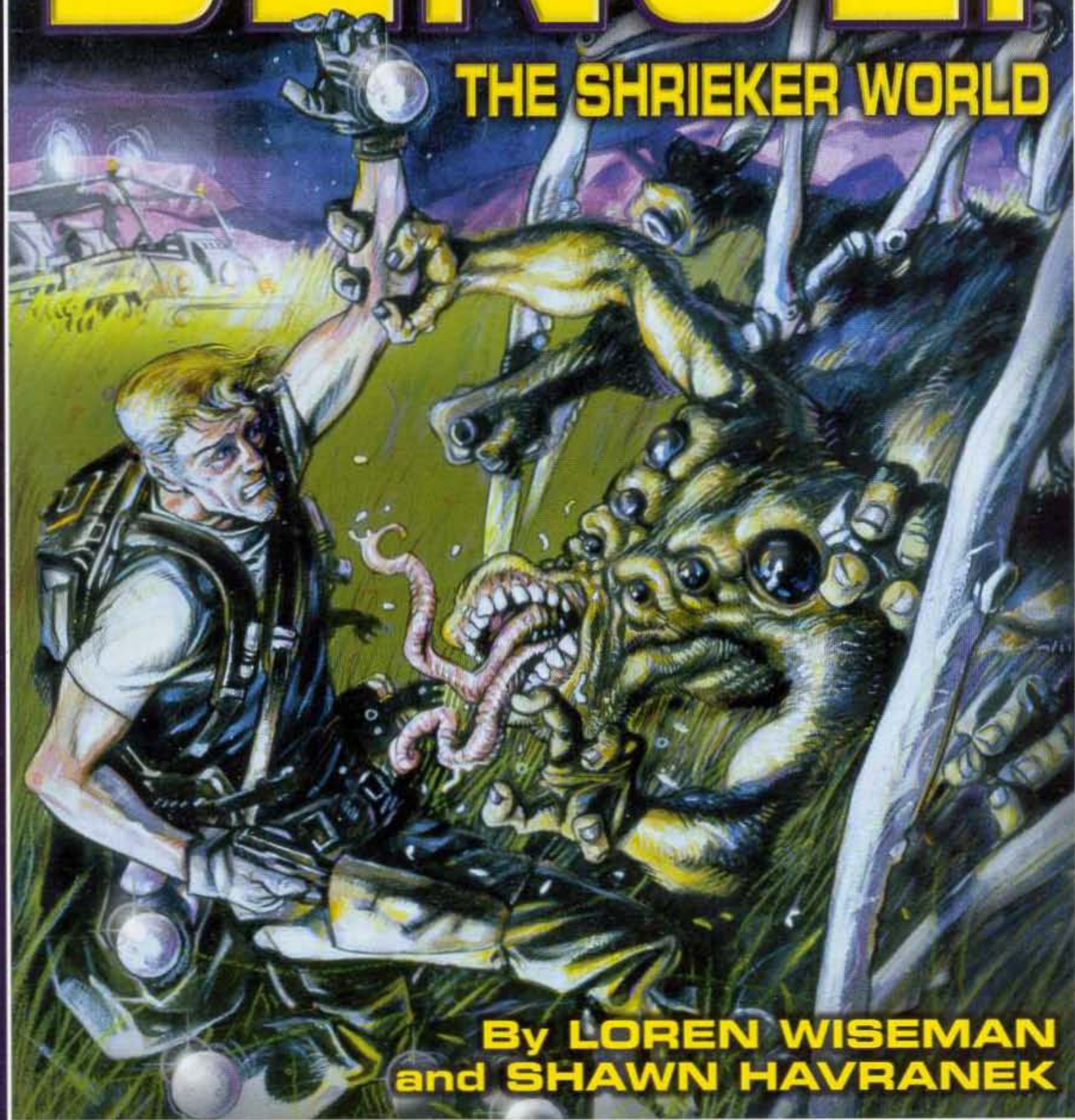


GURPS[®] *Traveller*[®] Planetary Survey 2

DENUULI

THE SHRIEKER WORLD



By LOREN WISEMAN
and SHAWN HAVRANEK

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

DENULI

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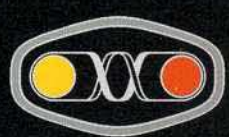
Valley of Memories

Great Retreat

Great Sea

Last Sea

Starport



+ STARPORT ● MAJOR CITY

GURPS[®] Traveller[®]

Planetary Survey 2

DENULI

THE SHRIEKER WORLD

**By Loren Wiseman
and Shawn Havranek**

*Based on the award-winning
Traveller science fiction universe
by Marc Miller*

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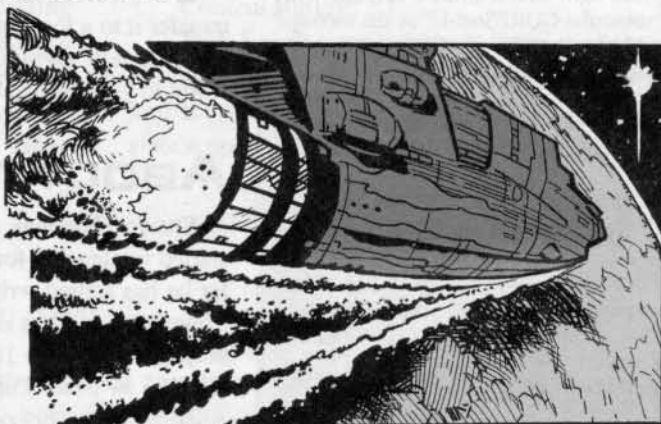
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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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Page References

Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. CI refers to *Compendium I*, GT to *GURPS Traveller, Second Edition*, and T:FT to *Traveller: Far Trader*.

For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

Introduction

Just beyond the Imperium's edge lies a system so useless that until recently it had no name . . . just a string of registration numbers in the IISS survey records. Denuli is only now coming to the Imperium's notice – this backwater world has proven to be an unexpected treasure house.

It turns out that this "useless" planet abounds in new resources. It is the home of a new sophont race, it holds medical and technological secrets potentially worth billions of credits . . . and it is the source of the fabled Denuli Gems, of which only a few dozen had previously been discovered. And all these resources are inextricably linked to the aboriginal sophont on the world – the species known to Humaniti as the Shriekers.

In 1110, one non-native had set foot on the surface. Less than a decade later, the Denuli system sits at the crossroads between greed, science, and novelty, as the Imperium tries to balance political and economic realities with the needs of a newly discovered sapient race.

How to Use This Book

The *Planetary Survey* books are not rules; they're background, nearly system-free. They are designed as a series of adventure settings . . . not just worlds the PCs can visit, but also "offstage" places with their own history that can be used to drive adventures elsewhere (see *Denuli Comes to You*, p. 29, for using Denuli in a non-Spinward Marches campaign). You can use this book:

■ As is. Denuli is an official part of the *GURPS Traveller* continuity, tied in with previous work in the *Traveller* background. It builds upon material outlined in GDW's adventure *Safari Ship*, extrapolating from that situation. Even if your campaign is not set in the Spinward Marches, you can use scenarios involving Denuli Gems almost anywhere.

■ In pieces. Feel free to rename the world and the aliens, and transfer it to a location better suited to your individual campaign. See *Alternate Denulis* on p. 30 for suggestions on tailoring the world to your own game system or campaign.

About the Authors

Shawn Havranek is a theater director and set designer who started freelancing for the game industry less than a year ago. So far he has scored writing credits with Steve Jackson Games and Chaosium, and has several other projects in the works. He has been gaming since 1981, and discovered *Traveller* in 1985 and *GURPS* in 1990. Currently he is in the process of moving from Austin back to his college stomping grounds in the Northeast, and is blessed to live with the most beautiful and understanding woman in the world – his wife Dina – and two cats.

Loren Wiseman was one of the founding partners of GDW, Inc., original publishers of *Traveller*, and spent more than 20 years there as designer, developer, and editor. After GDW closed, Loren freelanced, then came to SJ Games, where he is *Traveller* line editor and expert in residence.

IISS DATA – DENULI (FORMERLY 567-908)

Denuli orbits the primary (Laragii, formerly 567) of a binary system located at 1031 Spinward Marches, beyond the Imperial border. The system is underdeveloped, primarily because of the hazard to navigation presented by the large number of scattered planetoids and smaller debris in extremely variable orbits present in all portions of the system. The companion star Shasharshi (formerly 567.5) has no significant satellites and is so far away from Denuli as to be invisible during the day. The system's nomenclature was updated on 329-1117, when the IISS Nomenclature Committee approved the recommendations of the survey team.

The system contains an indigenous non-Human sophont species, recently contacted by an expedition sponsored by the Naasirka megacorporation, which maintains contact and liaison with the inhabitants. Naasirka also operates a small bio-medical research station, investigating potential applications of certain unique features of the sophonts.

Navigation within the system is extremely hazardous, and not recommended except in emergency situations. Navigation buoys are maintained in the outer reaches, broadcasting emergency refueling instructions on standard frequencies – it is strongly recommended that emergency refueling be carried out at the outermost world, Uamdar (formerly 567-934), rather than risking transit of the inner system.

The system is often the target of smugglers engaged in the illegal removal of the eggs of the indigenous sophont species. Possession or sale of these eggs or any portion thereof is a violation of Imperial law and perpetrators are subject to arrest.

The IISS is currently in the process of performing a complete system survey, but the level of available funding will not permit completion for several years.

Starport: Class I facilities administered by Naasirka and overseen by IISS Recon Base I-SM-082.

Size: Diameter 5,034 miles, density 9.15.

Gravity: 1.05 G.

Atmosphere: Very thin oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere, no unique features.

Hydrographic Percentage: 20% surface water, largely tied up in surface bodies, polar caps, or glaciation.

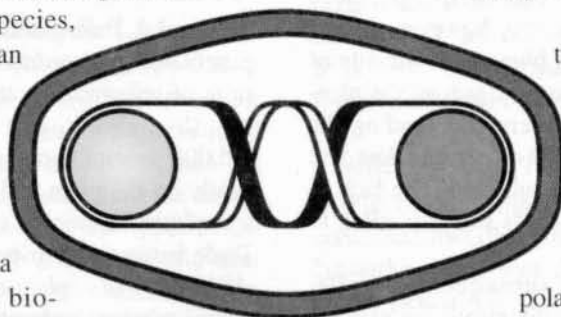
Population: 300,000+ Shrieker (nomadic indigenous non-Human sophont, census data unreliable), small Human population (200+).

Government: Theocracy, administered by a class of native priests.

Control Rating: 2.

Tech Level: 5 near starport, lower in outlying regions. Manufacturing capacity is minimal, and the only industry is a medical research station operated and maintained by Naasirka.

– END TRANSMISSION –



SYSTEM DATA

Primary: Laragii (formerly 567) (M II)

Name (orbit)	Gravity		Hydrographic %		Population	Notes
	Diameter	Atmosphere	Climate			
Ilgud (7.14 AU)	1,403	0.78 None	NA	V. Hot	-	
Denuli (19.55 AU)	5,034	1.05 V. Thin	20%	Warm	*	Scientific Station
Uamdar (41.37 AU)	960	0.40 None	8% (ice)	V. Cold	-	

* 300,000+ native sophonts, slightly more than 200 Humans

Secondary: Shasharshi (formerly 567.5) (M1 D)

Separation: 540 to 660 AU, Orbital Eccentricity 0.1

No satellites of significance.

History

Denuli presents a paradox; for most of its history, Denuli was isolated from the Imperium, while only a few parsecs away are some of the most advanced worlds in Charted Space.

PREHISTORY

Evidence supports the theory that at one time, Denuli was a much more comfortable planet to live. About 250,000 years ago, however, a large planetoid struck a glancing blow in the vicinity of the Great Ocean, tearing away much of the planet's free water and atmosphere and sending the planetary crust into a cycle of earthquakes and volcanism that still has not subsided. The lack of biodiversity shows the planet is still struggling to repopulate itself.

The disaster, and the subsequent die-offs, caused a genetic race as the surviving species diversified to fill abandoned niches. One such species was the Shriekers' ancestor, which, within the next 50,000 years, began to show evidence of tool use and the complex migratory patterns that still shape the Shrieker culture. The proto-Shriekers continued to migrate and evolve until the planet reached one of its volcanic slow periods. At this point, the first nations began to appear.



THE FIRST EMPIRE - THE SUN PEOPLE

About -150,000 Imperial reckoning, the Shrieker population had grown to a degree that simple food gathering was not sufficient to feed their numbers. Agriculture and domestication developed in response. With the resulting creation of fixed settlements, the first real governments were born. These remained small and localized, rising and falling over the centuries, until around -108,000, when the first world-spanning nation

rose from a sun-worshipping confederation. This government created the first leisure class, which dedicated itself to art and science. During this ancient period, still remembered in Shrieker legends as a golden age, the race advanced to TL3 – only to fall back to barbarity during a centuries-long planetary drought.

THE PLAINS CIVILIZATION

Shrieker society returned to its basic nomadic pattern and remained there until the random expressions of volcanism created a wide, rich flood plain on the shore of the great ocean. In -15,000 several bands of nomads settled permanently on the plain and redeveloped the complex agricultural techniques of the previous sun-culture. Trade between the tribes led to alliances, and by -10,000 the floodplain unified under the rule of a central religious authority. The practice of marriage pilgrimages began at this time.

As the prosperity of the plains civilization grew, it suffered increasingly violent raids from the nomadic tribes still inhabiting the rest of the planet. A dedicated warrior caste arose to protect the nation, and by -9200 had evolved into a secular authority parallel to the religious rule. In -8900 this civil government seized total power from the priesthood, which retreated into the mountains to evolve into a monastic sect. Over the next several centuries, military rule evolved into a civil service bureaucracy, and it was during this period that the Shriekers reached the height of their technological development. Walking-legs and other prosthetics were developed, massive irrigation and construction projects were undertaken, and the plains civilization reached out to subjugate the entirety of their known world.

THE RISE OF THE RETREAT

About -6000, disaster struck the still-growing civilization. Increased tectonic activity filled the atmosphere with ash, and much of the planet's water froze at the poles. The resultant drop in sea level caused massive climatic changes, which,

combined with constant earthquakes, destroyed the plains civilization's ability to produce food. The nation quickly fragmented back into the migratory tribes of times past. The last remnant of Denuli's advanced culture survives in the Great Retreat, the site of the exiled priesthood. From there, in contact with interstellar culture, Shrieker society is advancing once again.

CONTACT

It is now widely accepted that first contact occurred, not with the Thingvellir Expedition (see below), as originally thought, but much earlier by an independent scout – Mtume Denuli – performing a preliminary survey for the expanding Third Imperium.

THE COMING OF MTUME DENULI

Old records and the Shriekers' own rich oral tradition enable historians to date Denuli's arrival to 480. Denuli's logs mention a two-year stop for repairs on an unidentified planet, but fail to give much detail about the nature of the repairs or the location of the system. The journals mention little more about the world than placing an emergency beacon – unusual for a member of the Scouts. It is clear that, for reasons of his own, Mtume Denuli falsified his logs before returning to Imperial space. The discovery by his heirs of the original Denuli Gems, and the oddly pronounceable name of the Shrieker religion, Dtai-Denuli (see p. 17), strongly imply that those two years were spent on Denuli and in close association with the natives. The warm welcome the Thingvellir Expedition received and the existence of certain images in classic Shrieker art serve to reinforce this theory.

THE THINGVELLIR EXPEDITION

After Denuli's departure, the planet remained untouched until 1108, when the free trader *Homer* misjumped into the Denuli system, and performed an emergency landing in the Valley of Memories. The captain and crew spent three weeks performing maintenance on the drives, and in the course of their stay gathered several decayed Denuli Gems and encountered a startlingly beautiful native life form. They left without meeting any Shriekers – the last path to the Valley of Memories had been blocked two years before. Stories of their stop and the animal they found reached the ears of Kafla Thingvellir.

Thingvellir, an amateur naturalist who had been searching for years for a striking undiscovered species to bear his name, immediately mounted an expedition to the planet.

It was with this expedition that true, ongoing Imperial contact began. In 1110 Kafla left Mora to capture a sample of the elusive animal that would eventually be named "Thingvellir's Crested Trapper." The expedition was funded by the Naasirka megacorporation, and was intended as nothing more than a perk to ensure the smooth acquisition of Starolon, LIC, Thingvellir's medical equipment company.

The expedition succeeded beyond all expectations. Thingvellir formally described the crested trapper to the scientific establishment, earning the right to have the beautiful creature bear his name. Naasirka completed the buyout of Starolon, LIC and immediately saw the commercial value of certain of the natives' traits. The Shriekers were introduced as a new sophont race to the Imperium, and Naasirka made good use of the friendly relations begun by Thingvellir.

Clearing the Pilgrimage Route

The key to Thingvellir's success, as well as the continued friendly relationship the Shriekers and Naasirka share, was and still is the pilgrimage routes (see p. 17). The region around the Valley of Memories has, within the last 50 years, shown a marked increase in volcanic activity. Several routes led to the sacred valley, but one by one each became impassable due to earthquakes, rockslides, and lava flows. The last route closed in 1091, and despite the best efforts of the Great Retreat, it could not be reopened. Any progress was undercut by further seismic activity and more adults were being lost to the effort than children were reaching adulthood. The Shriekers of the Great Retreat faced the slow death of their culture, as their fertility was directly tied to the pilgrimage.

Kafla Thingvellir was an answer to their collective prayers (almost literally, considering the origin of much of the Retreat's dogma). In return for help in locating specimens of the crested trapper, he agreed to assist in clearing a new path to the Valley of Memories, a comparatively easy task with modern equipment. The continuation of this practice is the basis of the Naasirka/Shrieker relationship. Naasirka keeps the pilgrimage paths clear – four paths in addition to the original have been created, and a fifth is under construction – and the Shriekers provide subjects for the enclave's research, usually children or nomads from the desert.

THE DENULI RUSH

Unfortunately, contact with galactic culture was not wholly positive. Crew members from Thingvellir's ship discovered Shrieker eggs and recognized them as Denuli Gems (see p. 15). When the expedition returned to Imperial space, news of the source of the gems quickly spread to unscrupulous traders across the Marches. Dozens of prospectors descended on Denuli to find and exploit the Shriekers' eggs. Both Naasirka and the IISS worked to secure legal protection for the natives, but by the time either organization could put ships in the system, hundreds of eggs had been seized from the Valley of Memories. When the supply of gems in the Valley became low, the more vicious of the traders began harvesting still-viable eggs from isolated villages and nomads. Entire tribes were wiped out to satisfy the demand, and several traders, innocent and guilty, were killed by retaliating Shriekers. It was only by fast action that Naasirka managed to retain friendly relations with the Shriekers.

Late in 1112, possession and sale of the gems were declared illegal within the bounds of the Imperium. An IISS recon base was put in place to watch the planet, and an Imperial Naval patrol was shifted to clear the system of prospectors. As many of the eggs as could be found – no more than a fraction of those taken – were returned to the Shriekers as a gesture of good faith, and promises were made by all involved that any further smuggling would be severely punished.

Smuggling still occurs – the lure of quick cash is often too much for the construction teams and researchers brought in by Naasirka, and sometimes too much for the Scouts themselves. A trickle of gems leaves the planet through both organizations. Outsiders do the vast majority of the smuggling, however. The Scouts and Naasirka are too few to watch the entire planet at once, and the large number of moonlets makes watching orbits a tricky thing. There are usually at least two smuggling teams on the planet at any one time, though they avoid the Valley of Memories. Smuggling will continue as long as demand exists for the gems.

NAASIRKA AND THE SHRIEKERS

Naasirka formalized their current agreement with the Great Retreat in 1113 when they established the Naasirka-7 Research Enclave. The megacorp quickly absorbed Thingvellir's medical equipment company, then expanded Starolon, LIC's research department to discover ways to

exploit the Shriekers' unique physiological gifts. Several dozen scientists were moved from Mora to the enclave, and Naasirka purchased a small construction firm on Mertactor to clear pilgrimage routes. The enclave initially studied only the Shriekers, but Naasirka soon saw the benefit of an isolated research site. Not only was it ideal for preventing espionage, but the facility was out of sight of all Imperial regulatory agencies. The enclave soon expanded to include other sensitive projects.

Local Timeline

- 250,000: A planetoid crashes into Denuli, knocking much of its atmosphere and free water away. Massive extinctions occur at all levels of the ecology.
- 150,000: The Shriekers' ancestors start developing tools.
- 111,000: The Shrieker nation that will eventually become the "Sun Empire" is founded.
- 108,000: The Sun Empire becomes the first world-wide government.
- 108,000 to -94,000: "The Golden Age." The Sun Empire mines most of the available mineral resources on the planet.
- 94,000 to -93,000: Centuries-long drought destroys the Sun Empire.
- 15,000: Volcanism creates a wide floodplain on the coast of the Great Ocean. Several tribes settle there.
- 10,000: The plains civilizations unify under a central religious authority. The Plains Empire begins.
- 8900: The religious government is overthrown and sent into exile. The Great Retreat is founded.
- 6000: A "volcanic winter" freezes much of Denuli's water in polar ice caps; Shrieker civilization declines as tribes migrate everywhere but the Great Retreat.
- 480: Mtume Denuli performs initial survey of the Denuli system.
- 482: The Great Retreat begins its policy of expansion.
- 1091: The last route to the Valley of Memories becomes impassible.
- 1108: The *Homer* misjumps and lands on Denuli.
- 1110: The Thingvellir Expedition to Denuli takes place. Route to Valley of the Memories reopened with offworld cooperation.
- 1111 to 1112: The Denuli Gem Rush.
- 1112: Possession or sale of Denuli Gems declared illegal within the bounds of the Imperium.
- 1112: IISS Recon Base I-SM-082 founded.
- 1113: Naasirka Research Enclave founded.

Denuli Today

The Shrieker homeworld is located at 1031 in District 268/Spinward Marches. Skipped over in the First Survey and barely charted in the Second, Denuli remained a backwater just outside the borders of the Imperium. The planet is divided into two major landforms, a desert continent that stretches across half the planet, and a huge mountain range surrounding a single large ocean. While technically habitable, the planet's very thin oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere and constant, unpredictable volcanism make Denuli unappealing for colonization. Until the discovery of its native sentient species, it was considered one of the most useless pieces of real estate in the Spinward Marches. It was only in late 1117 that the system name was changed in the Imperial survey database. Before, it was known only as a string of numbers – 567-908.

SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS

Outwardly, there is little to interest the casual visitor to Denuli. The system is mineral-poor. The large number of planetoids sharing Denuli's orbit and its dozens of irregular moonlets discourage all but the most skillful or determined pilots from attempting orbit or planetfall. The Faldor and Bowman systems are both a single jump away and do not present the same navigational difficulties, so they receive the lion's share of mercantile traffic in the region.

Besides Denuli itself, the system has two other bodies that could reasonably be called planets, Uamdar (formerly 567-934) and Ilgud (formerly 567-962). However, the system is cluttered with thousands of small planetoids ranging from a few meters to a few miles across. The orbits of these space rocks are highly erratic – they are not clustered in a single asteroid belt.

UAMDAR

Besides Denuli, the only real estate in the system likely to be of interest to passing starships is an icy rockball in the outer system. Small and blue-green, with bands of dingy yellow, it is as

unremarkable as the rest of the system. It has no moons worthy of the name, but a host of the planetoids that infest the system revolve at odd angles and eccentric ellipses around it. Its only claim to significance is as an emergency refueling station for ships that misjumped, or are engaged in illicit ventures. Outside of Denuli itself, it is the only source of hydrogen in the system. Refueling here is difficult – the surface ice must be melted, then cracked into hydrogen and oxygen. It is a time-consuming process. Ships with business with the IISS station or research enclave refuel on Denuli's surface.

ILGUD

The closest planet to the star is even less inviting than Denuli. A rocky, pockmarked wasteland, investigation has revealed nothing worth salvaging from its surface. It has no atmosphere, no volatiles, no discernible mineral resources, and suffers even more violent and common earthquakes than the Shrieker homeworld. It matches every definition of a "hell-world," and has had only a single visit from the IISS since first being surveyed in 480 (to update the instrument packages deposited at various locations on the world's surface). Not even the smugglers go there.



The Starport

A small downport is growing around Mtume's beacon. The Naasirka-7 Research Enclave has improved the facilities almost to Class II. The downport is the base of operations for all legitimate offworlder concerns, though at any given time more than half of the Human population of Denuli is performing duties elsewhere on the planet. The Imperial Starport Authority is not involved in the administration of Denuli's port – the facilities are run by Naasirka, ostensibly until the Shriekers can govern the facility themselves. The Scouts remain on the authority of their mandate to survey the system.

The Naasirka Presence

Research facilities make up over half of the permanent installation in the starport. Over 40 scientists make the base their home – assistants, secretaries, cleaning staff, and administrators bring the research staff to over 200. Any of a dozen projects are in progress at once, but the majority of the research concerns the Shriekers. Tremendous strides have been made in direct nerve interfaces, and hopeful executives predict that new designs based on Denuli research will surpass even Solomani designs.

The base is headed by Anika Tolliver. Tolliver was hand-picked for the position by Adolfa Kaailra (p. 26), and is an able if unimaginative administrator. Anika is one of the few Vargr to reach this high a position in Naasirka, and this invites Adolfa's micro-management.

Horyzon Civil Construction

Originally out of Mertactor, Horyzon was a struggling road construction company when they were bought by Naasirka to expand the starport, build research facilities, and keep the Shrieker's pilgrimage routes clear. The entire operation was shipped by bulk-freighter to Denuli. A small complex north of the starport houses 28 workers and a 10-man management team (including one doctor and assistant). Four workers and the management staff remain at the base at all times, while the bulk of the force tries to keep up with the changing geography in the mountains between the Great Retreat and the Valley of Memories. The construction teams are beginning to consider Denuli a home, and the first native Denulian was born in the first-aid clinic two years ago.

Other Personnel

The Scouts maintain a single building at the starport, where they observe the enclave and ensure that the natives are treated fairly.

A substantial number of Shriekers have begun to call the base their temporary home. There is nothing that can yet be called a star-town, but a number of traditional native homes surround the base. Seekers are in the majority, with some serfs and one elder priest, and the entire native population observes each time a ship lifts off. Some have taken the next step and arranged passage off world. More than a dozen Shriekers have left Denuli, and the number is growing. So far none have returned.



THE PLANETOIDS

Because of the apparent uselessness of the system, and because Denuli was never a part of any of the three Imperiums, a full survey of all orbiting bodies was never completed. This presents a unique navigational experience for ships jumping into the system. Accurate system maps for Denuli simply do not exist, and because of the sheer number of irregularly orbiting bodies, jumping outside the orbital plane does not guarantee a safe journey in. The local IISS station is making a complete system survey as part of their duties, but the work is slow going – the budget is limited. The navigational buoys are updated weekly to ensure accurate and safe system routes, but the information these routes are based on is still incomplete and incoming vessels must exercise extreme caution.

Incoming ships that follow the instructions of the navigational buoys *exactly* still must make a Navigation skill check when traveling through the system. Success ensures a journey without incident. Failure means the ship drifts off course and adds 1d×10% to the length of the journey, as a new course must be plotted. Critical failure results in a collision with a small rock fragment, which does 1d×50 damage. Navigators who try to plot their own course roll at -6.



ENTERING THE SYSTEM

The system is effectively uninhabited. Any incoming ship will be hailed by an IISS navigational buoy (one of four, covering the most likely jump-points), advised of the most current safe route to Uamdar, and sternly warned away from Denuli.

Ships that approach the planet openly are contacted by both Scout Recon Base I-SM-082 and the Naasirka research enclave, and asked to state the nature of their business. If the arrival was unexpected, captains are again directed to Uamdar for refueling and warned away from the planet. Approaching ships will be sent warnings about navigational hazards and the penalties involved in smuggling. Ships that ignore the transmissions are tracked, and an air/raft or gig from one of the stations (sometimes both) is dispatched to the calculated landing site.

LANDFORMS

Denuli is a planet of extremes. Its peaks rise out of the atmosphere, its oceanic trench dives over a mile and a half below the surface. The thin atmosphere and hot sun throw every broken rock into sharp relief. Earthquakes and volcanic explosions constantly alter the geography. Nothing has time to erode – history is broken and buried by constant upheaval.

THE GREAT DESERT

Half of Denuli is an arid waste covered by dunes of volcanic ash. Plant life and isolated animals form a fragile ecology that thins gradually as one moves toward the interior of the desert, disappearing 1,000 miles from the base of the mountains. The center of the Great Desert never sees rain, and aside from some hardy lichen is completely lifeless. The desert is the most stable part of Denuli, but while it is spared the worst effects of the earthquakes, the less-frequent volcanic eruptions can cover thousands of square miles with several feet of ash in a matter of hours. Desert life has adapted to survive this, and the flowering of an ash field is one of the most beautiful sights on Denuli. The nomadic Shriekers keep to within a few hundred miles of the mountains.

THE LOST SEA

About -6000, the planet entered a period of increased tectonic activity. A “volcanic winter” reduced average temperatures by more than 10°, tying up more ocean water in the ice caps. The resultant drop in sea level left a huge salt plain. The land once covered by the Lost Sea is harsh even by Denuli’s standards, and is considered cursed by the natives. Little lives there, even close to the sea, and it was there that Mtume Denuli placed his emergency beacon.

THE MOUNTAINS

The mountains of Denuli are as inhospitable as the Great Desert; the peaks range from 30,000 to 45,000 feet high. The thin atmosphere becomes unbreathable higher than 12,000 feet, even for the native Shriekers, and the tops of the peaks are totally barren. Because of the thin atmosphere only the lowest passes are navigable; the mountains create a shifting maze of valleys, the configuration of which changes every few centuries because of landslides, volcanoes, and earthquakes. Within the valleys are isolated Shrieker tribes, some only recently contacted by the Great Retreat – and some of *those* only with the help of Naasirka.

The Great Retreat

The largest population center, and the seat of government for Denuli, is the Great Retreat. By sheer chance, the valley holding the Retreat has been spared the worst of the tectonic chaos. This has allowed the residents to hold on to the last scraps of technology from the Plains Civilization (p. 4). Fully one-quarter of Denuli's population, approximately 75,000 Shriekers, lives in the Retreat. There are some settled outposts and outlying villages, but the Great Retreat is effectively the whole of civilization on Denuli.

The valley containing the Retreat is full of the low stone huts that the natives call home.

Cultivated land covers the floors of the accessible valleys within 15 miles. High on the southern valley wall is the Retreat itself, the monastery where the Plain priests fled when they were exiled from the Plains Civilization. The Retreat is over 8,000 years old, and has been repaired many times; the still-solid walls are a testament to the ability of the Shrieker builders.

With the opening of the pilgrimage routes, the Great Retreat is settling back to their old traditions, and with the scraps of technology they have gleaned from association with Naasirka, the social and power gap between the Retreat Shriekers and the desert nomads is growing. More than five years have passed since the last major incident.

But the stability is unlikely to last. The Scouts are equipping the increasingly jealous nomads. The smuggler encampments are growing. With five routes to the Valley of Memories open, the Great Retreat is reconsidering their need for Naasirka. Denuli is still new, and its destiny is still to be determined.

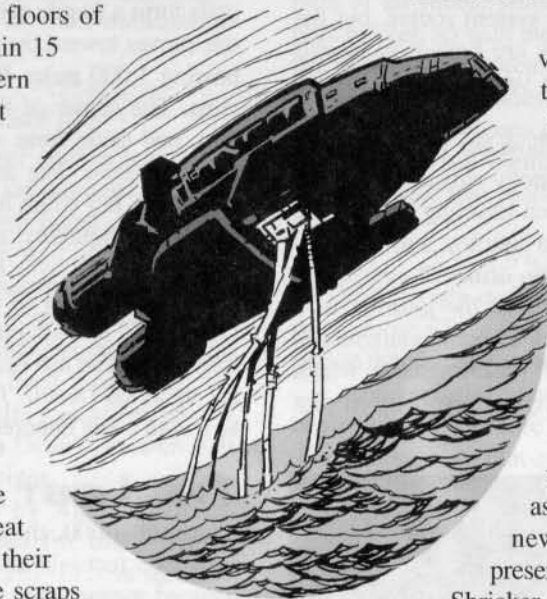
THE VALLEY OF MEMORIES

The Valley of Memories is one of the largest valleys on Denuli, so large that the center resembles a vast open plain more than a valley. It holds numerous Sun Empire ruins, and is the favored destination for the marriage pilgrimage. The Valley is the most attractive spot for an emergency landing, aside from the starport itself. It

has large flat stretches, a source of water, possibly edible fauna . . . and, as too many offworlders have discovered, it is the best place to find Denuli Gems.

Now that the pilgrimage routes are open again and the Shriekers have experienced the 1112 Denuli rush (p. 6), fighters regularly patrol the valley from the Great Retreat. Because of the constant scrutiny by the Shriekers, the Scouts, and Naasirka, smugglers seldom target the Valley any more.

RUINS OF THE SUN EMPIRE



Scattered around the valleys, and a few locations surrounding the Lost Sea, are ancient signs of the Sun Empire (p. 4). It is difficult to tell for sure, after tens of thousands of years, what most of the ruins were. Most seem to be mining operations, and a few are recognizable as buildings. These ruins are often revealed when a flood carries away ash, or covered again by a new eruption. The ash has preserved these remnants of the Shrieker golden age. When a new

site is discovered, it often becomes the destination of a new pilgrimage route. The Shriekers believe the strongest souls inhabit these sites.

THE GREAT OCEAN

The Great Ocean stretches almost from pole to pole, and is surprisingly serene for Denuli. The thin atmosphere doesn't produce strong waves, and none of Denuli's moonlets are of sufficient size to form tides. An occasional tsunami washes the shores clean, but the ocean's surface is reasonably calm and clear. It is from here that most of the clandestine activities on the planet begin.

Both the Scouts and the smugglers use the Great Ocean for refueling. The water provides necessary fuel for a jump, is relatively safe from earthquakes, and gives access to both the nomadic tribes and Seekers from the Retreat. Smugglers see an additional benefit – it is easy to hide underwater, and if caught, captains can safely dump their cargo and claim they were simply engaged in refueling.

NATIVE LIFE

Denuli's shattered ecosystem lacks the biodiversity of other inhabitable planets. But the remaining species are often stunningly beautiful, or have adapted uniquely to fill an isolated niche. Many animals and flora have iridescent body parts or produce gem-like by-products, the most famous being the eggs of its native sophont species.

PELLET VOLES

ST: 1 **Move/Dodge:** 3/7 **Size:** <1
DX: 13 **PD/DR:** 0/0 **Weight:** <1 lb.
IQ: 3 **Damage:** 1d-5 cut **Habitat:** D, M
HT: 12/1 **Reach:** C

Pellet voles are small rodent-like beasts with a interesting method of storing food. Competition is fierce in their native habitat, so when a vole discovers food, it gorges itself – a vole can consume its own weight in food in less than a minute, filling two large subdermal pouches that run along each side of the vole's body. When in a place of relative safety, the vole chews and partially digests the food, regurgitating it in the form of small highly compressed pellets. These are stored in the vole's burrow against lean times, when they can be consumed normally.

The Shriekers have domesticated the voles, both as a meat animal and as an easy source of refined sugars. Most Shrieker cooking is flavored in part by vole pellets.

Pellet voles are found in the wild in families of 3 to 6 individuals, usually a mated pair and young. They prefer to flee from danger, though if a nest is disturbed the voles will bite to protect their hoard.

SONGBATS

ST: 3 **Move/Dodge:** 17/10 **Size:** 1
DX: 15 **PD/DR:** 0/0 **Weight:** 10-20 lbs.
IQ: 5 **Damage:** 1d-3 cut **Habitat:** D, P, M
HT: 11/5 **Reach:** C

Denuli songbats resemble Terran bats only slightly; they more closely resemble furred owls. They have a large head, two wings, and strong claws on each of their six legs. The most unusual attribute of the songbat is the several seeming random openings in the bat's forehead. When a bat is flying, these openings catch the passing air and produce notes, the pitch and volume varying with the wind and the speed of the creature. A flock of songbats rising into the air has been described as a poorly tuned orchestra, heavy in the woodwinds, warming up for a concert.



Newcomers to Denuli have discovered the songbats and tried to train them, with limited success, because it has been discovered that the bats react poorly to mechanical noise. They attack mechanical equipment left running unattended, and have swarmed several air/rafts. Typically they try to land on the machine, rip exposed wiring free, and scratch at the housing with their claws. If their vandalism is interfered with, the bats will attack the interloper for a few rounds then fly off, only to return if the machine remains in operation and unguarded.

THINGVELLIR'S CRESTED TRAPPER

ST: 12-15 Move/Dodge: 8/7 Size: 2
DX: 14 PD/DR: 1/3 Weight: 400-450 lbs.
IQ: 4 Damage: 1d-3 imp Habitat: P
HT: 13/20-25 Reach: C

The object of the Thingvellir Expedition that revealed the presence of the Shriekers to the galaxy, the Thingvellir's Crested Trapper resembles a 2-yard-long spider with glittering translucent wings. The wings rise as far as 2 yards above the body of the trapper and are used to attract mates. The trapper cannot fly.

The trapper hunts by laying down a sticky resin in an area about 3 yards in diameter, carefully covering the mass with leaves and dirt. Any creature that walks into the resin is slowed (Move is cut in half) unless they make a simple ST check at +2. A thread of the resin connects to the trapper hidden nearby. Vibrations in the thread alert the trapper; it then moves in to attack with its stinger. The trapper is immune to the effects of its own resin, due to oil secreted from glands above its feet. Most solvents will dissolve the resin, and it will dry and flake off after a few days.



SPIDER SLUGS

ST: 45-60 Move/Dodge: 2/4 Size: 3
DX: 9 PD/DR: 0/6 (12 cr) Weight: 700-1,000 lbs.
IQ: 4 Damage: 1d+2 cr Habitat: P, M
HT: 13/28-40 Reach: C, R

Spider slugs are massive, slow-moving omnivores that shamle through the valleys around the Great Retreat. They are not true slugs; they have the normal (for Denuli) eight limbs, but the legs are often hidden under layers of fatty flesh. This bulk serves to protect the slug, providing effective armor, as it is difficult to reach the beast's vitals. As they move they leave a barren swath, eating all available vegetation to a height of 1.5 yards; they are a danger to smaller wildlife, including children. The slug can cough up sticky, rubbery mucus that it shoots at faster prey; the mucus remains attached to the back of its mouth. Any creature struck with the mucus (which can be dodged, but not parried or blocked) is drawn toward the beast at a rate of 1 yard per round. To avoid being pulled closer, prey must succeed at a ST contest against the slug (the mucus line has an effective ST 13) or attempt to sever the line. The line has DR 4 and 6 hit points, and can only be affected by slashing weapons. After each attempt to sever the line, the attacker must roll 8 or better on 3 dice, or the weapon becomes stuck in the mucus. When prey reaches close combat range, the spider slug bites each round, automatically hitting, then swallows.

The Shriekers

PHYSIOLOGY

The Shriekers are bilaterally symmetrical omnivores, and possess most of the attributes typically associated with mammals (self-regulating temperature, hair, etc.), although they are not related to Terran animals in any way. They evolved from grazing herbivores, in response to increasing volcanic activity and an increase in local predators. Fires from heavy volcanism destroyed much of the prehistoric grasslands, and the Shriekers' ancestors turned to scavenging to supplement their diet. Competition with existing scavengers and increased pressure from predators led to intelligence.

Physically, the Shriekers appear quite alien to Human eyes. The spine supports most of the body mass and the ribs slope upward, basket-like, to protect the internal organs. They have four pairs of legs. Six legs support the body, and the last two are adapted as manipulators; when not in use, they rest on the ground.

The head is round, with a heavy, honeycombed carapace to protect the brain and produce and receive sound. The same structure is integral to both making and detecting sounds, so that while speaking, a Shrieker cannot hear. They have three sets of eyes, each specializing in a different type of vision. The first, and lowest set is used for viewing details; the second set is used for distance viewing; and the third detects temperature differences. The mouth is a vertical slit with heavy molars. Two holes located behind and below the middle eyes open directly to the lungs.

Tawny-brown wiry hair juts upward from the skin and provides excellent camouflage in the desert plains. Adults mass about 450 lbs. and, unaugmented, stand 1 yard high. Length averages 1.75 yards, but can vary from 1.5 to more than 2. The legs are positioned equidistantly along the body, with the manipulator limbs located just behind the head.

Shriekers have access to all five senses familiar to Humaniti, though smell and taste are underdeveloped. Hearing is comparable to Imperial Humans, though it focuses on a slightly higher

register. The pitches formed vary from the Human-audible range into ultrasonic frequencies.

The primary senses of the Shriekers are sight and touch. The high-set distance-eyes have twice the sharpness of the Human eye, but resolution falls swiftly for objects closer than 10 yards. The downward-pointing detail-vision eyes can pick out fine features up to a yard away, but cannot distinguish more than shapes beyond. The resulting hole in vision is filled by the infrared "heat-eyes" located on either side of the face. Temperature differences of a single degree can be detected up to 20 yards away; specially trained Shriekers can increase the range of this resolution dramatically.

Touch is more localized than in Humaniti. The skin is uniformly sensitive to heat, pressure, and pain, but more detailed information is provided through specialized pads on the palms and ankles. These nerve pads are sensitive enough that when in direct contact, they can transfer impulses to the pads of another, and these impulses have become an important part of communication. An unfortunate side effect of this sensitivity causes Shriekers struck on these pads to react like a Human struck in the genitals. Both males and females can be so immobilized.

REPRODUCTION

Shriekers have two sexes, are oviparous, and typically mate for life. Eggs are created and fertilized in two encounters. The first produces an egg sac containing 10 to 20 eggs. The eggs are then fertilized externally, two or three at a time, until the egg sac is empty. Of the eggs in a typical egg sac, only half will be successfully fertilized, and only slightly less than half of these will survive to reach adulthood. A male other than the one who first created the eggs cannot finish the fertilization, but after the egg sac is created the mother is no longer needed. Often, the egg sac is removed from a still active female to be kept with the father, to prevent a whole generation dying with the mother. The elder caste, those who have survived their Second Crisis, is infertile.

The hormones associated with female fertility are stimulated by heavy activity, especially travel. Eggs produced without constant activity are less viable. Fewer hatch. This presents no difficulty for the nomadic Shriekers, but does cause problems for the Shriekers living in the agricultural Great Retreat. To combat the lowered fertility associated with civilization, the tradition of the "marriage pilgrimage" formed. The pilgrimage is designed to reproduce the conditions of ancient migrations and stimulate the female's hormones. Over time, this practice has become socially essential, if not biologically necessary. Children conceived without the benefit of a marriage pilgrimage are looked down on as "weak-souled," and are relegated to the lowest levels of society.



AGING AND DEATH

Shriekers live their life in three stages. The first, youth, lasts until age eight. The harsh conditions of Denuli result in extremely high mortality rates. Fewer than half of the youths reach adulthood.

Adults make up the most active segment of society. After childhood, unexpected death is rare and, barring accident, war, or disease, a Shrieker can expect to live to 40 years. Age is measured from adulthood and is given in multiples of the adult's life as a child. A Shrieker aged 16 standard years would be considered "one," 24 standard years "two," and so on.

At the age of "four," 40 Imperial years or one local year since hatching, every Shrieker goes through what is called the "Second Crisis," a process similar to Human menopause, though much more extreme. The Second Crisis causes hormonal and physiological changes that in most cases result in death. The few that survive (less than 10%) are no longer fertile, but retain their adult vigor for another 5 local years (200 standard) before going through a "Third Crisis" that inevitably results in death.

In game terms, a Shrieker character who reaches his 40th year must begin to make weekly HT rolls. After the first failed roll, he enters the Second Crisis. The coma-like state that occurs will last for 1d weeks, and when that time has elapsed, the player must roll 3 dice. On 15 or more the Shrieker awakes refreshed and often with a greater self-knowledge. (At the GM's option, a character who survives a Second Crisis may purchase levels of Strong Will or other mental advantages to simulate this personal awakening.) If the roll is 14 or less, the Shrieker dies. There are no modifiers to this roll. A healthy, robust individual has no more chance of surviving the Second Crisis than a sickly one. The survivors enter the elder caste (and must buy the Elder advantage).

SHRIEKER PHILOSOPHIES

The defining trait of the Shrieker race is practicality. The harsh conditions, the high child mortality, the sharply defined lifespan – all these combine to create a psychology that respects actions and deeds above individuals. Inherent value, apart from utility, is foreign to the race's mindset. To a Shrieker, a life is not precious because it is a life, but because of what that life can do to support the community.

This explains the lack of regard the Shriekers hold for their own children. Until the age of 8 standard years, a child is as likely to die as not. Any affection is likely to be wasted, so none is offered. After the child passes into adulthood, its survival is assured, barring accident, and it becomes worth society's effort to invest in its future.

This utilitarian attitude extends to other aspects of life. Shriekers place little value on individuals or objects, but instead value what that object or person can accomplish. This does not mean that Shriekers do not form friendships. Instead of being tied directly to a person, affection and respect are tied to specific deeds. Song-with-Dribbling-Notes will not be Whistle-Call's friend, but would be fond of a successful hunt, the discovery of a new medicine, or being rescued from a ravine. If Whistle-Call were involved with these three events, a relationship like friendship would exist between them.

This approach also explains why Shriekers react with such ferocity when encountering smugglers. It is not the individual egg, but the eggs as a group, that are vital to the race's future.

Because of this outlook, Shriekers are less likely to make judgments based on groups, and reaction modifiers that do not reflect the specific deeds of an individual are halved when applied to them.

SOCIETY

Shrieker society is split into two camps – the Great Retreat and the barbarian nomads. While the Great Retreat is the most organized and technologically advanced native society on Denuli, it makes up only one-quarter of the total population. The majority of Shriekers still live like their ancestors, as nomads. The Great Retreat Shriekers look down on their plains-dwelling brethren, but still trade with them for food, skins, and other essentials, with the most common export being walking-legs, a technology the priests guard jealously.

Most of the information in this section describes the Retreat Shriekers. Those are the most likely to be encountered by visitors to Denuli. The nomads live a life of constant motion, traveling thousands of miles each year on the plains that surround the mountains. They have no priest class, and because of this, none of the rituals and traditions the Great Retreat Shriekers use to mitigate the biological needs for travel. On the other hand, they are also more at the mercy of their environment, lacking the easy hierarchy and technological benefits of the mountain-dwellers.

THE CASTES

The members of the Great Retreat separate themselves into four occupational castes. Three developed from tribal divisions and are shared with the nomadic desert Shriekers. The fourth arose during the Plains Civilization (p. 4). While the Great Retreat divides the four castes rigidly, the various barbarian tribes allow the lines to blur. The small size of the nomadic bands require each individual to shoulder tasks not usually associated with their caste, and the lack of a priestly order means the elders of the other three castes share authority jointly.

In the Great Retreat, when a youth reaches adulthood, his caste is chosen by consensus of the local priests. Barbarian children are observed for natural tendencies and adopted by their future caste in their survival ceremony. In both societies children receive little training toward their future life. Only after the community is certain a child will survive will they spend the necessary resources.

Eggs/Gems

From the time of Mtume Denuli's discovery of the gems that bear his name, they have been the subject of an endless fascination by connoisseurs. So few existed that the owners were unwilling to subject them to detailed analysis, so their nature was not fully appreciated until their source was discovered. The few people who studied them with a critical rather than an artistic eye concluded they were organic – that much was fairly obvious. No one, evidently, suspected they were eggs of a sentient species.

No egg has ever hatched off of Denuli. The reason for this is a matter for speculation.

Appearance

Shrieker eggs are unfaceted crystalline structures of almost indescribable beauty, superficially resembling Terran pearls but much darker in color. The shell has a semi-translucent quality that gives the impression of shifting colors that flow deep within, and which change seemingly at random. The eggs vary in size from 4 to 6 inches in diameter. The base color is usually black, with hints of blue and gray, but true aficionados scorn trying to apply any single color to them. Some believe that they retain the image of every particle of light that has ever struck them, rebounding around inside the shell.

Display

The gems are usually displayed in a sealed case, floating in a zero-G field to allow every square inch to be illuminated (expensive, but next to nothing compared to the cost of the gem). Each gem differs in the color and intensity of light that produces the most spectacular effects. Natural light is considered best by some, but many collectors have elaborate light-shows to create kaleidoscopic displays. The most valuable examples are those which are the darkest in color but show the most "fire" (variety of colors) in the shell when illuminated. Prices range from a bottom of Cr10,000 for a small light gray or blue-gray example, up to MCr3.5 for a large, jet-black gem with great "fire" and intensity of color.

Serfs

Serfs produce or gather much of the community's food, and serve as labor for communal projects. Nonelders have little voice in their own affairs, and in the Great Retreat are governed directly by the priests. Without exception, Retreat children conceived without the benefit of a marriage pilgrimage are assigned to the serf caste. Even within this lowest caste, the "weak-souled" Shriekers are stigmatized.

Fighters

The "fighter" caste is made up of males tasked with watching over egg sacs. In ancient times, while the seekers and serfs were searching for and gathering food, the fighters remained behind to protect the vulnerable next generation. As populations increased, this responsibility grew to include safeguarding food stores and permanent habitats from predators and competing tribes of nomads. Fighters concern themselves more with defense than offense, and leave aggression to seekers.

Seekers

More completely "Seekers After Knowledge," the third class is the most diverse and includes the Shrieker scientists, engineers, doctors, and craftsmen. The "classic" seeker, however, is still the explorer. Seekers, more than any other caste,

work alone, out from under the eyes of their fellows. It is their task to bring new knowledge to the race.

Priests

The priest caste is unique to the Great Retreat, and is the only modern example of a ruling caste on Denuli. The priests appeared as a subset of the seeker caste during the height of the Plains Civilization (p. 4). They became rulers, but gradually lost power until they were forced into exile by a league of fighters. By coincidence, when the cycle of volcanism reversed and the Plains Civilization was destroyed, the priests' monastery was the only civilization to survive. The priests at the Great Retreat held on to their superior technology and secure settlements to impose their rule over Shriekers who sought refuge in the mountains.

Today's priests fulfill two roles in The Great Retreat. Their primary duty is to serve as leaders and counselors. They pass the decisions of the elders (also headed by priests) to the other castes and perform the daily rituals of life. Secondly they serve as the Retreat's memory. They are in charge of recording the knowledge discovered by seekers and remembering it in case of natural disaster. All settlements keep both a written and mnemonic record of important information.

Language and Names

Shrieker language utilizes a combination of three elements: the shrieks that are the race's namesake, communication through nerve pads, and gesture.



Gesture and sound are used to communicate objective concepts and facts, while the nerve pads convey subtle shades of meaning and inflection. The written form of this complex language resembles a series

of three wavy lines, one above the other. Each line represents an element of language – width, amplitude, and frequency vary to determine meaning. The ability to effectively communicate three concepts at once creates a language stunningly suited to irony, sarcasm, and wordplay.

The Shriekers' names utilize all three aspects of their communication and (like many names), cannot be translated directly. Because of this, the Shriekers have begun to adopt nicknames that their alien visitors can hear and repeat. To most Humans, these nicknames are just random collections of sounds, and Imperials refer to individual Shriekers in two ways – either by trying to transcribe the noise they hear (e.g., Whee-oooh-hmmk and Ahh-tktkchee) or a simple description of the beginning sounds (e.g., Two-Clicks or Triple-Beep).

ELDERS

Elders exist both within and without the class system, serving as administrators and advisors to their caste. This becomes, in effect, a second government (though in the Great Retreat the elder priests retain final say). Elders usually continue in the jobs they held before the crisis, though often with increased authority to reflect their newfound wisdom.



THE MARRIAGE PILGRIMAGE

A quirk of Shrieker biology requires the female of the species to undertake strenuous journeys to ensure fertility. While the barbarian tribes take care of this genetic requirement through their daily travels, the Great Retreat was forced to find an alternative for its more settled society. The solution is the marriage pilgrimage.

A bride and groom undertake this trek soon after being joined together. The journey simulates the migrations of their ancestors, and by its end the female's hormone levels have increased to where an egg sac will produce a majority of viable eggs. Often, the couple will bring the unfertilized eggs from their parents' egg sacs to spread across the valley. According to tradition, this frees the souls trapped within to find new eggs to inhabit. The couple then returns to their community with a batch of eggs that the male can fertilize as resources allow. A standard

pilgrimage takes 16 weeks, and most couples will make only one pilgrimage in their lifetime.

The pilgrimage is as necessary socially as it is biologically. While it is possible for children to be born from eggs not created during a pilgrimage, it is far less common, and tradition holds that such children are "weak-souled" – such children bear a stigma. Mortality rate is higher during childhood, and even when one of the weak-souled survives to adulthood, the stigma follows (this is one of the few times a Shrieker allows something other than actions to influence his opinions). Conversely, a child conceived during a particularly arduous or long journey is considered "strong-souled" and afforded greater respect (after surviving his childhood). It is for this reason that Shriekers are particularly respectful of spacers who claim to have been born or conceived in jump (after they learned what it meant). They find it difficult to comprehend a greater pilgrimage.

RELIGION

Most nomadic tribes believe in a simple animism, though some have borrowed tenets from the Great Retreat through trade and war. But the only organized religion on Denuli belongs to the Retreat.

Aside from the rigid caste system, most Retreat religion is very informal. *Dtai-denuli* (roughly "the way of Denuli"), the underlying moral code that frames the religion, is one of the dozen words in the Shrieker language that can be reproduced by a Human tongue. It focuses on the virtues of exploration and knowledge, and the importance of studying and understanding the universe without destroying it. The similarities between Retreat religion and Scout procedures, the name of the religion, and the fact that the Shriekers of the Great Retreat so readily accepted Humaniti all lead most scholars to believe that Mtume Denuli spent more than a fleeting amount of time among them. The original form of the Retreat's faith is unknown, though most theologians agree its tenets were probably already similar to IISS values for Mtume's influence to be so strong.

That said, the hardships of the last centuries have produced a "religion" that has devolved through typical Shrieker practicality into a series of traditions with accompanying philosophy. Little actual faith remains, and even the priests pay little more than lip service. Its continued existence and that of the current class system is more a consequence of the fact that it works than any strong devotion on the part of the Shriekers.

TECHNOLOGY

Nomad technology ranges from TL0 to TL1, with the occasional TL4 item traded from the Retreat. The Retreat's TL is 5, with the physical sciences lagging behind medicine and life sciences. Unfortunately, Denuli's environment lacks the resources to create many items possible with TL5 technology. The constantly shifting ground militates against the use of large structures. Sulfur and charcoal are in abundance, but Denuli has no natural sources of saltpeter (potassium nitrate), so gunpowder was never discovered. Weapons are usually crossbows (designed to be braced across the forehead) or short spears and clubs using volcanic glass shards as cutting edges. The Retreat has complex catapults available for defense – the designs are elegant and efficient.

Structures are usually stone, with wooden roofs, designed to withstand all but the most severe earthquakes. Physical engineering is where the Shriekers shine, and it is only the instability of their homeworld that has prevented them from building structures that would impress even a star-traveler.

Naasirka is slowly introducing modern materials to the Retreat, and the apparent TL is rising rapidly. Continued partnership between a small collection of seekers and the enclave are working to speed up the process and to increase Denuli's TL even higher. The Shriekers are especially interested in new possibilities for prosthetics and enhancing bionics.

Walking-Legs and Other Prosthetics

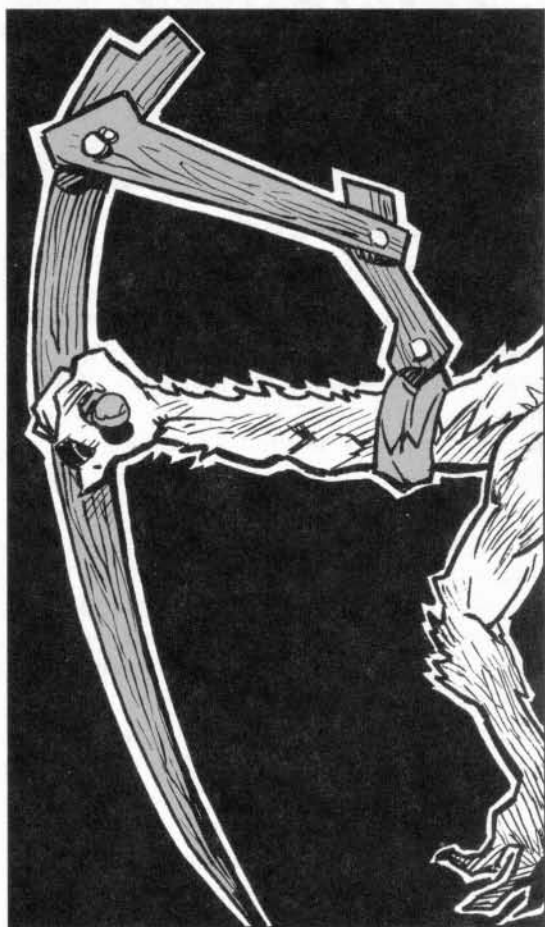
The one area where the Retreat squeezes the most from their technology is in the production of prosthetics, the most common being "walking-legs." Shriekers are slow and have difficulty maneuvering their bodies. Their legs can raise the body no more than a foot above the ground and have little flexibility. Because of this, Shriekers have great difficulty turning around, fleeing from danger, or making complex combat maneuvers. Early in their history they turned to artificial enhancements.

The walking-legs, combined with a surgical procedure, vastly increase the mobility of the Shrieker. They bind to the upper leg of the Shrieker, between the joint to the body and the knee, and raise the user a full yard and a half. With practice the user can maneuver as if the prosthetics were natural limbs. Several designs

exist for different types of terrain, providing a wide range of versatility, but the surgery required to use the walking-legs is crippling. Without the prosthetics, an enhanced Shrieker loses even the limited mobility of his unaugmented cousins.

Shrieker science has created other procedures to mitigate natural disadvantages: extended manipulators in place of arms, surgery and braces on the neck and breastbone to provide a better field of vision, etc. However, the walking-legs are the most common; other prosthetics are likely to be experimental or be debilitating in some other significant way. Naasirka technology is already finding ways around these problems.

As of 1118, there is relatively little interaction between Denuli and other worlds. It was less than a decade ago that anyone acknowledged the system had anything worth offering. To date, extrastellar relations have been limited to four situations: exploration and contact missions being performed jointly between the IISS and Naasirka, commercial exploitation (so far solely the purview of the Naasirka megacorporation), illicit gem smuggling, and emergencies or mis-jumps. These are not the extent of the possibilities of galactic/Denuli interrelations, but are likely to remain the most common for a while.



Extrastellar Relations

THE OFFICIAL IMPERIAL PRESENCE

Because Denuli is not an Imperial planet, the official Imperial presence in the system is small. A selection of navigation buoys and a small orbiting observation base are all the Imperium can justify for the time being.

The permanent Imperial presence is a staff of six on a standard orbital Scout observation station, Recon Base I-SM-082. The commander, Julian Giilaka, has been a contact specialist on the station since it was installed in 1113. The bulk of the staff, three teams of three technicians and two more contact specialists, serve for four-month rotating intervals, spelled when supplies are delivered. At all times, there is one technician (cross-trained to pilot the gig if necessary) and one contact specialist monitoring traffic and communication to and from the Naasirka enclave on the planet below. In addition, there is one technician/specialist team on the planet, monitoring Naasirka/Shrieker interaction or performing diplomatic duties on behalf of the Imperium.

The station has access to a standard 30-ton gig, laughingly called the "Lariikahi" (a Vilani species of flying insectivore). It is usually docked at the station, only leaving to take a new IISS team from the station or to investigate the landing site of possible smugglers.

THE UNOFFICIAL IMPERIAL PRESENCE

The unofficial Imperial presence is a different story. To combat the continued trickle of Denuli Gems into Imperial space, as well as the development of more general illicit trade and piracy, a monthly patrol from the Imperial Navy makes an "emergency refueling stop" in the system, and incidentally makes a roundabout sweep for other ships. These "emergencies" are not regular, occurring with little to no warning, and two out of five times detect a would-be smuggler on its way out

of the system. The detected ships are not stopped, but their transponders are recorded and distributed when the patrol returns to Imperial space. The offending ships' next several customs inspections are brutal.

In addition to the two Scouts allowed in the research enclave, the IISS has several covert teams working among the barbarian nomads. Their mission is to educate the tribes to at least the level of the Great Retreat, while preserving the unique flavor of their cultures. Naasirka feels these teams will eventually undercut their monopoly in dealing with the Shriekers, but will not take overt action against them. Several three- to five-man teams have been placed, and the program is about at saturation point – the nomads would be suspicious of a greater presence.

NAASIRKA

Naasirka funded the Thingvellir Expedition that discovered Shrieker sentience, and because of that has taken a very proprietary attitude to both the Shriekers and their planet. While the short-term value of Denuli Gems is considerable, Naasirka realized that with a regular source, the artificially high prices would quickly fall. What piqued the interest of Naasirka was the R & D potential of the native race's nerve pads. Direct person-to-person communication, without the use of poorly understood psionics, is worthy of investigation. And when it was discovered that the nerve pulses could interact easily with computer ports adapted for that purpose (the first example of this being the Naasirka Human/Shrieker Translation Harness) high-level executives took notice. While direct nerve-to-computer interface is possible, current methods are messy, uncomfortable, and often produce unpleasant side effects. The Shriekers are only the second intelligent species in known space to possess this ability naturally, and the only race available and willing to allow experimentation. (The other is the Inyx, an aquatic race with an empire rimward of the Solomani Confederation, detailed in *Alien Races 2*.)

The Denuli Ring

The criminal organization known as the Denuli Ring began as a loose association of smugglers taking Shrieker eggs off Denuli for sale to illicit collectors. The high price paid for Denuli Gems brought many fortune seekers to Denuli, but the hazards of the business quickly winnowed out the incompetent. Members of the ring have criminal contacts throughout the Spinward Marches and beyond, and many have dropped out of the traffic in Denuli Gems for other, equally shady enterprises. The Ring has grown in power and influence, and the Denuli traffic now represents a small (but still significant) portion of their activities. As is typical for such organizations, illegal gains are funneled into legitimate businesses and "laundered."

Today the Denuli Ring has contacts spread across space, 15 parsecs in every direction from Denuli, and the majority of its concerns have little to do with transporting Shrieker eggs. Narcotics, psionic devices and literature, the products of industrial espionage, and weapons all flow along the web originally created for the gems. However, the Ring still holds their monopoly on getting in and out of the Denuli system undetected, and a steady stream of gems flows from Denuli to collectors.

It remains for the individual GM to determine exactly how powerful and pervasive the Denuli Ring has become. Does the Ring have six members or 600? Do they get in and out of the system by stealth, or by bribing everyone along the way? Are they so powerful they need not fear local authorities, only the Imperial Navy?

The megacorp quickly put a research station in place to study the potential, and lobbied to block the proposed interdiction of the planet. Today the majority of the non-Shrieker population on Denuli is in the employ of Naasirka, with further growth planned. The toehold provided by Denuli is opening the eyes of the megacorp's executives to further potential in District 268, and it is likely the Shriekers' homeworld will become the spear point to greater expansion in the region.

TRADERS AND REGULARS

Because of its frontier location, lack of resources, navigational dangers, and semi-interdicted status, Denuli is not a common layover. Vessels entering the system are usually Scout and Naasirka supply ships, prospective smugglers, and ships in need of emergency refueling. The most common independent likely to have legitimate business on Denuli is a far trader who goes by the name of Captain Fred Ed Ted (see p. 26).

SMUGGLERS

After the flurry of activity in the precious gems market that occurred when the source of the fabled Denuli Gems was found, a swarm of less than reputable prospectors and entrepreneurs fell on Denuli to make their fortune. At the same time, the discovery that the rare Denuli gems were, in fact, the unborn children of the Shriekers horrified most of Imperial society. By 1112, Norris, Archduke of Deneb, had made possession and sale of the gems illegal within Deneb, and Strephon extended the ban throughout the rest of the Imperium soon thereafter. The Sword Worlds and the Darrian Confederation also banned the gems, which discouraged most of the would-be millionaires, but a market still exists among those connoisseurs who value appearance over morality.



The Denuli Gem Appreciation Society

Any collector of Denuli Gems is subject to arrest and his collection subject to confiscation. This makes all collectors potential blackmail victims, as well as targets for police investigations, and they must be extremely cautious about revealing their passion to others. Smugglers and fences dealing in Denuli Gems face similar penalties and must be equally discreet.

The Denuli Gem Appreciation Society was formed in 1111 in the Spinward Marches – before that time there had been too few collectors to warrant any such organization. When trade in the gems was made illegal, the group formally disbanded – or claimed to. Many members were genuine in their horror at the discovery of the gems' true nature. These people surrendered their collections for return to Denuli. A few formed a new organization, The Denuli Society, devoted to the study of all things related to Denuli (especially holographic images of Shrieker eggs, which remain legal provided they pre-date 1111).

Others, however, merely surrendered their least valuable holdings, or arranged to secretly recover their collections. These collectors formed the nucleus of the society in its present form. Despite losing many members whose sense of outrage overwhelmed their appreciation of the gems' beauty, the organization is probably larger now than in 1111. It consists of a few thousand collectors inside and outside of the Imperium. Because of the expense associated with the collection of Denuli Gems, and the risks involved, collectors tend to be very wealthy, very powerful – and very, very careful. For obvious reasons, everyone involved is leery of dealing with strangers. The society serves as a contact network, putting sellers in touch with

buyers. Society agents also investigate new sellers, filtering out perpetrators of fraud, informants, law enforcement "sting" operations, or potential blackmailers. Of course, the Denuli Gem Appreciation Society is in partnership with the Denuli Ring. The two groups are natural collaborators.

It is not difficult to find ex-members of the organization, but they usually are wary of discussing their former hobby. Locating actual collectors is difficult, even for those with criminal connections, if they aren't already involved in the trade.

A few members of the Denuli Society have taken public positions in opposition to the law banning all eggs. They argue that possession of eggs that cannot develop further should be legal. Others have attempted to amend the law to allow scientific study of infertile eggs. So far, neither Archduke Norris nor Emperor

Strephon have expressed any sympathy for this view. It is almost certain that members of the underground society are providing support for both overt attempts to modify the law and covert attempts to hamstring enforcement of the laws against gem possession.

Rumors persist of another agenda of the Denuli Gem Appreciation Society – trading for eggs with the Shriekers themselves. It is said that a few members of the society (perhaps even representatives of Naasirka or the IISS) plan to approach the Shriekers with a proposal: trade infertile eggs for advanced technology. If true, this could split the Shriekers into opposing camps, divided over where exactly to draw the line between selling dead tissue and destroying future generations.



CRACKING DOWN

The Navy records the transponder codes of smuggler vessels, but takes no immediate action. The Scouts do not have sufficient funding for anti-smuggling operations. The Ministry of Justice acts only within Imperial borders, and suppression of gem smuggling is not a major priority (the larger criminal activities of the Denuli Ring worry some officials, however). Official reaction in the Sword Worlds and the Darrian Confederation is similar. There are private groups, however, who are not satisfied with official lethargy, and make it their mission to stop the trade in Shrieker eggs by whatever means are necessary. Here are two examples:

THE SAMALA LEAGUE

This group was founded in 1115 by Baronet Sir Ophid Samala. Sir Ophid has no family, and has devoted his small fortune to stamping out the gem trade. Originally Sir Ophid limited himself to denouncing the trade regularly in various public forums. He soon realized that his efforts were attracting sympathy among the populace, but were having few real results.

Sir Ophid began hiring groups to travel to the Denuli system and act as unofficial anti-smuggler patrols. One of his early efforts involved an armed *Beowulf*-class vessel and a half dozen enthusiastic amateurs – they managed to land on Denuli without running afoul of Naasirka, and stumbled onto an equally amateurish group of egg smugglers. They rescued 60 eggs and turned the smugglers over to the naval base at Flammarion.

Sir Ophid was ecstatic. He sent the group back to Denuli almost immediately. The second trip was less successful: the ship was never seen again, but the headless bodies of three of the crew were discovered in the Valley of Memories by an IISS

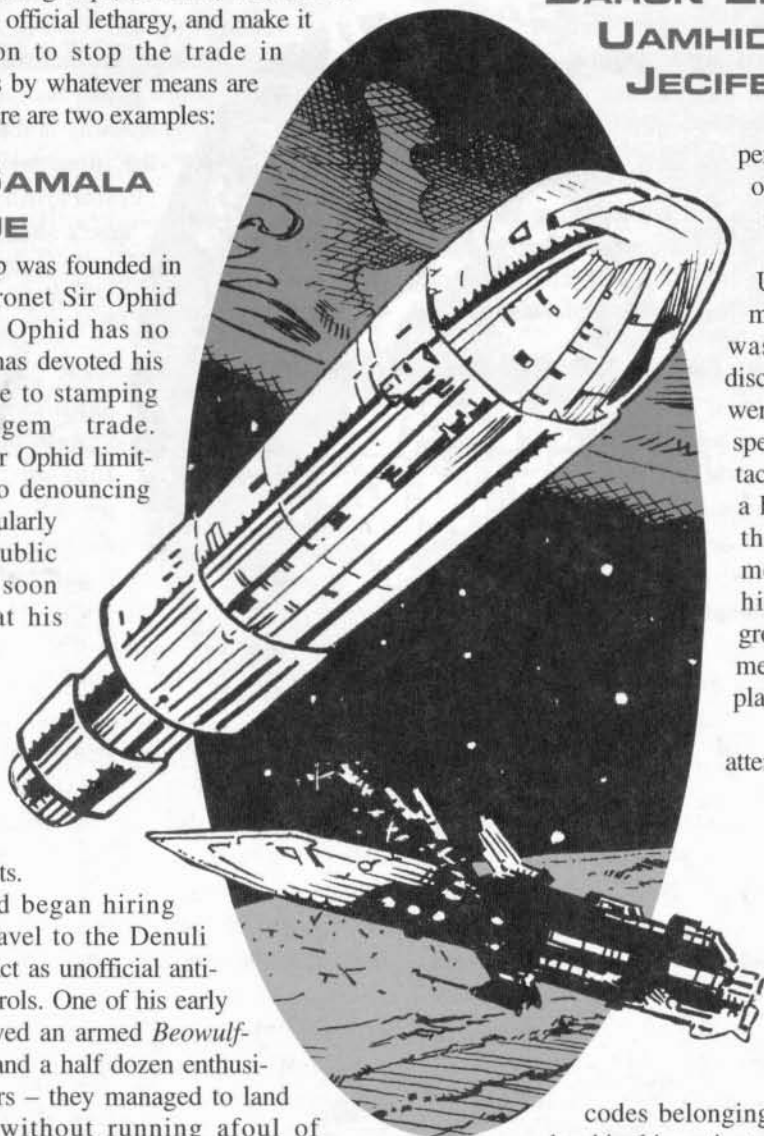
survey team. The tragedy caused Sir Ophid to fall into a depression, from which he emerged a few months later resolved to avenge the deaths of his crew and end the egg trade forever. He has hired a mercenary cadre to train and equip a paramilitary force, which he will personally accompany to Denuli. He seeks people with military experience, and plans to establish a permanent base on Denuli from which to attack the smugglers at the source. Sir Ophid has recently started hiring bodyguards.

BARON ENOS UAMHIDAR OF JECIFE

The Baron is a perfect example of the old saying, "There's no saint like a reformed sinner." Uamhidar is a former collector who was horrified by the discovery that the gems were eggs of a sentient species. He used contacts he developed as a high executive with the Hortalez et Cie megacorporation to hire a mercenary group: a pair of armed merchant ships and a platoon of infantry.

The Baron's attempts have been less spectacular than Samala's, but more successful. Uamhidar has made use of his personal and corporate connections to obtain the Navy's list of transponder

codes belonging to smugglers. He has hired investigators to track the ships, make sure they are engaged in egg smuggling, and arrange for carefully planned ambushes just outside Imperial space. In just over two years of operation, the Baron has taken three vessels out of action and anonymously sent over 200 eggs to Imperial authorities. The Baron must act anonymously, since he has no official authority and what he is doing is, technically, piracy.



Characters

An adventure on or around Denuli can include several types of characters:

- Native Shriekers, both civilized and tribal;
- Human residents, including traders, Naasirka researchers, engineers, and Scouts;
- Smugglers, do-gooders and their mercenaries, and other galactics drawn by the Denuli Gem trade;
- Other visitors, Human and otherwise . . . journalists, industrial spies checking out the Naasirka project, Imperial bureaucrats, independent researchers, and even wealthy curiosity-seekers.

SHRIEKERS

Should the exact size of a Shrieker character matter: for length, use the height of a Human of the same ST. For weight, subtract 4 from ST, find that Human weight, and multiply by 3.

SHRIEKER RACIAL TEMPLATE 17 POINTS

Attribute Modifiers: ST +4 [45]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Acute Vision +2 [4]; Extra Hit Points +2 [10]; Extra Legs (Six total) [10]; Infravision [15]; Ultrahearing [5].

Disadvantages: Centauroid [0]; Increased Life Support (Requires twice the food) [-10]; Poor Sense of Smell/Taste [-2]; Primitive/TL5 [-25]; Reduced Move -3 [-15]; Self-Destruct [-20]; Short Arms [-10]; Short Lifespan [-10].

Quirk: Broad-minded. [-1]

Skills: +2 to Camouflage (Only in tall grass, -50%) [1].

RACIAL DISADVANTAGES

Poor Sense of Smell/Taste
-2 points

Shriekers have substandard senses of smell and taste. They suffer a -4 on rolls relating to these senses.

Reduced Move see p. B29

Shriekers have very clumsy legs. They suffer a -3 to Move and Dodge and suffer a -3 penalty to use any physical skill that requires walking or running. Missile weapon skills are unimpaired, but any hand-to-hand combat skill is affected, as are any skills that involve ground movement.

SPECIAL ADVANTAGES

Neither of these is a new advantage; both are "package deals."

Acute Vision (Infrared Eyes)
1 point/level

Shriekers can improve their IR vision with practice. They may purchase additional Acute Vision after creation, but it applies only to the infrared-vision eyes (a -50% limitation).

Elder 20 points plus Status

A Shrieker who becomes an Elder buys off the racial Short Lifespan [-10] and adds Extended Lifespan 4 [20] and Sterile [-3]. Self-Destruct remains, on a new timetable. Any Shrieker who survives his Second Crisis must immediately buy this advantage. It can be paid for with earned experience points, or with points made up from reduced attributes (a side effect of the physically draining experience).

Becoming an Elder also requires purchase of increased status at 5 points per level: +1 to +3 levels, depending on the Shrieker's previous status (see below). Even a "weak-souled" serf, if he survives his Second Crisis, will have the same status as any other nonpriest Elder; the stigma is gone. Obviously, say the Shriekers, the life of the former serf strengthened his soul to allow him to survive, and others should learn from his virtuous example!

Psionics see pp. B165-176

Shriekers have no history of psionic power, but their legends contain stories of sorcerers and powerful magic. At the GM's option, Shriekers can have access to psionics under the same rules governing psionics for Humanity.

Reputation see p. B17

A Shrieker conceived during a particularly arduous or long marriage pilgrimage could have a positive Reputation (Strong Soul), good for +1 from members of his race who were aware of it.

Status see p. B18

Shrieker status means little off Denuli. Among Shriekers on-planet, it is quite important:

Status	Rank
4	High Priest
3	Elder Priest
2	Priests, Non-Priest Elder
1	Nomad Leader, Warrior, Seeker
0	Nomad, Serf
-1	"Weak-souled" Serf
-3	Child

An Elder should add an additional level of status for every 2 local years since his Second Crisis (round down); i.e., +1 at age 2, +2 at age 4. No one survives longer.

Walking-Legs 1 point

This advantage eliminates the racial Reduced Move (level 3) disadvantage and replaces it with Lameness (Legless) (Mitigator, "walking-legs," -60%) [-14]. The net cost is 1 point. A modified Shrieker without its walking-legs is effectively legless, and suffers the effects described on p. B29. It should be kept in mind that most Shriekers consider walking-legs a blessing, and actively seek the procedure.

DISADVANTAGES

Primitive see p. B26

The 5 levels of Primitive included in the racial template indicate a Shrieker from the Great Retreat, currently at TL5. Shriekers from the nomadic tribes should take additional levels appropriate to their tribal TL. This can fall as far as TL1 for the most isolated tribes.

Social Stigma see p. B27

A Shrieker conceived without the benefit of a marriage pilgrimage is considered to have a weak soul, and is therefore unreliable. Any Shrieker known to suffer this -5-point stigma will receive a -1 reaction from others of his race. For a campaign off Denuli, this can be modified by the People Affected and Frequency rules for Reputation (see p. B17).

CAREER TEMPLATES

The most obvious choice of template for a Shrieker is, of course, Barbarian, but several others are suitable as well. Serfs can be Athletes, Farmers, or Rogues. Fighters could be Athletes, Entertainers, or Martial Artists. Priests could use the Bureaucrat, Diplomat, or Manager template, and the Hunter/Guide, Medical Doctor, and Scientist templates are appropriate for seekers. Any template used should have the TL skills adjusted appropriately. Templates unsuited for Shriekers are those that tie directly to an Imperial service branch (Marine, Scout, Naval Officer) and those that rely on high-TL skills (Engineer, Computer Technician).

SEEKER AFTER KNOWLEDGE

100 POINTS

The Seekers After Knowledge are the Shrieker scout service, and are unique to the world. While the Seekers comprise a whole caste of Shrieker society, and include scientists, engineers, doctors, explorers, and craftsmen, the true Seeker after Knowledge is still an archetype common in their society. This template should be used for those seekers most akin to Imperial Scouts. They are the Shriekers that travel for the sake of seeing new things, and explore for the joy of it. It is these natives who will most likely be found off planet, and it is these that will most likely be willing to interact with outsiders.

Attributes: ST 14 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 12 [0].

Advantages: Shrieker Racial Template [22]; Walking-Legs [1]; and 20 points from Absolute Direction [5], Acute Vision (Infrared Eyes) [1/level], Alertness [5/level], Common Sense [10], Danger Sense [15], Intuition [15], Luck [15], or Versatile [5].

Disadvantages: -15 points chosen from Claustrophobia [-15]; Curiosity [-5]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Loner [-5]; or Overconfidence [-10].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Denuli) (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Cartography (M/A) IQ [2]-12; First Aid (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Orienteering (M/H) IQ [2]-12; Survival (Desert) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Survival (Mountains) (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Walking (P/A) DX [2]-12.

Secondary Skills: Shrieking (P/H) DX [4]-12; Teaching (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Tracking (M/A) IQ [2]-12; plus 6 points in TL5 scientific skills.

Background Skills: 6 points in any of the following: Brawling or Crossbow (P/E); Knife or Stealth (P/A); Area Knowledge (Any) or Camouflage (M/E); or Craft (Any low-tech) (M/A).

Customization Notes: This template represents an inexperienced Seeker, and skill levels increase dramatically as the Seeker grows and specializes. All skills are bought at TL5, but Seekers are the most likely caste of the Shriekers to learn high-TL skills. Several have arranged for transport off Denuli and are actively looking for new knowledge to bring back to their fellows. These Seekers could conceivably have any skill available to Imperial citizens, at the GM's discretion.

HUMAN TEMPLATES

Human templates appropriate for a Denuli campaign depend on how a character arrives on the planet. Any of the Scout templates in *First In* can be found in the Recon Base or the insertion teams. Naasirka employees can range from the obvious – Computer Technician (p. GT90), Medical Technician (p. GT96), and Scientist (p. GT98) – to the obscure but necessary

– Bureaucrat (p. GT89) and Entertainer (p. GT92). Smugglers (p. T:FT95) are the most common

criminal templates, but any type of Rogue (p. GT98) could be present.



IISS CONTACT SPECIALIST 95 POINTS

The Denuli system offers one of the few active Imperial contact situations, and a position as Contact Specialist is one of the hardest yet most desired posts available to the Scout Service. Originally a major component of the service, the Contact Division has shrunk with the available frontier. Now tasked with overseeing worlds interdicted to protect developing culture, and to interact with non-Human citizens and potential

allies, the IISS Contact Specialist is trained to keep an open mind. More than any other branch of Imperial service, the Contact Division welcomes non-Human members.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 11 [10].

Advantages: Patron (IISS, 6 or less) [13]; and 25 points from Alertness [5/level], Cast Iron Stomach [15], Charisma [5/level], Common Sense [10], Cultural Adaptability [25], Intuition [15], Language Talent [2/level], or Luck [15].

Disadvantages: Duty (IISS, 15 or less) [-15]; and -15 points from Code of Honor (Scout's) [-5], Curiosity [-5], Sense of Duty (Minor race) [-10], Workaholic [-5], or Xenophilia [-5/-15].

Primary Skills: Cartography (M/A) IQ [2]-14; Diplomacy (M/A) IQ [2]-14; Gesture (M/E) IQ [1]-14; Xenology (M/H) IQ [4]-14.

Secondary Skills: Anthropology (M/H) IQ-1 [1]-12; Area Knowledge (Galaxy (M/H) IQ-1 [1]-12; Computer Operation (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2] -13; Detect Lies (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Ecology (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Electronics Operation (Sensors) (M/A) [1]-13; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Intelligence Analysis (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Linguistics (M/VH) IQ-2 [2]-12; Photography (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Survival (Any) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-12; Teaching (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-12; and 5 points in non-native languages.

Background Skills: Astronomy (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Electronics Operation (Comm) (M/A) IQ-1 [1/2]-12; Engineer (Vehicles) (M/H) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-13; Navigation (M/H) IQ-2 [1/2]-11; Planetology (Any) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-12; and 3 points in Area Knowledge (Any) (M/E), Axe/Mace (P/A), Beam Weapons (Any) (P/E), Broadsword (P/A), or Guns (Any) (P/E).

Customization Notes: Individual contact specialists should choose one or two minor races on which to base their specializations. Survival, Planetology, and Languages should reflect this training, and an experienced contact specialist may have Contacts or Allies of their chosen race. Characters using this template should avoid most mental disadvantages not listed. This division has the strictest screening process in the IISS, and they choose only the most focused of individuals for contact missions.

I'M FROM DENULI

It will likely be decades before the first Human born on Denuli is of adventuring age, but those who have been stationed on Denuli for long enough will have some things in common. The following suggestions are intended for characters who have been stationed on Denuli for more than two years, and represent traits and skills a long-time resident might pick up before leaving.

Attributes: The gravity is only a bit greater than Earth-normal; most Humans adjust easily to it. The slightly heavier gravity and the harsh conditions of the planet means that a Human on Denuli is likely to be in good shape; +1 ST or HT, or both, is reasonable.

Disadvantages: Depending on their experiences, and because of the limited Human contact, a long-time resident is likely to form strong opinions one way or the other about the native species. The character may take -5 points from the following: Intolerance (Shriekers), Phobia (Spiders), or Xenophilia (Shriekers only).

Skills: Certain skills are absolutely necessary to working effectively on Denuli. Those who fail to develop these skills, whether they work for Naasirka or the Scouts, are likely to be transferred to another assignment. Long-term residents should put a point or two into the following skills: Survival (Mountains), any two TL3-5 craft skills, and either Electronics Operation (Naasirka Translation harness) or Language skill (Shrieker).

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

ADOLFA KAILRA

139.5 POINTS

Age 52; 5'4"; 160 lbs. Dark hair; gray eyes.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 13 [30].

Speed 5.25; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

Advantages: Filthy Rich [50]; Multimillionaire [25]; Status 2 [0]*.

Disadvantages: Overweight [-5].

Quirks: Feigns interest in quaint local customs. [-1]

Skills: Accounting-15 [6]; Administration-15 [4]; Computer Operation-13 [1/2]; Economics-13 [2]; Fast-Talk-13 [1]; Merchant-14 [2]; Savoir-Faire-16 [7]**.

* Free from Filthy Rich, Multimillionaire.

** Default of 12 free from Status.

Adolfa has a staff of three dedicated to making sure she is prepared for whatever might happen on any given day. These cultural, social, and political experts advise and have in hand anything Ms. Kaailra might ask for, and couriers stand by at a storage center to bring at a moment's notice anything unforeseen. She is *always* prepared.

She is a woman of medium height with dark hair and swiftly moving gray eyes. Overweight for her height, she carries it well and can usually be found in impeccably tailored clothes perfectly suited to whatever circumstance she may find herself in.

Adolfa Kaailra is the District 268 Subsector Division Head for Organic Research and Development. The whole Denuli project is Kaailra's brainchild, and was in fact the reason for her promotion to her current post. She sees the Shriekers as the first step toward her ascension to the head of Naasirka's interests in the Domain of Deneb, and will protect their interests as if they were her own (which for now they are). While Denuli is not the only research project she oversees, it is the most visible and potentially the most lucrative. She personally checks on its progress at least twice yearly. She is an able administrator, and does not interfere with the scientists' work; she knows the difference between management and staff. As a goodwill gesture, she personally pays for a Seeker to leave the world and travel in space after each trip. Eventually she hopes to expand Naasirka interests rimward into the unaligned systems of the Trojan Reach, and is using the research enclave as testing ground to groom managers for that task as much as to support the current studies.

PHREDERIC EDUARDO

TEDINOFF 403 POINTS

Age 46; 6'1"; 155 lbs.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 13 [30].

Speed 6.00; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

Advantages: Ally Group (Unwilling) (Crew, 15 or less) [30]; Attractive [5]; Charisma +1 [5]; Courtesy Rank 5 [0]*; Ship Owner (The Company Store) [249]; Status 1 [0]**; Wealthy [20].

Disadvantages: Callous [-6]; Enemy (Aslan trackers, 6 or less) [-10]; Intolerance (Non-Humans) [-10].

Quirks: Cultivates an aura of mystery; Dabbler in linguistics; Master of the left-handed compliment; Wine snob. [-4]

Skills: Accounting-13 [6]; Administration-13 [4]; Area Knowledge (Imperial Trade Mains)-15 [6]; Area Knowledge (Spinward Marches)-13 [2]; Astrogation/TL10-12 [2]; Computer Operation-13 [2]; Economics-13 [6]; Fast-Talk-13 [4]; Guns/TL10 (Pistol)-14 [2]#; Hobby Skill (Wine and spirits)-16 [5]; Merchant-14 [6]; Piloting/TL10 (Starship)-14 [16]; Savoir-Faire-14 [3]##.

* Free from Ship Owner.

** Free from Wealthy.

Includes +2 for IQ.

Default of 12 free from Status.

Captain "Fred Ed Ted" is a tall, charming man of obvious Solomani descent with dark hair, dark eyes, and dusky complexion. He is commonly unshaven and dressed in fashions five to 10 years out of date.

Off-ship, Captain Fred carries little more than a palm computer with a to-do list, though the bodyguards he hires when in port carry as much armament as is legally allowed. On-ship, he is never without a glass of rare wine and a pistol.

Captain Fred Ed Ted is the grandson of an ex-Imperial noble who lost his high position in government, though not his profitable merchant house, because of allegations of war profiteering. The two succeeding generations reintegrated themselves into Imperial culture; but Phrederic listened to and idolized his aging grandfather, and took to heart the anti-Imperial and anti-alien rhetoric that the old man spouted to justify his loss of prestige. Phrederic grew up to be one of the on-again-off-again terrorists that plague the Imperial frontier. Phrederic attended underground rallies, composed hate messages and death threats, and involved himself in every aspect of the resistance save actual violent action.

Phrederic lacked the courage of his convictions and would have soon tired of his illicit activities, settling down to the family merchant concerns. Unfortunately, while returning (drunk as usual) from one of his secret meetings, he walked into a visiting Aslan female, also drunk, returning from a trade negotiation. Phrederic, puffed up with rhetoric from his fellow bigots and reacting more with surprise than purpose, shot the Aslan, killing her instantly.

Due to his family's connections – and money – no formal charges were brought, but the family of the slain Aslan female cared little for legal niceties. To protect him from the vengeful clan, Phrederic's family handed title to one of their starships over to him and encouraged him to leave the subsector.

Now, Captain Fred Ed Ted tours the Imperium as a free trader (subsidized by his family), changing routes when necessary to keep ahead of his Aslan pursuers. He has adapted to his life on the run very well. Where once stood a pampered, spoiled child, there now exists a solid, self-assured, charming adult, competent in his field. Unfortunately, Captain Fred's experiences have hardened a boy's tendencies into a man's firmly held beliefs. Phrederic's charm is only as deep as his smile; beneath, the constant fear for his life has hardened him to the feelings of others and deepened his distrust of non-Humans into hatred.

The Captain's current routes range through the Sword Worlds, the Border Worlds and several independent planets in District 268. He has been on this route for almost 10 years and is becoming complacent. He has a standing contract with Naasirka to deliver supplies to the research enclave three times a year, and has contracted with the IISS to handle their staffing transport. He supplements his income peddling native wares and smuggling the few Denuli Gems that station personnel are able to sneak past their supervisors. As the only true "regular" to Denuli, Fred Ed Ted is the easiest legitimate way for a party to get to the Shrieker homeworld.

Adventure Seed: A Friend Indeed

An Aslan approaches the party with an odd request. He claims (with more circumspection than is typical for an Aslan) to be searching for a Human "friend." Unfortunately, the "friend" plies the local trade routes, and it would be dishonorable for a male such as himself to be involved with the local females (free traders) enough to gather the information necessary to find his "friend." He seeks to have the party find his friend and arrange a meeting between them, covertly of course, to avoid the stain of dishonor for both of them. The party eventually finds Fred Ed Ted just before he leaves to make one of his thrice-annual supply runs to Denuli.

The Aslan, of course, is a male relative of the Aslan Phrederic Tedinoff killed, and is looking for Phrederic in order to challenge him to mortal combat and avenge the death.

The Company Store

The Company Store is the much-altered *Empress Marava*-class far trader that has been Captain Fred Ed Ted's home for the last 10 years. Over the last decade, Phrederic has customized his ship to make it more comfortable for his travels. The communal area and two staterooms on the upper level have been completely isolated from the rest of the ship, with only a single door leading into the cockpit. One of the isolated staterooms has been converted into a storage area with expanded climate control for Captain Fred's extensive selection of fine wines. Gathered during his travels, it is one of the most impressive collections of its size in the Imperium, and Phrederic's one remaining luxury.

The *Store's* crew consists of a core of loyal retainers from his younger days, supplemented by the sweepings from the hiring halls of a dozen worlds. While Fred does not mistreat his crew, his pay scale is lower than average, and operating conditions no better than meager. *The Company Store* has a high rate of crew turnover among the newcomers, something the adventurers may find to their advantage.

HYASHI THE LESSER 97 POINTS

Age 45; 5'10"; 155 lbs.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 11 [10]; HT 11 [10].

Speed 5.50, Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 8 (Brawling).

Advantages: Danger Sense [15].

Disadvantages: Paranoia [-10]; Unluckiness [-10].

Quirks: Hates other people's success stories;

Pretends to be more well traveled than is true;

Refuses to tolerate "vermin" anywhere near him. [-3]

Skills: Accounting-12 [6]; Astrogation/TL10-13 [6]; Beam Weapons/TL10-13 [2]; Brawling -13 [4]; Carousing-11 [1]; Computer Operation-14 [6]; Economics-13 [8]; Electronics Operation (Comm)-12 [4]; Electronics Operation (Sensors)-12 [4]; Fast-Talk-13 [6]; Mechanic (J-drive)-12 [4]; Mechanic (M-drive)-12 [4]; Merchant-13 [6]; Piloting/TL10 (Starship)-12 [4].

* Includes +1 for IQ.

Hyashi the Lesser is a thoroughly unexceptional looking man – brown hair and eyes, a sallow complexion, and neat but nonstylish clothing. He is usually carrying a clipboard or notebook and an expression of impending doom.

Hyashi has, for his first 45 years, gotten the short end of the galactic stick. Whenever he crawls back from the brink of destruction, finally about to hit it big, something happens to rip success from his grasp. His application to the Imperial Marines was rejected two days before the deadline because of a bar brawl. Who knew the guy was a noble's nephew? His engagement to the widow Forillia would have left him living pretty for the rest of his life, but her death under mysterious circumstances just days before the wedding forced him to use his last credits to book passage out of the system instead. Accumulated savings from 20 years of hard work on a far trader led to his own ship, but the previous owners stuck him with a 250-year-old lemon, which he named (ironically enough, in view of later events) the *Black Pearl*.

Then, his luck seemed to change. A chance encounter with a member of the Thingvellir Expedition tipped him off to the fortune waiting to be harvested on the surface of Denuli, and he managed to be one of the first participants in the Denuli "rush" of 1111. He ran the gauntlet of planetoids, landed on Denuli, and loaded up with a king's ransom in Denuli Gems. He lifted off, made it through the planetoids outward to the 100-diameter limit, and was beginning to feel that his life had finally turned around when *Pearl's* jump drive suffered a catastrophic malfunction that killed his engineering crew. Hyashi sent out a distress call, and received an answer from one of the Naasirka survey ships that were just beginning to explore the system – they would pick him up in 36 hours.

Reasoning that any rescuers would want to share in his wealth, Hyashi and his one remaining crewman managed to ground the ship on a nearby planetoid and conceal it before taking the ship's gig to meet the rescue ship. Hyashi was once a good man, but one disappointment after another, coupled with intense greed, drove him to murder his friend before arriving at the rendezvous.

Hyashi has managed to remain in the region over the years, working on various ships while he waits a chance to return to Denuli and reclaim his fortune. Several times he has actually managed to make it into the system, only to have circumstances thwart his plans at the last moment. He has become increasingly obsessed with the fortune that remains just outside his reach – but, in a way, he is afraid to try to recover it, for fear that his luck will catch up with him once again.

Adventures on Denuli

Denuli is a unique place – a mostly unexplored planet with a sapient race, a planet which has rocketed from obscurity to prominence because it is the sole source of a gem that has been banned throughout the Imperium. Whether they are Scouts, smugglers, or Shriekers, PCs have ample opportunities for adventure on Denuli!

SCOUTS

Active duty Scouts might be assigned to Denuli, either as part of IISS Recon Base I-SM-082, conducting an in-system survey, or as one of the uplift teams working among the nomads. They might be sent by the Imperial government or by Naasirka to infiltrate the Denuli Ring in order to destroy it.

INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE

Naasirka has competitors who would be willing to pay a small fortune to learn the details of what is going on at Naasirka-7. This will be an especially difficult assignment – the medical station is a very small, closed community and it will be hard for strangers to enter into it.



CRACKING DOWN

The Navy gathers the transponder codes of smuggler vessels, but takes no immediate action. There are private groups, however, who make it their mission to stop the trade in Shrieker eggs by whatever means are necessary. These organizations hire small groups to travel to the Denuli system and act as unofficial anti-smuggler patrols. Those with armed starships are assigned deep system patrol. Groups with military experience will land on Denuli and seek out smugglers.

DENULI COMES TO YOU

If your campaign is not located in District 268 – or not even located in the Spinward Marches – Denuli can still be a factor in your campaign. Very few Shriekers have ventured off of their homeworld, but a lone Seeker would provide an interesting and unusual encounter for an adventuring group.

DO THE RIGHT THING

Any group might be hired by an anti-smuggling organization to recover eggs from a wealthy collector for return to Denuli.

STRANGE CARGO

Any group owning a merchant ship might be hired to carry a single passenger with one or more Denuli Gems in his luggage. The group might become involved if the authorities decide to arrest the egg smuggler and impound the ship for the duration of the investigation. Even if the adventurers are completely innocent of any wrongdoing, it might take them some time to prove it.

Another possibility is that a ship may be hired to deliver a small parcel which they are told contains biological samples (but which is actually an egg in a sealed container).

REPARATIONS

A group in possession of a starship might be hired by a private anti-smuggling society to carry a cargo of recovered eggs back to Denuli for return to the Shriekers. The Denuli Ring will be unwilling to allow a fortune in eggs to go to waste.

A LITTLE GIFT

Denuli Gems are organic, and as such can serve as a vector for local microorganisms. Disease-causing organisms from a given ecosystem are not normally capable of infecting life-forms from other ecosystems, but there are exceptions to every rule. To the Shriekers, the

plague is a minor skin disease, no more deadly to them than acne, and is of so little concern to them that it has no commonly accepted name. It can be transmitted to humans, but without ill effects – until it passes through a jump field. The peculiar physics of jump space changes the virus, converting it from a minor non-Human dermatitis to an insidious, slow killer. The virus spreads throughout the Human nervous system gradually, over a period of years, until a certain threshold is passed – then the seizures begin, and death occurs within days. An infected Human only becomes contagious when in the terminal stages of the disease . . . which is, unfortunately, when he is likely to have the most visitors, all of whom he infects at his deathbed.

Alternate Denulis

If the standard version of Denuli/567-908 does not match your campaign, or the players in your game are overly familiar with the details of the world, here are a few alternatives.

Dark Secrets

Some GMs incorporate a higher level of corruption and official dishonesty in their campaigns than the normal *Traveller* background. This version of Denuli assumes considerable amoral behavior by Imperial officials.

Julian Gailaka (the commander of IISS Recon Base I-SM-082) and Adolfa Kaailra at Naasirka discovered the truth about the origin of the Denuli Gems years ago, but have managed to keep it a secret from the Imperium and the rest of the universe. Gailaka and Adolfa Kaailra decided that the market in Denuli gems ought to be exploited to their mutual gain, and too much of a sense of morality would only interfere with things. Anika Tolliver was brought in on the plot early on and all of them have prospered mightily.

Gailaka has enough influence with the Scout Service to be able to hand-pick most of those assigned to his command. The permanent personnel at I-SM-082 are in on the plot and receive a share of the proceeds. Scouts rotated through the facility are kept in the dark until they serve out their hitch and leave.

Kaailra and Tolliver at Naasirka-7 are also in a position to choose personnel assigned to them. The staff at Horyzon are all Naasirka

employees and paid to look the other way at certain times.

Despite this, there are reasons why the partners might want outsiders to become involved. Naasirka's medical researches are also valuable, and Kaailra wants to keep the Shriekers unaware that the egg-stealers from the sky and the other Humans in the system are cooperating. Also, Gailaka and Kaailra need someone (or several someones) for the role of scapegoat if the true nature of the Denuli Gems becomes known and the Imperium cracks down on the trade.

Extinction

Life on Denuli is severe, and the Shriekers have been hard-pressed for many generations. Unfortunately, they are losing their fight against their hostile homeworld, and their numbers grow smaller each year. Reduced to little more than a few small bands of nomads, the population of Shriekers may already be below a viable level.

The few Shriekers associated with the medical research at Naasirka-7 are among the last survivors of their kind, and their part in the medical research makes them extremely valuable to Naasirka. Finding Denuli Gems in the outback is difficult, and their price on the black market has skyrocketed as the supply dwindles. Smugglers have become increasingly desperate, and look upon the egg sacs of the Shriekers associated with the medical facility at Naasirka-7 with rising greed.

Of course, the Humans in-system are relatively safe. The virus is harmless until it passes through a jump field, so the crew of the IISS base I-SM-082, and the Naasirka-7 station are unlikely to be stricken while they remain in the system. The smugglers who frequent the system are less fortunate. The mysterious disease that strikes apparently at random throughout the spinward areas of the Imperium has no clear center, no known focus, and has infected an undetermined number of people.

The medical personnel at Naasirka-7 might hold the key to saving Humaniti – after all, they are the one group best acquainted with the Shriekers. The symptoms of the early stages are subtle and not distinctive, so diagnosing a victim before he becomes infectious is troublesome, at best. Can they develop a cure before things get out of hand?



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WORLDS WITHIN JUMP-6 OF DENULI

DARRIAN SUBSECTOR

HEX	NAME	STARPORT	GRAVITY		HYDROGRAPHIC %			POPULATION*		CR	WTN		NOTES
			DIAMETER	ATMOSPHERE	CLIMATE			GOV TYPE		TL			
0429	Kardin	II	4,351	0.58	Thin	26%	Cool	40	AthDem	2	6	1.0	Amber Zone
0430	Bularia	III	6,837	0.91	Std (T)	38%	Normal	3.7 mill.	AthDem	1	6	3.5	
0528	Condaria	I	4,736	0.50	Thin (T)	71%	Cool	92 mill.	Bureau	6	6	3.0	
0530	Dorianna	I	3,569	0.32	V. Thin (T)	5%	Cold	502,000	Bureau	6	8	2.5	
0627	Darrian	V	4,288	0.45	Std	33%	Warm	2.1 bill.	Techno	2	13	4.5	Darrian homeworld
0727	Spume	III-N	513	0.05	Thin (T)	0	Cool	100	Clan/tribal	0	9	2.0	
0729	Ator	II	3,182	0.31	V. Thin (T)	60%	V. cold	830	Oligarchy	5	6 (9)	2.0	Ator family TL9
0830	Debarre	IV	7,853	0.84	Thin	39%	Cool	80	AthDem	1	9	2.5	Amber Zone

FIVE SISTERS SUBSECTOR

HEX	NAME	STARPORT	GRAVITY		HYDROGRAPHIC %			POPULATION*		CR	WTN		NOTES
			DIAMETER	ATMOSPHERE	CLIMATE			GOV TYPE		TL			
0433	Jone	IV	6,837	0.79	Dense (T)	15%	Hot	70 mill.	Bureau	2	9	4.5	Amber Zone
0532	Ucella	II	4,761	0.47	Std (T)	43%	Warm	4.3 mill.	Techno	2	7	3.5	Amber Zone
0533	Penelope	III	3,978	0.42	Std	1%	Hot	3 mill.	RepDem	1	5	3.0	
0534	Karin	V	7,241	0.87	Std	67%	Warm	41.2 mill.	Military	4	10	5.0	
0632	Gohature	III	6,712	0.62	Thin	41%	Normal	50.6 mill.	Subj	3	7	4.0	
0731	Ralhe	I	2,119	0.22	V. Thin (T)	35%	V. Cold	832,000	Subj	2	7	2.5	
0732	Iderati	V-N	7,769	1.14	Dense	71%	Warm	20.5 mill.	Bureau	4	12	5	Subsector Capital
0834	875-496	I-S	8,213	1.24	Dense	83%	Hot	53,000	AthDem	1	7	2.5	Amber Zone

SWORD WORLDS SUBSECTOR

HEX	NAME	STARPORT	GRAVITY		HYDROGRAPHIC %			POPULATION*		CR	WTN		NOTES
			DIAMETER	ATMOSPHERE	CLIMATE			GOV TYPE		TL			
0927	Narsil	IV	4,779	0.47	Std (T)	38%	Normal	27 bill.	Techno	5	9	5.5	
0930	Flammorian	V-WN	5,878	0.60	V. Thin	29%	Cool	77,000	Subj	2	9	4.0	
1026	Anduril	V-N	9,467	1.52	Dense	49%	Normal	222 mill.	Techno	2	9	5.0	Amber Zone
1126	Orcrist	IV-N	7,958	1.04	Exotic	62%	Normal	42 mill.	Oligarchy	2	9	4.5	
1130	Enos	I	1,961	0.19	Thin	0	V. Hot	75,000	Bureau	6	5	2.5	
1329	Caladbolg	IV-S	2,985	0.30	Std	49%	Cold	99 mill.	Multiple	2	9	4.5	
1429	Gunn	I	3,080	0.21	Thin (T)	37%	Warm	68	Subj	0	8	1.0	Amber Zone
1430	Caliburn	I	Belt	—	None	0	—	94,000	Subj	2	9	3.0	
1529	Steel	I	6,118	0.81	Thin	47%	Hot	4,300	Subj	1	8	2.0	
1628	Mithril	I	5,025	0.53	Std	83%	Cold	0	None	0	0	Nil	

DISTRICT 268 SUBSECTOR

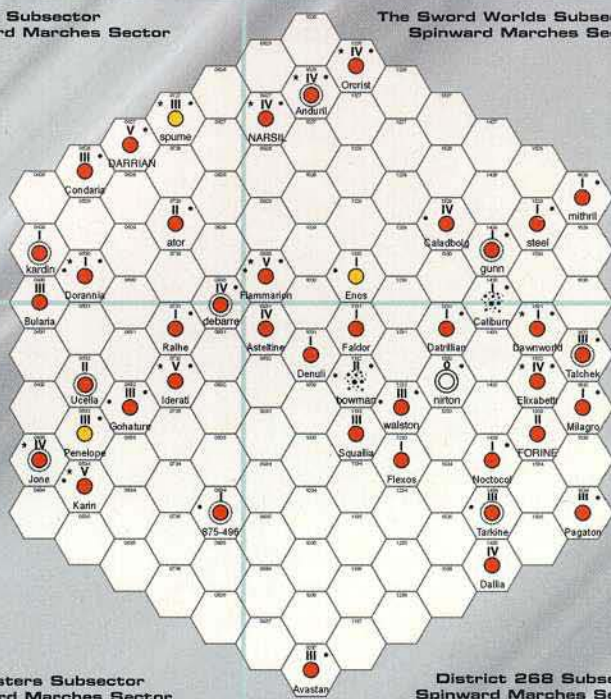
HEX	NAME	STARPORT	GRAVITY		HYDROGRAPHIC %			POPULATION*		CR	WTN		NOTES
			DIAMETER	ATMOSPHERE	CLIMATE			GOV TYPE		TL			
0931	Asteltine	IV	6,489	0.72	Exotic	69%	V. Hot	22,000	Clan/tribal	2	9	3.5	
1037	Avastan	III	3,990	0.42	V. Thin	27%	Cold	730,000	AthDem	0	9	3.5	
1131	Faldor	I	4,562	0.62	Dense (T)	27%	Warm	5 mill.	Dictator	3	5	2.5	
1132	Bowman	II	Belt	—	None	0	—	8,700	Anarchy	0	9	2.5	
1133	Squallia	III	3,853	0.36	V. Thin	80%	Cold	3 mill.	Multiple	5	9	4.0	
1232	Walston	III	5,407	0.48	Thin (T)	43%	Cool	3,000	Oligarchy	5	8	2.5	
1233	Flexos	I	4,773	0.57	Std	11%	Normal	62,000	AthDem	1	6	2.5	
1331	Datrillian	I	1,523	0.20	V. Thin (T)	68%	Warm	8.4 mill.	Oligarchy	2	8	3.0	
1332	Nirton	0	6,215	0.85	None	0	V. Cold	0	None	0	0	Nil	Red Zone
1433	Noctocol	I	690	0.92	V. Dense	52%	Hot	61 mill.	AthDem	3	6	3.0	
1434	Tarkine	III	3,853	0.57	Std	60%	Normal	3 mill.	Bureau	2	7	3.5	Amber Zone
1435	Dallia	IV	7,462	0.79	Corrosive	49%	Normal	620 mill.	Bureau	1	9	5.0	
1531	Dawnworld	I	8,403	1.20	Dense	50%	Hot	0	None	0	0	Nil	
1532	Elixabeth	IV	4,474	0.31	V. Thin (T)	61%	Cold	22,000	Dictator	4	8	3.0	
1533	Forine	II	2,635	0.26	Trace	22%	V. Cold	1.6 bill.	Dictator	5	9	4.5	
1631	Talchek	III	7,054	0.92	Corrosive	10%	Normal	60,500	Dictator	2	6	3.0	Amber Zone
1632	Milagro	I	1,927	0.24	Trace	6%	V. Cold	90 mill.	Bureau	6	7	3.0	
1634	Pagaton	III	7,396	0.97	Std	93%	Normal	938 mill.	Multiple	1	5	3.0	

*Starport personnel not included.

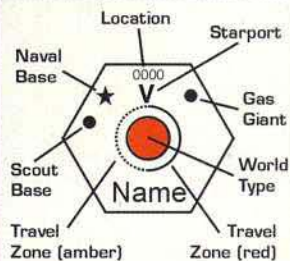
Darrian Subsector
Spinward Marches Sector

The Sword Worlds Subsector
Spinward Marches Sector

Jump-6 Map for Denuli



LEGEND



World Types

Asteroid



Vacuum



Desert



Normal



Water

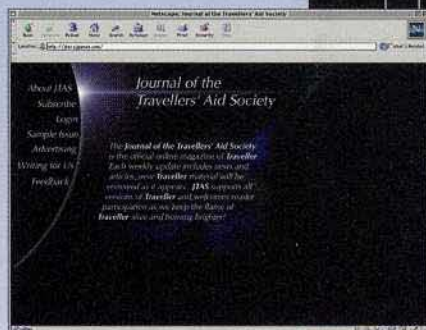


Worlds with population over a billion are named in all caps, e.g., **NARSIL**. Worlds with population 10,000 or less are named in all lower-case, e.g., **kardin**. Worlds between these extremes are capitalized normally, e.g., **Denuli**.

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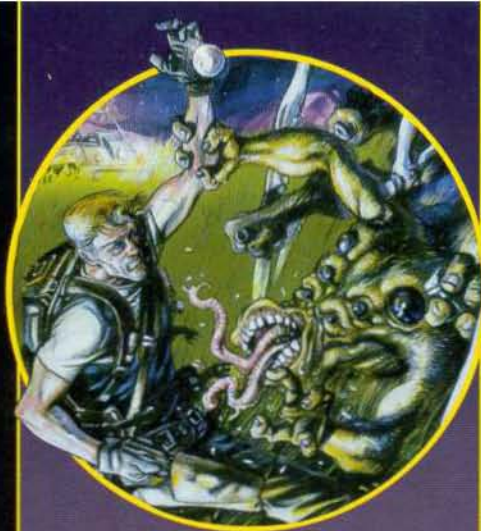
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