

TRAVELLER

S K A N D E R S V I K



SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

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CLASSIC TRAVELLER

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INTRODUCTION

Skandersvik is a complete campaign for Sword Worlder Travellers, who are crewmembers aboard the merchant cruiser *Skander*. It takes place as a series of episodes as the ship and her crew ply the spaceways beyond the Sword Worlds Confederation, voyaging through the Darrian and Five Sisters subsectors, into District 268 and finally home again. Along the way the crew will encounter a variety of challenges including interfering Imperials, a pushy planetary ruler and extremophile lifeforms aboard a derelict starship on an interdicted world.

The campaign assumes the Travellers are serving aboard the merchant cruiser *Skander*, detailed in the Referee's Information chapter, but another ship could be substituted so long as the overall mission is the same. Indeed, this campaign could be played using an Imperial, Darrian or independent ship either out of Narsil or one of the ports in the Darrian Confederation. However, many elements of the storyline assume the Travellers are Sword Worlders or friendly with them.

The Travellers are crewmembers or important passengers aboard the ship, so must be either native Sword Worlders or trusted by them. They will need a mix of shipboard and mercantile skills but there are opportunities for almost any Traveller to contribute to the success of the mission. Overall command of the vessel is exercised by its owner-aboard, Magnus Sundstrom, but the Travellers will have the opportunity to emerge as the most critical members of the crew (even if they are not the ship's chief officers) and make the big decisions of the campaign.

A trading voyage, even without covert intelligence-gathering or other adventures along the way, requires boldness and quick wits. A crewmember or mission expert who does nothing but their contracted job will be a huge disappointment to their colleagues. Mission members are expected to seize opportunities – or create them – and find additional ways to contribute to success for everyone's benefit. It is not hard to find a good negotiator or chief engineer but one who can be relied upon to create new opportunities or wring extra value out of the mission will be highly sought after by those putting together a crew for other missions and enjoy the respect and even adulation of their peers.

Magnus Sundstrom, the ship's owner-aboard, intends to handle most of the trade along the way himself but he is willing to give the Travellers leeway to negotiate a deal with some of the goods aboard. He also intends to buy local goods or speculative cargoes in the ports the ship passes through, trading them further down the line. Even if the Travellers are not directly involved in trade, they may be sent to investigate markets, meet with potential clients and carry out supporting activities that do not directly involve the purchase and sale of goods.

The Referee should note that a trading cruise like *Skandersvik* is very different to the activities of a small Free Trader wandering around the starports, picking up what small cargoes it can. Sundstrom is able to take a long view and deal in quantities that a small ship simply cannot. Indeed, the space taken up by containers of light machinery aboard *Skander* could be used to land a small trade ship with room to spare. This is big business and it is handled differently to tramp-trading.

The most important difference between this voyage and a typical small-ship cruise is accountability. The Travellers and their patron are accountable to business interests and political figures back home in the Sword Worlds and their actions have consequences beyond their own safety and well-being. Travellers who try to solve every problem by shooting holes in it will not only find a robust response from local authorities but they will also cause a diplomatic incident that will have repercussions when they return home. Travellers mindful of the long term outcomes of their actions have opportunities to profit in more than financial ways; those who seek only short term expediency may get themselves into severe trouble.

The Referee should also note that although the ultimate goal of the cruise is to make money, *Skandersvik* is about much more than rolls on trade charts. Indeed, the Travellers may choose to have nothing to do with the ship's mercantile activities if such things do not interest them. The adventure is about the expedition and challenges to overcome along the way. It is a chance for Travellers to experience what it is to be a Sword Worlder. Those who embrace the culture and values of these people will get more out of *Skandersvik* than someone who sees it as merely a set of episodic adventures.



OVERVIEW

Skandersvik is divided into three chapters, although there may be additional side trips and misadventures along the way.

In Chapter 1, *Freikorps Skander*, the Travellers leave Narsil aboard *Skander* and transit through Darrian space to the spinward edge of the sector. They are tasked with gathering intelligence data along the way, leading to brushes with local authorities and possibly foreign intelligence operatives. On the world of Bularia the Travellers are caught in the middle of a complex and violent situation; an uprising in the outback has caused what amounts to a civil war, trapping some of the Travellers' contacts in a combat zone. An interfering Imperial captain tries to prevent the Travellers from helping their friends.

In Chapter 2, *The Bowman Deception*, the Travellers undertake trading operations along the Bowman Arm of the Spinward Main. This ultimately leads them to Bowman itself, where they hear tales of a downed Sword Worlds ship on Nirton. Investigating it requires slipping through the Imperial blockade of Nirton and searching a wreck that has remained undisturbed for the past five

centuries. There, the Travellers find evidence shedding new light on the fate of one of the Sword Worlds' greatest and most tragic heroes.

In Chapter 3, *The Lunion Shield*, the Travellers continue their trading exploits during a transit of the Imperial systems unofficially known as the Lunion Shield Worlds. Attempts to gather information on Imperial dispositions in the region stir raiders who decide *Skander* is a prize too rich to pass up. If the Travellers can overcome this final obstacle they will be able to claim the rewards from their voyage.

SETTING UP

In order to begin the campaign the Travellers need to be at Narsil and be the sort of people who would go on a trading voyage aboard a Sword Worlds ship. The simplest way to do this is to play Sword Worlder Travellers, although there still needs to be a reason for them to be aboard *Skander*. Perhaps the reputation of the mission patron for winning riches and glory out among the stars has attracted the Travellers. To a Sword Worlder, participation in a successful voyage is more than profitable; it establishes a professional and personal reputation that can have benefits for years to come. The money is not unwelcome, either.

If the campaign is to be run as a one-off then why the Travellers are at Narsil does not really matter, however if *Skandersvik* is to be run as part of an ongoing game then the Referee needs to work a reason into the storyline. Perhaps the Travellers have other reasons to go on the mission. They may be friends or relatives of someone among the crew or feel bound by duty or honour to take part. They might be assigned by their employers, such as an observer from a world government or an intelligence operative working on behalf of the Confederation. Such personnel must pull their weight of course; there is no room for idle passengers aboard a merchant ship.

The default opening to the campaign is as follows: The merchant cruiser *Skander* is outfitting at Narsil, for a cruise to spinward-rimward lasting several months. Details of the forthcoming mission, publicised under the heading *Skandersvik*, have not been made apparent. This is entirely normal, since most such missions involve an element of opportunism and discretion. The overall aim is clear: *Skander* is a merchant cruiser, armed well enough to take care of herself, heading out to engage in speculative trade and deal-making on the worlds she visits and her owner expects to come home with a hold full of valuables.

Skander's owner is also the mission patron. He is Magnus Sundstrom, a well-known and highly respected merchant captain. His association with the mission is assurance of good planning and bold execution, and normally there would be intense competition to fill available berths aboard his vessel. However, *Skander* has gained a reputation as an unlucky ship. She was apparently bought by Sundstrom at a knock-down price after a string of misadventures ruined both the finances and reputation of her previous owner. A rumour that *Skander* has been badly damaged and repaired on the cheap has caused some of the best candidates to withdraw.

To young, ambitious Sword Worlders this is a good thing, as it gives less experienced crewmembers a chance to ship out with the near-legendary Magnus Sundstrom. Competition was indeed fierce but the quality of applicants lower than expected. Some were signed up only to be found unsuitable and dropped from the mission. Others quit after a few days – before even leaving port. That would make it even harder for them to

get other berths but in the meantime it opened doors for the Travellers. And so they are here, ready to board the merchant cruiser *Skander* for a career-making voyage... or perhaps with some other purpose in mind.

Due to the nature of the campaign it is not possible to present a complete list of crewmembers. Instead, a set of names and features has been provided, along with more detailed descriptions of four crewmembers. Once it is known what roles the Travellers will be taking aboard *Skander*, the Referee should assign these other identities to characters the Travellers will work or interact with. So, if a Traveller signs on as the power systems chief, identities should be assigned to the chief engineer and some of the engineering team. If none of the Travellers are in the deck team, there is no real need to assign identities there unless one of the team emerges as an interesting character along the way. Some identities should be reserved and assigned as the Travellers' relationship with their crewmates develops.

By way of example, the Travellers might be only peripherally aware of a member of a different shift until he is praised for good work by the captain at dinner, gets blind drunk celebrating and has to be rescued from a storeroom he has unaccountably managed to get stuck in. The Travellers will learn this crewmember's name (in other words, an identity is assigned) and might interact with him later in a different... or infuriatingly similar... context. Identities can be used in this way to flesh out crew as needed, without trying to keep track of 50 detailed characters the Travellers might never interact with during the entire campaign.

HANDOUTS

There are two handouts at the back of this book, which can be photocopied, printed out from the ebook edition, or downloaded from our web site.

Both should be made available to the Travellers before any adventures begin, especially if they have not read the *Sword Worlds* sourcebook. These handouts briefly outline the nature of the Sword Worlds and the people who come from them, as well as a little history on Grand Admiral Denisov, one of the most famous Sword Worlders who ever lived.

MERCHANT CRUISER **SKANDER**

The merchant cruiser *Skander* is built on a medium freighter hull, with a layer of crystaliron armour to provide protection from light weapons. The central blocky cylinder of the hull is straddled slightly aft of amidships by a distinctive 'saddle' containing some of the ship's systems and most of its cargo capacity. The lower decks of the saddle and the hull in between are taken up with cargo space, with a docking port on each side of the ship for a standard 80-ton Sword Worlds cargo shuttle or other combination of craft totalling 80 tons. At the fore end of the saddle on each side is a small missile bay.

The topmost deck of the saddle projects above the level of the main deck and contains the 'mercantile centre' of the ship. This includes a conference/briefing room, luxury cabins for the owner-aboard and a favoured guest, high cabins for senior officers and important passengers and some additional living and recreation space for the crew. The remainder of the crew are accommodated on the main deck forward of the saddle. Fore of this is the bridge and command spaces; aft is the engineering and drive section.

As with many ships intended for long cruises, *Skander* is equipped with workshops, medical facilities and a brig. She is also well-armed for a merchant ship.

In addition to the two missile bays there is a primary battery of four particle barbettes along the top of the saddle, backed up by four batteries of five dual pulse laser turrets, arranged on the flanks of the main hull forward and aft of the saddle. Twelve individual turrets are scattered across the hull, each mounting a sandcaster and pair of beam lasers for point defence.

Skander is by no means a combat ship, although she could function as an effective raider and her cargo bay could be converted to carry gunboats. She primarily defends herself by deterring attack and would normally run from threats behind a salvo of missiles. Enemy vessels can be engaged at range with missiles and particle accelerators, with lasers primarily used against fast small craft.

When *Skander* is on the ground she can open the large cargo doors in the sides and aft surface of the saddle, enabling cargoes to be rapidly moved in and out. On some variant vessels the central part of the cargo bay is used for other purposes, leaving the two main cargo areas available. They may or may not be connected by a transfer corridor.



MERCHANT CRUISER *SKANDER*

XX

TL12		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	4,000 tons, Close Structure	—	180
Armour	4 (Crystaliron)	200	36
M-Drive	Thrust 2	80	160
J-Drive	Jump-2	205	307.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power: 2,700	180	180
Fuel Tanks	Jump-2, 20 weeks of operation	890	—
Bridge		60	20
Computer	Core/50	—	60
Sensors	Civilian	1	3
Weapons	Small Missile Bays x2	100	24
	Particle Barbettes x4	20	32
	Dual Turrets (pulse lasers) x20	20	50
	Triple Turrets (beam lasers x2, sandcaster) x12	12	27
Ammunition	Missile Storage (288 missiles)	24	—
	Sandcaster Storage (240 canisters)	12	—
Systems	Docking Space (80 tons) x2	176	44
	Repair Drones	40	8
	Cargo Crane	7.5	7.5
	Armoury	4	1
	Medical Bay	4	2
	Brig	4	0.25
	Briefing Room	4	0.5
	Workshop	12	1.8
	Fuel Processor (400 tons/day)	20	1
	UNREP System	20	10
Software	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre/O	—	—
Staterooms	Luxury x2	20	3
	High x6	36	4.8
	Standard x48	192	24
Common Areas		80	8
Cargo		1576.	—

TOTAL: MCR 1195.35

1,760

HULL POINTS



CREW

CAPTAIN, PILOT,
ASTROGATOR, ENGINEERS X13,
MAINTENANCE X4, MEDIC,
GUNNERS X16, STEWARDS
X2, ADMINISTRATORS X4,
OFFICER

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr99613/month

• • • • •

PURCHASE COST

MCr1195.35

POWER REQUIREMENTS

800

BASIC SHIP
SYSTEMS

800

JUMP
DRIVE

800

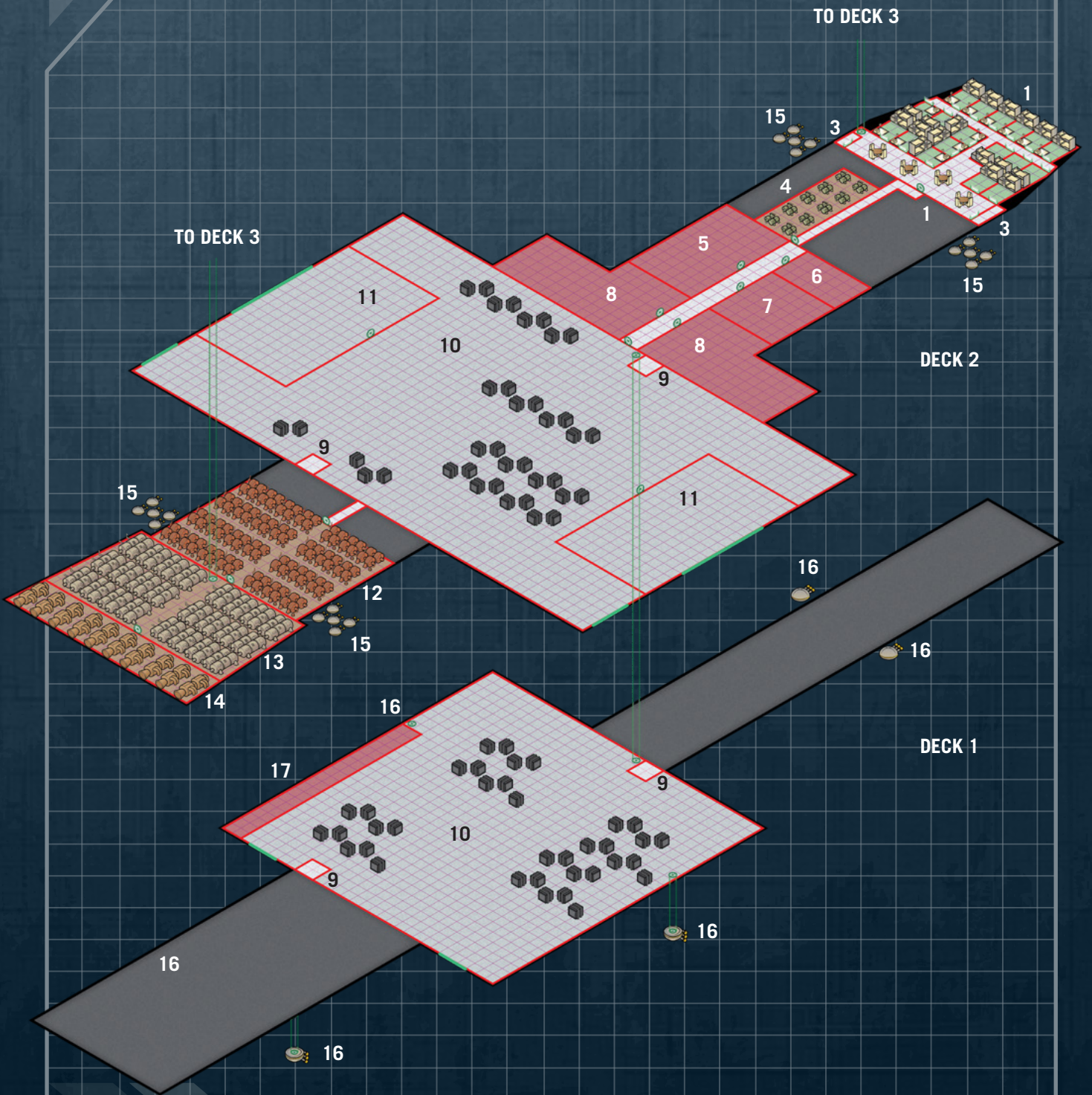
MANOEUVRE
DRIVE

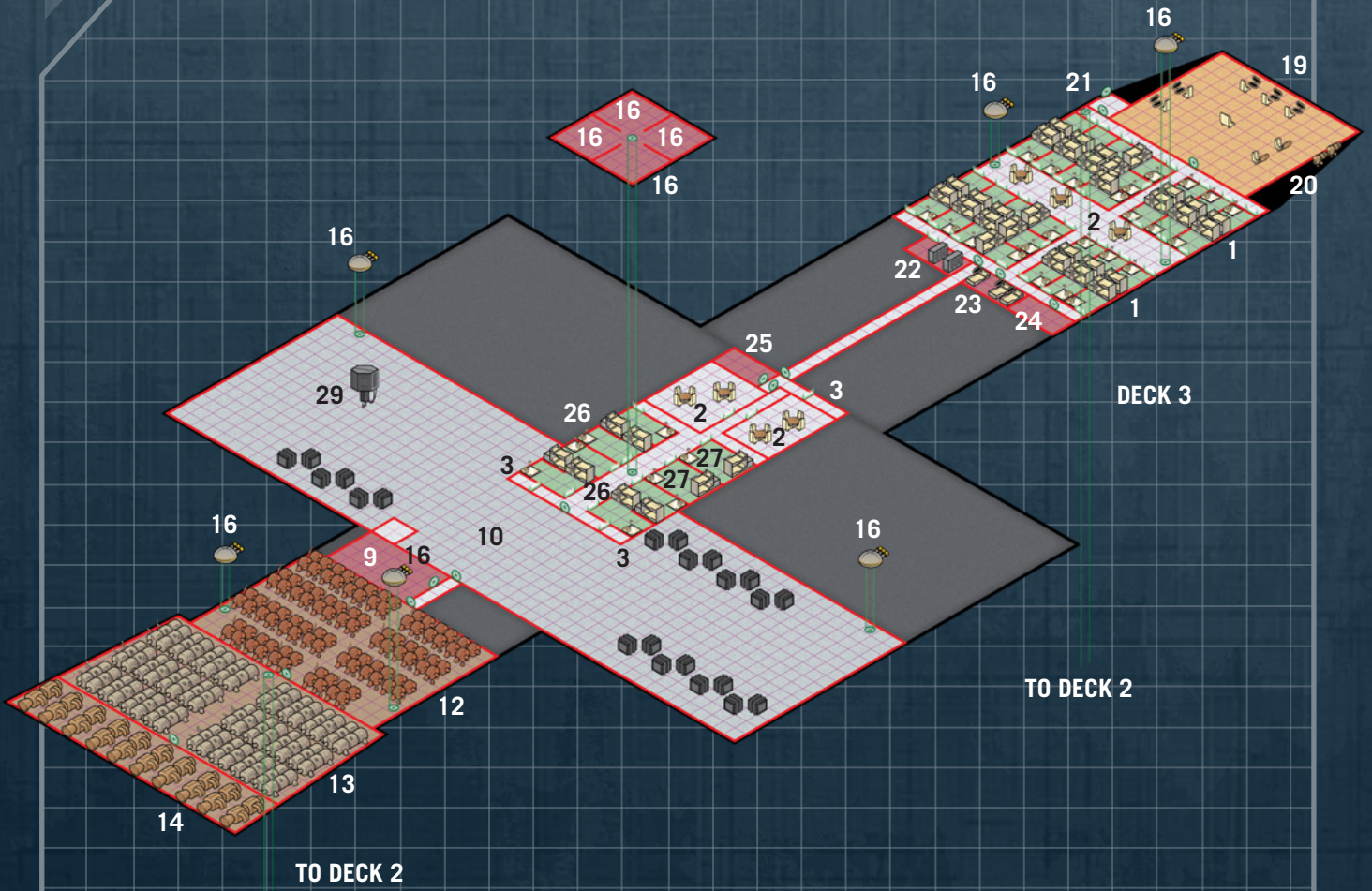
1

SENSORS

358

WEAPONS





LEGEND

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Staterooms | 16. Triple Turret |
| 2. Common Area | 17. UNREP System |
| 3. Storage Space | 18. Particle Barbette |
| 4. Fuel Processor | 19. Bridge |
| 5. Repair Drones | 20. Sensors |
| 6. Sandcaster Storage | 21. Air Lock |
| 7. Missile Storage | 22. Armoury |
| 8. Missile Bay | 23. Medical Bay |
| 9. Lift | 24. Brig |
| 10. Cargo Hold | 25. Briefing Room |
| 11. Docking Space | 26. High Staterooms |
| 12. Power Plant | 27. Luxury Stateroom |
| 13. Jump Drive | 28. Workshop |
| 14. Manoeuvre Drive | 29. Cargo Crane |
| 15. Dual Turret | |

Skander can be operated by quite a small group of key personnel but for extended operations she needs a full crew. It is always desirable to have multiskilled personnel aboard and in the case of an armed merchant cruiser it is essential. A significant proportion of the crew are gunnery-qualified but are not 'gunners' as such. That is, they are multiskilled individuals who support other segments of the crew most of the time, manning weapons when needed.

The crew is divided along conventional lines into 'flight', 'engineering' and 'operations' branches, each led by a specialist officer. All three branches answer to the first officer, who in return reports to the captain. The owner-aboard has authority over the captain in terms of the mission but decisions regarding the safety or operation of the ship rest with the captain.

The department heads are also the senior officers of the crew. Rank is not as formal as a navy ship and the overall command structure is relatively flat. Command devolves through the department heads in their roles as second, third and fourth officers. These are the senior officers of the ship, below whom are team leaders usually known as 'chief' of whatever team they lead. Below them are team members, usually referred to as hands or by a specific title associated with their field of expertise. Hands answer to their team leader, who answers to the officer responsible for that department.

Many tasks are filled on an as-needed basis. For example, some of the deck hands are qualified to operate the ship's weaponry and report to gunnery control stations when necessary. Others commonly assist the stewards or maintenance teams or have basic medical training and support the ship's doctor. Overall, the seniority of an individual can be rated 0–7, with the

most senior crewmember present normally expected to take charge in an emergency. However, rank aboard a ship like this is fluid. It is possible for an engineering-qualified deck hand to be suddenly elevated to the rank of chief engineer, if the owner and captain agree this is for the best, or for an unskilled crewmember to emerge as an effective leader and end up in charge of a team – officially or otherwise.

The *Skander* Personnel table gives an indication of the number of personnel fulfilling a given role and their desirable skillset. Additional skills are always welcome and gaps may be filled by an assistant or different crewmember at need. For example it is not really necessary for command officers to be capable of astrogating the ship but additional astrogators should be available among the crew in case something happens to the astrogating officer. On the other hand, there is a limit to how many people can be carried aboard; multiple specialists for a single role is a luxury. The answer is a multiskilled crew with specialists who can also cover someone else's post at need.

The **Command Staff** comprises the owner-aboard, captain and first officer. It is desirable that the captain and/or first officer be capable of astrogation tasks. The command staff consists of three personnel.

Flight Division is commanded by the astrogating officer and includes the ship's chief pilot and assistants plus bridge watchstanders and shuttle pilots. It is highly desirable to maintain a sensor watch and have a qualified pilot on the bridge whenever the ship is not in jump or port. Flight branch consists of nine personnel.

Operations Division is commanded by the operations officer and subdivided into three teams. The purser's team (by tradition referred to as the Purser's Department but this is unofficial) deals with financial, logistical and medical matters, and includes expert legal and administrative personnel plus the ship's doctor. Stewards run the galley and ensure the crew get regular meals on every watch and also look after guests or important passengers. The deck team are generalists who assist with maintenance, cleaning and cargo handling as well as providing security and manning some of the ship's weapons at need. The gunnery team spend most of their time assisting other divisions but maintain the ship's weaponry for use at need. Operations Division consists of 26 personnel.

Engineering Division is commanded by the engineering officer. It is subdivided into four teams each specialising in power, jump drive, manoeuvre drive or life support and general technical functions. Engineering division comprises 13 personnel.

Skander Ranks

SENIORITY	POSITION
0	Owner-Aboard
1	Captain
2	First Officer
3	Department Head (Flight, Operations, Engineering in order of seniority)
4	Team Leader
5	Expert Personnel
6	Technical or high-skilled personnel
7	Generalist or low-skilled personnel

Skander Personnel

Seniority	Branch	Position	Desirable Skills	Notes	Expected Complement
0	Command	Owner-Aboard	Advocate, Broker, Carouse, Diplomat, Persuade	Owner of the ship and leader of the mission	1
1	Command	Captain	Astrogation, Leader, Tactics	Commanding officer of the ship	1
2	Command	First Officer	Astrogation, Leader, Tactics	Executive officer of the ship	1
3	Flight	Astrogating Officer/Second Officer	Astrogation, Leader	Commander of the Flight department	1
5	Flight	Chief Pilot	Electronics (sensors), Pilot	Senior pilot	1
6	Flight	Pilot	Electronics (sensors), Pilot	Assistant pilots specialising in large-ship manoeuvring	2
6	Flight	Shuttle Pilot	Electronics (sensors), Pilot	Shuttle pilots	2
5	Flight	Bridge Chief	Electronics (comms), Electronics (sensors)	Leader of the bridge watchstanders	1
6	Flight	Bridge Hand	Electronics (comms), Electronics (sensors)	Bridge watchstanders, sensors and comms operators	2
3	Operations	Operations Officer/Third Officer	Admin, Leader	Commander of the Operations department, the most diverse segment of the crew	1
4	Operations	Purser	Admin, Broker, Carouse, Diplomacy, Persuade	Accounting, logistics and negotiation	1
5	Operations (Purser)	Administrator (Legal)	Advocate	Legal advisor to the purser and command crew	1
5	Operations (Purser)	Administrator (Financial)	Admin	Accounting and financial control	1
6	Operations (Purser)	Senior Steward	Steward	Leads the food-preparation and related logistics team	1
7	Operations (Purser)	Steward	Steward	Food preparation and care of guests	2
5	Operations (Purser)	Ship's Doctor	Medic	Medical assistance and preventative actions	1
4	Operations (Deck)	Deck Chief	Gun Combat, Jack-of-all-Trades, Leader, Mechanic, Melee	In overall charge of the multiskilled deck hands	1
7	Operations (Deck)	Deck Hand	Gun Combat, Jack-of-all-Trades, Mechanic, Melee	Multiskilled deck hands	6



Skander Personnel (Continued)

Seniority	Branch	Position	Desirable Skills	Notes	Expected Complement
4	Operations (Gunnery)	Gunnery Chief	Gunner, Electronics (sensors)	In overall charge of the gunnery teams	1
6	Operations (Gunnery)	Missile Gunner/Technician	Gunner, Electronics (sensors)	Missile Bay operators	2
6	Operations (Gunnery)	Particle Gunner	Gunner, Electronics (sensors)	Particle Barbette operators	2
6	Operations (Gunnery)	Beam Gunner	Gunner, Electronics (sensors)	Beam and defensive turret operators	6
3	Engineering	Engineering Officer/Fourth Officer	Engineer	In overall command of all engineering operations	1
4	Engineering	Powerplant Chief	Engineer (power)	Specialist in charge of power systems	1
6	Engineering	Drive Hand	Engineer (power)	Powerplant technician	2
4	Engineering	Jump Chief	Engineer (j-drive)	Specialist in charge of jump drive	1
6	Engineering	Drive Hand	Engineer (j-drive)	Jump drive technician	2
4	Engineering	Manoeuvre Chief	Engineer (m-drive)	Specialist in charge of manoeuvre drive	1
6	Engineering	Drive Hand	Engineer (m-drive)	Manoeuvre drive technician	2
4	Engineering	Technical Chief	Engineer (life support)	Specialist in charge of maintenance and lift support systems	1
6	Engineering	Drive Hand	Engineer (life support)	Maintenance and life support technician	2

Additional Personnel may be carried, including additional specialists or generalists, or perhaps brokers and other mercantile functionaries. Nominal crew complement is 51 without these additional personnel, although the final number may vary if some jobs are covered by multiskilled personnel or extra capability is desired in some area. As a general rule every crewmember must be able to do his own job and assist with someone else's. Skills such as Mechanic, Electronics, Medic and Vacc Suit are desirable for all crewmembers, although the more critical a person's function the less emphasis will be placed on peripheral skills.

LIFE ABOARD *SKANDER*

The ideal atmosphere aboard a ship like *Skander* is relaxed-but-efficient. Superiors and skilled peers must be respected but leadership is exercised through example rather than regulations. The officer in command of a division will often work alongside subordinates, demonstrating the skills that make them worthy of their rank.

The ship's routine is divided into three watches of eight standard hours' duration. Each is commanded by an officer, although they will normally get on with their own job during 'their' watch unless called to deal with a problem elsewhere. The three watches are designated Flight, Operations and Technical. Individual personnel may be transferred between watches from time-to-time but wherever possible effective teams are kept together.

During routine operations such as when in jump or on a long transit to port the watches rotate, with the command team joining a watch from time-to-time or as needed. By preference, significant tasks such as recalibration of the bridge controls would be performed during that division's watch, with the best personnel assigned to that watch's standing team. In an emergency or significant occasion, such as entering port under difficult conditions, the whole crew will be on duty.

Life will quickly settle into a routine. There is much to do aboard a ship like *Skander* but with good planning and effective teamwork there is no rush unless something has gone wrong. Conditions are generally agreeable; the food is good and the ship well equipped.

The command crew generally eat with the crew and are seen around rather than being aloof and distant figures. Over-familiarity will get the Travellers into trouble but the senior officers and Sundstrom himself consider themselves part of the crew. Occasionally, a couple of crewmembers might be invited to dine with the captain or owner (or both) in private. This is a great honour,

normally reserved for those who have distinguished themselves, but it is also an opportunity to gauge the mood of the crew. Forthright opinions are encouraged and a disagreement over dinner is not considered in any way a breach of protocol providing the crewmember continues to obey their orders.

Overall, *Skander* is a happy ship for those who respect their peers and superiors. The Travellers (or other personnel) might alienate some of the crew by acting like jerks but if they do their jobs well and treat others fairly they should have no problems. The Referee can make as much or as little of interactions aboard the ship as seems appropriate. It may be that the cruise might become more about roleplaying aboard ship than having adventures planetside, or quite the opposite with weeks in jump simply glossed over as routine.

WEAPONRY AND EQUIPMENT

Following standard practice, officers are permitted (and expected) to have a sidearm in their cabin for emergencies and arm themselves when on duty in situations where the ship is threatened. All other weapons are stowed in the armoury or emergency lockers. Travellers can bring their personal weapons aboard, subject to the same rules as everyone else, but will not be permitted to bring heavy military equipment such as battle dress or fusion guns.

Skander carries sufficient personal armament for her security needs. Sidearms, batons and shotguns are issued when shipboard security is an issue or when it is deemed necessary to have armed guards on the cargo doors during loading or unloading in dubious ports. There are also a few rifles and carbines in the armoury, just in case they are needed. *The Sword Worlds* sourcebook contains information on typical Sword Worlder weaponry but standard equipment is also suitable.

Equipment for planetside operations is also modest. There are cold weather and tainted-atmosphere kits for all crewmembers, with a number of spare vacc suits. Potential crewmembers who presented themselves without a vacc suit would be considered questionable but those who provided a good reason for not possessing a suit were still considered on condition they bought one with their hiring bonus. Thus everyone on board has a suit, with spares for contingencies.

The ship is well supplied with tools and general equipment and fully stocked with spares. The mission has been planned by an experienced trader who knows the value of preparation. He is also aware of the importance of keeping track and looking after

equipment. The ship's administrative and logistics personnel are tasked with constantly updating the records and tracking down misplaced equipment. This may annoy less diligent Travellers but is necessary to ensure smooth shipboard operations. In an emergency the ability to locate the right equipment can be a matter of life and death, so it may be that the Travellers will come to be glad of the endless signing in and out of equipment and harassment by logisticians when they are lax about putting items back where they should be.

There are eight ground vehicles in the cargo bay, parked out of the way of cargo operations unless the hold is very full, and securely locked down in flight. Six vehicles are off-road pickup trucks and two are SUVs built on the same chassis. The vehicles are used for utility and liaison tasks when the ship is at a port without much in the way of transport systems. All are coloured a discreet dark grey with no insignia.

THE CREW

It is not desirable to present a full crew roster for *Skander*, especially since the Travellers may displace someone from their role. Instead, names and descriptions are provided for characters who can be assigned as needed. For example, if the Travellers are working alongside someone on a regular basis and get to know them, the Referee can assign one of the identities listed here to that crewmate. Another identity might be used for the ship's doctor if the Travellers interact with them frequently.

Within a 50-person crew, many members of *Skander's* complement are likely to be known to the Travellers as 'that big guy from Life Support', especially if assigned to a different watch or working in another part of the ship. Names and descriptions can be assigned to people the Travellers become familiar with and the remainder of the crew abstracted as needed.

Crew

Forename	Surname	Description
Ivarr	Mardh	Big and loud.
Asmund	Janson	Young and eager to prove himself.
Benedikt	Rapp	Quiet and thoughtful most of the time but occasionally prone to enthusiastic outbursts about whatever has caught his attention.
Greger	Strand	He drinks. Even by Sword Worlder standards he is a renowned drinker.
Villads	Hallmann	His clothes are always slightly awry and nothing seems to fit properly.
Sven	Forsberg	Meticulous, neat and careful.
Mats	Lofgren	Ambitious to the point of over-boldness.
Viktor	Nikvist	Prone to melancholy homesickness .
Fredrik	Vinter	Prone to sudden leaps of abstract thought that can create surprising solutions to a problem or distract him from the job at hand.
Nisse	Vangr	His grandfather was a famous yachtsman. His endless tales of boating exploits can be amusing but eventually become irritating.
Oskar	Abella	He likes to wrestle and constantly seeks opponents for a 'friendly' bout in the gym. He objects to anyone betting on the fights but they do anyway.
Augusst	Kron	Certain that his distant ancestors were jarls of somewhere or other. He is convinced that one day he will trace his family tree far enough back to inherit riches.
Hiv	Rasmussen	Prone to severe headaches just after jump emergence but still loves space travel.
Sofija	Norling	Has a chip on her shoulder and insists on outperforming males at everything.
Hillevi	Tjader	Outlawed on Joyeuse as the result of a duel .
Jannike	Rask	She is from Gram and therefore better than everyone who is not.

Note that there are a few female crewmembers, women who have assumed a 'male' role. Some may feel they have something to prove but most are confident in their abilities and expect to be treated the same as a male colleague doing the same job. Travellers who are patronising or protective towards their female colleagues will annoy them immensely and may attract the displeasure of male crewmembers too. In Sword Worlds society a woman who has assumed a male role and is performing to an appropriate standard is a colleague to be respected just like anyone else fulfilling that role. Many males will challenge patronising behaviour not because they are protective of women but because these colleagues have proven they are worthy of being treated as equals. Disrespect towards anyone is offensive to most Sword Worlders and it is respect, not chauvinism, at work here.

The names and descriptions on the Crew table do not need to necessarily be used together. Variants on the same description can be used multiple times. Adding 'son' or 'dottir' to a forename can create a family name. There are enough Sven Svenssons in the Sword Worlds that the name has become an equivalent to John Doe and is sometimes used for a 'John Bull' type character representing the virtues of the Sword Worlds population.

Additional Characters

As with the characters before, the Referee can assign these individuals to any shipboard position or role. Ideally, they should be in a position to interact with the Travellers often enough to become known to them.

Lukas Sorensen: Lukas is an experienced spacer in his mid-40s. Whilst not an outstanding example of anything in particular he is unflappable and respected as a good man to have at your side. Lukas is also the ship's self-appointed skald. He composes epic poems about the doings of the crew, some of them hilariously mundane, and recites them with deep gravitas as if recounting the deeds of ancient gods and heroes. His rendition of *The Trials of Karl the Drive Hand*, a 30-minute epic during which the hapless Karl tries to eat his breakfast in between alerts, alarms and can-you-justs, can reduce the entire crew to hysterics. Not surprisingly, Lukas is a popular crewmate but has upset a few of his colleagues by reminding them of mistakes they regret.

Anna Makinen: Anna is around 55 and can make even a greasy coverall seem elegant. She is quietly competent and, if not unfriendly, sufficiently reserved to have no real friends aboard. She never speaks about her past, other than the ships she has served on, and is the subject of rumours about a personal tragedy. She

considers anyone asking about her past to be rudely prying and bluntly tells them to desist. Those who respect her wishes find her an agreeable workmate but not a likeable one.

Lars Kanerva: Lars is an ambitious young man on his first cruise and might be described as a bit of a Magnus Sundstrom fanboy. He grew up on tales of epic interstellar voyages and is sure this cruise will establish his reputation as a reliable and effective crewmember. He dreams (and talks... and talks) of earning enough to buy his own trading ship someday. It is known that Lars has worked in other industries before, although he is cagey about exactly what he did and where. There is nothing sinister about this, he simply prefers to keep his unimpressive first jobs in factories and as a delivery driver out of the conversation. Lars has a Holmgang sword – a basket-hilted broadsword used in formal duelling – in the armoury and likes to wear it when on security detail. The sword is an affectation he thinks lends him an air of the dashing adventurer, which his more mature colleagues find a bit silly.

Kurt Ahvass: Kurt is a nondescript sort of individual; competent and agreeable but with a tendency to fade into the background when alongside more boisterous companions. Indeed, those with an eye for such things may realise that Kurt is a 'grey man', an individual adept at not being noticed. This is for good reason; he is a naval intelligence operative sent along to obtain whatever data he can. He and Magnus Sundstrom know one another's agenda and are willing to cooperate most of the time, although Magnus does not officially recognise Kurt as anything other than one of his crew. If the Travellers figure out what Kurt is, he will openly admit it unless they have done something to make him suspicious of them. Kurt will then try to co-opt the Travellers to assist him with his mission, which will not offend Magnus unless they neglect their duties as a result or start producing information that contradicts his own opinions.

Interacting with the Crew

The Travellers will be working alongside the crew on a daily basis but for the most part will see the same few workmates. They might even get to the end of the cruise without interacting with several of the crew, if their duty stations are far apart. The occasional greeting whilst passing in the breakfast area, or an errand into another part of the ship, might be the only contact these individuals have with the Travellers. If the Travellers (or some of their crewmates) are of a suspicious mindset they may begin to question the actions of other crewmembers. Enmities and friendships might be formed among those they interact with.

The ship's senior crew will be watching their subordinates and assessing them on a constant basis. If the Travellers are senior officers, they will be expected to do this. Good work will be rewarded with recognition, which might be nothing more than a few words or something more formal like an announcement of commendation over a meal. Crewmembers who feel they are being treated fairly and recognised for their efforts will, in general, be happy; those who feel they are being ignored or that the officers are playing favourites will become disaffected.

Long weeks in jump could allow minor incidents to escalate out of control. A petty rivalry might become a feud between two groups of friends or an unintended insult might cause a friendship to go cold. The crew are not childish but they are proud. They will resent someone who receives undeserved praise or rewards as much as they will despise an officer who does not recognise their hard work. On the other hand, the mood of the crew is not hard to gauge most of the time. Crewmembers will tend to speak highly of respected comrades and officers they consider worthy.

The Travellers may become caught up in the internal politics of the crew or might contribute to it. If they are deceitful, lazy or otherwise cause their colleagues to lose respect for them, they will know about it. At first this will manifest as a lack of friendliness and unwillingness to help out but if they do not get the message they might end up being told straight out that they are letting their crewmates down. Those that persist might be discreetly 'corrected' by some of the more aggressive crewmembers. One result of this is that some internal problems are self-correcting – there are expectations and often it is the crew themselves who ensure that everyone lives up to them.

The Travellers will need to be mindful of the fact that they are expected to pull their weight and play fair. If they do not they will find the voyage can be very long for those who are despised by their crewmates. If a hint is needed, one of the crew might leave the ship in a foreign port, with word quickly going around that they were a layabout, a thief or some other sort of undesirable. Hopefully the Travellers will get the message or be the sort of people who earn positive comment and never encounter the displeasure of proud, hardworking but intolerant people.

TRADE GOODS AND CARGO

Skander leaves port carrying a mixed cargo of trade goods. The exact composition can be amended by the Referee, but Magnus Sundstrom has a plan to make money in both the long and short term from the mission. He also wants to create an appetite for Sword Worlds goods and, ideally, a reliance upon them among backwater worlds of the region. To this end he is willing to sell trivial amounts of an item or supply goods at a loss if he thinks this will be useful in the long term but is determined to come home with an immediate profit. His status (and ego) would suffer if the mission made a loss. This might prompt him to make the odd side trip in order to make extra money.

Skander thus does not have to sell everything at a profit, nor does she need to make money at any given port. She will carry local freight in spare hold space to increase her profits, no matter by how little. However, Magnus Sundstrom has never returned from a voyage without being able to open his cargo doors and show off tangible riches. He will buy and sell along the way – or assign Travellers to do it for him – with an eye to impressing the public back at Narsil with the contents of his hold and accountants with the long-term deals he has made. He remains mindful, of course, of his other purpose but his reputation is based on profits from voyages like these. He will not neglect that.

At the point of departure from Narsil, *Skander's* cargo is a mix of items likely to be popular on mid-tech worlds and some high-value goods that could be sold anywhere.

Common Raw Materials (TL10): *Skander* carries 400 tons of useful but not especially valuable materials. This is mostly highly purity ingots of common metals such as iron, copper and nickel as well as chemicals used in mid-tech industrial processes. Sundstrom intends to use these as samples of what Sword Worlds ships can provide, persuading local industries that it may be cheaper and easier to buy high-quality materials than to obtain poorer quality local versions. The goods can of course also be sold on the open market.

Common Electronics (TL10): *Skander* carries 100 tons of common electronic systems, mostly communications equipment useful for small businesses, remote farmsteads and small communities. Self-contained, simple-to-use business and general-purpose computer systems are also included, all interoperable with the communications systems. Sundstrom intends to provide these systems to a government or corporate body, ideally creating a dependence on Sword Worlds technology in the local area.



Common Industrial Goods (TL10): *Skander* is carrying 400 tons of light machinery, fabrication equipment and spares for it. Sundstrom hopes to sell not just the equipment but the possibility of using it to create pockets of local industry. These can be kept supplied with spares and equipment on contracts he will set up, creating income for the buyer as well as Sundstrom. As with everything else, he is willing to just sell them but long-term possibilities are never far from his mind.

Common Manufactured Goods (TL10): *Skander* carries 400 tons of general manufactured goods. These include hard-wearing working clothes and formal dress that is mass-produced but to a far higher standard than a mid-tech world could manage. Protective clothing includes items like gloves made of advanced materials that harden under impact to protect the wearer's hand yet remain soft and pliable the rest of the time. There are also tools and appliances, all geared to better productivity or a higher quality of life. Sundstrom is not pushing frippery on the people of the region, he is offering them items that will truly bring a benefit... because he knows this will generate a desire for more.

Medical Supplies (TL10): *Skander* carries 100 tons of common medical supplies. This is a mix of pharmaceuticals and machinery for producing them, medical instruments and electronic equipment.

Luxury Goods (TL10): *Skander* carries 100 tons of luxury goods ranging from decorative items to luxury ground cars. Sundstrom expects to break up some shipments and use them as gifts rather than selling them, although he does foresee lucrative sales of fine wines and spirits by the container load.

Samples (TL10): There are around 30 tons of assorted goods in converted shipping containers. These have been set up so the contents can be accessed without unloading the whole container. Samples include items from the main cargoes but also household and industrial robots, vehicles and all manner of items Sundstrom thinks someone will need or want on one of the planets his ship visits.

Currency: *Skander's* strong rooms contain large quantities of hard cash and precious metals used as a medium of exchange in the region. Some transactions will be electronic but Sundstrom expects to have to use cash for most of his dealings. Cash might also be used to develop informants along the way.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The following information is for the use of the Referee. How much of it is made available to the Travellers, and in what manner, is for the Referee to decide. Much of this data is commonly known or available through data terminals, info feeds to Travellers' comms and so forth. However, the commonly available version may be incomplete, dumbed-down, or wildly inaccurate for all manner of reasons. The Referee has the whole story; if the Travellers want accurate information they may have to search for it or use inventive means.

SKANDERSVIK

On ancient Terra, a 'vik' was an expedition. The term Vikings was used erroneously to apply to the Norwegian, Swedish and Danish people in general but in fact was only applicable to those currently engaged in a raiding or trading expedition. Whilst most modern Sword Worlders would laugh in the face of someone calling them Vikings, the mission itself merits the title Skandersvik, or 'the expedition of *Skander*'.

The personnel of the mission are Sword Worlders, with a strong sense of personal honour and respect. Failing to show proper respect to a fellow crewmember or superior will cause friction and perhaps ostracism. There are other considerations as a result of this attitude; all merchant ships have a crew hierarchy and requirements to obey orders and carry out duties properly but to Sword Worlders there is an additional sense that by signing on for the mission a Traveller has pledged their honour to do so. Someone who is disobedient or lazy has not just breached regulations; they have failed to do what they say they would do. This means disgrace even if the Traveller manages to lawyer their way out of formal punishment.

The Referee should remember that those involved in Skandersvik are proud to be there and honoured to stand in the company of their peers. Everyone benefits from successful completion of the mission and even if one crewmember dislikes another they are bound by common loyalty to the ship, its crew and the mission leader.

Salaries for all mission members are the same, from senior officers to deck hands. Everyone receives Cr2500 upon signing on and the guarantee of the same upon returning to port, on top of all other payments. Monthly salary is Cr1000 in return for fulfilling the duties of an

assigned position and whatever else the mission may require. It is all but unthinkable that a crewmember would wilfully fail to take necessary actions but in exceptional circumstances a member of the mission might forfeit their pay. The damage to their personal reputation and future work prospects would be far more significant in the longer term.

At the end of the mission, 5% of the profit is equally divided among all crewmembers (and the families of anyone lost during the mission) with another 5% assigned to the most worthy personnel in a manner decided by a vote among the crew. Normally this would mean most of the crew would receive a variable bonus depending on the opinion of their peers but it is possible that the two or three people who saved everyone else from disaster might get the whole pot.

MAGNUS SUNDSTROM

Magnus Sundstrom is a highly successful merchant captain; everyone knows this. He is not a celebrity in the sense of being followed around by photographers but is highly respected both as a starship operator and a reliable, honest man. He has featured in several advertising campaigns, mostly playing on his reputation and trustworthiness, and is occasionally a guest on current-affairs shows.

There are those who wonder why Sundstrom has launched this expedition. He is comfortably retired and well established as a pillar of the local community. If asked, he would normally reply that 'it should be enough for you that I have,' and refuse to discuss the matter further. Speculation that he needs money seems to be unfounded, so the usual explanation is that he is launching the mission because he wants to; he misses the life of an interstellar trader and wants to make one last cruise before finally settling down.

This is partly true but Sundstrom has a second agenda. He has for some time been quietly but persistently critical of the Confederation Navy's intelligence apparatus, believing that the Imperial/Darrian threat to the rimward side of the Confederation is much greater than the official estimates. He had personally funded

and launched this mission to prove the intelligence community – or more specifically those members of it who have the temerity to disagree with him – wrong.

The degree of ego and self-importance this implies says much about Magnus Sundstrom. Here is a decent and honest man but a proud and stubborn one. He is prepared to back up his opinion with a hugely expensive interstellar voyage and has set himself the task of not only obtaining proof of his theories but also coming home with a respectable profit – and doing it whilst keeping mission personnel safe. He is prepared to take risks but has a deep respect for anyone willing to venture out on a mission like this; a respect that if returned will make him a lifelong friend to anyone who follows him. Crossing him or impeding any part of his self-appointed mission will result in enmity of equal intensity.

Magnus Sundstrom is qualified to handle various aspects of the mission, from negotiation to astrogation. However, his role this time is as owner-aboard. He expects subordinates to deal with the details whilst he observes the big picture. This may make him something of a distant figure during much of the mission but the Travellers would be well advised not to forget he is in charge.

The mission brief is made plain for everyone when they sign on:

Skander will conduct a trading cruise with the primary goal of short and long-term profit. Cargo will be traded and deals set up to provide more. In addition, the mission is intended to gather information on traffic density, starport quality and naval ship movements in the systems visited. Any and all other information likely to be useful to the Confederation is to be gathered and presented to the designated personnel aboard *Skander*.

Sundstrom is openly stating to his crew that the mission's secondary goal is information gathering. This is commonplace on such voyages and will surprise no-one. He does not mention that he intends to conduct specific intelligence-related tasks along the way but most crewmembers will realise this is possible. Merchant cruises of this sort have been used to gather information for generations. Indeed, it might be a surprise if Sundstrom did not intend to undertake some kind of intelligence-related operation along the way.

PLAYING OUT THE MISSION

Skander will go where Magnus Sundstrom decides she will go. He is open to ideas and suggestions, although will expect a reasoned argument based upon projections

and at least moderately credible data. In short, he will not change his mind about the progress of the mission just because a Traveller wants him to but if he is presented with a well thought-out or otherwise highly convincing argument he will give it due consideration.

The upshot of this is that the Travellers do have some ability to change the course of the mission but for the most part will have to go where Sundstrom wants them to. Once they arrive, however, the Travellers will have considerable latitude to carry out the mission. Sundstrom actively encourages his crew to make decisions, take (calculated) risks and wring the most out of the voyage they can through boldness and initiative. He does not take kindly to stupid risks or ill-thought-out schemes, however. He wants a crew of entrepreneurs, not gamblers.

The crew will not be informed of Sundstrom's decisions until he wants them to know. He is open about matters such as the next destination and the requirement to obtain useful intelligence to present when the ship gets home but some of his plans will remain secret. He expects his crew to trust him and follow without hesitation wherever he leads. In return, he trusts them to do their utmost to make the mission a success. If the Travellers are the sort of people Sundstrom thinks they are – forthright, hard-working and brave – then this will work very well. If there is dissent among the crew, however, the possibility for disaster is considerable.

It is possible to play through *Freikorps Skander* as a series of incidents, make a few skill checks and collect the rewards but that is not the intent of the adventure. The Referee is presented with a framework that can be embellished in any way that seems desirable. It may be that the internal politics of the crew becomes a focus, with the Travellers trying to outwit rivals or discredit them to take over their posts aboard *Skander*.

The Referee is encouraged to flesh out the cruise with little details rather than rushing to the climax. *Skandersvik* is about the experience of adventuring aboard a Sword Worlds merchant cruiser, so the Travellers should *experience* it. The Referee should treat incidents in ports along the way, especially early in the cruise, as a chance for the Travellers to find their feet. Interactions with the crew in between these incidents will add to the overall adventure and make a threat to the ship's company matter more to the Travellers.

Handled well, these incidents-along-the-way will immerse the Travellers to the point where questions of reward and gain become irrelevant. Their actions will be directed by a desire to help comrades or leave a rival floundering so they can profit from his discomfiture.

Travellers who spend the voyage sitting in their cabins waiting to make skill checks will lose out on the richness of experience gained from getting involved.

A certain kind of Traveller might decide it would be a good idea to mutiny or even try to steal the ship. Sundstrom has sensible precautions in place, such as lockouts on the control systems that must be periodically reset, but he is not paranoid. Such actions are exceedingly uncommon aboard Sword Worlds ships, since service is a matter of personal honour and integrity, as well as obedience to a chain of command. Travellers who challenge Sundstrom without good reason will face ostracism and ruin when they go home. If they were to somehow steal the ship or carry out equally reprehensible actions the Travellers would never be able to return to the Sword Worlds.

Game Focus

It is not necessary or desirable to make every skill check for the crew of *Skander*. Instead, much of the time the ship and her crew will be driven by the needs of the plot, with the Travellers taking centre stage whenever something important happens. This does not have to be a key ship function. For example, if the Travellers are rescuing wounded personnel from a damaged compartment as the ship comes in to land, the game should focus on what the Travellers are doing, with the actions of the ship serving as a backdrop.

In such a situation, the Referee should make an abstract skill check for the crewmembers carrying out tasks elsewhere and resolve the Travellers' actions normally. The crew is reasonably skilled, so DM+2 can be assumed on abstracted checks. The abstracted check will indicate how rough the landing is, which will in turn feed into the Travellers' situation. The Travellers should never be put in a non-survivable situation without causing it themselves but abstracted checks can be used to determine whether the Travellers have new problems to solve and might create an opportunity for promotion if a crewmember is thought to be incompetent.

Referees wishing to resolve incidents during the voyage in a more detailed whole-crew manner may wish to use the system presented in the *Naval Campaigns Handbook*, from the *Element Class Cruisers: Shipbuilder's Blueprints* box set but this is by no means necessary. The mission is a backdrop to the Travellers' adventures and the focus should be on their actions.

Trade and the Travellers

Skander leaves Narsil in the Sword Worlds Confederation carrying a mixed cargo of trade goods and will conduct trade operations along the way. If the Travellers want to

keep track of the cargo and conduct detailed trade they can do so but *Skander's* owner-aboard has bigger plans for at least some of his cargo. He is hoping to create a demand for Sword Worlds goods – especially those from his own suppliers – in order to develop a reliable trade run, so at least some of *Skander's* commercial activity will be conducted by Magnus Sundstrom himself. It is not necessary to keep detailed track of these transactions since they are happening in the background to the adventure.

If the Travellers like trading and have proven themselves capable, Sundstrom might allocate them part of his cargo and some hold space, turning them loose to make as much profit as they can. The Referee can tailor the amounts of cargo and space to the abilities of the Travellers, keeping the book-keeping manageable whilst allowing the Travellers to indulge their mercantile instincts. They do not own this cargo or the profits from it, of course. Funds go into the ship's coffers, with the Travellers receiving their guaranteed share as well as a percentage voted on by their crewmates. If they pull off a great deal that benefits everyone, it is likely they will be given a large proportion of the discretionary percentage at the end of the mission.

If the Travellers do not want to get involved in trade, this aspect of the mission can be abstracted within the storyline. However, if they do then Sundstrom will assign them up to 250 tons of cargo – of mixed types and not more than 20% of the tonnage of any given item. Alternatively, he will give them access to as much as 250 tons of cargo space and a seeder fund of MCr1. The Travellers are free to use this space and money as they please, on the understanding that they are acting on behalf of the ship and crew. If they make a loss, so be it. If they make a profit they will benefit everyone and will be rewarded at mission end.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Information gathering is a routine part of the mission and everyone is expected to participate to the best of their ability. For the most part this is routine and forms a part of normal shipboard activities; publicly accessible logs of ships passing through a port are downloaded and vessels detected on a normal sensor sweep are recorded and investigated – typically by looking them up in starship listings and comparing their current activities to what is known historically about them.

Any run planetside is a chance to pick up information in the form of rumours, chance sightings, loose talk from portside officials and the like. Even something

as apparently trivial as spotting an unusually large proportion of Imperial Navy or Megacorporate shipping line uniforms in port can help build a picture of what is going on. The Travellers are expected to take at least a passive part in this information gathering aspect of the cruise and have the chance to do more.

Each port of call on the cruise has an Intelligence Value associated with it. This in general correlates to the quality of the port as a better starport typically sees more mercantile and naval traffic, and is strategically important because of its economic significance. High or low population and Tech Levels can further modify this value, as can miscellaneous factors such as position on or off the main interstellar shipping lanes.

If the Travellers convince Magnus Sundstrom to visit additional worlds, the Intelligence Values table can be used to determine the worth of a world. The lowest possible value is 0, indicating no meaningful information can be obtained there.

Intelligence Values

Factor	Intelligence Value
Starport E	2
Starport D	4
Starport C	8
Starport B	12
Starport A	16
Population 3–	–1
Population 7+	+1
TL 4–	–2
TL 6–	–1
TL9+	+2
TL11+	+4
Industrial World	+3
Other Factors	+/- up to 3 at the Referee's discretion.

The Referee must keep a running total of intelligence gathered by the Travellers. It can be assumed that the rest of the crew do a competent but uninspired job of information gathering but it is the actions of the Travellers that will determine whether or not Sundstrom achieves his goal of presenting Naval Intelligence with a strong case for an increased threat in the region.

The Intelligence Value associated with a given world is the maximum the Travellers can obtain there. Actually getting it depends on what they do.

Travellers who simply ignore intelligence gathering, or forget about it, add no meaningful data to the total for that world. Those who make a token effort – for example ‘we keep our eyes and ears open for anything useful’ – can pick up a little data but for the Travellers to really succeed in this part of the mission they need to make effort. Each significant action they take permits a relevant skill check and each skill check grants 1D points of intelligence up to the maximum possible for that world. Skills checks will be Average (8+) unless there is some reason intelligence gathering has become unusually easy or difficult. For example, if there have been a lot of pirate attacks in the region people might be more cagey about where their ships are going or coming from, increasing the difficulty of the skill check to obtain useful information.

Only one check for each type of activity can be made in any given port, unless the Travellers make an extended stay. In that case, one check can be made each week.

General Observation (Streetwise): General observation includes observing ships, personnel and trade patterns as well as asking the right questions of the right people in a way that does not make them suspiciously clam up. Hanging out in spacers’ bars and listening to the talk – accents and speech patterns as well as the actual words – can yield useful information.

Starport Records (Admin): Most ports have publicly accessible records about what ships have come through, their declared cargo and flight plans. These can often be downloaded but may sometimes consist of written records in a notebook. Collating this data can provide a great deal of information, albeit of a routine nature.

Collation and Analysis (Investigate): Going through available information, comparing, cross-referencing and finding different ways to present it can often lead to useful conclusions. This is normally done when the ship is in transit between worlds and requires the Travellers to spend some of their free time on the task. Intelligence analysis could be turned into a social activity by clever Travellers, enlisting crewmembers to help over a few beers – although too much socialising and beer can result in questionable conclusions being drawn.

Other Actions (Various): The Travellers may come up with a more inventive way to obtain additional information, such as hacking starport computers for more details or trying to worm facts out of a particular official or ship crew. One such additional action can be carried out per week in a port.

If the Travellers do not manage to obtain all available intelligence during their stay, any potential is lost. The total points of intelligence they gain is added to the running total, to be evaluated at the end of the mission. The Referee should not allow these actions to become automatic or the subject of a routine 'intelligence gathering check' when entering port. The Travellers will need to actively seek out intelligence data which means spending time and effort on it. These actions might lead to minor adventures as the Travellers poke around or perhaps arouse suspicion by taking too much interest in fat cargo ships passing along the Bowman Arm. In short, the Travellers will benefit at the end of the mission from taking the time to carry out these information gathering actions and the Referee can use them to generate interesting incidents and the occasional misadventure.

TRAVELLER PERFORMANCE

How well the Travellers do on this mission might be measured differently by different people. If their own goal is to simply make money they might focus on mercantile activity and fail to meet the expectations of the crew or owner. To track the opinions of others, the Referee needs to keep track of two additional characteristics: Esteem and Satisfaction.

Esteem tracks how highly the Travellers are thought of by the rest of the crew. It is a guideline only; a high Esteem value suggests the Travellers are generally well thought of but there may be some among the crew who despise them as a result of incidents or interactions. Satisfaction indicates how pleased the mission patron is with their performance. Both begin at a value of Average.

Esteem and Satisfaction are tracked separately for each Traveller (and could be tracked for other crewmembers as well, if the Referee prefers). They provide a DM when interacting with the crew (Esteem) and with Magnus Sundstrom (Satisfaction) and will determine the Travellers' share of the final profits at the end of the mission. It is possible for someone well regarded by the crew to be picked to approach Sundstrom on their behalf about an important matter, only to fall foul of his low opinion of the Traveller.

The Check to Achieve column on the Esteem and Satisfaction table indicates the difficulty of a check to attain (or fall to) that level of Esteem or Satisfaction. It is relatively easy to change opinions in the mid-range but becoming a hero to the crew or Sundstrom's right-hand man is a lot more difficult. Likewise, extremely low opinions are difficult to cause and maintain, although there are those who could manage it.



Esteem and Satisfaction

Value	DM	Notes	Check to Achieve
Despised	-4	The Travellers are ostracised and/or in danger of being put off the ship at next planetfall.	Very Difficult (12+)
Very Poor	-3	The Travellers are a liability who weaken the ship's company considerably. Nobody wants to work with them.	Difficult (10+)
Poor	-2	The Travellers are seen as weak links but if they are apparently trying hard they are worth supporting and helping to improve.	Difficult (10+)
Below Average	-1	The Travellers are seen as underperforming a bit but within tolerable limits.	Average (8+)
Average	0	The Travellers are about as well thought-of as anyone else aboard the ship.	Average (8+)
Above Average	+1	The Travellers are well regarded but nothing out of the ordinary.	Average (8+)
Good	+2	The Travellers are seen as solid, dependable comrades who others come to for help.	Difficult (10+)
Very Good	+3	The Travellers are leaders among the crew whatever rank they hold and instrumental in the mission's success.	Difficult (10+)
Excellent	+4	The Travellers are considered little short of heroes among the crew and (almost) equals by Magnus Sundstrom.	Very Difficult (12+)

At the end of each episode, when the ship leaves a world, each Traveller has a chance to increase or decrease both Esteem and Satisfaction and there may be occasions where additional checks are made. All checks are simple 2D rolls, with no skill or characteristics applying. DMs may be applied in some situations, depending on the actions of the Travellers.

The Referee should evaluate the Travellers' actions according to the criteria of their crewmates and Sundstrom. Note that an Average opinion means the Travellers are well respected and considered worthy, expectations are high. Routinely doing a good job and making an effort to enhance the overall success of the mission is nothing out of the ordinary. Travellers will not be revered for living up to the high ideals of a Sword Worlder crew – that is an expectation and the Travellers are already receiving the credit due for doing so.

Crew Esteem: The crew respect hard work, reliability and courtesy to one's crewmates, so will think less of anyone who does not behave like this, no matter what their other achievements may be. Esteem can also be reduced for instances of apparent incompetence. Increasing crew Esteem requires going above and beyond normal expectations by solving problems for others or doing deeds that impress. Particularly impressive demonstrations of skill, such as landing a shuttle beautifully in a tiny space despite a gusty crosswind, might also increase Esteem.

Satisfaction: Magnus Sundstrom respects the same things as his crew but has different requirements. His Satisfaction with the Travellers can be reduced by over-familiarity and lack of respect, lack of initiative and effort and, of course, failure to carry out the tasks he assigns. His Satisfaction is increased by presenting good ideas or going to great lengths to make a plan work or by actions that improve either the intelligence gathering or commercial success of the mission. Merely conducting some trade is not enough but pulling off a really good deal might increase Satisfaction.

The Referee can keep track of each Traveller's eligibility for increase and decrease checks in each area with a simple tick or cross next to their name. It is possible to qualify for both. If so, all checks are rolled. It may be that a gaffe is offset by a success, or that the Traveller's Esteem (or Satisfaction) increases due to a passed check and is not decreased by a failed one. If something like that happens the Referee should interpret the outcome – in this case the Traveller's failing is outweighed by success in another endeavour.

Esteem and Satisfaction for a Traveller give DMs to interact with crewmates but can also be used to create roleplaying moments, such as accolades from Sundstrom over dinner one evening or the privilege of being assigned a complex and difficult task on his behalf.

For example, a Traveller with Average Esteem and Satisfaction impresses his colleagues by taking charge of a complex damage control situation and potentially

saving lives. The Referee decides this is well worth an Esteem increase check and rules that DM+2 applies since the Traveller's actions prevented injuries and deaths. However, he normally does not trouble himself to get involved with anything not specifically his job, which some of his colleagues resent. This is worth an Esteem reduction check with no DM. Both checks are Average difficulty. The Traveller passes the positive one and fails the negative, so the net effect is an increase of one level to Above Average Esteem. Some crewmembers have reservations about the Traveller but they know he can be relied upon in an emergency even if he is a bit lazy the rest of the time.

Magnus Sundstrom's Esteem is included in this and whilst he certainly thinks more highly of the Traveller as a crewmember this does not affect his Satisfaction with the Traveller as a force to drive the mission to success. Indeed, the Traveller's lackadaisical attitude to routine intelligence gathering and general operations is cause for a Satisfaction reduction check, which the Traveller unfortunately passes. As a result, Sundstrom now regards the Traveller with Below Average Satisfaction.

The Referee interprets this as meaning Sundstrom thinks the Traveller is reliable in a disaster but lacks initiative and drive – factors he needs when deciding who to trust with important missions. These attitudes will become apparent to the Traveller through

interactions with the crew or possibly a blunt instruction from Sundstrom to sort his attitude out and start acting like a team player.

SHIP ENCOUNTERS

In the course of the adventure the Travellers will pass through many ports and encounter various ships. Most are of no great consequence but some may pique the Travellers' interest or hide secrets they might uncover. The vessels on the Encountered Ships table are all standard designs and can be mentioned in passing by the Referee or used as the basis for more detailed encounters.

The Travellers may at first be inclined to believe there is something unusual about any ship mentioned by name. The Referee should allay this suspicion by frequently naming a ship that stands out in some way – perhaps for no other reason than being ahead in the docking priority queue. However, some of these ships are more than they seem. The others might have a story associated with them too, at the Referee's discretion. However, it is not necessary for every passing ship encounter to lead to an adventure, incident or fight.

With the exception of jump-1 ships, which will only be found on the Spinward Main, these vessels could be encountered at any point on the voyage. The Referee should ensure that *SJ-8901* and *Glisten Advantage* are sighted at some point, ideally before *Skander* enters the

Encountered Ships

Ship	Type	Notes
<i>Viitaki</i>	Far Trader	Typical trader plying the local spacelanes at her captain's discretion.
<i>Bowman Calypso</i>	Subsidised Merchant	Well-maintained commercial freight hauler.
<i>SJ-8901</i>	Scout/Courier	Ostensibly a private courier, acts as a scout for pirate groups.
<i>Irineraak</i>	Patrol Corvette	Imperial Navy patrol ship.
<i>Elum Kandarsii</i>	Far Trader	Operated by Kandarsii Shipping, a minor Imperial company.
<i>Pox Rox</i>	Seeker	Run-down seeker .
<i>Grand Empire of Stars</i>	Free Trader	Grandly named but poorly maintained free trader operating on the Bowman Arm.
<i>Goldseeker</i>	Subsidised Merchant	Yet another ship called <i>Goldseeker</i> , this one almost brand-new.
<i>Glisten Advantage</i>	Subsidised Liner	Privately operated liner.
<i>Wild Ponis</i>	Far Trader	Rather disreputable trade ship with a very high turnover in crew.

Bowman Arm of the Spinward Main. This ensures both ships have time to plausibly be at their later encounter points. Note that *Glisten Advantage* is capable of jump-3 and might be encountered more than once whilst retaining the ability to get ahead of *Skander*.

ADMIRAL DENISOV

Grand Admiral Denisov is a cultural hero to Sword Worlders, as well as a shining example of a tragic, stubborn hero. Denisov served with distinction in the Second Frontier War, finally choosing to ignore orders to surrender in favour of a hopeless last stand at Narsil. Afterward, the remnant of his force escaped and began raiding Imperial shipping. It is now known that Denisov had established a secret base in the Bowman system, from which he conducted raids in the years 621-628.

Heavily defeated at Mertactor, Denisov was forced to pull back to his base, which was located soon afterward. Imperial forces entered the Bowman system in force, bringing Denisov's critically damaged fleet to action. The admiral is widely assumed to have perished at Mertactor or Bowman and was never heard from afterward. It has been suggested that Denisov – perhaps badly injured – transferred to another ship and was not present for the final defeat. When the Travellers locate the wreck of *Vyalyk*, an old Sword Worlds warship downed on Nirton, they may wonder if they have found the ship Denisov escaped on. They may even have located his final resting place!

This is not the case; the remains of Admiral Denisov are not aboard *Vyalyk*. However, there are some clues as to his eventual fate. He was seriously wounded in action against a superior Imperial force at Mertactor but determined to continue the fight. After withdrawing what was left of his force to Bowman, Denisov ordered *Vyalyk* to detach from the fleet and head for a rendezvous point where he would inform the ships that had not been present at Mertactor to stay away. In so doing, Denisov seemed to be accepting his

inevitable defeat but at the same time ensuring some of his followers would remain at large – or at least not blunder into an Imperial trap at Bowman.

Denisov's body was never found among the wrecks of his ships. That is hardly conclusive; decompression and scattering of wreckage meant that many bodies were never found. The debate as to whether Admiral Denisov died at Bowman still goes on and to many Sword Worlders he is a semi-mythical 'once and future admiral' who – in the minds of his most fervent admirers at least – could still be alive in a low berth on some frozen moon. This rather far-fetched idea has been the subject of numerous works of fiction and is determinedly believed by the Denisov Lives! movement.

Evidence found aboard *Vyalyk* will prove that Denisov was present at Bowman when the Imperials arrived but there is some very interesting additional information; the identities of all of Denisov's surviving ships are recorded aboard *Vyalyk*. Two had been detached on independent missions. They met *Vyalyk* at the rendezvous and were warned against proceeding to the base at Bowman. All three then jumped to secondary rendezvous points to await any survivors. *Vyalyk* went to Nirton where she met her end. The fate of the other two ships remains unknown.

Denisov was alive when the Imperial force reached Bowman, orchestrating repairs on his remaining ships. All were heavily damaged before the action began. Imperial records show that all nine Sword Worlder ships at Bowman engaged in a manner that can only be described as a death-ride, closing to suicidally short ranges and refusing all demands to surrender even when unable to fight on.

Imperial records show 'all nine' Sword Worlder vessels destroyed – but *Vyalyk*'s log indicates there were 11 survivors of the defeat at Mertactor. With *Vyalyk* detached, this indicates there were ten vessels present at Bowman before the action. *Did Denisov survive the Battle of Bowman after all?*

VYALYK, VARSLAV-CLASS

At Nirton the Travellers will investigate the wreck of a downed Sword Worlds starship. This is *Vyalyk*, a 1,000-ton Varslav escort which was once part of Denisov's raiding force. Although predating modern Sword Worlds design philosophy by a large margin, it does show some features that would later develop into standard practice.

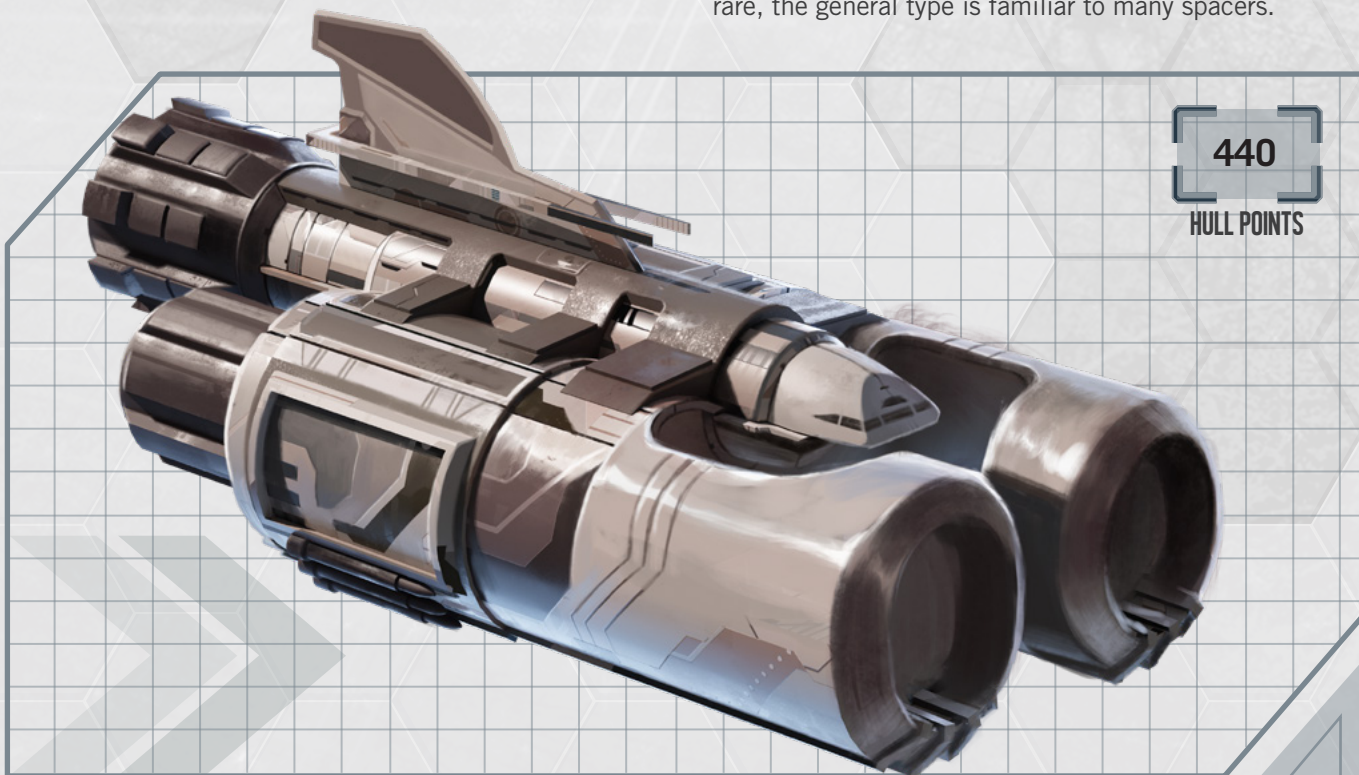
The primary hull is a two-deck, roughly cylindrical design, with the upper deck protruding ahead of the lower. Aft on the dorsal surface is a rounded 'fin' containing a docking station for up to 40 tons of small craft. Most access to the ship is made through this area. The main hull is built on two decks, with two cylindrical secondary hulls on the sides and offset to the ventral surface. The Varslav class was never intended to land on a planet but could, in theory, balance on its secondary hulls using them as oversized landing feet.

The upper main deck contains the bridge, located right forward, and 'officers' country' that consists of the captain's luxurious cabin, a small mess area and cabins for the senior crewmembers. The lower deck is mostly given over to engineering. The manoeuvre drive, most of the power plant machinery and the jump drive occupy much of this deck, along with workshops and utility spaces. Some of the ship's fuel is also stowed here. A secondary airlock at the front of the lower deck allows loading or personnel access.

The two secondary hulls each contain a small missile bay, a weapons control room and secondary power plant, along with missile magazines and the main fuel tanks. This design concept has been used at various times since the Varslav class was implemented, with the intention of protecting the main hull in the event the missile magazines or fuel tanks suffer an explosion.

The Varslav class is primarily a missile-armed ship. Its usual role was to protect heavier vessels by engaging incoming attackers before they could get into range. Its secondary armament of pulse laser turrets is dispersed over the hull rather than concentrated in batteries, useful for engaging multiple small targets such as fighters, gunboats and missiles but less effective against major warships. Despite this consideration, the Varslav class was successful. It was built in large numbers, with many examples surviving through several upgrades and refits.

The last vessels of this class were built in the Sword Worlds in the early 800s, although variants have occasionally been put together (with reduced jump capability) by the TL10 worlds of the Confederation as a low-cost patrol ship that did not come with strings attached from the TL12 shipyards of Gram or Sacnoth. The two 50-ton missile bays have sometimes been replaced with cargo holds or small craft hangars, creating a light patrol carrier design built under license outside the Sword Worlds. Thus whilst original Varslavs are very rare, the general type is familiar to many spacers.



440

HULL POINTS

SWORD WORLD ESCORT *VYAL YK*

VARSLAV-CLASS

TL11		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	1,000 tons, Close Structure	—	45
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 6	75	13.5
M-Drive	Thrust 3	30	60
J-Drive	Jump-2	55	82.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL8), Power: 800	80	40
Fuel Tanks	Jump-2 x2, 8 weeks of operation	416	—
Bridge		20	5
Computer	Computer/10	—	0.16
Sensors	Military	2	4.1
	Sensor Stations x4	4	2
Weapons	Small Missile Bays x2	100	24
	Dual Turrets (pulse lasers) x8	8	20
Ammunition	Missile Storage (288 missiles)	24	—
Systems	Docking Space (40 tons)	44	11
	Repair Drones	10	2
	Brig	4	0.25
	Armoury	4	1
	Medical Bay	4	2
	UNREP System	4	2
	Workshop	6	0.9
Software	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Fire Control/1	—	2
Staterooms	High x2	12	1.6
	Standard x18	72	9
Common Areas		24	2.4
Cargo		2	—

TOTAL: MCR 330.61

CREW

CAPTAIN, PILOTS X3,
ASTROGATOR,
GUNNERS X10,
ENGINEERS X5,
MAINTENANCE, STEWARD,
MEDIC, OFFICER

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr27551/month

•••••
PURCHASE COST
MCR330.61

POWER REQUIREMENTS

200

BASIC SHIP
SYSTEMS

300

MANOEUVRE
DRIVE

2

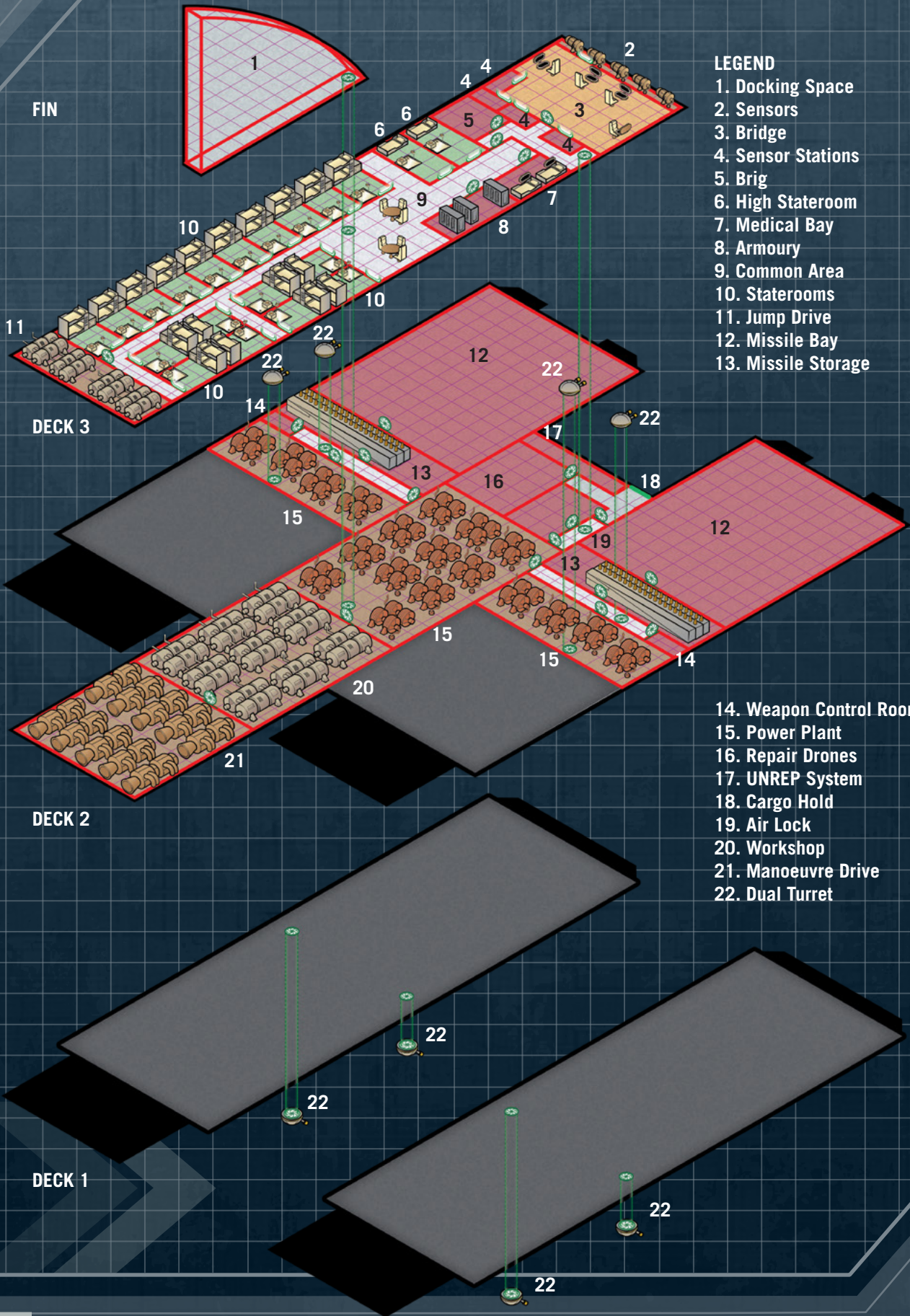
SENSORS

200

JUMP DRIVE

82

WEAPONS



- LEGEND**
- 1. Docking Space
 - 2. Sensors
 - 3. Bridge
 - 4. Sensor Stations
 - 5. Brig
 - 6. High Stateroom
 - 7. Medical Bay
 - 8. Armoury
 - 9. Common Area
 - 10. Staterooms
 - 11. Jump Drive
 - 12. Missile Bay
 - 13. Missile Storage

- 14. Weapon Control Room
- 15. Power Plant
- 16. Repair Drones
- 17. UNREP System
- 18. Cargo Hold
- 19. Air Lock
- 20. Workshop
- 21. Manoeuvre Drive
- 22. Dual Turret

THE PIRATE BAND

During *The Lunion Shield* the Travellers will encounter a band of pirates operating on both sides of the Imperial-Confederation border. Like other groups before them they have discovered that the lack of cooperation and information sharing between the Imperials and Sword Worlders assists in evading capture. The group uses temporary bases on outsystem worlds or gas giant moons, moving every few months. They have a small freighter for use as a transport, which is never taken into the vicinity of a mainworld as it is stolen and a couple of small vessels that normally serve as scouts.

One of these scouts is *SJ-8901*, an apparently legitimate scout/courier bought in damaged condition from the Scout Service and rebuilt as a private courier. Armed with a laser turret, *SJ-8901* offers secure transportation for small cargoes or a couple of passengers and has a good reputation. Unfortunately, this is merely a cover for its real purpose, which is to scout for potential targets or warn of increased naval presence in the region.

The group has been successful for two main reasons. One is the possession of a powerful vessel whose ability to destroy any small merchant ship tends to force rapid surrender. The other is the way the pirates operate; they do not take targets of opportunity but instead make carefully planned and targeted attacks using a variety of methods. Moving back and forth across the border and at times standing down for several months has also served to keep the authorities from reacting in a concerted manner. Indeed, it is only now beginning to become apparent that several apparently random disappearances of ships or isolated attacks across a region some 10 or so parsecs wide are all connected. Personnel from captured ships are usually transported to backwater worlds and released, delaying the inevitable day when the authorities realise what is going on. The pirates are aware they are pushing their luck and intend to relocate to a quieter region before a flood of naval vessels from the Confederation and Imperium descend upon their area of operations or intelligence agencies of the two powers begin sharing information.

The situation is further complicated by the fact the pirates have deals in place with groups on both sides of the border. They have allies among the less ethical merchants of various ports and are also connected with violent groups on both sides. Both the Imperium and the Sword Worlds have groups concerned about conflict

or actively wanting to start one. Presenting themselves as allies and providers of weaponry to both sides, the pirates have set up a nice cross-border trade, increasing demand for armament by creating fear with their raids or telling tales of a coming war. Some political figures on both sides of the border are supporting or at least turning a blind eye to the pirates in return for information – not all of which is true – and harassment of foreign shipping.

This was all very lucrative – and contributed to rising tensions in the region – but the bubble was going to burst sooner or later. The pirates decided to make one last big score and move on. Their intent was to take the liner *Glisten Advantage* but when they hear about *Skander* heading into the region, the pirates get greedy. Depending on the actions of the Travellers, that might be their downfall.

The pirates' main asset is the *Marqued Target*, a 1,200-ton raider. This vessel started life as a rugged prototype paramilitary transport vessel intended for mercenary work or commercial activity in highly dangerous regions. After passing through various hands she ended up as a pirate and raiding vessel, being modified in the process.

Hull form is a broad wedge, three decks high, with asymmetric projections forward at the top deck level. The longer of these contains the bridge and command area as well as accommodation for the senior crew, running back into the wedge. The other is shorter and has a fully glazed tip, allowing crewmembers to stand in a half-bubble and control loading and unloading activities.

The lower two decks originally contained larger cargo holds than they do today. Much of the hold space was repurposed for a craft hangar, entered from the rear of the ship, and barracks style accommodation for additional ground combat personnel. A brig and armoury were also added. A portion of the cargo bay still remains in its original function, accessed through doors at the front of the wedge.

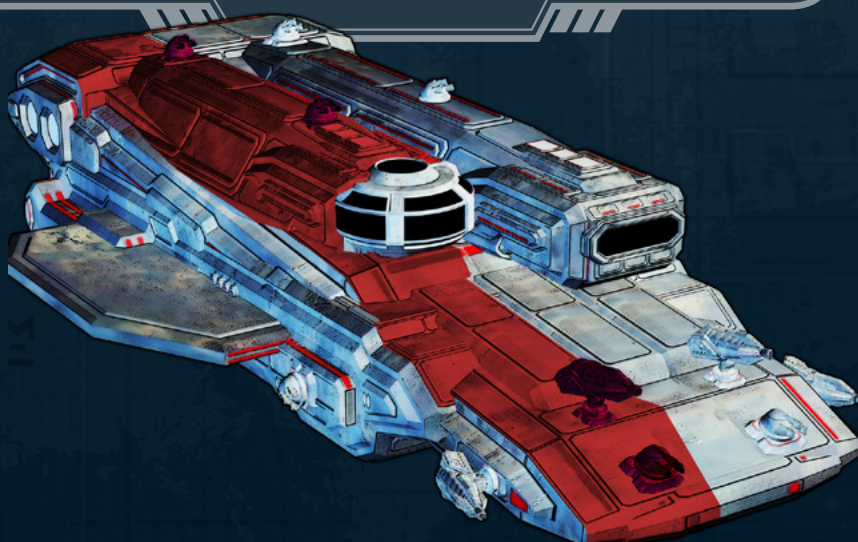
Primary armament is four large particle accelerator barbets, with laser turrets providing close-in defence and effective fire against smaller opponents. Although not a warship as such, *Marqued Target* is capable of undertaking escort or piracy suppression duties. This was part of her original remit along with secure transportation and mercenary support operations. It is not clear how many vessels of this type were ever built but it is unlikely the number was very large.

RAIDER MARQUED TARGET

XX

TL12		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	1,200 tons, Close Structure	—	54
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 6	90	16.2
M-Drive	Thrust 4	48	96
J-Drive	Jump-2	65	97.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power: 1,200	80	80
Fuel Tanks	Jump-2, 8 weeks of operation	256	—
Bridge		40	6
Computer	Computer/20	—	5
Sensors	Military	2	4.1
Weapons	Particle Barbettes x4	20	32
	Triple Turrets (pulse laser) x8	8	32
Systems	Hangar (50 tons)	100	20
	Repair Drones	12	2.4
	Brig	20	1.25
	Armoury	8	2
	Medical Bay	4	2
	Breaching Tube	3	3
Software	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Fire Control/1	—	2
Staterooms	Standard x24	96	12
	Barracks x24	48	2.4
Common Areas		36	3.6
Cargo		264	—

TOTAL: MCR 473.65



CREW

CAPTAIN, PILOT,
ASTROGATOR,
GUNNERS X12,
ENGINEERS X6,
MAINTENANCE,
MEDIC, OFFICER

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr39471/month

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PURCHASE COST
MCR473.65

POWER REQUIREMENTS

480
MANOEUVRE
DRIVE

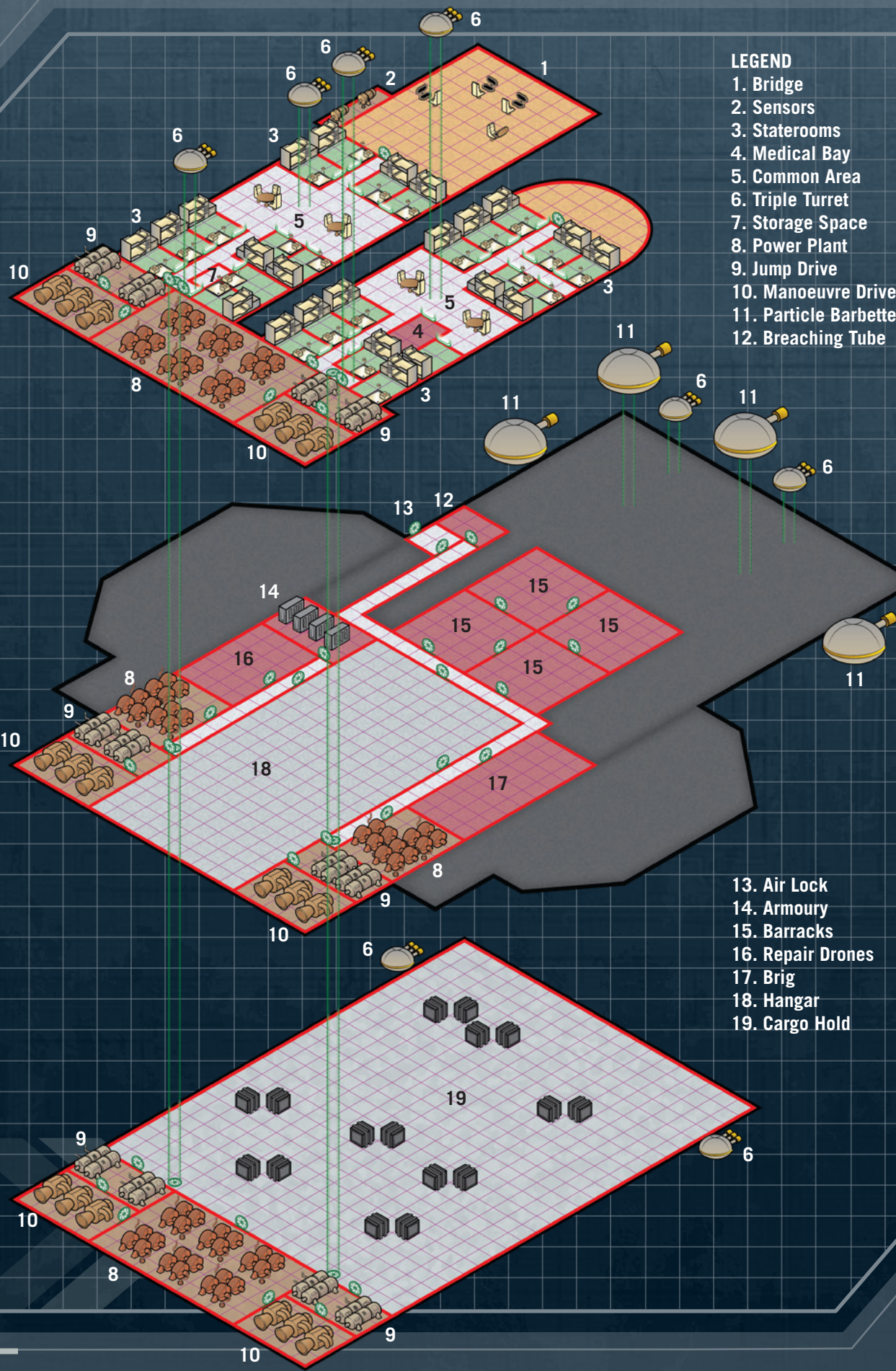
240
BASIC SHIP
SYSTEMS

240
JUMP DRIVE

2
SENSORS

164
WEAPONS

528
HULL POINTS



- LEGEND**
- 1. Bridge
 - 2. Sensors
 - 3. Staterooms
 - 4. Medical Bay
 - 5. Common Area
 - 6. Triple Turret
 - 7. Storage Space
 - 8. Power Plant
 - 9. Jump Drive
 - 10. Manoeuvre Drive
 - 11. Particle Barbette
 - 12. Breaching Tube

- 13. Air Lock
- 14. Armoury
- 15. Barracks
- 16. Repair Drones
- 17. Brig
- 18. Hangar
- 19. Cargo Hold

FREIKORPS SKANDER

Freikorps Skander covers the first segment of the cruise, from Narsil through the Darrian subsector, to Bularia. It can be treated as an episodic adventure, with incidents taking place at each world the ship visits. However, the voyage itself presents many opportunities for roleplaying and the occasional misadventure aboard ship. Interactions with the crew will establish characters the Travellers may come to care about or enmities that could complicate the adventure finale. Much depends on the play style and preferences of the Referee and players.

Similarly, it is up to the Travellers how much involvement they have in the running of the ship and its economic dealings. Some groups like to get involved in the details of trade and commerce, others are along for the adventures to be had. A general format to the mission is presented, with a default set of actions in each port. If the Travellers want to get involved they

can obtain permission from Magnus Sundstrom to try to make some deals and their efforts can be evaluated using the normal trade rules or played out as a minor adventure as they try to set up an agreement with local merchants. Alternatively, the Travellers might be busy with other matters whilst Magnus himself handles the trade. If so, they will learn about the results but will not be directly involved.

COMING ABOARD

The adventure assumes the Travellers have already completed the selection process for crewmembers and been accepted. *Skander* is outfitting for her voyage at Narsil Highport, where her crew have been directed to present themselves. Some may have met earlier or might know one another already but there is to a 'meet and greet' before the ship is formally boarded by her crew.



- Gas Giant
- Planet (dry)
- Planet (water present)
- Imperial Scout
- Way Station
- Secure System
- Amber Zone
- Imperium
- Darrian Space
- Sword Worlds Confederation
- Starport Class & Tech Level
- Imperial Naval Base
- Military Base/Garrison
- Other Naval Base

Travellers suitable for the role of officers will meet Magnus for a briefing the day before formal boarding. The venue is a conference suite in one of the many starport hotels. Magnus Sundstrom is business-like and polite rather than friendly. After reminding all present that they have agreed not to disclose details of the mission to anyone before departure, he outlines the mission brief:

Skander will leave Narsil on a jump-two transit to the worlds of the 'Kardin's Three' – a cluster of three systems in the rimward end of the Darrian subsector. Sundstrom plans to go way of Spume and Condaria, both relatively minor worlds. He does not expect trouble in either system. There are tensions but that is nothing new. The Darrians, he expects, will treat him and his crew politely enough and have no reason to doubt the ship's stated mission. Unless his crew starts something – which Sundstrom definitely does not want – there should be no problems on the transit. He does intend to do some trading in the ports he visits but Spume and Condaria are merely stepping stones to reach Kardin's Three – Kardin, Dorianna and Bularia. There, he intends to undertake a more detailed analysis of local trade conditions and set up long-term deals as well as trading whatever he can.

After Kardin's Three, Sundstrom intends to transit onto the Bowman Arm of the Spinward Main by way of Ucella in the Five Sisters, heading trailingward through District 268 into the Lunion Shield Worlds and eventually back into Confederation space at Biter. Trade will be conducted at his discretion along the way, with possible side trips to investigate opportunities or obtain useful information. If pressed on that point, he will freely admit to his officers that he is going to gather intelligence data of a military rather than commercial sort along the way. However, he fully intends the cruise to produce a profit overall and to implement deals that will permit follow-up cruises to carry goods to the end market. Officers will then be shown around the ship by Sundstrom himself and may move into their cabins at this time.

The following day, Sundstrom and his new officers repeat the process on a larger scale with the rest of the crew and after outlining the mission brief (he skips the part about naval intelligence gathering) the crew are invited to board their ship and assemble in the mess. There, a brief ceremony is held. Essentially, each crewmember pledges himself to the ship, the crew, and the mission – in that order – and swears to behave honourably throughout. Although a formality, this is a heartfelt occasion for most participants. Before, they were successful job applicants. Now, they are a crew.

Crewmembers move their possessions to their cabin, stow weapons in the armoury and begin pre-mission

inspections. Most importantly, the main reactor is brought online. *Skander* is now a functioning starship.

During the next 48 hours her crew will become familiar with their vessel and with one another. The ship is in excellent working order but this is her first voyage since purchase and refit so checks are conducted carefully. The Travellers are assigned to their watches and teams, and have a chance to get to know their closest associates. The Referee should pick a few names and descriptions and assign them to workmates of the Travellers. How these people get along with the Travellers may have a profound impact upon the mission.

Finally, it is time to leave dock. Magnus Sundstrom, the captain and first officer (who may be Travellers) tour the ship and formally ask the crew if they are ready. Once this ritual is complete, *Skander* slips out of dock and powers away from Narsil Highport. Her first task is to conduct basic drive and systems trials, then power up weapons and – after receiving clearance from the port authority – conduct firing trials. There may be a few glitches that need putting right but the ship is ready to commence her mission.

Entering jump for the first time in a new ship like this is a profound moment for most of the crew. Some try to be blasé about it, but there is a real feeling of anticipation aboard *Skander* as she enters jump. Her first destination is Spume.

THE DARRIAN SUBSECTOR

Darrian lies at the spinward edge of the Spinward Marches, entirely beyond the Imperial border. Indeed, Imperial presence in the region is relatively low due to the Sword Worlds Confederation lying between the two. The occasional Imperial ship passes through the rimward end of the subsector en route to Darrian space but otherwise encounters with Imperial ships are restricted to patrols out of the bases in the Five Sisters. Likewise, Sword Worlds activity in the area tends to be low, although there are moves towards creating a corridor from Sword Worlds space into the Foreven sector and beyond, by way of Ator and the cluster of worlds around Bularia.

Most of the worlds in the Darrian subsector are part of the Darrian Confederation, which is allied to the Imperium but generally charts its own course in interstellar politics. The Darrian civilisation is a remnant of its former glory; relics of TL16 are found on the Darrian homeworld though useable technology of the Darrian Confederation is comparable with that of the Imperium.

SPUME

C540200-A
Intelligence Value: 9

Spume is a minor possession of the Darrian Confederation. Its only population is a small enclave around the starport and a few tiny prospecting or mining outposts. The world's economy, such as it is, is based upon largely automated mineral extraction and income from the starport. This is more than would normally be expected, as Sword Worlds ships heading into Darrian space, and vice versa, usually go by way of Spume and Narsil.

The Darrian Confederation prefers to monitor traffic through Spume and discourages the use of gas giant refuelling by maintaining patrols at all three of the system's gas giants. Any ship attempting to bypass the starport is considered suspect and subject to an intensive board-and-search procedure. The Sword Worlds Confederation accepts this situation and encourages its captains to use the port openly in order to reduce tensions. Sometimes a Sword Worlds warship will be in the system on a 'goodwill' visit whose real purpose is to prevent an interstellar incident by ensuring Sword Worlds captains follow local procedures.

Skander emerges from jump at Spume more or less on schedule, with no major problems. She is promptly greeted by the port authority and soon afterward receives a courtesy message from a Darrian task force centred on a light cruiser currently patrolling the system. Some of the crew find the situation amusing; the Darrians

are making sure all visitors know there are naval ships around, so that *Skander* will not cause an incident that could lead to the war the Darrians are obviously terrified of. There is some truth in this statement, biased as it is.

Landing at Spume is not unduly difficult, although *Skander* is a large ship for the small downport. There are a couple of small traders on the pads but the port is otherwise quiet. If the Travellers are command or flight crew they may be the ones making skill checks to put the ship down smartly but otherwise the arrival is a plot element best abstracted with a single check. Sundstrom will not be impressed if his pilot embarrasses him by clonking the ship down heavily, which will send ripples through the crew. The Referee should keep in mind the possibility of this sort of incident whenever the crew does anything. An error or piece of negligence will have consequences for the crewmember or Traveller, which could lead to an opportunity to make the next landing instead of the designated chief pilot. Crewmembers will not be instantly fired for a mistake but underperforming will be noticed.

Since *Skander* is passing into the Darrian Confederation, customs checks need to be carried out. There is nothing untoward about the ship or its cargo; everything is properly documented, legal and above board. The Darrian customs staff are polite and efficient, and so long as nobody antagonises them the inspection will



go off smoothly. However, there are many in the Sword Worlds who are resentful or contemptuous towards Darrians and although efforts were made to weed out potential troublemakers it was always possible someone would cause an issue. The crew were warned not to do so and to be on the lookout for signs someone was about to rock the boat.

If the Travellers decide to cause a problem, the Referee must resolve the matter in whatever way makes sense. Sundstrom will be furious with anyone who compromises his mission in this manner; perpetrators will get one warning then be put off the ship. This might even be at a Darrian port. Assuming the Travellers are not inclined to be stupid, they may be able to stop someone else from making a gaffe. They will overhear a couple of crewmates muttering resentfully about the inspection and working themselves up to a confrontation.

How the Travellers deal with this is very much up to themselves. They could let it happen, which might be an attractive option if it is someone they dislike or want out of the way. An elegant solution might be to misdirect the troublemakers by giving them a job to do or asking them to help out somewhere the customs inspectors are not likely to go. Direct orders or an appeal to crew loyalty, presenting the inspection as unpalatable but necessary to eventual success, can all work.

The Referee can use any of the crew names and identities for potential troublemakers, creating later roleplaying possibilities if they resent the intervention or realise it was for the best. As with the landing, the Referee can make as much or as little as they like of any such incident. It is worth playing out at least some incidents however, as this establishes personalities among the crew and creates a greater level of immersion for the Travellers.

Skander will be in port at Spume for only 48 hours. There is little prospect for significant trade there, although the Travellers might want to see what the free traders have in their holds or if there is any significant cargo to be had. There is time for a little shore leave and on a voyage like this every opportunity to get out of the ship is a welcome one.

Unless they caused trouble with the inspection party the Travellers are given a 12-hour liberty pass to go 'ashore' and have some fun. There is a limit to how much of that is to be had in a small collection of domed buildings with a population of less than 400 but the port has a couple of bars that serve overpriced but acceptable drinks. Sword Worlds ships are not uncommon on Spume and Sword Worlds money is as readily accepted as any other.

If the Travellers want to try their hand at intelligence gathering they have several options. The port's register of ships detected in-system is not publicly accessible, although the record of vessels through the port itself is. The Travellers can get access for a fee of Cr20 and may be able to distract the port staff while one of their number covertly searches the database for more detailed information. Information can also be obtained from port staff in the form of unguarded remarks made over drinks or by talking to workers unconnected with the port who may remember ships coming and going.

The data to be obtained does not support Sundstrom's assertion that there is a major and imminent threat to the Sword Worlds. The usual naval patrols have been maintained for months without change and traffic has not greatly increased or decreased in that time. Of course, a naval build-up would not be apparent in a border starport, so this data is as Sundstrom thought it would be. The Travellers might expect him to be displeased if they present their findings to him but in reality Spume is of no consequence to him. The exercise of obtaining data was partly just-in-case and partly a practice run for later, more important, locations.

Spume presents opportunities for the Travellers to find their feet, so to speak, and figure out how to go about intelligence gathering whilst in port. Spume has a maximum Intelligence Value of 9, with 1D points obtained for each significant action. Consulting starport records and conducting general observations whilst socialising in the local bars might be sufficient to get all this intel, although the Travellers can come up with their own methods.

There are a couple of opportunities to alter Esteem and Satisfaction at Spume. If the Travellers cause trouble with the port authority or the boarding party Sundstrom's Satisfaction with them will automatically drop one category. If they fail to prevent someone else from causing a problem a check will be required to see if Satisfaction is lowered. There are few opportunities to increase Satisfaction, although inventive Travellers may do something impressive enough to merit a check.

Esteem will be risked if the Travellers handle potential troublemakers poorly, such as by causing a confrontation or giving direct orders. The latter will be seen as humiliating by the troublemakers and their friends and there may be hints the Travellers are Darrian-lovers. If the matter was handled in a manner that lets the troublemakers save face or politely pretend there was never a problem, everyone's ego remains intact and the Travellers qualify for a check to increase Esteem.

CONDARIA

E54779B-5 Ag Pi
Intelligence Value: 2

Although it lies just a parsec from the Darrian capital at Mire, Condaria is an independent world. With a thin, tainted atmosphere and plenty of water, Condaria has a primarily agricultural economy with most of the 90 million inhabitants dwelling in widely scattered farming towns. The population are overwhelmingly of Darrian extraction and have a very 'Darrian' culture. Much of the world's produce is shipped directly to Mire aboard large freighters. Magnus Sundstrom believes there is money to be made on Condaria and that a visit to the world is a possible opportunity for intelligence gathering as well as a stopover before heading rimward to Kardin.

Although Condaria is not part of the Darrian Confederation it is a location of interest for the Darrians and always has a naval presence in the system. As soon as *Skander* emerges from jump she is greeted by a corvette in orbit over the mainworld, with signals coming in from other ships patrolling the gas giants soon afterward. Sundstrom finds this amusing – the Darrians are making sure the visitors know their navy is present and correct, as he puts it.

Condaria lacks a proper starport or traffic control. By long tradition (and lack of either need or funds to do things differently) each major market town has a landing area and loading equipment for bulk grain and similar agricultural products. These are not starports, as such, and have no facilities other than the loading gantries. The main port is little better, although it does have a pipeline to a nearby lake from which water can be obtained. This is cracked into hydrogen fuel and oxygen by a visiting ship's own apparatus.

Despite these rather basic facilities, Sundstrom is sure he can strike a deal here. He directs the duty pilot to land *Skander* at the largest of Condaria's modest cities and the crew to prepare 'to put on a show'. This means smartly uniformed guards at the entrance to the cargo bay, a reception party ready to meet local merchants and show them around the ship and of course a tidy and smart ship to show them. A flurry of straightening and putting-away may be necessary. Amid this, Sundstrom begins putting together shore parties to head into town and look for opportunities.

The Travellers are given a slightly different task. They are to take one of the shuttles to the town of Ounarin and act as the ship's representatives there. If they do not have a pilot they will be assigned one. Either way, the Travellers' orders are to be seen and make a good impression, to seek out commercial opportunities and

obtain whatever information might be useful. Shore parties have considerable discretion and are permitted to treat their task as partially recreation time. They can call back to the ship if there is a deal in the offing but in most cases a beneficial transaction will be agreed without hesitation.

Ounarin is a short sub-orbital hop away. It is a typical 'grain town' of a few thousand people, surrounded by outlying farms. The landing area is little more than a concrete apron with a loading gantry at one end. There is no-one around and the equipment stands idle but the Travellers may see a grain truck arrive at one of the silos and offload its cargo.

The town does have a business office, used intermittently to oversee loading operations and any dealings that may be required such as signing over ownership of a cargo. By the time the Travellers reach the office a couple of officials – who act on behalf of the local farmers when necessary and run businesses in town the rest of the time – will be there to meet them. They have the usual questions about what ship the Travellers are from and their business on Condaria and will explain that there is only a small amount of grain in the silos at present. They normally sell to a regular ship from Mire but could make a deal if the price is right.

There is insufficient room aboard *Skander* for any worthwhile amount of low-value goods to be transported, so the Travellers will need to focus more on sales than purchases. They may be able to convince the locals to take delivery of some business and communications electronics. This will have little immediate benefit but may help the Sword Worlds open up a local market. Sundstrom will agree to part with a few units at loss-leading prices in the hope of creating a demand that can be fulfilled later.

The Travellers will also come across an opportunity. The locals have for many years relied on exports of bulk agricultural goods but this is a labour-intensive way of making a modest income. Recently experimentation has begun into high-quality spirits and fruit liquors. These have always been available but never in quantities worth exporting on the interstellar market. However, the situation is changing and a fledgling distilling group is seeking an offworld market. A flurry of inter-town calls results in an invitation to fly over to Reulei, a town around 600 kilometres away, to meet with representatives of the distillers.

If the Travellers accept, they will arrive to find the locals frantically putting the final touches to a presentation and sampling session – an occasion far more grand than the Travellers might have expected. They are presented with a vast array of goods to try – more than sufficient to induce inebriation, even if only small samples are taken. The quality and style of drinks on offer varies but overall there is potential here. Sundstrom will agree to the Travellers buying a cross-section or bulk order coming to no more than 10 tons, suggesting that they negotiate a good price in the morning after they sober up. He thinks it may be possible to find a good offworld market – perhaps even back home – for the distillers' products and negotiate a shipping contract.

The Travellers are treated as honoured guests by the locals, who want to get their business off the ground. Unless they make a serious gaffe, the Travellers should be able to arrange delivery of the samples to the landing ground and agree a fair price. The distillers ask for Cr30000 per ton but can be bargained down considerably. The price goes back up again if the Travellers start talking about exclusivity, however. The bargaining and arrangements are a roleplaying opportunity, with skills like Broker being obviously useful and others such as Diplomat or Admin allowing insight into likely marketing strategies.

The locals want this deal and are willing to drop their price considerably. This permits the Travellers to come back from their mission with something real and tangible and perhaps to impress Sundstrom with their acumen. This will incline him to assign the Travellers to operate independently later on in the mission, which will have important implications as events begin to unfold at Bularia.

Trading at Condaria produces at best a few minor sales of equipment and electronics. Sundstrom was not expecting any more than this. His intent was to assess the local markets and make some money if he could. He has seeded several towns with samples of his cargoes, hopefully creating a demand when the next ship comes through from Narsil. That, along with routine information about traffic patterns and port usage, is good enough for him. After a few days, *Skander* departs for Kardin.

Intelligence gathering will be limited and likewise there is no specific situation at Condaria that will affect crew Esteem. The Referee may choose to make a check to increase or decrease if the Travellers did something to affect the crew's opinions of them but there is no scripted event. Sundstrom's Satisfaction may be improved if the Travellers obtain a deal whilst they are on-planet. DM-2 applies if the Travellers required too much oversight, however. Sundstrom expects them to make things happen without calling him every few minutes for guidance.



KARDIN

E553123-6 Lo Po
Intelligence Value: 0

Kardin is a small, dry world with a thin atmosphere, populated by a handful of people. The world is habitable enough but has never been settled, at least not according to any official census. There may be moderate numbers of 'unofficial' settlers living on various parts of the planet but the only recognised population is a settlement of around 40 people living on an island in the Urganii Sea, a small but very salty body of water in the northern hemisphere.

The entire official population live around the rudimentary starport and mainly subsist by farming or providing cottage-industry support to the farmers. The occasional ship comes through en route to Roget via Bularia; this brings in a little offworld cash. For the most part however the population live fairly contented lives in their mid-tech community. New blood in the form of the occasional drifter does come in but the simple way of life on Kardin rarely changes.

Skander makes planetfall on Kardin largely as a refuelling stop. The shuttles are detached in orbit and sent to carry out a mapping survey of the planet. Sundstrom has no reason to believe anyone has built anything on Kardin since the last data was obtained but he wants any information he can get. The shuttles will land and rotate crews every few hours. Personnel aboard

them – including the Travellers – are authorised to land and collect samples of vegetation, rocks, water and anything else that might be of interest.

Water is taken on at the rudimentary landing area to be cracked into hydrogen and oxygen. Personnel are given a few hours to wander around the island and chat to the locals if they want. There is no business to be done here. However, Sundstrom expects his shore parties to find out from talkative locals about what ships have come through recently and similar routine data. There is little out of the ordinary about any of this.

It is always possible that a minor adventure could break out if someone decides to blow off steam by boating or swimming in the nearby sea or doing something else that might lead to trouble. If this does not happen, Skander will be climbing back to orbit after 36 hours on Kardin, collecting her shuttles soon after and heading out for Dorianna.

There is virtually no meaningful information to be obtained on Kardin and little chance to impress Sundstrom. The Travellers may become involved in an incident that affects Esteem or Satisfaction of course; much depends on what they choose to do.



DORANNIA

E42158A-8 Ni Po
Intelligence Value: 1

Dorannia is a 'rockball' world with too little water or air to be habitable. Nevertheless it is home to several hundred thousand people who dwell in sealed environments. 'Atomic Dorannia', as the world is popularly known, is famous for its exports of fissionables and devices based upon nuclear energy. The world government has recently implemented a defensive strategy based on the liberal use of nuclear missiles, which has deterred raiders but made ship captains rather more wary of visiting even for legitimate purposes.

Sundstrom sees Dorianna as a potentially viable market, although the population is too small to produce much in the way of exports. He does see the possibility of buying fissionables or nuclear-powered mid-tech machinery if the price is right and expects to sell some equipment and items useful in industry such as raw materials.

There is too little starport traffic for the usual trading but Sundstrom believes – correctly – that he can sell the government machinery and equipment that will boost the local economy, to mutual advantage. He is invited to a reception at the capital and will ask the Travellers to come along, among others. Depending on their shipboard roles they may be guards, functionaries or dignitaries. The latter is likely if the Travellers did well at Condaria.

This is a chance for the Travellers to see how trade is carried out on the large scale. Suits, gowns, uniforms and endless chitchat surround them on all sides, with cocktails and small delicacies on offer. Sundstrom and his senior entourage – which may include the Travellers – are pumped for information by the locals and have a chance to do the same about topics that interest them. Somewhere in the middle of this Sundstrom begins negotiating a deal to provide upwards of 100 tons of machinery and electronics, with the option to buy more from his contacts on Narsil at the same price. This is common in big deals involving corporations and governments; a

letter from Sundstrom, properly authenticated, allows representatives from Dorianna to buy goods at the prices he has agreed. This makes negotiations all the more complex, as setting up a deal that cannot be honoured would be a huge embarrassment.

Speaking of which, the Travellers are offered the chance to enter into a deal whilst Sundstrom is cloistered with the world's chief negotiators. One of Dorianna's chief exports is nuclear weaponry, often on rather loose terms. The Travellers are offered 18 tons of nuclear munitions at the rock-bottom price of Cr60000 per ton. They can probably sell them for three times as much within a couple of jumps. On the face of it, this is a good deal.

Sundstrom would not agree, however. He decided not to bring weapons for sale on this trip, because the Imperials might object to someone selling guns in their backyard. Imagine the backlash if Sword Worlders were found selling nukes to irresponsible users! Sundstrom will send the Travellers back to close down the deal if they agree it, which probably means paying for the weapons then not taking them and will be greatly displeased with them. If on the other hand the Travellers have the wisdom to turn the deal down, he will approve.

The visit to Dorianna is around six days in length, all told, and is a profitable one for the ship. However, it is Bularia that where Sundstrom intends to make the first big profit of the mission. Bularia has a large enough economy to be worth selling to in bulk and is known to be expanding its exports of a medicinal tea grown there. Bularia also has a proper starport, which will be a welcome change.

Sundstrom's Satisfaction rating will automatically drop one level if the Travellers buy nuclear warheads for resale. If they refuse the deal he will approve of their actions but this is no more than common sense as far as he is concerned and does not merit a check to increase Satisfaction.

BULARIA

C774622-5
Intelligence Value: 7

Bularia is a backwater but of great interest to the Sword Worlds Confederation as a possible stepping stone into the Foreven sector. Sundstrom is therefore interested in the world to a far greater degree than its Intelligence Value would appear to merit. He will expect his crew to find out as much as they can about the world, as detailed knowledge of its society, climate and a myriad other factors can all assist with long-term planning for Confederation expansion in the region.

The Bularia system is relatively dense in terms of planetary bodies, although there are no gas giants. The system's primary, Kanental Alpha, is a K5 yellow-orange main sequence star orbited by a distant companion, Kanental Beta, an M3 red dwarf. Each has a solar system of sorts, although that of Beta is limited to asteroid fields and a single uninhabited rockball. There are belter communities in the system's planetoid belt, who occasionally come to the mainworld to trade. It is possible that there are beltors working the companion system's planetoids too but there is no concrete data.

Bularia is remote from the interstellar community and sees little traffic. It is a client state of the Imperium, which means that although it does not enjoy the full rights of a member world, Bularia also does not pay Imperial taxes. Nor is it within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and other Imperial bodies. However, there are ties of friendship between the world and the Imperium that will likely lead to Imperial membership at some point. This is not considered desirable by the Sword Worlds Confederation as it constitutes part of the encroachment that will someday see the Confederation completely surrounded by a potentially hostile Imperium.

Physically, Bularia is a 'garden' world, similar in size and atmospheric composition to Earth. Surface gravity is 0.97gs, which is entirely comfortable for most humans. There are only two drawbacks to Bularia and both are minor. The first is an atmospheric taint in the form of an airborne bacterium, which finds humans an attractive host. This causes a mild flu-like illness for a few weeks in about 60% of humans who come to Bularia without taking appropriate precautions. These include a course of inoculations which takes about two to three weeks to take effect. Locals are immune and even at its worst the 'Newcomer Fever' is unpleasant rather than debilitating.

The other slight problem with Bularia as a prospect for settlement is its relative dryness. There is about half as much surface water as on Earth, making for a stable weather pattern but more extreme temperatures as well as the obvious arid areas. Much of the planet is well-watered

by any standards and there are some large seas, even oceans. However, regions of semi-desert and 'dust seas' exist, especially in the centre of the large continents.

Bularia's ecosystem was well developed when humans arrived. The seas, such as they are, contain a great variety of fish species and a considerable number of swimming snakes (as distinct from eels) that seem to have evolved on land then either gone back to the water or developed a lifestyle suited to swamplands and marshes whose boundaries change considerably from season to season.

Much of Bularia's surface is fairly dry, with rocky or dusty deserts being common. There is little life in such regions, although various succulent plants and cold-blooded animals eke out an existence there. Better watered areas have considerable forestation or wide grassy plains depending on the terrain and these regions are home to a variety of birds and animals. Marsupials are more common than mammals, although a number of offworld species have been introduced, deliberately and otherwise.

Early colonists decided that Terran elephants and poni, a large eight-legged animal, would be useful additions to the ecosystem. Presumably they were intended as beasts of burden or part of some sort of conservation program. Today small herds of both can be encountered in some areas but they are not domesticated by the locals. The importation of horses and kian was a much more successful measure and both are today ranched as riding animals and beasts of burden.

Other imported animals include sabrewolves. Henderson's sabrewolf is a vaguely dog-like pack hunter native to the Old Expanses sector. They have spread throughout Imperial space by various means, usually brought in to keep down populations of local predators or possibly megafauna. With their sabretooth tiger-like fangs, sabrewolves are well suited to hunting elephants and similar creatures, so those of Bularia may have been deliberately brought in to counter another human-imported species. In any event, both elephants and sabrewolves have made a place for themselves in Bularia's ecosystem.

Society on Bularia

The official population of Bularia as of the last census was about three million people, mostly humans, with an unknown number of unregistered people (possibly as many as one million) dwelling in remote areas and not forming part of the recognised world-state. The democratic world government takes the form of an executive and administrative body located at the capital, with every adult citizen eligible to vote on all issues.



Voting is remotely carried out at local stations whose computers are linked into the mid-tech communications system. The system was purchased offworld some years ago and is thought to be completely tamper-proof. The governmental process is slow and cumbersome, with a referendum being required for any major and many minor issues.

In practice, most citizens only vote on their favourite issues and leave everything else to others but occasionally something comes up that brings out millions of voters. The amount of majority needed to enact any given decision varies depending on what category it falls in. It is not uncommon for an important issue to require a vote on the category it is to be considered under and another on whether to change the amount of majority that particular category requires. Sometimes it is necessary for the whole population to vote on when a major issue should be scheduled, delaying the process even further. As a result, little changes on Bularia; at least, little of importance.

Most of the 'official' population dwell on a single large continent named, not coincidentally, Bularia. Perhaps 250,000 members of the world-state of Bularia live on other continents or island groups, mainly along the coasts. The majority of the 'unregistered' population are also located on these other continents although there are several groups on the continent of Bularia itself.

The main continent has an official population of just under three million. Of these, around one and a half million live in the Inner Zone, within 200 kilometres of the starport and capital, which was the site of the original

colony and many of the follow-up landings. The remainder have spread out across the continent, settling wherever there was good land or resources to make it worthwhile.

There are no cities as such beyond the 200 kilometres Inner Zone. Within that area there are several small cities with agricultural towns and villages between them; beyond the zone there are huge tracts of uninhabited land interspersed with smaller versions of the main settled area. These usually contain a central town with a population of 5-10,000, surrounded by several smaller settlements scattered over a wide area.

The 'unregistered' population are mostly descended from small-scale colonisation attempts that arrived after the first settlement and attempted to 'landgrab' other areas. Some did well and still exist; others collapsed and the survivors either reverted to a subsistence lifestyle or else joined other groups. With at most four million people on an entire planet, Bularia is very sparsely populated and parts have not even been fully explored.

Laws are loose and liberal on Bularia, despite an officially high Law Level. Serious crimes such as murder or arson are vigorously and thoroughly dealt with; Bularia has the death penalty, usually by firing squad. However, apart from major crimes that damage society, there is little need for masses of laws, prohibitions and the like.

For those living outside the central cities, it is legal to own and carry what the locals call 'non-military' weaponry. In practice, this means that energy and laser weapons, explosives, gauss weapons and extremely powerful personal weaponry such as machineguns

and huge calibre rifles are illegal. The standard is that if a weapon poses a significant threat to one of the irreplaceable grav sleds used by the military, citizens and visitors are not allowed to have it. Otherwise, it is legal to own weapons suitable for defence of self or property, although by custom only sidearms are carried in town, if at all, and property owners can make their own rules about what weaponry can be brought onto their land. Within the cities of the Inner Zone a strict no-weapons policy is maintained. Citizens with business outside the city can own weapons for self-defence but they must be securely stored and transported until clear of the city limits. It is not legal for a private citizen to carry a weapon within the cities.

One reason for the liberal laws in place is Bularian society's attitude to self-defence and the protection of property. Lethal force is acceptable if there is a significant threat and an assumption that anyone who tries to steal or damage property will resist interference and they will likely be armed. This 'assumption of escalation' means that it is considered acceptable to open fire on someone trying to steal from you. This tends to keep the crime rate down, although what crime there is tends to be serious and violent. This in turn is stomped on by law enforcers who, if not exactly trigger-happy, are not known for their hesitation to use force.

Economic Factors

The economy of Bularia is self-contained for astrographical reasons. Any port worth exporting to requires a jump-2 vessel and even then the route runs through underdeveloped star systems with poor starports. For this reason, among others, Bularia has never developed any significant exports.

The official Tech Level is 5; towards the lower end of the mid-tech range. This is a 'mature' technological capability and most of the items made by the world's major industries are robust, well-designed and quite sophisticated for all their lack of complex electronic systems. Bularia does not have the means to create advanced materials or electronics but has benefited from the ideas behind more advanced technologies. As a result, much of the TL5 equipment made on Bularia is better than it would be on a world where the technology had been developed from the ground up and represented the most advanced concepts available.

Within the Inner Zone, Tech Level is a fairly uniform 5, utilising advanced steam power for transportation and electricity generation. There is some higher-technology equipment available of course, mainly used to run the starport and create a communications net. However, visitors will find that their personal communications

will only work properly within the Inner Zone. Beyond this its range is limited to a few kilometres as there are no relays in the outback or satellites in orbit. This means that citizen votes and information to and from distant settlements must use long landlines for voice communications and mid-tech radios in the field.

Bularia has a hydrocarbon industry and much of the fuel in use takes the form of a compressed coal/oil block that gives out a great deal of energy at a steady rate when burned. This is mainly useful on a larger scale, so the usual system is to run electrical generating stations using fuel blocks to generate steam, driving turbines. Electricity is then fed into a local grid to power the town. Smaller blocks are used to fuel stoves and household heating systems, although cordwood and locally obtained coal can also be used.

Fuel blocks are only produced in the Inner Zone, at three sites, and then transported to the end users. In the more remote areas of the outback it is more common to use less efficient locally available fuels and everyone has a stockpile of logs or coal as a backup.

Beyond the Inner Zone, technological capability drops off quickly. Most outback towns have a locally sustainable TL4 with some imported TL5 gear from the Inner Zone. Regions tend to be self-sufficient as the only connection to the Inner Zone is a long railroad link and telephone cables running alongside. Some of these links run for up to 1,500 kilometres with nothing but fuelling and water stops along the way.

Extensive use is made of steam-powered rail transportation on Bularia. Visitors are often surprised at just how sophisticated the trains are. Rather than a traditional steam locomotive, Bularian trains are powered by an enclosed, high-efficiency steam turbine heated using fuel blocks fed in by a semi-automated gravity feed. Manual access is possible for emergencies and maintenance. Although the technology in use is bulky and mechanical rather than electronic, it is well-made and lovingly maintained.

For local transport, animal power is common. Horses and kian are both used. Kian are large flightless birds native to the Spinward Marches and bred on many worlds across Charted Space. Attempts have been made to introduce poni, large eight-legged animals, as beasts of burden but these have not been a great success.

Bularia's internal economy is mainly based on hydrocarbon/coal powered manufacturing for local use. There are few worlds that would be a good market for TL5 industrial goods, although the occasional enterprising free trader captain will buy up a large

amount of mid-tech produce in return for a smaller amount of higher-tech items useful to the Bularians and sell them on low-tech or underdeveloped regions nearby. However, the remoteness of Bularia makes this a marginal proposition at best.

Exports are few and therefore there is little offworld cash to buy higher-tech items or to invest in advancing the world's own technological base. On the other hand there is little need. Bularia has a stable, workable society and economy, sufficient to keep most of its people happy or at least content. There is no real need to sink vast funds into pushing up to the dizzy heights of TL6 or 7.

Bularia does have some exports, however. Some agricultural produce is shipped out, much of it to worlds in the Five Sisters. The most important export, however, is yellow leaf, a paste or pulp made from the yellow-green leaves of a native bushy plant. Yellow leaf has slight medicinal properties. It is a natural analgesic, albeit a mild one, promotes restful sleep and has a slightly beneficial effect on the human (and some other species) immune system. Yellow leaf tea tastes rather peculiar when first encountered but most grow to like it over time and it has passed into what amounts to folklore that a cup or two a day makes for a healthier life.

In recent years, pharmaceutical researchers have begun investigating yellow leaf but have generally considered it not worth exporting. However, it recently gained popularity in athletic circles as sports nutrition experts suggested that it might have beneficial effects for those training while carrying sports injuries. This has led to increased demand, to the point where existing plantations are unable to keep pace. Most are expanding but this will take time. There is thus a move to start bringing in larger quantities of yellow leaf from the outback, where it is grown for local use.

Military Matters

Bularia's Defence Corps is organised in three 'tiers', each with a specific task. All Defence Corps personnel have law enforcement powers and also act as fire and rescue personnel. Far more time is spent on these 'civic' duties than on military operations with the exception of tier one personnel. As a result, Bularia's armed forces are not well trained in combat operations, but have considerable low-level experience of dealing with crisis and disaster. The only purely military force is the high-tech tier one contingent.

Tier One (High-Tech Contingent): The smallest and most expensive segment of the world's defensive forces is dedicated to the protection of the starport and government apparatus, and enforcement of laws on

offworlders. Its main asset is a missile battery and tracking station located close to the starport. This is manned by the Tech Company of the Defence Corps which, along with the Mobile Company, absorbs most of the world's small defence budget.

The Mobile Company is equipped with a dozen large grav sleds capable of carrying a squad of troops plus a light support weapon. These are organised into four platoons of three sleds, each backed up by additional support sled armed with a dual-purpose 75mm cannon capable of engaging 'hard' or 'personnel' targets. The Mobile Company also has two armoured recovery sleds and a team of technicians.

There are also two Guard Companies, equipped with mid-tech small arms and support weapons plus a few higher-tech items as force multipliers. These include communications gear, a couple of high-powered gauss sniper rifles and a number of man-portable anti-armour/anti-air missiles.

Tier One troops are rarely seen away from the capital, except for the Mobile Company, which is often used as a first-response unit within the Inner Zone. Most of the equipment used by tier one forces cannot be repaired locally, although some maintenance is possible by properly trained personnel. These forces are carefully husbanded as they are considered a necessary form of insurance against offworld aggression or a trading vessel turned nasty.

Tier Two (Inner Zone Contingent): The second tier is a small conventional military force intended to back up and support the tier one contingent. It rarely deploys outside the Inner Zone. Each city and major town has a small Guard Detachment of light infantry equipped with locally produced weapons, backed up by the Field Force. The Field Force is mostly deployed as small detachments to deal with local problems, with a couple of larger formations held in reserve.

Most mid-tech units are mounted infantry, i.e. light infantry using horses or klan for mobility. Each company has a couple of hydrocarbon-powered off-road trucks for support and supply purposes. In the towns there are also fire trucks, ambulances and patrol cars.

The tier two forces also contain a Railroad Detachment, which crews two armoured trains for use on the long links out to the distant regions. The armoured trains mount several support weapons and also carry repair equipment for dealing with sabotage or damage on the line. More commonly, however, Railroad Detachment troops just ride ordinary trains.

Tier Three (Bularia Mounted Constabulary): The Mounted Constabulary fulfils the same functions in the outback regions as the tier two forces in the Inner Zone and in addition patrols the wilderness. Most of the time the Mounted Constabulary deals with disputes between ranchers or yellow leaf growers or chases down criminals who have fled to the outer regions. It is supposedly a military force, despite the name, but in practice the Constabulary does not train for large-scale military operations. Its personnel are effective enough in small-unit actions but could not take on a proper military force without taking heavy casualties.

'Mounties' as they are inevitably known, wear a dark blue uniform, usually with civilian hats and greatcoats. They ride horses or kians depending on preference and are armed with a sidearm, carbine and cavalry sabre. The latter is a badge of office more than anything else, although it can make an effective deterrent to aggression.

Mounties normally serve in the region where they grew up and are often friends and relations of the people they protect. This can lead to conflicts of interest at times but overall the system works well and the Mounties receive good support from the communities they are associated with.

Life on Bularia

Within the Inner Zone, the population is more or less evenly divided between agricultural workers and town-dwellers who work at various trades ranging from administration to industry. As already noted, laws are liberal but the population tend to be armed, making crime a dangerous prospect. It is not uncommon for settlements to have a 'no carry in town' ordinance, which means that weapons are kept in vehicles (for those who have them) or stored in homes and businesses. Other towns permit the carrying of sidearms, although businesses and private citizens do not usually allow strangers to enter their property armed. There is usually a no-weapons rule in bars and similar places.

Unemployment is virtually non-existent; anyone who wants a job can usually find something quickly. Aside from the farms there are always unskilled jobs available in factories, fabric mills and on the railroads as well as the world's small service industry. Skilled workers for the hydrocarbon industry or the starport are always in demand. Wages are low outside the specialist industries but the cost of living is not great and the range of consumer goods available is small, so there is no huge social divide.

In the outback, much the same situation exists, only on a smaller scale. The balance there is heavily in favour of

semi-skilled and unskilled labour on the farms, ranches and plantations, with craft-based and technical jobs available in towns for those with the right skills.

In general, people on Bularia have a simple lifestyle. A combination of a good diet, physical work and the occasional cup of yellow leaf tea results in a good overall level of health and vitality, and this in turn results in a generally contented populace. Ambitions for most people revolve around advancement through recognition of competence; impressing the ranch boss or factory owner is a strong incentive to hard work. These values are familiar to the average Sword Worlder, making Bularia a logical choice for a stopover or development of commercial relations.

There is a criminal element, like everywhere, and a rather more serious threat in the form of a rebel group. The latter is largely formed of disaffected workers, ranchers forced out by rivals and failed businessmen who feel they have been mistreated. There are plenty such individuals who have simply dropped back into society and had another go at finding success but some of these people are angry enough to want change at any price. Their numbers have been swelled by the marginalised 'unofficial' settlers on the main continent, resulting in a significant number of armed people willing to do whatever it takes to improve their lot, settle old scores or simply indulge their destructive impulses.

The rebels are fed information and funds by those still within mainstream society and their numbers have become great enough that they have begun to do more than cause minor local trouble. However, they are not in any sense unified and disagreements between groups over what should be done and how have hampered effective operations.

Some of the rebels are basically decent people who have been pushed into a corner. Others are committed to an agenda and willing to fight for it but are by no means monsters. Unfortunately, there is a sizable minority that simply want to cause mayhem and grab what they can.

The Bularia Rebellion

It is not possible to say for sure when the Bularia rebellion started. At some point the cattle raids and general troublemaking became more organised and increasingly serious, until today there is a clear armed threat to the stability of Bularia. This arose out of differences between the people of the Inner Zone and at least some of those living in the outback. The 'Zoners', as the people of the Inner Zone are termed, generally thought the 'Outlanders' complained too much. The Outlanders found the Zoners arrogant and uncaring

about their very real problems. Neither group ever really understood the other's viewpoint, making it impossible to head off the rebellion by concessions and conciliation.

Many of the supporters of what has become a very nasty revolt were decent people who had no idea what was about to happen. Most gave a little money to their favoured cause and talked about the evils of the present society because they thought they were exercising their right to dissent rather than funding a rebellion. Others got involved because it was chic to be a tough-talking revolutionary. Meanwhile the real hardcore revolutionaries plotted their campaign and recruited those who might become suitably committed to the cause.

Using contributions from sympathisers – who generally had no real idea what they were funding – the revolutionaries put together a fighting force of sorts. They were willing to use criminals and cattle-thieves as a means to an end; anyone with a gun and the willingness to shoot at the authorities' troops was potentially useful. Some disaffected groups were manoeuvred into a position where they had to take up arms against the government, creating additional fighters for the cause. These assets were to be a distraction, tying down government forces whilst the revolutionary militia made its move. Criminal elements and troublemakers-for-the-sake-of-it could be eliminated later, once the revolutionaries had control of the capital.

Some areas were quietly infiltrated and taken over by a mix of propaganda and threats, and even some cities of the Inner Zone were partially controlled by the rebels. The process of gradually gaining control of the countryside and moving into the cities was going well until a supposedly bloodless takeover of the remote outback town of Kelsbruck turned into a pitched battle between a revolutionary force and a detachment of the Mounted Constabulary. The survivors of the latter, along with large numbers of townsfolk, escaped down the rail link towards the Inner Zone, bringing word that the revolution was much more of a threat than previously supposed.

The revolutionaries had no choice but to go for broke. Forces placed in the cities made a grab for governmental centres and key installations, catching the local defenders largely by surprise. The military responded, of course, and some areas have already been pacified. Others are disputed, with parts of the cities becoming no-go areas for the authorities. Running fights are reported with the more organised revolutionary forces and whilst the authorities are (rightly, it seems) confident of restoring order the situation is turbulent and hazardous. Naturally, the danger is downplayed by official sources; it may not be apparent to the Travellers what they have walked into until the situation explodes in their faces.

FREIKORPS SKANDER

The first chapter of *Skandersvik* reaches a climax on Bularia, with the Travellers forced to confront armed rebels to extricate their crewmates. There is an opportunity to forge links with the planetary elite, which might be useful in later diplomacy. However, as *Skander* emerges from jump at Bularia there is no sign of the troubles to come.

Upon arriving at Bularia the Travellers will note that there are a handful of ships in orbit or at the downport. These are mostly small jump-2 traders from the Five Sisters but there is an Imperial warship in orbit as well. It is the *Mnasippus*, a Kinunir cruiser. Sword Worlders would call these ships frigates but the Imperials have chosen the title vanguard cruiser.

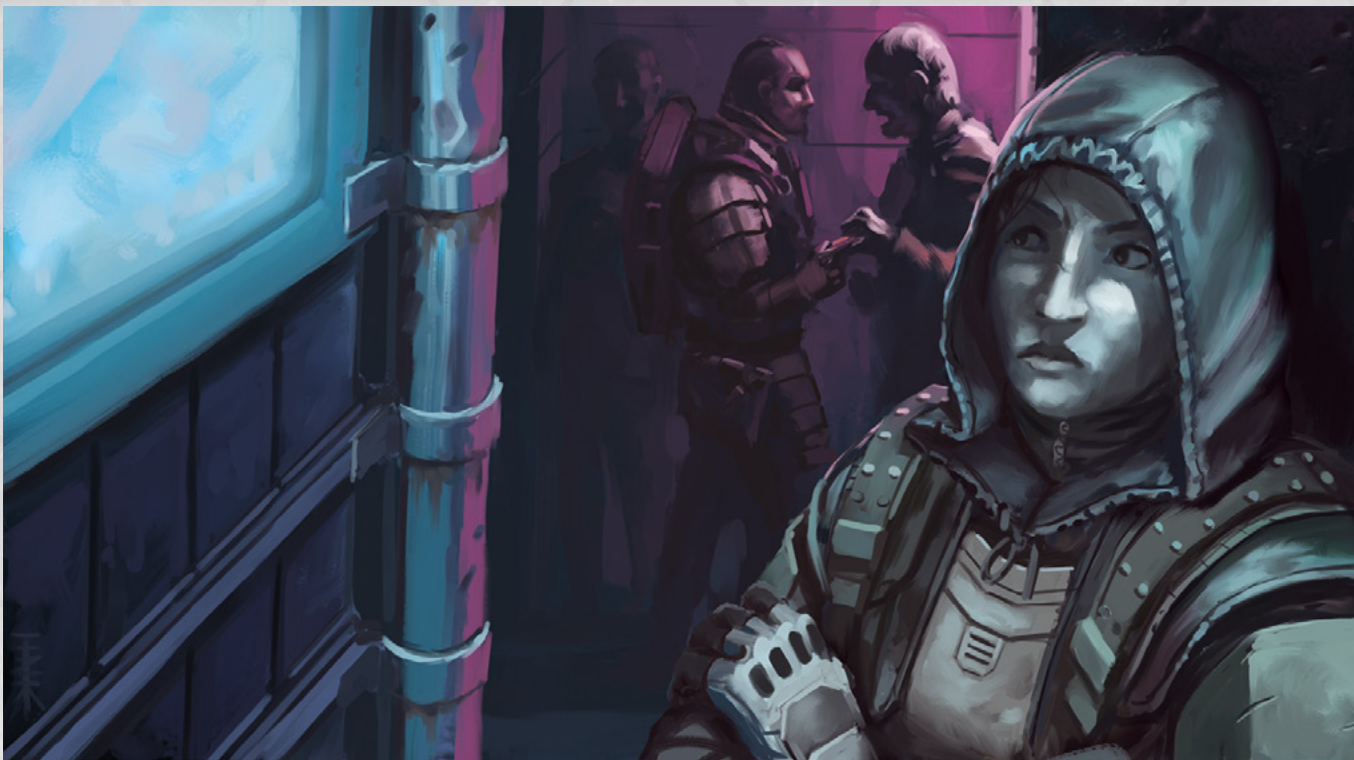
Mnasippus sends polite, formal greetings to Skander but does not otherwise communicate. There is nothing out of the ordinary about this, although Travellers might later want to know why *Mnasippus* did not pass along a warning about conditions on-planet. Similarly, the port authority does not mention the rebellion currently taking place but simply directs *Skander* to a landing bay. Support functions are handled in a purposeful and efficient manner and Sundstrom orders preparations to 'put on a show'.

With *Skander* on the ground and smartly turned-out guards at her entrance points, Sundstrom announces his intention to meet with a consortium of merchants at Nesben, a city 150 kilometres away on the fringe of the Inner Zone. He picks a handful of assistants – not including the Travellers – and orders samples to be loaded into the two shuttles. The Travellers are tasked with gathering information about local trade conditions, so that Sundstrom can get the best deals possible when he returns to the port. He is soon en route to Nesben and the Travellers are left to their own discretion.

Sundstrom has pre-arranged his meeting, having sent a representative to Bularia some months ago. This was before the rebellion, of course, and he is setting out before the real situation becomes apparent. He is also taking members of the senior crew with him to impress the merchants' consortium. Sundstrom hopes to strike a lucrative deal to market and export yellow leaf, whose mild medicinal properties have impressed him. However, his action has left *Skander* without her senior officers, except for any Travellers who might hold high rank. What happens at the ship will now be up to the Travellers.

First Impressions

There is a tense atmosphere at the capital, despite an attempt at business-as-usual. The Travellers will notice an increased security presence, with troops manning



checkpoints at key locations. Their offworld origins actually make them less prone to scrutiny than locals, since they are unlikely to be rebels seeking to infiltrate the city. Questions about the situation yield vague responses about a rebellion in the outback and attacks on a few cities but most citizens have little idea what is really going on and the authorities are not revealing much information.

Attempts to find out more about the situation will require either talking to locals and piecing the information together (Streetwise and Investigate skills will be useful here) or getting the information from an official who knows the real story. Diplomat and Investigate will apply in this case. Either option should be more than just a couple of skill checks. The Travellers will need to meet people and talk to them, which means interacting with local citizens and/or officials. How overt the Travellers want to be about this is up to them – are they concerned whether or not the local authorities know they are seeking information?

At the same time, the Travellers need to fulfil their mission. Representatives from *Skander* have been invited to meet with local merchants and governmental officials and with Sundstrom away it falls to the Travellers to handle this matter. The meeting is to take the form of a reception at the city hall. The Travellers are informed that they have limited diplomatic status, which means they are entitled to bring security people who are discreetly armed.

Earlier experience should guide the Travellers as to what to expect. This is an occasion for suits and dress uniforms and to engage in polite chitchat when every instinct is to plunge into negotiations. The Travellers will be expected to arrive in a motorcade and enter city hall with appropriate ceremony and the Referee should give the Travellers the opportunity to plan their visit, noting details like dress and weaponry. Turning up in street clothes and body armour, festooned with guns, will be seen as an embarrassing gaffe. On the other hand, the Travellers may have reason to suspect there is danger in the city, especially if they have observed the enhanced security.

The Reception

The reception is at the city administration compound rather than that of the world government, although there will be representatives present. The whole affair is rather dull, although it is obvious the locals want to impress their visitors. The Travellers are presented to various dignitaries and offered a range of interesting combinations of ingredients. An Average (8+) Diplomat check will permit each of the Travellers to act appropriately. The Referee should impose a DM based upon how well the Travellers planned their entrance and demeanour – it is quite possible that they did not realise this was a diplomatic occasion and arrived in coveralls! Of course, the Travellers might find a way to pull this off, perhaps even gaining admirers for their casual spacer-chic outfits.

The chief official assigned to deal with the Travellers' visit is Minister for Offworld Affairs Heleana Burke. A career official in her late 50s, Heleana has no time for sexism or patronising attitudes towards the 'poor backward locals'. She is familiar with the local democratic apparatus with all its inertia and occasional weird quirks. She does not want to discuss the rebellion situation but information can be obtained in the course of discussions about trade. She believes the rebellion to be a nasty business but one that will shortly be over. There have been attacks in a few cities but all were minor and most are dealt with or in the process. Production and processing of yellow leaf will be disrupted to some extent, she admits, but there are stockpiles here at the capital and once order is restored the export business will get back to normal. She also wishes to discuss the possibility of a contract and will be less than pleased – although she will not show it – to find that Sundstrom has already bypassed her government to work on a direct deal.

There are two Imperial Navy officers at the reception, both from the Kinunir in orbit. Lieutenant Carstairs Imbaria is an engineering officer and no diplomat. His clumsy attempts to obtain information will amuse Travellers or at least make them feel better about their own ham-fisted attempts. His companion is Lady Estrella Harben-Erataria, a 19-year-old officer cadet who, whilst inexperienced, is the daughter of an Imperial baron and trained from birth to be a diplomat. She works the room with charm and grace, making new friends and influencing people. Both Imperials are courteous towards the Sword Worlders but wary of them.

The reception goes on for quite some time. It is apparent that many of the local 'society' figures are there to be seen or to network – they have their own agenda that is nothing to do with interstellar trade. Many will still court the company of the Imperials or Sword Worlders; exotic starfarers are always good for the image. Where this leads depends very much on the character of the Travellers. They may like the attention and find it useful, or be irritated by it and want to get back to business. However, before much real progress has been made, events overtake the Travellers.

Decapitation Strike

The Travellers can hardly fail to miss the moment where the mood changes. Messages are received by the guests, comms burst into life and a hush ripples across the chamber. Distant gunfire and the thudding of explosions can be heard, then someone puts a display screen on and a shocking scene unfolds. A distinguished-looking gentleman in an expensive suit is making an announcement. It is terse but threatening.

'The Bularia First movement is now in control of the capital and the governmental apparatus. Citizens are advised to remain indoors and await instructions. Military forces are ordered to stand down and return to barracks. Those who comply will be offered amnesty. Further information will follow.'

The broadcast repeats at intervals, with images of surrendered government forces playing in between. One of the serving staff suddenly brandishes a submachinegun and climbs onto a table as others draw handguns.

'This building is now under control of the Bularia First movement,' the bogus waiter declares. 'Surrender your communication devices and weapons. No harm will come to you if you comply.'

His associates gesture at a table, indicating items are to be placed there.

The Travellers' comms – and those of the Imperial officers – begin indicating incoming calls. Answering will attract the attention of the revolutionaries, of course. The revolutionaries really do want their coup to go off bloodlessly, or as near as possible, as this will hasten the rebuilding of a functioning state with them in charge. However, they are willing to kill to protect themselves and very aware they can expect little mercy if their powerplay fails.

The Travellers have very little time to decide what to do. If they comply, they will witness a couple of locals try to resist and be beaten or shot out of hand, yet they will be treated with courtesy. They are informed the revolutionary council will want to speak with them and that they are considered to be foreign diplomats whose safety is guaranteed. Regrettably they must be held for a few days until the situation is stabilised, after which trade negotiations will be opened on favourable terms.

The Travellers are in a unique position here. The revolutionaries want their cooperation, and perhaps approval, and certainly do not wish to antagonise foreign powers. They are willing to make very favourable deals with the Travellers in return for what amounts to recognition of their new regime. The Travellers will be politely detained and allowed to contact their ship. The revolutionaries are not very familiar with offworld comms and may not notice if the Travellers make other contacts. If the Travellers do not comply, they will have to make contact as and when they can.

Skander: The guards at the ship came under sniper fire, although it was (purposely or otherwise) ill-aimed. The crew have retreated inside and begun warming the drive

for an emergency lift-off. Weapons have been broken out and the crew have contacted Sundstrom. However, the situation is even more complex than it first seems.

Sundstrom: Sundstrom and his people are cut off in the middle of a contested city, unable to get back to their shuttles. There is extensive fighting in the streets, with elements of the army counterattacking the rebels. Sundstrom orders the Travellers to... his signal goes dead mid-transmission and none of his entourage can be reached. It later becomes apparent that local communications have been disrupted by crude but powerful jamming devices.

Imperial Warship *Mnasippus*: A signal bounced over from *Skander* puts the Travellers in voice-only contact with *Mnasippus* Actual; the ship's commanding officer. The ship's transponder indicates this is Commander Ikaili Vasskaavi, although the voice on the comms channel does not use a name. The message is blunt and worrying:

'All vessels, all foreign personnel. Be advised that a situation of emergency exists on-planet. Imperial warship Mnasippus is operating under strict non-intervention and intervention prevention orders. We will fire on any foreign vessel that attempts to intervene in the present situation. No vessel will be permitted to take off or land during the crisis.'

The Travellers will need to decide what to do about these multiple problems and also the revolutionaries trying to hold them hostage. The two Imperial officers seem to be in a similar position.

Decisions at City Hall

If the Travellers resist the capture attempt, it is game on at City Hall. The revolutionaries will start shooting, local and offworld security personnel will reply. People run for the doors, try to jump the gunmen or just take cover. The scene is one of chaos and bloodshed amid the finery. There are enough security people to overwhelm the gunmen eventually but the cost will be high. There is no need to play out every exchange of fire; only those that involve the Travellers. The rest happens as a backdrop; a backdrop that leaves many of the city's foremost citizens dead or wounded.

If, alternatively, the Travellers do not act straight away, their favoured status might gain them the chance to eliminate some of the gunmen by surprise while they appear to negotiate a deal. The Travellers might even throw in their lot with the revolutionaries. There are thus various ways it can happen but sooner or later the Travellers will find themselves able to talk to their ship and the Imperial vessel. They are stuck in the middle

of what has become a war zone but the revolutionaries are not nearly as in control as they claim. Gunfire in the distance tells of ongoing fighting and there is no sign of the government forces standing down.

The *Mnasippus* Situation

The two Imperial officers also have an unusual status. The revolutionaries know that if they are harmed, their movement will have to take on an Imperial warship. If, on the other hand, they are returned to their ship the Imperials will obey their orders not to get involved and might even prevent others from doing so. The revolutionaries end up trying to persuade the Imperials to accept safe conduct back to their ship, which Lieutenant Imbaria is willing to accept. His junior colleague is not, however.

She starts out quiet and respectful but soon a heated argument begins between Imbaria and Lady Estrella. She is sure the people at city hall are in mortal danger but it seems likely the revolutionaries will not harm them if there are Imperial officers among the hostages. She is not empowered to declare the dignitaries and staff under Imperial protection but she loudly declares that murder or mistreatment of captives will trigger her captain's intervention... and that she intends to stay and witness what happens.

Ensign Harben-Erataria is in breach of protocol, of course, but Lady Estrella Harben-Erataria – who happens to inhabit the same body – has a different remit. She is clearly frightened but also extremely self-righteous and assured of herself. Her moral stand should impress Sword Worlders, even if she lacks the dignity of a seasoned diplomat. Her colleague will agree to be returned to his ship; Estrella will not.

The situation with the Imperial ship is as its captain stated – he is bound by strict non-intervention orders unless Imperial citizens are harmed and his standing orders are to prevent other ships from getting involved. However, his own inclination is to oppose the revolution. To this end, a video channel on the Imperial ship has been left 'accidentally' on, broadcasting a real-time image of the situation in the capital as seen from orbit.

What that image shows is that the world government's headquarters is not in the hands of the rebels. There is heavy fighting in the streets around it and the defenders look to be badly outnumbered. More rebel troops are approaching the capital in vehicles and a train presumably loaded with even more is en route. The best elements of the planetary army were deployed to fight in distant regions and are detaching their few grav-mobile elements to head back to the capital but

these are forced in many cases to divert to stabilise other situations. In short, there is a real chance the government will be captured before reinforcements reach the defenders.

If the Travellers successfully resisted the takeover of city hall they are free to act as they please. The locals have more pressing issues and suggest the Travellers get back to their ship where they should be safe – and incidentally out of the way. If the Travellers complied with the takeover, they will still be able to talk to the Imperials whilst the revolutionaries treat them as foreign diplomats.

In either case, Lieutenant Imbaria insists on returning to his ship. Ensign Harben-Erataria will also do so... in spirit anyway. She symbolises this by taking off her uniform jacket to be conveyed back to the orbiting ship. The person of Lady Estrella will remain on Bularia as an observer... and she asks the Travellers if they can provide her some security. If that means she will have to accompany them, so be it.

Lieutenant Imbaria will be picked up from the roof of City Hall by his ship's pinnace. The doors happen to be left open long enough for anyone else who wants to board to do so and many of the locals do. The Imperial captain is not permitted to intervene but he can always act to save lives, in this case by removing surviving local dignitaries from the battle zone.

The Situation in Summary

Sundstrom is out of contact and probably in desperate trouble. Skander cannot take off because the Imperial warship will not permit it... a ship whose captain has stated his willingness to use force to prevent a Sword Worlds intervention on Bularia but who is broadcasting tactically useful information to the only offworlders in a position to act. Astute Travellers should be able to infer that the Imperials do not like the position they are placed in by their standing orders but will obey until and unless they are given an excuse to act.

In all, the Travellers are in a very confused situation and may be in a position to tip the balance. They may recall the emphasis placed by Commander Vasskaavi on certain words. His orders are to prevent intervention by any foreign ship and to prevent any more from landing. He said nothing about people already on the ground...

There is another factor at play here, if the Travellers are smart enough to pick up on it. The Imperials will not mention this, in order to comply with the letter of their orders but they want to intervene to prop up a friendly government. They cannot legally do so, as a revolution of this sort is an 'internal matter' according to their

standing orders. Unless of course Imperial citizens or dignitaries were in danger. There is only one such person on Bularia – Lady Estrella – and she is safe enough at present. But if she was inside the government compound that is under attack by the main rebel force, the captain of an Imperial warship would be required to protect her...

Sounding the Rally

Getting back to *Skander* could be dangerous. There are bands of armed revolutionaries here and there, although most are tied up on the fighting for the governmental centre or holding down important locations such as the main rail terminus. There are some looters on the streets but most people are hiding in their homes. There is, however, a cordon of revolutionary gunmen around the starport landing area. It will be necessary to sneak past or shoot a path through. How that is to be accomplished is very much up to the Travellers.

This stage of the adventure involves negotiating the streets of a foreign city at night, in the middle of a war. Going hell-for-leather in ground vehicles is an option, though it might be possible to scout out a clear route with the help of the 'accidental' orbital data feed.

If the Travellers are cautious enough to plan a route they can avoid areas where there is obvious fighting going on and get around rebel roadblocks. An Average (8+) Navigation or Tactics (military) check will permit a suitable route to be set up, in which case the Travellers will have only fleeting contact with the rebels. There may be occasional shots or shouts to stop from militia who spot the Travellers speeding across the road they are supposed to be securing but there are too many alleys and back roads to prevent someone with a live data feed from dodging past.

Without careful planning the Travellers will encounter one or more patrols or roadblocks. These are hastily improvised, usually with a truck partially blocking the street and some furniture grabbed from nearby buildings to create cover or obstacles. The Travellers may encounter deserted roadblocks where local troops have driven the patrol off – and might be stopped by nervous soldiers. They may also be fired upon by rebels if they do not stop.

Local Troops have, for the most part, no more concrete information about what is going on than anyone else and may have been separated from their units. Detachments have been sent to conduct reconnaissance of areas or to push small rebel groups out. They are nervous and may have already come under fire. Troops will warn the Travellers before firing unless startled, in which

case there is a possibility of an unintentional reaction. The presence of Travellers is above the pay grade of most local forces; they will order Travellers to shelter in a nearby building and get off the streets but can be convinced to let them pass. The Travellers will not be able to recruit local forces to assist them.

Rebels may fire on anyone they do not recognise but are more likely to halt the Travellers and determine their identity in case they are allies. It may be possible to bluff past rebel groups or even obtain their assistance, although that would not be easy. More likely the rebels will try to take the Travellers' vehicles and weapons, and may decide to hold them hostage. The rebel command structure is disjointed, so different groups may have differing attitudes.

Looters are out for themselves and will ignore anyone they cannot rob, or scatter if the odds are against them. Looters are armed with improvised weapons only.

Roadblocks can be crashed without damaging the vehicle if a weak point is located. Since the roadblocks are improvised out of whatever is to hand, this is not difficult but requires an Average (8+) Drive check. Failure indicates the vehicle has hit something solid, in which case it suffers the Effect of the failed check as damage. There is also the possibility of control loss leading to a crash or becoming stuck whilst under fire.

However they do it, the Travellers should be able to reach the ship and rally the crew. While they are readying themselves, the Travellers will become aware of a strange sound outside the ship. In addition to steadily intensifying gunfire, there is the unmistakable tone of... bugles? Moments later a force of horsemen, with vehicles following, crashes through the rebel cordon and heads for *Skander*. This is a detachment of the Mounted Constabulary, escorting a convoy containing dozens of wounded personnel. The commander, Captain Jorsein, explains that he has nowhere else to take them – he does not know which hospitals are in enemy hands and the army has had no time to set up anything more than an aid post. If *Skander* has any sort of medical faculties, he begs the Travellers to use them. Even if they have no doctor, they do have bulkheads, heat, light and water. Will the Travellers shelter the wounded whilst his company re-joins the fight?

There are many casualties in the vehicles, some critically injured. *Skander* does not have the space in her sick bay for even a fraction of their number and her medical staff is minimal. However, there is nowhere else to go and any effort will save more lives than none. If the Travellers are well organised they might set up triage in the cargo bay

and an aid post for the more lightly wounded, with severe cases moved up to the ship's small medical centre then out to cabins to recuperate. There is only so much the crew can do but a valiant effort will win them lifelong friends among the people of Bularia.

The Travellers still have to do something about extricating Magnus Sundstrom. He took both shuttles, so there is no easy way to do this and with no communications it is not possible to say where he is or even if he is alive. Thus it falls to the Travellers to decide what to do next. They can legitimately sit out the fighting on Bularia if they want to. The rebels have no weapons that can harm *Skander* and once the situation is resolved – one way or the other – they will be able to negotiate deals and move on.

However, there is a way to tip the balance in favour of the government.

Joining the Fight

Captain Jorsein of the Mounted Constabulary has received word that elements of the Bularian army's grav-mobile company are en route to the capital but the government compound is under serious threat and could fall at any time. Now that he has fulfilled his orders to get the wounded to safety he intends to launch a counterattack against the rebels besieging the compound, hopefully hitting them in the rear. He will then break through and join the defence. A few extra rifles – and the ammunition his men will carry – might be sufficient to hold the compound long enough. After a long, awkward silence Jorsein comes straight out and asks the Travellers to help. Their vehicles could carry a great deal of ammunition and extra guns would always be welcome.

There is an additional factor that Jorsein has not thought of. If an armed party from *Skander* can escort Lady Estrella into the governmental compound, she can truthfully tell the captain of the orbiting warship that an Imperial noble is in danger. His standing orders to assist and protect Imperial officials will over-rule his orders not to get involved in local matters. The Imperial ship will have to send an extraction force at the very least, with covering fire to the detriment of the rebels.

If the Travellers have not teamed up with Estrella they can still make a difference here; a force of armed crewmembers hitting the rebels at a vulnerable point may be able to break through to the compound and perhaps even hold the way open for local forces to get inside. The compound will be able to hold out for a little longer that way; long enough for the first grav-mobile elements of the local army to get there.

This is, of course, not an intervention by the Sword Worlds ship *Skander*. It is the voluntary action of a Freikorps which happens to be formed from her crew, undertaking a speculative mercenary operation in support of a government that will surely be financially grateful. Such polite fictions are if anything more common in the Sword Worlds than elsewhere, given the necessity to avoid insulting important people or losing face in public. Likewise, the commanding officer of *INS Mnasippus* is unlikely to enquire too closely as to how an Imperial knight who happens to be also one of his officers got inside the threatened government compound.

The Mounted Constabulary are willing to try for a breach if the Travellers will accompany them. If the Travellers are agreeable, Jorsein leads them to an improvised ammunition dump guarded by a handful of troopers and after a brief exchange he signals the Travellers to load up their trucks with crates of cartridges. Then the little force sets out through darkened streets to break the siege.

The Travellers can alter the odds in their favour by good planning, using the orbital data feed to identify a concealed approach and bypass major rebel concentrations. If they think to do this they may apply DM+2 on the Encounters table.

The Referee should roll for encounters three times during the journey. The first possible encounter occurs soon after leaving the ammunition dump and is subject to DM+2 on the table (in addition to that noted before). The

second occurs midway through the advance and the third soon before reaching the assembly point from where the breakthrough is to be launched. This third encounter is subject to DM-6 on the table.

These situations can raise some difficult questions. Can the Travellers afford to spend time helping a few wounded stragglers? Is it worth sending men into nearby buildings to root out a sniper or might it be better to just rush past and accept the risk of casualties? Can they afford a pitched battle with a dozen militia manning a roadblock? It would be possible to treat the whole advance to the compound and breakthrough attempt as a series of detailed combats but they are better used as a dramatic backdrop to more focussed actions.

The Referee should emphasise the roleplaying parts of these incidents in detail but large combats are best abstracted. Use the Battles table to determine the outcome of each phase of combat, applying a DM for the size of the Mounted Constabulary force with the Travellers. This begins at DM+6, since the Travellers are with a force of around 100 troopers. As the force takes casualties this DM is reduced until it reaches +0. This does not mean every one of the troopers is dead or wounded but they will lose heart and fall back to harass the enemy with long-range fire once their DM reaches +0 unless rallied with a Leadership check and some good roleplaying. Adding government soldiers picked up along the way increases the modifier by DM+1.

Encounters

2D+DMs	Encounter	Notes
0 or less	Rebel Force	A force of 3D rebel gunmen is manning a roadblock or securing a building nearby. They will fire on anyone they think is pro-government.
1-3	Rebel Patrol	A force of 1D+2 rebel gunmen is sighted nearby. They will flee from a superior force after firing a few token shots.
4-6	Sniper	A rifleman in a nearby building opens fire on the force. If the Travellers decide to bypass the sniper he is able to take 1D shots before the force is past. Every second shot is at the Travellers; make an Average (8+) attack for 3D damage if hit. The other shots wound or kill troopers.
7-9	Citizens	A group of 2D frightened citizens (or possibly looters pretending to be frightened citizens) is encountered. They will approach and ask for (or demand) assistance.
10-12	Friendly Stragglers	A group of 1D+2 government troops, low on ammunition and possibly wounded, is encountered. They ask for assistance and any information the Travellers have. They are not in a condition to join the breakthrough attempt.
13 or more	Friendly Troops	A force of 3D government soldiers is encountered. They are cut off from their chain of command and just doing the best they can. The soldiers can be convinced to join the breakthrough attempt. Note that there is a possibility of a tragedy here, if either group is trigger-happy or nervous.

Whenever the force gets involved in a fight, including the final breakthrough attempt, each phase of combat is resolved using the Battles table. The Travellers may use Tactics (military) as a DM if they have the skill and the force DM should be applied. An additional DM is applied depending on the nature of the enemy force.

Snipers are not resolved using this method. Counter-sniping or building clearance operations should be played out with the normal combat rules.

Rebel Patrols can most likely be swept aside. DM+2 applies.

Rebel Forces are subject to DM+0.

Rebel Positions are subject to DM-2

Strong Rebel Positions are subject to DM-4

Battles

2D+DMs	Result
0-	Repelled with severe casualties. The force loses -1D from its DM and must rally before attacking again.
1-3	Repelled with casualties. The force loses -D3 from its DM and must rally before attacking again.
4-6	Repelled. The force loses -1 from its DM and must rally before attacking again.
7-9	Expensive victory. The force clears opposition but suffers a reduction of -1 to its DM.
10-12	Victory. The force pushes aside or routs the opposition. A few casualties are suffered but not enough to affect the DM.
13+	Glorious overrun! The enemy is swept aside for virtually no loss.

Each time an attack is made, every Traveller has a chance to be injured. D3 attacks are made against each by a generic rebel rifleman. If hit, the Traveller suffers 3D damage from a rifle bullet. They might never see who fired it. Vehicles will offer some protection but may become seriously damaged. These attacks are made against the Travellers even if they overrun their enemies and there will always be casualties among the troopers or crew from *Skander*. However, a force that flees straight away will not endanger the Travellers to any significant degree. Thus an enemy patrol that sights 100 cavalymen coming down the road and flees into an alley after firing a few token shots will not endanger Travellers unless they decide to pursue.

In all probability, any rebel patrols or small forces encountered will be swept aside without significant loss, allowing the Travellers and their allies to reach the

assembly point with an intact force. From there, the only option is to race through the rebel cordon around the government buildings, using speed and firepower to clear a path and avoiding becoming bogged down in a protracted fight. If the force is repelled at any point it must attack again, possibly suffering additional casualties.

There are two or perhaps three phases to the final assault. First the Travellers must get through the rebels' outer positions. This requires attacking a Rebel Position (with DM-2 on the Battles table) to be able to approach the main positions. They are more formidable; breaking through requires tackling a Strong Rebel Position. If the Travellers and their allies are in a bad way at this point, the Referee should allow them to enter the compound under covering fire from cheering defenders. However, if the force is still largely intact there is a final obstacle to overcome.

The rebels have just launched a major assault from a different direction and breached the compound's outer defences; gunmen are pouring through the gap and the defence is starting to collapse. It might be possible to hold out for a short time in the buildings but they will be reduced one-by-one. The only chance is to counterattack and hope the defenders can rally in time.

If the Travellers decide to charge at the incoming gunmen, their initial attack is subject to DM-4 on the Battles table. Any 'victory' result means the counterattack has stemmed the tide for a while but rebels are still pushing in. The Travellers need to achieve three victory results or one overrun to push the rebels back out through the breach. This will be costly no doubt but the defenders will rally and begin pushing back as well. A gallant failure sees the remnant of the force driven into the buildings of the planetary capital, in a desperate position but not yet defeated.

It is quite possible for the Travellers' force to heroically batter itself to pieces and still fail to break through the cordon or push back the rebels. However, even this will take pressure off the defenders and perhaps allow the compound to hold out long enough. The fight should be made as epic as possible by the Referee; a headlong affair of bugles, flashing sabres and shots from horseback. Travellers may be leaning out of their vehicle windows to shoot at rebel gunmen or crashing through improvised roadblocks. The more noise, chaos and destruction going on around the Travellers, the better.

Once inside the compound of the buildings, the Travellers may have to explain who they are. They will find themselves handing out boxes of ammunition from their trucks to grateful defenders or joining them on an

improvised barricade. This is a moment to savour for anyone but the typical Sword Worlder lives for this sort of thing. The thanks of a weary defender are worth more than the mission's paycheque to a true adventurer of the Sword Worlds.

Of course, getting into the compound is not the end of the matter. The Travellers are now surrounded and more or less trapped. They only have to hold out until help arrives and there are two ways that can happen.

If the Travellers can get Lady Estrella inside the compound, then within seconds of her comm call for assistance the incandescent streaks of a meteoric assault begin to appear in the upper atmosphere. Minutes later, battle dress-equipped Imperial marines are on the ground, securing a five-block perimeter around Lady Estrella's assumed position. This seems to have been rather vaguely calculated; rebel units come under attack at a considerable distance from the compound.

Without Lady Estrella, the Travellers will have to fight to defend the compound until the first grav-mobile units arrive. They will then witness (or join) a counterattack by a mix of grav and horsed cavalry, routing the revolutionaries. Either way, the government has managed to retain control of the capital and *Skander* is safe.

Aftermath

Once the rebellion is broken at the capital, it fizzles out elsewhere. Sundstrom and his party are safe enough, although they have had an exciting time of it. Sundstrom himself will be pleased if the Travellers acted to help the local government – he would rather deal with a grateful and stable world government than a band of rebels who might turn on one another next week.

Whichever side won the fight for governance over Bularia needs offworld trade, enabling Magnus Sundstrom to swing a deal on very good terms. Several hundred tons of TL10 machinery and equipment are delivered to Bularia in return for a large sum of money and some locally produced goods. More importantly, Sundstrom obtains a contract to buy yellow leaf at a low price and has 200 tons of it aboard *Skander*. Being a seasoned merchant, Sundstrom does not merely intend to sell it at a profit; he wants to create a demand on other worlds that he can

service at a better price than other captains. This is a key difference between a merchant cruiser and a small tramp trader. Sundstrom has an eye to quick profit of course but is more concerned with building a solid trade run that will bring in a good return for years.

The commanding officer of *Mnasippus* declares conditions to be back to normal as soon as he is able. He does not inquire too closely about the activities of 'Freikorps *Skander*' but makes it plain that the actions of a mercenary group on-planet are a local matter and outside his remit. Lady Estrella returns to her ship, where Ensign Estrella Harben-Erataria will have to explain why she was unable to return to her post during the crisis.

By the time *Skander* is ready to move on, the rebellion is being mopped up. The Travellers have not made friends as such in the crew of *Mnasippus* but if they acted honourably they will be treated with proper respect and even escorted to the jump point – unnecessary as that is.

As to Magnus Sundstrom, he will want to talk to the Travellers about their decisions and why they made them. They were right to side with the government, he decides, since rebels tend to be unpredictable. Even if they want to act honourably, any revolution creates chaos and chaos is bad for business. Of course, if the Travellers were able to record any data on how Imperial marines conduct an assault, that would please Sundstrom greatly. Insights into how an Imperial starship commander tiptoed along a line between obeying his orders and supporting a friendly government would also be welcome.

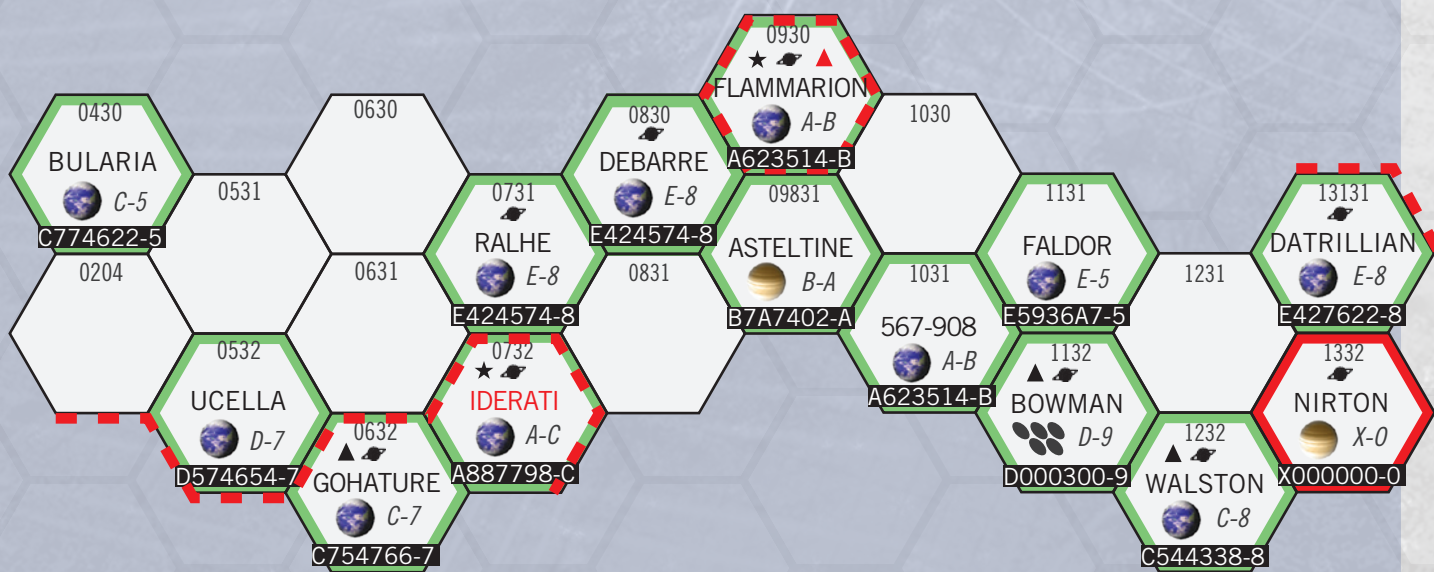
If the Travellers' actions were overall honourable, they qualify for checks to increase their Esteem and Satisfaction. If they assisted the planetary government and succeeded, both Esteem and Satisfaction are increased one level instead unless they are already Good or better in which case the Travellers may check for an increase as normal. Checks for a decrease are possible if the Travellers failed to act in a decisive manner or simply looked out for themselves during the crisis.

In all, Sundstrom decides, Bularia was a successful exploit – if an unexpectedly eventful one. Next, he plans to transit to the Bowman Arm of the Spinward Main, where there is real money to be made!

THE BOWMAN DECEPTION

The Bowman Deception is the second chapter of *Skandersvik*. It continues from the events of *Freikorps Skander* at Bularia, beginning as the merchant cruiser *Skander* leaves Bularia in the Darrian subsector. Although there may have been losses among the crew, little has changed. The ship may be short-handed and Travellers may have been promoted into positions of greater responsibility but the mission goes on.

This chapter of *Skandersvik* sees the ship transit onto the Bowman Arm of the Spinward Main and head trailingwards. The adventure climax takes place at Nirton, where the Travellers descend to the surface and investigate a crashed starship that might have been part of Grand Admiral Denisov's fleet.



- Gas Giant
- B-6** Starport Class & Tech Level
- ★ Imperial Naval Base
- ▲ Imperial Scout Base
- ★ Other Naval Base

- Planet (dry)
- Planet (water present)
- Asteroids
- ▲ Imperial Scout Way Station

- Secure System
- Amber Zone
- Red Zone
- Imperium

There are several ports of call along the way, with the possibility of additional incidents and adventures at any of them. Referees should remember that whilst it is entirely possible to jump from one port to the next making trade rolls and nothing else, there is potentially far more to this chapter than rushing to the climax. Interactions with the crew, side adventures (and misadventures) and odd little moments that occur along the way will create a deeper and more vibrant experience for the Travellers. They may be pleased with the Credits they make in trade or the loot they discover but what makes roleplaying games a unique experience is the chance to live in a world of adventure.

If the Referee and Travellers become immersed in the world then what matters at the end of the adventure might not be the payoff at all. What they will remember is that last night on Asteltine, with everyone singing together in celebration or the funeral of a fallen comrade. They will talk not of a successful trade role that got them a big profit on some computer components but of misadventures on motorcycles and outwitting some Imperials who thought they were being clever. *Skandersvik* means 'expedition of the *Skander*' and it is the expedition – the adventure – that is the payoff... not the Credits in the bank at the end.

The Referee should build on whatever minor incidents occur along the way, perhaps expanding some into adventures that might lead to unexpected places. Magnus Sundstrom had a plan when he left port but he is an adventurer at heart. There is no reason why the projected cruise down the Bowman Arm might not become a foray out into the Trojan Reach sector if there is a profit to be made. The mission could be extended almost indefinitely, with the scripted parts of this adventure becoming the focus of a later cruise if *Skander* returns home by a different route. Sufficient detail about the ship and her crew are provided for the vessel to become a mobile adventuring base for many years of game time.

Note: The Referee should include the liner *Glisten Advantage* among ship encounters along the way. Once the ship has appeared a second time, the Travellers will remember it, giving *Glisten Advantage* more significance when she is encountered for the final time in the final chapter.

DISTRICT 268

District 268 was given its designation by Imperial explorers in the early 600s and is today generally known by that name, although some charts refer to it by other names including Collace subsector or Vilgot's Reach. The latter refers to an early Sword

Worlds exploration captain who charted the region. The Imperial name is most widely used, even in the Sword Worlds, but there are those who insist on using one of the other designations.

District 268 is influenced by the large economies of Imperial space to trailing, notably Glisten, but is almost entirely independent. The major world of Collace is generally pro-Imperial in outlook and opposed by a business group named the Trexalon Technical Consortium (TTC) based on nearby Trexalon. Relations between the two vary from frosty to a state of 'trade war' that stops just short of open military conflict. Both powers are widely rumoured to be engaging in covert operations and support of corsair groups and known to try to influence traders and companies operating in the region.

The Trexalon-Collace situation is mainly confined to the rimward end of the subsector. Both have contacts and a desire to influence the rest of the subsector but this is mainly a matter of local agents operating on a shoestring budget. Similarly, the Imperium maintains a network of agents in District 268. The term 'agent' in this case does not refer to intelligence operatives but to someone who acts on behalf of a distant power. Some agents are involved in espionage, and all are concerned with information gathering, but for the most part the Imperial agents are merchants or governmental advisors who are openly (but not always obviously) associated with the Imperium. The Darrians and Sword Worlders also have a few agents in place but not on any great scale.

Resources are very limited for all these powers in the coreward end of District 268. There are no major intelligence networks or response teams; just whatever the agent-in-place can bring to bear. These agents are, for the most part, not sworn servants of their state; they are individuals conducting their own business in the region who also act on behalf of a power. Reliability and commitment to the aims of the parent state can vary considerably; many agents take on the role solely because it brings enhanced status, a salary, or other benefits, and can be used to gain an advantage in the agent's own endeavours. However, agents have obligations that cannot be entirely shirked if they are to keep their status, so even the least enthusiastic can be cajoled or bargained into assisting – at least to some degree.

THE BOWMAN ARM

The Bowman Arm has been described as the least important part of the Spinward Main and indeed many people would be surprised to hear it was a part at all. The Spinward Main snakes across the Spinward Marches, providing a jump-1 link between the major markets of the region. Its coreward arm connects to Zhodani space

whilst the most rimward spur runs all the way through to the Five Sisters. This branches away from the Bowman Arm at Caliburn but astrographic and economic-political factors ensure the Bowman section of the Spinward Main sees much less traffic than the rest.

A string of undeveloped worlds, some of them in Sword Worlds space, makes the transit from the 'main of the Main' – as the most-travelled section is sometimes known – into the Bowman Arm a tedious and unprofitable business. There are few major ports on the Bowman Arm, making this transit even less attractive. As a result, Imperial traders have not developed the potential markets of the region to any great degree.

The Bowman Arm does see a modest amount of traffic headed between Darrian and Imperial space, or connecting the Imperial outposts in the Five Sisters. Ships also transit rimward to District 268 and beyond into the Trojan Reach but to these vessels the arm is a route rather than a place to conduct business.

Imperial Activities

The Bowman Arm is of little interest to the Imperium, except inasmuch as it provides a convenient route into the Five Sisters and around Sword Worlds space to the Darrian Confederation. This would not be of any great importance were it not for the need to maintain the naval blockade around Andor and Candory in the Five Sisters. The Imperial Navy does not respond to questions about why it feels the need to support a ring of naval bases and heavy patrols around these systems, although Droyne presence on these two worlds is an obvious possibility.

Imperial presence is quite heavy, requiring regular shipments of supplies, spares and replacement personnel. Some move by way of individual ships but it is not uncommon to see convoys of several large naval auxiliaries moving along the Bowman Arm with a small escort force. This is mostly for form's sake; there is little prospect of a group of armed naval supply ships being attacked. Convoy runs are sometimes accompanied by an anti-piracy sweep, in which case the escort force is augmented by several patrol vessels that detach to carry out their own missions and re-join later.

Imperial convoys generally avoid backwater starports, preferring to conduct gas giant refuelling. Routes are also varied as a matter of operational security, so it is

rarely possible to predict whether a system will have a convoy passing through or not. The exception is Asteltine, whose Class B port is largely dependent on navy money to maintain its level of service. Asteltine is a port of call for most convoys and vessels heading back towards Imperial space and considered important to Imperial interests despite it laying outside the territory of the Imperium.

THE BOWMAN DECEPTION

After leaving Bularia starport, *Skander* sets course for Ucella in the Five Sisters subsector. On the first evening in jump, Magnus Sundstrom calls a gathering of all non-essential personnel. In part a commendation ceremony, in part remembrance of those who fell and in part a debriefing, the gathering is likely to be a sombre affair – especially if the crew took casualties.

Magnus Sundstrom outlines his plan from this point onward. It has not changed to any great degree; he intends to continue his cruise along the Bowman Arm, to seek profit and long-term deals, and gather information on Imperial activities in the region. If necessary, replacement crewmembers will be picked up along the way but in the meantime any gaps will just have to be covered. Some crewmembers receive new responsibilities or are elevated in rank and any reshuffling of watches or work groups is announced.

If any of the Travellers were put out of commission or new Travellers need to be introduced, Sundstrom announces that before leaving Bularia he took on a couple of people who wanted to get offworld in a hurry. Almost any sort of Traveller can be added to the crew at this point, although they will need some way to make themselves useful. It may be that a theoretical scientist ends up working as an assistant steward or deck hand if they lack suitable skills but as the adventure unfolds new Travellers will have many opportunities to earn a place among the crew.

The first destination is Ucella, an unremarkable backwater world where Sundstrom hopes to create a demand for robust, easy-to-use Sword Worlds machinery. He does not expect trouble... but then he did not expect trouble at Bularia, either.

UCELLA

D574654-7 Ag Ni
Intelligence Value: 4

Although a little dry, Ucella has an agricultural economy. Exports are limited; much of what is produced supports the four million or so inhabitants or shipped out in return for industrial and technological items. Likewise, the basic starport brings in only a little hard currency, ensuring Ucella remains a backwater. Other worlds in the region benefit from traffic between the Five Sisters and the rest of Imperial space but there is little reason for vessels to call at Ucella.

The journey to Ucella is largely uneventful, providing time to rest, recover from injuries and make plans for the future. There are no other ships in port when *Skander* arrives, which is perhaps the reason why the port director greets *Skander's* crew in person. The atmosphere is polite rather than friendly; there is some slight bias against Sword Worlders in the minds of local people as a result of past incidents with crews who were... less than respectful.

However, a trade ship is a trade ship and *Skander* is a big one. A large crew represents a lot of money spent in bars and restaurants, and offworld merchants in town means the chance to buy and sell on a scale not normally seen on Ucella. There is no 'startown' as such on this world; the landing field is located at the capital. The few ships that visit use the amenities of the capital, such as they are. Thus customs checks are minimal and the port director is keen to get the command crew planetside to meet the local merchants.

There is little to be bought on Ucella, other than agricultural produce. Despite atmospheric taint, the world is capable of growing a variety of crops and raising herds for market. The Imperial Navy routinely buys up a year's production of a particular item, sending ships at intervals to pick it up. This keeps the local economy solvent and allows some forward planning but the Imperium does not offer very good prices. Sundstrom is quite sure he can do better and has some equipment on offer that might be useful to local industry.



As Sundstrom and his senior officers begin their negotiations, the Travellers are free to do as they please on Ucella. If they choose to tour the bars or sights of Ucella's capital, they will be able to find a good time despite the limited resources. They might be diligent enough to perform information gathering instead or perhaps alongside their other activities. If so, their attention will be drawn to one of the local merchants who, oddly, does not seem to be trying to get a piece of the action. Far from clamouring for offworld business like his peers, this particular merchant does not seem to be taking much notice at all of the newly arrived trade ship.

The Travellers will encounter one or more friendly locals in their activities, who strike up a conversation and perhaps tag along with the offworlders. These people know the best bars and eating places, and can guide the Travellers to seriously under-priced yet good quality dinners, wines and the like. These, and the merchant, are connected. The merchant is Alxendr Vinkov, a Sword Worlds expatriate who now serves as the Imperial agent on Ucella. He left Sacnoth ahead of allegations of fraud and malfeasance, which whilst untrue were damaging and ended up acting as an agent for the Imperium. This was in part out of spite towards his former home and in part because he had no better options.

Vinkov is trying to obtain information on the Travellers and their ship. His operatives are locals who work for him and have had no training in espionage beyond reading a few required texts. Their questions are thus rather clumsy and their intentions easy enough to deduce. It will become obvious before long that they are up to *something* but the Travellers might conclude they are trying to fleece the crew of *Skander* rather than realising they are gathering information just like the Travellers.

Vinkov has standing orders to obtain information on any Sword Worlds ship that comes through and impede any attempt to increase influence. Sundstrom's plan to sell useful equipment at affordable prices in order to create a demand fits that description, so Vinkov intends

to derail it if he can. He is currently working through years of agreements and transactions in order to find a precedent and planning on presenting a legal challenge to the sale of the machinery. This rests on a vaguely-worded agreement to consider Imperial companies based in the Five Sisters as 'preferred suppliers' and permit them a chance to make a counter-bid before any significant sale. This means waiting several weeks, which obviously *Skander* cannot do. According to Vinkov's legal argument, the sale cannot proceed without fulfilling this requirement.

The challenge is legally shaky but sufficient to halt the sale of equipment to Ucella's government unless he is countered in some way. One option would be to prevent him getting to the meeting where negotiations are taking place. If he cannot present his challenge, the deal will be agreed. If the Travellers do not stop Vinkov, they will have to demolish his argument. A quick search of transaction records – which are publicly available – indicates the precedent exists. More detailed research suggests that this is 'demonstrable practice' but not legally required. If the Travellers can convince the local merchants' consortium that they are not bound by law as Vinkov suggests, they can be swayed by a persuasive argument.

This incident might play out as something of a courtroom drama, with legal arguments tossed back and forth – or made up on the spot. It might even degenerate into a fistfight or kidnapping attempt. Much depends on the Travellers' chosen approach. If they are successful (and avoid trouble with local law enforcement if their methods were 'robust') the Travellers will permit Sundstrom's deal to go ahead, which allows a check to see if Satisfaction increases. The deal is modest but will create an opportunity for further sales in the future. Failure will not attract direct displeasure unless it is obvious the Travellers failed to do something obvious. However, Sundstrom will be annoyed that his deal fell through and may be difficult to deal with over the next few days.

GOHATURE

C754766-7 Ag
Intelligence Value: 9

Gohature is Imperial territory. Indeed, it is a possession of neighbouring Iderati. On the other hand, Gohature has a population of around 50 million and a reasonable starport, so could offer significant trade possibilities. The world has a thin atmosphere and enough water to be a major agricultural exporter. Much of its produce is sent directly to Iderati but there is sufficient surplus that quite large lots are sometimes available at the starport.

Grain and vegetable crops can be stored for some time but higher-value items such as meat tend to be available in small quantities unless a delivery has been requested ahead of time. Magnus Sundstrom intends to take on a large quantity of frozen meat for sale as a luxury item later in the cruise. He details the Travellers to make sure the deal goes smoothly, whilst the rest of the crew undertake commercial operations at the starport.

Skander is entering Imperial space at Gohature and is thus subject to an enhanced customs, spaceworthiness and regulation-compliance check. This will be carried out over the course of several days – in no great hurry – while the ship is on the ground. Everything is legal and above board unless the crew or the Travellers have done something unexpected but as a large and well-armed ship *Skander* will attract attention. This is not a major problem but will tie up the command crew for a while. In the interim, Sundstrom has purchased a large amount of high-quality meat... but there is a catch.

The local landowners are happy to fulfil a big order but have to bring in their herds and then drive them to the slaughter/packaging complex near the starport. They have insisted on payment for the beasts they set out with rather than the weight of meat delivered.



Sundstrom is familiar with the gambit; losses on a drive are inevitable and this clause protects the herd owners – but also allows them to ‘lose’ a few extra animals between the certified assembly of the herd and its arrival at the plant. Sundstrom’s solution is to send some of his crew along on the drive as ‘liaison’, with instructions to be on the lookout for attempts to defraud him. The odd animal might be lost; it happens. What Sundstrom is concerned about is groups being discreetly directed away from the main herd and returned to their pastures or taken to a different market.

The herd will leave its assembly point at the town of Farrahill in two days and be in transit for five days after that. The Travellers will accompany it as far as reception at the processing plant and then return to the ship. This sounds straightforward but it may not be; the locals are friendly to the Travellers but concerned about their abilities to take part in a cattle drive. There will be hints that it might be safer for the Travellers to just go to the end point and wait – who’d know?

Some of the drovers use electrically powered motorcycles, recharged from the larger vehicles at need. Others ride kian or horses, whilst the leaders of the drive travel in a group of air-conditioned off-road trucks and SUVs. The herders are monitored from these vehicles using simple equipment purchased offworld. The Travellers are invited to ride with the leaders if they want to go along but if they ask will be provided with a riding animal or motorcycle.

If the Travellers ride in the trucks they will have only the information the repeaters show them. It is a simple matter to cut some of the herders out of the feed from time-to-time while they lead a few animals away to a suitable holding point such as a well-watered meadow. They will then be picked up by other herders who are not part of the drive and written off as ‘inevitable trail losses’. The Travellers could confound this by hacking the data feed to get the full information or if they are more adventurous they might be out on motorcycles and riding animals. If spotted, herders will bring the ‘strays’ back to the main group.

There are many ways this could all go horribly wrong. Sword Worlders on motorcycles in the outback... little more need be said about that. There is also the possibility of a confrontation escalating out of control. However, this is only likely if the Travellers are undiplomatic. The drovers are not hardened criminals; they are trying to hoodwink the client and increase profits by effectively selling the same animals twice. If caught but given a ‘polite out’ they will make obviously flimsy excuses in a sort of tacit acceptance they have been outplayed at their own game. Only if the Travellers are immediately aggressive will things get out of control.

If the Travellers range out beyond the main herd and prevent groups of animals being hidden away, the drive reaches its destination with some of the lowest losses on record. The landowners will be philosophical about this – a bit of embezzlement is part of the game and they were outplayed. The deal is still fair though. If the Travellers stayed with the main convoy but managed to spot some irregularities, losses will be higher but still below average. If on the other hand they allowed themselves to be hoodwinked losses are quite high, cutting into Sundstrom’s profits. There is nothing he can do about this but he will take the time to explain to the Travellers that they have been politely swindled and clearly have a lot to learn about the merchant business.

Low losses, on the other hand, will impress Sundstrom. The ideal outcome is that the Travellers ‘play the game’ with polite innuendo, making sure the locals know they have been rumbled but allowing them to pretend it was just a mistake. This sort of thing is common in larger-scale business of the sort Sundstrom is involved in and if it seems the Travellers are learning the unspoken rules he will be inclined to give them ever more responsibility. He plans to retire for good after this trip and is seeking a successor to continue his work – and not incidentally make him a lot more money. The mission is thus not just about trade and commerce but also Sundstrom’s legacy.

Success in cutting the level of embezzlement will permit a check for an increase in Satisfaction; being swindled calls for a check to reduce it but one way or another, *Skander* takes on a cargo of high-quality frozen meat at Gohature and makes ready for the jump to Iderati.

IDERATI

A887798-C Ag Ga Ri
Intelligence Value: 24

With a dense atmosphere and plenty of water, Iderati is a comfortably habitable world, which produces more than enough food for its 20 million or so inhabitants. It exports some of its own agricultural produce and also bulk foodstuffs brought in from its possession at Gohature. The primary client for these exports is the Imperial Navy, which maintains a large ration-pack plant on Iderati. This plant supplies the naval bases at Iderati and Flammarion as well as the forces in the Five Sisters. It is standard policy to create local sources for necessary items but ship a proportion of the produce from each to other regions. Thus no base is dependent on food from a single source and deficiencies in local production are covered from elsewhere.

The Iderati facility sells bulk shipboard rations to the civilian community through a variety of outlets, although this represents only a small fraction of the amount produced. The civilian economy is important throughout the region as a provider of TL12 goods and it is this rather than food that interests Magnus Sundstrom. He hopes to take on some technological goods for sale further down the line – perhaps even back home in the Sword Worlds – and create a market for yellow leaf tea from Bularia.

Iderati has an Imperial Navy base and is well secured, with traffic regulated and the approaches to the highport patrolled by gunboats and fighters. Sundstrom is keen to make a good impression, so whilst the crew engage in last-minute squaring-away of pretty much everything, the pilots are under pressure to make a clean approach and smooth landing. Once landed in the main docking area, the crew are reminded that everything they do and say is 'on show' before Sundstrom sets out to meet with local brokers and merchants.

The Travellers are not given a specific brief at Iderati but tasked as usual with general trade and information gathering duties. However, before they can get started their plans are interrupted by an Imperial Navy lieutenant with a warrant and squad of marines. The warrant is quite lengthy but essentially it states that as a non-Imperial vessel suspected of trafficking in illegal weaponry, *Skander* is subject to an enhanced inspection. This is legal and within the rights of the Imperials to do. It is also likely to annoy Sundstrom and his crew.

The 'suspicion of trafficking' is not an accusation but it does give the Imperials the right to search Sundstrom's vessel. The suspicion arises from nothing more than the fact that *Skander* has visited Dorianna, which exports

nuclear munitions on very loose terms. This is a weak pretext but is sufficient to obtain an inspection warrant from a friendly port authority. Unless the Travellers can do something about it their ship will be subject to an extremely intrusive search.

The first chance the Travellers have is to challenge the legality of the warrant. This is not a simple matter since it has been lawfully obtained but there are technicalities that could be used. The fact that *Skander* has already been inspected – at Gohature – might be enough if the Travellers have good Advocate and Diplomacy skills and are able to make a case to the port authority to withdraw the warrant. They have an ace up their sleeve if they think of it; Gohature is a possession of Iderati, so technically (this requires some fancy legal footwork to 'prove') *Skander* has been searched 'at Iderati' already. This argument will work, although the Imperials will still try to persuade the Travellers to consent to a search 'to demonstrate goodwill'. An attempt to challenge the warrant can continue after the search has begun and indeed Sundstrom would be delighted with a situation where the Travellers haughtily order the Imperial Navy out of his ship just after they start the inspection.

If the Travellers are not able to deflect the warrant, a team from the port authority arrives soon afterward, along with more naval personnel and marines to secure the perimeter. The crew are required to stow all personal weapons and accept Imperial Marines stomping around their ship escorting the inspection crew. The marines tend to act as cogs in the machine; uncommunicative and unyielding but not openly hostile. The inspection crew, on the other hand, are rather arrogant. They demand rather than ask to see inside inspection panels or cargo containers and whilst their demands are legal they are phrased in an undiplomatic way.

It is unlikely there will be anything illegal aboard *Skander* – at least anything Sundstrom knows about. He would not be foolish enough to buy nukes and bring them into an Imperial naval base system. However, the crew may have carried out a little illicit trade or have items they are not supposed to. There is also the question of how diligent the Travellers were about the tidy-up as the ship entered port. If they were lackadaisical it can be assumed the crew were too and the inspection party will see a ship that is run in a rather slovenly manner. Whilst this is not going to cause legal complications, it will upset Sundstrom who would much prefer the snotty Imperials to see how a proper ship is run.

There is also a chance that the inspection team will antagonise some of the crew and there will be incidents to defuse. Many of the inspection officials are condescending and just plain rude to the Sword Worlders, who they clearly consider to be inferior. The Referee should portray the Imperials as a bit full of themselves and prone to lord it over the crew. A 19-year-old technician lecturing the chief engineer of a starship about proper adherence to regulations will annoy everyone around but there is nothing the Travellers can do about this attitude. At least, not directly.

The inspection team will naturally find a long list of technical issues and discrepancies that they insist must be corrected. This will put the crew to a lot of unnecessary trouble and annoy them but in this case the Imperials may end up playing into the Travellers' hands. They are legally entitled to download the ship's public logs, which have already been presented to the port authority as normal. However, a demand to access the private shipping and commercial logs is not supported by the warrant. The Imperials will try to claim it is but without specific allegations of wrongdoing this constitutes an 'unwarranted intrusion into legitimate business' according to Imperial interstellar law.

If the Travellers are able to use the Imperials' own laws against them, they can block some of the demands and more importantly defuse much of the tension among the crew. Rather than an intrusion into their lives to be resented, the inspection may become a challenge match between the Travellers and the inspection crew. Bets start being made, with crewmembers watching the fun on internal monitors or finding reasons to be nearby. A particularly good point scored by the Travellers might elicit cheers, which will infuriate the Imperials... who of course can do nothing about it.

Many aspects of the inspection can be challenged either on a technical or legal basis. Even if the Travellers cannot win on all points they may be able to defer some for further investigation after the legalities are cleared up. For example, *Skander* was built in the Sword Worlds and has documentation to prove she meets all requirements

of spaceworthiness. If the Imperials challenge the safety of wiring according to their own regulations, there is a jurisdiction issue here. Imperial regulations may well apply in an Imperial port but *Skander* is a properly registered Sword Worlds ship and therefore Sword Worlds sovereign territory. Besides, when she leaves port is not on Imperial territory so her homeport regulations apply. So are the Imperials saying the wiring is unsafe here but not five kilometres away? Such questions are above the pay grade of a mere Imperial Navy lieutenant and have to be passed to a higher authority. Until a ruling is made by Iderati's courts the power of a warrant remains questionable and the Travellers are within their rights to insist the inspection team leave the issue alone.

If the Travellers are able to 'defeat' the inspection the whole team will have to withdraw, probably to the jeers of *Skander's* crew. Even a failed defence will attract the admiration of crewmembers who recognise a good attempt on their behalf. Failure to challenge the inspection will result in the crew having to spend days dealing with minor discrepancies like badly stowed soup cans and an intermittent fault in a lighting circuit. The Imperials will find every single excuse they can to poke around *Skander*. It is obvious that this is a combination of routine harassment – which is not uncommon in Imperial space – and information gathering.

Sundstrom will be pleased with a solid attempt to resist the inspection and delighted if the Travellers are able to send the Imperials packing. He will file a protest but is more interested in getting on with the voyage. He has concluded a deal to deliver a large proportion of his yellow leaf cargo to Iderati's merchants and obtain more in the future, so the visit has been a commercial success even if it was aggravating for the crew.

Iderati offers opportunities to increase or decrease Esteem and Satisfaction and gather a considerable amount of intelligence if the Travellers are clever about it. Sundstrom does not meet with much success in trading, which is more or less what he expected. The Travellers may of course manage to buy or sell some cargo through the starport brokers.

DEBARRE

B854123-9
Intelligence Value: 13

Magnus Sundstrom has selected Debarre as his next port of call, bypassing Ralhe as a poor prospect. Ralhe has a population of around 800,000 but is balkanised with a very rudimentary starport. It might be possible to make some small profits there, and Sundstrom is always willing to listen to a reasoned argument for a side trip, but overall he prefers to press on to Debarre. Not that he has much interest in the world itself; Debarre has a population of around 80 people and no industrial or economic base. However, it does have a good-quality orbital port that sees a considerable number of passing ships. It should thus be possible to conduct some trade there and the facilities will provide the crew with a chance for portside liberty.

The port at Debarre is busy, at least by the standards of the Bowman Arm. There is usually an Imperial Navy ship on patrol in the system and today is no exception. However, it is well out from the mainworld and apparently has no interest in *Skander*. Likewise the starport staff are not concerned about the ship's port of registry or the nationality of the crew. *Skander* is directed to a large docking bay and receives a competent service from the groundside crews.

Magnus Sundstrom announces to his crew that he intends to spend 10 days in port at Debarre. During this time he hopes to give each crewmember three days of liberty portside, although there may be alterations to this plan. The simplest way to do this is to allocate liberty by watches, which will leave the ship undermanned in some areas at any given time. However, Sundstrom does not anticipate any problems.

The Travellers will receive their allocated three days of liberty unless something goes wrong. This is unlikely but it is possible that crewmembers will get themselves into trouble or the Travellers will do something reckless. Assuming this is not the case the Travellers are free to do as they please, including visiting the surface of Debarre if they are so inclined. They will also be expected to conduct the usual information gathering operations and may engage in some trading if they please. Providing their conduct has been acceptable to date, Sundstrom will allocate the Travellers some cargo or funds to trade with on behalf of the ship. As before, the Travellers do not own these items or the profit from them but their contribution to the success of the cruise will likely result in a greater percentage of the final profits – and those profits will be higher than if they had not made the effort.

The Referee can make as much or as little as he pleases of the visit to Debarre. There is no scripted event here but that does not mean the Travellers will not make their own adventures along the way. At the end of the 10 days, Sundstrom announces some minor success in trading. He has bought a couple of cargoes and sold them on again at a small profit without taking them aboard *Skander* and has forged links with local merchant factors. Actual profits from sales were modest but acceptable. Between the lines he seems a little disappointed but of course could never admit that. If the Travellers made some good deals, this will cheer him up considerably.



ASTELTINE

B747402-A
Intelligence Value: 12

The next port of call is Asteltine, a non-Imperial world with a good starport. Asteltine has an unbreathable atmosphere and is a place people come to work rather than live. As a result, the population fluctuates around 20,000 and is composed of people whose origins vary considerably. Most of the residents are typical Imperial humans but there are small numbers of Darrians, Sword Worlders and Vargr, as well as various minor races at any given time. There is some tension between these groups.

While Asteltine itself is a fairly unpleasant world, the system supports a large belting and mining community. This was sufficient to support development of a decent starport, which employs nearly all of the world's inhabitants. The port is also used by ships plying the Spinward Main in the direction of the Five Sisters. For decades Asteltine's mining and processing industry has been a chaotic mess of small firms and entrepreneurial individuals but there are rumours that some of the larger corporations or even the megacorporations may want to move into the system now that access has become easier.

Asteltine, like Debarre, is a port of call for its starport rather than the mainworld. Magnus Sundstrom intends to investigate the mining and belting sector as clients for Sword Worlds goods and may take on high-value ore or metal ingots if the price is right. He is also open to whatever opportunities passing ships may provide during the three-day stopover.

Whilst Sundstrom is away making long-term deals, the Travellers will have the opportunity to conduct trade at the port. Just hours after *Skander* lands a large merchant convoy enters the system and heads for the port. This is not unusual in the Bowman Arm; a navy destroyer escorting a large supply ship was joined by several other ships for protection. This may make the Travellers wonder

if pirate activity is higher than usual but that is not the case. It is merely that the opportunity to travel together arose and on the frontiers that is always safer.

The arrival of the convoy, which contains several ships of varying sizes, creates an increase in the pace of mercantile activity at the port. The Travellers can be part of this if they choose. If they have an allocation of cargo space and funds, or cargo to sell, the Travellers may proceed at discretion. If not, Sundstrom may ask them to handle an equivalent segment of the ship's hold space and available cargo on a one-off basis. Either way, the Travellers are expected to turn a profit. If they choose to just make skill checks the Referee should resolve trade as normal but a Traveller group that roleplays meetings with merchants and captains should have the chance to make deals with DM+1/-1 or even +2/-2 on the trade tables.

As for Sundstrom, he returns from his meetings with news of good deals for high-value metals and minerals, and some sales to local mining operations. He is pleased with the outcome and takes pleasure in opening a shipping crate to reveal ingots of gold and platinum, which he says he got at a price 'not far short of armed robbery'.

Sundstrom's success (and that of the Travellers) is grounds to hold a celebration on the last night in port. Sundstrom shuts the entire ship down and takes everyone portside for a meal at a restaurant he has chartered for the evening. This should be a memorable occasion for the Travellers. The crew sing traditional songs together in an atmosphere of brotherhood. Sundstrom lavishly praises his men and the ship they serve. The self-appointed ship's skald recites some of his epic-but-mundane poetry about the heroic battle of a lowly deck-scrubber against crewmates with dusty boots. The latter might be even more relevant later in the cruise... but for tonight all is well and the crew are joyful.



ENOS

E35059B-4
Intelligence Value: 0

Enos is something of an oddity, being a member of the Sword Worlds Confederation yet lying far from the Confederation's heartland. Even just reaching Enos from the Sword Worlds is something of an undertaking given Sword Worlders technology and one that necessitated the use of deep-space refuelling points or tanker support for vessels making the crossing. This would make sense if Enos was worth anything but in truth it is not.

The world itself is thought to be a rogue body captured by its primary, Kaleshi, and is the only borderline-habitable world in a very empty star system. A population of some 700,000 or so individuals scrape a precarious living mining petrochemicals from the world's unusually large reserves. This is a hazardous undertaking, as seismic activity has weakened the rock trapping these deposits, causing occasional gas escapes that can be ignited by human activity or other causes. The largest petrochemical producing region is also the most dangerous; known as the Fire Sea, this area is about 400 kilometres across and characterised by thick black tar, which oozes to the surface and stains the land all around. Pockets of gas are sometimes ignited by lightning or other causes, which can in turn ignite the tar over a wide area.

Enos was colonised in the late 400s by refugees whose ship misjumped. The world population had to claw its way up from almost nothing and has never developed a significant technological or industrial base. Petrochemical exports bring in enough money to pay for necessary equipment but there is no cash for development and no incentive for outsiders to invest in the world. Thus Enos remains a backwater, bypassed by most trade ships moving along the Bowman Arm.

The carcass of a Sword Worlder base is present on Enos. Most of its personnel were removed as part of the treaty that ended the Fourth Frontier War, after which it fell into decline. The base is more or less abandoned, although its core functions are still functional. Part of the base has been re-occupied by a recruiting force, since service in the Confederation military is generally seen as desirable by the population of Enos. The remainder is periodically cleared out, ready for an expansion that is then postponed for whatever reason. Although Enos is theoretically the headquarters for a Confederation naval and military force, in practice the naval presence is limited to a patrol ship or two unless there is some reason to deploy larger forces to the Bowman Arm.

The arrival of *Skander* causes something of a stir on Enos, which to a great extent is what Magnus Sundstrom wanted when he included the world in his mission plan. There is little financial gain to be made here but there might be some political credit to be had. This means it is time for another show, with smart uniforms and crisply executed tasks. *Skander* will be staying for a few days, during which the crew are encouraged to go planetside, make friends and impress people.

There is little opportunity for the Travellers to make any money trading at Enos, which is fine by Sundstrom. In fact, he is planning on giving away some of his cargo. He provides some machinery and electronics to the port authority – such as it is – and the world government. Along with the equipment goes an agreement to help install it or fix up anything his crew can help with.

The Travellers will find themselves on technical or liaison duties, which includes a meeting with the world's ruler. Enos, like some of the other Sword Worlds, is ruled by a hereditary Hertug supported by a noble class of jarls who head the world's many clans. The Hertug has taken a personal interest in *Skander* and wants to visit the ship. Sundstrom handled the initial contact and met the Hertug at his palace but it falls to the Travellers to show a planetary king – albeit one with only a few hundred thousand low-tech subjects – around their vessel.

Hertug Ivan Aino is an example of a uniquely Sword Worlds personality type – arrogantly humble. He affects no airs and graces and encourages those around him to speak their minds even if they disagree with him but will not tolerate any form of challenge to his authority. This means his followers are welcome to tell him straight out they think his plan is idiotic but must obey if he chooses to go ahead anyway. He dresses plainly in outdoor clothing and does not stand out among his entourage until he speaks or otherwise commands the attention of the rest of the group.

Hertug Ivan and his entourage are not ignorant. Indeed, although Enos has a sustainable TL4 its elite have access to high-tech goods from the Confederation and are conversant with the principles of fusion power generation and artificial gravity. The Travellers will have the odd experience of pointing out *Skander's* main external gravitic systems to a king whilst a biplane takes off from the so-called starport. Ivan wants to impress the offworlders with his knowledge of starships but also likes to test people. He will sometimes call a component by the wrong name just to see if someone corrects him.

Those willing to speak up but who do it respectfully, are considered more worthy than sycophants who pretend he is right to avoid giving offence.

Hertug Ivan will insist on being shown around the ship and will deliberately take liberties from time-to-time. He will not take offence if someone objects to him plonking himself down in the pilot's chair on the bridge; it is their duty to do so and he knows it. However, he wants to see how far he can exert his power over the newcomers and establish his own authority through ignoring theirs. The tour of the ship might be something of a trial for the Travellers as a result but they must tread a fine line between diplomacy and maintaining proper boundaries.

Unless they antagonise Hertug Ivan, the crew of *Skander* receive a warm welcome at Enos, even before Magnus Sundstrom gifts the populace with expensive machinery. The crew will have to put in some hours getting equipment set up and showing locals how to use it but there will always be beers or a home-cooked dinner afterward, with new friends to be made every day. Although it is very dry, Enos is the sort of world many Sword Worlders aspire to live on or retire to. Hard work brings a modest standard of living but something more precious to the average Sword Worlder – the respect of an equally hard-working community. For those from the

crowded industrial centres like Gram or Dyrnwyn, Enos might seem like a paradise. Indeed, the Travellers may well meet people who sold everything they owned for a one-way ticket to TL4 Enos – and are glad they did.

The visit to Enos should go without trouble unless the Travellers do something unwise. If they are feeling really adventurous they might join a work crew harvesting petrochemicals near the Fire Sea, underground explosions of gas routinely flinging huge boulders – complete with a fiery trail of thick oil – into the air, are a sight worth seeing, although workers who have to dodge boulders whilst they make a living might have a different opinion.

After a few days on Enos it is time to board *Skander* once again. Sundstrom has managed to buy some petrochemicals but does not care about making money at Enos. He came to make an impression and he has done that. What use he might make of the goodwill the crew have earned here remains to be seen but he is satisfied with what has been achieved. The Travellers may check to increase or decrease Esteem and Satisfaction at the Referee's discretion. Handling Hertug Ivan well is grounds for a Satisfaction check but any other actions should also be taken into account.



BOWMAN

D000300-9
Intelligence Value: 5

The Bowman Belt is one of the wonders of the Spinward Marches. It is one of the most extensive planetoid belts ever discovered, occupying the equivalent of five planets' worth of orbits in one contiguous belt. The Bowman Belt is home to an unknown but probably large, number of Belter communities. There are also rumours of other inhabitants – pirates, renegade Sword Worlders and the like.

The only actual planet in the system is the gas giant Bowman Prime, whose moons are designated by Greek letters. Alpha is home to a tiny IISS base staffed by a dozen or so personnel, and Garrison Starport, the system's Class C port. The settlement around Garrison Starport has a permanent population of around 8,000 and generally a few hundred more transients who are not counted as citizens. An unknown, but large, number of people live in the remainder of the system but have never been subject to a meaningful census or survey.

Ling Standard products moved into the Bowman system some time ago and now have extensive operations in the Trojan asteroids. This has led to friction with the independent beltlers who work the system. There have already been incidents of violence and things look set to get worse. The beltlers of the Bowman Belt have a long tradition of independence and intolerance of interference in their affairs. Pirate bands who come to Bowman seeking rich pickings have often met a concerted, if loosely coordinated, response from the local population. It is rumoured that some of the pirate attacks are secretly sponsored by LSP in the hope of driving off the beltlers, whilst LSP has accused the beltlers of attacking its holdings under the guise of pirates.

Bowman is primarily famous as the site of Denisov's Last Stand, in which Grand Admiral Denisov's raiding fleet was finally broken and his secret base destroyed. Searches in the belt for his remains have never found anything conclusive but that does not stop the occasional party of hopefuls from trying. There is a small community of Sword Worlders inhabiting a planetesimal named the Denisov Memorial, who support and advise those who come seeking some trace of the admiral. These people are distinctly unfriendly to non-Sword Worlders but provide a warm welcome to any of their fellows who pass by. A handful of prospecting ships also operate out of Denisov Memorial, although these are commercial ships rather than treasure-seekers.

Skander's transit to Garrison Starport requires passing through part of the Bowman Belt. This is not especially hazardous unless the pilot is reckless, since even in a huge belt like Bowman the planetoids are a long way apart. However, the approach does require several wide course changes to stay clear of hazards that can result in a long, slow approach. The alternative is to take a slightly riskier course closer to hazardous areas. The chances of actually colliding with something are slim but there is a real chance of having to make an emergency alteration of vector that will make it obvious to anyone tracking *Skander* that her pilot and astrogator made mistakes. Naturally, Magnus Sundstrom wants to make an entrance, which means taking a least-time course without any obvious errors.

Arriving at Garrison Starport, the Travellers find it to be a typical small installation, with landing pads on the surface of the hosting planetoid. *Skander* is the biggest craft in port but there are numerous small prospecting ships and ore barges scattered around the smaller pads. The port's facilities are quite basic and unless a trader is looking for metal and mineral ores there is not much to buy and sell. Nevertheless, Sundstrom informs the Travellers that they have a few days in port to make whatever deals they can before departing aboard one of the shuttles.

Sundstrom is intent on visiting the Denisov Memorial, partly to pay his respects and partly to distract attention from the Travellers. Just before leaving he gives them a strip of flimsy printout with a name and location scribbled on it, cryptically telling the Travellers to go about their normal business but along the way to meet his contact without attracting attention and bring whatever he gives them back to the ship. The flimsy contains only the name Kurt Sannigan and a code number corresponding to a rented office close to the starport's administrative centre. Of course, in such a small port nothing is very far away but the admin centre is not somewhere most visitors would go.

Although the official Law Level for Bowman is 0, this does not apply to Garrison Starport. It is considered acceptable to carry a sidearm for self-defence, or maybe a small hand weapon, but heavier armament and obvious body armour are not permitted. The port's security staff will not allow anyone to leave the landing area festooned with guns, although weapons could perhaps be smuggled out. Penalties are severe for anyone caught with a powerful weapon in the port or its associated startown



and self-defence is not an excuse for using a prohibited weapon. The Travellers would be well advised to be discreet about any weaponry they take portside.

The Travellers should be able to figure out that Sundstrom wants them to be circumspect but in any case a successful Average (8+) Streetwise check will allow them to realise they are being followed. The Imperial agent in Garrison Starport has been tasked with keeping an eye on any crews from foreign powers that pass through the port as a matter of routine. She has little to work with in the way of intelligence personnel and generally relies on the good offices of the local Scout Service base. Thus the Travellers are being followed by a group of off-duty scouts with no experience of intelligence work.

The sheer ham-fistedness of these scouts is actually a problem for the Travellers. Whereas a trained intelligence operative would drop back if he thought he might be detected, these guys are unable to gauge their situation properly and will continue to follow even if it is virtually certain they will be spotted. The scouts simply follow the Travellers around, clumsily pretending to be browsing in stores or going into the same bar for a drink.

If the Travellers confront their 'tails', they will get a surprising response. The scouts will openly admit they are following the Travellers and even say who asked them to. It is obvious they are not taking the situation very seriously and not all that impressed at being ordered to follow yet another bunch of foreigners around. If the Travellers are not threatening, the scouts will suggest they all team up and make a night of it, blazing a trail around the bars and nightspots – such as they are – of Garrison Starport. This will actually make it quite easy for some of the Travellers to give their tails the slip once they are off their guard.

An alternative is fancy footwork down alleys and through disused buildings, in a port the Travellers do not know their way around. This has the potential to go awry, with the Travellers blundering around lost – perhaps even bumping into the people they are trying to get away from. If they do not lose their tails, the Travellers will be presented with another awkward situation. Either they or the scouts run into a gang of local troublemakers. The Referee should decide which way to play this; if the Travellers are attacked, the scouts will help them but then they will be stuck with their tails – who naturally want to find a bar and celebrate the incident. If the scouts get into a fight the Travellers could use the

chance to elude them but will later be confronted by an angry Imperial agent who wants to know why they stood by and let innocent people get hurt.

The incident will take the form of a confrontation with a bunch of drunks looking for trouble, which then escalates. This will present the Travellers with another set of problems. If what happens is nothing more than a fistfight the authorities will not take much interest once it is broken up. Escalating a brawl to lethal levels is another matter entirely. Garrison Starport security are used to beltors blowing off steam and so long as nobody is seriously harmed these matters tend to result in nothing more than a night in the cells to cool off. There is an unspoken etiquette to fights in the port as a result and killing someone will attract a lot of attention.

The Travellers would be well advised to limit their response if they get involved at all. Trigger-happy gun bunnies might land themselves in a great deal of trouble and derail their attempt to meet the contact. This of course assumes a patrol gets involved at all. An alleyway skirmish, perhaps followed by one or both sides fleeing, might not attract a response. Gunshots definitely will.

Exactly how many people are involved in the fight is for the Referee to decide. Numbers should be such that the scouts are outnumbered and likely to get beating but the Travellers can even the odds... or vice versa.

Assuming the Travellers negotiate this situation and manage to reach the address they have been given, they find it is the office of a minor local merchant who imports luxury foodstuffs, wines and spirits for those with the means to afford them. This brings him into contact with the upper echelons of society in the Bowman system and with a large number of merchant captains. Kurt Sannigan does not exist but asking about him either in person or by way of the office's out-of-hours contact system will result in directions to a nearby round-the-clock restaurant of distinctly mediocre quality, where the Travellers will be met by what appears to be a representative of the non-existent Sannigan.

The 'representative' is a young man with a strong Coladan accent, who seems nervous. He hands over a datachip holder and tells the Travellers that Kurt sent him. Inside the holder is the expected chip plus a handwritten note, which says:

Magnus. Respects to you, your crew, and family. This is what I have to date. Get the boy out of Bowman for me; I owe his father a favour, so I ask one of you. May we meet in better times. 'Kurt'.

'The boy' is Ehrlik Vindirsson, a 21-year-old from Colada who came to Bowman seeking his fortune. He is not a bad kid but has a chip on his shoulder about Imperials (perhaps rightly) and a habit of picking fights with them. He is currently in hiding, suspected of savagely beating a port official who failed to treat him with the respect he deserved. At present Ehrlik is scared and wants to get away from this strange place but he has a temper and an inflated sense of self-importance. He will do as he is told for now but is likely to cause trouble once he feels secure.

The Travellers will need to find a way to smuggle Ehrlik Vindirsson back to *Skander*. His few belongings can be easily slipped out or just carried by a returning crewmember but Ehrlik himself is subject to a general watch and arrest-on-sight order. The port is not very well secured, so a suitable deception or concealment among items being moved will work. However, it will be necessary to cross an expanse of open-to-vacuum landing pad, which requires an airtight vehicle or vacc suit. These problems are surmountable with a bit of ingenuity, especially since there is no manhunt underway for Ehrlik, just routine vigilance. The main problem the Travellers will face is getting him to cooperate once he starts to feel safe.

Back at *Skander*, the Travellers can hand over their data to Sundstrom. He seems a little sad at reading the note from 'Kurt', probably because he has had to pass up the chance to meet an old friend for the sake of keeping the information transfer secret. He is not unduly worried about Ehrlik, leaving the crew to sort out accommodation for him. If Ehrlik proves his worth he might be considered part of the crew after a couple of jumps; for now he is working his passage home. If he is troublesome he might be put off the ship at one of its later ports of call. More than likely the Travellers will have to deal with Ehrlik's temper at some point.

Finally, *Skander* lifts off from Garrison Starport. Sundstrom orders the astrogator to lay in a course for Walston and retires to his cabin to look over the data his contact at Bowman gave him. Just as the ship clears the belt, Sundstrom bursts onto the bridge in a most uncharacteristic display of excitement. He orders the astrogator to cancel the jump to Walston but let the port authority believe it is *Skander's* destination. Instead, Sundstrom demands a new course, this time to Nirton. Faced with quizzical looks from his bridge crew, he electrifies the room with one word:

'Denisov.'

NIRTON

X500000-OBa Va
Intelligence Value: 0

The Nirton system contains a gas giant, a planetoid belt and eight terrestrial planets, none of which is any more inviting than Nirton. The mainworld is something of a puzzle; a mid-sized world with no atmosphere and no water, positioned in the system's warm zone. Normally this would be attributed to lack of a magnetic field, allowing the solar wind to strip away atmosphere and dry out the planet. However, Nirton does have a magnetic field, albeit a contrary one.

Nirton's magnetic field fluctuates in a manner previously unrecorded. It varies in intensity over time, although not greatly and not in a predictable manner. The field seems to be prone to some sort of internal fluctuation, which at times all but cancels the magnetic field in some areas whilst intensifying it elsewhere. This can interfere with instruments and communications equipment, and may have permitted the slow removal of the world's atmosphere by solar wind. The reason for these strange magnetic effects remains unclear but current thinking suggests the presence of highly magnetic materials in an uneven concentration within the world's molten core. Movement of super-magnetic pockets might cause inductive effects similar to those observed at Nirton, although this is at best a working theory. It is not known if any attempt has been made to prove it.

Nirton is Red Zoned by the Imperial Navy, which rarely publicises the reasons for doing so. Various explanations have been postulated, mostly to do with the world's magnetic phenomena. It is also widely believed that the Imperium plans to exploit whatever is causing these effects and wants to keep everyone else away until its scientists can figure out how to do it. When pressed on the subject Imperial diplomats will repeat their statement that Nirton has been declared a reserve world for its mineral resources and that these will be shared with local powers when the need arises. This seems implausible to many and of questionable legality to others, who maintain that the Imperium has no right to interdict the world.

Nirton's Red Zone is contentious since the world is not within Imperial territory and has not been claimed. Indeed, there are many who consider the interdiction to be illegal; diplomats from the Sword Worlds regularly raise the topic with their Imperial counterparts, although this is generally for form's sake or as a bargaining point when seeking concessions elsewhere.

The interdiction is maintained by a battery of satellites controlled by an automated station on Nirton's moon. Until recently it was common to encounter a small

Imperial warship on blockade station in the system but none have been observed since 1102. Landing on Nirton or its moon is forbidden by the Imperium and backed by threats of force or prosecution. How vigorously these threats might be followed up is an open question and it is unlikely the Sword Worlds Confederation would extradite offenders to be prosecuted for violating a Red Zone it considers illegal.

Nirton's surface is typical of an airless world, with sharp mountain ranges interspersed with dust seas and impact craters. There is a fair amount of volcanism in some areas, indicating an active core. Most of the surface is uneven and of unknown stability, making a landing dangerous even if the interdiction satellites do not launch a barrage of missiles. There are no surveys or detailed maps of the planet in the navigational charts, although surface mapping has been carried out from orbit. Despite some inaccuracies due to interference, the general features of the world's surface are visible.

Vessels passing through the Nirton system are directed to Ditake Station, a refuelling installation set up as a private concern in orbit around the gas giant Maklin. Ditake Station started out as a gutted freighter hull serving as a hangar for a couple of fuel-skimming shuttles and has been expanded over the years in a rather ramshackle manner. Today it is a complex web of struts and girders linking several hulls and a few custom-built modules. The station provides overpriced fuel to passing ships along with rather seedy recreation facilities. Whilst not recognised as a starport by any power, Ditake Station is developing a reputation as a freeport and widely considered to be the 'mainworld' of the Nirton system.

Jumping to Nirton

The week's transit to Nirton is an exciting time aboard *Skander*. Word goes quickly around that Sundstrom has information about Grand Admiral Denisov, which must have come from his contact at Bowman. The crew know about the sudden course change and correctly assume there must be something important at Nirton. The mainworld of the system is Red Zoned by the Imperials – although the Confederation does not recognise this as legal – so the astrogator has set up a jump to the refuelling station at the system's gas giant.

Sundstrom does not at first elaborate on his dramatic announcement. For the first three days in jump he remains in his cabin, poring over the data he obtained at Bowman and making plans. Finally he starts holding

meetings with his senior crewmembers and those he has come to trust. Sundstrom tells the Travellers that his contact at Bowman has handed over a wealth of data. It is mostly innocuous at first glance; auxiliary and Imperial-registered merchant ship movements and the like but a picture is emerging of steadily increasing activity, as if the Imperials were preparing to expand their presence in the region. This, Sundstrom is adamant, proves his point that the threat from the rimward edge of Confederation space is increasing.

There is something else, which Sundstrom confides to the Travellers. He has been passed word of a ship downed on Nirton. He believes this is a vessel from Grand Admiral Denisov's fleet, perhaps with the remains of the hero aboard. It has lain undiscovered on Nirton for centuries but was detected by a Sword Worlds vessel some months ago as it probed the interdiction zone to demonstrate the Confederation's non-recognition of the Imperial Red Zone. So as to avoid suspicion the vessel continued on its way and reported the matter to Sundstrom's contact at Bowman.

Sundstrom knows *Skander* and her crew will be watched at Nirton and does not want the Imperials to get wind of what is happening. Thus he will take his ship into port at the refuelling station and attract attention whilst the travellers sneak past the blockade at Nirton and proceed to the surface. There, they will enter the wreck and retrieve whatever they can. Once the wreck is noticed, Sundstrom is sure, the Imperials will plunder it. Thus *Skander* has this one chance to search the wreck and retrieve anything of value. That just might be Grand Admiral Denisov's body, which would make *Skandersvik* the most significant cruise for centuries!

Even if Denisov is not present there may be information about his fate or the Battle of Bowman. This is a moment of significance for the whole Confederation! Sundstrom would prefer to go in person but he needs to be seen in port to divert suspicion. Thus the honour and privilege of running the Imperial blockade at Nirton goes to the Travellers.

Arriving at Nirton

Skander's course to Nirton was aimed at the system's gas giant rather than the mainworld. This is in accordance with advice contained in the astrographical databases, since Nirton itself is Red Zoned. It would look highly suspicious for *Skander* to ignore this information and jump to the mainworld anyway, although in all likelihood the action would be interpreted as defiance or curiosity rather than indicating interest in a specific object on the surface.

Sundstrom's plan is for the Travellers to proceed to Nirton on a low-powered coasting course aboard one of the shuttles, with the other in company as a backup. The second shuttle can conduct a rescue if something goes wrong or run interference if the Travellers are detected. One shuttle looks very much like another, so if the expedition looks like being spotted one will light its drives and very obviously flee whilst the Travellers sneak away. Hopefully the stronger signature of a shuttle under full power will mask the Travellers' craft.

The transit to Nirton means being cooped up in a small cabin for an extended period but nothing can be done about that. It does allow *Skander* to gather as much data as possible on the blockade at Nirton and pass it to the shuttles. The Travellers will have to analyse this information themselves, however; it will be transferred in the form of a pulse contained in normal navigational emissions. If detected this would seem curious but prove nothing, whereas detailed instructions on how to run the blockade would tell a different story.

Skander's sensors are not great but she can obtain some data on the situation around Nirton. This is done quite openly, in the form of directed sensor pulses in the direction of the mainworld followed by an impassioned diatribe over an open channel from Sundstrom. In it he decries the corrupt and self-serving Imperials for illegally Red Zoning a world they do not own and impeding freedom of navigation – the protection of which the Imperium claims is one of its highest goals. Sundstrom goes on like this for some time, playing the role of the indignant and self-important Sword Worlds captain. It helps that much of his sentiment is real.

Running the Blockade

From the data bounced over to the Travellers, it is obvious that the Nirton blockade is largely automated. A pattern of satellites maintains cover over the planet and its moon, shifting orbits constantly in a pseudo-random manner. There are gaps in the coverage large enough for a small ship to slip through, if it coasted in quickly and braked late, close to the planetary surface. This is a potentially risky manoeuvre, especially as it requires selecting a landing site at the last moment and using terrain to hide the shuttle's drive signature.

There is an additional complication. The Imperials have relied on their automated systems for the past few years, but have chosen to deploy a patrol ship to the Nirton system in the past few days. The Travellers have no way of knowing but this is a picket from a major convoy headed for the Five Sisters. The vessel is the patrol corvette *Kaaniis*, a modest ship but quite capable of running down a shuttle and arresting the occupants.

One way to get the patrol ship out of the picture would be for the second shuttle to attract its attention, either by openly nosing around the blockade or declaring an emergency and requesting assistance. This will of course require explanation and perhaps cause some legal entanglements. The alternative is to run the blockade faster, when the patrol corvette is out of sensor contact behind the mainworld and accept the enhanced risk.

Running the blockade is a matter of balancing speed against safety and of minimising the ship's emissions. Powering down all non-essential systems will shorten the distance the shuttle can be detected at, effectively creating gaps in the satellite coverage. It will be necessary to pass between the satellites with the drive off and to do so quickly enough they do not move into contact range as the Travellers pass. Doing this on the fly requires a Very Difficult (12+) Pilot check but the Travellers can bring this down to Difficult (10+) by one of the measures noted below and Average (8+) by using both. If the patrol corvette has been drawn off by some means the difficulty of this check will be reduced an additional level.

Pre-Planning: If the Travellers take the time to analyse the satellite pattern they will have a better idea where the gaps are. This does not rule out the possibility of a satellite changing course and closing a gap but does make the run in a lot more predictable.

High Entry Speed, Late Braking: By choosing the riskier option of accelerating to high speed and braking very late, close to the planetary surface, the Travellers will narrow the window of detection but increase the chance of a bad landing.

Other measures are possible. Patient and clever Travellers might carefully plot a course using minimal power and the gravity of Nirton to curve their shuttle through the interdiction satellites. The Referee should reward good thinking with easier skill checks or even automatic success.

If the Travellers' shuttle is detected the satellites will increase the power of their active sensors, attempting to identify and track the intruder. This could be thwarted by having the second shuttle close by. If it very obviously sheers off whilst the Travellers continue to coast, the satellites should be misdirected. The patrol corvette will also chase an obviously fleeing shuttle, although this will take the shuttle out of range should the Travellers require immediate rescue.

Making A Landing

The approximate location of the downed ship is known; just inside the rim of a large impact crater. Landing within the crater would be very hazardous; the bottom is covered in dust of an unknown depth. Besides, a craft on the surface would be very obvious in the middle of a dust sea. The terrain just outside the crater is rough and broken, making a landing tricky but concealing the shuttle once it is down.

As the Travellers make their approach, they will finally begin to pick up indications of an object just inside the crater. Sensors are erratic due to Nirton's unusual magnetic field, imposing DM-2 on all sensor-related checks and causing general annoyance whenever any electronic systems have to be used. This applies as the Travellers use their sensors to find a suitable landing point; the surface map is slow to form and frequently readjusted by the mapping system, necessitating a hard deceleration to hover just above the surface while a landing spot is chosen.

At this moment additional sensor data begins coming in. Although distorted, it paints a worrying picture. Several ships have just emerged from jump close to Nirton. Active scanning would be a bad idea as it will give away the Travellers' position, so the identities of these ships and their activities must be pieced together from erratic passive data.

The vessels seem to include a cruiser, at least three destroyers and a group of large vessels that might be tankers or supply ships. This force is surrounded by a screen of corvettes and close escorts. The Travellers may wonder if the Imperials have chosen this particular moment to impose a heavy blockade on Nirton but in fact this is a convoy headed spinward. Rather than grace the ramshackle freeport at the gas giant with their presence the Imperials are conducting tanker refuelling in orbit and will move on in just a few hours – taking the original patrol corvette with them. Thus the arrival of the convoy is actually beneficial to the Travellers... sort of.

This assumes they can evade detection and that in turn necessitates finding a landing spot screened by terrain such as a canyon. Getting the shuttle into one quickly and without damage requires a Difficult (10+) Pilot check. Failure results in slight damage to the ship and crew; each Traveller suffers one point of damage per point of negative Effect. The shuttle is dinged but fully functional.

However, the Travellers are now on the ground, on the wrong side of the crater wall, with an Imperial fleet overhead. They may be tempted to seek escape rather

than further investigation but should be mindful that if the Imperials find the wreck they will investigate and whatever is within will be lost to them.

Reaching and Entering the Wreck

Reaching the wreck requires clambering over the crater lip. This is not especially hazardous if the Travellers are careful but it is time-consuming. Conditions on Nirton are unusual for an airless world. Normally, a rockball of this sort would have very low surface gravity, but Nirton's is 0.55gs. Rockballs are often far from their primary, and therefore dark, but again Nirton is unusual. Located in what would be the system's 'life zone' under other circumstances the world has a day as bright as any on Earth and unfiltered by atmosphere. The result is harsh, bright light and areas of extreme shadow. This, accompanied by the difficulty in using electronic sensors, makes Nirton a strange and unpleasant environment in which to operate.

Finding a suitable low point to enter the crater will take upwards of half an hour, after which it is possible to approach the wreck from upslope. First impressions are of a Sword Worlds vessel, considerably smaller than *Skander*, built as a primary hull with two cylindrical secondaries. This layout is still used today on some vessels. Judging by the number of turrets and weapons mounts, it was a warship of some kind.

The vessel appears to have impacted the crater lip and slid nose-first down, coming to rest at the base of the slope. The front of the ship is buried in dust and

the port secondary hull has snapped off. There is an obvious entry point high at the rear of the ship, where its shuttle would have docked in a rounded fin. This can be reached by clambering up nearby rocks and using tangled wreckage as a bridge.

Exploring the Ship

The crashed ship is the *Vyalyk*, a vessel known to have been associated with Admiral Denisov. Exploring the wreck will answer some questions for the Travellers and create more. There is danger within, although it is not exactly what it seems. Indeed, the environment poses more of a hazard than the creatures in the hull and it is entirely possible the Travellers will inflict enormous harm upon themselves without any assistance.

Vyalyk was not present at the Battle of Narsil, instead joining Denisov later in undamaged condition. She had spent the war on guardship deployment, seeing no action. This may have been a factor in her crew's zeal once they joined Denisov. *Vyalyk* participated in several major raids and undertook at least two independent cruises, destroying several merchant vessels and escorts. She is renowned for her incredibly cheeky capture of an Imperial naval auxiliary containing a large quantity of missiles. Her fate was, until the present time, unknown.

Vyalyk was damaged at the Battle of Mertactor and ordered to detach, meeting two of Denisov's ships at Tarkine and passing along orders to proceed to secondary rendezvous points. The vessels parted ways and *Vyalyk* proceeded to Nirton. Along the way, in the Noctocol



system, she encountered an Imperial patrol vessel and suffered further damage. Jumping away from her equally crippled opponent, *Vyalyk* began emergency repairs at Nirton. The arrival of another patrol ship forced her captain to take desperate action. Unable to flee and unlikely to inflict sufficient damage, he attempted to hide his ship in Nirton's peculiar magnetic anomalies.

Vyalyk suffered serious drive failures on descent to the surface, to the point where her pilot could do no more than aim for a dusty crater bottom and try to mitigate the crash. In this he was partially successful but still the ship suffered fatal damage. The port-side secondary hull snapped off as the ship impacted the crater wall, rolling away from the vessel as she slid down the crater side nose-first. *Vyalyk* came to rest with her bridge and forward compartments buried in the dust at the crater's bottom. Her back is broken and main power systems smashed beyond repair. Her crew mostly perished in the crash or soon afterward as environmental systems failed.

Today *Vyalyk* lies forgotten, masked from orbital sensors by Nirton's magnetic fluctuations and hidden from observation by the cluttered rocks of the crater rim. She has been undisturbed for centuries, at least by humans. At one time the shiny surfaces of her torn hull might have attracted attention but now they are tarnished and coated in dust. Vacuum-dwelling creatures have taken up residence in the wreck, slowly consuming organic material over the years before becoming dormant. The arrival of a high-value food source like the Travellers will awaken them.

Vyalyk Incidents

2D-Effect	Result
0-	The Traveller winds up impaled on a jagged piece of debris, suffering 3D damage. Their suit is penetrated, making a rescue more difficult.
1-2	The Traveller encounters a jagged section of metal, suffering 2D damage and a serious suit tear that will require immediate repair.
3-4	The Traveller tumbles down the compartment in a spectacular avalanche of loose objects and debris, arriving at the 'bottom' with 1D damage and a small suit tear. Anyone else in the same compartment must make an Average (8+) Vacc Suit or DEX check or suffer the same effects.
5-6	The Traveller takes an embarrassing tumble all the way to the 'bottom' of the current compartment. Make a Difficult (10+) Vacc Suit or DEX check to avoid damage. If failed, the Traveller suffers 1D damage.
7-8	The Traveller snags their suit. Make an immediate Difficult (10+) Vacc Suit or DEX check. If it is failed, the Traveller takes damage equal to the negative Effect and has a small suit tear, which will require an emergency repair.
9-10	The Traveller slips or trips. Make another Average (8+) Vacc Suit or DEX check. If successful, there are no ill effects. Subtract any negative result from the current total and apply the new result.
11+	A scary moment but no ill effects.

General Considerations

The ship is totally unpowered, lightless and for the most part cold. Nirton's day is bright enough that the ship receives a considerable amount of solar energy but with no atmosphere it is quickly lost into the surrounding rock and dust. This has led to a heating/cooling cycle that stresses the already shattered hull. Where the hull is intact, it is entirely dark inside the vessel but in daytime some areas are lit by bright sunlight coming in through hull breaches or in narrow strips where there are cracks. This makes vision even more confusing; pools of darkness are deeper than they would be without any light at all.

Between battle damage, the crash and subsequent stressing there is not an even surface in the entire vessel, which is pointing not quite straight down a 30-degree slope. Uneven footing and patchy light increase the danger of a trip or slip and there is an abundance of jagged metal to catch a suit on. Any time the Travellers try to move without the utmost care within the hull, an Average (8+) Vacc Suit or DEX check is required. Failure indicates an incident. Roll 2D on the *Vyalyk* Incidents table, using the Effect of the failed roll as a DM.

It is not recommended that the Travellers be constantly falling over or tearing their suits but the Referee should check for a mishap whenever they begin a set of actions without due caution. Moving through a new compartment without great care is an occasion for a check, as is rushing to the aid of someone who has suffered a mishap. In combat, the Travellers will not have to make a check

if they remain anchored in place. Firing a weapon from a static position is not a problem; nor is swinging a hand weapon whilst gripping a handhold. Changing position is potentially dangerous, however, and falling down a compartment can be a lot more serious if there is something dangerous at the bottom.

The Referee should give the Travellers a chance to get used to moving inside the wreck, giving fair warning about the dangers involved. A small suit tear is a scary inconvenience if dealt with quickly and potentially life-threatening if not. Once they are used to moving inside the ship, the Travellers are fair game. The Referee should play for tension, perhaps building a 'haunted house' atmosphere. The combination of 'there's something in here with us' and the dangers posed by quick movement can become claustrophobic and might be worth savouring for a while before the Travellers confront the things living in the wreck.

The Creatures

Nirton has an extremophile species living in its apparently barren dust seas. These creatures are normally very small, being little more than a collection of cells a centimetre or so across. They filter out particles of carbon from the dust but derive most of their energy from background radiation. In this form the creatures are harmless to humans, though one might be carried into a ship on a vacc suit boot. In an environment with so much carbon available, the creature would grow to a far greater size. It is not known how large such a creature can grow, nor how long this would take. There does seem to be a stable upper limit for the creatures aboard *Vyalyk*, at around a cubic metre.

Once the creatures got aboard *Vyalyk*, they fed. Ration packs, skin cells, organic-based seals and of course the bodies of the crew provided nutrition. This allowed the creatures to grow to their current size, although the

process appears to have been very slow. Once the best food supply – crewmembers and shipboard rations – was used up the creatures became dormant, conserving their energy to avoid having to consume their own cells. They may have been bigger than their current volume at some time.

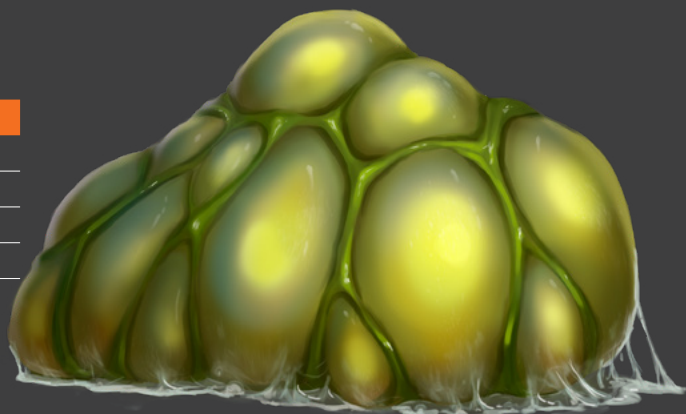
The creatures resemble a translucent glob of cells, like a very dispersed jellyfish. They move by oozing across any surface they can contact and appear able to detect food sources at a distance of a few metres. If a creature can get into contact with a person it will begin to dissolve flesh and organic material in suits and equipment. What will not be apparent to the Travellers is that this process takes weeks or even months. Although the creatures actually pose little direct hazard, they can impede or even kill Travellers in a variety of ways.

A Traveller with a creature wrapped around their faceplate will perish from oxygen depletion long before their suit seals are eaten through but they will not be able to see and may blunder into other hazards. A creature can entangle someone, oozing up their legs to cover the Traveller's whole suit in a thin layer of cells. This will make movement difficult and be utterly terrifying. An unprotected Traveller will feel a stinging sensation as the creature begins to dissolve the outer layer of their skin but again this is not as serious a threat as it seems. However, if the creature finds an opening such as eyes, mouth or a wound it will enter and begin dissolving the Traveller from the inside. By-products of this process will cause hallucinations and fever, and eventually poison the Traveller.

The creatures have a highly dispersed and non-specialised structure, making them hard to kill. Weapons like blades and guns do damage at the rate of one point per die, ignoring any plus or minus. Thus a handgun normally doing 3D-3 damage does only 3

NIRTON CREATURE

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Nirton Creature	12	1m
SKILLS	None	
ATTACKS	Special	
TRAITS	Dispersed	
BEHAVIOUR	Omnivore, Filter	



points to one of the creatures. Damage of this sort – impacts, punctures and the like – does not actually harm the creature as such but will break it up. Once all its hits are gone a creature is dispersed and will take several minutes to reform. Detached parts will flow back together or towards a food source – a Traveller might notice a glob of spatter oozing along their arm, heading for the patch over a suit tear.

Killing the creatures requires the application of extremely intense energy such as a laser or flamethrower. Laser weapons do minimal damage as noted above but harm the creature instead of simply spreading it around. Flame weapons or plasma do full damage and cause harm but might be problematic in a confined space. It is also possible to create a chemical compound that will kill the creatures' cells. Indeed, the standard fluid decontamination mix used for hazardous-environment suits will kill these creatures, albeit slowly. A variant of this could be created that will do the job more swiftly.

It is possible to dodge past the creatures, perhaps luring one out from a chamber so that others can slip past and explore. Since they move slowly and cannot reach out towards a target, creatures are mainly dangerous if they drop on someone or if they are cornered. The Referee should remember that any quick movement in the wreck can be hazardous and a Traveller may fall or slide down the deck into a creature or become entangled on something with one slowly oozing towards them.

The Nirton creatures 'attack' by engulfing their target and consuming it over a period of weeks to months. It is possible to avoid an attack by walking slowly away and even a crawling Traveller can outpace a creature. However, they are relentless and will follow food so long as they can still detect it. In practice this means the creatures will move unevenly towards Travellers within 10 metres or so.

A Traveller who comes into contact with a creature can be described as having been 'gooped'. The creature will begin to flow over the Traveller, who can pull free by making a Difficult (10+) STR check. If a gooped Traveller does not free themselves, after 1D rounds they will be 'engulfed'.

Being engulfed or stuck to a creature that is gooping the Traveller imposes DM-2 on all activities involving the gooped or engulfed body part. This does not apply to attempts to pull free from a gooping creature. A Traveller whose legs are engulfed suffers the DM on movement-related tasks; an arm affects handling of items and being engulfed around the head affects more or less everything the Traveller might want to do. Once

a body part is engulfed, the creature will continue to enfold its victim until completely engulfed, which will more or less immobilise them.

The creature can be scraped or burned off a Traveller's suit (or their flesh but there are other problems associated with that) and will generally stay together rather than allow bits of itself to be left behind, even on a rich food source. If a creature gets into a wound, this will cause intense pain even if only a small amount enters. It will try to force its entire mass into the wound, causing one point of damage every round in addition to intense psychological trauma.

The Traveller's body will fight the invading cells of a minor infestation and may eventually kill them. In the meantime the Traveller will begin to hallucinate and run a fever within an hour or so of infection and may need medical attention to support their body whilst it fights the invasion. A properly equipped medical facility should be able to assist the Traveller in fighting the infection once a doctor has studied it but any medical dramas that occur back on *Skander* are beyond the scope of this adventure.

Further problems with the creatures may occur if the Travellers do not decontaminate their suits and shuttle or if objects are brought from the wreck with a few creature cells on them. Again, this is beyond the scope of the adventure – subsequent events are at the discretion of the Referee.

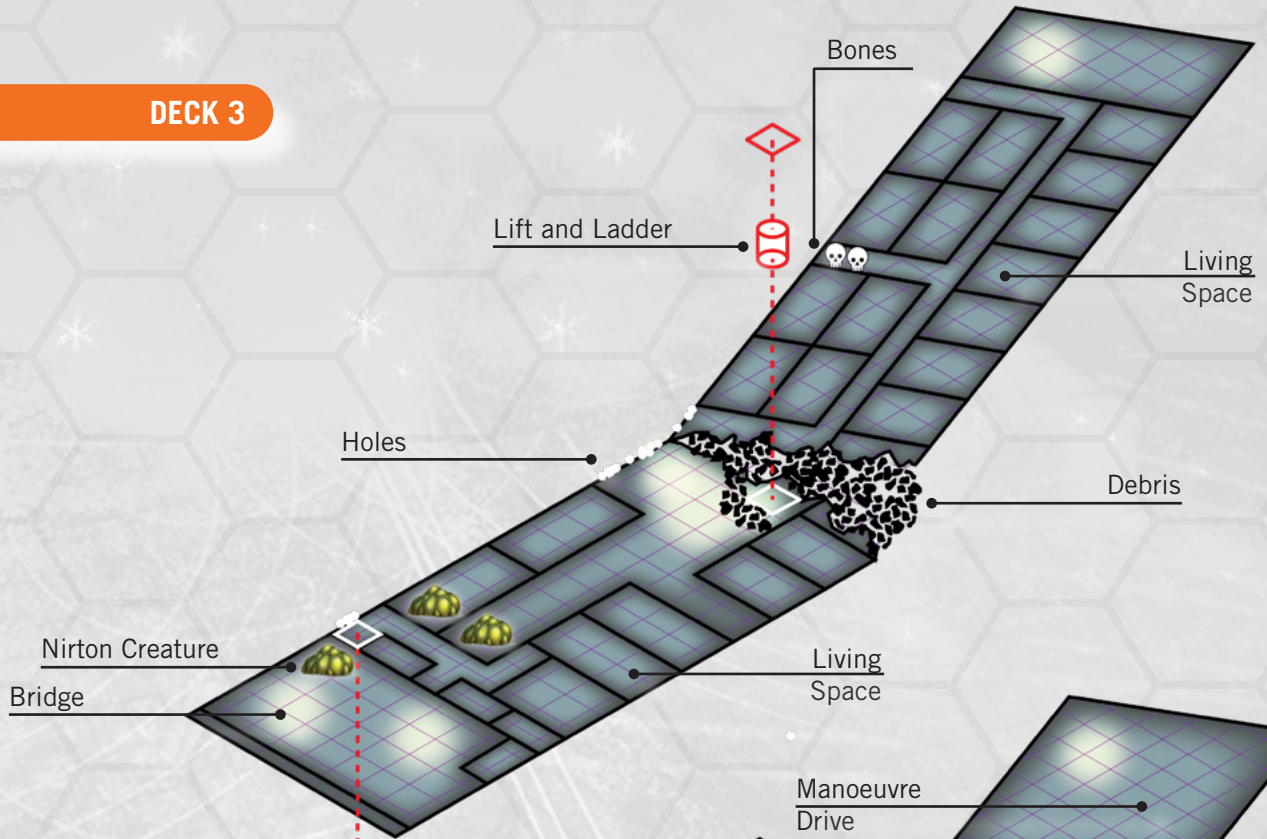
The creatures are more of a nuisance than a threat to Travellers who keep their heads and act carefully. However, if the Referee builds tension then presents the creatures in a suitably threatening manner it may be possible to induce the Travellers to react in an intemperate manner that causes more problems than it solves. For example, the Travellers may forget about the dangers of careless movement, adding a whole new dimension to the situation. Rather than another round of blast-the-beastie, a combat in the wreck should be a memorable nightmare of creeping menace, snagged suits, sliding down uneven decks and muzzle flashes in the dark. Indeed, the creatures in the wreck are not all that dangerous to the Travellers but will appear to be. Trigger-happy Travellers will pose a greater hazard to themselves with ricochets than the enemies they fire at. If they later discover the creatures were only a minor threat they might learn a valuable lesson.

Port Secondary Hull

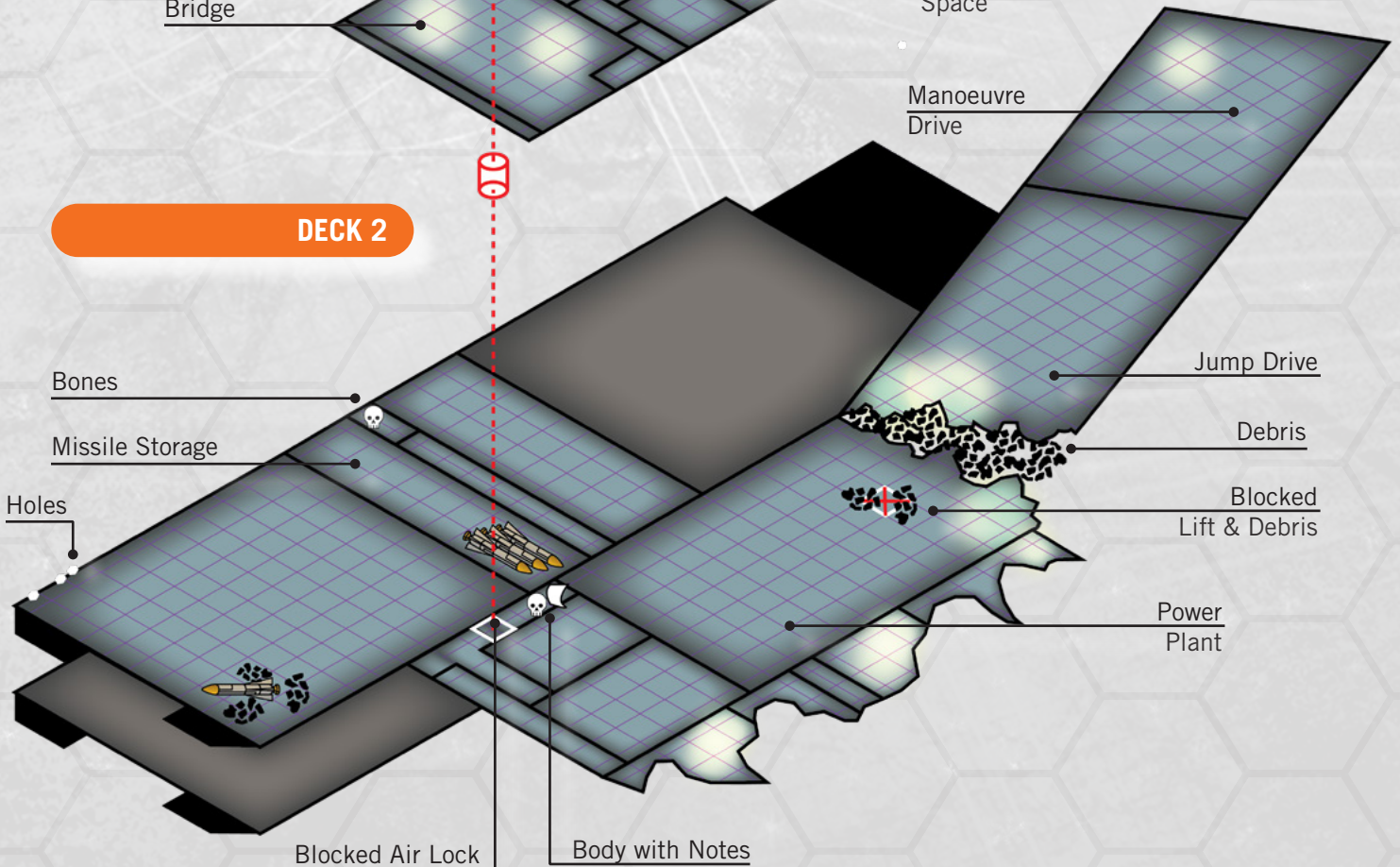
The port secondary hull was torn open in several places and detached from its mountings. It rolled and slid down the crater side, coming to rest a few metres from

THE WRECK OF THE VYALIK

DECK 3



DECK 2



the main hull. Although heavily damaged, the power plant in this hull survived the crash and could be made operational. There is no feed to the main hull, of course, but enough cabling might be salvaged to reach it. If so, parts of the main hull would regain light and even air circulation, at least until the fuel ran out.

There are no creatures in the secondary hull, although there have been in the past. Travellers may note that there are numerous ration-pack wrappers and containers strewn about, all of them empty with no sign of any food anywhere. Not a scrap remains; not even crumbs or smears. This might pique the Travellers' curiosity, since it is unlikely that survivors ate all the food aboard the wreck without leaving any other traces. A closer inspection indicates that some seals and other minor components are completely gone. There is no sign of anything being dismantled to remove these components.

Those with detailed knowledge of starship construction may realise that the missing items are all based on organic compounds. Even if they do not realise this, the Travellers will certainly notice that something is amiss. Either the survivors ate every single thing in the port secondary hull whilst removing certain components, leaving the place a mess but carefully putting all the machinery back together... or else something strange is going on here.

The Fin

The rounded upper aft section of the main hull, sometimes referred to as a 'fin', would normally contain a docked shuttle. It appears that the fin took a direct hit from a missile; its dorsal structure is torn open. The smashed remains of the shuttle are still clamped in place, minus some components strewn down the crater side. There is some fuel in a still-intact tank but no working systems aboard the shuttle to make use of it.

The fin offers the easiest route into the ship, although it does require edging past jagged damage zones that can snag or rip a suit. The elevator down into the main hull is inoperable without power, necessitating use of the emergency ladder. This area, like all others in the ship, is completely dark unless power is somehow restored. The Travellers may notice the same sort of missing components as in the port secondary hull. There are no signs of survivors or any of the creatures.

Aft Main Hull

Vyalyk's back is broken, separating her main hull into two parts. The upper deck is connected to the forward half by a tangle of wreckage, enabling intrepid Travellers to clamber across to the front half. This is a hazardous

undertaking as much of the wreckage is jagged or unstable. There are holes in the bulkhead on the far side that a Traveller might be able to wriggle through. The Nirton creatures can easily get from one half of the ship to the other by this means, although they generally stay in the front half of the ship.

The aft upper deck and engineering spaces are in the same condition as the rest of the ship. Seals and certain components are gone, along with every scrap of food in the place. Amid the debris piled up against a forward bulkhead are the remains of two humans, bones entangled amid the other wreckage. If the Travellers try to reassemble the bones, they will find that one has non-survivable damage to the limbs, chest area and skull, of a sort that might be incurred in a collision. The other has a broken forearm but there is nothing to indicate cause of death. The remains of their vacc suits are scattered among the debris but there is no soft tissue remaining – not even bone marrow.

These are two of *Vyalyk's* crew. One died in the crash; the other survived for a while. Their soft tissues were dissolved and consumed by the creatures, which were distracted by other food sources and moved beyond the aft section. They were unable to detect the organic material remaining in this compartment and never returned to it.

The power plant and machinery are inoperable, partly due to the crash and partly due to missing components. It is not possible to enter the forward half of the main hull from the lower deck; twisted wreckage forms an effective barrier. However, it is possible to leave the hull by one of the large breaches caused by the crash or to enter the starboard secondary hull by way of its normal entry points.

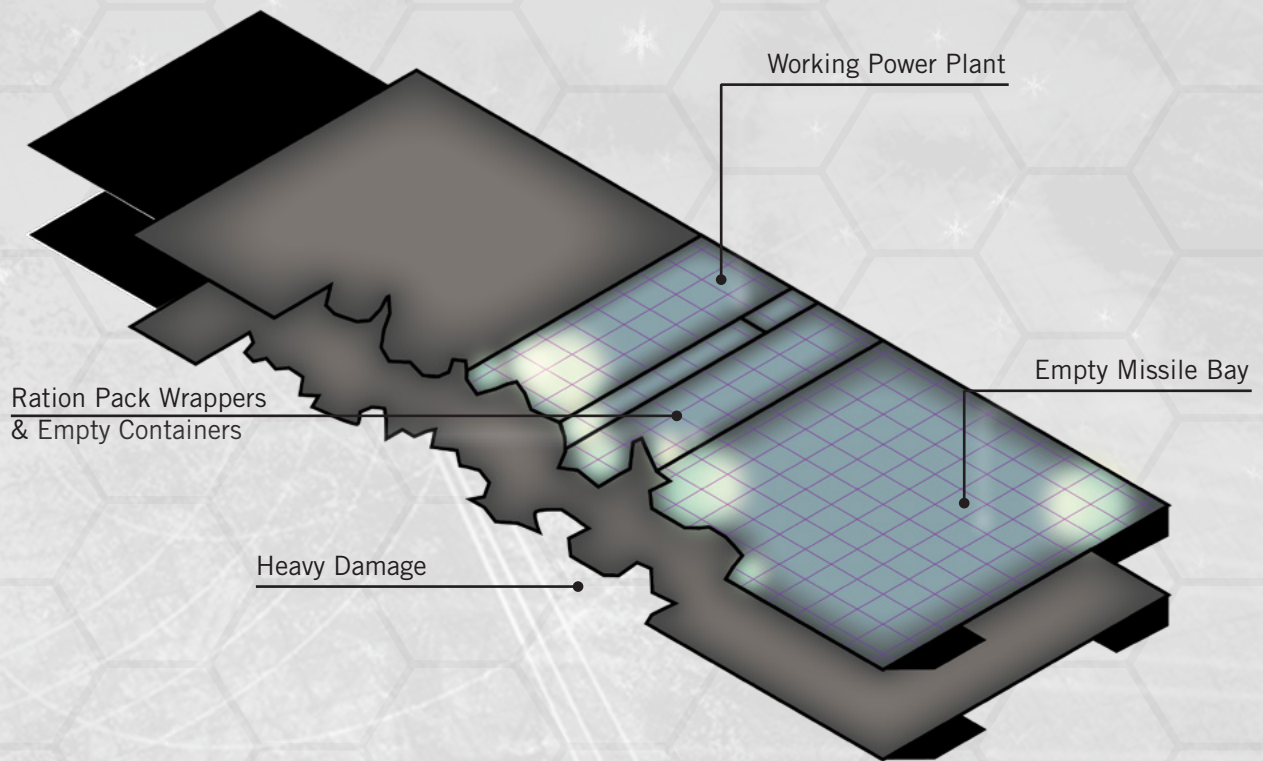
Starboard Secondary hull

The starboard secondary hull is the least badly damaged part of the ship. Its outer hull is mostly intact and the majority of internal doors are closed. There are still entry points the creatures (but not a human) could use in most areas, so these are picked clean like elsewhere. There are no bones here; crewmembers killed in this section were completely dissolved. However, it may be possible to find evidence of people in the form of inedible items – belt buckles, metal fasteners, vacc suit components and so on.

The missile bay might give Travellers cause for alarm. It appears that *Vyalyk* had expended all but a handful of her missiles at the time of the crash. There are a few still in the storage area and one that has come loose. It rests at the forward end of the bay amid various other

THE WRECK OF THE VYALIK

DECK 1



debris. The missile is inert, of course. Its warhead and propellants have long ago degraded but the Travellers may not at first realise this.

The missile control chamber is still sealed. *Vyalik* was depressurised for combat and closed off its internal ventilation system, making this chamber impenetrable to the creatures until the door is forced or structural damage creates an entry point. Inside, the mummified remains of a crewmember are strapped into the gunnery control seat. It appears the gunner suffered massive internal injuries during the crash and bled out into his vacc suit. The remains have been preserved by cold and vacuum.

The corpse can be identified from its suit ID patch and the security card currently inserted into the missile control station. Its electronics are degraded but lettering can still be made out. The gunner is Harvald Thierrikson, missing presumed dead since 629. His descendants, if he has any, might be grateful to know

what happened to him and the tale of a gunner still at his post after five centuries might pass into Sword Worlds folklore.

Here and now, however, Thierrikson poses a question for the Travellers. How is it that one crewmember is intact and all the others are bones or fragments? The Travellers will probably connect the fact that the chamber was still sealed with the survival of Thierrikson's corpse and other items, such as an emergency ration pack, which in other parts of the ship would have been consumed.

Forward Main Hull

The two decks of the main hull's forward section are heavily damaged, with the front part of the ship buried under the dust of the crater bottom. The engineering areas and crew accommodation are in the same state as most of the rest of the ship, with doors hanging off or breached by hull twisting. There are creatures in this section of the ship. How many is up to the Referee;

two or three should suffice to make life difficult for the Travellers but others could be outside nearby or in a bypassed chamber.

The creatures are dormant when the Travellers arrive, conserving energy as they have for long decades. They grew too big to sustain themselves on the occasional carbon particle out on the dust plains, so have waited for more food to arrive. It now has and the creatures will slowly stir and begin oozing towards the Travellers. The first encounter might be a Traveller putting their hand on a dark surface, feeling it become entangled and pulling away to find some sort of ooze crawling up their arm. Alternatively, the creatures might ooze menacingly out of a chamber or dangle down from a ceiling. Their ability to harm the Travellers is limited but if used well they will enable the Referee to get the Travellers to harm themselves.

Most of this part of the ship is trashed like the rest but the bridge recorder is intact and might yield some information on Admiral Denisov's last days. Detaching it is not a simple matter, especially in a vacc suit aboard a ship angled at 30 degrees downward. The task will take around five minutes of uninterrupted work, which might be more than the Travellers can hope for unless they can come up with a way of keeping the creatures out. The contents of the recorder will take some time to piece together once the Travellers have returned to *Skander*. Once they have been examined they will enable the Travellers to put together an explanation of what happened to the ship after the Battle of Mertactor.

There is another point of interest in this section of the hull, this time on the lower deck. The chief engineer, a man by the name of Evun Danilo, managed to reach the forward airlock after surviving the crash. With the nose of the ship buried he was unable to escape even if there had been anywhere to go and he died there from his injuries. Clutched in his hand, almost like a holy talisman, is a handwritten note laminated in plastic. It has survived the centuries in readable condition:

To the crews of all ships.

You have my thanks and my praise. You remained steadfast when others surrendered. You fought when hope had died and your courage gave hope to others. Now you must fight on without me, at least for now.

We have suffered a tremendous defeat, and I know it weighs heavily upon all of us. I know what must be done if the fight is to continue. It will be my shame and my honour to commit the fleet to one final

action; to do again what we did at Narsil. They will believe they have destroyed us and cease searching, freeing your ships to strike when the time is right.

If you consider me still fit to lead such heroes, disperse your ships and watch the rendezvous points. If I do not find you in a year, do as you see fit. Be proud, knowing none could have given more. Surrender with honour or fight on as you will. But know one thing:

This is not the end.

Grand Admiral Denisov

The note seems to prove the theory that Denisov survived the defeat at Mertactor and suggests that he chose to throw down most of his force at Bowman in order to make the Imperials think they had defeated the Sword Worlds holdouts. There is no indication whether or not Denisov escaped from Bowman but the note does imply he intended to. Whether these actions make Denisov a callous zealot or a tragic hero is open to debate but most Sword Worlders would readily believe his crews chose to make a suicide attack in order to deceive the Imperials. It is quite possible that Denisov did indeed survive Bowman, although what he did afterwards remains a mystery.

Whatever the truth of this, the Travellers are now in possession of a letter from Grand Admiral Denisov, written in his own handwriting. The message 'This is not the end' could become a rallying cry in years to come, perhaps in a renewed conflict with the Imperials.

Treasure? Loot? Salvage?

There is no 'loot' to be had aboard *Vyalyk*. She was a warship, carrying no cargo and almost out of supplies when she crashed. Many of her systems are smashed beyond repair and worth little as salvage even if there was a way to dismantle and remove the remaining components. That does not mean the Travellers cannot profit from their visit.

The Travellers might pick up odd objects as souvenirs and some of those could be quite valuable. The sidearm of a Sword Worlds captain who served with Admiral Denisov might sell for tens of thousands at auction; perhaps more. Even small pieces of memorabilia like suit patches or an original nameplate from an entry point could fetch thousands. The same items might be worth status to the Travellers rather than money. For example, if they were to present the current commander-in-chief of the Confederation Navy with a handwritten

letter from Grand Admiral Denisov. Such an event would be covered by media all across the Confederation and whilst the Travellers would not get any money out of it they would be heroes, at least for a time.

Inventive Travellers can therefore find a way to make a profit out of their visit to the wreck of *Vyalyk*, whilst those who unimaginatively make Recon checks to find a stash of money-treasure-points will have to make do with the contents of the ship's (very depleted) emergency funds locker. This amounts to a few thousand Credits in gold and silver coins minted 500 years ago. Again, they are worth more as commemorative tokens of Denisov's campaign than their metal value.

Travellers who have embraced what it is to be space adventurers and Sword Worlders in particular will be enriched by the experience of finding and exploring the wreck; the tales they can tell in the future and the status they will earn among their peers. There is relatively little of monetary value in the wreck but it is a treasure trove all the same.

Returning to *Skander*

Returning to *Skander* requires sneaking back out through the blockade, although the Travellers may choose to simply bull through and run for it. By the time they emerge from the wreck the Imperial convoy has refuelled and is pulling away from Nirton ready to jump. If the Travellers have time they can wait in their hiding place for a few hours until the coast is clear then leave. Even if detected they will receive no more than warnings of legal action unless they get too close to a satellite. If so, or if the Referee decides to give the Travellers a hard time, they will be targeted by one or more missiles fired from the satellites.

The Referee should judge this finely. If the Travellers are in a bad way, perhaps with infected or injured crewmates, they should escape with no more than legal threats. If they breezed through the wreck without even breaking sweat then a missile salvo or two might be in order. The shuttle is of course unarmed and unable to survive multiple hits, so this is a problem requiring ingenuity and perhaps some fancy flying. If the Referee really wants to stress the Travellers, an escort from the convoy might still be in orbit around Nirton when the Travellers leave. If so, an ideal solution is to sneak away in a powered-down shuttle, only accelerating hard once well clear.

Skander will depart the refuelling station as soon as Sundstrom knows the Travellers are ready to be picked up and intercept a coasting shuttle before readying for

jump. If the Travellers' shuttle was detected, Sundstrom expects a legal issue somewhere down the line but he will deal with that; Sword Worlds courts are not very sympathetic to accusations about violating an illegal blockade and Sundstrom can naturally prove both his shuttles were on local liaison and trade operations nowhere near the mainworld at the time. As usual, if the Travellers were circumspect and created plausible deniability, they will be fine. Those who charged in headlong might have problems but it will be weeks or months before accusations can catch up with the Travellers – if they ever do.

Back aboard *Skander* the Travellers will be bombarded with questions and expected to tell their tale over and over again. Sundstrom will be delighted with news that a ship from Denisov's last armada has been located and intrigued by the possibility that he was still at large after the Battle of Bowman. Travellers who return in possession of artefacts from Denisov's fleet will see their Esteem and Satisfaction ratings increase by one level and even a failed expedition is worth a check for an increase if an honourable attempt was made.

If the Travellers try to conceal some of what they found, such as Denisov's letter, then anyone who finds out will be furious, resulting in a reduction in both Esteem and Satisfaction. This find is of significance to the whole Confederation and to conceal it from shipmates is an insult bordering upon treachery. If, on the other hand, they present the letter or some significant souvenirs to Sundstrom without asking for anything in turn, he will forever hold them in the highest regard – increase Satisfaction to its highest value. Sundstrom will propose presenting the letter or items to the Confederation Navy's commanders and has the connections to make it happen. The Travellers will get to stand with him as he hands over what is essentially a national treasure and a lot of doors will be open to them thereafter. It is quite possible that when Sundstrom retires – for real this time – he will give the captaincy of *Skander* to the Travellers and fund them in setting up an expedition of their own.

All that is in the future as *Skander* coasts out to a safe jump distance. Sundstrom intends to hook back towards the Sword Worlds by way of the Lunion Shield Worlds. Nirton has been the high point of the mission, he thinks; not only does the convoy 'prove' (to his thinking) that he is right about an increasing Imperial presence in the region but his crew slipped through an Imperial blockade and retrieved treasures associated with one of the Sword Worlds' greatest heroes. Whatever happens on the trip home, however much money is made, *Skandersvik* has been a success.

P A R T T H R E E

THE LUNION SHIELD

In *The Lunion Shield*, merchant cruiser *Skander* begins the return loop of her journey. Rather than transit home through the safe but unprofitable Metal Worlds, Magnus Sundstrom intends to make a sweep through the Imperial worlds just across the border. *Skander* will re-enter Confederation space at Biter where her mission will terminate. At this point profits and bonuses will be shared out and the crew will stand down. At present Sundstrom does not know whether he will sell the ship, send her out again under a hired captain or pass her to some other user. The events of the final leg of the journey will dictate the final fate of *Skander*.

Magnus Sundstrom intends to visit the major port at Elixabeth in the hope of doing some trading there, then transit by way of Grote in the Glisten subsector into the Lunion Shield Worlds. He is not especially hopeful about making long-term deals in this region since he will be competing with Imperial firms moving goods down the Spinward Main but there are still profits to be made and perhaps secrets to uncover.

Close to the end of the mission, Sundstrom is asked for assistance by the Confederation agent on Wardn. He has heard the outpost on Iron has gone silent and requests that *Skander* pay a visit to check nothing is wrong. In fact the outpost has been taken over by a pirate band with the intent of luring *Skander* into a trap. The Travellers have a chance to rescue captives from the pirates and win additional glory before finally returning home.

LUNION SUBSECTOR

The Lunion subsector was settled during the early Imperial expansion into the Spinward Marches, with Lunion itself becoming an important local and regional trade hub. Expansion was largely guided by the Spinward Main, with worlds lying off it receiving less attention at first. Several of the worlds in what is now the border region between the Imperium and the Sword Worlds Confederation were originally claimed by the Sword Worlds. However, these claims were untenable and Imperial annexation proved inevitable.

The Imperial-controlled systems facing the Metal Worlds are unofficially known as the Lunion Shield Worlds, with connotations of a bastion against aggression from the Sword Worlds. In practice, these systems are very much a backwater and of little strategic significance other than as a 'tripwire' at the

beginning of a new conflict and an area to marshal and attack or conduct defence in depth.

The Lunion Shield Worlds serve as an interface for trade and commerce between the Confederation and Imperium. Most traffic goes by way of Wardn, with jump-2 ships proceeding directly to Biter and jump-1 vessels transiting through the Iron system. There has been some talk of building a port at Iron to exploit the economic opportunities afforded by this traffic but at present vessels conduct gas giant refuelling and move on without visiting the mainworld.

ELIXABETH

B426467-8 Ni
Intelligence Value: 12

The first port of call after Nirton is Elixabeth, a low-population colony whose mainworld is of no consequence. However, Elixabeth's port is the best in the area and serves as a nexus for trade in the direction of Collace and Glisten. There is a small Imperial Navy base at the highport, which supports patrols into District 268 or ships staging into the Trojan Reach.

Magnus Sundstrom intends to do some trading at Elixabeth over the course of a few days. The Travellers will have the usual opportunities for trading and intelligence gathering as well as anything else they want to do at the orbital port. The planetside installation is very small and rarely visited by offworlders. It is little more than a landing area for shuttles from the highport and of no real interest to the Travellers.

Facilities at the highport, on the other hand, are good. There is plenty of entertainment and a lively commercial sector. The Travellers may have to go into town to bring over-exuberant crewmembers back to the ship, perhaps even paying fines or bargaining for the release of crewmates who have got themselves arrested. There are all manner of mini-adventures to be had here but no scripted events.

Back at the ship, Sundstrom is neither pleased nor disappointed by his own trading efforts. He has made a little money and taken on some goods for sale later. If the Travellers have done well he will of course be pleased, whilst the crew may be impressed or otherwise by the actions of Travellers sent to deal with their colleagues' indiscretions. The usual possibilities for Esteem and Satisfaction to rise or fall thus apply.

GROTE

A400404-B
Intelligence Value: 20

Grote is an airless rockball world with a population of around 10,000 people, all of whom live and work within the excellent starport. The port was constructed to facilitate greater Imperial trade into District 268 and the Five Sisters. To date there has been only a very small increase in traffic but the port makes a modest profit and seems to have a secure future.

Grote serves as a major interface point for commerce into and out of the Imperium. A steady stream of jump-2 freighters connects Grote to the markets of the Lunion and Glisten subsectors, with most ships from District 268 going no further into Imperial space. Trading at the very edge of the Imperium reduces the amount of paperwork required, as compared to obtaining licenses and clearance to proceed deeper into Imperial territory. Likewise, goods are available in the brokerages of Grote that would not be obtainable elsewhere or at least at cheaper prices.

Grote is what might be termed an 'artificial territory' of the Imperium, in that without its port it cannot support an economy or even an indigenous population. It is inhabited only as a place to put a starport and people live there solely because the port provides an income. The port's operators are acutely aware their existence depends entirely upon interstellar trade and do their best to promote it as far as possible. One outcome of this is the creation of a small trans-border shipping group, made up of minor starship operators.

The starport approaches are busy when *Skander* arrives, requiring a lengthy wait for an approach vector. Failing to follow the instructions of the portside traffic controllers will result in an order to abort and wait for a new approach window, which will annoy Sundstrom and embarrass *Skander's* pilot. Once docked at the highport, *Skander's* command crew (and probably the Travellers too) will have to deal with another entering-Imperial-space inspection and questions about mission, cargo and so forth. This inspection is far less intrusive than the previous one, since there is a lot of trans-border trade in the region and attitudes are quite different. There are still opportunities for disaster, of course, but if the Travellers are professional there is no reason for this situation to become a major issue.

With checks and inspections complete, the Travellers have the opportunity to go portside and experience the very best facilities and latest fashions sweeping across the Imperium. The port concourse is a riot of advertising and not-to-be-missed offers, which can be overwhelming to the senses but once clear of the area immediately around the arrival terminus things calm down a bit.

The busy port at Grote represents the very best opportunity for intelligence gathering on the whole voyage. Sundstrom will point this out if the Travellers do not seem to have realised it. The usual methods of general observation and taking a look at the public records of ships coming and going will produce useful data, but there is so much more to be gained. If *Skander* was making a lengthy stopover it would be possible to create a steady information flow but she is not. Instead, the Travellers will need to obtain high-density information if they are to get the most from their visit. That means accessing information that others have already collected, which entails an element of risk.

There are three likely sources of this high-value data: secure starport records, mercantile data and the criminal underworld. The first is probably the most concentrated source of information since the port's tracking system logs all ships passing through the system. It will not have picked up a naval vessel making a patrol of the outsystem or quietly passing through without identifying itself but any vessel that used the port, whether it was a trade ship or not, will be logged along with details of its journey, cargo and status.

Accessing the secure logs directly is virtually impossible without getting caught. It would be necessary to defeat multiple layers of security whilst somehow remaining anonymous. Travellers with any skill level in Electronics (computers) will be aware of this and that such an attempt would have repercussions for the ship and its mission. However, an oblique approach might be taken by gaining access to a system that already has data access privileges but is not well secured.

Weak points in the port's electronic security include the automated navigation assistance system, which provides pilots with in-system course calculations and astrogators with standard solutions to jump equations for nearby systems. It is empowered to pass data back and forth to the main port log system and could be used to request a data dump of recent ship movements. This requires a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check and yields 2D points of intelligence. If the Travellers do not take the trouble to spoof the system then sooner or later the intrusion will be noticed and traced to *Skander*. However, with some additional work the data transfer can be made to look like a request from a different ship or otherwise not connected to the Travellers.

The mercantile logs are much easier to access but only contain information on commercial vessels that conducted business at the port. Access only requires membership of a user group which is open to licensed

brokers or favoured starship operators. The Travellers do not have time to apply for such status and earn membership but membership could be faked or forged. This is a crime, of course, but the Travellers should be able to cover their tracks if they are smart about it. If not there will be heavy fines waiting for *Skander* if she ever returns to Grote highport. A faked (or stolen) identification chip will allow logs to be accessed at any portside data terminal. All data is available to any user – it is simply a matter of asking the system for the desired information. However, the Travellers may not realise that and spend some time looking for security or electronic traps. In fact, the system is poorly secured, with only the membership requirement preventing outsider access. 1D+2 points of intelligence can be obtained this way.

It might also be possible to buy information from a criminal contact. This would require streetwise Travellers to locate someone suitable and arrange for them to collect or collate the necessary data. Making contact requires venturing into the seedier parts of the starport, which might be dangerous or attract the attention of the security services for various reasons. The Travellers might have to deal with agents following them – agents who are far more skilled than the ham-fisted scouts at Bowman – or an earnest patrol officer trying to persuade them to return to the nicer parts of the port without admitting the backstreets could be dangerous.

Criminal contacts will naturally be wary but if the Travellers can convince them to help, a data package can be put together in a day or so. For a mere Cr10,000 the local

underworld will provide a partial listing of passing ships and noted events worth D3 intelligence. For Cr50,000 they will go to some trouble and present not only a good listing of ships and cargoes but also some information on under-the-table dealings worth 2D intelligence. The latter includes mention of an incident where personnel from an unknown ship sold goods under the counter, as it were, which had been bought here at Grote just three weeks earlier. In return they took on a quantity of personal and starship weapons including ground-based anti-ship missiles. Sales of such weaponry are carefully tracked, yet these seem to have slipped through the net. This suggests a connection between someone at Grote highport and a pirate band, although the Travellers will probably not have time to investigate further.

Once the data is ready the Travellers are expected to return to collect it. This time they will definitely attract attention and may have to evade a tail before the handover. If they are lucky this will be the security services, who tend to take an interest in offworlders poking around the backstreets of the port since this is unusual behaviour. If the Travellers are less lucky they may encounter several armed thugs in the service of a crooked merchant who fears the Travellers may uncover his connection with local pirate bands.

Whatever intelligence data the Travellers obtain, Sundstrom will be unhappy if the Travellers cause an entanglement with local security services. Otherwise the usual increase or decrease of Esteem and Satisfaction is possible.



SMOUG

C54078A-9 De Po Pi
Intelligence Value: 11

Smoug is an important mining centre, producing enormous amounts of common materials such as iron. Most of the 90 million inhabitants are employed directly by the mining sector or supporting industries. A proportion of the minerals and metals produced on Smoug is used by local industry, with large quantities shipped to Tenalphi and Adabicci aboard bulk freighters.

Smoug itself a vast, dusty desert with virtually no standing water. Filter masks are necessary to deal with ever-present dust, which has a high iron content and can cause problems with electronic equipment; any instruments give confusing readings in parts of Smoug due to the magnetic effects of the dust. Those used to local conditions typically have workarounds in place but offworlders can easily get themselves into trouble believing what their instruments tell them.

When *Skander* enters the system she is greeted by *Kalsven*, a Sword Worlds destroyer on a goodwill tour of the Lunion Shield Worlds. It is not uncommon to encounter Confederation warships in the region, just as Imperial vessels sometimes visit Confederation ports. *Kalsven* reports no unusual conditions but passes along an advisory from the Imperial authorities about an increased possibility of piracy. This is accompanied by the usual assurances that the Imperial Navy is dealing with the matter. *Kalsven* is not in a position to escort *Skander* as she is headed toward District 268 but offers friendly well-wishes as she departs.

Smoug's highport is tiny; little more than an orbital refuelling station kept topped up by shuttles skimming the nearest gas giant. Smoug is a very dry world, with little fuel available at the downport. It is thus customary for vessels to dock at one of the highport's fuelling clusters and receive customs inspectors whilst taking on liquid hydrogen, then proceed planetside to conduct business. Interface shuttles are available for ships incapable of making a planetary landing but *Skander* is suitably equipped. Instrument interference and desert winds will make the landing a little tricky but Magnus Sundstrom expects a smart approach and touchdown all the same.

On the ground, there is a little money to be made in trade, although most trans-border commerce goes through Wardn. All the same, Smoug is a chance for the Travellers to stretch their legs planetside and possibly make a modest profit. Sundstrom does not intend to make a lengthy visit; unless there is some reason to extend *Skander's* stay he intends to lift off within 72 hours of arriving.

WARDN

B756486-B Ni Ga Pa
Intelligence Value: 16

Lying right on the border with the Sword Worlds, within one jump a major fleet base, Wardn is of strategic importance to both the Imperium and Confederation. Its starport is often considered to be the first or last major port on the Spinward Main. This is not strictly accurate, but is the first (or last) on the part of the Main that runs through purely Imperial space. Wardn is the only body in the system to be permanently inhabited, although temporary settlements have been set up at times elsewhere for scientific or prospecting purposes.

The mainworld has a population of around 50,000 and no significant economic activity. Indeed, Wardn is widely considered to be one of those worlds inhabited only to allow an enforceable territorial claim. The orbital port is large and quite busy, with trans-border traffic coming and going in a manner similar to Grote.

With an insufficient workforce to support any degree of industrial endeavour, Wardn relies on its starport and exports of agricultural produce for profit. Food is a high-bulk, low-value item with heavy shipping costs; agricultural economies are at a huge disadvantage in interstellar trade. This is offset somewhat by the export of higher-value goods based on agricultural processes. Thus, Wardn tends to export a little less grain each year and far more secondary products. These include wines and spirits, high-quality meat products and a range of truly excellent cheeses. The latter are pushed so heavily that the 'Wardn cheese salesman' has become a byword for hard selling.

There are few reasons to go planetside at Wardn, as all commercial activity takes place at the highport. A small Imperial Scout Service base was constructed planetside many years ago but fell into near-total disuse and is now staffed by a skeleton crew. A much larger installation was constructed on a moon of Enex, one of the system's gas giants, and now handles all Scout Service ships in the system. The original base officially remains in service only as a data collation facility, although exploration parties are sometimes sent into the world's Patterned Desert. There are those who remain convinced that the Scouts are looking for evidence of alien civilisations on Wardn and there may be some truth to this. After all, the Scouts have enough personnel in the system to spare a few to poke around Wardn on the off chance that rumours of alien inhabitation in the distant past might be correct.

Wardn's 'great anomaly' as some call it – a rather grand term but one that has stuck – is the strange system of lines and patterns carved into the surface of

what is known as the Patterned Desert. It is believed by scientists that these patterns are the produce of anaerobic life in the baked sand of the desert but many still believe the patterns are evidence of a vanished civilisation. Expeditions occasionally attempt to prove one answer or the other but so far there has been no solid conclusion.

There is an atmosphere of anticipation as *Skander* leaves Smoug, which grows as the days countdown to Wardn. This is the last port of call before re-entering Confederation territory and completing the mission at Biter. Emotions are mixed; some crew are tired and keen to take some time off, some anticipate the pay-out they will receive and most are a little sad that their time together is coming to an end.

At last *Skander* emerges into normal space and sensor data floods in. Wardn's large highport is surrounded by a bewildering pattern of commercial vessels in holding orbits or on approach vectors. Fighters dart here and there, 'eyeballing' new arrivals. All seems to be as it should be and soon *Skander* is given her approach vector. A couple of small trader ships send insulting signals, annoyed to be bumped from their slot by the larger vessel but this is nothing unusual. Unless someone makes a terrible mistake, the Travellers are soon docked in the highport.

Magnus Sundstrom intends to spend nine or ten days in port at Wardn, observing a whole one-week cycle of arrivals and departures, and exploiting the trade advantages to be had by a ship that is not in a hurry. Crew will be granted a couple of days' liberty and the usual intelligence gathering operations will be carried out. Sundstrom himself will be meeting with the Sword Worlds Confederation agent at Wardn and invites the Travellers along to the initial reception. Thereafter they are free to conduct business and enjoy the entertainment available at the port.

The Confederation agent is a former merchant captain by the name of Aaric Vindel. He is known to Sundstrom only by reputation but they have both operated large merchant ships on the same spacelanes and have a lot in common. His reception for the Travellers and senior crew of the *Skander* is a rather grand affair, involving not just Vindel's staff but several other starport brokers and agents as well as representatives from local shipping lines. There are even a few Imperial Navy uniforms here and there, along with captains from some small merchant ships favoured by Vindel.

There are opportunities for trouble if the Travellers are so inclined. Naval personnel are on their best behaviour, but some do come over as condescending towards Sword

Worlders or merchant crews in general. Among the small ship captains are some who were sending insulting signals or impassioned rants about queue-jumpers over the comms and who are now seeking an advantageous bargaining position by befriending the Travellers. By now the Travellers should be used to the responsibilities and restrictions of their position aboard *Skander* and perhaps capable of handling the situation diplomatically in order to get as much out of it as possible.

If the Travellers want to conduct business at Vindel's reception, they can of course do so but there are niceties to be observed. It is common to agree not to talk shop at a social event then discuss a business deal in oblique terms that eventually lead to something that requires only a signature and authorisation code. The nuances of this are subtle and complex, and inexperienced players at this game can find themselves talked into a less than favourable agreement without ever realising it is happening. The Travellers will thus need to be on their guard if they want to avoid this. However, there are opportunities to do it to someone else if the Travellers play the game well.

After the reception, the Travellers are free to do as they please at Wardn highport and to visit the planetary surface if they wish. The Referee should grant them a few days if they are interested in local features or conducting business but well before the expected departure date Magnus Sundstrom calls everyone back to the ship for an emergency launch. No details are given over the Travellers' comms.

With the crew assembled, Sundstrom requests a priority launch window from the port authority, with the assistance of the Confederation agent Vindel. This is granted, along with a fighter escort and a least-time departure vector. Sundstrom orders the astrogator to set a course for the mainworld of the Iron system and jump as soon as it is safe to do so. A message of thanks and good wishes is received from Vindel and as soon as he is able Sundstrom explains the situation to his crew.

Vindel has received word that the liner *Glisten Advantage* is down on Iron. She is an Imperial-registered ship but Vindel has contacts among her crew who gather information and carry out the occasional 'small package transfer' for him. He is worried that if the liner is assisted by a non-Confederation vessel – especially an Imperial Navy ship – certain sensitive information might be lost. Sundstrom has therefore agreed to cut short his visit to Wardn and proceed immediately to Iron. There, his crew will conduct a rescue of personnel from *Glisten Advantage* if necessary. If she can be made spaceworthy, this will be accomplished; if not *Skander* will convey her

passengers and crew to Biter along with the items Vindel needs retrieving. From there they will be someone else's problem and Vindel will owe Sundstrom a favour.

Astute Travellers might notice Vindel did not say how he found out *Glisten Advantage* was down. If someone thinks of this in time, he says a passing ship brought a message containing a discreet request for assistance. If pressed, he adds that this was the scout/courier *SJ-9801*. This story is not implausible on its own but the Travellers might think to check the port records or their own gathered intelligence if they have been diligent about it. If they do, they will realise that *SJ-9801* has been in port for several days – which makes the sudden urgency seem odd – and left Wardn highport on a priority departure vector an hour before Sundstrom received the request for assistance. There *could* be a simple explanation for this, such as a delay in contacting Vindel but it may seem strange. Further investigation shows that *Glisten Advantage* left Wardn highport 10 days ago, filing a flight plan for Iron.

The Travellers have no way of knowing but Vindel is working with a pirate band in the area. Some detective work through the intelligence the Travellers have collected might suggest he has handled off-the-books cargoes and weapons shipments and that a couple of times vessels he has chartered space aboard have disappeared or been raided for cargo. There is nothing conclusive about this but it might lead the Travellers back to Vindel if they pursue the pirate band in the future.

That in turn could be an interesting problem. Vindel is indeed in the pocket of a pirate band but he is the Sword Worlds Confederation agent at Wardn. Exposing him would embarrass the Confederation and provide the Imperium with propaganda material. If he could be quietly removed from his position or 'reassigned' without word getting out of his activities, this would be politically advantageous. In the meantime, he has a partial diplomatic status and is using it to support piracy. It is only a matter of time before he is discovered.

These are matters for future adventures, however. Currently, the Travellers are headed for Iron on what they may expect to be a rescue mission.



IRON

E529000-0
Intelligence Value: 0

Iron is one of the Metal Worlds, claimed by the Confederation as a reserve world but officially uninhabited. There is a small outpost on the mainworld, from where a handful of personnel conduct research or act as an 'administrative presence' to support the Confederation's claim to the world. Ships passing by typically skim fuel from the gas giants or conduct ocean refuelling. Very few land at the outpost unless they really need to.

When *Skander* emerges from jump at Iron there seems to be nothing wrong. The outpost's beacon is functioning and responds with an automatic greeting. This amounts to a declaration that Iron is the territory of the Sword Worlds Confederation and visiting is discouraged. No fuel is available at the outpost, nor other services of any kind. Passing vessels are advised to refuel at one of the system's four gas giants and move on.

There is no human response from the outpost's system at first but as *Skander* enters orbit she receives a signal from *Glisten Advantage*. This is clearly pre-recorded, declaring an emergency in calm, professional tones. The ship has suffered a serious drive failure and requires repairs before she can lift off. The crew and passengers are safe and well, the signal states, and there is no threat to life. A list of required spares follows, all standard gravitic, power and manoeuvre drive components. *Skander* has most of them aboard, and could probably jury-rig the others in her workshops.

The Situation at Iron

The pirates already pulled what was supposed to be their last big job before moving on. Vindel persuaded the captain of *Glisten Advantage* to divert from his intended course in order to deliver an urgent cargo of supplies to the Sword Worlds outpost at Iron. Part of the generous charter fee was paid up front and the job looked legitimate – the Travellers will find records of the transaction if they download the logs from *Glisten Advantage*, which will further implicate Vindel in the piracy ring.

Shortly before *Glisten Advantage* arrived, the pirates' main vessel – the raider *Marqued Target* – landed at the undefended outpost on Iron and disgorged a mob of ground fighters. The Sword Worlders at the outpost put up a spirited resistance but were quickly captured or eliminated, after which *Marqued Target* took off and hid herself. *Glisten Advantage* duly arrived and was invited to land by pirates at the installation. Her captain smelled a rat at the last moment and tried to sheer off but the liner was disabled by fire from *Marqued Target*

and crash-landed. Her crew were then overwhelmed by pirate ground fighters who had been hiding at the Sword Worlds outpost.

This was supposed to be the big final score but when *Skander* appeared in the area, Vindel got greedy. He has sent word aboard *SJ-8901* that the Travellers are headed for Iron and hopes the pirates can conduct an ambush there. They have most of the elements they need in place but little warning. Still, if they can draw *Skander* in they should be able to force a surrender or inflict sufficient damage to make one inevitable.

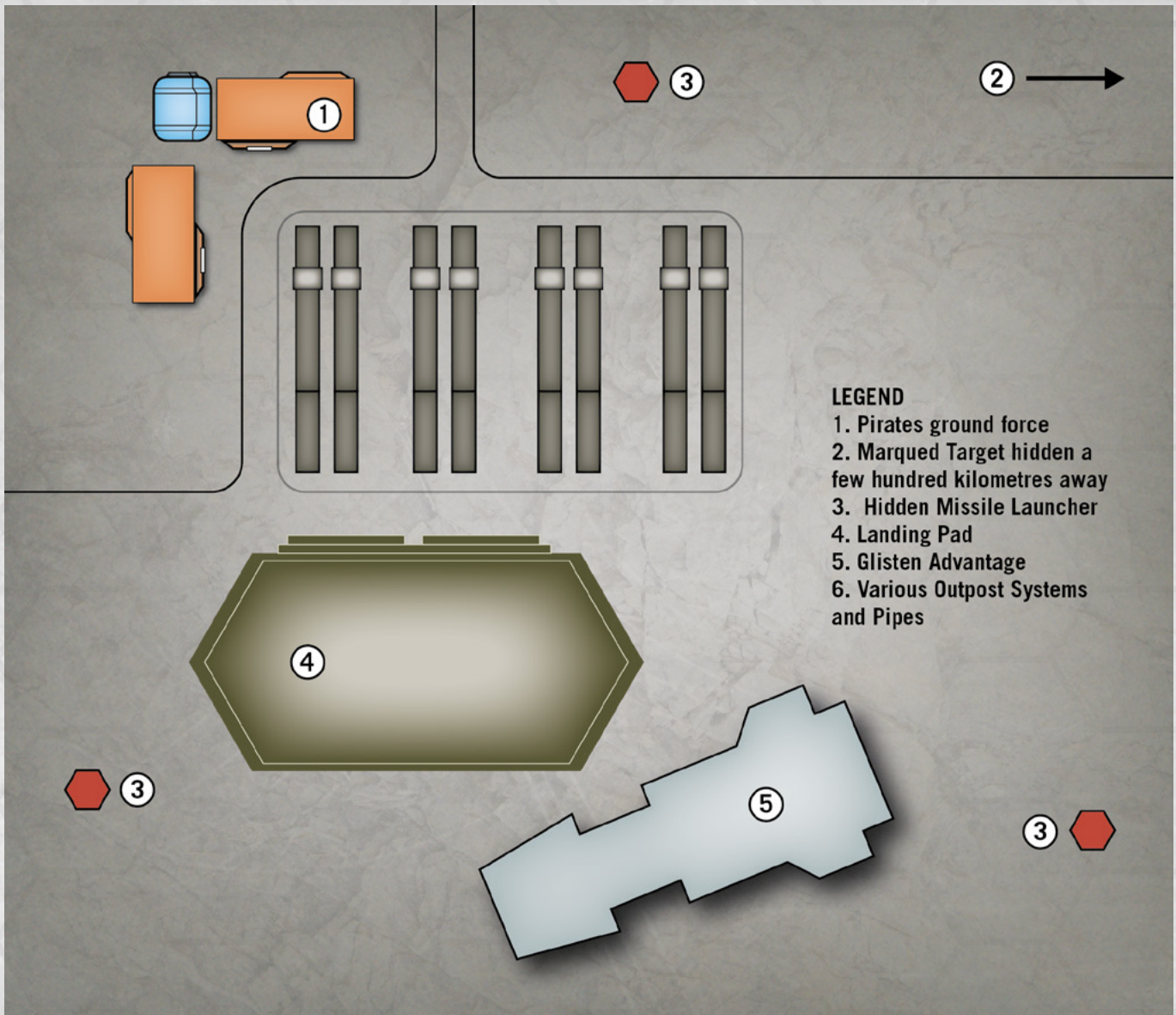
To this end, the pirates have hidden *Marqued Target* in rough terrain a few hundred kilometres from the outpost, where they hope she will not be spotted in the ground clutter. A ground force has concealed themselves in the outpost buildings and there are ground-based missile launchers hidden in nearby rough terrain. The pirates hope to lure *Skander* down on to the landing pad then launch their own ship on a rapid climb to cut off any escape. Failing that, they are confident they can deliver enough damage to ground the Travellers' ship either from their own or by launching a sucker punch missile strike.

The plan has been thrown together hurriedly as a variant on the one that worked against *Glisten Advantage*. Of course, *Skander* is a much larger and more heavily armed vessel that might already have been alerted to the possibility of ambush. The pirates may well have bitten off more than they can chew. However, the situation will be more complex than a straight fight. Apart from anything else, it is not enough to win the combat; the Travellers need to do so without taking so much damage that their ship becomes stranded or the mission's profits are wiped out by repair bills.

The Wreck

Glisten Advantage lies at an angle just outside the landing area. She has damage from weapons fire, although this will not be obvious until a close approach is made. At that point, it is clear she has received laser fire and crash-landed, collapsing part of her landing gear. If the Travellers have not realised by this point that the situation is not what they were led to believe, they must surely see it now. This is not a ship that needs some spares in order to take off; *Glisten Advantage* has been shot down and may never fly again.

The damage is serious but parts of the ship are still capable of supporting an internal environment. This does not include the forward disc section; it has



been breached and the neck linking it to the ship buckled, venting the passenger area and allowing Iron's extremely thin and tainted atmosphere to contaminate everything. The rest of the ship is still airtight and has power, although damage to the manoeuvre drive makes controlled flight impossible. However, the lifters used for landing and take-off still work and the manoeuvre drive can be used in uncontrolled bursts. This makes it possible to cause *Glisten Advantage* to lurch into the air and fling herself across the planetary surface. What use this might be depends on the inventiveness of the pirates and the Travellers.

Perhaps more significantly, *Glisten Advantage* has two dual laser turrets on her dorsal surface for self-defence and they still work. The pirates have manned them and placed a few ground fighters in the wreck. They have

vacc suits and can come out to fight or defend the gunners as they fire upon *Skander* and her shuttles. The surviving outpost staff plus the passengers and crew from *Glisten Advantage* have been placed in the liner's low berths for later use as hostages or to be ransomed. If the Travellers fire on the liner with starship grade weapons they risk harming the hostages. If they choose not to they will have to find some other way to neutralise this threat.

Other Pirate Forces

There are more fighters in the outpost, although it has no weapons with which to engage a starship. The outpost has environmental controls and power, and the fighters all have vacc suits. Exactly how many men the pirates can field is up to the Referee; there should be enough to challenge the Travellers without the situation

becoming farcical or overwhelming. In addition, there are missile launchers jury-rigged in crevices in the surrounding terrain. These are remotely controlled by the pirates and can be launched in a coordinated salvo or used for harassing fire. How many missiles the pirates have again depends on the Referee's judgement. Ideally, the Travellers should be presented with a problem they must think their way out of rather than simply blasting everything in sight.

Resolving the Situation

Ideally, the pirates want to lure *Skander* down with a distress call from the liner or invitations from personnel they have in the outpost. They will dissemble as well as they can but they have not had much time to plan and their story may contradict itself. The basic narrative they are selling is that *Glisten Advantage* has serious problems but can be made to fly; her personnel are safe aboard or at the outpost and everything is fine.

If the pirates get their own way, *Skander* will land and some of her crew disembark, at which point they will be taken hostage. With *Marqued Target* overhead, possibly accompanied by the Type-S scout/courier *SJ-9801* and targeted by the guns of the liner as well as missiles hidden in the surrounding terrain, *Skander* might surrender or be crippled and unable to take off. This is a best case scenario, of course, but if the pirates were to pull it off they would probably leave the crew alive with supplies on *Iron*, making off in *Skander*. Losing their ship would mean ruin for the Travellers and Sundstrom.

The Travellers can thwart this outcome in all manner of ways, perhaps by sending shuttles planetside or becoming suspicious early in the approach. If so, the pirates will still try to position *Skander* between the guns of *Marqued Target* and *Glisten Advantage* and compel a surrender by threatening hostages. The Travellers might find themselves facing multiple problems:

- *Marqued Target* has significant combat capability. Whilst the pirates have underestimated the capabilities of *Skander*, she cannot take on such a vessel without suffering significant damage.
- *Glisten Advantage* can fire on *Skander* or her shuttles and contains hostages. The pirates will make sure the Travellers are aware of this.
- An unknown number of missile launchers are available to the pirates.
- There are ground troops in the outpost.
- *SJ-9801* can engage *Skander's* shuttles.
- Some of the crew may have been taken hostage.

The Travellers probably have enough firepower to blast their way out of the situation but the crew of *Glisten Advantage* are likely to be killed along with

the survivors of the outpost staff and *Skander* herself may take serious damage. Travellers who have learned to think less directly during the cruise may have less destructive plans or might be able to use deception to alter the situation. It is possible that a demonstration of *Skander's* firepower followed by negotiation might suffice to make a deal possible or the Travellers might be able to launch a covert strike against *Glisten Advantage* whilst the pirates are distracted.

Whatever the Travellers decide to do, the Referee should reward good planning and thinking beyond the simple shoot-everything option. Magnus Sundstrom will be greatly displeased with trigger happy goons who get hostages killed or throw away opportunities to resolve the situation without suffering damage that will be expensive to repair. On the other hand, getting one over on the pirates without firing a shot will impress him enormously. In short, this situation is the finale of the campaign. It could be a triumph of diplomacy, misdirection and subtle action if the Travellers are so inclined, a big fight to wrap things up with a bang... or a disastrous bloodbath on the eve of success. It is not possible to predict every possible outcome, nor to foresee all possible actions on the part of the Travellers. Each group will find its own ending to the campaign.

Afterward, if *Skander* can still fly, she will make for *Biter*. Survivors from the outpost and liner may be aboard, perhaps with some captive pirates. *Marqued Target* will run rather than fight to the end, so may reappear as an antagonist or unlikely ally in some future adventure. For now, *Skander* must reach *Biter* and complete her mission.

BITER

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Intelligence Value: 0
Biter is home territory

Biter is not a particularly inviting world. It has a thin atmosphere gradually being lost to space and around 40% surface coverage in mostly shallow water. The ocean basins are surrounded by mineral flats created by evaporation. The population numbers around three million, mostly dwelling in small communities. These settlements are for the most part self-sufficient for food and have enough industry to make most of what they need but cannot contribute to a world economy in any meaningful manner. Farmsteads and ranches are scattered across the habitable lands, with around 200,000 people living in the only major city.

The starport is small but well run. Unusually, both highport and downport are operated by outside contractors, who pay a proportion of the revenue into Biter's coffers. The port is the only major source of income for the world but produces a respectable surplus each year. This is occasionally used to fund projects around the capital and port. Some of these are useful and worthy, others the product of too much democratic input from the populace. Visitors wondering exactly what is being built or installed sometimes find that nobody really knows for sure who authorised what and why. The port has some fascinating follies as a result, such as the astronomical viewing dome that was built for scientific purposes but is now part of an expensive hotel.

Biter's capital also hosts the small administrative apparatus for the Metal Worlds. This is sometimes mistaken for the government of Biter as it is better organised and has almost as many personnel. From this headquarters the Commissioner for the Metal Worlds exercises authority over the small outposts located there and collates periodic reports from their staff.

When *Skander* arrives in the Biter system it is busy, to say the least, but there is nothing unusual going on. Greetings are received from the port, the system defence squadron, and Confederation Navy units stationed in the system, and as a larger vessel *Skander* is directed onto a priority docking vector. This still requires a lengthy and careful approach, with the usual opportunities for embarrassing gaffes along the way. By now the Travellers ought to be used to Sundstrom's insistence that everything be sharp and precise. Naturally, on this final approach of the mission he wants to put on a show.

Smart crewmembers have been quietly preparing for this moment since leaving Iron. Those who have planned less well may be running around in a panic. Sundstrom is not concerned with obvious battle damage – those are honourable scars to be displayed, not concealed – but he expects everything else to be squared away ready for a triumphant entry into port. Urgent matters such as transferring serious casualties to the port's hospital must take precedence but Sundstrom still wants to show off his ship and crew.

Upon landing, the Travellers may be surprised to find media crews waiting for them. The most favoured are granted an audience in 'officers' country' and a near-exclusive interview with Sundstrom himself. Others are offered (on a take-it-or-leave-it basis) a tour of the ship with the Travellers, who will of course answer their questions. This may put the Travellers on the spot a bit and the Referee should play out this unusual set of

problems for all it is worth. Camera crews may be more concerned with getting the ideal shot than whether they cause chaos in the mess hall or disrupt engineering work; presenters may be miffed at not interviewing Sundstrom and determined to get footage of something embarrassing or even scandalous.

And then there are the questions; the endless babble of questions and demands for answers. Some of the presenters have an agenda and will rephrase the same question over and over in the hope of getting a headline they can use. The Travellers may not get to answer a whole question before the next one is asked and may become stressed and snappish. They might even do something newsworthy in its own right, like bodily removing a cameraman from a sensitive area of the ship.

- Who are you? What is your role aboard ship?
- Is Magnus Sundstrom the legend some say he is?
- What happened at Bularia? Did Sundstrom cause it?
- Yes but what did Sundstrom *do* at Bularia?
- How much profit has the cruise made?
- Are the rumours true that *Skander* is a barely flyable wreck?
- Did you cause an incident with the Imperials?
- How did you get that combat damage?
- Would you fly with Sundstrom again?
- When are you going back out?
- What was the highlight of the cruise?
- How many personnel did you lose?
- Where did you make the biggest profit?
- How well did the ship function? What about the crew? Were they a good team? What part did you play? Who was the most important member of the crew? Which ports would you want to visit again? Why?
- And so on... and on... and on.

The Travellers have an opportunity here to say whatever they like. That could get them into trouble if they badmouth other crewmembers or seem to be playing up their own actions to an excessive degree. Sundstrom will be displeased if they make the ship or its crew look bad or if they say too much about the more secretive parts of the journey. If the Travellers declare they have found Denisov relics, they will send the reporters into a frenzy. This too will upset Sundstrom, as he was planning a big reveal.

Once the media and the formalities of entering port have been dealt with, a final set of checks and inspections must be run. This will take a few hours, after which the crew assemble for the last time. The voyage is over. It is time to receive pay, say goodbye to crewmates and stand down.

STANDING DOWN

Standing down is a mix of excitement to be back in home territory and sadness that the adventure is over. Sundstrom draws attention to damage the ship has received, adventures great and small along the way, triumphs and setbacks. He is more inclined to praise than condemn and his thanks to the crew are heartfelt. He announces that at the end of the ceremony the crew will be officially disbanded but he does want to hire a few personnel to transit *Skander* back to Narsil where she will undergo maintenance whilst he decides whether to keep or sell her. Current crewmembers will be given preferred status if they want the job and anyone headed for a port along the way is offered free passage.

As to the financials, each crewmember will receive their promised monthly salary and an equal share of the ship's profits. As agreed, this was 10% of the ship's profit on the trip divided equally, plus another 5% divided according to crew vote.

Sundstrom declares a profit of MCr12 (rounding up slightly) on direct sales. The Referee should add to this any profits the Travellers made. In addition, he offers another MCr8 as a buyout on deals made along the way that have not yet begun to turn a profit. This means the crew have no stake in any additional revenue generated from the deals he negotiated but in return Sundstrom has paid them up front and might not make any money on the deals at all. He is also responsible for all repair costs and losses on the ship if it is sold at a low price.

Each crewmember (or the families of those killed or otherwise lost during the voyage) was given Cr2,500 at the beginning of the voyage. To this is added Cr1,000 per month – rounded up to Cr6,000 if the voyage was less than six months – and an additional Cr2,500 at the end. The real money is in the crew shares, however.

5% of the mission profit is divided among the crew. For simplicity, the Referee should assume there are 50 crew shares. Direct sales and Sundstrom's buyout figure come to MCr20, to which the Referee can add any profits made by the Travellers along the way. 5% of this (MCr1) is divided into 50 crew shares. If the Travellers made no profits the figure is Cr20,000 per crewmember.

In addition, another 5% of the profit is divided according to crew vote. It is assumed that some of this is scattered among other crewmembers even if the Travellers were crucial to the mission, so each 'vote share' is worth Cr1,000. How many the Travellers receive is based on the crew's Esteem and Sundstrom's Satisfaction with them, as shown on the Vote Shares table.

Vote Shares

Value	Esteem	Satisfaction
Despised	0	0
Very Poor	0	0
Poor	0	0
Below Average	0	0
Average	D3	0
Above Average	1D	10
Good	1Dx5	30
Very Good	2Dx5	60
Excellent	3Dx5	100

Travellers who performed exceptionally well stand to take home almost Cr200,000 in discretionary pay, although for a typical above-average crewmember the figure is nearer Cr12,000. However, the additional money is to a great extent not the point for most crewmembers. The prestige of being given a big vote share after a successful cruise is worth more in the long run since it helps build reputation, which in turn opens other doors. At the Referee's discretion, the Travellers might receive additional bonuses but it is not advisable to be too generous; *Skandersvik* will lead to opportunities aplenty, which are worth more than mere cash.

INTELLIGENCE DATA

Sundstrom will want to work through the collected intelligence data with the Travellers before presenting his findings. The Travellers should make a final Average (8+) Investigate check and add the Effect to a 2D roll on the Intelligence Data table. DM+1 applies for every full 10 points of intelligence gathered on the mission.

These outcomes assume Sundstrom manages to present his data at all. He is well respected but not able to simply march into an admiral's office and slam down a folder of data. If the Travellers do not assist him, this is exactly what he tries to do, resulting in an embarrassing ejection from the premises. The Travellers may be able to find a way to get the information into the right hands and set up a meeting.

One option is to use their connections in the Confederation Navy, if they have any. Alternatively, the Biter social scene might allow an informal approach to a senior naval officer followed by a discreet meeting. If the Travellers are in possession of 'Denisov relics' and are willing to present them to the navy, they can request a meeting in return. Failing all that, if Sundstrom has good enough information (or relics to grab attention) he may be able to force the navy to listen to him by

Intelligence Data

2D+Effect+DM	Outcome
0 or less	Disastrously wrong conclusions are drawn, which can easily be disproven by existing data. Sundstrom is made to look foolish.
1–4	Too little data exists or is contradictory. Sundstrom has nothing to present.
5–8	Sundstrom is able to present a few minor pieces of useful information but his theory of an increased threat from rimward is not supported.
9–12	Sundstrom is able to present Naval Intelligence with some useful data but his theory is not supported.
13–16	Sundstrom presents valuable intelligence data, some of which supports his theories.
17–20	Sundstrom presents a wealth of intelligence data, well collated and analysed. He has enough proof to take his theories to the admiralty.
21–24	Sundstrom presents a wealth of intelligence data, well collated and analysed. Naval Intelligence launches a new campaign to learn more about Imperial activities in the region.
25 or more	Sundstrom presents a wealth of intelligence data, well collated and analysed. Further analysis indicates definite patterns in Imperial movements and possible strategic weaknesses that might be exploited.

expounding his theories in the popular media and offering his data as evidence. This will not endear him to the admiralty, but he would rather cause a furore and allow it to be made public that the Confederation is in possession of this information than quietly accept the navy's refusal to listen.

The Strategic Situation

The default date for this adventure is 1105 and canonically the Fifth Frontier War begins in 1107. If a different timeline is used, the Referee can decide what degree of tensions exist and whether war is likely in the next few months but for the purposes of this adventure the Spinward Marches is poised on the brink of a renewed conflict.

The Sword Worlds Confederation is well aware of this and as usual there are those who would welcome hostilities and those who would do anything to avoid another war. Realists assume that war is inevitable sooner or later but would greatly prefer to defuse tensions – at least until the Confederation is in a stronger position. Naval Intelligence is also convinced (correctly) that something is afoot in the Zhodani Consulate. There has been no official warning but Zhodani liaison officers have dropped hints that the Consulate expects a new conflict and that the support of the Sword Worlds will be expected.

The Confederation is quietly moving on to a war footing, with no definite plans to attack and no expectation of imminent conflict. This means increasing training and operability levels, getting new ships into service and

setting up contingency plans. It is important to the Confederation that the Imperials not realise what is happening – nobody wants a war and preparations would be inflammatory. There is also the factor that if war broke out the advantage would be with the state whose preparations were most advanced. Thus the last thing Naval Intelligence wants is Magnus Sundstrom making a noise in the media.

Naval Intelligence does not want the Imperium to realise how much they know about Imperial ship movements in any region, so a quiet approach presenting useful information will get the best results. If Sundstrom thinks highly of the Travellers or they are necessary to his approach, he will ask them to accompany him to a meeting with senior naval officers and present their findings in an appropriate manner. To his disappointment, the meeting is not with top admirals but Naval Intelligence officers at a lower level but if the meeting goes well they will be a conduit to the top. For this to happen Sundstrom needs an outcome of 17+ on the Intelligence Data table. Anything less will result in at best polite interest and thanks for his efforts. A good result will also bring the Travellers to the attention of Naval Intelligence, with the possibility of freelance work in the future.

There will be no immediate or huge results from a successful data presentation but the day may come when the Travellers hear of warship movements and smile knowingly, since they know the official reason for the redeployment is a cover. They will know what is happening and it is just possible that someday they will

hear of a successful strike at the beginning of a new war, or an Imperial sneak attack thwarted, and realise they were the architects of that success. Alternatively, the news may carry a report of a mysterious incident on the Bowman Arm and again the Travellers will realise they had a hand in making that happen.

THE DENISOV MATTER

If the Travellers decide to sell any Denisov relics they found, they can obtain prices ranging from a few hundreds of Credits to perhaps several thousand through the auction houses of Gram or Sacnoth and the find will cause a small media stir. Only the letter is worth more than Cr10,000; other items are not directly associated with Denisov himself so are typically worth Cr2Dx250 for a good item or small lot. These will be picked up by collectors and museums, enabling the Travellers to someday visit the collections they helped create. The sale will generate a small and brief media stir.

The letter is worth vastly more. If sold it would bring Cr3Dx10,000 at a minimum and possibly more if the Travellers were to wait for an opportune time and place. A sale of this sort would generate enough media interest to make the Travellers into minor celebrities for a couple of weeks, after which the letter will become a curiosity in a collection somewhere.

The alternative is to present the letter to the Confederation Navy or one of the world governments, asking nothing in return. This will not generate any form of direct payment but the Travellers will be feted as heroes – along with Sundstrom if they told him the letter existed. If they did not, he will be furious and the Travellers will have made an enemy for life.

If the Travellers can indicate to the proper authorities they have the letter and it can be authenticated, they will be invited to a ceremony attended by several heads of state – possibly including the Hertug of Enos – at which they make a formal presentation of the letter and are awarded decorations for their service. This will be an extremely grand affair, taking up several weeks of travel and stayovers at the expense of the Confederation Navy.

The presentation might be an adventure in its own right and certainly will be memorable. The Navy will provide transport and a liaison officer, possibly even sending a *Denisov* battlecruiser to bring them to naval headquarters. They will be established as heroes of the Confederation, albeit minor ones, and for a few months every socially conscious Sword Worlder, from community

leaders to planetary rulers, will want to be seen with them. Chat show hosts want to talk about the cruise and all manner of issues, some of which the Travellers will know nothing about. Suddenly being asked about anti-poverty legislation on Narsil might throw the Travellers but they may be able to make the most of their time in the limelight to obtain new opportunities.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Eventually the limelight will fade and the Travellers will be once again just another band of starfarers but now they are established as the sort of crew Magnus Sundstrom would choose and may have connections in the navy or political apparatus of the Confederation. This might lead to new adventures.

Skandersvik II: If Magnus Sundstrom chooses to keep *Skander*, he may ask the Travellers to take command of her and find a crew of their own. Alternatively, the Confederation Navy might quietly take possession of the ship whilst Sundstrom continues to be her official owner, in which case an expedition could be launched with the goal of finding out more about Imperial bases and ship movements in the Five Sisters. The Travellers might find themselves planning a second Skandersvik, this time as the leaders of the expedition. Their goal might be the Foreven sector, the Five Sisters, District 268 or the Trojan Reach.

Vindel and the Pirates: The pirate ring is still at least partially operational. The Travellers might choose to take revenge upon Vindel for setting them up or be asked to infiltrate the ring by the intelligence services. The situation is tricky since the Confederation would be embarrassed by the discovery its agent was a pirate facilitator. The mission therefore requires a combination of cleverness and willingness to do what is necessary 'off the books'.

Unofficial Emissaries: The Travellers' actions may turn them into minor celebrities, which makes them attractive to businesses or political movements as figureheads and emissaries. Some of these groups may be rather unsavoury; others may seek to exploit the Travellers' fame in underhand ways. Some will be worthy but lack funds and hope the Travellers will help them out of goodwill. This can lead the Travellers into all manner of new situations ranging from a PR campaign to recruit potential members of an exploration mission to helping a charity get more funding. Some situations may be rather trivial, whilst others could be very important. The Travellers might find themselves carrying vital



information or messages, or requested to get access to a political figure on an ostensibly social level in order to influence their actions. Any one of these tasks could lead to a new adventure.

A Fifth Frontier War? There is widespread acknowledgement that another war may occur, although there are no definite indications one is imminent. The Travellers might be asked to join a goodwill delegation intending to reduce tensions, or derail its attempts. Similarly, they might be asked to undertake covert operations to make a war more or less likely. In times of increased tension the people who brought Denisov's letter home might have more influence over popular opinion than admirals or planetary rulers. It is even possible that a call to arms from the Travellers might be the flashpoint that triggers a new conflict – or their last-minute appeal for calm could forestall one.

SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

The original Traveller adventures often used phrases like 'subsequent events are at the discretion of the Referee' and this is certainly true in the case of *Skandersvik*. However, if the Travellers acted in a manner befitting adventurous and honourable Sword Worlds spacefarers they might find people listen to them and they can sway both public opinion and the policy of rulers. The Travellers might find themselves in a position where subsequent events are at *their* discretion as well as that of the Referee. This, more than financial gain or physical items, is the payoff for a successful voyage aboard *Skander*. A true Sword Worlder cares far less for money than the chance to *be someone*. If the Travellers have achieved that then their time aboard *Skander* will have been well spent indeed.

L I B R A R Y D A T A

CREW & ADVERSARIES

MAGNUS SUNDSTROM

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Human		Male		—
TRAITS			SKILLS	
STR	6	INT	9	Admin 2, Advocate 1, Broker 3, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Persuade 1
DEX	8	EDU	10	
END	9	SOC	10	
EQUIPMENT		Weapons: Revolver (3D-3)		



ENSIGN SIR ESTRELLA HARBEN-ERATARIA

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Human		Female		—
TRAITS			SKILLS	
STR	4	INT	8	Carouse 1, Electronics (comms) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 1
DEX	8	EDU	9	
END	6	SOC	10	
EQUIPMENT		Weapons: Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2)		



TYPICAL SKANDER DECK HAND

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
—		—		—
TRAITS			SKILLS	
STR	8	INT	6	Mechanic 1, Melee (unarmed) 1, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	6	EDU	7	
END	8	SOC	7	
EQUIPMENT				
None				

TYPICAL BULARIA SOLDIER

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
—		—		—
TRAITS			SKILLS	
STR	7	INT	7	Gun Combat (slug) 1, Recon 1
DEX	8	EDU	5	
END	8	SOC	6	
EQUIPMENT				
Weapons: Rifle (3D)				

TYPICAL REBEL GUNMAN

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
—		—		—
TRAITS			SKILLS	
STR	7	INT	6	Gun Combat (slug) 1, Streetwise 1
DEX	8	EDU	4	
END	7	SOC	3	
EQUIPMENT				
Weapons: Rifle (3D) or Revolver (3D-3)				

TYPICAL BULARIA MOUNTED CONSTABULARY TROOPER

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
—		—		—
TRAITS			SKILLS	
STR	7	INT	7	Animals (handling) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee 0
DEX	8	EDU	5	
END	8	SOC	6	
EQUIPMENT				
Weapons: Blade (2D), Carbine (3D), Revolver (3D-3)				

BOWMAN BRAWLERS

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
—		—		—
TRAITS			SKILLS	
STR	8	INT	6	Melee Combat (unarmed) 1
DEX	6	EDU	4	
END	9	SOC	5	
EQUIPMENT				
None				

EHRLIK VINDIRSSON

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Human		Male		—
TRAITS			SKILLS	
STR	9	INT	5	Melee (unarmed) 1, Profession (prospecting) 1, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	7	EDU	6	
END	8	SOC	6	
EQUIPMENT		None		



HAPLESS SCOUTS

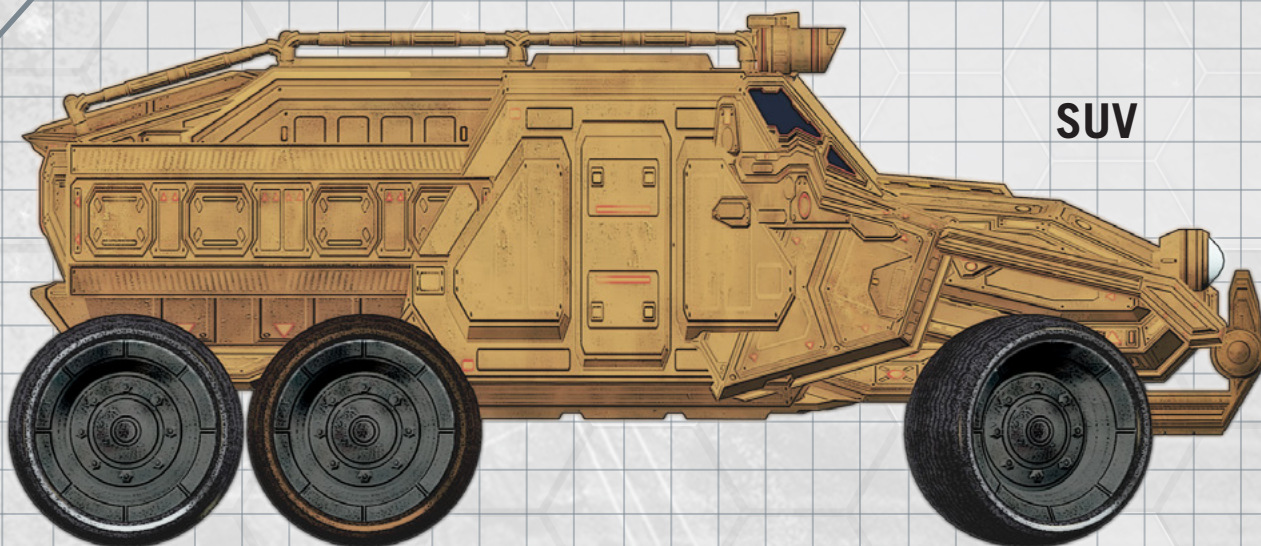
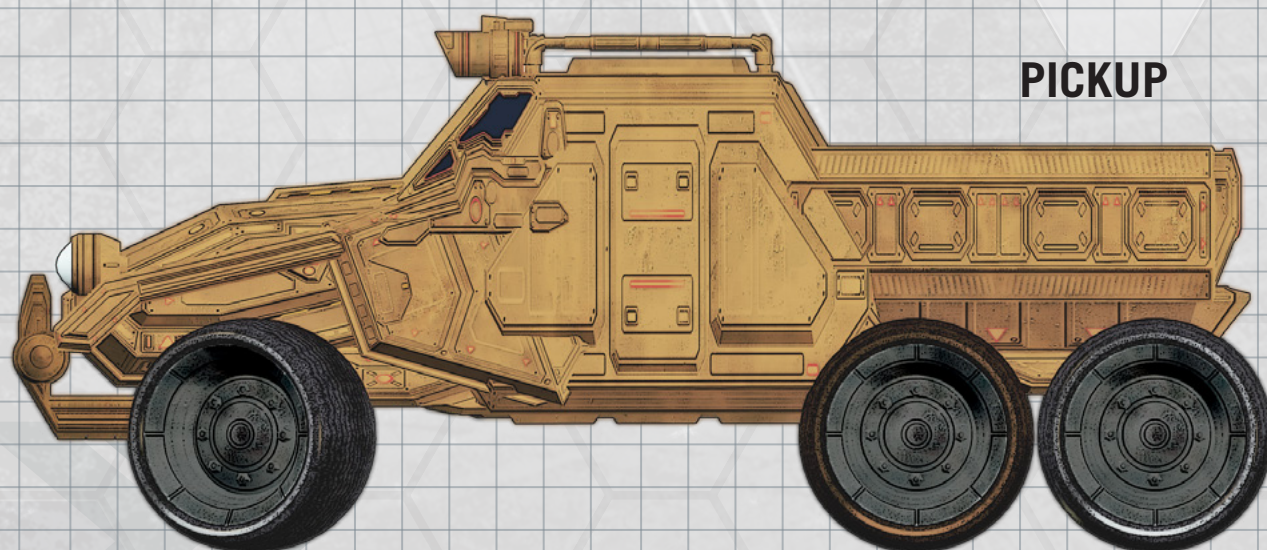
SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
—		—		—
TRAITS			SKILLS	
STR	6	INT	7	Melee 0, Streetwise 1
DEX	8	EDU	7	
END	7	SOC	6	
EQUIPMENT		None		

TYPICAL IRON PIRATE

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
—		—		—
TRAITS			SKILLS	
STR	7	INT	6	Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee (unarmed) 1, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	7	EDU	6	
END	8	SOC	2	
EQUIPMENT		Weapons: Assault Rifle (3D, Auto 2), Snub Pistol (3D-3) Armour: Vacc Suit (+8)		

SKANDER VEHICLES

All of the vehicles carried aboard *Skander* are built on the same rugged 4-wheel-drive chassis. The driving cab and controls are identical between the SUV and pickup versions. This is the SUV variant; the pickup trades four passenger seats and rear enclosed cargo area for an open-topped cargo bed capable of carrying 2,000kg.

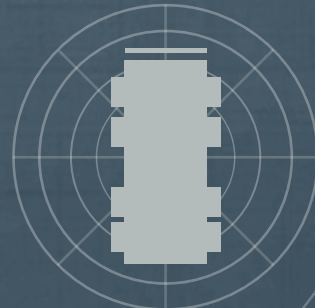
**SUV****PICKUP**

SKANDER SUV AND PICKUP

TL	10
SKILL	DRIVE (WHEEL)
AGILITY	+0
SPEED (CRUISE)	HIGH (MEDIUM)
RANGE (CRUISE)	500 (740)
CREW	2
PASSENGERS	4
CARGO	1 TON
HULL	24
SHIPPING	6 TONS
COST	CR36000

ARMOUR

FRONT	3
REAR	3
SIDES	3



EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Autopilot (basic), Communications System (improved), Control System (basic), Fire Extinguishers, Navigation System (basic), Sensor System (basic), Smart Wheels

No weapon fitted

Autopilot (skill level)	0
Communications (range)	1,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+1
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—
Camouflage (Recon DM)	—
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—

TRAITS

Off-Roader



PLAYING A SWORD WORLDER

Sword Worlders tend to be straightforward, honest, proud and physically adept. They respect those who speak their mind (although arguments and fistfights may result!) and despise liars or those who play the system rather than relying on their own merit. They are impressed by brave deeds and seek to emulate them but are not stupid. Risks are part of life but a successful Sword Worlder tempers courage with wisdom and manages risks rather than plunging ahead regardless.

More than anything else a Sword Worlder thrives on respect – both received and given. Respecting your comrades or an admirable person reflects well on you. Disrespect is reserved for those who have earned it. Likewise, a Sword Worlder expects their achievements to be respected and honoured but proportionately so. Someone who knows they are a decent but not great pilot expects to be treated as such and might actually be offended if flattered beyond this. One of the worst disgraces that can befall a Sword Worlder is to be uncovered as a fraud who overstates their abilities and achievements – or has allowed others to do so.

Sword Worlders have their own perspective on life and, in particular, gender. They seem sexist but attitudes are aimed more at the role typically associated with a gender than with a person's biology. Those who occupy what might be called 'traditionally female' roles are to be treasured and protected, for they are the future of society, whilst those who take 'traditionally male' roles are expected to take risks, be daring and get things done.

An outsider might therefore see a Sword Worlder who respects a female soldier as 'treating her like a man' but this is not the case. He is treating her as a soldier and as she deserves. Physical gender is not the issue here; it is all about the capabilities of the soldier herself in the role she has chosen. Likewise, a biological male who acts as a full-time parent to his children is not 'treated as a female'; he is respected for fulfilling an important nurturing role traditionally associated with females. The difference is glaringly obvious to Sword Worlders.

Traditional Sword Worlds culture is drawn heavily from Norse and Germanic traditions on Old Earth. Some even worship the old Norse gods but the

popular stereotype of the Sword Worlder as a mead-swilling 'spacegoing Viking' who swears by Odin and mistreats women is more the product of Imperial propaganda than reality.

A Sword Worlder respects their peers and superiors, providing they are worthy. They do not respect the rank so much as the effort and talent it took to attain it. They are contemptuous of liars and those rise above their merit. Empty titles may be hilarious or offensive and they are not afraid to show it. At the same time, they are proud to help others achieve what they are capable of and will offer advice to someone who is just starting out in a manner intended to be helpful rather than patronising. If that person goes on to do well, the Sword Worlder has a right to be proud of their part in helping. They do not help others in the hope of future gain or 'networking'; they assist because they can.

Common Sword Worlds attitudes include:

- 'Don't tell me what rank you hold; tell me what you had to do to get it.'
- 'All things pass away, save the judgement of a man's actions.'
- 'What will your colleagues think of you if you do fail to do that?'
- 'It is better to be honestly competent than to falsely claim brilliance.'
- 'It is a hard courtesy to speak the truth; a brave man will always do so and a brave man deserves it'

The average Sword Worlder is honest and forthright to the point others might consider rudeness but not without good reason. They are bold and sometimes reckless but not stupid. They are loyal to those they consider worthy but it is hard to live up to their standards. They are proud and stubborn but will respect and be quietly grateful to those who let them get out of an unwise promise without losing face. People who understand how interpersonal relationships work in the Sword Worlds will find them a firm ally and good friend; those who fail to show them proper respect will encounter their temper.

ADMIRAL DENISOV

The year 604 saw civil war break out in the Imperium, drawing off elements of the Spinward Marches fleet and ensuring there would be few reinforcements when conflict resumed with the Zhodani Consulate. Naturally, the Sword Worlds Confederation reaffirmed their former alliance with the Zhodani. As Imperial fleets struggled to contain Zhodani advances, Confederation forces drove hard into the Vilis subsector.

The capture of Vilis itself is considered a high water mark of Sword Worlds fortunes but soon after the tide turned against the Confederation. The Zhodani abandoned the alliance and sued for peace, leaving the Sword Worlds to face the Imperials alone.

The technological superiority of the Imperium ensured all gains were rapidly reversed and in 620 the Imperium won a decisive victory over the Confederation. Several worlds fell in rapid succession despite stubborn rearguard actions and by 621 the majority of Sword Worlds leaders were advocating surrender. Not all lost faith, however, and foremost among those with the will to fight on was Grand Admiral Denisov.

The withdrawal of Imperial forces to conclude their civil war provided a new opportunity. Denisov proposed a daring strategy, combining uprisings on occupied worlds with a renewed offensive by all ships that could be mustered. The Imperium seemed powerful but its fortress was shaking on its foundations. A sound blow might bring the walls crashing down – and Denisov was the man to deliver it.

Denisov's fleet was small but his crews were determined to do or die. From the high command he met only prevarication; seeing the leaders had lost their nerve, Denisov advanced against the Imperium on his own initiative. Instead of a triumphant call to war, Denisov's heroic assault was rewarded with an order to surrender.

He ignored it and fought on.

For a time, Denisov's fleet drove the Imperials before it, until shortage of supplies and lack of support forced him onto the defensive. A brilliant fighting

retreat to Narsil staved off defeat and kept alive the hope of a resurgence. Some responded heroically, joining the fight but again high command ordered Denisov to surrender. Again he refused.

Denisov's fleet made its stand over Narsil, against overwhelmingly superior odds. Even in the final extremity of defeat the Grand Admiral made the Imperium pay a bitter price and at the last he cheated them of victory. A handful of ships escaped the battle, carrying on a campaign of harassment from the Bowman system.

Denisov's force was eventually defeated at Mertactor and pursued back to its base where, according to Imperial sources, all Denisov's vessels were destroyed. Yet the Grand Admiral was never confirmed among the dead and there are those who claim he escaped a second time. His eventual fate is unknown, and after five centuries it is certain that Grand Admiral Denisov is long dead, but to many Sword Worlders what is important is that for all their might the Imperials could not defeat him, nor force surrender.

Grand Admiral Denisov is the epitome of the Sword Worlds fighting man. Stubborn and relentless, undaunted even in the darkest hour, he preserved the honour of the Sword Worlds by denying the Imperium a complete victory. Even today, 'until Denisov surrenders' is a figure of speech meaning something that will never happen. Today, the pride of the Sword Worlds Confederation fleet bears his name – the *Denisov*-class battlecruiser. Artefacts associated with him fetch enormous prices at auction and generations of explorers have dreamed of finding his final resting place.

In short, Grand Admiral Denisov is perhaps the single most important figure in the whole history of the Sword Worlds. No trace of him has ever been found and his eventual fate is one of the most hotly debated topics in history. Whoever finds his resting place will be forever associated with the greatest Sword Worlder who ever lived.

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TRAVELLER

SKANDERSVIK

Skandersvik is a complete campaign for Sword Worlds Travellers. As crewmembers aboard the merchant cruiser *Skander* they will voyage through Darrian and Five Sisters subsectors, into District 268 and finally home again. There is money to be made and glory to be earned on such an expedition, but it is not without its hazards.

Freikorps Skander: An uprising in the outback of Bularia has caused what amounts to a civil war, trapping some of the Travellers' contacts in a combat zone. Although officially prohibited from getting involved, the crew of *Skander* includes experienced fighters willing to join the fight as a mercenary Freikorps.

The Bowman Deception: Following rumours of a downed Sword Worlds ship on Nirton, the Travellers slip through an Imperial blockade to investigate the wreck. There, they find clues as to the fate of the legendary Admiral Denisov.

The Lunion Shield: During a transit of the Imperial systems unofficially known as the Lunion Shield Worlds, the Travellers are lured into a trap by devious pirates. *Skander* is a rich prize, but she may be too tough for the pirates to deal with.

Skandersvik provides a background to the mission, the ship and her crew, creating many opportunities for incidents, side trips and mishaps along the way. There is far more to this expedition than trading profits and a payday at the end. There are reputations to be made, hidden agendas to be uncovered and a tricky path to be threaded through the complex cross-border politics of the region.



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