

TRAVELLER

DEEP NIGHT RIFT SEDGE REVELATION
TRANSIT



SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

D E E P N I G H T R I F T S E D G E R E V E L A T I O N
R E V E L A T I O N T R A N S I T

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INTRODUCTION

The Riftedge Transit is the first expansion for the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign. It covers the initial transit along the ‘top’ edge of the Great Rift and at the end of this journey the crew will be in a position to start looking for a way across the rift. The transit is intended to take the expedition out beyond the farthest point the Aslan are likely to have explored or set up outposts.

There are many reasons for not wanting other powers to know about the expedition. If *Deepnight Revelation* discovers something of great importance it can be secured before anyone else knows about it; if it is dangerous, other powers can be notified as necessary... or not if that suits current strategic thinking. In any case, entanglements with other powers are best avoided. *Deepnight Revelation* is genuinely a research ship but still a heavy cruiser. Sending such a ship through the fringes of another polity’s territory could result in tension.

The Travellers are to work their way around the fringe of the Great Rift, exploring as they go. It is considered unlikely that a major civilisation will be discovered this close to Charted Space but there may be points of interest that require investigation. It is not desirable to make a crossing of the rift during this segment of the voyage, although if a potential crossing point is discovered it can be investigated for future reference. Knowing where the Aslan – or any power lying to spinward of them – can get across the rift may be useful in the future.

The transit is around 120 parsecs in length and expected to take 10–12 months to complete. Eventually the Travellers will reach the point designated NSY-X, or the ‘Near Side of Yonder’, the first major waypoint on the voyage to Terminus Point. In the meantime they will explore star systems along the way and encounter a race just beginning its own expansion into nearby space.

PLOT AND STORYLINE

Not all incidents in the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign have a plot, in the sense of linked events leading to a climax. Sometimes the Travellers will enter an area and complete their task without a storyline being presented to them. However, that does not mean there is no story to be found.

On some occasions a story may develop without a plot. In this context, a story is a narrative about what happens, a plot is a linked series of events that drives a story. ‘Vaalik fell over and cracked his faceplate. Morgan crashed the ATV’ is a story – although not a very good one. ‘A crewmember suffered an accident and needed urgent rescue. His friend tried to help and made the situation worse’ is a plot because one incident leads to another.

It can seem difficult at first to create adventure plots without opposing characters but a plot is not necessary to a good story providing it is short and interesting. If the Referee rewards the efforts of the Travellers with descriptions of incredible sights and wondrous phenomena, then that is a story – ‘we stood atop the highest peak, just above the roiling acid clouds, and watched lightning play in the corrosive fog below’ is a story the Travellers might tell. So is ‘we gathered that night to celebrate and take comfort in the company of our friends. We had made the transit and now stood upon the far shore of the Great Rift’.

Stories happen all the time in the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign and whilst they may internally lack a plot, they are part of the grand narrative being woven. The Referee should ensure the Travellers experience the voyage through these little stories – to do less is to short-change them. Stories are to be found in any location the Travellers enter and also aboard their ship. Too many little details will bog the campaign down but there needs to be enough ‘small stories’ to make the voyage come alive. Of these, some will be things the Travellers experience; others are events pieced together from evidence.

The experience of standing amid the wreckage of an emerging civilisation flattened by external events beyond its control will mean nothing if the details are glossed over. ‘Roll 8+ to experience sadness at the tragedy of it all’ is not what the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign is about. Playing out what the Travellers do, what souvenirs or samples they collect and what they say to one another... that is the story. Afterward, the Travellers will move on to new adventures.

In other cases there will be a plotted adventure waiting for the Travellers or a plot generated by their companions. This might happen due to minor incidents such as when a colleague gets lost in a cave system on



an airless moon and has to be found before his air runs out, or where a dispute among the crew leads to internal conflict. These adventures will tend to take longer to play out than ‘small stories’ as they are more involved and/or convoluted.

The Referee should not forget, however, that it is the story and not the plot that is important. The plot is a framework for the Referee; the story is what happens. The Travellers have complete agency in the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign. They may bypass the carefully constructed plotline by sending a team to deal with the situation while they concentrate on another matter or they might fly right past despite all the hints and clues... even a mission scientist jumping up and down in agitation. So long as a story happens, the plot is expendable.

OVERVIEW MAP

The details of the Travellers’ route and what they discover along it will be unique to each campaign but there are key locations and points of interest that can be observed even from Charted Space. It is anticipated that the Travellers will follow a route that allows them to visit and explore these points of interest, although this is by no means mandatory. The expedition planners need *Deepnight Revelation* to reach Terminus Point and investigate it. Exploration along the way is a bonus – an important one but not worth compromising the mission’s overall goal for.

The Riftsedge Transit will take *Deepnight Revelation* through four sectors directly spinward of the Harea sector and potentially through parts of the sectors to coreward and rimward of these. This creates an area of interest for the mission planners some 120 parsecs by 160, although in all likelihood the expedition will chart only a narrow corridor through the region.

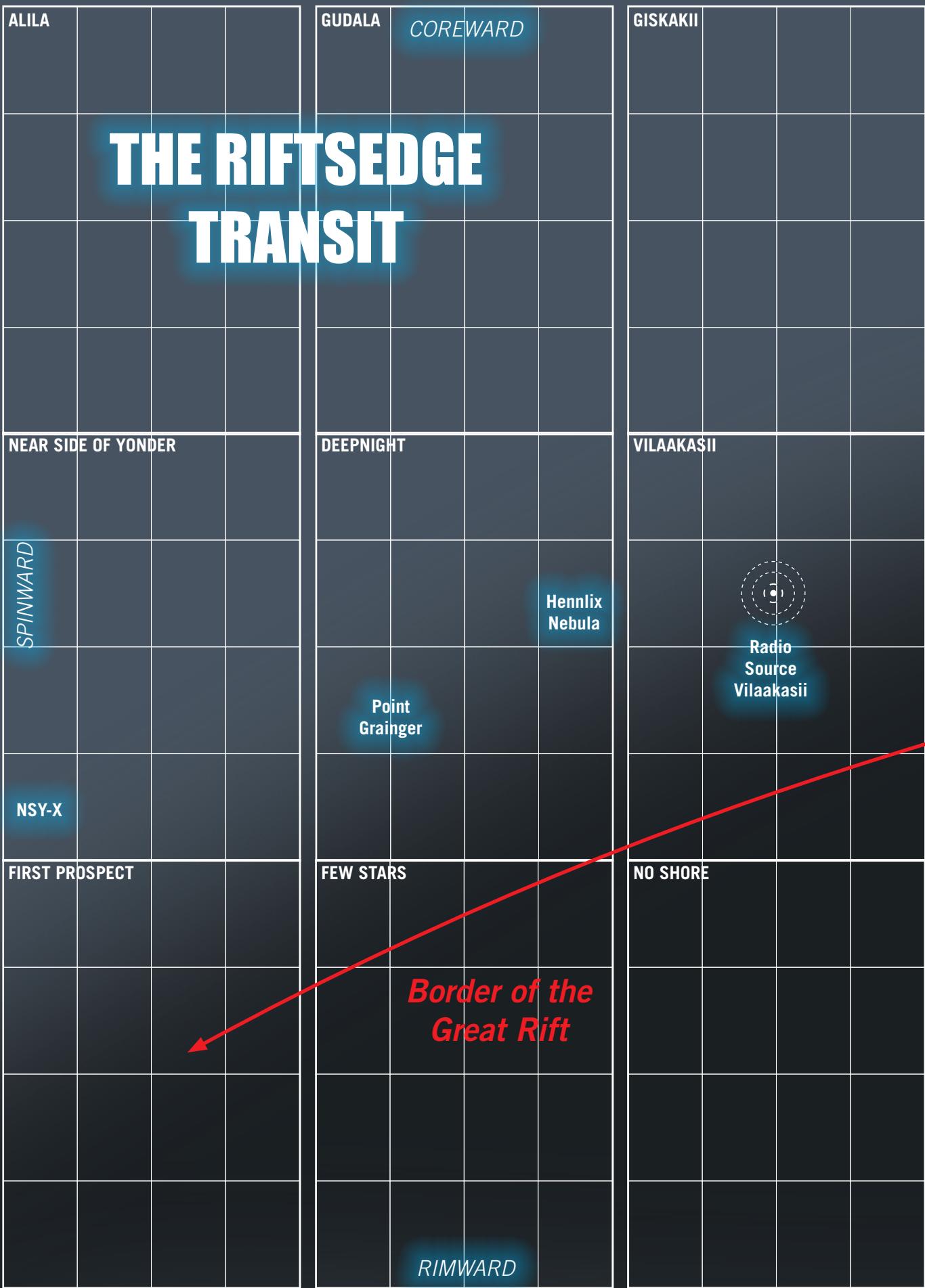
The expedition’s planners have assigned temporary designations to sectors *Deepnight Revelation* may pass through or produce detailed charts of. These may or may not become ‘official’ and any names assigned to locations by the crew may eventually find their way into the navigational databases when the record buoys dropped by the expedition are picked up.

The map is very general, as little is known for sure about this region. Reference points and waypoints are presented, sometimes in rather general terms. The actual position of a point of interest might turn out to be several parsecs away from its apparent location on the general pre-expedition map.

Alila

Alila sector was provisionally named for a semi-mythical adventurer who appears in several cautionary Vilani folk tales. Alila’s adventures all result from leaving the path or deviating from a goal and seldom end well. The name was applied to this sector as it is unlikely the *Deepnight*

THE RIFTSEDGE TRANSIT



INCognita Ulterior		MAVUZOG	
DEMNAN POINT TO NSY-X			
TRANSIT: 120 PARSECS (8-10 PARSECS/MONTH)			
TRANSIT TIME: 10-12 MONTHS			
INCognita Citerior		HAREA	
Point Demnan			
BIG EMPTY		TLYASEA	
LOW STAR DENSITY			
			TRAILING

POINTS OF INTEREST

POINT DEMNAN

Point Demnan is the starting point of the Riftsedge Transit and is located close to the Harea Sector.

RADIO SOURCE VILAAKASII

This first waypoint is located about 50 parsecs into the Riftsedge Transit.

HENNLIK NEBULA

The Hennlix Nebula is a bright cloud of dust and gas, pinkish yellow in colour, 5 parsecs across in length and laying close to the border between Vilaakasii and Deepnight.

POINT GRAINGER

Point of interest is the second waypoint of the Riftsedge Transit.

NSY-X

Third and last waypoint of the Riftsedge transit.

Revelation mission will enter it. Doing so would mean moving away from the fringe of the Great Rift and passing up the possibility of finding a crossing point. Alila has slightly lower stellar density than normal but otherwise not thought to be unusual.

Gudala

Gudala was provisionally named for an explorer of the immediately pre-Third Imperium era. It is possible the expedition may stray into this region if a path along the fringe of the Great Rift proves impractical. The sector has normal stellar density and lies many parsecs distant from the Great Rift.

Giskakii

Giskakii was provisionally named for the first CEO of the Deepnight Corporation. It is, according to remote sensors at least, a typical non-rift sector. Little more information is available.

Incognita Ulterior

Incognita Ulterior was named by the same team who came up with ‘Near Side of Yonder’, presumably after a sternly-worded memo admonishing them to use appellations more suited to dramatic media announcements. The name reflects available data – very little in this case. Incognita Ulterior is thought to be a region of typical stellar density but beyond this little is known.

Near Side of Yonder

The Near Side of Yonder sector was named, albeit in a tongue-in-cheek manner, because it is one of the major decision points of the expedition. It is possible that a crossing point on the Great Rift may be found in this region and if so *Deepnight Revelation* is advised by her standing orders to make the transit. This is of course subject to the discretion of her command team. If a suitable crossing point is not found – which is considered the most likely situation – the expedition is to press on spinward along the rift fringe until one is found. The primary point of interest in this sector is the waypoint designated NSY-X. NSY-X is the provisional destination of the riftsedge transit and the point where it is considered complete. After NSY-X, *Deepnight Revelation* will either be crossing the rift or proceeding ‘spinward and yonder’ until a crossing route is found.

Deepnight

Deepnight is named for the corporation backing the expedition, which paid for most of the pre-voyage research. The sector is characterised by the Hennlix Nebula, one of the mission’s waypoints, and represents

the halfway point of the transit. It is possible the path of *Deepnight Revelation* will take her spinward or coreward of Deepnight but this is unlikely other than a brief foray to explore a potential crossing point or investigate some point of interest.

Vilaakasii

Vilaakasii is named for a famous merchant-scout and the location of Radio Source Vilaakasii, one of the expedition’s waypoints. This is (correctly, as it turns out) thought to be a black hole. Another potential point of interest is the T Tauri star QQ-784, a protosystem in the late stages of forming. Vilaakasii lies on the fringe of the Great Rift, permitting *Deepnight Revelation* to search for a potential crossing route as she progresses through the sector.

Incognita Citerior

The Incognita Citerior sector could be considered the true beginning of the expedition. Imperial ships have at least scouted this far out but beyond the border of this sector there is little data. Points of interest include Marshalling Point Demnan, where *Deepnight Revelation* receives a refit and resupply from a naval tender, and the nearby neutron star Garva-411.

First Prospect

First Prospect is so named because it is the first good prospect for a trans-rift route. Most of the sector is rift, with a small region of greater stellar density in the spinward-coreward corner. The Travellers may wish to explore this region in the hope of finding a crossing but no suitable chain of fuel sources is available, so the expedition will have to push on spinwards.

Few Stars

Few Stars is, as its name suggests, part of the Great Rift. A narrow strip of systems across the coreward end of the sector may be worth exploring in the hope of locating a route across the rift but mission planners have already predicted that one is unlikely to be found.

No Shore

No Shore lies entirely within the Great Rift. This does not rule out the possibility that scattered stars may exist but the sector is considered a poor prospect for a crossing.

Big Empty

Big Empty lies to rimward of Incognita Citerior, entirely within the Great Rift. Any existing system will be difficult to reach.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Certain aspects of the mission will become important during the voyage to point NSY-X. One is the 'no-children' stipulation. It was decided that whilst relationships were inevitable and entirely acceptable, the nature of the expedition made it undesirable to permit children to be born and raised. Quite apart from the diversion of resources and requirement for space to provide suitable upbringing and education, there was the danger of the mission to consider. The idea of the Deepnight Entity infecting a child, or perhaps getting aboard due to the actions of one, was unacceptable.

All crewmembers were therefore required to agree that children would not be born aboard *Deepnight Revelation*. Expedition participants were offered a range of measures to ensure this would not happen, some pharmaceutical and others surgical. Not all of these measures were properly implemented, however, and some are reversible.

Another consideration is the effect of the long voyage upon the crew. Most were volunteers who thought long and hard about what they were getting into and the Deepnight Corporation was wise enough to be candid about the expedition. Recruiting suitable personnel was important but this consideration had to be balanced against the damage that would be done by disaffected or psychologically unstable crewmembers.

Unfortunately, not all potential crew were willing volunteers who knew exactly what they were getting involved in and wanted to make the commitment. Even among the most committed volunteers there would inevitably be those who changed their minds or suffered a major incident that made them unsuitable. This was far more likely among those who made a last-minute decision to join the crew or had their own agenda. Whilst the Deepnight Corporation was scrupulous in its recruiting practices – having learned hard lessons in the past – some subcontracted recruiters were less careful and some crewmembers conned their way aboard.

There were those who were manipulated or even coerced into joining the crew, or who decided it was a good idea at the time. Others wanted to get away from something – a bad breakup, disgrace in a previous career, crippling debts or even a murder charge. There is always the possibility that these people settled into a productive role aboard *Deepnight Revelation* but in some cases crewmembers are a problem waiting to happen. There are plenty of triggers and a lot of time for them to be encountered on a long voyage.

REFEREEING THE TRANSIT

The *Riftsedge Transit* is, as its name suggests, a segment of the voyage where emphasis is on speed of advance. The Travellers' overall goal is to make a transit to a suitable point where they can start looking for a way across the Great Rift. Points of interest will be investigated along the way, in accordance with standing orders, but the mission's planners envisaged that *Deepnight Revelation* would undertake only a cursory exploration of the region before moving on.

The planned follow-on missions are not nearly so ambitious as the voyage to Terminus Point and can be conducted by smaller vessels or perhaps a fleet. They will still need to make a 3 to 4 year transit out to NSY-X but can spend a couple of years in the region investigating in detail what the Travellers point them to before heading back. This is still a 10-year round trip, a major undertaking but with *Deepnight Revelation* blazing the trail the follow-on missions will produce a wealth of detailed information.

The overall goals for this segment of the voyage are therefore:

- Transit to point NSY-X.
- Investigate points of interest along the way, as appropriate, but with emphasis on maintaining speed of advance.
- Deploy record buoys at predetermined points for the follow-on missions to collect.

There was never any expectation that any part of the expedition would go smoothly. It is inevitable that the Travellers will have to overcome internal and external difficulties along the way. The adventures and incidents presented in this volume can, in many cases, be slotted in wherever the Referee thinks best. For example, if the Travellers are making a fast abstracted transit and a point of interest is indicated, the Referee can use one of those presented here. There is always the opportunity to invent more mini-adventures of course; almost any operation can lead to an adventure.

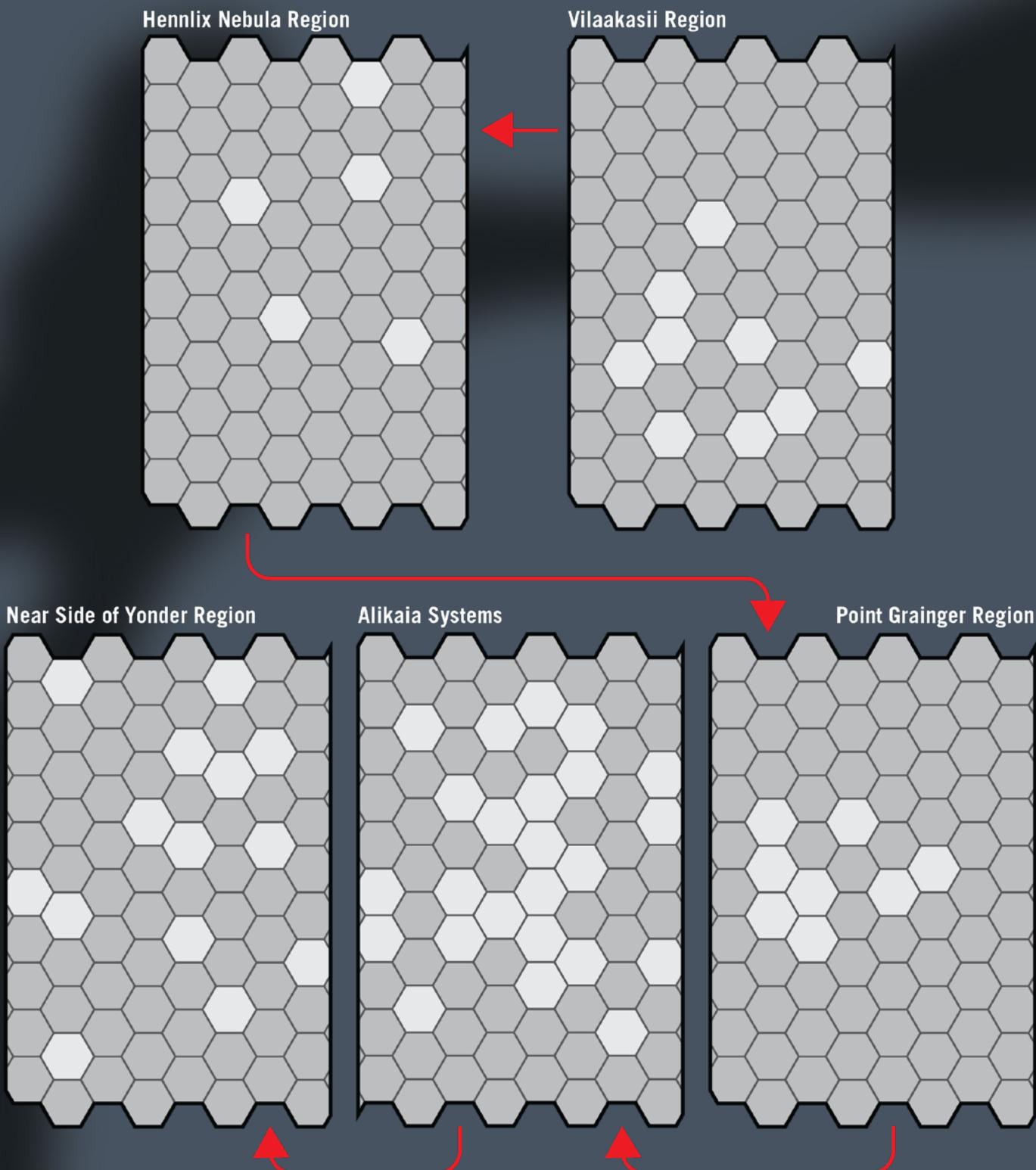
On the other hand, not all incidents are life-or-death matters; nor must they be connected with the Deepnight Entity storyline. Once in a while it may be interesting to present the Travellers with a situation that must be played out but which does not lead to major difficulties.

They complete refuelling, surveying a planet and gathering supplies, then move on... but with a nagging feeling they may have missed something.

Several situations, incidents and adventures are presented in this book, along with a larger adventure

revolving around the Alikai, a spacefaring alien race with serious internal troubles of their own. Once the Travellers have passed through the region they will leave the Alikai behind but any incidents or adventures not used during *The Riftsedge Transit* can be transplanted into a future segment of the voyage.

Example of Transit: using the *Campaign Guide's* Quick System Generation, the Referee may place regions in one subsector or overlap them over two or more subsectors.



WAYPOINTS

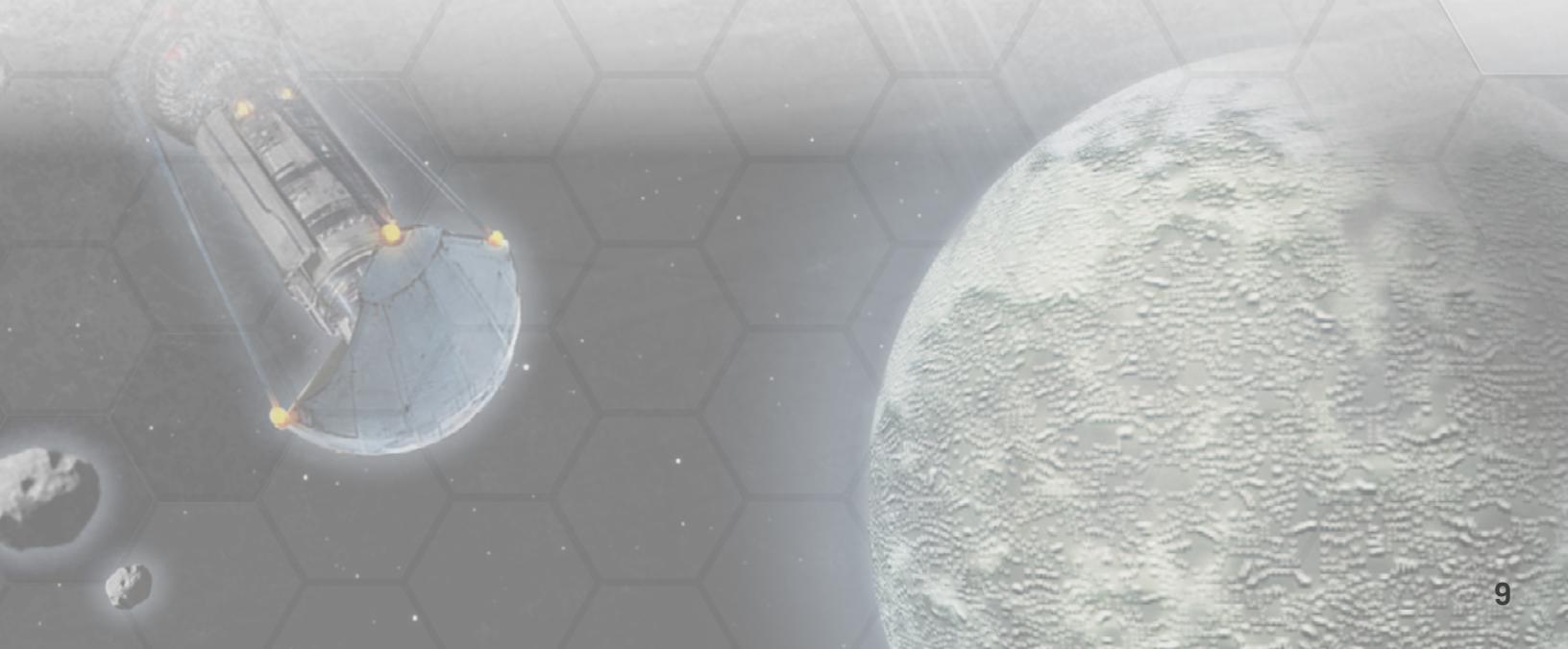
The Travellers have complete freedom to choose their route through the riftsedge region and dictate how long they wish to take making the transit. However, they are expected to leave record buoys in locations where they will be found by a follow-on mission. Several possible locations were identified as closely as possible using remote observation but this will still require refinement as the Travellers approach.

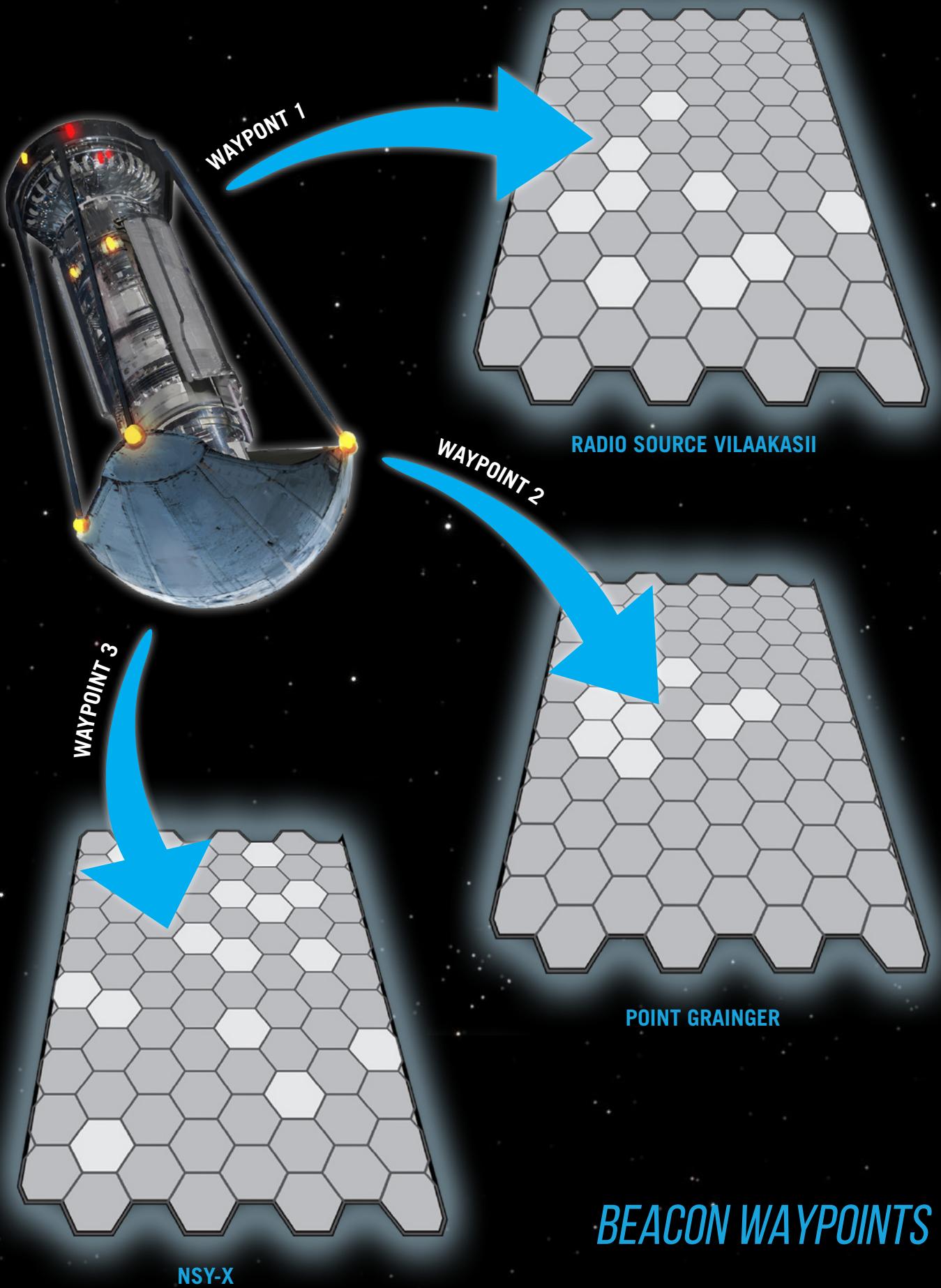
The buoys are small devices intended to be placed in a solar orbit or where their internal batteries can be augmented using solar panels. They are intended to function for several decades, transmitting their locator pulse at 24 hour intervals and standing ready to respond to a trigger signal whenever one is received. Each buoy contains a compete record of the mission to date along with shipboard logs, messages home and any scientific data that needs special attention.

Three waypoints were identified as buoy locations. In each case a primary and two secondary locations were identified for each buoy, with the intention that buoys would be dropped at two of these locations. Ideally the primary location would be one of those actually used but this will depend upon circumstances when the expedition arrives. It may not be desirable to drop a record buoy in an unstable system or one where a local race is conducting its own space exploration.

In order to drop the buoys, *Deepnight Revelation* will have to visit these star systems or send one of her scout vessels to carry out the mission. This creates a tentative structure for the voyage through this region, although it is subject to revision if necessary. Once the buoys have been dropped at a waypoint, *Deepnight Revelation* is to conduct a procedure to inform the follow-on missions of where the buoys are. This consists of transmitting an extremely powerful radio pulse at intervals for 48 hours, containing buoy locations and a compressed version of the mission logs. The pulse will be repeated at intervals in other systems as the expedition progresses.

The radio pulse will propagate at lightspeed, taking around 3.26 years to reach the next star system. It was envisaged that the follow-on missions would begin around 3–5 years after the departure of *Deepnight Revelation*, so by the time follow-on explorers reach the area there will be several expanding rings of radio pulses, like ripples from a stone thrown into a pond, each containing data on the location of record buoys. This, along with foreknowledge of where the buoys' intended positions were to be, and an understanding of the criteria used to choose alternate locations if necessary, should allow the records to be found.





BEACON WAYPOINTS

The three waypoints chosen correspond roughly to segments of the transit and are located with reference to nearby bright stars, radio sources and other points of interest. It was envisaged that these would be high on the list of places to investigate anyway. The Travellers can of course choose not to drop a buoy or not transmit the locator pulse if it seems unsafe. However, they must be aware that those who come after them will be looking for it and are likely to waste more time searching for a pulse or buoy that is not there than finding one that is.

WAYPOINT 1: RADIO SOURCE VILAAKASII

The innocuously named ‘radio source’ that gives its name to the sector is in fact a stellar-mass black hole. According to remote observation, the black hole appears to be orbited by a giant star in the process of being devoured. *Deepnight Revelation* may or may not choose to investigate this phenomenon but it is certainly not a healthy place to drop a buoy. Instead, a nearby main sequence star system, designated Waypoint Vilaakasii-Proxima, has been selected as the likely drop point. Waypoint 1 is located about 50 parsecs into the riftsedge transit.

WAYPOINT 2: POINT GRAINGER

Point Grainger lies in the Deepnight sector and is named for an early Terran interstellar explorer who set several records for the longest time spent in jumpspace for any human being of her era. Those records have since been smashed by almost every career spacer and even some frequent business Travellers but Grainger’s many missions were ground-breaking in her day. Travellers with a knowledge of history may recall that Alice Grainger was eventually lost in a presumed misjump incident; her remains were never found. The more superstitious members of the crew may regard this as a bad omen.

WAYPOINT 3: NSY-X

The final waypoint of this transit is in the Near Side of Yonder sector and designated NSY-X. It is an unremarkable star system located by triangulation from readily identified bright stars and chosen for its significance as a waypoint rather than any scientific interest. Dropping the record buoy at NSY-X denotes the end of the Riftsedge Transit and entry into the next phase of the expedition, the exploration of the region named the Near Side of Yonder.

ADVENTURES

The *Riftsedge Transit* contains one major scripted adventure, an encounter with the Deepnight Entity, and various minor incidents that can be inserted wherever they arise. It may be that some of these incidents do not occur during this phase of the campaign but they can be reused at a later date. Similarly, the procedures and concepts introduced in scripted adventures can be used as a format for later incidents of a similar nature.

In addition, the Referee should keep in mind that adventures can happen at any time. The abstract resolution system used for routine elements of the campaign will sometimes throw up situations that must be resolved as an adventure. These can be large or small and may spiral out of control into a life-or-death situation. The Referee may choose to be a little lenient about dumping another disaster on the Travellers just days after they escape an incident by the skin of their teeth – but not too lenient. If an incident is indicated, it will happen sooner or later; the Referee should store it and use it at their discretion.

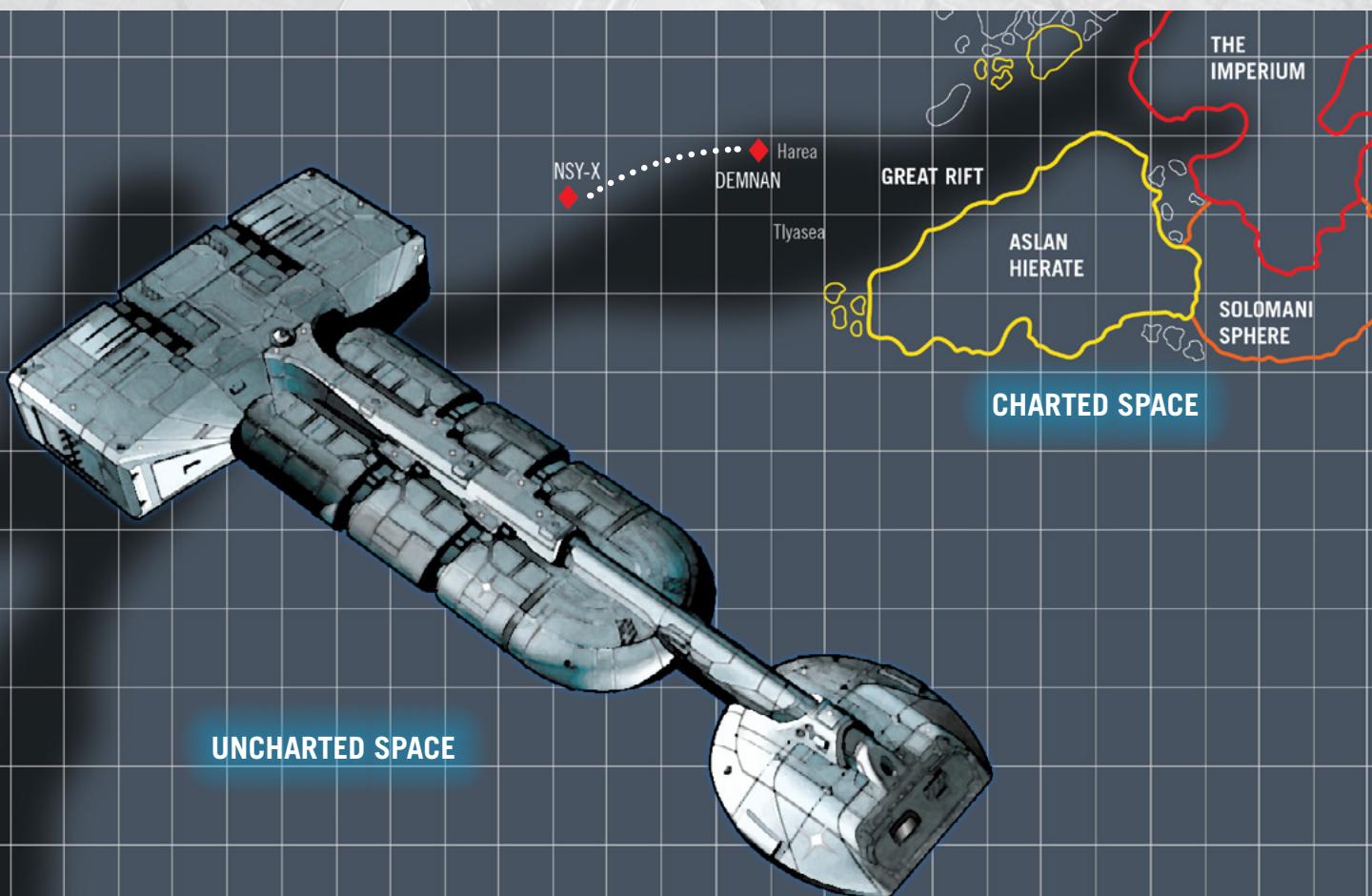
CROSSING THE LINE

The beginning of the riftsedge transit is simply a matter of crossing a line on a map. The universe does not care and there is nothing different about the empty vacuum around *Deepnight Revelation* as she begins the transit to before she made the first jump. Yet there are differences in the minds of the crew. Up until this point in the expedition they knew they could turn back, taking a berth aboard the supporting task force when it returned to Charted Space. Now, there is only *Deepnight Revelation*. She seemed so big and so reassuring in the dock at Giikur Naval Base and even when looking up at her in low orbit over the camp at Breakroom she seemed solid and dependable. Now she feels small and insignificant; an ambitious speck crawling through a universe of blackness.

The mood among the crew is varied as the transit begins. Some are excited, some apprehensive. Some are distracted by annoying niggles with their equipment or the bickering of crewmates whose off-on relationship has already resulted in repeated work-team reshuffles.

The offending pair are Shandra Vledden and Miyek Estaavi, low-ranking members of the crew who thus far have a good record for competence and diligence but a lamentable tendency to cause disruption with spill over from their private lives.

In a crew of 500 or so, it will usually be possible for the Referee to present new characters and build a story around them. The Travellers will be familiar with their immediate workmates and senior members of the various Divisions but even three years out from base most of the crew will be acquaintances passed in a corridor from time-to-time. So, the Referee should assign the two individuals at the centre of this adventure to a different work group or shift. With a bit of forward planning it may be possible to foreshadow events to come by describing one of their spats as a passing item of interest; a minor detail that was not relevant at the time but which provided some colour to whatever the Travellers were doing that day.





Shandra Vledden, Technician

STR 5 DEX 8 END 5 INT 8 EDU 8 SOC 6

Skills: Electronics (sensors) 1, Engineer (life support) 1, Flyer 0, Gunner 0, Mechanic 0, Vacc Suit 1



Miyek Estaavi, Research Assistant

STR 8 DEX 6 END 7 INT 6 EDU 7 SOC 5

Skills: Drive 0, Deception 2, Jack-of-all Trades 1, Mechanic 0, Pilot (small craft) 1, Recon 0, Stealth 0, Streetwise 1, Survival 0, Vacc Suit 0

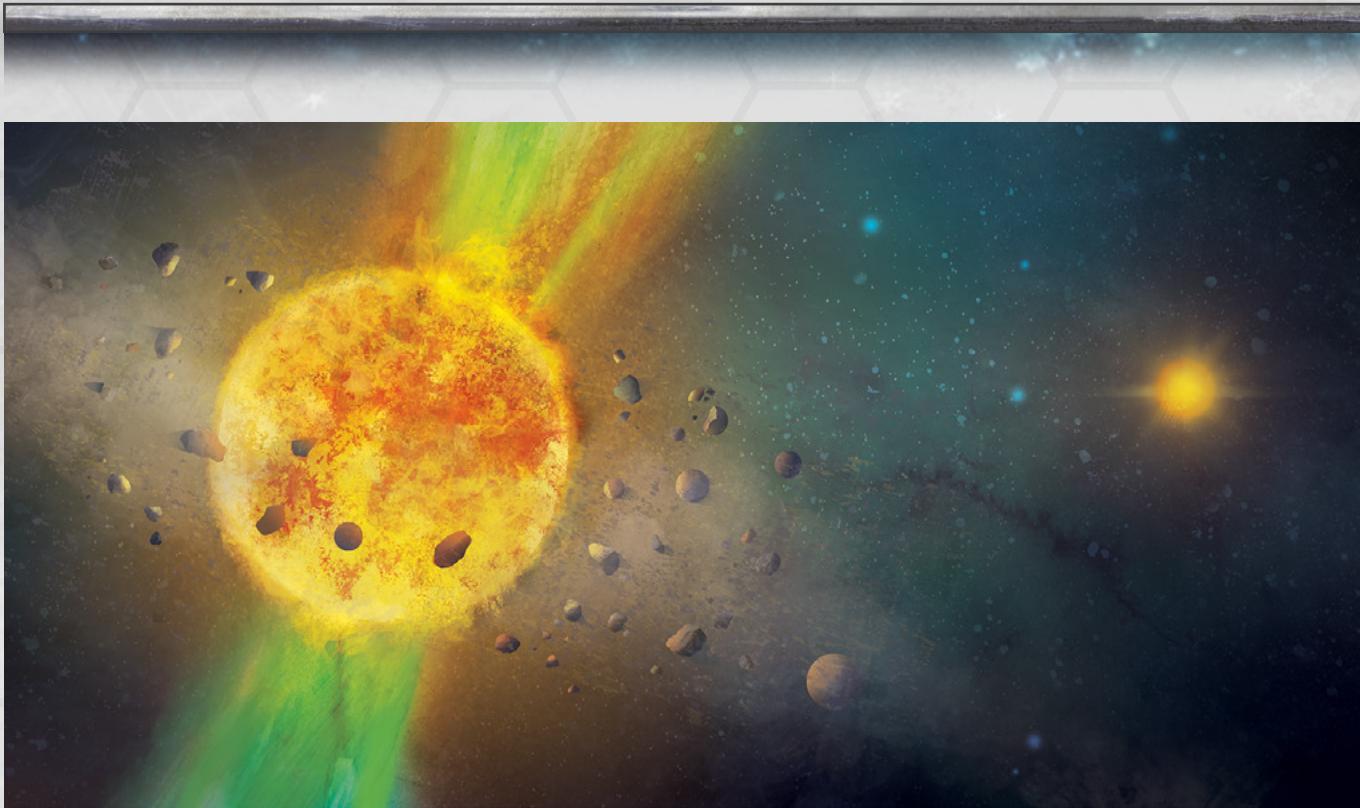
Shandra joined the expedition straight out of the Imperial Navy, where she had an undistinguished but honourable career as an engineering technician aboard various support vessels. Most of her career was spent in tankers, following the fleet around or waiting for a rendezvous in some backwater system. In theory this suited her as well as anyone to a long-range exploration mission and for the first few months it was so. Then a blossoming relationship with Miyek suddenly went sour and the first of the breakups occurred. The two had requested a shift change to make their off-duty time coincide; now they wanted to be on different shifts. They had swapped cabins to move in together; now they wanted their old accommodation back to be away from one another.

The breakup was followed by reconciliation and a reversal of the process, then another breakup. Each of those that followed was louder and had more fallout than the last, causing several crewmates to lose patience with Shandra and destroying some of her friendships. This naturally drove her back to Miyek once again. When things are good between them Shandra is cheerful and outgoing. After a breakup she is morose and difficult to work with, although she is still diligent enough at her own tasks to avoid censure.

Miyek was a last minute replacement for a crewmember who dropped out of the mission. He was originally hired as a deck hand, having presented a rather creative version of his credentials. Once it became apparent he was not qualified to operate the machinery he claimed, he was forced to give an account of himself. He told a mostly true story about wanting to leave behind crippling debts and some bad lifestyle choices and made himself not only useful but actually popular among the Mission Division crew as a hard-working, if not very skilled, assistant. He has never mentioned he can fly a shuttle, nor how he came by that skill, but has become a respected and valued member of the crew. However, his relationship with Shandra has been turbulent and made him unpopular outside a small circle of friends.

For all his habit of blagging his way into and out of situations, Miyek still fell victim to a deception himself. For reasons that made sense to her in the depths of a nasty breakup, Shandra decided to violate one of the expedition's fundamental rules. Perhaps she thought a child would bring them together permanently; perhaps she had not given it very much thought at all. Whatever the reason, at some point during the riftsedge transit Shandra becomes pregnant by Miyek and conceals the fact for a time. After a gamut of reactions, Miyek becomes almost insanely protective of the unborn child, leading to some decisions that will cause a lot of trouble for the rest of the crew.

PROTOSYSTEM QQ-784



Stellar Object QQ-784 is a T Tauri star. It is not mandatory for *Deepnight Revelation* to visit this system but the mission's scientists will want to investigate it if they can. QQ-784 is in the process of becoming a main sequence star, although it has several millions of years to go before it commences stable stellar fusion.

QQ-784 has a mass slightly greater than Sol, at 1.3 stellar masses, but is much larger at present as it is still in the process of coalescing from a gas cloud. As a result, QQ-784 exerts a variable Jump Interference Zone depending on the density of gas near its surface. The interference zone averages around 1.3AU but can change rapidly, reaching as far as 6AU or contracting down to as little as 0.4AU in a matter of minutes. The actual radius of the stellar object is around three to four times that of Sol, although this too can change rapidly. Its larger size means a greater luminosity than an equivalent main sequence star and there is also a great deal of x-ray and radio frequency noise.

QQ-784 is surrounded by a cloud of gas and dust. Within this cloud are several protoplanets and clumps of planetoids, which may eventually form into planets. Gas giants are also forming, including the body designated QQ-784G. The cloud and the objects it contains all orbit

QQ-784 on the plane of its rotation. Perpendicular to this are two spectacular jets of ionised gas emanating from the poles of the stellar object.

Jumping into the gas cloud is mildly hazardous. There is virtually no chance of interacting with an object large enough to cause damage but the gas itself may cause an unpleasantly rough jump emergence. On a straight 2D check, 8+ indicates an emergence bad enough to give some of the crew headaches and nosebleeds, and on 10+ an Erosion of Capabilities situation occurs. III effects can be avoided by passing the usual Average (8+) CEI check, indicating the crew's routine maintenance has been good enough to ensure the ship can handle a little rough and tumble. The problem can be avoided entirely by jumping in above or below the system's ecliptic and entering the dust cloud carefully. DM-8 applies if *Deepnight Revelation* attempts to jump out of the system without first moving clear of the cloud, perhaps resulting in a misjump.

All checks to use sensors or communication systems within the cloud are subject to DM-2. This is partially due to the dust and gas, and partly to interference across most frequencies caused by the star. It is not possible to filter this out as the frequency and intensity changes on a constant and random basis.

INVESTIGATING QQ-784

The mission's scientists have several points of interest they want to investigate. The gas cloud itself is worthy of a closer look, which includes collecting samples for analysis. This could be done using probes programmed to fly a pattern and return with their contents, and the collection and analysis can be abstracted with a DEI check for the Mission Division. There is not all that much that could go wrong here; probes might be lost or samples ruined but it is unlikely anyone will come to harm. The other activities suggested by the Mission staff are more hazardous.

The Gas Plumes

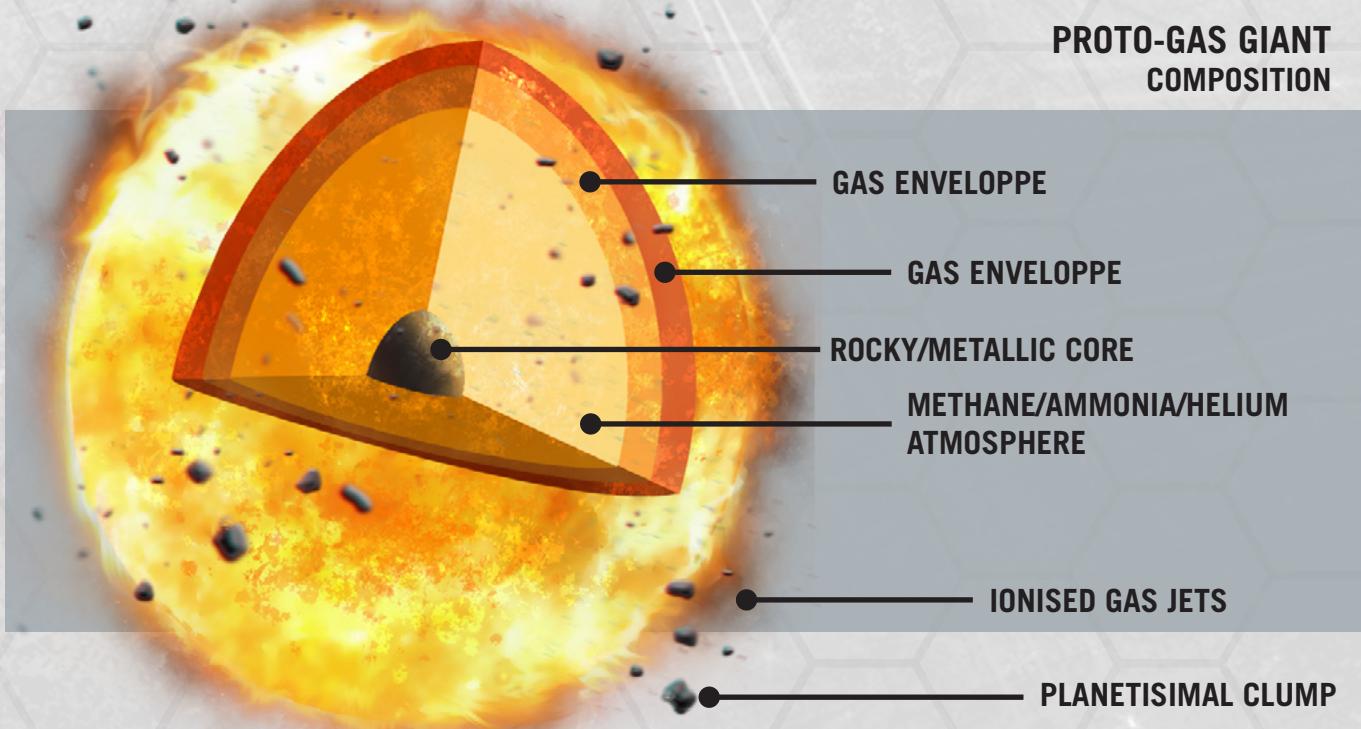
fascinate some of the scientists. Entering one would be stupid; it will do 2Dx50 damage to the hull of a vessel every round. However, it would be possible to carefully approach the fringe of the plume and collect some of the ionised gas using a small craft. *Deepnight Revelation* herself could perform the collection but could not manoeuvre precisely enough to avoid damage. She could simply plunge in, collect a sample and fly out again but this is a brute force approach to routine sample collection.

A small craft will have to approach the variable fringe of the gas plume, darting away if the uneven spouting of the gas threatens the craft. This can be abstracted with a DEI check for the Flight Division or an Average (8+) Pilot check for a Traveller personally undertaking the mission.

The Planetesimal Clumps are partially formed planets, gradually coalescing out of dust, gas and small fragments of rock. *Deepnight Revelation* cannot enter these clumps without smashing into some of the rocks but could gently nudge one apart without suffering more than a few dents if it seemed necessary. Small craft can get into the clump, permitting scientists or Travellers to clamber onto the rocks and take samples. If the Travellers are prepared to spend a day or so undertaking mining operations they can obtain 4D units of rare minerals from one of the planetoid clumps. This operation can be abstracted with a CEI or DEI check, or a Traveller piloting a craft personally can avoid mishap with a Difficult (10+) Pilot check.

The Proto-Gas Giant is particularly interesting. It consists of a rocky/metallic core around 2,400 kilometres in diameter – about two-thirds the size of Earth's moon but denser, with a 0.21g surface gravity. This is still accreting material and occasionally hit by large planetesimals but has already collected a deep but not very dense atmosphere of methane, ammonia and helium. Approaching the surface means a deep dive into a gradually thickening soupy gas envelope and landing on the uneven surface but it gives the Travellers a chance to walk around on the surface of a gas giant's core. In a few million years this may be impossible; they might be the only beings ever to set foot here. Samples can also be taken for analysis. The operation can be abstracted with a CEI or DEI check, or an Average (8+) Pilot check for a Traveller.

PROTO-GAS GIANT COMPOSITION



ADVENTURES AT QQ-784

Any of the investigations noted here, or just flying a ship in the gas cloud, can lead to an adventure if a mishap occurs on an abstracted check. Scientific parties operating in a planetesimal cluster or on the surface of the gas giant core are always in danger from small, fast-moving pieces of rock or ice, and from the usual trips, falls and vacc suit incidents. If no mishap occurs on an abstracted check the Referee may impose a situation. Alternatively, the incident detailed below can be used at some other point in the campaign.

One of *Deepnight Revelation*'s small craft suffers a drive failure as a result of electromagnetic interference or a collision with a planetesimal. The craft is drifting towards the ionised gas jets emanating from the star where it will be quickly destroyed. This far from home, craft are absolutely irreplaceable even if the Travellers are willing to write off crewmates. It is not possible to repair or restart the offline systems with the resources aboard, possibly because all personnel in the craft are incapacitated.

Reaching the distressed craft requires a breakneck transit of the gas cloud, which is rough but not especially dangerous. Once close, the Travellers will either have to board the craft and take off casualties or attach tow lines to move the vessel somewhere safer before tending to them. Either way, there is little time.

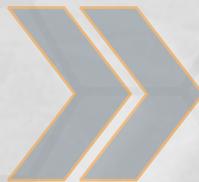
Docking with the craft will be impossible as it is out of control and tumbling, so someone will have to jump across and attach lines. This is a routine enough job for a salvage crew, but doing it on the fringe of a stellar gas jet is a whole new experience. A Difficult (10+) Vacc Suit check is required to reach the craft and avoid bouncing back off it or – much worse – being batted away by a projection due to an ill-timed tumble.

Once on the hull it is a simple matter to cycle the airlock and enter, or attach tow lines. So long as the Travellers are careful and avoid being cavalier about the danger of being flung off the tumbling hull into a stellar gas jet they can manage this. Casualty retrieval will require the process to be repeated in reverse, although at least this time there are safety lines in place.

If the craft is to be saved it must be carefully towed clear of danger. This requires a Very Difficult (12+) Pilot check, with both vessels suffering 3D points of damage per point of negative Effect. The check must be repeated until it is successfully made or the attempt abandoned. An Effect of -6 indicates the craft has been nudged the wrong way and will enter the periphery of the gas jet in D3 rounds. Anyone on the hull at that time will be killed almost instantly – and this applies also to anyone trying to jump back to the rescue boat once the distressed craft is in the jet.

Travellers who are still aboard at this point are probably doomed but there is one possibility. *Deepnight Revelation* herself could act as a shield, creating a shadow to allow crewmembers to jump back to safety or make another attempt at a tow. The ship will take 2Dx50 points of damage per round and an Erosion of Capabilities situation should be imposed.

This incident may be a good opportunity to introduce Miyek, either as the pilot of the distressed craft or – better – an impromptu hero. He is not, after all, a bad guy – just a pathological liar who got himself into debt and trouble back home, and tried to hide aboard a 20 year exploration mission. With no other pilot available he may take it upon himself to reveal his concealed piloting skill (such as it is) and lead a rescue mission comprising whoever was near the docking bay at the time. He might even come to the Travellers' rescue or try to help them and end up creating more casualties. The desired outcome is that Miyek emerges as someone who, despite a chequered background, is trying his best to be an asset to the mission and willing to take risks to help his crewmates.



RIPPLES IN THE VOID

This incident can take place in any star system that has a gas giant. It becomes apparent shortly after *Deepnight Revelation* emerges from jump that there is something a little strange about the gas giant the Travellers are approaching. It has a broad ring system, which is not especially rare but the rings scatter starlight in an unusual manner. It seems that something is perturbing them but the few large bodies detected are not positioned to do so. The disturbance is localised to several areas, spreading out from an epicentre like ripples in a pond.

A careful sensor analysis indicates there are multiple intermittent gravity fields in the rings. They come and go from minute-to-minute, causing small perturbations in the nearby ice and rock fragments that make up the rings. As *Deepnight Revelation* gets closer she can resolve the sensor data a little more clearly but there is a puzzling element to it – the intermittent gravity fields are similar to those produced by a starship's drive but it is not possible to detect any vessels.

A starship is a very large lump of metal, which can usually be detected by its electromagnetic and thermal signature or drive emissions. The latter seem to be present but their nature is highly unusual. The mission scientists suggest a range of options from natural phenomena to stealthy alien starships but can provide no explanation for the apparently random gravitic ripples in the ring system.

The Travellers may wonder if it is wise to approach the gas giant. Refuelling with potentially hostile ships in the area would certainly be a risk but hanging around with empty tanks is not a very good option either. There are a few crewmembers who advocate turning away and seeking another source of fuel but *Deepnight Revelation* came to investigate and explore, and most of her crew are intrigued rather than apprehensive.

Faint electromagnetic emissions become apparent but are not consistent with any known starship type – not even remotely similar. As *Deepnight Revelation* closes it finally becomes apparent that these are not starships, at least not in the usual sense. They are Alo'hei; starfaring creatures that seem to be native to regions spinward of Charted Space.

There are several Alo'hei in the gas giant's ring system. It is hard to tell just how many; perhaps 3–5 adults and 7–12 smaller, possibly juvenile, individuals can be counted but observers cannot agree on exactly how many there are. Some think that the Alo'hei can flow together or split apart; others are adamant that they are distinct creatures. Whatever is the case, they dart through the ring system scattering ice crystals as they go, flowing around larger bodies and disappearing from time-to-time. Some seem to be chasing one another, others drift lazily along then suddenly vanish from the sensors.

The Alo'hei seem to be at play and they are not really interested in the Travellers or their ship. If they are fired upon or otherwise attacked they simply drift away out of range – apparently unharmed. They may approach *Deepnight Revelation* or her small craft but do no harm other than peppering the hull with small fragments of displaced ice crystals

The vast majority of observers are mesmerised by the incredible beauty of these creatures, which results in one of the two hazards the Travellers might face here. Crewmembers may become distracted from critical tasks, forgetting to watch the sensors or take the midday meal out of the oven. Nothing serious is likely to happen but there may be small incidents all over the ship. The Travellers will be inundated with requests to take a pinnace out for a closer look or permit crewmembers to suit up and go out on the hull to see the Alo'hei with their own eyes – albeit through a vacc suit faceplate.

There are dangers inherent in these activities but the Alo'hei will not try to harm anyone. People on the hull might be struck by ice crystals but this is for the most part a small nuisance and a tiny price to pay to see such wonders. The Referee should make much of the reactions of the crew. That may cause the Travellers to wonder if there is something insidious about the Alo'hei but this is no death-trap. The Travellers are experiencing a wonder of the universe and the reactions of their crew are – for the most part – normal for such a situation. There is no mental force causing crewmembers to become clumsy and forgetful; they are simply too busy gazing out of viewports to look where they are going.



THE ALO'HEI

The Alo'hei have never been known to harm a starship, although they are encountered so rarely there is little data of any sort. Adult Alo'hei, if the term applies in the usual sense, can be as much as a kilometre long, formed of a gossamer rainbow of protoplasmic matter. They undulate in a physical and electromagnetic sense, giving off varying emissions right across the spectrum. Alo'hei are not completely solid and can morph into a variety of shapes although their usual form is a ribbon many times longer than it is wide or deep. They seem capable of generating a natural gravity field, which they use to propel themselves, and can manipulate physical objects in the same manner.

Alo'hei do not respond to attempts to communicate with them, at least not in an intelligible manner. Their electromagnetic and visible display shifts all the time and may be an attempt to communicate which terrestrial minds simply cannot comprehend. Almost everyone who sees a group of Alo'hei considers them the most beautiful thing in the universe but a small proportion of people – of various races – react with stark terror at the sight. They cannot explain this reaction but can only describe it as a primal fear originating beyond rational thought.

There are no meaningful rules for an Alo'hei – they cannot be significantly harmed by any weapon known to the races of Charted Space and will simply fly away if attacked. Their nature may intrigue the Travellers but it will remain a mystery for now.

There is a second danger but again it is a minor one. A small percentage of the crew react to the Alo'hei with nothing short of stark terror. This is controllable for most people but their inclination will be to shy away from even sensor readouts showing the creatures and issue incoherent demands to get the ship away from them. The frightened few cannot explain their reaction, only to say they feel a primal fear so deep it is hard to accomplish simple tasks.

The frightened individuals may drop things or abandon their work. Some may even find hiding places or attempt to break into a security locker. However, they are not under alien control or anything like that; they are just very, very scared but cannot explain why. The Referee should present minor incidents to attract the Travellers' attention but a major threat to the ship or mission is unlikely.

Similarly, there is no scripted adventure or incident here. As always, an adventure can occur at any time but this is simply an incident along the way. If the Travellers are interested enough they can undertake research using the rules found in the *Referee's Handbook*. There are two possible projects: the nature of the Alo'hei and their effects on people who observe them.

THE NATURE OF THE ALO'HEI

Attempting to understand the nature of the Alo'hei is an Extended (2), Very Difficult, Very Lengthy Special project. That is, 32 Research Points are required per breakthrough attempt and a breakthrough requires a Very Difficult (12+) Science check. Exactly which Science specialism applies is up to the Travellers; this is a cross-discipline project combining elements of space, physical and life sciences plus quite possibly other fields as well.

A dedicated research team will normally produce 2D Research Points per day, so a breakthrough attempt is likely every 4–5 days. If the Science check is failed, 32 more Research Points must be accrued before another attempt is made but the difficulty of the check is reduced by one level until it is finally passed. Since this is an Extended project more than one check must be passed – in this case two. The difficulty of the Science check reverts back to Very Difficult (12+) each time.

Each successful breakthrough will provide the Travellers with information, although in this case the project cannot provide a full explanation – the Alo'hei are simply beyond the Travellers' comprehension at this time.

First Check:

Passing the first check provides the Travellers with a wealth of data on the Alo'hei's emissions, patterns of scintillation – or lack of a pattern – and an estimate of their capabilities. It is believed that they are composed of some sort of malleable protoplasmic material that spans the boundaries between energy and matter. The component parts of an Alo'hei seem to be an extreme and controllable form of wave/energy duality and can be as readily considered to be photons as physical molecules.

The mission's scientists can go on like this until the Travellers lose the will to live but in short the Alo'hei seem to be beings that can choose whether any given part of their substance is composed of matter or energy at any given moment. They can definitely absorb energy – including cosmic background radiation – and matter, presumably to feed in some manner. They can also emit all manner of energy but it is not clear if this process is controlled. It can be definitively stated, either now or when a Leviathan is studied, that whilst there may be some similar processes involved, the two species – if that is an appropriate term – are not in any way related.

Second Check:

The second breakthrough is one of those disappointing times in science where a project reaches its end without providing all the answers. The second breakthrough consists of more data on the emission patterns, along with some highly complex mathematics to predict and model them, and the conclusion that the science available to the Travellers simply cannot explain the nature of the Alo'hei or how they came to be. It is now possible to detect one more reliably, and at greater distance, but the research team has reluctantly concluded that they are not sentient and meaningful communication will not be possible.

Reactions to the Alo'hei

Investigating the reactions of crewmembers to the Alo'hei is a Social Sciences project, crossing over into Life Sciences in places. It is a Complex, Extended (3) project. Three successful Science checks are required, each one yielding some useful information and leading to the next. The field, duration and difficulty of each segment of the project varies.

First Breakthrough:

Short, Routine, Social Sciences

The first breakthrough requires a successful Routine (6+) Science check after 4 Research Points have been generated. Careful analysis shows that 4% of the people exposed to either direct sight of the Alo'hei or recordings of them experienced a roughly equivalent level of primal terror. Everyone else experienced a sense of wonder. The sense of wonder seems like a natural reaction to the creatures; the sense of terror is unusually intense and appears less rational or natural.

The feeling of terror was not experienced by any Aslan who might be present, pure-blood Solomani humans, K'Kree or Hivers. The percentage for Imperial humans is almost exactly 4%; it is nearer 9% for Vargr and around 96% for Droyne. This data will only be available if there is a suitable sample of those races present aboard *Deepnight Revelation* but it may become relevant later.

Second Breakthrough:

Lengthy, Average, Life Sciences

The second breakthrough requires an Average (8+) Science check, made after 16 Research Points have been allocated to the project. It is established that the feeling of terror is not psionically induced and has no

connection to psionic ability. Nor is it conveyed by the same mechanism as telepathic triggers like the Droyne carvings, although there are similarities. However, it is only present in species 'touched by the Ancients'. That is, it is virtually unknown in pure-blood Solomani humans, average in those human groups transplanted by and interacted with the Ancients, more common in uplifted species such as Vargr and not present in species that did not interact with the Ancients. Virtually all Droyne are susceptible.

Third Breakthrough:

Typical, Very Difficult, Special

The third and final breakthrough requires 8 Research Points, permitting a Very Difficult (12+) Science check in any field the Referee considers relevant. The research team concludes that the Ancients encountered the Alo'hei and were very, very afraid of them for reasons that remain unknown. This primal fear is more common in species that were genetically or otherwise physically modified by the Ancients and less common in those that were not but whose ancestors interacted with the Ancients. Species that never interacted with the Ancients have no instinctive fear of the Alo'hei, which strongly suggests – but does not prove – that the fear is inherited through a connection with the Ancients.

REFeree's NOTES

The Travellers may make as much or as little as they like of this incident. Not everything that happens is connected to the Deepnight Entity and there is not always a scripted adventure waiting at each point of interest. This way, the Referee can keep the Travellers guessing and also impart information that may be useful to them later on.



MILK AND HONEY

This incident should ideally take place after the tempestuous relationship between Miyek and Shandra has become apparent. If *Deepnight Revelation* is running short of supplies or the crew are highly fatigued this will create a stronger impetus to investigate the garden world.

Remote sensing indicates a good prospect for a system with life just ahead. There are nine planetary bodies and a planetoid belt, orbiting a K9 (orange) main sequence star, and gas giants are present. Indications are strong that there could be life on one of the planets – going from its position in the warm zone of the star system – or at least conditions that may be suitable for groundside rest. Further data can be collected when the expedition enters the system.

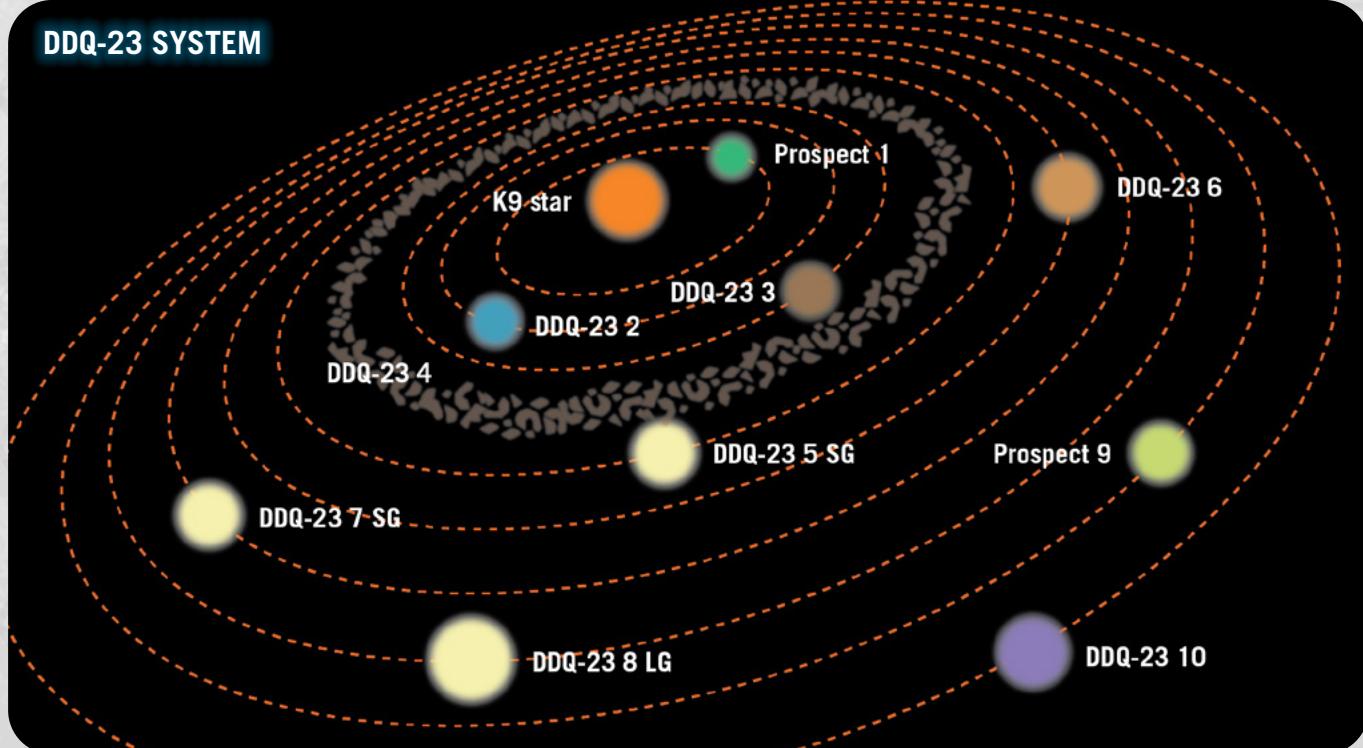
The system has been designated DDQ23 by the space science team, pending the application of a proper name by the command staff. It may or may not be entered into the star charts under its temporary designation but if the Travellers come up with a name, that is what the system is called. Two bodies in the system have been given temporary ‘Prospect’ designations, indicating a possible point of interest. The rest are simply numbered.

DDQ-23 (K9 Star)

Prospect DDQ-23 1	X866000-0
DDQ-23 2	XAAA000-0
DDQ-23 3	X210000-0
DDQ-23 4	X000000-0
DDQ-23 5 SG	Small Gas Giant
DDQ-23 6	X833000-0
DDQ-23 7 SG	Small Gas Giant
DDQ-23 8 LG	Large Gas Giant
Prospect DDQ-23 9	X8A1000-0
DDQ-23 10	X511000-0

The majority of bodies in the system are normal for the type. DDQ-23 2 is a large water world with a dense carbon dioxide-nitrogen atmosphere. Early life exists in its oceans and has just begun to put oxygen into the atmosphere; it will be millions of years before the planet has a breathable gas mix. Prospect DDQ-23 9 is a high-density planet with a surface gravity of 1.9g. Its atmosphere is a heavy smog of gases such as ammonia and methane, shrouding the planet in mystery. The surface might be a source of some exotic minerals.

DDQ-23 SYSTEM



Prospect DDQ-1 is the obvious prize of the system. A standard sized world with a breathable, untainted and unpolluted atmosphere it is covered in greenery and blue oceans. It looks a bit too inviting for some crewmembers but all scans indicate it is nothing more or less than a 'garden world' with a varied ecosystem.

APPROACHING THE PROSPECT

Among the questions that might be asked as the Travellers approach this apparently perfect world is 'could it be infected with the Deepnight Entity?'. Considering this question now will assist the Travellers in spotting the warning signs later on. The consensus among the expedition's scientists is that were an entity to be introduced to such a lush environment it would grow rapidly and out of control. Natural barriers such as seas and broad rivers, or areas with little or no vegetation such as arctic and desert terrain, might contain it but in all probability the world would be entirely consumed. It is likely that the entity would consume everything it could then die back for lack of food, leaving a dead husk of a world behind. This is clearly not the case here.

The likelihood of infestation is extremely small. Spores would have to be brought to the world by starship, or perhaps a rogue planetoid, and the chances of this happening are very slim unless an entity somehow infected a starship crew and directed them to carry it to a new place. The Travellers may be prompted to try to cleanse their ship's hull, just in case they are the carriers of infection, but as far as the world below goes there is no sign of infestation. There are, however, other dangers.

Prospect DDQ-23 seems to have a lot of birds or bird-like creatures. Closer inspection indicates these creatures have extremely fine leathery membranes rather than feathers, giving them a rather unnatural appearance. Most species seem to be harmless, at least to humans, but there are a few that might pose a problem. Among these is a species of flying pack-hunters with long pointed beaks and impressive claws. These creatures apparently prey on even the largest fauna, weakening an individual by attacking vulnerable areas such as the back of joints or soft tissue not normally protected by armour.

The largest herbivore on Prospect DDQ-23 resembles the extinct Terran glyptodont, although with a long whip-like tail it can use to strike predators. These creatures amble

around the plains and light woodlands of the world in large family groups or small herds, seemingly peaceable enough when not attacked. Some of the scientists want to study the interplay between these species, whilst many of the crew look forward to a change of diet.

How the Travellers approach landing on a new world is entirely up to them but there are recommended procedures. These start with a detailed orbital survey using probes or small craft, followed by a cautious descent into the atmosphere with some of the pinnacles. Samples of the atmosphere can be analysed in a few hours, giving an indication of whether there are spores, pathogens or unusual gases that could harm the Travellers. In the event, the atmosphere is clean and pure, as is the water. As far as anyone can tell from a distance, it is safe to land.

OPERATIONS ON PROSPECT DDQ-23 1

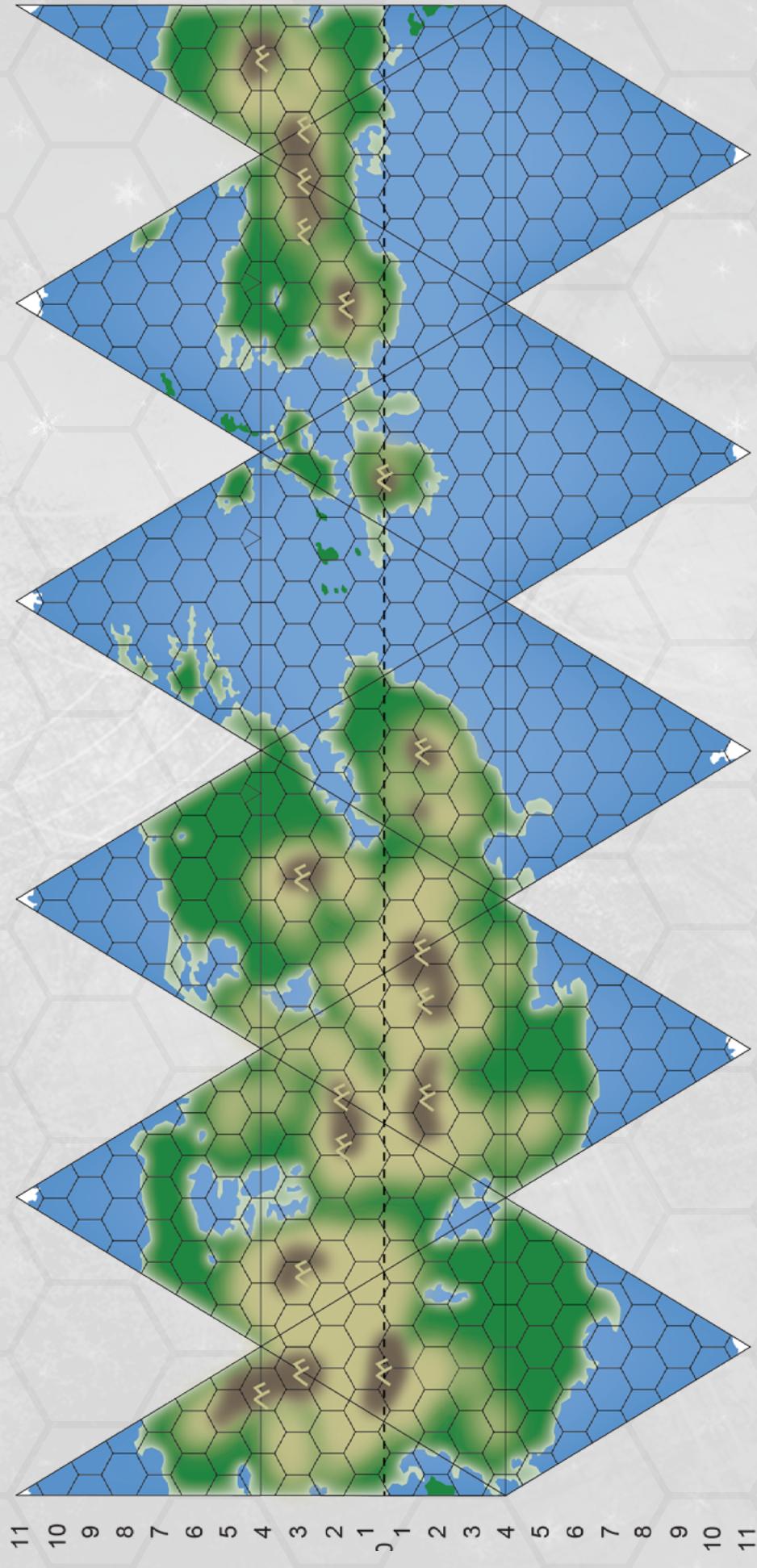
As always, the Travellers are free to make their own decisions about how to proceed but the Referee should keep in mind that the crew of *Deepnight Revelation* have been cooped up in a starship – albeit a large one – for a long period and are tired in ways that go beyond a need for sleep. Fresh air and a change of diet will go a long way towards reducing fatigue and raising morale. This must be balanced against the need to proceed in a safe, orderly fashion and ensure that the ship is not neglected whilst crew are planetside.

It would not be a difficult matter for the Travellers to plan a set of experimental landings followed by the establishment of one or more base camps, from which exploration can be carried out using ground and grav vehicles. More distant parts of the planet might be accessed using pinnacles or boats, or the larger scouts. Parties might be sent off to investigate other bodies in the system, presumably with a promise of groundside time when they get back.

If the Travellers do not make a suitable plan, the landing on the world everyone is calling Prospect will be an embarrassing free-for-all as crewmembers bargain and bribe one another for a trip planetside. Extra personnel are jammed into missions that do not need them and in some cases needless but sort-of-authorised trips are made to deposit crewmembers on the ground. Nobody acts totally stupid but there are many who will take advantage of the disorganised situation to do what they want.

NAME: PROSPECT DDQ-23 1

UWP: X866000-0



Seas and Lakes	Mountainous Area	Plains	Ice Caps
Forests	~	~	~
	Hex Scale	World Gravity	Mean Equatorial Temp
	1,000km	1.0g	30°

There are three obvious activities to be carried out on Prospect: Research, food gathering and recreation. Any or even all three can be the subject of an expedition to the surface. In addition, it would be wise to set up one or more camps. Given the novelty of being planetside in such a pleasant environment, crewmembers are quite happy to sleep on camp beds or even on the ground under an awning draped over a ground vehicle. Indeed, for many this is preferable to using the cabins of small craft or prefabricated base sections brought down from orbit – discomfort in this case might actually be fun.

Security

There is a real tendency for some of the crew to abandon caution and treat the trip planetside as a holiday. Whilst understandable, this is dangerous. There are unknown hazards from weather, terrain and local wildlife, as well as the recklessness of colleagues who are also trying to have a good time, so some sort of security element is advisable. If the Travellers forget about this, most of the planetside expeditions will generally follow regulations but in a somewhat lax manner. This means that some personnel will be properly equipped and have at least sidearms available; others may have left ‘unnecessary’ items behind either aboard ship or at the beginning of some planetside adventure.

Recreation

There is plenty of open space and an inventive crew can find all manner of ways to amuse themselves. Traditional or invented games with balls, frisbees or random objects dug out of a vehicle’s stowage bay break out, often with nobody really sure what is going on. For many personnel, any excuse to run around is good enough. Some want to climb hills or even mountains; some want to swim in a nearby river. Particularly inventive crewmembers might start building a raft to navigate a watercourse, despite the fact that an air/raft would be safer and easier.

The crew will get up to all sorts of antics, with even quite straight-laced individuals finding odd ways to enjoy the planet. There may be races with ground vehicles or shooting competitions going on in some areas, whilst others just want to drink a beer and sleep in the sun for a while. Keeping track of it all is a challenge for anyone, and there is a real possibility that those tasked with keeping the recreational antics within limits will be too busy joining in.

None of these activities are without risk and it may alarm the Travellers to realise that some groups are not maintaining a security watch whilst they blow off steam. The recreational activities indulged in by the crew may cause some alarm and a few minor injuries but the long-

term benefits should make risks worthwhile. Attempting to curtail the recreational outburst will cause resentment, although a light-touch approach to risk management is both wise and acceptable to those involved.

Food Gathering

Bulk organic material is always useful to augment the stocks used to make ration blocks or glop-stew. Once tested for contaminants, organic matter in the form of grasses and leaves are the easiest food materials to obtain. However, Prospect has a lot more to offer than bulk. There are fruits, berries and all manner of vegetables to be found. Some are available only in small quantities suitable for a novelty meal but could perhaps be grown in *Deepnight Revelation*'s biosphere modules.

Everything should be rigorously tested but there will inevitably be those who insist on sampling what they find. Most food items are harmless or unpleasant-tasting at worst but some crewmembers will make themselves sick. Bulk harvesting requires machinery that must be brought down from orbit, plus a fair amount of hard work, which may or may not be seen as recreational by some crewmembers. There are those who enjoy competing to harvest the most leaves or prairie grasses, or who simply like wandering through an alien forest picking nuts and berries. Others would see this as ‘proper work’ and either do it diligently, but expect recreation time in return, or else shirk the job in favour of something more fun.

Hunting

Some crewmembers consider hunting for meat an unpleasant task, whilst others may relish it a bit too much. Be that as it may, fresh meat is a luxury for most of the crew and even preserved for several months it is still a welcome addition to the menu. There are numerous creatures on Prospect that could be trapped or hunted, ranging from small game to very large herbivores that may pose a real challenge but which provide a great deal of meat. Indeed, the first round of kills may end up on an impromptu and extremely wasteful barbecue. There are those who will criticise the waste and over-indulgence but after months in space a little extreme behaviour may be beneficial.

Obtaining a meaningful amount of food in this way requires quite a lot of effort since there are 500 or so crewmembers to feed. Most of the butchery work is handled by automated systems, which requires either they be brought down to orbit or small craft make repeated trips with a large pile of dead animals aboard. The latter is gross but safer – in the event of a rapid retreat from the surface equipment might have to be abandoned.



It is likely that the more industrious hunters will find ways to herd the local herbivores, perhaps using air/rafts, and to chase them onto a firing line. This is not without its dangers – the largest prey creatures are capable of killing a human in a variety of ways, possibly without even noticing them. A kill may also attract the flying predators who might attack the hunters as territorial rivals or try to hijack their prey.

Research

There is work to be done on Prospect; soil and water samples, studies of the local plant and animal life, and all the usual planetary survey work. It is likely that after an initial is-it-safe analysis, research may be shelved for a few days whilst the scientists have some time off, and much of the early ‘research’ may take the form of investigating whether locally harvested nuts go well in salad or how best to serve the local wildlife. Some forms of research, in the sense of exploring and making observations, are pleasant and relaxing for certain

members of the crew, so against the backdrop of chaotic enjoyment there may be what amounts to parties of ramblers collecting samples as they take a nice walk in the woods.

LOCAL WILDLIFE

There are two species of interest on Prospect; the big herbivores and the predatory birds that plague them.

ARMOURED HERBIVORES

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Armoured Herbivores	100	5m
SKILLS	Survival 0, Melee (natural) 0	
ATTACKS	Stomp (6D), Tail Whip (2D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+8), Large (+3)	
BEHAVIOUR	Grazer	



FLYING PREDATORS

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Flyer	6	6m
SKILLS	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Melee (natural) 0, Recon 0	
ATTACKS	Peck or Talon Slash (1D)	
TRAITS	Flyer (slow), Small (-3)	
BEHAVIOUR	Chaser	

The Flying Predators

These flyers are typically around 75 centimetres long with a 180 centimetres wingspan. Their wings are covered in reddish-brown leathery membranes, with raggy 'hair' of the same leathery material on their bodies. They are unpleasant looking creatures, with long talons and a

The Big Herbivores

Resembling a Terran glyptodont with a long, prehensile tail, these armoured herbivores congregate in a family group of about 2–5 females, a single adult male and 2–4 calves of varying age. Larger herds form on a temporary basis and are generally amicable. A dispute of any kind is more likely to lead to a family splitting off than any kind of fight, although clashes do occur, mostly in the form of an irritable lash with the tail, causing a great deal of noise but absolutely no harm to the armoured rival. Males will occasionally charge at one another and collide violently. It appears that the intent is to smash armoured shoulders together, causing the weaker beast to stumble or tip over. An error can result in a charging male slamming his head into the armoured flank of his rival, which can be fatal.

pointed beak. The predators nest together in packs of around 20–30 individuals and hunt in concert.

They will take small game whenever they can find it but are quite capable of bringing down a large herbivore. This is accomplished by pecking under the edges of armour plates and at the back of joints, creating many small wounds. Typically a pack will attack a whole family group of herbivores to cause confusion but concentrate on weaker individuals or calves. If possible, they will induce the target to panic and flee the herd, possibly injuring itself in rough terrain, and can wear a creature down over hours or even days. It is not uncommon to see herbivores that have survived an attack with permanent wounds where tendons have been severed or deep punctures not healed properly.

BIRD STRIKE

The Referee should allow the Travellers and their crew some recreation time and uninterrupted research. If they keep finding things to do, the Referee should not stop the Travellers from having a good time. However, at some point events will begin to unfold that cast a different light on Prospect.

The first incident is relatively minor but worrying. An air/raft conducting a survey or transporting equipment has been attacked by a flock of large flying predators. They were extremely persistent and whilst there are no significant injuries, the crew are understandably rattled. If the incident is ignored there will be further attacks on personnel and vehicles, and since the flyers have the ability to bring down prey much tougher than a human this is a real problem.

Investigation indicates the attacks all took place close to a nesting area for the predators and that up to now they ignored anyone keeping their distance. However, they have now apparently taken an interest in the crew of *Deepnight Revelation*. Flocks have been sighted edging closer to groups of workers or crewmembers enjoying a period of recreation. They are scared off by loud noises, such as gunshots, but come back after increasingly short intervals. It seems only a matter of time before someone is fatally attacked.

A possible solution is simply making a lot of noise. Blasting music from loudspeakers will keep the flyers away, as will other loud noises. They are not active at night, so a safe zone can be established without keeping everyone awake. Guards with guns are always an option. Lasers do not make a scary noise but the flyers are smart enough to realise that when they go near a group of humans some of their number burst into flame and fall out of the sky. Overall, the flyer problem is not difficult to get around but it does mean the honeymoon period on Prospect is over.

THE SHANDRA SITUATION

A more serious and life-threatening situation develops sometime after the flyers start attacking humans. Shandra and Miyek are back together, more or less, after a particularly difficult period during which Shandra decided that a baby would bring the couple together. The decision made sense to her at the time – weary from the long voyage and worn out by fighting with her partner – but it was taken for selfish reasons and in defiance of the mission's no-children agreement. Shandra is currently several weeks pregnant and beginning to show it.

Miyek reacted poorly to the news that he would be a father, at least at first. He has since become almost insanely protective of Shandra and of their unborn



child – which one is more important depends on how recently they have had a fight. Colleagues are aware that something is not right but the normally outgoing Miyek will not discuss the matter with anyone. The couple are currently having another difficult time and are staying apart but both are on Prospect.

Shandra quickly wearied of aimless recreation and joined a field team conducting a detailed survey of a region about 200 kilometres from the nearest camp or concentration of crewmembers. The team is six strong, travelling in a pair of Ranger vehicles and is operating in a relaxed manner. The trip is something of a working holiday and the news that flyers are attacking people has not dampened the mood. The only difference is that the expedition personnel amuse themselves by selecting the most raucous hoots, honks and toots they can find in the audio databases to startle flyer packs. What started as a game to find the absolute worst selection of sounds achieved almost an art form after a few hours.

Unfortunately it had another effect. The flyers were indeed kept at bay but a nearby herd of large herbivores was enraged. A particularly large male charged the lead vehicle, tipping it sideways into a gully and incidentally causing itself a serious injury. Two of the occupants, including Shandra, were also badly hurt. The second vehicle was forced to withdraw at speed.

The expedition sent a distress signal, which was picked up by another group conducting sample-gathering operations from one of the utility boats. This group included Miyek, who reacted decisively and rather stupidly. Rushing to the boat he took off immediately and began flying low and recklessly towards Shandra's location, leaving his colleagues without a means of transport and, perhaps more importantly, without a long-range communicator.

Miyek slammed the boat down hard and tried to reach Shandra's location but was forced back by angry herbivores. He is now in the middle of the situation, not really helping, and becoming increasingly desperate. The crew of the second vehicle did not achieve any greater success and meanwhile there is a party stuck on a hillside and about to come under attack from a pack of flyers.

The Referee may choose to populate these groups with personalities from the crew or the Mission Division, or assume they are ordinary expedition members. All of these people are irreplaceable, however, as is their equipment. Anything and anyone lost or put out of commission on Prospect is unavailable for the rest of the voyage. The Travellers might forget this if they focus

on saving lives or they may be more concerned for the utility boat than the people nearby. Both approaches will have consequences but rescuing everyone will be tricky.

Up in the Hills

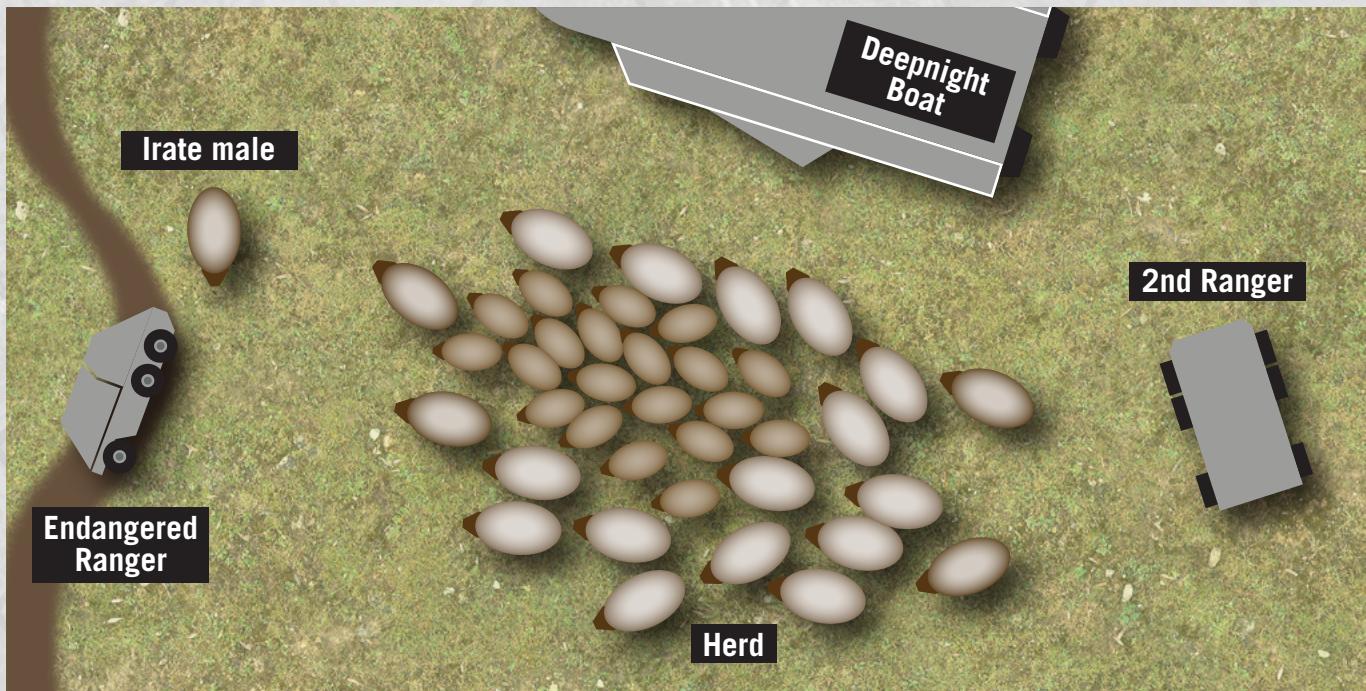
A party of five explorers is stranded on a hillside some distance from the main area of operations. They were using a utility boat to flit between hilltops, planting weather sensors and – if forced to admit it – larking about a bit. Most of their heavier items were aboard the boat, along with all their weapons other than sidearms. They have the usual contents of planetside working dress plus a few minor tools and instruments. The only larger item they have with them is a backpack-sized weather monitoring station.

With only personal comms, the team struggled at first to make contact with the rest of the crew. This problem was solved by using the remote data transmitter on the weather station – simple enough once they thought of it. Their initial messages are determinedly cheerful, with an undertone of anxiety about the sudden disappearance of their transport but then the team starts reporting attacks by the local flyers.

Soon, the tone is fearful as the team requests emergency extraction. They have made a variety of 'bird-bashers' from parts of the weather station and are fending off attacks as best they can. Gunshots work well but only for a short time and actually shooting the flyers is rather tricky. Gauss pistols do not make enough noise and revolver ammunition is running out.

If the team is not extracted quickly they will be mobbed and ultimately brought down. Already some of the party are injured and with little cover on the hillside it is only a matter of time before they are overwhelmed. An extraction is not very difficult to set up; any grav vehicle or small craft can pick up the team. However, this does mean landing and opening the doors into a maelstrom of swooping flyers. The predators are adept at immobilising prey and despite not having seen upright bipeds before they are quite capable of figuring out that legs, especially the backs of knees, can be attacked to immobilise a human or similar creature.

It may be necessary to dash out and drag wounded comrades aboard and there is always the possibility of flyers getting inside a vehicle. The situation is chaotic and some of the victims may panic, adding to the general confusion. Overall, however, the hillside rescue is relatively straightforward. The same cannot be said for the other situation.



Out on the Plains

The situation on the plains is far more complex. One of the expedition's vehicles is on its side in a gulley, with two casualties inside. The other, with four occupants, has made repeated attempts to thread through the herd to reach the distressed Ranger. Miyek is nearby in one of the utility boats, making short forays from its airlock before having to retreat as a herbivore approaches. Between attempts to reach Shandra, Miyek makes desperate calls for help using the boat's communicator. It is from him that the Travellers are likely to learn that Shandra is pregnant, which may shed some light on Miyek's behaviour.

The expedition fell afoul of a herd rather than a family group. There are 30-40 of the creatures, about half of them juveniles. There are five males, all in an agitated state and inclined to be territorial. One of them has injured itself colliding with the vehicle and has a concussion, perhaps even bleeding on the brain, which has made it act in a psychotic fashion. The creatures will not move away unless somehow forced to and seem determined to destroy the two vehicles as well as any others that arrive. As yet they have not yet attacked the utility boat but sooner or later this is likely. The herbivores probably cannot do much harm to the boat but that will not prevent them from trying.

The Travellers will need to find a way to extricate the two vehicle crews as well as Miyek and ideally all vehicles and craft. One option is to massacre the herd. This is quite an undertaking but will contribute to the food gathering operation. The herd will flee once several of its members have been slain but in the meantime even females and juveniles will charge anything that gets in the way.

A less murderous option would be to distract the herd by getting some to chase a vehicle or finding a way to frighten the creatures. Loud noises or fire might work, although there is always a chance of hitting just the right frequency to enrage a male instead of frightening it. Brave Travellers might just dash in and hope for the best but this is very risky. Anyone going near a juvenile will certainly be attacked, in the form of kicks and bites if there is no room for a headlong charge. Strikes with whip-like tails are likely if any Traveller is within reach; it is quite possible to be hit from several directions at once. Tail strikes on a vehicle are noisy and alarming but will not do much damage.

The **Utility Boat** is in no danger and, despite minor damage from an unfriendly landing, entirely flyable. However, Miyek will not take it anywhere whilst Shandra is in danger. He is not amenable to suggestions or orders; he will shout plenty of his own although. He

has no plan other than to somehow get to Shandra and then... he has no idea. Miyek is, in short, in a blind and desperate panic and likely to be more of a problem than assistance. He will violently resist any attempt to move the boat and demand to fly it if it is to be used as an ambulance even if there are better pilots available. The Travellers will have to deal with his interference throughout the incident.

The **Second Ranger** is intact and functional but dinged by glancing collisions with large herbivores. The crew are rattled but willing to assist in any way they can. However, they will balk at extremely dangerous ideas like acting as decoys for the animals on foot. Overall, if the Travellers come up with a plan, the second Ranger crew will be an asset if handled well. If the Travellers have no ideas the crew will do the only thing they can think of; a desperate swerving run through the herd to drop two of their number off at the side of the gulley. These will try to assist the casualties out of the vehicle.

This will not work unless the herbivores are somehow driven off. The casualties are badly injured – especially Shandra – and will have to be carried up the gulley side once they are extracted from the vehicle. It will not be possible for the Ranger to remain in place during this evolution; it will be bulldozed into the gulley on top of the first if the crew try. Thus the driver will have to move off and make a second run through the herd, then another out of it or to the utility boat. This can be achieved if the herbivores are distracted but if not it will end with a wrecked vehicle and more casualties.

The **Damaged Ranger** is on its side, badly damaged from rolling down the gulley side. Both crewmembers have internal injuries; Shandra has been impaled on an antenna torn loose from equipment in the vehicle. Her condition is critical and the driver is little better. Both are likely to die within an hour if they are not delivered to a medical facility or at least stabilised by a skilled medic. The latter could be done in the vehicle with improvised equipment if the Travellers are willing to try but requires a Difficult (10+) Medic check and for the herd to be kept at a distance.

Stabilising the casualties buys them more time but they will still need to be evacuated to *Deepnight Revelation* as a matter of urgency. It may be that medical efforts and rescue work will have to be undertaken amid a hail of tail slaps and bellowing herbivores, with a concussed male running amok and Miyek contributing to the general chaos. Ideally, the Travellers will create an opportunity to get the casualties to a craft and straight up to *Deepnight Revelation* but other solutions are possible.

REFEREE'S NOTES

This is a confusing and complex situation made more so by the emotions of the people involved. The Travellers will also have to deal with the aftermath. Miyek *did* steal a utility boat and placed his crewmates in danger – he will have to answer for that one way or another. Shandra also violated the no-children policy. There is the additional question of whether the baby survives.

This is a sensitive subject that might best be glossed over for some groups of Travellers. The default option is that Shandra loses the baby even if she survives. If so, the emotions of the crew are complex. It is a tragedy of course but there is also the question of how selfish the decision to have a child was – especially as it led to what was effectively a betrayal of crewmates who might have died. In fact, some might have.

If the baby survives there are other questions to be considered. Is this a precedent? Will others be permitted to have children? Should Shandra be ordered to terminate the pregnancy? If not, then how will the crew raise and educate the child? This is an example of putting something into the setting and having to live with it – if the baby survives then from this point on the Travellers will have to deal with the extra complication.

Will concerns about the child result in others being put in danger? Will the child grow up to be an annoying nuisance who might be a risk to the ship? How to face the possibility that a toddler might meet a horrible end infected by the Deepnight Entity? These are questions the no-children agreement was designed to avoid.

There is also the question of Miyek and Shandra, and their relationship. Perhaps they will settle down or split up for good. If not, it is quite possible the Referee may use them as characters in some future incident.

Leaving Prospect

With replenishment operations complete and casualties receiving treatment, it is time to move on. Prospect DDQ-23 1 was not a death-trap, just an ordinary garden world with some potentially dangerous species. It was the actions of people that triggered almost-disaster. There are lessons to be learned here if the Travellers are so inclined. However, it will be necessary in the future to defatigue and reprovision, and garden worlds of this sort are the best option available. The next one might be more or less dangerous but at least the Travellers have gained experience in avoiding hazards.



THE TOMB OF CIVILISATION

The first waypoint in the riftsedge transit segment of the voyage is Radio Source Vilaakasii, named for an early Vilani merchant-explorer who opened up new markets and paved the way for economic annexation of a wide region. The strong radio emissions that make this a suitable waypoint are generated by a black hole, which was created by the catastrophic collapse of a giant star.

This event ejected a wave of energetic plasma travelling at around 6% of the speed of light along with intense gamma radiation that sterilised nearby worlds. The event took place relatively recently in cosmic terms, just 800,000 years ago, and spelled doom for an emerging civilised race on a nearby world.

VILAAKASII
REGION MAP



The Radio Source Vilaakasii map shows the immediate region. It can be slotted into the voyage at some appropriate point or the Referee may prefer to generate a larger area and place the mapped region within it. Indeed, there is no reason why additional star systems cannot be added to the map. However, certain conditions prevail in the area around the black hole, as a result of its creation less than a million years ago.

The collapse of the star caused a catastrophic outpouring of gamma rays and stellar plasma. The latter cooled and dissipated as it spread out but still created an interstellar shock wave that made the Darrians' Maghiz seem trivial by comparison. Systems within one parsec were shattered; those within two parsecs were heavily damaged. Beyond this distance the plasma wave was survivable but still caused damage out to around six parsecs, although this was patchy due to gravitational effects as the plasma wavefront passed stars and planets.

The wave took around 60 years to cover a parsec. A starfaring race in the region – if there had been one – could have detected it and taken measures to save at least some of their population, providing they survived the gamma ray burst. This travelled at the speed of light, reaching the first star system around three years after the stellar collapse released it. Gamma radiation destroyed all life on worlds within three parsecs, and resulted in mass extinctions on more distant planets.

A world with a good magnetic field, situated five parsecs from the gamma ray source, would retain some of its biosphere. Beyond 10 parsecs the effects were relatively slight. However, the initial enormous gamma burst has been followed by other, lesser, events as the black hole consumes its companion star. As a result, the region six parsecs around Radio Source Vilaakasii is unhealthy in the long term and species that have survived tend to display a high rate of mutation.

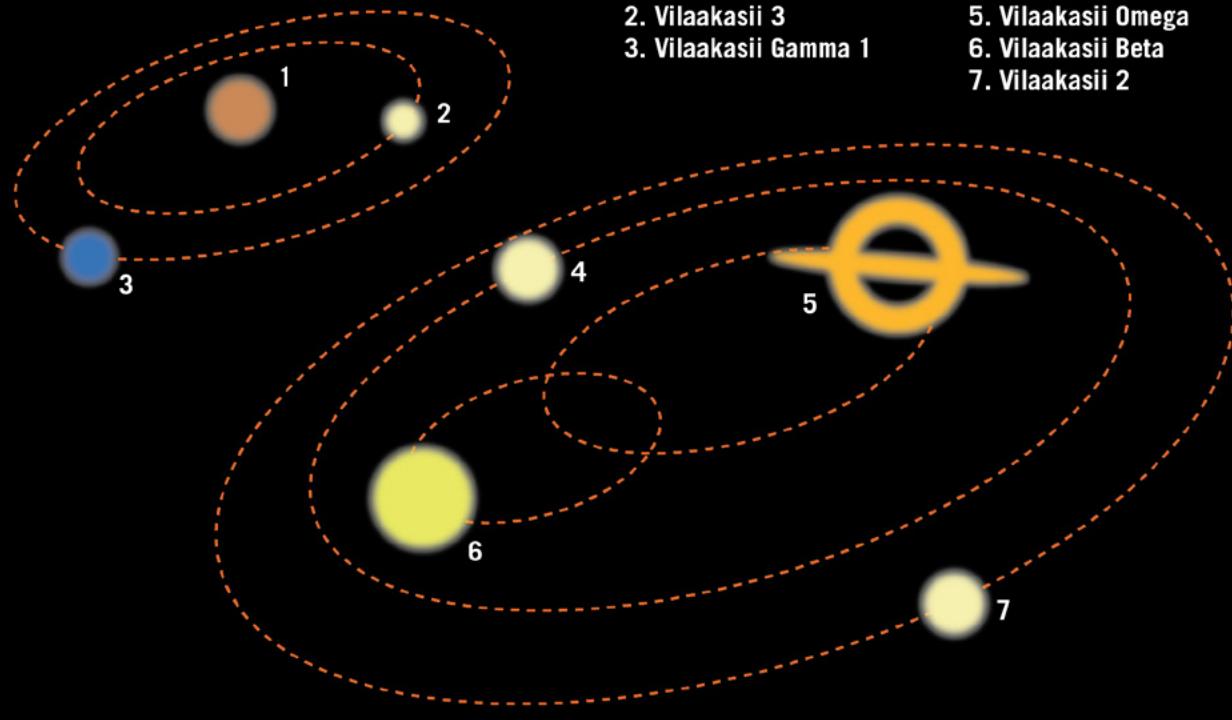
The Travellers are under no obligation to visit the Vilaakasii system but it is a wonderful opportunity to investigate a black hole at close range. Whilst mindful of the dangers, the mission's scientists will push for a visit if feasible. They will also want to examine the effects of the star's collapse on nearby star systems.

THE VILAAKASII SYSTEM

The Vilaakasii star system (0306) once contained a pair of giant stars. These short-lived giants burned through their fuel quickly and one underwent collapse, creating the black hole designated Vilaakasii Omega. Changing dynamics in the system brought the second star, Vilaakasii Beta, a little closer. Gas stripped from its outer layers began to spiral across the space between them, finally plunging into Omega's event horizon.



VILAAKASII SYSTEM



Today, Beta is distorted by gravitational forces and steadily losing mass to Omega, powering a pair of enormous plasma jets from the black hole's poles. A disc of stellar matter spirals between them. The remainder of the system was always sparse, with a wide zone around the companion giants swept free of matter.

VILAAKASII OMEGA (Stellar Mass Black Hole) VILAAKASII BETA (Yellow Giant Star)

Vilaakasii 1 (Small Gas Giant)
Vilaakasii 2 (Small Gas Giant)

VILAAKASII Gamma (Brown Dwarf Sub-Stellar Object)

Vilaakasii Gamma 1 (X830000-0)
Vilaakasii 3 (Small Gas Giant)

Apart from a scattering of planetoids, some of which are on inward-spiralling courses and ultimately doomed, the system consists of three small gas giants and a 'failed star' in the form of a brown dwarf. This, designated Vilaakasii Gamma, has a few small moons no larger than a kilometre in diameter and a single planet-sized moon.

Vilaakasii Gamma 1 is the only solid body in the system worth speaking of. Its composition is interesting, as it lacks much in the way of heavy materials and metals, giving it a very low surface gravity for its size. Its atmosphere is partially frozen but occasionally fully

melted by a flare of heat and radiation from the black hole. Like all bodies in the system it shows signs of bombardment with hard radiation, which increases available energy for a time and stirs the atmosphere into a roiling maelstrom.

There is no scripted adventure in the Vilaakasii system, although there are plenty of ways one could occur if the Travellers are not careful. There is an incident to be witnessed if the Travellers visit, however. Small gravitational anomalies are hard to detect in the chaos of a black hole but eventually it becomes possible to resolve a moving anomaly as a large Alo'hei. It dips in and out of the gas disc at will and eventually begins floating close to the black hole. For a time it vanishes from instruments and then reappears, apparently a little larger than when it vanished.

If this is the same Alo'hei, then it has grown about 10% in the minutes or hours it was off sensors. It was at the time very close to the black hole's Schwarzschild radius; could it be that the Alo'hei penetrated the event horizon and returned unharmed, perhaps experiencing extreme time dilation but no ill effects? This is wild speculation since it is not possible to approach close enough to gather more data but there are no better hypotheses among the expedition's scientists.

THE DEAD ZONE

The star systems at 0206 and 0305 are in the dead zone, blasted by gamma radiation then a plasma wavefront. The force was such that some bodies were destroyed and others flung out of their orbits.

0206 VDZ-A is no longer a star system. What was once a K6 (orange) main sequence star was so heavily distorted by the plasma wavefront that it underwent a series of large nova events. Although not on the scale of a supernova these enormous eruptions blasted huge amounts of stellar matter out into space, reducing the mass of the star and ripping apart all bodies in the inner system. What remains is an unstable subdwarf star, prone to flares and distortions due to uneven internal forces. Most bodies in the system have wandered out of their orbits and will eventually proceed into interstellar space. Collisions have occurred between larger pieces of planetary debris, creating a system-wide disaster zone.

0305 VDZ-B once centred on an M3 (red) main sequence star, with a distant M3 companion of almost identical characteristics. Both stars remain intact but the companion is now in the process of being ejected from the system. This is happening slowly and involves the companion spiralling more tightly inward. It gains speed as it does and will scatter the inner system planets or perhaps even steal some of them. When the companion does leave the system it will be at high velocity, creating a rogue star system journeying through deep space.

THE HEAVY DAMAGE ZONE

The four systems (0308, 0403, 0506, 0508) in the heavy damage zone were all greatly destabilised, with some bodies settling into new orbits and others ejected from the system or spiralling in towards their star where they will be annihilated.

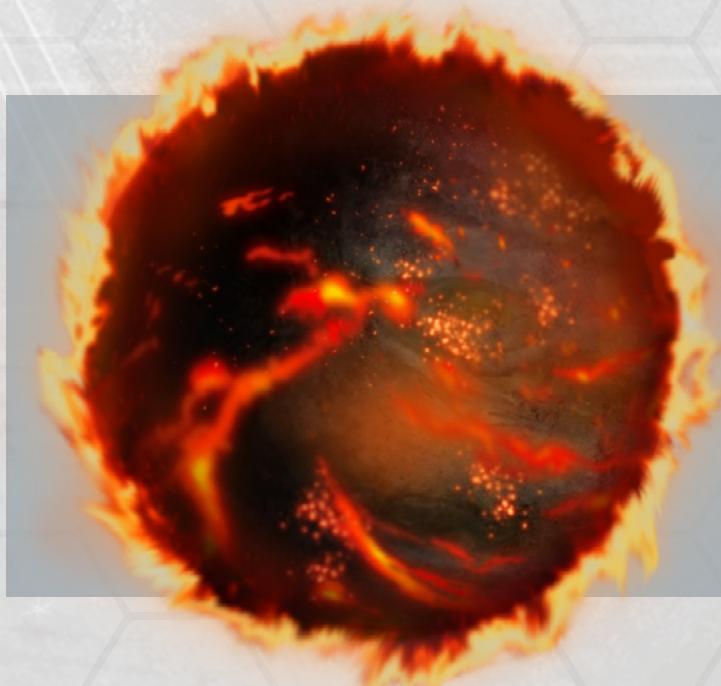
0308 HDZ-A centres on a G4 (Yellow) main sequence star. The system is in a state of complete chaos, with one of the terrestrial planets being ejected from the system and another in the process of breaking up. There is a gas giant present in the outsystem that is relatively unaffected but the inner system is under heavy bombardment by planetoids that once formed a broad belt at the edge of the warm zone.

0403 HDZ-B is a brown dwarf system, orbited by a small gas giant and a planetoid belt. The latter was heavily disrupted and remains chaotic, with many bodies on eventual collision courses with the gas giant or brown dwarf.

0506 HDZ-C or **Vilaakasii-Proxima** is the system designated as the location of choice to drop a record buoy. It was anticipated that a preselected location might turn out to be unsuitable, so the follow-on missions are expected to search the surrounding systems. However, the preselected location was to be used if practicable. The system was chosen for a very obvious star, a yellow giant just finishing its expansion. The star will collapse in a few million years but is expected to be stable over any duration that matters to the people of Charted Space.

Remote sensing indicates multiple bodies present including gas giants. Like VDZ-A, this system has been heavily disrupted. One of the outer gas giants is falling slowly inward, perturbing every other body as it goes. Planetoid bombardment has extensively cratered the two terrestrial worlds, pounding the innermost despite its dense (but unbreathable) atmosphere.

It is the innermost large gas giant that is perhaps the most interesting. It is on fire. That is, high-intensity radiation has ignited chemical reactions in the atmosphere, which have been ongoing since the first gamma pulse reached the system. This is not stellar fusion; it is a chemical reaction. The amount of energy required to start and sustain such a phenomenon is unimaginable.



A gas giant on fire

VILAAKASII-PROXIMA (G2 Giant Star)

- VP 1 (X7A3000-0)
- VP 2 (Large Gas Giant)
- VP 3 (X421000-0)
- VP 4 (Small Gas Giant)
- VP 4 (X000000-0)
- VP 6 (Large Gas Giant, Unstable Orbit)
- VP 7 (Small Gas Giant)

0508 HDZ-D is a trinary system with a G4 (yellow) main sequence star and its M5 (red) close companion distantly orbited by another M5 star and two planetary bodies. A broad and chaotic planetoid belt may be the remains of a third. There are no gas giants in the system but ice is present in the belt.

THE OUTER DAMAGE ZONE

The star systems at 0103, 0502, 0503, 0509, 0602, 0604, 0608 and 0806 have all suffered some damage. The Referee can generate these as normal if the Travellers choose to visit but only 0607 and 0806 are detailed here. If the Travellers visit the other systems they will find the same effects. The plasma wave had largely dissipated by the time it reached these systems,

so damage was limited to the effects of the gamma ray bursts. These will have killed most life present at the time, causing a mass extinction followed by a slow recovery, then possibly an explosion of new species to fill ecological niches vacated by extinct ones. Worlds that had no life were largely unaffected; a rockball is still a rockball.

0607 QVS-122 centres on a G6 (yellow) main sequence star and contains nine planetary bodies and two planetoid belts. Its mainworld was once home to an emerging civilisation, who might have found the exploration of their home system quite fascinating had they survived to attain spaceflight.

QVS-122 (G6 Star)

- QVS-122 1 (Small Gas Giant)
- QVS-122 (X000000-0)
- QVS-122 3 (X778000-0)
- QVS-122 4 (X420000-0)
- QVS-122 5 (X8AA000-0)
- QVS-122 6 (X000000-0)
- QVS-122 7 (Small Gas Giant)
- QVS-122 8 (X235000-0)
- QVS-122 9 (Small Gas Giant)
- QVS-122 10 (Small Gas Giant)
- QVS-122 11 (X334000-0)

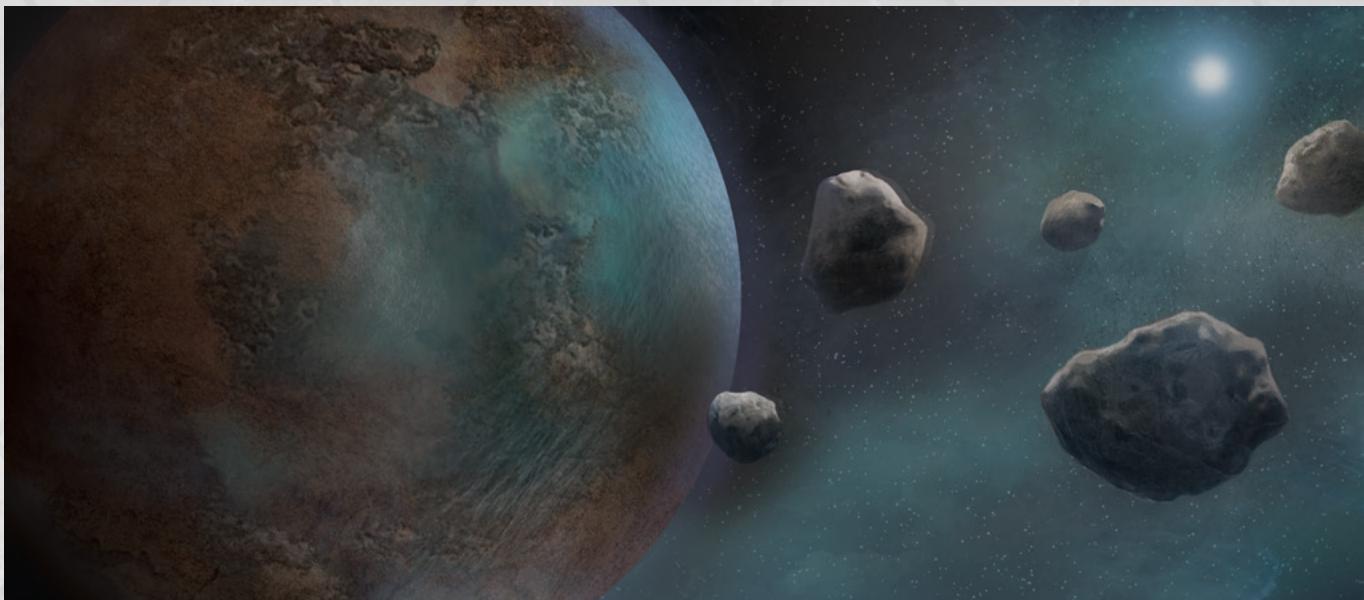
ENVIRONMENT AS ADVENTURE

Most *Traveller* adventures feature an element of us-and-them, in which the opposition is provided by hostile sophonts of one sort or another. Typically the plot follows the theme of a task that must be completed in order to thwart the opposition or achieve victory despite their efforts. However, in many adventures during the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign there is no intelligent opposition, although there may be animals or natural dangers.

In such an adventure, it is not us-and-them but us-and-that. The environment provides opposition, or sometimes the opportunity for the Travellers to create problems for themselves. This does not mean every location has to be filled with poisonous bats and explosive lava – or exploding bats and poisonous lava for that matter! Most hazards are passive, in that a cautious Traveller will not be endangered or sufficiently localised that the Travellers can choose to avoid contact.

Sometimes the environment has a story to tell. Piecing together ‘what happened here’ is both a puzzle and the reward for the adventure – this is a voyage of discovery, after all. Alternatively, the environment might provide the opportunity for a story. A simple skill check to avoid snagging a vacc suit whilst exploring airless caves is not very interesting but a situation where the Travellers must cross a jagged area to reach someone who has suffered a punctured suit – in low gravity, in the dark – can become a tense and exciting situation that might be just as memorable as a fight with space pirates or hostile mercenaries.

If the Referee is careful to think out the details of the environment and presents them to the Travellers in an interesting way then the environment can be the adventure. Add in the antics of crewmates and the occasional encounter with other people and the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign becomes a fascinating and varied experience.



QVS-122 4, 5 and 8 have an atmosphere of sorts, although none are breathable and conditions are harsh. QVS-122 5 is a frozen water world, just too far from its primary to retain water in a constant liquid state. Its thick atmosphere of carbon dioxide and nitrogen traps enough solar energy to allow the surface to become slush laced with monstrous icebergs in some areas. Deep beneath the ice there are pockets of liquid water under high pressure. These sometimes escape to the surface in an explosion of spray that falls as chunks of ice.

QVS-122 11 is a transient body, possibly a moon of one of the gas giants, which is in the process of leaving the system. Its atmosphere of methane and ammonia has frozen, creating an iceball that will not thaw until it enters orbit around a new sun. The ejection event does not appear to be connected with the nearby supernova, since plasma from the explosion is frozen into the surface gases – suggesting the moon was already on its cold journey when the wavefront arrived.

Tomb

Unless the Travellers come up with some other name, QVS-122 3 will be referred to as ‘Tomb’ by expedition staff. It was once a lush, green world with small continents surrounded by wide but shallow oceans and home to an emerging civilisation. The people of Tomb were upright bipeds, smaller than a human but similarly proportioned. They had attained a late industrial Tech Level and were just embarking on their first explorations of space when the supernova event occurred.

Today, Tomb is a wasteland. Bursts of intense gamma radiation killed off most of the higher animals almost immediately and caused sufficient devastation that

plant life also began to die. The plasma wavefront did relatively little damage but more than 99% of species on the planet were extinct before it arrived. In the intervening 800,000 years some regrowth has occurred. Most life is of a very simple sort; algae and lichens for the most part and pseudo-insects that feed upon them. However, there are pockets of greenery where more advanced plants survived and began to repopulate the land. There are few animal species on land but some sea creatures have survived. The seas also have a considerable amount of plant life, allowing a rapid repopulation of a few sea-dwelling species.

Approaching Tomb

From a distance, QVS-122 3 looks inviting. It has extensive cloud cover which, whilst sufficiently off-colour to indicate an atmospheric taint, does mean liquid water and therefore the possibility of life. Closer inspection reveals how little there is of that, at least on land. The small continents are, for the most part, barren expanses of dirt and rock – although there are areas of obvious vegetation. These in some cases cover whole islands or island chains, or are geographically confined by mountains and other obstacles. This is not a natural pattern for vegetation and atmospheric sampling suggests there is too little plant life to have produced the oxygen level in the atmosphere. Something killed most of the life on this planet – and the culprit is obviously the nearby supernova.

QVS-122 3 has a small moon. If the Travellers think to scan it in more than a cursory way they will find two areas of unusual reflectivity, which upon closer inspection also have concentrations of heavier metals than would be found in the moon’s crust. An approach



to visual range shows the same scene at each point. On the moon's surface, in an impact crater with a solid base and reasonably flat surface, stands a small shelter of lightweight alloy and thin fabric. One of the two has been shredded by micrometeorites but the other has escaped intact. Nearby are instruments – clunky and obviously low-technology – and an antenna cluster.

Indentations in the surface suggest that a craft landed here, long ago, and set up an exploration base. These were not starfarers; they were explorers from the planet below. Working with the best tech they had, they set off to explore their system and set foot upon another world before an uncaring universe wiped them out. At both sites they left a flag, big enough to be seen from the mainworld through a powerful telescope. It depicts a sun and a world orbiting it in silver and black. This curiously familiar motif may have been the mission symbol or a national flag but either way these brave people left their mark upon the universe.

Scanning the planet from orbit indicates no advanced life on land but there are areas where drifting dust has only partially covered the ruins of cities. Nothing remains above ground level but the grid of roads and structures can be made out. An archaeological dig will reveal more about the people who built the cities but there is an easier way to get this information. Centring on a sheltered valley on one of the less ravaged islands is a curious metallic anomaly with a powerful magnetic return.

This anomaly turns out to be the rusted remains of literally thousands of ground vehicles and some aircraft. The latter are confined to what was once a makeshift airstrip at the base of the valley. There are similar but much smaller anomalies elsewhere on the planet, notably where cities once stood, but it appears that a great many ships sailed to this island and eventually sank off its coast; aircraft came to the landing field and were left to decay there. Vehicles made a one-way trip up into the valley. Now they are a metallic carpet underlying the vegetation that has regrown on the island, marking the location of something that must have been of great importance.

The Valley

The valley is the site of a makeshift bunker-city. Most of it collapsed over the centuries but a few tunnels and chambers remain. It appears that the people of this world realised what was happening and tried to save themselves, or at least a segment of their population. They hurriedly dug out underground shelters and supplied them with the best equipment they could salvage or grab at short notice. Ships and aircraft carried survivors to the island along with vehicle-loads of supplies and equipment. What could not be stripped out of the vehicles was abandoned and now forms an iron-rich layer under the local vegetation.

These measures were all the people of this world could manage but they were not enough. Within a few years the last of them died and the ramshackle shelters became

their tomb. No remains are intact after all this time; even furnishings have collapsed into dust. The only real clues as to who these people were and what they looked like are to be found in the remnants of their moon landings. They were more or less humanoid it seems, with dimensions similar to Droyne. This may lead some of the expedition's scientists to infer the people were Droyne but this was not the case. They were an entirely unknown species just beginning to step onto the cosmic stage. Whatever potential they had was wiped out.

Musings Upon Tomb

The discovery of this doomed world will have a sobering effect on the crew of *Deepnight Revelation*. The Referee might even impose a Minor Morale Check to see if the crew are shaken by the realisation of just how fast an entire race can cease to exist. There may be a counter-effect however. Among the bits and pieces picked up on the moon – preserved by the same sterile and uncaring conditions that killed off the people of QVS-122 3, is a smaller version of the huge flags found on the moon surface.

The flag is made of a metallic sheet and, although ancient, has not been greatly damaged by the passage of time. At some point after leaving Tomb it is found hanging from a line strung across one of the cargo bays. Nobody knows who put it there but the crew are for the most part glad they did. The people of QVS-122 3 did not reach the stars but *Deepnight Revelation* will carry their banner for them.

If the Travellers think to hold a ceremony or dedicate a section of the cargo bay as a museum to their discoveries – or to the memory of those who went before – the effects of a failed Morale check are reversed. The Referee may consider this an opportunity for a possible Morale increase. Much depends on whether the fate of an unknown species or the way the Travellers honoured their memory stands out most in the minds of the crew.

0806 QVS-88 features a binary pair of orange stars – a K4 and a KO with slightly lower mass. There are eight planetary bodies present.

QVS-88 ALPHA (K4 star)

QVS-88 BETA (KO Star)

QVS-88 1 (X401000-0)

QVS-88 2 (Small Gas Giant)

QVS-88 3 (X662000-0)

QVS-88 4 (Large Gas Giant)

QVS-88 5 (X8AA000-0)

QVS-88 6 (X3A2000-0)

QVS-88 7 (Large Gas Giant)

QVS-88 8 (X8A0000-0)

Three terrestrial bodies in the system have a significant but unbreathable atmosphere, whilst QVS-88 3 has a more or less standard gas mix. The world is rather dry but quite capable of supporting advanced life. Its ecosystem is in a state of flux, however, and shows signs of an enormous die-off around 800,000 years ago. This was caused by gamma bursts from the nearby supernova event, although that might not be apparent when the Travellers first arrive.

The fact that the world has a standard atmosphere, which is almost always the result of a well-developed biosphere, is at odds with the rather primitive nature of most life on the planet and suggests that something worthy of investigation has occurred here. The expedition's scientists will be intrigued to find a few quite advanced species among the many more primitive ones, whilst those to correlate a standard atmosphere with new items on the menu are likely to be disappointed.

DROPPING THE BUOY

Dropping the buoy requires a few hours' work by one or two small craft. It is not a complex task, although establishing a stable solar orbit that will last for at least a few decades without course corrections requires some calculations. The buoy has basic positional thrusters using highly compressed gas and can make minor corrections using its own internal positioning system but a bad orbit may be beyond its capability to correct and result in the buoy being lost before a mission can reach it and retrieve the data.

The significance of dropping the buoy is far greater than the difficulty of doing so. The crew have just left a record of everything they have found so far. They can hope it will be recovered and its contents taken home. Whatever happens next, the crew have left behind a legacy. Even if their voyage ends tomorrow, it will not have been in vain. The buoy drop also acts as a landmark in the mission. The Travellers are about 50 parsecs spinward of any point reached by Imperial ships in the past. This is frightening to some crewmembers and inspiring to others but it is significant to everyone. It may be that a celebration is in order.

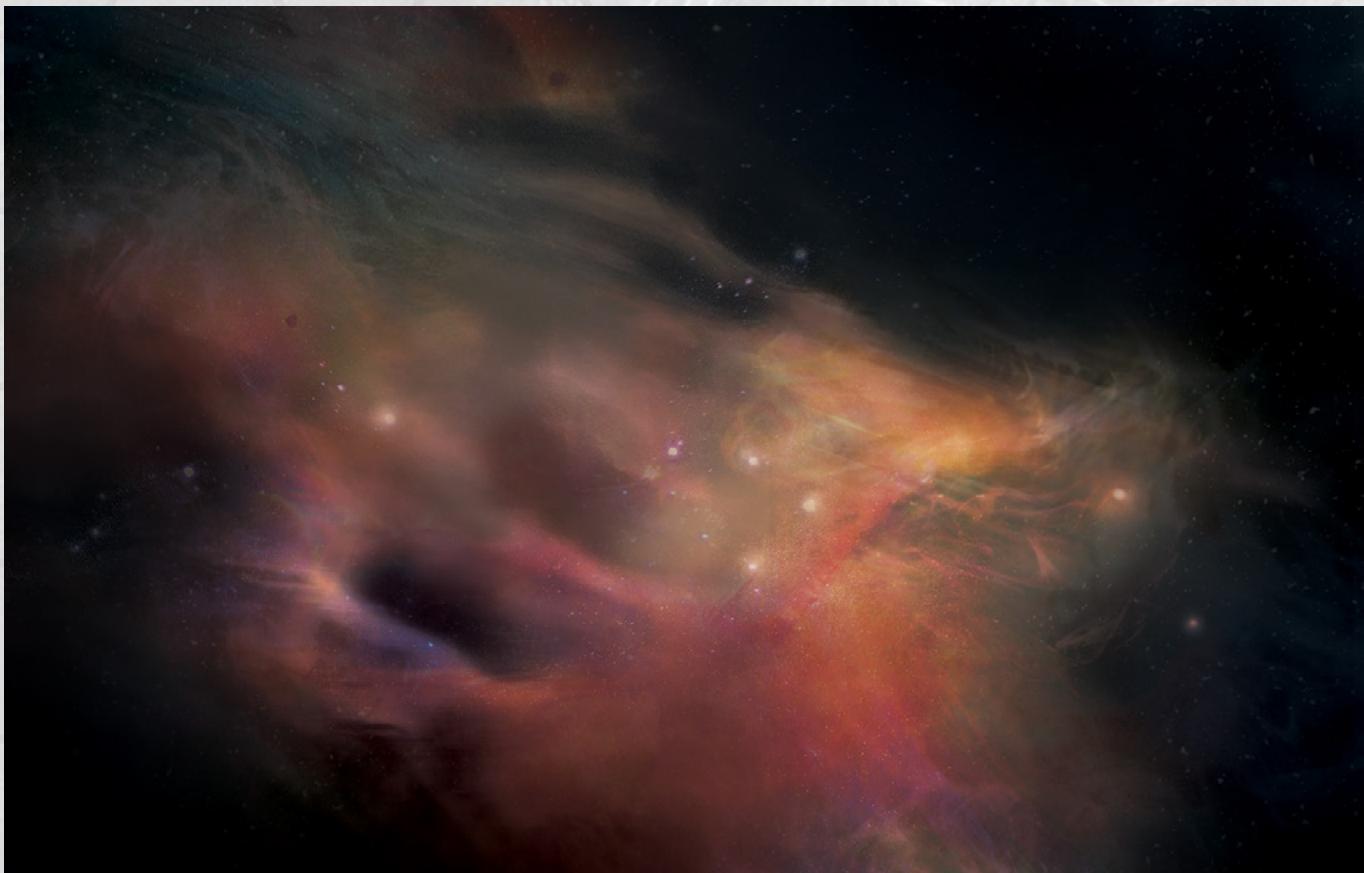
THE HENNIX NEBULA

After the first waypoint, the voyage resumes. The next landmark is the Hennlix Nebula, a bright cloud of dust and gas estimated to be about three parsecs across lying close to the border between the Vilaakasii and Deepnight sectors. As *Deepnight Revelation* approaches, it becomes apparent this estimate was rather low – the cloud is nearer five parsecs across. It is a reflection nebula, which would be seen as a dark spot in the sky ahead were it not lit by stars within it and close by.

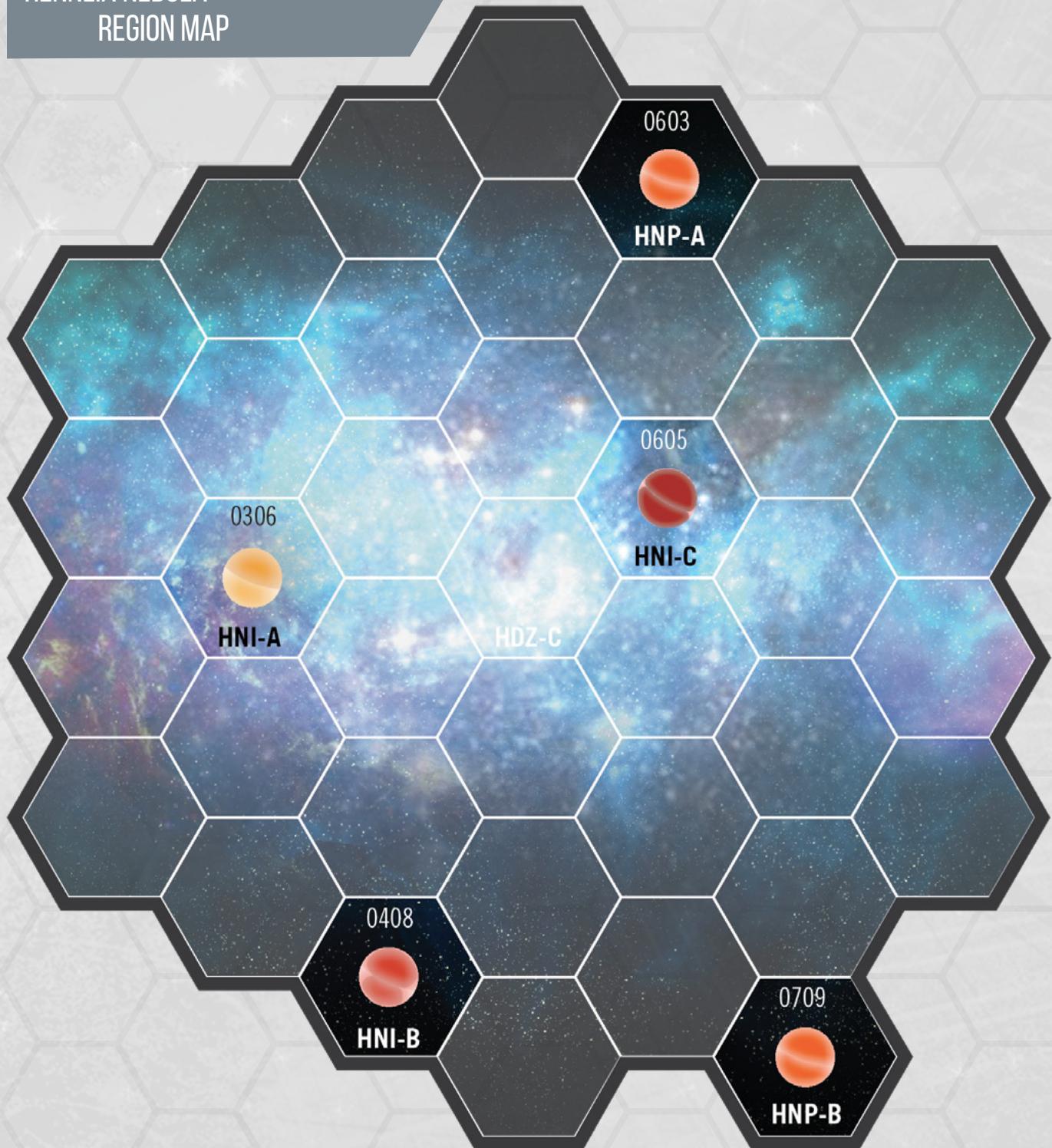
There are three star systems within the nebula and two bright stars close to it. Collectively these provide enough light to make the nebula visible as an irregular pinkish-yellow blur, growing larger with each jump towards it. Entering the nebula will be mildly hazardous but *Deepnight Revelation* is entirely up to the task. The mission's scientists will want to enter if at all possible. They suggest many good reasons like examining conditions in a nebula system but there are many who simply want to see what the inside of a nebula looks like.

Only the most significant star systems are detailed here. The Referee can plot additional systems around the nebula if the Travellers choose to visit them. As with other points of interest, long-range maps can be assumed to be a little inaccurate – they were, after all, formulated using remote sensors from hundreds of parsecs away, so the Referee has a little wiggle room to place the nebula where the Travellers are likely to pass.

From outside the nebula it is a feature in the night sky of all nearby planets and can be seen even in the day from some worlds. From within it is less impressive in some ways but also rather eerie. The shell of starlit gas and dust gives the whole sky a faint dusty-rose tint and ensures it never becomes completely dark on any world. The cloud also blocks out the light of stars outside it, creating a curiously empty sky. Some of the crew will consider this phenomenon alone worth entering the nebula but others find it disturbing.



HENNIX NEBULA REGION MAP



POINT OF INTEREST
QUICK SYSTEM GENERATION

0306 HNI-A

The HNI-A system is rather blandly designated ‘Hennlix Nebula Internal-A’ when first detected. Its presence can be discerned using gravitic sensors from dozens of parsecs away but it is only observable using optical instruments from within 12 parsecs and then not clearly. The system centres on a solo G7 (yellow) main sequence star. There are only two planetary bodies in the system.

HNI-A (G7 Star)

HNI-A 1 (X2000000-0)

HNI-A 2 (Small Gas Giant)

HNI-A 1 is an unremarkable rockball. Its only interesting feature is a relative lack of craters, due to the lack of planetoids in the system and other bodies to perturb them. HNI-A 2 has a few small moons, some of which are suitable for landing or even mining operations. Their composition is not as unusual as some of the scientists had hoped but there is still useful data to be collected here.

HNI-A 1 is the probable location of the Droyne Experiment (see page 61).

0408 HNI-B

HNI-B is a trinary system consisting of a pair of M3 (red) main sequence stars orbiting one another and a distant M1. The primary system contains three planetary bodies and a gas giant. The system lies at the fringe of the nebula where the gravity wells of its stars have twisted the cosmic gas into spirals and thin areas. At times the nebula is thin enough in places that outside stars can be seen but never in the whole sky at once.

HNI-B ALPHA (M3 star)

HNI-B BETA (M3 star)

HNI-B 1 (XEAA000-0)

HNI-B 2 (X210000-0)

HNI-B 3 (X000000-0)

HNI-B 4 (Small Gas Giant)

HNI-B GAMMA (M1 star)

The innermost body, HNI-B 1, is an unstable super-earth. Despite its relatively high gravity (1.6g) the planet does not, at first glance, appear to have formed properly. Further investigation shows this is not the case; the planet does appear to have formed as normal but was hit by another body sufficiently hard that a chunk was blasted right out of its far side and most of the crust liquified. The planet then reformed but with deep faults and cracks that may someday cause it to break up completely.

The detached chunk should have been ejected into deep space, according to calculations performed by the expedition’s scientific staff. Yet it was not; it currently orbits B1 as a large and jagged not-quite-spherical moon, contributing to the forces pulling the planet apart. This situation defies physics, unless the chunk was stopped by some force and placed in orbit. *Deepnight Revelation* lacks the capability to tow such a gigantic mass and even the biggest Imperial ship could not manage it. There is no other explanation, however; someone sent a planetoid into the super-earth hard enough to blast a huge piece off it and melt the planetary crust, then caught the debris and placed it in orbit.

HNI-B 1 has a dense nitrogen atmosphere with a few traces of other gases. Its composition is such that the expedition’s scientists wonder if the world was not beginning to develop life when it was struck by a large planetoid or dwarf planet with such force that its entire structure was destabilised. The timing of the impact, as best can be discerned, is suspicious. The impact occurred around 300,000 years ago and may have coincided with the passage of the Droyne expedition through the region.

0605 HNI-C

The HNI-C system centres on a solo M2 (red) main sequence star. There are five planetary bodies and a planetoid belt in the system.

HNI-C (M2 Star)

HNI-C 1 (X000000-0)

HNI-C 2 (Large Gas Giant)

HNI-C 3 (Large Gas Giant)

HNI-C 4 (X200000-0)

HNI-C 5 (X224000-0)

HNI-C 6 (X8A1000-0)

HNI-C 5 is noteworthy for its large reserves of water ice, held in a reasonably pure form in underground aquifers. The world is too cold for life to exist on its surface. One of the moons of HNI-C 2 receives enough energy to have produced a basic ecosystem, taking the form of single-celled organisms for the most part, with a few more advanced species starting to emerge. The moon exhibits a curious pattern of what might at first seem to be craters. They turn out to be perfectly flat, perfectly circular areas that cannot possibly be natural. The Travellers may have seen this before, on Alpha during the *Deepnight Legacy* adventure. The circles were melted with powerful starship-grade weapons beyond the technology of any race in Charted Space.

0603 HNP-A

HNP-A, or Hennlix Nebula Proxima-A, is a solo star system centring on a K5 (orange) subgiant star. HNP-A is in the process of swelling up into a giant and destroying its inner system but at the same time it has brought warmth to the outer worlds. Nothing remains of the inner system; the star is surrounded by a wide empty zone with a few bodies orbiting beyond it.

HNP-A (K5 Giant Star)

HNP-A 1 (X000000-0)

HNP-A 2 (X521000-0)

HNP-A 3 (Small Gas Giant)

The innermost remaining planet is now a spiral of debris with a few large clumps or fragments large enough to be considered dwarf planets, obviously the remains of a terrestrial planet. It is quite likely HNP-A 2 will suffer the same fate but for now it has the beginnings of life. What little water there is is slushy and half-frozen, slowly evaporating off into space over time. The very thin atmosphere is mostly methane, creating an environment capable of supporting life but nothing compatible with the crew aboard *Deepnight Revelation*. This did not prevent the Deepnight Entity from gaining a foothold on the planet; tell-tale circles of total destruction suggest there were several points of infestation, or suspected points, and that some previous expedition dealt with them thoroughly. There are no signs of infestation today.

0709 HNP-B

The HNP-B system centres on a pair of near-identical K5 (orange) main sequence stars. The system has an unusual composition, with a single terrestrial planet, a gas giant and two wide planetoid belts separated by a sparse zone containing just enough material that the two could possibly be considered a single super-wide belt.

HNP-B ALPHA (K5 Star)

HNP-B BETA (K5 Star)

HNP-B 1 (X56A000-0)

HNP-B 2 (Large Gas Giant)

HNP-B 3 (X000000-0)

HNP-B 4 (X000000-0)

HNP-B 1 is a water world with a standard oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere. It has virtually no land above sea level and there is no sign of life on that land. The expedition's scientists expect to find the seas full of plant and animal life, since this would normally be required to create an oxygen atmosphere. Conventional science suggests the archipelagos and single small subcontinent should be covered in plants even if no creatures have yet left the seas.

What the Travellers find is a dead world, with an atmosphere slowly reverting to a nitrogen-carbon dioxide mix. There was life here, clearly, but apparently nothing remains of it. There are clues as to what might have happened; the first is a curiously round inland sea in the centre of the subcontinent. It appears that the topsoil and even the upper layer of bedrock has been removed (actually it was vaporised) down to a depth of dozens of metres. The pattern is similar to Droyne weapons used against infestations elsewhere.

Analysis indicates the beginnings of primitive life in the seas but there is no sign of the rampant underwater plant life and algae that would be required to create an oxygen-rich atmosphere. The waters contain a range of biological compounds that would not be produced by the life that does exist and which make the water of this planet toxic. These compounds are similar to both the tissue of the Deepnight Entity and the counteragent used against it by the Droyne. A careful search produces indications this world once had huge underwater clusters of what was obviously the entity's tissues. They were large enough to drive root-like tendrils into the seabed, and even crack rocks, but the entity appears to have died off. The best hypothesis the expedition's scientists can offer is that it grew too large for the ecosystem to support and caused a collapse, which led to its own demise for lack of food.

That is roughly what happened here. The Droyne expedition came back to find the world infected and debated annihilating it with an asteroid impact. They preferred not to massacre an entire ecosystem, so instead burned out the infected area and introduced a developed version of their counteragent in case they missed any spores. They were sure they had eradicated the entity but were wrong. It grew from a few remaining spores despite the opposition of the counteragent and eventually came into contact with the seas. In this environment, rich in organic matter, the entity grew at an explosive rate. It was unable to curb its hunger, however, and consumed more than the world's ecosystem could support. In so doing it sowed the seeds of its own destruction.

Some spores still remain on this world, in tiny clumps too small to be called a cluster. As life begins to reassert itself these micro-clusters sometimes enjoy a brief period of growth but thus far none has become properly established. The see-saw battle between the counteragent and the entity's spores has poisoned the waters and further inhibited the development of organic life. If the Travellers do not take measures to curtail the development of the entity there is a possibility it will eventually take hold on this world.

HNP-B 1 is a chance for the Travellers to learn much about the Deepnight Entity. They will see what happens when an entity grows unchecked on a habitable planet – a period of total dominance followed by collapse, leaving behind a dead planet. There is also an opportunity to study the developed version of the Droyne counteragent. If the Travellers think to take samples and study them, they can conduct an Extended (3), Long-Term, Difficult (10+) research project. If three breakthroughs are made, the Travellers' own counteragent will become one level more effective; a Stage 0 counteragent becomes Stage 1 and so forth. Details of the effects of the counteragent are found on page 3 of *Terminus Point*.

THE DROYNE EXPEDITION

The Droyne were in a similar position to the Travellers when they reached the Hennlix Nebula; they were far from home and operating with limited resources. Their technology was much more impressive than that of *Deepnight Revelation* but they were in many ways not so very different to the Travellers and their crew. The Droyne, like the Travellers, wanted to leave behind signposts for those they hoped would follow them and, like the Travellers, chose large phenomena as their markers.

Thus the Droyne ship *Tresskvuess* approached the Hennlix Nebula, although the crew called it by a different name, and sought a suitable place to replenish

their supplies. They intended to build a monument and leave a record of their mission as they had at other points. However, the Droyne had something else in common with the Travellers; they were capable of making mistakes. One of their scientists had been working on a stronger counteragent and accidentally contaminated some equipment. He avoided infection but when samples were taken from the worlds of the nebula region, the entity was introduced.

Wherever the Droyne landed, the spores took hold. It was not until a diligent crewmember detected infestation in biological samples brought aboard from one of the worlds that the Droyne realised something was amiss. By then, they were a dozen parsecs away. Reluctantly, the crew of *Tresskvuess* turned back. They thought the entity had taken root on one of the worlds they had visited and that they had somehow missed the signs of infection. Further analysis showed this not to be the case; they had infected the local worlds themselves. Wearily, the crew of *Tresskvuess* set about trying to undo their mistake.

Some infestations were easy to remove. Where the effect was obviously localised the Droyne scoured the surrounding region down to the bedrock with their ship's weapons, melting circles into the planetary surface. They were liberal with their firepower but stopped short of sterilising whole worlds – except one. There, the infestation had spread to several regions and the crew could not be sure they had found them all. With no



viable alternative they accelerated a large planetoid on a collision course with the planet and observed as it smashed home. Nothing could survive that holocaust.

The scientist who had failed in his duties was brought before the Droyne captain. His name was Oyskrusk and he was troubled by what had happened. A small mistake had caused the infection of multiple worlds, forcing his crew to take extreme measures. They had murdered a whole ecosystem to protect the cosmos from an infection they themselves had spread. Oyskrusk decided there could be no more such mistakes; his crew must not become the instrument of the Deepnight Entity. He would have to make an example of the erring scientist.

The sentence was death, of course, but the scientist had a proposal. Let his death mean something, he begged. Let him infect himself and report on the progress of the infestation from the inside. This seemed like a useful ending for a talented member of the scientist caste, so Oyskrusk agreed. A site was chosen on an otherwise useless world and a self-contained ecosystem built to house a contained entity. The work took months and when the biosphere was ready the scientist entered it and allowed himself to become infected. His name was Tyovask and he was a telepath.

Tyovask was a strong-willed individual; disciplined and dedicated. Even as the entity consumed the plants and animals the Droyne had given it, he made dispassionate and informative reports to his captain. The progress of his own infection was slowed by the counteragent he had developed and even when his body was fully consumed into the entity he retained a flicker of separate consciousness.

Oyskrusk and his crew made preparations to eradicate the Tyovask-entity once their experiment had run its course. There was sadness, of course, but Tyovask had atoned for his mistake. This would be a proud and correct ending. Yet when Oyskrusk placed his hand upon the controls to destroy the site, Tyovask's voice in his mind asked him not to. The entity was contained, Tyovask said. It could not exist outside the biosphere the Droyne had made for it. Tyovask would live within it, curbing its tendency to consume everything available. He would wait for those who would surely come after the *Tresskvuess* and her crew. He would pass on what he had learned. In any case, in order to kill the entity all Tyovask had to do was stop containing it. Its hunger would run rampant, consuming all the life in the limited biosphere, and then it would die.

Oyskrusk considered the proposal and agreed. More ships would be coming. They would find what remained of Tyovask and learn from him, and his sacrifice could

be more than atonement; he might be the instrument of destruction for all manifestations of the entity. *Tresskvuess* voyaged on and behind her Tyovask began his centuries of torment as part but not-part of the Deepnight Entity.

Unknown to Oyskrusk and Tyovask, the Final War had devastated the Ancient Droyne civilisation. The mission to Terminus Point had been forgotten; no more ships were coming. Tyovask somehow retained a sliver of himself through the centuries and the millennia, until finally *Deepnight Revelation* arrived.

IN THE HENNLIX NEBULA

There is an overall storyline to the Hennlix Nebula segment of the transit. The Travellers will discover what the Deepnight Entity can do to a world, which may lead them to false conclusions or confusion when they reach Terminus. They will also have an opportunity to improve their counteragent and learn more about the Droyne expedition as well as the entity itself. At the end of this segment the Travellers should know the name of the Droyne ship and its captain, and should have developed a degree of familiarity with those who went before them. All of these factors will play into the *Terminus Point* adventure.

The Referee may have to play a little fast and loose in order to ensure the Travellers do not miss vital clues. If they are presented with information and fail to see its significance that is their problem but the Referee should take steps to ensure the information is available. This may mean either discreetly moving the locations of various encounters in this adventure such that the Travellers stumble upon them or – better – leading the Travellers to the right place whilst letting them think it was their idea to go there.

It may be that the Travellers decide to visit all five planetary systems on their own – it certainly would be in keeping with the mission directive to investigate phenomena such as star systems inside a nebula. The mission's scientists may also press for a visit to at least the three systems within the Hennlix Nebula. Once the Travellers discover traces of the Droyne expedition they are likely to want to search for more information, especially if they realise the Droyne were in the habit of leaving behind records for those they thought would follow them. Again, the mission scientists may press for investigation.

Failing that, the Droyne habit of leaving behind records will provide a more blatant signpost. At each location where they dealt with an infestation, other than by

chucking a rock at it from orbit, they left behind one of their conical rock monuments. Each is marked with simple inscriptions acting as a telepathic trigger to any sensitives who view them. The message in each case is the same:

The error of Tyovask was undone here. Tyovask awaits in penance.

Any sensitive triggered by the inscriptions will know where to find Tyovask's ecosystem.

One way or another, the Travellers are likely to confront what remains of Tyovask and learn a little from him, even as the entity he is part of tries to destroy them.

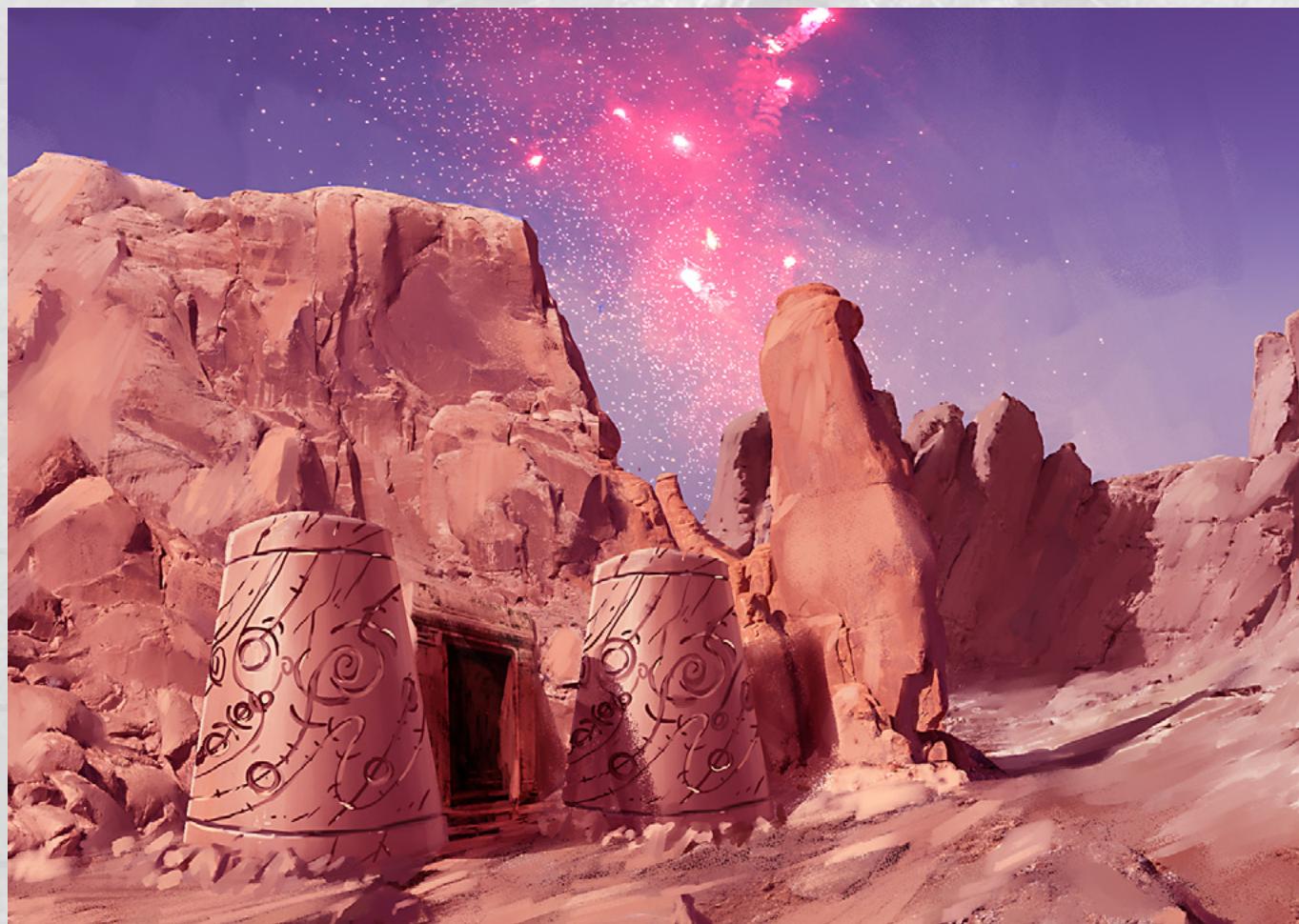
THE DROYNE EXPERIMENT

The default location for the Droyne experiment is on the first planet of the HNI-A system. The Referee can move it if the Travellers seem likely to pass by without finding the location but there are several clues that should lead them there. The planet is, as noted elsewhere, strangely devoid of craters. It has some but not the numbers

that would be expected on a rockball planet. This is for entirely natural reasons – the lack of planetoids in the system and gravity wells to perturb them – but it may still attract attention.

The ecosystem built to house the experiment is rather larger than the Travellers might expect but located deep underground and it may not be immediately obvious. A careful scan from orbit will indicate energy readings from the site, leading to an entrance cut into the side of a shallow ravine. This is flanked by two mounds inscribed in the same manner as those elsewhere. They tell of Tyovask's mistake and his punishment/self-sacrifice, and warn that grave dangers wait within.

Operating on the surface of HMI-A 1 is rather strange. The surface rock is quite smooth, particularly near the entrance to Tyovask's resting place, and covered by a layer of fine dust that is kicked up by any movement. It takes a long time to fall back to the surface and tends to coat equipment, suits and faceplates in a fine but abrasive layer. Only the stars within the nebulae are visible in the pinkish sky during the day, with a few other points of light dimly seen through the dust cloud. The overall effect is rather eerie, although strangely beautiful.





The Complex

The Droyne spent several months building a sustainable complex to house and contain Tyovask and the entity. They employed standard construction techniques – for the Ancients – and used a layout similar to some other Ancients sites. The complex consists of seven major chambers, arranged in a rosette of six surrounding a central area. Each is carved out of rock at a depth of about 200 metres below the surface. The complex would not survive an asteroid strike but finding a suitably large projectile in this system would be a challenge.

Inner walls, floor and ceiling are formed from smooth but not slippery fused rock, treated to give a soft glow underfoot and a much brighter one overhead. This is a passive effect created by some process unknown to the Travellers but has been recorded at other sites. The overhead light waxes and wanes to give a semblance of day and night, and sufficient to allow plants to photosynthesise.

Under the floor of the central chamber is a set of machinery built from components of the Droyne ship. It is connected to the six larger chambers by underfloor tubes and provides air and water recycling. The system was intended to run for a few hundred years; maybe a

thousand. It has struggled on for many millennia beyond that and is gradually breaking down. However, it will be tens of thousands of years before the site is incapable of supporting itself.

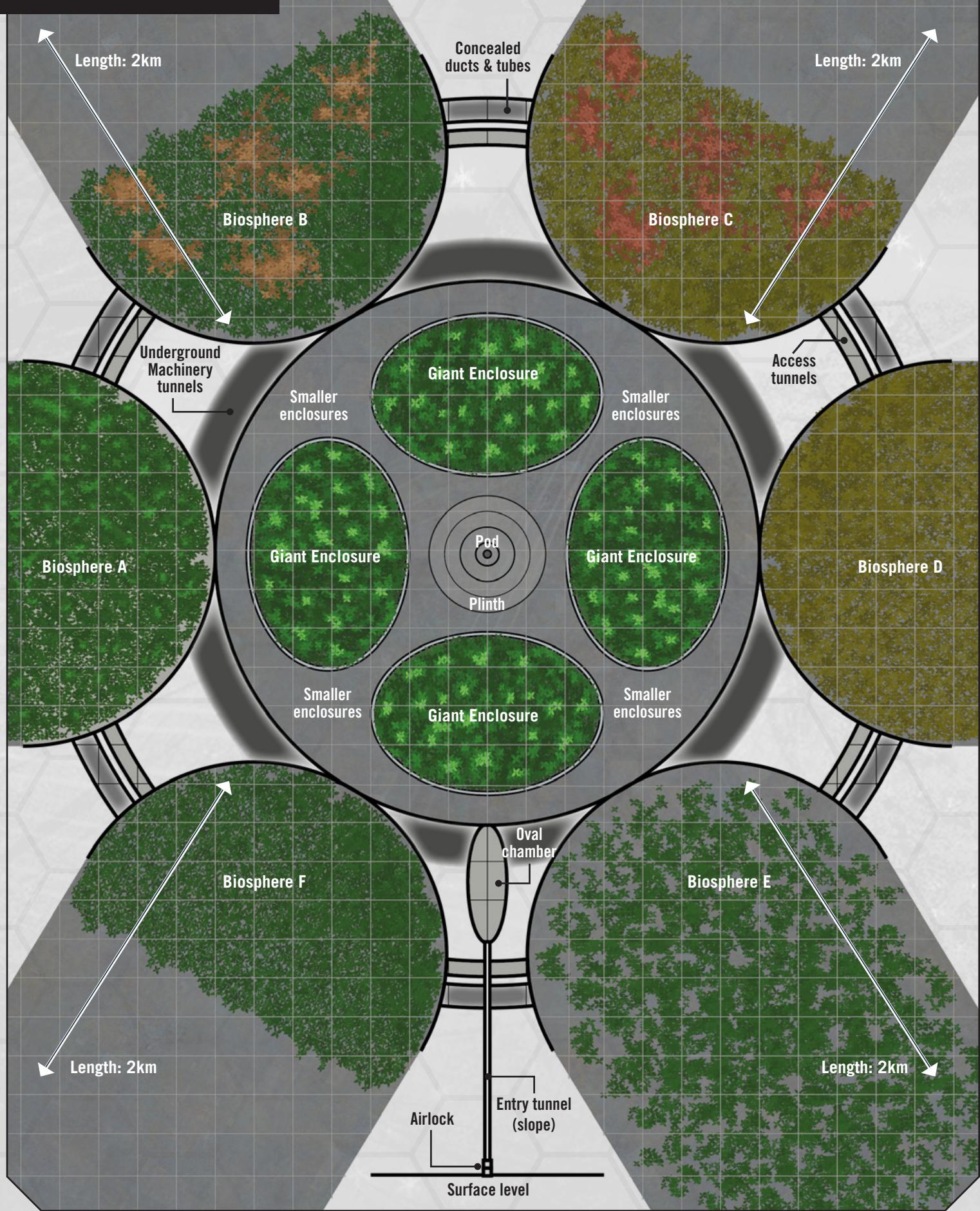
The six large oval chambers are connected to one another and to the entry corridor by wide access tunnels but also concealed ducts and tubes that interconnect at various points. It is thus possible for servitors to move between the chambers and get behind the Travellers or for a very brave soul to crawl through one of the ducts from one chamber to another.

Entry Point

There is only one way in or out of the complex. Entry is by way of a two-chamber airlock large enough for six people at once. It is necessary to enter the first chamber and wait for the doors to cycle, move to the second and repeat the process. During this time there are faint hums and slight changes in the light, followed by a sudden blaze of ultraviolet. Vacc suit faceplates will protect the vision of anyone who has kept their helmet sealed. Anyone else will be blinded for 2D minutes and suffer impaired vision for a day or so, imposing DM-2 on any tasks requiring visual cues such as aiming a weapon or avoiding a trip hazard.

THE COMPLEX

0 100 200 300 400 500
Distance in meters



The ultraviolet light-bath continues for several minutes and is sufficient to kill any biological agents – including spores of the Deepnight Entity clinging to a Traveller's equipment or clothing. Once complete, the inner doors open and the Travellers can enter the complex. This requires walking down a gently sloping tunnel for several hundred metres, which can be quite disorientating. The uniform light from the walls and smooth, slightly reflective surfaces have no reference points for the eye and the slope is deceptive. It becomes difficult to know if the Travellers are walking downward or along the flat.

The entry tunnel leads eventually into an oval chamber with automatic doors at each end. This chamber is, like the entry tunnel, spotless. It is also quite empty, having been used only as a staging point during the construction of the base. It is periodically purged with ultraviolet light in the same manner as the entrance. The chamber is impressive, at 300 metres long and around 50 metres high, with an opalescent hue to the glow from the arched ceiling. There are no walls as such; the ceiling comes down to meet the floor in a seamless curve that steepens at the last 2 metres.

The walls are inscribed in the same way as the mounds outside, telling a similar story of how the scientist Tyovask awaits within to reveal the secrets of his research. It warns against a repeat of his folly and, if the Travellers have not yet realised the function of the ultraviolet bath, a sensitive will now understand. A few seconds of exposure to intense UV will kill loose spores and long-term exposure is harmful to a cluster or shambler.

One implication of this is that spores that fall in dark places are more likely to take hold and that worlds whose sunlight has a very strong UV component are harder to infect than dimmer ones. However, once a cluster has formed mere sunlight is not enough to kill it; intense UV from an artificial source will be required. The Travellers may find this information useful in the longer term and for now they can be reasonably sure that so long as they pause to receive a UV bath on the way out they should not bring viable spores with them... unless spores are protected by folds of a vacc suit.

The Biosphere Chambers

There are six biosphere chambers, arranged in a hexagonal shape around the central area. Each biosphere is about 2 kilometres long and 1 kilometre wide, with an arched ceiling in the same manner as the entry room. The biospheres are a riot of plant life, most of it grasses and bushy plants of the sort found on many temperate worlds. There are no immediate signs of infestation in the first chamber but the Travellers may think they see movement among the plants; possibly small animals.

The six biospheres operate on a roughly 26-hour day/night cycle, with the overhead light from the ceiling reaching its noon-equivalent in one chamber and midnight-equivalent in the opposite one, with the cycle continuing smoothly around the chambers despite all the years that passed since its creation. Ancient machinery under the floor maintains the environment, although astute Travellers may note variances in temperature and humidity between the chambers. The support machinery is slowly breaking down.

Although there are no obvious signs in the first ecosphere chamber, the Deepnight Entity is present here. However, it will remain concealed as the Travellers move inward. This requires threading or hacking a path through the undergrowth; any paths that once existed were long ago overgrown.

Conditions in these six chambers differ from the first one. The entity has survived by consuming organic material in the ecosphere chambers on a rotating basis, with one as its primary feeding area and two others being consumed at a lower rate whilst the others recover. It could not do this acting upon pure instinct but is kept in check by what remains of the Droyne scientist Tyovask.

The state of the six ecosphere chambers are currently as follows.

A: Almost fully recovered. Vibrant life is present and rapid growth is taking place.

B: Feeding is beginning. Plant life is lush and vibrant but with strange and sickly hues. Some plants are clearly dying.

C: Feeding is in progress. Most plants are sickly and there are patches of obvious cluster-tissue here and there.

D: Feeding is coming to an end. Plant life is virtually all dead and clusters have grown here and there.

E: Beginning to recover. Regrowth is patchy and bushes are small. Clusters are present but dying back.

F: Partially recovered, bushes are smaller than in area A and there are patches of soil where grass is just beginning to reassert itself.

The Central Chamber

The central chamber is circular, with a radius of around 700 metres and a domed ceiling. It has six entrances all closed by automatic doors, and is lit on a 26-hour pseudo-day cycle by glowing particles in the ceiling. The chamber has a great many circular enclosures containing vegetation in various stages of growth and decay. Some enclosures show signs of infestation, with clusters of entity matter and gently waving tendrils, some are apparently clear but dying, others are clear and

thriving. The vegetation obscures the view ahead until the Travellers are close to the centre of the chamber.

At the centre is a round plinth, reminiscent of the mounds the Travellers have encountered elsewhere. This one has a pod atop it, formed of thin metallic material with six large oval windows of transparent crystal, one facing each entrance. Within can be seen a mass of tissue with a vaguely humanoid shape, formed of the tissue of the Deepnight Entity but different to those encountered earlier. Closer inspection indicates the main tissue mass is in the rough shape of a Droyne and even still has belts with the insignia of a senior scientist.

This is what remains of Tyovask. He has been consumed by the entity but retained sufficient control to more or less replace his previous form with a body of entity tissue. Tendrils emerge from the floor of his pod and connect him to other masses throughout the complex by way of underground conduits. It may seem to the Travellers that Tyovask is the focus of the entity infestation here but that is not completely true. He is part of it, and it of him, but the entity does not reside solely in Tyovask's form. The Referee should encourage the Travellers to believe so, however.

Tyovask and the Entity

The Droyne carried out Tyovask's sentence with careful planning and forethought. He was placed in the central pod and infected himself, whilst spores were seeded in the six growth chambers. As the infection spread, roots and tendrils found their way through the underground conduits to connect all the emerging clusters – and Tyovask. By this point his comrades had returned to their ship and monitored the spread of the entity through remote instruments and Tyovask's telepathy.

Tyovask was consumed but never completely ceased to exist. The result was an hybrid Droyne/entity in which Tyovask's discipline and dedication warred with the raw feeding instinct of the entity. He was able to curb its hunger, feeding from each ecosphere in turn and allowing it to recover. This has been torment for both him and the entity; a torment that has been ongoing for 300,000 years. All this time Tyovask has waited, hoping to pass on what he has learned, and slowly his self has been eroded into the mindless hunger of a new entity.

TYOVASK

Physically, there is no point where Tyovask ends and the entity begins. His body has been remade in the tissues of the entity, and is part of its structure, but his consciousness remains at least partially separate. The situation is one of a battle between the conscious mind of Tyovask and the subconscious instincts of the entity. Tyovask wants to communicate with the Travellers; the entity wants to eat them.

Tyovask's telepathy is weak now, largely due to the strain of maintaining control over the entity. If he ever did lose control it would immediately begin to feed on all living matter in the installation, including the Travellers. This will kill it, of course, once the food runs out but the creature's feeding instinct is overwhelming. Only a conscious mind with the ability to consider future prospects could control it, or even conceive of trying. This piece of knowledge may be relevant at Terminus Point.

Despite his failing powers, Tyovask is able to communicate with any Travellers not psionically shielded. The process is not quite like conventional telepathy – which is disturbing enough for those not accustomed to it – but takes the form of a jumble of memories, thoughts and ideas along with an overwhelming sense of struggle and hunger.

If the Travellers are able to approach within a few metres of Tyovask's pod he will convey to them all he can. They



get a sense of puzzlement that they did not arrive sooner and curiosity that they have no Droyne among them – early humans were, after all, among the servitors of the Ancients that Tyovask was familiar with. However, he is desperate to pass on his knowledge and will do so in a torrent of images and memories.

Unshielded Travellers take 1D damage and are disorientated for a few moments at least. They must make a Difficult (10+) INT check. Those that pass manage to effectively shunt the information flow to their subconscious, to be processed later. They are left with a few images but can function normally after the first D3 minutes. Those that fail take additional damage equal to the negative Effect of the check and suffer a DM on all actions equal to the negative Effect for the next 2Dx30 minutes.

The Travellers may perceive this as an attack, a feeling reinforced when the entity begins to move against them. Tyovask is unable to contain its urge to kill and consume the visitors whilst transferring his knowledge. Initially all the Travellers really get is a sense of enormous threat, Tyovask's decision to infect himself as penance for his mistake, his battle to control the entity for millennia and an urge to destroy this place. Specific information will start to emerge when the Travellers have digested the huge memory dump – a process likely to take several days.

Once the Travellers can make sense of it all they will gain an understanding of why the Droyne built the complex and what they did in the Hennlix Nebula region. Their unintentional infestation of worlds was, for the most part, undone but they regretted having to use sledgehammer methods to do so. Tyovask's research, conducted from effectively inside the entity, enabled him to understand what drives it and how it operates. The Droyne learned much from this project and ultimately chose to leave the entity contained here so Tyovask could inform those they expected to follow them of what been learned.

Battling the Entity

Whether the Travellers fire on Tyovask's pod or not, the entity will begin to consume all available organic matter and launch attacks on anyone within the complex. Small clusters begin to appear in all the ecosphere chambers, rapidly growing up the trunks of bushes or out of the ground, with tendrils bursting up from any soil surface. Unshielded Travellers will become aware of a scream of rage and frustration, with no conscious mind behind it. This is what the entity has been feeling for millennia, felt through the medium of Tyovask's telepathy. It is unsettling, to say the least, and may frighten some crewmembers into rushing for the exits.

Tyovask previously stopped the entity from trying to push into the entry areas but his control has now slipped. The Travellers or their crewmates may be pursued by creatures or tendrils, and may forget about the UV baths in their haste to escape.

Tyovask is encased in a pod protecting his body. It has Protection +10 and 100 hits. Once the pod is breached, Tyovask's pseudo-fungal form is exposed to attack. It will stumble out, trailing tendrils that connect it to the rest of the entity and lurch towards the Travellers, seeming very threatening. In fact Tyovask does not want to fight; he wants to die. His body has 25 hits. Tyovask will make token flailing attacks at the Travellers in the hope of attracting fire, until his body is blasted apart. Unshielded Travellers will sense... disappointment and anger... at the moment the body is destroyed. This is because Tyovask and the entity are one being and he will exist as long as it does.

Tendrils emerge from any growth container to attack the Travellers or anyone nearby. By preference they will grab crewmembers and drag them into the undergrowth to be pinned and consumed but may strike for 2D damage. A Traveller can avoid a grab or strike attempt by making a Routine (6+) DEX check. Anyone grabbed can tear themselves free by making an Average (8+) STR check. Failure indicates the crewmember is being dragged towards the base of the tendril. This will require D3 failures.

Once the Traveller reaches the base of the tendril they will be enfolded by multiple smaller ones the following round and tiny tendrils will push into their flesh within 3D rounds. Self-rescue is not possible after this point, and eventually hair-like growths will penetrate even a sealed vacc suit. The only chance for rescue is to cut the Traveller free. Tendrils can be severed by 12 points of damage.

Clusters begin to form in the growth tanks and tendril roots push through the ventilation ducts to reach the entry corridor. A cluster rapidly begins to form there. It may not be detected until the Travellers try to leave, as the doors remain closed. The cluster will grow and send out tendrils to block the corridor, creating a mass with 50 hits and capable of making two tendril attacks per round. These will strike, hitting on 10+ on a straight 2D check for 1D damage. Given enough time they will thicken and be joined by others, which will create a zone of thrashing tendrils requiring checks to avoid being hit rather than targeting specific Travellers. This will take 2D hours.

Other clusters will rapidly develop from colonies in the growth enclosures. These will eventually become minor

clusters but in the time frame of this incident they are mostly large colonies. Each has 20–40 hits and regenerates 1D hits per round.

Creatures exist within the complex. These have been created out of the tissue of the entity, based on forms Tyovask remembers. Some are basically harmless, other than as trip or infection hazards, such as those that resemble a half-decayed fungal rabbit. These are used to rove around the installation clearing up small pockets of vegetation that lie beyond tendril reach. Some are larger and more dangerous, however.

The larger shambler-servitors are things of nightmare, resembling headless quadrupeds standing about 1 metre tall with tendril/tentacles for manipulator arms. They can attack by charging into a Traveller and possibly knocking them down or by flailing with their tentacles.

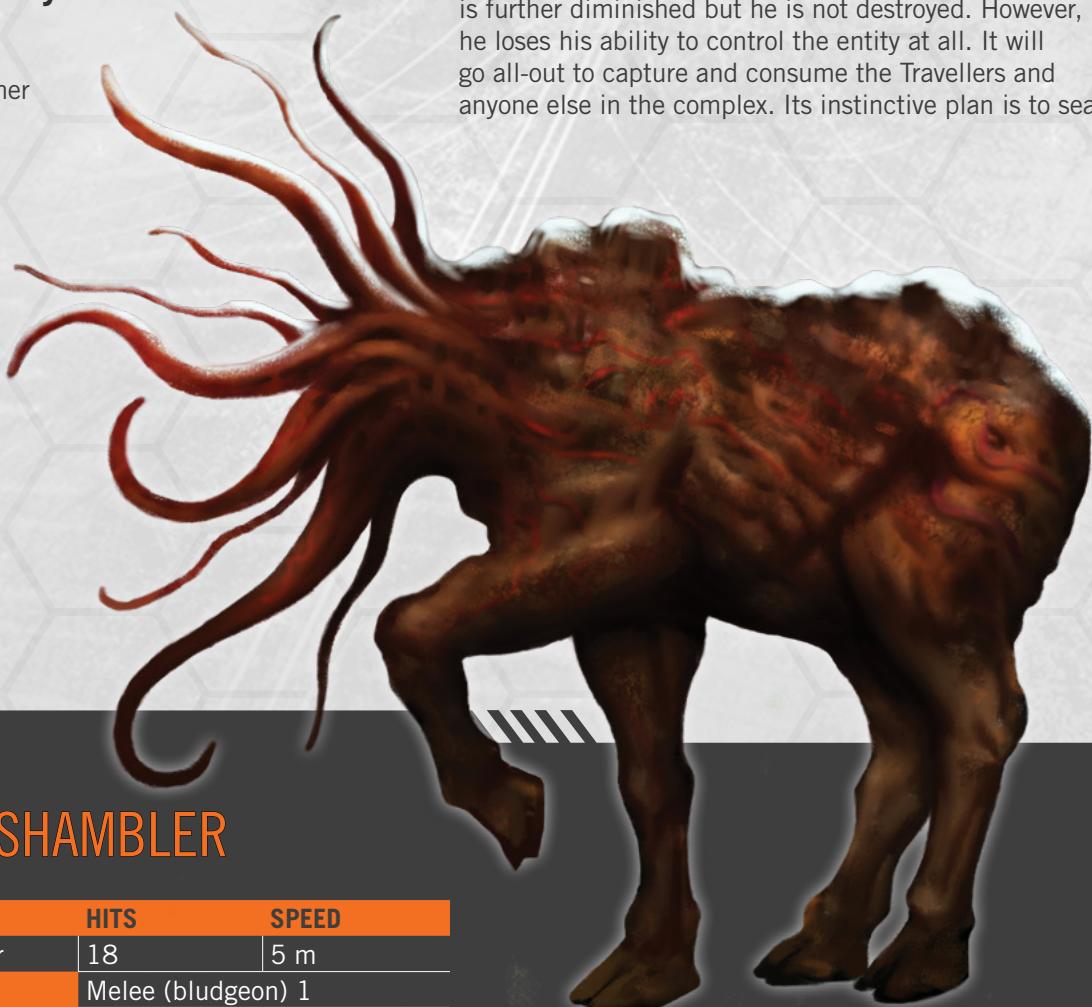
Defeating the Entity

The situation in the installation is better played as ‘horror’ rather than ‘combat’; the Referee should try to evoke an atmosphere

of creeping menace, culminating in the encounter with Tyovask’s form and a confused running fight through the complex. It is possible the Travellers will start shooting as soon as they see tendrils and clusters of course, in which case they will have to fight their way in as well as out. This is not really all that difficult; it is the drama of the situation that will make it memorable rather than the difficulty of the battle, although at the time it may seem things are truly desperate.

It is quite likely that the Travellers will believe Tyovask’s pod to be the seat of the entity’s consciousness and make efforts to destroy it either in response to the information dump from Tyovask or the entity’s attack. Either way, they will find themselves fighting the entity sooner or later. If the Travellers do not fire on Tyovask’s pod his form may emerge from it, apparently to attack them.

When the form of Tyovask is destroyed, his consciousness is further diminished but he is not destroyed. However, he loses his ability to control the entity at all. It will go all-out to capture and consume the Travellers and anyone else in the complex. Its instinctive plan is to seal



QUADRU-SHAMBLER

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Quadru-Shambler	18	5 m
SKILLS	Melee (bludgeon) 1	
ATTACKS	Charge (2D) or Tentacles (1D)	
TRAITS	—	
BEHAVIOUR	Mindless	

the entrance and use its mobile servitors to drive the Travellers close to tendril concentrations where they can be grabbed or eliminated.

The Travellers cannot destroy the entity by killing its clusters; not without an extended battle in the complex that might require days and enormous expenditure of flame and energy weapons. However, a nuclear demolition charge anywhere in the complex would destroy it and all its contents, and a pattern of hyperbaric charges would have the same effect. This will also kill Tyovask and what is left of him will be grateful for it.

All the Travellers really need to do is get out, if their only goal is saving themselves, or get a charge into the complex and set the detonator. The entity is not a conscious mind and will not realise what it is. Tyovask might but is more likely to protect the charge carriers than hinder them. Indeed, if the Travellers try to destroy the base they might find themselves momentarily stunned by a complete diagram of the vulnerable points and best place to put a charge in order to trigger sympathetic explosion of the installation's power plant. Tyovask is capable of giving them this, although it comes with a desperate plea not to fail.

The fight in the complex can be made more stressful by radio calls from detachments of the crew in other chambers. It may be that they have been caught by surprise and require rescue, or someone may have been enfolded in tendrils and in desperate danger. Meanwhile the shambler-servitors behave oddly. Most attack mindlessly but occasionally one runs in the way of another, protecting a Traveller before returning to its own attack. The Travellers may or may not realise Tyovask is not fully gone and is trying to help them.

Ultimately, the survivors will emerge from the installation and be beyond the reach of the entity. The Travellers can then decide how to destroy it – or just leave it to wither. Over the next few days those who received Tyovask's telepathic information transfer can begin to glean some facts from it.

TYOVASK'S WISDOM

Tyovask earned his horrible fate by failing to prevent infestation, thus allowing his comrades to carry the entity to several worlds. The information dump indicates which worlds in the nebula and close by the Droyne visited and how they dealt with the infestations there.

From him the Travellers can learn some or all of the following, at the Referee's discretion. Some of this information may be relevant – and some perhaps misleading – during the *Terminus Point* adventure.

An entity can be dispersed rather than having a single central cluster; its capabilities are the sum of its linked clusters, although dispersal is less efficient than a centralised entity. Its capabilities also depend on its environment and experiences. An entity that never saw an independently mobile creature might not come up with the idea of creating them – that concept came from Tyovask's memories. Likewise, an entity may develop telepathic or other abilities based on what it encounters.

It is possible for a powerful mind to survive within an entity as a sort of semi-individual consciousness. This was a hateful existence for Tyovask, however, and one he longed to be freed from. The entity itself is a mindless collection of instincts capable only of the most basic learning until it reaches a suitable size. It can elevate its mental capabilities for a short time by absorbing intelligent beings but as they decay or are taken over by entity-tissue their faculties are lost to the entity as a whole.

Entities are formed from undifferentiated tissue – that is, spores and cluster components are the same. This is one of the entity's strengths – it can grow into something very powerful without needing specialised and vulnerable organs – but also a limitation. A great deal of mass is needed before an entity begins to even approach the complexity of a specialised brain. Of course, one could grow large enough to have an equivalent capacity to dozens, hundreds or even thousands of brains.

The entity's instinct to feed and grow is such that it will consume everything nearby. If it runs out of food it will begin to consume its own tissues and may revert to a lower state. Eventually nothing will be left but a few spores, which can remain viable for millennia. It is likely that an entity turned loose on a garden world would consume everything on it and then die back, making the Deepnight Entity self-limiting at the cost of an entire ecosystem. However, if one learned to control its feeding instinct (as Tyovask did for the one he was part of), an entity could in theory achieve a sort of parasitic stability which might be maintained indefinitely.

POINT GRAINGER

The second waypoint in the riftsedge transit is Point Grainger, a point in space rather than a specific location. A small region was chosen for ease of location, based on local and distant reference points including the Hennlix Nebula, and instructions were to find a suitable star system in which to deposit the second record buoy. Preference was to be given to a distinctive star as that would attract the attention of the follow-on missions.

The best candidate for Point Grainger is designated DNS-AQ-406, one of a cluster of seven star systems at the general location of Point Grainger.

QUICK SYSTEM GENERATION

The seven star systems have been generated using the quick system generation rules on page 20 of the *Referee's Handbook*. These systems have been left part-generated as an example of how these rules are used and because no more is known about them at this time. If the Travellers visit any of these worlds or make a detailed remote scan the Referee can develop them in detail using either the system in the *Deep Space Exploration Handbook* or *The Great Rift* boxed set or the star system creation rules in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*.

System	System Density Index	Gas Giant Detected?	Borderline Habitable Mainworld Detected?	Habitable Mainworld Detected?	Planetoids Detected?
0305 DNS-AQ-305	5	No	No	No	No
0306 DNS-AQ-306	10	Yes	No	No	No
0307 DNS-AQ-307	8	No	No	No	Yes
0406 DNS-AQ-406	10	Yes	No	Yes	No
0407 DNS-AQ-407	18	Yes	Yes	No	No
0505 DNS-AQ-505	16	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
0606 DNS-AQ-606	13	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
0706 DNS-AQ-706	2	No	Yes	No	No

The fact that a body has not been detected does not mean for certain that one does not exist in the target system, although this is likely. It may be that when the Referee fully generates the system a suitable body may be added; remote sensing is not 100% accurate after all. However, the results from the quick system generation rules should be used to guide the more complete generation process if it is undertaken.

The result for system DNS-AQ-505 might indicate there are two habitable worlds in the system, one more pleasant than the other, but the Referee may take it as simply meaning the better of the two is present. Rather than determine the characteristics of the mainworld randomly, the Referee may choose to assign a UWP indicating a habitable world. The rule here is that if

quick system generation indicates something is present it is definitely there. If it does not indicate the presence of a given type of body, it will probably not be present... but may simply not have been detected.

DNS-AQ-406

The DNS-AQ-406 system is notable for its unusual trinary arrangement. Most trinary systems consist of a pair of close companions and a distant star, or sometimes a single central star with a pair as distant companions. DNS-AQ-406, however, has three stars all orbiting at considerable distance from the system's barycentre. It is effectively three star systems all orbiting about a common point. There is a further point of interest; a gas giant that orbits close to the system's

POINT GRAINGER
REGION MAP



SECOND WAYPOINT
QUICK SYSTEM GENERATION

barycentre. This places it distant from the three stars but its moons receive a little energy from each. The three stars are arbitrarily designated Alpha, Beta and Gamma, with the barycentre designated Omega for cartographical convenience. Alpha and Gamma are red main sequence stars; Beta is yellow.

DNS-AQ-406 Omega 1 (Superjovian)

DNS-AQ-406 ALPHA (M3 Star)

- DNS-AQ-406 Alpha 1 (X665000-0)
- DNS-AQ-406 Alpha 2 (Small Gas Giant)
- DNS-AQ-406 Alpha 3 (X9A9000-0)
- DNS-AQ-406 Alpha 4 (X000000-0)
- DNS-AQ-406 Alpha 5 (Small Gas Giant)

DNS-AQ-406 BETA (K7 Star)

- DNS-AQ-406 Beta 1 (Large Gas Giant)
- DNS-AQ-406 Beta 2 (X113000-0)
- DNS-AQ-406 Beta 3 (X53000-0)

DNS-AQ-406 Beta 4 (Large Gas Giant)

DNS-AQ-406 Beta 5 (Small Gas Giant)

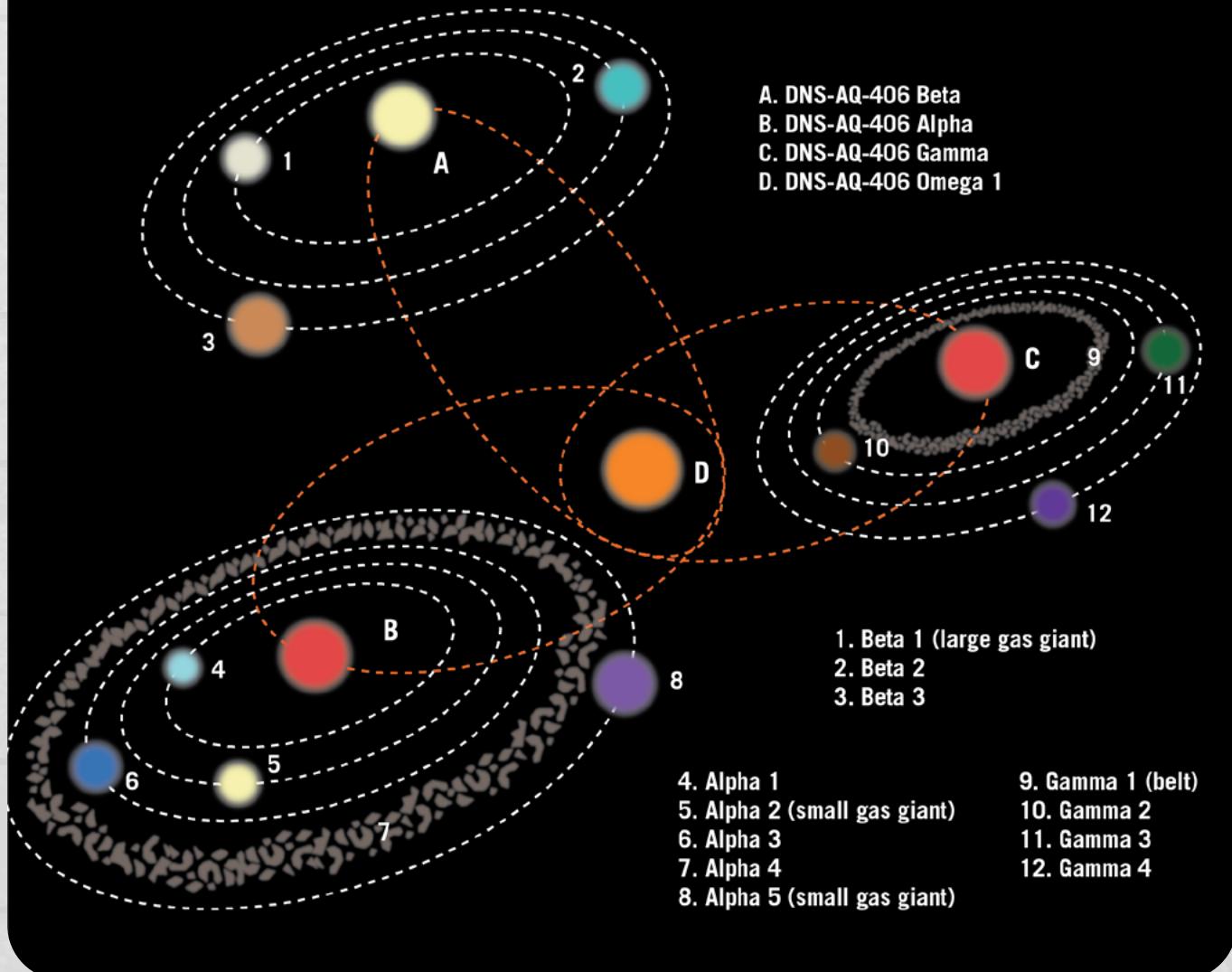
DNS-AQ-406 GAMMA (M6 Star)

- DNS-AQ-406 Gamma 1 (X000000-0)
- DNS-AQ-406 Gamma 2 (X520000-0)
- DNS-AQ-406 Gamma 3 (X9A1000-0)
- DNS-AQ-406 Gamma 4 (X710000-0)

DNS-AQ-406 Omega System

Omega 1 and her moons could be considered a system of sorts. The moons receive a fair amount of energy from all three stars in the system, which may be enough to allow liquid water to exist in some areas. The giant itself is a superjovian, much larger than Jupiter but not sufficiently massive to become a brown dwarf. Thus Omega is not the centre of a third star system but separate from the three sets of bodies orbiting the three stars of this unusual stellar grouping.

DNS-AQ-406 SYSTEMS



DNS-AQ-406 Alpha System

The Alpha system contains a planetoid belt. None were detected by remote sensing but the system is so cluttered with stars and other bodies that the belt was missed. There is also a large terrestrial with an inert atmosphere covering vast ice plains and a habitable world. This planet, DNS-AQ-406 Alpha 1, is detailed below.

DNS-AQ-406 Beta System

The Beta system contains a couple of typical rockball worlds, both with a small amount of unbreathable atmospheric gas and three gas giants. Although Beta is the warmest star in the group, it has no planets suitably positioned to benefit.

DNS-AQ-406 Gamma System

The Gamma system contains three terrestrial worlds, none positioned to have liquid water, and a rather sparse planetoid belt. Like the belt in the Alpha system this has escaped the notice of remote sensors, which is hardly surprising.

DNS-AQ-406 ALPHA 1

Alpha 1 is an entirely habitable world for humans and a good prospect for recreation or a resupply mission. It is a little on the cool side of temperate and prone to fogs and sleet in well-watered areas. This can be picturesque or annoying, depending on what the Travellers need to do but overall conditions are right for a varied ecosystem and the world certainly has one. Some inland areas are dry, with cold semi-desert as the prevailing terrain, but most regions are green and covered either with grassland or temperate/sub-arctic forests.

Operating on Alpha 1 requires little more than cold weather clothing, although shelters or vehicles with a good heater will be most welcome. The wildlife is not particularly dangerous but there are always opportunities for getting into trouble on a new world. It is probable that the Travellers will approach Alpha 1 with caution, given their previous experiences, but even the most cursory of surveys will locate a large magnetic anomaly in the centre of a broad region of steppes.

Overflying the region or undertaking an orbital reconnaissance indicates a large metallic object at the end of a gouge across the landscape. The object is composed of early-starflight era materials, notably steel and aluminium alloys, and is clearly a space vessel of some kind. Its displacement can be estimated at around 4,000 tons, in a configuration that does not match known designs.

It is obvious that the ship made a semi-controlled crash-landing at high velocity, and was torn in half by an internal explosion. This was more than likely the result of liquid hydrogen fuel meeting the planetary atmosphere and creating an explosive mix. From the plant regrowth in the gouge torn by the crashing ship, the crash took place a few years ago. A closer approach shows signs of a makeshift camp outside the ship. It is unlikely there were many survivors of the incident but some do seem to have made it out and attempted to survive for a time. There is no reply to radio messages, although there does seem to be power in part of the wreck.

The Alien Wreck

The wreck was once an exploration ship of the Alikaiia, crewed by a group of rejectees – mainly thinkers but some workers and warriors. It misjumped, which is not uncommon for ships of this type, and attempted a crash-landing with failing drives. The survivors built themselves a small camp whilst they made the ship habitable, buried their dead with honour and did their best to learn about the world they were now stuck on. They hoped they might be found and rescued but over the years met with accidents; illness claimed others. Now only one of the crew remains alive.

The interior of the vessel is, as might be expected, heavily damaged. It came down hard, killing many of the crew and dislodging heavy items of equipment that slid around causing additional damage. The midships fuel tank was breached at a point just aft of the central bulges and a huge explosion took place soon afterward. The two halves of the ship were pushed apart, coming to rest at an angle to one another about 150 metres apart. The rear section was most heavily damaged; little remains of the drive rooms or engineering control areas. The forward part of the ship suffered less from the explosion but was seriously damaged in the initial impact. Thus only a section between the central and forward bulges can easily be investigated and this is filled with twisted wreckage.

The Camp

The makeshift camp is a sad sight, comprised of half-collapsed shelters made from whatever could be dragged from the ship. All the expedition's vehicles were in the cargo areas and thus destroyed by the explosion, so the survivors had to do their work by hand. There are obvious graves outside the camp and from the vegetation growth it is clear that some are more recent than others. All are marked with a piece of metal wreckage that has been inscribed with symbols.

ALIKAIA EXPLORATION SHIP WRECK



It will be possible to discern a little about the physical form of the Alikaiia from the furnishings and equipment at the camp but it is deserted. It has clearly been abandoned for some time, although Travellers with Recon or Survival skills can find tracks suggesting someone has been coming and going between camp and ship, and making forays into the surrounding steppe. Amateur animal traps and a fish net can be found if the Travellers search long enough.

Akranika

One survivor remains alive. He is the thinker Akranika, a low-ranking member of the expedition who has been alone on this planet for over two local years. The Alikaiia are highly social creatures and isolation has affected him badly. He is paranoid and over-imaginative, and as likely to see the new arrivals as a threat as saviours. However, he is a scientist by inclination and instinct, and will observe the Travellers whilst trying to learn about them. It is quite possible that the Travellers and Akranika may end up stalking one another through the wreck, each trying for a clear look at the other.

Akranika can be coaxed out of hiding by behaviour that assures his analytical – if desperately lonely and terrified – intellect that the Travellers mean no harm. If they start exhuming corpses and conducting autopsies Akranika will construe this as hostility but behaving like civilised explorers will reassure him. Indeed, if he sees the Travellers investigating the things he would want to look over if he found an alien wreck, this will be immensely comforting to him. In fact, given his current mental state, Akranika may well forget his caution and just wander into the middle of a group of newcomers, pointing out wreckage and explaining its purpose whilst narrating the story of the crash. His words are utterly unintelligible but his demeanour unmistakable – this is no native life form of the planet, it is an alien academic delivering a lecture.

Akranika is half-starved, irrational and prone to panic attacks, he is also cautious about revealing secrets of his race to obviously powerful aliens. At the same time, he is desperate for company and hopes to carry the tale of what happened back to his people. In this way he will bring his comrades home, after a fashion. Afterward, if he is treated fairly, he may want to join the crew of *Deepnight Revelation*.

The Travellers can learn the Alikaiia language from Akranika, although it will take a while. Rudimentary communication can be established much sooner but full conversation and exchange of complex ideas will take days or weeks, even with assistance from translation equipment.



AKRANIKA

STR 3 DEX 6 END 4 INT 9 EDU 10 SOC 0*

* Akranika's SOC reflects his status as a rejectee. He is still respected for what he knows and what he does but has no place in mainstream society.

Skills: Athletics (dexterity) 1, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Science (planetology) 2, Survival 0

Armour: Chitinous Body Plate (+1).

Weapons: Carbine (3D-2), Survival Knife (1D)

Akranika has only about a dozen rounds left for the carbine he scavenged from the wreck of the ship. He is a terrible shot and will probably fire only as a warning or to attract attention, which may lead to a misunderstanding.

Referee's Note: This incident is likely to play out as an exploration of the crash site, with the Travellers becoming convinced they are being watched. Trigger-happy Travellers might end up killing a potential new friend; so be it. Akranika is not a fool but he is very lonely and not in a stable state of mind. He may resolve to make contact then panic and flee, or act in a manner that seems threatening. If the Travellers are patient and restrained they will make a friend here. If not, they can still learn about the Alikaiia – who they will soon encounter.

THE ALIKAIA

The Alikai are a multi-casted species, with notable physical differences between the castes. Their overall physiology is similar between all members but differences are apparent even in infants. Alikai are quadrupedal, with a torso divided into two obvious segments. The lower torso contains digestive organs and vestigial air sacs that once provided buoyancy. The upper torso contains the main life-supporting organs – heart, lungs and so forth – and can lean a surprisingly great distance forward or back at the ‘waist’. The upper torso is less robust than the lower and is lighter. It supports a small head with sensory organs and a pair of slender arms longer but significantly weaker than those of the average human.

All Alikai are covered in shiny, chitinous segmented plates that provide a measure of protection. The plates are very light and constructed on a honeycomb pattern with air gaps. Colouration tends to be a mix of browns, greens and dull reds, with the occasional individual displaying much brighter colours. The Alikai wear clothing of a sort but garments serve a decorative or protective function rather than covering body parts. Many Alikai wear only enough clothing to attach insignia or carry tools. They have no need for shoes as their three-toed feet are extremely tough; footwear would impede the ability of their claws to grip surfaces or projections.

EVOLUTION AND REPRODUCTION

The Alikai evolved on a damp world characterised by terrain much like a mangrove swamp. They adapted to this environment by developing the ability to operate in three dimensions. Alikai can jump a considerable distance and are adept at grabbing branches or any other projection when they land. In tangled terrain they move fast, threading in and out of branches and trunks with their four legs reaching out at improbable angles to secure a grip. The weaker forearms are rarely used during such motion.

Alikai are also excellent swimmers, although their natural buoyancy sacs are a vestige of a previous, more aquatic existence. It seems that at one time

the species was more at home in shallow lakes and watercourses than the surrounding thickets. The buoyancy sacs retain their ability to draw in air or expel it through gill-like structures.

At some point in their evolution the Alikai developed extreme specialisation into four castes, determination of which is physical at the point of conception. The four castes were probably breeders, makers, hunters and workers, in the distant past, but these groups have morphed as the Alikai developed technology. Today they are better described as breeders, thinkers, workers and warriors.

The breeder caste is much larger than the others but possesses a simpler brain. Juvenile breeders are almost as mobile as other castes but upon reaching sexual maturity a breeder will settle into a nest constructed for it and thereafter move around only within its confines. As a result, mature breeders tend to be capable only of very short exertions. Thinkers, warriors and workers are all male.

Breeders are near-mindless in any meaningful sense and would not be considered sentient. They operate on instinct, selecting mates from among those presenting themselves and nurturing their young. Modern nests use advanced materials and are grand by the standards of the species in the wild but their function is much the same. There are breeding chambers, egg-chambers and areas where the breeder can retreat from potential mates. Entering one of these private areas will rouse the breeder to rage and she is quite capable of killing a member of any other caste.

Mating is an uncertain and dangerous business for the Alikai. Breeders instinctively choose suitable mates based upon physical characteristics and pheromone triggers but they can be capricious. A breeder may display all the signs of having selected a mate then reject him. Sometimes this is a test of sorts and a persistent mate will be accepted. On other occasions the potential mate will be attacked if he does not make a rapid retreat.



WARRIOR



BREEDER



SOCIAL ORGANISATION

All castes of Alikai have a reverence for their breeders that borders upon worship. Communities may contain several breeders, each with her own nest, but the bond between those associated with a particular breeder are stronger than the cohesion of the community as a whole. Society revolves around the extended family unit of a breeder and her entourage of thinkers, warriors and workers, although individuals sometimes transfer from one family-community to another.

Social status is based upon achievement to a great extent, although a male rejected by a breeder may lose status despite being the best and most fitting leader for the community. Breederless communities of these rejectees tend to form as individuals drift together over time and serve a useful role in society as a workforce that can be deployed far from its home nest. Traditionally, rejectees formed scouting and work parties, or undertook construction of infrastructure. Today they are at the forefront of space exploration.

The interplay between a breeder and her community is complex. On one hand she has only an animal-level intelligence; on the other she is the object of veneration. The result is that communities expend considerable effort on pleasing their ‘queen bee’, as humans might put it, which can be counterproductive if she is unaccountably displeased by something. Setbacks and interruptions in major works are not uncommon as a result of an unhappy community – if the breeder is displeased the whole community will be out of sorts and unable to function properly.

These communities, typically comprised of a breeder and 200–300 non-breeders, are the central element of society. Communities sometimes specialise but all contain a mix of individuals and are capable of undertaking a variety of tasks. The direction of a community’s endeavours depends on who is in charge, so loss of favour with the breeder can result in a radical shakeup of the whole community’s plans.

At a higher level, multiple communities form cities whose leaders direct the efforts of all the participant communities in a general way and borrow personnel

for mutually beneficial tasks. Cities are governed by a council of the most eminent individuals from all castes and in turn cooperate with one another in a loose confederacy. Humans would probably call the system a sort of representative democracy, although the selection of leaders is not by vote but by combination of breeder-favour and eminence achieved through deeds.

It seems that the breeders, despite lacking in conscious thought, somehow regulate Alikai society. In times of crisis they reject a much higher proportion of suitors, creating a large number of essentially expendable individuals. High-status leaders or experts may be among these, moving from positions of eminence in mainstream society to a leadership role in a newly expanded military or workforce. It is notable that at the outset of space exploration there was a mass rejection of high-status individuals, which resulted in the best and brightest leading the way into space. There is no possible way the mindless breeders could have understood what was happening, yet the timing is highly suspicious.

Until recently, Alikai society was harmonious. Cities cooperated on large projects and conflict was rare. That changed around 30 standard years ago. The cause is not clear but several cities began making war upon others. This had been uncommon in the past and generally limited to skirmishes resulting in a negotiated settlement. This conflict was different; whole cities were destroyed and the population exterminated or scattered. Resistance was piecemeal and generally limited to threatened cities and their nearby friends, whereas over time it became apparent that the aggressors were acting in concert.

Today, there are essentially two factions in Alikai society. The mainstream cities are far more numerous but loosely coordinated, whereas the aggressors are focussed. Conflict is intermittent and sometimes unpredictable but, by a series of apparently random landgrabs, the aggressors have gained control over a segment of the Alikai homeworld. Within this area they seem to be founding new cities, which are not always positioned to control key resources. Some occupy marginal land but act as fortified bases to block attack routes or from which to stage attacks on other regions. The aggressor faction is slowly gaining ground but why or what its final goal will be remains a mystery.

TRAVELLERS ARE REJECTEES-BY-CHOICE

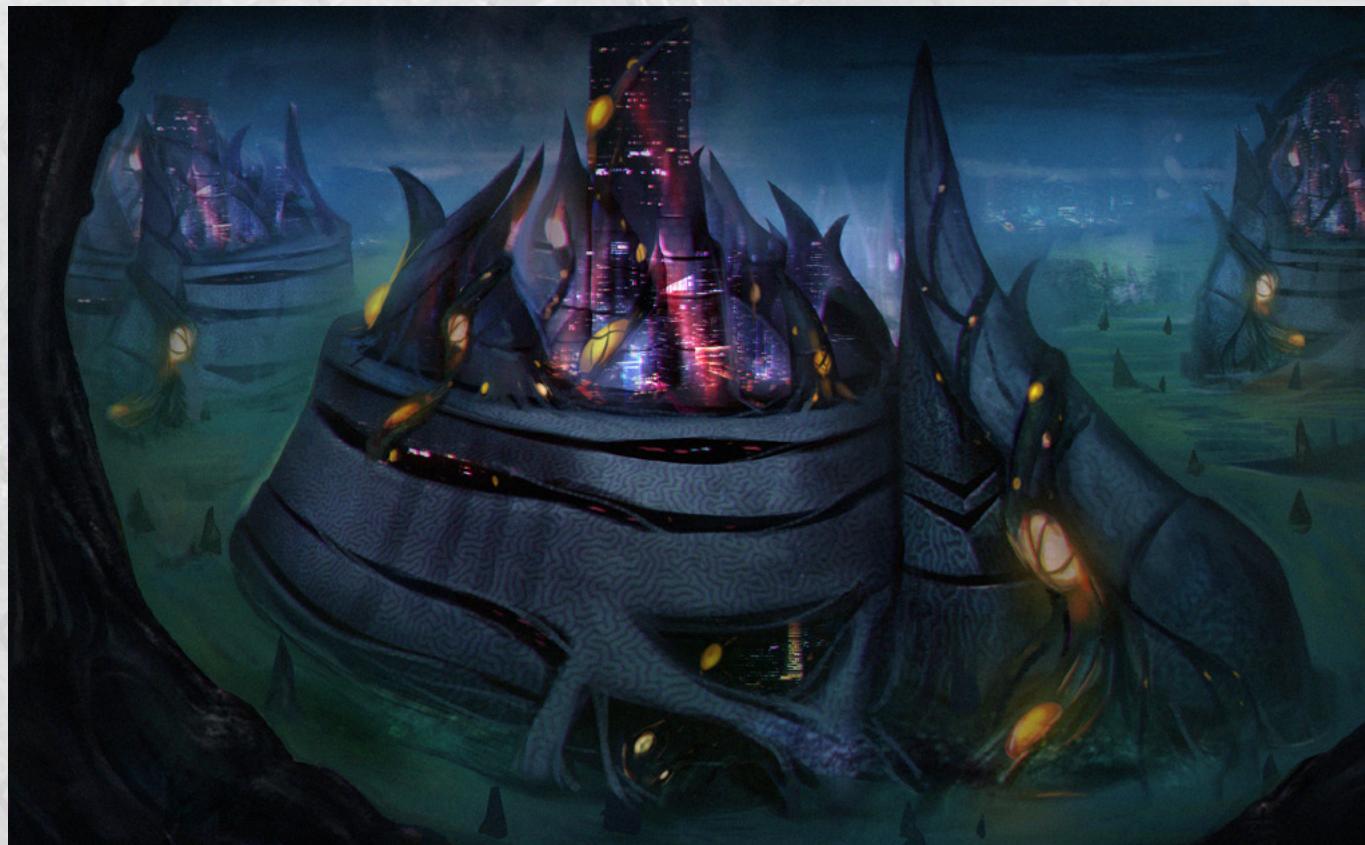
The Alikai know nothing of sexism in the usual sense. Their breeders and non-breeders are very different creatures, each quite incapable of fulfilling the functions of the other. However, they do have strong social boundaries regarding what tasks are appropriate. Any Alikai will lend a hand to assist with an urgent task but routine work is for workers. Any will fight in self-defence and defend their breeder with fanatical intensity but combat is for warriors. Anyone can try to puzzle out a problem but research and planning are tasks for thinkers. The Alikai will try to impose such distinctions upon the Travellers and their crew based upon their function aboard *Deepnight Revelation*.

The Alikai will also assume the crew are rejectees who left their breeding caste at home. They will be a little puzzled at the physical variety among the crew – males and females, humans and other species, all doing the same jobs interchangeably and without physical specialisation – and will inquire about it. If they find mixed genders aboard *Deepnight Revelation* are capable of producing offspring the

Alikai will be fascinated by the concept and may ask all manner of socially awkward questions out of genuine and innocent interest.

The idea that the crew have voluntarily given up the chance to breed is truly baffling to the Alikai. Rejectees are a useful element of society but nobody wants to become one. To voluntarily accept such a sacrifice at first confuses the Alikai but it does not repulse them – they are smart enough to realise the new arrivals have a different society to their own. Some individual Alikai will regard the Travellers with suspicion, as people who are not-quite-right, but an embarrassingly large proportion will conclude the Travellers are self-denying heroes of their people and treat them with an excessive degree of respect.

This in turn leads to the expectation that the Travellers can solve any problem which, given the capabilities of their ship, is not an unreasonable conclusion. The continual deference and habit of waiting for the Travellers to deal with whatever is happening rather than taking decisive action can become irritating after a while, and might occasionally be dangerous.



TECHNOLOGY

The Alikaiia possess a uniform technology rated at the lower end of TL9. Technological progress has been relatively slow and patchy for their species and reflects many aspects of their society. Cities are constructed in three dimensions, with access to upper areas often by way of an apparently random tangle of struts and supports, which mimic the swampy forests where the species evolved. Colour schemes tend to be organic, giving cities a natural look that blends into the surrounding countryside.

Personal vehicles are relatively uncommon, as Alikaiia do not travel much and can get around their local community at high speed in the traditional manner of scrambling through the 'branches'. Rail-based mass transport is generally used for goods within a city, with electrically powered ground trucks distributing necessary goods. Cities are linked by high-speed rail networks operated by rejectees, most from the worker caste.

Grav vehicles are used mainly for governmental functions, providing leaders with the ability to oversee a task or liaise in person then quickly get home to their community. Being away for any length of time is uncomfortable and many have an instinctive fear that they will be rejected if they spend too long or travel too far from their home.

Power generation is a mix of solar and fusion, with a highly efficient distribution network built into the fabric of cities and smaller communities. In most areas technologies are mature and efficient, as Alikaiia society as a whole prefers to advance slowly and implement technologies when properly understood rather than haphazardly experimenting with new concepts, so although TL9 equipment is available, most applications use proven TL8 designs.

The exception is space travel and related technologies. Here, the Alikaiia have been forced to make use of their ramshackle emergent-TL9 gravitics, manoeuvre drive and jump drive technology. Their starships are as good as they can be but use what amounts to prototype drives that are less than reliable. The risks inherent in using these technologies are acceptable given that only rejectees are sent into space, other than on carefully planned colonisation missions.

MILITARY

The Alikaiia do not have a formal military as such. There are corps of rejectee warriors in most regions, equipped by contributions from local cities. These are loosely organised into 'fighting communities' of

200–300 personnel in a curious parallel of the standard social grouping. These communities usually have a banner, trophy or other token that has almost the same significance as a breeder.

Forces are mostly light infantry, equipped with short-barrelled projectile firearms suitable for use whilst rushing through a forest or city on foot. Support in the form of artillery and light armoured vehicles is available but in short supply. Most fighting communities have a mobile headquarters with a few command and logistics vehicles, plus an armoured vehicle or two and an equally small amount of artillery. Given the specialised nature of Alikaiia society it is perhaps surprising that specialist tank or artillery units do not exist but this is mainly due to the fact that warfare is the preserve of warriors, not thinkers. Warriors fight the enemy rather than performing technical tasks.

The overall result is a rather inefficient military capability with little in the way of higher command or supporting functions like intelligence analysis. Warriors fight hard and bravely but command and control takes the form of requests from local city leaders, who often cannot agree on what they want the force to do or how it is to do it.

Air forces are rather better, largely because they are made up of non-rejectees flying out of their home cities. Specialist aviation communities exist in some cities, giving them an enhanced capability. Aircraft are typically advanced TL8 designs without gravitic assistance and are, in general, multirole designs with a bias towards ground attack. Air-to-air and aerospace defence are very much secondary concerns.

STARSHIPS AND SPACECRAFT

Exploration of the Alikaiia home system began long ago, undertaken by crews of rejectees willing to accept appalling risks. Outposts were created on various bodies, again crewed by rejectees, but it was not until the invention of relatively comfortable and reliable spacecraft that colonisation could begin. Breeders could not be risked aboard a ramshackle exploration ship, so colony barges were set up to carry whole communities to new homes built by rejectee work parties.

Colonisation of the star system began in earnest some 50 standard years ago, resulting in modest social change. The colony barges were designed as temporary homes, to offer the breeders a comfortable environment during the short voyage to their new planetary colonies. However, some breeders made it perfectly – and



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violently – clear that they wanted to remain in their new mobile city, creating the first mobile offworld colonies.

More barges have since been built and dozens now ply between the mainworld and other planets of the system. Colonies on those worlds have matured into cities in their own right and sometimes a colony barge takes on a few temporary communities bound for other worlds in the system. The permanent population of a barge is typically two or three communities, for a total of around 700–800 but there may be as many as 10 other communities aboard during a voyage.

All but the earliest barges have modest manufacturing capabilities and often take on raw materials at one colony to use for production en route to another. Goods are then traded at the next stopover. The Alikai have thus more or less accidentally created a whole-system economy with mobile cities plying between planetside colonies.

The development of the jump drive led to a rash of rather crude exploration ships and these were eventually followed by colony ships. Some were sent to settle specific worlds, although difficulties were occasionally encountered when breeders refused to set foot on the new planet. Some colony ships were built on the same principles as in-system barges and intended to become mobile colonies. Of these, the majority jump back and forth between the outer colonies and the home system, acting as intermittent transports and supply ships for the planetside colonies. A handful have instead elected to wander local space either seeking a planet their breeders consider acceptable or simply going from place-to-place as the whim takes their leaders.

Weapons are not normally fitted to Alikai starships. They have experimented with weaponry on a just-in-case basis but the need to build military starships or spacecraft has never arisen.

ALIKAIA TRAVELLERS

Alikaia breeders are not suitable as Travellers but the other castes are available. Each is specialised to a particular role in society.

Breeder

Breeders are large, near-mindless creatures that dwell at the heart of Alikaia communities.

Characteristics

Breeders roll 3D for END but only 1D for STR, DEX and INT. EDU is automatically set to 0 and SOC is hard to measure in human terms, and so is not used for breeders.

Traits

Breeders all possess the following trait.

Object of Veneration: An Alikaia has an almost mystical reverence for any breeder, especially the one at the heart of his community. If it is necessary to harm one or allow her to be harmed, such as to fend off the attack of an enraged breeder rejecting his advanced, the Alikaia must make an Average (8+) END check or he will be unable to act against her or resist the urge to rush to her aid no matter the cost. This also applies to juvenile breeders.

THINKER

Thinkers are the scientists, merchants and diplomats of Alikaia society. They are the most lightly built of the three non-breeder castes, with a strong aptitude for puzzles and mental pursuits. In addition to the obvious careers, thinkers are also well suited to life aboard a starship and make up most of the skilled complement of a vessel – pilots, astrogators and engineers.

Characteristics

Thinkers roll 2D for all characteristics, applying the following modifiers: STR-3, END-3, INT+3, EDU+3.

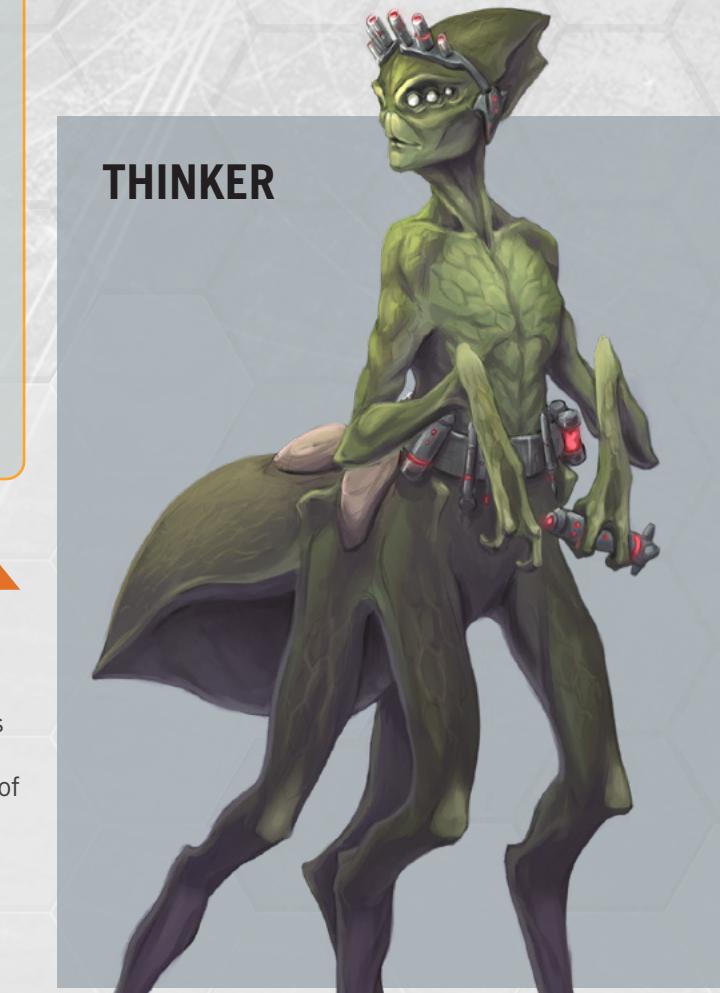
Traits

Thinkers all possess the following traits.

Agile: All members of the non-breeder castes are quick and agile when using their four rear limbs to negotiate any space with plenty of handholds. This is especially useful in microgravity. All checks to move quickly, retain balance or remain oriented in zero-g conditions are made with DM+2.

Armour: Thinkers have a layer of light chitinous plates covering most of their body, giving Protection +1.

Thinker: Thinkers are highly adept at mental skills, gaining DM+2 on all checks to solve puzzles using logic or applied knowledge. In addition, all Thinkers gain Investigate 1 and either Broker 1, Diplomat 1 or Persuade 1.



THINKER

WARRIOR

Warriors are the least common of the three non-breeder castes. They were more numerous in the past when they served as hunters and scouts for the primitive communities of the Alikai. But in modern society there is need for more thinkers and workers than protectors. It is not clear how the bias towards births of these castes has shifted but it has clearly done so. Warriors are larger and more dextrous than thinkers, and have slightly better natural armour. Warriors will normally enter only combat professions. Few serve aboard starships; if they do they will man weapons and provide security to other crewmembers.

Characteristics

Warriors roll 2D for all characteristics, applying the following modifiers: STR+1, DEX+2, END+1, EDU-3.

WORKER

Workers are the most common of the three non-breeder castes. They are big and strong compared to the other castes but not very intelligent. It is thus rare to find a worker in a leadership role other than at the head of a small work team.

Characteristics

Workers roll 2D for all characteristics, applying the following modifiers: STR+3, DEX+2, END+3, INT-2, EDU-4, SOC-2.

Traits

Workers all possess the following traits.

Agile: All members of the non-breeder castes are quick and agile when using their four rear limbs to negotiate any space with plenty of handholds. This is especially useful in microgravity. All checks to move quickly, retain balance or remain oriented in zero-g conditions are made with DM+2.

Armour: Workers have a layer of light chitinous plates covering most of their body, giving Protection +1.

Worker: Workers automatically receive Jack-of-all-Trades 1 and Profession 1 in a speciality of their choice.

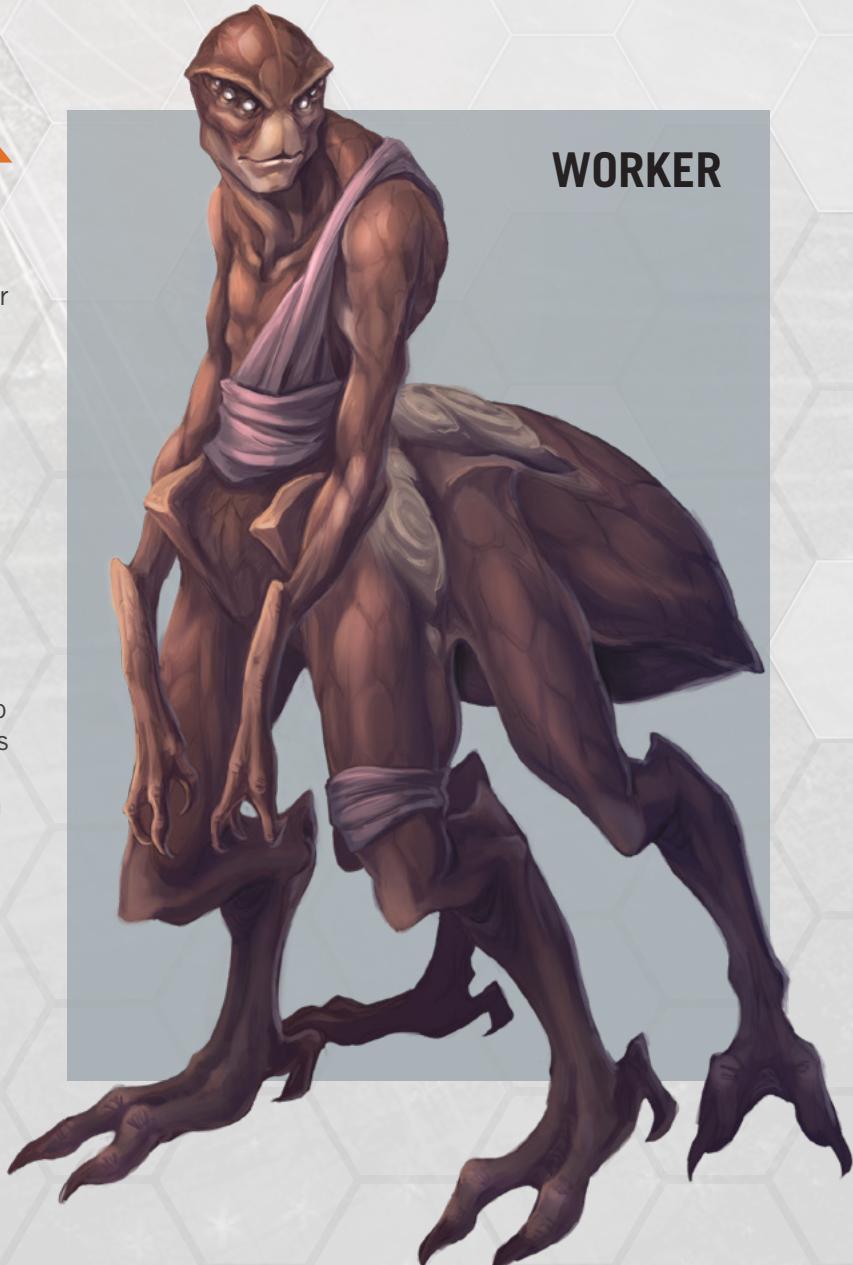
Traits

Warriors all possess the following traits.

Agile: All members of the non-breeder castes are quick and agile when using their four rear limbs to negotiate any space with plenty of handholds. This is especially useful in microgravity. All checks to move quickly, retain balance, or remain oriented in zero-g conditions are made with DM+2.

Armour: Warriors have a thicker layer of light chitinous plates than other castes, giving Protection +2.

Warrior: Warriors are fast and aggressive. They automatically gain Athletics (dexterity)1, Melee (unarmed) 1 and Recon 1. In addition Warriors gain DM+1 to attack rolls when using with all ranged weapons, providing they know how to use them.



WORKER

HIGHGUARD: ALIHAIA

The Alikaiia have access to jump and manoeuvre drives but they are inefficient and sometimes unreliable.

Alikaiia Manoeuvre Drive

Alikaiia manoeuvre drives have the same cost per ton as standard drives but are twice the mass and require 50% more Power. The maximum Thrust possible with a proven drive is 1 but an experimental Thrust 2 drive is available. This would never be used aboard a ship intended to carry breeders. The experimental drive is prone to breakdowns when used to deliver more than 1g of thrust. In every hour of full power use the drive suffers a problem on 10+ on a straight 2D check. The severity of the problem is usually low, requiring 2Dx10 minutes to fix, but occasionally a more serious breakdown may occur.

Alikaiia Proto-Jump Drive

The Alikaiia have discovered a version of the jump drive that takes up five times the usual tonnage and costs the same per ton as the standard drive. It is almost as reliable as a standard jump drive and can be used for ships carrying breeders. An experimental jump-2 version is available but is a new and temperamental technology fit only for ships crewed by rejectees. The proto-jump-2 drive is a prototype as defined by *High Guard*, with one disadvantage and greatly increased price in addition to its already increased size. An Alikaiia jump-2 drive will misjump on a straight 2D check result of 10+ and on 12+ the drive breaks down in a manner that cannot easily be repaired. Several exploration ships have been lost this way.

AINHIKA EXPLORATION SHIP

Overall hull form is a cylinder with three sets of paired bulges along its length. The vessel is notable for its large fuel capacity and huge, enormously inefficient, jump drive. This is housed in the central cylinder, along with the fuel skimming and processing system, and the fuel tanks themselves. Long corridors run up and down the flanks of the cylinder, with cross-corridors at intervals.

The forward pair of bulges contains the two bridges, one each side, and some accommodation space presumably used by the flight crew. The mid-hull bulges contain cargo space and research facilities, most of which are fairly basic. Aft bulges are larger, containing the twin power plant and accommodation for the engineering crew.

Most functions are paired, one each side of the ship, to create redundancy in the event of disaster. Overall, accommodation and common spaces are different

to those found aboard human ships. Rather than individual cabins, staterooms represent individual niches within a communal living space shared by 8–12 personnel, arranged in a three-dimensional manner. This simulates the cities and natural environment of the Alikaiia and can be easily navigated by members of that race. It is a rather cluttered and awkward environment for humans, however.

There are no subordinate craft; this vessel had to do everything itself. Fuel skimming, planetary landings and all other tasks were carried out by the whole expedition. This is another example of the way the Alikaiia think – they operate as a community even when driven away from their breeders by rejection. The overall impression the Travellers will gain of the ship is of inefficiency and amateurish design, which is reasonable enough. This is an early exploration ship put together by a race just venturing out into space.

EXPLORATION SHIP

AINHIKA-TYPE

TL9

		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	3,800 tons, Standard	—	190
M-Drive	Thrust 1	38	76
J-Drive	Alikai proto-jump drive-2	955	7162.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL8), Power: 2,250	225	112.5
Fuel Tanks	Jump-2 x2, 16 weeks of operation	1,610	—
Bridge	Standard x2	40	10
Computer	Computer/10	—	0.16
Sensors	Civilian Grade	1	3
Systems	Fuel Processor (400 tons/day)	20	1
	Fuel Scoops	—	1
	Medical Bay x5	20	10
	Laboratories	100	25
Staterooms	Standard x60	240	30
Software	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.1
Common Areas		360	360
Cargo		191	—

TOTAL: MCr 7981.26

CREW

CAPTAIN, ASTROGATOR,
PILOT, ENGINEER X35,
ADMINISTRATORS X3,
OFFICERS X2

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
MCr 665105/month

PURCHASE COST
MCr 7980.26

POWER REQUIREMENTS

380

MANOEUVRE
DRIVE

760

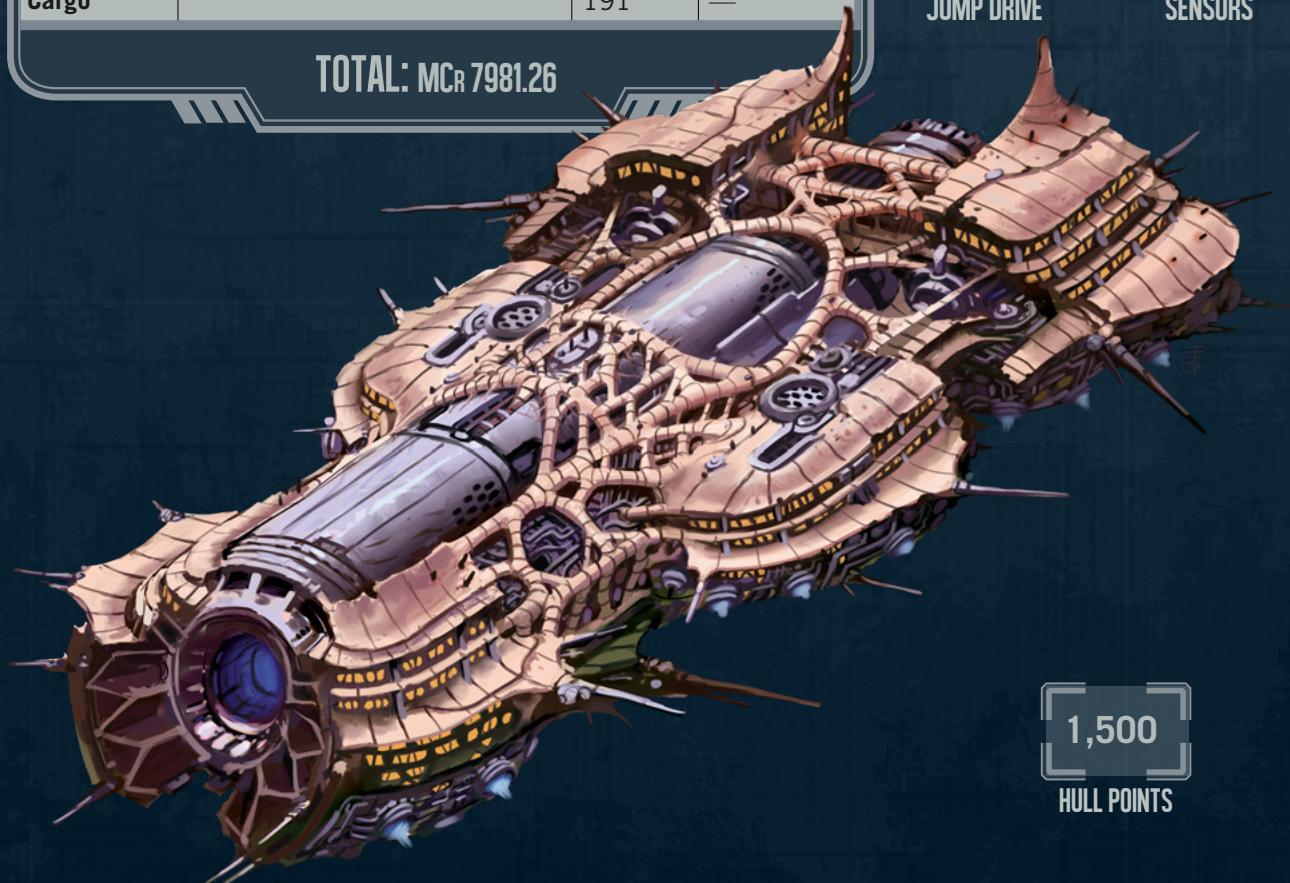
BASIC SHIP
SYSTEMS

988

JUMP DRIVE

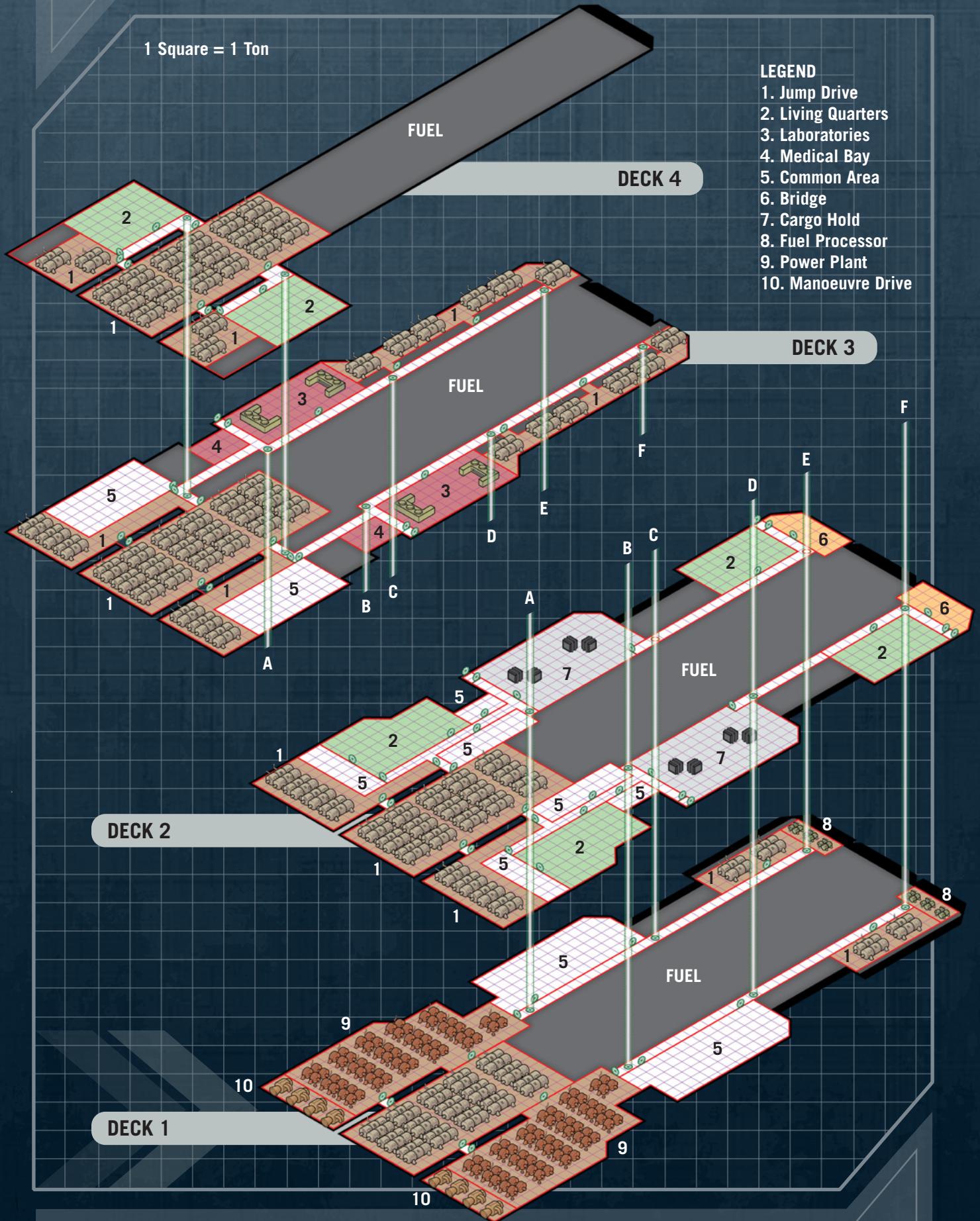
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SENSORS



1,500

HULL POINTS



LALIKAIA COLONY SHIP

ALI-KAMRAIA

TL9

		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	20,000 tons, Standard	—	1000
M-Drive	Thrust 1	200	400
J-Drive	Alikaia proto-jump drive-1	2,505	3757.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL8), Power: 8,500	850	425
Fuel Tanks	Jump-1 x2, 16 weeks of operation	4,340	—
Bridge		60	100
Computer	Computer/10	—	0.16
Sensors	Civilian Grade	1	3
Systems	Fuel Processor (600 tons/day)	30	1.5
	Fuel Scoops	—	1
	Medical Bay x40	160	320
Staterooms	Standard x120	480	60
Software	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/1	—	0.1
Common Areas		10,000	1000
Cargo		1,374	—

TOTAL: MCR 7068.26

CREW

CAPTAIN, ASTROGATOR,
PILOT, ENGINEER
X101, MAINTENANCE
X20, MEDICS X2
ADMINISTRATORS X10,
OFFICERS X6

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
MCR 589022/month

• • • •
PURCHASE COST
MCR 7068.26

POWER REQUIREMENTS

2,000

MANOEUVRE
DRIVE

4,000

BASIC SHIP
SYSTEMS

2,000

JUMP DRIVE

1

SENSORS

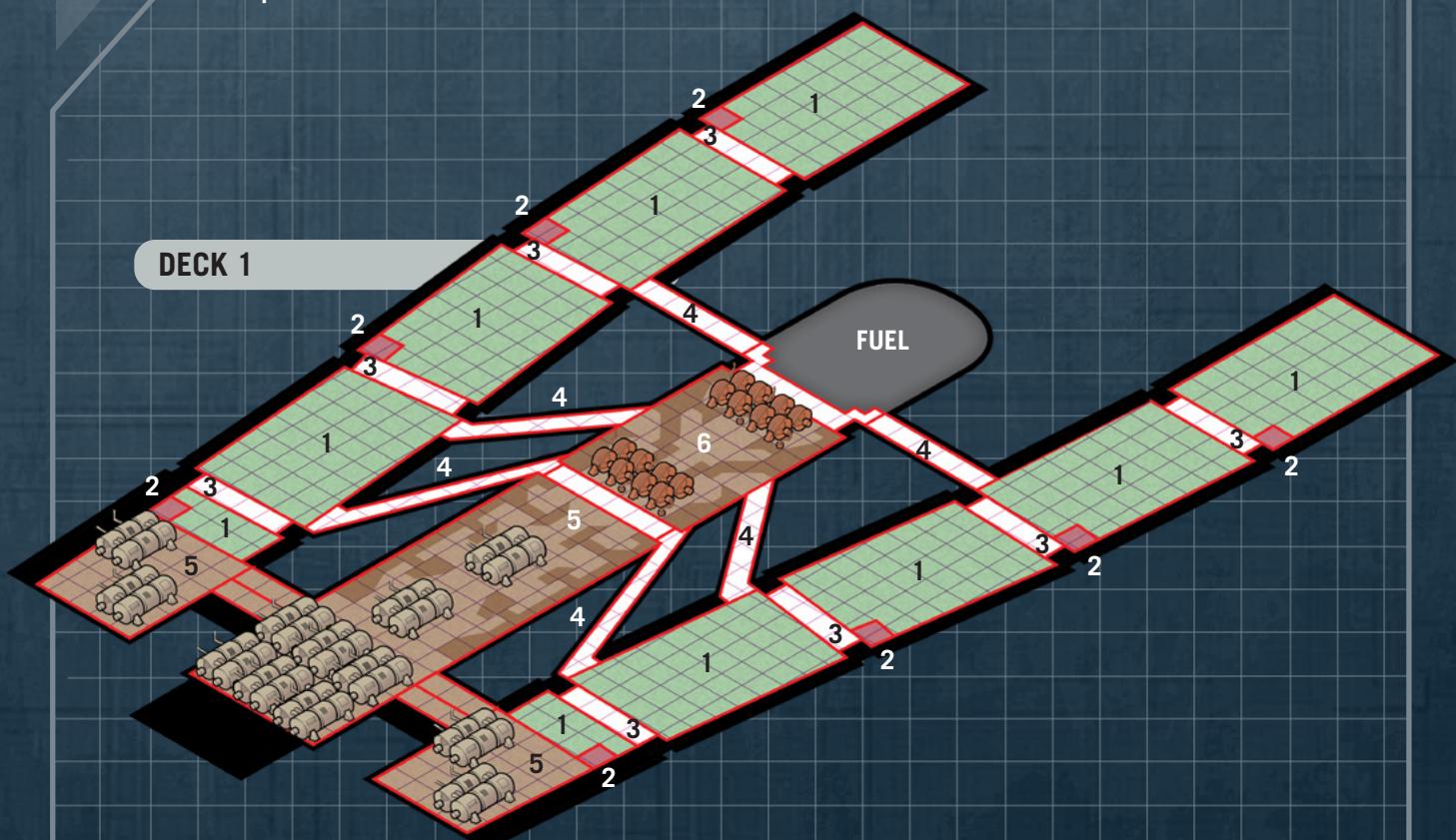
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FUEL PROCESSOR

Ali-Kamraia is a unique vessel, built from modules brought together at a groundside starport with no orbital construction facility. Other Alikaia colony ships are generally similar but no two are identical. Her central hull consists of three linked cylinders each with a specific function. The aftmost contains the jump drive and is linked by a short, narrower connecting section to another large cylinder containing the power plant and fuel for it. Another link section leads to the crew accommodation and command section, which forms the forward part of the main hull. Fuel is carried in an additional cylinder on the main hull's dorsal aspect.

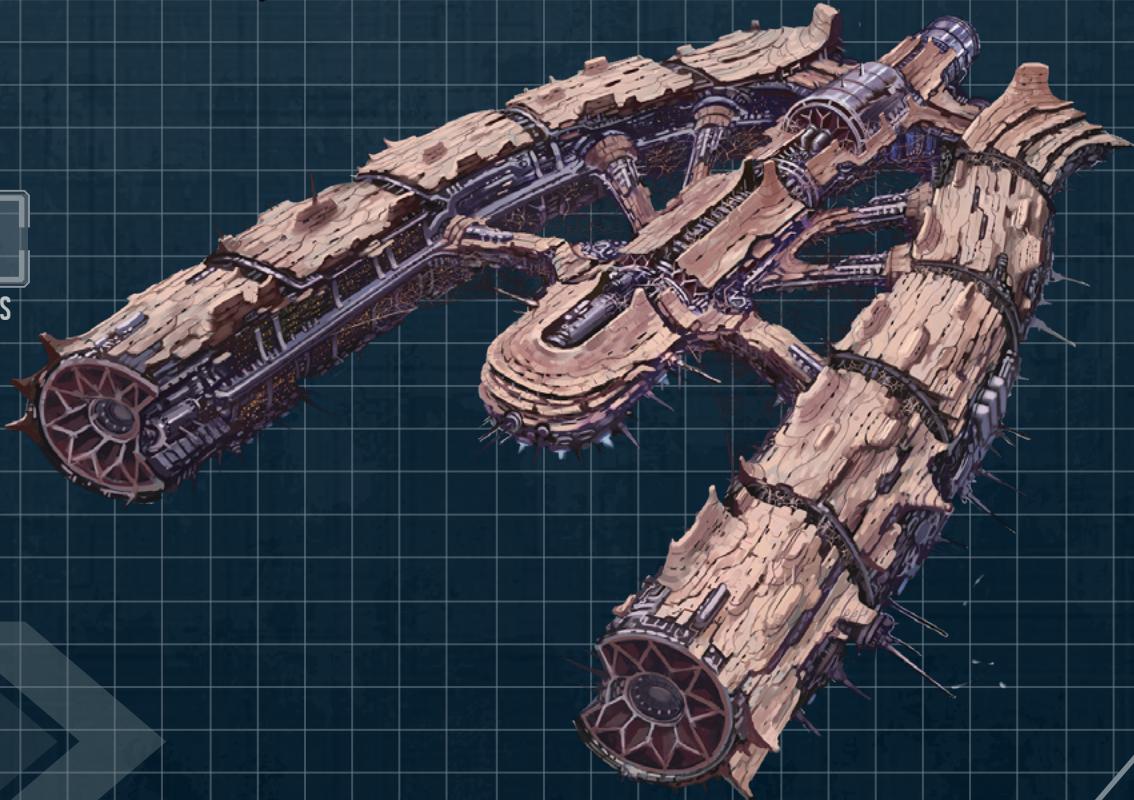
Outboard of the main-hull sections are two roughly 5,000-ton cylinders that carry the colonists. Rather than a system of cabins and common areas as might be expected in an Imperial vessel, the two cylinders are mini-cities with extensive open areas and communal living spaces for the communities carried aboard. Nominal capacity is around 1,000 Alikaia per cylinder, although this would be a little crowded. More could be jammed in as required but the actual number on any given colony mission depends very much on what the breeders will tolerate. Each colony cylinder has medical facilities scattered throughout its cluttered mini-city interior.

1 Square = 20 Tons

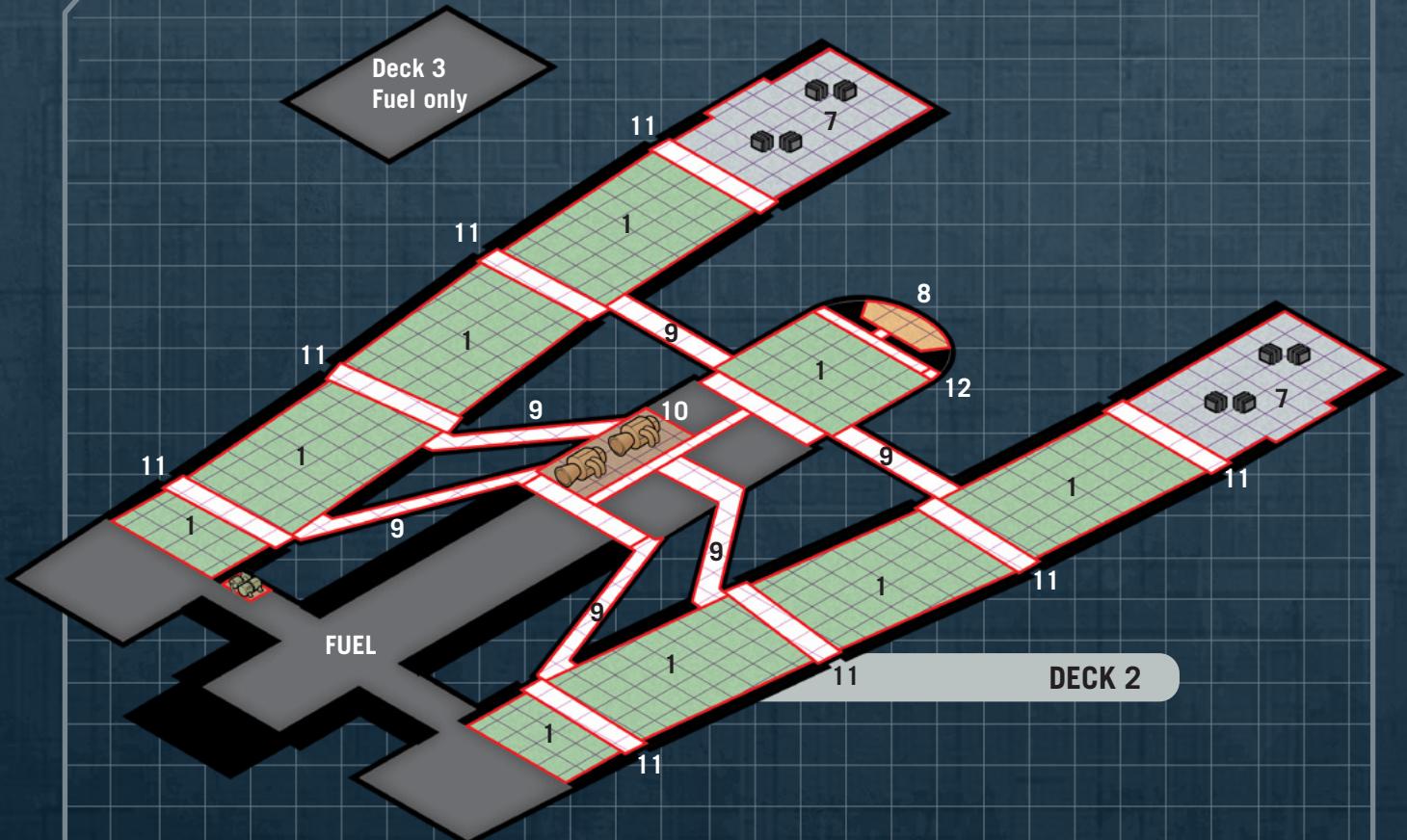


8,000

HULL POINTS



1 Square = 20 Tons



LEGEND

1. Living Spaces and Common Areas
2. Medical Bays
3. Airlock
4. Lifts to Deck 1
5. Jump Drive
6. Power Plant

7. Cargo Hold
8. Bridge
9. Lifts to Deck 2
10. Manoeuvre Drive
11. Connectors
12. Air Lock

THE AGGRESSOR FACTION

The Aggressor faction is far more organised than the mainstream Alikaiia cities and with its greater sense of purpose came a ruthlessness not seen elsewhere. The Aggressors are willing to kill breeders and not content with the occasional skirmish to settle a dispute. They are bent on conquest, fully intending to take control of all Alikaiia cities sooner or later.

The reason for this is twofold. The first is the emergence of a new type of breeder with vastly greater intellect. These breeders are still less intelligent than a thinker but are sentient, acquisitive and demanding. It is possible that the original 'smart breeder' was a mutation but selective breeding may have played a part. This would have been very difficult to achieve, given the breeders' manner of choosing their own mates, but with sufficient effort it could be possible. However the smart breeders emerged, they have become established and can produce more of their kind.

At present there are only a few smart breeders and most of their breeder offspring are of the normal, unintelligent sort, treated with contempt by smart breeders but still venerated by non-breeder elements of society. The respect within Aggressor culture for these new smart breeders borders on worship and this is part of the reason for the conflict. The Aggressors naturally want to give their breeders everything they want and the breeders want to spread their kind to all Alikaiia communities.

The second reason for the conflict is the realisation amongst Aggressors that there is a whole universe out there waiting to be claimed. A new sense of manifest destiny is emerging among their leaders, along with resentment that mainstream Alikaiia are going about exploring and claiming this vast universe in their usual haphazard and inefficient fashion. The Aggressor breeders want the world; the leaders who worship them want to give them the whole universe.

INTELLIGENT BREEDER



Aggressors are quite willing to risk unintelligent breeders aboard colony vessels even more ramshackle than the usual Alikaiia exploration ship. They have secretly constructed transports and are currently creating what can only be described as a planned military colony. Setbacks are not uncommon, particularly when a transport is lost, but the dedication of the Aggressors to their cause means they keep throwing resources – and expendable unintelligent breeders – at the project.

At present, mainstream Alikaiia society does not suspect the emergence of smart breeders nor the venturing of the Aggressors into space. They are unaware there is a concerted effort underway to conquer them and would have trouble conceiving of such a thing. Even when they are finally convinced of what is happening their response is likely to be confused, vague and ineffective. It may be that mainstream Alikaiia society is doomed without the intervention of the Travellers. This process will not be fast but it is inevitable.

WE WILL JUMP

As the Travellers push onwards, with or without Akranika aboard their ship, they will eventually encounter more Alikaiia. These have also been the victims of a misjump, although the cause was far more sinister than a simple accident aboard an exploration ship. The incident takes place in an otherwise nondescript system where the Travellers are about to skim for fuel. The system has been arbitrarily designated DNS-GL-210 but the Travellers may give it an entirely different name.

DNS-GL-210

The DNS-GL-210 system centres on a KO (orange) main sequence star, orbited by a gas giant and single rockball planet. There is nothing remarkable about either. This star system can be inserted anywhere after the Travellers have passed Point Grainger.

DNS-GL-210 (KO Star)

DNS-GL-210 1 (Small Gas Giant)
DNS-GL-210 (X410000-0)

THE ALIKAIA

The Alikaiia are extremely careful about risking their breeders aboard space vessels and conduct stringent checks on the vessels that carry them to new worlds. At present there are only a handful of such ships, all lovingly maintained and sources of pride to their whole race. Of them all, the vessel named *Ali-Kamraia* is the most prestigious. She has never suffered even the smallest variance from expected operational parameters – which are broad by Imperial standards but impressive to the Alikaiia – and enjoys the complete confidence of her people.

Despite this, *Ali-Kamraia* misjumped. She has six entire communities aboard; well over 1,000 Alikaiia and more importantly, six breeders. There is also equipment for expanding the colony at Abonek 1 but that is of little consequence. This was a safe, simple run with zero risk and yet the great and much-loved ship betrayed her charge. It was not her fault; *Ali-Kamraia* was sabotaged after her inspections were completed. This marks the beginning of a new and horrific phase of the conflict unfolding on the Alikaiia homeworld but in the short term it places six breeders in mortal danger.

Ali-Kamraia misjumped into the GL-210 system, emerging several days' transit from the only planets. With over a thousand colonists travelling in cramped conditions, supplies are running short and the breeders becoming agitated, her crew did the only thing they could. Approaching the gas giant they began skimming fuel, ready for an attempt to jump home using a damaged drive. The risk inherent in this endeavour was horrifying to the crew but the alternative was letting the breeders aboard the ship die.

Questions were asked – the crew were rejectees; had they gone rogue somehow? However, it soon became apparent that although not part of mainstream society any more, the rejectee crewmembers were still utterly devoted to protecting the breeders – and also the reputation of the ship that was now their home. Evidence was found of tampering with the drive, meaning that someone was willing to deliberately kill breeders. This is anathema to the Alikaiia under any circumstances but reluctantly they accepted the conclusion that their enemies had carried out this terrible act. This made it even more important to get home and warn their cities of a new and appalling development in the ongoing conflict.

DEEPNIGHT REVELATION

When *Deepnight Revelation* emerges from jump GL-210 it is immediately apparent something is wrong. Transmissions in the Alikaiia language (which may or may not be recognised depending on whether the Travellers bypassed Point Grainger) are picked up. A ship is broadcasting on all bands, panic is evident even in an alien tongue.

This is not surprising, given the circumstances. *Ali-Kamraia* suffered a serious drive malfunction during her fuel skimming operation. This is more than likely due to sabotage but the reason is less important than the consequences at this point. The vessel cannot maintain orbit and is descending into the atmosphere of the gas giant. Her orbital path is elliptical, taking her out of the atmosphere for a time before plunging deeper on the next

pass. The crew are doing what they can with a weak and erratic drive but are only prolonging the inevitable.

Even a cursory plot will indicate this vessel is doomed, imminently. It might be possible to reach her but there is no way to attach tow lines in time. The crew might have been taken off if there are not all that many of them but this is a 20,000 ton vessel – and it soon becomes apparent that she is crammed with colonists. Any Alikai aboard *Deepnight Revelation* are beside themselves with concern for the breeders aboard; they will recognise the ship and (correctly) fear it is loaded with colonists.

There is time to make an intercept using small craft and *Deepnight Revelation* has sufficient craft to bring off some colonists and crew. There is no way to save everyone however, even if the Travellers were willing to risk their ship deep in the gas giant's atmosphere. If communication can be established the scared but professional bridge crew will very politely and formally request assistance and the salvation of the breeders above all else.

Small Craft Rescue

The colony ship has no subordinate craft. It is designed to land directly on a planet and serve as a base whilst a

settlement is built. It has no docking facilities, although there are airlocks for maintenance and boarding from other craft. These must be used in a frustratingly slow rotation during the part of the ship's orbit where it is clear of the gas giant's atmosphere.

Any craft that remains coupled to the colony ship as it descends into the turbulent atmosphere will suffer 2D damage, at least, and risk being torn free of the airlock docking system. *Deepnight Revelation* herself could not remain docked in the atmosphere. There are no supports or major linkages, just an airlock's clamps, and at best the lock will be trashed; it is just as likely that the ships will collide or the lock yanked right out of the hull.

Coordinating the small-craft rescue calls for a CEI or DEI check for the Flight Division, which will give a general indication of how well things are going. There are some specifics that will have to be dealt with by Travellers, however.

The first is dealing with Alikai who are brought aboard *Deepnight Revelation*. They are encountering intelligent aliens for the first time and will be awed at just how sleek and powerful the Travellers' ship is. They are grateful for their rescue but highly protective of their breeders and not inclined to trust newcomers completely. Some may be panicked, some injured. As a



general rule warriors will be extremely protective of their breeders and not inclined to allow Imperials near them, whilst thinkers and workers will try to find a workable solution to the chaotic situation. Their idea of workable may be different to that of the Travellers.

Breeders are nearly mindless and terrified. One brought aboard *Deepnight Revelation* will be in a wholly new and alien environment. Added to the terror of the last few hours, it is likely that breeders will panic. This will inspire some of their community to do likewise, whilst others blame the Travellers (perhaps rightly) for not handling the situation properly. Some of the Alikaiia try to help, not always successfully. This all goes on against a backdrop of noise, chaos and panic... and the Referee should not forget that communication is at best difficult.

Calming a panicked Alikaiia requires a Difficult (10+) Persuade, Diplomat or Leadership check, increasing to Very Difficult (12+) for breeders. Soothing gestures might be misconstrued, given the cultural differences, or the Travellers might not realise breeders have only animal-level intelligence and try to talk them around. Anyone going near a breeder will trigger interference or at least suspicion from other Alikaiia unless they have demonstrated their goodwill.

Assisting a wounded Alikaiia requires a Difficult (10+) Medic check for Travellers who are at least vaguely familiar with the aliens' physiology, rising to Very Difficult (12+) if they are having to guess what various organs do as they treat an injury. Failure or mistakes might trigger an ugly incident, although most thinkers are able to figure out that the Travellers are trying to help and may attempt to convey useful information. If the Travellers have already translated the Alikaiia language this endeavour is more likely to go well.

WE WILL JUMP!

It is obvious that only a small proportion of the colonists can be saved – assuming the Travellers try at all. As the Alikaiia colony ship descends into the murky depths of the gas giant's atmosphere it suffers further damage. Its drive stutters and goes silent. For a moment the ship starts to turn beam-on to the methane winds... and then rights itself, surging forward under high acceleration.

It is clear something is wrong with the drive. It is running hot; so hot that it ignites pockets of gas behind it and sheds gobbets of half-molten metal. From its emissions it is clear that the Alikaiia crew have chosen to expend their drive in a last burst of power, hoping to climb into a stable orbit for at least long enough to be rescued. The prognosis is not good; *Ali-Kamraia* cannot reach a sufficient altitude to permit a complete small-

craft rescue. The measure has bought a little time, which will permit more lives to be saved but the ship and most of its passengers are doomed.

Moments later, as *Ali-Kamraia* blasts clear of the upper atmosphere and the molten remains of her drive fall away, it becomes apparent her crew had something else in mind. The ship begins transmitting a single phrase, over and over.

'We will jump.'

This is reckless to the point of insanity, but there is a small possibility for survival. The ship will emerge from jumpspace without propulsion but if she makes a short in-system plot *Deepnight Revelation* can be waiting for her. This assumes she does not misjump, which is highly probable. It is a desperate measure but perhaps the only possible solution.

As the bridge crew work to plot a jump for the Alikaiia ship, it becomes apparent that use of the jump drive was not what the transmission meant. There are no signs of a live jump drive aboard the other ship and she is shedding debris in a curious manner. Here and there holes appear in her hull, as small sections are cut or blasted free, and inside the ship can be seen hundreds of figures clad in clumsy emergency suits.

The colonists do not intend to engage their jump drive. They intend... to jump.

As *Ali-Kamraia* reaches the peak of her climb, the colonists begin leaping out through the hull breaches. Some huddle around the terrified, struggling breeders. A few have thruster packs or improvised devices. The space between the ships is filled with tiny, flailing figures making a leap to near-certain death because there are no better options.

A few might actually strike *Deepnight Revelation* and somehow make their way to an airlock. Most are on a one-way ride to a slow death by asphyxiation. Some do not even have suits but can survive for a few moments due to their external armour plates. How many of the colonists will survive depends on what the Travellers do.

Rescue of the *Ali-Kamraia*

There were around 1,500 people aboard the colony ship, including six breeders and around 200 crewmembers. A well-executed small craft rescue will have saved 100 or so already but the remainder are in mortal danger. The best equipped of them have emergency softsuits or are crammed into multi-person survival shelters with no means to grab anything if they do reach safety.



It will take upwards of 30 minutes for most of the colonists to cross the gap between ships. Some are moving faster, some slower, depending on how hard they jumped and who they collided with. A significant proportion will miss *Deepnight Revelation* entirely, no matter what the Travellers do, but this can be reduced by turning the ship to present her dorsal or ventral surface and positioning her where the largest number of Alikai will strike the hull. The chances of them managing to grab anything are low but some will make it. Of these, a few will somehow manage to reach an airlock.

Perhaps 50 Alikai can be saved this way, which is an incredible achievement given the circumstances, but leaves hundreds more to die in space. There are some other options, of course. As word spreads around the ship of what is happening the intercom will more than likely go crazy as the entire crew volunteers to suit up and attempt to bring some of the jumpers in. The Travellers should realise this is a recipe for disaster – an uncoordinated rescue by personnel who may not have sufficient skills will cost lives. A better option would be to come up with a plan that makes best use of the personnel available.

A free-for-all in which the crew are permitted to try their best without coordination will produce patchy results and multiple injuries. Several crewmembers will be injured through collisions with other people, or the ship itself, or due to inexperience at massed vacc suit operations. There will be a couple of deaths among the crew and the overall effect will be to save a total of around 150 Alikai.

A coordinated rescue attempt in which only experienced and qualified personnel go outside will work much better. To implement this the Travellers will need to quickly form teams to work outside and reception parties at the airlocks to assist – and reassure – Alikai as they arrive. They will need to be cleared from the airlock areas, which may not be easy given their terrified state and concern for their breeders.

If the Travellers implement something along these lines they can save around 250 Alikai, some with quite serious injuries, and whilst some of the crew may get knocked about there will be no fatalities. The figure can be pushed to 350 or so with a good plan. For example, if the Travellers set up an outer layer of suited crewmembers with thruster packs, these can redirect incoming Alikai towards catch-parties tethered to the hull, who will then pass the rescues along to receivers at the airlocks and thence into the ship. Some of these catchers will have to deal with terrified Alikai clinging to them, unwilling to be thrown in the direction of the ship. Some may have to be subdued in the process of saving them but overall this process is the best option available.

If the Travellers have some extra ideas like improvising thrust packs from compressed-gas bottles or chemicals thrown together in the lab, these ramshackle assists will allow their users to save another 50 or so Alikai – although at the cost of the odd explosion or runaway gas thruster.

Small Craft can continue to dash back and forth between the two ships whilst this is going on, taking off those who have not yet jumped. It would also be possible to very carefully approach Alikai floating in space and allow them to grab projections on the hull of a small craft or be brought in by suited crewmembers. This will require delicate flying, especially entering a hangar with a mob of rescuees hanging on the hull. A well-executed small craft operation can save 100–300 people. This can be abstracted using the DEI of the Flight Division or played out if the Travellers are directly involved.

INCIDENTS

The rescue of the *Ali-Kamraia* is a large and complex situation in which a lot is happening all at once. The Travellers may experience it from many different perspectives – someone in the mission control centre trying to coordinate the catch-and-assist operation will see things differently from a boat pilot threading her way into a crowded hangar with six Alikai clinging to her hull. The following snapshots can be used as incidents to play out or the Travellers might hear about them in the canteen a day or so later.

The Travellers are, in short, faced with a tricky situation aboard a juddering, dying starship and must come up with a creative solution. Whether they succeed or fail they have the opportunity to do something very much out of the ordinary, something they will remember in days to come as a triumph of ingenuity or learning experience... or both.

INCIDENT 1: THE RELUCTANT BREEDER

Some of the breeders have been persuaded or induced to jump – or hauled bodily out of the ship – but one is refusing to budge. It has already injured several Alikai who have tried to drag it to a large hole cut in the outer hull and is currently wedged into a corner lashing out at anyone who comes near. The flimsy emergency suits worn by most of the Alikai are easily torn and jagged debris around the hole is a real threat. If the breeder cannot be removed from *Ali-Kamraia* it will die, obviously, but its basic intellect cannot comprehend this. All it knows is mortal terror and until it is removed the 50 or so non-breeders remaining from its community will not leave.

The Travellers can ignore the situation or accept the loss and allocate their resources to saving lives elsewhere but if they do decide to intervene or send someone to do so they will have to deal with a complex situation. The best option is probably to send a craft to stand off the exit hole and somehow persuade the breeder to make the short jump. This is no mean feat, especially since some of the non-breeders around it are reluctant to allow weird

SHIFTING FOCUS

It is possible to play out the whole rescue in close focus. This may be desirable if the Travellers are hands-on types. It can be assumed that others are also trying to help and the end result abstracted or narrated by the Referee according to how they want the storyline to develop. The opposite is also true; the whole incident can be resolved with CEI and DEI checks as the Travellers monitor the big picture from their command stations.

However, there are many opportunities for memorable moments during the rescue. Some may be grim, some comical, some rather bizarre. If the Referee shifts focus back and forth from the big picture to the people at the sharp end it is possible to see the rescue from many perspectives. For example, the Traveller in command of the rescue orders the team on the alien ship to get the last breeder into a shuttle *now* or abandon it and the focus shifts to how they try to carry out this order.

This is the sort of thing that leads to wild spacers' tales: 'The commander ordered us to use any means necessary so I improvised a tranquiliser out of my suit emergency coolant and the contents of a ration pack and made a needle out of a nearby antenna...' and also carefully phrased reports: 'The crew were forced to use unconventional methods in order to save lives. Some details remain unclear due to the confused nature of the situation.'

bipedal aliens anywhere near their breeder, and it is as frightened of the newcomers as it is of everything else.

One option is communication, which will be easier if Akranika is present. Soothing the breeder to the point where it is not a hazard to everyone around it requires a Formidable (14+) Persuade check, with DM+2 if the Travellers can communicate in the Alikai language and another DM+2 if Akranika is with them. It can then be coaxed to the exit, providing the Travellers can convince the remaining non-breeders to assist. Persuading the breeder to jump will be next to impossible, although it might follow if some members of its community go first. If not, it will have to be grabbed and bodily flung across to the waiting craft. Those catching the breeder will have to deal with its panicky flailings in a small airlock...

There are alternatives, such as tranquilising the creature or frightening it so much it makes a blind rush for the exit. Any drugs used on Alikai will have to be invented

on the spot using what little the Travellers know about their physiology, which has the potential to go very badly wrong. Ultimately the Travellers may have to leave the breeder to its fate, lest they share it.

INCIDENT 2: INCOMING!

Amid all the confusion, a few individuals took bold and decisive, but not necessarily wise, actions. Among them was one of *Deepnight Revelation*'s EVA specialists. Armed with a set of improvised boosters made from hurriedly mixing chemicals in whatever containers were available, she strapped on a thruster pack and took a running jump off the spinal mount. Flying by eyeball and instinct, the crewmember managed to intercept a ball of Alikai who

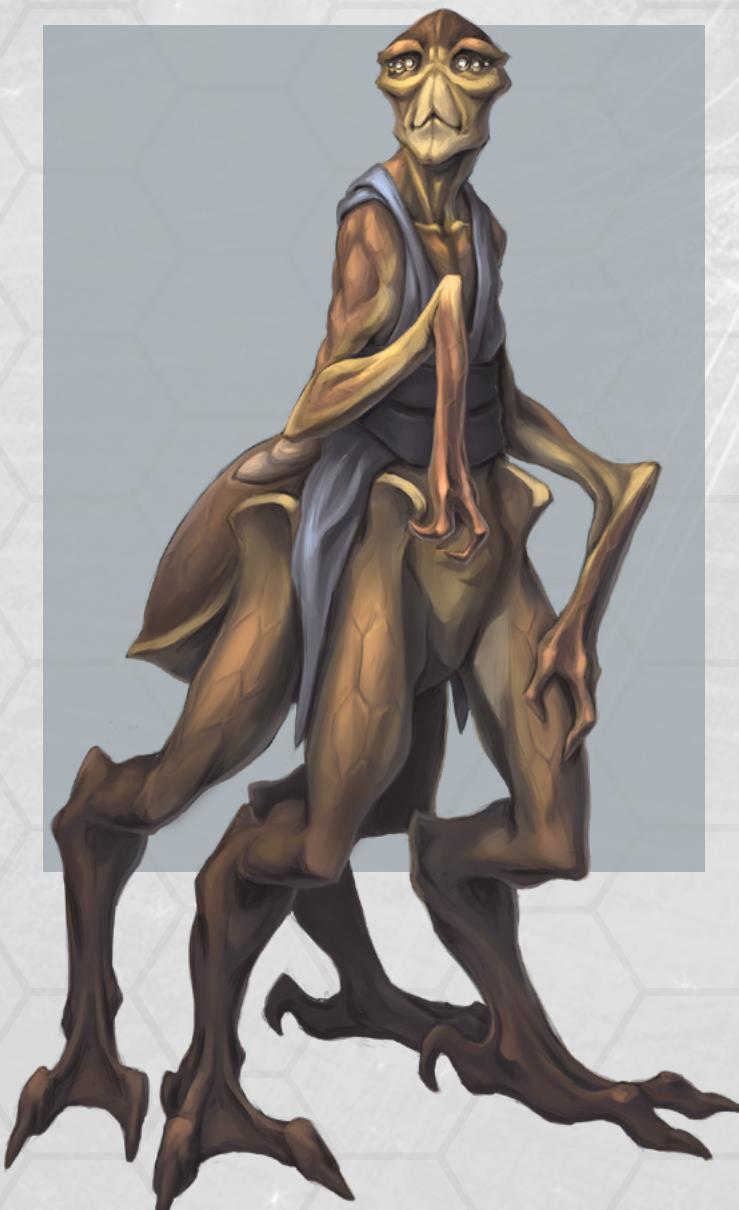
were clinging to their breeder. This group was destined to miss the ship by a good margin until redirected – not very gently – using the improvised boosters.

The first the Travellers know about the situation is an emergency call for a catch party. The ship's sensors soon pick up the suit transponder, treating the Travellers to the impressively bizarre sight of an EVA-suited crewmember with what appear to be two laboratory-grade demijohns under her arms and several Alikai clinging to her legs. Behind her stretches a chain of Alikai with a cluster at the far end containing the violently struggling form of a breeder. The whole lot are coming in fast and hard, and chances are that most are going to bounce off the hull.

There are multiple ways to resolve this situation, some more sensible than others. Crewmembers with thruster packs or attached lines could catch some of the rescues or small craft might pick them up. The ship might be aligned to funnel the whole lot into the particle accelerator collimator tube, from where they can be rescued at leisure. More inventive Travellers might try to rig some kind of net or arrester gear, in which case they will get to witness the agility of the Alikai as they swing themselves into the nearest airlocks.

INCIDENT 3: THE LONG JUMP CHAMPION

The worker Zanik is no-one special but he has a good eye for distance and can time a jump or throw to perfection. As such he is very useful in a work team, especially at heights. However, as a low-ranking member



Zanik

STR 10 DEX 10 END 12 INT 3 EDU 3 SOC 4

Skills: Athletics (dexterity) 3, Jack-of-All Trades 2, Mechanic 1, Profession 1

Armour: Chitinous Body Plate (+1)

Referee's Note: Zanik is not a rejectee and will try to be reunited with his community as soon as possible. He is diligent and hard-working, if not very smart, and can find common sense practical solutions that might elude a more abstract or complex thinker. He may choose to join the crew of *Deepnight Revelation* and might even become one of the Travellers. Indeed, it is quite possible that the band of Travellers that finally reaches Terminus Point may include members of species encountered along the way. If so, chances are Zanik will be among them.

of his caste he was naturally low in priority for a suit, and did not receive one. He knew that, in theory, he might survive the crossing between the two ships without a suit due to his tough external armour and was preparing to try when an idea struck him.

Making his way to an airlock, Zanik joined others of his kind, some suited and some not, but he clung to the safety bars as his colleagues allowed themselves to be blasted in the direction of *Deepnight Revelation* by escaping air. In his hands he clutched a large plastic crate; his feet held him in place until the air was gone. Then he flung the crate and dived after it. Catching up rapidly Zanik swung himself inside and snapped the lid shut, breaking the seal on an emergency air bottle as he did so.

Minutes later the astonished catch party see a deformed and bulging crate crash onto the deck just as their airlock's outer doors are closing. Even as the air rushes in the crate's lid pops off. Out springs the worker Zanik, entirely unharmed. The chances of making the throw and the jump were infinitesimally small; the chance of hitting an open airlock tinier still. Yet Zanik succeeded in hurling himself to safety in a plastic box. His reaction to his own incredible feat is typical of him – Zanik immediately begins looking for something useful to do and adjusts to the unusual situation with the pragmatism of a low-intellect worker with little imagination. He will happily carry out any task he can be directed to.

INCIDENT 4: THE CREW OF ALI-KAMRAIA

Non-essential members of the colony ship crew have suited up and are trying to convey the colonists to safety but flight and engineering personnel are still operating the ship. Their efforts are as creative as they are desperate. They are using anything that will burn or explode to create a little thrust, venting atmosphere from compartments to give the ship a tiny shove... anything to buy a few more seconds before the inevitable plunge into the gas giant. Their efforts are in equal parts heroic and pathetic, but for all these are rejectees there is no question of them deserting their posts.

The crew could be extracted by sending someone to persuade them they can do no more. This has to be done in person and is subject to all the difficulties inherent in communicating with aliens – the Referee should remember that the Travellers are an unknown species and for all they are obviously trying to help there will be reservations among the crew.

The bridge crew are easy enough to get to but the engineering section is more tricky. The half-melted remains of the drive continues to shed fragments and the crew have blown multiple holes in their hull through

which they are directing jets of gas, fire hoses and anything else that might provide the tiniest amount of thrust. Brave pilots might try to nudge up against the colony ship and give it a push. This achieves very little, given the size of the vessel, but any such effort is greeted with rapturous cheers from onlookers.

Approaching the colony ship to take off crewmembers or nudging it without taking damage requires a Difficult (10+) Pilot check. The craft suffers 1D damage for every negative point of Effect if attempting a nudge and D3 points per negative point of Effect if making an approach. Crewmembers are entirely willing – alarmingly willing in fact – to jump untethered across the gap between two craft. Some will even jump back again to assist a colleague. There is nothing much a Traveller can do about this but it is nerve-wracking to watch.

INCIDENT 5: RESCUING THE RESCUERS

The Travellers become aware of a crisis developing just as the rescue is winding down. A group of well-meaning crewmembers have ignored orders to do something safe and have instead joined in the rescue. They have saved a few lives but all lack much vacc suit experience and have managed to get themselves into trouble. The four personnel involved are likely to be low-ranked members of the Mission or Operations Divisions and have been assigned names for the Referee's convenience. Known crewmembers might be substituted for these individuals. This is especially suitable if characters have emerged in the course of the expedition who have a tendency to do this sort of thing.

The four did their best to operate safely and genuinely managed to help but eventually Enrique over-estimated how much thrust he needed and shot past the target he was trying to rescue. Halting his outward flight burned the remainder of the propellant in his thrust pistol and sent him off course. Marinne naturally went to Enrique's assistance and managed to reach him but his clumsy grab at her resulted in a collision that slightly cracked his faceplate. Enrique began to panic.

Enrique is currently drifting away from *Deepnight Revelation*. Marinne has hold of him but cannot calm him down enough to risk using the last of her propellant. His thrashing could result in any attempt to use thrust making the situation worse and she is very well aware of her poor EVA skills. Meanwhile, their two companions do not know what to do for the best. As yet they have chosen the wisest option; shepherding a few drifting Alikai to an airlock whilst yelling for help on the emergency channel. If the Travellers do not assist Enrique and Marinne, their friends will find a bunch of thrust pistols from somewhere and set off on their own ill-fated rescue mission.

Locating the distressed crewmembers is not difficult. Both have working suit transponders and Marinne has deployed her radar balloon. This is a large silvered sphere inflated by low-pressure gas that acts as a massive radar reflector and antenna for the suit's emergency beacon. Communicating is more of a problem, since Enrique is yelling on all frequencies that his faceplate is smashed and he is running out of air. In fact, there is a small crack and he is not losing any significant amount of oxygen through it but he is understandably frightened out of his wits.

Marinne has been trying to patch the crack with emergency tape but Enrique's constant grabs at her – and her own lack of skill – has resulted in several strips of patch tape stuck in the wrong places, none in the right one. She has had the presence of mind to tether the two of them together but is rapidly moving towards panic herself. Getting through to the pair and persuading them to act calmly requires a Difficult (10+) Leadership or Persuade check. If Enrique can be dragged back to rationality he will realise he is not losing air and that his best chance to survive is to stop preventing Marinne from helping him.

The pair have around three to four hours of air left under normal conditions but this will be used up much quicker by panicky struggles. There is time to use a small craft or even make a transit in vacc suits if no boats are available. Getting the two crewmembers into an airlock might be an unexpected challenge. If left to do it themselves with thrust jets they may well make a hash of the job and bounce off the hull. Travellers trying to guide them in will have to contend with their efforts to help. This will take the form of trying to use their own suit jets at the same time as the Travellers are setting up an entry, sending everyone off course.

The rescue could end up being frustrating and unusually difficult, after which the Travellers or the command crew of *Deepnight Revelation* will have to deal with the well-intentioned stupidity that caused the problem in the first place. The four culprits did save lives but ended up distracting personnel from the main rescue and could easily have deprived the ship of two or even four irreplaceable crewmembers. If the Travellers do not censure the four in some manner there will be more incidents like this one, although being too harsh will offend the crew. An ideal solution is a mild punishment that also addresses the issue at hand, such as being made to do maintenance on all the vacc suits damaged in the rescue and conduct wear-tests of at least some of

them. That way Enrique and his friends will learn more about the danger they placed themselves in whilst doing penance for disobeying instructions.

AFTERMATH

There will come a point where no more Alikaiia can be brought aboard and their ship begins its plunge into the gas giant's atmosphere. The Travellers now have to decide what to do about their new guests. The incidents here assume a maximum of about two-thirds of the colonists can be saved, with the same proportion of breeders. The Referee can adjust this depending on how well or badly the Travellers and their crewmates perform.

The Alikaiia will be in awe of *Deepnight Revelation* and not just a little scared. These new aliens have made a good impression by coming to the assistance of the colonists but they are powerful and their motivations unknown. At the same time the Alikaiia are shocked and saddened. Many have died, possibly including multiple breeders, and more have serious injuries. Members of communities that have lost their breeder are confused and lost. Are they now rejectees? Will another community take them? These Alikaiia are questioning their place in the universe along with that of the Travellers. It may be that some will join the crew of *Deepnight Revelation*.

There are also a great many practical problems to be solved. *Deepnight Revelation* is now supporting a greatly increased population. How can they be housed and fed? Can the ship's medical staff cope with the sheer number of casualties? What should be done with the dead? Which parts of the ship should they be granted access to? The Alikaiia are safe for now but cannot remain aboard indefinitely. The solution to most of these problems is to get them home as quickly as possible, but the Alikaiia are reluctant to tell strangers much about their home territory. Some consider it their duty to lie about the location of their home systems; others are desperate to return or so impressed with the newcomers that they volunteer all manner of information.

Unless the Travellers mistreat the Alikaiia, they have an opportunity to forge good relations with the cities of their homeworld. After all, their very first action upon making contact was to help and they have saved many lives. It will be possible to persuade the leaders of the rescued communities to provide navigational information that will allow *Deepnight Revelation* to proceed directly into Alikaiia space.

ALIKAIA STAR SYSTEMS

The Alikaiia are confined to a small volume of space around their home system. Explorers have pushed out further than this, although many did not come back. They are familiar with some of the systems around their home and colonies, and have decent data on them, which can be traded for whatever the Travellers wish to offer.

The Alikaiia home system of Alikherrnz lies more or less on the centre of a 16-system main, with outlying systems accessible by a jump-2 vessel. At present Alikaiia jump drives can only manage one parsec jumps with a reasonable degree of safety and even these are extremely primitive. Jump-2 exploration ships are available, using experimental drives, but the loss rate among these ships makes colonisation outside the jump-1 main unlikely for a long time to come.

Alikaiia vessels are the best they can build but to the typical Traveller they will seem alarmingly ramshackle. Indeed, it is quite possible to conclude from the erratic drives, as well as the air and water leaks, that a newly detected vessel is in distress. Alikaiia aboard *Deepnight Revelation* may be concerned at the lack of running repairs and hourly maintenance inspections. Jump-1 ships can be encountered anywhere in the main around Alikherrnz. Outside the four inhabited systems these will be exploration and scientific vessels crewed exclusively by rejectees. Jump-2 explorers may be encountered further away from home, possibly wrecked or stranded with a defective drive. All ships outside the central inhabited region will be conducting exploration or survey work.

The four central star systems are the only ones inhabited by the Alikaiia and of these only two have more than a token outpost. This is a species in the early days of interstellar exploration and expansion; proud of what they have achieved and as yet unaware that there are aliens with vastly greater capabilities than their own. The Alikaiia do not arm their starships as they have never encountered a spacefaring threat and also

because the highly technical task of manning weapons is better suited to thinkers than warriors but thinkers are temperamentally unsuited to the task.

Likewise, the Alikaiia have not really grasped the concept of claiming a region of space as their own. The arrival of *Deepnight Revelation* will raise questions they have never before needed to ask – such as whether armed aliens should be allowed in orbit over their cities or who that orbital space really belongs to. Away from the inhabited worlds the Alikaiia really do not care much what the Travellers do, although blatantly harvesting resources in an inhabited system might raise questions of ownership and potential enforcement.

ALIKHERRNZ AND LOCAL SPACE

Local star systems have been explored in a patchy manner. In some cases, the Alikaiia have visited a system and conducted a reasonable survey. Other systems may not have yet been visited or the ship sent there may have been lost before it could return with data. Where a system is presented below with an arbitrary identification code it has not been officially named by the Alikaiia, although it may be known by various unofficial designations. Named systems have been at least cursorily visited.

In some cases all that is known is the star type and System Density Index. The Referee can develop these systems using the rules on page 20 of the *Referee's Handbook* if necessary. Additional data might be available, such as the presence of gas giants and potentially habitable planets. If this is the case, the system has already been developed with the quick system generation rules but specific bodies present can be assigned by the Referee. If the Travellers do not visit or scan these systems, they can be left in their current form.

ALIKAIA SYSTEMS MAP



ARBITRARY CODES

Systems can be assigned designation codes completely at random and sometimes are. They may also be assigned a code based on an abbreviation of the sector name followed by a sequential number and letter designator. Another system, sometimes used by the crew of *Deepnight Revelation*, is to encapsulate what is known about this star in its designator code. For example, the system known as Hirnz to the Alikai is designated ALS-BMI by the space science team aboard *Deepnight Revelation*. This can be translated as 'Alikai Local Space – binary system, primary Star type M, distant companion star type L'. The L is presented in lower case to indicate a distant companion. A close companion star would be capitalised as normal.

0102 ALS-BMM

Binary System. M6 (red) main sequence star and M8 (red) main sequence close companion. System Density: 12

0107 ALS-SG1

G2 (yellow) main sequence star. System Density Index: 2

0108 ALS-T2MK

Trinary system. Twin M4 (red) main sequence close companion stars and K9 (orange) main sequence distant companion. System Density Index: 11

0203 Gehalka (ALS-SPGM)

Gehalka is an expanding pre-giant M4 (red) star. This star is in the very early stages of its expansion into a subgiant and finally a giant star. It is known to the Alikai as Gehalka. A scientific mission was sent there in the early stages of Alikai space exploration but the system has not been visited since. The Travellers will initially know this system by its arbitrary navigational designation but can obtain information on it from the Alikai.

GEHALKA (Expanding M4 Star)

Gehalka 1 (Small Gas Giant)
Gehalka 2 (Small Gas Giant)

Gehalka has no terrestrial planetary bodies orbiting it, although it may have had an inner planet or two, which were destroyed in the early phases of the expansion. Both gas giants have modest moon systems.

0209 ALS-SK1

Solo K7 (orange) star. System Density Index: 14

0305 Irn-Alaz (ALS-BMK)

The Irn-Alaz system consists of an M5 (red) main sequence star and its small K5 (orange) close companion. The system is known to contain six bodies including at least one gas giant, a borderline-habitable planet and a planetoid belt. Although it is a good prospect for a colony, Irn-Alaz has not been properly surveyed and is considered unlucky by the Alikai. Three exploration missions have been sent to visit the system; none returned. The first was on a long sweep out towards ALS-BMM and may have been lost en route or on the way back but the other two were sent to scout Irn-Alaz and return immediately. Fears are growing that there may be something inimical in the system and some Alikai will naturally wonder if the Travellers and their awe-inspiring ship are invaders from the unlucky system.

0307 Hirnz (ALS-BMI)

The Hirnz system consists of an M2 (red) main sequence star and its brown dwarf distant companion. There are only three significant bodies in the system.

HIRNZ (M2 star)

Hirnz 1 (X221000-0)
Hirnz 2 (Small Gas Giant)
Hirnz 3 (Small Gas Giant)

HIRNZ-IL1 (Brown dwarf sub-stellar object)

Hirnz is not of any great interest to the Alikai, as might be expected. The system was visited by one of the early exploration missions and has not been further surveyed.

0308 Ohral (ALS-BMA)

The Ohral system centres on an M4 (red) main sequence star and its small but very hot and bright A9 (blue-white) companion, Ohral-Ikn. Ohral-Ikn has long been a navigational point in the night sky of the Alikai homeworld and was one of the first systems visited once the proto-jump drive was invented.

OHRAL (M4 Star)

OHRAL-IKN (A9 Star)

Ohral 1 (Large Gas Giant)
Ohral 2/Ohral-Dza (Super-Earth)
Ohral 3 (X9B9000-0)
Ohral 4 (X6A5000-0)
Ohral 5 (X5A3000-0)
Ohral 6 (X000000-0)
Ohral 7 (Small Gas Giant)
Ohral 8 (Small Gas Giant)

The system is characterised by large terrestrial planets, although none has a breathable atmosphere. Ohral-Dza is particularly huge, with a dense atmosphere that traps stellar radiation to create a runaway greenhouse effect. The result is unimaginably harsh conditions with high temperatures, pressure and gravity combining to make an approach impossible. An Alikai mission placed several rather primitive probes in orbit and attempted to land some on the surface but still little is known about this forbidding planet. This is the sort of place where exotic materials or biologicals might be found but exploration would be hazardous even with *Deepnight Revelation*'s equipment.

0403 Onkonani (ALS-SG2)

The Onkonani system centres on a G5 (yellow) main sequence star. It lies at the end of the small main containing the Alikai home system and all their colonies, and has been the destination of several exploration missions. This is mostly due to the presence of abundant and apparently easily extracted minerals in the system's extensive planetoid belt. Thus far the Alikai have been able to do no more than experiment with extraction methods and plot promising regions of the belt but they hope someday to create an asteroid mining industry in this system.

ONKONANI (G5 Star)

Onkonani 1 (X000000-0)
Onkonani 2 (Small Gas Giant)

0405 Kahhe (ALS-BGI)

The Kahhe system is a binary, consisting of a G6 (yellow) main sequence star and its brown dwarf distant companion. There are just three bodies in the primary system and three in the secondary. None of its planetary bodies are settled, for obvious reasons, but an orbital station is maintained around Eduk-Kahhe for research purposes.

KAHHE (G6 Star)

Eduk (Large Gas Giant)
Eduk-Kahhe (Small Gas Giant)
Kahhe-Kabinid (X000000-0)

EDKAHHE (Brown Dwarf Sub-Stellar Object)

Edus (Large Gas Giant)
Edus-Tss (Small Gas Giant)
Edkahhe-Kabinid (X000000-0)

Eduk-Kahhe Station

The Alikai found a star system essentially consisting of a star and five gas giants, one of them huge enough to be orbited by the others and interesting enough to set

up a permanent research station. This consists of an early jump-capable colonisation ship whose drive had become too wayward to risk breeders aboard. Making one final jump she entered orbit around Eduk-Kahhe and essentially became a space station. Her manoeuvre drives have not been used in years other than for minor orbital corrections and are not in good repair.

The ship/station has four communities, with a total population of just over a 1,000, who arrived in a follow-on mission aboard a more reliable vessel. There are also a 100 or so rejects aboard. Small craft conduct visits to the gas giants of the system and their many moons, returning to the station for repairs and resupply. Support ships from the home system visit intermittently but for the most part the station is self-sufficient. All the fuel she needs is there for the skimming, along with gases that can be processed for useful chemicals, while minerals and metals are mined on a painfully small scale on the gas giant moons. The station has been a success story for some years now but unknown to her crew her drives have developed a severe fault. Applying high thrust creates the possibility that the drive will fail completely. If the research station ever needs to make an emergency orbital correction there is a significant chance she will instead be rendered helpless.

The Rest of the System

The remainder of the system is uninhabited, although Alikai craft can be encountered at any of the gas giants or planetoid fields. All of the gas giants have at least a few small moons and there are planetoid clusters at their Trojan points too. In all, this is an unusual and interesting star system despite not containing any bodies that are in and of themselves particularly noteworthy.

0407 Okh-Kahl (ALS-BBM1)

The Okh-Kal system is noteworthy for its extremely bright B3 (blue-white) main sequence primary, which is orbited by a rather unimpressive M9 (red) distant companion. The latter is surrounded by a clumpy and overall sparse planetoid belt, whilst the main system has several terrestrial planets with no atmosphere. Okh-Kahl 7 is an iceball whose atmosphere is mostly frozen. Additional gases sublime from the surface ice to create denser pockets whenever the planet is warmed. This occurs when the two suns are in the correct alignment, delivering just enough warmth to cause an explosive release of gases.

OKH-KAHL (B3 Star)

- Okh-Kahl 1 (Large Gas Giant)
- Okh-Kahl 2 (X530000-0)
- Okh-Kahl 3 (X8A0000-0)
- Okh-Kahl 4 (X320000-0)
- Okh-Kahl 5 (Small Gas Giant)
- Okh-Kahl 6 (Small Gas Giant)
- Okh-Kahl 7 (X430000-0)
- Okh-Kahl 8 (Large Gas Giant)

OKH-KAL-IDZ (M9 Star)

- Okh-Kahl-Idz 1 (X000000-0)

0503 Ikadni (ALS-SM1)

The Ikadni system lies on the main containing the Alikaiia home systems. There are no useable planets, although some of the gas giant moons might be suitable for outposts. Ikadni 3 is something of a hellhole, with a corrosive atmosphere, whilst Ikadni 4's orbit has obviously been perturbed in the past. It is sharply inclined to the ecliptic and extremely elliptical – to the point where this planet is sometimes further away from the primary than Ikadni 5.

IKADNI (M3 Star)

- Ikadni 1 (Large Gas Giant)
- Ikadni 2 (Small Gas Giant)
- Ikadni 3 (XAB7000-0)
- Ikadni 4 (X520000-0)
- Ikadni 5 (Small Gas Giant)

0505 Ghoudek (ALS-TKKm)

The Ghoudek system is a trinary, with a pair of almost identical K5 (orange) main sequence stars at its centre. The distant companion is an M6 (red) main sequence

star. The main system contains five planetary bodies, with no significant bodies orbiting the far companion. The only terrestrial planet in the system is a scorched hellhole orbiting far too close to the stars to be useful. There is a small settlement on a moon of the second gas giant.

GHOUDEK-YM (K5 Star) & GHOUDEK-YS (K5 Star)

- Deyiseid (X200000-0)
- Eghoudid (Small Gas Giant)
- Eghoudix (Small Gas Giant)
- Eghoudix-Alikaiia (D6A2346-9)
- Eghoudij (Small Gas Giant)
- Eghoudiq (Small Gas Giant)

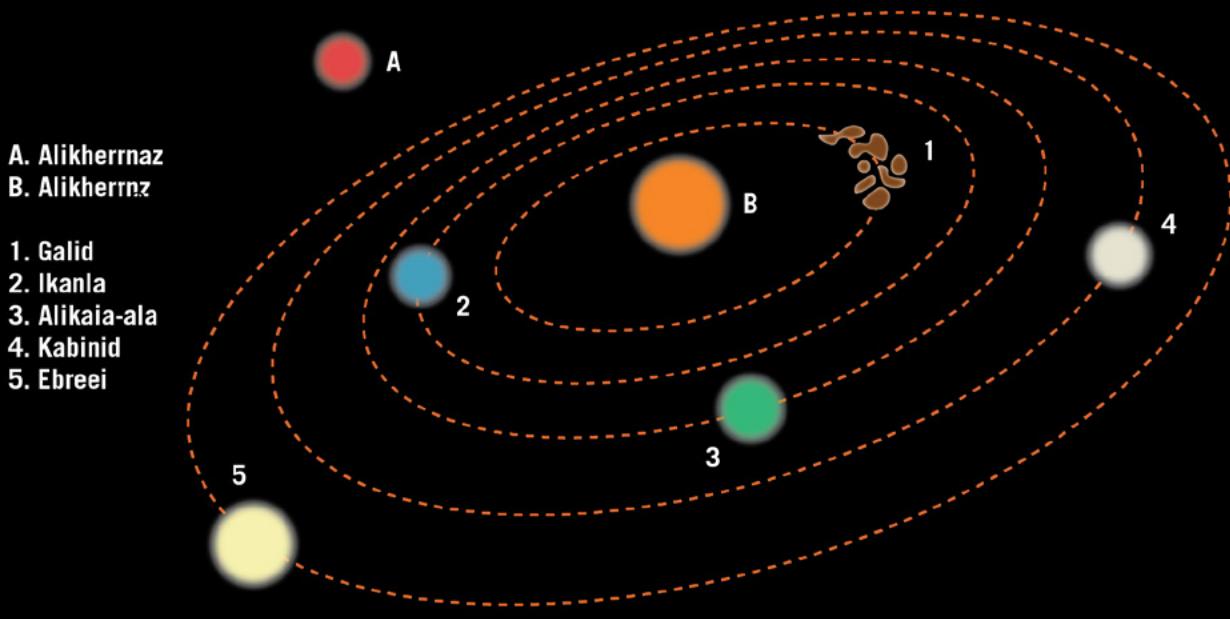
GHOUDEK-ENX (M6 Star)

As is common with Alikaiia-named systems, the names of the gas giants all begin with the same 'Ehhh' sound, which signifies a large object, followed by the name of the system's primary star. The only inhabited body in the system is a large moon of the second gas giant, whose orbit places it in the warm zone. Eghoudix-Alikaiia has an exotic atmosphere composed mainly of carbon dioxide and nitrogen, entirely unbreathable to humans and Alikaiia, but it does have liquid water and a mild if variable climate.

A single small outpost comprising half a dozen communities has been set up on this world. It is still under construction and there are plans to bring in additional communities once the city is finished. At present it resembles a gigantic construction site, with work gangs scurrying about in all directions. Some of the city's communities have specialised in this field, with a population almost entirely made up of workers.



ALIKAIA SYSTEM



0506 Alikherrnz (ALS-BKm)

The Alikherrnz system is the home of the Alikaiia species and to date the only system with a large population. It is a typical binary star system, with a K6 (orange) main sequence primary and smaller M8 (red) main sequence companion star in a distant orbit. The primary system is sparse, with just five major bodies and has an unusual composition. The companion star has no planets.

ALIKHERRNZ (K6 Star)

Gailid (Planetoid cluster, D000546-9)
 Ikanla (Transient Super-Earth)
 Alikaiia-ala (D767946-9)
 Kabinid (D000546-9)
 Ebreei (Small Gas Giant)

ALIKHERRNAZ (M8 Distant Companion Star)

Gailid

Gailid is something of an anomaly. It is a planetoid cluster that appears to have once been a terrestrial planet. It is probable that the arrival of Ikanla in the system disrupted its orbit and subjected the planet to enormous forces, resulting in partial breakup. One consequence of this is that the world's iron core and heavy minerals are exposed, making mining operations easy. There are a few small settlements on the larger planetoids, mostly consisting of a single community of 200-300 non-breeders and a single breeder. Most of the workers are rejectees who dwell on the fringes of the communities. Gailid is a regular destination for several

colony-barges, which take on raw materials and either deliver them to the mainworld or use them to produce goods that are traded elsewhere.

Ikanla

Ikanla is a transient body passing through the system it was partially captured by the gravity of Alikherrnz, falling into a path that took it close to the star before gradually spiralling back out over millions of years. The world has been more or less habitable for the past few hundred thousand years, and will remain so for tens of thousands more, but will eventually become too cold for life. Millions of years after that it will finally escape Alikherrnz' gravity and go on its way across the cosmos.

In the meantime, Ikanla has been colonised by the Alikaiia, who undertook extremely primitive terraforming. Ikanla has an unbreathable atmosphere of nitrogen and carbon dioxide, which is gradually being converted by algae introduced to the world's seas. It is hot and prone to violent storms as a result of its position at the inner edge of the system's warm zone. Cities are enclosed and partially underground, yet built in such a way as to resemble those of the homeworld as closely as possible.

The world population numbers in the tens of thousands but there is little significant industrial or economic activity. Most industry is of a self-support kind, with little produce left over for export. The colonies are not economically viable and there are suggestions they should be withdrawn. However, the breeders who have

settled Ikanla will have none of it. Even with a surface gravity of 1.7gs, almost twice that of the homeworld, the breeders of Ikanla seem to like their new home.

Alikaia-ala

Alikaia-ala is the homeworld of the Alikaia people and described on page 93. It has no single starport but most cities have a basic landing area with some facilities to support visiting craft.

Kabinid

Kabinid is a small terrestrial planet orbiting outside the system's warm zone. Its extremely thin envelope of atmospheric gas is not breathable and most water is frozen or found in deep aquifers. The world has been settled with a handful of cities, most of which sit atop aquifers or in regions of abundant minerals. Kabinid is viewed as a miserable place by anyone who does not actually live there but the inhabitants are content in their semi-subterranean cities. Expeditions down into the aquifers, using specially constructed submarines, have discovered traces of extremophile life that has excited the thinker segment of the planetary population. As a result, several communities have begun to specialise in exploration and scientific research.

Ebreei (Small Gas Giant)

Ebreei is a small gas giant with faint rings of ice crystals. It has five major moons and at least a dozen small ones. The larger moons are all settled to some extent but there is only one major city at Ebreei, an unusual example of an entire city that has specialised. It has a high proportion of workers and thinkers, and builds most of the exploration starships. These are often built to order for a mainworld city or consortium of them but some standard designs are constructed and put out to market.

The name Ebreei is used interchangeably, but sometimes with different inflections, for the gas giant, the main inhabited moon and the city based there. Craft from the city undertake skimming operations for petrochemicals in the gas giant's atmosphere and mine the smaller moons, whilst regular deliveries of heavy minerals arrive from Gailid aboard colony-barges.

Ebreei (the city) produces a significantly higher proportion of rejectees than most others and these are often of high calibre. It is thus the centre of exploration for the whole Alikaia race. To counteract the population decline inevitable with so many rejectees leaving aboard the exploration ships they helped build, the breeders of Ebreei are more active than most others. This leads to a number of figures of speech referring to the Alikaia equivalent of promiscuity.

0507 E-Ehkri (ALS-SI)

The E-Ehkri 'system' consists of a brown dwarf sub-stellar object and a handful of moons. Some are large enough to be considered dwarf planets but none sufficiently useful as to have been exploited or even fully mapped. This rather disappointing system has tended to direct Alikaia exploration efforts in the opposite direction, despite there being better systems beyond.

0508 Abonek (ALS-SM2)

The Abonek system may not seem very promising from a distance but it is potentially a real prize. The innermost planet orbits close to the M6 (red) main sequence primary and, despite a short year and considerable variance in seasons, it is as close to a perfect garden world as is likely to be found in the area. Some of the cities of the main Alikaia culture are aware of the potential of this world and a colony mission was recently organised. This is the distressed colony ship encountered by *Deepnight Revelation*, sabotaged to prevent it reaching its destination. The next planet out is right at the outer edge of the warm zone. Its dense atmosphere is sufficient to retain enough heat that its world-ocean is a semi-frozen slurry in most areas rather than being completely ice-bound. What life there is dwells deep beneath the surface, clustered around seabed vents and faults where volcanic heating allows pockets of life to exist.

ABONEK (M6 Star)

- Abonek 1/Alik-Alikai: (X667000-0)
- Abonek 2: (X78A000-0)
- Abonek 3: (Large Gas Giant)
- Abonek 4: (Small Gas Giant)
- Abonek 5: (Small Gas Giant)
- Abonek 6: (X4A1000-0)
- Abonek 7: (X720000-0)
- Abonek 8: (X221000-0)
- Abonek 9: (Small Gas Giant)
- Abonek 10: (X210000-0)

Abonek 1 is in fact already inhabited by Alikaia of the Aggressor faction, who call it Alik-Alikai. Its cities are unmistakably of Alikaia origin but arranged very differently to the usual haphazard growth associated with the mainstream. There is a single central city with several smaller urban areas, all within 120 kilometres of the basic but effective starport. The outer cities are located to control or access resources, or as part of a gradual spread from the central hub. This pattern is common in colonisation but atypical for the Alikaia.

The port is located around 50 kilometres from the main city and has a small specialist community dedicated to construction and maintenance of starships. This is very much a cottage industry, with a starship under outdoor construction on part of the landing area. Components

are laboriously fitted as they are completed, not necessarily in an efficient order.

The colony is defended by a surprisingly large ground force, with some air and vehicle backup. There are initially no anti-aerospace weapons other than a few light autocannon intended for use against aircraft rather than space vessels. Even these represent overkill before the arrival of the Travellers; the fact the colony is defended at all should indicate to the Travellers that these Alikai do not think the same way as the rest of their society.

0509 Insk (ALS-BMM2)

The Insk system contains two near-identical M5 (red) main sequence stars orbiting one another as what might be called semi-close companions. This creates a situation where some of the system's bodies have orbits that pass between the two stars. Insk 1 has a weirdly looping orbit that carries it between the stars then out in a wide ellipse at each end. Insk 2 is a spiral of planetoids probably resulting from the breakup of a planet between the two stars and Insk 3 is possibly the core of that planet. Insk 2 and 3 orbit the barycentre of the semi-close pair of stars and subject to tremendous stellar heat and radiation. Insk 4 and 5 orbit outside the stellar pair; sufficiently far that Insk 5 is a frozen world with a dense atmosphere of methane and ammonia.

INSK-LZI (M5 Star)

INSK-LSHI (M5 Star)

Insk 1: (X610000-0)

Insk 2: (X000000-0)

Insk 3: (X100000-0)

Insk 4: (Small Gas Giant)

Insk 5: (X9A1000-0)

0603 Airgi (ALS-SM3)

The Airgi system may be a good prospect for colonisation in the near future. Airgi 2 is borderline but much easier to settle than a rockball. At present there is sufficient interest in the world that research ships routinely visit to conduct surveys and there may be parties of Alikai planetside carrying out detailed exploration.

AIRGI (M5 Star)

Airgi 1 (X210000-0)

Airgi 2 (X843000-0)

Airgi 3 (Small Gas Giant)

Airgi 4 (X000000-0)

Airgi 5 (Large Gas Giant)

0604 Tinzal (ALS-BGm)

The Tinzal system is similar in many ways to the Alikai home system. It centres on a G2 (yellow) main sequence star with an M8 distant companion. It differs in being

far more dense in terms of planetary bodies. Unusually, the secondary (companion) system has a borderline habitable planet. There is little in-system traffic; ships arrive at the mainworld or very occasionally at Tinzal-Isk-Alikai from the home system and jump back again. As yet there has been little more than cursory exploration of the other bodies.

TINZAL (G2 Star)

Tinzal-Kabinid (X000000-0)

Tem (X341000-0)

Tinzal-Alikai (D756546-9)

Ebrain (Small Gas Giant)

Tinzal-Kabinid-Kss (X000000-0)

Ebinx (Small Gas Giant)

Ebzani (Large Gas Giant)

Ebsdn (Small Gas Giant)

Bai (X311000-0)

TINZAL-ISK (M8 Star)

Kunssu (X422000-0)

Tinzal-Isk-Alikai (X688246-9)

Ebeht (Small Gas Giant)

Tinzal-Kabinid

The Tinzal-Kabinid planetoid belt is notable mainly as a linguistic key to help penetrate the Alikai language. The linguistic process behind its name amounts to 'not really any different to the place of the same name but here instead of there'. The belt orbits close to the star and is a little hazardous due to stellar radiation and heating effects. The Alikai have not explored it.

Tem

Tem is a hot rockball of a world, tidally locked to its primary. It is of no interest to the Alikai and thus has been surveyed but no landings made.

Tinzal-Alikai

With a name translating more or less as 'the Alikai home in the Tinzal system', Tinzal-Alikai is not ideal for colonisation but was by far the best world the Alikai had found when the effort began. Today it has three modestly sized cities spread widely across the surface and some single-community settlements constructed where access to resources was easy. Tinzal-Alikai has a special place in Alikai culture as their first colony beyond the home system. Life is not easy here but the people are proud to be at the forefront of their expansion onto other worlds.

The Outer Primary System

The outer Tinzal system contains four gas giants and a planetoid belt. It has not been explored in any great detail but the occasional mission has attempted to chart

the moons of the gas giants or the Tinzal-Kabinid-Kss planetoid field. The latter is wide but sparse, composed mainly of relatively small objects with little in the way of useful minerals. At the outer edge of the primary system, far enough out that its orbit is heavily perturbed by the companion star, is the iceball world of Bai. It is notable mainly for an early exploration ship that crashed there with no survivors.

Kunssu

Kunssu orbits the companion star Tinzal-Isk far too closely to be comfortable. It has managed to cling to a thin envelope of toxic gas, composed mainly of heavy compounds, and has some heavily tainted water in underground aquifers.

Tinzal-Isk-Alikaia

Tinzal-Isk-Alikaia is an adequately habitable planet on the outer edge of the secondary system's warm zone. It is cold and dark, and not really to the liking of the Alikaia, but capable of supporting life so was deemed worthy of settlement. At present the colony consists of a single community dwelling in a mountain valley close to the equator. The world's single breeder is notoriously bad-tempered, producing enough rejectees that there is a steady stream of explorers heading out into the wilderness. The colony's population is in decline and its people are miserable. Not surprisingly perhaps there have been no volunteers to move their community to this rather unattractive world.

Ebeht (Small Gas Giant)

Ebeht is a small gas giant, remarkable only for orbiting very far from Tinzal-Isk. It may or may not have moons; it has never been visited by the Alikaia.

0606 Kgni (ALS-BKk)

The Kgni system contains two K type (orange) main sequence stars but no useful bodies. Kgni-Hzi 1 is a hot rockball too close to the primary, whilst the second orbit is occupied by a slowly dispersing planetoid cluster. This likely resulted from a planet that almost formed, and might have valuable resources easily accessible. Kgni-Hshi is a very distant companion; little more than a speck in the sky from the gas giants' moons.

KGNI-HZI (K5 Star)

- Kgni-Hzi 1 (X320000-0)
- Kgni-Hzi 2 (Planetoid Cluster)
- Kgni-Hzi 3 (Large Gas Giant)
- Kgni-Hzi 4 (Small Gas Giant)
- Kgni-Hzi 5 (X200000-0)

KGNI-HSHI (K7 Star)

0608 Danh-In (ALS-SK2)

The Dahn-In system is unusual in that it consists almost entirely of gas giants orbiting a K6 (orange) main sequence star. The outermost giant has an unusual retrograde orbit inclined only slightly to the system ecliptic and orbits pole-first. It is clear this planet was perturbed in some manner, perhaps at the same time the planetoid belt was formed. The belt exhibits a high proportion of dust and gas as well as small planetoids – and very few large ones – suggesting it is a failed attempt to form another gas giant.

DANH-IN (K6 Star)

- Dahn-In 1: (Small Gas Giant)
- Dahn-In 2: (Small Gas Giant)
- Dahn-In 3: (Small Gas Giant)
- Dahn-In 4: (Small Gas Giant)
- Dahn-In 5: (Large Gas Giant)
- Dahn-In 6: (Large Gas Giant)
- Dahn-In 7: (X000000-0)

0701 ALS-SK3

Solo K3 (orange) main sequence star. System Density: 4

0702 ALS-TLII

Trinary system. Brown dwarf with paired brown dwarfs as distant companions. System Density: 15

0710 ALS-SF1

Solo F3 (yellow-white) main sequence star. System Density: 11

0801 ALS-TMkm

Trinary system. M1 (red) primary with K2 (orange) and M2 (red) main sequence stars as paired distant companions. System Density: 13

0804 ALS-BGM

Binary system. G8 (yellow) primary with M7 (red) close companion. System Density: 8

0805 ALS-SM4

Solo M7 (red) main sequence primary. System Density: 11

0808 ALS-TMKm

Trinary system. M2 (red) primary with K7 (yellow-white) close companion and M7 (red) distant companion. System Density: 9

MAKING CONTACT

It is probable at this point that the Travellers will have encountered the Alikai and perhaps rescued a large number of their people. The arrival of *Deepnight Revelation* in one of their colonised systems will cause shock and alarm but if the ship starts broadcasting in their own language, perhaps even allowing representatives of the rescued communities to speak to their colleagues planetside, alarm will rapidly turn to awe and gratitude.

It will become painfully obvious that the Alikai have never even considered creating a protocol for first contact. They grasp the concept that non-hostile starfarers have arrived without undue difficulty but have no idea how to greet them or who should do it. *Deepnight Revelation* will be bombarded with messages from many cities inviting the crew to visit, whilst some cities are rather quieter. Most of these are simply undecided but the Aggressor faction has a different agenda.

It is obvious from first contact that Alikai society is extremely decentralised and disorganised. This will make it difficult for the Travellers to arrange a face-to-face meeting or even arrange for the transfer of refugees planetside. It may be that the Travellers have to arrange their own greeting ceremony. One option is to invite

representatives aboard the ship and send small craft to pick them up. However, this will result in dozens of delegations, some of them quite large, requesting inclusion in the event. There is no indication of who is worthy and who is not, since in theory every city has equal and independent status.

This approach might also offend some cities whose delegations cannot be included or who feel they have not been treated as they deserve. The end result would be a horde of delegates descending on *Deepnight Revelation*'s limited social spaces and endlessly asking the same questions about the Travellers' origins and intentions. The security aspects would be another nightmare. If the Travellers passively allow this shambles to take place, they will have to deal with all of these problems along with dozens of minor diplomatic incidents. They may manage to negotiate the minefield of wandering delegation members, parties demanding transport planetside in a huff due to some inexplicable affront, important Alikai offering trade deals or seeking preferential arrangements with the Travellers and anything else that can go wrong in such a sackful-of-cats scenario, however they will certainly not relish the experience or benefit much.



A much better alternative would be for the Travellers to direct the process of handing over the rescuees and holding a meet-and-greet ceremony. Blatantly giving instructions would be a mistake, of course. Not only would it annoy the Alikai but it might convince some that the Travellers are invaders come to stage a takeover. The best option is to discreetly manoeuvre the process with polite suggestions and loaded questions until a planetside venue is chosen. The obvious choice would be the city of Dari-Alkin, as it has a spaceport of sorts and a construction facility for starships. It is the home port of most of the Alikai colony and exploration vessels and is more or less a specialist city dedicated to space exploration. Other cities may not like the choice but at least it is a simple matter to explain it.

Persuading the Alikai to accept this solution might not be all that difficult. All cities are sympathetic to the needs of the rescuees, so a plan to land them as soon as possible at the most suitable port makes sense to everyone. Once small craft are plying between *Deepnight Revelation* and Dari-Alkin it is a simple matter to suggest the formal greeting ceremony take place there. The planetary communications net will explode with inter-city arguments but the end result is a horde of transport aircraft carrying dignitaries to the city. The arrivals are a chaotic mess, naturally, as there are no protocols in place to handle such an influx of important people.

The only workable solution is for aircraft to land at the city's airport – which is fortunately located separately from the spaceport – and then bounce to another city where they will be held until needed. Getting everyone home again is going to be an interesting exercise but at least the delegations can get to Dari-Alkin and be installed in temporary accommodation. Likewise, the Travellers will be unloading the rescuees, which requires informal arrangements with the local authorities and workers at the spaceport.

Unloading the Rescues

Getting breeders back into pinnaces and utility boats will be a challenge, although there are plenty of willing Alikai to help this time around. Many of the rescuees view the Travellers and their crew as heroes and are only too glad to help – or tell everyone around what great people they are, which can get embarrassing. Some are resentful that more of their fellow colonists were not saved and many are simply shocked and frightened. Overall, creating a schedule for who goes in a shuttle planetside and when is a simple administrative task. Making it happen is a more difficult diplomatic one but both can be abstracted with a CEI check.

On the ground, the Travellers are met with an overwhelmingly positive reaction by those they deal with. The city administration, consisting entirely of thinkers, meets the first shuttle personally and continues to have someone at least moderately important present when each lands. There are medical and work teams, obviously stretched thin by the influx of rescuees but working hard to treat physical wounds and mental trauma, to get everyone into accommodation with other remnants of their communities. Some rescuees are immediately airlifted to their home cities but most are installed in temporary accommodation at Dari-Alkin.

The locals are great to work with, despite communication difficulties and a habit of stopping to stare at the newcomers. Alikai workers for the most part just do what they are told. They have a clear task and carry it out no matter how weird humans and other people from Charted Space may seem to them. The thinkers who run the port are efficient and pragmatic about their task, although they do have a lot of 'if you have a second' type questions about the Travellers' craft and equipment.

Overall, the landing of the rescuees goes well and is a very positive experience. The Travellers did a good and heroic thing and the Alikai respect that. They are a little nervous about that big, near-magical, ship in orbit but a good impression has been made. Indeed, the respect they have won gets embarrassing after a while. From time-to-time the nearby Alikai just stop and a whisper goes around, 'they saved the BREEDERS!'. Sometimes the work parties start making a weird sound the Travellers will come to know as a form of cheering. There is a chance here to make some friends at the grassroots level and obtain information about the nature of local society.

TRAVELLERS AND AGGRESSORS

The Aggressors make contact several hours after the hubbub from other cities begins. They do not, of course, ever refer to themselves as Aggressors. They are simply 'us' as far as they are concerned. Their contact is on behalf of the entire faction but this is not apparent from the message. It looks like just another contact from yet another city and may not be noted as different or important. If the Travellers have specified their communications people look out for anything out of the ordinary or differing from the standard pattern that is emerging, they will be notified a signal has been received that might merit additional attention.

The signal is not very different to all the others. Broadly translated it reads:

Greetings, unknown starfarers. We welcome you to our territory. We invite a discussion of possibilities. We offer trade, hospitality, exchange of work and knowledge. Make known your needs.

The signal is slightly different from the standard in that it is more direct and refers to 'territory' where others use a word translating as 'home-place'. If the Travellers reply directly they will find themselves in contact with an Alikai thinker apparently no different from any of the others. He refers to himself as Irldzin and his city as Kadiaz.

Once communication is established, Irldzin seems keen to talk. He is clearly inexperienced at conducting diplomacy with an alien species – which is hardly surprising – but he is doing his best. He refers to 'his people' but is vague about who that is and is quite happy for the Travellers to think he is speaking for the whole planet or his home city as they will. There are advantages for him both ways. Irldzin's people would like to welcome a delegation from *Deepnight Revelation* to their city and negotiate a fair exchange for whatever the starfarers need. He litters his slightly clumsy diplomacy with questions about the ship, its origins and capabilities, which are probably intended to be subtle but are anything but.

Irldzin will readily accept an invitation to send a delegation aboard *Deepnight Revelation* but is less enthusiastic about joining the general gathering at Dari-Alkin. He throws up a few clumsy objections about the gathering being too large for meaningful discussions – which is actually true but has not deterred anyone else – and hints that 'we' have poor relations with the people of that city and would not be treated fairly. He will agree to send a party if there are no better options but in fact the Aggressors have a different plan regarding Dari-Alkin.

Asking About Kadiaz

Asking other Alikai about a city called Kadiaz produces no information at first. This is not unusual; there are a great many cities and little organised information about distant ones. Eventually, if the Travellers are persistent, they will be informed that this is a city located several hundred kilometres from Dari-Alkin. There is little current information on it but it used to be a typical conglomeration of non-specialist communities located on a large island in a river. There was nothing very unusual about it.

This rather vague response carefully does not mention that the city was attacked three years ago by the Aggressor faction and quickly overrun. Little has been heard since, although there are no indications of atrocities. As is not unusual in such situations, the city's forces put up the best fight they could and asked for help from their neighbours. This was provided in the typical haphazard manner – too little, too poorly organised to make a difference – and served only to inflict demoralising losses on other cities that were then overrun in turn.

The mainstream Alikai will not tell the Travellers about the Aggressors because they genuinely do not understand it exists. The attacks on some cities and the hostility of others are seen as isolated incidents but the pattern is obvious to an outside observer. The concept of organised intelligence work is completely unknown to the Alikai. Most cities believe there are a few minor conflicts going on and nothing more. There has never been an organised faction or alliance in the history of the Alikai people.

Thus although they suspect there are real problems developing, the mainstream Alikai are not really aware of what is happening and do not realise its significance. At the same time they do not want the Travellers interacting with 'one of those cities that has become hostile and uncommunicative'. Convincing the Alikai that this is not a case of a breakdown in relations coincidentally happening in many cities all at once will be surprisingly difficult.

Aggressor Diplomats

The Travellers may agree to host a diplomatic party aboard *Deepnight Revelation* or send a delegation planetside to Kadiaz. In the latter case they will be guided and not allowed to wander about too much but will be treated with courtesy and respect despite the odd unintentional gaffe. The city does not seem very different to others, although it is a bit more organised and seems to have more warriors.

The Aggressor faction are a lot more worldly-wise than mainstream Alikai society, if only because they know people like themselves exist in the universe. Their diplomats will arrive unarmed aboard *Deepnight Revelation* and will not cause any trouble. They will be civil to mainstream Alikai they meet there, although astute Travellers may note that whilst the mainstream members of society treat the Aggressors like everyone else, there is an air of contempt or perhaps condescension about the way they speak to ordinary Alikai.

The diplomatic party will make repeated requests for information about the ship and her capabilities, and will be just as baffled as any other Alikai by the way humans and other newcomers seem to flit between castes. However, their task is to assess the level of threat posed by *Deepnight Revelation* and see if they can win over the newcomers to their cause. They are seeking information, not infiltration, and will respect boundaries and secure areas.

Crewmembers with a naval background or diplomatic experience will find themselves comparing the behaviour of the Aggressor diplomatic party to that of a Zhadani or Solomani ambassador and his staff being shown around an Imperial Navy ship – that is, if the staff were on their first day of training. They try to conceal their interest in military capabilities and political alignment but they have no skill at this. Their behaviour is not unusual for such a situation but is notably different from the mainstream Alikai, who do not seem to have realised *Deepnight Revelation* might be armed.

Although clumsily phrased, the delegation's questions are far more astute than those of the mainstream visitors; they are the sort of questions asked by a power that realises the newcomers might be a threat whereas the mainstream diplomats tend to be concerned with far more general matters. The Travellers will be left with the impression that these Alikai are far more organised than their counterparts and that they may understand concepts the others have never considered. They will not answer direct questions about their faction but are quite willing to admit their home city cooperates readily and effectively with many others. They will immediately begin advancing this as an advantage for good relations – the delegation from Kadiaz are sure they and their allies can fulfil the Travellers' needs far better than a haphazard collection of uncoordinated deals with 'the other cities'.

If the Aggressors believe they can quickly come to an arrangement with the Travellers, they will try to do so. In such a situation their cards are unceremoniously dumped on the table. The pitch goes more or less as follows:

We-not-them are the destiny of our species. Join us and win the favour of our (Breeders? Queens? Gods?) – the last is an unfamiliar phrase that does not translate. The connotations of this phrase imply veneration and submission but it seems to refer to the breeders as leaders. This is at odds with what the Travellers know about the Alikai and their society.

The pitch will only be made if the Aggressors are reasonably sure the Travellers will side with them, which is not very likely. If they are at all unsure the Aggressors will decide to be cautious and not reveal their intentions. If the Travellers are amenable, the plan will be spelled out to them. If not, they become targets along with everyone else.

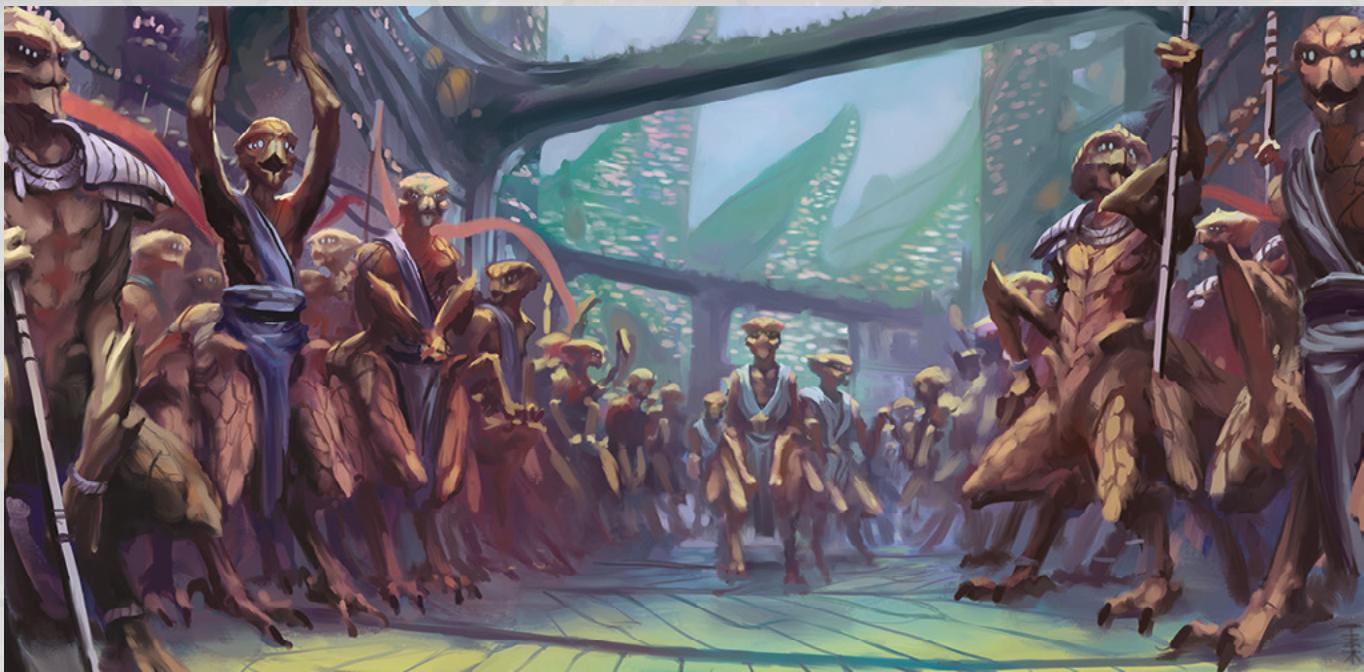
The plan has been rushed through as a result of the Travellers' arrival, which presents an unexpected opportunity. Many cities have sent leaders as well as delegates to the gathering at Dari-Alkin and there is a real chance to kill or capture them. If the Travellers did not seem receptive then this is also an opportunity to take out their leadership or capture hostages for bargaining purposes.

The operation is simple in concept. Armed parties will be landed at Dari-Alkin's airport, arriving as if they were delegates. They will attack the reception held in the Travellers' honour and try to kill or capture as many mainstream leaders as possible. However, this is a diversion. A second wave of assault transports is en route, with air support, and will land at the airport once

PRESUMED CASTE

Alikai can tell what caste another Alikai is by sight. Even if there are close physical similarities, the differences are such that a member of one caste cannot masquerade as another. They instinctively try to assign a presumed caste to aliens such as humans but can only base their assumption on what the person is carrying or doing. Anyone with a weapon is assumed to be a warrior. Tools indicate a worker. Datapads and scientific instruments or empty hands suggest a thinker.

A Traveller with an atmosphere sampler, electronics tool kit, portable computer and sidearm will baffle the Alikai, who will be unable to pigeon-hole the individual and therefore be uneasy around them. Actions will dictate presumed caste but the Alikai will remain unsure. All castes will fight in self-defence or to protect their community but the way humans and other creatures from Charted Space comfortably switch roles will cause problems for the Alikai worldview. After a while, the Travellers will start hearing a new sound from the Alikai, which translates literally as a word meaning 'someone who must be something worthy' and more generally as 'I just don't know what you are or how to address you. It makes me nervous but I'm trying to be polite'.



it has been seized. The Aggressors will then overrun the city and sweep up everyone in it. They hope to capture the Travellers' pinnaces and small craft, and ideally the command crew of *Deepnight Revelation*.

The plan relies on surprise and deception, and for this reason the Aggressors take no chances with the Travellers. If they have any doubts about their wholehearted participation, the Travellers will be assumed to be targets rather than allies. However, they will be offered the chance to join the Aggressors just as the attack begins. In the meantime, the Aggressors are far more devious than the mainstream Alikai and have every chance of achieving surprise. The folk of Charted Space are another matter, however, and may prove the undoing of the Aggressors' plan.

THE RECEPTION

The reception, when the planning and frantic preparations are over, is a grand but clumsy affair. The Travellers really should make an occasion of it, with the intention of creating a morale-boosting spectacle. Their crew have done a good and impressive deed, and who can turn down a parade in their honour? This is most definitely a day for finery; formal uniforms or dress clothing adorned with jewellery and braid brought all the way from Charted Space. It will not hurt to make a grand entrance. After all, the Alikai have basic shipbuilding capability and can provide the Travellers with much-needed repairs.

The locals have not made any stipulations about weapons. It has simply not occurred to them to do so.

Their people will carry tools or weapons as symbols of their caste but this is a matter of protocol rather than security – who brings a loaded gun to a parade? The Travellers and their crew might and their weapons will not be questioned. The Alikai will assume those with weapons are warriors and naturally carrying symbols of their caste. Nobody will be asked if their weapons are functional or loaded. However, since everyone carrying a weapon is presumed to be a warrior, if the Travellers authorise the wearing of sidearms for everyone they will present the image of a shipload of dedicated warriors. The assembled delegates will be a little taken aback by this raw display of military power and will tend to be cautious or even a bit nervous. On the other hand, if most crewmembers are not carrying tools or weapons they will be assumed to be thinkers, which makes sense for a starship crew and will reassure the delegates.

The reception is... disorganised... to say the least. There is nobody in overall charge, although the host city's leaders try to impose some organisation. If the Travellers were expecting neat blocks of soldiers on parade and polished diplomatic speeches they will be disappointed. The landing field is a mass of small clumps of Alikai, from a dozen to a hundred or so in each group. Some carry weapons and some carry tools, all are dressed in an adorned version of their working dress but no two delegations have the same conventions. The delegations are anything but silent and nor does anyone stand still. The result is a sea of movement on both sides of a rough corridor down which a greeting party from the home system slowly advances. Sporadic cheering breaks out here and there, sometimes swelling to a crescendo and sometimes tailing off with an air of embarrassment.

The Alikai are making an effort to greet the newcomers properly; that much is obvious. However, they have no idea what they are doing and the entire affair is likely to come over as a bit comical. Aircraft are still landing at the airport at the far side of the city and delegations are rushing up to join the rear ranks even as the Travellers' diplomatic party advances to meet their counterparts.

THE BATTLE OF DARI-ALKIN

The Travellers may have some warning that the event is about to go awry. It is possible security personnel may realise the last delegations hurrying across the landing field contain a far higher proportion of warriors than the others. This will be spotted on a straight 2D roll of 10+ if the Travellers have not specified any security arrangements and on an Average (8+) Recon or Tactics (military) check if they appointed some kind of security overwatch. This development is enough to make security people uneasy but is not conclusive. Once the information is relayed to the Travellers they can take whatever action they like but the ceremony is beginning and the decision to go to a combat footing or retreat to the pinnacles would look bad, to say the least. The Travellers have around five minutes to act at this point.

A little later, a message is relayed from *Deepnight Revelation*. A large number of aircraft are headed for the city. They are approaching on different vectors as if from many different sources but if the Travellers think to instruct someone to play back orbital surveillance data they are seen to have all marshalled at just three cities. Some of these planes are large, like the transports that brought the various delegations, but around 75% of them are too small to be airliners or private transports. They are most probably fighters.

If the aircraft are challenged, they all tell the same story. The transports are carrying delegates and their escorts, and they have a fighter escort for security as befits their high status. This is not entirely unreasonable; some of the delegations brought escort fighters. The majority turned for home after the transports landed but a few are at the airport or circling in a holding pattern near the city. About one minute before the ground attack begins *Deepnight Revelation*'s tracking systems indicate that most of the incoming small aircraft have accelerated past their transports and are headed for the city at high speed. They are no longer answering challenges.

The Travellers have about a minute to act at this point. There are hundreds, maybe thousands, of friendly Alikai between them and the newcomers, potentially hostile aircraft incoming and they are armed with whatever they brought. There is time to issue a warning,

which may or may not be heeded, to run for the shuttles, to order their ship to support them in some way or to throw in their lot with the attackers. Once that minute is up the battle of Dari-Alkin begins.

OPENING MOVES

The new arrivals at the back of the landing field open fire indiscriminately but in a disciplined fashion. Warriors advance a few steps then halt to fire a series of short bursts from their assault carbines, then move forward again. They operate in groups, supporting one another without much apparent command and control going on. The response from the delegations is immediate but chaotic. With very few exceptions the warriors attending the ceremony have no ammunition. Those that do shoot back as best they can but are targeted by overwhelming firepower. Others move in front of their leaders and act as living shields, whilst the majority make a gallant, uncoordinated and doomed rush at the attackers. Even outnumbered fifteen to one the attackers have sufficient firepower to shoot the charge to pieces. A few warriors make it to the enemy and engage in hand-to-hand combat before being cut down.

Meanwhile the first fighters make a pass over the city, firing rockets and launching guided bombs at governmental centres and any air defences that manage to get into action. Here and there a couple of fighters from the delegations engage as best they can but are swatted by a hail of air-to-air missiles. Reports from *Deepnight Revelation* indicate the transports are heading en masse for the airport and clearly intend to land. There are too many of them for an organised landing but this is not the intent. It appears some are headed for the starship landing area, apparently unconcerned that it is full of people and littered with space vessels.

It is possible the Travellers will choose to throw in their lot with the Aggressors or they may already have done so. If so, they will be ignored by the attackers as far as possible, although there is a lot of firing going on. There is also a possibility that some of the delegations might assume the Travellers are complicit in the attack even if they are not. Since warriors at the gathering have unloaded weapons there is little they can do except try to use their hand weapons. The Travellers may have to fire on their allies in self-defence.

As might be expected, the situation devolves into complete chaos. Delegations flee in all directions, some of them trying to get into the Travellers' craft. Fighters strafe and bomb the landing field, although the Travellers may realise they are not shooting anywhere near the landed pinnacles and boats. The reason becomes apparent when a party of warriors charges towards the ships. Their goal is to overrun and capture

the craft and/or their crews. They are firing to clear a path but will only shoot at the Travellers if they are taking significant fire from that direction.

The attackers are willing to accept casualties from a few handguns or carbines but will concentrate fire to eliminate anyone with heavier weapons. They move rapidly on their four legs, yet can still hold their weapons more steady than a running human. The Travellers may note – now or when they think about it afterwards – that these attackers all wear a torso protector with the same dark red and earth-brown colouration. This might be taken for camouflage; and it certainly acts that way in some terrain but in fact it is the insignia of their faction. This is another clue that the Aggressors are far more unified than their mainstream counterparts.

If the Travellers do not resist, a party will enter their craft and attempt to capture them along with any crewmembers they can catch. They will attempt to take crewmembers captive and are not especially subtle about it. Their carbines do not make very good clubs but are used vigorously, as are kicks and unarmed attacks. Where possible, the attackers will simply grab Travellers and bear them to the ground but will use lethal force if the Travellers do.

Even if the Travellers have agreed to join the Aggressors, they will be attacked if they make any attempt to return to their craft or allow anyone to board. This may not be an intentional betrayal but whatever the Aggressor leaders wanted their ground forces probably lack the coordination to avoid conflict. If the Travellers are captured, the Referee may want to stage a rescue. After all, *Deepnight Revelation* does have security specialists aboard in case a contact situation goes awry. A major firefight and attempt to kidnap the command crew certainly qualifies as ‘awry’.

The Travellers should be able to retreat to their small craft and escape once the capture party has been fended off. If they hang around trying to shoot it out with the Aggressors, or begin evacuating additional Alikai personnel, they risk coming under ground attack once more or being strafed by passing fighters. There is little the autocannon carried by these planes, or even their rocket pods, can do to a pinnace but Travellers in the open may be in trouble.

The Travellers' best option is to get to a communications console, or ideally the mission command centre aboard *Deepnight Revelation*, and begin making a coordinated response. Assuming, of course, they want to.



Aggressor Capture Party

STR 9 DEX 9 END 10
INT 7 EDU 4 SOC 5

Skills: Athletics (dexterity) 3, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee (unarmed) 2, Recon 1

Armour: Light Body Armour Jacket (+3), Natural Armour (+2)

Weapons: Carbine (2D+2), Durun-Isk (2D+1), Kick or Strike (1D+2)

GETTING INVOLVED... OR NOT

The situation groundside is confused to say the least. Local forces are putting up stiff resistance at the airport but are hard pressed, whilst at the spaceport the attackers ran riot for a time but have become bogged down in a firefight with arriving local troops. There is a wave of transport aircraft headed for one or both landing areas, certainly filled with additional troops. Elsewhere, ground forces are moving overland towards other cities but will not arrive for a few days.

Nobody wants this war. The mainstream Alikaians were quite happy as things were. The Aggressors did not wish to launch an all-out campaign of conquest just yet but the arrival of *Deepnight Revelation* has forced them to accelerate their plans. They could not afford to risk the powerful newcomers siding with the mainstream Alikaians, although by attacking the reception they may have ensured this happens. For their part, the Travellers could simply fly away – and indeed this may be their best option since getting involved in a local war does not benefit their mission. On the other hand, they may have made friends among the Alikaians and would benefit from a stopover at a friendly, if basic, port.

The Travellers are in an awkward position. They do not have the conventional forces to defeat the Aggressors head-on and whilst they could hold the Aggressors to ransom using their nuclear munitions they would have to demonstrate the existence of these and their willingness to deploy them. This might mean destroying a city, breeders and all, and then possibly others until the Aggressors finally surrender. Then there is the question of peacekeeping. Will the Aggressors start attacking again once *Deepnight Revelation* leaves? This seems likely, so how can the Travellers bring this present conflict to a rapid close? Should they get involved at all?

If the Travellers are out of their depth, they will receive advice from their security personnel and anyone with experience of military command. It is clear that the battle for Dari-Alkin is a turning point in Alikaians world history and that whilst the mainstream Alikaians are in a state of confusion they could be led to victory and shown how to force a lasting peace on their enemies – or eliminate them.

The first requirement is to not lose the battle for Dari-Alkin. The enemy has committed large forces and probably all of its air assets and must succeed in taking control of the city, whereas the Travellers only need to prevent this to achieve their aim. Inflicting enormous casualties on the Aggressors would be useful both in military terms and also as a boost to mainstream morale and a political bargaining point.

The Travellers have powerful weapons at their disposal if they choose to use them. The particle accelerator aboard *Deepnight Revelation* will not penetrate the atmosphere but could be used to create ionisation. That would severely disrupt communications for both local factions but the Aggressors are likely to suffer more and the Travellers' own equipment would not be greatly affected.

Weapons carried aboard the 200-ton scouts could be used for ground attack and air-to-air combat. A starship-grade laser will devastate a conventional aerospace fighter and even an unarmed pinnace could bring down transport aircraft. Ramming at speed is the most graphic method but just nudging a wing or tail section will break it. A supersonic flypast might cause some enemy aircraft to lose control and perhaps crash.

It would be possible to tip the balance of the battle by rallying the defenders on the ground – or at least providing them with a coherent plan of action – and by reducing the number of enemy troops reaching the city. The Travellers could try any of the following actions in person or send detachments to carry out the tasks.

The Aggressor Plan

The Aggressors have chosen to act decisively rather than hoping the newcomers do not disrupt their plans. Their assault on Dari-Alkin is intended to capture some of the Travellers or their crew, and perhaps their advanced craft. The Aggressors rather optimistically hope to press these into service in a short time frame. The assault will also eliminate many mainstream leaders, which will make later conquests easier.

The capture of the city is to be carried out by coup de main, relying on speed and surprise to offset lack of numbers. It is vital to the plan that the Aggressors hold an airport or other landing area and suppress local air defences. This will permit waves of troops to be flown in to complete the overrun of the city; this is a daring and risky plan, made more difficult by the amateurish nature of Alikaians warfare. However, there is every chance it will work.

Ground offensives have also been launched against several other cities. These were in preparation when the Travellers arrived but not expected to begin for weeks or even months. However, given the circumstances, the Aggressors have decided to go all-out and attack with what they have in place. Other forces are being assembled and will follow or launch additional attacks.

The avalanche has begun; the Aggressors will not stop after their current round of attacks. As might be expected, they have no plans beyond the immediate but there is a general aim to conquer and unify the whole

planet and then move on to the colonies. This will lead to a series of increasingly disorganised offensives as the Aggressors overrun one city and move on to the next.

If this situation is permitted to continue, or if the Aggressors win the battle for Dari-Alkin, the mainstream Alikaiia will eventually learn to cooperate against their mutual enemy. It will be too little and too late; the next decades will be characterised by warfare, insurgency, unrest and suppression until the Aggressors finally come to dominate their homeworld. It is likely their exploration of local space will be militarised and aggressive, and that they will seek to conquer other species they encounter. The generally peaceful and rather innocent Alikaiia encountered by the Travellers will have ceased to exist. If the campaign ends with the Travellers suffering the effects of extreme time dilation they may even have to fight their way past a militaristic Alikaiia Empire on the way home.

The Travellers are thus in a position to dictate the course of history for an entire species, with major implications for the whole region once the Alikaiia expand beyond their present colonies.

The Air War

Deepnight Revelation herself can participate in the air war, although not as effectively as her space combat capabilities might imply.

Positioning might be a problem, as *Deepnight Revelation* needs to be over the battle area or at least have line of sight to it in order to use most of her systems. This could be achieved by a powered orbit, using the engines to maintain position above Dari-Alkin, or by making fast orbits and acting during each pass. This would permit a dip into the atmosphere in what the navy informally calls a ‘broad hint gambit’, creating a shock wave that will cause little damage at ground level but remind everyone the ship is there. Each repositioning can be an Operation to be resolved with a DEI check for the Flight Division.

Electronic Warfare is a simple matter for such an advanced ship. Concepts like SIGINT (Signals Intelligence or listening to enemy transmissions) are in their infancy for the Aggressors and have not even been thought of by the mainstream Alikaiia. *Deepnight Revelation*’s high-technology military electronics can read local signals in real time and even perform some automated analysis. At the very least the Travellers can track and identify ground formations and aircraft, and with a little effort will be able to penetrate the command network (such as it is) and discern the Aggressors’ plans. The Referee can use this intelligence analysis to provide answers to why the conflict is occurring if the Travellers cannot find out by other means.

Beam Weapons Fire is of limited use from orbit. The particle accelerator and fusion guns cannot normally harm targets in the atmosphere but although lasers are heavily attenuated they will still cause damage to aircraft. Laser fire against atmospheric targets is treated as personal scale damage against targets at altitude in clear air and treats its dice as D3s against ground targets; a laser weapon doing 2D starship scale damage is attenuated down to 2D personal scale damage against aircraft and 2D3 against personnel in a five metre radius. Smoke or heavy cloud will completely block laser weapons.

Missiles can be fired at ground or air targets. Hitting a fast-moving aircraft is difficult but precision is not really necessary; an airburst within 50 metres or so will be sufficient to damage an aircraft. Ship-to-ship missiles do their normal starship scale damage to all targets within 10 metres, reducing by 1D per full 10 metres from the target. This will devastate ground units and makes flying in formation suicidal – a lesson local pilots will quickly learn once they see a missile attack.

Air-to-Air Combat can be carried out by armed small craft. At short ranges of a kilometre or two, attenuation is not great providing the air is clear, so laser weapons will do their normal starship scale damage. Clouds will render laser weapons useless. Targeting aircraft with lasers is tricky as their mounts are intended to make microscopic adjustments for shots over hundreds or thousands of kilometres and cannot slew fast enough to track an atmospheric craft at short range at some angles. Hitting an aircraft in a dogfight therefore requires a Very Difficult (12+) Gunner check. Alternatively, the weapon can be locked in place and aimed by pointing the craft itself. The targeting software will fire when the target is aligned correctly, which requires a Difficult (10+) Pilot check. At longer ranges – more than a kilometre or so – downing enemy transports and fighters is a turkey shoot, requiring only standard attack rolls. Armed small craft could be landed and used as an anti-aircraft battery in this manner.

If the Travellers act decisively, they have the capability to swat the Aggressor air forces out of the sky in such a dramatic manner it will inspire the mainstream Alikaiia and demoralise the Aggressors. A sufficiently resolute air defence might be the decisive factor in ending the war.

Groundside Action

The Travellers do not have major ground forces at their disposal but can influence the outcome of the land battle in various ways. The most effective is the least graphic. If the Travellers can convince the city’s defenders to accept their help they can provide detailed information on enemy troop concentrations and movements – and possibly even what those troops



are currently ordered to do. The Aggressors have used air reconnaissance and are familiar with the concept but this situation is one of what is sometimes called ‘technological surprise’. The Alikaiia do not know what is possible with advanced electronics and may not realise what is happening. As a result they may attempt to set ambushes or attack from an unexpected direction only to find their opponents fully aware of the situation and waiting for them.

Combat Parties could be formed from the crew. The gauss carbines and laser rifles carried aboard *Deepnight Revelation* are devastatingly powerful compared to local weaponry, although numbers will always be a factor in close-range urban combat. Using the crew as infantry would be wasteful and inevitably lead to casualties the expedition cannot afford. A better approach would be to deploy laser rifle-armed crewmembers as snipers with others as a security detachment. Hitting a fast-moving target might be a problem but the Travellers’ weapons greatly outrange those of the Alikaiia. Sniper fire could be used to draw an enemy force into an ambush or a costly assault against a well-defended position, especially if local forces are positioned to engage the enemy as they come into range. In this way, a handful of Travellers with laser rifles could act as a force-multiplier for local troops, with the combined force being far more powerful than individual elements.

Heavy Weapons such as plasma support weapons and even poni guns are capable of penetrating aircraft on the ground (or in the air if they can be hit) and taking most vehicles out of action. There are few armoured vehicles

on the planet and most of those are light enough that a poni gun might still get through. The plasma weapons will destroy any vehicle the Alikaiia have and could clear a street of troops, although they will cause a lot of collateral damage.

Vehicles might be used as ersatz tanks or armoured transports. The ATVs carried by *Deepnight Revelation* are tough enough to shrug off small arms fire and the attackers have few heavier weapons. It would be possible to use them as mobile emplacements for the plasma guns or create a rapid-reaction force using lighter vehicles filled with local or offworld infantry. The Alikaiia are quite happy to cling to the outside of a fast-moving vehicle with their feet whilst they blaze away with carbines. The hostile environment suits, although clumsy, would also serve well as near-invulnerable weapon platforms.

FIGHTING THE BATTLE

The first task facing the Travellers is to convince the Alikaiia to accept help. This is not difficult given the dire circumstances but their command net is virtually non-existent so troops on the ground might not understand the Travellers are there to help. Ideally, the Travellers should be able to not only convince the city leaders they can and will help but make them understand what they can do. The Travellers have capabilities the locals have not even thought of and may not realise what is possible. It may be difficult to persuade them of what

can be done without demonstrating some capabilities but once they grasp the concepts the locals will be only too glad to have war-winning superweapons (as they see them) on their side.

Getting to talk to the leaders requires a Difficult (10+) Diplomat check, with a positive DM at the Referee's discretion if the Travellers have already demonstrated their willingness to help. Almost any sort of offer can obtain the cooperation of the local commanders but the Travellers will achieve much more than this if they quickly lay out a set of proposals and explain their capabilities in general terms.

One of the most useful things the Travellers can do is to create an effective command net. This means placing a crewmember with a good communications device as liaison with every significant local unit, with additional personnel as observers in high places such as atop buildings. Selling this to the locals will not be easy – a Difficult (10+) Tactics or Diplomacy check will suffice – but once the ground forces begin to realise how effective they can be when operating in close cooperation they will welcome the move. This will trigger a military revolution in the longer term, with Alikaiia warfare becoming far more organised, but for now it will merely assist in winning the battle.

The battle itself is a huge, sprawling affair which could be played out in detail if the Travellers want but is best abstracted with a few incidents resolved where they affect the Travellers directly. This in-and-out shifting of focus allows the Travellers to gain an impression of the big picture whilst still having excitement. The following incidents lead up to the climax of the battle but the Referee can always add more if the Travellers are enjoying the fight.

Encounters with the enemy will be fleeting and confused. The Aggressor Alikaiia are likely to be racing over rooftops and jumping from one precarious perch to another. The Travellers may find themselves exchanging fire with typical Alikaiia infantry for a few rounds before they fall back or move off to continue their advance by a different route.

The Rearguard

The Travellers become aware of a situation developing near some of their own personnel. This might be by their own observations, a distress call or through the command net they have set up. Local positions have been overrun and the majority of forces are either fleeing in panic or rushing to reach fallback positions. A small rearguard is trying to buy time with a fighting retreat but are in danger of being flanked or simply overrun.

The fall-back is turning into a rout and will become one if the Travellers do not act. If they do, they discover the enemy is advancing up several parallel streets and also over the tops of buildings. They could be halted by a vigorous counterattack or a defended position. Even just a handful of Travellers with laser rifles and gauss carbines could inflict tremendous casualties on the advancing Aggressor force.

A stout defence of a position in cover will allow the survivors of the rearguard and some additional forces to rally and begin fighting back. However, enemy troops are still moving parallel to wherever the Travellers made their stand and there is a real risk of being surrounded. This might actually suit the Travellers; they may want to become an island of resistance. However, it is a grave risk.

A mobile counterattack might actually be safer. ATVs or personnel in hostile environment suits can withstand heavy small arms fire and punch a hole in the attacking force. If the counterattack is vigorous enough, the Aggressors may well decide they do not want to be anywhere near the Travellers, scattering every time they approach. It may even be possible to crash through and head for the airport, rampaging around in the enemy's rear and disrupting landing operations.

If the Travellers manage to inspire the local Alikaiia to stand with them, perhaps with a combination of brave deeds and inspiring words, they will bring about a curious running battle across the tops of buildings as well as in the streets. They will be fired upon from above, with Alikaiia clinging to projections from nearby walls, as well as facing multiple opponents at ground level. The fight culminates with the arrival of three light combat vehicles (see page 107) equipped with autocannon. These try to sweep aside the Travellers and their allies. Once they are disabled or driven off, resistance evaporates.

Air Interdiction

Word arrives that a concentration of enemy transport aircraft is heading at high speed for the airport. If they are not stopped these planes will crash-land anywhere they can, disgorging enough troops and light vehicles to alter the balance of the fighting. The transports are escorted by multiple fighters.

Stopping the landings could be achieved in various ways. The most effective is to shoot down the incoming transports. That may mean dogfighting with their escorts, which will allow most of the transports to get through unless the Travellers ignore the fighters. This is a viable strategy, since damage taken from local air-to-air weapons will be light. However, it all contributes to

wear on *Deepnight Revelation*'s craft and there is always the chance of a lucky shot.

An alternative would be to land the craft and use them as ground-based anti-aircraft emplacements. This is vastly more efficient than fighting it out in the air, as the craft's turrets only need to traverse a little between targets and can clear the sky in a matter of moments. Anti-ship missiles from *Deepnight Revelation* will have a similar effect.

At ground level plasma guns and laser rifles will destroy transport aircraft with ease, although it will not be possible to stop all of them from unloading. Any heavy weapons in use – and a laser rifle counts as one in this context – will attract a ground attack from whatever personnel are nearby and strafing by enemy fighters. This may be sufficient to drive the Travellers off and permit a significant force to be landed, in which case it will have to be dealt with.

Crisis Point

If the Travellers can prevent the collapse of the defence and arrival of heavy reinforcements, the battle is more or less won. However, the Aggressors have a final trick to play; one so appalling the mainstream Alikai are stunned into inaction. The Aggressors have rounded up a large number of breeders, presumably from areas they have overrun. Their communities would never have let them be taken, so there are undoubtedly scenes of massacre waiting for after the battle. In the meantime, the Aggressors begin herding the poor, terrified, near-mindless breeders ahead of their advancing troops. One or two are riddled with bullets by their captors in a deliberate terror-inspiring gesture.

The defenders immediately cease fire. Some throw down their weapons and flee, or attempt to surrender. Others dither, unable to decide what to do. The defence of Dari-Alkin is on the point of collapse as the Aggressors march slowly forward behind their living shields. It is unthinkable to the mainstream Alikai that anyone would harm a breeder, let alone murder several to make a point. The shock and indecision caused by this action has won the battle of Dari-Alkin for the Aggressors... unless the Travellers act.

There are several clumps of breeders being used as shields, typically three to five chained or tethered together. Each clump has a group of guards whose task is to kill the breeders if necessary and prevent an assault intended to free them. They will untether any that are disabled or killed. As the Aggressors gain confidence, sure now their vicious gambit has worked, their leaders begin moving up to the front of the formation. They walk beside or just ahead of the captive breeders, banner-

bearers beside them. Their bodyguards gun down the occasional Alikai but mostly they just advance towards the city administrative complex in eerie silence.

If the Travellers do not deal with this situation, the battle is lost. The city will surrender and the Travellers will have to flee. The locals might even agree to capture the Travellers in return for the lives of their breeders. Preventing this will not be easy but there are still some options available.

If the Travellers open fire they risk hitting the breeders but their weapons are sufficiently precise to minimise this risk. One option would be to take out the leaders and guards in a sudden strike. As soon as anyone opens fire there is a risk the breeders will be gunned down but the Aggressors would rather use them as shields so will hesitate to kill any more of them. The Travellers can exploit this opportunity to take out the guards and perhaps advance to rescue the captives.

There is a chance here to completely break the will of the attacking force. If some of their leaders are killed in a protracted firefight they may be a little demoralised but if they are all eliminated in a matter of seconds by the fire of powerful alien weapons, the attacking force will panic and scatter. This is the best possible outcome for the Travellers, achievable by a concerted, near-simultaneous, outbreak of precise weapons fire. If this is well executed, the advancing force jerks to a stop, pauses in shock and then disintegrates in a panicked rush back to the airport. Aggressor troops can be seen flinging away their weapons and racing up the sides of buildings to escape.

Mopping up the broken Aggressors will be easy, whereas if the Travellers have to battle it out at the head of a rallied local defence force the job will be a lot tougher. Either way, the battle for Dari-Alkin is more or less won once the breeders are rescued. If the Travellers manage to deal with the mass hostage situation cleanly they will become heroes to the Alikai, making the task of organising resistance to the Aggressors worldwide a lot easier. If, on the other hand, they are indiscriminate in their fire and kill some of the breeders, they will be hated even if they do win the battle.

AFTERMATH

The battle of Dari-Alkin will have long-term consequences for the Alikai and in the shorter term may dictate the outcome of the present conflict. The best possible outcome from the Travellers' point of view occurs if the Aggressors were summarily defeated. In particular, a graphic and quick destruction of the incoming troop transports will demoralise the Aggressors and awe the mainstream faction. The rout of forces

in Dari-Alkin might have a similar effect, although to a lesser degree. In this event the columns headed for other cities simply turn around and return to base.

If the Travellers lead the people of Dari-Alkin to a hard-fought victory, the war continues. However, the nature of the enemy has been revealed. They are organised, unified and willing to kill breeders. The latter causes a wave of revulsion across mainstream Alikaiia society and a rash of declarations ranging from relatively polite condemnation to pronouncements of a state of unremitting war. As with everything else the Alikaiia do it is all very disorganised but with some guidance from the Travellers an alliance will begin to form.

At the same time, the Alikaiia leaders start clamouring for assistance. Some cities want military action against the Aggressors. Some want technology to help in the fight, whilst others ask for the secrets of the Travellers' advanced jump drive. There is no set of hard-and-fast guidelines on what they should do but any decision will have consequences for the future – including a decision to do nothing at all.

Giving the Alikaiia the knowledge they need to build safe and reliable jump drives will permit an explosion into local space by whichever faction wins the war. The Travellers may or may not be willing to risk this being the Aggressors. Military action is possible but the Travellers have limited resources. Their laser-armed small craft could devastate military and industrial targets, setting the Aggressors back decades and ensuring a mainstream victory, or they might build weapons for the Alikaiia to use. This requires resources and the Travellers will have to gather at least some of them.

The mainstream Alikaiia also want the Travellers to teach them how to be effective in warfare. This is a rather sad situation, in which a generally happy-go-lucky and slightly inept culture must become a militarised state in order to survive. It will take several months to create a working command structure and instil the rudiments of strategy in an initial class of officers. The Travellers may not want to spend quite so long in one place, although they might benefit from the chance to repair and refit their ship with the help of the locals.

Further adventures with the Alikaiia are at the discretion of the Referee. The Aggressors have been stunned into inaction for the time being and their power could be broken by a few well-placed laser and missile strikes. Or the Travellers may decide the Alikaiia World War is not really their business. One possibility is for *Deepnight Revelation* to refit and conduct exploration of the local star systems whilst a cadre of experts trains Alikaiia troops and officers. Much depends on the choices made by the Travellers.

Eventually, one way or another, it will be time to leave Alikaiia space and move on. The expedition must continue and further involvement in local affairs will impose serious delay. It is likely that some Alikaiia will ask to receive training in space operations whilst *Deepnight Revelation* is in the area and that a significant number will volunteer to join the crew. Whether they take new friends with them when they move on, and what they leave behind, is very much up to the Travellers... but move on they must.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Some bands of Travellers will refuse to get involved in the conflict at all or will move on as soon as possible. It is beyond the scope of this book to detail all the possible adventures the Travellers might or might not get involved in. If they want a war, there is one to be fought – or won in short order using rather brutal methods. There are some interesting star systems nearby and exploring them might lead the Travellers to the secret Aggressor colony.

The Referee is advised to remind the Travellers that they have a mission to complete and need to move on as soon as possible. At the same time, any incident can become an Adventure and the Alikaiia World War could become a mini-campaign in its own right. Subsequent events are, as always, at the discretion of the Referee and players.

OPPOSITION

The warriors of the mainstream and Aggressor factions are similarly equipped, although the Aggressors are better organised and armed. Most personnel fight in an individualistic manner, helping one another as it seems appropriate. At this level the Aggressors are not really any more effective than their opponents but can coordinate their forces much better at the operational and strategic level.

The standard tactical unit might best be described as a warband rather than an organised formation. Typically a small group of 2–6 warriors will be led by one of their number and will join 3–5 other groups to create a loose combat force numbering around 20–24. These formations rarely contain support weapons; each warrior is armed with a short-barrelled carbine ideal for use whilst rushing across open ground or clambering at speed through a cluttered area. Some warbands include one or more vehicles, often light transports acting as carriers for a support weapon.

Tactics tend to be basic. Groups within a warband will halt to provide covering fire whilst others advance or peel off to flank an enemy position. Three-dimensional envelopment is not uncommon, with warriors racing high up nearby structures to fire down into ground level positions. Where support weapons are available they tend to be used to assist the nearest warbands or those most closely associated with the support crew rather than in response to a well-thought-out fire plan.

A field force typically consists of a variable number of warbands and some supporting assets in the form of

light vehicles carrying supplies. Administration of the force as a whole is almost non-existent in the case of mainstream Alikaiia but the Aggressors have learned to field larger forces and coordinate them a little more closely. Their command and control is rudimentary by the standards of more warlike races but compared to their opponents they are a paragon of efficiency.

Aggressor forces are organised on a semi-formal basis with a designated commander and subordinates. There is no such thing as a standard field force but a typical one might be organised as follows:

Aggressor Tactical Force

Commander's Warband

20-24 personnel
2-3 light vehicles

2-4 Subordinate Commander

Subordinate Commander's Warband
20-24 personnel
1-2 light vehicles

1-3 Warband

20-24 personnel
0-1 light vehicles

Supporting Warband

8-12 personnel
3-8 light vehicles

A force of this type typically fights as infantry, fielding around 200-250 effectives supported by 10-15 light vehicles acting as weapons carriers. These generally mount machineguns or light autocannon but mortars and anti-aircraft missiles are also deployed in some formations.

PERSONAL WEAPONS

XX1----

DURUN-ISK

Sidearms, in the sense of pistols and similar weapons, are rarely used by the Alikai. Instead the role of a weapons for last resort personal defence or close assault is taken by the Durun-Isk, whose name translates as 'does everything'. The Durun-Isk resembles a long, broad-bladed knife similar to a Bowie but with a hooked projection on the false edge. This is reminiscent of a billhook and is used in a similar manner when the Durun-Isk is employed as a tool. Both warriors and workers use apparently identical Durun-Isk but it is identified as a tool in the hands of a worker and a tool/weapon when carried by a warrior. An Alikai can somehow tell which the Durun-Isk is even if it has been dropped or is propped up in a corner.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
Durun-Isk	8	Melee	2D+1	1.3	Cr80	-	-	-

XX2----

CARBINE

The standard personal weapon for infantry is a bullpup-configuration carbine, fed from a 100-round ammunition cassette loaded into the shoulder stock. The weapon is rear-heavy, which brings the muzzle up quickly when encountering a threat at close quarters and can be fired one-handed with DM-2 to attack rolls. This does cause significant muzzle climb under automatic fire and there is no semi-automatic mode. As a result, DM-1 applies to all attempts to attack rolls at any range and effective range is short. On the plus side, rate of fire is high and the small-calibre bullets have good penetration. It is possible to shoot through light foliage or chew it away with sustained firepower. The latter is a common gambit in the cluttered environment where Alikai weapons are often used.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
Carbine	8	50m	2D+2	2	Cr350	100	Cr25	AP 3, Auto 4

VEHICLES AND INFANTRY

LIGHT COMBAT VEHICLE

The typical light combat vehicle is an amphibious four-wheel-drive design that trades efficiency for the ability to move through rough or waterlogged terrain. It will float in water but sits very low; more commonly it will move by a combination of tyres spinning in the water and intermittent contacts with the stream bed. The flat area at the rear can be enclosed by wires or panels to create a cargo carrying variant or used to mount a light weapon system.

The cab can hold two crewmembers, who take up three Spaces each due to the awkward body shape of Alikaiia. The vehicle bed can hold a maximum of 690kg of well-stowed cargo, or mount a 1-Space weapon and carry a crewmember – rather precariously – to operate it. Depending on the weapon fitted it is not uncommon to see an Alikaiia gunner hanging off the rear of a weapon traversed to the side, unsupported but for his own four fleet gripping whatever projections are handy.

AEROSPACE STRIKE FIGHTER

The Alikaiia do not have much of an air combat tradition and tend to use aircraft as support for ground forces. Air-to-air designs are beginning to emerge but most are still geared to the ground-attack role. The typical strike fighter in use by both sides in the conflict has a crew of two, supported in tandem in an ejection apparatus and operating their craft in a semi-standing position. This is natural for Alikaiia but does not translate well to high g-tolerance and an Alikaiia can only cling on so tightly

to his supports. Unwary crewmembers can be smashed against the inside of their cockpit when the pilot makes a sudden manoeuvre.

Alikaiia aircraft tend to be built for stability rather than manoeuvrability, largely due to the way their crews are accommodated and make good ground-attack platforms. The standard strike fighter can take a fair amount of punishment and keep flying. Four 22mm autocannon are mounted in a curious arrangement around the nose. Two point straight ahead and are useful in air-to-air combat when it occurs. The others are angled slightly down and often fired separately by the second crewmember. The rocket pods also use the same firing angle, allowing the plane to fly straight and level across a battlefield strafing targets as they enter the weapons' threat zone. Four guided bombs are also usually carried, although the hardpoints combined with a small amount of internal space does permit some customisation of payload.

ALIKAIA INFANTRY

STR 8 DEX 9 END 8 INT 7 EDU 4 SOC 5

Skills: Athletics (dexterity) 3, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee (unarmed) 1, Recon 1

Armour: Light Body Armour Jacket (+3), Natural Armour (+2)

Weapons: Carbine (2D+2), Durun-Isk (2D+1)

LIGHT COMBAT VEHICLE

TL	9
SKILL	DRIVE (WHEEL)
AGILITY	+1
SPEED (CRUISE)	HIGH (MEDIUM)
RANGE (CRUISE)	500 (750)
CREW	2
PASSENGERS	—
CARGO	VARIES
HULL	18
SHIPPING	4.5 TONS
COST	CR27000

ARMOUR

FRONT	7
REAR	9
SIDES	7



EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Aquatic Drive, Communications System (improved)

Ring Mount (light autocannon, gun shield)

Autopilot (skill level) 0

Communications (range) 500km

Navigation (Navigation DM) —

Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM) —

Camouflage (Recon DM) —

Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM) —

TRAITS

Off-roader



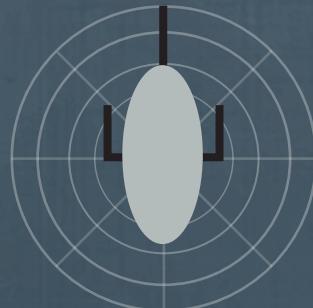
Weapon	Range	Damage	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits	Fire Control
Light Autocannon	1	6D	500	Cr1000	Auto 3	—

ARMOUR

FRONT 15

REAR 15

SIDES 15



AEROSPACE STRIKE FIGHTER

TL	9
SKILL	FLYER (WING)
AGILITY	+2
SPEED (CRUISE)	FAST (HIGH)
RANGE (CRUISE)	2,400 (3,600)
CREW	2
PASSENGERS	-
CARGO	500KG
HULL	8
SHIPPING	8 TONS
COST	CR503000

TRAITS

Autopilot (skill level)	1
Communications (range)	500km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1
Camouflage (Recon DM)	—
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Autopilot (improved), Communications System (improved), Control Systems (improved), Decoy Dispenser, Ejector Seats, Fire Extinguishers, Navigation System (improved), Sensors (improved), STOL, 3x Fire Control (basic)

Fixed Mounts (light autocannon x2, twin-linked, basic fire control) x2

Hardpoints (1 Space, basic fire control) x4

Fixed Mount (rocket pod x2, twin-linked, basic fire control)



Weapon	Range	Damage	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits	Fire Control
Light Autocannons	1	6D+6	500	Cr1000	Auto 3	+1
Guided HE Bomb	—	1DD	—	—	Smart	+1
Rocket Pods	1.5	4D+4	18	Cr8000	Auto 3, Blast 5	+1

ON THE BRINK OF YONDER

After their encounter with the Alkaia the Travellers continue towards point NSY-X. Their mission orders recommended seeking a route across the Great Rift, so it is likely *Deepnight Revelation* will proceed along the fringe of the rift. A route would require the location of deep space comets, rogue gas giants or perhaps brown dwarf systems where fuel might be obtained, all within four parsecs of one another. Even with frequent stops to scan, no suitable chain of refuelling points will be found.

The system designated at mission start as NSY-X lies in a region of relatively low stellar density, with three notable points nearby. This is the drop-off location for the final buoy of this segment of the voyage and marks the end of this phase of the expedition. If the preferred location for the buoy is unsuitable for any reason, standing orders are to select somewhere nearby as in previous drop-offs.

0106 NSY-X TMMm

This system is a trinary containing two near-identical M4 (red) close companion stars and a distant M7. System Density Index: 11

0201 Reference Point NSY-X Sigma

RP Sigma is a white dwarf star. Its thermal and light output are small but its radio emissions are a useful reference point in locating Preferred Record Buoy Location NSY-X. Any planets the star once had were destroyed long ago; there is nothing but cometary debris in the outer system and nothing at all in the region swept clear by the star's giant phase. RP Sigma is as dead as any place in the universe can be.

0206 NSY-X TGkk

The NSY-X TGkk system consists of a G1 (yellow) primary with a pair of K3 (orange) main sequence stars orbiting one another as a distant companion. System Density is very low; there is only a single body in the system, a small gas giant with a complex orbit about the trinary system's barycentre rather than around any of the stars.

0209 Reference Point NSY-X Phi

RP Phi is a stellar oddity; a complex multi-star system consisting of no less than seven stellar bodies. The

system's primary bodies are a pair of A3 blue-white giant stars orbiting very close to one another, with a third A3 giant as a close companion. It is likely these stars will eventually collide, making local space rather unhealthy for a time. This stellar trio is orbited by a pair of F6 (yellow-white) main sequence stars, also as a close pair, and two Type L brown dwarf sub-stellar objects as distant companions. The only planetary bodies are a superjovian and two large gas giants, all orbiting the system's complex and mobile barycentre.

0404 NSY-X SL1

NSY-X SL1 is a lonely brown dwarf sub-stellar object with no planetary system to its name. There are a few comets that might be mined for ice but overall NSY-X L is the very definition of a barren system.

0503 NSY-X BKK

The NSY-X BKK system centres on a pair of K3 (orange) main sequence stars. These are unremarkable in most ways but long-range scanning indicates a dense planetary system. System Density Index: 23

0506 NSY-X

The NSY-X system orbits a pair of stellar bodies: a G7 (yellow) and a K8 (orange) main sequence star. There is nothing really remarkable about these stars but they are located conveniently close to three more obvious local reference points, making the system a good choice for a buoy drop.

The system itself is rather sparse, although there is a water world on the inner edge of the warm zone that has an extensive aquatic ecosystem. A combination of high stellar radiation and greenhouse effect has turned this planet into an unpleasant steambath but there is still the possibility of harvesting food or useful materials from the oceans.

NSY-X ALPHA (G7 Star)

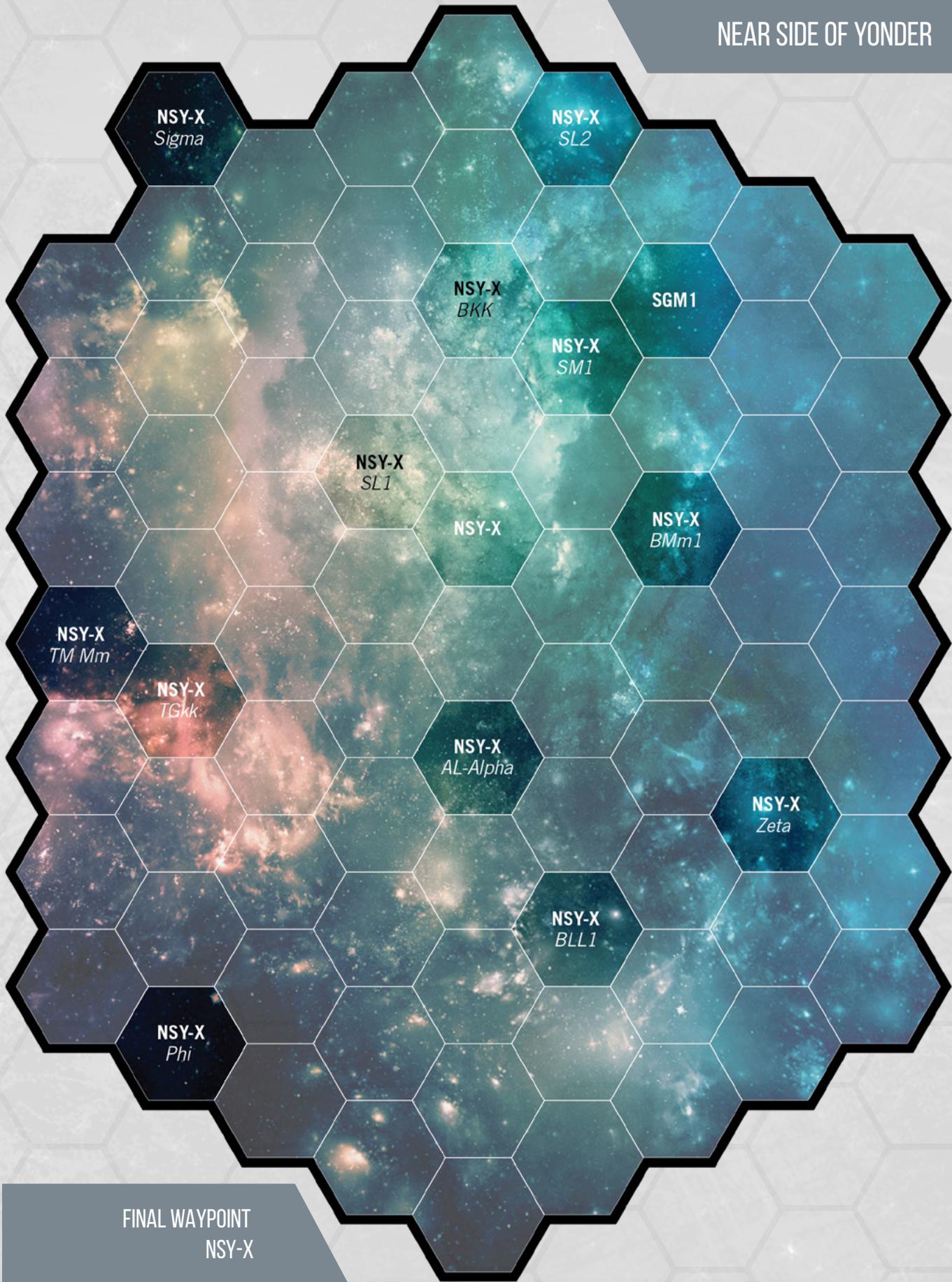
NSY-X BETA (K8 Star)

NSY-X 1: (Large Gas Giant)

NSY-X 2: (X69A000-0)

NSY-X 3: (X721000-0)

NEAR SIDE OF YONDER



0507 NSY-X AL-Alpha

NSY-X AL-Alpha is the preferred alternate buoy drop location if NSY-X proves unsatisfactory. The system centres on a K3 (orange) star. The system is unusually dense, with multiple gas giants and no less than four significant planetoid belts. The outermost is a distinct region containing a significant number of bodies but widely dispersed due to its large orbit.

Among the inner planets is a hot corrosive-atmosphere world and a super-earth at the outer edge of the warm zone. It is cold, largely icebound, but does bear sufficient life to allow some resources to be gathered.

NSY-X AL-ALPHA (K3 Star)

Alpha 1 (Small Gas Giant)
Alpha 2 (Large Gas Giant)
Alpha 3 (X8B7000-0)
Alpha 4 (Super-Earth)
Alpha 5 (X111000-0)
Alpha 6 (Large Gas Giant)
Alpha 7 (X000000-0)
Alpha 8 (X000000-0)
Alpha 9 (X61000-0)
Alpha 10 (Small Gas Giant)
Alpha 11 (X000000-0)
Alpha 12 (Small Gas Giant)
Alpha 13 (Large Gas Giant)
Alpha 14 (X000000-0)

0601 NSY-X SL2

NSY-X SL2 is a solo brown dwarf. It has a collection of seven major moons large enough to be considered dwarf planets, plus a ring system containing mainly icy planetoids.

0603 NSY-X SM1

NSY-X SM1 is an extremely crowded star system, with no less than 21 occupied orbits detected. All bodies, which include at least one gas giant, orbit the central M6 (red) main sequence star. SM1 was initially considered a suitable alternate location for the buoy drop but after a long-range survey the presence of a flaring red giant nearby resulted in a recommendation this system not be used.

0608 NSY-X BLL1

BLL1 is a close-companion pair of brown dwarf stars orbited by a curious binary pair of large gas giants. A highly untidy planetoid belt orbits between the pairs, distorted by the gas giants as they pass and in constant flux as a result. The belt is spread over a wide area, with few bodies large enough to be considered a dwarf planet.

0703 SGM1

SGM1 is a red giant star at the extreme outer edge of its expansion. It will soon begin its collapse to become a white dwarf but in the meantime is prone to violent flares and ejections of material in semi-regular nova events. All planetary bodies in the system have been destroyed.

0705 NSY-X BMm1

NSY-X BMm1 is a binary system containing an M5 (red) main sequence star and its distant companion. The system appears to be quite dense, with nine occupied orbits in the primary system and what appears to be a small gas giant orbiting the companion star. This system is a candidate for the alternate buoy drop location but has not been remotely scanned in any detail.

0807 Reference Point NSY-X Zeta

Reference Point Zeta is a relatively recent white dwarf star, which has not yet finished settling into its final form. Its radio emissions are extremely powerful, if erratic at times. The inner system was destroyed long ago but the outer planets survived. These are in the process of leaving the system, spiralling out into interstellar space.

VENTURING YONDER

Dropping the record buoy at NSY-X (or somewhere close to it) signals the end of the riftsedge transit segment of the expedition. The chances of finding a crossing point on the Great Rift in this region were never high but now *Deepnight Revelation* will have to explore the region designated the Near Side of Yonder in the hope of finding one.

In this segment of the voyage the Travellers have seen wonders of the cosmos. They have battled the cold, harsh environment of space and the dangers of a life-rich world. They have learned more about the Deepnight Entity and those who trod this path before them. They may have made new friends and even gained some shipmates from among the Alikai.

Passing NSY-X is another ‘crossing the line’ moment, similar to when the expedition began the transit. It is a time for reflection, celebration or remembrance. Yet whether the Travellers mark the occasion with solemnity, hilarity or simply a log entry as *Deepnight Revelation* leaves NSY-X, it is time to venture into the Near Side of Yonder and continue the journey towards Terminus Point.

TRAVELLER

DEEPNIGHT REVELATION
RIFTSEDGE TRANSIT

The Riftsedge Transit

The expedition begins with a transit along the edge of the Great Rift, taking the Travellers beyond Charted Space. This is the last chance to turn back, the final shakedown before the years of travel begin to unfold. Problems with the ship or her crew could scrub the whole mission, and problems certainly exist! How the Travellers deal with these issues will have repercussions throughout the voyage.

Wonders and Terrors

Rampant life on a garden world. The blaze of energy from a coalescing star. Space-dwelling creatures sporting in the rings of a gas giant. There are wonders to be witnessed, and dangers too. The Travellers will delve into the wreckage of a dead civilisation, and find the legacy of another mission with the same goal.

The Alikaiia

The Alikaiia are a spacefaring race completely unknown in Charted Space. The Travellers have a chance to rescue survivors from one of their vessels – under highly unusual circumstances. They must then negotiate a complex first-contact situation where nothing is quite what it seems.

The Riftsedge Transit. Wonders and terrors on the fringe of the Great Rift.



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