

GURPS® *Traveller*®

FLARE STAR



AN e23
ADVENTURE
FOR GURPS®
TRAVELLER®
FROM
STEVE
JACKSON
GAMES
FOR 3 TO 6
PLAYERS

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This campaign is made up of four adventures. It is designed for characters with a variety of backgrounds serving aboard a Trade Pioneer merchant ship. The GM may draw characters

from any source, including existing campaigns; it is recommended that several members of the team have Mechanic and Vacc Suit skills. It is also urged that characters have some skill in ground combat. Two scientist NPCs are also required for play of this campaign. Character generation information may be found in *GURPS Traveller*.

The merchant ship is the *Empress Marava*-class far trader *Scotian Huntress*. Details of her statistics and performance can be found on p. GT135, while deck plans can be found in *GURPS Traveller Far Trader* (pp. 110-111). Other *GURPS Traveller* books and supplements may be incorporated as desired.

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Part 1: The Derelict

BACKGROUND

Undeveloped sectors along the edge of the Imperium – sectors like Reaver’s Deep – are the hunting grounds of the Trade Pioneers. *Scotian Huntress* is one of these, an *Empress Marava*-class far trader owned by the mercantile firm of Caledon Ventures. Manned by an experienced trade team, the ship has been probing along the rim of the Great Rift, searching out new markets, resources, and products that might put Caledon ahead of the competition.

Unexplored star systems always promise untold wealth. But the system the traders are currently exploring – shriveled chunks of rock and ice circling twin M5 dwarfs – has shown the other side of the balance sheet. There is nothing of value here.

Until they detect the Other . . .

The alien craft is unlike any seen before – huge, with enormous heat radiator wings, falling in an eccentric orbit around the red suns. Aboard the *Huntress*, excitement runs high. Newly discovered races mean whole new worlds of trade opportunity, and a fat bonus from Caledon. In moments, the traders have matched course and speed with the newcomer. But, as they approach, they realize that there is no sign of life from the alien craft and only the faintest traces of power leakage or heat spill. Their prize is a dead ship.

PAGE REFERENCES

Rules and statistics in this article are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*, CII to *GURPS Compendium II*, and GT to *GURPS Traveller*. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

But even a derelict must come from someplace. The Trade Pioneer’s contact team suits up to have a closer look. An air lock is visible at the bow. Within might be the clues that will lead them to a new world, new people, and bonanza.

GAINING ENTRANCE

A three-yard-wide panel at the derelict’s bow is the only obvious entrance. No controls are visible, but a recessed niche two inches square will invite investigation. Nothing the adventurers do to this niche will have any effect. Team members who carefully examine the hull around the panel can, on a successful IQ roll, discover a hidden manual release.

Operating the release will make the panel slide open very slowly. The outer door will close and the inner door open automatically once the adventurers enter the air lock. The inner door will operate in fits and jerks, freezing open, and a faint blue light on one bulkhead will flicker twice and die. The party will find that nothing they do, and nothing attempted by those still aboard *Huntress*, will make the air lock operate again. They are trapped, although there seems to be no immediate danger.

CONDITIONS ABOARD

There is no gravity or light and, except for the battery that spent its last power working the air lock, there are no operating power systems aboard. There is atmosphere, but the interior temperature is -240° F.

There are bodies floating everywhere, well preserved in the cold and all showing signs of violent death. They are of no species known to the adventurers. Each is three feet tall, with a tubular body, two stalked eyes, four grasping appendages and four heavier legs. None wears clothes; some carry lengths of metal tubing, broken equipment, or other improvised weapons.

THE SHIP

As the adventurers explore the ship, the GM should refer to this section to identify various compartments and describe them to the players.

All corridors are three yards wide and two high. Doorways are three yards wide and only one yard high; mechanical releases 18 inches off the deck will open all the doors except two. These exceptions are the frozen inner air lock panel and a door leading aft to what may be engineering spaces; no mechanical releases are present, but recessed spaces two inches square are visible next to them. Debris floats everywhere – broken equipment, smashed instruments, and vandalized fixtures – and occasionally the party will encounter what seem to be tube-shaped, cartilaginous bones among the alien bodies.

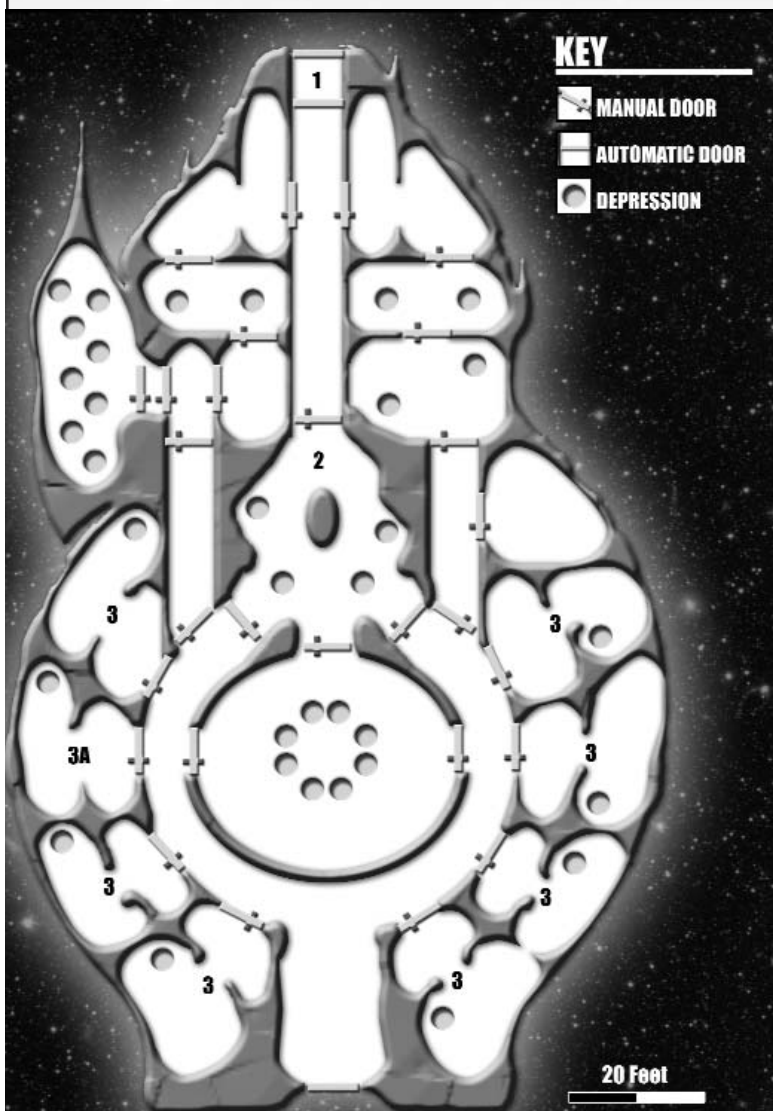
The following areas are keyed to the alien ship deck plans.

1. *Airlock.*

2. *Control Room:* Instrument panels are 18 inches tall, covered with switches, buttons, and other controls. Anyone with any computer-related skill will soon notice that there is nothing resembling a computer anywhere. “Furniture” seems to be shallow circular depressions, five feet across, 18 inches deep, lined with some flexible material and sunken into the deck. Considerable damage has been done to the instrument panels, though one, set off by itself and bearing only a violet lever, appears unharmed. Anyone who experiments with this will find that pulling the lever up will restore gravity (0.95 G) and light (extremely harsh, blue-white light from overhead panels) throughout the ship. When gravity is restored, each character must roll against DX to avoid falling damage (p. B131).

3. *Quarters:* Eight rooms, each with a single deck depression. The walls are covered by the remnants of intricately designed hangings of glass beads in shades of green, blue, and violet, interspersed with black. The door to one room (marked A) has been deliberately jammed shut from the outside by a piece of pipe in the release mechanism. Within are 10 alien bodies and a number of disjointed cartilaginous bones.

Including these 10 bodies, 60 alien corpses will be found aboard the ship; the GM should divide this number among the various compartments. Unnumbered compartments are of unknown purpose; the combination of alien design and wanton destruction leaves no clues to what they were for. Nearly every compartment has yard-high panels of silvery metal, many half-covered by alien inscriptions, along the walls. These notations can be wiped off easily.



ARTIFACTS

Among the other junk, the party will notice what look like bracelets of some slick, silvery material, three inches in diameter and two inches wide. A two-inch-square raised ornamental design on the band will on close inspection prove to be an intricate assembly of metal plates and electronic components. There are six bracelets, one in the cabin that was jammed shut. All will be found among or near scattered bones, and all will be broken to some degree.

Note that all rolls to use alien technology, either on the derelict spaceship or later on the alien planet, are at a -2 penalty for lack of familiarity (p. B43).

THE LIFEBOAT

On the port side forward the party will find a series of mechanically dogged hatches, the last jammed shut from the far side. The team must make a successful roll against ST-8 to free the door (the GN may grant bonuses if multiple crewmen push together, or if someone uses an appropriate tool). When opened, the door leads to the ship's lifeboat.

Power is off within the boat. A violet lever like the one in the control room is in the "on" position, but the boat's batteries have long since been drained. There is no way to restore light or gravity, or to cast off from the larger vessel.

Two bodies are aboard, much different from those found on the large ship. These are about five feet across, furry, and disc-shaped, with 12 appendages of various sizes arranged around a fleshy hub. There are no legs on the ventral surface; the creature may glide or undulate along the ground.

Each wears on one arm a bracelet identical to the broken ones outside. Strangely fashioned hand lasers float nearby; both aliens have burn wounds, and one appears to have shot itself.

THE ADVENTURE

Shortly after the party boards the derelict, crew members aboard *Huntress* will detect a massive cloud of hydrogen gas – part of the firefall between the two stars – falling toward the nearer sun. Computer predictions estimate that the cloud's impact on the photosphere will trigger a flare within 30 minutes.

Many red dwarfs are flare stars, subject to periodic upheavals that can increase their luminosity by a factor of 100 and flood nearby space with particulate radiation. The two ships are only nine million miles from the double sun, close enough that each is just as bright as, and appears four times larger than, the Sun as seen from Earth. The immediate increase in brightness will present no danger to crew within the ships. Personnel caught outside will be subject to 1d heat damage every five minutes, unless they are in the shadow of one of the ships.

Four hours after the light of the flare reaches the ship, particulate radiation will arrive. Screens aboard the *Huntress* will protect those aboard her, but the alien ship has no such protection. Adventurers aboard the derelict will suffer 15 rads per minute (see pp. CII145-148) until they return to *Huntress*. Radio communication will be impossible, though the

GM's INFORMATION

The following material is for the GM only. It will form the basis for subsequent adventures in this campaign.

Though A0 V stars rarely have planets, there are always exceptions, and the disc-shaped aliens come from a TL8 civilization on one of these. Clues aboard the derelict suggest that they see blue and ultraviolet light. Their ship passed the twin stars too close at the wrong time and a flare similar to the one that threatened the adventurers disabled their heat radiators and crippled their ship.

The starship builders are extremely long-lived. Later studies will show that the ship (designed to carry 100,000 tons of fuel, with a 100:1 fuel/mass ratio) was capable of reaching 2% of lightspeed. At that speed, the trip from the nearby A0 V star took 325 years.

Computers are unknown among the starship builders. They rely instead on individuals with the Lightning Calculator advantage – somewhat more common among them than in Humans – as organic computers. There will be a planet-sized market for electronic computers if the home planet can be discovered.

The presence of *two* alien species aboard the alien craft is the key to an important secret, one that will unfold later in the campaign.

explorers can talk by touching helmets. The flare will last for 20 hours.

The adventurers are trapped aboard the derelict with only a short time to make a thorough and rapid exploration of the alien vessel, discover a way out, and get back to the safety of *Huntress*. Along the way, they may gather clues concerning the identity and origin of the derelict's crew.

THE PUZZLES

A number of puzzles are presented to the adventurers. Most important, they must discover that the intact bracelets within the lifeboat will fit into and operate the two-inch-square niche by the air lock. If the ship's power is on, the air lock will function smoothly and the party can escape. (The mechanism of the rear hatch appears to be broken. No amount of tinkering will open it.)

A number of conclusions can be drawn once exploration of the derelict is complete. The players

should be encouraged to develop their own conclusions from the clues they discover. These include:

1. Two kinds of life forms were aboard the ship, which was designed for the disc-shaped beings. The ship probably carried a crew of eight.

2. No computers were found on board. The alien notations on the silvery boards may represent manual calculations. If this is true, an enormous potential market may be available once this race is discovered and contacted

3. The ship, based on external inspection, is not jump capable. It has a sublight gravitic drive of primitive design.

4. The harsh, ultraviolet-loaded light of the alien's lighting panels suggest a home star of around spectral class A0. Querying the *Huntress's* navigational computer will reveal an A0 V star two parsecs deeper into the Great Rift. Since such stars rarely have planets, it has never been visited. Caledon will pay a bonus of Cr250,000 for this information.

Part 2: Storm

The A0-class star, a blue-white giant, is a young, hot star with a single planet – possibly captured – in an eccentric orbit. The newly arrived visitors name the planet “Storm” as a result of the unusual number and violence of severe weather patterns observed from orbit.

PLANETARY INFORMATION: STORM

Starport: Class I.

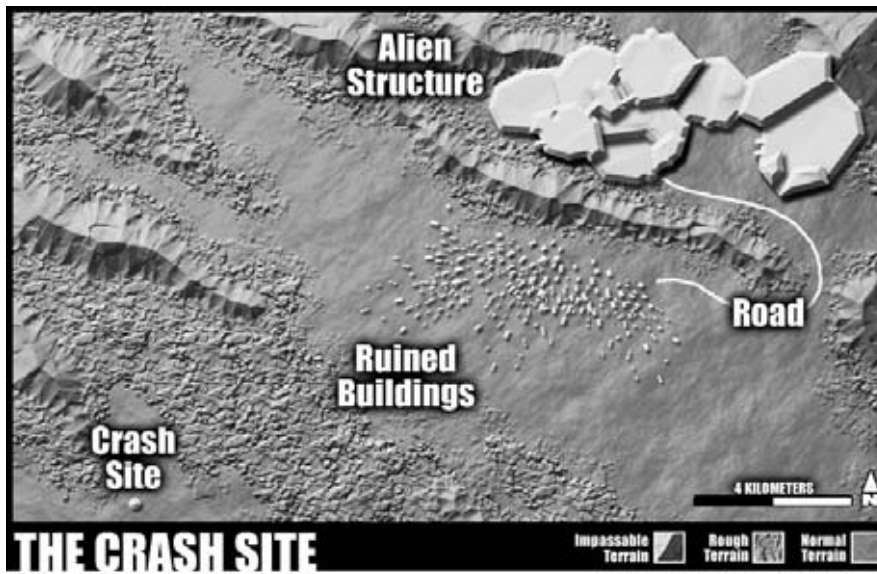
Diameter: 7,000 miles (11,300 kilometers). Gravity: 0.95 G. Atmosphere: Standard oxygen-nitrogen, polluted by high ozone content. Surface Water: 40%. Climate: Variable, currently Hot. Population: 200 million. Government: Anarchy. Control Rating: 0. TL: 8.

The Classic Traveller UPP for Storm is E774800-8. See the conversion information on p. GT107 and p. GT123.

BACKGROUND

During their descent from orbit, the crew of the *Scotian Huntress* feels the buffeting winds and watches the raging lightning of one of the “smaller” storms. Then lightning hits the ship, not once, but several times, scrambling the electronics on board and causing power surges. The pilot fights the far trader down . . . and somehow, miraculously, they land in one piece. But there is heavy damage, damage that will take hours to repair before the *Scotian Huntress* can lift once more.

While the crew begins making repairs, the Trade Pioneer team sets out to study the new world. The ship is down in a barren wilderness. Conditions outside are far from pleasant . . . temperatures at 95° F., with a high atmospheric ozone content that makes respirator masks mandatory. But recordings made during final landing show signs of civilization beyond a ridge that rises some 45 miles to the east. The team, including two expedition scientists, sets out to investigate aboard the ship's air/raft, hoping to make contact with friendly natives.



uncontrolled among the city buildings. Beyond, half-hidden by the smoke, they glimpse a huge, squat shape looming on a cliff, a massive, brooding structure with the look of a fortress or mausoleum.

An urgent call from the ship interrupts speculation and discussion among the party. The air/raft is needed to move heavy equipment for ship repairs. But the expedition xenologist has discovered two domestic animals – the first species of native ani-

CONDITIONS ON STORM

Breathing masks must be worn at all times. Other equipment may be selected from the ship's locker before the adventure begins. The GM should decide what gear can be carried, based on the needs of the adventure and the experience of the group.

Short, violent storms are the chief natural danger on Storm. They may appear at any time with about 5d minutes' notice. When a storm hits, Vision rolls, DX rolls, and any tasks that require precision or vision are at -5 (until the person reaches cover), and lightning is a severe danger. Anyone in the open must make a successful Dodge roll at +3 to take cover (see *Dodging Explosions*, p. CII54). Anyone failing his roll or choosing to remain in the open is subject to a lightning roll by the GM. On a 4 or less on 3d, the victim takes 8d damage. Repeat the lightning roll every few minutes or until the entire team takes cover. During a storm it is impossible for an air/raft to fly. The storm will last for 5d minutes, and then disperse as quickly as it began.

THE RIDGE

On the crest overlooking a wide, shallow valley, the adventurers discover buildings surrounded by a low wall. The buildings command a view of the valley, and the alien city that stands there. A pall of black smoke rises from countless fires burning

GM's NOTES

The floor plan shows the layout of the small complex of buildings on the ridge. The largest building contains various implements and furnishings that lead to the conclusion that it is a dwelling. Furniture – tables 18 inches high and broad, shallow circular depressions – is reminiscent of that used in the alien probe that first led the adventurers to Storm, proof that they are on the right track. The interior of the building shows signs of violence, and one corner holds a small pile of dry cartilaginous bones from some alien creature.

Ceilings are two yards high and covered with fluorescent panels that give off a harsh, white light. Doors are only one yard tall (adventurers must crawl through). Windows are flat, narrow slits, once glassed over, but now broken, set 18 inches above the ground.

The area designated as “stable” is a windowless building constructed of silvery, reflective metal. The door was originally secured with a heavy, complicated lock (the xenologist shot this off with a laser to enter). Scratches and dents on the door show attempts to force it open – they were there when the buildings were first examined. Inside the stable it is a cool 68° F., which warms slowly as air from outside filters through the damaged door. Low troughs filled with vegetable matter and two eight-legged, horned, slug-bodied animals are the only things found within.

mal life found on Storm – in a “stable” among the cluster of buildings. Much could be learned here . . . so the team leader makes a decision. The air/raft pilot returns to the ship, leaving the rest of the team to assist the scientists in investigating the buildings and the two animals. Later, the air/raft can return.

Everyone in the party will regret that decision . . .

THE ANIMALS

Within hours of being discovered (before the first native attack; see below), the two animals found in the stable will become sick, lying on their sides, panting, and licking at a number of basketball-sized swellings developing on their bodies. The expedition xenologist will venture the opinion that they are suffering from some parasitical disease, but can do nothing to help them. 18 hours after the sickness develops, the animals die within minutes of each other. The swellings, though, continue to grow. If one is opened, a slender, eight-legged animal will be discovered within, snake-thin, with a toothy mouth with which it is busy eating its way out of the larger creature.

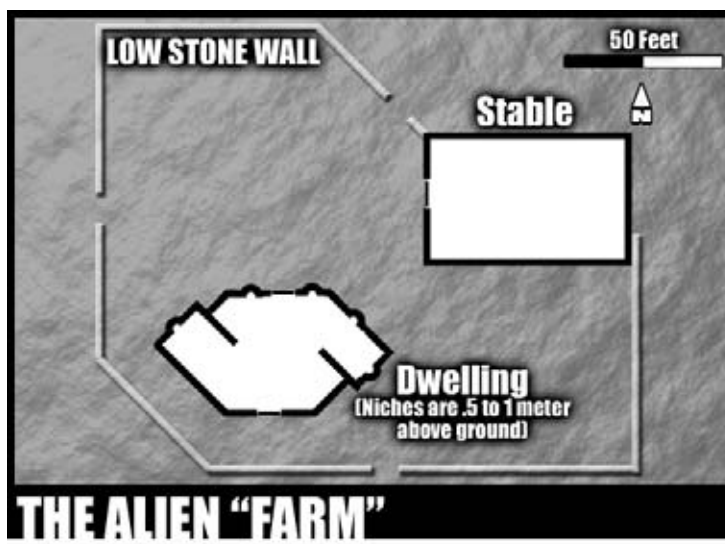
Four hours after the animals die, ten swellings on each carcass burst, releasing a total of 20 animals (less any released previously). Each is 18 inches long and quite vicious, attacking the nearest available adventurer, and continuing to attack until it is dead.

After careful study of both life forms, the xenologist will conclude that they are the same species, in adult and juvenile forms. An as-yet-unknown trigger causes the growth of the offspring as buds within an animal. The adult eventually dies, furnishing food for the young as they emerge. The two forms are differ-

ent enough to suggest that some unknown stimulus causes a metamorphosis from juvenile to adult.

ALIEN ATTACK

Several hours after the departure of the air/raft, a large number of alien creatures are seen moving up the ridge toward the explorers. Other bands of aliens are seen moving about in other directions, converging on the site the crew has called “the farm.” Examination shows them to be tall, four-armed, four-legged tubular aliens, each nearly seven feet tall.



Except for size, they are identical to the small alien corpses found aboard the derelict ship.

The aliens are a mob, without clear organization or leadership. They carry clubs, crude spears, rocks, and torches. Attempts to communicate with them will fail; they are interested in nothing but destruction and finding food – anything living. They will attack the party at the farm by rushing the buildings or by setting fire to them. Captured or killed adventurers will be dragged off and eaten.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTER INFORMATION

Information for creatures encountered in this adventure is given below. The *intermittents* are the animals that the team finds in the stables. The *killers* are the small animals that emerge from the swellings on the intermittents. The *hunters* are the tall natives with weapons.

Animal Encounter Table

Animal Type	ST	DX	IQ	HT	Move/Dodge	PD/DR	Weight	Damage
Intermittents	20	10	4	13	8/5	1/1	500 lbs.	1d impaling (horns)
Killers	3	12	3	15/2	4/6	0/1	1 lb.	1d-4 cutting (bite)
Hunters	14	12	6	12	7/6	1/1	200 lbs.	1d cutting (bite) or weapon

The aliens attack in waves, consisting of 1d×10 natives in each wave. Before each wave attacks, the GM rolls 1d×5 to determine the number of casualties they will take before fleeing. Once they have fled, they will reorganize for another attack 1d hours later. During this period, players will be able to move around the farm area, but an attempt to escape cross-country will be met by renewed assaults. For game purposes, assume an unlimited supply of aliens (several hundred). They will continue to attack until they win, or the adventurers are rescued by the air/raft.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

The air/raft has been delayed by a severe, lingering storm around the ship, a storm that has also cut all communications. Massive, swirling thunderclouds over the landing site will be visible to the adventurers, but there will be no way of telling how long the condition will last. After 20 hours, the GM should indicate that they detect a gradual clearing over the ship. 1d hours later the air/raft will arrive. Gunfire from the air/raft will disperse any native attack long enough for the adventurers to get aboard. Once an escape has been made, the adventure is over.

Part 3: Periastron

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

BACKGROUND

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

Inertial compensators and internal grav field components can be repaired, and it isn't long before they

Continuing the Campaign

On returning to the ship, the adventurers will find that repairs have been made, and the ship jury-rigged enough to make limited maneuvers. The adventurers can choose to leave Storm, carrying the information they have gathered so far back to Caledon Ventures so that a better-equipped expedition can be sent later. In this case, they will be rewarded a commission of Cr500,000 apiece 3d months later.

If they prefer, however, the traders can choose to continue exploring Storm, hoping to complete their mission themselves. In this event, they will discover that their ship isn't as repaired as they thought (see *Part 3: Periastron*).

FINAL NOTES

The discovery of the unusual life cycle of Storm's native life is a key to the overall campaign. Explorers must survive the native attacks to bring word of their discoveries to the ship.

The "fortress" sighted beyond the burning city should leave an impression of great size and technological prowess, and should suggest itself as a natural place to seek further information on the natives in later adventures.

are back in working order – at the expense of three of the grav modules from the air/raft. But the atmosphere and temperature regulators are harder to replace, both in terms of parts and time. And, with the damage as it is, time is suddenly a crucial factor.

Internal temperature control is no longer working. The outside temperature is up to 105° F. and still rising, as Storm swings toward periastron. The crew's vacc suits can keep them cool but they aren't designed for continuous operation; as things stand, there is no way the crew can get the temperature control repairs made before they roast in the heat. Only a single, faint promise of hope exists, unearthed by the team's planetologist.

A little over 45 miles away from the ship, on the other side of a ridge and a wide valley, a native city once stood. Now abandoned by its original inhabitants and ravaged by wandering bands of hostile natives (the juvenile form), the city no longer seems important. But a structure towers above it, on the sides of a mountain; a brooding structure of uncertain

GM's NOTES

Clues earlier in this adventure have introduced the unusual biology of the creatures inhabiting Storm. A reproductive cycle linked to the severe temperature fluctuations of Storm's eccentric orbit makes for a puzzling difference between life forms. During periastron, when the planet's orbit brings it closest to the sun, the temperature rises dramatically. Budding, triggered by the increased heat, produces a number of offspring in each of the individuals exposed. The parent dies, furnishing food for the young. As the comparatively short periastron period comes to an end, the offspring mature and ultimately metamorphose into the long-lived adult forms. Juvenile and adult are mostly unlike in appearance, and completely unlike in temperament.

When the alien spaceship in Part 1 was crippled by the solar flare and lost its heat radiators, the temperature increase triggered this reproductive process. The juveniles ate all of the adults but the two in the lifeboat, who shot themselves before they could reproduce. The cartilaginous bones are the remains of the rest of the crew. The juveniles never reached their full height of seven feet, dying due to a combination of cold, hunger, and radiation.

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

purpose. Scans made as the ship was landing show this building to be a tremendous source of heat, and the computer projects a high probability that this structure is actually a large, refrigerated complex. Inside, the computer claims, the temperature is actually well under what the Humans think of as normal – a chilly but comfortable 50° F. Other events have prevented more thorough investigation . . . until now.

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

THE ADVENTURE

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

Within the complex, the explorers will finally meet the aliens they have been seeking, the mature form of the tubular natives who have been so dangerous. These are disc-like beings, five feet across,

with a civilized and peaceful nature, and a technically sophisticated culture. They will be friendly; once communications are established and a common language worked out, they can not only help the adventurers survive, but prove a lucrative source of trade for Caledon Ventures, giving the party a fat bonus to look forward to on returning to civilization.

USELESS ARTIFACTS

The explorers will find a large number of artifacts in the ravaged city, most broken, some intact but useless. These are examples. The GM may devise others. Note that use of any alien artifact is always at a -2 penalty due to unfamiliarity.

Turquoise cube, two inches to a side, no apparent lid or opening. Something may be heard to rattle inside.

Metal rod, 10 inches long, one-inch diameter. One end will glow bright blue if the rod is lifted to a vertical position.

Metal cylinder, two feet tall, five inches in diameter. Bears alien inscription. Weighs 200 pounds. Top may be removed easily. Contains a viscous, plastic substance.

Statuette of a disc-shaped alien, two inches in diameter, composed of a shiny ferric alloy. Appears to be holding a largish, cigar-shaped artifact. Underside bears a trefoil-shaped symbol.

GM's NOTES

Overland Trek: Use of the air/raft has been greatly curtailed by the use of grav modules to repair the ship. It will serve reliably to carry supplies and a pilot, but its capacity for both weight and speed has been reduced (the vehicle is now at HT 10). All team members but the pilot will have to walk. Attempts to fly at more than 1/4 speed (40 mph), or carry multiple personnel and their gear, are subject to a roll vs. HT every hour (every 5 minutes in combat). For each failure, the air/raft loses 1 HT; on a critical failure, the vehicle becomes inoperable. Atmospheric turbulence can also be a source of danger to persons using the air/raft.

Travel is conducted at the rate of three miles per hour. Each hour, too, the GM should check for native encounters, equipment failures, and other events. See the map and event table.

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

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

Natives: The event table governs native encounters. Natives are seven feet tall, tubular, with four arms and four legs. Generally, they are armed with spears, clubs, torches, rocks, and other random, primitive weapons. They always attack. The explorers will encounter a total of 1d×10 natives at any given time. They break off and retreat when half or more are killed. If they capture an adventurer, they will attempt to eat him on the spot.

Equipment Failure: The air/raft is prone to failure at all times; if it is put under strain, failure is almost certain. Vacc suit air conditioning units

are also under an enormous load, and may also fail. Check hourly for air conditioning failure. The vacc suits have a HT of 11. Roll on Mechanic or Vacc Suit skill to make repairs; a tool kit is also required. If a suit fails, use the rules for heat exhaustion on p. B130. This will not be necessary if the party finds shelter in time.

The Doors: Before starting the adventure, the GM should choose five hexes on the map that are designated as doors. These doors occur in building hexes, in low alcoves that appear to be reinforced and far sturdier than the remainder of the building. They are one yard high, and a small recess two inches square is set into each. The "bracelets" from the first adventure aboard the alien ship will fit the small recess, and can be used to open the doors. Additional bracelets may be found in the city; see below. The doors cannot be forced.

In order to spot a door, searchers must make a Vision roll at -4, or an unmodified Vision roll if they are looking carefully. PCs may substitute Architecture skill if they are actively searching, but it won't help if they just pass by a door. They may find more than one door (see *Interesting Artifacts*, p. 11). Every door is connected by a tunnel complex to the alien structure that is the object of the quest. Once a door has been found and opened, this adventure is, in effect, over.

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

Every search will result in the uncovering of one "interesting artifact" (p. 11) and 1d-2 "useless artifacts" (p. 9). Some of these will be helpful; some will be time-wasters. Regardless of their immediate usefulness, they may prove valuable if brought back to a Human-occupied world. After the adventure, roll two dice for each artifact. A 2 or 3 means that it is essentially worthless. A roll of 4-10 means it will bring a 1d×Cr6,000 bonus from Caledon Ventures. On an 11 or 12, the artifact is worth 1d×Cr10,000. A second identical artifact will bring no additional bonus.

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

Translucent sphere, one foot in diameter, hollow. In one place there is a neat, circular hole.

White disk, six feet in diameter, six inches high, firmly embedded in the floor. A large number of colored buttons cover the radius in three tiers. Playing with the buttons will have no evident effect.

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

INTERESTING ARTIFACTS

Note that use of any alien artifact is always at -2 due to unfamiliarity. Roll 2d:

2. *A vehicle*. This is an alien ground car, apparently undamaged. It will hold up to four disc-shaped aliens (or a similar number of Humans), and is capable of cross-country speeds of 15 mph (half in rough terrain). Needless to say, the controls are very strange. It will take at least an hour to figure the thing out and get it moving. Every hour, roll on Mechanic or Driving skill at -2 to get it started, and for any difficult maneuvers thereafter. The car has enough fuel for 2d hours; once the fuel is gone the party will not be able to find more.

3. *Hand laser*. This weapon can be recognized from the alien ship. On 11 or less on 3d, it is charged and operable.

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

5. *Locker*. What the explorers see is a metal plate in the wall, about one yard high and 2 yards wide. Inspection will reveal the presence of hinges and a lock. The lock must be shot off to be removed. The interior space is about five yards deep. Animal parts and pieces of vegetation are stacked neatly around the walls. The temperature is 40° F. Throwing food will distract hungry natives for 2d turns, allowing the team to escape,

if they think of trying it. In addition, the locker may be used as a refuge in the event of suit air conditioner failure.

6. *Bracelet*. This is a key, identical to the one from the alien ship. It may be used to open a tunnel door.

7. *Intact building*. The adventurers may barricade themselves here if attacked by natives. See the second adventure, *Storm*, for a description of alien architecture. There are lockers in 10% of the buildings.

8. *Metal door*. This is an entrance to the tunnel complex. It is described in more detail on p. 10.

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

10. *Box with buttons (A)*. This "black box" is an alien recording machine. Playing with the buttons will, on 9 or less, produce a loud babble that will attract 2d hostile natives.

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

12. *Box with buttons (C)*. Comm unit. On first use, it will behave as Box A, but with the addition of a bright, confusing visual program. Repeated use will, on 7 or less, open a channel to the alien structure. A disc-shaped alien will appear on the screen. The box will make babbling noises, perhaps additionally repeating statements made by the investigators, but in a strange, distorted way. In 1d×10 minutes, an air/raft of alien design will appear overhead and land as near as possible to the comm unit. A door will open. There is nothing inside but a number of disc-shaped seats. The controls are locked, and the whole thing is under remote control. If the explorers enter, they will be taken to the alien structure. (End of adventure.) If they fire on the air/raft, the aliens will decide that they are hostile, and refuse them entrance under any circumstances.

Part 4: The Newcomers

Outside of the alien refuge, Storm's violent summer continues unabated. But though it is now over 120° F. outside, inside the complex the temperature remains at a cool 50° F. or less. Thus the adventurers no longer need worry about straining their overworked environmental gear in the grueling heat of the planet's periastron passage. Repairs to the *Scotian Huntress* have been delayed by the conditions outside, but can be resumed at leisure. In the meantime, the trade team has settled down to the job it came to do in the first place – opening up full commercial relations with the natives.

After several days of intensive effort with computer language translators and similar learning aids, communications with Storm's inhabitants began to open up. They are flat, disc-like beings two feet tall but nearly five feet in diameter. They have achieved a fairly sophisticated TL8 civilization . . . though it is radically unlike those of the mainstream cultures the *Scotian Huntress* crew is familiar with. Computers and other microelectronics systems are unknown; even communications technology is far below par, a result of the high interference generated by the active star the world circles. But all in all, there are many points of contact between the two cultures, and it is plain to all that the *H'Oskhikhil* (as they call themselves) seem

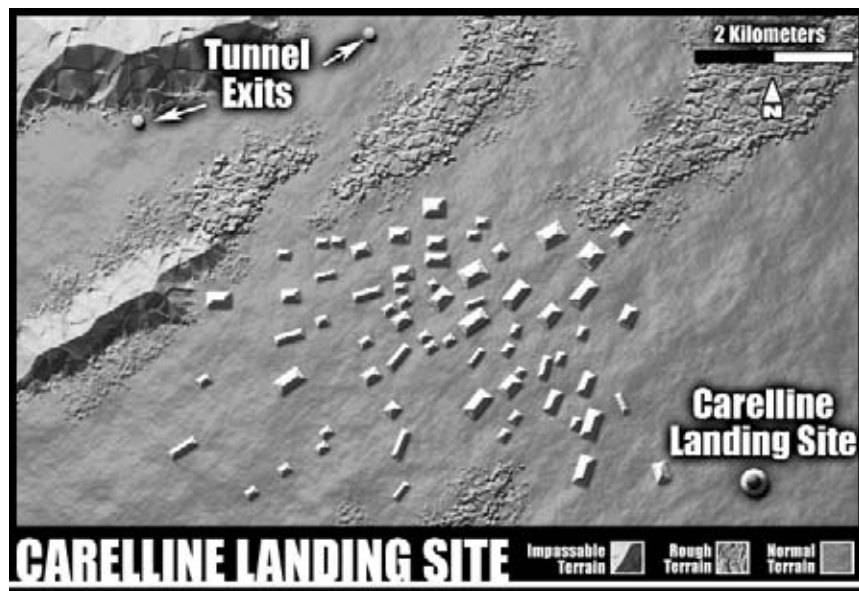
quite likely to be excellent partners for the team's employers, Caledon Ventures, in future mercantile relations.

The scientists with the team have taken the opportunity to learn a great deal about the life cycle of Storm's inhabitants. With a hot, young star and a wildly eccentric orbit, Storm spends a period of over 500 years in the cold phase of its long journey in orbit. Conditions are reasonably stable, but bitterly cold; only an unusual amount of vulcanism and internal heat keep the temperature warm enough to sustain water-based life, and only for forms that can adapt readily to underground life for the period of apiastron. At the end of this period, though, comes the short but incredibly violent "summer," when the world passes close to the star and suffers from the massive environmental upheavals of periastron. No life can adapt to both phases of the world's orbit without massive adjustments. Thus the life forms on Storm were forced to change drastically each time the cycle rolled around.

The cycle has brought about an interesting adaptation. The coming of the hot phase triggers the reproductive mechanism in most of the world's life. Several buds are produced in each life form, which consume the parent animal and emerge as a radically different juvenile stage.

These offspring then undergo a short period of rapid growth and development – marked primarily by voracious appetites – which ends only as the post-periastron temperature drop triggers a metabolic change. After a period of metamorphosis, the adult form is ready to emerge into the cooling world. This life cycle gives rise to great longevity, one of the main attributes of Storm's varied animal life.

Conditions on Storm hampered the development of civilization there, but several



GM's NOTES

Resources: The GM may designate the contents of the ship's locker from the *Scotian Huntress* on hand at the Citadel (in an ongoing campaign, this may already be known). Equipment and weaponry should be limited somewhat, and depend largely on the GM's judgment of the best balance to strike between the difficulty of the situation and the size and abilities of the group. All characters should be armed, though the quality of weapons or the quantity of ammunition may be curtailed somewhat to keep the group from indulging in indiscriminate attacks.

Transport to the area in which the Carillines ship has landed is limited. The *Scotian Huntress* can fly, but has limited endurance due to breakdowns (still under repair) in the life support systems. The ship's air/raft has been cannibalized for parts; if it is still flying at all, it is very much restricted. The H'Oskhikhil have remote-controlled air/rafts, but these are limited in range by the poor quality of radio signals in the presence of the energetic star . . . and by the fierce storms that can ground or destroy grav vehicles during the summer season. The same storms make it impractical to handle native air/rafts directly, though a pilot may attempt it at a -2 penalty due to lack of familiarity.

The best means of transportation available is an underground transportation system that connects the refuges with one another. A ground car can carry the team to a point near the destroyed refuge, where a break in the tunnel (made during the attack) disrupts further movement. Either of the two tunnel exits shown on the map may be used by the party upon their arrival at the new city.

The Carillines Forces: The opposition is divided into two groups. The smaller of these is on board the main Carillines ship, a 400-ton far trader. This party consists of four individuals, who will be found either aboard or in the immediate vicinity of the ship. If an alarm is given as a result of the Caledon team's actions or attacks, the ship party will withdraw to the defense of its vessel. It is very

unlikely that the attackers will be able to gain access to the ship with weapons normally available, once the alarm is given. The ship is armed, carrying two dual laser turrets plus sandcasters. The site of the merchant ship is marked on the map; if the ship lifts off, the GM should keep track of any movements it may make.

The larger force crews the launch, an armed auxiliary equipped with a beam laser. The squad contains eight people, who may be on board or operating on the ground nearby. The GM may secretly choose a location for the launch at the adventure's start; it may, however, move from this location as a result of event table directions.

Both Carillines groups should be armed and equipped as the GM sees fit; on the whole, they will be better outfitted than the Caledon team. Exact equipment should be selected by the GM for maximum balance and playability.

Conditions: The unpleasantly high temperatures and the ozone content of Storm's summertime atmosphere make vacc suits an absolute necessity for Humans traveling outside. Violent storms and other natural hazards will be a great danger for adventurers and their opponents; the event table regulates the occurrence of these. The GM should feel free, however, to add further dangers to overcome. On Storm, the elements are the single worst danger to unwary adventurers.

Natives: Native encounters are governed by the event table. Natives are hotphase juveniles ("hunters" – see *Animal Encounter Information*, p. 7), seven feet tall, tubular, with four arms, four legs, and large appetites. They generally carry torches, clubs, spears, and other makeshift weapons and tools. A total of 1d×10 may be encountered at any one time. They always attack when encountered, and make no distinction between one side or another. A native attack breaks off when half or more are killed from the ranks of any given group. If a Human is captured or killed, he will be eaten as soon as possible.

factors overcame the influences against it. First, the long life spans of the H'Oskhikhil and their generally superior intelligence have made each generation capable of quick development and growth. More importantly, though, was the race's discovery of its own cyclic nature. A few individuals could

survive periastron by living in cool polar caves, for example, though survival was a hit or miss affair. Eventually, it became possible to transmit knowledge accumulated by one generation to the emerging population of the next one. Gradually, the H'Oskhikhil learned to build places of refuge that

could survive from one generation to the next. A few of the most intelligent of the race, together with records of civilization and knowledge, could thus be guaranteed the chance to help the next generation start ahead of the last one.

Long-lived, extremely intelligent, and dedicated to peace and learning, the inhabitants of Storm seem the ideal find for the trade team. But the coming of Humans to Storm proves a mixed blessing; the natives are soon given reasons for regretting their hospitality. When this happens, the trade team finds that it stands to lose more than just a new market and a commission check . . .

BACKGROUND

For the trade team stranded on Storm, the passing of weeks has gone almost unnoticed, lost in the intense excitement and hard work of cementing relations with the natives within the enormous refrigerated complex known to the travelers as “the Citadel.” The H’Oskhikhil have been thoroughly introduced to the concepts of computer technology, and are most interested. Blessed with an innate ability to do very rapid mental calculations, the race has never been pressed to develop the basic computer technology usually needed for a civilization like theirs; “organic computers” were the rule instead. Now, however, the *Scotian Huntress* party has been able to show the many advantages of using computers – not only in their functions as sophisticated calculators, but as devices which can regulate equipment, store information, and otherwise improve the basic abilities of the H’Oskhikhil calculators. Dealings had, in fact, progressed to the point where trade – computer components and software exchanged for the radioactive elements so common on Storm – was ready to begin in earnest.

Suddenly, there comes a crisis.

A new market can’t be concealed forever. Though knowledge of Storm had been carefully shrouded before the beginning of the voyage of the *Scotian Huntress*, the facts were bound to leak out eventually. Representatives of other firms were bound to turn up sooner or later, to challenge the Caledon monopoly.

Unfortunately, the firm that has come to Storm after the *Scotian Huntress* consists of employees of Carillines, Ltd. Carillines is ruthless, aggressive, and well known for its determination to turn a profit, no matter what it cost others. Sometimes little better

than legalized pirates, the Carillines thrive in the loose political structure of Reavers Deep. And they have found Storm, arriving while the Caledon team is still engaged in negotiations.

Linked by land-line communications, the population at the Citadel have received reports from other refuges near other cities on Storm. When the Carillines ship landed near a city 160 miles northwest of the Citadel, the new arrivals spread out to explore the ruins of the city; they plainly became convinced that conditions were ripe, in the wake of a catastrophe, to pick up loot and plunder indiscriminately. Their ruthlessness has made the depredations of the juvenile H’Oskhikhil look harmless by comparison. When juveniles appeared, they were slaughtered without mercy, and pursued when driven off. It seemed that the leader of the Carillines expedition believes that no civilization remains to trade with. So he has made no effort to study the world, the artifacts that were found, or the native life. Instead, looting and destruction seem the main task of the entire group of Carillines crewmen.

For a time, the actions of the newcomers could be looked upon as unfortunate, but not really harmful. But when they decided to investigate the local refuge, the plunderers went too far. No entrance was obvious; therefore, they made their own with lasers mounted aboard a launch. The result was a disaster. Many adult H’Oskhikhil perished in the initial invasion, while the rest were doomed by the destruction of the refrigeration units that kept them from suffering the reproduction cycle. Through it all, the Humans acted without thought, without apparent understanding of the situation.

When the refuge was attacked, the transmissions quit. But everyone in the Citadel knows well enough what has happened. And many can’t help but become suspicious of the Humans they have welcomed into their own midst.

Opinion is split within the Citadel. Many H’Oskhikhil are convinced that the Humans from the *Scotian Huntress* are friends. These individuals give the team a warning of what could come of the crisis . . . and a way to avert it. It is quite possible that the Humans will be expelled, or worse, killed out of hand – as a safeguard, or in reprisal – unless dramatic proof is offered of the Humans’ good intentions and their lack of connection with the newcomers. If, for instance, the Carillines crew is subdued . . .

So, thanks to the thoughtlessness of other Humans, the *Scotian Huntress* trade team is caught in an unusual dilemma. Without proof of their

EVENT TABLE

Roll 2d once each half-hour:

2. *Lightning*: Fierce flashes of lightning begin. A person caught in the open must make a successful Dodge roll at +3 to take cover (p. CII54). Any character failing his roll or choosing to remain in the open is subject to a lightning roll by the GM. On a 4 or less on 3d, the victim takes 8d damage. The GM should repeat the lightning roll every few minutes until the entire team takes cover.

3. *Natives*: See natives rule, p. 10.

4. *No event*.

5. *Storm*: When a storm hits, Vision rolls, DX rolls, and any tasks that require precision or vision are at -5 (or until the person reaches cover), and lightning becomes a severe danger. Effects are as in 2, above. The storm lasts for 5d minutes.

6. *Natives*.

7. *Storm*.

8. *No event*.

9. *Natives*.

10. *Natives*.

11. *Natives*.

12. *Carillines launch*: The armed launch appears overhead, hovering above the location of one or more PCs. It remains overhead for 2d minutes, before flying off to a destination of the GM's (secret) choice. During the time it is overhead, characters will be detected on 10 or less, +4 if moving, but -1 for every 2 points by which they make their Camouflage or Stealth skill roll. The Carillines people, who have been troubled by juveniles, will tend to sweep areas where they spot intruders with laser fire. A hit by laser fire is made on a roll of 6 or less, and causes 6d×4 damage. People who are attacked can dive for cover with a successful Dodge roll +3.

goodwill – proof that can only come from an attack on the larger, better-armed party from Carillines – they are in great danger. They could lose the friendship of a freshly contacted race . . . the new market opened after such hardship and difficulty . . . and, indeed, their very lives.

THE ADVENTURE

The *Scotian Huntress* crew must attempt to overcome both groups of Carillines crewmen. The exact course of their attack will, of course, depend on the strategy and tactics they choose to adopt. In general, taking the 400-ton far trader ensures that none can escape . . . but the trader may prove almost impossible to take without capturing the laser mounted on board the launch.

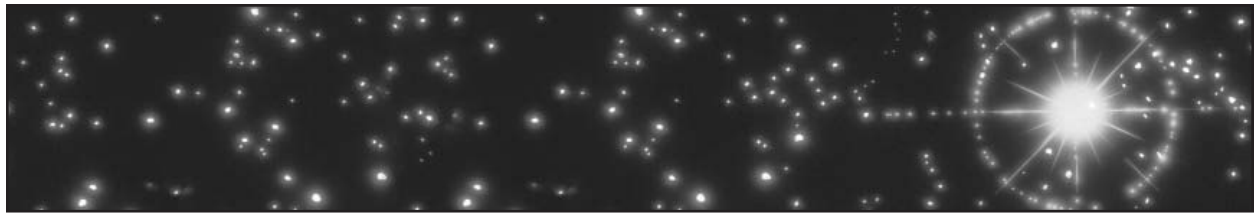
By and large, the best possible result from the players' point of view is one that ends in the capture of the senior Carillines people, rather than in outright slaughter of all involved. If the enemy leaders are captured, they can be brought before the H'Oskhikhil in demonstration of the team's support for its new friends. Also, if all the opposition is killed or merely driven off, the H'Oskhikhil may not believe they were enemies of Caledon's people at all, but may suspect collusion of some sort.

RESOLUTION

Final negotiations depend upon the skill of the adventurers, the success of the attack, and similar factors. The GM should make a reaction roll (pp. B204-205). The following modifiers apply: If the Carillines people were taken captive, +3. If the Carillines ship escapes, -2. Those with Diplomacy can make a skill roll, using the same modifiers.

A Good or better reaction indicates an overwhelmingly successful voyage, and will result in the award of a special bonus (discussed below) to the group. A Neutral reaction provides standard commissions for the team. A Poor reaction results in a breakdown of negotiations, with no bonus to the party despite its efforts. A reaction of Bad or worse causes a complete rejection of the Humans; GMs who so desire may choose to set further adventures around attempts to escape from this disaster.

For successful completion of the mission, the party receives a commission, amounting to Cr500,000 for each member. If a special bonus is awarded as discussed above, the commission is raised to Cr750,000 apiece. The GM should feel free to increase or decrease these amounts as appropriate to his campaign.



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