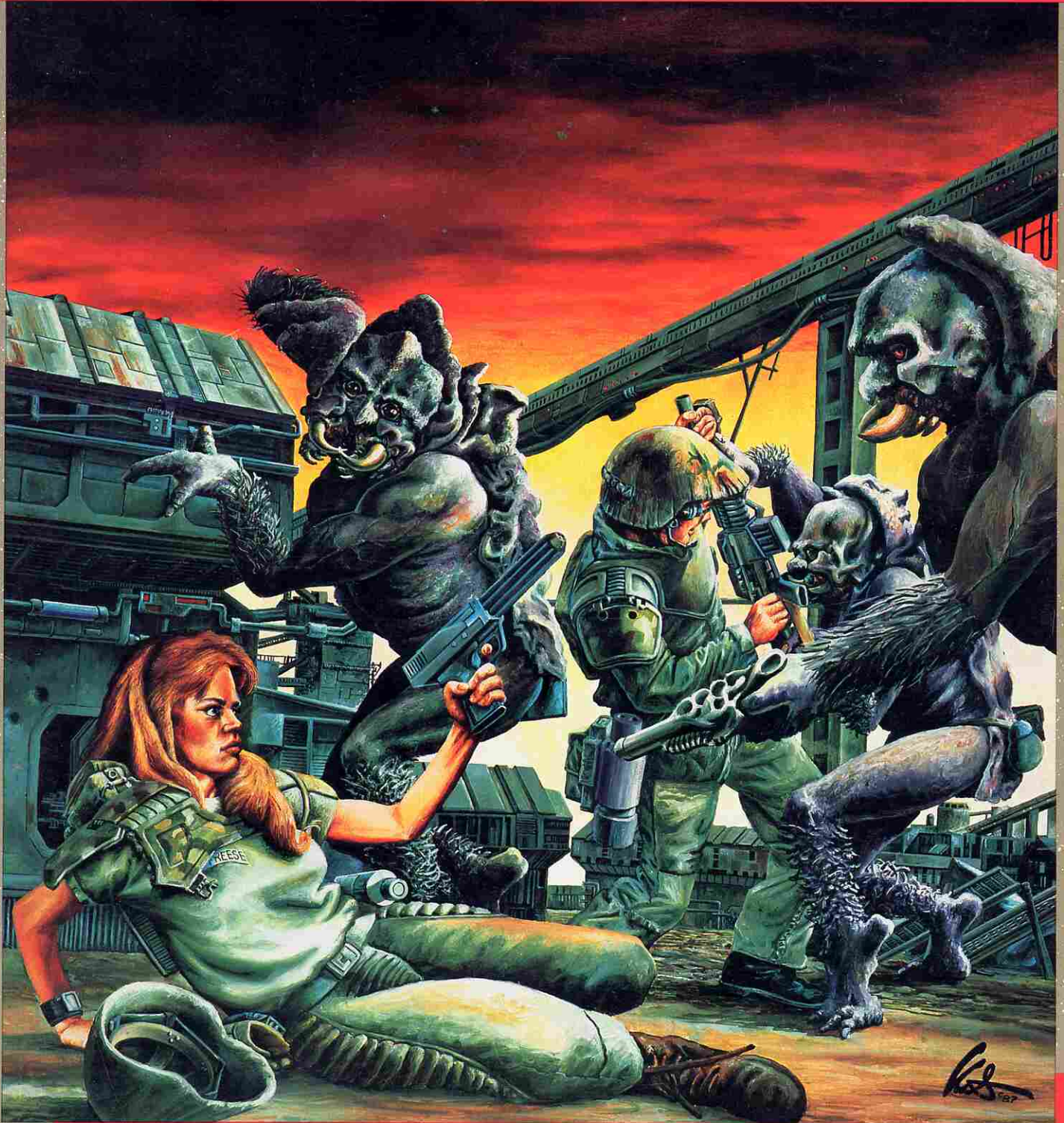


# 2300™

# Kafer Dawn

William H. Keith, Jr.



The Front Line of  
Mankind's Fight for Survival

Game Designers' Workshop



# 2300

## KAFER DAWN

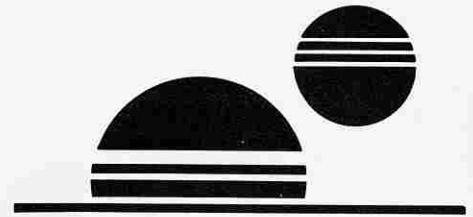
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*Design*.....William H. Keith, Jr.  
*Development*.....Frank Chadwick  
*Art Direction*.....Barbie Pratt  
*Art Assistants*.....Lauretta Oblinger  
and Dana Reischauer  
*Cover Art*.....Steve Venters  
*Interior Art*.....Dan Panosian  
and Steve Venters

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PO Box 1646, Bloomington, Illinois 61702-1646 USA



# Introduction

*Kafer Dawn* is an adventure for use with GDW's science-fiction role-playing game **Traveller: 2300**. In *Kafer Dawn*, the players are freelance adventurers or mercenaries who have recently arrived on the world of Aurore in the Eta Bootis system and found themselves in the middle of a small but increasingly vicious war.

The system was recently the site of a struggle between the human colonists and an invasion force of an alien race known only as the Kafers. The Kafer space fleet is gone now, defeated in battle, but bands of Kafer troops continue to range across the frontier of the planet Aurore. *Kafer Dawn* provides the referee with extensive background information on Aurore, as well as a series of interlocking adventures which take place on the planet's surface. It is also the first of several **Traveller: 2300** adventures which cover the events of what has come to be known as the Kafer War.

This booklet includes the following sections:

**Aurore:** This section is broken into two chapters: *General Description* and *Biology*. Together, these chapters provide considerable background on the world on which this adventure, and potentially many more, takes place.

**Tanstaaf:** This presents the history of the Tanstaaf colony on Aurore as well as providing considerable background information useful to adventuring there.

**Kafers:** This presents the information currently available on Kafer physiology and psychology, and a history of human-Kafer contact between 2296 and 2300. This section has two subsections: one which gives information which the player characters may discover during the course of the adventure, and another which gives background and psychological information which the referee must know in order to handle Kafer NPCs.

At this point in time, humans know very little about this alien race, but the player characters will have the opportunity to learn something about them during these scenarios. Only what the referee needs to know to conduct this adventure is revealed in *Kafer Dawn*. Further details about Kafer biology, psychology, and culture will be revealed in future GDW adventure modules covering the Kafer War.

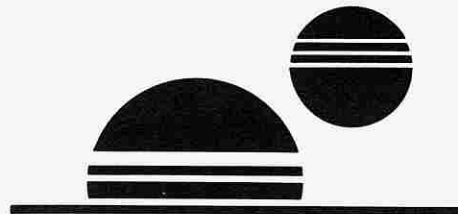
**Adventuring on Aurore:** This discusses the player characters' backgrounds and presents four separate adventure scenarios which can be woven together into a campaign on Aurore lasting several months, or which can be played independently of one another.

**Handouts:** The center eight pages of this booklet are designed to be removed and used as handouts to the players. One large sheet remains intact and shows a map of Aurore on one side and a more detailed map of Tanstaaf on the other. The other large

sheet should be cut in half. One 8½" x 11" sheet is entitled "Know Your Enemy" and is an informational flyer routinely given to all new recruits to the Tanstaaf Free Legion. At such time as the players hire on with them, they should be given this flyer. The other 8½" x 11" sheet has extracts from two standard and widely-available works on the Eta Bootis system and on Aurore itself. This handout can be given to the players at once as it is the sort of general background information they would find almost immediately.

## REFEREE'S NOTES

This game module is designed to be used solely by the game referee. Narrative sections are included which describe events from the points of view of various characters. These are provided to add color and detail to the referee's narrative as he unfolds the game situation to the players. Narrative sections may be read to or by the players, but all other sections are reserved for the referee alone unless otherwise specifically stated. Narrative sections are set apart in italics for easy recognition.



# Aurore

*I remember that first morning up above La Gouffre. The storms had cleared and left the sky a deep, midnight blue fading away to pale green in the east. Tithonus was down, masked by the mountains, but both inner satellites hung like tiny, blood-and-silver scimitars above his skyglow. Overhead, the aurorae wove their painter's magic, and Arcturus was a ruby blaze low in the south.*

*The gulf was all in shadow, of course, but I could see sky glint from the water at the bottom...what? Must have been half a kilometer under my feet. The far wall was fifty kilometers to the north, clear off on the north horizon, and morning haze left those cliffs hazy and indistinct. Mont Ste. Victoire was clear enough though, catching the first rays of Notre Soleil in gold fire. It would be sunrise soon—another couple of hours. But first...*

*I felt it even before I saw it, a dull, groaning rumble in the rocks beneath my feet. The water glint below me was troubled, breaking and trembling under unseen hammer blows. I could see the surface, white and frenzied, as the current raced pellmell towards the west.*

*Then I saw it, filling the gulf from rim to rim in the shadowed west, a black wall which surged and shuddered with power inconceivable. I reached up and adjusted my ear protectors. Men had gone deaf, listening to that blast which must rival the Last Trumpet.*

*The air filled with mist as thunderheads raced one another towards heaven, forking lightning, boiling, blossoming. Mont Ste. Victoire withdrew behind fog and magically appearing rainbows high above the valley shadows. I could mark the golden shafts of the still-hidden yellow sun cleaving the mist over my head. And at my feet, the chasm filled, the noise an assault which numbed the senses, battering rock and air and threatening to tear a world in two.*

*The tide was coming in.*

This section is designed to help the referee picture Aurore and the conditions there. It is background material only, intended to add color to the referee's narrative and to help remind the players from time to time that they are on an *alien* planet.

Eta Bootis is a double star, consisting of a yellow sub-giant in tandem with a red dwarf. The normal life zone for a Type G0 IV sun would extend to about 3.73 au from the primary, but the position of the red dwarf has prevented the formation of planets within that zone. Five gas giants circle the pair, with the orbit of the innermost world located four and a half astronomical units out.

The second gas giant, called "Tithonus," is a small brown dwarf,

an object too small to be a true star, but massive enough for gravitational contraction to generate more heat than it receives from the suns. This heat has created a narrow life zone around it, as though it were a very tiny star, and its largest moon has evolved into a garden-type world with liquid water and a breathable atmosphere.

Though earthlike in many respects, this Tithonian satellite, called "Aurore" by the humans who have colonized it, is subject to various climatological extremes. Trapped in a tidal lock with its gas giant primary, the side nearest Tithonus is subject to near-boiling temperatures, while the far side is engulfed in a vast glacier, with temperatures falling to  $-75^{\circ}$  C or below. A broad habitable zone exists between these extremes, but the temperature differences have resulted in severe winds and frequent, fierce storms. In addition, tides ranging from a few meters to almost half a kilometer result in vast inundations of low-lying coastlands twice daily. There are also frequent seismic quakes and numerous volcanos.

Humans have had to choose where they live on Aurore with extreme care.

## WORLD MAP AND REGIONS

The first surveys of Aurore established certain conventions in mapping and local navigation. The Base Meridian, or  $0^{\circ}$  longitude, runs from the north to the south pole, crossing the equator at the point where Tithonus appears suspended directly overhead—the location of the so-called "Hot Pole." The Cold Pole, lying on the opposite side of the planet, marks the line of  $180^{\circ}$  longitude. Latitude is determined as on Earth, with the equator at  $0^{\circ}$  and the poles marking  $90^{\circ}$  north or south respectively. Positions on Aurore are measured in degrees of east or west longitude, and north or south latitude. Thus, Novoa Kiyev lies at  $115^{\circ}$  east longitude,  $14^{\circ}$  south latitude; while Tanstaafli lies at  $88^{\circ}$  west,  $12^{\circ}$  south.

On Aurore, a world with a circumference of 29,688 km, one degree equals a little more than 82 km.

The planetology and the climate of Aurore have created certain broad, easily defined planetary zones. These are as follows:

**High Desert:** This is the roughly circular plateau surrounding the Hot Pole, the point at which Tithonus appears to hang directly overhead. The land is barren, either sandy or mountainous, and almost completely unexplored. The plateau rim averages well over 12,000 meters altitude above sea level—considerably higher than Earth's Mt. Everest—and atmospheric pressure at this altitude is too low to permit humans to breathe without special apparatus. Mountain-building and volcanism continue almost constantly

around the plateau perimeter, the result of Tithonian tidal effects on the planet's crust.

The High Desert is also referred to as the "Hotside," "Near-side," and as the "Sub-Tithonian Plateau."

**Temperate Zone:** This is a ring encircling Aurore across the north and south poles, roughly along the longitudinal lines of 90° east and west, and is defined as that region where humans can live with a minimum of special equipment or protective clothing. Although vaguely defined, the Temperate Zone is generally considered to extend from the base of the High Desert (roughly 50° east and west) to the Ice Wall of La Glaciere (roughly 130° east and west). The near-Tithonian reaches of this zone are uncomfortably hot, are not permanently inhabited, and are collectively referred to as the Auroran Hotback.

The inhabited regions on Aurore include the Novoa Kiyev island continent at 100° east; and the broad, high continental plateaus of Aurore, Lumiere, and Tanstaafli lying between 60 and 90° west.

**La Mer Ceindant:** The "Encircling Sea" occupies most of the Temperate Zone and is the product of the melting ice cap. The combined effects of melting ice and the planetary tides result in an unusually low salinity for a planetary ocean. The tidal effects of Tithonus on the sea and tsunamis created by 1000-meter icebergs are responsible for some of Aurore's most savage assaults on human colonization efforts.

**La Glaciere:** This is Aurore's permanent icecap, which covers all of the "Farside" or "Coldsides" of Aurore, between approximately 130° east and 130° west, with the Cold Pole lying squarely in the middle. The rim of the icepack is the Ice Wall, a cliff as much as 1000 meters tall which is continually calving icebergs into La Mer Ceindant under the influence of storms and tidal effects.

Although Aurore gets most of its heat from Tithonus, the twin suns of Eta Bootis are quite bright in the sky, with the yellow G0 sun having half the angular diameter of Earth's sun as seen from Earth. The popular notion of an Aureorean "darkside" is false. To human eyes, the landscape of ice and snow at local noon appears as brightly lit as does late-afternoon on a cloudy day on Earth.

Temperatures across La Glaciere range from above freezing at the borders of the sea to -75° C or below near the Cold Pole at night. Severe blizzards are frequent across the entire icecap and serve to keep the ice moving from the Pole towards the sea. The sea is continually fed by melting icebergs, vast amounts of water evaporate from the ocean's surface and from tidal seas at the Tithonian side of La Mer Ceindant, and winds from the High Desert carry moisture-laden clouds back over La Glaciere where blizzards deposit more snow and ice—a never-ending cycle of evaporation and precipitation.

## THE WORLD MAP

The world map uses the standard **Traveller: 2300** geodesic mapping system. Each geodesic map triangle measures a little less than 6000 km across one side. For detailed mapping, one geodesic triangle is divided into 28 hexagonal areas (six on a side), each measuring 1000 km across.

Important hexes are mapped in greater detail in the section entitled *Aurore: Background*.

**Similarities:** In many ways, Aurore is similar to Earth. Both are garden worlds, after all—planets where humans can walk around without wearing space suits or other protective gear. Aurore's surface gravity is only seven-tenths that of Earth, enough lower for a man to feel considerably stronger and lighter as he walks and works. The temperature in the longitudes of Tanstaafli and the French colonies is moderate, ranging from 20 to 30° C, but rising rapidly in the region known as the "Hotback" several

thousand kilometers east of the spaceport. The air is thinner than on Earth at sea level—about what humans experience in Mexico City—but is still well within tolerable limits.

But should a man ever forget that he is on a world far removed from Earth, he need only look at the sky.

**Tithonus:** Aurore is a satellite of the superjovian gas giant Tithonus. Tithonus is a small representative of that class of cosmic objects known as brown dwarfs; it can be considered to lie midway between large planets and small stars in the cosmic hierarchy, and, though it does not produce heat and light through nuclear fusion as stars do, it *does* generate more heat than it receives from the two suns of Eta Bootis. In fact, Aurore receives more heat from Tithonus than it does from its two suns.

Tithonus is visible (at least in part) from anywhere on Aurore from 100° west to 100° east. It is a visibly flattened sphere—its high rate of spin has caused it to bulge at the equator—and though it appears to glow with a dull, red-orange light, bands, swirls, and streaks similar to those in the atmosphere of Jupiter are clearly visible. Tithonus also reflects light from its suns and shows clearly visible phases which change with the positions of the twin suns in the sky.

An observer at the 0° longitude line on Aurore, in the center of the Sub-Tithonian Plateau, would see Tithonus suspended in the sky directly overhead. As he walked east or west, the planet would appear to set behind him until he reached 90° east or west, when Tithonus would appear to lie bisected on the horizon. On the far side of Aurore—the anti-Tithonian hemisphere—the gas giant is never visible at all.

From Aurore, Tithonus subtends an angle of 15°. This means the disk appears about as wide as does an object five inches long held at arm's length. Aurore's libration (see the explanation of Aurore's tides under *Special Problems*) makes Tithonus appear to rise and fall across 5°—or one third of its own diameter. Thus, an observer standing at exactly 90° west would see Tithonus on the eastern horizon, divided in half, but over a period of 15 hours the disk would rise until only the lower third was hidden. Through the next 30 hours Tithonus would set until only the top third was visible, and then it would begin rising once more. The rise and fall of Tithonus is linked to Aurore's orbital period—nearly 61 hours—and to the tides. High tide occurs as Tithonus reaches the lowest point in its cycle; low tide occurs when it is at its highest.

**Other Moons:** Three other major satellites besides Aurore orbit Tithonus, though Aurore is the largest and the only one which is habitable. The inner satellites, Memnon and Selene, are airless balls of rock which show tiny discs as they rise and fall above the limb of Tithonus and go through the same phases as the parent planet. Antilochus is sheathed in ice and is a small, brilliant disk in Aurore's night sky, but barely visible when it lies past Tithonus in the sky near the giant. Besides these three, there are countless other moons of varying sizes, including five which are larger than 100 km in diameter. All of these appear in Aurore's night sky as slow-moving, brilliant points of light.

**Eta Bootis:** Aurore's (and Tithonus') parent star is the double known as Eta Bootis. Eta Bootis A, called Notre Soleil or Muphrid, is a G0 IV subgiant. Its companion is an M0 red dwarf called Rubis. The brighter, yellow sun appears to be about half the size of the Sun in Earth's sky, but it appears several times brighter. It is hazardous to look at Notre Soleil with unprotected eyes. Rubis is much smaller, showing a barely perceptible disk when it is visible.

Aurore's day is nearly 61 hours long, precisely the same as its orbital period about Tithonus. From the location of Tanstaafli, at 90° west and close to the equator, sunrise occurs with first one, then the other of Aurore's suns rising above the sullen red

hemisphere of Tithonus, illuminating the gas giant's limb with silver light as the yellow sun climbs above it. A little over 15 hours later, it is high noon, with the suns directly overhead, and the upper half of Tithonus brightly lit. A little over 15 hours later, the suns set in the west in reverse order from their rising, and night and the light of Tithonus rule for the next 30 hours.

Most of Aurore's illumination comes from Muphrid, which is so bright that dim Rubis is lost in the glare for nearly half the time (though it can always be seen when it has risen clear of Tithonus and Muphrid is still eclipsed). At high noon, the surface of Aurore is about as brightly lit as on the afternoon of a lightly overcast day on Earth. The first quarter of the night is more brightly lit than the night of a full moon on Earth, because Tithonus continues to reflect the light of Muphrid after Muphrid has set. Hours pass, however, and the illuminated portion of Tithonus continues to dwindle, growing dark from top to bottom. Depending on how much of Tithonus is above the horizon—libration again—and on how far east or west of 90° west the observer is standing, the changing phases of Tithonus can provide more than enough light to read by, as much as during twilight on Earth. The part of Tithonus not illuminated by Muphrid, however, is sullen and bloody, and all light on Aurore has a reddish cast to it which can take some time to get used to.

**Separation of Muphrid and Rubis:** At their widest separation in the sky, Muphrid and Rubis appear to be 14° apart, coincidentally almost the same as the size of the disk of Tithonus. Thus, Rubis will appear 14° to one side of Muphrid. For the next 141 days, Rubis appears to draw closer and closer to the far brighter Muphrid, and at some point, probably about 70 days into the cycle, will vanish entirely in Muphrid's light. Rubis passes behind Muphrid, and about 70 days later reappears on the other side of Muphrid, moving away. One hundred forty-one more days or so into the cycle, the two have drawn as far apart as they are going to—14°—and Rubis reverses course again, falling towards Muphrid and vanishing in his light, to reappear on the far side once more. The complete orbit of Rubis about Muphrid, which actually takes 495 Earth days to complete, *appears* to take 69 days longer because of the orbital motion of Tithonus-Aurore about Muphrid-Rubis at the same time.

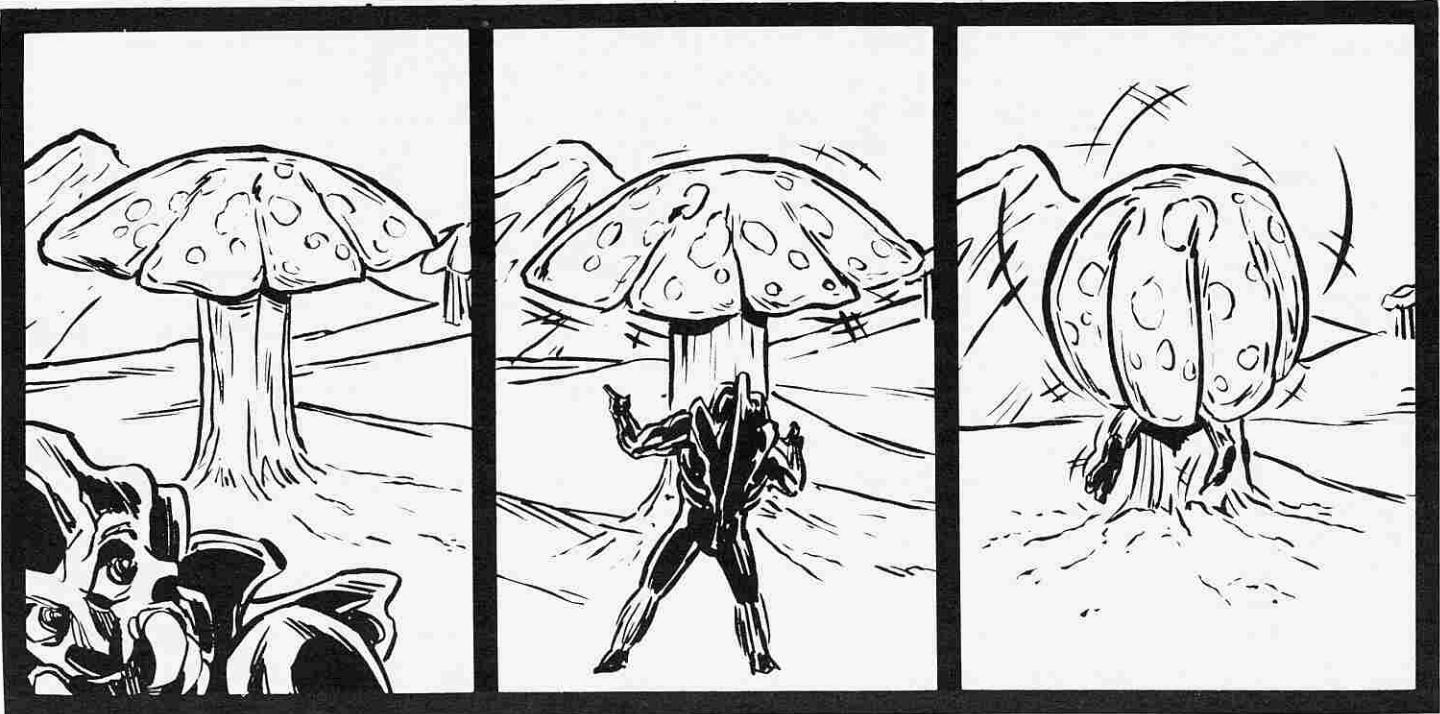
**Arcturus:** In areas where Tithonus is below the horizon, daylight is as bright as an overcast Terran afternoon, while night is truly dark. Most stars are lost where Tithonus is in the sky, but beyond about 100° east or west, the cold, thin air of Aurore gives a spectacular view of the sky.

One star is an exception. The red giant Arcturus lies less than four and a half light years from Eta Bootis. From Earth, Arcturus appears as a star of about  $-0.2$  magnitude, and is among the brightest stars of the sky. From Aurore, however, Arcturus has a magnitude of  $-4.5$ —over 40 times brighter than it appears from Earth, brighter even than Venus at its most brilliant. When Arcturus is in the night sky (which occurs for about half of Aurore-Tithonus' nine and a half year-long orbital period about Muphrid-Rubis), it is bright enough to cast shadows and appears as a fiery, golden-red beacon in the sky. Even by day, unless it lies quite close to Muphrid, Arcturus is clearly visible as a glittering point of light if you know just where to look.

Arcturus has always been one more item of pride for native Aurorans already proud of the raw and savage beauty of their world. Since the Kafer invasion, however, Arcturus has become something of an evil omen, an object of disquiet, or even dread. It was at Arcturus that a French research outpost first made contact with the Kafers—and then vanished. For the past three years, Arcturus has represented the farthest outpost of Humanity, beyond which lie the Kafers, a totally alien and unknown quantity. The Kafers came from beyond Arcturus, and it seems likely that the future destiny of the human race could hang suspended from that bloody, brilliant beacon in Aurore's sky.

**Aurorae:** Aurore's name is part pun, the French name for the goddess of the dawn, and name, too, for the shifting, colored, magical sheets and streamers of light in the sky.

Aurorae are caused by charged atomic particles caught in Aurore's magnetic field and interacting with various atoms in the upper atmosphere. Aurore's magnetic field is far weaker than Earth's—a result of its slow rotation—but charged particles are far more plentiful, trapped in the far-reaching Van Allens of Tithonus on either side of Aurore's orbit about the gas giant. Aurore's aurorae are normally visible only when Tithonus is at its dimmest, but on the anti-Tithonian hemisphere, at night, the aurorae light



the skies with translucent sheets and streamers and flames and shifting pillars of blue and green and red. At some rare times, when Muphrid is particularly active or there has been a solar flare, the aurorae are brilliant enough to compete with Tithonus in broad daylight.

**Meteors:** Aurore circles Tithonus in a relatively crowded region of space. Besides a large number of known, sizable moons, Tithonus is circled by a virtual cloud of debris left over from its creation. Close in to the giant planet, this material is thick enough to be considered a ring, though it is too dim and dark to be seen without special instruments from Aurore's surface. (The heat from Tithonus guaranteed that any water ice in a Tithonian ring system was long ago driven off into space.) In the region of Aurore, there are still a large number of sand- and dust-sized grains, and these flare into brief, spectacular light when they enter Aurore's upper atmosphere as shooting stars.

Aurore's sky, then, is a spectacular and beautiful sight at any time. The sky itself during the day appears to be a pale green color (because of contrast with the red light of Tithonus) shading to blue in the sky away from the gas giant and turning midnight blue even in daytime in parts of the world where Tithonus is no longer in the sky. The sky in the hemisphere facing the giant is dominated by Tithonus itself, but the twin suns of Eta Bootis are jewel-like in their beauty and precision as they move through the sky in their 61-hour cycle, and swing about one another for a year and a half. Besides all this, the Auroran skies are filled with shifting aurorae, the flash and streak of meteors, the shuttling moons of Tithonus, and the keen, ruby-golden beacon of Arcturus.

Aurore's skies would be perfect if it weren't for the...

**Storms:** Aurore's storms rise suddenly out of seemingly clear air, are extraordinarily violent, and dissipate as suddenly as they rise.

Of particular interest are:

*Tornadoes:* Much the same as their Terran counterparts.

*Waterspouts:* Sea-borne tornadoes, again much like those encountered on Earth.

*Tidestorms:* Particularly violent thunderstorms which occur at high tide over tidal flats or basins where the flood tide is particularly violent. The air becomes extremely wet, and warm air currents in the area bear this moisture skyward where it blossoms into thunderheads in a matter of moments. Cloud formation in such cases appears as rapid as does time-lapse photography of cloud growth on Earth.

*Tidemist:* Similar to tidestorms, the tidemist is a dense layer of fog which occurs during the several hours around high tide when the air is warm but the ground is cold. Visibility is reduced to nil during these periods, a condition as extreme as an Antarctic whiteout.

**Tides:** The effects of Aurore's daily tides are discussed elsewhere in this booklet. Tides are, however, among the most dramatic elements of the Auroran environment. Because they are so extreme, however, few human settlements are located anywhere near land affected by tides.

Tidal surges raise the level of the Equator River by as much as 10 meters each day, and villages along that river tend to be built atop steep cliffs, beyond the water's reach. The tidal flats south of the Equator are located near some human settlements, but Aurorans rarely venture onto them. The tidal bore called La Gouffre lies on the far side of the Northern Mountains about 300 km from the town of Distant Thunder. It has been visited by colonists from both Tanstaaf and Aurore, but humans do not venture into the gulf. Any human being or vehicle caught by that wall of incoming water would be utterly obliterated, and people standing too near would be deafened by its thunder.

## ADAPTING TO AURORE

Obviously, humans are not native to Aurore and have evolved to a different set of daily rhythms and cycles than those present on Aurore. Humans are remarkably adaptable creatures however, and have adjusted their schedules to meet Auroran conditions.

Day and night are less important on Aurore than on Earth, but there is still a pronounced difference between sunlight and Tithonus light—and a good thing, too, or the Terran plants imported to Aurore would not grow. Aurorans typically live and work in a cycle known as "ten on-ten off." A typical Auroran's 61-hour day can be charted as follows:

Hour 1-9 Work  
 Hour 10-19 Sleep  
 Hour 20-29 Work  
 Hour 30-39 Sleep  
 Hour 40-49 Relax  
 Hour 50-61 Sleep

The Auroran rises with the suns, works ten hours, then sleeps through the middle of the long, local day. He then rises in mid-afternoon and works for another ten hours until sun-set. Then he sleeps for another eight or ten hours before waking to a period of either middle-of-the-night work or recreation, then sleep, then work with the new day. (A ten-hour period, incidentally, is actually 10 hours, eight minutes long, in order to make up the extra 51 minutes of the 60-hour, 51-minute day.)

This schedule is subject to considerable personal variation, of course. Both work and sleep periods include time for meals and recreation. Some individuals extend their work periods to as much as 15 hours, while cutting their sleep periods to a minimum, especially by day. Farmers, especially, do as much work in daylight as possible and save the night work period for repairs or book-keeping, which can be performed indoors. Many factory or mine workers, however, work in shifts which change every ten hours so that Auroran factories and other businesses can continue producing all the time.

Other adaptations to Aurore's alien environment have been necessary, but none have been as basic as the change to Man's ancient circadian rhythms.

## OTHER DIFFERENCES

Other differences between Earth and Aurore are relatively minor points. The flora are radically different, of course, with most of what pass for trees on Aurore looking something like giant mushrooms, colored light-blue to charcoal-grey, or even in stripes and patterns.

Instead of grass, plains and fields are carpeted by plants called Blueflats, which resemble Terran liverworts in their flat, rubbery look but which can grow to be several centimeters deep and are deep blue or blue-green in color. The most important difference in Auroran flora, of course, is that several species are carnivorous and can kill an unwary human.

On the whole, there is less variation in plant and animal types on Aurore than there is on Earth. Evolution is younger on Aurore and has not created as many species as it has on Man's homeworld. There is still tremendous diversity, however, and new species are being discovered and catalogued nearly every day. Aurore is an entire planet, with all the richness and diversity and variations and surprises which that entails—and with new material which will keep researchers and catalogers busy for centuries yet to come.

If the Kafers permit it.



## Aurore: Special Problems

Aurore presents several special challenges and dangers to unwary visitors. Colonists who have lived here most or all of their lives are aware of these dangers and live with them, but a moment's carelessness can mean death to anyone who forgets that Aurore, for all its beauty, is an *alien* world.

### TIDES

The superjovian Tithonus exerts a tidal pull on Aurore which, in effect, stretches the planet into an egg shape. Though this stretching is too small to be detected by the naked eye, Aurore's librational movement as it circles Tithonus is sufficient to raise twice-daily "slosh tides" along the shores of La Mer Ceindant.

The average height of these tides in the open sea is only about six meters. However, as on Earth, the depth and shape of the sea bottom and the contours of the land contribute in places to magnify this figure considerably. The maps of Aurore show certain areas along the coast marked as "tidal flats." These are low-lying stretches of coastland, occasionally hundreds of kilometers wide, which are inundated by the incoming tide and left bare when it recedes. Tidal bores or gulfs are narrow, steep-walled canyons which are empty or contain only a little water at low tide but are filled by the incoming tide by a wall of water moving with incredible speed and power. Both tidal flats and tidal bores are dangerous at certain times each day.

The Auroran day is 2.537 Earth days long, or about 61 hours. Aurore's libration is a 5° back-and-forth or "nodding" motion caused by the slight eccentricity of its orbit about Tithonus. The result is a once-daily period of high tides along all coastal areas in one hemisphere as Tithonus appears to drop towards or below the horizon, coupled with low tides on the opposite hemisphere as Tithonus rises. This seems backwards to most newcomers to the world, who assume that high tide must be linked to the rising of Tithonus in the sky. The explanation, of course, is that the bulge of water heaped up by Tithonus' gravitational attraction remains more or less in place (there is some movement, of course), while Aurore itself moves back and forth under it, in and out of the water.

This cycle results in a thirty and a half hour period between high

tide and low tide at any one point on the planet.

On tidal flats, the water is continually moving seaward between high tide and low tide (called ebb tide), and continually moving inland between low tide and high tide (called flood tide). Though it is the planet which is moving, the relative velocity of the water at any given point can be calculated by dividing the distance from high-tide point to low-tide point and dividing by 30 hours.

For example, if the distance is, on the average, 100 km, the speed of the water is 3.3 kph or less than 2 knots, a rather gentle current. The danger comes in certain specific areas where broad, flat plains or narrow canyons focus the power of both ebb and flood tides and increase their speed dramatically. On a plain 1000 km wide, the water speed will average 33 kph (18 knots), which is a strong current by any standards.

Worse is the danger presented by tidal bores. An example is the crustal fracture called La Gouffre ("The Gulf") north of Tanstaaf. Water cannot enter the gulf for the first 15 hours of flood tide because of the position of a natural dam at the gulf's entrance. Once the water rises above this obstacle, however, it races up the 2700 kilometer length of the canyon at speeds which may exceed 180 kph, creating the roar which is heard on the far side of the Northern Mountains, in a settlement 300 kilometers away called "Distant Thunder." Ebb tide in La Gouffre is milder for various reasons having to do with the terrain, with the outgoing current rarely exceeding 100 kph.

Needless to say, characters trapped in a tidal bore by the approach of flood tide are doomed unless they can fly or escape to higher ground before the water arrives. Escaping the water will be a task which will be routine, difficult, formidable, or impossible depending on the terrain and the speed of the water. By the same token, watercraft will be inexorably dragged seaward by the ebb tide, though hovercraft are safe unless they set down on the water. When mapping areas on Aurore on his own, the referee should use the guidelines presented above to estimate the speed and force of the water, and to judge the difficulty of escaping its approach. The time of high and low tide should be tied in with the rise and fall of Tithonus (if the giant is visible) in the sky. Depending on the local situation, the onset of flow tide can be gentle and gradual—or it can be heralded by a distant thunder, rapidly grow-



ing louder...

## RADIO INTERFERENCE

Charged particles circling Tithonus at high speeds, trapped in the superjovian's magnetic fields, create a natural, broad-band static roar which renders radio useless throughout the Tithonian satellite system. This interference is so severe that wide-beam broadcast transmitters are simply not used. Shielded or fiber-optic cables are used for information transmission in Tanstaafl city and between major settlements in Areas 1 and 2. More remote areas keep in touch through a system of highly-directional microwave relay towers.

These towers, several tens of meters tall and set on the tops of prominent hills, maintain line-of-sight contact from relay to relay across large parts of the inhabited reaches of Tanstaafl. On the average, these towers are 50 kilometers apart. Homesteads and small settlements within 20 or 30 kilometers of a tower have small dish antennae trained on the tower, and messages can be relayed by tight-beam microwave transmission to anyone else on the net. Transmission equipment is too bulky for casual mobility. Military trucks can carry a transmitter and dish antennae, together with the computer equipment necessary for maintaining a fix on the nearest relay tower. Even these are useless, however, beyond the approximately 30-kilometer over-the-horizon radius which restricts line-of-sight transmissions on Aurore.

This system is used to direct the rapid reponse combat teams which respond to reports of Kafer attacks or activity in thinly populated areas. Homesteaders on the fringes of settled areas can report Kafer movements, and militia teams can investigate homesteads which have suddenly fallen silent.

## WILDLIFE

Aurore has its own native ecology, including a number of life forms deadly to humans. Each is described in some detail in the chapter entitled *Aurore: Biology*.

Wildlife encounters are dictated by the results of various event table rolls. When a wildlife encounter occurs, roll 2D6 on the following table. Note that the creatures encountered may vary, depending on where the encounter takes place.

Encounter Location	2D6 Roll				
	2-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12
Tidal Flat	—	SP	Creep	—	—
River, Swamp	1	BS	BH	BS	Creep
Woods	—	RS	BH	Drpr	Creep
Open Terrain	—	LC	LC	BH	RS
Hotback	—	—	LC	LC	—
Rough, Mountain	—	LC	LC	Drpr	—

**Abbreviations:** SP: Sand Puppy BS: Bloodsucker BH: Bladehood LC: Landcrab RS: Redswift Drpr: Dropper

**Animal Encounter Results:** Animal encounters refer to the various forms of plant and animal life described in *Aurore: Biology*. A "—" result is left to the referee's discretion. Possibilities include:

The sighting is of any Auroran life form chosen by the referee, so long as it is of a species which may be encountered in this terrain type.

The sighting is of an Auroran life form of the referee's own design which might be encountered in this terrain type.

The characters hear and/or see something moving but cannot identify it. The characters may misidentify this, believing it to be a Kafer or a dangerous native lifeform.

The characters *think* they see something, but the sighting proves

to be a false alarm.

The referee treats the roll as a *No encounter* result.

## THE KAFER ROT

The Kafers have added a new biological hazard to Aurore's ecosystem, one which promises to cause a great deal of additional harm to the Auroran colonies before it is through. A fungal blight has been deliberately introduced to areas overrun by the Kafers. This blight primarily attacks Terran plants. Corn and wheat develop grey-white blotches which grow into clumps of fibrous white strands resembling cotton; these blotches rapidly consume the entire plant. Apples and other fruit trees are less quickly threatened but still sicken and die within a few months' time. Hydroponics greenhouses remain unaffected unless spores are introduced from the outside, and then every plant in the building will be consumed within hours.

This is of serious concern to all three Auroran governments. Of graver concern is the fact that some humans have contracted one of two diseases which seem to be caused by the same fungal parasite. A non-fatal (thus far) form of the blight, called Greypatch, begins as inflamed, itching areas on exposed skin and loss of hair. In a matter of days, the patches turn grey-white and insensitive, then gradually (over a period of months) become covered by cottony tufts of fungal growth. Greypatch has been controlled by surgical removal of the growth in each case.

A more serious and generally fatal manifestation in humans is the lung disease called Kafer Rot. Spores from infected plants settle in the victim's lungs, grow rapidly, and choke him.

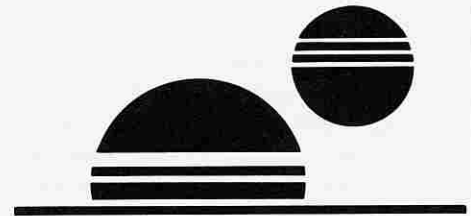
Characters who enter agricultural areas either formerly or currently occupied by Kafers run the risk of contracting one of these fungal diseases. Each day the characters travel through areas where evidence of the blight is visible (cottony tufts on Terran vegetation, fields filled by rotting vegetation), each character should roll once as for a task to avoid contracting the disease.

To avoid fungal blight. Routine. Endurance. Instant.

A major or minor mishap results in the character developing Greypatch, though symptoms will not occur for 2D6 hours after the exposure. Greypatch grows slowly and is not fatal but does require medical attention at Tanstaafl. The character must make additional rolls to avoid the blight each day he does not receive treatment, even if he has left the contaminated area where he contracted it. Further minor or major mishaps result in the affliction spreading and require other characters, as well as the afflicted character, to roll to avoid the disease as well.

A total mishap on any roll results in the character contracting Kafer Rot. He will become incapacitated in 2D6 hours (symptoms: coughing, difficulty breathing, pain, fatigue), and he will die 2D6 hours after that.

Scientists on Aurore and elsewhere are searching desperately for an agent which will kill the fungal blight, but research has been hampered by the war and by the danger to the researchers. The discovery of a drug or chemical to counteract the fungus' effects is crucial in the fight to save Aurore.



# Auroran Biology

*We'd bedded down for the first part of the long Auroran night on a high, dry ridge. The sky was clear and painted in reds and greens of shimmering aurorae, and Arcturus was a bloodred beacon low in the southern sky.*

*None of us was expecting trouble. We'd not so much as seen another living creature since we'd crossed the tidal flat earlier in the day. Lang had the first sentry-go, and the rest of us snuggled down in our sleeping bags for some well-earned sleep.*

*Lang woke us with his screams. Whatever it was, it was big, low, and shaggy, and all we could see of Lang was thrashing arms and legs. We blazed away at the thing with lasers and rifles, then smashed at it with our rifle butts until we could drag Lang free.*

*It didn't do any good though; Lang died later that night.*

**Referee's Notes:** Auroran biology is alien, active, and much of it is lethal to humans. Since humans have only been on the planet for a half a century or so, by far the majority of the planet's native life forms are unknown and uncatalogued.

Numerous species have been identified, classified, and studied, however; particularly those living in areas explored or colonized by humans. Descriptions of these life forms can be found in certain xenobiological texts and formal papers, in ship or university libraries, and in information terminals on Aurore. Information on some of the more spectacular forms may have circulated through documentaries filmed on Aurore and shown on Earth and elsewhere.

The ferocity of some native Auroran life forms is in keeping with the violence of the world itself. Several common Auroran life forms are listed, along with their **Traveller: 2300** stats and descriptions of their characteristics and habits. This section is presented as extracts from a technical paper which might be encountered by characters searching for specific information on Auroran life forms. This information can be read to or by the players, but the referee should arrange it so that they must look up specific life forms separately, and by specific request.

## LA BIOLOGIE D'AURORE

An extract of a paper presented to the Departement de la Biologie Extraterrestre de la Sorbonne, published by Raymond Girard, Ph.D., D.E., 2287.

Aurore is young, as planets go. Eta Bootis A, a young sub-giant rather than a main-sequence star, and its attendant planetary system are probably no more than two billion years old.

Evolution has proceeded rapidly on Aurore, however. The slight higher-than-normal background radiation stimulates mutagenic

processes and has resulted in the rapid evolution of plants, animals, and a third, intermediate kingdom, or regnum.

Auroran plants use a blue-green chlorophyll analogue as a catalyst in a typical photosynthetic cycle. A majority of Auroran plant forms, however, supplement their nutrient intake directly by feeding on other life forms, either as saprophytes or as carnivores. Auroran vegetation tends to be massive, leathery, and blue to charcoal in color. The equivalents of trees tend to be low with thick, spreading caps or foliage masses. The type known as broadtops resemble Terran mushrooms, up to ten meters tall, and are noted for their light, strong wood. Area-producing plants have the appearance of terrestrial liverworts or coral, blue to blue-green in color, are low-growing or found in clumps, and are quite rubbery to the touch.

Land animals are relatively simple, and most are members of a single class, the xenocancerformes. Terrestrial analogues would be horseshoe crabs or similar crustaceans. It is believed that a single form has evolved into widely diverse forms and ecological niches.

The intermediates share characteristics of plants and animals, distinctions which are somewhat blurred on Aurore. They appear to be either sessile animal forms or nonmotile plants which have evolved motile forms as one stage in a complex and as yet unknown life cycle. One notable example, *Stragulum ambulatio*, is motile or sessile depending on the presence or absence of water.

## AURORAN LIFE

**Bladehood (*Umbraculamina* spp.):** Bladehoods are Auroran plants with the appearance of heavy-stemmed mushrooms two to four meters in height, with broad, flat, and slightly upturned caps. Their root system is extensive and shallow, existing only a surprisingly short distance below the surface.

Bladehoods are the most openly dangerous of Aurore's plantlife. Though sessile, they supplement the nourishment drawn from the ground by trapping and killing animal life which strays too close. When the plant senses pressure over the root system within a meter or two of the central trunk, the cap or parasol snaps down and closes, the motion exposing and extending rows of sharp, in-curved blades which are sheathed and invisible when the parasol is open. Moderately-sized animals (between 5 and 50 kilograms) are impaled on the blades, which are coated with a highly acidic secretion, and are killed almost instantly. Larger animals may tear free of the parasol but will succumb within a few moments to the blades' poison. These die in the general vicinity, which is usually populated by numerous bladehoods, and the decay of the corpses fertilizes

the soil.

After closing, the parasol gradually relaxes, and it returns to its open position after an hour or two. Dead animals lying anywhere above the root system are rapidly covered by a black, cottony substance growing up out of the ground, which discourages scavengers and works to digest and absorb the body's soft parts.

Bladehoods are superficially identical to a number of other Auroran plant species. They can be recognized, if they are seen in their closed state, by the fact that some have had sections of their parasols torn or shredded by escaped prey (the damage repairs itself in a week or so), and by the presence of the carapaces, cartilage, or other hard body parts of recent prey about the area.

**Referee's Notes:** Auroran animal life is mostly exoskeletal or supported by a soft material more like cartilage than bone. While bladehoods will be surrounded by the nondigestible remains of their recent prey, old body parts tend to break down rapidly in the presence of bladehood digestive juices, and it will take a sharp-eyed and alert character to realize that the vaguely organic-looking bits of material at the base of that particular giant mushroom are, in fact, the skeletal remains of an Auroran lifeform.

Bladehoods will attack any character who approaches so closely to the trunk as to pass underneath the open parasol or cap. The root system will only be triggered by a mass greater than 5 kilograms.

The referee may require player characters to roll to identify the bladehood's threat as a routine task. If the players are completely unacquainted with the bladehood, and no characters are present who might warn them, the task becomes difficult. If the character party has already witnessed a bladehood attack, the task becomes simple. If characters are already alert to danger (by a freshly killed animal or the struggle of an animal within a closed parasol), a routine task will be reduced to a simple task, a difficult task to routine.

The referee might also use random saving rolls to avoid a bladehood during situations (such as a firefight) when the characters are obviously not thinking about the potential dangers of local flora.

Though bladehoods are plants, their characteristics allow them to be classified as animals, as follows:



## Bladehood

*Pouncer Number Appearing:* 2D6-2 *Initiative:* 1 *Size:* 2D6×50 *Speed:* 0 *Armor:* 0 *DPV:* normal *Wound:* +1 *Signature:* none *Hit:* easy.

Bladehoods cause injury through both normal damage and stun (the effects of the blade poison). There is, as yet, no antidote or antivenin, though individual light or serious wounds can be treated as if they were snakebites to stabilize the character's condition.

Bladehoods are found everywhere on Aurore, from the high-tide line to the desert's edge, on the Tithonian side of the sea. They are not found on steep or extremely rocky areas, but they are especially common in swamps or soft ground, where they form entire forests. They are frequently found in woodland areas mingled with other plants which are indistinguishable from the bladehoods—but harmless.

In terms of the bladehood's ecological niche, it can be considered to be a point producer (P), a hunter (4), or a pouncer (5).

**Creep (*Stragulum ambulatio*):** Creeps, also known as "walking carpets" or "strags," are members of Aurore's intermediate regnum and are found almost exclusively on Auroran tidal flats, though exceptions have been noted. They are flat (5 to 30 cm thick), shaggy creatures which walk with a shambling motion resembling a rug alternately bunching and flattening out as it moves. Glands along the creep's underside secrete a powerful, organic acid which seems not to bother the creep but which dissolves pockmarks in calciferous rock, such as limestone, from which the creep extracts certain minerals and nutrients. Like Auroran plants, they produce their own food through photosynthesis.

Creeps are motile only during low tide. Several minutes before the onset of high tide, creeps use their acid secretions to etch out a sheltered hollow in the rock against which the muscular undersides of their bodies apply tremendous suction. Even the most forceful of incoming tides cannot dislodge their grip. During high tide, they remain completely nonmotile and have the appearance of flat, moss-covered or weed-covered rocks.

Creeps are hunters. It is believed they have vibration-sensitive nervous systems which sense motion through rock or sand. They capture prey by leaping on it or crawling over it, using their acid secretion to dissolve calciferous armor and to partially digest their prey. They are not terribly fast—a creep moving at high speed is a comical and ungainly sight—but they are very persistent and will trail a prospective quarry for hundreds of kilometers, even leaving tidal areas to do so. Human exploratory parties on Aurore have reported numerous creep attacks on people who were sleeping in the open on the ground.

**Referee's Notes:** Creeps are not terribly bright. Their usual prey is the Auroran landcrab, but they will relentlessly follow any moving lifeform weighing 10 kilos or more which wanders to within about 20 meters of their location. Once on a quarry's trail, they seem to use smell or other biochemical means to track their prey and will continue to follow so long as the target remains within about 10 kilometers of the creep, does not cross water over a meter deep, and does not take to the air.

Creeps tracking their prey travel at an average speed of 10 kph.

Creeps can be described for **Traveller: 2300** purposes as follows:

### Creep

*Hunter Number Appearing:* 1 *Initiative:* 8 *Size:* 100 *Speed:* 50 *Armor:* .2 *DPV:* .8 *Hit:* routine.

Creeps cause injury through blunt trauma during their first attack, and normal damage each action thereafter through the use of their acid secretion. Hitting a creep with bullets tends to splatter

drops of acid, which cause 1D6–2 light wounds to each character within 3 meters of a creep when it is shot.

When considering Auroran ecological niches, creeps are considered to be hunters (4) or pouncers (5) in abundant regions. In sparse or barren regions, however, they may be encountered as gatherers (1), because of their ability to exist for long periods of time on nutrients eked from bare rock.

**Auroran Landcrab (*Xenocancer pronus*):** Landcrabs are numerous, harmless invertebrates found throughout the Auroran temperate zone, both below and above the high-tide line. Truly amphibious, they possess analogues to both gills and lungs and appear to be capable of living for years as either fully terrestrial or fully marine forms, changing from one to the other when trapped or stranded by the changing tide. Sheathed in a tough, leathery exoskeleton (with cartilaginous internal support), they can grow to 20 kilos or more. They are reminiscent of Terran horseshoe crabs, round and flat, with numerous broad, jointed, paddle-shaped legs, and a long, joint-armored tail. When threatened by an incoming tide wall, they roll up into tight, armored balls which can apparently absorb considerable punishment.

Landcrabs are extremely common and are often found in loose associations, called pods, of several hundred or more—though nothing is known about their social structure or relationships. They appear to be the primary food source for creeps, bloodsuckers, sand puppies, and bladehoods.

**Referee's Notes:** Landcrabs are provided as a food source for several Auroran predators and as background color. They are useless as human food and present no threat to the characters. Their stats are as follows:

#### Land Crab

*Gatherer Number Appearing:* 1D6×1D10 *Initiative:* 1 *Size:* 1D6×0 *Speed:* 40 *Armor:* .2 *DPV:* .2 *Hit:* routine.

Landcrabs are gatherers (1) in the Auroran food chain.

**Bloodsucker (*Hirudogigas aurorienses*, *Hirudogigas marinus*):** The bloodsucker, or Auroran leech, is an evolutionary parallel to the terrestrial leech. It is large, averaging 2 kilos in weight, and appears as a leaf- or egg-shaped, charcoal-grey mass lying on the bottom of tidal pools or rivers. One marine variety (*H. marinus*) burrows into sand on tidal flats as the tide ebbs, and

digs its way free when the sea returns.

A hollow, sharp-pointed prong is held ready inside the creature's body. When triggered, this prong is released by powerful muscular action, penetrating the prey's armor, if any, while the bloodsucker's body attaches itself to the prey. The prong injects a strong digestive fluid, then acts as a siphon to draw off the prey's body fluids.

Even small (thumb-sized) bloodsuckers can cause painful bites, and large (1 kilo or more) creatures can inflict considerable damage on unprotected humans. Worse, however, is the fact that the sucker's digestive juices are powerful allergens in humans. Perhaps 50% of all humans stabbed by a bloodsucker suffer severe anaphylaxis, which can result in death. Large doses of benadryl or other antihistamines injected within a few minutes of an attack will usually reverse its effects.

A bloodsucker will attack only when provoked—as, for example, when an unwary foot treads on its hiding place in a river bottom, shallow pool, or under a tidal sand flat. The refuge of a bloodsucker can sometimes be spotted by the shells and dead husks of landcrabs, the cast-off remains of earlier meals.

**Referee's Notes:** Bloodsucker attacks will occur with complete randomness and at the referee's discretion whenever the characters are in a region where bloodsuckers may be lurking. Referees may warn characters to their presence by noting the presence of empty landcrab shells, but since these relics are easily carried away by wind, tide, current or rain, most bloodsucker locations will be unmarked.

Bloodsuckers can be described as follows:

#### Bloodsucker

*Pouncer Number Appearing:* 1 *Initiative:* 1 *Size:* 1D6×.5 kg *Speed:* 60 *Armor:* 0 *DPV:* .2 *Hit:* difficult.

Characters struck by a bloodsucker will experience an immediate minor wound in whatever part of the body (usually a foot) the referee determines was stung. The wound is treated as normal damage.

The bloodsucker will mold itself to the stricken limb and cling with powerful muscular suction. Removing the bloodsucker is a specific task, as follows:

To remove bloodsucker from character. Difficult. Strength. 3 seconds.

Unfortunately, burning the creature with cigarettes or open flames does not cause it to release its grip. It must be peeled off and its prong removed without breaking it inside the victim's skin.

A major or total mishap will result in the prong breaking. A serious infection (treated as a serious wound requiring stabilization, but with one critical point occurring every other day, for a total of 5 critical points) will result within 1D6 days.

In addition, any character stung by a bloodsucker must roll 1D10. On any odd number, the character will suffer anaphylaxis, experiencing difficulty breathing, severe swelling, and shock. Treat this reaction as a normal severe wound, requiring stabilization.

Bloodsuckers are pouncers (5) on the Auroran food chain.

**Sand Puppy (*Occultator syrtis*):** Sand puppies are inhabitants of tidal flats, free-swimming at high-water, but burying themselves under the sand as the tide ebbs. They resemble fat, finned invertebrate grubs or worms, soft-bodied and eyeless. It is believed that they are one stage in a multiphase life cycle of some larger creature, but other stages in the sand puppy's cycle have yet to be identified. Like bloodsuckers, they have a feeding mechanism which is retained inside the body until it is triggered by pressure on the surface of the sand above them.

This feeding apparatus has been likened to the jaws of a steel



trap, serrated, tough, and driven by powerful muscles to lunge up through the sand and snap closed on the prey. Sand puppies average 10 kilos in weight, grow to be 1 meter long, and have a jaw span of over 40 cm—more than enough to engulf a careless human foot. Once closed, even after the creature is dead, the jaws must be broken to be released. Like bloodsuckers, creeps, and other Auroran life forms, sand puppies excrete digestive juices over the trapped member and, aided by a rasping tongue, absorb the prey's soft parts through the walls of the post-mandibular buccal chamber.

**Referee's Notes:** Encounters with sand puppies may be dictated by travel through certain areas, but specific attacks on characters will be totally random and at the referee's discretion. Sand puppies can be described as follows:

#### **Sand Puppy**

*Pouncer Number Appearing: 1 Initiative: 2 Size: 10 Speed: 0 Armor: 0 DPV: .2 Hit: easy.*

A sand puppy strike on a character results in a light wound. Removing a sand puppy is a standard task described as follows:

To remove a sand puppy from a character. Standard. Strength. 6 seconds.

Each mishap results in 1 additional stun point inflicted on the victim. A total mishap results in severe and permanent damage to the injured member.

Sand puppies are pouncers (5) on the Auroran food chain.

**Dropper (*Canceraculeatus arboreus*):** Droppers are small, arboreal crustaceaforms related to landcrabs. They have flat, lightly armored bodies, and a pair of outsized forelegs equipped with razor-edged, poison claws. They are encountered only in Auroran wooded areas, generally in rugged country some distance from human population centers. They climb up the trunks of large broad-tops and cling to the undersides of the plants' tops, where they blend in to near invisibility. The passage of a large (over 10 kg) animal beneath the broadtop's cover causes them to drop off—hence their name—slashing at the prey with stinging, poison-producing claws as they fall. The thousands of droppers which may inhabit a given area of woodland are then attracted by the thrashings of a poisoned, dying or incapacitated animal. All drop to the ground en masse, converge on the prey, and feed on it.

An attack by a dropper is treated as a stun attack with a DPV of 1. Subsequent attacks on a stunned character are treated as normal attacks with DPVs of .1 x the number of attacking animals, which is at the referee's discretion for any given combat round.

#### **Dropper**

*Chaser Number Appearing: 1 ★ Initiative: 2 Size: -2 Speed: 80 Armor: .1 DPV: 1 Hit: routine.*

★ The initial attack is made by a single creature. Once the stricken character collapses, 2D6 additional droppers will appear in the immediate area (within 30 meters). One minute later, 2D6 x 10 more droppers will enter the area. Five minutes later, 2D6 x 100 more creatures will arrive. At his discretion, the referee may continue increasing the number of approaching droppers indefinitely. The attacks will cease and the creatures return to their trees once the characters leave the immediate area.

Droppers are considered to be Chasers (3) on the food chain.

**Redswift (*Pabulatorufus velox*):** The redswift is an Auroran herbivore found in open areas and woodlands. Though threatening in appearance and quite agile, it is harmless. It is a common prey of droppers.

#### **Redswift**

*Intermittent Number appearing: 1D6 Initiative: 2 Size: 10*

*Speed: 100 Armor: 0 DPV: — Hit: difficult.*

Redswifts are Intermittents (2) in the Auroran food chain.

#### **REFEREE'S NOTES ON AURORAN BIOLOGY**

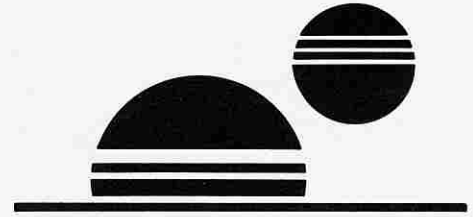
Auroran predators which threaten humans do so because of in-born reflexes, not because they seek human meals. Auroran animals are either actively poisonous to humans when eaten (causing anaphylactic reactions such as described for the bloodsucker), or they do absolutely nothing for them, passing through their systems undigested. This is because Auroran life is based on right-hand, or dextro-amino acids, mirror image (and undigestible) forms of the levo-amino acids necessary for human life. For the same reason, humans eaten by Auroran life forms either do nothing for the predators—or make them very, very sick.

Characters adventuring on Aurore must carry their own supplies of human food with them. Attempts to live off the land will be useless at best, disastrous at worst.

The human colonies on Aurore have been steadily replacing the native life in selected areas with imported Earth crops. Where terrestrial strains have grown wild in places, they have generally failed in competition with native Auroran forms, and colony farms must be carefully and patiently worked to maintain the balance of their miniature and artificial terrestrial ecosystems. An important (and expensive) Auroran import is soil brought all the way from Earth, containing the bacteria, nematodes, yeasts, and other microscopic life forms necessary to grow Terran crops in alien soil. Very small amounts of this imported "pay dirt," as it is called, is mixed with sterilized local soil and allowed to "brew." This new-grown pay dirt is then sold to colonist-farmers to be mixed into the carefully sterilized soil of their own plots. The process is expensive at first but results in larger and larger tracts of "terraformed" cropland.

**Acids:** Numerous Auroran life forms use powerful organic acid, either as a digestive juice or—in the case of the creep—to create a shelter from the incoming tide in soft rock. The referee is reminded that these acids do not perform the miracles attributed to various acids on TV or in the movies. They do not eat through steel, nor can the creatures use them to tunnel through solid rock.

Acid-secreting life forms are immune to the corrosive effects of the acids they produce. Many are armored with carbon-based compounds best described as organic plastics. The effects of acid on unprotected human flesh are severe but not immediate; the stuff will burn the skin and break it down in time, but is more dangerous as a systemic poison than as a corrosive. The exception is the creep, which can cause terrible acid burns with just a few moments of exposure. Even so, the stories told by old-hand colonists to Auroran tenderfeet about people being dissolved by giant creeps, bones and all, are just that: stories. Probably. As with all acid burns, the most effective treatment for burns caused by Auroran wildlife is to wash the affected area immediately with plenty of water.



# TanstaafI

The hex identified as Area 1 is centered on 90° west, 1000 kilometers south of the equator. It is the location of the original colony of TanstaafI, known now as TanstaafI City, or simply TanstaafI.

The city began as a cluster of settlement domes at the eastern base of a steep escarpment but has grown in the past forty years to a fair-sized city with a population of over 200,000. The spaceport, Port Blackjack, is located at the edge of a dry lake bed a few kilometers east of the city.

Since the characters will probably begin their adventure at TanstaafI or Port Blackjack, the city and its immediate area have been mapped. The most important features are described below:

## AREA 1: TANSTAAFL CITY

The following features are noted on the map of the immediate area around the city of TanstaafI.

**TanstaafI:** The city proper is a sprawling collection of buildings of various shapes and sizes. Because of the danger from seismic quakes, few buildings are more than two stories tall and most are a single level only. Buildings tend to be built with massively thick, braced walls of native stone, or with plastic, sheet metal, and other light, flexible materials which will either ride out a major quake or collapse harmlessly.

Kafer orbital attacks targeted the center of the city with high-explosive and kinetic energy warheads. Fortunately, no nukes were used (probably because the Kafers wanted to use the nearby port facilities), but several large areas of TanstaafI, especially on the south side of town, were cratered and reduced to rubble by the attacks, and civilian casualties were high. Rebuilding has not yet begun, and these “blitz blocks” are scenes of devastation which have only recently seen the largest remaining streets cleared of rubble.

**Business District:** Despite the impressive name, TanstaafI’s business district has not had time to grow to be much more than a motley collection of one-story and two-story office-space-for-rent buildings. The majority of TanstaafI’s business is handled here, however, because it is the general location of several major banks. One sprawling institution, La Banque Premiere d’Aurore, is a branch of the financial institution for the French colonies to the north, and is an important liaison in most business dealings between the colonies. La Banque Premiere acts as the principal bonding authority for mercenaries and other professionals hired to provide specific services for TanstaafI. Contracts and agreed-upon fees are held by the bank until the satisfactory completion of the ser-

vice, and officers of the bank’s legal services division frequently serve as adjudicators in contractual disputes.

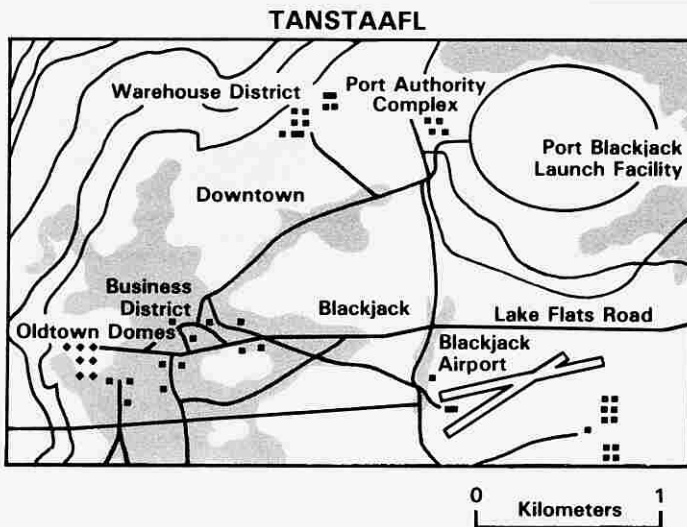
**Oldtown Domes:** The original corporate-owned settlement consisted of a number of large, precast sectional domes erected close to the wind shelter of Barrier Ridge, and these remain where they were built. Once housing TanstaafI’s entire population, as well as its corporate business center, the domes today serve as the colony’s government center, despite the fact that the growth of the city has carried the economic center of things a kilometer or two farther east. While laws in TanstaafI are few, shipping licenses must be purchased at the Public Offices in Dome One, and a public court to adjudicate civic disputes is set in Dome Two. Criminal proceedings—murder cases and the like—are overseen by a special tribunal which convenes as necessary in Dome Three.

**Outer Districts:** The outlying regions of TanstaafI City, apart from Oldtown and the Business District, consist of mixed residential and manufacturing areas. These are collectively referred to as the Outer Districts.

**Spaceport:** Port Blackjack is the colony’s spaceport facility several kilometers to the east of the city proper. It consists of several hundred square kilometers of dry lake bed, a paved main launch area and the Launch Complex terminal buildings, receiving and short-term warehousing facilities, and the Port Authority Complex which includes administration and security offices.

**Blackjack:** The town of Blackjack is clustered around the north end of the airfield and is primarily low-rent housing for spaceport, warehouse, and airport workers. Bars, casinos, and brothels line the main street into town, but these are generally haunts claimed by local Auroran workers who tend to discourage tourists. A separate neighborhood has been claimed by the mercenary troops hired by TanstaafI and based on the south side of the airport. Brawls between dock workers and mercenaries who stray across ill-defined territorial borders are nightly occurrences.

**Blackjack Airport:** Travel between widely-spaced settlements on Aurore was primarily accomplished by air transport before the war. The Blackjack Airport is a small facility shared by civilian and military transports. Flights on a more-or-less daily basis still arrive and depart from Lumiere d’Aube and Aurore. (Transport to Novoa Kiyev is possible only by rocket plane from the spaceport.) Civilian aircraft—light transports and utility light transports—can be chartered at the airport, with or without a pilot. However, inland flights are extremely dangerous due to the presence of Kafer “Snapfire” systems left by retreating troops. Consequently, virtually all travel to the outlying villages and towns is by hovercraft or wheeled



vehicles.

A TanstaafL militia military base is maintained on the south side of the airfield. Hangars here house four Conventional Frontier Fighters and a small detachment of mercenaries serving under contract to the TanstaafL government. These aircraft are risked in only the direst of emergencies, and generally fly in pairs with one aircraft carrying nothing but flares, chaff, and an assortment of jammers to cover the mission aircraft from snapfire attack. There is also a small in-processing unit for recruits. Characters seeking employment as mercenaries working for TanstaafL will be based here initially.

**Dawntown:** This collection of casinos, bars, brothels, cheap nightclubs, over-priced hotels, and decrepit-looking buildings is the traditional sinstrip which inevitably appears outside the main gate to any port or military installation. Because of the free-wheeling nature of TanstaafL's economy—there are very few local laws or regulations governing what you can or can't do with your free time—this one is wilder and more disreputable than most. Notable features are the Red Sky Casino and the local product known as "blackjack," a potent and foul-tasting 180-proof brandy made from the bitter, native apple cider.

Dawntown's entertainments cater to tourists and visiting spacehands and military personnel. Some bars have been "appropriated" by members of particular military units, who generally discourage outsiders from patronizing the place. Despite TanstaafL's boast that nothing is illegal in the colony, crime—people trying to take money and valuables from other people by force—does exist, and Dawntown's streets and alleys can be dangerous, especially to strangers travelling alone or in small groups. Most bars and entertainment facilities are owned directly by various members of the TanstaafL government; prices are high, but not excessively so, and not as high as the prices charged for the same services in the so-called luxury facilities in the city proper.

**Warehouse District:** Located off a road running north from Dawntown, the Warehouse District is a small industrial park and the site for row upon row of warehouses used to store goods which have just arrived on-world, or which are awaiting shipment off-world. Warehouse space is rented to shippers, merchants, and other users. The district is generally deserted except for loading crews and the full-time security contingents—both of which are hired directly by individual warehouse users.

A number of employment agencies within the district and at various places in Dawntown and TanstaafL will, for a fee, bring characters together with employers who—after whatever security checks or bond posting they may require—will hire them to load

cargo or guard shipments.

**Dry Lake Flats Road:** This is an unpaved road heading north-east across the lake bed known locally as Dry Lake Flats. The town of Worththetrip (now destroyed and in ruins) lies about 300 kilometers across the flats.

## AREA 1

Area 1 includes the city of TanstaafL and the spaceport, and extensive agricultural and mining areas to the south and east as well. The area is divided between the Barrier Hills (named because they sheltered the initial colony outpost from storms out of the west), and a broad river valley to the south.

The towns and communities in Area 1 are listed below.

**Adam's Ford:** *Population:* 4000. *Principal products:* Apples, hydroponic crops.

**Bristow:** *Population:* 1900. *Principal products:* Wheat, corn, hydroponic crops, and rabbits.

**Carver:** Destroyed by a nuclear warhead during the Kafer orbital bombardment, nothing is left but rubble and ruins.

**Confluence:** *Population:* 6500. *Principal products:* Apples, corn, hydroponic crops, and fish.

**Crossroads:** *Population:* 4000. *Principal products:* Apples, corn, hydroponic products, fish, and farming equipment.

**Dudley:** Destroyed by a Kafer nuclear warhead.

**Farside:** *Population:* 1100. *Principal products:* Corn, military salvage. Farside was an important town with a population of almost 5000. It was evacuated during the advance of a large Kafer war party in October of 2298 and has been only partly reoccupied.

**Glorify Center:** *Population:* 3000. *Principal products:* Wheat, corn, hydroponic products, and fish.

**Hadley:** *Population:* 1200. *Principal products:* Hydroponic equipment, hydroponic products, fish, and machine parts.

**Happy Days:** *Population:* 1900. *Principal products:* Cement, building stones, and metals.

**High Crossing:** *Population:* 1800. *Principal products:* Corn, and wheat.

**Jacklahoma:** *Population:* 1800. *Principal products:* Hydroponic products, and aureorewood.

**Junction:** *Population:* 9300. *Principal products:* Corn, wheat, hydroponic products, light industry, and textiles. Airfield (aircraft available for hire on a roll of 8 or less).

**Kingston:** Rubble and ruins surrounding a radioactive crater.

**Mercer:** *Population:* 1600. *Principal products:* Corn, apples, hydroponic products, and fish.

**Mushroom:** *Population:* 2800. *Principal products:* Aureorewood, and paper.

**New Dawn:** *Population:* 1300. *Principal product:* Wheat.

**Newton:** *Population:* 2000. *Principal product:* Apples.

**Over the Top:** *Population:* 1700. *Principal product:* Metal ores.

**Plateau:** An agricultural town northwest of the Barrier Ridge. It was the site of a critical battle on October 16, 2298. TanstaafLian mercenaries and local farmers' militia lured a large Kafer war party into the town and annihilated it with a tactical nuclear warhead. The battle is one of three credited with saving TanstaafL from Kafer occupation during the early part of the war.

Characters passing through Plateau will encounter 2D6 x 10 refugees who have returned to try to rebuild.

**Presser:** A farming community abandoned when the water supply was contaminated by fallout from Steeltown.

**Rectenna:** Destroyed during the Kafer orbital bombardment.

**Red:** *Population:* 1200. *Principal products:* Wheat, grain alcohol, methanol, and whiskey.



**Rhett:** *Population:* 1500. *Principal products:* Corn, apples.

**Sage Falls:** *Population:* 12,800. *Principal products:* Aurorewood, paper, and hydroelectrical power. Airfield (aircraft available for hire on a roll of 9 or less).

**Sawmill:** *Population:* 2800. *Principal products:* Hydroelectricity, paper, and aurorewood.

**Sky:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal products:* Textiles, apples, corn, hydroponic products, and light industry.

**Steeltown:** *Population:* 100. Destroyed by Kafer nuclear warheads during their orbital bombardment. Most of the central city is in ruins now, though a few scavengers live among the ruins which were not heavily contaminated. River transport between Presser and Jacklahoma has been interrupted by silt, rubble, and the formation of the highly radioactive Black Swamp.

**Titharkana:** *Population:* 1900. *Principal products:* Hydroponic products and fish.

**Vista:** *Population:* 1700. *Principal products:* Construction materials and metals.

**Washout:** *Population:* 1300. *Principal products:* Hydroponic products, fish, and apples.

**Wesserman:** *Population:* 1200. *Principal products:* Hydroponic products, fish, and meat.

**Westside:** Destroyed by high explosive and kinetic energy weapons during the Kafer bombardment.

**Whoopie:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal products:* Various metal ores.

**Zuckerman:** *Population:* 8000. *Principal products:* Hydroponic products, fish, wheat, and alcohol products. Airfield (aircraft available for hire on roll of 7 or less).

## AREA 2

Area 2 is very lightly populated, with settlements only on the eastern part of the region. It is dominated by the tidal flats east of Iceberg Bay, and by the vast and rolling Western Plains.

The Equator River flows out of Area 3 north of Platt, turns north, and vaults into a 200-meter plume of water and spray called Thundermist. Visibility is always poor from the top of the Thundermist cliffs because of the spray, but the view is spectacular nonetheless, shrouded in clouds and rainbows.

Southeast of the Thundermist falls is a place where the Equator River is rarely more than ankle deep across a shelf of hard rock. This ford, called The Lower Crossings of the Equator, is the location of an outpost manned by several hundred troops of the Tanstaaf Free Legion.

The following towns are identified on the Area 2 map.

**Caldera:** *Population:* 1200. *Principal product:* Heavy metals.

**Donner:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal products:* Hydroponic products, fish, bauxite, copper, and tin.

**Klugheit:** *Population:* 2000. *Principal products:* Apples, corn, and wheat.

**Plains:** *Population:* 2500. *Principal products:* Wheat, corn, and hydroponic products.

**Platt:** *Population:* 3000. *Principal products:* Wheat, corn, and grain hybrids.

**West Zum Nord:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal products:* Tin, bauxite, and copper.

## AREA 3

Area 3 is dominated by the broad Equator River Valley. Principal planetological features include the Equator River, a broad, swift-flowing river frequently girded by sheer-walled cliffs; the northern reaches of Barrier Ridge; and the Northern Mountains which are part of the tectonic folds flanking the tidal bore known as La

Gouffre. Dry Lake Flats is a desert, the dried bed of a salt lake drained by a sudden seismic cataclysm thousands of years ago. The surface is now a mixture of sand and salt flats 120 km wide, and stretching over 300 km from Tanstaaf City (the spaceport is built on the edge of the Flats) to Worththetrip.

The Equator Valley was first entered and settled by prospectors from Tanstaaf in 2267. In keeping with the multinational character of the corporate cartel which created Tanstaaf, settlers in the Equator Valley were generally from the United States, Bavaria, and Texas, and the place names tend to reflect this. Industrial and manufacturing centers in the eastern part of the area suffered heavily during the Kafer orbital bombardment. Many towns were nuked, and others heavily damaged by explosive or kinetic energy warheads.

The following communities are located on the Area 3 map.

**Across the Flood:** *Population:* 1500. *Principal products:* Corn and hydroponic products.

**Applejack:** A farming community destroyed during the Kafer's orbital bombardment.

**Arroyo:** A farming community destroyed by the Kafer Central Band.

**Avalanche:** *Population:* 1500. *Principal products:* Bauxite, iron ore, potash, and cement.

**Avarice:** *Population:* 5000. *Principal products:* Bauxite, corn, apples, and hydroponic products.

**Binker:** *Population:* 12,000. *Principal products:* Hydroponic crops, fish, guinea pigs, rats, and meat.

**Bounty:** Overrun and destroyed by Kafers.

**Carlyle:** *Population:* 8000. *Principal products:* Corn, apples, hydroponic crops, fish, and guinea pigs.

**Copley:** Overrun and destroyed by Kafers.

**Cunningham:** Overrun and destroyed by Kafers.

**Dawnslope:** Overrun and destroyed by Kafers.

**Desmond:** Destroyed by a nuclear warhead during the Kafer orbital bombardment.

**Disappointment:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal products:* Corn, apples, hydroponic crops, and catfish.

**Distant Thunder:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal products:* Bauxite and heavy metals.

**Dry Wells:** Overrun and destroyed by Kafers.

**Eos:** Overrun and destroyed by Kafers.

**Eta Home:** *Population:* 18,000+. *Principal products:* Corn, apples, and wheat.

**Equator Flats:** *Population:* 10,000. *Principal products:* Apples, other fruit, hydroponic crops, farming equipment, machinery, and terraformer soil. Airfield (aircraft available on a roll of 8 or less).

**Ewell:** Destroyed by chemical warheads and kinetic energy weapons during the Kafer orbital bombardment, then destroyed again by Kafer ground forces.

**Flat O:** *Population:* 3000. *Principal products:* Hydroponic crops, fish, and guinea pig meat.

**Freedom:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal products:* Copper, bauxite, tin, and heavy metals.

**Frischwasser:** Heavily damaged during the orbital bombardment by kinetic energy weapons, then totally destroyed by Kafer ground forces.

**Glorysky:** *Population:* 1800. *Principal products:* Copper, tin, lead, and heavy metals.

**Gollygee:** A mining community destroyed by Kafer ground forces.

**Grandeur:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal products:* Tin, bauxite, and heavy metals.

**Gridley:** Destroyed by Kafer orbital bombardment and further

devastated by Kafer war parties.

**Grodon:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal product:* Broadtop lumber.

**Hallwell:** An agricultural community destroyed by Kafers.

**Hamilton:** *Population:* 12,000. *Principal products:* Apples, machine tools, textiles, and machine parts.

**Handel:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal products:* Wheat, corn, and hydroponic crops.

**Highrise:** *Population:* 5000. *Principal products:* Corn, apples, tin, and heavy metals.

**Hope:** An industrial center destroyed by a Kafer nuclear warhead during the orbital bombardment.

**Jewel:** A mining community destroyed by the Kafers.

**Lakeview:** *Population:* 1400. *Principal products:* Apples, corn, hydroponic crops, and fish.

**Lightningstrike:** *Population:* 1200. *Principal products:* Apples, hydroponic crops, copper, and heavy metals.

**Montana:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal products:* Tin, silver, copper, and uranium.

**New Amarillo:** *Population:* 5000. *Principal products:* Corn, apples, wheat, and hydroponic crops.

**North:** *Population:* 1000. *Principal product:* Broadtop lumber.

**Nue Bavaria:** Overrun and destroyed by Kafer ground forces.

**Nueschuene:** Overrun and destroyed by Kafer ground forces.

**Roaring Falls:** *Population:* 1500. *Principal products:* Hydroponic crops, fish, lumber, concrete, and heavy metals.

**Ruckkauf:** *Population:* 4500. *Principal products:* Wheat, apples, corn, and hydroponic crops.

**Sigelhoff:** Overrun and destroyed by Kafer ground forces.

**Simpson:** Destroyed during the orbital bombardment.

**Spring Flood:** *Population:* 2000. *Principal products:* Corn, apples, and wheat.

**Susan:** A manufacturing and agricultural center badly hurt by Kafer orbital bombardment, then obliterated by the Kafers.

**Texas:** *Population:* 1500. *Principal products:* Rat, guinea pig, rabbit, corn, wheat, and apples.

**Twister:** *Population:* 1200. *Principal products:* Rat, guinea pig, rabbit, fish, and hydroponic crops.

**Uneven:** Destroyed by Kafer ground forces.

**Valley:** Destroyed by orbital nuclear strike.

**Valley Crossing:** Destroyed by Kafer ground forces.

**Vesper:** Destroyed by Kafer ground forces.

**Weizen:** *Population:* 1200. *Principal product:* Wheat.

**Wirbelwind:** Destroyed by Kafer ground forces.

**Wolfram:** Destroyed by Kafer ground forces.

**Worththetrip:** Destroyed by Kafer ground forces.

**Zero:** *Population:* 12,000. *Principal products:* Corn, hydroponic crops, fish, guinea pig meat, and concrete.

## CROSSING THE EQUATOR RIVER

The Equator is a broad, swiftly-flowing river which effectively isolates several northern communities from the Equator Valley settlements. Crossing is possible only at the bridge at Zero, or by hovercraft at some point where the banks are not sheer cliffs.

## AREA 4 AND AREA 5

Area 4 is very lightly populated, with only a few large settlements in the western region, and many small communities and isolated settlements across much of the rest of the central part of the area. Area 5 has not yet been settled, though a mining outpost has been established at Mount Phaeton, in the east.

The principal natural features in both areas are the Equator River in the north, and a series of volcanoes along a volcanic ridge south

of the river valley. Large, heavily forested areas are in the south. At the extreme eastern edge of Area 5 are the foothills of the High Desert Plateau, the beginnings of a plateau wall 5 kilometers high.

The area between Garrison and Essen was the site of a number of Kafer landings, and the entire eastern area was overrun by Kafer bands in the early days of the invasion. All major towns have been destroyed, though some smaller communities were overlooked. Numerous Kafer bands still roam through the entire area.

## AREA 6 AND AREA 7

Areas 6 and 7 lie north of the equator. The single most impressive feature of these areas is the tidal gulf called La Gouffre. Over 100 kilometers wide in places, and as much as half a kilometer deep, La Gouffre is assaulted once each day by a flow tide with a speed of 180 kph, and a maximum rise of 480 meters. Explorers have been deafened by the roar of the incoming water. Hearing protectors are recommended for people venturing to within a few kilometers of the gulf.

These two areas are almost entirely unexplored. Scientists have visited La Gouffre, and survey parties have passed along both rims of the gulf, but most of the rest of the terrain has never been visited. Mont Ste. Victoire is an enormous shield mountain over 400 km across and reaching some 5000 meters above mean sea level. South of La Gouffre is a labyrinthine canyon system called Thunder Valley. Part of the Iceberg Bay tidal flat extends into the southwest portion of Area 6.

## MILITARY FORCES IN TANSTAAFL

There are two main human military forces in the Tanstaafl colony: mercenaries and militia.

**Militia:** These are bands of local citizens who meet periodically for training and who can be mobilized quickly to respond to Kafer threats in the immediate area of their community. They are not as well trained as regular troops, and they have lost many of the weapons they began the war with.

Tanstaafl retains a paramilitary force (exclusive of the Tanstaafl Free Legion) of about 12,000 men. This number includes rural and metro police, plus a 9000-man militia organized as follows:

6 regional regiments, with a total of 20 infantry companies, 7 motorized infantry companies, 28 platoon-sized garrisons, 4 heavy weapons companies, 5 motor transport companies, 2 hover transport companies, 2 maintenance companies, 4 medical companies, 7 engineer companies.

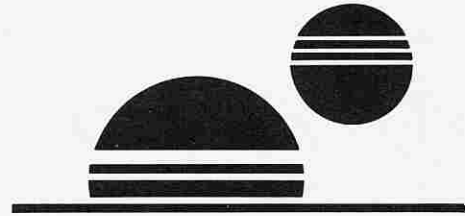
These units are scattered throughout Areas 1 and 2 and are organized to protect homesteads and communities in other areas.

In general, each local region, town, or community has its own local militia force. These are poorly armed, many of their heavy weapons having been lost in combat already. Perhaps one-quarter of this force will be assembled north of the Lower Crossing of the Equator at the time of the scenario *Thunder Valley*.

**Mercenaries:** The Tanstaafl Free Legion currently consists of about 2,000 men. Organization groups include:

3 area headquarters (permanent headquarters staffs), 3 hover infantry companies, 5 motorized infantry companies, 2 helicopter infantry companies, 1 hover tank company, 2 armored car companies, about 20 platoon-sized Ramrod teams, 3 artillery companies

About two-thirds of this force is currently in the immediate area about Tanstaafl City, while the rest is deployed on a rotating basis to advance fire bases throughout Areas 1 and 2. In the scenario *Thunder Valley*, perhaps two-thirds of the regiment will be assembled in the area north of the Lower crossing of the Equator, preparing to move in on the Kafer Horde in Thunder Valley.



# Kafers

*They told us he used to be a farmer, but I never could see him as one. They said he'd worked the rhenium mines for the money to bring in paydirt from Earth. He'd sterilized soil almost by hand and built farmland hectare by hectare. He'd started a family, too. Now his family and most of his friends were dead and his farm was covered in Kafer Rot.*

*When he talked there was never horror or pain or bitterness in his words, just a sort of dull shock. Now he looked up at us with those lifeless eyes and spoke.*

*"I saw it just as it saw me. You know how they used to say that snakes hypnotized their prey, held them paralyzed while the snake made its move? Sheer nonsense, of course... but right about then I felt like I was playing mouse to that Kafer's snake.*

*"Not that it was anything like a snake...or even a bug. Some say they look like overgrown roaches, but this... this thing didn't give me that impression at all. At the time, I wasn't thinking of comparisons. I wasn't thinking about much at all, as though my mind was paralyzed...like that mouse facing the snake. Oh, I remember details...now. Those small, black eyes under heavy brow ridges, the shell—like a lobster's, with spines—on its back and head. And the mouth... the mouth was the worst.*

*"Sometimes I still wake up screaming at night."*

*And all the while he talked, he methodically filed crosses into the points of the pile of seven-point-five cartridges in front of him, turning them into dum-dums.*

At the time of these adventure scenarios on Aurore, virtually nothing is known about the alien race known to humans as the Kafers.

To this date, no Kafer has been captured for study or for communication, there has been no formal contact with the race at all, and nothing is known at all about their government or society. The very little data available on their physiology comes from autopsies of Kafer dead recovered from the battlefield, and this is rudimentary at best. Due to a combination of internal bacteria and certain organic acids, Kafers begin to decompose rapidly and immediately after death. Although this is not an externally visible process, it does considerably corrupt the internal chemistry within hours. Thus biologists have a fairly good idea of the general layout of Kafer internal organs and a good idea of their general functions, but very little information on detailed body chemistry. Likewise, information available on their behavior was gleaned from interviews with the handful of humans who were captured by Kafers, were rescued or who managed to escape, and who still retain their

sanity.

Two sub-sections are presented in this section describing the Kafers. The first, *The Kafers: Player's Information*, contains all that is currently known about the Kafers, and what the players may be able to discover about them during the course of this adventure. The second, *The Kafers: Referee's Information* contains information on Kafer behavior and psychology which is *for the referee only*. The referee should keep in mind that Kafer psychology will be further revealed in future Kafer War campaigns and that this information should only gradually be revealed to the players. In addition, one of the handouts in the center of the book is a training flyer on Kafers produced by the Tanstaaf Free Legion and should be given to players when and if they enlist.

## THE KAFERS: PLAYER'S INFORMATION

The information in this section represents information available to the player characters. The referee should not, however, give it to the players freely, but should reveal it to them as the result of their questions or specific research into Kafer behavior, and through direct contact with the Kafers themselves. The information listed below is readily available elsewhere in this module booklet, both as rumors, and as background information which the players will be able to accumulate during the course of their sojourn on Aurore.

**The Kafers on Aurore:** The Kafer landings took place shortly after the victory of the Kafer invasion armada and their investment of low orbital positions around Aurore. In the Tanstaaf colony, the primary landings occurred in Area 4. Most human settlements there were overrun within the first weeks of ground fighting, and tactical reports were fragmentary and few. All that is known with certainty is that contact with human forces and communities within the overrun regions was lost.

Some four months before the time of the first of these scenarios, a huge body of Kafer warriors and vehicles (referred to as a *horde*) approached Area 3 from the east. After several battles with local militia forces, the Horde fragmented into three smaller units called *bands*, each of which pursued a more or less independent course towards Tanstaaf City, destroying every human community in their path. Two of these Bands were badly defeated by militia and Tanstaaf Free Legion forces defending the capital and the all-important spaceport. The third destroyed a number of towns but seemed to suffer from a breakdown of internal discipline and fragmented into small bands called *war parties*. Survivors of all three bands still infest the hill country north and northeast of



Tanstaaf City, and many parts of the Equator Valley.

The current strategic situation finds the human defenders holding their own, but with large areas formerly given over to human colonization now infested by small, roving Kafer bands. Much of Areas 3 and 4 are still considered to be Kafer territory. Vast areas of prime farming land, much of it already terraformed, have been infested by the fungal blight known as Kafer Rot and are unusable. The human occupants have been killed or driven off, or reduced to small bands of resistance fighters hiding in the hills.

The human response to the invasion at this point consists of mercenary and militia Quick Response Teams to reinforce threatened settlements or farms, frequent patrols of major roads, and systematic search-and-destroy sweeps through Kafer-held areas. At the same time, convoys to get supplies and reinforcements through to areas cut off by Kafer activity have been continuing for the past several months.

### KAFER APPEARANCE

Individual Kafers are upright bipeds standing 2 meters tall. A horny carapace over their backs and upper skulls, and a tough, hairless integument everywhere else contribute to their vaguely insectoid appearance. Their color is dark, ranging from brownish red to deep charcoal grey.

Their skulls have pronounced, bony eye ridges which are manipulated somewhat by internal musculature to shield the eye sockets and serve the same functions as human eyebrows. The eyes themselves are relatively small, deeply set, and darkly pigmented, and the top of the skull is decorated by irregular patches which become more reflective in direct sunlight. There is speculation that the brow ridges, coloration, and eye design are products of evolution on a world with a hotter, brighter star than Earth's sun, but this cannot yet be confirmed. Further speculation holds that Kafer vision does not extend into the longer wavelengths of red light visible to humans and is therefore handicapped somewhat on *Aurora*, particularly when the surface is illuminated only by the red glow of *Tithonus*. This, too, is unproven.

Kafer mouths are vertical slits surrounded by paired, opposing mandibles and a bewildering battery of external and internal mouth parts for grasping, tasting, chewing, piercing, tearing and suck-

ing. The mandibles are heavily muscled and have been known to shear through two-centimeter lead pipe. The lean, bony face and its array of complex mouth parts reinforces the insectoid impression most humans get when confronted by a Kafer, though Kafers are no more closely related to insects than they are to mammals. There are no visible sexual organs, and it is thought that they may be hermaphroditic.

Joint articulation is similar to humans. Upper arms and thighs tend to be heavily muscled. Lower legs and arms are slender and covered by short, coarse, black bristles. Their hands consist of three, radially symmetrical and mutually opposable thumbs. Although capable of fine manipulation, the Kafer hand is not nearly as strong as a human hand. Though technically upright, Kafers have a pronounced stoop, and the head and neck project forward from the torso more than in humans.

### THE KAFERS: REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The referee will necessarily be charged with handling both individual Kafers and Kafer parties during the course of these scenarios. In general, Kafers will seem to act quite stupidly, both as individuals and en masse. Kafer bands will march without maintaining march discipline: they may litter the road with their garbage, talk with one another in the ranks, and individually straggle. Kafer units approaching a suspected enemy position will never put out flankers or security elements, and only rarely will they send scouts ahead to check for ambushes or signs of the enemy. Kafers have been known to stage ambushes, but they are not cunningly devised or hidden, and tend to be set in fairly obvious terrain. The ambushers rarely, if ever, put out forces to block an ambushed party's retreat or to act as security elements for their own withdrawal.

Most small-unit actions between Kafers and humans have begun when a Kafer mob blundered into a human position, or when a number of Kafers organized an attack on an isolated human target such as a convoy or a farmhouse. Only the largest Kafer bands have attacked entire towns or large settlements.

Time and time again, humans who have faced Kafers in combat have stated that the Kafers seemed almost comical in their confusion during the first moments of a human attack on them. Entire Kafer bands have been wiped out to the last being without firing a shot in reply, apparently because they were still trying to figure out what was happening to them.

Unfortunately, Kafer war parties never *stay* confused. Once they come under fire, Kafers undergo a few moments of confusion or appear to react in a dull-witted fashion, but then they seem to be transformed into efficient and wickedly cunning combat machines.

**Role-Playing Kafers:** As a rule, once the firing starts, the Kafers will remain confused and dim-witted for 1D6 combat turns. During this time they may return fire but in the wrong direction or without taking careful aim, or they may not fire at all. Some may stand up in the line of fire, or take cover behind obviously inadequate shielding such as a light fence or shrubbery. Whole platoon-sized units have been known to stand in the open taking casualties while their officers pranced about beating them with whips and cattle prods. Some have been known to fire into their own comrades, or charge human positions unarmed, or even to slash or shoot themselves with their own weapons.

After the initial period of confusion passes, however, the situation changes. The Kafers will seem to melt into the terrain, and where before there was a mindless, disorganized rabble, there will then be a smoothly-disciplined and efficient fighting force. They will take full advantage of the surrounding terrain and lay down effective covering fire. They excel at small-unit tactics, with several

forces providing covering fire for one or more smaller units which will slip around the flanks of an enemy and strike him from the rear. A favorite tactic is for a small commando group to slip unobserved into the very midst of the human defenses, where they will attack in precisely the best way to cause a maximum of damage and confusion, then continue fighting hand-to-hand until the main body can rush through and join them. The coordination and timing of these attacks is superb. Once engaged in close combat, Kafers never surrender and rarely retreat, and they fight with (literal!) inhuman savagery, determination, and zeal.

Typical Kafer NPC stats are as follows:

Size: 18  
 Strength: 12  
 Dexterity: 12  
 Endurance: 16  
 Determination: 15  
 Intelligence: 2/12  
 Eloquence:—  
 Education:—

These values will vary considerably from individual to individual, but these can be used as a starting point. Kafer intelligence is low until shortly after combat begins, then jumps by 10 points or more. Not all Kafers have base intelligence values of 2; officers and some other veterans may have basic intelligence values of as high as 6 or 8, and very rare individuals may have values of 10 or 12 all the time. Kafer intelligence is *never* raised above 14 during combat, however.

In order to role-play one or more Kafers, the following guidelines should be used. The referee should consider Kafers to be green NPCs during the first moments of combat and allow them no advantages at all for tactical skill. After the initial period of confusion passes, however, all Kafers become Veteran NPCs, and all Kafer officers become Elite. Note, however, that it *always* requires four light wounds to incapacitate a Kafer, no matter what his NPC status at the time.

Advantages should be allowed to any Kafer band under fire as though it was led by officers with Leadership and Tactical skill levels

of 3 or more. The most important part of playing Kafers in a scenario encounter, however, is to stress through the role-playing narrative how cunning the Kafers have become. They will exhibit seemingly superhuman skill in infiltrating human lines and in determining the best place and manner to attack. They will use cunning tricks, including feigning death, hiding in or under burned-out or burning vehicles or buildings, hiding underwater, and using captured humans as screens in order to get a clear shot at their enemies. They are adept at picking out human officers and concentrating their efforts on them in order to cripple the *Fleischwesens'* command organization.

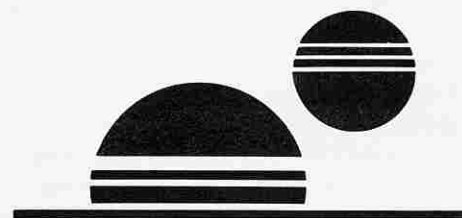
This change in the perceived combat abilities of Kafers will last for as long as they remain under fire, and for approximately 30 minutes after the battle is over. If Kafers are actively pursuing a human force, they will maintain high tactical and intellectual abilities so long as the humans remain in sight, and, again, for 30 minutes afterwards. After 30 minutes have passed with no humans in sight and no incoming fire, they revert to the same intellectual levels they exhibited before the engagement began.

The reason for this change is inherent in Kafer physiology and psychology. The referee should endeavor to present Kafer behavior naturally, in an offhand manner; their behavior is a clue to their makeup, but the referee should use a subtle hand in presenting Kafer peculiarities to the players. Kafer psychology is, in fact, a puzzle which the players will have an opportunity to solve while playing these and other scenarios of the Kafer War series. Further clues will be presented in later scenarios of the series.

Besides, understanding the Kafers is an important part of *this* scenario package. The players will have ample opportunity to attempt to understand their behavior in the course of these scenarios.

The problem, of course, is staying alive long enough to puzzle it all out.





# Campaign Introduction

*Blackjack spaceport wasn't much more than a dry lakebed with buildings at one end, and from the air Tanstaafl City looked less than impressive. But who was looking at buildings, anyway? Tanstaafl City is tucked away between the Barrier Hills to the west and the Tithonian Mountains to the east... and to the east is where Tithonus hangs on the horizon like some vast, blood-streaked eye.*

*We stepped off the rocket shuttle with a bounce in our step—seven-tenth's gee is great for fallen arches and sore feet—and that thin, dry air felt positively balmy. A few thousand kilometers further west across the ocean it was freezing, but at the longitude of Tanstaafl the temperature stays right around thirty degrees.*

*Of course, it does get warmer the farther east you go.*

*We weren't worried about the weather though. We'd come to Aurore for just one reason—well, two, if you want to get technical. The Tanstaafl colony was long on money and short on labor, and rumor had it that this was a place to make your fortune. That was the second reason.*

*The first reason, of course, was the Kafers.*

*Can you believe it? We were actually looking forward to meeting one...*

## THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

The characters are members of an adventuring party who have recently arrived in the Eta Bootis system and have been searching for employment in the Tanstaafl colony on Aurore. They may choose to sign on with the Tanstaafl army as mercenaries in the war against the Kafers (discussed elsewhere in this module), or they may find a job with a private individual or corporation as a security force or scout team.

Ideally, the player characters should have military backgrounds or some combat experience with ground military forces, but lack of such experience does not preclude a player from participation. So long as some in the party have military experience, the entire group may be hired as a squad.

## “WHAT BRINGS YOU TO ETA BOOTIS?”

Any of a number of rumors or events could have brought the characters to Aurore. The Beta Canum Venaticorum system, location of the introductory adventure *The Tricolor's Shadow* only 10.8 light years away from Eta Bootis—not far at all as interstellar distances go, and only a few systems away from Eta Bootis along the star lanes of the French Arm.

Clearly the most likely rumors which might have brought the adventurers to Eta Bootis are the stories circulating throughout

human space about the Kafer invasion of the system. For two years now, Aurore has been the scene of an ongoing and increasingly bitter war between Aurore's human colonists and bands of Kafer warriors cut off on the world by the dispersal of their invasion fleet. Aurore has appealed to Earth for help in her struggle against the invaders, and French, German, and Ukrainian forces have been operating in the system at the request of the French and Ukrainian colonies on Aurore. A third settlement, the independent colony called Tanstaafl, has been hiring anyone willing to serve in their mercenary army to help in the struggle against Kafers in Tanstaafl's territory. Many individuals have gone to Aurore to join the fight. For some it is a way to make money; for many more, however, it is something much more. It is the front lines in what may be a life and death struggle for racial survival.

## RUMORS OF WAR

Everywhere throughout human-explored space there are rumors of war with a new and previously unknown alien race known only as the Kafers. They were first encountered five years ago, in 2295, by a party of French scientists at an outpost in the Arcturus system. Two years later, all communication with the Arcturian station was lost, and a year after that, a Kafer invasion force attacked human ships and settlements at Eta Bootis, four and a half light years from Arcturus.

There are two rumors which the player characters will definitely have heard before they arrive at Eta Bootis, either through news and public information broadcasts and newsfax printouts, or through conversations with friends and acquaintances. These rumors are listed below.

**Atrocity at Arcturus:** The French *Station Arcture* (Arcturus Station) was an outpost consisting of 173 men and women engaged in astrophysical research. Arcturus is a Population II star, and the subject of intense astronomical interest. The outpost's crew was made up almost entirely of scientists, with a very small party of security personnel and an administrative department—nothing, certainly, which could have been interpreted as a threat by anyone.

In 2295, the outpost reported having established contact with the crew of an alien exploratory vessel. Attempts at communication were unsuccessful, but the science team had hopes that subsequent contacts would prove fruitful. Most of what is now known of Kafer biology was a result of that first tentative, unsatisfactory contact. News reports referred to the aliens as “Arcturians,” a complete misnomer since they were obviously visitors to planetless Arcturus, as were the French.

## The Eta Bootis System

**Referee's Note:** Player characters en route to Eta Bootis or newly arrived in the system may wish to learn something of their destination. There are numerous sources for such information including libraries, spaceport information terminals, briefings given by new employers, and navigational ephemerides and manuals.

The information given below is presented as an extract from such a manual. It may be shown to the players, but only upon their direct request and as a part of their characters' search for specific data on the Eta Bootean system.

Players should keep in mind that such information, while generally accurate, may be both subject to local variations in conditions and dated by events subsequent to the surveys which recorded it.

The navigational manual entry for *Aurore* presented below, for example, was dated by the events of 2298.

An extract from *Le Manuel de la Navigation des Etoiles de Blancharde*, edition 2295.

## ETA BOOTIS SYSTEM

### Aurore

Coordinates: X -26.8 Y -14.3 Z -10.2

**Eta Bootis A, Muphrid** Type: G0 IV Mass: 1.75 Sol Luminosity: 6.5 Sol Radius: 2.5 Sol

**Eta Bootis B, Rubis** Type: M0 V Mass: .48 Sol Luminosity: .04 Sol Radius: .54 Sol

**System Notes:** Ironically, the name "Muphrid" comes from the Arabic word for "single." Eta Bootis was not identified as a close double star until spectroscopic studies were made in the 20th century. The red dwarf companion, called "Rubis" (French: Ruby) by the system's inhabitants, occupies an orbit with a semimajor axis of 1.425 au and a period of 495 days. The presence of this small, dim companion has profoundly influenced the evolutionary course of the Eta Bootean system.

**Planetary System:** Five major planetary bodies, all gas giants, all lying in the system's outer zone. The presence of Rubis in the inner system has prevented the formation of terrestrial-type worlds within Eta Bootis' inner or life zones.

In accordance with the mythological nomenclature adopted by the system's colonists, these planets have been named as follows:

**I Hesperus:** Orbital Radius: 4.5 au Period: 6.39 yrs. Mass: .8 Jupiter.

**II Tithonus:** Orbital Radius: 5.85 au Period: 9.47 yrs. Mass: 5.3 Jupiter.

**III Laodemon:** Orbital Radius: 8.19 au Period: 15.7 yrs. Mass: 1.6 Jupiter.

**IV Theia:** Orbital Radius: 12.28 au Period: 28.8 yrs. Mass: .5 Jupiter.

**V Astraeus:** Orbital Radius: 19.66 au Period: 58.37 yrs. Mass: .28 Jupiter.

Eta Bootis II, Tithonus, attracted the immediate attention of early survey parties to the system. Over five times the mass of Jupiter (Sol V), Tithonus is a prime example of a brown dwarf, or "failed star." A brown dwarf is a sub-stellar body which did not collect enough mass during the system's early history to initiate hydrogen-helium fusion and shine as a true star, but which is so massive that gravitational contraction has heated it until it gives off far more heat than it receives from its sun. It glows with a dull, somber red light and radiates considerable energy in the infrared. Brown dwarfs occupy a place on the hierarchy of cosmic objects between the largest planets and the smallest true stars.

Classic brown dwarfs range in mass from less than one-tenth of Sol to five to ten times the mass of Jupiter. Tithonus lies at the extreme lower end of this range but is typical of the class in all other respects.

Planetary data for Eta Bootis II are as follows:

### ETA BOOTIS II: TITHONUS

Mean orbital Radius: 5.85 au Period: 9.47 years Mass:  $1.007 \times 10^{31}$  gm, or 5.3 times Jupiter, or about .005 Sol Equatorial Diameter: 257,000 km, or 1.8xSol V Rotational Period: 5 h 32 m 12 s Surface Temperature: 1120° K Luminosity: .00003 Sol

**Satellites:** Tithonus has four major satellites: Memnon, Selene, Aurore, and Antilochus, plus at least 5 minor satellites over 100 km in diameter.

**Notes:** Tithonus is also a representative of that rarity among planetary phenomena, a gas giant which radiates enough heat to support a world with liquid water and an extensive biosphere outside the life zone of its parent star. Tithonus' third major satellite was found to be habitable by an ESA exploratory survey in 2238.

### ETA BOOTIS II C (AURORE)

Mean Orbital Radius: 927,525 km Period: 2.537 days Rotational Period: 2 d 12 h 51 m 12.96 s (2.537 days) Equatorial Diameter: 9450 km Circumference: 29,688.1 km Mass:  $2.27 \times 10^{27}$  gm, or .38 Earth Density: 6.07 gm/cm<sup>3</sup>, or 1.1 Earth Surface Gravity: 728.6 cm/sec<sup>2</sup>, or .743 G Escape Velocity: 8.3 kps Axial Inclination: > 1° Temperature (Hot Pole): +90° C Temperature Range (Cold Pole): -75° C to -35° C Magnetic Field:  $> 5.5 \times 10^{-3}$  gauss tilted 8° to the pole.

**Atmosphere:** Pressure at Sea Level: in atmospheres:

N<sub>2</sub>: 78.58%

O<sub>2</sub>: 19.34%

Ar: 1.23%

CO<sub>2</sub>: 305 ppm

O<sub>3</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub>: < 10 ppm

Other constituents, including Ne, Kr, and NO<sub>2</sub>: < 1.5 ppm

**Tidal effect:** .02 Tithonian gravitational field: 129 Sol at 1 au

**History:** Eta Bootis was first surveyed in 2238 by an ESA exploratory mission which noted that planet II's third major satellite was both habitable and possessed of a mass/density which suggested the presence and commercial accessibility of heavy metals. The first attempt at commercial exploitation was made in 2244 by a Ukrainian colonial expedition under ESA auspices led by Vasily Martos and Yuri Leonivich Kamarov. The colony, sited on a large island continent astride the equator at about 90° east, and the satellite-planet itself, were both named Novoa Kiyev.

Two years later a French colony was established along the eastern coastlands on the opposite side of the planet, near 90° west. The French name for the world—Aurore—quickly replaced Novoa Kiyev as the planet's name and provided the mythological inspiration for the other planetary bodies of the system. Aurore (French for Aurora, from the Greek *Aurora*, goddess of the dawn) was suggested in part by the continual auroral displays which encompass much of the planet, but is primarily a tribute to the spectacular skies to the east of the French colony. There, the bloodred and banded glowing coal of Tithonus, covering a full 15° of the sky, ponderously rises and falls in a two-and-a-half day cycle which Charlerois, the Auroran poet, described as "the rosy fingers of eternal dawn." Two primary French colonial centers were established by 2280—Aurore itself, and the more recent *Lumiere d'Aube* (Dawn's Light).

In 2257 a third colony was established south of Lumiere on the far side of the tidal chasm called La Gouffre. It was given a name deemed appropriate by its largely American, Texan, and north-European founders—though the new colony's Earthside financial backers could not have been expected to understand the humor in the choice. By this time it was clearly recognized that Aurore could be deadly as well as lovely, and early dreams of immediate commercial success and prosperity had long since faded in the day-to-day struggle to survive in a little-known, hostile, and alien environment. The founders named their colony "Tanstaaf," after the humorous popular acronym for "there ain't no such thing as a free lunch."

**Notes:** Besides the usual hazards common to any newly colonized planet (diseases, exotic allergens, unknown animals and the like), Aurore presented the Eta Bootean colonists with three particular dangers unique to their world.

A. Tithonus possesses powerful and far-flung magnetic fields which create extremely powerful Van Allen radiation belts. Aurore's orbit lies between the two main belts, which actually serve to shield the planet somewhat from the worst of the particulate radiation cast off by the turbulent processes of the primary's interior, but travel in near-Tithonian space is hazardous and requires approach and escape vectors along the axis of Tithonus' poles.

Background radiation on Aurore's surface is somewhat higher than on Earth, though still within generally acceptable limits for human safety. It is believed that mutagenic processes within Aurore's ecosystem proceed somewhat more swiftly than on Earth. Statistical studies of the incidence of mutagenic cancers and birth defects do show a definite increase over base normals, but the human presence on Aurore is as yet too new to allow definitive studies of the effects on long-term human occupancy of the world.

A second effect of the Tithonian magnetic and radiation belts is the disruption of radio communications on Aurore's surface.

B. Tithonus exerts a tremendous gravitational pull on the satellite, creating a tidal effect which amounts to some 454 times the pull Earth's moon exerts on Earth. Although Aurore does not rotate with respect to Tithonus, it does have a slight librational movement (making Tithonus appear to swing back and forth in the sky across an arc of about 5°) which is sufficient, in conjunction with the pull of Tithonus, to cause local tides.

These "slosh tides" amount to only about six times the 1-meter high tide/low tide difference which occurs on the open ocean on Earth. As on Earth, however, local tides are vastly magnified by the channeling effects of certain bays, estuaries, fjords, and other geological formations. The difference between low tide and high tide along the chasm called La Gouffre has been recorded at 489 meters. Vast areas of coastland are inundated once daily for distances ranging hundreds or even thousands of kilometers inland. Narrow coastal gorges become tidal bores which focus the incoming tide into thundering columns of water moving with unbelievable speed and force.

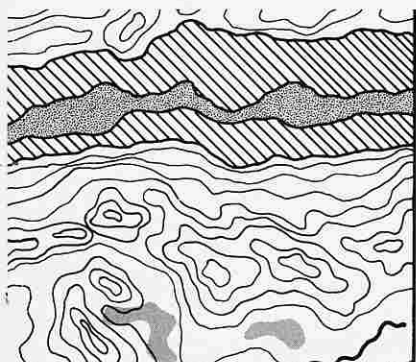
Tithonus' tidal pull has also contributed significantly to Auroran orogenesis, seismic activity, and vulcanism. Aurore is very slightly egg-shaped—though not enough to be noticeable to the naked eye—with the narrow end pulled towards Tithonus. The sub-Tithonian High Desert is in fact an extreme plateau surrounded by sharp, raw mountain ridges and faults. Seismic events are almost daily occurrences along the dawn-side of La Mer Ceindant, and there are numerous volcanoes grouped in chains along major stress lines around and through the High Desert. In the past half-century, Auroran settlers have learned to build their dwellings low, with thick, sloping walls and massive internal bracing. Mining operations have proven to be particularly difficult and expensive because of the constant seismic activity.

C. Aurore's tidal lock with Tithonus has resulted in a Hot Pole in the sub-Tithonian High Desert where temperatures remain near the boiling point of water, and a Cold Pole at the antipode where temperatures rise to -35° Centigrade when the True Suns are in the sky and drop to the freezing point of carbon dioxide at night. This results in constant high altitude winds blowing from the hot hemisphere to the cold, and low-altitude winds blowing from the cold hemisphere to the hot. Temperatures within the rather broad habitable zone (along both coasts of La Mer Ceindant) remain fairly constant, but thunderstorms are sudden and violent, lightning in the highly charged atmosphere is both spectacular and far more severe than on Earth, and the wind-shear effect at about 8000 meters causes grave difficulties at times for spacecraft attempting to land or take off.

Despite these difficulties, native Aurorans take a perverse pride in the harsh conditions and unpredictable violence of Aurore, and frequently boast that they can meet every threat and danger their world can throw at them.

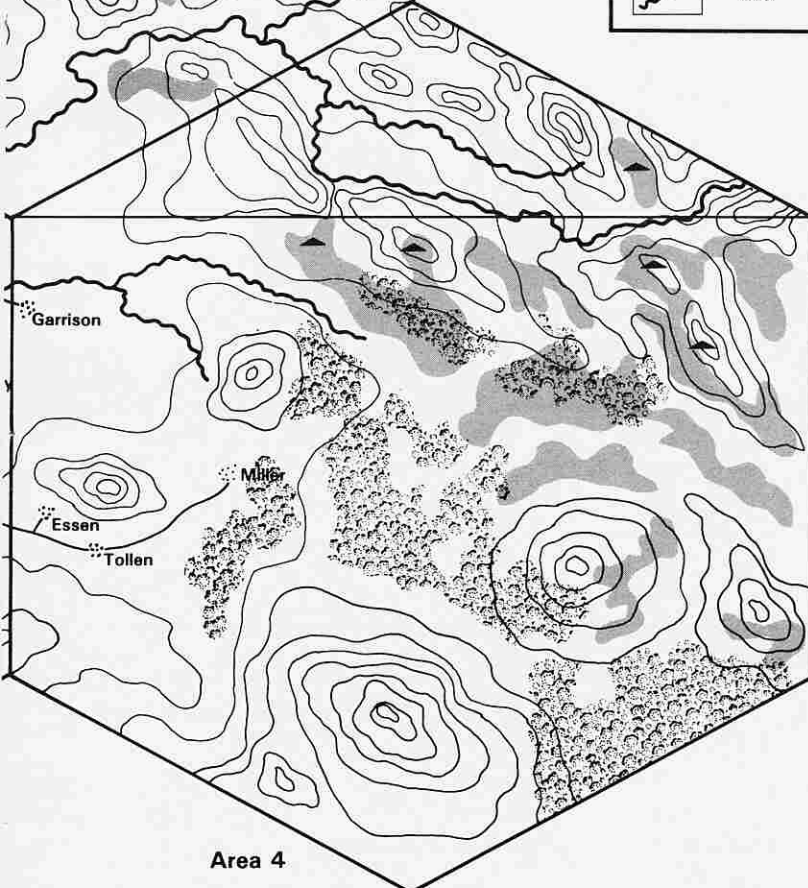
*In 2298, another danger was added to the list...*





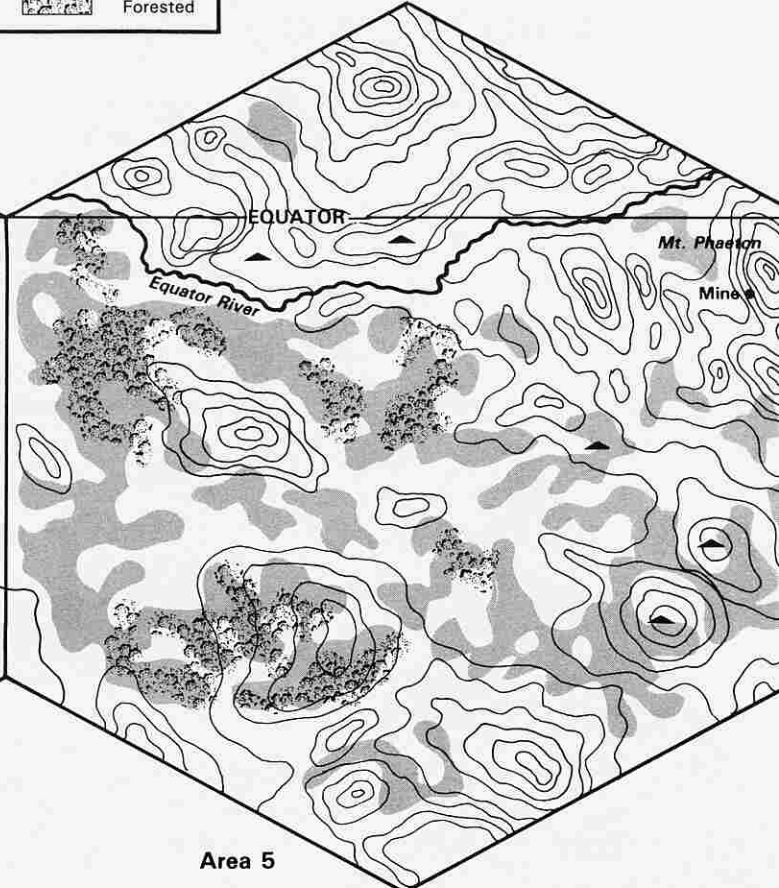
Area 7

TERRAIN KEY			
Symbol	Terrain	Symbol	Terrain
	Water		Road
	Volcano		Tidal Region
	Rubble		Tidal Swamp
	Town		Rough Terrain
	River		Heavily Forested



Area 4

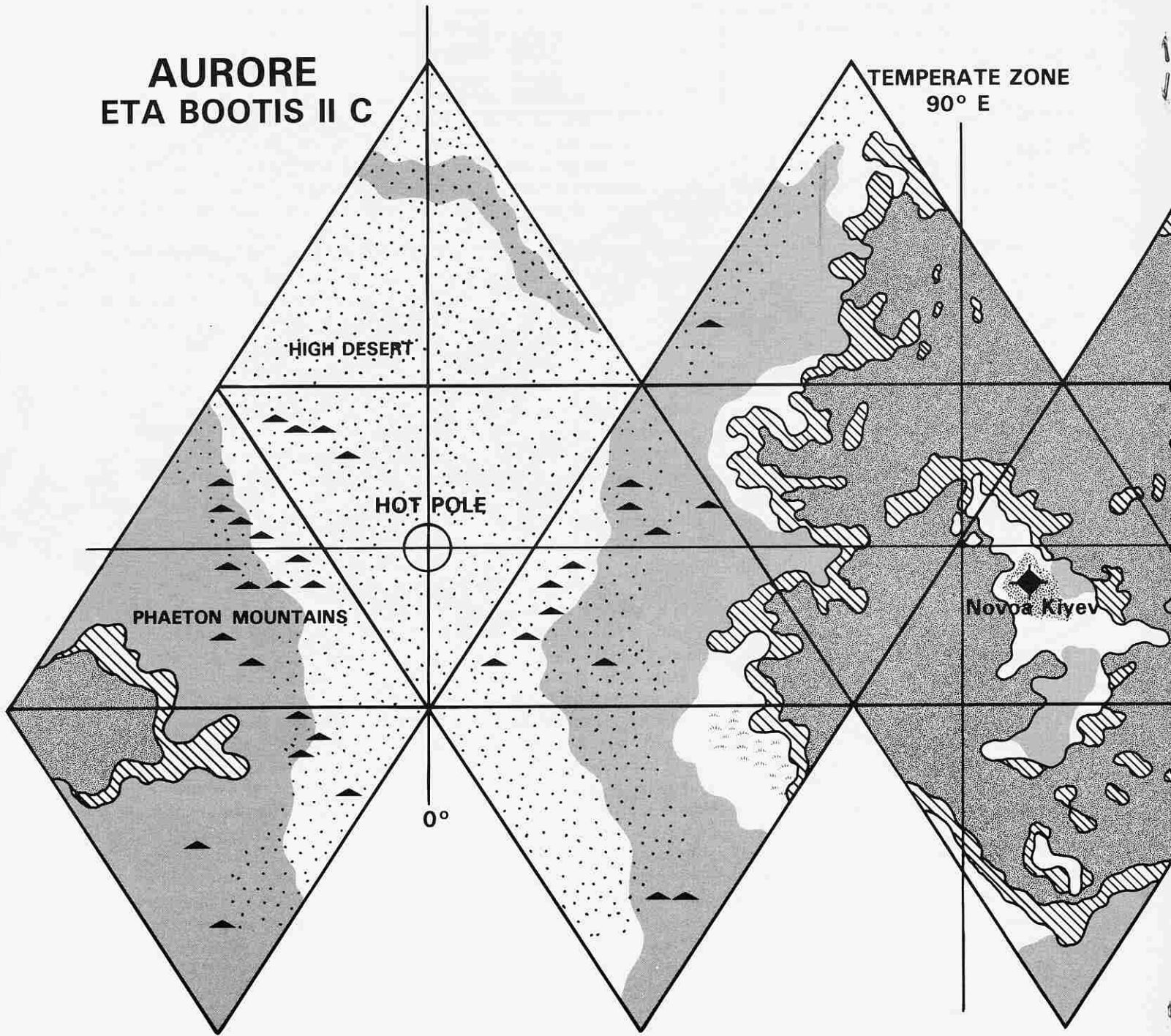
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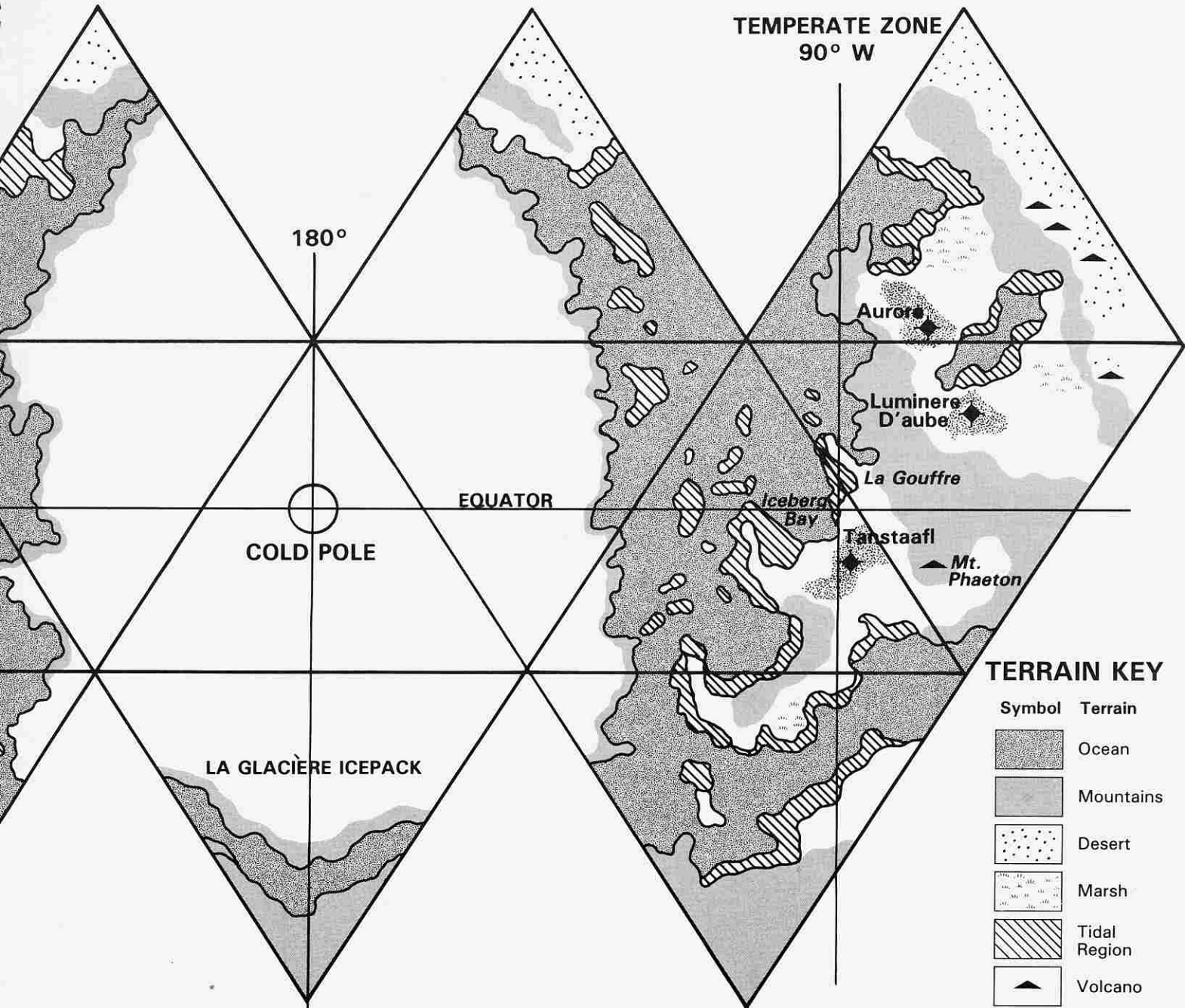


Area 5

**AURORE  
ETA BOOTIS II C**

TEMPERATE ZONE  
90° E







## KNOW YOUR ENEMY!

Training Circular K17-1

Kafers have only been observed at close quarters by humans who were themselves prisoners of the Kafers and under considerable emotional and mental stress. It is unknown how objective our present picture of their psychological make-up and societal structure is, but it is known that it is still fragmentary.

With this fact in mind, the two words which seem best to characterize Kafers are "cruel" and "stupid." Their society appears to be extremely militaristic and regimented, and, indeed, the notions of "civilian" and "military" as distinct entities do not appear to be a part of Kaffer thinking. Most Kafers not in positions of leadership appear dull-witted. Officers carry a device described as a "cattle prod" with which they jolt subordinates *before* giving a command. Bullwhips are common and are used for the same purpose as the prods.

Kaffer technology appears to be, on the whole, more advanced than that of humans—but it is less diffused: it is encountered only aboard starships or at important bases. Ordinary Kaffer troops are armed with relatively simple (if deadly) weapons and do not appear to rely on technical support such as battlefield computers or sophisticated communications devices. Kaffer equipment which has been captured tends to be extremely simple and rugged in design. Sensitive electronic gear is generally protected by metal bars or grates, and these often show signs of having been dented by blows. This supports a common observation: Kafers appear to have extremely short and uncontrollable—or uncontrolled—tempers.

A final disquieting note: A number of human prisoners were taken by Kafers early in the war, apparently for the purpose of learning human languages for intelligence purposes. Since that time, humans who have been addressed by Kafers (either prisoners, or, on rare occasions, personnel communicating with them by radio) report that their name for us is the German *Fleischwesen*.

This translates as "Meat Being."

### THE KAFER SOLDIER

Most humans who have fought Kafers extend to them a grudging respect: they fight with a cunning which seems amazing in beings who at times exhibit the most bizarre stupidity. Kaffer organization is loose and at times appears nonexistent. Human terms for Kaffer military units—"Horde," "Band," and "War Party" reflect this. More often than not, Kaffer parties appear to be shambling mobs which show no march discipline, are ridiculously easy to track, and are frequently just as easy to ambush.

Once engaged in combat, however, they become cunning and ruthless foes. They fight with an absolute and total abandon, a manic desperation which is terrifying in its intensity. News accounts have referred to them as "berserkers." This ruthless combat psychology, their use of overwhelming numbers to crush prepared positions, and the incredible cunning of small bands which infiltrate human lines and strike key tactical positions to open the way for direct attacks have combined time and time again to defeat the human forces set against them.

### KAFER HARDWARE

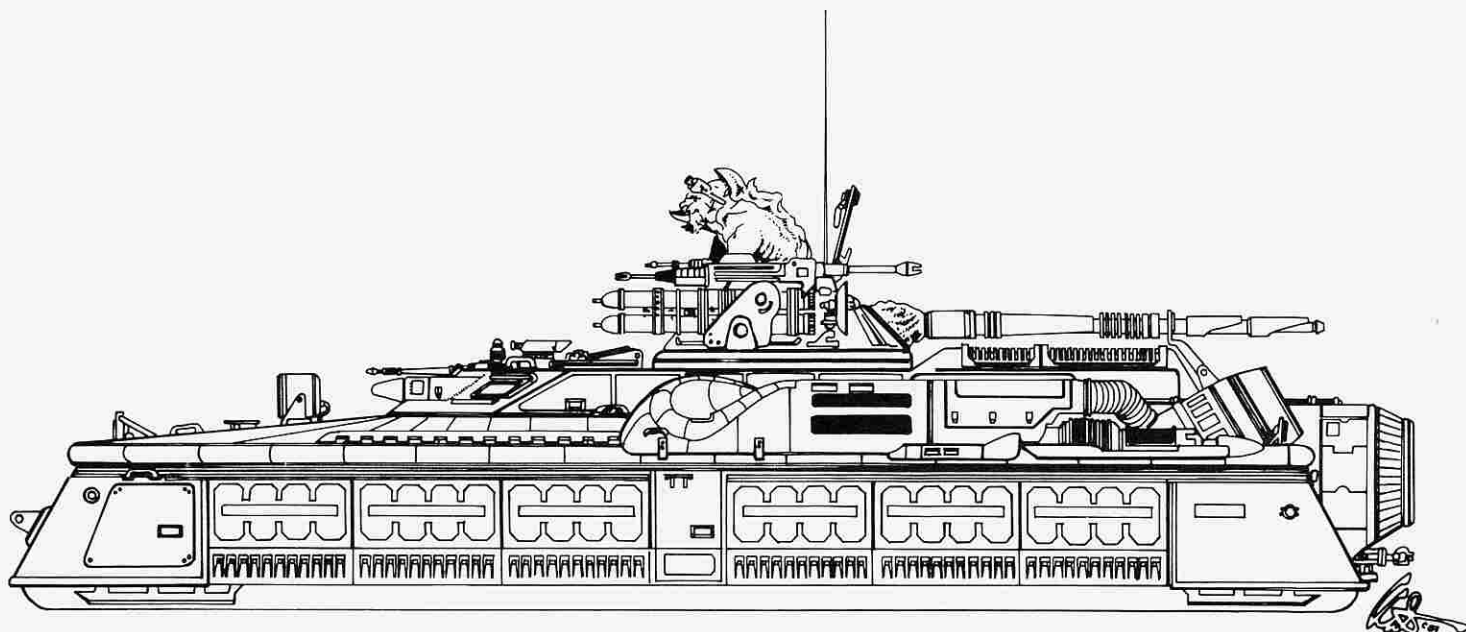
Numerous samples of Kaffer weapons and equipment have fallen into human hands. Most of these are still being studied, but their principal weapons are known and understood. These are described below along with the common names now associated with them in Tanstaaf service.

**"Horse Pistol":** An extremely rugged and heavy revolver.

Type: 14.5mm revolver Weight: 1.3 kg (Bulk = 0) Length: 31 cm Ammunition: 14.1×31mm fixed cartridge ball Muzzle Velocity: 490 mps Magazine: 6-round cylinder. Weight of 6 rounds: 0.2 kg ROF: 5 Aimed Fire Range: 80 meters Area Fire Burst: 3 rounds (AFV = 0.25) Area Fire Range: 40 meters DP Value: .9

**"Thud Gun":** An assault rifle/grenade launcher similar in some respects to the German SK-19.

Type: 12.1mm assault rifle with integral 27.2mm grenade launcher Weight (empty): 6.5 kg Length: 76.2 cm (Bulk = 2) Action: Single shot or bursts Am-



*munition: 12.1×31mm APHE Muzzle Velocity: 610 mps Magazine: 66-round magazine Magazine Weight: 00 kg ROF: 00 Aimed Fire Range: 00 Area Fire Burst: 10 (AFV = 1.5) Area Fire Range: 300 meters DP Value: 1.1*

*Type: 27.2mm grenade launcher Muzzle Velocity: 375 mps Magazine: 9-round box magazine ROF: 2 Aimed Fire Range: 600 meters DP Value: as explosion, (EP = 4)*

**“Flashlight”**: A Kafer laser rifle of rugged and simple design.

*Type: 75-01 laser rifle with integral 27.2mm grenade launcher Length: 76.2 cm (Bulk = 2) Action: single shot Pulse Energy: 0.7 mj Muzzle Velocity: C Magazine: a Kafer power cell with energy for 12 pulses Magazine Weight: 1.8 kg ROF: 5 Aimed Fire Range: 1300 meters DP Value: 2*

*Type: 27.2mm grenade launcher Muzzle Velocity: 375 mps Magazine: 9-round box magazine ROF: 2 Aimed Fire Range: 600 meters DP Value: as explosion, (EP = 4)*

**“Beamer”**: A vehicle-mounted, high-energy plasma gun.

*Type: 40 megawatt vehicle-mounted plasma gun Action: single shot Ammunition: charged cells, 13.3×28.3mm similar to Terran photonic core plasma cells, but more compact Ammunition Weight: .2 kg Magazine: 100 cells in detachable cartridge magazine Aimed Fire Range: 2000 meters DP Value: as tamped explosion (EP = 5)*

**Hand Grenade**: A general-purpose explosive hand grenade. *Weight: .4 kg DP Value: as explosion (EP = 3)*

**“Snapfire”**: A large number of these remote anti-vehicle missiles are left behind by Kafer troops when they abandon human areas. These missiles are very difficult to locate due to their small size and excellent camouflage, and usually are not detected until after launch. Keyed to high-speed aircraft, “snapfires” have virtually grounded all civilian and most military aviation in Tanstaaf.

*Type: remote emplaced air defense missile Launcher Weight: 13 kg Missile Weight: 17 kg Range: 9000 meters Guidance: automatic Homing Value: 25 Attack Angle: direct Damage: EP = 6*

## KAFER VEHICLES

Like their weapons, Kafer vehicles are simple, rugged, and reliable. They are similar in design to human tracked and hover vehicles, but tend to be larger and heavier. Three types have been widely encountered.

**“Crawler”**: A general purpose, enclosed, tracked APC. It is often equipped with a turret-mounted “Beamer” plasma gun.

*Type: Tracked all-terrain personnel carrier Crew: driver Weight: 4500 kg Armor: Suspension: 1 All faces: 1.1 Signature: 8 Evasion: 0 Sensor Range: 6 km Cargo: 10 passengers & 2000 kg Max Speed: 80 kph Cruising Speed: 40 kph Combat Movement: 160 meters Off-road Mobility: full Power Plant: hydrogen fuel cell, approximately 0.2 Mw Fuel Capacity: 204 kg Fuel Consumption: 6 kg/hr Endurance: 34 hours*

**“Bugbus”**: A general purpose, open-topped, tracked APC. A mounting ring to the left of the driver frequently supports a Kafer Weapon Type 4 plasma gun.

*Type: Tracked all-terrain personnel carrier Crew: driver Weight: 5100 kg Armor: Suspension: .8 All faces: 1 Signature: 8 Evasion: 0 Sensor Range: 6 km Cargo: 17 passengers & 2500 kg Max Speed: 90 kph Cruising Speed: 50 kph Combat Movement: 180 meters Off-road Mobility: full Power Plant: hydrogen fuel cell, approximately 0.2 Mw Fuel Capacity: 240 kg Fuel Consumption: 8 kg/hr Endurance: 30 hours*

**“Deathsled”**: A large, extremely heavily armed hovercraft. It does not have jump-jet capability beyond a height of about two meters, barely enough to provide a reasonable obstacle-crossing capability. The turret is constructed so that the missile launchers face to the rear. However, the turret is often seen with the gun traversed to the rear and resting in a travel lock, which brings the missile launchers to bear forward. Likewise, the commander’s rotating cupola is mounted with a beamer facing in one direction and an autocannon and machinegun in the other. The design rationale for these decisions is unclear. By the same token, examination of destroyed vehicles reveals four crew stations, a driver, turret gunner, commander, and one other. The fourth crewman has neither controls nor vision apparatus at his station and his function, if any, is a mystery (This crewman, for lack of a better title, has been designated the “kibitzer”).

*Type: Hovortank Crew: commander, gunner, driver, kibitzer Weight: 23,000 kg Armor: Plenum: 35 Front: 120 All other faces: 40 Armament: 10.13cm mass driver gun in turret Aimed Fire Range: 2000 meters Range Finder: +1 ROF: 3 Rounds Carried: 62 DP: 110. Twin anti-vehicle missile launcher mounted externally on turret side. Missiles appear to be roughly equivalent to French Mants-1. No reloads carried. One 40 megawatt plasma gun carried in commander’s cupola along with one 22.2mm autocannon (roughly similar in performance to Type 12 autocannon) and one 12.1mm machinegun (similar in performance to the Type 12 autocannon) and one 12.1mm machinegun (similar to DunArmCo Mini-12).*

*Signature: 8 Evasion: 4 Sensor Range: 8 kilometers Cargo: 1000 kg Max Speed: 170 kph Cruising Speed: 140 kph Combat Movement: 320 meters Off-road Mobility: full Power Plant: 3 Mw MHD turbine Fuel Capacity: 700 kg Fuel Consumption: 100 kg/hr Endurance: 7 hours*

## FOOD

Kafer food consists of packaged rations (much like human food concentrate packages stored) in their camps. Though similar to human foods in makeup, Kafer prepared food is of a fibrous and odiferous quality nauseating to humans. Also frequently found are objects referred to as “rotting sausages,” tubular chunks of extremely tough, prepared meat, which they seem to enjoy tearing at with their mandibles.

Humans can survive for long periods on Kafer food. It lacks two amino acids necessary for long-term survival, but is otherwise nutritious. The smell, consistency, and stories about Kafer eating habits, however, discourage most humans from trying it even under extreme circumstances.

## KAFER SHIPS

So far, no Kafer spacecraft have been captured intact. Observations made during the two battles for Eta Bootis suggest that Kafer vessels tend to be extremely large and carry large crews. A number of Kafer orbit-to-ground vessels were shot down or otherwise destroyed during and after the invasion landings. These vessels—stubby, highly reflective, burnished gold-colored flying wings—were also much larger than analogous human ship types and appeared each to carry a very large number of Kafer soldiers and their equipment.

In 2297, all contact was lost with Arcturus Station. A year later, a large alien invasion armada entered the Eta Bootis system just 4.53 light years down-arm from Arcturus. During savage fighting at Eta Bootis, the outnumbered elements of several human space defense forces were defeated, and the invaders landed an army on Aurore. Human counterattacks dispersed the alien armada, but increasingly bitter warfare continues on the surface of Aurore. The name *Kafer* (German slang for “bug”) was coined during this period.

It's obvious that the Kafers are guilty of a savage and unprovoked attack on the harmless research outpost at Arcturus. Subsequent fighting has shown the Kafers to be vicious killers who have no regard for life—human or their own. They are creatures who seem to have no understanding at all of the concepts of “non-combatant,” “civilian,” or “mercy.” They kill every human they can find, and, if cornered, fight to the death, neither giving nor asking quarter.

Those helpless French scientists at Arcturus were slaughtered by the Kafers as a first act in an unprovoked war to the death against Mankind!

**Kafer Motivation:** A very few humans captured by the Kafers during their first attacks in the Eta Bootis system managed to escape. Though the Kafers kill most humans on sight, a few prisoners were kept, apparently for research purposes, and to learn enough human language to allow the interrogation of captured humans.

Almost nothing is known of the Kafer language. The Kafers have learned enough German or English from human captives to enable a few of them to communicate with humans when they want to, but this is infrequent.

One thing that *has* been learned during those few exchanges of information is that when a Kafer addresses or refers to a human, he uses a phrase which apparently translates as “meat being” (German: *das Fleischwesen*). There is absolutely no evidence that Kafers have ever eaten human prisoners, and so the term “meat being” does not appear to mean literally something which is eaten, but certainly implies tremendous contempt and an unwillingness to consider humans as having any more right to live than livestock.

## ADVENTURING ON AURORE

*Kafer Dawn* presents the referee with the raw material for endless adventures and campaigns set in the Eta Bootis system. It is extremely unlikely that the players will get to visit every location detailed in this booklet during the course of a single adventure, or experience every possible encounter.

There are four main scenarios presented in *Kafer Dawn*: *Waiting for the Cavalry*, *On the Slopes of Mount Phaeton*, *Peace Quest*, and *Thunder Valley*. While each of these can be played alone, the four adventures are designed to be woven together into a longer, ongoing campaign on Aurore. The referee may add his own scenarios to the campaign as play progresses.

The campaign will be divided into the following broad aspects of play:

### ARRIVAL ON AURORE

Play begins with the characters' arrival on Aurore. They should have the opportunity to learn about the world, its people, and its problems. This information can be supplied by their employer, if they have one, or by checking a local library or information terminal. This background data on the planet and its system can be drawn from the information provided in this booklet. Ideally, this information should be given to the players only when their characters are actively looking for it. For example, any study

of special Auroran phenomena or problems will reveal information on the planet's tides, but characters who do not bother to check up on such details should be allowed to learn about Auroran tides on their own—the hard way.

If the players have come to Eta Bootis in hopes of finding employment, they will have to find someone willing to hire their services. This probably means they will encounter representatives of the Tanstaaf Legion and sign on as short-term mercenaries. They may also meet either Cathlin Ann Russel or a hiring representative for Tithonian-Dawn Metals, an encounter which will lead them directly into their first adventure.

There are four adventures presented in this section. The first three represent three possibilities for employment and may be played in any order desired. In their own way, each serves to introduce the players to elements of the planet or Kafers which will prove useful later. *Waiting for the Cavalry* finds the players working a short-term contract with the Tanstaaf Free Legion, the mercenary army of the colony. *Mount Phaeton* has them guarding a remote mining camp in the barren and remote desert highlands. *Peace Quest* finds them guarding a scientific mission into Kafer territory with the purpose of capturing a live Kafer.

The final adventure, *Thunder Valley*, covers the last major campaign against the Kafers by the Tanstaaf Free Legion. The characters, assuming they have survived their previous adventures, will have gained the experience (and reputation) necessary to play a vital, but hazardous, role in this battle.

Each adventure has five sections: *Player's Situation*, *Getting the Job*, *Referee's Synopsis*, *Background*, and *Adventure Events*. The Player's Situation is provided for the players and gives them the basic information they need to begin each scenario. The other sections are for the referee only and enable him to run the adventure.

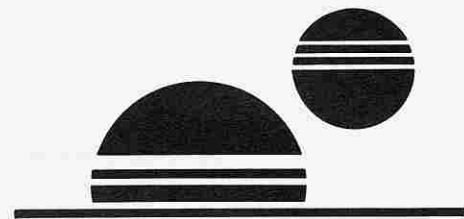
## ENCOUNTER

*The Kafers had walked smack into our ambush and we'd been having one royal ball, hosing them down with autofire mayhem. Two of their vehicles were burning, staining the sky with dirty smears of oily black smoke, and there were twisted, black bodies lying everywhere along the road. Man, I don't know what happened, but one moment we'd been having it all our own way, and then all of a sudden there wasn't a Kafer to be seen. It was like the ground had swallowed them up, and a kind of eerie quiet descended over our ridge because we knew they were out there, but we couldn't see them.*

*The Sarge made motions and sent Kominsky and Pappy forward down the ridge. We couldn't have got them all...could we?*

*Next thing we knew these brown and black shapes were rising up out of the flat, rubbery stuff that passes for grass on Aurore, and fire was stitching into our ranks with deadly accuracy. Pappy was down and Kominsky was screaming and black shapes were swarming up the ridge. Dalway took a round in the back of his head, and I twisted around and saw more black shapes swarming up from our rear.*

*Sarge saw them too, and yelled “Where the hell did they come from?” Those were his last words, because right about then a plasma gun bolt vaporized most of his head and chest and he was gone...and I was left wondering what the hell I'd been thinking of when I decided to be a soldier...*



# Waiting for the Cavalry

*The recruiter pursed his lips and stood there, rocking back and forth from the balls of his feet to his heels. "I don't know," he said. "We need about three more range patrols, and one of our Ramrod teams is real short of bodies... but if you don't know the Hotback..."*

*"What's to know?" Greer said, his lopsided grin much in evidence. He was a good man in most ways, but his unwavering cockiness got him into more than one fight. "Kafers? Humph! Desert? Hell, I was with the Legion in Central Asia. You wanna talk desert? 'Le Bled' we called it, and..."*

*The recruiter never let him finish. "So you know the desert? And did your Central Asian desert smash you with quakes that can level cities, or bury you in hot ash from erupting volcanoes? Did it hit you with a wind that throws gun sleds around like a kid's toys? Aureore, Mr. Greer, has a way of dealing with people who think they know about survival.*

*"To be perfectly blunt, gentlemen, between the Kafers and Aureore, I wonder how long any of you are going to survive here. You see, I'd like to know that we're going to get at least some return for our investment in you."*

The players are newly-arrived on Aureore, and in need of both experience and money. The logical place to obtain both is a contract with the Tanstaaf Free Legion, which is almost always looking for infantry to carry out security patrols of the outlying farms and settlements or to join a Rapid Response ("Ramrod") team.

Since the players have no previous experience on the planet or fighting Kafers, they will not be accepted into a veteran ramrod team at first. Instead, they will be offered a two-month contract as a security patrol. They will conduct routine sweeps of generally secure areas to maintain contact with remote farms, check power and communication outages, escort road convoys and repairmen, etc.

## GETTING THE JOB

This scenario is recommended as an introduction to the Kafers and to conditions in the Auroran Hotback. The players can be led into this scenario in one of several ways, depending on the decisions they make when their characters first arrive on Aureore. The referee should find some means of directing them to the Tanstaaf Free Legion, although the thought has probably occurred to at least one member of the party already. This need not be devious or heavy-handed; a simple mention such as "The TFL is always looking to hire on recruits," should suffice.

**Mercenary Recruiters/Mercenaries:** Tanstaaf does not

have a regular army. The militia has been supplemented by a veteran force of mercenaries called the Tanstaaf Free Legion (TFL), a mercenary regiment under the command of Colonel Randolph Prescott. Recruiters at several locations in and around Tanstaaf City will sign up characters wishing to join. Applicants must be in good health, and preferably possess Combat Rifleman-2, Melee-2, Ground Vehicle-1, and Hover Vehicle-1.

Mercenary pay for a line trooper is Lv50 per Auroran day, but meals, lodging, clothes, and equipment are provided free, as are ammunition and weapons if the character does not have his own. Length of employment contracts with the TFL are negotiable, but sixty days is usually the minimum for infantry. Particularly highly skilled players may be approached for specific short-duration contracts. Booty taken from the Kafers may be sold and the money divided among the takers as a bonus. (The market value of such booty is determined individually by the referee. Generally, up to four-fifths of the bonus is distributed among the unit's officers or placed in a regimental fund and the remainder shared by those who were actually present when the booty was taken. Some very special items of booty—a Kafer spaceship, for example—may be arbitrarily seized by the government without payment. It is not a fair universe.)

Troopers who have served for one complete contract period may be selected as non-commissioned officers and given command of units of various sizes for pay ranging from Lv75 to Lv150 per Auroran day.

Newly-signed mercenaries are assigned to a holding camp near the Tanstaaf airfield at Blackjack before being transferred to a line company somewhere in one of the four Tanstaaf areas. Units generally serve on the frontier (and in combat) for 10 to 30 Auroran days, followed by a similar period of time spent in training near Tanstaaf and in R&R. This routine will be interrupted by major Kafer threats or by all-out mobilization for a special campaign.

## MILITARY ACTIVITIES

Military NPCs and player characters will find themselves engaged in all of the following duties at various times.

**Garrison Duty:** By far the most common state of affairs, garrison duty finds the soldiers at their home base, in or near a settlement, or at an encampment on the frontier, waiting for something to happen.

**Patrols:** Squad- and platoon-sized units patrol Aureore's principal roads, the most important being the Tanstaaf-Lakeview route across Dry Lake Flats, and the Tanstaaf-Junction route to the south.



Their purpose is to watch for signs of Kafer activity and report it to headquarters and to engage Kafer bands where possible, calling for help as needed.

**Convoys:** Hovercraft convoys are the only link Tanstaaf City has with various communities cut off by recent Kafer incursions. The most important are Lakeview to Glorysky, and Binker to Carlyle to either Hamilton or New Amarillo. Platoon- or company-sized units in ACV-APCs ride shotgun for hovercraft transports carrying food, supplies, and arms.

**Point Response:** Rapid Response (“Ramrod”) Teams are kept on alert at various towns. When word is received of a Kafer attack on a homestead or community in their area, they deploy to the trouble spot by the quickest means available. They also respond to patrol reports of enemy activity.

**Search and Destroy:** Areas infested with Kafer bands are targeted for search and destroy missions. Units of various sizes (up to company strength) move through a region in an attempt to find and trap Kafers in the area, discover their bases, and destroy them.

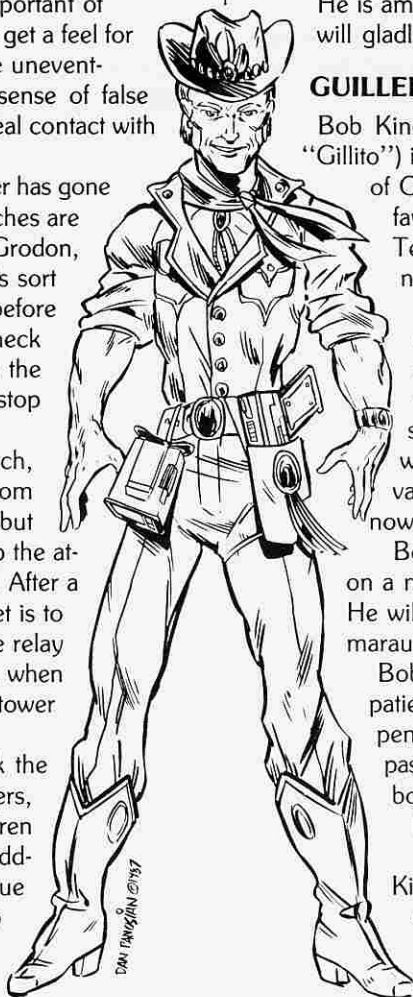
## REFEREE’S SYNOPSIS

The referee should run the players on a number of routine patrol and escort missions which do not result in combat at first. This will serve several purposes. First, it will acquaint the players with the general geography of Tanstaaf as well as standard operating procedures of the militia and TFL forces operating in it. Second, it provides the opportunity for the referee to give the players a feel for what life on Aureore is like. They will come into contact with plants and animals, experience the sometimes wild weather changes, see the tide come in, and, most important of all, talk to natives, hear their experiences, and get a feel for what this world means to them. Finally, these uneventful patrols will help lull the players into a sense of false security which will be shattered by their first real contact with Kafers.

Word is received that a microwave relay tower has gone off the air and, as a result, several remote ranches are out of comm link with the nearest settlement (Grodon, a village in the northeast part of Area 3.) This sort of thing should have happened at least once before to the characters. They are ordered to go check out the relay tower and all of the ranches in the neighborhood while they are there. The first stop will be the Kingsly Ranch.

While the characters are at the Kingsly ranch, a band of 20 Kafers is sighted approaching from the north on foot. The Kafers attack the ranch but the characters and the Kingsly household stop the attack and manage to hold the ranch buildings. After a day or so, the group decides that their best bet is to break out and attempt to reach the microwave relay tower to get help. They escape during the night, when the Kafers are at their worst, and head for the tower on foot.

On their way they make a detour to check the Clemmons ranch and find it overrun with Kafers, but Rhonda Clemmons and her two small children are holding out in a cement grain crib. After adding the Clemmons’s to their party, they continue to the relay tower. Once there they are able to send for help from a ramrod team, but must hold the Kafers off for several hours until relief arrives.



## CHARACTERS

The following non-player characters will be encountered in this adventure.

### GUILLELMO “GILL” KINGSLY

Kingsly is a 52-year-old Earthborn son of Texan immigrants to Tanstaaf, who is fiercely proud of his heritage, affecting the cowboy hat and boots of Earth’s U.S. western frontier. He has been homesteading a ranch at the edge of the Auroran Hotback with a terraformed strip for growing wheat and corn, and a large hydroponics barn for vegetables and foodfish. He is an accomplished mechanic as well and will be able to help characters stranded by a breakdown. His wife, Mary, and two sons and a daughter live on the ranch with him.

Kingsly may seem like a mildly eccentric character to the adventurers. If given half a chance, he will ply visitors with stories about his Texan ancestors—a particular favorite being the epic of Bill Kingsly Jr., a famous post-World War III Texan freedom fighter and then politician. Gill is a sharp observer, however, and well-versed in Auroran survival. He will be able to offer many valuable hints to the characters for avoiding trouble on their journey. Unfortunately, rash or unthinking characters may tend to dismiss him as merely a talkative old man.

He is a Veteran NPC.

**NPC Motivation Results:** *Heart Jack:* Gill is very wise, shows good judgment, and offers sound advice. He is particularly knowledgeable about Auroran life forms in the area, and about the dangers, difficulties, and lay of the local terrain. *Heart 4:* He is amiable and cooperative, likes to talk and yarn, and will gladly share whatever he has with others.

### GUILLELMO ROBERTO “BOB” KINGSLY

Bob Kingsly (only his father calls him “Little Gill,” or “Gillito”) is 31 and a native of Aureore. He is the eldest son of Gill Kingsly, and is named for the older Kingsly’s favorite ancestor. He cares little for the history of Texas, however, taking pride instead in being a native-born Auroran.

Bob Kingsly has his father’s keen understanding of conditions and dangers in the Hotback. He is also fairly well acquainted with Kafers, having survived the Battle of Plateau and two subsequent small firefights while serving with the militia. He was wounded in the last firefight and has been convalescing at home for the past four months. (He is now completely recovered.)

Bob is in love with Rhonda Clemmons, who lives on a neighboring ranch, and they plan to marry soon. He will risk anything to assure her safety, especially if marauding Kafers are in the area.

Bob Kingsly is friendly but reserved, sometimes impatient with his father’s love of things which happened 32 light years away and three centuries in the past...and he hates Kafers with the passion of a native-born Auroran.

He is a Veteran NPC.

**NPC Motivation Results:** *Heart Queen:* Bob Kingsly is very much in love with Rhonda Clemmons and will do anything to assure her safety... even if it imperils others. *Heart 2:* Like his father, he is amiable and cooperative, but not to the degree of the elder Kingsly.



There is one other son (Mario, age 18), and one daughter (Angela, age 20). Both are Green NPCs. There are also four hired hands, two Experienced, two Green.

### RHONDA CLEMMONS

Rhonda, 29 years old, is the widowed mother of two children: eight-year-old Bobby and seven-year-old Rebecca. Her husband was killed nearly two years ago, early in the Kafer war. Refusing to give up the small farm they had worked and improved at the edge of the Hotback, Rhonda has taken on the task of raising her children and managing the farm, rather than giving up and returning to Tanstaaff. She has since fallen in love with Bob Kingsly and wants to marry him, but has seriously considered breaking their engagement because she fears losing him.

She is an Experienced NPC.

**NPC Motivation Results:** *Hearts Queen:* Rhonda loves her children and Bob Kingsly very much. She will not abandon them or let them face danger alone, even if this imperils her or others with her. *Clubs 4:* She is not intimidated by threats or violence.

### ANTON VARGAS

Captain Anton Vargas is the commander of Ramrod Seven, the rapid response team stationed at Equator Flats. The players may meet him for the first time at the end of the adventure when Ramrod Seven arrives to rescue them, or they may have run into him before this while working patrols in the area. After all, the Tanstaaff Free Legion is not a very big organization and sooner or later everyone gets to know everyone else. This is particularly true with Vargas since he commands the rapid response team that the players may have had cause to work with previously.

Vargas is a native of Hochbaden, although not originally of Bavarian ancestry. He drifted into the military and later became a mercenary. He has been on Aurore for almost a year and has, in the process, become a proficient soldier and a reasonably good leader. In his earlier contacts with the player characters he is unlikely to pay them much attention due to their inexperience. After finding out what happens in the adventure, however, his respect for them will increase considerably. He may prove a useful contact or job reference for the characters later, or may just be used as

a recurring character to add local color.

Vargas is an Elite NPC.

**NPC Motivation Results:** *Club Nine:* Vargas loves combat, which is what drew him to a career as a soldier to begin with. *Diamond Seven:* His first concern, though, is money. This combination makes him a natural mercenary.

### RAMROD SEVEN

Vargas's twenty-four-man rapid response team consists of his own Number Seven Commando Detachment, one of a number of independent platoon-sized groups used to respond to trouble and support local militia and patrols. Since it is based on the 7th Commando, it has become known as Ramrod Seven.

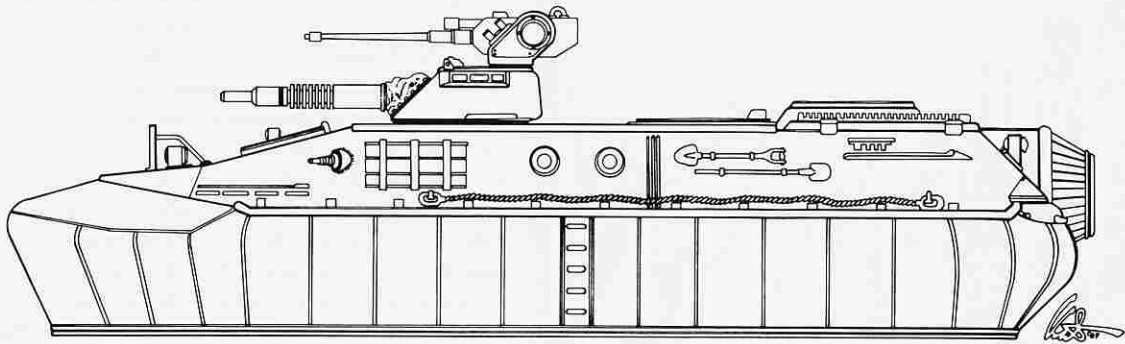
The response team consists of Vargas, one lieutenant, one platoon sergeant, three squad leaders (sergeants), three assistant squad leaders (corporals), three vehicle drivers, three vehicle gunners, and nine infantrymen. The platoon is carried in three Australian Army surplus Kangaroo IV hover APCs. Each APC has a driver, gunner, vehicle commander (also the squad leader), and four dismounting infantry (assistant squad leader and three grunts). There are six passenger seats in each APC, and so the platoon command group (Vargas, his lieutenant and his platoon sergeant) usually split up and ride one per vehicle. This still leaves a vacant seat in each "sled."

Most members of Ramrod Seven are veteran NPCs, and if a fairly large battle results, it will be easiest to resolve if all are treated that way. If the situation is such that some variety is manageable, two privates in each squad are experienced.

All members of the platoon are armed with AS-89 assault rifles. In addition, the platoon has six Guiscard Blindicide-9 man-carried missiles, one Type 1 plasma gun, and one SVB laser sniper rifle distributed among the squads.

**Kangaroo IV:** The Kangaroo IV is an obsolete, but still serviceable, military ACV-APC based on an older Bavarian design. Originally produced to meet an Australian Army specification issued in 2264, the Kangaroo IV has since been replaced in Australian service by more modern types and widely exported as surplus. The variants in use by Tanstaaff have had a number of modifications made, the most notable of which is the installation of a manned turret mounting a French CLP-1A (Cannon Legere Pyrotechnique-1A) 175 megawatt plasma gun. It has limited jump jet capability. Each minute in jump-jet mode uses ten minutes of fuel and speed is cut to one-tenth normal. *Type:* Hover APC *Crew:* driver, gunner, commander *Weight:* 4000 kg *Armor:* Plenum: 2 *All Faces:* 10 *Armament:* two DunArmCo Mini-12 machine guns in ball mounts. CLP-1A plasma gun in turret. *Aimed Fire Range:* 1600 m *Range Finder:* +1 *ROF:* 5 *Rounds Carried:* 30 *DP:* as tamped explosion (EP = 15). 25mm conventional autocannon in remote turret on top of main turret. *Signature:* 5 *Evasion:* 6 *Sensor Range:* 10 km *Cargo:* 6 passengers & 2000 kg *Max Speed:* 200 kph *Cruising Speed:* 180 kph *Combat Movement:* 420 meters *Off Road Mobility:* full *Power Plant:* 0.5 Mw hydrogen fuel cell *Fuel Capacity:* 270 kg *Fuel Consumption:* 15 kg/hr *Endurance:* 18 hours *Price:* Tanstaaff modified Kangaroo IVs are not for sale. Average open market price for Kangaroo IVs with only twin machine guns and a 25mm cannon mounted is Lv45,000.

Average open market price of a CLP-1A is Lv9500. The CLP-1A fires 41x77mm 175-megawatt photonic core plaser cells from a 10-round hopper. Each 10-round disposable clip weighs 38 kg and costs Lv500.



## THE KINGSLY RANCH

The Kingsly ranch is a sprawling collection of sheds, barns, and outbuildings around a modest, two-story house in a cleared valley a long, long way from civilization. The Kingslys are well known elsewhere in the colony, but the nearest large settlement is Grodon, some 200 kilometers to the west.

Until recently, the Kingslys kept in touch with other colonists through a chain of microwave relay stations. The nearest to the Kingsly ranch is 30 kilometers to the west. The next nearest is 50 kilometers west of that. The charged particles around Tithonus create a continuous static which makes normal radio communications all but impossible, and these relay stations are the only means remote homesteads such as the Kingsly's have of keeping in touch with the rest of the colony.

The house itself is a two-story aureorewood-and-brick structure which the referee can lay out according to his own design. Windows offer a clear field of view in all directions. Several small buildings are located less than 100 meters from the house, including a barn and some small sheds.

## EQUIPMENT

The adventurers will have their own equipment and vehicles with them, of course. Besides these, the Kingsly household is armed with the following:

- 2 FC-68s and 700 rounds of 5mm ammo
- 2 FC-70s and 750 rounds of 7.5mm ammo
- 1 12-81 magnum and 50 rounds of 12mm ammo
- 2 Traylor Model 10 Riot shotguns and 180 buckshot cartridges
- 5 9mm automatic pistols similar to Traylor Model 57, with 200 rounds

The following vehicles are also located on the Kingsly ranch. The referee should note the location of each in sheds or barns on various parts of the property.

2 light civilian hovercraft: These are similar to the Bridgeport Swift Songbird but have been rebuilt for frontier use. They are useful over most types of terrain but still cannot negotiate thick woods or extremely steep or rugged ground.

2 Range Trucks: These are identical to the range trucks described in the **Traveller: 2300 Players' Manual**.

1 Utility Van: This is identical to the Utility Van described in the **Traveller: 2300 Players' Manual**.

All vehicles are hydrogen-powered. A large fuel station operating off solar panels on the roof of the barn provides the power to separate hydrogen from the local water.

Also available at the farm are all tools listed in the *Players' Manual* equipment section, enough compact rations for 100 meals, and three medkits.

## GILL KINGSLY

In any event, the characters are ordered to "go check out the Kingsly place" as long as they are in the neighborhood and are separated from the main body of their unit. They arrive to find the Kingsly homestead intact. The events of the scenario begin while they are there.

*He was tall and broad and rangy, with skin like dark leather from Aurore's two (or three, depending on what you counted) suns. With his boots and cowboy hat, his dark deep-set eyes, high cheekbones, and black hair with a sprinkle of grey, he looked more like something out of a mythical wild west than an Auroran homesteader. "Howdy, 'migo!" he said, sticking out a beefy hand. His drawl was genuine holoivid Earth Texan. "I'm Gill Kingsly. Como 'sta?"*

*I shook his hand and took in the spread behind him. There was a neat little two-story house and a scattering of buildings and fences. A robot harvester was churning through a field, raising dust.*

*"You boys lost?" he asked, his eyes crinkling in a smile. "You're a long way from civilization out here."*

While the characters are at the Kingsly ranch, a Kafer band is sighted approaching from the north. The Kafers appear to number about 20 individuals. They are armed but are on foot. They approach more as a shambling mob than as a war party. At one point they begin demolishing farm equipment and storage sheds but have not, as yet, taken any notice of the main house. One small party breaks off from the main group and begins digging up potatoes in a terraformed plot near the front of the house.

It should be obvious to the players that sooner or later the Kafers are going to get around to noticing the house and checking it out. The Kingsly household consists of Gill Kingsly, his wife, two sons, one daughter, and four ranch hands, but the characters themselves provide the main body of defenders.

At first, Kingsly will be unwilling to leave his ranch if the suggestion is made that everyone try to slip out the back door and escape. Besides, more Kafers could be in the area, and the group has a defensible position right there in the house. Kingsly's son will be extremely worried about his fiance, Rhonda Clemmons, however. She lives in a neighboring homestead ten kilometers to the north, and the Kafers have obviously just come from that direction.

Planning will largely be up to the player characters, though the Kingsly's will participate. They can choose to remain quiet and hope the Kafers go away. They can attack and attempt to destroy the entire Kafer band. Or they can slip out past the Kafers and go for help. If they could reach the nearest working microwave relay station, a ramrod team could be brought in within hours.



Bob Kingsly, the son, will urge that a group (or he, by himself) be allowed to go check on Rhonda.

### THE DEFENSE OF THE RANCH

Eventually the Kafers will approach and attack the house. Any attack on the Kafers will initially have some success, creating confusion and casualties within their ranks. However, within a few moments the Kafer response will become disciplined and organized. They will move rapidly to seize other buildings in the area from which they can win effective fire positions and move to surround the house completely. Every door and window will be covered by fire.

The Kafers will not try to rush the house immediately. They are waiting for the arrival of a group of about 20 more Kafers, which will give them numbers enough to overwhelm the house defenders in one rush. They will maintain a steady fire against the house, however, and will continue to move small groups closer to seize better positions. Though the house will be wrecked by the battle, the Kafers will not be able to destroy it completely or to get at the defenders without rushing the house and taking the defenders in hand-to-hand combat.

If the defenders elect to remain where they are and fight off the attacks, sooner or later Kafer reinforcements will arrive, rush the house, and there is an excellent chance that the house will be overrun. Needless to say, the humans will be killed if they attempt to surrender—but there will be no thought of surrender among the native Aurorans present. They've heard too many stories about Kafer atrocities to consider such a course.

Several other possibilities are open. The defenders' best hope is to contact the ramrod team in Equator Flats, several hundred kilometers away. The closest microwave tower, about 30 kilometers to the west, is out of order, but the next relay in the chain is on a hilltop 50 kilometers beyond that.

Someone may suggest sending a small party, or even a single individual, to the working relay in an attempt to contact Equator Flats. If this party consists of one or some, but not all, of the player characters, the referee may find himself refereeing two separate adventures—one for the group which stays, one for those who leave. However, Gill Kingsly will argue persuasively against this.

He will point out that any division of their forces may lead to both groups being wiped out separately, but if they all stay together they may have enough firepower to make it. The whole group should make the breakout attempt together. To leave any behind is to doom them to almost certain death. He will also point out something about Kafers that the players may not yet be aware of; they have terrible night vision. The group should ultimately decide to break out at night.

If they plan well, the group should be able to break out of the Kafer encirclement. Since the Kafers are on foot, it is possible the players and the Kingslys will be able to get to the vehicles and escape that way. If the vehicles have been captured or destroyed, a stealthy night sortie, accompanied by the knifing of one or more Kafer sentries, should allow the humans to get a good head start on their pursuers by morning.

### THE TREK

Role-playing the journey to the relay station requires the referee to work with the encounter tables. The terrain is flat and open around the Kingsly homestead but grows rougher to the west. The first relay station is on a hilltop 30 km from the Kingsly ranch. If the characters reach it (and assuming they have not visited it already) they will find it has been completely destroyed by explosives.

The next station to the west is 50 km across a valley. There are no human settlements here now, though the characters may come across the ruins of settlements or homesteads destroyed by the Kafers years before. Likely events include encounters with Kafer bands still in the area, as well as the usual storms and seismic quakes. Upon arrival at the station, the characters can use equipment stored there to make the call to Equator Flats for the ramrod team stationed there.

Particularly nasty referees may allow the characters to discover that this relay, too, has been destroyed. The *next* relay is another 50 kilometers west.

### THE CLEMMONS RANCH

Once they break out of the Kafer encirclement, Bob Kingsly will try hard to take a detour to the Clemmons place. Subsequent events, including Kingsly going off on his own or the players deciding to go with him, are left to the players making the decision. However, Gill Kingsly will support his son in this request, pointing out two things. First, Auroran settlers would never have survived this long if they didn't help each other out, even if it meant some danger to themselves. He and his family owe it to their neighbors to help them out. Second, the players are soldiers who are also responsible for the safety of all the settlers in the area. Their duty is to at least make an effort to see what the situation is at the Clemmons ranch.

If the characters give in to the Kingslys' urgings and make it to the Clemmons ranch, they will find the Kafers are already there. The ranch buildings have been burned to the ground and the bodies of the two hired ranch hands are visible on the ground, as are the bodies of several Kafers. Life Kafers are still there as well, at least 30 of them in a crude encampment of lean-tos and plastic shelters. A cement corn crib some distance from the ranch buildings is being kept under a lethargic siege by them, and it is surrounded by four or five other Kafer bodies, the results of several apparent attempts to rush it. The ruined grain crib is about three meters on a side and scarcely more than a meter tall, but makes an excellent low fort given the lack of high ground anywhere nearby. Rhonda Cummings and her two children are in the grain crib. They have one FC-68, one FC-70, and perhaps 30 or 40 rounds

left for each. Rhonda has held off the Kafers for three days.

If the characters do nothing, two Kafer crawlers will eventually arrive, and these will turn their heavy weaponry on the corn crib and destroy it, killing Rhonda and her children. Bob Kingsly will be beside himself, and nothing the characters do (short of knocking him cold) will prevent him from setting out after the Kafer band himself—a journey from which he will not return.

A rescue will require stealth and cleverness. The Kafers are dimwitted at the moment, and there appear to be no guards posted, but there are many of them, and the player characters will have to sneak through the perimeter of the encirclement and then open fire on the Kafers, bringing Rhonda and her children out while the Kafers are still bewildered and disoriented by the attack.

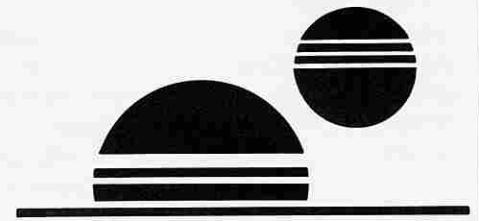
Travelling directly from the Kingsly ranch to the relay station takes three hours by hovercraft, or five hours by tracked vehicle or off-road range truck. Travel by road is not possible; there isn't one.

One additional set of possibilities: if the defenders manage to ambush and destroy the initial Kafer band, they may wait where they are and have the Kafer reinforcements arrive  $2D6 + 3$  hours after the battle begins, or they may set out to investigate the Clémmons ranch, where a second battle may be fought to life the siege of the corn crib.

### AT THE RELAY TOWER

If the party makes it through to the relay station, a message describing the situation can be transmitted to Equator Flats, where a ramrod team will be immediately dispatched to the tower. The team is described in the background section of this adventure. However, it will take hours for the team to arrive, and in the meantime the players may have to hold off repeated attacks by their Kafer pursuers. The eventual arrival of the ramrod team will turn the tables on the Kafer attackers, however, whatever their numbers.





# On the Slopes of Mt. Phaeton

Crown gestured with a stubby forefinger. "Look...I need help, fast!"

I spread my hands. "Your man in town made a joke about it. Said you needed an independent mercenary group for...uh....'house cleaning.'"

He shook his head. "It's not a house I want cleaned. It's a mountain."

"So what are we supposed to clean off of a mountain? Rocks?"

"Pests."

"Pests?" I had a momentary vision of Terran mountain goats...with fangs.

"To be precise, a few dozen Kafer pests. And you boys are the exterminators."

Jason Crown is a respected businessman in Tanstaaf City. He is founder and owner of Tithonian-Dawn Metals, Inc., a speculative mining company which, with help from several local investors, has opened a promising mine on the slopes of Mount Phaeton, some 3000 kilometers east of Tanstaaf City. These investors have provided the money necessary to get the mine started in the form of short-term loans totalling Lv10,000,000.

Unfortunately, a series of reverses have plagued Crown, and most of his capital reserves are gone. His biggest problem is that he is close—so close—to having the Phaeton mine become profitable... but the mine is threatened by Kafer bands in the area, and the government is unwilling to give him mercenaries to protect it. Initial surveys are promising; substantial discoveries of minerals rich in a very high-grade rhenium have been uncovered. If he can prove the mine, his investors will be willing to extend his loans long enough for him to get the mine into commercial production.

If he can just assemble a small, experienced band of mercenaries on his own, he believes it should be possible to safeguard the mine. He has 25 Auroran days—about two Earth months—to prove the mine, or his investor loans default, and he will find himself in debt to his investors for Lv10,000,000. It will mean both his personal ruin and the end of Tithonian-Dawn Metals.

Though unable to get military help from the government, he has been able to assemble a Lv200,000 bond with which to hire his own mercenaries. This bond assures that the mercenaries will be paid, even if things do not work out with the mine.

## GETTING THE JOB

**The Contract:** Crown will draw up a contract with the adventurers. The contract specifies the Lv200,000 bond as Crown's

collateral; he may not draw upon it without the written consent of the characters.

The adventurers, for their part, are to form a mercenary military force for providing security to the Mount Phaeton Mine. They must provide their own personal weapons. They may hire other personnel and may buy additional arms or equipment, but they must provide the money themselves. (If necessary, Crown will be able to loan them an additional Lv20,000 as a fund for the purchase of additional equipment as a separate, contractual agreement.)

The contract specifies that the characters have at their disposal up to three Bridgeport Swift Songbird hovercraft for their journey to Mt. Phaeton.

Upon completion of their mission—defined in the contract as protecting Tithonian-Dawn Metals, Inc.'s interests at Mt. Phaeton from "hostile elements"—the characters are to receive the bond of Lv100,000 to split between them and to cover all personal expenses. They will be expected to pay back the Lv20,000 advanced by Crown for weapons and other initial expenses from this bond. The remainder becomes the characters' pay for this mission.

## REFEREE'S SYNOPSIS

Jason Crown, president of Tithonian-Dawn Metals, is the owner of a mine on the western slopes of Mount Phaeton, some 3000 kilometers east of Tanstaaf. A number of investors put up money to open and develop the mine, but until recently, it showed no sign of paying off.

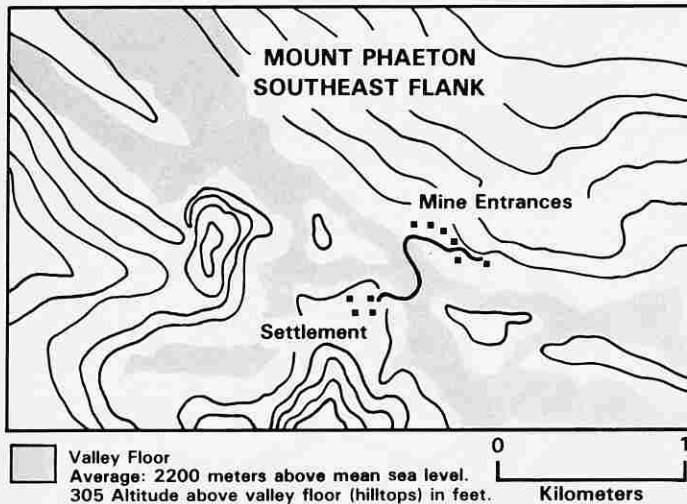
Worse, in two months, unless Crown can prove his claim, he will owe Lv10,000,000 to the investors—and he has already sunk every livre he has into his business, Tithonian-Dawn Metals.

Recently, his workings tapped into what promises to be a rich concentration of high-grade rhenium. Rhenium, an extremely rare transition element, is a dense, extremely hard silvery metal recovered in small quantities from several minerals. Once used for ballpoint pen tips, it has found application in a number of 23rd century technologies and is quite valuable. If the rhenium deposits prove out, Crown's investors will be satisfied and await the commercial development of the site. Crown is confident that the site will prove out.

Unfortunately, the mine area lies in the heart of terrain infested by Kafers.

In this scenario, the characters will be hired by Jason Crown to provide military security for the Mount Phaeton workings. He has been pleading with various government and military represen-

## MOUNT PHAETON MINE AREA



tatives for months in an attempt to get a militia or mercenary unit to Mt. Phaeton, but the answer has always been the same: Mt. Phaeton is far outside the Tanstaaf charter area; the extent of Kafer infestation in the area is unknown; the danger to communities and homesteads within the charter area is too great to permit expeditions so far afield; and the logistical problems of mounting a military campaign so far from bases of supply would be insurmountable.

Crown will present the player characters with a workable plan, however. He envisions the use of a small, well-trained and equipped force which could operate as an independent security element, using hovercraft to provide them with mobility and surprise. He is convinced that the "Kafer infestation" of Mt. Phaeton amounts to no more than a few score of scattered, individual Kafers. A few crushing victories against them could scatter them enough that the threat to the mine will be ended.

Meanwhile, the largely automated mine will be bringing out and refining the necessary rhenium.

Tithonian-Dawn Metals is experiencing severe financial problems. If the characters check out Jason Crown ahead of time (by bribing or making an acquaintance with someone at La Banque Premiere d'Aurore, for example), they will find out that his credit is good, but that he has had enormous (hundreds of thousands of livre) expenses recently.

One month ago he attempted to take out a loan for Lv1,500,000 with his company's mining robots as collateral. He was refused on the grounds that the collateral was out of the bank's reach, in Kafer-infested territory. It is no secret that he is on the edge of financial ruin. Everything—including the characters' contracts—depends on the success of the rhenium mine.

Crown has been able to assemble a ready cash reserve of Lv100,000, however, and it is with this that he hires the characters and provides for their needs. He is willing to post the money as bond, to be paid on the completion of the expedition *whatever* the outcome of the mine.

The plan calls for the characters to travel by one or more (as necessary) hovercraft to Mount Phaeton. The characters will be expected to provide their own weapons and ammunition. However, Lv20,000 can be made available on fairly short notice to procure additional

arms, supplies, and ammo if necessary. Characters who suggest that aircraft be used to transport them to Mount Phaeton will be told that the aircraft is currently being fitted out as a light combat aircraft, but that it should be ready by the time they reach Mount Phaeton.

The scenario will include both the trip to Mount Phaeton and the characters' activities once they arrive.

## JASON CROWN

Crown came to Aurore as a small-time prospector several years ago. He discovered promising ore samples in the foothills of the Phaeton Mountains, eastward deep in the Hotback, and with these was able to secure financial backing from the Banque Premiere in Tanstaaf and from several Tanstaaflian investors. With their money he has created Tithonian-Dawn Metals, a mining corporation with offices in Tanstaaf and extensive mine workings at Mount Phaeton.

Quite recently, his largely automated workings have uncovered a fabulously rich rhenium vein which could make him, and his investors, extremely wealthy. Unfortunately, the Kafer invasion has complicated things. If he cannot get the mine producing, or if the Kafers destroy it, he will find himself in debt to various creditors for well over Lv10,000,000. Mount Phaeton is far beyond the security zones patrolled by Tanstaaf's military forces, and he has been unable to get the government interested in protecting his claim.

The characters may encounter Crown as a prospective employer. He has two months to prove his claim or Tithonian-Dawn Metals goes into receivership and he will be in debt for Lv10,000,000. Random Kafer attacks have already damaged several pieces of heavy equipment at the mine, and the military will not help him defend it. He may hire the characters as a private security force to defend the mine and to conduct a search-and-destroy mission against Kafer forces in the Mt. Phaeton area.

**NPC Motivation Results:** *Diamonds 4:* His primary concern is money. He started Tithonian-Dawn Metals as a means of making a fortune, but now his greatest concern is to keep from going into debt to his investors. *Hearts 2:* He is a friendly and talkative man, easy-going, and open with those he deals with.

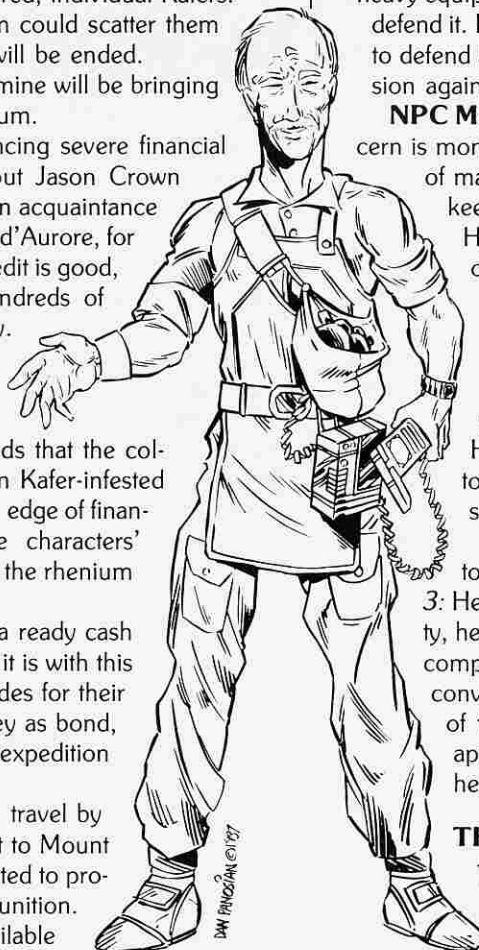
## HANK MORRISON

Morrison is the mine foreman at the Mt. Phaeton works. A mining engineer with 20 years experience, he knows his work, and he knows ores. He personally convinced that the Phaeton site is about to tap into a rich lode. "We're close," he says. "I can smell it!"

**NPC Motivation Results:** *Hearts 7:* He is loyal to Crown and Tithonian-Dawn Metals, Inc. *Diamonds 3:* He is cost conscious—in this case, because of his loyalty, he is concerned about financial losses which affect the company. For example, he will have to be convinced to convert mining equipment into weapons for the defense of the mine because plasma borers run Lv115,000 apiece... but once convinced, he will work wholeheartedly with the characters to make the things work.

## THE MINERS

There are twenty workers at the mine site itself, a mixture of mining engineers, mechanics, and laborers. Four are experienced NPCs for purposes of combat, the rest novice. None of them



are anxious to fight Kafers and will do so only in defense of the immediate area of the mine. Patrols, ambushes, and similar adventurous undertakings are the responsibility of the players, not the miners.

### THE MINE

The general layout of the mine is shown on the map. Quarters and equipment storage are in the mine buildings. The airfield is a small, paved area for handling VTOL aircraft. The workings themselves are a series of shafts sunk into the side of Mount Phaeton at a slight downward angle. The shafts are heavily reinforced to provide protection against seismic quakes.

The mines are almost entirely automated. Robot plasma-arc tunnelers extend the shafts by melting slowly through solid rock, and remotely-piloted samplers move through the tunnels, extract samples, and return them to the surface.

The destruction of the buildings and the mining equipment will ruin Crown's chances of turning a profit on the mine.

### EQUIPMENT

Besides their own weapons, equipment and vehicles, the characters will have the use of up to three Tithonian-Dawn Metals hovercraft mentioned in the contract. There are two more similar hovercraft at the mine.

The mine personnel have their own weapons: 15 M-2 assault rifles and 9000 rounds (300 magazines) of ammunition, plus an assortment of various handguns and sporting arms and several hundred rounds for each.

Also present at the mine are the following:

- Three hydrogen cracking fuel stations.

- Two range trucks identical to those described in the *Players' Manual*.

- A supply of explosives: 1000 1-kilogram blocks of plastique-9, each with an EP of 100.

### ADVENTURE EVENTS

The journey to Mount Phaeton will be an adventure in itself—and may include the events detailed under *Waiting for the Cavalry*.

The area around Mt. Phaeton seems quiet. The mine foreman and the ten men at the outpost report that there have been no Kafer incidents in the past four Auroran days, and Kafer sightings have been limited to small bands of no more than six to eight individuals for some time. The Kafers seem to be utterly without discipline or purpose. The mine foreman tells the players that "they don't bother us much, if we don't bother them."

The players should have full rein in determining their own strategies. The event tables for the area in which Mt. Phaeton is situated will provide patrols and search-and-destroy sweeps with random encounters with Kafer parties and camps. The referee should keep a private record of engagements with the Kafers, tallying up 1 point for every Kafer killed, five points for every vehicle destroyed or captured, and 20 points for every Kafer camp destroyed.

When the tally reaches 75 points, Kafers remaining in the area will come together to create a large band which will assault the mine. (Kafers may be dim-witted at times, but they are not completely stupid! They know where these attacks are coming from.) This Kafer band will number 2D6 x 20 individuals, will be armed with all types of Kafer weapons and grenades, and will include three Kafer Vehicles of Type 1 and four vehicles of Type 2. They will approach up the floor of the main valley to the south. Their goal will be the destruction of the mining camp, followed by the destruction of all mine workings in the area. Needless to say, all



humans caught will be killed.

If the player characters were careful in their analysis of the terrain around the mine, they will have arranged to keep an eye on the southern valley, using remote sensors if available, or human lookouts. That valley is an excellent place to catch a large Kafer party in an ambush.

If they miss that chance, the battle will take place on the slopes below the camp, in the camp itself, or even in the mine workings. The battle will continue until one side or the other has been wiped out.

If the players elect to play it cautiously and not attack the Kafers, the large Kafer band described will form anyway in 2D6 x 2 Auroran days after the characters arrive at Mount Phaeton. The Kafers have noticed the increase in human activity and have determined to wipe them out.

The mines are worked by robotic machines which use plasma weapon-type discharges to melt rock. The machines are not intended to be weapons, but referees who wish to may allow the conversion of tunneling equipment into five short-ranged (maximum range: 200 meters), high power (as tamped explosion, EP=6) plasma weapons. Such conversions would have to be powered by the stripped-down power plants of the tunnelers themselves.

Conversion is a specific task.

To convert a mining tunneler to a weapon. Difficult. Electronic. 30 minutes.

These weapons are heavy (140 kg) and *not* mobile. Each unit must be placed on a fixed mount, a task described as:

To mount improvised plasma weapons. Routine. Mechanical. 10 minutes.

The referee should wait for one of the players to suggest such a conversion and not suggest it himself. The tunnelers can be reconverted into robot tunnelers by reversing the tasks above. Destruction of all of the tunnelers will end Crown's chances for making the mine turn a profit.





described above from raiding the mine, most of the mine's automated equipment will be destroyed, and there will be no chance for the miners to recover the rhenium needed to save Jason Crown's hide.

### THE RHENIUM

At some point of the referee's choosing during the scenario, but *after* the battle detailed above and *before* the two-month period in which the mine must prove itself worthwhile and if the mine facilities and the five robotic tunnelers were not all destroyed in the battle, the mine foreman will report that the mine's rhenium deposits seem to have proved out. Nearly 200 kilograms of pure metal have been purified and stored. What is necessary now is for one or more hovercraft to take a sample (a few kilograms) of the metal back to Tanstaaf. The players can accompany this convoy as guards or not, at their discretion. The sample will arrive safely, and the mine owners will grant Crown an extension on his loan.

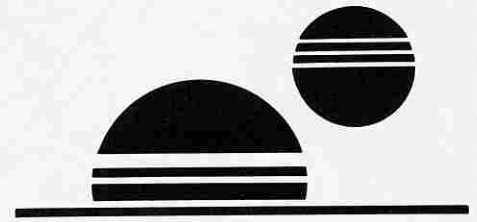
If the players wish to accompany the metal back to Tanstaaf, this can become an adventure in its own right, with the future of Tithonian-Dawn Metals riding on the expedition getting safely through.

Once the referee's tally of Kafer losses reaches 250 points (including those killed during the major Kafer attack), Kafer power in the area will have been broken. Individual Kafers may survive, but all trace of military command will have broken down, and most Kafers in the area will be dead or will have fled. The characters should only gradually become aware of this. Over a period of several Auroran days, encounters with Kafers will become less and less frequent (with the referee substituting "no events" or "abandoned Kafer camp" for Kafer encounters during event rolls).

Positive proof of victory will come with a period of at least 10 Auroran days without a single Kafer sighting, and no discoveries of anything but deserted camps. The referee may shorten this period by having Jason Crown himself arrive in a (brand new) Utility Light Transport to pick up the rest of the purified rhenium at the mining camp. In any case, victory will be assured once a sample of rhenium refined at the mine is returned safely to Tanstaaf, and Crown receives his loan extension.

Once the mine's success is assured, money is no longer a problem. Crown will pay the characters their money and will be in a position to offer them further work should they want it.

Of course, should the players fail to keep the large Kafer party



# Peace Quest

*Cathlin Ann Russel was one dedicated and stubborn lady, and if no one else on this rock gave a damn about what she was trying to do, she was making up for it with about a rifle battalion's worth of drive and determination. She meant to put together an expedition to haul off to the Hotback, find a Kafer who wasn't more than middling mad at humans, capture him, and then learn to talk with him so we could find out why the Kafers were mad at humans.*

*Only when you looked into those eyes of hers and heard her say it, it almost made sense.*

## THE MISSION

The adventurers are offered a contract to serve as an armed security force for a North American Research League-funded expedition with the goal of capturing a live Kafer.

The expedition consists of 18 members besides the characters. Seven of these are scientists, the others are drivers, assistants, and hired hands. Cathlin Russel is in charge of the expedition. Her second-in-command is Cas Dreyfuss. All members of the expedition are armed with various handguns or sporting weapons, but they are not trained or experienced in combat and are depending on the characters to provide proper protection.

It will be the adventurers' task to provide security for the expedition and to do whatever needs to be done in order to capture a Kafer. It is Russel's hope that a Kafer can be found somewhere far removed from areas of human habitation, and if the characters have had previous experience on Aurore, their services as guides in finding such areas will be invaluable. Invaluable too, will be any experiences in earlier encounters with Kafers.

The characters are encouraged to bring their own weapons and equipment. They are also allowed a bonus (the amount will be revealed by the referee and depends on the characters' experience) to buy additional equipment before the expedition sets out.

The expedition will provide two hoverjeeps for the characters and their gear. These vehicles are identical to Bridgeport Swift Songbirds, but are fitted out for wilderness travel with roll bars and high-survival armored plenum shrouds.

## GETTING THE JOB

Russel and her entourage have been on Aurore for several weeks now and have been completely unable to win government or military support or help. The military at first approved the project on the grounds that communication with the Kafers would smooth things for Intelligence, but they quickly realized that neither Russel nor the civilian population was going to cooperate with them on

this point, and they have retreated to a safe position: we don't want to stir them up any more than they already are, and anyway the only good Kafer is a dead Kafer.

Russel herself is of the frequently voiced opinion that if we can just learn to understand the Kafers, we will find that they are not so very different from us in their needs, dreams, and fears. If the differences between them and us can be understood, she holds, the causes of the war can be found and eliminated. The key to this understanding, of course, is communication. It is Russel's intent to establish contact with a Kafer and learn to communicate with it.

She is under no illusions about the dangers inherent in her scheme. She realizes that her project demands that a Kafer be captured alive—something which has not yet been accomplished—and if possible, the Kafer should be uninjured. Further, she prefers that a Kafer be found in some area far removed from the present fighting, out in the Hotback perhaps, because Kafer bands wandering near human-occupied areas are likely to harbor bitter feelings for humans after so many of their comrades have been killed.

Native Aurorans who discuss the topic with her generally wax a little bitter themselves at this point.

The characters can be drafted into this project in one of several ways.

**1. New to Aurore:** If the characters encounter Russel or her agents shortly after arriving on Aurore, they will be hired solely on the basis of their background and past experience. The fact that they are relatively inexperienced in fighting Kafers will have one clear advantage in Russel's eyes; they will not be contaminated with the blind, unreasoning hatred that most Aurorans seem to have. Russel will offer Lv300 per Auroran day and be willing to bargain to as high as Lv500 per day. Lv1000 will be available per character to buy additional equipment, but the expedition will provide basic equipment and two hoverjeeps.

**2. From Mount Phaeton:** If the characters have recently completed the Mount Phaeton scenario, word of their experience will have circulated through the colony, and they will be approached by Russel herself. The fact that they survived (whatever the outcome of events at the mine) is impressive and speaks well of the characters' prowess in action against the Kafers. Best of all, though, since the characters are not native to Aurore, they can be expected not to have the senseless, racial prejudice against the Kafers that most colonists seem to have.

She will explain her position and offer the characters Lv500 per Auroran day, plus Lv1000 apiece as a recruitment bonus and for

equipment if they will join her party. If forced to bargain, she will go as high as Lv850 per Auroran day, plus a bonus of Lv 1500.

The characters will provide their own weapons, but the expedition will provide hoverjeeps and basic equipment.

**3. After the Cavalry Came:** If the characters have already finished *Waiting For The Cavalry*, then they may currently be serving in a mercenary military force. Their commanding officer will ask them to volunteer for this mission. Military support of the expedition has been re-evaluated and approved, though the military command would like to keep a low profile for public relations purposes. The fact remains, however, that if it is possible to learn to communicate with Kafers, we'd better learn how to do it, and fast. The Kafers have already stolen a march on us in that some have learned English, French, or German, and all we know about them so far is that they are so alien we don't understand them.

The characters will be detached from their regular duties. They may take their own weapons, and additional weapons and ammunition will be provided on request. The expedition is using hovercraft; a pair of hoverjeeps is provided by the Tanstaaf Free Legion to carry the characters and their gear.

### WHY SAY YES?

First, the players may come to share Russel's ideals, or at least think them worth a try, certainly as an alternative to the apparently endless slaughter now going on.

Second, Cathlin Russel is both a beautiful woman and an attractive personality, and romance may draw one or more of the players into the expedition, if for no other reason than to protect her from possible disaster.

Third, the players are looking for work that will give them experience and money, and this job fills both of those criteria.

Fourth, members of the Tanstaaf government or the Tanstaaf Free Legion may approach the characters without Ms. Russel's knowledge and offer to pay them a bonus of up to Lv5000 each if they will accompany the expedition. By doing this they hope to put the government and the military in a position to benefit from whatever Russel learns from the Kafers, but without risking civilian hostility over an official attempt to communicate with the enemy.

Finally, if the players are already under contract to the Tanstaaf Free Legion (having played *Waiting For The Cavalry*) they may simply be ordered to accompany the expedition by their superiors.

### REFEREE'S SYNOPSIS

Cathlin Russel's mission is an idealistic one, but doomed to failure. If the characters have had any previous experience with Kafers at all they will know that Kafers are not exactly communicative with humans; that, in fact, they seem to hate humans as much as we hate them. The player characters may endeavor to convince Ms. Russel on this point, but they will find that she is extremely stubborn and determined. War is an unnecessary waste, she maintains, a terrible, tragic, and abysmally stupid waste which could be avoided if only the combatants took time enough to try to understand one another. In the end, whatever their arguments, the characters will be told the expedition is going on, with or without them.

The expedition sets off in a generally easterly direction. If the characters have had much experience at all on Aurora, Russel will be more than happy to listen to their suggestions and will use them in the capacity of guides. The expedition makes its way through outlying settlements and learns of Kafer activity from the inhabitants. Some Kafers may be encountered in this part of the trip, but none will be taken alive and Russel, though shaken by the ferocity of their attacks, will insist that this proves the validity of her original

plan to capture Kafers from a remote area. Thus the expedition will make its way clear across Areas 2 and 3, and possibly into 4. If the characters have already survived the events detailed in *On the Slopes of Mount Phaeton*, their usefulness as guides will be especially obvious, since they have already been through Area 4.

No matter where the expedition goes, Kafer response will always be to shoot first and not ask any questions at all. Even apparently dim-witted Kafers will open fire as soon as they see a human, and if the humans open fire on *them*, the usual response of momentary confusion followed by keen, tactical brilliance will manifest itself. The adventurers will earn their pay by defending the expedition against repeated, vicious Kafer attacks.

At some point after the expedition has survived several battles with the Kafers, one or more of the characters will be approached by Dr. Cas Dreyfuss, a psychologist, and Russel's second-in-command. He sounds the characters out about the possibility of returning to Tanstaaf at once, regardless of Russel's crazy ideas. Unless the characters elect then and there to mutiny and head the convoy back to civilization, this meeting with Dreyfuss will end on an incomplete note. The expedition will proceed, but it is noticed that Russel and Dreyfuss have several loud and bitter arguments in the next few days.

One night, during the last ten hours before daylight, an alarm is given when a hoverjeep leaves the camp perimeter, heading west. Dreyfuss appears, obviously distraught. Ms. Russel, he says, flew into a rage over management of the expedition and has returned to Tanstaaf on her own. Dreyfuss takes command of the expedition and gives the order to return to Tanstaaf at first light.

Before the expedition has travelled more than 10 kilometers, the wreckage of Russel's hoverjeep is found. Physical evidence points to a Kafer attack, but the lack of a body indicates Russel has been taken prisoner.

The expedition may just return to Tanstaaf, but is more likely to attempt to track down Russel's captors. If they do so, an attack on the Kafer band will rescue Russel, who will reveal that she had been overpowered in camp by Dreyfuss and dumped in the wild. The hoverjeep ambush was faked by Dreyfuss. Kafers found her and took her prisoner, apparently intrigued by the prospects of one human leaving another bound and gagged in Kafer territory.

After the Kafer band has been wiped out and Russel rescued, the expedition begins its return to Tanstaaf, but is by now being shadowed by an increasing number of Kafers. At least one more major battle will be fought before they fight their way back to safety.

### BACKGROUND

The complete expedition, including the characters' vehicles, consists of five Bridgeport Swift Songbirds and three Explorer ATVs, which are identical to those described in the **Traveller: 2300** *Players' Manual* and are without armament. One ATV is designated the command vehicle, one the lab, and one the mobile field hospital.

Also included with the expedition are medkits for all personnel, and a Lightweight Automed carried aboard one of the ATVs. There are eight Large Lifeform Detectors on hand, as well as plenty of such equipment as binoculars, camping equipment, all types of tools, cameras, and sampling kits.

### PERSONNEL

Expedition personnel consist of 18 people: seven scientists, and 11 drivers, assistants, and hired hands. The scientists are:

**Cathlin Ann Russel:** Green NPC; Career: Biology; expedition leader.

**Cas Dreyfuss:** Experienced NPC; Career: Psychology; second-in-command.

**Sharon Vandermeier:** Experienced NPC; Career: Biology.

**Albert Griffith:** Green NPC; Career: Linguistics.

**Barney Jones:** Green NPC; Career: Biology.

**Carlotta Uber:** Green NPC; Career: Medical Doctor.

**Adam Sorbechet:** Green NPC; Career: Linguistics.

## CATHLIN ANN RUSSEL

An attractive, bright, and dedicated woman, Cathlin Russel is a representative for the North American Research League and a member of the French-based organization PAX (*Paix Avec le Xenos*). She has recently arrived on Aurore as head of a NARL-PAX sponsored mission with the goal of establishing two-way communications with the Kafers. Russel sincerely believes that free communication with the Kafers will clarify the problems and misunderstandings which have led to war between the Kafers and humans and will lead ultimately to peace.

She has been encountering a great deal of hostility among native Aurorans, both officially and unofficially, for her views about human-Kafer relations. The characters may meet her while seeking employment and may be offered positions serving as security elements and guides for the Russel expedition.

**NPC Motivation:** *Club Queen:* Cathlin Russel is an extremely stubborn woman and determined that nothing will stand in her way. *Hearts 10:* She is committed to justice—in this case, to the just cause of Peace—and she reacts with anger to what she perceives as the injustice of bureaucratic bungling, stupidity, bigotry, xenophobia, and short-sightedness in the determined pursuit of the war against the Kafers.

## DREYFUSS AND SORBECHET

Both men are, unknown to Russel, Aurorans who have suffered grievous personal losses during the Kafer invasion—Dreyfuss a son and Sorbechet a wife—and both hate Kafers with a passion almost beyond the ken of other humans. They have successfully concealed these feelings and joined the expedition, but have done so with the sole purpose of sabotaging it.

**NPC Motivation:** Revenge.

## THE TREK OUT

The drive out from Tanstaaf should be generally uneventful. The expedition will pass through a number of settlements as well as the ruins of several more. Which ones will depend on the road taken. If this is the first adventure plot played by the characters, this is a good opportunity to build a feeling for the planet. Use the travel time to acquaint them with the sights and sounds of the world. Include several animal encounters. These need not all be threatening, and might include seeing a Creep shambling across the road. As settlements are passed through, the expedition can attempt to obtain information about Kafer activity, and in the process learn more about the fabric of Auroran society and how desperately it is fighting for survival against the Kafer menace.

## KAFER ENCOUNTERS

Kafers may be encountered through the usual procedure of rolling for encounters and events. Rumors may lead the characters to areas which are especially heavily infested

by Kafer bands. Ultimately, however, the referee will decide that the time has come for the expedition to find what it is looking for. There should be at least one encounter against small bands (1D6) of Kafers on foot, which are within the capabilities of the expedition to defeat or, if things turn ugly, escape from in their vehicles. These parties of Kafers will be poorly armed and equipped, but once aroused will be difficult to defeat and, the players will soon discover, almost impossible to capture.

## APPROACHED BY DREYFUSS

Besides Kafer attacks, the referee will be orchestrating other events during the course of this scenario. At some point after the expedition has survived several battles with the Kafers, one or more of the characters will be approached by Dr. Cas Dreyfuss, a psychologist, and Russel's second-in-command. He sounds the characters out about the possibility of returning to Tanstaaf at once. The cause is hopeless, he argues; no one can reason with creatures as unreasonably vicious as the Kafers, and the entire expedition is pointless. There are others in the party, he claims, who feel as he does.

Unless the characters elect then and there to mutiny and head the convoy back to civilization, this meeting with Dreyfuss will end on an incomplete note. The expedition will proceed, but it is noticed that Russel and Dreyfuss have several loud and bitter arguments in the next few days; he insists on turning back, and she insists on going ahead. At one point, when the expedition has circled up for a night rest period he is invited to take a hovercraft and leave, but he refuses. One of the characters notices Dreyfuss in planning with Adam Sorbechet, a linguist who is often in Dreyfuss's company.

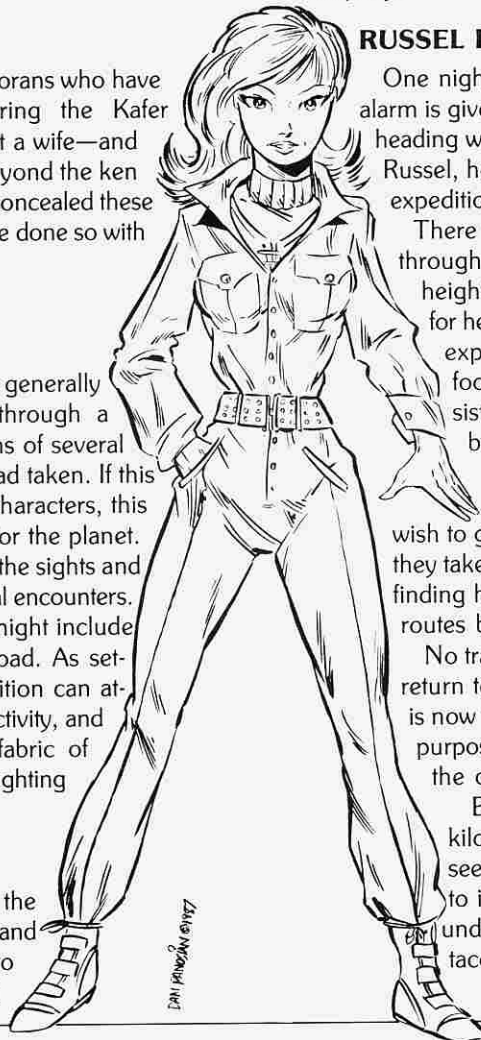
## RUSSEL DISAPPEARS

One night, during the last ten hours before daylight, an alarm is given when a hoverjeep leaves the camp perimeter, heading west. Dreyfuss appears, obviously distraught. Ms. Russel, he says, flew into a rage over management of the expedition and has returned to Tanstaaf on her own.

There is a hasty consultation. To attempt to travel back through hostile territory in Aurore's near-darkness is the height of foolishness. Russel was not, however, noted for her straight thinking, or so Dreyfuss insists. Though experienced campaigners will point out the foolishness of going after her at night, Dreyfuss insists that he wants to follow her and try to bring her back. Whatever the reaction of the characters, he will do so. If one of the player characters has developed a romantic interest in Russel, he may wish to go after her as well. If so, Dreyfuss will insist that they take separate hoverjeeps, to double their chances of finding her. She could be taking any of several possible routes back towards civilization.

No trace of her is found, and all searching hoverjeeps return to the encampment. Dreyfuss points out that he is now in command. Without Cathlin Russel's drive and purpose, the expedition has little further point. He gives the order to return to Tanstaaf at first light.

Before the expedition has travelled more than 10 kilometers, a wrecked hoverjeep is found—the one seen leaving the encampment earlier. Laser damage to its engine shows how it was brought down. It is undeniably Russel's hoverjeep. Her personal portacomp is found beside the wreck, broken. There are signs of a struggle, and a Kafer Weapon Type





1 is found nearby. The clues are obvious. Her hoverjeep was ambushed by a Kafer band, and she was carried off and probably killed.

The scenario can now take one of two paths. The expedition can return to Tanstaaf without further incident, the mission a failure. Cathlin Russel will be hailed as a hero for peace, a brave woman who died for what she believes.

However, it is possible that one or more of the characters has become suspicious of Dreyfuss. Russel was so determined to make the expedition succeed. Why would she suddenly decide to abandon it, without a word to anyone else, and vanish into the night alone?

### THE SEARCH FOR RUSSEL

The characters may force the expedition to halt while they conduct a careful search, or, if a confrontation with Dreyfuss occurs, they may abandon the expedition entirely. A search of the area turns up nothing, even with the party's large life form detectors.

Searching is handled as an unskilled task:

To search for Cathlin Russel. Difficult. Determination. 10 minutes.

The first character to throw a successful roll does not find Cathlin, but he does find a clue. Some distance away from the hoverjeep (several hundred meters at least), in a thicket of broadtops and aureowood trees, the characters discover further signs of a struggle—the ground growth is shredded and trampled in places—and there are cleanly cut nylon ropes lying around the base of one tree. Careful inspection shows where the tree is notched where a sharp knife cut through the ropes and into the wood. There is also a handkerchief nearby, with the initials C.A.R.

The characters should be allowed to arrive at their own conclusion. The *correct* conclusion is that Russel was here, tied to the tree. Someone—or something—came along and cut her loose. Trampled vegetation indicates that those someones departed towards the south. Kafers *have* been known to take prisoners... and in this case, they must have come upon her while she was tied to a tree. Since she was obviously helpless, they must have

elected to carry her off as a prisoner. The characters should use their own judgement about what to do with or what to tell the expedition. Since the trail leads into the woods, it is obvious that vehicles cannot be used in the pursuit.

Tracking Russel and her captors is a standard task:

To track an unknown party through wilderness. Difficult. Survival. 30 minutes.

If any of the characters have the skill Woodcraft Skill, this can be used instead of Survival Skill, and the task becomes routine instead of difficult. Failure means the party has lost the trail and must reacquire it. A total mishap means the party loses the trail and cannot reacquire it. Success means the party continues to find signs that they are on the right trail.

One sign will be in a forest of broadtop trees. One tree has snapped closed, and the carapace of a dead Kafer can be made out at the base, between the blades. The party being tracked are definitely Kafers, and one of them blundered into an Auroran Bladehood. (see *Bladehood* under *Biology*).

The referee should keep track of successful tracking rolls. On the tenth such roll, the characters will encounter their quarry.

The Kafer band numbers 2D6 individuals, armed with Kafer Weapons Types 1 and 2. Cathlin Russel is still alive. She was tied hand and foot and slung from a pole carried on the shoulders of two of the Kafers. When encountered, the party has stopped to rest. Cathlin, still tied to the pole, has been dropped on the ground nearby.

### THE RESCUE

The characters will have to work out their own plan for rescuing Cathlin, one which takes into account their weapons and numbers, and the numbers of the enemy. Weapons of mass destruction (grenades, plasma guns) are not advised, since Cathlin is in the midst of the enemy. As usual, any ambush will have initial success, but after a few minutes the Kafers will show uncharacteristic skill and cunning. It would be a good idea to take maximum advantage of the initial period of confusion by pulling Cathlin out of the line of fire and perhaps even beating a quick

retreat.

### CATHLIN'S STORY

If Cathlin is rescued alive, she will be able to explain what happened. If she is unconscious or dead, the characters will have to puzzle out what happened for themselves, but this should not prove too difficult.

Dreyfuss hatched a plot with his friend Sorbechet. During the night encampment, Dreyfuss engaged Russel in another argument, and Sorbechet hit her from behind. The two of them put her in a hovercraft, and then Sorbechet fled the encampment, leaving Dreyfuss to present the story of their last argument and her return to civilization.

Sorbechet, meanwhile, travelled to a point noted by the two of them during the last travel period, parked the hovercraft, and dragged Cathlin into the nearby woods. He was supposed to kill her and make it look like the Kafers had done it, but he decided that a more fitting end was to leave Cathlin to the Kafers themselves. He tied her to a tree and gagged her with her handkerchief. Sooner or later, the Kafers would come.

Dreyfuss, meanwhile, arrived in his hovercraft, "searching" for the vanished Cathlin. He and Sorbechet damaged the first vehicle to make it look like it had been brought down by laser fire, then Dreyfuss sadly returned to the encampment, with Sorbechet hidden under a tarp on the cargo deck of the vehicle.

The Kafers came perhaps an hour later. There seemed to be a dull-witted argument among them, with several wanting to kill her at once, but an officer, with what must have been curses and heavy-handed blows from his electric cattle prod, persuaded the others to cut her ropes, use pieces of the ropes to tie her to a pole and carry her off into the night. She didn't know where she was being taken; she knew only that her chances of survival were very, very slim.

Her attempts to communicate with Kafers at close hand were pointless—and every time the Kafer officer tried to talk to her, it would jolt her with the cattle prod first, as though that would somehow make her able to understand what it was saying.

And then her human rescuers had burst out of the underbrush, weapons blazing!

### DEALING WITH DREYFUSS

The final resolution of the scenario depends on what action the characters may have taken against Dreyfuss before they left. If they suspected him of having had a hand in Cathlin's disappearance, they may have left trusted NPC characters in charge, with orders to watch Dreyfuss and those known to be friendly with him. Another possibility would have been to force Dreyfuss to come along, which would make for an interesting confrontation when Cathlin is rescued.

If, however, the characters left Dreyfuss in charge, they will return to find the expedition vehicles are gone. In their absence, Dreyfuss persuaded the others that the characters have abandoned them on a fool's errand, and that all that can be done now is to get the expedition's valuable vehicles and equipment back to Tanstaaf.

### ABANDONED IN KAFER COUNTRY

This will open a new phase in the scenario. The characters *do* have the laser-charred hulk of the damaged hovercraft. It will be possible to repair it, but it is a difficult standard task.

To repair damaged hovercraft. Difficult. Mechanical. 10 minutes.

Naturally, the expedition members will have left behind nothing

so useful as vehicle maintenance tools or a fuel station. However, a basic tool kit (wrenches, screwdrivers, etc.) is present in the vehicle's gear locker. Damage to the vehicle's engine is relatively light. There is a full tank of hydrogen fuel, undamaged. What makes the task difficult is the lack of materials to patch severed hoses or a punctured coolant tank.

If the task is completed successfully, the hovercraft will run—not well, but it will run. The engine will tend to overheat because of a leak in the cooling system, and frequent stops must be made for water. The vehicle is restricted to half speed and cannot travel more than 100 km at a time without stopping for 2D6×30 minutes to allow the engine to cool off and make any necessary repairs.

If the hovercraft cannot be repaired successfully (a total mishap ruins the machine beyond all possible repair), the characters have no hope but to walk out. Their chances, quite frankly, depend on just how close the nearest human settlement is.

If they can get to a settlement, they may be able to beg or borrow a working hovercraft and catch up with the expedition, which can only move at the speed of the ATVs.

### THE FINAL BATTLE

Whether the characters return and find Dreyfuss and his friends still under guard with the expedition vehicles, or if they find the expedition gone and must cross several thousand kilometers of terrain alone, the scenario should close with a final battle against the Kafers. A Kafer band has been trailing the expedition for some time, trying to determine what they are up to. The Kafers which captured Cathlin were from this band, and Cathlin's predicament, tied to a tree, was one more utterly confusing and bizarre piece of human behavior which they have not yet figured out. Cathlin was allowed to live in hopes that a Kafer which knew a human tongue could communicate with her and find out why she had been left behind that way.

In any case, the expedition will be attacked again by this band before it reaches human territory. The referee may allow the repaired hovercraft to join the expedition just ahead of the Kafer attack or to have them arrive after the attack has already begun. The Kafers will number at least 25 individuals and will have four vehicles of Type 2. They will find a suitable (if obvious) place to stage an ambush and attempt to wipe the humans out.

Cathlin will have no opposition to this battle. Her experience with the Kafers and their cattle prods have left her with little interest in more subtle forms of communication. Besides, it is her friends who are being attacked. The course of the battle is left to the referee and the players' own decisions.

### A KAFER PRISONER

The referee may, if he wishes, allow the expedition to succeed in capturing a live Kafer at some point during the adventure, but this will not fulfill Cathlin's original plan. Attempts to communicate with the Kafer by members of the expedition will be uniformly unsuccessful. The Kafer in captivity will not behave like a snarling, captive, wild beast, nor will it seem particularly dull-witted. When waking up from its frequent sleeps it will at first seem lethargic and unaware of its surroundings, but once it realizes it is a prisoner of humans it will at first become enraged and violent, but quickly quiet down and become brooding and watchful. Persistent attempts to communicate with it while it is in its quiet state will probably result in the death of Dr. Albert Griffith, the expedition's linguist. Its quiet phase represents the times when it is at peak mental activity, brought on by the intense feeling of danger which goes with being a prisoner of humans. While it is in this state it is ruthless



and cunning, and is only waiting for an opportunity to kill. It will encourage approach by a human (Dr. Griffith) and, if given the slightest opportunity, kill him.

One possible result of the capture will be the discovery one night that someone has snuck into the area where it is kept caged and killed it with a knife. This will be discovered after Ms. Russel is missing, before Dreyfuss' part in her disappearance is uncovered, and while the expedition convoy is en route back towards Tanstaaf. If not murdered by Dreyfuss, there is a good chance that local citizens on the road back to Tanstaaf will form a lynch mob and kill it. If it is successfully brought back alive to Tanstaaf, the military will immediately seize it for study.

## RESOLUTION

Investigation will uncover Sorbechet's and Dreyfuss's Auroran backgrounds, which led them to volunteer for the expedition in order to sabotage it. Their actions were taken to prevent what they regarded as a possible calamity: what if the Russel woman were right, and peace resulted from communication with Kafers? The expedition had to be turned back or discredited... or peace might break out, and the killing of Kafers would stop. Various sources back at Tanstaaf will be able to verify the feelings these two men had when the expedition returns. If a captured Kafer is murdered during the trip, it will turn out that these two did that deed as well.

If Cathlin Ann Russel is returned to Tanstaaf alive along with most of the expedition, the players have succeeded about as well as they could hope to. A live Kafer prisoner will make the expedition a spectacular success, and the players will immediately acquire a reputation that will stay with them for the rest of their lives and spread throughout the length and breadth of human space. As the Kafer war heats up and becomes more and more a part of the news, many small incidents will be forgotten. But the story of the Russel Expedition's trek through the heart of Kafer country, the capture and rescue of Russel herself, and the first capture of a live Kafer, is such a natural that it will be told and retold. The only problem will be getting people to believe that the players *really* were the security team for the Russel Expedition.

**Major Kafer Force:** The characters encounter 2D6×15 heavily armed Kafers moving down the valley towards them. Most are on foot, but there are 2D6 vehicles of both crawlers and 1D6 deathsleds.

If a Kafer or a Kafer force of any size is encountered, the characters will see it before it sees them, and they will have an opportunity to hide. Avoiding being seen is an unskilled task:

To avoid being seen by Kafers. Routine. Dexterity. Instant.

**Mission Accomplished:** Trafficability information and the location of any pass or approach (free of Kafers, of course) to the main valley where the Kafer encampment is located, must be communicated to the Tanstaaf Free Legion advance post at the Lower Crossing on the Equator River. The TFL and militia army which is gathering to strike at the Kafer Horde will use this information in its planning.

## THE ASSAULT

The players will be asked to serve as guides for at least one column of the assault force. If they have found an approach route free of Kafer guards they will lead the force which goes in that direction.

In all cases, the combat teams will be led by their best infantry, one of the six Ramrod teams present, on foot. Vehicles will, at least at first, follow far to the rear so their turbine whine will not alert the Kafer sentries. Once battle is joined, however, the vehicles will move up quickly to give fire support. Given the scarcity of vehicles, the assault will go in at the pace of the infantry and the vehicles will be present purely to provide fire support. A typical combat team will consist of:

- One hovertank platoon with 3 LkPz-IX
- One ramrod platoon with 3 Kangaroo IV hover APCs
- One mercenary infantry company
- One militia infantry company
- One artillery half-battery in support with three 12cm multiple rocket launchers (similar to those on a German LkRw-12).

If a combat team is sent by way of an unguarded pass, it will probably escape detection longer than any other column and, after the other battles are joined, will emerge suddenly in the heart of the encampment behind the Kafer lines. This force will then be in a position to completely disrupt the Kafer defense and turn the tide of battle decisively in favor of the Tanstaafians.

Eventually the Tanstaafians will gain the upper hand and push back the Kafers. Details of the battle in the area containing the players is left up to the referee. However, a good bit of free-form refereeing is definitely called for here. It is not necessary that you carefully resolve every shot using the game's combat system; in fact, it is almost necessary that you not do that. Instead, decide in general what happens, make die rolls on close situations or things you want to randomize a bit, but above all else keep the flow of action moving. The battle should be a long, confused, violent brawl from the time the humans hit the Kafer outposts to the time the Kafers retreat into the La Gouffre canyon system to regroup. It is much more important to your players' sense of realism that events move quickly than that you make every die roll, so improvise!

## LA GOUFFRE

Several of the mountain passes north of Thunder Valley debouch into La Gouffre. The walls of the tidal bore are over 500 meters high and nearly vertical, and the valley floor is 50 kilometers or more across in places. Fractures in the valley wall rock have created



long, sloping ramps along which Kafers and vehicles can travel to reach the floor of the gulf.

High tide in La Gouffre north of Thunder Valley will begin five hours, twenty minutes after sunrise on the day of the operation. The characters will have to time their attacks and movements with this single fact in mind: at hour 5, the shallow water at the bottom of La Gouffre will begin running with a strong current towards the west, exposing large stretches of mud and tidal flat. At hour 5:05 the current will reverse, and a loud roar will be heard to the west. At 5:18 the steely glint of water will be seen in the valley to the west, and two minutes later a wall of water some 40 meters tall will sweep through the valley at 180 kph. Within the next 20 minutes, the water will rise from 40 meters to 150 meters, and it will continue rushing east with unstoppable force. Anything Kafer- or man-made anywhere on the valley floor will be utterly destroyed. The roar of the water between 5:19 and 5:22 will deafen all characters (Kafers included) anywhere within 5 km of the gulf unless they are wearing ear protectors.

The air above the gulf will be filled with clouds of spray—Tidemist—blocking the view from one side of the gulf to the other. High tide will remain for approximately 15 hours, at which time the current reverses itself and the water drains quickly from the canyon.

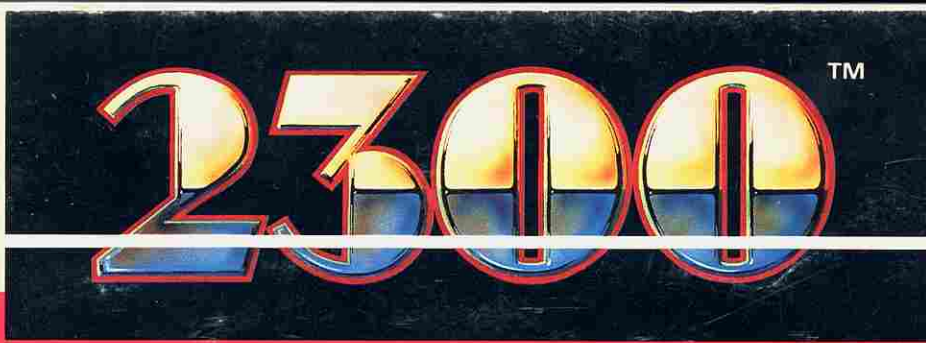
## RESOLUTION

If the players can pull this off, their reputations as combat troops will have been solidly established on Aurore, and word may even begin to spread to other worlds of the French Arm. While the Battle of Thunder Valley will not ultimately be as historic an event as the Russel expedition (assuming the expedition brings back a live Kafer) for mankind as a whole, it is much more important to the people of Tanstaaf.

Not that that means much financially. The players will have the gratitude and admiration of the citizens of Tanstaaf, but that will disappear quickly if they hit the talk show circuit, try to market a line of Thunder Valley sportswear, plush Kafer dolls, Captain Combat action figures, or capitalize commercially on their fame in any other obvious way. People like their heroes modest, not greedy.







# KAFER DAWN

L

ife for colonists on Aurore was difficult at best. Native plant and animal life was deadly to humans and soil had to be brought in by the ton to grow imported crops. Tidal bores were scoured by half-mile tall waves twice a day. Earthquakes and volcanic activity were constant hazards. Then, the Kafers came...

The inhabitants of Aurore always took a special pride in their home—it was the most spectacularly beautiful and at the same time least hospitable of the garden planets in the French Arm. For years it was also the end of the line in a colonial arm that terminated at planetless Arcturus, a dull ruby in Aurore's night sky. The Kafers were first encountered at Arcturus, and then their invasion fleet and invading armies struck Aurore. The battle was close, but the major population centers held out. Now, the remaining Kafers need to be hunted down and rooted out.

*Kafer Dawn* covers the campaign to mop up the Auroran "hotback" from the viewpoint of several adventurers who come to join the fight against mankind's most bitter foe. Despite over a year of warfare, little is known of the Kafers, and so *Kafer Dawn* is a voyage of discovery as well. Are the Kafers necessarily our implacable enemies, or can better understanding bring peace to both species?

*Kafer Dawn* gradually introduces the players to Kafers over the course of four new separate adventures (all included in this booklet) which form a mini-campaign. From the time the players ground ship on Aurore as raw recruits to the time they participate in the final drive against the last major groupings of Kafers in the hotback, they will gradually learn more and more about their violent but complex enemy.

*Design*.....William H. Keith, Jr.  
*Development*.....Frank Chadwick  
Loren K. Wiseman  
and Timothy B. Brown  
*Art Direction*.....Barbie Pratt  
*Cover Art*.....Steve Venters  
*Interior Art*.....Dan Panosian

**GDW** Game Designers' Workshop  
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