

Double Adventure 3 *The Argon Gambit*

TRAVELLER

*Science-Fiction Adventure
in the Far Future*



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Double Adventure 3
The Argon Gambit

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Science-Fiction Adventure
in the Far Future

Game Designers' Workshop

The Argon Gambit is dedicated to John D. MacDonald.

The Argon Gambit was designed by Frank Chadwick. Additional assistance provided by John Harshman, Winston Hamilton, Loren Wiseman, and Marc W. Miller.

The Argon Gambit

TRAVELLER, Double Adventure 3

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This Double Adventure is intended for use with **Traveller**. It assumes possession and understanding of **Basic Traveller** (Books 1, 2, and 3).

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Game Designers' Workshop,
PO Box 1646
Bloomington, Illinois 61701

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Introduction

This booklet contains two comprehensive adventures for **Traveller** printed back-to-back. This adventure, titled *The Argon Gambit*, deals with the crew of a bankrupt free trader and their efforts to acquire capital to finance a new venture.

It is assumed that this adventure will be administered by a referee who has read through this adventure, and who is familiar with both

**Requires only the
Basic Traveller Set**

it and the rules for **Traveller**. This situation calls for only the basic **Traveller** booklets (Books 1, 2, and 3), and no additional supplements, books, or other

information. As usual, paper, pencils, six-sided dice, and square-grid graph paper will prove necessary during the course of the adventure.

This introduction (pages 4 and 5) is for the use of both the referee and the players, and may be read to all concerned. The first two sections of *The Situation* (pages 6 and 7) are for the players, and should be presented to them, to begin the adventure. The remainder of the booklet is for the referee alone. No part of this adventure should actually be placed in the players' hands.

STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The following standards and assumptions are used in the text of this adventure. The referee may alter them by using a different time frame, or by using a world already in another **Traveller** subsector in order to integrate the adventure into an existing **Traveller** campaign.

Dates: All dates herein correspond to the Imperial calendar. The date for this adventure is 1107; that is, sometime in the 1107th year

Date: Sometime in 1107. following the founding of the Imperium. The referee should indicate the exact date based on the local situation. Days within the year are numbered consecutively from 1 to 365; thus, the last day of the year is 365-1107. Once the adventure begins, the referee should allow time to flow normally.

Place: This adventure takes place on Janosz (0608-A564978-B), which is located in the Harlequin subsector of the Solomani Rim, just inside the Imperial border. Janosz is only slightly less than average in size, measuring 8,000 kilometers in diameter, with a standard atmosphere and water covering 40% of the planet's surface.

Place: Janosz
Harlequin Subsector
Solomani Rim
the Imperium

Janosz has a population slightly in excess of one billion, and is listed as a balkanized world with an average law level of 8. There are, in fact, thirty-two sovereign states on the planet, with populations ranging from only a few million to over 100 million. This specific adventure takes place in the city of Argon, the capital of Intanevac and the site of the world's largest (and only class A) starport. Due to the influence of the large population of starfarers in the city, the local law level of Argon is actually 4. Intanevac is a representative democracy enjoying a high degree of personal freedom, and is widely known for its political and religious tolerance.

CHARACTERS

This adventure is intended for use with a band of travellers serving as the crew of a free trader, temporarily grounded for lack of funds at Down Argon Starport; it can be altered to use nearly any type of adventuring group.

Desirable Skills: No specific skills are called for in this adventure. The characters may find the following skills of some value: bribery, forgery, leader, streetwise, brawling, and various forms of gun and blade combat.

In some cases, characters may not have any weapons expertise. The referee may select a weapon (ideally one which supplies dexterity or strength bonuses) and assign a skill level of weapon-0. This, at a minimum, indicates which weapon the individual prefers and while not giving any skill advantages to its use at least avoids the negative DM associated with lack of skill.

Pre-Generated Characters: A group of pre-generated characters is supplied below, although the referee may allow other characters instead. If these characters are used but there are fewer than eight adventurers in the party, it is strongly recommended that the first five characters listed be utilized first.

1	Retired Merchant Captain	616668	Age 50	8 terms	Cr1,000
	Navigation-1, Admin-1, Steward-1, Medic-1, Pilot-1, Shotgun-1				Ship
2	Ex-navy Lieutenant Commander	118B94	Age 34	4 terms	Cr2,000
	Gunnery-1, Computer-2, Engineering-1, Pistol-2				
3	Ex-marine Trooper	AB8B67	Age 34	4 terms	Cr2,000
	Cutlass-2, Vacc-1, Brawling-2, Autorifle-1, Mechanical-1				
4	Ex-other	856994	Age 30	3 terms	Cr3,000
	Electronics-1, Bribery-1, Blade-1, Streetwise-2				
5	Ex-scout	365BB4	Age 34	4 terms	Cr1,500
	Vacc-2, Pistol-1, Pilot-1, Electronics-1, Brawling-1				TAS member
6	Ex-army Trooper	767994	Age 38	5 terms	Cr1,000
	Blade-1, Rifle-3, Gambling-1, Forward Observer-1, ATV-2, Medic-2				
7	Ex-navy Starman	961797	Age 50	8 terms	Cr1,300
	Dagger-4, Admin-1, Ship's Boat-1, Computer-1, Navigation-1, JOT-1				
8	Ex-merchant Second Officer	649465	Age 34	4 terms	Cr2,000
	Electronics-1, Mechanical-1, Medic-1, JOT-1				

EQUIPMENT

The player-characters should be allowed an opportunity to review the planetary characteristics and to select and purchase any equipment they think may be important to their activities. This selection period should be relatively brief, as ample opportunity to shop and buy will be available during the adventure.

Across the Bar Room Table

When the free trader *Long Shot* jumped into the Janosz system, it developed a bad fuel leak which destroyed much of the wiring in several power plant sub-systems. The *Long Shot* was taken in tow and parked in orbit above the planet Janosz pending repairs. Towing fees consumed much of the ready cash of the adventurers, however, and even after the disposal of the cargo the estimated costs of the repairs will amount to about Cr750,000 more than the group can raise. Forced to effect repairs within one month or have their ship seized as a hazard to astrogation, the group is desperately seeking employment.

While engaged in idle conversation at one of the bars in the rough section of Argon city near the starport, the group is approached by a man who identifies himself as Jason Grant (7879A8, age 34). Grant is expensively, although conservatively, dressed and appears to be out of place in the bar. Nevertheless, he gives the impression of being at ease, and capable of taking care of himself. Grant indicates that he is aware of the group's search for employment, has heard of the type of jobs they have done in the past (that is to say, occasionally shady, and often dangerous), and says that he may have a job for them. Are they interested?

Retiring to a table in the corner where they are unlikely to be overheard, Grant explains that he is in the employ of a public figure who is being blackmailed. The item in his employer's past is personal in nature, not political, but public revelation of it would nevertheless destroy his career. As his employer is out of favor with the government at present, discretion from the police cannot be expected. He is forced to turn to unofficial means of protecting his privacy.

THE TASK

Grant and his agents have determined the source of the blackmail — one Ganidiir-si Kashkanun, a local citizen of some means but with a slightly unsavory reputation. Kashkanun is known to have documents which form the basis of his blackmail plot in his villa, probably in his personal safe. The adventurers must break into the villa, recover the documents, and return them to Grant. Only by examining the documents can Grant's employer determine whether additional supporting documents may exist elsewhere and prepare forgeries which can be substituted for the originals.

Additional Discussion: Grant appears to be open in discussing the projected assignment. He explains several other relevant points.

He can and does provide a general plan of Kashkanun's villa, and says that he is relatively certain there are only three bodyguards at work there. He can provide tranquilizer guns and non-lethal gas grenades. The main obstacle to be overcome is the electronic security system. That requires some intelligence work which the adventurers themselves must do.

Grant can stall the final pay-off for seven days. On the eighth day, the pay-off must be made. Therefore, he suggests that the group make the raid on the seventh day from today. That should provide them enough time to get the information and make plans. He also demands that the group meet with him once more before the

plans are finalized; it is very important to him that the effort succeed, and as he is familiar with this sort of thing, it is likely that he can constructively criticize. If he can make even one suggestion that will prevent any obvious blunders, then he will be well rewarded.

Grant and his own men cannot carry out the break-in as their known association with Grant's employer may implicate him if anything were to go wrong.

Grant's employer will pay Cr1,000,000 for successful completion of the mission.

ADMINISTERING THE ADVENTURE

Things are not as they seem. The real nature of *The Argon Gambit* is not the simple burglary attempt it first appears to be; it is an involved political intrigue in which the adventurers will become ensnared against their will. This will gradually become apparent to the players as they go, and the focus of their efforts will change from just performing a job to discovering the nature of the mystery.

As referee, you must become familiar with the details of the mystery. First read through the rumors beginning on the next page. Don't worry if you don't understand everything; after you have finished reading, try to fit the information into a pattern and guess the solution. This will give you a valuable insight into the players' minds when you run the adventure. Next, turn to the Referee's Notes section (page 17), which explains the full details of the plot. Finally, read the rest of the adventure: The Squeeze, Courses of Action, and Background Data. Each section contains information the referee should know before play begins.

As play begins, the adventurers will be searching for information on Kashkanun's villa. Other rumors they find in the course of the search should alert them that something is wrong; when part one of the squeeze occurs, if not before, they should begin giving most of their efforts to solving the mystery. Players who ignore these hints and just continue planning the break-in are in trouble, and may deserve a slight nudge from the referee.

Maximum player enjoyment will be achieved by avoiding a stereotyped approach to the adventure. If it becomes merely a daily fact-finding mission much of the spontaneity will be lost. The referee should instead encourage the players to take some sort of action, and to that end the most likely options will be discussed later. It is impossible, however, to predict every course of action, and thus the referee must be careful to always remember what the real motives of and information available to each of the non-player characters are. For example, the adventurers may wish to make several meetings with Grant, and to quiz him on what is going on. The referee must remember that Grant is an extremely skilled individual, and will thus do everything in his power to defuse the players' suspicions. If quizzed as to why something happened, Grant would claim ignorance as long as it seemed feasible, but then promise to use his contacts to find out. The ultimate result would be an additional rumor, supplied by Grant to the group, which would then be the most plausible lie Grant could produce to cover his tracks and direct the adventurers back toward his purposes. Grant must always appear as helpful as possible; to be otherwise would be out of character.

Finally, remember that the purpose of this adventure is not to kill off the adventurers, but rather to reward good investigative work and deduction. This is not a situation the players can shoot their way out of, but it may be one that they can think their way out of.

Rumors

The Argon Gambit is a mystery which the players, to survive, must puzzle out, at least in part. The clues to the solution of the mystery can be obtained in several ways, but most of them are contained in rumors. Some of the rumors are red herrings, meaningless to the situation at hand, while others include critical information.

Due to the need to uncover as much information as possible, a different procedure from that used in other adventures is used here. Players may split their party up into several groups to independently hunt for rumors, and each individual or group of individuals may uncover one rumor a day. The individuals involved determine that they are seeking out such information by mingling with the population, making the rounds of bars and spacers' taverns, the local Travellers' Aid Society facilities (if the person is a member), the local naval or scout base, and any other appropriate location.

The information contained in a rumor should not just be read to the players. Rather, the referee should play the part of the non-player character with whom the players are interacting. Rumors available are divided into eight categories to facilitate placing them in plausible situations. The eight categories are street rumors, scout rumors, marine rumors, merchant rumors, navy rumors, noble rumors, Travellers' Aid Society rumors, and general rumors. The rumor obtained by an individual or group of players should be keyed to their actual characteristics; an ex-marine would receive a marine rumor, a character with social standing of A+ would more likely receive a noble rumor, a character with streetwise would receive street rumors, and Travellers' Aid Society rumors can only be obtained by a member of the Travellers' Aid Society visiting the local facilities. The actual characteristics of the group may dictate liberalization of this requirement. For example, if there is no member of the group with social standing A+, the noble rumors might also be obtained by a visit to the Travellers' Aid Society. Remember, it will be difficult enough for the players to solve the mystery even with all of the rumors at their disposal; denying them access to large numbers of them will make their task almost impossible.

Each specific rumor should be embellished by the referee as much as possible, providing a situation and setting and allowing the players to interact with the source. Study of the background material by the referee should enable him or her to provide additional information for some rumors in response to intelligent questioning by the players.

For example, a streetwise player who receives a street rumor would probably do so while in a known criminal haunt, and might also be able to find out by additional questions that the local police are incorruptible and scrupulously honest. Reactions (as per Book 3) should be rolled where the referee feels them to be important.

STREET RUMORS

The following are available to individuals with streetwise skill.

1. A talkative bartender mentions that he's never met Kashkanun but he knows of him. Kashkanun is a well-known Vilani minor racketeer, generally involved in several different shady deals at one time. If the party continues buying drinks and talking to the bartender, he will remember that he's heard rumors that Laura Chin, a big-wig in the local Solomani Party, and herself sometimes involved in shady deals and rough stuff, is apparently after Kashkanun. The word is that Kashkanun somehow double-crossed her, although the bartender doesn't think that the rumor is true. What business would the number two person in the Solomani Party be having with a Vilani thug?

2. A local fence says that he can get the group in touch with a contact man. A contact man is an information broker with sometimes valuable connections. If this is pursued, the contact man will meet the party the next day in the bar and will be able to obtain the complete plans for the electronic security system for Kashkanun's villa. He will sell them for Cr1,000. If the offer is taken, he will deliver them the next day.

3. After listening to the description of the men who attacked the party and beat them up, a local tough says that he has seen a group of men like that together often. The local word is that they work for someone in the Solomani Party as security guards and bouncers at political rallies, and they probably do special jobs on the side. He doesn't know their names, however, or where to find them. (This rumor should not be provided until after The Squeeze, Part One, has occurred — see page 13.)

4. A local bookie is nervous and thinking of closing his operation for several weeks, as he thinks the heat may be on. He has heard from a friend of his who works as a clerk in the municipal police department that a big raid is scheduled, although he doesn't know for sure what the raid is about. If the conversation is prolonged, he will mention the date of the raid, which is the same date as the break-in. (This rumor should not be provided until after the actual date of the break-in is determined and told to Grant.)

SCOUT RUMORS

The following rumors are available to retired scouts or to ex-scout characters. They may be found at the local scout base, or from scouts in local bars or gathering places.

1. An active duty scout is encountered, very drunk. He complains very bitterly about being stuck in commerce patrol duty instead of being in xboats, which he would prefer. He blames his assignment on the rumors of Solomani arms smuggling attempts, although he knows of no actual arms interceptions by patrol vessels.

2. An off-duty dispatcher from the local scout base claims that many scouts have been pressed into duty in commerce patrols because of a shortage of naval vessels. Several warships have been dispatched to support operations against the Solomani insurgents on the planet Scaramouche in this subsector. The scout has little regard for the navy or the marines, whom he considers to be equally obnoxious. The navy, he will forcefully assert, is run by no-talent nobles while the marines tend to think with their fists. A number of marines recently left the service and went to work for the local Solomani Party as thugs. If questioned further, he can probably remember the bar where the Solomani-sympathizing marines hang out.

3. A retired scout (age 70) claims that much of the southern continent of Jānosz

remains unexplored to this day. There's no telling what mineral wealth is there for the taking.

MARINE RUMORS

The following rumors are available to retired marines or to ex-marine characters.

1. An active duty marine sergeant-major, of obvious Solomani descent, tells the party that he is planning on retiring soon. Several of his friends have recently retired and are making good money working security for the Solomani Party. The sergeant-major is arrogant and self-important, and brags about his connections and pipeline to the inner party. He says that a big shakeup is coming in the party's higher leadership, but when pressed for more information, he abruptly seems to realize that he has probably said too much, and refuses to talk further.

2. A marine corporal is willing to talk about anything that comes up, although he has only recently been transferred to Argon as a guard for the Imperial Consulate. He has mostly pulled guard assignments for the last two terms, and unless things pick up soon, he's thinking of getting out of the service. The only break in the monotony since his arrival on planet was about three weeks ago. His squad was pulled in as additional local security after a burglary at the Intanevaci State Archives, although even then only some unimportant birth and adoption records were taken.

MERCHANT RUMORS

The following rumors are available to ex-merchants, or to retired merchant characters. Actually, since all members of the crew of the *Long Shot* are technically merchants now, any member should be able to find these rumors.

1. A merchant first officer, apparently well-versed in local commercial transactions, remembers Kashkanun's name and recalls that his fortune was made on an insurance settlement from a hijacked cargo. The captain of the merchant ship was financially ruined by the subsequent litigation, and the first officer thinks that Kashkanun somehow framed him.

2. A merchant captain of a free trader admits to being the primary supplier of anagathics to Argon, but is reluctant to discuss who his clients are, as that is privileged information. His manner suggests that a bribe will make him less reluctant, and he will settle for Cr100. After accepting the bribe, he will reveal that his best customer is Grant, although the captain is reasonably certain that the drugs are purchased for someone else's use.

NAVY RUMORS

The following rumors are available to ex-naval or retired naval characters.

1. A navy officer in a bar bemoans the fact that his regular drinking buddies haven't been able to get off duty at night for over a week. They are junior officers pulling a staff assignment in intelligence, and apparently some big operation is brewing.

2. A retired navy admiral comments that he is certain that he has seen the man who calls himself Grant elsewhere, years before, although when he approached him, Grant denied it sounding innocent and sincere. The admiral recalls that the man he knew was a junior naval officer serving on the staff of a fleet admiral in the core, although he disremembers the man's name or exact assignment.

NOBLE RUMORS

The following rumors are available to individuals with social standing A+.

1. An elderly knight is willing to discuss the ins and outs of the local Solomani Party structure at length, his description being liberally interspersed with disparaging remarks about them. Arlan Samuelson is the current Party chief, although he holds only a slim majority on the steering committee of the Party. His chief rival is Laura Chin, a moderate. It appears that Samuelson feels strong enough now to ease Chin out of the steering committee, as at the last Party Congress Samuelson's keynote address contained a number of remarks critical of the training of junior Party officials, a responsibility held by Chin. The main independent on the steering committee, Cedric Zimmerman, controls the swing votes and if he is now siding with Samuelson, that could be the reason that Samuelson is coming out in public against Chin. Although an independent with little solid support on the steering committee, Zimmerman's popularity with the junior Party regulars makes him the probable number three man in the Party.

2. A baroness on vacation in Argon from coreward comments that as a small child, she knew Cedric Zimmerman, although he was then of about the same apparent age as now. She concludes that he must be using anagathics although he has never seemed to have the financial resources to do so, even with his Party contacts.

TRAVELLERS' AID SOCIETY RUMORS

The following rumors are available in the Travellers' Aid Society.

1. Grant is not extremely widely known, but he is not a mystery figure either. A waiter, bartender, or any of several patrons in the Travellers' Aid Society restaurant and bar can easily identify him, and verify his identity from a player's description, as being a member of the Society and a frequent patron of the establishment. He is known to be the administrative assistant to Arlan Samuelson, number one man in the local Solomani Party.

2. The waiter is familiar with Mr. Kashkanun, who is a member of the Travellers' Aid Society, but he has not come into the restaurant in about two weeks. Prior to that, the waiter remembers that he was here several times in the company of Laura Chin, a major figure in the local Solomani Party (although not herself a member of the Society — she came as Kashkanun's guest). The waiter does not know what they discussed over dinner and drinks; waiters at the Travellers' Aid Society do not eavesdrop on conversations and he is too discrete to mention anything overheard by chance. If asked about Grant, he will mention that he knows him, but has never seen him in the company of Kashkanun.

3. The bartender comments that Grant was in the bar the previous night in the company of an attractive young woman — not a member and thus Grant's guest. They sat at a secluded table, a fact which did not surprise the bartender. He knows the woman by sight as an employee of the municipal police, and if she were seen in public with a member of the Solomani Party, it might mean her job.

GENERAL RUMORS

The following rumors may be encountered by virtually anyone.

1. A captain in the Intanevac Army speculates that the Imperials must be very concerned with the open existence of the Solomani Party in his country, but

they can't do anything about it. The home rule provisions of the Imperial Charter for the world clearly prohibit interference in internal affairs, and as long as the Solomani stay within the law, the hands of the Imperium are tied. The captain is not a Solomani sympathizer, but he doesn't care much for the Imperium either. Their powerlessness makes him feel smug.

2. A man in a bar orders a round of drinks for the house, and then loudly offers a toast to the anti-redemptionists. Several others join him, others throw their drinks at him, and a general free-for-all ensues. Questioning of locals reveals that the anti-redemptionists are a local political movement opposed to an immediate demand for payment on large amounts of Imperial war bonds held by the Intanevac government since the Solomani Rim War.

3. A private in the Intanevac Army has just returned from duty on the southern border with the nation of Malbak, and he says that there have been occasional border incidents, although he doesn't know why. A friend of his was wounded and he's glad to be back in the capital where it's safe.

4. The planet Janosz is truly balkanized. Not only are there thirty-two sovereign states on the planet, but only twenty-nine are officially members of the Imperium, with the three others autonomous. One of these, Cloralie, maintains its tenuous hold on independence by rigidly suppressing any sign of the Solomani movement within its borders, thus avoiding any Imperial charge that they are harboring rebels.

The Squeeze

The adventurers are not the only ones interested in Kaskanun's villa, and word will leak back to those who have an interest in keeping them away. As a result, the following two events will happen, administered by the referee. The first should happen on the second or third day; the second should take place a day or two later (once it becomes clear that the adventurers are not going to abandon the case).

THE SQUEEZE: PART ONE

While collecting information, it is likely that the group will become split up in order to maximize their use of time. When they do so, one of these splinter groups, the smallest and ideally consisting of just one person, will be intercepted by several thugs and beaten up.

1	First Thug Brawling-2, Auto Pistol-2	A68657	Age 34	armed with truncheon
2	Second Thug Brawling-1, Auto Pistol-2	997368	Age 22	armed with truncheon
3	Third Thug Brawling-3, Auto Pistol-1	8C2567	Age 22	armed with truncheon
4	Head Thug (ex-marine) Tactics-2, Leader-2, Cutlass-3, Body Pistol-1, Brawling-4, Rifle-1	766946	Age 38	armed with body pistol

Treat truncheons as club+1.

The thugs will beat up the adventurer or group of adventurers they find, and the head thug will warn them, "Get off this case and stop asking about Kashkanun. There's more to this than you think, and there are bigger people in it than you'll ever be, so clear out or you'll get squashed."

Street rumor number 3 should not be given to the party until after this incident (obviously).

THE SQUEEZE: PART TWO

If the party persists in their investigation, they will be ambushed by the thugs listed above. All of the thugs are this time armed with auto pistols, and will have surprise. After the first round of gunfire, however, a bright flash of light will literally burn them from behind. The two men who burned them will show themselves briefly to check the bodies, and then leave. These unknown protectors are armed with FGMP-15s.

Referee's Note: The FGMP-15 is a Fusion Gun, Man-Portable, Tech Level 15; the weapon is described in Book 5, *Mercenary*. Its function and operation are not necessary to this adventure. The players should be informed, however, that the weapon is a fabulously expensive, extremely powerful energy weapon virtually unavailable outside of Imperial service.

Irrelevant ideas such as snatching the FGMP-15 from the protectors, or following them, should be discouraged and should not be successful.

Courses of Action

After they have gained some idea of what is going on, the players may want to consider their many options. The following are several of the possibilities available.

RUN

Yes, the players can do this, but should probably be discouraged from flight for several reasons. First, they have accepted the deal from Grant, and he is likely to be very upset if they just vanish. He will probably attempt to track them down and get revenge for having spoiled his plan. Second, the players still need funds to save their ship, and running now would mean giving it up, resulting in a considerable financial loss.

GO TO IMPERIAL INTELLIGENCE

This course of action will be largely fruitless, as the local duty officer will express no interest in their story and even show some hostility to the group. His excuse is that nothing in their story actually indicates any threat to Imperial security and does not justify any action on his department's part in the group's behalf. In any event, he has no real jurisdiction in the matter. He seems to soften toward the end of the conversation and offers some friendly advice: it would be a bad idea to go to the police with their story, as the local police are notoriously corrupt. That is not to say that the group could bribe them; quite the contrary. The police are almost totally owned by various local criminal elements, probably including the people who are after the adventurers.

While leaving Imperial Intelligence Headquarters, the group catches sight of the two men who killed the thugs. They are seen briefly through an open office door, where they are engaged in what seems to be routine paper work. If the second part of the squeeze comes after the visit to the Imperial Intelligence, the two men will be remembered and recognized by the member of the adventuring party with the highest intelligence.

GO TO THE POLICE

The police are not corrupt and the advice of the intelligence chief was deliberate misdirection. The chief of detectives will talk to the party and listen to their story with interest, although he will not be very sympathetic. After all, he is a police officer, and the group is already guilty of conspiracy to commit burglary at the very least. A reaction roll will be in order here as a general guide to the detective's behavior, but extreme reactions will be tempered by either his natural distrust of criminals or his natural curiosity to find out what's going on.

The most likely outcome of the meeting will be the offer of a deal. The detective can easily prosecute them for their crimes thus far, and that would be the end of their ship. He instead may choose to offer them amnesty from prosecution in return for unraveling the mystery. Who's after what and why? If the deal is offered, he will tell them what he knows.

Grant has leaked to the police the date of their planned break-in to Kashkanun's

villa and the police are planning to seize them when they leave, hoping to get both them and the documents which the police hope will somehow incriminate Kashkanun. They do not at present have sufficient grounds for obtaining a search warrant, but the documents would become viable evidence if seized in the course of an arrest. The detective feels, however, that there is more to it than that, and the adventurers' story confirms this. Why would Grant turn them in?

ALTER THE PLAN

The group may decide to carry out the break-in earlier than specified by Grant. If so, this will spoil Grant's plan and make him very upset, and this should be pointed out to the group. Grant was adamant about knowing every detail of the plan, and there is the possibility that he will refuse to pay if it is deviated from. The players may carry this out anyway and use the documents to extort the money from Grant and from his employer Samuelson. This would be a very dangerous course of action, but possible to pull off if done carefully. They would, however, accumulate several powerful enemies, which might provide the background for future adventures.

GRILL KASHKANUN

Once they have broken into the villa, they may question Kashkanun. Under pressure, he will break quickly and tell all he knows. Specifically, he will tell his background (petty mobster), that he was hired by Laura Chin to burglarize the archives and obtain the documents proving Samuelson's ancestry, and then double-crossed Chin by using them to blackmail Samuelson instead of turning them over to Chin as agreed. Kashkanun also knows enough about the ins and outs of the Solomani Party to know that Zimmerman is dependent on Grant for his anagathics. This may be why he has sided with Samuelson on the committee, but he is certain that even Samuelson does not have the money to buy the needed drugs. Only Grant does, although where Grant gets his money is a mystery.

CHECK UP ON GRANT

Careful searches of public records indicate that Grant has a personal history leading back only ten years. Beyond that, no records exist. For the last ten years he has led an unspectacular life, gradually rising in the ranks of the party bureaucracy.

TRACK DOWN THE THUGS

If the adventurers return to the bar where they encountered the marine sergeant-major of marine rumor one, there is a chance (throw 3+ on 1D) that he will again be present and this time in the company of his two friends. One of them will be recognizable as the head thug. If this takes place after part two of the squeeze, only one of his friends will be with him (the other being dead) and they will both be depressed.

Both of the ex-marines are in the employ of Laura Chin and can be made to talk either through threats, bribery, or actual physical violence, depending on their reaction rolls and responses to bribes. They will eventually admit that they are in the employ of Laura Chin and that she has received information about their planned break-in at Kashkanun's villa. She plans to be waiting for them with several other thugs and to take the documents from them.

GO TO LAURA CHIN

Laura Chin is interested primarily in recovering the documents from Kashkanun intact, and may be willing to make a deal with the adventurers, although she has already been burned once and will be mistrustful. Her main desire is that the adventurers stay clear of the whole thing, although some of the information they have gathered may prove interesting to her, and may make her sufficiently grateful to offer them both money and protection from Grant.

DEAL DIRECTLY WITH SAMUELSON

There is no direct link with Samuelson, but Kashkanun can make contact and may be willing to make a deal. Part of the money would be better than none. Samuelson may be willing to deal with the group direct if the party by that time has figured out that Grant is an Imperial agent and can convince Samuelson of the facts. Samuelson will then pay the group the Cr1,000,000 in return for the documents, and also demand that other documents be put in their place in Kashkanun's safe. When the police do arrive and search on the basis of a tip that there is a burglary in progress (even though there isn't) the documents they recover will embarrass the Imperium somehow.

Referee's Notes

Before the adventure is run, the referee should read through the entire set of materials, if only to familiarize himself with the entire situation. But before reading this chapter, be sure to read through the rumors chapter. The experience of reading the information that will be presented to the players, and then attempting to understand it, will prove useful in presenting it to the players during the adventure. Only after reading and thinking about the rumors should you read this chapter.

INTANEVAC, ON JANOSZ

The nation of Intanevac on the planet Janosz is a representative democracy committed to freedom of political expression. Thus, the Solomani Party is a legitimate and open political movement in the nation, although generally not a highly respected one. The party has something of a reputation for rough tactics, and is believed to be involved in activities supporting covert operations elsewhere, although there is no proof of this. Due to the nature of the Imperial Charter's home-rule provisions, the Imperium cannot intervene to suppress the Solomani Party on Intanevac unless they actively engage in treason, or in the event of a declared Imperial emergency. Neither of these conditions is present at the moment.

The hierarchy of the Solomani Party is at present involved in a power struggle. There are three members in a position of power on the Steering Committee: Arlan Samuelson, Laura Chin, and Cedric Zimmerman. Samuelson is the leader of the hard-liners and controls six of the thirteen seats on the committee. Laura Chin, a moderate, controls five seats. The remaining two seats are controlled by Zimmerman, an independent. Although holding the fewest number of seats, Zimmerman controls the swing votes in any power struggle, and has recently sided with Samuelson. This makes Samuelson the clear party leader and moves have been initiated to squeeze Laura Chin completely out of the party leadership.

Several weeks before the adventurers arrived on planet, Laura Chin received word that there might be irregularities in the geneology of her chief rival, Samuelson. Desperate for anything which might give her an edge in the upcoming struggle, she contacted Kashkanun, a local racketeer. Kashkanun agreed, for a fee, to arrange a break-in at the state archives in order to obtain the documents which would prove the irregularities. These documents are not normally available to the public as they are considered to be personal and privileged information. For a man with Kashkanun's connections, the break-in and theft were easy.

The documents did prove that Arlan Samuelson's maternal grandmother was, in fact, Vilani. This had previously escaped notice as she bore a Solomani name; she had been adopted during infancy by Solomani parents. No special note was taken of her race as most people, even this close to the center of Solomani political strength, simply don't care much one way or another. Kashkanun, himself mostly Vilani, found the documents amusing, and decided to make some additional money on the side at the expense of the Solomani Party fanatics. Instead of turning the documents over to Laura Chin as promised, he used them to blackmail Samuelson. It was an effective blackmail ploy, as their publication would ruin Samuelson's

position in the party hierarchy. Laura Chin was naturally enraged, as it was necessary to her own political survival that she obtain the documents and use them to drive Samuelson from the Steering Committee, thus seizing control of the party for herself.

Jason Grant, Samuelson's administrative assistant, then entered the scene with a plan to save Samuelson. He would hire a group of adventurers to steal the documents back from Kashkanun, and they would then be destroyed. Obtaining the exact documents would allow replacements to be forged, and the information on Samuelson's grandmother's birth certificate would enable all additional documents relating to her to be traced and altered. In fact, Grant's plan was much more subtle, for Grant is an agent for Imperial Intelligence, planted in Intanevac ten years previously in order to infiltrate the Solomani Party power structure. The appearance of these documents provided him with a unique opportunity to seize control of the entire party apparatus.

While Grant worked for Samuelson, he hardly controlled him and his influence over actual party decision-making was very limited. Grant did, however, control Zimmerman. Zimmerman is actually a very old man, his life prolonged through nearly constant use of anagathics. On Janosz, anagathics are ruinously expensive and clearly beyond Zimmerman's means. Grant, using Imperial funds, supplies Zimmerman with the needed anagathics and thus wields nearly absolute influence over him. Up until this point, Grant had used that control to cause Zimmerman to support Samuelson on the Steering Committee, and thus make Grant indispensable to Samuelson. Now his plan went further.

When Grant made the arrangements with the adventurers, he demanded to know all of the details of the plan, including its date and time, ostensibly to check to make sure it is feasible. Actually, Grant leaked the date and time of the break-in to Laura Chin and also to the police. Chin and her hirelings would be waiting for the group as they left the villa and would attempt to relieve them of the documents. A gun fight would probably ensue and at that point the police would arrive and arrest everyone in sight. The contents of the documents would certainly become public, ruining Samuelson, and the criminal notoriety Chin would receive would probably ruin her as well. Thus, the way would be open for Zimmerman to step into the party leadership. Grant, controlling his anagathics, would then be the power behind Zimmerman, and able to closely control his policies. The Imperium would, in effect, control its most serious political rival in the nation.

Laura Chin was anxious that the activities of the adventurers would not interfere with her own efforts to recover the documents, and thus began putting pressure on them to back off. When this failed, she tried to have them killed. But since their part in the plan was essential to Grant's overall plot, two Imperial Intelligence operatives had been assigned to follow them and to guard them against just such an attack. It is they who killed the four thugs.

MAPPING

The major thrust of this adventure is the solution of the mystery: what is the adventurers' actual mission, why is it being contracted for, and what are the motives behind it? But in the course of the adventure, the travellers may be placed in situations where maps can prove useful. Such being the case, the referee should be prepared to provide maps as needed. Two specific maps appear to be called for:

Argon City and Kashkanun's villa.

Argon City: A sketch map of the city can easily be roughed out on a piece of paper. It should include the starport, a city center, and various locations of importance. If both the players and the referee are ready to deal with it, they should consider using a standard atlas or service station map of a familiar city, perhaps New York, Chicago, or Paris.

The city's airport can serve as the starport. The city center will hold the primary business centers, hotels, and government offices. Regions within the city can be marked off as seedy areas, rich neighborhoods (including the location for Kashkanun's villa), and manufacturing areas.

The use of this sort of real map, even if it is of a 20th century Terran city, will add details that often are lacking in simple sketch maps. For example, a referee's sketch map usually contains only those areas of importance in the adventure; a real map will contain large quantities of misleading detail. In addition, a real map will provide a realistic view of the distances involved in the city. The players will have to cope with distance and the valuable time they must waste travelling from point to point.

Kashkanun's Villa: A map or floorplan of Kashkanun's villa is a definite object of the players' searches. When they find one, the referee should have such a map available for examination. As with the city map, the referee can provide a simple sketch map, or can provide a map of a real location.

The villa should be inside a walled compound and consist of a large house and several smaller buildings (servants' quarters, stables, guest house, etc.). The electronic security system should be detailed; it consists of hidden television cameras and metal detectors positioned in numerous strategic places. One of Kashkanun's three body guards is always awake, monitoring the system, and the other two can be summoned to the site of a disturbance in 3 to 5 minutes. If the group does not have the plans to this system, they will find it very difficult to evade it.

If they do have the plans, they will be able to gain entry by carrying no metal objects and carefully avoiding all the cameras. The referee should indicate the viewfields of all cameras and leave a very few dead zones for this purpose; if the referee wants to go to a great deal of trouble, the cameras could have a scanning pattern, and the dead zones might only open up momentarily, at intervals. Assuming a proper plan, there should be few problems with the actual breakin and burglary.

Suggested real sources for such floor plans include the encyclopedia (for a typical Roman home, or a castle floorplan from England), or reference books at the library. Newspapers often run house blueprints with articles in the home section; often flyers or brochures are available from contractors or builders as well.

Background Data

The term Solomani is often used interchangeably to refer either to members of the Solomani race (or, more palatably to some, to members of the human race of Solomani descent) or to members of the Solomani political movement. The bitter fighting along the Imperial rimward frontier with the Solomani separatists has tended to obscure (to many people on isolated worlds) the important role played by loyal Imperial citizens of Solomani descent; to the experienced traveller the evidence is ever-present and undeniable.

HISTORY OF THE SOLOMANI PEOPLE

Independently developed from the original human stock on Terra, the Solomani achieved space flight about 2,500 years before the founding of the Third Imperium. At that point the Vilani had enjoyed space flight for nearly 7,000 years, and had a star-spanning empire which had endured for millennia.

The Solomani contacted the Vilani (and not the reverse) less than 100 years after developing space flight, and less than a decade after their discovery of jump drive. War broke out almost immediately, and only the decadence and inefficient management of the Vilani Empire allowed the Terrans to hold out long enough to build up a sizeable space fleet and begin a wide scale counter-offensive. The final result was the triumph of the men of Earth over the old Vilani Empire and the establishment of the Rule of Man (aka Second Empire). The drift toward disintegration was, however, already strongly rooted in the fabric of the old empire and its new governors were unable to overcome its inertia. The disorganization of the last period gave rise to the disparaging term Ramshackle Empire. Within four hundred years, the Rule of Man collapsed and a seventeen hundred year inter-regnum ensued. From that long night came the establishment of the Third Empire, today's Imperium.

Although the Rule of Man was fairly brief in terms of galactic history, its span did allow the spread of the Solomani people throughout much of the region presently ruled by the Imperium, and established them almost universally in positions of wealth and authority. The Solomani came first as conquerors, then as administrators, and their establishment in positions of power lasted well past the end of the Rule of Man. Much of the current Imperial nobility consists of genetically true Solomani, with an especially high proportion of senior naval officers being from this group. All of the Emperors of the Imperium were, in so far as it can be established, pure genetic Solomani until the marriage of the Emperor Zhakirov to the Vilani noblewoman Antiamo Shiishuginsa in 679.

Throughout much of the Imperium today, it is virtually impossible to distinguish Vilani from Solomani and in the middle classes, traditionally both geographically and socially mobile, the distinction has become meaningless as extensive inter-marriage has blended the two. The tendency during the Rule of Man for wealthy Vilani to change their names to Solomani surnames has further rendered any wish to make fine genetic distinctions problematical. Only in the Solomani Rim, where many planetary populations have remained overwhelmingly Solomani in character

throughout, and in the upper levels of society where individual geneologies are known with a fair degree of certainty, is there any possibility of making a meaningful distinction. Even between genetically pure Vilani and Solomani, the differences are slight.

HISTORY OF THE SOLOMANI MOVEMENT

The so-called Solomani Hypothesis (that Terra was the homeworld of Humaniti, and that all other human races developed from primitive specimens transported from Terra by the Ancients) gained wide-spread acceptance in modern times through its active advocacy by Magis Sergei haut-Devroe (64 to 141). In fact, the notion that Terra was man's home world had been widely accepted during the Rule of Man for several reasons.

Prior to contact between the Vilani and the Solomani, numerous theories of man's origins had been proposed, and each held varying degrees of sway in the different subject areas of the First Empire. Before spaceflight, Vilani development of the biological sciences had been painfully slow. Consider the difficulties: no animal on Vland has as close a relationship to a human as a human has to a lobster or even to an oak tree. This meant, among other things, that biology received little impetus from medical research: there were few human diseases (and no diseases with animal vectors); even surgery was largely freed from the danger of infection. In addition, there were no animals available for anatomical or biological experiments whose findings would have any validity for humans. Further, when a theory of evolution was finally developed on Vland, it was very difficult to fit humans into the scheme. The fossil evidence for the remainder of Vlandish life was telling, but theories of human evolution were forced to rely on farfetched lines of descent based on superficial similarities, and no theory of man's descent was granted more than tentative acceptance. On the gross level of physical shape, and even in some internal structures, there were many similarities between humaniti and the rest of Vlandish life; after all, there are only a few ways to construct a heart or an eye. But on the cellular and molecular levels, it is clear that humans are unique; only the primitive state of Vlandish embryology, cytology, and molecular biology kept this fact partially hidden.

When the Vilani burst into the interstellar scene, the discovery of numerous interfertile human races, all equally alien to the rest of the life on their planets, and at the same time of many non-human sentients with clear relationships to lower animals on their planets, sparked a new (and correct) theory that humaniti had originated on a single homeworld and had been scattered across the galaxy by unknown agency. Some theorized a previous human galactic empire, but the discovery of numerous ruins of the Ancients seemed to point to them as the likely agents. The major remaining question was the identity of humaniti's home planet. Many candidates were proposed, and all had their (generally chauvinistic) proponents, but the one generally accepted by scientists was Urunishu in the Antares sector. Urunishu possessed a native human race and a large number of species obviously very similar biologically to humaniti, from rodents to baleen whales, including a number of primate species. Unfortunately, Urunishu was undergoing an ice age, and had suffered from intermittent glaciation for several million years, making paleontological research both difficult and, due to the scouring action of glacial flow, unlikely to retain many recent fossils.

It was at this point that biological progress began to suffer from the general stagnation of scientific research that was an unfortunate outgrowth of the Consolidation Wars and the Pax Vilanica.

Contact with Terra and the subsequent Rule of Man widely spread the notion that Terra was the true homeworld, but following the collapse of the Second Empire many independent planets rejected the explanation, claiming that documentary evidence supporting Terra's claim was largely fabricated as a political prop to a faltering government. Few scientists had actually been to Terra or had the knowledge to appreciate its claims, and no physical evidence existed off-world.

Haut-Devroe's hypothesis, however, was based on numerous fragmentary surviving Second Empire texts clearly not of government origin, mostly scientific journals printed on Terra. Since the Imperium traces its legitimacy to the Second Empire, charges of Rule of Man political fabrication were in any event no longer held to be plausible, and the predominantly Solomani make-up of Imperial aristocracy added an additional boost to widespread acceptance. Additionally, haut-Devroe was able to marshal impressive archeological evidence that Urunishu had been the site of an extensive Ancient facility, the equivalent of a zoological park, which contained various Terran fauna and flora, thus ruling out the only other serious candidate for the Human home world. While creating academic interest, however, haut-Devroe's arguments caused little true sensation, and no claims to Solomani racial superiority. When the region of Sol was reincorporated into the Imperium in 588, a small historical mission verified, to no one's great surprise, haut-Devroe's Solomani Hypothesis.

By the early 660's, however, it began to appear that the fabric of the Imperium was unraveling. The previous five hundred years had witnessed a great expansion and thus taxed the ability of the central government to control the frontier. Simultaneously, the power of the various fringe rulers grew; the power of the Sector Dukes as more territory was added to the Imperial Realm, and that of the Admirals of the Marches in proportion to increases in naval and military assets. In 606, Grand Admiral Olav hault-Plankwell returned from the successful conclusion of the First Frontier War (589 to 604) with a fleet-in-being and seized the sceptre, thus beginning a period of two decades in which a series of admirals, the so-called Emperors of the Flag, wrestled for control of the Imperium.

This period of bitter fighting saw the beginning of the Solomani Movement. In addition to causing a great deal of destruction, the period of the Civil War also caused tremendous social upheaval, and Vilani nobles and industrialists began offering a serious challenge within the Imperium to the entrenched Solomani economic and political structure. It was primarily a reaction to this challenge that the Solomani movement was born. In general terms, the adherents of the movement held that the pure Terran racial stock was somehow superior and best fit for ruling the Imperium. They based this primarily on the historical argument that the original Terran invasion, although vastly outnumbered, had succeeded in bringing down the rotten and corrupt First Empire. Radical adherents of the movement eventually came to renounce the Rule of Man as the legitimate source of power, claiming that its failure to govern well was due to the renunciation of the pre-eminence of Terra. (The Rule of Man was initiated by a decision by the Navy not to accept Earth government authority any longer; it began with the institution of a much broader representational base in the government. In the brief period between

the Nth Interstellar War and the beginning of the Rule of Man, the defunct Vilani Empire had been ruled as a conquered territory of Terra, an arrangement which most political scientists agree was totally unworkable.)

Initially, the movement consisted of only a small number of genetically true Terrans, but as the troubles grew (and financial support multiplied) large numbers of essentially nostalgic and reactionary movements formed and the Solomani gained numerous supporters. The movement was at its height immediately after the Civil War (604 to 622) and completely dominated the inner circles of the court advisers to the Empress Arbellatra.

The assumption of the throne by Zhakirov in 666 marked a turning point for the movement. Zhakirov early made clear his rejection of the Solomani Movement's basic positions and began bringing in advisers, first of Solomani descent but not in sympathy with the movement, and later Vilani nobles. Zhakirov's final break with the movement came when he chose Antiamia as his bride, thus guaranteeing an heir of mixed Vilani and Solomani stock, and banished the majority of his Solomani Movement advisers from court.

To placate the more vocal of the Solomani spokesmen, the Solomani Autonomous Region (or the Solomani Sphere) was formed in 704. Effectively, the Imperium turned its back on its rimward fringes for nearly two centuries and allowed the region to develop independently. Trade continued; technological exchanges continued; even taxes continued. The major thrust of the Imperium, however, was to spinward.

In the mid-900's, Empress Margaret turned her attention to the Solomani in response to appeals from several client-worlds within the sphere. The reports indicated that the Solomani were perhaps too overbearing in their own superiority. Authority was concentrated in a few highly placed, genetically true Terrans, with a general disregard for the basic equality of the races. Margaret II, by proclamation in 940, declared the Solomani Autonomous Region dissolved, and reintegrated it into the Imperium. The Solomani resisted.

Initially, the Imperium resorted to diplomacy and bureaucracy to reabsorb scattered worlds into the Imperial mainstream. Ultimately, however, the worlds which had been added to the Sphere since 704 confronted the Imperium with their desire to remain both outside the Imperium and within the influence of Sol. The result was the Solomani Rim War (990 to 1002), an Imperial attempt by more forceful means to make the reintegration stick.

Exhausted, however, by the Third Frontier War (979 to 986), the Imperium was unable to complete the process. When in 1002 Imperial forces recaptured Terra after a long and costly ground and space campaign, both sides were willing to accept an armistice based on the status quo. No treaty was ever signed and the cease fire line has become the de facto border with occasional border incidents on a fairly regular basis since. A total of about 25% of the old Solomani Autonomous Region was reintegrated at the time of the cease fire.

Today in the Imperial area of the Solomani Rim, Solomani agitation is widespread, and wherever political freedom is tolerated there is generally at least one (and sometimes several rival) Solomani Parties. The Solomani Movement itself is fragmented, with hardliners adhering to a rigid belief in Solomani supremacy and sole fitness to rule the Imperium while more moderate forces work toward independence of the old Solomani Autonomous Region from the Imperium, presumably to join those worlds currently comprising the Solomani Sphere.

