Gateway Domain
Cluster Book 1
The Megusard Corporate

TRAVELLER

GATEWAY DOMAIN CLUSTER BOOK 1: THE MEGUSARD CORPORATE

A SOURCEBOOK ADVENTURE FOR *TRAVELLER*

Science Fiction Adventure in the Far Future

Based on the award-winning *Traveller* game universe
CREATED by Marc Miller

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book contains a complete game setting for *Traveller* or any other science-fiction game system, set within the larger context of Gateway Domain and the Third Imperium as described in *Gateway to Destiny,* part of the official *Traveller* line published by QuikLink Interactive. *Gateway to Destiny* will be useful to this adventure but is not necessary. MegaTraveller Journal 4 might also be of interest, but possession is by no means necessary.

Where possible, this book has been kept as 'systemless' as possible, allowing play using any edition of the *Traveller* rules. Since certain technological assumptions varied between editions of the game, it has been necessary to choose a baseline and in this case the T20 system has been chosen. In most circumstances the fit with other *Traveller* rules sets will be seamless. Individual Referees may of course choose to make different assumptions, depending on what rules set is in use. This will have little impact on the vast majority of games.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Please note that Gateway Domain Cluster Book 1 is not a standalone game. It requires that you have access to a set of Traveller *rules. Any set of rules can be used, but as noted above the default is the T20 rules set published by QuikLink Interactive.*

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The Third Imperium is enormous and offers vast possibilities for adventuring of all different kinds. However, there is always the temptation to find out 'what's out there' on the fringes of the map. It would be possible to run a campaign in Gateway Domain lasting for years as the crew of a small ship adventure, trade and scam their way around the Imperial fringes. *Gateway to Destiny* was written with this sort of thing at least partially in mind.

This sourcebook details one power far from the Imperial border, and provides an adventure dealing with how the adventurers might get there. Far from the Imperium, on the fringe of alien space, the Megusard Corporate is a small and fairly modest state. The Corporate has had a long and fairly peaceful history but is now growing uneasy. For just a few parsecs away a new power is stirring, one that might some day become a threat to all Humaniti; perhaps even those as far away as the Third Imperium.

This sourcebook and associated adventures are set in 993, a full century and more before the events described in MTJ4: Lords of Thunder. But already the Lords of Thunder are making their presence felt in the region. If the Referee wishes, the adventure can be transplanted to, say, 1107. In that case the Renkard Union will already be under the hooves of the K'Kree and the threat far more imminent.

The adventure in this book deals with the arrival of a group of starfarers in the region and dealing with their immediate crises. Future releases will concern themselves with the long voyage home. Of course, the travellers may not go straight home. They may instead decide to remain in the region and seek their fortune. Perhaps they will stand against the Lords of Thunder. Perhaps they might even change the course of history a little. Who can say?

Subsequent events must, as always, be determined by the Referee.

STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

World and system data in this book is presented in the standard T20 format, and where necessary, worlds were designed using the system found in the T20 Core Rule Book (The Traveller's Handbook). This system is entirely compatible with Classic Traveller (CT) Book 3 and Book 6 world generation, and therefore with any Traveller rules set. Data is drawn from "canon" sources and extrapolated as needed.

Standard Traveller practice had been followed for directions, dates etc. Thus the date 032-993 refers to the 32nd day of the 993rd year since the founding of the Third Imperium. SI units (meters, seconds etc) are also used throughout, except where normal Traveller practice dictates otherwise.

ASTROGRAPHY

The basic unit of astrography is the sector, an area of space measuring 32 parsecs by 40 parsecs. Within a sector there are sixteen subsectors measuring 8 parsecs by 10 parsecs, often grouped into four quadrants for mapping convenience. Thus a sector has four quadrants, each with four subsectors. The astrographic region covered by this adventure is just a few parsecs across – less than a subsector in all – allowing a closer focus on the area. For reference, a map of the entire quadrant is used (Delta Quadrant of Gateway Sector), though most star systems depicted will not play any part in this book or its associated adventure. Details of these areas are provided in the QLI sourcebook *Gateway to Destiny.*

Below the sector level, each hex on the starmap is one parsec across. This is the distance a Jump-1 starship can cross in a single Jump, and will contain a single (possibly binary) star system or a region of empty space.

Directions in *Traveller* are given in galactic terms:
• Spinward is in the direction the galaxy is rotating – left on the map.
• Trailing is away from the direction of galactic rotation – right on the map
• Coreward is towards the galactic core – 'up' on the map
• Rimward is towards the outer edge of the galaxy – 'down' on the map
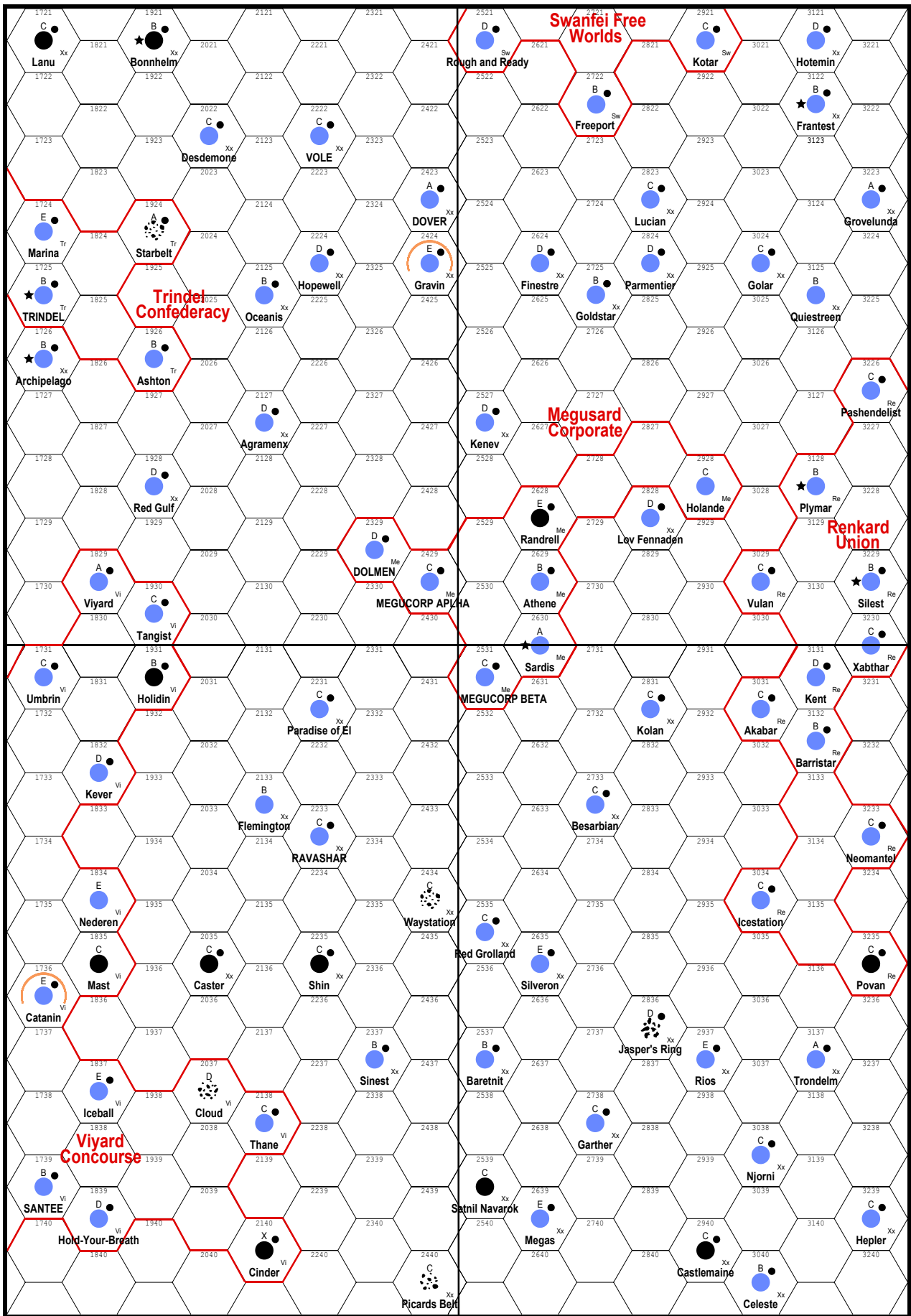
All interstellar directions use this frame of reference.

Traveller defines star systems by their mainworld, but of course it is possible to place other inhabited worlds in the system if the Referee chooses. Many developed systems have a few outposts and installations on gas giant moons or outsystem iceball worlds.

Astrography also makes reference to certain features of the starmap. These include:

Mains and clusters: A chain of worlds that can be accessed by a Jump-1 starship is known as a "main". These mains are the highways of the stars, seeing considerable traffic of all kinds. Mains are often named for the region they cross or a major world on the main. A main containing just a few worlds, or a "bunch" of stars close together is termed a cluster. Many clusters are named for the most important world they contain, but no firm convention exists. A cluster of 5-10 worlds is an ideal adventure setting, allowing the referee to create enough worlds to give great variety without needing to develop a huge area.

Rifts: An area with no stars is referred to as a rift, though normally the term is reserved for gaps two or more parsecs across. Some rifts (e.g. the Lesser Rift) are enormous starless gulfs that cannot be crossed by any starship, while others are merely small gaps between mains or clusters. Rifts are often given nautical names, such as the Great Atreill Deep.

Empty Space: Empty hexes are not always completely empty. Rogue planets, cometary bodies, gas clouds and similar objects can be found in deep space, though they are tiny compared to the vast gulf around them. It is possible to Jump to empty space (though without spare fuel to return, this is merely a slow and expensive form of suicide). Military and commercial concerns will sometimes establish a deep-space refuelling depot, for example to allow vessels to cross a rift or as a secret base of operations. The chances of locating such a dump without the proper coordinates are infinitesimally small.

Gateway Sector
Delta Quadrant

Year 993 Imperial

Swanfei Free Worlds

Trindel Confederacy

Megusard Corporate

Renkard Union

Viyard Concourse

Worlds

Lanu · Bonnhelm · Desdemone · VOLE · DOVER · Marina · Starbelt · Hopewell · Gravin · TRINDEL · Oceanis · Archipelago · Ashton · Agramenx · Red Gulf · Viyard · Tangist · DOLMEN · MEGUCORP APLHA

Rough and Ready · Freeport · Kotar · Hotemin · Frantest · Lucian · Grovelunda · Finestre · Parmentier · Golar · Goldstar · Quiestreen · Pashendelist · Kenev · Holande · Plymar · Randrell · Lov Fennaden · Athene · Vulan · Silest · Sardis · MEGUCORP BETA · Xabthar

Umbrin · Holidin · Paradise of El · Kever · Flemington · RAVASHAR · Nederen · Mast · Caster · Shin · Waystation · Catanin · Iceball · Cloud · Thane · Sinest · SANTEE · Hold-Your-Breath · Cinder · Ricards Belt

Red Grolland · Silveron · Kolan · Akabar · Barristar · Kent · Besarbian · Icestation · Neomantel · Jasper's Ring · Rios · Trondelm · Baretnit · Garther · Njorni · Povan · Satnil Navarok · Megas · Castlemaine · Celeste · Hepler

Legend

QUADRANTS OF A SECTOR

Alpha	Beta
Gamma	K	L
	O	P

SUBSECTORS

A	Darksky
B	Atoon
C	Denkard
D	Lowtown
E	Abysm
F	Windfleet
G	Castra
H	Forcett
I	Arconna
J	Beckann
K	Ashton
L	Riftin
M	Ownsbee
N	Ariel
O	Cinder
P	Farina

MAP LEGEND

Starport Type · Bases · Gas Giant · Tertius · World Type · World Name · X-Boat Route · Travel Zone Code (Red) · No Gas Giant · border · Quintus · Quartus
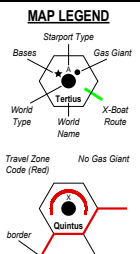
WORLD CHARACTERISTICS

- No Water Present
- Water Present
- Asteroid Belt

BASES

- ★ Naval Base
- △ Scout Base
- ■ Naval Depot
- △ Way Station
- P Prison Camp

TRAVEL ZONES

- Amber Zone
- Red Zone

POPULATION

Secundus — under one billion
PRIMUS — over one billion

GATEWAY SECTOR

Bordered to Spinward-Coreward by the Lesser Rift, and to Spinward-Rimward by a region of fairly sparse star systems, Gateway sector is a region of space mainly dominated by humans. Other species do live there; some of them indigenous and some not.

Gateway sector was not easy to reach from human space when the first explorers moved out and the colony ships followed them. Thus those that settled the region existed in semi-isolation for millennia, and indeed to this day contact with the states to Spinward is reduced by the natural frontier of sparse systems.

To Trailing lies the 2000 Worlds, the empire of the K'Kree. The K'Kree are militant herbivores who openly state that someday they will exterminate all meat-eaters in the universe. At present peaceful, if strained, interactions are possible. The presence of the K'Kree to Trailing has acted to curtail human expansion in that direction to a great degree.

To Rimward lies Crucis Margin sector, which is also largely human dominated, and then a region inhabited by large numbers of different alien species all playing a part in a large political structure known to humans as the Hive Federation. The Hivers, as the dominant species are known, are mysterious and rather strange, but they do not seem to be hostile. Some humans dwell in the Federation while other human states along the frontier co-exist quite happily. The K'Kree and Hivers have clashed in the past but at present leave one another alone for the most part.

A POTTED HISTORY OF GATEWAY SECTOR

Human habitation in the Gateway region began around 300,000 years before the founding of the Third Imperium, when a race of non-human beings normally referred to as the Ancients transplanted genetically engineered human stock to various worlds throughout what is now known as Charted Space. Their purposes remain unknown, though it is generally accepted that groups of Humans served the Ancients in some capacity. The Ancients vanished long ago, leaving only fleeting traces of their existence, but their transplanted races remain. It is possible that several human groups were transplanted into the Gateway region. The remnants of these populations may have been absorbed by the expanding empires of successful groups.

Little is known about the K'Kree during this period, but such of their legends as are known to humans speak of a "shadowed time of nightmare" from about –100,000 to –30,000, during which the primitive K'Kree were engaged in a battle for survival against one or more species of carnivores native to their homeworld of Kirur. Around –80,000 the first K'Kree cities were founded, initially being defensive arrangements created by individual herds.

Around –30,000, the K'Kree began the systematic extermination of all carnivores on Kirur. This period is known as the "time of shed blood". By –10,000 the K'Kree had begun to keep written records. The growth of the cities and the cooperation between herds continued to its natural conclusion, with the creation of a rudimentary world government in –8175. 1000 years later, the K'Kree "Law of Reason" was formulated, which still forms the foundation of K'Kree philosophy.

By –4305, the K'Kree had properly unified their homeworld, and continued technological development led to the creation of grav vehicles by –4228. Shortly thereafter, the K'Kree launched a campaign of genocide against a species of intelligent carnivores inhabiting their moon. The war was brought to a successful conclusion in –4167 with the extermination of the carnivores and the declaration of the Axavktrr xur, or "fundamental principles of survival" which demand the extermination of all carnivores that will not permit themselves to be converted to vegetarianism.

The K'Kree exploration of other star systems began in –4142 with the invention of the Jump drive. Expansion into neighboring systems was of course accompanied by extermination of their native carnivores. It is not known how many primitive omnivorous or carnivorous species were forcibly adapted or exterminated in the process.

Human colonists began to arrive in Gateway sector around this time. Many were of Terran origin. As the Terrans pushed out from their homeworld they encountered the decaying First Imperium of the Vilani and conquered it, creating the Second Imperium or Rule of Man. Although it was short-lived, the Rule of Man was vigorous and sent out huge numbers of colonists. Many more had departed during the Interstellar Wars between the Terrans and the Vilani, seeking new homes far from the conflict.

When the Rule of Man collapsed and the Long Night descended over former Imperial space, Gateway sector was little affected. Even as the short-lived Second Imperium was collapsing colonists forged out into the deeps of space, scattering across the Gateway, Crucis Margin and Glimmerdrift Reaches sectors. Records are patchy at best, but it is thought that in Gateway, colonists reached as far as Tharver, Bremen and Salur by –1700, and that by –1511 (confirmed as the date of founding of the Carlton colony) established trade routes existed across the sector.

Meanwhile, the Hivers had met the K'Kree. Contact came in –2045, and the aggressive K'Kree quickly occupied several Hiver worlds. The resulting war lasted from –2029 to –2013, and saw the Hivers defeated at every turn. The Hiver fleet was little more than a police force and exploration service, and could not stand against the K'Kree onslaught. Driven back deep into their territory, the Hivers faced defeat. The story of how they snatched victory from the jaws of defeat varies depending upon who is telling it.

Whatever the truth, the K'Kree agreed to an armistice that became a permanent treaty, and the Hiver-K'Kree war ended in –2013. The peace that has existed since has been threatened many times, but open war does not seem desirable to either party. While there is some debate about exactly how the Hivers defeated their enemy, it is known that K'Kree philosophy was somewhat amended at this time. The Law of Reason remained in force but the "fundamental principles" were overturned, resulting in a somewhat more moderate K'Kree society. Many K'Kree still followed the Principles, however.

Isolated from much of human-occupied space by astrography and distance, Gateway Sector charted its own path through the Long Night. As new states rose and fell, some others remained in being throughout the Long Night, though they saw many changes during the period. One of the states that remained in existence in one form or another was Tharver, one of the original colonies in the region. Tharver's culture and government survived (in various different forms) right through the Long Night. In the final years before the Dawn, Tharver was in a period of growth.

This period is often referred to as the Corporate Sector Wars, as the various Tharver-based corporations skirmished and occasionally fought pitched battles in space or on the surface of their various commercial colonies. The Wars sputtered and sparked from about –150 to 70 Imperial, though they did not stop the corporations of Tharver from expanding into new territories, bringing trade and industry, and ultimately civilization to worlds increasingly far out from the homeworld. Some of the projects undertaken by these corporations were impressive, such as the creation of an artificial worldlet in the system now known as Gateway. Gateway Station (now called Gateway Prime) remains an important trade hub to this day.

In -200, a vessel belonging to the Tharver-based corporation Galastrian Metals made what is thought to be the first human contact with the K'Kree of the 2000 worlds. Initial excitement at the trade possibilities now opening up became disappointment and, in some quarters, dismay as the nature of the K'Kree (and their lack of interest in trade) became apparent.

In what is now known as Year 0, the Third Imperium was founded and eventually grew to encompass most of the territory of the First and Second, its forerunners. It was many years before the Third Imperium sent scouts into Gateway sector and even today contact is limited by astrography. Imperial trade and diplomatic links were opened with Gateway states from about year 50, and the Imperials set up a trade mission on Tharver in year 64. Contact with the K'Kree was officially opened in year 103.

Gateway sector was in something of an economic depression at this time, and the hard times finally resulted in upheaval.

Starting with Gateway Station, dozens of worlds demanded independence from Tharver. The War for Gateway Independence, which lasted only a few months and took the form of a few minor skirmishes, was the catalyst for these worlds to break away. At this time, Gateway Station was converted from an industrial base to a world in its own right, requiring several projects of considerable ingenuity. In 252 the world changed its name to simply "Gateway" (though it is usually referred to as Gateway Prime to distinguish it from the system that also carries its name) to reflect its status as an independent world.

Gateway gradually became the hub of a number of important trade routes among the independent worlds, and when a workers' uprising on Tharver finally broke the homeworld's influence over the local region, Gateway became the center of a commercial entity known as the Galian Trade League. The league at its largest comprised around 80 worlds, and although a rather loose organization, was extremely influential for many years. The worlds which today comprise the Galian Federation, Trindel Confederacy and the Plavian league were all members of the Trade League in the past.

A workers' revolt on Barclaron, which spread to other corporate worlds, created the Collective in 320, and 425 saw the rise of the Hochiken Republic along the Coreward border of the sector. Despite being established by another workers' revolt, the Republic was a democratic and moderate state until a second rising in 590 placed a military government in power. Now known as the Hochiken Peoples' Assembly, the HPA is repressive police state wracked by suspicion and paranoia.

The pirate bands of Gateway sector, many of whom had their origins in the privateer groups of the Corporate Sector Wars, established several "pirate haven" states at this time, some of which became legitimate governments, their pirate vessels the basis of a real navy. Most either threw out their overlords or remained havens for the raiders.

By the late 600s, the pattern of states and independent worlds in Gateway sector was recognizable as a close forerunner of that which exists today. The last real upheaval came when the Viyard Alliance, formed of nine worlds formerly part of the Galian trade League, broke away in 750 and defeated Galian naval forces sent to reclaim them. The Alliance was then absorbed into the Collective, which became known as the Viyard Concourse.

One important factor in these difficult years was the rise of lawlessness and piracy in the Gateway Sector. Interstellar trade became increasingly risky and expensive, forcing some corporations out of business and damaging others. The Galian Trade League, based of course on interstellar commerce, suffered badly. Despite the best efforts of the League to destroy pirate bases and provide adequate security for vessels and installations, almost the entire region became what amounts to a pirates' haven.

Things did improve eventually, but not before the raids had taken their toll. The Galian Trade League finally fragmented under internal pressure, with the Galian war beginning in 911. This war pitted the league against itself, as rebel elements seized important installations and fleet units threw in their lot with the various factions. Trindel and Plaven declared independence in 912 and 915 respectively, creating their own small interstellar polities as they did so. In fact, these worlds had been independent for several years, and remained League members in name only. As of 915, the Galian Trade League had ceased to exist.

Gateway Prime remained an important commercial center right through the war, and commercial influence was a driving force in the reorganization of the League remnants. The Galian League became the Galian Federation in 925, and although much reduced in size, actually became more prosperous.

The K'Kree had remained a distant threat and considerable influence in the Gateway region for many years, but in 874 a new and disturbing event took place. A K'Kree leader named L'lluii!pri'vguurlg embraced the discredited Fundamental Principles and began advocating a return to the crusade of extermination against the meat-eaters. This action led to friction with the existing leadership, and his followers being expelled from the 2000 worlds. In 885 they founded Xuruk'xaar'keer!, known by humans as the Xuruk Empire or the Lords of Thunder, beyond the 2000 worlds and on the fringe of human space where their militant attitudes made them a direct threat to the non-vegetarian races of nearby space.

A UNIFIED TIMELINE FOR GATEWAY SECTOR
Certain events beyond the Gateway region are included for reference

-10,000,000	Proto-K'Kree appear
-3,000,000	K'Kree begin to develop manifest intelligence
-310,000	Ancients arise
-300,000	Humans seeded throughout Charted Space by Ancients
	Vargr transplanted to Lair
-290,000	Ancients civilization collapses in Final War
-100,000	K'Kree battle for survival vs. carnivores begins
-80,000	K'Kree begin building cities
-30,000	K'Kree begin systematic extermination of carnivores on Kirur
-20,000	Vilani civilization begins to arise on Vland
-15,000	Glaciers retreat on Terra.
	Solomani civilization begins to emerge on Terra

-10,000	First K'Kree writings appear
	Vilani begin space exploration
	Solomani develop agriculture
-9400	Vilani begin sublight colony missions
-9310	Vilani encounter non-Vilani humans
-9235	Vilani develop Jump drive
-8175	K'Kree begin to emerge as a world-state
-6970	K'Kree Law of Reason formulated
-4698	Hivers develop inferior Jump drive
-4520	Solomani calendar begins (1 AD)
-4305	K'Kree unify Kirur, reach TL7
-4288	K'Kree reach TL9, develop first grav drive
	K'Kree begin war of extermination vs. intelligent carnivores living on Kirrixur, the moon of Kirur
-4212	Hivers develop superior Jump drive
-4167	K'Kree exterminate Kirrixur carnivores
	K'Kree declare Axavktrr xur, the Fundamental Principles of Survival
-4142	K'Kree discover Jump drive
-4045	Ziru Sirka (Vilani, or First, Imperium) declared (1VI)
-3500	Ziru Sirka reaches its greatest size
-2559	Solomani (Terran) space exploration begins
-2408	First Interstellar War between Solomani and Vilani begins
-2346	Terran Confederation begins major reforms
	Terrans begin offensive operations against Ziru Sirka
-2210	Terran settlers known to have arrived in Crucis Margin Sector
-2204	Second Imperium (Rule of Man) declared
-2038	K'Kree occupy several Hiver client worlds, begin extermination of carnivores
-2028	K'Kree and Hivers make direct contact. K'Kree/Hiver war begins
-2013	K'Kree/Hiver War ends
	K'Kree principle of Axavktrr xur overturned
-1802	First Human/Hiver contact
-1776	Rule of Man collapses
	Long Night begins
-1700	Human explorers enter Gateway Region
-1522	Long Night deepens
-1511	Carlton colonized by Solomani
-500	Interstellar Corporations arise in Galastrian Trade Federation
-312	Galastrian Metals founded
-224	Gateway Station construction begins
-200	Humans contact K'Kree
-198	Gateway Sector named as such
-150	Corporate Sector Wars ongoing in Gateway sector
0	Third Imperium Founded
	Cleon I crowned Emperor
50	Economic depression begins in Gateway sector
64	Imperial scouts enter Gateway sector
70	Corporate Sector Wars end
75	Imperial embassy established on Tharver
103	Imperial and K'Kree ambassadors meet on Mneonon

POWERS IN GATEWAY SECTOR

The following powers are either based in Gateway sector or assert some degree of influence over events there.

THE THIRD IMPERIUM

The Third Imperium is a human-dominated power containing more than 11,000 worlds. Almost 1000 years old, the Imperium is stable and powerful, and seems uninterested in expanding into Gateway sector at the present time. Trade ships and the occasional naval sweep are seen however, and embassies to most of the major powers are maintained. The Imperium is currently involved in a war with the Solomani Confederation which further distracts its attention.

THE 2000 WORLDS

The 2000 Worlds is a very powerful state ruled by the K'Kree. The stated K'Kree destiny, to destroy all meat-eating creatures, makes them very frightening neighbors, and many worlds or small states close to the 2000 Worlds are heavily influenced by the K'Kree, mainly out of a (not in any way groundless) fear that the K'Kree may launch a pogrom on any pretext.

K'Kree worlds are ruled by Steppelords, who are in turn ruled over by Overlords-of-Steppelords, all the way up to a central figure known as the Overlord-of Overlords-of-the-2000 Worlds. Unlike their human neighbors, the K'Kree are unwilling to colonize rockball and iceball worlds, and so maintain little more than outposts on any world without breathable air and plenty of open space – unless of course they have a good reason for being there.

K'Kree society is based around the family group and the herd, and is far more homogenous than that of humans. Thus K'Kree from one world will behave very much like those form another. Their military doctrine and command structure is also very homogenous.

A few K'Kree trade missions and colonies exist outside the 2000 Worlds proper. Most belong to the Lords of Thunder, but some are ruled by Steppelords loyal to the Steppelord of Steppelords. The K'Kree also have several worlds under occupation, and are enforcing new dietary habits on their conquered subjects.

Most of the K'Kree activity in the Gateway region is on behalf of the 2000 Worlds and not, as many suppose, the Lords of Thunder. However, many 2000 Worlds dignitaries have some degree of sympathy for the Lords of Thunder, making it difficult to discern the ultimate purpose behind any given act or statement.

THE LORDS OF THUNDER

The Lords of Thunder have been active for over two centuries, but have recently become more of a threat. After defying the Overlord of Overlords, the Lords of Thunder were banished from K'Kree space. They moved into the Luretir!girr Sector in 885, conquered several worlds, and slaughtered all sentient carnivores on them that would not accept a new, herbivorous, diet. The Lords of Thunder then began a long period of consolidation and slow growth that has allowed much of the tension caused by their actions to dissipate.

However, in the past few years the Lords of Thunder have become more active, sending out considerable numbers of vessels beyond their borders. Many of these ships have been on peaceful missions such as trade and diplomacy, but sometimes even these missions have ended in violence. Skirmishes between starships, and fights with meat-eating people encountered in port, are common. Tension is again rising as the Lords of Thunder flex their muscles, demonstrate new starships they have built, and make their presence in the region known in no uncertain terms.

THE HIVE FEDERATION

The influence of the Hive Federation in Gateway sector is very minor. The Hivers (and their many subject races) make the odd trading voyage up to Gateway, or visit out of curiosity. Odd ships can be encountered here and there, but there is no major Hiver presence in Gateway sector. However, the presence of the Federation on the flank of the 2000 Worlds has traditionally acted as a counterbalance to the K'Kree desire to massacre all meat-eaters. Whether it works that way with the Lords of Thunder remains to be seen.

THE GALIAN FEDERATION

Comprising 32 star systems lying in the Gamma and Alpha quadrants of Gateway Sector, the Galian Federation is a mere remnant of the old Galian Trade League, but remains one of the most important polities in Gateway sector. Close to the only Jump-2 link into Ley Sector, the Federation has considerable contact with the Imperium.

The Galian Federation, even 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. This is mainly a response to the threat from the HPA.

The League's industrial and technological base is at Tharver, Salur, Hanumisk, Cresta and Wolden, while some worlds remain under-developed. The Federation maintains links to the Trailing states of the sector (Megusard and the Renkard Union) via the Gateway-Sardis Run, a trade route through non-aligned space where pirate attacks are common.

THE TRINDEL CONFEDERACY

Once a part of the Galian League, the Confederacy comprises three small states across twelve star systems, on the border of the Gamma and Delta quadrants of Gateway sector. These 12 worlds are grouped in a very loose organisation with no central capital – the three states that make up the Confederacy have their capitals at Tristar, Trindel and Ashton.

The Confederacy lies very close to the Galian Federation, and is strongly influenced by the Federation even though it is officially independent and neutral in the Federation's ongoing dispute with the Viyard Concourse.

Confederacy politics are something of a nightmare, with the internal politics of three states spilling over into the internal and external politics of the Confederacy as a whole. As a result, an excess of compromises hamstrings most attempts to get anything done, while occasionally the need to push a measure through results in agreements to all sorts of projects, concessions and operations.

The industrial worlds of Trindel and Taravesh provide most of the Confederacy's technology, though Trindel's central position makes it the natural choice for what passes for a capital, and as the base of operations of corporate concerns.

THE PLAVIAN LEAGUE

Another fragment of the defunct Galian Trade League, the Plavian League comprises 21 systems on the Alpha/Beta quadrant border, of which the Heptad (a cluster of 7 worlds centred on Tash) represents the dominant economic power. The League capital is situated at Plavis, with regional capitals at Tash and Bremen. The League in fact consists, like the Trindel Confederacy, of an alliance of smaller states. Industrial and technological capability is high across the League, with only 5 worlds possessing less than TL-9. Thus political weight is fairly equally distributed, and with the threat of war with the Hochiken People's Assembly (HPA), the various league factions are highly co-operative with one another.

The League is openly hostile to the HPA and skirmishing is ongoing. Requests for aid from the Galian Federation have been countered with unacceptable conditions, raising the price of Federation aid too high for the League to pay. Recent declarations by the HPA that it intends to capture the six worlds known as the Heptad are thought to be simply posturing, but tensions are running high.

THE HOCHIKEN PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY (HPA)

Originally a democratic state, the HPA is now a military dictatorship whose internal politics are characterized by political and military maneuvering. The state lies in the Alpha and Beta quadrants of Gateway sector, along the edge of the Lesser Rift It also extends Coreward into Stars' end sector.

Government is handicapped by the fact that many of the worlds of the HPA are separated from the rest by a Jump-3 rift. Even without this problem the central government, situated at Granth, is relatively weak and has trouble controlling the powerful admirals of the HPA fleet. A number of factions are jockeying for position and while the central government is able to contain any of them individually, an alliance (if one ever forms) could probably topple the present government in a civil war or, more likely, a coup.

Several rising stars among the HPA military leadership are strengthening their powerbase by gaining prestige in "unofficial" military actions. These include commerce raids into Plavian space and "anti-piracy sweeps" that may or may not be actually aimed at crushing pirate bands. At least one former pirate haven is under the control of an HPA task force, a move that would win favor with the interstellar community were the place not being turned into the private fief and fortress of the HPA commodore responsible.

Incidents along the border with the Plavian League are increasing in frequency, and it is only a matter of time before they spill over into war. However, since the HPA is one of the most powerful states in the region, the League is doubtful about its ability to survive such a conflict, and thus seeks to stave off the confrontation as long as possible.

THE VIYARD CONCOURSE

The Concourse was formed from fragments of the collapsed Galian Trade League, and another polity named the Collective. The capital is at Viyard, but the old Collective capital at Barclaron is also extremely important. The average tech level of Concourse worlds is 9-A, though industrial capacity is rather low. The worlds of the Concourse lie in Gamma and Delta quadrants of Gateway sector.

The Concourse is engaged in a dispute with the Galian Federation over the ownership of worlds lying between the two, a dispute that has led to many free-fire incidents and occasional "war-like situations". Tensions are not likely to relax in the near future, and trade between the two is almost non-existent.

Enmity with the Galian Federation has led the Concourse to seek allies elsewhere, but a treaty with the HPA proved short-lived and of little value. There does remain a possibility that Concourse policies may be coordinated with those of the HPA in order to distract and separate the attentions of the Galian Federation and their Plavian allies.

THE AKEENA UNION

Comprising 11 worlds in the Beta quadrant of Gateway sector, the Akeena Union is dominated by the Akeed, a non-human minor race originating on Akeen. Most Union worlds have a large human minority population, and numerous human commercial firms are based in Akeen space.

The Union is officially and determinedly neutral in the affairs of human polities, and the great majority of the human population is similarly disinterested, though some commercial firms have strong leanings this way and that. Relations with the K'Kree are fairly good, since the Akeed do not eat meat in any form. Trade with the 2000 Worlds is considerable, creating an avenue for human-K'Kree trade and diplomacy that might otherwise not exist. The Union is thought to have some kind of defense agreement with the 2000 Worlds. While not amounting to a full mutual defense pact, the Union can expect aid of some kind from the K'Kree.

The Akeen are fairly advanced, at TL 13, though their technologies are very alien and not compatible with human systems. Technological base away from Akeed is rather lower; the various subject worlds have not built up a major industrial or technological base, and do not seem to be keen to do so.

The Swanfei Independency (Swanfei Free Worlds)
The Swanfei Independency lies mostly in the Beta quadrant of Gateway sector, with three worlds just over the border in Delta quadrant. The worlds that now form the Independency were originally settled by a minor human race, the Swanfeh, about 2000 years ago, during the Long Night. Apparently they did not come from Terra, but migrated from other systems to eventually settle Carlton. They thrived here and achieved a starfaring culture of some power, spreading out to control 30 or so worlds before gradually losing their technology over a period of centuries.

The Swanfeh were isolated on several worlds when the region opened up again, and either allied with or were conquered by various opportunist groups that arrived over the last millennia. The pirate bands operating in the region found the Swanfeh worlds to be ideal havens, and gradually came to dominate what became known as the "Pirate Worlds".

For centuries, Carlton and the surrounding worlds were little but a free port for pirates and smugglers, but in time, the profits of piracy were used to create legitimate business. Now the Swanfei Free Worlds are a recognized interstellar polity, albeit a rather dubious and rough-and-ready one.

The Independency (to use the official name) is a major center for business, particularly arms trading and mercenary operations. According to rumor, almost anything can be bought and sold in the Independency, and pirates can still find a safe haven there. However, the veneer of legitimacy and the fact that pirates do not blatantly operate out of the Free Worlds has allowed the interstellar community to accept it, and prevented much in the way of retaliation.

THE MEGUSARD CORPORATE

The Megusard Corporate is the focus of this sourcebook and is dealt with in detail below.

THE RENKARD UNION

The Union comprises 20 systems on the border between Gateway Sector and Luretir!girr Sector to Trailing. Worlds in Gateway are all in the Delta quadrant. A loose organization based upon trade and mutual interests, the Union's member worlds also paid lip service to a vaguely-worded mutual defense treaty – at least until recently.

The obviously expansionistic nature of the Lords of Thunder in Luretir!girr Sector has forced the Union to close ranks and begin presenting a unified front in the hope of deterring K'Kree expansion. This has in turn led to the creation of a Union Navy and a central defense policy.

Opinion in the Union is sharply divided as to whether it is best to deter, appease or ignore the Lords of Thunder. Differences of opinion are so violent that rioting has become commonplace as the Central Defense Policy is implemented, and more than one world government has fallen. Some individual worlds have threatened to secede from the Union altogether, though this has not yet occurred.

The Union maintains strong trade links with the Megusard Corporate to Spinward, and conducts some long-distance trade with the 2000 Worlds. This has recently been stepped up, in the hope of improving relations and influencing the 2000 Worlds to exert some sort of restraint over the Lords of Thunder. This hope is thought to be wildly optimistic, but nevertheless the Union is trying.

Whether the rapid growth of militarization of the Union will provoke or deter the Lords of Thunder, or indeed if it will have any effect at all, remains to be seen. What is certain is that the cost is beginning to bite and this, as much as differences of opinion over the policy, is dividing the Union at a time when a united front is vital.

CURRENT EVENTS IN GATEWAY SECTOR

Not everything happening in the sector is relevant to events in and around the Megusard Corporate. Most of what is, is connected with the Lords of Thunder in some way.

THE LORDS OF THUNDER

In the immediate region, tensions between the Renkard Union and the Lords of Thunder are a major cause for concern, and have spawned some other problems too. Many governments, groups and individuals consider that the Lords of Thunder are talking very tough when they say they plan to exterminate all meat-eaters in the region, but the K'Kree have been saying that for centuries and it's never happened.

True, the Lords of Thunder have actually subjugated several worlds and there are 'rumors' (many with good proof for those who wish to find or believe it) that they have carried out mass exterminations on those worlds. There is a general feeling of 'can't happen here' among the people of Gateway Sector however. The isolated worlds that were overrun by the Lords of Thunder must somehow have allowed themselves to be conquered; surely the K'Kree would never dare take on a major interstellar state… everyone would unite against them, wouldn't they?

K'Kree merchants and diplomatic vessels have passed through Gateway sector for centuries and for the most part relations have been strained but non-violent. This is seen by many as proof that while the K'Kree must pay lip service to their 'holy mission' or whatever it is, everyone can get along well enough just like they always have done.

Those that know the K'Kree a little better are gravely concerned about this attitude as well as what the Lords of Thunder are doing. These are the people that were thrown out of the 2000 Worlds for being too extreme. Too extreme for a culture on a mission to wipe out all meat-eaters! These people are pushing for a response, but what response is most appropriate? A show of force and solidarity (even if it could be achieved) would perhaps deter the K'Kree but equally might provoke them. Diplomacy has not achieved any kind of concessions, and economic measures are unlikely to deter a conqueror. Covert action might divert the Lords of Thunder elsewhere or cripple their ability to pose a major threat, but equally it might create a flashpoint for a general war that nobody (except possibly the Lords of Thunder) is ready to fight.

An alternative might be to strengthen the worlds on the border with the Lords of Thunder and try to create a buffer zone. However, this costs money and besides, many of these worlds are currently seeking diplomatic arrangements with the K'Kree. Efforts in that direction might be wasted if the world then surrenders, or might be refused by a

government seeking to appease the Lords of Thunder and remain neutral. Finally, there is the simple fact that few world governments are willing to set themselves up as the bastion for Gateway Sector, inviting major attack with all the horrors that go with it, without a firm commitment that assistance will be forthcoming… and avoiding making that commitment is the whole point of setting up the buffer states.

One response to the problem is the increasing number of mercenary units and 'expeditionary forces' quietly slipping off to Trailing to help defend the threatened worlds or to cause trouble for the Lords of Thunder. Some of these units are amateurs, some experts. Some are patriots; some thrill-seekers and some are professional raiders and pirates operating with or without a letter of Marque against targets that few human governments care about.

While this ad-hoc resistance may indeed slow down the expansion of the Lords of Thunder, it may also precipitate a general conflict. The other major concern is the increase in lawlessness that has accompanied the creation of so many unregulated combat organizations. The illicit arms trade is booming, and many governments are turning a blind eye to deals conducted in such a worthy cause. Of course, not all these weapons are being used against the K'Kree….

Referee: The Lords of Thunder do indeed plan to expand into human space. Their next major target will be the Renkard Union, and it is a question of when rather than if. The resistance may provoke a precipitate response and cause the Lords of Thunder to take excessive casualties in conquering the Union, which will buy time for other states to prepare.

The Lords of Thunder have a number of other plans underway, including the annexation of a number of worlds in Gateway sector, which will give them a corridor of 'trade bases' across the sector. These bases will make contact with the Hochiken People's Assembly much easier, perhaps bringing about an alliance. This prospect has been worrying analysts in the sector for years and seems now to be occurring. It is not too late to prevent it, however.

In the Official *Traveller* Universe timeline, the Renkard Union has fallen by the Late Golden Age era, 1100-1116, and the Lords of Thunder make considerable gains in Gateway sector during the Imperial Civil War (1116-1130). The arrival of the Viral Plague after 1130 has important consequences for the Lords of Thunder. After an initial hammering they emerge stronger than ever, led by a great prophet and styling themselves the Gods of Thunder. In the 1248 era they are the masters of the 2000 Worlds and a terrible threat to humaniti. Of course, this does not preclude some serious setbacks in the 993 period….

THE SWANFEI FREE WORLDS

The Swanfei Free Worlds, or Swanfei Independency, was founded as a pirate kingdom. Today it does not blatantly support piracy but its arms traders provide ships and weapons to a range of customers, not all of whom are legitimate. Its yards also repair vessels without asking too many questions about how they came to be damaged.

The Independency is definitely anti-K'Kree in outlook, and has sent several squadrons of warships to the Renkard Union on 'joint security training operations'. It has also offered letters of Marque and negotiated pardons on behalf of notorious pirates if they will go plague the K'Kree rather than the humans of Gateway sector.

This policy is somewhat dangerous, since it increases the chance that the Independency will be drawn into open conflict with the Lords of Thunder, or will provoke a military response. However, most of those involved believe that the K'Kree will eventually move against them anyway, and it is better to defend far away, over the sector border, than on their own doorstep.

The Independency is also the scene of some rather vigorous internal politics at present. A series of (probably unconnected) incidents has shaken confidence in the present leaders and prompted a number of younger, more aggressive individuals to come to the fore. At present the power struggles are mainly confined to economic and political maneuvering, but in the Independency commerce, piracy and illegal arms trafficking are all intertwined. As a result some of the power struggles have become dirty little private wars. There is little open friction as yet but the 'old guard' of leaders are concerned and prone to taking ever more robust measures against their new rivals. An outright civil war is extremely unlikely but there may be a bloody shift in power over the next few years.

Referee: The issue of what to do about the Lords of Thunder is connected with this power struggle, but only peripherally. It is one of several questions that everyone has a different answer to. The consequences of a 'wrong answer' to the K'Kree Question are likely to be dire, so many leaders are willing to take quite extreme measures to ensure that their own (naturally, correct) solution is the one put into force. The Independency has never been a monolithic state, but at present it is severely divided against itself. Things are bad enough that some of the ships sent to Renkard are beginning to return as leaders need support at home whatever their external policies may be.

Those who believe that the Lords of Thunder will eventually move against them are correct, and defending in someone else's territory is probably the best choice. However, the blatant intervention of various Swanfei factions, and the open support of piracy within K'Kree territory, have prompted the Lords of Thunder to consider the Independency a

priority threat. Unable to act directly at this time, the K'Kree have begun a campaign of destabilization through third-party agents and are considering more direct, if covert, operations.

The Independency is a clear threat to the plan formulated by the Lords of Thunder to drive a corridor of 'trade bases' across Gateway sector and link up with the Hochiken People's Assembly in the hope of creating an alliance of convenience. The presence of a hostile state on the flank of the 'trade route', especially one that sponsors piracy, cannot be tolerated. The Lords of Thunder have decided that they will try to make the Independency non-threatening (in much the same way as they force subject races to become vegetarians) and if that fails they will destroy it.

It may be that the best hope for the Swanfei Independency is to cave in and leave their neighbors to their fate. Swanfei is too factionalized and disorganized to completely agree on such a measure however so chances are that it will continue to provoke and annoy the K'Kree without doing enough to actually stop them. If so, intervention, probably through a third party, is a question of when rather than if.

THE HOCHIKEN PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY
The HPA is a large, powerful and rather cynical state. It is also internally divided and essentially ruled by powerful admirals rather than officials of the weak central government. The general feeling in the HPA is that the Lords of Thunder could possibly present a threat some day but for the foreseeable future they are simply not powerful enough to endanger the Assembly. They are also a long way away.

The Lords of Thunder have made overtures to the HPA and other powers in the region, and while the official response from central government has been lukewarm at best, some admirals have chosen to cooperate with the K'Kree. Self-interest is one reason for this – the Lords of Thunder can offer a considerable amount of cash and hardware, most of it purchased at third hand and more or less untraceable. This gives the admiral who accepts their offer an advantage over his rivals who must rely on the forces loyal to them within the HPA fleet structure. Possession of a few ships nobody knows about offers certain attractive advantages.

Open alliance is highly unlikely but already some admirals are quietly cooperating with their counterparts among the Lords of Thunder. This is semi-public knowledge; public protests have been made by some officials and rival admirals in the hope of provoking a retraction from the alliance.

Referee: Cooperation with the Lords of Thunder is not as widespread as many of the HPA's enemies fear. At present it takes the form of a handful of naval officers acting out of self-interest, and is certainly not an official policy. However, the determination of the Lords of Thunder to set up a secure trade route to the HPA suggests that they would like to build on this modest start and eventually develop a full alliance. That would be a disaster for the rest of the sector.

THE RENKARD UNION
The Renkard Union has never been particularly unified. Now, when its member worlds need more than ever to stand together and face the threat posed by the expanding Lords of Thunder, the issue of what to do about them threatens to shatter the Union completely.

Even those worlds fully committed to opposing the K'Kree cannot decide how best to do it. Some are expanding their system defenses. Others argue that this is madness; they will simply be defeated one by one and must create an effective battle fleet. A couple of worlds are determined that the best option is to ignore the problem and not provoke the Lords of Thunder, while a couple more want to launch a pre-emptive strike (though with what remains an open question).

The result is a schizophrenic policy that is going nowhere – and not even quickly. True, a passable fleet is being assembled but there is no clear plan for what to do with it. Should the fleet pledge to defend all the worlds of the Union, even though some of them have not contributed to it? Should the pro-fleet faction secede from the Union and set up a mutual defense league, even though the worlds are scattered and the fleet would have to pass through 'non-fleet' systems when moving to protect the various worlds. There are no simple answers.

The Union is drifting in the direction of militarization. On most worlds this means a modest expansion of armed forces or the creation of volunteer defense formations, but in one case a 'crisis government' has been proposed, to take the form of a military junta dedicated to the defense of the Union. It seems likely that there will be at least one military coup in the Union before the decade is out, as admirals and generals decide that the civilian leadership is guiding the world to ruin.

The many foreign and mercenary vessels operating in the Union are a mixed blessing. Some are blatantly privateering, and not just against the K'Kree. The pickings are good for particularly unethical individuals, and the risks of pirating a Union ship are lower than those involved in raiding out into Lords of Thunder-controlled space.

Referee: The Union is indeed reaching breaking point over this issue, but under the surface there is a distinct movement towards resistance. This is mainly promoted by an organization calling itself Unity. Unity has cells on many worlds and sends covert operatives out to cause trouble for the K'Kree wherever possible. Sabotage, sedition and the occasional political assassination have so far failed to produce any real results, but Unity does not see an alternative but to keep trying.

Unity is also involved in creating resistance/militia groups, most of them unofficial, and in obtaining weapons for them. Its main goal, however, is to provide a rallying point for the general population, awakening them to the threat posed by the Lords of Thunder and guiding them towards the 'correct' response (as Unity sees it), which is armed resistance. Unity hopes that governments will bow to popular opinion and work together against the K'Kree threat, thus fully unifying the Union (so to speak) for the first time in its history.

Whether Unity has the right answer to the K'Kree Question or not, it is right in one area – the Union needs to be together on this issue. Whether that will be enough is another question.

LOCAL SPACE

This supplement is concerned with worlds and events close to the center of the Delta Quadrant of Gateway sector – more or less at the crossroads of Ashton, Riftin, Cinder and Farina subsectors. (Subsectors K, L, O and P of gateway sector, respectively). Full UWPs (Universal World Profiles) for the worlds of these subsectors can be found in *Gateway to Destiny*. We present here only those likely to be necessary to this adventure.

Note that most of the worlds listed here are members of the Megusard Corporate (allegiance code Me). The others are non-aligned (code X).

The region is characterized by relatively low stellar density, with no large mains in Gamma quadrant. The only stellar groupings of any size are the Silest Main which forms the backbone of the Renkard Union, the Four Worlds (centered on Goldstar) and the Silest Cluster at the heart of the Megusard Corporate.

The Silest Cluster is something of an island. To Rimward lies the Silveron Deep which can be crossed by a Jump-2 vessel from Holande to Plymar. To Coreward is Raiders' Gulf, named because in the past it has somewhat sheltered Megusard from pirates operating out of the Swanfei Independency. To Spinward lies the Viyard Concourse, but the way is blocked by a 3-parsec gap named Hamilton's Rift after the first explorer to successfully cross it and return.

Most of the interstellar trade in local space moves short distances between nearby worlds, or crosses the Silveron Deep to the Renkard Union. Leaving the worlds of the Megusard Corporate in any other direction requires vessels with drives that cannot be built or maintained locally, or the use of special deep-space refueling points. These do exist, giving access to the scattered worlds to Coreward and Rimward, and more importantly linking the Corporate with the Viyard Concourse, but using and maintaining them is an expensive business, which pushes up the cost of any cargo moved across such long distances.

THE MEGUSARD CORPORATE

Comprising seven worlds in the Delta quadrant of Gateway sector, the Corporate was once a large corporation – Megusard Interstellar - based out of Sardis. Megusard Interstellar was founded during the golden age of the interstellar corporations in Gateway sector and at its peak had holdings across the sector, though its assets were primarily concentrated in the region of the corporation's headquarters at Sardis.

When the Galian Trade League broke up and interstellar piracy began to rise dramatically, the corporation took appropriate steps to safeguard its key assets. Over the years that meant taking responsibility for protecting spacegoing commerce and making sweeps against pirate bases. As time went on the corporation began acting more like a government than a commercial entity and finally made a smooth transition to its current status as a multi-world state.

Although the Corporate has ceased to be a monolithic commercial institution, many of the trappings of corporate operation remain, with individual worlds holding a status rather like owned subsidiaries of the central government. Worlds have considerable autonomy, but must submit detailed reports of their activities to central government. Accountability is high.

The Corporate structure is highly efficient, with a premium placed upon education and innovation. Members of the Corporate's interstellar government and its bureaucracy tend to take the "corporate lifestyle" to extremes, but for the majority of citizens the standard of living is high and services efficiently run.

The seat of government is at Sardis, with major industrial centers at Megucorp Alpha and Beta. All three worlds are run by reasonably efficient bureaucratic governments staffed by career administrators who have climbed the corporate ladder using a mix of talent, hard work and 'networking', a euphemism for use of personal contacts, favors and whatever other means present themselves to attract the attention of superiors.

NAME	HEX	UWP	BASE	CODE	PBG	ALL	STAR
Dolmen	2329	D942987-6		In	512	Me	F9 V
Megucorp Alpha	2429	C77999A-9		In	412	Me	F4 V
Kenev	2527	D898314-5		Ni	913	X	F0 V
Megucorp Beta	2531	C53999A-9		In	103	Me	F8 V
Randrell	2628	E980100-4		De	211	Me	F7 V
Athene	2629	B689757-8		Ni Ri	114	Me	F7 V
Sardis	2630	A876899-B	N	In	900	Me	F8 V M8 D
Lov Fennaden	2828	D682432-7		Ni	613	8	M1 V K3 D
Holande	2928	C534573-9		Ni	900	Me	M2 V A7 D

The government has its share of dead wood, like all organizations, and is at times over-bureaucratized. Perhaps the worst of its vices is an obsession with cost-effectiveness which sometimes prevents expensive but beneficial decisions from being made. All services, including the military, are run on corporate lines and obsessed with getting the most value from their budget credits. In the case of the military, this has resulted in a force with far too many complex rules to follow and equipped for long-term budget stability rather than military capability.

Each world of the Corporate has its own government, and not all are designed along the same lines as those of the three main worlds. All world governments report directly to the Corporate Central Directorate in Sardis and are overseen by separate management departments which in turn report to the executive division of the Corporate central government. This creates a curious situation whereby the Interstellar Merchant Service, the Corporate Defense Force, certain major manufacturing concerns, and seven planetary governments each hold roughly equal status as departments of the Corporate government.

Economically, the Corporate is quite powerful, with extensive TL9 industrial capability at Megucorp Alpha and Beta and smaller TLB manufacturing facilities at Sardis itself. These factories produce a range of goods for sale across the sector, mainly finding markets in the Renkard Union. At present large shipments of missiles, weapons and entire warships are being loaded up for transport across the rift to the Renkard Union, where a rapid rearmament program is in place. It seems likely that these arms deals are being offered on very favorable terms since the Union is acting as a bastion against the expansion of the Lords of Thunder.

CORPORATE MILITARY

The Corporate Defense Force of Megusard is a unified service which deploys aerospace assets, ground forces and security formations on all worlds of the Corporate as well as providing detachments of system defense craft and ground-based defense weapons to protect the worlds. The interstellar component of the Defense Force is equipped to TLB with destroyer-sized and smaller, jump-2 vessels. These ships are mainly piracy-suppression and security vessels rather than real warships - the Corporate has never fought and actual war and hopes not to ever have to.

The Interstellar Merchant Service also operates some quasi-military ships including the Self-Escorting Merchant Ship, or SEMS. This is simply a ruggedized merchant vessel armed with numerous missile bays and carrying a fighter wing. Ideally, the fighters are used as pickets and to guide a missile strike launched at long range. SEMS vessels cannot hope to stand up to a real warship, but can destroy most corsair craft before they can close to energy range. Other joint Merchant Service/Defense Force projects include Q-ships; heavily armed vessels constructed on merchant

hulls and intended to surprise enemies after pretending to be harmless merchants. It is clear from these dispositions that the Corporate's military is geared up for security and commerce protection rather than warfighting, and despite rumblings from Trailing it remains fixated on this role.

The military of the Corporate is fairly efficient but not inspired by any real warrior spirit. Cost-efficiency rather than outright capability is paramount, resulting in a number of self-limiting policies. However, in terms of beating off pirate raids, the Corporate Defense Force of Megusard is highly effective. It would be swept aside by any real military force, however.

INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

The Corporate maintains strong links with the Galian Federation, mainly along what is known as the Gateway-Sardis Run. The Run extends through a corridor of neutral systems and, although troubled by piracy, is kept open because it avoids the space of any major power and the interference with trade that might result from crossing into and out of such a region.

The Corporate maintains close trading links with the neighboring Renkard Union, and has recently implemented a policy of backing the Union's stand against the encroaching Lords of Thunder. This policy does not extend to sending forces, but Corporate money has financed numerous mercenary contracts, hiring ships and troops to bolster the defenses of the Union. The Corporate also heavily subsidizes warship construction (in Corporate yards) for the Union.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Although the worlds of the Corporate are in some cases quite different from one another, there is a well established overall culture common to all worlds. Rules are generally seen as necessary to ensure that things get done and problems do not arise, and it is accepted that rank does indeed have its privileges. Citizens have come to expect a comfortable, easy life so long as they play their part and do as is expected of them. Those with ambition are guided into corporate channels and in due course will be granted the status symbols and luxurious lifestyle that go with success in the corporate environment.

Society is very conscious of symbols – membership of the right sports club, ownership of the 'in' model of vehicle or knowledge on the currently popular discussion topics. For most citizens, achieving happiness (or avoiding unhappiness) means expending a lifetime's worth of energy on conforming to and exceeding the expected norms of society. The rewards for such social climbing are considerable, since the 'corporation' pervades all aspects of life. Even areas like sport and art are pervaded by these attitudes; convention and subconscious conformity are the driving factors in all manner of activities.

Overall, the population want for little and have a comfortable lifestyle. If life in the Megusard Corporate could be summed up in a single phrase it would be: "Play your part and society will look after you". This does promote a good work/duty ethic but also creates a tendency towards mediocrity. Leaders and officers are managers first and foremost, and used to being accountable to higher authority, budget commissions and all manner of other bureaucratic interference. After a lifetime of trying to be the best at meeting standards of conventionality, it is highly unlikely that the leader on the spot will respond to a crisis with aggressive, dynamic leadership. On the plus side, there are contingency plans for virtually *anything* readily available to managers, so original thought is rarely needed. If it ever is, the great weakness of the Corporate system may be exposed.

WORLDS OF THE MEGUSARD CORPORATE

The seven member worlds of the Corporate and two nearby independent worlds are detailed below.

DOLMEN

Dolmen 2329 D-942987-6   In   512 Me F9 V

Dolmen lies at the Spinward end of the Corporate. A dry and inhospitable world with a thin, tainted atmosphere, Dolmen nevertheless has been steadily colonized over the years and currently boasts several large industrial metropolises connected by a nuclear-powered railroad system. Dolmen's technological base is weak; the local sustainable tech level is only 6, and most industrial production goes on self-sufficiency. This has much to do with the fact that the world has proved to be a real challenge to live on, so the colony never really became economically viable. The Corporate could dump money into Dolmen and eventually bring it up to the standards of Megucorp Alpha or Beta, but this would take many years and would not be guaranteed to succeed. It is for the present more cost-effective to allow Dolmen to shoulder most of its own burdens and contribute relatively little to the Corporate as a whole.

The world's main export, if it can be considered such, is personnel. Many young people from Dolmen enter service with the Defense Force and Merchant Service in an attempt to better themselves. This leakage of the best and brightest is good for he individual but further hamstrings Dolmen's modest attempts to improve its lot.

The Dolmen Sea, located in the far south, is the only really large expanse of water on planet. It is mostly shallow but the seabed is riven by two great rifts which plunge to huge depths. Elsewhere, rivers and small lakes are the only bodies of water likely to be encountered. There is a fair amount of ice at the poles and in some mountain ranges. Some communities use glaciers as a water source, melting water off as needed.

The capital, Lavinnstown, is located on the western shore of the Dolmen Sea. The city is quite large, with a population of over 2 million within its limits and in the immediate area. What passes for a starport is located close to the capital and connected by a railroad.

Most of the cities of Dolmen are located within 1000km of the capital and connected by roads and railroads. Some larger cities are much farther out and have become regional capitals. The thin atmosphere makes air travel impractical, and there are few grav vehicles. For this reason most travel between cities is by long-distance railroad, a time-consuming business. The difficulty of transporting goods around the

planet has further contributed to an inclination towards local self-sufficiency rather than export and expansion.

MEGUCORP ALPHA

Megucorp Alpha   2429   C-77999A-9
In   412 Me F4 V

Megucorp Alpha is highly industrialized world whose population of some four billion dwell mainly in large city complexes, several of which are built in shallow areas of sea and rise straight from the waters like artificial islands. Seabed cities in deeper water are less common but nevertheless a good half a billion citizens live below water level.

Megucorp Alpha is largely self-sufficient in terms of food even though it lacks much suitable farmland. Seabed farming and high-technology fisheries provide more than enough nutrition for the populace, though imports of luxury food items (like meat that does not come from swimming creatures) are popular.

The world's highly bureaucratic government is reasonably efficient and startlingly honest, but on the other hand it tends to stifle individual aspirations. There is a growing sense that something is missing from life on Megucorp Alpha that no amount of free sports facilities, company-sponsored singles mixers and bonus schemes can entirely eradicate.

The world's industrial output is fairly varied, though some industries are regionalized. Starship components, for example, are constructed almost exclusively in the city of Tavin. This is considered best for efficiency of production, but occasionally the vulnerability of the industry causes concern. The Corporate has not faced any real challenge to its survival in centuries, nor a military threat greater than a band of raiders. Now, with Renkard rearming to face the Lords of Thunder, the first questions are beginning to be asked about complacency.

Megucorp Alpha is the site of 90% of the higher education facilities in the Corporate. Its four great universities each specialize in a different area – Science and Mathematics, Engineering, Politics and Social Science and the Arts. The latter area is underfunded and less popular than the others, while the number of Political and Social Science graduates grows each year. All the universities offer officer training to their students and even maintain a reserve security force composed of current students which, in theory, could deploy alongside the regulars in time of serious danger. It is known that certain 'freelance' military groups recruit among these reservists to create volunteer units, and that some of these units are deployed in the Renkard Union.

As an important industrial center, Megucorp Alpha is heavily defended, with three large orbital forts each acting as a base for fighter wings and system defense boat squadrons. Several large asteroid-hull monitors patrol the system.

These are configured more as mobile forts than warships. They are slow but heavily protected, and can act as a base for wings of smaller craft. This system works well in that it provides coverage over the whole system to deter and deal with small raiders. Against a major fleet it would be found lacking however.

The system's larger gas giant, Vanquine, has several large moons which are the site of large mining operations. The ore barges and supply ships that ply between the outsystem mines and the mainworld are manned by Merchant Service crews and include several 'training ships' which carry a number of cadets in addition to their normal crew. Most Merchant Service officers pass through a dull but necessary period of training aboard these barges before taking up posts on a Jump-capable vessel.

Unlike many worlds, Megucorp Alpha does not have a single main Starport. Instead each of the city complexes has its own Class C port. Vessels from within the Corporate land wherever is most suitable, and very few come in from outside. The in-system freighters dock at the modest Highport, and lighters then deliver to the final destination. Thus the only real 'spacers town' or Startown on Megucorp Alpha is in fact not on the planet at all – it is an arm of Alphaport, the Highport.

MEGUCORP BETA

Megucorp Beta   2531   C-53999A-9
In   103 Me F8 V

The second great industrial complex of the Megusard Corporate, Megucorp Beta is a smaller but no drier world than Alpha. The world has a very thin atmosphere and is near the outer edge of the life zone, creating a rather cold world which is prone to extremes of day and nighttime temperatures. Much of the world's water s is in a state of semi-frozen slurry. At night, it freezes solid while in the daytime the upper layers melt, creating a treacherous region of shallows over solid ice, and filled with large and small icebergs.

The billion or so inhabitants dwell in great industrialized city-complexes, many of which are built in shallow waters or sprawl over small islands and off the sides into the sea. Industry is slightly less specialized than Alpha since Beta's output need not be shipped quite as far to reach the markets of Sardis.

The waters around cities are artificially warmed to keep them liquid, and floating barriers are used to prevent ice chunks from approaching the habitation structures. Large cargoes are sometimes moved by transport submarine, which is slow but cheap. Extensive use is made of grav vehicles however, and it has been commonplace for centuries for cargoes to move from one city to another via an orbital hop rather than on-planet.

There is hardly any life on land, and not all that much in the seas of Beta. Most food production is in controlled habitats, some of which cover small land masses or large areas of seabed in sealed, environment-controlled factory farms. There are vast wheatfields and pastures where cattle and other food animals roam, located on the seabed a hundred meters below the thick surface ice. Most citizens never see the farms and take this miracle of environmental engineering for granted.

Beta is ruled over by a very efficient bureaucratic government which at present boasts a crop of impressively talented individuals at the top. There is some concern about corruption in the government, however. As with Alpha, there is a feeling that something is missing from life among the general population. While this is nothing serious, the timing is bad. Beta's great orbital shipyards are turning out large numbers of simple warships for the Renkard Union and to expand the Defense Force, and productivity needs to increase. Also, the population needs to be more motivated to enter Corporate service to man these new warships, but instead there is an increasing interest in art, music and other diversions.

Beta has a single large moon, Inista. Inista is the site for the world's main starport, and has a population of some six hundred thousand in its main and secondary cities. Most traffic into Beta docks at Inistaport (or enters orbit above it), with transfers to the many Class C ports on planet carried out by shuttles and lighters.

Inista is also the system defense fleet's main base. A separate military spaceport is home to system defense boats and fighters while the rest of the system is defended by planetoid monitors on a 'roving fort' deployment. Very large numbers of concealed missile launchers on Inista's surface, equipped with special long-range missiles, allows coverage of a wide area.

RANDRELL

Randrell	2628	E980100-4
De	211 Me F7 V	

Randrell is an uninviting desert world inhabited only by a handful of individuals descended from early settlers. While technically a member world of the Corporate, Randrell is unimportant and undeveloped. Occasional prospecting expeditions visit the world and there is a standing Security Force naval patrol, but for the most part the world is ignored by the rest of the Corporate.

Randrell's thick atmosphere blows a great deal of desert dust around, leading to a heavily eroded landscape with few prominent features. The world has a developed ecosystem composed of hardy desert creatures – most of them very small – but it has never been studied in any great detail.

ATHENE

Athene	2629	B689757-8
Ni Ri	114 Me F7 V	

Athene is a very wet world, with deep oceans teeming with life. Some of the indigenous species are large and quite dangerous – ocean-going Megafauna can pose a threat to a submarine and are kept away from inhabited areas by maritime units of the Defense Force. The main maritime training facility of the Corporate Defense Force is located on Athene.

The population of some ten million or so live in three large city-states and a number of smaller settlements. Two of the cities are underwater while the third, Athene Prime, is located on an equatorial island and is both the world's Downport and its capital. Most of the smaller settlements are constructed on islands or the shores of larger land masses.

Rather than a strict bureaucratic government system, Athene has a complex administrative system in place based on factionalization and control of key industries. Workers' organizations in various key industries each have representatives on the planetary government and often find themselves at odds over issues like budget, social programs and education. This system arose as a result of corruption among the leaders some years ago; a period of power-brokering and internal dissent resulted in a new power structure that works reasonably well but is hamstrung by too many vested interests and an excess of checks and balances that prevents much from actually getting done.

At present, Athene suffers from a different kind of corruption, in that the larger workers' organizations wield a lot of influence and seek to better the lot of their own people. Smaller groups are forced to ally themselves with the powermongers to ensure that they do not lose out in key areas rather than voting for what is best for the population as a whole.

Athene is something of a breadbasket for the Corporate, with excellent growing conditions on its small land masses. Although only 10% of the planet is above sea level, this is still a lot of land, and much of it is good farming country. Vast farms employ a large number of personnel from the coastal and island towns, and from them bulk cargo vessels ship the produce to the worlds of the Corporate.

Athene Starport is a very good installation, recently expanded at considerable expense. It handles local traffic to and from Sardis and acts as a stopover for Jump-2 ships headed out to Trailing via the Miklai Deep Space Refueling Depot at 2728. Tankers and supply ships to support the depot come through Athene Highport on a regular basis.

SARDIS

Sardis	2630	A876899-B	N
In		900 Me F8 V M8 D	

Although its standard atmosphere is tainted badly enough to require a mask, Sardis is a fairly pleasant world to live on. It was settled early in the human expansion into Gateway sector and has grown steadily into a major economic and industrial center. TLC products from the factories of Sardis are sold across the sector and even into Crucis Margin sector to Rimward.

Sardis is the seat of government for the entire Corporate, and the location of most company headquarters, main banks and so forth. It is also the headquarters for the Corporate Defense Force, which is based out of Sardis' larger artificial moon, Saina. Saina is a large planetoid, one of just a handful of such bodies in the system, which was captured and brought into orbit over the mainworld several centuries ago. The naval base has been gradually extended over the years and is now a formidable fortress equipped with meson guns buried in deep armored bunkers plus particle accelerators and missile launchers in installations closer to the surface. Saina houses the Defense Force space training facility as well as maintenance and berthing facilities for most of the fleet.

Sardis has a second artificial moonlet, this one named Braihe. Braihe is another deliberately captured body, and is the site for Braihe Highport, the main interstellar port for the entire Corporate. With many landing areas for large and small ships, Braihe serves most of the traffic through the system, with sublight craft plying a regular service to Megusard Downport on Sardis itself. The moonlet is also a major site for shipbuilding with several yards building private and corporate vessels. At present all the yards are busy with many orders from Renkard. Security has been stepped up to avoid the possibility of interference in the completion of contracts.

The Sardis system is unusually empty. In the Alpha system (where the mainworld is located) there are no gas giants and no planetoid belts, though there are a few comets and rogue planetoids. Other than Sardis there are only three rocky bodies of any size:

Ramone's Rockball is a tidally-locked world orbiting close to the star. One face is a scorched wilderness, the other a frozen wasteland. A small scientific outpost is maintained in the Twilight Zone, studying conditions on both faces and also conducting stellar research.

Alphnei is an outsystem rockball only just big enough to be called a planet. The entire world is claimed by Sardis Metals Incorporated, a mining operation that has holdings on a few outsystem planetoids in the Corporate. Alphnei is a mining camp and little more.

Trexis is a large world in a distinctly peculiar orbit. It is thought to be a rogue planet captured by the system eons ago. The world's surface has some impressive radioactive craters in it and there is evidence of very severe volcanic activity in the distant past. As usual with such phenomena, the Ancients are assumed to be involved and scientific teams continue to search for any useful relics. Thus far, nothing has been found and the focus is gradually moving towards mining for minerals rather than searching for alien artifacts.

The Beta system is a good 0.6 light-years distant and only really reachable by Jump-capable craft. Like the Alpha system it is very empty with a handful of moons and planetoids orbiting a single very small gas giant. There are no habitable worlds and other than a small 'listening post' set up to detect vessels hiding in the system, the Corporate has no real interest in such a dead system.

MIKLAI DEEP SPACE REFUELING DEPOT

Located in deep space in hex 2728, the Miklai Deep Space Refueling Depot exists purely to serve Jump-2 traffic from Athene to Holande and thence to Plymar in the Renkard Union. It might seem more cost-effective to set up a port on Lov Fennaden, but this has never been seriously considered. The reason is money. Changing the traditional route from the Corporate to Renkard would cut both Plymar and Holande out of the chain and cripple their economies. Since the Renkard Union put up some of the money for the depot in the first place, and has since built a naval base and class A port at Plymar to support it, the Union would not take kindly to a unilateral change in the route. Since the Union is a major trading partner of the Corporate, upsetting its merchants is not a viable option.

Thus the deep space refueling depot will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. It is used by military craft as well as commercial traffic. In conjunction with another depot located to Coreward dedicated to military and government traffic, the Miklai refueling station can be used to reach Goldstar and the Four Worlds.

LOV FENNADEN

Lov Fennaden	2828	D682432-7	
Ni		613 8 M1 V K3 D	

A chilly, dry and inhospitable world, Lov Fennaden is inhabited by sixty thousand or so humans, with hereditary rulers descended from the world's original religious leaders. Religion is no longer such an important part of daily life, though many individuals are quite devout, and the ruling class has made the transition from leaders by the grace of the gods to heads of a secular government. Society is free and open, and governance is by light touch as often as not.

The population are fairly scattered in small communities close to water sources and good farmland, and there is little

industry of note. Technological progress is non-existent - Lov Fennaden has reached a balance point and neither wants nor needs to develop further.

Ships from the Corporate rarely stop at the tiny starport, though there is enough Jump-2 trade from Athene to Vulan to support a modest starport infrastructure. 3-4 ships a month is the usual rate, so the rest of the time the port serves local air traffic.

Lov Fennaden is very much a backwater world where little happens. Occasionally prospecting teams from the Corporate search for riches, but there is enough undeveloped territory within the Corporate that this is a very low priority undertaking.

HOLANDE

Holande	2928	C534573-9
Ni	900 Me M2 V A7 D	

Holande is officially claimed by the Megusard Corporate, though more than 75% of its 900 thousand inhabitants are not Corporate citizens.

Most of the population is descended from Long Night-era colonists, and dwells in city-states of thirty to eighty thousand souls. Each of these city-states has its own government and remains independent of the Corporate and of all the others. Most have a small spaceport but in a sparse system with no gas giant moons and no planetoids to exploit, space travel is very limited.

The 'annexation' of the system by the Megusard Corporate is a matter for huge indifference to the majority of the population. It occurred generations ago and did not actually change anything, so nobody really cares if an offworld government claims to own the star system. Only one city-state, Quaishe, is a member of the Corporate. Quaishe has a population of about 22 thousand, about half of whom are or local descent. The rest are the children and grand-children of settlers from elsewhere in the Corporate who have come in to operate the port and its associated businesses.

The Corporate Defense Force maintains a modest presence in the system to protect traffic. Its personnel are barracked in the so-called 'military quarter' of Quaishe.

Away from the city-states there is little life on Holande. The air is too thin to support advanced life, though there are some species of proto-fish in the deeper seas.

REFEREE'S NOTES

The Megusard Corporate is not the Imperium. It is a multiworld government that *does* intervene in the internal affairs of its member worlds – indeed, it does not so much interfere as dictates the conduct of matters. It is hard to see where the government ends and commercial organizations begin, since virtually every major firm has government contracts or representatives actually in government posts. This is a legacy of the move from commercial entity to multiworld government and seems quite normal to the people of the Corporate.

Similarly, 'the Corporate' (i.e. the government) pervades all aspects of life, providing sports and entertainment facilities, education and social services to the population. The multiworld Corporate government runs world administrations as subsidiaries, so there is no real distinction between the planetary level and the Corporate as a whole.

The citizens of the Megusard Corporate are not brainwashed workaholic drones, however. They are (mostly) contented and have a social system that has worked well enough for centuries, but there is still free thought and even some disaffection among the populace. Dissent is tolerated and if real issues emerge from the mutterings of the disaffected then they are addressed, though this usually takes a long time to produce actual results.

In short, the people of the Corporate have a comfortable lifestyle and a reasonable degree of faith in their system. Those that have visited worlds outside the Corporate (or seen documentaries about them) are convinced that theirs is the best way to live, if only because people just don't like change and what the Corporate does best is to offer stability.

A NOTE ON MONEY, WEAPONS AND INTERSTELLAR LAW

The currency of the Corporate is called a Credit, but it is not the Imperial Credit. Imperial money is virtually worthless this far out in Gateway sector, though perhaps an entrepreneur might take a quantity of it at a very steep exchange rate, hoping to make a profit by trading with the states nearer Imperial space.

For the sake of player and Referee sanity, once the characters have obtained local money it is best to assume that prices are much the same as in the Imperium, but note that most of the local tech base is TL9. TL12 items are available as they are manufactured on Sardis, but prices might be a bit higher for TL12 items away from Sardis. Anything higher than TL12 will be extremely expensive and hard to come by since it must be imported over a vast distance.

The Corporate does not permit private ownership of weapons on most of its worlds, and is suspicious of armed private groups. However, licenses are available to 'own and

transport' weapons. That is, the license holder is allowed to be in possession of weapons intended for use outside the Corporate's worlds. Such weaponry must be carried in locked containers which are placed in storage when entering civilized areas. The need for weaponry for, say, starship security is recognized but again weapons are supposed to be secured in arms lockers, not lying around on any convenient surface. The usual penalty is a fine and confiscation of the weapon, though repeated offenses will result in revocation of licenses.

This attitude to private weapons ownership reflects a feeling on the part of the Corporate that problems should be dealt with by the government, not individuals. This is so ingrained that in a crisis most citizens follow 'duck and cover' type drills then wait for the official response. It is rare to see a citizen take decisive action even when it is totally obvious as the correct thing to do. Those that rush back into burning buildings to rescue people are viewed as somehow having 'got it wrong' as often as they are hailed as heroes.

This all comes back to an attitude of 'do your part and the Corporate will look after you' that can hamstring attempts to deal with major problems but most of the time makes for an orderly society where 'The Plan' is followed whenever problems arise and there are few surprises.

The Corporate's interstellar laws apply within its territory, even in deep space. While not as strict as on, say, Sardis, there are many rules and laws to be aware of, giving an overall law level of 5. Military weapons and equipment are strictly controlled; it is difficult to get even a security permit for anything that fires fully-automatic, and especially for purely military weapons like machineguns and assault rifles.

The Corporate has an automatic death penalty for piracy and 'raiding', which is loosely defined and includes banditry and even bank robbery. Sometimes sentences are commuted in return for cooperation, but this is not common. Most other crimes are punishable by a fine and demotion or a salary cut (most employers cooperate happily with the authorities in such matters), or by a period of Enforced Service.

Enforced Service is not normally military but instead takes the form of somewhat dangerous work, usually in outsystem mines or deep ocean farms. Length of service is dependent on the severity of the crime; serious offenders or those too dangerous to be allowed loose are imprisoned on one or another of the Corporate's prison asteroids. These are quite heavily defended after an embarrassing incident where hundreds of prisoners were rescued by raiders three centuries ago.

STARSHIPS OF THE MEGUSARD CORPORATE

The Corporate operates a variety of ships, most of which are TL12 designs built at Sardis and capable of Jump-2. The Jump-2 Scout/Courier and Far Trader designs formulated during the First Imperium are built and used even this far from Imperial space; they are proven and workable designs which have yet to be supplanted by anything better.

Three common starships are given here.

MEGUSARD SEMS (SELF-ESCORTING MERCHANT SHIP)

The SEMS project is a response to operations in a region beset by pirate activity. Naval assets are not always available to escort commercial traffic, and have a habit of being called away on other tasks. The SEMS concept allows a merchant vessel to carry its own escort, which by definition cannot be 'poached' by Defense Force commanders.

The SEMS is an 8000-ton Jump-2 freightliner equipped with two missile bays and a light turret armament, plus carrying a squadron of 12 10-ton fighters. While commercially inefficient, this arrangement works out cheaper than lost ships. A SEMS is not a warship by any stretch of the imagination, but its fighters give it a deterrent plus the capability to engage an enemy at long range with missiles guided in by the fighter screen. Hopefully a raider can be identified by patrolling fighters and intercepted or driven off before it can attack the fragile merchant ship.

The SEMS concept has been in service for two centuries and has proven itself as a workable compromise between efficiency and protection.

TL-12 SEMS

Installed Components	Tonnage	Cost	EP	Notes
8000 Ton Hull (Flattened Sphere)	+8000	MCr560	-	
Bridge	-160	MCr40	-	
Computer	-0.4	MCr32	2	
Flight Avionics	-1.6	*	-	Model/4
Sensors	-1.2	*	-	Model/4
Communications	-.8	*	-	Model/4
Jump Drive 2	-240	MCr960	160	
Jump Fuel	-1600	-		
Maneuver Drive 2	-400	MCr280	160	
TL9 Power Plant	-270	MCr810	+180	
Powerplant Fuel	-180	-	-	
6 Triple Pulse Turrets	-6	MCr15.6	18	
6 Triple Sancaster Turrets	-6	MCr11.1	-	
2 100 Ton Missile Bays	-200	MCr42	-	
40 Ton Missile Magazine	-40	MCr4	-	
Small Craft Bay for 3x20 ton craft	-78	MCr0.39		
Small Craft Bay for 12x10 ton fighters	-156	MCr0.78		
Maintenance Shop	-10	MCr2		
4 Extra Airlocks	-12	MCr0.02		
Sickbay	-8	MCr5		
Engineering Shop	-6	MCr1		
40 Low Berths	-20	MCr2		
98 Crew Staterooms	-384	MCr49		
28 Passenger Staterooms	-120	MCr14		
Armored Hull Factor 2	-720	MCr48.3		
Cargo	-3380			
Totals	*0*	*MCr2877.19 (MCr 2301.752 in quantity)*		

Self Escorting Merchant Ship

Class: Starship, Type SEMS	**EP Output:** 180 (0 extra)	**100dt Bay:** Missile (x2), Attack Bonus +9 (+9 USP), Damage 9d6.
Tech Level: 12	**Agility:** 0	**Battery 1:** Sandcaster (x3), Defense Bonus +5 (+5 USP).
Size: Large (8000dt)	**Initiative:** +0	**Battery 2:** Pulse Laser (x3), Attack Bonus +3 (+3 USP), Damage 3d10.
Streamlining: Streamlined – Flattened Sphere	**AC:** 11 (Size -1, armor +2)	
Jump Range: 2	**Repulsors:** None	
Acceleration: 2	**Nuclear Dampers:** None	
Fuel: 1780	**Meson Screens:** None	
Duration: 4 weeks	**Black Globes:** None	
Crew: 98	**AR:** 2	
Staterooms: 126	**SI:** 425	
Small Cabins: 0	**Main Computer:** Model/4	
Bunks: 0	**Sensor Range:** Close (Model/4)	
Couches: 0	**Comm. Range:** Close (Model/4)	
Low Berths: 40		
Cargo Space: 3380	**Cost:** MCr2301.752 in Quantity	
Atmospheric Speeds: Cruising = 3525kph	NoE = 1175kph Maximum = 4700kph	
Other Equipment: 40 Ton Missile Magazine (800 missiles), 3x20dt lifeboats, 12x10 ton fighters, maintenance shop, 4 extra airlocks, sickbay, engineering shop.		

TAS Form 3.1 (Condensed)   **Ship's Data (Commercial)**

MEGUSARD PATROL CORVETTE

The *Stalwart* class patrol corvette probably has its origins in old Solomani designs dating from the Interstellar Wars. The class is ubiquitous, with scores of examples in service. Built on a 500t Jump-2 hull at TL12, the *Stalwart* carries a mixed armament of two beam turrets, two missile turrets and a sandcaster turret. It is deployed solo as a patrol asset or as part of a task force, escorting larger vessels. The design relied on its armored hull for protection, rather than its non-existent agility.

Several older *Stalwarts* have been prematurely retired from service and sold off to an unspecified foreign power (almost certainly a world in the Renkard Union). Rather than replace hull-for-hull, the Corporate Defense Force has placed an order for a smaller number of 900-ton vessels of a new design. These ships seem to mount a primarily anti-fighter armament of beam weapons, suggesting that the Corporate is worried about an attack by a force that uses a lot of fighters.

The Lords of Thunder (like the K'Kree in general) are known for using swarms of relatively poor robotic fighters controlled by a larger parent vessel. The acquisition of these vessels suggests that the Corporate expects to fight the Lords of Thunder some day. New designs aside, the next battle fought by the Corporate will almost certainly involve one or more *Stalwarts*; the class is still in series production and seems unlikely to be phased out.

The Stalwart is not a 100% efficient military design. For one thing it carries enough fuel for a Jump-1 and a Jump-2 (or 3 Jump-1s), allowing it to operate outside the Corporate and away from deep-space refueling depots. This capability has made the vessel popular for export to various worlds in the area.

Efficiency is further diluted by the fact that the *Stalwart* carries two 20-ton small craft (usually a lifeboat and a launch) and has a modest cargo bay. This is used for mission stores on a long deployment or to transport detachments of ground troops. In export models it is sometimes configured to the buyer's design. Where a *Stalwart* has found its way into the wrong hands, the cargo bay allows booty from a raid to be carried off. One of the most notorious planetary raider groups in the area operates out of a converted *Stalwart*, much to the embarrassment of the Megusard Corporate.

TL-12 Patrol Corvette

Installed Components	Tonnage	Cost	EP	Notes
500 Ton Hull (Close)	+500	MCr30	-	
Bridge	-20	MCr2.5	-	
Computer	-0.4	MCr28.4	2	
Flight Avionics	-1.2	*	-	Model/3
Sensors	-1.2	*	-	Model/4
Communications	-.8	*	-	Model/4
Jump Drive 2	-15	MCr60	10	
Jump Fuel	-150	-	-	
Maneuver Drive 4	-55	MCr20	20	
TL9 Power Plant	-39	MCr117	+26	
Powerplant Fuel	-26	-	-	
2 Double Beam Turrets	-2	MCr5.7	4	
6 Triple Missile Turrets	-2	MCr6.7	-	
1 Triple Sandcaster Turret	-1	MCr1.85	-	
10 Ton Missile Magazine	-10	MCr1	-	
Small Craft Bay for 2x20dt craft	-40	MCr0.08	-	
Fuel Purification	-6	MCr0.032	-	
Fuel Scoops	-	MCr0.5	-	
1 Extra Airlock	-3	MCr0.005	-	
Sickbay	-8	MCr5	-	
4 Low Berths	-2	MCr0.2	-	
12 Staterooms	-48	MCr6	-	
Armored Hull Factor-3	-40	MCr4.3	-	
Cargo	-29.4	-	-	
Totals	*0*	*MCr289.267 (MCr 231.4136 in quantity)*		

Stalwart Class Patrol Corvette

Class: Starship	**EP Output:** 26 (0 extra)	**Battery 1:** Missile (x1), Attack Bonus +2 (+2 USP), Damage 2d6.
Tech Level: 12	**Agility:** 0	**Battery 2:** Sandcaster (x1), Defense Bonus +4 (+4 USP).
Size: Medium (500dt)	**Initiative:** +0	
Streamlining: Partially Streamlined – Close	**AC:** 13 (armor +3)	**Battery 3:** Beam Laser (x2), Attack Bonus +3 (+3 USP), Damage 3d8.
Jump Range: 2	**Repulsors:** None	
Acceleration: 4	**Nuclear Dampers:** None	
Fuel: 176	**Meson Screens:** None	
Duration: 4 weeks	**Black Globes:** None	
Crew: 12	**AR:** 3	
Staterooms: 12	**SI:** 160	
Small Cabins: 0	**Main Computer:** Model/4	
Bunks: 0	**Sensor Range:** Close (Model/4)	
Couches: 0	**Comm. Range:** Close (Model/4)	
Low Berths: 4		
Cargo Space: 29.4	**Cost:** MCr231.4136 in Quantity	
Atmospheric Speeds: Cruising = 2625kph	NoE = 875kph Maximum = 3500kph	

Other Equipment: 10 Ton Missile Magazine (200 missiles), 2x20dt small craft, 1 extra airlock, sickbay, fuel purification plant, fuel scoops.

TAS Form 3.1 (Condensed)   **Ship's Data (Commercial)**

MEGUSARD JUMP-3 EXECUTIVE TRANSPORT

Built on a streamlined 300t hull, the *Pearl* class executive transport was designed as means to move important personnel around the Corporate quickly, but it quickly came to be employed in a variety of roles including diplomatic and naval courier duty, fast transport for small, high-value cargoes and as a status symbol for senior personnel.

After fitting in Jump-3 drives and fuel for them, and luxurious passenger accommodation as well as more modest double occupancy crew quarters, there was little room left in the *Pearl* for cargo space. The class is nothing like commercially viable, but it serves a useful purpose within Corporate space and beyond it.

The *Pearl* class has three hardpoints, but typically only one turret is shipped. This is usually a dual beam laser mount but is replaced with sandcasters in some examples.

TL-12 Executive Transport

Installed Components	Tonnage	Cost	EP	Notes
300 Ton Hull (Cone)	+300	MCr33	-	
Bridge	-20	MCr1.5	-	
Computer	-0.2	MCr16	0	
Flight Avionics	-0.8	*	-	Model/2bis
Sensors	-0.6	*	-	Model/2bis
Communications	-0.4	*	-	Model/2bis
Jump Drive 3	-12	MCr48	9	
Jump Fuel	-90	-	-	
Maneuver Drive 3	-24	MCr12	9	
TL9 Power Plant	-21	MCr63	+14	
Powerplant Fuel	-14	-	-	
Fuel Scoops	-	MCr0.3	-	
1 Double Beam Turret	-1	MCr2.85	2	
2 Hardpoints	-	MCr0.2	-	
Small Craft Bay for 1x20dt craft	-20	MCr0.1	-	
1 Autodoc	-0.5	MCr1	-	
3 Low Berths	-1.5	MCr0.15	-	
20 Staterooms	-80	MCr10	-	
Cargo	-14	-	-	
Totals	*0*	*MCr188.1 (MCr150.48 in quantity)*		

Pearl Class Executive Transport

Class: Starship	**EP Output:** 14 (0 extra)	**Battery 1:** Beam Laser (x1), Attack Bonus +2 (+2 USP), Damage 2d8.
Tech Level: 12	**Agility:** 1	
Size: Medium (300dt)	**Initiative:** +0	
Streamlining: Streamlined – Cone	**AC:** 11 (agility +1)	
Jump Range: 3	**Repulsors:** None	
Acceleration: 3	**Nuclear Dampers:** None	
Fuel: 104	**Meson Screens:** None	
Duration: 4 weeks	**Black Globes:** None	
Crew: 10	**AR:** 0	
Staterooms: 20 (3 double size)	**SI:** 130	
Small Cabins: 0	**Main Computer:** Model/2bis	
Bunks: 0	**Sensor Range:** Close (Model/2)	
Couches: 0	**Comm. Range:** Close (Model/2)	
Low Berths: 3		
Cargo Space: 14	**Cost:** MCr150.48 in Quantity	
Atmospheric Speeds: Cruising = 3525kph	NoE = 1175kph Maximum = 4700kph	
Other Equipment: 1 autodoc, 1x20dt lifeboat, fuel scoops.		

TAS Form 3.1 (Condensed)   **Ship's Data (Commercial)**

THROUGH THE GATE PART 1
WRECKED ON KENEV

CONTENTS

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Wrecked On Kenev is a complete adventure for *Traveller*, set just outside the Megusard Corporate in the Delta quadrant of Gateway sector. It can be played with any group of characters, of any level of ability or skills, though it is recommended that the protagonists be a band of adventurers rather than a large group of well-armed mercenaries.

The adventure is presented as a series of episodes. The overall story arc concerns a group of adventurers traveling across Gateway sector towards Imperial space. This adventure assumes that they are Imperials deposited far from home by a serious Misjump, but it would not be hard to substitute a different motivation for a local group headed towards the strange and distant Imperium for purposes of their own.

This adventure deals with the arrival of the characters in Gateway sector and their initial struggle to survive a crash and subsequent overland trek to find help. The adventure and related source material are compatible with any set of *Traveller* rules, though we have taken T20 as the base rules set where stats were necessary or assumptions had to be made. Classic Traveller (CT) stats are also included.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The characters are shipwrecked on Kenev, a frontier world very far from home. With no supplies and few weapons, they must trek overland to reach the only enclave of civilization on the planet. There, they find that the survival of humans on Kenev is threatened by a horde of aggressive local creatures. Before they can begin their long journey home, the characters must join the fight for survival.

Afterward they discover the reason for the onslaught – a sinister plot by the Lords of Thunder that could threaten the populations of many worlds.

THE EPIC ADVENTURE SYSTEM

This adventure uses the EPIC adventure system created by Marc Miller. The EPIC system is a way around one of the commonest 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 railroading 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 railroading or 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 cause mayhem 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**
• **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.
• **Chapters** – A Chapter or Act is made up of one of 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. Because of 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.

CHARACTER TYPES AND SKILLS

It is not the practice of Avenger Enterprises 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.

This adventure can be completed by any group of characters, though characters with outdoor skills like Survival and Navigation will be useful. Combat skills and weapons, and medical abilities, will help the characters if they must fight, while interpersonal skills are always useful.

THE WORLD OF KENEV
Kenev 2527   D-898314-5   Ni   913 X F0 V

An independent (and fairly unpleasant) world located in the Raiders Gulf, Kenev is considered to be within the sphere of influence of the Megusard Corporate, though it is not claimed. The Corporate Defense Force occasionally sends a patrol through the system and high-Jump vessels sometimes refuel there on their way out to Goldstar and the Four Worlds.

Kenev is a mountainous and highly volcanic world, making much of the land above sea level rocky or too steep for habitation. The thick, tainted atmosphere is turbulent and prone to devastating storms. Steep river valleys in the mountains offer shelter from the weather but can be prone to flooding.

The coastlines are dangerous places to be, with even more violent weather than inland. Sea travel (at least on the surface) would be highly unsafe for craft of any tech level, and even high-technology aircraft are likely to run into trouble. Perhaps as a result Kenev's population of nine thousand or so human inhabitants almost all dwell in a single region around the so-called Starport. Located in an upland valley far from the tempestuous coast, the town of Kenev and its immediate environs house about two thousand individuals, with perhaps another thousand dwelling in smaller settlements within 30km up and down the valley. These two townlets, known as Up-valley and Downstream, have a population of about five hundred each and serve as defensive outposts for the valley community. The remainder of the population, some six thousand or so, is scattered around the valley and high land on either side. The usual settlement is a semi-fortified hamlet of some ten to fifty inhabitants.

The reason for this bunker existence is a local creature called a Springer by the locals. Normally about the size of a large dog, some individual Springers have been reported that were almost as big as a horse. Springers are quadrupeds have a compact body with long back legs which can carry them at a fast lope and enable them to make startlingly long jumps. The front limbs are shorter and have clawed 'fingers'. A Springer can squat on its hind legs and manipulate objects, though they are not thought to be more than animal-intelligent. The head is flat and blunt, with an impressive mandible/jaw that can bite through a man's arm.

Springers are more less mammalian but lay eggs which hatch after a few months in the ground. They are omnivorous, though their diet mostly consists of foraged vegetation. They roam in small groups of a 3-10 adults and about twice as many juveniles, eating their way across the countryside. Springers have learned to avoid human habitation unless food is short, though they are attracted to cultivated fields and herds for the easy food to be obtained there. Groups of Springers will sometimes ambush lone humans or even small parties, and are very dangerous in brush country where they can hide and attack by surprise.

Kenev was settled centuries ago as a corporate venture out of Sardis. The project failed to get beyond the initial settlement stage before it was curtailed in a round of budget cuts, leaving the Kenev settlers out on a limb. Abandoned by their patrons, the employees of the Kenev Development Corporation who had come to live on the world had to make a choice between cutting their losses and heading home, and trying to make a go of the world on their own.

The settlers survived, but certainly they did not prosper. The only administrative body on the planet was the skeleton staff assigned to set up a Port Authority for a Downport that as yet was nothing more than a surveyed area, so these rather ill-prepared individuals did the best they could and in the end created a government of sorts. In so doing they broke with the usual practices of the Corporate and learned to take bold decisions. Not all of these decisions were the right ones but now, centuries later, the Port Authority governs a population of a few thousand individuals who have made Kenev their home and would not want to live anywhere else.

The citizens of Kenev have a sustainable tech level of 5, though the only industry is of the cottage type. Law level is nominally 4 – private ownership of automatic weapons requires special permission from the Port Authority. In practice, some individuals have obtained high-tech weapons from Corporate sources. 'Permission' is retroactively given to anyone who does so and shows willing to use the weapon to protect the rest of society. In other words, being well armed on Kenev means an assumed responsibility to deal with local Springer infestations and to lead rescue parties after an attack has taken place.

For those that cannot afford offworld weapons, 'bush pistols' are popular. These are long-barreled smoothbore revolvers chambered in 10-14mm and capable of firing buckshot or a

heavy slug with good knockdown power. A shotgun/carbine version, fed by a 5-round internal magazine and firing the same round, is the commonest small arm on Kenev. These weapons have a short effective range but this is not important in close country. What is important is that they can take a Springer out with a single shot and are easy to maintain on the kitchen table.

There was a time when the Springers could be scared off by a pistol shot, but in the past few years they are growing bolder. Killing or wounding a member of a group usually suffices to make them scatter – but not always.

Kenev is a tough and dangerous place to live, but the locals are skilled, resourceful and would not dream of leaving their home. They are polite to the occasional crew that comes through from the Corporate but find the 'Megusarders' or 'Company Men' to be stuffy and a bit full of themselves. There is also a small measure of mistrust as a result of being abandoned centuries ago.

Offworlders of any sort will find a welcome on Kenev so long as they behave themselves, but the locals only give their trust to those who prove themselves, which means helping out with work, dealing with a weather-induced disaster or chasing off Springers. There is no formal security service or even fire service. Emergencies are dealt with on a collective basis, led by whatever talented individual happens to be nearby. Visitors are expected to fit into the framework wherever they have the ability.

KENEV TOWN

Kenev Town has a population of about 2000 individuals, all of whom are long-time citizens of the world. Few would come here to settle, after all. The town is surrounded on three sides by a rather unattractive concrete wall topped by metal spikes, and on the fourth by an artificially deepened bend in the river (which, incidentally, is known simply as The River as there is only one in the valley, and nobody goes elsewhere).

The land rises quite steeply from the river, and there is a large grassy area between the town proper and the few buildings close to the water's edge. The latter are boat docks and associated stores, and the grassed area between the town and docks is used to graze small animals in safety. The herd includes Terran goats and a local beast about the size of a large cat, known as a Genra. Genras are small and fast, and quite difficult to herd or even catch when frightened. However, they are rather stupid and the locals are skilled at chasing them into nets held by companions.

The grazing area is also used for the local beast of burden, a creature known as a Joke. Jokes are thus named because they look awful, smell worse and taste like old socks, are both stupid and inventively obnoxious, and yet are strong enough to be used as beasts of burden. Popular opinion

considers them to be a joke on the part of the gods, who thought it would be funny to create such an aggravatingly useless creature and then place it on a world where some poor schmuck had to make use of them. 'Joke-wranglers' are considered to have the worst job on Kenev, but whenever anything needs to be moved somewhere a boat on the river cannot take it, the Joke is the only means of transport available.

Beyond the herd area is the town proper, a mix of old concrete buildings (none of them over 2 stories high) and more recent wooden structures. At the center of town stands the Power Station, an ugly building now covered in attractive climbing plants. It houses a very old fusion reactor kept in working order with parts brought in by the occasional starship, and serviced every couple of decades at huge expense. Power lines run underground to the buildings of the town, bringing electricity to even the most quaint wooden house.

The so-called Municipal Buildings are located at the far edge of the town. These started life as the beginnings of a starport administrative complex. Only part was ever finished; the half-built section collapsed years ago and is now a rocky garden filled with hardy shrubs which hide the unsightly ruins. The section that was completed includes the port control tower with its unreliable radio and a concourse that has been converted to a town hall on one side and a health center on the other.

Beyond the Municipal Buildings is an expanse of broken concrete that serves as a landing pad. It lies within the outer concrete wall, but there is a rough earth berm across the pad to protect the Municipal Buildings from debris thrown about by ships landing or taking off. One corner of the landing pad is taken up with some large barn-like buildings that house the few vehicles Kenev possesses. All are construction units of one kind or another and are in as good repair as can be managed – which is not saying much, given their great age. The town has clean, fresh water from an underground reservoir purified using power from the reactor. The same reservoir provides unrefined fuel for starships that visit.

All of Kenev's offworld trade comes through the starport. Exports include goat and Genra meat and a couple of local plants which have pharmaceutical properties. This provides the tiniest trickle of hard currency, which evaporates when the reactor needs servicing or medicine stocks run low at the health center. Imports are limited to the essentials; spares for machine tools and equipment required to maintain critical services such as power and the ability to rebuild the outer walls. If the locals can make do with a home-made low-tech version of something available offworld, they will make do. There simply is no money available to do differently.

UP-VALLEY

The settlement of Up-Valley, with a population of about 500, is surrounded by a simple earth rampart with a palisade of

sharpened wooden stakes, angled outward, along the top. The stakes are placed a few inches apart rather than as a solid wall, and there are gaps here and there where repairs have not been kept up to date.

The settlement, like Kenev Town, is a mix of concrete buildings and much newer wooden ones. It is powered by a small fission powerplant housed in a bunker at the edge of the town. There is a small boat dock on the river, outside the town and surrounded by its own rampart.

Up-Valley is situated at the confluence of three smaller valleys, each with a tributary of the Kenev River running down it. It is primarily a farming/herding town, though it also serves the mines and quarries in the higher valleys and acts as a base to patrol the area and keep the Springer population down. The area between Up-Valley and Kenev Town is probably the safest area on the planet, as high valley sides make it difficult for the hostile local wildlife from entering the valley and patrols deal with most of those that do get in.

The area around Up-Valley is wide and fairly flat, and dotted with several small homesteads. The three small valleys are narrow and steep, and mainly exploited for their resources.

Glacier Valley is the easternmost and the highest of the three valleys. It rises quickly over rocky terrain, with the river plunging in several impressive waterfalls down and areas of rapids. The river here is fed by The Glacier (as it is imaginatively known). The Glacier is wide and deep, and has never been properly explored since some daredevils lost their lives on it about 200 years ago, trying to reach the source. Kenev lacks the resources for such interesting but ultimately frivolous expeditions. There are few steads and no industry in Glacier Valley.

Mine Valley is the site of most of the planet's hard resources such as iron and copper. The mines are modest and rather dangerous but there is always a need for metal so work continues. There is also a small quarry where stone is obtained when it is needed. The produce of the mines and quarry are rafted down the river to Up-Valley and then on to Kenev Town. Mine Valley also has a few farming steads.

Big Lake Gorge is the narrowest of the three valleys for much of its length, widening out around The Big Lake, a meltwater-fed body of water dotted with small islands. One of these islands is big enough to support a small town but at present houses the only unwalled settlement on the planet, Larriman's Stead. Larriman's Stead, or just Larriman, is on its way to being the fourth town of Kenev, with a population of about 120 individuals led by the Larriman family who first settled the island a century ago. The Larrimaners believe that eventually the people of Kenev will be pushed back up the valley by failing technology and aggressive wildlife. They foresee a day when the entire surviving population will dwell on the lake shores or even their island, traveling to the other,

smaller islands to farm and tend their herds. Their fatalistic view of a 'survival society' on Kenev is not shared by their neighbors downriver, but there is no actual friction over this difference of opinion.

There are a couple of small steads around The Big Lake, and up in the mountains there are deposits of minerals that could be mined if the need were to arise. At present only a little iron and mercury come out of the valley. The latter is vital to the firearms industry on Kenev. While small, this industry is what enables the locals to keep back the Springers and thus survive in their little upland world.

DOWNSTREAM
The settlement of Downstream, population 450 or so, exists mainly to shelter the rest of the valley from Springer groups wandering in. It is surrounded by a high concrete wall with firing positions and a ditch outside which was dug long ago with earthmoving equipment and is maintained by work parties equipped with shovels.

Inside the wall, the town is composed entirely of wooden buildings, all of them fairly solidly built, and powered by a generator running on wood alcohol. Electricity is normally available just a few hours per day, and some houses have no power lines. At need, the generator is fired up to power the infirmary and a string of outward-pointing lights mounted on the walls.

Downstream has a small gunsmithing business and is the center of medical learning on-planet, since it is here that most casualties are incurred driving off the Springers. There is little other industry, though there are several farms clustered close to the protection of the town. This has the side effect of drawing hungry Springers into the vicinity of the town. While dangerous to the locals, it is seen as better to have the bulk of threats come into a defended area than to have to hunt them across the width and length of the valley.

Patrols regularly go out from Downstream, checking for signs that Springers are in the area or have passed up the valley. Although in theory everyone takes responsibility for this dangerous but necessary task, in practice there is a group of more or less professional 'rangers', some of them armed with weapons obtained offworld, who are experts in their field and well respected by the rest of the populace.

THE KENEV OUTBACK
Outside the valley is the Outback. Patrols do push down the valley and out of its mouth once in a while, usually to clear a Springer infestation before it can become a threat. This is rare, however, and for the most part the Outback remains unexplored and completely wild. It is possible to walk for days without sighting a Springer, but on the other hand it is possible to blunder into several groups in succession if a traveler is unlucky enough.

KENEV D898???-?
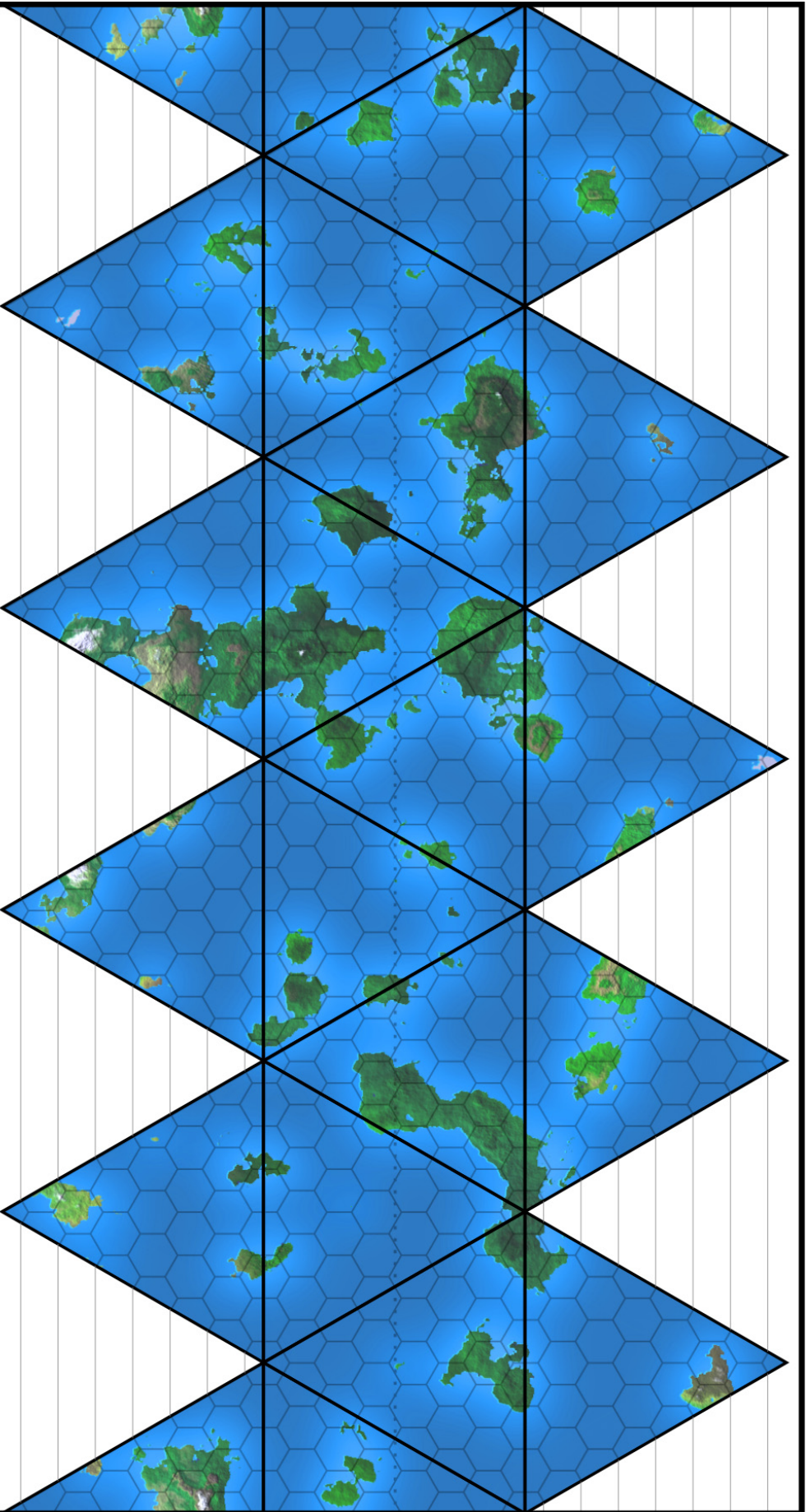
Terrain tends to be rocky, steep and heavily covered in vegetation, making travel slow and potentially hazardous. Even the locals do not know a great deal about their world's ecosystem. They know almost nothing about what lives in the sea, for example. There are records and occasional sightings by offworlders overflying the outback of large grazing creatures living in or close to the rivers, and there are numerous birds. These tend to be small and hardy, flitting between vegetation close to the ground rather than soaring in the turbulent air.

The vegetation itself tends towards creeping plants, low bushes and coarse scrub. This can make going hard, since much of the local plant life is tough and thorny. Some areas are entirely impassable without literally hacking a path through, a difficult and tiring task that will reduce travelers to a painfully slow pace. The vegetation also can conceal natural hazards and hostile animal life.

Traveling in the outback is an aggravating business. It is not uncommon to have to backtrack for many miles when a promising route peters out, or to have to make a dangerous crossing of a difficult area to reach a passable stretch. A knowledge of local conditions reduces this somewhat, as it is possible to predict good going or hazards from the general conditions.

Weather can also be a problem. High winds are common, and rainfall is often very heavy indeed. Mudslides and flash floods are frequent in areas with many watercourses or near high ground, while many low-lying areas can become boggy in a short space of time. Overall, the Kenev outback is a thoroughly unpleasant place that nobody visits if they can help it.

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

The following characters and creatures are presented for use in this adventure. Other characters can be added as necessary.

STARFARERS

Four starfarers are presented here; one crewmember and three passengers from the characters' ship. If necessary, these characters can be omitted or 'tweaked' to make them fit better into an ongoing game.

ANDREW RELNIX, ASSISTANT ENGINEER

Aged just 23, Andrew was a drive hand or assistant engineer aboard the characters' ship. His survival is something of a miracle; he managed not to be killed by the explosion in the drive room, and to make it through the crash relatively unscathed.

Andrew is a recent graduate of the Daramm Institute of Interstellar Engineering, and holds a B.Eng (Bachelor of Engineering) degree in Starship Engineering. Now, at the beginning of a promising career, he has been flung halfway across the sector and involved in a major crash. He is dealing with matters surprisingly well considering this was his first cruise and everyone he knew on the crew is dead. However, his emotional state is rather fragile. There is a limit to how many crises and setbacks he can handle before he begins to panic.

In happier times, Andrew is an engaging and friendly individual who likes to entertain his friends with card tricks but is simply not very good at them.

T20: ANDREW RELNIX, ASSISTANT STARSHIP ENGINEER. LEVEL 3 PROFESSIONAL

Str: 8 Dex: 10 Con: 10 Int: 12 Wis:17 Cha: 9 Edu: 15 Soc:11

Lifeblood: 10   Stamina: 14
BAB: +0   Melee +0
Ranged +0 (Includes Dex bonuses)
Saves: Fortitude +1 Reflex +1Will +6 (Includes Attribute bonuses)
AR: Normally 0
AC: Normally 10

Weapons:

Weapon	Att	Dmge	Crit	Range	Size	ROF
Fist	+0	1d3	20	1.5m	Tiny	-
Improvised	-2	1d4	20	1.5m	Tiny	-

Skills:

Bluff	2
E/Card Tricks	3
T/Computer	3
T/Electronics	4
T/Engineering	6
T/Gravitics	3
T/Mechanical	2
K/Astrophysics	2
K/Physics	5
Liaison	2
Listen	1
Pilot	2
Search	1
Sense Motive	2
Spot	2
Swim	4

Feats:

Vessel/Grav, Armor Proficiency/Light, Vac Suit), Weapon Proficiency/Marksman, Dumb Luck, Professional Specialty (Starship Engineering), Gearhead, Jury Rig

CT: Andrew Relnix, Assistant Starship Engineer (Fourth Officer). 1 Term, Merchant
Str: 5 Dex: 7 End: 7 Int: 8 Edu D Soc: 7

Skills:

Electronics-1, Engineering-2, Vacc Suit-1

HALFSDEN KIIANIS, PASSENGER

Halfsden is a medical intern headed home for a break before beginning his final stretch with a major hospital. His experience thus far has been broad, but he is heading towards a specialism in neural medicine – not the most vital topic on a frontier world, but his general practice experience is enough to make him useful in a crisis.

Aged 26 and rather impressed with his own achievements to date, Halfsden can be rather full of himself at times, and seems to go out of his way to be irritating. He is, however, dedicated and competent. He has always wanted to be a neuro-specialist, but finding himself in the wilderness with injured people he is willing to do 'trauma work' for the time being. He is, however, totally desperate to get home. He had planned to marry his fiancée as soon as his internship was over and cannot bear the thought of not seeing her again. He will fixate on medical problems to avoid thinking about the prospect, but will constantly push for a plan to get home. Halfsden will take a lasting dislike to any character who seems not to be 'pulling his weight' in the quest to find a way home.

T20: HALFSDEN KIIANIS, PASSENGER. LEVEL 4 ACADEMIC (MEDICAL)

Str: 11 Dex: 13 Con: 11 Int: 16 Wis: 13 Cha: 8 Edu: 18 Soc: 14

Lifeblood: 11   Stamina: 11
BAB: +1   Melee +2
Ranged +2 (Includes Dex bonuses)
Saves: Fortitude +4 Reflex +3 Will +3 (Includes Attribute bonuses)
AR: Normally 0
AC: Normally 11

Weapons:

Weapon	Att	Dmge	Crit	Range	Size	ROF
Fist	+0	1d3	20	1.5m	Tiny	-
Improvised	-2	1d4	20	1.5m	Tiny	-

Skills:

Bluff	2
Gather Information	4
K/General Medicine	8
K/Imperial History	4
K/Medical Law	3
K/Neural Medicine	6
K/Vargr Culture	4
Liaison	4
Listen	2
P/Admin	6
P/Medical Professional	3
Pilot	2
Search	5
Spot	3
T/Computer	3
T/Electronics	2
T/Medical	8
T/Sensors	3

Feats:

Research, Skill Focus (K/Neural Medicine), Surgery, Xeno-Medicine (Vargr), Great Fortitude, Vessel/Grav, Xeno-Empathy, Connections (Medical)*
* Halfsden's contacts are all at least half a sector away, making this feat useless until he reaches Imperial space.

CT: Halfsden Kiianis, Passenger. 2 Terms, Doctors
Str: 7 Dex: 8 End: 7 Int: A Edu F Soc: 9

Skills:

Medical-2, Admin-1

CHRISTINE TANIKSZEK, PASSENGER (EX-SCOUT), AGE 38

Christine is a senior Scout on Detached Duty. After 20 years in the Survey Office of the Scout Service, she began to feel burned-out and bored. Taking a leave of absence she set out to 'just travel' and see where a series of random starship hops took her. She could not have predicted this particular outcome but sees the disaster as an opportunity for adventure rather than a serious inconvenience. She is of course upset at the deaths that occurred during the crash, but her natural resilience quickly asserts itself.

Although more of a technical orbital-mapping expert than a ground explorer, Christine has both training and experience at dealing with hostile environments and will quickly adapt to the situation on Kenev. She is very practical and will advocate a get-moving approach to the problem of what to do next.

T20: CHRISTINE TANIKSZEK, PASSENGER (EX-SCOUT), LEVEL 7 SCOUT

Str: 10 Dex: 8 Con: 10 Int: 12 Wis: 15 Cha: 10 Edu: 9 Soc: 8

Lifeblood: 11   Stamina: 27
BAB: +5   Melee +4
Ranged +4 (Includes Dex bonuses)
Saves: Fortitude +1 Reflex +2 Will +5 (Includes Attribute bonuses)
AR: Normally 0
AC: Normally 9

Weapons:

Weapon	Att	Dmge	Crit	Range	Size	ROF
Fist	+6	1d4	20	1.5m	Tiny	-
Improvised	+5	1d6	20	1.5m	Tiny	-

Skills:

Climb	2
Drive	4
Gather Information	4
Gunnery	3
Handle Animal	1
Intuit Direction	2
Navigation	3
P/Survey	4
Pilot	6
Spot	5
Survival	4
T/Computer	2
T/Communications	3
T/Engineering	3
T/Sensors	5

Feats:
Armor Proficiency/Light/Vac Suit, Brawling, Weapon Proficiency/Marksman/Ship's Weapons, Vessel/Starship/Ship's Boat/Grav/Ground Toughness, First Aid

CT: Christine Tanikszek, Passenger. 5 Terms, Scouts
Str: 7 Dex: 6 End: 8 Int: 8 Edu 6 Soc: 5

Skills:
Air/Raft-1, ATV-1, Gunnery-1, Handgun-1, Jack-o-T-2, Navigation-2, Pilot-2, Vacc Suit-1

VERONI TAYLOR, PASSENGER. ACCOUNTANT, AGE 22

Veroni is a trainee corporate accountant ostensibly on her way to another job. In fact she was simply moving on after getting fired. An accountant who gambles (and loses) is something of a liability according to her superiors, so Veroni was encouraged to find another post. She does have a case full of Imperial Credits to her name, the proceeds of a good night at the tables, but that doesn't help much out here.

Veroni is a survivor as well as a gambler. She plays the innocent-to-be-protected well enough, but she can actually handle herself. She does prefer to 'use' other people to bail her out of trouble however. Always with an eye to the main chance, Veroni will seek to profit from any situation she can, though she is not actually a criminal and will not sell out those who help her. She is not above skimming some of the proceeds off a payment if she can get away with it, though.

T20: VERONI TAYLOR, PROFESSIONAL LEVEL 4

Str: 11 Dex: 16 Con: 11 Int: 12 Wis: 11 Cha: 11 Edu: 13 Soc: 11

Lifeblood: 11   Stamina: 24
BAB: +1
Melee +4   Ranged +4 (Includes Dex bonuses)
Saves: Fortitude +1 Reflex +4 Will +4 (Includes Attribute bonuses)
AR: Normally 0
AC: Normally 12

Weapons:

Weapon	Att	Dmge	Crit	Range	Size	ROF
Fist	+5	1d4	20	1.5m	Tiny	-
Improvised	+3	1d6	20	1.5m	Tiny	-

Skills:

Appraise	4
Bluff	4
Broker	3
Gambling	7
Gather Information	4
K/Business Law	5
K/Interstellar Economics	4
Liaison	5
P/Admin	7
Sense Motive	3
Spot	2
Trader	3

Feats:

Alertness, Armor Proficiency/Light, Brawling, Carousing, Fast Talk, Professional Specialty (P/Admin), Skill Focus (P/Admin), Vehicle/Grav, Weapon Proficiency/Marksman

CT: Veroni Taylor, Passenger. 1 Term, Other
Str: 7 Dex: C End: 7 Int: 8 Edu 8 Soc: 7

Skills:

Gambling-1, Admin-1, Brawling-0, Handgun-0

KENEV LOCALS

It is not necessary to detail every character who might be encountered in the course of the adventure. Stats for the locals can be extrapolated from the following data:

SAMPLE DOWNSTREAM RANGERS

Vaughan and a handful of other are extremely experienced and count as Elite Rangers. Most of the townsfolk of Downstream are much less experienced and are considered to be Green Rangers.

ELITE RANGER (ROGUE LEVEL 8/ MERCENARY LEVEL 4) TL 5 MEDIUM HUMAN

Stamina 69, **Lifeblood 14   Init +1**; Speed 9 m (6 squares);
Armor Class: **13** (+2 jack, +1 dex), **Armor Rating: 2** (jack)
Str 12, Dex1 Con13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha10, Edu 6, Soc 5
SV Fort +7; Ref+8, Will +4;
Attacks:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Fist	+12/+7	1d4+1	--	20	--	--
Machete	+11/+6	1d6+1	1.5	19	--	--
Bush Pistol	+11/+6	1d12	45	X2	1	5 or 6
Carbine	+11/+6	1d12+2	65	X2	1	6
Aslt Rifle	+11/+6	1d12	45	X2	1, 4	30

Skills: Hide +16, Move Silently +16, Spot +15, P/Hunting +14, Listen +13, Driving +7
Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman, swordsman), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Stealthy, Alertness, Tracker, Brawling, Spot Trouble, Sneak Attack (+1d6), Evasion, Point Blank Shot, Toughness, Far shot, Precise Shot, Endurance
Equipment: jack armor, 1 or 2 Bush Pistols, Carbine or assault rifle, machete.

CT Vaughan or Other Elite Ranger
9A9768 Army 5 terms
Blade (Machete)-1, Brawling-1, Leader-2, Medical-1, Revolver-2, Rifle-3, Tactics-1, Watercraft (Small)-1
Jack armor, 1 or 2 Bush Pistols, Carbine or assault rifle, machete.

GREEN RANGER (ROGUE LEVEL 2/ MERCENARY LEVEL 1) TL 5 MEDIUM HUMAN

Stamina 15, **Lifeblood 11   Init +0**; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: **12** (+2 jack), **Armor Rating: 2** (jack)
Str 12, Dex11 Con11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha10, Edu 6, Soc 5
SV Fort +2; Ref+3 Will +1;
Attacks:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Fist	+3	1d4+1	--	20	--	--
Machete	+2	1d6+1	1.5	19	--	--
Bush Pistol	+2	1d12	45	X2	1	5 or 6
Carbine	+2	1d12+2	65	X2	1,	6

Skills: Hide +7, Move Silently +8, Spot +8, P/Hunting +5, Listen +8, Driving +0
Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman, swordsman), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Stealthy, Alertness, Tracker, Brawling, Sneak Attack (+1d6), Point Blank Shot
Equipment: jack armor, Bush Pistol or Carbine, machete.

CT Average Ranger
878767 Army 2 terms
Blade (Machete)-1, Revolver-1, Rifle-2, Watercraft (Small)-1
Jack armor, Bush Pistol or carbine, machete.

TOWNSFOLK

Some of the townsfolk are non-combatants with no real experience outside the protection of the town and the steads. Use these stats for such individuals when necessary. Most will be unarmed but Bush Pistol, Dagger and Carbine stats are included in case they are needed.

GREEN FUNCTIONARY (PROFESSIONAL LEVEL 3) TL 5 MEDIUM HUMAN

Stamina 11, **Lifeblood 10   Init +0**; Speed 9m 6 squares);

Armor Class: **10** (+0 none), **Armor Rating: 0** (none)

Str 10, Dex10 Con10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha11, Edu 11, Soc 10+

SV Fort +1; Ref+1 Will +3;

Attacks:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Bush Pistol	-4	1d12	45	20 x2	1	5 or 6
Carbine	-4	1d12+2	65	20x2	1	6
Dagger	-4	1d4	--	19	--	--
Fist	-4	1d3	--	20	--	--

Skills: Pilot +6, P/Admin +6, Liaison +6, Appraise +6, Handle Animal +6).

Feats: Vessel (watercraft), Armor (light), Connections (professional), Research, Barter, Trustworthy, Credit Line, Professional Specialty (choose)

Equipment: perhaps dagger, bush pistol or carbine

CT Average Townsfolk

878767 Other 3 terms

Jack-o-T-1, Revolver or Rifle-1, Medical-1, Watercraft (Small)-1

Possibly Bush Pistol or carbine, machete/dagger.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

The following creatures may be encountered during the characters' travels.

AQUATIC GRAZERS

These creatures are fairly harmless. They are broadly fish-shaped, with an elongated neck to permit nibbling at vegetation along the shores. Although fairly large (15kg) these creatures pose no danger to anything without leaves.

Aquatic Grazers: Small (15kg) Grazer. Init +0 Attack No Flee 3+ Speed 12m   AC 11 (+1 Armor), AR 1 (natural armor), St/Lb 7/6, Atk N/A SV Fort +2 Ref +6 Will +2, SZ S, Str 10 Dex 11 Con 6 Int 2 Wis 3 Cha 2 Edu - Soc -

  Skills: N/A
  Feats: None
  Special Abilities: None
  Climate/Terrain: River, Marsh
  Organization: Small Group (1-6)

CT: 1-6 Swimming Grazers 15kg Hits 5/3
Armour: Jack
Weapons: None
A- F2 S2

BIG GRAZERS

These large creatures have never been given any better name than 'big grazers', and they pretty much do what the name suggests. Not really big enough to be considered Megafauna, the Big Grazer is still an impressive beast. They have a vague similarity to a Terran Rhinoceros or a Triceratops without the large head plate. A Big Grazer can attack with its large twin horns on the head and is protected by a tough scaly hide, but they are essentially harmless unless they step on a character by accident. The Grazers will flee from loud noises (even shouting will suffice) and would only fight to protect young or if cornered.

Big Grazers: Large (500kg) Grazer. Init +0 Attack 10+ Flee 3+ Speed 9m   AC 13 (+3 Armor), AR 3 (natural armor), St/Lb 28/21, Atk +4 horns 2d6 SV Fort +8 Ref +2 Will +4, SZ S, Str 22 Dex 11 Con 21 Int 3 Wis 4 Cha 2 Edu - Soc -

  Skills: N/A
  Feats: None
  Special Abilities: None
  Climate/Terrain: Usually Clear or Overgrown
  Organization: Family Group (1-4)

CT: 1-4 Big Grazers 500kg
Hits 14/12
Armour: Cloth
Weapons: 3D Horns
A9 F4 S2

FLYING CARRION EATERS

These small creatures closely resemble winged lizards. They will not attack anything that is still alive or moves like it is, but sometimes follow Springer bands to scavenge their kills. The carrion-eaters are difficult to hit due to their small size and agility but can be easily killed with almost any weapon or a good stomp. Stats are unnecessary.

RIVER MONSTER

This ferocious beast lurks in the rivers and marshes of Kenev and attacks anything that comes within reach. Its body is shaped somewhat like a flattened fish and covered in tough scales. With its long neck and two vestigial horns on its head, it does bear a vague resemblance to the Big and Aquatic Grazers of Kenev, but where they are harmless beasts this monster is savage and vicious. River Monsters sometimes attack boats, either by bumping them from underneath to spill the occupants or more often by simply sinking its teeth into the vessel and jerking about until it is sunk, then chasing down the occupants. River monsters can lunge a short distance up the shore and reach a surprising distance with their neck, striking like a snake at the end of a lunge. River monsters are not normally very large, but there are rumors of giant specimens being spotted from time to time.

River Monster: Medium (200kg) Aquatic Pouncer. Init +4 (+4 Dex) Attack 0+ Flee 10+ Speed 9m   AC 17 (+4 dex, +3 Armor), AR 3 (natural armor), St/Lb 22/18, Atk +8/+3 Bite 2d10 SV Fort +8 Ref +6 Will +4, SZ S, Str 19 Dex 18 Con 18 Int 3 Wis 4 Cha 2 Edu - Soc -
   Skills: N/A
   Feats: None
   Special Abilities: None
   Climate/Terrain: Usually Clear or Overgrown
   Organization: Lone Hunter (1)

CT: 1 Aquatic Pouncer: 200kg
Hits 22/12
Armour: Cloth
Weapons: 5D Teeth
A Always F10 S3

SPRINGERS

Springers are quadrupeds have a compact body with long back legs. The front limbs are shorter and have clawed 'fingers'. A Springer can squat on its hind legs and manipulate objects, though they are not thought to be more than animal-intelligent. The head is flat and blunt, with an impressive mandible/jaw that can bite through a man's arm.

Adult Springers typically mass around 25kg, with some individuals growing considerably larger than average. They can leap up to 4m in a single bound from a standing start and further if they can take a run up. Springing onto a target in this manner allows a Springer to knock down its victim, at which point it is worried by the Springer originally making the attack while others rush in to mob the target and bite it to death.

Usually, Springers will avoid contact with humans and are generally content to forage vegetation unless an easy source of food presents itself in the form of farm animals or a large herbivore isolated from the herd or weakened by injury. Groups of Springers will sometimes ambush lone humans or even small parties, hiding in close country to make their attack by surprise. Hunger is the usual reason for these attacks, though sometimes a Springer group will become possessive about an area for a while (perhaps because there are eggs nearby or perhaps for other reasons) and attack those that venture into it.

If forced to fight in the open, Springers are intelligent enough to use a feint attack by some individuals to allow others to rush or sneak up close from another direction.

Normal Adult Springer: Small (25kg) Omnivore/Hunter. Init +3 (+3 Dex) Attack 4+ Flee 3+ Speed 12m   AC 14 (+3 Dex. +1 Armor), AR 1 (natural armor), St/Lb 7/6, Atk +1 (Claw and Bite 1d6) SV Fort +2 Ref +6 Will +2, SZ S, Str 10 Dex 17 Con 6 Int 3 Wis 5 Cha 5 Edu - Soc -
   Skills: Spot 6, Listen 4, Hide 6, Move Silently 6
   Feats: None
   Special Abilities: Leap Attack (up to 4m; Atk +4, 2d6 Stamina damage only and knockdown
   Climate/Terrain: Broken, Forest
   Organization: Family Group (3-10)

CT: 3-10 Pouncers: 25kg
Hits 8/14
Armour: Jack
Weapons: 2D Teeth
A5 F10 S3

Large Adult Springer: Medium (50kg) Omnivore/Hunter. Init +3 (+3 Dex) Attack 4+ Flee 3+ Speed 12m   AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 Armor), AR 2 (natural armor), St/Lb 17/13, Atk +5 (Claw and Bite 2d6) SV Fort +2 Ref +6 Will +2, SZ S, Str 12 Dex 17 Con 12 Int 3 Wis 5 Cha 5 Edu - Soc -
   Skills: Spot 6, Listen 4, Hide 6, Move Silently 6
   Feats: Toughness
   Special Abilities: Leap Attack (up to 4m; Atk +4, 2d6 Stamina damage only and knockdown
   Climate/Terrain: Broken, Forest
   Organization: Family Group (3-10)

CT: 3-10 Pouncers: 50kg
Hits 12/20
Armour: Jack
Weapons: 3D Teeth
A5 F10 S3

SWIMMING POUNCER

Probably a close cousin of the River Monster, this creature is fairly small and far less likely to attack something as large as a human unless conditions are very favorable.

Swimming Pouncer: Small (10kg) Aquatic Pouncer. Init +2 (+2 Dex) Attack 3+ Flee 10+ Speed 9m   AC 13 (+2 dex, +1 Armor), AR 3 (natural armor), St/Lb 9/4, Atk +4 Bite 1d8 SV Fort +2 Ref +6 Will +2, SZ S, Str 14 Dex 14 Con 9 Int 3 Wis 4 Cha 2 Edu - Soc -

Skills: N/A
Feats: None
Special Abilities: None
Climate/Terrain: Usually Clear or Overgrown
Organization: Lone Hunter (1), sometimes small groups (1-6)
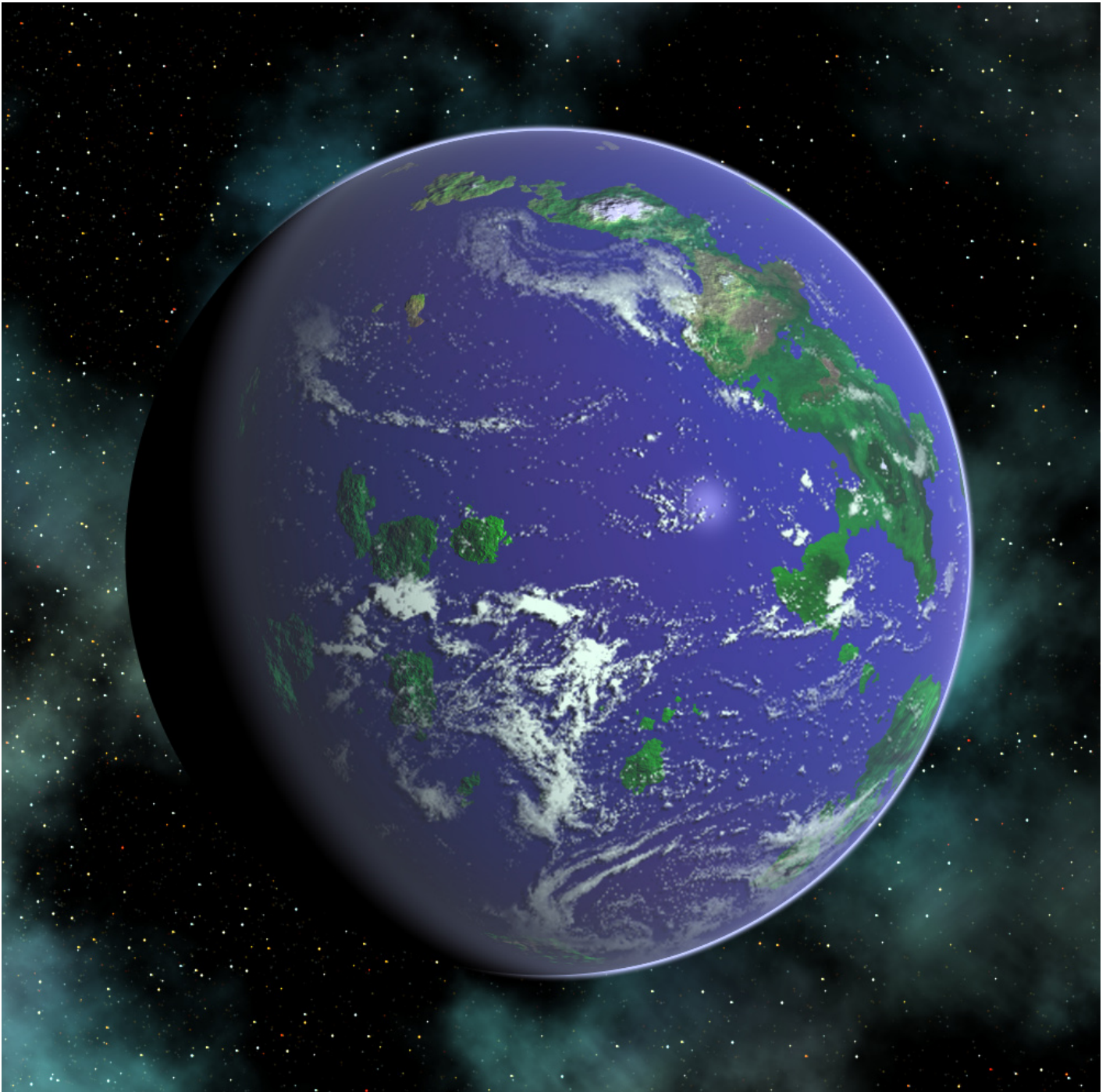
CT: 1 or 1-6 Aquatic Pouncers: 10kg
Hits 5/7
Armour: Jack
Weapons: 2 Teeth
A Always F10 S3

Kenev From Orbit.

ADVENTURE: WRECKED ON KENEV

PRELUDE: DISASTER!

In this Prelude, the characters discover that their ship has Misjumped and is speeding towards certain destruction.

SETUP

The characters are traveling on a starship, which has suffered a serious Misjump. A plausible reason for being aboard is presented under 'Involving the Characters', but in truth it does not matter why the characters are aboard nor where they were going – events have taken them so far off course as to make this inconsequential.

If the Referee does not want to wreck a starship belonging to the characters, it is suggested that their own ship be in dock (perhaps for annual overhaul) and that they have taken up the invitation mentioned below, traveling by commercial transport while their own vessel is laid up. This adds a further urgency to the need to get home – if the characters are missing too long their vessel will be seized by the mortgage holder or passed on to next-of-kin when the characters are declared Presumed Dead.

If the vessel they are traveling on belongs to the characters, they may be aware that something is not right, but will be unaware of the magnitude of the disaster. If they are passengers, the whole thing should come as a huge surprise.

Note that aboard commercial ships, weapons and other gear will be stowed and inaccessible. Even aboard their own ship, characters are unlikely to have weapons and other equipment stashed ready for a bail-out.

INVOLVING THE CHARACTERS

Involving any group of characters in this adventure is easy. They are traveling aboard a starship which Misjumps and emerges at Kenev. Thus the characters might be any group of individuals who travel on starships.

A large force of mercenaries with heavy weapons and maybe even tanks would not be appropriate to this adventure, though a small detachment of mercenaries might, or the handful of survivors of a larger force. This does mean that the rest of the unit must not be aboard the vessel, or else be wiped out in the crash, which might upset the players. If the group is a mercenary force or part of one, it is best to have the characters be part of a detachment sent off on an errand somewhere.

One good link into this adventure is from the QLI EPIC Adventure 5: *Scout Cruiser.* The scout ship in that adventure was suffering problems with her drives, and might not make it back from her mission after all.

In any case, the adventure begins as the characters' ship emerges from Jump and immediately begins to disintegrate. The Referee can assume that there are no survivors other than the player-characters if he wishes, or could use the NPC starfarers detailed in this adventure. Additional NPCs can be added if the Referee desires, perhaps as backup characters or as spear-catchers…

If the Referee wishes to incorporate this adventure into an ongoing campaign he will need to alter the opening to reflect a different starting point. The events of the crash can be amended accordingly.

SUGGESTED BACKSTORY

The following scenario is suggested to involve the characters. Another can easily be substituted to suit the needs of an ongoing campaign:

Baron Umberto Hault-Rossiter is an important property magnate in the Rimward-Trailing end of Ley Sector. He specializes in buying up sites on apparently worthless outsystem rockballs, then attracting mining companies, research organizations and sometimes the Imperial military to build an installation there. His eye for a future hot property is well known, as is his preference for working with trusted freelancers.

So, with the characters' ship in dock for maintenance, Baron Hault-Rossiter's invitation to meet with him looked very attractive. High Passage tickets to the meeting plus Cr1,000 in hand… not bad just for turning up to talk about a job. It's well known that once you get into Hault-Rossiter's circle of trusted people he is a very generous employer. Whatever the job is to be, it'll pay well.

And so the characters are taking their ease aboard the Subsidized Liner *Iskiine Laamu*, four days out of Evernia Memorial Highport. The food is good, the crew are efficient and the surroundings comfortable. The future looks promising. And then…

SCENE 1: THIRTY-SIX SECONDS OF MAYHEM (KEY SCENE)

It happens fast.

In the early hours of ship's night, the characters are woken up by a horrible sensation; a sudden queasy feeling that something is wrong. Then comes the shock of Jump emergence. A bad one. Some people become unconscious, some are doubled up vomiting, others reeling about disorientated and confused. Even those who are more or less coherent are unable to act for a couple of seconds due to shock. The waves of catastrophe wash over the helpless starfarers as damage alarms begin to wail.

The ship staggers, vibrating all along her length. Experienced starfarers may recognize the sensation of an explosion aboard. Gravity, lights and life support cut in and out for a few seconds. Even when the deckplates come back on, it is obvious that they cannot compensate properly for maneuvers, and that the ship is yawing wildly.

Each character must make a DC20 Fortitude save. Those that pass are able to act, though they will still be dazed and somewhat incoherent. Those that fail must make another save at DC10. If both are failed, the character is unconscious and probably bleeding from the nose. He or she is helpless. If the second save is made the character is vomiting profusely and unable to do anything but cling to the nearest object, person or fitting. (CT: Roll 12+, DM +2 if END 9+, to avoid helpless vomiting. If failed, roll 9+, DM +2 if END 9+, to avoid unconsciousness.

Ten seconds after the Emergence, when most people are still dazed and everyone is still reeling around, the characters sense applied thrust. Someone is trying to regain control of the ship. Either the pilot is some kind of iron man with the reflexes of a cat or else desperation has just created a hero.

The yaw slows somewhat but there is a nasty judder running the length of the ship. It feels like the vessel is skimming atmosphere. More damage alarms begin to scream and another explosion rocks the ship as the ship-wide intercom comes to life. "Captain to the Bridge, please," says a hysterically calm voice as the ship begins to buck and roll. Characters not clinging to something for dear life – i.e. anyone trying to do anything at all, or who is unconscious, will suffer 2d6 Stamina damage unless a successful DC15 Reflex save is made, in which case damage is halved. (CT: 1D damage, roll 9+ to take half damage instead, DM +2 if Dex 7+).

Several times the lights and gravity fade in and out. The ship gradually pulls out of her roll and seems to be moving in a predictable direction, though with frequent harsh lurches.

Thirty-six seconds after the first inkling that something is wrong, things settle down a little. The ship remains on an even keel for a few seconds at a time. Then the intercom comes to life on a shipwide channel:

"This is the Pilot. We have emerged from Jump dangerously close to an unidentified planet and are descending into atmosphere at great speed. The helm is answering manual control but I have no avionics. Internal security doors have locked down and remain sealed. I can't get them open and I can't leave my station. Please remain calm while I try to establish a stable orbit. Captain or first officer please report in…."

The characters are locked in a passenger area aboard a stricken starship. Things look dicey.

SCENE 2: GOING DOWN (KEY SCENE)

Minutes crawl by as the characters try to get out of the passenger area, to contact anyone at all on the intercom. The lurching and juddering becomes worse. Starfarers aboard will have a horrible suspicion that the ship is falling deeper into atmosphere. It is impossible to even stand up for long, and the bulkhead hatches will not open.

Finally, after about 25 minutes of this, the intercom comes back on, over the shipwide address channel.

"This is the Bridge, Pilot speaking. We're in serious trouble. We have some thrust but not enough to regain orbit – and we're losing that. There is no response from engineering nor from any other crew. The damage board says that the Boat is disabled and we have a fire in the engineering spaces. I have only one possible option. I'm attempting an emergency landing on the surface. I've picked up a port beacon and I'm headed for that, but it's in mountains so I'll drop us in short. The ship is in full emergency lockdown and I can't get to the overrides. The captain or first officer could, but I don't know where they are. I think engineering is gone. Even the internal monitors are out. I have to get us on the ground before we lose everything else."

The ship lurches horribly several times, then the intercom comes back on. The pilot's tone is urgent and breathless: "Bridge here, to anyone left alive back there, this is what I know… big world, dense atmosphere, tainted but breathable. No traffic in system I can detect. No radio besides the port beacon, no response to our distress signal. Astrogation computer says unknown system, outside Ley sector. Maybe outside the Imperium… the passenger beds are crash-

rated. Deploy the emergency harness. Doors will open automatically… I think… Coming in very hot. There's an open area ahead, I'm going to… BRACE FOR IMPACT! BRACE FOR IM…"

The ship hits the ground hard and fast. It's a near-perfect crash-landing given her velocity, tail first then sliding in as gently as possible. That means tearing along thorough the undergrowth as high speed, smashing the ship to pieces as she goes, but it's better than diving in nose first.

Characters securely strapped into a seat or emergency harness will suffer 1d6 Lifeblood and an additional 2d6 Stamina damage (CT: 2D damage.) anyone who is loose at the moment of impact suffers 3d6 Lifeblood damage (CT: 4D damage) unless a DC15 Reflex save is made. If so, half damage is taken. (CT: roll 9+ to half damage, DM +2 if DEX 9+).

Everyone loses consciousness during the crash for at least a few seconds. As they groggily come around, the magnitude of the disaster begins to become apparent.

SCENE 3: TAKING STOCK (KEY SCENE)

The Subsidized Liner *Iskiine Laamu* is in a terrible state. At the moment of impact everything – lights, life support and everything else – went offline, but after a few seconds the backups cut in, ensuring that there is light and air for the time being. The security system has gone into crash mode, unlocking the hatches and valves in areas but not opening them. It is now possible to force the doors open manually and move around what is left of the ship.

NOTE: remember that NPC survivors will also have suffered injuries in the crash and may need medical attention.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The liner is lying on her belly, tipped over slightly with her nose buried in the ground. Most of the lower deck and everything forward of the main Bridge bulkhead is gone, smashed to fragments as the ship dug herself a trough in the alien ground.

There is absolutely nothing left of the control areas and forward crew accommodation, which means that the heroic pilot, the ship's locker (containing the group's weaponry and most of their equipment) and most of the critical flight systems are gone. Most of the lower cargo deck (and therefore the cargo) is also smashed up, though parts of the cargo may be salvageable.

Engineering is gutted. The obvious (and correct) conclusion is that the Misjump Emergence caused an explosion, which killed everyone in the area and wrecked the main powerplant.

Part of the backup system remains, though it is damaged. The ship is currently running on stored power. The fire is now out in engineering, but it remains dangerous to enter until the suppression gases and fumes disperse.

The passenger area is in reasonable shape, and it is here that survivors are likely to be found. Like the characters, they were trapped by the security doors and unable to do anything about the crash. The exception is Andrew Relnix, the ship's drive hand, who happened to be working outside Engineering when the drives blew. He was unable to enter the engineering space during the crash (it was open to space and he had no suit) but he did manage to assist the pilot by re-routing power from the emergency backups using a maintenance console.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Andrew is in the best position to answer questions. All he knows is that he was off-duty, asleep, when the first officer woke him and ordered him to report to engineering. There, he found the Astrogator, Captain and First Officer conferring with the Chief Engineer about some minor anomaly in the Jump field. It looked like nothing serious, but the Engineer ordered a sleepy Andrew to check the power flow to the Jump grid at every maintenance station, and off he went. As he was taking readings from the first intersection and passing them to the Engineer for comparison with what the main engineering systems were reading, he felt the Emergence begin and passed out. When he awoke, his console said that Engineering was open to space, the ship had no power and there was a fire in the Jump drive, which eventually went out on its own as the oxygen ran out.

Andrew then spent the next 25 minutes inventing a way to get power out of the backup system and feed it to the drives. Characters with a knowledge of starship engineering will realize that he actually did a pretty good job of it and is probably the only reason any of them are alive. Andrew isn't sure if he could have done better though, and could use some reassurance.

Referee: Andrew's story is true and correct. He is not to blame for any part of this freak accident, and did better than such an inexperienced individual might be expected to. He has just lost his entire crew though and once the initial shock wears off he will need reassurance and direction. As the surviving crewmember he technically should be in charge but is in no way suited to do so. He needs to be told what to do right now, and will be grateful even for obvious make-work. A character who decisively takes charge at this point is likely to earn Andrew's personal loyalty on a fairly permanent basis.

OUTSIDE

Little can be seen outside. It is dark and cold, and there is both wind and intermittent heavy rainfall. The good news is that the air, while dense, is just about breathable and the atmospheric taint is not so dangerous as to make water undrinkable if it can be purified. Venturing outside in the dark might not be a very good idea, so perhaps the characters will want to collect what salvage they can find while waiting for dawn.

The ship's communications gear is smashed and personal communicators do not have much range. Thus there is no way to make contact with the outside world, other than finding a settlement.

SALVAGE

All of the ship's boats and vehicles are smashed, and most emergency equipment was destroyed along with the ship's locker. The characters have whatever was in their staterooms (which will NOT include weaponry; passenger ships do not allow weapons in personal quarters) and whatever they can salvage. The characters will have to search the ship for what they can get, and may not necessarily find everything available in a given area. A lengthy salvage operation could extract tens or even hundreds of thousands of credits worth of components and spares, but the characters have no time nor the ability to carry them. They are instead looking for survival equipment, and that is in short supply.

A quick breakdown of what is available follows:

Engineering: Engineering is very badly trashed and contains the remains of several crewmembers, not all of them whole. An assortment of tools can be found lying around, plus two emergency softsuits (temporary vac suits for use in emergency). There is a standard (unloaded) shotgun on a bracket on the wall, and 20 rounds for it in holders on the sling.

Plenty more could be salvaged but this would take time and require transport.

Passenger Area: The clothing and personal items of each passenger are more or less intact, along with an emergency softsuit and a disposable combination filter/compressor mask (which will work for a week or so before failing) per passenger. Neither of these items is completely vital to survival on Kenev but they might be useful.

There is enough power to run a library terminal for a while; long enough to access what little information the pilot was able to obtain on the planet the characters have crashed on.

Crew Quarters: The crew quarters are badly damaged but some items are salvageable. Each cabin contains a softsuit and emergency mask as per passenger quarters. The crew's personal effects include an assortment of clothing including some cold weather and 'outdoor' type clothing.

In addition, the captain's desk has his 'mutiny gun' in it, a standard autopistol with 3 magazines of 15 rounds and no additional spare ammunition. There is also a locker on the crew lounge wall which can be forced open with some effort. It contains two snub revolvers each with 20 rounds of HEAP ammunition, and two cutlasses, plus belts and webbing for all four weapons.

Boat Bay: The boat bay was torn open by the engineering explosion, and the ship's launch is crippled. Its powerplant is operable however. Aboard there are two intact Vehicle Survival Kits (see Library Data) and a 7mm Carbine with five loaded 20-round magazines.

Bridge: There is nothing left of the bridge area. No salvage is possible.

Cargo Bay: The cargo bay contains several intact shipping crates. However, there is little of immediate use among them. The handling waldoes are smashed so even unpacking a crate would be a major task. There are 12 tons of raw copper and 26 tons of steel ingots aboard, plus a 4-ton shipment of TL12 electronic components. The metals would be very valuable to the Kenev locals, while the components would be valuable in the Megusard Corporate.

There are no weapons in the cargo area, but an assortment of tools and blunt instruments can be found lying around.

ACT 1: MARCHING THROUGH KENEV

In this Act, the characters must travel overland to reach the relative safety of the starport area. Each type of terrain is treated as a separate scene, though it is likely that the characters will pass through each terrain type more than once.

SCENE 1: SETTING OUT (KEY SCENE)

The survivors start their trek towards safety.

NO OTHER CHOICES

If they want to, the survivors can sit tight for a while, but it will eventually become obvious that they are going to have to go for help – there is no indication that rescue is on its way or will be coming at all. The ship's computer has a partial world map available, and there is one other broad clue as to where to go – the pilot said he was putting the ship down sort of the starport but was heading for it. The wreck lies at the end of a long furrow which points broadly northwest. There is high ground in that direction, and hopefully some kind of settlement.

If the characters have a map, things will be easier of course. The only features on it are what the ship's sensors picked up, with no explanation or identification, but the fact that there is some kind of settlement to the northwest, and nothing but sea or wilderness in all other directions, should be apparent.

At this point, if not before, the Referee should make available the data presented in Players' Information, in Library Data below.

TRAVELING OVERLAND

Hexes on the map are 10km across, and require varying times to cross them depending on how heavily encumbered the group are as well as the type of terrain in the hex. The characters will encounter five main types of terrain in their march: Rocky, Marshy, River, Overgrown and Clear. Even clear terrain will be fairly slow going since it tends to be rocky and overgrown (though not so rocky or overgrown as those types of terrain).

Base movement speed for a party marching overland carrying enough supplies for the journey is 30km in 8 hours of marching. However, if the group contains 'walking wounded' or insists on carrying vast amounts of equipment then this is reduced to 20km per day. A party carrying stretchers will move even more slowly; 10km per day base speed in clear terrain. Two characters able to walk are needed to carry each stretcher.

Movement speeds assume roughly 8 hours per day on the march. More than this is not really feasible after the first day. This speed is tiring enough; trying to march for longer will result in stupid mistakes. The Referee should impose penalties on all skill checks and increase the chances of an encounter if a party tries to push on for longer. Movement at night, even with light sources, is stupid at best.

BASE MOVEMENT SPEEDS

Terrain	Speed in km per day of marching (Time required to cross hex)		
	Carrying Supplies	Heavily Encumbered	Carrying Wounded
Clear	30 (2.6hrs)	20 (5.3 hrs)	10 (8hrs)
Rocky	15 (5.2 hrs)	10 (8hrs)	5 (16hrs)
Overgrown	15 (5.2 hrs)	10 (8hrs)	5 (16 hrs)
River*	40 (2 hrs)	30 (8hrs)	20 (5.3 hrs)
Marsh	10 (8hrs)	5 (16 hrs)	2 (40 hrs)

* If moving banks following path of the river

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS

Each day, the Referee should check twice for an encounter, once while the characters are on the march and once when they are resting. If an event occurs then the Referee should roll 2d6 on the table below appropriate to the terrain type to determine the nature of the encounter. An encounter with animals that occurs during the night may involve creatures invading the group's camp, or simply being heard nearby. Terrain or event type results that occur when the group is camped can be ignored, assumed be nearby and set to occur just after the group gets going in the morning, or can be applied in a 'suddenly you realize that you've made camp right on the edge of a bog' manner if appropriate.

Note that although two checks are made per day, a slavish 'midnight and noon' time frame should be avoided. The Referee should play fast and loose within the encounter framework to keep things interesting.

The chance of an encounter is given on the table for each terrain type, first as the DC on a straight check that an event or encounter will take place (T20) and then as a 2D roll (CT).

There is a chance to avoid any given encounter. This is listed under the encounter description.

SCENE 2: CLEAR TERRAIN

Clear Terrain is the easiest to move through. It is not without its hazards however.

Clear Terrain is of course not entirely clear nor is it easy going. Although it is roughly level it is not by any means flat. Clear terrain has heavy vegetation in places and some rocky and

marshy areas. Backtracking is sometimes necessary and long detours around impassable areas are not uncommon. The chance of encountering a serious hazard is lower than in other terrain types.

CLEAR Terrain
Chance of Encounter: DC14 (CT: 9+)

2d6 (2D)	Encounter/Event
2	Swamp!
3	Site of Slaughter
4	Family Group of Springers (3-10)
5	Lone Adult Springer
6	Not As Clear As We Thought
7	Family Group of Springers (3-10)
8	Big Grazers
9	Flying Carrion-Eaters
10	Downpour!
11	Sinkhole
12	Someone Lived Here???

SCENE 3: ROCKY TERRAIN
Rocky terrain is harsh and unforgiving.

Rocky Terrain is characterized by harsh outcrops and scattered boulders with scree slopes and rugged areas carved by water runoff between them. Small watercourses are not uncommon. Rocky terrain is hard going but not as overgrown as other terrain types. Visibility is very restricted however, and encounters can occur rather suddenly. Travellers are more likely to encounter events than animals in Rocky terrain.

ROCKY Terrain
Chance of Encounter: DC9 (CT: 6+)

2d6 (2D)	Encounter/Event
2	Impassable
3	Chasm
4	Pond Life
5	Family Group of Springers (3-10)
6	Flying Carrion-Eaters
7	Difficult Traverse
8	Deep Water
9	Cave
10	Downpour!
11	Sinkhole
12	Outpost

SCENE 4: OVERGROWN TERRAIN
Overgrown Terrain is hard going and dangerous in all manner of ways

Overgrown Terrain has its share of minor watercourses and rocky areas, but for the most part is flat or rolling, covered in thick and tough vegetation up to 3m high in places. Visibility is very poor so it is easy to blunder into encounters. Open areas are used by the local wildlife to get about or to graze, so animal encounters are quite likely.

OVERGROWN Terrain
Chance of Encounter: DC7 (CT: 5+)

2d6 (2D)	Encounter/Event
2	Barrier of Thorns
3	Large Group of Springers (6-20)
4	Big Grazers
5	Recent Kill
6	Family Group of Springers (3-10)
7	Tough Going
8	Watercourse
9	Lost!
10	Family Group of Springers (3-10)
11	Ambush!
12	Carpet of Critters

SCENE 5: RIVER TERRAIN
Moving along a watercourse is one thing. Crossing one is entirely another.

River Terrain is found on the banks of and close to a major watercourse. It is cut by many small watercourses and pools, which must be negotiated, but offers a relatively clear route close to the river. If the river must be crossed then this is a major undertaking. The group may need to improvise floats or even a raft. Crossing a major watercourse will take up an entire day's march. The Referee should require Swim checks or Survival skill rolls to deal with the hazards of a crossing, and may add in additional difficulties if desired.

RIVER Terrain
Chance of Encounter: DC12 (CT: 8+)

2d6 (2D)	Encounter/Event
2	Flooded
3	Flooding
4	Aquatic Grazers
5	Pond Life
6	Big Grazers
7	Currents and Eddies
8	Floating Vegetation
9	Family Group of Springers (3-10)
10	River Monster
11	Swamp!
12	Wrecked Boat

SCENE 6: MARSH TERRAIN

Only a fool deliberately enters marsh terrain on Kenev unless there is no alternative.

Marsh Terrain is dangerous and extremely slow going. A group that knowingly enters a Marsh is asking for whatever trouble befalls them. Marsh terrain is still quite overgrown in places, and what appears to be dry land can in fact hide serious hazards of its own. Encounters and hazards are quite frequent.

MARSH Terrain
Chance of Encounter: DC4 (CT: 3+)

2d6 (2D)	Encounter/Event
2	Open Water
3	Natural Death-Trap
4	Pond Life
5	Dry Land!
6	Aquatic Grazers
7	Swimming Pouncer
8	Marsh Gas
9	Flooding
10	A Large Carcass
11	A Swampy Oasis
12	A Peculiar Find

SCENE 7: AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD

This scene is optional and will occur only if the characters decide to climb the largest peak in the region.

MALLOY'S SPIRE

Malloy's Spire is a steep hill topped by a curious rock spire. The hill is an arduous climb but poses no real difficulty unless the characters are carrying several wounded or a pile of supplies. The hill is a little higher than the surrounding terrain and offers a decent view of the neighboring hexes. The Referee should halve the chance of an encounter in the next hex traveled through when the characters leave the hill.

If someone chooses to climb this spire, this is a dangerous but not impossible task. Three DC15 climb rolls are required, with a fumble indicating that the character has fallen to his death unless proper climbing safety equipment is being used (which seems unlikely).

There are three things of interest on the spire:

• Someone was there first, long ago. VERY long ago. Carved deep into the rocks (but now quite faint due to erosion) are two sets of initials – AJH and BM – and a date that makes no sense until the observer realizes that this in a pre-Imperial AD date: 2365. The last people to ascend this summit were there three thousand years ago, during the Rule of Man! The Referee may like to give the character(s) making the climb a small experience bonus for being such daredevils.

• The travellers can see for many kilometers in every direction. The Referee should halve the chance of an encounter in the next three hexes the characters cross.

• Several family groups of Springers can be sighted. They seem to be moving generally northwards and congregating into larger groups.

SCENE 8: MASSACRE AT JOBLING'S CREEK (KEY SCENE)

The characters encounter evidence of not one but two slaughters in the same area. The Referee should work this encounter into the characters' travels somehow, possibly moving its location.

JOBLING'S CREEK

Jobling's Creek is a small tributary of the main river. It is unusually deep and runs through a defile, but is otherwise unimportant except as a handy route for rangers using boats to bypass some of the more rugged terrain in the area. Because the creek is difficult to cross, it acts as a natural barrier and can trap animals fleeing from packs of Springers.

Sometime in the past few days, a large number of local grazers have been thus trapped and massacred by a large pack of Springers. A VERY large pack, or so it seems from the number of stripped corpses. This kind of activity is very unusual; Springers do not normally congregate in groups larger than a dozen or so. In order to kill and strip so many grazers there much have been a hundred or more Springers involved. There are also a large number of Springer corpses too. Some are trampled, presumably by the cornered grazers, while others have died from less natural causes.

Further investigation is a grisly business, but it will turn up two disturbing points:

1. Most of the dead Springers were shot. There is no spent ammunition on the ground which suggests meticulous cleaning of the combat area or the use of caseless ammunition. The latter seems more likely, as there has been little attempt to hide the fact that some of the dead Springers have been shot to ribbons. Blade weapons have also been used – definitely manufactured weapons, not the claws and teeth of animals. It looks like some of the Springers were shot down while fleeing. Others have been riddled with bullets at short range or hacked to pieces after death in some sort of berserk fury.

2. If the characters have strong stomachs and want to conduct a careful search, they will find a section of some creature that does not belong here. It is a severed hand

and wrist, delicate and obviously weaker than a human's, and belonging to no species native to Kenev. There are several indications of this, including the fact that this alien hand is wearing two rings inscribed with letters in some alien language. There is no sign of the rest of the body; the hand is found under a bullet-riddled Springer corpse, suggesting a desperate close-quarters fight.

Referee: The hand belonged to a K'Kree warrior, one of several assigned to guard a party covertly investigating Kenev for reasons that are not immediately apparent. They stumbled upon a group of grazers being slaughtered by Springers and eaten, and were overwhelmed by revulsion. Jeopardizing their mission the K'Kree attacked the Springer group and chased it off with heavy casualties. They lost personnel in the fighting however, and withdrew to their vessel shortly thereafter. Wounded and dead were taken with them, except for the severed hand of one of their warriors which was overlooked in the chaos. A close search of the area will turn up some tracks leading to a clearing where a starship has clearly been landed in the past few days. The question remains open at present: why were the K'Kree on Kenev, and what do they want?

DATA POINTS: ENCOUNTER DESCRIPTIONS

All of the encounters described in this section can happen more than once. The terrain is sufficiently harsh that backtracking through a particular hex (or even deliberately searching for a previous encounter site) may not locate an old encounter. It is up to the Referee to decide whether to reapply a previous encounter, roll a new one, or both.

A LARGE CARCASS

The carcass of a very large river-dwelling creature is washed up in a shallow area nearby. It has been killed by a pack of aquatic predators which may or may not be lurking nearby (Referee's option). Use the Swimming Pouncer stats if necessary.

A PECULIAR FIND

In the middle of a swamp, on a scarcely-inhabited planet, the characters come across a short section of roadway. It is clearly very old (centuries or more) and leads in a random direction determined by rolling 1d6 and counting around clockwise from North. If the characters follow the road they may treat the hex as clear, with no encounter.

The road is very wide, like a major highway on a mid-tech world. Its surface composition looks to be fused, i.e. it was built using fusion power for some reason. The road eventually peters out in rough terrain.

A SWAMPY OASIS

In the middle of this awful swamp lies a little marshy island paradise. Edible fruit grows on low bushes and there is enough vegetation to build a decent shelter. However, all is not necessarily idyllic. There is a 50% chance that the island is safe and more or less as it seems. The characters will even be safe from animal attacks there – there will be no encounters if the characters rest up for a day or more. However, if the island is not determined as safe then the Referee should roll 1-3 Marsh encounters and apply them all at once in as twisted and just plain nasty manner as possible.

AMBUSH!

The group is attacked by a family group of Springers lying in wait. Any character who makes a DC10 Spot check (CT: throw 8+, DM Recon skill) has one round to act before the ambush is sprung. Those who fail are caught by surprise.

AQUATIC GRAZERS

A group of 1-6 large, broadly fish-shaped animals is spotted nibbling at waterside vegetation. They are harmless plant-eaters, but the characters may not know that.

BARRIER OF THORNS

The vegetation gets thicker and tougher, until eventually it becomes obvious that it is impossible to go on. Hacking a path through could take weeks! The group will have to backtrack to the last hex they left and choose another direction. Getting into and back out of this hex takes the same time as crossing it.

BIG GRAZERS

The characters spot a small group (1-4) of large grazing animals. They have a vague similarity to a Terran Rhinoceros, with large twin horns on the head and a tough scaly hide, but are essentially harmless unless they step on a character by accident. The Grazers will flee from loud noises (even shouting will suffice) and would only fight to protect young or if cornered. There is a 1 in 6 chance that a family group of Springers is nearby stalking the grazers.

CARPET OF CRITTERS

Ahead the ground teems with multi-legged creatures which pour across the group's path in a seemingly endless torrent. These are Eaters, rather like Army Ants on Terra, and will devour anyone caught in their path. The group could withdraw to a safe distance and wait until the carpet moves past (1-6 hours) or backtrack to the last hex.

CAVE

A rocky slope nearby shows signs of a natural cave that would provide good shelter. Roll 1d6 (1D):

1: The cave is lair to a Large rogue Springer. It may be present or out hunting
2-5: The cave is not deep and is unremarkable but for being a place where it does not rain
6: The cave contains a fissure leading to an extensive (and totally unexplored) cavern system. It is unlikely that there will be anything of interest within except to planetologists or perhaps prospectors.

CHASM

A deep chasm opens up in front of the group, dozens of meters wide. Finding a way around doubles the time required to cross this hex.

CURRENTS AND EDDIES

The water here is unusually turbulent. This is no hazard unless the characters are traveling in a raft or boat, but some of the eddies look a bit sinister, like some large creature was lurking in the water.

DEEP WATER

This area is crossed by many small watercourses and ponds. While crossing one, the lead character discovers that it is in fact very deep. It turns out that several seemingly innocuous bodies of water in the area are very deep. Searching for a way around will double the time to cross this hex, or the characters could swim across.

DIFFICULT TRAVERSE

The way ahead is blocked by an area of unstable and dangerous rocks. The group can backtrack to the last hex, taking as long as crossing this hex, or make the traverse. Crossing the dangerous area requires a DC15 Climbing check. Failure results in a fall. If a DC15 Reflex save is made, the character takes 2d6 Stamina damage and winds up winded bur relieved at the bottom of a scree slope amid a pile of debris. If the Reflex save is not made the damage is to Lifeblood. (CT: Throw 9+ DMs +1 if DEX9+, Recon Skill, to make the traverse. If failed, the character suffers 3D damage, halved if a throw of 9+ DM +2 if DEX9+ is made).

DOWNPOUR

Rain on Kenev is frequent and heavy, but this is much worse than usual. River terrain is impassable in any direction for one day after a Downpour, and there is a 1 in 6 chance that the current hex becomes subject to a Flooding result. The group will have great difficulty in moving in a Downpour; they should seek shelter and wait it out. If forced to move (i.e. by Flooding) or if they foolishly insist, then the Referee should impose 1-3 immediate Marsh terrain encounters.

DRY LAND!

A small island can be seen ahead. It has light vegetation suitable for making a shelter and is high enough above the water level to provide escape from a flood if the characters are fleeing one. The island is safe enough, though if there is a flood, other creatures may also seek its safety

FAMILY GROUP OF SPRINGERS

A family group of Springers (3-10) is encountered. Roll 1d6 (1D):

1: The Springer group is moving fast and stumbles into the characters with little warning. A tense standoff ensues. The Referee should adjudicate attempts to startle or drive off the Springers. Characters who attempt to flee will trigger a 'pounce' reaction and automatically be attacked.
2-3: The Springers are on the move and are well fed. They will attempt to avoid contact unless the characters are obviously weak and vulnerable.
4: The Springers are hunting. They do not want to attack a large and powerful group and will try to avoid contact.
5: The Springers are devouring a kill and will fight to drive off the group if necessary, but will not pursue or seek conflict.
6: The Springers are hungry and begin to stalk the characters.

To avoid this encounter, the Springers must be detected and identified before contact. A successful DC15 Spot or Listen check (CT: roll 9+ DM Recon Skill) will allow the characters to

realize that something is 'out there'. If at least one character detects the Springers, the characters have a chance to hide (DC10 Hide checks) or withdraw (DC10 Move Silently). (CT: throw 8+ to evade contact, DM Survival skill). If the characters are detected or fail to slip away, at least they will not be surprised.

FLOATING VEGETATION

Large clumps of vegetation have created a natural raft that cannot support a human's weight but resembles dry land to an unfortunately high degree. There is a 4 in 6 chance the first time this phenomenon is encountered that a character will step onto the raft and fall through. The entangling vegetation makes it impossible to swim or even struggle much, necessitating a rescue. Sadistic Referees may decide to have harmless but angry small biting animals living in the natural raft, just to add to the experience.

Each time the encounter occurs, the chance to become a victim is reduced, to 4 in 6, then 3 in 6. There is always a 1 in 6 chance that someone will make a mistake and become trapped.

To escape unaided, a DC25 Climb roll is necessary (CT: throw 12+, DM Survival Skill). Characters attempting a rescue must make a DC10 Reflex save (CT: Throw 7+, DM +1 if DEX 8+) or become additional victims. Each character assisting reduces the DC of the climb roll required to escape by 10. If DC goes below 0 the character is automatically rescued.

Each round the victim is in the water, they may suffer damage from drowning. See P382 of THB for Drowning rules. (CT: Character suffers 1D damage per combat round unless they can make a throw of 10+, DM +2 if END 10+, Survival skill).

FLOODED

The area ahead is low-lying and has been flooded by rising water, creating a shallow lake or deep swamp. It is not passable without a boat.

FLOODING

The local water level is rising, and soon the area will be impassable. The group need to get out of the hex before this happens, and will have to race the rising water to high ground. The Referee should roll 1d6 (1D) for the direction they need to flee in, counting round clockwise from North. The group will suffer 1-3 automatic encounters in the course of their flight before reaching the next hex, exhausted, at the end of the day.

FLYING CARRION-EATERS

A large group (5-20) of what look like small winged lizards are flitting about a nearby carcass. They are harmless to anyone who is capable of movement, but might give a nasty nip with their toothed beaks if someone grabbed one. Once this encounter has occurred, a character who makes a DC10

INT check (CT: Roll 7+, DM +1 if INT 8+) will realize that these creatures are sometimes seen when Springers and other predators are close by. The group may automatically avoid its next encounter with Springers. If this encounter occurs more than once, a further encounter may be avoided for each time the Carrion-Eaters are spotted.

IMPASSABLE

The going gets tougher and tougher, until eventually it becomes obvious that it is impossible to go on. The group will have to backtrack to the last hex they left and choose another direction. Getting into and back out of this hex takes the same time as crossing it.

LARGE GROUP OF SPRINGERS

A large group of Springers (6-20) is encountered. Roll 1d6 (1D):

1-2:   The Springers are chasing a wounded Big Grazer, which is coming straight at the travellers in a desperate, lurching run.

3-4:   The Springers are devouring a Big Grazer, which may or may not be dead.

5-6:   The Springers are hunting and have detected the group. They will stalk and attack if a chance presents itself.

To avoid this encounter, the Springers must be detected and identified before contact. A successful DC15 Spot or Listen check (CT: roll 9+ DM Recon Skill) will allow the characters to realize that something is 'out there'. If at least one character detects the Springers, the characters have a chance to hide (DC10 Hide checks) or withdraw (DC10 Move Silently). (CT: throw 8+ to evade contact, DM Survival skill). If the characters are detected or fail to slip away, at least they will not be surprised.

LONE ADULT SPRINGER

The group has attracted the attention of a single adult Springer. There is a 1 in 3 chance that this is a scout for a family group. If so, treat as result 6 on the Family Group of Springers encounter. The scout will lead its companions into a good attack position. If it is not a scout, it is a rogue acting alone. There is a 50% chance in this case that this is a Large individual. Whether it is or not, it is hungry and will stalk the group looking for a chance to attack.

LOST!

Somehow the group has become badly lost and is not where it should be. The Referee should roll 1d6 (1D) for direction, counting round from North, and 1d6 (1D) for the distance. The characters find themselves in this new hex and an automatic encounter for that terrain type is applied.

MARSH GAS

Bubbles on the surface of the water and a foul smell in the air indicates the presence of marsh gas. This is not a serious hazard unless the characters have naked flames or engage in gunfire. If so, there is a 1 in 6 chance of igniting a pocket of gas, which will cause 1d6 Lifeblood damage (CT: 1D damage) to anyone nearby. A DC15 Reflex save will halve the damage.

NATURAL DEATH-TRAP

As the characters struggle through ankle-deep water and thick vegetation, one of their number 'discovers' a natural death-trap in the form of a patch of quicksand just below the surface of the water. Any character stepping into such a patch finds themselves immediately up to their waist and quickly sinking deeper. There is nothing within reach to grab and pull oneself out of the bog.

A Swim check must be made each round. If the character beats DC20, he or she does not sink that round but does not make any progress towards escape. If the character beats DC30 then he has escaped the bog and found some more substantial ground to stand on. The DC of the Swim check is reduced by 10 if the character has some kind of floatation device available or some way to spread out his or her weight (thus characters who are for some reason carrying a wide wooden board or a basketball should be able to escape).

CT: Roll 2D each round, DM Survival skill. On a roll of 9+ the character does not sink any deeper. On 12+ he or she has escaped. A Dm of +2 applies if the character has some way to spread his or hear weight or floatation devices available.

A character who fails the Swim check will sink slowly:
Upon falling in: Character up to waist
After 1 failed check: Character up to chest (no damage)
After 2 failed checks: Character up to neck (no damage)
After 3 or more checks: Character is under water and begins to drown.

A character who is up to their chest or deeper must make a DC10 Fortitude save each round or panic. Any character who panics will thrash around and immediately disappear under the water, suffering drowning damage each round. (CT: 1D damage per round to STR, DEX or END determined at random. T20 drowning rules are found on P382 of THB).

Anyone trying to rescue a trapped character must be careful to avoid also falling into the bog. A DC10 Reflex save will suffice if the character is moving deliberately and carefully. If a rescuer simply lunges forward to grab the sinking friend, the DC increases to 15. (CT: 7+ to avoid becoming a victim, DM Recon skill. If the character is not being extremely careful, the required roll is 9+ instead).

A sinking character can automatically be rescued by any two other people provided they do not fall in. If just one character

is performing the rescue, success requires a Strength check at DC15. (CT: throw 9+, DM +1 id STR 8+, DM +2 if STR A+)

Once this encounter has occurred once, it may in future be avoided upon making a DC15 Spot check (CT: throw 9+, DM Recon skill).

NOT AS CLEAR AS WE THOUGHT

The terrain becomes rougher and more overgrown as the group proceeds. Eventually it becomes obvious that appearances were deceptive and this is most definitely not 'clear' terrain. Roll 1d6 (1D) to determine the actual terrain type:

1-3: Rocky
4-5: Overgrown
6: Marsh

Roll an immediate encounter on the appropriate terrain type and apply the result. This hex is treated as the new terrain type from now on.

OPEN WATER

The marsh ahead becomes a small lake. It is not passable without a boat. The group will have to backtrack to the last hex and go around.

OUTPOST

Up ahead lies a small, circular, stone building with a roof of turf. It has a crude wooden door and stout walls, with firewood stockpiled within. There are signs that people (of some humanoid race) have used this shelter in the past few months.

Referee: This is one of a handful of small shelters built by the locals to use as a base for their occasional forays into the wilderness. Sometimes patrols come out to drive off large Springer packs or just to check that no huge packs have moved into the area. These structures provide a safe haven during these patrols.

POND LIFE

There are many small ponds and minor watercourses in this area, making the march a squelchy and tiring business but not imposing any serious obstacles. As the characters cross yet another shallow body of water, a random character is bitten by some kind of fast-moving swimming creature not unlike an eel. The bite is not very serious (1d6 Lifeblood damage in T20, or 1D in CT) but bleeds profusely. While not poisonous, the chance of infection is considerable in a swampy environment. Each day after the bite, make a DC20 Fortitude save (DC15 if proper medical treatment is quickly given and precautions against infection are taken). Once the save is made, the infection has been fought off by the character's immune system. Each day it is failed the character will lose 1 point of Lifeblood, which cannot be

regained by medical treatment. (CT: Throw 11+ to avoid or fight off infection, DM +1 if END 8+, +2 if END 11+. Each day the throw is failed, lose 1 point from STR, DEX or END, determined randomly).

RECENT KILL

The half-eaten carcass of a large animal lies on the ground up ahead. A pack of flying carrion eaters is nibbling at it. There is no sign of what made the kill, though the carcass is very fresh.

Referee: There is a 1 in 3 chance that a family group of Springers is hiding nearby, ready to attack the group which they think has come to steal their kill.

RIVER MONSTER

A large predator lurks in the nearby waters. Much like a crocodile, it can make short but very fast lunges up the riverbanks to attack its prey. The predator may attack any character who ventures close to the water.

SINKHOLE

Ahead a wide rocky area is riven by a deep fissure, which turns out to be a sinkhole descending into the ground for tens or meters before opening out into a cave system. Nearby watercourses may plunge into the hole and create a waterfall. The sinkhole is a curiosity rather than a danger unless the group is very inattentive. Detouring around it adds 25% to the crossing time for the hex.

SITE OF SLAUGHTER

Ahead among the rocks and vegetation lie the corpses of one or more (it's hard to tell) Big Grazers. They have been savagely slaughtered, torn up and partially eaten by some kind of predator, then fed upon by smaller creatures. Whatever did this was either large or had both numbers and great savagery on its side.

This encounter is disturbing but harmless unless the group decide to harvest meat from the kills. If so, the Referee will have to determine if it has had time to go bad.

SOMEONE LIVED HERE??

The group stumbles on an old and very decayed shelter built from local materials. It is still sound enough to provide a good camp site. There are signs that the shelter was lived in for a long time, perhaps by a hunter or trapper, or some kind of mad hermit who actually liked it out here in the wilderness. There is a 1 in 6 chance of finding the mauled bones of the occupant within a few hundred meters of the shelter.

SWAMP!

A SWAMP! Encounter is very bad news indeed. The ground has become marshy due to massive rainfall somewhere nearby, or else the group has unknowingly wandered into a swamp. Roll an immediate MARSH terrain encounter, and treat the hex as Marsh hereafter. It may take the characters some time to get out. Backtracking will make no difference. The trail is more or less lost.

To avoid this encounter, a DC15 Navigation check is necessary (CT: Roll 9+, DM Navigation or Survival Skill). Success allows the group to backtrack to the last hex they left and choose another route. Further attempts to cross this hex will find a swamp unless sufficient time has passed to allow the waters to recede.

SWIMMING POUNCER

A dog-sized scaly creature is spotted swimming nearby. Normally it would not attack anything so large as a human but it will follow the group for several hours unless driven off. If given an opportunity (e.g. someone falls in the water and cannot swim), or if a character is injured for more than half their Lifeblood (CT: if a character has taken more than half his or her possible damage) then the Pouncer will attack. Its stats can be found in the Data section.

TOUGH GOING

The vegetation here is unusually thick and tough, and easy to get lost in. It is possible to force a passage but there is a chance of being significantly delayed. Make a DC15 Survival skill check to avoid undue delay (CT: roll 9+, DM Recon skill). If the check is failed, the group loses an entire day struggling through the undergrowth. There will be an automatic encounter the next day.

WATERCOURSE

A deep watercourse runs through the undergrowth here. It is narrow enough to improvise a bridge of sorts from nearby plant materials, or the group could swim. Making a bridge requires 1-6 hours and a successful DC10 T/Mechanical skill check (CT: Throw 8+, DM Mechanical skill). Swimming is not difficult, requiring only a DC10 Swim check (CT: Throw 8+, DM Survival Skill). However, there is a 1 in 6 chance that each character making the swim will suffer the effects of a Pond Life encounter.

WRECKED BOAT

The characters come across a large canoe-like boat capable of holding 6 people washed up on the beach. It has a crude hydrocarbon-burning outboard motor with some fuel left, and has apparently been attacked by some kind of large creature. There are bloodstains on the boat, and a sizable bite out of it. The boat is made for (and indeed by) humans and could be repaired with simple tools and half a day. Any supplies in it are long lost.

ACT 2: CIVILIZATION OR BUST!

The characters have a final hurdle to overcome before they reach civilization of a sort.

SCENE 1: SPRINGERS ON THE MARCH

The characters spot a large migration of Springers taking place.

A DISTANT HORDE

Once the characters get close to the valley and its human population, the Referee should impose this encounter at some suitable point.

As they crest a rise, the characters chance upon a most disturbing sight. In the distance they can see a veritable horde of Springers. They are not moving particularly quickly but there are probably hundreds of them moving generally north – not quite in the same direction as the characters. The Springer horde is in the next hex over and going that way would be obviously suicidal.

It is not obvious why this migration is taking place, but the characters do know that somewhere vaguely to the north is where the only human settlements on the planet are located.

Referee: The migration is not aimed directly at the human settlements, though once the Springers reach the area of the valley they will veer in the direction of human habitation quite obviously. Migrations of this sort are not uncommon and occur when something has disturbed the local Springer population. This is normally a shortage of food or flooding in their usual hunting areas, though sometimes the Springers will wander for no discernable reason. In this case there is a reason, though it is not immediately apparent. The sudden change of direction to enter the valley us unusual, and is connected with the reason for the migration.

SCENE 2: RESCUING THE RESCUERS (KEY SCENE)

The characters finally meet up with the locals

SOMEONE'S IN TROUBLE NEARBY!

Some time after sighting the Springer horde, and shortly before reaching the first settlement in the valley, the characters hear a shot, muffled by distance. Others ring out soon after in an increasing tempo. It is hard to determine exactly where the shooting is taking place due to vegetation and rocky outcrops, but it sounds like someone is fighting for their life.

If the characters investigate, they approach a clearing where three humans in 'bush' clothing are desperately trying to defend a small rocky outcrop they have climbed up. A fourth figure lies moving weakly in between the fighters, clearly badly wounded. The humans are armed with revolvers and carbines, and are trying to fend off a large (perhaps 30) group of Springers including some large individuals.

A sudden attack from a new direction would scatter the Springers, at least for the time being, and allow the cornered individuals to join the characters in beating a retreat from the area. Given a suitable opportunity, the newcomers will introduce themselves and lead the way back to the relative safety of the valley. It will be necessary to carry the wounded fourth man, and some of the Springers will cautiously follow unless driven off by an aggressive rearguard action, but with local guides much better time is made and the characters should reach safety without much further difficulty.

If the characters do not attempt a rescue, the four humans will eventually be slaughtered and eaten by the Springers. The characters may come upon the mangled bodies later, or may actually witness the final moments of these unknown individuals.

THE RESCUERS

The four humans are all experienced 'rangers' from Downstream, who have ventured out into the wilderness to search for survivors from the starship crash they witnessed a few nights back. Another team, two men in a canoe, was searching downriver. The characters may have found their wrecked boat – or might even be traveling in it!

The leader of the rescuers is Vaughan Stanning, something of a living legend among the 'rangers' of Downstream. His daughter Victoria and her husband Devon Tirrill are the other fighters. The wounded man is Ferdinand Lubrick. All of them are worried by the amount of Springer activity in the region, and will be very puzzled by news of K'Kree (or unknown armed aliens) on Kenev.

Vaughan will want to get back as quickly as possible to warn the settlements that a horde may be coming. He offers the characters hospitality, medical care and the chance to fight for their lives behind a good wall instead of out in the open. At this point, the people of Kenev don't have much more to offer.

SCENE 3: DOWNSTREAM (KEY SCENE)

The characters reach civilization, of a sort.

Finally, after many days in the wilderness, the characters sight the settlement of Downstream. Even if they have not teamed up with Vaughan and the other rescuers they will be brought into the town and offered hospitality, including medical attention. The locals know that 'something' happened a few days ago and suspect that a starship came down in the outback somewhere. They have sent out a few people to try to locate the wreck but without success. Some of them have not come back, and though the locals end that sentence with the word 'yet', they are clearly worried.

The Port Authority representative (i.e. the head of the settlement) in Downstream is Eleanor Tanniver, a cousin of Vaughan's who has led the people of Downstream for most of the past decade and enjoys their complete trust. She will request a conference with any of the characters who are fit enough. Vaughan will also be present if he came in with the characters. If not, he arrives back in town in a day or two having found trades of their passage and concluding that he has missed them. In either case, he can corroborate the characters' accounts of large numbers of Springers, which causes grave consternation in town.

A CONFERENCE WITH ELEANOR

The 'conference' is fairly informal, taking place in Eleanor's home over a light meal, with her husband and other people popping in and out on various excuses to meet the starfarers. It is not easy to believe that the Springers are on the march in numbers – it last happened over a century ago – but the damage was so severe that the threat has to be taken seriously.

Eleanor immediately sends word to the outlying steads to prepare for hard times ahead, and disappears for a short time to talk to the Port Authority at Kenev Town on her temperamental radio. She returns with a few thoughts for the characters to consider.

THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

If the characters are right, then everyone on Kenev is in danger and really there is no safe place to be. Eleanor stresses that her people offered the characters shelter and assistance without any strings attached, but she would be grateful if they would be willing to help out. She also hints that anyone worthy of her respect would feel obligated to offer something in return. The travellers managed to get from the crash site to Downstream under their own power, so they're obviously tough and resourceful. She can use people like that right now.

Eleanor suggests that the characters could help out in general quite a lot. Some of them must be able to help fix up 'tech stuff' that's not working properly, starting with Eleanor's radio set. Others might have skills that'd be useful – medical or some such – around town. And if the Springer onslaught really is coming, then anyone who can hold a gun will be needed on the walls. Downstream is the bastion for the whole valley – it is here that incursions are stopped, protecting everyone else. Reinforcements will be coming from the other settlements but every gun will be a help.

If the characters agree, the Downstreamers can provide them with their choice of a Bush Pistol or a carbine and 100 rounds to begin with. Those who distinguish themselves in the coming days will more or less have their pick of weaponry.

GETTING OFFWORLD

The characters are very far from home, thrown on the charity of strangers, and even their money is worthless this far from the Imperium. They could find a place here, Eleanor suggests, bringing their high-tech knowledge and skills to the community, but realistically she knows they won't want to stay.

Eleanor's answer to the problem of getting home is pragmatic. Ships from the Corporate come through Kenev Town from time to time. The characters could obtain passage on one, heading for Sardis, if they could pay for it. They have no money, but what they do have is the salvage from the wreck. Of course, it's lying out in the wilderness somewhere and there's no way to bring it in… unless they locals and the travellers team up.

Eleanor's proposal is this: Assuming the horde can be defeated she will organize an armed expedition (with pack animals) out to the wreck to strip it. The characters will supply the expertise to obtain as much salvage as possible, while the locals do grunt work and provide guards and transport. The salvage can be sold to a passing merchant ship or even taken to the Corporate aboard one (if a deal can be negotiated) and sold there. The proceeds will be split between the locals and the characters, with the locals using some of their cash payment to buy whatever they most want/need from among the salvage.

This is a reasonable plan. It's risky, and it can't be done until the immediate danger is past, but it's possible for both groups to profit from it. Eventually someone will spot the wreck lying around out there and an offworld salvage mission will strip it, in which case nobody profits. Eleanor's plan gets the characters to the Corporate with some cash in hand, and the locals get some hard currency plus anything they can use from the wreck.

Of course, the immediate problem needs to be dealt with first. If the valley is overrun and everyone gets killed by Springers, the question of offworld passage becomes moot. The next ship won't be through for weeks, and the enemy is at the gates right now….

ACT 3: PREPARATIONS

The human population on Kenev prepares to fend off the Springer migration.

SCENE 1: AGGRESSIVE PATROLLING

Vaughan's rangers try to determine the size of the threat and its severity.

Combat-orientated characters will find this task most to their liking. Lacking sophisticated surveillance devices it is necessary to keep tabs on the advancing horde by sending out patrols to observe their movements. Most patrols are on foot, though the river does offer a chance to watch the banks from the relative safety of a canoe.

Patrolling characters will have the odd brush with Springer bands but should be able to avoid contact in most cases. At this point the Springers are not interested in attacking humans; they are simply drifting into the valley and are more likely to attack wildlife and herds than other predators, which includes people. Most Springer groups will flee from gunshots unless they have managed to stage a good ambush.

Thus while patrolling is somewhat dangerous, it is by no means suicidal to venture out of the walled settlements. This is just as well, since the locals need some time to get their herds inside the town walls and to evacuate those farmsteads which are directly in the path of the horde. Not all of the steadholders are willing to abandon their property, and much time is lost in arguments. Some refuse to be persuaded, and decide to remain and defend themselves until the danger passes. They have good walls, plenty of ammunition and stocks of food. And anyway, everyone knows that the Springers can't breach a defended stead and will give up after a few of them are shot.

The information gathered by patrols is rather disturbing however. There are a lot of Springers on the move, more than anyone even thought existed. They are not moving all that fast but there is some kind of purpose to their movements. The major worry is that rather than trying to get at the ready food supply represented by the herds at Downriver and the nearby steads, which makes it fairly easy to kill enough to drive the remainder off, instead the Springers might just scatter throughout the valley. This would force the humans to hole up inside their walls, making farming and herding impossible. There are enough Springers to flood the valley and make concerted action against them very difficult. It is entirely possible that the human population could be starved to destruction unless the horde is somehow turned back.

SCENE 2: DEFENSIVE PREPARATIONS

There is plenty to do even for those characters who don't want to go out and fight.

The end of the valley is not wide but it is fairly open. There is no defensive line or wall, just a patrolled zone where Springers are exterminated as they wander in. Over many years they have learned to avoid this zone of death, at least most of the time. However, now that a major migration is heading straight into the valley there is little to stop them.

The general expectation is that the steads and the town of Downriver will hold out as islands in the sea of Springers, with the horde being gradually thinned and eventually driven out of the valley by sallies from the town. Reinforcements from Kenev Town are on their way to join the defenders. Preparations for this campaign of attrition are already well underway. Work parties are struggling to deepen the ditch in front of the town's wall and to strengthen the defenses of nearby steads.

Other groups are busy bringing in herds from more distant steads, stockpiling ammunition and medical supplies, and preparing for a lengthy defence of the town. There is plenty for skilled characters to do and not much time to do it. Nobody has time to spare for irrelevancies like salvage operations back out to the wreck or any such thing. Although the mood is determined, there is a very real fear just below the surface.

If the characters are willing to help out, possible tasks include:

• Grunt work on the defenses
• Rounding up the herds
• Engineering assistance on the defenses
• Technical advice on the lights, radio or other technological aids for the defense
• Medical preparations

Whatever the characters do, within a day they will have run out of time to do it. The first large groups of Springers arrive in the valley and head straight for the town.

SCENE 3: ENTER THE HORDE

The Springer horde arrives in force and the defense begins.

A patrol arrives back in town with grave news. There are several large Springer bands wandering around the valley, with smaller numbers heading northwards into the 'safe' areas. Much more seriously, very large numbers of Springers are moving up. They are just hours behind the patrol. It is time to pull everyone in and close the gates.

However, there is a last-second complication. Jack Kender and his family had decided to stay in their home until the danger was past. Jack's stead is one of the most southerly and he is an experienced ranger, sure that he could hold out from behind his sturdy defenses. However, he has had second thoughts and is en route to Downstream with his family and the families of the hands who work his farm with him. They have picked up some stragglers coming in at the last minute and are trying to get them to safety, but a fairly large mob of Springers seems to be headed in their direction. Jack has radioed in that he has led his people to take shelter on Swayback Hill, a good defensive spot about an hour's march from town. There are already a few dozen Springers around the base of the hill and more are trickling in.

Jack is not hopeful about his ability to hold out, and is completely sure that he cannot break out and flee, not with families, children and whatnot in tow. The only real hope is a rescue mission. Naturally, most of the population will volunteer; these are their friends and neighbors. Eleanor and Vaughan want to send out a compact party however; one able to move fast and deliver high firepower at need.

The rescue plan is fairly simple. The river runs close by Swayback Hill, and is only a couple of hundred meters from Downstream at its nearest point. It should not be too difficult to sally out through the gates, scatter the handful of Springers near the town, and rush over to the boathouse (which has a good compound wall). From there, it will be possible to get within a short distance of Jack's group, clearing them a path through to the boats before returning to the boathouse and making a dash overland back into the town.

Vaughan is even willing to play his trump card for the rescue – a light machinegun bought years ago from a passing trade starship and stored against desperate need. Only 500 rounds are available for it but it will have to suffice. Vaughan will assemble twenty or so volunteers to crew the boats and assist the breakout, and will gladly accept if any of the characters want to help.

DASHING TO THE BOATHOUSE
This is not very difficult. The locals have a couple of men with rifles stationed on the wall to provide covering fire. There are only a handful of Springers in the vicinity and they are skittish, more likely to scatter upon hearing gunfire than to chase large prey like humans.

Unless something goes disastrously wrong, it is not hard to enter the boathouse and get to the half-dozen boats stored there. Travel downriver is not a problem in this area, though rather ominously several Springers start following the boats along the riverbank unless discouraged by weapons fire.

THE RESCUE
The rescue is more of a problem. Jack and his people can see the river from where they're holed up, but getting through to the boats is going to be difficult. The only way will be to leave some of the rescuers to guard the boats while others rush out to meet Jack's party coming off the hill and provide an escort.

At first this goes well enough, even though several of the refugees are injured, including Jack himself. However, A small group have panicked and are refusing to leave the hill. It is a family group with a couple of young children. They will have to be abandoned – unless someone fights their way up the hill and more or less bodily drags them to the boats through stiffening Springer resistance.

UPRIVER
Whether the characters stage a desperate rescue or not, the boats set off back upriver, with a mob of Springers chasing them along the bank. The Springers seem maddened; nobody has seen anything like this before. Every now and then one leaps from the bank at the boats. Most miss and fall into the water, struggling to swim or drowning, they fall away astern. However, once in a while they manage to hit a boat, posing the problem of how to deal with a large and aggressive predator in a narrow boat…

BACK TO SAFETY
Whether the rescuers enter the boathouse or abandon their craft at the bank, they are going to have to cross the open space to the town. Sharpshooters on the walls do their best but there is a large amount of hostile wildlife between the town and the fugitives. However, they do have some help at hand. Reinforcements have arrived from Kenev Town to join the defense.

As the fugitives begin their dash for safety, the defenders sally out to form a skirmish line, covering the retreat. Lives are lost in the scramble to get back inside and a handful of Springers get into the town, but these are quickly dealt with. Catching their breath, the defenders have little cause for celebration – large numbers of Springers are descending on the town. They do not seem to want to wander up the valley; they seem maddened, perhaps by hunger. What they want is to get into the town and eat everything they can find there – herds, townsfolk and starfarers alike.

SCENE 4: A SHORT LULL
The Springer horde prepares to hurl itself against the defenders of Downstream

As those with long-range weapons try to reduce the numbers gathering outside the ditch, rumors flash among the defenders, each quickly contradicted or replaced with an embellished version:

• Outlying steads are going off the air as the Springers break in

- More people from Kenev Town and Upstream are on their way to help. Occasional variants on this one suggest that the relief force has been massacred
- There is nothing on the radio; no ships in orbit to ask for help
- Nobody has ever seen anything like this. Migrations happen but they're easily turned aside
- The Springers are eating everything in their path

What is obvious is that the Springers are behaving very oddly. Some are turning on one another, some chasing and killing anything that moves, devouring it and moving on to seek more food. Most on are advancing on the town as the largest food source in the area. There is no record of this kind of behavior in the past – migrations were bad but the Springers just wandered up the valley looking for easy food rather than trying to break into the town.

And then, abruptly, the lull is over and the final assault begins.

ACT 4: DEFENDERS OF CIVILIZATION

The defenders of Downstream stand between the Springer horde and defenseless farms further up the valley.

A few individuals begin to move forward, then like a massive wave the horde rushes at the walls, hundreds of Springers crushed to death in the ditch as they try to leap onto the walls and fall back. Others trample them, only to be crushed in turn. In moments the ditch is filled with dead and dying Springers, and a few have managed to leap onto the wall.

The defenders fight back ferociously, sometimes with guns, sometimes with improvised explosives and sometimes with hand weapons. Occasionally a Springer is able to make a space on the wall, clearing defenders from nearby firing positions. Others surge up to take advantage, requiring a counterattack to regain the wall section. Characters fighting on the wall will have their hands full shooting, rescuing comrades or carrying wounded defenders to safety. The battle at the wall turns into a long nightmare as the seemingly endless horde breaks against the defenses.

The players have no way to know, but the battle lasts 12 segments. If anyone is alive at the end of Segment 12, go to Scene 5: Pyrrhus Ascendant.

RESOLVING THE DEFENSE OF DOWNSTREAM

At times this defense is a nightmare of desperate close-quarters combat, at others a turkey shoot. The battle is too big to dice out every shot, every leap at the wall and every attempt at first aid. Instead, use the following system to produce events during the long fight:

The combat is treated as a number of 'segments' rather than combat rounds. Each segment of the combat lasts a variable amount of time; it could be minutes, it could be as much as hour. It's hard to tell in the chaos of the wall defense.

Each segment, the Referee rolls to see how well the defenders are doing. This will in turn influence how dangerous and/or desperate things get in the defense. After being given an indication of 'how things are looking' (i.e. what the event for this segment will be), every character now chooses an option and makes an appropriate skill check to resolve the result. This will determine whether the character is hurt or not, and how successful his actions are that segment. If a character achieves a result that gives a modifier (positive or negative) to the event roll, this is applied to the result for next segment.

For example, if one character did something that resulted in +2 on the event roll, another was successful elsewhere and gained a +1 and someone had a bit of a disaster resulting in a

–1, these modifiers are all totaled and the effective result (+2 +1 –1 = +2) is applied to the event roll for next segment.

The assumption here is that the defense will revolve around the heroes (i.e. the player characters). However, the townsfolk and rangers will have their own part to play. This is reflected in the Timeline For The Defense, below. The players will not know about these additional modifiers and will simply have to react to events that are out of their control.

The defense is a truly chaotic situation. The characters might be widely separated at times and pushed together at others. It is not generally possible to intervene in someone else's crisis, though certain options might lead to an opportunity to do so.

Unless there is a lull, in which case there is time to fully reload, tend wounds and grab weapons from downed friends, most of the defenders have empty or nearly-empty weapons most of the time. While someone is snatching a few seconds to reload a bush pistol, one of his companions is emptying his and another is covering them both from a flank attack using only a knife. To a great extent, survival will depend on whether the defenders can remain sufficiently well organized to keep reloading. In a purely hand-to-hand struggle the Springers will win. Thus the natural leaders among the defenders will spend a lot of their time organizing ad hoc units and trying to impose fire discipline so that in any given sector of the wall someone always has a loaded weapon to repel an assault.

Even characters who start the fight festooned with borrowed pistols or armed with magazine-fed weapons will quickly run out of ammunition and become involved in the same frantic cycle of shoving rounds into the cylinder and blasting them into the horde as everyone else. Weapons are dropped in the fighting and picked up by others later on. The Referee should not allow characters to assume that they always have a loaded weapon handy. Even those who try very hard to hang on to their gear will sometimes have to drop a weapon to draw another, or have one knocked from their hand. However, as a rule those who work together and keep a cool head should be able to ensure that they have enough ammunition to get through the segment. Heroes who rush around blazing away are likely to end up trying to club a Springer to death with their empty rifle.

At the beginning of each segment, each character must roll 2d6 to see how well 'tooled up' they are, i.e. how much ammunition they have, how many of their guns are actually loaded etc. It is assumed that characters are taking any opportunity to stuff a couple of shells into their weapon or to grab guns from the ground. Some of the defenders are not fighting but instead stand behind the wall with a box of ammunition, reloading any weapon passed to them (the fact that local carbines and bush pistols use the same ammunition is a blessing here). Characters might get lucky and have a pair of loaded pistols passed up to them just in time. On the other hand, their own weapon may be handed back for

reloading, only to be tossed to a beleaguered wall defender, or the reloading party may be driven off in the course of a breakthrough.

It is thus a bit random as to whether loaded weapons are available to characters fighting on the wall, though it is always possible to retreat for a segment to reload your own guns.

Remember that a combat action in a given segment does not represent a single shot. Instead it is a few minutes of action in which a character might shoot and reload steadily with a carbine, throw it to a reloading party and kick a Springer off the wall, get the carbine back and empty it again, use it as a club, lose it over the wall and end up fighting with pistol and knife. Nest segment the same character might be passed a new carbine or be unable to even find time to reload his pistol, let alone seek a more substantial weapon.

This scramble for weapons and ammunition adds to the drama and desperation of the defense. The Referee should play it for all it is worth.

DETERMINING WEAPON AND AMMUNITION STATUS

At the beginning of the battle, the Referee should assess the weaponry of each character. Most of the locals have either a carbine or a bush pistol, and the more experienced rangers may have more. Some are armed with a carbine and one or two pistols, while a handful have offworld weapons. Ammunition for these is very limited and concentrated near the weapon's user, so these weapons are unlikely to enter the 'pool' of armament available in any useful manner. More likely they will run out of ammunition and be discarded, or the user will be downed and nobody else able to use them since all the specialist ammunition is on the corpse of the original owner.

It is highly unlikely that the travellers will be able to obtain advanced weapons from the townsfolk as they already have experienced owners. Truly galaxy-class fast talking or some kind of deal might persuade the owner to hand over their prized weapon to a stranger, but it is unlikely.

Chances are the characters will begin the battle with whatever weapons they carried from the wreck, supplemented possibly with a local carbine or pistol. Those that distinguished themselves earlier might be able to persuade someone that they represent such a wealth of fighting ability that they merit several guns, but this is not all that likely.

A character with no guns is either some kind of hero, entering combat armed with only melee weapons, or in serious trouble. Melee weapons are rated as minor (knives and small clubs), typical (larger blades and clubs) or powerful (e.g. large and deadly blade weapons such as cutlasses). There is no real advantage in having more than one melee

weapon. Melee weapons are treated more like ammunition than guns as they are easy to lose and others can be found lying around.

A character armed with one or two weapons is rated as having A Gun Or Two.

A character with three or more local weapons or a moderately powerful offworld weapon is considered to be Tooled Up. For example, a character who enters combat with a pair of bush pistols in his hands, a spare one stuck in his waistband and a 10mm autopistol in a shoulder holster in case things get really sticky is Tooled Up, as is someone equipped with a magazine-fed offworld rifle backed up by a local pistol. Referee's discretion applies when deciding what constitutes Tooled Up status.

Once in a while someone will manage to collect several loaded guns or one fully automatic weapon and several magazines. He is considered to be Heavily Armed, at least until he runs out of ammunition.

There are not enough guns in town to festoon everyone in spare pistols, but nature of the fighting is such that weapons are dropped, passed back, thrown to comrades etc and thus tend to move around a lot. Exactly who has what changes from moment to moment. Normally a character will be able to keep the same level of armament from one segment to the next, though ammunition may be used up and melee weapons may be left stuck in corpses. Some segment outcomes will change the character's armament level but usually it remains the same. A character who started out with a carbine in his hands and now has a pair of bush pistols is still armed with A Gun Or Two and is treated the same.

Ammunition status, however, varies from one segment to the next.

Roll 2d6 (2D) at the beginning of each segment and add any appropriate modifiers:

2d6 (2D) Result
0-   **Unarmed!** Oh dear. The character is totally out of ammunition AND has lost or broken all melee weapons that he has so far used. Only what is still in its sheath/scabbard is available, plus unarmed attacks.
1-4   **Empty!** Time to find out if this thing makes a decent club… The character is totally out of ammunition for all his guns, except in special cases e.g. where the character carries a derringer or body pistol for last-ditch self-defense and has not yet used it.
5-7   **Almost Dry!** Ammunition is very limited and the character must choose his shots carefully.
8-10 **Fully Loaded!** The character has managed to reload all his weapons and maybe even grabbed a spare pistol from somewhere. Ammunition is not a problem, at least not for the next 20 seconds….

11-12+ **Woohoo!** A local kid ran up with a spare pistol, a big knife and a hatful of shells. And a grenade, wherever THAT came from. The character is armed to the eyeballs and gains a bonus on all combat rolls (weapon modifier is doubled) for the next segment where he fights. The segment, after that, add +2 on ammunition status roll – the character might even have some bullets left over after killing everything in sight!

AMMUNITION STATUS EFFECTS ON COMBAT
The assumption is that any given character will mostly be shooting (often at very close quarters) but must sometimes resort to hand-to-hand attacks when things get desperate. Anyone fighting with a knife, using a carbine as a club or battling with some other melee weapon is at a disadvantage against Springers. Someone who is forced to fight with bare hands is in deep trouble. On the other hand, a character who can afford to blast away with guns has a big advantage over even the most ferocious animal. The following modifiers are applied to attack rolls used to determine a character's success in his actions:

Situation	Modifier
Unarmed	-6
Minor Melee Weapon	-4 (e.g. knife, clubbed pistol)
Typical Melee Weapon	-2 (e.g. Blade, carbine used as a club)
Powerful Melee Weapon	0 (e.g. Cutlass)
A Gun Or Two	+2 (e.g. character has a bush pistol and a carbine)
Tooled Up	+4 (e.g. character has three bush pistols, a carbine and a snub revolver about his person)
Heavily Armed	+6 (e.g. character has acquired an offworld automatic weapon and some ammunition for it)
Almost Dry!	Halve the weapon bonus
Fully Loaded!	Normal modifier
Woohoo!	Double the character's weapon modifier

SEGMENT OPTIONS
Each segment of combat, every character must choose an option determining what he or she is going to try to do this segment. The option chosen will determine what the likely results of success or failure might be, and will also influence what happens in coming segments. For example a character who Gets Stuck In is quite likely to find himself very short of ammunition in coming segments.

Segments are normally resolved in T20 by making an attack roll with the character's chosen weapon to represent a barrage of kicking, clubbing and stabbing along with shooting any and all guns the character has loaded. In CT, roll 3D and add twice the character's skill level to the result, giving a broadly similar result range.

There are several thresholds of success to be considered:

Disaster:
A particularly bad roll is likely to result in personal injury and consequences for others all around

Failure:
Failure indicates that the character has fought or acted ineffectually and will probably be hurt

Success:
Success indicates that the character's actions were broadly successful, though he might have been hurt in the process

Spectacular Success:
Spectacular success inspires others as the character performs heroic feats and emerges unhurt.

Not all segment options involve combat skills, but the system works the same whether it is a weapon attack or an attempt to rally shaken defenders. The following options are available, and the Referee should adjudicate others as seems appropriate.

GET STUCK IN:
The character wades into the thick of the fighting, leaping onto the firing step to add more weight of fire to a comrade's defense, or charging along the wall to counterattack a potential breakthrough. This is a dangerous business but it could make all the difference. Piling in like this is likely to get the character hurt and he may well lose weapons in the chaos all around.

Thresholds:
Disaster: 6- Failure: 7-10 Success: 11-17
Spectacular Success: 18+

Disaster:
The character is badly mauled by Springers, suffering 3d6 Lifeblood damage (armor protects). CT: 3D damage. Roll for random events at –5 next segment.

Failure:
The character fails to make much of an impression and gets bitten for 1d6 Lifeblood damage (Armor protects). CT: 1D damage. Roll for random events at –2 next segment.

Success:
The character's heroics make a real difference. Even though he suffers 1d6 Lifeblood damage (Armor protects). CT: 1D damage in the process, he kills a pile of Springers. Roll for random event next segment at +2 on the dice. Alternatively, the character can choose to annul a Breakthrough or Catastrophe result if one occurred this segment – nothing will get past this hero! Single-handedly stopping a Breakthrough costs 1d6 Lifeblood (armor does NOT count in this case) and a Catastrophe is averted at the cost of 3d6 Lifeblood, with armor not counting (CT: 1D and 3D damage respectively)

Spectacular Success:
The character more or less single-handedly pushes back the horde in this sector. Roll for events at +4 on the dice next segment.

At the end of the segment, roll 2d6 (2D). If the result is less than 5, the character's armament level is lowered by one (e.g. a character who his Heavily Armed is now Tooled Up; a character who was carrying A Gun Or Two is now down to his melee weapons). In either case, the character rolls for his ammunition status with a penalty of –2 on the check next segment.

HIDE SOMEWHERE:
The character stays out of harm's way. This is not necessarily cowardice; medical staff working to save casualties brought into the health center will not be in harm's way unless things go very badly indeed. Anyone staying in a safe place without a good reason will be scorned after the battle, assuming anyone else survives.

HOLD THE LINE:
The character fights hard but cautiously, conserving ammunition and trying not to take stupid risks.

Thresholds:
Disaster: 3- Failure: 4-8 Success: 9-18
Spectacular Success: 20+

Disaster:
The character is badly mauled by Springers, suffering 3d6 Lifeblood damage (armor protects). CT: 3D damage. Roll for random events at –3 next segment.

Failure:
The character fails to make much of an impression and gets bitten for 1d6 Lifeblood damage (Armor protects). CT: 1D damage. Roll for random events at –1 next segment.

Success:
The character does his part but no more than that.

Spectacular Success:
The character deliberately and cautiously kills a whole pile of Springers. It is likely that nobody noticed his contribution, but he has the satisfaction of knowing he didn't waste a single bullet. Roll for events next segment at +2.

SAVING LIVES:
The character fights only in self-defense (if at all) and concentrates on rescuing casualties and performing emergency treatment. This option is resolved with Medical skill rather than a weapon. In CT, add the skill level to the roll just like a weapon. For T20, add 1 to the roll for each 3 skill ranks or fraction thereof.

Thresholds: Disaster: 2- Failure: 3-6
Success: 7-18 Spectacular Success: 19+

Disaster:
Taking too many risks, the character managed to get into trouble and was bitten for 1d6 (1D) damage before he managed to escape. He was not successful in saving lives.

Failure:
The character is unhurt but has achieved nothing
Success:
The character has treated several wounded fighters, some of them right in the middle of the combat.
Spectacular Success:
Kicking aside Springers while carrying comrades to safety then performing life-saving surgery in the middle of a hand-to-hand fight, the character wins immortal glory among the defenders without firing a shot. Any character other than the medical hero himself suffering damage this segment takes only half damage, and even if he is 'killed' will be stabilized in time to save his life.

SCROUNGE/RELOAD:
The character goes looking for weapons and ammunition. This action is not resolved using a weapon skill. Instead the character can choose whether to use Streetwise or Recon skill. In CT, add the skill level to the roll just like a weapon. For T20, add 1 to the roll for each 3 skill ranks or fraction thereof.

Thresholds: Disaster: 1- Failure: 2-4
Success: 5-19 Spectacular Success: 20

Disaster:
Somehow the character managed to get into trouble and was bitten for 1d6 (1D) damage before he managed to escape. He did not find any additional weapons or ammunition.
Failure:
The character starts next segment Fully Loaded but has not found any weapons
Success:
the character has managed to reload every gun he has and to fill his pockets with spare ammunition. He starts next segment at 'Woohoo!' status and equipped with A Gun Or Two unless he was already better armed than that.
Spectacular Success:
Treasure! The character not only gains the result of a Success but has also grabbed an extra gun or two, or found a loaded offworld weapon. His armament status is increased by one, e.g. from Tooled Up to Heavily Armed.

SNIPER/SUPPORT GUNNER:
The character finds a protected spot and shoots Springers. There are so many that it is hard to tell what sort of results are being obtained; bodies and wounded fall back into the mass and are trampled.

Thresholds: Disaster: 2- Failure: 3-6
Success: 7-19 Spectacular Success: 20

Disaster:
The character has a 1 in 3 chance of each of the following; roll 1d6 (1D):
1-3: Equipment malfunction. The character's main weapon packs up.

4: A Springer sneaked up somehow while the character's attention was elsewhere. He is gets bitten for 1d6 Lifeblood damage (Armor protects). CT: 1D damage
6: the character nailed a friend or ally by mistake.
Failure:
The character is safe but ineffectual
Success:
the character shot a bunch of Springers. This kind of quiet contribution will win the battle but nobody will talk about it. Roll for events next segment at +1.
Spectacular Success:
The character killed everything in sight OR remedied a dangerous situation. In the former case, roll at +3 for events next segment. In the latter, the character may declare that a Breakthrough or Close Quarters (but not a Catastrophe) does not happen; he nailed the Springer(s) responsible just in time. Replace the segment's event with 'We're Holding!'. Sniper options should be resolved first to allow this option to be implemented.

Anyone who spent last segment as a sniper or in support will roll for ammunition status with a +2 bonus.

SEGMENT RESOLUTION
Once each character has chosen his option for this round, the events of that segment are determined. In the ebb and flow of combat, it is entirely possible that there will be a lull on one part of the wall while another is being swarmed under. Characters must go wherever the battle takes them and are likely to be split up and to come back together later on. However, only one event is rolled for each segment of the battle, and its result applies to all characters.

It is of course entirely possible for one character to be up to his ears in Springers while someone else in another area is taking a breather; this is reflected in the different outcomes from characters' actions.

The Referee should roll for events each segment. Roll 2d6 (2D) and add in any modifiers that apply as a result of last segment's results as well as those from the timeline, below.

2d6 (2D) Roll	Event
0-	Catastrophe!
1-4	Breakthrough!
5-6	Close Quarters!
7-10	We're Holding!
11-12	Turkey Shoot!
13-14	Reinforcements Available!
15+	Lull

CATASTROPHE!

The horde is in. The defenders are flung back from the wall and Springers begin spilling into the town as well as out along the walls in an expanding torrent. The defense is unraveling, with some defenders being pulled down and others scrambling for safety. From here on, the characters will be fighting in the town.

Anyone who did well this segment may be able to cling to a few square feet of wall as the horde surges past, but unless they are either rescued or the defenders regain the wall they will be overrun eventually. For these diehards, increase all action resolution thresholds by 2 each segment after this until the characters break out or the wall is retaken by others. Eg a character who chooses to Get Stuck In normally suffers a catastrophe result on 6 or less. Next segment this threshold is 8 or less. The segment after that it is 10 or less, and so on.

After a Catastrophe has occurred, the defenders must retake the wall or they will find themselves fighting in the town. See Scene 2 for details.

BREAKTHROUGH!

A great mob of Springers gains the wall and hurls the defenders of that area back. After a few seconds of bitter hand-to-hand fighting and point-blank shooting, the survivors find themselves behind the wall and beset by a mob of enemies. With no-one alive on this sector of the wall the Springers will be able to scramble over and get into the town in large numbers. This result is not quite as bad as a catastrophe but it is very serious.

Each segment after a Breakthrough, event rolls are made at –4 on the dice until a catastrophe occurs or he wall is retaken. Ie the first segment after a breakthrough the event roll is at –4, the second it is –8, and so forth. See Scene 2, Retaking The Wall for details.

CLOSE QUARTERS!

The fighting is desperate, with no time to reload or change weapons. There are just so many of the enemy… only characters who are back from the wall in fire support or sniper roles may use firearms. Anyone on the wall must fight with hand weapons or use their gun as a club.

Event rolls are made at –2 on the dice in a segment after Close Quarters combat occurs.

WE'RE HOLDING!

The fighting is intense but the line is holding. The pressure is incredible and all but unbearable, but the defenders are clinging to their positions and piling up the dead.

There are no modifiers next segment.

TURKEY SHOOT!

The defenders have managed to clear the wall and put down enough fire to hold back the horde.

Next segment, roll for random events at +1 on the dice.

REINFORCEMENTS AVAILABLE!

A bunch of walking wounded, kids and old folks armed with whatever they could find lying around, plus a couple of fighters from a quieter sector of the wall, join the local battle. Their influence is as important to morale as to firepower, and the defenders are able to drive back the assault for a time.

Random events are rolled at +3 on the dice next segment.

LULL

The horde has been flung back from the walls and a brief calm descends. Runners hand out ammunition and water bottles while the wounded are treated and corpses cleared. Everyone begins the next segment with A Gun Or Two even if they have lost all their weapons, and Fully Loaded with ammunition.

Random events are rolled without modifiers in the next segment as the horde comes plunging back into the fight with new ferocity.

A TIMELINE FOR THE DEFENSE OF DOWNSTREAM

The assault lasts for 12 segments. The actions of the characters will to a great extent determine the course of the battle, but events will be influenced by what the horde does and how the bulk of the defenders are doing. Thus each segment there may be a modifier to the overall events roll.

Segment 1: The horde's attack is blunted by the ditch and walls. All success thresholds are reduced by 3 and random events are rolled at +3 on the dice.

Segment 2: The ditch has largely filled with dead and dying Springers, but it is still a serious obstacle. All success thresholds are reduced by 2 and random events are rolled at +2 on the dice.

Segment 3: The assault reaches a first crescendo. A massive horde of Springers reaches the wall. Roll random events at –2 on the dice this segment. If the result is better than 'Close Quarters', then apply a Close Quarters result.

Segment 4: Several rangers start throwing home-made incendiary bombs and fragmentation grenades into the horde, causing massive slaughter. Random event is rolled at +3 this segment.

Segment 5: The fighting continues. No modifier

Segment 6: Another serious assault hits the wall. Roll random events at –2 on the dice this segment. If the result is better than 'Close Quarters', then apply a Close Quarters result.

Segment 7: A mob of non-combatants, walking wounded and rallied defenders plunges into the fight. They suffer horribly and the survivors are quickly driven back, but this segment the random event roll is made at +4 on the dice.

Segment 8: The fighting continues. No modifier

Segment 9: The horde's desperation increases. Crushing one another in the press, they break through in several places and enter the town, though the walls are not lost. The battle hangs in the balance. Roll random event at –4 on the dice.

Segment 10: The horde begins its final effort. Roll random event at –6 on the dice and if any result better than Close Quarters is obtained, apply a Close Quarters result.

Segment 11: The final assault pours over the walls. Roll random event at –6 on the dice and if any result better than Breakthrough is obtained, apply a breakthrough result.

Segment 12: Although many Springers are turning on one another, maddened by hunger, most are still desperately trying to get at the humans in the town. Roll random event at –6 on the dice and if any result better than Close Quarters is obtained, apply a Close Quarters result.

Segment 13: The assault falls apart very quickly. There are suddenly too few Springers left to break through the defenders' shaky line. Many of them are too busy savaging wounded (of both species) to fight any more. At last the defenders can dare to hope.

SCENE 1: ON THE WALLS (KEY SCENE)

It is possible that the entire battle is fought out at the walls, though even then some individual Springers will get over the wall and have to be cornered and killed. More likely, the wall will be lost and retaken at least once.

Fighting on the wall (or chasing down small groups of Springers behind it) is less dangerous than battling in the open or the streets. All thresholds are normal if the wall is held. Resolve segments normally.

SCENE 2: RETAKING THE WALL

If a breakthrough or catastrophe occurs, the defenders must retake the wall or they will surely be overrun.

In the event of a breakthrough, the defenders have a chance to counterattack before the whole defense unravels. With people still fighting on the wall to the side of the lost section, it is a matter of plugging the breach rather than retaking the whole wall. If a catastrophe has occurred, the problem is considerably more serious.

Charging alone into the breach is a pretty good way to get killed without achieving anything. The only chance is to gather as many fighters as possible and make a concerted assault. The best plan is to get people back onto the wall to stop the flood of attackers, then deal with those that have got in with a backup force. It is unlikely that enough personnel are available to drive back the horde by methodically wiping out everything that got in.

Characters involved in an attempt to retake the wall have a chance to rally some locals to help them. Each character joining the attempt may make a DC15 Leadership check (CT: roll 9+, DM Leader skill) to rally 1d6 (1D) fighters. An additional 1d3 (half 1D) fighters join the action for each time the rallying character has Got Stuck In so far in the fight, whether or not the Leadership roll is made.

There is no room for caution in this attempt. The only useful option is a headlong attack with guns blazing – this equates to a Get Stuck In action. Those that want to help but are not feeling up to such heroics can give Fire Support or Save Lives from behind the attackers. Neither of these actions allows a chance to rally the defenders but a character who obtains a success as a sniper or in fire support may add +2 to to the assault resolution roll (see below). Spectacular success adds no extra bonus but allows the sniper to nullify one injury suffered by another character, shooting down the attacking Springer just in time.

Each character who is successful in his Get Stuck In option may roll 1d6 and add it to the Assault Resolution Chart (below). Spectacular Success allows the character to roll and additional 1d6. Failure does not subtract anything but may get the character wounded or killed…

ASSAULT RESOLUTION CHART

Roll 1d6 (1D) per Successful Get Stuck In check (2d6 (2D) per Spectacular Success), plus 2 per character successfully offering fire support and plus 1 per follower attracted by leadership tests.

In addition, add +2 per player character who is still fighting on the wall even though he is cut off.

Refer to the chart below to see how effective this assault is.

Total Result	Outcome
4 or less	The assault is flung back with heavy casualties. All followers are dispersed
5-8	The assault is a bloody failure but half the attracted followers remain available for another assault next segment
9-12	The assault is a partial success. If the characters try again next segment they gain a +4 bonus and half the attracted followers remain available for another assault next segment
13 or more	The assault succeeds. The wall is retaken and the line re-established.

NOTE: This table refers to retaking a section of the wall after a Breakthrough result. If the whole wall must be recaptured after a Catastrophe, rolls are made at –6.

FAILURE

There is nothing to stop characters who have been unsuccessful from trying again. Where indicated above the characters may retain some of the fighters they rallied, and in all cases they may make new leadership tests to see if they can scrape the barrel for a few more followers.

SUCCESS

If the wall is retaken, the battle continues and may be lost again. Return to Scene 1 and resolve the next segment of fighting along the walls.

SCENE 3: FIGHTING IN THE STREETS

If the defenders are driven off the walls, they will have to face the horde in the streets of Downstream.

If the defenders have been pushed off the walls they will have to fight it out in the streets. This is resolved exactly like combat on the walls, except that the defenders are much more exposed. All thresholds are increased by 4. Eg a character Holding The Line would normally succeed on a roll of 9-18. Now he needs a 13-22 to succeed, meaning that casualties are far more likely.

There are only two alternatives at this point – counterattack and retake the perimeter wall or fall back for a last stand in the more solid buildings such as the medical center. This is unlikely to do more than delay the inevitable if things are that bad, and it is unlikely that everyone will get into the buildings in time, even if they can all be accommodated.

SCENE 4: THE LAST STAND

Once the defenders have retreated to the buildings, they give up any chance of retaking the walls and are now fighting to delay the inevitable. Of course, if they can hold out long enough help might arrive, or providence may intervene…

If it comes down to it, the last survivors can hole up in the buildings and fight it out as best they can. The structures offer some protection but the Springers can overwhelm the last strongpoints one by one.

Combat during a Last Stand is resolved much as in Scene 1, but all thresholds are increased by 2. Eg a character Holding The Line would normally succeed on a roll of 9-18. Now he needs an 11-20 to succeed, meaning that casualties are far more likely. If characters are not all in the same building, outcomes are resolved separately for each cut off group.

In the case of a Last Stand, a Breakthrough indicates that some Springers have managed to get inside and a Catastrophe means that the building has fallen. There is little chance of survival but if there is still a building holding out somewhere (most likely this means that another group of player characters is holed up somewhere else) then characters can be offered a last chance to break out and escape to the new sanctuary.

A breakout is resolved the same way as a wall assault in Scene 2. Failure means that the characters involved were brought down and killed. There is no second chance. Success means gaining temporary safety elsewhere, but the process is likely to be repeated soon afterward until nobody is left.

SCENE 5: PYRRHUS ASCENDANT

We won… sort of.

At the end of Segment 12, the Springers have lost so many of their number that they finally abandon the assault and scatter in all directions. Most of them do anyway. Some continue their attack and others fall on one another, killing and eating their own kind in a feeding frenzy.

There are bodies (Springer and human) as far as the eye can see, piled up in great heaps in front of the wall and around strong points. Just clearing them away will take days of work, and there is the damage to the town to repair. The human cost is unbearable.

Any local can tell the characters that this kind of thing has never happened before. Springers are aggressive and can be very persistent but there is no record of any kind of mass assault like this one, nor any evidence of the sort of single-minded hostility that has been directed at the town of Downstream.

Sooner or later someone will notice that many of the Springers seem undernourished, some to the point of starvation. There is evidence that this horde has been killing and eating everything in its path. Perhaps the sheer numbers involved made it impossible for the horde to feed itself. But in that case, would the Springers not have scattered seeking food? Why did they stay together? Why did they try so hard to crack open the town and eat its residents? The mystery is further compounded by the fact that those Springers that managed to get among the herds and gorge themselves became sick and vomited up what they ate almost immediately.

Something is very different about these Springers.

INVESTIGATIONS

If the characters are able to conduct dissections on some of the Springer corpses (there are plenty to choose from!) with even the most basic analysis equipment then they will make some startling and frightening discoveries.

The Springers do not seem to be able to properly digest their usual diet. In extreme cases it actually makes them ill, while most are simply unable to extract proper nutrition from their food. It is as if there is something lacking from what they eat; something that makes it useful to them. This might be a trace mineral, a protein or some other chemical compound, but exactly what it may be is not immediately apparent.

Given the way the Springers attacked humans and in some cases one another, it seems that this missing component is found in the flesh of humans, and maybe Springers. Reports that Springers have been ganging up to take on some of the big river predators suggest that what they crave is only found in the flesh of creatures that eat meat.

Referee: This is of course the answer to the riddle. Kenev is being used as a testbed by the Lords of Thunder to conduct 'live' experiments on carnivores and omnivores. The goal is to create a biological agent that will make G'naak (Vermin, or carnivores) to turn on one another and create a mutual massacre.

The agent was introduced by the K'Kree just before the characters crashed. This does mean they have walked through the infected area, and anyone deciding to check will discover that they are carrying traces of some kind of agent. It does not, apparently, work on humans as yet. Were the K'Kree ever to perfect such an agent they could turn the ecosystems of whole planets against themselves and whatever meat-eating sentient races lived there – and

they might just trigger a frenzy of cannibalism among those sentients.

It may also be that the characters, having been exposed to the early and experimental strain of the agent, are now immune and could provide medical science with a counter-agent. They may inadvertently become the saviors of all humaniti.

AFTERMATH

As already noted, there is a lot of work to be done. Bodies must be cleared and dealt with before they start to rot. Casualties need tending and the mobs of Springers wandering about the valley must be brought down before they massacre the stead populations. Help is on its way from Kenev Town and Upstream, but in the first couple of days it all falls on the tired shoulders of the people of Downstream and their new offworlder friends.

There will be time to salvage the wreck soon, and the locals will help enthusiastically as soon as they are able. After all, as far as human habitation on Kenev is concerned, annihilation was narrowly averted on the walls of Downstream and the offworlders played the role of heroes.

They could honestly claim to have saved the world.

EPILOGUE: BOUND FOR SARDIS

The characters finally take the first steps towards getting home.

It was several days before Downstream looked like anything other than a war zone. It was two weeks before the last Springer bands were run off, shot down or discovered dead from malnutrition amid the bones of the herd they had devoured. It was nearly a month before the expedition to the wreck could be mounted, and weeks after that before the Joke-trains and boats full of salvage began to reach civilization.

But what a difference that salvage made. Stockpiles of raw metal exist for the first time ever at Kenev Town, along with power tools to work it. The reactor there is in good shape, serviced with parts from the wreck. Items as basic as cushions from the liner's lounge and drapes from the dining hall proved valuable to the locals, and taken-for-granted objects such as the engineering toolkit were greeted with shouts of joy by homegrown engineers who no longer had to test for radiation leaks by performing maintenance and seeing if they died afterwards.

The people of Kenev did well out of the wreck, and they were fair with their friends. They had little money of their own, but when the independent merchant ship *Raidergulf Clipper* finally comes through there was a fair amount of salvage on hand. Even in a buyer's market like this one, Captain Jusuf was willing to offer Cr 12,500 (Megusard Credits) plus middle passage to Sardis via Randrell.

With some cash in their pockets and a ticket to civilization, the characters prepare to board their ship. The Megusard Corporate is not the Imperium; it awaits discovery. Perhaps the travellers will find their way home; perhaps not. It may be that some of them do not want to make the long journey back to Ley Sector. Perhaps they have found a place among their new friends here on Kenev. Whatever the case, the future is an open book.

It is time to begin writing a new chapter.

LIBRARY DATA

PLAYERS' INFORMATION: KENEV
The following information can be determined from the ship's library computer

The characters' ship has crashed on a borderline-habitable world somewhere in Gateway sector.

UWP (as far as can be determined):
D898???-?   ?13 X F0 V__

Data Points:

- There are settlements in the valley to the northeast with some kind of radio traffic, though there was no reply to the liner's emergency signal. The settlements seem to have some kind of port (D or E class) with a suitable landing place for ships up to 1000t. The port/town might have a population of perhaps 2-3 thousand.
- Sensors picked up power emissions from two electrical generating centers in the valley northwest of here; probably these are the main town and another settlement of some kind. Tech level could not be estimated.
- The atmosphere is thick and tainted with some kind of airborne irritant. Filter masks are not 100% necessary but unprotected characters will probably suffer respiratory problems such as frequent coughing, shortness of breath and perhaps additional symptoms such as eye irritation and sore throats. These are unlikely to be life-threatening but could impair the ability to work or fight.
- No ships, satellites or any other artificial bodies were detected in the system and no vessel answered the distress call.
- The planet is mostly covered in water and has violent weather as well as thick vegetation on the ground. There are land-dwelling animals of some kind; groups were observed but no data is available.

A (rather sketchy) local map is also available from the ship's computer.

OTHER DATA

The following is standard library information available from any shipboard computer terminal.

Field Kit, Personal – A basic field operations and survival kit containing a bush hat, pants, shirt and a warm jerkin, a waterproof poncho/blanket, water bottle, belt pack with fire-starting equipment and 1 day's (almost inedible) iron rations, and a machete (treat as Blade). Boots must be purchased separately. Above TL6, the kit also includes half a dozen chemical lightsticks.

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.

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'Iluii'!pri'vguurlg was banished for his defiance towards the Overlord of Lords, the K'Kree supreme leader.

Medical Kit, Field – A basic emergency kit including first-aid supplies and small quantities of drugs such as anesthetics and antibiotics as well as minimal surgical tools. A field medkit is only designed to allow immediate treatment of injuries in a disaster situation, and will run out quickly.

Softsuit – An emergency vac suit designed to allow crews to survive disaster aboard a starship or space vessel long enough to do something about it. Softsuits are not durable enough for prolonged use, and attempts to use them instead of standard vac suits usually end in tragedy.

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

A vehicle survival kit is not designed to be carried about by individuals though parts of it, such as the rations, can obviously be placed in a pack or pockets.

Water Purification/Distillation Kit – Designed to provide safe drinking water for 4 persons, the kit contains chemical tablets and filters, plus a collapsible still (which requires a heat source; normally this is heat tablets provided with the kit) to distil liquids.

PLAYERS MAP OF KENEV

A - Up-Valley
B - Kenev Town
C - Downstream
D - Crash Site

1 Hex = 10km
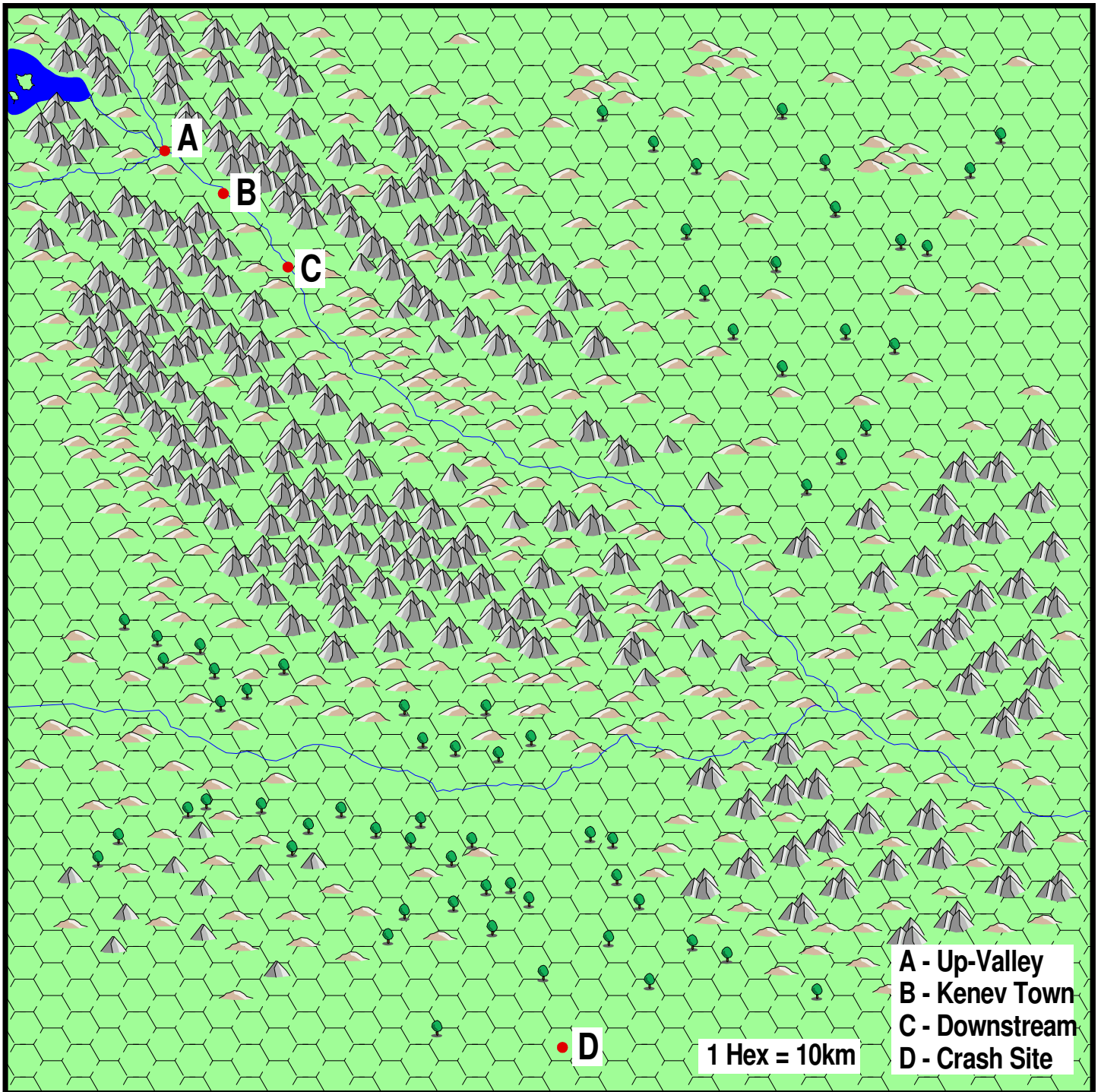
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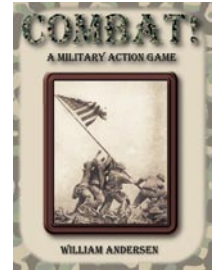
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