

The Rescue

A Traveller Scenario By Gareth Hanrahan

The universe is not a hospitable place for life. Humans can live naturally in a microscopic band, a thin film on rocks that happen to be the right distance from the local star and have the right combination of gases. Go beyond that little niche of viability and you must rely on life support systems and artificial shelters, trusting your life to hulls and airtlock seals.

The Rescue explores what happens when all of that goes wrong. It is suitable for a beginning group of *Traveller* characters and can serve as the kick-off for a whole campaign.

Mariposa & Sahal

Mariposa is a minor world on the fringes of the Imperium, a backwater ignored by most. It is primarily an agricultural world, producing textiles and luxuries for richer planets. The planet's large moon, Sahal, is mined for tritium, an isotope of hydrogen used in fusion reactors. Over the decades, the concentration of industry and technology has led to Sahal becoming the most influential and wealthy region in the system. The nobility, industrialists and corporate executives of Mariposa live on Sahal's underground cities and domed settlements, looking down at the benighted world below.

The main settlement on Sahal is Oculus, a city of a few thousand people that expanded out from the first tritium harvesting operation. The city is built into the floor and walls of Oculus Crater. Underground tunnels link Oculus to outlying settlements and bases. The richer nobles have mansions built into upper crater walls; the higher up the crater, the more prestigious the location.

Factories, shuttle ports, fusion reactors and lower-class housing are located on the crater floor.

The Disaster

The fusion reactors powering the lunar city have all manner of safety features and emergency systems but nothing is infallible. A shuttle, Flight 10, coming in from Mariposa lost control of its thrusters and accelerated as it approached its landing platform. The shuttle slammed into the Oculus Number Three reactor, causing a massive explosion. The blast itself did comparatively little damage. The twin blows to Oculus' stability were the loss of power throughout the city and the moonquake caused by the reactor's destruction. The shockwave caused dozens of access tunnels to cave in and caused part of the crater wall to collapse.

The shockwave also sent vast amounts of dust flying up and it would take weeks for the moon's weak gravity to drag the dust clouds back to the ground. The city was suddenly shrouded in an opaque grey dust, disrupting laser and radio transmissions. Oculus had grown up organically, without any central planning and the contingency plans were no match for a disaster of this magnitude.

In the chaotic hours after the disaster, the characters will be the only ones who can save dozens of lives.

Involving the Characters

If the characters have their own ship, then they just need to be near Mariposa. Perhaps they were trading

at Mariposa's spaceport or even visiting Oculus City. When the disaster strikes, then all ships nearby will be called in to help with the evacuation of Oculus. If the characters don't have their own vessel, then they need to be in Oculus City when Flight 10 crashes into the reactor.

There are five sub-plots in this adventure, which the characters can pursue in any order

- **The Morningside Dome:** Dozens of people are trapped in an outlying dome, running out of air. Worse, rumours are spreading about the cause of the disaster and panic is beginning to take hold.
- **The Deep Tunnels:** An underground tunnel complex was struck by the shockwave, trapping workers within. Rescuing them will require a perilous journey through unstable shafts.
- **The Mansion:** One of the wealthy nobles demands that he be rescued first. At the same time, a gang of thieves is taking advantage of the confusion by looting the rich homes on the crater wall.
- **The Shuttle Port:** The Oculus City shuttle port was severely damaged by the disaster but if the characters can free some of the ships there from the debris, they will greatly aid the evacuation effort.
- **Life Support:** Truly brave characters can head into the disaster area and repair the damaged power grid, restoring life support to Oculus City.

The characters are obviously not the only group trying to rescue survivors from Oculus but the other rescuers are concentrating on other survivors. The five tasks above are solely the province of the player characters – if they do not save those people, no-one will.

Failing Life Support

With the main reactors offline, life support in Oculus City is fading. Air recyclers have stopped, heaters are shutting down. Characters will start feeling the effects of the lack of life support an hour after the disaster, as the city becomes noticeably colder and the air feels thinner. Two hours after the disaster, the survivors in the Morningside dome will begin to run out of air. The miners have three hours of air, as does the mansion.

Artificial gravity has also failed throughout the city, reducing the gravity to one-sixth normal.

Mariposa is 400,000 kilometres away from Sahal, so it will take over three hours to fly from the moon to the planet below at 1g. There are other places to deposit survivors, if the characters think of checking. They could drop them off at orbital factories at the LaGrange point, which is only half an hour away from the moon or just move them to less damaged parts of the city.

If the characters reactivate the main reactors, then life support is restored to the whole city.

Moving Around Oculus

City

There are several ways for the characters to get around Oculus City:

- **The Tunnels:** Tunnels are the main way to get around the city. The major thoroughfares are wide boulevards, which under normal circumstances are designed to look like a street on an Earth-like world. The ceiling has holograms of blue skies and plants grow along the sides of the walkways. Now, the only illumination is from emergency lights. Some of the tunnels have collapsed and others are choked with fleeing refugees. There are tunnel carts

but these run off power from the main reactor and so are currently non-functional. If the characters find a suitable power cell, then an Engineering or Mechanic roll allows the characters to charge a cart.

There are also numerous side access tunnels, which are narrow ferrocrete tubes lined with cables and pipes. Every part of Oculus City is accessible by the tunnels. It takes thirty minutes to get from one place to another via the tunnels but the Games Master should also roll 1D6 on the Tunnel Encounter Table each time.

Tunnel Encounters

Result	Encounter
1–3	No encounter
4	Collapsed tunnel – the characters will have to find another path, taking another 1D6x5 minutes
5	Panicked refugees, looking for help
6	Dangerous tunnel – collapsing, fire, looter gang and so on.

- **The Surface:** Characters with vac suits and a good sense of direction can move along the surface, through the dust cloud, by making a Navigation test taking 10–60 minutes. There are numerous airlocks leading down into Oculus, all of which can be operated mechanically when the power is off.
- **By Ship:** The fastest way to get around the city, obviously, is by spaceship. The dust cloud does not impede flying.

Flight 10 Is Down

The scenario begins moments before Shuttle Flight 10 crashes into the reactor complex.

If the characters are in Oculus City, they hear the crash and the ensuing explosion. The ground quakes, the lights go out, then are replaced by sickly emergency lights. The city's computer system begins reciting emergency procedures, telling everyone to report to the nearest emergency shelter and wait for instructions from security. Unfortunately, the main security tower was destroyed in the shuttle crash and it will take some time for junior security staff to respond to the crisis.

If the characters are in their ship, then they receive distress messages from Sahal soon after the shuttle crash. Automated systems announce that there is an emergency at Oculus shuttle port and that all vessels in Mariposa orbit should stand by for further instructions.

The characters are soon contacted via their ship or comms by Rai Astasi, a communications officer at Oculus City's



security centre. She is young and inexperienced but she's also the ranking officer left after the crash and she is taking charge in this crisis. She has identified the Player Characters' ship as one of the few vessels within range that can aid in the crisis. If the characters do not have their own ship, then she call upon any ex-military characters to aid the rescue effort.

Assuming the characters agree to Rai's requests to aid, she fills them in on the current situation – a shuttle has crashed and somehow disabled main power across Oculus City. She is co-ordinating the rescue effort and is calling in aid from the planet below and from other settlements on Sahal but there are two groups of people who are trapped and she wants the characters to aid them. Life support is failing, so the characters will have to act quickly.

The first group are in the outlying habitat dome, Morningside Dome. Three dozen people took shelter there but the dome is damaged and slowly leaking air. Rai wants the characters to get the people there to the shuttle port, where they can be picked up. No-one in the dome is answering their comms.

The second group is a group of workers in a new set of tunnels beneath the city. They are trapped down there – an airlock has sealed itself behind them and refuses to open. One of the workers, Herik, has a comm and Rai can put the characters in touch with him; he will guide them down into the tunnels.

As soon as the characters agree to help Rai and are discussing where to go first, they get another call. It is from Yaj haut-Epp, a noble of Oculus City. He was monitoring the characters' communications with Rai and knows they are competent and mobile. He demands that they come and rescue him first of all; he's trapped inside his mansion and wants an escort to the shuttle port. He will pay them handsomely if they aid

him, offering them 5,000 credits immediately but he is prepared to go as high as Cr. 20,000 each.

The Morningside Dome

The Morningside Dome is located on the eastern edge of the crater, in the shadow of the rocky walls. The moonquake caused tons of debris to collapse on top of the dome, damaging its outer shell. The dome contains new housing modules, as well as one of the larger open indoor spaces in Oculus City, an artificial garden.

When the impact of the shuttle crash and reactor explosion rocked the dome, the inhabitants gathered in this central space. One of the loudest voices in the dome was that of Roget Viers, a former marine, who assumed that Oculus City was under attack by Ine Givar terrorists or even alien invaders. Viers has convinced the other survivors to remain in the dome and prepare for a siege instead of leaving. He has whipped them into a frenzy of paranoia and they now believe that the rest of the city is filled with rapacious terrorists and thieves.

Entering the Dome: The airlocks connecting the dome to the rest of the city have been locked from the inside. Characters can override the locks with a successful Mechanic or Engineering (electronics) test or they can don vacc suits and climb up the dome (easily done in one-sixth gravity) to one of the upper access hatches. While on the dome, the characters will see the fractures in the dome shell.

Once the characters have entered the dome, they can make their way through the curved corridors towards the central area.

Firefight: In anticipation of an attack of the invaders, Viers has sent small armed groups to watch the entrances and set up ambushes. These are not trained soldiers,

just frightened citizens who have been told they are under attack. Wary characters (Recon 1 or more) will notice the ambush up ahead – two of the doors along the corridor are slightly ajar, as there are armed citizens lurking in there. If the characters walk past the doors, the citizens spring out and challenge them.

If the characters do not react by drawing guns or firing back, then the characters may be able to talk their way out of the ambush. If they do fight, then the ambushers start at Initiative 6 and have 1/2 cover when they fire out from the doorways.

Citizens

Str 6 Dex 8 End 8 Int 7 Edu 6 Soc 6

Stealth 0, Gun Combat (slug handgun) 0

Snub Pistol, C/S x3D6-3

If the characters convince the ambushers that they are not Ine Givar terrorists, then they are brought into the central dome where they can speak with Viers. If they leave smoking bodies behind them, then convincing the terrified survivors to trust them will be almost impossible (*'we just shot your friends, but seriously, we're here to rescue you'*).

Viers: In the central area, the characters find Viers surrounded by several dozen frightened citizens. Viers is standing on the plinth of an ornamental statue in the garden, shouting about how the city is under attack and they have to hold their ground. They must dig in and wait for relief from the surface. If the characters are going to evacuate the people here, they will need to get Viers to stand down.

Viers is not crazy or delusional but he has completely misinterpreted what's going on and believes that the city is under attack. If the characters tell him that it was just a shuttle crash, he will be suspicious – terrorist sabotage of a shuttle as it lands is eminently possible. He suggests that it could be the characters who are wrong about the

attack and that they should wait here until they can get a secure channel to Mariposa and confirm what's going on.

Convincing Viers will require roleplaying but he will lend more weight to the words of military characters or those with the Advocate skill or high Social Standing. The biggest risk is that the players will try to bully or overrule Viers, in which case he will become convinced they are slavers or kidnappers, trying to lure the people of the city out to their ship.

Viers

Str 10 Dex 8 End 10 Int 8 Edu 8 Soc 7

Athletics 1, Battle Dress 0, Tactics 1, Heavy Weapons 0, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 2, Stealth 2, Leadership 1, Recon 1.
Snub Pistol (3D6-3), ACR (3D6/Auto 6)

Evacuation: If the characters convince the survivors in the dome to leave, then they still need to get them to safety. There are 37 survivors, some of which are lightly injured. The characters can cram survivors into their ship and carry them to another dome on Sahal's surface or the LaGrange factories or guide them through the tunnels to the shuttle port.

The Deep Tunnel

From its humble beginnings as a tritium mine, Oculus City has expanded in all directions, especially down. Thick layers of regolith protect the citizens from the lethal radiation of space.

When Flight 10 crashed, Herik and his work crew were excavating a new section of tunnel 50 metres below the surface. The impact caused an airlock to shut behind them, trapping them underground. Herik was able to patch his comm into a fibre-optic line and contact the surface. Rei can connect the characters to Herik, who

explains the situation. He and two others were repairing a damaged mining robot when the impact hit them.

Herik warns the characters that the deep tunnels are dangerously unstable and that they really shouldn't risk their lives by going that far underground. Instead, he suggests they head to the control room for the mining robots. The characters will have to put on vacc suits and filters, as the caves are freezing cold and airless. The tunnels are also outside the artificial gravity of the city, so the gravity drops from one-G to one-sixth G.

Moving Through The Tunnels: Herik has mapped the tunnels and while the disaster has caused a few cave-ins, there is still a clear route down to him. There is a danger of more cave-ins. Characters moving through the tunnels must make Dexterity+ Stealth tests. The time frame is 10–60 minutes.

Effect	Result	Event
Failed with 0 or less	Disaster	Huge Cave-In: All PCs suffer 4D6 damage, and the miners are trapped begin tons of rubble.
Failed 1–5	Average Failure	Cave-In: The character suffers 3D6 damage
Failed with 6+	Marginal Failure	Minor rock-fall: The character suffers 2D6 damage

If the characters successfully make it through the tunnels, they find their way to a control room. There are computer terminals here; Herik and his crew were using these computers to remotely manage the robot miners. Over the comm., Herik suggests that the characters go no further into the caves. Instead, they can use the computers to send the mining robots down into the deep tunnels to cut through the airlock and free Herik and his crew. If the characters examine the computers, the display shows a map of the tunnel network and there is a flashing warning icon beneath the shuttle port.

According to the computer, the tunnels beneath the port are in danger of collapsing and need to be reinforced.

There is no way for the characters to get there in time but they can send the mining robots to repair the problem. They have gravitic supports that they can deploy to shore up the damaged area. However, if they send the robots to save the shuttle port, then they will have to save Herik and the other two workers themselves. If they ask Herik, then he will urge them to send the robots, then escape themselves.

The Robots: The two functional mining robots are also in the control room. They are large cylinders that float in the air and are covered in drills, particle beams, probes and other sensors. The deployable gravitic supports are stored along the flanks of the robots and can be removed manually. These are dumb robots, with only minimal initiative or intelligence of their own.

If the characters send both robots to support the shuttle port, then the danger there is dealt with easily. The robots race through the access tunnels and deploy gravitic supports, shoring up the tunnels and saving the city from further collapse. If they only send one robot, have a player roll 1D6. On a 5 or 6, a single set of gravitic supports was not enough and the tunnel collapses again, wrecking one of the few functional landing pads in the city. With this port gone, escaping from the city will be much more difficult and the characters have doomed hundreds of people. Obviously, if they don't send any robots, the port automatically collapses.

Rescuing Herik: If the characters send one of the mining robots down into the deep tunnels, then they can rescue Herik at no risk to themselves. On the other hand, if they descend into the depths, they risk further cave-ins.

If the characters go deeper again, then they must make another Stealth test, this time with a –1 DM. Again, if the test is failed, they suffer a cave-in as above.

Once the characters reach the blocked doorway, they have to open it, which requires either a Hard (-4) Strength test or a Mechanic Skill Test. Once out, they need to make their way back to the surface, again risking cave-ins.

Herik & Workers

Str 8 Dex 7 End 9 Int 7 Edu 6 Soc 6

Engineering 0, Stealth 1, Mechanic 2, Trade (civil engineering 2)

The Mansion

The haut-Ebb mansion is located in the crater wall, overlooking the Morningside Dome. Normally, visitors arrive by air/raft or by the high-technology grav shaft that rises from the tunnels on the crater floor to the mansion high above. With main power down throughout the city, the obvious way up is via the emergency access stairs that wind around the grav shaft. If the characters ask Rai or another citizen, they are told that haut-Ebb is a rich and eccentric nobleman who lives alone. Rumours claim that he suffers from an auto-immune disease that makes him vulnerable to infection or that he hates other people or that he's insane or that he's got a secret psychic ability and finds crowds of people agonisingly people. He is very unpopular within Oculus City. He is certainly very wealthy.

The Gang: Four criminals are taking advantage of the current crisis to loot the mansion. They were already plotting to raid one of the nobles of Oculus City; the disaster is a windfall for them. They are:

- **Trager**, a thug and mercenary who wanders from world to world. Trager is a gun for hire.
- **Ripper**, his Vargr pal. Bloodthirsty and cruel, Ripper lives to fight and kill.
- **Orri**, a political activist from Mariposa. She believes that her world suffers from the predations and greed of the Sahal nobility and that wealth is being drained from the world below by the moon

vampires. She has no interest in stealing from haut-Ebb, she wants to make a political statement.

- **Yance**, a denizen of Oculus City. He is a coward and a petty thief and is in the gang as a local guide and locksmith.

Trager

Str 7 Dex 10 End 9 Int 7 Edu 6 Soc 6

Athletics 1, Gun Combat (slug handgun) 1, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 1, Recon 2, Melee (brawl) 1, Tactics 2
Autopistol (3D6-3, Auto 4), Accelerator Rifle (3D6), Flak Jacket (Armour 6)

Ripper

Str 9 Dex 10 End 8 Int 5 Edu 5 Soc 3

Athletics 1, Melee (blade) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Gun Combat 1 (slug pistol)
Autopistol (3D6-3, Auto 4), Blade (2D6), Flak Jacket (Armour 6)

Orri

Str 6 Dex 7 End 6 Int 9 Edu 10 Soc 5

Advocate 2, Stealth 1, Gun Combat (slug handgun) 0
Snub Pistol (3D6-3)

Yance

Str 6 Dex 8 End 6 Int 8 Edu 6 Soc 6

Stealth 1, Streetwise 2, Mechanic 2 Gun Combat (slug handgun) 0
Snub Pistol (3D6-3)

The gang's plan is to break into the mansion, incapacitate or kill haut-Ebb, then make their way across the surface of the moon to safety. They have lightweight environmental suits that will get them to a nearby outpost. Currently, the four gang members are making their way to the mansion. There are a lot of stairs; Orri's endless ranting about the evils of the nobility is annoying and Ripper is getting bored. It is never a good thing when Ripper gets bored.

If the characters head straight to the mansion, they will get there before the gang. If they go to one of the other locations in the city first, then the gang makes it to the mansion first and the characters will either encounter the thieves at the top of the stairs as they disable the door or inside the mansion itself.

Accessing the Mansion: If the characters have restored power to the city, then they can use the grav shaft to bypass the stairs and get to the front door. Otherwise, they have to take the stairs and it's a long and boring climb even in one-sixth gravity. Through plassteel windows in the stairwell, they can see the city covered in a thick dust cloud, like a burial shroud.

At the top of the stairs is the main entrance – a blast door. It's a richly decorated, ornate and very pretty and elegant blast door but it's still a blast door. The sort of blast door that says '*I value my privacy, especially where tactical nukes are concerned*'. If the characters are the first on the scene, then they can contact haut-Ebb and he will open the door for them.

If the characters do not go straight to the mansion, then haut-Ebb will contact them periodically and complain that they have not rescued him yet. He's insistent on this point. When the criminal gang start breaking through his blast door, haut-Ebb's comm messages will change from whiny and insistent to terrified and screechy. The gang get through the blast door by disassembling it, which takes them almost an hour.

Haut-Ebb: His Excellency Yaj haut-Ebb is a rake-thin, wild-haired man who wears flowing robes decorated with golden peacocks. He has a horror of all forms of footwear; it is quite hard for him to talk to the Player Characters while they are wearing shoes or boots and the thought of putting on a vacc suit fills him with nausea. Getting haut-Ebb out of his mansion and down to safety should be incredibly frustrating.

Haut-Ebb**Str 6 Dex 7 End 4 Int 8 Edu 10 Soc 12**

Carouse 0, Medic 1

Fighting the Gang: There are two possible places for the characters to encounter the gang: on the stairs or in the mansion.

When fighting on the stairs, then Ripper will hold their stairs with his blade, while Trager and Orri shoot from above. Yance will lurk at the rear, either cutting through the door mechanism or holding haut-Ebb hostage, depending on whether the Player Characters turn up before or after the gang breaks into the mansion. The thieves will avoid using their grenades unless the Player Characters are proving especially tough. The stairs provides ½ cover to everyone. Trager will try to snipe at the most dangerous-looking characters, while Orri will just try to keep them pinned down with wild bursts of fire.

If fighting in the mansion, then the gang will attempt to grab haut-Ebb and use him as a hostage. There is plenty of cover in the mansion and the characters can hide behind antique First-Imperium furniture and antiques from Sol, causing thousands of credits worth of damage with every shot.

The Shuttle Port

The shuttle port consists of four large landing pads surrounding a control tower. The large passenger concourse is located beneath the control tower. Flight 10 clipped the control tower as it crashed, sending chunks of debris plummeting onto the concourse below but the port is still the centre of the evacuation effort. Refugees from all over the city are gathering here, waiting for shuttles to carry them away. Others are putting on vacc suits and risking the overland crossing to outlying domes. If the characters are escorting the survivors from the Morningside Dome or haut-Ebb, then they'll have to come here.

Rai informs the characters when they arrive that there is an extra shuttle in a hangar but fallen debris has trapped has damaged the roof. If the shuttle is moved, the hangar will begin to collapse. None of the pilots at Oculus City are willing to risk moving the shuttle but if it can be flown out intact, then it will help speed the evacuation immensely. If any of the characters are expert pilots, they can try flying the shuttle out. This requires a Difficult (–2) Dexterity+Pilot (small craft) test. If the test fails, then the character fails to get the shuttle out before the hangar collapses on top of it.

If they get the shuttle out, then a trainee pilot, Noral, volunteers to fly it back to Mariposa with a load of refugees.

If the tunnels below the port collapse, then the remaining landing pads become too unstable to use.

Life Support

Once it becomes clear that the shuttle crash was not a deliberate attack or terrorist plot, the players may ask about the city's backup power. Surely a moonbase has a massively redundant power supply that should have kicked in when the reactor was destroyed – and they're right. Oculus City's backup power should be able to power life support indefinitely. The problem is that the backup power supply never activated and the city is currently running off the secondary backup. If this discrepancy is pointed out to her, Rai checks the computer and discovers that the backup power controls were damaged by the crash. The backup reactors are working but they're not connected to the city's power grid. Someone will have to go in to the crash scene and reconnect the backup.

There are two ways to approach the crash site – from the tunnels and overground.

From the tunnels: This close to the impact, many of the tunnels have cracked or collapsed. Fires smoulder in other corridors, mostly snuffed out by the low oxygen levels. The main threat, though, is the cargo of the shuttle. Among the cargo containers is a shipment of radioactive, which have spilled out into the tunnel. Characters approaching the reactors from below will absorb 2D6x10 rads. Vacc suits reduce the rad count by 50. This may be enough to cause nausea and burns.

Overground: Characters travelling overground will have to climb over the jagged rubble and melted, twisted metal of the crash site. The danger here is ripping a vacc suit on a broken rock or protrusion. Characters need to make Dexterity + Vacc Suit tests to avoid damaging their suits as they clamber through the wreckage. If a character does break his suit, he takes 1D6 damage immediately from the cold and another one damage each round until they patch the suit (self-sealing suits patch themselves).

Backup Power: Activating the backup power systems requires an Education + Engineering (power) test. Once backup power is activated, then the limits on life support are removed and the only rescue with a time limit is haut-Epp.

Clever characters might send the robots from the deep tunnels, once the

Aftermath

A few hours after the crash of Flight 10, rescue ships from Mariposa arrive in force and take charge of the city. The final death toll is between two and three hundred, depending on the actions of the Player Characters. If they saved Herik, then they are heroes of Oculus City. If they dealt with Viers violently, though, they may face legal problems later.