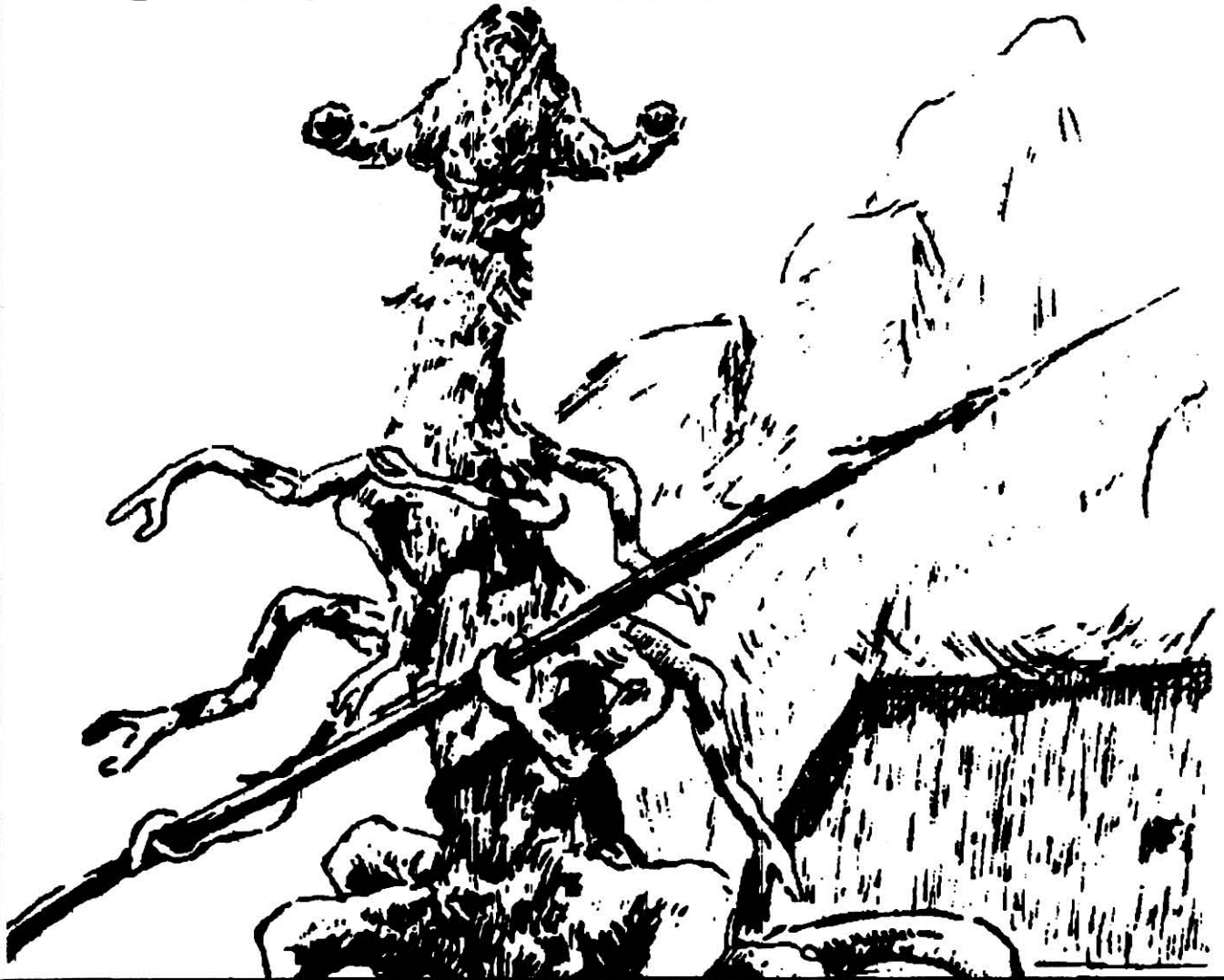


Periastron



Periastron by J. Andrew & William H. Keith Jr.

This folio adventure is designed for characters of almost any background attached to a Trade Pioneer Team aboard the Type A2 Far Trader Scotian Huntress. The referee may draw characters from any source desired, including existing campaigns. It is urged that characters have some skill in ground combat.

Two scientist non-player characters form a part of the expedition. Character generation information can be found in GDW Supplement 4, *Citizens of the Imperium*. Details on the statistics, performance, and layout of the Far Trader are not necessary for this adventure, but they can be found, if desired, in Supplement 7, *Traders and Gunboats*. Almost any other TRAVELLER book, adventure, supplement, or game may enhance the enjoyment of this adventure, as well.

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Science-Fiction Adventure in
the Far Future

Marschal



Adventures

Periastron

Setting: In "*Storm*," the adventurers were forced to crash-land when an electrical storm caused severe damage to their ship. They found themselves on a world they christened Storm (E774800), a planet with an eccentric orbit around a young, hot star... and, as a result, a planet with turbulent climactic conditions which were growing steadily worse. They had come in search of an alien race whose slower-than-light probe had been discovered in another system, a derelict; the lack of jump drive technology and a complete absence of computers and microelectronics offered a possibility of an enormous market for Caledon Ventures, the company which employed the adventurers.

What they found, though, were implacably hostile natives, with a primitive technological development and a form unsuited to the design of the derelict probe. The locals were fierce, aggressive... and very, very hungry.

Having survived their first rude contact with Storm's locals, the adventurers must now consider their next move. For though they thought they had their ship repaired, a new problem has arisen... a problem that makes contacting the natives more than a matter of profit. It's now a matter of survival...

Referee's Notes: Clues in past adventures in this series ("*Flare Star*," and "*Storm*") have introduced the unusual biology of the creatures inhabiting Storm. A reproductive cycle linked to the severe temperature fluctuations of Storm's eccentric orbit makes for a puzzling difference between life forms. Budding, triggered by rising temperatures, produces a number of offspring in each of the individuals exposed. The parent dies, furnishing food for the young. As the comparatively short periastron period comes to an end, the offspring mature and ultimately metamorphose into the long-lived adult forms. Juvenile and adult are completely unlike in appearance, and also in temperament.

If this adventure is played as part of an ongoing campaign on Storm, this information should be kept secret until and unless players reason it out. The referee may prefer, however, to reveal the knowledge as a working hypothesis by NPC scientists in the party, especially in games played outside a campaign framework.

Background: Scotian Huntress carried a top-rated Chief Engineer, but even he hadn't been able to catch the problem in time. Lost among the rest of the damage caused during the crash-landing, the failure of several key components in the life support panels remained unnoticed, until a full-power test was run on the ship preparatory to lifting off. Then the sparks and short-circuiting of the critical panel announced the problem in no uncertain terms.

Inertial compensators and internal grav field components could be repaired, and it wasn't long before they were back in working order - at the expense of three of the grav modules from the air/raft. But the atmosphere and temperature regulators were harder to replace, both in terms of parts and time. And, with the damage as it was time was suddenly a crucial factor.

Internal temperature control was no longer working. The outside temperature was up to 40°C, and still going up, as Storm swung towards periastron. The crew's equipment wasn't designed to support them continuously for more than a short time; as things stood, there was no way they could get the temperature control repairs made in time. Only a single, faint promise of hope existed, unearthed by the team's planetologist.

A little over 30 km away from the ship, on the other side of a ridge and a wide valley, a native city had once stood. Now ravaged by wandering bands of hostile natives (the juvenile form), the city no longer seemed important. But a structure towered above it, on the sides of a mountain; a brooding structure of uncertain purpose. Analysis made by a scouting party had shown this building to be a tremendous source of heat, and the computer projected a high probability that this structure was actually a large, refrigerated complex. Inside, the computer claimed, the temperature was actually well under what the humans thought of as normal - a chilly, but comfortable, 10°C.

It was imperative that the party find a place of refuge against the rising heat. Once that was done, it would be possible to keep vacc suits and other gear in better operating condition, to give the engineer and his helpers a chance to slowly work on the ship. It seemed the only chance for survival was a gambler's throw: visit the strange building, knock on the front door, and hope for a friendly welcome...

Referee's Notes

Overland Trek: Use of the air/raft has been greatly curtailed by the use of grav modules to repair the ship. It will serve reliably to carry supplies and a pilot, but its capacity for both weight and speed has been reduced. Attempts to fly at more than 1/4 speed are subject to a roll for breakdown (7+ each combat round). Atmospheric turbulence can also be a source of danger to persons using the air/raft.



Travel is conducted at the rate of one hex each hour. Each hour, too, the referee should check for native encounters, equipment failures, and other events. See the map and event table.

Supplies: The referee may designate the contents of the ship's locker (this should, of course, remain consistent in an ongoing campaign). The adventurers may carry any equipment or supplies they feel they may need. An electronics tool set should be available for repairs to vacc suit air conditioners breakdowns that may occur during the adventure.

Conditions: Vacc suits must be worn, both because of the unpleasant temperature and because of the high ozone content of the atmosphere. Violent storms and other natural phenomena are also a cause of considerable hazard. During storms, forward progress is impossible for 1d hours (during which other events and encounters may take place). Other difficulties may be imposed by the referee by natural hazards as he sees fit.

Natives: Native encounters are covered by the event table. Natives are two meters tall, tubular, with four arms and four legs. Generally, they are armed with spears, clubs, torches, rocks, and other random, primitive weapons. They always attack. A total of 1dx10 natives will be encountered at any given time. They break off and retreat when half or more are killed. If they capture an adventurer, they will attempt to eat him on the spot.

Event Table

Roll Two Dice:			
2	Lightning: Fierce flashes of lightning begin. A character must roll his dexterity or less to take cover, or suffer 8d damage.	9	Storm
3	Natives: See <u>Natives</u> rule.	10	No Event
4	No Event	11	Natives
5	Storm: See <u>Conditions</u> rule.	12	Natives
6	Natives	13	Natives
7	Storm	14	Natives
8	Lightning hits air/raft: Pilot takes 4d damage immediately. Air/raft crashes on roll of 8+, or if pilot becomes unconscious.	15	Natives
		16	Natives

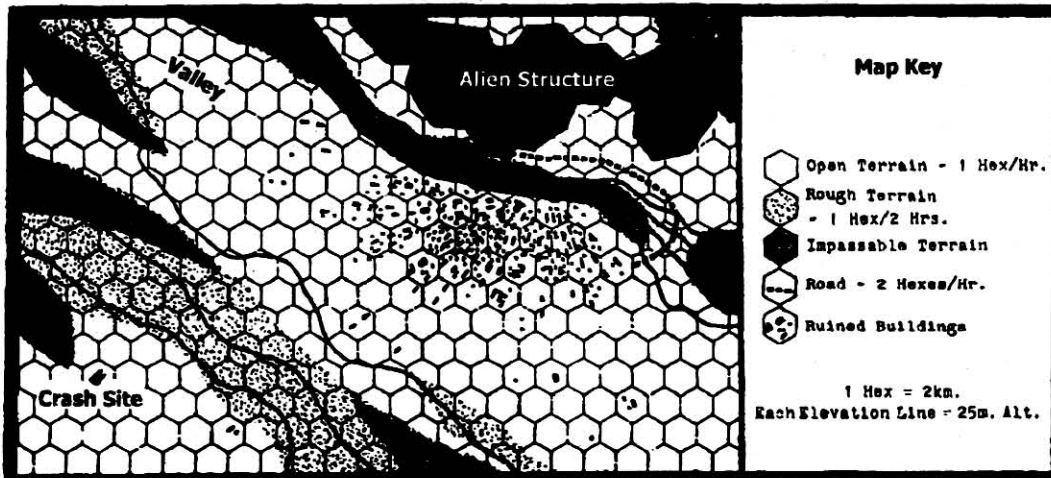
DM+4 if party is within three hexes of the Complex Building.

Equipment Failure: The air/raft is prone to failure at all times; if put under strain, failure is almost certain. Vacc suit air conditioning units are also under an enormous load, and may also fail. Check for air/raft failure every time a hex is entered. A roll of 10+ indicates the air/raft has malfunctioned, and is permanently out of action. In addition, check hourly for air conditioning failure. A roll of 8+ means one unit has failed. Air conditioner repairs take increments of 1/2 hour, with one throw of 7+ allowed each time.

Electronics and mechanical skill may be used as a DM. An electronics kit is necessary to make the repairs.

If the repair is not made within two hours, the character will have one characteristic reduced to zero. Each 15 minutes thereafter, another characteristic is reduced to zero. This will not happen if the party finds shelter in time.

The Doors: Before starting the adventure, the referee should choose five hexes on the map, which are designated as doors. These doors occur in building hexes, in low alcoves that appear to be reinforced, and are far sturdier than the remainder of the building. They are 1 meter high, and a small recess 5-cm square is set into each. The "bracelets" from "Flare Star" will fit the small recess, and can be used to open the doors. Additional bracelets may be found in the city; see below. The doors cannot be forced.



Characters will spot a door on 11+ if they pass through the hex, on 6+ if they search for it. Additional doors may be located as "Interesting Artifacts" (see Insert). Every door is connected by a tunnel complex to the alien structure, which is the object of the quest. Once a door has been found and opened, the adventure is, in effect, over.

Searching the City: One hour will suffice for one team of characters to search a city hex. The party may wish to divide into two or more teams in order to speed their searching. However, this will make them more vulnerable to native attacks.

Every search will result in the discovery of one "Interesting Artifact" and 1d3 "Useless Artifacts." Some of these will be helpful; some will be time wasters. Regardless of their immediate usefulness, they may prove valuable if brought back to a human-occupied world. After the adventure, roll two dice for each artifact. Dice rolls of 2 or 3 mean that the item is essentially worthless. Rolling 4-10 means the artifact will bring a 1d x 6K credit bonus from Caledon Ventures. On an 11 or 12, the artifact is worth 1d6 x 10K credits. A second identical artifact will bring no additional bonus.

The Adventure: Characters who try to reach the alien structure directly will find it almost impossible. It is surrounded by a mob of natives who are attracted to it by instinct. Moreover, no entrance is obvious from the outside, and the walls are impervious to anything the characters might use. Only parties who find a door have much chance of surviving the adventure.

Within the complex, the adventurers will finally meet the aliens they have been seeking, the mature form of the tubular natives who have been so dangerous. These are disc-like beings, a meter and a half across, with a civilized and peaceful nature, and a technically sophisticated culture. They will be friendly; once communications are established and a common language worked out, they can not only help the adventurers survive, but prove a lucrative source of trade for Caledon Ventures, giving the party a fat bonus to look forward to on returning to civilization.

Referees may prefer to utilize "The Newcomers," the last in this series of folio adventures set on Storm, which will show some of the practical difficulties of setting up relations with this race.



Interesting Artifacts

Roll Two Dice:

2. A Vehicle. This is an alien ground car, apparently undamaged. It will hold up to four disc-shaped aliens (or a similar number of humans), and is capable of cross-country speeds of 20 km/hr (half in rough terrain). Needless to say, the controls are very strange. It will take at least an hour to figure the thing out and get it moving. Check for each attempt hourly; a roll of 10+ indicates success. Applicable modifiers include Mechanic and Wheeled Vehicle. The car has enough fuel for 2d6 hours; once fuel is gone the party will not be able to find more.

3. Hand Laser. This weapon can be recognized from "*Flare Star*." On 6+, it is charged and operable.

4. Map. This is a detailed map of the city, annotated with alien text. Green symbols mark the positions of tunnel entrances. A green line indicates tunnels. Most green lines lead to the alien structure.

5. Locker. What the players see is a metal plate in the wall, about 1 m high and 2 m wide. Inspection will reveal the presence of hinges and a lock. The lock must be shot off to be removed. The interior space is about 4 m deep. Animal parts and pieces of vegetation are stacked neatly around the walls. The temperature is 5 degrees C. Throwing food will distract hungry natives for 2-12 rounds, allowing the characters to escape, if they think of trying it. In addition, the locker may be used as a refuge in the event of suit air conditioner failure.

6. Bracelet. This is a key, recognizable from "*Flare Star*." It may be used to open a tunnel door.

7. Intact Building. The characters may barricade themselves here if attacked by natives. "*Storm*" furnishes an example of alien architecture. 10% of buildings contain lockers.

8. Metal Door. This is an entrance to the tunnel complex. It is described in more detail in "The Doors" section.

9. Ruined Building. This structure is of more than usual interest, since there are many pictures on the surviving walls. Small statues or models may be found among the rubble. This place was once a school or museum. After an hour's study, the characters would come to understand the aliens' life-cycle, and would learn that the alien structure is a place of sanctuary, probably inhabited.

10. Box with Plungers (1). This "black box" is an alien recording machine. Playing with the plungers will, on 8+, produce a loud babble, which will attract 2d6 hostile natives.

11. Box with Plungers (2). This is an alien fuel cell, which depends on strict chemical balance for operation. Playing with the plungers will cause a yellow panel light to burn. Two minutes later, the yellow light will start flashing, and a loud, keening noise will start. In 30 seconds, it will explode, doing 5d damage to everyone within 5 meters, and 2d to everyone within 10 m.

12. Box with Plungers (3). Comm unit. On first use, it will behave as Box 1, but with the addition of a bright, confusing visual program. Repeated use will, on 10+, open a channel to the alien structure. A disc-shaped alien will appear on the screen. The box will make babbling noises, perhaps additionally repeating statements made by the characters, but in a strange, distorted way. In 1d6 x 10 minutes, an air/raft of alien design will appear overhead and land as near as possible to the comm unit. A door will open. There is nothing inside but a number of disc-shaped seats. The controls are locked, and the whole thing is under remote control. If the characters enter, they will be taken to the alien structure. (End of adventure.) If they fire on the air/raft, the aliens will decide that they are hostile, and refuse them entrance under any circumstances.

Useless Artifacts

Characters who explore the ravaged city will find a large number of artifacts, most broken, some intact but useless. These are examples. The referee may devise others.

Turquoise Cube, 5 cm to a side, no apparent lid or opening. Something may be heard to rattle inside.

Metal Rod, 9 cm long, 1 cm diameter. One end will glow bright blue if the rod is lifted to a vertical position.

Metal Cylinder, .4 m tall, .5 m diameter. Bears alien inscription. Weighs 200 kg. Top may be removed easily. Contains a viscous, plastic substance.

Alien Statuette of a disc-shaped being, 3 cm in diameter, composed of a shiny ferric alloy. Appears to be holding a largish, cigar-shaped artifact. Underside bears a trefoil-shaped symbol.

Gizmo, composed of dull, bluish metal, about 2 cm to a side. Bears yellow plunger. If the plunger is depressed, one end of the artifact will become red-hot in a few seconds, remaining hot until the plunger is depressed a second time.

Hollow Sphere, translucent, .3 m in diameter. In one place there is a neat, circular hole.

White Disk, 1.8 m in diameter, 6 cm high, firmly socketed in floor. A large number of colored plungers cover the radius in three tiers. Playing with the plungers will have no evident effect.

Oval Plaque of yellow, plastic-like material, securely fastened to the wall of a ruined building. Bears alien inscription and arrow-like symbol pointing in a random direction.

