

*Gateway Domain
Cluster Book 2
The Starfall Cluster*

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TRAVELLER²⁰
Science-Fiction Adventure in the Far Future

GATEWAY DOMAIN CLUSTER BOOK 2: THE STARFALL CLUSTER

A SOURCEBOOK FOR *TRAVELLER*

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

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

Dedication: To those who went before.

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INTRODUCTION

Starfall is part of the *Traveller* product line from Avenger Enterprises. This volume contains a complete game setting (the Starfall Cluster) and a campaign adventure set there.

Starfall is a companion volume to the *Gateway Domain Sourcebook* from QLI, which details the surrounding region. However, *Starfall* is a complete work that stands alone. The setting material fully details the people, politics and environments of the ten worlds of the cluster, and indicates how these worlds fit into the larger scheme of things in Gateway Domain. The adventures contained in this volume can be played separately or developed into a campaign, and with little effort can be used in any other *Traveller* or SF gaming context.

Note that it is not necessary to have a deep knowledge of the Official *Traveller* Universe (OTU) in order to use this book. The data in this sourcebook is self-contained, although naturally it is impossible to present the wider setting in any depth here. A greater knowledge of the OTU will be useful, but is by no means necessary.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Please note that this book is not a standalone game system. You will need access to one of the versions of the Traveller game rules, or some other SF gaming rules, to play.

Stats are provided for major characters using T20 and Classic Traveller. A suitable source such as 76 Gunmen or Citizens of the Imperium can be used to quickly obtain stats for random minor characters.

The longer adventures in this book use the EPIC adventure format, and are presented as a series of Acts within which are several Scenes.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Starfall is in two parts: the source material and the adventures.

The source material develops and details a region of ten worlds, and presents information on worlds and events beyond the cluster. This source information can be used in *Traveller* games long after all the adventures in this book have been played. Worlds presented here can be used as a setting for a one-off adventure, or to provide player-characters with a detailed homeworld. The places and events described as near to the Starfall Cluster may be used as the backdrop to further adventures. The setting material can of course be used with a different set of rules, or transplanted into any other corner of the universe.

The worlds detailed in this book have been developed from their Universal World Profiles (UWPs), presented in the *Gateway Domain Sourcebook*. However, referees developing other clusters should note that the world descriptions presented here are just one way to interpret a given set of UWP data; one low-tech democracy may be very different from another.

It is also worth noting that although a certain amount of detail has been presented about these worlds, no writeup can precisely define an entire world. There is plenty of room for the referee to tweak the setting to his or her own needs. For example, large areas of some worlds are entirely unexplored. There could be almost *anything* there, and even those areas that ARE detailed may hold a few surprises. Thus the system and world writeups included here are a beginning, not a closed book. They are not a restriction to creativity; they are a springboard to imagination!

The Adventures in this volume are presented in similar formats to those found in previous Traveller Adventures. Each is identified by type in the text:

- **Full Adventures** include necessary stats and other details in a ready-to-play format.
- **Amber Zone** adventures outline a situation and its resolution, providing the referee with the framework of an adventure that can be tailored to the current needs.
- **Mercenary Ticket** adventures are similar to Amber Zones, but are aimed at a mercenary force or heavily-armed group of characters.
- **Patron Encounter** adventures present the basics of a situation along with several possible outcomes. The Referee can choose or determine randomly which is in effect.
- **Adventure Hooks** present an adventure idea for the Referee to flesh out, or to use as the introduction to an interesting situation.

Note that character stats are only given for Full Adventures.

STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Starfall is set in the Official Traveller Universe (OTU) and thus forms part of the body of *Traveller* Canon. The background is that of QLI's *Gateway Domain Sourcebook*; i.e. the "Golden Age of the Third Imperium", or the 56th Century by Terran reckoning. The adventures in this book are set against the backdrop of the Solomani Rim War (990-1002), which, while distant, casts a shadow over much of Charted Space.

The usual *Traveller* conventions are observed. The GM, DM, Narrator, Storyteller or whatever other terms may apply is referred to as the Referee. It has also been assumed that some version of the *Traveller* rules is in use, though this is not a necessity.

Standard **Traveller** measurements are used in this setting; most distances are in Kilometers or Parsecs (a parsec is 3.26 light years, corresponding to the size of a map hex and the distance a Jump-1 ship can travel in 1 week). UWPs (Universal Word Profiles) are standard throughout all versions of the **Traveller** game. These codes are explained in the T20 or T20 Lite rules (or any other **Traveller** rules set).

Directions are given as follows:

- **Coreward:** Towards the Galactic Core (Conventionally, “up” on a map)
- **Rimward:** Away from the Core (Conventionally, “Down” on a map)
- **Spinward:** In the direction of galactic spin (Conventionally, “Left” on a map)
- **Trailing:** Away from the direction of spin (Conventionally, “Right” on a map)

Standard **Traveller** Unidigit notation is used where appropriate (e.g. in UWP codes). This is based on Hexadecimal, where A=10, B=11, and so on to F=15. Numbers greater than 15 are uncommon, but the system continues, missing out I and O for reasons of clarity.

PART 1: SETTING OVERVIEW

The Starfall Cluster is located in the Official *Traveller* Universe, a little beyond the Imperial frontier in the Glimmerdrift Reaches sector of Gateway Domain. This section presents background data on this region as it is in the year 993 of the Third Imperium, though of course Starfall can be transported to any corner of any universe, and at any time in history, that the referee wishes.

CHARTED SPACE

Charted Space is the name given to the region inhabited by the various human and non-human states known to the people of the Third Imperium. Various states have explored far beyond the main inhabited region, but for the most part have encountered no sentient life. Why several civilizations have arisen in one area, when beyond it lies a vast wilderness, is one of the great mysteries of the 56th century.

One of the most common intelligent species in Charted Space is humaniti (the spelling changed at some point in the past). Several distinct species of humans exist, some of which have powerful empires or cultural regions within another empire. It is thought that humaniti originated on the world of Terra in the Solomani Rim sector, and was seeded throughout Charted Space by a race of now vanished beings known as the Ancients.

Some human groups, such as the Vilani and Zhodani people, have long been players on the cosmic stage. Others are of relatively minor importance, since they have little power or influence. But the most influential (in so many ways) human group are humans of Solomani extraction – the “men of Sol”, or Terrans.

The Vilani Imperium (or First Imperium) was deep in decline when the Terrans came boiling out of their home system seeking new territories and avenues for expansion. The resulting Interstellar Wars, among other factors, toppled the First Imperium and created the Second, a Terran-dominated interstellar state often known as the Rule of Man, or the Ramshackle Empire.

The Second Imperium was created by the conquest of a vast area by a group with no idea how to rule it, and of course what was conquered was a dying dinosaur. The collapse of the Rule of Man after a mere 400 years was, in hindsight, inevitable. The Long Night that followed, almost 1800 years of darkness in which interstellar travel all but ceased and many worlds regressed or died, saw lights flicker here and there, but for the most part worlds struggled on alone. Some created small “pocket empires”, only to fall back into the darkness and be forgotten. Others survived in a diminished form, and a few actually prospered.

When the Dawn finally came and people across Charted Space reached out again to the stars, the region was very

different to what their ancient records showed, and even a thousand years later, the legacy of the Long Night remains.

Charted Space can be considered to be centered on Capital, the capital of the Third Imperium. This is probably the most important state in Charted Space; indeed, the end of the long night and the start of the current dating system are Imperial conventions, coinciding with the Restoration of the Imperium. The Third Imperium claims direct descent from the First and Second, and thus was “restored” rather than created. The Terran conquest of the First Imperium stamped a number of Terran traditions and habits upon the people of the region, and so the Third Imperium is culturally a mix of Terran (or Solomani) and Vilani traditions, with quite considerable regional variations.

The Third Imperium (or just The Imperium) is populated mainly by humans, but many alien races are counted among its citizens and the Imperium is accommodating to the needs of various species. Thus Imperial worlds, starships and installations are mainly human-dominated but often have representatives or enclaves of different species present. Non-human admirals, nobles and generals are quite common.

The Imperium is bordered by various human and non-human states. To Spinward of it (and far from the Gateway region) is the Aslan Hierate, and to Spinward-Coreward lies the Zhodani Consulate. Directly to Coreward lie the Vargr Extents, a collection of states that changes chaotically over time in typically Vargr fashion. Coreward-Trailing lies the Julian Protectorate, a mix of Human and Vargr states.

None of these powers has much influence in the Gateway region due to astrography, distance and the presence of the Imperium between them and it. Other states are more influential, however.

Directly to Trailing of the Gateway region lies the 2000 Worlds of the K’Kree. The K’Kree are militant herbivore quadrupeds who believe they have a manifest destiny to exterminate all G’naak (Vermin, or meat-eaters) from the universe. They make rather poor neighbors, and of all the K’Kree the faction known as the Lords of Thunder are the poorest. Unfortunately they are also the nearest, as they have been expelled from the 2000 worlds and have set up their own state close to the edge of human space.

To Rimward-Trailing lies another non-human state, the Hive Federation. Dominated by the species known to humans as Hivers, the Federation is made up of many races, each of which fulfills a specific function and is apparently happy with the arrangement. One reason for this may be the Hiver penchant for manipulation on a grand and individual scale, a trait that makes their neighbors nervous.

To Rimward of the Imperium lies the Solomani Confederation. A powerful human state with its capital at Terra, the Solomani Confederation has long been a rival of the Imperium, and this rivalry has recently spilled over into war. Imperial citizens of Terran heritage share many

traditions with the current Solomani, but these traditions are 2000 years old, and the typical Imperial feels no real kinship with the current Solomani, other than that stemming from a common lineage.

However, the Solomani heritage has an important part to play in the Gateway region.

THE GATEWAY REGION

The Imperium is divided into several administrative regions known as Domains, and even though only two of the four sectors of the Gateway region contain any Imperial worlds, the region is known to Imperials as Gateway Domain. Most independents refer to it as the Gateway Region, or use the Imperial designation due to cultural pollution.

Gateway Domain lies mostly beyond Imperial territory, though Imperial influences reach far out into the four sectors, which act as a “buffer region” between the Imperium, the K’Kree and the Hivers. The region comprises four sectors: Ley Sector, Gateway Sector, Glimmerdrift Reaches Sector and Crucis Margin Sector. It is home to numerous minor alien races, a couple of indigenous human populations of mysterious origin, and large numbers of humans of Solomani origin, plus a smaller number of Vilani and Imperial settlers. Most of these humans arrived during the Twilight.

The period leading up to the fall of the Long Night is known as the Twilight. Certain events of this period had a major impact on the whole of Charted Space, but particularly on the area that came to be known as Gateway Domain. As the Ramshackle Empire tottered towards its own collapse, groups of colonists forged out into the unknown in Jump-capable and sublight ships. Perhaps some of the latter still forge onwards into the deeps of space; the fate of many expeditions is unknown and may remain so forever.

Many expeditions reached the Gateway region, which was at that time far from the borders of the Ramshackle Empire, which had more or less taken over the territory of the Vilani (First) Imperium. The latter reached its greatest extent well short of the Starfall Cluster. Thus these explorer-colonist-conquerors found a scarcely explored region with many suitable planets for colonization.

As successive waves of colonists reached the Gateway region, they joined existing groups or searched for new places to settle. There was naturally some conflict, but with so many worlds up for grabs it was often more productive to push on and find somewhere else. Some groups, realizing that their ships were failing, settled marginal or downright hostile planets, and not all of the colonies survived through the Long Night. Others were conquered, assimilated or obliterated in events that are now lost to history.

Today, the Gateway region lies between three great powers – the Imperium, the Hive Federation and the 2000 Worlds, and is influenced by another power. The Solomani Confederation, realizing that it has much in common with the people of the region, sends ships and envoys around Imperial space to court the independent worlds and small interstellar states of the region. The other powers also have agendas, and allegiances shift over time as worlds find it in their best interests to cooperate with one of the great powers or one of the smaller, regional, powers.

GLIMMERDRIFT REACHES SECTOR

The Spinward-Coreward end of the Glimmerdrift reaches sector is dominated by the Darksky Gulf, or Delphi Rift, an area almost devoid of stars that partially cuts off the sector from neighboring Imperial space. However, while impressive, the Gulf is not the main astrographic feature of the sector. That honor goes to the Glimmer Drift.

The Glimmer Drift, for which the sector is named, is a region in the central area of the sector where its four quadrants meet. Stellar density is low in the Drift, though the wide spaces between the stars are filled with dense clouds of interstellar gas, which glow with reflected starlight (and in some cases, internal energy). Some astrographers consider this region to be an extension of the Darksky Gulf (or Delphi Rift) though it contains far more stars than what is normally considered Rift space. Glimmer Drift is bounded to Spinward-Rimward and Coreward by a region of true rift some 2-5 parsecs deep. This rift presents navigation problems as it can only be crossed by Jump-2 ships at two points, though once across the gulf, traversing the Glimmer Drift is somewhat easier.

The Glimmer Drift and Darksky Gulf both created natural obstacles to colonization and expansion, and in some ways shaped the development of the sector. This is nowhere more apparent than in the case of Imperial expansion into the sector.

As a result of the Darksky Gulf’s position, Imperial influences have come into the sector from two directions. Around the Coreward end of the Gulf, the Imperial Domain of Gateway is slowly expanding into the sector from Ley sector. Indeed, the Domain capital is just across the border at Annapabar. The Imperium has a few member worlds in the Alpha quadrant (the Spinward-Coreward corner of the sector), which are administered from Annapabar.

The Imperium has also expanded into the sector around the Rimward end of the Darksky Gulf. These worlds are technically part of the Domain of Gateway, and subject to administration from Annapabar. However, the presence of the Gulf and an area of neutral space between the two groups of Imperial worlds has made this impractical. Thus until the Imperial border moves far enough out that the two groups are united (a process that will likely take centuries) the worlds in the Gamma quadrant (the Rimward-Spinward

corner of the sector) are administered from Delphi, as part of the Domain of Sylea.

The majority of worlds in the Beta (Coreward-Trailing) quadrant of the Glimmerdrift Reaches sector are non-aligned. A handful of Imperial worlds are ruled from Annapabar, to Coreward, and a few belong to the Federate Republic. The Republic is, however, a rather loose organization which exerts little influence beyond its borders, and the Imperium is far away and busy with its own affairs (such as fighting the Solomani) so influences are relatively minor.

The Delta Quadrant of the sector is dominated by two fairly large interstellar powers; the decaying Farreach Margravate and the rising star of the Loyal Nineworlds Republic. Tensions between these two powers are high, and thus their attention is firmly focused on one another. The Republic's annexation of Shoehorn, a world right on the doorstep of Margravate territory, may be the salvation of the Margravate, presenting an external threat to unite the worlds of the Margravate, or the final straw that causes it to shatter. Both possibilities are likely to involve a great deal of violence and bloodshed.

The Glimmerdrift Reaches sector is to some extent a battleground for Solomani and Imperial agents trying to create sympathy for their respective causes. The Solomani could use neutral worlds in the Reaches as a base for commerce raids into the Imperium (indeed, it is suspected that they already are), and are constantly seeking alliances or basing agreements. Thus many worlds are equipped with Solomani weaponry sold at knock-down prices in return for a little political favor. Both sides are using all the tools at their disposal, from flag-showing naval vessels and economic assistance to covert action and blatant strongarm tactics, to prevent the other from gaining an advantage.

Beta Quadrant of the Glimmerdrift Reaches Sector

The four subsectors of the Beta Quadrant (Tri-Empire, Marla, Williamsburg and Tasman) meet at the Idam Lee system, which forms part of the Starfall Cluster. The Starfall Cluster is separated from its neighbours by two or three parsecs of rift (the Kulderson Deep) in most directions, and is only accessible to Jump-2 ships at certain points.

Despite the presence of the Kulderson Deep, the Beta quadrant is a region of fairly dense stars, grouped mainly in small clusters. The major grouping of worlds in the quadrant is the Broken Chain, which lies in the Rimward half of the quadrant and whose two halves are separated by one parsec of rift space. The smaller half (the Broken Links) centers on Wideocean, while the major half (the Chain Majoris) contains 15 worlds. The Chain Majoris can be accessed (by Jump-2 ships) from the Starfall Cluster only via the Didan system. Spinward of the Starfall Cluster is Eda Group (of 6 worlds), which in turn provides Jump-2 access to Coreward clusters: the Lunber cluster, Gildensky Quartet and the Shashka Main. This is the major trade route into the Imperium, though the journey is long.

The Beta Quadrant has a serious piracy problem. Vessels from as far afield as Granicus and the Raidermarch (a state just over the sector order in Crucis margin) prey on commercial traffic, and some worlds within the region use privateering as a political or military tool. As if navigation were not hazardous enough, the Beta quadrant has recently begun to suffer from incidences of the so-called Deadspace Phenomenon, with Jump drives malfunctioning for no discernible reason. The frequency of such incidents is low, but seems to be rising slightly.

The dust clouds that give the Glimmerdrift Reaches their name are particularly dense in some areas of this quadrant, and close to certain worlds they are sufficiently dramatic that they are considered a tourist attraction worth travelling many parsecs for.

NEIGHBORING POWERS

GLIMMERDRIFT TRADE CONSORTIUM

The Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium (or GTC) is a loose alliance of worlds tied together by economic, rather than political, ties. The Consortium is dominated by the high-tech economy of Fal, just a few parsecs away from the Starfall Cluster. The GTC is not a regional alliance, but includes worlds scattered across the Glimmerdrift and Crucis Margin sectors.

Based upon trade and industry, the Consortium supports a range of agendas among its members, and while internal politics can be rather 'vigorous', the Consortium is not expansionistic. Its economic influence is felt across the sector, and there can be no doubt that it can bring considerable power to bear if it chooses, but for the most part the worlds of the Consortium – and the Consortium itself – are content to mind their own affairs. Occasionally a world petitions to join; most such requests are politely turned down.

Member worlds of the Consortium have very different governments, which deal with their own internal affairs. External matters like foreign policy (such as it is) are the concern of the Mercantile Council, a representative body that allocates votes to member worlds based upon the size of their planetary economy. The Council is divided into numerous factions, and any issue requires an impressive amount of favors, influence and outright bribery (of individuals and worlds) to achieve a decisive majority. For this reason, Consortium affairs are normally in a state of "chaotic stability", where changes are minor and gradual despite furious politicking on all sides. Outsiders find this situation rather exhausting to enter into, which effectively keeps foreign firms out of Consortium-influenced markets. This is probably not a coincidence.

Vessels of the GTC trade fleet are frequent visitors to the Starfall Cluster, and trade with GTC worlds is important to the local economy. Thus the GTC (if its members can agree on anything for long enough) can exert considerable influence over the Cluster and the policies of the worlds in it.

Most vessels of the GTC are merchant cruisers capable of Jump-2 and armed for self-defense against raiders. Many of these vessels mount bay weapons and are thus capable of seeing off a fairly considerable attacker if the need arose. A group of armed merchant cruisers could in theory act as a military force, though it would surely take heavy damage in an engagement with real naval vessels.

The GTC does also maintain a military fleet of sorts. This is the so-called "CP-CK Fleet", a collection of small warships (nothing bigger than a destroyer) on loan from various worlds, assigned to "CP" (commerce protection) and "CK" (corsair killing) duty. Seepies and Seekers (as they are colloquially referred to) range beyond the systems of the Consortium, and at times have been known to assault and

occupy known pirate havens. Seepies operating out of Fal seem to consider that they have the right to operate in the Cluster without permission from local navies, and this is a cause of some tension.

FEDERATE REPUBLIC

A very loose collection of worlds situated to Coreward of the Starfall Cluster, the Federate Republic has little central authority, nor much desire for any. Its member worlds are bound by mutual defense and economic treaties, and a representative assembly is maintained to resolve disputes between members.

The Federate is strongly Solomani in terms of culture and outlook, though its links to the Solomani Confederation are tenuous at best. Within broad limits, member worlds are free to establish their own foreign policy, so relations with other polities vary from world to world. The Spinward worlds of the Federate are somewhat influenced by the Imperium, to the point where Imperial merchants and even navy ships are frequent visitors. Vessels from the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium are also frequent visitors, and for the most part are welcome.

The Federate maintains a fleet of light patrol craft to deter piracy on the Shashka Main and along its trade routes, but lacks anything resembling a real fleet. Patrol frigates do sometimes make courtesy visits to the Starfall Cluster, but for the most part the Federate prefers to mind its own business and let others do likewise. Some member worlds are more active, however.

FARREACH MARGRAVATE

The Margravate has existed (in one form or another) since the last days of the Rule of Man, though in that time it has been conquered, liberated, expanded, reduced to only 3 worlds, and at least twice wracked by internal wars. It currently occupies worlds in three clusters in the Delta quadrant to Rimward of the Starfall Cluster.

A rather loose organization traditionally ruled by an elected council headed by the hereditary Margrave, the Margravate is in deep decline. Its current capital and governmental apparatus are at H-10, but this 'central government' lacks any real power and is merely a political ornament. Central control has broken down, the Margrave has been nothing but a figurehead for centuries and member worlds are jockeying for influence and control over their neighbors. It seems likely that the Margravate will break up sometime in the next few decades, though the dissolution is not likely to be very violent.

Overall, the Margravate is a very disorganized state. Some worlds have designs on annexing territory outside the boundaries of the polity, while others are comfortable as they are. Economic policy is similarly fragmented. Some worlds are heavily influenced by the corporations of the Glimmerdrift

Trade Consortium, some have agreements with foreign powers and some are talking about economic localization – i.e. self-sufficiency.

The Loyal Nineworlds Republic appears to be hammering the last nails into the coffin of the Margravate. Its forces have annexed the world of Shoehorn, and the Republic seems inclined to keep expanding at the expense of the Margravate. The Margravate Navy, officially still owned and controlled by the central government, is bitterly divided along factional lines. It is a political football rather than a real fighting force, and stands no chance of deterring or preventing Nineworlds expansion.

In addition to the Margravate Navy vessels, various member worlds maintain private navies, some of which are coming to rival the Margravate Navy in size and capability. Vessels are mainly in the light cruiser size range, but tend to be generalist designs carrying a small wing of fighters, some ground troops and craft for them, and a light spinal mount. Such vessels are titled as “General Operations Vessels” or “Heavy Operations Vessels”, and are backed up by “Light Patrol Vessels”, “Fast Strike Vessels” (Oversized destroyers built around a small spinal particle accelerator), and “General Support Vessels” (armored and armed logistics/transport ships). System defenses include large numbers of “System Defense Craft” (light, fast monitors built around a spinal particle accelerator) and “System Patrol Craft” (equivalent to oversized SDBs, but carrying a heavy missile armament and a few small craft to improve area sensor coverage)

The Margravate is not capable of responding coherently to an outside threat, nor of dealing with a major fleet attack. Deterrent strategy is based around the concept of mutual damage; the Margravate would lose many SDCs and FSVs repelling an assault, but could make an attack very costly, at least in the initial stages.

THE LOYAL NINEWORLDS REPUBLIC

Founded by a broad racial mix of settlers in the last days of the Rule of Man, the Nineworlds Republic (named for the initial nine members; the polity is much larger now) has no formal ties to the Solomani Confederation, but loudly and repeatedly professes its loyalty to “The Peoples of Old Earth”. However, this is not the same thing as the present Solomani Confederation, and the Republic is actually at odds with the Solomani people who dominate Terra and her surrounding systems.

One of the major bones of contention between the Republic and the Solomani Confederation is that the people of the Nineworlds believe that ALL the races of Terra are supreme, and have many Dolphins, Apes, Orca and even a few Ursa among their population. The Republic maintains a claim to ownership of Terra in the name of these “true and equal children of Old Earth”. The Solomani (and everyone else) dismiss this claim as rather silly.

The various worlds of the Republic are self-governing for the most part, sending representatives to the capital at Centerpoint to decide common policies and operating a centralized naval force of cruiser-sized combatants capable of carrying out a range of tasks. Republican cruisers carry a force of Naval Infantry plus small craft to transport them. The Naval Infantry is the only “army” in the Republic, though member worlds do maintain militia and paramilitary security forces.

THE RAIDERMARCH

Founded during the last days of the Long Night as a raider kingdom, the Raidermarch is a powerful and militarized state lying in the Alpha quadrant of the Crucis Margin sector. Although built on a foundation of wealth and technology taken by force, the Raidermarch acquired a certain respectability during the middle centuries of the millennium, but today is once again a raider kingdom.

Marcher ships raid across the Crucis Margin and Glimmerdrift Reaches sectors, and it seems likely that the Raidermarch intends conquer more systems. The navy of the Raidermarch operates vessels of destroyer size and smaller. Most are conventional types, though long range and the capacity for self-repair is apparently considered an important feature. In recent years, “pocket carriers” flying the Raidermarch flag have occasionally been sighted in the Starfall Cluster. These 1-2000 ton vessels are constructed to rugged merchant rather than full military standards. They operate a handful of fighters and armed cutters, and are obviously designed to fight only semi-military threats. The Marchers refer to them as anti-piracy ships, but most other observers would describe them as custom-designed commerce raiders.

THE THIRD IMPERIUM

Imperial trade ships and corporations do operate in the Starfall cluster, though they are not very common. The Beta quadrant is an area of interest for the Imperials, and the occasional naval task force passes through on a flag-showing or piracy-suppression mission. However, most of the Imperial influence in the region is economic, and comes in the form of firms or vessels based out of Imperial worlds rather than “official” Imperial assets.

It is likely that the Imperium has long-term plans to expand into the region and perhaps annex some worlds. Imperial policy is generally to show worlds the benefits of membership and wait for them to apply to join, making discreet economic or diplomatic nudges as necessary. It is likely that Imperial agents and merchants are quietly going about bringing worlds around to requesting membership, a task that the Imperium can afford to take its time over.

The Solomani Rim War has distracted Imperial attention (which was never very focused on the region anyway), though it has added impetus in one area – the Imperium is

firmly opposed to allowing the Solomani to gain support or (especially) basing rights in the Glimmerdrift Reaches sector. Covert operations and intelligence surveillance are likely to be ongoing, though by their very nature these activities are not very noticeable.

THE SOLOMANI CONFEDERATION

The Solomani Confederation is very distant, but keen to make trouble on the Imperial borders and perhaps even gain allies there. Its long-range trade ships were not uncommon before the war, and now seem slightly more frequent, suggesting that the Solomani are also applying covert and economic pressure.

It is thought that the Solomani Confederation is operating a number of commerce raiders in the region, in the hope of damaging the Imperial economy, drawing vessels of the Imperial Navy away from the main battle fronts, and perhaps strongarming worlds in the region into siding with the Confederation. Agents, military advisors and diplomats are also highly active across the sector (and thus more than likely, in the Starfall Cluster), trying to counterbalance or oppose Imperial influences.

THE STARFALL CLUSTER

– AN OVERVIEW

THE ANCIENT PAST

Little is known about the Starfall Cluster in very ancient times. There are a few indications that one or more of the worlds may have been inhabited at one time, though whether by indigenous beings or star-travellers is an open question. Some scientists have suggested that certain creatures “native” to the worlds of the cluster are in fact crossbreeds or introduced life forms, adding weight to the argument that at some point in the past the cluster was home, at least temporarily, to a starfaring race.

However, all records agree that the worlds of the cluster were empty when the first humans arrived.

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The Starfall Cluster was settled by enterprising Terran pioneers late in the Twilight period. Although the worlds of the cluster are not all ideal for settlement, their proximity and therefore ease of access to Jump-1 vessels made them an ideal choice for a small interstellar state.

However, setting up a viable colony is a difficult business, and it was many years before the groups that landed in different areas of the same world, let alone on different planets, could establish regular contact and begin to work together. And by that time, of course, many groups did not want to.

The original settlers were augmented by later groups, some of which were absorbed without trouble. Others chose to create their own fledgling states, and a period of intense politics, economic pressure and occasional conflict then ensued. The situation remained fluid for many decades, with each new balance of power disrupted by the arrival of new colony ships. Some came thoroughly prepared, with holds filled with tools and weapons. Others arrived as desperate refugees aboard ramshackle starships that were days from total systems failures. The colonists came from Terra and from other worlds of the Second Imperium, and brought many cultures with them, including the traditional Vilani way of life and some minor human cultures long suppressed by the First Imperium. Some even came from first-generation colonies set up elsewhere in the Gateway region.

Each time a new colony ship came in, the culture of the Starfall Cluster was once again altered. Each new group brought new idea, or tried-and-tested old ones. Each new ship brought the potential for more conflict.

And then they stopped coming.

THE SILENT YEARS

The colony ships continued to come in until around –1400, though their numbers dropped off to almost nothing. By the time the last ships came in, the colonies of the Starfall Cluster were well established but already suffering from a new set of problems. The various colonies of the cluster remained in contact only so long as there were working starships. As with any new colony, some technological and industrial capabilities were lost. Shipyards were a luxury that none of the colonies could afford, and so the only ships available were one-off hulls fitted with drive systems removed from the colony vessels, or in some cases the colony ships themselves.

The system worked as long as there were new ships to strip components from, but once the colony vessels stopped coming in, there was no ready source of spares or components for new ships. The only option was to construct new drive systems from local resources.

That proved impossible. The theoretical knowledge still existed at that time, and working prototypes were available to copy from. But setting up the appropriate industry to locate, mine, refine and process the rare materials used in Jump drives was an expensive undertaking. Creating the industrial base required to build whole starships was the ruin of at least one world economy.

And so the last starships gradually wore out, the worlds of the cluster lost contact with one another, and the Long Night fell over the Starfall Cluster, lit only by the glory of the Glimmer Drift.

THE MODERN PERIOD

Although starships continued to ply the cluster throughout much of the Long Night, activity fell off almost to nothing by about –400, with only Lunarmise constructing vessels. This period marks the bottom of the trough for the cluster, and by –200 changing economic conditions on Lunarmise led to a period of economic imperialism that required starships to fuel it. A number of ambitious projects were undertaken, including the establishment of outsystem mining bases in the Idam Lee system.

Lunarmise was for many years the centre of the cluster in economic and political terms, and its economy fuelled development elsewhere in the cluster. By the time the star of Lunarmise passed into eclipse, the rest of the cluster had recovered from the Long Night sufficiently to be considered a starfaring civilization, though by no means a unified one. As the various colonies and outsystem concerns broke away from Lunarmise control, the political and economic balance shifted considerably and other worlds became more important.

During the modern period, contact with various other societies grew in importance. Ships from the Grand Duchy of Stoner have been visiting the cluster's ports since the early days of the Dawn period, and since then visitors have included vessels from the Imperium, Federate Republic, Farreach Margravate, the Raidermarch and Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium have begun to pass through in greater numbers.

THE STARFALL CLUSTER TODAY

Today, the Starfall Cluster is a mix of high and low-tech worlds, of backwaters and important economies. It is important mainly as a route to other places, and vessels from many different civilizations use the worlds of the cluster as a bridge across the Kulderson Deep.

Imperial-registered vessels are quite common. These are mainly Scout Service ships or private merchants, though warships do sometimes make visits to the more important worlds of the cluster. Solomani ships are less common, but the odd long-range trading expedition would come through from time to time. This has not happened since the outbreak of war.

ALLEGIANCE CODES

X	Non-Aligned
GT	Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium
Fr	Federate Republic

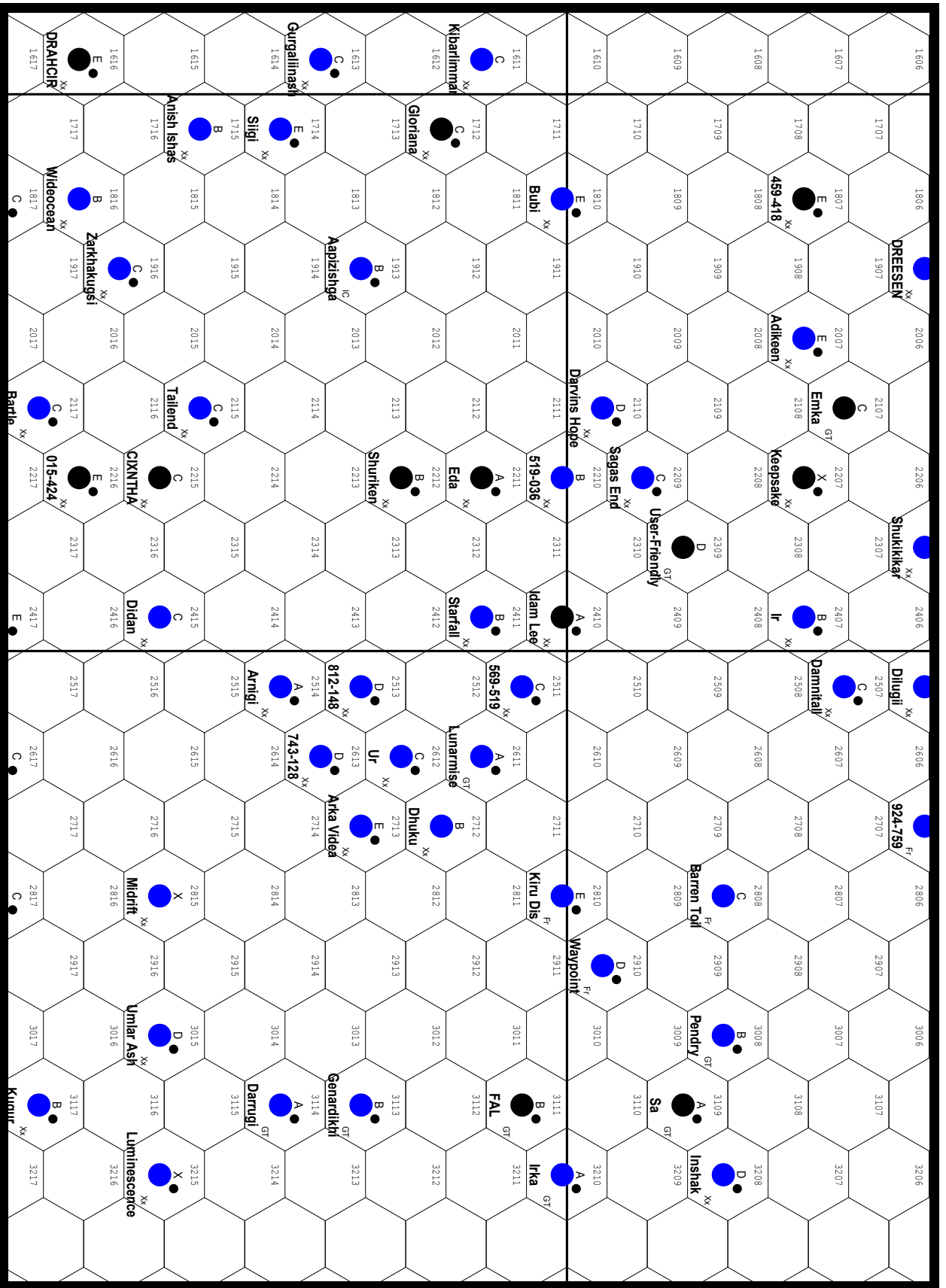
Name	Hex	UWP	Bases	Codes	PBG	Allegiance	Stellar Data
Darvin's Hope	2110	D332667-7		Na Ni Po	604	X	A1 V
Saga's End	2209	C571845-9			914	X	M3 V
519-036	2210	B5A1618-8		Ni	100	X	M3 V M7 D
Eda	2211	A100544-F		Ni Va	505	X	G3 V M2 D
Shuriken	2212	B300568-A		Na Ni Va	904	X	K0 III
Cixntha	2215	C100999-A		n	400	X	M3 V M9 D
User-Friendly	2309	D100300-5		Va	310	GT	K2 V
Ir	2407	B697733-6		Ag	812	X	F4 V
Idam Lee	2410	A410849-E		Na	604	X	M3 V M4 D
Starfall	2411	B654554-B		Ag Ni	803	X	M2 V
Didan	2415	C629301-8			300	X	M5 V M7 D
569-519	2511	C9A9566-B		Ni	204	X	G4 V
812-148	2513	D8B5589-5		Ni	523	X	G3 V
Arnigi	2514	A464599-B		Ag Ni	502	X	M1 V
Lunarmise	2611	A659868-D			824	GT	M1 V
Ur	2612	C68A887-5		Ri Wa	304	X	A2 V
743-128	2613	D6A2340-5			203	X	K4 V F3 D
Dhuku	2712	B98A400-C		Ni Wa	710	X	K7 V A4 D
Arka Videa	2713	E565644-7		Ni	123	X	K1 V
Kiru Dis	2810	E588646-6		Ag Ni Ri	424	Fr	K0 V
Midrift	2815	X346641-0		Ag Ni	610	X	G2 V
Waypoint	2910	D334564-7		Ni	902	Fr	G1 V

Ships from the Margravate, GTC and Federate Republic will often meet in the ports of the cluster (mainly at Lunarmise) to trade and trans-ship goods, and vessels from as far afield as the Hive Federation, the Old worlds and even the Droyne Oytrip in Crucis Margin sector will occasionally visit these markets.

However, despite this through traffic, the Starfall Cluster remains a backwater. Money comes into only a few of the local worlds from outside trade, and those that do not have the benefit of a good port in a strategic location remain rather poor. The spacelanes away from the major ports are thus rarely patrolled, if at all, and pirate attacks are not uncommon.

WORLDS OF THE KULDERSEN DEEP REGION

UWP data for the worlds of the Starfall Cluster, and those lying outside the cluster but within 3 parsecs of a Cluster world, are presented here. The UWPs are drawn from the *Gateway Domain Sourcebook*, and are expanded upon in the next section.



Starfall Cluster

Glimmerdrift Reaches Sector

Imperial Year 993

Subsectors			
B	C	D	
F	G	H	

MAP LEGEND

Starport Type: Gas Giant, Terminus, Wayport, Airway, No Gas Giant

WORLD CHARACTERISTICS

- Water Present
- No Water Present
- Asteroid Belt

BASES

- Imperial Naval Base
- Imperial Scout Base
- Imperial Way Station

Other Symbols: Border, Travel Zone (Coal, Fuel), No Gas Giant

PART 2: THE WORLD OF STARFALL

LOCATION: WILLIAMSBURG SUBSECTOR /GLIMMERDRIFT SECTOR 2411

UWP: B654554-B

ASTROGRAPHY

GENERAL

Starfall orbits along the outer edge of the life support zone of Bashan, an M2 (red dwarf) star officially catalogued as 288-986 on charts of the Imperial Grand Survey. Bashan measures 0.8 solar radii and 0.3 solar masses. It lies in on the spinward edge of the Starfall Cluster of the Glimmerdrift Reaches, approximately 12 parsecs rimward-trailing from the closest point in the Imperium, at Ku (Tri-Empire/Glimmerdrift 1404).

Including Starfall, there are four planets orbiting Bashan. The others are Berri, Kirpatrik, and Cook. Aside from Starfall, the terrestrial planets are iceballs well outside the life zone. These planets are separated by three planetoid belts, with the rather un-inventive names Inner, Outer and Wonkers. The belts are primarily composed of heavy metals with traces of frozen water, methane and ammonia. The Wonkers Belt is the smallest, and occupies an eccentric orbit inclined approximately 40 degrees from the elliptic. Scientists speculate that the Wonkers Belt is the result of a rogue planetoid passing too close to Bashan, and being torn apart by tidal forces.

System details are listed below:

Orbit Number	Name	UWP	Comments
0	Starfall	B654554-B	Naval Base
1	Berri	E410000-0	
2	Inner Belt	D000210-C	Planetary Belt
3	Kirpatrik	X300000-0	
4	Cook	X200000-0	
5	Outer Belt	X000000-0	Planetary Belt
6	Wonkers Belt	E000164-C	Planetary Belt, Research Station

Starfall's day sky is dominated by the huge orb of Bashan. The planet orbits at a distance of 0.25 AU (3.7 million km), in the closest possible orbit to the bright red dwarf. Starfall orbits with an axial tilt of 15 degrees, creating a moderate seasonal effect. The planet has no natural satellites.

Starfall's low Albedo (0.05) and high Greenhouse factor (0.15), which results from the high volume of volcanic gases continually released into the atmosphere, give Starfall a thin but reasonable atmosphere, in spite of the planet's low gravity (0.6 G) and its position at the outer edge of Bashan's optimal ecozone.

CHRONOLOGICAL DATA

Starfall has a rotation period of 20 Standard Hours. Locally, 'day' is generally used to refer to a local day of 20 Standard Hours, and 'standard day' is used to refer to the Imperial period of 24 Standard Hours. Timekeeping on Starfall uses a twenty hour clock, i.e. 2000 hours is midnight.

Starfall circles Bashan once every 84.04 days or 70.0 Standard Days. In local culture, the term 'year' is used to refer to a Standard Year, while one orbital period is locally referred to as an 'Orbit'. One orbit is therefore 84 days long, and divided into four 21 day 'Seasons'. The seasons are referred to in Galanglic by their traditional Solomani names – Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. The 21 days of each season are numbered, and the seasons are divided into three 7-day weeks. Every 25 Orbits, one additional day is added to the Starfall Calendar. Starfall currently uses the Oasian Calendar, where 1 Winter 1 was the day of the eruption of Mount Cerberus in the opening moments of the Devastation, and equated to 020-0023 in the Imperial Calendar. Accordingly, 001-0993 on the Imperial Calendar equates to 6 Summer 5057 on Starfall.

World Name STARFALL					UWP B 6 5 4 5 5 4 B						
Hex Scale in km 860 km/hex											
Trade Classifications Agricultural, Non-Industrial			Domain Gateway		Sector Glimmerdrift		Subsector Williamsburg		Hex 2411		
Travel Zone Classification		Primary Star Type M2 V		Binary Star Type -		Tertiary Star Type -		Orbit 0	Year Length 70 d	Gas Giants 0	Planetoid Belts 3
Starport Type B Good Quality (Tripartite Starport)					Bases Present Starfall Navy Base						
Size 6 9600 km diameter					Gravity .75 g		Natural Resources A				
Atmosphere 5 Thin					Climate Tropical		Max Temp. 25 C	Night Temp. 10 C			
Hydrographics 4 40% Surface Water					Biodiversity Active		Biodiversity				
Population 5 Hundreds of Thousands					PopX 8	Total Population 840,000					
Government 5 Feudal Technocracy					World Trade Balance +7		<i>IS Form 8.2 World Worksheet</i>				
Law Level 5 Moderate					Description 1. Landing City 2. Boatha 3. High Spires 4. Courtice 5. Oasis 6. Evergreen 7. Beurach Theine 8. Tyl Antal 9. Palmer's Landing 10. Delta 11. Nuevo Chiriqui 12. Gibraltar 13. Raiman 14. Cinder Bay 15. Geyser Pass 16. Altis 17. Black Ridge 18. Corwin's Strike 19. Mauna Ele-Ele 20. Eraikazan 21. Starfall Capital 22. Grand Valley 23. Kilimanjaro 24. Thermopolis R1. Starfall Central R2. Gorlan R3. Tedeshui (R = ruins)						
Tech Level B Average Interstellar Community											
SATELLITES											

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CLIMATE

The average annual temperature at 30 degrees latitude is 25°C or 'Tropical' by IISS standard notation. Average daytime temperatures vary from 40-50°C in the equatorial zone, to -5-15°C at the poles. Night-time average temperatures are typically 10 to 20 degrees cooler.

Climate Bands as follows:

Hex Band	Global Zone	Summer	Spring/ Autumn	Winter
1	Equatorial	Very Hot	Hot	Warm
2-3	Tropical	Hot	Warm	Tropical
4-5	Sub-Tropical	Warm	Tropical	Temperate
6-7	Temperate	Tropical	Temperate	Chilly
8-9	Near Polar	Temperate	Chilly	Cool
10-11	Polar	Chilly	Cool	Cold

At Landing City in the Sub-Tropical Zone, daytime temperatures vary from an average 35 degrees Celsius in the summer to an average 15 degrees Celsius in the winter. Because Landing City is located on the shore of a large body of water, the temperature is moderated somewhat.

GEOGRAPHY

Starfall's geography is typified by six ecozones. These are the Polar Plains, the Northern and Central Mountain Cordilleras, the Riftlands, the Devastation, the Volcanic Ranges, and the Barren Wastes. Although there is some variation across in a given region, the same basic characteristics apply across each individual ecozones.

The Northern and Southern Plains are low, stable regions with flat or rolling terrain. The underlying geology is the most stable on the planet, and the source of the two polar aquifers: reservoirs of over 60% of the planet's accessible water. The polar plains are dotted with small lakes and streams, most fed by runoff from the two mountain ranges. These regions also provide the habitat for the widest range of flora and fauna on the planet. The introduction of Terran animal and plant lifeforms has been most successful in these regions.

The two Mountain Cordilleras provide an ecozone typical of many alpine environments. Most of the moisture in these regions accumulates as a result of precipitation on the windward slopes, or geothermal venting of water drawn from the polar aquifers.

The main feature of the Riftlands is the Great Rift Valley, a deep tectonic fault line that stretches for thousands of kilometers across the Equatorial and North Tropical Zones of Starfall. The flooded section of the valley is the Starfall Sea: the planet's largest body of water. This ecozone is characterized by wide arid plain, torn in half by the massive scar of the Great Rift Valley. The plain is hot, dry, and sparsely

populated, except for areas along the shore of the Starfall Sea or on the edge of the mountains, where water is readily available. Due to the extreme temperatures experienced in the region, Terran animal lifeforms have had only limited success adapting to this region, but several species of Starfaller fauna, such as Palmer's Greycow, have filled important niches.

The Devastation is a plateau between the Northern and Central Mountain Cordillera in western Starfall. The region was the center of the volcanic activity that devastated life on the planet over 900 years ago. When the planet was first settled around IE -1800, the region was covered with lush native vegetation fed by the northern aquifer. Three major human settlements sprang up in the region: Starfall Central, Gorlash and Tedeshui. Then, in IE 23, a titanic series of volcanic eruptions along the Hades fault line devastated the region, forcing masses of refugees to flee while lava flows and ash storms wiped the three city-states from the face of the planet. Most of the arable land was destroyed and atmospheric contamination plunged the planet into a nuclear winter effect that lasted for over 600 years. Today, the Devastation is covered with lava flows and toxic ash dunes.

The Volcanic Ranges ecozone is limited to two large cinder cone ranges found in the southern tropical and sub-tropical zones. The Volcanic Ranges are massive features with rich soils but little or no native moisture. Human settlements have compensated with various moisture collection technologies. The largest of the cinder cones are several thousand meters in height and hundreds of kilometers in radius. Mauna Ele-Ele is the most famous of the features, rising out of the Southern Plain northwest of Grand Valley. Its terraced slopes are covered with coffee plantations.

The Barren Wastes are the dominant feature of the south tropical and sub-tropical regions. These areas are primarily large rocky plains, devoid of settlement. The rocky plains are of volcanic origin, and covered for the most part with pumice, obsidian and similar materials, ejected by eons of volcanic activity on Starfall. However, there are several exceptions to this norm. In certain locations, artesian springs, fed by sources thousands of kilometers away, create pools of spring water covered by buoyant mats of volcanic rock - like pumice - filled with pockets of air. Cinder Bay is named after such a feature. These pools are oases of life in a region that is otherwise barren.

GEOLOGY

The latest geological surveys indicate that Starfall is about 3.5 billion years old. The planet's most significant feature is its dynamic tectonic state, most likely attributable to the planet's proximity to the red dwarf star. There are dozens of volcanoes and cinder cones scattered along fault lines, and two major volcanic ranges in the southern sub-tropical zone. However, the most visible feature of this tectonic activity is

the Great Rift, extending for a distance of over 12000 km from Delta in the equatorial region to Thermopolis in the southern temperate region.

Starfall's diameter is approximately 9600 km, contributing to the planet's low surface gravity and thin atmosphere. The planet is, however, quite dense for its size, and the output of volcanic gases contributes to the planet's overall Greenhouse effect, and serves to enrich the otherwise sparse atmosphere. The core is molten, and made up of an iron-nickel core. The surface consists of a thin crust formed by about five main tectonic plates, and the high degree of movement in these plates is responsible for Starfall's two main mountain ranges and frequent major seismic events.

HYDROGRAPHY

The amount of visible surface water on Starfall is only about 10% of the surface area. This exists in a series of small, deep rift seas, the largest of which is the 6800 km long Starfall Sea, and a large number of small lakes scattered across the polar and temperate regions of the planet. The actual hydrography of the planet is much higher, close to 40%, but is not readily accessible. The remaining water is subterranean, but readily accessible in many parts of the world. In particular, the two polar aquifers hold incredible amounts of water just meters below the surface in those regions.

The volatile tectonic state of the planet's surface creates three unique features: the rift seas, geyser faults and artesian springs. Massive amounts of subsurface water accumulate along fault lines, where the integrity of the rock is weakened. Where these bodies of water are exposed, they are known as rift seas, incredibly deep bodies of water. In areas where the water is exposed to magma or hot gases from deep within Starfall, the result is a fault line crowned with geysers spraying superheated water thousands of feet into the atmosphere. Artesian springs occur where the aquifer carries water through layers of rock in regions where the surface is below water level at the source of the aquifer. Settlers drilling through to the aquifer are rewarded with a pressurized spring, perhaps a fountain, supplied by a source sometimes thousands of kilometers away. These artesian springs are the only source of water for the desolate areas such as Raiman and Cinder Bay in the Rocky Central Plains.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Starfall has a large and varied ecosystem, much of which is edible to humans, and many Terran species have made Starfall their home alongside (or instead of) the native life. Humans have cultivated Terran and local cereal crops, and Terran cattle graze alongside a native herd beast called Palmer's Greycow.

The availability of minerals in the soil makes Starfall's vegetation a riot of color, with blooms and fruit of every conceivable shade bursting forth during the short growing season. There are few flying creatures, but the forests are home to a great variety of climbing creatures, not all of which are harmless. Life is sparser in the badlands, but a number of very hardy species scratch an existence there, too. Even the slopes of active volcanoes are inhabited.

Local legend speaks of a beast normally referred to as a Land-Phoenix. This reptile-like creature is supposedly able to survive extreme temperatures, and lays its eggs high on active slopes where the heat incubates (rather than cooks) them. No proof of the existence of the Land-Phoenix has ever been found, though many explorers have tried and some have lost their lives in the process.

CULTURE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Mankind's recorded history on Starfall stretches back over 3000 years to when colony missions from the Second Imperium arrived at First Landing in IE -2177. By IE -500, the planet's population had risen to over 3.9 million people, a population density of only 34 people per 10,000 square kilometers of land. As the ships from Terra and the Empire stopped arriving by the middle of the Long Night, Starfall reached TL A. The isolation of the long night came slowly to the Starfall Cluster, but the settlers increasingly had to rely upon the resources within their own communities to survive, and to maintain the tools and knowledge that they had brought with themselves. As Starfall began to stagnate, some residents, particularly the technically adept, moved off-world to seek their fortune on the new colonies. This decline became the basis of the rise of feudal technocracy as the predominant form of government on Starfall.

As settlers spread out on the surface of the planet, they established widely separated self-sufficient communities. These became the basis for the today's city-states. Each of these cities administered their surroundings for as much as 1000 km in every direction. As the Long Night continued, the city-states competed with each other through trade, commerce and armed conflict. Then, in the course of the last millennium, Starfall suffered two successive disasters: one man-made and one natural. The first was the Starfall World War, which engulfed most of the northern and equatorial parts of the planet, and devastated First Landing. By IE -200, the independent city-states began to band together for mutual defense, and eventually the League of Cities was formed at Starfall Central. By then, almost one million people had died or left the planet. The second disaster was the Devastation of Year 23, a tectonic event on a planetary scale. The eruptions, environmental and ecological damage, nuclear winter and conflict over increasingly meager resources reduced the population to less than 50,000 by IE 600, and the dropped the local TL to no better than TL 6. Had the city-states not already been, for the most part, self-reliant, humankind on Starfall would have been wiped out completely.

As the planet's climate and ecology began to return to normal in the early 8th century IE, the surviving citizens of Starfall began to reclaim the regions abandoned during the Devastation. They were joined by new settlers, many from world of the Cluster that had originally been settled from Starfall millennia before.

Today Starfall's native population numbers some 840,000 people. That equates to a population density of only 6.9 people per 10,000 square kilometers. Much of Starfall is still unsettled, and many of the outlying areas have yet to be re-opened by the sophonts of Starfall. The majority of the planet's population is human, of Solomani and mixed origin, but the planet also has significant populations of Vargr (First Landing and Starfall Capital), Sydite (Mauna Ele-Ele) and Aslan (Tripartite Alliance).

THE PLANETARY GOVERNMENT OF STARFALL

THE EXECUTIVE

Head of State: The **First Director** – elected by the House of Governors for a one Census term (5.75 standard years). Current First Director - Governor Halsé Feldersen (Palmer's Landing)

Cabinet: The **Executive Board of Starfall** (EBS) – Appointed by the First Director to serve for a one Census term. The Current Directors of the EBS are:

- Director of Agriculture – Jonas Vanderval (Delta)
- Director of Engineering and Infrastructure – Orin Chan (Eraikazan)
- Director of Foreign Relations – Governor Demetrius Merganser (Thermopolis)
- Director of Global Security (Defense, Solicitor-General, Emergency Services, Intelligence Service) – Tulare Williams (Starfall Capital)
- Director of Industry and Labor – Governor Kathelyn Evanova (Grand Valley)
- Director of Justice (Court of Arbitration) - Professor Stefan Dubvonic (Oasis)
- Director of Natural Resources – Yani Vipera (Cinder Bay)
- Director of Science and Technology – Franklin Exeter (Evergreen)
- Director of Social Affairs (Immigration, Culture, Health) – Alura Dubree (Black Ridge)
- Director of Trade and Commerce (Customs) – Jafar al Salel (Gibraltar)
- Director of Treasury (Bank of Starfall) – Governor Liana Montereau (Courtice)

The EBS itself is a study in contrasts. Although some of the Directors appointed by the First Director are among Starfall's foremost authorities in their fields, the majority are bureaucrats appointed to repay political support. These Directors primarily act in the best interests of their respective city-states, and can sometimes be difficult to control.

With the commencement of the 17th Census of the House, the current version of the EBS is now in the final quarter of its term of office. First Director Halsé Feldersen has been hard pressed to maintain Starfall's neutrality during the current Solomani Rim War, and recent allegations of Solomani influence among certain members of the EBS threatens to undermine his government.

GOVERNOR HALSÉ FELDERSEN OF PALMER'S LANDING FIRST DIRECTOR OF STARFALL

First Director Feldersen has been in office for over twelve orbits, or almost three standard years. Feldersen was originally selected by competing factions to be a 'lame duck' First Director, who would allow his Directors have a significant amount of freedom to act in the interests of their respective city-states. However, over the last two years, he has proven to be a capable negotiator and cunning strategist. His bright, young team of assistants in the First Directorate has proven adept at creating a wide range of overt and covert options for the First Director to use. Feldersen's personal objective is to strengthen the central power of the First Directorate, raising the office and the EBS above what he considers the petty politics of the city-states. While the stature and influence associated with representation on the EBS thrills Feldersen's fellow Palmerites and others on the board, the more aggressive city-states such as Boatha and Nuevo Chiriqui are tenaciously resisting these efforts.

PROFESSOR JAN DUBVONIC OF OASIS DIRECTOR OF JUSTICE, EBS, AND FIRST ARBITRATOR

Director Professor Dubvonic is considered the most authoritative legal figure on the planet. Selected by Feldersen from his position as Dean of Law at Starfall College, Dubvonic now fills the dual roles of Director of Justice for the Starfall government and of First Arbitrator of the High Court of Arbitration at Starfall Capital. Although differing in age by almost 50 orbits, Feldersen and Dubvonic are personal friends. Few however are aware that, in their youth, the two first met while serving as volunteers in separate non-governmental aid agencies in First Landing. Dubvonic supports the First Director's efforts to bring the warlords of First Landing and the brigands of the planet's more remote regions to justice for 'crimes against freedom'. He is currently preparing a legation to travel to First Landing and hear public complaints. This 'circuit court', if successful, would be the first real court in First Landing in over 800 years.

LISE HASEGAWA OF GIBRALTAR DIRECTOR OF TRADE AND COMMERCE, EBS

Director Hasegawa's appointment was a matter of political necessity for First Director Feldersen. Gibraltar is one of several non-aligned city-states in the House of Governors, and the appointment of this prominent young professional assured Feldersen of the support of Gibraltar's governors in the house. Lise Hasegawa is a dynamic young computer engineer who rose to prominence in her home city-state as the Chief Information Officer of the Gibraltar Exchange, the planet's prominent commodities market. Since her appointment, Director Hasegawa has concentrated her efforts on promoting interstellar trade with Starfall, and on amending the Tripartite Starport free trade treaty to permit the remote brokering of cargoes. Her secret intention is to

grant the Gibraltar Exchange an exclusive license to provide those remote brokerage services, a business opportunity worth billions in fees and commissions.

GENERAL TULARE WILLIAMS (RETIRED) OF STARFALL CAPITAL DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL SECURITY, EBS

Director Williams retired from long a long and distinguished career in the Capital Corps to accept the post of Director of Global Security. Today, he is responsible coordinating all police, military, intelligence and emergency preparedness agencies on the planet. The leaders of Starfall's city-states consider the general to be a political outsider, that is to say unaffiliated with any particular city-state or faction. In reality, Williams is a cunning strategist, who trades in information and wields the concentrated power of the planet's security services like a surgeon wields a scalpel. Insiders consider the general to be a key player in planetary politics, and one of the main supporters of First Director Feldersen.

THE LEGISLATURE

Unicameral – **The House of Governors** – with representation by City-State based upon Population, as validated by a Global Census every 25 Orbits (4.8 standard years). Each city-state appoints one representative per 10,000 registered residents (rounded down). Governors may be appointed or elected as determined by the respective City-State.

The 13th House consists of 71 Governors. The political associations of the City-States with respect to the most issues are as follows:

THE UNITED STARFALL GROUP (32 GOVERNORS)

Global Technocracy
18 Starfall Capital (7), Grand Valley (4), Kilimanjaro (4), Thermopolis (3)
Enlightened Technocracy 14 Palmer's Landing (6), High Spires (4), Oasis (3), Tyl Antal (1)

THE DETERMINISTS (22 GOVERNORS)

Traditional Technocracy 17
Delta (4), Nuevo Chiriqui (4), Raiman (4), Courtice (3), Mauna Ele-Ele (2)
Social Technocracy 5
Geysir Pass (3), Altis (1), Black Ridge (1)

THE INDEPENDENTS (9 GOVERNORS)

Traditional Commercial	4
Cinder Bay (2), Gibraltar (2)	
Radical Technocracy	2
Eraikazan (2)	
Enlightened Liberal	2
Evergreen (2)	
Radical Commercial	1
Corwin's Strike (1)	

THE SOLOMANI FACTION (5 GOVERNORS)

Traditional Solomani	5
Boatha (4), Beurach Theine (1)	

OTHER (3 GOVERNORS)

Vacant	3
Landing City (3)	

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

ORIGINS

The United Starfall Movement originated as a group known as the Globalistas. These earliest advocates of the grass-roots planetary unification movement began advocating on behalf of a global state around IE 350, in the midst of the dark time after the Devastation. The Globalistas originally focused their efforts on establishing a new League of Cities, similar to the one which had previously existed at Starfall Central around IE -100. For the next 400 years, the Globalistas fought for support, while most of the other City-States worried about survival. In the end, the effort to rebuild the League at First Landing collapsed because the post-Devastation population of the planet was a more diverse and less cooperative society than its predecessor. Meanwhile, Starfall's stature in the Cluster continued to diminish in comparison to the mercantile power of Idam Lee, Eda and Lunarmise. The Tripartite Alliance (TA) of the Free Cities of Grand Valley, Kilimanjaro and Thermopolis became the center of support for the remaining Globalistas.

When, in IE 876, Boatha and High Spires reopened First Landing's rejuvenated starport and, in IE 903, invited the other City-States to send representation to a new assembly at Landing City, the TA responded with its own solution. The three southernmost city-states began a massive joint infrastructure program, with financial assistance from Eda, to build a new starport to rival Orland High and Lunarmise Starports, and to make the TA the dominant trading block on the planet. The TA then trumped Boatha and High Spires by offering two concessions that the Council of First Landing could never match: it created a large, modern corporate free planetary trade zone at the Downport available to all of the planet's city-states, and it offered valuable contracts to sell agricultural products to Eda. The only condition for a City-State to meet in order to access these concessions was that it was required to participate in the new planetary legislature - the House of Governors. It soon became obvious that new Tripartite Starport would overshadow First Landing economically, and the new government was established at Starfall Capital, next to the Tripartite Downport, in IE 915.

In the first 30 Orbits (six years – 915-921) of its service, the House of Governors acted as the executive branch as well as the legislature. However, the size of the house, and the frequent changes in representatives that some city-states appointed, made the system unwieldy. During the 2nd Census of the House, it was agreed that in the middle of each Census, the House would elect one of its own members to lead an appointed team of technocrats for a term of from mid-Census to mid-Census. The elected First Director could nominate any registered residents of Starfall as candidates for ten director's positions on the Executive Board of Starfall (EBS), and those directors were not required to hold seats in the House of Governors.

TODAY

Each City-State may name one Governor to the House for every 10,000 people legally registered as residents in the planet-wide census that takes place every 25 Orbits. There are no provisions as to how a City-State selects its Governors, or how frequently they are changed. The House is empowered to debate all matters of global interest, such as immigration, justice, science, security and trade. The latest Census of the House, the 17th, has now been assembled for just over seven Orbits.

The institution of the House of Governors is very recent in the history of Starfall and most of its City-States. After 75 years, the majority of the City-States still vote independently, shifting support with each issue debated. In spite of the Machiavellian atmosphere created by this situation, most City-States vote along cultural lines on important issues. The Tripartite Alliance (TA) is the first group in the history of the planet to reach consensus long enough to develop a political entity consisting of more than one City-State. Not surprisingly, the TA has become a focus for political thought in the House.

GOVERNOR KATHELYN EVANOVA – THERMOPOLIS (DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN RELATIONS, EBS)

AFFILIATION – UNITED STARFALL GROUP

Governor Evanova is the Starfall's equivalent of a kingmaker. Now 280 Orbits in age (about 54 Standard Years), Kathelyn has become the power broker of the United Starfall Movement, and First Director Feldersen owes a large part of his successful rise to the leadership of the EBS to her efforts and connections.

Governor Evanova is currently serving in two roles: as leader of the United Starfall Faction in the House of Governors, and as Starfall's Director of Foreign Relations on the EBS – a reward from the First Director for her artful manipulation of the election in the last caucus. Her current role enables her to interact with the worlds and governments of the cluster and beyond, and empowers her to make or break the efforts of most off-world interests. In spite of her TA heritage, Kathelyn is concerned by the TA's current political and economic predominance. She wages a constant covert struggle against the minions of First Consul Umpeka and the TA's Triumvirate.

GOVERNOR JUAN MIGUEL GAELIN – NUEVO CHIRIQUI

AFFILIATION – DETERMINIST

Governor Gaelin, known among his compatriots as *Don Juan Miguel*, is an archetypical Chiriqui caballero; cultured and well-mannered in public, but arrogant and prideful when aroused. As the senior Governor from Nuevo Chiriqui, Juan Miguel is that city-state's foremost advocate, and is a staunch supporter of its self-determination. In typical Determinist

fashion, he champions the position that Nuevo Chiriqui, like all other city-states, is sovereign and independent, and that the city-state's government will make its own decisions in all dealings in the House of Governors and with the EBS. What makes Governor Gaelin doubly dangerous to the United Starfall Movement is that he is a supremely capable diplomat, admired by all in the House, including Governor Evanova. In the corridors of the House, it is rumored among that a debate between the two is like a courtship, a seductive exchange of points and counter-points that leads to most issues being resolved before they ever reach the floor of the House.

GOVERNOR D'ARCY MANN – BEURACH THEINE

AFFILIATION – SOLOMANI FACTION

If Governor Gaelin is refined and debonair, the Solomani patriot Governor D'Arcy Mann is puffed-up and ill-mannered. That suits the Theiners perfectly, as most believe that there are only two kinds of Starfallers: Theiners and those who want to be Theiners. Even without his booming voice, garish dress, and the wreath of flaming red hair on his otherwise bald head, Governor Mann is hard to miss. At 185 centimeters and 120 kilograms, his physical presence is massive.

Governor Mann and his allies in Boatha, firm supporters of the Solomani Cause, resolutely believe that only Terran humans – the Solomani – are pure racial humans, that the Solomani are superior to other humans, and that therefore the Solomani are the most fit to rule other humans. In the House of Governors, D'Arcy has become self-proclaimed "Voice of the Solomani", constantly lobbying for support to the Solomani Confederation in the current War of Solomani Liberty. His position does have some support, particularly among the Solomani Faction and several of the Determinist city-states.

GOVERNOR ANITA SPEARE – EVERGREEN AFFILIATION – INDEPENDENT

The non-aligned city-states are neither Globalistas nor Determinists nor Solomani sympathizers, although they may work with any of those factions at a given point in time. The individual city-states vary widely in culture, economy and political interests, but they are referred to collectively as the Independents.

In some ways, Governor Speare is typical of the non-aligned Governors. She endlessly walks a fine line between the various power blocks in order to maximize her city-state's influence in the House and the benefits that result. Yet Evergreen is exceptional among Starfall's city-states because it is Starfall's only true fully participatory democracy. Governor Speare and her staff collect and filter information on issues of interest to Evergreen's citizens, and transmit House updates and Special Interest Briefings (SIBs) via Evergreen's secure public network. Anita provides a live

interactive digital presentation, interpreting issues under consideration, and, in turn, querying citizens for expert and public opinion, guiding debate through on-line town hall sessions referred to as SIB Panels, and coordinating digital voting on important issues. Chosen for her skills as a media consultant and broadcast journalist, Governor Speare has a reporter's aggressive instincts, a no-nonsense approach and the technological advantage of instantaneous access to information that combine to discomfort her peers. As a result, her fellow Governors view Anita with a mixture of awe, curiosity and mistrust.

SOURCES OF TENSION

With the various city-states acting much like the nations of a balkanized world, the primary source of tension on Starfall is the competition between the city-states. Although the political and social cultures of the city-states vary considerably, they all compete with each other for wealth, trade, population and political power. Most of the city states actively patrol the barren and sparsely populated spaces between them, and low-intensity border skirmishes occur frequently. The establishment of the House of Governors in the last century as created another forum where the city-states can release their tensions, and many local governments are increasingly resorting to diplomacy and law as means of resolving conflicts.

In some instances, the city-states of Starfall band together along ideological lines. Although most of these leagues are limited associations for specific reasons of trade or defense, some are well entrenched alliances based upon origin, culture and philosophy. For example, the People's Alliance of Altis, Black Ridge, and Geyser Pass have developed a loose alliance based upon social technocratic ideals that has existed for over 1500 years, except for a period between the 1st and 5th centuries when the ravages of the Devastation prevented contact between these three city-states. To this day, clashes of ideologies can lead to long-lasting brush wars between leagues.

The rise of the Tripartite Alliance is driving some competing city-states to increase the pressure upon their neighbors or states of similar ideology to unite in equivalent political organizations. The continued political presence of Boatha and High Spires in First Landing is one example that has been unsuccessful to date.

STARFALL MILITARY

STARFALL SYSTEM NAVY

The Starfall System Navy is a small professional force operating in what is, at many times, an impossible political situation. The Navy Headquarters in Tripartite Downport is directed by the Director of Global Security, retired General Tulare Williams, through the Vice-Director for the Navy, Antonio Haut-Granger. The Navy is commanded by Admiral Abraham Manchangiran, a former Imperial Navy flag officer recruited specifically to avoid intercity politics. Navy resources are organized into three operational wings: the Jump Squadron, the System Command, and the Close Orbital and Aerospace Command or COACC.

Most members of the Navy consider a posting to Jump Squadron to be the ticket to glory and adventure. Jump Squadron consists of three ships: the 1000 ton J-1 presidential frigate SSNS Star Phoenix, and the two aging 400 ton J-2 patrol cruisers SSNS Riftsea and SSNS Starfall Capital. The squadron rarely operates together, instead conducting individual patrols and, particularly in the case of the Star Phoenix, diplomatic missions to neighboring worlds. Jump Squadron personnel can be identified by their command crest: a red phoenix superimposed on a silver spiral arm galaxy.

The System Command, based at the Naval Wing of Tripartite Highport, is responsible for the bulk of security patrols and emergency response missions throughout the Bashan system. They are also tasked with supporting COACC in the case of an attack on Starfall itself. System Command currently operates four TL B system defense boats and an assortment of small non-starships optimized for servicing, logistics and rescue. System Command personnel can be identified by their command crest: a red dwarf star surrounded by seven concentric silver rings.

The COACC is a unique service that best typifies Starfall's political reality. Aside from the two orbital fortresses (each 5000 ton TL B, capable of basing up to 750 tons of aerospace craft) and a single regular squadron of fighters at each of those stations, the COACC relies on militia aerospace defense forces provided by the individual city-states. Militia squadrons are given a Navy unit designation that they operate under in Navy exercises and operations. Most squadrons, however, perpetuate their local identities and traditions. COACC regulars wear Navy uniforms, while the militias wear the uniforms of their respective city-states. The COACC crest - a red archer superimposed on a map of Starfall - is the primary identification for personnel from the various city-states on duty with COACC.

In peacetime, the various city-states that operate suitable aerospace resources train and exercise under standard procedures established by the Navy. As well, the city-states bid on contracts to provide aerospace fighter and attack

squadrons to the COACC's orbital fortresses for standing orbital patrols and policing merchant traffic. In wartime, plans call for the city-state's individual militia squadrons and air defense resources to be centralized under the command of the Navy.

The individual city-states are free to operate any sort of small craft in their militia squadrons as long as they comply with the inter-operability policies set out by the Navy. The result is a hodge-podge of ships and tactics, and an active and ongoing rivalry between the pilots of the various squadrons. This rivalry is amplified by the numerous conflicts that take place routinely between rival city-states, although squadrons on active COACC duty are forbidden by law from participating in these conflicts.

Over forty squadrons have been designated as part of Starfall's COACC wing. The most famous squadrons are:

- a. 1 and 2 Patrol Squadrons (Starfall COACC Regulars) – 35 ton multi-role aerospace fighters – TL B,
- b. 6 Interceptor Squadron (Militia) [2nd Tactical Fighter Squadron - Tripartite Alliance] – 15 ton light aerospace interceptors – TL B,
- c. 11 Attack Squadron (Militia) [Attack Squadron 1 – Delta] – 50 ton strike fighters – TL A,
- d. 15 Interceptor Squadron (Militia) [Escuadre Phoenix – Nuevo Chiriqui] – 20 ton light aerospace interceptors – TL A, and
- e. 23 Attack Drone Squadron (Militia) [Aerospace Drone Company – Evergreen] – 20 ton unmanned aerospace attack drones – TL C.

The remainder of the navy consists of numerous personnel serving in various technical and administrative branches supporting the operational wings. Whereas operational personnel can be identified by the red tabs on their collars and sleeves and unique unit or wing insignia, technical personnel wear green tabs and the insignia of their technical affiliation, and non-technical support personnel wear yellow tabs and the insignia of their administrative branch.

CAPITAL CORPS

The Capital Corps is Starfall Capital's primary defense and security force. Although most visible to the public in the security details for the House of Governors and the members of the EBS, the Corps is responsible for all defense operations in Starfall Capital and the portions of Tripartite Highport, Downport and FRETZ controlled by the planetary government. All Corpsmen are given light infantry and protected forces training. They then move on to specialize in VIP security, marine operations (primarily ship's troops), civil operations (riot control and urban warfare) or vital point operations.

The Capital Corps is headquartered in Starfall Capital, and falls under the control of the EBS and its Director of

Global Security, through the Vice-Director for the Corps, Jacoby Sandis. The senior service member of the Corps is the Colonel-Commandant, currently Brigadier-General Elias Vogel. It is no secret that the current Director of Global Security, retired General Tulare Williams, is a former Colonel-Commandant of the Capital Corps who hand-picked Vogel as his successor.

In all, the Capital Corps numbers some 1800 personnel, and is equipped to TL B. It operates in three 'divisions', each at approximately battalion strength. First Division is responsible for the physical security of Starfall Capital, and for the security of the officials and offices of the Capital: the EBS and House of Governors. Second Division is responsible for the security of planetary government property and personnel in Tripartite Highport and Tripartite Downport. Third Division is the reserve element of the Corps, providing marines for duty on SSN vessels and special operations, and for deployed operations as directed by the EBS.

OTHER FORCES

The Starfall Navy and the Capital Corps represent the only major formations directly under the control of the planetary government. However, each city-state on Starfall maintains some form of local defense force. Because of the small populations of the individual city-states (all less than 80,000), these forces are quite small. They vary from full-time professional military forces to local constabularies to citizen militias or reserves. In general terms:

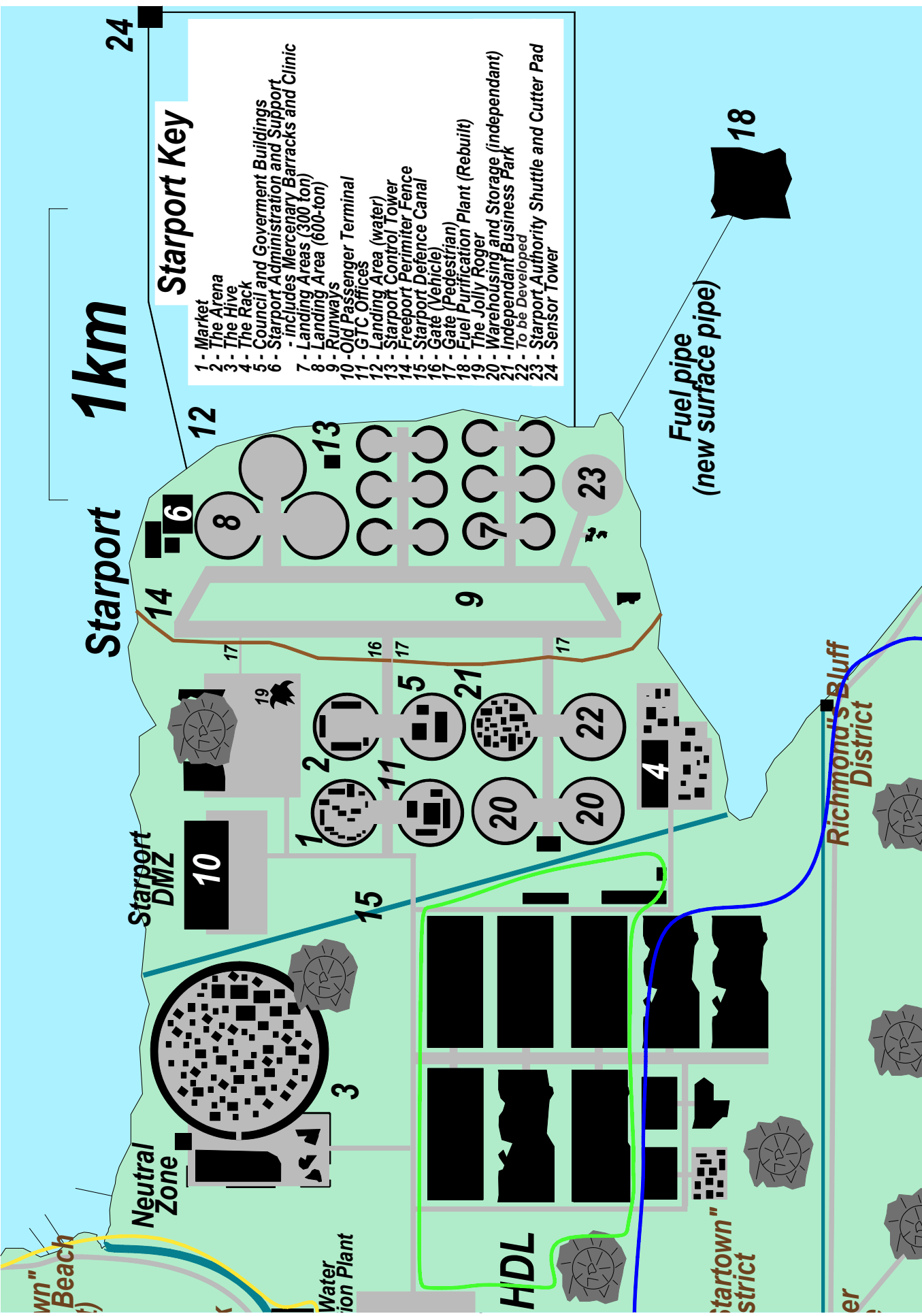
- None of the individual city-states operate naval starships, although they do contract starmercs from time to time,
- Most city-states operate independent COACC forces (usually a composite force of atmospheric and aerospace fighters, interface craft, and anti-aerospace batteries) that can consist of several squadrons. These forces are usually regular (full-time) forces rather than reserves,
- All cities have some form of ground force, rarely more than a regiment in size. The most common regular force type is lift infantry, although wheeled, tracked, airmobile and leg units also exist. The larger and more affluent city-states also have supporting elements (armor, artillery, EW), with permanent units never larger than a company in size, and
- Many city-states have small, specialized special operations units (not more than a company in size). These are the only forces with training in specialties such as protected forces, marine, orbital drop, counter-terrorist, commando, submarine or deep reconnaissance operations.

Starport 1km

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Starport Key

- 1 - Market
- 2 - The Arena
- 3 - The Hive
- 4 - The Rack
- 5 - Council and Government Buildings
- 6 - Starport Administration and Support
 - Includes Mercenary Barracks and Clinic
- 7 - Landing Area (300-ton)
- 8 - Landing Area (600-ton)
- 9 - Runways
- 10 - Old Passenger Terminal
- 11 - GTC Offices
- 12 - Landing Area (water)
- 13 - Starport Control Tower
- 14 - Freepoint Perimeter Fence
- 15 - Starport Defence Canal
- 16 - Gate (Vehicle)
- 17 - Gate (Pedestrian)
- 18 - Fuel Purification Plant (Rebuilt)
- 19 - The Jolly Roger
- 20 - Warehousing and Storage (independant)
- 21 - Independant Business Park
- 22 - To be Developed
- 23 - Starport Authority Shuttle and Cutter Pad
- 24 - Sensor Tower



Fuel pipe
(new surface pipe)

18

Starport DMZ

Neutral Zone

Water
ion Plant

HDL

Starport
District

Richmond's Bluff
District

er

TRIPARTITE STARPORT

GENERAL

When the Southern Triumvirate in IE 908 directed the construction of a new starport and supporting community on the fringes of Tripartite Alliance territory, most people expected another short-sighted project similar to the ongoing efforts of Boatha and High Spires to revitalize First Landing Starport. Instead, the visionaries of the Globalista movement leveraged the aggressive trading habits of Starfall's city-states, and attracted off-world investment and engineering support. The result was the near-simultaneous construction of Tripartite Starport and Starfall Capital.

The heirs of the Globalista tradition realized that most of Starfall's city-states would not be drawn to a starport controlled by the Tripartite Alliance, the most powerful alliance of city-states on the planet. Neither would they join a world government which had no significant benefits over the one already being formed in Landing City. Therefore, they proposed that the new starport be built from the outset as part of an independent city-state which would also serve as the new planetary capital. Tripartite envoys began to solicit investment from neighboring systems, and attracted attention on Eda. That system and its small, conservative, high technology society were concerned by the sheer size and power of Idam Lee and its industrial complex. Not surprisingly, Eda was interested in creating a secure trade framework with a strong agricultural world like Starfall. The terms were quickly agreed to, and Eda provided a large capital investment for the project. Tripartite engineers selected a site midway between Geyser Pass, Grand Valley and Kilimanjaro, and work on the designs for the Highport, Downport and Capital began. Ground was broken for the construction of the first infrastructure, the Downport Administration Center, in IE 910.

The Tripartite Starport Authority (TSA) manages the Highport and Downport, and answers to the EBS in Starfall Capital. Sections of both facilities are reserved for the use of the Starfall Navy and the Capital Corps, and are provided support by the TSA, but the TSA operates independently in peacetime. In case of emergency, the Chief of the TSA holds reserve rank in the Starfall Navy, and command of all TSA facilities then falls under the control of the Director of Global Security, who is currently retired General Tulare Williams. The TSA also administers the Starfall Planetary Free Trade Zone located adjacent to the Downport.

PRINCIPAL TRADING PARTNERS

Starfall's rich natural environment and moderate population level give the planet a World Trade Balance of +7, an indication of a strong export economy. The bulk of Starfall's exports are agricultural products and the processed goods made from agricultural raw materials. In fact, Starfall feeds a large proportion of the high population and industrial worlds

of the Beta Quadrant. There is also a significant export market for refined ores and chemicals.

The opening of Tripartite Starport has created a J-2 waypoint that is more central to the Starfall Cluster than Idam Lee. Currently classified as a major feeder port, Tripartite Starport is particularly popular with the cargo lines from the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium (GTC) and the independent traders trading under the Cinxthan flag. The main trading routes to and from Starfall are the feeder routes coreward to Idam Lee (Glimmerdrift Reaches (GR) 2410), and trailing to the GTC's industrial hub at Fal (GR 3111) and to Lunarmise (GR 2611). Each of these routes is serviced by a half dozen 1,000+ displacement ton freighters, and six to ten subsidized merchants or far traders.

As well, minor trade routes extend spinward to Eda (GR 2211) and its coreward connections to the Shashka Main, and rimward to the Broken Chain and the vacuum world of Cinxtha (GR 2215). Much of the Cinxtha trade then either continues rimward to the Far Reach and H-10 (GR 2124), the high-population, high technology capital of the Farreach Margravate, or spinward to the industrial worlds of Phelina (GR 1508) and Stoner (GR 1113) via the Glimmer Drift and the Stoner Cluster. Transshipment of cargos on these routes is common. For example, individual cargo containers may transfer three or four times on route from Starfall to H-10. Service on each of these routes from Starfall is provided by a hand full of subsidized merchants and free traders. Service on those routes by larger cargo liners is uncommon.

In addition, there are over 30 worlds in the Glimmerdrift and the spinward parts of Crucis Margin with which Starfall conducts more than MCr10.0 worth of trade annually. Almost all of this traffic is tramp (unscheduled) service.

The normal volumes for all Starfall trade are as follows:

Major Trading Partners	Revenues/Year	Passengers/Year	Displacement Tons of Cargo/Year
Idam Lee	GCr4.0	10,000	400,000
Lunarmise	GCr2.5	7,000	250,000
Fal	GCr1.8	5,000	150,000
Eda	GCr1.0	4,000	80,000
Phelina	MCr140	500	10,000
Stoner	MCr100	400	9,000
Cinxtha	MCr100	800	15,000
Total – Top 7 Trading Partners	GCr9.6	27,700	914,000
Total - Overall	GCr11.2	33,100	1,080,000

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Tripartite Starport operates primarily for the use of commercial freight and passenger traffic. In general, private

pleasure craft are discouraged from using Tripartite Starport, and must pay significant landing and berthing fees. Ships of 400 tons or over are given priority for landing and docking rights at both Tripartite Highport and Downport. It is not uncommon for a Free Trader that has been given landing authorization and approach clearance to have his clearance rescinded in order to provide space for a larger freighter. Smaller vessels are routinely assigned “spot berthing” status, and held on standby in orbit over Starfall until a bay at one of the facilities becomes available. In a further move to enhance the commercial status of the starport, the TSA will not allow empty vessels to dock until an authorized broker files an outbound electronic bill of lading with the TSA consigning awaiting cargo or passengers to the ship in question. The TSA claims that this improves the productivity of the Starport by inhibiting ships that tie up landing berths while haggling for cargo.

HIGHPORT

Tripartite Highport is one of the cluster’s largest orbital facilities, and serves three main roles. First, a large amount of freight moving out of Starfall is primarily containerized or bulk cargo usually handled by unstreamlined ships. With Starfall orbiting only 0.25 AU away from Bashan, most jump points are masked by Bashan’s 100 diameter limit. As a result, lighter-aboard-ship or LASH operations are also common. Several merchant lines from the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium operate 6,000 ton LASH tenders. Second, Tripartite Highport is the headquarters of the Starfall Navy, and the home station of the navy’s Jump Squadron and System Command. Third, Tripartite Highport is the home of the TSA’s orbital shipyard and maintenance facility. The shipyard is a state-of-the-art technical facility, capable of all but the most complex repair and overhaul activities. Although the shipyard’s focus is the construction of commercial non-starships, particularly interface craft, there has been effort in recent orbits to secure a niche in the market for small military non-starships.

Tripartite Highport handles 27,000 displacement tons of cargo traffic weekly. This includes lighter and shuttle traffic to and from the Downport, Planetary Free Trade Zone, and the spaceport of various city-states. Approximately 50% of the freight passing through the Highport, about 9,000 tons weekly, is transient and is not destined for Starfall. That cargo may, however, be transferred between ships or held pending a connecting cargo vessel. The remaining 50% is bulk or containerized cargo moving in or out system on unstreamlined freighters, and transferring to and from the surface via lighter or shuttle.

The Highport also handles an average of 2,900 displacement tons of passenger liner traffic weekly. This equates to an average of 580 passengers per week. Of the roughly 260 transients passing through Starfall system, as many as 50 will hold over at the Highport for business or pleasure at any given time. The remaining passengers are

shuttling to or from Starfall via the Highport, and are likely traveling via one of the large passenger liners that call at the there.

DOWNPORT

Tripartite Downport is a sprawling complex of buildings and facilities, having been added to in fits and spurts since its construction. Away from the main and secondary landing areas the terminal, freight-handing and control facilities gradually give way to warehousing and then urban zones, intermixed with manufacturing facilities. It is difficult to say where the Downport ends and the Startown begins. Since the port was built as the heart of a new city-state, the urban sprawls stretch away in all directions, though the higher-class areas are generally to the northwest of the landing zone. This entire area is part of the Fre Trade Zone.

STARFALL PLANETARY FREE TRADE ZONE

Since Starfall is an independent world, and not part of any interstellar union, Tripartite Starport is under the full jurisdiction of the EBS, through the TSA. As a result, no extrajurisdictional line exists to separate the starport’s jurisdiction from that of the world government. For customs and immigration purposes, however, two concentric zones exist at Tripartite Starport – the Starport itself (both High- and Downports), and the Starfall Planetary Free Trade Zone or FRETZ.

The FRETZ is a 160 square kilometer area of container yards, production and assembly plants, warehouses and brokerage terminals. Within the zone, planetside goods and raw materials, i.e. goods originating in any of the member city-states, can be bought, processed, assembled and sold without paying any planetary or city-state import taxes or customs duties. Material imported from off-world for sale on Starfall moves under seal from the starport to the FRETZ, where it is cleared and duties are assessed. If the off-world materials are to be used for production within the FRETZ and exported back off-world, the materials and products are treated as duty-free. Only brokers licensed and physically located in the FRETZ may handle cargo to and from the starport. Also, all cargo to and from the starport must physically transit through terminals in the FRETZ. As a result, all major brokers and planetary freight transportation services have facilities located there. The FRETZ is also the location of the Startown, referred to by TSA personnel at the Crew Services District.

Given the FRETZ’s preferred economic status, it is not surprising that the zone is the home of some of Starfall Capital’s largest manufacturers, including:

Modina Systems, a producer of electromechanical systems for a wide range of applications, including gauss weapons and magnetic levitation or maglev motors;

Alliance Dynamics, a Starfall-based defence avionics and sensor manufacturer;

TechnoSpace, the planet’s principal aerospace

manufacturer; and

Makhudire LIC, an Imperial corporation known for its powerplants and fuel cells.

THE TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE

The three city-states of Starfall's southern hemisphere – Grand Valley, Kilimanjaro and Thermopolis – are members of a powerful and progressive league known to the rest of the planet as the Tripartite Alliance (TA). A unique political entity in the history of Starfall, the TA is the closest thing to a nation state that has ever existed on the planet.

The political structure of the TA reflects its history as a response to the petty haggling of the Free Cities, and the Globalistas' desire to present a single, unified government to the other city-states and to the rest of the Cluster. Each city-state sends one consul to the Southern Triumvirate in Grand Valley. All policy for the TA is set by majority vote of the Triumvirate.

There are no provisions as to how these consuls are to be named, and on several occasions, they have served in both the Triumvirate and the planetary House of Governors. Most are appointed by their respective city-states. Over its 200 years of existence, the Triumvirate developed an identity that was the model for the Executive Board of Starfall and many of its institutions. Today, the Triumvirate is responsible for issues of public security, social programs and the economy within the TA.

With the formation of the Executive Board of Starfall and the House of Governors, the TA has come to symbolize the future of Starfall as a unified planet, and TA members of those bodies constantly advocate for a more global perspective on the issues of the day. With no significant competitor on the world stage, the TA is Starfall's only superpower, and sets the tone for most decisions made across the planet.

PROMINENT SOUTHERNERS

CONSUL MAGRA UMPEKA OF KILIMANJARO FIRST CONSUL OF THE TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE

Magra Umpeka is arguably the most powerful individual on Starfall. As Chair of the Triumvirate, she has the power to direct its efforts, and to influence the allocation of its resources. Born in Kilimanjaro in IE 941, Umpeka has been involved in politics her entire life. She was first appointed to the House of Governors 48 orbits (11 standard years) ago, and has steadily climbed through the planet's political ranks. Before her appointment as Consul for Kilimanjaro and First Consul of TA, she served as Director of Federal Affairs on the last Executive Board of Starfall.

**GRANDMASTER SEHAOSTIKO OF CLAN
SEHAOSTI
THIRD FIST OF THE GENERAL STAFF AND
COMMANDER OF TLIAEISOAS MERCENARY
BATTALION**

Sehaosti led the *ihatei* ("younger sons") of his clan to Starfall in IE 985. Here, he found the opportunity of his dreams: land as far as the eye could see. But because the planet was already claimed by *tahiwihateakhtau* (barbarians), Sehaosti chose to earn land for himself and his men through mercenary service, and signed a 50 Orbit contract in exchange for land from the TA. The Tliaeisoas Battalion now serves the TA's main quick reaction force. Equipped to TL C, including a 1000-ton Aslan cruiser, the 600-man Protected Forces Battalion is probably the most effective fighting force on the planet. Furthermore, the TA has awarded Sehaosti the rank of Grandmaster (Brigadier-General) and honored him with the role of Third Fist (Senior Operations Officer) of the TA General Staff. As a result, Sehaosti has intimate knowledge of the TA's military plans.



THE CITY-STATES OF STARFALL

ALTIS

Population 14,000. Main Industries – Tourism, Beverages

On the northern slopes of the Central Mountains, just off the main highway across the Geyser Pass, sits the famous tourist resort of Altis. Founded at the height of the pre-Devastation era, Altis was a one-of-a-kind phenomenon on Starfall – an alpine resort – that became a favorite destination for rich and poor alike. Wealthy developers built hotels, ski resorts and sport facilities, and Altis' most famous attraction, the Eis Casino. The fabulous structure, with its signature Grand Hall carved into the center of the Sanjit Glacier, attracted patrons from across the sector. The owners of the casino even built a small private Class C spaceport to shuttle wealthy patrons to First Landing or their ships in orbit.

In the time immediately following the Devastation, Altis bore the brunt of the refugee crisis. Immigrants from Starfall Central and Gorlan initially forced the conversion of the casino and hotels into makeshift shelters, but Altis did not have the resources to support a population that tripled within a month. The onset of the nuclear winter killed the city, and only a few thousand survivors set out for Landing City or across the Central Mountains to Geyser Pass. In the following 300 years, Sanjit Glacier expanded down the slopes and buried or crushed much of the infrastructure, and Altis became a place of legend.

Beginning in IE 480, the descendants of the Altis expatriates, with assistance from the Peoples' Alliance of Geyser Pass and Black Ridge and from the technocrats of Eraikazan, began to reclaim the remains of their city-state. The transformation that resulted is one of Starfall's greatest success stories. Today, Altis is once again a flourishing resort haven. The Grand Hall has been painstakingly recreated, and the remaining facilities rebuilt. Today's Altis share the social technocratic agenda of its partners in the People's Alliance, and the Builder's Council, which rules Altis, strives to create a utopian setting for citizens and tourists alike.

The Builders' Council has recently embarked upon a new venture to leverage the city-state's classy reputation, beginning with marketing bottled melt water from the Sanjit Glacier. Pure, clear Altis is starting to appear commercially in establishments from Starfall Capital to Corwin's Strike, and has become particularly popular with young trendy socialites.

BEURACH THEINE

Population 16,000. Main industries – Glass (Natural – Obsidian), Liquor

In the aftermath of the Civil War (IE 604 to 622), Imperial favor for all things Solomani was on the decline. For many

with strong Solomani beliefs, the marriage of Emperor Zhakirov to Antiama Shiishuginsa, the Vilani heiress to the mega-corporation Zirunkariish, was the writing on the wall. A large group of disillusioned Solomani sympathizers from Carlyle (3101 Harlequin/Solomani Rim) abandoned their homes to start a new life beyond Imperial Space. Their flotilla left Carlyle in IE 686, crossed the Old Expanses and skirted the Delphi Rift to enter the Glimmerdrift Reaches. They eventually reached Starfall in IE 689, at a time when the planetary climate had just returned to pre-Devastation levels and native population was once again increasing and beginning to approach 100,000. The Solomani patriots settled in the highlands at the tip of the Northern Mountains. Drawing from the Gaelic roots of their Carlyle heritage, they named their settlement Beurach Theine in honor of their new world.

The refugees from Carlyle, who settled those desolate windswept hills in the far north, chose their new home primarily because of its abundant supply of spring water. They also discovered that the hills upon which they had settled were the result of a series of volcanic extrusions below the earth's surface. These extrusions created enormous quantities of high quality obsidian, a natural form of glass. Aside from the attractiveness of obsidian in commercial and industrial applications, the Theiners became skilled in the art of cutting and carving the glass. The sweeping curving motifs of the dark stone inspired an architectural design movement that was extremely popular across Starfall in the late eighth century. Today, the designers, architects and engineers of Beurach Theine guide the growth of their free city, and inspire the craftsmen across the quadrant with their work.

The resourceful settlers of Beurach Theine also developed a bustling trade in distilled spirits. The highlanders became master distillers, and with the grain available from Delta and Evergreen, herbs from High Spires and lichen from the towering shoulders of the Northern Mountains, they produce whiskeys of impressive quality: names like Glentheine, MacKay's Select, and Olde Greycow. Theiner whiskey can be found in starports across the sector, and many traders consider it a commodity better than cash. Recently, the masters of Beurach Theine have begun to collaborate with the certain Professors in Oasis to produce Oasian brandy for export.

Theiners' ties to Carlyle's Gaelic ancestry have become a cultural obsession. Most Starfallers consider Theiners to be eccentric, with their proliferation of tartans and their affinity for pipe music. Although none of the Theiner Clans are truly of Gaelic ancestry, the Clans have become another symbol of their ties to Terra. The Theiners still support the beliefs of the Solomani Cause, and attribute their ability to thrive on this harsh world to their innate physical and cultural superiority. Many offer clandestine support to the Solomani Confederation, and a few have gone so far as to raise a unit of native Theiners to enter the Solomani Army.

BLACK RIDGE

Population 12,000. Main Industries – Tea

The small city-state of Black Ridge overlooks the southern Riftlands from its location on the equatorial slopes of the Northern Mountains. Black Ridge was settled in IE -1650 from High Spires by a group of Terran pioneers of Indo-Asiatic decent. The city-state's location is arid and exposed to Starfall's harsh elements. The efforts of the community, however, have transformed the city-state into a serene and comfortable environment. The people of Black Ridge are best described as having a strong sense of community. Neighbors work together to accomplish difficult goals, whether it is the ongoing harvest of the tea crop or the maintenance of the city-state's canal. One of the city-states greatest accomplishments is the Riftlands Canal. The structure, built entirely using local technology and materials, originates at the easternmost end of the Starfall Sea, and leads almost 2800 kilometers east to the foot of Black Ridge.

About 1500 years ago, the city-state of Black Ridge first began to encounter the predatory expeditions of nearby city-states, notably Nuevo Chiriqui and Thermopolis. When their culture's tolerant and peaceful philosophy proved inadequate for countering these raids, Black Ridge joined with Altis and Geyser Pass to form the so-called People's Alliance, a defensive pact based upon common social ideology. The threat of unified opposition deterred further aggression, and formed the basis for one of the longest standing alliances in Starfall's history.

It was said that the original settlers of Black Ridge brought with them only their ancient social philosophy and shoots of the various teas from the Assam region of their native Indian subcontinent. That proved to be enough, and today the city-state's economic existence is overwhelming reliant upon the unique and popular blend of tea that bears its name. Black Ridge tea is exported through Tripartite Starport to markets across the sector.

Few outsiders are aware that Black Ridge is also the location of the planet's only Psionic Institute. Known to the locals as 'the Hidden Door', the Institute specializes in the spheres of Awareness and Telekinesis. Among the students studying at the Institute, it is rumored that the Master of the Institute is over a thousand years old. No proof exists to substantiate that claim.

BOATHA

Population 48,000. Main industries – Grain, Farm Machinery, Electronic Parts, Computer Parts

Boatha is located in the midst of the Northern Plains, Starfall's prime agricultural region. Most of the surrounding area is only mere meters above the water table, allowing rich farming opportunities. Settled by a reclusive group of Solomani of South African heritage, Boatha continues its isolationist policy to this day, only becoming involved with other cities when it is absolutely necessary, or to their

advantage. The main drive of its rulers has been self-sufficiency, to which end they have built up a large military force and extensive manufacturing facilities. The huge farmlands caused a natural development of heavy farming machinery and associated technologies.

The society is very rigid, with a strong central authority born of the widespread backing of its population; all of whom have grown up supported by the state and in turn supporting it. Their isolationist views extend in particular to other races, and non-humans are extremely rare and very unwelcome in Boatha. Boathans also have a long, proud military tradition, and service in the armed forces is compulsory for a period of three local years. A prestigious position in one of the more famous and respected units can set a young Boathan onto a path of success for the rest of his or her life.

Due to its tight central government, extensive farmlands, and location far from tectonic activity, Boatha survived the Devastation well in comparison to Starfall's other city-states, although 90% of its population died when the crop production plummeted in the subsequent nuclear winter. Even during this period, there were far fewer incidents of upheaval than in most cities.

Boatha, the strongest of the original sponsors of the rebuilding of First Landing, has resisted involvement in the development and use of Tripartite Starport for practical as well as ideological reasons. First Landing's starport is almost 5000 kilometers closer to Boatha than Tripartite Starport. Boatha's support continues today and all of Boatha's imports and exports are routed through First Landing which helps them maintain profitability and independence. They have a strong dislike of, and rivalry with, High Spires due to that city's resistance to their taking complete control of the port.

CINDER BAY

Population 21,000. Main industries – Petrochemicals, Compressed Gasses

Cinder Bay has long been regarded as one of the most unique geographic and geological features on the planet. Situated at the north-western edge of the Barren Wastes, the city-state stands along the edge of a crescent-shaped depression, fed by dozens of artesian springs releasing water from the massive southern aquifer. Upon this lake floats a fine layer of volcanic rock, similar in characteristics to rhyolite, originally ejected from long-extinct volcanoes in the Barren Wastes region. The individual rocks range in size from dust particles to some a decimeter across. The layer coats approximately 70% of the lake's surface.

This layer of floating debris forms the basis of a unique ecology that lives above and below the floating mats of rock. Most important to Cinder Bay is a type of algae rich in hydrocarbons, known locally as 'Oilplant'. This algae is harvested by the locals and was the origin of the city-state's thriving petrochemical industry. The algae refineries were

soon joined by processing plants producing ethanol using grain imported from Delta, Kilimanjaro and Raiman. Although 'Gravoline', as the refined Oilplant-based product is called, has been supplanted by fusion power in large applications on Starfall, many still use it to power personal vehicles and fuel cells.

Perhaps because of the importance of the petrochemical industry to the development of modern Cinder Bay, post-Devastation society in this city-state has moved away from the technocratic fundamentals of the survival period, and adopted a much more commercial approach. Stories abound of individuals who have built commercial empires through their own hard work, creativity and luck. Many other Starfallers consider the residents of Cinder Bay to be materialistic, but locals shrug that off to complacency, and an over-reliance on the technocrats to run things.

CORWIN'S STRIKE

Population 10,000. Main industry – Gems, Minerals

Corwin Alemann left Landing City in Year 927, to escape the bedlam of the "Capital". A reluctant wanderer, Corwin followed the near side of the Northern Mountains west over the next few years, searching for a place to settle. By IE 931, he had come to a wild region, west of Oasis, where a chain of outcroppings, remnants of long eroded volcanoes, dotted the landscape. It was here that Corwin discovered "The Light of Starfall", a 90 carat pale red diamond. Although he never disclosed the exact location of his discovery, word soon spread about the amazing find.

Thousands of people rapidly descended upon the region, in search of their own fortunes or of victims to fleece. A town sprang up - Corwin's Strike - and Corwin Alemann became the "mayor, judge, and undertaker". At the height of the Rush of '31, Corwin's Strike was home to over 30,000 people. Although the town technically fell within the lands of the Free City of High Spires, the other City-States refused to allow the wealth to go to one of their own. Instead, Corwin's Strike was declared a Free City and given representation in the House of Governors. Today, the First Director of Starfall is wrestling with the gradual decline in population at Corwin's Strike. Should the population fall below 10,000, Corwin's Strike would lose its status as a Free City under Starfall's Code of Municipalities, and would revert to being part of High Spires.

Corwin's Strike is the largest mining and mineral processing center on the planet. Although the small City-State is managed by technocrats familiar with the industry, 75 year-old Corwin Alemann fills the honorific role of "City Founder". The City-State includes a wide range of service providers ranging from bars to bakers, and mechanics to monks; all serving the needs of the miners. Claimholders vary in size and power, from Alemann Minerals, who hold the largest stake in the region, producing gem quality diamonds, peridot and garnets, and marketable quantities of various metamorphic

minerals, to hundreds of individual prospectors and miners all trying to imitate the success and luck of Corwin Alemann. He sold "The Light of Starfall" to the Planetary Assembly in Landing City in IE 935 for an undisclosed sum. It was stolen six years later and never recovered.

COURTICE

Population 33,000. Main industries – Gold, Jewellery, Financial Services, Information Services

In spite of the mercurial nature of Starfaller politics, not many of the city-states on the planet would be described as Byzantine. Courtice, however, is one of those places. The technocracy of Courtice is driven by the interests and demands of the luxury markets of the world, and the Gold Market in Courtice is the place where the planet comes to trade its wealth.

Courtice's affluence is based upon its principal industry: gold. Shortly after settling Courtice at the outset of the Long Night, the residents discovered veins of native gold in the hills surrounding the city-state. They originally hoarded their production and concentrated on creating elaborate jewellery and works of art for off-planet markets, but the Devastation struck particularly close to Courtice, destroying the neighboring city-state of Gorlan. The hardships and shortages caused by the massive influx of refugees collapsed the traditional representative government in Courtice, and gave rise to the planet's first technocracy. The skills and ingenuity of the engineers, technicians and artisans saved the city-state from total disaster. Over time, these technocrats became the separate ruling classes of Courtice's society. As the climate began to return to normal around IE 700, the technocracy turned its energies to building upon the skills of Courtice's miners and goldsmiths. The technocracy passed ordinances to create a tax-free financial industry, backed by the gold merchants of the city-state. Individuals and companies from across Starfall began to open offices and accounts in Courtice, until the Gold Market reached predominance on a global scale, and became one of the primary financial centers in the Subsector.

In the Gold Market, independent goldsmiths and jewellers keep shops, along with other dealers selling luxury goods of all sorts. Above the small shops tower the offices of the merchant banks and exchanges, and sprinkled throughout this modern warren of wealth are the dark bars and coffee shops that cater to the brokering of wealth and information. The intelligence services of most city-states and many off-world interests maintain a presence in Courtice, and the city-state is known as a discreet place to trade secrets as well as gold.

DELTA

Population 49,000. Main industries – Grain, Meat (Fish), Livestock (Aquaculture)

Located at the western end of the Starfall Sea, Delta was founded as an agricultural community by a small group of

Solomani settlers in IE -1687. Today, despite being one of the larger city-states on Starfall, Delta has not lost its peaceful, small-town way of life. Delta sprawls along the shore of the Starfall Sea, and broad avenues and numerous green spaces lend an air of openness and calm to the community.

Delta is one of the primary agricultural city-states of Starfall. Production is based upon two main products: grain and fish. The surrounding plain is easily irrigated from the Starfall Sea, and those same waters have proven to be a rich habitat for the numerous species of aquatic life introduced by those first settlers. Fish are processed here and sold as meat, or shipped off-world as livestock. In the last 50 years, Delta has also developed a small but highly successful sport fishing industry. Tourists come from across the cluster to hunt Terran species like marlin, blue fin tuna, and swordfish, and more exotic species like Urshall and Dyvan Squid. Recently, the popular Federate Republic sporting periodical "Wild Life" announced plans to establish an annual sport fishing competition in Delta, and created a trust fund intended to yield a prize of FRD 50,000 annually.

Delta's low-key lifestyle is reflected in its civic government. The Corporate Council appoints the City-State's Chief Engineer and the four Governors for the House at Capital from among its members, and is made up of the representatives of the City-State's major corporations and central service bureaus. The Water Bureau is responsible for the sale and delivery of irrigation services, and the regulation of fishing practices – it collects revenues for the city-state through the sale of fishing licenses. The Constabulary directs local security and emergency services, and is generally equipped to a TL-9 standard. The Land Bureau issues land grants and collects the grain tithe.

ERAIKAZAN

Population 21,000. Main Industries – Grain, Fruit

Among the last regions of Starfall to be settled were the treacherous slopes of the volcanic ranges in the southern hemisphere. Although the older cones are generally dormant, they are still prone to unannounced fits of seismic activity. The youngest cones are extremely active, with eruptions and lava flows happening on an almost weekly basis. In spite of this, the rich volcanic soils on the slopes of the old cinder cones are suitable for growing even the most demanding crops.

The slopes of Eraikazan were first explored in IE -952 by Samuel Edo, a ranger for the Free City of Grand Valley, and were settled by that city-state a century later. Given the general lack of water in the south tropical region, the geologists and engineers from Grand Valley had to go to great lengths to provide an adequate water supply to the region. In the process, the Eraikazani became expert in the transmission and conservation of water. The terraced rice paddies are canopied with solar collectors that condense much of the water evaporating off the fields. The paddies

also act as a reservoir for the city below, maintaining an emergency water supply in case of any system failure. Below the city, the fruit trees use water recycled from the city and channeled to their roots using a system of underground irrigation lines.

The city-state's extreme policies on conservation have placed in inordinate amount of power in the hands of the civic water authorities, even for a feudal technocracy. The authority rewards individuals who use less than their ration, and punishes those who exceed it. One unanticipated side effect of this zealotry has been the creation of a black market in water. Smugglers try to import water and sell it for a profit, and citizens trade in their personal surpluses. Of course, all such activities are illegal, and the Eraikazani Water Authority, the local equivalent of a law enforcement agency, goes to great lengths to prosecute offenders.

EVERGREEN

Population 24,000. Main industries – Wood, Furniture, Grain

The smallest City-State on the northern plains, Evergreen is also one of the oldest. Founded in IE -2059 by settlers from First Landing, the town rests on the fringe of the polar permafrost zone. Local life forms had adapted to living on the frozen edge of the planet long before the humaniti arrived, and the first settlers found the region covered with dense growths of Spinela, a hardy evergreen whose wood has a fine reddish grain. These early settlers began harvesting the Spinela and using the best of the wood to create beautiful hand-crafted pieces of furniture. The forests that they cleared were then planted with 'Gineered Rye and Oats, to feed the settlers and to trade to neighboring city-states along with their lumber and woodwork.

The Devastation of Year 23 destroyed Evergreen slowly. Temperatures plummeted beyond the already cold polar norms, and the residents were forced south. Evergreen lay abandoned for over 800 years. Then in IE 839, a group of settlers from Idam Lee moved to Starfall as part of the re-colonization program of the time. They discovered the abandoned city, now overgrown by the encroaching Spinela, and set to work re-establishing the settlement. They brought with themselves the technological prowess of their homeworld, and adapted it to the needs of their frozen frontier. Forestry and agricultural 'automatics' now do the majority of the manual labor, and the citizens concentrate on technical and artistic endeavors. The city-state's infrastructure generally operates at TL C, with replacement components and new equipment being brought in from Idam Lee.

The citizens of Evergreen are the exception to the norm in Starfall politics and culture. Fiercely independent and conservative, the Free City of Evergreen carries on the political and social culture of Idam Lee. The town is governed through a direct, participatory democracy, and seats in the planetary House of Governors are elected, not appointed.

The standard of living is universally high, and graduates from Evergreen routinely top the Dean's Lists in Oasis and Grand Valley.

GEYSER PASS

Population 31,000. Main Industries – Plants, Power Generation (Geo-thermal), Tourism, Crystals

The treacherous slopes of the Central Mountains are among the most beautiful regions on all of Starfall. The wide variation in local microclimates in the range has resulted in a fascinating array of environments in close proximity. One such setting is Geyser Pass, the largest city in the Central Mountain ecozone. The city-state is named after its location, a high pass that provides the corridor between Starfall Capital, Grand Valley and Eraikazan to the south and west, and Altis and Courtice to the north.

Geyser Pass is one of the natural wonders of Starfall. Water from the massive southern aquifer is heated in deep underground cavities and rises to the surface through a series of geothermal vents. Thousands of these vents line the walls of the pass, shrouding the vale in a curtain of perpetual mist. This shroud, and the barrier provided by the mass of the mountains surrounding the pass on three sides, sheltered the inhabitants of the region from the worst of the volcanic effects of the Devastation, and the subsequent nuclear winter. Today, Geyser Pass has the highest atmospheric concentration of moisture on the planet, and supports an ecosystem more like an alpine rainforest than a desert planet. Jungles of red-yellow Jhastan Vine drape the blue-green Alpine Spinela foresting the walls of the pass. Even the mountains of the region share in the pageant, with sheets of multi-colored geothermal minerals like native Sulfur, Cinnabar and Calaverite coating the faces of the geothermal vents. These mineral beds are considered a heritage treasure by locals and only harvested according to strict laws.

The citizens of Geyser Pass have taken full advantage of the regions blessings. Today, valley is dotted with geothermal power plants and automated greenhouses. Geyser Pass is the largest producer of hydroelectric power on the planet, and has also become a resort catering to Starfallers seeking the therapeutic benefits of the geothermal waters. The spas and public baths are marvels of architecture, blending into the lush, rugged natural setting that they share.

GIBRALTAR

Population 25,000. Main industries – Transportation, Trade, Meat

If there is such a thing as a commercial hub on Starfall, Gibraltar is it. When colonists moved south into the Riftlands after Janko Palmer's legendary expedition, they soon realized the importance of the point of land that juts out across the middle of the Starfall Sea. As city-states began to spring up, first around the Riftlands and later in the wastes and the southern plains, the central location of Gibraltar

Point became obvious. By IE -1000, Gibraltar was already a transportation nexus, with rail yards, road terminals, airfields, and a small maritime industry.

Through the next millennium, Gibraltar became a trading center, a place where the city-states of the two hemispheres would come to trade with each other. Off-world buyers frequently came to there to negotiate contracts for delivery to First Landing Downport. In IE -9, the city-state completed the landmark Millennium Skybridge, connecting the two shores of the Starfall Sea across the Gibraltar Strait. This free-standing, gravitationally-supported structure is one of the best-known feats of engineering on the planet, and continues to stand to this day.

Even during the Devastation, Gibraltar survived. When air travel began to die out, the railroads, caravans and road trains became even more important. As trade decreased, the truckers and traders of the city-state joined forces. They received a charter from the city-state to form a trade and transportation monopoly called The Gibraltar Company. By the dark ages at the depths of the Devastation, Gibraltar Company traders were the only dependable link between the city-states across Starfall. The stereotypical caravan leader became a romantic figure of legend, and an entire genre of popular folklore arose around them.

Today, the Gibraltar Company governs the city-state, and is the only true corporate government on Starfall. It is also the largest, richest and most powerful corporation on the planet. It operates some of Starfall's largest and best known companies: Riftsea Railway, Air Gibraltar, Millennium Trading, and the Gibraltar Exchange. The modern equivalents of the legendary caravan leaders continue to exist today. Company managers, such as road train leaders and brokers operating independently outside the city-state have dual diplomatic and corporate status. They are recruited on the basis of their resourcefulness, initiative and good judgement. The most famous of these managers are the so-called "executive freelancers", agents of the Gibraltar Company that have the power to commandeer any corporate resources when necessary to complete a mission.

GRAND VALLEY

Population 48,000. Main Industries – Computer Parts, Computer Software, Farm Machinery, Education

Grand Valley sprawls across the flood plain of the Omeйда River in the Southern Plains. The city-state is the capital of the Southern Alliance, the centre of Globalista technocracy on the planet, and one of the largest city-states on Starfall. The original settlement in the southern hemisphere, Grand Valley began in IE -2130 as a base camp for settlers moving to the south from First Landing. From the beginning, the city-state was planned as a capital, with broad boulevards and integrated defences.

The core of the city has two characters: the stately government and academic complexes in the west, and the bustling commercial and industrial core in the east. The majestic neo-gothic Triumvirate Buildings and the classical architecture of the Southern Institute of Technology dominate the western bank of the river, while the business and corporate offices on the Avenue of the Alliance ring the core on the eastern bank and form the nucleus of Grand Valley's thriving software industry. The outer rings of the city-state support heavy industries such as Romo Equipment, Starfall's largest manufacturer of farm machinery.

The recent arrival of a large group of Aslan *ihatei* has led to the creation of an enclave in the south-western part of the city in the neighbourhood surrounding the garrison of the **Tliaeisoas** Mercenary Battalion. Aslan are also beginning to establish small land holds in Grand Valley territory outside of the city proper, an activity which has stirred up some debate in the capital. Grand Valley Milport in the north-eastern corner of the city is the home of the Southern Alliance's 1st Aerospace Wing, equipped with Stiletto aerospace interceptors and Gorgon aerospace superiority fighters. The Milport is also the current home port of the **Tliaeisoas'** 1000 ton mercenary cruiser.

HIGH SPIRES

Population 47,000. Main industry – Refined Silicon, Aluminium, Tools – Medical, Mechanical Parts – Water Purification Systems

High Spires is located at the edge of the Northern Plain, in the foothills of Starfall's Northern Mountains. Its latitude and shelter by mountains means it receives little rainfall, and is dry and temperate. High Spires was settled for its location close to large deposits of valuable metals and minerals. In the last thousand years most of these deposits have played out, forcing the city-state to import more raw materials to supply its manufacturing industry. The original settlers chose to establish the city at a moderate tech level for ease of maintenance and affordability of materials, with an emphasis on mining and medical technologies. The sparseness of local drinking water, coupled with the high mineral content, led to a rapid development of water reclamation and recycling systems that were used extensively across the planet.

The original colonists came from Terra's French-Canadian population and many of the inhabitants still speak the Québécois French dialect, indeed all children are taught the language for at least a year in school. Events on Starfall and exposure to many other colonial cultural groups have led to a dilution of the original culture, and the creation of a unique and vibrant society more liberal than most on the planet.

High Spires weathered the Collapse better than many cities; a great tribute to its medical technologies and its pragmatic mining background. It was still hard hit, with a population die-back of an estimated 80%; a figure significantly less than most

other city-states. Since its recovery High Spires' emphasis has shifted to education and research, particularly in the field of medicine. High Spires' doctors and medical engineers had an affect on the rebuilding of the planet far beyond their numbers. The reputation as humanitarians still follows them today.

High Spires, along with many other cities, became involved in the reconstruction of First Landing Starport, and unlike most has continued its support following the construction of the Tripartite Starport.

KILIMANJARO

Population 43,000. Main Industries – Grain, Livestock, Meat, Leather

The first thing that visitors to Kilimanjaro notice is the city's striking eastern skyline, dominated by the volcanic mountain for which the city-state is named. In the first half of the Long Night, Kilimanjaro was considered a frontier town, given the city-state's location south of the desolate Barren Wastes. That perception continues into the present, and many Starfallers associate Kilimanjaro with remote, frontier living and a general lack of refinement. Kilimanjari, as the locals refer to themselves, do little to discourage the notion.

The city-state is the center of Starfall's leather industry. Hides are imported the planet's agrarian city-states, particularly Palmer's Landing, Raiman and via the markets in Gibraltar, to process and convert into leather goods of all types. Kilimanjaro competes with Gibraltar to import livestock for meat production, and exports grain to Cinder Bay for processing into ethanol and other petrochemicals.

This otherwise mundane city has one exotic custom which draws thousands of visitors every year. 11 Summer is the summer solstice on Starfall, the day on which Bashan appears furthest south in the Starfall sky, and the height of the brief summer season in the southern hemisphere. 11 Summer is the only day of the year upon which Bashan rises directly over the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. The rising of the sun over the mountain is considered an omen. If Bashan rises clear and bright, the following year will be filled with good fortune. If however the summit of the mountain is shrouded in cloud, folklore states that the following year will be filled with trials and hardship. Regardless of the omen, the Kilimanjari mark the day with feasts, dancing and music. Most importantly, locals consider it bad luck and poor manners to miss the rising of the sun. The Kilimanjari phrase, "He slept through the Rising" is used to refer to a person plagued with ill fortune. On the other hand, a child born early on the morning of the Rising is looked upon to achieve greatness.

LANDING CITY

Population 32,000 (13th Census official figure). Main Industries – Contraband (illegal), Trade (marginally legitimate), Mercenary Services, Slavery (illegal)

Standing on the site of the original colony landing in the Starfall cluster, the city is a shadow of its former self. The

once class A starport lies mostly in disuse. A small section of the original facilities, now a freeport infamous across the surrounding subsectors, barely holds a class D status. The city is administered by a council of politicking, and occasionally warring, factions. Two of the city-states of Starfall, Boatha and High Spires, sit on this council, alongside the independent starport administration, and a collection of warlords, technocrats, and workers.

The city is heavily balkanized, with certain territories only safe for those allied to the controlling faction. The exception is the starport and its surrounding area. The starport is considered free and safe for all. The surrounding area (“the De-Militarized Zone” or “the DMZ”) is patrolled by starport security to minimize trouble and allow neutral meetings between all the city’s groups. This neutral zone has a culture and color all its own.

Anything can be found, purchased, traded, transferred, or stolen in Landing City, and the freeport operates without a customs service. The city is a complex and dangerous hotbed of gang warfare and politics, home to intelligence groups, criminal syndicates, humanitarians, slavers, smugglers and mercenaries. Quick wits and a good weapon are the most useful things a visitor can possess.

MAUNA ELE-ELE

Population 25,000. Main Industries – Coffee

High above the arid wastes in the equatorial portion of the Southern Plains towers the volcanic giant, Mauna Ele-Ele. Named by the first planetographers to survey Starfall, Mauna Ele-Ele, which means ‘black volcano’ in the ancient Hawaiian tongue of Terra, is the highest mountain on Starfall. At a height of 10,868 meters and a diameter of just under 1000 kilometers, the snow-topped cone is among the first features that a visitor notices when gazing down from orbit.

The eastern slopes of Mauna Ele-Ele are home to Starfall’s principal coffee growing region. The mountain’s rich volcanic soils and the moisture collected through condensation at higher altitudes, create a microclimate closely approximating the optimal conditions for growing Terran Arabica coffee. Hundreds of small homesteads dot the terraced plantations of the mountainside. Many belong to the planet’s only colony of Sydites, believed to number over 4,000. This colony first came to Mauna Ele-Ele as transient workers, but many stayed and began their own small plantations. Of interest, the Khuur League maintains a small delegation at Mauna Ele-Ele, which represents the League in trade and cultural affairs.

Mauna Ele-Ele is also the home of the Starfall Institute of Seismology and Tectonics (SIST). The scientists and technicians at the institute are the foremost authorities on the tremors, quakes and eruptions that plague the planet. SIST is currently studying the use of deep core drilling as a method of relieving the extreme pressures in the lower crust

that cause much of the seismic activity on Starfall.

NUEVO CHIRIQUI

Population 47,000. Main industries – Fruit, Wood, Furniture, Paper Products

Colony missions from the Latin nation-states of Dingir (1222 Dingir/Solomani Rim) arrived on Starfall in IE -1798. By then, the northern city-states already well established. These missions chose instead to create a new ethnic enclave on the southern shore of the Starfall Sea. Within 200 years, the Nuevo Chiriqui had planted huge tracts of mahogany, cypress and palm along the coastline, and established plantations for the cultivation of tropical fruit like dates, figs and banana. The ready supply of quality woods encouraged craftsmen and artisans to gather in the city-state, and trade in fine hand-crafted furniture and works of art soon developed.

Nuevo Chiriqui is typical of the city-states that oppose the Globalistas’ vision. The Chiriqui feel that the individual city-states should be allowed to determine their own course, and have the right to opt out of centralized programs initiated by the EBS. These city-states, known as the Determinists, oppose any further increase to the powers of the central government in Starfall Capital. **Alcalde** Bryson Stephano, Nuevo Chiriqui’s head of state, has recently been reappointed after running on a strongly determinist platform.

Few figures in Starfall’s popular folklore capture the imagination like the riders of the Chiriqui. The early colonists brought their favorite breeds of Terran horses to Starfall, and soon developed a hardy variety of the classic Arabian that could tolerate the torrid heat of the Riftlands. Many of today’s citizens of Nuevo Chiriqui, particularly the planters and lumbermen, still prefer to use horses for transportation on their own lands rather than more modern means of transportation. The local culture uses the honorific term **caballero** to refer to the leaders of the city-state, and the local militia units go by designations like **Caballería** for armored cavalry and **Jinetes** for lift infantry, e.g. Compañía Jinetes, 1era Caballería del Chiriqui (Lift Infantry Company, 1st Chiriqui Cavalry).

OASIS

Population 30,000. Main Industries – Education, Fruit, Fragrance Oils

The arid hills of Starfall’s northern plains rest upon a massive aquifer, storing significant amounts of the planet’s polar ground water just meters below the surface. It was this feature that led Starfall’s original settlers to concentrate in the northern hemisphere. Within a hundred years of the foundation of Oasis, agriculturists had begun to concentrate on the production of various fruit products and derivatives. In particular, the community developed adapted species of several Terran species: peaches, pears, citrus fruit, and the hardiest varieties of grapes.

The first wave of colonists that arrived at Starfall during the Twilight included a group of scientists and academics who were given the responsibility of protecting and passing on the accumulated history and knowledge of Earth. In the days of the Long Night, the constant struggle between the city-states began to take its toll on the planet's ability to sustain the technologies that had been introduced. The visionary leaders of Oasis created Starfall College, a place where science and the arts could survive the stagnation of the Long Night and foster the development of the Cluster. The Deans of the faculties were selected not only as leaders in their own academic fields, but also as administrators capable of directing the functions of the City-State in their related areas of expertise. Today, the Collegium of Oasis is an elite group of scholars, scientists and administrators, representing some of the most capable minds on the planet. The Collegium is led by Chancellor Marcus Katlyn, the world-renowned biochemist and director of Ambrosia Vineyards, and the eleven Deans of the College. The social structure of the city-state divides the residents into Professors (the academic elite and corporate directors), Mentors (managers and specialists), Citizens (skilled workers) and Visitors (non-citizens).

While the City-State survives on the basis of its academic and agricultural excellence, Oasis is probably best known as the center of Starfall's perfume industry. Today, the fields surrounding Oasis produce flowers and incense as well as fruit. Mentors from Oasis travel throughout the Cluster searching for new ingredients for next year's fashion craze.

PALMER'S LANDING

Population 62,000. Main industries – Chemical Catalysts (Organic), Livestock, Meat, Preserved Foods

In IE -1922, Janko Palmer led the first group of settlers out of the Northern Plains, and into the region now known as the Riftlands. His rugged, "damn-the-torpedoes" leadership style became the stuff of legend, and was more than once credited with the survival of the group that followed him. They settled on the north-eastern shore of the Starfall Sea, and named their new settlement Plenty. Within a century of his death, however, the citizens the expanding settlement changed its name to Palmer's Landing.

The settlers of the Riftlands discovered that the heat and lack of surface water made it impossible for Terran cattle or sheep to survive. Luckily, the Riftlands teemed with native herd beasts that became known as Palmer's Greycow. It took the residents of Palmer's Landing over 600 years to domesticate the Greycow, but the species provided valuable meat proteins that sustained the citizens of Palmer's Landing and the newer settlements in the equatorial and tropical zones of the planet.

Today, despite of the torrid heat that is typical of equatorial Starfall, Palmer's Landing is second only to Starfall Capital in size and economic influence. Although it began as, and to

large extent still is, an agricultural settlement, the city-state has a vibrant, business-first culture that draws from the myth of Janko Palmer. Beginning with the wide range of valuable products derived from the massive herds of Greycow roaming the dry Riftlands, Palmer's Landing diversified its industry. The city-state now also produces engineered proteins, organic enzymes and other catalysts for industrial and medical use, and processed foods for export. It also has a large and thriving service sector, particularly in the fields of finance and marketing.

The government of Palmer's Landing has institutionalized a corporate technocracy. All public institutions operate as corporate overhead, and most of the civic services are provided by private sector contractors. Palmer's Landing is governed by the business elite of the city-state, and many local and international executives compete for the high-profile and lucrative positions on the Executive of Palmer's Landing. The current Chief Executive Officer of Palmer's Landing is Chui Palmer Singh, a descendant of the city-states founder.

RAIMAN

Population 40,000. Main industries – Livestock, Grain, Agricultural Seed

Like Cinder Bay, the city-state of Raiman exists as an oasis in the blasted region known as simply the Barren Wastes. However, unlike Cinder Bay, which is located on the boundary of the Barren Wastes and the Riftlands, Raiman is located in the heart of the Barren Wastes, surrounded by thousands of hectares of broken wasteland. Planetary historical archives list five major attempts to settle in the region, but only one, the expedition in IE -283 led by the Vilani expatriate Dr. Unki Sialaana, survived in this hinterland.

Even more astonishing is the garden that Dr. Sialaana created. Fed by moisture released through subterranean hydrothermal springs, the irrigation complex at Raiman supports the cultivation of subtropical grains like Millet, Sorghum and Ykera. In turn, the local ranchers use the grain to raise cattle for export to the processing plants in Gibraltar.

Raiman is the site of Starfall College's Foundation for Advanced Agri-Genetics. The Foundation conducts research in botanical genetics, and finances itself through the production of seed products for commercial use. The Foundation maintains very close ties with Raiman's technocratic government, leading some critics to suggest that the Oasian university has excessive influence in the affairs of the city-state.

STARFALL CAPITAL

Population 74,000. Main Industries – Government, Defence, Aircraft, Mechanical Parts, Trade (Offworld), Grain

The creation of the new planetary capital has been the most ambitious construction project of the 9th Century. The city began as part of the TA, growing out of the fledgling Startown associated with Tripartite Downport, then completing construction. However, when the Southern Triumvirate, in IE 915, chose it as the seat of the newly-formed planetary House of Governors, Tripartite Startown was granted city-state status under the newly minted Code of Municipalities, and renamed Starfall Capital. Today, Starfall Capital is the planet's largest and dynamic community, and powerful political entity in its own right.

As its name implies, Starfall Capital is home to the Executive Board of Starfall and the Starfall House of Governors. The two form the core of the Government District, and are surrounded by the infrastructure and buildings of most of the planetary government. Most of the city-states on Starfall are over 1000 years old, and have survived the ravages of the Devastation with varying degrees of success. In contrast, Starfall Capital is a modern, purpose-built city. The oldest structure in the city, the maintenance facility at the Downport, is only 75 years old. Not surprisingly, the city-state's architects went to great lengths to create a state-of-the-art city. One of the first things you notice in Starfall Capital is the connectivity available to residents and visitors. Public access networks, wireless and hardened, provide high bandwidth voice/data connectivity throughout the city. Residents use a bewildering array of communications equipment, ranging from public access terminals or PATs located throughout the city, to wireless datapads and holojacks integrated into personal garments and accessories. Rumors exist of a radical fringe group of "dataknights", equipped with the latest cybernetic enhancements and thriving in the city-state's underworld.

As Starfall's planetary capital and primary Downport, Starfall Capital hosts significant diplomatic and non-citizen populations. The Third Imperium has a small consulate in Starfall Capital, as do many of the Domains' smaller starfaring states, such as the Kheur League, the Federate Republic, the Grand Duchy of Stoner and the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium. Starfall Capital is also home to several hundred Vargr, most of whom are non-residents working at the Starport or in the FRETZ. Starfall Capital, Tripartite Starport and the FRETZ are all policed by the Capital Corps.

THERMOPOLIS

Population 35,000. Main Industries – Fruit, Beverages, Power Generation (Geo-thermal)

Thermopolis is the southernmost city-state on Starfall, and one of the members of the Tripartite Alliance. The city-state thrives on agriculture, tourism, and geothermal power generation. The gentle climate of the Thermopolis region encourages the cultivation of many crops of Terran origin. In particular, the region is noted for its orchards of apples, and for the production of Thermagua, a mineral water derived from one of the local thermal springs. Since the

city's founding over 2500 years ago, people have travelled to Thermopolis to take advantage of the medicinal waters of the Thermal Pools. Today, the city maintains several public spas and clinics where travellers can relax.

The city is ruled by the Technium, a body of professionals and tradesmen that are selected by their patrons and customers for their expertise in their fields. Members of the Technium are elected for life, and each profession or trade in the city-state may only have one member in the body at any given time. It's not surprising, therefore, that any vacancy generates considerable public excitement. The people of Thermopolis also directly select the Consul of Thermopolis to represent the city-state at the Triumvirate in Grand Valley. The current Consul is Markalos Berger, a former chef. Markalos' appointment by the people of the city-state created a stir in local politics, particularly after he hosted an open banquet for the citizens of Thermopolis. The feast was extraordinary, and tens of thousands of people turned out for the food and entertainment. Markalos' opponents, including two very prominent members of the Technium, complained that Markalos had bought the support of the people with a feast.

With over 5,000 personnel in uniform, Thermopolis contributes a lift infantry battalion to Tripartite Alliance forces at all times, and two aerospace fighter squadrons and several mobile air defence mass driver (ADMAD) batteries to the Starfall Navy's COACC forces. Local defence forces are generally equipped to TL B.

TYL ANTAL

Population 13,000. Main Industry – Spices

Tyl Antal, or the Ford at Antal, first came into existence around IE -450 as an outpost of the Planetary Alliance of Starfall (PAS) on the southern slopes of the Northern Mountains. The base guarded the vital Antal Pass, on the route from Tedeshui to First Landing. Tyl Antal gained its place in military history during the Starfall World War, when, in IE -62, Tedeshui militia held the pass against advancing New Free Brotherhood (NFB) forces for six critical days. The holding action allowed the PAS to stage a counterattack that relieved the pressure on Tedeshui, and ultimately became the point of furthest advance of NFB forces during the War.

Beginning in Year 23, the volcanic devastations beyond the Tedeshui Gap forever changed the region to the west, and rendered hundreds of thousands of hectares of land uninhabitable. A major tectonic rift opened near Starfall Central, rapidly spawning a succession of volcanoes and lava flows, and spewing ash and poisonous vapors into the atmosphere. Gorlan, Tedeshui and Starfall Central were abandoned seemingly overnight. Those refugees that streamed east rested at camps surrounding Tyl Antal before proceeding south-east to Delta or through the Pass to the relative safety of the Northern Plains. At the height of the devastations, the population of Tyl Antal exceeded 40,000.

Ninety percent of those were refugees, mostly from Tedeshui. Today, many Starfallers make the pilgrimage to Tyl Antal to look out at Mount Cerberus and the lava flows that spread across the mouth of the Tedeshui Gap.

Many of the refugees stayed in Tyl Antal, where the altitude lessened the worst effects of the subsequent climate shift. They began farming in terraced gardens and greenhouses, and soon these gardens lined the Antal Valley below the Pass. Today, Tyl Antal's economy is focused upon the production of high-altitude spices, such as tarragon, turmeric, anarallik and cardamom. Most of its production moves off world through merchants at Tripartite Downport. Production and supporting services are regulated by the local chapter of the Spice Guild, which also manages this small but affluent City-State.

LANDING CITY

Most sophonts' first impressions of Landing City agree only on the contrasts. Flight control is remarkably efficient for its D class rating and from altitude the starport appears much larger than its astrogation almanac entry would suggest. Once on the ground things look very different. With the first draft of the hot and dusty air comes the sound of gunfire, or worse on a bad day. The view out the airlock is dominated by the ramshackle, but massive starship building yards with their anachronistic wind turbines and auto cannon nestled on the roof. The realization that at least half the starport is not in use registers when one's eyes drop to the larger landing bays – from the banners, bunting and crates stacked all over - they obviously aren't being used for normal purposes. Next to be noticed is an intimidating defence perimeter of brutal razor wire, minefields and guard towers that run just across the runway. Past this barrier the visitor's attention is drawn to an even more incongruous sight: a garishly illuminated Vargr starship with a rotating holographic sign reading 'The Jolly Roger'. There is just time to realize that on this side of the perimeter the starport is spotless with clearly painted safety fixtures and all locations signposted before the starport officials arrive in the form of two small, faintly reptilian, sophonts in open topped environment suits, backed by 2 heavily armed and armored guards. "This is your hardcopy of the starport regulations and fees, the landing fee is payable immediately and includes two standard days berthing." says the senior of the two Bwaps. "Welcome to First Landing Starport."

HISTORY OF LANDING CITY

First Landing's beginnings were nobler than its current situation. Originally the site of the first Terran colony in the cluster, a small settlement and starport were built to oversee the colonization of the planet. It was built with then state-of-the-art technology and eventually developed into a small class-A downport with an advanced orbital facility built around one of the first colony ships.

The decline brought about by the Long Night was initially not noticed in Landing City (the name changed to Landing City sometime during the long Night), though when it did the fall was swift and deep. The after affects of the First Starfall World War left the port and city so badly damaged as to be unusable. Starfall Central starport gained wide support and quickly replaced First Landing in importance; which fell further into decline. The massive volcanic eruptions of year 23 which devastated much of the world had less affect on the city due to it's location in a (relatively) stable zone. Landing City survived this period much better than most of the planet, mainly due to the very limited trade that continued, though it did suffer a fall in population of about 60%

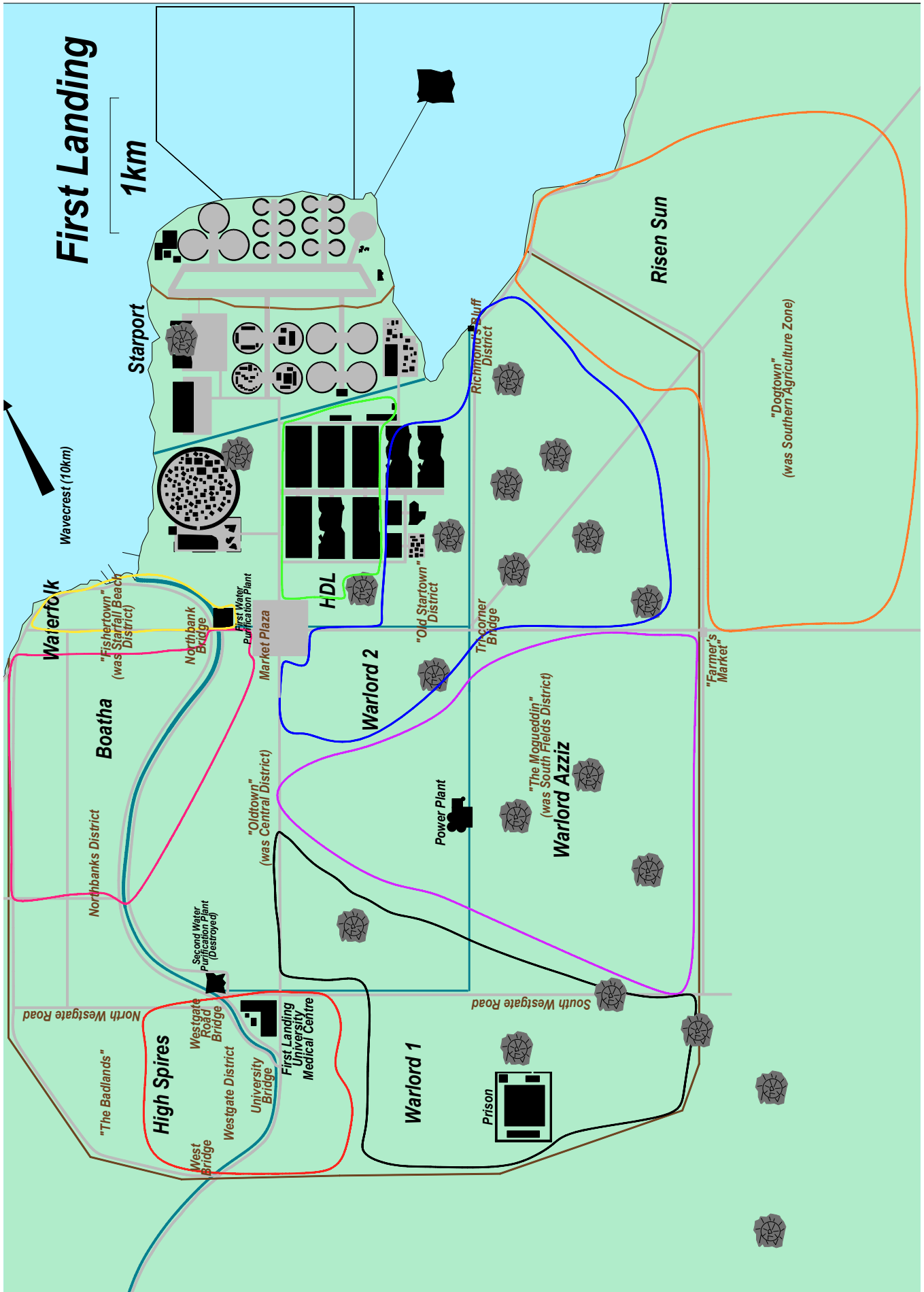
As Starfall slowly recovered from the devastation caused by the mass eruptions Landing City was slowly rebuilt.

During this period the highport, mothballed since the war, was discovered to have lost all station-keeping drives. A daring plan was evolved to revive the city by landing it off the coast and using it as a source of high tech equipment and a team of the cities' finest engineers was recruited. No one now knows what exactly failed but during re-entry the highport started to break up and eventually crashed into the sea approximately 10 miles off shore. The craters caused by the wreckage are still visible across the city though the damage caused by the resulting tidal wave are long gone. Of greater long term damage was the loss of many of the cities' greatest engineers and technicians which delayed the re-building of the Starfall.

It wasn't until 876 that the starport was reopened and with it the resumption of Landing City's place as capital of the planet; the next twenty years were ones of booming economic growth and prosperity for the city, though the remainder of the planet lagged far behind. Most cities allied with Landing City, grateful for any improvements to their economic situation, but three had other plans. Once Tripartite Starport opened it quickly eclipsed First Landing as the planet's primary port, and Landing City began a rapid decline which has only recently slowed with the declaration of it as a freeport welcoming all ships and goods.

LANDING CITY TODAY

Since the collapse caused by the opening of Tripartite Down, the city has collapsed into a chaos unmatched since the Starfall world war. Virtually all central authority has disintegrated and most regions of the city are effectively self-ruling. Any group powerful enough to rule an extensive part of the city is called a faction. The only two Starfall cities to continue links with the city are still powers in landing City as is the Starport Authority. An unusual grouping of Vargr naming themselves the Risen Sun control most arable land, and the old starship assembly buildings are operated by a faction based around its old trade union, whilst most of the remainder of the city is controlled by three criminal warlords. The last faction is the amalgamated fishermen and water engineers (now known as the Waterfolk), whose recent union lowered the membership of the near defunct City Council from ten to the current nine. Various other areas of the city are under no individual group control. Of particular interest is the unused part of the starport known locally as the DMZ, where many off-worlders can be found, which fulfils the traditional function of a startown. Just outside this is a confused and dangerous building known as the Hive (both detailed later). The other parts of the city not under any faction control are collectively known as the Badlands, where in general things are even worse and life valued even less.



FACTIONS AND GROUPS WITHIN LANDING CITY

FIRST LANDING STARPORT AUTHORITY (THE BWAPS)

INTRODUCTION

First Landing Starport has been abandoned, rebuilt, downgraded and almost constantly fought over in its time; when Tripartite Down was opened most ships stopped using the port. A hasty and ill thought out plan to revitalise the city by soft landing the orbital starport in the lake went disastrously wrong; making the bad situation even worse. All the local power groups agreed on the desirability of revitalizing the city via a fully functioning starport, but none were prepared to take the risk of ceding supremacy by allowing another control of it. This constant squabbling resulted in its rapid downgrading to a D class facility with a consequent greater loss of trade.

A solution that pleased none, but all could live with, was finally found; contract the starport administration to an independent body. It is not known who first suggested the Bwaps, but as they are renowned throughout known space for their impartiality and strict adherence to the letter of contracts, they soon became the only solution everyone could agree on. A crèche prepared to take on the running was found and has run the starport for just over a quarter century. They have full responsibility for all aspects of starport administration; such as its funding, sensor operations, flight control, navigation, etc.

Large portions of the original starport lie outside the authorities control, the defence perimeter is the boundary of their power. The remainder of the berths are known as the DMZ (qv) – no faction controls this area though starport security mount regular patrols into it and outright gunfights have become rare. The DMZ is bordered by an ancient defensive moat behind which squats “The Hive”, originally a SDB base, it is infamous throughout the cluster as a place where any service, any thing and anyone can be bought or sold. Just south of the Hive the Home Defence League occupies the towering Starship construction buildings.

GOALS AND PLANS

The orderly running of the starport with maximum efficiency is the Bwaps’ one and only aim. The crèche of approximately 50 Bwaps operate as a highly hierarchal and rigidly structured bureaucracy. Every member knows their position, their role and responsibility is clearly (some might say overly) defined.

The Chief Administrator is head of the Starport authority and Chair of the Landing City Council. As a matter of policy

the Chief administrator abstains on all council matters pertaining to non-starport issues; though he always has several very long proposals of his own at each meeting. Such proposals are always accompanied by a multitude of charts and other documents, the council has learnt to respond by suggesting that they take the information away for ‘further perusal’ and later decreeing that the project has merit but deserves further study. So far there are 35 Bwap inspired projects still extant, mostly undergoing feasibility or cost analysis studies. Progress is hampered by the Bwaps tendency to bring revisions of each project to every meeting

Unfortunately the chaotic conditions here wear heavily on them and much time is spent devising plans for the development of the Starport when (and if) the political climate improves. To assist in this endeavour extremely detailed records of every ship movement in sensor range and of all personnel movements within the starport have been kept since their arrival. At present this information is kept securely stored within the Bwaps’ own computer core in their accommodation area and no-one from outside the crèche is allowed access to it. Such information would be literally priceless to any one of hundreds of criminal, intelligence and mercantile organizations; fortunately no one outside the crèche is even aware of its existence, never mind its astonishing completeness.

STARPORT OPERATIONS

The starport is a strict freeport, any and all vessels are allowed landing and berthing and there are minimal controls on the movement of cargoes in and out of its perimeter. The only exception being health and safety regulations and a total ban on the movement of weapons of mass destruction, all cargoes are inspected to ensure compliance using sophisticated (TL:B) sensors hidden in the landing bays. Ships cannot be boarded without the captains’ permission under any circumstances, though once onboard shipboard security is the crews own responsibility. The only costs for using the starport are a landing and take off fee of Cr1 per 10dt; and after 2 standard days a berthing fee of Cr1 per 10dt per day; these rather high charges are generally offset by the total lack of any import/export duties.

Ground regulations are few; for instance the only areas off limits to visitors are the accommodation (Bwap and Hoplite) and their respective control buildings. Inside the perimeter loaded weapons are banned and military grade weapons must be carried disassembled or otherwise made safe. Due to the presence of Harpers Hoplites any form of violence is rare and they always responded to it without warning and using the maximum force available.

Ships incapable or unwilling to use the ground facilities and lacking their own interface craft can be serviced by the starport shuttle; which also doubles as the council’s official transport. A cutter with a large selection of modules is present, but the Bwaps are reluctant to let it operate too far

from the starport as it is their main Accident and Emergency vehicle. Other than these boats the only other vessel directly available to the authority is a Bwap starship of 400dt moored in the dock.

Under the original contract each local faction (since High Spires and Boatha had funded the rebuilding of the starport it was decided they should be exempt) agreed to supply the starport with certain services. The Risen Sun supply the personnel with food, supplemented by purchases from the fishermen, Azziz provides power whilst routine maintenance of the starports vessels is the HDL's responsibility. Unfortunately the Tong and Warlord Lashiinkhuunaagar (jointly responsible for manpower) never fulfilled their obligations and the absorption of the Water Purifiers into the Waterfolk has led to the supply of refined fuel becoming unreliable. As recompense for this breach of contract the Bwaps negotiated the ability to hire their own security forces.

Originally starport security was supplied by the council which led to some questionable hiring practises and conflicts of loyalty. Once the Bwaps gained the right to provide their own security they immediately hired Harper's Hoplites, whose duty is solely to them. In addition they negotiated a deal where by the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium pays the Hoplite's salaries, in return for substantial (65%) discounts on all fees and priority clearances for take-off and landing. The starport has made some dramatic savings and caused the council much distress, the only reason the Bwaps got away with it has been the dramatic increase in business (on average some 15 ships a week use the port now, a 5-fold increase on 5 years ago) and the council's inability to agree a satisfactory alternative to the efficient Bwaps.

Ship services vary in quality; all berths are fully equipped with power, data, sewage and unrefined fuel connectors. These are fully supplied with adapters, extensions, connectors, instruction guides in multiple languages and are clearly labelled. Flight control is precise and will provide good quality astrogation data for the entire cluster on request, data for the remainder of the sector is less complete but reliable.

All other services must be obtained from independent contractors; cautious skippers will contact a broker who will arrange most services at a minimum 25% commission. Refined fuel is sometimes available from the Waterfolk, Warlord Azziz and the HDL compete for maintenance and repair contracts whilst casual labour is available from the DMZ. If specific parts are required the Hive is a good starting point and the HDL can manufacture many items on demand, though their prices are steep.

Should individuals want to seek their own suppliers this invariably entails a face to face meeting, either in faction territory or the DMZ; such meetings are hazardous at best and deadly at worst.

First Landing is not on any scheduled trade or passenger run as trade volumes vary considerably due to a variety of factors – the level of violence around the city being the main one. However many free traders will drop in looking for speculative cargos with the staple trade being in food (Waterfolk and Risen Sun) and basic TL-9 consumer goods (from the HDL). Some high value, low volume goods are also available; including a form of Saki from the Risen Sun that some connoisseurs around the cluster are becoming interested in. Other items of interest to speculators or collectors are the variety of art work and high tech devices that occasionally reach the market here; the military weaponry that can be purchased openly here is a further draw for some traders. More dubious cargoes are also available for sale or can bring a tidy profit, slaves (particularly personal servants or technicians) are available to the right buyer and many ships selling items here have dubious reputations. Mercenary companies and low population planets also find this a useful recruiting ground, most inhabitants having some basic combat skills and little aversion to using them.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The authority need to move a ship docked at one of the berths to the dock site as it has not paid it's berthing fees for 2 months. Unfortunately the crew cannot be contacted so a team must be assembled to break into the ship, circumvent its security and move the vessel under its own power. The teams normally contracted to do this have refused to try as the vessel is, reputedly, a armed raider masquerading as a free trader, such vessels normally carry highly effective, and deadly, anti-hijack equipment. The team will be accompanied (at a prudent distance) by a 4 man team of Harpers Hoplite's to try and prevent any unauthorised theft or hijack by the group. (Note: Should the berthing fees remain unpaid for a further month the Authority will seize the vessel, notify the other starports in the cluster of its details and if no-one claims the ship will auction it 1 standard year later.)

HIGH SPIRES ENCLAVE

INTRODUCTION

The High Spires Enclave (or HSE) is the full name for High Spires city faction. High Spires is a city state to Landing City's west lying on the mountains, and is one of two cities that invested in its rebuilding. Some 2,500 High Spires nationals reside here, with 500 locals, patients, and medical experts. Many still speak the Terran Canadian French Quebecoise (the home state of the original High Spirian colonists), or heavily accented Galanglic. The coat of arms for High Spires is three White Towers in a triangle (one over two others) on a red field clearly identifies the enclave's official buildings and personnel.

TERRITORY AND INTERESTS

The HS enclave is centred on the old Westgate district and straddles the river up to Westbridge. To their south and southeast the cruel Warlord Lashiinkhuunaagar's implacable hordes and gang members lurk; sniping, firing rockets, and the occasional shell or landmine. They are surrounded to their north and immediate east by the "badlands" region of the city, where the most feral and desperate of the Landing City dwellers have taken to holding out.

In the last five years they have installed a TL-B fusion power plant and rebuilt much of the district to its former glory, it is located in the old City University Medical College (at the strategic crossroads leading out of the West gate). They also have a smaller TL-B Power plant in their extensive medical facility; between them they power all buildings and services within their area of control. This power plant, unlike the one the Boathans have supplied, is incapable of powering the whole city. Purified water is supplied by the Waterfolk, but sabotage to the pipeline is an ongoing problem with repairs required weekly. To try and get around this they take water from the river and grand canal for non drinking purposes and are working to avoid reliance on the Water folk for drinking water. This has put them squarely at odds with Azziz, as well as antagonizing the Waterfolk, who view their independence as a form of rivalry.

As they are the secondary city state investor in the restoration of Landing City (Boatha is the primary investor), their medical technicians are prime targets for snipers, kidnappers, and slavers so High Spires maintains its grip through its ever vigilant military force. It has two reinforced companies (250 personnel) of TL-B mechanized Grav Infantry here, but prefers to avoid confrontations whenever possible. A small police force wearing rusty maroon uniforms, kevlar flak vests, outfitted with TL-A grav vehicles and laser weaponry is responsible for security within the enclave itself; they are all trained in riot control and anti- terrorism measures.

Part of the problem the High Spirians have is their isolated position and the cynicism of the city population, who see

their humanitarian efforts as a ploy to lure the poor away from the factions through offering free medical care, Vaccines and other treatment.

GOALS AND PLANS

The High Spirian's main goal is to restore the excellent medical services and technology the city once enjoyed; they came with this high minded humanitarian goal, but swiftly learned their good intentions were spat upon. To prevent any charges of territorial acquisition, they have not moved to acquire further territory since their arrival 80 years ago. The HSE did invest heavily in the University's medical college and administer it still as a hospital, place of learning and fortress. Coupled with this they bring in food shipments to support their efforts to improve the health and dietary balance of the population. The Rack, in the DMZ, is heavily funded by them and many of their medics volunteer to work there in their spare time. High Spires has invested fewer millions of credits than Boatha over the years, but has no plans to leave before they've ousted that rapacious City-state from it.

The HSE leadership, under City Councilwoman Maria Duquesne, has however been aggressively redressing the plight of those being "deluded by service in the warlords' internecine warfare" (direct slaps at all the warring factions, not just the Lords of the Mogueddin). Duquesne has seen through the deception of the Boatha Technical Combine and actively opposes them in the city council at every turn. As she is very charismatic and an astute politician (especially compared to Boathan leader Boer-Jameson), this hasn't been particularly hard. She is determined to end the bloodshed that has gutted much of the city though their efforts have only succeeded in appealing to a few of Badlands outlaws, and a few others wearied of the incessant killing. Many others travel by roads seen and unseen (the former subways and sewers) daily to get a decent meal, and rest in this relatively peaceful zone.

Only the occasional sniper or shelling from mortar fire (usually from Laashiinkhuunaagar's bunch) breaks the daily routine here. High Spires has learnt to retaliate with a merciless but brief counterattack, and Lashiinkhuunaagar is seeking higher tech surface to air missiles to counter the superior grav vehicles at the HSE's disposal. Their borders have been reduced to rubble dotted with razor wire, landmines and booby traps placed by both sides. This has effectively penned in Laashiinkhuunaagar's mobile TL-7/8 4WD (wheeled) APC's and assorted former police riot vehicles and prevents them from using the north end of South Westgate road.

Duquesne has spies in Boatha's fastness and her faction has worked hard to make friends amongst those they heal and feed. Whilst not all are prepared to swear allegiance to the HSE, but the High Spires can call in "favours" to get information, or other things accomplished.

PERSONALITIES

Maria Duquesne - leader of the HSE and their representative to the Landing City council. Originally a professional medical technical expert she trained later as a diplomat. She is the fifth representative High Spires has sent, and in her first two years has made more headway than her predecessors have in the past 80.

Major Raymond de Ville - commander of the HSE military unit is short, with a lazy smile, good-natured features, and hazel eyes. Whilst he dislikes Van Lieder of Boatha; he despises the soldiers of the Mogueddin warlords, but has learned to be wary of even their low-tech cunning and ingenuity. He enjoys visiting the Starport proper and conversing with Major Eakehia over strategy games.

Dr Rene de Montmorency, MD – Dean of the university is a likeable, scholarly man who has a true vocation for teaching whilst also enjoying the challenge of regular surgery. He is the dapperly dressed crusader behind council woman Duquesne's drive against ignorance, despair, and death in Landing City.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. The Travellers are in the DMZ when they pass by the Rack and witness the open air clinic operated there by the white robed doctors with the three tower armbands. One of the medical volunteer workers, recognizes one of the team (from somewhere in the Starfall cluster worlds) and is asked if they would like to pitch in some of their spare time while planet side. Agreeing is likely to lead to gaining a useful contact in the HSE and may improve the likelihood of receiving decent medical care when it is needed.

2. The PCs are asked to deliver a load of urgently required medical equipment and supplies from the DMZ to the University College Hospital. Due to delays with the unloading their convoy of three local ground trucks are only ready to depart the Port at 1300hrs (which is an hour before sun down!). Passing through the HDL and market plaza unremarked, they are stopped briefly by the Tong of Warlord Yukowa at a road block just west of the plaza. Being refused permission to pass they are forced off the road into the badlands of the Old Town. Unfortunately for them elements of Boatha's 2nd Panzer Battalion are engaged in a counterattack against a raid by Azziz's Technicals in this area. The convoy literally drives into the gunplay and in order to survive they must take the only open route which leads towards Badlands Bridge - a river crossing just south of the canal and river junction.

3. There has been a severe clash in the city, (between Azziz and Yukowa at Tri-Corner Bridge) some two dozen have died and hundreds are reported wounded. Many casualties have been evacuated to the Rack. Dr de Montmorency is contacted via radio and personally takes charge flying there in his air raft with three assistants and a large supply of

blood and plasma. Unfortunately his vehicle is shot down en route, crash landing in the city. Fortunately the doctor and his assistants survived, but were captured by Azziz's technicals, who are waiting until sunrise to deliver him to their gang boss. The party is asked to locate and rescue Dr de Montmorency and his staff should they manage to rescue the medical supplies this will be considered a bonus (they are a significant portion of their reserve stock). Further adventures could follow as they try to determine who shot it down, likely villains are Lashiinkhuunaagar's men or possibly Boatha's militia.

BOATHAN TECHNICAL ENCLAVE

INTRODUCTION

Commonly called the Boathan, the Boathan Technical Enclave is the second city-state with a sizable presence in Landing City. Boatha itself is situated to the east, across the lake. Some five thousand Boathan nationals reside here, with a further fifteen hundred locals living under their control. Speaking the Terran Afrikaans tongue of South Africa, from where the original Boathan settlers came, most in Landing City also speak Galanglic, though with reluctance and a distinct accent. Three gold spheres in a triangle one over the others on a red field is their heraldic sign, clearly embossed on all their equipment and flying on flags all over their territory.

TERRITORY AND INTERESTS

The Boathan enclave stretches through the Northbanks district, across the southern shore of the river of the old city quarter up to Northbridge having been actively expanded since their arrival. Ever since their arrival they have tried to expand vigorously, the most recent addition is a whole swathe of territory stolen from the Waterfolk as they try and get to the lake side. They have been spreading into the badlands district inexorably, only slowed by the high level of damage in this area and stubborn guerrilla operation by its residents. Their expansion into the Old Quarter across the river has been stalemated for many years by the activities of all three warlords. As they include a large number of technicians and engineers in their number, who are prime targets for snipers and slavers alike, Boatha maintains a large military force in the city and controls its territory through outright and brutal military force.

Boatha keeps a TL-A armed and equipped mechanized lift infantry battalion here, one of 9 such units in their city's personal army. Currently Second Panzer Brigade is based here; it comprises four companies (each company contains four 30-man platoons, with eight grav carriers, and four light grav tanks), supported by a headquarters company of 100 men, including both supply and medical personnel. The lift troops wear combat environment suits topped by red berets for infantry and black for vehicle crews.

They also operate a heavily armed militia and a paramilitary police force wearing black outfits with Kevlar flak vests. Equipped with TL-8 ground vehicles and weaponry they are primarily tasked with anti-riot and counter-terrorism operations. Finally the enclave funds and operates a militia called the *Staatd Liberatizione Front* who are armed with a mix of semi- and automatic weapons produced (or looted) locally at TL-6 they also make heavy use of booby traps, conventional explosives and landmines. These paramilitaries are the real vanguard of the enclave, wearing ski masks and

no uniform they are similar to the gangs of the warlords and are, simply put, thugs who instigate much of the violence that leads to Boatha occupying areas for the "people's protection". They are also used as a deniable resource to retaliate against the "enemies of Landing City" of which there are many due to their twisted ideology. They insist that in the perfect feudal technocracy only the "true brothers of Sol" (humans) are worthy of the benefits of the state. Mixed humaniti, Sydites, and all other alien races are only fit to be used as unskilled labour! Needless to say open warfare between the mixed sophont warlords and Boatha, is common marked only by cease-fires where the violence continues at a less public rate.

In the past five years the Boathans installed a TL-A fusion power plant in the city governors old mansion in the centre of their enclave and started to extensively rebuild this part of the city. This power plant, unlike the one in High Spires Enclave, could power the whole city, but for opposition by Azziz and others, mainly fuelled by the apartheid policies of the Boathans. They have also tapped into the water table for an independent source of clean water to avoid reliance on the Waterfolk. Along with their large amount of technical expertise has put them firmly at odds with Warlord Azziz and his technicals in particular.

GOALS AND PLANS

The current Boathan leadership in Landing City, under city Councilman Boer-Jameson, has been aggressively attempting to "redress the plight of the those humans plundered by the medieval practices of extortion and tithing" (direct slaps at Azziz's power company monopoly, and the Water Purifiers Union) and promises a "new era and a new vision" for the city. They offer clean streets, more shops, free education (to Boatha standards of course!) and more law and order including prompt criminal punishment (public hangings). Whilst this appeals to a few of the wealthier and more disgruntled members of the Water Union it, of course, requires embracing the Boathan sophontist line, even if only lip service is required.

Boer-Jameson envisions a day when the vargr and all other "parasitical" aliens are completely driven out, or exiled to marginal ghettos, like the Risen Sun has done for itself. This policy has put them on a collision course with their fellow city-state enclave of High Spires, which has seen through their deception and actively opposes them in the city council at every turn. This is hard for Boer-Jameson to understand as High Spires was settled at the same time as Boatha by people from Sol/Terra.

Based on the current laws of planetary citizenship most of the 5,000 Boathans resident here have "gained their citizenship" (dwelled here for 2 or more years) and therefore do not count against those who say BTE is a foreign power. They are the third group to gain such rights, and much of their city infrastructure repair work is a hide for making living quarters for another 4,000 workers. Tied to this they are

bringing in some of their own businesses to support their efforts to “economically rejuvenate the city”.

Long term the Boathans plan to rewire the city to their power grid and by repairing the water treatment plant get a stranglehold on the city. Boatha has invested millions of credits over the years into First Landing City and their leaders have no intention of leaving before they’ve wrung a profit from it. While they no longer practice skin color racism, they are actively sophontist. As a result the Solomani Confederation has been successful in making contacts here, they show great sympathy for their aims whilst being more concerned with tying down the most Imperial resources.

PERSONALITIES

Andriijk Boer-Jameson - the leader of the faction also sits on the Landing City council. He is a balding man with a sun bronzed face, pale blonde hair, and watery blue eyes. His speech is heavily accented and he appears to actually believe that he is doing the city a favour by “cleaning it up”. Andriijk is arrogant in a likeable way sure of himself and as oily as any snake seller in the Hive.

Lieutenant Colonel Chevakris Vaughn-Lieder - the commander of the Second Panzer Battalion, a wiry, lean, saber scarred duelist; with a hawk nose and pale blue eyes. An ardent sophontist he looks forward to the day he gets the order to cut loose “and wipe the vermin out”. Vaughn-Lieder dislikes the current incremental policy and secretly hastens the day when he and his men can be unleashed.

Margaux Landersson - the local representative of the Boathan firm “Intelli-Gear”, and a computer software security and encryption specialist. Her firm sells TL-A encryption devices and data storage upgrades for personal computers. Ms Landersson finds Boer-Jameson a social boor as well as a poor politician and makes no secret of the fact. She has secretly been selling him out and some of his more grandiose self-aggrandizing schemes to Ms. Duquesne, the council woman of High Spires’ enclave.

Police Inspector Pieter Van der Haas - a likeable policeman trying to do regular police work who longs for a return to regular courts, trials and due process. Although his jurisdiction is technically only the Boathan zone, Van der Haas can be found as far afield as the badlands or High Spires (their forensics equipment is far superior to the Boathans’ cheap facilities). He has ten detectives who work in the homicide unit under him. Unlike Boer Jameson, Van der Haas is charismatic, reasonable and sincere - even when he’s after you!

Hans Blix-Halstedder - the head of the SLF paramilitary terrorist units. Anything but the stereotypical leader of sophontist thugs, by day he is a simple construction worker superintendent running a work crew of 150 men and women. Hans however, changes into his alter-ego when he dons his

ski mask takes out his assault rifle and night vision scope. Hans is a mahogany skinned, kindly faced, brown eyed man with greying hair who wears glasses and has a middle aged paunch.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. The Group are in the Boathan Enclave, enjoying a night out in a quieter part of town, when they are accosted by members of the SLF on a “purity sweep”. Any minor aliens, or humans of “obvious non Solomani descent” will be castigated, jeered, heckled and they will demand they leave the district. This is blatant specism if the PC’s respond with force it will be met with rapidly escalating force. Gunplay will bring down the police who will tend to side with the SLF whilst getting the party out of the zone.

2. One day while passing through the zone, the travellers spot several men in ski masks working around a freshly dug hole near the edge of the badlands; the area is roughly grave sized. When they drop a sack into it the party sees what appears to be an arm dangling out. If investigated the shallow grave contains the remains of a missing Vargr offworld merchant, to complicate matters the police will arrive shortly afterwards led by Inspector Van der Haas. The group will be questioned thoroughly about the matter (the real villains spotted them and their buddies called the detectives). This can be easily developed into a extended adventure investigating the death squads targeting alien merchants (and others) in the city.

Alternatively the party and witnesses the murder of the Vargr merchant. As they pursue the murderers into the Boathan enclave, they are thwarted by men of the second Panzer Battalion at a checkpoint, who deny seeing the perpetrators vehicle pass through.

3. Ms Margaux Landersson hires the travellers to deliver some documents and software ‘samples’ to the High Spires enclave; specifically the Medical college. They are followed and stopped by the police on a trumped up charge and questioned about any packages they are carrying. If the PC’s admit to having the package, it will be confiscated; if not, they will be allowed to continue. The GM may add other encounters en route to the medical university. Regardless of outcome, the data is useless to Ms Landersson’s enemies; the real test was of the travellers, could they be trusted as she needs couriers to carry the clandestine minutes of Boer-Jameson’s meeting to Ms Duquesne.

HOME DEFENCE LEAGUE

INTRODUCTION

The Home Defence League (HDL) occupies the city's six largest buildings; once used for the assembly and manufacture of starship parts; final construction being carried out at the orbital starport. Standing just outside the DMZ, the smooth walls with shuttered windows and barricaded doors are as grey and unwelcoming as the inhabitants.

The HDL traces its history back to a people's militia formed during the First Starfall World war to defend the city. Since that time the organization has waxed and waned with Landing City, but has always taken its strength from the workers in the factories adjoining the starport. Predominantly conservative and prudish, they see themselves as the last bastion of decency and hope for the city. They have always held true to the belief that if the factories are kept working, chaos will be kept at bay. In many ways this is the economic heart of the city with many consumer goods produced here, with sufficient surplus for off world exports.

Over the years many aspects of daily life has become regulated to an extreme degree; every person is assigned a job designation (commonly called JD's) at sixteen, after a six standard year apprenticeship period, that rules their lives. This strict hierarchy is deliberately balanced by a commonality of living arrangements, everyone's living space is identical in size with common furniture, and all food is served in communal canteens in fixed shifts. This sense of equality is reinforced by all working clothes being grey coveralls with only color coded epaulettes to distinguish position and everyone being paid a set wage regardless of rank – though discretionary budgets and expense accounts do increase markedly the higher your assignment.

Despite appearing very humourless and colorless to outsiders; life within the HDL is very varied. Whilst everyone works an eight hour shift each day, they also take part in the many clubs and social gatherings. Mass participation competitions are popular and many of the population can become swept up in a new hobby overnight. Eleven years ago a speed chess craze swept the HDL, which developed into a league system that involved over 90% of the population and lasted for eight years, before finally ending in a massive knockout competition that only finished last year. A full day of rest was declared so everyone could watch the best of nine games final live – the first time production has completely ceased for over twenty years – the moves were even broadcast live to the guards on duty.

TERRITORY AND INTERESTS

Of the six seventy metre high structures the HDL occupies, three have been adapted; by the installation of multiple internal floors, to be a mixture of workshops and accommodation. There is no clear segregation between the spartan living

quarters and the various work spaces making these buildings something of a maze and impossible to navigate unless born there. Each workshop is either responsible for the production of a variety of parts for general use by others or are used for custom orders. This is where all the HDL's weapons, armor, ammunition and clothing is made amongst other more mundane articles. Anyone requiring parts made can place orders via the HDL's trade department; co-located with their warehousing offices. Given blueprints and/or a sample they are capable of making virtually any relatively small part from TL4-A. Such external orders are however of only moderate priority and make take some time to produce.

Most non-Leaguers will only ever gain access to their warehouse offices in the north eastern building, convenient to the DMZ's entrance, where their large quantities of trade and consumer goods are stored, as well as materials susceptible to weather damage. (All other raw materials of low value are stored in the severely damaged central western building.) Many regular trading visitors hire space here as the HDL has earned a reputation for superb security. All goods brought here are carefully inspected on delivery, no-one is allowed access to the actual warehouse space, with some goods rejected due to their dangerous or immoral nature. The warehouse office is also the trade office where special orders and/or large purchases are dealt with, if custom parts are required an appointment will be made for a later date, when a workshop foreman will attend to offer a quote.

The last building contains the source of their economic power – a fully computerised TL:A assembly line capable of manufacturing a wide variety of consumer items. Due to its age this plant requires heavy and constant maintenance, but is still run day and night throughout the year; the only pauses being the 2-12 hours needed to change the specific product produced. Though theoretically capable of weapon manufacture the HDL will not produce any goods that might further destabilise the city, a policy unchanged since the city's collapse. The thought that some other faction might gain access to this factory gives every other faction leader nightmares, even whilst they dream of controlling such a facility themselves.

Their primary defence relies on the solidity of the building's TL:D construction reinforced by deep razor wire concentrations and AT trenches, covered by grenade launchers and MMG's on the narrow border with Yukowa. These weapons, and the anti-air cannons on the roof, are manned by the Vets, the league's only full time troops. They are organized in 4 self contained "watches" of 40 troops armed with assault rifles and wearing flak jackets. At all times one watch is on duty manning the checkpoints, whilst a second is on standby – normally spending much of the time training. A third is sleeping and the fourth is off-duty, but still available on 30 minutes call.

In the rare occasions when action is required outside their perimeter, the Vets can deploy one watch mounted in 2 G-carriers and an assortment of all terrain vehicles, half the watch will be in cloth armor in this case.

All other adults, everyone aged between fifteen and sixty, are members of the citizens militia responsible for internal security and keeping the peace. Every fifty days they patrol the buildings, stand guard in the warehouse armed with truncheons and revolvers – the leaders are armed with SMG's. They are rarely called to do anything more serious than break up an overenthusiastic brawl or escort drunks to their homes or nearest guard station to sleep it off. In emergencies the HDL can mobilise 90% of the population to defend their homes and factories, however they are reluctant to do this except in the worst case situations as it causes great damage to production schedules.

GOALS AND PLANS

In the name of smooth running of production lines, these workers have given up most of their rights to a near absolute dictator; the Prime Minister, whose sole responsibility is to safeguard production. The hope is that by keeping alive a core of economic stability it will enable a rapid redevelopment of the city when law and order is restored. The current Prime Minister is Anders Faraday, advised by a cabinet of eleven ministers; any eight of whom may overrule his decisions. These ministers comprise the head of the militia, the senior military leader, three senior factory managers and six others elected by the whole population in bi-orbital elections.

Relations with the other factions in the city vary widely; the Water Purifiers Union were their closest allies, on ideological grounds primarily, but also as its primary supplier of purified minerals. Since the collapse of the union and it's amalgamation with the Fishermen relations have cooled noticeably despite the likelihood of increased supply of salvage from Wavecrest as more technicians move there. The League find the fishermen too lacking in 'decent family values' and deplore their disregard for the city council; though some trade still exists the HDL is urgently seeking another source of raw materials.

Despite their natural dislike of outsiders the HDL is one of the starports strongest supporters; they see an increase in off world trade as a necessary step leading to the eventual resurgence of the city. The efficiency of the Bwaps has overcome many of their reservations about the aliens – although they despair of the disreputable nature of many of the traders using First Landing.

Unlike the Bwaps the representatives of the other Starfall city states are instinctively distrusted by most Leaguers; a common maxim is 'local solutions for local problems'. This attitude has been rudely reinforced by the Boathan's, who are despised as totalitarian aggressors who would be thrown out if anyone here had their way. High Spires, on the other

hand, has started to earn the HDL's respect for it's even handed and humanitarian efforts though it still has a long way to go before it is treated with anything more than frosty politeness.

Most surprising is their attitude to the Risen Sun for whom the HDL has great respect and is treated as their closest ally in the city council. It is not known whether this is a result of a complete lack of understanding of their culture or just a result of their ingrained respect for a society based on such ancient traditions.

The three warlords are jointly despised as a pure example of the chaos destroying Landing City, their only redeeming feature is the fact that they are mainly locals. Compounding this antagonism is the attractiveness of many HDL personnel as kidnap targets and the stiff competition they provide as a supplier of trade goods. Of the three Azziz and his Technicals are the main competitor in supplying technical staff to the starport and it's visiting ships. The wind generators on each of their buildings are a desperate attempt to wean themselves from their dependence on them for electric power. Relations are not helped by the daily sniping and occasional heavier fire directed at their building by Yukowa's gangsters.

NPCS AND PERSONALITIES

Prime Minister Anders Faraday – Now in his seventh year as premier he is an unimaginative man who typifies the stereotype of the HDL, more concerned with production schedules and resource allocations than the long term future. Leaves the defence of the faction to the militia and Vets ministers whilst constantly trying to cut down on arms and armaments production.

Defence Minister Senior Watch Leader Barbara "Sgt Major" Dwyer – Quiet, but stubborn when dealing with non vets, in combat she becomes deadly calm and precise. Her unconventional tactics and orders are always designed to cause the maximum enemy casualties, with the loss of as few of her people as possible an objective she has been succeeding at for 15 years now.

Warehouse Manager Kerry Strongarm – despite her surname Kerry is a petite and peaceful woman who is more at home with the computerised stock control system than other humans. She is secretly terrified that she will be either promoted or demoted to a job that requires more dealings with humans.

Adventure Hooks

Kerry Strongarm has discovered a security breach in the warehousing computers, it appears someone has tapped into their stock system and copied all details of GTC stock movements. She has managed to conceal this and wants someone from outside the League to investigate. The data is to be destroyed and the persons behind the theft persuaded to keep quiet. She will pay Cr20 000 (scrounged from various

expense accounts) on condition that knowledge of the theft does not become public.

THE AZZIZ TECHNICAL COMBINE

INTRODUCTION

This is the high mileage name for the Warlord Adjinn bin Azziz's band of gun-toting gangsters; Azziz himself is a former civil electrical engineer turned Warlord. Through the Technical Combine, Azziz controls the old city power plant (now retooled to TL-6/7) and provides over 50% of the city's dwellers (as well as a majority of the Risen Sun) with all their electrical power. He and his faction control almost 85% of the city phone service as the main telephone exchange lies in his territory. Only the Risen Sun and the Starport Authority aren't on his phone service. Adjinn bin Azziz opposes anything, and anyone that attempts to diminish his power (electrical or political).

TERRITORY AND INTERESTS

The wedge-shaped slice of territory controlled by Azziz stretches along the southern perimeter of the city and divides the warlords territory neatly in three. His main borders are with his two former lieutenants territory. In the north it just reaches the Main Starport road about a kilometer West of the market plaza.

Azziz's men, known as the Technicals, are distinguished from other ruffians of the districts known as the Mogueddin, (or the "Mogue" for short) by their flamboyant red and white checked keffiyeh's or bandannas and their omnipresent 15mm heavy machine gun mounted pick-up trucks and 4WD ground vehicles. They tend to career around the area he controls firing wildly at anything in the air with both the machine guns and their small arms.

Other than these "soldiers" Azziz's main power comes from his control of the main power plant, which he re-tooled from a TL-B fusion power plant to a combination diesel, natural gas and coal powered TL-6/7 power plant whilst using the previous generators and power grid. He regards power generation and distribution as his personal domain and sits at the top of the heap dispensing it in the greek classical definition of a tyrant. As is the norm in feudal technocracies his top men are repairmen or technicians with great skills in their trades (especially communications, electrical and automotive engineering). The claws he has sunk into the other factions of the city go well beyond his extortionate rates for electricity supplied by his power lines, to include maintenance of the solar arrays some housing areas have boasted since the colonization as back up emergency power. His technicians have access to salvaged parts for sale and mainly rote working knowledge of the assembly and repair of the more advanced arrays; many purchased and used by the Risen Sun as backup for their computer systems. This way anyone who has arrays might have "gotten off the grid" and therefore out of his power company extortion racket, they are still reliant on him men to keep them running. Many of the

Risen Sun's farms are on Azziz's electrical power as it tends to have fewer brown outs than his rival Warlord Yukowa's supply. Azziz regularly accepts payment for this supply in foodstuffs, liquor, etc from the Risen Sun's vargr at Southern gate crossroads, known as the "farmer's gate-market".

Before Boatha or High Spires brought in their own power plants, Azziz and his technicals controlled the city through its power; the Waterfolk used some hydroelectric generators, the HDL had its wind generators and a small steam powered substation was built Tong of Yukowa; but none provided anything more than emergency power. That changed with the arrival of power plants in the enclaves of both Boatha and High Spires, though he has managed to prevent the council approving Boathan supplies as yet.

Unknown to most on the council he was the person behind the Bwap administration and also the GTC deal as he greatly desires keeping the starport open to expand his traffic in goods offworld, and to gain imported wares that would never arrive by land safely enough to suit his needs. Many of the ships visiting the starport are his (often unknowing) customers here to purchase items unavailable or illegal on their own worlds. This is a recent expansion of his dealings as he seeks alternative sources of income or power rather than just his control of the electrical power supply. He also supplies power to the DMZ and the Starport as a "token of good will".

GOALS AND PLANS

Adjijinn bin Azziz's main goal is to eventually dominate all three seats to the world government at Starfall Capital City, in order to accomplish this he must control 30,000 of Landing City's citizens. As Azziz reasons Landing City is not a democracy, but a Feudal Technocracy and therefore control of population means access to the seats on the world government. He uses his phone and electrical supply records to prove his claim to controlling sufficient citizens either directly or indirectly, this is in addition to the approximately 8 000 sophonts dwelling in his territory alone.

In addition the western Mogue, run by the myriad of gangs of the Ronin warlord Vorugo Lashiinkhuunaagar, are entirely reliant on his power grid and Azziz collects tribute from them (in manpower, slaves or cash) and wields his electricity like a club over the rest of the city when he chooses to. Summers reach an average high of 45 degrees Celsius here (130 degrees Fahrenheit) in the 20 hour days, air conditioning other than low power requirement ceiling fans, doesn't come cheap!

Both the foreign city state enclaves of Boatha and High Spires have their own power plants, the Boathans, or "Boatheads" as he prefers to call them, could power the entire city. Whilst the less powerful plant of High Spires only generates enough juice to keep their portion of the city lit it is very efficient. Strangely he sees them as more of a threat than the Boathans.

Fortunately for Azziz, the Boathans have tapped into the city water to fuel their plant and this has caused several old wells used by the very poor to dry up, he has capitalized on this politically and socially in the city. He has also shrewdly allied with the Waterfolk and HDL against Boatha pointing out that their days are numbered if Boatha succeeds in linking the city's power grid to their power plant, as they too will suffer a loss of revenues, influence, and therefore power.

Azziz's power plant is his fortress as well, squatting astride the southern leg of the canal between the old quarter of Mogueddin's southern districts. He has shown his two rival warlords a self-destruct mechanism for this entire complex. Should anyone attempt to seize power over Azziz, it will be a pyrrhic victory, for among the many conventional explosives buried deep within the complex is a planetary defence missile with a nuclear warhead!

PERSONALITIES

Adjijinn bin Azziz - a former civilian electrical engineer who rose to power during the chaotic period of collapse at the same time the Vargr evacuated the city. Azziz seized control of a handful of technicals, technicians and with his militia men soon made the Mogueddin his fief.

Mustafa Khalid bin Aideed - the tactical genius behind the heavy machine gun armed pickup truck or technicals used by the armed forces. Wielding rocket propelled grenade launchers, assault rifles, pistols and the Mogueddin blade of choice, the jambiya, his men are known city wide for their aggression. An arrogant man who leads his troops through a combination of fear and respect.

Ahmed ibn Vhaashkhuunen - the financial brains to counterbalance Aideed's generalship. It is he who invests in cargoes to be fetched from or sent offworld, he also cements all deals struck in exchange for electrical power. The factions revenue collectors answer to him when they come up short of quota, an event that rarely happens twice.

Allahajia bint Adjijinn - Warlord Azziz's most potent weapon and beautiful daughter; Allahajia runs the telephone service, from mobile cell phones, to the hard-wired landline that serves 55% of the city's residents. She is also the head of Azziz's intelligence service, her spies trained to listen rather than act immediately. Some of her most effective operatives are children.

Hotep-Abdul ibn Azziz - a scarred and bald Sydite mercenary Hotep serves as Azziz's personal executioner, usually barehanded. He is mute and communicates with Azziz via a private sign language they developed together.

Khaenghaerz-Abdul ibn Azziz - an offworld vargr who serves as his main technical advisor and chief repairmen. Khaenghaerz started his career as a corsair and fled here to avoid capture by the GTC piracy suppression teams

after his career became too successful. He has parlayed his electronics engineering knowledge for his life albeit as a servant to Azziz. (Note: -Abdul in Sol-galanglic means “slave of” literally)

ADVENTURE HOOK

The Travellers have been contracted to deliver a cargo of copper wire (TL-5/6), weighing 5 tons when they get to Landing City they discover they will only be paid on delivery to Azziz's Power plant in the centre of the Mogueddin. If they have no ground transport a truck will offload it at their starship (the outrageous hire cost will be deducted from their final payment). Although the load is heavy and the truck ancient it is capable of carrying the load at a slow speed, several red scraps of cloth are provided to identify it as a Azziz vehicle. They will be escorted by two technicals, each armed with a 15mm machine gun and crewed by three of Azziz's gun men from the entrance to the DMZ onwards. Their contact from the port will depart and bid them good luck. The Hoplites at the starport checkpoint will just watch in silence as the loud convoy passes.

If the party hasn't fitted the scraps of red cloth the gun men will insist they are fitted; driving off at speed if the group refuse, leaving them to attempt the gauntlet without an escort.

If escorted...

En route the lead vehicle will run over a landmine destroying the vehicle and killing all but one of crew, the group may be surprised at the gangsters reaction, casually stripping the bodies of valuables and weaponry and dumping the bodies in a ruined building nearby. The survivor will mount the HMG on the truck and man it there after binding his slight wounds. Just past the central market square they will be ambushed from the Boathan side of the road, a Machine gun will open fire and rake the remaining technical causing it to crash; they have two options fleeing at the low speed of the truck or trying to fight it out. If they stay to fight the HMG gunner will manage to suppress the ambushers and they can check the wrecked vehicle for survivors (two badly injured) and escape.

If unescorted...

The PC's run into the landmine, and the ambush alone.

End results...

This will earn them some brownie points with Azziz's faction as brave but trustworthy fools, loss of the truck and the copper earns them no payment at all

THE TONG OF YUKOWA

INTRODUCTION

The Tong of Yukowa is the official title of Warlord Hisiin Yukowa's mixed band of pan-Asian Solomani humans, ronin vargr and sydites. They control the original starport power plant, located adjacent to the HDL southern boundary, and next to his primary holding a munitions factory; both have been adapted to TL-6 in addition they control a small steam powered power station built along the southern leg of the security canal. These plants are used to power his key businesses whilst about 45% of all other dwellings in his territory are tied to Azziz's power supplies. If Azziz can be called the king of electricity in Landing City, then Hisiin Yukowa is the king of the criminal organizations controlling most of the large scale vice, slavery, smuggling, money laundering, drug trafficking, gambling and small arms manufacture in the city either directly or through intimidation and protection rackets.

TERRITORY AND INTERESTS

The pork chop shaped piece of territory controlled by the Tong stretches from Richmond's bluff at lakeside into the most heavily damaged zone of the Mogueddin with a small and diminishing no man's land between himself and the Risen Sun. In the north it reaches to the Starport Main Road and borders the great central market square which separates it from Azziz's zone of control.

Yukowa's men, known city wide as the Tengu, are distinguished from other gangs in the “Mogueddin”, by their dark blue and silver headscarves and their crest; four arms grasping each other in a diamond. These gang members are typically armed with locally produced TL-6 assault rifles, sub machine guns and a bewildering variety of personal side arms.

The substation power grid has been re-tooled from its previous TL-B (11) fusion power plant to a coal powered steam TL-6 non-nuclear power plant. Along with his munitions plant west of it, are the keys to Yukowa's power as a Technocrat-warlord and Hisiin regards this as the centerpiece to his “empire”. An empire he runs as his personal fiefdom here in the Zaibatsu style of feudal technocracy. His top men are, as usual in the city, the skilled technicians, especially electrical engineers, chemists and his munitions experts; next come his troops and beneath them the common workers in the myriad of criminal organizations run from his territory.

Yukowa and predecessors in the Tong have controlled the criminal activities in Landing City since before the arrival of Boatha and High Spires. Initially the arrival of their police forces changed things for the worst but the opening of Tripartite City starport and Landing Cities subsequent woes diminished their threat looked their worst for Hisiin Yukowa. One of his major successes is negotiating the cessation of overt hostilities with the Risen Sun and now acting as their

sole factor for off world machinery and farm equipment. Unlike his former colleagues in the Mogue he realizes money is power and lowly though merchants maybe in the Risen Sun's eyes, they are necessary to their society; he has therefore developed very close ties with many of them, controlling a lot of their trade.

Along the market plaza Yukowa openly runs several brothels, gambling houses, a geisha house (only for the very well to do, of course), as well as a rickshaw taxi service in his zone. Other than these rickshaws a notable lack of powered ground or grav vehicles is immediately noticeable in his faction, though the streets are often busy with pedestrians or bicycles. This is due to the several rival gangs operating within his territory; a situation he promotes to help keep his subordinates from unifying to overthrow him occasional sniper fire from the neighboring factions also help keep most important traffic below the city streets.

Most of his influence on the other factions of the city go far beyond the few visible on first sight, Yukowa's cheap stamped metal SMGs, smallarms ammunition; landmines (both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle), cheap disposable anti-tank weapons (patterned on the pre-space flight terran "Panzerfaust") are common throughout the city and even exported to other worlds in the cluster. For security, and because of the heavy damage in the zone he occupies, many of his facilities are beneath the surface; utilizing the old subway system, the sewers and World War era bomb shelters.

Yukowa's power plant and munitions factory form a twin fortress astride the southern front of the HDL zone; they are separated only by a narrow street. Unlike many other portions of the Mogueddin's southern districts this area resembles a walled war zone, the Tong's men have bricked up all of the windows facing out save for gun and RPG ports. Hisiin Yukowa has assured the HDL that anyone overrunning this fortress will trigger the destruction of the whole zone. He has standing orders for the several hundred metric tons of explosives (C-4, cordite and gunpowder) to be set off if there is any danger of the fortress falling to opponents, there is more than enough to level Yukowa's munitions plant, his power facility and most of the adjoining HDL factories.

GOALS AND PLANS

Hisiin Yukowa's main goal is to dominate the small arms market, as well as to control all illicit trade in the city for its citizens. As a Landing City technocrat he uses his "employee" records (most are actually indentured servants or slaves) to try and increase his place on the city council. Currently some 6,500 sophonts dwell in his territory; nearly a third of them former peasants from the Risen Sun who have defected to his faction over the past 20 years. Yukowa's neighborhood is zoned into four "districts" with appointed viceroys who are tasked with collecting tribute from these districts. His shock troops are called the Taifun consisting of vargr ronin (some

of whom still have their Samurai weapons and armor) and sydites, who tend to carry at two panzerfausts each as well as 20mm light assault guns.

In council the Tong's bitterest enemies are the Boathans and High Spirians having brought their own police forces into the city costing the Tong dearly as crime in their zones dried up which cost them politically, economically, and socially. Other than this they engage in a near constant sniping war with the HDL.

PERSONALITIES

Hisiin Yukowa - A former Risen Sun Samurai having dishonored the Risen Sun for dabbling in "filthy money" like a merchant, he was sent on a suicide mission as punishment and somehow survived. Rather than returning to the Risen Sun lands he felt vindicated in his interest in money and assumed command of the faction whose warlord he had just killed. That was 20 years ago, now 48 he is interested solely in accumulating more wealth, and extending his "invisible" reach offworld.

Vasily Vashkhuunen - viceroy of the coveted Market Plaza district and the sole gaijin in such a senior position he has risen as far as possible. He manages the gambling dens, bars, prostitution houses and "nightclubs" here. Like many in Landing City he is an Imperial refugee driven out from Ley sector by the new administration, he has been here for 35 years now. He is likely to outlive Yukowa, being pure Vilani, but may not have the patience for that and may be considering a coup at some time in the future. Yukowa is well aware of this possibility and watches him carefully (as he does all of his viceroys). Vasily's son, Ahmed ibn Vashkhuunen, is Azziz's financial manager and a wizard at the job.

Xian Phu Duc - foremost military leader of the Tengu, and Viceroy of the district adjacent to Azziz's territory, paralleling the road towards the farmer's market. An able guerilla warfare expert, his district is honeycombed with tunnels, linking all the tube ways, fallout shelters and larger basements. Many of these tunnels are used as schools, factories and several dozen bunkers used as granaries in case of strife or siege. The Rickshaw Taxi service answers directly to him.

Kim il Dong - Viceroy of the vital weapons and power district. Dong is a man consumed with running his petty fiefdom with no time to spare for treachery making him ideal in such an important role. Content with running his dream, his own miniature "empire", he is a slave driver determined to meet any quota on weapons or power output regardless of casualties amongst his workers. Dong's obsessive style has driven him to order his Tengu forces to snipe and harass the HDL to prevent them getting anything from the canal region. Dong has been known to execute personally anyone who shoots a member of the Waterfolk as he has an agreement

with them, allowing them in to glean metals and minerals in return for maintaining his turbines.

Kwazi Cheng-Tze - viceroy of the large district adjoining the lake running down to the Risen Sun faction. He is a born and bred Yakuza of the old school - a criminal merchant festooned with tattoos. Beneath the shanty-town roof tops here he runs the bakeries, other food processing workshops, restaurants and workshops where hand crafted tools, repairs, and all sorts of odds and ends are made. It has its own bars and gambling dens, but is also the residence for many of the free workers of the other three districts.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Soon after first arriving in Landing City any merchant in the party will be approached by a rickshaw driver who will tell of a powerful patron seeking a starship to trade off world. If they agree they will be taken by rickshaw through the streets and into the heart of the Mogueddin and then into the underground portion of the city. There they will meet Hisiin Yukowa in person; he is interested in arranging regular cargoes (approximately every 6 weeks) to a nearby planet in the cluster. The cargoes will be large quantities of ammunition and small arms for a rebel group. Should the ship take on the contract they will be well paid for it but forever known in the city as an ally of the Tong.

THE ZOO (WARLORD LASHIINKHUUNAAGAR)

INTRODUCTION

The Zoo is the colloquial name for the Warlord Vorugo Lashiinkhuunaagar's band of human and vargr mercenaries along with many other minor alien races. If Azziz is king of electricity and phones and Hisiin Yukowa the Lord of Crime then Vorugo Lashiinkhuunaagar is Lord of the Outcast. The unclean, merchants who crossed Yukowa, beggars, military deserters, escaped prisoners or slaves and those too desperate to even seek shelter in the Badlands make their homes here. Which is ironic since Vorugo is the former prison administrator. The Zoo is a tapestry of abject misery, patrolled by cynical gun-toting bravos who are tasked with "protecting the people". In the badlands, at least, no one is forcing you to starve at gunpoint.

TERRITORY AND INTERESTS

The Zoo's centres on the Old City Prison grounds, the southern half of the Westgate district and the southwest corner of the "Mogueddin", it therefore borders the High Spires and Boathan Enclaves in the North and Azziz to the East. Like the devastated area the Tong of Yukowa occupies, most of the facilities are beneath the surface utilizing portions of the subway system and the sewers, the poorest are forced to dwell on the hot and ruined surface.

Vorugo is simply the most powerful gang leader in this area, his control of the Zoo is less than perfect with many of the other gangs constantly fighting for supremacy. Lashiinkhuunaagar's men, the "Jackals Brigade", are distinguished from other ruffians by their flat black headscarves and armbands, with three White Skulls in an inverted "V" (one human, one Sydite, one Vargr). They are typically armed with TL-9 thru TL-5 weaponry, all carry, the short curved bladed dagger of the city, the jambiya. The other gangs tend to be armed in similar ways, but none come close to him in numbers. Lashiinkhuunaagar's "Army" has one great advantage a near monopoly in vehicles especially armored ones. Numbering some 150, most of them are wheeled, although ten are TL-8 tracked scout tanks, mounting 30mm hypervelocity guns with a crew of 3, and eight half-track personnel carriers mounting machine guns left behind by a mercenary company some time in the past. The only other purpose built armored vehicles, are the twenty former riot police Armored Personnel Carriers (mount a heavy machine gun in a one man turret) originally stored at the prison. His men also access to a varied collection of soft steel armor plated trucks and buses used as personnel carriers. His ace is the three ex-police force helicopters, capable of transporting six men each (not counting the 2 man crew). These aircraft he keeps in sheltered hangars at the prison or at WeGo Air's airfield when they require maintenance.

The faction makes virtually no economic input to the city; they are raiders and thieves primarily, not makers. The peasantry barely subsist on food donated by High Spires' charitable contributions and the meagre product of their small gardens. Other than the gangs the only employment in the Zoo is working on Vorugo's illicit drugs factories and fields the product of which are mostly exported off world to large criminal concerns. The labs that synthesize these drugs are heavily guarded and mostly underground. The local ghazi plant's leaves of Starfall, also serves as a mild euphoric when chewed, with similar effects to caffeine on the human nervous system, many of his human troops chew it to while away the hot afternoons.

The Zoo is part of Azziz's Technical Combine power rent, all but the prison itself is totally reliant on them for electrical power and phone communications. Solar power boards covering the prisons roofs to provide power for the factions headquarters is the only exception to this rule. The prison and the subway terminal south of it (converted into the vehicle garage for the factions armored vehicles, Lashiinkhuunaagar's headquarters and primary base of operations for his marauding bands. Vorugo sees "the Zoo" as his kingdom and runs it from here in the simple but brutal tyranny of a robber baron. Unlike many of the other faction leaders his top aides are military men, deserters or not, below them come those with chemical expertise or weapons making skills. The poor serve as cannon fodder in his schemes and ploys against High Spires and Boatha.

Warlord Vorugo would have been destroyed by his enemies in the Mogue many years ago except for Boatha and Azziz's concentration on fighting each other. His jackals are useful in tying down many of Boatha's troops and he has brokered a deal with Azziz to keep the power turned on in exchange for a mobile armored force of raiders which attack Azziz's enemies. He also gains imported wares that would never safely arrive by land through this alliance, though barely sufficient to meet his needs. Vorugo is an opportunistic power in the city; though he is scarcely in day to day control over his bloodthirsty bands. His former focus had been against the forces of High Spires, but their devastating technical advantage caused him to swiftly reassess the facts. Although he can count on nearly a thousand soldiers they are scarcely a homogenous group. The largest permanent unit of humans, numbers between 40 and 50, while his best troops are his Ronin Vargr (about 120 strong) and some two hundred Sydite mercenaries.

Due to the ongoing rivalries between his troops and the other much smaller gangs in the Zoo daylight travel above ground is unsafe except in armored vehicles. The poor tend to stay in their dwellings and wait for the charity food trucks from High Spires to dispense whatever the gangs haven't already stolen. If forced to travel in daylight they try to stick to the sewers risking the booby traps and mines that litter the unclaimed areas.

GOALS AND PLANS

Vorugo Lashiinkhuunaagar's personal goal is to not be discovered by Imperial bounty hunters, he is an Imperial criminal who fled prosecution in the Ley Sector, during the crackdown of 970. He is pleased to be the chief instigator of mayhem and havoc in the city, enjoying degrading society through his supply of drugs. He has expanded as far as he can hold and is spread very thin on his northern border he has given ground which they have razed with their to create a deadly free fire zone, anything military across it dies usually quickly and gruesomely.

With the Boathans & High Spires military and police forces in the city, opportunities for raiding far and wide dried up. Vorugo Lashiinkhuunaagar retrenched concentrates on becoming the primary importer of unskilled slave labour and chief supplier of narcotics. In council the two foreign enclaves are his bitter enemies, closely followed by the Risen Sun whose territory he raids on occasion. His only other concern is to try and establish complete control over his territory by killing the rival gangs though new ones develop as fast as one is wiped out.

PERSONALITIES

Vorugo Lashiinkhuunaagar - a wanted Imperial criminal who "bought" the prison administrator's job from a corrupt city official after escaping here. A hollow title when he received it he turned the Jackal's Brigade into a fearsome raider band based out of the prison buildings, it was a raid by him 28 years ago which directly led to the formation of the Risen Sun faction. A charismatic urbane looking Vilani he is morally bankrupt, totally opportunistic, fond of cruel punishments and torture.

Ronin Ghaenzhukhi - the scarred leader of the 120 strong band of Vargr janissaries, who fight for plunder, pillage and rapine under the Tri-Skull banner, Ghaenzhukhi is a former Vargr corsair marooned here by his crew. He has prospered, grown prestigious and even more vicious. His weapon of choice is a man pack 5mm mini-gun (with a 10,000 round cassette), his troops operate the various APC's.

Symeon Syddarthus - the leader of the Sydite Mercenaries once known as "The Company Insidious", this is the most military disciplined unit of all of the brigands who make up the "Jackal's Brigade". The Company Insidious was disbanded on Starfall after a particularly bloody series of small system wars in the quadrant, Symeon managed to keep two of the companies together and decided to go rogue. His mobile element rides in the twenty former garbage trucks converted into armor plated personnel carriers. Bald and missing his left eye; lost in the fight for unit command several years ago; he is a fearsome sight and a aggressive and viscous fighter.

Skye Kaminski - foremost human in the Jackal's Brigade, leads the 50 strong armored vehicles section (the 10 Scout Tanks and 3 scout helicopters). She is an able urban warfare

fighter and a hard-bitten mercenary who decided to stay in one place rather than moving every few months.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The PC's (arriving by starship) selling cargoes. One such is a hovercraft tank (TL-9) destined for Lashiinkhuunaagar's faction. Payment on Delivery! Due to restrictions in Air traffic control, they cannot simply "fly it" there, and it must be delivered on a flatbed truck (out of the DMZ). "Flying" it off the starport and around the city means running a gauntlet: to the south, the Risen Sun's SAM defences will attempt to get lock on it, and destroy it; to the north, the BTE air defences and 2nd Panzer Battalion will get an "unscheduled live fire exercise", at the PC's expense. Running it by truck through town remains the safest option. Another option is to truck it to We go Air, and have it flown to the dirt airstrip The Jackal's use to ship out on-world their narcotics cargoes.

NOBATTATAIYOU (THE RISEN SUN) FACTION

INTRODUCTION

The breadbasket of First Landing the Risen Sun is a violently insular whose rulers enslave any intruder found inside their lands and shoots down without warning any vehicles over flying its territory. Other than the occasional merchant in their distinctive purple clothing most inhabitants of the city have never set eyes on a member of this rigidly controlled society.

The origin of the Risen Sun lay in Richmonds Bluff District, a tolerant middle class area of the city, with a significant minority of terrans of far eastern descent. Sometime before the reactivation of the starport the district became a haven for significant numbers of Vargr during a city wide outbreak of xenophobia and racism. Within a few generations the Vargr had so successfully merged with the District it became known as 'Dogtown', whilst still maintaining it's reputation as a peaceful and prosperous part of the city until the disastrous re-entry of the orbital port. The district never recovered from the widespread damage and casualties caused and entered a slump in it's prosperity which even the re-opening of the starport could not halt.

It was during this period that a young, but charismatic, vargr became interested in the legends and stories of Japanese and Korean history – by now distorted out of recognition by the intervening millennia. After several years of study and thought he developed a philosophy that merged human and vargr ideas, he changed his name to Kenji and started preaching "The Way of the Samurai". This emphasizes a feudal state whose leaders are outstanding warriors that defend the remainder of the population in return for total obedience. It's strong emphasis on a clear but constantly evolving hierarchy amongst these 'Samurai' leaders appealed to many vargr, whilst several human adherents were attracted to it's emphasis on self control and intense concentration on martial arts.

His story could have ended there, but for the chaos caused after Tripartate port opened, whilst many in Richmonds Bluff ignored the warning signs of growth in criminal gangs and general increasing levels of violence Kenji and his Samurai made their preparations for the coming storm. This broke when the gangs, later to become the Jackals of the Zoo, erupted into a bloody invasion of the Bluff twenty-eight years ago. Kenji's Samurai provided the only organized resistance; their fanatical fighting and suicidal rearguard actions allowed the shattered residents to retreat into a tiny enclave in the south east of Richmonds Bluff.

Kenji was elected by acclaim as leader of the survivors, he then revealed his great plan – they would move out of the city into the countryside and become farmers! Well aware how

close they had come to disaster the population reluctantly agreed. Over the next decade the present structure of the Risen Sun was established. The surviving Samurai were given land as fiefs with the remainder of the population split up equally between the approximately thirty settlements thus formed. Kenji proclaimed himself Shogun and settled on the site of the current capital - the Forbidden Palace – where he devoted the rest of his life to balancing the endless jockeying for power amongst the Samurai and ensuring his ideals would be perpetuated after his death.

Sixteen years ago his adopted daughter took power and whilst endorsing all Kenji's decisions, she was also instrumental in making the Risen Sun more isolated than before. It was her decision to ban all over flights, a decision backed by an imported TL:B air defence control system mated to the locally produced TL:9 missiles. She also became even more remote, from the general population never leaving the Forbidden Palace after becoming shogun, and releasing fewer and fewer edicts over the last decade.

TERRITORY AND POWER

The Risen's power is based on the astonishingly fertile land, year round growing season and their intensive TL: 7 farming methods, providing the city with nearly two thirds of its food supplies. The surplus crops are stored in case of crop failure or other disaster, though some are also traded off world along with their distinctive liquors and recordings of traditional terran art forms are also popular on some planets. This small off world trade is used to purchase the distinctive samurai armor and weapons as well as other high tech purchases – such as the air defence system.

From birth all samurai, believed to number no more than 600, are trained to be honourable but formidable warriors, with either their swords or their imported ACR's. On ceremonial duty and in battle with Gaijin they wear their distinctive combat armor which mirrors traditional Samurai armor with the addition of being extremely garish in color (chameleon options are used in actual battle). All Samurai spend the first full year after coming of age and 30 days a year patrolling the boundaries of the land. To back the samurai is three and a half thousand peasants in the well motivated militia, equipped with TL 5 rifles they are required to carry out 1 days tactical training every week and serve 1 orbit in 20 on the border. This border varies from a simple fence far from the city to a 250m kill zone bulldozed through the city, this zone has no visible defenders, except at the checkpoint on the main road, except for a gruesome line of stakes set every 150m through its centre atop each is the head of a criminal or trespasser.

Each farm is in truth a village of between 300 and 450 persons ruled by a Samurai family; all except three purely Vargr; all of whom owe allegiance to the family head, who answers only to the Shogun. As the majority of Samurai do work for the benefit of their subjects and take most of

the risks – an average peasant will outlive a Samurai by between 20 and 30 years – there is little discontent. This is further defused by the traditional right of any non-slave to leave the Risen Sun taking a share of the farms money and goods, such a decision once made is irrevocable and any exile becomes Gaijin in perpetuity.

Despite their isolationist stance the Risen is forced to deal with other factions for some services, these contacts are handled by the despised merchants who arrange any trades necessary. The most vital connection is their reliance on Azziz for their power supply and agricultural machinery; although each village has backup generators sufficient to run basic services and the air defence systems. Other than this the main contacts are with the Waterfolk who trade speculatively for food and then ship this to the city for sale to independent traders and warlord 2 who ships most of the city's food supplies through his territory in return for a percentage.

GOALS AND PLANS

The Risen Sun is very insular and simply wants to keep the peace within its borders (what Gaijin want or do is irrelevant). Stability and isolation are the watchwords of this faction.

Law is at once simple and, to outsiders at least, barbaric; there are few laws and only one punishment, death! Samurai are the sole adjudicator of this law and lie outside it's purview, being empowered to carry out judgement and execution immediately. By definition the only crime a samurai can commit is disloyalty to his Lord, normally cowardice in battle as challenging the lord is considered a normal part of society. Such criminal Samurai are punished by giving near impossible missions against the gaijin to accomplish alone. Anyone surviving such a Kamikaze mission is accepted back into the fold as they have demonstrated their innocence. Gaijin (outsiders) are exempt from these laws only insofar as the punishment is slavery rather than death.

The essence of Shogun Law is contained in the first five decrees; all later decrees simply expand on these five. A Samurai seeing any breach has only 2 choices, they can carry out judgement (and execution) immediately or ignore the incident totally.

- No one may handle non-melee weapons or enter any vehicle capable of flight, without the specific permission of their Samurai lord.
- Not presenting ID on request, this is a simple TL 8 magnetic strip card easily read by the omnipresent card readers in every village, guard post and only alterable by the pocket writer carried by each samurai.
- Disobedience or failure to show the respect due a Samurai.
- Failure to wear identifying colors correct to your position. (See below)
- The Risen Sun border can only be crossed by the

two official check points, one on the main road as it crosses the city wall, the other where it leaves their territory further down the coast.

The right of death is rarely invoked – the vast majority of the population are law abiding and grateful for their protection and a comfortable lifestyle.

Society is divided into five classes, with specified colors to be worn by each one – clothing worn must be predominantly in your class color, though shades are allowed and accessories can be of any color. In descending order of precedence these classes are:

- Samurai – any color at all – though clashing bright ones are popular.
- Peasants - those who produce or process food or other goods – Green.
- Entertainers - including priests, journalists, artists etc. - Orange
- Merchants - all who deal in the trading of goods or services – Purple
- Slaves - captured Gaijin or the children of slaves - White

Slaves are not common in the Risen Sun – the only source being captured intruders – slaves are considered property similar in importance to cattle or machinery. A slave who shows the proper respect towards their betters can be raised to a position within normal society, though this is rare, once there their slave status is wiped out of official records. Such a rise in position is not uncommon in this society where only the Shogun's position has (so far) proved inviolate. The Vargr cultural tendency towards competition and constant testing of a superior's position is seen as a strength, all classes of society have a constant under current of competition constant swirling through it. Losers in these competitions are normally retained in service – after all they have proved their importance in the past and may be of use in the future – some samurai however become so disconcerted by a fall from power that they leave the Risen Sun and join the gaijin in the city. Such ronin are considered highly desirable bodyguards and well known for their fighting ability.

Although the Vargr only form a minority of the population (less than 10% of the total population of 5 000), they are all Samurai by right and their culture is thoroughly mixed. For instance most human males grow their facial hair, the language is a strange mix of Galanglic and Vargr with many common words especially vargr curses; most merchants speak Galanglic fluently.

NPC'S AND PERSONALITIES

Merchant Richard H. Sansom – A common sight around the DMZ he is the chief negotiator for off-world cargos, a crafty negotiator who is always looking for extra leverage against ship masters; he has an encyclopaedic memory for faces and debts owed.

Merchant Samuel Yeekoya – An anonymous member of most trade delegations to other factions he is the unofficial leader of the merchants, due to his supreme political sense and ruthless ability to carve advantage from any situation.

ADVENTURE HOOK

A samurai is assassinated whilst visiting the city; a peasant separated from the entourage in the chaos sees the weapon used tossed away. As he is loyal to his master he wants to recover it and return it to his liege, but dares not pick it up, and must find a PC to help him bring it back to his village.

THE WATERFOLK

INTRODUCTION

The Waterfolk were formed two years ago by the merger of the older Fisherfolk and the Water Processor Technicians Union (WPTU); both factions had been struggling for some time. The Union had been under attack from the Boathan's for several years and lost much of its territory and population, whilst the Fisherfolk had also felt the pinch from the Boathans encroachment onto their warehousing and shipyards on the coast. This merger was more a marriage of convenience than a true merger of like thinking allies and the many underlying tensions are still.

Fisherman society has always been very freewheeling and centers around group marriages of five to fifteen adults along with any associated children; each marriage controlling one or more boats. Their social mores can only be described as loose and there are very few social rules, loyalty is to the family first, other fishermen second; with the rest of Landing City hardly registering on their consciousness other than as an object of contempt for being "soft ground huggers". They believe in working hard and playing harder, with much of their entertainment revolving around betting on fist fights, arm wrestling and similar pursuits. Major disagreements are settled by informal knife fights, to first blood, after which the insult is traditionally forgotten regardless of winner. As they are the majority in the new faction, the merger has made virtually no impression on this anarchic folk.

The WPTU was a feudal technocracy with carefully controlled levels of knowledge gained slowly through decade long apprenticeships – which had started to fragment during the Boathan attacks and has now completely broken down. The main reason for this collapse – and the subsequent merger – was the drastic drop in their membership from nearly four thousand two decades ago to the present 600 (out of total 2800 Waterfolk). These losses were either killed defending their territory from aggressors, kidnapped by the various criminal gangs or intimidated into joining the Boathans.

TERRITORY AND INTERESTS

Despite their name the fishermen are engaged in several activities other than harvesting the lake; though their large fish farms are an important source of food for the city; they have a monopoly on water transport in the area. Since the collapse this has become quite lucrative and many starport traders use them as a safe way of moving goods – they also indulge in some speculative purchases of Risen Sun foods and other goods from the city to supply outlying villages and farms. As the only reliable supplier of these goods they can charge excessive amounts, their customers being reluctant to travel to the city in person.

By tradition (and force of arms) they lay claim to the downed starport which they have mainly used as a

convenient overnight stop until recently. The merger has led to union members, becoming involved in salvaging the high TL composites, ceramics and metals from these ruins. Additionally Wavecrest (as the ruins have been christened) is being used as a primary base for more and more of the fishermen as their land sites become more dangerous. This has led to some refurbishing of the less damaged areas and a growing permanent population.

All members of the faction pay a poll tax each orbit to maintain their small fleet – six armed hovercraft and two heavily armed jetfoils - with most families having at least one member serving in this navy. In addition to this most of their craft sport several machine guns for self defence and the occasional mortar for land targets. For ground troops the faction depends purely on the technicians, whilst the official militia ceased to exist a few years ago, most of the survivors are proficient fighters. Their ground defences depend heavily on remote controlled rapid fire weapons controlled from heavily armored bunkers.

On land these defences protect the jetties of the dock area and the vital water processing plant that is the Boathan's primary target. These are linked by a network of tunnels and trenches which wind through the devastated landscape of broken buildings, shell craters and even, along the river, churned mud. The water processing plant itself has been made into a fortress of bunkers, anti-vehicle trenches, booby trapped buildings, minefields and remote turrets manned by the most steadfast of the WPTU members.

The Water Processing plant was built soon after the founding of First Landing, high concentrations of minerals were found in the water supply, which can cause long term health problems. Originally two were built, but the other was destroyed in the Starfall World War and has never been rebuilt – instead the parts were salvaged to maintain the primary one now under Waterfolk control. As a side product of the purification process, many of the minerals extracted from the water, are of use in various manufacturing processes and these generally purchased by the HDL or the Tong. It is this plant that the Boathan's are intent on occupying though if they do they may be in for a big surprise. The Water Processors bear no resemblance to their original design having been rebuilt constantly over the last 1000+ years (an off world engineer was astonished to discover parts of Vilani jump drives used in the system). The secrets of these Heath Robinson adaptations are not committed to any form of data storage and are held secret by the most senior Master technicians; ironically most have been killed by the Boathans over the years.

As their contribution to the rebuilding of the starport the Union repaired and substantially rebuilt the Fuel processing plant; the facility was heavily damaged in earlier fighting. Unfortunately due to the pressure the Waterfolk are under the refinery is only run intermittently, though there are some

plans to bring it up to full production if the Water plant has to be abandoned.

AIMS AND GOALS

Currently the faction is split between 2 long term aims – the fishermen want to abandon their land base and permanently occupy Wavecrest. Many of the older Union members are adamant that the water purifiers and refinery are too important to abandon – they are also concerned that if the faction abandoned their city site they would lose all representation on the council, (an idea that has already been causing some deep thought amongst other councillors) at present the WPTU councillor remains their representative.

In general the Waterfolk have a deep antipathy towards both Boathans and High Spires, their previous relationships with the HDL was very good, but has become strained in recent years. They still trade a lot of minerals with them and salvaged materials from Wavecrest are becoming a major trade item, but relations are not really close.

NPC'S AND PERSONALITIES

Stanley “The Man” Moyo – The most respected family head and de'facto leader of the fisherman. Famous both for his ability to drink copious amounts of alcohol and still beat any man in a knife fight, as much as for his booming laughter and uncanny ability to sense bad weather. Has no interest in the city, he was one of the first to move his family to Wavecrest, and pass little interest in events ashore.

Grand Master Hennessey – Leader of the Technicians, he lost an arm and eye to a mortar attack four years ago. Determined to never abandon the purification plant, he is vital to the morale of it's remaining defenders. Pugnacious and determined he prowls the plant constantly checking on it's status and the readiness of its defenders.

Technician Julia Kington – One of the last apprentices be promoted before the training system broke down. Highly emotional but determined to do her best at all times, she is currently responsible for the defences linking the plant to the jetties – a near impossible task with the few personnel she has available.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Rumors that the Waterfolk have buried a tactical nuclear device (possibly salvaged from Wavecrest) under the water plant have started circulating. The PCs are hired to investigate this rumor and if it is confirmed, attempt to discover the location of the trigger mechanism.

LANDING CITY GOVERNMENT

The nine factions detailed above are all members of the City Council which meets every 28 days in the DMZ to discuss matters of interest to the entire city. Membership of the council requires a majority vote of the current membership as does dismissal from the council – in reality any group powerful enough to threaten the other factions either is destroyed or becomes a member. The head of the council is the Bwap Chief Administrator of the starport authority, however his power is severely limited by the requirement that he only votes on tied votes or items that directly affect the starport and its operation – in the case of ties he will vote for which ever motion calls for the least change from the existing situation.

Due to the antagonism and deadly rivalries between the various factions it is rare for the council to agree on any action however important the issue. In fact the last substantive issue they agreed on was the dismissal of both the Fisherman and the Water Purifiers union from the Council and the election of the new Waterfolk faction to a place. Even this issue required several months of intense negotiation as Boatha tried to convince the others that as the majority of the new faction lived away from the city (on Wavecrest) they should be excluded from membership. More recently the council has failed to agree on the three representatives to be sent to the world council on the city's behalf as Azziz claims a seat automatically because of his (hotly disputed) claim to control 10 000 people directly and others renewing the age old argument as to whether High spires and Boatha should be eligible to send representatives as they are already represented by their home cities. So far no faction has managed to get close to getting the five votes necessary so the seats remain vacant.

Relations with the remainder of Starfall, other planets and polities are theoretically the responsibility of the council but they have no official contacts currently though many individual factions do have their own connections. Trade is totally unregulated (other than the total ban on NBC weapons) so is hardly affected by the lack of decision here; on the other hand the complete deadlock on the council is one of the major reasons the city is such a lawless and dangerous place – even if it is a place where huge sums of money change hands on a regular basis

THE DMZ

Whilst technically still part of the starport, this area between the old startown and the starport defense fence is ruled by no individual faction, none being sufficiently powerful to hold such a vital area, controlling access to the starport as it does. The name comes from the Council regulation that no firearms are to be used here; a rule enforced by Harper's Hoplites who mount regular patrols. Most of the city's off-world businesses operate from this area and it is home to a mixed bag of local businesses that owe no (overt) allegiance

to any particular faction, it has also developed into a place where people can meet in a neutral area and it is not uncommon to see members of different factions in the same bar or restaurant without fighting breaking out. Most visiting starship crews make a point of not travelling further into the city than here, using it as an effective Startown.

THE JOLLY ROGER

The Jolly Roger is one of the first sights to greet people leaving First Landing Starport, and is often remembered longer than any other. The Jolly Roger is a bar built out of a derelict, bright purple, red, and blue striped, 400-ton Vargr Corsair. The ship landed at the Starport a few years ago, after suffering catastrophic jump drive and computer failures from battle damage. Parts were unavailable to repair the ship, so crew stripped the ship of most of the useful equipment and sold it for passage back to their base.

One person, Gvarrh ("just Gvarrh"), chose to remain behind in First Landing. He continued to live out of his old stateroom whilst looking for work, and was soon joined by a few vargr wanderers who weren't accepted anywhere else. One drunken evening they decided to do something with the ship, and the Jolly Roger was born. Using money from the sale of the salvageable jump drive and computer components they stripped the ship and refurbished it as a bar and club. The forward portion of the upper deck contains the offices and 'crew' quarters, and a hidden safe. The lower deck and the remainder of the upper deck have been converted into a number of small bars, dance floors, and private meeting rooms. The old engineering section is now empty, and is a huge dance floor, decorated like on old desert island pirate retreat.

The Jolly Roger is run by Gvarrh, the old first officer, and his 'crew'. Gvarrh is a flamboyant character who dresses in a garish version of old Terran pirate attire. His crew are a group of vargrs and humans who drifted here and found work. Security is loose but harsh, and any violence beyond a fistfight is put down quickly, and all the staff are armed with handguns or shotguns. It is a lively and vibrant place, with a mix of patrons.

Adventure Hook

One of the employees of the Jolly Roger, James Hallam, is a disgraced Imperial Marine corporal wanted for war crimes. Recently an IISS surveyor, and ex-squad mate, arrived on planet, met Hallam, and recognized him. The scout has threatened to give his location to the Marine Corps. Hallam has a good income selling weapons out of the Jolly Roger's back room and doesn't want to leave. The party are hired to kill the scout before he leaves the planet

ODDS & SODS

This scrap yard which sits inside a walled enclosure on the edge of the hive's lowest level, is where the desperate go to find unusual parts or items. It has existed for as long

as anyone can remember and contains an amazing mix of ancient and modern junk – including many starship parts salvaged from abandoned ships or the old orbital starport. It's small makeshift office is inhabited by the ancient proprietor Ted "Handsome" Tugellai who is surly and suspicious, rarely speaking in anything other than a growl. "Handsome" inherited the yard from his father many years ago and probably knows the Rack better than anyone else having lived here his whole life. Anyone bothering to spend the time to make friends with him, will find him a font of information on the history and times of Starfall and the starport especially.

Customers are expected to find items for themselves, an operation that means braving the rat infested huge piles of junk and rubbish piled all over the yard. Once found you must detach it from the pile, drag it to "Handsome" who will spit out a price accompanied by the advice to "take it or leave it, that's the price". Despite this Ted hugely enjoys haggling and will lower his price substantially if he enjoys the verbal duelling. Anyone stealing or attempting to intimidate Ted will be visited by his twin sons – 2 strapping 6' 10" brutes renowned for their small wits and huge muscles.

Adventure Hook

Sat in the back of the Odds & Sods yard, buried under a pile of old bicycles and computers, is a small boxed container. In this box is a 10-kiloton nuclear warhead from a space combat missile. The Travellers stumble across this. Ted will not sell this to the Travellers unless coerced, but will sell the warhead to a pirate contact and point any inquiries towards the player characters. After all, a 10-kt warhead is on most faction's want-list. It could even be a dud, which would infuriate the buyers even more...

RENT-A-SERF

Operating out of the old passenger terminal in the starport DMZ, this unusual group of people provide unskilled labour for a cheap price. Their slogan is "Rent-a-Serf - we supply the wheelbarrow." The serfs in question are unskilled residents of the city and starport who pride themselves on their hard work and strong work ethic. They charge cr20 per day per serf.

Adventure Hook

Rent-a-Serf workers are being targeted for beatings around the city. So far nobody has been killed, but as the severity of the attacks increase it is only a matter of time. Rent-a-Serf's manager, Steven Killinger, hires the party to find out who is attacking his men and stop the attacks.

THE ARENA

The Arena is the closest thing Landing City has to a sports arena, converted from a 600 ton landing bay it can easily seat 5-8 thousand sentients, and includes private booths and a control tower. This arena does not display normal sports, it is a gladiatorial arena similar to the Coliseum of ancient Rome on Terra. Arguments and feuds can be brought here,

by tradition the winner of any fight is proven innocent of the insult or charge and retaliation for the death of their opponent is frowned upon by even the most vicious residents of the city. As a general rule anyone caught committing a serious crime in the DMZ or starport (and surviving the experience) will be sentenced to fight here in a grand melee of 10-15 sophonts, the survivor is acquitted of all charges. In addition to these matches many competitions are held here for the most desperate with prizes large enough to tempt many. All fights here are to the death.

Unlike the rest of the city where the gun rules supreme, firearms are not allowed in the arena, contestants being restricted to swords, knives and shields. However, particularly unusual makeshift weapons are occasionally allowed. Usually such "matches" are advertised throughout the city by radio and TV with live coverage from cell-phone equipped reporters being broadcast live.

Orchestrating and maintaining the TL-2 steel & wooden weapons used by the combatants is a small time business in and of itself, the amphitheater sells seating, at a credit a seat (rough bench), and booth space for various fees on an annual basis. In such a high tech society such an anachronism as duels to the death with primitive weapons seems unusual, but the few times the arena has been forced to close have led to increased fighting all over the city and howls of protest from many. Private duels can be held here, the only stipulation being they are with steel weapons, no firearms allowed, not even in the audience.

ARENA PERSONALITIES

Asheraati Vashkhuunen - estranged 2nd wife of Vasily Vashkhuunen (see Tong of Yukowa), fight promoter and general manager of the arena. A handsome local woman - one of Adjiiin ibn Azziz's granddaughters - she keeps the books (both financial and on-site betting).

Gaerghukhoz "the Black" – A Ronin Vargr Samurai now swordsmith, responsible for the manufacture and maintenance of the Arena's swords, maces, axes, flails, daggers, tridents, and so on. Though blind he still makes the best weapons for the games, his nickname derives from his coat of fur, singed by his smithcraft over the forge.

Hoh Dupder - A Sydite rogue and security man. The 20 Droashav mercenaries under his control provide enough security to ensure the "competitors" do not escape the Arena. Hoh is scrupulously neutral and for a paid thug an honest one; he stays paid. Torx's rantings and ravings aside, Hoh ensures the prisoners remain alive until game time and only once since Hoh took over security has Torx killed a "competitor" in training - having the life squeezed out of you by a man with four arms made Torx see reason. The Droashav speak no galanglic, and only Hoh can communicate with them, bribing them is out of the question

and if people persist in the attempt Hoh will make sure they appear in the next show.

Adventure Hook:

The player characters are visiting Landing City for the first time and get invited, escorted to, or hustled into buying tickets for the arena's next monthly match. This is a good opportunity for the referee to slip pickpockets, clandestine meetings, meetings with patrons etc. It is also an excellent opportunity to see some of the prominent warlords watching their folks duke it out man to man in the local style of justice.

THE RACK

Originally intended to be a high quality starport hotel, the Rack is now First Landing's only non-aligned hostel. Hardly a five-star establishment, its only virtues are it is cheap and anonymous.

The accommodation varies from forty 3m square rooms furnished only with a rickety single bed, to the three 20x3m barrack-style rooms that give the hotel its name. In the rack four-high bunks are closely packed, a ragged curtain the only form of privacy, with a lockbox (invariably broken) bolted to the head of most bunks. There are also two dining rooms in the Rack, one run by the hotel and of adequate (at best) food, and the other a soup kitchen run by the High Spires enclave. Once every week High Spires also hold a free clinic here.

The freshers are well equipped but their water supply is no more than a trickle and none of the occupants can remember the last time it was more than lukewarm. Sophonts requiring soap or any other luxury are advised to bring their own.

The original owners of the rack are long forgotten and a former Risen Sun Samurai has run it for the past few years. The Samurai, Khaenjirhiroshi, keeps order amongst the guests with a firm but fair hand. If asked he will happily discourse for hours on why the Risen Sun has failed to live up to its promises to improve the well being of it's people, though he does grudgingly admit that most of its inhabitants are well off and safe by First Landing standards.

Adventure Hook

A combat drug-crazed, mercenary has barricaded himself in one of the bunk rooms and is holding eleven guests hostage. The mercenary is having flashbacks to a nasty border war, and believes the other guests to be captured enemy troops who he is interrogating. He has already 'executed' three others, and is very dangerous. The mercenary has demanded his unit interrogator to be sent in before he executes the prisoners and moves on to his next objective. Khaenjirhiroshi offers a reward to one of the party if they will pose as the intelligence officer and deal with the threat.

'ENRY'S TEMPORARY LABOUR MART

Desperately needing a coat of paint and looking in danger of imminent collapse, this small building is situated just inside the First Landing Business park. Inside it is shabby with a well worn counter presided over by "Enry" a friendly and polite Sydite, who will welcome all visitors; past him a large waiting area filled by variety of muscle bound sydites and humans all wearing their trademark yellow and blue vests. The Mart supplies labourers for a variety of jobs, for instance most cargo handling at the port is contracted through 'Enry and his stevedores are a common sight around the starport. The staff are also available for more unusual assignments such as short term guards or general muscle; recommended for visits to some parts of the city.

The Mart also provides other services, which are charged at a 15% commission rate, such as collecting debts from unwilling creditors or the repossessing of stolen goods. They will also take on more unusual jobs, such as intimidating competitors, discouraging opponents or rivals through accidents or injuries, though they refuse to deliberately kill or (permanently) cripple anyone. Clients looking for such a service will be asked to look elsewhere – though there are persistent rumors of 'Enry's people being prepared to carry out freelance killings.

UNUSUAL THINGS

A strange place to find in such a lawless city, this discreet shop caters to those whose tastes run to the unusual or rare. Situated in a dim corner of the terminal building its nondescript door won't open to anyone unknown to the staff or accompanied by such a person. The store specializes in small objects from all over known space, several such items are tastefully (and securely) displayed – several bottles of champagne from Terra, a few pieces of K'Kree artwork, a collection of Rule of Man military medals and so on. Whilst most of its customers are local to the Cluster is not unknown for customers to travel from as far away as Solomani or Imperial space to browse its wares.

The owner is a shadowy human who protects his privacy with extreme security measures, rarely leaving the apartment above the shop. Rumors of course abound about his background with the most common being that he is a retired pirate who raided a Imperial nobles residence. This is reinforced by the irregular visits by the crew members of suspicious ships delivering small packages of goods into the store.

Adventure Hook

A client with considerable influence approaches the store owner with a request to obtain a rare item. Taking it as a challenge (and thinking it's a good idea to please the client), the owner asks the PCs to obtain the item for him. The item is in an inaccessible place (possibly even offworld) and may be very well guarded. As a reward, the owner offers to give the characters something they need from his collection.

ILC BROKERAGE

Operating out of the former passenger and cargo terminal in the DMZ, ILC is the premier broker in Landing City, and its fees match. Whilst fulfilling the traditional broker's role of matching ships to cargoes and vice-versa, ILC employees work hard to live up to the company motto "We exist to serve." Ship's needing crew members, repairs, obscure parts, tours of the city, escorts, introductions or just reservations for dinner can find them all here; for a steep fee. The company will set up safe and secure meetings with locals capable of providing the goods or services required; prices of parts, rates of pay etc are the responsibility of the client though ILC will provide a negotiator if required.

Their office proves there is substantial amount of money to be made in First Landing with the décor being a stylish fusion of furniture and decorations imported from Solomani, Imperial, Julian, Hiver and even K'Kree space.

ILC is run, and apparently owned, by Peter Swinson, a nondescript businessman of local birth and his four employees. The receptionist and office manager Kiiiiiki Verashier is a good humored and unflappable Vilani in her 50's. Jager Tinkinski is responsible for the company's huge database of contacts, clients and trade information – a male human of Nordic appearance he is also in charge of electronic information gathering. The offices physical security is handled by Krieger, a Sydite female of average appearance and stature; she also runs the body guarding, guide and any other security related jobs. All external negotiations are carried out by Juliet Ramos a short (5'1") but fiery human whose deal making has become semi-legendary in First Landing.

ILC is renowned for its discretion and neutrality – it boasts contacts all over the city and in every faction, whilst being careful to show no allegiance or preferential treatment to any of them. The rumors that it is commonly used by faction leaders when negotiating with their deadliest enemies come as no surprise to anyone. As such it boasts a unique position of being trusted by all but the most paranoid, and justifies it's very high fees. These are twice the norm for cargo brokerage, a commission of 5% on all deals/purchases made as well as fees for other services.

In reality the company is wholly owned by Yatiki Kasamoto, the Risen Sun's highest ranked merchant and Council member. He set it up as a money making enterprise to guarantee his financial security and secure a way off planet should his position within the Risen Sun hierarchy collapse. He is not above using his special access to information to his advantage in Council meetings, but he scrupulously avoids anything that might cast suspicion on ILC's independence. Peter Swinson is the only other sophont aware of the true ownership of the company, but he will never divulge the truth.

Adventure Hook

ILC has a client that needs discreet transportation off-world. Due to another (unspecified) job; their normal security personnel are not available so Krieger approaches the PCs. They will be paid Cr25,000 to collect the client from his present location, deep within the Zoo (qv), and then to a waiting starship at Tripartite Orbital port. The only condition is that the PC's are not to attempt to identify or communicate unnecessarily with the client. Method of transportation and all other details are their responsibility.

The client is a Sydite, "call me Tom", of impressive size and distinctive features and thus difficult to disguise or conceal. Their will be no problems, other than those normal in this violent area, meeting him in the Zoo and moving him afterwards. However once it becomes apparent that they are taking him to tripartite starport he will panic and attempt to escape by subduing the PCs. Once at Tripartite Orbital they will be met by armed security personnel who will seize Tom and escort him away. The PC's will be ignored and free of any interference so long as they do not try and gain access to the Sydite. ILC will pay the fee in full and ask the PCs to not mention this to anyone.

The entire operation was purely a distraction so another mission could proceed undisturbed – Tripartite security escorted 'Tom' to a waiting starship and he will not be seen again.

ALL ARMS

All Arms is a small shop in the independent business park of the starport DMZ. Run by a Luriani merchant, Viz Peree, the shop is regarded as the best place to buy small quantities of man-portable weapons on planet. Peree sells most types of personal or military smallarms and has a wide selection of melee weapons. She also offers second-hand weapons at knock-down prices, though these are only bought by the truly desperate as there is no guarantee given on these. Viz has a small residence above her shop that she shares with her long time boyfriend Vince (also her only employee), she can be seen swimming in the lake for a few hours every morning.

Adventure Hook

Vince has been kidnapped and a ransom note delivered. An unknown party is demanding her entire stock of weapons in return for his life, Peree hires the party to guard her stock as it is transported to the exchange point. Many people would kill for this stock of weaponry, and it won't be an easy task. When they finally arrive at the exchange point they can either exchange the weapons with the kidnappers, or attempt to rescue Vince by force.

THE BEACHED WHALE

First Landing's only newspaper is more full of rumor, innuendo, editorial rants than actual hard news, but despite this each issue is the high point of many a sophont's week.

It reinforces many people's view of the city and at least gives them a laugh or the reassurance that many are worse off than themselves. The name comes from a saying popular nearly 30 years ago: "Landing City Council is like a beached whale, it flops around a lot but it's going nowhere".

The paper's office, in the DMZ business park (area 21), is manned by the owner/editor (and only other member of staff) Damon Towser who also compiles and prints the paper on the fully automated print press behind the office. A multitude of distributors flock around the building every Monday, before racing away to their favoured pitches with bundles of the latest newspaper. As they keep all the money and even the most hard bitten of the city's denizens look forward to each issue, it is considered a plum job and places are hard to come by. The paper takes paid adverts to cover its costs, mostly propaganda from various factions and classified ads.

Damon is a shifty looking fellow well known around the DMZ for his dislike of personal violence and ability to blend into the background of any gathering. Refusing to talk about the stories the paper has run, he is generally seen as a boring yes-man with no friends. It is not known where he resides though he can be found at the paper's office from dawn to dusk most days. He spends each day sorting through the mass of information that pours into the office, looking for stories or leads to bigger stories. Much of this information arrives anonymously: pushed under the door overnight, from untraceable email accounts or muttered down telephone lines. Sometimes Damon meets contacts in the DMZ for whispered conversations.

Rachel Esterhuis is Damon's sole employee, a daring reporter who never visits the office in person as her work is considered too dangerous to take the chance of being identified. She was probably an undercover operative of some sort as she has managed to infiltrate most places in the city over the years. Many of the teenagers in Landing City dream of becoming such a daring hero of the masses.

Unfortunately for their youthful dreams Rachel is nothing but a figment of Damon's fertile imagination as is most of what he prints. Many years ago Damon was a streetwise reporter trying to make a name for himself in Landing City. Unfortunately the start of his reporting career coincided with the rapid slump in Landing City's fortunes – his career lasted all of 12 months before he was laid off as the papers closed. A new career as a petty swindler and con man followed until he had the idea for the Beached Whale; the city was so chaotic and depressing that he guessed (rightly) that people would believe anything. An imaginative swindle gained him the money to buy the disused printing presses and a vivid imagination has given him every story since then for the last 30 years. Sometimes even he can't believe that he is still getting away with it.

However, Damon continues to get away with it. This is partly because he is an expert on the city and its ways; a lot of his stories are basically true but he changes the names to protect himself. If it's a quiet week, he simply makes up a story, adds a few random names and locations, and the paper is ready. Rachel was invented to justify some of his more outrageous stories and to deflect the faction leaders' rage away from him, though of late he has considered killing her off as he finds himself becoming jealous of her popularity.

Adventure Hook

Damon is in a real jam; his latest paper includes a wholly fictitious article detailing the disgusting habits and double crossing ways of the invented gang member Rogi Ishkiduur. Unfortunately there is a gangster who goes by that name in Warlord 1's army; 10 minutes ago he burst into the office demanding the name of whoever wrote the story. Hoping to buy his life the panicking Damon gives him the next name in his diary, along with the fact that they will be back in an hour or so. Rogi knocked him out cold and isn't there when Damon is brought round by the PC's as they arrive for their appointment 45 minutes later...

EXPORTS LE UNIVERSE

Operating out of the Starport terminal (**BLDG 10 on map**) is the Brokerage firm "Exports Le Universe". This company arranges cargoes & passengers going off world as a general rule, and very seldom, brings in cargoes. Run openly, it appears on its face a legitimate business, and that's as its factor in chief, Henri Chablis prefers it. In reality, behind the façade of business as usual, it is the SolSec outpost here on Starfall. Chablis' main contact in the cluster is the SolSec ship the Solomani freighter SS Hunter S Thompson when it is in port. The NPC Lilith Preston (The psionic leader aboard the Thompson) is also an infrequent visitor here.

Chablis also monitors the politics of the planet, and is not adverse to spreading disinformation especially if it aides the Solomani Confederation, and hinders any Imperial moves in the cluster. Though not a specist himself, The office is rather tidy and small, He employs some very sophisticated listening devices, and finds the wiretaps placed by Azziz's daughter's agents laughable. He uses them as a conduit to spread even more disinformation! Chablis is a dapper, and tanned silver-haired man of late middle age, who dresses in colonial white suits, and fedora. He is never without his silenced snub pistol, or a discrete Ballistic weave vest (his suit is custom fit). He is a canny agent, who detests his ally, Boer-Jameson, as a venal thug. Locally he subcontracts cut out personnel for "jobs", most of them criminals, for "wet work", errands, and diversions.

Make no mistake, the truly clumsy and overly curious have a bad habit of disappearing from public view who inquire too closely about his doings. Several of the warlords owe him "favors", and he will never hesitate to call upon these "trump" cards, if he feels it necessary. Chablis is amiable,

and charming in a slightly patronizing manner, and considers himself a spy of the “old school”.

Adventure Seed

Henri Chablis needs the PC's to spirit a certain sophont out of town. Unlike the other seed of this type, the person being moved off world is his illegitimate daughter. Chablis is a man of his word, and he promised her mother (A now killed informant in local factional fighting) he would see she got a decent life, and better education. He gives them two addresses. One is in one of the most dangerous parts of town (the Zoo), the other is We Go Air. Chablis' plan is for the party to get the youngster (a cute, precocious 9 year old named “Lucky” Yuu), and meet them at We Go Air. He intends to have her flown out to Tripartite city (the capital). They are to make sure she packs up all of her clothes, and her mother's things. He offers them Cr25,000 each to get her out, or one personal favor each, if it is within his power as a broker in First Landing City.

If the PC's bungle this, and Lucky gets killed, they will have earned a bad enemy. If they succeed, Chablis will be eternally grateful, even to the point of warning them in the future, should they come a thwart SolSec's plans. After that One favor each, he will consider the matter “square/ even” on the books.

THE RAIDERMARCH CONSORTIUM

Widely regarded as the worst attempt at a public cover in the city, the Raidermarch Consortium is the public face of the Raidermarch here in First Landing. Operating out of an office in the DMZ, the company is a brokerage for deals involving Raidermarch cargoes, and a re-supply agency for visiting Raidermarch ships. The company chief executive, Walsh De'Vries, maintains they are a legitimate enterprise, though rumor makes De'Vries the mastermind of pirate activity in the surrounding subsectors. Their office employs a small staff, including three heavily armed goons.

The truth of the matter is that De'Vries and his staff are exactly what he claims – merely businessmen and women trying to make a living. Any operations involving the Raidermarch around First Landing are run by Madeline Liikishu in the GTC office, who uses rumors to turn attention to the Consortium and disguise her actions. This is not to say that the members of the Consortium don't consort with pirates – merely that they do not do it in the name of the Raidermarch, only their company.

Adventure Hook

The Travellers are approached as they exit their starship upon arrival, with a job. They are asked, for an up-front payment of Cr500, to transport a package to the Raidermarch Consortium office the next morning. The patron is actually a middle man, hired by a middle man working for Madeline Liikishu, and the package is an empty box. Madeline is subtly planting more doubt about the Consortium to shield

her activities. If asked, the patron will claim to be a visitor, who does not know where the office is (forcing the Travellers to ask around and draw more attention) and is leaving on a ship in thirty minutes.

THE HIVE

The Hive is a small community built in the old SDB landing area. Its sheltered area made a natural settlement location during the fighting that laid most of the city to waste, and the inhabitants slowly built houses, tents, shops and businesses under the half-close cover of the 20 metre high walled pad, using whatever materials were available. When ground space ran out they began to build up and across, until the Hive became a sprawling mess of walls, curtains and people spread over an innumerable number of different scaffolding and roofed layers.

The re-opening of the Starport changed the direction of the Hive forever. The sudden influx of money and people opened up markets of opportunity for the poor residents of the Hive (the ‘Rats’), whose criminals became cartels, and whose craftsmen were in demand. The cartels began to sell stolen and black-market goods of all types from their bases in the mess of residences. Drugs, prostitution, occasional specialist slaves, murderers for hire – all can be found in the Hive if you know where to ask.

As Landing City became more and more violent and dangerous the Hive changed in response. Outsiders, not knowing the culture and ways of the Hive, often found themselves beaten or killed deep in the mess of residences. The Hive gained a reputation as a place to buy anything or anyone – if you survived the visit. Hive children began to hire themselves out as guides, to allow outsiders to find places and people they would never find without tearing the place apart, or getting themselves killed. It is an uncommon day that passes without the severe beating or murder of an outsider in the Hive.

Adventure Hook

A valuable item has been stolen from the party, and the thief has fled to the Hive. The party have to find the thief whilst surviving the Hive's unique dangers. The thief works for Boris Grushov, and Boris is very protective of his own. Boris may return the item, for a price – he wants a meddling Hoplite officer removed.

THUGS ANONYMOUS

This is the half-nickname, half-serious trade name for a group of vicious brutes of below average intelligence who earn a living through intimidation, murder and any other variety of violent crime to order. Its membership is unstable at best but members can be found scattered throughout the Hive's drinking establishments by anyone foolish enough to go looking for them. The group acts more as a pool of possible reinforcements of a semi-trusted nature for when an individual wants backup or assistance with a job. They

have been used as a deniable resource by all three warlords and the Boathans at times, though they normally prefer to work for individuals. Due to the group's tendency to smash people and things up (or worse) when bored they fight a constant battle with the Vigilantes inside the Hive.

Adventure Hook

During a visit to the Hive the Travellers are confronted by a member of Thugs Anonymous. Although he will back down as he is outnumbered, he takes an active dislike to the Travellers and every time they enter the Hive they are harassed by groups of the Thugs.

THE SMOKEHOUSE

Throughout the Hive there are many small food stands, one of which is the Smokehouse. Famed for its steak sandwiches and its no-vegetable menu, it is successful and of reasonably high quality. The owner, a vargr who will not tell anyone his name (he is called 'the steak guy' by locals), also has many contacts amongst the thieves and fences on the Hive and can arrange an introduction if the price is right.

Adventure Hook

Someone is poisoning the meat the Steak Guy gets from his supplier and Boris Grushov ate a poisoned sandwich. He survived, but the Steak Guy has 24 hours to clear his name before Grushov's men come calling – he needs help.

THE CONTAINER BAR

Located exactly in the middle of the Hive's bottom level is a small cargo container fitted out as a bar. The furniture is a rag-tag mix of tables, stools, chairs and boxes, and the bar itself is a row of wooden lecterns. The drinks are served from the many fridges behind the bar. There is no back room, and no storage area.

The bar has long been a regular drinking place for the Vigilantes, and is one of the safer bars in the Hive. The bar is run by a woman named Jillian, an ex-Vigilante who lost an eye in a fight. The Container Bar is the place to go to find honest bodyguards in the Hive.

Adventure Hook

Jillian's four year old daughter has been kidnapped. The Vigilantes have turned the Hive over but can't find her. The only link is a dropped, encrypted hand computer. Anyone who can find her daughter will be a friend of the Vigilantes for the rest of their life.

THE GREY MARKET

Built around a broken-down G-carrier near the back of the Hive is a market stall run by Lewis Grey, an ex-soldier, and his family. They sell anything they think will get a profit (legal or stolen), and deal with many of the Hive's fences. Grey's wife Jude also writes surprisingly good poetry, and sells the books from the market. The Greys will not under any circumstances ask where an item came from, nor reveal

who sold it to them, a fact that makes them popular with the Hive underworld.

Adventure Hook

Recently a few customers have been prying more and more into the sources of the Greys' goods. It is always the same few customers, and they are beginning to make threats. Lewis Grey will pay to have the customers followed and investigated.

THE VIGILANTES

Although the Hive is viewed as a lawless and dangerous place, its inhabitants desire protection and safety. The Vigilantes are a gang who offer protection for payment throughout the Hive. This differs from the standard protection racket in the fact that the gang really do protect people and businesses who pay them from trouble, and do not initiate violence against those who do not pay. They can be identified by the red bandana they wear when on patrol. Generally the Vigilantes are respected throughout the Hive, though they have clashed with the Knives in the past. On occasion members of the Vigilantes take jobs as bodyguards.

Adventure Hook

During a visit to the Hive the player characters are accosted by the Vigilantes and accused of badly beating one of their number. Quick-thinking Travellers can convince the Vigilantes to allow them a day to track down the real culprits. Investigations point towards an enforcer working for Boris Grushov. Why is the enforcer trying to frame them?

THE PETERSON SOPHONT RESOURCES COMPANY

Located near the entrance to the Hive's middle 'floor' is a pair of old modular office cabins used by Roy Peterson and his staff. The front room of the cabin is a well-decorated office with two desks, a computer terminal (non-networked), and a scattering of plants. The door to the backroom is locked with a heavy mechanical lock. The backroom contains a locked cage and some seats. A small fresher has locked access to both rooms.

From this office Roy Peterson and his gang operate a slavery ring. Customers from across the cluster order slaves of specific races, genders and skillsets from Peterson, who uses his contacts with pirates and local factions to acquire the slaves. Individuals and small groups are kept in the cage until collected, but large groups or long-term storage cases, are kept under armed guard in a second cabin located behind the first.

Peterson and his gang have access, through their contacts, to advanced weaponry with which to defend themselves, and are a powerful force in the Hive. They will never take slaves from the Hive, realizing the trouble that would bring.

Adventure Hook

The Travellers are meeting a contact for information, but the contact doesn't show. Asking questions and spreading around credits leads them to the Peterson Company. They have already sold on their contact to slavers who are preparing to leave the starport.

THE KNIVES

The Knives are a violent group of thugs. They make their living by murder-for-hire and theft. Any outsiders in their territory will likely be attacked unless the leader, Claymore, has use for them. Their trademark weapon is the knife, though they use firearms when needed.

Adventure Hook

The Travellers are referred to an out-of-town weapons collector who wants the K'kree combat knife used by the leader of the Knives for his personal collection.

'PEEKING'

Peeking is a young boy of 11 who operates as a guide in the Hive. He is an orphan, with no siblings, and got his name from the fact he can be seen watching everyone who passes. He is a very charismatic young boy, and knows the Hive as well as anyone in it. He can find almost anything, given enough payment. He sometimes leads his more obnoxious clients to the Knives' territory, and collects a part of the loot from their bodies.

Adventure Hook

Whilst Peeking is leading the Travellers somewhere in the Hive he is chased by an armed Vargr thug. Peeking pleads for help from the Travellers in return for some information of value, or further services or referrals.

BORIS GRUSHOV

Grushov is a crime lord operating out of the Hive. He has taken control of a large chunk of the drugs trade in the Hive, and is branching into fencing of stolen goods. He is middle-aged, balding and a little fat, with a tendency to spit whilst talking. He is also a vicious, ruthless man who controls his organization with an iron hand.

Adventure Hook

Grushov has a contact in the Risen Sun who supplies him with fine saki from the shogun's personal bins by hiding it in trade goods. The contact was recently discovered and is being held in Sashmi Croft awaiting questioning before execution. Grushov wants the Travellers to infiltrate the village and kill the contact before he can reveal Grushov's involvement. If the Travellers refuse he will threaten to disclose a certain nasty little secret he has learned...

LADY REEVES

Lady Reeves claims to be an Imperial noble who left because of an argument with the Emperor. She operates as a fortune teller, and the proprietor of a small house of ill repute

in the Hive. Her establishment caters to most non-violent tastes. Her employees sell information along with their other services, and hear a surprising amount. Her fortune telling is just for show.

Adventure Hook

One of her staff members has been brutally beaten in the course of her work. Lady Reeves offers a 30% recovery fee for them to gain financial or property reparations from the guilty party. The guilty party is a senior officer in the Boathan military, and the Travellers will need to do this on his home ground.

THE KANGAROO RATS

The "Kangaroo Rats" are a small time group of pickpockets, ranging in ages from 7 years, to 14 years old. They are quick and sly, and often use tag team methods to winnow away the wallet from a "mark". They know whom to mess with in the Hive, and whom to avoid (like the Knives, Boris Grushov, and the Vigilantes). They lair in the hold cooling/ heating ducts of the SDB base, well away from sight, and the heat.

Adventure Hook

Whilst en-route to collect payment for the retrieval of an object, the Travellers are accosted by the Kangaroo Rats. When they arrive at the meeting they find the item is missing. The Rats have sold it on to the Grey Market (see above). The players need to track down the Rats and get this information from them before the Greys sell the object on.

THE BASTINADO BBQ & GRILLE

The Bastinado BBQ & Grille is a combination open-air restaurant and butcher shop. It is a place where denizens of the Hive can take anything here, and have it skinned, and cooked, from a small rodent to a K'kree sized animal, for a nominal fee. It is rumored several murdered folk have vanished in the kitchen, and wound up as stew. The cheery deaf-mute Syдите Garaanj and his three Droashav assistants are tight lipped, and answer no questions. They employ six human females as "waitresses". The place reeks of blood, cooked meat, and the sweat from four aliens. Like the Smokehouse, vegetarian meals are not served here, though many of the Hive's poor come to eat here.

Adventure Hook

The Travellers are hired by a grieving husband who is convinced his wife was killed and cooked at the Bastinado. He wants the party to prove it so he can agitate the locals into killing Garaani. The truth is that his wife left him for a member of the Harper's Hoplites who she has been having an affair with, and they are due to return to Harper in a week.

ESHAARA'S EMPORIUM

This motley collection of three-rainbow hued old 50 ton cargo containers and a dust shrouded olive-drab army medium sized tent, are what make up the infrastructure of this establishment. Eshaara is long dead, but her descendants manage it now. Vhostan & Mrii D'hkara run it now, with their

sons Chem, Haim, and Danii. They are sellers of everything imaginable, from souvenirs made by city craftsmen to knock-off Chronex watches from Eda, trinkets, jewelry, spices and perfumes. Chem has taken up selling weapons and munitions to offworlders out of the tent (the basement is an old 10-ton cargo pod buried beneath it accessed by a trap door), but then only when his Mother isn't around. Haim & Danii will book cargoes with starship captains.

Adventure Hook

Buried underneath the basement is an old, broken TL-11 fusion reactor. A representative of the Azziz Technical Combine offers a sizeable amount of money for the retrieval of all the usable spare parts from the reactor without the family finding out.

ALTERNATIVE FIXES

A small booth presided over by Madam Trisha, oddball and wise woman extraordinaire, this is a wonderland of alternative medicines, wise advice, unusual plants and drugs of doubtful legality. Her customers vary from the gullible to the neurotic via a handful of enthusiastic botanists. She is considered a witch due to her abilities as a first aider and medic. Despite this she is avoided by even the most brutal people in the Hive, though this could be due to her friendship with some of its toughest denizens. Unknown to most she is a psionic of some power who hides her ability due to persecution in the past.

Adventure Hook

The Travellers are contacted by an anonymous patron and hired to kidnap Madam Trisha. They are warned she is a telepath and given psi-shield helmets for the job. They are to drop her off to a starship at the port, at which point they will be paid Cr10,000 each. The anonymous patron is actually Terry Carson from the Peterson Sophont Resources Company. They have been offered an obnoxious amount of money for psionic slaves and are willing to break their 'no Hive slaves' ethic on this occasion. Madam Trisha has a large number of friends in the Hive from her medical aid, so this is a very dangerous mission.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS OF INTEREST

HARPER'S HOPLITES ("NO DEBT UNPAID, NO DEED FORGOTTEN")

A mercenary Light Infantry unit of regimental strength (4 1,500+ personnel brigades, and one training battalion of 500 personnel). 6,500 personnel total. Homeport of call is Harper (0135 E647ABC-9 Hi In X215) in Gateway Sector. The regiment owes its allegiance and taxes to the world government of Harper, though it recruits across a couple of subsectors. The regiment is considered to be a niche unit, having carved out lucrative contracts like Starport security forces on several worlds in the subsector. Harper's Hoplites are usually deployed at minimum battalion strength to client worlds, usually in Garrison and Cadre "tickets". Due to overpopulation on Harper, mercenaries are one of this world's chief exports. The unit will usually be found on planets with tech levels from 4-A in either security, garrison, or cadre roles. Clients arrange transportation to destination, and billeting.

UNIT HISTORY/ DEPLOYMENTS

Harper's Hoplites were formed in the 980's during the tensions running up to the Solomani Rim war, as a replacement garrison unit by several worlds expecting to be bereft of their home Imperial Mercenary units leaving for the war. Insurgents in an ambush killed Brigadier General Reynaud Abernicht, the first CO of the Regiment, in action on Renaldo/Gateway in 988. Since then, they have undertaken Cadre and Security work in the Gateway and Ley Sectors, notably on the balkanized worlds of Dummar (0433) & Baker (0334), in cadre roles; security on Caldwell (0332) at their A-class Starport (an ongoing mission for the 1st battalion) and the ongoing occupation of Renaldo (0233), where an entire brigade is deployed (the 3rd). The 4th Brigade is deployed into Glimmerdrift sector, hired by the GTC, notably at Starfall, First landing City (4th Bn).

EQUIPMENT & ORGANIZATION

Basic gear is TL-9: 7mm ACRs, 10mm auto-pistols, ballistic weave body armor, CES suits, helmets, IR/image intensification equipped. Personnel are also equipped with personal communications devices, squad medium range communicators, and long range company and battalion level comms. Light anti-armor weapons consist of RAM GLs, disposable AT weapons and grenades. 60mm Mortar sections are organic to each company organic, along with one Mortar platoon (81mm). 4-6 wheel vehicles of the D company of each battalion carry 4-5 personnel each, and carry either anti-armor ATWGM's, 4cm Auto GL's (usually

HE, HEAP, and Anti-personnel rounds) or the Imperial 2cm LAG (belt fed). Light 6-8 wheeled APC's are armed with 2cm autocannons, 7mm MMG's, and a variety of ATGM/Tac Missile/SAM packages.

The regiment is organized into four brigades and one HHC Battalion (Command & Control, Training). Each Brigade consists of 3 battalions of 500 personnel; each battalion consists of five companies (A, B, C, D, & HHC). Companies A through C are "line units". D company is the Light vehicle Anti-armor/Recce/Riot control company; HHC supports companies A-D and includes a Scout platoon, an 81mm Mortar platoon as well as a Medical platoon, Command Section, Transport and Support section (which includes quartermaster and cooks for entire Battalion).

TACTICAL DOCTRINE/TERRITORY

Harper's Hoplites Regiment is trained in the Riot control, security and suppression roles, usually against forces or populations with no heavy armored vehicle assets. Coming from a world with Law level C and a tainted atmosphere, they have Legal/Admin, Vac Suit, and 0-G Environment as default skills. Company level and Platoon level tactics against possible insurgency, patrolling/ controlling of urban-built up areas are the regiment's forte. Rules of Engagement (ROE) are extensively negotiated on a per-contract basis.

On Starfall, in First landing City (4th Battalion/4th Brigade), their ROE includes "use of deadly force in protection of the Starport, its personnel, and all of its structures to the success of unimpeded free trade." They completely control, and are quartered in the smaller portion of the First landing city Downport. They control the access ways into the port proper, and across the canal into the DMZ/neutral zone (North canal Crossing point/ South canal crossing point).

FAMOUS/INFAMOUS NPCS

***Brigadier General Vanya Koniev:** first female CO the regiment has ever had. She has personally shot her personnel for being asleep on duty during a training exercise. Vanya is a former Imperial Marine Colonel, from Old Expanses world of Mueller. Unconventional and daring have been hallmarks of her career. It was she who appointed LTC Bergen to this mission.

***LTC Dyrik "Iceberg" Bergen (4th/4th CO):** Bergen is of Answerin stock, a minor human race from Vland that knows no fear, and views it as a mental but treatable disorder. He is an Imperial Lift Infantry veteran, and in addition to his homeworld views, has adopted the Zen philosophy from his experiences against Solomani Terrans. Outwardly he is dispassionate, and laconic, and sets an example of Spartan Soldiering to his subordinates. His personal life is "compartmentalized". Bloodshed and death hold no awe over him. Bettering his men's lot here on Starfall and ensuring the mission is accomplished with ruthless neutrality are his first goals. Is constantly thinking up exercises and drills to

keep the unit on their toes against “mission creep” and is cursed roundly as “the devil himself” for his diabolical means to keep troublesome men busy. Despite this, he is respected and loved by his men, who in one on one conversations, knows by name.

***Bn Command Sergeant Major Shadup Shudappin** (Sydite Human): If the BN Commander is the “Iceberg”, CSM Shudappin is the volcano of emotion and action. A Sydite trooper of several wars in Gateway Sector, he was shrewdly hired by BG Koniev in 999, as a counterbalance to Bergen. Shudappin speaks his native tongue, galanglic (with thick accent), and profanity, fluently. Cannot pronounce “ck” sound well, and substitutes “gg” instead in his words (i.e. the epithet “Frak” becomes Fragg). Like most Sydites, he is smarter than he looks, and a few of the unit who have tried to cross him have learned this to their eternal dismay.

***HHC Company CO, Major Eakehia “Silent-Death” Hlaurhiy** (Imperial Aslan, female): Eakehia is in an unusual role, though still in a support function, as her command controls all of the vehicular assets, maintenance, supplies, medical, and indirect fires (mortars). She came to the unit, with Koniev, as former Artillery officer from the Capital Imperial Aslan regiment. Outside of the “Berg”, she is the only other person who can put CSM Shudappin in his place, with a glance of her deep green eyes.

***HHC, Scout/Sniper Platoon Sergeant (E-7) Malcolm “Krait-6” Graham**: Graham hails from Harper, and is in the beginning of his 5th term with them. He has held every NCO position in this unit, from Fire team leader to Company First Sergeant. His call sign is named after a small deadly terran viper; Graham himself is a lean wiry 5’1”. He is cheerfully blasé about his job. “Why run? You’ll only die tired,” he is oft quoted as saying. His men are the vanguard of any security crackdown in the DMZ, and wear black Commando masks. Locals call them the “Black Oni” after an Sol-Asiatic mythological demon. This has been further perpetuated by the addition of gauss rifles to his 40-man section.

***C-Company, SSG Micheal “Papa” Malone**: A wisecracking, dour looking Squad leader, also from Harper, whose men are like his wayward sons to him. Often draws duty to the North canal crossing point (nearest the Hive), or Arena security detail for his men’s misbehaviors. Despite this, he and the dog team assigned to him have found more contraband entering the DMZ than any other in the Battalion has. “You think this strip search is unnecessary? Buddy, have you ever been to Harper?” is a typical quote of his to those new to the DMZ.

ADVENTURE HOOKS:

1. While in the DMZ, near the north canal crossing point, PC’s witness a small girl playing in / near the minefield. She comes to the notice of the Hoplites if the PC’s think to alert them. Rescuing her without

SSG Malone’s men being alerted results in their being arrested for trespassing, and might possibly detonate a mine killing themselves, and/or the child.

2. The Boathan Envoy/Speaker, Councilman Boer-Jameson, hires the PC’s to dig up dirt on LTC Bergen, whom he suspects is having an affair with Speaker Duquesne of High Spires. (PC’s will discover this, but his primary reason for meeting with her is concern over the safety of their mobile clinics in the Wilder parts of town.). Boer-Jameson will use the PC’s as expendable assets, and handle this thru middlemen, keeping his “hands clean”.
3. PC’s are from a visiting star freighter/ship, and have been contracted to carry medical supplies to FLC. Unfortunately for them, the shipment is not medicine, but Shoulder carried Anti-Tank rocket-propelled grenades and man portable TL-7 ground to air missiles. One of the Hoplites choppers were destroyed the week before the Players arrives. There is medicines packed on top of them, but a dog inspection team finds them. SFC Malcolm’s “Black Oni” gets called out, and the players have some explaining to do.

THE MUSICIANS' UNION

The Musicians' Union is a group of information gatherers and sellers that operate throughout Landing City and the First Landing starport. They play no favorites or sides, selling information to anyone who will pay. Although this is a dangerous business, they protect themselves by making it their policy to freely share information with the enemies of anyone who harms or kills a member of the union. Although there have been some bloody periods in the history of the Union, most people are content to use them as an occasional low-level source of information. People are very wary of the members, though they are often the best musicians and entertainers in First Landing. They have a join the Union or leave the city policy for anyone too proficient or famous (enforced by influence over club owners, not by violence), and many club owners will not employ non-Union musicians for fear of their darkest secrets becoming public knowledge.

The Union was originally started by an artistic subgroup of an Irish colonial ship that arrived (the Irish have a strong tradition of bards and musicians) as a mutual-help society. Over time it became a social group and club for musicians and some other artists. To join you had to impress the other members enough - it was a point of prestige to be a member. When the colonies on Starfall hit hard times the Musician's Union members had trouble maintaining their employment as musicians, so started working as couriers while they travelled, which led to the sale of news and information. This evolved to the group today.

They control no set geographical regions, though a few bars and clubs in the Starport DMZ and various neutral territories are firmly under the Union's control. The most famous is the Holland Jazz Bar in the old Starport Terminal. The owner, a jazz pianist named Eddie, is the unofficial leader of the Union, and one of the most connected men in the city.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The travellers need information that only the Union can provide. Eddie is willing to share it with them for a price – find out who shot one of their members and threw her body in the lake after a gig in the Hive. Investigations point to a member of the Home Defence League, though is he being framed?

WEGO TRAVEL

WeGo advertises (mainly by word of mouth) that it will “fly anyone, anywhere, anytime”; this is misleading – anyone is accurate but the price quoted for some locations (e.g. The Risen Sun) is so high that it is unlikely anyone would pay. The anytime is equally misleading, the proprietor Dannie ‘Been There’ Donnelson's sense of timing has never been too good and an ‘early morning start’ becomes ‘before midday, probably’ in his mind. On the other hand he really can get sophonts (WeGo does not carry cargo) anywhere.

Operating out of an airstrip north west of the First Landing WeGo Travel operates a motley variety of aircraft, helicopters, modular cutters and grav rafts. The airfield does not inspire confidence in its customers (several wrecks litter the sides of the runway) nor does Dannie. He is a large man of no clear ethnic group invariably dressed in knee boots, shorts and a variety of T-shirts topped by an Imperial Army beret. Appearing to be in his fifties he boasts several tattoos, some interesting scars and a rogue's smile. Despite this he has the reputation of being something of a ladies man and is ‘ruggedly handsome’ – he also claims to be the ‘best damn pilot you'll ever find around here’. This is one of the few accurate statements Dannie is ever likely to make about himself his nickname comes from his catchphrase “been there, done that, got the ears as trophies” (his tall tales are legendary in First Landing). Despite this he really is an excellent pilot and knows the capabilities of all his vehicles in detail.

No one on Starfall (or possibly still alive) knows Dannie's real background. His affectation of an Imperial army beret and Ithkur Gauss pistol are careful misdirection on his part. He is a deserter from the Solomani Marines where he served as a highly successful and decorated assault lander pilot. Having seen his unit destroyed due to political interference by the Solomani Party commissar he killed the commissar and went on the run. Over the next 30 years he found employment with many mercenary teams, his only requirement being that their contract took them further from the Solomani Rim.

One of these contracts was so successful that he used his huge bonus to invest in a 10 year supply of anagathics and continued to slowly wend his way to the Gateway Domain. When he first arrived at Starfall he decided to settle down for a few years (his luck was running out and he was sick of life on the run) and set up WeGo. To his amazement he discovered he enjoyed this life and had settled down to (in his words) grow old disgracefully.

The past 10 years have been good to him, First Landing is an ideal refuge and he loves the chaotic hurly-burly of the city; unfortunately the outbreak of the Solomani Rim war has disrupted this life and Dannie has started planning a quick way off world, he has seen no sign of SolSec (and doubts

they would be still interested in him) but he has lived this long by being very cautious. Fighting against this desire to run is the fact that he likes First Landing, such conflicting desires have made him quieter than usual and caused some concern amongst his employees.

Dannie employs 2 permanent staff. Andy is a deceptively young looking man, who keeps most of WeGo's vehicles more or less airworthy. He is assisted by Gander, a Sydite of impressive size (even by that race's standards), who doubles as the base security guard. Everyone at WeGo is armed at all times. Danni carries a large calibre Gauss pistol of unusual design (Ithkur). Gander favours a semi-auto shotgun with a large magazine capacity whilst Andy trusts in his assault rifle.

Should a client want more than one vehicle piloting (they are not available for hire without a pilot) Dannie has a large network of pilots who he can call in given a few hours notice. Their skill varies, but all are of at least average ability.

ADVENTURE HOOK

One of Dannie's aircraft has crashed in the badlands north of the city after sending a distress signal saying they had been fired upon by another aircraft. Dannie hires the travellers to accompany him to the crash site and rescue any survivors, once there he wants them to investigate the circumstances of the crash and discover who shot it down and why. Once at the site the aircraft will be found to be relatively intact but all the survivors have been executed at the scene. Dannie will pay any reasonable amount to the group to track down and kill the perpetrators. The aircraft was accidentally shot down by a Boathan army platoon conducting an exercise in the area and the survivors killed to prevent any scandal.

THE FIRST LANDING TOPICAL CLUB

The First Landing Topical Club is one of the most unusual groups in First Landing. A group of Hivers who were travelling the neutral space between the Hive Federation and the Imperium to study interracial psychology in a chaotic cultural environment arrived on Starfall with the intent of spending a few weeks there investigating the locals. They visited First Landing and after some debate decided it to be a low-level representation of the surrounding multi-cultural, balkanized, space, so elected to stay and investigate (some say manipulate) the city for their own curiosity. A few travelling Hivers, and a very few members of other races, have joined the club since, and it is gaining a small amount of prominence in the communications of the Manipulations Club of Glea.

The Club operate out of a small building they rent from the Waterfolk, located near the Hive. They pay the rent, and finance their activities, but selling information reports and assessments to groups, and by renting out their computer and technical skills. The group consists of six Hivers, two Humans, one Vargr, one Ursa, and six Ithulkur bodyguards.

The Club keep themselves low-profile most of the time, but on occasion they appear in small groups or as individuals, and wander the city on their mysterious errands.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The party is hired by a Hiver, "M. Jerricho" (Anyone who knows about Hivers will recall that the M. is an abbreviation for "Manipulator", a rare and impressive honorific), to trace the origins of a now defused bomb found in their building. The party find themselves led back to another Hiver in the group, and then on to another, and another. Is this a real schism within the Club, or part of another manipulation?

THE GLIMMERDRIFT TRADE CONSORTIUM

The Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium (GTC) operates at both of the starports on Starfall, though the Tripartite Alliance port is its primary concern. It has a secondary interest in First Landing as a freeport to conduct business in goods of all legalities away from the more rigorous customs and accounting systems of other ports. The local GTC coordinator chooses not to involve himself openly in the local council politics, preferring to keep his involvement in First Landing low-profile to facilitate business with groups that shy away from larger organizations and to allow his ships to more easily trade in black market goods.

TERRITORY AND INTERESTS

The GTC does not control any territory in First Landing, though it does maintain a brokerage office, and small accommodation and warehouse buildings, in one of the old starport landing pads in the neutral area. They are under the directorship of the local coordinator, Christophe Barlom, and his staff. They also rent larger warehouse space and security as needed in the old starport area from the Home Defence League. The GTC, through Barlom, has contracts with various local brokers and traders to supply them with everything from weapons to medicines. First Landing is the only port at which the GTC can openly trade with the black market, though even here they will not deal in, or broker deals for, slaves.

The GTC offices are well appointed modular buildings shipped here and assembled on-site. They have a small warehouse guarded by an advanced security system, an employee residential module for non-locally recruited staff, and an office building. It has a TL-A central computer system with a communications array sufficient to reach ships at the 100 diameter point. Although they use locally supplied power purchased from Warlord Azziz, they also secretly maintain a compact TL-15 fusion plant to supply their buildings in even of power outage. The local staff consists of Barlom, his office manager, his secretary, three brokers, two administrative assistants, one technician and six security guards armed with TL-A weaponry and armor. All the staff have firearms hidden in or under their desks, though only a few can use them effectively. Access to the GTC compound is controlled by the security guards, and all weapons must be unloaded before entry.

The GTC also bankroll the mercenary unit that provides security at the starport in return for priority berthing and token docking fees. Control of the mercenary unit was given fully to the Bwap administration team to avoid any political trouble from other local factions. Although this cuts down on profits from operations on Starfall, it is more useful to maintain the neutral port's services and effective operation than increase immediate profits.

The local coordinator also has an extensive web of contacts throughout the starport and the city. These contacts are used to gather information about ships, merchants and sales in the area. They also supply him with economic information and rumors about other worlds in the cluster from visiting merchants and ships. He also maintains spies in the factions in the city, and pays well for news of their plans and activities. He also pays for a monthly situation report from the First Landing Topical Club.

Barlom also has an interest in establishing a method of direct cargo transfer with the Tripartite Alliance starport. The reluctance of the Alliance to grant clearances to ships stopping first at First Landing is causing problems and hitting profits, and Barlom is attempting to find a local service to circumvent this. The WeGo Air! service has recently come to his attention and he is searching for leverage over the owner.

GOALS AND PLANS

The GTC has one main goal in all its operations and First Landing is no exception – to make money. It will take almost any action short of war to ensure that profitability remains high, though long-term profits can outweigh short-term losses in the right situations. The main goal of Coordinator Barlom is to ensure a profitable and efficient flow of goods through the port. Secondary to that he is concerned with gathering information about trading opportunities and economic data from across the cluster through his network of agents.

Barlom's long-term plans for First Landing involve controlling the starport from behind the scenes whilst maintaining the freeport status. His decision to bankroll Harper's Hopliters gained him a large amount of good feeling within the starport administration, something he is careful to develop by ensuring he does not attempt to influence the staff in any way. This goodwill often gains him small concessions without request from the non-Bwap members of the administration

Barlom is slowly exerting influence over the other factions through his ability to arrange large cargos of rare and expensive goods at good prices. He hopes to eventually use this to exert control over essential resources and control the factions through money. He is cautious and subtle, and takes care to conceal his plans from his customers.

METHODS

The local GTC team operate subtly, and always behind the scenes. They are very careful to present a public image of a neutral brokerage agency, and this gains them a lot of business. All local activities are personally approved by Barlom or Liikishu, and are focussed toward increasing the GTC's market share or influence within the factions. Barlom also gathers information he can use later to further his own personal power, though he is too smart to allow this to interfere with his work.

PERSONALITIES

Christopher Barlom (46, human, male) – local GTC coordinator. Barlom is a resident of nearby Fal (3111 Glimmerdrift Reaches), a small, high-technology world with extreme laws. Barlom runs his office very strictly, with little hesitation in punishing transgressors harshly, though always within the GTC employee contract. He is tall, lithe and pale, with close-cropped blond hair and hard eyes. Although his time is spent administrating his office and agents, he is also a skilled broker. Barlom's main motivation is advancement within the GTC. He is always accompanied by two bodyguards.

Madeline Liikishu (38, human, female) – GTC office manager. Madeline's records show her to be an Imperial expatriate who entered a career as a merchant after working as an accountant. Whilst not the best broker or trader, her skill with accounting and administration is incredible. She is small, a little dumpy, and takes little care of her appearance. Her work is her life. In reality Liikishu is a Raidermarch agent placed within the GTC to gather information about raiding targets. Her transfer to First Landing was unanticipated and she wishes to return to GTC space.

Vince Larson (24, human, male) – broker. Larson ("call me Vince") is a charismatic and attractive young man who works as a GTC broker. His easygoing nature belies overconfidence in his abilities (as good as they are). Vince is the broker of choice for many larger merchant ships. He is also as dirty as they come, taking bribes for information and skimming money from the office. Vince doesn't trust or like Madeline, and tries to undermine her where he can.

Jaycen Sataya (19, Luriani, male) – security. Santana is a Starfall native who took a security job with the GTC to escape the dullness of village life. He is young, excited and enthusiastic about everything. He takes great pleasure in meeting new people, and enjoys working at the starport. He is a competent shot and brawler, though by no means exceptional. He has many friends and contacts among the Luriani colonists who live amongst the Waterfolk faction.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. The local office has an order for high TL computer parts but the ship carrying them has been delayed at Idam Lee. Liikishu has discovered Warlord Azziz is in possession of a starship computer these components could be stripped from. She needs the PCs to steal the computer without drawing a link back to the GTC in order to continue his good relations with the warlord.
2. The computer at the GTC office has been hacked, and the payment data for the local accounts stolen and wiped. The players are employed to track down the thief and recover the data by any means. Investigations point the PCs towards a member of

Harper's Hoplitest admin staff who has gambling debts.

3. Vince Larson's attempts to discredit Madeline Liikishu are a threat to her continued position in the GTC (and thus with her mission as a Raidermarch spy). She hires the PCs to make a deal dirty with him and then give statements to Barlom attesting to this, to discredit him. The other party in the deal, one of the local Warlords, is not happy about being double-crossed by independent merchants (the PCs).
4. A GTC ship is bombed in port, and the investigation leads the GTC's hired agents to the PCs. The PCs need to evade capture long enough to find out who is framing them, and prove their innocence. Investigations lead to the Hive, and a gunrunner with a vendetta against the GTC for undercutting his prices. He claims the PCs were just strangers – handy scapegoats. What is the truth?

WAVECREST

Situated approximately 10km offshore, the ruins of Landing City Orbital were ignored for many years after its catastrophic re-entry; with the fisherfolk the only people bothering to visit it. Useful as a shelter during storms and a storage area for supplies for many years it's only permanent residents were the crew of the Free Landing City radio station broadcasting their anarchic programmes.

As the Boathans started their encroachment into the Water Processors territory many of the Fisherfolk found their land homes under fire. Led by their current leader Stanley Moyo many families started investigating the station as a hideaway, a process that was slowed by their lack of experience with High technology. Eventually an alliance with younger members of the Water Processors union led to a joint expedition which discovered a previously unknown entrance to the interior. Once inside they were amazed to discover that much of the structure remained habitable, albeit with a lot of hard work, and some of the original equipment was still serviceable.

This discovery led to an accelerating exodus of the fisherfolk to this safe location until the vast majority of the population resides here. Despite some families having been resident for over decade little progress was made on salvaging equipment or improving living conditions until the recent formation of the Waterfolk. This has led to an influx of skilled technicians and the rapid improvement in living standards here, and the site is beginning to develop some impressive defences – missile launchers and artillery pieces have been spotted.

Life in Wavecrest is anarchic to say the least, many internal passages still need clearing or are deemed unsafe to use so routes tend to be convoluted and visitors often get lost. Fishermen who have been away for more than a few weeks

often comment on how much the site has changed in even these short periods. Ashore the Hive's shops are beginning to sell items obviously salvaged from the wreck and the HDL takes several cargoes from here every week – primarily high tech ceramics and metals in short supply. Most of the other factions have started making enquiries about possible purchases and rumors sweep the city regularly about new equipment seen being brought ashore. Much of this salvage is simply electronic or other mundane parts no longer capable of manufacture in Landing City. Occasionally though some more valuable (or dangerous) items are found and offered for sale to the highest bidder.

ADVENTURE HOOK

A faction member has received partial plans of part of the old station. They are fragmentary, but indicate the location of a bank vault. The PCs are to visit Wavecrest, establish whether this location survived and gain entry if possible. The payment will be 50% of all recovered items, payable on safe return to the Starport – the patron intends on leaving Starfall immediately.

ICHIBAN INTERSTELLAR

Starfall, with its moderate technology and small population, is of little military or economic value to the Solomani. Solomani contact teams operating on planet do so for its cultural value as a Terran-settled planet, and its central position in a strategically located cluster. More details on the Solomani interest in Starfall and its world council can be found in the Starfall world section. First Landing, and by extension Landing City, is of interest to the Solomani for its status as a freeport, and its connections to the cluster's free traders, pirates, and underworld.

The Solomani presence in First Landing is a small Solomani Naval Intelligence team that arrived almost three months ago. Their mission is to investigate First Landing's suitability as a future base for support of commerce raiders, and as a location for moving supplies, intelligence and agents covertly. The team is led by Lieutenant Richard Twain, a promising young intelligence officer assigned his first field command. His second in command, Chief Petty Officer Pedro Undluyu, is a stocky and intense man who has spent most of his career operating in the dangerous parts of neutral space. Communications specialist Able Starman Lisa Smith is the junior member of the team. Recently transferred to Naval Intelligence, Lisa is enthusiastic about her new role, something CPO Undluyu tries to keep in check. The final member of the team is responsible for physical security of the team and its equipment. Corporal Britta Liebnau, a German and the team's only trueborn Terran, is utterly devoted to her task, any time not spent protecting the team is spent honing her skills. None of the team are overtly political, and only Twain and Smith hold strong personal views in support of the Solomani Party.

The team's public cover is that of representative of Ichiban Interstellar, a Solomani corporation. Ichiban Interstellar operates as a mercenary clearing house, and information brokerage. As part of this cover they are recruiting mercenaries and ship crews to operate under letters of marque in the surrounding subsectors. They are also working to establish sources of arms, equipment and starship supplies through First Landing. So far they are unable to make any large breakthroughs due to local suspicion of Solomani political views, though they have begun to establish contacts in the area and have a small number of ships considering the offer of privateer status. The team, here for twelve months to investigate the city, is unaware of SolSec operations through Exports le Universe (see above).

ADVENTURE HOOK

The team become suspicious of the Travellers and begin to investigate them. The Travellers may discover that enquiries are being made about them during the course of their activities in First Landing. If the party come close to discovering what is happening, the team will decide they are

Imperial agents and begin to spread manufactured evidence of this amongst the factions.

“RADIO FREE LANDING CITY (KKRE)”

Operating out of the Wavecrest community on the coastline of First Landing City is the “pirate” radio station KKRE. Putting out at irregular power levels (due to hydroelectric generators), this station broadcasts & rails against the “establishment” powers, and purports to be “by the people, for the people” of FLC with DJ’s like:

- Drekh Sludge (a Vargr Sea Dog!) News/ Gossip/ Rumors/ Counter propaganda/ & opinions! (Reads the FLC newspaper with commentaries).
- Rip Beamer (Weather & Traffic News on the hour!) Thanks to Cell phone calls from a dozen kids employed across town!!!
- Candy Columbia (Salacious Advice for all sophonts)
- Mad Willy- (Sydite) Sports (arena fights/ commentary) - Again, thanks to kids/folks with cell phones.

Music selection is Solomani-Terran of mixed cultures from the colony days...pre-Long Night! Each DJ pulls a 5-hour shift. Owned and operated by...“Captain” Morris Ap Morgan, an ex-Solomani Navy Commo/ EW Spook (retired).

SASHMI CROFT

Located just 500m from the city walls this typical farm, a small hamlet in reality, is the most familiar to Gaijin of the 13 farms in The Risen Sun. Surrounded by its neat fields filled with healthy cattle, goats and sheep the croft looks most unwelcoming. Obviously built for defence and smaller than its population of nearly four hundred would suggest, the Croft is about 200m across and surrounded by a circular sloped dyke. The only breaks in its defences are the menacing gunports and a heavy gate, invariably flanked by two samurai in combat armor.

Only when visitors get inside do they realize that the buildings are all two floors high and sit in a depression cut deep into the earth. A pair of ramps run down to storage area and garages cut into the dyke; whilst foot traffic uses the steps directly opposite the gates. Most of the forty local samurai occupy the houses directly at the bottom of these ramps, though Lord Nvarragh and his family live in the position of greatest risk – directly opposite the steps. Between these buildings are the despised merchant houses with the entertainers clustered directly behind the Lord’s house and the Peasantry accommodation filling the rest of the space. .

All the houses are of similar design and size being differentiated only by their colors; Lord Nvarragh’s favorite scarlet, lime green and brilliant yellow and they other classes buildings in their prescribed green, orange and purple. Inside the rooms are surprisingly roomy with the only distinguishing

features being the rich accessories of the merchants, varied work rooms of the artists and the Spartan simplicity of the Samurai’s accommodation.

Lord Nvarragh has only recently risen to leadership of the Samurai here – having demonstrated his fitness to lead the others through his clever maneuvering against the previous incumbent he was proclaimed leader by the other samurai at the turn of the year. He is a student of old Japanese society and has a weakness for Japanese poetry and militia – he is also an innovative tactical thinker who has managed to gain the leadership position by treating it as a tactical exercise. Prone to spending a lot of time quietly planning his future moves and gaining whatever advantages he can, he surprised the previous leader by his sudden and overwhelming leap for the position. At the moment he is basking in the knowledge that most of his subordinates will spend the next few orbits fathoming how he did it. His opponent Gvenish managed to hold on to enough prestige to be appointed 2nd in command – and will too busy holding on to that position for the foreseeable future to be a threat.

Being this close to the border with the city the samurai are mostly veterans fighters though the lord still insists that they spend the 4 hours a day training as required by their position. The rest of their time is generally spent in the rough and tumble of normal samurai life – patrolling the farm and nearby road, gambling, engaging in practical jokes against their fellow samurai and carefully observing the actions of their rivals and plotting to increase their prestige or bring about the downfall of a rival.

The non samurai have lives that would be considered luxurious by the standards of anyone used to city life. Whilst required to work nine hour days, they receive one day off in every ten, food is plentiful and tasty and they have access to a full range of entertainment and leisure facilities. The 275 peasants here work primarily on the farm, but there is a contingent of armorers, mechanics, engineers and computer operators responsible for the maintenance of the machinery as well. Sashmi’s entertainers are famous for their chefs and several of them have students loaned from other villages studying here. In the past several have been selected for service in the Forbidden Palace – serving the customary 5 cycles before returning to their master’s croft – thereby bringing great honour and prestige to the farm and all resident there.

Sashmi is unusual in having more as many as 15 merchants in its household – at some cost to its prestige in the Risen Sun – due to its prime location close to the border. Every lord has tried to lower the number to no avail, to their disgrace they have always found that this is the minimum necessary to service the trade caravans that pass daily and to allow negotiation with the alarming number of gaijin who visit here. The fact that Sashmi is one of the richest villages, allowing its samurai to be equipped to superb standards

and to be recognized as a centre of excellence is hardly any recompense for having to put up with so many of the parasitic merchants.

ADVENTURE SEED

Anyone wishing to travel within the Risen Sun must visit this village for permission to travel further along the main road. A merchant broker wants the PCs to visit the Croft and find out as much as they can about the personality of the new lord. The merchant intends to flatter him through suitable presents and thereby get a step ahead of his rivals.



Starfall Safari - the search for the land Phoenix.

ADVENTURES IN FIRST LANDING AND THE STARFALL SYSTEM

FULL ADVENTURE: STARFALL SAFARI

INTRODUCTION

One feature of Starfall that draws off-world tourists interested in something other than the disreputable distractions of First Landing is the allure of the legendary land Phoenix. No direct evidence of the creature's existence has been brought forward, but countless stories will rebound through a 'Scratcher' Bar if the topic is brought up. 'Scratcher' is the name the locals give to an establishment patronized by residents of the Outback, who are in turn called 'Scratchers' given the rather lean existence scratched from Starfall's barren outback.

It is exactly one of these tales that has lured a wealthy young noble of the Third Imperium to this frontier setting. Master Ruben Somaar has decided that he must obtain not just a glimpse of a Land Phoenix, but to shoot one and have its head mounted on his study wall.

While big on ambition and cash, Ruben needs assistants to help him track down and find one of the creatures. He has had no luck hiring any of the locals, so he is now forced to find a group of Travellers to aid him in his search. Along the way, the group will have to deal with Ruben's "enthusiasm", the advances of his older sister, and the machinations of Ruben's assistant.

It is preferred that the party does not have a starship available to them for the duration of this adventure, as many of the obstacles presented will simply be ignored. One possible way to cover this is to have the party's ship in for extensive repairs or maintenance. Another is that the work must be performed on the ground – their patron insists on living his adventure to the fullest. It is rather difficult to generate the mood for camp-fire songs two clicks above the desert...

BACKGROUND

As noted in the Starfall Setting section, the Land Phoenix is a creature of legend on Starfall. Many of the rumors are similar to the Terran legends of dragons – a large ferocious lizard of immense size, fortitude and appetite. Some of the wilder tales will claim that the Phoenix is sentient and capable of speech, where others say it is merely a dumb beast. The Land Phoenix has become the standard 'boogey-man' of Starfall, used to explain sudden losses of livestock or other mysterious events.

Should someone be able to prove that the creature exists, or more incredibly bring a specimen back for investigation, they would gain some measure of fame on Starfall. Several scientific institutions of the Cluster and beyond would pay considerable sums to obtain a creature. However, contacting these distant organizations would take time – they aren't just standing around waiting for someone to bring a Phoenix to them.

Enter Ruben Somaar, adventurer extraordinaire and his need to hire a group of Travellers. Ideally, Ruben could meet the group while they are at the Tripartite Starport awaiting repairs for their ship or just looking for work. If the players aren't in orbit, prefer to hang out in seedier environs, or are just starting out, then he could meet them in Landing City. It won't matter to Ruben – he will be oblivious to the different class of potential recruits between the two places.

The Referee could have the group respond to an electronic ad, or if she desires a more role-playing alternative, could simply have Ruben 'ambush' the group while they are shopping or in a restaurant. If encountered outside of Tripartite Starport, it should be obvious that the group are off-worlders (unless they come from Starfall) and therefore easily selected from the rest of the crowd. If they are at Tripartite, then just ascribe Ruben's selecting them as luck.

Ruben will begin by energetically inviting the group to join him on a most exciting journey, which should not only fatten their wallets but also create legends they can share with their children. Ruben will ignore any direct protests short of violence, assuring the team that he has a deal they cannot refuse.

He will tell them of the legendary Land Phoenix, basically providing the sketchy details and legends listed above. He will state that he has hired a local guide, but he specifically wants the team as reinforcements. When asked why them, he replies "I don't know if you've noticed, but some of the people at these star-towns look rather disreputable. You all seem much more trust-worthy – I am certain we will all soon be fast friends!"

Ruben will offer the PC's a salary of Cr500 per day they accompany him, and a 5% stake in any profits gleaned from the expedition. He is not much of a negotiator, but can not be persuaded to increase the fees as he has already put his best offer on the table. (Note: The Referee should feel free to adjust this fee up or down depending on the financial specifics of his campaign. In general, it is intended that the fee be well above average.)

If the group has no means of land-transportation Ruben will provide a wheeled ATV that he has secured (rented). He will also provide any other miscellaneous camping gear including hiking backpacks.

Ruben will also provide a map of the region to be explored by the expedition. Essentially they will be circling the volcanic

range NE of Eraikazan, a rural city known for its strict Water Authority. The volcanic range is a mix of active and dormant volcanoes, with the majority of latter at the NW end of the chain. Ruben will point out that depending on the trail signs that they find (he is just sure the Phoenix is real, and is certain that locating it will be trivial), they will likely have to journey overland to find the creatures' lair upon the high slopes of the volcanoes.

CHARACTERS

RUBEN SOMAAR

Ruben Somaar has been bumbling through life since the moment he learned to walk. He survived his inherently clueless nature only because of his easy, charming manner which has often persuaded people to look out for him. In particular, Ruben's uncle, Baron Somaar (Econdora/Ikhnaton/Ley), has protected him from his own incompetence many times. The Baron loved his sister, who died giving birth to Reuben, and has a soft spot in his heart for her son. In her memory he continues to fund Ruben's bizarre misadventures, regardless of the cost. The safari for the Land Phoenix is but the most recent of Ruben's mad schemes.

Physically, Ruben is just over 170 cm in height and masses only 63kg. With dark brown hair, wide, excited hazel eyes, and a ready grin, Ruben's nervous energy often reminds people of a friendly puppy (or similar small lifeform). Ruben possesses the rather thin face and fine features of the Somaar family. Though he is unlikely to inherit any title or responsibility, his Somaar-signature features are admired (and resented) by others in the family.

Ruben is an enthusiastic optimist – things will always work out, no matter how bleak the immediate situation may seem. His attitude is a result of the multitude of times that he has faced certain death and lived, largely due to the actions of others. Ruben will simply ignore rudeness or brusque behavior from anyone towards him, thinking the other fellow must be teasing.

Ruben loves his sister dearly, and is somewhat oblivious to her emotional state. She has been pulling the young man back from various precipices all his life, so he doesn't see her loneliness or desperation for attention. In his mind she has become the mother he never knew. He will be shocked and flustered if he ever sees her sharing romantic interest with someone.

Ruben Somaar

(Noble level 5) TL 12 Medium human
 Stamina 25, Lifeblood 12 Init +0; Speed 6 m (4 squares);
 Armor Class: 14 (+4 Armored Clothing), Armor Rating: 4 (armored clothing)
 Str 9, Dex 10 Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 16, Edu 11, Soc 16

SV Fort +2; Ref+3 Will +5;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Auto Pistol	+2	1d10	45	20	1	15
Foil	+2	1d4	-	18	-	-

Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +6, Broker +2, Climb +3, Driving +1, Gather Information +11, Jump +2, K/ Interstellar Law +1, Liaison +12, P/ Prospecting +3, P/ Survey +3, Survival +3, T/ Computer +1, Trader +1

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light), Weapons (marksman, swordsman), Carousing, Dumb Luck, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Trust Fund, Trustworthy.

Equipment: Armored Clothing –12 (treat as flak jacket for statistics), pistol, foil.

CT: 67876B Noble 2 Terms

Streetwise-2, Survival-1, Carousing-1, Grav Vehicle-0, Pistol-1, Foil-1.

HILDEGARD SOMAAR

Hildegard was only 8 years old when Ruben was born and their mother died. Hildegard naturally assumed the daily care for her younger brother in honor of mother. As Hildegard grew into womanhood, she took on a matronly demeanor, which unfortunately matched her rather unusually tall and wide figure. Because of her plain looks and the demands of her reckless brother, the combined effect was to deny Hildegard any opportunity for romance as a young woman. She has recently passed the age of 30 and has no prospects for marriage.

Hildegard stands a full 200cm tall and masses nearly 120 kg. Her dirty blonde hair is in a severe no-nonsense style reminiscent of many military organizations, and is matched by her equally blocky body shape, leading many non-humans to confuse her gender on first meeting. There is a private joke amongst the family that Hildegard is either adopted or the result of her mother's dalliance with an Ursa. The former causes Hildegard to mutter angrily under her breath, while the latter sends her into a full red-faced rage.

Hildegard is lonely. She has never been the center of attention except to be ridiculed, and so many find her closed and defensive when they first meet her. She has forfeited her life to care for her brother, and is beginning to regret what she has "lost". She journeys with her brother to escape noble life as an "old maid", desperately hoping to find someone to share her life, just as she has read in many novels.

Hildegard will seem remote and abrupt when first met by the group. She will stay close to her brother, but readily fall into his shadow once he gets on a roll. Any kind gesture towards her from a member of the group will provoke a surprising and overly eager response from Hildegard as she

perceives the act in the most romantic light possible. She will see the individual as her knight in shining armor come to rescue her from her cursed tower.

Hildegard Somaar

(Noble level 3/Traveller level 3) TL 12 Medium human
 Stamina 34, Lifeblood 12 Init +0; Speed 6 m (4 squares);
 Armor Class: 14 (+4 Jack), Armor Rating: 4 (Jack)
 Str 14, Dex 11 Con 12, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 6, Edu 10, Soc 15
 SV Fort +4; Ref+3 Will +6;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Rifle	+2	1d12	72	20	1	10
Fist	+2	1d4+2	-	20	-	
Blade	+2	1d8+2	-	19	-	-

Skills: Driving +6, Gather Info +5, Innuendo +4, K/ Interstellar Law +5, Liaison +3, Listen +6, Pilot +5, Search +7, Sense Motive +7, Spot +8, T/ Communications +4, T/ Computer +6, T/ Medical +5, T/ Sensor +3

Feats: Vessel (grav, wheeled, ship's boat), Armor (light, medium), Weapons (marksman, swordsman), Alertness, Brawling, Endurance, Sixth Sense

Equipment: Jack, rifle, blade, TAS Membership.

CT: 978A7B Noble 3 Terms
 ATV-1, Streetwise-1, Pilot-1, Computer-1, Medical-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Rifle-0, Brawling-0, Blade-0.

WALTER BURGHOFF

Walter Burghoff has had a hard life. Born in the back-alleys of Landing City, Walter grew up learning the skills of deception and trickery. He has moved from scam to scam, always targeting off-worlders so as to keep from angering any locals. He heard of Ruben's desire to bag a Land Phoenix and saw his opportunity to make a big score. Either they would never find the creature after weeks of searching while Walter collected stiff rates and unusual fees for strange hunting permits, or they could actually locate the creature and collect a live specimen, for which he was certain to fetch a large price tag. Quick arrangements with the crew of the Brazen Chance provided a means to discretely get the creature off-world.

Walter stands 185 cm and masses around 95 kgs. He cuts a dashing figure of a rugged explorer with his sandy brown hair, and weather-beaten, unshaven face. His clothing is rather worn and shows the signs of years of exposure to Starfall's environment.

Walter has no redeeming qualities. He is a self-serving snake that has survived only because he doesn't trust anyone. He will be polite and jovial at first meeting to disarm any suspicions people may have of him. He has concocted

a cover story of being a secret agent of the IISS to provide a cover for any clandestine activities he may undertake. He has stashed in his gear an old IISS uniform, which he stole from a Traveller several years back. This is also where he obtained his Scout-issue Laser Pistol that he carries in a low holster on his left thigh and its matching power belt.

Walter will not be pleased to learn that Ruben has hired additional "help" for the safari. He will be especially undone when he learns they are off-worlders, and therefore someone whose motives he doesn't know. He will be confrontational at first, questioning the groups capabilities to perform the safari in an attempt to get them left behind. Once this has proven futile, he will switch his tactics and try to get close to the group to learn their motives, always trying to find some advantage over them.

Walter is an obvious antagonist against which the PC's must work. If he survives the adventure, he will have a grudge against the group, though he will not pursue them offworld. He may desire vengeance, but his survival instincts won't allow him to take exceptional risks unless they treat him particularly harsh.

Walter Burghoff

(Rogue level 4/Mercenary level 2) TL 12 Medium human
 Stamina 36, Lifeblood 10 Init +0; Speed 6 m (4 squares);
 Armor Class: 16 (+4 Jack, +2 Dex), Armor Rating: 4 (Jack)
 Str 14, Dex 14 Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12, Edu 8, Soc 8
 SV Fort +6; Ref+6 Will +4;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Gauss Pistol	+7	1d12	80	20(x3)	1/4	40
Fist	+7	1d4+2	-	20	20	-
Knife	+7	1d4	-	19	19	-

Skills: Appraise +5, Bluff +11, Bribery +5, Gambling +4, Gather Info +6, Intimidate +6, Leader +4, Listen +5, Search +5, Sense Motive +7, Spot +5

Feats: Vessel (grav, wheeled), Armor (light, medium), Weapons (marksman, swordsman), Brawling, Dodge, Fast Talk, Fence Stolen Goods, Smuggling, Spot Trouble

Equipment: Gauss Pistol, Knife, Jack.

CT: AAA866 Rogue 4 Terms
 Bribery-1, Streetwise-2, Gambling-1, Leader-1, Grav Vehicle-0, ATV-0, Pistol-2, Brawling-2, Blade-2.

LAND PHOENIX

The Land Phoenix is a large quadruped specifically adapted to thrive in and around areas dominated by geothermal heat, such as volcanoes. This large, often solitary creature can consume most organic matter, and due to its unique digestive system, even extract some nutrients from rocks. It possesses a large, spade like head with two eyes located symmetrically on the forward facing surface. It possesses a short tail (6-8") that appears to be more for balance than any kind of more dexterous function.

The creature has a rough, thick and craggy skin that looks very much like the volcanic rock of its habitat. This allows the creature to be virtually undetectable when it remains motionless. This allows it to capture smaller prey simply by waiting for it to come along and then stunning it with its claws.

The true mystery of the Land Phoenix is its odd electrochemical physiology. A Land Phoenix is actually able to store electrical energy within its tissues, and readily access that energy to sustain itself. This also allows the creature to channel small electrical jolts into its victims, much like a taser gun. It generates this electrical energy by absorbing the heat from its environment, basically as a natural thermoelectric generator.

This allows the Land Phoenix to live for extended periods of time without consuming organic food which is sparse in the caldera of a volcano. However, a Land Phoenix must periodically intake some form of organic matter, and so they will infrequently leave their lairs and descend to regions where organic material is more plentiful. While living tissue (meat) is preferred, the Land Phoenix can subsist on plant matter is needed.

Its diet is often supplemented by eating pumice gravel, from which the creature leaches out the necessary minerals it needs for life. This will become a surprise to anyone who removes a Land Phoenix from Starfall, as it will sicken and die without a ready intake (1 kg/week) of the mineral rich rock native to Starfall.

The Land Phoenix sits at the top of its local food chain. Since it has no predators to fear, the Land Phoenix is seldom alarmed when encountered. It is a slow-moving, seemingly docile and content creature. Humanoids should be careful, because while it normally moves slowly, if alarmed the creature's metabolism can quickly accelerate. This is usually only after the Phoenix encounters some form of threat or personal damage.

It will initially try to stun any attacker with its claws. If that is not successful, it will either bite or smother the victim, if they are smaller than the creature. A successful smother attack means that the creature has leapt upon the victim and is now pressing them into the ground. On the next round and every round thereafter, the victim begins to take damage.

A successful STR check against the Phoenix is required to break free of a smother.

ADULT LAND PHOENIX

Size:	Huge/3200 kg
Type:	Omnivore - Eater
Stamina:	16d6 + 64
Lifeblood:	28
Initiative:	-1/+5*
To Attack:	19 (15)
To Flee:	18 (20)
Speed:	6/18*
AC:	14/17* (+10 base -1 Size +6 AR -1 Dex/+2 Dex)
AR:	6
Attacks:	+10/13* melee (claw), +11/14* melee (Bite), +5/8* (smother)
Damage:	2d6 + 8 (Claw), 4d8 + 12 (Bite), 3d10 + 8
Saves:	Fort +8, Ref +3/+6*, Will +3
Abilities:	STR 26 (30), DEX 8/14*, CON 18 (24)
Skills:	Hide +5 (13), Listen +4, Spot +4, Search +4
Feats:	Weapon Focus (Bite)
Special Abilities	*Electro-Adrenalin, Heat Resistance 30, Natural Camouflage, Regeneration 1 (limited), Stunning Claws
Climate/Terrain:	Volcanic Mountains
Organization:	Individual

CT: Land Phoenix – 3200kg Omnivore; Hits 40/16; Armor cloth; Wounds Claw: 6D Bite/Smother: 6D: A0 F12 S2.

Stunning Claw: Roll END or under or victim is stunned for 1D rounds.

Electro-Adrenalin: Because of the unique electrochemical physiology of the Land Phoenix, it has developed a mechanism to speed up its neuro-chemical activity in times of stress. This is similar to the adrenalin response in Terran animals. In the case of the Land Phoenix, whenever it feels threatened (something attacks it), a gland releases a neurological catalyst to speed up its reflexes. In game terms, the Land Phoenix gains a +6 to its DEX, triples its base movement, and access to the Improved Initiative feat). These changes have already been figured into the statistics above, and are the second numbers in each of the categories.

Heat Resistance 30: The Land Phoenix thrives on heat, and so is relatively immune to all but the most extreme of temperatures. Laser fire, which relies on the rapid vaporization of material to cause damage, has a limited effect on a Land Phoenix. In game terms, treat the Land Phoenix as having an addition +4 AR vs. laser weapons.

Natural Camouflage: The Land Phoenix's craggy and rock-like skin allow the creature to readily blend into its volcanic environment. In game terms this is represented as a +8 to Hide checks when in volcanic terrain.

Regeneration 1 (limited): The Land Phoenix's system is accelerated when in the presence of high temperatures (>200 C). This allows the creature to heal much faster than normal, but only when in its lair. This is unlikely to have any effect in combat.

Stunning Claws: The Land Phoenix stuns its prey with a small electrical discharge from its claws to assist it in catching food. In game terms, if a target is struck by a Land Phoenix's claws, the victim must make a Fort save vs DC 14 or be stunned for 1-6 rounds. If the Phoenix has activated its Electro-adrenalin, then this DC is increased to 18 due to the super-charged metabolism of the creature. Vehicles are immune to this attack, however, if the claw damage breaches the vehicles armor, and a passenger takes damage, then the passenger must make the Fort save.

CREW OF THE BRAZEN CHANCE

It is not likely that the group will perform any role-playing with the crew of the *Brazen Chance* except from the end of a gun-barrel. The statistics for each has been taken from Traveller's Aide issue #4 "76 Gunmen" with some modifications to fit this adventure.

The *Brazen Chance* is currently owned and operated by Captain Jonas Tuluum, a dishonorable ex-Navy veteran who was dishonorably discharged for looting corpses during a boarding action 12 years ago. He gained the *Brazen Chance* through an act of piracy after spacing the previous crew, and so far has been able to stay ahead of the law. Jonas lives only for himself and will use whatever means it takes to survive any encounter. His only redeeming characteristic is that he has kept the *Chance* flying, often through sheer will.

CAPTAIN JONAS TULUUM – CAPTAIN AND ENGINEER

(Navy level 8) TL 14-15 Medium human
 Stamina 40, Lifeblood 10 Init +0; Speed 6 m (4 squares);
 Armor Class: 12 (+2 vac suit), Armor Rating: 2 (vac suit)
 Str 13, Dex12 Con10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha14, Edu 12, Soc 11
 SV Fort +3; Ref+3 Will +7;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Laser Carbine	+7	3d8	45	20	1	50
Fist	+5	1d4	--	20	—	--

Skills: Pilot +6, T/Computer +13, P/Administration +13, Liaison +12, Sense Motive +5, T/Engineering +13, T/Mechanical +15, T/Electronics +15, T/Sensors +8

Feats: Vessel (grav, starship), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (marksman, laser), Brawling, Zero-G/Low-G adaptation, Zero-G combat, First Aid, Cross Training, Jury Rig, Damage Control, Gearhead, Miracle Worker

Equipment: vac suit-14, laser carbine with HUD.

Jonas's two partners Tomas and Willard serve as his primary crew. Both are long term associates of Jonas, and though not as skilled as their captain, all three are cut of the same moral cloth – black-hearted scoundrels that no one will miss.

CT: 887987 Navy 3 Terms, Merchants 3 Terms
 Pilot-1, Computer-2, Admin-2, Liaison-2, Engineering-2, Mechanical-3, Electronics-3, Grav Vehicle-1, Brawling-1, Zero-G Combat-1, Laser Weapons-2, Rifle-1, Vac Suit-1.

TOMAS GEISSER

(Navy level 6) TL 14-15 Medium human
 Stamina 33, Lifeblood 10 Init +0; Speed 6 m (4 squares);
 Armor Class: 12 (+2 vac suit), Armor Rating: 2 (vac suit)
 Str 9, Dex15 Con13, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha10, Edu 12, Soc 11
 SV Fort +3; Ref+3 Will +7;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+7	1d10	21	20	1	15
Fist	+5	1d4	--	20	—	--

Skills: Pilot +12, T/Computer +8, P/Administration +13, T/Astrogation +13, T/Communications +13, T/Sensors+13, Gunnery+7, T/Sensors+8, T/Engineering+13, T/Mechanical +15, T/Electronics +15

Feats: Vessel (grav, starship, ship's boat), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (marksman, laser, ship's weapons), Brawling, Zero-G/Low-G adaptation, Zero-G combat, First Aid, Cross Training, Ship's Tactics

CT: 6A8887 Navy 3 Terms, Merchants 2 Terms
 Pilot-2, Computer-2, Admin-2, Astrogation-2, Commo-2, Engineering-2, Gunnery-2, Mechanical-3, Electronics-3, Grav Vehicle-1, Brawling-1, Zero-G Combat-1, Laser Weapons-1, Pistol-1, Vac Suit-1.

WILLARD JOHNSON

Mid Tech (Army 9) TL 5-8 Medium human
 Stamina 48, Lifeblood 12 Init +1; Speed 9 m (6 squares);
 Armor Class: 15 (+4 flak jacket, +1 dex), Armor Rating: 4 (flak jacket)
 Str 11, Dex12 Con12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha10, Edu 10, Soc 10
 SV Fort +4; Ref+7 Will +3;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Assault Rifle	+8/+3	1d12+2	45	20	1/4	30
Fist	+8/+3	1d4	--	20	--	--
Bayonet	+8/+3	1d8+2	1.5	20	--	--

Skills: Spot +12, Driving +13, Survival +12, Forward Observer +12, Gunnery +12

Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Armor (light), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman, armsman, field artillery), Weapon Focus (assault rifle, bayonet), Weapon Specialization (assault rifle, bayonet), Brawling, Sniper

Equipment: flak jacket, assault rifle, 2 HEAP grenades, 2 fragmentation grenades, bayonet, medium ranged radio

CT: 788777 Army 6 Terms

Survival-2, Forward Observer-2, Gunnery-2, Ground Vehicle-2, Combat Rifleman-2, Blade-2, Brawling-2.

The Chance crew also contains 4 deckhands who serve as the lower ranks aboard the *Chance*. As Jonas, Tomas, and Willard aren't that considerate of their crews longevity, so these positions are often replaced due to attrition. These four deck hands were hired thugs from Landing City who saw an opportunity to get offworld. It remains to be seen if this will actually happen, even if the *Chance* crew is successful in their mission, as Jonas has a penchant for ditching his minions before leaving a system to reduce operating costs.

DECK-HANDS

(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	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Assault Rifle	+2	1d12	45	20	1/4	30
Fist	+3	1d4+1	--	20	--	--

Skills: Hide +7, Move Silently +8, Spot +8, P/Hunting +5, Listen +8, Driving +0

Feats: Vessel (wheeled, starship), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Stealthy, Alertness, Tracker, Brawling, Sneak Attack (+1d6), Point Blank Shot

Equipment: jack armor, assault rifle.

CT: 877754 Rogue 3 Terms

Hunting-1, Ground Vehicle-1, Combat Rifleman-1, Blade-1, Brawling-1, Vac Suit-1, Recon-1.

THE BRAZEN CHANCE

The *Brazen Chance* is the classic example of a good ship that has seen better days. Basically a standard Type-K starship, the *Brazen Chance* is a variant of the Adventurer-class hull design developed by Sternmetal over 300 years ago. The *Brazen Chance* was the 15th ship of that first production run, and while space-worthy, she would struggle to pass any Imperial safety inspection. This is one of the reasons why her crew is plying their wares out in the frontier region of the Gateway domain.

MINOR SCENES

#1) TRAVEL TO ERAIKAZAN

The first challenge for the group is to determine how they will get from where they were hired to the City of Eraikazan. It is roughly the same distance (~5000km) from either Starfall Capitol or Landing City (the two likely hiring points). This can be accomplished by driving (taking 1-2 days, depending on the vehicle) or by commercial air transport (for 100Cr). Ruben will be taking the latter, though if the group has their own vehicle and chooses to drive, he will insist on accompanying them. Nothing like a good road trip.

Either means of transport is fine. This is an excellent place for the Referee to describe the landscape of Starfall. Please refer to pages ## for details. It is also a good time to let the players get to know Ruben, ask questions about his past, or anything else that comes to mind. Ruben will be open and animated in his answers, trusting the group completely.

#2 MEETING THE TEAM

Once the party arrives at Eraikazan, Ruben will introduce the other members of the expedition. He will introduce Walter first as the local guide, and then, almost as an afterthought, introduce his sister, Hildegard. As she steps forward to shake the PC's hands, have them be interrupted by a Local Water Marshall asking for their identification.

As noted on page ##, Eraikazan is notorious for its strict control and monitoring of water consumption. The Water Marshals are a special branch of the local law enforcement charged with maintaining the safe supply of this precious commodity for the community. They have been granted wide powers and authority to perform their duties, and few locals will question the word of a Marshal.

In a strict system like this, corruption and graft are fairly common, and such is the case in this encounter. Water Marshall Bourne is one of the less-honorable Marshalls and sees the new-comers as likely targets for a shake-down. He will ask for their water permits, which of course they aren't likely to have. Marshal Bourne will then make a big, melodramatic scene about how much trouble the party is in while waiting for them to make him an appropriate offer to pay 'a fine'. The PC's should then make a Bribery skill check (DC 15) to determine how much is necessary to make the problem go away (in this case, 100Cr per person). Failure will result in an insult to the Marshal, who will then bluster about taking the group in and a doubling of the bribe amounts required to pacify him.

Stats are not provided for Marshal Bourne, as no party in their right mind should think to start a fight with legitimate law enforcement personnel in an open, public place.

#3) RESOLVING THE PATH

This scene should open with the group going over the route that Walter has laid out (basically a counter-clockwise path around the three cones). This is an excellent time for the group to acquire any last minute gear for the trip, especially since they now know the terrain they will be covering.

Walter will spend this time sizing up the group and the potential threat they represent to his plan. He was not keen on Ruben hiring additional staff, but felt that if he fought the decision too hard it may spook his mark. The Referee is encouraged to have Walter approach each of the PC's one-on-one discussing the various tasks they are undergoing to prepare for the journey. Questions about their pasts, skills that they have, all in the name of being better prepared for the safari.

If the group already has their gear prepared, then have them plan to start out on the next day, and during the night previous, have Walter take them out on the town. He will ask questions about the characters in terms of their opinions about things rather than for direct facts of their background. Some possibilities include:

- a) What do you think about the legend of the land phoenix?
- b) What do you like about the Third Imperium?
- c) Isn't that bar-maid cute?
- d) So what convinced you to take this job? Any regrets now that you've spent some time with "the boss"?

Again, all of these questions are aimed at sizing the group up. If at any time the PC's wish to make a Sense Motive Check on Walter, the DC is 21 (basically Walter taking 10 and adding his +11 Bluff skill). If they are successful, it will be clear that Walter has a separate agenda from the safari. If unsuccessful, then have the PC's just chalk up his behavior as being pragmatic – after all, they are complete strangers with whom he is risking his life.

As the group begins their journey, they will begin to wonder about their patron. He will be indifferent to their opinions and complaints about camping out while on safari. If the group is persistent about staying at the roadside way stations, or within the ATV, he will remind them that he is paying the bills. Walter will admit that there is little danger in the Outback, so there is no need for the group to avoid camping out under the stars. Walter doesn't actually know anything about the Outback (he was raised in a city), but if the PC's get eaten by something, then that is one problem he doesn't have to deal with later. Any PC who does know something about living in the outdoors (Survival skill check, DC15) will be suspicious of Walter's evaluation.

#4) HILDEGARD MAKES HER MOVE

This scene can happen at any time during the adventure, but is best to come up early on rather than get lost in the chaos of the final scenes. As described in her background, Hildegard has spent the majority of her life with little regard to her own needs. Over the past year, she has begun to regret these choices and resent her brother's insensitivity. The failed introduction in Scene #2 will have been the final straw.

The life-long victim of abuse and ridicule, Hildegard will over-react to any kind word or courteous deed that one of the PC's may do for her. Because of her isolation, the young woman's notion of romance is limited to holo-novels and so will extrapolate even the most normal of courtesies as romantic interest on the part of the PC. After all, they are devilishly handsome adventurers, wandering the stars and living a life of mystery, excitement, and above all, freedom.

Hildegard will begin by doing small things for the PC, such as serving them dinner, taking over camp chores, or sticking up for them if they happen to be the butt of a joke. Assuming that the PC tries to dissuade her gently, she will completely ignore what they say, lost in the depth of their eyes, or astonished that they are so close to her. If the PC is rude or abrupt, she will interpret their actions as part of a game – they're just playing hard to get.

Eventually, she will find a way to sneak into their sleeping space wearing nothing but a demure smile. The PC now faces a dilemma – how does he dissuade an obviously willing, eager, and naked woman from his bed? Will this upset his patron? (No.) Should he take advantage of the situation? What will the rest of the group say (remember that Hildegard is not an attractive female)? Who cares, after all she is a noble – perhaps the PC is looking at a chance to climb the social ladder.

Any Liaison check to persuade Hildegard to return to her own sleeping space faces a daunting DC of 26 (Base 15 + situation bonus of +10 and +1 for Hildegard's Wisdom stat). The situation bonus is based on Hildegard's lifelong desperation for attention.

Physical action against Hildegard will also be difficult – she is a big and strong woman with a fairly single-minded purpose.

While skill checks and stats can be used to resolve this situation, the real challenge is one of role-playing. The actions taken with respect to Hildegard's offer should be based on the PC's character. Hildegard is not just a nameless face he will be able to leave behind, but someone he will be spending the next 3-4 weeks with. The Referee may choose to give the PC a favorable situation bonus on any checks depending on particularly good role-playing.

Referees are also discouraged from making Hildegard appear pathetic and helpless. This is not a chance to foster acts of misogyny (abuse of women) from the PC's, nor the players. She is a human being facing a crisis. We all have been lonely at some points in our lives. If the PC treats Hildegard dispassionately, remind the character how it felt when they were alone. Even if the PC's concept would tend toward being mean to Hildegard in some way, use this scene as chance for the PC to realize how hurtful their actions are, and perhaps a turning point for them to change.

#5) A SNAKE IN THE GRASS

While traveling through the wilderness, Walter will have to make a call to his allies aboard the Brazen Chance on a weekly basis to give them a status update. He will usually wait until it is his time to stand watch while the others are asleep. Basically have the party make Listen checks against a DC of 20 once each week. The PC's can receive a +4 bonus to this check if they are already suspicious of Walter.

Depending how the party chooses to confront Walter, he will try and explain that he is just an undercover Imperial scout. He will flash a badge and show some of his scout equipment. He will claim to have been sent to survey Starfall and determine if the Land Phoenix exists. Any PC trying to Sense Motive on Walter to see if he is lying will face a formidable DC of 26 (Walters +11 Bluff skill, Walter 'taking 20', but a –5 modifier as the group is suspicious).

If asked to whom he was talking, Walter will claim that he was just filing a log to be dispatched back to his field office. Anyone trying to trace the call (assuming they have the equipment) must make a T/Communications check vs DC 20 to learn that the call was bounced off a satellite and directed to Tripartite Highport (which fits his story). They will not be able to learn of the Brazen Chance.

#6) A BREAKTHROUGH

As the team reaches the valley indicated on the map, they will encounter a strange rock formation. It looks like some kind of 8 meter statue of a creature lying on its side. The curious aspect about it is that it has drawn some of the desert carrion feeder to it. These will readily disperse as the group closes in.

What they will see is that inside of the rocky exterior is the remains of a living creature. Walter will say that he has never seen anything like it, while Ruben will jubilantly exclaim that they have found a Land Phoenix. Any kind of Search check (DC20 for just Search, DC 15 for a Wilderness Lore check if someone has the Tracking feat) will reveal tracks leading away from the creature, suggesting where it had come from. The good news is that the trail is easy to follow – the bad news is that they will have to proceed on foot.

At this point the Referee should make sure the group is taking sufficient provisions for the hike they are about to

undertake. A survival check DC 10 will point out any obvious flaws in their inventory. Remember that each adult will require a minimum of 2 liters of water per day of active hiking.

Also, because of the terrain, the group will only be able to hike about 1.5 km per hour. This means it will require several days to hike from the mouth of the valley up the slope to the plateau in Scene #7.

#7) BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

After several days of hiking, the group is likely to be tired and hungry, unless they had all the provisions they needed. If not, the Referee should note any penalties that the PC's are operating under due to their lack of food or water. Any armor worn by the PC's will become too warm to be comfortably worn. If the PC's decide to keep it on, they will face 2x any penalties to active skills (like Climb, Jump, etc.).

As they reach a plateau, they will be greeted with the smell of sulfur as they approach an active vent. It is within this vent that a Land Phoenix makes its home. As the group approaches, the creature will emerge, curious as to the noise being made on the surface.

If the group does nothing, then the Phoenix is likely to ignore them and move off to a favorite lava pool a few hundred meters away.

If the group approaches the beast cautiously, it will stand still and take no action until they are within 3 meters. At that point, it will decide that its latest meal has come to it, and it will attempt to bite the nearest PC.

If the group decides to shoot first, then they will alarm the Phoenix and face a tougher challenge, though an early lucky shot may be the real difference in this fight.

Once the combat is complete, Ruben will enthusiastically thank the PCs for their service. He is now ready to return back to Eraikazan.

#8) A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

It is important for this scene to happen almost immediately after #7. When the group encounters the Phoenix, Walter will have activated his pocket phone, signaling the Brazen Chance to come and get their specimen. It will take the Chance 6 hours to move from Tripartite Highport and descend to the PCs current location.

It is assumed that the group will be camped out near the scene of their battle to tend to their wounded and to rest, before beginning their trek back down the slope. If they have someone on watch, then a Listen check DC 10 is needed to hear the approach of the Chance. Otherwise this Listen check goes to DC 15 if there is no sentry.

Fortunately, the *Brazen Chance* does not possess any ship-scale weapons, so its crew will have to disembark and confront the PCs personally. The bad news is that they have already left the Chance and are approaching via air raft from the other direction, hoping to take the group by surprise. The PCs can make a Spot check DC 20 to notice the approaching air raft, otherwise they spend the first round flat-footed.

The crew of the *Brazen Chance* are not interested in prisoners, even the Somaars. They enter the scene with guns blazing. The rocky terrain of the area can provide some cover behind which the PC's can fight, but the crew of the Chance will have similar opportunities. During the combat, the Chance will land on a nearby outcropping via autopilot – there is no one aboard her.

PLOT KEYS

There are three significant events or keys that the party must encounter to complete this adventure. They are:

- 1) PCs Learn that Walter is not what he seems. This helps to put the group on their guard around Walter and not to blindly trust him. If they don't obtain this plot key, then it is likely that they will be fodder in the final conflict with the *Brazen Chance* as Walter will be able to readily betray the group.
- 2) Finding the lair of a Land Phoenix. Without this event, then the crew of the Chance is never called nor is Ruben going to end the safari.
- 3) Dealing with the Crew of the Brazen Chance. This is the final key, with which the official adventure ends and the Referee can then determine how to wrap things up. Suggestions are listed below in the Concluding or Continuing the Adventure Section.

CHAPTERS

While the EPIC storytelling system is intended to allow for random ordering of the various scenes of the adventure, Starfall Safari tends to be a rather linear plot. The scenes should unfold in the order in which they are listed in the Minor Scenes section. The one exception is Scene #4, which is more dependent on PC behavior and general events. However, no Referee should be assured that his/her group will follow any path precisely as it is laid down, and should be prepared to improvise. .

CONCLUDING OR CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

Successful completion of the adventure should net 2000 xp for each PC. Additionally, the Referee should award an additional 500 xp to the PC who was targeted by Hildegard if the PC came up with a generally positive solution. The Referee is encouraged to award any other good role-playing with 100-500 xp awards, especially if it helped to advance the adventure.

There are several points for continuing the story beyond this adventure. They are listed below:

- 1) What is the group going to do with the Brazen Chance? They certainly have the option to claim it under Starfall's legal system. This could mean their ticket off this rock. They won't have a mortgage, but lots of the ship's systems are held together by duct tape and baling wire, or the TL12 equivalents. If they already have a ship and wish to sell the Chance, they will be disappointed to learn that few will want to buy the nearly broken down hull, with the highest offer being MCr6. If they wish to keep it, then they have just acquired their very own money pit.
- 2) What do they do with their Land Phoenix carcass? What do they do with their knowledge of where Land Phoenix live? To whom do they sell this information?
- 3) Do they wish to continue working with Ruben Somaar. It is possible that he could become a full-time patron of the group, funding their operations as long as he gets to come with. This would be quite helpful if the PC's decide to keep the Chance.
- 4) Why did Walter hook up with Ruben? Was it just lick, or was he hired by someone. Who would do that? If these questions aren't answered, Ruben will offer to hire the team to find out. Possibilities include another family member who is jealous of all the attention that Ruben gets (Hildegard isn't the only one who resents Ruben's popularity).
- 5) What will Hildegard do? She has taken a chance, and depending on the reaction of her intended, she may feel embarrassed or free. Perhaps she will join the team, if there is a spot for her. Or maybe she returns to her sullen behavior traveling with her brother.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure should provide sufficient challenge to most adventuring parties, depending on how much equipment, specifically military hardware, they can access. If the Referee has allowed the characters access to automatic weapons, or even fusion guns, then the combats listed in the adventure will be much more easily overcome. If this is the case, then introduce a 3-5 more Land Phoenixes to Scene 7, depending on group size, and equip the Chance with two laser turrets (doing 2d6 base damage, but scales to 12d6 vs. humanoids). This means that the Chance is likely to be involved in the combat in Scene 8, meaning it will have that much more damage to be repaired.

If the group has access to Battle Dress or similar high tech equipment that will give them an overwhelming edge, then the Referee is encouraged to use the adventure more as a back-story rather than as a direct challenge for the party. Perhaps they are a mercenary company hired by the Somaar family to find and return Ruben to his homeworld. Perhaps they are bounty hunters or even Imperial marines trying to track down Walter Burghoff for the murder of an Imperial Scout. They could simply be part of the security force of Tripartite Highport who decided to follow the Brazen Chance down to the surface because of its erratic behavior and checkered reputation.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: SHUTTLE PILOT

Required Skills: Pilot, Vessel/Ship's boat
Required Equipment: Vac Suit

PLAYERS' INFORMATION:

The players are dirtside on Starfall's First landing D-class feeder Downport. A hurricane has been brewing off the coast of this peninsular port for several hours, and the edge of the storm is already over the place. The Players may be on liberty and have to get "topside" or miss their shipping out window in a few hours. Star Administration Authority won't allow their shuttles down till it blows over, and considers anyone lifting off planetside to do so at their own risk.

There is one spacecraft warming up on the pads, despite the weather, with an owner crazy enough to risk a takeoff. The ship belonged to a Vargr Traveller known as Khaergr Maghiz. Like the players, Khaergr has to make it to the Highport for a deadline. Problem is, his copilot is in the drunk tank (again), and his engineer eloped of with some Lawyer fellow. The "Miss Pristine" is one of two cutters owned by the 800dton Jupiter-class merchant ship "Fortune's Fool", and has been downside speculating, awaiting pick up. He needs a co-pilot, a comms/sensor man, and an engineer. His 29dton cargo module has only 5dton of mail, and six stainless steel suitcases, but he can drop in passenger seats to the floor out of their wall. Problem is, the "Miss Pristine", is anything but...She's a hand me down TL-15 cutter with spares and patches in her parts all the way down to TL-9. The cabin and the engineer's station is air tight, but the cargo module "leaks" he says, so passengers & crew have to "suit up". Khaergr's strategy is to launch just before the eye of the hurricane is upon them, and shoot up to the orbital station through it, risky, because timing it will be an eyeball call, SAA **will not** transmit any telemetry while the storm is ongoing. Just before warm up, his engineer runs up, wet and bedraggled, crying her "fiancée" jilted her at the altar. Wanda Perkins is whipsmart at engines but has no luck with men. She is too upset to do her job, and so rides up in a Vac Suit in the cargo compartment, red-eyed and miserable.

Once docked at Tripartite High port station, Khaergr thanks the PC's, and asks they take Ms Perkins to dinner nearby while he drops off the mail, and gets some cash to pay them for their help. The players have six hours to spend before they too depart. Ms Perkins forgets something at the cutter, and goes back for it, shortly after Khaergr rejoins them at the eatery/ cafe/ what have you. Khaergr offers to pick up the tab, as a way of saying thanks, and offers 100cr each PC who manned a station. No charge for those who "rode up". Then he gets a call that makes his fur stand on end. Someone has abducted Ms Perkins, and "wants the money back or she dies. Any SAA security, or Star Marshals and

she gets spaced from an airlock you have one hour, or she walks in space.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION:

Khaergr has already sold the speculated cargo, and has filled in the time with taking on courier work for a local warlord and First Landing City councilman, a certain Mr. Hiisin Yukowa. At 3 Gees thrust, it is a twenty minute shot to the station's orbit, considered hazardous due to very high winds initially (Ref's are encouraged to make this as scary and bumpy a ride as possible for the players-roll dice ominously, describe wind whistling through the patched hull, etc.). Khaergr's fee for transporting Mr. Yukowa's six suitcases to the drop off point is a mere 1500cr. Inside them, some 36 MCr in 100's and 50cr bills (wrinkled/ used). This is not the first charter trip Khaergr has done for Mr. Yukowa. Khaergr was to drop it off for the off world money-launderer who works for Yukowa elsewhere (preferably Jump-1 away at least).

One of Mr. Yukowa's upper level underlings, a certain Mr. Vasily Vaskhuunen has decided to get one last pay raise in and cut out and run for the frontiers of the GTC worlds. Khaergr really does care about Ms Perkins' safety and will beg the PC's to help him get her back. He leads them to the six wall lockers where he stashed the cases, and gets them out. At no time will he spill the beans what's in them. Arranging the rendezvous will be at spacecraft hangar berth (pressurized).

RESOLUTION: (1D6)

1. All is as stated. Khaergr and his engineer are in the proverbial rock and hard place between two criminal hard noses, and really need help -- fast.
2. Khaergr is actually an agent of the Tripartite Star Marshal's Agency, and this is a sting operation going down, save the bad guys (Vashkhuunen) have his partner, Agent Gwendolyn Ghaanesh. Vashkhuunen's thugs killed the other two of his team; he dares not lose her too.
3. Khaergr is the actual embezzler, and has swapped broken thruster plate parts wrapped in foam & bubble wrap into the cases. The money is stashed elsewhere, in a dirty laundry bag, behind the cutter's makeshift fresher.
4. Khaergr was set up by Mr. Yukowa to flush out Vashkhuunen's treachery. The money is still in the cases, but the cases are made of hi-tech memory-plastic explosives. If they are opened without the key, the internal fuse will count down in fifteen minutes and detonate.
5. Khaergr is smarter than he looks; he swapped the cash, and called Mr. Yukowa for reinforcements. He allows the players to deliver the cases, but will go along to get Ms Perkins back.
6. Any combination of the above.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: THE DERELICT DEAL

Required Skills: Various

Required Equipment: Starship

PLAYERS' INFORMATION:

The PCs are about to close the sale on a particular gadget/widget they've been after, when the merchant asks if they've ever traveled through the XXXX system. The referee should determine a suitable system. The Trader tells of a derelict they saw on their journey here. The XXXX system is a few parsecs away. The Trader offers homemade holoivid shots of the silhouette of the derelict ship as it glides by the primary. The vessel appears to be an Imperial Gormandocy class Destroyer (3000 dton range, TL-14). The system is "Suitless" (i.e., has no gas giant). Offers the film, and information for being such a nice customer, and asks only a 5% finders fee if there's salvage.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION:

The TL-14 Gormandocy is a 3000 dton escort for convoys in the border regions of the Imperium. No longer a frontline Destroyer, the class is being replaced by a new class, but its armament (a mix of beam laser turrets/missile turret/sandcasters) makes it an admirable convoy escort. This particular ship has been missing since the Sydite Wars, and has been written off as Missing, Fate Unknown. The referee is free to use this as a ruse, or as a legitimate site for the wreck.

The ship's name is INS *Stalwart*. She boasts ten triple laser turrets, ten dual missile turrets, and ten triple sandcaster turrets. No spinal weapons or meson screens.

There are opposing Pirate gangs operating in this general area. The first is the Local trouble, made up of humans and Sydites primarily; the second is composed of Raidermarch Privateers.

RESOLUTION: (1D6}

1. All is as stated. Ship is a 3000 dton Gormandocy class DD (TL-14, Jump-3/6G), and is battle damaged. She made her last jump to here, crew abandoned ship. Descendants are living marooned on one of the nearby planets (X-354210-2). There is no life aboard the ship and no power either.
2. All is as stated. Ship is a derelict, though her crew were able to enter low berth and remain frozen as prisoners in thrall of the Pirates who are awaiting someone with a workable jump drive to cannibalize. The canny trader has several crew members aboard as hostages, and barely escaped with his/her ship. (The derelict Vessel still has M-drive 4) and all of her laser weaponry intact.

3. The whole thing is a fraud, and a Pirate gang's sponsored trap (or a ploy by the Raider March/Solomani Confederacy Commerce raiding forces). The trader is also a Pirate agent seeking to capture someone from this area for intelligence purposes. Twice the number of the PCs vessels will be waiting in ambush in this system. (Minimum of two).
4. As in option 3, but the trader is a dupe, and was sold this film and story by a Pirate agent to use elsewhere. The Pirates are very real, and have also a small remote missile pod containing 10 semi-independent missiles to fire at any ship that slows to dock with the wreck. The pod is located on a nearby asteroid and is equipped with short-ranged passive sensors.
- 5-6. As in option 3, but the ship was battle damaged, but is now a converted Pirate base; some of this Trader's crew were captured, including this merchant's Astrogator /Lover, The opposing gang of Pirates learned of this debacle, and saw a way to profit from it. They will allow the PCs to disable the Ship-base, then swoop in with missiles and three to four ships lying doggo in the debris field to seize all the swag.

PART 3: THE WORLDS OF THE STARFALL CLUSTER

The Starfall Cluster contains ten worlds and their star systems. This chapter presents nine of them in some depth, along with adventures set on them.

THE WORLD OF IDAM LEE

Idam Lee 2410 A410849-E Na 604 X M3 V M4 D

PHYSICAL

The Idam Lee system is a binary. The primary, Idam Prime, is orbited by four gas giants and several rocky worlds, with only Idam Lee lying in the Life Zone. Idam Minor is a red dwarf star orbiting very far from Prime. Idam Minor has a single rocky planet and a rather two dense planetoid belts orbiting it.

The mainworld, Idam Lee, is a small, light-gravity world, it has little in the way of an atmospheric envelope and almost no surface water. More importantly, Idam Lee lacks heavy elements. The planet's surface is pocked by meteor craters and the occasional dormant volcano. The scenery is harsh and jagged, creating a forbidding environment that poses significant hazards to travellers.

What little water there is on Idam Lee is found as ice in deep valleys, or underground. Settlement patterns were dictated by the availability of water and also by the difficulty of finding suitable terrain to build on. Thus for the purposes of most visitors, Idam Lee can be considered to consist entirely of urban terrain, since there is little need for most visitors to leave the cities.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Idam Lee's trace atmosphere is too thin for humans to breathe (a suit breach means slow rather than quick death, but death all the same), but a few very hardy creatures have managed to develop. Much of the plant life (such as it is) on-planet takes the form of lichens and fungi, and these carpets of hardy plant growth provide havens for a few species of beetle-like crawling creatures. There is nothing larger native to the world, though the hydroponic gardens and enclosed nature reserves do contain a number of offworld species, and some have escaped to establish themselves in the piping and wiring of the cities.

WORLD OVERVIEW

Idam Lee is one of the most important worlds in the region, though it was originally passed over in favor of more welcoming and economically promising worlds. Idam Lee was explored by the early settlers who came to the cluster, but was not the site of anything larger than an outpost until

around -200. At that time, development of the far companion star's extensive planetoid belts began, and the decision was taken to build a starport to provide services to the belting operations. The single planet in the Minor system has a very eccentric orbit and is subject to extremes of heat and cold. It was deemed unsuitable for colonization for this reason.

An outpost already existed on Idam Lee, and it was decided to expand the existing infrastructure as a marshalling point to facilitate the building of a port in each of the belts. However, it was obvious that the belts would need several ports for efficient exploitation, and arguments as to which was to be the main starport dragged on for years. Belting operations were also begun in the less lucrative but still viable Trojan clusters orbiting ahead of and behind the gas giants Udar Ala and Udar Lee, and mining outposts were set up on the moons of those worlds. In the meantime the temporary facilities at Idam Lee gradually became more permanent.

What started out as a bare rock pad and tiny prefabricated facility grew as the belting operation became more important to the system's economy. Ore storage facilities were built and later processing gear was brought in; the base was expanded and made permanent. People settled on Idam Lee as port workers, shopkeepers, entertainers and starship technicians. Then came the administrators, and suddenly there was a world government of sorts.

Thus Idam Lee became the mainworld of the system, a central base from which vessels made the long journey out to the far companion - mostly by using an in-system Jump - and where the various mining concerns and brokerages could maintain a single office. The various fledgling ports of the Far Belts remained rudimentary facilities, with produce shipped to Idam Lee for sale or trans-shipping to the other worlds of the cluster. Much of the ore mined in the Far Belts is shipped home in unmanned, robotic freighters. This method is slow, but cheaper than using Jump-capable ships.

By Year 0, bulk ore freighters and supply ships were coming into Idam Lee Downport every day, serving a burgeoning mining industry that had grown beyond the far companion's belts to include sites on outsystem rockball worlds and gas giant moons. A population of tens of thousands now lived and worked on Idam Lee, and a sense of national identity began to develop.

By this time, several outlying communities existed. These were mostly specialized factory-towns, producing food, electronic components and other staples of the world's industry. Meanwhile, the Downport had become a vast installation served by a number of subsidiary fields, and an orbital component was under construction.

Orland High (as Idam Lee's orbital component became known) was instrumental in the development of the world as a nation-state. It became the jumping-off point for starships headed outcluster to Coreward, and considerable revenue

came in through it. Most of this money was passed straight on to various offworld investors, which irritated the world's citizens.

Increased revenue and trade meant an increase in piracy, and soon it became necessary to station patrol ships in the system. The cheapest way to do this was to construct system defence boats and combat craft on-planet and base them out of the Highport. Thus was born the beginnings of a navy.

Despite some rough times, Idam Lee gained in prosperity throughout the first half of the millennium. The yards became a center for shipbuilding, industry picked up despite the world's lack of resources, and more and more people came to Idam Lee to settle and grab a slice of the pie. However, all was not well.

Disputes between mining companies and among the investors increased in frequency, hitting a peak around 550. The world economy nosedived, and despite some determined attempts to create a lasting and workable solution, matters were set to become worse.

A group of investors, fearful that the bubble was about to burst, decided to act decisively, and began what amounted to a trade war against their rivals. For twenty years, armed mining ships and small parties of corporate thugs fought sporadic battles over territory and resources. Idam Lee's economy went into a flat spin with apparently little chance of recovery.

In 580, the Independent Idam Movement (IIM). The Movement was centered around a group of investors and industrialists who had brought their operations to Idam Lee some years before. Some suggest that this was a deliberate ploy to set up their coup. Whether there was a masterplan or not, the Movement portrayed itself as the legitimate business interests of the native Idam Lee population, and led a loud but initially non-violent campaign against the "offworld" companies.

As the IIM gained in popularity, it gained a rather inept following of would-be urban guerrillas, who failed to make any impression on the corporate forces fighting the trade war. The IIM was discounted as a noisy nuisance, right up until it was ready to strike.

The IIM had been quietly training up strike teams and combat units, and had gained the support of elements of the system patrol squadron. In a series of lightning strikes, the IIM seized part of the Highport, all of the Downport and much of the world's critical industry. Fighting was heavy in places (much of the Highport was damaged) but it quickly became obvious that the IIM was firmly in control of the world's vital locations.

The IIM became a de facto government at that point, and by all accounts it was a nasty one. "Offworld" firms and independent beltors were run out of the system – often at gunpoint – as the IIM consolidated its hold on the local economy and industry. Law enforcement became a boom industry, and a small fleet of warships was built by the increasingly paranoid governors.

The IIM imploded in 587, as the various leaders jockeyed for power. As the infighting intensified, the urban guerrillas returned, this time seasoned and experienced and much more effective than before. Bloody revolution swept away the remnants of the IIM and replaced it with a People's Council for the Interim that was possibly even worse than the IIM.

The People's Council for the Interim held power for some 250 years, in one form and another, developing a powerful economy and broad technological base at the expense of oppression and paranoia.

The Interim finally came to a close when a new force arose. A junior officer in the People's Navy of Idam Lee (as it was then styled) led a brilliant insurrection among the armed forces, which resulted in the toppling of the Interim Council in yet more civil war. Lieutenant-Commander Alisha Styles was quickly "elected" to the post of dictator, beginning what could have been another period of fascism among the oppressed people of Idam Lee. But then, a curious thing happened.

Commander Styles began a series of liberal reforms, amending the constitution to permanently allocate money from government funds to programs such as art, welfare and social programs. A house of representatives was created, and free elections were held (for the first time in world history) to fill it. Styles created the trappings of democracy, as if to legitimize her rule, and genuinely improved the lot of the typical citizen. The nature of Idam Lee's society was such that democracy had to be rammed down the citizens' throats at gunpoint, but when it was done, Commander Styles stood down and handed control of the world to its people.

It took some years for the citizenry to get used to their increased freedom and responsibility for their own government, but by the early 880s, Idam Lee was a truly democratic state. Attempts to hijack the democratic process were opposed by new laws, and by a shadowy group calling itself "Social Conscience", which was linked to the assassination of several dubious political figures.

Today, Idam Lee has a century of democratic tradition behind it, yet retains the memory of oppression and the struggle to be free of it. Children are taught from an early age about the need to balance power and responsibility, and the need for checks and balances to ensure that those in power lead in the best interests of the people as well as in their name.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The population of Idam Lee, numbering some 6 hundred million, dwell in semi-underground cities nestling in valleys or old meteor craters. The usual pattern is for a wide bowl of rock to be excavated and the city to be built as a series of large building complexes within it. Some complexes are connected by tubes along or above the surface; most are linked by underground tunnels through which maglev railroads run. Some important facilities are situated entirely underground.

To the typical citizen, this is of course perfectly normal. Most people never even consider that there is an “outside” at all. They live in one complex, take the maglev to another to work, and very occasionally board a grav vehicle in a sealed docking bay to travel to another sealed bay in a different city. Only a handful of scientists, security troops, maintenance personnel, port workers and vehicle operators go outside.

Society is moderate and conservative, with many laws to ensure reasonable and considerate behavior on the part of citizens, and many more to maintain the balance of power. Law enforcement is routinely carried out by an unarmed police force, which can call on specialist units equipped to a military standard at need.

Technology is all-pervasive in Idam Lee’s society. Even relatively poor individuals have a high standard of living and access to considerable amounts of labor-saving and leisure technology. Educational standards are similarly high, and the technical academies that once turned out corporate drones to serve in the world-machine now train experts who are greatly in demand across the sector. Many offworld students come to study at the academies, most of which are situated in specialized university-towns. All university and academy courses include mandatory citizenship education (even for offworlders) and a program of study into the arts, even on the most technical of courses. The avowed intention of Idam Lee’s education system is to create intelligent, responsible people first, and well-educated ones second.

Government and representation is carried out through a series of layers. Representatives from each interest group or business, and for each housing area, sit on a panel at the city level, which in turn elects representatives to the Planetary Forum. The Forum has a number of elected officers – President, Ministers and so on, but powers are balanced between the executive and representative groups. Governmental process is thus rather slow, but this is seen as a good thing given the alternatives.

Despite the amount of law that governs their lives, the citizens of Idam Lee see themselves as free people, and jealously guard that privilege. Various “watchdog” groups exist, and satisfactory service on such a government-restricting body is a necessity for election as a representative to the government.

Idam Lee also has a period of mandatory public service or education for all citizens. The requirement is fairly gentle – indeed, most citizens take the option of a 2-year college course and gain qualifications into the bargain, but the period of service helps build the sense of social responsibility so prevalent in Idam Lee society.

The legacy of the many revolutions to wrack Idam Lee’s society lives on in the form of numerous “monitoring” group that obsessively watch what governmental officials and businessmen are up to. Most of these groups are simply concerned citizens, but it is thought that Social Conscience and other groups like it still exist, and that they maintain a combat arm against the day that democracy must again be torn bloody from the hands of tyrants.

MILITARY AND SECURITY

As previously noted, Idam Lee’s internal police force is unarmed (in the sense of only carrying non-lethal and self-defense equipment). However, the Starport Customs Service and police backup/planetary security units are equipped with powerful weaponry.

Idam Lee possesses little in the way of ground forces, though there are numerous planetary security units barracked throughout the cities. These are mainly equipped as light infantry, for urban combat within the cities, and to act as disaster relief forces in the event of a catastrophe.

Planetary Security does maintain some Protected Forces infantry (equipped with Vac suits and combat armor) for service aboard the highport and out on the planetary surface. The latter force is backed up by light grav armor and artillery, and is equipped with the best that TL 14 can provide. Planetary Security also crews numerous defense installations, including missile launchers and at least one deep-site meson gun. These weapons are the last line of defense for the world; its security normally rests in the hands of what is now formally known as the Republican Space Fleet of Idam Lee, or just the Fleet.

The Fleet operates mostly non-Jump capable craft including gunships and 2-400 ton System Defense Boats (SDBs). A few larger craft, titled Monitors, are operated. Some of these are nothing more than oversized patrol boats, often carrying ground troops and small craft, equipped for long patrols in the outsystem, on the robotic freight routes or among the planetoid belts. Others are destroyer-sized vessels mounting heavy armor and bay weapons, capable of seeing off almost any raider.

The Fleet possesses a few Jump-capable warships. Most are Jump-1 Outsystem Patrol Ships, which mostly use their Jump drives to reach distant parts of the system quickly but which can undertake missions beyond the system. What little power projection capability Idam Lee possesses rests in the hulls of a flotilla of 400 dton patrol cruisers and a handful

of larger vessels. These ships mainly undertake commerce protection missions and show the Republican banner in neighboring systems.

TRADE, COMMERCE AND INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

As one of the highest-tech worlds in the region, Idam Lee is a major exporter of technological equipment including plant and machinery, robots and communications equipment. Arms sales are controlled and limited by law, though it is possible to buy advanced weapons, with the appropriate licenses.

Idam Lee's industrial output is modest considering its potential, but the high-tech factories are quite capable of meeting local needs with enough left over to export. Some equipment made on Idam Lee makes it as far as the Imperial Trade Cluster, to Coreward in Ley Sector.

The shipyards at Orland High are extremely high-technology, and as such their products are in constant demand. Idam Lee is quite happy to build warships for legitimate (and friendly) world governments, and in addition undertakes a great deal of commercial shipbuilding along with the occasional private custom job. Starship manufacture, and crew training, is an important part of the world's economy and as such is subject to strict quality control laws.

In addition to the world's industrial exports, much revenue comes in through the impressive starport, which is still the gateway to the cluster from Coreward. Orland High is very busy, though less ships proceed to Idam Lee Downport since there is no need for them to do so. A regular shuttle service allows cargo and personnel transfer if necessary, but for most ships the palatial facilities at Orland High are entirely satisfactory.

A healthy market and brokerage exists at the highport, with considerable volumes of cargo changing hands in a constant stream.

Embassies are maintained at Orland High by the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium, the Federate Republic and the Imperium, along with several individual non-aligned worlds. Idam Lee is essentially uninterested in anything other than trade beyond the system and stays out of regional politics as much as possible. Relations with most other powers are characterized by a cordial neutrality. In the event of a dispute, negotiation and occasional trade sanctions are the normal means of resolution.

ADVENTURES IN THE IDAM LEE SYSTEM

AMBER ZONE: A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

SITUATION

Having completed customs formalities at Orland High, the party set about enjoying the palatial facilities for which the high port is famous. The intention is to seek out some light weight, high value trade goods that would be worth a run around the block. After an uninspiring afternoon and a night of conviviality they return to their vessel. There they discover the ship's anti-hijack facility has been disabled and that they have a visitor, a female of apparent middle years. She is unarmed, and introduces herself as Beniji Kaserlin. Her manner is decidedly 'no-nonsense'. The party, she all but demands, are to aid her in an important service. In return she offers a number of high value archaeological items. These would fetch a high price in the markets of Eda or Lunarmise.

Beniji Kaserlin reveals herself to be a potentate of a movement operating on Idam Lee. Called "Social Conscience", the movement's charter is the preservation of a free society and to ensure the continued absence of despotism, tyranny and totalitarianism. Beniji, suspects the movement has been infiltrated. She fears that SC itself has become a target. She wishes to turn matters to the movement's advantage.

She needs a group of individuals, offworlders, unknowns, with mercenary motivations and no Idam Lee connections. The mission is to find proof positive that three named individuals are, in fact, members of the proscribed organization called RIIM, the Real Independent Idam Movement. She can provide little by way of leads other than the individual's names and places of employ. She suggests a good place to start would be to do some background checks followed by a little second storey work.

Kalath Minagoran, Beniji explains, is a potentate of SC and is a senior customs official in Orland High. She suspects him of being a member of an RIIM cell operating in the high port. Any computer records showing favorable customs treatment of any known RIIM activists would be sufficient. Any other RIIM intelligence would be extremely useful.

Arion Krell has a day job as a weapons trainer in the Idam Lee Navy. Beniji reveals that his other role is as a lieutenant in the "Social Conscience" secret combat arm known as the Hand of the Justice (colloquially known as **The Fist**). The Fist's primary purpose is to be ready for the day when freedom must again be defended from within. In the meantime there is plenty to do including the elimination

of demagogues, would be dictators and anyone that would jeopardize the greater stability and societal freedoms so far achieved. In Krell's case, Beniji suspects him to be weak and a danger to the movement's other members. She suspects him of having been the betrayer of a number of recently murdered "Social Conscience" agents. Any information link him to the killings, or to the killers, or directly with RIIM would suffice. His quarters, she suggests, is probably a good place to start.

Linka Molliakoi is a minister in the Church of Celestial Consciousness and intelligence analyst for "Social Conscience". She sees most information gathered by "Social Conscience". She operates out of her temple in Styles Square, the cultural hub of the crater city of Alisha Planetia. A wily old fox, according to Beniji, Linka is unlikely to be easy to reveal. The temple is a good place to start but the best results could well be achieved from checking out her associates. Care is cautioned as her tendrils run deep and wide in Idam Lee society.

RESOLUTION

"Social Conscience" has indeed been infiltrated by agents of the radical terrorist organization called the Real Independent Idam Movement. The RIIM (known to the media as 'Rhyme') has as its stated aim the return of the principals of the IIM founders for the good of all true sons and daughters of Idam Lee. Only through leadership of the strong can Idam Lee become truly great.

The aim of the infiltrators is twofold. Firstly, they wish to ensure that the efforts of "Social Conscience" to hinder RIIM activities are rendered impotent. Secondly, it wishes to publicly discredit "Social Conscience" and all it stands for.

Kalath Minagoran already knows that an off-world group have been hired by someone within "Social Conscience". Her bureaucratic efforts to frustrate them will be truly legendary. When she discovers that they have a ship in port (and she will), they will find themselves tied up in bureaucratic knots for months. If things go bad for her, she will orchestrate a plant of contraband. An arrest warrant will see the party out of the way for quite some time unless they already have hard evidence against Minagoran.

Arion Krell has a RIIM mission to frustrate the efforts of The Fist. He has been warned that a group seeks out RIIM members but knows little else. Cut off from his RIIM chain of command for long periods he is decidedly uncertain and even edgy. A number of navy people are growing suspicious. His "Social Conscience" fellows fear his betrayal. His RIIM handlers fear his cowardice. He doesn't know it, but his days are numbered. At the appropriate time (when the player characters are at hand) an assassin will kill Krell. Pre-established evidence will point to the player characters

Linka Molliakoi has masterfully saved quite a few RIIM members from the clutches of The Fist. She is aware that

Arion Krell's position is a threat. Ironically, her superiors in "Social Conscience" have warned her that Krell can no longer be trusted. An off-world RIIM operative will arrive in a few days to eliminate that little loose end. The player characters' activities will provide an excellent opportunity for this agent to deflect blame and establish a frame-up.

Finally, if the mission succeeds, Beniji Kaserlin will hand over a collection of archaeological artefacts. These will fetch between $1d6+4 \times 10,000\text{Cr}$. The party will also have made a seriously influential friend.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: EXPORT LICENSE

Required Skills: electronics, computer, bluff

Required Equipment: None

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The party is approached by a well dressed middle aged individual of rotund and corpulent proportions. He explains that he has a consignment of goods for export to Eda. They are, however, bound in the high port customs lockup. His complete fortune is locked up in these goods and he faces ruin unless they can be released. He tried 'negotiating' with a customs official, one Kalath Minagoran, but to little avail.

The merchant, who calls himself "Beori Misanak", wants the individuals to acquire, "on loan", one of the customs scepter from the customs headquarters on the high port. He will provide a duplicate device and needs an electronics expert to transfer the security codes to the copy from the original. He then requires the borrowed scepter to be returned. With the duplicate he will be able to electronically swipe his pallets and be quickly on his way.

The party are offered Cr1000 each to deliver the original scepter and an additional Cr 1000 to return it so that no-one is any the wiser. He is adamant that this task is as vital as acquiring the copy in the first case. Without a willingness to return it, there will be no deal. He will double the offer if this is what it takes.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The acquisition will require careful planning and observation to find the opportunity to slip the security screen around the customs offices. The referee is responsible for floor plans and layouts. Ensure many security features are provided, pressure plates, beams, biometric scans, heat sensors, DNA probes, cameras, holographic comparators, micro-densitometers to detect masses of 100Kg+ in motion within the building etc.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

- 1-2 All is as planned. The scepter acquisition and return are difficult, but eventually accomplished. Once the crates have been swiped, the merchant wipes the codes from the duplicate wand declaring it a dangerous thing with which to be found.
3. The wands are keyed to individual DNA signatures. It will be necessary to fabricate a false DNA "glove" from the real user's skin tissue in order to be able to use the duplicate device.
4. As 3, but a further retinal scan and voice analysis are performed. The retinal scan is compared against holographic base lines. Photographic impressions of the required retina will not suffice. The real eye and a lot of ingenuity will be needed, but only for a short time.

5. As 4 but the highport suffers a total gravitic failure during the operation.
6. The merchant is a criminal wide boy. He will hightail it with the duplicate scepter. To further ensure his successful getaway he will rat on the party to the law as they are returning with the original customs scepter.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: INDUSTRIALIST

Required Skills: none

Required Equipment: Vac Suits

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

While doing some provisioning at the highport, one of the party is approached by a service droid. The droid hands one of the party a small locked flight case and says, in a low voice, "Styles Square, Alicia Planetia. Noon, tomorrow. Bring the product. You will receive further instructions on arrival". It trundles off and says no more. Interrogation is useless and capture and disassembly, etc. will reveal that a message was delivered electronically from an anonymous source. Unless opened correctly, the case will destroy its contents.

The trip to Alicia Planetia would normally be by public transport grav vehicle. The journey to Styles Square would be by maglev followed by travellerator. On arrival, the party will be approached by a street cleaning droid. He will inform them to deliver the unopened case to one Graznid Shoriin. He is to be found at a prospecting site three hundred kilometers to the south west, outside. In return, the party can share Cr3000.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The case is a full of scientific surveys of the outer planetoid belt. The job is one of industrial espionage. The droid will not be bargained with and should the party refuse to accept the task they will be left with the case. The police will be informed immediately. In minutes the party will be under arrest on charges of corruption.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

- 1-2 All is as planned. Outside, the journey is treacherous. There are ravines, rockslides, suit ruptures, micro meteoroid impacts, etc. Once the journey is completed, Mr. Shoriin will hand them over the cash with a bonus of Cr1000 for a job well done.
3. As 1-2 but the party are followed by the police. They have got wind of the operation through surveillance. At the handover the group of ten policemen will have the location, a canyon, sealed. Before the party have a chance to surrender, Graznid Shoriin and his seven assistants draw a combination of laser carbine and SMGs. The firefight that ensues sees the party having to choose sides. The party will tip the balance in favour of which ever side they join. Should Graznid prevail, the party will be marked as outlaw on Idam Lee. If any policemen are killed, the party will be wanted throughout the cluster.
- 4-5. There is no Graznid Shoriin. The drop location is deserted. The whole thing is a joke by some students out for some kicks. If the droid in the square is analyzed, it will be obvious from its computer logs that the joker is

- a geeky individual known as "The Glimmerman".
6. When the party arrive at the drop point they find Graznid Shoriin dead. His suit is ruptured in many places and his skin is covered in a strange fungus. A nearby test hole in the ground is heavily coated with the fungus as is the equipment (a long, long, drill) stuck in the hole. If the party spend any time examining the remains they discover that the suit that is in contact with the ground, and hence in contact with the fungus, has been eaten away. Further, the soles of the Vac Suit boots have been destroyed. At this time the party discover that the soles of their boots are melting. Suit failure will occur in 4D6 minutes. The fungus reacts to body heat. Once in contact with a warm body it absorbs the heat and swells before exploding in a cloud of spores, within the suit. The inhaled spores are highly toxic.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: WATER WAR

Required Skills: computer, forgery

Required Equipment: none

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

A holo-message arrives at the characters' ship in the middle of offloading some cargo. It arrives unsolicited and somehow makes it past the junk mail filters. Its content both invites and entices. The PCs are asked by a Mr. Van Der Miesen himself to attend him in his offices on Concourse 17 for "a spot of work, well worth your while". Their reputation has preceded them, it seems. Concourse 17 is not far and is very upmarket. Characters can easily find the small offices of "Van der Miesen Associates, Lic., Interstellar Brokerage".

Van der Miesen represents a consortium of investors, who shall remain nameless, who currently pursue a project in the southern hemisphere. An enormous subterranean aquifer has been discovered. If it meets even half its potential, it could transform Idam Lee into a lush garden world. Progress has been slow because of the difficult terrain in the south. Extinct volcanoes with ancient lava flows pepper the area, making equipment transport and deployment very difficult. However, just recently the project has made a breakthrough. A borehole reached liquid water at a depth of seventeen kilometers. The hole is capped in preparation for the building of production facilities.

The consortium, up until quite recently, had almost run out of funds. Their troubles were severe enough that their prospecting licence for the region was not renewed. Work continued in the absence of a licence. Shortly after the breakthrough, a rival group attacked the works and overran it. They have a valid licence. They claim the region and the works.

The consortium has managed to raise significant financial support for the project but all of this is subject to the return of the works into their hands. To achieve this end, the consortium needs to have its licence restored and the rival's licence revoked or otherwise eliminated. The job in hand is to replace the existing records with 'corrected' records. This involves breaking into the computer system of the Office of Mineral and Natural Resources. These are a small adjunct office off the main Customs office in Orland high port. The reward is for success only and amounts to Cr20,000. Successful negotiation can raise this to Cr25,000.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The licences are maintained in both physical and electronic form. The physical form, based on holographic technology, is very difficult to forge (DC30). In the case of the computer records the licenses are protected by many levels of encryption and physical security. To modify a record requires

senior administrator level access with an encryption rating of 33 and four prior layers of encryption rated at DC 20, 23, 26 and 30. To further complicate things, the final layer may only be entered at the Office itself.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

- 1-2 All is as specified. The licence records are stored physically in the safe within the office. A straightforward physical security system involving TL14 motion detectors is deployed but little else.
3. All is as specified except the office is patrolled when not occupied. Both a team of armed guards and two laser pistol armed hover-droids provide round the clock vigilance of the office and its contents. If one of the droids is destroyed, a company strength force of police arrives within 1d20 minutes.
- 4-5. In fact, the 'rival' group are the legitimate licence holders. The consortium is the usurper. The real licence holders have filed years ago. Their records are duplicates of originals now posted to the subsector capital. A few months legal to and fro will reveal the legitimacy of their case. Unless the party succeed with a legal defence (DC 25), the consequence of all this legal wrangling and that the consortium members' lawyers are better than the party's is that blame will be squarely placed on the members of the party. An arrest warrant will be issued. Returning to Idam Lee means the party members will be subject to arrest and detention (DC10 + 2 per elapsed year thereafter). If their ship ever docks with the high port, arrest is guaranteed. Once seven years have passed, all charges are dropped.
6. The 'rival' group are the legitimate licence holders. They have got wind of the break-in and have informed the police. The building is surrounded by police (in considerable strength), all records have been removed and have been replaced by decoys. Any attempt to enter the building or access the computer will be detected. The 'trap' has a security rating of 35. If this check is made, the attacker can detect that the computer is in fact a trap. A firefight will ensue if any resistance is met. Such activity is viewed on Idam Lee as a further example of corporate corruption and is little tolerated.

THE WORLD OF 569-519 (HIDAMAE)

569-519 2511 C9A9566-B Ni 204 X G4 V

PHYSICAL

The 569-519 system centers on the Type G4 star named Daraska. The system has four gas giants, which have an unusually large number of rogue asteroids drifting in the space between them or collected at their Trojan points. There are few large rocky bodies other than 569-519 itself. Astrophysicists have suggested two theories for this phenomenon. Either the system experienced very unusual conditions during planetary formation, or else at some time in the distant past someone or something blasted several planets into rubble. Neither theory is particularly plausible.

569-519 is a large, wet world. Its atmosphere is dense, and composed of a high-nitrogen/low-oxygen mix which is unbreathable to humans. Protective suits are not necessary; an air mask is all that is needed to survive, though the high atmospheric pressure poses two hazards. Firstly, the air mix must be correct to avoid gas narcosis. More seriously, the high-pressure external atmosphere has a tendency to seep into any imperfection in the mask's fit. The world is also rather hot, creating a rainy steambath environment with vigorous weather systems.

569-519 is not quite a water world; it has considerable amounts of land above water level. These are well weathered, characterized by rolling hills and extensive flood plains. Vegetation is riotous, with rainforests in many areas and thick scrub on higher ground.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Most of the plant life and almost all the animals on 569-519 are local in origin. As already noted, rainforest terrain is common, and the dense jungles are home to an almost infinite array of plant types. A few hardy animals (most of which have extremely efficient lungs to extract sufficient oxygen from the air) dwell among the trees. Although the forests have been explored to some extent, new species are discovered almost every time someone enters the forests, and occasionally an expedition fails to return, suggesting that there may be more aggressive species in the depths of the jungles.

The rivers and seas teem with animal life, from plankton to gigantic whale-like sea grazing creatures of which the enormous Wilkinson's Grazer is the most commonly sighted. There are certainly "sea monsters" of some kind living in the depths; the carcasses of mutilated Wilkinson's Grazers occasionally drift up on beaches. Whatever lives in the depths, it has tentacles, large teeth, and likes to be left alone.

The seas are also home to a massive amount of plant life. Gigantic rafts of floating seaweed, some of them many kilometers across, drift on the currents and provide a floating island home for several species of small creatures.

The rivers are similarly well-populated, and clog with organic debris on a frequent basis. This necessitates regular dredging if the river is to be used for navigation.

WORLD OVERVIEW

569-519 was originally colonized from Starfall, but the initial colonies (there were at least three, according to surviving records) failed and were evacuated. The world was the site of a fuelling station for centuries, but was not colonized again until 560. The original colonists came from Lunarmise for the most part, and quickly set up high-technology settlements along the coasts of the largest 'continent'. Not all of these settlements were a success, but the majority were able to adapt to the new world and become productive.

Population rose steadily over the next 400 years, though the world remained a colony of Lunarmise and was never formally assigned a name. The various settlements answered to Colonial Governors appointed from Lunarmise, and exported their produce directly to the homeworld.

569-519, which is normally known to its inhabitants as Hidamae, after the founder of the very first colony, has had a fairly unremarkable history until quite recently. Until the early 900s, the world was not unified in any way, and as simply a collection of Lunarmise possessions that happened to lie on a different planet.

However, as Lunarmise became increasingly dominated by the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium, Hidamae quietly began moving towards independence. Local pressure groups began to cooperate and by 950 a World Alliance had emerged, dedicated to securing autonomy or complete independence – but only by legal and non-violent means.

This proved to be an impossible goal; the Colonial Governors were unwilling to grant concessions, and deep rifts formed in Hidamae's society. Peaceful pressure gave way to urban guerilla fighting in some areas, and Lunarmise responded by sending an intervention force composed of mercenaries and some of its own troops.

The intervention was not an unqualified success. Most of the mercenaries hired were experienced at the walking the counter-insurgency tightrope, applying enough force to resolve a problem when necessary without being drawn into escalation. However, the Lunarmise troops were not so skilled, and several tragedies occurred during the early years of the insurrection.

Although some areas were pacified, others became more rebellious as citizens reacted to Lunarmise "atrocities". The result was a drawn-out urban guerilla war that simmered

constantly and flared up sporadically on from 959 to 978. Some settlements were completely untouched by the fighting, while others were devastated.

By 978, both sides were thoroughly weary of the conflict, and several factions had sprung up including secessionists, loyalists and militias that seemed willing to take on all comers in pursuit of their own agenda. As often as not, these militias started out as defensive organizations with no political goal at all; merely existing to protect ordinary citizens from the ravages of the war. However, all of them made enemies or entered into the conflict of their own will sooner or later, and thus the situation became very confused.

Sanity began to reassert itself from 979. Apart from a few fanatics and groups that had an interest in keeping the conflict going, everyone was thoroughly sick of the violence. A solution was suggested by Karlton Harvney, one of the Colonial Governors who had weathered the war years with his credibility intact, mainly by trying to keep the peace and doing as little as possible, and only when absolutely necessary.

Respected by the rebels as a fair and honorable man, and by his superiors as a loyal and competent governor – one of the few who managed not to make the situation worse – Harvney was able to persuade the various factions to come to the negotiating table. There, he played his trump card.

Having somehow managed to get the various factions together in one place, “Peacemaker Harvney” as he is now known, brought in an Akeed mediator. The Akeed are a strange race, but their skills as diplomats are in no doubt. The delegates were subjected to the usual Akeed antics, which included arbitrary breaks in the proceedings, a major row over seating arrangements at the conference table, and a constant series of complaints about the catering. Infuriated with their mediator, the delegates forgot some of their animosity towards one another.

The great conference of 979 ran for several weeks, and much to their surprise the delegates came out with a workable solution. 569-519 became the Autonomous Colonies of Hidamae; an arrangement whereby each settlement was self-governing up to a point, but the settlements answered to a central Advisory Committee composed of local and Lunarmise personnel.

In theory, 569-519 is still a colonial possession of Lunarmise, but in practice the Advisory Committee is now a de facto world government, and is in the process of building a nation. The catalyst for this move towards healing the scars of long years of war came from an unexpected direction; the assassination in 784 of Peacemaker Harvney by a small splinter group disowned by the Eastern Free Hidamae League.

The EFHL had either decided that the peace agreement was unsuitable, or else was disgruntled at the odd manner

by which the settlement was created. Whatever the reason, Karlton Harvney died in a hail of close-range pistol shots during a formal reception, and the whole peace process teetered on a knife edge.

People did pour onto the streets, but not to fight over their differences. Instead, the various factions were united in outrage that the nearest thing to a cultural hero that 569-519 had ever produced had been murdered. In this moment of common grief (and the vigorous lynching of those EFHL members that could be found), the Autonomous Colonies found their common identity.

Today, the Autonomous Colonies is a young nation, still finding its feet, but as Lunarmise falls increasingly under the influence of the GTC, the people of its former colony are free to go their own way, if they can find it.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The society of the Autonomous Colonies is slowly healing, though divisions still exist. Several of the militias and pressure groups live on. Some are active organizations (though carefully legal nowadays) while others have become nothing more than fraternal organizations or drinking houses for the faithful.

As a mostly-water world, 569-519 has a lot of coastline for its land mass, and settlements are mostly situated on the coasts or on the banks of rivers. The primary industries are also ocean-based; fish-farming, seaweed and plankton harvesting, and underwater mineral extraction.

Much of the world’s transportation is undertaken by high-technology submarines, though grav craft are used for long journeys. Surface operations in the open ocean are hazardous due to the violent weather patterns encountered there, so surface ships are uncommon. A hybrid “submersible ship” is used for some purposes, such as seaweed mat harvesting. These vessels normally operate on the surface but can submerge to avoid weather or to pass under a region of Sargasso. Nautical crews and workers are highly regarded, and service aboard a transport sub is seen as a prestigious career.

The settlements of 569-519 mostly enjoy a high technology level (12), which corresponds to a high standard of living for most citizens. All citizens are entitled to Basic Support from their community. This equates to a modest rent-free dwelling and sufficient clothing and nutrition. Poverty on this world is thus rather different than on some others. Indeed, many citizens make use of Basic Support as they attend education or pursue a goal such as being an artist or poet.

However, while the great majority of citizens will make use of Basic Support during their lives, the great majority simply use it as intended. Basic Support is to allow citizens to make the best of themselves without having to worry about not being able to live; it is intended to be a stepping-stone to a better life. Taking this ideal to its logical conclusion, those who choose to

life on Basic Support and pursue their dreams are not in any way abusing it. The only “waster” (who are despised by other members of society) are those who use Basic Support as an excuse not to do anything for themselves.

Overall, the people of the Autonomous Colonies are hard-working (or more accurately, strive hard to do well at whatever they have chosen to do) and respect others who try as hard. The divisions and mistrust sown by the recent violence will take many years to abate, but most of the planetary population wants to put the troubled years firmly behind them and move towards a better future.

The Advisory Committee, which is the only thing even close to a central government that the world possesses, has few resources of its own other than a small bureaucratic service. It relies on the assets of the individual settlements, to which it “offers advice” rather than giving instructions. However, as the years go by the Committee is gradually shedding some of the vast number of Advisors voted to it by various factions, and is becoming a more streamlined organization. At the same time, the common practices agreed by the settlements and the Committee are becoming entrenched; The Autonomous Colonies are gradually becoming a world state.

MILITARY AND SECURITY

The Autonomous Colonies never possessed a military, other than police forces, before the violence. As the world moves towards status as an independent nation, centrally-controlled forces are becoming necessary. The Colonial Security Force, formed in 989, is primarily composed of rapid-reaction light infantry with grav vehicle support. It can, in theory, claim to be nothing more than a police force, maintaining the fiction that the Autonomous Colonies are still part of Lunarmise. The Security Force does have a small “military” arm with grav armor, artillery and the trappings of a modern army, and this force is steadily growing.

For planetary defense, the Security Force mans batteries of ground-based missile launchers and a handful of system defense boats based out of the Highport. These are technically assets of the Lunarmise Armed Forces, though they are crewed by locals and owe loyalty to the Advisory Committee.

Since forming an actual spacefaring navy would be direct challenge to Lunarmise authority, and one that cannot be ignored, the Autonomous Colonies have taken an indirect route to becoming a starfaring power. A number of merchant ships have been armed and fitted with uprated drives and sensors. These vessels are owned by a private “secure haulage” company officially based out of Idam Lee but with offices at the Highport. In practice, these vessels are crewed by citizens of the Autonomous Colonies and are being used to gain experience with Jump-capable warships prior to purchasing real naval vessels.

As the colonies move towards open secession, the navy becomes ever more important, and the day seems close when the colonies will begin openly operating their armed merchant fleet as a regular navy. Many observers have speculated about how Lunarmise will react, and if it comes to violence, how a flotilla of armed merchant ships can possibly defend their homeworld against a real navy.

TRADE, COMMERCE AND INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

The interstellar relations of 569-519 have for most of its history been dominated by Lunarmise, which conducted the affairs of its possession as it saw fit. Relations have been increasingly strained since semi-independence, but since Lunarmise itself is rapidly falling under the control of elements from the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium, its options have been limited.

It seems likely that the GTC corporations that now dominate Lunarmise will want to absorb the former colony too. This will inevitable lead to conflict of some kind; the most likely form being economic warfare. In order to offset the corporate interests, the Autonomous Colonies are attempting to create economic ties wherever they can. This has led to some conflicts of interest.

569-519’s exports are relatively few; some high-tech consumer goods and a range of seafoods. Moves are afoot to develop a larger economic base, and investment has been poured into vehicle manufacturing, arms production and communications services, with the hope of attracting more offworld customers. So far, the effect has been minimal, though trade ships are beginning to come in from farther afield.

As a young state in need of allies, the Autonomous Colonies are willing to talk to almost anyone. Rumors persist of corsair groups using the Starport freely, and even of a possible alliance with the Raidermarch.

ADVENTURES ON 569-519

PATRON ENCOUNTER: PRACTICE GOOD DENTAL HYGIENE

Required Skills: Shipboard

Required Equipment: Starship

An attractive young woman approaches the crew, looking for passage. She has only carryon luggage and a shipping case, weighing 100 kg, in an armored and refrigerated case. The exterior of the case says biohazard and medical samples, keep cool, do not expose to oxygen, etc. She claims she is a dentist, and she is carrying a set of new tooth buds cloned in a high tech facility. She does have some knowledge of the terminology if questioned by a character with medical skills.

She is taking passage to the next stop on the ship's itinerary. All during the booking of passage and loading of cargo she will hover nervously, ask to see the cargo loading and during the trip will ask to check her cargo frequently.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

- 1-2: All is as it appears. She is a dental researcher and the case does contain medical samples. They are delicate and any rough handling will damage some of them. This will cause her to become very upset and threaten to sue the ship for negligent practices. The case will also cause delays at customs or if the ship is inspected by a routine patrol.
- 3: She is mostly who she claims, but the cloned material is actually stolen! She is an industrial dental spy and the high tech facility has just discovered the theft. They are trying to get the authorities to lock down the port to search out going ships. If the characters take off in time they will not be stopped at the port. A leisurely departure will have them boarded and the dentist detained. This will delay the ship at least 2 days while an investigation is begun. The crew will be cleared, but any further trips into this system will Always result in the ship being stopped and searched.
- 4: She is mostly who she claims, but the material is a bio-war agent! She is an industrial spy, who is also a trained dentist. In this case the high tech facility in question is a government lab. The authorities in question are able to lock down the port, and as the customs service approaches the ship she will attempt to access the bio-war agents and take the ship hostage. If the players do not stop her, she will threaten to not only deploy the agent, but to publicly expose the research to the public. Characters will need to subdue her or the authorities

may decide that using a tac nuke to get rid of the war agent is a good idea! Never mind what it would do to the ship.

- 5-6: She is nothing like she claims, and any background check will reveal this. She is a dental cleaning technician who got fired recently. The samples do have biohazard material in them, but nothing really dangerous, just some stolen trash from her former employer. In the midst of that material is a 60 kg package of illegal narcotics. She is trying to make a small fortune and get away from her home planet. She has stolen these drugs from her boyfriend. He will be looking for her, and is very violent, attacking anyone who gets between him and her or his drugs. He will follow her to the next port of call, remembering the ship's name for the rest of his days.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: PROSPECTORS

The players are seeking passengers for their next destination. Amongst the hopefuls looking for transport are two retired corporate lawyers turned prospectors.

Margaret Cook and Donald Vallish are both in their late forties and have mustered out from their corporate career, with an interest in making their fortunes in the rocks of some out-system moons. They have about four tons of equipment with them for transport, and hope to pick up some sort of vehicle at their destination. They will pay for a shared middle passage, as a couple. They will ask for their equipment to be transported at standard rate, but this may be open to negotiation with the Crew.

If the Crew ask to inspect the equipment, they will indeed find that there is about Cr50,000 worth of basic mining and prospecting equipment, along with Vac Suits and other survival equipment.

The two prospective prospectors seem nice enough, and their paper-work checks out (K/Admin or K/Corporate Law, or even Contacts (Corporate) will be useful here). The crew can make a bit of extra money if they are short on cargo space by taking these folk and their equipment to their next stop.

OUTCOMES: 1D6 (1D)

- 1: It's all above board. The couple are indeed looking to make some money finding good strikes and selling the locations to corporations for further development. This is something that they encountered during their professional career, and share this info with the PC's during Jump. In fact, they might offer interested characters a chance to buy into the enterprise. They say that for each Cr100,000 invested, it's likely that a return of at least 10-20% is possible within six months. Crews or characters with spare cash might well find this a good safe investment.
- 2: It's all above board, but the couple are way out of their league. The next system has strict prospecting laws that are obscure but tough, and may be familiar to Crew-members. The couple are likely to be arrested soon after they disembark, and their equipment will be seized. The PC's may be in a position to warn or even help the couple in some way, either with forged or legitimate paperwork or even an 'unscheduled stop' before the Starport to drop the couple off without having to make them go through customs.
- 3: It's not as it seems. The couple are indeed who they say they are, but they are not innocently retiring to a life of prospecting. They are carrying this equipment to the next system to sell it. This isn't illegal or wrong as such, but the mining equipment contains small amounts

of valuable industrial materials, such as gravity-hardened diamond cutting heads etc, which will sell for a considerable profit on the next world, especially if it's non-industrial.

- 4: It's not as it seems. The couple are traveling on forged papers, and are in fact local law-enforcement agents for the GTC (or other interstellar organization). They are transporting the valuable equipment very openly, and are trying to draw out a Mining Corporation troubleshooter called Mishkail Horowitz who has been traveling on tramp freighters trying to either buy out prospectors or miners, or sabotage their equipment, to protect his company's interests. Mishkail may or may not be another passenger on the ship – if so, the agents will attempt to wait until after arrival before arresting him, but trouble may brew on board.
- 5: It's not as it seems. The couple are not miners, but have been paid to accompany the equipment to the next destination. Once there, they will leave the ship and disappear, leaving the crew with valuable (but illegal) equipment on board their ship. Someone will tip off local starport authorities about the cargo, and this will certainly get the crew into trouble. The reason behind this may remain a mystery, or may be an act of revenge against any or all of the crew for previous dealings they may have had.
- 6: It's all as it seems, but the couple are hopelessly naïve about the ease of what they're about to do. They don't know anything about mining, let alone how to operate the equipment on board. They don't even know how to put Vac Suits on. The crew may take pity on the couple, and offer to buy their equipment instead, or give them pointers on what to do. If a Belter is among the crew, they may even get a week's crash course in mining. Left to their own devices, they will at the very least get stranded on a distant moon for several days before being rescued. The most likely scenario is much less happy for the two retirees.

THE WORLD OF 812-148

812-148 2513 D8B5589-5 Ni 523 X G3 V

PHYSICAL

812-148 may well be the least habitable world of the cluster. Its atmosphere contains sufficient airborne sulphur compounds to be corrosive. This effect is more pronounced at low altitudes where the heavy compounds collect. Deep valleys are extremely hazardous, and most bodies of open water present a real danger to travellers and even their vehicles.

In most areas, the corrosive effect is relatively slow. Exposure for a few minutes will cause respiratory distress, and eye irritation is immediate. However, with simple filters and goggles it is possible to work for a short period in the open. Skin will start to blister after about 30 minutes, and equipment failures become likely after a period of hours. A hostile environment suit or ATV can survive for several weeks in this normal-hazard environment. These conditions are somewhat unpredictable, however; there is no guarantee that a cloud of acid mist will not blow over a party of travellers, presenting a serious hazard.

In the deep valleys, where the air is thick with yellow-green acid mist, even a hostile environment suit will fail in a matter of hours, and anyone wearing lesser protection will last minutes at best. Vehicles quickly break down in these conditions. The air is much safer at high altitudes, though storms can blow tainted air up to considerable altitudes.

The rest of the system is fairly typical; several rockball worlds, three gas giants and two planetoid belts orbiting a G3 star.

FLORA AND FAUNA

As might be expected, there is relatively little variety of life on 812-148. Plant life is mainly in the form of fungi or creeping, moss-like plants, plus thick stands of twisted, briar-like, bushes. These are extremely difficult to hack through or tear up. Unless the roots are dug out and burned, they come back quickly and even more thickly – and the plant as a whole does not burn well.

These tangled, thorny growths, known as Bluntbushes after the effect they have on most cutting equipment, grow everywhere, though they prefer the higher altitudes where there is less sulphur in the air. They provide shelter for some of the world's few animals.

Most animal life on 812-148 is small and scaly or otherwise hard-skinned and acid-resistant, ranging from beetles to armadillo-like scuttling creatures. Most animals

are poisonous to humans, as might be expected, though they can steal food from human settlements and live on it quite happily. The ecology of the deep valleys has not been thoroughly studied. It is possible that some strange creatures live in the acid mists, but more likely that the valley bottoms are devoid of advanced animal life.

WORLD OVERVIEW

The original settlers were stranded on 812-148 by a malfunctioning starship and were forced to make the best of their circumstances as they waited for rescue. That rescue never came, not through the whole of the Long Night, and by the Year 0 the population of 812-148, which they named "Perdition", had settled all along the shoulders of a chain of mountains, now named the Heaven's Reach Mountains.

The settlers of Heaven's Reach were able to move between the high foothills without much danger, and over the years they spread out to cover the whole of their available territory. There was little competition among the settlers; their world was hostile enough that cooperation was a survival necessity.

Life was hard, and much knowledge was lost in the scramble to survive. With limited resources available and the absolute necessity of creating protected gardens to grow food, the colonists became expert improvisers and tinkerers; new ways were constantly being found to perform high-tech tasks with Iron Age equipment.

Expeditions into the lowlands usually proved fatal, and were eventually abandoned. However, the high peaks of the mountains, with their clear air and proximity to the heavens, beckoned. The colonists mounted many expeditions to the high peaks, and gazed out at the other lands poking up through the acid clouds of Perdition.

By Year 100 or so, the colonists had managed to climb back to TL 4, and had the beginnings of industry to work with. Still the distant lands beckoned, and finally an expedition was launched. Not overland – that would have been suicide – but by airship.

Parties of explorers set out in their ramshackle airships. Many fell into the acid lowlands and died, but enough reached their destination that a second wave of ships was constructed. This one carried colonists. Families, with enough equipment to set up a basic settlement, went out to the distant peaks and claimed them.

As technology gradually improved, the airships became more reliable and the outlying colonies were brought into regular contact. Their technological base was lower than that of the Heaven's Reach population, of course, but regular contact allowed rapid growth. And from these new heartlands, new waves of explorers set out. These pioneers made two surprising discoveries. Both occurred around Year 700.

The first discovery was that the colonists of Heaven's Reach were not the first to crash on 812-148. The acid-scored remains of not one but two starships – of definitely alien origin – were sighted in a valley far to the north of Heaven's Reach. Investigation proved impossible, but given the depth of the valley and the age of the wrecks, it seemed unlikely that anyone aboard had survived. There was no sign of habitation on any of the high ground nearby.

The second discovery was that another group of colonists existed on 812-148. This society was descended from the same mission; the Heaven's reach colonists rode their ship down and crash-landed while the second group, who were confined to a single high mesa named High Salvation, had used shuttles and escape pods to make their landing.

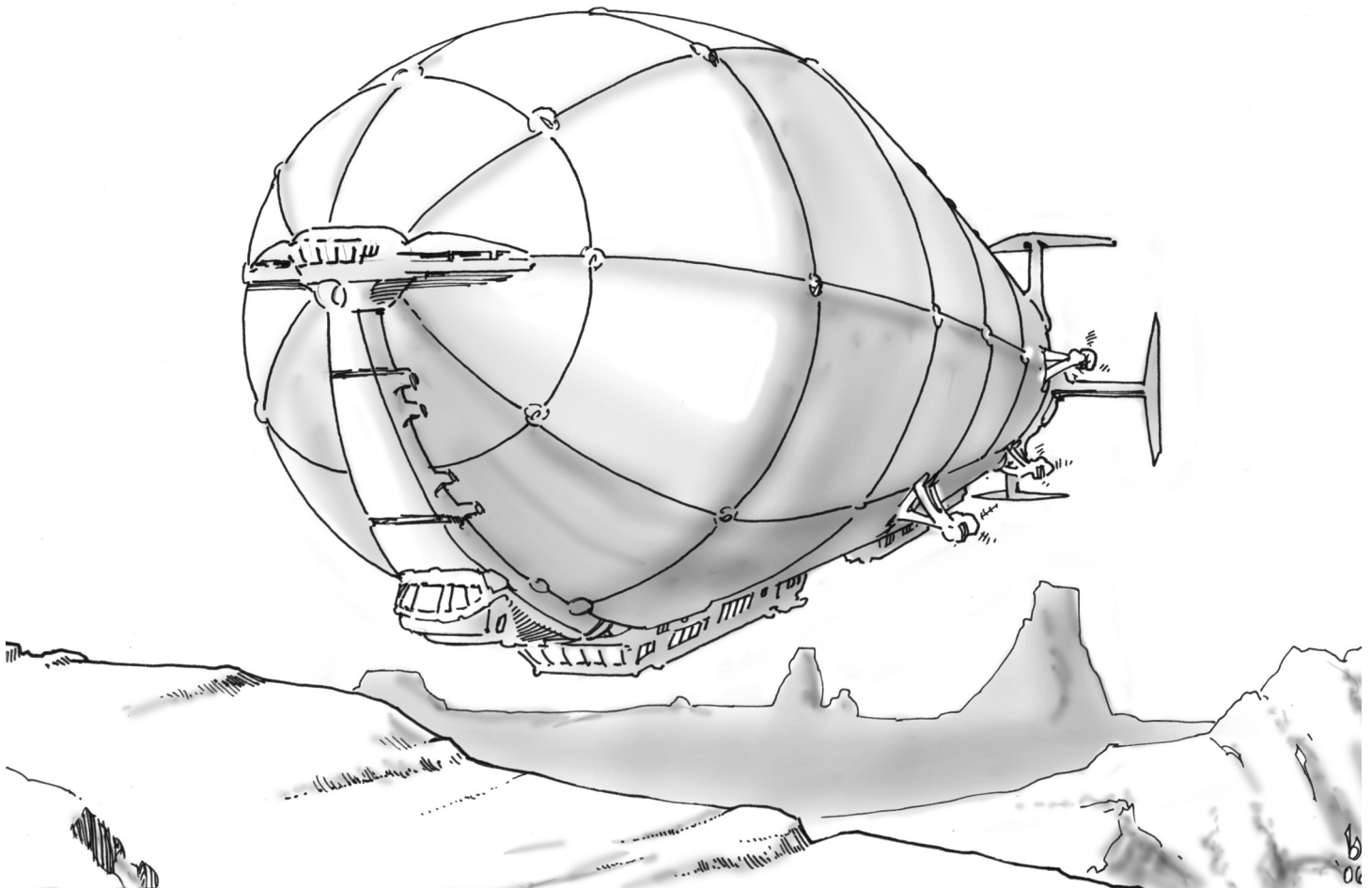
The colonists of High Salvation had arrived with almost no tools. Worse, they were a cross-section of the most me-first survivors on the colony ship, who had seized the escape equipment by force. Their personnel base had been biased towards the young, strong and selfish, which meant they were severely deficient in technical skills and theoretical knowledge when their colony was scratched out. And with a very small gene pool, they were severely inbred.

The explorers discovered that several of the colonial missions that had gone missing during the first wave had been blown that way by prevailing winds, and had touched down on High Salvation seeking assistance. They had been incorporated into the local society – one way or another – and had unwillingly dragged the technological level from 2 to 4 over the past two centuries.

Those explorers who survived their contact with the inbred psychopaths of High Salvation returned home with chilling news. High Salvation was building a fleet of airships, and planned to conquer the "have-it-all" settlements of Heaven's Reach by hill-hopping, taking over the outlying colonies as they came.

The threat was not as severe as originally feared. The prevailing winds were against the Salvationers, and the technology of Heaven's Reach was far superior. A squadron of military airships was hastily constructed to defend Heaven's Reach, and clumsy but fierce aerial battles ensued, with the vanquished (or more often, both) vessel plunging to its doom in the acid mists below.

The Salvationers did manage to take over a number of small colonies but by 950 these had all been liberated and



An airship from the Heaven's Reach Sky Navy.

either evacuated or fortified as air bases. The Air Navy of Heaven's Reach now patrols constantly off High Salvation, attempting to confine the insane denizens on their high prison.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The population of Heaven's Reach and its associated colonies is around 500,000 people, about 75% of whom dwell in settlements along the Heaven's Reach Mountains. They are governed by an efficient bureaucratic government, which uses a system of enforced service to acquire skilled and effective personnel.

All citizens serve for between 2-7 years (and longer, if they choose) in one of the services – Medical, Rescue, the Air Navy, the Militia, the government, the Exploration Service or the Public Work Service. The majority serve in safe jobs within the administration, or work on necessary projects or in government-owned factories. The more hazardous services offer high pay and prestige, plus a short term of service, for those willing to do their time in a more dangerous environment. Nobody is forced to fly over the acid clouds.

Contact between the colonies is maintained by radio and by the airships of the Postal Service, an arm of the government. The Postal Service base, atop Kindley's Peak, also serves as a rudimentary starport. The government is based in the main settlement of Reach Central, about 75 kilometers from the starport and linked by a narrow-gauge railway that descends the mountain in a fashion alarming to most visitors.

Laws are strict among the people of Perdition, as might be expected in such a hostile environment. The book of laws is actually named the "Survival Code" and breaches of it are dealt with rather harshly, since in theory they could affect the survival of the entire population. As a rule, society is well-ordered, polite, and hard-working.

The people of Heaven's Reach and her colonies are adept at determining the weather, and can usually predict an acid storm in time to get undercover. Building seals, air scrubbing and hostile-environment gear may be crude and low-tech, but they are effective and well maintained, usually by Public Service personnel who have no other job than to make sure the communities are prepared for their homeworld's occasional attempts to slaughter them.

Much of the world's food is grown in controlled-environment gardens, which amounts to saying that soil is carefully monitored and additives are commonly used to keep it within tolerable levels of acidity. Some gardens are enclosed in vast greenhouses, which improves their productivity greatly and makes keeping the local environment out far simpler. In time, it is likely that all production will be moved into greenhouses.

The people of Heaven's Reach are very spiritual, believing that evil lurks in the depths and that all that is good can be found in the heights. They attach no particular significance to starfarers themselves, but do consider space to be the holy abode of the gods and benevolent spirits. This belief is challenged by the obvious evil of High Salvation, but so far no "holy war of cleansing" or anything even close to it has ever been suggested. The Heaven's Reachers prefer to contain the wrongdoers, though whether this is to allow them time to see the error of their ways, or simply to let them wallow in the misery of their existence is not known.

The society of High Salvation, what is known of it, is totally different. A race of self-serving go-getters who constantly fight among themselves over resources and status, the people of High Salvation are a constant threat to the nearby settlements. Little accurate information exists about them. It is thought that there may be 50-75,000 individuals, ruled by an elite class with the majority held in serfdom or even slavery.

MILITARY AND SECURITY

Heaven's Reach maintains a small standing security force, augmented by and forming part of a larger militia. Most ex-military personnel remain on reservist status as members of the militia. The Militia provides detachments to guard threatened colonies (and to lead the reservists there) and to secure the starport. Militia members man anti-airship guns and rocket batteries at settlements thought likely to need them.

The Sky Navy operates a force of airships equipped with machine-guns, light artillery and rockets. These occasionally battle their cruder counterparts operated by High Salvation. The long distances involved in combating the High Salvation menace make fixed-wing aircraft less useful than may be supposed, but a few are operated for defense of settlements close to Salvationer territory. Experiments with airship-aircraft-carriers are underway, with rather limited success.

TRADE, COMMERCE AND INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

Few ships land at Heaven's Reach; fewer still at High Salvation. Thus the worlds have little trade and no real place in interstellar society. The Reachers will trade with anyone who comes through; the Salvationers will probably try to kill them and cannibalise their ship, or else coerce them into bringing in necessary goods.

ADVENTURES IN THE 812-148 SYSTEM

AMBER ZONE: SHIPS IN THE MIST

Required skills: Vac suit, Drive (ATV)

Required equipment: none

SITUATION

Dr. John Carter of Eda is an alien artifacts professor at the University of Eda. He has heard about the alien spacecraft glimpsed in the mists of 812-148, and intends to visit and study them.

When the party meets Dr. Carter, he is searching for a team to help him travel to and explore the ships. Dr. Carter is willing to pay Cr1000 per week per person for the time it takes to travel to and study the ships. If the party meets Dr. Carter before he reached 812-148, he is also willing to pay for Middle Passage tickets to get them there. If the party has a starship with significant cargo capacity (at least 30 dtons), he is willing to charter the ship to get him and his equipment to the planet. The professor insists that all members of the party have Vac Suit skill, and that someone in the party have skill in driving tracked ATVs. He wants someone in the party with starship Engineering skill if possible.

Dr. Carter will provide a TL15 tracked ATV and TL15 hostile environment Vac Suits that are specially designed to resist the corrosive atmosphere of the valleys on 812-148 for several weeks. The ATV is stocked with food, water, and other consumables for the party to last at least two weeks. The ATV's equipment locker includes: mechanical, electrical, and metalwork tool kits, a medical kit, a lock pick set, radiation counter, five atmosphere testers, five 100 foot lengths of acid resistant rope, four rifles and four pistols with fifty rounds of ammo each, recording equipment (still and holographic), and several boxes filled with small containers of white power which the professor says is chemical base (similar to baking soda).

RESOLUTION

The party travels through the Heavens Reach settlements for a few days before coming to the north end of the mountain range. The residents they meet are interested in the party, its technology, and its intentions. When the idea of going into the deep valleys to study the ships is brought up, there is an invariable aversion reaction. After that the residents' reaction rolls will either be one level less or more favorable than normal as people think of the party as brave adventurers or foolish and possibly evil.

Once north of the settlements, the land begins to get lower

in general, though there are a long series of smaller ridges and valleys going generally north. The route to the wrecks is not very well plotted, though the location of the wrecks is pretty well defined - if you are in an airship. The Perdition maps are similar to 19th century Earth maps where "islands" of habitability are fairly well defined but the depths between have sketchy information (and that mostly close to the "shores"). Once the party is in the area of the wrecks they may need to check several valleys to find them.

The party will find that, contrary to the Heavens Reach residents' assumptions, the plant and animal life in the valleys is only a bit less common and varied than on the mountains. The plants tend toward mosses and fungi more, and other types less. One of the fungi types that is unknown on the mountains looks like a Terran toadstool and can grow taller than 1.5 meters. Animal life is primarily insect, though there are variants of armadillo-like creatures that appear to be omnivorous. A larger creature (about 1.5 meters long) looks like a cross between an anteater and an armadillo. The party is most likely to meet this kind if walking outside in a "toadstool forest." If the party investigates, it will find this kind to be this world's top predator though omnivorous, with a diet enriched by toadstool spores.

As the party travels north, the geology shifts from tectonic plate edge mountain range to land forms of volcanic origin. An increasing number of hot springs and eventually geysers will be noticed. The sulfur taint of the atmosphere will increase greatly near any of these active hot spots.

Events the referee might impose during travel include:

- Earthquakes
- Thin crust over sinkhole (empty or full of hot water)
- Active volcano or lava flow
- Acid lake
- Landslide
- Animal or insect attack
- Toadstool spore in the ATV, grows quickly at first then dies without sulfur
- High Salvation airship bombing

When the party arrives at the wrecks they will find they appear to be quite similar and look about 600 dtons each. Covering most of the tops and about halfway up the sides is plant growth. The ships now look a bit more like small mesas than they do ships. They appear to have been streamlined originally.

As the party arrives and starts looking for entrances to the ships they will find that the airlocks after a little digging should be usable since the seals on the airlock doors have been eaten away by the acids in the air, rain, and soil. Even the hull plating is showing serious corrosion problems, and all external markings have been etched away.

Inside, the party will find less direct corrosion and more damage from plants and insects. The professor will be in his

element, having carefully made measurements and pictures (still and holographic) of the outside. Measurements and pictures of the interior will be constant, and the drone of the professor's voice making notes may annoy other members of the party. He will constantly be stopping to point the cameras at various bits that might give clues to the origins of the ships. The first ship turns out to have crashed, and the large openings in the hull allowed the plant and animal life to work over the interior pretty well. There are a number of toadstools in various places in the ship, particularly in what might have been the bridge. The second ship seems to be in better condition inside, though it too has a number of plants and animals living inside. In fact, the bridge in the second ship seems to have toadstools only in front of where the control panels likely were. The second ship also has control panels and markings that are still discernible. The control panels are oddly spherical and the few markings are hexagonal. After the professor has time to study his recordings he will determine that the ships are of Hiver design. He will want to make one more trip into the second ship to pick up a few artifacts that are more peculiarly Hiver in origin. If the referee wants to inject another attack by High Salvation forces, this is a good time to do it while the party is weighed down with loot.

Once the professor is done with the ships the party can turn south toward the starport. In the next valley south, through which they had come on the journey north, the party will find a fresh stream of lava pouring out of a hillside. The professor will be concerned as to whether the lava will reach the ships, but it looks like it would take some months at least for the lava to run that direction if it ever did. The professor, however, will want to hurry back to see if he can arrange to get the ships moved to a safer location (by lifting them with airships perhaps). Though the party is now following a route somewhat familiar from the outbound journey, the referee will want to roll more often for mishaps as the professor urges the driver to greater speed.

Once back at the starport, the professor requests the party's assistance with his salvage operation if they have done a good job for him. If they don't want to do the salvage mission, he will pay them the agreed amount. He might also be persuaded to write a letter of introduction to his colleagues on Eda.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: BELTER

Required Skills: Pilot

Required Equipment: starship

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

A scruffy individual approaches the party. He indicates he is a belter working in this system. His ship was badly damaged a month ago in the system's inner asteroid belt. He was able to nurse his ship back to 812-148, but without enough money to order parts to repair his ship from Arnigi. He would like to be taken to the inner asteroid belt where he says he had just found a rich asteroid when his ship was damaged. He will be able to activate a coded transponder when he is close. He offers shares in his find as inducement. He initially offers a 10% cut, but can be worked as high as 40% by a sharp bargainer (though he will look very unhappy at anything over 25%).

Accepting this proposal will require outfitting the party's ship for prospecting work – primarily packing in a good supply of food, water, air, fuel, and such hand tools as this world produces (shovels, picks, nets, and dynamite are all possibly useful items made locally). The belter will be able to supply a few higher tech items from his own ship such as laser-cutting torches and a table-sized densitometer designed to test core samples placed inside the machine.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The belter will help plot a course for the approximate area of the belt the asteroid is in, but can't remember the exact location. The party will spend 4d6 days getting close to a number of asteroids while the belter sends a low-power coded signal to each asteroid in turn, trying to find the right one. There is plenty of opportunity to have dangerous encounters with asteroids. Once the right asteroid is found, the belter will lead a team onto the asteroid to test various spots and find its composition.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

1. The asteroid will prove to be a respectably rich find, with a largish (several tens of kilograms) chunk of nearly pure Titanium, and a deposit of Lanthanum that is enough to supply several starships with jump grids.
2. As 1, but the belter's dead partner will be found near the transponder, shot with the same kind of snub pistol the belter is now pulling on the party...
3. The belter finally finds the transponder, but when he leads the party down, he discovers it is a worthless rock he had prospected thoroughly many months ago and abandoned. He insists that the party try some more asteroids in an attempt to find the right one, and will attempt violence if they refuse.

- 4-5. This turns out to be a worthless asteroid, with no reason to think it unusual aside from being a good shape and composition for a ship hull.
6. There is a corsair waiting behind the asteroid (which has no special value). The 'belter' is a front man for the corsair band as a second income source.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: MUSICIAN

Required Skills: Drive wheeled vehicle
Required Equipment: Personal weapons

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

An elderly woman approaches the party and asks if they would act as her driver and bodyguards as she attends a musical function in a distant location. She has a large TL-5 ground car but dislikes driving long distances. She recently received a note threatening her life if she attends a particular musical function she has attended before. She says her nephew, an official in the local government, can get the party permits to bring weapons along if they act as bodyguards. She would prefer the party bring the flashiest, highest-tech weapons they have, to make it clear to those around her that she is well protected.

The musical function is at a canyon about 150 kilometers away using twisty mountain roads. The woman will provide a topographical map of the area between her town and the musical event. The map has a number of curious markings on it, centered on the site of the event. The site of the event as shown on the map is called the "wailing wall."

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The road to the function is even twistier than shown on the map, and there are a few spots that have obviously had small rock falls recently removed. The site turns out to be a canyon above a volcanic vent, and the configuration of the walls and the content of the atmosphere just below the ledge where the event is held have an unusual mix of acoustic properties. The event has been held annually for the last thirty years, with some of the better musicians on the planet coming during an especially calm season to sing or play their instruments while the unusual sounds are recorded.

The party will arrive to find a couple hundred people there. Some of the people will be very happy to see their charge, while others will be obviously annoyed. Talking to various people will show that their charge is viewed as something of a prima donna, with very picky tastes in music. There will be a fair amount of very good TL-5 recording equipment setup around the performing platform.

Note: This patron encounter could be as suitable for a single player as for a larger group.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

1. The woman is able to perform without incident, and the return trip is uneventful.
- 2-3. There are a small number of people who protest her performance, and the party may be asked to help remove the disruptive elements.
4. Soon after the party arrives, the weather takes a turn for

the worse. The volcanic gases and billows of the valley's sulfur-laden air will begin to surge toward the performing platform. The party will need to evacuate their charge to higher ground, and will be asked to help with other people and equipment as well.

5. There are a number of people who are clearly hostile and will throw rocks and other objects at the woman. Some of them may have illegal weapons.
6. There is a group of commandos from High Salvation waiting for the party, and they will attack as soon as the party has left their vehicle. Their aim is to snatch the high-tech weapons from the party. The woman is their skill, and will duck back in the vehicle and lock the doors while the party fights it out with the commandos.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: MERCHANT

Required Skills: Ship skills

Required Equipment: Merchant Starship

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

While the party is at one of the A or B starports in or near the Starfall Cluster, a merchant who would like to charter their starship for a cargo run to 812-148 approaches them. His cargo will almost fill their cargo bay, but the only passenger will be himself and one assistant. He is fine with the party waiting another day or two to fill up the rest of the cargo bay and passenger staterooms, but doesn't want to wait longer than that. If the party chooses this option he will insist that he not have to pay for any of the cargo space or staterooms he is not actively using.

If the party does wait for more passengers and cargo, they will find an unusual number of large, burly men wanting passage to 812-148, each wanting to fill their full cargo allotment as passengers. Once the starship arrives in the 812-148 system, the merchant will indicate that he wants them to set down on High Salvation rather than the normal Heaven's Reach starport. If the party protests the landing spot, the merchant will point out in their contract the part that says "...unloading to occur at the place on the planet 812-148 designated by the lessor..."

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Shipping contracts vary in precision. Some are very detailed, while others merely specify the destination world, with the assumption that the cargo is going to the main Starport or the nearest Spaceport to its final destination. This contract is perfectly legal, and there is absolutely no reason not to trade with High Salvation, other than the generally unpleasant nature of society there. Heaven's reach claims to be the legitimate world government of 812-148, and forbids trade with the Salvationers. In practice, this is unenforceable.

Legally, the characters have to comply with the merchant's wishes unless they can show "unreasonable risk" inherent in doing so.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

1. The party lands on High Salvation and the cargo is unloaded. The merchant appreciates their service and promises more cargos in the future.
2. The party refuses to land on High Salvation, and the merchant and his assistant try to hijack the ship to land there. The burly men are from Heaven's Reach, and will assist the party if allowed to.
3. As 2, but the burly men are from High Salvation, and will help the merchant and his assistant. They will produce body pistols from their cargo allotments.

4. The burly men are from Heaven's Reach security forces and will try to arrest the merchant and his assistant as part of a sting operation.
- 5-6. As 1, but the party will be taken as prisoners and made to show the operation of their ship to High Salvationists to use in furthering their plans.

MERCENARY TICKET: WRAITHS FROM THE MIST

Mission Type: Security / Cadre

Unit Size: Platoon

BACKGROUND:

The High Salvation forces have recently been able to copy a number of TL-5 advances from stolen and salvaged equipment from the Heaven's Reach forces. If the High Salvation forces are able to produce a sufficient number of weapons and airships of the newer designs, the balance of power may shift, forcing the Heaven's Reach forces to retreat.

MISSION:

The Heaven's Reach forces are just starting to work on TL-6 equipment (jet engines, electronic computers, fission power, etc.). The work is progressing well, but the government is concerned that the High Salvation forces are gaining TL-5 equipment faster than the Heavens Reach forces are moving to TL-6. The government has purchased a large TL-6 technology data package from Arnigi, as well as a number of small turnkey demonstration facilities to produce this technology. The Heaven's Reach government would like to hire a small mercenary group to provide high-tech security for the compound where the demonstration facilities will be setup as well as the small number of technical advisors leased from Arnigi.

The mercenary group will also be training selected Heaven's Reach personnel in the effective use of TL-6 military technology. The government would like a platoon-sized group equipped to at least TL-9 standards (preferably TL-11). The contract would be for a three-month tour, with payment of Cr400,000. Half the money would be available up front and half at the end of the tour if there were no successful High Salvation armed incursions at the compound. 25-50% of the fee will be forfeit if the compound is attacked and the work disrupted.

RESOLUTION:

The compound is sited at the edge of a shoulder on a mountain several mountains north of the starport. Three approaches to the compound are relatively flat for at least half a kilometer, with a magenta moss as ground cover with the occasional bluntbush. The fourth side drops steeply into a canyon, which is filled almost to the level of the compound with rolling green acid mists. There is a two-meter tall fence around the compound that is electrified. There are guard posts in each of the four corners that have searchlights and heavy machine guns mounted in them, and another guard tower at the main gate. Electric power comes from a spur taken off the hydroelectric generator of a town about ten kilometers away. There is also a road that connects the compound and the town that mostly follows the electric spur.

The government has been fairly open about the project, to enhance public support for the project. Unfortunately, that means the High Salvation forces know about it too. There will undoubtedly be several attempts to capture (or if need be, destroy) the higher tech equipment and advisors while the mercenaries are guarding the compound. Some of the attempts may include forces climbing the steep slope from the mists while wearing protective gear.

THE WORLD OF ARNIGI

Arnigi 2514 A464599-B Ag Ni 502 X M1 V

PHYSICAL

A small, dryish world with a standard atmosphere, Arnigi is very Earth-like in many ways, and so was quickly settled by the early colonists. It is a young world, with harsh landscapes and jagged mountains, whose ecosystem was in its infancy when Terrans arrived and brought their own flora and fauna.

Arnigi orbits close to its dim red primary, and thus is rather warm despite the unimpressive nature of the star. It has three moons, all of which are mere rock fragments. There are no planetoid belts in the system but the numerous rockball worlds and the moons of the two gas giants have been explored and, in some cases, exploited since the settlers arrived.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The wildlife of Arnigi is mostly that of Terra. The colonists brought populations of many species with them including some rather unlikely ones such as elephants and wolves. A few native species do exist, but these are mainly fairly primitive creatures such as fish and insects.

Vast forests of oak and beech cover lowlands of the temperate regions, with pine and fir on higher ground. Much of the land is rocky or mountainous, and in these regions local plants predominate. The latter are mostly fairly primitive, and take the form of clinging mats of moss or tangles of creeping vines.

The equatorial regions are extremely hot, and much of the terrain is rocky or sandy desert without much life. This has created a broad belt of inhospitable terrain which prevents Terran species from spreading into the scattered oases and the flood plains of rivers in the region. These well-watered areas are havens for the local wildlife, which includes mud-skipping reptiles and a host of insects, but nothing more advanced.

WORLD OVERVIEW

Arnigi was something of a prize, and was settled several times by groups from Terra, the surrounding worlds, and finally by a motley collection of Vilani refugees from the Rule of Man. These groups claimed widely dispersed regions and built up small civilizations of varying technological sophistication.

By the fall of the Long Night, Arnigi was home to at least seven major civilizations, each with a population numbering in the millions. There was plenty of room on the planet for all these groups, and competition for resources was unnecessary. Despite the lack of need for conflict, the

various factions found reasons to fight one another, and for most of the Long Night there was at least one war going on somewhere.

In addition to these human factions, there was a large population of Chirpers in the southern hemisphere of Arnigi). These simple people were existing at a stone-age level of technology, but maintained a stable society. Ironically, their generosity was the only reason one of the original human colonies survived its first few winters.

This colony, styling itself the April Plains Confederation (after the region it had claimed), struggled for many years but finally was able to become a technological civilization. The people of April Plains never forgot their friendship with the Chirpers, and tried to coexist with them as far as possible. Indeed, forces from April Plains fought other humans from time to time to protect Chirper communities from less friendly factions. The self-appointed protectors of the Chirpers made many enemies by their stance, but in the end it was to save humanity in the southern hemisphere.

The Starfall Cluster never quite lost interstellar flight during the Long Night, and ships continued to come in. Most were local, trading among the ten worlds of the cluster. However, the occasional colony ship would limp in from time to time. Most of them were second-generation vessels. That is, they originated from colonies in the Glimmerdrift Reaches sector which were obviously failing and whose inhabitants had taken the desperate gamble of reactivating their ancient vessels and moving on in the hope of finding a better place.

One colony ship, the one that almost spelled doom for the entire planetary population, came in out of the distant past. During the Interstellar Wars, the Vilani Imperium used bioweapons several times against worlds that refused to surrender. Unable to prevent the attack, the elite of one world (it is not now known which one) attempted to escape in several vessels, little knowing that they were already infected. One ship, the now infamous **Zealous Fugitive**, was built without a Jump drive – there simply were not enough available – and packed with would-be survivors in low berths for the long journey to safety.

After a voyage lasting hundreds of years, the **Zealous Fugitive** reached Arnigi and crash-landed in the Horystone Badlands. The few colonists still alive in their low berths were automatically revived and quickly rescued by local settlers coming to investigate the crash.

The plague took hold quickly, and killed almost every human in the southern hemisphere. Most factions were totally wiped out, though the plague was 'only' about 70% fatal. Most of the remainder died within 10 years as society collapsed and people failed to adjust to a more primitive existence. The exception was April Plains, whose human survivors were taken in by the Chirpers (who were immune to the plague)

and became part of the local Neolithic civilization.

The plague crossed to the northern hemisphere eventually, though the broad desert band slowed it considerably. Warned by their dying southern cousins, the northern factions were able to create a partial Vaccine, which greatly reduced the death toll. They were also able to impose a self-blockade on the planet, refusing to allow any ships in or out while the plague burned itself out.

Despite their efforts, a large segment of the northern population (which was always smaller than that in the south) died out during the plague years, and the efforts to find a cure and to rebuild a wounded society forced the northerners to come together at last, creating a world government that exists to this day.

The plague was more or less eradicated by Year 100, and Arnigi began to rebuild its population base and technology. The northerners, now united under the Emergency Council for the Interim, were able to open their world and to cross the vast deserts to search for survivors in the lands of the southern hemisphere. Mostly, they found only deserted ruins where great cities had stood, but to their surprise they found a thriving low-technology human/chirper society which had become immune to the plague and was rapidly spreading over the southlands.

The southlands were never recolonized by the northerners, other than a few trade-towns to maintain contact with the southerners. Instead, the northerners turned their attention to the stars and began creating a spacefaring culture.

The first crude space vessels reached orbit in 350, and advanced interface craft soon carried the components of a space station into orbit, and from there the northerners, whose Interim Council had become a World Council, reached out to the other worlds in the system and finally to the stars.

Initially to prevent another star-borne plague, the people of Arnigi plunged their energies into spacefaring, and rapidly became a major presence in the cluster. Soon, what had been a survival measure became a cultural obsession. Citizens competed for jobs in the burgeoning spacecraft construction industry, or took jobs aboard security and research ships. Their trade ships plied the lanes of the cluster and crossed the Kulderson Deep via Didan to trade along the Broken Chain.

Today, the original space station orbits close to the orbital Highport, a visible reminder of the history of Arnigi. The crumbling cities of the south are another stark reminder of what might have happened, but for the present, Arnigi looks outward, not back.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The population of the northern hemisphere numbers

around 500,000, most of whom dwell in one of the three major cities. The spaces between these cities are vast and open, unspoiled but for the occasional ranch or vast farm.

The people of the northern hemisphere are by inclination spacefarers. Indeed, the seat of government is at the orbital Highport, which is now the "first city" of Arnigi and has a population of some 75,000 which is not included in the planetary population.

Law levels are high, as many of the emergency regulations were never rescinded, but policing is not intrusive. Indeed, the courts treat many prosecutions under archaic Survival Measure laws as test cases to see if the law needs to be scrapped, and penalties for infringing laws that are not currently needed are mild. It is generally agreed that the bureaucratic central government needs to be overhauled or maybe just given a good shake to get rid of some of the debris, but this will probably not happen for a long time. The system works well enough for now, and there are more interesting things to do than fix the governmental system.

The northerners are technologists by inclination, and produce many technicians and physical scientists as well as starship crews. Research is being conducted into many fields, though rather slowly and carefully, and with many regulatory laws. Science ships are often dispatched to study outsystem and deep-space phenomena, or hired out to other governments to conduct research on their behalf.

The southerners, whose numbers are unknown, dwell in mixed human/chirper groups that equate to a clan or tribe. Some are nomadic, some settled. No technology higher than TL 2 has been observed anywhere. There is some conflict between clans, but the southlands are wide enough to accommodate a far larger population, so serious disputes are rare.

The southerners rarely visit the ruined cities, though they seem to have no particular taboos about them. They are certainly willing to trade at the trade towns along the edge of the desert belt, and even have a representative on the world council. This is more than a courtesy offered by the northerners; the representative is actually listened to, and sometimes cuts through a complex issue with common sense and primitive wisdom.

The two societies, starfaring technologists and hut-dwelling hunter-gatherers, are separated by a vast reach of desert. They live in very different worlds. And yet, somehow, they have managed to remain respectful and friendly to one another where the factions of the old colonies fought constantly. Perhaps it is the shared tragedy of near-extinction, perhaps the fact that the dying southerners passed on a warning and all their research to their cousins. Whatever the reasons, the people of Arnigi are proof that very different societies can respect one another and become friends.

MILITARY AND SECURITY

The northerners (who are normally considered to be the only population on Arnigi that matters, at last by offworlders) maintain a security and customs force that operates a strict inspection code. The security force operates several squadrons of gunships plus armed shuttles for inspection boardings. The Highport is also somewhat fortified.

A handful of Jump-capable patrol craft are maintained for commerce protection duty, but these are lightly armed by military standards and are at best capable of defeating only small pirate craft. Similarly, Arnigi has no real ground forces, just a security arm equipped with grav vehicles for transport. Some of these mount light support weapons.

Arnigi is a peaceful world whose traditions of conflict are long forgotten. It can police itself and defeat minor raids, but could not stand up to a real military force.

TRADE, COMMERCE AND INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

Arnigi makes most of its money through interstellar trade and from ships using the Highport. As the Rimward gateway port of the cluster, Arnigi Highport sees considerable traffic and does a good trade in refits and the occasional starship purchase.

Relations with other worlds are generally neutral-cordial. Arnigi does not interfere in other worlds' affairs, and is happy to trade with almost anyone. There are few reasons for conflict and the World Council is adept at defusing situations long before they become serious.

Many offworlders see Arnigi's people as dedicated, hardworking and rather bland, an image that is probably apt in most cases. They do occasionally come over as rather smug, since many citizens project an air of pity for those who can't even get along with their own people. A few things are important to Arnigi, and pressing the right buttons can get a highly emotional response from a citizen. However, for the most part they just want to be left alone to pursue the things that matter, like science and exploration. Unless threatened or pushed beyond tolerance, Arnigi and its citizens will simply live and let live.

ADVENTURES IN THE ARNIGI SYSTEM

AMBER ZONE: DADDY'S PRINCESS

SITUATION

Duluk Stellane came to Arnigi 16 years ago with his two year old daughter Kiara, having buried her mother and older brother on Hidamae (569-519). He made a fresh start in the northern city of Warrawee, setting up a small manufacturing business.

Kiara Stellane considers herself an Arnigian, and her father a dear but out of touch old man. She has recently decided to adopt the Soufolk (southern Arnigians) lifestyle and drop out of the high-tech, high-stress life of the Norfolk. As a newly recognised adult she has taken the appropriate steps to cut herself off from her old life, which includes booking her high-tech belongings into a government run holding station for safekeeping.

Kiara's unexpected departure worried Duluk, but to make matters worse he has received an urgent and distressing vid-call from her. The vid-call was cut-off before she was able to say anything, but he was left with a vision of her bedraggled, with sunburnt lips, wearing sandy rags in what looked like a Soufolk desert tent.

Arnigian authorities dismissed Duluk's worries as those of an offworlder who just doesn't understand Soufolk culture. It is common for young people who have 'gone south' to experience an initial homesickness, but it usually passes and they almost always reject outside intervention. They have sent a request for information about Kiara to the major southern settlements, but a response might take months, or never happen. The authorities were able to narrow her location at the time of the call to a 100 hundred kilometre square area in the southern continent's desert region.

Duluk has turned to an old friend, who is a shipping agent for many free traders. Together they have decided the best approach is to hire offworld (i.e. sympathetic) help to locate and if necessary, recover, Kiara. Duluk's friend has contacted the characters to see if they are interested in helping out. Duluk has Cr 20,000 to fund this mission, he will be willing to offer the characters half up front, with the rest payable if they successfully locate his daughter.

RESOLUTION

Kiara is actually in very deep trouble. 'Going south' turned out to be very easy, but she quickly realised she didn't know many people, and in the south, survival is a matter of who and what you know. She eventually befriended a group of

Soufolk youths who had come in to pick up some supplies at the settlement she had been dropped off at.

Unfortunately for Kiara, the youths she befriended are a group of rebellious Soufolk who have been kicked out of their various tribes because of their appallingly inappropriate behaviour. The youths were hired by a GTC corporation interested in doing some research in the ancient southern cities, and needing some 'locals' to provide cover for their activities. The youths caught Kiara eavesdropping on their conversations about how cushy this job is, and made a panicky decision to force her to return to the desert campsite with them.

The GTC corporation is interested in researching the plague that wiped out most of the early colonists for possible bio-weapon uses. They have begun digging up burial sites of plague victims. The youths don't really know what is going on, and are simply helping allay local suspicions. Kiara has been forced to do menial work around the camp, and since she snuck into one of the researcher's tents, has been restricted to the youth's area of the camp.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: RESEARCH SUPPORT

Required Skills: Ship and vehicle or wilderness survival skills.

Required Equipment: Ship with room for an ATV, or survival equipment.

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The characters are hired to aid a GTC corporation's research team investigate the ancient southern cities of Arnigi for potential high-tech artefacts brought by early colonists. The characters should either be able to provide transport for the research team and their equipment, or be able to provide wilderness survival skills useful in the Arnigian desert.

If the characters provide a ship then they will be paid standard charter rates for the duration of the research project, which is estimated to take between a week and 2 months. Otherwise they will be hired on a retainer of Cr 150/day each, with board and provision covered by the corporation.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The GTC corporation is very interested in maintaining secrecy, supposedly to prevent competitors from discovering their chosen path of research. This explains why people outside the corporation have been recruited for this project. The characters will be closely watched, and the researchers will at all times strive to prevent them discovering what the research is really looking for, or has in fact found. The GTC researchers are very much loyal corporate employees, and have little desire to fraternise with the 'hired help'.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

- 1 The corporation is really just after high-tech artefacts.
- 2 The corporation is researching the Vilani plague for potential bio-weapon uses. The characters will be killed if they find this out.
- 3 The corporation has hired local youths as protection from local nomads, and the youths have kidnapped a northern girl (see Amber Zone above).
- 4 A local tribe has taken an interest in what is happening and demands to be shown what the researchers are doing.
- 5 Shortly after setting up, the researchers report success, and another corporation's black-ops team has been sent to steal the research data.
- 6 A big storm is brewing but the research team refuses to pack up and move somewhere safer until it is too late.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: RACING TEAM

Required Skills: Ship, security and subterfuge skills.
Required Equipment: None.

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

Whilst at Arnigi Highport, the characters are approached by a lawyer representing clients who wish to remain anonymous, but who need discreet security people, if they agree to signing a binding contract of secrecy, they will be told more.

The lawyer's client is the Shuriken Starmine SystemOne team. Once the contract is signed the characters will be introduced to the team manager, Gad Farsko. He will explain that the team has recently lost their best pilot, Dux "The Duke" Farran, in a suspicious accident, that local authorities are investigating. Unfortunately the Arnigi series of races will probably finish before the investigation is completed. Gad is interested in hiring extra security for his team, particularly the backup pilot, Rodger Yung, who he thinks is almost as good as Dux. He doesn't want the extra security to appear obvious, as that would only inflame rumours about Dux's accident, so he proposes the characters adopt a cover.

Whichever one of the characters presents the best will be announced as the new backup pilot for Rodger. The rest of the characters will be hired as extra engineering crew, the new pilot's hangers-on, etc. This will give the characters access to the SystemOne ship docks, and the many social events that surround the race series. The characters will be offered Cr 1,000/week each, and the season ends in 3 weeks, the full amount will be paid to the characters if a culprit is identified before the end of the season, and they will be released from their contract at that time.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

SystemOne is the Gateway Domain equivalent of Formula One racing. It is in the format of a series of spaceship races within a given system, and attracts the best teams from across the sector. Hefty corporate sponsorship funds the races, which offer a significant means of advertising to markets across the Glimmerdrift Reaches sector.

The SystemOne season lasts for four years, with 5-6 race series each year. The current season is winding down with a series of races in the Arnigi system. Going into this last series the Shuriken Starmine team had a sizeable lead, their nearest competitors being the teams from Lunarmise and Idam Lee.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

1-2 Dux's accident really was just an accident, the hardest challenge for the characters will be dealing with the press.

- 3 Starfall used to hold the final series of the tour, but 10 years ago they lost their series to Arnigi. Agents of the Tripartite Alliance are trying to give the Arnigi series a bad name, and will target other team's pilots too.
- 4 Rodger Yung organised the accident so he could take Dux's place, he is suspicious of the characters and might try to 'take care of' them too.
- 5 A rival team's sponsor has deployed a black ops team to ensure the Shuriken team do not win the championship.
- 6 An alternate backup pilot engineered the accident in order to take Rodger's place in the team once Rodger was the main pilot. The alternate is dismayed when one of the characters is announced as the new backup pilot, and is determined to take care of them too.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: TAKE HIM AWAY!

Required Skills: Ship skills.

Required Equipment: A starship with passenger berths.

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

Whilst picking up passengers and cargo on Arnigi, the characters are contacted by a representative of the World Council and an unusual request is made.

The highest Arnigian court has found a young southerner guilty of a crime, which under the Survival Measures, requires banishment. The courts have recognised the peculiarities of this case and so have sentenced the youth to exile from the Arnigi system for the next five years. The World Council has been instructed to arrange for the youth to be given passage to any world within 3 parsecs of Arnigi.

The World Council will purchase the youth a middle passage ticket, and will offer the characters an additional Cr 2,000 to ensure that the youth arrives without incident at his destination. In addition the characters will have done the World Council a favour, something that might prove useful later.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The youth's name is Arlay, he has no other name as his tribe has stripped him of his clan name. An intelligent, if hot-headed young man, he successfully requested the chance to obtain work experience in the north. He was placed with a local university's team of researchers, and managed to perform adequately in his role as research assistant.

Recently the university had been given an old data core from one of the southern cities. The research team Arlay was a part of was responsible for retrieving what they could from the core, as well as analysing its physical construction. The data turned out to include an inflammatory series of articles by one of the main opponents of the April Plains Confederation. Most of the material was extremely racist, and cast a very negative view of the Neolithic Chirper society.

Arlay was amazed to overhear some of his younger NorFolk colleagues discussing the merits of these views, and questioning the age-old Arnigian acceptance of Chirpers. He decided that the material in the data core was too dangerous to be saved, and set about destroying the data core and the research notes made about the material on it. Unfortunately, rather than just being guilty of the destruction of physical property, the Survival Measure laws specifically included strict penalties to prevent just this sort of destruction.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

- 1-2 Arlay will cooperate with the characters, but is very sad to be forced to leave his beautiful home this way.
- 3-4 This event has confirmed every bad thing Arlay has heard of NorFolk/offworlders. He is contemptuous of the characters and seeks to deliberately disrupt the ship's day-to-day activities.
- 5 Arlay has frustrated the aims of a particular anti-Chirper group who have arranged for some local thugs to 'take care of' him as payback for destroying historical documents supporting their views.
- 6 Arlay is actually excited to be going offworld, and a bit ashamed of his actions. If the characters seem likeable, he will want to join their crew instead of going planetside again.

MERCENARY TICKET: Q-SHIP

Mission Type: Escort
Unit Size: Starship Crew

BACKGROUND:

There is an ongoing problem with corsairs in the Starfall Cluster, and the problem is often that the local patrols are too easily avoided. It seems that the corsairs have some local help, as patrol vessels time and again miss corsairs by a matter of days, even when 'surprise' patrols are instigated.

In particular corsairs heavily affect Arnigi, as it has a small population heavily dependent upon interstellar trade. To counter this, the Arnigian World Council purchased a high-tech Q-ship from Idam Lee, a ship that outwardly appears to be a 400-ton subsidised merchant, but is actually a heavily armed anti-corsair vessel.

The Q-ship never made it to Arnigi, corsairs found out about the vessel before she even left dock, and it was ambushed by several corsair vessels whilst en route to Arnigi. The Arnigian World Council suspects loose lips at Orland High, and have decided to solve the problem another way.

MISSION:

The World Council of Arnigi is looking to either hire a mercenary Q-ship, or a free trader willing to have their armament upgraded, and willing to take on a regular route through some of the worst systems for corsairs.

Obviously the council would prefer a dedicated mercenary ship that has a proven track record, but there are some advantages to upgrading an existing trader – primarily that the existing reputation of the ship would prevent corsairs being wary of it.

The problem seems to be the Ur route. Typically ships transport goods through Ur to Dhuku and thence to Kiru Dis, or to Lunarmise and the rest of the Starfall cluster. Recently vessels have been hit whilst leaving Ur, and few ships captains are willing to trust themselves to Arka Videa, 812-148 or 743-128. Patrol vessels sweep the Ur system regularly, but the belts provide an easy place for corsairs to hide, and the lack of a gas giant means ships must refuel at Ur's Starport, and thus pass the gauntlet of the belts.

If the characters' ship needs an armament upgrade, then the council are willing to pay for additional popup triple pulse laser or missile turrets, and for the modifications necessary to add fighter launch capability to the cargo hold – as well as up to four fighters and their pilots. Note that the more the council needs to do to make the ship a Q-ship, the less reward the characters can expect.

A fully kitted out mercenary Q-ship will be paid Cr100,000 for one month's hire, whilst a merchant ship that requires extensive modification will only be paid Cr40,000 for one month's hire, and in addition will be expected to disarm at the end of the contract. There is a Cr10,000 bonus for identifying a corsair ship, a Cr100,000 bonus for each corsair vessel disabled/destroyed and a Cr50,000 bonus for each corsair base identified.

RESOLUTION:

The characters will need to equip their ship at the Arnigian naval yards, and then begin operating a fake trade route that takes them into harm's way. It is up to the characters to decide if they want to hang out in the Ur system, or try the less travelled routes through Arka Videa, 812-148 or 743-128.

Arnigian patrol ships sweep the Ur route once a month and in addition there are the occasional GTC Seepie or Seeker patrol that come through. The corsair raids do not have a particular frequency, but they do manage to avoid the scheduled patrols.

If the characters manage to identify a corsair vessel and live to report it, that will be a minor success. If they severely damage, or disable a corsair vessel that will be a major success in the council's eyes. To identify a corsair base, or locals harbouring corsairs, would be a grand success, and likely put a dent in corsair operations for some time.

THE WORLD OF LUNARMISE

Lunarmise 2611 A659868-D

824 GT M1 V

PHYSICAL

Despite its thin atmosphere, Lunarmise is covered with deep oceans. Not quite a water world, the planet nevertheless has a tremendous amount of water, and even on land there is a great deal of swamp; it rains almost constantly everywhere but the polar ice caps.

The landscape of Lunarmise's small continents (what can be seen of them through the cloud base) is rounded and grooved deep, both by rivers and a recent ice age. Much of the land lies low and floods regularly. The underwater landscape is rather more spectacular; vast abyssal plains are cut by stupendous trenches, with chains of seamounts rising almost to the surface in some areas.

The rest of the Lunarmise system is quite full. There are four gas giants (one of which Lunarmise itself orbits as one of seven moons) and two planetoid belts, plus several other rocky planets. One such world, named Marisha, is marginally habitable and lies on the inner edge of the life zone. Although battered by asteroids and somewhat scorched, Marisha offers significant mineral wealth from its volcanic plains.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The great majority of life on Lunarmise is of course to be found in the oceans. A vast range of fish and stranger creatures dwell in the relatively shallow waters off the coasts of the continents. Twelve-tentacled squid-like predators occupy a number of niches in the food chain, and some species grow to colossal size.

A relative of these creatures is the Burrower, a large creature which excavates a short vertical tunnel to conceal its body and waits for passing prey. Its tentacles, which are disguised by plant-like fronds and often hidden in seabed vegetation, can grab quite large prey (larger than a human) and drag it in to the maw.

A smaller, freshwater version of the Burrower exists in the rivers and shallow swamps, and some species have learned to extend their tentacles out of the water to grab prey from nearby land. They have infrared sensors on their tentacles for this purpose, but these are in an early stage of evolutionary development and as such are not very sensitive. The swamp-burrower must get a tentacle quite close to the target to sense it. A common way to achieve this is to leave a few tentacles spread out in shallow water or across small areas of dry land, and wait for something to wander by.

Land-dwelling creatures are mainly confined to the swamps and the wetlands around them, though a number of Terran species (and a few from other worlds) dwell in the dryer lands of the continental interior.

WORLD OVERVIEW

Lunarmise was the site of an early Rule of Man colony, which achieved subsistence but little more, and was thus of little consequence in the early years of the cluster. Eventually, second-wave colonists (mainly from Starfall) arrived and settled the available land masses. Those that joined existing colonies were the most successful, building on a stable if small base to create what became the dominant culture on Lunarmise.

The colonies were widely scattered, with little communication between them at first. As sustainable technology levels rose, outlying colonies were integrated into the expanding world-state. This process was not without conflict, and provided impetus for technological growth.

By -700, Lunarmise was more or less unified, and began launching its own starships shortly thereafter. Lunarmise merchants plied the spacelanes and set up enclaves on the various worlds of the cluster including Starfall, where they became a dominant partner in the development of the offworld economy of First Landing Starport.

Many of the firms involved in opening up Idam Lee (around -200) were based out of Lunarmise, which at that time was the dominant economy of the entire cluster. This pre-eminence was shaken in year 67, when some of the outlying colonies decided that they could do better on their own. The secession of the Broad Straits Alliance from the world government of Lunarmise came as a complete surprise, and it took 75 years of economic pressure and limited military action to bring the rebellion to a close.

Over the next 400 years, Lunarmise became the unofficial "capital" of the Starfall cluster, and by the mid 500s was able to recolonize the world of 569-519. The Lunarmise colonies on Hidamae (as the world became unofficially known) grew steadily but remained directly-ruled possessions of Lunarmise for centuries.

Within 200 years of colonizing Hidamae, Lunarmise reached TL D, one of the highest technology levels recorded in the sector. Life was good in the cities of Lunarmise and inevitably, complacency set in, followed by stagnation.

From 750 onwards, there has been little in the way of progress on Lunarmise. Research has taken the form of minor improvements rather than large, expensive blue-sky projects. Citizens are comfortable and assured of their superiority over all rivals. So sure of this were the people of Lunarmise that they sowed the seeds of their own eclipse.

Lunarmise had traded for many decades with the corporations of the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium, and many of its firms maintained offices on Lunarmise. As the people of Lunarmise became less vigilant and competitive, so the offworld corporations gradually became more important in

the economy of the world, buying out small firms and gaining shareholder percentages in larger ones.

By 950, GTC firms dominated several key market areas, and in some cases had gained a secret monopoly by taking control of rivals through dummy shareholder groups. The influence wielded by these firms was such that the government was increasingly beholden to big business.

At the same time, unification and secession movements were gaining pace in the colonies at Hidamae. Attempting to regain some public confidence and reassert its authority, the government of Lunarmise ordered an intervention in the Hidamae situation, and played right into the hands of the GTC.

The intervention became a bloody struggle with little glory or prestige to be gained, and drained both resources and will. It became apparent that Lunarmise must disengage as gracefully as possible and turn its attention to problems closer to home. The peace settlement on Hidamae was welcomed (though Lunarmise went through the motions of making demands and holding out for a better agreement, for a variety of reasons).

However, the government escaped the Hidamae situation too late. The GTC corporations had by this time become firmly entrenched, and were working to reshape the government in a more pleasing form. By 990, the world government of Lunarmise was basically owned by offworld firms.

There is still some resistance to GTC rule, and the government has considerable latitude to run the planet as it sees fit. The GTC does not want to be bothered with the minutiae of world administration, so merely dictates broad policy and vetoes any unacceptable actions.

Ironically, the GTC takeover may actually free Lunarmise resources to bring the colonists on Hidamae back into the fold, though whether this will help the citizens of Lunarmise counterbalance the overwhelming influence of the GTC, or simply give GTC another planet, remains to be seen.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The 800 million people of Lunarmise mainly dwell in medium-sized cities situated on high ground and surrounded by swampy lowlands. A few seabed arcologies and even a couple of free-floating “ship-cities” exist, but by and large the people of Lunarmise are land-dwellers.

Government is bureaucratic, and the current government can trace its origins back through many centuries. However, it is extremely corrupt, being almost wholly in the pocket of offworld firms based out of the GST. The world recently declared membership of the Trade Consortium, which causes nary a ripple among the bulk of the population.

The people of Lunarmise are overwhelmingly complacent and comfortable. The GTC takeover has affected the lives of citizens very little, and the effects are deliberately kept to a minimum. Coupled with a drive towards greater consumerism and subtle propaganda in the media, the GTC has convinced most citizens that they live in a golden age of prosperity and prestige. One of those two is actually true for most citizens.

A segment of the population knows the real situation and resents it. These individuals can now see that Lunarmise has been sliding into decadence for centuries, and that they have woken up too late to do much about it. However, they are trying.

Resistance to GTC rule is fragmented. It very rarely takes the form of open protest, let alone violence, but is more a matter of individuals and small groups going about their normal business but with an increasing sense of dissatisfaction with the situation; that they should be doing something about it. Most have no idea what could be done, while a few have half-baked or ineffective ideas about kicking the offworlders out and reclaiming Lunarmise for its own people. There is thus the makings of an underground resistance on Lunarmise, but as yet it has no form and no leaders.

The exception is in what used to be the Broad Straits Alliance, where open dissatisfaction takes the form of protests and attempts at – legal and illegal – economic measures such as stock manipulation and bank fraud. These problems are easily squashed by the GTC, which has vastly more money to throw at economic wars, or by the central government, which maintains its dignity by being seen to keep good order in its territory.

However, the Broad Straits region is beginning to cause some problems for the GTC, and contact has been made with Hidamae in the hope of coordinating resistance. On Lunarmise, the people of the Broad Straits are seen as ungrateful troublemakers by the bulk of the world population, who don't want to know about anything that might upset their comfortable lifestyle.

MILITARY AND SECURITY

Lunarmise has always maintained a small security force and a reasonable system-protection fleet with a few jump-capable ships for commerce protection. These forces were extremely complacent and what can only be described as “flabby” – over-officered, over-managed and under prepared – at the time of the Hidamae Intervention. Combat experience caused a few changes to be made, but for the most part the lessons learned in the intervention were more about finding effective scapegoats than actually improving the military's efficiency.

Thus while the patrol ships of Lunarmise are efficient enough in conducting searches of merchant vessels (except GTC-registered ships, which are subjected to a sketchy inspection at best) and chasing off pirates, their actual military effectiveness

is rather low. Business is the career for decisive, talented individuals, while the military gets whatever is left over. The exception is in the field of well-paid staff or managerial jobs, which are generally given as favors, or to keep important but incompetent individuals busy and out of the critical financial arena.

Personnel in the armed forces are as concerned with following regulations and not being blamed if anything goes wrong as with actually doing a good job. The few who actually try to improve standards are struggling against a mass of corruption, entrenched favoritism and sheer complacency, topped with a good helping of inertia.

TRADE, COMMERCE AND INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

Lunarmise is a member of the GTC, and friendly to all other member worlds. Relations with other worlds are fairly neutral but characterized by a certain arrogance on the part of Lunarmise citizens. As a rule, Lunarmise wishes to maintain a reputation for dealing within the letter of its contracts. Open rapacity and clever double-dealing are frowned upon, but hard bargaining is the accepted norm. Other worlds used to see Lunarmise as an arrogant, high-handed power, but one that was secure behind the bastions of its fleet and its economic strength and thus able to do as it pleased.

Recent events have shaken this belief, and there is a growing conviction that Lunarmise is nothing but a puppet for the GTC, the thin end of a wedge being driven into the Starfall Cluster.

Lunarmise exports high-technology manufactures goods for the most part, including starships and small craft. Complex restrictions make arms sales difficult to organize, but small quantities of military equipment are sold each year. Imports include raw materials such as ore, and foodstuffs that cannot be grown in any quantity on Lunarmise.

ADVENTURES IN THE LUNARMISE SYSTEM

AMBER ZONE: WATER RATS

SITUATION:

The Meraxes Floating Habitation Unit, or “Meraxes Flab” as it commonly referred to, is one of several high class residential units designed to cruise the extensive seas of the high tech world of Lunarmise, giving its rich, and largely retired, residents a different view of the planet every day.

It is a peaceful place full of happy citizens living out their pensions eating, drinking, socializing or doing whatever they find enlivening.

Due to plentiful food and lack of exercise, a significant proportion of the residents of such complexes are grossly overweight. This is the primary reason why the appellation “Flab” came about, rather than the official “FHU” or some other contraction. However, the residents find this no great drawback, due both to the amount of water available for transportation and socializing in, and the fact that space is not as limited as it is in the many land-based cities of Lunarmise, so everything has been built large to accommodate them.

For the really large wishing to leave the water sections of the habitation (which are treated, non-saline, heated, and sealed off from the surrounding sea) specially designed grav-belt units are readily available, and the Meraxes Operating Company (MOC) maintains one of the best heart clinics on Lunarmise.

The characters are employed by an MOC representative to provide standard security services, the equivalent of street police level enforcement for a six month tour of duty. Criminal detection, surveillance and detective services are provided by the complex’s Model 7 computer system running specialized programs.

The MOC representative will offer 5000Cr per month to each member of the team. A wary character will realize that this rate is a little on the high side for a job that should consist primarily of baby-sitting a bunch of rich retirees as they drift lazily around the planet. The Meraxes Operating Company representative will say that this is because they know that good security personnel often find the environment of the Meraxes Flab boring and possibly even a threat to their status as rough and ready men, as mercs coming off such an assignment are sometimes considered to be as soft and flabby as the residents. However should a character think to check, a cursory search of the Lunarmise data-net will reveal that the last security enforcement unit employed on Lunarmise lost half it’s personnel to a terrorist bomb attack planted by a member of one of the security teams. The MOC

believes employing off-worlders reduces the risk of another mole.

A Difficult skill check against the Gather Information skill will reveal that the Meraxes Operating Company is in fact a wholly owned subsidiary of an off-world GTC corporation, so the majority of profits from this company will end up going off planet.

RESOLUTION:

The mission could be as peaceful as the MOC representative claims. However it could just as easily become a nightmare.

To the troublemakers of the old Broad Straits Alliance, the very existence of the Meraxes Flab is an affront to the spirit of Lunarmise independence. On the Flab, the decadent rich live lives of idleness and luxury while paying **off-worlders** for the privilege of enjoying what Lunarmise itself provides. In fact the term “on the Flab” has come to describe someone the dissidents see as someone acting against the interests of Lunarmise and getting rich doing it. For instance, they consider most of the current government to be “on the Flab”.

The floating habitation units have become a symbol of both the influence of off-world interests, represented mainly by the GTC, and the general apathy and decadence of the majority of the Lunarmise population. As such they are increasingly coming under threat from the more militant elements of the Broad Straits Alliance.

It will come as no surprise that the Meraxes Flab is about to enter waters once controlled by the Broad Straits Alliance, as part of it’s well publicized schedule. Despite attempts by Meraxes’ captain to convince the MOC that the Flab should alter its schedule, there are some beautiful tourist venues in the Broad Straits area, and its occupants would not be happy to miss seeing them.

The party will be deployed together as single security team, all on the same shift. At least two other off-world security teams will be employed, to cover the other two shifts,

The referee is free to choose from the following events that the security force will need to deal with during their tour of duty, or they may roll randomly to select an event. Events may occur more than once but the referee should try to differentiate them or may build them into an ongoing plot if she so desires. Of course, every incident will need to be investigated which may in turn lead to further adventures...

If random events are desired, roll 2d6 (2D):

2 Squid Surprise.

A large (just over large human size in diameter) ten-tentacled squid has (somehow) managed to get through the filtration systems and is loose in the internal water transport system. Protect the residents, rescue the squid.

3 The Dealer.

A team member notices a member of one of the other security teams acting suspiciously and placing a package in a pipe. If the party are aware of the possibility of terrorist action, play this up, but actually the person is providing illicit anagathics or recreational drugs to residents.

4 The Cork.

A resident has become stuck in one of the internal water transport tubes. The security force must figure out how to extract the resident before the pressure builds enough to be dangerous. Flab engineers will help, but they claim it's not their responsibility, and anything involving residents needs to be handled by the medical staff. Guess what the medical staff say...

5 Falling Down.

A resident's grav-belt fails leaving them stranded on precarious part of the Flab's architecture. The team needs to rescue and calm the scared, and possibly irate, resident.

6 Accusation.

One of the many people employed as service personnel on the flab is accused of a crime (possibly theft, assault, rape, selling illicit drugs, etc.) by a resident. Whether the accusation is true is up to the referee.

7 Domestic.

There is a dispute between two residents and the security team is called to defuse the situation.

8 Armed Domestic.

As 7, but one or both of the parties produce a weapon, probably only a knife or other domestic equipment, and attempts to use it to 'settle' the dispute.

9 Pressure Down.

A system failure leaves many residents stranded when the transport tubes they are using lose water pressure. The system is fixed but residents are still stranded in the miles of transport tubes, and must be found and removed before water pressure is restored, as the sudden influx of water on repressurization will endanger them.

10 Storm Warning.

A large storm is approaching. While the Flab is designed to withstand even the most severe hurricane conditions, it has been a while since it has had to "batten down the hatches" and the Captain details the security force to examine the exterior of the Flab to ensure that all is secure.

11 Terrorist Attack.

A small motorized boat approaches the Flab and launches a salvo of unguided rockets at the Flab. The team need to deal with both the boat and the results of the rocket attack.

12 Terrorist Assault.

A large, well-organized, and heavily armed, terrorist team seizes the Flab's bridge while the party are off-duty.

The party members get enough warning to disappear into the Flab's maintenance tunnels before being rounded up by the terrorists, but not enough to retrieve their weapons, as the terrorists knew exactly where the team were supposed to be. The party will discover that the Flab's First Officer, Todd Bartholomew, and/or one of the other security teams, is or are in league with the terrorist team and the security system has been locked down.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: THE GTC FACTOR

Required Skills: Gather Information, Streetwise, Counter-Insurgency, Tactics, Intimidation
Required Equipment: None

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The party is approached by GTC Trade Factor Jeremy Britz to rescue his daughter, Ramona. The factor will assume that the party knows both him and the situation relating to Ramona because of the publicity involved in the case. Any party member who has been on Lunarmise over the last month, or anyone making a successful on-the-spot Gather Information roll, will be aware of the following details:

Exactly two weeks ago, Britz's daughter was kidnapped from his estate. Since then the terrorists who kidnapped her have carried out a series of raids on banks and other rich targets around the capital. At each of these raids, the factor's daughter has been used as a human shield.

The party are offered a lump sum payment of Cr 500,000 for the girl recovered alive and unharmed. The lump sum will be reduced by 50% if the daughter is hurt, and nothing will be paid if she is killed.

Britz will explain that he has no faith in the local security force's anti-terrorist unit, given their poor showing on Hidamae a few years back, and he thinks the party can do better.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The local security force will bow to Britz's wishes, and allow the party to fulfil the contract, due to the fact that the security force commander is in the pay of the GTC. However, the rank and file members will definitely not be happy with the situation, and some of them will be hoping that the party fails. They will be ready to jump all over the party if they break any laws during the execution of their contract.

The security forces will not volunteer the following information, though they will grudgingly give the party the following information if they are explicitly asked. They know **exactly** where the gang is holed up and have had them under surveillance for three days. They also have full dossiers on all members of the gang, **including** Ramona. If the party gets access to Ramona's dossier and the surveillance tapes, and all they really have to do is to think to ask nicely, it may give them advance warning of the real situation (see die roll below).

The gang's leader, Marcus Rowse is well aware that as long as they have the Factor's daughter, they will enjoy "special treatment" from the security forces. In other words, they will not be fired upon, and Britz will veto any drastic

action against the group. There is at least one member of the security forces who is utterly disgusted with this kid-glove approach and will, if the situation arises, and he meets the gang, completely ignore his superior's orders.

This is a very high media profile case, on a complacent Tech Level D, relatively high law level, planet (i.e. with sophisticated information systems) where there has been little exciting happening recently. The characters will almost certainly be interviewed for television if they succeed and charged with felony offences if they fail, especially if they use illegal weapons in their operations. Any characters that don't want to be well known will be out of luck. Characters may be able to retire on the movie rights if the case is successful. If not, well, see "**The Hole**" in the Mercenary tickets section.

Britz has been using his authority with the GTC and calling in favours to ensure local law enforcement and security personnel do not shoot at or otherwise endanger the gang while his daughter has been with them. But Britz knows he cannot pull this off for too long, as the next GTC trade ship, due in-system in four days, has his superior on board who will not be happy with the way the way Britz has handled the situation. It has damaged GTC relations with the Lunarmise security forces, and made it plain to people in the Lunarmise hierarchy, who may not have previously been aware of it, just how much control the GTC has. If the party does not get the daughter back prior to the arrival of Britz's superior on planet, which will occur 1D6+6 days from now, the security forces will be given the go ahead, and the party is unlikely to get paid.

If the party **do** manage to rescue the daughter, Roll 1d6 (1D) for the outcome:

- 1-2 Everything is as described. Ramona is grateful for the rescue. Her first act, if the party has secured the other members of the gang, will be to assault Rowse in the most painful manner possible. Rowse may be able to use this distraction to attempt an escape.
3. Ramona is a victim of Stockholm Syndrome, and believes she loves Rowse. She will do anything she can to save him and help him escape, including throwing herself in front of weapons fire intended for him.
- 4-5. Ramona acts as if she is grateful for the rescue. However, she actually **is** in love with Rowse, and has been for some time prior to the kidnap. Her first act, once everyone is secured will be to assault Rowse as per 1-2. But she will attempt to use this distraction to free the leader, give him a weapon she had concealed about her body, (if she was not frisked by the players) and join him in attempting to escape.
6. Ramona acts as if she is grateful for the rescue, but she is in fact the real ringleader of the operation and actually suggested the idea of kidnapping herself to Marcus Rowse. Rowse is in love with **her**, so will do all he can to protect her, including shutting up and going to jail. Ramona knows she is alright as long as the rest of the

gang are kept quiet, so once she realizes the game is up, she will do all she can to ensure the gang are killed rather than captured.



MERCENARY TICKET: THE HOLE

Mission Type: Recon

Unit Size: Squad

BACKGROUND

Deep Sea Mining Station 34 sits in some 1200 metres of water astride an underwater mountain chain rich in rare ores far from the populated centres of Lunarmise. Most citizens of Lunarmise don't know of its existence, and the majority would be horrified to find that it does. Originally, '34 or "The Hole" as it is referred to by those who know of its existence, was a largely automated deep sea mining platform. But the robots alone could not deal with the instability of the rock in this area, and costs began to sky-rocket as humans miners had to be employed to watch the robots and deal with the things they couldn't handle.

At this stage the Lunarmise government found it had a dire need of a place to send those dissidents against the GTC who could not be allowed to surface again, but it balked at actually killing them. The GTC also wanted cheap labour to operate the mining machinery, which was hard to find on Lunarmise where there are no poor. They solved both problems by turning DSMS34 into a detention centre.

The warders inhabit a way station that is a mere 25 meters below the surface, where the freight submersibles load. The detainees live in the working part of the mine some 200 meters deeper and are left to their own devices. The wardens send food and pipe oxygen to the mine.

Most of the time the warders do nothing but process prisoners who are on their way down, and receive processed ore back. Every now and then a problem comes up that requires the direct attention of one of the civilian crew, a geologist or an engineer, and can't be handled by one of the remotes. When this happens the warders have to mount an armed expedition down the Hole. Very rarely someone mounts an escape attempt or there is a riot, and the warders cut off the oxygen supply until everyone is subdued.

So far there has only ever been one release of a prisoner, and one successful escape, though the escapee died when he ran out of air during the long journey back to civilization in the hold of an automated freight submersible.

MISSION

A GTC representative approaches the unit commander personally, claiming to have been given his name by a former employer. The GTC rep states that this is an emergency reconnaissance mission to determine the status of a Deep Sea Mining Station. Contact has been lost with the station during a severe storm. The continuing storm makes effective orbital surveillance impossible.

No regular units are currently available for the operation, and the reconnaissance must occur before the next automated freight submersible arrives at the station in four hours. The representative will not reveal that '34 is in fact a detention centre.

The GTC representative will provide a G-Carrier if the unit is not already equipped with one, and will arrange any reasonable other (non-weapon) equipment as requested, such as diving equipment, and the like.

When the recon team arrives the storm will not have blown itself out, so the G-Carrier driver will require a Formidable skill roll to make a successful landing on the platform's surface pad.

Resolution: 1d6

- 1 There is nothing wrong at the mining station, other than that the fierce storm has destroyed the station's long-range communication systems beyond local repair. However, the warders will be **very** wary of unexpected visitors with a G-carrier, treating them as possible accomplices for an attempted escape. The mercs will have to be careful to avoid a disastrous firefight.
- 2-3 The storm has severely damaged the surface part of the mining station. The surface pad is destroyed, oxygen-pumping equipment is non-functional and there is no obvious means of accessing the station other than dropping into the ocean. If the mercs have had enough foresight to bring diving equipment they can reach the upper module relatively easily. Once there, they face the same issues as in 1, plus, once they convince the wardens of their bona fides, they will have to consider what they can do to get air back to the base or the occupants out. Additionally, the g-carrier only has a loiter time over the mine of forty minutes before it must return to base and leave any dropped mercs to the sea.
- 4-5. There has been a successful revolt at the station. The miners/detainees have managed to gain control of the upper module during the storm, have several hostages and are waiting the arrival of the freight submersible to escape. When the mercs arrive the escapees will try to pretend that nothing is wrong and that they are the wardens. Of course, **someone** in the merc unit is bound to notice something is wrong...
6. The "Aliens" Scenario. After a brief burst of hysterical comms from the criminals far below, all contact is lost with the mining platform. The warders flood the complex with enough nitrogen to make all the prisoners fall unconscious, fearing a revolt or attempted jail-break, but somebody has to go down and see what really happened. When the merc unit arrives, only the civilian personnel are left in the upper module, and they are **very** twitchy, having heard nothing but screams from the warders who went down to investigate....

Note that the 'The Hole' could just as easily be located on Dhuku or Hidamae if the referee wants to isolate the players even more.

MERCENARY TICKET: IN COUNTRY

Mission Type: Patrol
Unit Size: Platoon-Company

BACKGROUND

Lunarmise Intelligence has been receiving reports from a reliable asset that a battalion-strength rebel force is carrying out exercises in the vast and impenetrable swamps to the south of Broad Straits.

Acting on this information, the security force has been carrying out patrols in the area. However Lunarmise Intelligence have reason to suspect that informers in the security force have allowed the suspected insurgents to be warned of all such sweeps in the past, thus explaining why no contact has occurred so far.

An upcoming ceremony, marking the end of the last open hostilities on Lunarmise will draw the majority of the security force to the capital for about three weeks. The insurgents, if any exist, will know that they should not expect Lunarmise forces during this period, so Lunarmise intelligence is taking the opportunity to insert what should be an unexpected, and also secure, force into the area.

MISSION

A military officer (actually a member of Lunarmise Military Intelligence) approaches the unit commander and states that they have need of a recon unit to search for some possible insurgents. He will explain that the recon sweeps need to be continued during the ceremony, and Lunarmise's meagre security forces cannot handle both activities without external support.

RESOLUTION

The patrol will be landed by G-carrier to carry out a sweep from one pre-programmed way-point to another, estimated to take five days on foot, where they will be recovered by the same G-carriers, given two days rest at the closest Lunarmise security force base, and then dropped in for another sweep. Three sweeps will be carried out during the period of the ceremonies and the contract.

The patrols must be dropped and picked up away from the primary search area to avoid alerting the insurgents by G-carrier over-flights, so contact is not expected on the first or last days of the sweep.

OUTCOME: 1D6 (1D)

1 No Contact.

Patrol is 'routine' and 'boring'. No evidence of insurgents is found.

2 Storm Front.

The patrol gets a warning that a fierce tropical storm is bearing down on their position and they must dig in to wait out its effects. The storm will last three days. During this period roll again. If 2 is rolled again, the storm worsens and lasts longer. Remember the team is stuck in low-lying **swamp** during this storm. Creatures will be disturbed and looking for shelter as well, and some deeper sea creatures such as ten-tentacled squids, could be driven up out of the depths by the storm.

3 Deliverance.

The patrol runs across a group of armed people living in the swamp. As long as they are not antagonized it will be easy to determine that they are not insurgents, but merely a bunch militant back-to-nature types. If, however the patrol annoys them, perhaps by treating them as yokels, they disappear into the swamp and begin laying traps and sniping at the patrol.

4 Light contact.

Sporadic sniping, traps and mines are encountered, as well as signs (camp sites, tracks, etc.) of a numerically superior force. No hard evidence of a large force is found, but the signs imply one. In fact, there is no large force, a small elite group is trying to give the impression of a large force. The referee is encouraged to give the players a chance to discover this, and to speculate on **who** is running the scam. Is it actual insurgents, or Lunarmise Military Intelligence themselves?

5 Heavy contact.

The patrol discovers a well-camouflaged, occupied camp containing a significantly numerically superior force. It is shielded against orbital detection, has what looks like very effective communications and jamming equipment, and also has surface-to-air missile capability. The patrol is forced to silence a sentry to avoid detection, and then must determine what plan to follow, whether to creep away hoping the sentry will not be noticed, or attack and hope surprise and confusion will allow them to escape. They may call for an extraction, but the G-carrier pilots will be unwilling to descend into an area which might have surface-to-air missile coverage.

6 Ambush.

A numerically superior force ambushes the patrol. All non-player patrol members are killed or wounded in the first volley. Through luck, the players gain an opportunity for escape. They are then hunted through the jungle as they try to make it back to the rendezvous point. If they manage to salvage the satellite up-link, they may call for an extraction, but the G-carrier pilots will be unwilling to descend into a possible fire-fight.

During all patrols the referee should make rolls for animal encounters in the swampy terrain. Note that many different forms of Burrower make their homes in this morass. Also, emphasize that they are *never* dry.

Regardless of the outcome above, once the patrol reaches the rendezvous point, roll 1d6 to determine when the G-carriers will arrive.

1D6 (1D)

1 The G-carriers are early

The pilots will be waiting for the patrol when it arrives and grouching about the patrol being late, and getting their nice shiny G-carriers all muddy.

2-3 The G-carriers arrive on time.

4-5. The G-carriers are late.

The referee should determine just how late the G-Carrier will be (minutes, hours, days) depending on what the current situation is, and how nasty she feels. If nothing happened in the current sweep, it might be fun to have them wait around for a day or two, dealing with more fauna.

6. The G-carriers are unavailable.

Through a combination of circumstances, (storm damage, a sudden need to move some of the security force because of a disaster elsewhere, etc.) no G-Carriers are available for at least 3 days. If the patrol can still make radio contact they will be told that they must travel some hundred kilometres to the coast where they may be extracted by a cargo submersible.

Note that any delay of over two days, whether caused by late G-carriers, storm, or any other reason, will result in the patrol running out of rations, unless extra rations are specifically packed asked for by the team.

THE WORLD OF UR

Ur 2612 C68A887-5 Ri Wa 304 X A2 V

PHYSICAL

The Ur system orbits a single Type A2, a hot blue-white star named Salyph. There are relatively few rocky bodies, though four gas giants and numerous planetoid fragments dot the system. There are no planetoid belts, though a substantial collection exists at the Trojan points of the gas giant Kailar.

Ur is a water world; i.e. almost totally covered with water, but its oceans are for the most part not very deep. It has no ice caps, and mean surface temperature is high. This coupled with the dense atmosphere, created a rather unpleasant world for visitors not used to such conditions.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Life on land is minimal, though low creeping plants cover most above-water surfaces. In the warm, shallow seas, a host of swimming creatures has evolved to fill every conceivable ecological niche. The waters are crowded with brightly-colored fish and stranger creatures, which dart among the fronds of underwater jungles seeking safety from the world's many predators.

The ecological balance on Ur was somewhat disrupted by the arrival of a large population of Dolphins, who set up a colony and quickly spread out throughout the world-ocean. The Dolphins' arrival was in -1600 or so, well after the fall of Twilight, and over the last 2500 years their numbers have expanded massively. One reason for the Dolphins' rapid growth in numbers is the plentiful food supply.

Ironically, the Dolphin population has engaged in practices more normally associated with humans. They have hunted several local species to extinction, and driven others out of their natural habitat. One species on the verge of annihilation is the Urshall, a somewhat shark-like predator that used to be at the top of the local food chain. The natural enemy of the Dolphins, the Urshall have been driven from all the best feeding grounds in a never-ending war of extermination. Some authorities have suggested that the Urshall show signs of a rudimentary intelligence; they are pack hunters and are certainly capable of using cooperative tactics, but it is possible that their intellect is greater than previously supposed.

The Dolphins will not allow study of the Urshall, of course, and the Urshall themselves tend to try to eat human researchers that venture into their waters. After the loss of many divers and even a research submarine (probably to an accident) in the 980s, investigation was curtailed.

WORLD OVERVIEW

Originally settled by Dolphins from Terra in -1600, Ur saw a second wave of immigration around -700, when humans from Starfall landed on some of the larger islands. Relations with the local Dolphin population were at first cordial, but deteriorated rapidly when humans began fishing the coastal waters.

The highly territorial Dolphins fought a long campaign to drive the humans from the water. All attempts to agree a settlement were met with derision by Dolphin negotiators, who bitterly cited instances of human cruelty to their species. Any settlement, they said, would be the thin end of a wedge that would eventually lead to human domination of the seas and displacement of the Dolphins from supremacy in their new home. The only way to avoid war, the Dolphins said, was for humans to stay out of the water.

The human colonists tried to do that, using air transport and farming the small areas of land that were available. However, in time the human population grew to the point where exploitation of the coastal waters was necessary just to provide food and raw materials for subsistence. The first attempts to fish or search for minerals in the nearby seas were met with attacks by Dolphins, and soon it became apparent that any human who entered the water did so at extreme peril.

The humans needed the resources the Dolphins denied them, and the Dolphins refused to yield an inch. The result was the war that both sides had dreaded. Human forces took a terrible beating at first as they tried to adapt to underwater combat, but in time their superior technology gave them the upper hand. The Dolphins withdrew from the coastal waters except for the occasional raid, though they bitterly opposed every human expansion.

Ur never gained any particular importance in interstellar matters. A small manufacturing base, the inability to attract offworld investment and the fanatical opposition of the Dolphins to any attempt to extract greater mineral wealth from the seas (and thus increase the world's industrial capacity), kept the human colonies on-planet at a low tech level. Ur's human population were able to live from day to day, to fend off the Dolphin attacks, and little more. As time passed, they became satisfied with their lot.

Ur cannot be said to have much history into the modern period. The colonies settled at a sustainable TL 5 and traded a little with visiting starships. Ur was a tough place to make a living, and quite an unpleasant one, but it was home and for the human colonists, that was enough.

Around year 375, itinerant beltlers began to drift into the system to exploit the Trojan clusters of the giant planet Kailar. They came to Ur for supplies and a little R&R, and a new industry was born. One of the world's landing fields

was expanded and became a modest Class C starport, with recreation facilities for the visiting Belters. The locals learned how to supply a starship's needs with TL 5 equipment, and a small amount of extra cash began to leak into the coffers of the world government.

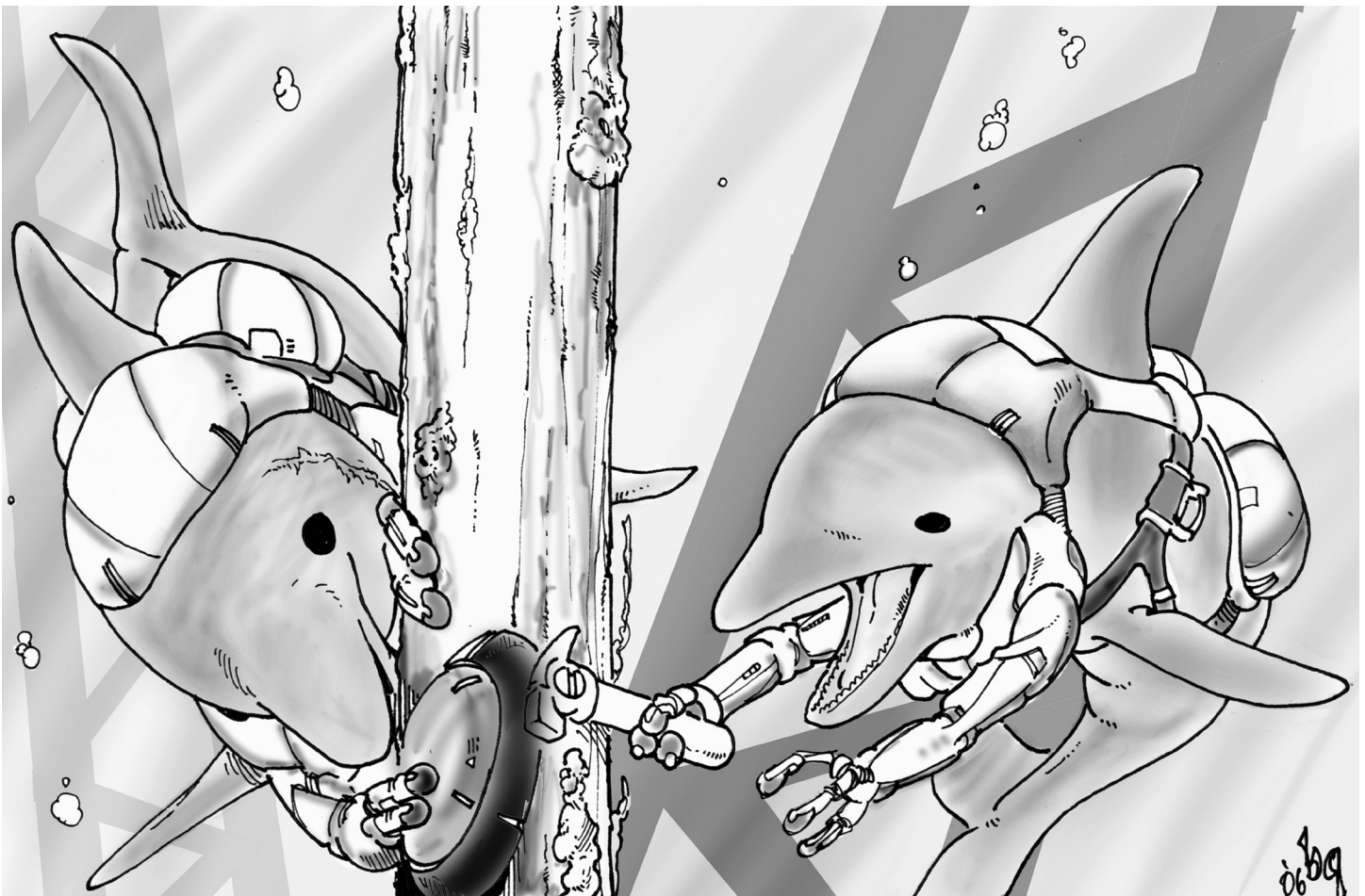
This was just as well, since several critical seabed extraction facilities were under almost constant attack by Dolphin forces, and their loss seemed imminent. Investment in the military allowed the humans to gain a little more territory, though at considerable cost. A new Dolphin offensive seemed imminent, but suddenly abated when the Dolphins offered a truce without terms.

The reasons for the Truce of 389 have only recently come to light. Apparently, the Dolphins found something in the waters near the south pole that caused them great alarm. They withdrew from contact with (and combat against) the humans for nearly 50 years, and when they returned their numbers seemed less. The full story is as yet unknown, but the truce has formed the basis for a Treaty of Coexistence that, despite frequent incidents, has remained in force to this day.

Since that time, life has gone on as normal on Ur, with one ripple to mar the placid surface. In 966, a Dolphin delegation bitterly accused the humans of Kaillen Island of violating one of their holy places and massacring several schools that dwelt there. Shortly thereafter, a mining rig in the same region was attacked by persons unknown (almost certainly Dolphins) and sunk. As the humans demanded an explanation, the Dolphins claimed that they had carried out further massacres, of which the humans had no knowledge. Preparations for war were hurriedly begun.

A Dolphin force was observed to be mustering near Kaillen Island, and an improvised combat group was sent to launch a spoiling attack. That force reported finding the entire Dolphin army dead, many from no discernible cause. They then reported that they were under attack, and contact was lost.

Human and Dolphin reinforcements rushed to the area, and both came under attack by unknown forces. Dolphin swimmers and human submersibles battled side by side for their survival. The few survivors were eventually able to reach Kaillen Island, and from there they spread the word.



There was something else in the waters of Ur. Something neither Dolphin, nor human, nor Urshall. Something they could only describe as evil.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Human society on Ur is centered around the Brind Group, a chain of islands in the northern ocean. About 1/3 of the world's 300 million human inhabitants dwell on the islands, which are the seat of the civil service government and also site of the starport.

The government is a fairly loose organization of local administrative offices, each of which deals with a geographic region and has considerable autonomy in most matters. The vast distances between the islands, coupled with the world's low tech base, make tighter control impracticable even if it were desired, which it is not. As a result, Ur is very much a collection of settlements rather than a world state.

More than half the world's population do not live within sight of the sea, despite the small land mass available. The early requirement to stay out of the water resulted in the development of inland cities and industry, and this trend has been continued to the present.

Of the remaining population, most work along the coasts or close inshore, farming fish and sea-plants. A hardy breed of open-ocean workers exists, who man the long-range freighters and prospecting ships, and the floating or tethered mining and drilling platforms.

The belter community may be fairly large; exact numbers are not known, but certainly there are thousands of beltlers living and working in the Kailar Trojans. Most never come to Ur, but supply vessels call quite frequently and ore is sold on at the starport, to be picked up by freighters bound for other systems.

The size of the Dolphin population is unknown, but it must be in the hundreds of millions. Neither the Dolphins nor the human inhabitants of Ur are happy about offworlders – especially researchers – poking about in the oceans, but they are grudgingly tolerated for the most part.

Since “the Threat” has come to light, the Dolphin and human populations have set up a dialogue of sorts, and increased cooperation seems likely, if only to prevent more massacres at the hands (if it has hands) of these unknown enemies.

MILITARY AND SECURITY

Ur has no offworld or space combat capability beyond a few PAD (Planetary Aerospace Defense) missiles bought in to protect the starport. The remainder of its armed forces are either light infantry for security work or maritime (wet navy) units.

The Ur Maritime Security Force operates a number of coastal and offshore patrol vessels, most of which are capable of carrying a seaplane or helicopter. Large, long-range “flying boat” aircraft are also used for patrol work. However, the primary role of these assets is rescue and enforcement of laws on human surface craft. Armament is light – infantry support weapons and guns in the 50-100mm range are the heaviest weapons shipped.

The real combat capability of the UMSF is underwater. Small combat and reconnaissance submersibles capable of deploying combat swimmers are used for local defense, with larger long-range submersibles used for offensive action. These are often supported by surface tenders. Explosive weapons are employed, but these pose a hazard to all personnel in the water, regardless of species, so caution is used.

Troops are equipped with low-tech but reliable diving equipment and a range of underwater weapons including spearguns, knives and polearms. Teamwork is drilled into the combat swimmers, who are of course out of their element when facing Dolphins in the water.

TRADE, COMMERCE AND INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

As already noted, most of the offworld contact Ur has is with the local belter community. Corporate and private merchant ships do come through to buy up the ore stocks or to engage in a little speculative trade. The citizens of Ur are friendly to anyone who doesn't break their laws, and since they have no offworld presence, this sums up their entire foreign policy.

ADVENTURES IN THE UR SYSTEM

AMBER ZONE: HAVE I GOT A DEAL FOR YOU!

Required Equipment: Transport

Required Skills: Engineering, Technical

SITUATION

For the last few months the Travellers have been engaged in earning a modest living moving supplies out to the beltlers in the system's planetoid belts and returning with ore for pickup by freighters. The latest run was uneventful, and the PCs have just dropped off a consignment of ore at the main starport when a flashy looking character approaches them on the landing pad.

The man introduces himself as Doonal Turump, a property developer from Hidamae (also known as 569-519). He arrived on Ur a few weeks with a technical team to survey the planet for a suitable site to build a new vacation resort. Unfortunately, his ship suffered a powerplant failure several thousand kilometers away from the starport. Doonal explains that he commandeered the team's utility sled and only arrived at Ur Starport a few hours ago. He's frustrated that the locals don't have the knowledge to handle repairs to a basic fuel cell, never mind a fusion powerplant.

The starport really doesn't have the techs to spare on a repair job in the middle of the ocean a quarter of a planet away, and they keep talking about some sort of 'Threat'. Doonal is tired, hot and uncomfortable and just wants to get back on his ship, get it fixed, and get on with the survey. He offers the PCs twice the normal rates to take him and his sled back to his ship, and help his crew get back underway. He's even prepared to hire you to go out-system for spares if necessary.

Doonal is a smooth talker, but a little short on details. Luckily, the computer on the utility sled has the location of the downed survey team. The ship is submerged in shallow water on Seamount 324, about 200 kilometers north-east of Kaillen Island. The characters will be well aware of the tensions between human and dolphin in the area, but the job seems straightforward enough. The dolphins, he thinks, will probably be pleased with the characters for removing the intrusive humans.

RESOLUTION

Doonal has no idea how much trouble he's in. The seamount, called *Akaha-tci* by the dolphins, is a holy place, used until about twenty years ago for the ritual hunting of urshall, as part of the coming-of-age ceremony for young

dolphins. The site was specifically selected by the dolphins because it is one of the few known urshall mating grounds on the planet. Since its abandonment after the Battle of Kaillen Island, the population of urshall in the vicinity has grown to the highest levels in recent memory, and as any dolphin will tell you, there are few things in the seas meaner than an urshall in heat. In spite of the lack of any permanent human settlements or dolphin pods in the area, the seamount continues to be routinely patrolled by dolphins and by the submarines of the Ur Maritime Security Force.

Doonal's ship is the *Turump Glory*, a 600 ton Subsidized Liner, modified slightly to accommodate Doonal's lavish tastes. In addition to the standard crew, the *Turump Glory* is carrying a team of civil engineers, architects and marketing specialists who are all employees of Turump Development. With them, they have brought a wide assortment of surveying and media equipment.

Upon arriving at the site, the characters will find the ship powered-down and submerged in about 50 metres of water. If they try and communicate with the ship, there will be no response from the vessel. The first thing the players will come across is the remains of a crewman (one of the stewards) floating on the surface, and being fed upon by the local sea-life. There is not enough of him left to tell how he died, but the look of sheer terror on his reasonably well-preserved face will be unmistakable. The ship itself can easily be located, but the players will require access to breathing apparatus of some sort in order to carry out any sort of detailed investigation of its current condition. Physical examination will reveal that the seals on one of the docking ports have been forced, and that the ship is at least partially flooded.

Before they can repair the ship, the group first have to secure it. Since Doonal left to get help, the ship has been boarded. Was it humans, dolphins, urshall or something else?

PATRON ENCOUNTER: GRIZZLED BELTER

Required Skills: Vac Suit, Shipboard Skills (particularly Sensor and Electronics)

Required Equipment: Starship

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

On the ramp of the Ur Starport, the party's attention is drawn to a grey-haired belter cursing as he works on the sensor pod of his 100 ton TL-B seeker, the **Proverbial Needle**. If the group listens for a few minutes, it will be obvious that the prospector is cursing the sensor's x-ray waveguide, a vital component for conducting remote mineral surveys. It seems that the waveguide is misaligned.

If the group loiters for more than a round, the temperamental old cuss will stop working and challenge them, asking if they think they can do better. If the group accepts, a skill check of DC 20 will correct the fault. A skill check of DC 30 will reveal that the waveguide was tampered with.

If the group ignores the old belter, they will be passed as they leave by two burly-looking thugs in coveralls, each carrying a large pry bar. The old belter will be wary of the approach of the two, and will try unsuccessfully to scramble away. The two thugs will utter words to the effect of "We warned you what would happen...", and as one thug catches and restrains the old man, the second will attack the sensor pod with the pry bar. If the group does not intervene, the thugs will smash the delicate components within the sensor housing, warn the old belter once more, and leave. If the group intervenes at any point, the thugs will move off after exchanging a few insults, warning the group not to get involved.

The old belter's name is Roscoe Morson. He and the **Proverbial Needle** have been working the Salyph system's planetoids for the last twelve years. If the characters intercede, Roscoe will be grateful for the assistance of the party, and will offer to share his secret. Two months ago, he discovered an ore body high in platinum and other trace metals. He carefully tagged the planetoid and proceeded back to Ur with samples for analysis. He's just received the results of the tests, which were better than he'd hoped, and his samples contained traces of rare metals like Ytterbium and Iridium. His samples were more than enough to pay for the drinks at the **Smiling Mermaid**, a star-town bar frequented by beltters, techs and low-lives of all sorts, and he indulged his acquaintances in a few rounds of drinks before heading back to the starport. Now his sensors are down, and he needs to get back to the planetoid fast, before someone else cuts in on his once-in-a-lifetime find.

Roscoe will invite the characters to help him secure the planetoid until he can register it with the Claims Office

at Emmerson Planetoid, in the Tygarr asteroid belt. In exchange, he'll share 10% of his claim and cover the team's operating expenses.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The characters can offer the use of their own ship, or they can help repair, refuel and re-provision the **Proverbial Needle**. On one hand, the sensor suite on the seeker is optimized for prospecting work. However, the ship is well-worn, and several of its systems have been jury-rigged or replaced with non-standard parts.

Tygarr Belt is the third of Salyph's four planetoid belts. Most of the asteroids in Tygarr are low grade iron/manganese-based ore bodies, but several spectacular strikes have been made. On his previous visit, Roscoe marked the rich planetoid with a coded passive x-ray tag. The tag requires an active sensor sweep at a range of 500 kilometers or less, otherwise the low-powered response from the tag will be too weak. Obviously, Roscoe has a very good idea of where the planetoid is, but if pressed he'll only say, "Come with me, and I'll show you."

Meanwhile, word of the discovery has reached several unsavory local characters, including:

Dyvein Jones – An underworld kingpin in Ur Startown, Dyvein deals in loansharking, extortion and racketeering. The two toughs at the starport work for him.

Maraak Anshaliiv – A tough young prospector, captain of the seeker **Rock Legend**, Maraak is looking to strike it rich fast, and has no interest in working long and hard like Roscoe. He's impulsive, aggressive and greedy, but he's not really a killer.

Jik "the Slick" Limurkash – The captain of the **Margin of Error**, another small seeker, Jik is a slimy, underhanded character, who is known by many on Ur and trusted by no one. Jik is capable of anything, if the reward is high enough.

Dyvein will cause trouble in-system, particularly at the starport and at Emmerson Station, while Maraak and Jik will try to jump the claim, and, if necessary, arrange an accident for Roscoe. The trip out will be a race out to the Belt, and then a game of cat-and-mouse while Roscoe looks for the rock.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

- 1 All is as it seems. With a few precautions, Roscoe and the characters will find the planetoid without difficulty. Jik and Maraak will see that Roscoe has help, and will leave him alone until they can catch him away from his new companions. If the party can help secure the location long enough for Roscoe to register the claim with the Belters at Emmerson Station, the group will have earned its cut.

- 2 All is as it seems. Jik and Maraak will team up to try and force Roscoe off the claim. Subterfuge is a certainty, and violence is likely.
- 3 All is as it seems. Dyvein expects to get a cut from this lucrative find, and will offer protection from Maraak and Jik in exchange for 60% of the take. If Roscoe refuses, Dyvein will offer Maraak and Jik his services, including a contact at Emmerson Station who can delay (or expedite) the registration of any claim.
- 4 Once the party reaches the rock, they find that a claim has already been staked. Someone else must have been following Roscoe the first time that he was here. Roscoe and his new friends can try appealing to the Claims Office on Emmerson Station (Dyvein can help, for a price). Otherwise, the party is out of luck.
- 5-6 The group discovers that the marker on the planetoid is Maraak's, not Roscoe's. Roscoe needed some help to get out to the rock ahead of Maraak and jump his claim. Of course, Roscoe can't let the characters inform the authorities...

PATRON ENCOUNTER: FALO DEN ERTY, SOLICITOR AT LAW

Required Skills: None

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The characters are on a layover at Ur Starport, when they are approached by a man identifying himself as Faloden Ertý, of Coale, den Ertý and Vincenzi, Solicitors at Law. Mr. den Ertý indicates that he is approaching them on behalf of a local pod of Dolphins from the Anaje Shoals region of the planet. He explains that the pod is involved in a dispute over fishing rights with Green Reef Harbour, a human village neighboring their part of the shoals. Den Ertý states that tensions are starting to rise. The dolphins hope to break the impasse by hiring a group of offworlders, who understand human culture and laws but are separate from the prejudice that exists between dolphins and humans on Ur, to assist in mediating a peaceful resolution to the dispute.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Faloden Ertý has acted on behalf of the dolphins previously, and has created a lucrative niche for himself, dealing in dolphin-human conflict arbitration. His mercenary pro-dolphin position has led several prominent citizens of Ur to accuse den Ertý of collaboration with the dolphins. The truth is that Faloden is a practical man, and he is utterly pragmatic about the arrangement. The dolphins have access to goods of considerable value to humans, and Faloden has no problems gouging the dolphins for material gain. In this particular case, den Ertý is playing the role of a middle-man, and has no desire to become personally involved in the arbitration.

Green Reef Harbour is a small human community of about 60 residents, built on an atoll in the Anaje Shoals, about 200 kilometers away from Ur Starport. The village was founded almost a hundred years ago, by a group of refugees from another settlement that had been forced to leave their homes following raids by dolphins. Green Reef Harbour has grown steadily over the last several decades, and the humans have started to move outside the immediate area of the atoll to hunt and fish in the more open waters surrounding the atoll. Generally, the inhabitants of the village will try to avoid open conflict, but there are several agitators living in the village who will work overtly and covertly to undermine any accommodation of the dolphin pod.

The local dolphin pod is formally known by the human approximation of their Dolphinese name, *Kurrukuk Eiy*, or less formally as the Green Reef Pod. The pod numbers about 80 members, and hunts over a wide range of the Anaje Shoals. One of the pod's most popular hunting grounds lies in the waters just off the atoll at Green Reef Harbour. The pod has had a gentler history of interaction with humans

than most of their kind on planet, and they hope to avoid any conflict. However, the pod can, if necessary, defend itself, and is equipped to TL-8.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

1. All is as stated. The humans are impressed by the dolphin's conciliatory approach, and will reciprocate to negotiate a reasonable solution.
- 2-3 All is as stated. Aggressive elements in the human village will try to discredit the group, accusing them of being 'dolphin-lovers' and traitors to the human race. If they fail in their attempts to slander the characters, the subversives will try to escalate the tensions between the two camps.
- 4-5 The negotiations will proceed poorly, and the group will become tired of hearing the insults and the rhetoric. Several days into negotiations, a human anarchist will attempt a suicide bomb attack, injuring several delegates including members of the group. Clashes between the factions will grow in frequency and violence, unless the characters can expose the anarchist group and have them brought to justice.
- 6 The dolphins are using the group as a smoke screen to give them time to prepare an attack to secure the hunting grounds. Within seven days of the time that den Ertý first contacts the group, the pod will be reinforced by the hunters of several nearby pods. The dolphins will then have enough resources to interdict the village, and attack any human surface or subsurface vessels. The dolphins will seek to drive the humans from the village, or at worst, limit the villagers to the waters inside the atoll itself.

MERCENARY TICKET: UR JOINT OPERATIONS TEAM

Mission Type: Cadre

Unit Size: Squad

BACKGROUND

For years after the battle of Kaillen Island, the humans and dolphins desperately tried to gather information on what happened there and who or what they were up against. Having to reconcile the hostile human and dolphin cultures did not make the job any easier. Leaders in the Ur Maritime Defense Force (UMDF) and the dolphin pods have agreed to cooperate in a historic venture: the creation of a joint human/dolphin commando force, trained and equipped to be the elite of the two forces and a symbol of cooperation between the two races.

MISSION

The two sides have decided to create the Ur Joint Operations Team (UrJOT), a joint sea/air/land commando group of squadron size (about 200 of all ranks). A group of mercenaries with experience in commando operations have to equip UrJOT to TL-7/8 standard (the most that the UMDF and dolphins can afford at this time) with inter-operable equipment for both humans and dolphins, and must then remain in the region with the unit for its first four months, acting as cadre. The mission is success-only.

RESOLUTION

All of the recruits will be drawn from the experienced dolphin pods and from the UMDF. The humans will have knowledge of military equipment up to TL 5 (Ur standard), and the dolphins TL will be slightly higher (TL 7). The first two months of bringing their skills up to commando level will proceed with no major snags. The GM can have fun bring across the concept of dolphins and humans working together in tasks like morning physical training, unarmed combat and target practice.

The remainder of the contract will involve the gradual integration of UrJOT into the operations of the human and dolphin forces on the planet. "The Threat" is a vicious, powerful and mysterious enemy, one whose capabilities and limitations are unknown. The cadre will discover that there are very few citizens of Ur who have run into these unexplained adversaries and survived the encounter. Therefore, the cadre must concentrate on teaching excellence in leadership, courage and resourcefulness, as well as skills. This will make all the difference in any future encounter with the unknown.

The aim of the mission is to train this world's elite commando unit, one that can lead the way in future confrontations with the unknown menace. The most immediate threat to the success of the mission is the deep cultural mistrust that each race has of the other.

THE WORLD OF 743-128

743-128 2613 D6A2340-5 203 X K4 V F3 D

PHYSICAL

743-128 was not settled by the original Solomani colonists, and this is hardly surprising. A dry world of vast deserts and dusty plains, whose atmosphere is unbreathable to humans, 743-128 has little to recommend it.

The 743-128 system contains two stars, both relatively hot and bright. Araka, the system's primary, is a K4, whose system includes three gas giants and a handful of rockball worlds. Jasik, an F3 dwarf, is a far companion orbited by two scorched rockballs and a scattering of comets.

FLORA AND FAUNA

What little life there is on 743-128 is mainly plant or fungal. A few hardy strains of cactus-like growths struggle to survive on the deserts, and elsewhere carpets of fungal growth cling to rock surfaces where a little moisture condenses.

A few offworld plant species have been introduced, and survive in small oases. These species come from worlds as far apart and as different as Terra, Vland and Muan Gwi. They are mainly confined to small areas, but there is no telling what species will be encountered in the next oasis.

WORLD OVERVIEW

743-128 was ignored by the first and second waves of colonists, and was finally settled by a number of expeditions out of Starfall and Lunarmise in the late 200s. The various colonies were mainly set up to exploit a mineral deposit, but in some cases settlements were created merely to claim an area of land with access to water, in case it became worth something in a future "gold rush".

The gold rush never happened, and gradually the colonists packed up and moved on, leaving one tiny outpost on the shores of the Dusty Sea. This settlement, Karisar, was also the site of the world's so-called starport, which boasted a crude landing strip and minimal support facilities.

Since the abandonment of the world in the 400s, Karisar has remained as a tribute to human stubbornness, and to the fact that if someone sets up home in a place, someone else will sooner or later move in next door.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Karisar is a combination of tiny starport and mining camp surrounded by a berm to protect it from the desert winds. Its population has fluctuated over the centuries, from only a few dozen inhabitants to several thousand at one point. The current population is about 2,000 individuals.

Sustainable technology level is only 5, enough to allow makeshift repairs to the life support equipment necessary in every building and to service starships. Many individuals possess higher-tech items, but Karisar cannot maintain or replace them with its own resources.

What government exists is a sort of feudal democracy, in which various leaders and family heads speak for their followers and argue out a compromise solution to any problems. There is little law, though most inhabitants are jealously protective of what they have, and respectful of the property of others (mainly due to the impressive array of smallarms owned by other citizens). People protect their own interests, and a few self-appointed guardians impose a rough code of conduct on the more rowdy visitors.

Overall, Karisar is a rough and fairly unpleasant place. It is something of a haven for drifters and ne'er-do-wells, and has a bad reputation across the cluster. Karisar is not a place people go. Some pass through, some get stuck there. And there are a few who can trace thirty generations of forefathers in the settlement, and actually call it home.

MILITARY AND SECURITY

There is no formal military or security arrangement on 743-128. A well-armed populace will turn out to deal with anything that seems to threaten them or their interests, while minor incidents are normally ignored or at best dealt with in passing by one or more of the settlement's thug/guardians.

TRADE, COMMERCE AND INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

A few ships come through Karisar every month, normally to buy ore from the small mine near the town, or to trade luxuries. Other than this, 743-128 has no offworld contact, and certainly could not be said to have a foreign policy.

ADVENTURES IN THE 743-128 SYSTEM

AMBER ZONE: UNSAVORY CHARACTERS

Required Equipment: Starship

Required Skills: Engineering

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

Arriving at Karisar, the characters are faced with an interesting challenge. The landing pad is occupied by a 500 dton wedge-shaped starship, covered in burn marks and scars of combat, and parked at a very awkward angle. Normally the pad can accommodate three or four such ships, but this one has been landed and left in the middle of the pad with obvious disregard for other starfarers.

It is possible to land, but this means squeezing in between the berm that surrounds the pad, the control huts and the grounded ship, a tight squeeze made more difficult by a gusty wind. The grounded ship is tracking the characters' vessel with its fire control radar and one of its turrets is slewing around, ostentatiously pointing at a location exactly two ships' lengths behind the characters ship. Instruments show that the weapons (a dual laser mount) are not powered, but they could quickly be brought into action. The gesture is, obviously an arrogant warning not to bump the grounded ship rather than an actual threat.

If the characters open fire, not only are they making an unprovoked attack on a grounded ship, but could retaliate with five turrets of weapons – it is unlikely that either ship would survive an engagement at such short range.

If the characters attempt to land, they can manage it, but it requires a tricky maneuver; mane a DC 30 pilot check. If successful, the pilot squeezes his ship in with no real problems. Failure indicates the characters have clipped the berm and their ship has taken some minor damage, but they are down. Failure by 10 or more means the pilot has collided with the grounded ship (which does not actually open fire even if they do), causing some minor damage to both vessels.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The ship is the *Hamali*, a custom design registered out of Granicus. It belongs to 'Captain' Mikhyl Teiss, a member of one of the smaller but more adventurous pirate bands operating out of Granicus. He is in a bit of a jam at present. He has landed himself a lucrative job smuggling weapons to pro-Solomani militias on various worlds, but just couldn't pass up the chance to bushwhack a juicy merchant or two along the way.

Teiss' latest victim wasn't a merchant at all, but turned out to be a Q-ship operated by StarSecure, a merc outfit operating out of Eda. Teiss "had a feeling" about the target and left himself a large window of opportunity to escape, which was just as well. The short exchange of fire that followed his challenge caused a great deal of damage to both vessels, but the *Hamali* was able to Jump out and carried on her gunrunning mission while the ship's engineer made running repairs.

Tiess is on a tight timeframe and stands to make a lot of money from his smuggling mission. He simply dare not go home to his superiors and tell them he blew the job out of greed, so he has pressed on in disregard of common sense. Things worked out well enough for a while, until the ship's engineer got into a knife-fight with one of the gunners and died shortly thereafter. Shooting the gunner didn't make Tiess feel any better, and now he's two men down, behind time and unable to space out without an engineer and a damage control team.

And perhaps worst of all, he's stuck on 743-128. He isn't a happy man.

The arrival of the characters' ship represents an opportunity to solve his problems. He needs an engineer desperately, and he'll go to any lengths to get one.

Possible ploys Tiess might try include challenging the characters to a drinking contest, getting them drunk and abducting their engineer, or angrily demanding some help to fix the damage the characters did colliding with his ship, getting the engineer aboard then locking down his ship and lifting off. He'd quite happily disable the characters' vessel as he did so.

Of course, if the characters are amenable, he would actually hire one of their engineers on a good salary, and would be quite willing to cut a deal with suitably amoral characters, so long as he gets an engineer to keep his ship running until he can find someone permanent. Characters who agree to work with Tiess have many opportunities, such as playing decoy by sending out a distress signal to summon assistance, as if the *Hamai* was attacking them, then catching the would-be rescuer in a crossfire. Or the characters might act as information gatherers for Tiess. They might even be able to get in on some gunrunning action.

On the other hand, if the characters are not inclined this way, then they are stuck in a backwater port with a bunch of heavily armed thugs. They can't take off because the *Hamai* would gut their ship. Unless Tiess and his crew are stupid enough to antagonize the locals, the characters are going to be on their own.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: STRIKE!

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The miners' cooperative that works the small mines that produce 743-128's only export is one of the most powerful groups on planet. It often exchanges raw ore for shipments of luxury goods such as fresh fruits and vegetable, meats and medicines that trader ships bring in, usually on a speculative basis.

Bringing in just such a cargo of luxury goods, the characters are offered a good price on a small lore shipment that contains a high percentage of rare earths. Selling the cargo on, the characters attract the notice of one of the metallurgical firms of the cluster, who are interested in finding out all about where the shipment came from, and whether it is a fake, a fluke or something worth investing in.

The characters are offered a standard charter rate to transport a survey team to 743-128 to investigate, and a bonus if the team finds something the firm wants to exploit. They are required to wait a week while the team does its work, and then bring them back to base.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The miners co-op is resentful of the survey team, and attempts to drive them away. Measures range from passive resistance to sabotage and intimidation, and will eventually spill over into violence (though lethal measures will not be employed unless the characters begin to use them). The characters aren't directly involved (though the miners will sometimes target them out of resentment) but if the survey team can't do its job, the characters won't get their bonus. The survey team are engineers and scientists; they're not up to facing down a mob of angry locals.

But maybe the characters are....

RESOLUTION: 1D6

1. The survey team discovers that the shipment was a fluke, and there is nothing here worth exploiting.
2. There is a reasonable vein, and the company wants to bring in a small mining team. The locals are extremely angry, but are unwilling to escalate the situation and most eventually allow themselves to be bought out or offered jobs.
3. There is no vein, and the locals are attempting to deceive the company into bribing them to allow a corporate team in. They'll go away again once they discover the vein is virtually worthless, but in the meantime the locals will enjoy the proceeds of their scam...
4. As 1, but the locals are extremely resentful and become quite violent. If the team is driven off, the form becomes convinced that there is something worth having and launches a merc operation to seize the mines.

5. As 2, but the locals are very stubborn, and the situation escalates into a shooting match.
6. As 1 OR 2, but the survey team sneaks into some old mine passages and gets stuck. The locals are very unwilling to mount a rescue, so either the characters will have to be persuasive, or go themselves.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: HAVE FIRE TRUCK, WILL TRAVEL

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The players will be approached by a young, tough looking woman who wants to book passage to 743-128. She says she has a grav vehicle she needs transporting. The vehicle will take up 10 tons of cargo space, and she will book middle passage for herself. If the characters have no ship, they might be approached to help obtain suitable transportation, as the young woman has no experience of interstellar shipping.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The Karisar Volunteer Firefighting Company, originally part of the miners' co-op on 743-128, broke away and has become a combination of local drinking club, fraternity, paramedical service, and town watch. With over 50 members it has the very high esprit de corps, training and teamwork. They have managed to raise enough funds to purchase a surplus Grav fire/rescue vehicle from a local higher tech planet. The young woman appointed herself to the task of selecting a suitable vehicle and getting it home.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

- 1-2 All is as it appears, though the young woman will start hitting on any available males in the crew once into Jump space. She is bored with the "dull boys back home, who never travel"
- 3-4 Same as 1-2, except that her behavior will become more and more erratic as the trip progresses, eventually leading to her assaulting another passenger or a crew member, and having to be restrained. Given that she is a trained firefighter and town watch member, she is very fit, strong and quite well trained. The characters should not get away without a few bruises and black eyes. The young woman is having a nervous breakdown due to stress, having realized how badly out of her depth she is. She is particularly concerned that the truck is not suitable and that she's disgraced herself by spending all that money on a white elephant.
- 5-6 As in 3-4, except that her erratic behavior is actually one of the early signs that the ship has mis-jumped! All of the passengers and crew, in order of least traveled to most, will have some signs of aggression and paranoia. The most experienced (3+ terms in a space based service) crew will be the only sane ones until the ship exits jump space. The misjump direction and distance should be determined using the misjump tables. But at least the characters have a fire truck if they need one...

PATRON ENCOUNTER: PATIENT TRANSFER

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

Families on 743-128 often run to 20+ members, all living in one dwelling. Some of these families practice hydroponic and carniculture farming, using local lichens, imported tissue cloning tanks and greenhouses to supply most of the food staples for the local population. Squabbling, stealing, and intermarrying with each other most of the time, they quickly band together against 'offworlders' and the miners whenever they feel threatened.

The characters are approached by the charismatic head of one of the largest families, who asks them to take his gravely ill daughter to the high tech hospitals on Idam Lee. He will offer as payment a collection of rare medicinal and hallucinogenic lichens native to 743-128. His eldest son, a nervous yet earnest young man, will accompany the girl,

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The people of 743-128 are poor by anyone's standards, but they are proud, and approaching outsiders like this is not easy for them. They genuinely think the herbs and lichens they offer will be worth enough to pharmaceutical companies with the resources to refine them to cover the trip and treatment, and they will never forget the outsiders who helped them out.

The girl is about 15, and is wonderfully charming. She is clearly dying of a hereditary lung disease, yet she is patient and kind, and has time for everyone. She seems to have accepted her fate with remarkable stoicism, but occasionally she collapses into tears for no real reason or goes into wild rages at the unfairness of it all. Her brother is a little older and frankly terrified at leaving his home, but determined to do what needs to be done.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

- 1-2 All goes well, and the lichens are well received by the local scientific drug companies. The fees they offer will more than pay for the passage and the girl's treatment.
- 3-4 The trip is uneventful, but the hallucinogenic lichens will be confiscated by customs, and the girl will have to go into a charity hospital, unless the characters become involved in getting her better treatment.
- 5 The trip goes poorly and unless the girl is put into a low berth, she will die before the ship exits Jump space. The young man will become inconsolable and try to hurt the crew and himself if not restrained. He will eventually have to be returned to his family who will be sorrowful, yet thankful that the characters tried to help.
- 6 Same as 3, except that the family blames the characters for their daughters death, which earns the characters enemies for life.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: ART DEALERS

return to 743-128. He will buy them a drink from the brand new drink dispenser he bought with the money the characters gave him. They did buy the art on speculation after all, buyer beware!

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

A seedy looking bar on 743-128 called the Jump Mobieus is the place to find out what SDB crews can be bribed and where to land illicit shipments so as to avoid detection. Information is rumored to be available on at least 20 different systems. The bar is owned by Santosh Pandipati, a small, dark, constantly smiling man, he is a Solomani political refugee who has drifted very far with his small family, settling in this out of the way place to avoid political problems at home.

Inside, the decor seems to be made up of surplus ship interior components. No name is visible on the outside but all the locals know where it is located. Characters with naval architect or engineering experience will be able to recognize at least 10 different types of starship and small craft interior fittings which make up the alcoves and booths that line the walls of the Jump Mobieus. Observant characters will notice that conversations do not carry far out of the alcoves. The middle of the room is filled with tables representing all the shapes in geometry. The far wall has a metal bar with a holographic backdrop, which shimmers and changes constantly, like a poorly tuned television. Any PC with more than a couple of Jumps under his belt will realize that the holo-screen is showing a film loop of Jumpspace! Staring at it too long while in the bar, especially after a few drinks, will cause hallucinations and a sense of deep unease.

The owner approaches the characters will a deal. He has acquired a number of art pieces of all sorts and sizes as payment for bar tabs. He cannot leave Karisar but is willing to sell them to the characters for a deep discount so he can get some hard currency.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Santosh has a lot of highly dubious Starfarers passing through his establishment, but he is not a crook himself. He is also unfortunately not an art critic.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

- 1-2. If the players buy the goods and then try to resell them elsewhere they will get top credit, often at a 5 to 1 profit.
- 3-4. As in 1-2, except that about 4 days after they begin selling the art, local customs will descend and confiscate the art works remaining. It seems that all of these were reported stolen from various shipments, including some from ships that are missing, presumed lost! The characters will have to do some fast talking or employ their administrative or legal skill rolls to avoid being tried as pirates.
- 5-6. The art is mostly worthless, pawned off on the ignorant innkeeper, who will be sad to hear that if the characters

THE WORLD OF DHUKU

Dhuku 2712 B98A400-C Ni Wa 710 X K7 V A4 D

PHYSICAL

Dhuku is a large, fairly high-gravity water world, with very little habitable land above sea level. A few sharp mountain peaks just from the oceans, and there are several small archipelagos suitable for human habitation. These are far apart.

The Dhuku system is a binary, consisting of the primary, a K7 named Madsen's Star, with an extremely hot A4 dwarf star named Liesse as a close companion. There is one planetoid belt and a handful of rocky worlds.

Dhuku's orbit is rather complex since its primary is a dual star. As a result the world goes through cycles of increasing and decreasing temperature depending upon the relative position of Liesse and Madsen's Star. This constant heating and cooling effect has had considerable effects on the climate of Dhuku.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The seas of Dhuku are highly dangerous. A range of large animals and what amounts to "sea monsters" roam the depths and occasionally pose a hazard to coastal communities. Those working underwater must be constantly vigilant of such threats.

Some species found in Dhuku's oceans are also native to other worlds in the cluster, suggesting that they were deliberately or accidentally transplanted some considerable time (hundreds or thousands of years) ago.

The dominant oceanic life form on Dhuku is not fish, as such, but a great variety of "tentacled eels", some with armored heads, which fill most of the niches normally containing fish. Many species of eels are aggressive, and some grow quite large. One of the worst of them is the Zhettil's Cuss, which is detailed in the T20 rulebook. The Cuss is not native to Dhuku, but has been here for a long, long time. These vicious beasts hunt in packs and are quite capable of ripping a human to pieces. Their armored heads and powerful jaws make them a dangerous predator, but they are not top of the food chain on Dhuku.

Several species of predator compete for the top slot. In coastal waters, shoals of Eaters (as this species of small eel is known) swarm over much larger prey like self-propelled razor blades and rip their victims to pieces. In deeper water there are large predators about which little is as yet known. Research submarines have returned with heavy damage, or not at all, from encounters with large creatures in the dark depths of the ocean.

WORLD OVERVIEW

Like some other worlds of the cluster, Dhuku was settled long ago by a small band of colonists from Starfall, who went quietly about their business for many years. Dhuku's history is mainly one of struggle against the rather hostile oceanic wildlife and weather systems. Records tell of hurricanes and losses to predator attacks, but as a whole the decentralized population has escaped the usual plagues, wars and major events that make up most of history.

Dhuku became a little more important around 700 onwards, when its starport was expanded with the help of investment from Lunarmise to accommodate trade coming in from Trailing of the cluster. This affected the lives of citizens very little. The port makes a little money and spacefarers sometimes take liberty on planet (though few come to visit a second time), but very little of this activity spills over to the communities away from the Downport. For most citizens, the starport might as well not be there.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Dhuku is home to some 70,000 individuals, who inhabit three smallish islands in the world's temperate zone. Although the population have no formal system of government, most communities are rather small and thus quite well integrated. Feelings of personal respect and friendship, plus the natural leadership of some individuals, bind the communities together in an unspoken harmony.

The main industry of Dhuku is shallow-water farming on the shelf near the islands. These areas are patrolled by divers and small submarines armed to deal with the more intrusive local wildlife, though shallow-water incursions are fairly uncommon. More hazardous is deep-water industry, such as mineral extraction. Deep-water bases are under constant threat and suffer a small but steady attrition of personnel due to accidents and encounters with the local wildlife. However, this activity is necessary to support the world's industry and way of life, and the risks are accepted by the workers, who see themselves as a rugged siblinghood doing what others dare not do.

Dhuku's Highport is a small affair manned by less than 50 personnel. It cannot handle large numbers of ships at one time, though it is set up to service the large freighters that sometimes come through from the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium. Most smaller traffic proceeds directly to the Downport on Settlement Island, where the facilities are more extensive, the ground crews are cheerfully efficient, and the seafood restaurants are said to be the best in the sector.

MILITARY AND SECURITY

Dhuku has no real military forces. A handful of security personnel guard the Downport and Highport, and a militia could be scraped together at need, but unless an invader landed in the sea and tried to attack from there, Dhuku could do little about it.

Dhuku's only real combat force is its security divers, who protect underwater facilities from attack by the wildlife. Much of this work is preventative, involving nets and ultrasound barriers to keep hostile life at bay. Spearguns and shock-prods are the normal weapons of the divers, though some are trained in the use of explosives and poisons to deal with determined (and large) predators.

TRADE, COMMERCE AND INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

Dhuku's starport is the Trailing gateway to the cluster, and as such handles a certain amount of shipping. Much of that into or out of the cluster belongs to the GST, whose large Jump-2 freighters stop over at the Highport and never visit the surface. Smaller ships are mostly internal to the cluster, and there is a modicum of speculative trade at the Downport as a result. Traffic volume is low, however, and the port's high rating reflects the quality of service that the GTC was willing to pay to set up, rather than a large, bustling port.

ADVENTURES IN THE DHUKU SYSTEM

AMBER ZONE: IRANUS MINES

Required Equipment: Weaponry

Required Skills: Pilot/Watercraft, Environmental/Vac Suit

SITUATION

During the evening on shore leave, the party is approached by a security officer. His uniform is crisp; however he appears very tired as if he's been awake for days. He introduces himself as Paul Manaras, a Lieutenant in the Underwater Security division of Dhuku's Security Forces. He says he has a job for the party, but is unable to submit details until the party signs acknowledgement of a gag order, preventing them from speaking to anyone about the operation until mission completion, under penalty of severe legal action.

Paul has a situation which he needs help with. Several days ago, an underwater mining facility sent a distress call, which was quickly cut short. Two rescue squads have gone to attempt a rescue, neither has returned. The last squad managed to send half a message which is still being analyzed, but it seems they were attacked by someone or something on approach to the mining facility.

The message received was unintelligible due to the background noise, mostly sounding like metal being stressed beyond its limits. This was followed by a roar which has been determined to be water entering the passenger compartment of the rescue submarine. He again notes that the message is still under analysis, and they will be informed of the contents as they become available.

Between the loss of the two eight man rescue teams, and a situation up north with an abnormally large build up of predators attempting to eat the underwater farmers, the security forces do not have the manpower to attempt another rescue. He has spent some long hours trying to find a way to resolve the manpower issue internally, but time is running out. Soon they will be forced to release the information to the press, as they've been getting calls from the miners' families about lack of contact for the last few days.

He admits that the situation has been handled badly and that the information should have gone out almost immediately, but they've been too busy to even man the press conference that would be required. He offers to make the PCs into deputies for the length of the operation, with full pay and benefits (including free medical), as well as hazard pay, bringing the pay to Cr500 per day per person. The minimum pay will be Cr2500 per rescuer. The party will be issued a standard rescue submarine, which can make

the trip in about 16 hours; a pilot can be scrounged up if the party is unable to pilot the vehicle.

The crew at the mining station consists of 24 men and women. The station is mostly automated, allowing for the small crews. Each of the rescue subs had a crew of 8 each. The rescue sub can pack up to 30 people aboard at maximum capacity, so two trips may be needed. The mining facility is at a depth of 500 meters, which requires the use of special high pressure suits. Training on these will be quickly provided. The submarine is armed with a single medium laser tuned to blue-green frequencies to function underwater.

RESOLUTION

The trip out should be uneventful except for several large sea creatures, including one that dwarfs the submarine by a factor of five. This beastie will only be picked up on sonar and does not molest the submarine in any way. What **will** molest the submarine, however, is a huge creature previously not cataloged, though it falls into the category of local wildlife known by the initials HBM (Honkin' Big Monsters).

The creature will attack by wrapping its tentacles around any projections on the submarine and then do its best to tear its way into the hull using its armored jaws and head to tear its way into the hull. The creature is massive, mean, and smart. If it is severely injured, it will disengage and get away from the PCs as fast as possible. It does not leave the area, as it has a good food source nearby (PCs and miners) and it is very angry. If it manages to tear through the hull at 500 meters, the Travellers will meet the fate of the other two submarines dispatched.

Upon reaching the mine, the PCs will discover that both airlocks are wrecked, allowing seawater to flood most of the mines. Several large pockets of air exist though, allowing 2-12 miners to survive for the PCs to rescue. Also, up to two of the crew from the last rescue submarine may have managed to escape to the mines, as they were in deep suits when the creature attacked. The HBM has its own entry into the facility though besides the airlock and it can wiggle through almost any habitable space in the mines. This in turn makes it a very dangerous threat to the PCs as it is heavily armored and standard weapons will not be very effective against it.

All of the miners will require decompression either prior to leaving the mines or prior to exiting the submarine. The submarine can do the job, but will require the PCs to acclimate themselves to the pressure and then decompress everyone. This process will require 2 days spent at sea, and if the HMB has survived, it's going to be stalking them until they reach solid ground.

Returning to port, the PCs will be given a heroes' welcome and be accepted as family by the relatives of the miners and security forces (most of the population of the island). They will receive a 5000 credit bonus for bringing back at least one survivor, and upon departing the planet, receive enough

homebaked cakes, pies and similar sendoff gifts to last the crew the next 3 years. If the PCs are looking for cargo, they will receive ore at a huge discount from Iranus Mining, and cargo handling fees will be waived. Any PCs so desiring will be offered a permanent commission in the Security Forces of Dhuku.

If the PCs decide not to assist, they will be intensely scrutinized at every opportunity by law enforcement. One week later, they will hear word of the loss of the mining facilities and all personnel aboard, along with the crews of 3 rescue submarines.

Suggested T20 stats for the HBM:

Size: Huge; Type: Carnivore/Killer; Stamina: 107 (13D);
Lifeblood: 30; Initiative: +1 (+1 Dex); To Attack: 2+; To Flee: 14+; Speed: 20meter; AC: 14 (-2 huge, +1 Dex, +3 Armor);
Attacks: (+8 Melee) Bite 5d4, (+3 Melee) Slam 3d6; Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +1; Abilities: Str 26, Dex 12, Con 24, Int 6, Wis 5 Edu -, Cha 4; Skills: Spot +2, Hide +2; Feats: Endurance, Improved Grab; Special Abilities: N/A; Climate: Salt water Ocean, Greater than 1000 foot; Organization: Solitary

PATRON ENCOUNTER: STARPORT AUTHORITY

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The party is contacted by highport authority as they approach turnover for their arrival into orbit around Dhuku. Apparently the starport has lost contact with a cutter carrying a high ranking corporate individual who was making a tour of the mining facilities on a moon of one of the outsystem, planets. The party is 'requested' to conduct a SAR (Search and Rescue) operation for the cutter and render any needed assistance. The highport does not currently have any vessels in orbit able to conduct the SAR operations.

The official is the Vice CEO of Valance Industries, a big time (in this system anyway) mining corporation which employs about twenty percent of the population of Dhuku. They mine both the limited resources of the moons, and also the ocean depths of Dhuku. The official is well respected and liked by the populace, and he is said by many to be in the running for the Governorship of the system in the next election. There is a crew of 2, with 6 passengers aboard.

As payment, the party is offered 1000 credits each for the safe recovery and return of the crew and passengers, as well as no tax or tariff on any goods the ship is bringing into or taking from the system. All port fees and cargo handling fees will be waived as well. If the cutter can be recovered, there will also be a 3000 credit bonus per rescuer.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Time is of the essence in this situation. The cutter was on the far side of the planet and in its sensor shadow, which is the reason Highport cannot locate them. The mining station hasn't got sensors to brag about, either. The vessel was damaged by an explosion in the aft section, leaving engineering with a gaping hole into vacuum and a crew and passengers barely protected by a door not meant to serve as an airlock. To top it all off, the emergency battery has only about a day of power left. The ship's engineer, who was luckily in the forward compartment during the explosion, has shored up the door as well as possible. Air still leaks through the seals though.

If the PCs demand more than what is offered above, the Highport officer becomes very formal and reminds the PCs of the interstellar articles requiring their vessel to assist the authorities in any way possible and of the consequences of legal action should they refuse.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

1. The craft is easy to find, the emergency beacon is functional and the crew are fine.
2. The craft is easy to find as above, however the craft has 2d6 (2D) hours until it crashes into the moon's surface.

3. As 1, however, there is a serious leak requiring the survivors to use vac suits. They have less than a day of air remaining.
4. The cutter was attacked and destroyed by someone, rogues or assassins, who are now sneaking away with hostages.
5. The cutter was attacked and the offending vessel is still attempting to recover the survivors to use as hostages.
6. The cutter was destroyed with no survivors.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: VALANCE INDUSTRIES

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

While awaiting their own cargo to be on loaded, the PCs are approached by a representative of Valance Industries who says he has a job for them. The man is well dressed and appears to be what he says, up to and including a high security identification badge, which will be produced upon demand. Over the last 8 months, he says, there has been a profit skimming operation going on at the shipyard, resulting in loss of nearly 3 million credits. Attempts to track the loss have been yielding less than stellar results, mostly due to the fact that the shipyard is run by what is essentially a clan of closely related individuals. If asked how this one family came into control of such a major operation, the Travellers are told "that's how it's done here." All the major operations on the planet are run by one clan or another and the families stick together, which tends to hinder law enforcement at times.

The PCs are offered a sum of 10,000 credits (total) to identify the responsible parties and provide proof of the thefts, most likely in the form of documents and to keep their operation "quiet." They are warned to not take any action against the offenders, as law enforcement will quickly deal with them as soon as proof is obtained.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The family in question is a clan known by the surname Terell. They have run a fairly honest operation in the past few decades, and the problem has only started recently upon the retirement of the old station manager. He was replaced by an extremely ambitious young man, Connor Terell, who happens to be a very greedy and power hungry man. He has in the last year caused most of the supervisors of the station to "retire" or just plain quit and replaced them with his gang of cronies, who are mostly close relatives.

The scheme is simple. They receive the ore shipment, and while it is in storage about .05 ton is removed out of each ton and added into a new container, combining the ore to make another slightly light container. This container is sold at the same price and the Terell's keep the profit, while smudging Valance Industries' name in the process. They do keep a log of the proceeds in the station manager's office in a secure safe, and also a copy in the account executive's office. The copy is unknown by anyone but the AE.

The files will be guarded by at least TL 13 security systems, including video recording systems, motion sensors, and alarms integrated into the doors and safe.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

1. The office has a roving patrol checking every half hour and an alarm system set to go off if the safe is opened without the correct key code.
2. There is a guard on duty at the end of the hall as well as an alarm.
3. The PCs need to find a way past the guard without detection.
4. The files are guarded by only the automated security systems.
5. The party is given information 2 days after acceptance of the job of an additional copy in the AE's possession. This copy is in a very well hidden safe and a private alarm system set to alert the AE whenever the safe is opened, even if he is the one opening it. The AE would be willing to part with his copy for a significant bribe and the offer of a secure position with Valance Industries.
6. As 1-2, the PC's are betrayed however and security (consisting of 2 officers responding within 5 minutes, and with a backup team 15 more minutes away) is alerted within 15 minutes of the PC's attempt.

MERCENARY TICKET: WRONG PLACE, WRONG TIME

Mission type: Capture
Unit Size: Squad

BACKGROUND

Kelly Terell, a relative of the owner/operators of the highport is currently wanted for charges of murder in the neighboring system of Ur. She has fled to her home on Dhuku and is hiding out in one of the small island communities, begging protection with her family, who are quite powerful in Dhuku politics. Security cannot actively search for her without offending this family, which would lead to many difficulties.

MISSION

Kelly is a very dangerous, very unstable woman. She is cold and calculating, and able to manipulate people easily. She has convinced her family of her innocence and family being what it is, they are protecting her. Security knows the details of her crimes and has a psychological profile that is pretty convincing of her ability to carry out these acts. To avoid offending the local families, they have decided to quietly hire a small mercenary party to apprehend Mrs. Terell.

Security has a small fund set aside for eventualities such as this. They are able to pay Cr5000 to remove this nuisance from their fairly peaceful world. In addition, upon returning the prisoner to Ur, the recovering party will receive a 30,000 credit reward for the capture of Kelly once her identity is confirmed.

Security will provide any intelligence they are able as long as the PCs ensure that the local families do not blame them for the investigation or the arrest. The mercs will be on their own in finding, pursuing, and capturing the prisoner, not to mention extraction. Property damage and casualties are to be kept to an absolute minimum, and the mercs will be held legally responsible for any damages or injuries that occur.

RESOLUTION

The Mercs are headed for a mess. The clan, over one hundred individuals, is NOT going to cooperate with the investigation. Though there may be some that actually think that she did commit the crimes, on this world, family takes precedence. The PCs will be very hard pressed to find someone to talk, even among Kelly's enemies in the family, and the information will be very limited in details.

On the other hand, when Kelly finds out about the Mercenaries searching for her, she will go out of her way to prepare a reception. She will gather her closest friends and ensure that the mercs' transportation is sabotaged, their equipment is damaged or destroyed, and maybe one or two

sniper attacks depending on the mercs' actions. The attacks will become more and more serious the closer the party gets, however, the attackers cover their tracks well.

Even upon Kelly's capture, she has already told her family she'd rather be dead than sentenced to prison, and her closest cronies will try to carry out her last wishes. Kelly has managed to acquire a shoulder mounted surface to air missile unit and as the PCs set their course on the starport, they will be attacked by this. If they are shot down, security will arrive at the crash site within a half hour to render aid. Everyone will be locked up until an 'official' story can be worked out, and if Kelly survives the crash, she will most likely be returned to her family due to political pressure and the PCs escorted back to the highport with empty hands.

If Kelly is successfully captured and taken off world, she will do what she can to make a nuisance of herself during the entire trip to Ur, and do everything in her power to escape. If she is successfully delivered, Ur will reimburse all expenses (only if asked) as well as pay the bounty for Mrs. Terell. The PCs may be offered another bounty contract.

THE WORLD OF ARKA VIDEA

Arka Videa **2713 E565644-7 Ni** **123 X K1 V**

PHYSICAL

A fairly Earth-like planet, Arka Videa is a comfortable place for humans to live. Indeed, there are indications that it has been inhabited before. At some point in the distant past, a civilization arose on Arka Videa, and left its marks on the landscape.

A number of ruins have been found and explored; these are at least 200,000 years old, but seem to be of human origin. Indeed, human (or very human-like) remains have been found in these ruins along with animals and what are presumed to be intelligent aliens. Some of these species have been identified; some are unknown to scientists in the local region.

The cities of Arka Videa represent a technological society that possessed grav transport, and which collapsed over a fairly long period. There are signs of abandonment and of newer, lower-technology centers of population. There are also a number of radioactive craters at what would otherwise be prime city-building sites. It seems that whatever civilization existed on Arka Videa, its inhabitants regressed to barbarism and finally died out long ago.

The system contains three gas giants and two planetoid belts in addition to several rocky worlds. No great mineral wealth has ever been discovered in the Arka Videa system, but that does not stop the occasional belter from taking a look.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Arka Videa has a broad range of terrain types, from desert to rain forest, and plains to arctic, and these are inhabited by a full and varied ecosystem which includes a number of Terran species imported by the colonists. However, the vast majority of the local life evolved on Arka Videa and is native to it.

Some of the wildlife is rather large. Several species of Megafauna roam the broad sub-tropical plains, mostly in small herds. These mobile eating machines graze their way slowly across the landscape, avoiding inhabited areas for the most part but occasionally causing havoc when they encounter a farm or stead too small to scare them off.

The Megafauna are hunted by a range of impressive predators, including a species of sabertoothed, dog-like animals named Arkan Saberwolves (to differentiate them from the Saberwolf native to the Solomani Rim sector). The Arkan Saberwolf will not normally attack humans, if only because they are not much of a meal. If threatened or hungry enough, a pack of 'wolves will surround a stead,

devour the livestock, and then set about trying to get at the human inhabitants.

WORLD OVERVIEW

Arka Videa was settled by the first wave of colonists out of Terra, and later by a migration from Starfall. The small colonies scattered across the globe were built in defensible terrain to keep the Megafauna and predators at bay, which limited their growth. The settlement pattern was thus one of many small communities rather than great cities.

The small communities were unable to maintain a powerful tech base, and technology level slumped during the long night. The arrival of the second wave, around -300, yanked the level back up somewhat, and the extra population enabled the people of Arka Videa to reverse the trend. TL stabilized at 5 by -250.

Some regions gradually became "civilized", i.e. the more dangerous local life-forms began to be driven out, as a result of lying in a well-traveled network of these small settlements. These "civilized wilderness" areas were obvious sites for the first real cities to be constructed.

The "city-building" phase lasted from about -50 to year 100, and during this time several cities were built. These were planned from the ground up, with outer and inner boundary defenses to keep the Megafauna at a distance, farms between the two boundaries, and a carefully planned development of the urban environment within the inner region. Few cities were built after -100, since they were all built large enough to hold a half-million people in comfort. Even with a considerable population migration from the countryside, there is still plenty of room for growth within the walls.

The concentration of population allowed a technological society to develop more fully, and Arka Videa has steadily improved its technological base to TL 7, pushing 8 in some areas. The increase was conducted slowly and carefully, according to a plan laid down in year 220 and carefully updated ever since. The result was a steady, sustainable growth with minimal environmental impact, and just as importantly, no imbalances; tech levels and standards of living are uniform across all the cities of Arka Videa.

The migration into the cities continued steadily, until by 800 about two-thirds of the planetary population dwelt within the outer boundaries of what became known as the fort-cities. The remainder are steaders, farmers, and small-town people scattered across the globe.

Other than the devastation by earthquake of the fort-city of Westarm Oraigen in 856, an event that led to the abandonment of the city as the diverted western branch of the great river Akona turned it into a lake, Arka Videa has seen little in the way of disaster and strife. A minor world off the trade routes, it seems likely to remain that way.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The people of Arka Videa generally like to take the long view, and are known for planning generations ahead in some cases. They receive little offworld contact, and do not crave it. Those trade ships that do land at the various cities are made welcome, and there is usually a small profit to be made on both sides from such contact, but the Videans are not natural traders, and care little for the universe beyond their system.

About 4 million of the world's 6 million people dwell in the cities, or at least within the outer defences. Even in the heart of the urban areas, population density is low and there is plenty of space. Parks and common places are well looked after, and are valued by the citizens as places to relax and meet friends – indeed, more social gatherings occur in the open air than indoors.

Each of the communities of Arka Videa seeks to be as self-sufficient as possible. As a result, there are no great seats of learning or industrial centers. Instead, expertise is spread as evenly as possible; individuals are expected to be multiskilled jacks of all trades rather than experts in a narrow field. As a survival measure this makes sense; any one community of Videans can survive on its own resources, and even rebuild all of Videan society eventually. However, without any real threat to their survival (the Megafauna and Saberwolves are a nuisance, but hardly a major threat) this is more rampant conservatism than long-sighted survivalism.

The pace of life on Arka Videa is steady, bordering upon slow. Surprises are few, though the locals seem to manage to respond to the occasional crisis well enough.

Arka Videa has no “starport” as such. Each of the fort-towns maintains a landing field within its boundaries in case someone chooses to visit. The main port, if such a thing could be said to exist, is the landing field at Videa Unos, seat of the planetary government. Government is by a system of tiered representation, and is characterized by slow deliberations and detailed plans. The government is known to have working groups looking into a range of “what-if” scenarios and developing plans to deal with them. The evacuation of Westarm Oraigen was conducted according to such a plan, and went far more smoothly than would be expected under such conditions.

MILITARY AND SECURITY

The government maintains two armed services. The Ranger Service exists to patrol the outback and drive off dangerous wildlife. It operates light aircraft and VTOL craft in addition to ground vehicles, and has responsibility for law enforcement beyond the inner boundaries of the cities.

The Urban Security Force polices the cities and, in theory, can field light infantry units to deal with a military threat. These forces are unlikely to be effective in this role, though

they have successfully backed up Ranger units in dealing with a migrating herd of Megafauna, and in implementing crisis-relief plans.

Although law levels are quite low, and society is for the most part free and easy, legal judgments take a long, long time, as the courts discuss the case and the ramifications of any precedent they set, possible effects on society, and all manner of other factors for weeks before coming to a decision. One reason Videans are on the whole very law-abiding is that even if found innocent, they will waste a lot of time in the legal system. Thus the system itself, rather than the laws it uses, can act as a deterrent in many cases.

TRADE, COMMERCE AND INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

Arka Videa has virtually no offworld relations or trade. Odd ships come into the cities now and again to conduct some trade, and there are a couple of long-term shipping deals in place, but for the most part Arka Videa is a backwater where little happens, and nobody goes.

ADVENTURES IN THE ARKA VIDEA SYSTEM

AMBER ZONE: GRAVITY WELL

Skills required: Pilot, Engineer, Diplomat
Equipment Required: None

SITUATION

SpaceLanes, Inc, a small corporation based out of Idam Lee, is interested in developing a starport on Arka Videa, and has found a way to do it on the cheap. Arka Videa has had a 'real' starport for at least two short periods in its history, and one of these ports, situated at the town of Vindell's Holding, could possibly be reactivated, making it the obvious choice for visiting ships and thus establishing a basic port and startown arrangement that can later be expanded.

StarLanes has money and backing, but few assets of its own, and those are tied up in on the projects. Thus they want to hire several characters, pay them handsomely and send them off in their own (streamlined) ship to effect the re-commission of the original Starport water filtration systems. If the characters do not have access to such a ship, they would be loaned a Scout ship for this specific purpose. Ultimately this would affect the going price of their mission.

While this may sound like simplicity itself, StarLanes is at pains to point out that the Arka Videans are a 'difficult' population to deal with, and should be handled with kid gloves during the enterprise. The situation is made a little more difficult since the proposed new port is not located at the planetary capital. The characters are going to have to sell the plan to the local and planetary leaders as well as carry out the simple engineering work required.

RESOLUTION

The characters' first obstacle is to get the world government to accept the plan. Such an important decision must be taken at the very highest level – after appropriate consultation with absolutely everyone else, of course. The characters must present a solid argument why Arka Videa needs a central starport, something it has done very well without for a long time, and why it should be located at Vindell's Holding. Assuming the characters present a decent case, the arguments and wrangling go on for several days before presidential council agrees to let the characters proceed – but only if they can get permission from the local authorities.

Next, the characters have to jump through the same hoops to persuade the locals at Vindell's Holding that they really want a starport on their doorstep. These are the people who allowed a previous one to decay into a cracked and weed-

pitted landing area, which perhaps illustrates their attitude.

If granted permission, the characters can begin the actual work. The port site is outside the secured area for the small city, and the PCs will now have to spend several weeks clearing the grounds of the original Spaceport of vegetation and wildlife. All of the equipment is still there, although rusted and useless for the most part. Repairs can be made using some of the junk, and two or three items can be patched together from the spares. With enough burning, scraping and messy work, the Starport main buildings and the water purification plants may be retrieved.

Of course, nothing is that simple. The port area provides good cover for local predators, and all that crashing about in the wreckage may attract one or more examples of the local megafauna, some of which can be very territorial.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: THE FAMILY

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

While the players are on Arka Videa looking for passengers and cargo, they encounter a man and a woman looking to transport four people and ten tons of cargo to 743-128. They turn out to be man and wife, William and Janet Grey, and are looking to transport their machine shop and associated parts. Their plan is effectively to corner the market in "high tech" tools on 743-128 and use the funds generated to pay off their current creditors. The Greys have just enough to cover their middle passages and freight charges for their cargo. They will offer to help out during the voyage if the players will take them. They need to leave Arka Videa in three days or less otherwise they say they will not be able to.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The two other passengers are the couple's kids, Ben and Carolyn, who are ages 7 and 5 respectively. If the players agree to take the Greys the children will turn up the day of departure without any warning, unless the players ask the right questions.

The Greys' creditors are liable to seize their machine shop if they don't get it off planet within the time scale, or they find out that the Greys are trying to leave the planet. The family is using the last of it's available cash and assets to move machine shop in the vain hope of putting their fortunes back together on a new world.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

1. All is as stated. William and Janet will help the crew in anyway they can during the voyage, however Ben and Carolyn will cause as much mayhem as kids normally do. If there are other passengers on board they will be harassed after the first couple of days. The children will constantly ask the crew questions that they may find annoying. They will play hide and seek in areas of the ship that they are not supposed to be in, activating anti-hijacking programs etc. They will play video games that are actually the real fire control of the ship turrets etc. William and Janet will be apologetic for their children at all times.
2. As 1, however the Greys' creditors are already at 748-128 and will confiscate the cargo as the players unload it at the Starport.
3. As 1, however the Greys' creditors are already at 748-128, but the Greys find out before the cargo is offloaded and try to persuade the players not to let it fall into the creditors hands.
4. As 1, however the Greys are transporting TL-7 mineral extracting machinery and tools. The locals of 748-128 will welcome the Greys into the mining camp.

5. As 4, however the locals will not want the Greys to import the TL-7 equipment. This is why William and Janet said it was a machine shop.
6. As 5 but the locals of 748-128 have found out they are coming and try to enter the PCs' ship in the hope of damaging the equipment before it can be unloaded.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: LOST RELATIVES

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

While the players are doing the rounds of the starfarers bars and hangouts looking for their next employment, a 40 year old man dressed like Indiana Jones approaches them. As he comes towards them it is obvious to the players that he has very little self-confidence. He constantly looks around him in a nervous way, and would probably die of fright if someone shouted "boo" at him. The gentleman introduces himself as Eneri McAdam, and explains that he is looking for his grandfather who came through here 20 years ago. McAdam says his grandfather was also looking for his ancestors who had boarded a colonial transport before the Long Night whose course was in this general direction. McAdam will offer the PCs Cr5,000 each, and any reasonable expenses, if they can help trace his grandfathers movements, and take him under their wing while they do so.

Eneri's Grandfather was Jack McAdam, and the ship he was tracing is the Maysflower.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

If Eneri can prove that his ancestors settled on one of the colony worlds, or that there are no surviving relatives he will inherit a huge legacy that is sitting on Terra waiting for someone to prove who is the next legitimate heir to the fortune. His grandfather was doing the same when he went missing in this region of space. Eneri has traced his grandfather to this starport, however he has drawn a blank on his grandfather's destination off planet and is seeking help in his quest.

Eneri is in fact independently wealthy. He made his money on the stock markets in the Solomani Rim and managed to convert it all just before the war broke out. He moved out of the war zone and decided that he needed something to do while he was waiting for the war to finish before moving home again. He knows that his grandfather came through the Starfall Cluster on his quest. Eneri has found himself in rough town, out of his depth and frightened. While he is looking for help in searching for his grandfather, he is also looking for people to protect him.

RESOLUTION: 1D6

1. All as is above. Eneri is constantly frightened and a little paranoid by the denizens of the starport and will dog the PCs in their task and offer them double the amount if he can tag along while they search. Eneri's grandfather came through the Starfall Cluster following the trail of the Maysflower to a planet of the referees choosing.
2. As 1, but having found the information Eneri asks the players to accompany him to the next planet on his grandfather's journey. Eneri will pay for the players passage.

3. As 1, but the trial goes cold because Jack McAdam was killed in the starport while trying to trace the route of the Maysflower. Records of which can be found in the security logs. Eneri will be devastated, then pay the PCs and disappear.
4. Eneri is really John Smith who is trying to con the trustees out of the fortune by attempting to become the grandson of Jack McAdam. This job is part of John's plan, because by trying to find Jack he believes he can invent his new identity from were Jack finished. John has no money and is likely to con the PCs as well if he can.
5. Eneri is really John Smith and is independently wealthy because he has the backing of the Solomani Confederacy. By searching for Jack McAdam and the Maysflower he will notify the local SolSec sponsored terrorist group that he is in town and needs contacting. He is using the PCs so that if there are any Imperial agents who have broken the codes then the PCs can take the heat. If all goes well and the terrorists contact him he will pay the PCs off and disappear.
6. As 5 however the terrorists will then target the PCs so that there is no trace to John.

PART 4: NEARBY WORLDS

The following twelve worlds are situated within three parsecs of the Starfall Cluster. They are thumbnailed to give an indication of what lies beyond the cluster.

DARVIN'S HOPE

Darvin's Hope 2110 D332667-7 Na Ni Po 604 X A1 V

Lying in the Eda Group at the edge of the Kulderson Deep, Darwin's Hope is named for the Terran industrialist Jay Darwin, who led an expedition out of the Terran Mercantile Confederation to find a new home during the Twilight period. Darwin's hope proved to be ill-founded, and the expedition was forced to land their worn-out starships on a rather inhospitable rockball with a very thin atmosphere and little water.

Despite the harsh environment, the Darvinnians were able to survive and gradually adapted to their new home, even though a certain amount of technological degradation took place. Today, some 6 million citizens live on the world, which sees little offworld traffic due to its remote location and lack of worthwhile exports.

Darvin's Hope was conquered in 976 by what was less an invasion and more of an offworld coup. A high-tech mercenary force was used to take control of key areas and to crush any attempt at resistance, while covert assault squads took out key centers of government and prominent figures around whom the populace might rally. This shockingly sudden assault threw the world into chaos, and allowed a small group of wealthy individuals who had hired the mercs to take over the planet. Their intentions remain unclear. It may have been the insane whim of a group of lunatics with too much money, or some kind of social experiment. No clear agenda ever emerged.

Much of the original governmental apparatus (which had been a democratic institution) was left in place, and for a time the conquerors were able to run the planet as they saw fit. Some industrial and technological investment took place, and some rather odd construction programs were begun. Order was maintained by mercenary security units which, while cheaper than the original assault force, were still sufficiently more capable than local forces that they were able to keep the populace down for several years.

However, whatever the original plan may have been, the occupation eventually dissolved into a morass of abuses of power and infighting among the new rulers. Matters came to a head in 984 when Captain Jim Valperrez, commander of one of the security units, could stomach the rulers' excesses no longer. Captain Valperrez launched a coup that toppled the conquerors and set up an "interim council" of merc officers to begin transferring power back to the locals.

However, since his actions effectively made his unit unemployable, Valperrez is seeking to make a place for himself in the government of Darwin's Hope, and this is taking longer than anticipated due to disputes among local factions. For the time being, Darwin's Hope lurches along from one conference to the next, with the mercs tiredly keeping order and drawing their pay from increasingly bare planetary coffers.

The whole Darwin's Hope story may never be uncovered; all that is known is that someone went to a lot of trouble to gain control of a backwater planet, and in so doing effectively wrecked its economy and society. The future is not promising for this troubled world.

SAGA'S END

Saga's End 2209 C571845-9 914 X M3 V

Another world of the Eda Group, Saga's End is an extremely dry, cold world whose minimal surface water is mostly locked up in glaciers and polar ice caps. It is likely that the world was warmer at one time, and perhaps even had more surface water, since much of the land seems to resemble seabed. The air is tainted by airborne dust particles, which are not themselves particularly harmful. However, when the temperature is cold enough (which is much of the time), airborne moisture freezes to the dust, creating a serious hazard to anyone breathing it unprotected – lung damage can result even if the individual is not frozen to death from the inside. A cloth over the face provides sufficient protection, though a heated filter mask is desirable.

As a result of its unwelcoming aspect, Saga's End was passed over by the initial waves of colonists, and was not settled until deep in the Long Night. The reasons why colonists chose to land on this dry, frozen wasteland of a planet are unknown, though some evidence has been found of early mining operations, which suggests an industrial colony sponsored from offworld.

Whatever the reason, the settlers were cut off as the Long Night descended, and were forced to make their way as best they could. Technology slumped somewhat, and though it never fell below TL 6 in the developed regions, a large segment of the population lost their tech base almost entirely and became "barbarian" peoples scratching a bare living from the world's harsh environment.

In time, the two groups went their separate ways. The city-dwellers of Saga's End were able to reconstruct a reasonable technological base, while their "barbarian" cousins spread out across the globe in small communities of hunters and farmers.

Today the population, which numbers around 900 million, is about equally divided between the two groups. The main settled region surrounds the starport and capital, and is home to about 200 million people. This region is linked to other,

smaller, developed areas around the world's other major cities by surface maglev rail tunnels and regular grav vehicle services. The developed cities have a modest industrial base, producing goods at TL 9. The other half of the population range from small towns with TL 3-4 capabilities to wandering clans of herders and trappers with no real technological base.

Although the various groups of Saga's End do clash from time to time, as a rule they have little reason for conflict, so there is hardly any. There is plenty of land, and the nomads see the benefit of trading with the cityfolk (usually, but not always, via the mid-tech townspeople) for things they cannot make. Thus Saga's End Starport often has TL 9 industrial goods awaiting export alongside furs and pelts of the planet's native animals

519-036

519-036 2210 B5A1618-8 Ni 100 X M3 V M7 D

Five-Nineteen, as the world is known to its inhabitants, has for some reason never been named in the star catalogues. It officially retains its original astrographic designation, though it is universally referred to as Five-Nineteen. Originally settled in the last days of the Rule of Man, Five-Nineteen is not a welcoming planet. Its cold, dry surface is largely dusty desert, with little flora and less fauna. The oxygen content of the atmosphere is sufficiently low as to make it unbreathable to humans, though the pressure is high enough that only air tanks are needed.

Despite its unwelcoming nature, Five-Nineteen is home to a population of some 1,000,000 inhabitants, most of whom dwell in a belt of small cities circling the equatorial region of the planet where the mean temperature is a little higher. The Starport was (and remains) the main industry on Five-Nineteen, serving vessels plying the Eda Group and the neighboring Starfall Cluster. However, the port was heavily dependent upon offworld technical support and is now in decline.

Nineteen Downport is a huge facility situated in the Dranik Basin, a relatively well-watered area on the edge of a broad desert belt. Much of the Downport is now closed, and is falling into disrepair as the demand for its services drops off. However, in a system with no belts and no giants, there is a continued need for some kind of port, so Nineteen Downport remains open for business.

The Highport (Nineteen High) was constructed as part of an ambitious expansion project. It was intended to be a state-of-the-art facility, but is now little more than a hazard to navigation. Originally constructed to a high standard using offworld technology and investment, the Highport was intended to attract more trade into the system and allow eventual expansion to A class, with a small starship yard. In the end, all it did was break the bank. Tariffs were imposed

to pay for spiraling construction costs, and vessels able to go elsewhere did so. Revenue fell rather than rising, and the unfinished Highport became an albatross around the neck of the world government. It is more or less abandoned, though a small refuelling and docking station is maintained in one section, since revenue from passing starships is all that keeps the world government from going under.

The collapse of the Port Expansion Project was particularly damaging since the world of Five-Nineteen is actually governed by the Five-Nineteen Starport Corporation, whose fortunes were naturally tied to those of the port. With little industry and no source of income other than the declining port, the world government is unable to afford even basic services.

EDA

Eda 2211 A100544-F Ni Va 505 X G3 V M2 D

Eda, for which the cluster is named, is the highest-technology world in the sector. Indeed, its technology is in advance of anything outside the prototype laboratories of the Imperium. However, with its relatively small population base (500,000 individuals), Eda's industrial and therefore export capability is rather low.

Eda was settled quite deliberately by a very well-prepared expedition from Terra. They sought a world with good natural resources, which was fairly isolated and also of little interest to colonial groups seeking a Terra-like home. The early settlers intended to ensure they would be left alone to develop their world until the colony was past the vulnerable early stages.

The colonists were right, and as the Long Night drew in their small but sustainable industrial base allowed them to construct new starships and to trade for what they needed throughout the dark years. Eda was one of the few beacons that shone out in the darkness of the Long Night; never flickering or dimming.

With a long history of technological society, it is hardly surprising that the people of Eda have reached a high level of development; indeed, the only real reason why they have achieved more is the essentially conservative nature of Edan society. Every development must be tried and tested. Every change must be sustainable. Reliability is more important than performance.

This deep-rooted conservatism features elsewhere in the Edan psyche. The world is welcoming to visitors and traders – indeed, its starport is something of a wonder – but is not accepting of immigrants. Eda's three cities are maintained at a comfortable level of population, and only a handful of immigrants are accepted every year. Conditions for acceptance are difficult to meet, and all immigrants are

considered to be probationary for at least a generation.

For those who are full members of Edan society, life is good. Standards of living are very high, and laws are fairly relaxed. Individual conservatism is more of a factor than intrusive law enforcement. The eager traders who come to Eda Starport seeking high-tech items for sale provide a handsome income which is spread across the whole of the population by Eda's well-regulated economy.

Some traders are disappointed, however; Eda does not sell weapons of any sort, to anyone. Even the craftsperson-built starships constructed at the small orbital yards are supplied unarmed and lacking fire control. Weapons and supporting systems must be obtained elsewhere; Eda's yards will fit systems supplied by the buyer.

It should be noted that as the only source of TL-F starships in the sector, Eda can charge what it likes to those who desire the technological edge these vessels give them, and are willing to take the risk of a breakdown far from the only port able to provide proper spares. Ships are practically hand built; even standard designs cannot be said to be mass-produced. Eda manufactures the best starships in the region, but only for those who can afford to pay well over the odds.

SHURIKEN

Shuriken 2212 B300568-A Na Ni Va 904 X K0 III

Another vacuum world in the Eda Group, Shuriken is owned by Eda and operated almost as a subsidiary company. Shuriken is a prosperous trade world that makes a fair amount of its income from fitting-out Edan ships with armament. The port also services other armed vessels, and can provide upgrades to civilian systems that almost match military capabilities. Many new shipowners do not realize that they are in effect buying TL-A weapons systems from Eda.

Shuriken has a population of around 900,000, of whom about a third are of Edan origin. The remainder are immigrants (though have been citizens for centuries). Shuriken is controlled and governed from Eda, and though society is more progressive than on the homeworld, Shuriken is subject to stricter controls to counterbalance this.

The tech level of Shuriken is artificially imposed; Shuriken is not allowed to undertake technological development, nor to export the few TL-F systems brought in from Eda for the use of the governmental elite and system defense force.

A significant part of Shuriken's income comes from raw and refined materials mined from the system's rockballs, gas giant moons and Trojan clusters. Mining colonies are scattered throughout the system and are mainly but not exclusively operated by Shuriken citizens. A fair-sized

Belter community exists in various parts of the outsystem, composed of whatever transient Belters happen to be in the system that the present time. Although the authorities of Eda and Shuriken do not approve of the Belters, relations are cordial and claims are scrupulously recognized.

Good relations with the transient Belters has had the result of distancing the Shuriken-Belter community from the population of the mainworld, since the Shurikenese Belters feel they have more in common with their nomadic brethren than with their stuffy cousins on-planet. Concern over where this may lead has resulted in a gradual increase in the amount of legal restrictions placed upon society. So far, this trend has not caused resentment since the changes have been carefully thought out and introduced gradually.

CIXNTHA

Cixntha 2215 C100999-A Va 400 X M3 V M9 D

A link on the Broken Chain, Cixntha is a tidally locked, airless rockball orbiting close to its primary. As a result, the "bright face" is a scorched wilderness while the "cold face" is cratered by meteor impacts. Between the two lies the twilight region where most of the world's population and industry are found. A belt of arcologies linked by subterranean transit tubes circles the twilight region and houses 90% of the world's 4 billion population. The remainder dwells in mining or industrial outposts, or in subterranean cities on the bright or cold faces.

Cixntha's main exports are light industrial produce and TL-A electronic systems, and the process of mining, refining and using the raw materials required to support this industry employs a sizeable percentage of the population. The populace are ruled by a restrictive (but not particularly oppressive) bureaucratic government.

Visitors to Cixntha are struck by its drabness more than anything else. Clothing styles tend to be tasteful and functional, ornamentation is sober; even park areas are formally laid out according to strict rules that make them all seem alike. Cixnthan art and music are mass-produced and, to an outsider at least, extremely boring. Some observers prefer to describe both art and music as "subtle", implying that true appreciation is beyond the understanding of the uneducated masses. This piece of snobbishness has been at least partially successful – Cixnthan art and music have enjoyed considerable export success in the past few years, being bought mainly by people who don't want to admit that they, too, find it boring and drab for fear of seeming like cultural Neanderthals.

Cixntha's small starport is situated on the Cold Face, a thousand kilometers from the nearest Arcology but close to an industrial marshaling point. As well as a stopover for trade ships plying the Broken Chain, Cixntha Down acts as a port of registry for many independent vessels. Most ships registered

out of Cixntha have nothing to do with the world, other than as a flag of convenience. Cixntha conducts workmanlike checks on the legality and spaceworthiness of vessels using its flag, and so its endorsement is considered to be worth paying the high registry fee for.

Probably the only thing about Cixntha that is not drab is the cuisine. Almost the entire food production on-planet comes from vast algae tanks and tiny gardens and microfarms. Making anything interesting to eat out of these limited raw materials is a challenge, so when a Cixnthan chef has access to shipments of spices and frozen produce from other worlds, he or she plunges into the task with heart and soul – and the results are simply incredible.

USER-FRIENDLY

User-Friendly 2309 D100300-5 Va 310 GT K2 V

User-Friendly, quite simply, isn't. It is, however, a nasty little tidally-locked rockball world occupied by some 3,000 individuals, all of whom work at the port or in its service industries. User-Friendly is listed as a member world of the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium. In practice, this means that it is used as a stopover point for long-haul vessels operated by the GTC as they head Spinward. Its only income comes from the portside service industries and a small GTC subsidy.

User-Friendly is primarily important as a Jump-2 link from the Starfall Cluster to the Shashka Main and the Gildensky Quartet, both to Coreward, and Ley Sector beyond. Its Starport is a minimal installation capable of providing fuel and basic R&R facilities to passing starship crews. Fuel is obtained by two specially built tanker/fuellers that each supports a number of ice-mining vessels. The latter obtain hydrogen from ice asteroids. This is transferred to the starport by the tankers and stored for sale to passing vessels. Little trade is undertaken at the port; this is a service installation only.

The entire planetary population dwells in a semi-subterranean town adjacent to the port. Marrikstown, as it is known, is a lawless place where order is kept by private security forces. The main power in town (and thus on the entire planet) is the GTC-sponsored Marrikstown Security Authority, which is little more than a mercenary security force which guards the vital life-support equipment, ensures the safety of GTC crews (anyone else can take their chances) and prevents anyone from stealing or sabotaging vital equipment such as the fuel shuttles.

User-Friendly's local TL is only 5, representing what can be constructed in local workshops. However, a fair amount of higher-technology is available (such as the fuellers and the life-support equipment at Marrikstown). This equipment is provided and paid for by the GTC; it could not possibly be replaced by local resources.

For non-GTC personnel, Marrikstown is a Freeport where more or less anything goes. The facilities are low-tech, but the locals understand that their daily bread comes from entertaining spacers; they know how to put on a good show. Given the lack of local laws, a certain amount of otherwise-illegal business is conducted in the bars of the Startown, though this is normally between visitors as the world lacks the resources to get into these dealings in its own right.

GTC security will deal with any really serious incidents, but for the most part just lets visitors and locals get on with what they're doing. The exception is when GTC interests are threatened. In this case, the lack of local laws simply allows whoever has the most guns to do as they please – and the security force has plenty.

IR

Ir 2407 B697733-6 Ag 812 X F4 V

Ir is a pastoral world whose population of 80 million is governed by an oligarchical system that grew out of and still pays lip service to the concept of various guilds. The guild leadership positions have become institutionalized and in some cases hereditary, and now fulfil all government functions. What was once a workable system is now a corrupt shambles of vested interests and (sometimes literal) political backstabbing.

The Heavy Industrial Association and the Guild of Starport Workers are currently the dominant groups; each has the allegiance of several lesser guilds, though these allegiances shift constantly. Influence is wielded in various ways by the different organizations, depending upon the guild's unique assets. The Starport Workers Guild controls all offworld technology and strictly rations what is available to the other guilds. Its income comes mainly from the fact that Ir is important as a Jump-2 link, and as such its Class B starport sees a considerable amount of traffic.

The Heavy Industrial Association effectively controls all industrial activity on-planet, and most non-imported technology. Its influence is more widespread, though its rival is powerful in many areas through subordinate guilds.

All of the guilds, great and small, maintain "security volunteers" among their membership. These security forces not only compose what passes for a planetary army. They guard against and carry out acts of intimidation, sabotage and coercion wherever the guild leadership thinks it necessary.

The result of all this infighting and influence is that Ir's political situation resembles a vast turf war between rival crime gangs more than a planetary government. The fact that citizens belonging to rival guilds may well live next door to one another does not help matters much.

It manages to export a small amount of agricultural produce, but for the most part its economy is just barely self-sufficient. Most of the Starport revenue is spent on maintaining the offworld equipment needed to keep the port open; the rest is needed to maintain the Port guild's position as a world power, and so little revenue leaks into the world economy other than as bribes.

DIDAN

Didan 2415 C629301-8 300 X M5 V M7 D

Didan is a low-population world situated in the Kulderson Deep. Its small starport, which handles all the traffic in and out of the Rimward end of the Starfall Cluster, employs the entire planetary population in one way or another. Those not employed in port security, administration or technical services work in the tertiary sector of the world's one town (Didan Startown) or support them by labor in the hydroponic gardens, power generation systems or the very modest manufacturing industry that provides most of the port's spares.

Didan's atmosphere is extremely thin; unbreathably so in fact. As a result the world is prone to some impressive extremes of temperature, though overall it is very cold. One impressive phenomenon occurs when the temperature rises suddenly over Didan's mostly-frozen oceans. The ice will sublime, occasionally creating steam geysers or shattering suddenly under the pressure, hurling large pieces of steam-trailing subliming ice in all directions. This phenomenon is as dangerous as it is impressive.

Didan Startown is composed of environmentally-controlled building complexes surrounded by a concrete berm. Many citizens never go outside the berm; the planet is unwelcoming and there is little need for most citizens to leave the only settlement. Most of those that do are farmers raising crops to supplement the hydroponic staples, and mining engineers. Both groups operate from sealed vehicles wherever possible, or use remote robotic helpers.

Didan has few laws. The free and easy, yet non-violent, society that exists there is made possible by the strong feeling of community that exists among the world's population. Despite the relatively low planetary tech level, living conditions are fairly good so long as the individual is willing to work hard to afford them; Didans therefore have a strong work ethic but also throw some really great parties.

The port is smart and efficient, though rather basic by some standards. Ships are quickly fuelled and turned around if they mean to move quickly on, or transferred to underground holding bunkers if the crew intends to spend a few days in port. There is no absolute requirement to move ships underground, but the practice has been in force for generations and there seems to be no reason to change it.

KIRU DIS

Kiru Dis 2810 E588646-6 Ag Ni Ri 424 Fr K0 V

A fairly pleasant, pastoral world, Kiru Dis lies to trailing of the Starfall Cluster. It is claimed by the Federate Republic, which uses it as a "breadbasket" but invests little in developing the world.

Kiru Dis can trace its colonial heritage back to a multinational expedition from Terra, which set up a successful colony early in the Twilight. Conditions were sufficiently Earth-like that despite a catastrophic war during the Long Night (which involved the liberal use of nuclear weapons) among the various factions, the human population was able to survive and gradually rebuild to TL 6.

The planetary population figure of 4 million does not include an (at least) equal number of people who dwell in the world's wide "outback" regions. These are mainly semi-nomadic groups who avoid contact with the mainstream population. The semi-nomads do not have much of a manufacturing base, though they can make crude one-off copies of TL 6 items at need.

Kiru Dis exports a great deal of agricultural produce, not only to the Federate Republic. Bulk foodstuffs like grain and meat are generally shipped by contracted freighters, but small merchant ships can often find cargoes with a higher unit value available at the port. These include luxury meats, distilled grain liquor and a range of wines. The Republic is happy enough for the Populace to sell off their surpluses to anyone with the money, so long as the world meets its standing quotas. Shortfalls are rare, so this is not usually a problem.

Over the past decade, the system has been the site of a number of pirate attacks, mainly on vessels carrying high-value goods. Well-armed vessels such as those operated by the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium are never attacked, but free traders have had a rough time over the past few years. Raidermarch vessels have been blamed, though it is possible that independents are to blame. The piracy problem has been sharply reduced over the past three years thanks to the implementation of patrols. The vessels undertaking these patrols are mostly mercenary ships hired by the Federate Republic, though naval vessels from the Republic and the Starfall Cluster have also begun semi-regular sweeps. It is notable that the GTC has repeatedly turned down requests to deploy some of its CP-CK assets in the system.

MIDRIFT

Midrift 2815 X346641-0 Ag Ni 610 X G2 V

Midrift is just that; a small world in the middle of the Kulderson Deep. As such it receives little contact and cannot be said to possess a starport of any sort. The population of some 6 million or so (numbers are vague), are stone-age primitives dwelling in tribal groups that seem to have a fairly sophisticated society

despite their lack of technology. Families are represented at the village level by an elected 'elder'; villages are represented at the regional level, and there is a Grand Moot every year or two, at which the regional representatives decide major issues.

Most individuals subsist at a survival level by hunting or herding; there is some agriculture but this is mainly of the vegetable plot or tended copse sort rather than orchards and grain fields. The locals are at least familiar with the concept of starfarers, though most will never see one. They are wary of outsiders, but have been known to trade pelts for tools. Nobody ever paid his ship's mortgage by such trinket-dealing, so for the most part Midrift is left alone

The origin of the human population of Midrift is (like much about the world) unknown. Some starfarers have reported sighting ruins in remote areas, so it is possible that the world is a failed colony that fell back to barbarism during the Long Night or afterward. The atmospheric taint is a natural allergen (to which the natives are immune) rather than the product of industry or technological war, so it seems unlikely that an industrial civilization existed for any length of time, if at all.

WAYPOINT

Waypoint 2910 D334564-7 Ni 902 Fr G1 V

Waypoint is small and rather hot, with a very thin atmosphere and relatively little surface water. It is thus not the most welcoming of worlds, though almost a million people make it their home.

Waypoint is technically a member world of the Federate Republic, though in practice it is little more than a possession; a mining outpost run by a mineral consortium based out of Shashka. The great majority of the population are employed in the mineral-extraction industry, with most of the remainder being farmers and administrators who support them.

Waypoint's tiny starport is also the world capital and the HQ of the planetary mining consortium. It is situated in a sheltered valley, which misleads many visitors into thinking the whole planet is similarly tame. Those who venture beyond the port region rapidly discover the truth – Waypoint is a nasty little hell-hole that seems determined to find new ways to kill its human visitors.

Waypoint has little in the way of wildlife, though the world's extensive land masses are home to a range of hardy and mostly cactus-like plants adapted to the harsh environment. Some of these plants are carnivorous, subsisting on the few small animals that wander into reach. This sparse diet is supplemented by the occasional explorer or mineralogist, and some plants are developing a taste for synthetic materials such as those used in ATV tires.

Since Waypoint is situated only 2 parsecs from Fal, seat of the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium, the system is regularly swept by the GTC CP-CK fleet. GTC vessels, and GTC merchants often pass through on their way to the Starfall Cluster. This brings in a little additional revenue, but not sufficient to be worth upgrading the port for.

About half of Waypoint's 900,000 inhabitants are resident in or around the port/capital. The remainder are scattered across the globe in small prospecting and mining camps, plus a few larger logistics and recreation centers. These are connected to the more permanent camps by surface railroads, with large crawler vehicles used to transport the ore from and supplies to the transient mining or prospecting operations.

PART 5: ENCOUNTERS

A range of encounters are presented in this section, to make the lives of Travellers more dangerous or to make their tasks harder, and thus to make the game more fun for everyone... except maybe the players.

Some of these encounters are specific to certain worlds or terrain types, while others can be located on almost any world. Encounters can directly affect the characters or they might provide the backdrop for an adventure. For example, characters responding to a GK (distress) signal might find that the people needing help are on a Bring-'em-Back-Alive expedition.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

BURROWER

Native to Lunarmise, the Burrower is a major threat to anyone going near the water. It exists in both salt and smaller fresh water species, and is adept at mimicking coastal or wetland vegetation. As its name suggests, the Burrower will dig itself a hole on the bed of shallow water, pretend to be a clump of vegetation, and grab whatever comes along in its tentacles, to be dragged into its maw.

Burrowers do not seem to like moving, and are never observed on the move. They simply turn up in an area almost overnight, terrorize everyone and eat all they can until someone or something kills them. They do also drift out of regions from time to time.

The stats given here are for a mature Freshwater burrower.

Mature Freshwater burrower

Size: Large (600 kg)
Type: Aquatic scavenger/trapper
Stamina: 5d8+5 (27)
Lifeblood: 13
Initiative: +2 (+2 Dex)
To Attack: If possible
To Flee: Special
Speed: 0m, swim 3m (when not in burrow)
AC: 13 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +2 AR)
AR: 2
Attacks: Tentacle +6 melee, bite +1 melee
Damage: Tentacle (1d4+4/20), bite (2d6+2/20)
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +4
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 4, Edu --, Wis 3, Cha 7, Soc --
Skills: Hide +4, Swim +13
Feats: Skill focus (hide)
Special Abilities: Improved grab, swallow whole
Climate/Terrain: Coastal waters

Organization: Individual (1), clutch (1d6)

CT: Mature Freshwater Burrower – 600kg Swimming Trapper; Hits 18/9; Armor jack; Wounds 3 (as teeth); A0 F0 S1.

DIN (DIMINUTIVE VERMIN)

Named after the sound they make scuttling around en masse, the Din are beetle-like crustaceans native to Five Nineteen.

A Din is a beetle-like crustacean, land bound, about a hand's width across. It is shiny and black, but slightly iridescent. Two small antennae wave rapidly around, and six spiny legs move the Din quickly around. Dins have found their way onto many ships passing through Five Nineteen, especially as many ships are forced to land in order to refuel. Din feed on organic materials, preferring plant matter, but will eat food scraps, natural cloth and materials, and even organic based oils. They can sense electricity and other magnetic fields created by power sources, and tend to stay away from them.

Dins are not particularly intelligent, though they are cunning and able to work in groups. A typical Din nest contains several dozen creatures, that cooperate in order to scavenge for food and water. Twenty years ago, a desperate starship crew, after a potentially fatal misjump into the Kulderson Deep, discovered some of the ubiquitous pests on board their vessel, and, with supplies running low, they decided to try and cook the bugs. The creatures were inedible, but their shells, crushed and powdered, made a tasty spice when added to food. Many tramp trader messes include small jars of powdered Din shell

Din (Diminutive Vermin)

Encountered: Desert, or anywhere starships have been
Size: Diminutive (<1 kg)
Type: Scavenger
Stamina: 1d4 (1)
Lifeblood: 4
Initiative: +2 (+2 Dex)
To Attack: 12+
To Flee: 8+
Speed: 2m
AC: 20 +4 size, +2 Dex, +4 AR)
AR: 4
Attacks: Bite -3 melee
Damage: Bite (1d4-3/20)
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities: Str 1, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 1, Edu --, Wis 9, Cha 3, Soc --
Skills: Jump +2, Climb +4, Spot +1, Survival +2
Feats: None
Special Abilities: When moving en masse, the Din make a very loud clicking sound, giving all listeners a situational

+10 to any listen checks to hear them. Crushed powdered shells considered tasty food additive. 1kg of crushed shell sells for Cr20 (roughly requiring 10 dead Din per kg).

Organization: Infestations (2d8)

CT: Diminutive Vermin - <1kg Scavenger: Hits 1/1; Armor Cloth; Wounds 1 (as Teeth); A11 F7 S2.

DROP LIZARD (ARBOREAL POUNCERS)

These annoying pests dwell anywhere that they can climb above the landscape; cliffs, forests etc. They resemble small reptiles about 30-50cm long, scaly and gray-green in color, with a whip-like tail that forks near its base. However, they are warm-blooded and bear live young. Their favored mode of attack is to drop on small animals passing by, using skin membranes stretched between their limbs and double tail to guide their attack.

Drop Lizards often hunt in packs, and accompany their attack with a high-pitched screech that shocks the prey into confusion as a mob of biting, clawing pseudo-lizards land on its back. Even if the prey manages to dislodge some individuals, more will keep on dropping on it, and those on the ground will either rush in and nip at the prey's legs or scramble up the nearest high surfer for another go.

The Drop Lizard is no threat to a human, individually. Even a hunting pack of 6-8 individuals should not be able to bring down an adult. However, the Drop Lizards has utter stupidity on its side, coupled with some sort of racial psychosis. Drops will attack anything that moves and seem to be unable to break off their attack once it has begun. Killing some just drives the rest into a berserk frenzy. Indeed, adventurers have been known to fight off one pack, only to be attacked by three others at once, all of them driven mad by the deaths of their brethren.

Theorists suggest that if a pack can be dealt with by kicking individuals away, stunning them or even trapping them in packs etc, then the frenzy will not be triggered. People who have been on the receiving end of a drop lizard attack are happy to suggest that the theorists get out there and try it.

Drop Lizard

Size: Tiny (2 kg)
Type: Carnivore/pouncer
Stamina: 1/2 d10-4 (1)
Lifeblood: 2
Initiative: +4 (+4 Dex)
To Attack: If surprise
To Flee: If surprised
Speed: 9m
AC: 16 (+2 size, +4 Dex)
AR: 0
Attacks: Bite +4 melee

Damage: Bite (1d4-3/20)
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +4
Abilities: Str 4, Dex 18, Con 2, Int 2, Edu --, Wis 2, Cha 10, Soc --
Skills: Climb +4, Jump +3
Feats: None
Special Abilities: Attacking cry requires the prey to make a Will save (DC 11) or be dazed for one round, Racial psychosis forces all drop lizards, upon hearing the death cries of a nearby drop lizard, attack the dead one's killer.

Climate/Terrain: Any land (prefers to attack from above)
Organization: Hunting pack (2d4+2)

CT: Drop Lizard – 2kg Pouncer; Hits 1/1; Armor none; Wounds 1 (as teeth); A0 F0 S2.

GAS SHARK

Gas Sharks belong to a very alien ecosystem; that of the gas giant worlds. Most gas giants have no life in their hellish atmospheres, but Gas Sharks can be encountered in some. They are vaguely cylindrical but somewhat amorphous creatures, normally 4-5 meters in length, which float in the heavy atmosphere by means of gas bladders and propel themselves with a sort of natural pump-jet engine.

Gas Sharks are predators. They attack and feast upon much larger creatures, which drift through the Jovian atmosphere and sift out hydrocarbons as food, in much the manner of a whale harvesting krill. Gas Sharks cannot eat humans or anything similar, but this does not stop them from occasionally engulfing someone who goes outside a starship, for example someone making repairs to a SDB hiding in the atmosphere.

Sharks are often curious about starships and will follow them through the atmosphere, occasionally clinging to the hull and hitching a ride into deep space. They cannot survive long in an earth-type planetary atmosphere, but they can last long enough in vacuum to accompany the ship to its next destination. This can cause a Misjump, or give the crew a nasty surprise at their next destination.

Some Starfarers have claimed to have discovered immature gas sharks in their fuel tanks, picked up by skimming operations. This is surely a spacer's myth, as nothing can survive in a vat of liquid hydrogen.

Gas Shark

Size: Huge (3200 kg)
Type: Carnivore/killer
Stamina: 11d10+3 (63)
Lifeblood: 18
Initiative: +0 (+0 Dex)
To Attack: 4+
To Flee: 9+
Speed: 18m

AC: 10 (-2 size, +0 Dex, +2 AR)
 AR: 2
 Attacks: Bite +8 melee
 Damage: Bite (1d10+6/20)
 Saves: Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +2
 Abilities: Str 22, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Edu --, Wis 6, Cha 5, Soc --
 Skills: Survival +8
 Feats: Toughness, Flyby Attack
 Special Abilities: Improved Grab, Swallow Whole
 Climate/Terrain: Gas giants
 Organization: Solitary (1)

CT: Gas Shark – 3200kg Flying Killer; Hits 42/12; Armor jack; Wounds 4 (as teeth+1); A4 F6 S4.

GLIMMERDRIFT MEGATHERIUM

The Glimmerdrift Megatherium (there are several different species throughout Charted Space, all named 'Megatherium' by unimaginative explorers and differentiated by their region of origin) is native to Arka Videa. It has been spread to other worlds as a food animal, though herding these immense beasts can pose some problems. Like most Arka Videa wildlife, the Megatherium is a marsupial.

Megatheriums are huge herbivores with a bony-plated skull used for defense, primarily as a ram. They are near-sighted, but their sense of smell is exceptional. Herds are usually around 50 strong, and if panicked are extremely dangerous as their response is usually an en-mass charge at whatever is disturbing them. Individual bulls are also known to challenge anything strange, and run down anything smaller than they are (which is most things).

Megatheriums do not have a 'season' for mating, and being marsupials do not have a special time when calves are dropped, or mating occurs. Thus the herd is generally skittish at all times, and reliably aggressive when the circumstances warrant.

Glimmerdrift Megatherium

Size: Huge (6000 kg)
 Type: Omnivore/gatherer
 Stamina: 12d8+60 (114)
 Lifeblood: 20
 Initiative: +0 (+0 Dex)
 To Attack: 7+
 To Flee: 5+
 Speed: 15m
 AC: 16 (-2 size, +0 Dex, +8 AR)
 AR: 8
 Attacks: Slam +18 melee
 Damage: Slam (3d6+12/20)
 Saves: Fort +13, Ref +5, Will +4
 Abilities: Str 35, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 2, Edu --, Wis 12, Cha 4, Soc --
 Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5

Feats: None
 Special Abilities: Scent, Trample 3d8+18
 Climate/Terrain: Open plains, scrubland
 Organization: Individual (1) or family (1d6)

CT: Glimmerdrift Megatherium – 6000kg Gatherer; Hits 52/14; Armor cloth+1; Wounds 20 (as hooves); A6 F5 S3.

JELLY FISH (TINY AQUATIC VERMIN)

These small aquatic creatures throng the ocean on Arka Videa and can be encountered elsewhere too. There are uncountable types of them, ranging in size from a few millimeters to almost a meter in size. Most have a poisonous sting, and some types of poison are especially deadly to humans. The vermin in question have the following poison statistics; DC 18; 2d8 Str Damage. Mixed swarms of Jelly Fish are uncommon, and only seldom occur. Usually the swarm will come to rest in a protected inlet of some form and multiply exponentially, feeding off nutrients and plankton-like creatures in the area, before drifting off with the current in mats after exhausting the local resources.

Jellyfish

Size: Tiny (3 kg)
 Type: Aquatic scavenger/hijacker
 Stamina: 1/2 d8-2 (2)
 Lifeblood: 6
 Initiative: +3 (+3 Dex)
 To Attack: 6+
 To Flee: 7+
 Speed: Swim 6m
 AC: 15 (+2 size, +3 Dex)
 AR: 0
 Attacks: Sting +3 melee
 Damage: Sting (1d4/20 + poison)
 Saves: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0
 Abilities: Str 1, Dex 14, Con 6, Int 1, Edu --, Wis 10, Cha 2, Soc --
 Skills: Hide +18
 Feats: None
 Special Abilities: Poison, Vermin
 Climate/Terrain: Oceans, coastal
 Organization: Solitary (1), cluster (1d6) or colony (3d6)

CT: Jellyfish – 3kg Swimming Hijacker; Hits 1/4; Armor none; Wounds 1 (as stinger); A6 F6 S1.

MINE MOSS

A lichen native to 743-128, Mine Moss is both color mimetic and strongly nitrogen fixing. Unfortunately this results in the production of nitroglycerine. As the plant matures it will reach a diameter of 20 cm and a depth of 10 cm. It tends to concentrate the nitroglycerine in nodes below the center of the plant. When stepped on it explodes with the same damage as a Snub Pistol HE round.

Being color mimetic it blends into the surrounding environment. This adaptation aids the dispersal of the plant into the wind of its home world, thereby increasing its possible range. It also is capable of being transplanted to a planet with a lower nitrogen concentration in the atmosphere; it just takes longer to mature. Some terrorist and rebel groups would love to get hold of samples of this lichen. Armament and bio-research agencies would also like samples. Being volatile and dangerous to transport, this is a very hazardous cargo, unless very small samples are gathered which are not yet of mature mass.

A variant has recently been discovered which grows short fronds. These are very stiff, but in a sufficiently high wind, once mature, they will snap. This sets off the explosive charge, effectively making this an above ground trigger system for the Mine Moss. This variant is now in high demand, though the gathering of one is dangerous, to say the least.

Mine Moss

Size: Tiny (2 kg)
 Type: Scavenger/reducer
 Stamina: 1/2 d8+4 (1)
 Lifeblood: 2
 Initiative: -4 (-4 Dex)
 To Attack: Special
 To Flee: Special
 Speed: 0m
 AC: 8 (+2 size, -4 Dex)
 AR: 0
 Attacks: Special
 Damage: Special
 Saves: Fort -4, Ref -3, Will +0
 Abilities: Str 1, Dex 3, Con 2, Int 1, Edu --, Wis 10, Cha 2, Soc --
 Skills: Hide +8
 Feats: None
 Special Abilities: Vulnerability to physical damage (mine moss takes double damage from a physical source); Explodes at zero lifeblood (0 LB) for 2d10 points of damage; Camouflage skins (+15 to Hide checks).
 Climate/Terrain: Any land
 Organization: Solitary (1) or patches (2d6)

CT: Mine Moss – 2kg Reducer; Hits 1/1; Armor none; Wounds special (explodes for 8 points of damage when killed); A0 F0 S0.

PSEUDO-CETECEANS

Native to the seas of several worlds in the region, these huge creatures may be related to or even descended from Terran whales, but this has not been proven one way or the other. They usually are encountered in pods of 3 to 8 in number. While not usually aggressive, they are curious creatures and sometimes can be quite destructive despite

themselves. It appears that they hunt by scent, and their staple food is plankton and jelly fish of all types. They can consume enormous amounts of the vermin, and certain types of jelly fish seem to act as a prelude to their mating habits.

Pseudo-Ceteceans are not encountered on Ur; presumably the dolphin and ura population exterminated any introduced there, or perhaps no-one ever tried. These creatures are not apparently of very high intelligence, and are held in contempt by dolphins and orca.

Pseudo-Ceteceans

Size: Huge (12,000 kg)
 Type: Aquatic herbivore/filter
 Stamina: 13d4+17 (149)
 Lifeblood: 29
 Initiative: +1 (+1 Dex)
 To Attack: If possible
 To Flee: 12+
 Speed: Swim 18m
 AC: 19 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +10 AR)
 AR: 10
 Attacks: Tail slap +20 melee
 Damage: Tail slap (1d10+15/20)
 Saves: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1
 Abilities: Str 41, Dex 12, Con 29, Int 3, Edu --, Wis 12, Cha 3, Soc --
 Skills: Listen +15, Spot +15
 Feats: Stunning blow
 Special Abilities: Scent
 Climate/Terrain: Oceans, coastal
 Organization: Solitary (1), pair (2) or pods (1d6+2)

CT: Pseudo-Ceteceans – 12000kg Swimming Filter; Hits 55/20; Armor battle; Wounds 16 (as thrasher); A0 F7 S4.

RIVERSAW

The Riversaw is a freshwater plant that extends serrated tendrils across the path of the current, catching floating detritus and allowing the current to tear any organic matter to bits. As it works through the web of tendrils, matter is sorted and directed, so that food reaches the Riversaw's maw and inanimate objects are dropped.

The largest Riversaws can be several meters wide and long, though this represents the tendrils and roots; the 'body' is rarely more than 30cm in diameter. Riversaw tendrils are extremely difficult to cut, and will gradually choke up a watercourse. They are also extremely sharp and can injure animals or people crossing the river. They are a nuisance more than a real threat, though an injured person who falls into the sharp tendrils may become trapped and drown, or inflict severe self-injury while trying to escape.

Riversaw

Size: Small (6 kg)
Type: Scavenger/trapper
Stamina: 1d8-1 (3)
Lifeblood: 8
Initiative: +0 (+0 Dex)
To Attack: Special
To Flee: Special
Speed: 0m
AC: 15 (+1 size, +0 Dex, +4 AR)
AR: 4
Attacks: Tendril +0 melee
Damage: Tendril (1d8/19-20)
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 11, Con 8, Int 1, Edu --, Wis 9, Cha 3, Soc --
Skills: Survival +0
Feats: Improved critical (tendril)
Special Abilities: None
Climate/Terrain: Rivers, waterways
Organization: Patches (3d6)

CT: Riversaw – 6kg Swimming Trapper; Hits 2/5; Armor mesh; Wounds 2 (as thrasher); A0 F0 S0.

SABERTOOTH COURSER

These common predators belong to a species of Marsupial similar to the Terran Smilodon. They are quite common on Arka Videa, and have managed to set up small family groups on other worlds too. While they are not fond of human flesh, their aggressive nature usually means they will attack anything smaller than them, and humans definitely fit the bill as far as these 450kg carnivores are concerned. Their typical tactic is to set up 'nests' when following a Grazer Herd, and attracting the attention of a stupid aggressive lone Bull. The resulting charge by the Bull will generally result in him being ambushed by several of the predators and dragged to the nearby nest for consumption.

When targeting hers on the move on the move, things become more difficult for the Sabretooth, but they are perfectly capable of running an isolated Grazer to exhaustion and mobbing it.

Sabertooth Courser

Size: Large (400kg)
Type: Carnivore/chaser
Stamina: 6d10+30 (63)
Lifeblood: 20
Initiative: +3 (+3 Dex)
To Attack: If more
To Flee: 9+
Speed: 24m
AC: 16 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +4 AR)
AR: 4
Attacks: Two claws +13 melee, bite +7 melee
Damage: Claw (1d10+5/20), bite (2d8+2/20)

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 17, Con 20, Int 2, Edu --, Wis 12, Cha 6, Soc --
Skills: Move silently +7
Feats: Weapon focus (claw)
Special Abilities: Berserk, sprint
Climate/Terrain: Open plains, scrublands, hills
Organization: Solitary (1) or family (1d6)

CT: Sabertooth Courser – 400kg Chaser; Hits 40/13; Armor mesh; Wounds 5 (as claws and teeth); A0 F6 S4.

SLIMERS

Known colloquially as 'slime' or 'slimers,' these creatures are normally found as a thin layer of slimy-looking single celled organisms that coat every available surface. Preferring direct sunlight in this form, the individual organisms jockey for position, creeping over and around one another to reach their desired location. Hating to be screened from the sun by anything, they spread out so only a single layer covers each available surface.

Slimers are found in a wide variety of colors and when in their single-celled form they can mix without restriction, presenting a colorful patchwork appearance over the substrate.

An individual slimer can be anything up to half a metre square or more, although the thickness rarely exceeds 1cm. Although the surface of the organism feels slick to the touch, no actual 'slime' is exuded and no residue is left to mark a slimer's passage. To the naked eye, the exterior is featureless, and the slimer apparently can move in any direction at will.

The remarkable thing about slimers is that upon occasion they will aggregate or clump together to form what to all intents and purposes is a multi-cellular animal. Normally, although they mix freely in the single-celled state, these aggregations are formed from organisms of a single color alone. How these creatures 'know' when or where to gather is as yet unknown.

The reasons for a slimer aggregation are little better understood. Sometimes several form at the same time, until most or all of the single-celled slimers in an area have gathered with others of the same color. On other occasions only one or two colors aggregate, leaving all the others in the single-celled state.

Aggregations have been observed to occur under severe weather conditions and so may have a protective purpose. It is also possible that they occur when slimers wish to reproduce, although this process too is shrouded in mystery. It has been reported that under exceptional circumstances all slimers irrespective of color will aggregate into a single giant organism, although there is no reliable direct evidence of this.

In the single-cell form, slimers are unintelligent. However, the larger aggregates show at least animal intelligence if not more.

Slimers are also capable of existing in the vacuum of space, by first forming an aggregate and then encysting – forming a hard shell around themselves. In this form, they can survive an absence of pressure and air. A similar technique is used to survive periods of extreme drought even on planet.

A Misjump could be caused by a ship with a slimer infestation taking off, and the encysted form interfering with Jump bubble geometry.

Explorers or settlers who ‘clear’ a slimer infestation might find that the creatures aggregate and engulf a straggling member of the group. While inside the aggregate, attempts are made to communicate with him by a form of telepathy. This communication is strong enough to enable contact even with a non-psionic character, and may be sufficient to trigger a latent psionic’s abilities.

Slimers

Size: Tiny (3 kg)
Type: Scavenger/reducer
Stamina: 1d8-2 (2)
Lifeblood: 6
Initiative: +5 (+5 Dex)
To Attack: 14+
To Flee: 7+
Speed: 6m
AC: 19 (+4 size, +5 Dex)
AR: 0
Attacks: Engulf +6 melee
Damage: Engulf (special)
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +7, Will +3
Abilities: Str 3, Dex 20, Con 6, Int 4, Edu --, Wis 12, Cha 5, Soc --, Psi 8
Skills: Hide +8, Spot +3, Telepathy +5
Feats: Life Detection, Telepathy, Read Thoughts, Send Thoughts
Special Abilities: Psionic, Engulf (up to a Medium-size creature)
Climate/Terrain: Any outdoor surface (preferred exposure to sunlight)
Organization: Solitary (1), pair (2) or band (1d6)

CT: Slimers – 3kg Reducer; Hits 1/4; Armor none; Wounds special (entangles as a net); A8 F6 S1.

URSHALL

Native to Ur, the Urshall is a shark-like aquatic predator thought to possess rudimentary intelligence. Urshall hunt in packs and are highly cooperative, to an even greater degree than Terran wolves.

Urshall dwell in small family groups, ranging over territory that they fiercely defend. They bear live young, but breed intermittently. It seems that certain water conditions are required to trigger the mating season, and these only occur in shallow water near islands. Urshall will travel long distances to breed, and destruction of these mating grounds by the dolphins of Ur may eventually render the Urshall extinct. They are not thought to dwell on other worlds.

Urshall

Size: Large (800 kg)
Type: Aquatic carnivore/chaser
Stamina: 6d10+18 (51)
Lifeblood: 16
Initiative: +1 (+1 Dex)
To Attack: If more
To Flee: 13+
Speed: Swim 24m
AC: 16 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +6 AR)
AR: 6
Attacks: Bite +7 melee
Damage: Bite (1d8+5/20)
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +1
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 4, Edu --, Wis 10, Cha 6, Soc --
Skills: Survival +6, Swim +10
Feats: Weapon focus (bite)
Special Abilities: Cold resistance
Climate/Terrain: Oceans, coastal
Organization: Solitary (1), pair (2) or family (1d6)

CT: Urshall – 800kg Swimming Chaser; Hits 33/10; Armor cloth; Wounds 4 (as teeth); A0 F8 S3.

WEED-HOPPERS

These rather odd creatures can be found only in Sargasso conditions – ie where rafts of floating seaweed provide a mobile habitat for them. Flightless birds rather similar to a Terrestrial species, Weed-Hoppers are known to a segment of the xenobiological community as “Berry’s Other Birds”, for some reason. They are also found on Daramm, almost a sector away, and on other worlds between.

Weed-Hoppers are streamlined for diving into the ocean from their seaweed islands, and can hunt for fish, though their elongated bill is also used to peck among the seaweed strands in search of insects and trapped shellfish.

Weed-Hoppers belong to three or four distinct varieties, differentiated mainly by their size and habitat. Warm-water species are quite small, perhaps 40cm tall at full height, but possessed of a wickedly shaped bill. Their main diet comes from among the weed strands. Cold-water species have a shorter bill and mainly dive for fish.

The weed-hopper in ungainly on land (hence its name) and causes great amusement among viewers. However,

they are very fast and graceful in the water, and have keen underwater senses that make them excellent hunters. The cold-water species are sometimes trained by maritime forces, since they make excellent anti-swimmer units, working with handlers to detect (and sometimes savage) intruders into sensitive areas. Indeed, some fishermen train a team of Hoppers to assist them, working from a boat or raft in the manner of a falconer.

The warm-water bird is a vicious little beast, and highly territorial. It cannot be usefully trained, and people intruding into its territory will regret their temerity. When not tearing great bloody chunks out of someone's leg, the warm-water Hopper is rather cute, and attempts have been made to tame them as pets.

This has never been successful.

Weed-hoppers

Size: Tiny (3 kg)
Type: Omnivore/gatherer
Stamina: 1d6-1 (2)
Lifeblood: 8
Initiative: +3 (+3 Dex)
To Attack: 9+
To Flee: 6+
Speed: 3m, swim 12m
AC: 15 (+2 size, +3 Dex)
AR: 0
Attacks: Bite +4 melee
Damage: Bite (1d4-3/20)
Saves: Fort -1, Ref +5, Will +0
Abilities: Str 5, Dex 17, Con 8, Int 2, Edu --, Wis 9, Cha 4, Soc --
Skills: Spot +4, Survival +2, Swim +12
Feats: Endurance
Special Abilities: Blindsight 18m range while underwater
Climate/Terrain: Sargasso
Organization: Individual (1), pair (2) or flock (2d6)

CT: Weed-hoppers – 3kg Gatherer; Hits 2/4; Armor none; Wounds 1 (as teeth); A6 F5 S2.

NPC ENCOUNTERS

The following NPCs can be encountered anywhere in the Cluster. They may serve as friends or opponents, or as 'color' in a scene as the characters pass by.

FAUSTO MAISTRAL, TRADER

Fausto Mastral is the head of a small shipping company, Mastral Hija y Associates, consisting of three type R Subsidized Merchants: his flagship, *Alison, flora de mi Corazon*; the heavily armed *Canta, Musa, de la coléra de Aquilles*; and the luxuriously appointed *Yo canto de las armas y del hombre*. (The ships are usually referred to by nicknames, which are, respectively, *Corazon*, *Coléra*, and *Yo canto*.) All three ships have subsidized routes which provide for a good portion of their income. Once a year they rendezvous in a secret location (which changes every year) for strategic planning.

Mastral is a small, wiry man in his early 60s. He has had a vigorous youth and middle age and shows no sign of slowing down. He has a parchment complexion, deep brown eyes, and a wiry mop of iron-grey hair; he sometimes keeps a very neat triangular patch of beard between his lower lip and chin. His grip is surprisingly strong, and his gaze is piercing when it lands on something. Normally, his eyes dart all around, constantly looking over and examining his surroundings. These, and other signs, such as never sitting with his back to a door or window, are hints of a violent past.

Mastral is a widower and has one child, Alison. His wife, Valeria Synnpchov, vanished some two decades some twenty years ago. Mastral searched for evidence that she had lived for a year, then had a magistrate declare her legally dead. He has been known, however, to occasionally resume his search for evidence of Valeria's status, and claiming information about his wife is one way to gain access to Mastral. Some have speculated, however, that this is because he fears that if Valeria is alive, she will have a claim on his enterprises.

Mastral's daughter Alison, 24, is his pride and joy, and he dotes on her. All the same, he has tried to give her the benefit of his years of trading experience, and she is being groomed to take his place at the head of the company. Outwardly, Alison gives little sign that she has the necessary ruthlessness to command Mastral's operations; she is a pretty blonde with green eyes, seemingly more concerned with enjoying herself than running a merchant trading ship. Her outward appearance, however, masks a cruel streak that has surprised many who have attempted to cross her. She is also becoming an extremely sharp trader in her own right, often assisting Mastral's XO and co-wife, de Varrghas.

Alison's greatest advantage, however, is her most closely guarded secret: she is a psionic, gifted in telepathy. Mastral had her trained at great risk and expense when she was very young. Since then, he has relied on her talents to build

his empire and monitor the loyalty of his closest advisors.

After Alison, the most important people in Mastral's inner circle are his two spousal contractors, Andrea de Varrghas and Gaani Alexandrovna. The two women have signed a Limited Spousal Partnership Agreement (LSPA) with Mastral. This gives them the legal status of his wives for the duration of the contract (in this case, five years apiece.) This is a slightly unusual relationship but not unheard of, especially on the high-population worlds of the Imperial core.

The older of the two women, de Varrghas, is approximately 40 years old. She was a midlevel executive in the Tukera megacorporation, with two (male) spousal contractors of her own, when Mastral recruited her as his executive officer. After a year she decided to accept Fausto's proposal; the contractual penalties to her then partners were paid by him. She is an exceptionally competent XO and purser, and Mastral has leaned on her more and more and for long-term strategy planning.

Mastral's younger co-spouse is Gaani Alexandrovna, 26. Her homeworld and early history is known only to her. Wherever she is from, it must have been a hard life. She is an expert in personal combat of all kinds, and has an instinctive grasp of tactics. She is rarely surprised and is alert to the point of near-paranoia. The economics of running a trading starship bore her; but she remains useful to Mastral as his roving security expert and the head of his bodyguards.

THE FLEET

Mastral remains captain and owner-aboard of his flagship, *Alison, flora de mi Corazon*. His other two ships are captained by his loyal subordinates, Eneri Landuusham and Robert Exeter.

CANTA, MUSA, DE LA COLÉRA DE AQUILLES:

The second ship bought by Mastral, *Coléra*, as it is commonly known, is captained by Eneri Landuusham. In his late 40s, Landuusham's most striking feature is his missing left eye, the result of radiation damage that was too extensive for regeneration; he refuses to have it cybernetically replaced, and as a consequence he wears a patch over the socket.

A former officer in the Imperial Navy, Landuusham is an aggressive commander and not afraid of a fight. He is a skilled swordsman and an excellent shot with a pistol.

The *Coléra* is one of the best armed traders in the subsector, and Landuusham constantly searches for the extra edge to improve her performance. He recruits his crew exclusively from former members of the Imperial armed forces, primarily from the Navy and Marines, but he has been known to hire Army veterans and train them in the appropriate shipboard skills. (As he puts it, "Any idiot can monitor a board.")

Because of the reputation for security Landuusham has built for the *Coléra*, it is often used as a courier for important

messages between worlds, and has several regular mail contracts, which provide a significant fraction of the ship's income.

YO CANTO DE LAS ARMAS Y DEL HOMBRE:

Robert Exeter, captain of the *Yo canto*, as it is usually called, is the third son of an honor noble. He has no noble title of his own, but he grew up at the court of a powerful count. Because of this, Exeter is extremely comfortable in the upper reaches of society.

The *Yo canto* is elegantly and tastefully appointed, and no expense has been spared in making it a pleasurable experience for the passengers. Exeter carries more than the usual complement of stewards, and he expects every member of his crew to double at that position when the need arises.

Because of this attention to detail, the *Yo Canto* is one of the best-kept secrets among the nobles of the region. They will use it when traveling inconspicuously between worlds, as Exeter's standards generally meet theirs.

Exeter does not overlook security concerns, of course; the ship is armed, and his chief steward, a mild-mannered man in his late 50s who also happens to have been an Imperial Marine Commando School instructor, doubles as his chief of security.

ALISON, FLORA DE MI CORAZON (CORAZON):

Maistral's flagship is nondescript to the point of anonymity. Except for its nose art, a rose superimposed on a golden heart, it could be any tramp plying the starlanes. But the ship has a reputation among those in the know.

For years it has been rumored that both the drives and the armor of *Corazon* have been upgraded beyond that of an ordinary trader. What is not well known is that this is in fact the second ship to bear the name. Maistral's first ship was an ordinary subsidized merchant. Ten years ago, Maistral commissioned a custom-built subsidized merchant built to specifications known only to himself and de Varrghas. It is almost certainly capable of 2G acceleration or better, and has an excellent sensor and weapons suite.

The interior of the ship is quite drab. Maistral has set aside one stateroom as his office and another extra-large stateroom for his own quarters. Visitors rarely glimpse this private sanctum, although rumor has it that he lives in it like the more decadent members of the aristocracy, lying on silken cushions, surrounded by luxurious draperies, and waited upon by obsequious robotic servants.

Maistral rotates his crew approximately once every six months. Exceptionally competent and loyal members are shifted to the other ships of his fleet; if they do well there, they may eventually return to the flagship. As stated above,

Alison carefully monitors the loyalty of the crew. Maistral's great fear is that somehow a psionic will manage to infiltrate his crew; to avoid this, he has purchased a great deal of secret (and illegal) anti-psionic counter-measures, and is constantly in the market for more.

His concern is justified, however, because of the riskiest part of his business: he is an active smuggler of psionic drugs. Carefully hidden within the *Corazon* is a five-ton storage bay not on any of the deckplans that is heavily armored and guarded with the best electronic countermeasures gear. Here Maistral keeps his illicit but highly profitable cargo.

MEETING MAISTRAL

Fausto Maistral did not build up his small empire by taking chances on meeting strangers. Indeed, at this time he rarely meets anybody, preferring to let de Varrghas and Alexandrovna serve as his contacts with the outside world. Still, it is possible to gain access to this shadowy figure.

THE CAPTAINS

Neither Exeter nor Landuusham are as secretive as their chief, and both hire new crew or contractors on a semi-regular basis. Exeter is especially interested in security personnel, whom he generally prefers to hire on a temporary basis. Landuusham can generally use qualified traders to act as brokers or replacement crew; he will be reluctant, however, to hire anyone who cannot fight as permanent crew, no matter how qualified.

At last year's meeting of the fleet, both the *Coléra* and the *Yo canto* were attacked by person or persons unknown. One crew member was killed, and both ships had their security software breached. This year Exeter and Landuusham have both resolved to bring extra security to the meeting; Landuusham is especially interested in computer experts.

Whether or not the fleet is attacked again, attending this meeting will provide a chance to meet the reclusive Maistral. It will not be easy to do so, however, without the PCs distinguishing themselves in some way.

ANDREA DE VARRGHAS

Fausto's elder co-wife is the public and legitimate face of his merchant empire. As such, she is by far the easiest member of his circle to meet. Characters engaged in almost any merchant-related activity will have opportunity to cross paths with her.

As Maistral's purser and XO, de Varrghas is in charge of the hiring decisions for the flagship. She often hires small groups to do projects she does not deem suitable for the flagship's crew. These can be as simple as retrieving a special cargo from the satellite of a world to attempting to break into the starports' security net. Note, however, many of these missions will require Alison to read the minds of the PCs to check their loyalty.

If de Varrghas has a weakness, it is psionics. She dislikes psionic adepts (except for Alison), and lives in constant fear that the Imperium will discover that Maistral is engaged in the psionic drug trade. She will go to almost any length to prevent discovery of this, up to and including the “silencing” of witnesses and whistleblowers. She often hires “independent contractors” for this kind of work, although such groups would do well to look after their own security. She will never knowingly hire a psionic.

People who distinguish themselves on de Varrghas’ missions have a chance to be hired on as members of the **Corazon**’s crew and meet her owner.

GAANI ALEXANDROVNA

Alexandrovna can turn up in almost any conceivable location. Her only official position in Maistral’s organization is “roving security expert,” but this gives her license to go almost anywhere in his empire. She currently spends about half her time with Exeter onboard the **Yo canto**, helping to protect the ship.

Alexandrovna is often used as Maistral’s liaison with the rougher elements he sometimes needs to work with. She understands life on the streets and is not afraid to use violence. She is also fiercely loyal to Maistral and will protect his interests aggressively – sometimes **too** aggressively. Dealing with Alexandrovna is one way to get nearly immediate contact with Maistral, as he will accept anyone she vouches for, but is fraught with peril, because she has no compunctions on turning against anyone who threatens her husband.

ALISON MAISTRAL

Alison normally has limited contact with the outside world. Maistral’s fears for her safety – and her value to his organization – mean that she almost never is allowed off the **Corazon**. This is a source of stress between father and daughter; as she has gotten older, she has wanted to make her own way in the world, only to be held back by her father.

In a way, Maistral is a victim of his own success. He has tried to raise Alison to be as strong, skilled, and daring as he has been; but this has resulted in an inevitable conflict between his need to protect her and her need to assert herself. Alison is desperate to prove herself, and may make clandestine contact with bands of adventurers to pursue her own schemes.

Alison loves and is devoted to her father, but there are many submerged tensions in their relationship. First is her psionic training. Although it is a great ability and very useful to her, it is also a constant danger to her life and well-being. Her father’s use of her as a personal lie-detector is also galling. Then there are his co-wives. Getting along with de Varrghas

is possible, because of her age and the respect Alison has for her trading abilities; but Alexandrovna is only two years older than Alison. The two get along like sisters—but that itself is disturbing, and there is much unexplored resentment on Alison’s side. Finally, Alison is a young woman, and interested in having a good time, especially with young men. Such partners are rarely to Maistral’s liking.

Whether they work for Alison on her schemes, or for Maistral in breaking those schemes up, the PCs should take care. Alison’s psionic abilities give her great power. She has inherited much of her father’s ruthlessness and cruelty; her spoiled upbringing has not given her many of the restraints that Maistral’s hard childhood gave him. She will be a dangerous opponent. And Maistral will brutally punish any harm to her, even if it ruins him.

FAUSTO MAISTRAL

It is almost impossible to meet Maistral in person. Generally, one must work through his agents, building up trust in the organization, before being allowed to meet the trader himself. However, there are two ways to get almost immediate access.

The first method is to claim to have information about his wife. Fausto has never stopped searching for Valeria, even though she is almost certainly dead, and his interest is mainly to make sure that she never shows up to claim a part of his empire. He has followed many false leads and treats any claim with extreme skepticism; however, he also follows up almost every claim, and he may still have feelings for his long-missing wife.

The second way to get to Maistral is to be involved in the psionics trade. Maistral is always interested in new anti-psionic measures, and of course he is both a buyer and seller of psionic drugs. Note that he take extreme measures for his own protection whenever he deals with any psionic-related activity, and that he absolutely refuses to hire any psionic.

FAUSTO MAISTRAL, TRADER

(Rogue level 4/merchant level 6) TL12 Medium human
 Stamina 37, Lifeblood 8; Init +1; Speed 6 m (3 squares);
 Armor Class: 13 (+1 dex, +2 vac suit), Armor Rating: 2 (vac suit)
 Str 8, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 10, Edu 14, Soc 14
 SV Fort +3; Ref+7; Will +5
ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+5	1d10	18	20	1	6/15
Fist	+5	1d4-1	--	20	--	--

Skills: Appraise +16, Bluff +15, Bribery +13, Broker +11, Gambling +13, Forgery +10, Gather Info +13, Innuendo +8, K/Interstellar Law +9, Liaison +6, Pilot +9, P/Merchant +7, Trader +11

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapons (marksman, swordsman), Barter, Brawling, Calculating Eye, Chief Steward, Connections (merchant, underworld), Fence Stolen Goods, Smuggling, Steward, Zero-G/Low-G Adaptation.

Equipment: company uniform (tailored vac suit-14), snub pistol

CT: Fausto Mastral, Trader 686999 Age 54 9 terms
Bribery-3, Gambling-3, Streetwise-3, Broker-2, Legal-2, Grav Vehicle-2, Blade-1, Brawling-1, Liaison-1, Pistol-1, Steward-0, Vac-0

ENERI LANDUUSHAM

(navy level 6/merchant level 3) TL14 Medium human
Stamina 38, Lifeblood 10; Init +2; Speed 6 m (4 squares);

Armor Class: 14 (+2 dex, +2 vac suit), Armor Rating: 2 (vac suit)

Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14, Edu 16, Soc 11

SV Fort +4; Ref+5; Will +8;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+6	1d10	18	20	1	6/15
Fist	+5	1d4-1	--	20	--	--
Cutlass	+6	1d8-1	--	18	--	--

Skills: Broker +6, Liaison +14, Pilot +14, P/Administration +13, T/Astrogation +15, T/Computer +13, T/Communications +15, T/Sensors+15, Trader +6

Feats: Vessel (grav, starship, ship's boat), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (marksman, laser), Barter, Brawling, Narrow Escape, Ship's Tactics, Weapon Focus (cutlass, snub pistol), Zero-G/Low-G adaptation, Zero-G combat

Equipment: company uniform (tailored vac suit-14), combat snub pistol, cutlass.

CT: Eneri Landuusham 6A78B7 Age 46 7 terms
Admin-2, Astrogation-2, Computer-2, Communications-2, Liaison-2, Blade-1, Brawl-1, Broker-1, Pilot-1, Pistol-1, Grav Vehicle-0, Vac-0

ROBERT EXETER

(noble level 2/merchant level 6) TL12 Medium human
Stamina 34, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 6 m (3 squares);

Armor Class: 12 (+2 vac suit), Armor Rating: 2 (vac suit)
Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 14, Edu 14, Soc 15

SV Fort +3; Ref+2; Will +6;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+2	1d10	18	20	1	6/15
Fist	+2	1d4	--	20	--	--

Skills: Appraise +12, Bluff +9, Broker +9, Gather Info +13, Innuendo +7, K/Interstellar Law +12, Leader +6, Liaison +13, Pilot +7, P/Merchant +11, Trader +9

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (marksman), Barter, Brawling, Calculating Eye, Carousing, Chief Steward, Connections (nobles), Fast Talk, Steward, Trustworthy, Zero-G/Low-G Adaptation

Equipment: company uniform (tailored vac suit-14), snub pistol

CT: Robert Exeter 77789A Age 42 6 terms
Broker-2, Carousing-2, Legal-2, Liaison-2, Brawl-1, Leader-1, Pistol-1, Steward-1, Grav Vehicle-0

ANDREA DE VARRGHAS

(merchant level 6/professional level 2) TL12 Medium human

Stamina 26, Lifeblood 9; Init +1; Speed 6 m (3 squares);
Armor Class: 13 (+1 dex, +2 vac suit), Armor Rating: 2 (vac suit)

Str 9, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 12, Edu 17, Soc 10

SV Fort +3; Ref+3; Will +7;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+2	1d10	18	20	1	6/15
Fist	+2	1d4-1	--	20	--	--

Skills: Pilot +11, P/Merchant +11, K/Interstellar Law +13, Appraise +11, Gather Info +10, Trader +13, Broker +12, Liaison +11, P/Administration +15, T/Computer +10

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (marksman), Barter, Brawling, Calculating Eye, Chief Steward, Connections (merchant), Legal Eagle, Professional Specialty (P/Administration), Skill Focus (P/Administration), Steward, Zero-G/Low-G Adaptation

Equipment: company uniform (tailored vac suit-14), snub pistol

CT: Andrea de Varrghas 686BB7 Age 42 6 terms
Broker-3, Legal-3, Admin-1, Brawl-1, Computer-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Liaison-1, Pistol-1, Steward-1, Vac-0

GAANI ALEXANDROVNA

(mercenary level 6) TL-10 Medium human
Stamina 46, Lifeblood 13; Init +3; Speed 9 m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 17 (+3 dex, +4 flak jacket), Armor Rating: 4 (flak jacket)

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 11, Soc 10

SV Fort +6; Ref+6; Will +3;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Auto Pistol	+10/+5	1d10+2	45	20	1	15
Fist	+9/+4	1d4+1	--	20	--	--
Baton	+9/+4	1d6+1	--	20	--	--

Skills: Hide +8, Intimidate +9, Listen +11, Move Silently +7, Pilot +12, Spot +11

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapon (marksman, combat rifleman, armsman), Alertness,

Brawling, Evasion, Quick Draw, Uncanny Dodge, Weapon Focus (auto pistol), Weapon Specialization (auto pistol)

Equipment: flak jacket, auto-pistol, baton

CT: Gaani Alexandrovna 8B9977 Age 30 3 terms

Pilot-2, Pistol-2, Brawling-2, Stealth-1, Grav Vehicle-0, Vac-0

ALISON MAISTRAL

(merchant level 4) TL12 Medium human

Stamina 18, Lifeblood 10; Init +1; Speed 6 m (3 squares);

Armor Class: 13 (+1 dex, +2 vac suit), Armor Rating: 2 (vac suit)

Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 10, Edu 12, Soc 14, Psi 15

SV Fort +2; Ref+3; Will +2;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+2	1d10	18	20	1	6/15
Fist	+2	1d4	--	20	--	--

Skills: Appraise +9, Bluff +5, Broker +11, Gather Info +5, Liaison +7, K/Interstellar Law +9, Pilot +9, P/Merchant +7, Telepathy +9, Trader +11

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (Marksman), Barter, Calculating Eye, Life Detection, Natural Talent (telepathy), Psi Training, Steward

Equipment: company uniform (tailored vac suit-14), snub pistol

CT: Alison Mastral 787989(A) Age 26 2 terms

Broker-2, Legal-2, Pilot-1, Grav Vehicle-0, Vac-0, Telepathy-2

ADVENTURE HOOKS

As a prominent shipping firm, Fausto and his company will have all kinds of work for skilled characters; filling in crew positions, extra security and similar routine tasks. Fausto may also hire characters to follow up leads on his missing wife.

After the attack on his ships last year, Fausto may wish to hire characters to find out who is responsible, or to deliver some payback. He (or some of his people) may need a competitor or investigator warned to keep their distance; Fausto always has a use for smart people who can keep their mouths shut and persuade others to do the same.

Additionally, Fausto is interested in the psionics trade. Characters who seem to know what they are about may be contacted for a variety of purposes. Fausto may need couriers for the dangerous run into Imperial space, or agents to pick up a shipment of psionic gadgets or drugs. He is also very interested in information and research into psionic phenomena, and will pay well for people to obtain it for him.

Characters' initial dealings with Fausto and his company will be legitimate and apparently above-board; just another shipping firm needing some PATRON ENCOUNTER done. However, characters who impress can work their way into the heart of his organisation, where there is always something illegal (and well-paid) to be done.

RANI KAILANI

Rani was born on Idam Lee to parents who worked for the government bureaucracy. She regularly reminds other natives of the Starfall Cluster about Idam Lee's pre-eminence among the neighboring worlds. Rani is a self-educated "dame-of-all-trades" serving first with a ship-building consulting firm there on Idam Lee, then working with the highport, Orland High in the as both an engineer and a manager. Bored of all the paperwork after four years, she applied and landed a managerial position with a frontier subsidy holding of SuSAG, L.I.C., working in their biotech division where she picked up some medical skills. This also afforded her the opportunity to travel around the Gateway Domain and even into the Imperium. It was during this term that she was contacted by Imperial agents to act as a front for their operation back on her home turf in the beta quadrant of the Glimmerdrift Reaches. It was an offer that was very hard to refuse with the promise of a starship and lots of hard currency to back up the operation. That, coupled with very minimal oversight sold her to the idea, and gave her the inspiration to start Bring 'Em Back Alive Adventure Outfitters to have the crazy adventures she always wanted to have, push the Imperial agenda in a very subtle way by getting others to do the dirty work for her, and make money in the process.

Rani is not afraid to get messy, and the scrappy woman from Idam Lee is not a bad shot with a pistol. She always goes armed. Although ship's owner and her operation's president, she helps out in engineering (despite her chief's complaints) and assists as ship's nurse. She can also play a mean guitar, and she entertains her clients with the latest popular tunes or her own work during the trips to the expedition sites.

Rani KaiLani (NPC) Female Human (mixed)
Professional 7 Hair: Red Eyes: Green Height: 1.58 m
Weight: 46 kg Age: 30
Str: 13 Dex: 18 Con: 14 Int: 16 Edu: 18 Wis: 14 Cha: 14
Soc: 13 HD: 7d6+16 Stamina: 54 Lifeblood: 14 Init: +4
Speed 9 m (6 Hex/Squares)
AC: 16 (Tailored Vac Suit-14, Dex) AR: 2 or a flack jacket (AR: 4) when in the field
Saves: Fort +4 Ref +6 Will +7
Attack: +5 Melee and Ranged
Skills: P/Administration +14, P/Hunting +8, K/Interstellar Law +12, K/Business +10, T/Medical +10, T/Computer +11, T/Electronics +13, T/Sensors +11, T/Mechanical +13, T/Gravitics +11, T/Engineering +11, Pilot +6, Entertain +9, Survival (Thin Atmosphere) +4
Feats: Armor Prof. (Light Armor), Armor Prof (Vac Suit), Vessel (Grav), Weapon Prof. (Marksman), Skill Focus (P/Administration), Professional Specialty (Technical), Professional Specialty (Interstellar Trade), Naval Architect, Surgery, Jury Rig, Gearhead, Miracle Worker
Languages: Galanglic, Low Vilani, Vargr-Irlitok, Sopas
Possessions: Masterwork Snub Pistol or other masterwork smallarm
Personality: Professional, Micromanager, Spontaneous,

Risk-taker

Typical Quote: "Move over and let me take care of that."

CT: 8D9BD8 3 terms

Admin-3, Hunting-2, Medical-2, Computer-2, Electronics-2, Mechanical-2, Engineering-2, Pilot-1, Survival-1, Vac Suit-0, Grav Vehicle-0, Pistol-1, Blade-1.

BRING 'EM BACK ALIVE ADVENTURE OUTFITTERS

More than likely, the travellers will initially contact Rani through her wilderness and back-world outfitting company, **Bring 'Em Back Alive Adventure Outfitters (BEBA)**. Their largest offices are located at First Landing on Starfall with at least twenty employees present at any given time (including guides, but excluding the ship's crew). They also have a travel agency on Idam Lee, Rani's homeworld, and Lunarmise with probably no more than five employees at either location. Adventurers looking for a safari expedition to one of the worlds in the Starfall Cluster and surrounding systems are strong candidates and, for Rani, potential recruits. BEBA' can both provide equipment and arrange transport for the expedition. Travellers with their own means of transportation, can either hire Rani or a few of her cohorts to accompany them or have her ship, the **Artemis Intrepid** escort them to the site. Rani regularly goes on tour with the **Artemis Intrepid** so she can be met at any of BEBA's locations.

At the most limited level of interaction, BEBA' can provide wilderness equipment for sale at the highest tech level available to the Cluster (TL-14) as she regularly updates all of her surplus on First Landing with the latest gadgets from Idam Lee. As the relationship between the travellers and Rani warms, she can also act as a front for weapons. However, if the adventurers are solely buyers, these are limited to the local tech level (TL-11) of Starfall. If the adventurers become operatives (see Adventure Hooks below), this restriction can ease as money and needs (and the referee) dictate. The smaller offices on Idam Lee and Lunarmise do not carry weapons. They also have less variety when it comes to equipment (i.e. it is limited to the local tech level).

The cost for an expedition is 20,000 credits per person. This includes round trip travel ("High Passage accommodations at less than Medium Passage prices!"), rental fees for equipment, and all the fees for permits, licenses and visas to whatever world traveled. On site guides cost 1,500 credits/week. BEBA' representatives will also ask if the clients would like 5,000 credit death insurance (for a 20 Kcredit voucher). Equipment can be purchased new (standard **Traveller Handbook** prices) or used (for a 15% discount on the standard price). Hiring scouts is the cost of travel (medium or high passage—a hired expedition guide will not settle for a low berth) to and from plus 5,000 credits/month. The company, though purposely a small operation, itself has several megacredits in liquid assets and can have unlimited backing from Rani's Imperial patrons if necessary and given enough time. The starship and the

surplus goods and weaponry that the operation possesses make Bring 'Em Back Alive Adventure Outfitters worth much more.

Rani and her employees pride themselves in not losing customers and one guide is always equipped with the best field medical gear. Also, they will not, as their name claims, leave anyone behind, guns blazing from starship or air raft if necessary. Her main employee and most sought after guide is Tjorda Kam, a Sydite. She also has anywhere from two to five local guides for any of the worlds in the Starfall Cluster and nearby systems that her clients can choose from to lead them into adventure. Tjorda and Rani hire themselves out to the highest bidder (which usually runs close to 10,000 credits), although Rani will not go without other guides.

So if the customer wants to go hunting megafauna on Arka Videa or dangerous sea creatures on Dhuku, Bring 'Em Back Alive Adventure Outfitters is the company to get them there. How the clients fare and how they interact with the hired hunters will influence the next phase of their relationship with Rani KaiLani (see below). Rani will try as hard as she can to meet with the client before (to interview) or after (to debrief) the expedition for that reason.

TJORDA KAM

Male Sydite Barbarian/Mercenary/Big Game Hunter
Level 4/2/3 Hair: Brown Eyes: Green Height: 2.2 m Weight:
130 kg Age: 34

Str: 20 Dex: 18 Con: 15 Int: 14 Edu: 12 Wis: 12 Cha: 11
Soc: 11 HD: 4d12+2d10+3d8+18 Stamina: 84 Lifeblood: 15
Init: +8 Speed 9 m (6 Hex/Squares)

AC: 18 (Tailored Vac Suit-14, Dex) AR: 2 or heavier (such
as a Combat Environment Suit AR:6) as works with his
feats and depending on the hostility of the world

Saves: Fort +10 Ref +7 Will +7
Attack: +13/+8 Melee and Ranged

Skills: Animal Empathy +3, Handle Animal +3, Intuit
Direction +2, Jump +10, P/Hunting +9, Ride +6, Search
+7, Spot +13, Survival (Outdoor) +9, Technosavvy +4,
Tumble +6

Feats: Armor Prof. (Light Armor), Armor Prof. (Medium
Armor), Armor Prof (Vac Suit), Shield Proficiency, Weapon
Prof. (Archer), Weapon Prof. (Swordsman), Weapon
Prof. (Marksman), Weapon Prof. (Combat Rifleman),
Ambidexterity*, Two-Weapon Fighting*, Point Blank Shot,
Precise Shot, Far Shot, Skill Focus (Outdoor Survival),
Weapon Focus (Bow), Technophobia, Improved Initiative,
Tracker, Trapping, Sixth Sense,

Or the multi-armed equivalent

Languages: Sopas, Galanglic, Vargr-Iriltok

Possessions: an assortment of melee and ranged
weapons as suits his needs and moods.

Personality: Stoic but friendly. He is a man of few words.

CT: FDA987 4 terms

Survival-2, Hunting-2, Vac Suit-1, Grav Vehicle-0, Combat
Rifleman-3, Blade-3, Military Cross-3.

OTHER EMPLOYEES

Guides

For expeditions to low-tech worlds (TL 0-3), of which only one exists in the Starfall Cluster (Midrift at 2815 Glimmerdrift Reaches), use the regular barbarian statistics on page 421 of the *Traveller Handbook*, although they will probably have flak jackets and higher-tech equivalents of their primitive weapons. Also, one of their listed feats should be replaced by Tracker and they should be given some ranks in Search. However, a rich dilettante may want to have a primitive barbarian in his hunting entourage, so Rani gives her clients the option.

For expeditions to medium-tech worlds (TL 5-9), use the regular guards statistics on page 422 of the *Traveller Handbook* again substituting Tracker with one of their listed feats and giving them some ranks in Search. Also they should have a weapon proficiency feat in a "primitive" weapon, preferably Archer and be equipped accordingly.

Lastly, for the outbacks of high-tech worlds (TL 10+), use statistics for high tech guards on page 422 of the *Traveller Handbook*. They are hunters in training so it is appropriate so substitute the P/Security skill listed for P/Hunting. Also, Tracker and a primitive weapon skill (i.e. Weapon Proficiency (Archer) is also suggested. More than likely, they will be wearing flak jackets instead of a combat environment suit, although on dangerous worlds with dangerous animals (Dhuku, Arka Videa, 560-519) that might be more appropriate.

ARTEMIS INTREPID

The starship is based on the standard hull for a safari ship (Type K) but deviates significantly from the standard design presented in the *Traveller Handbook* reflecting Rani KaiLani's patronage and mission. The specifications for the *Artemis Intrepid* can be found on the following page.

Safari Ship (Modified Type K)

Class: Starship, Type K	EP Output: 8 (+4 excess for weapons or agility)*	Triple Turret: TL13 Pulse Laser (x3), Attack Bonus +3 (+3 USP), Damage 3d10. Single Popup Turret: TL13 Popup Plasma Gun (x1), Attack Bonus +3 (+3 USP), Damage 3d12.
Tech Level: 13	Agility: +2	
Size: Medium (200dt)	Initiative: +2 (+2 Agility)*	
Streamlining: Streamlined – Wedge	AC: 12 (+2 agility)*	
Jump Range: 3	Repulsors: None	
Acceleration: 2	Nuclear Dampers: None	
Fuel: 68 (60 Jump and 8 powerplant)	Meson Screens: None	
Duration: 4 weeks	Black Globes: None	
Crew: 5 (pilot/astrogator, engineers, gunnersx2, steward)	AR: 0	
Staterooms: 10	SI: 115	
Small Cabins: 0	Main Computer: Model/2bis	
Bunks: 0	Sensor Range: Short (Model/2)	
Couches: 0	Comm. Range: Short (Model/2)	
Low Berths: 0		
Cargo Space: 12.4	Cost: MCr112.15 (New)	
Atmospheric Speeds: Cruising = 3525kph	NoE = 1175kph Maximum = 4700kph	
Other Equipment: Air/raft, 20 ton Launch (standard designs).		

TAS Form 3.1 (Condensed)

Ship's Data (Commercial)

TL-13 Design Specifications

Installed Components	Tonnage	Cost	EP	Notes
200-ton Hull (Wedge)	+200	MCr24	-	-
Bridge	-20	MCr1	-	-
Computer	-0.2	MCr12.4	-	Model/2bis
Flight Avionics	-0.4	(MCr1.8)	-	Model/2
Sensors	-0.6	(MCr2.4)	-	Model/2
Communications	-0.4	(MCr2)	-	Model/2
Jump Drive 3	-8	MCr32	-6	-
Jump Fuel	-60	-	-	-
Maneuver Drive 2	-10	MCr7	-4	-
TL9 Power Plant	-8	MCr24	+8	-
Power Plant Fuel	-8	-	-	-
2 Hard Points	-	MCr0.2	-	-
1 Triple Turret	-	MCr1	-	-
1 Single Popup Turret	-2	MCr2.5	-	-
1 Plasma Gun	-2	MCr1.5	-1	-
3 Pulse Lasers	-1	MCr1.5	-3	-
10 Staterooms	-40	MCr5	-	-
Air/Raft	-5	MCr0.01	-	-
20 Ton Launch	-20	MCr0.04	-	-
Cargo	-14.4	-	-	-
Totals	+0	MCr112.15 (MCr89.72 with 20% standard design discount)		

*Note that if the **Artemis Intrepid** fires both its guns in a given round, she will lose the +2 agility modifier.

Ship Crew:

For the ship's crew, Rani has recruited a number of ex-Travellers with various backgrounds and expertise. Pages 421-423 of the *Traveller's Handbook* list numerous templates from which to choose. For example, the pilot/astrogator could be taken from the merchant bridge crew template while the engineer could be an ex-scout. The gunners could be ex-naval gunners (or ex-Vargr corsairs!) and the medic/steward could either be a professional functionary (substituting the Surgery feat and T/Medical skill for some the "office-related" feats and skills) or a merchant crewman with trade crew skills (and again some medical-related feats and skills). Rani can fill in for any of the crew positions, except the gunnery position.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

At the first level of an encounter with Rani the player characters can encounter her as clients wanting to go on an expedition to the Starfall Cluster's more exotic locales. Alternatively, the players can meet Rani and members of an expedition in the wilderness of one of these worlds. Referees wanting to expose their players to the more vicious animals in the Cluster are encouraged to set up a safari to Arka Videa to hunt *real* big game. For an even more danger and an underwater challenge, Dhuku might be the place.

As Rani gets a feel for the characters and begins to learn their allegiances she'll attempt to gain their trust. One way to do this is by opening her weapons shop (see above). Slowly, Rani will become a patron and maybe even sole equipment supplier to the travellers. At the next level, maybe she will ask the characters to do some local work at First Landing to clean up some of the less savory (and anti-Imperial) elements there.

If the group is successful, the next job may be to help the Autonomous Colonies on 569-519 against GTC moves to absorb the system or stem the influence that the Raidermarch may be trying gain. Another possible mission could be to aid citizens of Heaven's Reach on 812-148 against raids from High Salvation. Rani could also offer support and a mercenary ticket to the travellers by sending them to Darwin's Hope to either support or work against Captain Valperrez's men.

Finally, after as many interactions as the referee deems necessary to build mutual trust, the player characters may be "brought (or *bought* as the case may be) into the fold" and told who backs Rani and her company. In the long term they may be made partners or employees either as part of BEBA' or the crew of the *Artemis Intrepid*, and then help to look for more potential agents as the Imperium extends its influence into the Glimmerdrift Reaches.

SCOTT'S RIFLES

Scott's Rifles is a platoon-sized mercenary outfit equipped to TL-9/10 Light Infantry standards. The unit is registered out of offices on Idam Lee, where it maintains a tiny recruiting station (in the form of the office staff). The unit does not train raw recruits but prefers to take experienced personnel on. Ex-Army and Marine personnel are preferred, though law enforcers, Navy and even merchant servicepersons are acceptable, provided they know which way round a weapon goes and are willing to accept orders.

The platoon operates in three "rifle" sections and a command detachment.

Each rifle section nominally contains 7 personnel armed with Light Advanced Combat Rifles (with RAM Grenade launchers) and one with a support version of the same weapon.

The command section consists of the platoon commander, an assistant/sergeant, a medic, communications trooper and any excess personnel the unit may have available. At present the unit is up to full strength and has 3 extra riflemen with the HQ. These are new recruits settling into the unit before joining a rifle section. The platoon has no transport other than an air/raft for liaison duties, and relies on its employer to provide any necessary vehicles during an operation.

The Rifles normally undertake security or cadre operations, training local troops to use advanced weapons. They have been known to take Striker missions but are not really suited to this role. Their lack of heavy weapons is a liability in battlefield operations, but the unit is adequately equipped for its intended role. IN addition to their personal weapons, members of the platoon are equipped with Cloth body armor and helmet communicators tied into a net by the HQ comms operator. Everyone has a shock-baton for non-lethal duty, and there are a couple of Thud Guns available should the need arise.

The Rifles are of very average quality as mercs go; personnel are a pretty mixed bunch and the small size of the unit precludes any sophisticated training. However, section members know one another well and work together effectively; in a security or small-unit firefight situation this is usually all that is needed. Indeed, the Rifles have a reputation as "good scrappers" – which is one of their main selling points.

Unfortunately, the Rifles' penchant for scrapping sometimes spills over into their off-duty habits. Members of the platoon are regularly arrested by the local authorities after being found in the middle of a general free-for-all in some bar or restaurant. The habit of violence has become something of a unit tradition (and it's actually good for their image, and therefore their client books). The troops usually try to "keep

it in the family”, and only pick fights with other mercs, or uniformed personnel like merchant crews and corporate field teams. They prefer not to brawl with the locals, though if anyone wants to join in, they’re welcome to take their chances.

In other units, this habit would have been stomped on, but the platoon commander, who holds the rank of Lieutenant due to his position, is in fact an ex-enlisted man who never held any rank above Lance-Corporal (and lost THAT due to, yes, fighting). Lieutenant Sven Scott leads his platoon rather than commanding it, He can often be found in the front line alongside them – and the same goes for a brawl. If a unit’s commanding officer started the fight, there is little chance he’ll punish his men for being involved.

Despite these drawbacks, the Rifles are in demand as a security unit that’s not afraid to get stuck in if the job gets dirty.

LT SVEN SCOTT, MERC SOLDIER

(Mercenary level 7) TL-10 Medium human
Stamina 60, Lifeblood 14; Init +2; Speed 9 m (6 squares);

Armor Class: 16 (+2 dex, +4 flak jacket), Armor Rating: 4 (flak jacket)

Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 12, Edu 11, Soc 10

SV Fort +7; Ref+4; Will +4;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Military Shotgun	+9/+4	3d8/2d8/1d8	7	20	1	12
Fist	+9/+4	1d4+1	--	20	--	--
Cutlass	+9/+4	1d8+1	--	18	--	--
Auto Pistol	+10/+5	1d10+2	45	20	1	15

Skills: Driving +10, Leader +12, Listen +5, Spot +5

Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapon (marksman, combat rifleman), Brawling, Evasion, Natural Born Leader, Quick Draw, Tactics I, Weapon Focus (auto-pistol), Weapon Specialization (auto-pistol)

Equipment: flak jacket, cutlass, auto-pistol, military shotgun

Lt Sven Scott, Merc Soldier 9A9777 Age 38 5 terms

Leader-2, Blade-2, Brawling-2, Shotgun-2, Pistol-2, Tactics-1, Vac-0, Wheeled Vehicle-0

MERCENARY SOLDIER (SCOTT’S RIFLES)

(Mercenary level 6) TL-10 Medium human

Stamina 33, Lifeblood 11; Init +1; Speed 9m (6 squares);

Armor Class: 15 (+1 dex, +4 flak jacket), Armor Rating: 4 (flak jacket)

Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 10, Soc 10

SV Fort +5; Ref +3; Will +3;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Military Shotgun	+7/+2	3d8/2d8/1d8	7	20	1	12
Fist	+8/+3	1d4+1	--	20	--	--
Cutlass	+9/+4	1d8+1	--	18	--	--
Auto Pistol	+7/+2	1d10	45	20	1	15
Light ACR	+8/+3	1d12+2	72	20	1/4	30
SMG	+7/+2	1d10	45	20	1/4	30

Skills: Driving +10, Listen +11, Spot +11

Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapon (marksman, combat rifleman), Alertness, Brawling, Defensive Roll, Evasion, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (Light ACR), Weapon Specialization (Light ACR)

Equipment: flak jacket, light ACR, auto-pistol, possibly SMG or military shotgun

Mercenary Soldier (Scott’s Rifles) 887777 Age 30 3 terms
Combat Rifleman-2, Wheeled Vehicle-2, Brawling-2, Tactics-1, Vac-0

Adventure Hooks

The Rifles have had to recruit back up to strength after a hot mission more than once; experienced characters could become temporary or even permanent members of the unit. Alternatively, PCs might be assigned as liaison to the unit, or may have them as guards/enforcers during a diplomatic mission (a nightmare scenario if ever there was one).

The Rifles can also be encountered in the course of their duties, or battling it out with the local law enforcement personnel after a beer-fuelled disagreement. They will always need reliable supplies of ammunition, basic kit and luxuries, and may place a custom order with PC merchants.

KARYLE ISRIVIK

Karyle is a woman of average height and build, whose red-brown hair and dark trouser suit are always slightly disheveled. She has a permanent air of being in the middle of something, if only she could remember what it was...

Karyle is an Ancients Hunter, a borderline crank obsessed with discovering the truth behind the vanished Ancients. She is convinced that an early civilization in the Starfall Cluster had something to do with the Ancients, and that neither the Ancients nor these early cluster dwellers are as “vanished” as people think. There is no proof of this to be had, but Karyle keeps on looking anyway.

When not wandering about the outback with a range of handmade instruments and a team of bemused assistants, Karyl raises funds for her next expedition working as a TAS

correspondent and appearing on various chat shows to discuss her theories. She is something of a celebrity at present, and is using her popularity to put together the definitive Ancients expedition.

KARYLE ISRIVIK

(Academic 5/TAS Field Reporter level 2) TL12 Medium human

Stamina 24, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9 m (6 squares);

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

Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 14, Edu 16, Soc 12

SV Fort +1; Ref+5; Will +5;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Dagger	+1	1d4+3	--	19	--	--
Body Pistol	+1	1d8	24	20	1	6

Skills: Bluff +8, Decipher Script +10, Gather Information +12, K/Ancients +17, Liaison +6, Listen +2, Pilot +7, P/Administration +12, P/Journalist +10, Sense Motive +2, T/Communications +5, T/Computer +13, T/Electronics +11, Use Alien Device +8

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (vac suit), Academic Lecture, Advanced Knowledge (K/Ancients), Advanced Research, Mental Discipline, Research (Ancients), Skill Focus (K/Ancients), Xeno-Empathy

Special Abilities: Expense Account, Connections +1

Equipment: Communicator, holorecorder-12, dagger, body pistol

Karyle Isrivik Age 38 5 terms

Admin-2, Computer-2, Journalism-2, Communications-1, Electronics-1, Liaison-1, Linguistics-1, Pilot-1, Blade-0, Grav Vehicle-0, Pistol-0, Vac-0

Adventure Hooks

Karyle always needs smart, resourceful people to assist on her expeditions, and works best with imaginative people who will at least give her the benefit of the doubt when she starts expostulating on her pet theories. PCs teaming up with Karyle might find themselves conducting a centimeter-by-centimeter densitometer survey of a rock face – on the end of a rope dangling from above, wandering around the jungle looking for a single section of stone wall someone spotted a decade ago, or trying to hack corporate databases for extra information on the cluster's worlds.

PART 6: ADVENTURE: COUNTERWEIGHTS AND MEASURES

REFEREE'S OVERVIEW

This full adventure for *Traveller* will take the characters to several worlds of the Starfall Cluster as they attempt to help out an old friend and come up against the might of a cartel of business interests. Some of the firms operating under the banner of the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium (GTC) have ambitious plans for the cluster, and not everyone wants to fall under corporate control. The characters are tasked with setting up an economic alliance to counterweight the GTC influence, and once the corporations learn of the plan they take drastic measures to derail the process.

The adventure begins on Idam Lee, but from there can take almost any path. The characters have jobs to do on several worlds, and each world is presented as an Act in the standard T20 EPIC adventure format. The final act, the climax of the adventure, cannot occur until at least some of the other Acts have been played out. It may be that the characters will fail to complete some Acts, or run out of time, in which case the Referee can decide to proceed to the Climax at any time after one or more Acts are completed.

It is of course entirely possible that the characters will have other adventures while playing this main one. There are many Patron Encounter and Amber Zone adventures associated with individual worlds or available to be dropped in anywhere, and incidental encounters might lead to new adventures after this one is over.

Note that although the opposition in this adventure is part of the GTC, these firms are not representative of the entire GTC. As its name suggests, the GTC is an economic alliance or federation. It contains some firms that are hard-nosed but fair, some that are positively kindly, and a few unscrupulous and even vicious organizations. It is these that will act against the characters directly, though any GTC company will naturally defend its interests if challenged.

The characters will face a wide range of challenges in this adventure, not all of which can be solved with fists or guns. Indeed, the direct approach will in some cases lead to defeat and failure. Subtlety, stealth, interpersonal skills and the occasional piece of misdirection will serve the characters well, though of course some of the challenges can only be met head-on...

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

Idam Lee is, for many visitors, the gateway to the Starfall Cluster, though it is certainly not the most appealing of worlds when viewed from orbit. A blasted, lifeless landscape is broken only by patches of green-gray lichen and the steep

sides of mountains or craters. However, once a traveller reaches the semi-subterranean cities, the urban areas are very pleasant indeed.

Idam Lee's urban zones are not only high-tech but are well laid out and very 'citizen-friendly'. Society is peaceable and well-ordered, and most visitors are struck by just how polite and friendly the citizens are towards one another and (mostly) towards offworlders too.

The characters are not total strangers to Idam Lee, inasmuch as they have come here to meet up with an old friend. Juliette Kamahl is an Imperial citizen who made her home here on Idam Lee after spending several years in the Starfall Cluster as a business factor for Glimmerdrift Tranship Inc, a firm specializing in shipping goods across the Imperial border (entirely legally, of course) and setting up trade deals between Imperial companies and those situated beyond the frontier.

Glimmerdrift Tranship is still in business. It has few assets of its own, but acts as a middle-man and broker in complex deals, taking a cut of the proceeds in return for smoothing the legal process and avoiding unnecessary fees (again, this is quite legal and above-board. It is a matter of knowing which entry points have customs laws favoring certain goods, and where extra taxes or fees are levied). Juliette does do some work for Glimmerdrift Tranship from time to time on a freelance basis, but these days she is the owner-operator of a small brokerage at Idam Lee Downport, doing well but not making spectacular profits, and is rapidly becoming a full citizen of Idam Lee in spirit as well as legal fact.

Juliette is an honest and trustworthy person, who the characters have known on and off for some years. Her latest note contained, amid the usual personal snippets and gentle abuse directed at her friends, the offer of some work if they could make it to Idam Lee. Since the characters' business took them in the general direction, they have taken a few days out to meet up with Juliette and renew their acquaintance – and possibly do a little work.

Juliette's brokerage is in the Downport business area, and is easy to find. The office is modest, employing only a receptionist and two trainee brokers as well as Juliette herself, but it is prosperous. After waiting a few minutes in the comfortable reception area, the characters are approached by Juliette herself. A tall, animated woman in her mid-40s, Juliette wears a sober dark blue trouser suit with a University of Daramm pin in the lapel. After handshakes and hugs all round, and introductions to any characters she's not met before, Juliette smiles and offers to buy everyone lunch. She says she's just closed a pretty good long-term deal and her diary is empty for the afternoon, and characters who know her well will realize that they'll probably spend the afternoon in the restaurant, and possibly much of the evening too.

Juliette asks one of her brokers to book a hotel for the characters and have their bags delivered, then leads the way to Hinaldi's, a restaurant she's very fond of. It's just off the main concourse and not as busy as some of those on the front, but that just makes it a little more exclusive.

Hinaldi's serves a range of dishes, heavily influenced by traditional Solomani cooking and accompanied by some excellent wines imported through Juliette's brokerage. She gets a healthy discount, but today that just means she buys more of it for the same amount of money...

As the wine flows, conversation ranges over personal news, reminiscence, current events in the Imperium and the Cluster, and a certain amount of friendly abuse, before Juliette finally wanders around to the reason she wanted to talk to her friends. By this time the restaurant is fairly empty, though Juliette does not seem concerned about security. She talks quite openly about the situation and her plans.

Juliette says she has nothing against big business – it was her career for nearly 20 years after all! – but she has seen a lot of GTC (Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium) based firms moving into the cluster and using their considerable economic resources to bully smaller outfits. Juliette doesn't like that, but there is little that the 'little folks' can do unless they band together and do some collective bargaining.

And that's her idea. Juliette wants to set up a round-table meeting between some of the more influential business people in the cluster – local people (which is what she now considers herself to be) rather than outworlders – who will in turn sell the idea to their contacts. In time, local businesses will be able to form an organization to act as a counterweight to the GTC firms. A common legal fund will allow GTC actions to be challenged in the courts, where normally an action would be impossibly expensive. Collective bargaining will result in a fairer deal for everyone.

Juliette expounds on the subject for a while, but this is the gist of it. She offers to pay for passage and reimburse reasonable expenses for the characters if they will make the rounds of her potential contacts, and persuade them to attend a meeting here on Idam Lee in 16 weeks' time. She will pay the characters Cr10,000 for each of the people who attends the meeting, whether she succeeds in talking them around or not. She'll give the characters a letter of introduction that may or may not help get them a meeting with the contact, and an expenses voucher that allows them to set up passage for the contacts if they agree to attend.

Juliette feels that her proposal (which is actually rather complex) is best made in person, face-to-face. Thus while she expects the characters to outline the idea to the contacts, there is no need for them to go into vast detail.

The characters are being offered a pretty good deal here – they are free to come and go as they please and undertake side trips or extra jobs along the way, and are basically getting a holiday with travel and accommodation thrown in, just for taking a day or so to talk to someone at each stop. Juliette has no reason to suppose this job will be anything other than a pleasant little trip for the characters.

DATA POINTS

Juliette's potential contacts are:

- Denzal Mailowe, a member of the Advisory Committee on Hidamae (569-519)
- Klaris Iske, a broker on 812-148
- Gavin Broach, an influential lecturer on Arnigi
- Thomas Vender-Borakinsenn-Alkai, a mining company owner in the Idam Lee system

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

As noted above, the GTC is not a monolithic organization, and is not particularly bad. However, some of the firms that have a strong influence on the policies of the overall Consortium are heavily involved in the Starfall Cluster. All stand to gain considerably if their plans come to fruition in the cluster, and all view their activities as legitimate business (they are, for the most part). They are, as they see it, 'playing the game'. They play hard but they play fair; the courts are a tool, just as using influence or offering favorable deals in return for cooperation – but two of these three firms are legitimate organizations that would never condone outright illegal measures (though some local rule-bending might be acceptable), and will accept a setback or defeat gracefully, possibly looking for a way to get something out of the situation by making the deal with an obviously very capable opponent, or perhaps seeking a new way to win.

The third firm, however, has its fingers in some very sticky pies, and is quite happy to use any measures to squash its opponents.

The three "opposition" firms are:

- Myko Factoring RCC (Registered Consortium Company)
- GlimmerTech CPC (Consortium Preferred Company)
- Three Sectors Shipping RCC

MYKO FACTORING RCC

Myko is a large brokerage and commerce firm. It operates a web of starport brokerages but for the most part makes its money by investment in other firms; Myko owns large segments of several manufacturing and entertainment corporations, plus a number of local firms of all kinds in the Starfall Cluster. The company also undertakes a fair amount of speculative trade, though it ships its goods on commercial freighters rather than its own vessels. Myko has also moved into the field of starship finance in the past 20 years, offering a range of terms to potential buyers that usually include preferential rates for Myko freighting.

Myko is a tough player, but a fair one. The firm is willing to ruin other companies if necessary, through cut-throat competition. It will always act legally, however, and keeps a close check on its field operatives. Its main tool is legal interference stirred up by its formidable arsenal of lawyers.

Myko, like most firms, has a small security arm, but this is merely a bodyguard and installation-security service. There is no "black ops" force.

GLIMMERTECH CPC

Firms that are represented at the highest level in the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium are referred to as Registered Consortium Companies. RCCs have a say in the running

of the GTC, but the real power rests with the Consortium Preferred Companies, an archaic title dating back to the foundation of the Consortium. CPCs indirectly run the entire consortium; they wield so much economic influence in an organization based upon commerce that no decision can be taken without considering the CPCs position.

GlimmerTech is one of the smaller CPC, but is still highly influential, especially on Lunarmise. The firm specializes in high-tech manufacturing, producing starship components, gravitics equipment and a range of electronics products including entertainment equipment, robots and computers. The firm does not manufacture weapons or targeting equipment and has publicly stated that it will not touch that market sector for moral reasons. Cynics have suggested that a deal with a competitor might be the real reason for this outbreak of ethics.

GlimmerTech is a powerful force, and has a lot of government and administrative figures in its pocket. The firm is quite willing to use extra-legal methods to achieve its goals, but generally restricts this to illegal bargaining, bribery and political influence rather than direct action.

GlimmerTech does not make weapons, but it is certainly willing to employ them. Its large and well-trained security force is evident at all its installations, and there is some evidence that 'field teams' may exist capable of conducting 'trade war' operations.

THREE SECTORS SHIPPING, RCC

Three Sectors was founded two centuries ago in a partial management buyout of the now-defunct Trans-Kulderson Line. The firm has grown steadily from that time, and now operates over 100 starships on local runs as well as longer routes into Ley and Crucis Margin sectors. About half the firm's vessels are moderate to large freighters or freightliners in the 5-10,000 ton range, while the rest are mainly smaller passenger/cargo ships of 800-1200 tons displacement, plus a few small "trade scouts" and one-offs like the luxury *Glimmerdrift Princess*, a Jump-4 liner normally assigned to the Fal-Stoner-Imperium run.

Three Sectors has subsidiary operations in various starports including brokerages, charter firms, personnel hiring services and equipment leasing offices. Its security arm is large and well-trained, and is known to include starship assault (hostage rescue) teams capable of conducting boarding actions.

Three Sectors is a vocal proponent of actions to curtail the resurgence of Raidermarch activity, and has pledged a large amount of money to support any military operation that seriously curtails piracy in the region. The firm regularly and promptly pays out prize money for pirate vessels destroyed and known pirates apprehended, even though it has no legal reason to do so – other, of course, than the fact that reduced piracy means safer shipping lanes.

Three Sectors is known to have loaned security forces to worlds and states willing to strike against pirate havens, and this aggressive stance makes the firm popular with independent spacers who, as a rule, Three Sectors does not interfere with.

However, despite the positive public image, the firm has a darker side. Its personnel are quite willing to use force against any organization threatening its interests. 3 Sectors is planning to dominate shipping across the Kulderson Deep, thus increasing its market share, and does not want any interference. Acts against competitors and obstructionists are normally confined to threats, bribes, coercion and legal entanglements, but if necessary Three Sectors will take "direct action".

JULIETTE KAMAHL

(Merchant level 9) TL14 Medium human
 Stamina 31, Lifeblood 9; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Speed 6m (4 squares);
 Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 vac suit), Armor Rating: 2 (vac suit)
 Str 8, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 13, Edu 14, Soc 12
 SV Fort +3; Ref +4; Will +6;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+4	1d10	18	20	1	6/15

Skills: Appraise +12, Broker +14, Gather Info +13, K/ Interstellar Law +15, Liaison +13, Pilot +13, P/Merchant +14, Trader +15
 Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (Marksman), Barter, Calculating Eye, Carousing, Connections (merchant), Credit Line, Legal Eagle, Market Analyst, Trustworthy, Weapon Focus (Snub Pistol), Zero-G/ Low-G Adaptation
 Equipment: tailored vac suit-14, snub pistol, personal communicator.

CT: 686798 5 terms
 Admin-2, Pilot-2, Streetwise-3, Liaison-2, Vac Suit-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Pistol-1, Carousing-1.

ACT 1: IDAM LEE

The characters must contact Thomas Vender-Borakinsenn-Alkai at the offices of United Belting, in the outsystem.

REFEREE'S OVERVIEW

This Act takes place mainly in the planetoid belts of the other star in the Idam Lee system, Idam Minor. The characters will need to journey there, find their contact, and talk him into attending the meeting. However, he has some problems and will want help solving them in return for his cooperation. This requires a short side trip of a couple of days' duration to sort out a problem at one of the remote mining installations, and will bring the characters into conflict with a corrupt mining manager and his cronies.

The contact, Thomas Vender-Borakinsenn-Alkai, will need the characters to act for him in another matter, which should coincide with their travels. If they agree to this, he will attend the meeting.

DATA POINTS THE COMPANION SYSTEM

Idam Minor is a dim red dwarf star in a distant orbit from Idam Prime. The star itself is in an eccentric orbit, and at a constant 1-G acceleration can be anything between 16 days and 29 days travel from Idam Lee. At present it is 21 days out. Thus depending upon which part of which belt is the destination, a 1-G vessel will take between 16 to 25 days to reach the belting communities. Only the robotic freighters make the run at 1-G; for personnel transit faster 'packet boats' are used, normally at 3-G constant (requiring about 9-14 days). Jump-capable ships can make the trip in 6-8 days, of course, but this is expensive and reserved for priority missions. A 6-G courier can do the run in 6-10 days, and more cheaply. Such couriers are used as VIP transports by local companies.

Referee: The Fleet (the Republican Space Fleet of Idam Lee, to use its full title) maintains patrols in the Minor system and along the main transit routes. However, there is a lot of space to cover and not many ships, so coverage is patchy.

UNITED BELTING

Thomas Vender-Borakinsenn-Alkai is the owner and Chief Field Engineer with United Belting, a small but prosperous outfit working the Pasley Cluster in the inner Idam Minor belt. United Belting has a solid safety and reliability record, but profits have dropped over the past three years. The firm has always employed freelance prospectors, and activity has not increased in this sector, which is at odds with rumors that the Cluster is becoming worked out.

The firm has had a number of internal disputes recently. Thus far all have been resolved, but some key personnel have left to work elsewhere and in some cases mining teams

have been replaced with freelance beltlers.

Referee: The Pasley Cluster is still rich, but a clique of sub-managers is skimming funds intended for equipment maintenance and falsifying reports. Thus productivity is gradually declining. Thomas Vender-Borakinsenn-Alkai suspects something is afoot, but cannot get his personnel to reveal the details—they are being intimidated. The freelancers generally work in separate groups to the 'company men' and are resented by many permanent employees, not least because they perform to expectations.

SCENE 1: UNITED BELTING ONE

The characters will need to reach the Idam Minor system, and specifically the Pasley Cluster. The most usual method is a 3-G packet boat, which will take 11 days at present (the transit time varies as the belt and the mainworld change relative positions due to orbital movement). Juliette will pay for 3-G passage, but faster ships are not available at present.

Thus the characters will spend 11 days aboard the 200 dton packet *Pegasus*, sharing the trip with a hold full of mining spares, cryogenically preserved fresh food, and two very bored pilots who ramble constantly about how much better life would be if they'd got into the Fleet, or maybe a GTC freighting line.

Eventually, the characters land at United Belting One, a tiny spaceport situated on a large planetoid in the Pasley Cluster. The port undertakes maintenance for a number of freelance and company belting ships and has a loading dock for bulk robotic ore freighters. Huge ore pits lie alongside the constantly churning ore-sorters, and company personnel go about their business (in heavy-duty vac suits) around the port's star-baked landing field. A scattering of small craft and battered mining cutters lie here and there, but there is plenty of room on the pad.

The characters will have to transit to the headquarters complex in vac suits, but once inside the semi-subterranean base (which is not very different to the cities of Idam Lee), conditions are quite pleasant. There are residential blocks, recreation areas, a med facility and even a small shopping precinct as well as the company's offices and some light industry to support the mining operation. UB One is the only place most of the company's employees can go for R&R, and its facilities are important to morale.

The main entertainment center is the predictably-named Rock Club, which includes several bars, a vid-cinema and sports facilities. The Rock Club has an efficient security team who prefer to deal diplomatically with troublemakers but are quite capable of breaking heads at need. Trouble is not uncommon as miners blow off steam, but due to a strict policy of no weapons and no body armor throughout the complex, even more strictly enforced at the Rock Club, fights

tend to be relatively minor. Indeed, aggressive individuals are given a direction for their energies in the form of the Rock Club Rumble-Pit, a fighting arena where patrons can engage in refereed bouts of wrestling, boxing and no-holds-barred Rumbling - and even make a little money on the side.

The Rumble-Pit is strictly refereed and medical assistance is always on hand, but it can still get pretty ugly in there. Employees are 'encouraged' by a system of fines not to put their fellows out of action, though accidents do happen.

The characters can spend a few hours familiarizing themselves with the installation while they wait for an answer. Eventually, Thomas Vender-Borakinsenn-Alkai replies to their comm message with an invitation to his office.

SCENE 2: FIRST MEETING

Thomas Vender-Borakinsenn-Alkai is a 55-year-old Hostile Environment Engineer whose career has taken him all over the Starfall Cluster and far beyond. He was at one time an impressively muscled individual, a little under average height. These days he is somewhat flabby despite sessions in the gym, and self-conscious of it. He dresses in a simple loose-fitting coverall, as if he was still a field engineer, and does occasionally act as an equipment troubleshooter when he has the time. More and more these days, he's stuck in his office dealing with admin problems.

Thomas knows Juliette well. Indeed, they had an affair once that almost led to marriage, until it became apparent that they like one another a lot better when they're apart. The two speak fondly of one another and will not hear criticism of the other, yet after a mere five minutes in the same room they are arguing and snapping at one another. Thomas thinks that if Juliette sent these people they are probably worth listening to.

However, Thomas has a problem, and the characters may be able to solve it. Thus he informs them that he cannot even hear their pitch until a certain problem is sorted out, and it may occupy him for a while. Weeks, even. So, if they could just do a little job for him - as freelance contractors, on 100 credits a day - then he'll be able to hear them out.

The job is laughably simple. Thomas wants the team to make a surprise inspection of a couple of robotic mining units, open up their systems bays and get both a systems diagnostic from the 'bots themselves but also an eyeball inspection of the condition of the bots. Ideally, characters with vac suit and Electronics skills are best suited to the task.

The bots, Thomas says, are declining in productivity rapidly, and they should not be. His surveys suggest that the vines they are working are good for years yet, and they have been recently overhauled. Their diagnostic reports are fine

- or at least, the diagnostic reports put in by the teams that field-service the bots claim they are fine. If these are being falsified, Thomas wants to know why.

Normally the 'bots are left in place to work their seam, dumping out a stream of ore nodules into catchbags that are picked up by a collection team that also checks the bot for problems. Manual mining is only used in conditions requiring flexibility and human ingenuity. Thus there will be no-one around to see the characters conduct their checks, and Thomas will gain data direct rather than through field operatives who may or may not be trustworthy.

Thomas will provide security codes for the bots and a launch to get to the mining site. He can assign a pilot if the characters need one.

SCENE 3: MINING BOT BLUES

It will take the characters several hours to reach the remote mining site, on an otherwise uninhabited planetoid. The 'topside' components of several mining bots are situated on the planetoid surface, each with a string of ore-filled catchbags trailing from it. The 'deepside' component of each mining bot can be found at the end of a winding tunnel into the planetoid, following the path of the main ore seam. These bots are mining copper, nickel and iron. There is some slight radioactivity present, but this is not a threat to anyone staying less than a century.

There are five bots. Two respond to the shutdown signal, but three do something rather strange. They transmit an unintelligible signal then send a 'shutdown failed: personnel hazard' signal to the control units as they continue to work their seam. Repeated code signals will not shut down the bot, and it is hazardous to approach even the topside component of one that is working - the ore stream is guided up the shaft on a flexible tether, then shoots into the catchbags with some force, making the bag of rocks jump about unpredictably.

It is possible to approach the working bots and undertake a manual shutdown. However, this requires a Reflex save at DC15 to avoid being hit by the lashing bag, which will do serious damage to any character it strikes. Damage is 1d6 per point the Reflex save is failed by, to Stamina.

Once close to the topside of the 'bot, characters are in danger every time an ore fragment arrives, which occurs every 1d3 combat rounds. As each fragment arrives, make a Reflex save at DC10 to avoid being hit, with damage as above on a fail. Body armor and Vac Suits will protect normally against this damage, but a suit might be torn by a sharp fragment (roll a straight check, DC19, to see if a suit tear occurs).

The shutdown should be a simple matter of hitting the Emergency Stop plate. However, this has no effect and wastes a round. Once this is discovered, opening the access

panel and performing a manual shutdown takes 5 combat rounds per attempt. A T/Mechanical or T/Electronics or T/Robotics check at DC10 is required to succeed, otherwise the character must struggle on for another 5 rounds, all the while dodging ore fragments.

Once the bots are shut down, they can be approached safely, Diagnostics can be downloaded from the topside unit, but a survey of the deepside unit will require a character to clamber down the shaft and open up the bot manually. An examination of the bot's innards will reveal that, in the case of the two functioning bots, everything is as it should be. However, the other three have not been maintained properly. Several components are listed in the maintenance logs as having been replaced with new ones, and have clearly not been. Particularly, the laser drilling head is, in all three cases, in need of overhaul.

The drill heads used in these particular bots are remanufactured from military-grade laser collimator assemblies. After a certain amount of use, a collimator begins to wear out and loses its tight focus. If a laser weapon is to remain effective, the collimator (the device that ensures the laser remains in a tight beam) must be replaced. However, although these worn-out collimators are not capable of focussing a beam at thousands of kilometers, they are certainly capable of delivering a tight beam at mining ranges. Thus they are remanufactured into mining drill heads and sold on to belting firms.

Ex-military beam collimators are quite expensive, but very rugged. They last a long time in the field but eventually lose focus. This results in a rapid drop in efficiency. It appears that these drill heads should have been replaced some months ago, but although the maintenance logs say they have been, they have not. This is the reason for the drop in productivity here, and it is clear upon examination that the maintenance logs have been falsified.

The data obtained from the three malfunctioning bots does not match with the maintenance data Thomas has on file, though the serial numbers and other data for components matches real components – they existed, they just were not installed here, even though the logs say they were. It is fairly clear that someone has used them elsewhere, or sold them on.

As proof, the characters may want to remove a laser head (there is no way these 5kg components can be used as a weapon, other than to drop one on someone's foot) as proof that what was in the machine was a worn-out unit listed as removed, condemned and replaced in scheduled maintenance.

SCENE 4: BACK TO UB1

Returning to Unified Belting One, the characters should be able to present their findings to Thomas. However, there are

those who have an interest in Thomas not seeing the data. As the characters head for Thomas' office, they are confronted by a group of company personnel. A couple have tools that could easily be used as weapons (actual weaponry is hard to come by on the base), and others are obviously regulars in the Rumble-Pit. As the uglies face off, one of the more nondescript workers steps forward with a friendly smile and a cash-clip full of credits. She offers the characters Cr500 apiece to hand over the data and depart, and will go as high as Cr 1000. It's a simple choice: take the money and depart with the mission unfulfilled, or take a beating and be thrown off the planetoid with the mission still unfulfilled...

This scene can play out several ways. The characters may be able to face down the workers or battle their way past them. Fast talking might just get results, or it may be possible to flee and try to find a way around the thugs, perhaps by going to ground and calling Thomas for an escort. Of course, some of the security people are in on the scam, too, so relying upon them may be a risky prospect.

However they do it, the characters should eventually get their data to Thomas, who quickly concludes that some of his maintenance personnel are selling off components to rival firms and writing them up as used in maintenance. The scam has probably been going on for a long time, and only recently begun to show up as "replaced" components wear out.

Thomas is grateful, but he's in a corner now. A quick look at the maintenance records indicates which personnel are probably involved, and how bad the problem is. Thomas is confident that his security people can detain the scam artists and protect him, but he's going to have to get a whole new batch of laser heads and other components shipped out as soon as possible. His supplier is on Arnigi. Now, if the characters are willing to take an order for new components there ASAP, Thomas will pay their expenses plus Cr250 each per week as a retainer. Note that Thomas will need starship tickets billing to his office – the characters can use Juliette's expense account OR Thomas', but not both.

Of course, Thomas will be very receptive to the characters' pitch now and so long as they can solve his component supply problem, he'll be willing to attend the meeting...

NOTES

Characters returning to UB1 later will find about 15% of the workforce has been fired, and in some cases charged with a range of offenses by the Idam Lee authorities. Despite one or two ugly incidents, including the death of a security guard in a brawl, the removal of the corrupt personnel went off smoothly enough. The characters will be treated with disdain as "troublemakers" by a small segment of the remaining workforce, but for the most part the workers are glad to be rid of the clique of bullies and thieves that was gradually taking over the firm. It was only a matter of time

until someone got killed as a result of faked maintenance, and the beltlers are glad to be rid of the problem.

Some of the fired personnel have been replaced with freelancers, some with hired company personnel. The company is now a bit short-handed but things are already looking up.

THOMAS VENDER-BORAKINSENN-ALKAI

(Merchant level 10) TL-13 Medium human
 Stamina 52, Lifeblood 12; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Speed 6m (4 squares);
 Armor Class: 14 (+1 Dex, +3 vac suit), Armor Rating: 3 (vac suit)
 Str 13, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 10, Edu 14, Soc 14
 SV Fort +6; Ref +4; Will +6;
ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+3	1d10	18	20	1	6/15
Fist	+4	1d4+1	--	20	--	--

Skills: Appraise +13, Broker +15, Gather Info +12, K/Interstellar Law +16, Liaison +14, Pilot +13, P/Admin +15, P/Merchant +13, T/Medical +2, Trader +14

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (Marksman), Barter, Brawling, Calculating Eye, Carousing, Connections (merchant), Credit Line, First Aid, Legal Eagle, Market Analyst, Skill Focus (Liaison), Zero-G/Low-G Adaptation

Equipment: personal communicator, vac suit, snub pistol.

CT: 888899 6 terms

Admin-3, Streetwise-2, Liaison-3, Grav Vehicle-2, Vac Suit-1, Medical-0, Brawling-1, Pistol-1.

ORDINARY WORKERS

(Professional level 6) TL-13 Medium human
 Stamina 22, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);
 Armor Class: 10 (+0 none), Armor Rating: 0 (none)
 Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11, Edu 12, Soc 10+
 SV Fort +2; Ref +2; Will +5;
ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Fist	+2	1d4	--	20	--	--

Skills: Pilot +9, P/Mining +11, Liaison +9, Appraise +9, T/Computer +10, T/Electronic +7, T/Mechanical +8, T/Robotics +10, Speak Language (various).

Feats: Vessel (grav, ship's boat), Armor (light, vac suit), Brawling, Carousing, Endurance, Gearhead, Professional Specialty (P/Mining), Skill Focus (P/Mining), Zero-G/Low Gravity Adaptation

Equipment: communicator, mining equipment

CT: 777787 4 terms

Ship's Boat-2, Grav Vehicle-2, Vac Suit-1, Brawling-1, Carousing-1, Prospecting-2, Liaison-1, Computer-2, Electronic-1, Mechanical.

RUMBLE-PIT VETERANS

(Professional level 6) TL-13 Medium human
 Stamina 25, Lifeblood 11; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);
 Armor Class: 10 (+0 none), Armor Rating: 0 (none)
 Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11, Edu 12, Soc 10+
 SV Fort +2; Ref +2; Will +5;
ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Fist	+2	1d4	--	20	--	--

Skills: Pilot +9, P/Mining +11, Liaison +9, Appraise +9, T/Computer +10, T/Electronic +7, T/Mechanical +8, T/Robotics +10, Speak Language (various).

Feats: Vessel (grav, ship's boat), Armor (light, vac suit), Brawling, Endurance, Gearhead, Improved Unarmed Strike, Professional Specialty (P/Mining), Toughness, Zero-G/Low Gravity Adaptation

Equipment: communicator, mining equipment

CT: 777787 4 terms

Ship's Boat-2, Grav Vehicle-2, Vac Suit-1, Brawling-1, Prospecting-2, Liaison-1, Computer-2, Electronic-1, Mechanical-2.

SECURITY GUARD

(Professional level 3/mercenary level 3) TL-13 Medium human
 Stamina 26, Lifeblood 11; Init +1; Speed 6 m (4 squares);
 Armor Class: 17 (+6 CES, +1 Dex), Armor Rating: 6 (CES)
 Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 11, Soc 10
 SV Fort +4; Ref +3; Will +5;
ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Shock Baton	+4	1d6+1d6+1	--	20	--	--
Fist	+5	1d4+1	--	20	--	--

Skills: K/Interstellar Law +8, Listen +5, Pilot +4, P/Admin +8, P/Security +6, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, T/Electronics +6, T/Communications +6, T/Computer +6, T/Sensors +6

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapons (armsman, marksman, combat rifleman), Alertness, Brawling, Interrogation, Legal Eagle, Quick Draw, Professional Specialty (P/Security), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)

Equipment: Combat Environment Suit, shock baton, communicator.

CT: 887777 4 terms
Admin-2, Grav Vehicle-1, Streetwise-1, Electronics-1,
Comm-1, Computer-1, Vac-1, combat rifleman-1, pistol-1,
brawling-1.

ACT 2: HIDAMAE (569-519)

The characters must contact Denzal Mailowe, a member of the Advisory Committee on Hidamae (569-519)

REFEREE'S OVERVIEW

Although Hidamae is not as heavily influenced by the GTC and its member firms as Lunarmise, the GTC is influential there. By the time the characters reach Hidamae, their mission is known to the interested companies, and they will act to disrupt and dislocate the plan. This interference will initially be in the form of legal entanglements and general stonewalling rather than overt actions. The main GTC presence on Hidamae is Myko Factoring, and it is this company, though a series of catspaws, that will endeavor to interfere with the characters' mission.

DATA POINTS

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The colonies of Hidamae are largely self-governing, with the Advisory Committee taking, as its name suggests, an advisory and mediatory role. However, while the committee has few actual powers, some of its members are highly influential within local politics. Many of the committee members appointed by Lunarmise are in the pocket of GTC corporations, giving the GTC a strong toehold in the politics of Hidamae. However, this is somewhat counterbalanced by a local unwillingness to listen to these 'corporate cronies', however sensible what they say may be. Thus those thought to be free of corporate influence wield more power – a situation that has many implications.

SCENE 1: HARVNEY MEMORIAL STARPORT

The Highport at Hidamae is a very modest affair, consisting of little more than a mooring station and trans-shipping facilities for personnel and cargo going planetside. From the Highport, most shuttles descend to the main Starport, which has been renamed in honor of Peacemaker Harvney. The port and its associated Startown, called Varanu Delta, are the seat of the Advisory Committee, and also the place where most of the world's business is conducted. It is also possible to obtain passage to the various small ports operated by the Autonomous Colonies, though shuttles are less frequent.

Getting to the downport is thus no problem. The characters are treated to a view of the River Varanu and its associated rainforest, swamps and delta as it snakes across a large island from an area of steep uplands in the central region. The Startown is constructed on a natural island in the Delta, which is busy with watercraft, dredgers and wildlife-control patrols.

The port is fairly busy, mainly with smaller merchant craft, and the humid air is hot, making air masks very uncomfortable to wear. The characters will be glad to

get inside the air-conditioned buildings of the port's Trade Concourse.

A quick data search or enquiry will enable the characters to locate the offices of the Advisory Committee, situated in a rather bleak and utilitarian office building in the central business district. Calls to Denzal Mailowe are routed through his automated aide system, which simply files calls for later response unless they come in flagged with the right priority codes (which the characters don't have).

It will be necessary for the characters to cool their heels in Varanu Delta for a day or two until Denzal finally gets round to contacting them. This contact comes in the form of an animated hologram of a man in his sixties, though in pretty good shape, who is working out in the gym as he speaks to the characters. It is a doctored image, one of several that Denzal uses from what the characters may recognize as a commercial 'look how busy I am' package used by executives and administrators throughout the region. Denzal might be in his office or the local jazz club as he speaks through the projected hologram.

The message is short. If the characters just said they need to get in touch with the Advisor, they are contacted by an interactive aide system and directed to proper channels for petitions to Committee members. If they mentioned Juliette by name, or said something else that piqued his interest, Denzal will respond in person (though through the hologram of course).

A few minutes' discussion will suffice to convince Denzal to meet with the characters. He suggests the following evening, in a local jazz club he particularly likes, then excuses himself as he has a lot to do.

SCENE 2: LEGAL ENTANGLEMENTS

Not long after hearing from Denzal, the characters are approached by two impeccably-dressed gentlemen, in very nice suits. Astute characters might notice that the suits are made of slightly stretchy material and loose enough to allow freedom of movement, say for street-fighting. However, the pair are not bruisers but licensed Court Representatives. Their job is to serve legal documents, which can occasionally be dangerous. Contrary to popular misconception, documents are considered properly served even if the recipient refuses to take them, leaves them on the ground or chases the court officers off with an axe (this has actually happened to these two, one reason why they're a bit cautious these days).

One of the men approaches the group while the other stands short distance off to watch his back. The first gentleman politely that he is Jeremiah Askew, a Court Officer, and that he is very sorry to have to serve the characters with a writ. He offers to recommend a good legal advisor if the characters wish, explains (if necessary) that he doesn't know the contents of the document and that his job is merely to serve it, and advises against 'doing anything rash'. Finally,

Askew and his partner did the characters a good day and depart, not quite turning their backs.

If the characters become difficult, Askew is an excellent diplomat and will try to talk the characters down, de-escalating the situation while remaining polite but firm the whole time. Assaulting him would be a serious offence, he says, and also a very, very bad idea.

The papers relate to a civil case brought against the characters by an anonymous client of Reuter & Orch, a local legal firm specializing in such disputes. Apparently the characters are suspected of trafficking in 'insider information relating to business, economics and industrial processes' and since this information is detrimental to the interests of the client, a provisional order is now in place forbidding the characters from having any contact whatsoever with members of the Advisory Council. They are also forbidden to leave the planet until the case can be resolved.

If there were any evidence against them, this would be a reason to be very worried. The damages the characters might be required to pay would ruin them. Fortunately, there is no evidence, but the preliminary hearing is set for 10 days from now, and will probably drag on into a long and expensive legal battle.

Referee: Askew and his partner are unarmed but formidable hand-to-hand fighters with considerable experience. They also have the law on their side. If any characters are stupid enough to fight it out, see 'We Fought The Law', below.

The civil action has been brought against the characters by a field executive working for Myko Factoring. Her plan is simply to stall the characters for a while, and try to keep the case tied up in the courts until they cannot afford to fight it any longer. Myko has a large fund set aside for this purpose, and uses this tactic to dissuade its smaller opponents. Ironically, this is exactly the sort of thing Juliette wants to counter by creating a common legal fund.

SCENE 3: OPTIONS

The characters are in an interesting position. They may (rightly) suspect that their comms are being monitored, and of course now a court order (albeit a provisional one) is in place forbidding contact, even calling Denzal to tell him the situation is a problem. Although the action brought against the characters is civil, ignoring a court order is a criminal offence.

The characters have several options. Fighting the case in the courts is a possibility, but Juliette's expenses account does not run to millions in legal fees, which Myko can pour into the case, even if the characters can persuade a law firm to accept the expense voucher. Self-representation is risky, but feasible if the characters have the skills, but it could take months.

Ignoring the writ, making the contact and running for it remains a possibility, though it gives Myko 'evidence' that Denzal was in league with the characters and that they really were doing something wrong – Myko will be able to take Denzal to court and hammer him if the characters do this. Not only is it a disservice, but it prevents Denzal from attending the meeting, and thus plays into the hands of the GTC.

The characters' most useful options are:

- Use stealth and subterfuge: meet with Denzal covertly then slip offworld.
- Try to find a legal way around the writ. Characters with Admin or Legal skills have an advantage here, even though they may not be familiar with the local legal specifics.

Stealth and Misdirection

The characters are being watched by investigators working for Myko Factoring (but Askew is nothing to do with this; he merely served a set of papers). If the characters can detect the observers, it might be possible for some or all of the party to give them the slip. Note that the observers are freelance investigators hired by the law firm. They don't know about the Myko connection and in any case are doing nothing wrong. Attacking them would be a criminal offence.

Thus if the characters want to evade observation they will need to employ skills like Bluff, Disguise or perhaps less subtle stealth skills. The observers do not know where the meeting is to take place, so if they can be lost, the characters are free for a while. There are only three of them, so if the party splits up, they will only be able to follow some of them. The referee should determine randomly which characters are followed, or make a judgment based on the measures taken by the party.

Legal Weasel

Hidamae has laws that allow someone bringing a civil case to retain their anonymity until the case is actually heard in court. This was conceived as a measure to protect citizens but in this case is being used by Myko for its own purposes. However, there is a way around this law. The Hidamae Legal Association maintains a register of all law practitioners and the cases they have handled. This register is only available to members, of course, and is considered both sensitive and confidential. Like all such documents, there are numerous ways to get access if one is sufficiently determined.

To realize that such a document may exist, make a check at DC10 on any K/Law skill a character possesses. Alternatively, a check at DC 15 on P/Administration will incline a character to believe that something of this nature exists. To obtain access to the register:

- The characters could hack the Legal Association computers, which are well protected by encryption and firewall measures. The referee may wish to make an adventure out of the attempt, requiring

the characters to hack the database from the Legal Association headquarters itself, or may allow remote access.

- The characters could bribe, coerce or suborn a member of the Legal Association to obtain the information. This would probably not succeed, and will get the characters into even more trouble.
- The characters could bribe, coerce or suborn a member of the Legal Association staff to obtain the information. Security in the building is reasonably good, with cameras, detectors and a handful of roving guards (who are civilians rather than police, and unarmed). The guards are monitored for corruption, but the cleaning, admin and technical staff are poorly paid and may be open to some judicious bribery. One of them might be able to obtain the data the characters need for Cr500 or more. Of course a fiendish referee might have this plan go awry, leading to yet more complications.

Having discovered the identity of their accuser, the characters have two options, either of which would work.

- They could file an 'interference in business' suit against Myko, claiming that the firm is deliberately interfering in their legitimate affairs (which actually it is, though the characters are advised not to state how they came to know this!). The same laws that allow Myko to restrain the characters' movements make such actions illegal until the case comes to court. Thus the writ preventing the characters from talking to Denzal is invalid, and they can do as they please. Setting this up will take few hours and costs Cr5000 to file the suit. The characters will have to drop the suit after they leave, of course (if they forget, Myko will cheerfully turn up at court and blow the unsubstantiated suit out of the water in an excruciating week-long hearing the characters probably will know nothing about until they get a bill for Cr74,000 in legal fees!
- Alternatively, the characters could contact Reuter & Orch (the law firm), and offer to settle out of court. Under local laws they are permitted 7 days to negotiate (through Reuter & Orch) to reach a settlement. Due to a technical loophole, the characters are entitled to "freedom of action" during this period, and cannot be prevented from talking to Denzal. Of course, if they have not come to a settlement with Myko by the end of the week, they are once again banned from talking to the Advisory Council and certain local businesses, and the case will have to go to court.

Whichever option the characters choose, they will now be free to meet Denzal and make their pitch.

SCENE 4: PITCHING TO DENZAL

Once the characters can get access to Denzal, they find that he is indeed a 60-something gentleman with a passion for old Terran Jazz-Blues and a liking for brightly colored clothing. He is also not nearly in such good shape as his hologram suggests. In fact, Denzal is so obese that his health is suffering, though he has a zest for life (and rich food) that gives him a great deal of energy. Denzal laughs a lot, makes expansive gestures, and generally acts as if he is an overpromoted, pretentious twit having a wonderful time doing very little and getting a fat salary for it. Unfortunately, this image is not a front.

Selling the idea to Denzal will be a tough one. The characters will have to come up with a good reason to attend this meeting of Juliette's. Denzal does have a good working relationship with her, and has ordered a number of rare items through her offices, but he's not a friend and owes her nothing.

The best tool to use in persuading Denzal is a threat to his lifestyle. If he thought that the GTC takeover of Hidamae would put him out of the job he fully intends to enjoy for the next 15-20 years, Denzal would put his full (and not inconsiderable) weight behind an attempt to prevent it. While he may be a playboy, Denzal is persuasive when he wants to be, and he does hold an important position. If he had a reason, he could be a force in local politics, if only by rubber-stamping projects that Juliette's other contacts thought were beneficial and opposing GTC-backed ones.

OPTIONAL SCENE: I FOUGHT THE LAW

There are several ways the characters could end up in legal trouble on Hidamae. Becoming frustrated with (or being contemptuous of) the legal obstacles in their way will probably lead to the characters being arrested and charged with a criminal offence, that of 'Breach of a Court Order'. This will result in a fine (Cr 100 X 2d6) after a day spent in the local cells awaiting the Summary Judgment Panel's verdict. A second such offence results in a fine five times as large, and a third offence will require that the case be passed to the criminal courts. The characters will spend a week in the slammer waiting for their case to come up, and will probably be sentenced to 15-30 days (minus what they have already served) plus ten times the original fine.

Assault on a court officer, or intimidation of legal personnel, is a serious offence on Hidamae, and has the same penalty as the third offence, above.

If the characters decide to resist arrest, the local police (armed with sidearms and batons) can call on several squads as backup and in extreme cases the counter-terrorist squads (equipped to military standards) can be called upon. Killing a police officer carries the death sentence on Hidamae, ever since the troubles of 959 onwards. Characters who use weapons in resisting arrest can expect a sentence of 3-8 years' duration, and even unarmed sparring with the local

constabulary carries a sentence of 3-9 months.

Thus fighting it out with the cops is a no-win situation, and more importantly it is exactly what Myko hopes will happen.

NOTES:

The case Myko has brought against the characters is extremely flimsy. The firm's aim is to stall and delay the characters and try to push them into over-reacting, creating a situation where the original case becomes irrelevant in the face of a lengthening criminal charge list. If this does not work, the firm will try to obtain some circumstantial evidence that will allow them to go to court and drag things out until the characters' legal defense fund runs out.

If the characters remain within the law, there is actually nothing Myko can do to them, though the requirement to remain on-planet is a nuisance. Any character with Law-related skills will realize that if the characters can appoint someone to speak for them (ie to answer the charges), they don't actually have to remain on-planet for the case. Denzal would be willing to do this if asked, if they've got his cooperation on the meeting with Juliette. Realizing that their gambit has failed, Myko will quietly withdraw the suit a day before it is due to be heard, and nothing further will happen.

However, if the characters slip offworld and do not appoint a representative to answer the Myko case, they will lose the case by default. Myko will wring damages of some 2d6 X Cr 100,000 out of the court, and since the characters have gone offworld, a portion of this money will be put up as a bounty for their return (alive and well!) to Hidamae, where they will face criminal charges of Absconding (3 months in jail) and be required to pay the damages or face a long prison sentence.

Thus leaving an untidy situation behind them may seem like a good option at the time, but will ultimately lead to more problems for the characters.

NB: The court case and damages are the characters' problem, not Juliette's.

DENZAL MAILOWE

(Merchant level 9) TL-11 Medium human
Stamina 41, Lifeblood 12; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Speed 6m (4 squares);
Armor Class: 12 (+2 Dex), Armor Rating: 0 (none)
Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 16, Edu 16, Soc 13
SV Fort +5; Ref +5; Will +5;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+4	1d10	18	20	1	6/15
Fist	+5	1d4	--	20	--	--

Skills: Appraise +6, Broker +14, Gather Info +15, K/ Interstellar Law +15, Liaison +15, Pilot +6, P/Admin +15, P/ Merchant +13, T/Medical +3, Trader +14

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (Marksman), Barter, Brawling, Calculating Eye, Carousing, Connections (merchant), Connections (politicians), Credit Line, First Aid, Legal Eagle, Market Analyst

Equipment: personal communicator, snub pistol

CT: 7987B8 6 terms

Admin-3, Medical-0, Grav Vehicle-1, Streetwise-3, Liaison-3, Vac-1, Pistol-1, Brawling-1.

COURT OFFICERS

(Professional level 6) TL-11 Medium human

Stamina 22, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);

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

Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11, Edu 12, Soc 10+

SV Fort +2; Ref +2; Will +5;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Fist	-3	1d3	--	20	--	--

Skills: K/Interstellar Law +12, Liaison +10, Pilot+9, P/Admin +13, Sense Motive +5, T/Computer +10, T/Communications +10, T/Medical +1

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light), Barter, Carousing, Connections (government), First Aid, Legal Eagle, Professional Specialty (P/Admin), Research, Skill Focus (P/ Admin), Trustworthy

Equipment: personal communicator

CT: 777787 4 terms

Grav Vehicle-2, Carousing-1, Admin-2, Liaison-2, Computer-2, Comm-1, Medical-0.

HIDAMAE COPS/SECURITY PERSONNEL

(Professional level 3/mercenary level 3) TL-11 Medium human

Stamina 26, Lifeblood 11; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Speed 6 m (4 squares);

Armor Class: 17 (+6 CES, +1 Dex), Armor Rating: 6 (CES)

Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 11, Soc 10

SV Fort +4; Ref +3; Will +5;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+7	1d10	18	20	1	6/15
Fist	+5	1d4+1	--	20	--	--
Shock Baton	+4	1d6+1d6 +1	--	20	--	--

Skills: K/Interstellar Law +8, Listen +5, Pilot +4, P/Admin +8, P/Security +6, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, T/Communications +6, T/Computer +6, T/Electronics +6, T/Sensors +6

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapons (armsman, marksman, combat rifleman), Alertness, Brawling, Interrogation, Legal Eagle, Professional Specialty (P/Security), Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Sense Motive)

Equipment: Combat Environment Suit, Snub pistol with HUD, shock baton

CT: 887777 4 terms

Grav Vehicle-1, Vac Suit-1, Brawling-1, Admin-2, Computer-1, Electronic-1, Comm-1, Streetwise-1, Combat Rifleman-1, Pistol-2, Brawling-1.

ACT 3: 812-148

The characters must contact Klaris Iske, a broker on 812-148.

REFEREE'S OVERVIEW:

812-148 is a very hostile world; so much so that mere survival is a major challenge for humans. Despite this, the two groups resident on the world are constantly at one another's throats. In this Act, the player-characters arrive to find their contact is not at the starport but is visiting a mountain-top village close to the war zone. Shortly after they arrive, they become involved in a desperate battle to repulse raiders from High Salvation.

DATA POINTS:

Heaven's Reach

Heaven's Reach is the main settlement on 812-148, stretching along a vast mountain chain that rises above the acid mists of the planet. Airships are the main mode of transport between habitable areas, though in some places it is possible to cross from one settlement to another across mountain saddles.

The people of Heaven's Reach (Reachers) are tough but civilized. They are survivors first and foremost but have never lost the intangible factors that make the difference between a group of survivalists and a budding civilization. Thus offworlders find them cheerful, friendly and overall good people who have prospered despite incredible difficulties – and never lost their humanity in the process.

The Reachers have a policy of restricting spacecraft and starships to their main (and rather basic) Starport, for safety and also to assure themselves that no-one is trading high-tech equipment to the Salvationers. The Reachers cannot really enforce this edict, but they will not deal with anyone who ignores it. They will not even provide fuel for a ship to leave.

High Salvation

The people of the High Salvation Mesa (Salvationers) have a brutal, dictatorial society dominated by an elite caste. Their population is rather small and they are inbred. One means to alleviate this problem is to snatch prisoners in raids against nearby Heaven's Reach settlements. Service in their military and raider forces is the usual means of elevation into the elite, and personnel are highly motivated.

Morgan's Claw

Morgan's Claw is a great mountain standing almost alone. Its foothills are lost in the acid mists and corrosive lakes surround its base, but the mountain is broad and high, and supports a thriving community on a wide shoulder of the mountain. Above, the sharp-toothed Claw reaches starwards for several thousands of meters. It bulges on one side and

falls steeply on the other, giving the mountain its name.

The plateau community (also called Morgan's Claw or just The Claw) lies dangerously close to High Salvation, but the wide plateau is excellent for farming and for herding the cattle imported from offworld. Thus a farming town has grown up on the Claw, along with a small iron mine and some light industry.

Salvationer raids are not uncommon here, and for this reason the Air Navy maintains standing patrols in the region, backed up by local defenses which include anti-airship guns manned by the Militia, a Ground Detachment of the Air Navy Infantry (a title that amuses offworlders, though these soldiers are dedicated professionals and good at what they do) and a two-plane detachment operating a pair of biplanes armed with machineguns and anti-airship rockets, flying from an airfield on the edge of the plateau. The biplanes are unreliable at best, and many a pilot has been lost in the acid mists, but the posting is prestigious and there is no shortage of volunteers.

Klaris Iske

Klaris Iske is an oddity in Reacher society. She may in fact be the only Vargr on planet. Her mother was a consulting engineer en route back to the Imperium from an overlong contract in the Crucis Margin sector. During a stopover at High Salvation, an acid storm poisoned Klaris' mother, who died soon after, though the Reachers managed to save the baby, the alien orphan was taken in by a Reacher family and raised among their own three children. Thus she is biologically a Vargr but socially and emotionally a human member of Heaven's Reach society.

Klaris' childhood was a little troubled, but the community of Morgan's Claw where her parents lived came to accept her as a normal member of their society. In time, she outgrew the little community and traveled offworld for a time, gaining a rough-and-ready high-tech education (and meeting other Vargr for the first time, a rather interesting experience). After travelling, she discovered that her heart was truly among the people of Heaven's reach, and she came home to take a post at Kindley's Peak, working as a starport broker.

Klaris regularly visits her family at Morgan's Claw, and occasionally travels offworld on business. She is well respected for her service to Heaven's Reach, and rarely encounters prejudice of any kind. She would be deeply shocked if she did.

Reacher Religion

The Reachers are a spiritual rather than religious people. They believe that the Universe contains good and evil, and that mortals have free will to do as they please. The universe does have a plan, however, and those that meet the challenges it sets will be rewarded with peace and happiness in a state of one-ness with everything.

Thus the Reachers believe that each individual must do his or her best to meet the challenges their life throws up, and the ultimate goal is to live a good, worthy life, reaching out a hand to help others who need it and not being afraid to ask for help. Their practical philosophy holds that if an individual faces a challenge and gets fifty others to help him overcome it, he has succeeded and also given them a chance to do right. It is not a failing to need help, but it IS a failing not to give it, or to be defeated because of an unwillingness to seek assistance.

The Reachers also believe that they were put on Perdition for a reason, and that this reason will become clear eventually. This is one factor in their unwillingness to crush the Salvationers – what if they are SUPPOSED to be there? There is a general feeling among the Reachers that evil comes from below and righteousness is found in the sky and the heavens. The Air Navy and Postal Service flyers are, in effect, both servants of Humanity and holy warriors of God who can touch the heavens in their duties. Air service is very prestigious as a result.

Some Reachers think that they are on Perdition to contain its evil; to stand between it and the heavens. Others think that somewhere on their planet the answers wait to be found. And some think that the original colonists were unrighteous and were marooned here as a test. They must regain the heavens to win redemption. The easy route – passage on a starship – is not acceptable to the Universe. The Reachers must regain the Heavens by their own efforts. This is slightly at odds with the philosophy of asking for help, but the Reachers don't see it that way.

Religious debate in Heaven's reach is rather vigorous, but generally good natured. Religion is, everyone concedes, a personal thing and not to be rammed down anyone's throat.

SCENE 1: DESCENT TO PERDITION

812-148, known as Perdition to its inhabitants, is not an inviting world. Gray-green mist swirls around the bases of the uplands, creating the impression of islands in a sinister sea. The lights of civilization twinkle on the mountain plateaus, however, and as a ship approaches the small and very basic Starport at Kindley's Peak, people can be seen going about their business just like anywhere else.

Airships ply between the mountain towns. Some of them are obviously armed, while others are painted bright red and yellow, the colors of the Postal service. Anti-airship gun and rocket batteries ring the port, and a lone biplane circles on patrol as the ship comes in to land. It makes a 120kph flyby, waggles its wings in salute, then resumes its patrol.

Kindley's Peak is a small but busy settlement, site of the Starport and base of the Postal Service that holds Heaven's reach society together. Although crude and low-tech, the port is staffed by cheerful and efficient personnel who assist

with cargo handling and other routine tasks while their senior staff explain the survival rules:

- Ships remain at the port. Travel is by local transport, with local personnel as guides, unless special permission is granted.
- Weapons of any kind are not permitted unless the user is serving in the Militia, Air Navy or the Postal Service.
- When the Storm Siren is sounded, everyone seeks airtight shelter immediately.
- Only designated rescue personnel remain outside in an acid storm
- All visitors are expected to know the location of the nearest airtight building at all times.

These rules are sternly explained, since they make the difference between weathering the local conditions and getting a bunch of other people killed in a rescue attempt. Once the characters have accepted the rules, they are free to enter the town of Kindley's Peak.

SCENE 2: FINDING KLARIS

Klaris Iske is not at Kindley's peak at present. She is spending a few weeks with her family at Morgan's Claw. She does possess a comm, if anyone thinks to try to contact her this way, and answers promptly. She listens to what the characters have to say, nods and tells them that she knows Juliette professionally; well enough to trust her. If the characters can come out to Morgan's Claw for a day or two, her parents can show them some hospitality and they'll discuss the matter in person, as Reachers prefer to do.

There are postal flights out to The Claw every 2-3 days, and getting passage on the next one is a simple matter. The journey may be a little harrowing for high-tech characters unused to flying in gas-and-fabric contraptions over a sea of acid. A quick look around suggests that even the Reachers aren't totally at ease until they touch down at each of their stops along the way. However, although the airship has a couple of machinegun mounts on its gondola and the Postal Service crew carry sidearms, nothing untoward happens during the 2-day flight.

Touching down at Claw Station (the airfield serving The Claw) the characters are greeted by a young woman in the gray trousers and sky-blue tunic of an Air Navy officer. She grins cheerfully as she introduces herself as Talitha Iske, Klaris' sister (the family have pretty much forgotten any distinctions between their biological and adopted members).

Talitha is a fighter pilot assigned to defend The Claw. Not only is she an extremely attractive young woman (and therefore the subject of attention) but she is also one of the daredevil elite; a fighter pilot! She is a bit full of herself and talks like an ace, even though she has never seen action.

Talitha quickly escorts the characters through the settlement, exchanging greetings with friends and acquaintances along the way. She airily waves at a giant shed at the far end of the settlement, nestling against the mountainside. "Ask Dad about that!" she says, but won't discuss it further, although she clearly enjoys having the secret.

The Klaris house is big and solid, well protected against the occasional acid storm. The family were prosperous before their daughter started making big bucks as a broker, and it is clear that they are well liked and respected in the community.

The characters are introduced to Talitha's mother Guildea who is a Community Elder and spends most of her time in her office (in a spare room) working on administrative matters, or mediating disputes over a glass of wine in her living room. The youngest brother, Thame, is also here, working on his Air Navy Application. The other child, Andry, is in the Postal Service, halfway across the Reach.

Eventually Klaris and her father, Kaven, return home. They have been in the big shed all afternoon, looking at progress on Kaven's new project. He is an aeronautical engineer, he says, and he's building something very special. Kaven, Klaris and especially Talitha are very excited about the project, and suggest that the characters take a look for themselves before dinner.

It is a short walk to the big shed, and Klaris really wants to show the characters her dad's project. However humanized she has become, she is still a Vargr and cannot focus on something else while she has the Big Project to show off. One way or another, she will try to persuade the characters to take a look inside The Big Shed.

SCENE 3: THE BIG SHED

Klaris, Talitha and Kaven lead the characters to The Big Shed, past a couple of Air Navy guards armed with carbines and into what is apparently a giant airship construction shed. And what an airship he is constructing! At first it seems to be four large vessels, until the characters realize that it is in fact a quad-gasbag design linked by a central frame with one large and two smaller gondolas.

This, Kaven says, is *Heaven's Voyager*, the largest flying vehicle ever built on perdition. It will explore the far corners of the world, crossing the lowlands to place explorers on the distant Alten's Hope mountain range. It may one day even voyage beyond the seas to new lands... Kaven is excited by his airship, but astute characters may notice other projects in the far corners of the giant shed. Inspection reveals a range of unlikely flying machines. Kaven and Talitha excitedly point them out: a rocket-plane to intercept airship raids (an extremely hazardous but feasible project), a long-duration glider (again, feasible), an advanced biplane fighter, or rather the wreckage of one (Talitha grins sheepishly and says 'I

broke it. Dad wasn't impressed.'). And there, at the very rear of the shed, is Kaven's dream.

A range of model rockets and firing-chamber testbeds lie scattered around the frame of what is unmistakably a space capsule. It is a terrifyingly crude design, capable of carrying one lightweight and not very tall person. The design is workmanlike, and with suitable propulsion the capsule looks capable of reaching orbit and surviving there for a time.

Characters might point out that the problem of safe landing and return to a highland area of Heaven's Reach will prove a greater challenge than reaching orbit, but both Kaven and Talitha just shrug at that. 'It only has to go up,' Talitha says. 'Once I reach orbit it's in the hands of fate.'

Before anyone can reply to this rather frightening statement, the Storm Siren begins to wail.

SCENE 4: RAIDERS ON THE STORM

Klaris rapidly leads the way to the family home, which is storm-proofed. Kaven remains behind for a few moments to help the guards close up the Big Shed, then comes running after the characters.

The storm is not what might be expected. There is a slight breeze, but the only indication that anything is amiss is the swirls of misty acid vapor that begin to coil across the plateau. Any Reacher can explain that storms are normally caused by atmospheric disturbances elsewhere, which change the air density or stir up the vapor sufficiently that it spills onto the higher ground. Everyone should be safe indoors, though there is the usual worry that someone might be caught outside or that the cattle might not have been rounded up in time. Storms are actually quite rare on Morgan's Claw, as it is very high up the mountainside. The Prediction Office thought that this one would just stir up the valleys a bit.

Kaven and Guildea receive a couple of calls on their telephone, keeping them updated. It looks like the air will not be clear until midmorning, so everyone settles down to make the best of it. The characters are offered dinner (which is very good) and a fair amount of improvising enables everyone to have somewhere to sleep.

The storm, which resembles a thick fog with sudden breezes more than anything else, goes on all night and into the morning. However, just after dawn the phone buzzes. Kaven answers, goes pale and turns to the characters. 'Stay here,' he says shakily. 'Lock the doors after us and don't let anyone in. We're under attack.'

Kaven unlocks his gun cabinet and pulls down a carbine for himself, tossing Thame a shotgun. Talitha gets her sidearm and dons her gas mask as aero engines drone overhead. After a moment's consideration, Kaven throws a pair of revolvers and another shotgun on the dining table, along with masks. 'Thame, stay here and protect the house. These

people will help you,' he says, nodding at the characters.

Kaven pulls on his mask, slips an armband bearing the Militia insignia and the crossed cannon of a gunner on his arm, and heads for the door. Talitha goes too. The characters can hear the sounds of muffled argument between the two as they head for the door. As they close the inner gas door, Talitha shouts what sounds like, 'That's an order, Dad!'. The rest of the discussion is inaudible.

Outside, there are sounds of anti-airship guns firing and explosions. It seems like several airships are attacking the settlement, and after a few minutes the phone goes dead. Smallarms fire starts up from around the settlement.

SCENE 5: THE BATTLE OF MORGAN'S CLAW

The Salvationers have taken advantage of an unseasonably violent storm in a nearby valley to cover a large raid. Six airships have broken out of the blockade and are attacking the settlement of Morgan's Claw for two reasons. They intend to undertake the usual breeding-stock snatch, and also to take out whatever is in The Big Shed. The Salvationers think that the project is some kind of weapon aimed at them.

Kaven is manning an anti-airship gun, firing at whatever targets present themselves, and Talitha is headed for the airstrip. Taking a fighter up in an acid storm is reckless in the extreme, but entirely in character. Gas-masked Militia and Air Navy Infantry armed with carbines and submachine-guns are taking up positions to oppose the expected landings.

A lone Air Navy airship has managed to reach the battle zone, but it is badly outmatched and already being shot to pieces as the first Salvationers hit the ground. The defenders will put up a stiff fight but they are in serious trouble. At the very least, many people will be killed and others abducted if the raid is not thrown back. If the characters remain in the house, the referee may wish to attack them with a squad of Salvationers bent on taking prisoners. If they are out and about doing something to help, the action can focus elsewhere.

There are many things the characters can do. Extra weapons are likely to become available in the fighting if ground combat is their choice. Alternatively, they may decide to man an AA gun or even try to fly the other fighter (whose pilot is more prudent than Talitha and has joined the gunners on the ground). Casualty rescue, defense of the airship sheds or even an attempt to use the model rockets as anti-airship weapons are all possible.

The situation is very confused, with the swirling acid mist reducing visibility to a few meters at times. Masks make breathing safe, but exposed skin is irritated and will eventually blister painfully.

Play the battle for tension and confusion, but remember that the Salvationers are here to raid and withdraw, not to hold ground. They will avoid centers of fierce resistance.

SCENE 6: AFTERMATH

The scene after the battle is a horrific one. Several houses were breached and not all the inhabitants had masks available. Some survive their brief contact with the mist, others die slowly. Several people are dead, others missing. It is up to the referee whether Talitha and Kaven are killed, injured or intact. There are even casualties among the cattle; not all of them were rounded up in time. The damage will take a while to repair.

If the characters did more than hide under a table during the fighting, the Reachers treat them like comrades. Klaris will agree to attend Juliette's meeting readily, as she feels she owes them something.

TALITHA, KLARIS'S SISTER

(Army level 5/Ace Pilot level 1) TL-5 Medium human
Stamina 26, Lifeblood 11; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 14 (+2 jack, +2 Dex), Armor Rating: 2 (jack)
Str 11, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10, Edu 10, Soc 10
SV Fort +1; Ref +8; Will +1;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Auto Pistol	+5	1d10	45	20	1	15
Fist	+5	1d4	--	20	--	--

Skills: Driving +9, Forward Observer +8, Gunnery +9, Pilot +10, Spot +9

Feats: Vessel (propeller aircraft), Armor (light), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman, heavy weapons, field artillery), Brawling, Heavy Metal, Vessel Specialization (propeller aircraft), Weapon Focus (auto-pistol)

Equipment: jack armor, auto-pistol

CT: 797777 4 terms

Aircraft-2, Forward Observer-2, Heavy Weapons-2, Field Artillery-2, Combat Rifleman-1, Pistol-1, Brawling-1.

KAVEN ISKE, KLARIS'S FATHER

(Professional level 6/academic level 2) TL 5 Medium human
Stamina 24, Lifeblood 9; Init -1 (-1 Dex); Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 11 (+2 jack, -1 Dex), Armor Rating: 2 (jack)
Str 9, Dex 9, Con 9, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 12, Edu 13, Soc 12

SV Fort +1; Ref +3; Will +8;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Carbine	+0	1d10	45	20	1	20
Fist	-4	1d3-1	--	20	--	--

Skills: Drive +11, Gather Information +12, K/Aeronautics +16, K/Aeronautics History +13, Liaison +12, Pilot +13, P/Admin +14, P/Engineer +14, T/Electronics +13, T/Mechanics +13.

Feats: Vessel (wheeled, propeller aircraft), Armor (light), Weapons (marksman), Advanced Knowledge (K/Aeronautics), Carousing, Connections (professional), Credit Line, Hobby (Gather Information), Mental Discipline, Professional Specialty (P/Engineer), Research (K/Aeronautics), Skill Focus (P/Engineer), Skill Focus (P/Admin), Trustworthy

Equipment: jack armor, carbine

CT: 666B88 6 terms

Aircraft-2, Wheeled Vehicle-2, Streetwise-2, Liaison-2, Admin-3, Engineering-2, Electronics-2, Mechanical-2.

KLARIS ISKE, A BROKER ON 812-148

(Merchant level 9) TL12 Medium vargr

Stamina 47, Lifeblood 12; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Speed 12m (8 squares);

Armor Class: 14 (+2 jack, +2 Dex), Armor Rating: 2 (jack) Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 13, Edu 12, Soc 13, Pre 12

SV Fort +5; Ref +5; Will +6;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+6	1d10	18	20	1	6/15
Claw	+6	1d4	--	20	--	--
Bite	+6	1d6	--	20	--	--

Skills: Appraise +12, Broker +14, Gather Information +7, K/Interstellar Law +13, Liaison +7, Pilot +14, P/Merchant +14, T/Medical +1, Trader +14

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (Marksman), Barter, Calculating Eye, Carousing, Connections (merchant), Credit Line, First Aid, Market Analyst, Trustworthy, Weapon Focus (Snub Pistol), Zero-G/ Low-G Adaptation

Equipment: jack armor, snub pistol, personal communicator

CT: 7A8788 6 terms

Admin-2, Medical-0, Grav Vehicle-3, Streetwise-2, Liaison-2, Vac-1, Pistol-1, Brawling-1, Carousing-1.

REACHER MILITIA/AIR NAVY INFANTRY SOLDIER

(Army level 6) TL-5 Medium human

Stamina 26, Lifeblood 11; Init +1; Speed 9m (6 squares); Armor Class: 13 (+2 jack, +1 Dex), Armor Rating: 2 (jack) Str 11, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10, Edu 10, Soc 10

SV Fort +2; Ref +6; Will +2;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Carbine	+5	1d10+2	45	20	1	20
Fist	+5	1d4	--	20	--	--
SMG	+4	1d10	45	20	1/4	30

Skills: Driving +5, Forward Observer +9, Gunnery +9, Pilot +9, Spot +9, Survival +5

Feats: Vessel (wheeled, aircraft), Armor (light), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman, armsman, field artillery), Brawling, Weapon Focus (carbine), Weapon Specialization (carbine)

Equipment: jack armor, carbine or SMG, medium ranged radio

CT: 787777 4 terms

Aircraft-2, Wheeled Vehicle-1, Forward Observer-2, Survival-1, Combat Rifleman-1, Brawling-1, SMG-1, Field Artillery-2.

SALVATIONER GROUND RAIDER

(Army level 6) TL-5 Medium human

Stamina 26, Lifeblood 11; Init +1; Speed 9m (6 squares); Armor Class: 13 (+2 jack, +1 Dex), Armor Rating: 2 (jack) Str 11, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10, Edu 10, Soc 10

SV Fort +2; Ref +6; Will +2;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Rifle	+5	1d12+2	72	20	1	10
Fist	+5	1d4	--	20	--	--
Bayonet	+4	1d8	--	20	--	--

Skills: Driving +9, Forward Observer +9, Gunnery +9, Pilot +5, Spot +9, Survival +5

Feats: Vessel (wheeled, aircraft), Armor (light), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman, armsman, field artillery), Brawling, Weapon Focus (rifle), Weapon Specialization (rifle)

Equipment: jack armor, rifle, bayonet, medium ranged radio

CT: 787777 4 terms

Aircraft-1, Wheeled Vehicle-2, Forward Observer-2, Survival-1, Combat Rifleman-1, Brawling-1, Field Artillery-2, Blade-1.

SALVATIONER GOON

(Army level 6) TL-5 Medium human

Stamina 26, Lifeblood 11; Init +1; Speed 9m (6 squares); Armor Class: 13 (+2 jack, +1 Dex), Armor Rating: 2 (jack) Str 11, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10, Edu 10, Soc 10

SV Fort +2; Ref +6; Will +2;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Rifle	+5	1d12+2	72	20	1	10
Fist	+5	1d4	--	20	--	--
Bayonet	+4	1d8	--	20	--	--

Skills: Driving +5, Forward Observer +9, Gunnery +9, Pilot +9, Spot +9, Survival +5

Feats: Vessel (wheeled, aircraft), Armor (light), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman, armsman, field artillery), Brawling, Weapon Focus (rifle), Weapon Specialization (rifle)

Equipment: jack armor, rifle, bayonet, medium ranged radio

CT: 787777 4 terms

Aircraft-2, Wheeled Vehicle-1, Forward Observer-2, Survival-1, Combat Rifleman-1, Brawling-1, Field Artillery-2, Blade-1.

NOTES:

The journey back to Kindley's peak is nearly a day longer than the outward leg due to prevailing winds, but it is uneventful. The characters may have to wait a few days for a ship to their next port of call.

If they return to Perdition, perhaps the characters may witness the launch of *Heaven's Voyager*, or even be aboard a starship that diverts to respond to a distress call from a rickety one-woman space capsule crewed by a lunatic fighter pilot who saw no need for return-to-Perdition equipment. And why should she? Her sister can get the timetable for arriving starships and she has a radio. It's never wrong to ask for help, according to the Heaven's Reachers. And having reached the Heavens under her own power, all she needs is a little help to get home...

ACT 4: ARNIGI

The characters must contact Gavin Broach, an influential lecturer on Arnigi

REFEREE'S OVERVIEW

This Act takes place in the outback of the world of Arnigi. Gavin Borach is leading a field trip in the deep south at the time the characters arrive, and is not expected home for some time. The character thus have to cross the desert into the Southlands, find Gavin and arrange a meeting with him. Matters are complicated by the fact that representatives from GlimmerTech CPC are also seeking a meeting with Gavin, to discuss funding for his future operations.

DATA POINTS

Education on Arnigi

Arnigi (the northern half, anyway) is a starfaring civilization, and trains vast numbers of starship crews, physical scientists and technicians. However, the legacy of near-extinction lives on in Arnigi culture, and gives rise to a requirement that everyone taking higher-education courses must see for themselves what destruction science can cause. Thus the universities of the north run regular field trips to the ruined cities of the south.

On these field trips, students undertake some archeology, visit the more prominent ruins and attend a series of seminars on the plague, the containment measures, and the laws now in place to prevent such a catastrophe from recurring.

NorFolk/SouFolk Relations

The two very different cultures of Arnigi come into contact mainly at the trade towns on the southern edge of the great desert belt. Some cultural mingling does take place in these towns but the great majority of NorFolk and SouFolk never come into contact with one another. Northerners visiting the ruined cities of the deep sometimes employ locals as guides and workers, but again it is a very small segment of the population that meets in this way. Thus the two cultures influence one another very little.

Since there is no need for conflict and a considerable shared history of respect and friendship, relations between the two groups tend to be distant but polite. Northerners wandering around SouFolk lands are generally ignored or greeted with polite indifference unless they do something grossly offensive.

SouFolk who are familiar with northerners (and offworlders) often engage in good-natured teasing about the need for soft beds and processed foods, and sometimes respond to displays of technology with an obviously overplayed gosh-wow 'amazed native' attitude, asking endless silly questions about the device in question and what it can do, how it works etc. They rarely understand the answers, of course, but it

amuses them to hear earnest NorFolk trying to explain their gadgets and how they make life better.

The ultimate joke for the SouFolk is when one of their brethren who has 'been north' for a time and actually understands technology quite well strings a hapless Northerner along for a long, long time, asking questions he knows can't be simply answered, then finally asks to take a close look at the device, at which point he promptly dismantles it, runs through the standard maintenance procedures and puts it back together. While the SouFolk find this endlessly hilarious, it does serve the purpose of reminding northerners that 'we are not idiots'. Thus while some NorFolk do have an attitude of 'those poor barbarians and their Chirper pets' towards their cousins, those who go through higher education are gently reminded that their southern relations are clever people who just have a different way of life.

The overall attitude on both sides tends to be something like: 'I've no idea why you would want to live the way you do, but I guess it works for you. And you can do things I can't, so I can't really claim to be superior.'

NorFolk have little contact with Chirpers, but if the Southerners get along with them, they must be okay.

SCENE 1: ARNIGI PLANETFALL

Arriving on Arnigi, the characters quickly discover that Gavin is in the Southlands on a university expedition. He is not expected back for some weeks, and while it would be entirely possible to send him a comm signal, the invitation is better delivered in person. The expedition is on the move in a group of ATVs, headed for the ruined city of Yunax.

As a courtesy to the SouFolk, direct flight is not normally undertaken in the Southlands, and grav vehicles are restricted to areas around the trade towns. The standard mode of transport is wheeled offroad vehicles; ATVs and jeeps. These are easy enough to hire at the tradetowns, and local guides can also be obtained of necessary.

The nearest tradetown to Yunax is Bright Hills, a community of about 1500 Norfolk and about twice that number of SouFolk. Bright Hills is served by a semi-submerged Maglev line. Trains run every day.

Before leaving for the south, the characters may want to arrange a supply of mining equipment spares for Thomas Vender-Borakinsenn-Alkai. This will prove to be quite simple, requiring only a trip to the offices of Halder & Siconcci, a small firm specializing in the supply of industrial components for specialist applications.

Presenting the request forms is a simple matter, and during the short transaction the characters may make a useful contact. Halder & Siconcci do not deal in anything illegal, but

are very skilled at obtaining rare, hard-to-get items, or those requiring considerable paperwork due to local laws. They are not cheap, but they can get results in most cases.

After presenting the order, the characters can proceed to the Southlands.

Arriving in Bright Hills after their Maglev trip, the characters find it a bustling, welcoming place. The half-underground buildings are air-conditioned and cool, and TL-B comforts are available from the many shops. The SouFolk mainly keep to one end of town, where they mostly dwell in buildings resembling a concrete igloo (without air conditioning, but with running water and good sanitation) built for them by the northerners.

There is plenty to see and do in town; there is a street bazaar where merchants from both cultures sell to the public and arrange their own deals, and a range of bars and taverns selling potent Southern brews and northern distillates.

While drunken rumbles are rare in Bright Hills, the security force (composed of SouFolk for the most part) is quick to respond to trouble and does not hesitate to put a stop to it in the most direct manner possible.

Bright Hills is the jumping-off point for many southern expeditions, so there should be no problem obtaining transport and other supplies there

SCENE 2: THEN O'ER THE DESERT

Having obtained transport, the characters can set out for Yunax. The journey will take 4 days overland, through desert, then semi-desert and finally better watered and almost lush lands. The referee should feel free to impose almost hazard or encounter he/she feels is suitable during the drive. The country is still pretty wild despite the regular expeditions that traverse it, and there are many dangerous areas, even to a well-equipped ATV.

The characters will have one definite encounter along the way. As they traverse an area of rocky semi-desert, cut by ravines scored by wind and sand, they pick up a weak GK (distress) signal. It comes from a vehicle distress beacon, intermittent and strangely muffled. There are no other vehicles scheduled to be in the area, so it seems likely that someone has managed to get lost in the outback.

A period of searching and triangulation allows the characters to home in on a steep-sided ravine. An Air/Raft has crash-landed in the bottom of the ravine, and two figures can be seen waving frantically from beside the wreckage. Their communicator appears to be out of action.

The characters may (correctly) realize that this vehicle is not supposed to be here, but the occupants, a man and a woman dressed in obviously new Southern-Expedition gear,

seem genuinely distressed. The Air/Raft is the right way up, but shows signs of sliding down from the lip of the ravine. It is, to use a technical term, trashed.

The two Air/Raft crew are genuinely distressed, not to mention battered and bruised. Getting them out of the ravine should not be to much of a problem (a cable from the ATV would make the climb possible) but their Air/Raft will not fly again. Their supplies (tent, food, water etc but no weapons other than a Blade in the survival kit) are mostly salvageable.

The couple are Thom Buurindu and Myla Anderson. They say they were en route to Yunax when their hired Air/Raft developed a very sudden lifter failure. Myla insists that she could have made a good landing, but Thom was at the controls. He ham-fistedly slammed them into the ground where the lifters went berserk and sent them skidding to the edge of the ravine. With the perfect timing of such disasters, the drives died completely as the 'Raft skidded over the edge and slid down the ravine side. They'd been at the bottom for a couple of hours, trying to get the wreck, or at least its communicator, to work when the characters showed up.

If questioned, Thom and Myla say they are insurance assessors for United Interstellar, a firm based out of Lunarmise. They were on Arnigi at the end of a pretty demanding set of inspections around the cluster, and were owed a few days off. They decided to see the southlands and the Memorial at Yunax what people keep talking about, and since there wasn't a lot of time they rented an air/raft up in the North without really explaining where they were going. Apparently it wasn't in the best of condition...

The story is true, more or less. United Interstellar is a front for GlimmerTech CPC, and the pair are actually on assignment to find Gavin and offer him a fat research budget to stay out of Juliette's counterweight project. They know that a party of offworlders are trying to contact Gavin, and naturally suspect it is the PCs.

Thom and Myla will ask to travel with the characters to their next port of call, (Yunax? It must be our lucky day! Mind, if we were just a bit luckier we'd not have crashed in the first place!), from where they may be able to obtain transport back north.

SCENE 3: IN MEMORY

Yunax was once a fairly large city, but little of it now remains. One area is frequented by almost all visitors to the region. This is the Yunax Plague Memorial. A simple thing of steel and stone, the memorial represents a pair of snakes (from the traditional Solomani medical symbol) entwined around a communications antenna. It symbolizes the work done at the Yunax Research Hospital, whose staff worked to create a Vaccine even after they were infected and such measures were useless to them. Their work was the foundation of

the Vaccine that saved so many lives in the north, and their regular transmissions symbolized the fight to save Humanity on Arnigi. They died, but they won the battle and are still revered as heroes.

A semi-permanent township of tents stands on open ground near the monument, from which the traditional 'Science, Ethics and Society' lecture is given to visiting students. Gavin and his party arrive just before the characters, joining the various northerner and SouFolk groups at the monument. Some of the parties have been here a while, undertaking guided 'cultural archaeology' investigations while the locals wander around, alternately making fun of the visitors and lending a hand where needed. Many of the SouFolk can be hired as guides to the city, and tell vivid stories of what life was like in those times. These are either drawn from the oral traditions of the SouFolk, or made up on the spot, depending upon the guide.

Gavin is too busy to talk to the characters at present. He's got six ATVs full of students and research assistants to supervise, and the locals are killing themselves laughing as the high-tech visitors demonstrate that they don't know how to operate a tent...

Gavin is giving a key address tonight, and suggests that if the characters attend the lecture, he'll be able to see them afterward. He offers to meet them at their vehicle or tents (ie away from his students). He'll bring a bottle, he says.

That night, a portable PA system is set up and Gavin, plus a couple of other university dignitaries and an old SouFolk woman, give their address. As expected, it includes a retelling of the events that almost saw humans become extinct on Arnigi; the arrival of the infected ***Zealous Fugitive*** and the madness of creating biological weapons; the fight against the disease and heroism of the doomed researchers here at Yunax and in other southern cities.

Much of the content of the lecture is predictable; the idea that science is an uncaring tool, that must be used with wisdom and thought to the future, but there are some surprises. Much is made of the kindness of the Chirpers, and also that there was no real reason for the April Plains settlers to protect the Chirpers, but they did it because it was right. And in return, the Chirpers saved them when society broke down.

Characters may realize that this is more than a lecture. As night falls and the scene is lit by fires and torches, it seems to take on an almost religious nature. This perception is fairly apt; morality, ethics and forethought are ingrained into the psyche of the educated classes in the north. They also tend to develop the feeling that doing what is right, even if it has no apparent advantage at the time, pays off in the end.

Perhaps the characters will come to understand more

about the culture of the people of Arnigi from this lecture. More importantly in the immediate future, they may realize how Gavin can be won over to their point of view.

SCENE 4: PROPOSALS AND PROTESTS

When Gavin arrives to speak to the characters, he has two other people in tow – Thom and Myla. If the characters didn't rescue them, they will have been picked up by some other education-pilgrims. By now they are certain that the characters are here to discuss opposition to GTC expansion in the area, and they know that people like Gavin wield a powerful influence over large segments of the northern population.

Thom and Myla have already spoken to Gavin, who has decided to be fair. He's willing to hear arguments for and against in a sort of informal, fireside debate. Thom and Myla are not totally impressed with this situation, but are willing to abide by Gavin's rules in the hope of winning him over.

Gavin will ask everyone to seat themselves around a little open fire his students have made for him. Passing SouFolk keep it going, but otherwise stay out of the way. Gavin will not tolerate rudeness, shouting or disorganized argument, and makes it quite clear that he has a good idea what both groups are here for. He wants to hear two sides of a reasoned debate, then make his mind up. It's how he does things and nothing else will work.

The GTC pitch is simple: The Trade Consortium has a number of quite legitimate business interests in the cluster, and will eventually expand its presence on Arnigi. Although the firms that will come here (GlimmerTech is one) are outworlders, the Consortium has strict rules about conduct of business (this is true, though enforcement is variable). Firms that come to Arnigi will employ local people (northerners) and will abide by local customs and laws. Nothing they do will upset the harmony that exists here, and the only results will be more jobs and greater prosperity. If local firms cannot compete that is because they are lacking something – something that the GTC will bring to Arnigi! Local firms that ***can*** compete may well become part of the GTC and be able to benefit from membership.

After all, the GTC is just a trade federation. It is founded on principles of fair competition, giving opportunities for the best firms to prosper. It won't change societies, merely alter the balance of trade somewhat – probably in favor of Arnigi.

In short, the GTC is only asking one thing – let events go the natural way of things. In nature, some species become strong enough to move into new areas and become dominant there. It's not bad or good; it's just the way it happens. Just as a new balance was found when the plague shattered civilization on Arnigi, so a new balance will be found when the GTC comes here. And everyone will benefit. Opposing this natural situation for the sake of it is just plain silly.

And besides, they add, those reactionaries that oppose the GTC expansion are going to lose their chance to share in the new opportunities coming along. Would it not be better to get aboard now and help guide the process? It's going to happen anyway, and the results will be more to the liking of people like Gavin if they are able to help rather than trying to hinder.

Gavin then invites the characters to make their pitch. The GlimmerTech pair, he says, have made good points. A heavy GTC presence in the cities of the north might not change anything at all. It might be good for Arnigi. So why should he go chasing off to this meeting? Is there really any point in resisting GTC expansion. And is there any reason to want to?

The characters can say anything they like, though Gavin will not listen to unsubstantiated attacks on GTC personnel or firms. A good pitch, that will help to convince Gavin, should include some or all of these points:

- Yes, the GTC is strong, and strong cultures or species do naturally overwhelm weaker ones. It's the way nature goes. But if the opposition is stronger, the GTC won't be able to get a foothold. Again, that's the way nature works.
- But people can choose not to behave like species of animals... on Arnigi, the stronger northern culture could have moved into the southlands and come to dominate the whole planet. The northerners chose not to, out of respect for their cousins. Just because the law of the jungle supports GTC expansion does not mean it is a good thing.
- The characters have just witnessed the reason why Arnigi is harmonious despite its very different cultures. Will the GTC be so respectful? It doesn't seem likely that the southerners could prevent commercial exploitation of their homelands; they're relying on their northern cousins to protect them here. Gavin should consider the implications for the whole of Arnigi rather than just the north.

Gavin has a difficult choice. He can do nothing and see what happens. He can accept that GTC expansion is going to happen, and take this opportunity to get aboard and help make the best of it for his people. Or he can join some harebrained opposition scheme in the hope of keeping the corporate giants out. He doesn't know what's the right thing to do, or the best compromise he can make.

A good pitch by the characters will at least stop him agreeing to help the GlimmerTech representatives, but it will take more to make his mind up for him.

SCENE 5: MOMENT OF DECISION

As the debate goes on, the characters become aware of a

disturbance not far away. This rapidly expands into what is obviously a major fight. Such disturbances are uncommon, but it does happen. Exactly what has started this one is unclear, but several people are brawling not far away. Gavin immediately gets up and goes over to see if he can help, and Myla & Thom follow.

At least a dozen young people are battering one another, NorFolk and SouFolk all mixed up in a huge multi-way brawl, while several casualties lie around or are staggering away. This isn't a fight between northerners and southerners exactly; it seems more likely that two or more people clashed and their friends tried to help, then some bystanders joined in for various reasons. Some of them were trying to protect people who were getting battered, some saw a friend or a fellow northerner/southerner in trouble, some got annoyed when combatants crashed into them, or decided to settle a score while their target was distracted... the reasons vary but what is going on now is a huge rumble, which seems to be growing.

Gavin calls upon everyone to stop fighting (nobody takes any notice) and then demands that the gathering crowd help break the fight up. Other than the odd one joining in, the crowd does not seem inclined to help much. A couple of brave souls are trying to help anyone who wants to escape to break free, and at least one of the joiners-in is trying to drag people off.

Gavin isn't physically up to doing anything about the situation, and the GTC pair aren't going to help. Indeed, they try to get Gavin to "come away, where it's safe" and incidentally so that they can work on him some more.

What the characters do now will decide the issue.

Exactly what the characters can do depends upon their skills. Medical people can help casualties. Anyone can grab a limping escapee and help them get safely clear. More physical characters can try to break up the fight – or join in.

Gavin will not respect people who just pile in, unless it's clear that they are knocking down the most determined fighters so that the fire goes out, so to speak. He will be very impressed with those who try to protect injured or downed combatants, or who restrain, face down, or otherwise get people out of the fight without hurting them.

The brawl can be as nasty as the referee wants. If the characters need a challenge, one or more fighters could grab a makeshift club and start breaking heads, or several combatants might attack the characters for interfering.

Afterward, it's clear to Gavin what sort of people he is dealing with. If the characters did nothing, or went with Gavin and the GTC pair, trying to make their pitch while people get hurt needlessly, Gavin will decide that both groups are

unworthy of his attention. However, if the characters tried to do something about the brawl, he will come down in their favor. Their actions appeal to the heart of Arnigi philosophy – they abandoned their agenda to do right – in this case by preventing people getting hurt needlessly. Gavin is willing to sign up with people like this, while the GTC has made a poor showing in his eyes.

He agrees to attend the summit.

GAVIN BROACH, AN INFLUENTIAL LECTURER ON ARNIGI

(Professional level 6/academic level 3) TL-11 Medium human

Stamina 26, Lifeblood 9; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 10 (+0 none), Armor Rating: 0 (none)
Str 9, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 14, Edu 16,
Soc 13

SV Fort +3; Ref +4; Will +7;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Fist	-3	1d3	--	20	--	--

Skills: Appraise +11, Gather Information +14, K/Interstellar Law +18, Leader +8, Liaison +14, Pilot +11, P/Admin +15, Speak Language (Sopas), T/Computer +15, T/Communications +15, Trader +8

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light), Academic Lecture, Barter, Carousing, Connections (professional), Credit Line, Legal Eagle, Professional Specialty (P/Admin), Pseudo-Eidetic Memory, Research (K/Interstellar Law), Skill Focus (K/Interstellar Law), Skill Focus (Liaison), Skill Focus (P/Admin), Trustworthy

Equipment: communicator

CT: 6779B8 6 terms

Streetwise-3, Liaison-3, Admin-3, Computer-3, Comm-3, Leader-2, Grav Vehicle-2.

BRAWLERS

(Rogue level 6) TL-11 Medium human

Stamina 32, Lifeblood 12; Init +5; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 13 (+2 jack, +1 dex), Armor Rating: 2 (jack)
Str 11, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 6,
Soc 5

SV Fort +2; Ref +6; Will +2;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Fist	+5	1d4	--	20	--	--

Skills: Innuendo +9, Intimidate +9, Listen +11, Pilot +11, Spot +11

Feats: Vessel (grav), Weapons (marksman, swordsman), Armor (light, medium), Alertness, Brawling, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Spot Trouble, Toughness

Equipment: jack armor

CT: 787754 4 terms

Grav Vehicle-2, Bribery-2, Rifle-1, Brawling-1, Streetwise-1, Blade-1.

ARMED BRAWLERS

(Rogue level 6) TL 5+ Medium human

Stamina 32, Lifeblood 12; Init +5; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 13 (+2 jack, +1 dex), Armor Rating: 2 (jack)
Str 11, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 6,
Soc 5

SV Fort +2; Ref +6; Will +2;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Lead Pipe	+4	1d4	--	20	--	--
Fist	+5	1d4	--	20	--	--

Skills: Innuendo +9, Intimidate +9, Listen +11, Pilot +11, Spot +11

Feats: Vessel (grav), Weapons (marksman, swordsman), Armor (light, medium), Alertness, Brawling, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Spot Trouble, Toughness

Equipment: jack armor, lead pipe or other makeshift club

CT: 787754 4 terms

Grav Vehicle-2, Bribery-2, Rifle-1, Brawling-1, Streetwise-1, Blade-1.

ACT 5: THE SUMMIT

REFEREE'S OVERVIEW

The characters receive a message that the meeting has been moved to a new venue, to allow an additional person to attend. All goes well at first, until Three Sectors Shipping decides to take direct action against the delegates, taking out the instigators of the opposition in one fell swoop. The delegates and the characters are forced to fight for their lives against a GTC covert-operations team.

DATA POINTS

MESSAGE DROPS

The delays inherent in interstellar communications make it difficult to get a message to someone unless you know exactly where they are going to be. For this reason, a message drop system has evolved. The sender of a message pays a fee to have it included in the news and communications bundle that goes out on all vessels leaving the world. At each port of call, the message bundle is downloaded and the message is retained on the starport computers for a period determined by the sender.

Characters can query the message database at any starport or spaceport (advanced personal comms do it automatically), so as long as the recipient can contact a port within the paid-for period, he or she will eventually receive the message.

This only works where there is a reasonable computer network at the port. Very poor or low-tech worlds may have no such system in place.

Most ports participate in this informal system, and make a small profit from outgoing message fees. The message fee starts at Cr5 for a short video message and rises according to:

- How big the message is. Text takes up little memory but video is more expensive
- How long it remains in the outgoing message bundle. 1 week is standard. Add Cr 10 per month thereafter
- How long it is to remain on the database at the far end. 1 month is standard. Add Cr 25 per month up to 6 months. The fee is a cumulative Cr 250 per year thereafter 250 for 1 year, 500 for the next). This is intended to discourage very long-term message storage.

The message-drop system can be abused. Some marketing firms have learned to place 'any user' messages in the bundle, which are delivered to every single person accessing the database. This interstellar spamming causes fury among system users and constant attempts are made to eliminate it.

SCENE 1: DIVERSIONS, DELIVERIES AND DINNER

As the characters are about to return to Juliette for payment, they receive a message via the starport message-drop system. The meeting has been rescheduled and moved to the city-state of Thermopolis, in Tripartite Alliance territory on the world of Starfall. This is to allow another delegate to attend. Juliette sends her apologies for the change of plan, but the opportunity was too good to miss.

The characters have time to arrange transport and reach Starfall in time for the meeting, and arrive at Tripartite Starport in due course. Tripartite Starport serves the planetary capital of Starfall Capital, the largest and most productive community on the planet. Laws are not especially strict, and characters will be able to pass through customs with sidearms, semi-automatic rifles and carbines, and shotguns (though open carry in the city is discouraged). It will be difficult to bring anything more powerful, or any weapon capable of firing on full-auto, but then again, the characters have no real need to do so. Storage within the starport area is available for items illegal on-planet.

Thermopolis is the southernmost of the city-states of Starfall, though the journey (by shuttle or grav transport) presents no real problems. Arriving in the city, the characters will have a half-day or so to look around before Juliette gets in touch. She has arranged to rent a villa about 20km north of the city; one of several close to one of the region's lesser mineral spas. The villas are widely separated, with none closer than 1km to another, arranged around a valley with the spa in the center. The location is ideal, she says, for a few days of discussion, a little holiday, and maybe a trip to the spas.

Most of the delegates have arrived, so Juliette asks the characters if they could pick up a last shipment of food and other supplies (the villas are normally used for self-catering holidays) before coming out.

The 20km trip is easy enough, though the characters will have to rent a ground car or air/raft for the trip. The villa is as expected; a large one-story house constructed of attractive light-gray local stone which sparkles with reflective microcrystals. The villa has a dozen rooms that can be made up as bedrooms or recreation/conference areas, plus two large reception rooms and a well-appointed kitchen.

Arriving at the villa, the characters find a relaxed, holiday atmosphere in place. They are introduced to the Thermopolis delegate, Sandhra Gold, who actually owns this entire valley and runs a holiday/conferencing business here. The other attendees are all familiar to the characters, of course. Juliette pays the characters what she owes them, and says that the conference will start in the morning. If the characters want to stay they're welcome. There's food and wine, and Sandhra has brought two of her staff to make sure everyone

is comfortable. It's certainly a bit late to be headed back now.

Juliette privately adds that she'd like the characters to stay on and contribute whatever they can to the discussions. They may have a better handle on how to convince some of the delegates than she does.

The characters settle down to an excellent 4-course dinner, with fine wine and luxurious surroundings. Everyone relaxes, and tries not to talk shop. There will be plenty of time for that over the next three days...

SCENE 2: THE GTC DELEGATION ARRIVES

Sometime in the early hours of the morning, an alarm goes off in the villa. Sandhra did not mention (unless asked) that the villa is used for business conferencing and thus requires excellent security. One of the outer alarms has been tripped. This sounds only on Sandhra's terminal, and quietly at that. Sandhra quickly checks out the alert on her terminal and glances at the display from the concealed cameras in the grounds. She isn't sure, but she thinks someone is approaching the villa, on foot, and quickly.

The characters are probably best qualified to check out the situation, since Sandhra's people are exactly what they appear to be – a cook and a butler. If the characters are short of weapons, there is a sporting-guns cabinet maintained for visitors who like to spend their time blasting the local wildlife. It contains:

- Two revolvers with telescopic 'hunting' sights
- Two semi-automatic hunting rifles
- Four 'sporting' shotguns (double-barrelled)
- A moderate amount of ammunition for all these weapons.

A careful look at the cameras will show a team of black-clad personnel approaching the villa. They move professionally, in pairs, fast but silent. All of them are armed. It seems very unlikely that these new visitors are here to enjoy the spas.

The assault force is a covert-operations team working for Three Sectors Shipping. The referee should decide how many personnel there are based upon the numbers and weaponry of the characters, but there should be at least 4. They have 10mm autopistols and Cloth body armor, helmets, night-vision gear and an assortment of longarms. Most assault team members carry 10mm SMGs, but shotguns, assault rifles and even laser carbines are possible.

The team's orders are quite simple. Enter the villa, secure everyone inside and kill those who resist. A pair of air/rafts are ready to take off the prisoners (who can be made to 'disappear' once they have revealed any information that might be useful). If possible, the covert-ops team will force people in the villa to surrender at gunpoint or take out anyone checking what's going on with a silent knife or laser weapon.

If they have to shoot their way through the villa, they will do so.

Other than some structural pillars, most of the internal walls of the villa are lightweight, and will not resist weapons fire for long. The furniture is sturdy enough to make a decent barricade, however.

If the referee feels that the characters are having it too easy, a second assault team might enter the villa from a different direction, or a pair of troopers could land on the roof using grav belts.

The covert-ops team will withdraw in the face of fierce resistance. They are willing to take some casualties, but not to get involved in an indoor Battle of the Somme. Although the land-lines are cut and the assault team can jam most radio comms, there is a concealed backup ground line available to Sandhra. If she can reach her terminal and hit the panic button, a friend at the Thermopolis City Barracks will send a couple of G-carriers full of troops to the villa – but they won't be there for 30 minutes or so, and in the meantime the characters have a lot of trouble on their hands.

But at least the villa is stone, and reasonably fireproof.

SCENE 3: AFTERMATH AND REPERCUSSIONS

It is not hard to figure out that the covert-ops team was sent by a GTC firm, but even if everyone survived there is a clear message here – opposing GTC expansion is a dangerous business. Some of the delegates just want to drop the matter and go home, while other are angry and determined to fight. A vigorous debate breaks out in the wreckage of the villa, and it will be up to the characters to talk some of the delegates round.

What comes of the meeting is up to the referee, and could well lead to new adventures. Possible leads include:

- Determining which GTC firm sent the assassins
- Finding new leaders to help the anti-GTC organization grow
- Dealing with members of the organization that want to take on GTC firms in a guerilla war... or fighting that guerilla war

SANDHRA GOLD

(Professional level 6/merchant level 3) TL-11 Medium human

Stamina 38, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 10 (+0 none), Armor Rating: 0 (none)
Str 8, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14, Edu 15,
Soc 14
SV Fort +4; Ref +3; Will +7;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Revolver	-3	1d10	30	20	1	6
Fist	-3	1d3	--	20	--	--

Skills: Appraise +11, Broker +15, Gather Information +14, K/Interstellar Law +13, Liaison +11, Pilot +10, P/Admin +14, Speak Language (Sopas), T/Computer +11, T/Communications +11, Trader +15

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (marksman), Barter, Calculating Eye, Carousing, Connections (professional), Connections (merchants), Credit Line, Legal Eagle, Market Analyst, Professional Specialty (P/Admin), Research (K/Interstellar Law), Skill Focus (P/Admin), Trustworthy

Equipment: communicator, revolver

CT: 6778A9 6 terms

Grav Vehicle-2, Streetwise-3, Liaison-2, Admin-3, Computer-2, Comm-2, Vac-1, Pistol-0.

NONCOMBATANT STAFF (COOK AND BUTLER)

(Professional level 5) TL-11 Medium human

Stamina 17, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);

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

Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 12, Edu 11, Soc 10

SV Fort +1; Ref +1; Will +4;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Assorted Cookware	-3	1d4	--	20	--	--
Fist	-3	1d3	--	20	--	--

Skills: Appraise +8, K/Interstellar Cuisine or Customs +8, Liaison +9, Pilot +8, P/Chef or Steward +8, Speak Language (choose two), T/Computer +8, T/Communications +8

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light), Athletic, Barter, Carousing, Connections (professional), Fast Talk, Professional Specialty (P/Chef or Steward), Trustworthy

Equipment: personal communicator, assorted cookware and cutlery

CT: 777777 3 terms

Grav Vehicle-2, Liaison-2, Computer-2, Comm-2.

THREE SECTORS COVERT ACTION TEAM

(Professional level 3/ mercenary level 3) TL-10 Medium human

Stamina 26, Lifeblood 11; Init +1; Speed 6m (4 squares);

Armor Class: 15 (+4 cloth, +1 Dex), Armor Rating: 4 (cloth)

Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 11, Soc 10

SV Fort +4; Ref +3; Will +5;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Military Shotgun	+7	3d8/2d8/1d8	7	20	1	12
Fist	+5	1d4+1	--	20	--	--
Auto Pistol	+7	1d10	45	20	1	15
Light ACR	+7	1d12	72	20	1/4	30
SMG	+7	1d10	45	20	1/4	30

Skills: Bluff +3, Hide +9, Listen +5, Move Silent +9, P/Admin +6, Pilot +4, Spot +5, T/Electronics +6, T/Communications +6, T/Computer +6, T/Sensors +6

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapons (armsman, marksman, combat rifleman), Alertness, Brawling, Interrogation, Professional Specialty (P/Admin), Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Hide), Skill Focus (Move Silent)

Equipment: cloth armor, night vision gear, auto-pistol with HUD, SMG with HUD, Light ACR with HUD or military shotgun with HUD.

CT: 887777 4 terms

Grav Vehicle-1, Recon-1, Admin-1, Electronics-1, Comm-1, Computer-1, Vac-1, Combat Rifleman-2, Brawling-1, Pistol-2, SMG-2.

GTC COVERT OPS TRANSPORT PILOT

(Professional level 3/ mercenary level 3) TL-10 Medium human

Stamina 26, Lifeblood 11; Init +1; Speed 6m (4 squares);

Armor Class: 17 (+6 CES, +1 Dex), Armor Rating: 6 (CES)

Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 11, Soc 10

SV Fort +4; Ref +3; Will +5;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Military Shotgun	+7	3d8/2d8/1d8	7	20	1	12
Fist	+5	1d4+1	--	20	--	--
Snub Pistol	+7	1d10	18	20	1	6/15
Light ACR	+7	1d12	72	20	1/4	30

Skills: Bluff +3, Hide +7, Listen +5, Move Silent +7, P/Admin +6, Pilot +6, Spot +5, T/Astrogration +6, T/Communications +3, T/Computer +3, T/Engineering +6, T/Sensors +6

Feats: Vessel (grav, starship), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapons (armsman, marksman, combat rifleman), Alertness, Brawling, Interrogation, Professional Specialty (Admin), Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Pilot)

Equipment: Combat Environment Suit, Snub pistol with HUD, Light ACR with HUD or military shotgun.

GTC Covert Ops Transport Pilot 887777 Age 30 3 terms

Pilot-2, Admin-1, Astrogation-1, Brawl-1, Combat Rifleman-2, Communications-1, Computer-1, Pistol-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Vac-1

GTC COVERT OPS ENFORCER

(Professional level 3/ mercenary level 3) TL-10 Medium human

Stamina 26, Lifeblood 11; Init +1; Speed 6m (4 squares); Armor Class: 17 (+6 CES, +1 Dex), Armor Rating: 6 (CES)

Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 11, Soc 10

SV Fort +4; Ref +3; Will +5;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Range	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Military Shotgun	+7	3d8/2d8/1d8	7	20	1	12
Fist	+5	1d4+1	--	20	--	--
Snub Pistol	+7	1d10	18	20	1	6/15
Light ACR	+7	1d12	72	20	1/4	30

Skills: Bluff +3, Hide +9, Listen +5, Move Silent +9, P/Admin +6, Pilot +4, Spot +5, T/Electronics +6, T/Communications +6, T/Computer +6, T/Sensors +6

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapons (armsman, marksman, combat rifleman), Alertness, Brawling, Interrogation, Professional Specialty (Admin), Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Hide), Skill Focus (Move Silent)

Equipment: Combat Environment Suit, Snub pistol with HUD, Light ACR with HUD or military shotgun.

GTC Covert Ops Enforcer 887777 Age 30 3 terms
 Combat Rifleman-2, Admin-1, Communications-1, Computer-1, Pistol-1, Stealth-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Vac-1

FINAL NOTES

As has already been stated, the GTC is not a monolithic organization, and it is not 'all bad'. Some of the member firms play hardball and some are willing to use covert ops to get their way, but the GTC itself is just a trade federation. Attacking the whole GTC is both pointless and ultimately suicidal. If roused, its common assets could be placed in the hands of more aggressive firms and used to squash any resistance.

Instead, if the GTC expansion is to be opposed, it is necessary to 'play the game', learning more about member firms, using legal and economic countermeasures against them and even playing one GTC member off against another. Direct action is possible, but must be both precise and limited, and must accomplish some long-term aim. Thus Juliette's people might decide to launch a military strike at a Three Sectors Shipping installation, but this would not be done lightly, nor for the sake of 'winning a battle'. This war will be won in boardrooms and brokerages, in court rooms and corporate headquarters. It is a war of negotiation and influence, in which some direct action is possible, but not necessarily the best option.

The GTC expansion and the opposition to it can be the backdrop to many future adventures.

PART 7: NON-SPECIFIC ADVENTURES

These adventures can be located wherever and whenever the Referee wishes.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: VACATIONAUT

The PC's are in Startown on any low or middle tech level planet. They are doing whatever they usually do during R&R but are making decisions regarding what to do next. Ideally, they have just finished a big job, or are resting after some stressful events.

One of the PC's is approached by a Vargr male who is, apparently, choosing people at random. The PC in question may witness the Vargr unsuccessfully try to gain the attention of other people nearby.

He introduces himself as Graz (not his full name, he explains), a representative for a new company in the system.

The company is called Vacationaut and practices 'Space Tourism', a rare enough thing on this particular world, where 99% of the population will never even see a Starship, let alone a ride into space.

Graz, and Vacationaut are looking for ships willing to take people up into space for short trips, probably around the planet or even longer trips out to the moons or nearby planets.

The Vacationaut offices are in Startown, and are completely legit as far as the PC's can make out. Computers are still being unpacked, and the wiring around the offices is still being completed.

Graz introduces the PC's to Victor Haaz, the director of Vacationaut on this world. He is willing to discuss fees with the characters.

The price for a simple two hour ride into space and back for a 'Vacationaut' is set at Cr1000, which might seem like a lot considering that a low-berth costs as much.

For a longer trip, around nearby planets or moons, the price rises to Cr10,000 or even higher. They have a waiting list of nearly 200 people who have already paid for the trips in advance.

The PC's will be offered 50% of the price of the trip, not including life support (it won't matter for trips under a day

or two). The company will even provide excellent food and entertainment for the 'boring parts' of the trip.

The PC's can transport as many people per trip as they feel they can fit on board comfortably, and Vacationaut will handle any custom work needed, like wall removal or extra seats being installed.

It's up to the Crew- are they going to run easy tourist flights for a week or two and make some quick, honest cash?

Roll 1D6 or choose the plotline that suits your purposes.

1 – The first trip goes well, as do any others the Crew undertakes. They might even make a good amount of money, but the interest in Space Tourism dies down after a few weeks. No harm done, everyone parts ways happily.

2 – On one of the trips, some passengers hesitantly ask the Crew if they can provide 'private quarters' so they can join the rare 'Sky High Club'. The Crew can make what they want of this- but if they let these passengers do so, then the ship gets a reputation of something of a 'space brothel' which the media gets hold of- and it could end up being embarrassing for both the Crew and Vacationaut- even if their ticket sales triple in a few short days...

3 – On one trip, a group of extreme sport enthusiasts request that they experience zero-g for some time during the flight. If the ship is a trader, then it might be easy enough to switch off the grav plates in the hold for some part of the flight. Further options here include the enthusiasts getting badly hurt in zero-g, or inventing a new kind of sport which catches on and develops more business for Vacationaut- or even the Crew, if they are that way inclined.

4 – One trip includes twenty children from a privileged school on the planet. They are aged between eight and sixteen, and range from whiny to know-it-all. They will be tough to control, will get under everyone's feet and into places they really shouldn't go. Dealing with a crying ten year old who is scared of the view outside whilst a budding engineer takes apart bits of the ship to see how it all works might cause the crew some problems.

5 – A group of 'businessmen' hire the ship out exclusively for a two day trip around the system. They ask to be left alone the entire time, except for food and steward activities. They are a crime syndicate who are having their yearly big meeting in a secure and interesting place. This option is wide open for all sorts of complications, from Planetary Police on another hired ship coming after the Crew's vessel, to assassination attempts on board their own ship.

6 – During one of the trips, the Crew's ship develops technical problems and misjumps.

The Crew have a potential disaster here- some of their people back on the planet, not enough life support, and a potential passenger list including children, criminals, extreme

sportsmen or almost anyone the Referee can think of.

Luckily, the misjump, a week later, has moved the ship less than three AU out system, and the ship can limp home within hours.

Vacationaut considers marketing their 'Terror in Space' themed flights on a regular basis...

PATRON ENCOUNTER: INSURANCE EVALUATION

Required Skills: Shipboard Skills

Required Equipment: Starship

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

Whilst searching the job boards of 519-036 for information that could lead the players to any lucrative opportunity, one of the PC's communicators beeps and shows an incoming call of unknown origin. For some reason the reception of the PC's comm is not good, but the player can just make out a female in business attire. She introduces herself as Janet Gimmini who explains that this number was given to her by one of the players last Patrons. She invites the PCs to her office in the still functioning part of the downport to talk about a proposition she has for them.

The players are given directions to the local offices of ESIB (Eda Starship Insurance Brokerage), where Gimmini works. Once there the receptionist shows the players in to a large and well-furnished office where Gimmini greets them. Gimmini is of average height, in her early thirties, has long auburn hair, but what is very distinctive about her is that she has a laser burn across her left cheek and is missing the lower half of her left ear. After showing the players to a seat she will explain that she has asked the players here to see if they are interested in a three-week job that will entail a micro jump to the binary system. There they will survey a vessel that has been stranded there for the past month.

If the players are interested Gimmini will explain that she is an insurance investigator and her usual team and ship have been assigned to another job. She needs this work carried out as soon as possible which is why she has contacted the PCs. She will charter the players ship for three weeks, and will require the player's services at the sight of the investigation.

If the players accept Gimmini will want to leave as soon as the players can arrange the installation of a collapsible fuel tank, which Gimmini will provide, and purchase fuel and life support. She has all the equipment that she needs for the trip already packed and ready to go.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

In jump Gimmini will explain that the ship in question is the Dancing Kallinger a 400 ton Fat Trader registered out of Idam Lee. The Dancing Kallinger was reported missing, presumed lost, five months ago after it failed to arrive at it's listed destination of Starfall following a jump from Idam Lee. The Dancing Kallinger had a crew of 7 and its inventory lists a cargo of electronic consumer goods. It was listed as carrying no passengers.

Upon arriving at the binary system the Dancing Kallinger can be found adrift close to the second rockball planet. The players will have to pinpoint the ship and match velocities before finding a way onto the ship. There is a man-sized hole in the hull that leads into the engineering section. Once

aboard the players will find that the power is off, there is no fuel in the tanks, and the jump drive looks like a complete slagheap. All is in place in the cargo hold, except one air lock is open to space. An exploration of the staterooms will show all items of the crew are in the places they left them. The galley is clean with signs that show the crew had just cleared their last meal.

After the players manage to transfer some fuel and start the power plant they will be able to get life support and the computer on line. Accessing the ships log shows that nothing happened going into jump and all was normal for three days, and then nothing. No computer access, no doors opened, nothing was turned on, no crew on the monitors, nothing.

The ship stayed in jump space for three weeks. When it looks as though the ship should have exited jump the sequence used to start the jump drive was activated. Internal sensors show that the jump drive sucked as much power as it could from the jump capacitors, which drained the fuel in the tanks. With no fuel the power plant went off line, and the computers UPS cut in. The UPS showed it had power for 5 minutes. During this time the jump drive melted into slag and blew a hole in the engineering section out into jump space. The computer logs stop 5 minutes after the power plant failed.

Roll 1D6 or choose the plotline that suits your purposes.

1. No further information can be gathered from the Dancing Kallinger. Gimmini is satisfied that it is Deadspace Phenomenon, and will pay out on the insurance policy, while salvaging the ship. This will involve transporting what cargo they can and any valuables to Five-Nineteen primary. The players may have to find an ice asteroid or comet to refuel. Gimmini will arrange for the Dancing Kallinger to be picked up by a recovery vessel before passing it on to the authorities to look into the phenomenon. Six months later the players will encounter the Dancing Kallinger plying the space lanes with a new crew and under a different name.

2. As one, however it is not possible for Gimmini to arrange a recovery vessel. Gimmini will ask the players if they will fix the ship on station and then recover it to Five-Nineteen primary. As this will involve approximately a month and a half's work to, transport and fit a new jump drive, patch up the latinum grid, the hull, and then jump a possibly dodgy starship, she is willing to offer the players 5% of the value of the ship. Subsequent events are at the discretion of the Referee.

3. On investigation of the ship's logs it looks like there are discrepancies. Gimmini thinks that the logs might have been faked, and so will not pay out on the claim. Gimmini will arrange for the ship to be picked up by a recovery vessel, however she would like some of the crew to baby sit the ship while she can arrange this. The players will have to find an ice asteroid or comet to refuel, and arrange the life support supplies for both ships. All the players will receive a

Cr10,000 bonus for this. The passage of events during the two weeks of ship sitting is up to the referee.

4. As three, however the Dancing Kallinger was attack by a pirate band that faked the computer logs and then left the ship as bait. When most of the crew are on the stricken ship and they discover the discrepancies in the logs the pirates will launch a two-pronged boarding action of the players ship trying to capture it undamaged. The size and number of the pirates should match the PC's abilities.

5. As four but Gimmini is in league with the pirates.

6. When the players arrive they cannot find the Dancing Kallinger at all, and no sign of any ship, debris, or any indication that there was any one in the binary system recently. Subsequent events are at the discretion of the referee.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: HONEST BROKER

Introduction - The players are approached by a cargo broker they have dealt with before.

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

A broker with whom they have done business contacts players during a starport layover. He has a business proposition he believes the players may find interesting, one that will pay them rather well and will take only a few hours to perform.

He has need of some people to perform a somewhat critical business errand for him. The party that normally handles this sort of errand for him is busy with other tasks. The errand is not illegal nor will the players need to break or bend any laws. The errand is extremely confidential however and the broker does not want the job freely discussed in any saloons or barbershops the players may frequent. The broker is more than willing reward discretion on the players' parts and the fee he offers will illustrate that.

The broker's errand consists of the players taking a written note to an individual, waiting for a reply to the note from that individual, and returning the reply to the broker.

If the players are efficient and behave in a circumspect manner, the broker may have similar errands for them in the near future.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Kidnappings in and around the starport region have been on the rise. Very few of these crimes are reported to the authorities. Some see law enforcement as either corrupt or incompetent. Others view kidnapping as a private affair, something to be handled without drawing any additional attention to the crime. In a large majority of cases, the ransom is paid and the victim released, usually unharmed.

The people being kidnapped are drawn from all walks of life; they can be visiting businessmen, gang members, local citizens, and even starship crew members. Ransoms can range from a few hundred Crlmps to hundreds of thousands of credits. Victims can be held for only a few hours or for several weeks, however long the situation demands.

Many groups, with a variety of agendas, are active in the trade. A few groups are using kidnappings to raise money for political or social causes, while others are involved in the trade simply for the money. Some of the kidnapping gangs specialize in snatching dozens of low ransom targets, depending on quantity to fill their pockets. Other gangs target individuals who can command large ransoms and spend weeks and months planning their operations. Whatever the reasons, the boom in kidnappings has led to an opportunity for people willing to act as middlemen.

Both the kidnappers and the ransom payers want a sense of security when dealing with each other. The kidnappers want to be assured that law enforcement or private security officers won't be breathing down their necks. The ransom

payers want to be certain that they aren't paying for a corpse. Both sides want the full amount of money to reach the proper individuals without any problems and both sides do not want to be cheated by the other in any way. A middleman, known and trusted by both sides, can help assuage those fears.

The middleman can handle ransom negotiations, reporting honestly to either side about the financial situations involved. A middleman can also verify that an individual is actually being held captive and that they are in good health. Finally, a middleman can help insure that the final swap of ransom and kidnapped victim goes smoothly and without any chance of a doublecross.

Some middlemen have even branched out into offering a type kidnapping insurance. Individuals at risk of being kidnapped post a bond with a trusted middleman. This bonded money will then be paid out if the crime has occurred and after the kidnappers demonstrate that the victim is still alive.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The broker in question has developed a lucrative side business of late. He has been acting as a middleman, an 'honest broker', during this recent spate of kidnappings. Because this aspect of his business is booming, he is in need of additional help. He is hiring the players to perform one of the most delicate and time consuming portions of the middleman business, ascertaining that the kidnapping victim is alive and that they are who the kidnappers claim.

His desire that the players remain discrete about their job is not due any personal embarrassment. Rather, he does not want to run the risk of the local authorities being tipped to the affair in any manner. Neither side is this situation wishes that to happen and the broker will reward the players if they behave in a circumspect manner. Any attempts by the players to pressure the broker for more money or even to blackmail him, in the mistaken belief they have something 'on him', must keep these distinctions in mind.

Quite frankly, the local population generally admires the actions of the middlemen and the parties involved are relying on the broker's discretion. If the players get too 'cute', the broker will remove them from the job, pay them the original fee agreed upon, and let news of their actions pass through the local community. The players will find any business or private dealings they may undertake in the area adversely effected by these reports for some time to come.

If they accept the job, the players will be handed an envelope and a small holographic portrait of an adult human male. The broker will instruct them to deliver the envelope to the man in the picture, wait for his response, and bring that response back to the broker. The broker will tell them to arrive at certain eating establishment by a certain time. There they will be approached by an individual and given further instructions that will eventually bring them face to face with the human in the picture.

The broker will be forthright about the kidnapping, explaining the situation to the players and warning them not to be heroes. He will caution them about carrying

weapons beyond those they would normally carry around town. The players are to act as the broker's ears and eyes; they are there only to determine that the kidnapped person is safe and whole. They are not there to puzzle out where the victim is being held, who is holding them, or any other similar information. The broker will stress again and again that the players not act as heroes. He wants confirmation, not additional problems.

When the players arrive at the rendezvous, a nondescript street person will immediately approach them. They will be asked if they are from the broker. If they reply 'yes', the street person will hand them a small disposable comm link, tell them that the call is 'for them', and depart. If the street person is followed, they will lead anyone trailing them first to a local liquor store and then, clutching a full bottle, to a flophouse. The street person will pay in both cases with cash. If questioned, the street person will only know that they were given the link, the cash, and instructions about whom to hand the comm over to. Any descriptions the street person supplies will be worthless, either too vague or too shifting to be of any practical use.

The comm link itself is of a local variety. Cheap and disposable, they are easily purchased and last for a set number of minutes. Attempting to track down who bought the link or where it was purchased will prove impossible as they are sold in vending machines throughout the port and surrounding region. Attempts to monitor or trace any calls made over the link will be fruitless too; the link has a limited wireless range and connects into a bewildering landline and microwave transmission network.

(Note to GMs - If the tech level of the planet in question cannot support a system of disposable cell phones, have the street person instead direct the players to the phone booth he has been waiting in. All other messages will be by public telephone too.)

A voice on the comm link (or phone) will provide the players with directions to another location. The directions will be provided twice in succession and the voice will answer no questions. If the players interrupt too often or ask too many questions the call will terminate and no additional calls will be received.

As the players reach the new location, another call will be received much like the first. The players should be routed around the starport and surrounding city to as many locations as the GM wishes, but three or four such trips should be the absolute minimum. After reaching each location, the players will receive a new call with new directions to yet another location.

Do not provide the players with much time to travel to each new location. In this manner the GM will be able to prevent the players from making any detailed plans or doing anything else other than moving from place to place. The players should have little time in each location to scan or survey the each area. They should remain uncertain as to whether or not they are being followed or watched.

Finally, the players should arrive at low-income housing project, residential hotel, or other such low profile, high traffic

type building. The players will be directed, again by comm link or telephone, to a certain unit or room and there finally meet the man they've done so much to see.

The make-up group holding the captive and the set-up of the rooms in which he is currently being held should be carefully arranged by the GM. The number of captors, the weapons they are carrying, the location of the captive, all should be chosen to prevent any notion of heroics on the part of the players.

After being frisked and allowed to keep any personal weapons or equipment the kidnapers find reasonable, the players will be informed that they have 10 minutes to speak with the captive. They should hand over the envelope and await the response they have come for. While with the captive, the players may try to question him further. However, the captors will interrupt and prevent any questions beyond those concerning the captive's health and wellbeing.

As soon as the captive finishes his response to the queries contained in the envelope, the captive will be hustled out of the room. Some of the kidnapers will stay with the players and prevent them from leaving for another 30 minutes. After that time, the players will be free to go and report back to the broker.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Roll 1D6 or choose the plotline that suits your purposes.

1 - Traffic or some other transportation problems prevent the players from arriving at a designated location within the time specified and the captors break off contact.

This may not mean the end of the job however. If the players immediately and honestly report their failing to the broker, he will still pay them and may even hire them for a second attempt.

2 - One of the kidnapers takes umbrage at the players. Something they said, or did, or something they were carrying causes him to question their motives. He may denounce them as informants or worse.

An argument among the captors may break out over his suspicions. The players will have to defuse or resolve the situation before they are allowed to see the captive.

3 - The captive is injured in some manner and requires basic medical attention.

The players may have to convince the captors of the captive's condition or the captors may already be aware and nervous about the captive's condition. The players can then either provide the medical care themselves, keeping in mind the kidnapers' desire to move the captive soon, or argue that the captive be hospitalized.

The captors may even offer to allow a player with medical skills to remain with the captive.

4 - Knowledge of this kidnapping has leaked out and the players are being followed. The followers could be law enforcement agents, private security hired by someone

close to the captive, or another kidnapping gang interested in taking the captive and ransom for themselves.

If the players discover they're being followed, there are a few options open to them. They can try and give their followers the slip, they can try and convince the followers to stop, they can join in with the followers, or they can inform the kidnapers and abort the meeting.

If the players do not discover they're being followed and the meeting goes ahead, they could find themselves in the middle of a police raid, gang firefight, or hostage situation.

5 - The captive is not who the kidnapers think is he is. Despite his protests, the captors believe he is someone else and will react violently to any suggestions otherwise.

The holographic picture the players are carrying may help convince the kidnapers of their mistake, but that also means the captive is no longer of any use to them. How the captive is dealt with after that will depend on the actions of the players.

6 - The captive is dead, either as a result of the kidnapping or from other causes, and the captors are still attempting to collect the ransom. One of their number is posing as the captive, wearing the captive's clothes and sporting heavy bandages to disguise his looks. The imposter will be unable to answer the broker's written questions. He'll scribble a few lines and claim an inability to answer fully due to the effects of his injuries. In any event, the imposter will not do a very good job of pretending to be the captive.

If the players denounce him as a fraud or let their suspicions be known in any other manner, the kidnapers will be forced to act. They may attack the players or even offer them a piece of ransom if they help deceive the broker.

CONCLUSION AND RESOLUTION

However the meeting with captive and kidnapers occur or whatever the results are, the players will have spent a nerve wracking afternoon and evening being shuttled all over the starport, meeting with a criminal gang, and collecting the required information.

Success in this one job may bring offers of similar jobs from the broker. The players could find themselves delivering a portion of the ransom or acting as couriers during protracted negotiations.

Success could also help the players in other, more 'legal' ways. The broker is a broker after all. The successful and trusted working relationship that developed during this matter could lead the broker to hire or use the players in other areas, such as shipping or speculative trading.

Success could also bring notoriety. While the general population doesn't mind the existence of the middlemen, the local authorities do not care for them at all, viewing the activities of the middlemen as a professional insult. The players may begin to experience low level police harassment, paperwork troubles, or other bureaucratic tangles once the authorities know their affiliation with the middleman.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: DRESSED ALL IN RED

The characters arrive at a planet which is very strict about what you may carry in terms of weapons. No offensive weapons are permitted at all; indeed possession of any weapon is punishable by death. If the characters persist in trying to smuggle weapons out of the starport extralimity zone, the Referee may have at least one of them arraigned on charges. Attempting to negotiate, bribe or force their release should prove amusing.

Alternatively, the characters are approached by a distraught young female, who pleads for their help. She says that her brother has been wrongfully accused of possession and use of offensive weapons and is due to be executed the next day. Having exhausted the limited routes of appeal available, she would like the offworlders to arrange a prison break. As prison guards are armed, they will need to smuggle some weapons out of the starport extralimity to have a chance at completing the task.

Roll 1d6 or choose the plotline that suits your purposes.

1. All is as it seems

The brother is victim of a plot hatched by a member of the local peace force, who has his eyes on the sister. She is unwilling to respond to his advances, and the brother has been adamant about withholding his permission (necessary under local law for a marriage to take place).

Once the rescue has been effected, the pair will request passage off-world. If the characters choose to take them, they will have to be smuggled aboard. The young lady has a small store of jewellery with which to pay the characters for their services.

2. Terror Tactics

The lady and her brother are members of a terrorist group. He deserves execution! Characters aiding him will be assumed to be terrorists also (another crime warranting the death penalty here).

3. Agent Provocateur

The lady is a government agent, seeking to show that all offworlders are a danger to the peace and tranquillity of the land, and should not be allowed to land at all. Her plea is false and the mission is a trap.

4. Reality TV

The lady is the front-person for a 'candid camera' TV show. The characters will be filmed and broadcast for entertainment purposes. The 'prison' to which she will lead them is an elaborate set, and the guards, etc., are actors. Once the characters reach the 'brother' they will be told what is going on, and offered a payment for their participation in the show. Alternatively, the Referee may decide that appearing on this particular show is regarded as a great honour, and

participants are given a low-value medallion as a memento instead.

Naturally, there may be difficulties if the real authorities are encountered on the way. It is likely that the characters will be long gone by the time the programme airs, but they may face some awkward questions if they should return here.

5. Another Agent Provocateur

The lady is a government agent: her task is to test the starport control systems. If the characters succeed in getting their weapons out of the starport onto the planet proper, they will be surrounded by heavily-armed peace officers and the situation explained to them.

The Referee may choose to have them lectured by a senior peace officer on the error of their ways, and to have their weapons confiscated, before they are permitted to return to their ship. Needless to say, they will be watched closely for the remainder of their stay.

6. Revolution

While the characters are planetside undertaking this mission, a revolution breaks out. As they are some of the few people apart from government forces that have weapons, their aid is enlisted by the leaders of the rebellion.

Note: The title is derived from the planetary custom of dressing convicted felons awaiting execution in a bright red jumpsuit.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: THE GUN RUNNER

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

While in port, ship-owning characters are approached by a short, sandy-haired human. He is neatly-dressed, and is accompanied by a grav-float laden with locked metal boxes. Quietly-spoken, he asks the characters where they are bound, then (whatever they reply), asks if he might book passage as the location in question is his next destination.

If they agree, he says that he also has some goods to transport (gesturing towards the grav-float), and will of course pay extra for their transportation. He has one business matter to attend to; just a brief meeting, and then he will come aboard. Perhaps the characters could see to the loading of his goods...? Safe storage is all that he asks, he will not require access to them during the voyage. Oh, and his name is Clive Thomas.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Clive Thomas is an arms-dealer (or gun runner, as his more unkind rivals would put it). The metal boxes contain samples of his wares, but unlike many in his profession, he specializes in weaponry for the civilian market.

The boxes all have TL12 electronic locks plus old-fashioned key locks, both of which have to be opened to gain access to the contents. The keys are in a cloth bag around Clive's neck, and he has not written down his access code anywhere. (It is 'cevil' – an anagram of his name, and a joke – his father used to say, "Come and see some evil," when showing off his weapon collection.)

What's Going On?

Roll 1d6 or choose whichever option fits your needs.

1. All is as it seems

Clive turns up about an hour later. He proves pleasant company during the trip, and tells many stories of his adventures as a travelling arms salesman. He mentions that his father collects bladed weapons, and asks that the characters look out for any rare or unusually fine ones, for which a good price will be paid. If the characters are interested, he might be interested in negotiating a deal for future travel on their ship, and will sell each of them a weapon of their choice from his stock at cost price.

2. Leaving in a hurry

Clive arrives at the ship out of breath and requests an immediate launch. He looks as if he has been in a brawl... mostly because he has. Characters accessing the news circuits will hear about an altercation in a startown bar between an unnamed man and a party of local thugs,

believed to be connected with the planetary 'Mob.'

There will be no further trouble, although if the characters return here soon, they may be faced with a few questions from either the local police or the Mob about the current whereabouts of Clive Thomas.

3. The No-Show

The characters' scheduled departure time comes – several hours after their encounter with Clive Thomas – but he does not show up. The news circuits are carrying a story about a brawl in a local tavern between the 'Mob' and an unnamed man. There were several fatalities.

If the characters take their time about departing, the local authorities turn up, having found the name and dock number of their ship in one of the dead men's pockets. They will be delayed for anything up to a few days answering questions and other formalities. Their own affairs will be subject to close scrutiny, something most characters wish to avoid!

4. Company

Clive arrives at the ship out of breath and with several Mob hitters on his tail. If the characters are not quick to react, they will be fighting off a boarding action! At the Referee's discretion, the Mob may have contacts within the starport authority who may attempt to withhold launch clearance.

5. Customs Inspection

While awaiting Clive's return, the starport authorities conduct a surprise inspection of the characters' ship. They will insist that the locked boxes are opened, and will force them if the characters prove reluctant (their reluctance will, of course, be held against them – and items aboard their ship are their responsibility, no matter that they belong to a passenger and the characters do not have the access codes!).

At the Referee's discretion, the boxes may contain items that are a) illegal on this planet or b) reported as stolen.

6. Ooops!

All seems in order as Clive returns from his business meeting and settles into his stateroom. Once in Jump, however, he says that he feels a little tired and would like to rest undisturbed.

When the characters eventually become concerned at his absence, he is found dead. He has been poisoned (by whoever he had his meeting with). The characters will have to try and explain this to the authorities at their destination.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: IMPERIAL AGENT

Required Skills: Espionage

Required Equipment: none

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The characters have several days stop over and last night spent some time in the company of Kelis Puleton, a vivacious and witty woman who works for the Port Authority. There may have been some playful flirting with handsome, unattached male characters, but nothing improper. This morning the character (male or female) that Kelis got on best with receives a package from a Kelis containing a storage device and 100Cr, with a note asking the character to deliver the device to Petrov Anniki at the characters next port of call.

Shortly after the package arrives, the local police arrive to question the characters in relation to the murder of Kelis Puleton, as they were the last people seen with her alive...

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The computer storage is an innocuous private letter to an old friend. It is also the code key to de-crypt a report to Imperial Naval Intelligence (already sent by a different route) from Kelis, who was an imperial agent. She had intercepted communications between Solomani agents, representatives of the Raidermarch and the local government about a deal for a Raider base in this system, funded by the Solomani and giving this system preferential exemption from raiding.

Everything is as described, but Kelis' shadowy double life never comes to light. The characters are removed from suspicion and, once the authorities are satisfied that there is nothing of importance on the storage device, allowed to complete the delivery. The characters may be curious as to why Petrov Anniki is so relieved to see them and why he pays an additional 400Cr for Kelis' letter.

Kelis' death was only tangentially related to her work as a spy. She was murdered in a fit of rage by a rejected lover, an obsessive man who had taken to stalking Kelis and, after discovering some of her secrets, tried to convince her to flee with him. She refused and died in the subsequent struggle. Although the local police will rapidly clear the characters (but ask that they remain available), the murderer will become convinced that the characters are working for Kelis' off-world masters and are responsible for driving the wedge between them. He will stalk the characters, eventually attempting to kill them.

Actually, the local government supplied the information to Kelis (unbeknownst to both the Raidermarch and Solomani). Kelis was acting as bait to draw them out. Now the government wants the characters to do the same but neglects to inform the characters they are contributing in the capacity of bait! They simply draw the Solomani and Raidermarch agents' attentions to the characters and then monitor the situation,

hoping to be able to intervene before there are too many casualties.

The local government are hip deep in this. Once they have established that the characters were not Kelis' contact in INI they will be sent on their way with a fake duplicate of the message for Petrov Anniki and shadowed by Raidermarch agents on behalf of the three conspiring powers.

PATRON ENCOUNTER: RESPECTABLE SCIENTIST

Required Skills: Shipboard, electronics, mechanical
Required Equipment: none

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The characters are approached by a senior research administrator from a respected academic institution; either local to the system or with a local presence (perhaps a University on Eda). The institution is engaged in a long term observation project and has a facility directly over one of the poles of the stellar primary. Communication is unreliable but except in periods of high stellar activity, contact is usually fairly frequent. Now there appears to be a problem: there has been no communication for five days and this morning the courier pilot was hospitalised unexpectedly (a simple accident). The researcher wants the characters to pilot the institutions specially modified supply craft out to the facility and check that all is well.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The supply craft is a Ship's Boat modified to allow safe operations on repeated exposure to conditions close to the star. It is armed as appropriate to local law level.

The research team are fine, although recent severe stellar activity has destroyed their communication equipment. Character assistance with repairs will be much appreciated!

The entire research team are dead as a result of violent psychoses induced by hallucinogenic compounds in a contaminated food shipment; similar too but more severe than the condition Ergotism. The contractor responsible for the food shipment will try to evade their responsibilities in the matter.

The facility has been severely damaged by an atypically violent ejection of stellar coronal matter that overwhelmed the stations countermeasures. There are survivors trapped in various parts of the facility and the whole station is adrift and heading towards the star: the characters will have to make some difficult judgement calls to rescue the survivors.

A crippled Raider ship mis-jumped from a losing fight several systems away and emerged near the facility, where upon the jump drive failed. The raiders have commandeered the facility and are in the process of cannibalising it to fix their ship, although the supply craft would be a much better source of parts...

PATRON ENCOUNTER: WEALTHY INDUSTRIALIST

Required Skills: Liaison
Required Equipment: none

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The characters are approached by Johan Shaasterne, a wealthy industrialist from Lunarmise with diverse holdings on several worlds in the Cluster. He is on a business trip to inspect his assets and his son Jerec has accompanied him. He cannot spare the time to attend a Toy Fair (including a shipment of toys from Eda) with Jerec. He wishes the characters to transport Jerec and his minder to the Toy Fair, to chaperone him whilst he is there, and to bring him back in time for the next leg of Shaasterne's trip.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

What Johan Shaasterne will not tell the characters is that Jerec has a rare, terminal condition and will sometime in the next five years suffer a sudden collapse of all motor functions and die shortly thereafter. He occasionally has minor seizures, although he is taking medication that suppresses these and delays the terminal phase; but there is no cure. The boy's minder, Eltic Ranliir, will accompany him and be primarily responsible for Jerec's security.

Whilst at the Toy Fair there will be a well planned (but beatable) kidnapping-for-ransom attempt.

Whilst at the Toy Fair the boy will be snatched by a small gang who have been contracted to provide a living toy for an eccentric, and jaded, millionaire recluse.

The boy's condition is the key to a medical breakthrough being developed by the bio-research division of a rival of Shaasterne's. With the boy away from his father, agents of this company will attempt to obtain biological samples from the boy. They need blood and bone marrow samples and they are prepared to offer bribes (Eltic will never agree) but will simultaneously have a kidnapping plan available the moment a bribe is rejected. They intend the boy no serious harm. They will need to hold him for about 12 hours for the medical procedures.

Jerec, caught up in the excitement and freedom of the Toy Fair, decides to strike out on his own and gives both Eltic and the characters the slip. Tracking the boy down will be challenge enough, but if he is away long enough to miss his medication he will have an attack with severe consequences.

AMBER ZONE: ACID EXTRACTION

Location: Arnigi/812-148

Required Equipment: Starship

SITUATION

While in a starport lounge in Arnigi, the players are approached by a very tall man with black hair and huge hands, who is dressed in coveralls that have seen better days. Mazun Havelock, as he introduces himself, is a co-founder and director of Corex limited. He offers to buy the players a drink, and indicates that he might have some work to offer them. If they accept Havelock will show the PCs to a table that is occupied by a man who he introduces as Gillian Best. Best is the other co-founder and director of Corex. Best stands to shake the players hands, and organises the drinks while Havelock explains what he has asked the PCs over for.

Havelock and Best are looking to charter a Starship, at 10% above normal price, to take them to 812-148 and back, where they are to meet with representatives of Heaven's Reach's government. There they plan to continue negotiations for the production of clean air and mineral rights. As they can't guarantee that there will be a starship to bring them back they will pay for the crew to stay on 812-148 and do some work for them. The charter will involve the shipment of hazardous material, and the work involves the hazardous environment on 812-148.

The players are offered Cr5000 each for the weeks work between the charters. The charter and work are an all in one package.

Havelock and Best recently patented a new form of gaseous filtering technique and they formed Corex to exploit it, however they found that there was not enough incentive to use the new technique in the production of any product. None of the companies they contacted who produced filters were interested in a product that reduced ongoing revenues. The companies saw that the new technique would reduce the number of times that filters would need to be replaced and this would reduce their ongoing profits from the existing market in replacement parts.

Havelock and Best were about to give up and do something else when a representative of Ling Standard Products (LSP) approached them. It turned out that LSP had been looking into this type of technique for the extraction of metals from tainted atmospheres as a low cost, and highly efficient, mining process, however Havelock and Best had got their first. LSP proposed that they would fund a year trial of the technique to analyse its effectiveness. If the trials are successful then LSP proposes to purchase exclusive license to use the technique, and a controlling interest in Corex for a

large some of money.

Havelock and Best looked around the cluster and saw that there was a need for sulphur and sulphuric acid for the industries of their home system Arnigi, as well as an export market to industries throughout the cluster. They thought that 812-148 would be an excellent place to start the trial. Having researched sales and distribution of the finished products on Arnigi they are now heading out to 812-148 to negotiate for mineral rights in exchange for clean air and ongoing revenues, having already negotiated an initial weeks experiment.

If the players agree Havelock and Best will arrange to be on board in two days with the necessary equipment. Havelock will authorise the PCs to purchase fuel and life-support equipment for a month, and will urge the PCs to offer passage and freight space to 812-148 as long as Corex can take 50% of any profit. Havelock encourages this, as the charter costs will be recovered as an expense of the trial, while any extra monies earned from the charter can go directly to Corex as new business. As new business this will increase the sale price of Corex if the trial works. If this happens Havelock and Best will be very happy.

RESOLUTION

The equipment that needs to be taken to 812-148 is a prototype-filtering machine, ancillary devices, an advanced base, an ATV, an enclosed Grav Vehicle, and numerous hazardous environmental suits, filter masks and breathing apparatus etc.

Apon arrival and unloading at 812-148 Havelock will start the negotiations with the bureaucracy, while Best and the PCs ready the equipment for the initial experiment. The players will have to set-up the portable base at a suitable location and work with the ATV and Grav to set-up the filtering machine in the lower regions of the atmosphere.

The device filters the acid from the atmosphere, some of which is concentrated into sulphuric acid, while the rest is extracted as pure sulphur and made into bars that are stored in a light water resistant oil. The resulting clean air and water are piped away from the machine as waist products. The acid and sulphur bars need to be moved from the machine to the ship where they need to be stored safely for transportation. When back on Arnigi the metal bars and acid will be analyzed for purity.

The players will need to set-up a non-corrosive pipeline for the clean air and water to be transferred to the portable base. This will involve the negotiation of rugged mountainous canyons with the added danger of the corrosive atmosphere, acid storms and other dangers of the terrain. The air and water transported to the base will need to have the amount of sulphur left in them analyzed.

The players and Best will find the locals friendly and

helpful. They will be offered advise on materials, transport and storage of the acid and sulphur, on weather forecasts, and on times to descend into the depths. This advice will prove invaluable, and the players should be encouraged to listen to the locals.

After five days, if all goes well with the players having negotiated the hazards of working in such an environment, a raiding Salvationer having evaded the Air Navy, will attack a postal service airship. The airship will be damaged and the crew will do all they can to stop descending into the acid mists. The players, who should be unprepared for the attack, will be left facing a hostile airship and a damaged friendly one than needs rescuing before the crew descend to their deaths. The Salvationer's weapons will have little effect against the players Grav and/or starship however they can still attack the stricken airship, the players and their base, the starport, or any other airship that might be returning.

The postal service airship will take 10 minutes to descend to a depth low enough to kill the crew. If the Salvationer is allowed to continue its attack each hit will halve the time it takes for the airship to descend, and four successful hits will destroy the postal service airship.

If the players manage to rescue the airship and destroy or capture the Salvationer, Heaven's Reach's government will look favourably on the negotiations and will allow Corex to set-up the year's trial.

Following the rescue or for exceptional work Havelock and Best will award the players with a Cr 5,000 bonus each. Upon arrival back on Arnigi Havelock and Best will offer the players an additional charter to 812-416 and back in two months time. This is to carry the equipment for the trial. As an incentive to accept, the PCs will also be offered freight and passenger runs at regular intervals to and from 812-148 and Arnigi. These additional runs can be scheduled at the referee's discretion.

APPENDIX – DOLPHINS IN T20

THE DOLPHINS (TURSIOPS GALACTIS): A MINOR RACE FOR T20

Dolphins (*Tursiops galactis*) are a genetically uplifted Terran animal species, like the Ursa and Orca. During the Rule of Man, the Solomani megacorporation GenAssist raised Dolphins to sentience as one of their numerous programs to adapt Terran native lifeforms to alien environments. Genassist saw a need for sentients that could assist in the colonization, development and exploitation of world with high hydrographic percentages. To that end, GenAssist began research on a number of different aquatic species. As other species were dropped from GenAssist's overall project, the company focused more resources on the Dolphins. It was not long before Dolphins attained true intelligence, and were rapidly seeded along the rimward frontiers of Solomani space. Even after their forebears passed into extinction on their homeworld (though colonies of non-sentient dolphins still exist in transplanted ecologies on other worlds), uplifted Dolphins continued to thrive and expand. A majority of Dolphins still dwell in Solomani space, but their curious nature and natural bent toward exploration has driven them to establish colonies sporadically across Imperial space, from the Domain of Deneb to the Gateway Domain.

Personality: Dolphins are a naturally gregarious and social race, living in extended family communities of fifteen to twenty adults. However, they possess no truly structured society as man envisions it. Genetic uplifting is a piecemeal science, not entirely understood even by 56th Century standards (Terran dating), much less during the Rule of Man when Dolphins were first uplifted. Many psychological drives for the Dolphins are still "hard-wired" into the race which were never entirely geneered out. The Dolphins are an interesting study in how these instincts present themselves in a sentient species.

One of the primary drives in Dolphin society is total equality, as every Dolphin believes that each citizen is entitled to the full benefits of society's capabilities. They have no concept of property, personal or otherwise, nor do they understand land ownership. Basic human drives that lead to mercantilism and related criminal activity, and even social casting such as nobility are foreign to the Dolphin mindset. Such antisocial thoughts belie the Dolphin's instinct toward equality and sharing, and threaten the family and thus the community.

This drive towards total equality has led to some cross-culture conflicts. Believing that tools and items exist for the full benefit of all, Dolphins will often borrow an item or tool without asking if it is not currently in use. This can be disconcerting to other, more possessive, races, which

often view such acts as theft. Some Dolphins have come to realize, over long exposure, that asking permission to use something is a game that must be played with items that people seem attached to.

While Dolphins are able to deal deadly blows to larger creatures by ramming, they are (generally) friendly to humans and rarely known to attack people without provocation. Military training may alter this generally pleasant nature. Most Dolphins possess a strong instinct to aid other cetaceans in danger, responding to cries of distress by taking any physical action necessary to rescue them from harm. This aptly named Succor Syndrome is a particularly strong artifact of their pre-uplifted ancestry.

Physical Description: Uplifted from dolphins found on Terra, the modern male Dolphin measures 2.75 to 3.95m from fluke to snout, and masses 100 to 150 kg. Female Dolphins tend to be smaller and lighter. Dolphins possess a brain that is 1.5 times the size of a human's. This is due in part to the greater body mass of a Dolphin, and in part to allow for the rapid processing of their echolocation sense, as Dolphins emit high frequency sounds and process the returning echoes to help them perceive their environment. This does not mean that the Dolphin has poor eyesight. Underwater, they possess very keen eyesight, but due to the different refracting nature of air versus water, they are near-sighted out of water. (TeeSuit helmets or corrective lens adjust for this.)

A carnivorous species, Dolphins eat twice as much as humans. Despite being an aquatic race, Dolphins are still air-breathers. However, they can use the full lung capacity, allowing them to dive for an average of 15 minutes without respirator assistance. Layers of fat offer the Dolphin some limited natural protection from physical damage. Additionally, their physiology protects them somewhat from the pressures of greater aquatic depths, allowing them to dive as deep as 240m without assistance. Dolphins can swim at speed of 40 kph, with occasional bursts of up to 60 kph. They require high levels of humidity, so often travel about in specially designed environmental suits, called Travel-Suits or TeeSuits. Finally, common with numerous uplifted races, Dolphins did not naturally develop organs capable of fine manipulation. They make up for this lack through the use of mechanical appendages, called waldos.

STATUS: MINOR RACE

HOMEWORLD: TERRA (EARTH) A867A49-D

Languages: All Dolphins speak Dolphinese, a language composed of various clicks, rasps, and whistles extending into ultrasonic ranges beyond human hearing. Without technological assistance, it is virtually impossible for a human being to speak or understand this language. In addition, many Dolphins understand Galanglic, but have difficulties

verbalizing in Galanglic without technological assistance (though it is possible through diligent work and training for a Dolphin to communicate in Galanglic unaided.)

Adventurers: The Dolphins' love of space and innate curiosity leads most of them to pursue careers in exploration among the stars. Most militant Dolphins pursue careers in the aquatic armed forces, though other military and mercenary careers are not unknown among their numbers. Dolphin psychology, such as their beliefs in total equality and the lack of a strong concept of personal property, tends to preclude Dolphins from exploring political and mercantile pursuits, whether licit or illicit.

RACIAL TRAITS

- +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -4 Social Standing
- All Dolphins begin as 4th level characters with 6000XP (3 Alien levels + their first class level.)
- 5 + Constitution score = Lifeblood points
- Constitution ability score X 2 = Starting Stamina points.
- Dolphin base speed is 1.5 meters (unaided, mostly by flopping somewhat helplessly about on the ground). Dolphins have a swim speed of 24 meters.
- Large-size. Dolphins receive a -1 attack and AC penalty due to their size.
- Can dive in water down to depths of 240 meters without artificial aid.
- Extended lung capacity: Dolphins can hold their breath for a number of minutes equal to their Constitution score plus three (Con + 3), before they begin to suffer from asphyxiation.
- +2 natural AC bonus.
- +8 to all Swim checks.
- +4 to all Listen checks. In addition, Dolphins are +2 to all Spot checks made underwater, but -4 to all Spot checks made outside of water (unless compensated through corrective lens.)
- Blindsight: Dolphins can "see" by emitting high-frequency sounds, inaudible to most other creatures, that allow them to locate objects and creatures within 36 meters.
- Dietary requirements: Dolphins must eat twice as much as humans to meet their nutritional needs.
- Succor Syndrome: A Dolphin must make a Will save (DC 20) to resist the proto-sentient urge to rush to the aid of any other Dolphin in distress, doing everything in their power to help them until the danger has past. While under Succor Syndrome, Dolphins suffer a -5 circumstance penalty on all mental tasks, as their instincts control them and drive them toward aiding their comrade.
- No hands: Dolphins possess no fine manipulatory appendages, and must use artificial means to manipulate their environment.
- May not select Barbarian, Merchant, Noble or Rogue classes.
- Dolphins may attack others by ramming them with

their hard snouts as a natural weapon, inflicting 2d4 + Str modifier in damage with a successful hit.

Random Height/Weight:

Dolphin, male- base height (length) 265, height modifier +4d6 (X5); base weight 90, weight modifier X (1d4) kg.

Dolphin, female- base height (length) 250, height modifier +4d6 (X5); base weight 75, weight modifier X (1d4) kg.

Age: Young Adult 2-5; Adult 6-29; Middle Age 30-39; Old Age 40-49; Venerable Age 50+; Maximum Age 50+2d4; Maximum Terms 7.

NEW FEATS

WALDO OPS

The character is familiar with the design and use of artificial manipulatory devices.

Prerequisite: Character's race possesses no true manipulatory organs.

Benefit: The character is skilled at using waldos, or artificial manipulatory appendages, in interacting with his environment, and does not suffer a untrained penalty to skill checks and attack rolls when operating them.

Normal: Untrained characters suffer a -4 penalty on related skill checks and attack rolls that rely on the operation of waldos.

RESIST SUCCOR SYNDROME

The character is better at resisting Succor Syndrome than other Dolphins.

Prerequisite: Dolphin race.

Benefit: The character is +4 on any Will saves to resist the effects of Succor Syndrome. In addition, should the character succumb to Succor Syndrome, the character only suffers a -2 circumstance penalty on all mental skill checks.

Normal: Dolphins normally must make an unmodified Will save to resist the effects of Succor Syndrome, and suffer -5 to all mental skill checks while under its influence.

VERBALIZATION

The character is capable of verbalizing languages so that humans and others of similar sensory perception ranges can understand him.

Prerequisite: Character's race has difficulty communicating within the sensory perception ranges of humans and similar races.

Benefits: The character can verbally communicate effectively with humans, altering and/or limiting their communications to fall within human perception ranges.

NEW EQUIPMENT

Travel Suit (or TeeSuit): An environmental garment designed specifically for Dolphins, the TeeSuit is effectively a Dolphin vac suit that sustains the high levels of humidity necessary for the Dolphins to survive. The TeeSuit comes complete with integral grav modules to enable the Dolphin

to move freely out of the water at speeds of up to 100 kph (though normal cruise speed is only about 75 kph, and NOE speed is 20 kph). The suit also possesses a built-in long range communication array and onboard computer, equivalent to a hand computer in data processing capacity. The clear, bubble-helmet is specifically designed to serve as corrective lens for Dolphins, thus countering their normal penalties to Spot outside of water. The TeeSuit provides complete protection for up to five atmospheres of pressure, over a temperature range of -100 degrees to +100 degrees Celsius. The suit also provides some physical protection (AR 5 at TL 12-13, AR 4 at TL 14 and higher.) Waldos are optional. The wearer must be proficient with the use of vac suits to effectively wear a TeeSuit. Early versions of the TeeSuit appear at TL 12, weighing 12 kg (with the grav modules turned off) and providing twelve hours of life support at a cost of Cr125,000. By TL 15, the cost has increased to Cr150,000 but the suit only weigh 7 kg, and provides very comfortable accommodations for up to 48 hours.

Combat Travel Suit (or CeeTeeSuit): Designed for military applications, the CeeTeeSuit provides Dolphins with an equivalent to human battle dress. The Combat Travel Suit boasts the same parameters as the standard Travel Suit, with a number of combat-worthy enhancements: increased physical protection (AR 10), a sonar amplifier (range 1 km), integral waldos, and a chameleon surface for camouflage (often set to dark gray above blending to light Grey/white on the lower surface.) CeeTeeSuits can be fitted for a special snout ram, as well as a torpedo rack.

Waldos: Mechanical manipulation devices that takes the form of an artificial arm and hand, waldos are often used in pairs, generally in situations where a physical presence is too risky (such as in hostile environments) or by races that lack manipulatory organs. The latter is virtually unheard of in naturally occurring sophont species, but is not uncommon among genetically-uplifted races. Dolphins are among the most widely-known users of waldos. Early versions, first created at tech level 9, are worn as a harness (or mounted on the outside of a Travel Suit) and controlled by movements of the tongue and head. These early waldos are very clumsy, resulting in a -4 penalty any Dexterity-based skill checks and attack rolls made using the waldos. (This is assuming a proficient user; non-proficient users suffer additional penalties to their skill checks.) In addition, the waldo's strength is also quite poor (Str 6), allowing them to manipulate no more than 25 kilograms with safety. Greater masses may be moved, but there is a danger of system failure. (Any checks made by the waldos exceeding their normal Strength capacities that fail by five or more result in damage to the waldos.) TL 9 waldos cost Cr150,000 and weigh 20 kilograms.

Medical advances allow the surgical implantation of neural control plugs at TL 12, which allows the user to directly interface with the waldos. This reduced the penalty on related skill checks and attack rolls to -2 at TL 12, -1 at TL 13, and no penalty at TL 14 and higher. Every advance in tech level

increases the effective Strength score of the waldos by 2, to a maximum of Str 16 at TL 14. At TL 12, the weight of the waldos drops to 10 kilograms, and increases the cost to CR250,000.

GENERIC NPCS

The following rather generic NPCs are provided for use by the referee when dealing with Dolphin encounters. These NPCs may be used 'as is', or the referee is free to adapt them to suit their needs.

Dolphin Negotiator: Dolphin Professional 6; TL 5-9; Init +0 (Dex +0); AC 11 (-1 size, +2 natural armor); AR 2; Speed 1.5m (1sq), swim 24m (16sq); St/Lb 60/17; Attack +0 melee (snout ram 2d4+1/20); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +5; SZ L; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11, Edu 8, Soc 6.

Skills: Bluff +4.5, Innuendo +4.5, Liaison +9, P/Negotiator +9, Sense Motive +4.5, Swim +10, Survival +1, (one appropriate T/ skill) +8.

Feats: Armor Proficiency/Light, (Armor Proficiency/Vac,) Carousing, Fast Talk, Professional Specialty/P/Negotiator, Trustworthy, Verbalization.

Note: (*) The first value for Spot is when the Dolphin is in the water, while the second value is when the Dolphin is out of the water, without corrective lens.

Dolphin Negotiator 878764 Age 30 3 terms
Liaison-3, Communications-2, Carousing-1, Computer-1, Brawling-0, Vac-0

Dolphin Soldier: Dolphin Army 6; TL 5-9; Init +0 (Dex +0); AC 11 (-1 size, +2 natural armor); AR 2; Speed 1.5m (1sq), swim 24m (16sq); St/Lb 68/17; Attack +4 melee (snout ram 2d4+3/20), -1 ranged (assault rifle 1d12/20); SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2; SZ L; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 8, Soc 6.

Skills: Demolitions +9, Listen +4, Spot +11/+5*, Swim +10, Survival +10, (one appropriate T/ skill).

Feats: Armor Proficiency/Light, (Armor Proficiency/Vac,) Dodge, Mobility or Waldo Ops, Tactics I, Weapon Focus/Snout ram, Weapon Proficiency/Combat Rifleman, Weapon Proficiency/Marksman, Weapon Specialization/Snout ram.

Equipment: Lower tech Dolphin soldiers are more melee combatants than anything else. At higher tech levels, they wear waldos, and can use combat rifles effectively.

Note: (*) The first value for Spot is when the Dolphin is in the water, while the second value is when the Dolphin is out of the water, without corrective lens.

Dolphin Soldier 878764 Age 30 3 terms
Demolitions-2, Brawling-1, Communications-1, Rifle-1, Tactics-1, Waldo Ops-1, Vac-0

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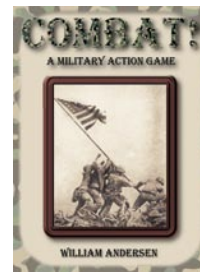
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