

# TRAVELLER®

THE ORDER OF PROMETHEUS



SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

# TRAVELLER®

## THE ORDER OF PROMETHEUS

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### CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	02
ALDEBARAN SECTOR	05
WOVOKA SUBSECTOR	06
FIRDAUSI SUBSECTOR	08
THE PALERMO CLUSTER	10
THE WASAT SYSTEM	11
THE SWELTER SYSTEM	14
THE ALZIRR SYSTEM	18
THE MEROP SYSTEM	20
THE PALMERO SYSTEM	24
THE NOVA PROMETHEUS SYSTEM	28
THE MU'IZZI SYSTEM	32
REFEREE'S INFORMATION	35
THE ORDER OF PROMETHEUS CAMPAIGN	40
VERY FAR FROM HERE	44
THE ONLY PREY WORTH HUNTING	54
ESTATE MANAGEMENT	63
IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY	84
YUREM'S HOUSE OF CLARIFICATIONS	105
AFTERMATH	109
CHARACTERS AND OPPONENTS	111
STARSHIPS AND EQUIPMENT	125

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# INTRODUCTION

*The Order of Prometheus* is an adventure-sourcebook focusing on the rimward side of the Solomani Confederation. It presents a cluster of worlds in detail, along with an episodic campaign set there. This can be interspersed with side adventures and any Traveller-generated activities that may occur, or played out as a whole before the Travellers move on.

The campaign revolves around a mysterious group calling itself The Order of Prometheus after one of the local worlds. This is something of a red herring as the group is not based there but have been active on Nova Prometheus and still have ties to the world. In ancient Greek mythology, Prometheus was a titan who stole the secret of fire from the gods, giving it to humanity. This enabled humans to forge their own tools and angered the gods, who wanted to keep this knowledge secret. The Order of Prometheus has obtained secret knowledge of their own and plan to forge their own tools – in this case genetically engineered workers and soldiers. The Travellers may come to question whether humans are wise enough to wield such power and what the consequences might be.

The Travellers are sent to survey an old remote installation, to see if it has any salvage value. They find evidence that someone has been using it recently and that they were brutally killed by the creatures they were experimenting on. Further investigation reveals that the Order has been field-testing their creations on other worlds. Their original intention was to create super-soldiers and obedient workers but these creatures are badly flawed. The Order still intends to make use of them but now as a political tool.

## REFeree'S NOTES

*The Order of Prometheus* can be inserted into an ongoing campaign or used as an introduction. Its location makes it highly suitable as an introduction to the Solomani Confederation, as the Travellers are initially confined to the Palermo Cluster, which contains seven star systems separated from the rest of the Solomani Confederation by at least a two-parsec gap.

The jump-2 gap can be used to contain the campaign until the Referee is ready to develop a wider region, without the requirement to railroad or artificially

constrain the Travellers. This of course presumes that the Travellers have access only to a jump-1 ship. If they have a jump-2 or higher vessel the Travellers can simply leave whenever they please, which will derail the campaign. Thus, if using *The Order of Prometheus* as an introduction to the setting it is best to limit the Travellers' mobility. This often 'just happens' as Travellers impose their own boundaries based on astrographic features, but some groups have quite the opposite mindset and insist on tackling obstacles simply because they exist.

If this occurs the Referee could move campaign elements so that the Travellers encounter them anyway, or might work hints into an ongoing campaign that ultimately draw the Travellers back into the storyline. The approach used depends on how much agency the Referee wants the Travellers to have. If they truly are free to roam wherever they will the Referee needs to be more creative than in a railroaded campaign but the results are usually worth it.

Whilst there is a measure of financial motivation at the beginning of this campaign, the Travellers are not guided through it with regular offers of money and loot. Those who choose to investigate and learn about the Order of Prometheus will unravel a mystery which – to some Travellers at least – could be sufficient reward. There are other points at which the Travellers can gain in various ways. They may develop relationships with useful contacts or find unexpected ways to profit from their experiences. An inventive group of Travellers can find ways to advance themselves during the events of this campaign, whilst those who endlessly ask 'what's in it for me?' are likely to be disappointed.

## THE PRECONCEPTION PROBLEM

Travellers who have been heavily influenced by earlier game materials might have reservations about playing a game set in the Solomani Rim. The Solomani people have traditionally been represented in *Traveller* as rather nasty racists and at times as a sort of 'Space Nazi' culture. Thus Travellers may come to this adventure with certain preconceptions, which could raise difficult questions about how they think they are supposed to behave and how they expect others to act.

This common perception of the Solomani people is wildly distorted as a result of Imperial propaganda. The Solomani do indeed think they are better than everyone else but this is snobbishness rather than hate. The Travellers may encounter groups who are haters but they are the exception. Travellers who are pure-blooded Solomani are likely to believe they stand a little above everyone else in the universe but do not fly into a panic or rage when they see an alien, or refuse to share facilities with non-Solomani humans. The Solomani are sometimes patronising, sometimes disdainful but they only hate those who have wronged them.

The Solomani people are more likely to view aliens and non-Solomani humans as worthy opponents in the game of universal dominance than despise them just for being different. A good analogy might be a high-end professional athlete who respects their opponents and perhaps looks down on those who are significantly inferior. An Olympic sprinter is unlikely to hate someone who runs for a local club but they might be a bit condescending about the achievements of such an individual.

So it is with the Solomani. They are the true-blooded humans and feel a call to greatness that others seem to lack. This is not a reason to despise those less talented, although some Solomani do have a rather toxic ‘true human’s burden’ mentality that makes them assume that outsiders need the help of the Solomani – whether they want it or not.

What does trigger both the hypothetical sprinter and the Solomani people is pretentiousness from those whose achievements are not in the same league. ‘Doing pretty good, just not as good as me’ is fine with the Solomani people, although they can be a little patronising at times. ‘Strutting about pretending to be hardcore when you’re not’ is likely to result in disdain or social hostility.

To put that another way, the Solomani people are racist in the way the Imperials are wealthist. The Imperial nobility ‘know’ they are better than the common folk due to bloodline and position. The Solomani, on the other hand, ‘know’ they are better than everyone else just because they are Solomani. Ironically, an alien or non-Solomani human is more likely to be treated as a valued friend by a fervent Solomani than a common person is to receive the same reception from a minor Imperial noble.

## ADVENTURES IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

The Solomani Confederation is not a parallel for any real-world state. It is a fictional place created as the setting for a game played for entertainment. What happens there does not affect the real world, which means it is possible to try out different ways of thinking or explore issues encountered elsewhere. In the case of this adventure, the main issues are institutionalised racism and the question of what makes a person... a person.

It is an underlying fact that social injustice exists in the Solomani Confederation and that it is based along racial lines. Rather than present a society of xenophobes and cartoonishly rabid haters, the Solomani people presented here are subtler in their prejudices. The degree and even the targets of this prejudice vary from one person to another. Travellers might be surprised to see agents of the much-vilified Solomani Security risking their lives to protect aliens. Does that mean SolSec are really the good guys after all? Is it condescending that they are protecting alien people? Is this some kind of ‘duty to those less than us?’ or just professionals doing the job they signed up for?

There are not meant to be any simple and clear-cut answers to questions of this sort. Indeed, it is possible to ignore the moral issues and just play the game – and certainly, playing the game for enjoyment is more important than wrestling with moral philosophy all the time. Nor is it worth trying to neatly match up elements of the game background with real-world history and current events. Ultimately, the Travellers will do what they think is best and their actions may be judged by others.

## SOLOMANI CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Solomani society is extremely diverse, celebrating the many cultures of old Earth and the ways they developed on new worlds. As a result, fashions and customs vary more within Solomani space than they do in the Imperium. One world may favour clothing with a distinctly West African design or colour scheme whilst another is clearly influenced by Japan or Brazil. This does not mean the Solomani Confederation is composed of places like ‘Scotland World’ and ‘Korea World’, it is a cosmopolitan interstellar society where practicality is as important as traditional style.

As the Travellers move around the cluster the Referee will have an opportunity to demonstrate this variety of cultures. The Solomani Confederation has more variation in architecture and approaches to design than the Imperium, which can look drab and corporate by comparison. Solomani on the whole will denigrate Imperial culture as a consumerist dystopia where everything is geared towards making money off the common folk for the benefit of the ruling elite. This is partially propaganda but there is some truth to it.

The two common factors throughout Solomani society – although they vary in degree from place-to-place – are institutionalised racism and hostility towards the Third Imperium. Although the Solomani people do not hate or deliberately mistreat non-Solomani, they do feel superior and are highly reluctant to entrust anything important to an alien or non-Solomani human. In the military, this translates to respect for non-Solomani soldiers but resistance to them becoming officers. The loyal non-Solomani sergeant is a staple of entertainment vids – and reality in the military – but a non-pure-blood who became even a junior officer would have to work harder and achieve more than their Solomani peers. This is not to say it does not happen but there is an inherent resistance to allowing non-pure-blooded Solomani to hold power over pure-bloods.

Non-pure-blooded Solomani can be successful and extremely rich but their success tends to be in areas unconnected to politics and governance. Thus a non-Solomani might well be the owner of a major business group – but not one operating in a key sector. If they chose to stand for public office they would face habitual and unconscious bias from the voting public or appointing body. Whether they stood any chance at all would depend on which world or region they were operating on. The average Solomani may not be aware of their bias and most that are would suggest it is natural and correct – the Solomani are the most talented and just plain best people in the universe and it is only right they should hold the highest offices.

Hostility towards the Imperium is greatest along the coreward border, far from the Palermo Cluster. However, even in areas little affected by the Solomani Rim War there is considerable resentment towards the Imperials. The fact that they currently occupy Terra herself is an affront to most Solomani and there are real worries that the Imperials might take her ancient treasures to be showcased in some distant museum – or placed in a vault and forgotten about.

The Imperium is represented – not without some truth – as a gigantic corporate franchise ruled by businesspeople or their descendants, and operated as a commercial concern. Imperial culture is geared towards consumerism and the movement of wealth upward – in short, the Solomani view the Imperium as a money-making scheme for its super-rich. As evidence of this they point to the diversity of Solomani worlds and the ‘samey corporate-ness’ of the Imperium. This is of course a distorted viewpoint but it is true that a lot of Imperial culture is designed to push citizens into buying patterns that favour those who control the media or can pay those who do.

Even in the Palermo Cluster, where there is little reason to hate the Imperials for deeds done, it is not uncommon for Imperials to be referred to as ‘consumers’ rather than ‘citizens’. The general impression the average Solomani has of Imperials is that they are either unwitting dupes of the fatcats or lack the talent and will to avoid an existence geared solely to increasing the wealth of the corporations. Of course, the Solomani Confederation has its own corporate fatcats but that is somehow different. In any case, there is considerable suspicion towards anything Imperial, which is used to the advantage of local businesses and politicians whenever it suits them.



# ALDEBARAN SECTOR

Aldebaran lies rimward of the Solomani Rim and is for the most part the territory of the Solomani Confederation. Its human citizens are almost entirely pure Solomani, although there is a significant population of primitive indigenous aliens. Not all of these have successfully assimilated into Confederation society.

The sector is not adjacent to any hostile powers so the region has been free of the border conflicts that have troubled other regions. A few worlds have been settled for thousands of years but only the coreward subsectors of Aldebaran were heavily populated prior to the Solomani Rim War. This changed once the Home system was selected as the new capital of the Confederation. Development of the sector has become a powerful engine for new economic growth. The worlds around Home are benefitting from their proximity to the Confederation's new centre of gravity while settlement of the undeveloped rimward subsectors has been accelerated.

Confederation policies designed to encourage rimward settlement through liberal grants of territory on unsettled worlds have created a wide-open colonial frontier. Rival Party factions, corporations and planetary coalitions are competing in a 'land rush' to claim, colonise and tame new worlds. In some subsectors the pace of development has outpaced the rule of law. With the leadership of the Confederation Navy reluctant to commit main fleet assets to a region not threatened by external enemies the rimward area remains something of a 'wild frontier'.

The forces of the Confederation Navy are for the most part centralised. Major battle formations are held at the largest naval bases, notably at the capital Home. Regional naval bases support patrol and response flotillas or provide specialist functions. In some cases a base is oversized for its current function and may be partially mothballed. These bases were either once of greater significance or set up for rapid reactivation and expansion if a major fleet needs to be deployed to the area.

Similarly, ground forces tend to be based en masse at important worlds rather than being scattered across the Confederation in 'penny packets'. This leaves the defence of individual worlds and the security of most star systems in the hands of the Home Forces. In the more developed coreward end of Aldebaran and around Home, security is good but elsewhere coverage can be patchy. Thus whilst the rimward parts of Aldebaran face little in the way of major military threats, low-level trouble is not uncommon off the main trade routes.

Economic and political power in the Solomani Confederation tends to be grouped and clustered, with major trade and manufacturing hubs surrounded by market worlds and backwaters. Jump-1 mains and clusters direct and regionalise trade, with an overall pattern of system, local and regional traffic radiating out from the main starports. Those systems with multiple inhabited bodies or which have important economic assets throughout the star system tend to see a considerable amount of in-system traffic. Non-starships are cost-effective in this role, although some bodies lie so far out it is more efficient to jump there (even accepting the reduction in cargo capacity) than to tie up a sublight transport asset for weeks or even months.

Local trade favours jump-1 starships either operating on a set back-and-forth route or making circuits of a cluster, with higher-jump vessels offering a faster service. This regionalisation in many cases applies also to Home Forces – vessels may be restricted to their local cluster but can carry more weaponry on the same tonnage. This has the effect of limiting the ability of Home Forces to project power outside their local cluster, which is generally to the liking of the Confederation government. The influence – military, political and economic – of any given world or grouping is naturally limited in this way, which contributes to long-term stability of the Confederation.

# Wovoka Subsector

Wovoka borders the Aldebaran subsector, seat of the Confederation government, but most of the subsector is of little importance to the Confederation as a whole. There are 21 star systems, of which 10 are part of clusters lying wholly within the subsector. Most of the remainder are part of groupings lying partly outside. Average Tech Level is 10, with adequate to good starports on most worlds.

There are no major political or economic groupings in the subsector, although the six-system cluster around Wovoka itself has a strong internal economy. A major trade route between the Grand United States of Quesada and the Boötean Federation, both multiworld member states of the Confederation, runs through the spinward side of the subsector and contributes to the wealth of Wovoka. The rest of the subsector is far less prosperous.

Culturally, the region is heavily influenced by the Hispanic-dominated Grand United States of Quesada but there is far more variation outside its borders than within them. The four worlds belonging to the Grand United States which happen to be situated in the subsector are both astrographically and politically distant from the rest of the subsector.

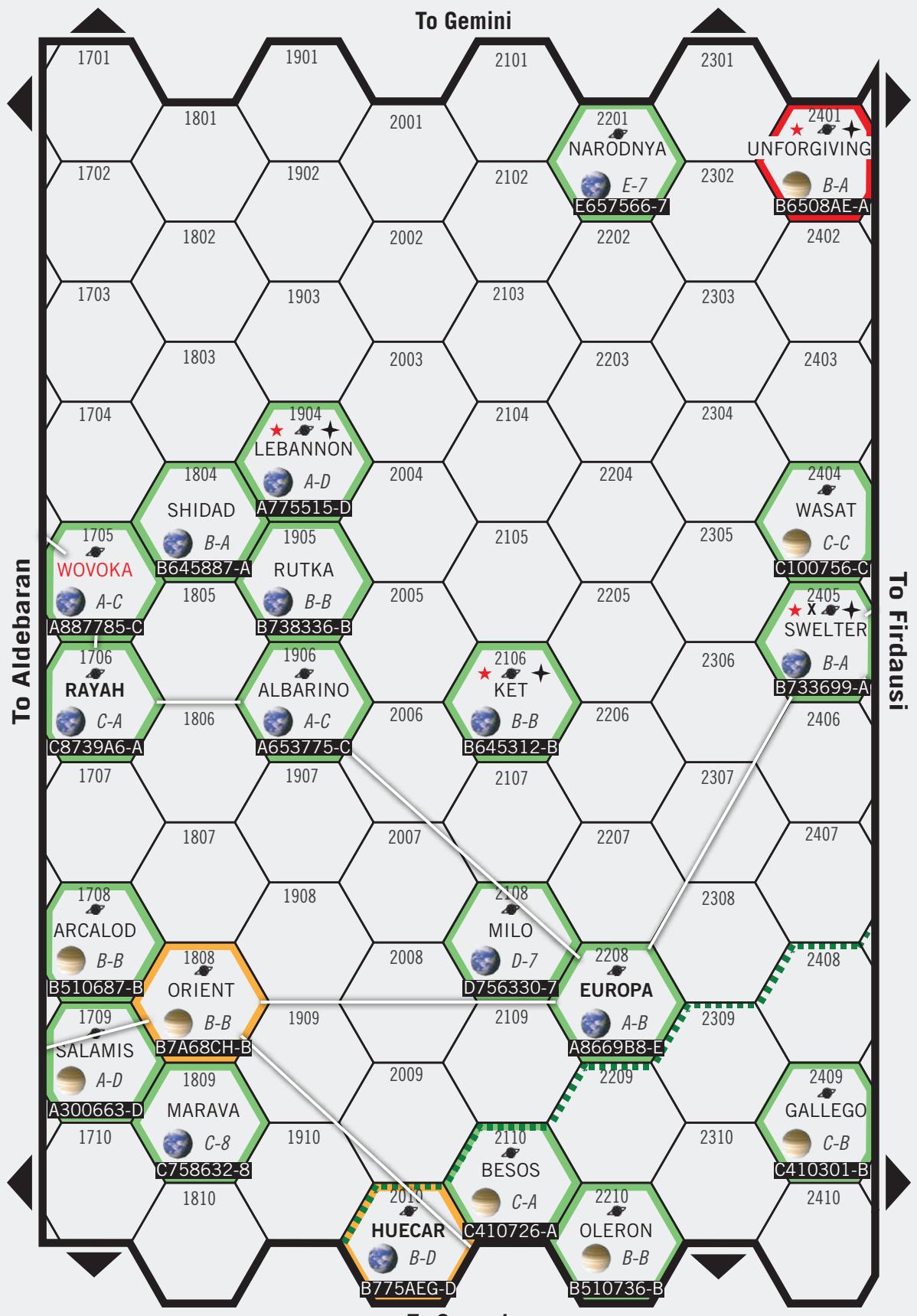
The subsector capital is at Wovoka but once again its focus is on the immediate cluster rather than the subsector as a whole. The cluster around Salamis receives investment funds from both Wovoka and Home, and is likely to increase in importance in future decades. There are four Confederation Navy bases, of which the one at Unforgiving is by far the most important. Unforgiving houses a reserve battle group intended to reinforce the Gemini subsector or join an attack on the Imperium if necessary. Other than local patrols, vessels from this base are rarely seen in the rest of the subsector.

Lebanon houses a specialist base, home to a large concentration of logistics ships and tankers plus some escort vessels. Ships out of Lebanon are often encountered on support missions or transiting to join an exercise or deployment. A handful of patrol ships police the local cluster but rarely venture outside it. The bases at Ket and Swelter are home to the local flotillas, that at Swelter having responsibility for the jump-1 cluster to trailing and for guarding the approaches to the major naval base at Firdausi, whilst the Ket flotilla patrols the rest of the subsector. It is most active around Salamis and along the Quesada-Boötes trade route.



# WOVOKA SUBSECTOR

ALDEBARAN



Gas Giant

B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level

Other Naval Base

Military Base/Garrison

Secure System

Amber Zone

Red Zone

X-boat Route

Planet (dry)

Planet (water present)

Grand United States of Quesada border

X Prison, Exile Camp

# FIRDAUSI SUBSECTOR

Firdausi lies in the middle area of Aldebaran, between the mature worlds of the Imperial border zone and the developing worlds of the rimward frontier. As such, it is on the way to various places but unimportant in its own right. There are 20 star systems, most part of small clusters lying partially in other subsectors. There is no overall 'subsector identity' although three star systems lie within the Grand United States of Quesada and are culturally very similar.

Firdausi itself is the most important world in the subsector – politically, strategically and economically. It enjoys the highest Tech Level in the region (TL14) and is a major manufacturer of warships. Arguably, Firdausi is more important to the Confederation than the rest of the subsector combined. However, since the world is balkanised, there are sometimes internal disputes which can weaken the overall position.

The three systems at the spinward-rimward corner of the subsector can more properly be considered to be part of the Grand United States and are for

the most part ignored by subsector administration. Jump-2 trade between the States and Firdausi is extensive but these worlds have little contact with the rest of the subsector. Ladon is a restricted system, for reasons which have never been publicised. It is widely assumed the entire system is used as a firing range by the Confederation Navy, with rumours of secret weapons-development facilities.

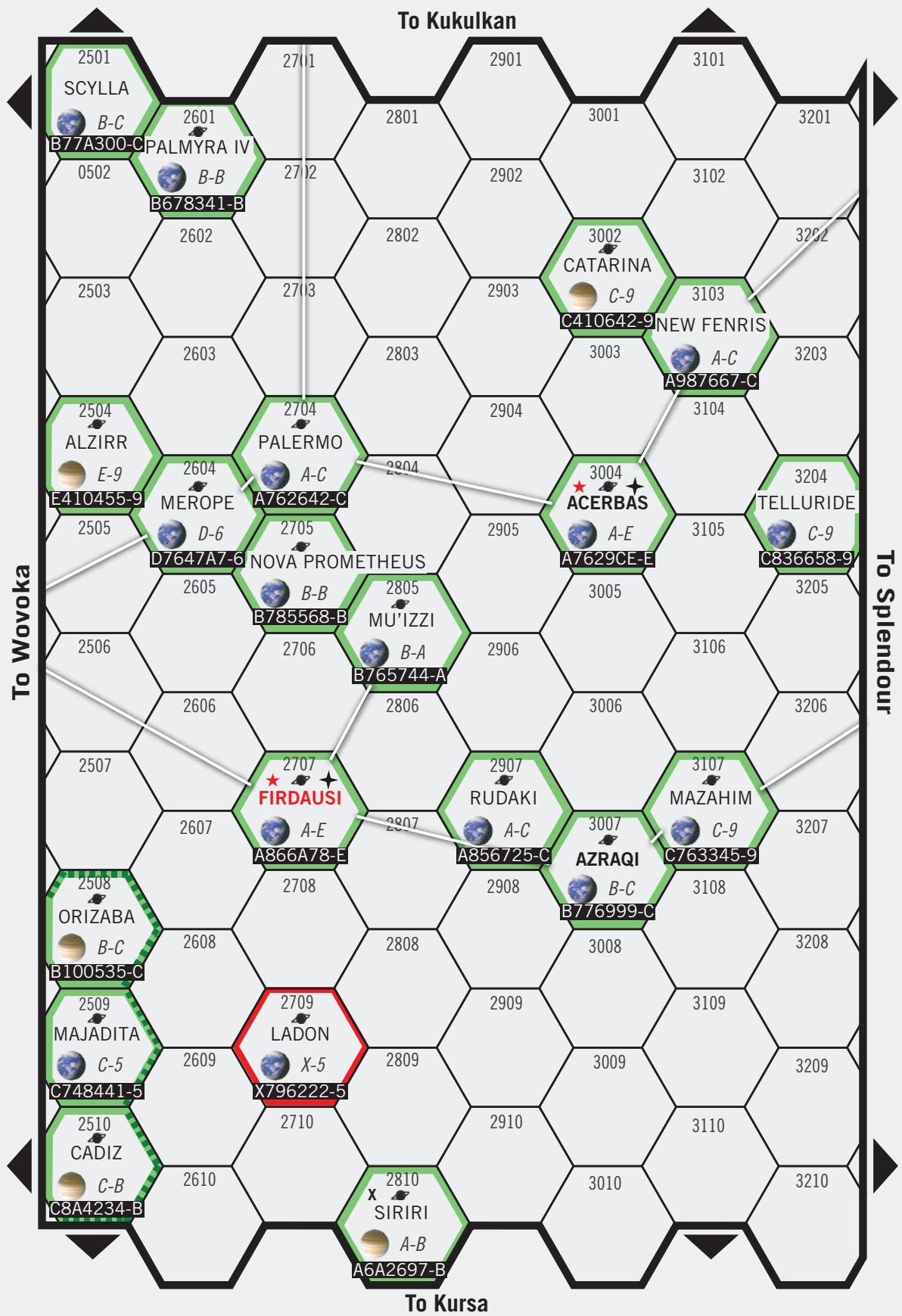
From Firdausi, a major trade artery runs trailingwards into the Neworld sector, whilst links with the powerful economies of Kukulcan are maintained coreward through Palermo. Vessels of the Confederation Courier Service are commonplace on these routes, whilst information can be slow elsewhere in the subsector.

In addition to Firdausi, which houses a large reserve force, there is only one naval base in the subsector. This is at Acerbas and is the home of the local patrol flotilla. There are bases just outside the subsector, mostly local security installations or transit-support facilities designed to rapidly refuel and replenish vessels on their way to a trouble spot or new deployment area.



## ALDEBARAN

## FIRDAUSI SUBSECTOR



# THE PALERMO CLUSTER

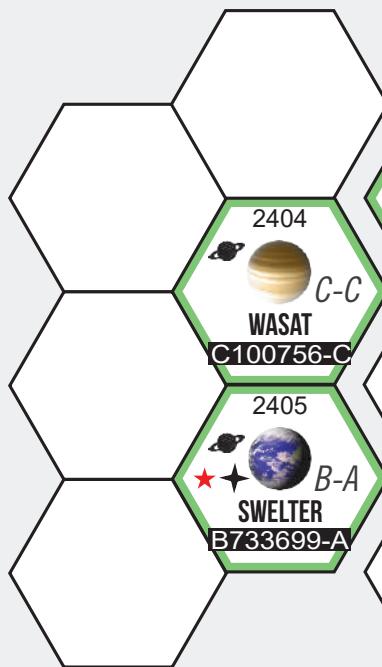
The Palermo Cluster lies mostly in the Firdausi subsector, a grouping of seven worlds of varying importance. The cluster has no over-arching political structure, although it has an internal economy. High-tech goods from Firdausi enter the cluster by way of Mu'izzi and to a lesser extent Swelter, competing with items from Palermo in the premium marketplace. The majority of internal trade is by way of jump-1 ships plying between Palermo, Nova Prometheus and Mu'izzi, with far lower volumes moving throughout the rest of the cluster.

The cluster's worlds are all independent members of the Solomani Confederation, overseen by the regional administration at Firdausi. In practice this

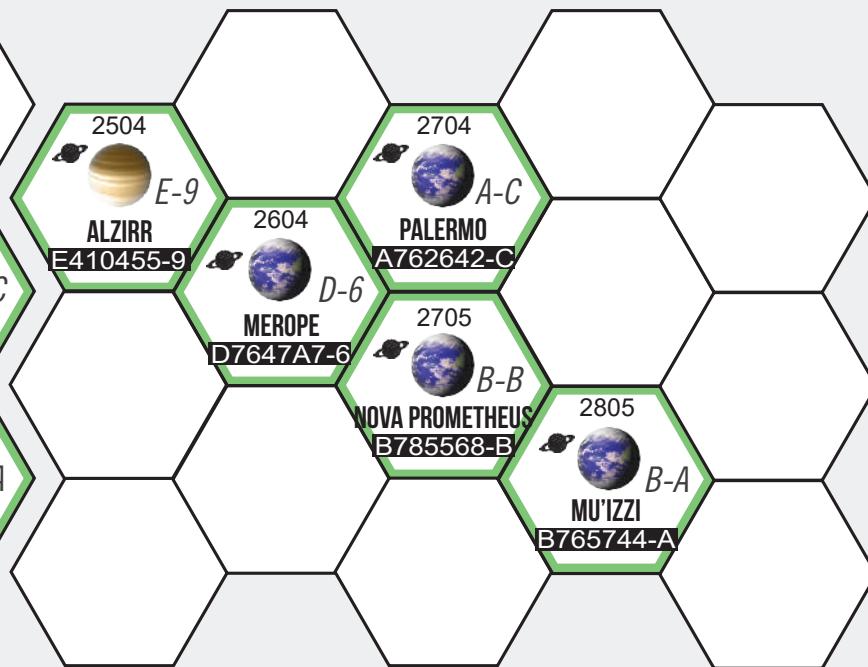
means there are offices of the regional administration at Palermo, Nova Prometheus, Mu'izzi and Swelter, with small delegations visiting the other worlds from time-to-time. Coordination and cooperation are loose, with the occasional joint project undertaken with stronger oversight.

The cluster does not perceive any real external threats other than the vague but constant worry of renewed hostilities with the Imperium. Even the more prominent worlds have relatively small Home Forces and are generally unimportant beyond the local cluster. Links to spinward and trailing are stronger than in other directions, largely as a result of astrography and politics.

## WOVOKA SUBSECTOR



## FIRDAUSI SUBSECTOR



- Gas Giant
- B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
- ★ Naval Base
- ◆ Military Base

## THE PALERMO CLUSTER

- Gas Giant
- Planet (dry)
- Planet (water present)

# THE WASAT SYSTEM

Wasat can best be described as a binary with a very distant companion. The 'primary' is thus an F0 (white) subgiant orbited by a K3 (orange) main sequence star. This binary is known as Delta Geminorum A and B, or sometimes as Delta Geminorum Primary. The distant companion, Delta Geminorum C, is a K6 (orange) main sequence star. It has its own small planetary system.

The primary system is in flux at present and will likely remain so for the rest of its existence. Delta Geminorum A has swollen up into a subgiant and will eventually become a giant, engulfing those planets it has not already swallowed. This process will take millions of years, however, so for the people who live in and travel through the system conditions seem stable enough.

There may once have been Earth-like planets in the primary system but if so they have since been destroyed or had their atmosphere burned away. Today, the mainworld is a rockball named Wasat, inhabited almost exclusively by Selenites. There is also a large gas giant and six other rather uninviting worlds. The Delta Geminorum C system consists of two small gas giants and a rockball world, plus a distinctly uneven planetoid belt.

## DELTA GEMINORUM A (F0 IV)

### DELTA GEMINORUM B (K3 V)

- 1 Haddit (X200000-0)
- 2 Hadditnext (X31000-0)
- 3 Core (X7A1000-0)
- 4 Wasat (C100756-C) Na Va Pi
- 5 Arcomm (Small Gas Giant)
- 6 Neradi (X2AA000-0)
- 7 Talsk (X300000-0)

### DELTA GEMINORUM C (K6 V)

- 1 C-Inner (Small Gas Giant)
- 2 C-Belt (X000000-0)
- 3 C-Outer (Small Gas Giant)
- 4 C-Terrestrial (X811000-0)

## HADDIT

Haddit is what might be termed an inferno world. Whatever atmosphere it once possessed, along with any life, was burned away long ago. Even the crust is now unstable, although there are areas where it might be possible to make a landing. As the name suggests, Haddit will be engulfed by its primary within a few million years but is likely to break up long before that happens.

## HADDITNEXT

Hadditnext is experiencing the same process as Haddit, although at an earlier stage. The most dense atmospheric gases still cling to the surface at low altitudes but everything else is gone. The planetary crust is stable enough for a landing but volcanism and tectonic quakes are becoming more common. This has attracted the attention of a few small mining companies. Most of these operate out of spacecraft, enabling a quick escape if the area becomes unstable or is threatened by an eruption, but there are a handful of surface camps as well. The majority of operations are experimental in nature, intended to determine if deposits have become easily accessible due to changing conditions.

## CORE

Core is the former rocky centre of a gas giant which has lost its atmosphere. It is claimed as the territory of High-Gravity Mining Services Incorporated, a small and very specialist outfit with no other holdings. HGMSI has constructed a small station on the surface, which experiences 1.72G outside the grav plate-controlled area. This can make landings a little tricky but is not otherwise a major impediment to operations which use either grav vehicles or remotely operated mining drones.

The density of Core is relatively high due to the presence of heavy materials – essentially all the dense elements accreted during the formation of the planet that remained when the gas envelope slowly burned off. Output from the mining station is good in terms of output to hours worked but the cost of equipment offsets this to some extent. It remains to be seen whether this sort of mining is viable on a

large scale. If it proves to be so, the workforce and owners of HGMSI will have to lobby hard to achieve recognition as a sovereign member of the Solomani Confederation. At present their claim is largely ignored and their main defence against being run off by someone better equipped lies in the difficulty of operating on the surface of Core.

## WASAT

Wasat is a meteor-blasted rockball, notable mainly as the innermost body in the primary system to be safe for the foreseeable future. Even so, it is subject to the occasional major solar flare which can disrupt electronics and interfere with sensor systems for hours or even days at a time. Critical systems are heavily shielded but the port is usually closed during major flares. The usual procedure is to advise ships to remain in the shadow of the planet until the flare has passed, although it may be possible to predict windows of relatively low disruption during which vessels can dash onto the surface.

The port is unusual in design, notably in that there is no permanent orbital component as such. Instead, a large non-starship freighter acts as a mooring point for the few large ships that visit and docks craft up to 800 tons internally. It offers extremely basic starport facilities which are rarely used. An as-needed shuttle service connects the freighter to the downport. When necessary, the orbital 'port' can move behind the planet for protection. Usually the shuttle service is suspended but a handful of daredevil pilots are willing to make runs through a lull in a protracted storm – for an enhanced fee, of course. Ships and shuttles making this run typically approach the port at very low altitude, using crater walls and canyons for protection against direct contact with a flare as much as possible. Landings tend to be made at high speed and can be... exciting... for passengers.

The downport has multiple landing pads, all of which are surrounded by high walls formed by bulldozing and cementing loose surface rock. The larger pads are surface-only, connected by tunnels, whilst the smaller ones actually take the form of tunnels which can be closed off by heavy doors. All the port-tunnels connect into a transitway which runs to the planet's main city. The opposite end of the transitway, past the landing areas, houses a traffic control centre and associated facilities. Most of this facility is underground, with only a small observation and antenna tower projecting above the surface.

Wasat City is the capital and by far the largest settlement on the planet. It houses some 20 million people, almost all of them Selenites. Despite being built underground, the city has a feeling similar to being aboard a starship. Gravity is low, which is to the liking of the Selenites who live there and most structures are delicate and graceful. The starport is constructed in an artificial cavern, linked to others by light railways and roads running through spacious tunnels. The gigantic pillars of rock that support each cavern roof also act as a framework for complexes of pod-like buildings. Indeed, most dwellings are above 'ground' level in the caverns whilst factories and similar installations that need considerable logistics support are kept supplied by ground-level rail and road links.

One consequence of Wasat's unique architecture is the popularity of personal gliding kits for recreation and transport. With air pressure just below earth-normal, and extremely light gravity, it is possible to strap on a backpack wing kit and glide between structures. All pod-complexes have a small landing and jumping area, which can alarm some visitors when they see a group of people line up on the edge of a high place and step off whilst chatting happily among themselves. Once they are used to the sight, visitors will learn to distinguish between 'utility' gliders, who need to go somewhere without taking time to descend to ground level, and 'sport' gliders who simply enjoy unpowered personal flight.

The remainder of the planetary population is dispersed in small cities, all connected to one another by deep underground railways. Most of these cities are unremarkable but two stand out. The first is Deep Raiawa, situated in the bottom of an immense canyon over three kilometres from the surface. Deep Raiawa is reached by a long curve of railway which descends gently and eventually enters the planet's only 'surface' city. Characterised by unattractive, blocky buildings Deep Raiawa is an industrial and scientific centre, obtaining resources from the canyon walls and floor.

The other unusual city is Adcota, situated high in a mountain range of the same name. It has no rail link and relies on grav transport across the surface for connection to the rest of the planet. Adcota is said to be the original settlement on Wasat and has a utilitarian look to its structures which contrasts with the grace found elsewhere. Its caverns are small and rather claustrophobic but it does give access to a set of high-altitude stellar science laboratories in the nearby peaks. These are engaged in ongoing research into the expanding primary and staffed largely by students from offworld universities. Thus Adcota is the only city on Wasat with a significant non-Selenite population.

Wasat is, overall, a peaceable place with a modest Law Level and a generally permissive society. Total population is around 70 million Selenites and a few hundred others at most. It is governed by a council-of-councils, with each city's major officials being in charge of a particular function and electing a president among themselves, who in turn sends a deputy to the world governing council. This consists of deputy presidents from all cities plus the overall heads of critical functions such as offworld commerce, power generation and medical services. These individuals have no official power but advise the council of deputies and its elected president. They are well-regarded as the finest experts in their field and responsible for planetwide contingency planning. Occasionally another world government tries to hire someone away, which is rarely successful. The council will engage in advisory and planning work for offworld clients, however.

## ARCOMM

Arcomm is a small gas giant of little significance except as a scientific curiosity. The expanding primary has warmed the gas giant's atmosphere and made it significantly more active than usual. This has resulted in violent storms and lightning-showers that can light up an entire hemisphere for hours. Fuel skimming is inadvisable at such times.

## NERADI

Neradi is a small, cold world shrouded in heavy gases. It is known to have semi-frozen oceans covering most of its surface, with a few rocky projections identified under the ice. Landings have been made but little data is available other than a rather obvious advisory that this is a dangerous planet to visit.

## TALSK

This is the archetypical rockball world, with a slightly eccentric orbit suggesting it may have been captured or perturbed at some point in the distant past.

## C-INNER

C-Inner is the innermost planetary body in the far companion system. This system has been mapped and chart update missions carried out from time-to-time but beyond that its bodies are for the most part of little interest.

## WASAT

System:	F2 IV Subgiant K3 V Dwarf 1 Gas Giants – 0 Planetoid Belts – 6 Other Worlds	
UWP:	C 1 0 0 7 5 6 – C	
Starport	C	Routine
Size	1	1,600km
Atmosphere	0	No atmosphere
Hydrosphere	0	Desert World
Population	7	Tens of millions
Government	5	Feudal Technocracy
Law Level	6	All firearms except shotguns prohibited
Tech Level	C	Average Imperial

## C-BELT

The C-Belt is the only area of any interest in the companion system. It is a curiously patchy belt, with a few dense clusters here and there. These are mostly claimed as Territory Of Interest to various mining firms, whilst less dense areas see only the occasional freelance prospector or extractor. The Territory Of Interest designation essentially means the firm feels justified in chasing off anyone who intrudes and would back up their actions in court. It does not confer any form of ownership, although firms making such declarations like to pretend it does. Ships carrying ore and supplies to these areas usually jump to and from other star systems and have little to do with the worlds orbiting the inner binary.

## C-OUTER

C-Outer is a small gas giant typically used as a source of fuel and petrochemicals by the mining ships in the C-Belt.

## C-TERRRESTRIAL

C-Terrestrial is a large near-rockball with a little water ice in some areas. It is arguably the most habitable body in either half of the system but too remote to be useful.

# THE SWELTER SYSTEM

The Swelter system contains a K7 (orange) mainsequence star and is significant mainly as a communications hub and military base. Lying just four weeks from Home by jump-4 courier, Swelter has more up-to-date information than most other worlds in the region. It is home to a small naval base which primarily serves the local defence flotilla but sometimes sees forward-deployed heavy assets from Firdausi passing to and from the Gemini and Kukulkan subsectors.

The mainworld and primary are both named Swelter, although the star is usually referred to as Swelter Primary to avoid confusion. There is a single gas giant and five other terrestrial worlds in the system. Through-traffic is mostly jump-3 freighters coming from spinward by way of Ket or trailing via Palermo. This makes Swelter extremely important as a link on the jump-3 route to Laputa and the major economies of Kukulcan. The highport sees a steady flow of commercial ships registered out of Home, along with jump-1 and jump-2 local traffic.

The local flotilla is typical of the type, comprising mostly light patrol assets. The Solomani Confederation does not deploy subsector fleets in the manner of the Imperium but instead assigns security and defensive forces by astrographical region. The flotilla's small force of corvettes and frigates patrols the Palermo Cluster along with the Azraki-Rudaki-Mazahim group and can call upon assistance from the Firdausi naval base at need. In addition, the flotilla is tasked with protecting the approaches to the base at Firdausi and the link to Home. This is accomplished by a significant force of in-system gunboats and monitors.

Occasionally the flotilla is temporarily reinforced with a handful of destroyers or fleet (rather than patrol) frigates. This is usually in preparation for a major operation involving the movement of capital assets to another subsector. The deployment serves to increase local security during the move – or sometimes to deceive foreign intelligence operatives that something is afoot when the actual movement is to be made elsewhere.

## SWELTER PRIMARY (K7 V)

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Swelter One (X100000-0)             |
| 2 | Swelter (B733699-A)                 |
| 3 | Swelter Restricted Zone (D5A646A-A) |
| 4 | Stileg (Small Gas Giant)            |
| 5 | Nintorod (D7A536A-A)                |
| 6 | Jargemet (X6AA000-0)                |
| 7 | Stagemet (XA10000-0)                |

## SWELTER ONE

Swelter One is a 'fireball' world, orbiting too close to its primary to be useful. It is tidally locked, with the 'bright' face receiving too much stellar radiation to be navigable. The 'cold' face has seen some surface exploration but for the most part the world is a forgotten chunk of rock. This was not always so, however. Swelter One was one of the sites chosen for the over-ambitious 'Savage Haven' experiment. Concealed on the cold face are several deep, angled tunnels. Most are intended for a craft of under 400 tons or a group of small gunboats but there are rumours of giant caverns capable of holding a battlecruiser.

The intent of Savage Haven was to bore hardened tunnels into the surface of worlds that would be bypassed or overlooked by an invader. These could be used to conceal system defence craft or, in some cases, create a hiding-place for warships damaged in the early stages of a battle. The Savage Haven plan flip-flopped between the potentially workable – protecting a handful of gunboats capable of sallying out to attack the enemy supply line – to the impossibly grandiose. In its most extreme form it was envisaged that crippled capital ships might hide to make repairs then launch spectacular raiding cruises behind a front line that had moved on. Similar plans have been mooted at times, some potentially useful and others less so.

## **SWELTER**

Swelter is not a very welcoming world. From space it has a 'mucky orange-yellow' tinge to most regions, with sharp mountains rising up from dusty plains. What water there is lies in deep canyons or sea basins and is very salty. The extremely thin atmosphere makes it possible to work outside without a pressure suit but breathing apparatus is required. Most of the world's food production is centred around a cluster of artificially-fresh lakes dug deep into the bedrock. There is no possibility of raising livestock but a significant area is covered by Terran crops or modified variants of them.

The world's only city lies squarely in the middle of the 'Green Region' and houses most of the three million population. Whilst technically a sovereign state, Swelter is considered by its residents to be merely that part of the Confederation where they live and work. There is very little in the way of national identity, with fashions and cultural values generally reflecting those of Home – at least, as far as the local population can imitate them.

Swelter is populated purely because the system has a strategic location. Its income comes almost exclusively from the starport and what industry exists serves to support local needs only. However, living standards are high and most citizens enjoy good access to offworld goods or education packages. A family who might consider themselves rather poor on Swelter will enjoy more living-space, better working conditions and a greater variety of labour-saving devices than many of the Confederation's supposedly wealthier citizens.

This is all down to the presence of the highport. The planet's downport is small and rarely visited by starships but its orbital component is huge and well-frequented. Local traffic, usually referred to as in-cluster shipping, uses a dock set up mostly for smaller vessels whilst the big jump-3 freighters operate in and out of an efficient 'extracluster' terminal. Many of these ships simply pass through, picking up local goods if something interesting is available but a proportion turn around at Swelter. These bring high-end goods into the cluster and return towards Home carrying local exports or goods from elsewhere that have been traded for in the busy markets of the highport.



## SWELTER

System:	K7 V Dwarf 1 Gas Giants – 0 Planetoid Belts – 5 Other Worlds Naval Base Military Base Prison, Exile Camp	
UWP:	B 7 3 3 6 9 9 – A	
Starport	B	Good
Size	7	11,200km
Atmosphere	3	Very thin
Hydrosphere	3	30%
Population	6	Millions
Government	9	Impersonal Bureaucracy
Law Level	9	Possession of weapons outside the home prohibited
Tech Level	A	Interstellar community

The population of Swelter is just over three million, of whom over 98% are located at the one city. Government is by the Solomani Party of Swelter, which takes the form of an efficient but rather distant bureaucracy. Laws are strict but need relatively little enforcement as there is little perceived social injustice. Opportunities exist for any citizen to better themselves, including attendance at offworld universities and funding for grassroots art and sports projects. The result is a generally content and peaceable society, although some areas of the highport can be a little rough and ready.

Swelter has a surprisingly large Home Forces contingent for such a modestly populated world. The majority of personnel serve in the combined security/paramilitary/customs force that protects the starport. Members tend to specialise either in 'business security' or 'street level' work. The former are concerned with ensuring fair trade and proper documentation of cargoes whilst the latter keep order in the port and on-planet. These personnel are what passes for a planetary army on Swelter but have no training above squad level.

The space contingent of the Home Forces crew an array of missile launchers mounted on the highport itself and operate the system's patrol and security flotilla. This consists mainly of short-range gunboats and could not put up a serious fight against a military opponent. It is not intended to, however, since it serves mainly to police traffic around the port. System defence proper is the responsibility of the Palermo Cluster Flotilla of the Confederation Navy, which maintains a frigate or at least a corvette in orbit at all times as a guardship and reminder that the navy is just a few hours away.

The Confederation Navy is popular on Swelter. Its city has quite extensive recreation facilities which will almost always have some flotilla personnel present on short-term leave. The navy is a well-respected career, along with the merchant lines, and whilst Swelter has never produced a famous naval hero it does send many of its brightest and best young people to serve on the Confederation's starships.

### SWELTER RESTRICTED ZONE

Swelter Restricted Zone is in fact the name of the system's third planet. SRZ lies outside the system's warm zone but is kept at an acceptable surface temperature by its carbon dioxide/nitrogen atmosphere. Its oceans are largely covered in a thick layer of ice but can thaw into slush from time-to-time. The whole planet is off-limits to outsiders as it is used as a sort of 'variable gulag' for political undesirables.

The main settlement on SRZ is the small starport, which is staffed mainly by civilian contractors but is officially a Solomani Security facility. SolSec maintains a considerable presence on SRZ, not merely to oversee the running of the internment facilities and prison complexes but also as a base from which to operate throughout the cluster. Dissidents claim the SRZ facility is rife with sophonts' rights abuses and mistreatment of prisoners but there is little evidence of this.

There are multiple levels of internment at SRZ. The lowest level is a sort of voluntary internal exile under supervision. 'Volunteers', as they are known, live and work alongside the port contractors and enjoy a high standard of living. They are technically free to leave any time they like and some do travel extensively. In some ways the community at SRZ is a haven for minor dissidents or those who have made political enemies. By taking up residence there they demonstrate a sort of 'loyal opposition' to the Confederation and are permitted to live as free citizens so long as they do not spread dangerous ideas. The fact that communications

in and out of SRZ are heavily monitored permits the Volunteers to essentially place themselves where they can be seen to be doing no harm to the Confederation.

Mid-level internees live in one of the outlying settlements, connected to the port by grav vehicles and enjoying most of the benefits of Confederation citizenship. The difference is that internees are not permitted to leave until they have served their sentence or been proven innocent. The majority of internees are politically suspect, but not considered dangerous, and are either awaiting a SolSec hearing or serving a mild sentence. They vary from annoying but basically harmless dissidents to military personnel awaiting trial for political offences. Non-Confederation citizens whose movements need to be restricted – such as someone stowing away on a ship without proper identification – are often sent to internment settlements like this one until the authorities decide what to do with them.

The highest level of internment is in the prison settlements. These vary in security level depending on how dangerous the prisoners are considered to be. Each is connected to a security hub and then to the starport by a surface road, and grav vehicles are rarely permitted to approach. Unless special permission has been given, grav transport will be fired upon within the security zone of the prisons. This means the only way out is one road over a hostile surface with an unbreathable atmosphere. Escapes are, unsurprisingly, virtually unknown.

## STILEG

Stileg is the system's only gas giant and thus an important strategic target in the event a fleet wishes to advance through the system. For this reason it is the home of the Palermo Cluster Flotilla, whose base and defensive vessels secure the system's main strategic asset. The base orbits Stileg, sending craft down into the gas giant's atmosphere to maintain large fuel stocks.

The naval base consists of a primary structure surrounded by mobile mooring lattices. Piloting these is a tedious but important task, which can become quite tricky when manoeuvring a lattice loaded with a mix of full and empty fuel tanks. When traffic is light the base concentrates on filling all tanks and moving them to a distant position. Bringing in fuel loads at the right time to top up a passing warship or tanker is something of a logistical art form, as is rotating the mooring arms such that the right ships are in position to be loaded or unloaded.

In addition to its own considerable missile complement the base is protected by a flotilla of gunships and corvette-sized in-system combatants. A single cruiser-sized monitor is permanently deployed to defend the base. The level of perceived threat is low, so an old ship was assigned rather than a new-built monitor. Indeed, Stileg's monitor is a little piece of history all to herself as she was the first of the 'loyalty ships' – *Prospero Loyalty* – built at the expense of world governments and donated to the Confederation Navy. A powerful heavy cruiser in her day, she was stripped of her jump drive and had additional systems added in parts of her fuel tanks. Subsequent generations of loyalty ships used her basic design, although it has since been supplanted by a new generation.

## NINTOROD

Nintorod is a cold, dark terrestrial planet with an atmosphere composed mostly of methane and ammonia. It is about half-covered in frozen seas of exotic fluids, churned up by seabed volcanoes. This rather uninviting world has a large scientific installation and surrounding settlement, perched high on the flank of an extinct volcano. The work done there is mainly planetological but occasionally a company operating in the chemical industry will sponsor a project. An experimental 'ice mining' rig is under construction on the shore of one of the frozen seas.

## JARGEMET

With an extremely eccentric and elliptical orbit, Jargemet is thought to be a captured object. Its surface is shrouded in dense clouds below which lie frozen non-water oceans of unknown depth.

## STAGEMET

Stagemet is usually the most distant major body from the system's primary, although Jargemet is farther out for part of its orbit. It is generally assumed to be a typical outsystem rockball, although little data is available in the public databases. It is certain that the Confederation Navy will have at least mapped the planet at some point but have not released their data.

# THE ALZIRR SYSTEM

The Alzirr system orbits a white subgiant in the late stages of expansion into a full giant star. Expansion is accelerating but the time frame is still in the millions of years. However, the primary is prone to flares and matter ejections which scotched an otherwise promising terraforming project. The system is typically avoided by jump-2 traffic but jump-1 ships are forced to refuel at the gas giant. This prompted the construction of a fuelling station in orbit which in turn permitted other businesses to move in. As a result, although the mainworld of the system is officially Alzirr, it receives little traffic at its extremely basic starport.

Alzirr is populated as a ‘territorial anchor’ rather than for any particular importance. The mainworld population includes a proportion who call the world home but about 60% of personnel planetside are what might be termed contract-citizens. That is, they are given citizenship for a few years but Alzirr is more of a workplace than a home. Populations of this sort are maintained on many backwater worlds, for a variety of reasons. Often this is little more than placeholding of a literal sort. If the system becomes important for some reason, additional colonists can be moved in. In the meantime, the world receives representation at the interstellar level, preventing someone with an agenda from landgrabbing a few rockballs to engineer extra votes.

As a result of this unimportance, the mainworld receives few visits from navy ships. However, the gas giant and its orbital stations are of some significance and patrolled by Confederation Navy vessels from time-to-time. Some of these patrols are assigned specifically to the system, whilst others stop over for a day or two on their way to another destination.

## AZIRR PRIMARY (F5 IV)

- 1 Sudig (X300000-0)
- 2 Wexteir (X4A3000-0)
- 3 Grohdag (X101000-0)
- 4 Azirr (E410455-9)
- 5 Trestranne (Small Gas Giant)

## SUDIG

The innermost of the system’s surviving planets, Sudig has lost its atmosphere and water but remains structurally intact. Its rotation has slowed to the point where it is becoming tidally locked but for the present it has a ‘day’ slightly longer than its orbital period. Approaching is hazardous due to stellar mass ejections and heating.

## WEXTEIR

This is a small world with a heavy carbon dioxide atmosphere. It was once an outsystem ‘iceball’ world but the expansion of the primary has warmed the world sufficiently that it could be more or less habitable for a few tens of thousands of years. This time frame was sufficient to make an experimental terraforming project viable. The intent was to seed Wexteir with algae which would rapidly convert atmospheric carbon dioxide into oxygen, creating a breathable atmosphere in the long term. The project might have worked but stellar mass ejections caused varying conditions, which have greatly impeded the algal colonisation of the seas.

Although the Wexteir Terraforming Project was officially abandoned decades ago, not all of the algae beds died out. Some have thrived and begun to expand, putting a little oxygen into the atmosphere. This is for the most part of little consequence but occasionally a buildup of trapped oxygen results in a short-lived but spectacular Rapid Combustion Event. The world is officially uninhabited but it is thought that some of the terraforming monitoring stations might have been reoccupied either by their original staff or interlopers.

## GROHDAG

Grohdag is a typical ice-capped rockball, of no great interest to starfarers. It was a candidate for the system’s mainworld but the decision was made to use Azirr instead. This was based mainly on distance from the expanding star, as both planets are equally uninviting.

## AZIRR

Azirr is the mainworld of the system by designation, providing a territorial claim and base for expansion if it ever becomes desirable. The world is a barren, almost-airless rockball with low surface gravity and few easily accessible deposits of minerals. Its one settlement houses about 20,000 people of whom around half were born on Azirr. The remainder are assigned or working here and hold citizenship only for as long as they remain resident.

Governance is by a council of chief engineers and leaders of various sectors such as administration and medical facilities. The city is self-sufficient in most ways but has no significant imports. Most of its funding comes from the small percentage paid by the gas giant industries. Aziir is not considered to own or control the system, as it has no capability to project power beyond a few kilometres outside its perimeter, but lease payments from businesses operating in the system are a condition of licensing applied by the Confederation government as a whole. This arrangement pays for territorial token colonies like that at Azirr.

## AZIRR

System:	F5 IV Subgiant 1 Gas Giants – 0 Planetoid Belts – 3 Other Worlds
UWP:	E 4 1 0 4 5 5 – 9
Starport	E Frontier Installation
Size	4 6,400km
Atmosphere	1 Trace
Hydrosphere	0 Desert World
Population	4 Tens of thousands
Government Type	5 Feudal Technocracy
Law Level	5 Personal concealable weapons prohibited
Tech Level	9 Anti-Gravity

## TRESTRANNE

Trestranne is the most distant body from its primary, with a rather feeble ring system and a few small moons. Its primary asset is the refuelling station, a bare-bones installation with no facilities for guests or trade. Skimmer shuttles ply back and forth from the station to the gas giant, providing regular but dull work for local pilots. The station charges a premium for fuel and an extortionate fee to any ship that tries to skim its own fuel and gets into trouble. The station's two rescue tugs spend far more time collecting stray fuel containers or overseeing training for new pilots than in their intended role.

The presence of the refuelling station made it possible for other businesses to set up at Trestranne. Most of these are petrochemical skimming rigs which supply the industries of Palermo and beyond. A recent addition is a semi-mobile chemical processing facility, deposited on the surface of Trestrane's largest moon. Its presence permits the petrochemical rigs to export high-density or high-quality materials and has increased the overall prosperity of the Trestranne economy. The mainworld sees little of this, of course.

In addition, a semi-official starport has been constructed. This offers recreation facilities to workers as well as a chance for passing ship crews to enjoy a little liberty. Facilities are limited but expensive, as might be expected, and the overall atmosphere is rather rough. With nowhere else to spend their credits, the highly-paid petro riggers are for the most part happy enough to pay the port's inflated prices.



# THE MEROPÉ SYSTEM

In Greek mythology, Merope was a nymph who married the human king Sisyphus, a rather bad character who was eventually condemned to eternally push a boulder up a hill. A little confusingly, perhaps, the Merope system does not orbit the star Merope, which is part of the Pleiades cluster. Its primary is semi-officially known as Sisyphus to avoid confusion among navigators.

Sisyphus is a G3 (yellow) main sequence star orbited by a system containing three gas giants, two planetoid belts and 11 terrestrial planets including Merope itself. Although the mainworld is something of a backwater, the Merope system is economically important to the cluster and has multiple inhabited bodies. In-system traffic is thus high, with some ships jumping direct to their in-system destinations whilst others make use of trade hubs.

Overall, Merope-the-world is of little importance but Merope-the-system is much more significant to the cluster as a whole. Indeed, it is the centre of the cluster's raw materials extraction industry, with the mainworld playing a small part in the overall system economy. One consequence of this exploitation of the system by outside influences is that Merope will never develop into an important world. It is a sovereign state but a weak one and essentially part of the exploited territory.

## SISYPHUS/MEROPE PRIMARY (F3 V)

- 1 Amceden (X7CA000-0)
- 2 Merope (D7647A7-6)
- 3 Corinthian Belt (C000575-A)
- 4 Braci (D111467-A)
- 5 Comab's World (D6AA514-A)
- 6 Trab (Small Gas Giant)
- 7 Strufacc (5A3467-A)
- 8 Murid (Large Gas Giant)
- 9 Theban Belt (D000418-A)
- 10 Intueste (D411367-A)
- 11 Ceimti (D610468-A)
- 12 Intuebi (EAA1318-A)
- 13 Entramme (X9A1000-0)
- 14 Inarrio (X400000-0)
- 15 Spatahae (DA3475-A)
- 16 Fortise (Small Gas Giant)

## AMCEDEN

The innermost planetary body in the Merope system, Amceden has an insidious atmosphere made all the more dangerous by the fact that it is subject to extreme stellar heating on the hemisphere facing the sun. The atmosphere is roiled into a knot of massive storms, with hot gases rising in plumes and an endless corrosive wind blowing in from the colder hemisphere. The world might be of interest to companies operating in the exotic-compound sector but conditions are so hostile that exploitation is unviable.

## MEROPE

The official mainworld of the Merope system and the only sovereign state present, Merope is home to around 20 million people, of whom around 1.5 million are Dolphins. The world was settled in the Rule of Man era and survived the Long Night at a low Tech Level. Merope established a mid-tech industrial base early enough to become a market for offworld goods but never reached the point where it could compete with more advanced manufacturing bases. This was not too much of a problem, as the world's natural resources allowed it to become a breadbasket. This has continued to the present day, with Merope contributing in a modest way to the prosperity of surrounding systems. Some income is received from businesses operating in the system but overall Merope is very much a giver rather than receiver.

The planetary population is dispersed in small cities all around the globe, with human/dolphin settlements in shallow seas or among island chains. Agriculture, and its aquatic equivalent, is the dominant employer and basis of the planetary economy. There is no central starport; each city has its own small port and the capital has only a small landing area for official visitors. Merope plays virtually no part in wider affairs, other than to provide food and some naturally occurring raw materials.

Despite the modest Tech Level, standards of living are good. The population enjoys a rich and varied diet heavily based around fresh produce and can afford imported goods of a higher Tech Level than their homeworld can produce. There is an amount of nationalist feeling, mainly directed at gaining a higher proportion of the system's income but is disorganised

and unlikely to amount to more than grumbling. Most of the population are happy, or at least content, to make a reasonable income from agricultural exports and not worry about the wider universe.

Uniforms, or uniform-like clothing, are fashionable on Merope and some of the other inhabited bodies of the system. It seems that every association, service or corporation has its own ‘business uniform’. Typically, citizens will wear a plain ‘work’ version most of the time, with a ‘casual’ variant when not working. Formal dress tends to be a less practical or more decorative version of the working outfit. Visitors to the system tend to stand out as a result, although there are always locals who prefer to dress in less conformist style.

## CORINTHIAN BELT

The inner planetoid belt is named the Corinthian Belt. Its primary starport, Boutak City, is one of the system’s main trade hubs. Whilst Merope is officially the mainworld and seat of government, more traffic from outside the system arrives at Boutak City and more trade is conducted there. The port is of modest size but has better facilities than any of the scattered spaceports of Merope. It is located on a large asteroid and run by a self-contained corporation which grew out of a consortium of businesses.

Boutak City exists mainly to serve the mining interests operating in the belt. It has extensive ore processing facilities and a private security force which enforces a ‘neutral territory’ remit with varying degrees of vigour. Beyond the confines of the city, various areas are claimed as territory of commercial interest by mining companies and a Belter community of unknown size. The Belters have semi-permanent settlements throughout the Corinthian Belt but frequently move between them. Most of their income is provided by selling claims to the larger commercial mining outfits but some Belters carry out small-scale mining. Occasionally a group makes a valuable strike but for the most part they do little more than get by from day-to-day.

The port at Boutak City also serves as the hub for inner-system trade. Relatively little of the agricultural produce coming from Merope goes straight out of the system; most is transferred by sublight craft to Boutak City and then transhipped aboard jump-capable freighters or bought by businesses operating elsewhere in the system. The majority of this trade is handled by merchant factors who have a stake in the port as a whole.

## MEROPE

System:	G3 V Dwarf 3 Gas Giants – 2 Planetoid Belts – 10 Other Worlds	
UWP:	D 7 6 4 7 A 7 – 6	
Starport	D	Poor
Size	7	11,200km
Atmosphere	6	Standard
Hydrosphere	4	40%
Population	7	Tens of millions
Government Type	A	Charismatic Dictator
Law Level	7	Shotguns prohibited
Tech Level	6	Nuclear Power

## BRACI

This is a ‘warmish rockball’ populated by a few thousand miners and those working in supporting industries. It is claimed by the world government of Palermo, which enforces its territorial rights intermittently. Outsiders may be ignored if they set up a mine far from the areas earmarked for development but there is always the possibility of being run off if the internal politics of Palermo require a demonstration of strength.

Braci has a scattering of mining camps located atop the most promising deposits in a classic resource-grabbing pattern. Exploitation of this sort is lucrative in the short term but very wasteful, as the most readily accessible deposits are plundered then abandoned. Palermo occasionally makes noises about selling off the long-term rights to these areas at a discount but this has never happened to date. It will be many years before the initial plundering ceases to be viable, at which point Braci might be abandoned or, more likely, the mining rights sold to an over-optimistic developer for an inflated price.

In the interim, Braci produces a steady output of basic minerals and metals, which are collected from the mining camps and transferred to Boutak City for stockpiling and shipment to the homeworld. Very little of what comes out of Braci is sold at Boutak City, although its representatives are always on the lookout for items that will keep the morale of miners up or improve output from the strip-mines.

## COMAB'S WORLD

Comab's World is the licensed territory of the Aldebaran Progressive Corporation (APC), a business group mostly active in the scientific and technological development fields. Its one city is perched high in a ring of mountains protruding above the frozen surface of a non-water world-ocean. APC is not forthcoming about its reasons for being on Comab's World but given its interests in hostile-environment technology and techniques it is likely to be developing or testing specialist equipment.

According to rumour, APC is using ice-tunnelling vehicles to descend into the depths of the world-ocean, conducting research into conditions in the depths and on the seabed as well as in the surface layer. This may be more than simple development of equipment; it is likely that scientific investigation is also ongoing. Whatever the truth, access to Comab's world is restricted to those having business with the company, which includes a select group of in-system trade-ship operators. APC pays well but prefers to do business with those it has already established a relationship with.

## TRAB

Trab is an unremarkable small gas giant which marks the outer boundary of the 'inner-system economy' in Merope. Orbital skimming rigs obtain chemicals from the gas giant's atmosphere, shipping them to Boutak City for sale or transfer to one of the cluster's main market worlds. Trab's atmospheric composition makes gas-mining a little more lucrative than average but not sufficiently so to attract industrial-scale exploitation. As a result the stations are for the most part small and privately owned.

## STRUFACC

Strufacc lies outside the inner-system economic zone and receives little traffic. It was originally settled as a mining colony, like many such worlds, but proved too troublesome to develop. The colony was bought out by a client whose identity was deliberately obscured and subsequently developed into a private retreat. Theories as to who the owner or owners might be range from cultists to super-rich recluses but all that is known to the general public is that access is restricted and only a few of the system's trade ships are permitted to land.

In fact, Strufacc was bought out by the Confederation Army which intended to use it as a hostile environment training centre. This plan fell victim to changing priorities and was never implemented, leaving the army with a small city on a remote planet and nothing

to do with it. Strufacc City is currently maintained by a civilian contractor which keeps everything in working order in case the army ever decides to make use of the place. It is occasionally useful as a quiet location for a meeting or transfer of items between ships but is otherwise an asset-in-waiting and nothing more. Such projects are a drain on the coffers and something of an embarrassment to the military but admitting the project was a failure might be a sensitive issue as well. In the meantime, Strufacc remains a mystery to outsiders but one with a very commonplace explanation.

## MURID

Murid occupies a nebulous position as almost a miniature star system within the Merope system. Its many moons and wide ring system are picked over by an unknown number of Belter and independent ships, with small mining operations buying up most of their discoveries. The nearest thing to a centre of government Murid has is Muridport, a small and rather seedy freeport located on Murid's outermost significant moon. Muridport receives considerable traffic from outside the system and a few entrepreneurial small trade ships from within. It imports foodstuffs directly from Merope, usually by chartered vessel.

Despite being a general free-for-all with some instances of violence, Murid is the area of the system most closely associated with the population on Merope. A programme of investment, albeit a modest one, has given Merope's leaders a stake in several mining operations as well as Muridport itself. This generates little income directly but allows Merope to bypass the merchant factors of Boutak City when their prices become over-inflated. With a small but steady influx of resources from Murid, Merope is able to restrict its buying to what it needs over and above this amount. It is rumoured that the merchants of Boutak City are taking covert action to deal with this threat to their near-monopoly. This is more likely to be disruption and perhaps sabotage than outright piracy but the possibility always exists.

## THEBAN BELT

The Theban Belt is the outer of the system's two planetoid belts and is claimed as the exclusive territory of the Palermo Resources Consortium. The PRC is a group of companies which generally cooperate to mutual benefit but have been known to engage in vicious internal disputes. Their claim to the belt has no legal basis in the sense of territorial ownership but various interstellar laws regarding economic areas of interest have been cited as grounds for chasing off independents.

The PRC has insufficient means and little interest in policing the whole belt, so uses its well-established legal precedents to justify armed force in the areas it currently wants. It is rumoured that independents are generally tolerated so long as they stay away from the big claims and are willing to accept a 'fair' price for anything they find. This is never publicly acknowledged however, since it might undermine legal proceedings arising from use of force to protect economic interests.

The Theban Belt receives very little in-system traffic, with most ships plying directly to and from Palermo. A regular freighter service brings agricultural produce from Palermo and to offset the cost of returning with an empty cargo hold the operators will typically buy up whatever the mineral consortium shipowners are selling. This is usually small quantities of industrial goods or refined minerals but occasionally a merchant from Palermo is in-system with a greater variety of goods.

## INTUESTE

Intueste is claimed by the world government of Mu'izzi, although the claim is disputed by various parties. Intueste is apparently of little value, suggesting that the establishment of a colony there was a matter more of prestige than economic or territorial ambition. The world receives little traffic and most of that comes direct from Mu'izzi. It is widely thought that the single settlement on Intueste serves as a repository for information and documents.

## CEIMTI

Ceimti is private property, although exactly whose is open to debate. Its small port does not welcome visitors, although permission would be granted to a ship in distress. However, any crew needing assistance badly enough to go to Ceimti is met with well-armed suspicion and charged a steep fee for even the most basic services. Requests to meet with leaders or officials are ignored, as are questions about the settlement.

Those few who have visited have seen nothing but the port itself. They state it is well constructed but basic, capable of handling a ship of up to 800 tons and a handful of small craft but no-one has ever seen any vessels landed there. It is probable that there are underground hangars or dispersal areas. Crews seemed efficient and were smartly turned out but nothing was visible that might give a clue about the identity of the settlement's owners.

## INTUEBI

Intuebi is a large, almost super-Earth sized, terrestrial planet shrouded in a cloud of cold, heavy gases. Its hydrographics percentage represents the coverage of frozen gases rather than water, which can create a hazard on worlds like this. Any heating, such as from a landed starship or a vehicle passing over the ice surface, can cause pockets of lighter gases to sublime. These gas geysers are usually small but have been known to damage a ship or tip a vehicle over. Intuebi is the site of a planetary research project funded by the University of Home. Its location far out from the primary ensures there is little offworld contact other than a scheduled supply ship from Merope and a twice-yearly personnel rotation from the university.

## ENTRAMME

A large iceball world, Entramme was a candidate for the project eventually set up on Intuebi. It was passed over in favour of the larger world for reasons of scientific interest. It is not known if any other group has visited the world since it was surveyed in the early stages of the project.

## INARRIO

Inario is an archetypical rockball, apparently of no interest even to scientists.

## SPATAHAE

Spatahæ is the most distant inhabited body in the Merope system. Its population numbers a few thousand, scattered in mining camps all over the surface. Most of the time Spatahæ receives virtually no in-system traffic due to its eccentric and highly elliptical orbit but as it enters the 'short' arm of its orbit the world may become more accessible for a few decades. In the meantime it produces small amounts of minerals which are bought up by merchant ships hopping from one camp to another before proceeding to Palermo or Mu'izzi.

## FORTISE

Fortise may be a captured body. Its orbit is well outside the ecliptic and extremely elliptical. Fortise has been charted but is not of any special interest.

# THE PALERMO SYSTEM

Palermo is a binary, consisting of a K5 (orange-yellow) main sequence star and its distant M3 (red) main sequence companion. The primary system, consisting of one gas giant, one planetoid belt and four terrestrial planets, orbits the primary, with a secondary system consisting of a small gas giant, its moons and a patchy planetoid belt. Palermo's population is spread out between the mainworld and other bodies, connected by regular in-system flights. Some communities are corporate or independent but most are tied into a central government based on Palermo itself.

Palermo is the semi-official capital of the cluster. It has the best starport and provides a vital link to coreward and trailingward. Jump-3 freighters entering the cluster at Swelter usually jump straight to Palermo, as none of the economies in between are worth the time necessary to visit. Trade destined for the Kukulkan subsector typically goes by way of Palmyra IV then Laputa, whilst Acerbas is the trailingward link. Regular jump-3 services are also maintained to Firdausi.

Most traffic internal to the cluster uses jump-1 ships, typically plodding along from Swelter to Mu'izzi and back again without visiting Palermo, but there is more money to be made on the jump-1 loop between Palermo and Nova Prometheus. This can cause the balance of trade to shift when too many captains want to make the short, lucrative run rather than the longer and less profitable transit. The situation is usually remedied by modest subsidies or reduced-cost refits in return for an agreed number of 'long runs' as the full-cluster transit is termed.

As the only Class A starport in the cluster, Palermo offers high-quality refits and undertakes considerable civilian shipbuilding. Attempts to attract warship contracts have generally been unsuccessful, since the yards would have to compete with those more conveniently located at Firdausi. However, Palermo has succeeded in establishing a reputation for naval auxiliaries of various sizes, including rugged transports and freighters which can be fitted-out as inexpensive patrol craft. A number of these vessels serve in the Home Forces of Palermo, either without jump drives as system assets or with jump-2 capability. These vessels can be encountered throughout the cluster and those parts of the subsector that can be reached by a jump-2 ship.

## PALERMO PRIME (K5V)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Gitrok (D100515-C)  |
| 2 | Palermo (A762642-C)   |
| 3 | Palermo Belt (C000542-C)  |
| 4 | Reigev (Small Gas Giant)<br>Reigev Main (C3A15A7-C)<br>Reigev Stanto (D210315-C)<br>Reigev Tersus (D100315-C) |
| 5 | Cataphract (DAA0315-C)  |
| 6 | Outinthevoid (X710000-0)  |

## PALERMO SECONDE (M3V)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Seconde Prime (Small Gas Giant)<br>Tierce (X100000-0)<br>Quarte (X300000-0)<br>Saint-George (D210315-C) |
| 2 | Seconde Belt (X000000-0)  |

## THE PRIMARY SYSTEM

The planetary system of Palermo Prime is vastly more important than the secondary system. In-system traffic is common, with sublight ships of all sizes plying between the mainworld and the other inhabited bodies.

## GITROK

Gitrok is a small planet with no water or atmosphere, important only as the site of a string of mining outposts. Most are owned by Palermo Minerals & Metals, with a handful of independent sites. Gitrok is tidally locked, with most mining done in the twilight zone or on the 'cold' side. Installations are only semi-permanent, breaking down and moving when easily accessed veins begin to play out. 'Hot' side mineral extraction is normally carried out by mobile crawlers which make forays out from the twilight zone or are conveyed to their area of operation by spacecraft. These rarely stay out for more than a few days, plundering a site then retiring to a cooler area for maintenance.

Gitrok is sufficiently productive to merit a regular in-system freighter service, but the independent sites must either pay a tariff or arrange their own transportation. Some have a dedicated vessel or share one with other independents, but there is usually a profit to be made by small spacecraft operators selling consumer goods or high-requirement parts and returning with a modest amount of processed ore.

## PALERMO

Although rather dry, Palermo has a standard atmosphere and generally agreeable living conditions. Much of the surface is badlands or semi-desert, with extensive true deserts in the wind shadow of mountain ranges. The world's cities are mostly located around the shores of the Inevist Sea, each with an agricultural hinterland. The cities are connected by grav vehicle transit lanes rather than ground-level transportation, as it is easier to fly straight across the sea than to go around. Water transportation is used only for heavy bulk goods that do not need to be moved quickly.

Unsurprisingly, Palermo has a well-developed grav vehicle industry and its cities are built for grav transportation. Although by no means arcologies, the buildings of Palermo's cities are as self-contained as possible, especially when it comes to preventing water loss. Standard construction is a cluster of towers with transitways running along structural members between them, rising from a common base containing the cluster's power, water and similar systems as well as industrial areas.

Palermo's population has not expanded as was expected and indeed has fallen slightly. As a result most cities have half-built tower clusters, with work suspended in most cases. Some cities have recently embarked on an immigration-inducement programme and resumed construction of new facilities. The inducement programme has been controversial as it provides incentives for skilled workers rather than artists and creatives. An unusually virulent opposition has emerged, centred on the idea that Palermo's society will be artistically disadvantaged and geared towards unimaginative and complacent corporate drones 'just like the Imperium'. To an outsider this accusation seems nonsensical but there is a lot of noise about it on the planetary dataweb.

Away from the main city-cluster, Palermo is very sparsely populated. Small settlements exist near watercourses and lakes, typically on the eastern side of mountain ranges. These play little part in the planetary economy but are, in some cases at least, plugged into the system economy in a small way. In-system traders will make the rounds of these remote communities, selling assorted goods and buying agricultural produce.



There are restaurants elsewhere in the system that only serve steak ranched in a particular small area of Palermo, or boast of their fine wines from a single vineyard on the mainworld.

The Home Forces of Palermo are overgrown given the size of the population but considered necessary as a symbol of the world's importance. A flotilla of gunships operates out of three modest orbital forts, with in-system monitors and patrol craft protecting the remainder of the system. The Home Forces do not operate jump-capable warships but have several locally built freighter/carriers with a solid missile armament to back up their small craft. These not only secure local star systems but serve as an advertisement for the system's shipyards.

Palermo's culture is heavily influenced by the Western and Central Mediterranean societies of Old Earth – at least, insofar as they are remembered. Most citizens speak what they call Spanish as a second language, after Galanglic. This is not quite the same as the Spanish spoken in the nearby Grand United States of Quesada, partly due to other influences and partly due to inevitable linguistic drift. Palermo-Spanish has a lot of Arabic and North African words and idiom mixed in.

The world's name suggests its culture might have an Italian flavour perhaps but visitors to Palermo are struck with a more North African/Spanish 'vibe', especially where colours and pattern choices are concerned. Business dress typically features sober dark grey or black trousers paired with an embroidered mid-blue jacket, whilst the general-duty uniform of the Home Forces is based on the clothing of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Zouaves. Soldiers wear baggy red trousers – spacers have a less extravagant version to avoid tangling incidents – and a blue jacket with a red cap. Army units use a red cap, whilst the formal dress of naval personnel includes a fez. There are those who find these outfits humorous, but the Home Forces of Palermo have a reputation for tenacity and ferocity that would impress even their prestigious forebears who wore the same style of clothing.

## PALERMO BELT

The system's planetoid belt is a semi-autonomous member state of Palermo's planetary democracy. It sends representatives to the mainworld's assembly and generally follows mainworld practices. However, the needs of a scattered planetoid-based population are different to those of a habitable world. Disputes are not uncommon, although they normally take the form of shouting in the assembly chambers and posturing in the media rather than causing any significant damage.

## PALERMO

System:	K5 V Dwarf M3 V Dwarf 1 Gas Giants – 1 Planetoid Belts – 4 Other Worlds	
UWP:	A 7 6 2 6 4 2 – C	
Starport	A	Excellent
Size	7	11,200km
Atmosphere	6	Standard
Hydrosphere	2	20%
Population	6	Millions
Government Type	4	Representative Democracy
Law Level	2	Portable energy weapons prohibited
Tech Level	C	Average Imperial

The Palermo Belt's population numbers around 60,000, of whom about half live in or close to the capital city. The remainder are scattered across the belt in small mining and industrial stations. The typical pattern of settlement and exploitation is for a promising cluster or volume of planetoids to be seeded with semi-permanent mining stations, with one selected for expansion into a local logistics and industrial hub. Occasionally these hubs sell direct to passing trade ships but for the most part what they produce goes to the belt's capital and then to the mainworld.

A key area of disagreement with the mainworld government is over security for the belt. According to its representatives, there are too few defensive assets deployed and they are the wrong types. A couple of obsolete monitors are patrol the belt, or act as guardships for the port, but what the local authorities want is a force of smaller vessels that cover a lot more territory. Vague assurances were made but no significant action followed, so the belt government has taken measures of its own. A loan secured against the belt's mineral resources funded a wing of fighters and small craft converted to a support role. This angered the central government as it feels the belt's resources belong to the mainworld and should not have been mortgaged to outsiders.

## REIGEV

Reigev is the only gas giant in the primary system and more importantly is the centre of a small local economy. It has a distinctly unimpressive ring system and a great many tiny moonlets. There are three moons of useable size, all of them inhabited.

## REIGEV MAIN

The innermost moon of Reigev, Main is shrouded in a thick blanket of methane and ammonia. Despite its uninviting nature, the moon is the site of a small city whose main industry is chemical processing. Reigev Main is not part of the Palermo system democracy but an offshoot of the mainworld society. The city was founded generations ago by a business group which saw an opportunity to more or less corner the market for various chemicals and compounds in the system. Targeted investment resulted in a highly productive industry which remains an important part of the system economy. The city's corporate administration gradually morphed into a dictatorship, although a benign one. Most of Reigev Main's trade is with Palermo but ships from outside the system do sometimes call there.

## REIGEV STANTO

This is a possession of Reigev Main. It is the site of a small mineral extraction plant governed by an appointed official.

## REIGEV TERSUS

Reigev Tersus is the outermost major moon of Reigev. Like Santo it has a small installation which receives little traffic other than supply craft from Reigev Main.

## CATAPHRACT

Cataphract is a large but low-density world, with few useful resources. It is the site of a small scientific outpost governed from the mainworld.

## OUTINTHEVOID

This is an uninhabited rockball. It is not public knowledge whether the world has been surveyed for resources.

## THE SECONDARY SYSTEM

The small planetary system of Palermo Seconde is officially the territory of the mainworld but is rarely visited other than by Home Forces patrols. Typically a jump-capable freighter/carrier is assigned to the system for a few weeks at a time, with a similar interval until the next patrol. This is one of the dullest missions available to the Home Forces, so is typically used as a training exercise for new crews or those that have begun to underperform. It is not a popular posting.

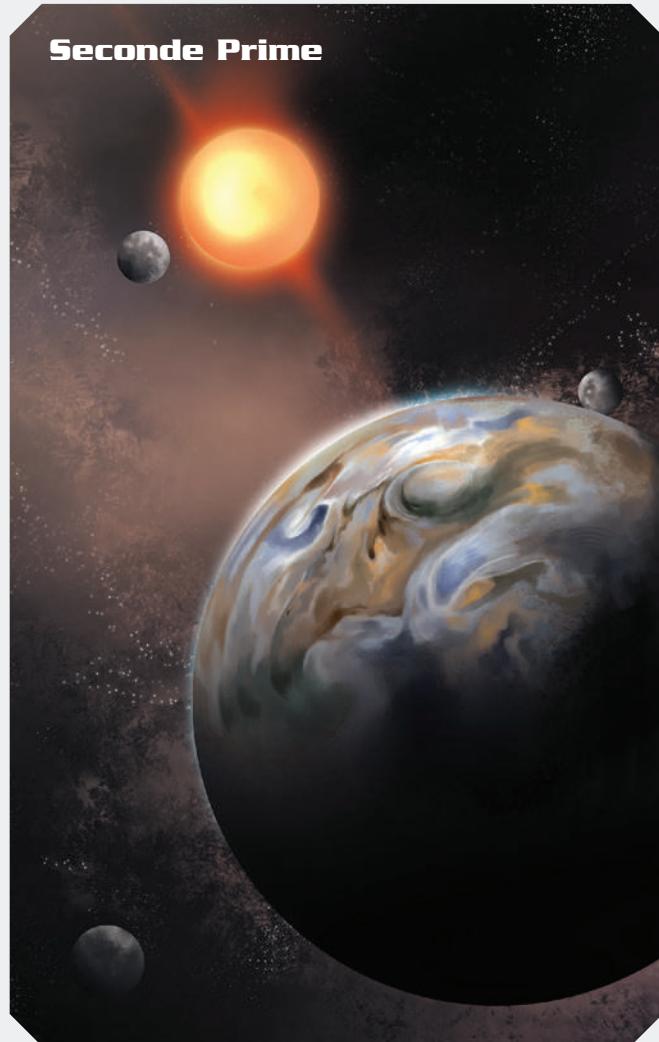
## SECONDE PRIME

Seconde Prime orbits very close to the star, which makes for a turbulent atmosphere. Gas giant refuelling would be hazardous but not sufficiently so that the occasional smuggler or intruder will not use the Seconde system to bypass Palermo's more secure inner planets.

Seconde has three significant moons. Tierce and Quarte are uninhabited but there is a scientific outpost on Saint-George. This is officially the territory of the mainworld but is run on a day-to-day basis by a private research company. Their projects are not common knowledge but presumably something to do with the gas giant's proximity to its primary.

## SECONDE BELT

The Seconde system also contains a sparse planetoid belt, or rather a spiral, perhaps the remnant of an almost-formed planet. It is now distributed as a trail of rocky debris, gradually drifting apart as the belt is perturbed by the gravity of Seconde Prime.



# THE NOVA PROMETHEUS SYSTEM

Nova Prometheus is overseen by a governor resident at Firdausi, with a modest population on the mainworld and various settlements throughout the system. Firdausi's 10 billion citizens would benefit greatly from being able to move excess population to Nova Prometheus but despite various initiatives only a small-scale colonisation effort has ever been made.

Nova Prometheus itself is a colony owned by the Solomani Confederation Navy, by way of a civilian administration answering to the admiral at Firdausi Naval Base. The system's resources are almost entirely used by the navy, with little reaching the open market. Resource extraction throughout the system – including on the mainworld – is conducted on a license basis. In theory this should be an efficient way of tailoring operations to availability by allowing private industry to develop regions suited to the company's capabilities. In practice, however, it is something of a free-for-all. Licenses are routinely traded between firms and there are fresh allegations of sleaze every few months. The navy does get a lot of resources from Nova Prometheus but it is clear that profiteering and under-the-table dealing are rife.

The system is quite 'busy', both in terms of number of bodies and habitation. The Primary is Nova Prometheus A, a G0 (yellow) main sequence star closely orbited by Nova Prometheus B. The latter is an M0 (red) main sequence star. In addition to the mainworld the system contains nine terrestrial planets, three gas giants and three planetoid belts.

The mainworld is the point of entry for ships from outsystem but a significant volume of traffic operates in-system between the resource extraction zones. Although the system is governed from Firdausi, responsibility for policing it rests with the local flotilla at Swelter. Provision of vessels from the flotilla is considered to be inadequate by the fleet admiral at Firdausi, resulting in an endless conflict between standing orders and instructions 'from Fleet'. The usual compromise, which pleases no-one, is a standing deployment of a couple of corvettes or a frigate with surges carried out 'at need'. This essentially means whenever the admiral applies sufficient pressure or finds a new reason to demand increased deployment.

Vessels from the fleet at Firdausi also patrol the system from time-to-time, and when the admiral wants to make a point he sends a battlecruiser to do the work of a frigate. This raises questions about effective deployment in civilian political circles and for a few months Nova Prometheus gets an enhanced deployment. Freighter/carriers from the Home Forces of Palermo are also regular visitors to the system.

In contrast to the vibrant and colourful dress popular on Palermo, fashions among the ordinary folk of Nova Prometheus are sober and utilitarian. The exception is the elite and their hangers-on, who dwell in extravagant country estates on Nova Prometheus itself. There, fashions change constantly but tend towards the ostentatious. Even ordinary workers at the estates tend to be well-dressed, usually in a toned-down version of whatever the upper crust are wearing. Livery for servants goes in and out of fashion, with some estate holders favouring particular styles, colours or patterns which they jealously defend as their own private colours.

## NOVA PROMETHEUS A (G0 star)

### NOVA PROMETHEUS B (M0 star)

- 1 Lativa (D700411-B)
- 2 Tawter (D100315-B)
- 3 Nova Prometheus (B785568-B)
- 4 Iseali (D323468-B)
- 5 Cenoro (X600000-0)
- 6 Coa (Small Gas Giant)  
Coa Magna (D4A2315-B)
- 7 Roato (D420416-B)
- 8 November Papa Belt, Inner (X000000-0)
- 9 Adserie (X610000-0)
- 10 November Papa Belt, Outer (X000000-0)
- 11 Accapae (X710000-0)
- 12 Exerie (X400000-0)
- 13 Scrib (X200000-0)
- 14 Kuipier's Breakdown (X000000-0)
- 15 Havisse (Small Gas Giant)
- 16 Small Gas Giant

## LATIVA

Lativa is a large rockball world orbiting close to the system's primaries. It is tidally locked, with a small administrative and ore-processing installation at the southern pole. From here, mining expeditions venture out onto the hot and cold faces in short forays of just a few standard days' length. It is becoming clear that the easily accessed nearby deposits are becoming played out, necessitating longer transits to and from viable sites.

The installation's operators are also attracting comment for their extremely aggressive mining methods, using devastatingly large explosive charges to smash up large areas of the surface for processing. Those who consider this an environmental issue are ignored, as the world is a lifeless rockball, but there have been several serious incidents where miners have been killed or injured. Combined with the requirement to spend longer in the field on a hostile world, Lativa is gaining an unenviable reputation as a very dangerous place to work.

## TAWTER

The tiny rockball world of Tawter is home to a single settlement. Whilst officially independent, Tawter is a corporate holding rather than a sovereign state and generally follows guidance emanating from Firdausi. Tawter's owner/occupier is Tawtercorp, a business group with interests in shipping and related areas. In addition to operating some of the in-system freighters and a few small jump-capable vessels, Tawtercorp also operates as a 'naval operations liaison training facility'. This rather vague label covers a range of related activities.

The small but surprisingly well-equipped port has facilities for on-planet training and a collection of small craft for field exercises. Tawtercorp provides training to merchant crews seeking to increase their security and defensive capabilities. Ostensibly this is to improve liaison and coordination between commercial and military vessels during wartime or when civilian ships are operating as naval auxiliaries. This is a reasonable goal, although in practice what happens is the company provides training to crews wanting to earn 'navy money' as auxiliaries or simply to better defend themselves. Tawtercorp's operators are keen to push the liaison angle, citing a largely imaginary contribution to the security of the cluster, in the hope of attracting investment or subsidies from the naval budget.

## NOVA PROMETHEUS

Nova Prometheus is the sort of world that would be of far greater importance but for local politics. Had the world developed under the direction of its own leaders it might have become the capital of the local region. It is certainly well suited – a very habitable planet in a system with excellent resources. However, instead Nova Prometheus has become a place to be exploited for the benefit of others.

The world has a dense atmosphere and sufficient water to support a vigorous ecosystem. Initial settlement was patchy and uncoordinated and some settlements show evidence of this. However, once the navy got involved there was a clear plan and – unlike at Tawter – the will to carry it through. Today, most of the 100,000 or so inhabitants dwell in small cities located at the heart of an agricultural hinterland. Each of these has an extensive food processing industry and the world's primary export is ration packs. Most of these go into naval stocks but Nova Prometheus also sells in bulk to civilian starship outfitters.

There are also numerous small settlements scattered over the planet, each with a grav port and modest local resources. These are private estates, some of which belong to retired naval officers. Others have been bought by or gifted to notable individuals from Firdausi. As a result, Nova Prometheus has a vibrant high-society circuit, with notables travelling to parties at one another's estates in motorcades of grav vehicles. It is not uncommon to see multiple small starships or spacecraft landed at an estate. Technically this is forbidden as ships are supposed to use the starport or the city spaceports but the estate owners of Nova Prometheus are too important to care.

For all its low population there is a lot of money on Nova Prometheus. Unfortunately little is in the cities. Agricultural workers and those employed in supporting industries – notably farming machinery and agricultural robotics – are underpaid for the most part and resentful of it. This social inequality is getting steadily worse, with some observers commenting that the situation resembles that of the Imperium more than the Confederation. Naturally this causes a certain amount of annoyance among the rich, whilst workers can only grumble.

In addition to agricultural exports, Nova Prometheus receives a large income from its high-quality starport. Again, little of this trickles down to the population on-planet. A large share goes to the Confederation Navy which owns the port through a civilian operator. The remainder enriches a consortium of shareholders and owners of major businesses at the port. These include spacecraft builders and a variety of space-related industries as well as manufacturing concerns based at the port.

Nova Prometheus Highport is a major producer of industrial and consumer goods as well as spacecraft components. The latter mainly feed the local builders, whilst consumer goods are shipped to distant destinations. The port is also used as a flag of convenience for some merchant shipping operators who prefer not to be associated with any particular planetary government.

### **ISEALI**

Orbiting just outside the system's warm zone, Iseali is an unusual 'almost habitable' world with a very basic biosphere comprising mostly algae and lichens. Much of its surface water is frozen but there are pockets warmed by volcanic vents which may support local ecosystems. A scientific outpost constructed to study the world's conditions has gradually expanded into a city of some 9,000 people, complete with local industry. Whilst not significant in the economy of the cluster, Iseali City receives some in-system traffic.

### **CENORO**

Cenoro is officially uninhabited, although at any given time there may be prospectors or scientists active on its barren surface. To most spacers it is just another rockball and with no economic reason to visit it is largely forgotten.

### **COA/COA MAGNA**

Coa is an unremarkable small gas giant. Its largest moon, Coa Magna, is the site of a small installation serving miners and prospectors operating among the gas giant's other satellites. The installation is a commercial holding with no pretensions of becoming a sovereign state.

### **ROATO**

Roato is the outermost body in the Nova Prometheus system with a significant population. 'Significant' in this case means around 5,000 permanent residents and an ever-changing number of contractors. Deep fissures in the planetary surface allow access to useful mineral deposits, typically by mining platforms that might be considered a hybrid between spacecraft and grav vehicles. Actual mining operations are mostly handled remotely using robots or drones.

### **NOVEMBER PAPA BELT, INNER**

The innermost of the system's three planetoid belts is officially uninhabited but has a transient Belter population of unknown size and numerous mining vessels present at any given time. The belt is rich in resources but these are distributed in a patchy manner creating distinct territories unofficially claimed by mining concerns.

### **ADSERIE**

Adserie is a cold rockball, of little interest to most spacers. Rumours of strange structures on its surface drew in explorers a decade ago but turned out to either be a hoax or a piece of misdirection. The Adserie Spires are impressive and unusual rock formations but appear to be entirely natural.

### **NOVEMBER PAPA BELT, OUTER**

Although less productive than the inner November Papa belt, the outer planetoid system is still sufficiently promising to attract prospectors and minor extraction firms. Distance from the mainworld makes it more effective to jump directly to market at Palermo or Firdausi, with the result that November Papa Outer might as well be in a different star system as far as in-system traffic is concerned.

### **ACCAPAE**

Accapae is a rockball with a trace of atmospheric gas. Such worlds are of little interest to the average spacer.

### **EXERIE**

Exerie is notable only for an incident some years ago, when an unidentified vessel fired on a survey ship before jumping out of the system. Investigation by the Confederation Navy found no reason for this craft to be present, at least according to published reports.

### **SECRIB**

The outermost terrestrial planet in the system, Secrib is generally considered worthless.

## KUIPIER'S BREAKDOWN

Kuipier's Breakdown is the third of the system's planetoid belts, although it might better be considered a patchy scattering of small bodies and tiny rock fragments. The belt was clearly perturbed in the distant past, perhaps by a rogue body passing by. This may have been an ejected moon of the gas giant Havisse.

## HAVISSE

Havisse represents the outer edge of the star system and presents an annoyance to the Confederation Navy. Remote gas giants are useful to smugglers and infiltrators as refuelling sites, so have to be patrolled. This absorbs a vessel for the duration of the patrol plus two weeks in jump there and back, with very little chance of encountering anything. Still, patrols must be mounted. Usually this means a bored corvette crew cooped up in their little ship for 10 days or so, scanning gas clouds for signs of an intruder before jumping to a port for shoreside liberty. 'Visitors from Havisse' is a common figure of speech in the cluster, referring to crews who can be expected to party hard and spend a lot of money in the local recreation establishments.

## NOVA PROMETHEUS

System:	G0 V Dwarf M0 V Dwarf 3 Gas Giants – 3 Planetoid Belts – 9 Other Worlds	
UWP:	B 7 8 5 5 6 8 – B	
Starport	B	Good
Size	7	11,200km
Atmosphere	8	Dense
Hydrosphere	5	50%
Population	5	Hundreds of thousands
Government Type	6	Captive Government / Colony
Law Level	8	Long bladed weapons controlled; open possession prohibited
Tech Level	B	Lower Average Imperial



# THE MU'IZZI SYSTEM

The Mu'izzi system is the trailing entry/exit point for the cluster, providing jump-2 links to Firdausi, Rudaki and Acerbas. This in turn gives access to the economic zones to trailing, rimward and even, via Firdausi, to the Grand United States of Quesada. As a result Quesadan cultural influences are strong, with a distinct Hispanic flavour to language, culture and entertainment.

Despite being closer to the naval bases at Firdausi and Acerbas, Mu'izzi is the responsibility of the flotilla based at Swelter. Maintaining a constant presence, even just a corvette or occasionally two, is a serious drain on the resources of the small Palermo Cluster Patrol Command. The base at Acerbas is tasked with patrolling just four systems but has an even smaller allocation of vessels. As a result, Mu'izzi is mostly secured by its own Home Forces.

The Home Forces are not well enough funded to operate jump-capable vessels and consist mainly of short-range interceptors operating around the homeworld and low-end patrol craft in the 600–800 ton range. These are set up for lengthy sublight operations rather than heavy combat and whilst quite capable of dealing with the typical 'ethically challenged merchant' they are of little value in a major confrontation. Pressure from the regional Solomani Party administration to beef up the defences of a world only two parsecs from a major Fleet Reserve base can only be countered with requests for subsidies or the transfer of older fleet vessels for conversion into heavy monitors.

The system's primary is a solo G3 (yellow) main sequence star, orbited by two gas giants and seven terrestrial planets besides the mainworld. The system is not as well developed as some others in the cluster, with most industry centred on the mainworld. As a result, there is relatively little in-system traffic. Jump-1 traders plying the cluster turn around at Mu'izzi, creating a relatively cluttered orbital zone and a nearly empty outer system.

The exception to this is Clibique, next planet out from the mainworld. Clibique hosts a modest industrial centre built on an otherwise unwanted planet in order to avoid being beholden (and paying taxes) to a mainworld government. Over time, Clibique has become something

of a tax haven and facilitator of business dealings. Ships need a license or special permission to land and this is very rarely granted to anyone who does not have vast amounts of money to invest.

Mu'izzi's highport is extensive, with three separate docking areas. One serves local traffic from the cluster, which can include quite large freighters and another is geared to ships moving in and out of the cluster. This creates two related but separate commercial areas with different goods on offer at each. The third docking area is off-limits to civilian traffic and serves as a base for the Home Forces and a stopover for naval vessels. Diplomatic and official ships are also accommodated here.

## Mu'izzi A (G3 V Star)

- 1 Fosaw (X60000-0)
- 2 Mu'izzi (B765744-A)
- 3 Clibique (C652517-A)
- 4 Occqui (X10000-0)
- 5 Thea'exec (Small Gas Giant)
- 6 Colquex (X200000-0)
- 7 Moquev (Large Gas Giant)
- 8 Ashadd (X510000-0)
- 9 Uvawe (X100000-0)
- 10 Hasconn (X300000-0)

## FOSAW

Fosaw is an unremarkable inner-system rockball. Charts and unusually detailed survey data are available from cartographic offices at the starport but whatever attracted the explorers' interest has failed to inspire anyone else to visit.

## MU'IZZI

Mu'izzi is a habitable if slightly turbulent world lying on the warm side of the system's goldilocks zone. As a result its atmosphere is a little more energetic than usual. Rainfall is higher, storms are more powerful and erosion is greater. The climate is also generally hotter than might be desired, creating large arid regions in the tropics. Human settlement is divided about equally between the northern and southern temperate zones, with little habitation in between. This has not resulted in a heavily divided society; links between northern and southern cities are strong.

The original settlers built multiple spaceports, some of which vied to be the world's official starport. In the end, a consortium was put together to build a main port in a neutral location. This is an upland area in the middle of the world's largest continent and not coincidentally in the middle of its largest desert. The downport is supplied by imported goods and foodstuffs for the most part, although deep wells are drilled to natural aquifers nearby. The whole project has been described as an exercise in doing it the hard way but the result is a well-constructed downport with efficient facilities.

Despite the widespread availability of grav transport, heavy and large-scale movement on-planet makes use of an unusually wide-gauge railway system. Luxurious passenger and huge heavy-goods trains ply between the cities, mostly through reinforced cuttings and semi-tunnels which protect the system from high winds and debris. Occasionally an unseasonal storm will overwhelm the drains and flood part of the cutting. This is not too much of a problem, as the trains have their own small fusion reactors and are heavy enough to push through even if completely submerged. This can be alarming for first-time passengers but is something of an attraction to those who ride the rails on a regular basis.

The rail network is well planned and efficient but most of the cities it connects are anything but. Mu'izzi was settled in an uncoordinated manner by multiple groups which then flowed together to create a world state. This was amicable enough for the most part but proceeded in fits and starts. As a result the cities are laid out in a haphazard and confusing manner which makes internal logistics a real problem. The solution to this was to move industry to the outskirts and build manufacturing zones with their own rail terminals. The inner cities are gradually being redeveloped into purely living areas with extensive parks and public spaces. Architecture in these areas varies in style, with a constant debate about whether to demolish and unify or preserve the world's erratic heritage.

Society on-planet tends to be unwelcoming to outsiders. The highport and to a lesser extent the startown around the downport are both cosmopolitan but the people of the cities are far more reserved. This is not hostility, more lack of trust until a good relationship has been established. This is reflected in the practice of charging 'offworlder prices' for most goods and a complete unwillingness to negotiate despite it being commonplace among locals. Those who make friends on Mu'izzi will not do so easily but always discover a completely new side to life there. Outsiders pay over the odds for mediocre

entertainment in formal hotels and restaurants, whilst friends enjoy cheap drinks and passionately cooked food in side-street bars and taverns.

## CLIBIQUE

Orbiting at the outer edge of the goldilocks zone, Clibique is marginally habitable. Agriculture is possible and the world has a basic ecosystem augmented with imported species. It is very cold, even at the equator, so other than field workers it is rare for anyone to leave the world's single starport/city. The name 'Clibique' is generally applied to the city.

The port/city is not off-limits but independent ship operators are restricted to a small startown area where everything is overpriced and nobody seems to have any information about anything. There is little to be bought here and the world's merchants do not return calls from independents. It is possible to have a good time at Clibique's startown but there is no reason to go there except to throw away money. Various vid dramas have depicted the port as a wonderland of casinos and luxury hotels but the reality is rather more mundane.

The 'real' Clibique is only available to those with the right connections, landing at a segregated part of the starport and conveyed into the city proper without coming into contact with lowlife spacers who might happen to be in town. The city's business district is extensive and very well appointed, surrounded by residential and manufacturing areas, home to people who know which side their bread is buttered on. Wages are high, cost of living is low due to critical-industry subsidies and life is good for even the most ordinary worker. Few people ever leave and those who do profess to know nothing about the inner dealings of Clibique City.

Clibique started out as an industrial centre and continues to operate in this capacity. However, in recent years it has become a haven for the more grubby parts of politics and business. Clibique serves as a banking and investment centre, promising complete confidentiality and discretion. It is widely known to be a tax haven for businesses and political figures, charging very low rates to those firms that have their headquarters in its business district. Some commercial ships are registered out of Clibique and seem to have privileges, although these vary between vessels and operators.

Clibique's commercial and business centre offers discreet transfers of data, money and goods. Some transactions are conducted at the port but, for a fee, a nondescript security detail will deliver anything anywhere in the cluster. Some of these units travel by

commercial flight, others have their own transport. It is an open secret that Clibique's couriers sometimes abuse diplomatic privileges to refuse the authorities permission for a search or investigation. SolSec has taken an interest in Clibique's business groups from time-to-time, but the only result is a few 'minor breaches of regulations, probably of an accidental nature' which result in small fines or dismissal of a minor official.

### OCCQUI

This is a nondescript rockball. Like all bodies in the system it has been properly charted but there has never been much reason to invest in settlement or exploitation.

### THEA'EXEP

Thea'exep is named for a supposedly mythical character who in fact was the invention of a children's book author. As the innermost gas giant it is frequently used for refuelling by those who wish to bypass the system's starport. This is sometimes for illegal reasons but some long-haul shipping operators prefer to keep their costs down in this manner. It is not so much the fuel that drives costs up as the fact that a landing at the highport inevitably results in inspection and administrative delays, adding two or three days to a transit. The Confederation Navy is aware of this but inspects the occasional vessel to deter smuggling. There will often be a patrol ship in the vicinity – indeed, a passing ship is more likely to encounter the Confederation Navy at Thea'exep than at the mainworld – but ships with a good reputation or a well-respected operator tend to receive nothing more than a polite greeting. Less reputable vessels, or those new to the area, may be boarded.

### COLQUEX

Colquex is an unremarkable rockball world, charted but never surveyed in any detail.

### MOQUEV

This is a large and highly turbulent gas giant with a huge number of moons and an extensive ring system. The exact number of moons is debatable, as some may be classified as large ring objects in some databases. Few are of useable size but Moquev's moon system does contain a number of bodies that could support a settlement. The moon and ring system are officially uninhabited but likely to be explored by prospectors on an intermittent basis.

### ASHADD

Ashadd is a largish rockball with a trace of atmospheric gas. A scientific expedition is rumoured to have found evidence of very primitive single-cellular life but the findings are debated.

### UVAWE

Another deserted rockball, Uvawe lies too far out from the primary to be interesting to scientists.

### HASCONN

Hasconn was once the site of an astronomical research installation. Once funding dried up the facility was stripped of saleable assets and abandoned.

## MU'IZZI

System:	G3 V Dwarf 2 Gas Giants – 0 Planetoid Belts – 7 Other Worlds	
UWP:	B 7 6 5 7 4 4 – A	
Starport	B	Good
Size	7	11,200km
Atmosphere	6	Standard
Hydrosphere	5	50%
Population	7	Tens of millions
Government Type	4	Representative Democracy
Law Level	4	Light assault weapons prohibited
Tech Level	A	Interstellar community

# REFeree's INFORMATION

The following information is for the use of the Referee, at their discretion. Some of the facts presented here are common knowledge but may be distorted or misrepresented in generally available sources such as a planetary dataweb or Library software. For the most part, information will be readily available on most topics but will be incomplete for various reasons. For example, it is easy enough to look up the world of Palermo, which will give a general overview of the world and its inhabitants along with links to additional information such as tonnage of starships through the world's port and an indication of prices for common commodities in the markets.

More detailed information may require a bit of digging without being deliberately concealed. For example, it may be possible to locate blueprints for a particular design of in-system cargo vessel if a Traveller knows where to look, whereas someone without at least a basic knowledge of the industry would not know where to start. As a general rule, Travellers should be able to locate non-confidential information on most topics either with an Investigate check or one based on a relevant skill. Thus a Traveller who wanted to know about a type of starship would use a shipboard skill

such as Pilot or Engineer, whilst someone good at finding information but lacking knowledge of the field would use Investigate.

The difficulty of the check depends on how widely known the facts are, which might be due to simple obscurity or a desire to restrict information on potentially sensitive subjects. Even some supposedly classified information can be pieced together from bits and pieces on various sites or inferred from other information. The Obtaining Information table gives an indication of the difficulty associated with finding out necessary information. This does not apply to extremely restricted or highly classified data; information such as plans for naval patrols in the next few months are closely guarded and would require special measures to determine.

If the check is good enough to succeed at one level lower, the Traveller will obtain some information or a data package which contains vague areas and inaccuracies. Success at a level above that required indicates very detailed information or unexpectedly useful data. If the desired information is highly restricted, such as military secrets, the check can only be made after measures are successful to obtain access to it.

## Obtaining Information

Difficulty	Level of Information	Example
Easy (4+)	Unrestricted, widely available information but which requires some searching or background knowledge	Sales figures for a particular make of grav car
Routine (6+)	Unrestricted but specialist information	Record of surveys and cartographic flybys of an outsystem body or planetoid
Average (8+)	Unrestricted but obscure information requiring knowledge of relevant keywords and concepts	Detailed import/export figures for specific commodities or products of a given company
Difficult (10+)	Slightly sensitive information which the owners would prefer not to be common knowledge	Specifications of commercial or military starships, or observed movements of a specific vessel
Very Difficult (12+)	Sensitive information which is not subject to secrecy as such but which is controlled as best the owners can	Procurement preferences for components or goods, detailed information on the financial and commercial dealings of a particular company
Formidable (14+)	Very sensitive information which is concealed as far as possible but which has leaked into the public domain and become available to those who know where to look	Schematics of sensitive buildings, commercial starships and naval vessels; observed deployment patterns for naval assets

## SOLOMANI SECURITY (SOLSEC)

SolSec has a rather grim reputation outside the Confederation but within it opinions vary considerably. Wise citizens remember that a SolSec agent's first loyalty is to the Confederation – some would say to SolSec itself – and that other relationships come a long way second. However, this is only part of the story. Agents and operatives vary considerably. There are grim zealots within the ranks of SolSec but there are also good-hearted protectors of the Solomani Confederation. The majority of personnel are professionals who do a job in return for a salary. Their degree of indoctrination and zeal depends on their personality and experiences.

Insofar as it is possible to categorise people at all, SolSec operatives tend to have a primary motivator that may give an indication of their agenda. However, this may not always be apparent, or there may be more than one motivator. For example a Zealot might be open about it or might play the part of a salary-agent with weak convictions. This is in addition to any cover identity the agent might have. Thus it is possible for a personally ambitious agent to pretend to be a zealot to their peers whilst posing as an innocent citizen during their assignments.

**Zealot:** A Zealot fits the stereotype expected outside the Confederation. Zealots are dedicated to the destruction of enemies of the Solomani people and their Confederation, often at any price. They may be grim and sinister, or cheerful and urbane, but their convictions are rock-solid. Not all Zealots are open about it and indeed SolSec officials with a different agenda constantly worry that their associates might include one or more Zealots who will take exception to personal or political machinations. The actions of a Zealot will usually not be extreme but they will always be willing to consider extreme actions if the situation merits it.

**Protector:** A Protector is dedicated to the protection of the Confederation's citizens first and the state a close second. Their motivations vary but Protectors tend to be genuine patriots motivated by pride or compassion. Where a Zealot will push to eliminate potential threats a Protector is more willing to live and let live. Protectors may be willing to consider extreme actions but as a rule tend to be moderate in their responses to a threat and willing to play off potential enemies against one another rather than insisting that all be destroyed. In short, where a Zealot will work to undermine potential enemies and weaken them just in case, a Protector will seek a good and honourable treaty that makes conflict unlikely.

**SolSec:** Where Protectors and Zealots are dedicated to the mission of SolSec – the protection of the Confederation and her citizens – those devoted to SolSec are more concerned with the organisation itself. They may justify their actions in terms of the vital mission but are often motivated with strengthening the position of the organisation or removing obstacles to advancement of their goals.

**Politician:** A Politician is primarily concerned with SolSec's role as a mover and shaker in the political arena. They may or may not be loyal to the goals of the organisation but are using SolSec to further their own agenda or one they are affiliated with. A Politician's responses to a situation will be different to those of, say, a Protector. The differences may not be great but the Politician is looking for advantages or furthering a plan rather than defending the people of the Confederation.

**Careerist:** Careerists are motivated first and foremost by their own career in SolSec and perhaps a future in politics. Successfully completing the SolSec mission is highly favourable but a Careerist is more interested in whatever furthers their own advancement within SolSec – quite possibly to the detriment of the organisation's mission. Careerists are especially keen to avoid taking the blame for failures, mistakes or excessively heavy-handed actions.

**Professional:** The majority of SolSec personnel can be considered Professionals. That is, SolSec is their job rather than a calling or mission in life. Some are more committed – and more professional – than others but these individuals are working to earn a living. They will take risks at times, since that is part of the job, but there is a point where a Professional will back off or even refuse to carry out an action.

**Penant:** Penants are those who work for SolSec because they have to. Usually this is because they have been caught doing something illegal and offered the chance to serve rather than be punished. Others may be being blackmailed or otherwise coerced. Penants might not believe in the mission of the organisation but in some cases they can be more zealous than a Zealot. Much depends on what hold SolSec has on them.

The actual competence and zeal of a given SolSec operative can vary considerably; one Careerist is not necessarily like another. SolSec does have some truly incompetent agents and some who are very talented but prefer to remain in relatively lowly positions.

## FIELD OPERATIONS TEAMS AND GROUPS

SolSec has a great many assets, most of which operate openly. As both an intelligence and law enforcement service, SolSec carries out many duties that require operatives to be seen and identified, and of course it never hurts to remind the populace they are being watched. However, some operations are better handled covertly. SolSec has regional and local intelligence networks which operate under the guise of businesses or diplomatic stations, and a great many covert 'monitors' among the population. In addition, citizens are encouraged to provide information to their local overt SolSec office.

Field Operations Teams, known as FOTs within SolSec and S-FOTS to the armed forces, are assigned to handle operations alongside or apart from the local SolSec network. Typically a field team will report to the local commander and receive support from local resources but it is not uncommon for a team to be assigned without local officials' knowledge or with only an advisory that the FOT is in the area. This occasionally results in a 'crossing of wires' where operations interfere with one another but it does improve secrecy.

A FOT may or may not be specialised. Some are experts in quite mundane areas such as tax audits or regulation of commerce, whilst others are paramilitary rescue or threat-elimination teams. Generalist FOTs can expect to be swapped from one role to another, and generally operate in a semi-secrective manner; that is, they will be discreet and try to blend in with local activity but are ready to openly identify themselves at need. SolSec conducts very few 'black operations' despite popular impressions. One reason for this is that their operations tend to be legal, if sometimes rather harsh, and it is better for the public to know SolSec is doing its job than for threats to quietly disappear without anyone being the wiser.

FOTS generally number three to eight personnel. When a larger operation is required, multiple FOTS are formed into a Field Operations Group (FOG) under an assigned commander. Personnel may come from multiple FOTS or be co-opted from local resources.

The FOG in this adventure is a generalist unit comprising multiple small teams placed under a single commander. Its mission is to investigate the Order of Prometheus and put an end to any threats to the security of the Confederation. This is a broad and general remit that requires a great deal of sifting through mundane information and the occasional field trip to speak to people. It has until now been a typical investigate-and-report mission; rather dull and not at all dangerous.

## FIELD OPERATIONS GROUP KENNIG-1868-ANGON

Field Operations Teams and Groups are usually assigned random codes as their designation and Kennig-1868-Angon is no exception. There is no significance to any of the words or numbers and will eventually be reused as part of some other combination. In short, the designation exists as long as the FOG does and no longer. Within the FOG, sub-units have a different final word to differentiate them.

**Kennig-1868-Angon** is the overall designation of the Field Operations Group. Its commander uses the callsign Kennig-Actual when in direct communications with operatives or associated armed forces.

**Kennig-Grand** is the callsign used by the headquarters and intelligence staff supporting the FOG commander. This unit rarely ventures out from its safe-houses or local quarters. Its personnel collate and process data, switching to an advisory and handling role when teams are engaged in 'contact' operations.

**Kennig-Mirror** is the callsign used by a FOT specialising in starship and space operations. This team has been together for a few years and is highly experienced. They have handled everything from hostage-rescue operations aboard a hijacked liner to criminal investigations at a remote planetoid mining installation.

**Kennig-Posture** is a generalist FOT which normally conducts mundane 'detain and interview' type operations. Its personnel are competent but not experienced in high-stakes situations. They are used to dealing with dissenters and criminals who have strayed into the political arena by mistake rather than dangerous enemy agents and internal enemies.

**Kennig-Brother** is a FOT cobbled together from locally available personnel. They know the cluster and their own assigned worlds well enough but are used to following standard practices in an unchanging situation.

## THE ORDER OF PROMETHEUS

The Order of Prometheus is a secret society dedicated to using genetic technologies to better the Confederation and their own position within it. This is not known to most of its members, as the Order pretends to be a highly exclusive social club for the elite. Its members are encouraged to be secretive, to receive initiation into the 'secrets' held by the Order. These have nothing whatsoever to do with genetic manipulation or political machinations, and are essentially collections of very clever nonsense offering explanations of historical events and various related conspiracy theories.

Those at the centre of the Order use this 'society with secrets' as protective colours. Anyone investigating is likely to conclude that it is possibly a scam and certainly a means for its founders to make connections and manipulate people. All this is legal as far as SolSec is concerned, although some activities might be considered questionable from a moral or local-law standpoint. Wading through the polite obfuscation of people who genuinely believe they know 'the secrets the Solomani party doesn't want you to know!' would take a long time and might well lead to the conclusion that the Order is harmless – at least, as far as the Confederation's security is concerned.

In fact the Order is anything but harmless. Its founders do in fact know some secrets, specifically about a genetic manipulation project undertaken several centuries ago. According to their records, a Rule of Man-era long-range exploration ship found a species with very unusual capabilities on a world far outside what is now the Confederation. Specimens were brought to a secret location and experimented upon, with attempts made to replicate these capabilities. The project was shut down and expunged from the history books for reasons unknown.

The Order has managed to obtain some of the research data and – more importantly – the location of the source world. Creatures brought to their research facility proved to have incredible powers of resilience and cell repair, although with unpleasant side effects. The creatures themselves could not be put to use but advanced gene-splicing offered the capability to create animals and even people with these capabilities. The Order did not at that time know where their research would lead but had hopes for anti-aging treatments, augmented humans who could tolerate harsh conditions, and other beneficial outcomes.

The reality was unpleasant, producing hardy specimens with mental and physical defects. Some were hyper-aggressive, some had very low intellect. Many were prone to 'regenerating' cells that were not damaged, resulting in aggressive tumours and even the growth of new body parts. It may be that the leaders of the Order set out to give Humaniti a longer life and better health but somehow they became side-tracked.

Collectively known as Golems after a mythical creature of Old Earth, the creatures coming out of the Order's labs seemed promising in other ways. Those that were strong and tough but stupid could be put to work as uncomplaining labourers; those that displayed more intellect might be conditioned as super-soldiers. A

project was undertaken to investigate the capabilities of these creatures – they were not considered to be people by the Order's leaders or its scientists – and at some point the inevitable occurred.

An escape was supposed to be impossible but whilst most subjects were docile or incapable of operating simple devices such as door locks without supervision, there were some among them who were smarter and more determined. The Order chased down those it could find and quietly closed the laboratory but at least some of the Golems survived. Sooner or later they are certain to attract notice.

## THE GOLEMS

Three general types of Golems were created. Some were experiments intended to try a technique or explore a possibility. These creatures were never intended to survive longer than necessary for experimentation and were for the most part destroyed once they were no longer useful. Others were animals, intended to be viable in the longer term. The creation of animals was mostly on a proof-of-concept basis but there were possibilities that some designs might be sufficiently useful to be worth breeding. Guard animals or 'attack dog' type creatures might be useful in law enforcement or military applications, and extremely hardy beasts of burden offered possibilities for those working in remote areas.

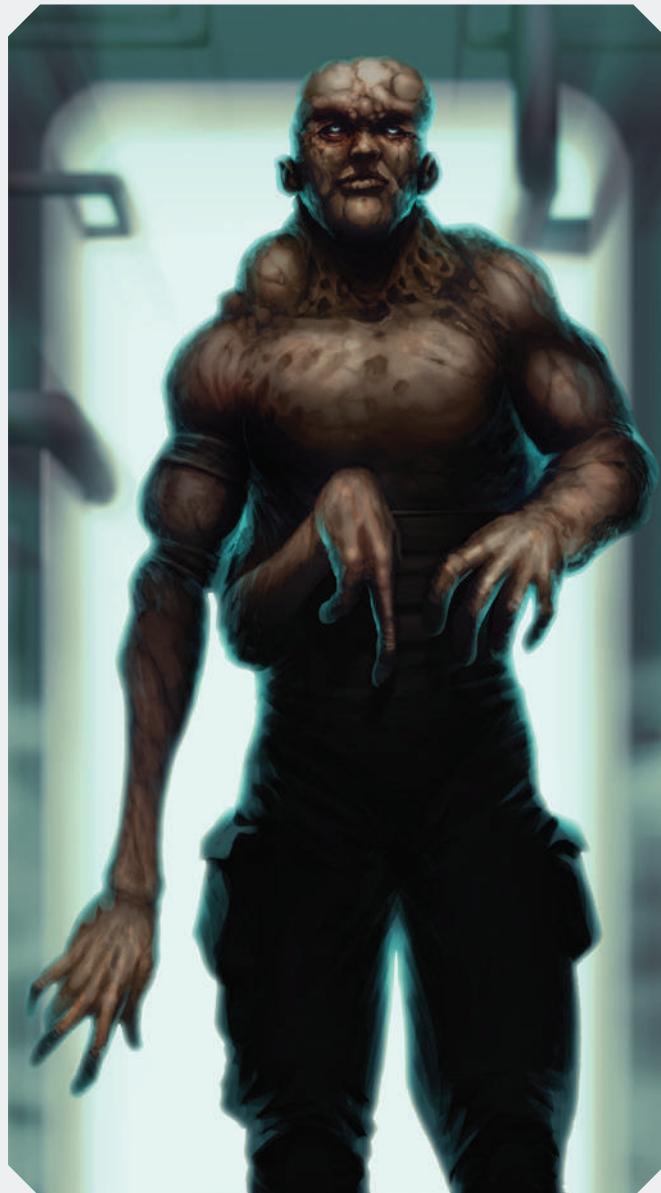
The end goal of the project was to create the third kind of Golem – people. It soon became apparent that the hoped-for benefits were not going to materialise but the humanoid creatures that were produced might have useful applications. The project instigators' stance towards the being they created was simple – they were objects to be used rather than people. This position was easy to maintain with the early batches; they looked more or less human at first but were dull-witted or psychotic, or both. Confidently declaring that no humanoid Golems were self-aware, the project leaders did as they pleased with them.

Eventually, the project started to produce subjects that were mentally stable – more or less – and which could even speak. The term 'which' was still used rather than 'who' as these creatures were not recognised as human or any sort of sophont. Those proving suitable were put to work; those that fell short of expectations were destroyed.

All Golems created by the project had certain characteristics to a greater or lesser degree. Their cells developed and were replaced at an astonishing rate, allowing a full-grown specimen to be produced in just a few months. The process slowed at adulthood

but injured Golems still healed rapidly enough that they might recover from what would be a mortal wound to a human. A by-product of this process was a tendency to develop tumours or even to start growing additional body parts.

Golems were designed to operate in harsh conditions including heavy gravity. In addition to an extraordinarily powerful circulatory system they have blood reservoirs at key points around their bodies and specialised muscle groups that can pump the blood reserve even if the heart has stopped. Reservoirs are connected to the main arteries and continually replenished, so a Golem has enough oxygenated blood available to continue functioning even after the heart has stopped. Depending on circumstances a Golem may be able to lie dormant for over an hour whilst its body uses up reserves to heal an otherwise terminal wound.



Alternatively, in the event of catastrophic damage what remains of the Golem can continue to act for a few moments after 'death'.

Some Golems also have a super-adrenaline hormone which, combined with the use of reserved oxygenated blood can allow bursts of superhuman strength or speed. This trait was added to those intended to be combatants, and not included in workers, but the constant regeneration of cells means that some workers can develop the ability later on. Similarly, the generally low intellect of the Golems can change. Exactly how the process works is as yet unknown but replenishment of brain cells can suddenly open up new functions. A dull-witted worker might instantly become self-aware, a frightening and horrifying experience which might well lead to a psychotic episode. This phenomenon is very rare and almost always results in self-destruction or a quick elimination of a 'psycho worker' by human handlers. The project's leaders are not yet certain if this intellectual flowering is real and have tended to assume incidents are just the usual Golem mental breakdown.

## CHARACTERISTICS

Humanoid Golems have the following modifiers applied to their characteristics: STR +1D, END +1D. INT is rolled with D3+1 for the vast majority of Golems and EDU and SOC are not relevant.

## TRAITS

Golems may have the following traits.

**Regeneration:** A Golem heals rapidly, regaining one point to each of STR, END and DEX every 2D minutes unless all three characteristics are reduced to 0. In this case, the Golem collapses and appears dead for 2Dx1D minutes after which its STR, END and DEX are each set to 1 and regeneration begins. Golems with Regeneration tend to live short lives as their constant cell regeneration produces tumours or malfunctioning organs.

**Wound Frenzy:** A Golem with this trait can continue to act for a while after catastrophic injury, providing at least part of the brain survives. STR, DEX and END are set to double their normal scores and reduced by -2 each combat round thereafter. Damage also reduces characteristics but the Golem only goes down when all three reach zero. If the catastrophic injury is not survivable, even by a creature with regenerative abilities, the Golem dies. However, it is possible for a regenerative Golem to frenzy, collapse and then recover. A Wound Frenzy can also be induced by non-fatal injury of a graphic sort such as a severed limb or severe burns.

# THE ORDER OF PROMETHEUS CAMPAIGN

This campaign takes place in the Palermo Cluster, centring on an investigation into the mysterious Order of Prometheus. Along the way the Travellers will encounter different types of Golem and operatives from Solomani Security. Later, they will meet a self-aware Golem. He may be a tragic character or be pushed into the role of villain by the Travellers. Similarly, the Travellers' preconceptions about SolSec may cause them to assume its operatives are the opposition. In fact, both of these groups are pursuing agendas that might align with those of the Travellers.

The Order of Prometheus is the real 'villain' in this campaign, although the Travellers might decide their actions were justified and side with them. Much depends on the moral stance of the Travellers and there is no reason why the campaign has to have any particular outcome. Indeed, the Travellers can probably reap greater rewards from siding with the Order than opposing them. This is a choice the Travellers will have to make for themselves; not everyone's moral compass points in the same direction.

In particular, the Golems may raise a moral question among the Travellers. Are they people? Many are not self-aware and less smart than a dog. They cannot make decisions for themselves other than at an instinctive level – get food, destroy threat, move away from fire – and cannot make any sort of life for themselves except as wild animals. Yet they have the potential to become self-aware and even the dumbest of them feels pain and distress. They were created by humans and could not have come into being naturally but now they exist... what is their place in the cosmic order?

The vast majority of Golems react as animals do and many will be hostile to the Travellers. These may be callously gunned down by some but others might reflect upon the inherent tragedy. The Travellers must defend themselves, of course, but their attackers are only acting according to their nature. The real blame lies with those who created the Golems. In short, the Travellers are justified in protecting themselves without hate or spite.

However, at some point the Travellers will encounter self-aware Golems. The events of the campaign may have conditioned the Travellers to think of Golems as

passive enemies, which can lead to the assumption that the self-aware Golems are the villains of the campaign. Some of them definitely are bad people, although they have reasons for their actions. Others are more difficult to quantify. A self-aware Golem knows that it was created to be used like a machine. Bodily defects and a short life expectancy are the result of uncaring researchers messing with nature. Given the mental instability of most self-aware Golems, and the fact that they are in constant pain due to internal regeneration, a negative outlook is inevitable.

Self-aware Golems have their own agenda, just like everyone else, and their motivations may align with those of the Travellers once they realise what is going on. Similarly, the Travellers might react badly to SolSec operatives no matter how the Referee portrays them. This sort of in-game prejudice will make life difficult for the Travellers but the Referee need have no sympathy with such self-inflicted troubles. Those who take the time to observe and consider have the opportunity to make more rational choices and should do better through the course of the campaign.

## INVOLVING THE TRAVELLERS

The default opening to the campaign assumes the Travellers have arrived in the Palermo Cluster seeking new opportunities or are perhaps trying to get away from their past. The campaign is suitable for almost any sort of Traveller and any group can succeed. It will be helpful to have skills that could be used to operate spacecraft and at least a limited degree of capability in combat will be necessary. However, the situations the Travellers encounter can be resolved in a great variety of ways.

To begin the first adventure the Travellers need to be in the Wasat System or close enough to travel there in order to take the offered job.

### A LEAD

The Travellers will become aware of work by some means. This might be a contact they have made or a starport jobs board. They may be selected as a good prospect for the task and approached 'cold'. However it happens, the Travellers are invited to the office of

one Raindell Navarro, a mildly renowned broker and facilitator. The offer is standard – Navarro's office will provide lunch and drinks in return for the Travellers listening to a proposal.

Navarro's office – whether this is his home office or a temporarily rented one – turns out to be rather bland and generic, however lunch is excellent. The Travellers may recognise various traditional dishes from Palermo, which have a generally Western Mediterranean style (the Referee might imagine Moroccan and Spanish dishes cooked by an Italian chef) and are clearly made with the finest ingredients. A selection of wines are available after the meal, at which point the Travellers are requested to take their drinks into the private office. This is just as generic as the outer one but expensively and tastefully furnished.

Raindell Navarro joins the Travellers in a drink and a little small talk. Astute Travellers will realise he is creating a mood which will facilitate discussions, and is clearly very good at this kind of thing. Soon he comes around to the point of the meeting. He is acting on behalf of one of the cluster's banking groups, who have inherited the albatross otherwise known as Landell Station. He chuckles wryly at the mention but explains once it becomes apparent the Travellers do not know what he means.

Landell Station has changed hands many times. Located on one of the moons of Arcomm in the Wasat system, it was built as a research installation from which to study the gas giant's weather conditions. Funding ran out and the place was stripped of what could be sold to pay off creditors. What remained was bought out by a succession of hopefuls, only to go under again and again. Ownership of the installation passed from creditor-to-creditor, devaluing each time, and is now the property of the Grand Unified Bank of Palermo.

The bank has, by some miracle not entirely unconnected with Navarro's involvement, managed to find a buyer for the station. It is to be returned to its original purpose, researching gas giant weather patterns and associated phenomena, by a project funded by no lesser organisation than the University of Home. The university is willing to pay MCr5 for the installation and all its contents. Whilst this is not exactly a lot for an outsystem facility, the chances of finding another buyer are slim to none.

It may be possible to push up the price a little, depending on what is left of the place. The asking price assumes the structure is intact and liveable, which it was when last surveyed some years ago, but does not include anything more than basic internal fixtures and systems. If there is equipment or useful systems present that will make re-habitation easier, the price can be increased a little.



## DISCRIMINATION IN THE SOLOMANI CONFEDERATION

Travellers who insist on playing aliens from far-off regions, or Imperial humans, may have a harder time in the campaign than Solomani or local species. The Solomani are nothing like as bigoted as Imperial propaganda might suggest but do have a tendency to look down on those who do not share their bloodline. This should manifest in relatively subtle ways most of the time. For example, a Traveller who is a pure-blooded Solomani will be noted as such on their identification documents. They will receive slightly preferential treatment – and should expect it!

This will usually take the form of automatic positive discrimination. For example, if there is an upgrade to first class available then it will be offered to a Solomani before any non-Solomani are considered. A blanket DM+1 should apply in interpersonal situations between pure-blooded Solomani or when dealing with government institutions. Typically, Solomani will be treated better rather than non-Solomani being treated worse. There are exceptions of course. DM-2 (or more) may apply when dealing with those who are suspicious of outsiders or jealous of their heritage. In some cases, non-Solomani will encounter refusals or rejection. The deciding factor is often the preservation of the glorious Solomani heritage.

In any society there will always be those whose behaviour is extreme and unreasonable. As a result outsider Travellers might encounter hate but it is uncommon and should be shocking to both the victims and general populace. The average Solomani does not get in a tizzy because two aliens sit down opposite them in the restaurant. Someone who did make an issue of eating in the same building as outsiders would at best be viewed as an unpleasant boor. The Solomani Confederation and its people are inherently racist but in a more subtle – and some would say insidious – manner. They promote their own and place quiet obstacles in the way of others. In short, a non-Solomani is unlikely to be attacked in the street for being an outsider but is equally unlikely to get the best suite in a hotel no matter how much money they have.

For example, the Travellers visit an antique shop. The owner is quite happy to sell most items but has a few that are of real historical significance to the Solomani people. The owner will not consider selling these to an outsider – not because they hate outsiders but because the idea of letting items of historical significance fall into their possession is distasteful. The shopkeeper is quite happy to sell other items but DM-2 applies to attempts to bargain down the price due to slight discomfort surrounding the sale of historical items to non-Solomani. The shop owner is polite, and perhaps even genuinely friendly, and possibly quite unaware of their own prejudice.

Later, the Travellers go to an expensive hotel. The outsider flashes immense amounts of cash but is told the penthouse suite is simply not available. Incredibly, when a less well-off Solomani asks a few minutes later it has just completed renovations and is now available. Outsider Travellers will become familiar with this sort of polite fiction during their time in the Confederation. If played well, this could be an educational exploration of the subtler forms of prejudice, or it can be presented as simply a fact of life in the Solomani Confederation.

Navarro wants the Travellers to visit the installation and first of all demonstrate that it is in a useable condition. If they can find reasons to put the asking price up, Navarro will be pleased. This may not be much more than a few hundred thousand Credits but he likes to wring as much out of a deal as possible. As an incentive, the Travellers will receive 2% of the sale price (Navarro can be bargained up to perhaps 2.5% but no more) and if they can find a creative way to wring say an extra million Credits out of the university's space sciences division, well, that is an additional Cr20000 in their pockets. All additional value must be backed up by visual evidence and suitable justification.

So... the Travellers are to conduct a detailed audit of what remains at Landell Station in terms of the structural condition of remaining assets. If the Travellers have their own ship the bank will cover their expenses for the trip. If they do not the bank can provide a hired small craft, although the long transit out to the gas giant will be uncomfortable in a cramped vessel. Either way, the Travellers are expected to go to Landell Station and spend several days there conducting their audit.

In addition to the percentage, each Traveller will receive Cr10000 – more than a commercial pilot makes in a month – for a suitably detailed report. This will be paid even if the installation is a total wreck but payment is Cr2000 up front and the remainder on delivery of the report. Perhaps more importantly, success will lead to the possibility of more interesting or sensitive jobs in the future as part of Navarro's network.

## REFEREE'S NOTES

This is the default starting point for the campaign, although it can be amended. The Travellers might hear a rumour about a deserted research station or stumble upon it in the course of their own misdeeds. The station does not have to be in the Wasat system; anywhere remote will suffice.

There may be a chance for a little foreshadowing at this point. If the Travellers are buying up supplies for their journey they may note that most of the locally available ration packs come from plants on Nova Prometheus and their quality is very good for the price.

## THE SEVEN

The actions of another band of Travellers are important to this campaign. They are referred to as 'The Seven' hereafter, although they would not have used that name for themselves. None of The Seven have survived but the Travellers might be able to piece together who they were from clues along the way.

**Yurem May:** Yurem was the leader of The Seven despite a quiet demeanour and general distaste for danger. He was the owner of their starship and acted as its chief engineer. His background was in commercial planetoid mining.

**Dr Magdalena Delgado:** Magdalena was a moderately prominent geneticist who suddenly went on sabbatical from the University of Firdausi about three years ago. This was about the time Yurem approached her for advice on what his friends had discovered about the Order of Prometheus and its activities, although this is not common knowledge.

**Keon Greer:** Keon was the group's security expert, a former soldier and police officer who joined the group around the time Magdalena did.

**Kamari Santana:** Kamari was the group's pilot. She teamed up with Yurem after he acquired a ship, also serving as astrogator.

**Dillan Esparza:** Dillan was the 'everything else guy' aboard the group's starship. Whilst not very skilled in any one area he could apparently turn his hand to anything.

**Salvio Vargas:** Salvio's background is something of a mystery. He was skilled in electronics and generally making things work and responsible for most of the repairs at Landell Station.

**Valerie Morales:** Valerie was an old colleague of Yurem and the group's vacc-suit expert.

# VERY FAR FROM HERE

In this chapter the Travellers visit a remote scientific installation and discover that someone has been secretly using it for their own purposes. These researchers met a bad end, leaving a lethal threat behind for the Travellers to deal with.

## VISITING WASAT

Wasat is an unpleasant world in a system whose star is expanding into a giant. The Travellers may arrive in the middle of a solar flare event, in which case their best option is to land at the mobile starport, which will be hiding behind the planet. From there, the Travellers can take a rather scary shuttle ride down to the main port. Alternatively, they could attempt the same landing approach used by the shuttles in their own ship or just wait for the event to pass.

Wasat is populated by Selenes, who are tall and graceful as a result of their low gravity environment. The Referee can gain an insight into what their cities look like from the description on page 12. The people of Wasat are largely unconcerned about events in the wider universe, as if having a few millions of tons of rock above their heads was more than just a physical barrier. The Travellers will find the locals friendly enough but extremely out of date regarding current events and popular culture. Those whose work involves outside contact are more plugged into events in the Confederation but the overall feeling is that Wasat is a self-contained world where news arrives late if at all.

The Travellers are most likely to visit Wasat in order to meet with Raindell Navarro. There are other reasons to come here of course – trade or seeking information. Whilst on-planet the Travellers might have reason to visit one of the more unusual cities. Deep Raiawa has a different character from Wasat City or most other settlements as it is constructed on the surface – albeit at the bottom of an immense canyon. Adcota is almost the complete opposite, built in the mountains with stellar observatories among the peaks.

The Travellers may come to these locations seeking information about Landell Station. The most general of information can be obtained from any database but beyond this it is a matter of finding someone who knows a little more and persuading them to discuss

the matter. Travellers with a suitable background, such as fellow scientists, are more likely to get a researcher talking than others but as usual the Travellers can go about obtaining information any way they please.

**The Dataweb** states that Landell Station was built around 80 years ago by a company – now long defunct – named Paisyss Research Solutions, which was active in the field of gas giant research. The carcass of the installation was sold, at a deep discount, to the short-lived Wasat Resource Collective and then to a series of small firms which did not last long. It is currently listed as a possession of Taselo Holdings, a diversified business group which is currently selling assets to avoid bankruptcy. In fact the sale has already gone through and the station is owned by the Grand Unified Bank of Palermo pending sale to the University of Home. Such is the nature of Wasat's society that this entry may not be updated for years.

**A Researcher** might know a little more. The original facility actually produced a fair amount of useful data in its 15-year run of operations, including papers on gas giant weather which are part of relevant university courses. There is nothing particularly noteworthy beyond this – Landell was just another project that fell victim to budget cuts. People knowledgeable about such things can cite examples of how a project can collapse in just a few months if an influential backer shifts their position, after which assets end up being sold to hopeful buyers for less and less money until either someone moves in and makes a go of it or the whole place is written off.

## ARCOMM

The gas giant Arcomm has several small moons, the innermost of which is tidally locked to the giant planet and eminently suitable for a research installation. As the Travellers approach they can see why Arcomm was of interest. Its atmosphere is clearly very turbulent and frequently lit by lightning storms. Some of these are so violent that a Traveller on the surface of the inner moon might notice a change in the light level even if looking in a different direction.

The moon is listed in the charts as Arcomm S-1 and is clearly an airless rockball. Meteorite craters pit the surface, although far more on the side facing away from the gas giant. The installation is clearly visible as the Travellers approach. It lies at the centre of an artificially flattened area of bedrock in a slight depression, with plenty of room for a small starship to land. There are no craft or vehicles outside the building complex. It appears deserted, with protective shutters over its windows and no response to communications. Even the automatic transponder is silent.

Landing is not a problem. Surface gravity of S-1 is just under 0.1Gs, so moving around on the surface requires a little care. On the other hand, there are few obstructions in the flattened area so Travellers should not run into trouble as they approach the installation. First impressions are inconclusive; the installation consists of several prefabricated buildings connected by passage tubes, with a tower structure rising from one of them. Most buildings appear to be about four metres high, but are slightly set into the ground. A good jump could get a Traveller onto the roof, although the low gravity would make it hard to judge and it is possible the landing spot might be cluttered.

The base consists of a hexagonal central nexus, from which four ground-level tubes radiate. Three of these terminate in rectangular buildings of roughly the same size. The fourth passes through a small building then into a much larger one which clearly was used as a vehicle garage. A narrow neck, just wide enough to hold a ladder, power conduits and pipes, rises from the hexagonal building some 15 metres or so before terminating in a hexagonal one-storey structure festooned with antenna brackets. Most of the antennae appear to have been removed.

## THE FATE OF LANDELL STATION

Around three years ago, a group of Travellers stumbled upon the works of the Order of Prometheus. They learned of the Golems and the threat they might pose. The survivors secured some of the Order's equipment and samples, and sought an out-of-the-way location to study them. Recruiting a couple of additional members they brought their number up to seven and are hereafter referred to as The Seven.

The derelict Landell Station offered what they needed, so they moved in and made the place liveable. This was not legal but the station had not been visited in a decade or more. It was known to exist but salvagers had already stripped out everything that was cost-effective to take. In short, it was an ideal location where The Seven were unlikely to be disturbed and where they could easily contain any experiment that went wrong.

## ENTRY POINTS AND COMPARTMENTALISATION

There are multiple entry points to the installation. The access structure contains the main airlock, which is large enough for four personnel and some equipment. The two other main structures have secondary airlocks suitable for two people at a time. These have rarely been used in the whole history of the installation and may be seized or obstructed. Clearing either will take some work.

The vehicle garage is designed to act as a large airlock, with the inner doors opening only when the area is pressurised. However, the outer garage door has been welded shut. There is a secondary airlock alongside it which is still functional but blocked by the modifications made to the garage area. The Travellers will not be able to access the installation by this route without cutting their way through the containment zone. See page 51 for details.

The installation is compartmentalised to reduce the possibility of disaster. Each connecting tube has pressure doors at either end, designed to automatically close if pressure is lost. Not all of these doors are still functional, however. Each building is set slightly into the ground, and has an airtight false ceiling. Above this is a layer of ballistic cloth to provide resistance to any micrometeorite that might penetrate the roof. A crawlspace houses pipes and conduits, with the armoured roof above. It is possible for a human (or a Golem) to move around in this space, although the noise would be audible in the rooms below.

Whilst some continued their investigation into the Order of Prometheus, those with a more scientific mindset began assembling the equipment they had brought. Once that was done, they pumped nutrients into the tanks and introduced the material they had sampled from the Golems. They grew at an astonishing rate but typically died before reaching adulthood. As their colleagues came and went bringing supplies, the scientists worked until they managed to create viable specimens. These were studied and The Seven became increasingly alarmed at the threat they posed.

Ironically, it was the decision to terminate the experiment – and the subjects – that was the scientists' undoing. Their fail-safe was the garage area personnel airlock, which could be used to draw the atmosphere out of the garage. Two of the four experimental subjects were killed this way but a fault with the personnel lock required attention. With the subjects confined to their cages, it should have been a simple matter to make a repair and continue the process. However, the cages were not as secure as believed.

The subjects got out, although one injured itself badly in breaching the cages. The scientists in the garage were torn to pieces. One was safe in the control room and the other survivor tried to join her there. He almost made it, reaching the top of the access ladder with the test subject snapping at his heels. He bled out in the control room. His colleague knew that if her friends returned they would also be attacked, so rather than spend weeks alone with a corpse she made the courageous but unwise decision to hunt the creature. She got little further than the gun locker.

## FOUR OF THE SEVEN

The research at Landell Station was carried out mainly by Dr Delgado, assisted by Valerie Morales. Keon Greer was present as security expert and Salvio Vargas did everything technical required to keep the installation running and the subjects contained.

Morales and Greer were killed when the test subjects escaped, although Greer put up enough of a fight that Vargas was able to flee. He was badly wounded by a Golem as he climbed the ladder to the tower, where the Golem could not follow. Delgado, who was in the tower control room at the time, did what she could but could not save him. When the Golem moved away from the base of the tower to seek food she descended, took weapons from the locker and confronted the Golem in building 5. Delgado inflicted wounds but was driven back to the central nexus where she was killed by the other escaped Golem. Her body was subsequently eaten.

The base has been silent for weeks now. The supply ship is overdue but the Travellers have arrived instead. It is too late to save the scientists but at least their fate will be known. Of course, that presupposes the Travellers survive what they find in the installation.

## LANDELL STATION

The installation was built using standard prefabricated components of a sort that have not changed much in decades. Windows are covered by armoured shutters and the roof is formed of multiple layers like spaced armour. Protection from meteorites is good. There is a central reactor and waste management system, with each building having its own fuel cells. These are topped up from the reactor but can provide several days of power at need. The buildings have provision for solar cells on the roof but these are not fitted for obvious reasons.

The entire installation is set up for humans, with no indication of any furniture or equipment suited to any non-human. The buildings are old and have stood empty for a long time before being reoccupied; the experimenters were not intending to stay more than a few months, so cleared out the areas they needed and tidied only as necessary. Many systems are jury-rigged, rather than being properly put back into service, and in some cases may be a little hazardous. Prior to reoccupation the base was stripped by salvagers, who were not subtle about getting furniture out of the way so that they could take valuable electronics and specialist components.

Overall, the installation is something of a mess, with improvised wiring stuffed into spaces where junction boxes and control systems used to be. Panels are missing and there is an unfinished nature to almost every job. There are exceptions, where a spare component was available or someone took the time to do a neat job. These stand out against the generally rough-and-ready way the installation was brought back into service.

## INSPECTING THE INSTALLATION

Once the Travellers get close enough they will see there are emergency lights on inside the structures. These are visible as glimmers through the armoured shutters, all of which are closed. The airlock has power and will open upon command. Normally there would be some form of security but the space where a card reader or code entry system would be is vacant. Instead a cargo door control – a metal cylinder with a big red button on one end, easy to slam with a vacc-suited fist – dangles forlornly on obviously jury-rigged wires.

If the button is pushed, the airlock lights up and begins to cycle. Lights come on automatically when the Travellers



move around the installation and the ventilation and water recycling systems are running as normal. Air quality reads as normal pressure and safe to breathe but anyone opening their helmet will instantly smell... death. A detailed analysis of particulate matter in the air indicates biological contamination of a sort associated with decomposing bodies. It is not enough to be harmful but is certainly unpleasant.

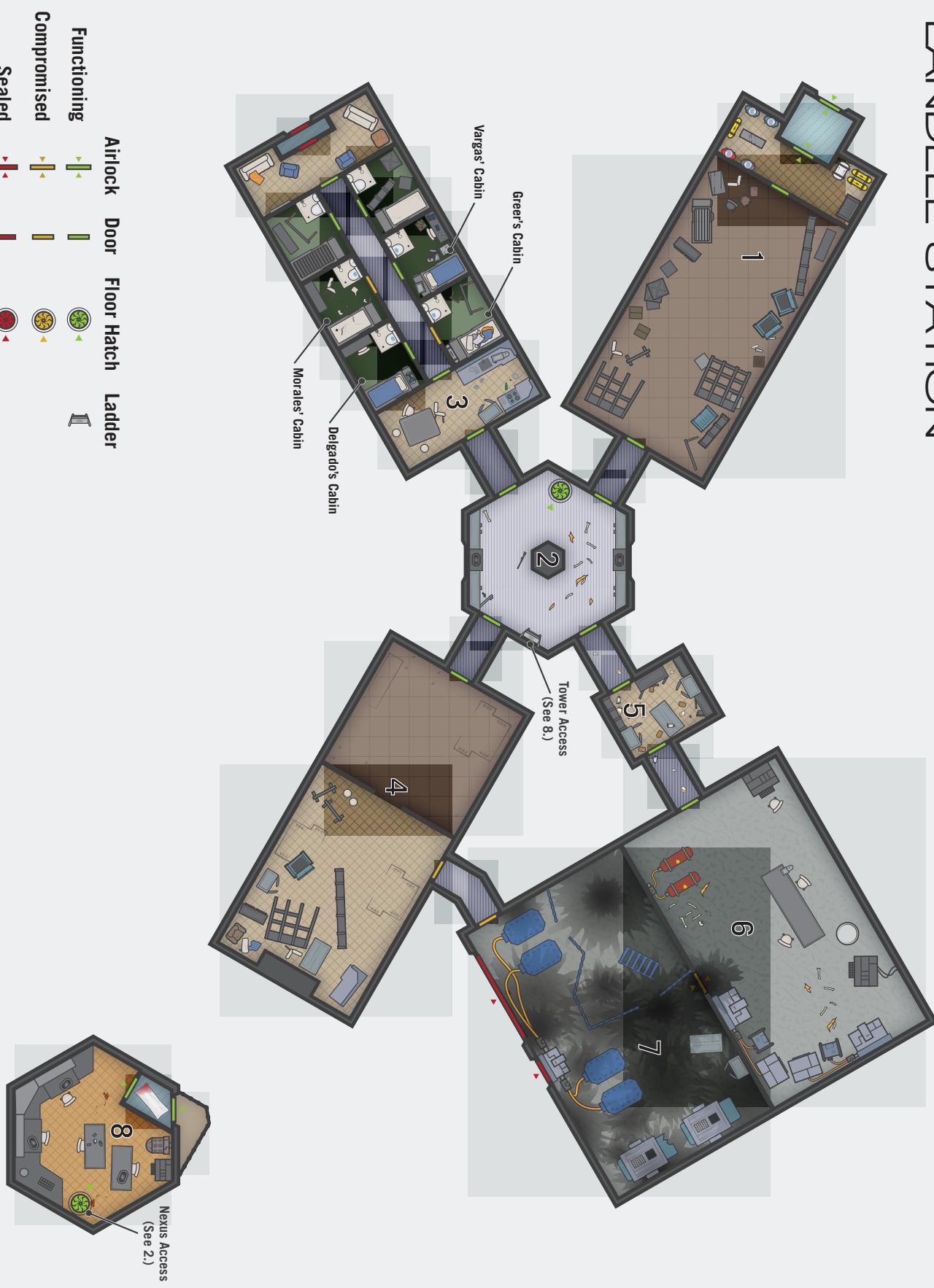
## BUILDING 1: ENTRY CHAMBER

The main airlock leads into a typical equipment stowage and vacc suit maintenance bay. There are four human-sized vacc suits on racks along with a basic maintenance tool set, of a standard type used all across the Confederation in installations and small starships. Three of the suits have nametags, which read: Delgado, Greer and VALERIE'S SUIT!! The fourth suit belonged to Salvio Vargas, who never bothered with a name tag. The suits are of differing designs. Those belonging to Delgado and Greer are pale blue and of an inexpensive type. Valerie's suit is bright red with white areas and is a tough 'outdoor worker' suit of a type used by engineers, miners and prospectors. The fourth suit is dark grey and looks suspiciously like Confederation Navy-issue. All suits are charged and ready for use.

The remainder of the structure was originally used for stowage, although many of the shelves and lockers are now in a tangled heap of wreckage. This occurred partly when scavengers ripped out the furniture to get at the buildings' electronics and more valuable locker contents, then more damage was done when Salvio Vargas needed access to jury-rig the building's systems. The Travellers may be familiar with the building and its layout, as both are typical of modular installations throughout the Confederation. If so, they will know where to look for power outlets and utilities junctions should they wish to investigate them.

The same module is used for three of the installation's buildings. This one is really too big just to be an entry area but as is common the base's original builders found it cheaper and easier to use the standard module. The rear of the building is a large open space. Again, this will be familiar to the Travellers as it is common. Such spaces are useful for additional stowage in some cases but often end up as an informal recreation area or 'multipurpose space', which invariably fills up with everything the base's operators do not have a place for. In this case it has been used as a dumping-ground for lockers and racks, plus spare furniture and general oddments pulled out of the rest of the base.

## LANDELL STATION



VERY FAR FROM HERE

There is a clear path through the middle of the trash, easily wide enough that access is not impeded. Travellers might come to the (correct) conclusion that someone cleared out the base and made it workable without regard to tidiness or regulations. If they choose to search through the wreckage they will find little of use but may notice that some of the piles have been disturbed recently (days or weeks), as if someone had burrowed into the piles. In fact, this was one of the Golems looking for food. Since there is none to be had, the Golems do not come into this area very often.

## BUILDING 2: CENTRAL NEXUS

The central nexus of the base is a hexagonal chamber with connection points for link tubes in each of its faces. There are only four links in place but some examples of this kind of base can have six, or have multiple nexus modules with other buildings radiating out from them. The nexus chamber has a wide pillar in the centre, which supports the tower module above. At opposite sides are a floor hatch and a ladder up to the ceiling. Around the walls are monitor panels and lockers for emergency equipment, including a gun locker that stands open.

The stench of death is strong in this chamber. There are bones – obviously humanoid – scattered about the floor with scraps of cloth. The bones have been chewed and stripped of even the smallest scraps of flesh. On the floor lie an empty combat shotgun and snub revolver, also empty. There are cartridges – some fired, some not – here and there and projectile impact damage on consoles and lockers. If the Travellers investigate the corridor to area 5 they will find more expended shotgun cartridges. The bones are those of Dr Delgado, although it may be difficult to identify them. Most of her clothing has been eaten along with her flesh. This makes it difficult to determine the time of death.

The floor hatch is closed and has not been opened by the Golems, so they have had no presence in the chamber below. This is a roughly circular pit housing the installation's fusion reactor, with a fuel tank sunk into the rock underneath it. The original reactor was removed down to its mountings and someone had a go at removing those as well. Much later The Seven installed a portable reactor in a distinctly Frankensteinian mess of pipes and conduits. Inspecting the reactor suggests it is in a 'safe-ish but troublesome' state requiring constant maintenance and has already begun to malfunction. Its logs indicate the last maintenance was 34 days ago, with work carried out almost every day for many months before that. This suggests a time for the disaster at the base.

The roof hatch hangs open. Climbing a ladder attached to the wall leads to a small space above the roof of the central nexus with a near-vertical ladder/staircase leading up to the tower section. The upper hatch is also open and there are bloodstains on the stairs. The Travellers may wonder why they do not find bloodstains throughout the installation. This is because the starving Golems have licked every scrap of biological matter they can find, including their own fluids, but could not reach the tower.

The upper chamber is similar in shape to the lower one but with consoles and desks throughout. None of these are original equipment – that was all plundered for saleable components and replaced with whatever The Seven could scrounge up. The command tower has been used as an office and general working space and has been set up with basic and rather ramshackle communications equipment.

The tower has an emergency airlock system which is little more than a pair of hatches leading onto a fenced ledge outside. From there it is possible to get onto the upper surface of the tower for maintenance or loading of equipment from a grav vehicle. The airlock is depressurised and contains a body, missing the lower half of the left leg. This is Vargas, who was placed here just after he died. With no suits in the control area and nowhere to go even if she had one, Delgado could not remain here and was forced to descend into the main base.

### THE GUN LOCKER

The gun locker is a repurposed stowage unit with clip fastener. There are crudely welded holders for four snub revolvers, which are loaded with HEAP ammunition. Next to each is a strip of cloth, clearly home-made, fashioned into cartridge loops holding 12 more rounds of HEAP. These end in decorative clips intended to be hooked onto a belt or pocket. Two revolvers are still present.

There are also racks for four combat shotguns. Two are full-sized, with a six-shell capacity and a full stock. The others are shortened and stockless, with a three-shell capacity. All are loaded with heavy buckshot, with eight more cartridges in home-made carriers beside each gun. One short shotgun is missing. There are also boxes of 100 HEAP rounds and 50 shotgun cartridges, which have been spilled by someone clearly grabbing a gun in a hurry.

There are portacoms on some of the desks. The contents are encrypted but not well. It should be possible to guess passwords or break encryption with a few hours' work, but initially the Travellers will not be able to learn anything from the computers.

### BUILDING 3: RESIDENTIAL

Building 2 is much the same as 1 and 4 in terms of basic structure. It has an attachment point for an airlock module but this is not fitted. Instead there is a simple two-manual-hatch arrangement in the outer end, locked shut from the inside. Windows are covered by metal shutters. The whole area stinks of what the Travellers might realise is animal faeces.

Area 3 is configured as a residential zone. Entry is by way of a dining and social area, which then leads to a starship-like corridor lined with small cabins. At the outer end is another open space which has been set up with some very beat-up furniture as a lounge. There are six cabins, of which two are filled with trash dumped from the others. The remainder were stripped long ago and have been brought back into service with rather basic equipment from a variety of sources.

**Delgado's Cabin** is intact. The door is scuffed with what appear to be claw marks but has withstood attack. Inside, the cabin is neat and rather sparse. Delgado had a few scientific awards and degree parchments on the walls but the only personal item appears to be a novelty paperweight formed from some shiny and very fine-particle rock. Her taste in clothing was apparently utilitarian for the most part, with several sets of equally drab coveralls. However, she does have a formal suit with a University of Firdaus pin and a beautiful blue ball gown in vacuum-shrunk protective packages.

**Greer's Cabin** is trashed. The door was left open or at least unsecured and was bashed open by a Golem which has since been sleeping on the bunk. It made a nest out of all the clothing and other cloth items it could find, including Greer's coveralls. His personal effects are minimal but he did possess an Advanced Combat Rifle and six magazines for it along with 500 rounds of ammunition. This was in its case in the cabin at the time of the breakout and has not been used. It may be found if the lair is searched.

**Vargas' Cabin** is intact. It appears its original door was replaced by a more sturdy one which is rather ill-fitting and difficult to open. Inside is a chaotic mess of half-repaired electronic devices and odd tools which have been collected from all manner of sources. Inspecting the devices suggests that Vargas has a rather...

unusual... approach to his work. Some solutions are extremely clever or inventive, whilst others seem to be over-complex just for the sake of using up all available components. Vargas' clothes and personal effects reflect a habit of collecting everything that might someday prove useful. His wardrobe is jammed with ill-assorted items, whilst every space not full of works-in-progress contains small mementoes of planets visited or past adventures: bottle caps, novelty key rings and other oddments that presumably have a story attached.

**Morales' Cabin** has half a door. The bottom has been scratched and clawed until a flaw allowed the Golem some purchase. Eventually the tough plastic gave way and the creature smashed its way inside. The cabin is completely trashed, with everything tearable torn and everything breakable broken. The presence of fragments of wrappers suggests that Morales had a stash of sweets or something similar. The Golem clearly went to a great deal of trouble to get at these.

The lounge area has been ripped up and some parts of the furniture gnawed. The Travellers might infer from all this destruction that the Golems – which they might or might not yet have encountered – are starving. They have resorted to eating their own faeces and anything organic such as shoes or belts made from natural materials, leaving a trail of destruction throughout the installation.

### BUILDING 4: UTILITY AREA

Building 4 was originally set up as a utility area by the constructors of the installation. In practice this meant part of the building was a laboratory for detailed biochemical analysis, part was a workshop for any fabrication or repairs that might be needed and the remainder was used as general working or recreation space. The innards of this area were torn out when the base was salvaged, leaving little more than a shell. This later became littered with broken fittings and furniture, allowing the second Golem to set up a lair.

The utility hatch in one wall was used to create a second accessway direct to the garage. This allowed samples to be brought from the garage without going through the rest of the base. It was by this route the second Golem escaped from the garage area.

### BUILDING 5: STORAGE

Building 5 is small and was used mostly for food stowage. This took the form of many months' worth of pre-packaged rations along with bulk stowage of beans and similar dried foodstuffs. Almost every cupboard and locker has been smashed open. Only one is intact, having fallen on its face.

The starving Golems smashed their bodies into the food lockers until they broke, then devoured the contents. Wrappers and packaging are strewn all over this building and adjoining corridors. Some items were taken to the lairs of the two creatures but for the most part they gorged then went away to sleep before coming back for another feeding frenzy.

If the Travellers can reconstruct some packaging or get into the toppled locker they will find the base was stocked with rations produced on Nova Prometheus. This should be no great surprise as the world is a major exporter of such products but the production codes can be localised to the city of Mykala. There are no validation codes, meaning the rations were bought directly from their producer at Mykala rather than going through a supplier at the starport.

## BUILDING 6/7: GARAGE AND RESEARCH AREA

This large building was once the vehicle garage and associated maintenance area for the base. In addition to ground vehicles for utility purposes, the garage housed a small transporter for probes. These were launched from a rail set up on the bedrock outside, making a pass through the atmosphere of Arcomm before returning for pickup. Gas samples and instrument recordings were the main source of data for the original research team.

The Seven used the divider between the garage and maintenance bays to create what they hoped was a secure research area. The access tube to building 4 was locked off and all necessary equipment to grow and sustain Golems was installed in area 7. The main garage door was sealed and the personnel lock connected by a set of tubes to the containment cages. This would allow any or all of them, or the whole area, to be deprived of oxygen or rapidly vented. A backup incendiary system was installed as a fail-safe.

The Golems were grown in nutrient tanks and contained in cages until it was time for them to be used in experiments. Some were killed and dissected, whilst others were set loose in an ingenious run built by The Seven and their capabilities assessed. Parts have survived, although severely damaged. It will not be clear to the Travellers how the Golems escaped but it is probable that a section joining the cages to the run failed whilst at least one of The Seven was in area 7. The door between 6 and 7 is jammed open by a piece of debris and there is severe fire damage throughout 7 and into part of 6. There are two sets of bones in area 6, picked clean and splintered like those found elsewhere. A snub revolver might be found if the Travellers search; all cartridges have been fired.

Whilst little remains intact in area 7, 6 has merely been ransacked rather than burned and exposed to vacuum. A good search will turn up some facts:

- There are two Golem corpses in their cages in 7. These cages were vented to space and the corpses damaged by the incineration process rather than being destroyed.
- Two people were killed here, judging by the gnawed bones.
- The scientific and nutrient equipment in 7 is almost entirely trashed.
- Equipment in 6 is largely still functional. It consisted mainly of environment control for 7 and some remote sensors.
- It appears that the people here were experimenting on some kind of creature, which got loose and killed them. Although primitive their containment measures were thorough.
- Data was not stored here – in fact the researchers used portacoms which are found in the control tower.
- Here, or in the portacoms, the Travellers will notice The Seven referred to these creatures as Golems. In Old Earth mythology a Golem was a created being, formed out of clay.

## EXPLORING THE STATION

The Travellers will need to explore the station in order to find out what happened here. The Golems (Attack Dog types, see page 111 for their description) will become aware of them as soon as they arrive. They are starving but cunning and will attempt to stalk the Travellers rather than attacking outright. If a lone Traveller can be ambushed, this is preferable but the creatures are sufficiently desperate that they will burn their last reserves to bring down prey. They may work together if it suits their purposes.

The upshot of this is that the Travellers will know something is in the base with them but may not be able to locate it, at first. The creatures are good at hiding and moving stealthily, and know their environment well. The Referee is advised to play for tension rather than having an all-or-nothing battle break out straight away. The creatures may strike and run, or cause a disturbance in the hope someone will come to investigate. They are not intelligent by any means but have the instincts of a successful ambush predator.

In the meantime the Travellers will be piecing together what happened here. They may come to know a little about The Seven and even feel an affinity for them, although it is likely that the Travellers will initially believe The Seven are the creators of the Golems. The data



obtained from portacoms in the command centre will shed some light but will not be available during the initial exploration of the base unless the Travellers retire for several hours to decrypt and study what they have found.

### PORTACOMP DATA

The portacoms in the command centre are full of extremely specialised information about protein interactions, cell replication rates and other data that would only be of use to someone studying the Golems in detail. It may be that somewhere down the line the Travellers will benefit from this information but for now they need the general overview. The Seven did not write an introduction for outsiders, as they knew what was going on and were not planning to leave a legacy. The Travellers should still be able to figure out the main points.

Most of the complex data is attributed to and commented on by Dr Delgado. It is clear she is a 'proper' scientist from her rigorous academic style.

Even when conducting the most basic experiments everything is written in the correct manner. Delgado repeatedly comments that someone called 'Yurem' (Yurem May) keeps nagging her to cut corners and get results and expresses what might be described as fond annoyance that he simply cannot comprehend the importance of details.

From the data it is obvious that The Seven were experimenting on some kind of creature which demonstrated incredible powers of cell replication, regeneration and a generally aggressive nature. There are mentions of the occasional 'near miss' or 'unscheduled researcher-subject interaction' along with warnings of just how dangerous the Golems could be. Nowhere does Delgado mention where the specimens came from or how they were obtained, although she does refer to 'The Hovel' a few times. It will eventually become apparent that this is the name of, or a nickname for, a starship.

Early entries speak of failed experiments which appear to be attempts to grow Golems in nutrient tanks. Once viable specimens are mentioned there are notes about converting holding pens to be vented to vacuum if necessary and installing a destroy-by-fire system in what the data refers to as 'the lab'. There are then hundreds of pages of hard data about cells and nutrient levels, with the occasional comment about a specimen being defective but surviving for a time. Finally there is a period of about 10 days in which Delgado refers to experimentation on four viable subjects. She expresses some distaste for 'what Keon is having to do' (this is a reference to deliberately harming the subjects to see what happens). There is no mention of anything going wrong and no station logs as the electronics that would have recorded them are not present. Delgado's work simply... stops.

A separate set of files consists of rather random notes by the various members of the group. These sometimes refer to The Hovel coming to visit and bringing supplies. The last entries state that Yurem is taking The Hovel to Nova Prometheus to chase up a lead and will be back in three weeks, then there are a couple of notes that The Hovel is overdue. It is currently about a month overdue and there are concerns about the level of rations and life support supplies. These entries also end abruptly.

Appended to this file set is a single entry entitled YUREMS CLARIFICATIONS. A single text file within reads:

*Nova Prometheus  
Mykala  
Entefyss Farming Conglomerate: WCS??*

WCS is shorthand for Worst Case Scenario, although that may not be immediately apparent. Most of the other data is apparently gibberish or some kind of code. Analysis reveals that these are access and override codes for a computer system. The Travellers may find them useful when they encounter the *House of Clarifications* later on.

## INVESTIGATING THE CORPSES

An analysis of Golem corpses indicates some of their physical peculiarities. It is clear they are very tough and have unusual abilities. Three of the four specimens had various deformities and tumours. The worst affected was one of those which got loose, as it was injured and had to heal rapidly. The Travellers may deduce that rapid healing is harmful to the Golems. They might also ponder the use of the name, since Golems in mythology were anthropomorphic.

A detailed analysis including DNA work will take several weeks but early on the obvious conclusion stands out – these are artificial creatures created using some kind of synthetic DNA as well as some drawn from common species. In this case it was dogs. There is also some very exotic genetic matter present, which does not match any species in the commonly available databases.

## ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the Travellers have dealt with the Golems they can complete their investigation of the installation and the work done there. What they tell their client is up to them, although eventually someone else will come to the station so outrageous lies will be exposed. An honest appraisal of the remaining structures is bleak; pretty much everything is gone and the jury-rigged setup used by The Seven requires significant investment and work to make viable for the long term. However, the fact that the installation can provide a shirt sleeves environment for those fixing it up could be a selling point. If the Travellers can paint the situation in the right light they can add a few hundred thousand Credits or more to its value.

However, there is a problem. The fact that the installation has been used will cause the buyer to hesitate even if the nature of the research undertaken there is not divulged. The Travellers will receive payment for their report but their percentage of the sale price depends on there actually being a sale. Navarro will suggest an investigation of The Seven and their ship which will hopefully produce information to satisfy the buyer.

It would not be a difficult matter to conceal some aspects of what happened, which might be a good idea. If the Travellers are too open about what they found an investigation by law enforcement personnel will be necessary. This is a local affair, not a job for SolSec, but the Travellers will have to answer a lot of questions about what they found. They may or may not realise they are witnesses rather than suspects; they undertook a legitimate mission and reported what they found. Unless the Travellers give the local authorities reason to suspect them they will not be investigated beyond providing an account of what they found at the installation.

In the meantime, the Travellers know the people who died here had comrades, and a ship called The Hovel or something similar. There is also an indication of a connection with Nova Prometheus. Perhaps this might lead somewhere?

# THE ONLY PREY WORTH HUNTING

The Travellers have found clues that point to Nova Prometheus, specifically the city of Mykala. Located high in the temperate latitudes Mykala is cool, when it is not bitterly cold, but is still a major agricultural centre. The city's population is such that it might be considered a town or large village on many worlds but, for Nova Prometheus, 4,000 people is a significant settlement. Most of the population work on the industrial farms that surround the city or in supporting industries, although a significant proportion are employed directly by the ration pack manufacturing centre.

Mykala has its own spaceport, which mostly serves cargo shuttles rather than passenger or general-trade ships. Most traffic in and out of the port is directly to a jump capable freighter in orbit or to the highport. Few starships visit the city, so most of those that call more than once are familiar to the port's personnel. Among them is a ship called *Yurem's House of Clarifications*. This is the vessel referred to as 'the Hovel' by Dr Delgado in her notes. A basic record of which ships docked where is available for download from the highport's databases and can be accessed remotely over the datanet.

## ARRIVING AT MYKALA

First impressions of Mykala are of a small, compact mini-city surrounded by industrial greenhouses, fields of hardy winter crops and neatly planted forests of coniferous trees. Produce is brought in for processing then shipped out by spacecraft or starship. It is clear that Mykala was built by a society in which it is easier to set up an orbital 'bounce' to the starport or another spaceport than to build overland infrastructure. A web of roadways link the farms and outlying communities but there are no land routes to other major settlements.

The port receives few visitors other than commercial ships, so traffic control and customs are likely to be quick and efficient despite the small number of personnel at the downport. Weapon restrictions are tight on Nova Prometheus and checks are stringent. If the Travellers want to smuggle weapons into the city or on-planet they will have to be clever. Otherwise, the entry process is simple enough and the Travellers can take a look around.

### YUREM'S HOUSE OF CLARIFICATIONS

*Yurem's House of Clarifications* is registered out of Palermo Highport. She is a 500-ton Causeway small transport, listed as being over 50 years old and 'internally modified'. Her type and role are noted as 'General Minor Commercial' which typically means a small freighter or general-purpose transport. However, the designation is used as a catch-all for a great variety of roles, some of which are euphemistic. There are no alerts or warnings associated with the vessel, at least in publicly available data.

If the Travellers begin researching this vessel they will be able to build up a picture of a ship that is definitely not engaged in minor freight operations. The *House of Clarifications* has made several visits to Mykala downport, each a few weeks apart, but is very rarely noted as having sold anything. Purchases are 'minor incidental goods and general freight' with no indications of major export shipments. The records are very general and require some inference in terms of what was exported or sold at times the ship was in port.

The likely reason (and this is correct) is that the *House of Clarifications* has been shuttling back and forth between Mykala and Landell Station, with side trips here and there. The ship was last in port a few weeks ago and departed with a cargo of 'minor incidentals' as usual. It is clear that the *House of Clarifications* did not arrive at Landell Station when expected but there is no indication of where she went or why.

Mykala is typical of a small city in a starfaring culture. Buildings, vehicles and consumer goods are all constructed at TL11 to a strict regulation code, which makes items expensive but ensures high quality. The Travellers will be struck by the friendliness and cooperative nature of the locals and by their love of a warming locally produced liqueur known as Evaught. Made with cold-weather berries and fruits it is generally unavailable offworld and expensive at the starport but in Mykala it is given away free with meals.

There are a couple of typical restaurants but most eating-places resemble dining clubs. Members of a club pay a small fee each month and eat for free in between, whilst guests can be invited (for free) to eat at a particular club for a few days or pay a fee if they have no local friends. This starts at Cr100 for 'a few days' and is actually a good way to make those local friends. Food at the clubs is home cooking on a bigger scale. Whilst not extravagant or impressive it makes good use of locally available ingredients and is lovingly prepared. This is a reflection of local society if the Travellers think about it – the people of Mykala are for the most part rather poor, although they are poor in a TL11 society.

The lifestyle of the average citizen is simple and revolves around social activities far more than possessions. Indeed, other than data devices most people have few high-tech possessions and status symbols are rare. Standards of living are high as a result of good city planning and high technology but people have little disposable income. The majority are content enough but there is an undercurrent of resentment aimed at the upper echelon of society.

## SEEKING THE HOVEL AND THE SEVEN

It should be a simple matter to connect Yurem's *House of Clarifications* with references to The Hovel. Few ships are regular or even repeat visitors to Nova Prometheus. A quick look at publicly available arrivals and departures logs shows this ship in port loading up on locally produced rations on several occasions. Given the small size of the city it is not hard to figure out what the crew were doing and where they were going whilst in port. In addition to setting up deals with the ration pack manufacturers, the ship's commander had a tendency to pop up all over the city and its surrounding farmland.

If the Travellers can track down anyone he spoke to – not hard, as he openly pestered everyone with the same questions – they will get an impression that Yurem was not subtle in his enquiries. He wanted to know about acts of violence, murders, disappearances and the like in the area surrounding the city. A lot of the

people he spoke to found this morbid and sometimes a bit sinister and are not inclined to discuss the matter. This is especially the case since Solomani Security came around a while after Yurem did. They asked about him but also had the same questions.

Those willing to talk for the most part do not know anything. The local news has a few reports of tragic accidents or workers caught out in winter storms which some people do not think ring true. These are scattered over a wide area but have a suspiciously high concentration in the region around the Entefyss Farming Conglomerate, which lies to the north-east of the city. Nobody can say what WCS might have stood for.

## ENTEFYSS FARMING CONGLOMERATE

The EFC is one of many such organisations surrounding the city. The usual format is a hub with a small admin and logistics complex, with large industrial farms surrounding the hub. In the case of Entefyss, most of the produce is from logging or gathering a moss native to the area that has some useful pharmaceutical properties. If the Travellers think to investigate they can get access to export records which show the conglomerate as producing large quantities of lumber over the past three years and apparently doing well financially.

The situation was very different before that, however. Output was in deep decline until a sudden turnaround occurred. If the Travellers can persuade anyone to discuss the matter they have little idea what happened, other than that a large segment of the workforce was paid off. Nobody recalls any local recruiting after that, so presumably the conglomerate brought in offworlders or robots. That would be expensive, so maybe there was a new backer. All this is conjecture however; nobody has any real idea what happened.

If the Travellers have a vehicle there is no difficulty in getting to the conglomerate's central settlement. If they do not, they will find that there are no vehicle-hire facilities in such a small town. However, the outlying agricultural areas are served by automated trucks which can carry passengers; the trucks have a cab for an operator if one is needed and behind it is a small passenger or crew pod. Licensed operators can access the control area from the pod, whereas passengers cannot. Transportation in this manner is essentially free, although a Cr1 transaction is required to provide a record of who has used the service and when.

However they reach the conglomerate's hub, the Travellers will find it is a community capable of housing perhaps 50 people, with a few outbuildings and a

large loading yard for automated trucks. There are few people around, possibly because it is cold, but there are vehicles parked around the hub, mostly farm-working types such as pickups and quad bikes. One stands out from the others by virtue of being spotlessly clean and of offworld design.

The Travellers will be greeted cordially enough by whoever notices them first, unless they do something to offend like poking around before introducing themselves. However, there is an undercurrent of tension. They are invited into the central building complex for a meal and introduced to two notable people; Jerome Entefyss, current owner of the business and its associated settlement, and Lieutenant Maria Culstein of SolSec.

There are a couple of dozen locals at the hub and four SolSec operatives. They stand out like their vehicle by being smartly dressed in business-casual suits and having a city-folk image. All four have concealed weapons (ScMP-8 assault pistols, see page 132) but this is routine. There is no sign they are expecting trouble. Their leader seems wryly amused at the Travellers' arrival.

At present Entefyss and his household are not suspected of any wrongdoing, although having SolSec in the house is always uncomfortable. Culstein will want to talk to the Travellers and although she prefers not to discuss what she is investigating with outsiders, it is pretty obvious she is interested in the same events they are. She thus sees no harm in sharing information, working on the assumption that as an experienced investigator she will get more than she gives. Her subordinates will engage in general chit-chat but avoid or bluntly refuse to discuss any sensitive topics.

Maria Culstein and her team intend to head up to the main logging camp at first light tomorrow. Travelling at night on poor country roads would be unnecessarily hazardous. She suggests that the Travellers accompany her team and 'persuades' Entefyss to loan them a vehicle. He is clearly uncomfortable about something but will be evasive. More than likely his demeanour will be mistaken for general unease at having SolSec around.

Although weapons are strictly controlled on Nova Prometheus, farming households always have a few shotguns for vermin control. Any Traveller who wants one will be loaned one of these. They are standard break-open civilian double-barrelled shotguns, with a dozen or so shells for each. Culstein does not think the Travellers need weapons, and would prefer them not to have any but does not raise objection. She would rather have the Travellers where she can keep

an eye on them than blundering around a potential investigation site on their own. The offer of vehicles and weapons applies only if the Travellers accompany the SolSec team. If they want to go off now they will not receive assistance; the roads are indeed dangerous at night and the Travellers will find themselves exploring a logging camp in darkness.

## AN EVENING AT ENTEFYSS

Jerome Entefyss is resigned to having house guests and does his best to be a gracious host. There is plenty of accommodation, although some of it has not been used for a couple of years. Family members and workers end up scurrying about with spare bedding, trying to quickly air out and warm up buildings that have not been used since their occupants quit their jobs. This might strike the Travellers as unusual – the conglomerate clearly underwent a downturn and does not appear to have recruited back up to normal levels but overall it seems more prosperous than the Travellers would expect. Jerome Entefyss is not willing to comment on that, other than saying that he has a good, hard-working team out in the fields and the forest. The hub gets by with a reduced complement and of course that means less of a salary overhead. This is all plausible and indeed true... sort of.

Assuming the Travellers behave themselves, their evening at the Entefyss estate can be comfortable enough. The SolSec operatives are professionally non-social and will withdraw to the building set aside for them. The remainder of the household are willing to chat but are obviously uncomfortable. The Travellers will be able to pick up a few clues from chance words here and there. Yurem May visited a while back and was a bit of a jerk despite being given hospitality. He asked a lot of very direct questions and openly stated he disbelieved the answers. As a result, the family are not willing to repeat the process unless they have to – which means they will answer questions from SolSec but not random Travellers.

Despite a reluctance to talk about Yurem's visit or the reason for it, the household are concerned about the number of accidents and injuries happening at the logging site. Most believe Jerome has made a bad decision about hiring new workers and they are sloppy or downright careless. Most of the original workforce have gone and those who remain have become insular and unfriendly. On the other hand, productivity is way up so maybe it is best to leave them to it. The family do not know about the Golems and indeed Jerome does not either. He does know that something is amiss and hopes that either SolSec figure it out and blame the staff at the camp or that the logging manager is able to somehow fob them off.

## THE LOGGING CAMP

The logging camp is about 20 kilometres north-east of the main hub, along rough and rather basic roads normally traversed by automated trucks. These have very large wheels and can cope with rough ground but produce immense ruts which make it difficult for smaller vehicles. It may be tempting to try to go offroad at times but the road runs through thick stands of trees so the Travellers will have to navigate around them which could lead to further obstacles. With frost or light snow on the trees the scenery is attractive but also rather lonely.

Arriving at the logging camp, it is immediately apparent that something is wrong. Machinery is running but there is no-one in sight. The SolSec team do not miss the obvious and begin breaking out submachineguns and a rifle from racks in their vehicle. They do not offer the Travellers weaponry but do advise the Travellers to stay with their vehicle. This is stated as an instruction but has no force of law and the SolSec team will not prevent the Travellers from looking around unless they get in the way or destroy evidence.



## THE SOLSEC TEAM

It is possible the Travellers will treat the SolSec team as faceless cannon fodder or even try to murder them for their weapons. This might work in the short term but being in the vicinity when a Field Operations Team goes down is grounds for investigation at least. There will be consequences for Travellers who act against or impede the SolSec operatives. It is to be hoped the Travellers have enough common sense to realise this.

Maria Culstein and her team are professionals but they are not prepared for what is about to happen. They will be as scared and confused as anyone else would be but will do their duty. This includes rescuing Travellers or surviving workers if at all possible and Travellers who cooperate with the SolSec team will rapidly become valued allies. There are a couple of spare guns in the vehicle and Maria will gladly grant access to competent Travellers once the severity of the situation becomes apparent.

The skills and weapons of the SolSec team are similar to those listed on page 124 but for the sake of narrative their actions and personalities will be of interest to the Referee. Ideally, the team should be portrayed as people-doing-their-best and the Travellers might gain a new perspective on SolSec from this encounter. Indeed, the moment a SolSec officer hands her submachinegun to a Traveller might be a narrative high point in the campaign.

**Maria Culstein:** Team Leader, ScMP-8 handgun and SMP-8 submachinegun (see page 132).

**Tomas 'Tommy' Palenque:** Usually drives for the team. Tall, with big hands and feet; continually jokes that the vehicle controls are too small for his 'giant monster hands'. ScMP-8 handgun and SMP-8 submachinegun.

**Ayanda Gil:** Quiet, reserved, usually appears mildly irritated by Tommy. Carries an ScMP-8 handgun but favours the STR-10 rifle when the team arms up. She would loan her pistol to someone but not the rifle.

**Mallin Prousse:** Designated team medic and 'random science facts guy'. ScMP-8 handgun and SMP-8 submachinegun.

Adding the odd detail about the operatives and their personalities will enhance this adventure and perhaps make it more poignant if some of the SolSec people do not survive.

## LOGGING CAMP



THE ONLY PREY WORTH HUNTING

## LOGGING CAMP

The logging camp uses good-quality prefabricated structures well suited to a cold environment. They are obviously quite old, some with climbing plants growing over them, but they are of good quality and for the most part intact. Power, water and sanitation make use of underground conduits, buried just a few centimetres down. Between the buildings is a concrete apron which has numerous cracks where plants and – in little-used areas – even small bushes have pushed through.

### BUILDING 1: OFFICE AND HEADQUARTERS

This structure is larger than most. About half of it is one storey high, whilst the other side has three floors. The one-storey side contains a small ‘community hub’ with a reactor and water recycling system. This is the heart of the settlement and although it is old it has been well maintained. The other side is mainly given over to offices and a couple of meeting rooms. It is clear this side of the building has not been used much in years, other than a single office on the upper floor.

The occupied office has been outfitted in a non-standard and rather eclectic manner. In particular there is a wide selection of spirits and liqueurs, comfortable furniture and a distinct lack of work-related items. A portacomp on the desk presumably sufficed for all the manager’s needs. There is a semi-automatic pistol in the desk drawer, with one spare magazine. This weapon would have been highly illegal on Nova Prometheus unless the owner had a special permit. There is no indication one existed.

SolSec personnel will be very interested in the portacomp, which is encrypted to a surprisingly high degree considering it is just the accounts machine for a logging camp. The SolSec vehicle has a computer of its own with powerful intrusion software and plugging in the portacomp will unlock it in less than an hour. Of course, persuading the SolSec team to share their insights might be difficult. If the Travellers can do so, they will have some answers to questions that might otherwise require some detective work to unravel.

The portacomp mostly contains records of logging output, replacement tools used and supplies required. There are a couple of surprises here. For one, the settlement had begun taking delivery of large quantities of cattle feed which is strange given there is no terrain suitable for grazing animals. The emphasis seems to have moved from vehicle-mounted mobile cutting machinery to hand-operated chainsaws and even axes, of which an inordinate number have needed

replacement. The vehicles were still used until they wore out but output went up even as the means of production became less technical.

It also contains records of workforce losses and injuries. In some cases there are names and payroll numbers but the vast majority are simply noted as ‘worker fatality’ without any identifier. Some of the ‘fatalities’ have details that suggest the injury was not likely to be fatal, yet there are no indications of medical evacuations. In some cases a ‘worker fatality’ is accompanied by an equally vague ‘irreconcilable workplace dispute’.

This is of course all deniable euphemism. The unnamed workers are Golems and those too badly injured to work were executed. References to disputes in many cases mean a Golem became psychotic or otherwise unbiddable. Whether or not killing a humanoid Golem would constitute murder is a difficult question; one that would probably require a lengthy trial to establish legal precedent. Indeed, that might be one of the outcomes of this incident – are Golems people or are they property in the same manner as livestock?

### BUILDING 2: STORAGE

This structure is subdivided into a small storage area containing food and related items for the human population and a larger area filled with cattle feed bins and what appears to be an industrial quantity of cheap protein shake mix. This is added to the cattle feed to create the staple diet of the Golems. It smells bad and probably tastes worse but provides sufficient nutrition to support a hard-working ‘herd’ of Golems. Feeding something like this to creatures that appear human seems disgusting, at least to the SolSec team – the Travellers may have a different set of values. However, there would be no point in serving human-style meals to animal-intelligence Golems. The Travellers might wonder where exactly the line should be drawn.

### BUILDINGS 3A-D: RESIDENTIAL

Structures 3a-d are identical two-storey dwelling units, with a central kitchen and dining area, a lounge and bedrooms on the upper floor. 3c has obviously not been lived in for some time. 3a and 3d were occupied by the guards, whose personal habits varied from military tidiness to those of utter slobs. Those inclined to keep their homes clean gravitated together in 3a which is well kept, whereas those too lazy to make a bed or clean up trash have comprehensively wrecked 3d. The guards were equipped with combat shotguns and most rooms have a box of shells with a few missing. It is unlikely that guns will be found here as the guards

always went armed when they dealt with Golems. Indeed, the odd shotgun fired into the air was part of the herding process.

3b is home to the few remaining employees and the manager. It is in good condition overall, with some quite expensive personal effects. The staff here are noticeably wealthier than the people of Mykala, especially the manager. The door to this building is barricaded with furniture and inside is a terrified survivor. This is Travda Vaughan, one of the remaining workers. See page 116.

#### BUILDING 4: VEHICLE MAINTENANCE SHED

Building 4 has large roller-shutter doors and is clearly a maintenance facility for the installation's vehicles and equipment. Most of its fixtures and tools are in disrepair, having been ignored for over two years. The area is extremely cluttered and full of hiding-places for a cunning Golem.

#### AREA 5: LOADING YARD AND STOCKPILES

Area 5 is dominated by a large gantry crane which is still running. Its function is to load logs from the huge pile waiting for transfer onto the back of automated trucks. The logs are rather unevenly cut, making crane operations difficult and it is clear that some have been dropped from time-to-time. These are mostly just rolled out of the way towards the sides of the loading area. The log pile is mostly stable but could be disturbed by someone climbing on it.

#### AREA 6: GOLEM CONTAINMENT AREA

Area 6 is surrounded by a high double fence, with a gigantic tent built out of a patchwork of tarpaulins supported by posts between the two fences. The tent stinks, as it was used to accommodate dozens of Golems without regard to their well-being. There are heaters in the tent, fenced off to prevent accidental burns but sanitary facilities consist of holes which the Golems have been trained to clear out and fill in from time-to-time. All Golems were driven off but some may return to this area as it is the only home they know.

#### AREA 7: VEHICLE GRAVEYARD

As the vehicles wore out they were dumped here. Some have been cannibalised to keep others running and most could be fixed with sufficient effort and equipment. There is an earthmover and a digger but most vehicles are small tracked logging platforms designed to cut, drag and place timber. Those that still work are parked in the loading area; all those here are defunct.

#### WHAT HAPPENED?

Some time ago, the camp had a workforce of about 20 personnel, working mainly from the cabs of small tracked or wheeled vehicles. The operation was efficient but expensive to maintain. Interference from one of Nova Prometheus' landholders drew off experienced workers and made it hard to recruit replacements. Eventually, with the camp running with just a skeleton staff, a deal was made and a new manager took over. He brought with him armed guards, which was unlikely to be legal, and a workforce of Golems. Some of the remaining human workers quit over the next few months but others adjusted to the situation with the help of greatly inflated paycheques.

The result was a huge increase in productivity, at the expense of moral standing. Golems were accommodated in what was little more than a tented animal pen and trained to use dangerous power tools they lacked the understanding to operate safely. Casualties were inevitable, even without the occasional need to remove a psychotic Golem. However, the situation was contained for a time. As the first-generation Golems aged, many became deformed or mentally unstable and the number of accidents rose. Attacks on workers and guards also increased, driving off some staff. Eventually, only those willing to compromise ethics for money remained.

After a difficult learning curve littered with human and Golem bodies, working practices evolved which kept casualties down to what seemed like concealable levels. However, a rash of psychotic incidents coincided with a visit to Nova Prometheus by Yurem, piquing the interest of the local SolSec office. Maria Culstein and her team were assigned to investigate. Warned of this by a contact at the Entefyss hub, the manager and his guards decided to herd the Golems into the forest where they could be hidden. This backfired, resulting in a fight between some of the Golems and the guards. Whilst most of the Golems are currently wandering the forest in a state of confusion and distress, some ran amok in the logging camp. Casualties on both sides were near-total.

#### THE INVESTIGATION

It is immediately obvious something bad happened here but exactly what will require investigation. The SolSec team are duty bound to do so and to look for survivors, and will request assistance from the Travellers once the size of the task becomes apparent. The guards and staff are all dead and their corpses may well have been gnawed upon. A couple of Golems (see page 112 for a description of Worker Golems) are hiding in the camp but most have dispersed into the forest.

The Referee should note that Golems are clothed, although tend to quickly reduce this clothing to rags. One might be mistaken for an injured worker in poor light and certainly the SolSec team will discourage a shoot-first attitude. Indeed, the Travellers could be prosecuted for a lethal mistake – although they would have a good defence if they genuinely thought they were under attack by Golems.

The investigation will turn up unsettling finds; bloodstains and spent shotgun cartridges, then perhaps gnawed body parts and partial corpses. At the same time the Golems in the camp will begin hunting the Travellers and others present. They are hungry and angry on a primal level, having been herded into the cold and seen those that were too slow simply gunned down. The bodies of these victims were dragged a short way into the woods and can be found by a search, but that does mean going into a forest where Golems lurk.

The bodies of guards will usually be found with a shotgun. Maria and her team will not object to Travellers arming themselves once the first attack takes place, and may perhaps even give weapons to the Travellers. Maria will call for assistance once she realises the situation is out of control, but it will take time for anyone to arrive. The most likely development is an initial investigation with hints of threat, discovery of half-eaten corpses and contact with one or more Golems, and then an escalating attack as more Golems come out of the woods. The Travellers will find themselves fighting for their lives alongside the SolSec team – a situation neither group would have expected.

## RESCUE OR RESOLUTION

The escalating Golem attacks should be tailored to the strength of the Travellers' group and their preferences for violence. Fighting fools may enjoy a running battle through the camp, whilst other Travellers might prefer a problem-solving approach as they try to avoid Golems whilst facilitating an escape. If things go really badly, the Travellers can always climb the crane or hole up in a building and await rescue.

Assistance will arrive in the form of Major Aiden Zimmermayer of SolSec, arriving at the head of a Field Operations Group all the way from the starport. He is Maria's superior, heading a combined team carrying out investigations. The force is well equipped with submachineguns and rifles, and has a duty to protect all Confederation citizens. They will do their best to extricate the Travellers unless the Travellers do something to make it unnecessarily difficult for them.

Afterward, or when a victorious team returns to Mykala, SolSec will want to interview the Travellers. They

are witnesses rather than suspects and might have earned a great deal of goodwill if they ably assisted Maria's team. The interview could in fact be a friendly one, although any questionable deeds will still require explanation. This is a typical post-incident interview and is mandatory – the Travellers can be thrown in jail for not cooperating. Once completed, the Travellers may think they have heard the last of it. This is not the case.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH MAJOR ZIMMERMAYER

Soon after returning from the logging camp, the Travellers receive a call from the local branch of SolSec. This can be alarming depending on what they have been up to. For many starfarers it is a bit like their country's taxation service asking to speak with them – probably some routine advisory or question but a cause to worry for some. SolSec has a policy of calling on new arrivals just to see what they do. Those who immediately bolt or go to ground are obviously worth questioning.

In this case, the call is nothing more than an authenticated text-only request to visit the local SolSec offices. Such invites are always presented as voluntary and indeed not backed by any force of law. There is always a possibility that SolSec might view declining the invite as suspicious but in reality that depends on circumstances and how important the matter is. A typical citizen invited in for a discussion of some trivial matter will not be hounded for ignoring the invitation. On the other hand, newly arrived starfarers might be viewed with more suspicion and considered worth following up.

The invite can be scheduled to the Travellers' requirements providing they comply within two or three days. If they do not, there will be no obvious or immediate consequences but they will be placed on a 'suspicious activity' list and subject to routine monitoring. This does not mean active surveillance or agents assigned to follow the Travellers, just a file at the local SolSec office which gradually fills up with boring data on how much the Travellers spent in the shops, what they bought, where they went and who they met with. If needed, this data will feed into an analysis which might lead to other action. In most cases it simply lies on file forever.

If the Travellers arrange to visit the local offices they will be given a time to be there and greeted professionally by a smartly business-casual office worker. These front-office staff work for SolSec but are local administrative professionals rather than agents of an intelligence service. They are about as involved in interstellar espionage as a payroll clerk in a starport brokerage. Civilian staff run the office and handle liaison with visitors, whilst the

three SolSec personnel assigned to Mykala do all the intelligence work. Or at least, this is the usual approach.

When the Travellers arrive it is immediately apparent the office is overstaffed. Extra desks are jammed in and there are personnel coming and going all the time. Most are in local clothing but with a prominent SolSec pin in one lapel, whilst some wear a version of the SolSec working uniform suited to professional encounters or detective work in the local community.

It will be apparent to anyone with experience of SolSec that something is going on here. At least one field team has been added to the local monitoring service. There are no racks of guns or piles of hardware in evidence, although it is certain there will be weapons available. The Travellers are only kept waiting for a few moments before a man apparently too young for the rank of major appears from the back office. He wears what is known as 'business greys' – a particular cut of mid-grey suit peculiar to Solomani Security. Not quite a uniform, it is finished off with epaulets and a rather fetching gold aiguillette plus a military-style officer's cap.

If the Travellers have not already met him at the logging camp, this smartly turned out individual introduces himself as Major Aiden Zimmermayer, 'of the Home Zimmermayers' he adds, then chuckles wryly. 'Never mind that, you get the habit from dealing with the local higher-ups'. If the Travellers have much knowledge of Solomani politics they will realise that Major Zimmermayer has just connected himself with an extremely powerful family in the Solomani Party of the capital. This might be an affectation picked up in local society but it also suggests that Zimmermayer wants everyone to remember his connections.

Be that as it may, Zimmermayer's demeanour is professionally warm and friendly. He shakes hands or exchanges traditional non-contact greetings – SolSec officers tend to be skilled diplomats versed in many cultures of the Confederation. Then he suggests the Travellers accompany him to the dining club three doors down, where things are a little less cluttered. If the Travellers have questions or reservations Zimmermayer says he will explain everything over coffee and that the Travellers are not suspected of any wrongdoing. Of course, SolSec usually says that...

If the Travellers refuse, they are free to go but Zimmermayer will not explain why he wanted to talk to them. If they are suspicious or guarded, he is well used to that and does not take offence. The Travellers can order whatever they like from the dining club's

limited but generally wholesome menu, eliciting a wry comment that this is a decent enough posting if you like winter-vegetable stew.

Zimmermayer has a few questions for the Travellers, which he says are to assist in his investigations into a different matter – and not their affairs. He would like to know why they have come to Nova Prometheus and why they are asking about Yurem and will reciprocate with as much information as he is permitted, freely admitting this is not out of goodwill. SolSec acknowledges that sometimes you have to give people some information to put in context what they know; divulging some facts can shake loose a greater dividend.

SolSec knows that Yurem's ship has visited Mykala several times and that he has been rather clumsily asking about disappearances or, as he suggests, covered-up murders in the surrounding area. His antics drew the attention of SolSec but also made their job rather more difficult. What Yurem was not willing to divulge was where he got his leads. If the Travellers can shed any light on that it would be very helpful.

Zimmermayer is not interested in the events at Landell Station as the Travellers' actions are probably legitimate and it is outside his remit anyway. However, they may well choose to be cagey anyway. Zimmermayer will almost certainly be able to tell if they are holding back information or outright lying, which will pique his interest in a way that candour will not. However, he is still willing to be as open with the Travellers as SolSec ever is. He suggests that Yurem may have been onto something, especially since the appearance of the humanoid Golems. Zimmermayer wants to know what the Travellers have found out about them.

If the Travellers question Zimmermayer's motives, he (truthfully) tells them that his remit is to protect the people of the Solomani Confederation. This is of course not the whole story but he will not be further drawn at this time. He will not interfere in any lawful business the Travellers have, even if that means acting as amateur sleuths, but he disapproves of unofficial parties making his job harder and putting themselves at risk. SolSec is nothing less than cordial throughout the meeting unless the Travellers are truly obnoxious.

The Travellers can draw certain inferences from the meeting. There is something going on here that worries SolSec and Yurem's companions know something about it. Mysterious deaths and the existence of the Golems could go hand-in-hand but if The Seven were the creators of the Golems why would they be openly asking about them? Further investigation is required, whatever SolSec has to say.

# ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Thus far, the Travellers have discovered the existence of the Golems but do not know where they are coming from. They may suspect Yurem and his associates but there is evidence that The Seven were also investigating the same subject. Now it appears that SolSec is interested too, which always makes everything more interesting. There is no reason why the Travellers cannot have multiple side adventures around the cluster whilst seeking clues or pursuing their own agenda. Ideally, the Referee should encourage the Travellers to investigate on their own initiative and find clues by their own efforts. If they lose the thread of the adventure the Referee should implement 'Message From a Stranger'.

The Travellers should be able to infer that the creation of Golems requires significant resources and a certain amount of discretion. There are plenty of rockball worlds that would be suitable as a production site but this raises questions of resource availability and usefulness of the Golems. One useful avenue of investigation, should the Travellers think of it, is to look into sales of suitable chemicals and equipment. Records exist and are usually accessible through starport databases but not to the general public. The Travellers could get access by feigning interest as a shipper or user of such equipment, or simply hack the database and steal the information.

A suitable investigation will reveal that a very large amount of such equipment, followed by ongoing sales and transport, took place around six years ago. Since then a single freighter, named the *Margarie DuPont*, has called at Mu'izzi Highport to pick up deliveries of supplies that could be associated with the creation of Golems. This vessel's intended delivery destination is not recorded, although she always filed a flight plan to Nova Prometheus. Further investigation shows the *Margarie DuPont* transiting the length of the cluster and back, sometimes with a detour by way of Palermo. She is quite a large ship, not well suited to making money in the backwaters, so suspicious Travellers might (rightly) suspect her movements are intended to conceal a delivery somewhere. Unfortunately, there is no indication as to where.

The Travellers might think to intercept the *Margarie DuPont* somewhere in the cluster but this will not be possible. It is a workable plan if she continues to ply back and forth but something has changed. After turning around at Swelter, *Margarie DuPont* disappeared. She is overdue at Wasat but not yet sufficiently so that a search is required. At the present time, the *Margarie DuPont* remains a mystery.

## MESSAGE FROM A STRANGER

At some point during the Travellers' investigations they receive a text-only message. If the Travellers linger at Nova Prometheus the message will reach them quickly. If they are in the backwater systems such as Alziir or Merope it may take a few weeks to appear on the web. Once it does, the message will be available for pickup as soon as the Travellers log in.

The message is short and cryptic, reading:

*I know what happened to Yurem May. I know what is coming.*

*Come to the Algol Taverna in Nueva Cadaques, Mu'izzi. Be discreet.*

*Say you have an invite from El Falso Diablo himself. Follow instructions.*

El Falso Diablo – the false devil – does not produce any immediate connections. Someone who has been vilified unfairly, perhaps? The only way to find out is to follow the instructions.

## ARRIVING AT MU'IZZI

Mu'izzi's highport is a typical facility but the world below is a little unusual. Vessels are only permitted to land at the central downport if they have special permission – which is extremely difficult to obtain. The downport and startown are located in an artificial oasis, surrounded by a huge sandy desert. A series of concentric walls and berms keep most sand out of the city, except when it is particularly windy but all the same automated street-clearing vehicles are in constant action and most buildings are constructed as part of roofed complexes. These have transparent or slightly opaque roofs in public areas, with lush green parks filling most public spaces.

Although visually impressive, Mu'izzi's downport has a rather strained elegance. Overpriced shops and a generally unwelcoming attitude make a visit somewhat less pleasant than might be expected. Everyone seems to be in a hurry or at least has something to do rather than talk to strangers. Fortunately the Travellers do not need to spend much time in town. There are wide-gauge transcontinental railways linking the startown to all other major cities. These can only be accessed once inside the customs zone but Mu'izzi's laws are fairly relaxed about weapons and permitted items. If the Travellers can resist replying in kind to the rather curt security staff they should have no problem getting through customs and on their way. A train to Nueva Cadaques is easy enough to find and tickets are surprisingly cheap.

## ON THE TRAIN

The trains of Mu'izzi are something of a technological marvel, not so much for advanced technology as brute power. Each is driven by a fusion reactor in the power car at the front of the train, with energy cells in each carriage and transport car. Most trains are a mix of huge goods wagons and slightly smaller passenger carriages, with passenger areas at the rear of the train. Close to arrival, the main (goods) section of the train detaches and is diverted into the freight yards whilst the passenger segment is piloted into the station from a small cab in the front carriage. Separation takes place at high speed, with the rear segment braking slightly to allow the goods wagons to pull ahead. Most passengers do not notice the separation process and some are surprised to find that half the train has vanished when they arrive.

The train itself is comfortable, with lounge and sleeping accommodation in the wide carriages. Most service is by way of robotic stewards, which are arguably more friendly than the human ones. Nevertheless the journey will be comfortable... at least at first. There are few other passengers and they are spaced out among several carriages. There is no real reason for this, other than the generally anti-social nature of Mu'izzi society. Travellers who try to interact with their fellow passengers will encounter vaguely civil responses which are clearly intended to discourage further attempts at conversation.

The train proceeds at high speed across the desert towards Nueva Cadaques. Along the way, there are occasional areas of high winds but a heavy train running along a semi-sunken track is little affected. Gradually the terrain returns to semi-desert and then grassland and the sky darkens. A few hours out from the starport, the train enters a rainstorm. This is not much of a problem at first but the ride becomes a little rough as water pools on the tracks. As it gets deeper due to runoff from the nearby hills, the Travellers get to witness a local wonder. The speeding train piles up water in a wave in front of it, slowing down significantly. Then vents in the underside of the power/driving car are opened and water is forced in under high pressure. It is sprayed out of the top and sides, creating a high-speed geyser racing across the countryside.

The waterspout show continues for half an hour or so before the water level subsides and the train once more gathers speed. Soon after this the goods segment separates and the passenger carriages roll smoothly into the station at Nueva Cadaques. The city is similar in general architecture to the startown, although the building complexes are more about keeping rain off the



population than sand. The locals are no more friendly than anywhere else on Mu'izzi but since the Travellers have already passed through customs they can go about their business without needing to deal with local officials.

The Algol Taverna is not hard to find, although it is located in a backstreet away from the area's tourists might be likely to visit. There are a handful of locals drinking and eating what look to be very well-made meals. They take little notice of the Travellers until someone mentions Falso Diablo. At that point a young local woman wordlessly beckons the Travellers through a rear door and out into the street where she has a ground car parked. This has 'trap' written all over it but it is genuine. The woman says little other than 'I will take you to him. Be kind.' She proceeds to drive out of the city in a distinctly informal manner which may alarm Travellers used to more organised road systems. It appears that ground traffic is something of a free-for-all on Mu'izzi.

Half an hour or so outside the city limit is a small settlement; a typical agricultural village surrounded by rain-soaked pasture and wetland agricultural facilities. The Travellers' guide points to a nondescript house on the edge of town. The door is unlocked. Inside the Travellers find a living-room converted to a makeshift medical facility. A hospital chair/bed stands in the centre of the room, currently unoccupied but clearly in use by someone. There are two people present. One is a middle-aged human, the other... a Golem.

The two are conversing when the Travellers arrive and turn to face their visitors. The Golem's features are humanish but not quite right in a disturbing sort of way. Yet there is a light of intellect in its eyes which the Travellers have not seen before. Its deformed jaw makes speech slightly difficult to understand but with effort it manages to say, 'Welcome. You will be wanting answers, yes?'.

## GIDEON'S STORY

The human is Carlos Alvarez-May and would describe himself as a simple country doctor in a nowhere town. He likes it that way. He served his time in the navy medical corps then took a job as a medic for the planetoid mining industry. Met some people, married his friend's sister, fell out with the friend, found a place to settle down and raise a couple of kids. His is a very mundane story for the most part, until recently.

Carlos and his brother-in-law Yurem fell out when he started dating Yurem's sister. They did not see one another for years. Then one day Yurem arrived at his door, desperate for help. With him was a... creature... that seemed more or less human. It was dying. Yurem asked Carlos to undertake illegal and highly risky

surgery to remove a tumour that was blocking the creature's main neck arteries. It survived and whilst it recovered Carlos studied it.

The creature was of little more than animal intelligence, although it seemed to understand that Carlos was trying to help it. He cut out aggressive tumours and gave the creature what treatment he could. When it went into cardiac arrest he brought it back from the very brink of death. To his surprise, when it opened its eyes the creature was... different. It tried to speak. Astounded, Carlos and Yurem nursed and taught the creature, naming it Gideon. In a matter of days Gideon learned the basics of civilised human behaviour and a few simple words. Carlos and Yurem taught Gideon to read and write, and to use the datanet. One day Gideon told them its story.

Gideon can relate its own tale from here. Its speech is difficult to follow but it tries hard to be understood. Gideon explains that it is a Golem, created in a laboratory to be a farm worker. It remembers, dimly, being corralled with others of its kind and fed some kind of nutritious mush. It worked as it had been taught, without complaining despite the cold and injuries. It never occurred to it to wander off. In fact nothing occurred to it. It was an animal without thought or identity.

Gideon remembers being forcibly dragged away one night, jammed into a dark container and bounced around a lot. It now knows that Yurem and his companions grabbed it at random as a specimen and took it away in a vehicle. When it arrived here it was an animal but potential to be more than that. Perhaps it was the near-death experience that lit the spark of intellect. Perhaps it was simple kindness. Gideon had never encountered anything but indifference and cruelty... perhaps all it took was a reason to want to live. Gideon does not know.

What Gideon does know is that it will not live much longer. Its body is producing tumours at an alarming rate and its systems are breaking down. There is no normal life for it, no life outside this house, but it has a purpose. Gideon wants to destroy its kind. They are abominations, Gideon says, creatures on the cusp of sentience doomed to a life of suffering. Becoming self-aware only brought more suffering, despite the kindness of Carlos and his family. Imagine becoming self-aware in the middle of a herd. Gideon suspects this happened to others. Its memories are dim but it thinks it can tell the difference between those that were killed by the guards for becoming violent and those that began to behave as if they knew what was happening to them.

Gideon is convinced that its kind occupy a niche that should be forbidden; created creatures that individually straddle the line between animal and sophont. Those that are animals cannot be treated as people. Those that become people remember being animals. Golems cannot reproduce naturally, so at the very least the programme should be shut down and existing Golems destroyed or allowed to live out their short lives in relative comfort. The people who made the Golems should be damned to eternal torment, according to Gideon.

Carlos has tried to keep track of Yurem since their rather strange reconciliation. He knows that Yurem and his companions were researching the Golems and had found a way to make a version with no human component. This is one of the most sinister parts of the project – Gideon has a lot of human DNA. This means whoever made it deliberately incorporated human elements. Whether they hoped for sentience or not they must have become aware that at least some Golems were self-aware... and yet they did not stop.

Carlos and Gideon know that Yurem uncovered evidence of something called the Order of Prometheus and that it has members on various worlds. Yurem was unable to infiltrate the Order as he had made a bit of a nuisance of himself already. His ship is missing and Carlos is afraid for him. All he knows is that Yurem visited the ValGorch estate and received a rather unpleasant reception. Poking around he found the Golems and abducted one. Perhaps there are clues at the ValGorch estate which might lead to finding Yurem and perhaps revealing what the Order of Prometheus is planning.

Carlos is unwilling to leave his comfortable and mundane life. He has obligations to the local community and his children. However, he would be grateful if the Travellers would find out what happened to his old friend and perhaps help Gideon. The way to do this is to infiltrate the Order of Prometheus. The Travellers have a location now and may be able to find out more about the Order. Gideon will go with them and is willing to pretend to be a dumb worker Golem to get into the compound if that is what it takes. Gideon has no identification papers, however, which might pose a problem. Its appearance might raise questions but most people would be likely to assume it is a human who has suffered severe injuries or illness.

## TRAVELLER MOTIVATIONS

There is no 'X thousands of Credits to perform this task' mission-giver here, just a situation that might lead somewhere interesting. Some Travellers might be motivated to help Yurem and Gideon out of altruism, or perhaps curiosity, and may need no rewards beyond the adventures and experiences they have. Those who want financial gain can find it but they will have to look beyond the obvious. As mentioned in the Introduction, the Referee is well advised to foster a mindset along the lines of 'let's see where this goes' or 'how can we turn this to our advantage?' rather than spoon-feeding the Travellers a neat package of mission, challenge and reward.

This mindset can pay dividends, not only in terms of a more interesting gaming experience but also gains for clever Travellers. In this case the Travellers do not at this time know what the consequences of *not* learning more about the Order of Prometheus might be. Nor do they know how useful the information they gain will be or what it is worth to whom. They can, however, make inferences. The Travellers know SolSec is interested in Golems. Can the Travellers sell information to the authorities or gain a reward for acting on their initiative? Can they find a buyer for the data they already have? Smart Travellers do not need to be told how they will profit from action; they will do what they think is best and find a way to benefit or at least avert disaster.

The ValGorch estate is located some 50 kilometres from Nueva Cadaques, the private retreat of a family with significant business holdings throughout the cluster. The estate has its own rail link to the city and a small manufacturing plant on-site. It would be possible to approach the estate overland, although not easy. Going there by train requires either stowing away or obtaining an invite. This is not all that difficult to do, although the Travellers will surely realise that Gideon cannot openly enter the estate. If the Travellers propose to make a visit by deception Gideon understands perfectly that it cannot take part. If they intend a covert infiltration or have some means of smuggling Gideon in it is excited by the prospect and wants to take part. If the Travellers will not permit this Gideon is hurt and disappointed but wishes them well and offers to pray for them.

## OBTAINING AN INVITATION

The easiest way to get into the ValGorch estate is by deception. Some Travellers may be of sufficiently high status that they can simply call and ask to visit, or they could pretend to be representatives of someone of this nature. The ValGorch family routinely entertain clients and business partners at their estate and are always willing to welcome people of suitable status. This might not be business partners necessarily; the family can make use of connections with war heroes, entertainers and most other high-status personages. If the Travellers choose to go down this road they can blag an invite by dropping a few names and making a Very Difficult (12+) Persuade or Diplomat check. This can be waived if the Travellers are famous or well-connected enough, especially if they are associated with the Solomani Party.

Those without the right status will have to present credentials and persuade the estate's manager they are worth talking to. The Travellers will have to come up with a suitable story and can help themselves by doing some research. The estate produces precision components used in various high-end applications, so posing as a potential buyer or supplier of materials could work. Combined with a good and plausible story this approach requires a Difficult (10+) check, which can be reduced to Average (8+) or lower if the Travellers go to the trouble of creating a well-aimed pitch.

Those granted an invite will be conveyed on a luxury train up to the estate and ushered into splendid accommodation before their meeting with the head of the ValGorch family. It may be possible to stow away additional personnel aboard the train, although the likelihood of discovery is higher than aboard a goods train.

## SNEAKING IN

In order to sneak onto the estate it is first necessary to get close. The Travellers could accomplish this in all manner of ways, perhaps approaching in vehicles then sneaking in on foot or flying on grav belts. It is also possible to stow away on a train headed to the estate. These are rather smaller than the intercity service but use the same very wide gauge. Getting aboard a goods train is relatively easy. The ValGorch family have a dedicated yard for their own use but it is no better secured than any other commercial property. There are cameras and motion detectors at key points but the family have no reason to suppose anyone is trying to sneak into their rail yard and their staff are complacent. Sneaking through the yard requires an Average (8+) Stealth check, followed by a fair amount of patience waiting for the train to head back to the estate. Getting aboard a passenger train is a little harder, requiring a Difficult (10+) Stealth check.

As usual, the Referee can lower the difficulty of necessary checks if the Travellers have a good plan. One option is to cause a distraction of some kind or bribe one of the staff. They are not highly alert; they are administrators and technicians who keep the trains moving. Nor are they treated well by their employer. As a result, security at the city end of the rail line is extremely lax. The situation is different at the estate. If stowaways choose to ride the train all the way into the estate they will have to slip past guards at the station or freight yard.

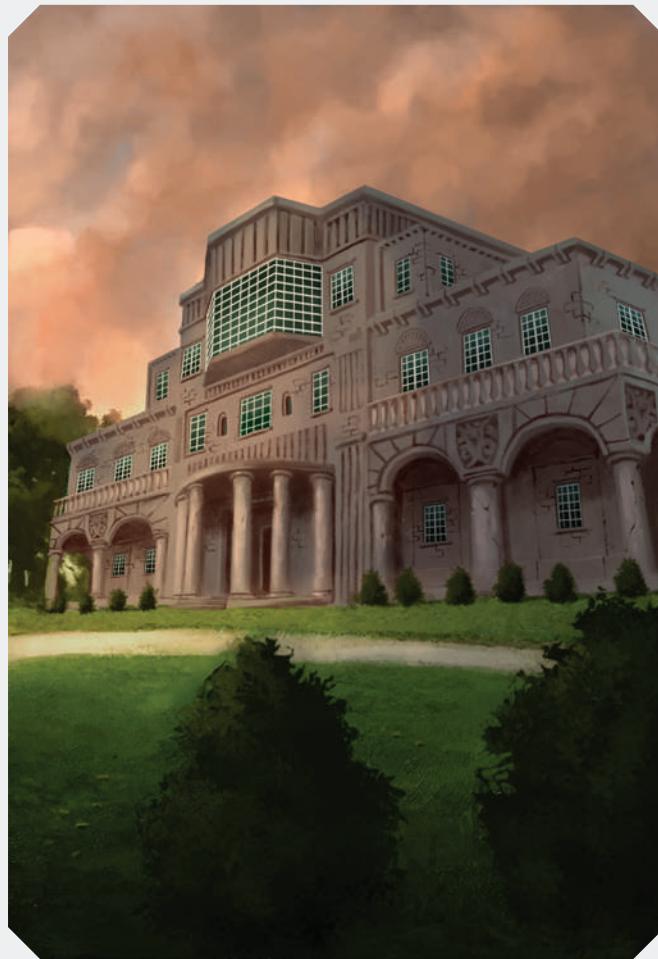
The alternative is to jump off the train as it slows down to approach the estate. This is not dangerous; the cuttings used by the rail line are as prone to flooding as the main line and trains generally slow right down to push through. This represents a way into the estate for adventurous Travellers. Between and under the rails of the entire line is a channel used to draw away water and debris. It is usually half-full of dirty water, allowing Travellers to swim past the guards and right into the freight yard. They may not smell so good when they arrive but are unlikely to be observed.

## THE VALGORCH ESTATE

The ValGorch estate is surrounded by a wide area of wilderness, which receives plenty of rainfall and tends to be overgrown. This provides cover for those hoping to sneak up to the boundaries but it can be hard going. A zone some 200-300 metres wide around the entire perimeter of the estate is kept cut short by the 'gardening' staff. Up until recently these were low-paid humans but increasing use has been made of Golems. The family find this arrangement satisfactory as Golems do not whine about working conditions or dispute unfair contract clauses.

At the outer edge of the cleared zone is a razor-wire fence. This is not in good repair and has vegetation impinging its outer side at many points. The fence is wired with sensors which will, in theory, detect if it is cut. However, these can be bypassed by technically adept Travellers. Alternatively, there are numerous breaches which have been designated null areas by the monitoring staff. There are places where it is possible to simply walk through a gap.

The clear zone is bounded at the inner side by a similar but less decrepit fence. The area in between is supposed to be monitored by camera sweeps and the occasional patrol but these have fallen victim to a problem that can be summed up as 'mistreat and underpay your security force, get lousy security'. Travellers who know what to look for will be aware of the sort of security arrangements likely to be in place but may not realise how inept and demoralised the



force is. Sneaking across the clear zone risks detection but good use of dead ground and likely sweep patterns makes penetration as far as the inner fence relatively easy. It will be necessary to nullify nearby sensors before cutting the inner fence, requiring an Average (8+) Electronics check. Failing this does not necessarily mean the Travellers will be detected. An intrusion might be recorded by the cameras without triggering an alarm.

There are patrols in the cleared zone. At one time these were human guards but now the estate uses Golems created for combat (see page 113). Whilst smarter than the worker type they are still extremely dumb and plod around their patrol route with metronomic regularity. If they spot anyone, the Golems are trained to press a button on their communicator units which will cause a pre-set response. The communicator will begin to loudly emit a command to 'surrender and identify' and trigger alarms in the estate. The Golems are only supposed to open fire on command but there is always a possibility they will do so anyway. These patrols produce one or more false alerts every single day, so response is not always quick or effective.

## VALGORCH ESTATE

The estate is well-kept for the most part, although the area north of the rail line is much neater than the rest of the estate. This area is still maintained by human gardeners, whereas the southern part of the estate is in the care of haphazardly controlled Golems.

In general, human workers and guards are smartly turned out and subject to strict penalties if they fall short of mandated standards of dress or conduct. They are underpaid, undervalued and demoralised, and remain in their jobs either for lack of better options or due to restrictive contracts. Ordinary personnel have little loyalty to the family that employs them. They fear the managers and senior guards but the estate is something of a house of cards. If the ValGorch family lose control of their workforce to a small extent, they will lose control completely.

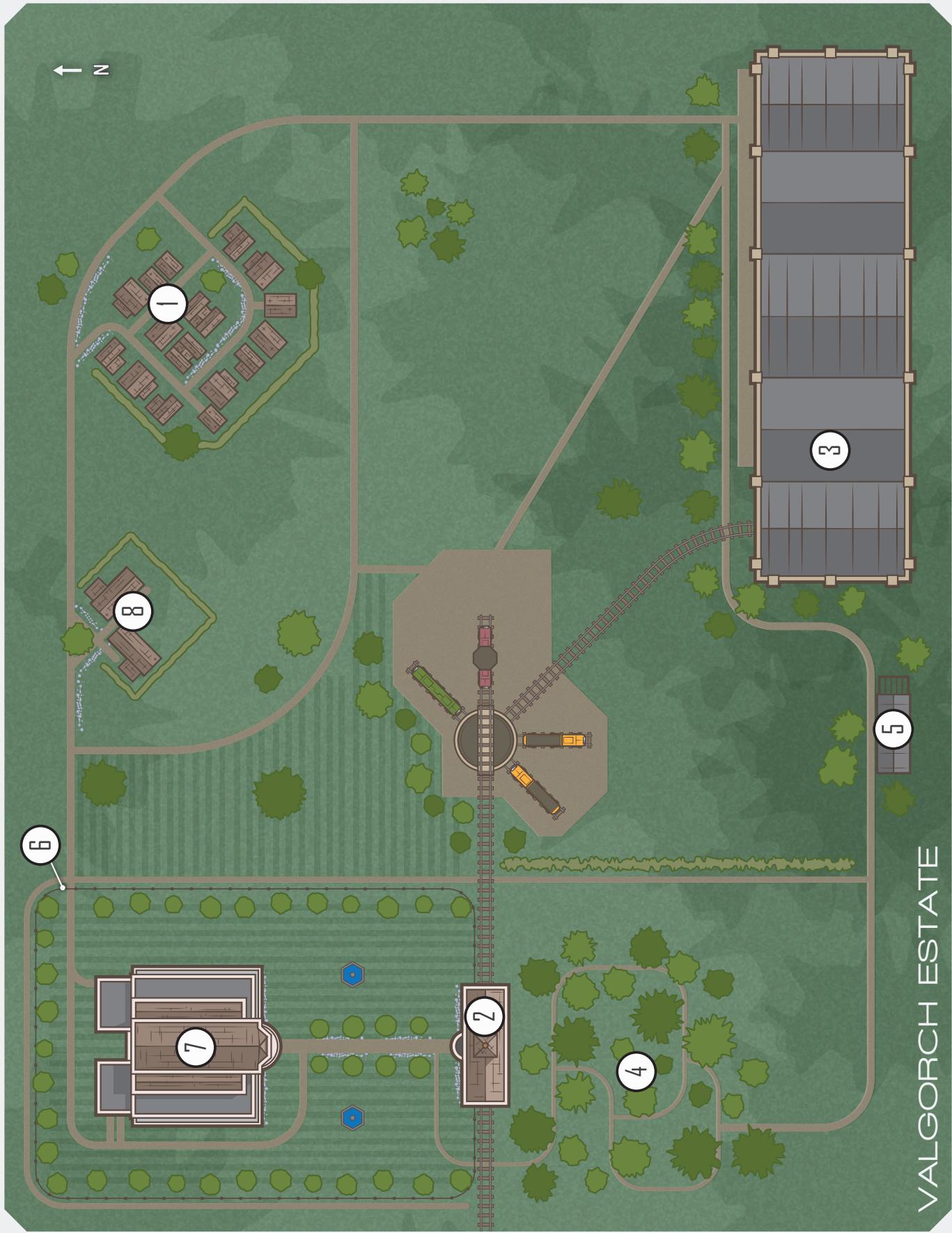
The workforce, for the most part, despise the Golems and are frightened of them. The Golem guards are used as a threat upon occasion and have been used against the workforce from time-to-time. The workers do not view the Golems with much sympathy, largely for this reason, and for the most part would not act kindly towards an injured Golem. They might even try to cause an 'accident' to occur to one they caught unsupervised. Those charged with managing the Golems are particularly contemptuous of them and sometimes engage in acts of pointless cruelty. In some cases this is a consequence of the social structure at the estate – workers are bullied by managers and take it out on helpless worker Golems. Many genuinely see the Golems as contemptible and worthy only of random blows and this attitude will not be changed by a few wise words.

### BUILDINGS (1): WORKER HOUSING AND UTILITIES

A cluster of variously-sized buildings house the estate's human workers and garages for vehicles used on the estate. They are constructed of locally quarried stone, at no little expense, and kept looking immaculate. Inside, they are rather modest but the estate's owners are keen to make a good impression on visitors.

### STRUCTURE (2): RAILWAY PLATFORM AND PASSENGER TERMINUS

The estate has its own small but rather grand stone-built rail terminus. Beyond the platform is a turntable and rail yard containing a few cargo wagons and passenger carriages. One of the latter has a landing area for grav vehicles and is especially well outfitted. It is not only the personal transport of the family head but also a form of bolt-hole for emergencies. The carriage has its own power system and, although it cannot pull a train, is capable of high speeds on the main line in an emergency.



VALGORCH ESTATE

## COMPLEX (3): MANUFACTURING PLANT

A gigantic building several hundred metres long houses a small precision manufacturing plant, materials stowage and a rail loading/unloading facility. The plant produces components, common designs used in a variety of applications. Most of the machinery is automated, with human oversight limited to specifying designs and occasional troubleshooting.

## AREA (4): WOODLAND PARK

The area south of the railway tracks is less well kept than the north, except for this area. Here, Golems are used with closer oversight than elsewhere to ensure they keep this small park in good condition. Workers and Golems are cleared out when dignitaries or family members want to use the park but otherwise are in near-constant attendance during daylight hours.

## STRUCTURE (5): GOLEM BARRACKS AND PENS

Most of the Golems in use at the estate are accommodated in very basic barracks-like accommodation. Combat Golems are housed at the western end of the structure and are smart enough to eat from a bowl with a spoon. They might be mistaken for very rough-and-ready human troops from a distance. Workers are in the centre of the structure. On average they are of lower intellect but also capable of sitting down to eat a meal. In general, those not up to this standard are not accepted for service at the estate. Most are shipped elsewhere for other purposes but a steady stream of rejects are disposed of and their bodies cremated in this building's furnace.

At the east end are pens for a number of attack dog Golems of a sort the Travellers have already encountered. They are grown from the same recipe as those at Landell Station but are a little more refined. This means they can be handled similarly to dogs, at least most of the time. The 'dogs' do sometimes attack their handlers, however, and are generally given a wide berth by human workers.

## FENCE (6): INNER PERIMETER

The inner perimeter fence is in much better condition than the outer one. Human guards occasionally patrol the fence, either on foot or in vehicles. They are not vigilant as no threats have ever been detected.

## STRUCTURE (7): VALGORCH HOUSE

The ValGorch house is constructed of local stone in a deliberately archaic style. Approach to the house is usually made by way of a paved path running from the rail station through neatly kept gardens.

## STRUCTURES (8): GUARD ACCOMMODATION

The estate's human guards are accommodated in two stone buildings which also house their armoury and garages for estate vehicles. All weapons for issue to Golems are – officially at least – stored here. However, it is not uncommon to leave a few at the combat Golem accommodation. They are stored in a locked cupboard which can easily be broken open. The assumption is that the Golems are too stupid to do something like look for weapons without being told. This may or may not be correct.

## LIFE ON THE VALGORCH ESTATE

Life on the ValGorch estate is pleasant and luxurious... if you happen to be Veronique ValGorch. For anyone else it is a daily grind of paranoia, punishments and disrespect. Wages are above-average for workers and guards but most would quit if they were not sure Veronique would find a way to punish their 'disloyalty'. Veronique herself is unmarried and amuses herself with a succession of minor celebrities and favourites. She is sailing gracefully into early middle age with no intent of finding a long-term partner or having children. That does raise the question of who the family business will be passed to but Veronique herself does not care – '*après moi, le déluge*' sums up her philosophy. She does have estranged cousins but they are less likely to inherit the estate than a goldfish from Merope if Veronique has anything to do with it.

The staff live in constant fear of Veronique, who enjoys lording it over them. She shows off to visitors whose approval she wants by bullying her staff and expects others to behave in a similar manner. She is intolerant, to put it mildly, of any criticism. Similarly, Veronique expects others to agree with her openly racist views on aliens. She genuinely believes that aliens are planning to take over the stock markets and move into all the prime real estate in the Confederation. For some reason she has a particular hatred of Vegans, whose territory is just to coreward of the Confederation. This is due to a rather convoluted narrative in which the Vegans were once loyal subjects of the Solomani but for some inexplicable reason wanted independence. Naturally, this means they are planning to destroy the Confederation – a problem because it might impact Veronique ValGorch's lifestyle.

The estate as a whole is a place where everything is presented as being 'just so' and the staff scramble in the background to conceal deficiencies. This is one way the Travellers could win over some of the staff. They are frightened of Veronique but might defy her in some

safe manner if they get the chance. A Traveller who observes a mistake or something less-than-perfect and does not tell Veronique will win the gratitude of those they thus shield from retribution.

If the Travellers obtain an invitation they may have to play along with Veronique's attitudes if they want her to let slip information. She will pretend to tolerate different opinions only if she really wants something from the Travellers. If they can convince Veronique they are representatives of a hugely wealthy organisation her greed will allow her to stomach their ridiculously liberal attitudes for a while, however she will secretly despise them and be guarded about what she reveals. Only by convincing her they are kindred spirits will the Travellers be able to get her to open up. If they are successful, Veronique will start bragging about the Order of Prometheus to impress them.

## VALGORCH HOUSE

The ValGorch house is not enormous but impressively built from real stone. The front of the house faces south and is dominated by a pillared porch above which is a huge bay window. The house is, broadly speaking, divided into 'public' and 'private' sides. The short roadway from the rail station runs up to the front of the house, with a spur curving around to the rear past garage doors for ground vehicles. The upper floor is mostly two storeys high but the two rearward projections (beyond the main rear wall) are only one storey high. Their flat roofs have provision for private and guest grav vehicles to land. There is usually a large grav limousine atop area 5, for when Veronique prefers to fly direct rather than taking the train. Her private train has a landing point for a grav limousine – just because she might want the best of both worlds when making a tiresome visit to another city.

### PORCH (1)

The porch is constructed in neoclassical style, with large stone pillars topped by decorative stonework. Behind this is a grand entrance whose doors look like carved wood but are actually security-grade ballistic polymers. They can be automated or operated from the house's control room but are usually set to provide just enough resistance that the servants have to struggle to open them manually.

### ENTRY CHAMBER (2/3)

The entry chamber is dominated by a grand staircase running up to the rear of the upper floor. The rear half of the chamber (3) has a ceiling with grand chandeliers,

### ROLEPLAYING AT THE VALGORCH ESTATE

Playing along with an openly and unpleasantly racist character might be uncomfortable for some Travellers. The situation can be abstracted with Persuade and Diplomat checks, if necessary, but it is possible to use this as a learning experience or perhaps even an exercise in parody. There is nothing remotely amusing about real-world bigotry but one effective weapon against it is to ridicule those who think that way.

Without turning Veronique into a cartoon character, the Referee can portray her in a manner that shows how ridiculous her attitudes are. Thoughtful Travellers might draw a comparison with the politely biased nature of most Confederation citizens' thinking – or the Imperial bias towards a hereditary nobility versus commoners – and draw some interesting conclusions. It is advisable to avoid real-world slurs but inspiration can be drawn from the behaviour of some segments of modern society. Filing the serial numbers, as it were, off some of the dafter conspiracy theories and Big Lies flying about the Internet today will provide a wealth of inspiration for Veronique ValGorch's beliefs and help the Referee portray her as she is – nasty, bigoted and wealthy enough to push those values on other people.

whilst the forward area (2) is open right up to a huge skylight. Like all windows here this is made from bullet-resistant materials. A balcony runs around the sides of the upper area, giving access to the bay window which has seating and actual paper books. Veronique likes to sit here and watch the lower orders go about her business in the grounds to the south.

### KITCHEN COMPLEX (4)

As befits such a grand home, the house has an extensive kitchen complex with storage and utility chambers on the west side and access to the dining room to the east. The complex is, as is proper, outside the main rear wall of the house and has its own staff entry point and delivery hatch.



Ground Floor

## VALGORCH HOUSE

Upper Floor



## DINING ROOM (5)

The dining room is impressively huge, with a central table of tremendous proportions. The room is accessed by guests from the public lounge, whilst servants use an unassuming doorway to the kitchens. Art objects and paintings adorn the walls. These are expensive but in most cases unusual to the point of being downright weird. Naturally Veronique is contemptuous of those who do not 'get' her art collection.

## PUBLIC LOUNGE (6)

The public lounge is huge, with circles of sofas and coffee tables and a large entertainment screen. It is very much a room intended to impress rather than a place to relax in comfort. More art objects and various trophies are on display. The latter have impressive sounding names like 'Excellence in Investment' but do not seem to be connected with any particular awarding body.

## BATHROOM SUITE (7)

The downstairs bathroom suite is, of course, intended to impress visitors with its tasteful opulence. It is far too large and festooned with exotic plants, gold-framed mirrors and all manner of entirely unnecessary excess.

## ESTATE CONTROL ROOM (8)

The estate control room is set up for the use of multiple personnel but usually staffed by just one or two guard/technicians. Patrol check-ins and sensor data dumps are routinely recorded here and ignored. It is also possible to take manual control of security lights and cameras, gates and the like – or to discreetly turn them off. Data is stored on-site, in a safe-like vault at the back of the room. Destroying the servers would eliminate any evidence of the Travellers' doings at the estate, whilst taking backups might be useful for later analysis. Amid endless reports about supply levels and late wine deliveries there are cryptic communications from other members of the Order of Prometheus. An organisation like SolSec might be able to identify some of the people involved from their comm encryption.

## PRIVATE LOUNGE (9)

The private lounge is small and intimate, and reserved for entertaining guests considered to be especially worthy, or Veronique herself. A number of status symbols, such as first edition books printed centuries ago, are artlessly strewn about. Guests are 'not supposed to see' such expensive items treated in a cavalier manner. Gambits like this are ways for Veronique to both demonstrate her wealth and create a feeling of intimacy.

## DRINKS ANNEX (10)

Accessed from the private lounge by guests and the utility areas by servants, the drinks annex is large enough to be a room in its own right. Wines and spirits are displayed or kept ready for use, with armchairs for those who wish to sample several without going to all the trouble of walking into the other room. Under most circumstances a servant will be stationed in this chamber so long as there is anyone awake in the house.

## PRIVATE STAIRCASE (11)

A spiral staircase links the library to the owner's suite on the upper floor.

## LIBRARY (12)

The ValGorch family have amassed a large collection of paper books and related items, including vintage board games, antique entertainment vids in their original packaging and a very faded tapestry said to have been saved from the Fall of Terra. It is asserted to be thousands of years old, made by hand in the pre-spaceflight nation of France.

## UTILITY SPACE (13)

A long and wide chamber links the private part of the ground floor to the garages and contains most of the domestic appliances used in the house. These are in decorative cabinets, with items that Veronique has 'just put down for a moment' scattered along the work surfaces. These are of course expensive, rare and tastefully 'not on display, just there'.

## GARAGES (14)

Veronique's collection of vehicles is stabled here, along with maintenance facilities. Ground vehicles access through the garage doors, whilst grav transports are lifted up on an elevating platform revealed by retracting part of the roof. There is also a personnel elevator for occasions when Veronique wants to leave her grav limousine parked casually on the roof.

## UPPER FLOOR ENTRY (15)

The upper floor of the house extends as far as the rear wall, with the kitchens and rooftop landing areas only one storey high. The main staircase arrives at a landing with access onto the flat kitchen roof and a walkway running around to the bay window seating area. There is no access to Veronique's private chambers from this walkway but on the other side a corridor runs the length of the east wing.

## GUEST BEDROOMS (16)

The east wing has four large guest bedrooms and associated en-suite facilities.

## UPPER LOUNGE (17)

The upper floor contains a lounge for the use of guests, with access to the rooftop landing area.

## GUEST SUITE (18)

The main guest suite is reserved for the most favoured of visitors and is decorated in a style said to be favoured by the highest officials of the Solomani Party on Home. Veronique is playfully vague about how she knows the most senior Party members' taste in bedroom furnishings.

## PRIVATE ACCESS/LOUNGE (19)

The staircase from downstairs exits into this chamber, an open-plan lounge where highly favoured guests can wait for Veronique to grace them with her presence. This is actually her favourite room and is meant to please Veronique rather than impress guests. The décor is still rich but there are no clever little 'mistakes' that 'accidentally' showcase the ValGorch fortune.

## INNER CHAMBER (20)

Veronique's private chamber can only be reached by going through her office and outer chamber. It also acts as a panic room if necessary.

## OUTER CHAMBER (21)

The outer chamber of Veronique's suite is characterised by immense wardrobes and shoe-racks, with both holographic and traditional mirrors.

## VERONIQUE'S OFFICE (22)

Veronique's private office is expensively functional rather than ostentatious. From here she runs her businesses and confers with advisors by video link. The office can be directly accessed from the rooftop landing area, which also permits a visit to the guest quarters or main landing by walking along the kitchen rooftop.

## INVESTIGATING VERONIQUE

The Travellers are likely to get onto the ValGorch estate by invitation or stealth – or perhaps a bit of both. They might play the part of visitors then try to break into her office or sneak around the estate and try to get into the house by illicit means. Excessively

direct methods, such as shooting everyone and looting the office, might work but will bring down a heavy response. The ValGorch family have been pillars of Mu'izzi's community for decades; murdering one or even just violating their home would outrage public opinion no matter how poorly regarded the family is by most people.

If the Travellers can find what they are looking for without anyone realising – at least until they are offworld – they can avoid complications. More likely, their activities will be discovered. This will make Veronique livid and cause her to push for all manner of retaliation. Response by planetside law enforcement will take time and will depend on the Travellers' actions. A reported break-in will be investigated but the authorities are likely to assume the estate's guards can handle most attempts. There will also be a marked tendency to dawdle in order to give Veronique's people a chance to conceal anything they should not have – like significant amounts of energy weaponry. Response to a shots-fired situation will be much quicker but the Travellers will still have time to make good their escape. How to do that with few other settlements nearby is an open question.

What the Travellers may not consider is that the ValGorch family are sufficiently well connected that starport authorities will send assistance in the event of a serious incident. Within minutes a group of starport security officers can be piling into a shuttle and whilst it will still take some time to get down from orbit they are coming from an unexpected direction. The port's facilities can also be used to provide satellite coverage.

The legal situation surrounding this involvement is complex. Officially, the port authorities have no jurisdiction outside the downport and information passed to groundside law enforcers may violate rules of operation. It will still be passed on but not in a manner that makes it admissible in court. Thus the Travellers may find themselves in a situation where the local police know what they have done but must find a way to prove it without using the intelligence they received from topside.

## SKULKING ABOUT

The estate's personnel have had long practice at ensuring guests see only what Veronique wants them to see. For new acquaintances this means evidence of how rich and powerful the ValGorch family are and not much more. Stealthy Travellers may be able to get into places they are not supposed to be, enabling them to find out a lot more about what is going on. As noted,

the estate's security arrangements are rather lax. It would be relatively easy to evade the guards or find a moment when cameras are not being monitored.

The estate is quite large and there are only a dozen guards in total. In addition to being spread thin they work long hours in an environment where little ever happens, so other than those near to where Golems are penned or at work, the guards will not be very attentive. At any given time four of the guards are on duty, four are on call and four are off duty. On-call can mean being sent out to investigate something every few minutes or just to be seen because Veronique wants to impress someone. Usually, however, it means sitting around with weapons handy but nothing to do.

Typically one active guard remains in the control room at all times, with a partner available for checks or a walkaround. In practice both guards may be half-asleep in the control room most of the time. The other two guards may be on roving patrol or standing around pointlessly near the rail station so that guests can notice them. Since the arrival of the Golems, some of the guards have taken to keeping a special eye on them. Others make a point of being as far away from the Golems as they can manage without getting into trouble. Thus there is no guarantee the most sensitive parts of the estate will be actively patrolled.

The Travellers are more likely to run into servants than guards, since they are constantly busy. About 20 people work on the estate but only half are permitted in the house. The others are groundskeepers, estate technicians and, recently, Golem-wranglers. It will be a lot easier to persuade a servant rather than a guard that a Traveller was not seen, especially if the Travellers can sell the line that Veronique approves of an action. A servant who suspects a Traveller is on the way to a not-excessively-discreet tryst with Veronique will pretend they have seen nothing just in case they get into trouble. Indeed, servants will tend to ignore anything they do not absolutely have to take notice of.

It should not be difficult to get access to the Golem pens area or rail yard. The manufacturing plant is mainly robotic and requires a keycard to access but is entirely legitimate. Accessing the house requires either a keycard or entry to the house sensor database or bypassing these systems by some means. The household computer system has a standard security software package but it is not fully utilised. Essentially this means that any attempts to hack or spoof the system will be unusually easy. Travellers can gain access by interfacing with unsecured peripherals. For example, whilst the household data transfer

net is reasonably well protected the robotic laundry equipment is virtually unsecured. Travellers who get 'inside' the household net in this manner gain DM+2 on all attempts to spoof or manipulate the system.

## SOCIALISING AND INTRIGUE

The weak point of the estate's security, and perhaps the Order itself, is Veronique ValGorch. She is greedy and egotistical, and whilst other members of the Order have a grand (if rather unpleasant) goal in mind she simply wants more money so she can enjoy shoving her lavish lifestyle in everyone's faces. She is thus easy to offend but also easy to manipulate. The Order keeps her at arm's length and takes her money – and recently has begun using her estate as a testbed for the Golems – but limits the information she receives.

Travellers who seem worth the effort will be cultivated as friends. Those who seem useful will be tolerated and allowed to partake of Veronique's lifestyle providing they show appropriate deference. Anyone who does not go along with her contempt for the 'lower orders' will earn her enmity. She is quite capable of having someone thrown off the estate in the middle of the night. After all, if they are worth anything they can easily arrange transport back to whatever hole they crawled out of.

Those who pass Veronique's attitude test will have little difficulty getting information out of her. Indeed, it will be hard to stop her boasting. She is the most trusted member of the Order of Prometheus, according to her at least. As such, she is testing the viability of the 'subs' as workers and guards. She is the best qualified to appraise their capabilities and will decide when they are ready to go to market. Veronique will straight-out state that Golems are better than robots because they self-repair and need no maintenance – until they break out in tumours and have to be shot. She presents this as a selling point, which says a lot about her attitude in general.

Given the chance, Veronique will show off her Golems to the Travellers. She is keen to demonstrate their obedience and waves aside their stupidity. Any problems are put down to the incompetence of the handlers, who lack experience and a willingness to learn according to Veronique. She will even order a demonstration of a couple of the combat Golems on an improvised firing range, culminating in them using a live (but tumour-infested) worker Golem as a target.

If the Travellers can stomach this performance, they will win ever more approval from Veronique. She will even offer them a letter of introduction to one of her contacts. This is Djean Sarratt, a wealthy businessman with holdings on Merope. Veronique is

not supposed to do this sort of thing, which makes the letter a possible problem for everyone concerned. However, it is a solid lead.

## INFORMATION GAINED

If the Travellers can obtain access to Veronique's computer system they can download or transfer all the detailed information she has. Unfortunately this is not all that much since the rest of the Order do not trust her. In addition to footage of the Golem tests and use of Golems as guards – which is probably several kinds of illegal – the Travellers will be able to obtain the name of Veronique's main contact, Djean Sarratt. There are also details of deliveries which are presumably batches of Golems and supporting equipment, along with scientific information which Veronique has clearly never even looked at.

It appears that the Golems have been brought on-planet using a shuttle which landed at the estate. Since this is normally forbidden, someone at the starport is undoubtedly complicit. Investigating the matter would be time-consuming and may be beyond the capabilities of the Travellers. SolSec would be very interested in this information, however.

The Travellers will gain some information on the Order of Prometheus. There is little written in concrete terms but there are several documents with official-looking headers and the motto 'fire from heaven'. Most are mundane communiques which vaguely allude to the work going well and field tests looking positive but here and there are more interesting snippets. One is a diatribe on how the citizens of the Confederation have come to love aliens more than fellow humans and claims that all aliens are Imperial infiltrators. According to this rather rabid document, the Imperium plans to continue its conquest of the Confederation by using alien agents. This, apparently, is because the Solomani would not suspect aliens of being capable of subtlety, allowing them to operate in plain sight. Where a human Imperial agent would be caught by diligent Solomani intelligence services, aliens can do as they please under the radar. There are pages and pages of this unpleasant nonsense, culminating in exhortations to watch all aliens and track them back to their Imperial Intelligence handlers.

Sifting the documents might make Travellers a bit queasy but they can get a reasonable impression of the Order of Prometheus from them. They are clearly a secret society of some sort, focused on racist and anti-Imperial ideals. Their political stance will seem somewhat at odds with Veronique ValGorch's selfish goals. They also appear to have access to advanced scientific equipment and people trained to

use it. References to 'fire from heaven' and the Titan Prometheus suggest they are trying to obtain secrets of some kind. The Travellers should be able to draw a connection to their experiments with Golems.

There is one other piece of information that might capture the Travellers' attention. A memo from the Order asks members to be on the lookout for a starship named *Yurem's House of Clarifications*. Apparently this ship has been identified as the one that 'appropriated' samples its crew were contracted to pick up from the facility on Merope. Members are requested to 'take steps to impede' this vessel and her crew and to investigate its more recent activities.

## TAKING ACTION

Whether by intrigue or skulduggery, or a bit of both, the Travellers can find out more about the Golems and their uses at the ValGorch estate. What they do with this information is up to them. Informing the planetary authorities will not get them far. A report will be filed and conveniently forgotten about, courtesy of the many officials who owe their positions to ValGorch money. Indeed, Travellers who try to do the right thing might find themselves harassed by the authorities. Making trouble for the world's premier citizens is frowned upon.

The Travellers would thus be wise to keep quiet about what they have learned and get clear of the estate before taking any action at all. Anything blatantly illegal, such as shooting Veronique and burning down her house, will be investigated as a top priority matter by the world authorities. Lesser infractions might go unreported since Veronique prefers to deal with enemies directly rather than draw official attention to her business. Indeed, this is the only kind of attention she dislikes.

If the Travellers make a report to their local SolSec office they will be politely thanked and nothing will immediately happen. However, the information will be included in regional briefings and eventually attract the attention of an official. An investigation into the Order will begin, although it will be low priority and have few resources. There are plenty of such secret societies and most turn out to be harmless. SolSec is generally patient; its enemies reveal themselves sooner or later with no more than routine diligence.

## RETURNING TO THE STARPORT

The Travellers will need to get back to their ship if they are to investigate further. This requires a return to the starport, which would normally be a simple undertaking. Carlos' daughter will drive the Travellers to the station and, perhaps to their surprise, there are no awkward

questions about Gideon. A few people look curiously or pityingly at its misshapen features but no-one has any reason to suppose Gideon is anything but a human of unusual appearance. Getting him through the starport without papers might be more challenging but inventive Travellers should be able to come up with something. This presupposes the Travellers take Gideon with them.

Obtaining identification papers for Gideon would be something of a challenge for most Travellers. It may be that someone owes them a favour or is willing to create documents in return for a service. The local SolSec office is unlikely to comply but if the Travellers made a good impression with Major Zimmermayer they might be able to call on a favour. He is quite willing to arrange for suitable documentation in return for what the Travellers have learned – he is closer to the Golems matter than the regional administrators and considers this a useful investment. If the Travellers are unable to wait for communication both ways they will have to think of something else. However, events may overtake them.

The train ride back to the port begins normally enough but whilst Veronique ValGorch is not a political player she is watched by those who are. Among her servants and guards are people loyal to other members of the Order. When they realise Veronique has blabbed secrets to her new friends, or allowed someone to poke around her estate, she becomes a liability. All evidence at the estate will be obliterated in a tragic cargo-shuttle crash. As for the Travellers, there will be an incident just for them...

## THE TRAIN CRASH

The Travellers may get the chance to realise something is wrong when the planetary news net starts broadcasting coverage of the incident at the ValGorch estate. Reports are initially fragmentary and confused, referring to an explosion or possible sabotage before identifying the cause as a shuttle crash. At this time the train is speeding across the countryside, well short of the desert, passing through belts of intermittent heavy

### THE VALGORCH ESTATE INCIDENT

The Order of Prometheus has had a plan in place to get rid of evidence ever since they chose Veronique to be their expendable test host. This makes use of Veronique's existing arrangements to bring in whatever illicit goods she desires. From time-to-time a shuttle headed to one of the city spaceports will deviate from its course then reappear without anyone commenting on the time it was off the sensor grid near the ValGorch estate. If the Order ever needs it, this shuttle can be set to suffer a catastrophic drive failure which sends it at speed into the estate. Just bad luck and a faulty component but that is what happens when pilots are paid to tamper with their controls...

As soon as the Order's operatives give the word that Veronique has breached security, the shuttle will be prepared as if for a routine trip planetside. It goes off comms and deviates from its course, and nobody takes any notice. The port's sensor grid is programmed to turn a blind eye to this sort of activity, at Veronique's own behest! Thus the alarm is raised tragically too late and there is no time to take remedial action. The shuttle plunges down, as if guided by some malicious gremlin, straight into the heart of the estate. The resulting explosion causes devastating damage with an epicentre just south of the factory building.

The subsequent investigation will eventually find that Veronique ValGorch was receiving an illegal shipment of under-the-counter components for her factory and that the shuttle malfunction was due to the error of the pilot, who tampered with his systems to conceal the delivery. The devastation makes it impossible to identify all the remains found, even if anything survived the fireball at the point of impact. The case is closed quickly to avoid embarrassing the surviving members of the ValGorch family and whilst everyone knows this is a whitewash they assume it is a corrupt business matter rather than a cover-up of something more sinister.

If the Travellers feel the need to investigate, they will come up against opposition from the authorities, who just want the case closed as fast as possible and the scandal shoved under the nearest rug. It may be possible to obtain some of the reports but there is nothing to indicate the matter was anything other than a botched piece of smuggling involving an embarrassingly well connected individual... unless of course you know what was really going on at the estate.

rain. If the Travellers are worried something might happen they have a chance to make preparations but there is a limit to what they can do in a passenger car.

Ahead, the track enters a tunnel which is kept clear of water by pumping out the channel below and between the rails. This feeds into a reservoir which in turn is piped to farms on the edge of the semi-desert. However, as the Travellers' train approaches at high speed the pumps are reversed by their central monitoring station. The drainage channel rapidly fills up and overflows, causing the water level to rise in the tunnel. Automated systems apply the brakes but the train is large and heavy. It will take time to stop.

It may be that the first the Travellers know of a problem is when the train begins emergency braking. A curiously polite klaxon and discreet warning lights flash, along with a rather soothing message that passengers should seat themselves, fasten belts and await further instructions. It is possible that anyone caught by surprise may fall or collide with something. Any Traveller not deliberately securing themselves must make a Routine (6+) Athletics (dexterity) check or suffer

1D damage in a minor fall. The Travellers will probably ride this out easily enough but other passengers and staff may be caught out.

People aboard the train react in various ways. Some are indignant about spilled coffee and more inclined to storm about the sliding train looking for someone to threaten with a lawsuit than take sensible action. Others seem unconcerned. So the train is braking hard... how inconvenient. Everything will be fine in a moment just like the automated voice says...

## OBTAINING INFORMATION

Asking train staff for information provides nothing useful. Everything is fine, the train is just slowing down in accordance with an alert. Happens sometimes. Please remain seated. Astute Travellers may notice that some staff seem a little stressed but for the most part they do not appear unduly worried. The situation is slightly unusual but hard braking does happen from time-to-time.

There is an information display unit at every passenger seat. This shows the train's location and speed plus interesting information like estimated time of arrival and percentage of on-time arrivals, but can be used for interactions with the world's dataweb. Those who think

## THE TRAIN SITUATION

The train is similar to the one the Travellers arrived upon. It consists of a driving and power car at the very front, 24 heavy goods wagons in the front section and six passenger carriages at the rear in groups of three separated by a galley car. The front passenger carriage has a driving and crew compartment and a set of heavy-duty power cells allowing the passenger component to be driven separately.

Under normal circumstances, when there is deep water in a cutting the train will slow down and push in, drawing in and venting water as the Travellers have previously witnessed. However, the reversal of the pumps is causing the tunnel to fill far too fast for the system to slow the train down in time. This can only be deliberate, as is the disablement of the crew alert system and the train's external communications equipment. It is still tied into the planetary datanet, so the Travellers may be able to communicate with the outside world that way but the train itself has been quietly cut off and presented with an obstacle developing too quickly to be avoided. Unless, of course, the Travellers take drastic action.

Train staff are unaware of the true situation, although they know the train is braking unusually hard. They will respond with what would normally be sensible measures, requesting everyone to sit down and use their seat belts. Anyone ignoring instructions is likely to be followed around by increasingly agitated staff requesting, then demanding, they sit down. Interfering with the train's systems will result in staff hitting the emergency alarm, at which point they will realise something is seriously amiss. The alarm does not function. Of course, the staff might assume the Travellers are responsible and try to deal with the perceived threat as best they can. The Travellers may be able to convince the staff they are trying to help but they will be up against a mindset of 'leave everything to the professionals' – meaning themselves.

## Train Incident Related Questions

Question	Unrestricted Answer	Bypassed System Answer	Additional Information
<b>Reason for braking</b>	The train is slowing down in accordance with safety protocols in order to avoid a hazard. Credit has been added to your account for a hot beverage and biscuits.	Emergency braking engaged. Hazard on line.	Collision unavoidable using standard braking systems.
<b>Condition of tunnel ahead</b>	The tunnel ahead is prone to occasional flooding. This is controlled by automated pumping systems which provide water for our Partners in Agriculture (see link for more details). Small debris may be deposited on the track, causing noise but posing no hazard.	Tunnel ahead flooded to track level. Level rising.	Train will derail due to aquaplaning.
<b>Obstruction in tunnel ahead</b>	There are no significant obstructions on the track ahead. Our automated debris detection system automatically warns if significant obstructions which might threaten a train are present. None are presently detected.	Water in tunnel poses critical aquaplane effect. Recommend emergency braking.	Not possible to avoid catastrophic aquaplaning event.
<b>Can the train stop in time?</b>	The train's braking systems can bring it to a stop so gently passengers may not notice they are decelerating. In the event of an emergency additional braking force will be applied.	Maximum emergency braking will be insufficient to prevent collision-level entry to water.	Entry to water will cause catastrophic deceleration in addition to aquaplaning. Severe to critical derailment event unavoidable.
<b>Prediction of damage</b>	No damage is predicted. Minor debris on track is pushed aside by the train's wheelguards. This may occasionally result in noise audible in passenger area. Speak to the train staff for more information on debris and our Trackside Wildlife Protection Scheme.	Derailment at current speed will result in critical damage to the train in accordance with standard collision models.	Derailment event survivable.
<b>Reason for flooding in tunnel</b>	Occasionally some rainwater may pool deeply enough to fill the drainage channel. Our automated systems pump this excess water away for storage and use in agriculture.	Pumping system operative. Water level rising.	Pumping system has been reversed.
<b>Condition of water level control system in tunnel?</b>	Automated systems control the water level in the drainage channel, ensuring it remains below hazardous levels.	Water level rising.	Water level rising rapidly.
<b>General condition of train?</b>	The train is in excellent condition and proceeding normally.	Train endangered.	Train critically endangered. No crew response to situation identified.
<b>Reason for crew inaction</b>	The train is in excellent condition and proceeding normally.	Unknown.	Crew emergency alert system inoperative.

of the right questions can obtain a lot more information. Travellers who do think of the right questions can be given information without checks but bypassing the system requires an Average (8+) Electronics (computers) check.

Asking the right questions is a matter of figuring out what information may be relevant. This will produce the ‘unrestricted answer’ response. If the passenger information system is bypassed to remove information filters the Travellers can get more detailed or restricted information. Additional information can be obtained by searching further, typically by hacking into the command personnel only data system.

## COUNTDOWN TO THE CRASH

The Travellers have only a few minutes before the train enters the tunnel and derails, and there is no way to stop it instantly other than by derailment which will kill everyone on board. Obviously they need to slow the train down as much as possible in order to mitigate the crash. Rather than a strict time frame of minutes and seconds, the Travellers have seven ‘time segments’ in which to act. Each is perhaps two to five minutes long depending on what any given Traveller is doing, and different Travellers may undertake shorter or longer actions in any given time segment. This is a dramatic device, with any time difference assumed to average out or be taken up with small hinderances or movements to another part of the train.

Which carriage the Travellers are in at the beginning of the incident may be significant, as may which one they are in at the moment of the crash. There are six passenger carriages, with a galley car in the middle. The front carriage is the only one with a control chamber. In one time segment a Traveller can do one of the following, or take some similar action:

1. Move quickly through two carriages and into a third, for example from carriage 4 through the galley car and carriage 3, ending breathlessly in carriage 2.
2. Move quickly through one carriage into a second and take some very short action such as shouting for everyone to move rearward up the train.
3. Move to an adjacent carriage and undertake a longer action such as arguing with a steward or having a short fistfight. A cursory inspection of controls or applying a simple set of commands such as triggering the emergency brakes could also be undertaken after such a move.
4. Move one or two incapacitated or wounded people to an adjacent carriage.

5. Stay in the same carriage and undertake a lengthy task such as attempting to bypass the security on the driving controls.

At this point the Referee will need to begin tracking the severity of the crash using the Crash Severity Indicator (CSI). This begins at a value of 20 and can be reduced by actions on the part of the Travellers. If they do too little the crash will not be survivable. The Referee should keep in mind that the other passengers and the train staff are likely to get in the way, especially if the Travellers seem to be causing harm. The starting CSI 20 takes into account the normal braking which has already been implemented.

## EMERGENCY BRAKES

At present, the train is braking as hard as it is permitted under normal operating circumstances. Its emergency braking apparatus should be in operation but has been remotely disabled along with the crew alert system. The emergency brakes can be applied from the driving compartment – which is normally unstaffed since the train operates automatically – by anyone who is authorised to access it. Normally, any train staff member can use their keycard to gain access but the locks have been overridden. It will be necessary to break in somehow.

There is also a manual activation control for the emergency brakes behind the counter in the galley car. Any staff member who becomes aware of the real situation will rush to the galley car and apply the brakes. These additional braking systems will cause the train to slide on the tracks and shudder violently. Anyone not secured when they are applied must make an Average (8+) Athletics (dexterity) check or fall and suffer 1D wounds. Anyone moving around or undertaking complex tasks under emergency braking suffers DM-2 to all checks.

Once the emergency brakes are applied, the Crash Severity Indicator is reduced by -2 at the end of each time segment. In addition to reducing the effects of the crash, this may buy the Travellers additional time to act. It will also trigger the train’s distress beacon. This is entirely functional but has been suppressed by the same remote commands that prevent the crew alert and emergency brakes from operating. The cutout is bypassed by a direct application of emergency systems. This in turn causes the train’s base to try to contact it but of course comms are disabled. An investigation party will be launched in grav vehicles but will take well over an hour to arrive. By that time the Travellers will have self-rescued... or not.

## THE CONTROL CHAMBER

The control chamber is protected by deadbolted electronic locks. The doors are more to stop passengers fiddling with the controls than to prevent entry by determined individuals. The Travellers can make one attempt to smash their way in every time segment, with two Travellers combining their efforts. They will need to obtain a total of 10 points of Effect on individual STR checks, with one check per Traveller permitted every time segment. Using tools of some kind, such as improvised crowbars, should earn each Traveller DM+1 to +4 depending on how creative they are.

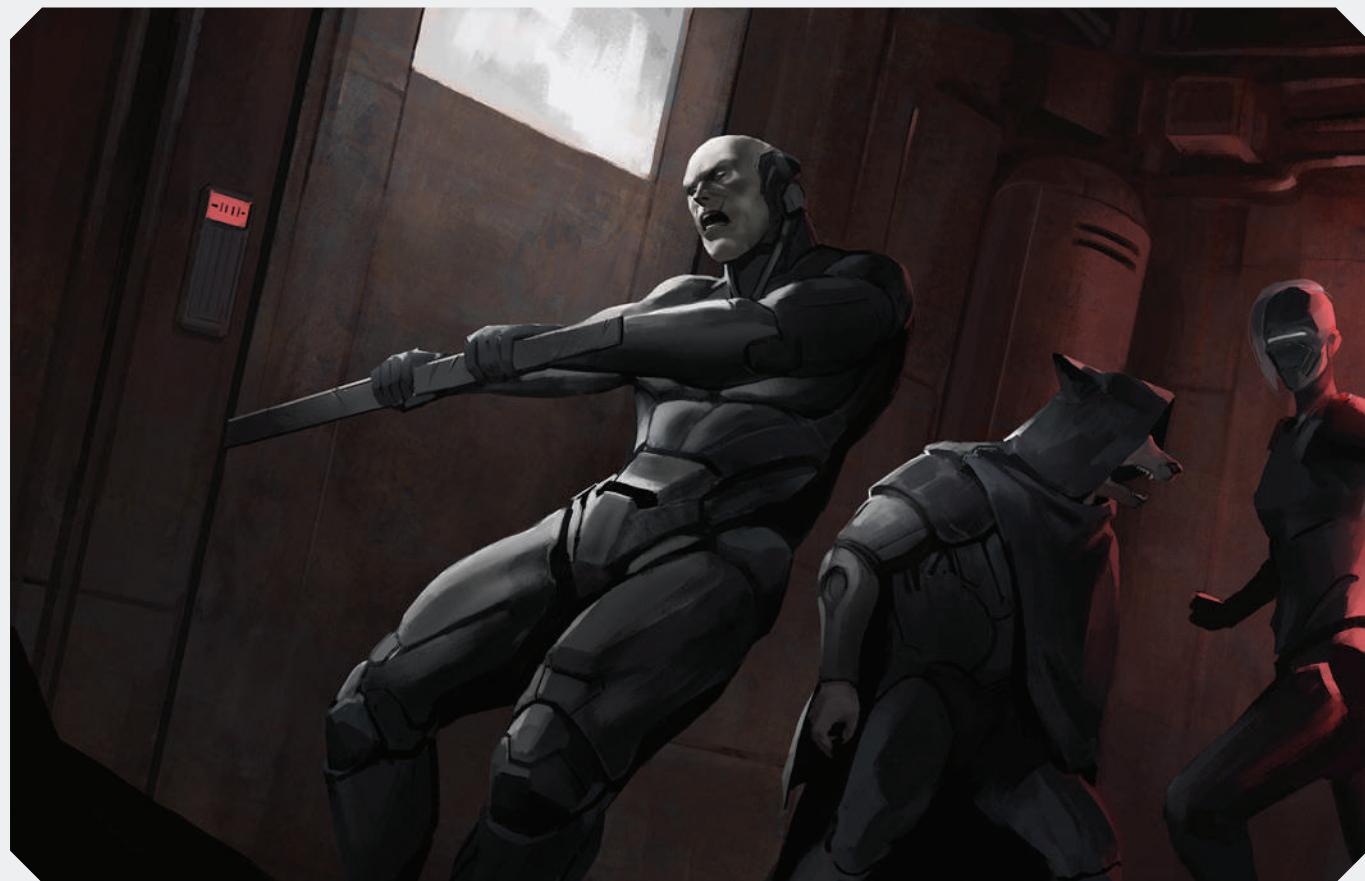
The locks could also be disengaged by hacking the system, which requires a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check or by rather brutally bypassing the electronics with a live wire. This requires only a Routine (6+) Mechanic or Electronics check but will shock anyone trying to break the doors open for 1D damage. The shock could be avoided by a well-timed instruction to stand clear but not all Travellers are so well organised.

Once inside the control chamber the Travellers can apply the emergency brakes and will be able to see that the alert system and communications array have been disabled. This happened by way of a remote command, triggering a piece of code that should not have been in

the system. The Travellers can see instantly that the systems have been deliberately commanded to shut down but finding the code requires an Average (8+) Electronics (computers) check. Reactivating the system is a matter of finding the right control but of course the Travellers may not have driven a train before and might not know which one to use. A Routine (6+) Drive or Pilot check will allow the Traveller to figure this out.

The Travellers can apply any number of controls in one time segment, providing they know what to do. Thus it is possible to send a quick sitrep off over the comms system, apply the emergency brakes and whatever other train-driving-related activities the Travellers want to engage in. The Travellers could also take radical action from this chamber if they think to do so. There is an emergency decoupling system which will separate the goods cars and the passenger section. Over-riding the security system on this control requires a Routine (6+) Electronics (computers) check or use of a train crew keycard.

Decoupling the goods section of the train has an immediate effect as the heavily laden goods cars have far more momentum than the passenger section. They draw rapidly ahead whilst the effectiveness of the passenger carriages' brakes will be greatly increased. The effect on CSI is noted overleaf.



## BRAKING EFFECTS AND CRASH MITIGATION

The Braking and CSI tables indicate the effects of braking under various conditions.

### Braking

Situation at End of Time Segment	CSI Reduction
Normal heavy braking	None
Emergency brakes applied	CSI -2
Goods cars decoupled, normal heavy braking	CSI -1
Goods cars decoupled, emergency brakes applied	CSI -4

### CSI

CSI	Effect
20	None
19	None
18	None
17	None
16	None
15	None
14	The Travellers gain one extra time segment in which to act
13	None
12	None
11	None
10	None
9	None
8	None
7	The Travellers gain one extra time segment in which to act
6	None
5	None
4	None
3	None
2	None
1	None
0	The train has stopped. No crash occurs

Essentially, if the Travellers can slow down the train early they gain more time for further deceleration in addition to whatever actions they choose to take.

## THE CRASH

If the Travellers succeed in bringing the train to a stop – or just the part they occupy – they will not be involved in a crash. If not, the front of the train ploughs into deep water, slowing it rapidly and derailing it if CSI is 4+. Just hitting the water at that speed is enough to injure people aboard the train and significantly remodel its front end. If the goods cars decoupled the passenger section slams into them at reduced speed; if not the whole train will concertina as front cars slow down faster than the rear. None of this is a good outcome for anyone aboard.

If a crash occurs, everyone aboard takes 1D damage for every point of CSI remaining. This is reduced by 1D for every carriage between the individual and the goods section. Thus someone in carriage 6 will take 6D less damage than someone in carriage 1. Damage can be mitigated by -1 per dice by being securely strapped into a seat and braced for impact.

## FURTHER PROBLEMS

Whether the Travellers prevent a crash or not, they are not out of the woods yet... The tunnel ahead is blocked by derailed goods cars and the reservoir is still pumping tons of water into the tunnel. The water level is rising and will continue to rise despite the amount now flooding out of the open end of the tunnel. The train is being jostled by the force of passing water and whilst it is designed to be watertight all the way up to the ceiling – in order to deal with especially deep flooding in a cutting – it was not 100% sealed even before the collision. The Travellers are now aboard a possibly derailed train which is filling up with smelly lake water...

There are various ways the Travellers might deal with this problem. Attempting to swim or float out of the tunnel is tantamount to suicide. Anyone trying this will be rushed along by the torrent of water and smashed against walls or obstructions such as parts of the train. Trying to open doors or escape hatches will be difficult and will allow water to enter the train much faster. One option would be to close off the pumps and halt the flow of water but that requires reaching a control node. Remote access has been disabled, so hacking from the train is not possible. However, the tunnel has a conduit in its ceiling which carries cables and pipes. At intervals there are access points into which a computer could be plugged. An extension lead from a Traveller's comm would also allow remote access.

Reaching the conduit is dangerous and difficult. The Travellers will have to find a roof hatch which is above water, then avoid falling off the train. Carriages are being jostled and moving in short jerks every few

seconds. Staying on the top of the train requires an Average (8+) Athletics (dexterity) check every 2D rounds. Travellers who find a way to anchor themselves should make an easier check and will not fall off, although they might be unable to stand. Anyone going into the water close to the train suffers 1D damage every round from being bashed around and risks being swept away down the tunnel. If this happens what is left of them will be washed out of the tunnel mouth, so rescue becomes a priority.

Reaching the overhead conduit will require a bit of athleticism. Normally access is granted by a platform atop a maintenance car but lacking this the Travellers will have to improvise. It may be possible to jump and grab a handhold, or be lifted by a strong companion. Once in place it is a simple matter to plug in a comm and establish a link to the pump controls. Alternatively, if the Travellers can establish communications with the train's operators they can obtain outside help. This is a rather mundane option but it will work. The operators are completely unaware anything is happening as the emergency reporting system has been disabled. Once they are aware they can reboot the system and shut down the pumps. Help will also be sent immediately, although it will take some time to arrive.

If the Travellers cannot shut down the pumps they will have to ride out the situation aboard a train that is slowly filling up with water. Eventually the reservoir will run out of water or the train carriages will be pushed far enough up the tunnel that more water can escape around them. In the meantime the Travellers will have

to deal with panicking passengers, short-circuiting electricals in the water and similar issues, but the situation is survivable.

## LEAVING MU'IZZI

After the train crash, the authorities will want to talk to the Travellers. This could be awkward if they have carried out illegal actions, or have Gideon with them, but they are witnesses and victims rather than suspects. The sabotage of the train and reservoir pumps was done in a hurry, leaving a trail that is easy to follow... at least at first. The authorities quickly establish the sabotage originated away from the train, by way of remotely activated commands which had been in place for at least a couple of years. The Travellers are in the clear at this point, although there are still questions to be answered. Unfortunately it is not possible to determine where the commands were sent from, nor who sent them.

In fact, the train sabotage was set up some time ago by agents of the Order of Prometheus as an insurance policy. Just as plans were made to eliminate evidence at the ValGorch estate, the Order decided to ensure witnesses did not reach the capital or starport. The Travellers may or may not make the connection straight away but it seems likely that sooner or later they will realise that a tragic shuttle accident *and* a train crash *and* a reservoir venting into a tunnel all on the same day is too much of a coincidence. The Travellers might then come to the conclusion that the Order is cleaning house. This is correct. They know their operation has been detected and an investigation is underway, so it is time to put their plans into operation.



# IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY

The Travellers have discovered the identity of another member of the Order of Prometheus, one Djean Sarratt. This individual is well enough known that the Travellers can simply look him up on the dataweb. A wealthy business owner, Sarratt has a history of backing 'Imperials out!' campaigns and delivering impassioned speeches about the evils of allowing aliens the same rights as true Solomani citizens. In short, up until about eight years ago he appeared to be the stereotypical Solomani Supremacist.

Then something seems to have changed. Sarratt suddenly reversed his company's policy and began recruiting workers from all species and bloodlines. His savage rhetoric ceased overnight and his sponsorship of pro-Solomani activist groups was withdrawn. He has never commented on this change of heart and it is generally assumed he is embarrassed by his previous stance. He does not speak out on interspecies friendship or anything so positive but it is clear that something has happened to make him a lot less racist. His holdings have even been attacked by Solomani Supremacists who consider him a traitor.

The Travellers might find the timing of this change of heart interesting. It occurred a couple of years before The Seven discovered the Order of Prometheus was making Golems. If Veronique ValGorch told the Travellers about the Order, or they got access to messages from its members, they will realise that Djean Sarratt ceased to be noisily racist about the time the Order was founded and when the first Golems were being created.

Sarratt has extensive holdings on Merope, including a showcase 'company town', which is now the home of one of his businesses. This installation appears in the news from time-to-time, usually referred to as 'Commstwon' although its actual name is Sarratt Mass Communications Centre. This rather unusual name refers to its origins as a purpose-built installation where hardware and software for mass communications are developed. The Travellers may also stumble upon a news article about the controversial decision last year to hire additional workers from a newly-encountered humanoid species known as the Arneddi. There are no images of an Arneddi in the article, just a lot of op-ed material debating the wisdom of allowing a virtually

unknown species to work at a facility that, among other things, creates encryption systems for personal communications equipment.

## KENNIG-ACTUAL SENDS HIS REGARDS

At some point in their journeys, the Travellers will pass through a starport where they will be detained by security personnel. This is for, they are told, just a few routine questions. It is not uncommon for people who move around a lot and should not in and of itself be alarming. The Travellers will be disarmed – again, standard practice – and their identification run through the system. Whilst they are waiting for clearance to proceed, the portside security officers leave and are replaced by four uniformed Solomani Security personnel. Even this is not necessarily bad; SolSec do sometimes question people at random and starfarers are high on their interest list.

The four are joined by a fifth, who introduces herself as Captain Alicia Suarez, commander of Field Operations Team Kennig-Mirror. The Travellers may recognise the word Kennig. It is the overall callsign of the Field Operations Group led by Zimmermayer and containing Maria Culstein. As far as anyone outside this room is concerned, Suarez tells the Travellers, they are being questioned by a specialist starships-related team about irregularities in their ship's logs and manifests. In fact, she has a different interest.

The Referee should note that the Travellers are being detained but they are not under arrest. This basically means they are required to stay for as long as is necessary to complete whatever business SolSec has with them. If they cooperate they will be granted all due courtesy and can soon be on their way. If they are foolish enough to fight SolSec they will be biting off more than they can chew and should be aware of that.

Suarez tells the Travellers that Major Zimmermayer sends his regards. This may or may not be sarcastic depending on the Travellers' previous interactions with him. She explains that her team are specialists in starship-related matters, which can mean anything from investigating a possible smuggler to boarding a hijacked liner to free hostages. Their current assignment is mundane but frustrating; FOT Kennig-

Mirror is investigating a suspect vessel named *Yurem's House of Clarifications*. She is aware the Travellers are doing something similar and has a proposal of mutual assistance.

SolSec actually knows where the *House of Clarifications* is but that does not help much. Investigating the matter made it apparent that something wider was going on and ultimately resulted in the formation of FOG-Kennig-1868-Angon. In return for the Travellers' assistance and all the information they have, Suarez will provide what she knows and backup that should prevent the Travellers from running head-on into much greater danger than they expect.

## INFORMATION FROM SOLSEC

SolSec know of the existence of a group calling themselves the Order of Prometheus. It has recently become apparent that these are no ordinary secret society members. They are, as the Travellers must surely be aware, behind the destruction of the ValGorch estate and the train crash on Mu'izzi. What the Travellers are unlikely to know is that a ship belonging to the Order, operating under false papers, left Mu'izzi Highport just after the train crash.

SolSec, assisted by local Home Forces, intercepted this vessel which turned out to be the missing *Margarie duPont*. The crew resisted boarding and, during the fight, released some kind of super-soldiers armed with crude laser weapons. Casualties were taken and Suarez is personally as well as professionally keen to find out as much as possible about them. These were, of course, combat Golems. The Travellers might be able to provide quite a lot of information. Suarez already knows they are lab-grown creatures; the ship was carrying industrial quantities of equipment that could be used to make more.

If the Travellers tell Suarez about Gideon or introduce it, they will provoke intense interest and concern. If these things were rabid dogs or enhanced lab rats then scientists could create a tailored poison but if some are people that option is right off the table. Travellers used to Imperial propaganda about SolSec might be surprised to hear its officers announcing that the rights of a barely-sentient lab creature must be protected but SolSec's mission is to protect the people of the Confederation – all of them. Some SolSec personnel might consider this as a rather paternalistic duty to safeguard lesser beings but they will do it all the same. The Travellers might be put in mind of Veronique ValGorch's casual contempt for what she called the 'subs' – but then she treated pure-blood Solomani little better.

SolSec knows the *House of Clarifications* is at Sarratt Mass Communications Centre, on Merope. It has been there for several weeks. Records show the vessel was granted a flight plan to land at the private port there but its immobility since suggests that something has gone awry. Routine observation suggests the ship is being internally modified in some way, although it is not possible to see what purpose this serves. The problem SolSec has is that the Order of Prometheus seems to know their intentions. This suggests a mole or perhaps a tip-off from local authorities in the pocket of the Order. Conventionally, SolSec has to inform local authorities of its operations unless they are the subject of the operation. This avoids getting lines crossed with local intelligence and law enforcement agencies but can lead to leaks.

What SolSec does not have to do is to tell local officials that a band of Travellers is poking around. There is no legal requirement to do so, which means any operation undertaken cannot be challenged in the courts. This happens from time-to-time – the supposedly all-powerful SolSec identifies a threat to the Solomani people and then has to let the perpetrators go because rules were not followed. So, Suarez wants the Travellers to investigate the situation and report back to her superior. Backup will be on hand in the form of a whole Field Operations Group and once called in by concerned and loyal citizens, its actions will be legal.

SolSec knows the Order of Prometheus is political and does not buy the story of Sarratt's change of heart. They know he still has contact with Solomani Supremacist groups and that the attacks were most likely a deception. They know the Order is making Golems, some of them combat-capable but their intentions remain unknown. Thus the Travellers' mission is to infiltrate Sarratt's company city and find out what is going on there. They do not have carte blanche to do as they please; SolSec has to explain its actions to an oversight committee and whilst some leeway can be granted to people trying to help in a hazardous situation, association with SolSec is not a get out of jail free card.

Any Travellers with a background in SolSec will be reactivated for the mission, giving them a temporary commission as an officer of the Solomani Confederation with associated powers and protections. Others will not be so trusted until they have proven themselves and might have no status higher than 'associated penants' – this designation is given to those who have to go along with a SolSec operation in order to avoid consequences. What is certain is that SolSec respects loyalty to the Confederation and looks after those who help it. This

might be out of a good heart or self-interest – rewarding loyalty and commitment makes assistance more likely in the future – but whatever the motivation the Travellers can be sure SolSec has their collective back.

Travellers can request equipment if they agree to undertake the mission. Standard self-defence type weapons are available, such as semi-automatic pistols or SolSec-issue submachineguns. The Travellers will be permitted to carry these weapons despite Merope's Law Level and will be given them by a contact once they are through customs. Weaponry and equipment do have to be returned, however. The Travellers can also request items like automated hacking devices and concealable cameras, and will be given Cr5000 each in cash as expenses. The money is written off for accounting purposes the moment it is issued, so whatever the Travellers do not spend, they can keep.

## VISITING MEROPÉ

Whilst the Merope system is important to the cluster economy, the planet itself is something of a backwater. The 'main' downport is used only by official visitors, with most ships that land doing so directly at the city they have business in. The majority conduct business at the highport and move on. This means the Travellers will need to fabricate a reason for visiting Commstowm. One option is to be blatant about interest in the Order. If Veronique ValGorch gave the Travellers a letter of introduction they might consider simply turning up and asking to join. If they prefer not to take this option, they will need an excuse of some kind.

Commstowm is a company town producing electronics and communications systems, and receives delegations from time-to-time from parties interested in buying or acting as a distributor. This would be a reasonable cover story. Depending on what sort of ship the Travellers have, they might claim they are in search of speculative cargo or a distribution contract. Permission to go direct to Commstowm is granted by system traffic control but the city administration must grant landing clearance and will not do so without valid reason.

The Travellers may be tempted to overthink this, and come up with some convoluted story, but the reality is that almost any explanation will get them permission to land. One reason for that is the need on the part of the Order to maintain their own cover. Turning away merchant ships would seem odd and might attract attention and, in any case, they do have a business to run here. Entertaining visitors is part of that process

and every vessel unconnected with the Order that lands at Commstowm dilutes attempts to investigate those that are involved.

Thus the Travellers will have no difficulty talking their way onto the landing pad. What does matter is how convinced the Order is that they are harmless. The Order is alert and paranoid, especially at the present time as their plans approach a critical phase, and they know a band of Travellers is poking around. They are working on the assumption that the Travellers are somehow connected with The Seven which, whilst inaccurate, at least serves to warn the Order that someone may be coming to interfere with their plans. Everyone visiting Commstowm is under suspicion but a good cover story will make the difference between the Order being reasonably sure the Travellers are hostile and assuming they are what they seem.

## THE ORDER'S PLANS

The Order has been aware for some time that their plans may have been compromised. Investigation by SolSec is inevitable for any society of this sort, although the Order were confident they could present themselves as a harmless social group. Recently they have become aware that Veronique ValGorch has been less than discreet, although they do not know for certain who she talked to. News about the elimination of Veronique has reached Commstowm and in addition the starship *Margarie DuPont* is overdue. The latter is causing concern but as yet the leaders of the Order cannot be sure she has been intercepted.

Concerns about the possibility of investigation have caused the Order to move up the timing of its plans. Originally, the intent was to smuggle a mix of combat and worker Golems into several cities and installations on Merope then release them all at once. The workers would probably not cause all that much damage but they would be a distraction and instil fear. The attacks would be presented as 'alien treachery, probably inspired by Imperial agents' and should trigger a backlash against other alien minorities within the Confederation. That in turn might result in retaliation and if not it can be engineered.

The ultimate goal is to stir up racial hatred and anti-Imperial feeling, strengthening the position of the Solomani Supremacist groups on various worlds. According to the Order, Confederation society is far too liberal and should be keeping aliens in their place. The Golems will be misidentified as a Minor Race recently offered the hand of friendship, which just proves that nobody but good old humans can be trusted.

Djean Sarratt has set himself up to be the victim of the situation. He has political ambitions and plans to ride a wave of sympathy and xenophobia into public office after reversing his previous change of heart. He had come to believe that aliens could be loyal friends, he will say, and even recruited a workforce composed in part of non-humans. The attack on Commstow is thus a betrayal of his goodwill, making his re-hardened attitude towards aliens understandable.

With the *Margarie duPont* unavailable, the Order plans to carry out a reduced version of its plan. *Yurem's House of Clarifications* is being fitted with containment equipment for Golems and will be flown to the downport. Golems disgorged from the ship will attack the main centre of government whilst others will be released at Commstow. Sarratt and his people will be safe in the walled governmental annex whilst the Golems run amok in the city. Casualties are likely to be very high but that is of no consequence to Sarratt. After all, his workforce are all aliens or non-pure-blood Solomani and thus expendable.

The arrival of the Travellers creates a problem but Sarratt decides to go ahead with his plan whilst containing the Travellers. It may be they can be useful, perhaps as scapegoats. Indeed, it may be that their ship offers a chance to attack another city. The more chaos and casualties ensue, the stronger the message sent. Some pure-blooded Solomani will inevitably be killed but the mission is sufficiently important that their sacrifice is necessary.

## COMMSTOWN, MEROPÉ

Commstow is a private 'company town' which generally conforms to the planetary laws of Meropé. However, no weapons are permitted other than for security and law enforcement personnel and they are restricted to stunners and batons in the city. Guards at the administrative annex have access to lethal weaponry but it is rarely displayed. Thus even in the governmental centre the Travellers will encounter guards openly carrying a stunner and (apparently) no other weapons.

### RESIDENTIAL AREA (1)

The main residential area is a vibrant and colourful place where about 15% of the population are non-humans. There is a significant Bwap community as well as representatives of various species. The occasional Hiver or Aslan might be encountered, although for the most part non-humans are members of species native to the Confederation or the local region. The population are generally happy and enjoy a standard

of living somewhat above that of the average Meropan citizen. Sarratt's company pays good salaries and offers discounts on its own products for employees. The typical worker has access to more devices and a generally higher Tech Level of imports than the rest of the planetary population.

The residential area is, on the face of it, a model of an integrated and cosmopolitan society. Aliens and humans occupy all social niches without fear or favour, with aliens sometimes holding positions of authority over humans. This cosmopolitan utopia has featured on various vid documentaries and has attracted bile from those who are openly racist. This is all a cover, of course. Djean Sarratt does not in any way approve of the society he has created and plans to destroy it as part of his orchestrated atrocity. If the Travellers take time to investigate they will not find a single pure-blooded Solomani in this area.

### RESIDENTIAL AREA (2)

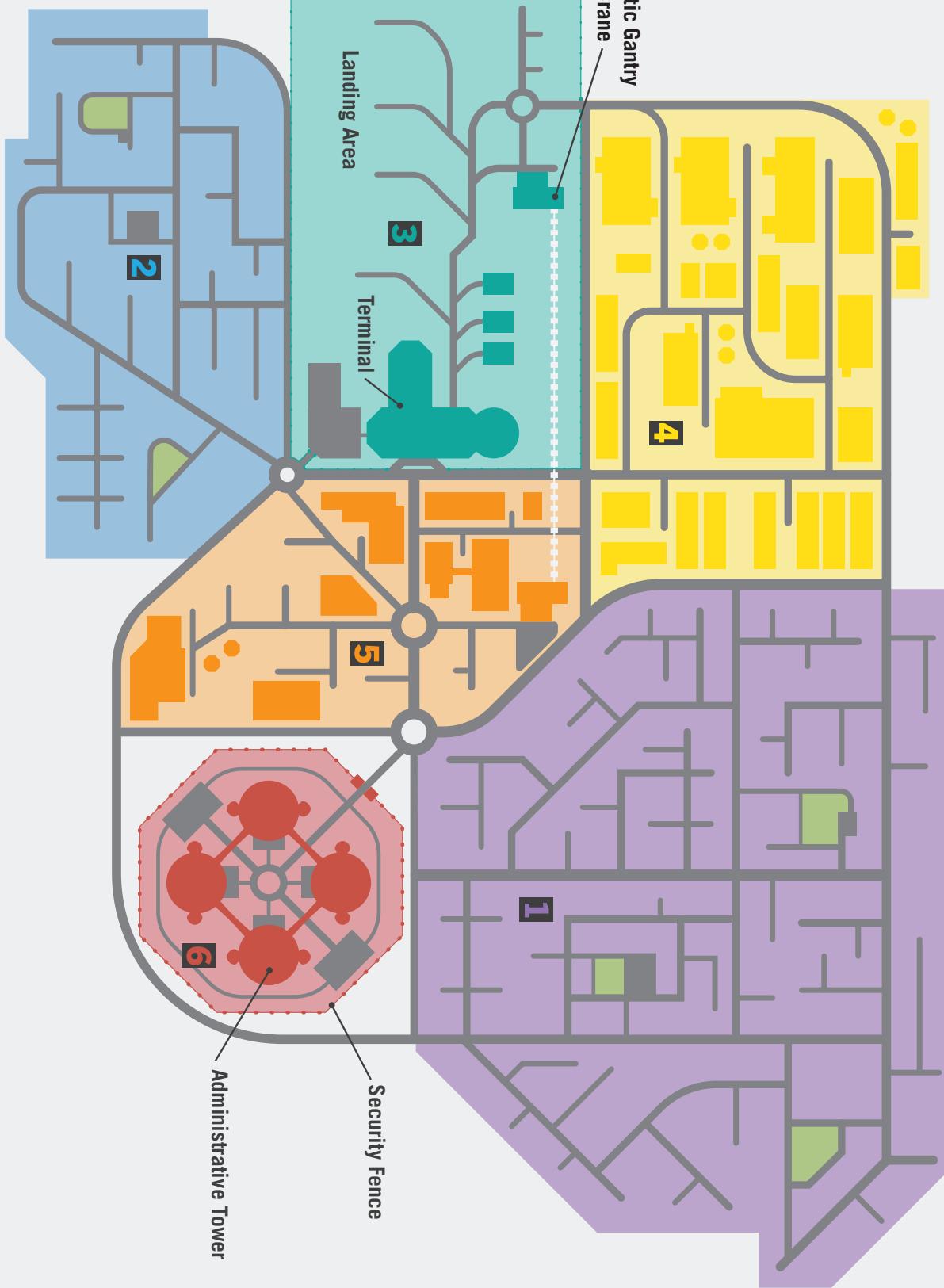
The secondary residential area is only partially occupied. It is home mainly to workers at the spaceport and the managerial class of the industrial complex. Almost all of those in the upper echelons of the workforce are pure-blood Solomani, with few aliens and mixed-blood humans among them. There are no signs of the rampant racism of the Order among these people. Some of the pure-bloods are a bit snobbish about their lineage but with very few exceptions these people are cosmopolitan and friendly with their non-Solomani neighbours. Sarratt is less happy about sacrificing this population than that of area (1) but will do so if necessary.

### SPACEPORT (3)

The city's small spaceport is mostly used by commercial vessels and shuttles from freighters in orbit. Its passenger terminal is small but well appointed, with efficient staff and high standard of equipment. Visitors are informed that no weapons are permitted past the landing area. Security personnel are equipped only with stunners, although they do have a few firearms available for emergencies.

A gravitic gantry crane system carries containers from the landing area to the marshalling point for the city's industrial complex. Smaller quantities of goods are moved by way of robotic vehicles which any resident can inform the Travellers are all tied into a bespoke distribution network running throughout the city. Goods and supplies – notably fresh produce from the world's agricultural economy – are transferred from large robotic vehicles to holding areas then delivered throughout the city with high-speed efficiency. It is possible to order a steak cooked at one of the starport

## COMMS TOWN



IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY

restaurants and have it delivered by robot anywhere in the city. This might be nothing special to the Travellers but it is impressive by the standards of Merope.

## FREIGHT YARD (4)

The city's freight yard contains several large buildings used to store materials and finished goods. This area is more heavily secured than the rest of the city and generally off-limits to the average citizen for perfectly understandable commercial-security reasons. Some of the buildings are in fact used to grow Golems which are penned in an inhumane manner. Up until recently they have been the subject of experimentation or shipped out aboard shuttles to the *Margarie DuPont*. However, recently stocks have been built up ready for the attacks. Rushing the growth of batches of Golems has resulted in these being even more defective than usual, with a greater instance of psychosis. This is not a drawback as far as Sarratt is concerned.

## INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX (5)

The industrial complex is the heart of the city. It combines advanced electronic manufacturing facilities with hardware and software development labs. A large proportion of the city's population are employed in this area or supporting industries such as fabrication of tools and even office furniture. The complex never completely shuts down, although it is less busy at night.

## ADMINISTRATIVE ANNEX (6)

The city's administrative annex is surrounded by a security fence of unusually robust construction. This is not readily apparent; casual observers would find nothing remarkable about it. The fence is probably sufficient to keep out a mob or group of Golems operating in an uncoordinated fashion but could be breached by enough people. However, the four towers that make up the annex are heavily secured.

Three of the towers contain accommodation for guards and workers – all of whom are pure-blooded Solomani – in the lower segments and luxury apartments for the city's leaders above. The fourth is a combination of offices and city administration facilities, with a large administrative suite on the upper floors. All four towers have grav vehicle landing platforms and are linked by bridges at their mid points. The city's power generation system and critical utilities are buried under the bases of the four towers and can be used to move between them without being seen from outside.

The administrative annex is designed to function as a mini-fortress in the event of a disaster such as a riot or Golem escape but not obviously so. Astute Travellers might realise that walls are unusually thick and doors extremely solid for an office complex. Security personnel are not obviously armed but there are armouries on some levels with sufficient firepower to repel a determined assault... at least long enough for the elite to escape in their grav vehicles.

### GIDEON AT COMMSTOWN

Gideon, if it is still alive, poses a problem for the Travellers at Commstown. It will of course be instantly recognised by Sarratt and his Order fellows for what it is but they cannot openly say so. Unless they decide to immediately take violent action, they will have to pretend they think Gideon is a member of the fictional Minor Race – the Arneddi – the Order plans to blame for its atrocity. Gideon's presence, if detected, will alert the Order that the Travellers are enemies if they have not figured it out by now.

Gideon does not really understand deception, so is likely to say something inconvenient if allowed to converse with the locals. Only the guards and staff at the Golem production facility know what a Golem is and aliens are common enough at Commstown that a strange-looking humanoid will not necessarily stand out.

### INFILTRATING COMMSTOWN

It is possible the Travellers might make a covert entry into Commstown, or that some will. This is made more difficult by the fact that the population are generally loyal to their community. There are few willing to hide infiltrators, making it necessary to either perform great feats of stealth or use deception to hide in plain sight.

The city is not large and people tend to see the same faces in their daily routine. Newcomers will stand out, which will require some deception. At the same time, ordinary citizens are not particularly suspicious; they have no reason to be. Travellers who look like they belong are unlikely to be challenged unless they attempt to enter a secure area. A partially-true cover story might be useful. For example, the Traveller might truthfully say they arrived on the ship that just landed

but falsely claim they have permission to ‘run some errands’ over to the manufacturing centre. The average security operative is as complacent as the rest of the population and might take such a story at face value. Those who guard the Golem pens and facilities are more suspicious, however.

It would be very suspicious indeed for a ship to land without any sort of official contact with the city’s administrators, since there is little reason to be here other than to conduct business. The Travellers might attempt to keep their overt interactions at a relatively low level, as a small merchant vessel might, but if they intend to find out more about Djean Sarratt or the Order they will have to aim a little higher. Either way, they will find themselves dealing with a mid-level manager named Isla Bennei. Bennei is a gatekeeper for Sarratt as well as a genuine trading manager at the downport. She is a member of the Order of Prometheus and knows at least some of the plans currently unfolding.

### POLITE HOSTILITY

The timing of the Travellers’ visit is awkward for the Order. This, and the possibility they may be investigating the Order’s plans, makes Sarratt want to get the Travellers on their way as quickly as possible. His ideal solution is for Bennei to make them feel welcome with some wining and dining at the downport, followed by demonstrations of Sarratt’s hardware and software, and a good deal on whatever the Travellers want to buy. Whilst there remains a possibility of getting rid of the Travellers this way, Bennei will work towards it.

There is a game to be played here, even if the Travellers want to directly approach Sarratt about the Order. Bennei will not permit herself to be cut out of the loop, so at least some of the Travellers will have to go through the motions of behaving like normal visitors. Asking the right questions or displaying the correct knowledge will earn the Travellers access to Sarratt. Turning up with a letter of introduction from Veronique ValGorch will also work, but since Sarratt considered her a security risk he will take a friends-close/enemies closer approach.

If the Travellers play their part and say the right things they will eventually be invited into the administrative annex to meet Djean Sarratt. The most likely location is the executive suite in the main administrative tower,

which has extensive hospitality facilities. Sarratt will play the gracious host over dinner and drinks but unless the Travellers put on a virtuoso performance he will continue to assume they are agents of his enemies or at least a prospective obstacle to his plan. Sarratt talks about high-end encryption and personal security in electronic devices and how his company is creating a new market standard in affordable personal electronics. All of this is true, given a bit of corporate hype, and is being done legitimately.

Sarratt is also careful to drop into the conversation the occasional reference to how much his company owes to its motivated and talented workforce. His secret, he says, is no secret at all. People give more when they are fairly treated and rewarded for their merits. He recruits the best people he can find, of any type, and gives them space to be who they are. The results speak for themselves. Sarratt is right but he is also lying through his teeth. The methods he uses here are indeed more effective than blocking the talent of a segment of the population but he is not doing it to showcase the benefits of racial integration. Quite the opposite; he has created a cosmopolitan society with the intent of graphically destroying it.

The irony of the fact that Commstown demonstrates the stupidity of his racist attitudes would be lost upon Sarratt. He is a zealot and always was. The Travellers may notice an undercurrent of tension, despite his gracious words and friendly gestures, but he can pass this off as nerves about a big market event – which of course he cannot discuss other than the hint that it might be a good time to buy stock in his company. If the Travellers behave offensively Sarratt will terminate the meeting and have them escorted back to the downport where they can make use of the available accommodation at their own expense. On the other hand, if the Travellers play along Sarratt will indulge them.

Ideally, unless Sarratt is absolutely convinced the Travellers will come over to his cause, he wants them caught up in the events that will unfold tonight. Out in the city, unarmed and confused, they stand little chance – or so Sarratt thinks. He is quite happy for the Travellers to visit most of the city and will send Isla Bennei to show them around. The residential areas and the manifesting centre – other than the most sensitive research areas – are proudly showcased.

## TRIGGER AT THE FREIGHT YARD

If the Travellers want to see the freight yard, Bennei will need a reason why. Why would freighting arrangements matter to people interested in an electronics contract? She will politely suggest other, more interesting, sites to visit but will not push the matter. If possible the Travellers will be given a quick look at the loading facilities and moved on, perhaps with the suggestion that sensitive cargoes are being loaded and they have not signed a non-disclosure agreement so cannot be around.

If at all possible Bennei will get the Travellers away from the freight yard and the ship landed there. The Travellers will still be able to see it is definitely *Yurem's House of Clarifications*, although Bennei says she does not know much about it. Ships and freight yards are not her area of interest and she already has plenty to do. This is true. She knows the ship has been at the yard for weeks, which is unusual but apparently some sort of internal work needed doing. She suspects it is to be involved in some kind of publicity stunt but is outside the need-to-know group for that sort of thing.

If the Travellers insist on poking around, the last-ditch attempt to get them away from the freight yard occurs after they spot Golems. These are passed off as 'refugees from some new species the boss has decided to rescue. They're a lot of trouble and it is probably not going to work out'. Some employees genuinely believe this and trying to warn them about Golems will provoke a response ranging from disbelief to uneasiness. Those that do know what is really going on will have just received proof the Travellers are hostile and will alert Sarratt. Likewise, if Bennei cannot get the Travellers away from the freight yard she can inform Sarratt with a codeword. What she does not know is that this will trigger his decision to release the Golems early.

## ADMINISTRATIVE TOWER

The administrative tower is larger and higher than the others. It is served by an elevator system running from the entry level to the top. This requires keycard access to use at all and additional clearance above the executive hospitality suite. A separate system leads down into the utilities and storage area.

### ENTRY LEVEL (1)

The entry level corresponds to the top of the surrounding apron. A set of heavy double security doors can be augmented by shutters and pop-up barriers rising from the surface of the apron. These are designed to provide hard cover to armed defenders and will also cause attackers on foot to take an indirect path. This is an unusually heavy security arrangement for a commercial installation but not much beyond the norm.

Once inside, the lowest level is given over to waiting-rooms, lounges and a security post close to the elevator. Behind this is a chamber giving access to the utility basement. The entry level always has a pair of stunner-equipped guards on duty as a visible deterrent – or source of polite and helpful directions – along with receptionists when visitors are expected. The guardrooms allow additional security personnel to remain out of sight and these have access to lethal weaponry. Depending on the level of alert, a disturbance in the main foyer can draw a response within seconds to at most a few minutes.

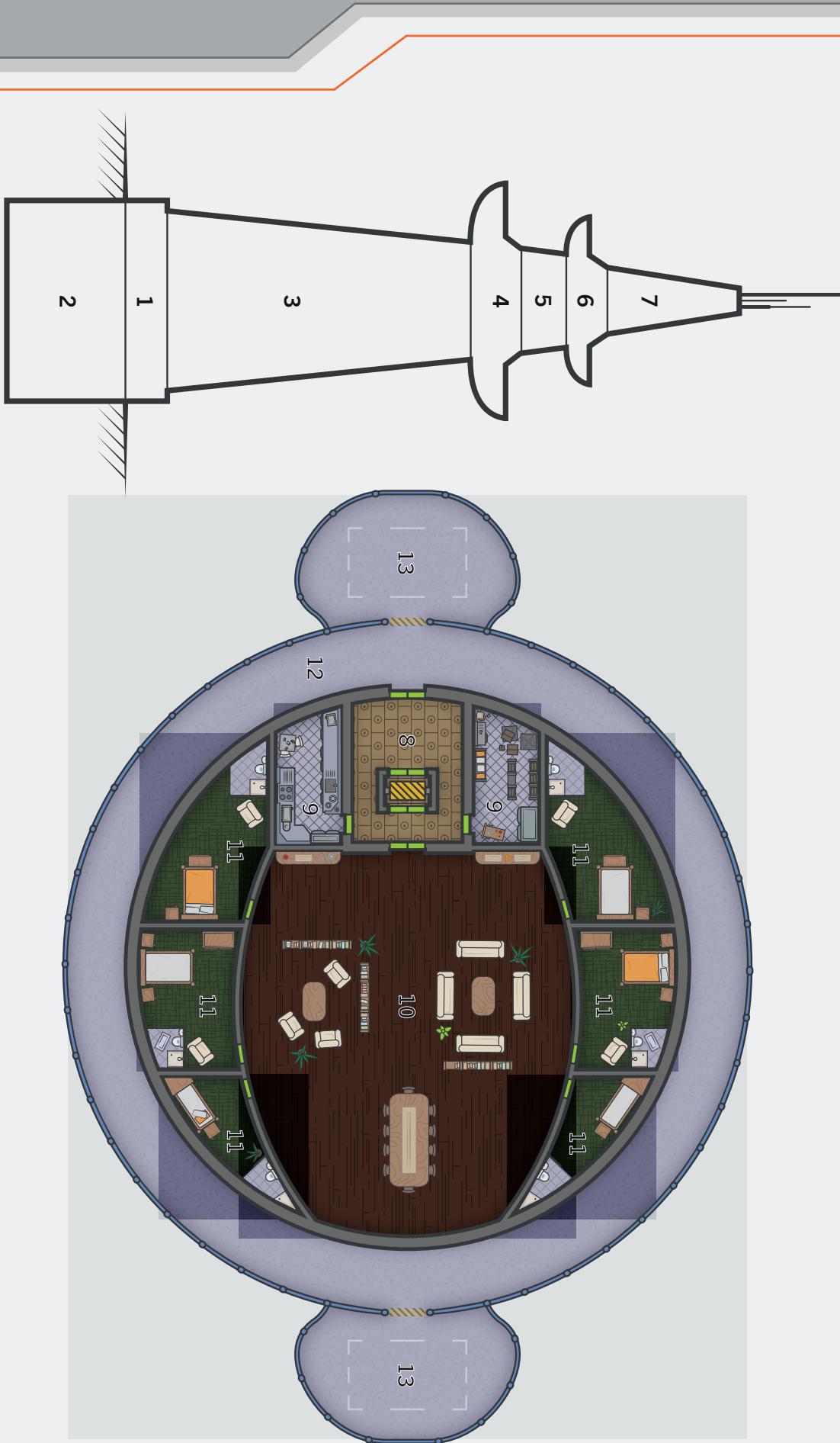
### UTILITIES BASEMENT (2)

The basement contains a reactor which powers the whole city other than the manufacturing plant, which has its own. Waste disposal and recycling are also carried out here for the administrative complex. Other areas of the city have their own facilities, all underground in a central location. The basement is heavily, but passively, secured by multiple deadlocked doors requiring correct identification and codes. Shutting down the reactor places the complex on emergency power which will last for several days of normal use. Power can also be shunted from the manufacturing reactor unless the conduits are shut down.

### RESIDENTIAL LEVELS (3)

Guards, secretaries, technicians and minor executives dwell in the residential levels. All have a need to be in the main tower, otherwise they would be housed in the others. Thus these people rarely come and go through the main entrance, allowing it to be kept closed unless visitors are expected. Some know about the Order and may have a minor role in it but most are simply staff in what they believe to be a legitimate business. Everyone housed in the tower is a pure-blooded Solomani.

# IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY



## EXECUTIVE HOSPITALITY SUITE (4)

This level is used for visitors and business meetings, and has its own grav vehicle landing platforms.

## CITY CONTROL SUITE (5)

The city's utilities and other mundane functions are mostly automated but monitored from this level. It is always staffed, although normally there is little to do but make mid- to long-term plans for consumable imports and monitor routine reports. Those on duty at the time the Order's plan is put into effect are trusted minor members of the Order and will fight to prevent anyone interfering. There is a concealed gun locker on this level containing shotguns and semi-automatic pistols.

## EXECUTIVE SUITE (6)

Accessed from the lift shaft by only a handful of individuals, or from the two grav vehicle landing pads, the suite occupied by Djean Sarratt is his personal workspace and living area. The latter is very occasionally used to entertain guests, whilst the workspace is never opened to outsiders. Neither has artefacts linking Sarratt to extremist groups; a SolSec infiltrator might poke around and come out sure that Sarratt had nothing to hide.

The exception is one chamber which is always heavily secured; it could be described as a shrine to hate. There are artefacts and ancient copies of books going all the way back to Old Terra. Sarratt seems to be a particular admirer of Zaspar Merrain, a particularly nasty extremist who led a genocidal movement in the early Rule of Man era. Like many such figures, Merrain inspired copycats and his legend has grown far beyond his actual deeds. However, he is one of those historical figures where no matter how bad you think they are, they always manage to surprise you with something else. Merrain advocated total 'cleansing' of aliens within the Rule of Man, leaving only humans to inherit the universe. Perhaps the most disturbing thing is an ancient (and priceless, to someone who likes that sort of thing) paper copy of Merrain's book 'The Inexorable Ascent of Humanity'. Someone (probably Sarratt) has scrawled 'Wrong Wrong WRONG! That's how we got the Imperium!' over a passage where Merrain advocates allowing the 'lesser races of humanity' to survive under the wise guidance of the 'true men of Sol'.

Sarratt's own writings – pen on paper, written in an exquisite hand with an antique fountain pen – are also pretty disturbing. He advocates triggering a race war to demonstrate that aliens cannot be trusted but only as a means to an end. Leaders will come to the fore who have the stomach for what must be done and the population will be inclined to follow them. This will allow

the Order to lead a crusade against the 'lesser races of humanity' and consign them to 'reservation worlds' where they will be denied advanced technology. He even questions this, occasionally suggesting it would be simpler just to kill them and repopulate worlds with pure-blood Solomani.

His genocidal ambitions do not extend to aliens. He has little but contempt for them, yet is not so affronted. His stance seems to be that aliens are acceptably different and, so long as they learn their place, can be permitted to serve with honour. His hatred is directed at those who have the temerity to look like 'real humans' but be something else. There are several pages of raging, incoherent poetry in which Sarratt tries to put into words his frustration at having to pretend to be an enlightened human. He also questions the wisdom of using the Golems, created as they are in human image, but satisfies himself with convoluted logic that those who are in the image of true humans (non-Solomani) will be cast down by an even greater perversion of that image which will in turn be expunged from the universe.

Sarratt's personal work computer is located in his suite. It is heavily encrypted and secured but is more vulnerable to hacking attempts made directly than those originating outside the suite's firewall. Getting into the files will still be a lengthy business, especially since information connected with the Order is concealed within normal business data. This is no quick hacking job; Sarratt's own company has created a custom security system for him, without any of the backdoors and shortcuts built into more mainstream versions.

Getting into Sarratt's computer files will require a major intelligence-agency level operation. Even if he can be induced to unlock files at gunpoint there are timed cut-outs and concealed secondary barriers which will change the encryption on some files and delete others. Getting to the surface layer of information is difficult enough. It will require 12 points of Effect on a series of Formidable (14+) Electronics (computers) checks. A check can be made every 2Dx30 minutes. The system uses TL14 electronics and DM-1 applies for every Tech Level lower the intruder's equipment is. A specialist intrusion assistance package on a portacomp will certainly help, reducing the time between checks to 2Dx10 minutes and granting DM+2.

This supposes the Travellers are digging into the files as a 'cold intrusion'. If they have insights into Sarratt's way of thinking they may be able to guess some passwords and bypass blind alleys. Half an hour sifting through papers in the private chamber will produce a lot of ideas that can be used to shorten the process.

The Effect of an Average (8+) Investigate check can be added to each attempt to penetrate the system's extensive security.

Full access might take a long time and even then there is a real possibility of Travellers not recognising the significance of a file or failing to detect it at all. However, some information will become apparent much sooner than full access.

### COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNICAL SPIRE (7)

Above the executive level is a tall, tapering spire housing antennae and communications equipment. This is not normally staffed but has crawlways and platforms for servicing its systems. A roof hatch gives access to a fenced space between the main antennae and dishes, which could be used by a sniper or observer.

### ELEVATOR CHAMBER (8)

The elevator chamber has thick walls, ostensibly as a structural strengthening measure, and secured doors leading into the main suite. A set of double doors leads out onto the balcony and gives access to the grav vehicle landing spots.

### KITCHEN AND STEWARDS' AREAS (9)

Accessed from the elevator chamber are a working area for stewards and storage for drinks and delicacies. This area is staffed by at least two stewards when there are guests, usually assisted by a skilled chef. The stewards will normally be in and out of the main suite with refills for drinks or suggestions for a particularly good set of nibbles to go with them.

### RECEPTION SUITE (10)

The tastefully elegant reception suite is used to entertain guests or give presentations to prospective clients. Depending upon circumstances it can be set up as a dining area or lounge, or subdivided by furniture to create spaces for small groups to converse.

## System Access and Information

### Combined Information Gained

#### Effect

1	This is an extremely potent bespoke security system. Whilst it makes sense for the owner of a tech firm to have such a thing, the sheer amount of layers and false entrances is more reminiscent of a military or intelligence-service system.
2	Those at least generally familiar with military or intelligence-service security systems will be aware that whilst of a similar level of capability, Sarratt's system is different. It was not provided by any known agency in the Confederation. That does not rule out external origins but that seems unlikely given Sarratt's attitude towards Imperials.
4	The system contains a great many hidden files, some of which are traps. Activating these files deletes others or triggers new layers of security. In addition, the Travellers will know that manufacturers of data systems are usually required by law to provide backdoors for use by the security services. Some firms can obtain exemptions but Sarratt's company is not one of them. His system appears to have the legally required backdoors but they lead to false data or trigger the destruction of other files. This alone would be grounds for prosecution after a vigorous SolSec-led investigation.
8	Some files are unlocked. This gives the Travellers access to some general information about the situation. From the equipment that has been ordered and delivered they will be able to discern that Yurem's ship is being converted to carry Golems for delivery somewhere. If they think to look, the Travellers can also learn that the administrative annex is staffed entirely by pure-blooded Solomani and whilst some live in the main city the vast majority of the population are non-pure-bloods or aliens.
12	The Travellers have full access and will be able to download and analyse files. Eventually this will lead to the identities of other Order members but analysis will take time. In the short term the Travellers will find a large body of faked information ready to be released to the media. This largely concerns the 'desperate alien refugees' charitably given a home by Sarratt. Images accompanying these fake news stories clearly identify the 'aliens' as Golems.

Sarratt has his own landing pads for grav vehicles. Normally at least one vehicle is standing ready and at the time the Golems are released in the city he will make sure he has one on each pad.

## GUEST CHAMBERS (11)

The reception suite has six well-appointed guest chambers with facilities appropriate for visiting executives and politicians.

## BALCONY (12)

A wide balcony surrounds this level of the tower, with a decorative safety fence. It runs right around the perimeter but the only entrance is into the elevator chamber. There is an emergency ladder running up to a hatch in the higher balcony but this is recessed and might not be spotted by a casual observer.

## GRAV VEHICLE LANDING PORT (13)

Two large grav vehicle ports allow direct access to the executive suite without going through the city.

## THE COMMSTOWN INCIDENT

Depending on what the Travellers do, the Commstown Incident, as it will become known, may start when they are at the administrative annex, the freight yard or possibly in another location. Sarratt has moved his plans forward already and now feels he has to pull the trigger immediately in case the Travellers can somehow intervene.

If the Travellers are out and about in the city, Sarratt's preferred opening gambit is a variation on the 'alien attack' scenario he plans for the city. Two or more, depending on the Travellers' numbers, combat Golems will be brought near to where the Travellers are, injected with a cocktail of drugs intended to trigger a psychotic episode and turned loose. They will not be given ranged weapons but are provided with lengths of pipe and similar items they could plausibly have picked up along the way. Sarratt is willing to sacrifice any of his people who happen to be nearby. After giving the Golems a few minutes to cause havoc, he releases the rest into the city and orders *Yurem's House of Clarifications* to take off.

If possible, Sarratt would prefer to take the Travellers prisoner. He is unlikely to risk this in a public place but if the Travellers are at the executive suite in the administrative annex it should be possible to detain them. The first stage is to bring more guards, equipped with a mix of lethal weapons and stunners, up the elevator and have them conceal themselves in the stewards' areas. To cover as many angles as possible Sarratt will have a couple of Golems turned loose in the city and will rush up to his private chambers 'to find out what is happening'. Almost immediately after, guards enter and arrest the Travellers on suspicion of being involved with the attack.

This could be passed off as a precaution, or a mistake if necessary, but unless Sarratt has a good reason to believe the Travellers might be useful to him his default option will be to introduce Golems into the room where they are being held – probably in the tower basement. Once they have suffered convincing wounds the Travellers' bodies can be dumped somewhere in the city. An investigation will hopefully be misled into thinking they are just more victims of the Commstown Incident. If necessary, the guards will shoot captives but this is not the preferred option.

It may be that the first the Travellers know about the incident is guards trying to detain or even kill them, although more likely they will have a little warning if they are observant. The sudden departure of Sarratt might be a clue something is amiss and despite him being a good actor there may be indications he is expecting something. However it plays out, the Travellers will find themselves in the middle of an incident that grows more destructive as time goes on.

## CHAOS IN THE CITY

The release of Golems into the city is accomplished by simply opening all their pens at once and broadcasting an ultrasonic signal they find irritating. Humans and people with a similar hearing range will perceive only a faint whine when close to a speaker, whilst those capable of hearing higher frequencies will be aware of an irritating high-pitched noise. The sound is being broadcast using the city's announcement system; there are too many speakers to shut it down by destroying them. It can be turned off from the security office at the spaceport – Sarratt did not want any links to his personal office, just in case.

The sound is being used mostly just to rile up the Golems but also to apply a measure of direction. It is noticeably louder at the outer edges of the city and whilst this does not prevent Golems from moving through the louder zone it does direct most of them inward. One solution to the attack might be to reverse the situation – making the sound louder in the city centre and pushing the Golems outward. Again, this will not direct all of them, and not very precisely, but it will create a tendency towards moving into the countryside. This can be accomplished only at the spaceport as the controls there have been set up to override all others. Just turning the sound off will not calm the Golems once the incident has begun; they will have to be incapacitated or driven off.

The Golems begin pouring out of the freight yard straight away, overrunning guards that try to stop them. The vast majority of personnel in the city are unaware of the Order or its plans, and the honest members of the security force will do their best with stunners and improvised weapons. This includes protecting the alien citizens of the city. In the crucible of the Commstow Incident, the true colours of many people will be revealed. Some are murderous villains, some value certain lives over others but the majority of citizens and security guards face the danger together and look out for one another.

The Referee cannot possibly keep track of the tide of chaos pouring across the city and there is no need to try. Most of what happens is a backdrop for the Travellers' actions. They may witness secondary disasters such as fires started by improvised incendiary weapons, foolishly brave citizens taking to the streets with improvised weapons, doors slammed and barricaded in the face of those seeking sanctuary; the whole gamut of reactions to a bad situation. The Travellers cannot be everywhere, nor see everything. Instead, their involvement will take the form of certain critical situations. What they do there will determine the fate of the city and perhaps influence wider events.

## CALLING FOR HELP

If the Travellers agreed to help SolSec, Zimmermayer's entire Field Operations Group is on standby. They will race to the city in grav vehicles but cannot be there immediately. When they do arrive, they find a chaotic situation and need information. If the Travellers can give them some idea what is going on, this will be very helpful but either way SolSec will operate under a basic set of guidelines they use in all such situations. It is drilled into operatives over and over until it becomes almost a mantra:

- First of All, Don't Get Dead
- Save Lives
- Investigate
- Communicate
- And Most of All, Don't Get Dead

Operatives' first priorities are to remain operational and save lives. Immediate threats must be taken care of. As quickly as possible, secured areas will be set up and civilians directed there. Zimmermayer will also need a command post and he is entirely willing for this to be right in the middle of the toughest fighting.

Zimmermayer will try to get some kind of casualty triage and treatment set up, and to evacuate the most endangered using his grav vehicles. He will be scrupulously fair, putting a wounded alien aboard a grav vehicle in preference to an uninjured pure-blooded Solomani. Not all of his personnel agree with this policy but they will obey him.

The actions of the SolSec FOG will mostly become part of the backdrop to the Travellers' story. If needed, the SolSec teams might come to the Travellers' rescue – or they might need help themselves. They will supply weapons and ammunition to anyone who needs them and may be a useful source of information and advice as the Travellers rush around the city. In short, SolSec can be used as a plot device whenever the Referee needs one.

### DOING NOTHING

The Travellers might decide they are safe within the administrative annex and just hunker down to enjoy the canapes. They might even decide to slaughter a few aliens in the name of racial purity... or something. That is their choice, of course, but choices have consequences. If the Travellers do nothing or actively join in on the wrong side, the SolSec FOG will still arrive after an hour or two. They will do their best, which is pretty good, and call for assistance from the planetary armed forces. Some of the city and its citizens will be saved and the investigation will begin.

Ultimately the Travellers' involvement in the incident will be called into question and they may have to answer some difficult questions. Doing nothing is not illegal and SolSec cannot do anything to the Travellers if they have broken no laws. However, they may face civil suits on the grounds that they could have at least raised the alarm and may end up entangled in legal matters for a long while after the shooting has stopped. So, the Travellers are not under any obligation to help the people of Commstow but their actions (or lack thereof) will come under scrutiny. Siding with Sarratt, on the other hand, means assisting in an atrocity. Travellers who do this will have made a new enemy – the security forces of the Solomani Confederation.

# TIMELINE OF A DISASTER

Once the atrocity is launched, events will unfold at an alarming pace. Everything takes longer than you expect in a crisis, except enemy action. The Travellers may be able to slow down some events, or prevent others entirely, but time is not on their side.

The Referee will need to keep track of the time. This is not a matter of combat rounds but of minutes. Actions on the part of the Travellers are assigned a rough duration which can be modified if the Travellers come up with a time-saving idea or take an unduly long time about something. It is not necessary to keep track of the exact timings of a fight, for example, since there will be additional time afterward which is spent making sure everyone is okay, checking the area for remaining hostiles, scouting or retrieving items from downed foes and so on. The following actions are a guideline for the Referee, from which others can be extrapolated. In addition, certain situations have a duration associated with them. This might be altered by the Travellers' actions at the Referee's discretion.

The incident will develop according to a loose time frame which may be affected by the Travellers' actions. For example, the SolSec intervention will occur 38 minutes after the Travellers call for assistance. If they do not, Zimmermayer and his team will realise something is amiss and move to investigate but will not arrive for 102 minutes.

## Action Duration

Action	Duration	Notes
Search a room	1D minutes	This assumes a quick but careful search.
Search a floor in a tower or building	3D minutes	A quick but careful search.
Quick attempt at hacking or electronic access	1D minutes	Includes time to get set up and pass on information gained.
Short Fight	2D minutes	Includes time for the aftermath.
Move from one area of the city to an adjacent one on foot	2Dx5 minutes	Assumes brisk but alert movement.
Move from one area of the city to an adjacent one in a vehicle	2Dx2 minutes	Includes mounting/dismounting and related tasks.

These timings assume the Travellers are operating briskly but with due caution. Moving quickly or making a cursory search reduces time required by 20% but there is an increased risk of running into a problem. Tasks such as Recon checks to spot a problem before running into it are one difficulty level higher. If the Travellers choose to rush headlong, duration is reduced by 40% but tasks such as Recon checks are two difficulty levels higher. If the Travellers want to take twice as long on a task they can lower the difficulty level by one.

## CASUALTIES

Casualties will mount from the moment the Golems are released and ultimately the amount of deaths will be an indicator of how well or badly the Travellers did. It is not necessary – nor possible – to keep track of everyone who is killed or injured. Instead, casualties are abstracted as a value named Severity Index (SI). SI increases by +5 for every minute the incident is ongoing. This could be long after the starport attack but more likely the planetary armed forces will start to arrive and bring the situation under control. After the arrival of Zimmermayer's SolSec team, SI rises by +3 per minute instead of +5. This value can be reduced by actions on the part of the Travellers.

The final value of SI when the planetary armed forces start to arrive is used to determine how disastrous the incident is. If the Travellers do absolutely nothing, SolSec will arrive at 102 minutes and the planetary armed forces at 187 minutes. This gives a maximum value of SI 765. A much lower value can be obtained by calling for SolSec assistance early and taking actions to mitigate the disaster. A prompt call for assistance followed by SolSec rapidly appraising the situation and requesting backup results in SI 445.

## Incident Timings

Incident	Timing	Notes
Golems are released in the freight yard	0 minutes	Exactly when this happens may depend on the Travellers' actions.
Yurem's ship is ordered to prepare for take-off	15 minutes	The Travellers may be immediately alerted if they are monitoring the ship. If not, they will become aware later... perhaps too late.
SolSec FOG arrives	Call for assistance +38 minutes or 102 minutes	Zimmermayer's team will request backup from the planetary armed forces but they will not arrive until the incident is over.
Yurem's ship takes off	212 minutes	Just over two hours from the beginning of the incident, Yurem's ship lifts off if the Travellers have not taken action to stop it.
Starport attack	260 minutes	Yurem's ship crash lands at the main downport and begins disgorging Golems.
Planetary Forces begin to arrive	Call for assistance from SolSec + 85 minutes	—

## Severity Index and Incident Outcome

SI Value	Description	Notes
Less than 150	Incident Contained	Surprisingly few casualties. The incident is still bad but loss of life was minimised and public opinion can be managed to the point where there is little change in the status quo.
151–300	Incident Mostly Contained	Casualties are numerous but wider effects of the incident can be minimised by information control. There is little effect on relations between humans and aliens.
301–450	Effective Response	Casualties are heavy but it is clear the authorities did the best they could. Supremacist groups and the Order itself spin the incident as 'a vicious betrayal by untrustworthy aliens' resulting in some incidents of violence against minorities within the cluster.
451–600	Ineffective Response	Casualties are heavy and the response is open to criticism for many failings. Numerous serious incidents are sparked as news reaches other worlds in the cluster but effects are mostly confined to local worlds.
601–750	Highly Ineffective Response	Casualties are enormous and the response considered a debacle – fairly or otherwise. Numerous serious incidents are sparked on other worlds, even those outside the cluster. The event becomes infamous for years to come.
More than 750	Total devastation	There are few survivors outside the administrative annex. The atrocity will cause a backlash against aliens greater even than Sarratt hoped, despite all efforts to demonstrate what really happened.

## INTO THE FRAY

The Travellers are in what might be called a good-deed-rich environment. They can help almost anywhere. There are Golems all over the place, although initially concentrated around the freight yard. They are attacking anything that is not like them and even the ones that are just stampeding are causing fatalities. The city's security force are doing their best but most of them have only batons and stunners, and neither of those are working well. Anywhere the Travellers go there are people being chased or trapped by Golems. Helping them may require eliminating the threat but inventive Travellers may be able to impede the Golems instead. Something as simple as blocking a street with a vehicle could be a big help.

Some of the following incidents can take place anywhere in the city; others are specific. Each has an associated SI modifier. Successful resolution of each incident will reduce SI, although exactly what constitutes success is up to the Referee. This is a disaster situation and it will not be possible to save everyone. The Referee should note that some actions are symbolic. The SI reduction does not necessarily reflect the Travellers saving five people so much as serving as an indicator of the overall situation. Each incident will take time, which may be in short supply. Incidents may occur more than once and the Referee can make as much or as little as they please of each.

## CORNED CIVILIANS

Time: 5 minutes  
SI -2D+12

A group of civilians has become cut off and are trapped, perhaps in a building surrounded by angry Golems. There are 2D worker Golems nearby. Success is indicated by saving these people, which may or may not involve violence against the Golems. The Travellers might just blast everything in sight to clear a path but a stealthy escape after distracting the Golems or a daring rush to vehicles are also possibilities. This incident, like all the others, might be expanded into a major incident if some civilians are headstrong or stupid. Just as today, in the far future there are people who will stand around calling their lawyers whilst death charges head-on at them.

## HEXAPOD HAZARD

Time: 5 Minutes  
SI -1D+6

One of the hexapod utility animal Golems is on a rampage nearby. It is capable of bursting through light walls and overturning vehicles. If the Travellers choose to bypass or evade the beast no significant time is taken up but there is no SI reduction. The creature might be killed or disabled, or corralled in some way to prevent it causing further damage.



## SECURE AREA

Time: 15 minutes  
SI -3D+30

Setting up a secure area or refuge for civilians requires selecting a defensible location, clearing it and providing some means of defence. This might be little more than barricading doors and convincing the civilians they can defend their refuge with improvised weapons. It is likely the civilians will want the Travellers to stay and protect them, or at least provide some means of protection, an opportunity for roleplaying, leadership and organisational skills. Perhaps the Travellers can find some trustworthy security people or an experienced civilian and provide them with a gun or two.

## GOLEM GUNMAN

Time: 5 minutes (variable)  
SI -1D+6

A smarter than average combat Golem has got itself into a position to cause mayhem, perhaps blocking an escape route or firing from an upstairs window. Essentially the Travellers have a not-very-competent sniper situation. Although the Golem does not understand concepts like concealing its position it still must be located if it is to be dealt with and that can be difficult in the chaos. If the Travellers bypass the problem no time is taken, whereas time required to deal with it can vary depending on how cautious they want to be.

## CHARGING HORDE

Time: 10 minutes  
SI -3D+12

A veritable mob of Golems is charging down the street towards a large group of civilians, who are unable to escape due to obstacles or the difficulty of moving fast enough with the elderly, sick and juveniles. If the Travellers do nothing they will be overrun and massacred. The Referee should tailor the size of the horde to the Travellers' capabilities but there will be at least a dozen workers and a couple of combat Golems which may or may not have ranged weapons.

Solving this problem might be a matter of gunning down Golems but there are more inventive and interesting solutions. They might be lured into an enclosed area and trapped there by blocking doorways, or induced to fall victim to traps. Blocking their approach with vehicles or rubble will buy time for the victims to get away, especially if the Travellers

are able to lead them to safety. Of course, taking a shortcut through that building might lead to further danger; there are no guarantees in a disaster zone.

## DISTRESS CALL

Time: Variable  
SI -4D+12

The local comm net is going crazy, as might be expected. Among the garbled calls is a request for assistance from the manufacturing centre. A group of workers have managed to barricade themselves inside a building but for some reason the Golems are particularly determined to get at them. The number of attackers should be significant and their behaviour is odd. Hexapod beasts are smashing themselves into the building at a charge, sometimes inflicting fatal self-injury. Workers are clambering up walls to seek a way in... these are extremely determined Golems.

This could be a straight fight but the Travellers have the option to solve the problem in other ways. A grav vehicle landed on the roof could take personnel off in relays to a safer location, or the Travellers could enter the building somehow and figure out what is attracting the Golems. It transpires that some of the production machinery is still running and this produces low-frequency vibrations. Just as the ultrasonic signal annoys the Golems, these vibrations attract them. This information could be put to good use by inventive Travellers. The timing for this incident depends on whether the Travellers have to move to the threatened location or not, and how long they take about their solution.

## DOG PACK

Time: 1D minutes  
SI -2D+6

A pack of attack dog Golems is racing around the town attacking anyone who appears to have a weapon in their hand. These creatures are conditioned to take out enemy combatants but do not know the difference between a firearm and a fire extinguisher. However, they work together and are bringing down those who try to protect others. Eliminating the pack will improve the survivability of the defenders but they are fast and cunning, using terrain to their advantage.

## SOLSEC ARRIVAL

Time: 3 minutes  
SI reduction variable

When the SolSec team arrives they need information. Whether the Travellers provide it or not, Zimmermayer's people will do their best and slow the casualty rate as noted before. A solid SITREP from the Travellers will assist greatly in this. The Travellers should be encouraged to roleplay this rather than simply making a check. Apart from anything else, this will give the Referee a chance to determine what the Travellers think is going on. If the Travellers provide a decent report they may make an Average (8+) Tactics check with the highest Leadership skill among them as an additional DM. SI is reduced by -1D+1 for every point of Effect. Negative effect confuses the situation further and adds to SI instead.

## LOCATING AND STOPPING THE NOISE

Time: 2D minutes  
SI special

The Travellers may become aware of the ultrasonic noise in various ways. They will be aware there is something uncomfortable about certain areas and if they stay in one place for any length of time they will perceive a change in the ambience. It would not be difficult to calibrate a comm or similar communications device to detect and analyse the sound. Its main frequency is just above the normal threshold of human hearing, with a regular variation pattern. It is being broadcast by the city's announcement and comms system, and also from some personal comms connected to it. Only those made by Sarratt's company are doing this but almost everyone in the city has one.

Countering the signal can be accomplished in various ways. The controls for it are at the downport security office. If this is captured it will be the work of minutes to figure out the system and turn it off. This does not include the time required to reach the port or fight any guards. Turning off the signal can be accomplished by anyone familiar with comms systems. Manipulating it, on the other hand, is a more complex business. There are two ways the noise can be altered to the Travellers' benefit; changing locations or the nature of the signal.

Changing the location of the signal can be used to guide at least some of the Golems. At present it is most intense on the outskirts of the city, driving them inward and towards the residential area with the most aliens. By intensifying the signal in these areas and weakening it at the outskirts of the city the Travellers will cause some of the Golems to drift away from the main population

## GIDEON DURING THE COMMSTOWN INCIDENT

Once the incident has begun, Gideon will do what it can to help, which could lead to tragic misidentification and a friendly fire incident. Gideon is saddened by what is going on but will fight against its kind to protect innocents.

Gideon can provide two useful pieces of aid. Firstly, it is aware of the irritating ultrasonic noise and will quickly realise it is being used to agitate and direct the Golems. The Travellers can then try to locate the source and stop it. Secondly, Gideon may be able to redirect and calm some of the Golems. If permitted to try, Gideon will go off alone and draw some Golems away, corralling them or leading them on a wild goose chase. This endeavour will be partially successful, reducing SI by -5D+10. However, Gideon will lose control of a group of Golems at some point and tries to physically prevent them from attacking civilians. Gideon will not survive this.

centres. This requires 2D minutes per attempt. On a successful Difficult (10+) Electronics (comms) check, the signal intensities are changed enough that some of the Golems move away from potential targets. SI increase is reduced by -1 per minute from this point on. Thus if the SolSec team have arrived and SI is increasing by +3 each minute, this is reduced to +2.

Changing the signal's frequency pattern could make the Golems less aggressive. This requires a Very Difficult (12+) Science (xenology) check, with DM+2 if the Travellers have carefully studied the data discovered at Landell Station and DM +4 if they made a rigorous analysis of it. To gain this DM they will need to have spent considerable time and effort on the analysis without any immediate incentive to do so. Foresight and good planning are sometimes rewarded, this time with a reduction in SI of -2D+6 for every point of Effect. It is possible to make things worse by failing this check but only a little. Increase SI by +1D per point of negative Effect.

Controlling the noise remotely is a much more difficult prospect. The controls are isolated to avoid remote hacking – and to allow the evidence to be destroyed without traces remaining in the city's computer system.

However, a counter-signal could be introduced which will reduce the effectiveness of the ultrasonic noise. This requires getting access to the city's announcement and communications system, probably by hacking the main computers at the administrative annex. It is not possible to simply turn off the signal from there but a carefully engineered counter-signal could be introduced. Setting this up requires gaining command access – either by using Sarratt's override codes or some clever hacking – and creating a signal opposite to the agitation noise. This requires a Difficult (10+) Electronics (comms) check. SI is reduced by -2D per point of Effect.

## TACKLING SARRATT

Djean Sarratt will lock himself in his tower. He has his most loyal guards with him and is protected by deadlocked doors. The elevator can be blocked from approaching the upper floor by both the electronic security system and physical barriers. These place bars of crystaliron across the shaft and can only be removed by climbing past them and using manual controls to withdraw the barrier. Sarratt will station a couple of guards in the elevator shaft to prevent this, requiring the Travellers to engage in an awkward firefight or remove them in some unusual manner.

The upper level of the tower can also be accessed via its grav vehicle landing pads. These are of course watched and incoming vehicles will be fired upon. Even SolSec will be engaged, in an 'unfortunate friendly fire incident', meaning that the Travellers will have to fight their way onto the platforms if they want to access the upper levels. The doors are sealed from the inside and will have to be cut or blasted open.

If the Travellers do manage to storm Sarratt's fortress they can gain access to his computers and backdoors into the electronic security systems he has created. He will flee in a grav vehicle if he can but is prepared to surrender and take his chances in a court if things look hopeless. He has very good lawyers, contacts at the highest levels of government and has ensured that most evidence is likely to be destroyed or point in other directions. Indeed, whilst Sarratt is the cause of the incident, capturing him will not mitigate what is unfolding in the city below. He will repeatedly state his innocence and blame 'alien traitors' for the situation.

If the Travellers do take Sarratt prisoner they will have to decide what to do with him. SolSec do not have lawful grounds to arrest him, even if they have their suspicions, and may release him on condition he does not leave the city. This might annoy the Travellers but

unless there is clear evidence of wrongdoing it will appear they have assaulted the leader of the city whilst a disaster is unfolding. Questions need to be asked but there are more pressing matters.

Tackling Sarratt is therefore a more complex issue than it might at first seem. He is the obvious 'bad guy' of the adventure and is likely to escape justice if he is not captured. Yet doing so raises questions. What will the Travellers do with him once they have him? Can they justify acting against him without clear evidence? The Travellers may find themselves answering difficult questions. The Referee should keep in mind that the law requires evidence and proof, and what a band of Travellers – or even a senior SolSec operative – 'know' is not enough for the courts. The Solomani Confederation proudly respects the rule of law, which may require prosecuting those who have done what they thought was right and allowing the villain to go free. If the Travellers obtain evidence they can avoid this problem but will still face tough questions.

## THE SPACEPORT

The downport is the only part of the city outside the administrative annex secured entirely by guards loyal to the Order of Prometheus. Some of those elsewhere are members, and some would sympathise with its goals, but most of the security personnel in the city are just professionals doing their job. The downport is the only part of the city where significant amounts of firearms are available.

Personnel tasked with protecting the downport will secure its facilities as their main priority and largely ignore the plight of civilians. Their own friends and families are safe in the administrative annex, so other than known loyalists and people who might be useful these guards are not inclined to allow anyone in or out of the port. Only a trusted few know the real situation; others are Order members but have little information. They will obey their orders, which are to fire on anyone approaching the terminal buildings and in particular to secure the control centre. The Travellers may encounter frightened citizens who have been fired upon, or bodies of those who have, as they approach.

The spaceport guards are focused on events at ground level and have already had a busy time of it. This is a weakness in their defence, as they may not spot grav vehicles or Travellers who have somehow managed to get up on the buildings. The guards are not fanatics and will surrender if obviously outmatched – providing their safety can be guaranteed. Getting them to relinquish their means of self-defence with Golems

running around loose is unlikely to be possible. Thus to gain control of the spaceport the Travellers will have to fight or come up with a clever ruse.

The exact level of opposition faced by the Travellers is up to the Referee but it can be expected there would be at least a couple of dozen security personnel at the port. They are unlikely to all be firing at the same target however. Guards are deployed in pairs at key points and as roving reinforcements. Doors and other access points are barricaded wherever possible, with guards positioned to fire on anyone trying to force the doors. Properly securing the whole port and removing potential threats would take a long time, with odd guards popping up from time-to-time to cause trouble. However, it is possible to get control of key areas and defend them until the situation has stabilised. If Zimmermayer has arrived, he will make the port his command centre if it has been taken, and will try to clear it of opposition.

If the downport guards can be defeated or at least driven from the control tower the Travellers can shut off or alter the ultrasonic signal and might be able to turn the port into a safe haven for civilians. One problem with this is holdout Order loyalists, although only the most fervent will fight on after the port has been taken. The rest may go into hiding, hoping to regroup and retake the control building, try to reach the administrative annex or pretend

they are non-Order members. It is likely that some will evade justice in this manner or even get into a position to recapture the port command centre.

If the port is in friendly hands when the planetary armed forces start to arrive, SI should be reduced by -20% as the troops will have a clear area to organise themselves before pushing out into the city. If it is not, SI should be increased by +20% due to the difficulty in getting established and locating objectives. There is another benefit to capturing the port – it has a stock of firearms and ammunition. This is not huge; in addition to what the guards are using there are about 20 laser carbines and 20 security shotguns. If the guns can be distributed to friendly security personnel or civilians, this will make a real difference. There is a chance of putting firearms in the hands of Order members or trigger-happy yahoos who will make the situation worse but on balance more guns on the streets means more chances to save lives.

Naturally, there are many who request, demand or beg to be armed and many are entirely unsuitable. The Travellers can make an Average (8+) Tactics (military) or Leadership check to find the best hands to put weapons in. A DM may apply if the Travellers come up with a good scheme to make this work more effectively, perhaps making use of a Traveller's knowledge of psychology or previous experience to create guidelines. SI can be reduced by -5% per point of Effect on this check but may be increased if the result is negative.



## STOPPING THE LAUNCH

*Yurem's House of Clarifications* has orders to take off as soon as the Golems are loaded and may be instructed to launch before that if Sarratt deems it necessary. This is not as simple as the Order had hoped, however. She is an old ship and temperamental. After sitting in a freight yard for several weeks the vessel needs some preparation before launching. This comes as a surprise to the crew, who were expecting to be able to take off immediately.

The Travellers may be alerted to the imminent take-off in various ways. If they are able to monitor local communications they may overhear a frustrated crew trying to explain why they have not lifted off straight away. If the Travellers miss this, Zimmermayer may be able to provide the relevant information. The Travellers might also uncover the plan to attack the world's main starport from Sarratt's headquarters or Sarratt himself, or by interrogating captives. It might also be inferred that something is going on from the fact the ship is in the freight yard and not on the port landing apron.



Failing all this, the Travellers will hear unpleasant noises from the direction of the freight yard. Those with portside experience or who have served aboard old starships will recognise the sound of badly tuned lifters being driven to their maximum capacity. This occurs at intervals, with silence in between as the Order crew try to recalibrate the drive or just ram more power into the lifter circuits. Experienced Travellers will be able to figure out they are getting closer to being able to take-off but that flying in this condition is inadvisable.

Stopping the launch requires getting control of the ship, unless the Travellers have some other means of preventing take-off. They will have to negotiate the freight yard, which has various kinds of Golem wandering around, and gain entry to the vessel. The latter is not as difficult as it would usually be – the Order disabled the security system when they took Yurem and his crew prisoner. Hatches and valves are not secured but may be guarded.

As noted elsewhere, the Order has assigned a crew and at least four guards to the ship, with the possibility of more. These personnel are determined to carry out their mission and will fly to the starport even with a gunfight raging around them. Taking control of the engineering spaces will allow the Travellers to abort take-off by cutting power. Once it is in the air they can bring the ship down in the same manner – with disastrous effects for those aboard – but only control of the bridge will permit a landing.

The Golems in the cargo bay are secure but the Order guards are quite willing to release some in order to impede the Travellers. As an added complication, they may have locked a few in cabins near where Yurem and his companions are being held. Since the Order wants Yurem and his crew to look like they were mauled to death by their treacherous alien allies, having some close by at the point of landing will be useful. Unwary Travellers who open the wrong cabin or encounter a released Golem might find themselves fighting two battles at once.

Ultimately, the Travellers need to prevent the starport attack in order to be completely successful. If it goes ahead there will be a backlash against aliens in general and even when an investigation reveals the truth about the Golems there will be those who believe the Order's account. The damage will be done by that point and Sarratt will have achieved at least some of his goals.

# YUREM'S HOUSE OF CLARIFICATIONS

*Yurem's House of Clarifications* is a Causeway small transport. It has been internally modified in its long career and is currently being refitted for a final mission. The Order intends to use the ship for a short hop to the capital, where the cargo area will be opened to disgorge a horde of Golems. The crew for this mission are fanatical but junior members of the Order who will carry out their mission if at all possible. Their orders are to land the ship and deliver the cargo, then mingle in with the people fleeing the attack and later give an 'eyewitness account' of the treacherous alien assault.

The lowest deck contains the bottom half of the cargo modules, a small passenger luggage space and the engineering chambers.

## LUGGAGE AND STOWAGE AREA (1)

Acting as a structural member linking the fore ends of the two fuel/cargo modules, this chamber can normally only be accessed from above. It would typically be used to store bulky items for passengers or stores for the use of stewards. Yurem's crew long ago repurposed this area as a general workspace, with some light fabrication machinery and vacc suit maintenance equipment. There are also several racks recognisable as used for explosives stowage in the mining industry, although now they contain all the random objects a crew has no immediate use for but do not want to throw away. Yurem keeps a gun stashed in one of the racks, which has not been discovered, an ordinary combat shotgun with a few spare shells. Immediately aft of this chamber is a gap between the cargo/fuel modules, with the engineering section aft of that. It is obviously not possible to move through that open space but there are rarely-used hatches in the fore ends of the cargo modules.

## ENGINEERING SPACES (2)

Linking the two cargo/fuel modules, the engineering space is surrounded by fuel tanks. Hatches allow access by way of a tunnel (3) through the tanks into the aft end of the cargo holds but usually the engineering area is entered from above. The Order has stationed two technicians in these spaces and there may be additional guards as well.

## MAIN HOLDS (4)

The main holds are accessed by way of large cargo doors at the fore end and are two decks high. They have been crudely modified with holding pens for Golems and parts of the external bulkheads have been rigged to blow out using explosive bolts. Upon remote command, a horde of agitated Golems will be released onto an unsuspecting population. Most of these are workers but there are combat Golems among them. These are not armed but there are weapons for them in sealed containers which will pop open at the same time the walls blow out and the pens open. The Golems are smart enough to grab these weapons. In addition, there are attack dog types and even a handful of hexapod Golems, just to add to the mayhem.

Whilst the ship is still loading, there will be guards at ground level shepherding Golems into their cages and others on walkways around the sides of the hold at the upper deck level.

## FUEL/CARGO AREAS (5)

The fuel/cargo areas are only used for fuel when the ship intends to jump and will not be needed for the present mission. They currently stand empty and are accessed by hatches in the bulkheads connecting to the main holds. These areas are two decks high.

The upper deck of the main hull is in two parts, separated by an open space between the cargo modules. Transit between the forward (passenger) and aft (crew) modules is normally by way of 'the big pipe' carrying a corridor between these two modules but there are also walkways along the walls of the cargo holds at the upper deck level.

## PASSENGER AREA (6)

The passenger area contains the main airlock and a reception/recreation space. Yurem's crew never carried passengers and some of the cabins in this area are run-down to the point of needing a complete overhaul. Some are serviceable and were occasionally used as additional accommodation – especially when crewmembers had fallen out.

Yurem and his surviving companions have been incarcerated in the better cabins for several weeks now. They are isolated so have not seen one another and are dubious about assurances that the others are alive and well. In fact, they have not been badly treated and have been allowed to exercise under close guard. The Order wants to use them as scapegoats; they will be released from their cabins when the attack begins and become victims of the Golems. The Order hopes the presence of the ship's legal owners will divert suspicion – hopefully the authorities will conclude that Yurem was in league with the alien attackers, rather than looking for other connections.

To this end the Order has placed combat Golems in some of the cabins. How many is up to the Referee, depending on the Travellers' weaponry and capabilities. At least two are expected to be necessary, to make sure Yurem and his friends do not remain inconveniently alive.

## CREW AREA (7)

The crew area contains four crew cabins and a small common area, plus the ship's utility areas – workshop, medical bay and armoury. The latter is used by guards stationed aboard the ship for their own weapons and the cabins are made available to them too. This has resulted in a certain amount of casual neglect, with broken items unceremoniously dumped in the passenger luggage area or left where they have fallen.

The command spaces and captain's cabin are located on a small third deck projecting above the rest of the ship. The Order's two-person flight crew will be assigned here, along with a couple of guards.

## BRIDGE (8)

The Causeway-class has a standard bridge, although it is located in an unusual place. The Order has gained access to all systems – one benefit of operating in the electronic security industry is a set of skilled hackers – but has not removed Yurem's control protocols. The Seven can still control the ship if they can reach the bridge and the Travellers will also be able to if they analysed the data found in the portacoms at Landell Station.

## CREW LOUNGE (9)

The crew lounge and common area also houses an elevator shaft (with an emergency ladder inside) up from the crew spaces below. This is a dangerous choke point where guards could ambush or halt the Travellers.

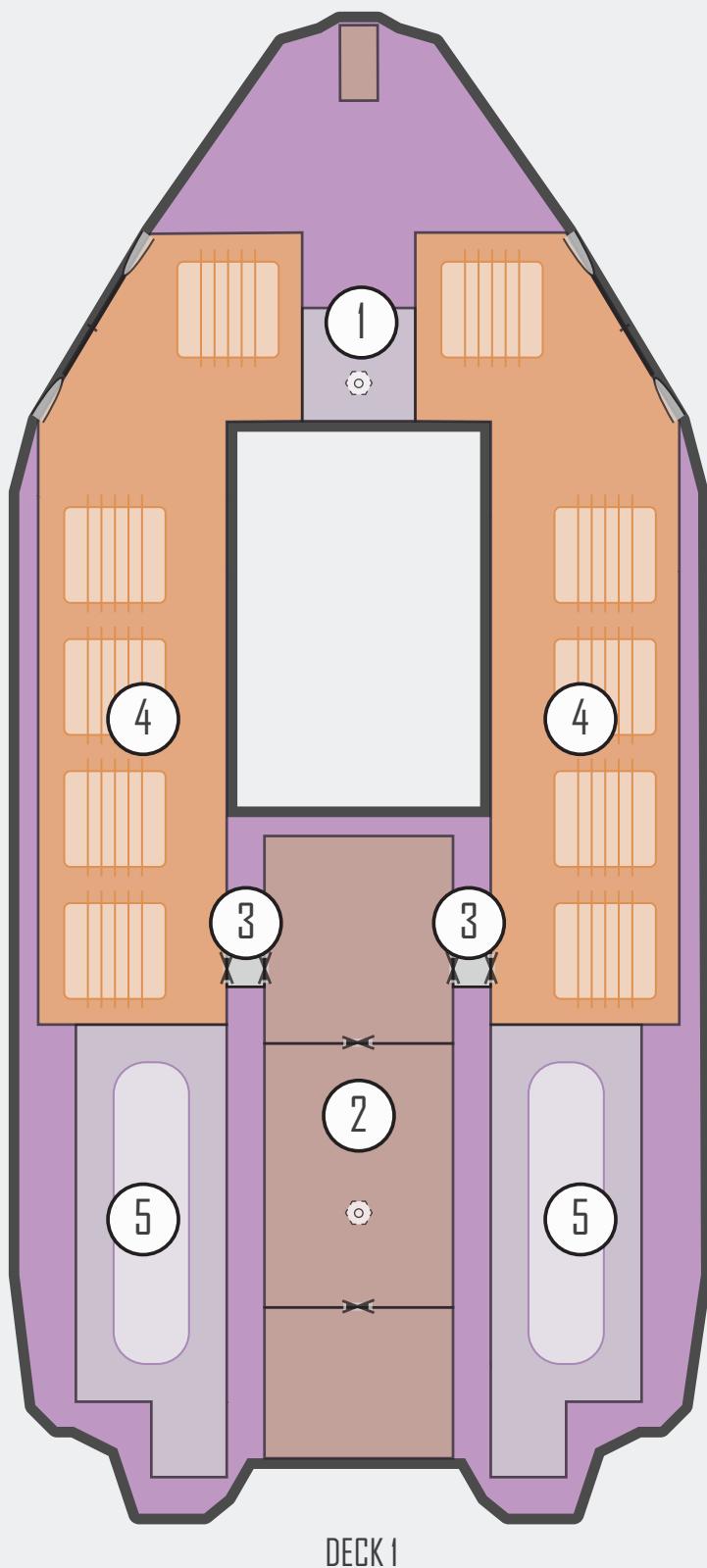
## CABIN (10)

The second top-deck cabin has been abused by Order members for some time. It is unremarkable other than having a maintenance hatch in the aft bulkhead, allowing access to a hardpoint. The *House of Clarifications* does not carry armament but the hatch could be used to access the command area from the outside.

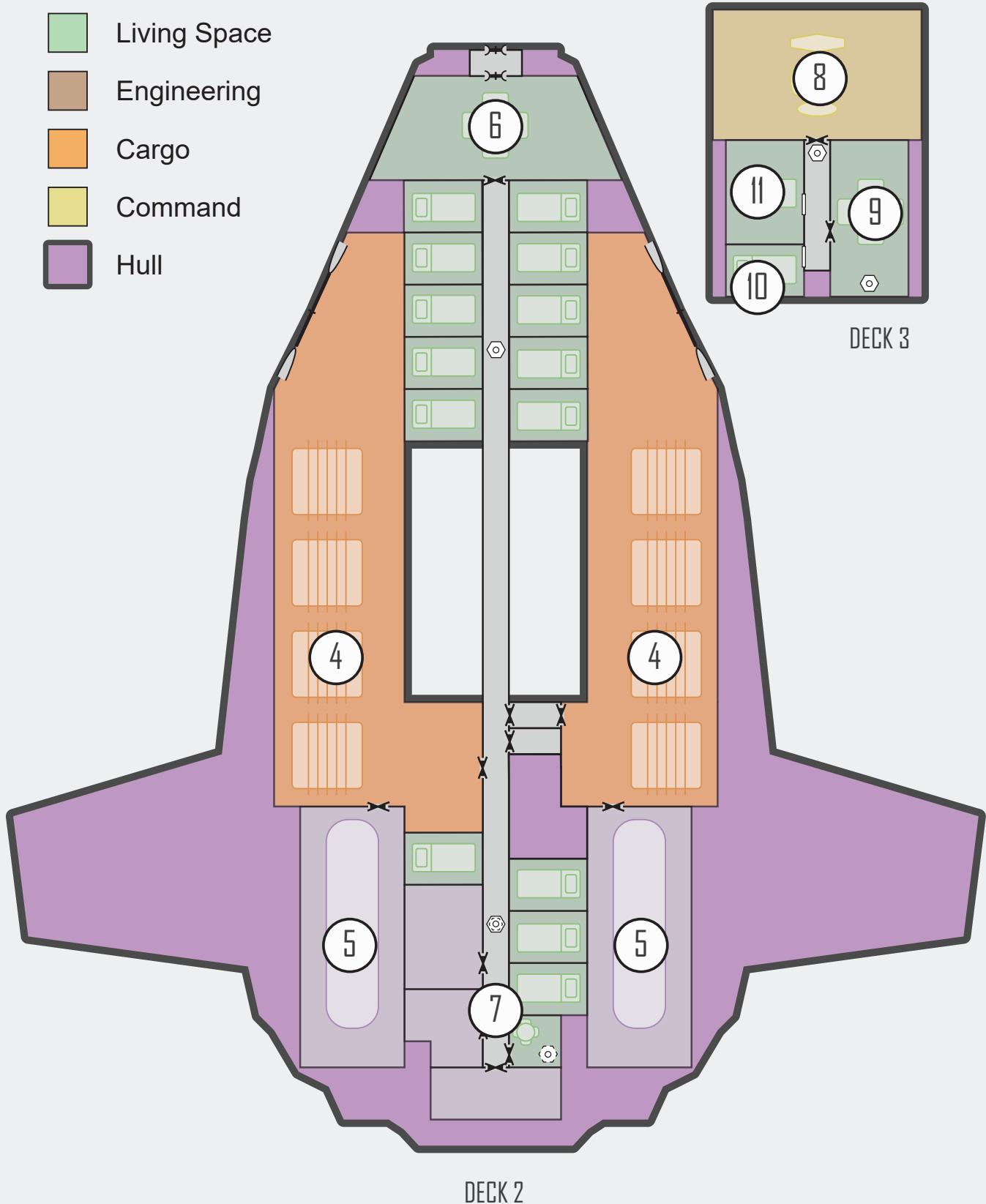
## CAPTAIN'S CABIN (11)

The large captain's cabin has been appropriated by the Order flight crew. Yurem's personal effects were dumped in the passenger cargo area.





- Living Space
- Engineering
- Cargo
- Command
- Hull



# AFTERMATH

The adventure ends with the climactic battle to save the people of Commstown and prevent the starport attack, although there are likely to be ongoing effects. Depending on the actions of the Travellers, a number of outcomes are possible. If the Travellers do little or nothing SolSec and the planetary armed forces will mobilise a response once the alarm is raised but it will take time for troops to arrive. The fate of the city will have been decided by then.

Sarratt's fate is largely up to the Travellers. Unless they take action to force a particular outcome he will do what he thinks best. It is quite likely Sarratt will stay in the city and try to weasel his way out of trouble, especially if there are handy scapegoats or there is little to implicate him. Alternatively, he may choose to flee in one of his grav vehicles and rendezvous with a shuttle.

From there he will try to escape offworld, defeated but seeking revenge. It may be that the Travellers gain a new Enemy here.

As for the Travellers, their actions will be thoroughly investigated. If they came to Commstown after agreeing to assist SolSec, and did their best to prevent the atrocity, the investigation rapidly becomes a collection of evidence for awards and commendations. A group of Travellers who succeeded in stopping the launch of Yurem's ship and contained the Golem outbreak will be considered to have acted heroically in the defence of the Confederation and her people. This does not come with much in the way of financial reward; the Travellers are granted the equivalent of a few weeks' salary for a SolSec operative, amounting to Cr5000 each along with whatever they did not spend out of their expenses money.



Travellers may be underwhelmed by the fiscal reward but heroes of the Confederation do not do it for the money. Instead they are invited to the regional capital at Firdausi where they are awarded medals – the Medal for Conspicuous Service, a high civilian decoration. Those who did not perform quite so well receive the same amount of money and a Party Commendation for Service. This is less prestigious but still quite an honour.

In the longer term, a holder of the MCS will receive DM+1 in any interaction with officials aware of the award and can expect preferential treatment wherever they go in the Confederation. Those who receive either award are local heroes for a few months and can expect invitations to appear on vid shows or to attend the opening of civic facilities. They will be recognised by people in the street and asked to pose for holos. This period of celebrity will fade but while it lasts the Travellers could milk it. For example, SolSec does not insult heroes by paying them large sums of money but the producers of 'Confederation Today' are willing to pay a considerable appearance fee. A manufacturing company wants an endorsement or an appearance in an advertisement... and so it goes on. The Travellers can come up with many ways to profit from their celebrity status and may end up making more than they would have from a simple mission reward. Of course, this requires some thought and might lead to new adventures.

The Travellers will also have proven themselves to Zimmermayer and the local commanders of SolSec. This does not mean they will be instantly given access to dark secrets or vast resources; intelligence agencies are too paranoid for that. However, the Travellers will have made some useful Contacts who might have work for them in the future or provide assistance when the Travellers need it.

## YUREM AND THE SEVEN

The survivors of The Seven may not make it through the incident. If they do, they will have to be told about the fate of their friends and debriefed by SolSec. The Travellers already know most of their tale, other than how they came to be prisoners. That was due to Yurem's rather amateurish and in-your-face technique of investigation. He came to Commstown and started asking difficult questions, which alerted Sarratt and the Order of Prometheus. Challenged by the city's security forces, Yurem and his friends allowed themselves to be taken prisoner thinking this was a minor legal matter and have been locked up in their own ship ever since.

Yurem's ship needs extensive work before it can recommence operations or pass a spaceworthiness inspection – blow-out panels are unlikely to be safe for vacuum work or entry into a planetary atmosphere. Yurem does not have the money to pay for this work. He might be able to sue for it, since his ship was unlawfully seized and modified, but this will take time and money. The authorities have no interest in helping Yurem in this matter.

What Yurem does about this is probably his own problem. He might offer the Travellers a deal whereby he joins their crew in order to make enough to repair his ship. He does have some ideas for money-making, notably in the planetoid prospecting arena. Before he left the profession he built up a list of 'rainy day' possibilities that might lead to a good strike. He will cut the Travellers in if they provide the ship. This might lead to new adventures, as might other plans to get Yurem's ship flying. If none of The Seven survived, the ship's status is nebulous. The Travellers might be able to put in a low offer for it or gain possession through some legal shenanigans. Again, this is an adventure for another day.

## SARRATT AND THE ORDER

Sarratt may or may not escape the Commstown Incident. If he does, he will have to rebuild his powerbase and perhaps make some dubious alliances. It is possible that he will reappear as the backer for political or even insurgent movements, funded by a stash of money and valuables he has squirrelled away over the years.

If SolSec capture Sarratt they will want to put him on trial for any offences they can prove. It is possible he will make a deal and all but escape justice, especially if there is little evidence linking him to the atrocity. It is just about possible that Sarratt will come out of the situation smelling of roses, having blamed 'alien infiltrators'. This will legitimise his return to being an outspoken bigot championing the – peaceful of course – removal of aliens from the Confederation other than in carefully monitored reservations. He can cite his attempt to create an integrated society and the subsequent betrayal by aliens, as evidence that 'you just can't trust any of them'.

Other members of the Order might be implicated in the incident and a few names might have been turned up by the Travellers. However, it will be clear that the Order is larger and more powerful than just Sarratt and his one city. Zimmermayer expects to be investigating them for some time to come, which once again could lead to new adventures. Even if the Travellers want none of this, they will become targets for the Order in the months and years to come. Those medals might turn out to be more like bullseyes on the Travellers' backs.

# CHARACTERS AND OPPONENTS

The Travellers will encounter a great many people in the course of *The Order of Prometheus*. Most interactions will be of a casual sort and will not require statistics or checks. The following characters may interact with the Travellers in various ways and could of course become recurring characters in a campaign running long after the events of *The Order of Prometheus*.

## GOLEMS

Some Golems are people. Others are humanoid animals and some are obviously nothing more than animals. The latter were mostly created as one-offs for experimentation but some standard types exist. Modifications to a non-humanoid Golem can vary considerably depending upon the type, the way it was grown and all manner of barely-understood vagaries.

### QUADRUPED 'ATTACK DOG' GOLEM

The attack dog Golem was created with military applications in mind. It has been described as a 'biological hand grenade' in that it is sent into a confined space to destroy everything it encounters. A specialist armoured vest was created, adding protection and – more importantly for most users – a camera and strips of explosive which can be used as a self-destruct mechanism if the beast goes out of control. The strips are set to cut the Golem's torso into segments, making regeneration impossible and hopefully rendering it instantly ineffective.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Attack Dog	26	8m
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 1	
Attacks	Claws (2D) or Bite (3D)	
Traits	Armour (+4), Regeneration, Wound Frenzy	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Hunter	



## HEXAPOD 'UTILITY ANIMAL' GOLEM

The utility animal Golem was created as a work or riding beast for harsh worlds. It is capable of digesting almost anything but needs a high-energy diet to be able to work. Without this, the creature will graze on anything remotely edible rather than do as bidden. Modified from a six-legged creature known as a galpos, the utility animal is tougher and has greater endurance. It is normally docile unless hungry but some specimens have become unstable and will attack for no reason.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Utility Animal	34	6m
Skills	Athletics (endurance) 3, Melee (natural) 1	
Attacks	Kick (2D)	
Traits	Armour (+6), Regeneration	
Behaviour	Omnivore, Grazer	



## WORKER GOLEM

Worker Golems look like humans but have a blank, dead stare. They can follow simple instructions or be taught relatively complex tasks but are no smarter than a dog and far less fun to be around. Most live around 10–15 years, with about a 10% chance of developing tumours and minor mutations each year. These are usually unsightly but may not be life threatening. Once deformities or tumours appear, the process will continue. In addition, workers occasionally become psychotic and attack anything nearby. There is sometimes, but not always, a logic to this; some will have a preferred target or respond only to perceived threats – although exactly what constitutes a perceived threat can vary enormously. Others will simply run amok until brought down. There is also a very small possibility of any given worker becoming self-aware. This would result in the gain of INT +1D in most cases, with an even smaller percentage reaching normal human levels of intellect.



## WORKER GOLEM

CHARACTERISTICS				EQUIPMENT AND TRAITS	
STR	10	INT	1	<b>Weapons:</b> Club (2D)	
DEX	7	EDU	—	<b>Traits:</b> Regeneration	
END	15	SOC	—		

## COMBAT GOLEM

Combat Golems are big, tough and stupid. After appropriate training they can be taught to obey simple commands and follow a human (or self-aware Golem) leader. More commonly they would be used as cannon fodder, with only the most basic of weapons-handling and target recognition capabilities. The Order of Prometheus is testing combat Golems but the overall consensus is that they are not ready for their intended use. They might make a useful terror weapon, however.



## COMBAT GOLEM

CHARACTERISTICS		EQUIPMENT AND TRAITS	
STR	12	INT	2
DEX	7	EDU	—
END	15	SOC	—

**Weapons:** Club (2D), or as issued  
**Traits:** Regeneration, Wound Frenzy

## GIDEON

Gideon is a self-aware Golem. It is in constant pain and nearing the end of its short life having known little but misery. Gideon's only solace is in religion. It has a small shrine in the home of Carlos Alvarez-May and prays fervently for someone to save its kind from their fate. It is a small step for Gideon to begin to believe the Travellers are divine agents sent to deliver its people. The question plaguing Gideon is not one the Travellers can answer – do created beings have souls? What about animal Golems? Would any god care about such an abomination? Gideon is deeply religious, asking nothing more from this world than a sign that something – god, demon or human – cares about it. If the Travellers permit Gideon to go with them they will find it a loyal if melancholy friend.

Gideon will not live much longer and its final weeks will be increasingly painful. The Travellers might be able to help to some extent but Gideon is a doomed creature and it knows that. Its only choices are what to do with the time remaining to it and the manner of its passing. Gideon will work towards infiltrating the Order of Prometheus with complete disregard for its own condition and is entirely willing to sacrifice itself for anyone who shows it the slightest kindness.



## GIDEON

CHARACTERISTICS		EQUIPMENT AND TRAITS	
STR	15	INT	6
DEX	6	EDU	2
END	12	SOC	1

**Traits:** Regeneration

# CIVILIANS

## RAINDELL NAVARRO

Raindell Navarro is a broker of sorts, sometimes dealing in cargo but more commonly assisting others in ventures. He has a web of contacts and a great many people have his virtual business card on their comm. Raindell's office is at Palermo Highport but he or his representatives travel widely throughout the cluster. He can be encountered aboard a liner, either accompanying a client or holding discussions that may lead to a contract.

Raindell has a solid reputation for legal and honest dealings, and is considered by many to be a guarantee of fair play on all sides. He cultivates an air of business-like harmlessness, favouring bland clothing and mainstream culture but is renowned for a sharp legal and political mind. He is rather overweight, in a stylish and comfortable manner, and uses his lack of physical fitness as an excuse to part company with an over-enthusiastic client. Those that want to rush around poking into every detail first-hand are wished well and Raindell will keep track of their progress by comm whilst he enjoys dinner and wine.

Inevitably, there are those who think Raindell is more than he seems. He does have some highly competent security people working for him, and a gun in his desk drawer, but he is in fact nothing more or less than a highly competent broker who makes a great deal of money. Some of his clients may have secrets but Raindell is what he seems.

### RAINDELL NAVARRO

GENDER			Male
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS
STR	3	INT	11 Admin 2, Advocate 3,
DEX	7	EDU	12 Broker 4, Carouse 2,
END	4	SOC	10 Diplomat 3, Investigate 1
EQUIPMENT		Weapons: Autopistol (3D-3)	



## JEROME ENTEFYSS

Jerome Entefyss comes from a long line of landholders in the Mykala region. He is resentful of the monied classes, not without cause. His family have struggled to run a business for generations but have had workers lured away or legal obstacles created when they would not provide materials at an extremely low price to people who could afford far more. The latest round in this dispute saw the business go into a fatal decline a few years ago, which was remedied only by extreme measures.

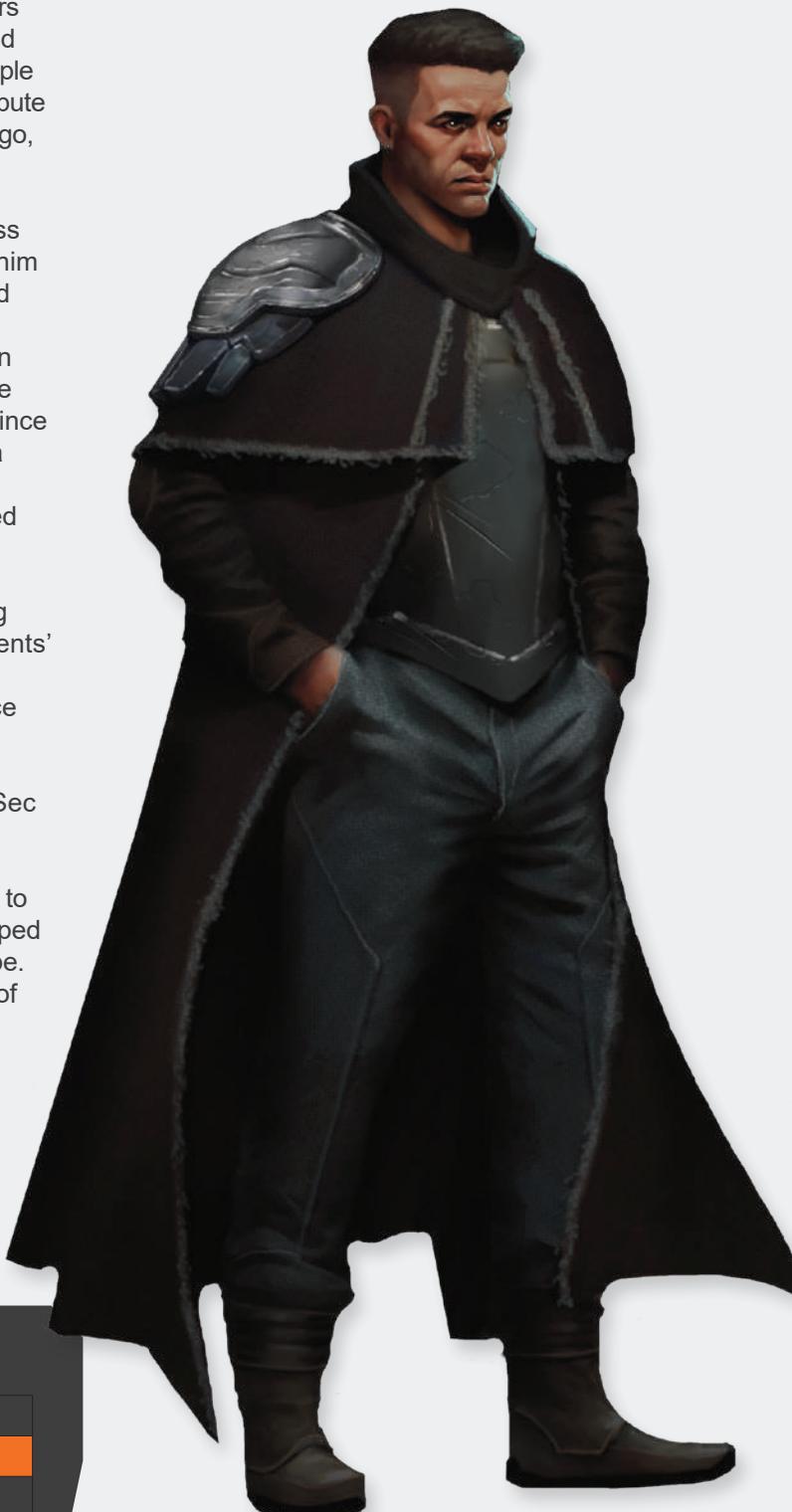
Finding it difficult to recruit workers, Jerome Entefyss agreed to a proposal from an offworlder to provide him with a solution, a workforce of Golems. They proved effective as labourers, enabling Entefyss to start exporting hand-hewn timber in larger quantities than his previous conventional logging operation. Jerome has only visited the logging operation a few times since the new workforce arrived and he has never seen a Golem. Instead he was shown around the camp by a new manager who seemed efficient and convinced himself that any misgivings were groundless.

He knows that something is not right at the logging camp but has no idea what it might be. The 'accidents' and other losses worry him but he has become accustomed to taking the manager's reports at face value and looking the other way. He would prefer investigators to go away without looking into the logging operation and has not yet admitted to SolSec that there is anything unusual.

Jerome Entefyss is not a bad person, just desperate to save the family business. He was to some extent duped by the Order of Prometheus but he was a willing dupe. Once his workers began suffering a high proportion of 'accidents' he knew something was amiss but chose not to report anything. This makes him culpable in a variety of offences and he knows it. He has reached the point where he cannot come out and admit anything for fear of the consequences but he is not willing to act directly against SolSec or the Travellers. Allowing them to wander into the woods unprepared is another matter...

### JEROME ENTEFYSS

GENDER			Male
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS
STR	4	INT	9
DEX	8	EDU	7
END	7	SOC	8



## TRAVDA VAUGHAN

Travda Vaughan is one of the few members of the original workforce who stayed after the Golems arrived. One of his motivations was greed; he was very well paid. He is also much closer to the stereotype ‘Solomani Supremacist’ than most and was easily able to overcome his distaste for the way the Golems were treated. After all, non-Solomani exist to be exploited and these things are not even that. Vaughan’s casual racism is jarring – most Solomani consider themselves a bit superior but this is straight-out hate and contempt for anything not of pure-blood. That applies to any of the Travellers who are not pure-blood or capable of passing for one.

Vaughan is callous and self-centred, and desperate to get away from this place. He will make almost any bargain to secure passage, although he is likely to go back on his word if he can get away with it. He can tell the Travellers about the facility and the way the Golems were exploited but does not know where they came from or who is in charge. He has a lot of information about the ‘accidents’ and ‘disputes’ that occurred here and will agree to tell all in return for immunity from prosecution, which Maria Culstein is empowered to agree to. However, she is quite willing to have the Travellers make such a promise and conduct an interrogation so long as she can listen in and record on an open comm. She does not have to honour any deals made by non-SolSec personnel...

Vaughan will constantly demand to be conveyed to a safe place, given a weapon or whatever he thinks will guarantee his safety at that moment. If he can he will steal a vehicle and abandon everyone else, or lock himself inside a building and refuse to let anyone else in. In short, he is a thoroughly bad sort and cannot be trusted. SolSec considers him a witness and possible suspect but also a citizen in need of protection. They will try to balance these requirements as best they can but there is no guarantee Vaughan will not slip away at some point.

### TRAVDA VAUGHN

GENDER			Male
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS
STR	9	INT	6 Admin 1, Deception 1,
DEX	8	EDU	Drive (track) 2, Electronics
END	10	SOC	(computers) 1, Persuade 1



## VERONIQUE VALGORCH

Veronique ValGorch's bearing and demeanour are haughty and arrogant towards 'lesser' individuals but distinctly pally towards those she deems worthy. In short, she exists in a social world far above the masses and is only respectful of those who move in similar circles. She also extends a pretence of this respect to those who might be useful, showing them a world of glamour and lavish excess in the hope of gaining their cooperation.

As the head of a powerful household and a member of the Order of Prometheus, Veronique is entirely contemptuous of what she calls 'the subs' (in the context of sub-human). The Golems are a useful and cheap tool, and those that 'go wrong somehow' can be easily eliminated. Any problems that occur will fall upon the lower orders; her human workforce. Thus there is nothing whatsoever wrong with mistreating the Golems as far as she is concerned. She is also far more racist than most Solomani and will hold forth on ideas about an alien conspiracy to anyone who will listen. Given her social status, she is able to pin down most people and talk at them. It is a measure of how highly she regards someone (or wants them to feel they are regarded) whether she spouts conspiracy theories as fact or makes a pretence of discussing the issue in a more reasoned manner.

Veronique is a member of the Order of Prometheus but does not know everything about it. She has been told that the 'subs' (Golems) are a degenerate once-human race rather than created beings and has taken the story at face value as it fitted her preconceptions. She sees the Golems as a cheap source of labour and 100% obedient guards, both of which suit her agenda. Although she rails against the 'insidious alien threat' she is mostly concerned with forwarding her own position and gaining ever more wealth. The leaders of the Order consider her short-sighted and therefore unworthy of knowing their true plan.



## VERONIQUE VALGORCH

GENDER			Female	
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS	
STR	4	INT	10	Admin 4, Broker 3,
DEX	5	EDU	13	Deception 1, Electronics
END	6	SOC	12	0, Persuade 3

EQUIPMENT	<b>Weapons:</b> Those are for the lower orders <b>Armour:</b> That is what guards are for <b>Equipment:</b> Anything she wants to buy
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## THE ESTATE GUARDS

Mu'izzi has a Law Level of 4, forbidding private ownership of automatic or energy weapons. Of course, the ValGorch family do not care about such things and have provided laser carbines – but no relevant training – for their guards to use on the estate. These weapons are entirely functional but really are just status symbols. The estate faces no significant threat, so possession of bespoke light flak jackets and illegal laser weaponry is more about showing off just how rich and important the family is than actually protecting them. The guards run unimaginative pre-set patrols and are more concerned about avoiding punishment than doing their jobs properly. Blame deflection is valued more highly than teamwork and as a result guards mistrust one another. This is not an effective setup, which might be exploited by the Travellers.



## VALGORCH ESTATE GUARDS

GENDER			—	SKILLS		
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS			
STR	9	INT	5	Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee (unarmed) 2, Recon 1		
DEX	6	EDU	4			
END	9	SOC	6			
EQUIPMENT		<b>Weapons:</b> Shotgun (4D, Bulky) or Rifle (3D) or Laser Carbine (4D) <b>Armour:</b> Bespoke Flak Jacket (+4)				

## TRAIN STAFF

The train staff are essentially stewards and technicians. The worst they normally have to deal with is an outburst from a customer dissatisfied with a hot beverage. They think in terms of keeping people calm and quiet, and allowing the train's systems to deal with most problems. Staff are not armed but there is a security locker near the driving compartment of the passenger section. This contains stunners and batons which some of the staff have been trained to use. Their security training is minimal and most are hesitant to do more than hit the emergency button. This normally summons an on-call security team aboard a grav vehicle but of course it is not working. The staff are professional but out of their depth and do not fully understand the problem. They may become an obstacle for the Travellers whilst doing their best to follow standard procedures in a distinctly non-standard situation.



## TRAIN STAFF

GENDER			—	SKILLS		
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS			
STR	6	INT	7	Diplomat 1, Melee 0, Persuade 0, Steward 2		
DEX	8	EDU	7			
END	5	SOC	7			

## DJEAN SARRATT

Djean Sarratt is an example of a ‘true hater’, rare even in the Solomani Confederation. In his guise as the reformed racist he speaks blandly of integration and mutual respect and is convincing enough that most people do not question his change of heart. However, he has always hated the Imperium and by association every alien or non-Solomani human associated with it.

Sarratt’s hatred of all things Imperial is a family tradition. A distant relative owned property on Terra before the Solomani Rim War and its capture by the Imperials is still seen as a personal affront by the Sarratt family. In Sarratt’s twisted view his ancestral estate is being violated by corporate nobodies and their alien cronies on a daily basis and only by rallying the people of the Confederation against the Imperials can anything be done. Sarratt is rather vague on exactly how stirring up racist hatred will lead to the liberation of Terra but if it puts him in a position of influence that will be a step in the right direction.

Although his enmity towards aliens is real, Sarratt arrived at it due to annoyance at the loss of Terra. In this, he may actually be worse than those who hate for direct reasons – his hatred is driven by rather petty reasons. Nonetheless, it is very real and very deep. Sarratt has become skilled at maintaining his poise as an agent of integration but he cannot wait to be heartbroken at the betrayal of his goodwill and return to his original persona as a bile-spewing racist.



### DJEAN SARRATT

GENDER		Male	
CHARACTERISTICS		SKILLS	
STR	4	INT	9
DEX	9	EDU	11
END	5	SOC	10
EQUIPMENT		<b>Weapons:</b> Something from the armoury, if necessary <b>Armour:</b> Concealed Torso Protection (+4)	

## ISLA BENNEI

Bennei is a relatively minor member of the Order. Unlike Sarratt she is not aggressively racist but does fervently believe that the Solomani people have lost their way. Imperial influences are creeping in everywhere, with the Confederation moving towards a conciliatory position which will leave Holy Terra in Imperial hands forever. The Order is working towards a more confrontational stance of which she approves wholeheartedly.

When dealing with those thought to be friendly to the Order, Bennei will openly speak out against Imperial influences. She is loyal to what she thinks are the Order's ideals but does not know the extent of what Sarratt plans. Bennei knows about the Golems and has come to see them as 'just animals, although they look disturbingly human'. Exploiting them is acceptable since it will provide an enormously increased worker base for marginal worlds. This translates to a stronger Confederation economy, which in turn supports a larger military capable of demanding concessions from the damned Imperials.

Bennei considers the idea of Golem shock troops to be acceptable, since it will reduce human losses in a future war. She would be horrified at the idea of turning them loose against civilians, even Imperials, and if she can be convinced of what is about to happen she will try to prevent it. This switch of allegiance will not happen instantly nor be easy; Bennei is likely to hesitate, or hope things just somehow work out, but ultimately she would try to prevent a Golem release. Sarratt knows this and considers her expendable. Indeed, he will deliberately leave her outside the secure administrative complex, hoping to deceive his enemies into thinking he is not yet ready to act or will choose to delay until the Order's members are all safe.



## ISLA BENNI

GENDER				Female
CHARACTERISTICS				SKILLS
STR	6	INT	10	Admin 2, Advocate 0,
DEX	4	EDU	10	Diplomat 3, Drive 0,
END	6	SOC	9	Electronics (computers) 1

## COMMSTOWN GUARDS

Personnel who protect the spaceport or keep order in the residential areas are drawn from all walks of life but those who secure the administrative annex are pure-blood Solomani. Few are even aware the Order exists and most would vigorously disagree with its ideals but they are loyal to their home city and a leader who has always treated them well. Guards carry stunners most of the time but have other weapons available. These include laser carbines and shotguns, various handguns and tear gas grenades.



## COMMSTOWN GUARDS

GENDER			—
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS
STR	8	INT	6
DEX	8	EDU	6
END	10	SOC	6
EQUIPMENT		<b>Weapons:</b> Autopistol (3D-3), Laser Carbine (4D), Shotgun (4D, Bulky), Stunner (2D+3, Stun) <b>Armour:</b> Flak Jacket (+7) <b>Equipment:</b> Personal Comm	

## ORDER FLIGHT CREW

The Order has placed a small flight crew aboard the *House of Clarifications*. There are two bridge crew and two engineers. Their shipboard skills are not relevant to this adventure. They are accompanied by at least two guards in the bridge area and two more in the crew/engineering spaces. Additional guards will be present if the Order is expecting trouble or whilst the Golems are being loaded.



## FLIGHT CREW

GENDER			—
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS
STR	5	INT	8
DEX	8	EDU	8
END	6	SOC	6
EQUIPMENT		<b>Weapons:</b> Autopistol (3D-3) <b>Equipment:</b> Personal Comm	

## SURVIVORS OF THE SEVEN

Three members of The Seven are still alive. Physically they are in reasonable shape but they have been incarcerated for a long period with no certainty that others are alive. All three are angry, mistrustful and keen to get some payback.

### YUREM MAY

Yurem is not a coward by any means but he dislikes risk and danger. This stems from a career spent blasting chunks off asteroids and collecting the bits. He will much prefer to know what the plan is (and if there is a plan at all!) before charging into the unknown. However, he is angry enough to throw caution to the winds if he finds out his friends died at Landell Station.



### YUREM MAY

GENDER		Male	
CHARACTERISTICS		SKILLS	
STR	9	INT	9
DEX	8	EDU	9
END	7	SOC	6
Electronics (sensors) 3, Engineer (j-drive) 1, Engineer (power) 2, Explosives 2, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Leader 1, Mechanic 2, Vacc Suit 2			

### KAMARI SANTANA

Kamari earned her pilot's license in the Home Forces of her homeworld, having served a term in order to pay for college. After that she wandered, taking whatever jobs she could get. She actually does not like Yurem or his friends that much but has come to love their ship. The alterations to the *House of Clarifications* will upset her but not to the point where Kamari will do something stupid. She will try to preserve the vessel even if Yurem feels it has to be sacrificed.



### KAMARI SANTANA

GENDER		Female	
CHARACTERISTICS		SKILLS	
STR	6	INT	7
DEX	11	EDU	8
END	5	SOC	6
Astrogator 2, Electronics (sensors) 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Vacc Suit 1			

## DILLAN ESPARZA

Dillan is the group's jack-of-all-trades and knows Yurem from their time aboard mining ships. He is perhaps the least motivated of The Seven and would prefer to just get away than to fight The Order. He will abandon the ship and the Travellers but not his friends; if Kamari and Yurem are down Dillan will disappear.



### DILLAN ESPARZA

GENDER			Male
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS
STR	8	INT	8
DEX	6	EDU	6
END	10	SOC	6
Electronics (computers) 1, Engineer (j-drive) 2, Jack-of-all-Trades 1, Mechanic 2, Melee (bludgeon) 2			

## SOLSEC OPERATIVES

The Travellers will interact with a number of SolSec personnel during this campaign. They may be surprised to discover that most are far more than sinister agents of national security.

### MAJOR AIDEN ZIMMERMAYER, SOLOMANI SECURITY, CALLSIGN KENNIG-ACTUAL

Aiden Zimmermayer is related, although not closely, to a number of powerful individuals on Home. Although the Solomani Confederation loudly proclaims that nepotism is far less prevalent than in the Imperium – and not without some foundation – family connections are still important. This was enough to fast-track Zimmermayer's career in SolSec, although he could not have managed his rapid promotion without talent and hard work.

Zimmermayer is loyal to SolSec as an organisation rather than for its role as protector of the Solomani. The status of the organisation, and to a lesser extent his own position within it, is more important to Zimmermayer than the organisation's mission. This is not usually a problem, since success in the mission leads to SolSec being well regarded and remaining powerful. What it does mean is that Zimmermayer resents any challenge to the authority of SolSec as a whole.

In short, Aiden Zimmerman would quietly go into exile or even prison if it meant that SolSec emerged from a situation with its reputation intact. He is a true believer of sorts and might be manipulated by higher-ranking officers whose agendas are more personal.

If the Travellers treat Zimmermayer and his agents with respect they will earn a friend who may help them in the future without asking anything in return. Disrespect will be remembered and Zimmermayer is cold enough to abandon questionable allies to their fate. He will do almost anything to protect Confederation citizens however, even if his primary goal is to make SolSec look good rather than purely out of patriotism.

### LIEUTENANT MARIA CULSTEIN, SOLOMANI SECURITY

Maria Culstein is the leader of Field Operations Team Kennig-Posture, a routine-operations unit that operates throughout the cluster. She is in most ways a typical SolSec professional; she knows her work is important and believes in protecting the people of the Confederation but ultimately SolSec is a job rather than a calling. Maria is polite and professional in her dealings but unyielding when necessary.

Maria and her team are investigating the unusual cluster of disappearances and accidents surrounding the logging operation at the Entefyss Conglomerate. She is also aware

## MAJOR AIDEN ZIMMERMAYER

GENDER			Male
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS
STR	7	INT	9
DEX	9	EDU	12
END	6	SOC	11
EQUIPMENT		<b>Weapons:</b> ScMP-8 (3D-4, Auto 3), SMP-8 (3D, Auto 3) or STR-10 (3D+2, Scope) <b>Armour:</b> Diplo (+3) <b>Equipment:</b> SolSec Comm	



## LIEUTENANT MARIA CULSTEN

GENDER			Female
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS
STR	9	INT	8
DEX	8	EDU	7
END	9	SOC	8
EQUIPMENT		<b>Weapons:</b> ScMP-8 (3D-4, Auto 3), SMP-8 (3D, Auto 3) or STR-10 (3D+2, Scope) <b>Armour:</b> Diplo (+3) <b>Equipment:</b> SolSec Comm	



that Yurem May was poking into the situation, though some of his questions were positively weird. As yet she has no suspicions about the existence of Golems; she thinks she is investigating a serial killer or perhaps a cover-up of bad working practices that have led to a rash of accidents.

### SOLSEC OPERATIVES

The majority of SolSec team members are low-ranked technicians or security personnel. They can conduct a basic questioning or secure a location but will usually defer to their team leader when any complex situation arises. The majority are professionals rather than zealots. Those showing more initiative and good judgement tend to be rapidly promoted out of supporting roles, perhaps contributing to the impression of the average SolSec operative as being unimaginative to the point of mindlessly following rules and directives.

## SOLOMANI SECURITY OPERATIVES

GENDER			—
CHARACTERISTICS			SKILLS
STR	8	INT	7
DEX	7	EDU	7
END	8	SOC	7
EQUIPMENT		<b>Weapons:</b> ScMP-8 (3D-4, Auto 3), SMP-8 (3D, Auto 3) or STR-10 (3D+2, Scope) <b>Armour:</b> Diplo (+3) <b>Equipment:</b> SolSec Comm	

# STARSHIPS AND EQUIPMENT

Many of the starships in use throughout the Solomani Confederation are similar to Imperial designs. However, Solomani ships have always had their own unique flavour and since secession from the Imperium there has been a move away from anything resembling an Imperial vessel. Sometimes this means a Solomani ship will have near-identical outfitting but a different hull form, whilst in other cases an entirely different vessel will fit in the same niche as an Imperial ship.

## CAUSEWAY SMALL TRANSPORT

The *Causeway*-class was developed to fill a similar niche to the subsidised merchant, although with greater strategic mobility. This is afforded by the use of configurable cargo/fuel tank modules. The ship itself is capable of jump-1 and has a dedicated fuel supply for the power plant. When operating in-system, the entire jump fuel/cargo capacity can be dedicated to freighting space and on a main or in a cluster the ship needs to use only one of its fuel/cargo modules. Filling both allows two consecutive jumps, enabling the vessel to cross between mains or undertake there-and-back missions without refuelling.

Hull form is somewhat unusual and consists of five areas. Two cargo modules run parallel to one another with other modules spacing them. Between the forward ends of the cargo modules is a one-deck-high passenger area, with a crew area between the modules aft. This is two decks high, with its lower deck connected to the upper deck of the cargo module. Below the crew area and projecting forward towards the passenger module are the engineering spaces.

The crew area is a short rectangular structure two decks high, creating a partial third. This uppermost deck contains the bridge and what is rather grandly termed the command suite; a high cabin for the use of the captain, a standard stateroom which may be set up as an office or entertaining area and four tons of common area which is typically used as a crew lounge. Whilst it is unusual to site the bridge so far aft, this does have the advantage of concentrating crew with their accommodations.

The lower part of the crew module contains crew accommodation consisting of four standard cabins and an eight-ton common area. The ship's armoury, medical bay and workshops are also located in this area. Below this, and projecting forward of the other two decks, are the engineering areas which total roughly 47 tons. This includes a fuel supply sufficient to run the ship's systems and manoeuvre drive for four months.

Alongside the engineering and crew spaces are two two-deck-high cargo modules. Each displaces around 150 tons. Of this, 105 tons is standard cargo space accessed through large cargo doors at the forward end. The aft part of each cargo module is sealed off by a bulkhead and contains a configurable fuel/cargo space. This can carry 40 tons of fuel or 40 tons of cargo but has to be entirely given over to one or the other. With one module carrying fuel the ship can make a single jump.

At the forward end of the ship is a single-deck passenger area displacing roughly 66 tons. Most of this tonnage is on the upper deck, which contains 10 standard cabins and a 16-ton common area. It is common for one of the cabins to be used by one or two stewards, ensuring someone is always on call. A smaller lower deck area consists of a nine-ton luggage stowage area, although this is often repurposed. Passengers enter the ship by way of an airlock on the upper deck and are confined to the passenger area for the duration of their journey unless the crew invite them to move around the ship. Crew access is by way of a corridor extending forward from the crew module. It is also possible to traverse the personnel gantries running along the walls of the forward cargo areas and use maintenance hatches to enter the passenger area.

The *Causeway*-class is not routinely armed but has a lightly armoured hull. There are four hardpoints, two located on the aft outer surfaces of the cargo/fuel pods and two on the forward dorsal surface of the cargo modules. The fifth is located behind the command suite on the uppermost deck and has an arc of fire restricted to aft and dorsal. The *Causeway*-class is not well suited to missile armament but if fitted with missile turrets on the forward dorsal mounts a magazine can be improvised from the cargo area.

These vessels were designed to be customised. The basic version is a freight/passenger ship which offers reasonable passenger capacity and around 250 tons of freight on a jump-1 route, rising to over 300 tons on an in-system run with all available capacity used. Power allocation includes room for alterations without having to shut down systems prior to jump. Private users in questionable areas typically fit a turret or two equipped with lasers, which will not strain the ship's capabilities. However, more radical alterations are possible.

The most common is to repurpose the passenger area for additional cargo. A version of the *Causeway*-class set up for prospecting or planetary exploration instead uses this area for laboratories, or installs scientific

facilities in the cargo areas and retains personnel accommodation. There are rumours of a militarised version with the forward cargo areas cut away and replaced with grapples for fighters, although this is said to make the vessel unstable during a planetary landing.

Overall, the *Causeway*-class is comparable to the Type-R subsidised merchant. It costs considerably more at MCr138 and has about 25% greater cargo capacity when on a jump-1 run. Admirers of the ship consider the trade-off favourable due to the ability to cross between clusters and switch to high-capacity in-system runs. Greater survivability is also a selling point, although to the typical Solomani operator the most important thing is that the *Causeway*-class is 'ours'.



# CAUSEWAY SMALL TRANSPORT

TL12

		TONS	COST (MCr)
Hull	500 tons, Standard	—	25
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 2	12.5	2.5
M-Drive	Thrust 2 (energy efficient x2)	10	25
Jump Drive	Jump 1 (decreased fuel x2, energy efficient)	17.5	39.375
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 210	14	14
Fuel Tanks	16 weeks of operation	5.6	—
Bridge		20	2.5
Computer	Computer/20	—	5
Sensors	Civilian	1	3
Systems	Cargo Cranes (150 tons) x2 Fuel Scoop Repair Drones Medical Bay Armoury Workshop	6 — 5 4 1 6	6 1 1 2 0.25 0.15
Staterooms	High x1 Standard x15	6 60	0.8 7.5
Common Areas	Crew (12 tons) Passengers (16 tons)	12 16	1.2 1.6
Software	Manoeuvre/0 Jump Control/1 Intellect Library	— — — —	— 0.1 — —
Cargo		219.4 Cargo/Fuel Modules (40 tons) x2	— 84 0.42

## Crew

Captain, Pilot,  
Astrogator,  
Engineers x2

**Hull: 200**

## Running Costs

### MAINTENANCE COST

Cr11533/month

### PURCHASE COST

MCr138.395

## Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems

100

Manoeuvre Drive

50

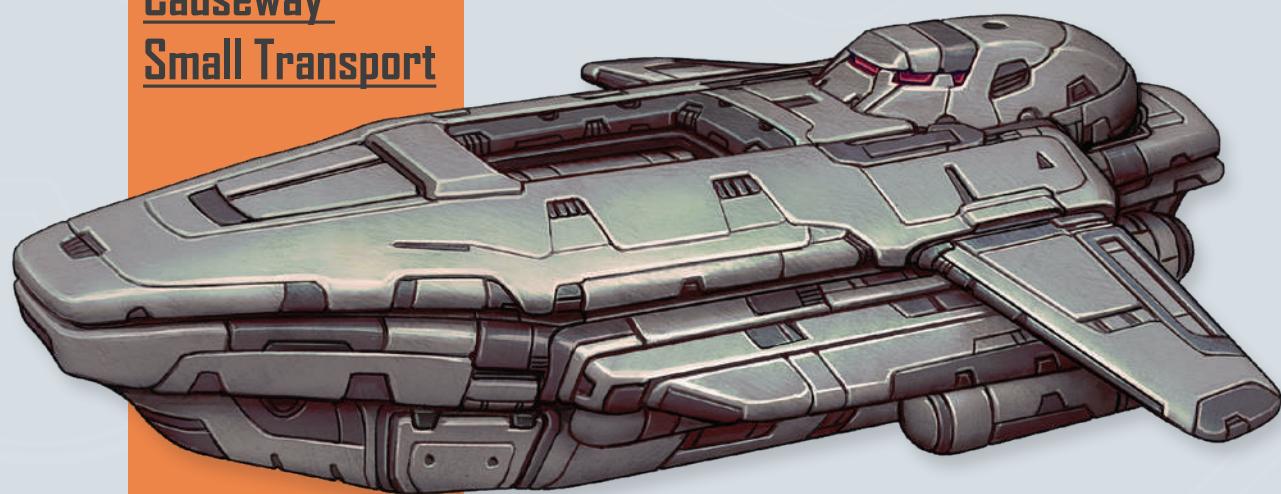
Jump Drive

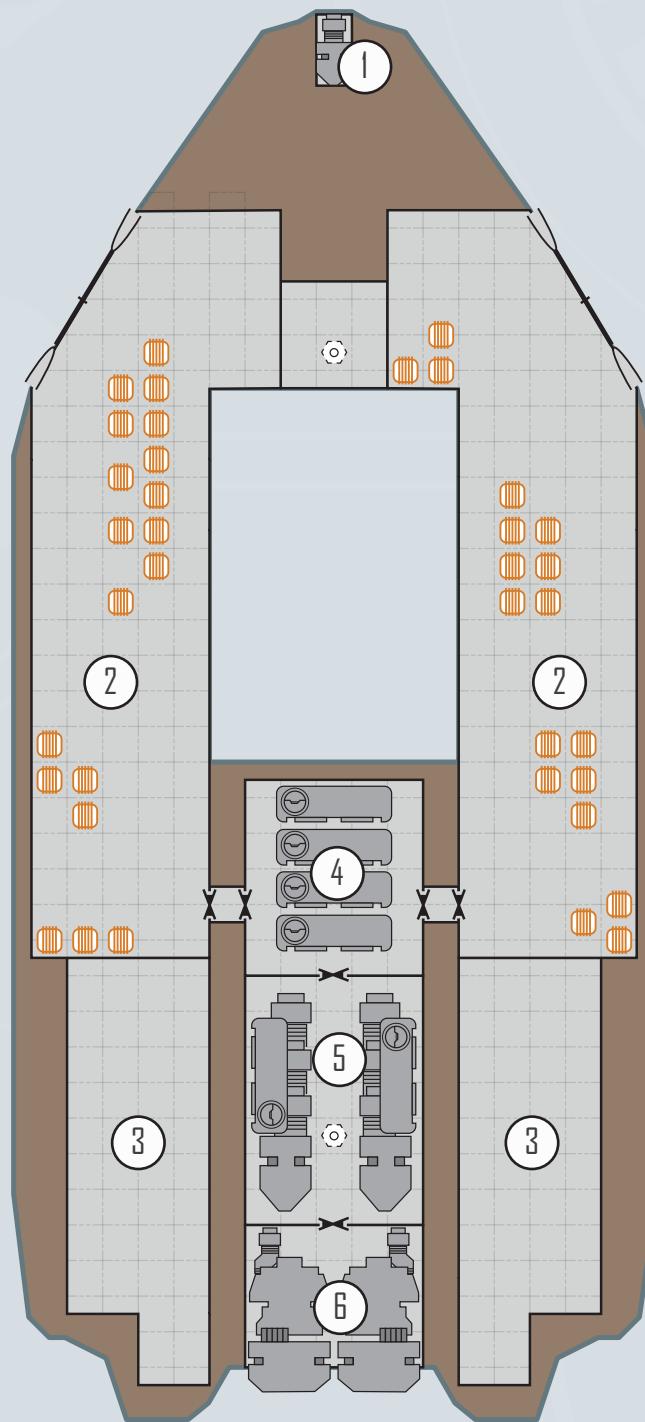
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Sensors

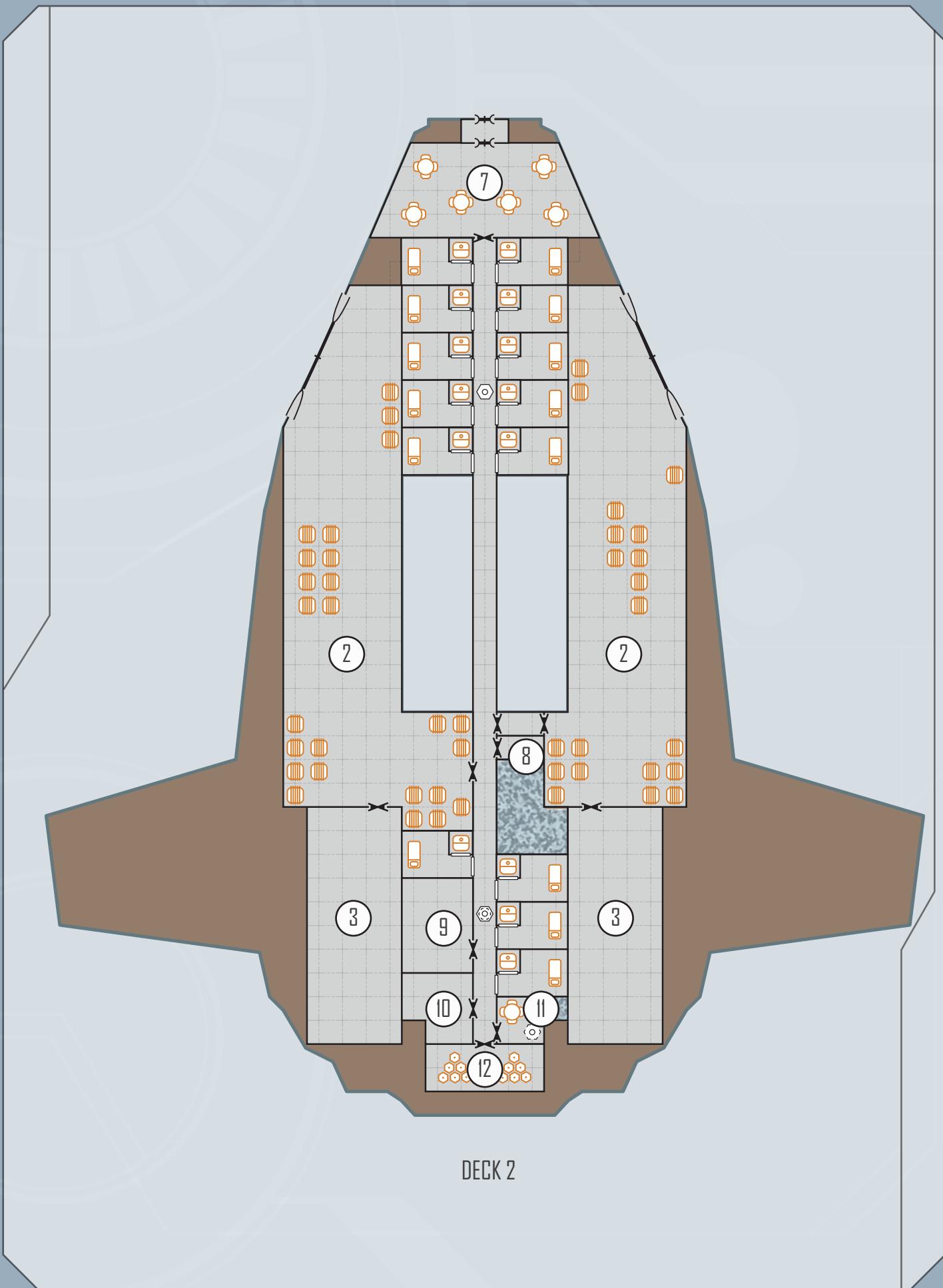
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Causeway  
Small Transport

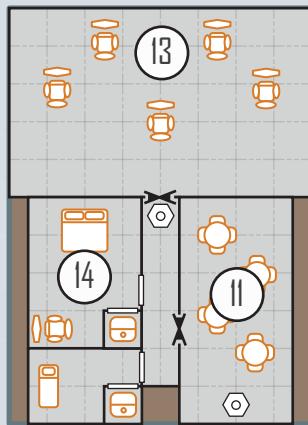




DECK 1



1. Sensors
2. Cargo Bay
3. Cargo/Fuel Modules
4. Power Plant
5. J-Drive
6. M-Drive
7. Passenger Common Area
8. Armoury
9. Workshop
10. Medical Bay
11. Crew Common Area
12. Repair Drones
13. Bridge
14. High Stateroom



DECK 3

## HARDWARE

Most items used in the Solomani Confederation are similar to Imperial designs, since both are human-centric societies. Solomani items tend to vary more, whereas designs and colour schemes tend to be standardised in the Imperium. The average Solomani will cite this as an advantage over Imperial designs, which are ‘geared to maximising sales in all markets rather than having any soul or character’. There is some truth in this, although the same charge could be levelled at many items of Solomani origin.

### GOLEM GUN

There are many who would hesitate to put a firearm in the hands of a creature so stupid and unpredictable as the typical combat Golem. Nevertheless, the leaders of the Order of Prometheus are willing to do so and have gone so far as to produce a disposable weapon specially for them. It is a rather clumsy thing, consisting of eight semi-disposable laser tubes arranged in an octagon around a central power supply, with a pistol-type primary grip and foregrip. The laser units are

cheaply made, to deliberately loose tolerances, and the pulse generation unit is overpowered. The resulting weapon is potent but inaccurate (DM-2 to attack rolls).

The barrels cannot handle the intensity of the pulse put through them and can only be fired once before needing to be removed and refurbished or replaced. This is easy to do, although most Golems are not up to the task of servicing their weapons. Thus any given Golem has eight shots and no reloads, which is considered an advantage by their creators. For simplicity, the Referee should assume that any barrel fired is burned out.

Power cells are typically good for about 20 discharges, although they are cheaply made and can vary by as much as 50% either way. All Golem Guns have a remote-disable feature, which is usually keyed to a particular location or switched on and off at the discretion of a controller. The fact that such measures are considered useful suggests that perhaps the Golems are not ready for combat applications.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Power Pack Cost	Traits
Golem Gun	12	50	4D+6	2.5	Cr500	8	—	Zero-G

## SOLSEC PERSONAL WEAPONS

SolSec uses a great variety of personal weaponry, including military hardware only available to elite formations. However, for most operations standard firearms are sufficient. When selecting a calibre for general use, SolSec had to balance the need for ease of carry and discretion with the possibility that a lone agent might have to tackle multiple assailants. A one-shot stop must be a possibility or at least the capability to deter a group or cause them to retreat with their casualties. The obvious choice was to use the 8mm cartridge developed for the standard naval officer's sidearm but fire it from a weapon with additional capabilities.

The ScMP-8, sometimes nicknamed 'skimpy', is in many ways a standard self-loading pistol. However, its designation stands for SolSec Compact Machine Pistol, following a nomenclature dating back to Old Earth. Fed from a 12-round magazine the weapon has a semi-automatic action and de-cocking lever rather than a manual safety, with magazine and trigger safeties disengaged by correct operation. The weapon can be brought immediately into action by simply pulling the trigger. There is no selector; a short trigger pull fires a single round and a full draw fires a three-round burst. The relatively light cartridge keeps felt recoil down but a short barrel and compact frame do produce significant muzzle flip.

This weapon is compact and constructed from materials that are harder to detect than conventional firearms. Although not a 'stealth weapon' as such it does impose DM-2 on attempts to detect it by physical or instrumental search. The weapon is favoured by operatives who may need to be discreet in their weapon carry but also may have to put a suspect down hard and fast at close range. For open combat operations most would take an army-model gauss pistol instead.

The SMP-8 (SolSec Machine Pistol) is an entirely different weapon. It takes the form of a bullpup-configuration submachinegun with vertical foregrip and short barrel. A 40-round ammunition cassette is loaded into the top of the stock but at need an ScMP-8 magazine can be used instead. The SMP-8 is made from the same materials as the ScMP-8 but is much larger. As a result it imposes DM-2 on searches using instruments only. These weapons are sometimes concealed in attaché cases by agents operating discreetly. Like its smaller stablemate, the SMP-8 uses a double-action trigger but is capable of selective fire – single shots, three-round bursts or fully automatic fire. A barrel and sight kit is available for Cr250 (if one can be found on the open market); this in no way creates a sniping weapon but it can be useful for short-range marksmanship in a hostage situation.

The STR-10 (SolSec Tactical Rifle) is chambered for a long 10x55mm cartridge and primarily used by emplaced marksmen. It has a telescopic scope and bipod as standard, although these can be removed at need. The long, heavy barrel provides accurate fire to long ranges but the usual application is urban sniper and counter-sniper work or the disablement of vehicles. The STR-10 is not a 'combat' rifle; a SolSec team expecting heavily armed opposition would be better equipped than an infantry unit of the Confederation Army. Instead this weapon is intended for general issue in civilian law enforcement.



ScMP-8

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
ScMP-8	10	10	3D-4	0.8	Cr375	12	Cr10	Auto 3
SMP-8	10	25	3D	1.8	Cr550	40	Cr25	Auto 3
STR-10	10	600	3D+2	3.5	Cr650	24	Cr15	Scope



STR-10



SMP-8

### SOLSEC SUBTLETY?

The image of SolSec as a sledgehammer for the Solomani Party is a distortion originating mainly in Imperial propaganda. Whilst high-profile operations do serve a purpose, an organisation that cannot be subtle cannot succeed. SolSec is well aware that the Party needs the support of the general population and SolSec exists to defend the people by serving the Party. Thus the average SolSec officer is diplomatic and discreet – at least most of the time.

Low-level thugs are useful sometimes, especially in areas that are openly unruly. SolSec can deploy the whole spectrum from heavily armed blunt instruments of the state to diplomatic and genuinely helpful individuals, used as an indication of the Party's favour. SolSec can be very heavy-handed when it wants, creating an incentive to quietly support its actions. After all, the best way to get the ACR-equipped jackbooteers off the streets is to help SolSec get rid of unruly or disloyal elements. When the thugs are withdrawn and replaced by smiling official-friends, there is an incentive – for both SolSec and the people – to keep it that way.

In this way, SolSec acts as both carrot and stick. Its senior officials are adept at gauging the level of intervention required and usually prefer to operate quietly in areas which are generally loyal. SolSec officers acting like civilian police create much less resentment than a paramilitary intervention squad and often produce better long-term results. It is accepted that a few friendly and diplomatic personnel in nice suits with concealed handguns can gather better information and maintain a peacefully loyal situation better than a mob of violent thugs. Indeed, there are those who consider the Imperial representation of SolSec as jackbooted goons to be an attempt to make the organisation look incompetent as well as pointlessly nasty.

## AUTOHACK

Autohacks are palm-sized devices designed to crack commonly available electronic security systems. They are not creative or clever but programmed to recognise common security systems and automatically apply exploits or make a targeted attack. SolSec uses the best devices available and Confederation law requires companies that do not have an exemption to leave backdoors which make it necessary only to enter a request code. Autohacks are more or less useless against any system they do not 'know' but extremely useful in getting past mass-market security software that would otherwise pose a significant problem.

Any Autohacks provided to the Travellers for their mission are tailored to the target and will be able to penetrate most security systems within a few seconds. This requires no skill on the part of the user, just proximity or a plug-in contact. Systems that do not communicate wirelessly require direct access to the network. SolSec autohacks can use a close-contact induction system to communicate with electronics that are not well shielded.

A single action, such as opening a locked door or gaining control over a camera, takes 1Dx10 seconds. Only one attempt can be made at any one system – either the autohack can get in or it cannot. Its chance of doing so is based on Tech Level and since SolSec has the best available the base difficulty is Easy (4+). This assumes a check needs to be made at all – the outer layers of security have been studied well enough that the Travellers' devices can simply ask to be let in.



Item	TL	Kg	Cost
SolSec Autohack	14	0.1	Cr14000

## SECURITY ATTACHÉ CASE

SolSec regularly uses attaché cases to carry documents and equipment, like most organisations. However, some cases are designed to conceal weapons and other items. The security variant has several features as standard and others can be fitted to tailor it to the mission at hand. The most generally useful is the ability to deceive scanners of a lower Tech Level. The case is opaque to most scanners but does not appear to be so. Instead it presents a false image of innocuous contents. This feature is imperfect and a skilled scanner operator will realise the device is being spoofed on an Average (8+) Recon or Electronics (sensors) check. DM-1 applies to this check for every Tech Level the scanner is lower than that of the case.

In addition, a concealed catch releases the panels of the case, which fold out under gravity to create a flexible shield. Although awkward to hold up by the case's handle, the panels provide Protection +6 of additional armour against attacks coming in from the direction they are presented. Releasing the catch without allowing the case to fall open, such as on a table, allows access to a concealed compartment inside. This normally contains a handgun with a couple of spare magazines and a powerful radio-frequency beacon that can boost normal comm signals or act as a short-range jammer.



Item	TL	Kg	Cost
SolSec Security Attaché Case	14	1.8	Cr1200

# INDEX

A Lead	40
Accapae	30
Administrative Annex	89
Administrative Tower	91
Adserie	30
Alzirr	19
Amceden	20
An Evening At Entefyss	56
An Interview With Major Zimmermayer	61
Arcomm	13
Arriving at Mu'izzi	63
Arriving at Mykala	54
Ashadd	34
Autohack	134
Azirr	19
Balcony	95
Bathroom Suite	73
Braci	21
Bridge	106
Cabin	106
Captain's Cabin	106
Casualties	97
Cataphract	27
Causeway Small Transport	125
C-Belt	13
Ceimti	23
Cenoro	30
Characteristics	39
C-Inner	13
City Control Suite	93
Civilians	114
Clibique	33
Coa/Coa Magna	30
Colquex	34
Comab's World	22
Combat Golem	113
Commstown Guards	121
Commstown, Merope	87
Communications and Technical Spire	94
Core	11
Corinthian Belt	21
C-Outer	13
Crew Area	106
Crew Lounge	106
C-Terrestrial	13
Dillan Esparza	123
Dining Room (5)	73
Djean Sarratt	119
Dog Pack	100
Drinks Annex	73
Elevator Chamber	94
Emergency Brakes	80
Engineering Spaces	105
Entefyss Farming Conglomerate	55
Entramme	23
Estate Control Room	73
Executive Hospitality Suite	93
Executive Suite	93
Exerie	30
Field Operations Teams and Groups	37
Fortise	23
Fosaw	32
Freight Yard	89
Fuel/Cargo Areas	105
Garages	73
Gideon	113
Gideon's Story	65
Gitrok	24
Golem Gun	131
Golem Gunman	100
Golems	111
Grav Vehicle Landing Port	95
Grohdag	18
Guest Bedrooms	74
Guest Chambers	95
Guest Suite	74
Haddit	11
Hadditnext	11
Hardware	131
Hasconn	34
Havisse	31
Hexapod 'Utility Animal' Golem	112
Hexapod Hazard	99
Inarrio	23
Industrial Complex	89
Infiltrating Commstown	89
Information from SolSec	85
Information Gained	76
Inner Chamber	74
Intuebi	23
Intueste	23
Iseali	30
Isla Bennei	120
Jargemet	17
Jerome Entefyss	115
Kamari Santana	122
Kitchen and Stewards' Areas	94
Kitchen Complex	71

Kuipier's Breakdown	31
Landell Station	46
Lativa	29
Leaving Mu'izzi	83
Library	73
Lieutenant Maria Culstein, Solomani Security	123
Life on the ValGorch Estate	70
Logging Camp	59
Luggage and Stowage Area	105
Main Holds	105
Merope	20
Moquev	34
Mu'izzi	32
Murid	22
Neradi	13
Nintorod	17
Nova Prometheus	29
November Papa Belt, Inner	30
November Papa Belt, Outer	30
Occqui	34
Order Flight Crew	121
Outer Chamber	74
Outinthevoid	27
Palermo Belt	26
Palermo	25
Passenger Area	105
Polite Hostility	90
Porch	71
Portacomp Data	52
Private Access/Lounge	74
Private Lounge	73
Public Lounge	73
Quadruped 'Attack Dog' Golem	111
Raindell Navarro	114
Reception Suite	94
Reigev Main	27
Reigev Stanto	27
Reigev Tersus	27
Reigev	27
Residential Area	87
Residential Levels	91
Roato	30
Sarratt and the Order	110
Seconde Belt	27
Seconde Prime	27
Scrib	30
Secure Area	100
Security Attaché Case	134
Socialising and Intrigue	75
Solomani Culture and Society	3
Solomani Security (SolSec)	36

SolSec Arrival	101
SolSec Operatives	123
SolSec Personal Weapons	132
Spaceport	87
Spatahae	23
Stagemet	17
Stileg	17
Strufacc	22
Sudig	18
Survivors of The Seven	122
Swelter One	14
Swelter Restricted Zone	16
Swelter	16
Tackling Sarratt	102
Talsk	13
Tawter	29
The Commstown Incident	95
The Control Chamber	81
The Crash	82
The Estate Guards	118
The Fate of Landell Station	45
The Golems	38
The Investigation	60
The Logging Camp	57
The Order of Prometheus	37
The Order's Plans	86
The Preconception Problem	2
The Primary System	24
The Secondary System	27
The Seven	43
The Spaceport	102
The Train Crash	77
The ValGorch Estate	67
Thea'exep	34
Theban Belt	22
Trab	22
Train Staff	118
Traits	39
Travda Vaughan	116
Trestranne	19
Upper Floor Entry	73
Upper Lounge	74
Utilities Basement	91
Utility Space	73
Uvawe	34
ValGorch House	71
Veronique ValGorch	117
Veronique's Office	74
Wasat	12
Wexteir	18
Worker Golem	112
Yurem and The Seven	110
Yurem May	122

# TRAVELLER®

THE ORDER OF PROMETHEUS

In a backwater cluster of worlds deep within the Solomani Confederation, a covert society has stolen a cosmic secret. Using lost, perhaps forbidden, knowledge the Order of Prometheus will lead humanity into a new age with their custom-made creatures. Loyal warriors, indefatigable workers and resilient beasts of burden, their Golems are the answer to every manpower and labour-relations issue a user could ever imagine.

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