

**BOOK 3:  
THE FALL OF TINATH**

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**TRAVELLER**

# TRAVELLER

BOOK 3 : THE FALL OF TINATH

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# INTRODUCTION

Since the discovery of the jump drive, humans have pushed out from their homeworlds, exploring ever further into uncharted space. Where explorers go, settlers and merchants follow, pushing back the darkness at the edge of the map and building an interstellar civilisation.

The frontier overflows with opportunity for those with quick wits and a brave heart, but there is danger too. Claim-jumpers, pirates and rival colonists are an ever-present threat, and something as simple as a starship malfunction can be fatal this far from the hubs of civilisation. Those who are smart and lucky can make it big on the frontier; a single bad decision can wipe out years of hard work.

The linked adventures in this book are based around the world of Tinath, a typical frontier planet with a growing human population. However, there are others who want Tinath for their own... and they are willing to wipe out the human population to get it.

The first adventure – *A Hard Landing* – is an introduction to key game mechanics and how to run a Traveller adventure. It details the skill checks to be made at each stage, demonstrating the mechanics in use, and provides guidance on running and staging the adventure.

*A Hard Landing* is followed by four linked adventures which are intended to be played in order. These are designed to give the referee more freedom; skill checks are no longer specified as the referee will by then know how to define any necessary check. Given the infinity of options available to Travellers, it is not possible to specify every skill check and situation. Instead the adventures present a situation, characters, and events... allowing the Travellers to decide how best to proceed. Different groups may find quite different paths through these adventures, adjudicated by the referee as necessary.

The adventures in the *Fall of Tinath* storyline are designed to be played in order, introducing the *Traveller* game and key elements of its setting whilst telling a dramatic and exciting story. Any group of Travellers, with any mix of skills, can play through these adventures, though some shipboard skills may be desirable. All the

pre-generated Travellers included in the box can fulfil some role aboard a starship in addition to their main area of expertise.

Also at the end of this book are notes on how the campaign might proceed after the *Fall of Tinath* storyline is complete.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book serves several purposes. It is primarily a guide for the referee, who can lead a new group of Travellers through the linked adventures. Along the way, the Travellers will accomplish many tasks typical of *Traveller* games. By the end of the campaign, they will be familiar with all the core concepts and tasks, and understand where starships and technology fit into the game. The Travellers will also be familiar with the core concept of the game: that Travellers travel for personal reasons, and achieving their own goals is the ultimate reward and motivation for seeking personal connections, equipment, or wealth.

## SETTING UP

A certain degree of preparation is necessary before the game can begin at all. The basic logistics of running a game session are largely a matter of common sense – a suitable venue (ideally free from interruptions and distractions) must be available, along with obvious essentials such as dice, writing implements and rulebooks. Additional *Traveller* supplements may be useful, along with deckplans and maps.

The first thing that should be done is pick or create a Traveller, as detailed on page 7 of Book 1. A set of pregenerated Travellers is included with the *Traveller Starter Set*.

The referee should ensure the Travellers start with a spacecraft of their own – either gained as a Benefit during their careers, or granted by the referee after all Travellers have been created or chosen. The Type-S Scout or Type-A Free Trader from *Book 2: Spacecraft and Worlds* are excellent vessels for Travellers, and do not usually require extra crew.

# TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING

Most people want a safe and predictable life, with a little (but not too much) excitement. A steady job or income, the chance to pursue personal goals, respect from their peers and maybe the opportunity to raise a family in safety and build a good life for their children. These are worthy and positive goals, but they rarely lead to greatness.

Some people are driven (or forced) to go beyond the mundane and safe, living a life of adventure and danger. We refer to these people as Travellers.

Travellers are motivated by a variety of factors. Some just relish adventure, or want to see what is ‘over the next hill’. Some are searching for something – and may not know what it is. Some Travellers are seeking a home, a cause or a place to settle down and have simply not found it yet. Most are accomplished individuals who have had a career, or at least significant life experience, before beginning their adventures.

Travelling (in the sense of being a Traveller) is different from merely going from place to place. Out of dozens

of people aboard a liner, only one might be a Traveller (capital T) whilst all the others are engaged in travel.

Travellers are motivated by many things. Some are outright mercenaries, who care nothing but the wealth they amass. This is rare however; the ratio of risk to reward is often not all that great. Instead, Travellers tend to be motivated by curiosity, wanderlust, and often by the friendship they find among their band of like-minded individuals.

Travellers are often hired as ‘freelance experts’ to solve a problem or complete some task for a temporary employer referred to as a Patron. Often the arrangement is for more than just cash – Patrons may offer to solve some problem or procure some item (or information) the Travellers need. Alternatively, Travellers will sometimes undertake a task simply because they are the only ones who can complete it. This may be for altruistic reasons (maybe to protect ordinary folks), or because their egos require they prove their worth over and over.

In short, Travellers are people who have adventures. Their reasons can vary considerably even within a group that travels together.



# GETTING STARTED

Two key elements make refereeing a Traveller game much easier: experience and preparation. Experience comes with time and the occasional error, and really can only be earned by playing and refereeing Traveller games. New referees should not worry too much about getting something wrong – it still happens after years of refereeing, just less often – but can limit their opportunities for error by following a few simple rules:

**Start small:** Put your Travellers in a situation that is well-defined and does not require huge amounts of exposition to get started. Make sure there is at least one clear path ahead for them to take.

**Get moving:** Once the Travellers are doing stuff – however trivial or unconnected with the plot it may be – then the game will tend to flow. It may go places you did not intend, but going anywhere is better than going nowhere.

**Don't infodump:** The more information you have about the setting, the deeper and richer it becomes. However, your Travellers do not need a lengthy exposition on interstellar trade balances or how the jump drive works every few minutes. You can drop necessary pieces of information about the setting into the game narrative and gradually build a picture of the setting, and if the Travellers want to know something specific they will ask.

**Limit the number of major characters you portray:** The Travellers will interact with various non-player characters (NPCs) along the way. Most are inconsequential, and can be summed up by a stereotype plus some minor detail, e.g. ‘lazy starport maintenance technician with a shifty expression’. Limit the number of major NPCs you must portray. This is partly for your own convenience, and partly because the Travellers may have trouble remembering who’s who. Major characters should be added one or two per session at most.

**You are the universe, not the enemy:** The Traveller universe is cold, uncaring and pitiless, but it is not actively plotting against the Travellers. The referee should be likewise. If the Travellers do something dumb, like trying to shoot their way through starport customs, then the reaction should be logical. If that results in imprisonment for the survivors, so be it – they made their choices. Likewise, if they come up with something clever that bypasses a problem, your job is to adjudicate fairly, not invent arbitrary obstacles just for the sake of it.

**NPC's are people, and fallible:** If an NPC is plotting against the Travellers, you must be mindful of what they know and the resources they have available. You can play a ‘bad guy’ without everyone in the universe being against the Travellers. Separating your role as neutral game adjudicator from your role as an opponent is necessary to good refereeing.

**The referee is also fallible:** If you want the Travellers to fall into the hands of the bad guys and set up an inescapable situation to make them do it, and the Travellers figure out a way to escape anyway, then you must live with that. You should never dictate the Travellers’ actions to them (e.g. ‘you surrender’) nor invent ever more contrived ways to block their escape. The deviation from your plans may require some thinking on your feet, but it is better than annoying the Travellers by railroading them.

**Don't be too generous:** A game can become unplayable if the Travellers become too powerful. Gaining wealth or other advantages is a motivator for many, and some degree of progress is necessary for Traveller satisfaction. However, if the Travellers are flying around in a battleship, armed with a hangar full of exotic power armour, and have collected every possible psionic talent between them, then the question of ‘what next’ arises.

Travellers this powerful need ever-bigger challenges, and a game can become rather silly if every session revolves around a new threat to the very fabric of the universe. If the Travellers can solve most problems by hiring an army of mercenaries to deal with it, then maybe they have become too powerful... unless of course that is the sort of game you want to play.

## GIVING OUT INFORMATION

Naturally, the Travellers will need information to play the game. The referee must provide it in a form that is digestible and useful. The information provided might be distorted, incomplete or just plain wrong if that is appropriate, but there is an important difference between deficient in-game information and the referee deliberately misleading the Travellers.

By way of example, the referee should tell the Travellers (truthfully) what they can see and hear, but what they see and hear might be misleading. It is fair enough to say 'you see four starport security guards headed towards the maintenance sheds' if that is what the four characters look like. The fact that they are saboteurs impersonating guards does not change what they look like, though the Travellers should be given a chance to see through the disguise.

To make useful decisions, Travellers need three pieces of information for any given scene or situation:

- **Where they are**
- **Who is there**
- **What is going on**

This information should be presented first as a general impression of the situation, with details added as necessary. Too much information can be distracting or boring, but one of the common reasons for a game stalling is that the Travellers do not have enough information to make meaningful decisions.

The same three pieces of information can be applied on a grand scale (these are the local star systems, these two are major trade hubs and there is a suspected

pirate base somewhere nearby, trade is declining fast due to piracy and an economic crisis is expected) or the local scale (this is a frontier spaceport with two small merchant ships on the landing pads; a handful of maintenance techs are lounging around outside the main hangar and one of the merchant captains seems to be arguing with a port official).

The referee can go into detail once the scene is set or the Travellers ask for it, zooming in the focus as necessary, but most of the time Travellers need only a general impression of the situation to start doing something.

Ultimately, that is why the referee gives out information; so the Travellers can decide what to do and start having adventures. The referee's job is to put a situation in front of them and adjudicate their actions. If they want to go off-script and spend an evening sampling the menu in a local restaurant, then the referee will usually be able to let them – unless something requiring immediate attention happens, like an alien invasion during dinner. If the Travellers do go off-script, they may need a little help finding their way again. Quietly re-presenting key information is usually sufficient.

## PREPARING FOR A GAME SESSION

Preparation is the key to effective refereeing. The referee should be familiar with key facts about the setting – a 'prompt sheet' containing important data like the names of key characters, cities and planets can be very useful here – and should be able to provide them at need or drop in references that will help establish the background.

Similarly, a general familiarity with the rules is important. It is not necessary to know every single rule for every possible circumstance, but the referee should know where in the rulebook to look for the specifics, or be willing to adjudicate on the fly based on common sense and a general impression of how the rules work.

The important thing here is to keep the game moving. Good preparation minimises time spent flipping through a rulebook or looking up the name of the pirate queen. This is important, since Newton's laws apply to games much as they do to physical objects – a game that has stalled

tends to stay that way; one that is moving will generally continue to do so. Games do depart from Newtonian physics in one important way – they can change direction almost at random due to Travellers doing something unexpected. This brings us back to the subject of referee experience – dealing with sudden sharp left turns is an excellent way of gaining experience.

## IF SOMEONE DIES

Being a Traveller is a dangerous occupation at the best of times, and adventuring in what amounts to a war zone is particularly hazardous. The Travellers do not have ‘plot immunity’ – they can be killed by a bad decision or a stray shot. The referee should ensure the Travellers realise how deadly the game world can be, after which they can make their own decisions. It is easy to be a hero when there is a save point to fall back to if it all goes wrong. In Traveller, there is no second chance. Thus, heroism really is that, because the consequences of a failed action are permanent.

Sometimes Travellers die in stupid or pointless ways, but usually it is the result of risk-taking or bad decisions. If a Traveller decides to take on a company of enemy soldiers armed only with a pistol, then things are going to end badly. Some Travellers will attempt to hold the referee hostage, as it were, by doing something insanely dangerous. The referee must decide whether to allow the Traveller to succeed – essentially cheating in the Traveller’s favour as an alternative to killing them – or to let the situation take its natural course.

It is recommended that the referee simply play out such a scene in a fair and neutral manner. Certainly, you should never allow a Traveller to get away with the ‘you have to let me win now, because I’ll be upset if you kill me off’ gambit – it will only be repeated again and again. A Traveller who makes a bad decision and dies as a result will learn from the experience. That is harsh but better for everyone else.

On the other hand, if a Traveller meets their end doing something heroic – for example holding off the enemy whilst the others escape, or manually detonating a bomb to stop pursuit – then the very thing that makes it heroic is the finality of the action (or its likely consequences). Either way, if a Traveller dies then that is the end of their story, but that may not be all bad.

A good death can be a fitting end to an epic story, and it is perhaps better to end on a dramatic note than to fizzle out. Take for example the Norse god Thor. Thor dies seconds after slaying the terrible serpent Jormungand, his arch-enemy, during the battle of Ragnarok. What an ending that is to Thor’s tale! And what is there for the great warrior to do now his nemesis is slain?

A dead Traveller’s story is ended, true, but they were part of something larger than just one person. Their friends will go on to new adventures, sooner or later welcoming a new Traveller into their group. The referee should work the new Traveller into the story as soon as possible, perhaps using them to bring some necessary piece of information or expertise to the fore. And so the tale goes on, even as the cast of Travellers changes over time.

## IN SUMMARY

Before beginning, the referee should be familiar with the rules and the key details of the setting, along with a few iconic details that will help the Travellers visualise the game universe. Specific ship designs are one, as well as names of places, equipment manufacturers and the like which can be dropped in to create a more believable setting.

At the beginning of the game, and at the start of every new scene, the referee should provide a quick general impression of the situation and get the Travellers involved as fast as possible. Once things are moving the game just sort of happens all by itself, and refereeing ceases to be a conscious act – when that happens, you will know you have made it as a Traveller referee.

# THE ATHWA SUBSECTOR

The adventures presented in this book take place in a region very distant from the great powers of Charted Space. Whilst this setting is compatible with the Third Imperium and Original Traveller Universe (OTU), the distant empires of Humaniti and the other major races will have no influence on the events unfolding around the Travellers. Thus, there is no need to learn about the Third Imperium setting just yet; the referee and players can get their bearings in a less complex environment.

The setting for these adventures is the Athwa subsector, a frontier region with no large starfaring powers nearby. Some worlds in the nearby region of space are more influential than others; some have a sufficiently powerful economy to maintain a modest interstellar navy and export goods to many star systems. Most of the worlds of the region are small colonies however, with extensive areas of wilderness away from their small settled regions.

With no means of faster-than-light communication (other than sending a ship to carry a message), many of the smaller colonies in the Athwa Subsector can go without news from other systems for weeks at a time. More important starports see regular traffic, with updates from other major trade centres every few hours.

This means that news is often very old by the time it reaches the backwater colonies. Rumours can also get out of hand, since it may be weeks or months before better information comes along. This means a wild rumour can sometimes move among the backwaters, coming back to a given world in a distorted fashion and seeming to corroborate the original.

Officials on such worlds cannot wait for equipment requisitions to be fulfilled (if they ever are) or calls for assistance to be met. They must work with what they have, and often what they have is a bunch of willing but unskilled colonists plus whoever happens to be passing through at the time. Travellers are often in demand as a useful source of skills to deal with problems that might otherwise not be addressed.

## SUBSECTORS

The concept of the subsector is a convenience for astrographers. It is an area eight by ten parsecs across, one of sixteen forming a 4 x 4 grid to make up a sector.

There is generally no political or economic significance to the boundaries of a subsector – they simply help create useable maps. However, sectors are often named for their most prominent feature, which might be an interstellar empire or some general cultural trait.

Subsectors are usually, but by no means always, named for a prominent world within the subsector. The origins of the Athwa subsector's name are lost to history – perhaps some long-forgotten explorer named it or it may have been named after a colony mission that ultimately failed. Perhaps that world now has a new name, but the subsector designation remains on the charts.

The map hexes of Athwa subsector (like those in all Traveller game materials) represent one parsec, a measure of distance based on observations of stars from Terra. The origins of the parsec are not relevant (and may not be known to most Travellers) but its length is defined as a constant, and it corresponds to the distance a jump-1 starship can travel in one week.

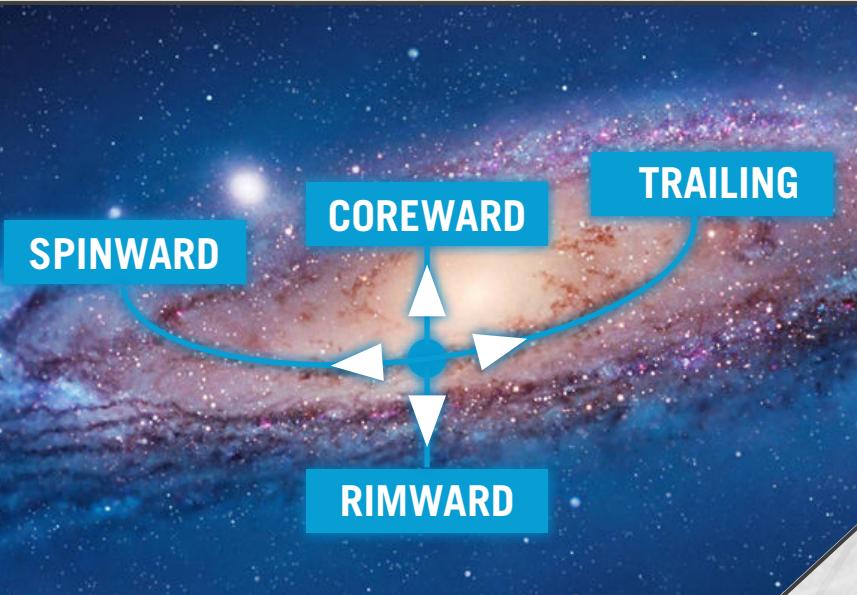
A parsec is roughly 3.26 light-years. Since radio and similar electromagnetic signals travel at the speed of light, that means it would take 3.26 years for a signal from one star system to reach an adjacent one. A distress call from a stranded starship in deep space, or a call for help from a world under attack, will not be picked up in time to make any difference. The only way to get a message from one star system to another on a useful time frame is to send a ship carrying it. This is an important facet of the *Traveller* universe, and is directly relevant to the *Fall of Tinath* campaign.

A standard system of directions is used for interstellar travel, based on the direction of the galactic core and the rotation of the galaxy. Thus 'Coreward' means towards the galactic core, and by convention this direction is 'up' on sector and subsector maps. The core is very distant, so Coreward is the same direction in all subsectors the Travellers are likely to visit.

The opposite direction (by convention, this is 'down' on a subsector map) is Rimward, i.e. towards the galactic rim or away from the Core. The direction of the galaxy's spin gives us the astrographical concept of 'Spinward' (left on a subsector map), whilst the opposite direction is known as Trailing or Antispinward.

## GALACTIC DIRECTIONS

North, south, east, and west are insufficient terms for referring to directions within the galaxy. Instead, the following conventions have achieved widespread acceptance when referring to direction: Coreward – toward the galactic core; Rimward – toward the rim of the galaxy; Spinward – towards the direction the galaxy is rotating (or spinning); Trailing – opposite the spin of the galaxy.



## THE ATHWA SUBSECTOR

The Athwa subsector was colonised by humans in a patchy and haphazard manner, with some colony missions failing or being absorbed by others that came along later. Some worlds have developed to the point where they are economically important, but the region is very much a frontier. It has no Class A or Class B starports, and interstellar trade is for the most part carried out by small ships. There is simply not enough money to be made by big shipping concerns, so large freighters do not call here.

Likewise, there are no multiworld polities based in the Athwa subsector. Nearby subsectors do have interstellar

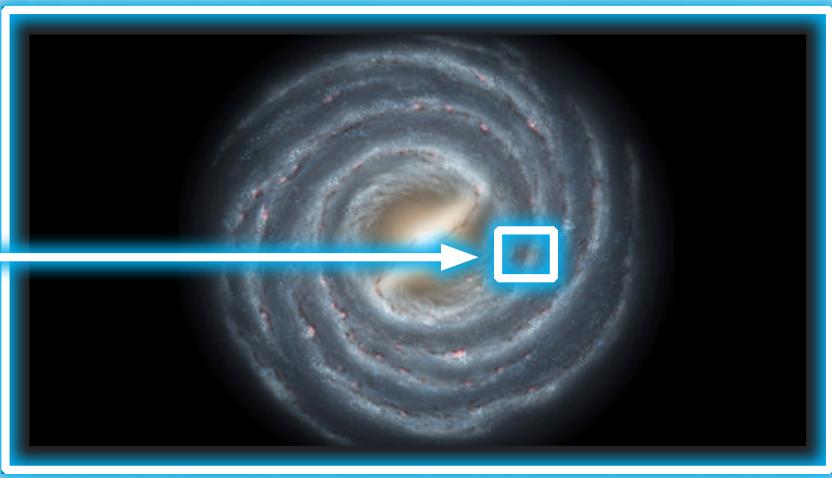
states, and these have interests in the worlds of the subsector. However, their presence is small and restricted mainly to their areas of interest. Most notable among these is the Calida Federation, a loose alliance of worlds with a few colonies and outposts in various star systems.

The capital of the Calida Federation is located on the world of Calida, well to Rimward of Athwa subsector. The Federation has a single outpost in this subsector, located on the world of Cenhening. Some of the city-states on the world of Tinath were founded by colonists from Calidan Federation members, and maintain loose links with their parent worlds. This manifests itself mostly as trade agreements, but the Federation does occasionally put a warship into the Tinath system as a 'flag-showing' exercise.

## ATHWA SUBSECTOR



## THE MILKY WAY



The Athwa subsector is also home to non-human sophonts (intelligent, self-aware people). These include the Calu of Lecalju and the natives of Rushesal, who resemble large crustaceans. The humanoid Esseray also have outposts in the subsector, but are not native to it. The location of their homeworld and the power of their polity are unknown.

## SUBSECTOR SUMMARY

The Athwa subsector is a frontier region, characterised by under-developed colonies and backwater worlds. The highest technology level in the subsector is at Cenhening, whilst the highest population is at Rushesal.

The main astrographical feature of the subsector is a chain of worlds running to Trailing from Tinath, connecting several worlds into a jump-1 ‘main’ and permitting trade using slow-moving but efficient jump-capable freighters. Jump-2 capable ships can reach most worlds in the subsector; trade ships from the Calida Federation (located to Rimward) enter the subsector’s main trade lanes by way of Rushesal and Sosecgen. Systems that lie off this jump-1/jump-2 chain receive very few trade ships, adversely affecting their economic development.

The subsector data below follows a standard format used throughout Traveller game materials, as defined on page 90 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and worlds*.



### Systems in Traveller

**Name:** The name of the system’s mainworld. Many star systems have more than one inhabited body, but this is the most important or most habitable one.

**Location:** The hex number on the subsector map the system occupies.

**Bases:** Codes for any bases present. In the Athwa Subsector the only base type is C, a Colonial Support Base. Other subsectors may have many types of base.

**UPP:** The mainworld’s Universal Planetary Profile (see page 92 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and Worlds*) written in order as;

- Starport Code
- Size Code
- Atmosphere Code
- Hydrographics Code
- Population Code
- Government Code
- Law Level
- Tech level

**Trade Codes:** The world’s trading categories, if any (see page 103 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and Worlds*).

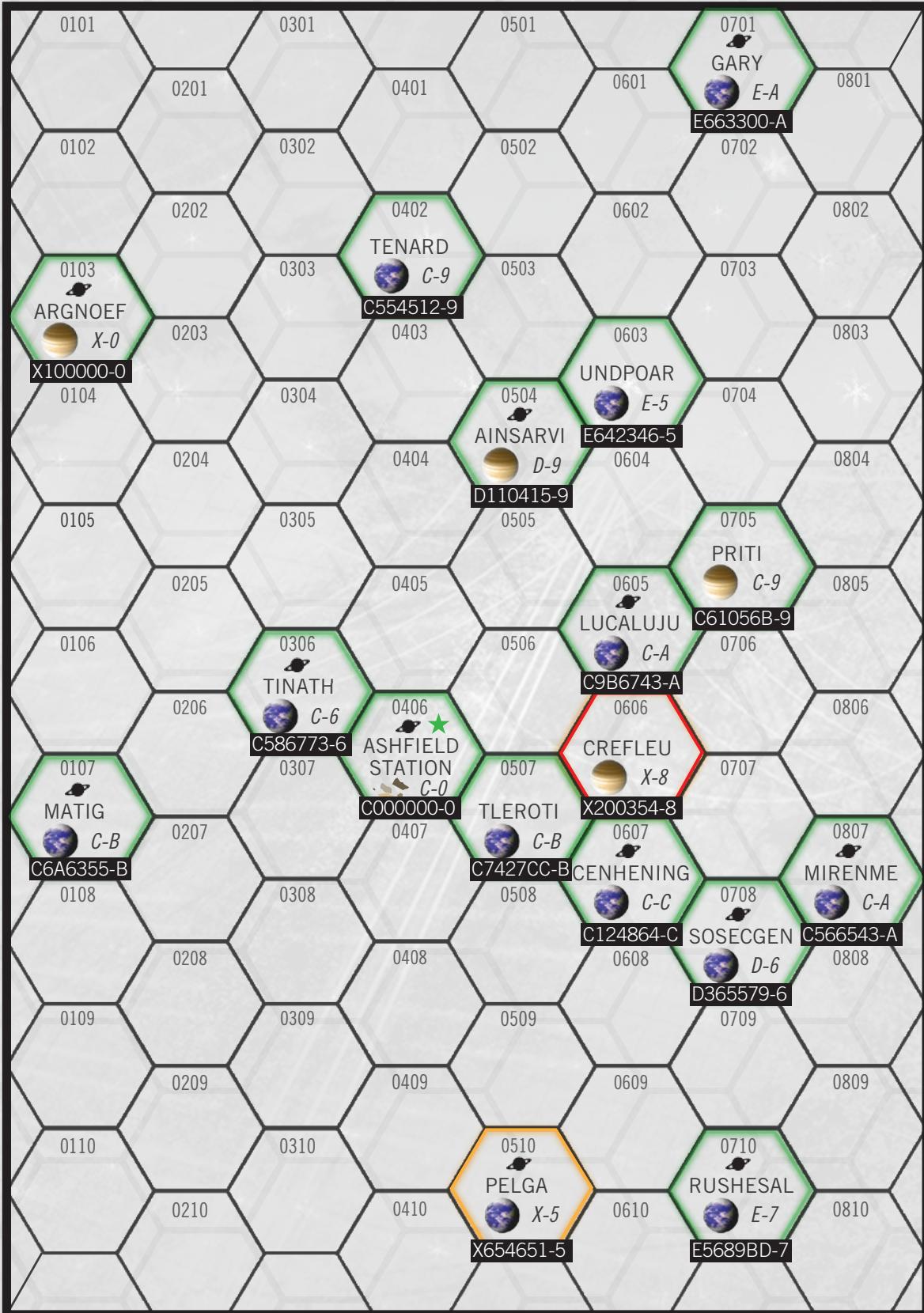
**Travel Code:** The world’s Travel Zone classification (see 103 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and worlds*).

**Gas Giant:** Whether any gas giant planets are present in the star system.



Name	Location	Bases	Profile	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Ainsarvi	0504	-	D110415-9	NI		G
Argnoef	0103	-	X100000-0	NA Va		G
Ashfield Station	0406	C	C000000-0	As Va		G
Cenhening	0607	-	C124864-C			G
Crefleu	0606	-	X200354-8	NI Va	R	
Gari	0701	-	E663300-A	NI		G
Lecalju	0605	-	C9B6743-A	FI NI		G
Matig	0107	-	C6A6355-B	NI		G
Mirenme	0807	-	C566543-A	Ag NI		G
Pelga	0510	-	X654651-5	Ag NI	A	G
Priti	0705	-	C61056B-9	NI		
Rushesal	0710	-	E5689BD-7			G
Sosecgen	0708	-	D365579-6	Ag NI		G
Tenard	0402	-	C554512-9	Ag NI		
Tinath	0306	-	C586773-6	NI		G
Tleroti	0507	-	C7427CC-B	Po		
Undpoar	0603	-	E642346-5	NI Po		

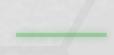
# ATHWA SUBSECTOR



Planet (Water Present)



Gas Giant



Secure System



Planet (Dry)



Colonial Support Base



Amber Zone



Asteroid Belt



Red Zone

**Ainsarvi** is a failed mining settlement. Lately it has become a fashionable destination for artists and recluses. Some unique craftsmanship coming from Ainsarvi has attracted the attention of collectors.

**Argonef** is a small, barren rockball world, recently explored by corporate surveyors. Preliminary reports claim that any exploitable minerals are locked far beneath the planetary crust and would be very expensive to exploit.

**Ashfield Station** is the name of a facility located in the Ashfield Belt, a large asteroid belt with rather patchy resources. It was originally home to a small belter community (itinerant asteroid miners) and some corporate mining vessels, but these were edged out by large scale investment in the Ashfield Project, which ultimately collapsed leaving the system a sort of interplanetary ghost town. The large facility built to support the project now survives by supporting trade ships headed for Tinath.

**Cenhening** is a tiny world whose population live in domed cities which extend below the planet's surface. The world itself is owned and supported by elements of the Calida Federation, a small interstellar power located in the next-rimward subsector.

**Crefleu** is a rockball world whose population of a few thousand are extremely isolationist. Very little is known about them, other than the fact that they will launch missiles at any ship that tries to land. Crefleu is thus considered a Red (prohibited) travel zone.

**Gari** is a 'freeport' populated by drifters, con artists, and fugitives. Few remain there long without becoming permanent residents.

**Lucaluju** is the homeworld of the Calu, an upright quadruped sophont people. The small human settlement and their starport acts as a middleman between the Calu and free traders.

**Matig** is a colony of researchers, devoted to exploring the exotic life found here. About half of the population is directly involved in science, with the other half supporting them.

**Mirenme** is a successful colony world with a population of about three hundred million. Its TL10 industrial base is modest but capable of producing specialist and luxury items which find a ready market elsewhere in the subsector and in the worlds to Trailing. Mirenme

has a small trade fleet of jump-2 ships which range across the region, and supports the ships of many independent operators.

**Pelga** is a habitable world whose early colonies struggled to become established. The result was a rather xenophobic mid-tech culture with little of value to trade. Merchant ships that attempt to open trade links find the Pelgans uninterested in interstellar contact, and what might be described as 'politely hostile' to outsiders.

**Priti** is home to a modestly successful colony of around six hundred thousand people. It maintains trade links with Lucaluju, to mutual benefit, but has little contact other than with its immediate neighbour. Attempts to open trade links with Crefleu resulted only in violence.

**Rushesal** is a small world with a hospitable climate. The four billion inhabitants are a mix of human and a local crab-like sophont, each dominating their own continent. The overall government is extremely intrusive, and yet the population seems not to mind. Wild rumours suggest widespread mind control is being used to pacify the public.

**Sosecgen** is a marginal agricultural world. Desert dominates its landmasses, but littorals and wetlands are productive and profitable. Much of its production is bought up by trading concerns operating out of Mirenme, and sold wherever their trade ships make planetfall.

**Tenard** has extensive wilderness. Its light gravity supports several very large animals suitable for hunting; thus, the world is attractive to tourists whose deep pockets can afford a visit.

**Tinath** is a colony world on the edges of civilised space. Over the decades, several different settlements have built cities on its small continents, and a trade network was created. Lately, war has broken out between human settlements and alien colonists who call themselves Esseray.

**Tleroti** is a dystopian world dominated by a strong dictatorship. Led by the hope of atmosphere processors and plentiful water in the asteroid belts, the population has agreed to ever stricter regulations and work schedules, with little improvements to show so far.

**Undpoar** is a typical though insignificant colony world. It is home to a few thousand people who maintain a mid-tech subsistence lifestyle. With little to offer trade ships, Undpoar is rarely visited.

# WORLD PROFILE: TINATH



In any star system, there tends to be one body (a planet, asteroid belt or moon) which is more important than the rest and is thus designated the mainworld. The star system is normally named after this body, and the Universal Planetary Profile (UPP) presented for the system corresponds to this mainworld.

Other bodies in the system may be inhabited, but none will be as politically or economically important as the mainworld. Most non-mainworld settlements tend to be outposts with a specific function such as mining, scientific research or serving as a base for naval or exploration vessels.

The mainworld tends to be the most habitable world in the system, for the simple reason that people tend to settle in the place where it is easiest to survive. Thus whether or not the mainworld has a breathable atmosphere, it is unlikely that another body in the system will be more conducive to settlement.

Tinath, mainworld of the star system that bears its name, orbits a yellow dwarf star at a distance of 0.9 AU (Astronomical Units, a measure based on the distance from Earth to the Sun). Tinath has an orbital period of around 300 days, and rotates around its axis once every 30 standard hours. Its year is thus shorter than that of Earth and its day/night cycle longer.

Tinath has two small moons, with long axes of 500 km and 150 km. The moons are irregularly shaped and resemble large asteroids more than they do Earth's moon. They are not inhabited on a permanent basis,

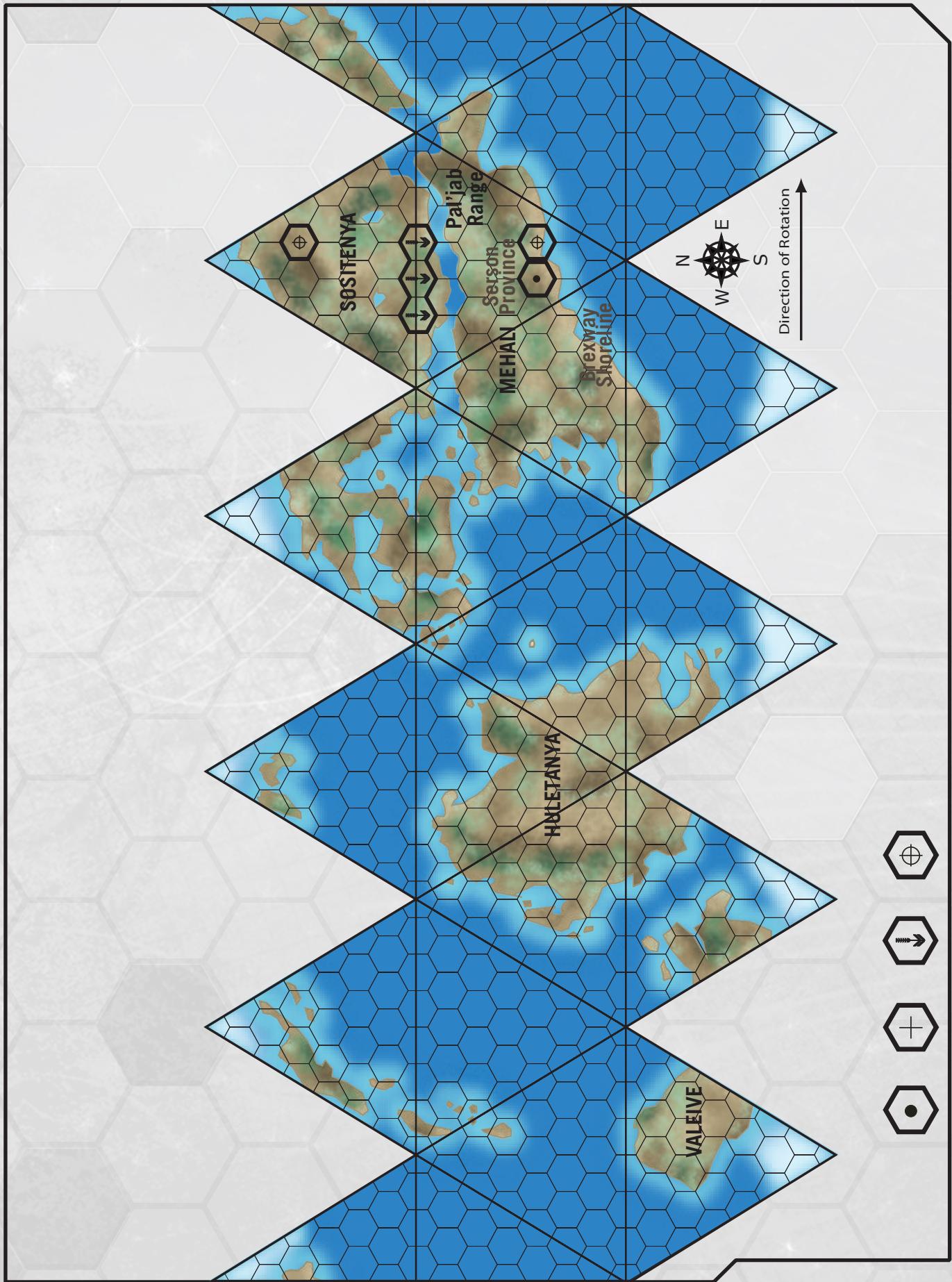
but it is possible that prospectors or small mining companies might be active there from time to time.

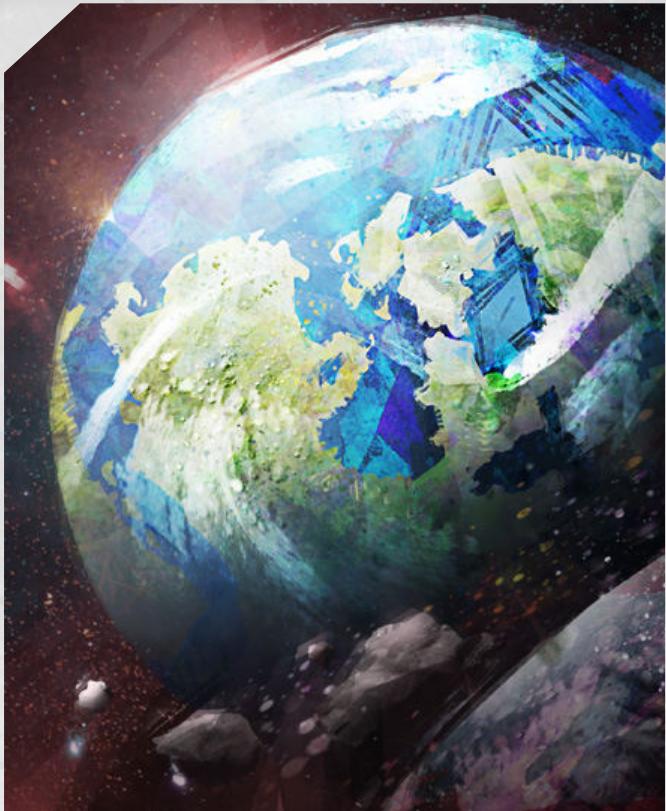
Tinath is one of the most important worlds of the Athwa Subsector; its population of some seventy million is sufficient to create a significant economy, but the fact there is no unified world government (a situation known as balkanisation) means the world's economy overall is far less efficient than it could be. Nevertheless, Tinath is a destination for trade ships, and both a market and source of goods for sale elsewhere. Its starport sees a fair amount of traffic (by the standards of Athwa Subsector) and news from across the subsector tends to be reasonably up to date.

## PHYSICAL DATA

Tinath is a habitable world, situated in the Orion Arm of the Milky Way Galaxy. It is around 8,000 km in diameter, and has a thick but breathable atmosphere. Water oceans cover 60% of the world's surface, with a typical mixture of terrain types on land. Five small continents contain a mix of desert, savannah, forest, hills and mountains, and there is some volcanic activity.

Physical conditions are generally similar to those of Earth, though the much smaller moons result in lesser tidal effects. Due to the thick atmosphere, mountain ranges erode more quickly than those on Terra. For example, the Paljab range in the east of the Mehali continent, though somewhat younger than the Terran Himalayas, are nearly as eroded as the Appalachian Mountains along the eastern side of North America on Terra.





## CLIMATE AND WEATHER

Tinath has little orbital eccentricity, but its axial tilt of 20° results in moderate winds with mild seasons. It is a warm world, with an average surface temperature of 24°C. The temperature tends to decrease 1°C for each 10° latitude, and 2°C for every 1,000 m of altitude. Occasional disturbances in the atmosphere produce periods of storm and wet weather, but they are relatively unpredictable.

## SOCIAL DATA

Tinath is a balkanised world. That is, its population is made up of several different colonies established over the last two centuries, with seventy million inhabitants scattered among several large city-states. Most of the population are humans whose origins can be traced to other worlds nearby, but there is also an enclave of Esseray, humanoids about whom relatively little is known.

Tinath has a mature TL6 economy, with some higher-tech items available as offworld imports. The world is economically significant in the local area due to its fairly large (by the standards of Athwa subsector) economy

and industrial base. Tinath tends to import high-tech goods in small quantities and exports larger amounts of mid-tech industrial goods for sale across the subsector.

The first colonists on Tinath were émigrés from the Calida Federation, a small starfaring state located to Rimward of the Athwa subsector. They were followed by groups from various sources; many city-states were founded as a coalition of groups too small to set up on their own.

Colonisation, at least at first, was carried out in a fairly deliberate manner. The first settlements were constructed on sites that had been pinpointed as good prospects, and many of the later arrivals took over sites identified but not exploited. With a respectable degree of early funding and access to good resources, these early colonies flourished and developed into city-states.

Trade agreements among the city-states, coupled with a little offworld trade, guaranteed good initial growth and the development of a solid, if modest, industrial and technological base. The first city-states were set up on Mehali, one of Tinath's five small continents. Since that time, two other continents, Huletenya and Sositanya, have been settled by new arrivals.

It is not clear exactly when the alien Esseray arrived on Tinath. They may have had a presence before humans settled the world, or might have quietly set up a city on the continent of Sositanya some time since the initial colonisation. They did not at first interact much, if at all, with the humans of Tinath but as the secondary city-states of Sositanya expanded, they began to compete with the Esseray for resources.

This competition led to skirmishing which grew in intensity. Finally, a military alliance was formed among the city-states of the Mehali continent and a joint force landed on Sositanya. The intent was to push the Esseray back from territories they had encroached upon and force them to accept a border treaty. There has been some fighting, mostly low intensity skirmishing, and the Esseray are falling back towards their only known city. A favourable resolution to the conflict is expected shortly.

## SERSON PROVINCE

Serson Province is the major population centre of the Mehali continent. Its main city, Serson, rests on the Mehali southern coast. If the world unites under one government, Serson is likely to become the world capital.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

Serson boasts the Oracle, a 70,000-year-old temple-palace tourist spot and pilgrimage destination. The temple vastly predates colonisation of the world and was apparently built by an extinct native race. Ongoing scholarly research into the temple dominates college archaeology departments.

The Brexway Shoreline is a string of beautiful beaches along the southern coastline of Mehali. Numerous seaside resorts are here, along with luxury habitats on the fringes of Serson.

Around each of the city-states lies a belt of agricultural land, with small towns and villages dotted all over the landscape. Beyond these agricultural belts the world's natural ecosphere is largely undisturbed. Although most of the seventy million inhabitants live on Mehali, this is not a large population for an entire continent and most of the land remains unspoiled.

The cities are connected by fast, straight roads and an advanced high-speed rail system. This is mainly used to transport goods and raw materials; relatively few people move between the city-states. There are a handful of resource-extraction and industrial sites located far from the cities that have their own railheads connecting them to the starport.

## STARPORT

By convention, the main port on a world is known as its starport, and lesser facilities are termed spaceports. Tinath's starport is officially named Jenna Serson Starport, but is usually known as Tinath Starport – again, convention dictates a world's primary port is identified by the world name.

Jenna Serson Down has a small orbital component, known as the Highport, but its facilities are minimal. The primary function of the Highport is to act as a mooring station for unstreamlined ships that cannot enter the atmosphere, enabling passengers and cargo to be shuttled planetside.

Most traffic proceeds directly to the main starport installation at the city of Serson. Known as the downport, this facility handles most freight and passengers arriving on Tinath. Small spaceports exist at some other city-states, but these tend to handle local traffic only.

In recent months, the city-state of Serson has earmarked large amounts of adjacent land for developments mostly

connected with the downport. The hope is that as the subsector develops, trade will increase and the starport will be upgraded.

## ORBITAL DEFENCE

Most of the city-states of Tinath have their own orbital defences, in the form of a tracking capability and handful of surface-to-orbit missiles. A greater concentration exists at the starport, and there are a few launchers on the orbital facility as well. This is entirely sufficient to deter piracy, raiding and traffic control violations, but could do little more than cosmetic damage to a major warship.

There are also a few small defensive craft, mostly obsolescent fighters obtained offworld and armed launches used for customs inspections. A pair of 200-ton System Defence Boats are the only significant space forces available to the city-states of Tinath. Jointly operated by a politics-wracked space defence force, they are obsolete and in poor repair, but quite capable of chasing off a small merchant ship turned raider.

## TRAFFIC CONTROL

Serson Down has twelve landing pads and two runways, plus several holding areas where additional ships can be parked. The starport administration is organised to handle one landing each hour during the day, and one landing every two hours at night; more capacity than is generally needed. A greater volume of traffic is rarely seen, but could be handled on an emergency basis for a short time.

## THE DOCKS AND PASSENGER CONCOURSE

Docks are basic, with humans managing robotic cargo lifters. The concourse is mostly open-air, with some tourist agencies using individual air-conditioned rooms. Clearance to visit the world is not hard to obtain, especially for those with useful skills or clearly not intending to stay for long, such as Travellers with their own starship.

For those wishing to immigrate, the process of obtaining probationary citizenship includes a work assignment, which is partly dependent on the world of origin. People from worlds considered friendly to Tinath tend to get better jobs.

# THE CAMPAIGN

**The following data is for the use of the referee. Anyone who intends to play in these adventures should stop reading now.**

The adventures in this book form what is often termed a campaign, in the same way a military campaign might comprise several battles leading to a conclusion. Not every adventure is about combat and violence, but thinking of an adventure like a battle is a useful analogy – there is a period of setup and preparation, initial actions leading to escalation, and finally a climax which leads to a new situation.

There is no set way to complete any given adventure. The Travellers will have a task ahead of them and will need to figure out a way to accomplish it, but the means can vary considerably. One group might bull through, guns blazing, whilst another sneaks, misdirects and connives their way to victory. The end point of the adventure will be much the same for all groups of players, but the experience of playing through the storyline can be quite different each time.

Overall, the tone of this campaign is one of increasing desperation. A simple task leads to the discovery that something strange is happening, one thing leads to another, and eventually the Travellers find themselves battling to save countless lives.

The story focusses upon the planet Tinath coming under the total domination of the Esseray; a machine-based people intent on stripping worlds of their resources to create new colonies. The Travellers are caught in the occupation, when the Esseray begin to eradicate human settlements.

The story begins in *A Hard Landing*, an introductory adventure that sees the Travellers return to Tinath from a trip to another star system. Their ship suffers a serious malfunction requiring an emergency landing and repairs.

In the first of the linked adventures, *Research and Rescue*, the Travellers attempt to locate a missing

research team on one of the undeveloped continents of Tinath. Their vehicle is shot down by a mysterious and powerful weapon close to the ancient ruins the researchers were investigating. Attempting to locate the research team, the Travellers must enter the ruins and discover some of their mysteries whilst battling a force of Esseray sent to secure the site.

In the second of the linked adventures, *Captive Audience*, the Travellers infiltrate an Esseray facility on one of the moons of Tinath. There, they must free captive researchers and escape back to the planetary surface.

In the third linked adventure, *Electronic Warfare*, the Travellers infiltrate an Esseray field command base and attempt to obtain data from its computers. There, they learn more about the alien Esseray and their plans for Tinath. It is by now obvious that Tinath cannot be saved. A plan to evacuate as much of the population as possible is put into action, but time is running out.

In the fourth and final linked adventure, *Under the Hammer*, preparations are underway to evacuate as many people as possible. These are interrupted when an Esseray warship enters the Tinath system. It begins moving into position to bombard the cities of the Mehali Continent. A force of fighters and armed craft is assembled to attack it but the pilots are leaderless and inexperienced. The Travellers are called upon to lead the assault on the alien ship.

At the end of the campaign, Tinath is falling to the Esseray but at least some of its people can be saved. Colony ships are cramming in everyone they can and jumping out of the system as one by one the city-states fall. The Travellers escape the fall of Tinath in their newly-repaired ship, joining the exodus and perhaps beginning a new adventure as the people of Tinath seek a safe place to make a new home.

# REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The following information is for the use of the referee during the course of the campaign. Much of it will become apparent to the Travellers, but wherever possible a 'show don't tell' approach is preferable. For example, a newly introduced character might tell the Travellers her name, and they can see what she is wearing and the tools she is carrying, but the fact that she has Electronics, Engineer and Mechanic skills will not necessarily be apparent at first glance. Her actions will reveal her capabilities and personality as the game continues.

## THE CONTINENT OF SOSITENYA

Sositanya is located high in the northern hemisphere, reaching from well above the arctic circle into the temperate zone. It is mountainous and irregularly shaped, 4,000 km in width, but with a 5,000 km land distance between its farthest points. A large crater forms an ancient lake near the continent's centre. Its surface area is about 7 million square kilometres.

There are a few human settlements on Sositanya, mostly small cities along the southern coast. Expansion beyond these toeholds has been minimal, other than a farming belt much like those of the Mehali continent. A few small resource extraction sites have been set up further inland, but beyond these lies wilderness and disputed territories where the alien Esseray are encountered.

Sositanya has one known Esseray settlement: a large, technologically advanced city with its own starport. This sees little traffic and does not permit human ships to land at all – vessels attempting an approach are curtly warned off and then fired upon. The odd vessel, mainly couriers and freighters, lands at the Esseray port but this is by no means frequent. There are numerous small craft at the port, some of which undertake missions out into the rest of the system. Most, however, are used to maintain links with a facility on Tinath's larger moon. Like the Esseray starport, this facility shoots at human vessels that approach.

Little is known about the Esseray city beyond what can be discerned from a great distance. Reconnaissance aircraft and drones are intercepted by small – possibly robotic – aircraft and shot down without warning. The Esseray never discuss this, simply ignoring protests as they ignore most other communications.

From the little contact humans have had with the Esseray, it seems their city has an oppressive Law Level, and its people are forbidden from interacting with outsiders. Little is known about the citizens, except they are humanoid and seem to have something like a skill-based caste system.

The rest of the continent is largely unexplored, lacking surface access to resources found in abundance on the Mehali continent.



## THE CONTINENT OF VALEIVE

The smallest of Tinath's continents, Valeive is thought to be uninhabited. Lying in the far south, it has extensive snowfields and ice shelves, and its southern shores are often locked in pack ice during the winter. Much of the potentially useable land is covered in thick forest. Surveys showed a few promising sites for resource extraction or colonisation, but the decision was made to concentrate colonisation on one continent for the sake of efficiency and, as a result, Valeive was left mostly unexplored.

## TINATH'S MOONS

Tinath has two moons, neither of which have human settlements on them. The larger moon is named Rigash; the smaller is Elnath. Neither is thought to have significant mineral wealth, though no real effort has been made to search for resources.

Rigash orbits closer to Tinath than Elnath, whose orbital path is inclined and very elliptical. Elnath is thought to be captured asteroidal or cometary body, but is not of great interest to the people of Tinath. Neither, in truth, is Rigash, though it is larger and closer.

Rigash's long axis is about 1/7<sup>th</sup> the diameter of Earth's moon and, not being even remotely spheroidal, it has very little mass compared to Luna. Rigash thus has a very low surface gravity; around 0.02G on average. Due to its irregular shape, gravity varies considerably depending on where the observer is relative to the moon's centre of mass, but it is nowhere more than 0.03G. If it were not a moon, Rigash might qualify as a dwarf planet. It would be a significant body in a planetoid belt, but compared to Tinath, it is tiny.

In short, Rigash and Elnath are what spacers call rockballs, with no atmosphere and probably no water unless ice is somewhere underground or in deep craters. Rigash is known to have some sort of installation on it, built by the Esseray, but its purpose has not been discerned.



# SCAVENGER CLOUDS

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Scavenger Clouds	30	1 m
SKILLS	None	
ATTACKS	Special - See Description	
TRAITS	Flyer (idle), Slow Metabolism (-6)	
BEHAVIOUR	Omnivore, Eater	



## EXTREMOPHILE LIFE IN THE TINATH SYSTEM

Extremophiles are forms of life adapted to very harsh conditions including extremes of heat and cold, pressure and radiation. Some extremophile lifeforms have adapted to the cold, radiation and near-vacuum of space environments, and the Tinath system has several types.

The most common space-borne extremophile takes the form of bacterial colonies. Thinner than spider silk, these colonies drift in ragged sheets, enveloping any stray particles which might contain food, water or heat. Starships that spend more than a few weeks in orbit around Tinath typically have their surfaces cleaned of these colonies.

As bacterial colonies spread in orbit around Tinath, predatory lifeforms evolved to take advantage of this niche. The next most common lifeform is the vacuole: a plant which has evolved to grow inside silicon seed pods, capable of regulating its interior pressure against the vacuum of space. Vacuoles anchor themselves to airless worlds and planetoids in the Tinath system and gather food particles by means of a fan-like filter. These creatures feed on bacterial colonies and other extremophiles.

On Rigash and Elnath, floating scavengers drift, basking in daylight and prowling for extremophile bacterial colonies to feed upon. These scavenger clouds have two sets of silicate sail-like appendages, long prehensile tentacles, and a set of small manipulators around a mouth, which itself has sharp silicon plates for tearing organic materials. The tentacles extend to 3 metres long. Typically, the scavengers form a loose net by hanging on to one another with their tentacles and spreading out. When

a potential source of food comes nearby, the nearest member grabs on with one tentacle, and then others can wrap themselves around it to search for food.

A scavenger net that contacts a Traveller wearing a vacc suit will try to engulf him, initially feeding off any particles of biological matter clinging to his suit. It will also begin to digest the suit itself, though very slowly. Seals will eventually fail, though this can take days. Every hour, roll 2D without any DM. On a roll of 12+, a seal has failed and the suit begins to lose pressure. The scavenger net also gains access to the Traveller's flesh and begins to digest him, doing 1D damage every hour (ignoring any armour, of course).

This is a very slow and long-term threat, though Travellers may not realise the time frame they are facing. More immediately, the scavenger net sticks to the Traveller's suit and can impede vision, imposing DM-2 on all skill and characteristic checks until removed. This would normally be done using standard decontamination procedures available in most airlocks, but for Travellers without access to such facilities getting rid of the net can be a problem. Loose dust could be used to scrub the scavenger off, though this requires a certain amount of rolling around, which is hazardous in a vacc suit.

A scavenger net that is brought inside a 'shirtsleeve' environment such as a starship or the Rigash prison complex will die in 1D hours, leaving behind a sticky and rather unpleasant substance not dissimilar to a partially dried-up slug trail.

# EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES

1

## G/CARRIER

The G/Carrier is a paramilitary transport, designed to deploy a small number of personnel quickly and in relative safety. Typically, the G/Carrier has a maximum cruising speed of 700 kilometres per hour; travel from Mehali's starport to the survey location in Sositenya will take about twelve hours.

Numerous variants on the basic G/Carrier exist. The one provided by Baroness Edda in *Research and Rescue* is a large sport-luxury model, with enough room for the Travellers to be comfortable during the journey. Furniture is reconfigurable between conference and bunk modes, and the interior cabin space is comparable to that of a small corporate jet. The G/Carrier is controlled by computer and responsive to any reasonable request made by the Travellers.

The G/Carrier requires one pilot, though there is one additional control seat for a co-pilot, sensor operator, or gunner. Travellers with appropriate skills may make use of the vehicle's hardware. This vehicle mounts a fusion gun on the roof. It does 3DD damage; it is a Destructive weapon which means it rolls 3D for damage and multiplies the result by 10.



Rules for the G/Carrier are found on page 126 of  
*Book 1: Characters & Combat*.



## 2

# ISSUED EQUIPMENT



At the beginning of the *Research and Rescue* adventure, the Travellers are issued (or at least offered) equipment by their patron. The Travellers can, of course, take any of their own equipment on this mission. In addition, the following items are made available to them on loan. The Travellers will not be penalised for genuinely losing or breaking equipment but a team who comes back and claim they lost their rifles will be viewed with grave suspicion unless their story is very plausible. Thus, if the Travellers manage to hang onto this gear throughout the adventure, they would be expected to hand it back, though it may be re-issued for later adventures.

## 1 FIELD FATIGUES

Each Traveller is issued with a set of tough coveralls and boots, in a ‘low-observable field colouring’ (a dark greenish-grey that looks black under dim light). The coveralls are made from ballistic cloth armour and grant +8 Protection. Those who prefer can have a flak jacket instead. This is easier to get on and off and grant +5 Protection. The fatigues and flak jacket have pockets, straps, and holders for a variety of small pieces of equipment.

## 2 FIELD PACK

A standard light field-operations pack containing the following equipment and additional items. Travellers who dump their packs or lose them will not have access to this equipment.

- **Magazines:** Holders for four standard weapon magazines.
- **Rations:** An additional four days’ worth of ration bars.
- **Bedroll and Shelter Half:** Standard military field camping gear.
- **Emergency Heat/Light Kit:** Eight chemical lightsticks good for two hours each, plus eight emergency heatsticks suitable for heating food, warming a casualty or starting a larger fire.
- **Climbing Line:** A set of small baseplates which can be fixed to most surfaces with molecular glue, plus 10m of strong line.
- **Field Tool:** A combination spade/pick for basic field work. It can be used in combat to do 2D+1 damage.





4

Fragmentation



Smoke



Sidearm

Knife

5

Water Bottle

Flashlight

Rations

Multitool

Lightsticks

3

## GLOVES, MASK AND HELMET

Each Traveller is given a combination filter/compressor mask which fits in a small belt package when not in use. The mask gives protection against most atmospheric threats such as dust or tear gas, and when mated to a hood (which comes with it), gloves and the issued fatigues, the whole ensemble protects against skin contact toxins such as nerve gas. There is no reason to expect any of these threats, but the equipment is standard issue. The helmet is an open-face ballistic plastic design, and pairs up with the fatigues or flak jacket to extend armour coverage to the head.

4

## GRENADES

Each Traveller will be issued two standard hand grenades. Only fragmentation and smoke grenades are available to choose from.

5

## PERSONAL KIT

Attached to the fatigues or flak jacket are holders for the following listed items. If a Traveller is separated from his equipment, he can be assumed to have these items about his person as they are worn.

- Sidearm:** A standard 9mm autopistol (3D-3 damage), plus two spare 15-round magazines.
- Knife:** A small fighting/working knife (1D+2 damage).
- Blade:** A large machete-like weapon used mainly for cutting through brush (2D damage).
- Multitool:** A non-powered basic hand tool including screwdrivers, pliers etc.
- Lightsticks:** Four chemical lightsticks good for two hours each.
- Flashlight:** A powerful hand light with 10 hours of battery power.
- Water Bottle:** A 1.5-litre water container.
- Rations:** Field ration bars providing two days' nutrition for an active person.
- Medikit:** A basic personal emergency kit allowing wounds to be temporarily treated.
- Magazines:** Holders for four standard weapon magazines.
- Grenades:** Attachments for two grenades or grenade-sized items.

Medikit



6

## TRANSCEIVER

Each Traveller is issued with a transceiver tied into a team network and keyed to their vehicle's main communications system. The devices are reasonably secure but not immune to jamming or interference. The device is handheld and carried in a pocket or equipment pouch, but has a headset for convenience. It can be used with or without the headset; the latter will function if within 5 metres of any of the team's transceivers.



3

## WEAPONS

The Travellers will be offered their choice of the following primary weapons. Magazine-fed weapons come with one magazine in place and eight more to be distributed among personal kit and pack holders. Requests for additional ammunition are unlikely to be granted; the Travellers will be carrying quite enough weight and will not be in the field very long.

Full details of these weapons can be found in  
*Book 1: Characters & Combat*.

### ADVANCED COMBAT RIFLE



### SHOTGUN



### SUBMACHINEGUN



# THE ESSERAY

The primary opposition in the *Fall of Tinath* campaign is an alien force known as the Esseray. Very little is known about them by the people of Tinath as they are secretive and uncommunicative. Most sources of information – ranging from questioning people who claim to know about the Esseray to undertaking a search through all available databases – will turn up some or all of the following ‘facts’. These can be fleshed out into somewhat inaccurate descriptions or wild tales (depending on the source) as the referee desires.

Note that these ‘facts’ are not the whole story and in truth are not all that accurate; they are an impression gained by the humans of Tinath. The reality of the situation will become apparent as the campaign develops.

- The Esseray seem to be a humanoid species, which makes use of both animals and robotic systems for a variety of tasks.
- The Esseray have a city on the continent of Sositenya.
- The Esseray city has a starport and receives the occasional visiting starship.
- The Esseray generally ignore attempts to contact them and shoot at any vessel approaching their facilities. Reconnaissance drones are usually intercepted by small (presumably robotic) aircraft and fired upon without warning.
- The Esseray have secondary facilities all over the continent of Sositenya, most or all of which seem to be involved in resource extraction.
- The boundaries of Esseray territory are well known. The closest approaches made without being fired upon have been entered into the charts as a sort of de facto border, though no agreement has ever been reached as the Esseray very rarely communicate with humans.

□ Occasional non-violent contact has occurred, usually when the Esseray have suddenly transmitted an offer to trade resources or items. They do not bargain, but simply offer a deal on a take or leave basis. Even this is rare.

□ The Esseray are presumed to have Tech Level 12, comparable to the best humans have available in this region of space. However, some unusual devices have been sighted and may be of higher-tech or exotic origin.

The Esseray are not a single species. They are a group of intelligences or beings that make use of a variety of bio-engineered species to fulfil various functions. Most of these species are virtually mindless; they can better be considered as biological robots than people. It is possible to augment some individual units with wafer jacks and implanted computer systems, to permit a more advanced intellect to live within the biological host body.

The Esseray also use robotic craft and systems, but prefer biological units for most tasks. The reason for this preference is not known; it may be connected with the origins of the Esseray. These, too, are unknown at the present time. It is apparent the Esseray have approached humancharted space from Spinward, but their true point of origin could be almost anywhere. They seem to be engaged in stripping resources from the worlds they overrun, though it is not possible to say what their final purpose might be.

It is entirely possible the Esseray are a self-perpetuating remnant of some ancient war, or a species that found a way to survive down the ages by transcending conventional existence. They may have no purpose beyond destruction or survival, or might be gathering resources for some enormous project begun aeons past. Future events might reveal more about the

Esseray and their plans, but for now all that will be apparent is that they are intent on overrunning Tinath and stripping its resources.

The Esseray construct starships and vehicles in much the same way as humans do, though they tend to be run by a central computer rather than commanded by a crew. Most tasks, including those of shipboard crewmembers, are carried out by biological units. These are cloned and rapid-grown as mass-produced and expendable labour, though some are augmented for more complex tasks.

## INTELLIGENCE

There are several levels of intelligence or being within Esseray society. The highest and cleverest are known to humans as Generals. These may be the top echelon of society or might answer to some higher authority; no evidence either way has been seen by humans. The consciousness of a General resides in a small but very powerful computer core which is carried in a receptacle surgically implanted into a host body. A General can be detached from its host without harming the intellect (the host is irrelevant) and transplanted into another body. Generals, like other Esseray intelligences, do not seem to favour robotic bodies no matter how powerful they might be.

The next echelon is known to humans as Commanders. These seem to be in charge of field forces, small installations or parts of a larger facility or project. Commanders are lesser intellects than Generals and completely subordinate, though it is not clear if an equivalent to the human chain of command exists. Commanders, like all lower intelligences within Esseray society, exist within a biological host body and are uploaded by way of wafer jack. They cannot be removed and die with their host body.

Below Commanders are Leaders, which are typically unimaginative by human standards but smart enough to direct a fighting force in the field or organise an efficient work party. A group of Esseray without a Leader present will carry out its assigned task and react to circumstances in much the same way as a group of animals. The leaderless Esseray will not dissolve into chaos but may be unable to comprehend a situation, in which case they will usually simply stop and wait, or go to some pre-determined marshalling point to receive new instructions.

Some biological Esseray and all robotic units fall into the category known as Augmented or Specialist. Biologicals have wafer jacks used to implant skills necessary for their intended role. Moving a unit from one role to another requires over-writing the previous skillset.

This sometimes results in malfunction as information mingles; such units are normally killed out of hand.

The lowest order of Esseray society is known as Unaugmented. These are biological units without wafer jacks, used as disposable labour or cannon-fodder. They are by far the most numerous of all Esseray, and can be fitted with a wafer jack and then upgraded with a skillset or even a higher intelligence if necessary.

The Esseray also make use of 'dumb' computers which are very similar to those used by humans. These computers are powerful data storage and processing tools but have no intellect as such. They can be controlled by a Leader, Commander or General through direct interface.



## ESSERAY SPECIES

The Esseray make use of several bio-engineered species. Any given individual can be implanted with a wafer jack and augmented, or could be used as the host for one of the higher Esseray intelligences. It is usually possible to spot leaders, specialists, and higher ranking Esseray by their behaviour; in general appearance they are no different to those that remain unaugmented.

There may be other species extant, and it is likely that the Esseray could produce more variants at need. Unaugmented Esseray tend to be clumsy; those with a wafer jack and implanted skills are sometimes very agile.

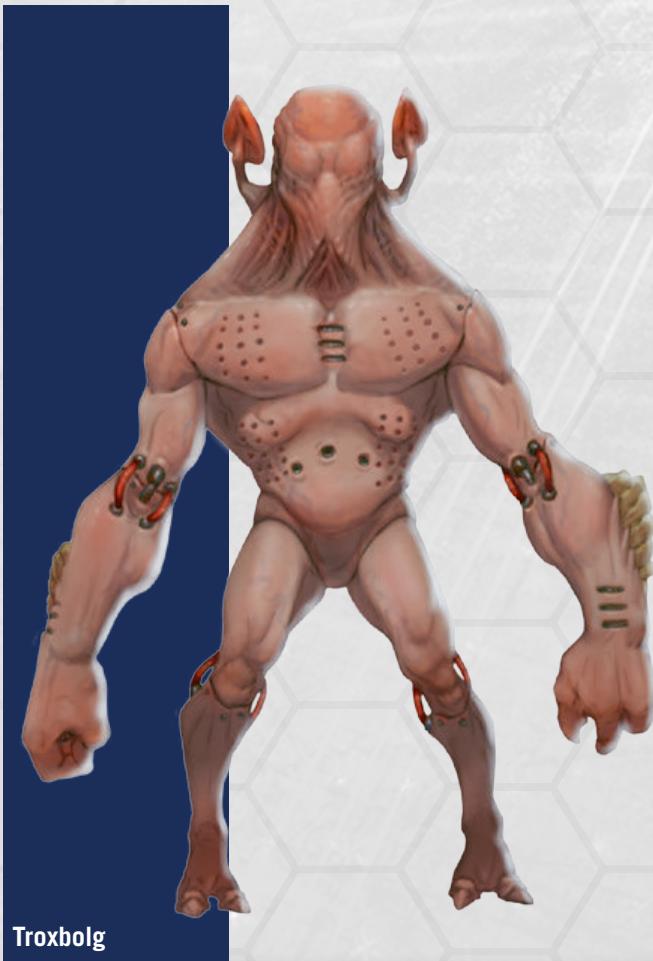
None of the species encountered on Tinath have any form of reproductive organs. There may be some Esseray species somewhere that do reproduce naturally, but they are not present in this area of space. From this fact it is possible to infer (correctly) that none of these species are the original or 'true' form of the Esseray.

## Troxborg

Troxborg are the commonest of the Esseray biologicals. They are bipedal and vaguely humanoid, used as general-purpose labourers and combat units. Troxbolg are also the most commonly used host bodies for higher Esseray intelligences.

Troxborg stand taller than most humans. Their arms and legs are segmented, and move in a manner many humans find disturbing. Most Troxbolg have a bony projection down the outside of the forearms, which can be used as a blunt weapon. Their hands are quite dexterous but unaugmented Troxbolg lack the manual dexterity and physical agility to operate complex equipment or weapons such as firearms that require fine motor control, even if they have the intellect to do so.

The head of a Troxbolg has two strange lung-shaped organs on stalks, used for hearing and echolocation. They can thus operate in complete darkness, though fine details cannot be made out. Unaugmented Troxbolg are only vaguely self-aware, and not much concerned with cold or pain. They do have a survival instinct, and will react to danger if they recognise it, but are unimaginative in the extreme, and rather dumb.



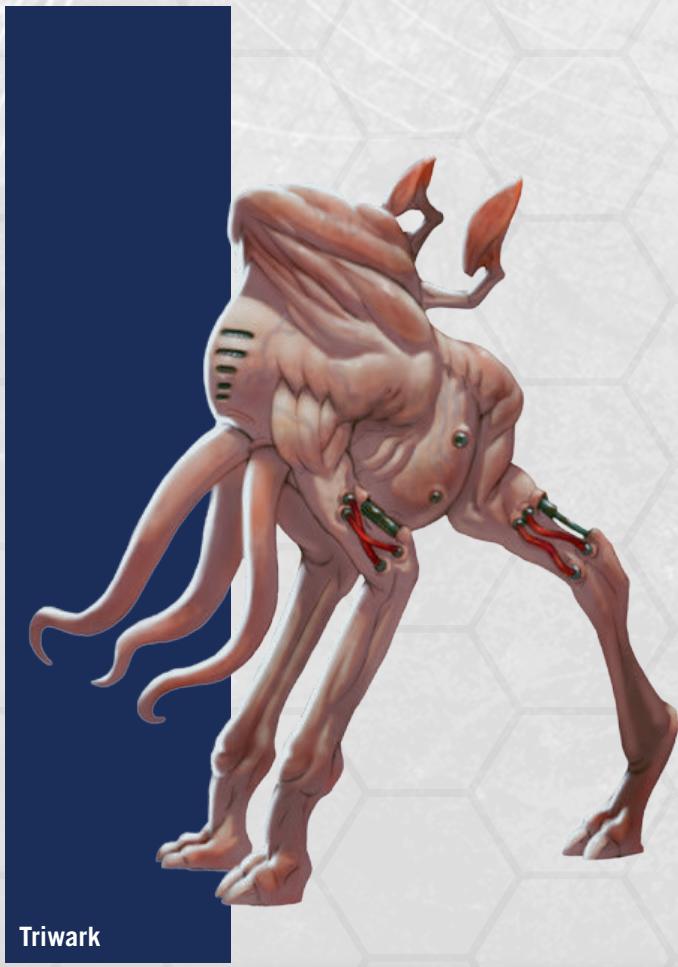
Troxborg

Unaugmented Troxbolg cannot understand human speech, and even those augmented cannot be reasoned with or persuaded. They will sometimes stick to a task even when wounded, slowly bleeding to death as they work. This is not always the case; it is likely that an importance is assigned to a task by the nearest Leader, and if the importance is sufficient the Troxbolg will not flinch. This can be useful, but since most Troxbolg cannot administer even the most rudimentary medical assistance, losses to accidents and minor mishaps tend to be high.

## Triwark

Like the Troxbolg, Triwark are biomechanical animal-like horrors. They stand 2.5 metres tall on three legs, with three tentacles extending from their central body mass at points midway between each two legs which can be used for additional purchase or balance when traversing rough ground. Triwark have no head as such; sensory organs are carried on protrusions from the top, bottom and sides of the central mass, and also on the tentacles.

Triwark have no eyes, instead relying on sensory organs similar to those of the Troxbolg (but larger and more efficient) to navigate by echolocation. They also ‘taste’ the air and surfaces they touch with their tentacles, making them effective trackers.



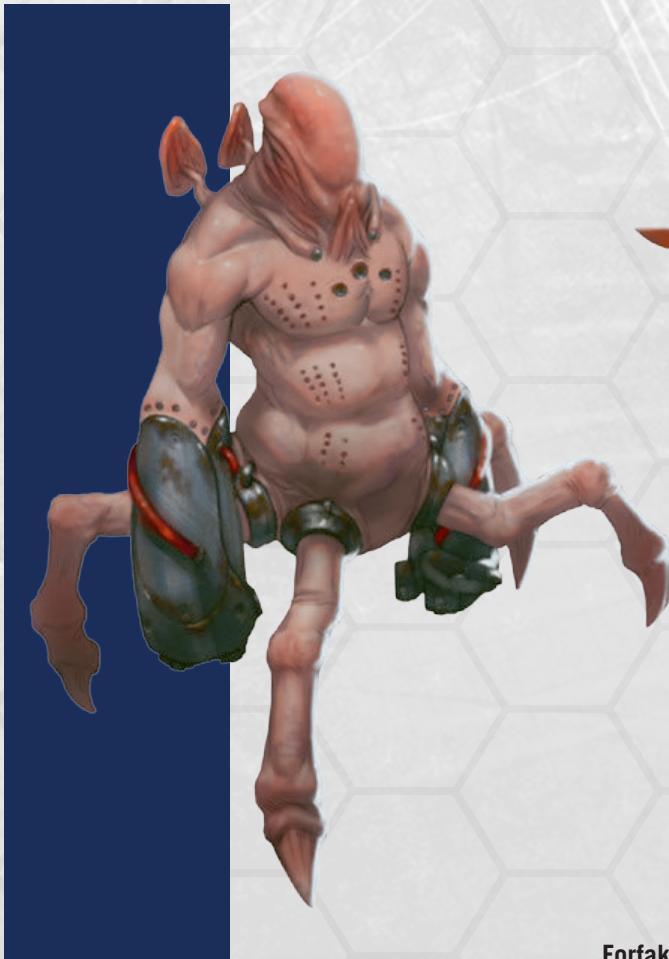
Triwark

The tentacles of a Triwark cannot operate most human-designed weapons or intricate tools, though they can handle larger and simpler devices. Triwark are usually augmented with a wafer jack and used as trackers, guards and guides. They still have little more than animal intelligence but can be directed more easily if wafer jacked.

## Forfak

The Forfak is a biomechanical animal-like robot designed for logistics and similar ‘support and facilitation’ tasks including the containment of prisoners. They stand 2.2 metres tall on four arachnoid legs. Two heavy arms can serve as bludgeons or carry a heavy load. Like other constructs, Forfak also have echolocation capabilities and can operate in darkness.

Forfak have been observed to possess a limited psionic capability. The only demonstrated application is a ‘psionic punch’ used to subdue prisoners. It is not clear whether all Forfak have this ability or if it is implanted through their wafer jack. Almost all Forfak are augmented, though those intended for very simple manual labour may not be.



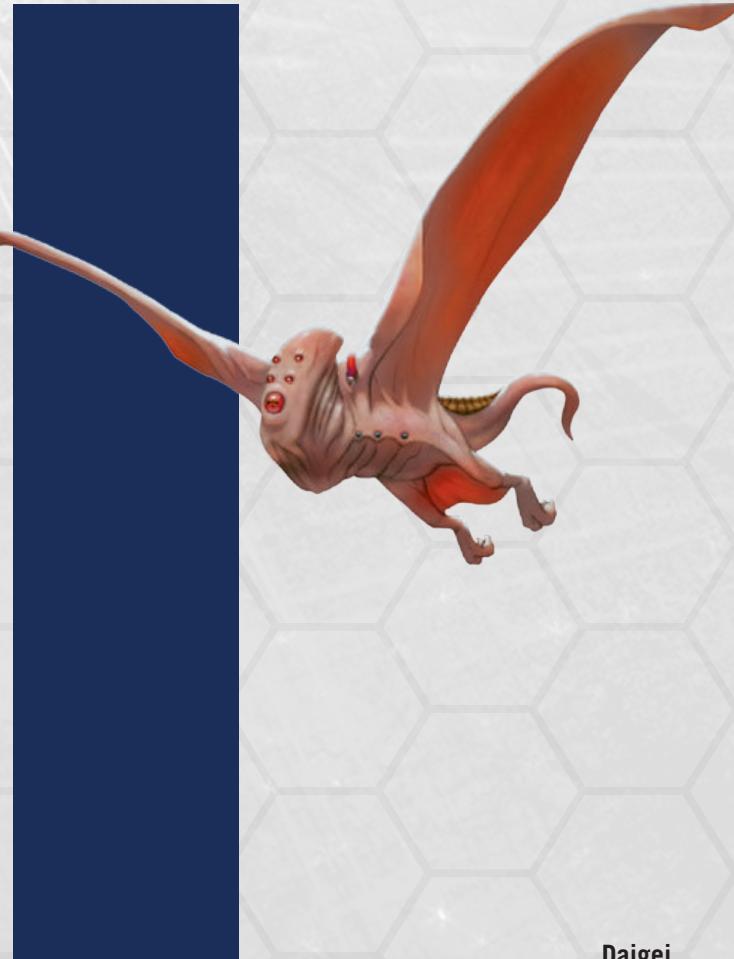
Forfak

## Daigei

Daigei are light biological constructs capable of flight using leathery wings. They can be described as resembling a blunt pterodactyl (they lack the long beak but otherwise are quite similar). Daigei are usually augmented with a wafer jack and used as scouts, though some installations have colonies of unaugmented Daigei which act as a sort of biological alarm system and can harass intruders.

It is not clear why the Esseray prefer to use biological units as scouts rather than true robots, though in application there really is no difference between a Daigei scout and human-made recon drone. The Esseray do make use of robotic craft and vehicles, but these are not thought to be part of the Esseray social order as such. It is possible a Daigei might be enhanced to the status of a Leader or perhaps even a Commander; no vehicle ever would be.

Daigei have complex senses, and can detect magnetic fields which are used for navigation. They also have very good eyesight. Daigei can carry objects in the claws that end their rear limbs, but have no hands and cannot manipulate weapons or tools.



Daigei

# WEAPONS, TOOLS AND VEHICLES

In addition to biological robots, Esseray also make use of conventionally engineered devices. Metal is used in many items, though there are also many biological components where another species might use plastics. Handles, grips and the like tend to be made from a bone-like substance (actually, it *is* bone, grown in the same way as complete Esseray standard forms) which feels rather disgusting to humans touching it.

Many components of vehicles or spacecraft are biological in nature, though metal is extensively used. Thus wires would be made of metal, but rather than plastic insulation an Esseray device would have a flesh-like covering serving the same purpose. The biological components of a vehicle or spacecraft are alive to the extent that they can heal damage over time. Smaller items cannot; they are inert once removed from the growing and shaping process.

Esseray vehicles, space stations, shuttles and starships are similar in construction to human versions, though as noted they use biological materials in many applications. There is another major difference; most Esseray vehicles and spacecraft are designed like robots. Thus a vehicle designed to deploy Esseray infantry would not be driven by a biological Esseray; it is a robot capable of limited decision-making or being directed from elsewhere.

The same applies to Esseray spacecraft including fighters and shuttles. They have a crew compartment, but this is used for maintenance and reprogramming rather than operations. Esseray fighters and spacecraft are just one more tool in their arsenal of near-mindless slaves.

Starships are controlled by a central computer and are the nearest any non-biological Esseray device gets to being self-aware. A ship is capable of limited decision-making and can function without direction from flesh-borne consciousness, though normally an Esseray of at least Leader rank is aboard to direct the vessel. The crew will be biological units, mostly Augmented Troxbolg, though numbers tend to be smaller than on human vessels as many functions are carried out by the ship's central systems.

For example, gunnery, piloting and many engineering functions are carried out by the ship itself rather than crew, who are mostly aboard to conduct damage control and fulfil functions the ship cannot. The crew might best be considered as internal mobile components of the starship; they move items, load missiles if the autoloader is jammed, and conduct maintenance rather than manning the turrets or controlling the ship's drives.

Esseray tools and weapons are more bulky than human designs, and require larger hands to grip properly. Humans trying to use an Esseray-made firearm or tool suffer DM-2 on skill checks, and the converse applies when Esseray arm themselves with human equipment.

TL12

## ASSAULT WEAPON

A small-calibre submachinegun-like weapon fed from a 40-round magazine inserted through the grip. Its cartridges are small and lack stopping power but the assault weapon's rate of fire somewhat offsets this.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Magazine	Traits
Assault Weapon	12	20	2D-2	1.5	40	Auto 4

**TL12****BATTLE RIFLE**

The standard weapon for Esseray troops is a heavy rifle firing cartridges carried in a bulky 40-round magazine. The Esseray battle rifle is semi-automatic, firing one round per pull of the trigger, and can serve as a reasonable sniping weapon at need. A long-barrelled support weapon variant, which uses a 60-round drum, is carried by some infantry or mounted as a light anti-personnel weapon on some vehicles and emplacements.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Magazine	Traits
Battle Rifle	12	350	3D+1	3	40 or 60	-

**TL12****BONE SPIKE**

A rod of heavy, dense bone-like material about a metre in length, with a heavy lump at one end and a sharp point at the other. This weapon can be used to club or impale.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Magazine	Traits
Bone Spike	12	Melee	2D+2	2.5	-	-

**TL12****ESSERAY GRENADE**

Esseray infantry typically use only one kind of grenade; a fragmentation type which is normally issued only to assault troops.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Magazine	Traits
Esseray Grenade	12	20	6D	0.1	-	Blast 6

**TL12****PLASMA GUN**

Some vehicles mount a plasma gun for anti-personnel and light anti-vehicle work.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Magazine	Traits
Esseray Plasma Gun	12	12 km	2DD	3000	-	AP 20

# ESSERAY UNITS

The Esseray field a variety of units, most of them specialised for one task. They are inflexible, unimaginative and dumb for the most part, but also relentless and obedient. The designations used here, such as infantry or hunter, are terms applied by humans based on behaviour.

## INFANTRY SQUAD

The standard infantry formation fielded by the Esseray is based on a squad of four Troxbolg. Three are Unaugmented and armed with hand weapons only; this may be a bone spike or nothing more than their natural limb weapons. The fourth squad member will be an Augmented Troxbolg equipped with a battle rifle.

The Augmented Troxbolg is not smart enough to act as a leader for the others; its wafer jack is used to implant an ability to operate and maintain a rifle, and little more than that. Without a Leader present, the tactics used by such a formation will be basic in the extreme, consisting of little more than a living wave assault by melee-armed infantry (using dual weapons, as described on page 75 of *Book 1: Characters and combat*) mixed with random shooting by the rifle-equipped Troxbolg.

Troxborg deployed for combat purposes are sometimes given basic armour protection in the form of a light ballistic cloth coverall (+8 Protection), though they also have a dermal weave of armour fibres that adds to this protection.

## ASSAULT SQUAD

The assault squad is made up of four Troxbolg infantry personnel armed with a fragmentation grenade and assault weapon. All assault squad members are Augmented and have a wafer jack, but may be assisted by numerous Unaugmented Troxbolg sent forward as a distraction and shield.

Most Esseray Leaders and Commanders have a personal escort of one or more assault squads.

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Troxborg Infantry	15	8 m
SKILLS	Melee 0 (Augmented Troxbolg have Gun Combat 0 too)	
ATTACKS	Troxborg Bone Ridge (2D), and Battle Rifle (3D+1) or Bone Spike (2D+2)	
TRAITS	Armour (+1), Echolocation	



ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Troxborg Assault Troop	15	8 m
SKILLS	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee (bludgeon) 2	
ATTACKS	Assault Weapon (2D-2, Auto 4), Esseray Grenade (6D, Blast 6), Troxbolg Bone Ridge (2D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+1), Echolocation	

TROXBOLG GUARD



TROXBOLG SCOUT



TRIWARK SCOUT



## TROXBOLG GUARDS

Installations such as prison facilities and starships are guarded by Augmented Troxbolg. Around one in five is armed with an Assault Weapon, while the remainder have Bone Spikes. Troxbolg guards are dumb but do not get bored and cannot be talked into letting an unauthorised person past. They will follow simple instructions such as ‘no humans permitted past this point’ and cannot even comprehend the idea of making an exception.

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Troxbolg Guard	15	8 m
SKILLS	Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee (bludgeon) 1	
ATTACKS	Assault Weapon (2D-2, Auto 4), Bone Spike (2D+2), Troxbolg Bone Ridge (2D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+1), Echolocation	

## SCOUT/HUNTER SQUAD

A Hunter or Scout squad typically consists of three to six Troxbolg infantry armed with battle rifles, accompanied by one or more Triwark. All Troxbolg are Augmented but highly unimaginative. They can track a target or remain on station for weeks if necessary, slowly starving to death if resupply is unavailable. Troxbolg selected for scout duty are typically equipped with basic fieldcraft skills, but are still very dumb.

Scout/Hunters are sometimes deployed as ‘elite’ (compared to other Troxbolg) riflemen and sharpshooters. More commonly, they are used as scouts and pickets, and may be sent out to capture enemy survivors. Triwark move quickly and surprisingly quietly for their bulk, and can maintain a fast three-limbed lope for an extended period.

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Troxbolg Scout	15	8 m
SKILLS	Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee (bludgeon) 1, Recon 1, Survival 1	
ATTACKS	Battle Rifle (3D+1), Troxbolg Bone Ridge (2D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+1), Echolocation	

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Triwark Scout	25	12 m
SKILLS	Melee 0, Recon 2, Survival 1	
ATTACKS	Tentacle (1D+2 or 1D Stun)	
TRAITS	Echolocation, Heightened Senses	

## FORFAK WORKERS, TECHNICIANS, OVERSEERS

Forfak carry out many support and technical tasks aboard starships and installations. They are typically not armed in this role, but can usually grab an improvised club at need. Their powerful arms can also make a bludgeoning attack, and Forfak assigned to oversee prisoners have the ability to deliver a telekinetic blow.

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Forfak Technician	40	6 m
SKILLS	Melee 0, Recon 2, Survival 1	
ATTACKS	Tentacle (2D-1)	
TRAITS	Armour (+2), Echolocation, Psionic (5, telekinetic punch only)	



FORFAK TECHNICIAN

## DAIGEI SCOUT

Daigei are used for airborne scouting and routine monitoring. They are typically deployed in groups of 2-8, dispersing slightly to give wider coverage of the target area. Daigei are as dumb as other Esseray bioconstructs, but can fly a variable patrol pattern and report on what they see. Those deployed far from their base are usually considered disposable, and left on station until they collapse and die. It is not uncommon for Daigei in this situation to turn on the weakest of their number and eat it, maintaining the group's capability at an ever-diminishing level for as long as possible.

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Daigei Scout	10	3 m
SKILLS	Melee 0, Recon 1	
ATTACKS	Claws (2D-2)	
TRAITS	Flyer (slow)	



DAIGEI SCOUT

# ESSERAY ORGANISATION AND WARFARE

If no Leader or higher commander is present, any activity undertaken by Esseray will tend to be disorganised (at least) unless it is very routine. Thus, a mob of Unaugmented Troxbolg and Forfak can unload a starship efficiently without supervision but will dissolve into chaos in a fluid situation.

Troxborg infantry are normally used in unimaginative 'Esseray-wave' tactics, with some elements of a force charging at the enemy to attack in melee combat whilst others use firearms, though usually only part of a force is equipped with firearms. Esseray are not particularly concerned with friendly fire and will shoot into a melee if it seems there is an advantage to be gained – or sometimes more or less at random.

Forces put into the field vary in size, though typically any grouping of more than twenty Esseray of all types will include a Leader and his close escort. A Commander will only be present if the force fielded is significant – typically more than two hundred or so – and a General would only take the field in command of thousands of Esseray. Similarly, small installations and starships merit only a Leader; larger ones have a

Commander, and only the most powerful or important facilities and ships would carry a General. Indeed, it is not so much that the installation or ship merits a General, as the General in charge of local operations has his headquarters there.

It is not known who the Generals answer to, if anyone.

Most Esseray military operations are either in defence of an installation or launched directly from spacecraft. Where on-planet mobility is required, robotic personnel carriers (typically armed with a plasma gun) are used for transport. This creates an equivalent to what humans term lift infantry (an infantry force using grav vehicles for mobility). If resources sufficient for a lift infantry force are committed, the operation would be under the control of a Commander or even a General, and might include quite sophisticated tactics. The combat troops themselves are still dumb as so many posts, but they can be skillfully handled by a higher Esseray intelligence.

## ESSERAY VEHICLES

The Esseray use a range of vehicles and craft, most of which are analogous to human designs but controlled by a robotic brain rather than a pilot. The use of biological components is disturbing to humans who have to ride in one of these craft, but their function is at least familiar.



### ESSERAY LEADER (TROXBOLG)

Most Esseray Leaders, Commanders and Generals inhabit Troxbolg bodies. A Leader can control up to fifty Augmented or Unaugmented Esseray of any species, though this control is limited to simple instructions which will be carried out in a sometimes spectacularly dumb manner.

A Leader inhabiting a Troxbolg body will usually be armed with an assault weapon and accompanied by several guards. Some Leaders may arm themselves with a battle rifle instead, but tend not to fight except in self-defence. Leaders are very much coordinators of other Esseray rather than hands-on types.

ANIMAL	STATS
Esseray Leader	STR: 12, END: 12, DEX: 8, INT: 6, EDU: 4
SKILLS	Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee 0, Recon 1, Tactics (military) 2
TRAITS	Armour (+1)

# ESSERAY INTERCEPTOR

## TRAITS

Folding Wings

TL	12
SKILLS	ELECTRONICS 1, HEAVY WEAPONS (VEHICLE) 1, FLYER (WING) 1, RECON 1
AGILITY	-2
SPEED (CRUISE)	SUPersonic (SUBSONIC)
RANGE (CRUISE)	7,500 (11,250)
CREW	0
PASSENGERS	1
CARGO	-
HULL	10
SHIPPING	30 TONS

## ARMOUR

FRONT	22
REAR	18
SIDES	20

## EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

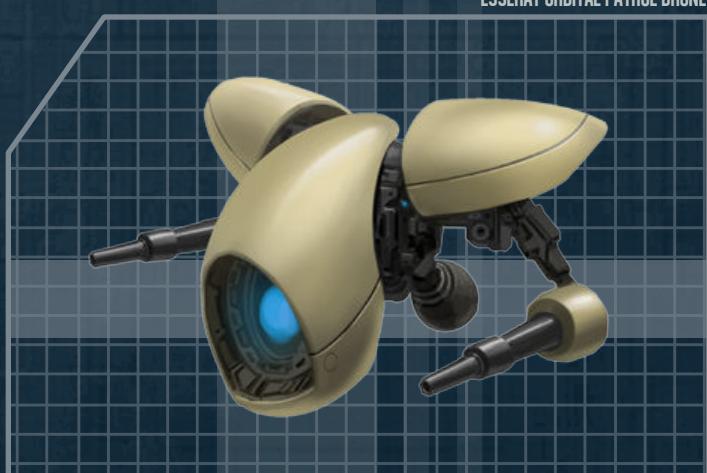
Autopilot (improved, skill level 1)

Fixed Mount (Esseray plasma gun, forward, DM+2 to hit\*),

\* This DM is only applied to flying targets.



ESSERAY INTERCEPTOR



ESSERAY ORBITAL PATROL DRONE

# ESSERAY ORBITAL PATROL DRONE

## TRAITS

None

## DESCRIPTION

Esseray Patrol drones are used to protect sensitive locations and detect intruders. They usually operate in low orbit and conduct sensor sweeps of the surrounding area.

Drones are armed with a multipurpose laser weapon. Firing at full power, it functions like a shipboard beam laser (page 33 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and worlds*) but does not get the beam laser's usual DM to attack rolls, and the drone will be unable to fire for 1D minutes as it recharges. In anti-personnel mode, it is less powerful but does not exhaust the drone's power supply.

TL	12
HITS	25-
SPEED BAND	SUBSONIC
SKILLS	ELECTRONICS (SENSORS) 2, GUNNER (TURRET) 1, FLYER (GRAV) 1
ATTACKS	MULTIPURPOSE LASER (5D, AUTO 3) ARMOUR: 20

# A HARD LANDING

This short adventure is intended to serve as an introduction to *Traveller* and the *Fall of Tinath* campaign. By the time the referee and Travellers have completed *A Hard Landing*, they will be familiar with the core game mechanics.

*A Hard Landing* illustrates out the skill checks that Travellers will need to make as they play. This is not usual in *Traveller* adventures, except in a few cases necessary for clarity. More commonly, the referee will decide what skills and modifiers apply to any given check based on the *Traveller* rules and a certain amount of common sense. Indeed, the referee is welcome to completely ignore the skill checks recommended here and to use his own judgement. Every gaming group has their own style and preferences, and so long as everyone is having fun, you are not playing the game wrong.

This adventure relies mainly on shipboard skills, which some Travellers may not have. There is still plenty for others to do – *Traveller* is not defined by skill checks alone. Travellers should be encouraged to look beyond their list of skills and remember they are a competent person who can do anything reasonably plausible. By way of example, a Traveller without the Athletics skill (which governs physical activity) can still try to climb a wall. They will just not be as good at it as someone with the skill, in much the same way as an average person in today's world is not as good at mountaineering as someone who has conquered several notable peaks... but they can still make an attempt.

The linked adventures in the *Fall of Tinath* campaign all emphasise different skillsets, which will bring various Travellers to the fore and give value to skills picked up in their previous career. Success in

*Traveller* is not so much about having the perfect set of skills to 'beat' the adventure as making good use of what you have. One group of Travellers might prefer to blast opposition with their high Gun Combat skills, whilst another misdirects them or even enlists their cooperation. There is no right or wrong way to complete any adventure and, in any case, it is the experience of adventuring, rather than completing the adventure, that makes gaming enjoyable.

Travellers, then, should be encouraged to enjoy the journey through the adventure rather than fixate upon winning. This is greatly assisted by the referee making the adventure vibrant and 'alive'. Rather than stating 'make this skill check to fight the fire', the referee should describe the fire – heat, smells of burning insulation and thick black smoke starting to fill the compartment – and let the Travellers decide what to do. They will probably make the skill check to fight the fire anyway, but the gaming experience will be richer for the way it is handled; the Travellers might instead come up with something quite different to do, which is always interesting....

## SKILL CHECKS

This adventure uses a standard format for skill checks and similar dice rolls to determine the outcome of a situation. It is not possible to set out skill checks covering every possible course of action for the referee in this manner, but the ones presented in this adventure will serve as guidelines for any other actions the Travellers attempt. After a few game sessions, the referee will not need this guidance; he will be able to select a suitable skill check, level of difficulty, and so forth using his own judgement.

The format used for these sample skill checks is as follows:

**What the Traveller is Trying to do:** Difficulty, Skill to be used, Time required, Characteristic the task is based upon.

#### For example:

*Learning the Traveller Task System:* Average (8+) Investigate check, (1D x 10 minutes, INT).

**What the Traveller is Trying to do:** Learn how to use the skill check rules.

**Difficulty:** Average (8+). This means the Traveller needs to score a total of 8 or more on two dice, plus any modifiers that apply.

**Skill to be used:** Investigate, as shown on page 66 of *Book 1: Characters and Combat*.

**Time required:** 1D x 10 minutes

**Characteristic the task is based upon:** Intellect

*This ‘task’ is based on the Investigate skill, and smarter people will find it easier. If a Traveller does not quite get it the first time around, he can roll again to see if he has figured out how the rules work after 10-60 minutes of play.*

The referee should make sure he is fully familiar with the skill check system, as covered on page 56 of *Book 1: Characters and combat*, before playing his first adventure. Once you understand this rule, you will understand 90% of all rules in *Traveller* – it is that simple!

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following data is relevant to *A Hard Landing* and the four linked adventures that follow it. The referee should decide how much of this information is available to the Travellers at the start of the game. None of it is absolutely necessary, and it is generally better to get the game going and fill in information as play progresses than to start with a big scene-setting exposition.

### General Background

The Athwa Cluster is a subsector of new colonies. Expatriates seek new worlds to conquer, prospectors push outward to search for riches in planetoid belts,

exiles forced out of political battles look for frontiers to govern, pirates look for less choosy (and less well policed) markets, and entrepreneurs lay the foundations for new trading empires.

Travellers gravitate to the frontier for all manner of reasons. Most are trying to leave something behind or looking for something new... or both. One Traveller might have left a career that had become stale and be seeking a new challenge. Another could be running from some scandal or incident. The reasons vary, but once Travellers have found their way to a region like the Athwa subsector, what they find is opportunity. On the frontier, a handful of bold spirits can make a real difference.

Tinath is one of these frontiers. Although colonised some time ago, it has only recently begun to receive much in the way of interstellar trade. Expansion to the starport, gaining it a ‘C’ rating, will hopefully bring in more ships and expand the world’s economy. The prospects seem good that Tinath will develop into an important world someday.

However, there are some difficulties to overcome. Tinath is balkanised, with its population of seventy million people split between several large city-states established over the past two centuries. Mistrust and disputes between the city-states has thus far hampered the growth of an effective economy, and in recent months an additional conflict has arisen. Competition for resources with the humanoid Esseray on the Sositanya continent has grown into an open, if small, war. Human forces from the city-states of the Mehali continent have landed on Sositanya and are advancing on the main Esseray city there, but the campaign is hampered by a lack of cooperation among the city-state forces.

### The Esseray

The primary opposition in this adventure is an alien force known as the Esseray. The Travellers might still fall foul of local wildlife, humans and all manner of other threats but the Esseray are the real problem. They are not out to get the Travellers – they do not know about them and do not care – but they have an agenda that will pit the Travellers against them. The alternative is to be overrun with the rest of Tinath.

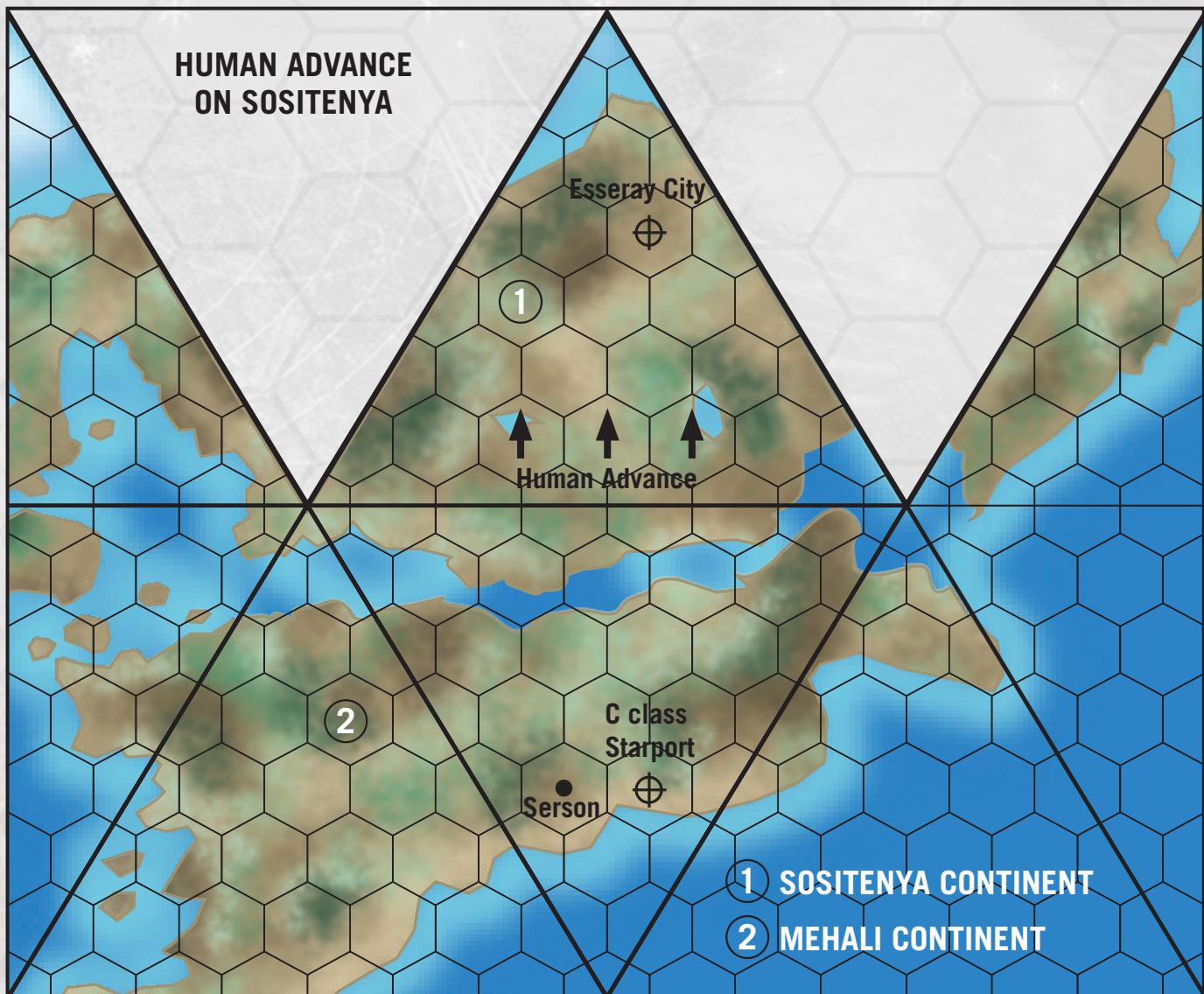
Humans do not know very much about the Esseray. Contact has been minimal and the Esseray are both

remote and secretive. They seem to be a vaguely humanoid race, though there are descriptions of Esseray that contradict this image.

In fact, the Esseray is not a race or species at all. It is a force of machine intelligences that use both conventional robots and biological constructs as necessary. The 'Esseray' most people have seen are in fact a species created by the Esseray, named Troxbolg, used for security and combat tasks. As the Travellers proceed through the adventures they may be confused by the different species of Esseray, until eventually they come to understand the truth.

The key fact for the referee to keep in mind is that virtually all individual Esseray are near-mindless 'biological robots' capable only of carrying out simple tasks. They have no initiative and no emotions, only a fairly basic set of responses. These include a survival instinct of sorts. An Esseray will not ignore imminent danger unless it has a task to perform that overrides personal safety.

The dumbness of most Esseray, once realised by the Travellers, can be exploited. However, there is a driving intellect, as events will show. That intellect has a plan, and will not be deflected from it.



## A HARD LANDING

The adventure begins as the Travellers are returning to Tinath from a mission to another star system. What ship they are using will depend upon whether the Travellers obtained one after mustering out from their careers. If they did not, the referee should assign them a vessel. A Scout/Courier is an ideal ship for Travellers, though there are other options; a Far Trader is a good choice for a larger group.

Once the adventure begins, it should not be allowed to bog down. The referee should strive to ‘open with action’, i.e. to have the Travellers doing something right from the beginning, and keep them busy until the crisis is past. This is a good way to get a session moving and put the Travellers in the right frame of mind for playing Traveller rather than being distracted by a discussion of last night’s TV show.

In this case, the Travellers are nursing their malfunctioning ship towards an emergency landing. Details can wait – first they have to stay alive!

## THE SITUATION

The Travellers’ ship has just emerged from jump, headed for Tinath, and everyone will be at their duty stations. Pilot and astrogator will be on the bridge, engineers and technicians in the drive rooms, gunners will be buttoned up in their turrets... just in case. Anyone who does not have a specific duty station should indicate where they are in the ship as it begins its approach.

As the pilot begins a minor course correction, several instruments register power spikes and the ship judders alarmingly. The manoeuvre drive surges then cuts out, causing the ship to begin a slow tumble. Clearly something has gone badly wrong somewhere, but it is not immediately apparent what has happened.

## THE OPENING SCENE

The referee is advised to think of the opening scene much like an action movie. Rather than a long explanation of who is who and what is going on, the game starts *in medias res*, as scriptwriters say. The scenes should be dramatic, with the camera moving quickly from one Traveller to another. If the referee can get everyone involved right from the outset and give them all a bit of ‘camera time’, the adventure will be off to a good start.

The Travellers have a serious problem and need to find out what has happened. They might be under attack, or something entirely unexpected might be happening. The referee should give each Traveller the chance to perform one short action, then move on to the next Traveller, creating a feeling of tension and suspense. Anyone who takes too long to make up their mind what to do or wants vast amounts of information before making a decision should be passed over in favour of getting the others who are actually doing something. Travellers will soon learn they need to think on their feet rather than spending half an hour deciding on the perfect course of action as flames erupt from a nearby power conduit.

The most obvious actions are:

**Determine if the ship is under attack:** Any Traveller with access to a control console (i.e. on the bridge or in a turret or drive rooms) can make a sensor sweep to look for hostiles. Success indicates there are no ships nearby and the Travellers’ vessel has not been fired upon.

*Sensor Sweep:* Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check, (1D minutes, INT).

**Determine if the ship has been damaged:** The best place to do this is the drive rooms, but there are repeater readouts in other parts of the ship. A Traveller could also undertake a manual inspection, i.e. run around looking for signs of damage. There are quite a few cupboards popped open with the contents spilling out, but there seems to be no serious structural damage. However, there is a small fire in a power conduit.

*Damage Report:* Routine (6+) Mechanic or Engineer check, (1D minutes if using instruments, 3D if making a manual inspection, INT).

**Figure out what has happened to the drive:** This can only be done from the drive rooms. A successful skill check indicates the manoeuvre drive’s safety cutouts have taken it offline and can be easily reset, but there is a more serious problem with the drive itself. Finding out what caused the cutouts to trip (and the drive to run wild) will take longer. The priority is likely to be getting the drive back online - without it the ship is completely out of control. Fixing the underlying problem can come later.

*Assess the Condition of the Manoeuvre Drive:* Routine (6+) Engineer (m-drive) check, (1D minutes, INT).

**Find out if the ship is going to crash:** Anyone on the bridge (but probably the pilot) can quickly run a course projection to see if the ship is going to crash into Tinath. They will also be able to determine the drive is offline and cannot be used until the ship's engineers have reset it. Success indicates the ship is tumbling slowly towards Tinath and will enter its atmosphere very soon. This will be fatal to an out-of-control vessel.

*Course Projection and Status:* Easy (4+) Pilot (spacecraft) or Astrogation check, (1D minutes, INT).

**Other Actions:** The Travellers might try to do all sorts of other things, requiring the referee to adjudicate accordingly.

Once the initial round of actions is completed, the Travellers should know what is going on – they have suffered a drive malfunction, and are not under attack. There is a fire inside the ship, the drive is offline and they are tumbling towards Tinath. They will need to do something about this!

Note that the pilot cannot regain control of the ship until someone resets the drive, and that the power conduit fire is threatening to spread. More seriously, it could cut off power to some of the ship's systems and perhaps cause it to crash. A streamlined ship is designed to operate in atmosphere but it is not an aircraft – it is not possible to 'dead-stick' a powerless starship in to a landing.

The ship will hit Tinath's dense atmosphere in 17 minutes. Once this happens the referee should roll 1D for the number of minutes before the vessel and its occupants begin to take damage. Everyone aboard will take 1D damage (halved if they are strapped into a seat) and the ship's structure (its hull points) also suffers 2D points of damage. When the ship runs out of hull points, it breaks up. Everyone aboard will perish at that point, so the Travellers will really need to have solved their problems before then.

There are three major problems facing the Travellers right now:

1. The ship's engines are shut down.
2. The ship is out of control and about to crash.
3. The ship is also on fire.

The pilot is helpless until the drive is back online, and only the pilot can prevent a fatal crash. If the ship's engineers fail to reboot the drive, they can make repeated attempts, with the clock ticking down a few

more minutes every time they try. Meanwhile, the fire will spread unless someone fights it.

## FIGHTING THE FIRE

Any number of Travellers can fight the fire. To fully extinguish the fire, they will need several successful skill checks. These checks could all be made at the same time by multiple Travellers, or a lone Traveller might battle the fire all the way to the planetary surface.

The referee should keep a count of the 'Fire Value', which starts at 3. Each time someone makes a successful skill check (as described below) to fight the fire, the Fire Value drops by 1. When it reaches zero, it is more or less extinguished, but the referee might want to give the Travellers a surprise by having it flare up again (at a value of 1), unless a final skill check is made to ensure the fire stays out.

Every time someone fails a skill check to help extinguish the fire, the referee should roll 1D. On a result of 1-2 the fire spreads, adding +1 to its Fire Value. In addition, all attempts to use the ship's systems are subject to a negative DM (die modifier) equal to the current Fire Value. Therefore, the attempt to reboot the manoeuvre drive is initially subject to DM-3. If the Travellers make a real hash of fighting the fire and it spreads to the point where they need 6 successes to put it out, then everyone else aboard the ship suffers DM-6 to their attempts to carry out tasks.

The most likely way this scene will play out is for the ship's engineers to wrestle with the drive and bring it back online whilst the pilot helplessly reads out a countdown to destruction and demands status updates every few seconds. Meanwhile, everyone else battles the fire, hopefully making the engineers' task easier once they are no longer in danger of being roasted alive.

**Fighting the Fire:** Everyone who is trained for a job aboard a starship learns how to deal with fires and other emergency procedures. Travellers may therefore use their highest skill out of Astrogation, Engineer, Gunner, Pilot or Steward to deal with the flames. Anyone who fails the check suffers 1D damage from heat and smoke, and runs the risk of the fire spreading. Note that rolls to fight the fire are also subject to the same penalty as other tasks whilst the ship is on fire. Thus, the first attempt to put the fire out is at DM-3.

*Firefighting:* Routine (6+) (relevant skill) check, (1D minutes, END).



**Get the M-Drive back online:** This can only be done from the drive rooms. The ship's engineers will be able to reset the drive's safety cutouts, but the process of fully powering down and resetting takes a few minutes. Once the drive is brought back online the pilot can attempt to regain control of the ship, but flying will be tricky until the drive is repaired and there is a chance of another incident.

*Reboot the Manoeuvre Drive:* Average (8+) Engineer (M-drive) check, (1D minutes, INT).

**Regain Control of the ship:** Once the drive is online the pilot can correct the ship's tumble and bring the vessel onto a landing vector. The drive remains slightly erratic, however, and there are a few scary moments as it lurches and surges. However, it will hold up long enough to get the ship to the ground. The attempt to regain control can be made repeatedly until the pilot succeeds.

*Regain Control and Make a Landing:* Difficult (10+) Pilot (spacecraft) check, (1 minute, DEX).

**Helping the Pilot:** Even with the drive rebooted, the ship is hard to control and could be already falling through the atmosphere. Other Travellers might come up with clever ways to help the pilot. For example, an astrogator could try to predict the ship's tumble and effects of the atmosphere, and help the pilot compensate. Engineers might manually correct the drive's power surges and smooth out the thrust. Other Travellers might come up with almost any way to assist – even just shouting encouragement (using the Leadership skill perhaps) might be useful. The referee should adjudicate these efforts appropriately, and grant the pilot DM+1 for every Traveller successfully assisting in some meaningful way.

## THE GET OUT CLAUSE

It would be a bit of a shame to massacre the Travellers in the opening scene, so the referee might want to give them a little bit of help. The ship's automatic fire suppression system may put out the fire sooner or later, and the engines' self-diagnostic routines will reboot and restart them. However, things will go much faster (and be more heroic) if the Travellers actually do something. The referee might like to apply the following bonuses if the Travellers are having a hard time.

- For every three attempts by the Travellers to extinguish the fire (whether successful or not), the automatic system puts part of it out. Treat this as if a Traveller had made a successful check to fight the fire, i.e. reduce the Fire Value by 1.
- After 20 minutes (i.e. 3 minutes after the ship hits atmosphere) the manoeuvre drive will finish its automatic reboot cycle and begin to function again. The drive is not repaired, but works well enough to make a landing. Of course, by this time the ship is taking damage from its fall through the atmosphere and the pilot still must regain control....
- You may wonder why the automatic systems are less efficient than a bunch of panicky Travellers. The simple answer is that a game where the Travellers sit around drinking coffee while waiting for a machine to solve their problems would be very boring. Traveller is about 'people doing stuff', so the action should centre on the Travellers.

## THE HARD LANDING

With the engines back online, even if they are running rough, it should be possible to make a landing approach. The ship's engineer will see from the readouts there is still something badly wrong with the drive. It could run wild or shut down again, but there is nothing that can be done for now except hope the ship makes it to the landing area.

Finally, Tinath Starport is just ahead. All that is necessary is to make a landing.

*Landing the Ship:* Average (8+) Pilot (spacecraft) check, (1D minutes, DEX).

The skill check to land the ship is subject to DM-1 for the erratic drive, and it makes a truly horrible noise during the final approach. A failed check will not destroy the ship, but a negative Effect will indicate various degrees of hard landing. The ship will need repairs... but then it did anyway!

The Travellers may wonder what to do next. Their ship is clearly in unflyable condition and getting it repaired could be a problem. Fortunately, a situation presents itself just after landing, leading to the next part of the adventure.

## WHAT NOW?

The Travellers have managed to land their ship at the Tinath starport, quite possibly stumbling out of the smoke-filled interior onto the landing pad. They are down but have a real problem. Their manoeuvre drive is malfunctioning and could run wild again at any time. It is simply not safe to fly with the ship in this condition.

On established worlds, this sort of problem is easily solved: pay for the repairs, and the ship is fixed in a few days. On Tinath, the starport is less capable than what is expected of a true interstellar community. As a result, major starship repairs are typically subordinated to every other political and industrial need of the developing world. Months of waiting for repairs is not an appealing prospect; Tinath may be a nice world, but nobody feels like settling down just yet.

The referee should let the Travellers get their bearings before moving on to the next part of the adventure. They will need to pass through customs and security checks in order to move off the landing area and into the cities of Tinath. This is not very difficult, simply a matter of answering some simple questions and presenting the identification documents everyone carries. Unless the Travellers do or say something exceptionally stupid they will be allowed entry to the world of Tinath.

*Not Getting Deported:* Simple (2+) INT check, (1D minutes).

This is a check against a characteristic – Intellect in this case – rather than a skill. The procedure is the same as for a skill check, however. The referee could choose to dispense with the dice roll entirely and allow the Travellers entry based on how they roleplay the scene. Assuming they tell the truth and do not attempt anything silly, they will have no problems. After all, the Travellers are the crew of a starship using Tinath's port and are stopping over for a few days – this is completely mundane and a perfectly good reason to be where they are. No portside security officer is going to have a problem with this, whereas making up some outrageous lies will land the Travellers in trouble.

This scene is an opportunity for the referee to establish that the Travellers must obey rules and laws, or risk the consequences of not doing so. Attempts to march through the customs checkpoints ignoring security or use force to get through will end badly. The security officers at the entry point are not expecting trouble and are unarmed, but a forceful intrusion will bring an

armed response which will escalate even if the Travellers succeed in shooting their way through.

One way to deal with the sort of Travellers who think they can ignore the laws of the land ‘because we are heroes’ or ‘because we have loads of guns’ is to play out the ensuing gun battle first against security teams armed with handguns, then the emergency response team with assault rifles, then the army (think what happens in video games like Grand Theft Auto). When the Travellers are all dead, the referee can tell them ‘and that’s what would have happened if you had tried to bull through... but you didn’t, did you...?’

Assuming the Travellers do not get themselves shot or deported, they will have a chance to experience Tinath. The world has a Law Level of 3, representing fairly relaxed laws, as is common on frontier planets. Ownership of purely military weapons is forbidden, but it is quite legal to own a light automatic weapon such as a submachinegun.

However, whilst Tinath’s laws recognise a farmsteader whose property is an hour from the nearest assistance might want such a weapon for self-defence, carrying weaponry in cities is a different matter. Hand weapons such as swords are acceptable, as are handguns, but more destructive items such as automatic or energy weapons, or any gun intended for use in both hands (such as a shotgun) are not allowed on the streets. It is acceptable to transport such a weapon in a locked case, however.

Tinath has a Tech Level of 6, which represents the locally available technology. Some more advanced items are available, but these have to be imported and are very expensive. Thus, most transportation is by wheeled ground car, with a few grav vehicles used by rich individuals or organisations. Higher-tech items can generally be maintained by local tradesmen, usually requiring imported parts. Stocks of such parts are available, but not in large quantities.

The referee should allow the Travellers a chance to look around the city of Serson, which is adjacent to the starport, and get a feel for the local culture. Although Tinath does not have the technology to build starships and grav vehicles, the population is quite familiar with them. Similarly, although the world’s port does not receive many starships in a given month, there is nothing particularly spectacular about one arriving. Its crew will certainly not be treated as celebrities.

Overall, the Travellers will be able to go about their business in the city of Serson, buying a few things or spending money on dinners made with actual fresh ingredients rather than shipboard ration packs. Sooner or later the question will arise... what next?

## MOVING ON

At this point, the referee can present the hook for the next adventure – *Research and Rescue*. This comes in the form of a call from Baroness Edda. The baroness is the Travellers' current patron, and payment is waiting for the last job they did for her. This was, of course, the trip the Travellers were returning from when their drive malfunctioned.

The Travellers are invited to a meeting with the Baroness herself. They can pick up payment there – in electronic form or, if the Travellers prefer, a case of hard plastic credit plaques – and listen to Edda's proposal for another job. She has sufficient influence to get the repairs to the Travellers' ship expedited, and whilst the Cr20000 they will be picking up is nowhere near enough to pay for the repairs, the baroness offers to cover this cost as well.

She does want something in return, however.

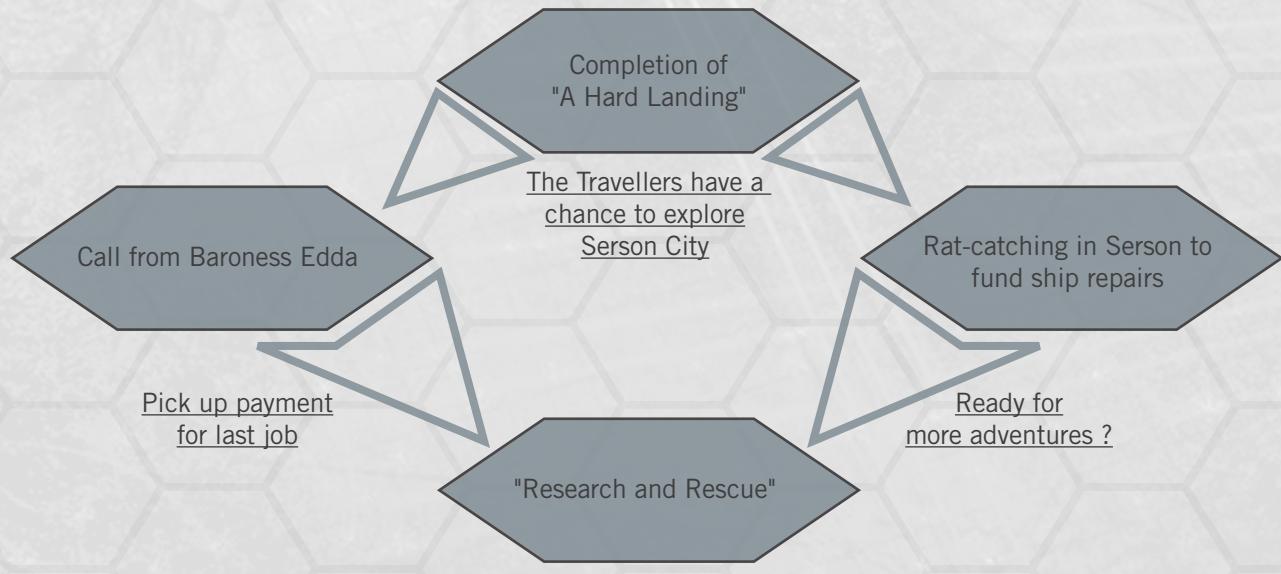
The Travellers have now completed *A Hard Landing*. They are ready to move on to other adventures, and a hook has been presented to draw them into the next

one. The referee will note that Traveller adventures are often a combination of set-pieces, usually action scenes, and freeform elements where the Travellers can do as they please. The game should not be allowed to stagnate; if the Travellers get bored wandering around the shops and bars of Serson city, then the next adventure can be implemented.

On the other hand, many gaming groups create their own adventures as they attempt to reach some goal they have set themselves. If the Travellers decide to fund the repairs to their ship by setting up a rat-catching business in Serson, the referee should let them try. When they are ready to begin *Research and Rescue*, the adventure will be waiting. This is not always the case – sometimes events overtake the Travellers and there is no time for side missions – but where possible the Travellers should be able to make their own choices. Refereeing *Traveller* is not an exercise in railroading the Travellers from one adventure to the next; it is an interaction between Travellers and referee to create a game that is fun to play for all.

However, even rat-catching is only interesting for so long. The referee must be ready for when the Travellers want more adventure, and the *Fall of Tinath* campaign will provide plenty of that. It begins with a simple search for some lost scientists and ends in a desperate space battle against overwhelming odds.

## END OF ADVENTURE SUMMARY



# THE FALL OF TINATH

*The Fall of Tinath* consists of four linked adventures, with a period of days or weeks in between them. Naturally, the Travellers could use this time to undertake their own side missions, but the referee should be mindful of the fact that this campaign has a ticking clock. The human-Esseray war will be going on in the background, steadily turning against humanity until it is obvious that Tinath is lost. The referee can play fast and loose with the timings if the Travellers have found something interesting or fun to do, but ultimately Tinath will fall to the Esseray.

Each segment of the campaign leads on from the last, building a tale of high adventure and daring in the face of great adversity. The campaign can be played with the pregenerated Travellers provided in the *Starter Set* or with any other band of Travellers. Likewise, there is no single and correct way to solve the problems posed in this campaign; inventive Travellers may come up with all manner of solutions to the challenges before them.

The adventure includes guidance intended to assist new referees in getting started. However, the most important thing to remember is that gaming is a social activity, and it is fun. Travellers who are interacting and enjoying themselves tend to care very little about the exact wording of the rulebooks – they remember the things they did in the game, not the dice rolled to accomplish them.

So, if there is one piece of advice to new referees that stands out above all others it is this:

*Have fun playing the game!*

*A Hard Landing* contained numerous examples of skill checks to provide guidance to the referee in setting difficulties, assigning relevant skills and so forth. The adventures that follow provide only a few such examples, in keeping with the more standard practice of leaving the adjudication of Traveller actions up to the referee. It is not possible to list every possible skill check for every conceivable action, so most Traveller adventures do so only for unusual or critical checks. Other actions should be adjudicated by the referee using the rules starting on page 70 of *Book 1: Characters and combat*.

## THE COURSE OF THE WAR

The war that forms the backdrop to these adventures proceeds in a scripted fashion. It is possible to write adventures that allow the Travellers to change the course of events, for example ensuring a critical piece of information gets through in time to be acted upon, but in this case the Travellers will be unable to prevent an Esseray victory.

What, then, is the point of trying?

The fact that Tinath is doomed to fall is not necessarily apparent, and in any case the subject of these adventures is the band of Travellers, not the world of Tinath. The difference is important; the referee and Travellers are telling a story set against the fall of Tinath, and it is the *story* that is important – not the fate of the world. A story in which the Travellers are doomed to a

pointless death would be a poor one, but a tale where surviving the fall of Tinath represents a victory is a different matter. Besides, as the curtain falls on Tinath, the Travellers will be preparing for new adventures among the stars.

The information presented here is, as always, for the use of the referee. It can be made available to the Travellers through rumours, panicky calls for help on the radio, updates from allies on-planet or gleaned from the displays in an Esseray map room. The true course of events is presented here for the referee; the Travellers can be told fragments or distorted versions if necessary.

War became inevitable the moment the Esseray landed on Tinath. They will not tolerate competition, and always expected to fight the human population. However, their initial foothold was not strong, so they chose to build an outpost in a remote area and begin mining materials necessary for their conquest.

The Esseray plan was to build up to full readiness then swamp the locals' defences with an assault from space, using a bombardment vessel to break centres of resistance, whilst hordes of ground troops overran the human cities. Conflict was precipitated early by the actions of the human city-states. This caused the Esseray to advance their plans.

Human forces made good initial gains on the Esseray's continent, although they were disorganised and suffered from internal rivalries. The initial opposition was mostly made up of infantry and hunter units, which fought fanatically to defend positions the humans nevertheless easily overran.

At the time of the first adventure, *Research and Rescue*, human forces are advancing on the main Esseray city on the continent of Sositenya. A small force of Esseray conducting reconnaissance of the southern continent becomes aware of the alien ruins when the humans stumble upon it, and captures the research team. A detachment of troops sent to secure the site encounters the Travellers as they undertake their own investigation.

The war takes a turn for the worse just after *Research and Rescue*. As the human forces enter the region around the main Esseray city, they are unaware they are being drawn into a kill-zone for more potent Esseray forces. The first sign that the Esseray are stronger than expected is when a horde of infantry are released. Although mindless, they are employed effectively by some guiding intellect.

Meanwhile, robotic vehicles equipped with support weapons convey more infantry into the combat zone, in many cases landing directly upon human support bases and command centres. These assaults are suicidal, of course, but with their supply chain and command structure shattered, the humans are driven back in disarray.

Against the backdrop of this terrible news, the Travellers begin their second mission, *Captive Audience*. This is a daring infiltration of the Esseray facility on Tinath's largest moon. The mission could take weeks or just hours, depending on the Traveller's actions. Whilst the Travellers are in orbit, and possibly after their return to Tinath, the war continues to become a disaster for humanity.

The confident advance on the Esseray becomes a series of desperate rearguard actions, fought against a relentless horde of Esseray infantry. It is here that the people of Tinath buy themselves the possibility of a future. Last stands by doomed units inflict such staggeringly huge casualties on the Esseray that others actually win free of the kill-zone and are rescued by chains of grav vehicles. Even civilian craft join in the rescue attempt, flying though a sky filled with Esseray interceptors to pick up a handful of wounded soldiers.

The Dunkirk-style evacuation of the human armies back to their home continent of Mehali ensures the war is not quite lost. The remaining forces dig in, and are joined by militias formed from the desperate population. The assault on the cities of the Mehali continent is thinner than the Esseray intended, and somehow the defenders manage to hold out.

At this time, a significant proportion of the human armed forces are still on Sositenya, holding out in a shrinking perimeter with a dwindling stream of grav craft pulling out the wounded and some of those able to fight. The Esseray fling assaults against these perimeters, and some collapse. Others hold on long enough that the enemy falls back, having reached the point where the assault could not be sustained without using up reserves needed to take the human cities. Some of the trapped units fall back, awaiting rescue. Some actually counterattack!

The chaos caused by this resurgence throws up a unique opportunity. An Esseray General has been located and may be vulnerable to a covert strike. The Travellers thus embark upon their third adventure, *Electronic Warfare*,

seeking to capture the General and perhaps obtain an advantage over the enemy.

This is Tinath's most glorious hour, but it is merely a bright moment before the darkness falls. Information gained from the Esseray General indicates a bombardment ship is due to arrive in the Tinath system very soon, and a large fleet is following it. On the heels of this news comes even worse – the main human power in the region (the Calida Federation) is under attack and has already lost most of its fleet.

It is obvious that Tinath's population face annihilation. The only hope is an evacuation, which might save at least a portion of the populace. A mission is sent to Ashfield, a nearby star system where a colonisation fleet was outfitting until the Ashfield Project collapsed. If people can be ferried to Ashfield Station, or the colony ships brought to Tinath, then some people at least can be saved.

A period of frantic preparation begins, against the backdrop of bitter fighting as the Esseray advance on the ground. Small craft are converted into torpedo carriers and everything that can fly into space is either crammed with refugees or prepared for the final defence of Tinath's starport.

Finally, the Esseray ship arrives in-system, emerging from jump near the system's gas giant. After skimming fuel, it proceeds toward the world of Tinath and the evacuation fleet. There are those who hope the Esseray will let the colony ships go, but gambling on mercy is not a viable strategy. The only hope is to somehow defeat the massive Esseray ship.

In the final mission, *Under the Hammer*, the Travellers take part in the assault on the Esseray warship. Things do not go quite as planned, but eventually the ship is destroyed. It is only a temporary reprieve, of course. More Esseray fleets are on their way, and there is no prospect of victory on Tinath. But the Travellers have bought time for the colony ships to escape, and that – along with their own survival – may be victory enough.



# RESEARCH AND RESCUE

At the end of A Hard Landing the Travellers had reached Tinath's starport and were wondering how to get their starship's drive repaired. The solution presented itself when their patron, Baroness Edda, offered to expedite the work (and pay for it) in return for the Travellers undertaking a mission for her. The job offer is made in a distinctly civilised manner, over a light lunch at the office suite Edda's staff use as their headquarters on Tinath.

The Travellers are not on contract to Edda, as such, and are not part of her staff. They are freelancers who have undertaken various tasks on the baroness' behalf. This sort of arrangement is not uncommon for Travellers, who have skills that might be required in the short term but are not inclined to settle into a steady job. The usual term for the client is 'patron', which covers all manner of arrangements. In some cases, the Travellers might have a friendly working relationship with the patron, in others they may be coerced.

In this case, the arrangement is amicable and mutually beneficial. The baroness comes from a rich and powerful family in the Calida Federation, and has extensive interests on Tinath. Although she is not part of the local city-state government, she is a player in Tinath's political scene and well respected. Indeed, she has acted as a mediator between Serson and the other city-states at times.

The baroness owns some industrial assets, mainly light-industry fabrication facilities, and employs hundreds of Tinath's citizens in addition to her own household. Household in this context is a term for the staff and close associates of a noble. Edda has a small security

force equipped with TL12 small arms, a few grav vehicles, and a staff of lawyers, administrators and functionaries. Her family have been involved with Tinath for many years, and Edda considers herself a citizen of Tinath rather than the Calida Federation.

The task Edda has for the Travellers should take a few days at most. She wants them to find and retrieve a research team she sent out to investigate a site on the southern continent. She will provide a vehicle and some equipment, which must be returned afterwards. Payment is extremely generous – Edda will apply pressure to the starport authorities to get the Travellers' ship repaired, and cover the costs of doing so. This is estimated at around MCr2. Edda does not have any ulterior motive in this – she believes the Travellers are an asset who might be handy to have around in these troubled times, and is willing to spend money in order to keep them in play.

Rather than simply telling the Travellers what they are expected to do, the referee should roleplay the actual meeting. This allows a few little details to be presented, helping build a picture of civilisation on Tinath. Later in the adventure, when things become grim and Tinath's cities are under bombardment, the Travellers can be reminded of how life used to revolve around genteel business meetings conducted over a salad and wine. Done right, this can motivate the Travellers to fight for human civilisation on Tinath without any consideration of financial reward or self-interest.

The baroness is mindful of her own high station and will not tolerate disrespect from the Travellers, but that is a two-way street.

She is respectful of their skills and talents, and does not treat them as underlings. She will freely provide the following information:

Baroness Edda owns a set of old reports from surveys performed before the first colonisation of Tinath. The original placement of colonies was based on these surveys, but not every promising site was selected for development. The original reports were largely forgotten as more detailed surveys of the prospective colony sites were performed, and it is unlikely many outside the baroness' family have access to them.

Baroness Edda is a direct-line descendent from original colonists, and inherited the survey maps from her parents. Her father was exiled from the capital of the Calida Federation but the family has since regained some of its lost status. In order to fully restore her family's prestige, Baroness Edda wants to develop one of the areas flagged as promising.

Edda tells the Travellers her maps show a surface anomaly in an unexplored region within the continent of Valeive. She thinks it is a pre-colonial structure, perhaps hundreds of years old. She sent a small research team to explore the anomaly but, a week ago, their transmissions abruptly ceased. She wants the Travellers to re-establish contact with the team and help them return to the starport. The research team is led by Sir Berani, one of Baroness Edda's own knights. He is a skilled scientist and capable agent. With him went four research associates and two guards. One of the research associates is Sir Berani's daughter, Desta.

The baroness does not really have any idea what has happened to the research team. With war ongoing on the continent of Sositenya, it is possible the alien Esseray have attacked them and, if so, the Travellers may be headed into danger. However, it is equally likely there has been a communications malfunction or some other relatively minor problem. Tinath does not have a sophisticated orbital tracking capability, so it is possible a starship might have visited the site. In short, the Travellers might have to deal with almost anything when they get to the site, and would be well advised to prepare themselves.

In order to protect the Travellers from legal complications, the baroness has registered their task with a mercenary bonding agency. Their mission brief (known in the trade as a 'ticket') is a security operation with a success-only payment of MCr2. Success is defined as discovering the fate of the research team and ensuring their safety if possible. The payment will be used to cover the repair cost of the ship's drive system.

The Travellers will have use of a G/Carrier for the operation, carrying extra fuel for the distance that must be travelled. The G/Carrier is a lightly armoured paramilitary grav vehicle used by many mercenary and corporate forces. The Travellers will also be issued military weapons and armour if they wish. A standard set of equipment is presented on page 21. Requests for additional items will be considered, though the referee should not let Travellers take liberties. The northern continent is technically a war zone at present and although the Travellers are not headed there, a few extra useful items would be a reasonable request. Ridiculous demands will be refused; Baroness Edda is willing to outfit the Travellers for a dangerous job but she is not prepared to give them a truckload of weaponry.

INFO I

INFO II

INFO III

INFO IV

INFO V

INFO VI

The best way to handle outfitting for a new group of Travellers is to give them the list of issued equipment, and ask if they have any other requests. If a request is granted, the referee can assign some relevant piece of equipment from *Book 1: Characters and Combat*. Travellers should not be allowed to bog down the adventure reading through equipment catalogues and asking for explanations of what items are or what they do in slim chance they might need them. In short, if the Travellers can identify a need and there is a piece of equipment available that will meet it, it can be issued.

### Referee's Note

Many adventures start this way, with a patron outlining the task they want the Travellers to complete and what they get in return. This is not the only way to begin an adventure – *A Hard Landing* started out in a very different manner – and there are really no hard-and-fast rules about how to begin. However, an adventure that starts with roleplaying and ‘talking scenes’ can become aimless if the Travellers do not get out there and start doing something in good time. The referee should keep things moving and prevent Traveller chat about other topics from drowning out the game narrative.

As previously noted, Traveller is about ‘people doing stuff’. The Travellers have been given something

they need to do, so as soon as possible they should set about doing it. However, if the Travellers go off on what might be called an ‘active tangent’, i.e. they decide to do something interesting or fun on their own initiative, they should not be railroaded back to the adventure plot. Travellers who create their own adventure opportunities (even the very mundane, centring on golf courses and wine bars) should not be discouraged.

In short, active participation is what the referee wants. Active Travellers may not closely follow the expected narrative, and the referee must adjudicate accordingly. This is much better than forcing the Travellers to march from one skill check to the next in a linear and ultimately boring fashion, even if it does require a bit more work on the referee’s part.

## EN ROUTE TO VALEIVE

The missing research party is on the cold southern continent of Valeive, about 12 hours’ flight away for the G/Carrier. The G/Carrier is quite capable of making the trip on autopilot, though it would be advisable to have a pilot with Flyer (grav) skill at the controls in case of emergency.

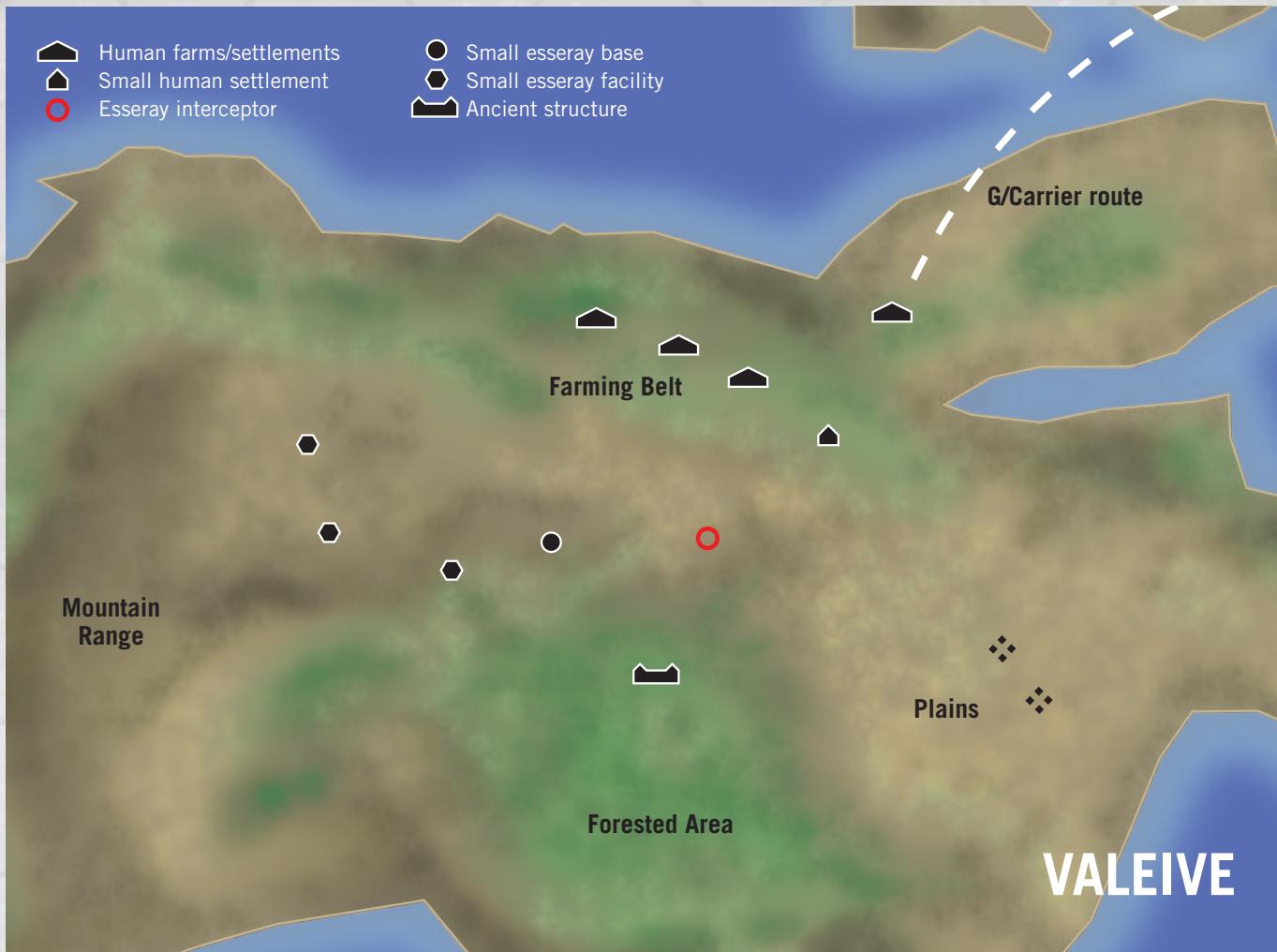
The trip itself is made at a cruising speed of about 300 kph, and at sufficiently high altitude that weather is no issue. The G/Carrier’s interior is small but comfortable, so the journey should not be much of a hardship.

Once they approach their objective, the Travellers would be well advised to be on the alert. The G/Carrier will have to descend to a lower altitude where turbulence is likely from time to time, and there is always the danger of interception. If the Travellers wish, they can use the G/Carrier’s sensor suite to learn more about the continent they are flying over.

In the introductory adventure, skill checks were spelled out in detail for the referee. This is not normal practice in Traveller adventures. The following is a reminder of the format used for skill checks, but after this the referee should impose skill checks wherever it seems appropriate and adjudicate them using the normal Traveller rules.

Using the G/Carrier’s Sensor Suite: Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check, (1D x 10 minutes, EDU).

Failure indicates that the Travellers have not learned anything new, but they will still get a general impression of terrain and weather. If sensors are successfully used over an ocean, success will detect large aquatic lifeforms, including the possibility of rather fearsome predators or vast kelp mats. If over Valeive, a successful skill check reveals a new fact about the continent. In that case, roll 2D and consult the Sensor Readings table. If one item has already been revealed, choose an adjacent item.



## Sensor Readings

### 2D Information Gained

- 2 The target location has a faint heat signature.
- 3 A gravitic drone is detected far away, carrying a cargo payload. It is not possible to determine the origins or nature of the drone – it may be human or Eserray.
- 4 Though covered with forest growth, something that may be a very old structure is detected.
- 5 The surrounding area is heavily overgrown with forest cover.
- 6 A flock of flying scavengers is detected, congregating on a grassy plain.
- 7 A very small human settlement is spotted. It is nothing more than an isolated farm or very small village. Valeive is officially uninhabited but small numbers of people have settled it over the years.
- 8 Large land carnivores are detected, chasing a herd of prey through a heavily forested region.
- 9 A momentary ‘sensor ghost’ appears, but is lost. It may have been a distant vehicle or aircraft, or perhaps just interference.
- 10 What appears to be an Eserray settlement is detected, elegantly built in concentric rings with spokes radiating from its centre. It is quite old and appears to be abandoned.
- 11 Electromagnetic emissions indicate there is some kind of facility located in a rift valley, mountainside, crater, or other rugged terrain. Its broad-spectrum emissions suggest it is a small technological settlement, probably involved in industrial production.
- 12 An Eserray settlement is detected under a forest canopy. Its broad-spectrum emissions suggest it is a technological facility, probably involved in deep-crustal mining for scarce resources.

# FLYING OVER VALEIVE

Valeive is not uninhabited after all. Small numbers of humans have settled the continent, setting up small villages and outlying farms in a belt across the northern coast. The Esseray have also landed on Valeive, constructing several small facilities to extract resources. Not all of these were successful; some are played out whilst others were not as productive as expected.

At present, the Esseray have a small base located far inland, from which they are conducting a more detailed reconnaissance of the area. They have overwhelmed the few human settlements in the area and may eventually move against the belt of farms in the north. However, the Esseray do not need to do so and have thus far simply ignored them as they pose no threat.

The Travellers cross the Valeive coast after about 7,000 kilometres of flight (about twenty-four hours at 300 kph). At this point, several Esseray Interceptors are scrambled to prevent the G/Carrier from travelling into the interior of the continent. No warning is given; the interceptors are simply deployed to shoot the craft down. The interceptors are robotic aircraft capable of very limited decision-making.

The Esseray Interceptor (see page 34 for its full capabilities) is a combat aircraft designed for high speed and altitude, but limited manoeuvrability. Their normal mode of combat is to make a fast pass with their plasma gun, then a long sweeping turn away before coming back around. The interceptors are much faster than the G/Carrier and cannot be outrun. Nor, under most circumstances, could the G/Carrier outmanoeuvre them – it is a streamlined grav vehicle, not a combat aircraft. However, the Travellers are not defenceless.

The fight will take the form of a succession of gun passes by the interceptors. After each pass, it will be 1D rounds before the interceptor can come around again. The interceptors' guns are powerful plasma weapons doing 2DD damage – i.e. 2D, multiplied by 10. These can penetrate the G/Carrier's armour on any facing except perhaps the front.

The referee should not fling hordes of interceptors at the Travellers; one or two should be sufficient to pose some threat without massacring the Travellers. If things are going too well, a few additional interceptors might be sent to even the odds, but the resources of the local Esseray base are very limited.

## Referee's Note

This may be the first combat run by the referee. It can be reduced to a set of dry skill checks and attack rolls, but it is generally far more fun to play for drama and excitement as the G/Carrier hurtles low across the terrain pursued by the interceptors.

Normally, an adventure will not spell out all the options available to the Travellers – not least because Travellers inevitably come up with something the adventure writers did not expect! However, in this case we have spelled out some of the most likely options to give a new referee some guidance.

## Evasive Action

The pilot can try to evade each round. The G/Carrier is not really designed for airborne combat, and has an Agility of -1. This is applied to the pilot's skill check, and the Effect of this check is applied as a negative DM to the interceptors' attack rolls against the G/Carrier that round, as covered on page 59 of *Book 1: Characters and Combat*. This does mean that a bad roll actually makes it easier to hit the G/Carrier.

## Getting Down Low

The pilot could also get down very low, where the G/Carrier's slower speed might actually be an advantage. He can weave through the treetops and hills, hoping to wipe one of the interceptors off on a terrain feature. If the pilot successfully weaves (i.e. the pilot makes his Flyer check), an interceptor will either try to follow – they are not very manoeuvrable for all their speed, and suffer DM-2 to its own Pilot check – or break off its pass and come around again in 1D rounds. An interceptor that fails to weave hits something and is spectacularly destroyed.

## Shooting Back

Shooting back with the G/Carrier's fusion gun uses Heavy Weapons (vehicle) skill. Travellers who have any speciality of the Heavy Weapons skill are considered to have a skill level of 0 in all other speciality, which is sufficient to make an attack roll without penalty, and apply their relevant characteristic bonus (in this case DEX). Those without any Heavy Weapons skill suffer the usual DM-3 penalty on their attack roll. Only one Traveller can operate the gun at a time.

Alternatively, if the referee is experienced or feeling adventurous, he might like to use the Dogfighting rules on page 38 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and Worlds*.

## ALMOST THERE....

After the incident with the interceptors, the Travellers will be alert for trouble. Nothing untoward happens, other than flying through a heavy sleet squall that lashes the G/Carrier and reduces visibility to virtually nothing. According to the map, the destination is just ahead, though attempts to contact the research team by radio avail nothing.

As the G/Carrier is beginning its descent, looking for a good landing site, there is a sudden horrific screeching of metal. Cold air blasts into the cabin and alarms start to wail. Sensor systems momentarily white out. The G/Carrier begins to slew sideways and descend rapidly. Despite the sudden shock, astute Travellers might realise there was no impact or explosion. The referee might choose to call for an INT check or simply give out this information.

This can be a difficult choice for the referee. On one hand, a check rewards more competent Travellers and can make more obscure skills relevant. On the other, missing some critical piece of information through a bad dice roll can stall the Travellers through no fault of their own and cause the adventure to stagnate.

A good rule of thumb is to call for checks when the information (or whatever other outcome is triggered by a successful check) will be of some benefit but not critical to the progress of the adventure. Information that is critical should be given out automatically, though it is possible to disguise this by asking for checks and rewarding the least bad, or giving the information to a Traveller who has a high relevant characteristic (such as INT or EDU in this case) or who has the most relevant skills.

Regardless of whether they realise there was no conventional attack, the Travellers have a problem. The G/Carrier is crippled and falling fast. Everyone on board has time to perform one short action. It is apparent that the vehicle's automatic safety systems are trying to land as gently as possible, so a crash might be survivable. The obvious options are to strap into a seat or to try to regain control of the craft.

Any Traveller who is in the pilot or co-pilot seat at the time of the attack can try to regain control of the vehicle (only one Traveller can do this at a time; the pilot station overrides the co-pilot's emergency controls). They will not be able to prevent a crash but can mitigate it to the point where everyone will be less hurt. A successful Flyer (grav) check permits a controlled crash landing. The referee should decide on the difficulty of the check but no matter how well it is made, the G/Carrier cannot remain in the air.

If the pilot made a successful Flyer check, everyone aboard takes 1D damage, ignoring armour but halved if they are strapped in. If the check was failed, the landing is much harder, with everyone taking 2D damage (again, halved if they are strapped in).

## IMPACT!

The G/Carrier smashes through a couple of small trees and comes to rest at a strange angle. Internal systems like airbags protect the occupants, and the crash is survivable. Anyone inside is a bit dazed, thoroughly scared and jammed in between airbags... but alive. It seems obvious the G/Carrier has been shot down somehow. Struggling out of safety restraints and taking stock of the situation seems to be of immediate importance



The Travellers might want to call for assistance. If so, they find the communications suite is still working, though power levels in the G/Carrier are dropping fast. A character with Electronics (comms) skill could try to get a call off before power fails.

Anyone trying to use the comms system will be informed by the G/Carrier's computer that appropriate appeals for help have already been broadcast on all bands. There is no indication whether the call has been heard. If a Traveller successfully manages to use the communications system, he briefly contacts Baroness Edda's staff. During the exchange, communications are interrupted by powerful jamming. The last message through is that a rescue mission is being prepared. ETA is twelve to fourteen hours, with the Travellers' original destination point as the rendezvous location.

The Travellers are also likely to wonder what has happened to their vehicle. It is obvious the gravitic lifter and propulsion unit burned out for some reason, and there is structural damage associated with whatever caused that to happen. Additional damage was, of course, caused in the crash-landing.

Travellers with a high EDU or Science skills may be able to figure out that the G/Carrier was hit with a gravitic weapon. It might have been torn apart, but it would appear the lift-and-drive field partially protected the craft and its occupants. The vehicle is a total write-off, but this was probably the best of all possible outcomes. No gravitic weapons are known to be in service; this is an exotic and advanced technology which at present is only theorised. However, it is the best explanation for what just happened. The implications are rather worrying....

### Referee's Note

The referee can make as much or little as he pleases of the crash. For additional complications, the G/Carrier (containing all the heavy equipment) might come down in a canyon or be stuck in the tree canopy. This would add a whole new level of difficulty to the situation, and the Travellers might suspect that someone may be coming to finish the destruction of their craft.

Alternatively, the referee can go easy on the Travellers and give them a relatively soft landing. The G/Carrier is trashed either way, and will not fly again, but properly stowed equipment should have survived intact.

### ON WITH THE MISSION?

Collecting their wits after the crash landing, the Travellers note they are within a few hundred metres of their destination. Since the fundamental parameters of their mission have not changed, and since it is also the most likely rendezvous point for rescue, their best course of action seems to be to complete their original mission whilst they await rescue.

If the Travellers instead decide to march off into the cold wilderness, the referee can nudge them back in two ways. The first is the environment. They are not equipped for cold-weather survival; the G/Carrier offers little shelter and no heat in its present condition. Finding the research team might also lead the Travellers to warmth and shelter. Secondly, the Esseray force described a little later in this part of the adventure might make an early appearance, forcing the Travellers to change direction and herding them back towards the mission destination.

Assuming the Travellers choose to head for their destination, they will begin struggling through the semi-frozen forest. The referee should take the opportunity to present some details about the situation; these will help bring the adventure to life. The Travellers are sore and bruised, and very cold. The forest is full of concealed dips and roots that conspire to trip unwary Travellers; 'unwary' typically means anyone who has been trudging along in the miserable cold and damp for more than a few minutes.

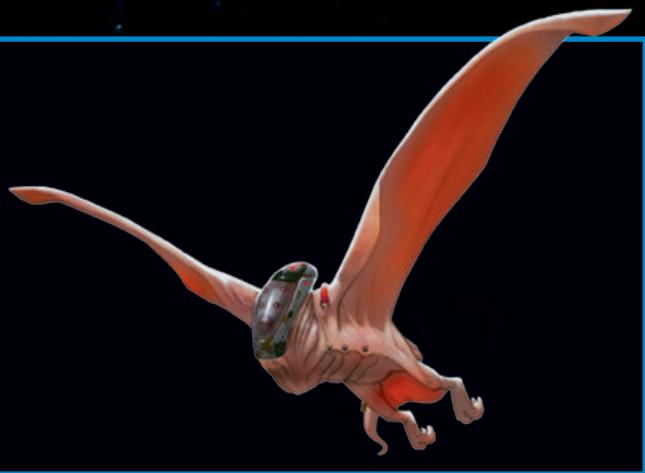
Travellers with Survival skill have an easier time, as they are experienced in this sort of thing. The referee should remember many Travellers live on a climate-controlled starship; some may never have been outside the comfort of starports and high-tech cities before. The forest can be a frightening and mysterious place to such people.

As they are moving, the Travellers may become aware that something is not right. The referee should ask for a Recon check, and apply a Bane (See page 59 of *Book 1: Characters and Combat*) to any Traveller who does not have Survival skill. Such people are trying to be watchful but are distracted by the environment tripping them up, and keep lapsing into a state of numb trudging.

The Travellers are suddenly attacked by flying creatures. It is quite possible this assault comes as a complete surprise. Winged shapes come swooping in as the Travellers cross a clearing, lashing with claws in eerie silence. Travellers who are caught completely unaware cannot react at all during the first round of combat, and unless someone has a weapon already in their hands, they will not be able to shoot before the Daigei make their first strike.

# DAGEI SCOUTS

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Daigei Scout	10	3 m
SKILLS	Melee 0, Recon 1	
ATTACKS	Claws (2D-2)	
TRAITS	Flyer (slow)	



The Daigei are a species of Esseray used as airborne scouts. The Travellers will not know this right now, however, as Daigei are rarely seen by humans. They will probably seem to be some local animal; later revelations about the Esseray will make the Travellers realise they had encountered Esseray without realising it.

Travellers who do not detect the Daigei ambush suffer DM-6 to their Initiative check (see page 70 of *Book 1: Characters and Combat*). There are at least three Daigei in this initial attack. How many more are present depends on the referee's discretion. It is hard to keep track of the swooping creatures, which sometimes go out of sight behind the trees to attack from a different angle.

The referee should note that combat in Traveller can be very, very deadly. This cuts both ways – the referee should not be merciful and 'let the Travellers off' if things are going badly, especially if it is the result of poor decisions on their part. In other words, Travellers who try to march forward blasting the opposition should suffer the consequences of being a good target. Those who are smart, using cover and concealment, can tip the odds in their favour.

This encounter is a minor skirmish, enabling the referee and Travellers to get the hang of personal combat and figure out how deadly it can be. It is best played as a chaotic scramble with Daigei swooping in to attack, then away again, everyone firing in different directions, and confusion reigning. Smart Travellers may realise the Daigei cannot get at them if they stay under the trees, though they will be shadowed from above. It is possible to move under the trees and take carefully aimed shots at the Daigei, making the fight much easier.

In short, this is a skirmish, not a battle to the end. The Travellers should get a taste of Traveller combat and

learn some lessons before they run into more dangerous opposition. Once the deadliness of Traveller combat (and the lack of rapid healing) is demonstrated, they can be considered to have had fair warning. Bad decisions in future combats may lead to fatalities.

## THE PLAZA

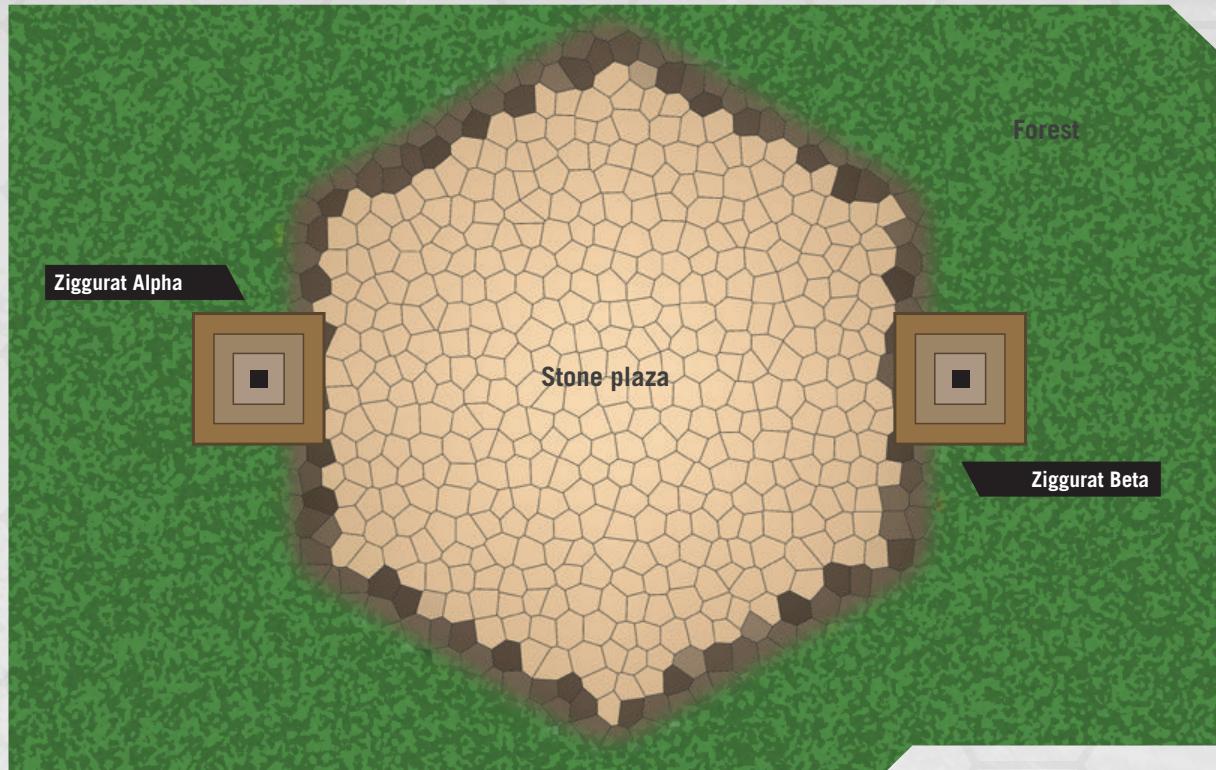
Sometime after the encounter with the Daigei, and possibly still being shadowed by them, the Travellers emerge from the forest to find themselves on the fringe of an overgrown hexagonal plaza about a hundred metres on a side. On opposite sides of this plaza rest two low ziggurats, hereafter referred to as Ziggurat Alpha and Ziggurat Beta. The structures are built from seamlessly laid composite blocks, and the plaza is also formed from similar materials.

A scan with an appropriate instrument reveals the building materials are high tech, at least TL9 and probably higher. The blocks and plaza slabs are composed of a composite ceramic material which seems to be extremely resilient and hard. There is little sign of weathering on the ziggurats, though the plaza surface has been cracked in places and trees are growing through it in places. These must be decades old at least.

The referee should describe the scene in at least a little detail; strange, possibly alien, structures of great age standing above the plaza. The vegetation poking up through the plaza floor, slowly reclaiming the site. The Travellers should be encouraged to wonder 'what is this place?' and 'what is going to happen here?' in the way a movie audience might when shown such a scene by the director. A big part of Traveller adventures is the sense of wonder and danger inspired by finding something strange or mysterious.



## THE PLAZA



The plaza is simply a large flat area – or rather, it was. A curious ripple effect can be observed, as if some upheaval has twisted the ground and cracked the plaza slabs. There is no sign of any structure other than the two ziggurats. Nor is there much indication of the research team. A search might be conducted using the Recon skill, or Travellers with Survival might take an educated guess at where the research team would camp.

Success leads to a flattened area of vegetation where a grav vehicle clearly landed, and a few discarded items of camp equipment such as ration boxes and tent poles. More significantly perhaps, cartridge cases can be found around the camp site and elsewhere. There are not many, just a few from what was presumably a human-made rifle and some other, heavier cases from an unknown projectile weapon. This was an Esseray battle rifle, but the Travellers will not know that.

It seems the research team were attacked. Their vehicle, equipment and personnel have been removed from the site. Nothing more can be discerned at this time.

If the Travellers climb the ziggurats, they find that with a bit of teamwork it is not difficult to scramble up each 1.4 metre high terrace, though it is tiring. The top of each ziggurat is a flat open space with a cube-shaped structure offset from the centre. These have doors, though the one in Ziggurat Beta is sealed and cannot be opened from the outside. The door into Ziggurat Alpha has been damaged and can be pried open with some effort.

One thing will be apparent from the design of the ziggurats; they were built by a society that relied heavily upon gravitic technology. Access to the ziggurats from ground level is difficult and could not be achieved with a heavy load or bulky items. Clearly, they are a remnant of an advanced culture. Travellers who visited the Oracle when they first arrived on Tinath will be struck by a general similarity in proportions and materials.

## NEW ARRIVALS

About the same time the Travellers force the door into the ziggurat, a force of Esseray infantry approaches the ruins. They were sent from the Esseray base on foot to approach the ziggurat. An attempt to use interceptors to overfly the ziggurats was unsuccessful; they were shot down by the same means that took out the Travellers' G/Carrier, and a robotic Esseray infantry transport met the same fate. The research party's transport did not, but at the present time the Travellers have no way to tell where it is.

There are already a handful of Esseray infantry (see page 30) at the installation, along with a human prisoner.

The new arrivals have been sent to reinforce this squad, and have instructions to treat any non-Esseray they encounter as hostile.

Esseray infantry are mindless synthetic beings with only the most basic tactical skill. Their behaviour might seem selflessly brave at first, but it will soon become apparent that they have no regard for their own lives. Their willingness to advance into the teeth of heavy firepower is unnerving to say the least.

The Travellers may not be aware of the new arrivals at first, especially if they enter the ziggurat straight away. If they hang around for too long, the first Esseray will arrive and open fire or charge at them with their natural blade weapons. Individually, Esseray infantry are easy to deal with, but large numbers will overwhelm the Travellers.

There are enough Esseray in the vicinity that the Travellers cannot simply stand and fight, but they will not all arrive at once. They are moving in small groups through the forest and have become strung out. Thus, the Travellers might get the better of a sharp fight then realise the odds are mounting way too fast. Glimpsing more Esseray infantry closing in from all sides, they should realise their best (and perhaps only) chance of escape is to enter the ziggurat and seek another way out.

## INSIDE THE ZIGGURAT

The ziggurats were built in the distant past, apparently as some kind of base or facility. It is still partially functional due to its extremely high technology, but has inevitably suffered from neglect over the millennia. Cracks and pitting are apparent in many surfaces, but some parts of the base (especially critical machinery) remain in almost-new condition. Doorway sizes and corridor widths suggest the builders were roughly human-sized or a little smaller. There is no sign of the builders now.

The inside of the cube-shaped structure atop Ziggurat Alpha is a dark, empty space about four metres across. Most of this room has no floor. The space in front of the door, a roughly semi-circular area with a 2m radius, has a floor which is scraped on the edges as if heavy objects were manhandled over the edge. Travellers familiar with gravitic technology (everyone, more than likely) will realise that a gravitic lift used to operate in this shaft.

Dropping something (or someone, which would be unfortunate) down the shaft indicates it is over 10 m deep (actually, it is around 16 m deep). The lift floorplate is jammed at an awkward angle 16 m down. The shaft looks like it may go deeper; it is not possible to say for sure.

There are two openings in the shaft wall, one 12 m down and one 16 m down. Both lead in the direction of the other ziggurat, and both seem to have corridors running from them. There are no markings or other safety warnings, and no lights are functioning in this area; it would be entirely possible to walk straight off the edge and fall down the lift shaft. The lower entrance is blocked by the twisted lift floorplate. It does not seem possible for a human to get through the small gap remaining.

The only obvious feature is what appears to be a humanoid lying face down on the edge of the higher corridor. Its feet are towards the lift shaft.

It may be possible to climb down to the corridor entrances using irregularities in the walls. If the Travellers are well-equipped (i.e. they brought their packs and equipment with them from the G/Carrier) they may have climbing line available which will make the traverse much easier and safer. The climbing line can be fastened to the outer wall of the ziggurat using anchoring plates treated with molecular glue. These are included in the kit, but there only a few so the Travellers should use them wisely.

A Traveller can climb down to the ledge in about five minutes with a successful Athletics (dexterity) check. Failure means the Traveller slips and must make another attempt; a second failure means the Traveller falls to the bottom of the shaft unless secured by a line. Once a line is secured at both ends, even unskilled Travellers can be conveyed safely to the corridor below unless something goes badly wrong. This might be slow going, but should not present an undue hazard.

If the Eseray infantry have made their appearance, it is obvious to the Travellers that they cannot stay in the entry chamber. Climbing down to either corridor entrance would be very difficult if someone were defending it; it might be possible to make a stand there, or push through the corridors and find another way out. The Eseray will not try to enter the ziggurat immediately. They will mill around the entrance to Ziggurat Alpha, and some will go to Ziggurat Beta. There, they simply wait for a while before moving back to Alpha.

The reason for this behaviour is not obvious at the time, but the Travellers may eventually figure out the Eseray lack initiative or much in the way of intelligence, and are waiting for the second ziggurat door to open. Why it does not will become apparent later.

### Referee's Note:

Progress through the adventure requires the Travellers get down to the ledge and enter the base. Situations like this must be handled carefully – on one hand it should be a challenge and, on the other, the referee does not want the adventure to stall because the Travellers lacked a necessary skill or chose not to make what appeared to be a hazardous attempt. The climb is not really very risky if a line has been deployed, but Eseray entering the chamber will cause problems. The Travellers may need to repel or discourage them with weapons fire from the corridor below as the last of their party makes the transit.

## THE BASE

The ziggurats and plaza were built around 75,000 years ago by some highly advanced race. The Oracle on Tinath is of a similar age and might be connected with the same intelligent species, but it is not clear who these people were or what happened to them. The structure was a planetary defence base housing a powerful gravitic weapon.

The base was powered by a planetary core tap, very sophisticated and advanced technology beyond the capability of any sophonts or cultures of which the Travellers are aware. They will be able to determine that its function was, at least in part, defensive though it is not obvious whether the gravitic weapon was there to protect the base itself or the base was placed on Tinath to defend something else. It is, however, obvious the Eseray are interested in it and do not yet know its secrets.

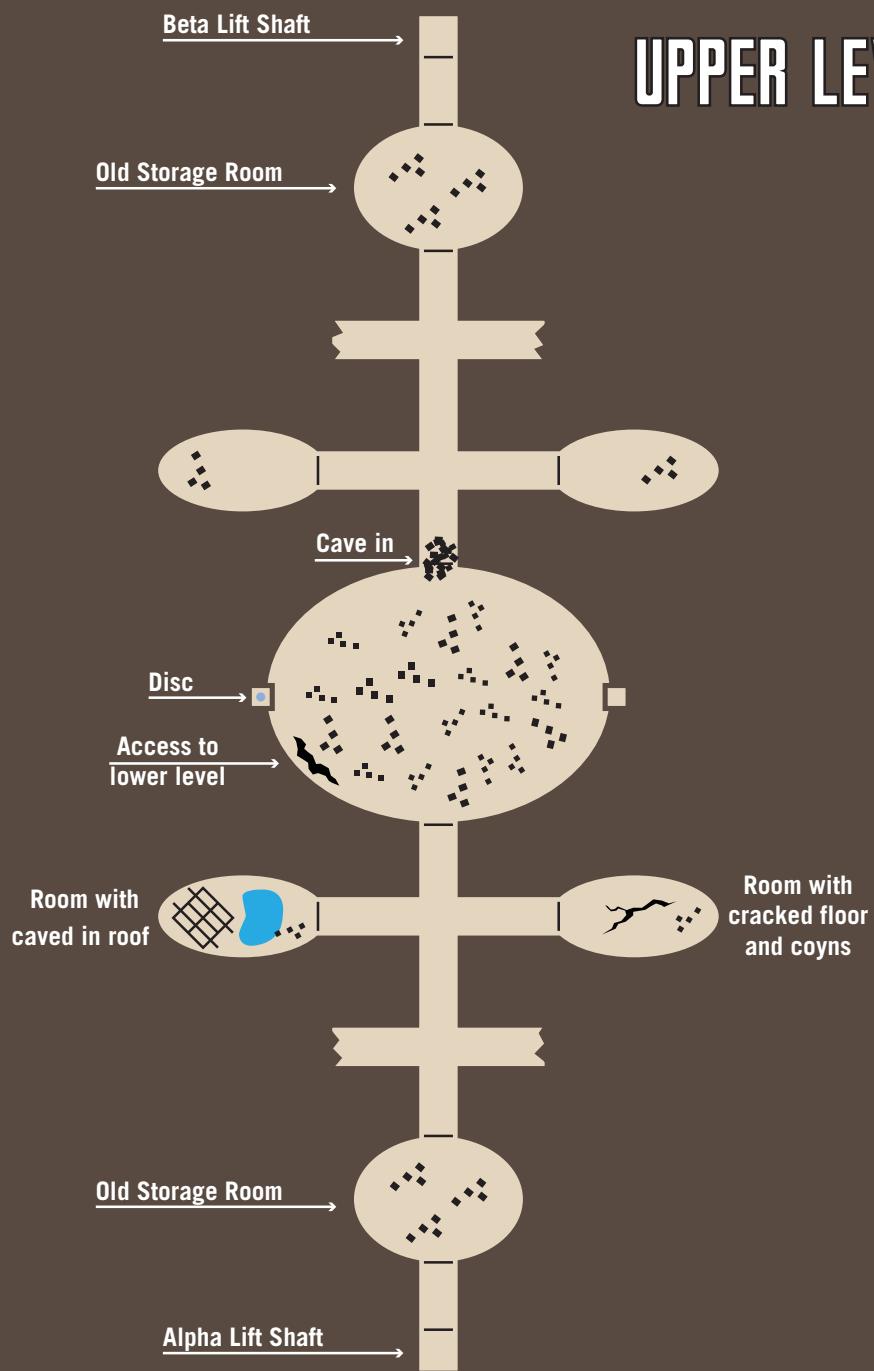
The lower part of the base is inaccessible and plays no part in the adventure, though it is possible the Eseray might gain access to it sooner or later. The lower levels house the power system, including shafts running down through Tinath's crust towards the planetary core, and the weapon mechanism itself.

The weapon induces a powerful localised gravity field, similar to a vehicle's drive plates or starship's manoeuvre drive. It is powerful enough to rip a vehicle apart, and at full power could devastate large warships. Similarly, a fully functional version of this weapon could hit targets in orbit; at present it has a range measured in tens of kilometres.

The base was abandoned in the distant past, and stripped of most portable items. It is not obvious why the Artefact Module (see Central Chamber, below) was left behind, though this may have been connected with a planned reactivation. Travellers may choose to speculate about what happened to the builders, but at the present time there is no information for them to work from.



## UPPER LEVEL



## THE UPPER LEVEL

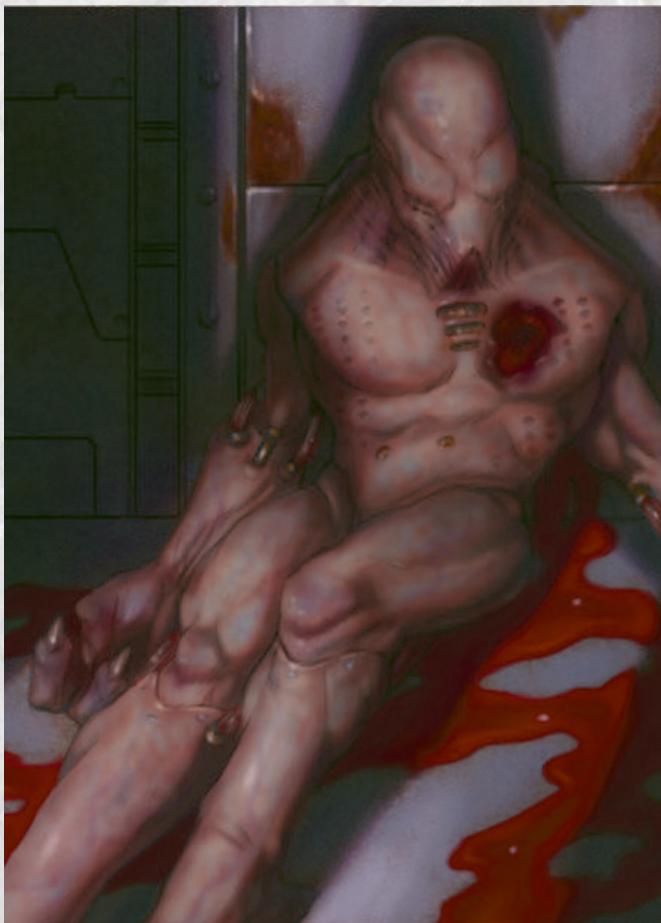
The upper level of the base is in total darkness, and entirely abandoned. The gravitic lift unit is unpowered and heavily damaged; it cannot be moved and it is impossible to enter the lower corridor this way. Thus, the Travellers must traverse the upper chambers.

The layout of the two levels is identical. A corridor runs directly from one lift shaft to the other, with chambers opening off it. At each end is a large, oval space once used for storage. There are then two much smaller oval chambers off each side of the corridor, connected to it by a short passage. A large central (also oval) chamber lies at the midpoint of the corridor. The layout is identical on the lower floor, and mirrored on both sides of the central chamber, though this part is no longer accessible due to a cave-in.

### The Corridor

The corridor is straight with no doors, making it possible to walk right off the edge into the lift shaft. It is unlit, requiring the Travellers to use their own light sources or rely on the tiny amount of light coming down the shaft from the doorway, if they left it open.

The body at the corridor entrance is that of an Esseray (Troxbolg) infantry soldier wearing simple coveralls.



He still has his weapon, a battle rifle, and three spare magazines which are fully loaded. His other equipment is minimal; just a water bottle and a couple of ration bars in a pouch. They are, if anything, even less edible than the human equivalent.

If the Travellers choose to make a close examination of the body, characters with Science or Medic skills may be able to learn a little about the Troxbolg. General physical characteristics are obvious, though the nature of features like the echolocation organs on the Troxbolg's head will not be obvious to unskilled Travellers.

The following facts may be discerned.

- The being appears to be humanoid, but lacks reproductive organs.
- It is powerfully built and probably stronger than a human.
- Its skin has an unnatural appearance caused by a dermal weave, using fibres to create armour.

A successful skill check when examining the Esseray reveals it is more like a synthetic animal than a natural creature, suggesting it might be a cloned soldier or worker. It appears to have simply... died. There is no sign of trauma or damage to the body. In fact that is exactly what has happened. This Troxbolg infantry soldier found its way into this part of the complex and could not get back out. So it waited. Eventually, it died.

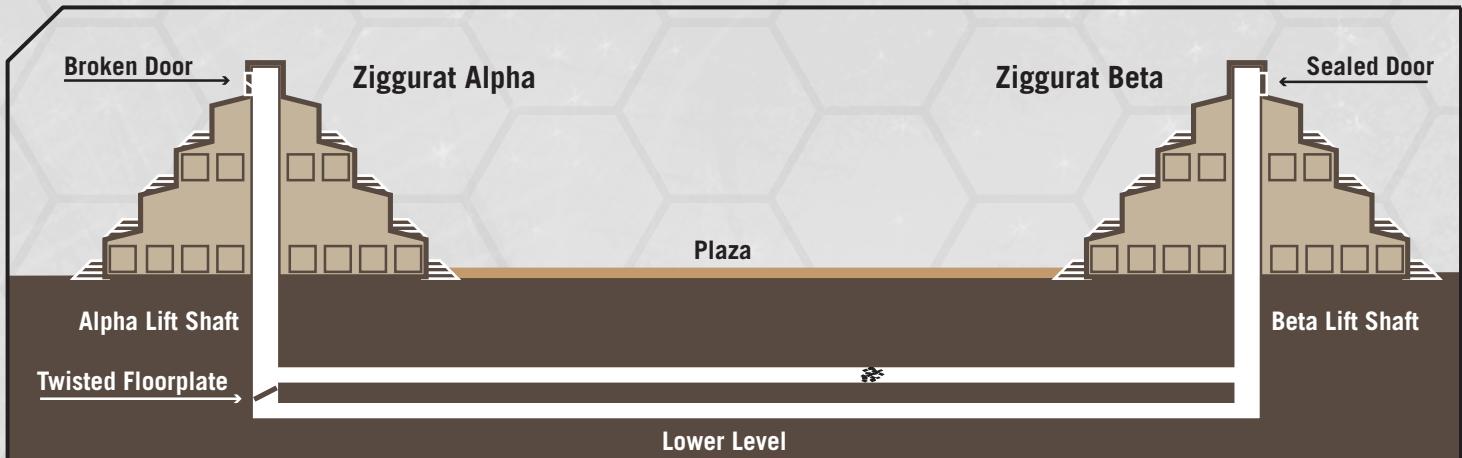
### The First Oval Chamber

A few metres from the lift shaft, the corridor opens out into a large oval chamber with a gently domed roof. It is unlit, and there are no signs of any means to light it though there are concealed ducts for air circulation. Examination of the entrances indicates there are heavy curved shutters that can slide down and cover them. These normally lie flush with the ceiling and are hard to spot.

The floor is covered with piles of coarse, slightly sticky dust and fragments of some kind of polymer. Travellers with Science skills may be able to figure out these were once crates or pallets, whose materials have decayed over a very long time. A successful Science (chemistry) skill check suggests a time frame in the thousands of years.

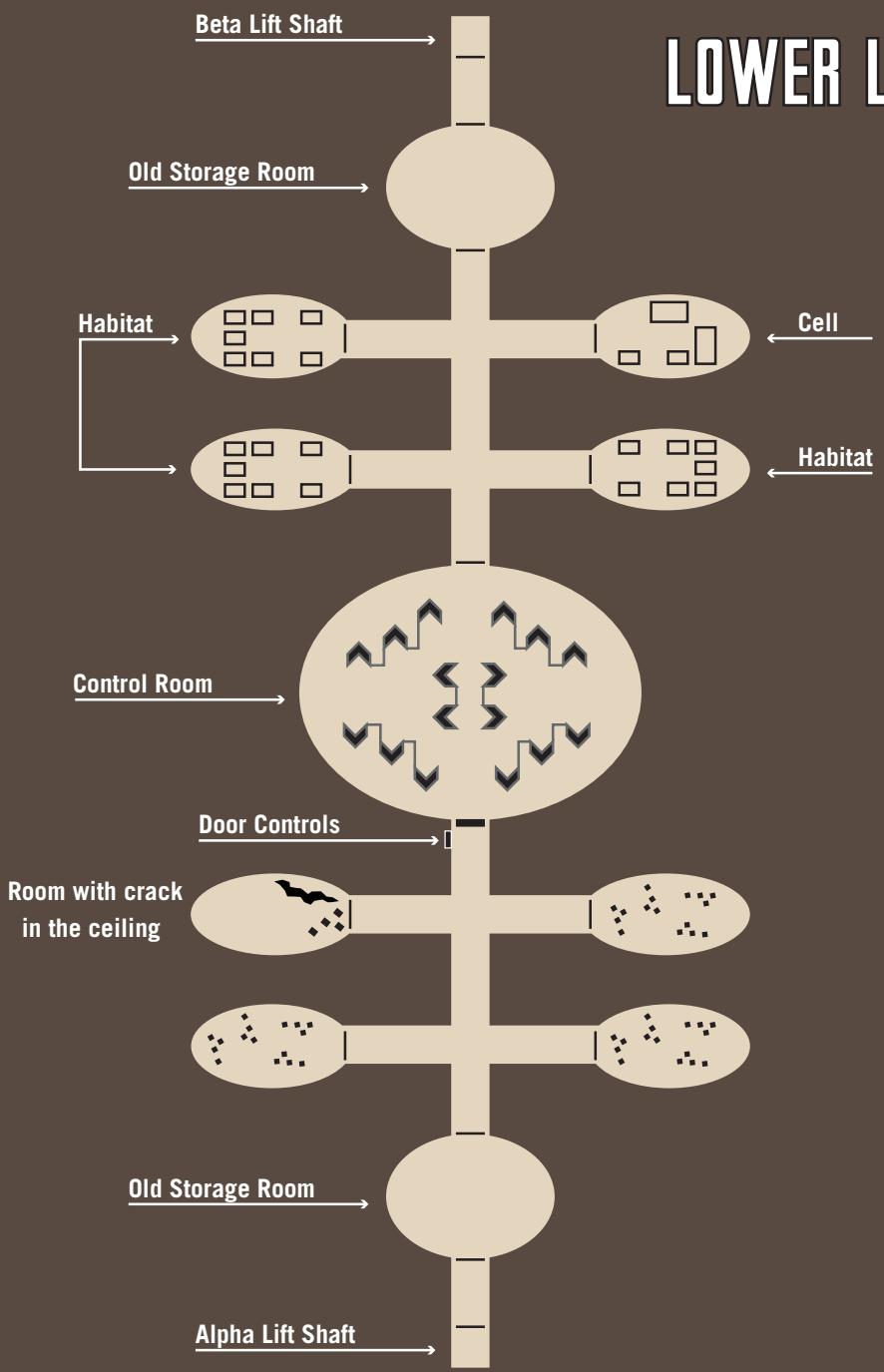
### The Four Small Oval Chambers

From the former storage area, the corridor leads dead straight ahead, with an opening on each side a short way along. These lead into the bedrock and simply stop, though there is another opening on each side at the end. These each lead into dark, oval chambers about 8m on the long axis. They have ducting in the ceiling for ventilation but there is no heating, lighting or air movement.



Lower Level

## LOWER LEVEL



There is no sign of whatever furnishings these rooms had in the past. One of the chambers has a partially caved-in roof, with roots growing down and water dripping to make a small pool in the middle of the floor. The air is damp and cold. Another chamber has a deep crack in the floor about a metre wide and three metres long. Shining a light in here reveals several round metallic objects, like discs or coins, which can be laboriously fished out. There are a total of 22 of them, each with a different symbol on one side and a stylised flame on the other. The metal is a complex lightweight alloy, gold in colour, and entirely untarnished.

### Referee's Note

In the Third Imperium universe (which Tinath is in, though many, many light years away from the big empires), these discs are associated with the sentient race known as Droyne, and are usually referred to as coyns. There is no way for the Travellers to know this at the present time, but finding coyns in an ancient installation might foreshadow future adventures.

### The Central Chamber

Further along the corridor is a large oval chamber with a vaulted ceiling with the same ducts and shutters as the storage chamber. The floor is strewn with rubble and debris, making footing difficult and creating a multitude of trip hazards. Another dark corridor seems to run out the other side, but is blocked after a few metres by a caved-in roof.

There are no furnishings or fittings in the chamber, but Travellers who play a light on the walls may realise they are patterned in a way that puts them in mind of an inscription. Travellers who have encountered an unknown language before (as noted in the summaries of the pre-generated Travellers) will recognise the shape of the lettering and conclude this is the same language. It is not possible to read the inscriptions unless the Travellers is noted as having previously studied the language and puzzled part of it out. If so, they are able to make out fragmentary references and ideograms that relate to 'energy', 'gravity' and 'safety' or 'security'. The majority of the text is incomprehensible.

There is a niche in the wall at each end, located at the points of the oval. One is empty but the other contains a ceramic-like sphere, about six centimetres in diameter. This device is hereafter referred to as the Artefact Module. It glows with a faint blue light when the Travellers approach. If picked up, it will absorb heat energy to charge itself. It has internal lifters, and after a few minutes of charging will be able to hover or move at a walking speed. While doing so, it emits a complex set of clicks, tones, thrums, and tweets. It is responsive to speech, and after a short time learns to repeat sounds spoken to it. It is a fast learner, and soon will start

learning the Travellers' speech. It will attach itself to the Traveller spending the most time with it.

The Artefact Module is described on page 103.

Travellers spending more than a couple of minutes exploring this room will quickly realise progress out of the other side is impossible, but the rubble on the floor conceals a section that has collapsed, leading to a deep crack. It might be possible to wriggle down through this and pass packs and weapons down, perhaps gaining access to the lower level.

It is indeed possible to do so, though it is a tight fit at times. The crack runs diagonally down and comes out in one of the chambers below the caved-in one on the floor above.

## THE LOWER LEVEL

The lower level is not the lowest in the base; there are others below but they are not accessible at this time. It is laid out like the one above; a central vaulted oval chamber with a corridor running out of each end to the gravitic lift shafts coming down from the ziggurats above. Four smaller oval chambers open off each of these corridors, two each side. The corridor leading to the shaft coming down from Ziggurat Alpha is blocked at the end by the jammed lift.

The Travellers enter the lower level through a crack in the wall of the small oval chamber nearest the jammed lift. This chamber has partially caved in but the corridor outside is accessible. There is rubble on the floor but the walls glow faintly, as they do throughout the whole level. Any furnishings in this chamber were long ago removed.

The other three chambers are similarly empty, though less rubble-strewn. Travellers with a knowledge of planetary or physical sciences may be able to figure out that the cave-in and jammed lift are connected – intense gravitic forces may have resulted from a malfunctioning or overloaded lift and damaged the structure of the base. These forces could not have brought down the G/Carrier, though the effect is similar.

### The Central Chamber

The central oval chamber has its heavy shutters in place. These are made from some highly resilient alloy and resistant to all weapons the Travellers are likely to have with them. However, a stud on the wall beside the door controls them. It is possible to deactivate the external door controls, but the Esseray in the central chamber do not know how.

When the wall stud is depressed, the shutter slides up into its roof recess, silently and quickly. This chamber is softly lit by glowing walls, and filled with complex

looking consoles of some kind as well as oddly-shaped objects that might be ornamentation, instruments or something else entirely. In front of one of the consoles there is a human who is standing awkwardly and moving with obvious pain. It looks like this person might be one of the missing researchers.

Guarding the captive are several Esseray (all are Troxbolg; equipped as a mix of Infantry and Guards, as detailed on page 30). They are unaware of the Travellers' presence in the base and may not immediately notice the opening door. However, they will attack as soon as they become aware of the Travellers. These are typical Esseray infantry and not very skilled or imaginative so it should be possible to overcome them. However, one of the Esseray will gun down the already wounded human as soon as any casualties are taken.

The referee should run a sharp fight with a force of opponents suited to the Travellers' armament and numbers. The Esseray are inefficient fighters who will get in one another's way. For example, one might charge to attack with melee weapons blocking the line of fire of three others... who are more than likely to shoot anyway. The fight should be chaotic and scary, not least for the sheer inhumanity of the opposition.

About half the Troxbolg in the chamber are Unaugmented and armed only with their natural weapons. The others are Augmented; roughly half-and-half equipped as Guards and Infantry.

Assuming the Travellers manage to neutralise the Esseray guards, the human captive can be rescued. Unfortunately his wounds are mortal, and he knows it. He is grateful for any attempts to make him more comfortable, but desperate to pass on what he knows. At the end, he is just glad to be free and among fellow humans rather than brutal aliens.

### The Last Minutes of Aldred Giles

The captive is named Aldred Giles, and is indeed one of the missing researchers. He can tell the Travellers that his team got into the ziggurat using the lift in Ziggurat Beta, but were ambushed by a force of Esseray whilst collecting equipment from outside. Those outside were killed or captured, though one of the scientists made a break for it in the research team's grav vehicle. Giles thinks she crashlanded some distance off. She was wounded but might still be alive.

Giles thinks the rest of the research team were taken away somewhere, whilst he was forced to try to figure out the base's function. He disabled the lift in Ziggurat Beta (not deliberately) and activated other systems, including the lights.

Aldred Giles



Giles has been a prisoner in the base for some days; he is not sure how long. He made an attempt to escape and was roughly handled as a result. He was unconscious for a time after that. When he recovered, the Esseray dragged him to the consoles again and he started fiddling with them. It was at this time that ... something happened... and the glowing walls went dark for a minute or two. This was the gravitic weapon firing, though Giles does not know that.

Giles can warn the Travellers of the Esseray reinforcements (if they have not already encountered them) and show the Travellers how to pull up a map on the consoles. This reveals the Esseray have set up a perimeter and seem to be searching the nearby forest. It also shows a downed grav vehicle a couple of kilometres away; the Esseray do not seem to have found it yet. It looks more or less intact.

Giles grows rapidly weaker as he passes on his information, but makes sure the Travellers understand what he has figured out about the Esseray. They are biological robots, he says, and virtually mindless. That means there must be some guiding intellect somewhere. That intellect will be interested in the base and will no doubt send a force to storm it sooner or later. The downed grav vehicle might offer an escape, and Giles theorises the gravitic weapon will not activate if it stays very low. He also shows the Travellers how to reactivate the lift in Ziggurat Beta. The door will open automatically when the Travellers reach the surface, Giles thinks.

### The Consoles

This was the main control area for the base. Its consoles would normally provide alerts about doors being opened

and closed in the installation, as well as the current output of the power plant. However, the system has become unreliable after so many years, and failed to warn the Esseray about the Travellers.

Travellers messing about with the consoles cannot get the gravitic weapon to fire, though they call up tantalising fragments of a base floor plan. It would appear there are other levels below this one with a power plant, some kind of huge machine (the gravitic weapon) and what might be living quarters. The lift from Ziggurat Alpha is depicted with a symbol that perhaps suggests it is disabled, and there are other symbols throughout the floor plan whose significance cannot be discerned.

## The Other Chambers

The Esseray escorting Giles set up the four small oval chambers between the main control room and the working lift as makeshift living quarters. These are extremely rudimentary; indeed, the room used as a cell for Giles is more comfortable than those used by the Esseray. Beyond this is the lift shaft leading up to Ziggurat Beta. The lift is in place, and will take the Travellers to the top of the shaft level. It will not go down any lower, nor will it stop at the out-of-commission top level. The outer door of the ziggurat opens automatically when the lift arrives.

Peering out, the Travellers can see there are numerous Esseray infantry around the plaza and perimeter of the forest, and quite a few clustered around the entrance to Ziggurat Alpha. There are only a couple near Beta, however. This may be a chance to make a break for it.

## GETTING OUT

The best option is to slip out and make a dash for the forest, moving fast to minimise the time the Travellers are exposed to enemy fire. The Esseray will react in a confused but violent manner; it should be possible to push through them and enter the forest, but equally obvious is that trying to get out on foot is a losing proposition.

The climax of the adventure is a running fight through the forest, with Esseray infantry leaping out in front of the Travellers while others spray bullets wildly among the trees. The Travellers are running just ahead of many Esseray.

They will eventually come across a civilian model of their G/Carrier, unarmoured and configured for transporting a mix of personnel and equipment. It is not armed and has no firing ports, but windows can be opened if the Travellers want to shoot out. The pilot's seat is occupied by the corpse of a young woman, who apparently managed to ground the vehicle before succumbing to gunshot wounds.

The grav vehicle can be flown easily enough, and will not be fired upon by the gravitic weapon if it stays low for the first few kilometres. It will follow a preprogrammed course back to Serson and the starport unless the Travellers alter its controls. It is a lot slower than the G/Carrier however, and takes nearly two days to make the trip. Long before they get there, the Travellers are intercepted by a rescue force flying a military G/Carrier and escorted back to base.

Baroness Edda will be gravely concerned by this turn of events, and conveys her worries to the government. Whilst the Travellers have been away, the war has started to go very badly for humanity, and there is nothing that can be done immediately about the alien base on Valeive. With the city-states' army in disarray on the continent of Sositenya, the immediate problem is preventing a total collapse and perhaps losing the war in the next few days.

The Baroness is very concerned about research team members who are still missing. Esseray shuttles have been tracked moving to and from their installation on Tinath's larger moon, Rigash. It is possible the team were taken there, along with other human prisoners. The resources for an assault cannot be spared, but a resourceful team could perhaps infiltrate the installation and break the prisoners out.

This leads to the next adventure: *Captive Audience*.



# CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

The search for the missing research team did not go as planned, though the Travellers have learned a lot about the Esseray. Indications are that the Esseray facility on Tinath's moon Rigash may be some kind of prison complex and, if so, Baroness Edda's people might be there. Even if they are not, infiltrating the complex offers a chance to find out more about the Esseray and their plans.

The Travellers' ship is still out of commission. Work has only just started and the drive will be in bits for days or even weeks. However, any standard spacecraft can make the trip to Rigash. The Esseray installation there is known to fire upon any craft approaching, but it may be possible for a small vessel to slip in undetected and land some distance from the facility. If so, the Travellers may be able to proceed on foot (in vacc suits, of course) and find a way to enter the facility. After that, they will have to figure out how to get the prisoners out (if there are actually any there) and return to their craft.

A standard ship's boat (see page 68 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and worlds*) is made available to the Travellers, along with vacc suits (TL8 versions that provide +4 Protection) and weapons similar to those issued in the first adventure. These weapons will function perfectly well in vacuum; high-tech small arms are generally designed with space operations in mind. The ship's boat is armed with a beam laser, but it is not remotely a 'stealth ship'. The Travellers will thus need to approach from the far side of Rigash and fly low to avoid detection.

The ship's boat is capable of 5G acceleration, and would normally take no more than an hour to reach Rigash. However, the necessity to head out into space then come in screened by the moon's bulk greatly extends this time. It will be about four hours before the craft begins its approach to Rigash.

## RIGASH AND THE ESSERAY

Rigash is an irregularly shaped lump of rock, of no great interest to most spacefarers. The Esseray have built a small installation there, which serves two

purposes. It is used to contain prisoners, many of whom have been captured over the long period of escalating tension with the human population, and also has a small landing area where a force of combat craft are being assembled in secret.

These combat craft are robotic fighters intended to gain orbital superiority over the human defenders when the time comes for a final push. They require little support beyond munitions and refuelling. Security is provided by robotic patrol drones and a small force of infantry equipped with vacc suits.

The patrol drones (see page 34) orbit Rigash in a variable but fairly predictable pattern. They are 'dumb' sensor platforms carrying out routine and predictable surveillance of the surface. Their movements can be anticipated and evaded during the mission. The drones can be encountered by the Travellers while they are on the surface of Rigash, and also when they approach or leave the moon in their ship's boat.

## APPROACHING RIGASH

Approaching Rigash without being detected requires the ship's boat pilot to set up a coasting flight path which will minimise the craft's electromagnetic emissions, then use the drive as little as possible when landing. The landing site needs to be somewhere the craft can be concealed, and ideally it can be landed directly into such a position of concealment rather than being moved using its drive which risks detection.

It may be possible for a good pilot to do all this on the fly, but the Travellers can make things easier for themselves by setting up a task chain (see page 60 of *Book 1: Characters and Combat*), where the previous task's level of success or failure contributes a DM to the next. The relevant tasks are:

*Planning a 'Silent' Approach:* Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check (1D minutes, INT). This task may be skipped. If it is attempted, the Effect will generate a DM

to the next task in the chain as per page 60 of *Book 1: Characters and Combat*.

**Tuning the Drives to Operate at a Lower Power:** Difficult (10+) Engineer (m-drive) check (1D hours, EDU). The Effect of this task will generate a DM for the next task in the chain.

After the approach is planned, the pilot plots the course and sets up a ‘silent’ coasting approach which does not use the craft’s drives.

**Making a Silent Approach:** Difficult (10+) Pilot (small craft) check (DEX). If the above task chain was attempted, the DM generated by its outcome is applied to this task.

Failure on this task indicates a patrol drones detects the ship and engages it in combat. It is necessary to destroy this drone in order to break contact, otherwise more will be called in. Once the craft is out of sight of the drones, a landing can be attempted.

If the Travellers evade detection, there is no alert. If they were spotted, patrols are sent out to look for intruders and additional drones are launched to provide sensor coverage.

## HIKING ON RIGASH

Hiking across the rocky wastes of Rigash is a dangerous affair. Surface gravity is very low, which can cause Travellers to bounce across the landscape for long distances. Even simple movements are tricky. Vacc suits are bulky, the ground is treacherous, and there are concealed volatile ices. Travellers with the Vacc Suit skill will have a good idea how hazardous the coming walk is likely to be, especially in a region patrolled by the enemy.

The referee should take the opportunity to set the scene, which is breathtaking in its harsh beauty. The jagged rocks and craters of Rigash’s surface are lit by pitiless sunlight or plunged into darkness. The stars overhead are bright and too many to count, and it is possible to see tiny points of light that are starships and spacecraft in orbit around Tinath. Details like these can make the game come alive for the Travellers, and should not be neglected in favour of game mechanics.

Travellers who have at least Vacc Suit 0 and take their time will not suffer mishaps when moving on the surface of Rigash, but those who want to rush around or engage in combat may run into trouble. To negotiate dangerous

terrain in a vacc suit requires a skill check at a difficulty level depending on the degree of hazard. Flat terrain with few obstructions might be considered Routine (6+) whilst the typical rocky terrain of Rigash would be Average (8+). A particularly hazardous area might be Difficult (10+) or harder.

If a Traveller fails a skill check whilst moving hastily, he falls or smashes himself into a jagged rock. This may cause a small suit leak requiring a Vacc Suit check (from the Traveller or someone else) to patch it. This can be attempted each round; the Traveller suffers D3 damage, ignoring armour, each round until his suit stops leaking.

Hasty movement might be necessitated by the approach of drones or a patrol. However, it is possible to predict the movements of the drones and get under cover long before one appears overhead.

When moving on the surface or in space near Rigash, Travellers can anticipate the position of a patrol drone by making a successful Recon check. If they have the Artefact Module with them and make use of its capabilities, DM+2 applies to this attempt.

The march to the prison complex will take around four hours. It is not possible to land any closer without alerting the base. As noted above, most of the time the Travellers can proceed without undue hazard, and even the unskilled among them can be helped along without being placed in much danger. However, the approach is not all plain sailing.

There is a constant danger of detection by patrol drones, though this risk can be managed by careful Travellers. Every hour, the referee should throw 2D. On a roll of 10+, a drone passes overhead. The chance of a drone pass increases if the Travellers were detected on their way in to land on Rigash; if so, throw 8+ for a drone pass to occur.

Drone passes can be predicted as noted above, and if so the Travellers can ensure they are not sighted without needing to make a skill check. If they fail to anticipate the approach of a drone, Travellers on the surface may be able to quickly hide by making an opposed Stealth check with the drone, though the drone may still pick up something anomalous and make an investigative pass.

If the Travellers successfully hide, the drone cannot positively identify them as intruders. It will conduct a short inspection of the area then return to its patrol route. If the Travellers fail to conceal themselves, they will be spotted. The drone will raise the alarm and attack.

If the Travellers are identified by a drone, an alarm is raised, and the Travellers will be attacked. Each carries a single weapon: a laser that can be used for anti-shipping or antipersonnel combat (see page 34).

If the alert has been raised, patrols will be sent out to search for the intruders. These consist of Augmented Troxbolg (see page 66) equipped with vacc suits and battle rifles. There are typically two to four Troxbolg in a patrol, and they tend to stay close together when searching, but are very dumb and sometimes become scattered.

Gunshots make no sound in vacuum, so the only way a patrol can alert others is by radio and if none of the patrol members gets a call off there will be no further response. Occasionally an entire patrol can get themselves killed in an accident, so a patrol that simply goes missing will not result in heightened alert, although another will be sent to find it. The typical Esseray is unable to reason that an entire patrol would not normally all fall into a crevasse or suffer some other mishap; without a report of combat, the assumption is that nothing more than an accident has occurred.

This is an indicator of the typical Esseray thought process, such as it is. One individual could meet with an accident and fail to get a distress call off. A reasonably smart person would realise how unlikely it is for a whole patrol to meet such a fate, but the average Augmented Troxbolg simply cannot make this simple logical progression. If something could happen to one individual, then it is plausible it could have happened to every member of a patrol. Esseray below the level of Leader are not able to consider the implications of even basic concepts such as ‘the patrol as a group’.

Of course, the Travellers may not yet know enough about Esseray behaviour and intellect to realise this, and will probably assume that contact with one patrol will automatically alert others. Obviously, if a patrol goes silent and then its bodies are found, even the Esseray can figure out what has happened.

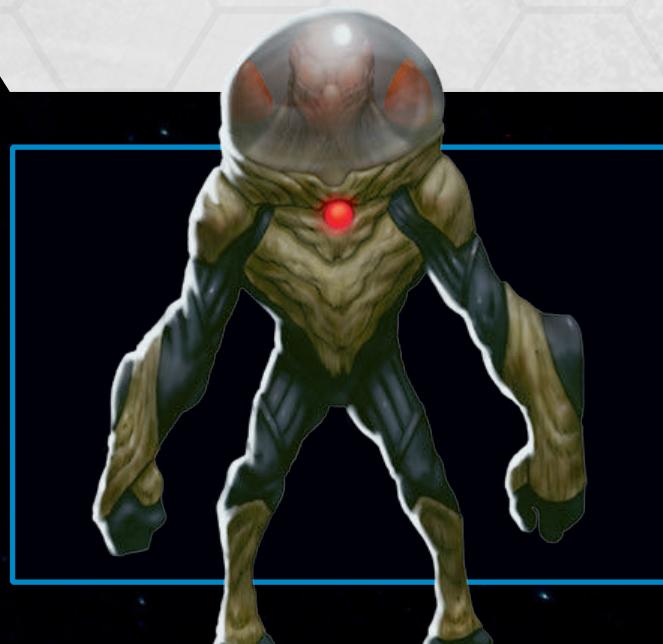
If the alarm has been raised, patrols will be ranging quite far from the complex, resulting in the possibility of an encounter in the last two hours of the march. Each hour, the referee should throw 2D; on a roll of 9+ there is a patrol in the area. This can be evaded if detected early enough, requiring Recon checks.

Even if the alert has not been raised, patrols are maintained close to the prison complex. Coverage is such that the Travellers will have to slip past or eliminate at least one group of vacc-suited infantry. Hiding or sneaking past requires a Stealth check, using END or INT. Using END means the Traveller blends with the terrain features as well as possible (for example, crouching in a dark shadow while the patrol passes), remaining perfectly still. Using INT may mean the Traveller exploits the sensory limitations of the patrolling Esseray. Note that Troxbolg cannot use their Echolocation trait while in a vacc suit, but it combines with their natural Armour trait to provide a total of +11 Protection.

In addition to these hazards, moving around on the surface of Rigash has its own dangers. The Travellers might fall foul of a group of Scavenger Nets, as described on page 19. Alternatively, they might witness an unlucky Esseray infantry soldier blundering around with a net over his suit, finally collapsing when he falls over an obstruction. This is not necessarily a combat encounter but can be used to add detail and vibrancy (in this case, of a fairly unpleasant sort) to the setting.

## VACC-SUITED TROXBOLG INFANTRY

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Vacc-Suited Troxbolg Infantry	15	8 m
SKILLS	Gun Combat 0, Melee 0	
ATTACKS	Battle Rifle (3D+1), Bone Spike (2D+2), Troxbolg Bone Ridge (2D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+1)	
ARMOUR	Vacc Suit (+10)	



Rigash also holds other hazards. It has unstable pockets of methane and chlorine gas in some areas, and the surface is unstable in others. It will be necessary for the Travellers to carefully pick their way past these points, which can be detected by an alert Traveller making a Vacc Suit, Recon or Survival check.

If the Travellers fail to spot a dangerous area, they may find the ground crumbling under them, or be suddenly surrounded by jets of escaping gas that fling small debris around. The latter causes 1D damage and is not very serious in and of itself, but Travellers will need to make a Vacc Suit check to avoid falling with the same results as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Travellers who find they are on unstable ground can scramble to safety with a Vacc Suit check (again, there is a chance of falling and tearing the suit). Those who fail will tumble into a crevasse. The fall is just a few metres in very low gravity, and does only 1D damage, but getting back out may pose problems. Other Travellers might be able to fix a line to climb out, or one of the Travellers might make a risky low-gravity jump to the crevasse edge.

A crevasse-related incident might be more of an opportunity for some problem-solving than a serious danger to the Travellers. This is no bad thing – a variety of problems requiring some thought is far more interesting than a direct march from one skill check to the next, by way of yet another gun battle. That said, Travellers who fall into a crevasse might find they are not alone. A group of wounded Esseray infantry stuck in the same hole as the Travellers might result in an interesting experience.

## APPROACHING THE PRISON

Finally, the Travellers sight the prison complex ahead. There is very little to it, at least above ground. The complex takes the form of a set of wheel-shaped structures, set one below the other, with only the top level above ground. At the centre of the wheel is a recessed hangar covered by large doors. Occasionally, the doors open and a drone enters or leaves. There seems to be a personnel accessway every 90° around the wheel, consisting of stairs up to the roof of the base and hatches down into the top level.

Before they can approach the prison complex, the Travellers notice something else. In an ancient impact crater close to the prison complex can be seen rows

of small craft. Some low structures have been built in the crater, which is to all intents and purposes now a landing field.

A fairly cursory investigation of the landing field reveals that many of the craft seem to be Esseray Interceptors, suitable for combat in space or entering atmosphere to establish air superiority. Others are light, fast transports suitable for an assault landing on a defended target.

Many of the craft seem to be in an unfinished state, but there are numerous completed vessels lined up in neat rows. Bunkers nearby perhaps hold ordnance that could be used for ground attack. Conduits run to a distant structure at the edge of the crater; presumably this is the control building of some kind.

There seem to be no guards around most of the time, though occasionally a patrol moves in or out of the control building. The interceptors and transports, like most Esseray craft, are robotic and do not require a crew. Concealed on Rigash, they are assumed to be safe and are not well guarded – after all, the only humans who know about them are incarcerated in the prison.

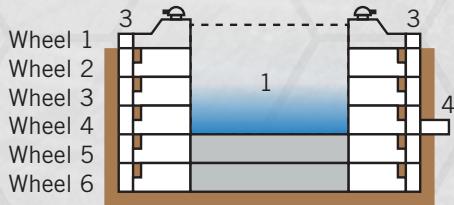
The interceptors and transports represent a significant force in the battle for Tinath, though obviously the Esseray are not ready to commit them to action just yet. The landing field is covered by the same weapons that defend the prison complex against spaceborne attack; a pre-emptive strike by human craft might eliminate many of these craft but would be costly. There may be other options, however.

A significant proportion of the craft could be taken out by moving warheads from the munitions dump to strategic points and setting up an improvised initiating charge using some of the ordnance. Charges in the munitions bays will also create large sympathetic explosions. With no atmosphere to carry a blast effect, the amount of damage that can be done will be limited, but it should be possible to smash up many of the craft and damage others with secondary projectiles such as rock fragments or wreckage. Power and fuel feeds might also be disrupted.

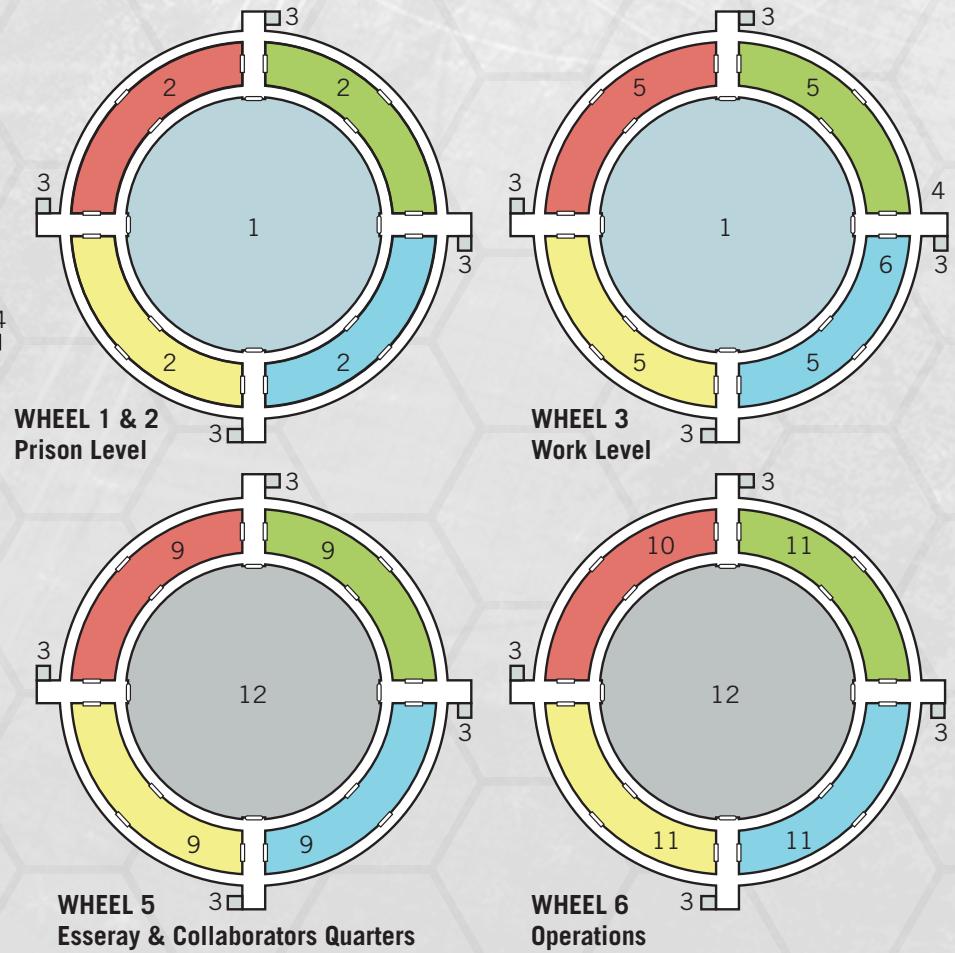
Obviously, blowing up the craft before entering the prison complex will alert even the dumbest Esseray to the fact that something is going on. However, the Travellers might do it anyway, or perhaps they will rig up some explosives for later detonation either as a distraction or to prevent the interceptors interfering with their escape. It might even be possible to hijack an Esseray transport (if they do this, use the pinnace on



1. Hangar
2. Prisoners housing blocks
3. Stairwells
4. Access to landing field
5. Workshops
6. Infirmary
7. Supplies stores
8. Food processors and tanks
9. Esseray living quarters
10. Command center
11. Nutrients tanks
12. Facility's power and life support systems



## Esseray Prison Complex



page 66 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and Worlds*), doing away with the need to walk back to the hidden ship's boat.

If the Travellers decide to sabotage the small craft, now or later, the referee should use the following section which covers most eventualities. This may not be until after the prison has been entered, or may not occur at all, but few *Traveller* adventures are totally linear. Most Travellers will, at some point, find a way to do everything in the wrong order and make it unnecessarily hard for themselves. The referee's task is to adjudicate Traveller actions as they occur rather than trying to force them to follow a scripted outline.

## Sabotaging the Craft

It is not possible to place explosives to destroy all the craft on the landing field, but a significant proportion can be disabled using munitions from the bunker. This is quite heavy work, requiring warheads to be humped about the landing field, and will take some time. Travellers with the Explosives skill can rig up a suitable set of charges, though a detonator will be more of a problem. A very simple solution would be to use a manual system – two wires and a battery would make a workable switch – but this will require someone to set off each charge in turn, and to be rather close when they go off. A radio detonator is a better prospect. One can be improvised out of a vacc suit communicator by a Traveller making a successful Electronics (comms) check, but this does leave someone unable to talk to his peers.

Unless the base is on high alert, the landing field is not subject to much security other than the usual drone passes. Indeed, if the Travellers have managed to get this far without raising an alarm, they will be completely ignored by the Esseray at the base. A clue to why might lie in the human-sized footprints through the dust to the command building. Prisoners are sometimes used to transport items to the landing field, so humans near the craft will not necessarily raise an alarm.

If the base is on alert there will be patrols of Esseray guards moving in and out of the command building. These are not frequent, and can be evaded like all other patrols. Even if the Travellers are detected, the Esseray at the base are not smart enough to realise what they are doing and will ignore any explosives in place. They will, however, try to kill or capture the Travellers.

The control building is a two-level bunker, with control rooms on the upper floor. The lower level houses tools,

spares and supplies, and has a heavy-duty airlock on the outside. A secondary airlock on the lower level leads into a personnel tunnel which gives access to the prison complex.

It may be possible to hack the small craft from the control rooms. This is a difficult business, requiring a Traveller to figure out how to interface his own personal computer with Esseray technology, and then navigate alien protocols. However, there is no data or system security as would be found on human systems – Esseray logic is that the computer is in a secure location and cannot be accessed by outsiders. There are no traitors or dissenters in Esseray society. The computer is therefore secure.

The computer is exceptionally dumb by human standards, existing only as a programming interface for the small craft. It has no other functions and no communications capability other than hardwired contact with the craft by way of cables plugged into the conduits running across the landing area.

The interceptors cannot be reprogrammed to attack Esseray targets – a fundamental part of their operating system includes prohibitions on such actions – nor can they be self-destructed. They could, however, be sent off on an extremely long flight that would take them out of any fight for weeks. The interceptors' operating system will not allow them to be sent somewhere they cannot reach another facility or base from, though it might be spoofed into believing there will be a ship coming to refuel the fighters at their rendezvous. Creative Travellers will thus be able to get rid of the fighters for a while – those they have not blown up, that is.

Transport craft can be programmed to accept commands from humans carried aboard them, and to navigate to a destination such as the starport on Tinath. It would be possible to use these craft to extract a large number of prisoners from the complex.

## Fireworks!

Once the charges are in place, the Travellers can set them off any time they please, though it would be wise to reach a safe distance. Nothing is guaranteed here, however. The remote detonation system is improvised, and might need some adjustment before it can be made to work. An Electronics (comms) check is necessary to detonate the charges remotely.

If the check fails, Travellers could sneak back onto the landing field and try to see what the problem is. Finding and fixing the issue is much quicker than planting the explosives, but does run the risk of an unexpected detonation. Alternatively, the Travellers can fiddle with the improvised detonator until it works. This will cause an imperfectly synchronised detonation, but a satisfying amount of destruction will result anyway.

The explosions are strange in the airless environment, but the effects are spectacular. Interceptors are torn in half and debris sent careering into other craft nearby. Walls of the munitions bunkers are flung as rubble across the landing field, denting interceptors and tearing components off them. The ground heaves, and the Travellers can be sure they have gained the attention of every Esseray within a couple of Astronomical Units.

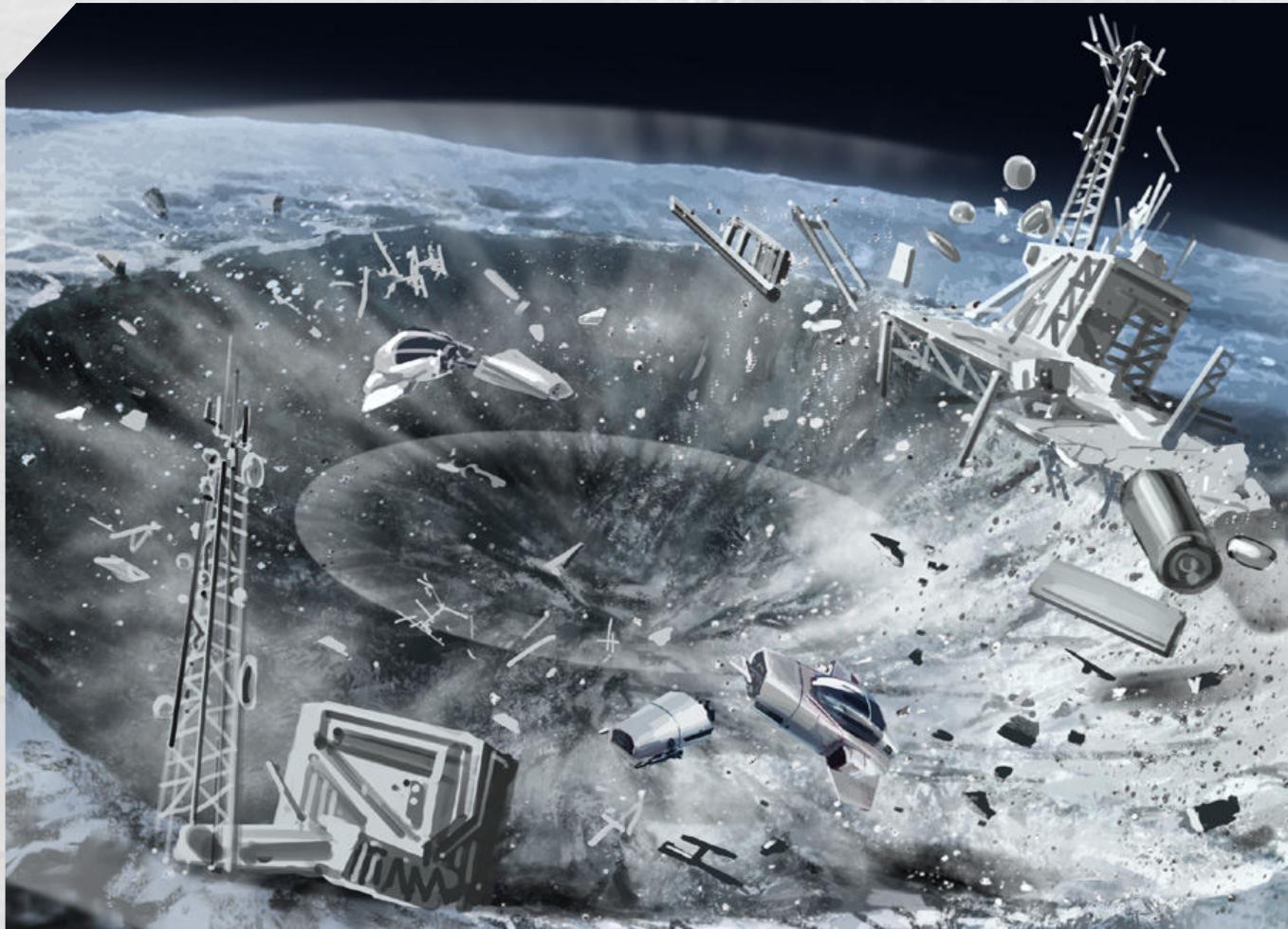
Detonating the explosives will destroy some fighters outright and disable others. Disabled fighters are out of action for now but could be returned to service in days or weeks with proper facilities. However, the facilities on Rigash are rather basic, so repairs will be slow going, especially if the Travellers make a nuisance of themselves at the prison complex.

## LAYOUT AND OPERATION OF THE PRISON COMPLEX

The orbital prison complex was created for the dual purpose of holding prisoners taken by the Esseray and studying them. The Esseray are unimaginative in the extreme – even their highest leaders are not capable of such original thought – but they *can* learn by study. Over time, the Esseray will start to borrow human ideas and concepts, which might make them more dangerous.

The prison facility was recently adapted to serve as a base for the small craft force being (literally) assembled there. This placed the craft beyond the observation of humans on Tinath and allowed them to be put together using the limited facilities available in the Tinath system. Engineered components were mostly brought up from the surface whilst organic parts are grown at the prison complex.

The Travellers' mission to the prison complex is to rescue the missing research team and learn as much about the Esseray as possible. As they investigate the facility, the Travellers will discover how Esseray biological robots are made, and may also find out key facts about their plans



for Tinath. The presence of additional prisoners creates a new problem; the Travellers may want to rescue everyone, which is a large undertaking.

The prison facility is protected by four dual beam laser turrets on the upper surface of its top deck, the only part of the facility above ground level, and by many more missile rack and beam laser turrets emplaced in the surrounding area.

With sufficient defences in place to repel most intruders, the facility is deemed secure by its unimaginative operators, at least until a higher intelligence gives them new instructions. That has not happened at the time of this adventure. For this to occur, the guards at the prison would have to realise something was wrong and inform their commanders. They are unlikely to do so until the Travellers' mission is well advanced, if at all.

This is the fatal flaw in Esseray strategy. The prison facility operators are caught in a trap whereby the guards are not smart enough to realise their orders are inadequate and request instructions, and the commanders who could issue those instructions cannot do so since they do not know about the problem.

The prison complex itself is laid out as six wheel-shaped layers, with a hangar capable of receiving a ship of up to 100 tons in the centre of the wheel. There are two entry points; via the hangar, and the tunnel leading to the launch field. The hangar entrance doors open automatically when a drone is launched or recovered, or when an Esseray craft approaches the facility. There are personnel access hatches close to the doors, which are used by patrols and thus subject to fairly frequent foot traffic.

## PERSONNEL

The prison is run by a mix of Esseray and human collaborators. There is no Leader or higher-ranked Esseray present; the complex was considered to be of low importance when built and one was never assigned. It is essentially an automated facility designed for minimal oversight and maintenance, only using biological creatures rather than electronic robots.

Most Troxbolg here are Augmented Guards (see page 31) and equipped with assault weapons or bone spikes. Those sent out on patrol are typically standard infantry Troxbolg, issued with battle rifles. This adventure does not specify how many Troxbolg there are, to avoid the possibility of the opposition being overwhelmed or overpowering. The facility can easily house around 60 Troxbolg, and probably quite a few more. However, it is not desirable for the Travellers to become bogged down in endless gunfights with hordes of enemies. The

referee should thus tailor the number of Troxbolg to the Travellers' capabilities and the needs of the storyline, rather than trying to play out a skirmish game with every single hostile accounted for.

The Esseray overseers and technicians belong to the species named Forfak (see page 32) by human observers. These have a small degree of artificial intelligence – though other Forfak encountered elsewhere may not have this AI implants. There are currently 22 Esseray overseers and technicians in the complex. Their duties include operating and maintaining the complex's machinery, readying the interceptor force, and ensuring the human prisoners do not cause trouble.

Each Forfak at the complex has a two- or three-digit identification number. They are otherwise identical to each other. They have no self-identity and no personality, although can temporarily display a false personality if it furthers their immediate goals.

In addition to the Esseray, there are several human overseers at the prison complex. These are people who agree to work for the Esseray in exchange for better quarters and a bit of personal power. In many ways, these overseers are more dangerous than the Esseray, since they know the Esseray do not care if they are replaced with other collaborators and thus constantly watch for trouble from the other prisoners.

## OVERALL LAYOUT

The prison complex is built around a central well, which contains the hangar and some of the complex's essential machinery. Its six 'wheels' are constructed on a broadly similar pattern, with a circular inner corridor running around the hangar and four radial corridors running outward from it. A second circular corridor runs around the outside of the wheel, with stairwells at each intersection of the outer circular and radial corridors.

Stairwells are sealed off from the corridors by airtight hatches controlled by keycard-type devices and monitored by cameras. Guards are stationed at some stairwells. Each stairwell can act as an airlock for its wheel if one section is depressurised. There is no outside access from any of these internal airlocks, however.

Between the radial corridors are the main segments of each wheel, accessed by doors leading from each radial and circular corridor. The segments are colour-coded red, green, blue and yellow, though the shades are odd by human standards and vary in intensity from place to place. Segments are by colour and level, e.g. Red One, Blue Five, and so forth. Levels are numbered from one (top) to six (bottom).

Segments are subdivided in a non-standardised manner, by partition walls that resist depressurisation only for a short time. They can be shot through or breached by vigorous application of force, and appear to be made from thin metal coated in a strangely rubber-like substance. This is in fact bio-engineered flesh, and rather unpleasant to the touch. Scrapes and damaged areas will eventually ‘heal’ though this process takes days or weeks for extensive damage such as scraping all the flesh-covering off a wall.

Some prisoners have discovered that the flesh can be cooked and eaten, though not everyone is willing to try it.

### The Central Well – Hangar and Machinery

The prison complex is built around a central well, much of which is taken up by a shuttle hangar. This contains a variety of machinery designed to support small craft operations. The hangar is four decks deep, with covered walkways running around its sides, maintaining a ‘shirtsleeves’ environment even when the hangar doors are open, and have airlocks leading into the main hangar as well as onto the upper surface of the installation.

The hangar has airlock doors to the top four levels of the prison, but those leading to Wheels 1, 2 and 4 are routinely kept locked and require a keycard for access. The doors to Wheel 3 (the working level) operate automatically when approached but are one-way only. A keycard is needed to return to the hangar from the working level, as is needed for all other levels.

Prisoners are normally brought into the working level under guard and assigned directly to whatever shift is working there. They find out about eating and sleeping conditions when their shift is scheduled for these activities. There is no orientation briefing or welcome speech, though some prisoners have their own ways of ‘welcoming’ new arrivals.

The two lowest levels of the central well are not accessible from the hangar. These contain the facility’s power and life support systems, and are accessed from Wheels Five and Six.

1

### Wheel One – Prison Level

Wheel One is the top level of the installation. Like the others, it is divided into four sections – Blue, Green, Yellow, and Red – and is used to house uncooperative workers. Although air in the corridors is as good as anywhere else, in the four accommodation segments it is smelly and polluted.

Each of the four accommodation segments is subdivided into a large sleeping chamber, an assembly hall and a few smaller chambers which have been co-opted by small groups of prisoners as their own territory. Sir Berani and his daughter are currently housed here along with various other troublemakers and prisoners too ill or uncooperative to work.

The stairwells are guarded most of the time, usually by a single Troxbolg, and have an access panel in the roof which leads into the base of a defensive turret. This is a maintenance panel only; the turret is controlled from elsewhere, but occasionally a prisoner has managed to access a turret to hide for a while or stash items. Others have attempted sabotage, to the annoyance of prisoners using the gun mounts for storage.

There are also surface access hatches in Wheel One. These are atop the inner circular corridor, halfway between the radial corridors. The doors into the accommodation segments are disabled to prevent prisoners from quickly accessing the corridor and hatch. This is an unusually proactive step for the facility’s operators, and resulted from an incidence of sabotage a while ago. Some prisoners may remember this incident, and from their tales the Travellers can deduce that the Esseray are incapable of spotting even obvious problems, but can learn from experience when others exploit gaps in their security.

Prisoners from Wheel One are taken to the working level (Wheel Three) only intermittently. This translates to roughly one shift for every four pulled by personnel from Wheel Two. The rest of the time, they are simply locked in and left to stew. As a result, many are apathetic and bored, and some have become almost desperate to be ‘upgraded’ back to the slightly less terrible conditions in Wheel Two. Collaborators sometimes emerge among the populace of Wheel One, though this is uncommon.

### Wheel Two – Prison Level

Wheel Two houses the majority of the prisoners. Those who are, for whatever reason, unable to work or too much trouble, are moved up to Wheel One. The accommodation areas are somewhat overcrowded at present, even though very few prisoners are brought to the facility now open warfare has begun. Its primary function was to contain personnel and inhabitants of areas the Esseray were operating covertly, making them ‘disappear’ rather than killing them. The Esseray are no longer concerned with such niceties.

2

Wheel Two is essentially the same in terms of layout as Wheel One, though without surface access hatches. Guards are not commonly stationed on this level, though occasionally one or more may be positioned at a stairwell for some reason. Humans have not been able to fathom the logic behind the guard rota and, indeed, there may not be any. It could be that guards are purposefully positioned on a random basis, creating a situation where their locations cannot be predicted.

3

## Wheel Three – Work Level

Wheel Three is where the prisoners are put to work, its segments subdivided into workshop areas where components are assembled. This work is done by the more alert and dextrous prisoners. The more drugged or apathetic prisoners are typically given simple tasks such as cleaning the corridors or providing manual labour. This mainly consists of carrying items up from Wheel Four or to the landing field by way of the tunnel from this level.

Several poor quality and ill-fitting vacc suits have been provided for human work parties going outside. They are stored here but only issued to those actually going onto the landing field. Most trips through the tunnel are simple delivery runs, stockpiling items in the control building for use by the Forfak technicians servicing and assembling the craft outside. There are vacc suits for Esseray and Forfak, along with a maintenance bay for them. They cannot be used by humans but some components could be salvaged.

Some areas of Wheel Three are given over to specialist functions such as the infirmary, which sees a lot of use due to minor work-related incidents. Drugged prisoners are prone to falling or injuring themselves with tools, which keeps the infirmary attendant busy most of the time. The infirmary is manned by prisoners who have (or claim to have) the appropriate skills and are assigned here instead of other duties. The usual attendant is Private Yegillan, a soldier captured in the fighting on the surface. He can be a useful contact in the prison and may be able to hide items for the Travellers.

4

## Wheel Four – Stores and Supplies

Most of Wheel Four is given over to fairly mundane stores and supplies, including machinery for processing the gloop that passes for food and huge tanks holding raw materials for creating it. The Yellow segment is off-limits to humans and guarded; this area is mainly used for items taken from human captives. The stowage system in use is not particularly organised and all manner of items have been dumped in crates or buried under others. The Travellers may find body armour, weapons, tools and all kinds of personal items in this chamber.

If the Travellers' equipment has been confiscated, their Artefact Module will be here assuming they had it with them. If the Artefact Module (see page 103) was not found by the Travellers in *Research and Rescue*, then it is here in a powered-down state.

5

## Wheel Five – Esseray and Collaborator Quarters

Wheel Five is off-limits to humans, except those who have been given overseer status by the prison regime. The Esseray have no personal belongings and only the most basic of living facilities – essentially a place to sleep, eating area and sanitary facilities. They are more tightly packed in than in any human barracks, but being upset about this would never occur to any Esseray.

6

## Wheel Six - Operations

Wheel Six is the control centre of the prison complex. Some of its chambers stand empty and clearly have never been used. The Red segment is given over to a command centre from which the Esseray overseers run the facility. Access is possible to the machinery levels of the central well, from the inner circular corridor.

The other three segments were originally empty and spare, but are now used to grow biological components for spacecraft and machinery. This process takes place in nutrient tanks and is likely to be both frightening and repugnant to humans entering the area. Some tanks grow sheets of flesh, others sections of bone or other tissues for use as structural components in lighter machinery and weapons.

The Operations level is always guarded by a handful of Troxbolg guards who are forbidden to leave their posts until relieved, and will have at least some of the Forfak overseers on duty at any one time. Much of the equipment in the Operations level is unnecessary to the functioning of the prison facility, but could serve as a backup system for command of ground operations on Tinath or spaceborne attack on the world.

If the Travellers can gain access to the operations rooms, they may be able to use the equipment there to observe the course of the war. The general impression is that things are going very badly for humans. Travellers with the Tactics skill may be able to discern more specific information such as troop concentrations and strengths. There are also maps of Tinath with what appears to be targeting data on them. These appear to have been prepared in advance to guide an orbital bombardment, though at present the Esseray in the Tinath system seem to have no capability to conduct one.



## DAILY ROUTINE IN THE PRISON COMPLEX

The Travellers are unlikely to remain in the prison long enough to become part of its routine – if they do they may end up staying permanently! It is more likely they will encounter other prisoners living out a dreary nightmare. The referee should use the routine to provide a backdrop to the Travellers' actions.

Each day, the prisoners are worked for about ten hours. They are split into four overlapping shifts, with two groups working at any one time. Thus a shift change occurs every five hours or so, with half the workers returning to their barracks to be replaced with another shift. Actual working times vary from just a couple of hours (occasionally) to fifteen or even twenty hours straight. Sometimes the prisoners can figure out why there is a need to alter the working hours, other times there seems no logic to it.

Each shift-group corresponds to an accommodation segment on Wheel Two. If extra hands are needed some of the corresponding workers from Wheel One are brought in. Thus, at any given time, one shift-group is in the first half of its work period and another is in the second half. When not working the prisoners are confined in their accommodation segments and (in theory at least) have no contact with the other groups of prisoners.

At the beginning of a work cycle the shift-group is woken by guards and assembled for breakfast. This takes the form of a purple liquid in an edible cup, containing nutrients and a mild narcotic. The narcotic is addictive and over time causes partial amnesia. After eating, the prisoners are assigned to their work stations. Many of the tasks are menial and could be carried out by robots more efficiently than the drugged and apathetic humans; prisoners may be assigned to cleaning details, fetch-and-carry assignments or simple assembly and maintenance tasks, with the most alert given the more complex tasks.

Prisoners can be encountered moving around the prison on a variety of tasks, often unsupervised. The guards will not take notice of prisoners carrying an armload of cleaning rags or a box of components somewhere, unless they try to enter a restricted area. Some prisoners have learned to appear heavily drugged in order to be able to move around the facility. The Esseray have not cottoned on to this trick yet.

Some prisoners use this or other methods to slip away from their work groups on a regular basis. Some are engaged in attempts to escape, some find a corner and sleep, and others have various rackets going on. There are those who can get items, for a price. Mostly, this is food that is not drugged sludge, but sometimes a prisoner wants a weapon or tool to be used in sabotage. The 'fixers' are wary of such people but sometimes grant their requests.

During the work day, there are frequent short breaks for rest. Most prisoners just sit around in an apathetic daze at these times. A green mush is served for lunch; also in an edible cup that contains nutrients, but no narcotic, with the effect that the prisoners heads are slightly clearer in the second half of their work shift. At the end of the day, the prisoners are assembled again and given brown sludge in another edible cup. The assembly permits a head count and scan for unauthorised items. Afterward the prisoners are escorted to their designated sleeping areas where they are required to remain until the next workday begins.

### Moving Around the Prison

Most doors use a keycard-like device to grant access, though much of the time this is unnecessary as the majority of doors are unlocked. An accommodation segment whose personnel are not on a work cycle will be locked, requiring card access, as will all doors on Wheels One, Five and Six. Most other doors are left unlocked and will open automatically when approached. Once an alert is triggered, all doors are locked and require keycard access.

Parties of humans may not be challenged by Esseray guards as they move around Wheel One, Two, Three and Four, so long as they fit the general parameters of a prisoner working party. Travellers who do not hurry or move purposefully, and are carrying something that is not obviously a weapon, are often completely ignored. Anyone with a weapon will be immediately challenged to surrender and then attacked. Those who are identified by the prison's many cameras as having fought with the guards (unless they lost and were spared for some reason) will be hunted.

A standard keycard is required to access any locked door on Wheels One through Four or the hangar. Doors to Wheels Five and Six, and the machinery spaces, require an overseer's keycard, which are normally only held by Forfak overseers and some human collaborators. Occasionally, one is filched by the prisoners, and these are not always recovered. Travellers who get one can open any door in the complex, though any non-Esseray who opens a door on Wheel Six or the machinery rooms will trigger an alert as if they had attacked guards.

It is also possible to bypass the locks on most doors by hotwiring their control panels, through a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check. This is not very difficult – Esseray are less conscious of internal security measures than humans, having no crime or dissent within their society – but tends to be rather obvious and likely to be detected as soon as guards pass by, even if the lockpicker is careful not to trigger the door's alarms.

Travellers may also be able to crawl through access spaces and air ducts, though these are constructed with considerable amounts of pseudo-flesh and thus thoroughly unsettling places to be. Some prisoners do this on a regular basis, and there seems to be a correlation between their increasing instability and the time they spend in the ducts.

## Talking to People

Most people encountered in the prison are in a drugged daze, unable to communicate in a meaningful way. Some, however, are conscious and dispirited. From talking to some of them, Travellers may be able to learn more about the prison complex. When a Traveller tries to talk with a member of the prisoner population (i.e. those housed on Wheels One or Two), roll 2D-1 on the Prisoners table to determine the person spoken with. The referee should note the location of the contact for future reference, if the prisoner's accommodation segment is not obvious from the place they are encountered.

The referee can assign skills and characteristics to prisoners if this seems appropriate, but in most cases it will not be necessary. Extra inmates can be created by the referee if the Travellers spend a lot of time socialising.

## PRISONERS

1. Sa Rumi. A thug working for Machine Overseer 482. He is not particularly cruel, but also not particularly patient.
2. Jak Rutri. A civilian who lost an arm assaulting a guard two months ago.
3. Ciro Wozena. A thug working for Machine Overseer 297. He speaks rarely, and then in monosyllables.
4. Remi Kejove. A thug who works for a human overseer named Zek Gorabamou. He is not only unhelpful, but aggressively hostile.
5. Henayi Waphla. A prisoner who has slowly been losing his sanity.
6. Yato Tuahema. A civilian in deteriorating health with respiratory problems.
7. Laab Tirxsh. A civilian in deteriorating health with daily dizzy spells.
8. Gem Pateko. A former starship medic whose arms and legs have been broken by the Esseray running the prison, and healed at the infirmary. She is deeply depressed and has lost all hope.
9. Voci Tejera. A civilian suffering from repetitive strain injuries.
10. Cego Chisik. Previously an operator of mining vehicles, he is an informant to the Esseray. He will appear guarded but helpful, and will also ask after the Travellers. Any information they reveal to him will be passed to Esseray Overseer 12 and the human overseer named Zek Gorabamou.
11. Tova Gapete. An engineer working with the prison's power and life support systems. If treated kindly, Tova will offer to sabotage a part of the prison complex if the Travellers will help him escape.

Getting any sense out of some of the prisoners is impossible, and many of those able to communicate meaningfully must be persuaded. This might be done by reasoning with them, begging, bribing or intimidating; Travellers who can figure out what a given prisoner wants or is afraid of are more likely to be successful.

Trying to obtain general information produces various pieces of data, not all of which are accurate. Some of the following are opinions, so the Travellers may hear variants or even contradictory statements.

- Beings called Esseray built the prison facility several months ago.
- The importance of the complex's levels increases with depth below ground.
- There are six levels. Prisoners are housed on the top two and work on the third.



- There is an access tunnel on Wheel Three. Some prisoners have been through it and say it leads into another complex. Others claim it leads outside onto the surface of Rigash.
- Most of the staff are Esseray organic machines.
- There are some human collaborators working with the Esseray.
- Working in the prison is better than being killed in the war with the Esseray.
- There are lots of things that can go wrong in the prison complex: life support fails, waste water pipes break, toxins leak into the food supply, volatiles mix with the air supply, power failures result in pitch blackness and stale air, and sabotage causes the guards to go on a rampage.
- The guards are synthetics without intelligence, and the overseers are soulless.
- When the Esseray conquer Tinath, those prisoners who have proven their worth (i.e. the collaborators) will be given positions of power.

Inquiring about Sir Berani and his daughter will eventually reveal they were initially assigned to Wheel Two but were soon moved to Wheel One for attempting to sabotage the facility. Opinions vary about this action – some think they deserved the punishment, some express regret the sabotage did not improve conditions. Most prisoners believe the captives will not last long on Wheel One.

Asking about the Guards and Esseray Overseers produces the (correct) opinion that the Esseray are not really living creatures, nor even sentient robots. They are mindless, single-purpose bioengineered machines, whose main function is to protect the facility and its overseers. Some inmates may venture a wild-eyed rumour, such as the prison being run by previously unknown aliens, or a worldwide conspiracy, or a radical group of sociological researchers. The Travellers can also learn that the Esseray and their human collaborators are housed on the lower levels of the facility.

## Referee's Note

The prison complex is operated by a mix of Esseray and human collaborators, and is not run the way a human prison might be expected to function. The Esseray simply are not capable of caring what humans are plotting, though they will react with instant violence if their responses are triggered. Orders are given to humans in Anglic by way of speakers in the walls and ceiling, or in monosyllabic commands from the guards; it is not clear to the prisoners who or what is deciding what those orders should be, though most prisoners assume the Forfak Overseers are the originators.

The Esseray guards, and the prison system itself, are not really concerned about what the prisoners do so long as they remain contained, do not cause trouble when not working, and the work they are assigned gets done at an acceptable pace. Acceptable in this case means very slow; the prison was originally designed only as a containment facility, with make-work assignments used to keep prisoners busy. When instructions to start assembling interceptors and small craft were given, this was simply added to the work roster with little more urgency than cleaning the floors on Wheel Two. As the Esseray plans stood at the time, there was no hurry.

The nature of the prison regime has allowed some humans to create their own power structures, typically based on bullying and violence. The human collaborators have their own agenda, which is completely self-serving. Most of them would be very happy to join an escape attempt that looked like it could succeed, though they are wary of what might happen once they return to human society. A few collaborators have bought into the idea that they will be rewarded with positions of power when the Esseray take over, though it is not clear where this originated. The Esseray have never made any such offer.

Thus Esseray guards will stand and watch the Travellers doing something they should not, so long as their specific orders are not triggered. If the Travellers wander around the complex, the prison regime will probably not even notice so long as they do not enter a restricted area or attack the guards. Normally, prisoners arrive under guard and are conveyed into the prison from the hangar, where they are added to a work shift. An Esseray guard in the complex has insufficient intellect to realise if something different has happened; he simply covers his station until someone triggers a response.

In short, the prison is run in a very lethal manner, with guards able to instantly kill someone for going through the wrong door, but not in an intelligent way. Esseray guards cannot recognise most suspicious behaviour and will not react unless something forces them. There is no proactive enforcement on their part, though human collaborators prefer things to go smoothly and will preempt anyone who looks likely to upset their regime.

## PLAYING OUT THE ADVENTURE IN THE PRISON COMPLEX

The Travellers could go about their rescue mission in a variety of ways, but there are some likely paths through the adventure that most groups will more or less follow. The referee should not worry overmuch if the Travellers go off-script; they will eventually find a way to progress and ultimately complete the adventure.

The spectrum of possible approaches runs from stealthy and covert to extremely 'loud'. It is quite possible that the Travellers might slip into the prison, sneak by some guards and walk blatantly past others carrying boxes and cleaning supplies, find and extract key prisoners, and then depart without the Esseray ever realising they were there. Alternatively, they might take the rather more dramatic and risky option of shooting their way through the facility. A middle-road approach might see the Travellers making a quiet infiltration and 'going loud' when they are discovered.

As already noted, if the Travellers behave much like other prisoners and do not trigger any alarms, they will be able to move around much of the complex without hindrance.

### Triggering an Internal Alert

An internal alert will not result in intervention from outside the facility. It can be triggered by trying to enter a restricted area or fighting with the guards. Brawling with other humans, even human collaborators, will probably not trigger an alert.

Once an alert is triggered, the Travellers will be tagged as dangerous intruders and a search-and-eliminate operation will begin. Additional guards will be posted at critical points such as access doors leading to Wheel Five, while patrols sweep the corridors.

Prisoners are contained wherever they happen to be when an alert is triggered, and groups are examined to find perpetrators hiding among them. Prisoners outside a normal working or sleeping area when an alert

begins may – if they are lucky – be roughly rounded up. Sometimes they are simply killed out of hand, with a working party sent to clean up the mess.

There are sufficient cameras in the prison complex that anyone acting in a way that triggers an alert is almost certain to be identified. Once this happens they will be actively sought until captured or eliminated. Some perpetrators are consigned to Wheel One as a punishment; others are simply killed on the spot. It is not always clear if there is a correlation between the prisoner's actions and his punishment.

Any prisoner spotted carrying a weapon will prompt an immediate response from the guards. This applies to guns and obvious weapons such as knives and hatchets. Items that could be used as a weapon, such as sharpened screwdrivers, will not normally trigger a response unless they are used as a weapon.

Once the Travellers are tagged as intruders, they will be actively hunted by parties of Troxbolg guards, who will be sent to any location the Traveller appears on camera. They also run the risk of betrayal from other prisoners or collaborators.

## Triggering an External Alert

An external alert is triggered if the facility is seriously endangered. If the Travellers inflict serious casualties on the guards and manage to get control of the prison's main facilities, or if there is a serious uprising among the prisoners, an external alert will begin. The facility will be locked down as noted above, with anyone caught outside a working or sleeping area likely to be killed on sight. A response from Tinath is likely.

Given the present situation on Tinath, the Esseray cannot mount a concerted attempt to take back the prison. Instead, a small force will be assembled and placed aboard two shuttles. Around twenty Troxbolg infantry will enter the base through the hangar, whilst the same number uses the tunnel from the landing field. They will shoot to kill any human they see, including collaborators, until the facility is secured.

It will take around four hours to assemble a force and get it to the prison complex. If this attempt to retake it fails, the prison will be simply abandoned to its fate. The Esseray do not care much about it, and consider all of their personnel (other perhaps than high ranking leaders) as expendable. They will simply ignore the prison for the time being, though when their ships arrive in system it will be eradicated with a few missiles.

## PROCEEDING THROUGH THE ADVENTURE

The adventure is likely to play out in a series of distinct phases:

- Entry
- Orientation
- Securing the Captives
- Escape

If the Travellers are less than subtle about their arrival at the prison, they might be fighting from the start, in which case they will be hunted constantly and have frequent battles on their hands unless they hide or disguise themselves. It is likely that an alert will be triggered at some point, but the adventure will be much easier for the Travellers if this can be delayed as long as possible by remaining covert.

### Entry

There are two likely means of entry to the prison; the access hatches atop the hangar and the tunnel from the landing field. The Travellers will more than likely have to stash their vacc suits somewhere, unless they intend to undertake a very direct assault on the facility. It is possible that suits and other equipment might be found by enterprising prisoners who are in the habit of hiding items of their own, in which case the Travellers may have to bargain to get their own equipment back. However, this is not all that likely. Providing a good place to hide equipment is found, it will probably be safe for a few days at least.

The only door from the hangar that the Travellers can get open without an impromptu rewiring job leads to Wheel Three, as does the tunnel from the landing field. Thus, the most likely arrival point for the Travellers is into a working area where apathetic and drugged prisoners go about their tasks. The Travellers' first impression will likely be of despair and utter lack of interest from the few visible guards.

The first time an Esseray guard sees the Travellers with weapons, they are challenged with an immediate one-word order to surrender. If they do so, they are roughly disarmed then simply ignored if they are in a non-restricted area. They will be conveyed to the working area on Wheel Three if they are somewhere prisoners should not be, and after that they are apparently forgotten about. If the Travellers resist, they will trigger an internal alert.

## Orientation

There are two ways to learn about the prison complex. The Travellers might sneak around observing, or they could talk to the inmates. If the Travellers are sensible, they can gather a lot of information before doing anything likely to cause an alert. This will make direct action a lot simpler when it becomes necessary.

Assuming the Travellers came in through the hangar entrance or tunnel from the landing field and do not attract attention by being in vacc suits or opening fire on the guards, they will be in a working area of Wheel Three. There is no official reception, but sooner or later one or another of the prisoners will drift over and make an approach.

The most likely (and useful) contact here is Private Yegillan, a captured medic who runs the Wheel Three infirmary much of the time. He is less drugged than many other prisoners, largely to allow him to function properly, and as a fairly recent captive he still entertains some hope of getting out of the prison. Yegillan will try to get the Travellers to follow him into the infirmary where he questions them about their presence.

Yegillan is obviously a soldier. He wears the remains of a military uniform with insignia proclaiming him to be a member of the defence forces of the city of Malkgreif. If asked, he explains that on Tinath his platoon was overwhelmed by Esseray and the few survivors were brought here. The prison, he says, is a holding facility of some kind and for the most part the Esseray do not seem to care very much what the captives do, so long as they do not cause problems. Some humans are collaborating with the Esseray; most are just trying to survive.

Yegillan can explain the basics of the complex, including the fact that the guards are dumber than posts and keycards are needed to operate some doors. He knows it is possible for prisoners to move around so long as they do not enter restricted areas or carry prohibited items like weapons. If the Travellers are armed, he will offer to stash their equipment in the infirmary, though the Travellers might not trust him to do so.

If the Travellers think they have been spotted with weapons by the guards (this is likely to be obvious, as additional guards move into the working area to look for them), Yegillan suggests hiding some weaponry then allowing themselves to be caught. If the guards take

away weapons they find, they will assume the Travellers are now unarmed. It is not likely to occur to them to search for other equipment.

Yegillan remembers seeing a man who fits Sir Berani's description, and possibly his daughter as well. They were not around for long, and there was an incident soon after they arrived, so it is possible they have been executed. If not, they will have been transferred to Wheel One.

The Travellers may encounter some of the other prisoners during this time. The prison's fixers will want to know what the Travellers can offer, and of course they will make it known that they can get items for a price. Thugs and bullies will want to shake the Travellers down, citizens will want news of the war. However, most of the prison population will simply ignore new arrivals.

## Securing the Captives

Sir Berani and his team, as noted above, are usually held in one of the accommodation segments of Wheel One. They are usually locked in, requiring a keycard to access the door, but physically reaching them is not the Travellers' greatest problem.

In order to retrieve any of the captives it will be necessary to contact them and obtain their cooperation. Few people will want to remain captives, so the latter should not be much of a problem. However, Sir Berani will not leave without the surviving members of his team, and feels compelled to try to rescue at least some of the other prisoners.

It will also be necessary to get the captives to a spacecraft. That might mean hiking back to the concealed ship's boat, which requires a vacc suit for each prisoner to be rescued. Alternatively, the transport craft on the landing field could be used but again getting to them requires vacc suits. Given the short distance between the control building and the transports, suits could be shuttled back and forth, with prisoners removing them when they are safe inside a transport craft and sending the suits back for the next group.

Doing this without being interrupted might be a challenge, and of course the prison's defences will fire on any escaping craft. These might be sabotaged or otherwise disabled, either directly by entering the turrets and crippling them or by gaining access to the control chambers in Wheel Six.

If the Travellers can gain access to the control rooms, they can turn off the prison's defences and bring craft directly into the hangar to remove prisoners. Of course, this will trigger an external alert but the facility's weapons could be turned on the reaction force, shooting down shuttles before they land. If this approach is taken the Travellers could even call up ships from the starport and have them take off the prisoners – the Esseray will not interfere after the first attempt to retake the prison has failed, though the Travellers may not know that.

If the Travellers decide to take the guns-blazing-from-the-start approach, they should be able to secure a keycard for Wheels One Through Four from one of the prison's fixers, or by some other means. If they can gain access to the vacc suits stored on the work level, then these can be used to get some of the prisoners out. It might be possible to do all of this without causing an alert and, if so, leaving the prison will be relatively easy.

## Escape

If there is no alert, a small group of prisoners and the Travellers should be able to slip out of the prison and hike back to the ship's boat to make their escape. This is the 'quietest' approach, and even leaves the possibility of coming back later to remove more captives.

If an alert is triggered, then the Travellers might have to fight their way to an exit and escape, possibly pursued by Esseray infantry. Blowing up the landing field will cause a distraction, but the Travellers might still face a tough fight.

The third option is to go for broke and try to take over the prison complex. The best chance of success here is to arm as many of the prisoners as possible or incite them to attack the guards. Many are too worn down and apathetic to take part in a prison riot unless the Travellers can find mood-altering chemicals. This could be done by Travellers with a scientific or medical background, altering the mix of the prisoners' food to include drugs that will agitate rather than pacify.

Even without chemical enhancement, some of the prisoners will fight if they get the chance. It is not necessary to roll dice for every single prisoner fighting every single guard; instead, the riot should be a cinematic backdrop to the Travellers' actions. They may witness prisoners being pre-emptively gunned down, or beating a guard to death with improvised weapons, and later question the morality of their actions. However, for

the time being, a riot will distract the guards and destroy some of them.

Taking control of the prison means entering the lower levels and eliminating resistance. This may be a tough fight but with some assistance from Sir Berani and the other prisoners it should be possible to overcome the defenders, especially if they are caught by surprise.

If the Travellers can gain control of the prison, they will need to defend it against the attempt to retake it. If that is achieved, they can simply call for rescue. It will be a few hours before help arrives, during which time the Travellers will have to deal with confused prisoners, collaborators trying to avoid being murdered by their former victims, and the occasional Esseray guard who has so far evaded destruction.

## Retiring from the Prison

This section is only relevant if the Travellers do not take control of the prison.

If there is no alert, the return trip to the concealed ship's boat is no more difficult than the inward hike. If the prison has been alerted there is no certainty the Esseray will realise the troublemakers have left the facility, and again the hike is much as before. If, on the other hand, the Travellers have caused a ruckus and are suspected to have gone outside, Esseray defenses will be on full alert and patrols will be looking for the Travellers.

If the Travellers blow up the landing field (or part of it) to cover their withdrawal, this creates additional complications for both sides. New fissures open up around the Travellers, and volatile or corrosive gases spray the surface. This is mostly dramatic backdrop; providing the Travellers do not fall into a new crevasse they should be able to break contact and move back to the ship's boat.

Once clear of the immediate launch field area, the Travellers should be able to leave pursuit behind them and march rapidly back towards their craft. Drones can be seen overhead, but seem to be inspecting damage to the landing field and taking up orbital defence positions rather than searching for escapees. The Travellers will not know it, but the drones are looking for an outward threat as they have been programmed, and have temporarily abandoned surveillance of the surface. The Travellers may still decide to hide or sneak, as they have no way of knowing they are in no danger of detection.

## Getting Past the Drones

The final stage of the Travellers' escape is to slip past the drones and head home. There are various ways to go about this.

If the Travellers are using an Esseray craft, they may try to simply fly past the drones and pretend they have clearance. This is a risky form of bluff, essentially trying to manoeuvre like an Esseray craft and hope the drones fall for the deception. A Deception check will enable the pilot to follow Esseray flight parameters closely enough to fool the drones.

The Travellers might instead try to sneak past, perhaps by flying low and slow around the moon, hidden behind terrain features, then dashing out into space while the moon's bulk shields them. This is feasible but requires some clever piloting. A failed Pilot check results in detection by the drones, which will then attack.

Other Travellers could assist in this task by using the ship's sensors to plot the drone positions and chart a course between them. Up to two other Travellers can assist, creating a task chain with relevant skills such as Electronics (sensors) and Astrogation, using the task chain rules.

The alternative is to fight it out. This might be deliberate or the Travellers might be spotted – for example, if a bluff or sneak attempt fails. If the Travellers deliberately choose to fight, they can ambush the nearest drone by waiting until it is over their craft's hiding place then blasting it before it spots them. This will make the Gunner check Easy (4+) for the first shot, after which normal space combat ensues.

If the drone is taken out on the first shot, others will not be alerted in time to stop the Travellers dashing out into open space. If the Travellers are forced (or choose) to fight it out, they will have to engage one drone for two combat rounds, with another arriving every 1D rounds after that. It takes 3D rounds to get clear of the drones' operating region, after which the Travellers are clear and can head out into space, and finally home to Tinath.

Once they are back on-planet, the Travellers are filled in on developments of the war by Baroness Edda and her staff. Things are not going well for the humans, though the situation is not as bleak as it might otherwise have been. Sir Berani and his people are grateful for their rescue and keen to join others from the baroness' forces in the fight. Her people are few in number but they have grav vehicles and TL12 small arms, which makes them a potent striking force.

The Travellers might decide to pitch in with some combat missions over the next few days. If so, the referee could create a suitable short mini-adventure. This might be a straight fight with the Esseray, a dash into enemy territory to rescue wounded or surrounded soldiers, or some similar minor scenario. However, pretty soon something rather bigger presents itself, and the baroness asks for the Travellers' help once more.

This leads to the next adventure, *Electronic Warfare*.



# ELECTRONIC WARFARE

After the Travellers returned from Rigash (or during their adventures there, if they were at the prison for an extended period), the Esseray began to make rapid gains against the humans of Tinath. Cities on the continent of Sositenya have been overrun, though some of the troops and population made it out on grav vehicles and maritime ships. Esseray forces have landed on the Mehali continent and are making gains there too, largely because the human armies were so heavily committed to the campaign on Sositenya.

The situation is complicated by the fact that relatively small numbers of Esseray have been landed in different parts of Mehali, and are conducting skirmishes and raids on a fairly random basis. It is difficult to get an accurate impression of their numbers and location. Some forces are just a handful whilst others are large enough to threaten nearby cities, but contact reports do not always reflect the real strength of the opposition.

The remaining human forces on Sositenya became bottled into pockets cut off from one another. Some were overwhelmed but others managed to hold out or even counterattack. This threw the Esseray into confusion, and from that an opportunity has arisen. As the Esseray clumsily redeployed, it became apparent that many of their movements were being coordinated from a facility in southern Sositenya.

It has been theorised that the Esseray must have higher intelligences guiding them, and the location of one such intelligence has been found. It would not be possible to launch a major offensive at this time, but a small team might be able to penetrate the facility and identify this intelligence. Eliminating it will help the human war effort; capturing it even more so. As a secondary objective, any information that can be obtained from the facility would be extremely useful.

Naturally, the Travellers are the obvious choice for this mission.

## Referee's Note

This adventure does not spell out the exact levels for skill checks and other tasks attempted by the Travellers. It does, however, provide some guidance to the referee on when to ask for checks and what skills

or characteristics are relevant. Astute readers may have noticed that these adventures are providing gradually less of this kind of guidance. This is deliberate – by the end of this campaign, the referee should be entirely capable of flying solo and deciding when a skill check or some other rules-based adjudication is needed, then determining levels of difficulty as appropriate.

Different referees vary in their approach, some calling for a lot of skill checks and others very few. Ideas about the difficulty of any given skill check also vary. This is fine; Traveller referees are individuals and by the end of this adventure series the game is very much yours to do with as you please. Find your own style, play it your way, and have fun....!

## BRIEFING AND PREPARATION

There seems to be an assumption that the Travellers will volunteer for the strike mission, or indeed that they already have done so. People congratulate them on their infiltration of the prison facility and thank them for agreeing to go on the strike mission before they have a chance to say anything. In truth, with their ship still under repair, they must do something with their time, and a strike against the Esseray is possibly a better option than hanging around a city that might be attacked again in the next day or two.

The Travellers are told what has gleaned about the Esseray Generals. These are machine intelligences, as best the analysts can tell, and are the driving force behind the Esseray assault. Generals use bio-engineered bodies but may consider them disposable; the body is basically a vehicle for a wafer jack and computer brain. The General's intellect can be downloaded to another receptacle computer aboard a different body. It is therefore possible that some of these intelligences are very, very old.

It is thought that one or more Esseray Generals are at the target installation. The plan is to insert a team directly from orbit – a technique known as meteoric assault – and capture the General. If this proves impossible, killing it and wrecking the installation will go a long way towards derailing the Esseray plans.

The installation is well-defended with layers of pickets, patrols, and sensor drones. However, intelligence analysts have discovered timing gaps in the defence network: a small force could reach the base using high acceleration re-entry pods. The defence network is continually being strengthened, however, and it is likely that the holes in their detection network will be closed soon.

Moreover, the installation also includes a large landing field. At least one vessel, thought to be an interstellar starship, has landed there in the past few hours. Others may follow, which could make the defences too strong to overcome. However, the presence of the ship also represents an opportunity.

There are many who think the war for Tinath cannot be won by humans, and are urging an evacuation of the world. Some have already begun leaving, but there are precious few ships available. Commandeering an Esseray vessel might enable a few more to be saved. This represents a tiny victory, but if the war is truly lost then every live saved is worthwhile.

To this end, a project has begun to secure transport for large numbers of people. Details are vague at the moment but apparently some old colony ships are being reactivated and will be loaded with evacuees as soon as they arrive at Tinath. At present, the number wanting to leave is a low percentage of the planetary population, but as the Esseray advance it becomes increasingly likely that more will want to escape. There is no way to get everyone offplanet, and many hope the war may yet be won.

Thus, the Travellers are given four goals for their mission: neutralize the Esseray surface installation; secure one or more starships for the world's evacuation effort; capture the intelligent Esseray General who commands the massed armies of Sositenya; download the contents of the base's central computer.

To escape, the Travellers are advised to take one of the starships or craft from the landing base and rendezvous in deep space with the destroyer Liiskenka. This is a vessel of the Calida Federation's naval forces which arrived a short while ago. Although no formal treaties are in place, her captain has offered his assistance in defending the cities of Tinath, and is defining 'assistance' rather loosely at present. In short, he is an unofficial but determined ally. Alternative arrangements can be made; if the Travellers can disable the base's defences, they can be directly extracted by shuttles or grav vehicles, or they may be able to withdraw to a safe distance on foot and await pickup.

The Travellers will be offered their choice of weapons as in Research and Rescue, and will be outfitted with a

vacc suit if they need one. Any equipment lost or used in previous adventures will be replaced, and reasonable requests for more will be met as well as possible. However, the humans of Tinath are fighting a losing war, and every weapon that can be scrounged up is being used to outfit militias.

## DESCENT

The Travellers are assisted into re-entry pods aboard a fast shuttle. The re-entry pods are heavily armoured with ablative material, and coated with reflec armour. One re-entry pod can hold one passenger; in addition, there are several decoys for each pod.

Deployment is a bit... informal. Normally a specialist launching system is used, but the improvised nature of this mission requires that pods are simply dropped from a shuttle's cargo bay. They are aimed at a spot one kilometre from their target. The pods, while on a preprogrammed trajectory, do have attitude controls for fine tuning.

During the descent through the atmosphere, the pods will encounter turbulence and may start to tumble. This is a thoroughly unpleasant and disorienting experience. Travellers can avoid tumbling by careful manipulation of their pod's controls, using the Pilot (small craft) skill. Failing this check means the Traveller has been thoroughly bounced around and suffers a Bane when evading defences later.

As the pods hit the troposphere, defensive turrets around the headquarters begin firing at the Travellers. Evasion is possible by using the pod's primitive sensors. It also helps to have good reflexes. Travellers who make an Electronics (sensors) check can predict firing times and evade accordingly. A Boon or Bane can be imposed on these checks; see page 59 of *Book 1: Characters and Combat* for details. A Bane occurs as noted above if the pod is tumbling, and a Boon might be granted by the referee if the Travellers come up with a clever plan to distract or confuse the defences.

If a Traveller successfully evades, he is not hit by the defences. If he fails, his pod suffers D3 near-misses from ground fire. These each do 3D damage to the pod. Its ablative armour absorbs the first 12 points of damage it receives, after which the pod retains armour Protection of +4 which is applied in addition to whatever armour the Traveller is wearing. Thus, if a pod is hit twice, for 14 and then 9 points of damage, the first hit blasts off the ablative armour but does not penetrate the 4 points of protection provided by the pod's structure. The second hit is mitigated by the 4 points of armour remaining; 5 go through to the Traveller within. His own armour is applied to this damage.

## ON THE GROUND

The pods are designed to come in hard and fast. Landing is not a pleasant experience, but the Travellers will reach the ground safe and intact. After regrouping at the landing site, they need to move overland towards the installation. Initially, this movement is through thick forest, offering good cover from enemy observation but bearing its own risks.

As they make their transit, the Travellers' sensors may pick up heat signatures. They are too big to be any known species of Esseray, and within moments their data systems have pegged the creatures as a herbivore native to Tinath and several other worlds, known locally as a Forest Trudger. These typically move in small groups, so 1D individuals will be nearby. There will possibly be others within a short enough distance to be a threat.

The Forest Trudger is a three-legged animal that stands higher than the forest canopy (perhaps 10 metres, though individuals vary). It has no head; its eyes and ears are built into a hump on its back. Its naturally unpleasant disposition is made worse by its inexplicable irritation at any sort of gravitic-based technology. It has no arms, and typically grazes the tops of trees for food. It feeds by way of an elephant-like proboscis/mouth.

If the Travellers want to avoid contact, they can try to do so with Recon, Survival and Stealth checks. Failure indicates the Travellers have alarmed the trudgers or triggered a territorial instinct. The animals will attack, though they can be driven off by reducing them to 50% of their initial Hits.

### FOREST TRUDGER

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Forest Trudger	50	10 m
SKILLS	Survival 1	
ATTACKS	Tail (3D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+4), Large (+3)	
BEHAVIOUR	Herbivore, Grazer	

Also in the forest are several parties of patrolling Esseray infantry. They are equipped as standard Troxbolg infantry, but all are Augmented and armed with battle rifles, and are accompanied by one or more Triark hunters (see page 31). It may also be possible to slip past these patrols. If one is encountered, it will contain 2D personnel, possibly with an additional 1D stragglers and scouts. Quiet kills with melee weapons will avoid raising the alarm, though a fight that goes on too long will allow casualties to make a call for help.

If the Travellers draw in additional Esseray, it will be difficult for them to break contact, but they will need to do so in order to proceed with their mission. Killing all the Esseray in sight will suffice, as will moving quickly out of sight and getting clear of the area without being observed.

The Esseray cannot fail to notice the arrival of the re-entry pods, and will send patrols in their direction. This can work both for and against the Travellers. If they realise the patrols will be coming towards them from the direction of the complex they can skirt around or hide and let them pass. Once past these Esseray, the Travellers will have a much easier time as investigating the pods will draw in many of the personnel from the forest.

## SENTRY OUTCROP

A single spire of rock rests in the middle of the forest. A sentry is stationed there with a communicator, but is not very attentive. Astute Travellers might realise the rock



spire is an excellent place to put a lookout, or might spot the sentry before he sees them. This would require a Recon check.

There are various options at this point. It may be possible to find a way around under cover of the forest using Stealth skill. Each of the Travellers will have to make the check separately, and failure by any of them means the sentry has spotted movement. He might not be sure what he saw, but will fire at the Travellers, or in their general direction. Since his weapon is fitted with a suppressor, his gunfire will not attract anyone else's attention. He may or may not decide to call in a warning, at the referee's discretion.

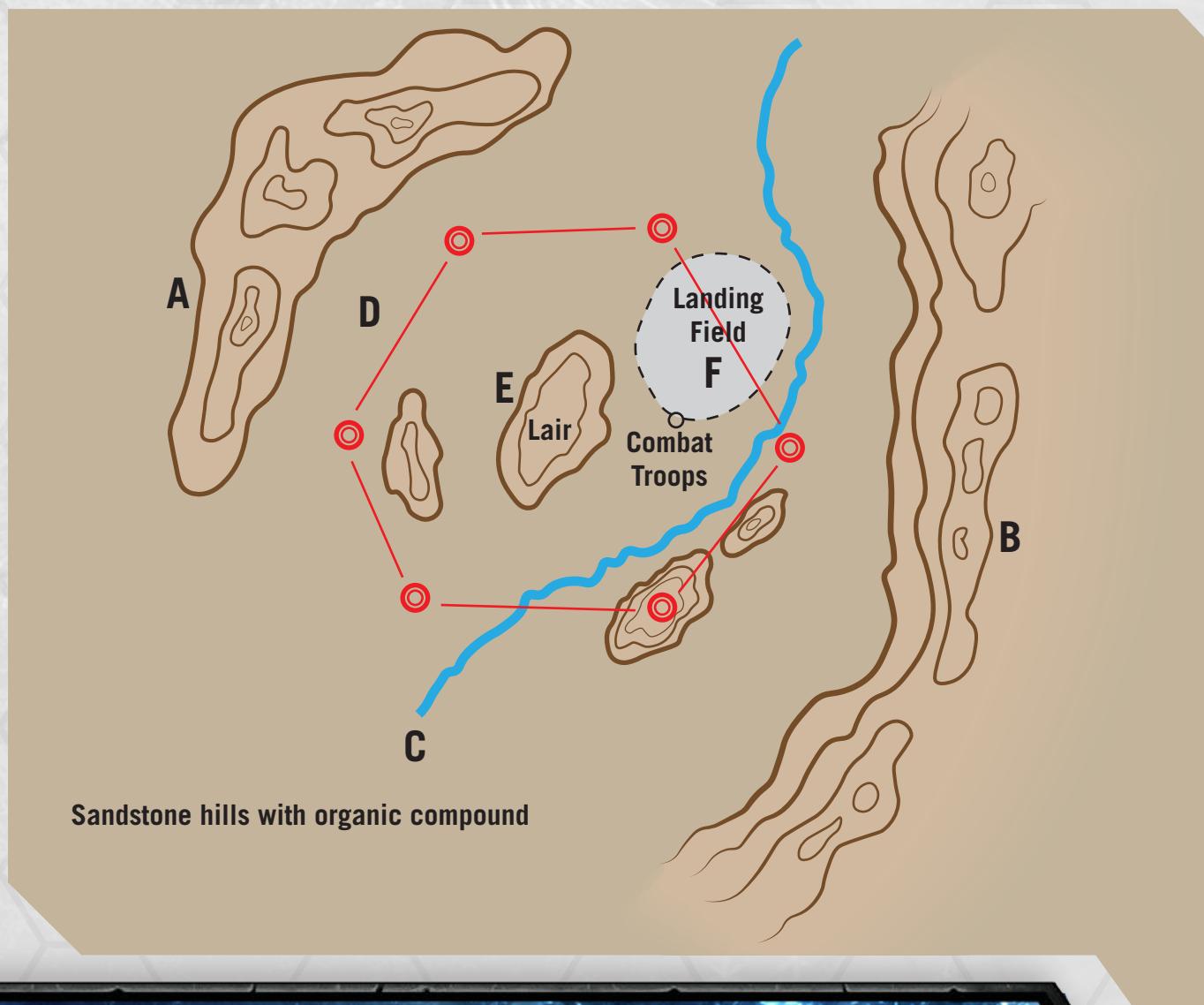
The Travellers might want to eliminate the sentry. They could do so by sniping, sneaking up and attempting a quiet kill with melee weapons, or simply blast his position with everything they have. The latter will almost certainly attract several patrols to the area. If the Travellers attempt to snipe the sentry, a single shot may not attract much attention. A clean shot against a stationary target might kill him instantly – this occurs

with an attack roll with an Effect of 6+. If the attempt fails, the sentry can fight back or call for help as normal.

If anyone wants to climb up into the sentry's lookout position, he can see back the way they came, and will sight several patrols. Some are working their way through regular routes in the forest, while one of these patrols is fighting a pair of Forest Trudgers. Most are searching the area around the re-entry pods, using a gradually widening pattern.

## THE VALLEY

The target installation is in a valley on the edge of the forest. The Travellers approach from the direction of an eroded, Monument-Valley-like mesa (A) stretches around the near side of the target valley. Once part of a wide plateau (B), it was long ago isolated and shaped as the river carved out the valley. The result is a natural sandstone wall, with a few gaps and narrow passes carved into it by the action of wind over time. The top of this wall provides an unobstructed view into the valley, although there is no cover either. The gaps in the stone



allow reasonably easy passage into the valley. To the north and south of this mesa is rough open terrain with little vegetation.

The valley is perhaps five kilometres East to West, and ten North to South. A river (**C**) issues from springs to the north and exits the valley to the south. The base (**E**) is in the centre of the valley, surrounded by a defensive ring of weapon turrets connected by tunnels (**D**). A landing field (**F**) lies near the base. It is currently occupied by a single Esseray starship.

If the Travellers decide to climb the mesa or other rock faces, they suffer a Bane on their STR checks (remember, Athletics skills might apply here) if attempting the climb at night. A marginal failure on this check results in a noisy slip that might attract attention. A fail indicates a minor fall doing 1D damage, and an exceptional fail (Effect -6 or worse) causes a minor landslide doing 2D-2 damage to every Traveller.

Alternatively, the Travellers might decide to skirt around the wall. This requires moving through very open terrain where it is likely the Travellers will be spotted. Stealth checks are required to move through this area, and if any Traveller fails, a patrol is sent out to intercept them. This is a force of a force of Esseray infantry (typically 2D of them), who will try to set up an ambush if possible.

## The Defensive Ring

The main facility lies at the centre of a ring of defensive emplacements, its entrance is covered by several anti-personnel weapons. It might be possible to force an entry that way, but casualties are inevitable and if there is any delay in getting the doors open the Travellers will be caught in a killing ground. A better alternative is to enter the complex through the defensive ring.

The defensive ring is an underground tunnel network supporting anti-aircraft and anti-starship weapons. These are laser and missile systems, mounted in starship-type turrets atop bunkers that are mostly underground. Each emplacement is connected by way of an airlock to the subterranean passageway. The weapon emplacements have maintenance hatches that might be forced, enabling the Travellers to enter the bunker from beneath. This would almost certainly alert guards, requiring the Travellers to fight a prepared enemy.

If the Travellers prefer to search for another way in, they will be able to find an access hatch on the near side of the ring, opening into a washed-out flood ditch. It does not look like it is used much. The hatch is very stiff and possibly rusted, but can be forced with some effort. This requires a STR check.

Each attempt produces a horrible squealing noise and some clanging. The Travellers may fear they have alerted the guards, and this is the case if the referee feels it is appropriate. However, there is a limit to how many mobs of Esseray guards can be thrown at the Travellers before it becomes dull – the referee would be better off using mere threats and tension sometimes. For example, the hatch makes a lot of noise and the Travellers are painfully aware of it... but there is no obvious response. Have they got away with it? Is there an ambush around the next corner? Sometimes no response is better for gameplay than an obvious and immediate resolution to the situation.

Once inside the tunnel ring, the Travellers find it is typically Esseray in character – drab and functional, with little regard to usability. There are pipes and conduits sticking out of walls at odd angles; a careless Traveller can bang into one and make an alarming amount of noise.

The tunnels are patrolled on a regular and predictable schedule, typically by squads of four Esseray infantry or guards. Weapon emplacements are automated but do contain a crew space for maintenance. Anyone opening an airlock into one of the emplacements will trigger an alert in the control facility, but it might be possible to bypass the alarm system and open the door without being detected...

If an alarm is tripped, Esseray patrols will be sent out in groups of four. Initially, one patrol will head through the tunnels to the site of the alert and another will go into the valley and search for any sign of intrusion. Contact with these patrols will result in immediate attack, and if the Esseray are not eliminated quickly they will raise a general alarm. Stronger forces will then be dispatched to eliminate the intruders.

It should be possible to move quickly through the defensive ring and enter the control centre. There are two access points. These are the lift shafts close to E and K on the control facility map. The Travellers will be vulnerable as they leave the lift, but a rapid movement into the complex should catch the Esseray off guard. Speed, aggression and firepower are the order of the day now.

## THE CONTROL FACILITY

The control facility for the defensive weapon emplacement is also the local Esseray command base, and houses over a hundred infantry. However, many of them are out patrolling the forest or have already been eliminated by the Travellers. Those that remain will

respond to alerts in an unimaginative manner, moving towards gunfire or alarms and engaging intruders unless they have instructions to guard a critical place or person. This could result in the Travellers being forced to fight a horde of enemies who arrive from all directions. If they keep moving and break through some groups of the enemy, they can reduce the odds against them. Clever use of traps, explosives and other tricks can take out clumps of enemies.

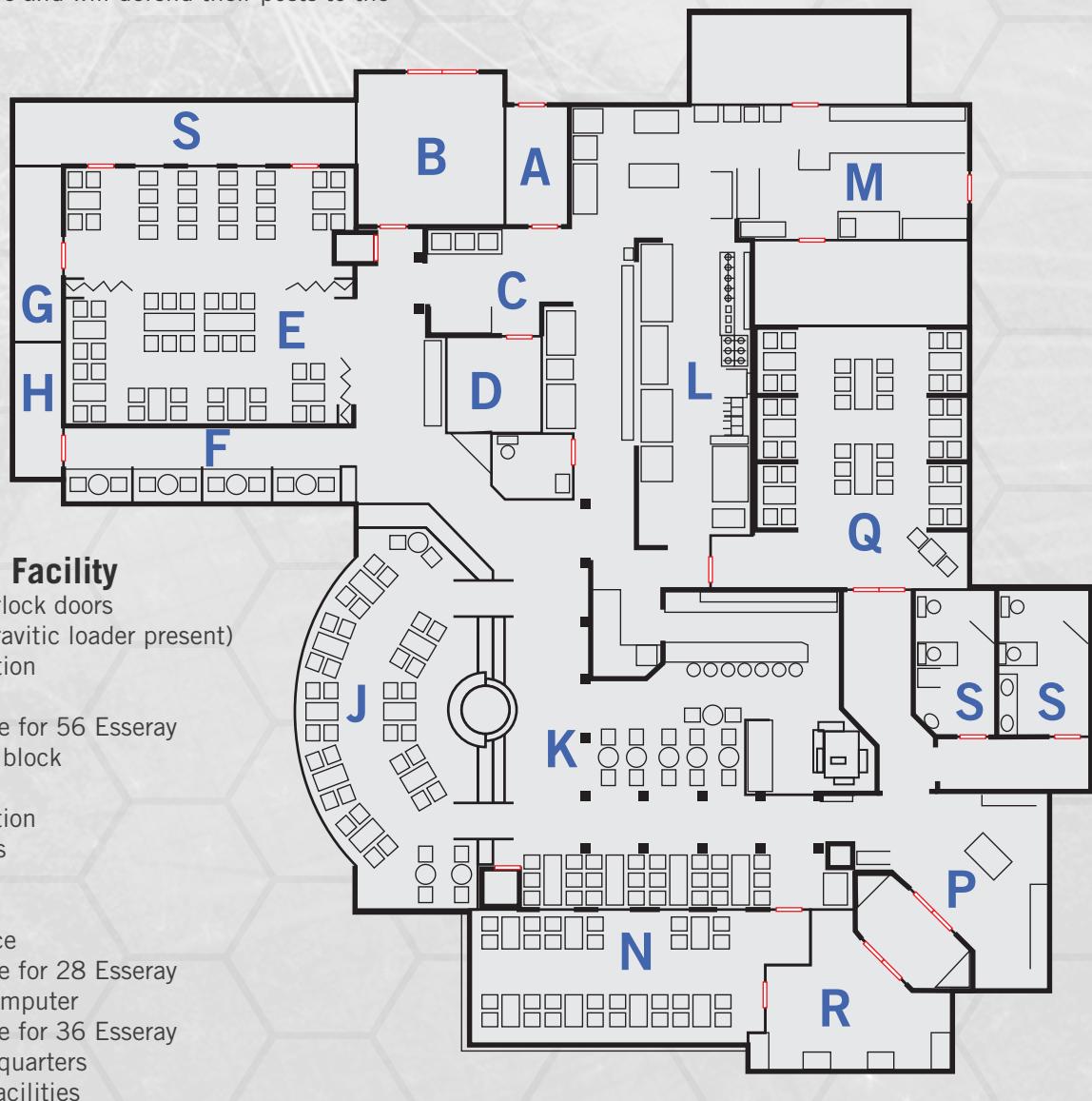
The referee need not keep track of every single Troxbolg in the facility. Instead, the fight in the base will be a dramatic situation in which human ingenuity and aggression is pitted against alien relentlessness. The referee should think of the combat as a story rather than a wargame – it should be exciting, dramatic and dangerous, and not reduced to the level of soulless counters moving about a map.

Areas G and J contain 2D Eseray guards who are ordered not to leave and will defend their posts to the

death. The General also has 2D infantry with him who will not leave unless ordered to. He might use a few as a delaying tactic to hold a corridor whilst he escapes, but will not leave himself without at least a few guards.

The Eseray General is using a Troxbolg body and is hard to tell apart from his guards. He will use this to confuse attackers if he is in danger. Once the Travellers have figured out which Troxbolg he is, they can keep track of him until they lose sight.

The General's initial response to intrusion is aggressive; he sends groups of 4-6 Eseray to hunt the intruders, and moves towards the resulting gunfire with his escort. As soon as it becomes apparent the fight is going against him, he orders all Eseray in the base (except those guarding the armoury and operations room) to hurl themselves at the intruders whilst he



begins a fighting retreat. His intention is to retire to the starship on the landing pad and prepare to abandon the base, but as a secondary option will enter the defensive ring's tunnels and hole up in a weapon emplacement until assistance arrives.

The Travellers will thus find themselves in a confused firefight with Esseray coming from all directions. They will need to push through quickly to catch the retreating General, or cut him off from the exits.

The General may be in room E, J, P, or R when the Travellers enter the base. His personal escort will not be far away, and will hasten to his defence as soon as an alarm is raised or gunfire breaks out.

### Hacking the Central Computer

The central computer is located on the map in room P. If the Travellers can find time amid the chaos, they can try to gain access to it. As soon as any attempt is made to hack the computer, the base sends an alarm signal to other Esseray forces, which will begin to make a response. It will be some time (at least 20 minutes) before any forces can respond, and much longer before a full-strength counterattack materialises. Of course, the Travellers will not know that.

A successful hack allows a quick download of a vast amount of information, which can be sifted later.

## THE SHIP

Not far from the control centre is a landing pad upon which a large Esseray freighter stands. It is mostly unloaded, having brought in components to strengthen

the base. The freighter is jump-capable and could be useful in evacuating people from Tinath, but is guarded by a small number of Esseray infantry. These will not leave their posts unless the General orders it.

The General will make for the ship if things go against him, expending his guards as living shields if necessary, and take off as soon as he can. He orders the ship's automated systems to begin warming the drives and preflighting the vessel as soon as he decides to abandon the base, which may be very convenient for the Travellers.

If they can gain access to the vessel, whose airlocks will quickly open to receive a fleeing General, the Travellers will be able to take off almost immediately. This is probably just as well, as every Esseray unit in range will converge on the base. The automated defensive systems will not fire on their own vessel unless ordered to by the General but, again, the Travellers might not realise this.

The Travellers may be able to make their escape aboard the ship, hopefully with the captured General. Some Travellers might realise the General will not die if his body is killed, and that removing the computer components from his brain will enable them to capture his intellect more conveniently than bringing the whole body.

If the Travellers cannot get to the ship, they will have to escape the base area, getting far enough clear that a shuttle can be sent to pick them up. Killing or capturing the Esseray General will throw the enemy forces into disarray for a time, allowing local counterattacks to succeed. However, the situation remains very bad for the humans of Tinath. How bad will become apparent in the final adventure, Under the Hammer.



# UNDER THE HAMMER

Had things gone according to plan, the Esseray would not yet have launched their attack on Tinath. They would instead have struck the key worlds of the Calida Federation first, then simply swatted the humans of Tinath as part of a mopping-up operation. Events have derailed their timetable, forcing an early launch of the campaign on Tinath, and then human ingenuity – not to mention desperate valour – has further delayed Esseray victory.

However, failure was never an option. The Esseray want Tinath for several reasons, notably the presence of what humans call the Oracle and other alien artefacts on the planet. They also want the world's resources, and its ecosphere may be useful in providing material for the Esseray biological robotics programme. The Esseray may have suffered setbacks but are continuing to grind down the remaining resistance. Ultimately, there is little chance for the humans of Tinath to win their war, and those chances are about to drop to zero.

The Esseray have diverted one of their starships from the assault on the Calida Federation. This is a large and powerful ship capable of delivering an orbital bombardment of cities or other important sites, and which carries cloning tanks used to grow large numbers of Esseray for use in ground combat. Once this ship arrives, the fight for Tinath is as good as over.

Information gleaned from the Esseray General (or by some other means if the adventure went awry) has given the defenders of Tinath some warning. Frantic preparations are underway to create a defensive countermeasure. However, there is little chance of stopping the Esseray warship even with the assistance of the Calidan destroyer Liiskenka. This ship arrived during the previous adventure and has remained to assist in the defence, although the critical situation in the Calida Federation means it may be recalled at any time.

Preparations for the final defence of Tinath are twofold. The world's arsenal of surface-to-orbit missiles is being expanded as quickly as possible, and all available weapons are now tied into a unified command structure.

This will give the best possible chance to punch through the Esseray warship's defences and cripple it, though the odds are not thought to be good.

At the same time, the world's few armed craft are being supplemented by conversions of anything that can fly into space. The more agile craft are being converted into ersatz fighters, while heavier ones are fitted with improvised torpedoes for a strike on the Esseray warship. There are few combat-experienced pilots available, however. Even the handful of pilots making up Tinath's space defence complement have, for the most part, never fired a shot in anger. The civilian volunteers making up most of the present force are nervous and inexperienced.

Given the fragile nature of the defences, the desire to evacuate has become widespread. There is no way to rescue the majority of the world's seventy million people, but a proportion might be saved using the mothballed colony ships of the Ashfield Project. These were intended for a large-scale colonial expedition out to Spinward, which collapsed due to a number of factors. The colony ships include three huge asteroid-hulled vessels (literally asteroids that have been tunnelled to create a mobile worldlet) and numerous support and supply ships.

Efforts are underway to reactivate these ships and bring them to Tinath in time to save some of the population. It is estimated that as many as half a million people might be brought aboard these ships, mostly into the vast low berth chambers of the three main vessels. If the defenders hold out long enough, the colony ships may be able to take these refugees to a safe world and come back for more, though that will require several weeks for the trip and by no means certain.

In the days and weeks after the events of Electronic Warfare, ships start arriving in the Tinath system and taking on evacuees. At first these are freighters and supply ships, which run back to Ashfield Station and load their human cargo aboard vessels waiting there. Eventually, the three great asteroid ships arrive at Tinath, and a stream of shuttles begins transferring

people aboard them. Even evacuating around the clock, the process is slow and only a few tens of thousands are aboard when the Esseray warship arrives. The asteroid ships have a few weapons for self-defence but stand no chance against a warship. If the defenders cannot stop it, the evacuation will have to be curtailed and the colony ships will flee with what they have aboard. At least some will be saved that way....

Under the Hammer takes place in two distinct phases. The first is a period of several weeks after the events of Electronic Warfare. During this time, the Travellers have a chance to do whatever they think best, though likely they will be overworked as the defenders increasingly look to them to solve problems. The second phase of the adventure represents the climax of the campaign as the Esseray warship enters the Tinath system and the final defence begins.

## UNDER THE HAMMER

The leaders of the Tinath defence know the Calida Federation has been hit hard, and that no assistance can be expected. They are also aware a warship has been sent to Tinath and will be arriving soon. This information has been suppressed to avoid a panic, and a downplayed (but nevertheless alarming) version has been made public.

The Travellers are made aware of the real situation by Baroness Edda. Their ship is still out of commission. Indeed, some of the necessary parts only recently arrived and the drive is still in pieces. However, the baroness offers a guarantee that the ship will be ready to fly as soon as possible. In the meantime, she wants the Travellers to do their utmost to assist the defenders. They are becoming a rallying point for the human population, and could do much to help. This is in their interests anyway – the longer the Esseray are delayed the more chance there is of getting their ship into a flyable condition.

With Tinath waiting under the hammer, the Travellers can do a lot to raise morale and prepare for the day it finally falls. They could also be forgiven for taking a few days to rest and recuperate from their previous adventures. One way to combine this is a tour of the cities, ostensibly as ‘special advisors’ to the defenders but unofficially as a propaganda exercise.

The referee can make as much or as little of this period as he likes. It is recommended that the Travellers play out one of their visits to a city threatened by advancing Esseray, but there is no need to come up with dozens of variants on the theme.

## THE GOODWILL TOUR

When the Travellers arrive in a city under threat, there is a simple reception but no welcoming crowd or huge parade. Damage to the city is obvious – Esseray Interceptors are being used to attack civilian targets with their plasma guns and tend to cause a lot of damage before the city’s few anti-aircraft weapons can bring them down. Bereaved and distraught citizens may demand to know why they are being attacked like this, but the only answer the Travellers have is that the Esseray do not understand concepts like ‘civilian’ or ‘non-combatant’. They see the human species as their enemy, and do not distinguish between military and non-military targets.

Despite the grim situation and occasional gunfire from the city perimeters, the Travellers are warmly received most places they go. They will face questioning from military and political leaders who want to find out everything they know about the Esseray. They may also run into people who do not believe the stories of their adventures, or who have bought into enormously exaggerated versions. The Travellers may end up shuffling their feet in embarrassment as a civic dignitary-turned-fanboy raves about their incredible adventures and the hordes of Esseray they have slaughtered to a rapt audience desperate to believe heroes walk among them.

There will also be private receptions, where a select and invited few can meet the Travellers socially. This might get a bit awkward as well, with the elite seeking support or assistance with some endeavour that might be entirely self-serving. It may also become apparent that some invited dignitaries have traded access to the Travellers for support or other favours from those less privileged. Many of these people want the same thing – they want to know how the Travellers are going to save them (personally in most cases, but sometimes society in general) from the Esseray.

There are, of course, those who are a bit more genuine. Military and civic leaders who want to know how best to protect their people, and those who genuinely appreciate what the Travellers have done so far. The goodwill tour will show many facets of human society from the heroism of those fighting the enemy or saving lives in the combat zones to those profiteering from resources that have become scarce. The overall impression is of people trying to survive and desperate for someone to show them how or just give them a reason to hope.

The referee could build many incidents into this period. Examples include an Esseray attack that penetrates the city and forces the Travellers to take up arms, or a visit to a field hospital thrown into chaos and requiring firm leadership. Not all of these incidents need to involve combat or require dice rolling; if the Travellers can roleplay the situation without picking up their dice at all, then this is an excellent outcome.

Overall, however, the referee should strive to show the Travellers a human side to the struggle for Tinath, good and bad. They will hopefully emerge from the tour with a resolve to protect the ordinary folks whose lives are torn apart or threatened by the conflict. Their definition of winning might shift from achieving the adventure's goals and collecting their reward to saving innocent lives. In short, this section is all about showing the Travellers what they are fighting for. Not all Travellers will get it, of course, but those who do will find the game far more immersive than if it is reduced to a string of skill checks required to get to the end of the adventure.

## THE ORBITAL DEFENCE FORCE

Given the time frame of just weeks, the size of the newly-formed Unified Orbital Defence Force is little short of amazing. Unfortunately, it is still far too small to be sufficient, and its crews are both scared and inexperienced. As with the strike against the Esseray base, it seems to be widely assumed that the Travellers will lead the fight when the Esseray warship arrives. Not everyone knows about it, of course, but rumours have leaked out and it is obvious the space force is preparing for something. Thus, the Travellers will find themselves asked 'when are you joining us?' by pilots and wished good luck in the coming battle by ground crews.

With their own ship still being hurriedly repaired, the Travellers are assigned a vessel. This started its career long ago as a Type A Free Trader (see page 44 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and worlds*). Its jump drive began to fail some years ago, and it was relegated to in-system work. Until recently, the vessel was serving as a transport in the neighbouring Ashfield system. It was brought to Tinath, re-armed, and is now ready for combat... or as ready as it will ever be. It has no crew, however.

The vessel has received an uprated manoeuvre drive, giving it Thrust 3, and has been fitted with improvised armour over most areas of the hull, providing +3 additional points of armour. It is fitted with two dual



pulse laser turrets and can carry marines in the cargo hold for boarding actions. For the battle against the Esseray warship, the vessel has been fitted a cradle for an improvised anti-shipping torpedo. This is fired by opening the cargo bay doors, which will depressurise the cargo hold. The weapon is very short-ranged, and can only be launched from Close (1-10 km) ranges. This is very short for space combat, but there are no better options.

Once the Travellers have agreed to take part in the fight, this vessel is chosen for the delivery of one of the world's very few tactical nuclear warheads. The torpedo is refitted with the new payload, and the Travellers are entrusted with putting it in the right place.

If the weapon hits a heavily armoured starship such as the one expected to attack Tinath, it will detonate on the surface. Damage is likely to be significant but not disabling. To have a good chance of stopping the Esseray ship, the warhead must penetrate the hull and detonate deep inside. Thus, the Travellers are informed that their role in the coming battle will be to pick their moment and deliver the nuclear warhead into a vulnerable part of the enemy ship.

Penetration is likely if the torpedo hits a hull breach or open docking bay, but otherwise a surface detonation will likely result. The Travellers' vessel will act as a command ship for much of the battle, until the Esseray hull is breached or a suitable attack point presents itself. At that moment, the Travellers will need to get in

close and launch the torpedo. Their hull (and that of the enemy ship, in the case of an internal detonation) will protect them from radiation, and of course there is no blast effect in space.

The Travellers will be carrying a one-shot weapon aboard their ship. It is conceivable the battle can be won without it, but the torpedo represents Tinath's best chance. Above all else, the Travellers must survive until they deliver the weapon, which may mean hanging back from the fight until they can make their own attack run. That might be contrary to the Travellers' nature, but it is the mission they are best suited for.

The vessel needs a pilot and engineer to run the drives, plus gunners for its weapons. Additional crewmembers might be useful for damage control or other emergency tasks.

## The Orbital Defence Force

The orbital defence force consists mostly of fighters and converted small craft equipped with lasers or improvised torpedoes. There are two 200-ton system defence boats and a handful of larger converted vessels like the one the Travellers have been assigned, and the Calidan destroyer has offered its support. However, the Tinath leadership are reluctant to place command in the hands of the destroyer's captain as his vessel could be recalled at any time. They are rather obviously hoping the Travellers will provide leadership, especially if there are ex-navy personnel among them.

The general plan is not complex. The fighters and more agile craft will try to punch a path through to the enemy vessel, at which point the torpedo craft will attack. The torpedo force should be split into several divisions, attacking in groups rather than all at once to avoid getting in one another's way. Beyond this, organisation of the battle will be down to the force leaders. If all else fails, the orbital defence missiles of Tinath can be launched in a single salvo, which might be enough to cripple or even destroy the enemy vessel.

In the days or weeks leading up to the assault on Tinath, the Travellers have a chance to prepare the defence force a little better. These options could be played out in detail as a roleplaying exercise, in which case the referee might choose not to ask for skill checks at all if the Travellers do a good job. They can be reduced to appropriate dice rolls if necessary, with the referee selecting skill and difficulty as usual.

**Attempting to Improve Morale** might be a matter of giving big speeches or simply looking like the Travellers know what they are doing. There are other methods too, however. For example, a Traveller might use the Carouse skill to create social bonds between diverse crewmembers, hoping that camaraderie will carry them through where there is no time for formal training. This is an example of a clever way in which Travellers may use the skills they have to approach a problem. Many such options could be tried. If the referee decides morale in the force has improved, DM+1 applies to all checks made by the orbital defence force (not including the Travellers) during the battle.

**Creating a Command Structure** would be another good idea. There is no time for anything very formal, but appointing some crews as leaders for the rest will allow the force to operate more cohesively and perhaps enable it to rally after a setback. However, not everyone will agree with the Travellers' decisions; they may have to face down challenges or deal with dissent. If a suitable command structure is put in place, the Travellers may add DM+2 on all Tactics checks during the battle.

**Setting up a Data-Sharing Net** is a more technical task that would offset deficiencies in the sensor systems of many vessels, including the Travellers' own. By automatically passing all sensor data among the defensive craft, the Travellers will facilitate simpler targeting and a better awareness of the tactical situation. If the Travellers successfully implement this, they suffer no negative DM on Electronics (sensors) tasks (there would normally be a negative DM for using civilian sensors) and all vessels (including their own) receive DM+1 on all attack rolls to hit enemy craft with weapons fire – including torpedoes.

## THE FINAL HOURS

The asteroid ships from Ashfield Station eventually arrive and begin loading evacuees in a stream of shuttles. Supplies and weaponry are also sent aboard, though there is a shortage of both. A few of the smaller supporting vessels are quickly filled to capacity and jump out. However, before the larger colony ships are more than partially loaded, a jump emergence is detected in the outer Tinath system.

The vessel that has arrived is very large – estimated at over 60,000 tons. It is smaller than the asteroid-hulled colony ships but is a ship of war rather than a lumbering mass of cryo-stasis units and equipment holds. The

Esseray ship spends several hours in orbit around the system's gas giant, presumably using its subordinate craft to skim fuel, then begins a leisurely acceleration towards Tinath. Arrival time is estimated at around 120 hours – giving the colony ships several precious days in which to load as many people as possible. It is a measure of how bad things are getting that this is seen as a blessing.

The ground offensives by the Esseray step up in intensity once the ship arrives, and the hours tick down to its arrival. The colony ships are ordered to move away from Tinath, placing them out of range of the warship's weapons if it attacks the planet, and also positioning them to make an immediate jump if (when) necessary. This makes the transit time for shuttles from the surface much longer and slows the evacuation, but the colony ships will be able to remain to the very last minute, and if the Esseray warship is defeated they will be able to continue loading afterwards.

There is nothing left to do now but check on the status of the Travellers' own ship – it is almost ready but will not be flyable before the Esseray vessel enters orbit – and to prepare for the final do-or-die defence of Tinath.

## THE BATTLE FOR TINATH

When the Esseray ship is still about four hours from Tinath's orbit, the rag-tag defensive force launches and begins to form up. It would be a grand sight under some circumstances, but at present it seems little more than a tragic gesture of defiance.

Indeed, some armed craft break off once they reach orbit, heading for the colony ships. Their crews can see no possibility of winning the battle or even surviving it, and have chosen to save their own skins. The Travellers could reverse this mutiny by saying the right things over the radio, inspiring or shaming the crews into returning to their squadrons.

This would require a Leadership or Persuade check, or perhaps a Tactics check to lay out a plan for victory in cold, rational terms. If the Travellers succeed, most of the fleeing craft return to their positions and some deliberately place themselves ahead of their squadrons. Their crews are clearly determined to redeem themselves, and if this messes with the formation a bit, at least they are back in the fight.

As the defence force accelerates out to meet the incoming Esseray ship, it is joined by the Calidan

destroyer Liiskenka. This ship, which seemed quite powerful a few days ago, is now dwarfed by the Esseray vessel. However, it is the most significant asset the defenders have.

For their part, the Esseray seem to have an overwhelming force but things are not quite as bad as they may seem at first glance. A 'straight' warship of 60,000 tons could easily swat a force like the one the Travellers have assembled. However this is not a battleship. It is a heavily armed transport, with the capability to conduct an orbital bombardment. Most of its weapons are designed to attack ground targets or large installations like a highport, and are too clumsy for space combat. However, the Esseray ship still has plenty of firepower for ship-to-ship work, and as it approaches Tinath it begins to launch its own defensive craft, robotic vessels equivalent to a Light Fighter (see page 64 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and worlds*). These fighters have no crew and are partially biological, like other Esseray craft. They are relentless and fearless, but unimaginative. It is thus possible to draw them into a crossfire or other trap, and to use the same trick several times before the survivors finally get wise to the tactics.

Any Initiative or Tactics check against the Esseray space forces gains a Boon for this reason.

### Referee's Notes:

It might be possible to play out the space battle off Tinath in detail, but this would require a lot of time and might be too complex for beginning referees to handle. Instead, the attack on the Esseray cruiser should be played in a cinematic fashion. It is not necessary to work out where every single shot from every single gun has gone. Instead the action should focus on the Travellers and their decisions, with the fight as a whole abstracted to a great extent.

For this reason, details of the Esseray ship and the Calidan destroyer are irrelevant. They are plot elements here, not assets in a wargame. Other Traveller adventures may take a different approach – indeed, there are rules for large-scale ship combat in High Guard – but for now the Esseray ship is a looming menace, the 'big bad' that must be stopped by heroic actions.

Thus many of the scenes that follow impose effects on the enemy ship without the Travellers directly rolling to hit and figuring out the damage done by each of their weapons. This is probably just as well for them – there is really not much a converted Free Trader can do to a

60,000 ton warship! However, those guns can affect smaller Esseray craft, and smaller-scale fights can be played out using the normal space combat rules, found on page 30 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and Worlds*.

## THE ESSERAY BOMBARDMENT SHIP

The Esseray vessel is not a warship as such. Instead it is designed to act as an artillery (orbital artillery) platform in support of a ground offensive, or pound strategic targets from above. It also carries cloning vats to produce huge numbers of ground troops, which are delivered by shuttle to the surface. In short, this vessel must be stopped short of its firing position or it will start demolishing Tinath's cities and troop concentrations with no hope of reply, and then flood the wreckage with hordes of Troxbolg infantry.

Such a ship could sit in orbit over a world, taking on board organic matter from the surface and a few days later send down another wave of mindless killing machines, all the while bombarding any centres of resistance that emerge. Most of the munitions used by ships of this sort are termed 'deadfall ordnance', i.e. they are weapons that can be dropped from orbit without power or any sort of guidance system. Gravity makes even a simple rock a lethal city-killer.

The bombardment ship has a crew of Forfak technicians and Troxbolg guards, large enough to operate the ship at full efficiency. However, its complement of ground troops is still rather small, and many will need days or weeks to become ready. This makes no difference in a ship-to-ship fight, but it does mean that if the defence of Tinath were to be broken, the humans would have a few days before the hordes descended from space to finish them off.

## INITIAL CONTACT

As the defence force approaches the Esseray ship and its own fighters come out to intercept them, the Travellers might think to undertake a detailed scan and look for weaknesses. A successful Electronics (sensors) check indicates the vessel's armour is much stronger in some areas than others, and is designed to trade fire with heavy planetary defence weapons rather than withstand close attack by smaller craft. This can be used to the Travellers' advantage if they direct attacks against the more lightly armoured sections. The referee can apply DM+1 to attack rolls against the Esseray ship if the Travellers learn its weaknesses in this way.

It may also occur to them to try to draw out some of the defending fighters and eliminate them before beginning the attack run. Done well, this should increase survivability for the torpedo-armed craft. It is not very difficult to draw Esseray fighters into an ambush. Sending out some craft ahead of the force to engage early, before running back towards the rest of the squadrons, will draw the Esseray in a pursuit that will place them under the massed guns of the human force.

There will inevitably be casualties among the decoy force, and getting crews to volunteer for it might be difficult. Leadership checks might work, though if the Travellers rallied the fleeing crews earlier they will have several ready volunteers eager to redeem themselves. The Travellers may be aware they are sending at least some of these crews to their deaths, but it will gain an advantage for the force as a whole.

Note that the Travellers' ship is not fast enough for this role; it requires lighter, more agile ships.

If this measure is undertaken, the leading Esseray fighters are drawn into the fire of the human ships at a pre-planned location and distance. The Travellers' own ship can fire on the Esseray with DM+2 to attack rolls, and the overall effect is devastating. Numerous Esseray craft are blasted apart before they can withdraw, tipping the odds a little.

If this measure is carried out, all attempts to get past the Esseray fighter screen are subject to DM+1. The referee might want to give the Travellers a list of names after the adventure; these are the pilots killed drawing the Esseray into the ambush zone.

## ATTACKING THE BOMBARDMENT SHIP

From this point, the battle takes the form of several attempts to attack the bombardment ship. Each has two distinct phases; an attempt to break through the fighter screen and the actual attack. If the fighter screen is not penetrated, the attack against the Esseray ship can be made anyway, but casualties will be very high among the torpedo craft.

There is time for six attempts before the Esseray ship reaches Tinath's orbit. At that point it will immediately begin launching weapons against cities, though it will need several hours to obliterate all of them. This



will allow an indefinite number of attacks, though the humans will probably run out of spacecraft long before this happens.

The referee should embellish the battle with cinematic details, creating a narrative out of fragmentary snapshots of the action: a burning human ship surrounded by Esseray fighters spitting laser fire into its hull; a daring torpedo run by a converted shuttle; clumsily handled weapons on the cruiser hitting an escort as well as the human fighter they were targeting; small craft strafing the hull; fires starting aboard the bombardment ship and debris billowing out into space. Throughout this all, the destroyer Liiskenka makes repeated gun passes at the much bigger ship, drawing fire away from the torpedo craft and doing a little damage with her own weapons.

Amid this chaos, it is the Travellers' actions that decide how the fight goes. They will also roll for the performance of the human fighter and torpedo squadrons, using their own skills. The referee can assume a Traveller who is coordinating the fire of a fighter group can apply his own skill to their gunnery rather than rolling for squadrons or individual ships.

There are six human fighter groups and four torpedo groups at the beginning of the fight. If a group is eliminated as a result of the battle resolution process (below), it is likely that there will be a few craft still surviving who will fight on as best they can, or flee, or otherwise act according to their crew's determination and skill. Later in the battle there may be a chance to scrape some of these survivors together for a last, desperate assault.

There will also be some fixed events that take place during the battle. The way the Travellers react to these may weaken their force but save lives elsewhere.

The battle itself is a constant melee of fighters, with larger craft flying among them, shooting at targets that present themselves. However, the key actions are the attempts to torpedo the bombardment ship. Each of these is a crescendo in the action, and resolved in the following manner:

- Set-piece events are resolved.
- The Travellers decide whether to make a heavily committed attack or one that can be aborted if it goes badly.
- An attempt is made to punch through the fighter screen.

- The Travellers choose whether to abort if they have retained that option.
- The torpedo attack on the Esseray ship is resolved.
- Effects are applied to the Esseray ship, and after a period of regrouping and skirmishing another attack run is set up.

Attacks on the Esseray ship are resolved in an abstract manner, with the Travellers directing the assault and providing supporting fire for the most part. They may become involved in direct fighting due to some set-piece events, as noted below. When human fighters or torpedo craft make an attack, the Travellers will roll for how well they do, based on their own skills.

If a Traveller comes up with some clever way to gain an advantage, maybe attempting to spoof the enemy's targeting systems with a home-made jammer, the referee should adjudicate accordingly. However, any given stratagem should only work for one attack run. By the time of the next strike, countermeasures will be in place or the advantage gained will have been offset by other events.

**Breaking Through the Fighter Screen:** Difficult (10+) Tactics (naval) check (2D minutes, INT). If the check is successful, the Esseray fighter screen inflicts casualties on the human fighters only. If unsuccessful, the fighters can also inflict casualties on the torpedo craft. If the Travellers chose to make a heavily committed attack they receive DM+2 to this check but automatically lose one fighter group. If the Travellers elected not to make a heavily committed attack they can abort the torpedo run after checking to see if the fighter screen is penetrated, in which case no casualties are taken among the torpedo craft.

**Making a Torpedo Run on the Esseray ship:** Average (8+) Gunner (turret) check (2D minutes, DEX). The Effect of this roll determines the damage done to the Esseray ship. This has two consequences: it increases the damage level of the enemy cruiser (see below) and also increases the effectiveness of future attacks as the target is worn down.

**Any success level** gains cumulative DM+1 on all subsequent torpedo attacks.

**Exceptional Success (Effect 6+)** adds an additional DM+1 to all torpedo attacks.

## Esseray Cruiser Damage

Damage	Damage Effects
1-3	The cruiser does not seem to have received more than cosmetic damage.
4-6	The cruiser has a few small hull breaches and is venting water and air.
7-9	The cruiser has large hull breaches, and fires can be seen within. Some of its weapons seem to be out of action.
10-12	The cruiser's drive seems to be malfunctioning, and severe hull breaches can be seen.
13-15	The cruiser begins to shed large pieces of debris. It may break up even if it takes no further damage.
16+	The cruiser is consumed by internal fires and explosions as its ordnance and propellants begin to detonate. It will be torn apart by internal explosions within minutes.

## ESSERAY CRUISER DAMAGE LEVELS

The Esseray bombardment cruiser receives damage according to the cumulative Effect of the torpedo attacks thus made. Negative Effect does not reduce the ship's damage level. The amount of damage received will produce visible effects shown on the Esseray Cruiser Damage table.

## TAKING CASUALTIES

The Travellers begin the battle with six fighter groups and four torpedo groups at their disposal. These may be lost as the battle continues.

Each attempt to penetrate the fighter screen exposes the human force to losses. The referee should make a straight 2D roll. On 8+, a fighter group is lost to enemy fire. An additional group is lost automatically if a heavily committed attack is made, though this does reduce the chance of losses to the torpedo force.

If the screen is penetrated, the torpedo force takes no losses from enemy fighters. If it is not penetrated but the attack is aborted, then again there are no losses among the torpedo craft. If the screen is not penetrated but the attack goes ahead anyway, a torpedo group is lost to enemy fighters on a 2D roll of 6+, though the torpedo run can still go ahead if there are any groups left.

In addition, a torpedo group may be lost on a straight 2D roll of 10+, simulating the effects of inaccurate and rather random defensive fire from the bombardment cruiser.

If the humans run out of torpedo craft then no more runs can be made, though there is a last chance to rally the survivors as noted on page 96.

## SET PIECE ACTIONS

The following events occur automatically during the fighting and should be imposed at the beginning of each attack run. If the event calls for direct action by the Travellers, this is resolved using the normal combat rules rather than being abstracted.

### First Run

As the humans begin their first run at the Esseray cruiser, three Esseray fighters close with the Travellers' ship and engaged in a dogfight with it. Rules for dogfighting are found on page 38 of *Book 2: spacecraft and Combat*. The Travellers will be at a serious disadvantage against the more agile Esseray fighters. They might simply fight the battle as normal, or try to break out of the dogfight. One option would be to lead the Esseray onto the guns of more agile human craft, but the Travellers might come up with all manner of other ideas.

### Second Run

As the second attack run forms up, a force of Esseray fighters breaks off and heads for the stream of evacuation shuttles, which are now virtually defenceless. Several pilots demand to be allowed to intercept them. If the Travellers agree, these pilots are out of the battle with the result that the humans have lost a fighter group. If they refuse, they may have to deal with the

consequences after hundreds are killed aboard the shuttles, but they keep their force intact. Either way, all subsequent attempts to get through the Esseray fighter screen are subject to DM+1 due to the absence of these enemy fighters.

Note that the Travellers' vessel is not fast enough to catch the Esseray fighters.

### Third Run

During the third attack run, the Travellers' ship is struck by debris, sending it spinning out of control and drifting towards the Esseray vessel. Unless the Travellers call off the attack, the third run will go around them, which might be disconcerting given their circumstances. A handful of Esseray fighters target the Travellers' ship, though they are not able to initiate a dogfight. The Travellers will need to fight off this attack with their ship's guns whilst getting their ship's systems back online.

### Fourth Run

The Calidan destroyer Liiskenka has been hit heavily and is close to being forced out of action. Her captain chooses to make one last close gun pass on the enemy vessel, drawing the fire of virtually every weapon aboard. On fire and shedding debris, the destroyer pours fire into the bombardment cruiser and delivers significant damage equivalent to 1D points on the Esseray Cruiser Damage table.

Because of this distraction, the fighter screen is automatically penetrated this run, with no casualties taken by fighters or torpedo craft from Esseray fighters or weapons aboard the bombardment ship. However, all future rolls to inflict casualties on the human force are subject to DM+1 as the destroyer is no longer causing a distraction.

After her gallant assault, Liiskenka limps away, pursued by a few fighters. She is still capable of weakly defending herself but cannot contribute further to the battle.

### Fifth Run

There is no set-piece event on the fifth attack run, but the Travellers will receive frantic radio signals as the Esseray cruiser approaches its firing position. They are urged to take it out right now, which is an understandable sentiment even if it is not very helpful.

### Sixth Run

As the Esseray cruiser moves into orbit, the defenders of Tinath launch all their surface-to-orbit missiles in a single salvo. The Esseray fighter screen is shifted to intercept the missiles. If they are permitted to do this, most of the missiles are shot down, though enough strike home to inflict 1D damage (on the Esseray Cruiser Damage table).

If the Travellers send their own fighters against the Esseray screen, one fighter group is automatically lost in the ensuing melee and there is the usual chance of another. However, more of the missiles are able to get through, and the enemy cruiser takes 2D damage.

With the enemy fighter screen drawn off, the torpedo craft are able to make their run unimpeded, though there is still the usual chance for losses from the cruiser's defensive fire.

### Seventh Run

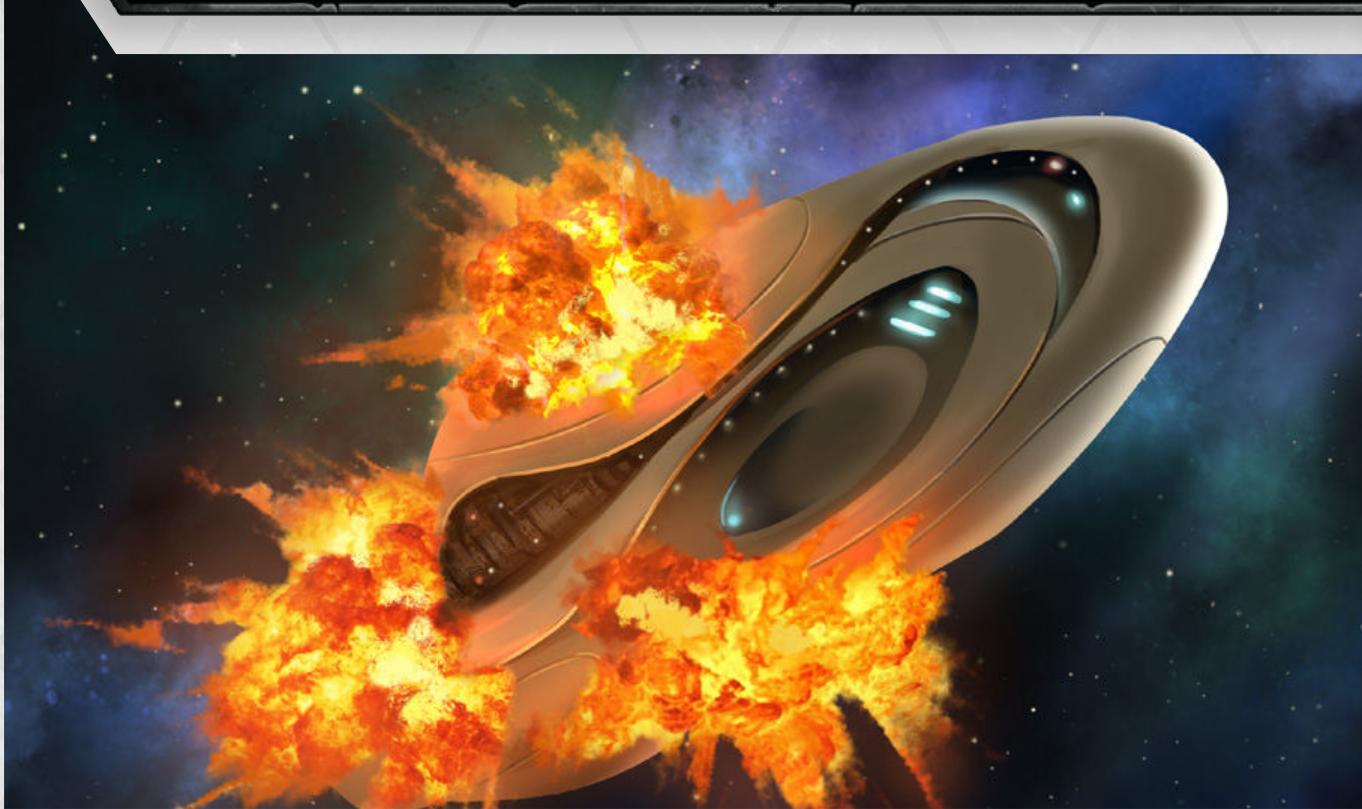
Before the seventh attack run begins, the bombardment ship opens fire on Tinath. Once it is free to manoeuvre in orbit without being under fire it will drop 'deadfall' ordnance, i.e. weapons that do not require any motive power. These weapons typically rely on the velocity they strike the ground with (due to gravity) and are not very precise, but cheap and extremely destructive.

For the time being however, the enemy cruiser relies on powered missiles with non-nuclear warheads. These will cause serious casualties wherever they strike but are not capable of totally annihilating a city. The Travellers will receive demands that they transfer fighters to a screening role, shooting down some of the missiles. They can reduce casualties among the civilian population by doing so, but they will also reduce their chances of taking out the enemy ship.

Subsequent attack runs follow the same pattern, as the bombardment ship launches salvo after salvo at the cities of Tinath. If the defenders run out of ships, they have one last chance to rally some survivors, after which Tinath is doomed. The only option at that point is for the colony ships to pick up stragglers from the Travellers' force and jump out. It is to be hoped that the Travellers manage to destroy the enemy ship before that.

## USING THE NUKE

The Travellers have discretion about when to use their weapon. They can launch it at any time, but an internal



detonation is necessary to cause maximum damage. Thus the higher the damage level the enemy cruiser already has, the more chance there is of a penetrating hit. The Travellers will also need to get close to the enemy ship in order to fire.

Launching the torpedo requires an attack roll using the Gunner (turrets) skill, but it would be rather sad if it missed. The Travellers may thus want to stack the odds with a task chain or clever manoeuvres. The referee should adjudicate their efforts accordingly, and in addition apply DM+4 to hit the enemy cruiser; it is a very big target and the Travellers are launching from very close range. Hitting the cruiser should not really be a problem.

Achieving penetration is a different matter. The heavily armoured hull of the Esseray ship can withstand a surface detonation, so punching through a weak spot is desirable. If the nuclear torpedo hits the enemy ship, the referee should make a 2D roll. If the roll is equal to or higher than the damage level of the Esseray ship, the torpedo hits armour and detonates on the surface. This means the torpedo cannot fail to penetrate if the cruiser has a damage level of 12 (severe hull breaches) or more.

A surface detonation delivers +1D damage, which might be enough to cripple the ship if it is already heavily damaged. An internal detonation delivers +3D damage, which is likely to destroy the Esseray ship. As predicted,

the Travellers are shielded from radiation, but debris from the target showers their ship. Treat this as 1D hits, each doing 3D damage to their ship.

If the nuclear strike is not enough, all may not be lost. Further torpedo attacks might be sufficient to finish off the damaged Esseray ship. If not, Tinath is doomed but the Travellers should be able to escape to the colony ships.

**Referee's Note:** The damage taken by the Travellers' ship uses the normal ship combat rules. Hits against the Esseray cruiser use the cinematic system noted before.

## THE LAST CHANCE

This ending should be used if the Travellers have failed, whether through terrible dice luck or bad decisions. It draws the focus away from the Travellers to some extent. There is nothing wrong with that – sometimes the Travellers are just part of someone else's story! However, it is better if the Travellers succeed through their own efforts than a deus ex machina imposed by the referee.

If all the torpedo craft are destroyed and the Esseray cruiser remains intact, the Travellers have one last chance to scrape together a strike from the survivors. There will be a few craft forced out of the fight with damage, or whose crews have decided to withdraw.

Hurried repairs have made some of them combat-worthy (at least marginally so) and those who have withdrawn can perhaps be convinced to return.

Now is the time for the Travellers to rally their forces. An inspiring speech or even just a few words to the effect that they are not beaten whilst someone is still fighting might win over wavering pilots. Travellers should be encouraged to roleplay this scene, and the referee should give a positive DM to Leadership or Persuade checks if they come up with something suitably dramatic.

If the effort succeeds, calls start to come in. A few of the pilots still have their makeshift torpedoes and are willing to make the run if others can cover them. Damaged craft crawl back into formation; pilots with no torpedoes offer to make a dummy attack to draw fire. What is left of the defending force forms up for a last torpedo run as the Esseray shift their surviving escorts to cover the line of attack.

The final assault should be as cinematic as possible. If the Travellers want to fire on the enemy ship or its escorts they can do so of course, but this scene is not the stuff of skill checks; the referee should indulge his dramatic instincts.

The attack goes in, and it is glorious. An Esseray escort is crippled and crashes into the cruiser; fighters rake the cruiser's drives with laser fire whilst others launch their last torpedoes at point-blank range. Debris showers out of the cruiser; cracks appear in its hull... but it is still firing. All the torpedoes are expended, the assault has failed, and there is nothing left to fight with.

Then the Calidan destroyer Liiskenka makes her own final effort. Accelerating so hard she tears away damaged sections of her hull, she passes close along the Esseray ship's hull. Her last missiles cross the gap in seconds, detonating in a chain of explosions along the hull. A larger explosion consumes Liiskenka as she is hit at point-blank range, and still the enemy cruiser is firing.

... and then it stops. The cruiser's drive section is vaporised in a fireball of expanding plasma. It is ripped

apart from the inside by a chain of explosions, human fighters scattering to avoid the debris.

And then there is a moment of realisation. The Travellers have actually done it. The war is not over but Tinath will not fall today.

## AFTERMATH

As the Esseray cruiser breaks up in orbit, debris showers down into Tinath's atmosphere, and the ground war rages on. The Travellers' ship limps back to Tinath starport, where there is both jubilation and sadness. As soon as possible, the Travellers are debriefed by leaders from various city-states. There is an atmosphere of tension and desperation, but the leaders do find time to thank the Travellers for their efforts. Their world was facing certain annihilation, and has been granted a reprieve. They are grateful.

However, it is nothing more than a reprieve. Several more Esseray vessels similar to the bombardment cruiser have emerged from jump near the system's gas giant. They are refuelling, and will undoubtedly head for Tinath as soon as they are ready. There is simply nothing left to fight them with.

The only answer is to cram as many people as possible into the colony ships over the next few days, and flee. The leaders are moving their headquarters to the three asteroid ships (cynics might note this gives them the ability to escape the fall of their world) and doing their best to coordinate the evacuation.

They do not yet know where the evacuees will go, but they need to get well away from the Esseray before they stop running. Distances ranging from a subsector to a sector or even more are thrown around, but in reality it is obvious there is no solid plan beyond escape.

The Travellers' ship will be ready for flight in a matter of hours, and the evacuation fleet is going to need scouts and troubleshooters. So the leaders of Tinath have another request for the Travellers – will they help the survivors find a new home?

Tinath is about to fall, but new adventures await among the stars.

# AFTER THE FALL OF TINATH

In the scramble to escape the fall of Tinath, refugees were crammed into any ship that could take them. The large colony ships of the Ashfield Project took most, but this was still only a small fraction of the population. As the final assault on the human cities began, the colony ships were forced to retreat.

The situation aboard the evacuation fleet was desperate. Many smaller ships were critically overloaded with too many people and too little food, water or other necessary supplies. Most crews had not thought beyond getting as many people aboard as they could, and urgently needed to make planetfall. Most ships fled as far as the nearest habitable world and landed to offload their cargo of refugees. A few brave captains even turned their ships around and went back to Tinath for more.

Then came the second wave of the Esseray advance. Ships fleeing the destruction of the Calida Federation brought news of Esseray vessels spreading out across the subsector. Worlds were bombarded or invaded; minor colonies obliterated in hours and larger ones quickly overrun by ground forces. The situation seemed hopeless.

Messengers arrived on the worlds of Athwa subsector, calling all ships to a rendezvous. Crews were requested to load up everyone they could, fill their holds with supplies, and come together to form what would become known as the Exodus Fleet. Not all of them came. Some chose to go their own way and others fell victim to Esseray vessels advancing across the subsector. But the fleet that assembled was still impressive; an armada of merchant ships, prospecting vessels and commercial starships centred on the three great colony ships.

Spares, supplies and personnel were shared and redistributed among the vessels of the fleet. Many smaller ships were relieved of their refugees in return for becoming scouts and messengers. Meanwhile, the remnants of the Calida Federation navy fought a rearguard action to delay the Esseray advance. The survivors joined the fleet or limped along after it departed Athwa Subsector.

The ramshackle framework for cooperation established in the dark days after the fall of Tinath lasted only

weeks, and soon powerblocks emerged among the ships of the Exodus Fleet. Each of the great colony ships became the centre for a group, with smaller alliances switching allegiance between them. The Exodus Fleet began to crawl away from the Esseray at a painfully slow pace whilst its leaders wrangled over every conceivable nuance of policy and governance.

Eventually a consensus of sorts was established. The fleet divided into three main components, each of which would be internally self-governing. Cooperation was agreed but each component would take a slightly different route, maintaining contact through messenger ships. This was announced as a measure to ensure no disaster could overtake the entire fleet, but was just as much about a failure to decide on key policy issues.

Each of the three main fleet segments has a generally similar composition;

**The Flagship:** A huge asteroid-hulled main colony vessel, containing most of the population in low berths and a smaller number of active refugees. The flagship has docks for smaller vessels and some workshop capability.

**Specialist Ships:** A few specialist vessels escaped the fall of Tinath. Some, such as mining ships or mobile repair vessels, are extremely useful. Others, such as scientific vessels, may be essential to some future crisis but at present are unable to contribute much to the progress of the fleet.

**Warships:** A few warships – mostly small escorts – escaped the destruction of the Calida Federation. Most are damaged, some very seriously, but these represent the only naval capability among the fleet and are too precious to risk on scouting or communications duty.

**Smaller Colony Ships, Freighters and Commercial Vessels:** Making up the bulk of each fleet segment, these carry refugees and spares. Some of these ships are detached from the fleet to carry out important missions such as obtaining food and fuel from worlds passed along the way.

**Small Vessels:** These include scouts and small merchants, and have become the workhorses of the

fleet. They range ahead and to the sides of the projected route, scouting out places to obtain supplies and fuel, and maintaining contact between the fleet segments. These fleet scouts also conduct diplomatic missions to inhabited worlds along the way, and deal with most other problems. Their mission is to smooth out the road ahead, and it is a difficult one.

The Exodus Fleet is at present just trying to get as far away from the Essaray as possible. The best intelligence available suggests that a route generally to Trailing-Rimward (down and right on the map of the Traveller Third Imperium universe) offers the best chance to get well away from the Essaray. There are those who want to join the population of worlds passed on the way, or settle on some suitable planet, but at present most

This adventure series contains hints about the nature of the Essaray. By the time the exodus fleet has departed Tinath, the Travellers will know that the Essaray are not a single species; nor are they an empire in the usual sense. They are something altogether more dangerous – an intent housed in the bodies of countless biological robots.

The Essaray have overrun a large segment of the galaxy, but fortunately that region is far away, and the local enclave of Essaray is widely separated from their main centre of power. The primary reason for this is that the higher Essaray intelligences cannot tolerate jump space. Any Essaray capable of planning a conquest or coordinating a large-scale operation is liable to suffer irreparable brain damage if exposed to a jump field. The lower intelligences are less affected, but a significant proportion will be harmed by a jump and most individuals experience a period of disorientation upon emerging from jump.

There are exceptions, however. A few Essaray have been able to transfer their intellect to an electronic

Included in the Traveller Starter Set is a huge double-sided sector map for you to fill in and explore. One side has the Athwa subsector already filled in, but you can create the rest of the sector as you see fit, using the rules described in Book 2: Spacecraft and Worlds. Once the Travellers and their Exodus Fleet has explored the nearby systems, you can allow them to travel even further in a wholly new sector of your own creation, simply by flipping the poster and starting afresh with the blank sector map.

of those who witnessed the fall of Tinath agree that distance is the fleet's best chance of survival.

Beyond Athwa subsector is a region of sparsely settled worlds, areas of which are entirely uncharted. The referee can generate this area using the system creation rules on page 92 of *Book 2: Spacecraft and Combat*, with the Travellers joining the fleet scouts in charting a path through this unknown region. What lies ahead of the fleet is unknown, but behind there is only death.

Future sets from Mongoose Publishing will chart the progress of the Exodus Fleet through key parts of its epic journey to safety. Not everyone will make it, of course, but for now the only hope is to keep going and hope for better days ahead.

brain which is at least partially resistant to the effects of jump space. These individuals have brought their followers to the local region of space and begun a campaign of conquest. They are aware of the relative weakness of their position, and concerned the exodus fleet might bring retaliation against them. They are also curious as to where it is going, and what valuable conquests might lie there. The Essaray do not yet know the exodus fleet is fleeing blindly.

They are aware that the defenders of Tinath made a far better resistance than expected. They have thus resolved that the fleet must be followed, studied, pursued, and eliminated. This is a challenge for the Essaray, who have few jump-capable ships and suffer serious difficulties in operating them. Thus, whilst the exodus fleet is in mortal danger, all is not lost. The pursuit is likely to be disjointed and erratic; so long as the fleet can stay ahead of the expanding Essaray menace, they have a chance to reach safety sooner or later.

Alternatively, you may have chosen not to use the Fall of Tinath campaign at all and simply started with your own universe. If so, good for you! The blank sector map can be used for any universe, and is ready for your Travellers to start exploring. There is no need to create every system your Travellers may visit straight away, however, as you can create a sector by simply generating each system as the Travellers visit it, marking new systems on the map as they adventure further into space.

# CAST AND CHARACTERS

The following characters appear in one or more parts of the campaign. Their first appearance is noted after their name.

## THE ARTEFACT MODULE (RESEARCH AND RESCUE)

The so-called Artefact Module is not a character as such, but can behave like one in many ways. It is an organic device, grown as part of an ancient, abandoned base on Tinath. It is discovered by the Travellers while exploring the base in *Research and Rescue*. It has integral lifters that move it at a maximum speed of about ten kilometres per hour, and raise it to a height of up to ten metres above ground. It lacks manipulators, and is essentially a sphere. If a small shelf could be constructed, it could balance it and carry a one kilogram load.

The Artefact Module must charge one minute for every ten minutes of use, and can hold up to one day's charge. It is not quite intelligent, but is skilled in Science specialties biology, chemistry, cybernetics, and physics at level 1, and knows how technological devices are controlled. It can remember facts and follow detailed orders, as well as detect electromagnetic fields, hear as well as a human, and see in the infrared, red, and green spectra (it cannot, for example, distinguish blue from green). In effect, it is a robot with decent artificial intelligence programming in a very small volume. At any rate it is unique, beyond known construction and programming methods, and therefore beyond price.

## HUMAN GUARDS (CAPTIVE AUDIENCE)

<b>STR</b>	7	<b>INT</b>	7	<b>SKILLS</b>
<b>DEX</b>	7	<b>EDU</b>	7	Deception 0, Melee (bludgeon) 1, Persuade 0
<b>END</b>	7	<b>SOC</b>	4	(DM-1)

Some humans are clearly in positions of authority aboard the prison facility, leading prisoners to and from various locations. However, these humans are unsympathetic in the least, or downright brutal in some cases. After observation, it becomes clear they have less authority than the Esseray guards, if only because the guards sometimes drag one of the thugs off. These people are never seen again.

## AARAN, SIR BERANI (CAPTIVE AUDIENCE)

<b>CAREER</b>				<b>AGE</b>
Agent (4 terms)				54
<b>STR</b>	6	<b>INT</b>	10 (+1)	<b>SKILLS</b>
<b>DEX</b>	8	<b>EDU</b>	10 (+1)	Deception 3, Drive 0, Explosives 2, Flyer 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Investigate 2, Medic 1, Melee (unarmed) 1, Recon 0, Science (physics) 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 0, Vacc Suit 1
<b>END</b>	7	<b>SOC</b>	11 (+1)	

Sir Berani began work as a field researcher at a prestigious university. When he graduated, however, he began working for Baroness Edda and now his research projects typically overlap with espionage. When asked about his work, he will talk about technological research, recent formal debates on Tinath climate modelling, and permafrost samples at the poles, proudly pointing to his published papers which resulted in his knighthood. What he does not mention is that he has also sabotaged a weather-control laboratory, stolen research papers on meson gun technology, and bluffed his way into the restricted government think-tank of a rival city-state.

Lately Sir Berani's attention has been on the war with the Esseray. He has been trying to find out more about them and in particular their motivations. He is convinced the Esseray are mechanical locusts, bent on stripping the system of all resources.

## EMMA BERANI (CAPTIVE AUDIENCE)

<b>CAREER</b>				<b>AGE</b>
Scholar (2 terms)				26
<b>STR</b>	5 (-1)	<b>INT</b>	10 (+1)	<b>SKILLS</b>
<b>DEX</b>	6	<b>EDU</b>	10 (+1)	Admin 0, Athletics (strength) 1, Diplomat 0, Electronics 0, Engineer (power) 1, Investigate 0, Medic 0, Persuade 1, Science (chemistry) 1
<b>END</b>	9 (+1)	<b>SOC</b>	9 (+1)	

## EMMA BERANI CONTINUED

Emma works with her father and enjoys it, though she is far more interested in science than espionage. Sir Berani employs Emma as a research assistant on some assignments but prefers not to place her in danger if he can avoid it. On the prison station he is more concerned with her safety than his own.

While she lacks true criminal skills, Emma can usually talk her way through human checkpoints. When her social skills fail, things can go badly wrong in her experience. She has become adept at making a timely run, dodge, or dive for cover. This is often her go-to response, of which her father approves.

## MR. AKILLE SALUS

### (C A P T I V E   A U D I E N C E )

STR	6	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	9 (+1)	EDU	9 (+1)	Gun Combat (energy) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Leadership 1, Melee (blade) 2, Survival 0, Tactics (military) 1, Vacc Suit 1
END	9 (+1)	SOC	10 (+1)	

Salus is a member of Sir Berani's team and a captive at the prison. The referee may or may not choose to use him in the adventure, as keeping track of too many characters might be a little too demanding. He is the tactical leader of Sir Berani's group, and was in charge of the security team during the initial mission. He has taken his failure to protect the team rather personally and might be more interested in vengeance than a quiet escape back to Tinath.

## SANDA REETE

### (C A P T I V E   A U D I E N C E )

STR	7	INT	5 (-1)	SKILLS
DEX	9 (+1)	EDU	5 (-1)	Gun Combat (energy) 2, Heavy Weapons (man portable) 2, Vacc Suit 2
END	9 (+1)	SOC	11 (+1)	

Sanda is a member of Berani's team. She is a former soldier, a heavy-weapons gunner with experience of combat in hostile environments. As with Salus, the referee may choose not use Sanda in the adventure for the sake of reducing complexity.

## ZEK GORABAMOU

### (C A P T I V E   A U D I E N C E )

CAREER		AGE	
Rogue (6 terms)		42	
STR	8	INT	12 (+2)
DEX	5 (-1)	EDU	5 (-1)
END	10 (+1)	SOC	4 (-1)
SKILLS		Deception 1, Persuade 1, Melee (unarmed) 1	

Zek is a human collaborator working for the Esseray at the prison complex. He is a brutal sociopath and a leader of a number of thugs in the mines. His authority comes directly from Forfak Overseer 12.

Although he is a morally bankrupt criminal, Zek is also very intelligent. He is a quick decision-maker and is usually 'lucky' when it comes to surviving. The referee might give Zek the equivalent of nine lives.

If the Travellers are captured doing something they should not in the prison, Zek might be the human overseer assigned to discipline them. He would want to use them to maximise his own standing among other humans. If the Travellers can convince him that they have value, he will keep them alive and give them less onerous tasks. If the Travellers manage to convince him they are not a threat, Zek might even make the error of giving them weapons.

## PRIVATE GARVAN YEGILLAN

### (C A P T I V E   A U D I E N C E )

CAREER		AGE	
Army (1 term)		22	
STR	8 (-6)	INT	10 (+1)
DEX	9 (+1)	EDU	7
END	10 (+1)	SOC	4 (-1)
SKILLS		Medic 1, Recon 1	

Private Yegillan is an army medic captured by the Esseray just before open conflict broke out. He was part of an engineering corps team sent to Sositenya to gather intelligence on the Esseray themselves. His platoon was on patrol when it stumbled into a company of hostiles; they killed about half of their opponents before being captured. He has been on the prison station for some time when the Travellers meet him, but has managed to avoid being drugged into a stupor by judicious use of the medication available to him.