

# TRAVELLER

REACH ADVENTURE 6 : EXODUS



SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

# TRAVELLER

REACH ADVENTURE 6: EXODUS

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
REFEREE'S INFORMATION	4
JOB OFFER	7
HTEAKYA	8
THE RING AND THE NOOSE	16
THE CROSSING	22
SANCTUARY	28
ALLIES AND OPPPOSITION	36
EQUIPMENT	40



# INTRODUCTION

*Exodus* takes place in the Goertel and Dpres subsectors of the Trojan Reach. Goertel is home to the Glorious Empire, a heretical offshoot of the Aslan Hierate known for practicing slavery and supplying mercenaries for wars throughout the sector. Centuries of warfare with the Hierate have depleted their once great Empire. Dpres subsector is plagued by internecine warfare, ridden with post-apocalyptic civilisations and isolated by the Trojan Bight, a stellar void that impedes travel to more civilised regions of space. Dpres Subsector's one beacon of hope is the trail of stars known as the Dustbelt. The Imperial-Florian Trade Route runs along this narrow stream of stars, bringing much needed information and commerce to the region.

For this adventure, the Travellers will need starship skills to crew a transport ship that is carrying hundreds of freed slaves to a sanctuary world. The ship needs a pilot, astrogator, two engineers and possibly a sensor operator or gunner. In a pinch, the roles of pilot and astrogator can be combined into one role and only one full-time engineer is required as long as a Traveller with the Mechanic skill is available to serve as a drive hand.

The freed slaves in their care have recently become refugees, unwanted on their homeworld and cast out into space to find a new home. Assisting the refugees is part of the job. Empathy and diplomacy will be as important as being a qualified spacer.

The Travellers will face many challenges over the course of the adventure. Some are technical, a few tactical and many of a more personal or emotional nature. Many of the refugees have never flown aboard a starship before. Some will find the experience frightening. Managing a ship full of neophyte starfarers will pose a unique challenge.

More than anything else, the Travellers must have a common desire to do good. *Exodus* is not a story about earning millions of Credits, obtaining advanced technological gadgets or winning space battles. It is the story of a group of heroes and their attempt to save people's lives.

Despite the charitable nature of this adventure, there are rewards to be gleaned from its completion. In addition, trade with the Hierate is on the rise and a job like this will give the Travellers an opportunity to make contacts and learn all there is to know about the region. An enterprising group can use this knowledge to forge lucrative trade careers. When all is said and done they will have become familiar with an area that few humans are bold enough to visit. Great fortunes have been made by Travellers willing to brave the dangers of the Reach.

## OVERVIEW

*Exodus* begins on the Acis system in Dpres subsector. Acis is a garden world and the agricultural powerhouse of the region known colloquially as the Dustbelt and historically as the Sindalian Main. Not only does Acis feed the entire region with exported foodstuffs, it is also strategically located along the Imperial-Florian trade route and serves as the entry point for Aslan merchants making their way to the Dustbelt via the Akhwohkyal system.

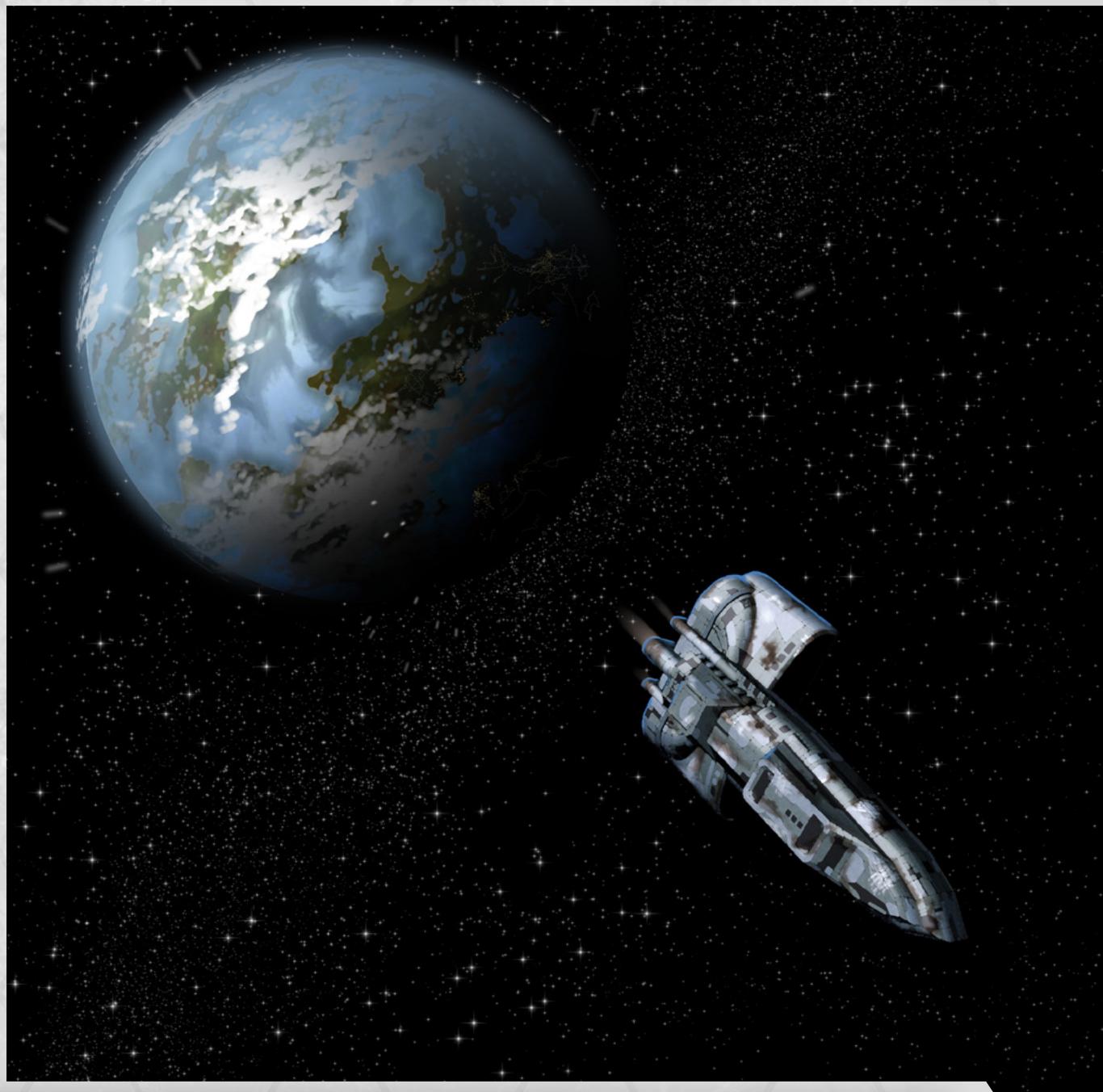
Whilst they are visiting the busy and cosmopolitan downport of Acis, the Travellers are contacted by a man named Val Treadwell. Treadwell operates in the region of worlds known as the Hliyh Chain, which consists of star systems liberated from the Glorious Empire. The Glorious Empire has left billions of slaves behind on the worlds it has lost. Hierate Aslan are eager to obtain the land on these worlds but the clans are ambivalent about what to do with the freed slaves. Some want to keep them as cheap labour while others just want them gone. One world that desires the latter is Hteakya.

Treadwell wants to hire the Travellers to fly the *Bad Betty*, a converted 600-ton clan transport, on a mission to deliver hundreds of refugees from Hteakya to a sanctuary world. He cannot initially offer them much more than standard salaries but promises they will be lavishly rewarded by the clan lord of Hteakya should they successfully complete the job. Treadwell's hyperbole catches the ear of a journalist. She and her holographer deftly follow the group to Hteakya in an effort to cover this burgeoning story.

On Hteakya, Treadwell gives them a tour of the ship and introduces them to the Aslan clan lord who is sponsoring the trip. He hosts the Travellers at his manor and bids them good fortune on their journey. The Travellers then meet the leaders of the refugees who graciously request that the Travellers take them to Tryaoke, the world they believe to be their 'promised land'.

The Travellers jump to Tryaoke, a world with eight billion freed human slaves. The humans live in primitive conditions but many have taken to raising aua, a herbivore native to the Aslan homeworld. The Aslan are eager to claim the land on Tryaoke but are in a quandary about what to do with all the humans. The Travellers take some of the refugees to the planet to investigate and are initially optimistic. When a renegade clan lord attacks the settlement they are visiting, decimating its population, they are forced to reconsider. The Hierate interdicts Tryaoke for the time being.

The Travellers return to their ship knowing that they must now take the refugees somewhere else. To make matters worse, they find out that they are being hunted by an unexpected enemy. The Travellers are forced to play a deadly game of cat and mouse as they travel through a dangerous region of space in search of sanctuary.



# REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The following information is for the Referee. How much of this information is made available to the Travellers is up to them. Much of this data can be made available to the Travellers through public information systems, a ship's Library software or by interacting with individuals from other star systems. Keep in mind that the information the Travellers discover might be out of date, biased or obscured by forces beyond their control. Partial information or misinformation can be stumbling blocks on the road to becoming fully informed.

## THE FREED SLAVES

The Hliyh Chain is a group of star systems in the Aslan Hierate recently liberated from the Glorious Empire. The systems in the chain include Hliyh, Hrahraiu, Hteakya and Eilaeah. Some astrographers also include Tryaoke in the Chain but its two-parsec distance from the other worlds qualify it as merely an outlier for most.

The post-war reorganisation and reconstruction of these worlds has been a monumental undertaking. Among the most pressing issues is what to do with the region's billions of freed slaves. The clans have held several conferences on Hliyh in an attempt to find a unified course of action but have thus far failed to do so. If anything, the meetings have only managed to entrench the clans into more extreme positions. The complexity of Aslan politics in the Reach has made matters worse. Hliyh and Eilaeah are governed by a notable Ya'soisthea clan, Hteakya is run by an unaffiliated clan and Hrahraiu is under the control of a triumvirate of Tlaukuh clans. Each of them have different ideas about how to manage their newly acquired territory. One can only assume that the Glorious Empire looks upon this situation with amusement as the clans' ideological differences threaten to throw the region into chaos.

Despite their inability to reach a formal agreement regarding the freed slaves, the clans have narrowed down the options to:

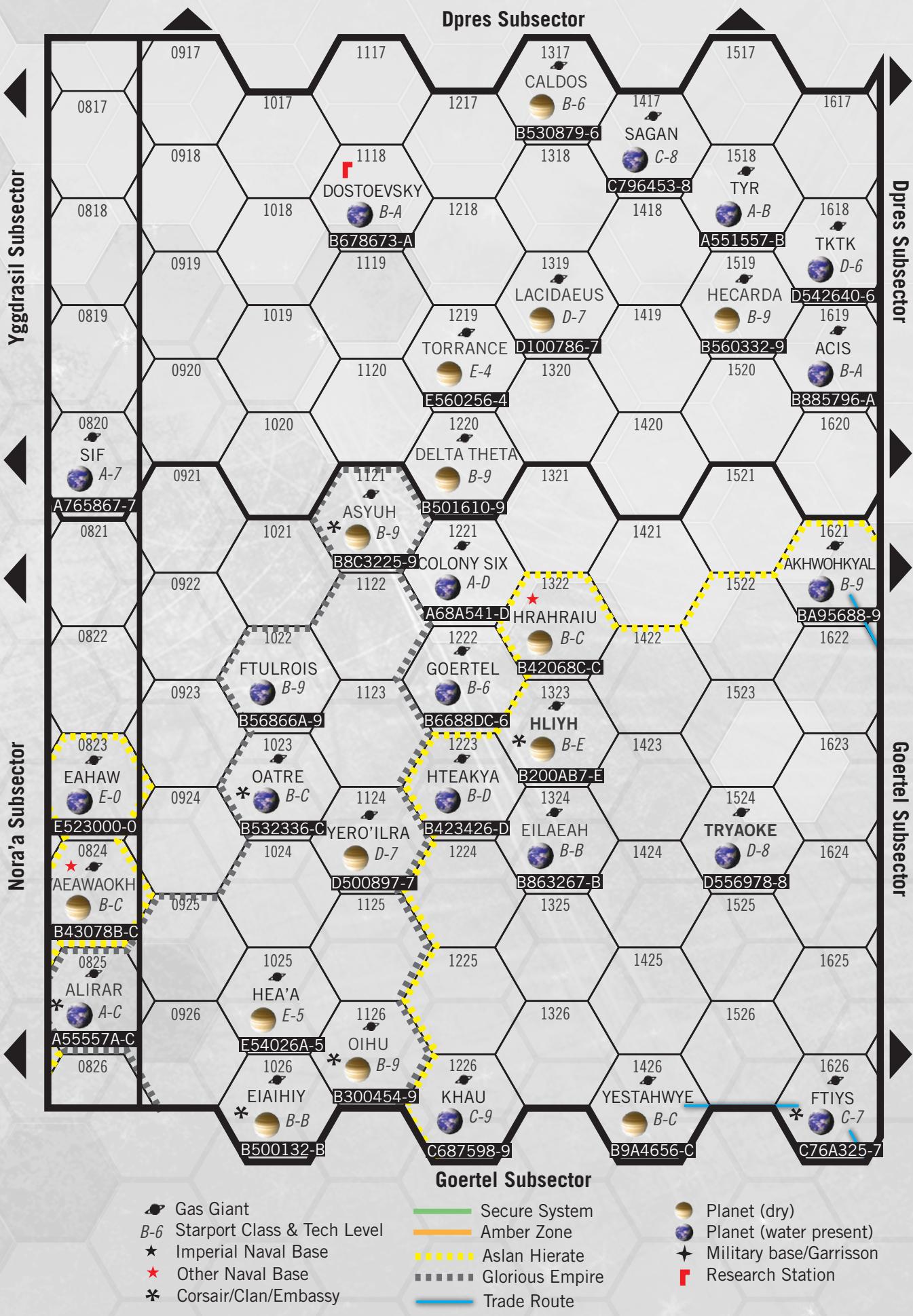
- Incorporating them into society
- Resettling them elsewhere
- Exterminating them

Incorporating humans into Aslan society is not a new concept for the Hierate. On the frontiers of Aslan space, humans and other alien species have pledged obeisance to the Hierate and learned to adhere to traditions and cultural norms. It is difficult to accomplish this in the Hliyh Chain because the freed slave population is both massive and incapable of self-government. The Aslan are not by nature a paternalistic race; they are preoccupied with conquest and expansion, and have little desire to shepherd or coddle vulnerable sentient species within their borders. Nevertheless, Hliyh has managed to incorporate millions of humans by forming a labour caste that exists below all other tiers of Aslan society. There is little possibility for these humans to climb the socioeconomic ladder but, considering where they have come from, their lives have improved dramatically.

Resettling the humans is problematic. The vast majority have never lived in Imperial space or anywhere other than where they are now. The Glorious Empire is a xenophobic and closed society. Most slaves have lived their entire lives knowing little about the universe around them or that there were free human societies just a few parsecs away. Threatening to take them away from the only lives they have ever known has been traumatic for many of them.

Extermination would be a cruel solution but one gaining momentum in some circles. Among those advocating extermination are the Hrahraiu Triumvirate. The Seieakh, Akatoloh and We'okunir who govern Hrahraiu are Tlaukuh clans who trace their lineage back thousands of years to the old Hierate. Their motives are unclear, especially considering Hrahraiu's close proximity to many free human worlds and Imperial Client States. Some believe it is an attempt at brinkmanship with the humans, a declaration of strength and authority intended to 'show the humans who's boss'. Others believe it is intended to be a direct affront to the Glorious Empire. By and large, the Empire views its slaves as a lynchpin of its society. By threatening to destroy their former slaves, the Triumvirate denigrates one of the practices the Empire believes made them 'Glorious' in the first place. Whatever the reason behind the Hrahraiu extermination agenda, the idea has spread to neighbouring Tryaoke where eight billion genetically engineered former slaves occupy land the Aslan are all too eager to acquire.

# Partial Map of the Dpres & Goertel Subsectors



## HUMANS OF THE HIERATE

The freed slaves comprise an immense subculture of Humaniti. In the Hliyh Chain alone there are over 12 billion of them, dwarfing the population of all the Dustbelt worlds combined. In the decades since being liberated, their lives have changed dramatically. The clans of the Hierate have given them freedoms they never dreamed of. The transition has been easy for some and difficult for others.

Most freed slaves want nothing more than to live and prosper on the worlds where they were born. These are not Imperial citizens or humans of the Outrim Void. These are *Hierate* humans. Most of them were born slaves to the Glorious Empire and have only recently become free. They are a unique subset of Humaniti who have been taught since birth to comply with the dictates of Aslan overlords and to live by the tenets of Aslan culture. The idea of leaving the Hierate is terrifying to many of them.

They might not even be welcome beyond the borders of the Hierate. In the Dustbelt, there is a strong undercurrent of resistance to *i hatei* expansion. Many worlds accept some level of *i hatei* in order to preserve diplomatic and economic relationships with the Aslan

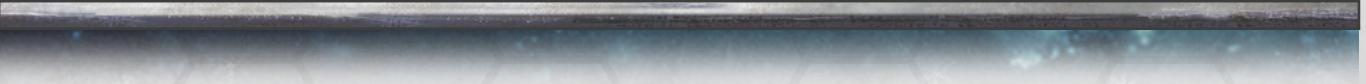
but the idea of inundating the Dustbelt with humans who readily acquiesce to Aslan authority is not a popular one. Some fear that it will portend the eventual collapse of Humaniti in the region and create a path for massive *i hatei* expansion.

The Hierate is in a quandary. More than anything they want to distribute the land on these captured worlds to the clan lords who conquered them but they are close to human space and under the watchful eye of neighbouring human polities. Some degree of restraint is advisable but the Aslan can only deny their biological drive to obtain new lands for so long. Mercy is not a concept that comes easily to them and it is only a matter of time before they act upon their instincts.

The freed slaves find themselves between a rock and a hard place. Neither the Aslan who liberated them nor their own brethren want them. In the Hierate they take up land the Aslan want and in the Dustbelt they are thought of as a burden whose perceived fecklessness poses an existential threat. The narrative could change if the Travellers are successful. A publicised voyage of freed humans to a sanctuary world might get sentients on both sides of the border to reconsider their feelings on the subject.



# JOB OFFER



During a routine stopover at Acis, the Travellers are contacted by Captain Val Treadwell, an eccentric old codger wearing what appears to be a somewhat out-of-fashion yachting suit and captain's hat.

Treadwell informs the Travellers that he has a job to offer them. He needs a crew for his ship, a modified 600-ton Aslan clan transport, which will be used to transport hundreds of refugees from the world of Hteakya to a, as yet undetermined, sanctuary world. He assures them that the majority of the passengers will be in cold sleep so they will not require day-to-day management. The Travellers will be paid standard crew salaries for the duration of the voyage but will also receive a bonus upon completion of the mission. The bonus may be one of the following:

- 5 Ship Shares.
- Weapons for a ship they already own; two turrets with any armaments from the *Traveller Core Rulebook*.
- A vehicle or small craft with a maximum value of MCr5.

The bonus is being provided by the *Uiukhtaiuko*, the clan lord of the planet Hteakya. As an Aslan, he does not think in terms of raw cash; he wants to give the Travellers something they truly need for completing a difficult and honourable task.

In addition to the salaries and bonus, Treadwell points out that the knowledge they gain about the region will enable them to obtain additional wealth and fame should they desire it. Trade between the Hierate and Dustbelt is growing rapidly and the first players to the game are likely to make the largest financial killing.

The ship they will be crewing is in good working order and has been modified so human crews can operate it

without difficulty. The *Uiukhtaiuko* has declared that all humans in the Hteakya system shall be deported and has generously provided a ship for the express purpose of taking them wherever they want to go. The voyage the Travellers are being hired to make is expected to be the first of many. Treadwell, the *Uiukhtaiuko*, and probably the refugees themselves, do not know quite what to expect. Nothing like this has been attempted before. It will require a brave crew of Travellers to see this through, thereby proving it can be done.

If they are willing and able to take the job, Treadwell offers them middle passage to Hteakya aboard an *Eakhau*-class trader that belongs to an Aslan friend of his. Should the Travellers have their own ship and want to fly themselves to Hteakya, Treadwell promises their ship will be mothballed and well cared for at Hteakya's excellent Class B downport.

As they converse, the Travellers notice that an attractive and snappily dressed woman, and her scrappy cohort, have taken notice of their conversation. She identifies herself as Yana Tique, a journalist for the Traveller News Service. She has heard rumblings from her contacts in the Hierate that an operation was afoot. With their permission, Tique would like to cover the voyage for the TNS. She claims that people in the Dustbelt and Imperium need to know this is happening. Tique is a smooth operator and will do what she can to butter up the Travellers if it helps her to get what she wants. If the Travellers are leery about the idea and reject her offer, Tique and her holographer, Nendo, will covertly tail the group into the Hierate anyway. Whether or not they consent to having her cover their exploits, the Travellers have the feeling this will not be the last they see of Tique.

# HTEAKYA

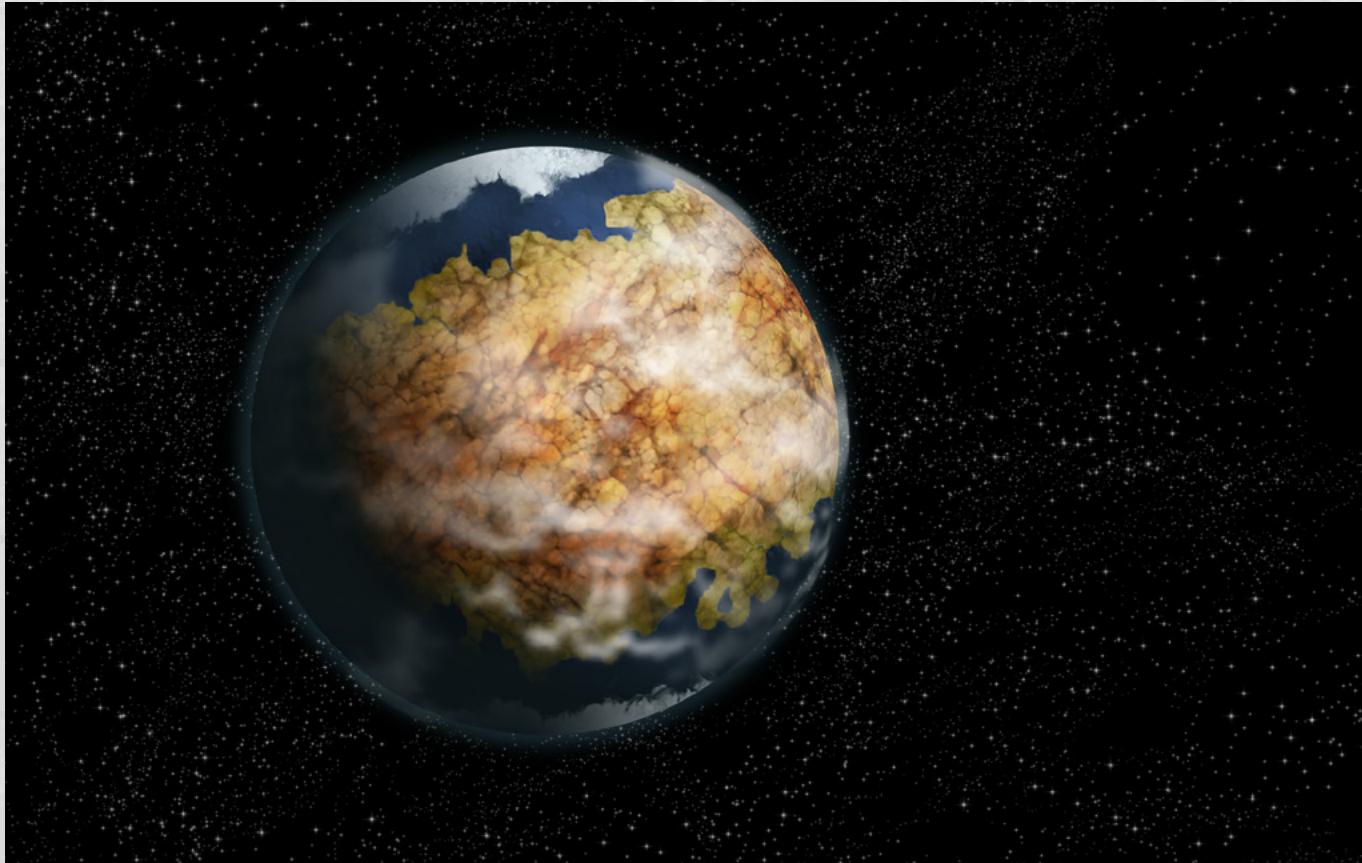
Hteakya is a craggy, cracked, mostly dry world with the majority of its water locked in polar ice caps. Long, tendril-like seas meander from the caps like fingers attempting to reach the equator. From orbit, the predominant colours of the world are a rusty orange sharply contrasted with dark greys and browns along the mountain ranges. The ice caps are a stark white that gradually turns blue as the water thaws and melts in the temperate regions. The planet's weak magnetic field and eccentric elliptical orbit around the system's binary pair have stripped it of what otherwise might have been denser, more breathable air.

The primary purpose of the world has always been to serve as a stopover for mining interests in its prosperous asteroid belt. Hteakya itself is not short on mineral resources but in its long history of colonisation by the Solomani, Glorious Empire, and now the Aslan Hierate, it has yet to see its day as a boomtown. Its current caretakers, the Uuiukhtaiu clan, are hoping to change that. The Uuiukhtaiu are a former vassal of the powerful

Khaukheirl clan who gave up their vassalage to join the effort to conquer the Hliyh Chain. The gambit has clearly paid off and the prevailing sentiment is that now is the time to reap the rewards. The Uuiukhtaiu have determined that the first step is to rid the world of its unsavoury past by getting rid of its population of freed slaves.

In due time the Uuiukhtaiu intend to model themselves after the Ahroay'if, the wealthy vassal clan of the Tlaiwaha who set down their arms and became rich from trade with the Imperium. If their plan comes to fruition they will eventually dominate the Hliyh Chain and establish new trade routes into the Imperium and Florian League.

Whether the Travellers came to Hteakya aboard their own ship or via Treadwell's middle passages, they are permitted to bypass the planet's utilitarian orbital starports and head straight for the downport. Using the ship's visual sensors or peering out of portholes on the *Eakhau* trader, they see the approach of Hteakya's small



but impressive downport, a high-tech affair replete with the curvy and smooth architecture for which the Aslan are known. The starport has few docking bays but there is a great deal of construction under way in and around the facility. Traffic within and outside the starport is light and does not seem to warrant so many expansive additions. Presumably the Uuiukhtaiu are envisioning a bright future in which Hteakya becomes a busy hub instead of the sleepy little stopover it is today. The Travellers will note that most of the construction is being performed by anthropomorphic robots.

If the Travellers did not permit the TNS journalists to accompany them, they may make a Routine (6+) Recon or Streetwise check to notice their familiar faces among the crowd. Even if the Travellers have denied them permission to cover the story, Tique intends to do so anyway. She brazenly asks to accompany them to their meeting with the clan lord. She is elated if they allow it. If rebuffed, the persistent reporter will find another way to get the information she needs.



## The Traveller News Service

The Traveller News Service is the leading news agency in Imperial space. They have a ubiquitous presence in sector and subsector capitals, on high-population worlds, along the borders of enemy powers, conflict zones and anywhere else where stories are happening.

In the Outrim Void, the presence of TNS reporters is sparser but still present, covering happenings on the worlds of the Dustbelt, Borderlands and along trade routes. The dateline for Dustbelt-based stories is usually an Imperial Client State, Imperial border world or other system with an Imperial presence. The TNS is highly dependent on the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service x-boat system for the distribution of its stories. The TNS sometimes employs independent mail carriers but prefer sanctioned and reliable x-boats.



Yana Tique is a reasonably well-known TNS journalist from Albe, famous for filing stories from some of the most remote and dangerous locations in the Trojan Reach. Wherever she goes stories seem to happen. Some surmise that Tique is actually a marketing ploy, a fictitious persona contrived by the TNS to generate and maintain interest in broadcasts. Such conspiracy theories also suggest that 'she' is actually a series of replicated androids distributed around the Void to ensure that wherever and whenever a story happens, she is there to report it. Tique's seeming agelessness, perfect vocal pitch and attractiveness only serve to fuel such fantasies.

The Travellers might actually welcome the light of journalistic truth on their expedition. After all, they are in foreign territory and should the voyage encounter any difficulty, it might be beneficial to have someone who can spread the news to sympathetic viewers.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BAD BETTY

After giving the Travellers time to get their bearings, Treadwell meets them in the halls outside the docking bay. If they brought their own ship to Hteakya, Treadwell makes arrangements for its safe storage. He then guides them to a grav transport that whisk them away on a short ride to the other side of the starport where they see the ship they have been hired to operate: the *Bad Betty*. Treadwell points out that the rather un-Aslan name of the ship was his doing.

The transport approaches the ship from the bow and the Travellers get their first full look at her. The *Khtukhao*-class clan transport is obviously aged and weathered, and has a fresh layer of light grey paint to cover her more egregious dings and scratches. Long and sturdy landing gear supports the narrow bow of the ship whilst its more bulbous and bulky aft is supported by short, squat nubs. *Khtukhao* clan transports have a standard hull and typically do not land on a planet's surface, preferring instead to use their shuttle for the transfer of passengers and cargo. Hteakya's unimposing very thin atmosphere made a terrestrial landing possible.

Almost all the *yoyeaokhtef*, the inscriptions Aslan decorate their ships with, have been scratched off, marred or burned away over the years. A fresh coat of paint has obscured most of the remaining ones. Only one large, bright icon remains on the bow of the ship. Treadwell tells the Travellers it means 'resilience'. He stops to marvel at the ship for perhaps a few moments too long before guiding them on an inspection. What might appear to be a grungy old barge to some is obviously Treadwell's pride and joy.

Walking along the exterior of the ship, experienced spacers among the Travellers can tell it is an old ship that has seen a lot of action. It is dented in several places and rusty in a few spots where there is exposed machinery, along with faded and painted-over burn marks that appear to have been sustained during combat. Treadwell leads them to the belly of the ship where an open lift beckons them to enter. Taking them inside, the first thing they see is a small craft bay within which the ship's 95-ton shuttle resides. *Little Betty* is a sleek, streamlined craft that appears to be far less weathered than its mother ship. Treadwell commissioned an artist to paint a bomber-style image on its hull of an attractive human female astride a ringed gas giant. In her arms, she cradles an orange Terran tabby cat. The Travellers might wonder aloud if Aslan will get the joke.

Going up one deck, they see that the ship's cargo hold has been partially converted into a low berth pod. Rows and rows of cold-sleep capsules are aligned in the hold, their cabling neatly tucked beside them, their status lights glowing in the dim light. Two large high-efficiency batteries flank the low berths and a collapsible fuel bladder on the port side of the hold is cabled to the main fuel tank via a duct in the ceiling. Treadwell points out that low berths were the best way to maximise their passenger-carrying capacity. Adding so many puts a lot of stress on the power plant so they added the batteries for backup. He mentions that even more low berths have been stuffed into the shuttle with yet another battery. Also in the cargo hold are portable ship's lockers containing emergency soft suits (see page 39) for each and every passenger on the ship. Soft suits are easier to use and less cumbersome than full vacc suits.

Moving up to the engineering section, things appear to be in good order but the jump drive is obviously mismatched. An experienced engineer or drive hand might notice the smaller size and custom-fit connections. The drive's smaller footprint leaves additional space in the section, which is used to store spare parts and emergency medical gear. The ship's original jump drive was destroyed at some point and has been replaced with a salvaged drive from an *Aoa'iwa*-class trader. The recalibrated drive gives *Bad Betty* a jump-1 capability.

The remainder of the ship is pretty standard for the class. She shows her age and there is the faint odour of aua leather and other pungent smells that mark an Aslan ship but other than that she appears functional and serviceable. Treadwell silently lets the Travellers take it all in until they reach the bridge where its instrument panels lightly glow and they hear the faint hum of electronics. Treadwell insisted that the Aslan fit her with holographic controls so human crews could fly her, running on top of the mechanical controls.

Finally, he takes the Travellers back through the accommodations section, casually informing them that they can select their own staterooms. A quick glance into the ship's locker reveals that it contains TL12 vacc suits for all crew members, several first aid kits, six shotguns, four submachineguns and extra ammunition for each weapon. After the Travellers select staterooms, he takes them aft where they ascend a ladder into a quiet sanctum the size of a standard stateroom. The walls are adorned with tapestries, a dusty but plush-looking throw rug rests upon the floor and there are dozens of idols, jars, decanters, statuettes and other knick knacks placed on shelves and cabinets along the

walls. Presumably the items are secured to the surfaces to prevent them from falling off during flight. Treadwell says '*This here is one of their shrines. All their ships have them. I left it as is. Seemed a shame to take any of it down even though goodness knows we could use the space!*'.

Upon completion of the tour, Treadwell gives the Travellers some time to settle in and have a look around. He heads back to the bridge to make a few calls and take care of other housekeeping issues. Engineering-oriented Travellers might want to engage in a more comprehensive examination of the drives. They will discover that in many cases, the renovations are little more than a thin layer of paint and some patchwork; some maintenance work to ensure everything is functional may be advisable so there will not be any surprises once spaceborne.

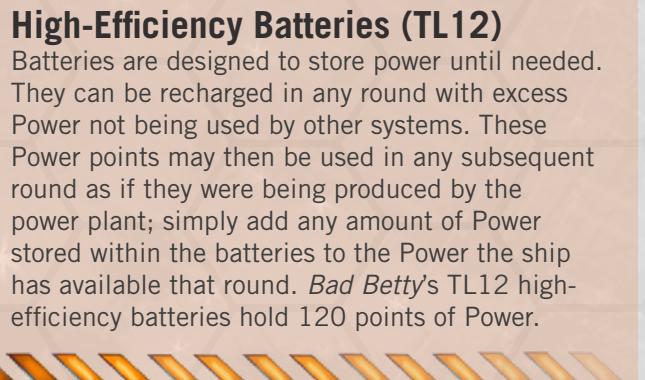
**Referee's Note:** If the Travellers spend a great deal of time rummaging through the engineering section, have them make a Formidable (12+) Investigation check (INT) to discover a high-tech communications device hidden among the spare parts. Should they find it, an Average (8+) Electronics (comms) check (EDU) determines it is a radio beacon, configured to broadcast a high-powered outgoing call. The device has no ability to receive transmissions.

Bridge crew among the Travellers may go to their duty stations to configure the holographic controls. By now the Travellers will have noticed that *Bad Betty* is unarmed; no weapons are installed and no hardpoints are configured. However, the shuttle is armed with a fixed-mount pulse laser. Its basic sensor system would be highly ineffective in a fight, so the previous operators configured a sensor link with the mother ship. The link enables the shuttle to utilise *Bad Betty*'s civilian-grade sensor array as long as it stays within Short range. It is far from ideal but if the ship gets into a scrape, it is certainly better than having no armament at all.

After giving the Travellers enough time to get situated, Treadwell rounds them up for the next event: a meeting with the *Uiukhtaiuko*, the clan lord of Hteakya.

## FLIGHT OF THE BAD BETTY

In this adventure, the Travellers are put into the unusual position of flying an Aslan starship. The ship is old and quirky and has some unusual features. It can be a challenge to operate but its unique modifications might be a saving grace.



### High-Efficiency Batteries (TL12)

Batteries are designed to store power until needed. They can be recharged in any round with excess Power not being used by other systems. These Power points may then be used in any subsequent round as if they were being produced by the power plant; simply add any amount of Power stored within the batteries to the Power the ship has available that round. *Bad Betty*'s TL12 high-efficiency batteries hold 120 points of Power.



Operating in Aslan space in an Aslan ship prevents the Travellers from experiencing the level of probity they might otherwise be forced to endure. It also gives them a level of legitimacy, as the ship has been lent to them for a mission of great importance to the Hierate. The Travellers can leverage these unique circumstances to get assistance when they need it.

It should be noted that the high-efficiency batteries are a stopgap at best and can only provide power for a short time. Should something happen to the main power plant, necessitating the use of the batteries, it will be imperative for the ship's engineer to get power back online as quickly as possible, otherwise the ship's captain will be forced to make difficult choices that may endanger the lives of passengers or limit other functions of the ship.

The ship's large fuel tank and collapsible bladder give the crew the ability to cross larger expanses of space than would otherwise be possible, crossing up to three parsecs without stopping if necessary. *Bad Betty* has no fuel scoops for wilderness refuelling but *Little Betty* does. Gas giant skimming is a cumbersome task, requiring three round trips by the shuttle to a gas giant or other fuel source. As the skimmed fluids are transferred to *Bad Betty*, she can refine the fuel at a rate of 20 tons per day.

Captain Treadwell has been given an allowance to pay for monthly maintenance, life support, crew salaries, and fuel. The nature of the voyage might make it difficult to keep up maintenance on the ship. The Referee should make sure to note the length of time between maintenance services and replenishment of the ship's life support system.

## LAIR OF THE CLAN LORD

Treadwell takes the Travellers for a ride into the Hteakyan outback aboard a sealed air/raft. The cabin is spacious with large viewports that give them the ability to see the landscape as they are flown to the provincial manor of Ftaiwehoahyas, clan lord of the Uiuikhtaiu. The air/raft is piloted by a dour Aslan male and passengers are attended to by a courteous Aslan female. Shortly after departure, she offers them beverages made from dustspice, a much beloved additive imported in large quantities from Imperial space with a mild intoxicating effect on humans. The Travellers should find it quite tasty.

The two hour journey over a rocky slate-coloured mountain range is uneventful and the Travellers have an opportunity to relax and enjoy the beautiful and spartan view outside. During the flight, the steward gauges the physiques of the Travellers and distributes appropriately sized pressure sleeves, combination masks and polarised goggles to each of them. The driver sniggers for a moment when she is done. The steward chides him in Trokh and then in passable Galanglic informs the Travellers to pay him no mind; he is only laughing because the pressure suits she has given them are intended for Aslan children.

When they are 10 minutes out from the manor, the steward instructs the passengers to don their gear, politely instructing them to wear all three pieces. This will protect them from the radiation of Hteakya's two suns and enable them to extract oxygen from an otherwise unbreathable atmosphere.

The air/raft lands outside a collection of large domes that the Uiuikhtaiu use as a country manor of sorts. Whilst there is nothing larger than microscopic life on Hteakya and therefore no hunting grounds to speak of, the Aslan still enjoy roving their lands and experiencing the great outdoors. If the Travellers need any additional evidence of this, they need look no further than the half dozen or so dusty Clawbikes (see page 116 of *The Pirates of Drinax: The Trojan Reach*) that sit idle outside the airlock door.



## MEETING THE UIUIKHTAIUKO

Once inside the facility, the Travellers discover it contains a biome with simulated savanna climate. The biome is not extensive but achieves the desired effect of giving its owner a little piece of home. Grasses and brambly bushes grow in an open field with filtered sunlight shining through the geodesic dome above. A stream of water from a virtually undetectable irrigation system bifurcates the landscape. The biome is stocked with small game, one specimen of which is being consumed by a large and boisterous Aslan male sitting a few metres from the entrance. The male is surrounded by his family and several human servants who appear to be waiting on the family. Four alert-looking battledress-clad guards with stagger laser rifles mill about on the periphery of the group.

He heartily greets the Travellers in accented Galanglic and introduces himself as Ftaiwehoahyas, clan lord of the Uuiukhtaiu. He invites them to join him and his *ekho* for a meal. If the Travellers decline, he chides them but ultimately accepts their wishes. If they accept, he distributes *eakhyasear* rifles to each of them and takes them on a brief hunt within the confines of the biome. After each member of the group has killed something, he asks them if they want their catch raw or cooked, knowing full well that humans will undoubtedly want theirs skinned, gutted and seared to a crisp.

Ftaiwehoahyas is the *Uuiukhtaiuko*, the clan lord of Hteakya, ruling over thousands of Aslan on this middling size world. Over dinner, Ftaiwehoahyas explains that they have been brought to Hteakya to take as many of the world's freed slaves as they can to a sanctuary world, some place among the stars willing to give them a new home. He explains that things are changing on Hteakya and there is no place for humans in their society. Ftaiwehoahyas claims to be an advocate of sophonts' rights and seems to genuinely care about the humans of his planet, even if he is evicting them. Ftaiwehoahyas' magnanimity comes with one condition: He insists his ship travels only six parsecs to any proposed destination, leaving the Travellers with a limited array of choices.

Ftaiwehoahyas tells them there are many nearby worlds that should have space and more pleasant climate, which would be a big improvement on their homeworld. Walking to an outcropping of rocks, he makes a hand gesture and a holographic display pops up above the rocks. With a few more gestures, he brings up a starmap of the region. The Referee should use this opportunity to let the Travellers familiarise themselves with the interstellar region if they have not done so already. Let them come up with one or more ideas as to where they

might take the refugees. Just when they feel pretty confident about one world or another, segue into the following scene.

After the Travellers and Treadwell look over the starmap and consider their options, Ftaiwehoahyas interrupts them and says that the de facto leader of the freed slaves might disagree with them. He beckons to the group of servants attending to his family and a human female walks over. Ftaiwehoahyas introduces her as Lenka Ankys. Lenka is in her late thirties or early forties, tall, olive-skinned, with dark hair. Despite her status as freed slave, she carries herself with an undeniable grace and confidence.

Lenka engages the Travellers and Treadwell in conversation, asking each about themselves, initially saying little about herself or her people. When she does speak of them, the Travellers might get the sense she feels a sort of maternal obligation to them. At some point in the conversation the topic shifts back to where the voyage should take the refugees, at which point she glances at her wrist watch and asks everyone if they would mind taking a little trip outside. She looks to Ftaiwehoahyas who nods his consent. Lenka, the Travellers and Treadwell don pressure suits and other protective gear, before stepping outside the airlock.

## ABOUT THE SHIP

When meeting the *Uuiukhtaiuko*, the Travellers may ask him questions about the ship; this is their chance to request upgrades or changes. Ftaiwehoahyas is not eager to discuss the minutiae of the ship but will defer them to a female who handles purchasing for the clan. If they have requests, she politely defers most of them but will provide and install a fixed-mount pulse laser on the *Bad Betty* if the Travellers so desire.

## STARGAZING ON THE MOUNTAINS OF HTEAKYA

Lenka leads the Travellers and Treadwell on a brief journey of several kilometres, the first few on the Hteakyan plains and then gradually ascending a low but steep mountain. They may either walk or borrow the Clawbikes they saw outside the biome.

As they reach the top of the mount, the twin suns of Hteakya have set and the remnants of their faint glow can barely be seen on the western horizon. Lenka points to the north-eastern sky and with her index finger draws a circle as if painting the constellation before her. Somewhat muffled by her breathing mask but audible enough to hear, Lenka says:

## Rumours

D66	Rumour or Lie
11-12	The Glorious Empire is planning a major counterattack on Hteakya and Eilaeah (not true).
13-14	The Hrahraiu Triumvirate is plotting to take over the entire region (not true but they are up to something).
15-16	Tryaoke is being considered as a hub for a future trade route into the Hierate (possibly, but this is by no means certain).
21-23	Eilaeah is being reserved for the palatial manors and hunting grounds of Aslan nobles.
24-26	Hliyh's reorganisation of humans into a labour caste has increased the exploitation of its resources dramatically.
31-32	The Glorious Empire has been probing Hrahraiu and Hteakya but few skirmishes have occurred.
33-34	Colony Six and Delta Theta have experienced increased raids and attacks from the Glorious Empire.
35-36	The Hrahraiu Triumvirate is using its resources to fortify the system and create a blockade.
41-43	Lacidaeus and Torrance are at war and are plague ravaged hellholes which few <i>i hatei</i> are considering for colonisation.
44-46	Dostoevsky is a habitable world but its environment is harsh.
51-52	Sif and Acis are agricultural worlds in need of manual labour. In addition, each has a great deal of open land.
53-54	Acis is experiencing tension with its <i>i hatei</i> population and is concerned about Aslan expansion.
55-56	Sif is neutral ground upon which Florian League, Glorious Empire, Aslan Hierate and even a few Imperial delegations meet.
61-63	The Hrahraiu Triumvirate have decided to exterminate the planet's humans.
64-66	Things are heating up between the clans of Tryaoke as they determine what to do with the planet's billions of humans.

*'The constellation you see before you is what we call the Ring. The bright star to the left you know as Deneb. On the right side is a bright orange star, bright because of its nearness to us. My people believe that star beckons us to sanctuary. It is the star of the Tryaoke system, where our people have already been free for a generation. We wish more than anything else in the universe to join them.'*

As they return to the biome Lenka is quiet and contemplative, responding to any questions the Travellers might have with brief answers. Perhaps she knows that ultimately her fate, and that of the refugees, is out of her hands. She can only hope they comply with the wishes of her people.

## RUMOURS AND LIES

If the Travellers seek more information on Hteakya and other worlds of the Hliyh Chain, let them make an Average (8+) Streetwise or Carouse check (1D days, INT or SOC), whichever applies best. Success enables them to discover one rumour from the table. Every two points of Effect provides an additional rumour.

Roll D66 on the Rumours table for each rumour the Travellers acquire, applying DM-1 to the 10s dice if the world they are on has Population 5- and DM+1 if it is 8+. Apply DM+1 to both dice if the Traveller is Aslan or has the Language (Trokh) skill.

The Travellers can make these checks on any of the worlds of the Hliyh Chain. If they encounter the same rumour more than once, allow it to be repeated, perhaps with subtle differences.

## BOARDING THE BAD BETTY

The *Bad Betty* can fit up to 220 passengers including 180 in the low berths (150 of which are in the main ship, with the other 30 in the shuttle) and 30-40 more in double occupancy staterooms. The crew will take the remaining 5-10 staterooms.

The passengers are a broad mix of men, women and children. The subdued behaviour of the adults starkly contrasts with that of the children, many of whom have grown up free. Getting them all situated is at least a full day's work. The passengers have only brought their most essential possessions with them so the cargo hold remains largely empty. Even so, stowing the gear of hundreds of people is an exhausting and time-consuming activity.

Treadwell's main task is to settle 180 of the passengers into low berths but the job goes much faster if he has assistance – any Traveller with Medic or Electronics skill can help. The refugees' feelings about low berths is a mixed bag. Some are accustomed to low berths from

being transferred from one world to another within the Glorious Empire, while others experience abject terror at the thought of being put into one. Some experienced being captured and stuffed into low berths under dangerous conditions, sometimes two or three captives per capsule. Identifying which refugees have a phobia for cold sleep will help reduce the time it takes to get them settled. The best solution might be to assign the most fearful among them to double-occupancy staterooms.

Guiding the remaining passengers to their staterooms can be done simultaneously by crew members who are not busy getting the ship ready for take-off or helping Treadwell.

For the most part, getting the passengers aboard and settled goes well. The Hteakyans humans are grateful and humble, which they express by being as gracious and cooperative as possible during the boarding procedure.

If Treadwell and the Travellers have not yet firmly committed to a destination, Lenka, attended by two associates, confers with them to make sure they go to Tryaoke. Lenka identifies her associates as Ilium Antradi and Uden Ahlmgris (see page 36 & 37). Whilst this adventure only details these three refugees, the Referee should feel free to develop as many into fully fledged characters as desired. The more the Travellers interact with the refugees and get to know them, the more invested they will become in efforts to assist them.

If there is disagreement about their destination, Lenka is firm and persistent but never confrontational or gruff. She is determined that they go to Tryaoke. If the Travellers deny her, the Hteakyans are disappointed and will do anything short of outright mutiny to redirect the voyage to the promised land. This might include awakening passengers from cryogenic sleep so they can appeal to the Travellers en masse, staging a hunger strike or refusing additional communication with the Travellers. If it comes to an impasse, the Travellers might think the passengers childish or ungrateful but they are merely doing what they can to gain control of their own destinies. They were liberated from slavery a decade ago and are learning over time what it means to be free.

## THE REFUGEES DURING JUMP

Once the *Bad Betty* enters jumpspace, the Travellers and refugees have time to get to know each other. Over the course of the week in jump, the Travellers see first-hand just how different they are from other humans. Their behaviour is very Aslan in nature and they speak Trokh better than Galanglic (if they even speak Galanglic at all). If two of them have a dispute, apologies are demanded on the spot. If an apology is not given, the dispute is resolved with a duel to first blood. The outcome is always accepted without further grief.

Many refugees spend time in the shrine where they meditate, socialise and pray to their ancestors. Even though they are human, their indoctrination into Aslan society and culture is quite complete. The Travellers may come to a greater understanding of their passengers but the more they get to know them, the more foreign they become.

### A Spy in Our Midst

Uden Ahlmgris is a spy for the Hrahraiu Triumvirate. Once *saihlea* (a slave of rank and privilege in the Glorious Empire), he served as an informer and is a traitor to his people. This past is unknown to his fellow refugees. Uden was approached by operatives of the Hrahraiu Triumvirate and promised a tidy sum of money and passage to a world of his choice, provided he activates a radio beacon on each system the *Bad Betty* visits (the one hidden in engineering). He does not know exactly what the gear does but just wants his prize at the end of the voyage.

# THE RING AND THE NOOSE

This chapter describes the events that occur in the Tryaoke system should the Travellers take the refugees there. Lenka has gone to great lengths to express how important Tryaoke is to her people. Slaves on many current and former Glorious Empire worlds, including those on the Hliyh Chain, have come to believe that Tryaoke is a promised land, a sanctuary for every man, woman and child who has been freed from slavery.

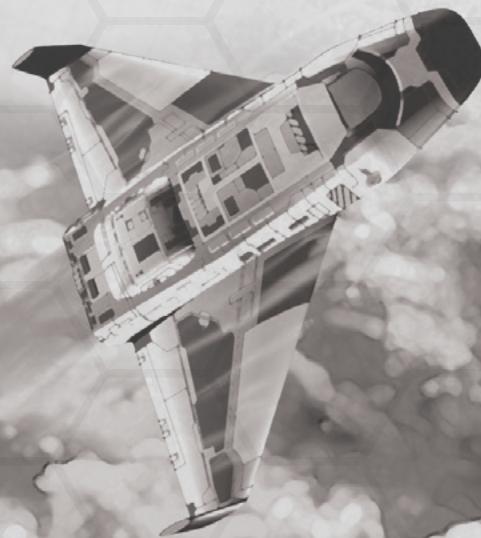
Tryaoke was liberated from the Glorious Empire 30 years ago, a full two decades before the worlds of the Hliyh Chain. It has been the site of an ambitious genetic engineering and breeding program, and few slaves from other worlds in the Empire knew about Tryaoke until the war against the Hierate. The Empire is known to use slaves as cannon fodder so legions of human slaves from the Empire's other worlds fought on the losing side of the Battle of Tryaoke. Many of these soldiers saw the hordes of genetically engineered Tryaokean slaves first-hand and those who made it back to the Empire brought home accounts of what they had seen. Word spread quickly about billions of humans on the planet, humans who were presumed free. The idea that so many of their brethren were liberated took hold and an underground movement with an almost spiritual fervour developed. This movement was called the Ring, named for a constellation seen from Glorious Empire space that contains Tryaoke's orange dwarf star.

The transition of Tryaokean humans from slavery to freedom has been difficult. The highly secret project that created them was intended to create low-intelligence, highly servile slaves and the Glorious Empire was inspired by its encounters with the Florian

League whose dimorphic species comprised intelligent masters (the Barnai) and brutish, subservient dullards (the Feskals). The experiment on Tryaoke was an abject failure resulting in the creation of billions of highly superstitious, xenophobic and intractable humans who were unfit for the jobs they were designed to do. In an effort to create a massive industrial slave labour force, the Empire unwittingly created a huge burden for itself. Now that burden has fallen upon the Hierate.

The Glorious Empire learned about the Ring movement and crushed it wherever they could. Cells of Ring dissidents and guerrillas were discovered in their hovels and executed. The Empire used counterinsurgency techniques to confound the movement, creating the idea of 'the Noose', which spread the notion that Tryaoke was not a beacon of freedom at all but a trap laid by the Hierate. The Noose, they said, was a ruse to draw humans into a trap 'like atekteia bugs to aua dung'. Once there, the humans would be subjected to genocide, ridding the Hierate of a problem it did not want to deal with. Liberation was a lie and the Glorious Empire was therefore the slaves' only hope for survival.

Whilst the Glorious Empire's propaganda is disingenuous and merely intended to prevent widespread dissent, there might be some truth to it. The Hierate is struggling with the Tryaoke Crisis and some among them feel there is no other solution than to exterminate the humans who currently occupy the land they crave. The crew of the *Bad Betty* and its passengers are about to become all too familiar with the problems on Tryaoke.



## TRYAOKE

Upon arrival in Tryaoke, the *Bad Betty*'s sensor array picks up a plethora of starships and small craft. There is a lot of orbital traffic here, most of it in the 200-2,000 ton range. The world has few close-orbit facilities and no public highport to speak of. The best it can muster are some orbital warehouses, storage facilities for the clans who administer the world and therefore forbidden to offworlders. Tryaoke's solitary gas giant is inconveniently located in the outer system, making it a useless resource for ships intending to visit the mainworld. The gas giant does enable ships that are just passing through to skim for fuel and then move on, which is exactly what most of them do.

The majority of the ships in orbit of the planet are military. The remainder are traders and *ihaeti*, most of whom are making their way coreward. Tryaoke is administered by multiple clans including those who now hold sway over the Hliyh Chain; they ostensibly own the planet but no fiefs have been officially assigned at this point. After conquering the planet, the clans were eager to stake claims to its land but Tryaoke presented a unique challenge. The world was populated by eight billion humans, the product of a genetic engineering project gone awry. The population density of this medium-sized world is high and there is no easy way to change that. The Aslan do not take kindly to having squatters on their land and the presence of so many humans has made a traditional land grab complicated. Tryaoke is currently being held in reserve with the intention to distribute fiefs after the human problem is resolved. A blockade has been set-up in orbit to prevent overeager young lords from rushing the planet but this is exactly what some of them have done. The Aslan presence on the world therefore consists of peacekeeping forces from the controlling clans and claim jumpers who have run the blockade. The resulting tensions between the various parties on the planet is a powder keg waiting to blow but this is just the sort of thing that happens when Aslan win land they cannot actually occupy.

By now the Travellers either have a good working relationship with the TNS journalists or no relationship at all. If the Travellers are cooperating with the TNS, they may contact them at this time to coordinate a landing together. Otherwise, give them the opportunity to perform a sensor scan of the ships in orbit of Tryaoke with an Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check (INT, 1D minutes). Success means they notice they are being followed somewhat closely by a lone scout/courier. This scout carries Tique and Nendo. If they hail the ship, Tique makes no effort to deceive the Travellers, informing them that their voyage is newsworthy and she intends to cover it.

From space the planet is quite beautiful and similar in appearance to Kusyu or Terra. It has a significant hydrosphere, a breathable atmosphere, varied climates and swirling white clouds. The planet's medium size and commensurate lower gravity has created a busy topographical map and most of its continents are covered with tall mountain ranges and plateaus descending into deep river valleys. The dark side of the planet is remarkably devoid of the brightly lit urban centres one would expect to see on a high-population world, a sure sign of a low Tech Level on most of the planet. Tryaoke has a somewhat long day of about 40 standard hours and the humans living on the world have adapted to the longer cycles, adopting an elongated work day, one sleeping period and two periods of rest and recreation.

As the *Bad Betty* approaches, it is hailed by a Hierate escort ship that instructs them to hold their position at five diameters and prepare for inspection. The inspection team consists of four uniformed Aslan, comprising three males and one female. They are officious and terse as they make their way about the ship and will be surprised to find a human crew operating a clan transport, initially assuming they are an activist group seeking to provide aid to the humans on the planet. If the Travellers inform the team they are a colonial mission of sorts, seeking to bring more humans to Tryaoke, their initial inclination is to ask why anyone would want to do that. The chief inspector does not go into great detail but describes the planet as horribly overcrowded and highly unpleasant. He wonders why more humans could possibly want to join the billions already there. Immigration to Tryaoke is strictly forbidden... for Aslan. As far as he knows, no humans have attempted to migrate to the planet but he is unaware of any laws that prevent them from doing so. At the completion of the inspection he clears the *Bad Betty* to land at the downport.

Before he departs, the chief inspector informs the Travellers about the planet's strict weapons laws, prohibiting them from carrying anything other than short blades. If they defy these laws they will be deported immediately and risk having their ship impounded. The inspectors are unconcerned about the shuttle's fixed-mount laser as long as the Travellers keep it powered down at all times when in Tryaokean airspace. This might seem to be an odd contradiction but is allowed nonetheless.

Lenka and her people are undeterred by the pronouncements of the inspection team and persist in their desire to land on the planet. Tryaoke's thin atmosphere is enough to make landing the *Bad Betty* at the downport a risky proposition, if the Travellers insist upon it and DM-2 to Pilot checks apply due to the

ship's standard hull if they attempt to do so. It would be wiser to take the ship's shuttle whose streamlined hull operates much better within atmosphere.

Lenka, Ilium, Uden and most of the other refugees who were not in cold sleep prepare to disembark the ship on what they believe to be the conclusion of their voyage. In the presence of the Travellers, Lenka asks Treadwell to begin awakening the low berth passengers from cold sleep so they can all be taken to the surface in a series of shuttle trips. The Travellers might wisely advise that they first visit the planet with a smaller contingent to ensure its suitability and safety. The refugees are eager to get to the planet, throwing caution to the wind, but they will relent to the Travellers' concerns about security. Treadwell offers to stay aboard the ship to watch over the remaining passengers.

Keep in mind that 30 refugees are stored in low berths on the shuttle. It might seem odd to keep them that way but there are not enough acceleration benches for the waking refugees and those in the low berths.

Tryaoke's downport is a haphazard affair originally designed as a portal to the planet for the thousands of female genetic engineers and other scientists who created the Tryaokean strain of Humaniti. The starport was more elaborate under the Glorious Empire but heavily bombed during the war with the Hierate. It was initially a Class C, bombed into a Class E and lately restored to a rather pedestrian Class D facility.

The downport is located next to the planet's largest inland sea. Like any ambitious project, the facility required access to a range of supplies, equipment and personnel, which necessitated the creation of hundreds of other facilities and habitations that surround and encroach upon the starport itself. The facilities were designed for scientific purposes and are an odd fit for the Hierate forces that now occupy them.

The starport has few docking bays for a world that serves such a large population but the bays it does have can serve very large spacecraft. Refuelling services are readily available but there are no refineries to speak of. The clans that control the planet have effectively levied martial law on the sprawling facility, with squads of infantry and grav APCs making regular patrols around its perimeter.

## HOME ON THE RANGE

Since the Hierate acquired Tryaoke, the Aslan have been befuddled by the massive human population. Attempts to create a labour caste similar to the one in place on Hliyh have failed miserably and the establishment of work training programs, schools, farms and even local militias have been completely ignored by the locals. Despite their many attempts, all efforts to corral, cajole or coerce the people into one form of industry or another have met with failure.

Oddly enough, one industry has notably taken off completely on its own: aua ranching. The original aua were native to Kusu but the species has been adapted to hundreds of environments across Hierate space and beyond. They are a major source of food, leather and other products. No one is quite sure who first introduced the aua to Tryaoke but the humans have taken quite a liking to them. Whilst the species is known to be highly adaptable, they seem to do better in the lowlands of the planet and since they were introduced here, millions of humans have begun breeding them, creating a steady food source for the planet's billions. Recently they have begun selling and trading surplus stock to Aslan ground forces on the planet.



Thousands of ranches have sprung up in river valleys, canyon systems and low-lying plateaus, and aua ranching has become the single most popular industry amongst an otherwise indolent strain of Humaniti. Being omnivores, the humans benefit from a steady source of protein and share the same vegetable products they feed to the livestock. In a few short decades, aua have come to outnumber humans on the planet.

There are concerns about the long-term effects of introducing massive numbers of aua to Tryaoke's ecosystem, as they contribute to erosion by stripping terrain of edible grasses, consume copious amounts of fresh water and contribute a measurable atmospheric taint with their... aua emissions. All are solvable problems as far as the Aslan are concerned – they are just pleased the humans have something productive to do.

## CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

Once on the surface, Lenka and her entourage want to see the planet. They know next to nothing about it other than basic physical characteristics and the mythology created around it. Lenka informs the Travellers that she and her advisors would like to see the countryside and visit some of the human habitations. Based on information she has, the area a few hundred kilometres outside the starport is heavily settled by Tryaokean humans. The refugees very much want to meet the natives.

## A RIDE INTO THE OUTBACK

The Travellers are permitted to fly their shuttle to any site within 500 kilometres of the starport provided they keep its laser powered down. If they bucked convention and landed the *Bad Betty* on the planet, they are informed that they are not permitted to fly it anywhere outside the boundaries of the starport. There is some concern that landing the shuttle in the outback amongst a heavily populated community of xenophobic and superstitious humans would do little to ingratiate the refugees with the locals but the choice is the Travellers' to make. It might be inadvisable to take the shuttle since the refugees really want to get off on the right foot with the locals.

The Travellers may seek alternative transportation but there are few high-tech vehicles to be had. Once outside the borders of the starport, the Tech Level drops precipitously; however, they may rent or purchase ground vehicles. The nearest human communities in the region are at least a two hour drive from the starport but the Travellers and refugees may opt to go deeper into the outback if they want. They are advised to take heavy ground vehicles with the Rough Terrain trait and wear filter masks to withstand the intense sulphurous fumes of the aua ranches. Travellers can become acclimated to it after a while but newcomers can get quite ill after breathing the 'enriched' air for an hour or two. The Travellers are unlikely to have contacts on this remote Aslan world but if they check into the local data network they might discover that the Uiuikhtaiu clan have a presence on Tryaoke. The local clan administrator has been made aware of their mission and its importance to Hteakya, and will happily loan them a pair of wheeled ATVs for their excursion.

Driving into the outback begins pleasantly enough but as the Travellers progress the roads quickly give way to poorly paved dirt. It gets downright bumpy and rocky at times and the Referee may opt to have the driver make one or more Average (8+) Drive checks (DEX) to determine how effective they are at navigating the various hazards. Presumably driving an Aslan vehicle, they will suffer DM-2 to account for the alien control systems. The Traveller behind the wheel might find it prudent to reduce driving speed to ensure a safer trip.

## BREAKING THE BLOCKADE

With the tyranny of the Glorious Empire long gone, the planet's eight billion humans have had to develop their own society and culture virtually out of thin air. These humans were bred for labour and have received little in the way of education. One of the few resources they have are the soldiers who were left behind after the Glorious Empire lost the planet, who had rudimentary education and military training. Many have risen to levels of distinction among the Tryaokeans and are doing what they can to shepherd them along.

An Aslan noble by the name of Keawowilrea has roused his ahriy to breach the blockade and stake a claim to a fief. It is a lush, temperate locale with verdant, broad deciduous trees that range from obsidian black to a

deep blue and home to hundreds of animal species Aslan like to hunt. It is a prime piece of real estate and despite the fact that he has defied the blockade just by being there, the clans' unwillingness to condemn his actions is nothing less than tacit support. Many of them secretly hope his defiance results in a loosening of the blockade, enabling more of them to make similar claims to Tryaocean land.

The humans are having none of it. The land that Keawowilrea has claimed borders an expansive grazing plain used by aua ranchers. Despite an extreme technological disadvantage, the humans have begun to resist the Aslan interlopers and have engaged in a few minor scrapes with Keawowilrea's forces. No major battles have occurred yet but several people have been injured. In return, the humans have managed to vandalise Keawowilrea's makeshift manor and a few of his vehicles. As far as Keawowilrea is concerned this is completely unacceptable and it is high time someone did something about these unruly, lab-grown human barbarians. It just so happens this is the very same region the Travellers and Hteakyan refugees have come to visit.

## COUNTRY HOSPITALITY

As the Travellers and refugees enter the outback they have the opportunity to get to know some of the Tryaoceans. If the Travellers took the shuttle, the chances of them making contact with the locals are slim to none. If they took a ground vehicle and approach a settlement or ranch, the locals will be frightened at first but become curious after a while and summon the courage to meet the offworlders. It will be up to the Travellers to find a way to extend an olive branch of some sort to breach the xenophobia of the locals. The Travellers will note that many of the ranchers are armed with rifles and pistols but further investigation reveals their primary purpose is to eliminate predators that prey on the aua herds.

After the Travellers and refugees establish contact, they might be able to convince some of the more outgoing locals to invite them into a tavern, town hall or other public venue to discuss the purpose of their visit. During this meeting, the majority of the Tryaocean humans avoid them and remain aloof. They are not accustomed to offworlders and have seen very few humans from the Outrim Void or Imperium. They are not used to humans who act with any sort of authority, having been passed from one Aslan overlord to another over the course of their lives.

Allow the Travellers and refugees to get to know some of the locals. After they warm up to the offworlders, the

locals talk about their current situation including the recent annexation of land by an Aslan noble. Over the course of the conversation the Travellers do not get the sense that Tryaocean humans lack intelligence but there does seem to be some kind of artificially imposed limit on their intellectual curiosity, an inhibitor preventing them from becoming fully functional human beings. It might be unsettling for human Travellers to witness first-hand what an alien race has done to members of their species.

After getting to know them for a while, the Tryaoceans offer to show the Travellers the Aslan manor. If they decide to go, it is a short drive of about 15 kilometres. The Aslan have set-up a camp of sorts, comprised of tents, advanced shelters and small craft, with several armed vehicles parked on the perimeter of the camp. The Tryaoceans advise the Travellers not to get too close as the Aslan are armed and have fired shots on occasion. Allow the Travellers to make a Difficult (10+) Recon (1D minutes, INT) check to notice several helicopters concealed under camouflage netting in the centre of the camp (see page 40).

The Travellers may optionally decide to perform a more detailed reconnaissance of the camp later, perhaps under the cover of night. If the TNS is with the Travellers, they will insist on coming along. If they stealthily make their way into the perimeter, they notice the helicopters are equipped with large tanks and spraying mechanisms. A Difficult (10+) Medic or Science (Chemistry) check (EDU) reveals the tanks contain a neurotoxin of some sort.

After returning to the village, the Travellers and refugees are invited to stay for the evening meal which, as they might have expected, is going to be aua steaks and assorted vegetables.

Lenka, Ilium and Uden seem heartened by their encounter with the locals. They feel more than ever that Tryaoke is their promised land. Unfortunately, their dreams are about to be shattered.

## THE ASSAULT

Either late that evening or early the following morning, the village comes under attack. The Aslan assault the village with the squadron of helicopters, spraying a neurotoxin that kills humans but leaves aua and other animals alive. Assuming the Travellers and refugees are wearing their filter masks as they were advised to do, they are completely unaffected by the nerve gas.

Anyone not wearing a filter mask suffers a quick and painful death. Exposed humans suffer 1D damage per round (ignoring armour) unless they get indoors or obtain a filter mask or other breathing device. Going indoors

provides only a temporary respite. After five minutes, the neurotoxin works its way into any unsealed environment and causes the same damage per round.

Watching the Tryaokeans die is a horrifying experience. The neurotoxin causes them to asphyxiate where they stand. One moment the Travellers and refugees are making inroads with a purportedly reclusive and xenophobic society and the next they are gone.

If they investigate further, the Travellers see the attack is covering a broad area. The Aslan seem to be targeting a specific region and the community they were visiting is in the middle of it. It is up to the Referee to decide whether the Aslan land in the Tryaokean village to assess the damage they have inflicted or not. If they do, use this encounter to convey the fearsomeness of the Aslan. Unless they decided to violate the laws of the planet, the Travellers and refugees are probably unarmed and will have to hide or flee the area if they are to survive.

The TNS journalists express their determination to get the story out as quickly as possible. If they accompanied the Travellers in ground vehicles, Tique insists they return to the starport immediately so she can jump for Acis to file the story. She informs the Travellers that after they file the story, they plan to immediately head back to the Hliyh Chain where they hope to reconnect with them. They will be in Delta Theta in six weeks.

## AFTERMATH

After they make their way back to the starport the Travellers discover there is no news of the attack on any local media. The Tryaokean humans have no long-distance communications equipment or broadcasting devices and therefore no way of publicising what happened.

The Travellers, refugees, TNS team and any Tryaokean villagers they managed to save are the only survivors and hence the only witnesses to the attack. If they notify the authorities, an investigation takes place and Keawowilrea is censured for his actions. The blockading forces interdict the planet and begin weeding out Aslan encampments. If the Travellers do nothing, the TNS reporters notify the authorities of the incident after they get to the jump point, bringing about the same result; Tique wants to make sure her team is able to jump out of Tryaoke without being detained for any length of time.

The attack on Tryaoke has created a crisis. The clans who administer the system determine that, in the short term, the system is to be interdicted. All non-essential and unaffiliated starships are instructed to leave Tryaoke close orbit immediately; it is time for the Travellers and the refugees to go. Lenka and refugees may protest but the clans' decision is final. Tryaoke, at least for now, is closed off.



# THE CROSSING

After the events on Tryaoke, Treadwell and the refugees are demoralised and defeated. They were certain that Tryaoke was their promised land. Now that their hopes and dreams have been dashed to the wind, the Travellers must come up with a back-up plan. Taking a look at the starmap of the region, they have an array of potential sanctuary worlds to consider. Captain Treadwell can serve as an advisor during the decision-making process but has no definite place in mind. Treadwell provides the following guidance:

- **Camoran:** This world is a no-go. This is Treadwell's homeworld. Its future status as an Imperial Client State is uncertain and it has an arrangement with the Hierate that prevents it from accepting immigrants.
- **Acis:** Acis might accept refugees but is currently going through an *i hatei* crisis. Acis has allowed *i hatei* settlements in its rural outback but this has begun to cause tension with the natives. Taking the refugees there under those circumstances could be controversial.
- **Goertel:** Absolutely not. The Church of Nom prevents its citizens from leaving the planet and only the priesthood may partake in space travel. Depositing refugees there would make their lives little better than they were under the yoke of the Glorious Empire. In fact, they might be worse off.
- **Colony Six and Delta Theta:** These human-controlled worlds are possibilities. The major concern is that they are constantly under siege by the Glorious Empire and have their hands full just trying to remain independent. Should they fall, the refugees would likely become slaves again.
- **Torrance and Lacidaeus:** Out of the question. Both are blighted or plagued post-apocalyptic nightmares.
- **Hecarda:** This world might provide sanctuary but is highly inhospitable and the refugees' prospects would be grim.
- **Dostoevsky:** This world is far afield but an Imperial Client State which, makes it a safe haven. The sole focus of Dostoevsky is its research station and the industries that support its efforts. Where the refugees would fit into that picture is uncertain but it could be worth a try.
- **Sif:** This world is an enigma to Treadwell. If the Travellers have managed to discover one of the rumours about this world, they have information to help them decide. It could be worth further investigation. A major drawback is that travelling there requires crossing Glorious Empire space.

Just as they have begun to settle on a plan, a new problem presents itself. Whilst perched in orbit over Tryaoke or on its way to the 100-diameter limit, *Bad Betty* is hailed by an unidentified ship.

## TAUEAWATRE'S DECLARATION

The Travellers are hailed by an *Aoa'iw*-class trader operating in the vicinity of the *Bad Betty*. The ship's commander identifies himself as Taueawatre, a space officer in service to the Hrahraiu Triumvirate. Taueawatre informs them that it is his mission to destroy them. He confesses that he was ordered to kill them on first sight but ambushing an unsuspecting opponent conflicts with fteir, the Aslan concept of honour. He is therefore putting them on notice that the next time he sees them he will destroy the *Bad Betty* without hesitation.

Just as he is about to cut the comms link, Taueawatre seems to remember something and mentions that his ship is not the only one pursuing them. The Triumvirate has employed a cadre of highly disreputable individuals to hunt them down, including outcast pirates, mercenaries and assassins. '*Oh and by the way,*' he says dismissively, '*you have a spy on your ship who is helping us to track you.*'

With his ominous message delivered, Taueawatre jumps out of Tryaoke, presumably to the system he expects the Travellers to go to next.

Taueawatre's declaration and unsolicited intelligence will undoubtedly give the Travellers more to think about. In addition to their other problems they must now contend with a bounty upon their heads and an alleged traitor in their midst. If they redouble their efforts to scour the ship for surveillance devices and the like, give them another shot at finding the radio beacon in the engineering section that was described on page 11.

It is likely that, at some point, the Travellers will discover Uden Ahlmgris is the traitor. Lenka and Ilium offer to mete justice on behalf of the community of the *Bad Betty*, although it is more than likely they will condemn him to death and show him to the nearest airlock. A Referee may optionally allow Ahlmgris to defend himself and possibly win the right to be exiled

instead of executed. All he must do is win a duel against either Ilium or a Traveller chosen from among the crew.

## THE TRIUMVIRATE'S PLAN

The Hrahraiu Triumvirate plans to exterminate over a million humans on their system mainworld. On the surface, this appears to be a cruel and egregious thing to do. There are many in the Hierate who believe the Triumvirate have lost their minds. However, there is a method to their madness.

The Hierate and Glorious Empire have been at war for centuries. Most wars between clans are settled by ritualised war, taking many forms from simple displays of strength in which no lives are lost to limited wars where a small number of lives are sacrificed to resolve conflicts. So broken are the diplomatic channels between Hierate and Empire that virtually the entire conflict has been fought as total war with few exceptions. Millions upon millions of lives have been lost. The Triumvirate believes it has a solution that will prevent further bloodshed.

Slavery is the lynchpin upon which the Glorious Empire is built. Incorporating freed slaves into Hierate society and sending them elsewhere lets the Empire believe its culture and tradition live on even as it continues to lose worlds. As long as the Empire has hope, it will fight to the bitter end. The Triumvirate believe it is necessary to demoralise the Glorious Empire, to send a message that the ways of the Tokouea'we clan have come to an end. They believe a broken Glorious Empire is one that will fall much faster, thereby saving millions of Aslan lives. If it brings about an expedient end to the war, the Triumvirate is more than willing to sacrifice as many humans as it has to.

For the Triumvirate to enact their master plan, the Travellers' mission must fail. If an upstart group of offworlders prove they can successfully deliver a group of humans to sanctuary, their plan will be in shambles and media coverage of the voyage is exacerbating the situation by generating public sympathy. Should the Triumvirate succeed in stopping the Travellers, they will then continue to the second phase of their plan: fomenting tensions on Tryaoke to breaking point, resulting in the genocide of the world's eight billion humans. After a mass murder of that scale, the death of a few million more on Hrahraiu will pale in comparison. The Glorious Empire will be on notice – come to the negotiating table now or face the utter annihilation of your cultural legacy.

Plotting and planning of this nature is not usually the way of the Triumvirate. Some suspect they are operating under the advisement of the Syoisuis (see page 59 of *The Pirates of Drinax: The Trojan Reach*), who are much more adept at deception, subterfuge and skulduggery. The Triumvirate leadership has found it difficult to enlist allies for the dark deeds it is committing and the destruction of a lone, unarmed ship is no exception. The Triumvirate have hired outcast pirates, assassins, mercenaries and even disgraced space officers like Taueawatre to get this unseemly job done. Unfortunately, the Triumvirate may have recruited a bit of a loose cannon in Taueawatre as the Travellers will soon see.

## RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

This portion of the adventure is freeform in nature, casting the Travellers into an uncertain situation with no obvious bread crumbs to follow. They know they are not permitted to travel more than six parsecs from Hteakya – their ship has no electronic or mechanical fail-safe devices to prevent it from travelling further but any violation of the contract nullifies the agreement with the *Uiuikhtaiuko*. Should they break the rules, they will not be paid, nor will they receive the agreed upon bonus. Perhaps none of that matters to the Travellers at this point but that is for them to decide.

Despite the apparent broad array of choices, there are only really three viable sanctuary worlds: Acis, Dostoevsky and Sif. The path to each of these worlds is wrought with challenges. Use the following descriptions as a guideline to the worlds that lay between the Travellers and one of these sanctuary worlds.

## ENCOUNTERS

During the Travellers' voyage, use the Encounters rules on page 146 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook* with the following changes:

- Roll two encounters per day. The first is a standard encounter and any result on the Space Encounters table will suffice. For the second encounter, simply roll 1D. If the Travellers have not yet discovered who the spy is or found the radio beacon, a roll of 5+ indicates a Triumvirate hunter ship is present in the system on the lookout for the *Bad Betty*. If the radio beacon has been disabled, only a roll of 6+ indicates the presence of a hunter.
- Hunter ships are 300 tons or less. A suitable ship can be selected from *Pirates of Drinax: Ships of the Reach*.
- If Taueawatre is present in the system, he pursues the Travellers with the intention of destroying their ship. However, if a hunter is also rolled, Taueawatre

first attempts to destroy *that* ship before coming after the Travellers. See the page 25 for the path he takes after warning the Travellers of his intention to destroy them.

- Glorious Empire space counts as Wild Space in the encounters rules. Any roll of 6 on the dice indicates the Travellers encounter a Glorious Empire warship. Select any Aslan warship ranging from 1,000-2,000 tons.

The voyage to sanctuary will be dangerous. Keep in mind that the *Bad Betty* itself ultimately has two requirements: fuel and life support. Both can be obtained at any non-hostile starport along their course. For example, the Travellers can purchase both at Hliyh's Class B starport but attempting to do so at Hrahraiu, Goertel or any Glorious Empire world would be courting disaster.

Alternatively, the Travellers may perform wilderness refuelling in any system with a gas giant or world that has Hydrographics 1+. Wilderness refuelling is not easy for the *Bad Betty* as it has to be done by shuttle, which can only carry 40 tons in its collapsible fuel bladder. The shuttle must perform three skimming round trips between the fuel source and *Bad Betty*. Each skimming run requires a Difficult (10+) Pilot check (1D hours), so it is far from trivial. The fuel must then be refined by the *Bad Betty*, which will take additional time.

Note that any hunter, including Taueawatre, knows the Travellers must either go to the mainworld, a gas giant or another world in the system with liquid water for refuelling. The Referee must decide where the hunter searches first. Roll 1D with a 1-4 indicating the hunter searches the mainworld and a 5-6 indicating they check a gas giant or other refuelling resource. The Travellers may find themselves guessing which option gives them the best chance of slipping under the hunters' radar and then taking that path.

The game of cat and mouse that the Travellers must play with Taueawatre and the hunters will add tension to the voyage. There will probably be several close calls and some might result in the *Bad Betty* coming under attack, for which she is ill-suited. However, the Travellers have a few things going for them that might prevent the *Bad Betty* from being destroyed. One is Taueawatre. This wily Aslan spacer intends to destroy the Travellers but not until he eliminates his unsavoury competition. His stringent, some would say insane, interpretation of fteir demands not only that he complete his assigned mission but also destroy any other ships attempting to do the same job. This could provide the Travellers with the opportunity to slip out of the hunters' grasp on more than one occasion.

In addition, word has begun to get out about the Travellers' voyage. Three weeks after the Tryaoke incident, the TNS crew file their report on Acis. The news begins to spread along the Dustbelt like wildfire, generating sympathy for the refugees. Tique and Nendo arrive in Delta Theta six weeks after leaving Tryaoke in an attempt to reconnect with the *Bad Betty* and cover the remainder of the story.

If the Travellers take the *Bad Betty* back to the Hliyh Chain and then into the rimward spur of the Dustbelt, there is a good chance that news of their voyage makes its way into the public eye. If the Travellers arrive at either Colony Six or Delta Theta and make their presence known, they receive offers to escort them the rest of the way to their goal. The escort is likely to be no more than an armed trader but given *Bad Betty*'s dismal offensive capabilities, such an offer would probably be welcome.

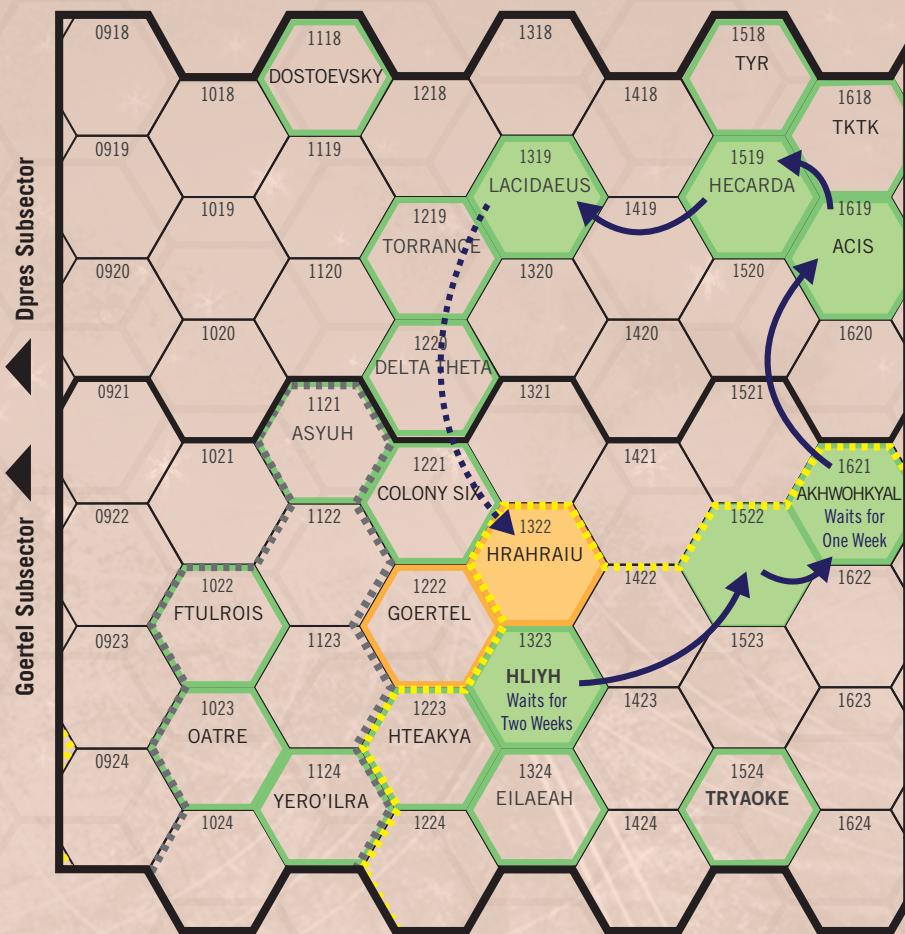
### Commander Taueawatre

Taueawatre is a decorated and highly capable officer from the Steweahkarluarl clan, a vassal of the Akatooloh, one of the three clans comprising the Hrahraiu Triumvirate.

Taueawatre subscribes to a stringent and highly traditionalist approach to fteir, making him extremely unpopular with his commanding officers but the Aslan who crew his ships worship him like a demigod. Taueawatre is an extraordinarily capable spacer and has commanded several ships to victory under challenging conditions. Nevertheless, his stoicism and inflexibility have gotten him into trouble with his superiors one too many times. Taueawatre's besmirched reputation has cut short his opportunities for advancement. War hero or not, you can only defy the chain of command for so long without consequence.

Assigned to a naval auxiliary vessel, and tasked with the destruction of an unarmed ship, Taueawatre has resolved to comply with his unseemly and distasteful orders but he intends to do it his way no matter what the cost.

Taueawatre's modified *Aoa'iw* has 2G of thrust and jump-2 capability but also has a 60-ton collapsible fuel tank, so it can cross 3- or 4-parsec gaps in two weeks. Use the track on page 25 to monitor Taueawatre's path as he searches for the *Bad Betty*. Alternatively, if the Referee wants an increased chance of an encounter with Taueawatre simply roll 2D for each system the Travellers visit. On a 9+ the canny Taueawatre is present in the system and begins to doggedly pursue the Travellers.



## Taueawatre's path

Taueawatre travels along the following path in search of the Travellers. Starting at Hliyh and ending at Lacidaeus. If Taueawatre fails to encounter the Travellers at Lacidaeus he believes he has lost the trail and returns home to Hrahraiu, once again in disgrace.

## HLYH

The Aslan clans of Hliyh have converted the slave population into a labour caste. Whilst life in the artificial abodes of Hliyh's airless surface is less than ideal, it has improved under Hierate management. Under the Glorious Empire, the slaves were exposed to horrifically dangerous jobs, working in the deep open-pit mines on the planet and in vacuum conditions constructing Hliyh's extensive orbital cities. Under the Hierate, working conditions have become much safer.

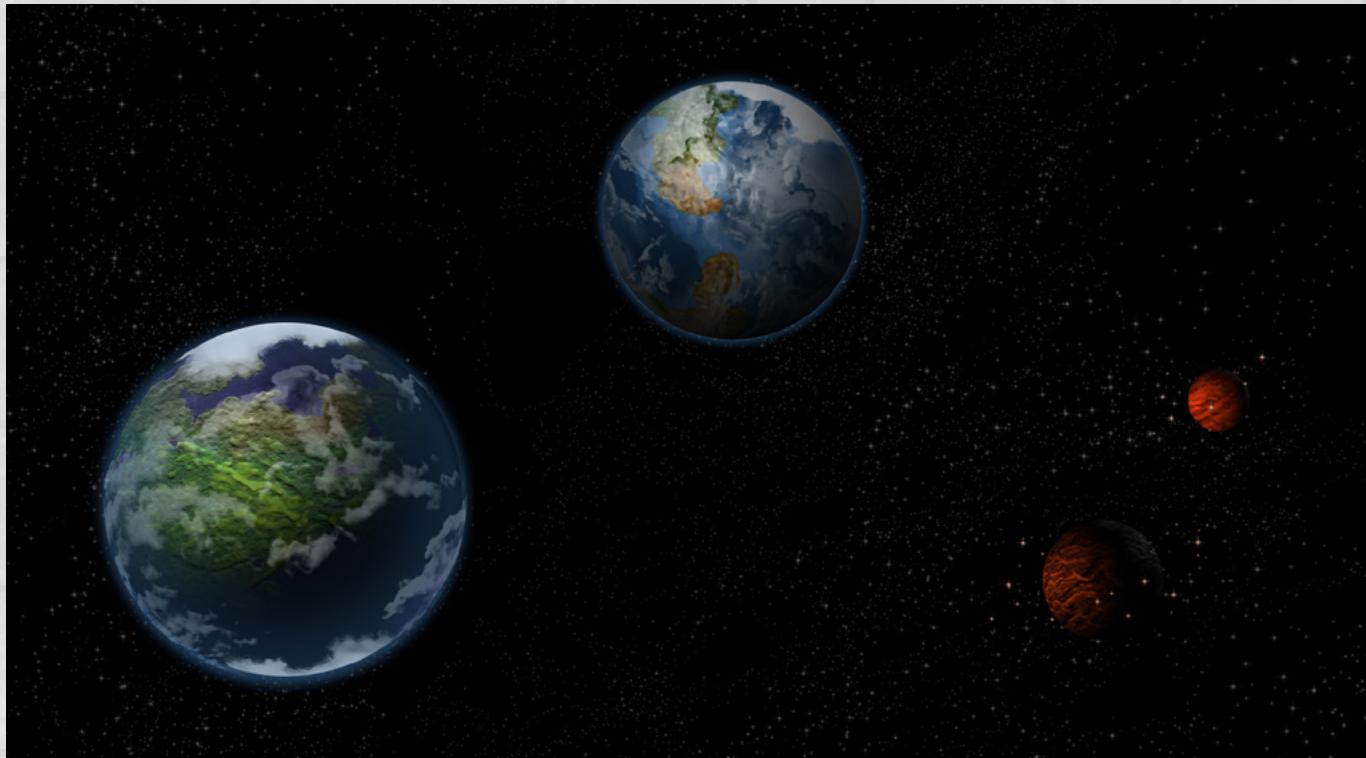
The majority of Hliyh's Aslan inhabitants live in its extensive and cutting-edge orbital cities including a magnificent orbital ring that encircles the entire planet. The dun-coloured world below has been mercilessly mined for raw materials for centuries, its surface becoming a blasted out, dishevelled husk with vast portions of its outer layers repurposed into industrial and construction materials. The joke among Aslan is that given a few more centuries, only the ring will remain and the planet itself will be but a distant memory. The ring and other orbital cities contain sprawling Kusyu-like artificial habitats and cities. The world was intended to be a monument to the greatness

of the Glorious Empire but now the Hierate has staked its claim upon this technological wonder.

Hliyh features a well-defended high-tech starport, bristling with defences and commercial traffic. After a brief but remote inspection from one of the starport's sensor hubs, the Travellers will be allowed to dock their ship. Treadwell takes the opportunity to have *Bad Betty*'s monthly maintenance done before they continue their voyage. This gives the Travellers and refugees a few days to explore the wonders of Hliyh's expansive orbital cities. One cannot help but consider how many slaves' lives were sacrificed to build this marvel.

## HRAHRAIU

This system is under the auspices of the Hrahraiu Triumvirate. The Seieakh, Akatoiloh and We'okunir clans have worked together for millennia on one project or another, exemplifying a spirit of unity among the clans. As in any marriage there are rows from time-to-time but their strong commitment to one another keeps the Triumvirate together. Unfortunately, cooperation with other clans outside their sphere is sometimes lacking. The Triumvirate thinks of itself as a miniature Tlaukuh.



within the Tlaukuh and has been known to exhibit exclusionary behaviour even when the influence and advice of outsiders might be sorely needed.

The Triumvirate has determined that the best course of action for their millions of freed slaves is extermination. Few reasons are given for this other than some vaguely expressed notions that the logistics of shipping them off planet far outweigh any benefits. The independent human systems in the region, neighbouring Hierate worlds and some of the systems in the Dustbelt have decried the Triumvirate's declaration. In response, the Triumvirate have made their operations more opaque, interdicting the mainworld and closing the downport to all but Hierate traffic. The orbital starport remains open to offworlders but visitors often express how unwelcoming the culture is. Most merely stop by, refuel, offload freight and then move on to the next system.

Peering down from the orbital starport, Hrahraiu appears to be a dusty and rocky ball with dozens of canyon systems that line its surface like stress fractures. The world is rich in low-grade mineral resources having long been stripped of lanthanum and other valuable metals. It is still quite active in the niche market of selling its rich and hardy array of natural pigments that Aslan use in many art forms, including the decorative characters they inscribe upon their starships.

It would be inadvisable for the Travellers to take the *Bad Betty* to Hrahraiu. More than likely they will never leave.

## EILAEAH

Eilaeah is a beautiful world with a well-developed ecosystem, especially around its large seas. The Glorious Empire used this planet as a hunting ground for nobles and the expectation is that the Hierate will use it for the exact same purpose. With its four gas giants and planetoid belt, Eilaeah offers ample resources for wilderness refuelling.

## GOERTEL

This world is controlled by the Church of Nom, a messianic cult that believes a divine entity will one day arise from humanity's collective soul and that its ascension can be hastened by fostering psionics. The Church has outlawed space travel for the vast majority of its citizens, allowing only the priesthood and select trained technicians to operate spacecraft. Conquered by the Glorious Empire in 556, the planet recently overthrew its oppressors when the Empire had to withdraw to defend its other worlds from the Hierate. The archaic Sindalian fleet of Goertel, mothballed on Delta Theta for centuries, returned to assert the authority of the Church.

The priesthood would be more than willing to accept the refugees as disciples but this would merely make them slaves to a new master. If the Travellers go through Goertel at all, they should be cautious lest the priesthood forcibly recruit them.

## COLONY SIX

This independent human world has its hands full dealing with the Glorious Empire, the Hiereate and the religious zealots of Goertel. Colony Six has a progressive and welcoming culture and will gladly accept the refugees if asked but the Travellers might note how fragile this world's prospects are. Should it fall to the Empire, the refugees would become enslaved once again. In any case, even if the refugees do not settle upon Colony Six, the planetary navy is willing to lend them an escort for a jump if they are heading into the Dustbelt to find sanctuary.

## DELTA THETA

This system is run by Starlink Merchant Factors, a sector-wide megacorporation who have taken over management of Delta Theta in an attempt to get a jump on its potential value as a trade hub. When the Goertelian refugees moved out, Starlink moved in. The imminent demise of the Glorious Empire has been predicted for decades and once they are gone, the neighbourhood will improve immensely or so goes conventional thinking. Unfortunately for Starlink, the Glorious Empire refuses to conveniently die a natural death and just keeps on keeping on. As a result, Starlink's investment in Delta Theta has been a financial sinkhole for the company. Keeping the system secure has cost the corporation millions of Credits paid out to mercenary units alone.

The Starlink Personnel Department is interested in selectively picking and choosing from among the refugees for trainees whom they could employ as stewards, drive hands and stevedores at the many starports where the corporation has a presence. However, they acknowledge that there are not enough roles for all of them.

Much like Colony Six, Delta Theta is dealing with Glorious Empire incursions and the possibility that they might one day be invaded is high. Were this to happen, the refugees might find themselves enslaved once again.

## ASYUH

Asyuh is a frontier stopover for Glorious Empire raiders and mercenaries making their way into the Outrim Void to gather slaves or fight in the wars of the Dustbelt. It is a dismal place with few amenities of civilisation. Its one redeeming quality is the relative freedom enjoyed by its denizens. As long as the refuelling and resupply depots in the system continue to function, its people are free to live as they wish.

There are few terrestrial habitations in the system with citizens instead opting to live in orbital facilities. Most of its worlds are airless rockballs, all of which are in tidally locked orbits around the system's two smouldering red dwarf stars. The Aslan of Asyuh own no slaves and have opted to run their society as a direct democracy. The people make all legislative and social decisions via a computer network that runs on its orbital platforms, planetoid monitors and sublight ships. A council of three determines which issues see the light of day in this dismal place, making sure to give their constituents plenty to decide upon.

Should the Travellers go through Asyuh en route to Sif, it would be wise if they engaged in wilderness refuelling and moved on as inconspicuously as possible.

## BRIDGING THE GAP

The final phase of the adventure begins after the Travellers cross the Hliyh Chain, the rimward spur of the Dustbelt, or the dangerous coreward portion of the Glorious Empire en route to one of the possible sanctuary worlds.

Commander Taueawatre should be used as a foil and erstwhile ally over the course of the crossing. His dutiful commitment to follow orders keeps him hot on the Travellers' tail but his adherence to fteir prevents him from letting other hunters take them down. At some point, he finally decides to finish the job, honour having been served by his deliberate destruction of *Bad Betty*'s other adversaries.

By this time, the voyage's notoriety has given the Travellers unexpected allies as they embark upon the final steps of their journey. Whether it be escorts from Colony Six, armed traders from one of the other stopovers or both, the Travellers should have acquired a viable escort by this time. Their good friends from the TNS might have returned to the scene as well. Should Taueawatre make his move, he will no longer be tasked with the destruction of a lone, unarmed ship but also its armed escorts. The Travellers might even help by putting their armed shuttle into the action. Taueawatre will likely be so focused on dealing with any escorts that he will ignore the pin pricks of the shuttle's pulse laser.

The Travellers and their escorts might be victorious over Taueawatre or the *Bad Betty* might have to make a final mad dash to safety as their escort finishes the battle. As far as Commander Taueawatre is concerned, khoafteirleao has been served no matter what the outcome may be.

# SANCTUARY

Finding a viable sanctuary world for the refugees is no easy task. None of the available choices are perfect but there are several worlds that would make a suitable new home. The Travellers and refugees may select from many worlds but there are three that are head and shoulders above the rest.

## ACIS

Located on the central axis of the Dustbelt, Acis is a rich, agricultural world with a progressive and cosmopolitan culture. Acis is still recovering from centuries of conflict with its nemesis, Tyr. Acis and the other worlds of the Dustbelt had long resisted Tyr's aggressions and finally broke their back with assistance from Aslan mercenaries from the Glorious Empire.

Acis is engaged in a public relations campaign aimed at the other star systems in the region. It fancies itself the capital of the Dustbelt and hopes to become a beacon of light in this otherwise dusky and blighted place.

Acis welcomes the refugees, albeit guardedly. There are societal pressures they are dealing with that make the planet a less than optimal place for the refugees to settle. First among these is the *ihatei* problem. Acis rather liberally allows *ihatei* to settle uninhabited areas of their planet, which helps keep the peace whilst Acis attempts to establish strong trade ties with Akhwohkyal, a scant two parsecs away and a prospective gateway between the Hierate and Dustbelt. As there are no other viable paths into the Hierate, with the Dustbelt's rimward spur under siege from the Glorious Empire and the trailing route blocked by the blighted Oghma Cluster, Acis is the region's best hope to establish a vibrant economic channel into the coreward Hierate.

Unfortunately, the people of Acis, especially those living in the outback, are less than sanguine about the situation. They fear their lives will get markedly worse if the government does not establish some kind of cap on *ihatei* immigration. The idea of bringing in large numbers of people who willingly submit to Aslan authority has ballooned into hysteria. Some believe the refugees represent an existential threat; whilst there is no evidence that refugees from conquered systems contribute to some sort of human malaise, Travellers might have a hard time

convincing a farmer whose plantation is already being infringed upon by *ihatei* interlopers.

The Travellers can take the refugees to Acis and there are informed people who understand they pose no threat and will willingly take them on humanitarian grounds; however, it might be best if they do not make much of a show of this. This is where the Travellers might have a conflict with the TNS journalists who have been covering their story. The TNS wants to present all the facts, perhaps not realising how difficult they could make it for the refugees to assimilate themselves on Acis. If possible, the Travellers must convince the TNS to keep the refugees' location on Acis confidential.

## SIF

Throughout its long history Sif has been the site of failed experiments, draconian dictatorships, lost colonies, invasions and at least one attempt to completely depopulate the world by environmental extremists who believed the planet was better off without the presence of sentient life. Despite its sordid history, Sif has recently developed a degree of importance it has previously lacked.

After its most recent dictator was deposed, an interim government was formed to seek outside assistance to form a more lasting solution to the planet's perennial governance problems. Despite its rich and bountiful resources, the Council of Sif was unable to find any takers until they met the corporate managers of Delta Theta, a wholly owned subsidiary of Starlink Merchant Factors. Starlink appointed the ne'er-do-well son of one of its high-level executives to be Sif's provincial governor. In the ensuing years, he proceeded to make a series of horribly disadvantageous trade deals with the neighbouring Florian League, Aslan Hierate, various and sundry Dustbelt worlds, and even the reticent Glorious Empire. The young fop cut a deal with just about anyone who was willing to make the long trip into the spinward bight in which the world is perched. While these developments did nothing to enhance Sif's stability or economic progress, it did have a delightfully unexpected effect; Sif became the de facto centre for diplomacy for the powers of the region.

The regional powers have since invested heavily in the world, building cities, transit networks, light industry, expansive foreign service bureaux and impressive, if culturally hodgepodge, orbital and downports.

Sif now has sizeable minorities of Florians and Aslan. The various groups have segregated themselves into cultural regions but the planet's urban centres tend to feature a diverse mix of people. The Delta Theta connection has become minimised as the system acquires greater importance and increased foreign investment. Starlink, knowing a good thing, attempts to assert itself from time-to-time after which it is typically bribed and shoved off stage. The regional powers are disinterested in establishing any lasting imprint on the planet lest they offend or threaten one of their peers and are thus more than happy to allow Starlink to be the 'face' of Sif if nothing else.

Sif's high-quality starport is capable of servicing and constructing starships provided materials are brought to the planet from outsystem, as the manufacturing and technological base of the planet simply cannot support soup-to-nuts construction of interstellar craft. Thanks to the magnanimity of the neighbouring powers, such craft can and are built on planet. Whilst this is seemingly impractical, Sif's shipyard has found its niche as a builder of prototypes and test spacecraft.

The people of Sif are mostly provincial, living on plantations while growing and selling agricultural goods in the world's nascent trade zone. In spite of their seeming lack of sophistication, Sifians are eager to trade with offworlders. With Starlink's role minimised, many farmers have become quite prosperous. Despite the world's humble beginnings, its prospects going forward seem bright.

Sif is in the unique position of being ineffectually governed by one entity and reluctantly by a cadre of others. In this anarchic void it would be easy to imagine a place for a group of hopeful, hard-working refugees who are looking to establish a permanent home. Manual labour and service opportunities abound on Sif. The only problem is getting there. It is far off the beaten path and reaching it requires that the Travellers pass through the Glorious Empire who, in all likelihood, would be more than happy to reacquire some of their long lost slaves if given half a chance.

## DOSTOEVSKY

The windswept surface of Dostoevsky is daunting to even the boldest adventurers and colonists but the discovery of an undersea Ancients site prompted development of an Imperial Research Station. The planet's somewhat

eccentric orbit, two large moons and young F-type star combine to create a roiling and tumultuous environment. Whilst the air is breathable with a filter mask, and the planet reasonably warm, its constant and violent meteorological activity make it a challenge. The Ancients site beneath the surface of the planet's largest ocean is difficult to reach but has yielded a bounty of ground-breaking discoveries and new insights.

Client-state status was imposed on the system surreptitiously by the Imperium and without consent of Dostoevsky's disparate municipalities. The Imperial presence is an intrusive one that has resulted in a grass-roots movement to be rid of it.

Dostoevskians would probably not oppose the addition of would-be colonists. There are jobs to do and the research station has a decidedly liberal bent. Willing and able students would be trained in a number of disciplines that serve the needs of various research projects and those without scholastic aptitude could fill the world's many vacant service positions. 'Dost' would be a difficult place for the refugees to settle but the locals would be happy to have the refugees if they decide they want to make a go of it.

## EPILOGUE

Should the Travellers return to the Dustbelt after their harrowing adventure, they are likely to come across a TNS bulletin that catches their interest:



DOSTOEVSKY/DPRES 125-1105

A converted Aslan clan transport named the *Betty* has unwittingly found itself at the centre of a controversial effort to transport thousands of freed slaves from former worlds of the Glorious Empire to those of the Sindalian Main. The freed slaves, or Hierate refugees as they have come to be called, are in need of a new home. Humans descended from colonists long ago taken as slaves by the Empire, the refugees must now strike out from the only homes they have ever known to an uncertain future in the Dustbelt and beyond. One can only hope that they find safe haven among the stars.

## NEXT STEPS

After the voyage is complete and the refugees delivered to their new home, it is time for the *Bad Betty* to make the return trip to Hteakya. Ftaiwehoahyas awaits her triumphant return. The *Uiwikhtaiuko* presents the voyage as a fait accompli, proof that humans of the liberated worlds have a home awaiting them outside of Hierate space. To do anything other than assist them with their departure would be uncivilised and unbefitting of the fteirle.

Treadwell is satisfied that a point has been proven that Humaniti takes care of its own. There are places the freed slaves of the Hliyh Chain can go. With little more than a used and abused clan transport, the Travellers proved this to be true and Treadwell hopes the example set by the voyage will make the Hrahraiu Triumvirate and land-hungry clans of Tryaoke think twice before they consider exterminating humans on their worlds. The story of the voyage has been broadcast loudly and clearly by TNS journalists. The news has spread into the Hierate too, where progressive clans have lauded the courage and honour of the *Bad Betty*'s voyage.

The Travellers have played the role of heroes in this adventure, saving the lives of hundreds of people and quite possibly paving the way to save thousands or even millions more. What they do next is up to them. If they determine it is time to move on to new adventures elsewhere or claim a new starship of their own, they will still be remembered as the heroes who bravely delved into the Hierate to help save the lives of refugees. If they end up serving as the long-term crew of the *Bad Betty* or even purchasing her from the *Uiwikhtaiuko* clan, the possibilities are endless. The ship has shown its versatility and durability, and is worth a good look if the Travellers are considering a long-term stay in the Hierate.



M  
2011

# BAD BETTY

TL12		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	600 tons, Standard	-	30
M-Drive	Thrust 2	12	24
J-Drive	Jump 1	20	30
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 255 High Efficiency Batteries (TL12) x2, Power 120	17 2	17 0.4
Fuel Tanks	J-1 (twice), 4 weeks of operation	122	-
Bridge	Holographic Controls	20	3.75
Computer	Computer/5bis	-	0.045
Sensors	Civilian Grade	1	3
Systems	Fuel Processor (20 tons/day) Collapsible Fuel Tank (60 tons) Docking Space (95 tons) Shrine Workshop	1 0.6 105 4 6	0.05 0.0003 26.25 0.5 0.9
Staterooms	Standard x 25 Low Berths x 150	100 75	12.5 7.5
Software	Manoeuvre/0 Jump Control/1 Library	- - -	- 0.1 -
Common Areas		20	2
Cargo		85 (100)*	-
<b>TOTAL: MCR 157.9953</b>			

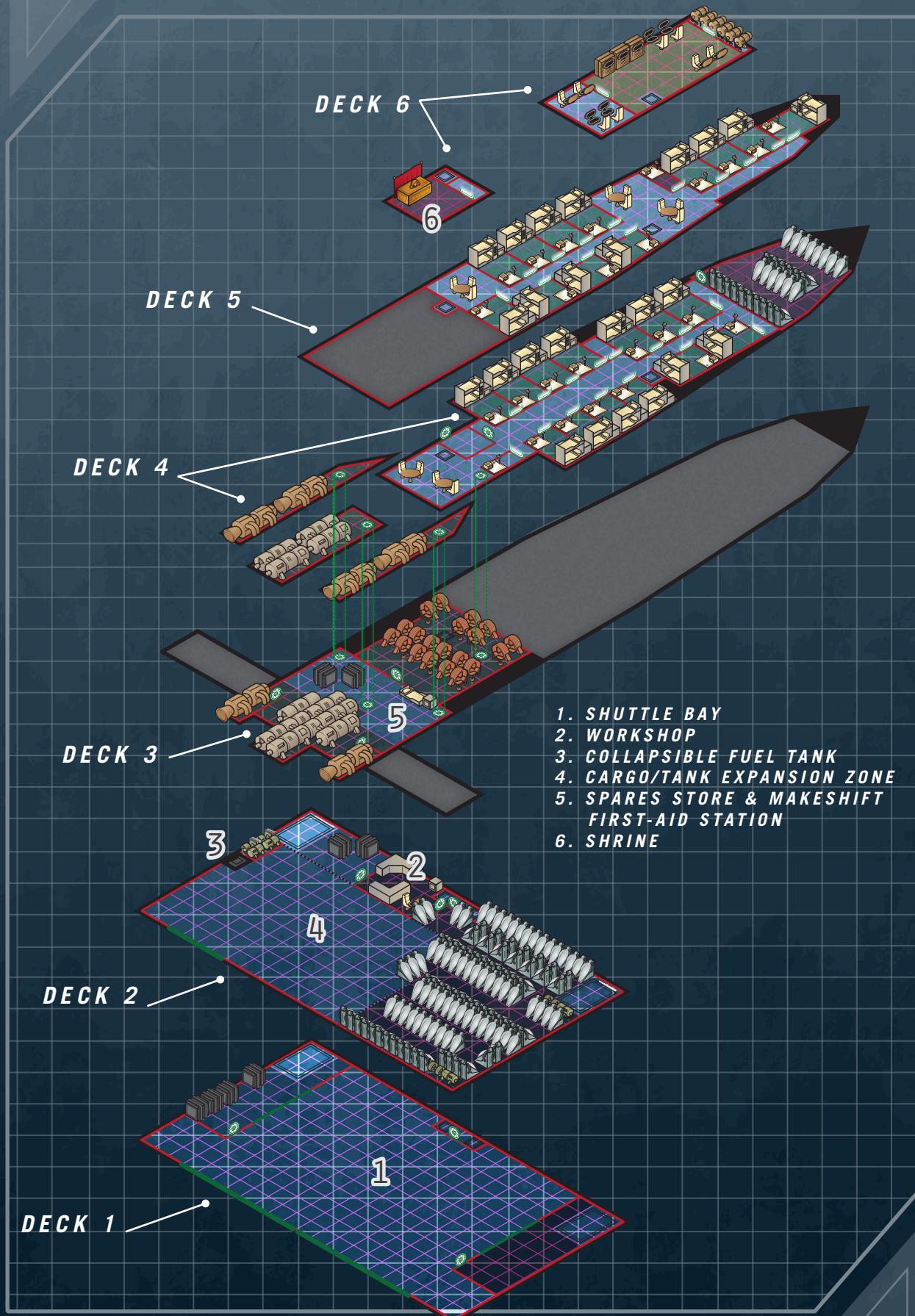
240

HULL POINTS

\* The engineering section has 15 tons of additional space due to the emplacement of a smaller jump drive without making additional modifications to the drive room bulkheads. This space is typically used to store spare parts and other materials used for the care and upkeep of the ship.



The *Bad Betty* is a modified *Khtukhao*-class clan transport. The cargo hold houses an additional 120 low berths along with high-efficiency batteries for emergencies. The ship's original jump drive was destroyed and replaced with a salvaged drive from a smaller ship, giving it only jump-1 capability. The original bulkheads remain in place, making for a rather spacious engineering section, and the space is used to store spare parts and a makeshift first-aid station. The unmodified fuel tanks, originally designed to hold enough fuel for a two-parsec jump, carry enough fuel for two jump-1s. One of few accoutrements is the inclusion of holographic controls so human crews can operate *Bad Betty* without degradation in performance. She retains her original Aslan mechanical controls beneath the holograms.



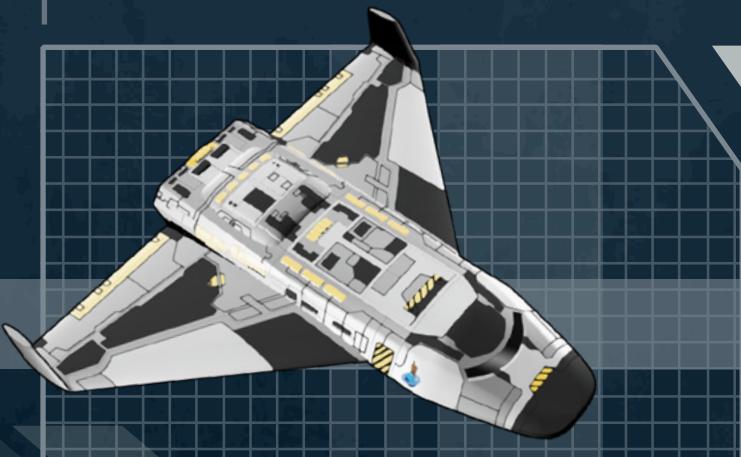
# LITTLE BETTY

TL12

TONS COST (MCR)

<b>Hull</b>	95 tons, Streamlined	-	5.7
<b>M-Drive</b>	Thrust 2	12	24
<b>Power Plant</b>	Fusion (TL12), Power 60	4	4
	High Efficiency Batteries (TL12), Power 60	1	0.2
<b>Fuel Tanks</b>	4 weeks of operation	1	-
<b>Bridge</b>	Holographic Controls	6	0.59375
<b>Computer</b>	Computer/5	-	0.03
<b>Sensors</b>	Basic	-	-
<b>Weapons</b>	Fixed Mount (pulse laser) x 1	-	1.1
<b>Systems</b>	Collapsible Fuel Tank (40 tons)	0.4	0.0002
	Air Lock	2	0.2
<b>Software</b>	Manoeuvre/O	-	-
	Library	-	-
<b>Accommodations</b>	Cabin Space x 8	12	0.6
	Acceleration Benches x 9 (seats 36)	9	0.09
<b>Cargo</b>		41.75	-

TOTAL: MCR 19.71395



38

HULL POINTS

3

LOW BERTHS

CREW

PILOT, ENGINEER, GUNNER

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr1643/month

• • • •

PURCHASE COST

MCr19.71395

POWER REQUIREMENTS

29

MANOEUVRE  
DRIVE

19

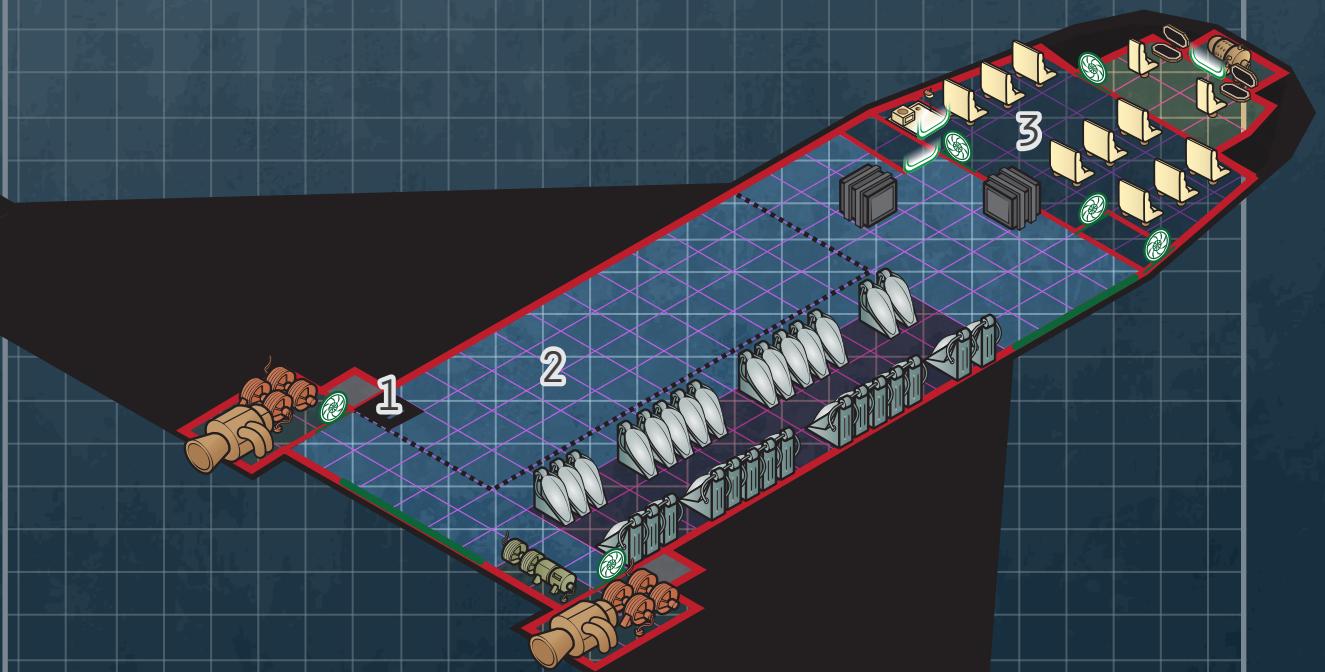
BASIC SHIP  
SYSTEMS

4

WEAPONS

SENSORS

*Little Betty's* cabin has been modified to accommodate 30 low berths, increasing the number of passengers the mothership can carry. A high-efficiency battery has been added for emergency power and the shuttle's collapsible fuel tank is deployed when wilderness refuelling is required for *Bad Betty*. The shuttle has a fixed-mount laser on its bow but achieving any degree of accuracy requires a link to *Bad Betty's* superior sensors.



- 1. COLLAPSIBLE FUEL TANK**  
**2. CARGO/TANK EXPANSION ZONE**  
**3. CABIN SPACE**

# ALLIES AND OPPOSITION

## Captain Val Treadwell

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE		
Human	Male	71		
TRAITS		-		
STR	4	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	8	Admin 2, Advocate 1, Astrogation 0,
END	5	SOC	5	Carouse 2, Electronics (computers)
PSI	-			1, Gambler 2, Language (Trokh)
				3, Mechanic 0, Medic 2, Science
				(psychology) 1, Steward 1, Vacc Suit 0
EQUIPMENT		TL12 Vacc Suit, TL10 Portable Computer with Expert/2 (medic) Software, TL10 Medikit		



### Playing Captain Val Treadwell:

The careers of some spacers are blessed by the stars themselves; and then there are careers like Val Treadwell's.

Treadwell started well enough when he was selected for flight school at Camoran's vaunted COACC force, but his career quickly derailed due to a lust for strong whiskey and fast women. Before long he was kicked out of school and had few prospects. He managed to land a job as a deck hand on a freighter that worked the coreward Hierate. He learned to speak Trokh, about as well as a human can, and spent the next four decades wandering the stars and taking any odd jobs he could find.

Val has not got a Credit to his name but does have a big heart. Everything he earns from a day's work or wins in a card game ends up being given away to one lost cause or another. Disowned by his family and with nowhere to go, Val says he 'means to do one good thing' with his life even if it kills him. He believes he has found a cause worth fighting for in helping the freed slaves of the Hliyh Chain. Whether or not it brings about his demise is another story.

Val is no more a starship captain than the Duke of Tobia is a penniless pauper but he is willing to play the role if it gives him a chance at redemption. He leans heavily on the Travellers for their expertise and experience, and is not afraid to admit when he does not know about something. He just wants to get the job done no matter what it takes.

## Lenka Ankys

SPECIES	GENDER		AGE
Human	Female		42
TRAITS			
STR 8	INT 11	SKILLS	
DEX 7	EDU 7	Admin 2, Advocate 1, Astrogation 0, Carouse 2, Electronics (computers) 1, Gambler 2, Language (Trokh) 3, Mechanic 0, Medic 2, Science (psychology) 1, Steward 1, Vacc Suit 0	
END 9	SOC 4		
PSI -			
EQUIPMENT		None	



### Playing Captain Val Treadwell:

Lenka is the leader of the refugees aboard the *Bad Betty*. She is grateful and humble but shows dogged determination to get her people to Tryaoke, a world her people believe to be their promised land. Whilst Lenka is eager to get this group of refugees to sanctuary, she knows her future is to travel the stars of this region as an advocate for the freed slaves of the Glorious Empire.

## Ilium Antradi

SPECIES	GENDER		AGE
Human	Male		35
TRAITS			
STR 10	INT 6	SKILLS	
DEX 9	EDU 4	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Heavy Weapons (vehicle) 1, Language (Galanglic) 2, Melee (blade) 2, Recon 1, Survival 1, Tactics (military) 1, Vacc Suit 1	
END 11	SOC 4		
PSI -			
EQUIPMENT		Monkey Knife, jack	



### Playing Cllium Antradi:

Ilium is a leading figure among the refugees and can usually be found at Lenka's side. He looks upon her as his spiritual guide and would willingly lay down his life for her. Ilium was a Glorious Empire 'dog soldier' left behind on Hteakya. His fellow soldiers were implanted with explosive devices intended to prevent desertion and when their Aslan officers dusted off the planet in retreat, most of his unit was killed as their devices went off. Ilium was one of the lucky ones whose implant was a dud.

## Uden Ahlmgris

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	52
TRAITS		
STR 5	INT 9	SKILLS
DEX 6	EDU 8	Admin 1, Deception 3, Electronics
END 8	SOC 5	(comms) 2, Jack-of-All-Trades 1,
PSI -		Language (Galanglic) 2, Mechanic 2, Stealth 2
EQUIPMENT		Dagger



### Playing Uden Ahlmgris:

Uden was saihlea, a human who worked his way up the ranks of slave society to become an informant and traitor to his people. Whilst he has since repented and been accepted back into society, he secretly misses his life as a slave. He had status, respect and more wealth than most of his kind were allowed to have. He longs to have all of that back and more.

## Yana Tique

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	32
TRAITS		
STR 6	INT 9	SKILLS
DEX 7	EDU 11	Art (performance) 2, Art
END 8	SOC 9	(holography) 1, Jack-of-All-Trades 1, Language (Trokh) 1, Mechanic 1, Persuade 2
EQUIPMENT	TL12 Tailored Vacc Suit (bearing the TNS logo), Holography Equipment	



### Playing Yana Tique:

The perpetually young Yana Tique is a mainstay of the TNS in the Trojan Reach. She is widely respected by the public and her peers for taking on big stories regardless of the danger. She can be a bit tunnel visioned at times, focusing so hard on the story at hand that she does not consider the repercussions of her actions. Whilst it may seem all she cares about is the adrenaline rush and another big story, Yana is an ethical and empathetic person, and will do the right thing when prompted.

Yana always has her holographer, Nendo ligida, in tow wherever she goes. She is gruff and imperious with him, which he seems to accept as part of the job.

# Commander Taueawatre

SPECIES	GENDER		AGE
Aslan	Male		42
TRAITS			-
STR 9	INT 10	EDU 8	SKILLS
DEX 9	END 9	SOC 11	Gun Combat (slug) 1, Gunner (turret) 2, Gunner (spinal) 2, Independence 0, Language (Galanglic) 1, Leader 4, Melee (natural) 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 3, Pilot (capital ships) 2, Tactics (naval) 4, Vacc Suit 1
EQUIPMENT	Gauss Pistol, Boarding Vacc Suit		



## Playing Commander Taueawatre:

The duty-bound and relentless Commander Taueawatre is on a mission to prevent the Travellers from getting the refugees to sanctuary. He does not stop to ask why this is important to his Tlaukuhu masters; it is his job to ensure they die a cold death in space. The only thing getting in his way is his strict adherence to the Aslan code of honour and absolute insistence that everyone else have the same lofty standards.

X

# EQUIPMENT

01/57860

## EMERGENCY SOFTSUIT

A disposable emergency vacc suit including gloves and a soft, collapsible 'bubble' helmet, the softsuit offers no protection against hostile environments or attack – only against vacuum and non-corrosive atmospheres. The softsuit includes a small air bottle (4-hour capacity) and can be plugged into shipboard life-support points to prolong this supply. It is rather flimsy and it offers no protection against radiation, making it a poor choice for repair work or routine duty and a desperate last resort for EVA work. An electronics suite not included.

Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Emergency Softsuit	+0	10	-	10	Cr2000	Vacc Suit 0



# AUSIYR ASSAULT HELICOPTER

TL	8
SKILL	FLYER (ROTOR)
AGILITY	+1
SPEED (CRUISE)	MEDIUM (SLOW)
RANGE (CRUISE)	2000 (3000)
CREW	2
PASSENGERS	4
CARGO	0.5 TONS
HULL	4
SHIPPING	8 TONS
COST	CR249000

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

## WEAPONS

Light Autocannon  
(pintle mount, basic fire control)

## EQUIPMENT

Control System (improved), Communications System (improved), Navigation System (improved), Sensor System (improved), Camouflage (improved), Stealth (basic)

## ARMOUR

FRONT	16
REAR	12
SIDES	8



## TRAITS

## DESCRIPTION



These Aslan helicopters are designed to transport fire teams to the battlefield and popular among mid-tech Aslan mercenary companies. The standard version features a heavily armoured front surface and belly-mounted light autocannon. The open rear cabin willingly sacrifices the protection of its occupants in return for fast deployment capability.

WEAPON	RANGE	DAMAGE	MAGAZINE	MAGAZINE COST	TRAITS	FIRE CONTROL
Light Autocannon	1	6D	500	Cr1000	Auto 3	+1