
MONGOOSE LIVING TRAVELLER

Of Dust-Spice and Dewclaws

A One-Round *Mongoose Living Traveller* Adventure

by Andy Lilly

Campaign Story Coordinator: Don McKinney

An Aslan trading ship has lost an extremely valuable cargo of dust-spice. An assortment of passing travellers are their best hope of recovering the shipment before it becomes a clan-level embarrassment. A one-round adventure set on Mora (3124/Mora/Spinward Marches).

Resources for this adventure include *The Spinward Marches* [Martin Dougherty] and *Alien Module 1: Aslan* [Gareth Hanrahan].

Sanctioned Play

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an event from the Mongoose Living Traveller website, or you received it from your Senior Referee. To play this adventure as part of the Mongoose Living Traveller Campaign (MLTC) – a worldwide, ongoing Traveller campaign set in the Spinward Marches setting – you must sanction it as part of a gaming event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the Referee's house.

The person who sanctions the event is called the Senior Referee and is in charge of making sure the event is sanctioned before play, runs smoothly on the date sanctioned, and then reported back to MONGOOSE LIVING TRAVELLER CAMPAIGNS in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the Session Referee. Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the Senior Referee is also the Session Referee. You should use the Mongoose Living Traveller Campaign Master Log Sheet (MLS) to track your play and advance your Mongoose Living Traveller Campaign character.

To learn more about MONGOOSE LIVING TRAVELLER character creation and development, event sanctioning, and rewards, visit the Mongoose website at www.mongoosepublishing.com.

PLAYERS READ NO FURTHER

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the Referee only. If you read farther than this section, you will know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you are

playing this adventure as part of a sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

As a minimum to run this adventure you need the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. It is strongly recommended that you read *Alien Module 1: Aslan* to fully understand the Aslan race. *The Spinward Marches* may be useful for background material regarding the area around Mora.

Throughout this adventure, text in ***bold italics*** provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Information on non-player characters (NPCs) and creatures appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Refer to the Appendix for full information on NPCs and creatures.

At the end of the adventure, you will note what awards your players' characters received in this adventure and record it on their Master Log Sheets (MLS). If you are playing this as part of a sanctioned event, please turn those details into your Senior Referee. Otherwise, please note what awards were given out and report the results to the Campaign Coordinator.

PASSAGE

This is a standard one-round adventure, set on Mora (3124/ Mora) in the Spinward Marches. Participation in this adventure requires one passage of any type as indicated in the *Mongoose Living Traveller Campaign Sourcebook*.

Adventure Summary

The scenario begins with an Aslan trading ship having 'lost' an extremely valuable cargo of dust-spice. This is no accident – one of the competitive young males on the trader fooled a rival male into signing away the cargo to a transport company without the knowledge of the ship's senior crew. This was only intended to cause embarrassment, but the situation quickly escalates beyond the instigator's expectations.

The shipment goes to a local company, randomly selected by the duplicitous male Aslan – clearly the recipients aren't expecting the dust-spice, but the potential value of the spice leads them to accept the cargo. A disreputable member of the company immediately passes on the shipment to some friends of his... a local gang, who promptly spirit the spice away to their hideout.

The PCs are recruited in great haste by the astrogator of the Aslan ship. She discovered the loss of the cargo and is trying to recover it before the ship's captain realises what has happened, as the resulting dishonour would forever ruin all the ship's crew, in addition to the physically violent duels and retribution that could occur between certain of the crew...

DATES

All dates correspond to the standard Imperial calendar. The start date of this adventure is Taday 024-1105 (the 24th day of the 1105th year since the founding of the Third Imperium). Time will flow normally once the adventure begins. If a different date is required, for example to fit the adventure into an existing campaign, then the start date can be altered with little or no disruption to the adventure.

LOCATION

The adventure takes place on Mora (A-A99AC7-F), a rich, strategically positioned trading gateway, the capital of Mora subsector in the Spinward Marches. The action is focused around Fenrock, one of the huge seabed arcologies located near the equator of this waterworld. A more detailed description of Mora is provided later.

THE ADVENTURE

This adventure is divided into the following parts:

1. FOR HONOUR

The PCs are recruited by the astrogator of the Aslan trader *Open Path* to recover a shipment of dust-spice that has mysteriously gone missing from the ship. Finding out what happened is problematic given the crew don't want the ship's captain to know the dust-spice has gone.

2. FIRST QUESTIONS

The astrogator will expect the PCs to gather their initial information from those Aslan who interacted with the courier who took the spice shipment away from the *Open Path*. Getting information out of two aggravated male Aslan may be a little challenging...

3. THE COURIER

The next logical step is to check out the courier company, but they seem to have genuine paperwork requesting the cargo transfer and one of the Aslan crew signed all the forms.

4. SOMETHING FISHY

Having traced the shipment to a restaurant in a nearby seabed city (100 kilometres from the starport), the PCs find that the alleged recipients claim never to have seen the cargo, until someone mentions one of their staff has suddenly gone missing...

5. THE LONG HAND OF THE LAW

The PCs turn up at the house of their chief suspect only to find him overdosed on dust-spice... just in time for the cops to turn up.

6. RED TAPE

Some or all of the PCs are in the clink having been caught in a drugs-bust. They will have to be at their most diplomatic if they want to regain their freedom and avoid involving the Aslan.

7. SWIMMING WITH THE SHARKS

Unfortunately, the dust-spice has ended up in the hands of the local criminal fraternity...

8. FINDERS KEEPERS

The PCs have to decide what approach to take, legal or extra-legal, to resolve the matter and get the dust-spice back from the thugs because asking nicely isn't going to work.

9. MAD CATS

The young Aslan males involved in losing the dust-spice from their ship decided to take matters into their own hands and deal with the dishonourable thieves who are holding it. However, their fiery tempers and lack of experience dealing with non-Aslan are guaranteed to lead them into trouble.

10. CASTING OUT

Hopefully the dust-spice has been recovered and the authorities placated. The PCs should have gained sufficient evidence to determine that one of the young Aslan males is behind this whole incident. The question is who is brave enough to challenge him with the facts?

Mora (A-A99AC7-F)

Mora is known as the “Gateway to the Marches” as it sits at a critical pinch-point for the Jump routes through which most of the rimward half of the Spinward Marches is reached (from Deneb sector and the rest of the Imperium to Trailing). As a result, it became the seat of both the Duchy government and the Sector administration and accumulated a disproportionate amount of wealth and influence.

It's now more than a millennia since Ling Standard Products first established itself on Mora to exploit the rich natural resources of this water-dominated world. Over the centuries the population has swelled to over ten billion, mostly dwelling in hundreds of huge arcologies that dot the small areas of exposed land and sprawl across the seabed (primarily in the equatorial regions).

PHYSICAL DETAILS

Mora is a large, molten-core world with a diameter of 15,567 km (9,673 miles) giving it a gravity of 1.19G. A day lasts 23 hours and 51 minutes and it takes 1,162 (local) days to circle its sun. The dense oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere is tainted with industrial pollutants from its past but over the last hundred years this has been reduced to a minor irritant by various environmental ‘clean up’ measures. As a result, almost all inhabitants and most visitors suffer no ill effects, though those of a sensitive constitution may prefer to wear some form of filter mask when outside the sealed areas of the arcologies.

Around 92% of the planet is covered with water, with only one small continent (Batadis), a few large islands, a few archipelagos, and a smattering of lesser islands rising above the surface of the sea.

A relatively high axial tilt of 33 degrees combined with an orbital eccentricity of 0.02 means equatorial temperatures of up to 60°C in Summer but in the polar regions, ice sheets cover large areas of the sea with temperatures as low as -65°C in winter.

SOCIAL DETAILS

Mora's population of over ten billion mostly live in huge self-contained arcologies, about one-eleventh of which are built on dry land on to the continent of Batadis and the various islands, though most of the available arable land surface is dedicated to intensive agriculture. The remainder are spread across the sea floor, mainly in the equatorial regions and often have seabed farms around them. Arcologies may be home to tens or even hundreds of millions of inhabitants. Around 300 million people live in space habitats spread out across the star system.

The planetary government of Mora is split into three authorities – the Judiciary (an elite council known as “The Eleven Brides”); the Executive (another elite council, of 33 women called “The Caucus”); and the Legislative authority which is theoretically held by the Duchess of Mora in her capacity as Matriarch, but in practice exercised by a large bureaucracy appointed by her.

Over the last millennium, Mora has suffered various conflicts – mostly between the merchant lords who sought to control it for its strategic position and trade value. However, for the last 400 years the strong rule of a steady line of Matriarchs has provided a relatively stable and tranquil environment. The current Matriarch is Delphine Adorania Muudashir, 15th Duchess of Mora, who has reached the remarkable age of 125 years, has ruled Mora for more than 90 years, and is generally regarded warmly by Mora's population. As Mora also hosts the Imperial Sector Administration, the political and economic power-play of the whole of the Spinward Marches revolves around the Duchess' world.

Components of each of the military services provide law enforcement and first-response teams for the emergency services, with close day-to-day liaison with the judiciary run by The Eleven Brides. However, the Matriarch has overall control of the planet's military and can mobilise any and all of its units in a crisis situation. The world's laws are fairly strict and somewhat intrusive.

Mora's matriarchal bias extends across many of its government positions with males prevented (by law) from rising above specified levels of responsibility.

STARPORT

Mora Imperial Downport is located on an island in the Fakla River estuary, adjacent to the capital Wavecrest City on the east coast of Batadis. Two of the other arcologies have spaceports and most have some form of airborne access, being built in sufficiently shallow water for their uppermost levels to be above the surface of the sea. Given Mora's economic, astrographical and political importance, its downport is huge (140 square kilometres) and one of the busiest in the Marches. There is an equivalently large highport, handling bigger, unstreamlined starships as well as orbiting space habitats, space industry complexes and megacorporation docks.

Not only is the downport very large but in a fairly uncommon arrangement the associated startown is inside the extrality fence so the port's boundaries are swelled by residential areas, warehousing districts, and an extensive diplomatic district housing hundreds of ambassadors and their staffs, as well as the ducal palace. As a result, the extrality fence encloses an area of roughly 140 square kilometres.

The various names applied in connection with the urban agglomeration at the Fakla River estuary are often confused and mixed up. ‘Wavecrest City’ is strictly speaking only the part that lies outside the extrality fence, but is often used to include the part inside. The part inside the fence is officially the Imperial Enclave, but is often referred to indiscriminately as ‘the startown’ or ‘the starport’, since there is no real separation of the two.

STAR SYSTEM

The Mora system has mining operations and high-technology industrial research and manufacturing centres spread throughout its star system. Close in to the planet are four moons, the largest of which is a vast military complex which is home to the Imperial 73rd Fleet, the Duchy Fleet, and the System Defence Force.

A Scout base and secondary naval base are located in the planetoid belt, the former being the IISS regional headquarters for the Spinward Marches. As a result, the system is full of every kind of vessel, from heavy battle squadrons to high-performance Scout Couriers.

KEY GAME POINTS

- It is assumed that the PCs have been on Mora for some days, have researched it before arriving, or have visited it in the past, such that any of the **world data** given in this section is readily available to them without the need to refer to a library data system.
- Mora's **atmospheric taint** only affects PCs with a weak constitution (i.e. Endurance of 5 or less). Enterprising local outfitters will try to sell tourists filter masks anyway. Characters with low Endurance may feel the need to wear some form of breathing filter (cheap nasal plugs are adequate) to remove the contaminants from past industrial excesses. Should they not do so, any period of exertion requires them to make an Endurance check (Easy, +4) to avoid a fit of breathlessness and coughing (determine the game effects as you feel appropriate, but this could be awkward in the middle of a chase or gunfight). This is not a problem inside the big arcologies, thanks to TL 15 filtering, even though the massive quantities of air pumped around within these mega-cities is drawn from the planetary.
- Mora's **law level** requires all PCs to store personal firearms in secure facilities inside the extrality fence before leaving the Imperial Enclave. The only weaponry allowed outside the extrality fence are: stunners; small blades (larger blades if of appropriate social status or career background); and clubs or similar.
- Mora's **law enforcement** is fairly strict and intrusive. The police (a part of the military on Mora) are armed, never hesitate to point their weapons at potential criminals and can call on military assault teams at very short notice. They expect all civilians to be obedient and produce identity documents whenever asked for, etc. There is also a high degree of video surveillance around the arcologies. This does not mean that all enforcers are thugs – most of them are very approachable and helpful. However, they are capable and ready to deal with those who break the law.

Primary Name: Dimoph

Type: F0 V

Orbital zones

Inner limit: 0.32

Life zone: 2.4 - 3.3

Snow line: 13

Outer limit: 64

List of Planets

Orbit	Distance	Name	Type
0	0.96	Murugil	Terrestrial
1	1.35	Elicar	Terrestrial
2	1.74	Iyrne	Terrestrial
3	2.52	Mora	Terrestrial
4	4.08	Forigi	Terrestrial
5	7.20	The Guarek Belt	Planetoid belt
6	13.44	Gigig	Gas giant
7	25.92	Gogog	Gas giant
8	50.88	Erstine	Terrestrial

Mora is named after a harvest goddess of an old Sylean pantheon. The continent, Batadis, is named after her cornucopia-like Basket of Plenty, and other prominent geographical features on Mora are named after artefacts belonging to other gods. The sun is named after the Sun God and the other inner planets after other gods. The biggest planetoids in the belt are named for members of the Guarek, a race of small mischievous supernatural beings akin to the elves, trolls, and dwarves of Old Terra and the gishkan of Old Vland. The two gas giants are named for two of the giants who hold up the sky, and the major planetoids in Gigig's trojan points (Borranek (The Vanguard) and Surranek (The Rearguards)) are named after heroes listed in the Heavenly Muster chapter in an epic describing the Dawn War between the gods and the primal forces that opposed the creation of Sylea. Erstine, the tiny outermost planet, is named after a dog-like animal belonging to Forigi, the Goddess of the Hunt.

Fenrock

Located 100 km almost due east of Wavecrest, Fenrock is a self-contained underwater city housing 33 million Moran citizens. The city is in relatively shallow water (generally less than 100 metres) and is on the main subsea highway system which carries ground vehicles and mass-transport anti-grav 'rail' systems between the major arcologies.

A few of the upper levels of the city rise above the surface of the sea, supporting a large airport capable of handling aircraft as well as the ubiquitous grav and helicopter traffic. The waterline also acts as a demarcation of class, with the more important and wealthy inhabitants living above sea level.

The city also extends down below the seabed, with large power plants at the lowest levels, subsea farming and processing around the edges and tens of levels of accommodation and services for its inhabitants.

Any given level within the city is generally about 8 metres in height, subdivided into circular or hexagonal spaces (termed "sectors") of several hundred metres across, potentially able to seal themselves off with water- and air-tight doors should the need arise. Mora's tech level and wealth has allowed it to

overcome any civilian's concerns regarding feeling enclosed: the quality and quantity of lighting and environmental control, combined with huge display panels all around these "sectors" showing false 'windows' on to surface and subsea vistas, means that it is pretty easy to forget that on the lowest levels you may be several hundred metres below the sea floor. Zen sector covers all the levels above and below the main transport hub (marked "T" on the city map) and Yin sector the levels below the airport (marked "A"). These two sectors tend to house most of the city's authorities, bureaucracy and associated services (such as the police).

Of course, on the highest levels, the dome structures are fully or semi transparent (with appropriate filtering for the sunlight) and provide views across the surrounding sea (particularly spectacular during the storms that are driven by Mora's dense, hot, equatorial atmospheric regions).

KEY GAMING POINTS

- See the map of Fenrock given in Appendix 5.
- Transport to, and within, Fenrock is described in part 4 of this adventure.

The YAEUKHTAI (“Open Path TO HEROISM”)

The *Aokholkhtyeilik* (approximately meaning “Balance of Trade”) clan are a relatively small sub-clan of the *Wahtoi* clan, themselves vassals to the *Aroaye’i* clan. These huge clans own multiple worlds and are in constant competition to become, or retain, their position as one of the *Tlaukhu* (“The Twenty-Nine” highest-ranking Aslan clans).

The *Wahtoi* are renowned traders and explorers, with colonies and commerce establishments throughout the Trojan Reaches. The *Aokholkhtyeilik* are sufficiently important to own land on Dallia (1435/District 268/Spinward Marches) and their most senior females run *Aokholkhtyeilik’al’soistsea* (roughly “Balance of Trade across Frontiers”), a merchant company with a fleet of ten merchant ships, mostly *Aoa’iw* class Light Traders.

This adventure concerns the crew of one of these Light Traders, specifically the *Yaeukhtai* (“Open Path to Heroism” – hereafter just “Open Path”), consisting of:

- Captain *Hwekaiheast* (“Hunter Of Meat”) – hereafter “Hunter”
- Astrogator *Ftoulreisktoal* (“Star Cloud Climber”) – hereafter “Star”
- Purser *Yorleikhoi* (“Seer Of The Evening”) – hereafter “Seer”
- Engineer *Ktaharastl* (“Cliff Edge Walker”) – hereafter “Edge”
- Spacehand *Troirlaukah* (“Power Of The Shaking Rock”) – hereafter “Rock”
- Gunner *Wiyi’steawtaul* (“Travels Quietly to Catch Prey”) – hereafter “Catch”
- Gunner *Wiyi’htarhwoakh* (“Travels Far Across Wasteland”) – hereafter “Wasteland”

Hunter, Star, Seer and Edge have successfully crewed the *Open Path* for some years, working together for the benefit of their family. Wasteland and Catch are not *Aokholkhtyeilik* clan themselves but come from the *Ka’ahsu’ikhya’ui* (“Defenders against the Inner Void”), another vassal clan of the *Wahtoi*. A couple of years ago, Hunter’s excellent ship tactics allowed the *Open Path* to not only evade, but then fire upon and disable a pirate ship run by outcast Aslan. These pirates had been preying upon *Ka’ahsu’ikhya’ui* ships and in return for Hunter’s brave action the *Ka’ahsu’ikhya’ui* clan nominated two of their young males to crew the *Open Path* for two years. Wasteland and Catch have been reasonably useful and cheap, but are coming to the end of their commitment and expect Hunter to free them to return to their own clan’s service when the *Open Path* finally makes it back to Dallia.

A few months ago, just before the *Open Path* set off on its latest trading run into Lunion and Mora subsectors, there was an assassination attempt against *Troirloiyykheyo* the first-born

son of the *Aokholkhtyeilik* clan leader *Aokholkhtyeilikko*. With no idea who was behind the attempt, the clan leader decided he must protect his precious male heirs while he and his brothers sought out and dealt with the assassins. He put his first-born *Troirloiyykheyo* on one trader and his second-born son Rock on the *Open Path* and despatched both ships off on long trading trips. As both ships were captained by trusted cousins, *Aokholkhtyeilikko* felt confident his sons were in good hands.

Troirloiyykheyo was an intelligent, fierce young chief, widely expected to bring honour to his clan and take over its leadership in the future. Rock was... not quite so bright and not quite so useful, but had to be protected as a matter of principal. *Aokholkhtyeilikko* entertained the vague hope that a few months on a merchant ship would expose his less promising son to the wonders of the stars and perhaps help him towards the role his mother had always wished for him as a clan duellist.

The *Open Path* crew had watched Rock grow up and knew that looking after him would be a full-time job. Indeed, Rock initially seemed to believe he was effectively being assigned as captain of the ship – Hunter quickly put him straight on the matter and Rock reluctantly settled down into a crew role, though he would still assume a leader-like air whenever Hunter was not in the vicinity.

Rock’s arrogance did not enamour him to Wasteland and Catch; he would continually try to boss the other two young males around, despite having no real idea of shipboard operations. Over the coming months of trading through Lunion subsector and into Mora subsector, the crew learned to work *around* Rock, while trying to keep him sufficiently involved in day-to-day tasks that he did not have enough spare time to get himself into trouble. However, the animosity between Rock and Catch (in particular) had festered over this period, threatening time-after-time to erupt into vicious duels. Hunter did not feel it appropriate to constrain Rock’s competitive nature (given his intended duellist career) but at the same time he respected the entreaties of his purser Seer that if Rock got injured by Wasteland, not only would it demoralise the clan leader’s son but it would also be disrespectful of the *Ka’ahsu’ikhya’ui* clan’s contribution to the *Open Path* crew. As a result, Hunter has repeatedly had to step in to prevent open conflict between the young males.

Frustrated at the way Rock treated him and yet avoided having to answer his challenges, Catch finally decided on a more cunning method of discrediting the egotistical second-son...

KEY GAMING POINTS

- The “Open Path to Heroism” is described in Appendix 4. It’s unlikely the PCs will need to go aboard the ship – its deckplans are given in *Alien Module 1: Aslan*.
- Statistics and descriptions of all the *Open Path* crew are given in Appendix 3.

Good Fortune

The *Open Path's* trade route ran along the trade route from District 268 into Lunion subsector and then to trailing through Mora subsector, with the world of Mora as the turn-around point, working on the basis that as the trade hub of much of the Spinward Marches, Mora would be bound to have some of the most interesting and profitable opportunities for cargo to bring back to Dallia.

While visiting Carey (2726/Mora), the crew stumbled upon a fantastic opportunity. A raggedy Scout/Courier called the "By Jupiter!" was stuck at the starport with a major failure of its Jump Drive, requiring costly repairs. Given the minimal amount of trade through the port and their urgent need to get off world, the By Jupiter's captain was auctioning off his most valuable cargo – four small containers of genuine, high quality Romar dust-spice. (The means by which he had originally obtained the spice was one of the many reasons why the captain did not wish to stick around in this subsector any longer than he absolutely had to...)

The *Open Path* turned up at just the right time, with sufficient ready cash, to out-bid the locals for the shipment, such that the Aslan ended up with the dton of dust-spice at a massive discount.

On arrival at Mora, Seer intended to spend at least a week getting the best possible prices for the goods already in the *Open Path's* hold, possibly including selling up to half of the dust-spice, while keeping the remainder to take back to their clan in Dallia. She would then invest in high tech electronics and other high-profit goods that were difficult to obtain in District 268, leaving a little space in the hold for trading lesser goods on the way back through Mora and Lunion subsectors.

As usual, Seer began brokering deals even before landing, though she knew she would get the best deals face-to-face as her sister Star was particularly adept at overcoming the instinctive fears and racial biases of many non-Aslan. Together, they made an excellent negotiating team.

A Cunning Plan

Catch had bided his time over the past weeks, gradually setting up Rock for a fall. He had made subtle suggestions to Rock that his father had given up on the idea of him becoming a duellist and that he was destined to spend the rest of his life as a lowly deckhand; he even managed to plant the seed in Rock's mind that perhaps the assassination attempt had just been a ruse to get him away from the clan home so that his brother, the first-born, could develop relationships with certain young females in whom Rock had shown some interest. As a result, over the past weeks Rock had begun to demand more responsibilities and Hunter, hoping that this was a genuine chance to educate his nephew, agreed.

On the third day in port, Catch found the opportunity to put his plan into action. He knew that Seer and Star would be out most of the day brokering deals and Edge was off-ship handling the supply of some engine parts. Hunter typically spent most of the afternoon asleep after his main meal, so for a four hour period Catch, Wasteland and Rock were the only crew awake on the ship.

Catch ensured that on the first day on Mora he was allowed off-ship briefly, allowing him to use his computer and streetwise skills at a public computer terminal to send a fake shipping request to BlinkOfAnEye, a courier franchise operating across much of Mora (though selected at random by Catch from the public directory). He selected as the destination a company called Land Of Spices, which sounded to him sufficiently relevant that no one should question the shipping paperwork.

He arranged for BlinkOfAnEye to arrive at the *Open Path* about an hour into the captain's nap period, such that only he, Wasteland and Rock were aboard and awake, to handle the courier. When the van turned up, Catch stroked Rock's ego a little and encouraged him to "play captain" and handle the courier. Just a single taunt about waking the captain "if he wasn't sure what he was doing" was quite sufficient to prompt Rock into action.

So far as the hulking Rock could tell the human courier had authentic paperwork indicating that the dust-spice was to be taken off the *Open Path*; he reassured himself with the assumption that Seer and Star had made a worthwhile deal for

the spice today and their customer had wanted to make the exchange promptly.

Rock puffed out his chest, assumed Hunter's manner for dealing with non-Aslan and even announced himself to the courier as the ship's captain (feeling in some way that while Hunter was asleep, logically Rock really was the effective captain). When the courier asked for payment for the shipping, Rock was still unsure but with a suitable flourish put his personal authorisation into the courier's handcomp.

The courier left with the spice, Rock awaited his superiors' return (eager to tell them how well he had handled the transaction) and Catch retired to his cabin, confident that through his deception Rock would be thoroughly humiliated.

Seer and Star returned to the ship two hours later, just prior to Hunter awakening from his afternoon nap. On hearing Rock's story, the two females immediately concluded that fraudsters had tricked Rock into releasing the dust-spice to them. Realising that they had only a very short window in which to act before Hunter awoke, Seer persuaded all three young males of the wisdom of keeping their mouths shut, then she and Star brainstormed a plan.

A quick com call to the couriers indicated they were a legitimate company, had fully authorised paperwork for the shipment, all seemingly initiated from the *Open Path*, and had already made the delivery, so (basically) it wasn't their problem. A further call to the destination got no response, but a quick computer search identified it as a seafood restaurant.

The two females needed to make a quick decision: Hunter could awake any minute, and would probably rip Rock's head off if he realised the dust-spice had been lost. It would be nonsensical to try entrust any form of investigation to the ship's young males, while involving Mora's legal authorities could require lengthy official entanglements which could not be concealed from Hunter. Seer decided she would stay at the ship with Rock and Catch and try to cover up the loss of the shipment for as long as possible while Star headed into the port to see if she could find 'local' investigators who could pursue the matter... the first suitable candidates she finds are the PCs.

1. For Honor

The PCs are recruited by the astrogator of the Aslan trader *Open Path* to recover a shipment of dust-spice that has mysteriously gone missing from the ship. Finding out what happened is problematic given the crew don't want the ship's captain to know the dust-spice has gone.

DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

It is assumed that the PCs are in a suitable location for hiring (such as the Travellers' Aide Society at Mora Downport) and are looking for work. If one of the PCs is an investigator, trader or similar, they are assumed to have already put up (or be about to put up) an advert for their services at this establishment.

The time is 4pm on a normal working day.

You are slightly startled to see an Aslan burst in through the door. A couple of traders nearby look very taken-aback but the Aslan, seeing their distress, does make a rushed placatory gesture indicating some form of apology.

She is clearly a female, lacking the thick mane of the males but otherwise still the height of a tall human and fairly well muscled. She wears a loose scarlet tunic and kilt, both embroidered with shimmering golden symbols, some of which look vaguely representative of star systems while others are probably Aslan calligraphy. A thick leather belt with golden metal bands at her waist carries pouches, a comm unit and tool pack as well as a small pistol holster [just a blade if outside the starport]. She looks around quickly then her piercing eyes settle on your group and she stalks over.

- If any of the PCs happen to have Aslan as a language skill then a Routine task roll will allow them to interpret the calligraphy on the female's tunic: part of it is a short poem which roughly translates as "This one uses the clouds as steps to reach her star"; the remainder indicates she is part of the *Aokholkhtyeilik* clan and is an Astrogator from the starship "*Open Path to Heroism*".

If any of the PCs are female, the Aslan will address them in preference to the males:

"Are you of the skills necessary to undertake an urgent investigatory task?"

Whether or not the PCs actually have the necessary skills, they should be encouraged to at least get the Aslan to talk to them (otherwise this adventure ends here...).

The Aslan will draw the PCs into a quiet corner, showing some concern not to be overheard (more due to potential

embarrassment regarding what she's about to reveal, than any real need for secrecy). In the following briefing, she will subconsciously direct more of her attention to the female PCs when discussing investigative or financial matters, while looking to the males when there is mention of more physical activities.

"I need your urgent help to resolve an extremely embarrassing situation. I am the astrogator of the honourable ship *Open Path* and humans call me *Star*. My ship has suffered the loss of an extremely valuable piece of cargo which may be due to fraud or theft – the exact conditions are not clear to me. This loss is not only financially painful but... also... dishonouring." She frowns deeply, her expression combining confusion, discomfort and perhaps anger.

"A local courier arrived at our ship just three hours ago with forms indicating he was to take away one displacement ton of valuable spice from our hold. I and the senior ship's officers were away from the ship, securing other deals. In our absence, a junior member of our crew – you may call him *Rock* – signed over the spice to the courier. I think he believed that as the forms were in order, perhaps our purser – you may call her *Seer* – had organised the courier." You notice her claws flicker out before she clenches her fists and clears her throat with a threatening growl, perhaps an instinctive reaction to her concern at the loss of the cargo.

"As soon as *Seer* and I returned to the *Open Path* and discovered this error, we contacted the courier – a human enterprise called *Blink-of-an-Eye* in your language. They appeared to have forms filled in by our purser *Seer* to transport this spice to a *Land-of-Spice* in *Fenrock* which we determined to be a restaurant serving local sea-derived foodstuffs. Unfortunately the *Blink-of-an-Eye* had already delivered the cargo nearly an hour before we contacted them and have all the proper forms signed... yet the restaurant owner whom we then called denied all knowledge of the shipment and said his business premise was closed until later this evening." She grimaces, showing a hint of sharp teeth.

"We called the port authorities but they say if the forms are valid and our own crew signed over the spice then this is not a crime but rather a legal dispute and will involve the *Moran* law system since our goods are now outside the extrajurisdiction zone. Yet we called the *Wavecrest* law enforcement centre and they cannot see that a crime has been committed either because they say there is no proof that the courier has only acted on our apparent

instruction.” She shifts restlessly and waves one fully extended claw in the air as her voice rises in clear frustration: “Both these great entities seem unwilling to do more than consider opening an investigation, if we fill in many forms and wait a great time and then I still have no belief they would find anything of use.” Her claw slices through the air in an angry gesture.

“Understand that we feel they show us great disrespect. To lose this cargo is great dishonour. It must be recovered, by whatever means is necessary and as quickly as possible. It is with this task in mind that I have sought out investigators such as yourselves...”

- Perceptive PCs will note that – unlike so many of her species – Star seems relatively comfortable dealing with non-Aslan; presumably she has a lot of experience with other races, which hopefully means she also has an even temper...

THE TASK AT HAND

The PCs now have the opportunity to ask any questions (for your easy reference, a “Timeline” is presented below) and to negotiate their reward should they be successful:

- It is possible the PCs may suspect some form of trick, but a check of Diplomacy or some similar skill will determine that Star is very genuine.
- If the PCs ask whether any of the crew could be ‘in’ on the heist, Star will adamantly deny this (her initial view is that not even Catch would do something this dishonourable, but such questions *will* sow the first seeds of doubt in her mind).

Regarding rewards for the PCs:

- Star is pretty desperate. She will initially offer each of them Cr 100 of “expenses” up-front (this is as much cash as she has on-hand) and Cr 1,000 on successful return of the cargo. She hopes this will not take more than a day, so will offer a retainer of Cr 200 per person per day after the first.
- Successful negotiators, i.e. PCs who ask for more money *and* make some form of Leadership, Broker, Diplomacy or similar task roll (not just players who shout loudly) will be able to get Star to double her offer – potentially Cr 2,100 each for just a day’s work (if they’re lucky). Because of her current stress levels she will respond more positively to requests from a female PC than from males.

If the PCs need any guidance, Star’s expectations are that they should do the following:

1. Talk to Rock and Catch to get as much information as possible about the loss of the cargo. Star cannot afford to let the PCs near the *Open Path*, as this would make Hunter suspicious, so she sets a meeting point at a nearby bar she is familiar with: The Terminal Pheasant. She will meet the PCs there in 15 minutes (probably around 18:30 depending upon how long she took recruiting them). See Part 2: First Questions.
2. Talk face-to-face with the courier firm and preferably whichever courier actually dealt with their shipment, to

confirm his story and find out to whom he delivered the cargo. (In her aggravated state, she will occasionally slip back into Aslan mode and use terms such as “if these people lie, you must Challenge them” – implying an Aslan honour challenge). See Part 3: The Courier.

3. If the courier really did leave the shipment at the Land-of-Spice restaurant, then the PCs will have to go there and find out who received the cargo and what then happened to it. See Part 4: Something Fishy.

Of course, the PCs may have alternative ideas, but they must end up at the restaurant to have any chance of tracking down the dust-spice. Sensible PCs will realise that the ‘trail’ may be ‘growing cold’ with every minute that they delay, so it is likely they may decide to split up and address the interrogation of the Aslan, the couriers and the restaurant simultaneously – to ensure none of the players are left out of the game, you may opt to allow them to suggest ideas to each other, even if their characters are not physically present.

TIMELINE

The PCs may wish to establish a detailed timeline as part of their investigation; for your purposes, the key events were as follows (items in parentheses are not known to the PCs at this point):

- 10:00 Seer and Star departed the *Open Path* to meet various brokers around the Downport.
- (10:30 Catch wandered into the Downport to arrange the courier.)
- 11:00 Edge left the *Open Path* to visit two engineering firms in the Downport.
- 13:00 The remaining ship’s crew finished lunch aboard the *Open Path* and Hunter settled down for a nap.
- 14:00 The BlinkOfAnEye courier turns up and Rock signs over the cargo.
- 14:20 The courier leaves the *Open Path* with the spice.
- 15:40 The courier arrives at the Land Of Spice restaurant and delivers the cargo (who receives it is not clear at this point).
- 16:20 Seer and Star return to the *Open Path* and learn of the loss.
- 16:25 Star contacts BlinkOfAnEye to ask where the spice is.
- 16:40 BlinkOfAnEye confirms the shipment was received at Land Of Spice.
- (16:50 Edge returns to the *Open Path* but Seer decides it would be best not to tell her. She has already ordered Rock, Catch and Wasteland not to mention a word of this to Hunter or Edge.)
- 17:00 Star manages to contact the manager of Land Of Spice, who denies any knowledge of the shipment.
- (17:20 Hunter awakes. He detects some nervousness among the crew but Seer reassures him there’s nothing wrong.)
- 17:30 Star has quietly called both the port authorities and the Wavecrest police, neither of whom can help.
- 18:00 Having decided they cannot handle this themselves, Seer agrees Star should go recruit some private investigators.

2. First Questions

The astrogator will expect the PCs to gather their initial information from those Aslan who interacted with the courier who took the spice shipment away from the *Open Path*. Getting information out of two aggravated male Aslan may be a little challenging...

While Star is fetching her two young male crewmates, the PCs have a few minutes to think, plan, decide what questions to ask, etc.

The Terminal Pheasant is easy to find and looks like a fairly reputable establishment with reasonable price drinks and simple bar snacks available. A circular bar in the centre has display screens hung above it, showing incoming and outgoing starships and the current prices and availability of various goods being traded in the Downport. The seating is arranged in discrete groupings, separated by low plastic walls with vine-like growths flowing over them.

The PCs can find a quiet table in a secluded corner where their discussion can be discrete (if they do not do so, Star will take them to such a table before she begins any discussion with them). They may have time to get drinks or snacks before the Aslan arrive:

This time three Aslan walk through the door, the leader being the female you know as Star. You felt she was well-built but towering over her are two much heavier, muscled males, the fluffed-out manes and just slightly bared teeth adding to their dramatic appearance. The first has shiny gold crescents secured into long braids of mane which hang over his shoulders almost like epaulettes. He wears a similar red and gold tunic and kilt to Star's but this is supplemented by a metal chest plate, its surface covered with intricate calligraphy. The second male has similar clothing but somewhat less impressive, using mostly silver rather than gold decoration.

Star looks quickly around, spots you and signals the two males to follow her over to you. Needless to say given their appearance, the eyes of quite a few of the clientele follow them as they swagger across the room.

- A PC with Aslan language skill can make a Routine task to interpret Rock's calligraphy: it roughly translates as "His roar is so powerful it makes the very rock shake beneath his enemies"; like Star he is from the *Aokholkhtyeilik* clan

and is an Envoy from the starship *Open Path*.

- A similar task for the second male shows him to be "One who moves quietly to catch his prey unawares", Gunner of the *Open Path* but, interestingly (to one who understands Aslan clan loyalties) of the *Ka'ahsu'ikhya'ui* clan and "serving honourably with" the *Aokholkhtyeilik* (not a "vassal" in the normal sense).

Star will introduce her two companions:

"These are my two honourable crewmates who were defrauded of our cargo a few hours ago. The first, who dealt with the courier you may call Rock. The second, who was also on duty at the time and helped load the cargo may be called Catch. Please ask what you will but be factual and do not hypothesise blame or ignorance to the actions of either male... it would not be taken well." She quickly looks meaningfully at each of you.

Star hopes the PCs will understand that they should treat the two males with due respect but she is not currently in the mood to run through the niceties of Aslan interaction (as she might have done when first introducing an important business contact to one of her crew).

- If necessary, use the "Knowledge of the Aslan" principle to indicate to one or more of the PCs the potential physical hazards of insulting one of these two males. However, any PC stupid enough to face off with one of the males should end up with the male challenging him; in desperation, Star will prevent the duel by fabricating some excuse (in Aslan) that the PC, being an alien, is too far beneath the male's level to accept the challenge. The last thing she wants at this point is for the PCs to be distracted from the task at hand. However, you should keep note of any transgressions or insults by the PCs, because the Aslan will remember these.

IT MUST BE SOMEONE ELSE'S FAULT

The two males are somewhat uncomfortable in this environment and somewhat snappy with anyone who asks them impertinent questions. Star translates where necessary to avoid confusion (mostly on Rock's behalf).

Given his lack of experience of dealing with non-Aslan (i.e. no Tolerance skill), Rock is particularly uncertain which of the PCs to talk to; he would expect investigative / administrative work such as this to be undertaken by females. Catch does understand some of the oddities of aliens and will try to assist Star in managing Rock's interactions with them – in fact he will be almost fawningly desperate to show how helpful he is being. Rock can repeat the key points of the story as explained in "A

Cunning Plan” earlier. Catch will try to leave Rock to do the talking, acting innocent and playing down his part in the incident: all he did was notify the senior crew present – Rock – of the courier’s arrival, then help load the spice into the courier’s truck. Catch will, where possible, slip in some careful flattery of Rock, effectively encouraging him to cast aspersions on the courier’s integrity. Rock’s simple pride means he is almost unable to accept that he did anything wrong – so it must be someone else’s fault. He may even suggest that Star or Seer must have made a mistake – of course Star will politely point out his error. When he mentions in an almost absent-minded way that perhaps Catch should have noticed there was something wrong with the courier, the second male will suddenly turn very defensive – there will be a noticeably tense air between the two for several seconds before Star cuts in and tries to placate them. Thereafter, Catch will end every sentence he says to Rock or Star with the term *fiya* (“I am your vassal”) to highlight his lesser status (somewhat tongue-in-cheek).

During the conversation, Star will contribute the following:

- She can confirm that – so far as they are aware – the original shipping request from the *Open Path* was fraudulent. Seer has had time to check their computer systems and she cannot find any record of that request originating from the ship or any of the hand computers and other equipment used aboard.
- However, Rock’s authorisation of the shipment was genuine and he doesn’t deny doing it. The couriers have his paw print, retina scan and the ship account number (because the courier required payment authorisation for the transport costs).

However, Star will also be noticeably wary about certain points:

- She will not confirm the exact type or value of the “spice” that was in the shipment and will butt in (carefully, so as not to offend) if either of the males start giving away too much detail. She fears the PCs may decide to take off with the spice themselves if they know just how valuable it is!
- If the PCs ask to talk to any other members of the *Open Path* crew, Star will at first say that only she is really skilled in dealing with non-Aslan so it is best if they communicate solely through her. She will provide a comm code by which they can contact her at any time of night or day.
- If really pressed she will refuse point-blank to allow the PCs near the ship, creating vague excuses that she does not want them associated with the ship for their own protection, or claiming that the ship is currently being watched by the authorities.

Suspicious PCs might try:

- Following the Aslan – they will return to the ship and won’t leave again until the PCs call them with some news.
- Spying on the ship – they won’t see anything of interest except to confirm that: Star, Rock and Catch are all crew members; there are several other Aslan crew as well; the ship arrived in port a week ago just when Star said.
- Checking with the Port Authorities or local Law Enforcement – because the PCs have no legal jurisdiction on this world, neither group will confirm or deny whether any crew of the *Open Path* have contacted them regarding any form of lost cargo; they will be told to contact the ship’s crew directly.

If the PCs waste too much time, Star will contact them by personal comm to chase them up for a progress report and, if necessary, spell out that with every minute they delay, the trail may be growing cold.

3. The Courier

The next logical step is to check out the courier company, but they seem to have genuine paperwork requesting the cargo transfer and one of the Aslan crew signed all the forms.

The central office for BlinkOfAnEye couriers is just outside the Downport. The staff are honest, if a little uninterested: as far as they are concerned, they did their job and they have the paperwork to prove it (and customers are *always* moaning about stuff going missing in order to fraudulently claim on the insurance, etc.).

The PCs will probably ask for the office manager; if not, once the desk clerk understands the nature of their enquiries, he will call out the duty manager Folim Jones:

The manager appears to be an average, down-to-earth guy wearing the standard dark green, one-piece jump suit typical of BlinkOfAnEye, with an animated eye on his front that blinks and then shoots off to one side. It repeats with annoying frequency – since it’s out of his eyeline he doesn’t seem to notice initially but then apologises, rubs a patch on the jump suit and the thingy stabilises. “What can I do for you folks?” he asks as genially as possible with a fixed customer-facing grin.

Folim will try to be helpful, as he is with all customers. The courier who actually delivered the shipment is currently out on his rounds but will be back in an hour or two “depending on the traffic”. He has a personal comm on him, but Folim will refuse to allow him to be distracted from his job unless the PCs offer substantial financial compensation for the disruption this would cause to their delivery schedule.

Folim will be happy to provide all the electronic forms used in the transaction, which consist of:

- The original shipping request;
- The sign-off and payment authorisation by Rock;
- The sign-off of receipt of goods at the restaurant.

These forms clearly define the shipment as “four 0.25 dton standard cargo units, hermetically sealed, containing class I-a Romar dust-spice”. The PCs may quickly realise the potential value of this cargo (see below for further details).

Checking the shipping request shows only the information on the form *could* have been created by any fraudster who knew the basic details of the *Open Path*. However, any PC looking over the electronic forms who makes a successful Admin, Broker or similar task will note that the ‘user’ transaction code (an identifier entered by the requester as their own ‘reference’ code) is in an unusual format.

- The ‘user’ transaction code is invalid, but uses a non-standard code format which a Merchant (or someone with a quick bit of computer searching) will identify as probably being unique to Aslan traders.
- If the PCs check with Star, she can confirm the code is Aslan and does include the *Open Path*’s valid ship identifier, though the rest of the code appears random to her. She will express concern that this may mean another Aslan ship is messing them about, but will tell the PCs to ignore this for the moment as it will be easier for her to make enquiries about the two other Aslan ships she knows are in the port (this is a red herring, and Star will confirm at some later point that she doesn’t think either ship is involved).
- For the PCs, this is a clue that someone on the ship was responsible for initiating the request (Catch has seen shipping paperwork enough times to know what to put in as a reference code on his fake shipping request; however, he did not properly consider just how unique the code format was to Aslan ships).

Checking the sign-off for the shipment leaving the *Open Path* shows nothing fraudulent. Rock signed the approval with his retina scan and paw print and even put in the ship’s account number for the shipping fee.

- However, a Merchant or someone with Admin or Broker skill will notice the details on this form – part of it concerns customs taxes, which are usually handled by the couriers on behalf of their customers. This requires an accurate valuation of the shipment – shown as Cr 1,600,000. The observant PC will also notice that the sign-off that Rock put on the form wasn’t *just* for the transport fees but *also* accepts payment of the customs fees – a whopping Cr 160,000 in this case. Seer hasn’t yet realised this but will be even more distraught when she hears about it.

Working on the same principal, the recipient sign-off has a retina print and hand print for the person who signed for the shipment. The name on the form is Taliesan Frump.

- The PCs ought to ask whether the name matches the bio-ID provided (if they don't think of this, get anyone with Admin or Broker skill to roll a quick check to remember this; alternatively, a PC could make a Difficult Intelligence roll to realise that Taliesan Frump is the name of a minor 3D movie star. (Garth Frix – the real culprit – had to think quickly when the spice turned up; he had to use his real retina and hand print, but at least tried to think up a false name on the spur of the moment.)
- If any doubt is raised over the recipient's identity, the couriers can easily check the name against the retina and hand prints. On doing so, Folim will look a bit confused and

say he believes there might be an error in the database (which is very unusual) as the retina and hand prints match to someone called Garth Frix. Their computer access will only confirm the person's name and show an ID picture (yes, the courier's should have checked this on the spot, but they process so many transactions a day all they're interested in is getting *someone's* signature on the form so they can get on to their next delivery). Their computers do NOT have access to Frix's personal details, address, etc.

The PCs will want to find out who Frix is, but this information is effectively protected by law and so only available through local law enforcement agencies, who will not release that to the PCs no matter what bluff they use.

The only way to track down who Frix is, and where he's taken the shipment, is to go visit the restaurant...

4. Something Fishy

Having traced the shipment to a restaurant in a nearby seabed city (100 kilometres from the starport), the PCs find that the alleged recipients claim never to have seen the cargo, until someone mentions one of their staff has suddenly gone missing...

TALK TO ME!

The PCs can phone the Land Of Spice restaurant, and (unlike the earlier Aslan calls) will now get an answer from one of the staff as it's late enough in the evening for the restaurant to have opened to customers.

However, it's a busy, noisy evening, the staff all have strong local accents, and are mostly interested in whether the PCs want to book a table, rather than wasting their time discussing some 'lost shipment of spice'.

- Diplomatic or persuasive PCs who specifically ask about Garth Frix will get an admission that Frix works there, but the staff on the phone won't be sure if he's around and don't have time to go look for him.
- If the PCs use a clever ploy, for example saying Frix has won the lottery or similar, then the staff will be sufficiently motivated to go search for him, though they will return shortly and say he's not in the kitchen and hasn't phoned in sick.
- If the PCs ask for the restaurant manager (Jules Torpen – Star knows his name from having contacted him earlier), they will be told he is too busy to come to the phone (whatever the reason) but if they want to "pop in" to the restaurant he may be able to spare them some time.

GETTING AROUND

The PCs will need to visit the restaurant in person to get any further information. This is fairly easy as Mora has an excellent public transport system. To get from Wavecrest to Fenrock (or vice-versa) the PCs may do one of the following:

- Ask Star to lend them the *Open Path's* grav vehicle: she will refuse – not only is it too valuable to simply hand over to the PCs, she knows Hunter would get suspicious and it is a very conspicuous vehicle!
- Hire a small ground car: these cost as little as Cr 100 per day for a 6-person wheeled vehicle, including all applicable taxes, though the "named driver" must have the appropriate driving skill. Grav vehicles start at Cr 1,000 per day and will require a lot of paperwork because of their much greater value.
- Hire a taxi: a 6-person taxi will cost Cr 5, plus Cr 1 per km, so about Cr 100 to get to Fenrock.

- Take the train: fast monorail systems will provide transport to Fenrock's central terminal for Cr 10 per person. There are plenty of subsidiary railway systems and stations dotted throughout Fenrock, so getting around within the city is fairly easy, costing just Cr 1 per journey.

The transport link between Wavecrest and Fenrock is effectively a series of huge 'pipes' containing many subdivided tunnels for road and rail traffic with separate links for the emergency services.

Fenrock is described in an earlier section and a map is given in the Appendix. Emphasise the layered, sectorised nature of the city but otherwise it is effectively like a multi-layered city above ground with two- or even three-storey buildings free-standing along a fairly normal network of streets. Stacking a few tens of layers like this gives the city the same overall population density as (for example) a city such as London or New York.

SPICY STUFF

The Land Of Spice is located in Spear sector level 7 (below sea level), about 250 metres from, and one level above, the Quandor docks (the D marked in the bottom left corner of the Fenrock map).

On their arrival, the PCs will find that none of the staff can add much beyond what the PCs may already have obtained over the phone. However, a diplomatic approach will get them a few minutes with the manager Jules Torpen, provided the PCs take a table and order some food (the more they spend, the friendlier Torpen will be).

- Torpen will act confused, wondering why the PCs would be asking about Frix. He mentions some mad Aslan called him up earlier in the day accusing him of receiving some huge shipment of spice at the restaurant. "What the Plinus would I do with a displacement ton of spice?" he grumbles. "And I've never heard of this Frump bloke that the silly alien seemed to think worked here!"
- Assuming the PCs explain Frump may actually have been Frix, Torpen will change his tone. "I always knew he was a trouble maker", he says. With a little thought, Torpen admits that Frix could have been at the restaurant earlier in the day – it was his turn to get into the restaurant early in the afternoon, ready to receive the fresh afternoon catch from fishermen at Quandor docks. Certainly the fish were all stocked in the refrigerator units when the other staff turned up this evening, but Frix had gone by that time.
- Now that he knows Frix could be mixed up in this business, Torpen will declare that he's firing him, so any loss of spice is not the restaurant's responsibility.

- The PCs will no doubt want to know where they can find Frix. Torpen can tell them that he hangs around the Quandor docks with some ‘friends’ – he won’t elaborate. If it will make the PCs go away, he will somewhat reluctantly tell them Frix’s home address.

Torpen will expect the PCs to finish their meal and leave, without hassling the rest of his staff, but PCs may want to talk to the staff anyway (particularly if they didn’t get far with Torpen). Hanging around out the back where the staff take their breaks, or sitting down for a meal and then talking to the waiters/resses as they come by, with some suitable “financial encouragement” will gain the PCs some useful information:

- Frix only joined the restaurant a couple of months back;
- They think he might have been a member of a gang, certainly he seems to hang out with some unsavoury people around the Quandor docks;

- They think he might have “done time” recently (this is true – see part 6).
- They can give his home address, though this may take some persuasion;
- He’s a bit unreliable at turning up on time and doing what he’s told;
- None of them would trust him with their wallet, etc.

There’s nothing more to be learned here – the PCs need to locate Frix, either at his home or down at Quandor docks.

A quick look around the docks won’t locate Frix though the PCs may have the opportunity to encounter the smells of a lot of processed fish up-close-and-personal. See part 8 for a description of the dock area. This should encourage them to head for Frix’s home but if they haven’t managed to learn where he lives, then allow them to encounter him near the docks (but not near the Sharks’ hideout).

5. The Long Hand of the Law

The PCs arrive at the house of their chief suspect only to find him overdosed on dust-spice... just in time for the cops to turn up.

Note: If the PCs have tracked down Frix in the docks, adjust this encounter accordingly, but the result should be the same, with at least some of the PCs and Frix getting arrested.

Dust-spice is, in theory, only a mild euphoric for humans. However, having retained a little of the spice for himself when he passed the rest over to his gangland friends, Frix decided he should try it out to see why it's so damnably expensive. Having no idea how much to consume or how to take it, he decided to try dissolving several spoonfuls in the low quality spirit "Headharmer" that makes his life worth living. The combined alcohol-dust-spice concoction has had quite an effect on Frix, sufficient to make him mix up some further glassfuls. By the point the PCs turn up, Frix believes he lives on a planet-sized water melon and everyone else is just one of the pips in the melon.

Having also decided that since he's a Shark he should now go swimming like a real shark within the water-melon "sea" of flesh, Frix has stripped naked and is wandering about his apartment block trying to convince some 'pips' to come with him. A woman in a nearby apartment decided she did not want "to create a

new melon" (the offer Frix made on her doorstep) and instead called the cops.

The PCs turn up just in time to find Frix leaving his apartment stark naked, claiming he's going to pop out to see the fishes for a while to find out if they are melon pips too. Assuming the PCs confront him, he is far too "gone" to give them any coherent answers, however he will then suffer a bout of sudden paranoia, at which point he will look thoughtful, say meaningfully "Ah, the sharks took it!" and make a run for it. The PCs should easily catch him again without significant injury!

At some point during or just after this escapade, the police turn up. As is natural for the military-oriented law enforcers on Mora, they have a lot of guns and point them very meaningfully at anyone whom they suspect of doing anything that could be considered illegal. At least some of the PCs should be sufficiently engaged with Frix that the police will arrest them too, assuming that Frix is either a maniac or crazy on drugs, and the PCs could be anything from helpful bystanders to his drugs suppliers. The key thing is that they want everyone down the local cop house to make their statements.

Any PCs who avoid being captured (e.g. watched Frix from a distance and did not get involved in confronting or chasing him) will see those who were arrested bundled into a wheeled APC with police markings and driven about half a kilometre into the Zen sector where the local police station is situated.

6. Red Tape

Some or all of the PCs are in the clink having been caught in a potential drugs-bust. They will have to be at their most diplomatic if they want to regain their freedom and avoid involving the Aslan.

Any PCs taken to the police station in Zen sector will be interrogated to determine their part in this evening's charade. The police will adjust their questioning according to how suspiciously the PCs acted and whether any of them denied arrest or lied about their identity.

At this point the police have no reason to link the PCs or Frix to the enquiries Star made earlier in the day regarding a "stolen" shipment of dust-spice. However, if anyone mentions their patron Aslan, the police will try to check their story. Assuming Star is on the *Open Path*, she or Seer will intercept any such call (to avoid Hunter getting wise to the situation).

- If the PCs have broken the law, then the Aslan will only admit to having hired them to find some 'lost property' and will deny any authorization to commit crime, carry weapons or kidnap Frix (for example)! If the PCs have behaved properly, then Star will vouch for them and confirm their investigatory authority on behalf of her ship.

In their time in the cop shop, the PCs should be able to learn that:

- Frix is a nasty piece of lowland gang thug – a member of the Fen Sharks;
- He's only been out of prison (1 year for beating up some people who didn't pay protection) for a couple of months;
- For parole he had to demonstrate he was taking a decent paying job. Here the law says you can't hold past convictions against someone, so he got the job at the restaurant without the owner knowing (initially) he was an ex-con.

PCs who have committed crimes, however minor, will – as offworlders – probably just be fined for their misbehaviour, anything from Cr 50 up to Cr 500. If someone somehow managed to seriously injure a police officer then they will only be released if Star comes down and personally signs them into her custody, on bail of Cr 5,000. Needless to say, that PC

can consider any fee from the Aslan to have been waived. You should only confine a PC to jail if they have really screwed up, because the rest of the game should happen sufficiently quickly that they will effectively take no further part in it.

- PCs who can mention the names of past contacts or patrons (for example from previous Living Traveller adventures) or who have a very high Social Standing, will get more positive and respectful treatment from the police.

If the police somehow learn that the PCs are looking for a missing shipment of dust-spice, they will confide in the PCs that this is expensive stuff and if it's in the hands of a local gang then it could be hazardous to find, so they should leave it to the cops to handle. Of course, this means Star sitting down with the cops and filling in a lot of paperwork, so she will be adamant that the PCs should keep looking.

In addition, the police will do a quick check on the "missing dust-spice" story and, though there's paperwork – from the couriers – showing a ton of dust-spice exported from the *Open Path* just a few hours earlier, they can't trace the payment for it to the *Open Path*, and its delivery to the restaurant is very suspicious, so they will begin to wonder if it's really dust-spice that has gone missing, or perhaps this is a drug distribution deal with the Aslan acting as the "mules".

Whatever the manner in which the PCs leave the police station, a combination of factors (Frix's strange state, his own admission to having taken drugs (he's non-specific about which ones), the possible drug-running link noted above, and the (extremely likely) suspicions that any PC raises whenever they talk to an officer of the law) will lead to a couple of plain-clothes officers being assigned to tail them, "Just in case they lead us to something interesting."

Frix won't have said anything useful during this whole scene, but the PCs should conclude that the stuff is with his gang friends. After all, who else would he get to take a dton of dust-spice, given it wasn't at his house and the police may have been a bit insistent about asking them all where the stuff had got to...

Time to find the Fen Sharks...

7. Swimming with the Sharks

Unfortunately, the dust-spice has ended up in the hands of the local criminal fraternity...

Frix's Fen Shark friends hang around sub docking bay 42 in the Quandor docks, within one level and a few hundred metres of Frix's house:

It's easy to get directions to the Quandor docks, though once within the Quandor sector it is a somewhat confusing tangle of huge water-lock docks, repair yards, noisy processing plants, warehouses and a few very dodgy looking drinking establishments. The first thing that surprised you was that the huge doorways linking the docks with the rest surrounding sectors were closed – everywhere else these doors stay open except in times of emergency. Of course, once they opened the door to let you through, you were hit by a solid wave of fish-stink and weed-smell that explained why their neighbours preferred the docks to keep their doors sealed as much as possible.

Naturally, cities such as Fenrock are totally dependent on the bounty of the sea, deep fishing and seabed farming to support themselves, but up to now you hadn't been exposed to the "dirty" end of the business.

Asking around for the Sharks will mostly get blank stares from the dock workers, though the application of a bit of Streetwise will quickly get them directions to bay 42.

- If you need to push things along, have one of the Fen Sharks wander by with a very noticeable shark tattoo on his exposed muscled shoulder. If the PCs need any further clues, feel free to let them find a sign with "Sharks this way" and a big arrow pointing towards bay 42.

If the PCs are doing a bit too well at this point, then assume that one or more of the Sharks heard about Frix's capture by the police... they will have watched the station, seen the PCs released and wondered if they were perhaps a rival gang, out to find or steal the dust-spice. An attempt by some Sharks to beat up and interrogate the PCs in a back-alley can be used at this point to add some action and/or delay getting to the finale (if this is necessary).

If threatened by the Sharks now, or in part 8, the PCs *could* pretend to be dealers in the spice. No doubt the police covert surveillance will be gradually increasing now that the PCs are in the docks area and interacting with known gang members. The police might subsequently step in and encourage the PCs to act as dealers, in order to speed up the location of the dust-spice and allow them to make a dramatic swoop and arrests.

- Though the planet's law level is 7, all the Sharks are muscled and/or know how to use knives, spearguns and other nasty marine-oriented weaponry. If the PCs out-fight the Sharks too easily in this part of the scenario then in part 8 a few of the gangsters should have access to real guns, just to make it a bit more challenging.
- It's unlikely the PCs can get hold of guns, though they may get clever and go buy some fish-hunting equipment themselves – anything from spearguns to one-shot explosive "sticks" (used for scaring away aquatic predators), electrified nets, etc. can be obtained at shopping malls close to the docks.

If the PCs aren't working with the police at this point, they *might* get the feeling they're being watched, though they'll have to roll a good Streetwise or somesuch to actually spot an undercover cop. Even then they should be unable to determine whether he is a cop, or a Shark or another rival dock gang member.

8. Finders Keepers

The PCs have to decide what approach to take, legal or extra-legal, to resolve the matter and get the dust-spice back from the thugs because asking nicely isn't going to work.

It's time for the PCs to go to dock 42 and try to get the dust-spice back.

Simply watching the Sharks carefully will indicate a sudden preponderance of them around sub dock 42 – they're holding the dust-spice there while they try to decide whether to fence it themselves or find a proper "trader" to sell it to. Some of their group have suggested trying to sell it to one of the Aslan ships in port, because they know the Aslan *really* like dust-spice – this will lead into scenario 9.

The head of the sharks – Niko "the barb" Kinollo – is currently inside the dock, while a number of his heavies (adjust as appropriate to be a good match to the PCs) lounge around outside on the crane system that runs between the dock and the nearby repair yard.

The dock is basically an 8 metre long and 5 metre wide cylindrical water-lock, with large iris valves at either end (one opening out into the sea). There is a very rusty old mini-sub in there that the Sharks actually own and occasionally use to ship contraband between cities. The four crates of dust-spice are sitting idly by this old sub, awaiting Niko's decision on whether to sell them immediately or ship them out to somewhere safer.

The PCs have a number of options:

1. They can pretend to be spice dealers. The head of the sharks – Niko "the barb" Kinollo will see they're offworlders and assume therefore that they are not undercover cops, so will probably be fairly easily convinced that they can either buy his spice or sell him some more (depending upon the approach the PCs have used). He will proudly take the PCs into the dock, show them the number of heavies he's

got, claim worldwide distribution capability, etc. to impress them. He has a rough idea of how much money he can make from the dust-spice and if the PCs have any more to sell he is determined that he's going to get a cut of the action.

2. If they're acting as buyers, Niko won't show them where the spice is, but will meet them somewhere in the same dome, with plenty of his heavies around, and let them sample the spice. He doesn't know yet how to check its purity – his brightest thug is looking this up on the web so he can work out how to test it. The PCs won't have to work hard to look more knowledgeable than Niko! They could even bring along one or more of the Aslan as potential buyers. If so, then Star and Seer will turn up, with Rock and Catch left in their grav vehicle somewhere nearby (they just don't trust the two males to be left on the ship where they might give the game away to Hunter, if he hasn't already realised the dust-spice has gone). This is another way of triggering part 9 of this adventure.
3. The kick-down the door approach. The PCs basically turn up with improvised weaponry and try to sneak, or force, their way past the Shark guards to see if the dust-spice is in the sub bay.
4. The PCs involve the Aslan in approach 1, 2 or 3 above – see part 9 as well.
5. The PCs involve the police in approach 1 or 2 above (the police won't sanction kicking down the doors of the dock unless they have evidence the Sharks have stolen goods there.)

Whichever approach the PCs choose, modify the number and armament of the Sharks to make this a fun fight, without causing undue injury to any given PC. If the PCs out-fight them initially, more Sharks can be called out from the local bar, etc., potentially with more significant weaponry to extend the fight as needed – see part 9.

9. Mad Cats

The young Aslan males involved in losing the dust-spice from their ship decided to take matters into their own hands and deal with the dishonourable thieves who are holding it. However, their fiery tempers and lack of experience dealing with non-Aslan are guaranteed to lead them into trouble.

At some point Rock will get to hear about the Sharks, whether it's through him or Catch accidentally picking up the call when one of the Sharks tries to sell a ton of dust-spice to them, or the PCs giving them updates on their progress, or actively inviting Star as part of a 'deal' in scenario 8.

Whatever the reason, Rock and Catch turn up in Shark territory and at the worst possible time decide it is their honour to get back the dust-spice (Rock because he screwed up, Catch because all this has gone much further than he intended and he knows he needs to get the spice back so people stop looking for the culprit who originated the whole incident).

The Aslan won't necessarily attack the Sharks outright without warning the PCs or otherwise investigating the docks, but they will be somewhat ham-fisted and the situation is guaranteed to result in Aslan issuing challenges, Sharks pulling weapons (being no respecters of "honour") and there being a fierce, whirling-claw battle probably pulling in the Sharks, the PCs (willingly or otherwise) and the police (having been warned by their surveillance team that something serious is going down at bay 42)!

This should be the exciting finale to the adventure (BUT leave time for part 10 too).

There is the danger that Niko and his guys will try to escape in the sub, perhaps managing to load one or more of the spice crates in a rush, or in a panic they might open the sub bay doors and flood the bay (the crates would get carried out into the sea but would sink to the sea floor quickly and could therefore be recovered).

Normally the inner and outer dock doors cannot be opened simultaneously. However, Niko's crew once over-rode the

control system to allow them to get their sub out fast when the police came to call... this means that in theory they *could* mess up and lead to a mass flood of the sector, though this should be a threat rather than an actual event, as all concerned would probably drown.

The presence of heavily armed local police can be used to add excitement and to provide last-minute assistance to prevent any PC getting unnecessarily killed by a Shark. Any PC who is foolish enough to try attacking a police officer is likely to get themselves killed or at least arrested.

***F e n S h a r k**

*Human Rogue (Enforcer) 2

Abilities Str 9 (+1), Dex 7 (+0), End 8 (+0), Int 6 (+0), Edu 5 (-1), Soc 5

(-1)

Languages Anglic

Skills Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Melee 1, Recon 0, Streetwise 0

Possessions brass knuckles (1d6) OR stunner (2d6+3 stun) OR autopistol

(3d6-3), flak jacket (3) OR cloth

armour (5), comm

Note that armour and weaponry varies from shark to shark.

***N i k o "T h e B a r b" K i n o l l o**

*Human Rogue (Pirate) 3

Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 9 (+1), Int 9 (+1), Edu 7 (+0), Soc 6

(+0)

Languages Anglic

Skills Comms 1, Computer 0, Deception 1, Drive (Sub) 1, Gun Combat (slug

pistol) 1, Leadership 2, Recon 1, Streetwise 1

Possessions snub pistol (3d6-3), cloth armour (5), comm

Optionally Niko and one or two of his closest sharks may have access to

assault rifles (3d6).

10. Casting Out

Hopefully the dust-spice has been recovered and the authorities placated. The PCs should have gained sufficient evidence to determine that one of the young Aslan males is behind this whole incident. The question is who is brave enough to challenge him with the facts?

When the fight is over, the PCs and the Aslan will have to come clean about the dust-spice, because otherwise the police are going to confiscate it as evidence against the Sharks. Star and Seer can provide sufficient evidence of their ownership to get the police to release the goods to them.

- Should any of the PCs decide that they would have preferred to keep some spice for themselves (given its great value) it is unlikely they will get away with this given the presence of the police at the conclusion of the adventure (this is a key plot reason for involving the police at the end).

At this point there is still a potential “hole” in the story – who initiated this whole thing? The PCs may have picked up a few clues that point to Catch – if they suggest him as the culprit, he

will challenge whoever does so to a duel. The legality here is a bit of an issue, but it’s practically impossible for the PCs to have obtained definitive proof, so they are effectively challenging his honour here. The other Aslan may be horrified, Star or Seer may intervene and be reluctant to dispute the challenge itself but will point out it doesn’t have to be resolved by a fight – the PCs could then suggest suitable alternative methods of duelling that would satisfy everyone. If a PC accepts the challenge but then gets mauled by Catch, or they simply chicken out of the duel, Rock may step up to the challenge, substituting for the PC. This is most likely to occur if someone alleges that Catch’s plan may have been to deliberately embarrass Rock (they may have worked out the animosity between them).

Whatever, hopefully the PCs or Rock win. Hunter may step in and give everyone a thick ear. He won’t be happy, however things have turned out.

The end result is that Catch ought to be declared to have committed *Ya’uiya* – dishonour so great that the Aslan is stricken from the rolls of his clan and becomes Outcast... and potentially a life-long enemy of the PCs!

Campaign Consequences

The consequences of the adventure are dependent on 1) if the characters recover the dust-spice, and 2) how much trouble or turmoil the recovery causes.

If the characters recover the dust-spice but choose to steal it for themselves, they receive two awards: "Hunted by Aslan Merchants" and "Wanted by Mora Law Enforcement". The first award makes it very difficult to sell or profit from the stolen dust-spice, and the second one results in the character being arrested and taken out of game (not the campaign) during any adventure when encountering Law Enforcement personnel and failing a Advocate + Social Standing check (Average, +0).

If the characters recover the dust-spice and return it to the Aslan merchants, they receive two awards: "Honourable Reputation with Aslan", and "Favour of *Aokholkhtyeilik'al'soistsea*". The first award allows for a +1 DM on social interactions with Aslan groups in the campaign, and the second extends free travel

(Middle Passage) on the clan's merchant fleet, to campaign adventures in the Lunion (K), Mora (L), District 268 (N), Glisten (O) and Trin's Veil (P) subsectors of the Marches. In addition, the Aslan will give each character Cr6,000 immediately, and all characters will also receive "Contact with Aslan Merchants (Star)".

If the characters prove Catch is guilty of the series of events, they will also gain "Contact with Aslan Clan (Rock)", and "Enemy – Catch, renegade Aslan". While Rock isn't the greatest contact, he will remember they protected his honour. Catch, on the other hand, will NOT forget they proved his dishonour, and because he is forced to make his way in human society, may be in a position to make things difficult for the characters later.

The Referee should make sure to let the Story Coordinator know what rewards above were granted in the adventure for future campaign consideration.

Appendix 1: The Aslan

This section provides sufficient information to roleplay the Aslan in this adventure. The Referee is advised to read *Alien Module 1: Aslan* for additional background.

INTRODUCING THE ASLAN

Aslan are typically two metres in height and 100 kg in weight, having a distinctly leonine appearance, including manes on the males and (sometimes) tails. Aslan have three fingers and an opposable thumb, all with their own retractable claws, as well as a vicious dewclaw (1d6+2) concealed in the palm beneath the thumb.

Aslan dress in loose tunics and kilts, usually with no footwear. Their clothing tends to be shimmering with colourful embroidery, both decorative and indicating their clan identity and allegiances. The males tend to wear jewellery appropriate to their status, from amulets and talismans to earrings and braids in their manes.

Aslan society is deeply rooted in extended family *ekho* groups and conglomerations of such families into clans. Family and clan hierarchy is based on ownership of territory and this is embedded in the acquisitive mentality of almost all male Aslan. Patrilineal descent drives the family structure, with the male family head perhaps having several wives and a multitude of cubs, as well as blood relatives such as unmarried brothers and sisters and those older family who do not have their own groups.

In addition, Aslan are a proud warrior race and their society is founded on the concepts of honour, tradition and 'harmony' with the universe. Males in particular are very sensitive about their honour, expecting appropriate respect and courtesy to be shown to them according to their clan and rank. Accidental impoliteness will result in a quick verbal correction with the expectation of immediate submissive behaviour by the offender. Deliberate discourtesy is viewed as a direct challenge to the individual and is likely to result in a duel. Though duels are strongly controlled by ritual, and may use some form of competitive (non-combat) event to resolve, most involved personal combat.

Aslan society has very strong gender-related traditions. Only one quarter of Aslan are males, whose primary role is as commanders, hunters, warriors and inter-clan negotiations. Females fill all the remaining roles in their society, from military support staff to scientists, brokers to managers.

As a result, Aslan tend to place great emphasis (generally unconsciously) on the gender of those they deal with, whether Aslan or alien. In the case of non-Aslan, they are often biased

more by a person's perceived gender (based upon the role or skills of that person) than by their biological sex. So a human female starship gunner would be treated, to some degree, as a male, as this is perceived to be a male role.

Due to their gender-specific bias, Aslan will accept discourteous behaviour from the opposite sex but may challenge someone who they *perceive* as being of the same sex (e.g. a non-Aslan whose job is associated with a particular Aslan gender). Consequently they will tend to avoid hiring, or working with, aliens whose gender is inappropriate to their skills.

Aslan are almost exclusively carnivorous, with a strong preference for freshly killed prey, with smaller creatures eaten raw and larger ones lightly cooked but usually heavily spiced. Aslan cannot digest proteins from some other worlds, particularly Terran-derived cattle, but can overcome this problem by taking pills containing genetically modified stomach bacteria.

ASLAN TERMINOLOGY

The Aslan language is called *Trokh*. Aslan words throughout this adventure are given in *italics*. If you are feeling particularly brave, you may try to vocalise some of these names and terms, but for the ease of both yourself and your players, Anglic equivalents are always given. In the case of Aslan NPCs, their true name is even longer than is shown in this adventure, including details of the clans of which they are part. The names given here can be shortened to just one key Anglic word for simplicity – for example *Hwekaiheast*, meaning "Hunter of Meat" is generally referred to just as "Hunter".

KEY GAME POINTS

- Importance of **pride and honour**, which may lead to **challenges or duels**.

Note: There are points in the adventure where the text suggests that dealing with the Aslan in a disrespectful manner may lead to a challenge / duel. In order to avoid the characters spending all their time fighting the Aslan (who are, after all, their patrons!) the Referee should (if necessary) guide players by providing advice through volunteering information to a suitably 'knowledgeable' member of the party – see "Knowledge of the Aslan" below.

- Very strong **gender bias**, based more on perceived skill set than actual gender for non-Aslan.
- **Better night vision, hearing and smell** than humans, giving them a +1 DM to any Recon or Survival checks that involve these senses.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ASLAN

Aslan are not uncommon within the Spinward Marches and so any character who has travelled the stars, lived near a major starport, or who is reasonably well-educated concerning offworld matters, will know of them and have some idea of their society and behaviour. However, this view may also be

somewhat stereotyped, in the same way that many Imperials view all Vargr as untrustworthy pirates or Zhodani as mind-sucking baby-eaters.

Any character wishing to know details of the Aslan (from this section, or from *Alien Module 1: Aslan*) should either justify the reason they would know the information, or make an 8+ Education check for each piece of data, +1 if from a starfaring career, +2 if they were a scout.

Appendix 2: Dust-spice

Fteahrao (dust-spice) is a rare, euphoric spice used for seasoning food, especially fruit. Harvested from the bark of the geki – a desert scrub-plant originally found only on Romar (2140/Glisten, Spinward Marches) – this seasoning is popular with humans as a mild recreational spice with effects slighter than, but similar to, alcohol.

The Aslan (as well as a few other non-human races such as the Vargr) find dust-spice a much more powerful euphoric, and since it was first imported into the Aslan Hierate (by *Tyeyo Fteahrao Yolr* Tyeyo dust-spice Importers), it has been in constant demand by those higher ranking Aslan who could afford its very high price.

Quickly recognising its value, the Aslan and other races have sought to grow geki on other worlds, but with only limited success, and never to the same strength and exquisite flavour as the Romar variety. Clever chemists have since determined the key organic components of dust-spice and created synthetic equivalents but these are still regarded as inferior to spice from Romar. As a result, production and shipping of Romar dust-spice is carefully controlled, with a complex system of certification of purity and origin to ensure that this maintains its value in a market swamped by synthetic spice. The *Tyeyo Fteahrao Yolr* is now just one of many dust-spice shippers and long ago changed its focus to other novel or valuable trade goods that can be traded between Mora (3124/Mora, Spinward Marches) and the Aslan capital of Kuzu.

GRADING AND PRICE

Dust-spice is graded via laboratory measurement of several of its chemical components, effectively determining the strength of its intoxicating effects, its fragrance and taste (for cooking) and even its colour. These factors are affected by the origins of the spice (the environment in which the plants grew), the manner of collection (for example, the degree to which the stripped bark is contaminated with other parts of the plant during harvesting

and subsequent preparation) and its processing (the control of temperature and humidity during drying, the grinding and filtering techniques used, etc.).

Imperial Trade Standard 3632-101-B1 is dedicated solely to specifying the grading standards for dust-spice, defining four basic grades: IV (poorest), III, II, and I (finest quality). Officially, only Romar dust-spice can ever be rated grade I, and within this there are four sub-categories: I-d (poorest) through to I-a (finest). The precise grading is obtained by spectrophotometric analysis of a spice sample.

The basic grades very roughly correspond to Romar (I), geki plants transplanted off Romar (II), mixed synthetic and geki-derived (III) and pure synthetic (IV) though of course every trader of dust-spice has their own view of how precious their particular spice mix may be! Typical trading prices range from Cr 500 per kg for grade IV, up to Cr 11,000 per kg for grade I-a (though like fine wines, the price paid for the highest prices may reflect 'snobbery' value rather than the purest flavour).

KEY GAME POINTS

- **Dust-spice is well-known** across most of the Spinward Marches (and beyond), so all the characters will know the information given above unless they fail an Easy Education roll. The only exception to this is the detail of the grading and prices, which will only be known to Merchant PCs who succeed at a Broker task.
- **The dust-spice in this adventure** is graded I-a and is carried in four 0.25 dton containers. Each container's gross volume is a 1.5 x 1.5 x 1.5 m cube. Allowing for vacuum-safe walls, carrying handles, securing points, and internal packaging, each container holds about 2,500 litres of dust-spice, which weighs just over 36 kg (dust-spice has a relatively low density) and is worth about Cr 400,000. The total value of this shipment is therefore up to Cr 1,600,000.

Appendix 3: The Crew of the Yaeukhtai

HWEKAIHEAST (“HUNTER OF MEAT”)

Ship's Captain/Pilot

Male Aslan Captain – Space Officer (Commander) 4

Abilities Str 13 (+2), Dex 6 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 5 (-1), Edu 5 (-1), Soc 8 (+0)

Languages Aslan

Skills Comms 1, Computer 1, Gun Combat (Rifle) 1, Gunnery (Turrets) 1, Leader 3, Melee (Dewclaw) 2, Pilot 2, Tactics (Naval) 1

Possessions Carbine *Uealikhe* (3d6), Hardened Dewclaw (2d6), Combat Flex *Su'koir'yerl* (5), Cr 1,000

Hunter is an impressive sight – towering over two metres tall, covered in shining, brightly coloured armour which barely contains his bulging muscles. His bushy mane surrounds a broad face with a seeming perpetual frown, his heavy brows shadowing piercing eyes that burn with fierce intensity.

He is famous within his family for resolving issues through simple intimidation, though when required to “show his claws” he is a genuinely good fighter. Though not the fastest or brightest of males, he does have an innate ability to foresee starship actions and has avoided pirates from rival clans several times through this keen insight, including one instance where the use of a gas giant for cover allowed him to counter-attack a pirate ship and take it out – this was considered a great blow for his family and the clan as a whole.

He has strong respect for his cousin who runs the *Aokholkhtyeilik* clan and is using the *Open Path* as a means of surveying various worlds to determine somewhere that he might strike out and grab some land of his own in the near future. He is protective of his crew though somewhat perplexed at what to do with Rock as the young male doesn't seem to show much talent for anything useful.

FTOULREISKTOAL (“STAR CLOUD CLIMBER”)

Ship's Astrogator

Female Aslan Astrogator – Space Officer (Astrogator) 4

Abilities Str 10 (+1), Dex 9 (+1), End 10 (+1), Int 9 (+1), Edu 7 (+0), Soc 9 (+1)

Languages Anglic, Aslan

Skills Astrogation 2, Computer 1, Engineer (Jump Drive) 1, Engineer (Power Plant) 1, Robotics 1, Tolerance 2, Vac Suit 1

Possessions Body Pistol *Khaihte* (3d6-3), Gold Flak Jacket (4), Cr 11,000

Star is an experienced astrogator and also helps Edge (see below) with ship maintenance. She is also unusually tolerant and understanding of other species, which means she often accompanies her sister Seer on her business about the starport when cargo negotiations with non-Aslan are required. She understands the need to have Rock as part of the crew but finds him frustratingly “male”.

YORLEIKHOI (“SEER OF THE EVENING”)

Ship's Purser

Female Aslan Senior Lieutenant – Space Officer (Shipmaster) 4

Abilities Str 5 (-1), Dex 3 (-1), End 7 (+0), Int 9 (+1), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 9 (+1)

Languages Anglic, Aslan.

Skills Admin 2, Advocate 1, Broker 3, Computer 2, Deception 1, Diplomat 1, Gun Combat (Slug Pistol) 2, Leadership 1, Persuade 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2

Possessions Long Pistol *Takhestah* (3d6-3), Cr 65,000

Seer is relatively short and thin and, with her thin mane is barely distinguishable from a human at a distance – totally unlike her sister Star. Her small stature tends to make her seem far less threatening, both to Aslan and to other species. However, her humble demeanour hides a sharp, business-oriented mind and she is a subtle but very persuasive negotiator who rarely fails to secure an advantageous deal for the ship.

She has many years' experience of dealing with non-Aslan and is confident of her capabilities in a business environment. However, she feels distinctly uncomfortable as soon as non-business matters arise, which is why she often asks her colleague Star to accompany her when meeting non-Aslan, particularly for the first time.

KTAHARASTL (“CLIFF EDGE WALKER”)

Ship's Engineer

Female Aslan Intendant – Space Officer (Commander) 1, Space Hand (Engineer) 2

Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 4 (-1), End 9 (+1), Int 6 (+0), Edu 6 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)

Languages Anglic, Aslan

Skills Computer 2, Engineer (Manoeuvre Drive) 1, Engineer (Power Plant) 2, Jack-of-all-Trades 1, Mechanic 1, Vac Suit 1

Possessions Long Pistol *Takhestah* (3d6-3), Cr 31,000

Edge is an average size Aslan whose primary value is in her dedication and thoroughness. Outside of the engine room, she may appear dull and lumbering; thankfully once she is working on the innards of the power plant, her very methodical attitude seems to overcome her lack of manual dexterity and she always thoroughly studies the manual for anything she needs to use, rather than believing in the intuition that most engineers seem to rely on.

Edge began her spacer career as a simple spacehand but after two terms of service she transferred to Hunter's ship; it was just a month later that her expert management of the ship's drives helped Hunter in his counter-attack on a feuding clan's pirate ship. He rewarded her dedication with a promotion to the officer path. Troirlaukah (“Power of the Shaking Rock”) Annoying Family Second-born

Male Aslan – Envoy (Duellist) 1

Abilities Str 13 (+2), Dex 6 (+0), End 11 (+1), Int 3 (-1), Edu 5 (-1), Soc 9 (+1)

Languages Aslan, Anglic (very limited)

Skills Melee (Dewclaw) 2

Possessions None

Rock believes he is the “god-king of the universe”, the pride and joy of his parents. In fact he is the second-born son of his family and it is his older brother *Troirloiyykheyo* who has been spoilt and wanted for nothing throughout his young life. However, some of this did ‘rub off’ on Rock and given his very simple mind and correspondingly very simple view on life, he effectively believes himself to be just as important as his brother.

He is still a little confused as to his role on Hunter's ship and originally believed himself to be the effective captain, given Hunter is merely his uncle and has the relatively unimportant task of running a starship. In Rock's eyes, if Hunter were important in the clan he would be a land-owner, not wasting his time here in space, albeit all the boring day-to-day running of the ship at first appeared to be handled by his subordinate females. Hunter quickly demonstrated how 20 years of duelling experience could overcome a naive young male – no matter how strong – so Rock, somewhat humiliated, realised that he wasn't the boss and he would have to do as he was told... at least for the moment...

WIYL'STEAWTAUL (“TRAVELS QUIETLY TO CATCH PREY”)

Gunner

Male Aslan Spacehand – Spacer (Gunner) 2

Abilities Str 13 (+2), Dex 5 (-1), End 8 (+0), Int 10 (+1), Edu 7 (+0), Soc 6 (+0)

Languages Aslan, Anglic

Skills Computer 1, Gunnery (Turret) 1, Sensors 1, Steward 1, Streetwise 1, Tolerance 1, Vac Suit 1

Possessions Cr 2,500

Catch is a third son who already had experience in space on his own clan's traders before being assigned to the *Open Path* as a token of his clan's appreciation for Hunter's anti-piracy success. Although as heftily built as Rock, Catch has not trained for fighting and is not truly sure whether he could take on the arrogant whipper-snapper nephew of the ship's captain who has been making Catch's life a misery for the past few months. Unfortunately Catch's cousin, Wasteland, is about as bright as Rock and so not very helpful.

WIYL'HTARLHWOAKH (“TRAVELS FAR ACROSS WASTELAND”)

Gunner

Male Aslan Spacehand – Spacer (Gunner) 2

Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 6 (+0), End 10 (+1), Int 4 (-1), Edu 6 (+0), Soc 6 (+0)

Languages Aslan, Anglic (limited)

Skills Gunnery (Turret) 2, Vac Suit 1

Possessions Cr 1,500

Wasteland is a third son in much the same position as Catch though his smaller size means he is much more easily intimidated by Rock and so has learned to simply keep out of the way of the conceited young second-son. He sympathises with Catch's frustrations but doesn't see what either of them can do about it.

Appendix 4: Other Characters

When needed, Mora's Peace Enforcement teams are quick to respond. They will consist of four Peace Enforcer personnel, and one Peace Enforcer officer. They will separate all groups immediately, working first to stop all violence, and only afterwards investigating a scene.

MORA PEACE ENFORCER OFFICER

Human Agent (Law) 3

Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 7 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)

Languages Anglic

Skills Advocate 1, Comms 1, Computer 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Streetwise 0

Possessions stunner (2d6+3 stun), autopistol (3d6-3), cloth armour (5), comm

MORA PEACE ENFORCER PERSONNEL

Human Agent (Law) 2

Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 6 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)

Languages Anglic

Skills Comms 1, Computer 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Streetwise 0

Possessions stunner (2d6+3 stun), autopistol (3d6-3), cloth armour (5), comm

Note that if violence continues, additional teams will respond, replacing the cloth armour (5) with combat armour (12), and the stunner with assault rifles (3d6).

Appendix 5: Yaeukhtai ‘Open Path’ Aoa’iw Class Light Trader

A popular design inside the Hierate, especially in the Trojan Reach, combining cargo space with a small number of passenger cabins. Nicknamed the pouncer, it has a dramatic, forward-sweeping wing design.

The hull of the *Yaeukhtai* is a deep red and heavily decorated with inscriptions and clan heraldry in gold and silver with sparkling spots imitating expensive jewels embedded within the hull.

The key statistics for the ship are:

- 300 dton hull, streamlined with fuel scoops.
- Jump-2, 1G Manoeuvre, Power Plant-2
- Model 2 computer with basic civilian electronics.
- Three double turrets, mounting double-beam lasers in one, and missile / sandcaster combinations in the other two.
- Cargo capacity of 105 dtons.
- 20 dton Launch.
- Ship's Air/raft.
- Cost as new, MCr 92.

Deckplans for this ship can be found in *Alien Module 1: Aslan* but should not be needed for this scenario as none of the Aslan will let the PCs aboard the ship under any circumstances.

Appendix 6: Maps of Fenrock

AERIAL VIEW OF FENROCK CITY, MORA

Key:

- 1: Subsea transport system to Wavecrest city (100 km west).
- 2: Subsea transport system to the Lancefer Arcology (200 km northwest).
- 3: Subsea transport systems to the Morilar Archipelago (1500 km northeast).
- A: Airport (above sea surface).
- D: Main subsea docking and warehousing sections.
- T: Main transport hub.
- Shaded area shows extent of the city under the seabed.

SIDE VIEW OF FENROCK CITY, MORA

Key:

- 1. Subsea transport system to Wavecrest city (100 km west).
- 3: Subsea transport systems to the Morilar Archipelago (1500 km northeast).
- A: Airport (above sea surface).
- D: Main subsea docking and warehousing sections.
- F: Subsea farm processing.
- P: Main power plant area.
- Shaded area shows extent of the city under the seabed.


