile into anyone who even looks like they might start trouble.

The characters have several posts and may be split up, though normally security work in pairs and are allowed to pick own their partner. There will always be at least 2 security staff on the front door, greeting customers and refusing entry to those who look like trouble. The rest of the team will circulate between the main bar and the stage area, preventing anyone from clobbering the main attraction and dealing with incidents if they arise. Security staff have radio comms and there is a 'panic button' in each area.

The evening will be a string of minor incidents, which can be played out in as much detail as the Referee likes. Drunken customers may have to be escorted out, or those who turn up drunk or improperly dressed (the Flip Side has a loose dress code but there will always be someone who fails to meet the few requirements) or whose conduct seems threatening, may have to be refused entry. Depending on how well this is handled, violence may ensue.

Inside the club there will be several minor incidents, ranging from false alarms (a heated conversation or someone wanting to assault Ricardo but dissuaded by his friends) to fights between patrons or serious attempts to get on the stage and break it with Ricardo's head.

The security staff will also have to deal with the usual night-out antics of the patrons, and will spend much of their time asking people not to dance on the tables or mess the glass collectors about. While all this routine security activity is going on, there is a chance that some minor incident may flare up into a serious one. The Referee should roll 1d6 for possible problems, and unlike the usual Odd Job, more than one roll may be made during the course of the evening. The same result can be applied a second time, since it is likely to play out very differently.

Outcomes (1d6):

1. A customer refuses to comply with the security staff. He or she is no real threat, but is self-righteous and offensive, making contemptuous remarks about the staff as they try to use diplomacy. If manhandled, he or she struggles vigorously but does not 'fight' as such. The customer's blows are painful but not really harmful. Doing violence to him or her is not really warranted, but it will be very tempting.
2. As 1, but the non-compliant customer will try to fight the security staff and may (50% chance) be aided by 1-3 companions. These individuals are ordinary citizens and not skilled at all, but they are angry and full of drink. Their attempts are vigorous rather than skilled.
3. As 2, but the fighters are experienced members of a local fighting gang and capable of doing some real harm to the characters.
4. A group of large and aggressive individuals starts looking for trouble, taking drinks from other patrons and shoving people about. If they are not stopped quickly they will pick a fight with a suitable (i.e. weaker) victim and pummel the living daylights out of him/her.
5. Ricardo says something particularly offensive and there is a general outbreak of hostilities. Most patrons just shout abuse and make gestures, but others throw glasses and similar missiles. A few will attempt to storm the stage and beat Ricardo up.
6. A fight breaks out in the bar and quickly spreads until at least a dozen people are involved.

Subsequent events are up to the Referee.

KEEPERS OF THE GATE

3

REFEREE'S OVERVIEW

The characters are contracted to deliver a cargo of technical equipment to a remote settlement on Irdashdis, where they discover a team of Loyal Sector Guard personnel working with the locals to improve conditions. It becomes apparent that there are several such teams on the world. Whether the characters think this is a good idea or not, they are soon drawn into a chaotic local situation, in which the LSG team represents not only the sole force for law and order in the area but ultimately the only hope in the face of a natural and man-made disaster.

The adventure gives the characters a chance to see the human face of the LSG; idealistic and motivated but fallible and possibly misguided people doing what they think is right.

The early stages of the adventure see the characters traveling overland to deliver their cargo and interacting with the LSG personnel in the town of Onslar Rapids as they carry out the second part of their contract – teaching the locals and their LSG allies how to operate the equipment. The nature of life in the outback of Irdashdis is gradually revealed.

Later Acts involve the characters in a series of crises that beset Onslar Rapids as severe weather strikes the town. There are opportunities for action and gunplay, but for the most part this is an adventure about tough decisions and decisive action in other areas of human activity.

PLAYING OUT THE ADVENTURE

The most important factor in this adventure is the personality of the various main protagonists. The characters should be given the opportunity to get to know both the locals and their LSG allies. They should eventually realize that there is no 'single truth' about the Loyal Sector Guard; it is diverse as its members.

PUSH, PULL, ENIGMA AND GIMMICK

Four elements of the typical adventure story are push, pull, enigma and gimmick.

Push: The characters are 'pushed' into the adventure by their contract. Once events begin to develop, the rapidly worsening situation and a sense of duty towards people they have come to know and respect should push them onwards.

Pull: The main 'pull' in this adventure is survival. The characters are sucked into a dangerous situation and must scramble to get out alive.

Enigma: The main enigma in this adventure is: what is the truth about the Loyal Sector Guard detachment at Onslar Rapids? What are its personnel really up to?

Gimmick: A gimmick is something special the characters get out of the adventure. It is possible that the characters may make friends with the LSG team and find them useful allies in the future.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The following information is not in any way 'secret' – i.e. the players may discover it in the course of the game

by simple investigation or observation – but it is not all common knowledge. The Referee should decide what to reveal, and when. As a rule, facts should be deduced by the players as a result of their characters' actions rather than given out verbatim by the Referee. Remember that people venturing information may be misinformed or biased, and that sometimes contradictory 'facts' may be discovered. Finding out which of the options is true is a matter for further investigation. It might be that both sources of information are partly correct, completely wrong, or both may be true under different circumstances.

"Wheels within wheels" is an important factor in the *Traveller* game universe, and one 'truth' may simply lead to more questions.

It may indeed be that there is no one central truth to any question; just endless opinions and deeper revelations that lead in circles. The *Traveller* universe is, after all, an imperfect world.

THE LOYAL SECTOR GUARD

The Loyal Sector Guard is a powerful but unofficial military organization which exists within the Domain of Gateway. Its stated purpose is to defend the lives and property of Imperial citizens from all threats – i.e. the same as the official Imperial armed forces.

The LSG is formed from assets donated by various members: noble household troops, mercenary units, planetary armed forces, corporate security units and some specially-raised forces. It consists mainly of ground-combat units equipped as mid-tech light infantry (i.e. security forces rather than battlefield units) but does have a number of starships and "real" military units among its ranks.

The LSG has its own rank and pay structure, a uniform, and a strict code of conduct for its members, all of whom take a personal oath of loyalty to "The Imperium, her Citizens, and the Emperor".

The LSG is technically forbidden by Imperial Law. While the law does not prohibit the formation of properly-accountable mercenary forces in the service of a corporation or an individual, the creation of a widespread organization paralleling the Imperial Armed Forces is specifically prohibited. Despite this, the LSG has not been shut down. It is led by several powerful figures in the sector, and has some popular support due to its policy of sending forces to protect places the Navy and Army cannot or will not. LSG personnel have met their deaths in the defense of citizens, and (other than by its existence) the LSG remains strictly within the law.

Many LSG members are well-known loyalists and some are Imperial officials whose integrity is beyond reproach. Other members (and quite prominent ones, at that) may be motivated by political considerations. Tension with the official armed forces is considerable, but it is recognized that closing down the LSG would be very unpopular with the citizens they protect. Only time will tell if the LSG manages to establish itself as a power in the region, but already its influence is being felt.

The LSG must have immense funding available; likely this comes from several sources. In addition to large numbers of

security troops (equipped to TL8 standards for the most part), the Guard also deploys advisory teams, patrol and escort ships, fighter wings and even regular ground forces. The latter are mainly fairly small, being in the main mercenary units, but it is thought that the LSG could muster an entire Lift Infantry division, with armored support.

The LSG does have significant space forces. Its ships are small; armed traders and small patrol vessels for the most part; capable of dealing with pirates but little use in a real engagement. Rumors do persist that the LSG has purchased and is reactivating a number of obsolete cruiser-class vessels. While still inferior to a regular Navy ship, these vessels would give the LSG a far greater capability.

In addition, the LSG has large numbers of small, cheap fighters and a few larger gunships. These vessels (and supporting technical crews) are deployed in backwater systems, where they enforce local and Imperial law and create a measure of offworld defense.

The Guard also operates a number of manufacturing centers, and is now a player in the sector arms market. Products include smallarms, conversion kits for civilian vehicles, and a line of cheap, easy-to-maintain "people's fighters" intended to allow poor worlds to obtain at least some means of offworld defense.

THE LSG DETACHMENT AT ONSLER RAPIDS

The LSG unit at Onslar Rapids is not a combat force. It is instead an 'assisted self-help' team put together for the job at hand. Its personnel number 14, a mix of older, experienced personnel and young recruits.

The team wears non-descript coveralls when working, though they do display discreet LSG insignia. Off duty, they dress in local clothing and are picking up the dialect – it is quite hard to tell the LSG team from those who were born in the town. Most of the team are experts of one form or another; an economist, a couple of engineers, a mathematician working as a tutor, and so on. They are mostly graduates but rather young to be leading such a project. The locals are aware of their limitations but since nobody else was interested in helping, the LSG personnel are well respected for trying. The team work hard and are surprisingly competent despite their collective youth.

Four members of the team are 'security specialists', including the master-at-arms. They help out where they can but are primarily guards; something that is rarely needed on Onslar Rapids.

The team has enough autopistols for one each, but these are not normally carried. The four guards have Flak jackets and assault rifles concealed in their quarters (technically these are now legal and the locals know about them, but they are not routinely displayed). If personnel go out of town they will be armed for self-protection; most parties working outside the town fence include at least one armed member in case the wildlife turns nasty.

The LSG detachment spend most of their time in the town working on setting up the factory machinery or fiddling with prototype grav-plows alongside their local inventors. Others will be tutoring young people or helping out on odd technical jobs. At any given time there may be 2-5 members of the team out of time at one of the farmsteads or the mine. There is a lot

for them to do and even those with quite limited technical skills find themselves in constant demand.

IRDASHDIS

Basic data on the world of Irdashdis is included in the World Data section of this adventure. Other information necessary to this adventure is presented here.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Irdashdis has a diverse and well-developed biosphere, which now includes creatures introduced from offworld. Most of these were introduced during the Rule of Man and are now well established in their ecological niche. The most significant is Talkan's Grazer, a normally docile grazing animal somewhat larger than a Terran cow. Little more than eating machines, Talkan's Grazers are sometimes known as Steakhamsters for the way they trundle about on stubby legs and their generally rodent-like appearance. Steakhamsters are incredibly stupid and will try to eat almost anything, so they can inadvertently pose a hazard to humans by eating their equipment or stepping on them while they do so. Rogue males are a more significant threat to people, but it is not so much the Steakhamster as its predators that cause the real problems on Irdashdis.

Like all biodiverse worlds, Irdashdis has evolved numerous predatory species. These include some quite large and dangerous creatures, but their numbers were kept down by competition for food resources. Since the introduction of the Steakhamster, however, and particularly since wild herds of the docile, stupid beasts have become common, Irdashdis' predators have undergone something of a population explosion.

Although they are regularly culled or driven off, packs of Ziprips and lone Kainhos frequently attack domestic Grazer herds, and some regions of the outback are extremely hazardous due to the numbers of predators living off the wild Grazer herds.

The Ziprip has a biological name, but nobody on Irdashdis remembers it. A Ziprip is a reptilian creature about the size of a Labrador. They are Chasers which take their prey by sneaking close then hurtling in at great speed and jumping on the target, slashing at it with sharp teeth and an array of claws and forelimb spikes.

A Ziprip pack (3-8 adults typically) will attack a human. They are extremely fast and agile, and will not be deterred once they have begun their charge. The best defense against Ziprip attack is either to remain in a group or to shoot one of the approaching beasts while it is sneaking up, which will drive off the pack in a panic. Of course, Ziprips are well camouflaged and stealthy, so this requires a sharp lookout – and a good rifle.

The Kainho is a larger, lone predator of reptilian appearance like the Ziprip (they are related not too far back in their ancestry), but much larger. Possessing the same long head with razor-sharp teeth and forearm spikes, the Kainho is a killer rather than a chaser. It is quite fast overland, at least in a straight line, and can run on its hind legs only for a short distance. Its normal mode of attack is to charge from cover, rising up on its hind legs to crash into the victim and bowl it over, then eviscerate it with forearm spikes.

Kainhos have learned to avoid human habitation since they are shot on sight. They roam the wilder plains preying on wild Steakhamster herds and other large grazing animals. Kainhos are territorial and sometimes seem to attack just for the fun of it.

There is also rather a lot of life in the seas of Irdashdis, but humans tend not to live along the coasts. One reason for this is the Raftweed, a type of orange-green seaweed that forms great floating islands in coastal waters and tends to wash up on the shores in thick, choking masses.

Raftweed gives off a constant mist of tiny floating spores that contaminate the air, giving Irdashdis its Tainted atmosphere label. In the coastal regions, filter masks tend to fail or clog up quite quickly, making habitation in these areas problematical. Farther inland, the spores are thin enough that it is possible to dispense with the masks much of the time, though this is risky since weather conditions can carry spores far inland.

If inhaled, Raftweed spores grow in the victim's airways and lungs in a manner similar to respiratory Anthrax. Symptoms are flu-like, leading to respiratory collapse and death within a few days. The condition can sometimes be treated if it is caught quickly enough, but prevention is a lot less risky than cure.

WEATHER PATTERNS

Irdashdis is a wet world with a thin atmosphere. The resulting rapid changes in temperature can cause somewhat vigorous weather. Although the air is thin, high winds are possible but these are rarely very damaging. However, they do stir up Irdashdis' atmosphere sufficiently that Raftweed spores can be blown far inland.

Another hazard is the so-called Hail Dump, where a rapid drop in temperature causes a massive downpour of rain, turning to hail as it falls. The hailstones can be very large – golf-ball sizes are common and larger examples have been recorded in many instances. Hail Dumps are quite rare except in hilly or mountainous regions near the sea, though they can occur anywhere with little warning.

Individuals caught in the open during a Hail Dump can be severely hurt or even killed by the repeated blows to the head and body. Wearing a helmet and body armor will help somewhat but not as much as might be expected – huge hailstones have a powerful concussive effect. Sheltering under one of the world's very resilient trees should ensure safety, though the experience will still not be exactly pleasant.

LIBERTY PORT

Liberty Port is a large and high-quality establishment that serves vessels passing along the cluster into or out of Imperial space, bound for Gateway sector or the Khuur League. It is also the base for the system defense fleet of the Republican Defense Force, which conducts customs and law-enforcement duties within the port.

Liberty Port has a large orbital component, through relatively few people live there other than employees and their dependents. The Downport is large and well laid-out for the most part, with a large Startown that serves as the planetary capital. Liberty Port, as the port and Startown are collectively known, is home to almost two million people.

While many Startowns are subject to more relaxed laws than the rest of the planet, being interface zones between the planetary culture and offworlders, Liberty Port is quite the opposite. Law enforcement is strict and brisk, with a higher cops-to-citizens ratio than any other city on the planet. Ignorance of the law is not a defense, and visitors are routinely given a pocket directory of local laws and customs to help them avoid problems. The port area is heavily guarded by the Defense Force, but unlike most other cities it has no Republican Militia or other armed groups. Indeed, Liberty Port may be one of the most thoroughly disarmed settlements in the region.

Crime and disorder is rather low, partly as a result of the strict policing and partly due to a strong community ethic. Social programs work hard to establish a feeling of neighborhood identity and pride, and a spirit of pride among those who live close together. One unintended result is a vast number of volunteer-run amateur groups participating in sport, drama or other social activities. Virtually every apartment block or housing group has a couple of sports teams, and most offer a range of activities. Rivalries are friendly more often than divisive; most of the amateur sports teams are so bad that it is hard to take their matches very seriously, though there are exceptions. Visitors are often co-opted to fill a vacancy on a team, generally with very poor results, and anyone with coaching experience or who has played a sport to a reasonable level can find a housing group willing to offer a free apartment and meals for the duration of his or her stay in return for a hand up off the bottom of the league table.

Liberty Port is not much of a manufacturing center, and brings in a lot of goods by monorail or aboard barges up the Great Barsike Canal from the neighboring industrial city of Barsike. Most of the world's financial institutions are situated in the city, along with the main campus of the Planetary University of Irdashdis.

Overall, Liberty Port is a clean, orderly place inhabited by prosperous, cheerful and socially integrated citizens; the model of a high-technology city. This impressive state of civilization has been achieved at the expense of funding in other regions, however, and a great deal of Imperial loan money has gone into making the city and the port what they are. Things are not quite so rosy on the rest of the planet, and there is some resentment of capital-dwellers in the outback regions where things have not improved for decades and where funding even for minor projects like road repair is very limited.

ONSLER RAPIDS

The town of Onslers Rapids lies 1750 kilometers from Liberty Port as the crow flies; it is a little further by road since the southern arm of the Dhuran Mountains must be rounded.

Although Irdashdis has an impressive technological base, grav vehicles are not very common outside the major cities as maintenance facilities are few and far between. Thus towns like Onslers Rapids are connected to the main cities by ill-maintained roads and (in some cases) monorail links. The nearest large city to Onslers Rapids is Yubaytas, a city of some 1 million inhabitants about 400 km southwest.

Onslers Rapids is a typical small town on Irdashdis. With a population of about 2000 people, it is situated in the foothills of the Dhuran Mountains, on the banks of the Siedel River.

The Siedel is shallow and fast-flowing at this point, fed by meltwater and rainfall from the mountains. The river water is pure and clear, and is used in the production of one of Onslers' main exports – whiskey.

There are five distilleries at or close to Onslers, four of them producing a potent and distinctive distillate that would have been recognized by old Terrans as a very good single malt scotch. The fifth, and largest, produces grain spirit which is mixed with a little single-malt from each of the other distilleries to produce a cheaper but still pretty good blended whiskey.

In addition to whiskey, Onslers Rapids has a small manufacturing base, fed by an iron mine a few kilometers to the north, and a large farming and ranching community. There is some tension between the distillery owners and the miners since accusations a few years ago that the river was becoming contaminated by mine tailings.

The farmers grow a fair amount of grain, much of which goes straight to the malting-houses at the distilleries, and vegetable crops including some of the best potatoes in the subsector. The ranchers have fairly large herds of Talkan's Graders, otherwise known as Steakhamsters. All of this should mean that the town is fairly prosperous, but this is not the case.

The difficulty of exporting bulky goods, and the general weak state of Irdashdis' planetary economy, means that only low-bulk, high-value items such as whiskey actually make a reasonable profit when shipped out. Onslers whiskey is sold offworld and is currently popular in the larger cities, but while it remains the mainstay of the local economy, the profits are not sufficiently great as to allow much investment.

Most other produce, such as Steakhamster meat and cereal crops, make very small profits when sold in the cities, so tend mainly to be used for local consumption. As a result, the people of Onslers Rapids are poor in terms of cash and consumer goods, but they do have a hearty diet of meat and potatoes, washed down with grain beer and whiskey. Theirs is not a bad lifestyle, by any means.

However, the lack of investment is beginning to show, in terms of fairly poor health and education services, and it is obvious that in the long term the region is in decline. Backwater towns like Onslers Rapids will suffer most from this spiral – unless the citizens do something about it.

Having given up on anything useful coming out of central authority, many small communities are looking for assistance from elsewhere. In the case of Onslers Rapids, the town council has appealed to – and obtained modest assistance from – the Loyal Sector Guard.

The LSG is mainly associated with security projects and defensive deployments, but its activities do include 'assisted self-help' programs such as the one currently ongoing in Onslers Rapids. In return for a complex and, on the face of it rather less than lucrative, agreement to provide Onslers whiskey and some shares in local businesses to the LSG, the town has received a detachment of LSG experts who are working with the locals to establish a number of businesses that can make real money from high-value exports.

The main effort is being directed at the creation of a small factory producing high-quality agricultural machinery. While some cynics might be surprised to discover that crates shipped out of an LSG-affiliated facility and labeled 'tractor

parts' actually do contain agricultural equipment, the factory has already produced some prototype equipment that has been sent offworld for evaluation and field testing.

The factory's main products include agricultural tractors and a variety of tool attachments for them, and an ingenious self-contained grav-assisted plow for use on mid-low tech worlds. This device can be pulled by any means, from oxen to fusion-powered machinery. Its focused grav field takes some of the load but more importantly breaks up the ground ahead of the blade, making plowing heavy soil much easier.

A lot is riding on this venture; the LSG is providing technical support and sourcing equipment, but it is the savings and mortgages of the locals that have funded the venture. If good sales are generated then even with the LSG cut of profits, the factory will bring greater prosperity to the region. If not, the locals are in an even deeper hole.

The LSG detachment is also tutoring some of the locals in what they need in order to obtain places at offworld universities and academies. Some of the students have expressed an interest in joining LSG units and already a few have gone offworld to training institutions at Brightlett and other LSG-friendly worlds.

The Sector Guard is popular with the people of Onslers Rapids, initially because they were willing to help out when nobody else was but later because the detachment has shown itself to be made up of friendly, hard-working and trustworthy people. This friendly relationship will be apparent to anyone spending time in the town; some people do not like the LSG personnel but the vast majority of townfolk like and respect them, and speak more highly of them than 'that lot over in Liberty Port' – i.e. the planetary government.

While the high law level on Irdashdis forbids the ownership of weapons, Onslers Rapids has two 'permitted groups' who are allowed to own weapons for local defense and protection against the wildlife. The Onslers Rapids Free Rifles Association consists mainly of farmers and others who work in the outback and need a rifle to deal with Ziprips and the occasional rogue Steakhamster. (Visitors may find the locals' reason for obtaining and using weapons rather funny; those who have seen a Ziprip attack cease to do so). The local sheriff and her deputies are also members by professional association.

The second group is the Dhuran Mountains Rangers, (Onslers Rapids Chapter); a small and declining organization that was formed long ago to resist the threat of invasion. Technically, most adults in the region belong to the Rangers, but in practice the Chapter has exactly three active members. Two of these individuals are local 'custodians' who maintain a small arsenal of shotguns and rifles in case of emergency (such as an invasion or mass Ziprip attack on the town's herds) in their basement. The third member is the LSG master-at-arms, who joined upon arrival as a polite fiction to legalize the sidearms the LSG team smuggled in with them.

PLOT AND EPISODES

SETUP

It does not really matter for the purposes of this adventure whether the characters own a starship or not. If they do not, they will arrive on Irdashdis as passengers aboard a ship. This might be a local trader out of Shurril Gami or a Jump-4 long-haul freightliner out of Zaada. If the characters do have a ship then it is likely that they have come in via the Jump-2 route through Bastion, Kamaskusis and Barnes, then entered the Sydymic Outworlds at Igmigi before Jumping on to Irdashdis.

The Referee will have to decide upon a reason for being in the cluster. Shipowners may be at the end of a charter to deliver goods or passengers to Irdashdis. Adventurers may be headed out into Gateway sector or perhaps just seeking new challenges. Since Irdashdis is just over the Imperial border, they may be laying low for a while after a questionable adventure. They may even be LSG members sent to help out the Onslers Rapids detachment.

It is not important how the characters get to Irdashdis. Once there, they are likely to be caught up in local events without really realizing what is happening. Their ship, if any, will not be available to them during the adventure.

ACT 1: LIBERTY PORT

The characters arrive in Liberty Port and are contracted to make a delivery.

SCENE 1: PLANETFALL (KEY SCENE)

Liberty Port, Irdashdis, is a fairly busy installation. Local (i.e. port of registry is in-cluster) traffic is directed into several streams while long-distance ships out of the Imperium, Khuur League and various states in Gateway Sector are concentrated in a single traffic stream. Inspections on this stream are more thorough than those dealing with local traffic. Light fighters dart back and forth, sweeping out on patrol or coming in close to conduct a visual identification of a vessel. Larger system defense craft can be picked up on sensors, prowling about farther out. There are always a few on the scope at any given time, even though the average SDB is capable of being very stealthy at need. The obvious presence is a broad hint to would-be troublemakers.

As the characters' vessel approaches the mainworld it is intercepted by a smart customs cutter out of the Highport and subjected to a polite but brisk inspection. Unless there is some compelling reason, the ship will be given permission to land at the Downport and settles into an approach path. Interested characters may note many typical Imperial designed ships – Free and Far Traders, Scout/Couriers and Subsidized Merchants for the most part, with the odd larger vessel – alongside a smaller number of obviously non-Imperial ships. A handful of vessels really stand out; a sleek 1000-ton diplomatic courier out of the Galian Federation in Gateway, a box-like Sydite trader and an Imperial Jump-4 freightliner. Most are just local trade and commerce vessels plying the trade lanes just like anywhere else.

Descending to the planetary surface, the characters disembark into the large and well-maintained port terminal, where it gradually becomes clear that they are no longer in Imperial space. The differences are subtle but important. For example, there is no 'Extrality Line' at the port. Liberty Port is subject to exactly the same laws and customs as the rest of the planet. Note that this means that any weapons in the characters' possession must be handed over and placed in storage or left aboard a ship. The port has some very good weapon scanners and stiff penalties for being caught with a weapon.

Progressing through ID checks and baggage inspections, the characters can finally enter the port concourse and thence the planet itself.

The port is colorful and busy, with many kinds of shops and businesses. It is something of a shopping center for locals, and has vast retail parks and department stores filled with goods of all kinds. There is, however, relatively little accommodation at the port. Visitors can obtain advice on how and where to obtain a good place to stay, but this generally involves heading out into the city.

SCENE 2: STOPOVER IN LIBERTY PORT

The characters are likely to be in Liberty Port for a few days. Finding a hotel should not be much of a challenge, but there is an alternative. Any character whose public resume mentions participation in sports will be met at the port by a delegation of locals. This may be a little alarming, but a quick look around shows that there are several such groups, each armed with handfuls of resume printouts and images of inbound passengers, all accosting travelers with similar offers.

The offer made by the locals is very simple: if the character is willing to trade a couple of hours' instruction every other evening, he or she (and at a push, all his or her friends) will be welcome to stay in a guest apartment in the group's home area for free, with meals provided and all other costs waived by the hosts.

If the characters choose not to take up the offer, they are of course free to do as they please. If they do accept, they will be eagerly ushered into vehicles and taken to the apartment block by earnest, friendly locals who want to know everything possible about the characters and their sporting pedigree. Even fairly inept characters who played the odd game of basketball or Kaanishaa Mirulii (a traditional Vilani game involving several soft head-sized balls that must all be placed in the scoring areas at the same time to win) at college, just for fun, are treated as offworld sporting heroes. The locals chatter about how this is their lucky break; just the thing they need to beat the neighboring Liberty Fireflies in this week's game.

At the apartment block, it becomes apparent that this sort of thing is common. The guest quarters are clean and comfortable but obviously well used. The locals are a friendly lot, and the food is good and plentiful. It can all get a bit irritating however, especially since it is obvious that everybody is straining at the leash to get out on the practice ground and learn some skilful offworld plays.

The Referee should decide what sport the locals are competing at, depending upon the skills and history of the

characters. Outdoor events like cross-country ski-ing are not feasible. It is most likely that the game in question is a small-team game that can be played indoors or in a small stadium - something like basketball or baseball (or an equivalent) is ideal. Alternatively, the sporting challenge may be an unlikely medley of individual events including fencing, pool and low-g volleyball to achieve an overall result in some manner incomprehensible to outsiders.

The Referee should make as much or as little of this interlude as seems desirable. The characters will be invited to attend the game (or even to join in if the locals are short of players). They are spectacularly inept, of course, as are their opponents. Anyone of even mediocre talent will stand out as a star player, and the sight of clumsy young people and overweight middle-aged office workers giving it their all and achieving nothing may drive characters into fits of giggles or tears of sympathy. It is obvious, however, that everyone is taking it all very seriously yet having a great time. It does not matter all that much who wins the game, so much as whether or not a player manages to make use of something a character taught her. If anyone manages to use what they were taught, the characters will be mobbed by locals wanting to pound them on the back or hug them as if they just saved the world.

In short, it's all very strange, but harmless.

However, during their time in Liberty Port, perhaps even during the game, the characters are noticed by someone needing their skills.

SCENE 3: A CONTRACT (KEY SCENE)

The travelers are approached by a gentleman named Creighton Senthier, who turns out to be a shipping agent at the port. He has a contract for them; nothing difficult but requiring the sort of skills the characters have among them.

Creighton has a shipment of components for some sort of engineering project in a town named Onsler Rapids, some of which are quite complex and will require rechecking along the way. What he needs is a crew to drive two truckloads of gear up to the town, stopping every 500km or thereabouts to make sure the cargo is not suffering any ill-effects, and to help the locals unload and set up the gear when they arrive. Onsler Rapids is 1750km away, so the trip will take roughly 4 days each way, with maybe 3-4 days in the town at the far end. The characters are offered Cr500 each for the trip, plus a bonus upon their return if the job goes well.

The cargo is mainly control components for the power generation equipment in a hydro-electric power station. This segment of the cargo is pretty robust and needs no checking. However, the locals also have a special order in with their main cargo; a number of finely-made grav plates and control equipment for them. These may be somewhat delicate and will need special calibration checks to ensure they do not 'drift' out of alignment during the trip. Once installed in whatever the locals have in mind for them they should be robust enough but fine-tolerance grav units are notoriously prone to malfunction if transported loose. The characters will receive an additional Cr500 bonus if the units arrive in functioning order.

The characters will be invited to look over the cargo and assure themselves that it is indeed what is listed on the manifest. Everything is indeed in order, though what the folks

up in Onsler Rapids want with grav units is anybody's guess.

Referee

If the characters arrived in their own ship, with a charter cargo, then it may be that this delivery is part of the charter. This, and other 'hooks' to get the characters to Onsler Rapids and involved in the problems there, is a matter for the Referee.

ACT 2: OVERLAND ON IRDASHDIS

An opportunity to take in the sights and sounds of rural Irdashdis... and get mauled by a giant space hamster.

SCENE 1: LIBERTY PORT TO HOLGRUND CITY

The trucks that the characters will be driving are a fairly standard type, the RoadHauler XM. Manufactured by Ling Standard Products in the Imperium for frontier use on many worlds, they have a good reputation for safety and reliability, though they are rather expensive. These particular examples have obviously been in service for some years though they are in sound condition.

The trucks are large articulated vehicles fitted with a range of driver aids including radar and a basic auto-drive system that handles routine route-following and maintains a safe distance from other vehicles and obstacles. The cabs are pressurized and filtered, so providing personnel use the small airlock-like main door they are safe from atmospheric contamination. Filter masks and short-term protective suits are held in lockers in the cab, along with hard hats and basic tools. The truck cabs each also have a small sleeping area and are actually quite comfortable, if cramped.

The cargo area is not fitted with an airlock and is not pressurized, and when the characters take over the trucks it is jammed full of crates and boxes. The grav units are fortunately located near the access area so getting them out and conducting a basic recalibration and systems check requires only about an hour for two individuals. It is pretty heavy work, however, since the plates are quite dense.

It will be necessary to conduct the calibrations every evening upon halting for the night.

The first two days are very straightforward; a matter of monitoring the autodrive as the trucks hurtle along well-maintained highways between the capital and Holgrund City, a major city about 1300km to the north. There is a fair amount of other traffic on the highways, ranging from small, fast roadsters to big haulage trucks like the ones the characters are crewing. The first night is spent at a waypost/truck stop and the second in pleasant, if basic, accommodation at the busy main freight terminal of Holgrund City.

Holgrund is a lot like Liberty Port in many ways, but obviously receives less funding from central government. It is a major trade hub for the region, however, so facilities are still good.

SCENE 2: INTO THE BACKWOODS

After Holgrund City, the characters are headed into the backwoods. About 100km up the road is Yubaytas, the last major city for many kilometers. After passing Yubaytas, the characters notice that there is a lot less traffic on the highway, which is not well maintained at all. The ride becomes quite rough and the auto-drive drops its safe speed gradually. Back on the main roads 175kph was quite comfortable, but with every passing kilometer the auto-drive reduces its speed further, down to about 75kph. This is still fairly rough at times as the road surface is torn up in places, causing the truck computer to brake hard or swerve around an area of chewed-up road that its radar cannot detect.

The characters could probably make better time on manual control if they were willing to risk it. This will become increasingly attractive as the auto-drive reduces its speed to a mere 50 kph to compensate for damaged road surface. In fact the patches of damage are quite far apart, but the truck can only detect them with its wheels, so has been programmed to play safe.

Ahead, the Dhuran Mountains creep ever closer. Some peaks are wreathed in short-lived but dark and angry clouds while others glint in bright sunshine. To each side of the road is a wide expanse of open country roamed by wildlife. The most noticeable of the local fauna are small herds of dowdy gray-furred rodentine creatures ambling slowly about the plains munching on whatever they find. These docile and stupid beasts are Talkan's Grazers, known almost universally as Steakhamsters.

There is a high and robust fence along the side of the highway to keep the Steakhamster herds off the road. However, it has been breached in some places. In others, a Grazer can be seen determinedly nibbling at the fence posts (which are made of thick steel). This is not untypical behavior for these beasts, which are among the most stupid in Charted Space.

As the characters drive along, they will observe a herd suddenly scattering to seek cover as a slashing wave of golfball-sized hailstones rains down from the apparently clear sky. This is a foretaste of the Hail Dump weather phenomenon; a mere fragment of one blown far across the plains by a high-altitude air current. The Grazers end up in a heap under the nearest trees, climbing over and under one another to seek shelter. The hail seems to harm them relatively little, though it makes a terrific din as it hammers into the armored windscreens and cab roofs of the trucks. Grazers unable to find shelter stagger drunkenly for a while then roll up into a ball, emerging battered but essentially intact as the storm passes. It was a series of storms like this one that chewed up the highway.

The journey goes on in this manner, with the road becoming increasingly worse as the characters head north, then northwest. The going is slow and the roadside fence has obviously not been repaired in as long as the road itself has been neglected. It is breached in several places.

Night is beginning to fall and while heading onward on auto-drive is just about feasible it is not really a safe bet. The characters still have 250km to go and should see about the recalibrations while there is still light. They can push on in the

morning.

SCENE 3: ROGUE MALE

As the travelers are carrying out their technical tasks, a rogue male Grazer spots them and begins to amble closer. To the uninformed, it appears to be just another Steakhamster, perhaps detached from its herd, searching for something to eat. However, the situation is more dangerous than that. Rogue males are bad-tempered and dangerous beasts that will attack just about anything. Being also extremely stupid, they are hard to frighten off and generally have to be seriously injured in order to make them take notice.

With all the delicate electronics gear lying around outside the trucks, simply retreating inside the cab is not an option. The Grazer is likely to start eating the cargo or even nibbling on the truck, and it is quite capable of doing enough damage to matter. It is going to have to be driven off.

The characters should not have access to any firearms, since Irdashdis has a high law level. There are a range of implements that could be used as improvised weapons including tire irons, spanners, lengths of tubing and so forth.

Stats for the rogue male are found in the Cast of Characters section of this adventure.

The following morning, the characters can proceed to Onslar Rapids.

ACT 3: ONSLER RAPIDS

The characters arrive in the charming backwater town of Onslar Rapids and make their delivery.

SCENE 1: ARRIVALS (KEY SCENE)

Rumbling up the road towards the town, the characters gain their first impression of Onslar Rapids. Constructed on the banks of the Siedel river, the town is surrounded by a meter-high earth berm topped by an impressive metal fence, which leans outwards to deter climbing creatures. Heavy gates can close off the road but currently stand open.

The town is surrounded by fields, and in the distance farmhouses can be seen, all fenced off from the surroundings just like the town. Tractors and utility vehicles work the fields, and anyone taking the time to look can see that while firearms are strictly controlled on Irdashdis, every group of people outside the town includes at least one person cradling a rifle or shotgun.

Upriver of the town are several compounds, each with its own fence and gates. These are the famous Onslar Rapids distilleries. The road continues northwards after passing through the town, crossing the river on a robust-looking bridge and heading for a break in the mountains. It has clearly been repaired many times using local resources and is patchy but better than what the trucks have been bumping over for the past 250km.

Several people are heading for the gates as the trucks come into view, so that by the time the characters enter Onslar Rapids there is a crowd of several dozen individuals waiting for them. The trucks are waved to a parking/unloading area and the characters invited to disembark.

Leading the greetings is the town mayor, Alex Cheslen.

Alex is a young man of about 25, but he has the confidence of the townsfolk and it is not hard to see why. He has an easy manner with people, yet radiates trustworthiness and sincerity. In addition to heading the town's tiny administrative apparatus Alex works in the town cooperage, making barrels to store whiskey in. His is a skilled but unglamorous job, which is also how he views his tenure as the mayor.

Alex greets the characters with a round of warm, calloused handshakes and invites the characters into the more hospitable confines of the nearby Healey Tavern, which serves as a café, inn and bar at different times of day. Paperwork can be handled over a meal and maybe a glass of the local distillate.

Various people come and go as the characters sort out the paperwork. Everyone seems pretty busy, though some of the tasks they are engaged in may not be immediately apparent to visitors. There seems to be a fair amount of traffic in and out of the gates, including a party piled into the bed of a four-wheel-drive pickup truck, equipped with a couple of shotguns and a large electronic device festooned with cables and jury-rigged data readouts. The same party returns a little later, dejected and with the device in pieces.

Once the paperwork is completed, there is only the matter of unloading the trucks and setting up the specialist equipment the characters brought up from Liberty Port. Post-transit checks on the entire cargo will be a lengthy process, so Alex decides that it will have to wait until the morning. In the meantime, he'd like to introduce a few people and maybe give the characters a tour of the town and its industry.

The unloading involves a mob of volunteers, who all seem pretty excited by the gear that has arrived. Faces come and go, but Alex does manage to introduce a few of them. Only first impressions are listed here. The Cast of Characters gives more detail on each of these individuals.

- "Bob" – Bob is a middle-aged and tubby individual with impressive technical skills. He can be a little hyperactive however.
- "Maria" – Maria is a dark-haired woman in her mid 30s who owns the Healey Tavern. She turns everyone out of the bar to help with the unloading, promising a free drink or lunch for anyone helping out.
- "Ted" – Ted is a young man with a permanent slight smile (or maybe a sneer). He has a certain boyish charm as a result of good lucks and curly blond hair, but he seems rather lazy. He also keeps sipping from a hip flask, though he is obviously not drunk.
- "Khuuli" – Khuuli is about Ted's age but bulky rather than slender. He wears nondescript work coveralls with a discreet Loyal Sector Guard insignia on the shoulder. He has an autopistol on his hip; one of the few carried inside the town. Nobody seems to care about this, or even to notice.

The unloading is a long and complex task, and then the crates must be opened and the equipment checked. Many of the townspeople help out before returning to whatever they were doing. Technical tasks are carried out by Bob and Khuuli for the most part. The locals are pleased about the shipment of power generation gear, but the grav plates are what really delight them. Asking anyone about them gets much the same

response: "they're for a project Bob and Ted dreamed up. It's our ticket to prosperity..." and a suggestion that Bob and Ted can explain better than anyone else.

ASKING ABOUT THE EQUIPMENT

Bob or Ted (or Alex, if he's asked) will be delighted to explain what all this gear is for. Much of it is for a power generation project at a dam some distance up the Siedel River. The grav gear is for a prototype project; a gravitic plow. This device will revolutionize agriculture on low-tech worlds, the inventors claim.

The plow is pretty standard; it can be drawn by animals or mounted on a light vehicle. Grav plates take the weight of the plow but more importantly the ground ahead of the plowshare is broken up by a focused gravitic field, allowing the blade to pass through the broken soil and turn it over. This reduces resistance and therefore the amount of effort needed to drag the plow through the soil, meaning that a lighter animal or a small vehicle like a quad or Bob's pickup truck can plow a field faster than a traditional tractor-drawn plow.

The project is still very much in the experimental stage but it seems promising. It had better pay off, since the town has sunk a lot of money into the equipment that just arrived...

ASKING ABOUT THE LSG

If anyone is asked about the presence of Loyal Sector Guard personnel in town, the first reaction is puzzlement, then a wry smile. Most of the townsfolk have completely forgotten that the LSG people are not locals. The answer is always much the same: there are about a dozen of them; they arrived over six months ago and have really helped out with technical matters and some plain old hard work. They hydroelectric power project, upgrading the existing obsolete system with a modern high-output one, is part-funded by the LSG. Why they'd do that doesn't matter to the locals. After years of being ignored by central government they are finally getting some help and they're glad of it. The LSG folks have been nothing but good for the town and are considered entirely trustworthy. Most of them have close friends in town; some closer than others.

WHEN THE UNLOADING IS FINISHED

The characters are contracted to help set up the equipment they have brought. Their employer probably neglected to mention that much of it needs to be set up at a dam 35km upriver from the town, but that's not a problem. The locals will be doing that over the next few weeks. Alex does suggest that the characters come up to the dam in the morning, so they can tell their employer they've fulfilled the contract properly. Besides, he'd like to show them the river valley and just why Onslar Rapids is the best town on Irdashdis.

SCENE 2: FOR THE FARMER AND THE FACTORY, AND ALL OF YOU AND ME

(KEY SCENE)

The following morning, Alex neglects his vital duties as a barrel-maker, a cog in the vast machine that is the town's

distilling industry, in order to accompany the characters up to the dam. If anyone wants to do something else, they are welcome to stay in town and do it.

Alex, Bob and Khuuli will accompany the characters, driving up the valley in a couple of pickups and a small truck loaded with supplies for the dam workers. Alex makes sure everyone has a good filter mask, just in case of contamination carried in on a wind from the coast. Khuuli has a sidearm strapped on, and just before leaving Maria comes out of the tavern with an armload of shotguns, casually tossing one to the driver of each vehicle. Bob immediately hands his to the nearest person.

There should be no need for the guns, Alex says, but the occasional rogue Steakhamster or particularly ambitious Ziprip will try to kill and eat a passing pickup. The noise of a gunshot will usually deter them, but if not each weapon has 6 rounds in the magazine and there should be some spare ammunition in the glove compartment.

If anyone checks, there are 2d6 loose shotgun rounds in the glove box or strewn about the cab. Clearly, there is no major threat or these people would be a lot less casual about their self-defense measures.

The little motorcade clears the gate and winds out of town along a small and poorly-maintained road that parallels the river. True to the town's name, the Siedel runs over a set of rapids just downriver of town, but upriver it is deeper and calmer. There are five distilleries along the river banks, each with its own perimeter fence and, in one case, a moat created by diverting part of the river. Locals (including Khuuli) proudly explain that the fresh mountain water from the river is what makes Onslar Single Malt the very special drink that it is.

Along the way, the motorcade passes fenced-in farms and open plains with small herds of Grazers wandering about. At one point, one of the dumb beasts wanders into the roadway and stands there, nudging a loose section of the surface with its snout. It is apparently considering eating the road! The lone Steakhamster is no threat but will not move. Alex jumps down from his cab and runs over, shouting and waving his arms. When that fails, he begins kicking the Grazer's hindquarters vigorously. It ambles off at this point to gnaw hopefully on a roadside marker post.

Finally, the road climbs up a valley and comes out at a small and obviously rather old dam. There are about 50 people here, living in prefabricated huts and clearly working on the structure of the dam as well as the contents of the generating house. There is no fence around the compound, but a couple of workers have weapons ready to chase off any animals that get too close.

The new arrivals are greeted with a round of waves, handshakes and the odd hug. Observant characters will note LSG insignia on some of the workers' coveralls, though there is no apparent distinction between offworlders and locals.

Anne (Major Orvatsenn) is up here, and stops work to grab a cup of coffee with the new arrivals and, not coincidentally, Bob. She explains to the characters that the dam provides agricultural and drinking water to the town and also electrical power. In truth, though the distilleries claim they take their water from the river, it is piped from the reservoir behind the dam.

The existing generating equipment is not only unreliable,

it is also inadequate for the future needs of the town, which plans to expand its industrial base a little and begin marketing 'those gizmos' Bob and Ted have come up with. It's a bold plan, Anne says, but the skills of her team and the locals' ingenuity might be enough to pull it off.

Anne does not go to work armed, though there is an LSG trooper on guard somewhere. She will happily answer questions about the LSG, but can supply little more information than anyone else – it is the policy of the Guard to help those who help themselves. These people are undertaking a bold endeavor and the Guard is proud to be able to help. That's all there is to it.

If the characters choose to look over the dam, engineers among them will realize that it is truly in a bad way. The generating gear is very old and the dam itself is not in the best condition. It should have been overhauled many years ago.

There is not that much more to learn here, but if the characters are inclined to put in some work they will find this is a good way to make friends among the locals.

Eventually, the motorcade returns to town.

SCENE 3: FIELD TEST (KEY SCENE)

Back in town, any characters nearby are alerted that something is going on by shouts and cheers. A number of young people (aged 10-16) are fiddling with a prototype gravitic plow under Ted's laid-back guidance, and they have managed to get it to work!

Nearby locals begin to congregate as the kids begin an impromptu field test on a handy stretch of flower bed. With four laughing teenagers hauling on it, the plow scrapes slowly through the earth, upending geraniums and making quite a mess. Nobody cares about that, though. The gadget seems to be working; the ground ahead of the blade is visibly breaking up and a quick test with the grav plates off indicates that it is much easier to get the plow through the ground with the grav unit turned on.

There is a real atmosphere of hope and achievement among the townsfolk as the test is repeated. Characters are beckoned urgently over to verify the result and pretty soon bottles are being passed around to toast the junior engineers. Of course, this is the moment when the plow packs up, but a few moments' fiddling by a character with Gravitics or Electronics skills can get it going again.

The concept has been proven, if nothing else. It is obvious that the device is a long way from becoming marketable or even reaching the working-prototype stage, but finally all the invested time and money has resulted in something concrete. The townsfolk are delighted, and naturally the characters are included in the general back-slapping. After all, they drove all the way from Liberty Port with the new components to build the demonstration model currently ripping up someone's flower bed...

There is much excited talk for the rest of the day, about getting some working prototypes set up and maybe filing a patent with the Imperium. Long-term plans to build a small electronics factory and begin production suddenly seem achievable at last. It is no surprise that little work gets done by anyone for the rest of the day.

SCENE 4: MEAT AND POTATOES FOR DINNER... AGAIN! (KEY SCENE)

The characters will find themselves invited to a celebration dinner at the Healey Tavern. The invite will likely come from Bob, but Alex or Ted may extend it; all three will be there along with Anne, who drives down from the dam specially. The atmosphere is euphoric, with people talking about their hopes and dreams for the town and asking Ted for 'just one more' demonstration of the prototype, which by now has been virtually worked to death.

Dinner is typical fare for Onslar Rapids; Steakhamster meat and potatoes with a grain-based scone and local vegetables. It is healthy food, and indeed in other places the steak would command a high price. But in Onslar Rapids this is pretty much the diet everyone lives on, and even steak can become boring after a while.

The meal is a chance for characters to interact with the locals and chat, perhaps getting to know them a little better. Initial impressions may not have been good in some cases, but after spending some time with these people the characters will (hopefully) concede that they are decent, hardworking people. There seems to be nothing sinister about the LSG presence. They, too, seem to be dedicated and hardworking, earnest people trying to make things better. Whatever the political goals of the organization, the detachment at Onslar Rapids is no gang of jackbooted thugs, nor is it a social club for well-off people who couldn't get into the Navy...

Dinner goes on for some time, with plenty of local spirits and liqueurs to help it down. The mood turns from excited to mellow, and people begin to open up to one another.

And then amid the hazy doze of an evening among friends, Alex glances at his comm., frowns, and turns suddenly serious. One look at his expression makes the characters feel like the temperature has dropped several degrees. Indeed, it may have. For Alex has just received warning from the world's weather-monitoring satellites. He stands up and makes his excuses, saying only:

"Storm's coming. A bad one."

Referee's Information: Characters who have partaken liberally of the local distillates will suffer from impaired judgment and dexterity in the coming Acts. The Referee must decide what level of penalty is appropriate.

On the plus side, drunken characters are less prone to suffer from pain and cold, and can sustain shocks better than their sober companions. This is not necessarily a good thing...

The effects of alcohol will dissipate as the adventure unfolds, but characters who have been drinking heavily will be at something of a disadvantage whenever they need to concentrate or do anything involving fine motor control. Like most of the things they are going to have to do...

ACT 4: THE STORM

Irdashdis' unpredictable weather decides to cut loose.

SCENE 1: GATHERING CLOUDS (KEY SCENE)

Outside the Tavern, it is growing dark early. Normally the stars are bright and clear (unless the world's rotation makes its night-side face the Lesser Rift), but tonight there are no stars, only angry black clouds laden with moisture. The temperature is falling fast, and it is obvious to everyone with even a sketchy knowledge of local conditions that a Hail Dump is likely in the next hour or two.

People are rushing around making sure everything fragile is under cover and that children and live stock are all accounted for. Meanwhile, Alex is trying to organize a work party. The herds, he says, will be savaged by a Hail Dump, and Steakhamsters are often too stupid or too slow to reach cover in time. He needs to get a few people together, with vehicles, and make a hurried roundup. There are shelters ready if the herds can be driven into them, but the farmers alone are too few to complete it in time.

If anyone volunteers, Alex is (drunkenly) delighted and will hug them or shake their hand while thanking them on behalf of the town. He does ensure that everyone has a mask and a hard hat, and that there is a gun in each vehicle. While the roundup party is being assembled, Alex goes off to one side and speaks into his comm. He thinks he is being quiet and conspiratorial, but he is inebriated and in fact ends up half-shouting his message. He is of course speaking to the people up at the dam, advising them to board their vehicles and head into town as their prefab shelters may not survive the onslaught that he fears is coming.

Anne is sending a similar message, rather more discreetly, and when it becomes apparent that there are not enough vehicles to evacuate everyone, she grabs a few friends and piles into a mob of pickups and light trucks to carry out a rescue. As Anne's party head off up the valley, Alex leads his into the open to round up the herds.

SCENE 2: THE ROUNDUP

Rounding up Steakhamsters is a frustrating business at the best of times. The stupid beasts will ignore trivialities like honking horns and flashing lights, but if they can be got moving they will carry on for some distance (usually in the wrong direction) for quite a while before needing to be nudged again. On a tight timeframe like the one that currently exists, herding is an exercise in screaming frustration. However, with a great deal of determination it is possible to get the herds moving in the right direction.

Getting any particular beast moving can be done in several ways. Standard techniques include slapping it across the nose or beating it about the head with a stick (this causes the Steakhamster to turn roughly 180 degrees and amble away), kicking it repeatedly in the behind (which drives it forwards) or making a loud noise such as a gunshot behind it. Driving a vehicle into the beast at low speed will usually also work, though sometimes the stubborn creatures will just push right back or climb over the top causing considerable damage

in the process.

The roundup is a confused affair, carried out in gathering darkness and increasing cold. There are vehicles all over the place, people running everywhere, and Steakhamsters ambling bemusedly about or trying to nibble on vehicle tires. Every now and then someone has to dodge rapidly as a Grazer takes a nip at him or her.

Various events take place during the roundup, some of which are serious and some rather bizarre:

- A pickup suffers a burst tire as a Steakhamster gnaws on it.
- A couple of Grazers are spooked and gallop off into the night. One collides with a pickup at a bad angle and overturns it. The crew are injured and have to be taken back to town aboard a different vehicle.
- A very drunken Ted sits on the front of a pickup, using a makeshift whip to chivvy the nearest beasts along as his driver edges close to them. Close inspection shows that Ted is using a (blunt, practice) fencing foil.
- Another vehicle bogs down and cannot be freed.
- One of the locals performs his party piece, scrambling onto a Steakhamster's back and trying to guide it. The beast scarcely notices.
- As the temperature drops the Grazers finally become frightened at the prospect, squealing in fear and milling about, trying to hide under one another and generally being particularly difficult to handle. If they can be gotten into sight of shelter they will trundle in and make themselves comfortable. The Grazers no longer have to be corralled – they know what is coming and have no desire to be out in it.

The roundup is a difficult business, and several Grazers have to be abandoned as they wander off into the gathering darkness. However, the majority are eventually chivvied into shelter and the group heads back towards the town. Occasional blasts of hail slam down, giving a foretaste of what is to come.

SCENE 3: HALFWAY TO SAFETY (KEY SCENE)

As the roundup team head back, and urgent com signal comes in. One of the trucks that went up to the dam is in trouble. It is loaded with workers headed into town for safety and has crashed during a sudden hail spate. Another vehicle is standing by to help with the injured, but there is not enough room to load everyone aboard and besides, a couple of the workers will need proper medical attention before they can be moved.

There seems to be only one option – load the injured onto the working vehicle and run for town while someone else comes out to pick up the rest. This is not a great solution, and Alex knows it, even if nobody else realizes. If the storm breaks while the workers are out in the open, their survival is dubious, and the seriously wounded will almost certainly not make it. Knowing what is expected of him, Alex turns his pickup up the valley to do what he can and instructs everyone else to make for safety.

The characters have a difficult choice here. Nobody would

fault them for seeking cover, nor expect them to head into the storm to aid a bunch of strangers. But they are close enough to reach the stranded vehicle, and maybe the people of Onslar Rapids aren't such strangers after all.

If the characters decide to play it safe, go to Act 5. If they wish to affect a rescue, proceed to Scene 4 of this Act.

Referee's Information: Some or all of the characters may be in town rather than helping with the roundup. A rescue could just as easily be launched from there. See under Reaching The Workers, below, for how this affects drive times.

SCENE 4: RACING THE STORM (KEY SCENE)

From here, this act is a race between the rescuers and the stormfront slashing down the valley. The characters will have to reach the stranded workers, load them into vehicles, and run for the town before the storm destroys their vehicle. The heavy trucks used to drive from Liberty Port might be able to survive the storm, but it would probably take 20-30 minutes to reach the town cross-country, and the trucks are slow on the narrow valley roads. Nobody in town could drive the trucks since their security system is keyed to the characters' biometrics.

If a character is in town and wishes to use a truck, they may do so. Add 50% to the time taken to cover each segment of the journey and note the Effects of the Storm on a truck rather than a pickup (see below).

REACHING THE WORKERS

The journey to the rescue point can be divided into four segments. How long each takes depends upon how recklessly the characters wish to drive. Note that it will take 15+3d6 (18-33) minutes to get to the town to get a truck. Reaching the point where the characters would have joined the valley road takes another 3d6+6 (9-24) minutes.

Whenever a driving roll is required, passing it means that there is no mishap. An excellent success (T20: beating the roll by 10 or more, CT: rolling 4 or more higher than required) allows the characters to shave 10% off the required time (or a minimum of 1 minute). Failing the drive test means that there has been a mishap. See below for mishap results.

Difficulty of a driving roll is specified in the text. This will be Routine, Tricky, Hard or Insane. The mechanics for such checks are as follows:

T20: Driving Check Difficulty

Routine:	DC10 Driving Check
Tricky:	DC15 Driving Check
Hard:	DC20 Driving Check
Insane:	DC25 Driving Check
Ludicrous:	DC30 Driving Check
Ultimate:	DC35 Driving Check

CT: Driving Check Difficulty

Routine:	Roll 7+, DM Driving Skill; +2 if Dex 9+
Tricky:	Roll 9+, DM Driving Skill; +2 if Dex 9+
Hard:	Roll 11+, DM Driving Skill; +2 if Dex 9+
Insane:	Roll 13+, DM Driving Skill; +2 if Dex 9+
Ludicrous:	Roll 15+, DM Driving Skill; +2 if Dex 9+
Ultimate:	Roll 17+, DM Driving Skill; +2 if Dex 9+

Mishap Table

1d6	Result
0-	A hairy moment, but the vehicle is under control again
1-2	A slight skid or jolt. One occupant suffers damage (T20: 2d6 Stamina; CT: 1d damage)
3	A crunching impact. Each occupant has a 50% of damage as per 1-2, above.
4	Loss of control. Make another Hard driving check immediately. If it is made, apply result 3. If failed, apply result 3 and roll again with +1 on the dice. If result 4 comes up again, apply damage and keep rolling (and adding 1 cumulatively) each time until a different result is generated or everyone aboard the vehicle is killed.
5	A wild slide results in a collision. Apply result 3, plus the vehicle takes 1 point of structural damage.
6	As 5, but vehicle takes 1d6 points of damage.
7	Disastrous slide leading to a collision. Everybody aboard takes damage (T20: 23d6 Stamina; CT: 2d damage) and the vehicle bursts a tire. It can still be driven but all mishap rolls are at +1 and each segment takes 10% longer per tire out (max of 4)
8+	The vehicle careens out of control and crashes. It will roll unless the driver makes an immediate Hard driving check. If the vehicle rolls, apply results 7 and 6. If it does not, apply result 7 only. If their vehicle can still be driven, the characters can continue. Note that righting the vehicle requires at least 2 people if it is on its side and 4 if on the roof. It will take 3d6 (2D) minutes to right a rolled vehicle.

BEING OUT IN THE STORM

An unprotected character will take severe damage if caught out in the Hail Dump.

T20: A character takes 3d6 Stamina damage per minute of exposure. This is reduced to 2d6 if the character has a hard hat OR good body armor such as Cloth or a Flak Jacket. If the character has both, damage is 1d6 per minute.

CT: A character will take 2D damage per minute. Hard hat or body armor reduces this to 1D, and wearing both brings it down to 1-3 points (1/2D).

Treat improvised measures such as hiding under a tarpaulin or small bush as having body armor, and partial shelter (truck wreckage, overhanging rock) as helmet and body armor.

Vehicles are also damaged by the storm at a rate of 1 point per minute of exposure. Treat a pickup truck as being able to take 20 points of storm or collision damage. As this is eroded (by collisions, mishaps or a Hail Dump), the vehicle is gradually smashed to bits. Windows are shattered, bodywork hammered to wreckage, and finally the vehicle will become undrivable. A vehicle that has taken half its damage capability ceases to fully protect the occupants, who now take damage as if they had helmet and body armor. When full damage is taken, the vehicle is an immobile wreck but can still act as partial shelter.

The large truck, if available, can take 30 points of damage and only takes a point of storm damage every 3 minutes.

Referee's Information: The characters should not be told

exactly what their vehicle can withstand in game mechanic terms, but description of the increasingly bad state of the bodywork can be used to give a hint.

1. Reaching The Valley Road

Tearing across country in the wake of Alex' pickup, the characters are bumped and jostled even at a moderate pace. Pushing it turns the ride into something akin to being in a cocktail shaker.

Speed	Effect
Safe	Journey takes 6d6 (6D) minutes. No chance of mishap.
Fast:	Journey takes 5d6 (5D) minutes. Routine driving check to avoid mishap. If failed, mishap roll at -1 on the die.
Reckless	Journey takes 4d6 (4D) minutes. Tricky driving check to avoid mishap.
Suicidal	Journey takes 3d6 (3D) minutes. Routine driving check to avoid mishap. If failed, mishap roll at +1 on the die.

2. The Low Slopes

The early stages of the climb are long and easy, with many sweeping bends. Even at speed, in the dark, this stage is not too bad.

Speed	Effect
Safe	Journey takes 6d6 (6D) minutes. No chance of mishap.
Fast:	Journey takes 5d6 (5D) minutes. No chance of mishap.
Reckless:	Journey takes 4d6 (4D) minutes. Routine driving check to avoid mishap. If failed, mishap roll at -1 on the die.
Suicidal:	Journey takes 3d6 (3D) minutes. Tricky driving check to avoid mishap.

3. The Gorge

The most dangerous part of the journey requires the characters to negotiate a series of tight curves on an uneven road surface above a steep river gorge.

Speed	Effect
Safe	Journey takes 10d6 (10D) minutes. No chance of mishap.
Fast	Journey takes 8d6 (8D) minutes. Tricky Drive check to avoid mishap
Reckless	Journey takes 6d6 (6D) minutes. Hard driving check to avoid mishap. If failed, mishap roll at +1 on the die.
Suicidal	Journey takes 5d6 (5D) minutes. Insane driving check to avoid mishap. If failed, mishap roll at +3 on the die.

4. The Approach

Clearing the gorge, the characters see vehicle lights ahead. Visibility of not good and the road is very uneven, but the sight of waving workers, desperate for rescue, may prompt the characters to take grave risks.

Speed	Effect
Safe	Journey takes 4d6 (4D) minutes. No chance of mishap.
Fast	Journey takes 3d6 (3D) minutes. Routine Drive check to avoid mishap. If failed, mishap roll at -1 on the die.
Reckless	Journey takes 2d6 (2D) minutes. Tricky driving check to avoid mishap.
Suicidal	Journey takes 1d6 (1D) minutes. Hard driving check to avoid mishap. If failed, mishap roll at +1 on the die.

REACHING THE WRECK

The driver of the truck has done a good job of wrecking it. She was pushing hard and apparently clipped a rock on the inside of a curve, sending the truck skidding wildly across the road towards the steep slope down to the river. The banks are not so steep here as in the gorge, but the fall would have killed everyone aboard. To save her crew, the driver (a young LSG recruit) deliberately guided the truck into a tree, smashing the cab and killing her co-driver instantly. The driver is still trapped in the cab with a suspected neck injury. Several workers are trying to cut her free with improvised tools.

The others injured in the crash were not so badly hurt and have been evacuated by the second truck.

With the storm closing in, the characters are going to have to work fast to free the critically injured LSG driver, immobilize her spine, and get moving again. There may be an additional problem, too, if Alex has not made it.

Alex

Alex has driven recklessly all the way up the valley. Assuming he makes it to the wreck site with his vehicle intact, he makes the following times:

Stage 1:	9 minutes (Alex has a slight headstart on the characters)
Stage 2:	16 minutes
Stage 3:	21 minutes
Stage 4:	4 minutes
Total Time:	50 minutes

It is possible that the characters have passed Alex on the way, depending upon what sort of time they made. He may not have arrived at all, having managed to wreck his vehicle somewhere along the way. Roll 1d6:

1d6	Situation
1	Alex crashed somewhere along the way and needs rescuing
3-3	Alex arrives, but his pickup is in a terrible state. It is drivable despite the smashed windows and bent bodywork, but the fragments of vegetation caught in the chassis do not fill anyone with confidence.
5-5	Alex arrives with a slightly dented vehicle. He is a bit wild-eyed from adrenaline but has managed the trip remarkably well.
6	Alex is calm and assured, if a little too pleased with himself. His vehicle is in perfect condition.

Getting Out Ahead of the Storm

The main front of the storm will reach the stranded workers 105 minutes after the characters set off on their rescue mission. They will be running ahead of it down the valley, which may provide the extra time they need to reach the town... or it might not. The characters will know when the storm front is 'less than 15 minutes away' and 'right on top of us' (i.e. within 5 minutes of arrival) by the feeling of the air. However, until they feel the sharp drop in temperature they will not really know when the storm is due to arrive. At any time that the stormfront is 30 minutes away or less, there will be intermittent falls of sleet and some light hail. Most of these last just a few seconds, but they will make driving more hazardous.

If the rescue party is to reach the town ahead of the storm, they will have to get moving. First priority is to cut the driver free from the truck cab. Each attempt takes 1d6 (1D) minutes, at the end of which a character with Mechanical or T/Mechanical skill can make a roll. (CT: roll 9+ to free the driver, DM Mechanical Skill, DM+ 1 if STR 9+, T20: DC20 T/Mechanical roll. Up to 2 other people can assist with this task as per the usual teamwork rules.)

There is a 1 in 3 chance that the driver will suffer a cardiac arrest or hemorrhage as she is freed, requiring prompt medical treatment if she is to survive. In any case, stabilizing and immobilizing her will take 1d6 (1D) minutes, after which everyone must be loaded into the vehicle(s). This might be very overcrowded. The casualty (and anyone tending her) will have to ride in the pickup bed and will be essentially unprotected against the Hail Dump when it arrives.

Other characters in the bed could provide body cover for the casualty and the medic, in which case they are treated as being in partial cover, or could hold a tarpaulin over them for a similar level of protection. Either way, those characters will be exposed to the storm and will suffer terribly.

The best bet is just to run for town and hope for the best.

And so the rescue team sets off ahead of the stormfront, racing for safety down the narrow valley road. The stages of the journey are the same as the trip up, but in reverse order. In addition, it takes the storm 2d6 (2D) minutes to cover each segment of the journey. It might just be possible to get to town ahead of the Hail Dump.

Driving in The Storm

Once the storm front is within 30 minutes, the sudden hail and sleet squalls make all Driving checks one level more difficult (e.g. Hard becomes Insane) and adds 1 to all Mishap rolls. Once the storm has struck, the Hail Dump begins damaging the vehicles and everyone in them. Driving checks become two levels harder than normal. The slippery conditions and bad visibility add +3 to all Mishap rolls. It will be obvious that the vehicles will not survive for long, and extreme measures may become necessary.

Alex

Alex drives recklessly all the way home, taking stupid risks. If the stormfront catches him up and the Hail Dump begins, he struggles on for a few moments then skids the pickup to a halt against a steep slope or some vegetation, hoping to create an improvised shelter for his passengers.

Alex is a good and gutsy driver, but he will likely crash his pickup at some point as a result of trying too hard. If so, he and any survivors will attempt to take what shelter they can and ride out the storm. The Referee must decide whether Alex and his party survive the night. Alex is not essential to the rest of the adventure, since it is assumed that he is laid up with injuries leaving a leadership gap that must be filled. If the Referee feels it is appropriate that Alex and his people do not make it home, so be it. A slight tweak may be necessary in the last act, but nothing major.

RUNNING FOR HOME

With the wind rising and sleet falling, the characters turn for home. As before, they must decide how hard to push their vehicles, given that conditions are growing worse by the moment.

1. Departing the Wreck site

This is the shortest and easiest part of the run. However, note the penalties listed above if the weather has closed in.

Speed	Effect
Safe	Journey takes 4d6 (4D) minutes. No chance of mishap.
Fast	Journey takes 3d6 (3D) minutes. Routine Drive check to avoid mishap. If failed, mishap roll at -1 on the die.
Reckless	Journey takes 2d6 (2D) minutes. Tricky driving check to avoid mishap.
Suicidal	Journey takes 1d6 (1D) minutes. Hard driving check to avoid mishap. If failed, mishap roll at +1 on the die.

2. The Gorge

The most dangerous part of the journey requires the characters to negotiate a series of tight curves on an uneven road surface above a steep river gorge all over again; but this time going downhill. Just to make things worse, the dropping temperature has resulted in ice forming on the road. All Drive checks are one level harder and mishaps are at +2 on the die. The characters should not have any warning about this.

Speed	Effect
Safe	Journey takes 10d6 (10D) minutes. Tricky Drive check to avoid mishap
Fast	Journey takes 8d6 (8D) minutes. Hard driving check to avoid mishap.
Reckless	Journey takes 6d6 (6D) minutes. Insane driving check to avoid mishap.
Suicidal	Journey takes 5d6 (5D) minutes. Ludicrous driving check to avoid mishap.

3. The Low Slopes

Clearing the gorge, the characters begin their final run for home. The road has many sweeping bends but is no more dangerous than on the way up, unless the characters have been caught by the storm.

Speed	Effect
Safe	Journey takes 6d6 (6D) minutes. No chance of

mishap.

Fast	Journey takes 5d6 (5D) minutes. No chance of mishap.
Reckless	Journey takes 4d6 (4D) minutes. Routine driving check to avoid mishap. If failed, mishap roll at -1 on the die.
Suicidal	Journey takes 3d6 (3D) minutes. Tricky driving check to avoid mishap.

4. The Home Stretch

The characters can see the lights of the town ahead. They are not far from home now. However, the storm front billows out from the valley and sweeps down on the characters. Hail begins hammering on the vehicles and it is obvious that they will be smashed to pieces unless they find shelter – and fast.

It is time for desperate measures. Alex (if he is still on the road) swerves off into a field and crashes his pickup right into a stand of low trees. The characters see him and his passengers groggily stumbling from the wrecked pickup and huddling in its lee as the stormfront slashes over them.

The characters need shelter. There are several options available, but the Referee should permit virtually any suitably desperate and inventive ploy to succeed. Possible options may include:

- Crash into the riverbed and hide under a bridge
- Find a stand of trees like Alex did
- Overturn the pickup and use its solid chassis as a shelter

There is another option, however. Ahead is a herd shelter occupied by a squealing, frightened heap of Steakhamsters. There will be room for the characters to jam themselves and their passengers in among the herd beasts and spend the night in the smelly, furry heap. There is a real chance of being squashed or clawed by a Grazer trying to burrow its way deeper into the pile for warmth. There is also the chance that one of the stupid beasts may try to eat a character. But equally, these are gentle herd creatures that get along well with people. The characters may find themselves nuzzled affectionately or even nudged into a warm gap in the heap opened by a motherly Grazer.

The night passes in icy misery or smelly warmth, depending upon what the characters did in order to survive. Towards dawn, the characters stumble out to greet a party from the town. It is still cold, and intermittent sleet still falls.

But compared to last night, it is a balmy summer's day.

The crisis is over and the work of reconstruction can begin. Or so everyone thinks.

ACT 5: TIGHTEN YOUR HELMET STRAPS

After the storm passes, the cleanup begins. And then the real crisis hits.

SCENE 1: SURVEYING THE WRECKAGE

(KEY SCENE)

The morning after the storm, the area is a mess. There is structural damage to some buildings, a string of power outages, a handful of serious injuries and other problems to deal with. Nevertheless, parties are sent out to search for anyone who did not make it into town last night, and everyone sets to fixing the damage with a determination that overcomes their dismay.

As the characters return from their night in the fields, they get a first-hand look at the devastation wrought by the storm. The ground is chewed up in places and dead livestock lie around here and there in shelter that proved to be inadequate. There are some human casualties too, but thankfully very few.

With the help of the LSG personnel, work begins on the essentials such as restoring power to the town. There are breaks in the distribution system and the step-down station has been damaged, but at least the main power line from the dam is intact. It was built to withstand the worst Irdashdis could hurl at it, and it seems to have done so.

However, it seems prudent to check the line, so a party heads out upriver to make sure there is no damage further up the line.

SCENE 2: LIFE GOES ON... SORT OF

(KEY SCENE)

That first morning after the storm is pretty confused. Alex and his people are brought in suffering from various injuries and hypothermia. They are quickly rushed into the town's health center for treatment. It is obvious that Alex is out of the picture right now, which is a real shame since his leadership would be useful to the town.

A power vacuum exists, and various people step forward to fill it. All of them have strong ideas – and in many cases they are good ideas too. But by midday the divided efforts of the townsfolk begin to resemble a cat-herding exercise. Everyone has a claim on spares and tools, and a very real need for them. Technical people are pulled from one project and assigned to another before they can achieve anything.

Gradually, things shake themselves out and three distinct groups coalesce. An overview of each, with the main plus and minus factors associated with their viewpoint, follows:

THE LSG FACTION

Anne has experience of colonial disasters and the backing of her LSG personnel, plus Bob and some of the locals. She also commands the direct obedience of the LSG technicians. Anne wants to put an end to the headless running-around going on and tries to assume command of the situation. This upsets some of the townsfolk, who feel that however welcome

and well respected Anne has become, she is an offworlder and should be taking orders from a local. Were Bob to assume control, or Alex (if he were only well enough), then they would be happy to listen to Anne's advice. But putting her in charge of the town is something many locals have reservations about.

Anne's plan is cautious and sensible. She wants an audit of resources and personnel, a survey of damage and a clear set of priorities. She wants to start with securing the essentials of survival such as power and water supplies, then move on to preserving the lives of individuals (this is a typical 'colonial disaster' approach – the survival of the community has to take precedence over the well-being of individuals) and finally lesser priorities such as preventing economic damage and 'comfort' repairs.

For: This plan makes efficient use of scarce resources and ensures that work is undertaken on a minimum-risk basis.

Against: Anne is perhaps TOO cautious. More importantly, her plan seems a bit cold-blooded when there are possibly people needing help out in isolated farmhouses. In addition, there is the very valid point that without the farms and the distilleries, the community will die an economic death. Anne's plan assigns them a low priority, which may mean they receive help too late.

THE LOCAL LEADERS' FACTION

A coalition of influential local figures including Maria and Dan, plus the owners of the five distilleries and most of the farmers (i.e. the main economic pillars of the community) have a different set of properties. They demand that all resources be assigned to saving the lifeblood of the town – the businesses that support it – as soon as everyone has been saved. This means sending out all the vehicles at once to reach remote farmhouses that have gone out of touch. The faction cannot decide what needs to be done first, and want to do everything at once.

For: There may be people needing help right now. Audits of resources and such like will waste time that those people may not have. Besides, without the businesses there IS no Onslar Rapids. Starting work now and refining the effort as time passes may salvage more of the town's industry. And it places the leadership of the effort in the hands of locals, who are the people who have to live with the results, after all.

Against: This is a confused and very inefficient approach. Vital tasks may fail and people be put in danger by poorly directed efforts.

THE NAYSAYERS AND THE HUMANITARIANS

A number of people do not fall into either Anne's or Maria's camp. Most are undecided, shocked or confused and seeking leadership. But some coalesce into a fairly solid group that wants something done immediately but does not like either approach on offer. At first their contribution is random and contradictory, consisting mainly of loud disagreement with ideas that are put forward by others.

After a time, a third faction develops out of the mass of Naysayers. These are the 'Humanitarians'. Their viewpoint is based around protecting the people of the town. After all, while the businesses of the town are its lifeblood, most of the benefits of those businesses go to a small group of people. The

resources spent on restring power to the Onsler Whitewater Distillery (the largest of the five), for example, could be spent on checking over houses that people have to sleep in. How many of them have suffered structural damage and are unsafe to enter? How many have no power?

There are still a lot of Naysayers and undecided individuals too. They generally side with the Humanitarians in an argument, but have little of any use to add.

The chief proponent of the humanitarians is Ted, who quietly (if repeatedly) points out that the town is nothing more than its people, and that their safety (not comfort, though) must come first, before economic or efficiency concerns.

For: Many homes are indeed unsafe or unpowered, and resources spent on making the town livable will benefit everyone.

Against: Fixing up the town, even just to a safe-livable level, will be a long task and will take up a lot of resources. Meanwhile, the town's economy will suffer as herd beasts wander off and the distilleries perhaps suffer damage to their equipment. There may be problems as yet unseen that a cautious survey might uncover, and which may become serious while effort is being dispersed in this manner. Also, there is the fact that many of the humanitarians are acting from selfish motives. They are more interested in seeing their own homes powered and heated than in saving the community as a whole.

NO CONSENSUS

The arguments result in no consensus. Anne's suggestion of holding a town meeting to decide what is to be done is not acceptable to the other two factions, who want to get moving NOW, nor to the majority of the Naysayers, who want the whole problem to go away without them having to think or deal with anything difficult.

Thus each faction gathers what resources it can and gets on with its own priorities. Personnel, including the Travellers, are approached to join this or that faction, or by Naysayers wanting to know why they haven't sorted it all out yet. Some equipment is 'poached' by rival groups, though this only happens to unattended gear. There may be some major differences of opinion between the various groups, even some shouting and arm-waving, but they are friends and neighbors. Everyone understands that while the other factions may be complete idiots, everyone is on the same side and doing their best.

And so the confused and slipshod reconstruction effort goes on for the rest of the day. Workers are brought food and hot coffee by those not participating in the various tasks. Power is restored to some of the houses; reports come in of isolated farmers safe and sound but with smashed antennae; the damage to the Whitewater distillery's roof is found to be serious but not critical.

Things are looking a little better as night draws in. And then...

SCENE 3: A WARNING (KEY SCENE)

The team sent up to the dam to check on the main power line has reported several areas damaged and in need of repair but nothing serious. Suddenly, that changes. The technicians

report that they have reached the dam and there is a problem. A serious one.

The reservoir level is very high, and rising. Perhaps the Hail Dump has caused a section of glacier further up the valley to break loose and slide into the river, melting and creating a sudden huge inflow. Or maybe there was just a lot of water coming out of the sky last night. Whatever the cause, the dam is endangered. Its internal strain gauges are already off the scale, and the technicians are concerned that it might rupture. They might be able to relieve the pressure by opening the sluice gates wide, but that will cause the level of the river to rise near the town...

The news spreads like wildfire, and everyone has an opinion about what to do. This of course means that nothing is done for a while. Then Anne announces to everyone nearby that since the technicians up there are under her command, she has assumed responsibility for the situation. She has ordered her people to open the flood gates. She understands the implications of this, but if the dam goes everyone in the valley will perish.

There's a disaster coming, Anne says. But they'll cope. And her people, she promises, will be in the breach along with their friends from Onsler Rapids.

There is a great deal of shouting and recrimination. Even Bob rounds on Anne. A couple of locals storm towards her but are halted by a pistol shot (into the air) from Kuuli, the LSG master-at-arms. Gradually everything calms a little, but yet again the town is split over what to do for the best. Some want to save what they can and head for higher ground. Some want to shore up last winter's flood defenses and battle it out with the elements. Some want to lynch Anne, but they are in the minority.

SCENE 4: ON THE BRINK OF ANNIHILATION (KEY SCENE)

The team at the dam remains there, monitoring it as best they can. The warning they will be able to give is somewhat limited, but it might save some lives. Besides, cynics might point out, the team is beside the dam and therefore not in the path of the river if it breaks through.

Meanwhile, Onsler Rapids prepares for its watery trial. The river is rising fast and night is falling. People struggle to shore up flood defenses that were not adequate last year to stop a mere seasonal flood. Farmers try to drive their herds to higher ground. A convoy of trucks begins to evacuate the injured and least able individuals (children and older folks, though many of the latter are too busy filling sandbags to leave).

A signal is received from First Landing; a disaster relief force is being assembled but will not be ready for some hours. There have been some individual offers of help, so perhaps some limited assistance might reach the town sooner. But for now, the locals are very much on their own.

Then a message comes in from the dam party – cracks have appeared. The dam is leaking. Within minutes, the message changes. The dam is beginning to break. The town is going to be swept under by a huge wave that will sweep down the valley. There seems to be nothing for it but to flee for high ground. The end can be only minutes away...

SCENE 5: A REPRIEVE FROM ON HIGH**(KEY SCENE)**

As everyone drops their tools and runs for the few remaining vehicles, knowing that there is no way to get everyone clear in time, what appears to be a shooting star streaks in from the heavens. It seems to break up into several fiery trails, one of which begins to climb away. The rest hurtle low over the town headed for the valley mouth. A general broadcast on the civilian and military distress channels blares from every personal com and every entertainment center in town:

“THIS IS SYSTEM DEFENSE BOAT *IRDASHDIS VIGILANCE* TO ANYONE ON THE GROUND IN THE VICINITY OF ONSLER RAPIDS. FIND COVER IMMEDIATELY. MISSILE DETONATION IMMINENT. REPEAT: THIS IS SYSTEM DEFENSE BOAT *IRDASHDIS VIGILANCE*...”

Seconds later, a cluster of plasma warhead anti-shiping missiles detonate along the valley side, bringing down huge sections of rock and earth. From the town, just a few km away, the explosion is bright as day. The ground trembles as a second salvo slams home, and a third. The SDB continues to empty her missile magazines into the valley side, hoping to create a natural dam of sorts.

Meanwhile, other ships are descending. A Subsidized Merchant hits the ground just outside the town fence, her bow ramp already dropping. Crewmembers rush out and wave the nearest locals aboard. A mob rushes for the ship, which bears the name *Outworld Conveyor* on her nose.

As the townsfolk scramble to board the ship, her crew shout out to anyone in earshot that they have sent off their boat to rescue the team at the dam. Other ships are dumping their cargo out at the port and lifting off to rescue everyone they can.

It is also pretty apparent that it will take a lot of ships to get everyone out. If the makeshift dam created by the SDB doesn't hold, there simple will not be enough time.

Orbital imaging shows that the water has been slowed by the dam, but not contained. The river is rising fast, but it might be possible to buy enough time to evacuate everyone by vehicle and space vessel. There is also just a chance that the town might be saved. But that will take more than merely preventing it from being totally flooded. It means protecting the distilleries and the electronics factory so that there is an economy here after the water has flooded. Otherwise, everyone in town will be ruined and forced to relocate as refugees.

SCENE 6: A CONSENSUS AT LAST (KEY SCENE)

While the majority of the population is content to scramble for a place in the evacuation ships, a hard core of individuals (formed mainly around the Humanitarian faction and the Local Leaders) decides to stay and fight for their homes. Support is weak at first. Then Anne adds that she and her LSG people (and anyone who will help them) will remain and help. She adds that: “We style ourselves Keepers of the Gate. We

pledge to stand with the people of Gateway Domain against whatever they may face. We will not betray that trust now. If the people of Onslar Rapids are determined to fight for their future, then the Guard fights with them!”

Some of the waverers rally to the call, and as the night goes on the weary townsfolk dig and shovel up a large earth berm to try to protect the town. The four upriver distilleries are abandoned, but the nearest (the Onslar Whitewater facility) is included in the defenses. It is back-breaking work carried out in rising water, with ships coming in every few minutes to carry another dozen or two locals to safety. The temptation to be on one of the ships out is overwhelming.

Perhaps the characters decide to get out of town while they can. Nobody would blame them if they did. But there are others here, struggling on against the rising odds; trying to preserve their future. Perhaps that is a cause worth fighting for?

ACT 6: KEEPERS OF THE GATE

As the river rises and the local wildlife goes berserk, the characters and their allies lead the fight for a whole town's survival.

SCENE 1: HOLDING THE LINE (KEY SCENE)

The night drags on. Water seeps through the berm and in places it is threatened with breaching. Frantic locals shore up the damage as best they can, driving vehicles into weak areas and burying them. The berm is stabilized. But by now two of the distilleries are under water and two more are badly flooded. The last is within the berm and secure, or so it seems.

And then the shout goes up. The distillery is on fire!

The town's main source of power (the dam) is long gone, but the emergency generators at the step-down station were sufficient to power a few essential buildings. It seems that the power cabling repairs were not so good as was previously thought; a fault has caused a fire in one of the distillery outbuildings. It is spreading fast.

The distillery has hundreds of barrels of highly flammable spirit stored in its warehouses. If they catch light, nothing can save the distillery, which in turn means that the town's economy is ruined. People are fighting the fire, but they are losing. The answer is fairly obvious, if not particularly palatable. There is a whole river just on the other side of the earth berm. Were the distillery to be flooded it would suffer considerable damage but probably survive (unlike the ones on lower ground which are now largely immersed and being smashed up by debris swept down the raging river).

Obviously, the berm must be breached to allow river water into the distillery. The breach must not be too big, but it must be made soon. Of course, the town will be flooded even more than it otherwise would be, and might be totally destroyed if the berm gives way entirely. In short, this is not a great solution, but it needs to be done.

It will take too long to breach the berm manually. However, Bob has an idea. There is a quantity of explosives stored in town for various engineering and agricultural uses. Just the right amount, in just the right place, would do the trick. It'd take a mathematical genius to calculate where to place the

charges, but fortunately the town has one. Ted.

Bob quickly suggests that he and Anne clear everyone out of the area while the Travellers find Ted and the explosives. Once they are ready the distillery can be evacuated and the characters can undo everyone's hard work by blowing a hole in the berm...

SCENE 2: GATHERING THE TOOLS (KEY SCENE)

Obtaining the explosives is fairly easy. It is a simple matter of a dash across town through ankle-deep water to reach the store. There are plenty of scared people around getting in the way and calling out for assistance, of course, but the characters cannot afford to be side-tracked. Unfortunately, that is going to be a problem.

The trucks used by the characters to reach the town are standing idle. They cannot be driven or even started by anyone not cleared by the security system, and the characters do not have the authority to alter the settings. A group of locals, mainly Naysayers, have figured out that the characters could drop what they are doing and drive them to safety in the back of the trucks. They confront the Travellers as they gather the tools they need, and demand passage to safety.

There are several locals in the group, and they are scared enough to become violent if their demands are not met. The characters might reason with them, intimidate them or sneak around them. It is dark and things are pretty confused; if the characters can give the locals the slip they will be able to get on with their mission.

Fighting would be a bloody business. Firearms have not yet been used, but there are sufficient improvised weapons available that a general brawl could become very serious. Anyone spending a combat round looking for a weapon should be able to find themselves something to use as a cudgel, and there are more locals than Travellers, implying that a fight might not be the best option. However, is a character can brutally and graphically 'take out' one of the ringleaders the locals will back down – for now.

However the characters manage to circumvent this problem, the would-be escapees will come looking for them after a while, determined to force the characters to drive them to safety. They will reappear in a later scene.

Ted can be found trying to salvage the contents of the electronics workshop by moving the prototype plow and the more portable equipment to an upstairs room. A couple of his teenage students have stuck around to help him. If the characters explain the problem with the distillery, Ted agrees to help if they will promise in return to get his students and the prototype plow out of danger.

With the gear they need and Ted in tow, the characters return to the berm, which is now lit by the flames of the blazing distillery.

SCENE 3: FIRE AND FLOOD (KEY SCENE)

It takes Ted mere moments to figure out where to place the explosives in order to create a small breach in the berm. Placing them is more of a challenge. Seepage means that the characters will have to work in knee-deep water, digging

holes into the berm surface that so many people have spent the past few hours packing solid. This is slow, tough work for exhausted characters. The prototype plow would be quite useful in loosening some of the packed earth, but ultimately this is just a heavy, dirty job for straining muscles.

Finally, the explosives are planted and the characters can withdraw to a safe distance. However, just as Bob gives the all-clear to detonate the explosives, the would-be escapees return. They are now armed and reinforced; there are dozens of them. And worse, they are led by Khuuli, the LSG Master-at-Arms. His pistol is in his hand and his expression is one of scared desperation.

Khuuli demands that the characters drop what they are doing and accompany him to the trucks. His followers emphasize the point by waving improvised clubs and a scattering of rifles around.

Anne steps forward and starts to speak to Khuuli but is silenced with a single blow of the young man's pistol barrel. An enraged Bob starts to move forward, and Khuuli reflexively shoots him.

There is a stunned moment as Bob crumples to the ground. Even Khuuli looks shocked at what he has just done.

SCENE 4: CRISIS POINT (KEY SCENE)

The fate of Onslar Rapids hangs in the balance. Khuuli has betrayed the LSG and now seeks only to escape the dying town. The distillery fire rages out of control, drawing ever closer to the barrels of spirit stored in the warehouses. The explosives are primed and ready, but the detonator control has fallen into the knee-deep water. Bob and Anne are down, one semi-conscious, one possibly dying. Bob may drown if he doesn't die from the gunshot wound.

There is a moment here where the situation could be saved or lost completely. The characters have several options:

1. DO AS KHUULI SAYS

They could take the trucks and go, conveying the escapees to safety. Khuuli will promise not to harm anyone if the characters do this, and he really intends to keep the promise. However, he is very scared and may over-react to something or go completely out of control. Unless this happens the characters will eventually reach safety and be released. There is insufficient room aboard the trucks for all Khuuli's followers, who end up fighting for places in the trailers. Some are left behind, as are Ted and his students, Anne and Bob, who dies from his wound.

The others may or may not escape, but the town will be largely destroyed by fire and flood. A few days later Khuuli will be arrested for murder by the authorities.

2. FIGHT

The characters may be armed themselves, and in any case may be inclined to fight it out. There are about 40 people with Khuuli at this point, of whom one in six has a firearm (a carbine or shotgun in most cases). Only about half will fight; the rest are shocked by the shooting and dither around or fade into the darkness.

There are about 30 people with the characters, who have

been working on the berm. Most have shovels and other heavy tools that can be used to fight with, and about half of them will wade in if the characters do. The resulting fight is likely to be bloody and desperate, and the Referee should make sure that it is remembered by the players as a truly horrific incident. In the confusion, it is hard to see who is on which side, so the fight quickly becomes a manic scramble in which friends sometimes attack one another.

Amid the chaos, Anne struggles to get Bob out of the water and find someone to treat his wound and Ted dives into the water, emerging with the detonator in his hand. As the fight rages, he hits the button and blows the berm. The fight will be stopped by the inrush of water – only the most desperately entwined combatants will be able to carry on battling as the river surges over them.

As the fight breaks up and the water rushes in, everyone's attention will have to turn to the immediate need not to drown. Go to Scene 5.

3. SPEAK

It might be possible for a charismatic character to win over some of Khuuli's people by intimidation, persuasion or raw leadership. The one and only chance to do this is in the pause after Khuuli shoots Bob. The Referee should not permit this matter to be resolved on a single die roll. Instead the players should roleplay their dramatic speech or gentle talking-down, and the Referee should modify die rolls according to the quality of the speech.

It might be possible to talk Khuuli into surrendering his weapon. He is shocked at what he has just done and somewhat vulnerable. If the characters can achieve this, the rest of the mob will dissipate. Some could even be rallied to help the characters in their final endeavors. However, it would take a pretty impressive success to achieve this. More likely, the characters will be able to cause confusion and doubt among Khuuli and his followers, long enough to either jump him and get his gun or to retrieve the detonator under the cover of assisting Bob.

Blowing the berm may cause nervous people to pull triggers, but it will also provide a wonderful distraction to aid an assault on Khuuli's gang.

SCENE 5: INTO THE BREACH? (KEY SCENE)

Within moments of blowing the berm, the town is plunged into darkness as the emergency generators are flooded. The distillery fire is swamped; the buildings already on fire will be destroyed but the warehouse holocaust will be averted. The characters find themselves in waist-deep water, with casualties (e.g. Bob, seriously wounded but alive, and some people caught in the blast along with any fight casualties) to cope with. The only priority now is survival; the town is finished. Its structures may survive but the damage inflicted as the river rises yet further and debris sweeps through the town will be too great to repair. Onslers Rapids will die after all.

Unless...

Now that the distillery fire is out, there is no need to leave the berm breach open. If it could only be closed, the damage to the town might be limited to the merely disastrous. Something might yet be salvaged. But what could close the breach?

Every second it is eroded wider as the enraged river pours through...

There are still some options available to clever and inventive Travellers. The cooperage where Alex works is filled with barrels that could be filled with rubble or water to hold them down and shoved into the breach. Sandbags and earth could be shoveled in to fill in the gaps, but they would be washed away by the flow unless the main breach could be somehow plugged.

One way to do that would be to simply drive a large vehicle into the gap and plug around it. This would still be a difficult task but it may be possible. The water flow around such a plug would be very powerful, but it should be feasible to create a plug of some kind from barrels and debris, and improvise a means of holding it in place.

Alternatively the characters may decide that enough is enough and flee. This will be pretty much the last straw for the remaining diehards still fighting the flood. They will down tools and join the exodus if the Travellers decide to go, but will rally for one final effort if there is someone to lead them. The remaining LSG personnel (including Anne) will join the characters in organizing this last-ditch fight for the town's survival.

And so, in the end, the fate of Onslers Rapids rests with the characters and a handful of Loyal Sector Guard personnel. The task will be hard, but if they choose to enter the breach and close the gate, the river will be defeated in the end. If they flee, all is lost.

EPILOGUE: KEEPERS OF THE GATE

The characters are offered a dubious honor.

SCENE 1: A VERY MINOR VICTORY (KEY SCENE)

As dawn approaches, it becomes apparent that the water is no longer rising. Satellite observation shows that the makeshift dam blasted by the SDB held back the worst of the deluge for long enough that it came through as a torrent rather than a tsunami; *Irdashdis Vigilance* bought Onslers Rapids a fighting chance, but it was the townsfolk and their offworld friends that fought the river.

And won, after a fashion.

As the relief force finally arrives from Liberty Port aboard a fleet of air/rafts and construction vehicles are shuttled in from the spaceports of nearby cities, the scene is one of devastation. Most of the town is still standing, and most of the population is still alive. One distillery still stands, and enough of the herds have been saved that the town's economy is not totally ruined.

However, the town is still knee-deep in water, and Grazer corpses float down the river from time to time. There are human bodies in the water, too, and the air is heavy with smoke. The town has been saved, but the cost was very high indeed.

SCENE 2: DEPARTURES

Days pass, and the flood recedes. Aid comes in from the capital and other cities, but the numb survivors can see little future for their town and themselves. The cost of rebuilding the town might be met by the government, but a new dam seems unlikely and without it there will be no power for the community other than emergency generators. The future looks bleak, but still the locals struggle on.

Finally, a meeting is called in one of the few dry buildings in town. Anne is there, having assumed the position of Town Engineer while Bob recuperates in a hospital at Liberty Port. She outlines the grim situation and her last-ditch plan to rebuild Onslers Rapids.

First, Anne will petition the Loyal Sector Guard for funds to rebuild the dam. She plans to suggest that it be used as both a PR exercise and a training project for the LSG's young engineers to gain some practical experience on. She also explains that Ted salvaged the grav-plow prototype, and now that he knows it works, he plans to file patent off world before seeking a buyer for the design. That will require some trustworthy individuals to take the prototype to an Imperial world with a Patents Office (more or less every Class A starport has one) and deal with the paperwork. It is obvious whom she has in mind.

If the plow design can be sold, it will bring in enough money to rebuild the town several times over, and perhaps even to refund the distilling industry. For now, the existing stocks of Onslers Whitewater Whiskey are rather valuable, being the last run from the stills for some time to come.

If the characters agree to take the patents offworld, Anne will accompany them to Liberty Port. She wants to see Bob, but also she feels she owes the characters a sendoff. Their friends at Onslers Rapids pack their bags with little gifts, including a dozen bottles of now-priceless whiskey.

At the Port, Anne gives the characters a letter to the LSG's leaders, asking for their help. She also gives each of them a token of her respect and admiration. It is a set of shoulder insignia of the sort worn by LSG officers.

"This may mean nothing to you," she says, "but it's a big deal to me. We call ourselves Keepers of the Gate. We protect the people of Gateway Domain against all threats, external and internal. My people were sworn to stand in the breach with me. You weren't – but you chose to do it anyway. As far as I'm concerned, that makes each and every one of you one of us. My superiors may disagree but I don't care."

Anne shakes hands with each of the characters and bids them a bright future. Perhaps they'll meet again if the characters return to Onslers Rapids; perhaps not. Anne pauses and smiles wryly, realizing that she's decided to make a home for herself in the town after many years of wandering the stars.

But whatever happens in the future, she says, the characters can leave with honor, carrying the hopes of a town with them. And they'll always know that, just for a while, they too were Keepers of the Gate.

THE FUTURE: ONWARD FROM IRDASHDIS

Filing the patent and contacting the local LSG commanders may lead to new adventures. Perhaps the characters will indeed return to Onslers Rapids some day. Perhaps they will receive an invitation to a wedding, or to the inauguration of a new Mayor when Alex steps down. If so, they will return to a grateful community where they will always be welcomed as heroes, and more importantly, as friends.

Subsequent events are at the discretion, as always, of the Referee.

EPIC ADVENTURE CHECKLIST

Key? Done? Scene

ACT 1: LIBERTY PORT

- K1 _____ Scene 1: Planetfall
- _____ Scene 2: Stopover in Liberty Port
- K2 _____ Scene 3: A Contract

ACT 2: OVERLAND ON IRDASHDIS

- _____ Scene 1: Liberty Port to Holgrund City
- _____ Scene 2: Into the Backwoods
- _____ Scene 3: Rogue Male

ACT 3: ONSLER RAPIDS

- K3 _____ Scene 1: Arrivals
- K4 _____ Scene 2: For The Farmer And The Factory, and All Of You And Me
- K5 _____ Scene 3: Field Test
- K6 _____ Scene 4: Meat and Potatoes for Dinner, Again!

ACT 4: THE STORM

- K7 _____ Scene 1: Gathering Clouds
- _____ Scene 2: The Roundup
- K8 _____ Scene 3: Halfway to Safety
- K9 _____ Scene 4: Racing the Storm

ACT 5: TIGHTEN YOUR HELMET STRAPS

- K10 _____ Scene 1: Surveying the Wreckage
- K11 _____ Scene 2: Life Goes On... Sort Of
- K12 _____ Scene 3: A Warning
- K13 _____ Scene 4: On The Brink of Annihilation
- K14 _____ Scene 5: A Reprieve From On High
- K15 _____ Scene 6: A Consensus At Last

ACT 6: KEEPERS OF THE GATE

- K16 _____ Scene 1: Holding The Line
- K17 _____ Scene 2: Gathering The Tools
- K18 _____ Scene 3: Fire and Flood
- K19 _____ Scene 4: Crisis Point
- K20 _____ Scene 5: Into The Breach?

EPILOGUE: KEEPERS OF THE GATE

- K21 _____ Scene 1: A Very Minor Victory
- _____ Scene 2: Departures

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

PEOPLE

THE TOWNSFOLK AT ONSLER RAPIDS

ALEX (ALEXANDER CHESLEN)

Physically unassuming, Alex is town mayor at 25 and has the confidence of the entire town. He works as a cooper in town and gets bawled out by his superiors all the time for running off to do town admin business. Later in the week, Alex will be giving the same people a hard time when they complain that their requests have not been processed by the town administration. Alex does not have an office, just a desk in the room he rents in a house next door to the Healey Tavern.

Alex is a born leader; a 'follow me' type who lends a hand where it is needed and asks nothing in return – but commands the loyalty of a whole town. He is something of a reluctant hero inasmuch as he does not seek danger or challenges of any sort, but cannot shirk his self-assumed duty. Thus everyone in town has a story of how Alex led the building of flood defenses last winter, plunged into a burning building to save a little girl, and regularly leads armed parties to kill or chase dangerous predators away from the town.

They will also add, reluctantly, that the flood defenses failed and he is only a danger to himself with a rifle. As to the heroic rescue, well... the little girl was safe in her father's arms a hundred meters from the house – Alex didn't actually stop to check – and he was overcome by smoke and had to be rescued by Ted the Schoolmaster of all people. But Alex is a decent administrator and a good guy all round. He's not particularly competent but he tries so much harder than everyone else that it's hard not to believe in him.

T20: (professional level 3) TL12 Medium human
 Stamina 11, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9 m (6 squares);
 Armor Class: 10 (+0 none), Armor Rating: 0 (none); Str 10,
 Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11, Edu 11, Soc 12; SV
 Fort +1; Ref +1; Will +3;

ATTACKS:							
Weapon	Hit	Dmg	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Dagger	-4	1d4	—	—	19	—	—
Fist	-4	1d3	—	—	20	—	—

Skills: Drive +6, P/Admin +6, Leader +6, Appraise +6, T/Computer +6, T/Mechanical +6, C/Cooper +6, Liaison +2.

Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Armor (light), Connections (professional), Research, Barter, Trustworthy, Credit Line, Professional Specialty (C/Cooper)

Equipment: communicator, dagger

CT: 76A878 Age 26 2 terms Cr10,000
 Mechanical-1, Admin-1, Leader-1

Communicator, dagger

BOB (ROBERT ALEXANDROVSK HANDRY)

Bob is a middle-aged and tubby but nonetheless hyperactive individual who is the 'town engineer' – i.e. vastly overworked and happy that way. He is 48 years old, and while he has never left Irdashdis he has worked engineering projects all over the planet. The grav-plow project is his idea, though much of the design work was done by Ted and some of his older students. He is also the director of the hydroelectricity project.

Bob disapproves of drinking, but despite this is a great friend of Ted the schoolmaster. The two are very ill-matched: animated Bob and laid-back Ted, but they are an effective problem-solving team. Recently Bob has been spending a lot of time with Anne, the LSG commander. He is quite taken with her, but is sure that someone as eminent and accomplished as she is would not be interested in a yokel like Bob.

T20: (professional level 9) TL12 Medium human
Stamina 33, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 10 (+0 none), Armor Rating: 0 (none); Str 10,
Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 12, Edu 12, Soc 10; SV
Fort +3; Ref +3; Will +9;

ATTACKS:							
Weapon	Hit	Dmg	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Rifle	+2	1d12	72	48	20	1	10
Fist	-2	1d3	—	—	20	—	—

Skills: Drive +12, P/Admin +16, Liaison +13, Appraise +9, T/Computer +13, T/Engineering +13, T/Gravitics +13, Speak Language (Sopas).

Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Armor (light), Weapon (marksman), Connections (professional), Research, Barter, Trustworthy, Credit Line, Professional Specialty (T/Engineering), Carousing, Skill Focus (P/Admin), Legal Eagle, Iron Will

Equipment: personal hand computer, rifle

CT: 448AA6 Age 48 7 terms Cr50,000
Computer-1, Engineering-3, Gravitics-2, Vehicle-1
Personal hand computer, rifle

MARIA (MARIA DHUURISKI)

Maria is 36, married with no children of her own but a self-assumed responsibility to look after every waif and stray in town, which in practice means the younger adults, bored teenage kids and some of the less self-assured LSG members. Along with her husband Dan and a couple of helpers (short for Daiiniskiimu), she runs the tavern, cooks, cleans up after the patrons and still finds time to make everyone who comes through the door very welcome.

Maria has an attitude of patient hurry about her. She will stop and listen to anything someone wants to say to her, yet without showing the slightest sign of impatience she manages to convey a sense of the millions of things she has to do before sundown....

Maria and her husband are the weapons custodians for the Dhuran Mountains Rangers (Onsler Rapids Chapter) and

maintain a fair arsenal of shotguns and semi-automatic rifles in the tavern basement. They are friendly with Kuuli, the LSG Master-at-Arms.

T20: (professional level 6) TL12 Medium human
Stamina 22, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 10 (+0 none), Armor Rating: 0 (none); Str 10,
Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11, Edu 12, Soc 10+; SV
Fort +2; Ref +2; Will +5;

ATTACKS:							
Weapon	Hit	Dmg	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Auto Rifle	+1	1d12	60	40	20	1	10
Shotgun	+1	3d6/ 2d6/ 1d6	3	2	20	1	10
Fist	-3	1d3	—	—	20	—	—

Skills: Drive +9, P/Admin +13, Liaison +9, Appraise +9, P/Innkeep +9, T/Communications +10, K/Interstellar Law +12, Speak Language (Sopas).

Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Armor (light), Weapon (marksman), Connections (professional), Barter, Trustworthy, Credit Line, Professional Specialty (P/Innkeep), Carousing, Skill Focus (P/Admin), Legal Eagle

Equipment: communicator, auto rifle, shotgun

CT: 676776 Age 36 4 terms Cr20,000
Gun Cbt-2, Steward-2
Communicator, auto rifle, shotgun

TED – (SIR THEODORE HAMILTON-COASNER)

Ted is 23, a mathematical genius and a scion of an Imperial noble house. Having completed his second PhD at 20, he promptly disappeared over the border to 'find his place in the world'. That place seems to be at the front of a mixed class of kids aged 4 to 16, teaching philosophy, gravitic theory and basic arithmetic, plus fencing. Ted is a gentle soul with curly blond hair and a little smile that implies that he knows more than he's telling. He is great friends with Bob and assists on all the town's engineering or theoretical projects.

Ted is so laid-back as to be almost horizontal. Most of the time he sips from a hip flask and saunters about as the world must wait for him. This annoys Bob, but there is no way to make Ted change his ways. Even when practicing fencing with his students, Ted's style is calm and unhurried. Ted does drink rather a lot, but it does not seem to affect him all that much.

Someone as potentially eminent as Ted is an unlikely find in a remote place like this, so everyone expects there to be a tragic story hidden somewhere. The commonest theory is that Ted killed someone in a duel and fled in remorse or to escape vengeance. Perhaps he has a terrible temper kept in check by his usual calm...

The reality is more prosaic. Ted took a good look at the future that awaited him – politics or academia, or perhaps an honorable career in the Navy – and decided none of it was for him. He sought, and found, a place where he could be just Ted,

not a genius, not a noble. He has found his place, and he is happy here among people who are just glad to have another decent guy around town. And of course, the local whiskey is excellent.

T20: (noble level 6) TL12 Medium human
Stamina 22, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 10 (+0 none), Armor Rating: 0 (none); Str 10,
Dex 10, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 11, Edu 16, Soc 16; SV
Fort +2; Ref +2; Will +7;

ATTACKS:							
Weapon	Hit	Dmg	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Rifle	+3	1d12	72	48	20	1/4	20
Sword	+3	1d8	—	—	20	—	—
Fist	-1	1d3	—	—	20	—	—

Skills: Drive +9, Pilot +12, P/Instructor +11, T/Engineering+12, T/Electronics +9, T/Gravitics +12, K/Philosophy +12, K/Mathematics +12, Liaison +11, T/Computer +12, Speak Language (Sopas, High Vilani, Mahkakraik).

Feats: Vessel (grav, wheeled), Armor (light), Weapon (marksman, swordsman), Carousing, Iron Will, Trust Fund, Trustworthy, Skill Focus (P/Instructor).

Equipment: communicator, sword, rifle

CT: 6878BB Age 23 2 terms Cr80,000
Gravitics-2, Instruction-1, Blade Cbt-1
Communicator, auto rifle, sword

TOWNSFOLK (GENERIC STATS)

Any randomly encountered townspeople or farmer can be considered to have the following stats. The first set is for an adult, the second for a teenager or very young and inexperienced adult. Weapons will not normally be carried inside the town, but cudgels and daggers can be improvised from handy implements at need.

T20: (professional level 3) TL12 Medium human
Stamina 11, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 10 (+0 none), Armor Rating: 0 (none); Str 10,
Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 11, Soc 10; SV
Fort +1; Ref +1; Will +3;

ATTACKS:							
Weapon	Hit	Dmg	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Rifle	-4	1d12	72	48	20	1/4	20
Dagger	-4	1d4	—	—	19	—	—
Fist	-4	1d3	—	—	20	—	—

Skills: Drive +6, P/Admin +6, Liaison +6 or Trader +8, Appraise +6, T/Communications +3, T/Computer +3, T/(choose) or P/(choose) +6, C/(choose) or P/(choose) +6, Speak Language (choose).

Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Armor (light), Connections (choose), Carousing or Research, Barter, Fast Talk or Trustworthy, Credit Line or Skill Focus (choose), Professional Specialty (choose)

Equipment: perhaps communicator, perhaps rifle or dagger

CT: 777777 Age 26 2 terms Cr1,000
(personal skill)-2
Perhaps communicator, perhaps rifle or dagger

T20: (professional level 1) TL12 Medium human
Stamina 4, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 10 (+0 none), Armor Rating: 0 (none); Str 10,
Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 11, Soc 10; SV
Fort +0; Ref +0; Will +2;

ATTACKS:							
Weapon	Hit	Dmg	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Rifle	-4	1d12	72	48	20	1/4	20
Dagger	-4	1d4	—	—	19	—	—
Fist	-4	1d3	—	—	20	—	—

Skills: Drive +4, Liaison +4 or Trader +4, Appraise +4, T/Communications +3, T/Computer +3, T/(choose) or P/(choose) +4, C/(choose) or P/(choose) +4, Speak Language (choose).

Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Armor (light), Carousing or Fast Talk or Trustworthy, Professional Specialty (choose)

Equipment: perhaps communicator, perhaps rifle or dagger

CT: 676767 Age 17- 0 terms Cr10
(personal skill)-0
Perhaps communicator, perhaps rifle or dagger

LSG MEMBERS

ANNE – (MAJOR ANNEKKA ORVATSENN, LOYAL SECTOR GUARD DETACHMENT COMMANDER)

Anne is a 20-year veteran of the Imperial Colonial Office. Having retired, she missed the challenges of supporting backwater-world societies and signed up with LSG. Her military style rank is a courtesy; she has never served, though ICO personnel are trained in self-defense with firearms and she has had some scrapes in her time.

Aged 41, Anne is a field worker rather than an administrator, and is in pretty good condition. She can and does put in work hours that leave her younger colleagues exhausted. However, while she is a strong doer, her grasp of logistics and administration is shaky at best. She has been known to make a mess of projects due to a lack of attention to detail. Sometimes Anne is too busy diving in to plan properly, leading to delays or problems.

Anne believes in the LSG and its mission, which has become very personal for her since she came here six months ago. She is thinking of settling down in Onslers Rapids, something that still astounds her. She and Bob have a very obvious romance blossoming – that is, it's obvious to everyone but them. Anne respects and admires the town engineer and likes his company; consciously she thinks of him as just one more professional associate who has become a close friend.

INTRODUCTION

Subconsciously she finds it hard to be away from him, and she will gravitate into his company whenever he is around, no matter what else is going on.

T20: (professional level 6) TL12 Medium human
Stamina 37, Lifeblood 11; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 10 (+0 none), Armor Rating: 0 (none); Str 10,
Dex 10, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11, Edu 12, Soc 12; SV
Fort +6; Ref +2; Will +5;

ATTACKS:							
Weapon	Hit	Dmg	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Auto Rifle	+1	1d12	60	40	20	1	10
Fist	-3	1d3	—	—	20	—	—

Skills: Drive +9, Pilot +5, P/Admin +8, Leader +5, Liaison +9, T/Computer +10, T/Communications +10, K/Interstellar Law +12.

Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Armor (light), Weapon (marksman), Connections (professional), Toughness, Trustworthy, Great Fortitude, Professional Specialty (T/Communication), Carousing, Skill Focus (P/Admin), Legal Eagle

Equipment: communicator, auto rifle

CT: 679788 Age 41 5 terms Cr20,000
Admin-1, Communication-2, Computer-1, Gun Cbt-1, Vehicle-1
Communicator, rifle

KUULI (SERGEANT KUULI JAMAI)

Kuuli is a cheerful young man of 23, recruited from the demobilization office of his homeworld army. Although he served only one term on his homeworld, Kuuli showed considerable potential and was snapped up by LSG recruiters as soon as he became available. He has taken to the responsibilities of his work with LSG and enjoys his status as Master-at-Arms for the detachment. In practice, this means he is tasked with looking after the weaponry and is often called out as an armed guard for parties going outside the town fence.

Kuuli is now a member of the Dhuran Mountains Rangers, and spends a lot of time with Dan and Maria at the Healey Tavern. Some would describe this as 'loafing about in the bar', which would not be too inaccurate. Chosen as much for his technical skills at maintaining weapons as for his marksmanship, Kuuli is no 'warrior' but comes over as a cautious professional who is able to handle most situations. This appraisal is basically correct. He does, however suffer from a lack of experience and self-confidence. In normal situations this is not really noticeable. However, events in Onslers Rapids are very different from normal.

T20: (army level 3) TL12 Medium human
Stamina 13, Lifeblood 11; Init +2; Speed 6m (4 squares);
Armor Class: 21 (+7 combat, +2 Cham, +2 Dex), Armor Rating: 7 (combat armor); Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10, Edu 13, Soc 10; SV Fort +1; Ref +5; Will +1;

ATTACKS:							
----------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Weapon	Hit	Dmg	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Gauss Rifle	+8	2d12	96	64	20x2	1/4/10	40
Fist	+7	1d4	—	—	20	—	—

Skills: Pilot +6, C/Armory +3, T/Sensors +7, Spot +3, Gunnery +6, Forward Observer +3

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman, field artillery, high energy, heavy weapons), Weapon Focus (gauss rifle), Brawling

Equipment: Combat Armor-12 plus Chameleon-12, gauss rifle with HUD display.

CT: 798787 Age 23 1 term Cr20,000
Gun Cbt-1, Gunnery-1
Combat armor-12 plus Chameleon-12, gauss rifle with HUD display

LSG TECHNICIANS (GENERIC STATS)

The LSG detachment's personnel are mainly technicians rather than soldiers, though they have been trained to handle weapons in self-defense. Weapons are not normally carried unless there is a clear need.

T20: (army level 3) TL12 Medium human
Stamina 13, Lifeblood 11; Init +0; Speed 6m (4 squares);
Armor Class: 19 (+7 combat, +2 Cham), Armor Rating: 7 (combat armor); Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10, Edu 11, Soc 10; SV Fort +1; Ref +3; Will +1;

ATTACKS:							
Weapon	Hit	Dmg	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Gauss Rifle	+6	2d12	96	64	20x2	1/4/10	40
Fist	+5	1d4	—	—	20	—	—

Skills: Pilot +6, T/Sensors +6, Spot +6, Gunnery +6, Forward Observer +6

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman, field artillery, high energy, heavy weapons), Weapon Focus (gauss rifle), Brawling

Equipment: Combat Armor-12 plus Chameleon-12, gauss rifle with HUD displays.

CT: 777777 Age 26 2 terms Cr10,000
Gun Cbt-2, Gunnery-1
Combat armor-12 plus Chameleon-12, gauss rifle with HUD displays

ANIMALS

TALKAN'S GRAZER (STEAKHAMSTER)

Talkan's Grazer is detailed on P424 of the Travellers' Handbook. Stats are repeated here.

T20: Large (400kg) Herbivore/Grazer; Init +0; Flee 4+, Attack 4+, Speed 30m; AC 9 (-1 size); AR 0; HD 4d4+2; St/Lb 12/15; Atk +3 melee bite (2d8/20); SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will -1; SZ L; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 15, Int 2, Edu -, Wis 3, Cha 4, Soc -.

Skills: Balance +3, Jump +4, Spot +0

Feats: None

Special Abilities: None

Climate/Terrain: Deserts, Plains, Grasslands

Organization: Herds of 8-12 creatures.

CT: #App 8-12; Herbivore/Grazer; 400kg; Hits 8/10; Armor none; Wounds 6 (teeth+1); F5 A5 S3.

ZIPRIP

The creature that natives of Irdashdis call a Ziprip is a reptilian beast about the size of a Labrador. Ziprips are Chasers, taking their prey by sneaking close then hurtling in at great speed and jumping on the target, slashing at it with sharp teeth and an array of claws and forelimb spikes.

A Ziprip pack (3-8 adults typically) will attack a human. They are extremely fast and agile, and will not be deterred once they have begun their charge. The best defense against Ziprip attack is either to remain in a group or to shoot one of the approaching beasts while it is sneaking up, which will drive off the pack in a panic. Of course, Ziprips are well camouflaged and stealthy, so this requires a sharp lookout – and a good rifle.

T20: Small (25kg) Carnivore/Chaser; Init +3; Attack if more, Flee 9+, Speed 30m; AC 16 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 AR); AR 2; HD 2d10; St/Lb 11/10; Atk +7 melee claw (1d8-1/20), +2 melee bite (1d6-1/20); SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +5; SZ S; Str 8, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 2, Edu -, Wis 3, Cha 2, Soc -.

Skills: Hide +6, Move Silent +5

Feats: None

Special Abilities: None

Climate/Terrain: Deserts, Plains, Grasslands

Organization: Packs of 3-8 creatures.

CT: #App 3-8; Carnivore/Chaser; 25kg; Hits 10/6; Armor jack; Wounds 4 (teeth); A0 F6 S3.

KAINHO

The Kainho is a larger, lone predator of reptilian appearance like the Ziprip (they are related not too far back in their ancestry), but much larger. Possessing the same long head with razor-sharp teeth and forearm spikes, the Kainho is a killer rather than a chaser. It is quite fast overland, at least in a straight line, and can run on its hind legs only for a short distance. Its normal mode of attack is to charge from cover, rising up on its hind legs to crash into the victim and bowl it over, then eviscerate it with forearm spikes.

Kainhos have learned to avoid human habitation since they are shot on sight. They roam the wilder plains preying on wild Steakhamster herds and other large grazing animals. Kainhos are territorial and sometimes seem to attack just for the fun of it.

T20: Large (400kg) Carnivore/Killer; Init +3; Attack 4+, Flee 8+, Speed 18m; AC 13 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +1 AR); AR 1; HD 4d10+2;

St/Lb 24/14; Atk +6 melee claw (2d8+3/20); SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +6; SZ L; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 2, Edu -, Wis 4, Cha 2, Soc -.

Skills: Hide +2, Move Silent +6

Feats: None

Special Abilities: Improved charge (during first round of engagement, can move up to four times normal speed and still attack once as a charge)

Climate/Terrain: Deserts, Plains, Grasslands

Organization: Solitary.

CT: #App 1; Carnivore/Killer; 400kg; Hits 12/8; Armor jack; Wounds 8 (teeth+1); A5 F6 S2.

LIBRARY DATA

This information represents data that is available on library computers anywhere in the region. It may or may not be 100% accurate and is nothing more than an overview of each topic. This section mainly serves as a quick-reference source for information on the wider universe.

Annapabar (Ley/Diamond-Prince - 1936). Current Gateway Domain capital, established by Archduke Erechs in 990 upon his installation as Archduke.

Communicator, Personal ("Comm") - A hand-held, single channel communication device. On world with a tech level of 8 or higher a personal communicator is able to tap into the world's satellite communication network and with the proper address, contact any other communicator in the world (for a fee). The channel is private, but not secure and may be monitored on some worlds. Usually network access can be arranged at the local starport for a small fee. On worlds with a tech level of 7 or less, personal communicators will not work except for direct comm-to-comm contact over distances of not more than a few hundred meters.

Many individuals purchase accessories for their comm. The most useful is a specialized computer device called an Aide. The Aide stores a considerable amount of information that the character feels he may find useful, downloads news or market information when available, and reminds the character about his schedule at appropriate times. Many Travellers conduct their business by comm while on the move.

An Aide costs Cr 250.

Daramm (Ley/Spearhead - 0812). Luriani homeworld.

Dukh (Ley/Nightmare - 1210). Ley Sector capital, and former Gateway Domain capital.

Emperor Gavin - Current Emperor of the Third Imperium after the 989 abdication of Styryx. Gavin is the eldest son of Styryx.

Emperor Styryx - Abdicated 989. Current whereabouts unknown

Erechs, Marcus Aaron - Archduke of Gateway. Appointed by Emperor Gavin in 990, Erechs was a prominent corporate leader in the Domain and vocal and commercial opponent of the previous Archduke. Of common birth, Erechs built his single merchant ship into a Domain-wide commercial powerhouse known as MAE Lines. Familiar with the people and the economics of the Domain his policies, radically different from most previous administrations, have begun to turn around a Domain that for centuries has been considered an unimportant backwater to most Imperial experts. Applications for Imperial membership are at an all time high, and trade revenues have quadrupled under his guidance. Industrial and agricultural exports are on rise, and immigration of Imperial citizens into the Domain has begun a similar rise.

Hive Federation - A region dominated by the Hivers and their "subject" races, found to Rimward/Trailing of Gateway Domain.

Imperial Trade Cluster - A highly developed and active Jump-one main located in the Diamond Price Subsector. Established by Archduke Erechs in 991 in an effort to better control the flow of 'outworld' cargoes and passengers into and out of the Imperium itself. Any and all cargo originating from or destined for a non-Imperial or Client State world must be

inspected and certified by the Imperial Trade Cluster Authority. Any class A or B starport located in the jump-1 cluster centered at Annabapar (1936) qualifies as an Imperial Trade Cluster Authority inspection point.

K'Kree - Militant vegetarian major race found to Trailing of Gateway sector. The K'kree are dedicated to exterminating all G'naak (Vermin, or carnivorous/omnivorous creatures). They are herd creatures, ruled by Steppelords and Overlords. Their supreme leader is the Overlord of Overlords. The K'Kree have an uneasy relationship with humans and other omnivorous creatures. Co-operation is possible, but conflict is not uncommon.

Kukugukhe (Ley/Nightmare - 1406). Former Imperial Naval Depot destroyed in 185 by the Julian Protectorate during the Julian Wars.

Khuur League - A 'mercantile' confederation located on the trailing edge of the sector. Most of the worlds in the League are the former core worlds that made up the Sydymic Empire. Formed shortly after the fall of the Empire in 675, the League began as nothing more than a true trade confederation, under the watchful eye of the Imperium. As the years past, and the vigilance of the Imperium waned the League began to enlarge its range of activities to include the 'mutual defense of member worlds from villainous forces'.

Long Night Remembrance - A fanatical Vilani group whose political arm vigorously opposes everything Solomani. Linked to terrorist acts against Solomani businesses and cultural centers such as museums.

Lords of Thunder, The - An extremist group of K'Kree now ruling a small empire in Crucis Margin sector. The Lords of Thunder follow the teachings of Axavktrr xur, a K'kree philosophical and moral stance largely discredited since the Hiver War. About 150 years ago their leader, L'lluui'pri'vguurlg was banished for his defiance towards the Overlord of Lords, the K'Kree supreme leader.

Loyal Sector Guard - An unofficial and technically illegal organization formed by several powerful figures and trade interests. The LSG maintains a force of mercenary troops and space vessels for the explicit purpose of defending the sector, its people and its economy from attack. The LSG has always remained within the law (other than by existing at all) in its operations, which are conducted in the same way as legal mercenary tickets. The LSG offers advisors, cadres and security forces for vulnerable areas that cannot afford adequate protection. Its fighters and patrol craft protect vulnerable starports and strictly enforce Imperial Law. The LSG is growing, and could become a "people's militia" in time. This development is viewed with concern by the authorities, but in the meantime the contribution of the LSG to stability in the region cannot be denied.

Prince Garlan - A nephew of Emperor Styryx, Garlan has been highly active in Gateway Domain in recent years. His retinue visits frontier outposts as well as major worlds, and he is generally well thought of by the people of the sector. Garlan is known to be approachable and willing to consider using his influence to solve a local problem.

Ramshackle Empire - See Rule of Man, Second Imperium

Rule of Man - Solomani name for the Second Imperium.

Second Imperium - After the conquest of the Ziru Sirka

by the Terrans, the latter took over the remains of the Vilani Imperium and thus created the Second Imperium, also known as the Ramshackle Empire or the Rule of Man. The Second Imperium lasted approximately 400 years before collapsing into the Long Night.

Sopas – The Sydite language.

Sopater - Sydite name for Khuur (Ley/Sydyomic - 3026), their homeworld.

Solomani – The word can mean many things: an individual member of the Solomani Confederation, the Confederation itself, a person (possibly an Imperial citizen) whose culture and traditions are strongly influenced by “old Earth” (such people are often completely loyal Imperial citizens who have nothing in common with the Solomani Confederation and its present-day peoples. Most commonly the word is used to mean any idea, concept, person or object that seems to have more connection with old Earth culture than any of the many other Imperial cultures. At present there is often some suspicion associated with the word, but this is because of the war and not a common theme.

Solomani Confederation – A powerful human state to Rimward-Spinward of gateway Domain. The Solomani Confederation is centered upon the spiritual and ancestral home of the Solomani people; Terra.

Solomani Rim War – A major conflict currently (1000) being fought to Rimward-Spinward of Ley Sector. The war has drawn off considerable Imperial forces. Solomani sympathizers and commerce raiders cause some trouble in Gateway Domain, but the main battlefronts are sectors away.

Survey Satellite – A Survey satellite, or Sursat, can be launched from a shipboard missile launcher or a ground launcher. It is capable of undertaking basic communications and beacon functions and quite sophisticated mapping and survey operations. A sursat can report on weather and atmospheric conditions constantly. Life is 3-5 years if placed in a stable orbit.

Survival Kit, Personal – A small backpack or belt pack containing personal survival equipment. Higher-tech versions include more advanced equipment, but basic functionality is the same. Contents include:

- Small knife
- Fire-starting equipment
- Blanket/poncho
- 4 days' preserved rations
- Water bottle
- Compass
- Light cord or string
- Mirror
- Water purification tablets
- Survival manual

Survival Kit, Vehicle – A standard kit carried aboard lifeboats, vehicles and starships, the Vehicle Survival Kit designed to equip 4 people. Imperial Law requires that all spacegoing vessels include one kit per 4 passengers or crew. Contents include:

- 1 Survival Rifle, plus 50 rounds shot and 50 ball
- 1 Hatchet

- 1 Field Medical Kit
- 4 Personal Survival Kit
- 4 Field Kit, Personal
- 4 Sets/Emergency Cold Weather Clothing
- 4 Combination Masks plus extra filters
- Field Rations for 60 person-days (15 days for 4 people)
- 4 Bulk water storage containers with filters
- 1 Water Purification Kit
- 2 Pressure Tent

Sydyomic War (640-675) - A long and bloody war between the Imperium and the Sydyomic Empire, consisting of primarily massive planetary assaults and protracted surface campaigns across two subsectors.

Third Imperium – Founded 1000 years ago from the expanding Sylean Federation, the Third Imperium is ruled from Capital/Core. It claims direct continuance from the Ziru Sirka and Rule of Man.

Ugiirkidan (Ley/Gaudix Drift - 1420). Imperial Naval Depot established in 249.

Ziru Sirka – Literally “Grand Empire of Stars”, the Ziru Sirka is also known as the Vilani, or First, Imperium. It ruled Charted space for millennia before suffering decline and eventually being toppled by the Terrans.

DEVELOPING THE SYDYMIC OUTWORLDS CLUSTER

This Special Supplement presents only the barest bones of the Sydymic Outworlds Cluster. There are many locations to visit, and dozens of adventures waiting to be had. For this reason QLI has declared the Sydymic Outworlds a fan-developed setting.

Traveller Referees are invited to submit adventures, locations and other details of this cluster of worlds. Relatively isolated on the edge of the Lesser Rift, these eight worlds are fairly unique in terms of society, flora, fauna etc.

Submissions will be reviewed by the COTI editors and if accepted will be posted to the Sydymic Outworlds pages on the QLI website. With sufficient input from T20 fans, the Sydymic Outworlds will be built up into a vibrant, living game setting to rival Linkworlds or the Starfall Cluster.

Submissions will take one of the following forms:

- **Locations:** Description of a town, city, starport or other place that might be visited, including adventure locations (a wreck in deep space or a mysterious ruin) or hangouts (a spacer bar or weapons dealer). Length: As needed.
- **Flora and Fauna:** A description and stats (for T20 and possibly other **Traveller** rules sets) of a creature or plant, its habitat and how it fits into the local ecosystem.
- **Encounters:** A description (with stats for T20 and possibly other **Traveller** rules sets) of a person, group or starship that might be encountered in the cluster.
- **Odd Jobs:** A brief adventure idea (no stats required) with several possible outcomes, in the style of Odd Jobs and Patron Encounters published for **Traveller** in the past. Length: up to 1000 words.
- **Signal GK:** A more detailed adventure or encounter outline, possibly with stats. Length: up to 2500 words
- **Full Adventures:** Larger adventures can be submitted, but check with the editor first.

Payment: The Sydymic Outworlds is a fan-driven region, and while small submissions will count towards a Citizens of the Imperium title or other awards, payment will not be made for any article under 2000 words. Larger articles (check with the editor before submitting) will be paid at the standard COTI feature rate of \$50 upon publication.

OPEN GAMING CONTENT

Except as specified as Product Identity (see below and section 1e of the OGL) or Trademarks (see below and section 1f of the OGL), the following material is considered Open Game Content under section 1d of the OGL:

- EPIC Adventure System (pg 3-5)
- Anything marked for T20 in the Keepers of the Gate adventure (pg. 27-46)
- Cast of Characters (pg 47-50)
- Animals (pg 50-51)

It is the express intent of QLI that all classes, feats, skills, and other rules that are derivative of the d20 SRD and other Open Game Content be released and added to the existing body of Open Game Content for free use under the principals and requirements of the Open Game License. Those sections that are solely derived from the original Traveller canon works, such as the vehicle and starship design, or the world building rules remain closed content and are not considered Open Game Content.

PRODUCT IDENTITY

In addition to the items specified under section 1e of the Open Game License, the following terms and titles are also reserved as Product Identity. A copy of the Open Game License can be found below:

All material not specifically listed as Open Game Content is to be considered Product Identity or under normal copyright protection.

OPEN GAME LICENSE

OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.
2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.
3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.
4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.
5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.
6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.
7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.
8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.
9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.
10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.
11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.
12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.
13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.
14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.
15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

System Reference Document, Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

T20 – The Traveller's Handbook Copyright 2002, QuikLink Interactive, Inc. Traveller is a trademark of Far Future Enterprises and is used under license

The Sydymic Outworlds: Special Supplement #1 - Copyright ©2004 QuikLink Interactive, Inc.