

William H. Keith's

The No. 32
JOURNAL
of the Travellers' Aid Society®

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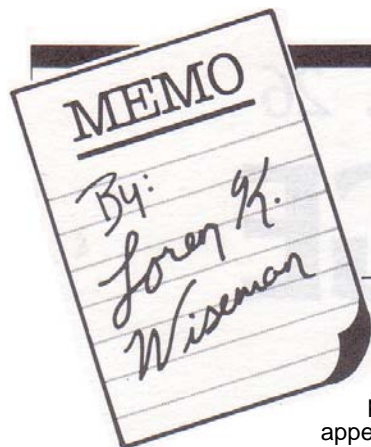
Dates in this issue of the *Journal* are given in accordance to an arbitrary Imperial calendar of 365 days. The date consists of a three-digit day number (the current day of the year) a dash, and a four-digit number (showing the current year since the founding of the Imperium). The latest date of **Traveller News Service** in this issue is 297-1117.

All editorial and general mail should be sent to Challenge, P.O. Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646.

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Submissions: We welcome articles and illustrations for the **Journal**. Please inquire before submitting manuscripts, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope; we will send manuscript guideline and format sheets. Foreign inquires (except APO/FPO) please include International Reply Coupon.

32-02, From the Management (Editorial), Loren Wiseman
32-17, **Traveller News Service (Traveller News Service)**, Marc Miller
32-18, A World on its own (adventure), Timothy B. Brown
32-27, Swift Water: An Amber Zone (Amber Zone), John M. Ford
32-30, Tlea: A Casual Encounter (Casual Encounter), Rob Caswell & Tom Peters



From the Management

Tim Brown has written the last couple of "From the Management" pieces, and I thought it was time I put in an appearance to let you know I'm still alive and kicking. I'm very proud of what we've accomplished with **Challenge** lately. We've been on schedule for almost two years, and it looks like we'll be able to stay that way. We've expanded twice --- once in dimensions, and once in number of pages. We've increased our coverage of games from the basic two (**Traveller** and **Twilight: 2000**). Our overall appearance has improved greatly and will continue to do so (resting on laurels is dangerous ... they tend to crumple out from under you).

FOOT-IN-MOUTH DEPARTMENT

All this said, I must own up to a mistake in my part of "Combat Examples" in the last issue: As near as I can figure, I managed to mix one paragraph with the one directly below it. The corrected passage appears in this issue's E&C column. I apologize to anyone who was confused by my blundering.

-Loren K. Wiseman

Issue 31 feedback was as follows:

Hazardous Cargoes	4.13
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JUST DETECTED

MINIATURES

15MM SCIENCE-FICTION

The Reiter (a mail-order hobby shop dealing in books, games, magazines, and miniatures) has acquired a limited supply of out-of-production 15mm science-fiction miniatures. For a list, write The Reiter, 3440 S. Monterey, New Berlin, WI 53151.



TRAVELLER NEWS SERVICE

MD MILIAN GWI/VEGA (0107 A456A86 F)

Date: 268 1117

¶ Reports from Sol subsector indicate that heavy fighting continues on Terra, despite efforts by local governments to maintain order. Imperial troop units stationed in Europe and North America have been placed on war status. **Travellers** from the region report sizeable defections from Imperial troop units by racial Solomani declaring for the Confederation.

¶ Admiralty spokespersons refused to confirm or deny the reports.

REGINA/REGINA (0310 A788899 A)

Date: 271 1117

¶ Archduke Norris has placed Imperial forces within the Domain of Deneb at condition 3 standby alert.

¶ Fleet reserves are being assembled and orientation training begins immediately. Trance Kelopty, a defense analyst retained by the **Traveller** News Service, recently evaluated the situation: "Norris' naval intelligence background makes him extremely sensitive to recent developments, and he naturally wants to take preventive measures.

¶ "Although the fleet reserve mobilization sites have not been announced, I still expect that there will be three major concentrations.

¶ "First, forces will muster at Regina (and I mean within, say, 10 parsecs of Regina) to protect the Archduke's capital and react to a possible Zhodani thrust. "Second, forces will assemble at Mora as a reaction force against Aslan movements. "The entire rimward flank of the Domain is vulnerable to Aslan ihatei fleets, and they are extremely difficult to stop once they get moving.

¶ "Third, there has to be a fleet mobilization concentrated around the Depot in Deneb sector.

¶ "Vargr raiders dart back and forth across the border even in the best of times, and at any sign of weakness, we can expect major Vargr raids.

¶ "The region which includes the Border Worlds and the Darrian Confederation is reasonably secure.

¶ "If Norris has to ignore any part of the Domain, that's probably the place to slight.

¶ "Finally, and not mentioned in the official releases, I believe that Norris will be forced to mobilize a central reaction fleet that can race from trouble spot to trouble spot putting out fires."

CAPITAUCORE (0508 A586A98 F)

Date: 280 1117

¶ The Ninth Sept of Capital, 400 kilometers northwest of the imperial Palace, was swept by fire and looting today in the wake of continued rioting and civil disorder.

¶ Imperial enforcers, backed by marines and jump troops, have retaken the major communications facilities and government centers.

¶ Initial military affairs announcements and reactions implied that the Ninth Sept Rising was directly instigated by Dulinor and his followers.

¶ More recent reports make it clear that the insurgents were dissatisfied because government subsistence payments had been curtailed.

DLAN/ILELISH (1021 A8D1ADE G)

Date: 288 1117

¶ Dulinor is now travelling to the New Palace following the recent victory of the Loyal Fleet over Lucan's forces in Dagudashaag sector.

¶ "I leave the fleet in capable hands," Dulinor said as he addressed an assembly which included officers from every ship in the fleet.

¶ "My brother knows my every wish."

¶ The present location of the Loyal Fleet is unknown.

CAPITAUCORE (0508 A586A98 F)

Date: 297 1117

¶ The Vengeance Fleet has intercepted and destroyed the screening elements of Dulinor's so called Loyal Fleet, forcing it to withdraw and paving the way for continued penetrations into rebel territory by Imperial forces. The Vengeance Fleet suffered only minor losses in the engagement. It will press its penetration toward Dian after a period of refit at the Imperial Depot in Dagudashaag sector.

Traveller News Service is another Imperium wide benefit of membership in the **Travellers'Aid Society**.

A World on its Own

This is an adventure for **MegaTraveller**.
It will be necessary to have both it and Alien Module 1 Aslan in order to play.

TOO MANY WORLDS TO COUNT

"Using the ancient calendars, the Emperor Strephon was rightfully defeated in the summer. By winter, the victorious Dulinor had returned home to announce his reign. But his promises of peace and prosperity in the center of a burgeoning empire didn't last, and the fleet was off to war by the next spring. The sons and daughters of the sector said their goodbyes on a hundred different worlds as the host assembled for its long journey to the core."

The sectors of the Imperium are large: large enough that entire worlds or groups of worlds can sometimes get lost in the shuffle. When the call went out to assemble the sector navy into a single fleet, more than one world refused to send their contingents. One such world was Khirar.

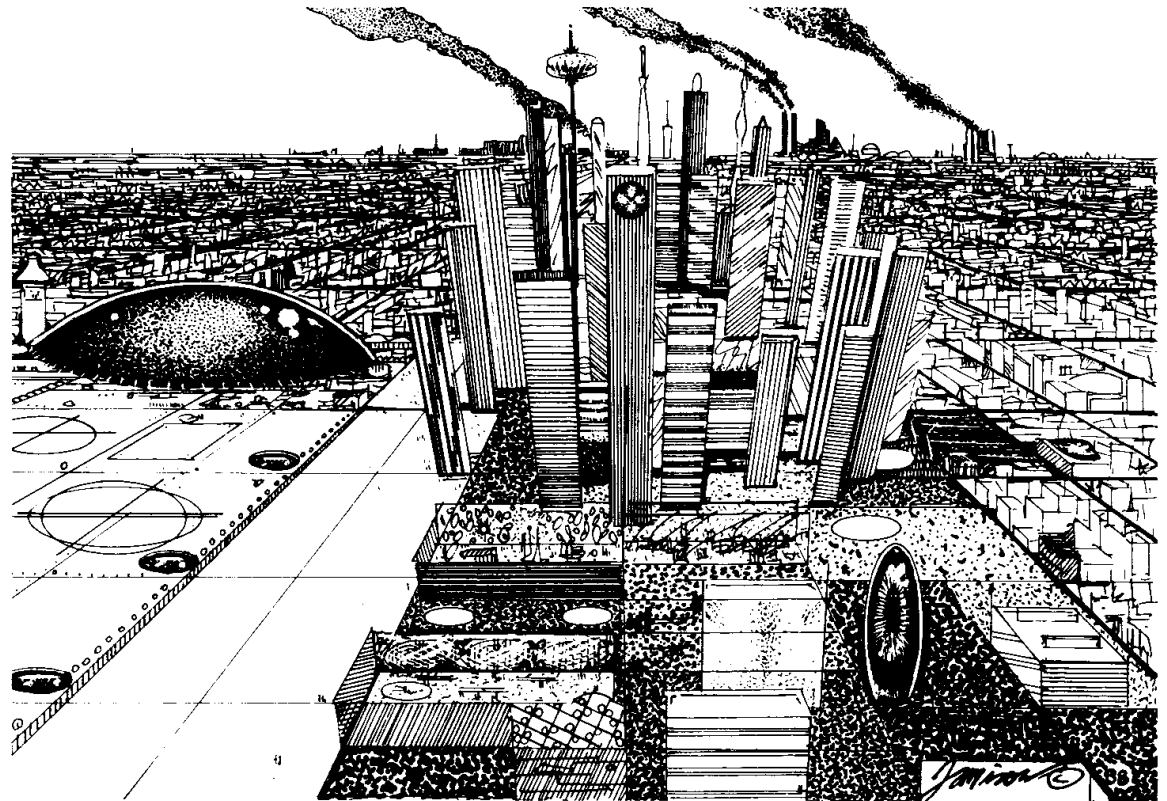
Khirar is a prosperous world in Ilelish sector. The government is a dictatorship by a powerful warlord who seized power for himself during a time of planetary upheaval two decades earlier. Reputedly as wise as he is fearless, the Warlord Rutall now enjoys the popular support of the majority of his two billion subjects. It is his economic leadership which has seen the entire world through the depressed times which followed the devastating war years.

Technologically, Khirar is in the mainstream of spacefaring worlds, but is certainly not a match for the advanced ships and weapons of the sector naval base in orbit around it. Technically, the naval base had been a separate entity in the system, subject only to Imperial decrees and not to planetary decisions. When word reached Khirar that Dulinor had assassinated Strephon, Rutall reasoned that dark times would lay ahead for his people. With a practiced sense of forethought he put his spies and infiltrators to work on the orbital naval base.

The naval base itself is an orbital facility designed to house a total of up to 300 individuals. The families of those personnel are almost universally settled on the surface, so

all 300 occupants are trained service people. Typically, there are three dozen or so ships operating out of the naval base, performing patrol and training missions in a radius of up to six parsecs.

By the time Dulinor's orders came to move the ships from the base, Rutall's campaign to infiltrate the base had taken effect. In a nearly bloodless coup, several senior naval officers were arrested and replaced by junior officers who had been turned to Rutall's point of view by promises of wealth and power. Only three vessels managed to escape the coup, leaving thirty ships of various sizes and capabilities. Rutall had successfully cut off himself and his world from the call to arms going on in the space around him, and had captured an impressive collection of warships to make his independence stick.



Characters

Once the players have been introduced to the scenario, they should be assigned characters. There are five player-characters listed below with motivations, equipment, and notes on how to generate them using **MegaTraveller**. If more than five players are needed, either use the male Aslan as player-characters or expand the humans listed as necessary.

Hatiiru Mana: You are a lieutenant commander aboard the cruiser *Kunnip*, one of the ships taken over by Rutall. You are also of noble birth, a knight who has sworn allegiance to Dulinor and his cause. You were born on a farming settlement on an agricultural world near Dian, where your family has a fief granted by Strephon through Dulinor himself for your father's services in the navy. While young, your character followed the family tradition, attended the Naval Academy, and began service with the sector navy. Your latest assignment has been as the navigational officer aboard the *Kunnip*, where you gained quite an admiration for your superior officer, Captain Dunard.

When the unexpected coup came off, you were caught completely off guard. From your temporary quarters at the orbital base, you heard the security alarm sound, and you headed out to see what the trouble was, armed with your laser sidearm. Before you could react, you watched the Captain die at the hands of Rutall's Guardsmen, feared enforcers of local law. Later you met up with Lieutenant Britcher, and the two of you opted for the better part of valor and sought safety hiding in the cargo bays.

After things quieted down, you managed to stow away on a shuttle heading for the planet's surface. Once there you managed to escape the naval ground facility unseen and disappear into the city, Arkron, capital of Khirar. For the last few weeks you have been living in anonymity among the nameless in the shadow districts, giving up your rightful naval uniform for the dark cloak and work clothes of a common peasant. However, like all officers in the Ilelish Fleet, it is considered a dishonor, even a disgrace, to be without one's uniform. You wear it proudly beneath the disguise you have adopted.

Your chief motivation is to gain control of the *Kunnip* and join up with Dulinor's fleet. The injustice of this coup is wearing on you, so action must be fast and immediate.

Mana's Equipment: You managed to escape with only your uniform and your laser carbine 13 (with all 200 shots remaining). On planet, you have also picked up a disguise and a blade.

Creating Lieutenant Commander Mana: Roll up the lieutenant commander as a Naval character. Generate his homeworld randomly (it is an agricultural world, if you care to fudge your results in that direction). If his originally rolled Social Standing is less than 10, raise it to 10. Also, insure that he becomes a lieutenant commander by the time he has gone four or five terms (fudge his position and promotion rolls if necessary). Finally, don't bother with mustering out benefits the lieutenant commander is still in the service.

Angela Britcher: You were on your first duty assignment aboard the *Kunnip* as a weapons officer when the coup erupted. Only with the level headed help of

Lieutenant Commander Mana were you able to escape capture by Rutall's men.

Your origins are actually in the Solomani Rim, where you were born on Karkhar, an agricultural planet near Dingir. Though Karkhar is under military rule, in the rural crater plains of the planet there is little animosity between Solomani and Vilani. You always considered life there good, but you had to leave home when business took a turn for the worse. A connection in the local government got you an admission into the Imperial Navy, and natural aptitude has seen you the rest of the way on your career.

Although you are not necessarily a disciple of Dulinor, the Navy is your home now. You will remain loyal to the Navy and to your only superior officer in this adventure, Lieutenant Commander Mana. Like your fellow officer, your disguise is worn over your naval uniform.

Britcher's Equipment: You were not so fortunate in the escape from the naval base, having retrieved no equipment. However, on Khirar you have managed to pick up a cutlass, with which you are quite adept.

Creating Lieutenant Britcher: Angela's homeworld, Karkhar, is a Starport B, Medium sized, Dense atmosphere, Wet world with High Population, Moderate Law Level, and High Stellar technology. Create her character accordingly. Also, she has a great understanding of vehicle operation from her background as a mid tech farmer, so give her an additional background skill point in each Wheeled and Grav Vehicle. Finally, she is skilled with a cutlass; make certain she has at least Skill Level 3 in Cutlass.

Stahn hut Myeer: Rutall is not without enemies on Khirar. Far from it, as his support stems from his conquests, and conquered peoples rarely accept the yoke of servitude without resentment. The hill tribes of the southern continents are among those who have been caught up in the global warfare which rocks Khirar. They typically lag a Tech Level or two behind the rest of the planet, living a nomadic life, following animal herds for food, and sunshine for electrical power among the foothills.

You were a child when you last lived in the foothills with your people. It was when Rutall and his forces overran the area and burnt your temporary village that you were orphaned and nearly killed yourself. Deep inside, you know that soldiers killed your family, but you know Rutall killed them just as surely as if he had wielded the laser himself. It is your ultimate goal to take revenge upon the evil warlord.

You have grown up as a rogue and wanderer among the war-torn nations of Khirar. You have never known the luxury of the victorious nations; only the suffering of the defeated. As a saboteur and sometime soldier you have picked away at Rutall's empire, always one step ahead of his retribution. Currently you are laying low in Startown around Arkron after a particularly close call with the authorities.

Stahn's Equipment: Stahn has personal armor which is the equivalent of jack, and he carries a blade and an assault rifle (7mm). He is also temporarily "sitting on" a dozen hand grenade 9s. With his connections, Stahn can come up with other weapons and equipment as necessary in Startown.

Creating Stahn hut Myeer: Roll him up as a Rogue according to world stats for Khirar. Fudge rolls if necessary to give him a good overall weapons skill.

Jason Thanoor: Another displaced civilian who has sworn vengeance against Rutall, Jason Thanoor was once an aristocrat here in Arkron itself. His family was known for its warrior heritage, and his father had fought alongside Rutall in the southern campaigns almost twenty years ago. However, when Rutall purged his officers after that campaign, he saw fit to wipe out the Thanoor family as well. His father already dead, Rutall's troops seized the Thanoor estate and killed his entire family, eliminating all but his youngest son. Jason's foresighted mother had smuggled him out of the city before the bitter end.

Raised and educated by a well-to-do family in Ruthkar (a city to the west of Arkron), Jason only learned of his heritage when he came of age on Khirar at age 15. Shocked and enraged, Jason thanked his Ruthkar family, but declined his mother's wish that he remain anonymous and live out his life under an assumed name. He dropped out of school, took up his weapons, and joined a rebellious faction of jungle dwellers on the edge of the world's largest sea. Here he learned the ways of the soldier and proclaimed his name once again as Jason Thanoor.

Thanoor and hut Myeer met during a raid against a government fuel convoy three years ago. They have been close friends ever since, having undergone a ceremony which makes them, in modern Earth terms, the equivalent of blood brothers. They will not leave the other behind, no matter what the situation.

Thanoor's Equipment: Jason brandishes a dagger and a Gauss pistol, a prize he took in a previous raid. He wears no armor, in the tradition of the jungle fighters who taught him well. Jason is never without his climbing equipment.

Creating Jason Thanoor: Generate Jason as a Barbarian, careful to make certain that he has some Gun Combat skills. Since he dropped out of school, his Education should be no more than 6.

Airlaloiw: As a young female Aslan of the powerful Hyuktoi clan (a clan with holdings on sacred Kusyu itself), your possibilities seemed virtually limitless. But your true sense of business led you to corporate management rather than marriage. And despite your clan's influence, you felt that your best chance for success lay outside the Hierate, in the Imperium itself. Could it be that your longtime fascination with humans influenced your decision? Besides, who could have foreseen the dangerous times which now grip the entire empire?

Your business was built around one large passenger/cargo vessel which you managed from star to star throughout the Imperium, at one time going as far as Capital for a lucrative cargo. The three male employees of your corporation are quite loyal; one of them is actually your younger cousin. (*Referee:* The player running Airlaloiw is also in charge of the three male Aslan non-player-characters). All other crew positions were filled by temporary human personnel.

Unfortunately, your vessel was heavily damaged by a pirate attack several weeks ago. When you limped it into Dian for repairs, the authorities commandeered it. Without a ship, you were out of business. Since then, you

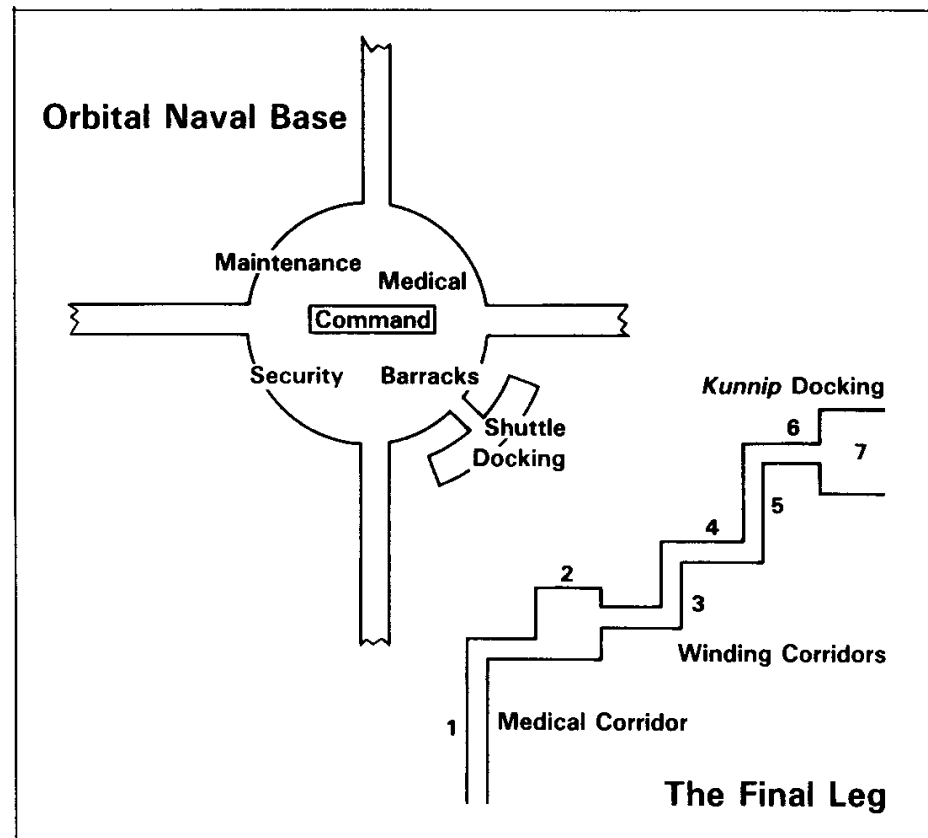
have managed to move away from Dian, hoping to find a business opportunity elsewhere. Old acquaintances on Khirar couldn't help you, as everyone is feeling the crunch of the hard times brought on by the impending wars. It now seems that your only chance for a bright future is to flee the Imperium entirely, retreating back to the Hierate to go home.

With this in mind, it is probably in your best interest to find help in getting off planet. Though you have no particular quarrel with Rutall, his coup and crackdown on off world travel couldn't have come at a more inconvenient time.

Remember, Airlaloiw is an Aslan, not a human. To properly role-play her as one, both the referee and the player should obtain and read through a copy of Alien Module 1, Aslan.

Airlaloiw's Equipment: She has virtually nothing but money right now. Neither her nor her employees have any weapons or armor. They are presently travelling with little more than their clothing.

Creating Airlaloiw: Use Alien Module 1, **Aslan**, to create Airlaloiw and her three male employees.



Assembling the Adventurers

Once characters have been chosen, it is up to the referee to begin the adventure. Referring to the map of Arkron, the naval officers are in the Shadow districts, the rebels are in Startown, and the Aslan are in the Bazaar. Since the characters are not in contact and haven't really met one another, the first part of the adventure will deal with getting them all together.

Begin the scenario with the naval officers as the only "active" player-characters. Administer their movements and actions until they "meet" the other characters. Once met by the naval officers, bring the appropriate players into the game and allow them to manipulate their characters normally.

Movement in Arkron: Each district of the city is described below. With each are three encounters which may occur.

The first time the naval characters move through Startown, the rebels will be alerted to their presence. As the referee, simply tell the rebel players, "Two unusual characters have entered the district and it would be in your interest to investigate." Let the players role-play their first encounter.

The same holds true for the Aslan characters, once any "active" characters move through the Bazaars district.

The characters may move to adjacent city districts, taking an hour on foot to do so, or, if they find vehicle transportation, five minutes. When using vehicle transportation, there is a charge of Cr10 per person per sector, and since the naval characters have no money, they will have to move on foot. There are no encounters when using vehicle transport, which may be good or bad, depending on the situation.

Of course, it will help if both player and referee know a little bit about the entire planet first.

KHIRAR

All of the characters should be fairly familiar with the information in this section. Even the Aslan and the naval officers, though not natives, have lived on Khirar long enough to get this overview of its conditions.

History

Khirar is a habitable world, nearly the size and mass of Terra, but with far less surface water. The tiny seas are landlocked in a world continent characterized by wide desert regions and fierce, active volcanic mountain ranges.

The original colonists of Khirar were Vilani who arrived just prior to the Rule of Man. Solomani settlers followed and basically got along well with the Vilani already there. The world enjoyed a period of prosperity until the ultimate fall of the Second Imperium and the beginning of the Long Night.

During the eighteen centuries prior to the reintroduction of Imperial rule, the populations of Khirar suffered terribly. Cut off from interstellar trade, local resources took on a far greater importance, and local wars broke out over their exploitation. Factionalization plunged the world into the depths of technology recession, until warlords and petty emperors ruled archaic armies among the ruins of once great cities. During that time, a code of military honor and a

tradition of strong leadership took hold and has lasted through the rebirth of technology and prosperity.

A thousand years of Imperial protection and trade has brought Khirar back to the mainstream of interstellar society.

However, their warlike, bickering tendencies have limited their social growth, and planetary conflicts on their balkanized planet have been frequent. On occasion a single leader has emerged from these wars, but none have succeeded in creating a single world government for long. The latest such world ruler is the Warlord Rutall, who operates a shaky, but so far successful government from his seat in Arkron. The military leader who ended up on top after the last global conflict, Rutall is a fair administrator, excellent warrior, and enjoys the support of both his people and his armies. In the future, Rutall may indeed be looked upon as a Charlemagne of Khirar's history.



People and Culture

The natives of Khirar are humans of Vilani and Solomani stock. Typically Khirarians are of average height and are tanned very dark by the heat of the

local sun. Light clothing is usually appropriate, similar in style to Middle Eastern dress in many ways, to ward off the sun and protect from the dry sandstorms which are prone to erupt.

Wealthy corporate managers and government officials, usually the friends and relatives of Warlords, make up a small but secure upper tier of society. Their money and influence runs the planetary economy, and their houses dominate the very psyche of the lower classes.

An entire second tier of society is reserved solely for men. Warriors are accorded greater status than any other profession and are granted several rights which blatantly impinge upon the rights of other people. While there is no shame in not being a warrior, a male who does not lead the warrior's life is not eligible for the prestige necessary to, first, rule lands in the name of a warlord, and second, choose his wives as he pleases. This is not to say that only warriors sire new generations, but only the children of warriors enjoy the rights of the second tier of citizenship. Various challenges and accusations over marriage and infidelity often result in bloody retaliation in crimes of passion, most of which are not under the umbrella of the Warlord's peace.

The third tier of society includes virtually everyone else. Merchants and businesspeople, factory workers, farmers, etc., are all, roughly equal on the social ladder. Of course, the refugees and the armies of unemployed, destitute people are accorded no status at all, and, as in Arkron, are all but locked up into designated areas with no escape.

THE CITY OF ARKRON

Arkron is the most important city and is also capital of Khirar. Rutall rules the planet from his palace, the grounds of which are nestled among the highrises of the business district.

The city is divided into districts for purposes of description and movement. Encounters for each district are given directly after its explanation and are determined by a one die roll. Every time an adventurer or group of adventurers moves through a district, an encounter is rolled using 1D6, and the result is immediately implemented. The referee has latitude in revising repeat encounters.

Starport

The landing pads of the starport dot the landscape just outside the city's limits. The sprawl extends to the north, south, and east. Westward lies the filthy industrial districts, the pollution of which is mercifully carried in the opposite direction. The area was previously residential, but it was flattened in favor of the vital starport facility by an earlier conqueror of the city.

Starport security is state sponsored, as are the customs and immigration departments. All three are notoriously corrupt, but Rutall's personal guardsmen are presently patrolling the starport, enforcing his rule since the coup against the Imperial naval base.

Rutall rules the planet from his palace... nestled among the high rises of the business district.

Traffic has slowed considerably since the coup, as many sector-wide merchants are wary of possible future retribution against Khirar. For now, they

feel Khirar is a little fish in a big pond, but its days of independence may be numbered.

Encounters in the Starport: Roll 1D6.

1 3 Guardsmen: A patrol of 1136 guardsmen has an interest in the adventurers. They will follow the adventurers for one minute (10 combat rounds) before overtaking and questioning them, in which case the adventurers will be arrested and detained. Should the adventurers run, a firefight will ensue.

To lose pursuing guardsmen:
Difficult. Stealth, Dex, 6 sec.

Failure will subject the adventurers to fire, which they can return. Guardsmen are armed with Gauss rifles and wear mesh armor. Should an adventurer be captured, he or she will be taken to the palace for interrogation. For every 10 combat rounds in which the characters do not successfully lose the Guardsmen, another 1136 of them will join the chase.

4 Rumor: A mechanic can be bribed for information.

To bribe the mechanic:
Routine (Simple if over Cr100 offered), Bribery, Int, 1 min.

If successful, the mechanic will give the name of Hiram Walker. He will say that Walker may have a means of getting items to and from the naval base through Rutall's screen of guards, but he will elaborate no further. Hiram Walker may be found in the Startown district, according to the mechanic.

5 6 No encounter.

Startown

To the uninitiated, Arkron's Startown appears to be a decrepit slum in the shadow of a great modern city. Its narrow streets are dirty and rumored to be dangerous, and its buildings are filthy, ramshackle creations, cobbled together out of random sheet metal and scavenged prefab components. But reality is such that its appearance belies its true comfort and utility. The truth of the matter is that Startown generally enjoys a superior Tech Level to that of the rest of Khirar, a fact carefully camouflaged from the warlord and his tax assessors.

Every manner of spacefarer can be found in the Startown district of Arkron, attracted to the wealth of a populous world--- like moths to a flame. At any one time there are probably a dozen new ship crews wandering the streets, frequenting the local establishments, as much at home here as anywhere else in the sector. Mix them well with the regular travellers and you have the greatest pool of information and rumors on the entire planet.

Startown is ostensibly run by a corporate entity for the state. However, since Rutall's conquest of most of Khirar, Startown is sometimes patrolled by his regular police, who have stepped up activity in recent weeks.

Encounters in Startown: Roll 1D6.

1 Hiram Walker. Hiram is an employee of the starport, a shipping supervisor with considerable authority in the starport itself. He lives here in Startown with his family, enjoying the comforts of the higher Tech Level which he is used to. Originally, Hiram and his family are from off world, where he previously held a more influential position in Core sector. However, after a spat with a superior, he was "banished," as he calls it, to Khirar. The job here is a good one, and he is paid well, but he is still bitter about being demoted and transferred over a petty disagreement with a pigheaded superior.

Hiram is a stocky, portly man who would look right at home in a Santa Claus suit if he were a bit older. He has never been in the service, so he has no weapons skills to speak of. His talents mainly lie in administration (he has Administration 3) and red tape (he has Bureaucracy 2).

It is common knowledge around the starport and Startown that Hiram Walker sometimes takes on odd jobs for extra income. He has three children and another on the way, and while he is not desperate for money, he is always eager to get an easier life for his family. For instance, he intends to purchase a housekeeping robot for his wife as soon as the next child arrives.

Hiram has access to shipments which move between the starport and the orbital naval base on a daily basis. If approached, he will be at first reluctant to perform an illegal act. However, he will come around and will assist the adventurers in stowing away for a ride up to the naval base. Doing so will appeal to him on two levels. First, he will want some sort of monetary reward (he says he will not work for less than Cr 10,000). Second, it will give him a chance to stick it to the company which placed him here in the first place.

Details on what Hiram can do to smuggle people off world are given in the section "367A Spare Parts."

2 3 Police Patrol: The routine police patrols which move through Startown are generally regarded as friendly keepers of the peace. They have no specific orders to search for the adventurers and will probably ignore them if encountered.

To avoid police patrol:
Simple, Stealth, Int, Instant.

If the adventurers fail to avoid the police, or if they panic, a chase will ensue, administered exactly like the chase described for guardsmen under starport encounters above. However, evading these police is a simple task. Police wear no armor and carry snub pistols with tranq rounds. Captured adventurers will be taken to police headquarters in Startown and, unless broken out, will be transferred to Rutall's palace in 20 hours.

4 Guardsmen: Treat just like a guardsmen encounter for the starport above.

5 Rumor: A very common rumor available from about everyone is that an entire brigade of guardsmen have been sent up to the naval base for security. They all went up within the week, and this can easily be confirmed from various other sources who saw them moving through Startown. With that many men involved, there must be something nasty going on up in orbit.

6 Rumor. According to a barkeep, about the only way up to the naval base is stowing away on a supply vessel. Those go every day. There are no passenger ships going there, and the shuttles are all full of guardsmen and ex-imperial naval personnel. The barkeep knows of a man who might be able to help Hiram Walker. For no less than Cr50, he will tell how to get in touch with Walker.

Stahn hut Myeer and Jason Thanoor begin the adventure in the Startown district.

The Bazaars

Arkron is Khirar's doorway to the rest of the galaxy. The shrouded tradesmen of a dozen human races set up their wares in huge open bazaars not unlike those of a medieval courtyard. But the hardware and technology for sale set against the grav cars and 'scrapers of Arkron's financial district never let a person forget he is a part of a spacefaring society. Bejewelled Shudashian merchants fill their tables with weapons and their pockets with gold. Local traders spread their fabrics and crafts on the ground, hoping to catch the eyes of bargain hunting off worlders. And all the while, the shadows play host to quieter businessmen who deal in the less savory merchandise of the underworld.

Encounters in the Bazaars: Roll 1D6.

1 2 Weapons Merchant: A particular merchant tent catches the eyes of the characters, as it is filled with reasonably priced weaponry. Virtually anything of Tech Level 12 or below can be purchased, with the exception of energy weapons, for the standard prices given in the rules. Remember that Khirar is a world in strife, so standard prices are a bargain here. The merchant has three large thugs for security and a writ notarized by a city office declaring his merchandise to be legitimate.

Purchases from this merchant will have to be registered with the city, and some form of identification will be necessary. This should not cause any problems, but might deter nervous players from buying here.

3 4 Black Marketeers: A friendly looking spacefarer will approach the characters, introducing himself as Johnas Kelp. He explains that his wares are special, worthy of more attention than those found on the tables of the bazaar. For no charge whatsoever, he will give the characters a private viewing of his wares, which he promises will be of particular interest.

Should the characters accept, they will be taken to the edge of the bazaar district, to a tiny shack guarded by two burly men with clubs. Inside, Kelp will have a complete selection of drugs and armor (armor was recently made illegal on Khirar) as listed in the **Imperial Encyclopedia**. The drugs will be for sale at 10 percent over their normal cost, the armor for double its normal cost. He has no battle dress.

While inside, roll 6 on 1D6 for a raid. Administer the raid as the police patrol encounter in Startown above, but the characters will have at least two turns of warning before any police get into the shack.

5 6 Police Patrol: Administer as a police patrol in Startown, described above. Airlaloiw and her retinue begin the adventure in the Bazaars district.

The Shadow District

In more prosperous times, this section of Arkron was home to an expanding working class and was filled with new homes and apartment complexes enviable most anywhere in the Imperium. But the years of harder times have taken their toll. The marvels of modern living have either broken down or been stolen one by one as the refugees swarmed from the countryside. Today five or more families may share an apartment designed for one, and no one who lives in these wretched streets enjoys even the most basic dignities a prosperous world should provide. By day, the destitute scramble for their share of government assistance, which rarely goes far enough. By night, the streets are ruled by youth gangs who make war with one another over territories no one else would bother with. The Warlord's Police don't concern themselves with lawlessness within the district, and are happy enough to keep it from spreading to the better parts of the city.

One thing is certain, however. A person who wishes to hide himself could find no better place in Arkron than the dank hole of the shadow district.

Encounters in the Shadow District: Roll 1D6.

1-4 Youth Gang: Moving through the Shadow district is very dangerous, either during the day or night. When the characters are doing so, they will be accosted by a gang of youths who will demand money. No doubt, these young thugs will have bitten off more than they can chew, but a fight will probably ensue nonetheless.

There are 3D6 youths in the gang, each of them armed with either a cudgel (1 3) or a dagger (4 6). They wear no armor to speak of. They will attempt to subdue the characters and rob them, but will flee after one third of their number has been rendered either dead or unconscious. There is no chance that police will show up to help the characters, but an unbridled use of weapons will draw some attention if good weapons are used by the player-characters during the battle; the next time there is a youth gang encounter they will be armed with either daggers (1 3) or revolvers (4 6).

5-6 Beggar: An old man sitting at a street corner will be begging for money. If passed by, he will shout, "Go on. Who needs you? I'll save my wisdom for the wise!"

The beggar will be happy to relate news of a planetary nature, most of which will be useless to the characters. If pressed for specific information, he will know nothing of how to get to orbit. He will know general information: that there are extra patrols in the starport and in Startown, and that guardsmen are moving up to the orbital naval base. He also knows about special agents of the warlord on the lookout for escaped unfriendly naval officers; they have even asked here for them.

Lieutenant Commander Hatiiru Mana and Lieutenant Angela Britcher begin the adventure in the Shadow district.

Lower Residential District

Though the industrial section of Arkron is across town, most of the workers there live in this district. They have commuter passenger service to and from work, cutting through the business district and above the starport. Though of

lower income, the people here are infinitely better off than those in the shadow district, with most families living in cramped but adequate apartments. There is even a nice park in the district, constructed in three levels, one representing each the desert, plains, and shoreline environments found on Khirar.

Encounters in the Lower Residential District: Roll 1D6.

1 3 Tavern: The characters will notice an interesting tavern near the park in this district. Known as the Journey's End, it is frequented by an enthusiastic group of laborers and technicians, many of whom apparently work at the starport.

Unfortunately for the characters, the establishment is being staked out by an undercover officer of Rutall's guardsmen investigating a matter unrelated to the adventure. However, if he hears the characters asking around about starport operations or means of getting up to the naval base, he will turn his attention to them, and when they leave he will tail them to their next location.

To discover tail:

Routine, Streetwise, 5 min.

If discovered, the characters can deal with the agent in their own way. If not discovered, or if the agent escapes, the characters will have to adopt a disguise, or else they will be recognized immediately as wanted persons by every guardsmen patrol they encounter for the rest of the adventure.

4 5 Thief: While passing through the district, the characters will be marked by a thief. He will attempt to pick the pocket of one of the characters, determined at random. Roll 8+ on two dice for the thief to be successful, and remove one item of value from the marked character, determined at random. If the roll is 4 or less, however, the thief has blundered and will be discovered by the character in question. Rolls of 5, 6, and 7 mean the thief failed, was not discovered, and no further attempts will be made.

6 Police Patrol: Administer in the same manner as a police patrol in Startown, described above.

Middle Residential Districts

The homes of the business people and well-to-do families are not typical of other communities in the sector. The city government is such that this residential district is subdivided into smaller units, something like a commune. Each commune encompasses a few hundred families and their houses or apartments. These are clustered around a central park, sponsored by the commune, usually with shopping facilities. Schools, sanitation, and public transportation are provided at the commune level. There are no large streets, except for side and slide walks, since most personal transportation is done by grav vehicle.

Encounters in the Middle Residential District: There are no encounters in this district.

Upper Residential District

The families of warriors and upper level bureaucrats live on the estates of this district. Each estate usually has a few square kilometers of land and several buildings. Traditionally on Khirar these buildings are a stable (now occupied by vehicles), a trache drying shed (now obsolete, but fashionable), plus a main building for the family and servants. Often captives from foreign campaigns were put to slavery in older times. This is no longer the case. When such captives are on the estates, they are generally corralled into their own tent cities.

The popular sport of the upper classes, especially among young warriors, is rotoc sparring. Rotocs are large flyers, with wingspans of over two meters. They are unintelligent, territorial creatures who navigate by natural sonar. When a rotoc enters another's territory, they engage in a violent dance which involves rams at high speeds and complicated maneuvering. Young warriors use small hang gliders launched from grav sleds to mimic invading rotocs. Though sparring is dangerous, the rotocs are considered sacred and are never killed or injured.

Encounters in the Upper Residential District: There is no die roll for encounters here. Any movement through the district will attract a police patrol, as outlined above.

Ending the City Maneuvering

Once the characters have been assembled and have met Hiram Walker, the city portion of the adventure will be at a close. Hiram Walker has the only practical means of getting to and from the orbital naval base. Should the players decide on some other course of action, it will have to be handled outside the context of this scenario.

367A SPARE PARTS

As a trusted and important employee, Walker moves freely in and out of sensitive areas of the starport. He has to pass two different checkpoints to get to his place of work, both with retina scan identification and, recently added, several armed guardsmen. As a plan is devised to get the characters into the starport, it will emerge in conversation that they simply can't follow Walker to work one day and expect to go unnoticed.

Here are three separate methods of gaining entrance to the starport. Let the players argue it out among themselves, giving them clues from the below listed information about the starport and its operations to guide them. Of course, if they are particularly clever, they can apply their own plans, which may not be listed here.

Option 1 Hijacking: There are service and maintenance vehicles always moving into and out of the starport with crews, maintenance personnel, small cargos, etc. Most move through any one of many lightly guarded vehicle entrances. In theory, all vehicles must stop and obtain official clearance each time they enter the starport. However, due to the frequency of vehicle movements, these formalities are often ignored provided the occupants are all wearing starport work suits and are driving a licensed vehicle. Walker will know

how lax the entrance regulations are for vehicles and will bring it up as a point of interest.

It would be easy to locate a starport-bound vehicle outside of the starport itself, running some sort of errand. The characters would have to seize the vehicle and incapacitate its rightful owners. Once seized, the characters could switch into starport work suits and attempt to drive into the starport.

Finding such a vehicle is automatic. It will have 1D6 2 (minimum of 2) starport workers on it. The vehicle will be a grav sled, about the size of a GCarrier.

To get through the starport vehicle entrance unquestioned:
Routine, Stealth, Int, 1 min.

Certain circumstances might change this task, such as the number of characters hiding on the vehicle making entrance and time of the operation (night is always best). Failure of the task will mean that the vehicle will be searched and papers will be demanded. In such a situation, the characters will either flee from the starport, or possibly run the gate into the starport to escape. The vehicle entrance will have an attendant armed with an auto pistol and two guards armed with auto rifles.

Option 2 The Service Ducts: Various ducts for air circulation and electronics housing move into and out of the starport. Walker has a good idea of their layout and may recommend them as a possible means of entrance.

The only problem with using the ducts to get into the starport is the possibility of getting lost. The various ducts make many turns and branches, and most are barely large enough for a person to fit through, much less get a good look around him.

To avoid getting lost in the ducts:
Difficult, Int, 30 min.

Failing the task will mean that the character (or characters roll once per group moving through the ducts) will become lost, and it will take an additional 30 minutes to get out of the ducts. Once out, lost characters will not be where they expect to be and will have to sneak around the starport to get where they are going. In such a case, roll normally for starport encounters.

Option 3 Stowaway: Walker will point out that the shipment bound for the orbital naval base, 367A Spare Parts, will originate at an assembly plant in the industrial spur. Security there will be practically nil, and the characters will easily be able to pack themselves away a couple of days in advance. Note that this additional time in packing crates will affect each character's performance once out of them.

The Trip Up

Once the characters successfully enter the starport, Walker will see that they are packed into a regular shipment moving on a shuttle flight to the orbital naval base. The shipment is marked 367A Spare Parts and should attract little or no attention on the trip up.

Each character will be packed into a single high impact plastic crate. The original contents will be disposed of by Walker. There is no procedure for checking such crates on their way to the orbital base, so there is no danger of discovery on board the shuttle itself.

However, the several day journey packed away in these crates will affect the characters. Once out of the crates, they will each suffer 1D6 damage points, which will have to be healed normally. It is unlikely this will incapacitate any of the characters, but it will make them think twice before doing this sort of thing again.



RECOVERY OF THE KUNNIP

This section refers often to the rough layout of the orbital naval base and bridge area of the *Kunnip*. Since the characters are all fairly familiar with it (from descriptions offered by the two naval officers), copies should be made and distributed. Individual rooms and corridors are not shown on the map. As the referee you can assume these are similar to various other starship deck plans you can dig up for this adventure.

367A Spare Parts is not an emergency shipment and, as such, will simply be offloaded from the shuttle and loaded onto a grav pallet. The pallet will be moved to one side of the docking bay where it will sit until it is eventually moved to the maintenance storage areas. There will be plenty of time for the characters to unpack themselves unnoticed in the docking bay. Once out of packing, Lieutenant Commander Mana will see a glorious sight: the *Kunnip* is presently docked with the naval base.

Orbital Naval Base Khirar 1

Built by the Imperial Navy, the base is a state-of-the-art maintenance/ administrative/ training facility. But now it is overrun by comparative primitives operating at two or more Tech Levels below the Imperial norm. With this being the case, the base is not being used at its peak efficiency. Imagine if you will, having soldiers from the First World War occupying a modern aircraft carrier. They wouldn't know how to work or to understand the detection devices or virtually any of the electronics. Rutall has some Imperial naval officers helping run the base, but things are far from perfect. Presently, the base is overrun with unsophisticated guardsmen using this ultra modern facility as a barracks.

Since the Coup: In brief, Rutall's plan is to use the captured Imperial ships for personal gain. Of course, he expects eventual retribution, but not for some time. In the meantime, he has a high- tech pirate fleet with which he plans to plunder the surrounding systems. He feels that continued successful campaigns will secure his power base at home, and the only areas left to conquer are off world.

Every ship is being packed with soldiers for raids against nearby planets. The *Kunnip* is currently being packed with soldiers and weapons, drawing off the naval base like a geostationary depot. When the ships are ready, the fleet will advance out of the system on a campaign of terror and plunder.

Movement on the Base: The base is presently overrun by soldiers. Every room and passageway is full of them, most awaiting assignment to one of the ships in the fleet. It will be impossible to move about the base without uniforms. The two naval officer characters will be able to use their own uniforms, provided they acquire special black armbands which signify loyalty to Rutall. Traitor naval officers are not uncommon on the base. The other player-characters will have to come up with entire uniforms. An Aslan will no doubt draw attention, but fortunately there is an Aslan mercenary unit in Rutall's employ, and they are on the base. The circumstances under which appropriate attire is found will be up to the referee, but acquiring it shouldn't become a major stumbling block to the characters and their efforts.

As on the world's surface, movement on the orbital base is abstracted. There are actually two maps of the base. The first is a general layout of the entire facility. The second is a larger view of the "final leg" of the journey through the base to the *Kunnip*. For purposes of this scenario, we are assuming that, with the proper disguise and stealth, the characters will be able to get to the final leg areas without incident. All of the action on board the base will happen in the seven areas defined in the final leg.

The Final Leg

Those characters familiar with the layout of the base will be able to guide the entire group successfully to the medical corridor (corridor 1 on the map). Once there, however, administer this encounter:

Medical Corridor Encounter: While making their way along the main corridor of the medical section, the group will encounter two traitor naval officers approaching them. They will initially pass the characters, but will stop and turn about ten meters behind, one saying "Hey, Britcher. I didn't know you were with us!" Then his face will turn to a frown with realization, and he will fumble for his laser pistol sidearm.

The Firefight: The two traitor naval officers are ten meters behind the group down a corridor five meters wide. They are wearing no armor and have laser pistol 13s. In front of the characters are two guardsmen, who will join the firefight two combat rounds after it begins. They have jack armor and are armed with auto rifles.

The Alarm: Regardless of the outcome of the firefight, the traitor naval officer who recognized Britcher will make it to the corridor wall and pull a security alarm lever. (For dramatic emphasis, this could be a valiant effort after he is mortally wounded.) However, though the red emergency lights will come on and the alarm signal will sound, the security gas will not emerge from the ceiling and the security doors will not automatically close. Britcher and Mana will realize immediately that this is a mistake: the guardsmen must have screwed up the base's security systems. It is still possible to get through to the *Kunnip*, but the entire base is on the alert.

The Medical Lounge: The next area on the final leg is the medical lounge (area 2 on the map). Presently, the lounge is being used to house seven soldiers, who are part of a recon team in a standard Arkron militia unit. The men here were carousing, playing cards, and drinking heavily when the alarm sounded. Now the characters must make their way through them.

To fast talk the soldiers:

Difficult, Persuasion, Int, 1 min.

If that fails, the characters will have to fight their way through the lounge. The soldiers are wearing no armor and will have autopistols (7mm). However, since they are unprepared and mostly drunk, give them a -2 die roll modifier to hit.

The Winding Corridors: The four sections of corridor numbered 3, 4, 5, and 6 on the map are referred to collectively as the winding corridors. When in the winding corridors, the characters have a chance of running into new problems and of being pursued. Administer the winding corridors one at a time: it takes six combat rounds to move through, assuming the characters are running. Upon entering each of the sections, roll for an encounter.

Roll	Result
1-2	No Encounter
3-4	1D6 Guardsmen
5	1D6 Soldiers
6	1D6 Guardsmen and 1D6 Soldiers

Guardsmen on the naval base are wearing mesh armor and are armed with autorifles. Soldiers will have jack armor and brandish autopistols (7mm). Encounters will be midway through the corridor section, each section being about 80 meters long.

Cautious characters may wish to listen around corners, which should alert them to the presence of new encounters. Since guardsmen and soldiers are not particularly adept, they aren't trying to be particularly quiet; there is no roll to hear them; it is automatic.

Pursuit: Each time characters round a corner into a new corridor section, roll for pursuit. On 1D6, a roll of 5 or 6 means there are 1D6 guardsmen coming behind through the last corridor section. They must be dealt with, if they aren't eliminated, subsequent pursuit rolls could make their numbers grow.

The Kunnip Docking Port: Area 7 on the map is the docking port on the *Kunnip*. There are three guardsmen on duty here, who, if they knew how, could protect themselves by closing the heavy doors along the corridor in front of them. Instead, they will fight it out with the characters if they make it this far. If the characters are successful in eliminating opposition here, they can close off the heavy doors and isolate themselves and the *Kunnip* from the rest of the naval base.

Aboard The Kunnip

At the entry port, a judicious use of the computers will yield the following information about the *Kunnip*. There are presently over three hundred persons on board, but the actual naval crew is small, numbering only twelve. The rest are soldiers being stuffed into the below decks for some future mission. Of the twelve naval crew, three are on the bridge, one in medical, and eight in engineering.

According to Mana and Britcher, taking the entire ship at this point will be a piece of cake. The corridors to the bridge should be clear, so three easy steps should secure the whole ship. First, someone needs to get to the bridge, take out the three traitor personnel there, and secure the bridge. Once this is done, the security system can be activated, flooding the engineering and medical decks with gas and neutralizing the people there. Finally, a single access hatch and corridor must be closed off and flooded with gas to secure the below decks. All of this can be done from the bridge.

To the Bridge: There will be no encounters on the way to the bridge. The three personnel there will be taken by surprise their information says that the alarm situation on the naval base was a mistake and that the situation is under control. They are wearing no armor and have laser pistol 13 sidearms.

Once the bridge is secured, Mana and Britcher can detach from the naval base and maneuver away from it. They will also be able to engage the security system to take care of the other naval personnel and seal off the below decks. But there's a red light on the security screen: the security system to cut off the lower decks has failed. Someone will have to get there fast and operate it manually!

Get Below, Fast: There is one junction between the lower decks and ship operations that is the corridor which must be sealed at both ends and flooded with gas. The security system failed, and only the first door toward the lower

decks has closed, and it hasn't locked. The soldiers on the other side are frantically trying to get it open.

To lock the far door:

Routine, Computer, Electronics, 6 sec.

Every round this task is failed, roll 1D6. On a roll of 6 the soldiers manage to force the door open enough to fire through it. They can fire at any of the characters, but have an automatic 2 to hit. They cannot open the door enough to get through. Once the above task is successful, the soldiers are sealed in.

To close and lock the other door and flood the compartment with gas:

Routine, Computer, Electronics, 6 sec.

Once sealed off, there is no way for the soldiers to get into the ship's operations section. They are stuck until the characters decide to let them out.

So Long, Sucker

Once the ship is moving, there are no other ships ready to pursue it, or to fire on it for that matter. Security on the station is pretty low, and confusion is pretty high. The *Kunnip* can be easily maneuvered to a position and jumped out of the system.

The soldiers will probably be sealed in the below decks. The subdued traitor naval officers can be locked up in the ship's brig. Turning all of these men and the ship itself over to Dulinor will certainly gain the characters a rich reward, be it cash, a knighthood, promotion, or what have you. Those fighting for the cause of Dulinor will not soon forget the daring escape from Khirar!

Timothy B. Brown

Swift Water

Indeep (A AF2527 9, second data group 512) is a low atmosphere world; that is, it has a thin atmosphere that is breathable only at low altitudes. The principal settlement is the optimistically named Green Valley, a city built at the bottom of a rift valley nearly five kilometers deep. Indeep's main industry is ore extraction and processing. The authority onworld is the Valley Operating Company (Voco), which owns all mineral rights and manages ore extraction and processing. It also owns and manages Indeep Starport. All citizens of Indeep own profit shares in Voco, though each citizen has only one political vote regardless of number of shares held (at least, that's the theory). Voco directly employs about one half the population, and another 30 percent earn their principal living providing it with goods and services.

Green Valley is 300 meters wide and five kilometers long. The city is built on both banks of the 100 meter wide river (called simply The River); structures extend up to 30 levels up the nearly vertical canyon walls, and some of the dozen river bridges support further buildings. While there are some small patches of parkland and garden, and every private dwelling has at least a few flowerpots, the city is still mostly functional and industrial in appearance. The valley runs east to west, so sunlight reaches Green Valley for a few hours a day at midday, but the rest of the day is in twilight, and at night only a tiny sliver of stars is visible. Some of the wealthiest citizens have pressurized apartments high up the canyon walls; the sky view isn't much better, but the valley overlook is impressive. The thin air is quite clear due to extremely stringent air pollution laws.

Indeep Starport is located at the rim of the valley. The atmosphere here is unbreathably thin. Shipments for the surface mining and industrial sites travel by train; connection with the city is by freight elevators plasma bored through the rock, or by air/raft. Air traffic in the canyon is strictly controlled. If something fell, it would have two chances in three of hitting a building. The Starport also has the Community Recreation Center, a large clear domed building available to all citizens. The Center has a swimming pool, a sports field, and the usual recreational facilities, but citizens usually visit just to look at the sky.

Because of the nature of the planetary surface, Indeep Port has no Startown. Voco runs the usual shopping and carousing facilities, but these are well-maintained and not too rowdy. Most of the Company security police (the "Vocops") are employed keeping order at the Port.

In addition to the local population, there are a few (not more than a dozen) wildcat miners, who land and hide their ships, usually 100 ton seekers, at likely spots to dig around the planet, in violation of the Voco monopoly. The Company generally lets them alone, as it would cost more to search for and prosecute them than they take out in ores. Occasionally a wildcatter is dumb

enough to land at the Port for fuel and service; the Vocops seize the cargo, give the trespasser a stern warning, and send him packing.

The players may have come to Indeep looking for trade goods, or the ship they are on (their own, or a passenger vessel) may be laying over for routine servicing and stores. At some time when they are away from the ship, the players are approached by representatives of Voco for "a small security job."

There has been an act of sabotage against the Company, possibly an inside job. Until the saboteurs can be identified, Voco needs people with no local interest to police the damage site.

Payment can be in cash or in goods and services. The company rep will begin by offering a small but reasonable amount (say, Cr1000 per person) for the policing job, to be doubled if there is actually violence. This amount can be negotiated up to Cr5000, doubled for combat. If the players own their ship, Voco will fuel it and perform annual maintenance. As an alternative to cash, the Company will provide trade goods worth 150 percent of the negotiated cash amount for the team. (In **Merchant Prince** terms, these are A 9 F1 Ni Cr5900 cargoes.) If the players do not own their ship, they will have to make arrangements with the owner for cargo space.

Police type weapons (pistols, carbines, shotguns, gas grenades) and armor (flak jackets) can be provided if the players do not have their own. The team absolutely may not carry heavy artillery: fusion guns and battledress are right out. They will be given armbands identifying them as Vocop auxiliaries.

If the players accept, they will be immediately taken to Company offices for outfitting.

AMBERZONE



REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Most experienced travellers have learned that a job like this is full of surprises, mostly unpleasant. The Voco rep sounds a little too much in a hurry, and much too willing to raise the players' pay. The players should be skeptical.

If they refuse the offer which has been made, they will be denied permission to return to their ship, and they will be taken to comfortable but locked and guarded hotel rooms in the Starport complex. They may, of course, attempt to escape either during, or after, the move; success depends on their actions and, given that the Vocops are armed, whether the characters are carrying concealed weapons.

If they accept, after getting equipped, they are taken to a Voco warehouse on The River's bank, about three-fourths of the way upstream, near a large metal and concrete bridge that also supports a shopping arcade and apartment blocks. A 15 meter inflatable structure is floating on the water near the warehouse, anchored by heavy cables; it is apparent from here that The River runs very swiftly. Characters with military or police experience will notice that there is a lot of unobtrusive security about; those with appropriate experience (use your judgement) may see that there are divers at work in the water, although this is not obvious.

The facts are these: three 50 ton pressure cylinders of a corrosive industrial chemical have been accidentally dropped into The River. If one of the tanks, which are each the size of a railroad car, ruptures, then its contents will vaporize in 1D hours or less. Even if every resource were mobilized, it would take days to evacuate Green Valley to the surface, where there are no facilities anyway to handle half a million people. Therefore, the company has not told the population.

The recovery team is trying to determine how badly damaged the chemical tanks are and then get them safely to the surface. The water is bitterly cold, and the current very swift: a recovery operator describes it "like working in a solid blizzard." A plan to spray the cylinders with sealing compound failed because the water washed the sealant away before it could harden. The current plan is to surround the tanks with huge gas-tight bags before lifting them, but no one is confident that the bags can be handled or sealed properly.

If the players' characters have skills useful in the recovery, they should be allowed to help. Rules for this are given below.

If they don't go in the water, keep the suspense high with continuous encounter situations. Some examples:

*A Citizens' Committee demands to know why armed outsiders are in town; they push past the Voco spokesman and ask the players directly. (Since the players will have at best a partial idea of why they're there, this could get very interesting.) You might quietly point out that an explanation of "one of your policemen is a terrorist" is hardly going to quiet the crowd.

*One of the Voco divers panics while out of the water; he intends to leave the site, collect his family, and make for the surface. The team is ordered to keep him quiet. He's not violent at least, not at first, and swears he won't tell anyone else what's going on. The company was (deliberately?) vague about what "keep him quiet" means.

*Some people sneak over the fence into the site. They're just kids playing detective, and the "equipment" they're carrying is all toys. This one is really nasty: use it only if you trust your players' judgment or really want to trigger a mob scene.

The general idea is to keep making it harder for the players to avoid the use of force while at the same time making the consequences of violence progressively more disastrous.

Players who volunteer to help the recovery team will be accepted if the character has appropriate skills. Divers wear electrically heated suits, which only slow down the effects of chilling and must be tethered at all times. If a player joins the recovery team, use the following rules:

Once out of the water, lost Endurance is recovered at the same rate it was lost (4 pts/hr) but the character must spend at least two hours recovering or gain no points back. Characters must also sleep eight hours out of 24 or be considered Fatigued.

Voco has 10 divers who are working in two shifts of five. A shift descends, spends one hour working, and ascends (total 1.5 hours), then spends two hours resting while the other team works. Total per day: five shifts on, four two hour rest periods, 8.5 hours sleep. Each diver puts in five man hours of work per day, for a total of 50 for the team. The teams are working on one tank at a time.

Divers must periodically roll to avoid a mishap: once while descending and ascending, and every thirty minutes at work. The referee may require additional rolls for specific tasks, such as attempting to clear debris or move a cylinder. The basic roll is 11 +. Skill DMs: each level of Vacc Suit or Zero G Combat skill, + 2. If the character has experience in underwater work, +4. If the character is Fatigued, all positive modifiers are halved. Regardless of modifiers, a mishap occurs on a roll of 2.

In UTP format:

To perform a special salvager task:

Difficult, Vacc Suit x2, Zero G Cbt x2, 1 hr., Absolute (fateful).

Referee: If a mishap occurs, roll 2D. Add 2 if the character is Fatigued. On 6 or less, the last hour's work by the team has been wasted and does not add to the total; on 7 exactly, the last 1D hours are lost. On 8 10, the mishap endangers the character: a broken safety line, damaged suit air or heat systems, a shift of debris that traps the character underwater until it has cleared. Role-play the rescue; work stops until it is completed. On 11 or 12, the cylinder has been damaged.

Each cylinder can receive minor damage four times before beginning to leak (if you prefer, roll 1D for each tank to determine the damage number.) Should a leak start, each diver working on the tank has a chance to stop it by rolling 7+ DM + 1 each level of Engineering skill. (Routine, Engineering, Instant (fateful)). When a diver succeeds, the damage number becomes 1 and work continues. If

all the divers fail, the leak can't be stopped, and the tank will rupture in 1D hours. Now's the time to try an emergency measure, like the plastic bag around the tank or else to (as they say) get the hell out of Dodge.

Every full day the tanks are in the water, the damage number drops by one. If it drops to zero, a leak starts exactly as above. Do not tell the players the damage number, but tell them that they can hear the valves creaking and that the welds look weak.

Roll dice periodically for the NPC divers to keep the players nervous, but assume the time lost mishaps are factored into the system. Have more dramatic accidents occur when useful.

While the players do not start out in charge of the salvage operation, it's in the nature of the game that they will be able to take authority if they want it. If they can impress Voco with their competence (this is more a matter of role-playing than skill rolls) they may be able to adjust the dive schedules or propose new ideas for salvaging the tanks, especially as time passes and the situation gets tenser. On the other hand, if the players' characters have a high rate of accidents, they may face considerable hostility from the other divers and be ordered out of the water. Note that at the current rate of work, it will take five more days to finish the job, and the tanks will almost certainly start leaking before then. The job can be as simple or elaborate as the players wish to make it.

If the players turned down the job offer and escaped, or backed out and made their way back to their ship, they will find that it has been fully fueled and is ready for takeoff: if the gas is released, certain Company officials plan to use it for a hasty getaway. It is being guarded by Vocops.

There are two sources of suspense here: first, the poison gas crisis itself. Never let the players forget those three time bombs in the water, and make sure they understand that if the gas is released, there will be a mad scramble for the surface, for protective equipment, and for a way off planet.

To maintain the uncertainty, you should make sure the players understand the size of the potential disaster; there is a finite quantity of gas, and even if all three cylinders should rupture, people could survive in the upper floors of the tallest buildings, or in the luxury apartments on the canyon wall. Players should quite reasonably assume that the possibility of everyone being automatically doomed should the gas be released would not be allowed to happen, no matter how badly they handled the crisis. With a less extreme disaster, there's room for doubt. However, if things go wrong and the gas is released, the characters should find themselves in the middle of nearly total mayhem; a panicked mob is not calmed by being told that some will probably live through the disaster.

The second drive spring of the story is the search for the truth about the accident. Was it really caused by saboteurs, and if so, are they still active? And was it intended to ruin the company or be a diversion from some other act? Did the agents know how dangerous the chemical was? Or were the saboteurs invented by negligent Voco officials to cover up for their mistake? And if there are no hidden saboteurs, then why did the Company need to hire the offworlders to make its story sound good, or to frame them as the responsible parties?

The referee must decide who's responsible and throw real and false clues at the players. A safety cable breaks, and a diver is swept away. Did the wire shear on torn metal, or was it cut? A group of citizens wants to talk to the senior Voco official do they suspect what's going on, or is it something else If there's a confrontation, whose side do the players take?

A successful recovery does not have to end the adventure, for the detective work into the cause of the accident can continue. A failed recovery doesn't finish things either, as expeditions into the poisoned city to recover valuables or rescue survivors are possible. Should the players be framed or just wrongly blamed for the release of gas, they face a real task of hunting through the wreckage for evidence that will clear them.

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Tlea

Tlea' AulreliyhOuhaoleawa'eliea
Management Manager 984988 3 terms.
UPP: 984988.

Apparent Age: 37 years (42 ftahea).

Actual Age: 37 years (42 ftahea).

Skills: Vacc Suit 0, Pistol (Khaihte) 1, Computer 1, Grav Vehicle-0, Bribery 2.
Tolerance 1, Admin 2, Trader 2, Broker 3, Streetwise-1, Steward 1.

Funds: N/A (Clan expense account).

Homeworld: New Rome/Glisten (Starport B, Large, Vacuum, Wet world,
Moderate population, Moderate law, Avg. Stellar).

The Aslan, as a race, are known for their fierce prowess in battle, but they have proven equally competent in numerous other endeavors.

Tlea'AulreliyhOuhaoleawa'ehea (or just called "Tlea" informally) is a female Aslan holding the position of purser/co-captain on the free trader *Shidaka*, named after the semi-mythical Vilani hero of the Long Night. Operating under the Hlararei Trade Group (HTG) based on New Rome in the Glisten Subsector, the *Shidaka's* current duties take it through a portion of the rimward end of the Marches.

Tlea was born on New Rome, a world with a sizable (35 percent) Aslan population, into an ehko (family) under the Teiftekhaeifeah huiha (clan). Born prematurely, she was plagued with poor health in her early years, and experienced growth problems which kept her form relatively small. In her teenage years, she devoted much of her free time to athletic pursuits in an attempt to strengthen her somewhat frail form.

Casual Encounter

The atmosphere of an interstellar trader's life has always predominated Tlea's environment, as her entire ehko has been devoted to working in the huiha's Hiararei Trade Group. During her Akhuaeuhrekhyeh (the Aslan rite of passage), she demonstrated exceptional abilities and was promptly given a position on one of HTG's trading ships. In her early years with HTG, she served as a steward/assistant purser, learning the ropes of being a merchant while aiding in the ship's function.

The onset of the Fifth Frontier War signaled hard times for both Tlea and the HTG. While engaged in some promising trade negotiations on Wardn/Lunion, Tlea was seriously wounded during a strike by Sword World terrorists. During the end of her five month recuperative period, she received news that her older sister, co-commanding the HTG starship *Kter*, had been killed along with all

hands as they were attacked by Sword World commerce raiders in the system of Datriillian/District 268. The loss, though emotionally trying for Tlea, served to accelerate her position in the HTG. Shortly after the war's end, she was given co-command of the *Shidaka*, sharing the post with her cousin, KyuraoKhoiyoOuhadleawa'hrah (called "Kyura" informally).

As with many Imperial born Aslan, Tlea has a tendency to exaggerate many Aslan traits in an attempt to maintain her racial identity. This is, however, a hollow attempt at best, since Vilani culture and standards have effectively shaped her on a subconscious level. The resultant personality is an incomplete caricature of a stereotypical Aslan sprinkled with human idiosyncrasies. While Tlea may take offense more easily than a Hierate born Aslan, she gives little thought to such things as a human male serving as a doctor. It is also not uncommon to find Tlea, during her off hours, indulging her fondness for human pop music, listening in particular to Veedback, one of her favorites.

Tlea's exaggerated Aslan behavior becomes noticeably lessened when she is not in the company of other Aslan. The Aslan love of storytelling, however, is wholeheartedly shared by Tlea, and she frequently entertains the crew and passengers for hours with her "slightly embellished" tales of the exploits of the *Shidaka*.

Tlea is also a packrat. The *Shidaka*'s ship's locker is full of seemingly useless items which she has found discarded in starports through her many journeys. Though Kyura often chides her about cluttering up the ship with her "trash," many of the esoteric items have proven handy at solving unexpected problems.

THE HLARAREI TRADING GROUP

The HTG is a small, huiha-owned trading company operating out of New Rome/Glisten by carrying high-tech goods out of worlds in the Glisten vicinity and trading them for commodities on less developed worlds away from the industrialized hubs.

The *Shidaka*, a second hand Type A Free Trader, is one of four ships owned and operated by the HTG. The co-command structure of the ship's authority puts planetfall activities, trade operations, and the overall ship's itinerary under control of Tlea, while in-flight decisions are Kyura's realm. Tlea and Kyura have an uneasy relationship, finding their only bond to be blood and company responsibility. They tend to give each other a wide berth, not wanting to step on each other's toes.

Shidaka's standard trade route brings it from Glisten, crossing the Imperial borders to the small cluster of worlds in the vicinity of Bowman/District 268. This brings the ship close to Sword World space too close for Tlea's taste. Due to her experiences during the Fifth Frontier War, Tlea possesses little love for the Sword Worlders. When dealing with any, Tlea should be treated as if she had no Tolerance skill.

Other ships in the HTG fleet are two Type A2 Far Traders and one Type A. The Type A, *Achilles*, forges its trail into the Five Sisters subsector, while the A2s, *Velvet Enchantress* and *Fleet Majesty*, ply coreward toward Mora and Lunion.

EKIAI

The most recent addition to the *Shidaka*'s crew is a small, six-legged creature the crew has named Ekiai ("Little Meddler"). Tlea found Ekiai in the cargo compartment during its last visit to Dallia Downport (Dallia/District 268). Not native to the planet, it has been adopted as mascot. Ekiai has proven to have an incredibly curious nature, seeming sentient in many respects.

Ekiai's nature has eluded Tlea. No one can pinpoint which world Ekiai is from. It seems to share characteristics from many of the worlds in the Marches, but fits none specifically.

The crew of the *Shidaka* has not put Ekiai to any medical tests. The crew would be surprised to find that Ekiai is not an animal but is a pseudo- biological robot. Ekiai was built by Naasirka for industrial espionage. When found by Tlea, it was on an information gathering mission, spying on the heavily guarded SuSAG installation on Dallia. Ekiai's nature was discerned before it was able to escape the complex, and it was pursued by SuSAG agents to Dallia Downport, where it sought refuge in *Shidaka*'s cargo hold. The agents traced Ekiai to the ship after it lifted from port.

Ekiai is a much wanted item to Naasirka and SuSAG. SuSAG's goal is the interception of the information Ekiai is carrying, though the destruction of the robot would serve their ends as well. Naasirka agents are closing in on their chase to retrieve Ekiai. Though their interest is the retrieval of Ekiai's data, they also do not wish their advanced espionage hardware to fall into the hands of a competitor or anyone else, for that matter. The *Shidaka* and its crew, ignorant of their position, lie in the crux of this megacorporate race against time.

USING TLEA IN A GAME

Tlea may be used during play as the starting point for a campaign, as a patron, or as an encounter. If used to start a campaign, Tlea may contact the players to fill several crew positions, as a number of her crew have decided to terminate their employment while the ship is at port. If pressured, she will divulge that the reason her crew decided to quit was that a bomb was found on the ship. Unbeknownst to her, it was the work of SuSAG agents. If the players still wish to fill the crew positions, they will travel with Tlea as the plot unfolds.

As a patron, she may contact the players about investigating just who did plant the bomb on the *Shidaka*. The players would then be challenged into unraveling the dual megacorporate plot before the situation comes to a head.

In an encounter, the players could meet Tlea with Ekiai clambering about her shoulders as he often does at a point when either or both of the megacorporations make their moves. The players would be drawn into the fray.

Rob Caswell and Tom Peters