

TRAVELLER



*Adventure 1:
Beltstrike*

Face the Sonares Frontier

TRAVELLER

Beltstrike

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INTRODUCTION

Asteroid
/astroyd/
noun a small rocky body orbiting the sun.
Origin: from Greek *asteroeides* 'starlike'.

Oxford English Dictionary

Beltstrike provides Traveller referees with essential information for running campaigns based in the hazardous asteroid belts found in many, if not most, star systems. Beyond the rules and game mechanics, the Beltstrike Campaign is a series of linked scenarios set in the Schaeffer Belt.

As far as locations go, Beltstrike is not tied into the Official Traveller Universe of the Third Imperium. Efforts have been made to keep the book as generic as possible so that referees can take the Schaeffer Belt campaign setting and place it anywhere in their own campaign universe. Those referees running a Traveller campaign in the Spinward Marches will find guidance on likely systems where the Schaeffer Belt can be placed.

Of course, the game mechanics and principles can be applied to any Traveller game – whether in the Imperium or elsewhere.

CONTENTS

Part One: Background and Rules

CHAPTER ONE – ASTEROIDS AND ASTEROID BELTS

An overview of asteroids, their composition and how they are mined.

CHAPTER TWO – BELTERS CHARACTERS

Character generation for Belter characters plus information relating to solo belting, free companies and corporations.

CHAPTER THREE – EQUIPMENT AND SHIPS

The tools of the Belters' trade: ships, mining platforms and the equipment needed in the hazardous exploration of the asteroid belt.

Part Two: The Beltstrike Campaign

THE SCHAEFFER BELT

Background on the Sonara system and, in particular, the Schaeffer asteroid belt – the setting for the campaign. This chapter details the major players, overviews the habitable asteroids and details two habitats – Shoranan and Vinen.

THE FACTORY

The opening chapter of the Beltstrike campaign. Working for Lothrain Free Company the characters are assigned to survey a mining platform the company aims to buy, and then help to get it commissioned.

SIGNAL TO NOISE

The characters learn more about the Factory's background – a mixture of the disturbing and the criminal.

WORKING THEM ANGELS

The recommissioning of the Factory gets underway. A hazardous task, not least because betrayal is in the characters' midst. And an astonishing discovery is made...

ADVENTURES IN THE CHLAER RADICAL

With the Factory online, it is down to business for the LFC. The characters are involved in prospecting the Chlaer Radical section of the Schaeffer belt.

BELT WAR

The deteriorating political situation on Sonares Prime prompts Maas Industries to lay claim to the entire Schaeffer belt. Tensions run high and the belt is the scene of armed aggression by the independent Belters against the Maas mercenaries.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED?

You will need the core Traveller rules to make full use of Beltstrike. The Traveller supplements *Mercenary* and *High Guard* may be useful but are not essential.

ASTEROID BELTS

This chapter gives an overview of typical asteroid belts commonly found in most solar systems. Belts are a common geo-astronomical feature, just as gas giants and habitable (or terra-formable) planets are a common fabric of many systems. Belt characteristics in terms of density, composition, location within the solar orbit and so forth can vary hugely, and it is impossible to account for every eventuality, so this chapter concerns itself with characteristics that are most likely to prevail and be of greatest use in Traveller adventures.

ASTEROID BELT CHARACTERISTICS

Asteroids are primordial objects left over from the formation of the star system. In some systems they are the remains of devastating planetary collisions during the earliest years of the system's birth, but generally asteroids are the leftover rocky matter that never successfully coalesced into a planet. This rocky material was originally composed of dust grains and ice that, trapped in a solar orbit, coagulated into larger bodies known as *planetesimals*. This period of accretion may have taken up to 100 million years and, in some cases, developed into full-sized planets. However, the remaining mass of material, influenced by the gravitational force of outlying gas giants and the distance from the system's star, limited the planetesimals' development. Very few asteroids in a typical belt are above 1,000km in diameter; the rest of the material has been subjected to constant collisions that disrupted accretion and led to the disintegration of the planetesimals. Great swathes of an asteroid belt contain material that is little bigger than a pebble or a boulder, a great deal of material, due to collision, either impacted with developing planets, fell towards the star itself, or was ejected into interstellar space.

System Location

Most asteroid belts are found in an orbit between the system's star and the closest gas giant. Typically this equates to a distance of between 300 million and 500 million kilometres from the star, but may be greater or lesser depending on the system's age, and number of gas giants present.

The typical orbital circumference of an asteroid belt is therefore anywhere between 1.8 billion and 3.1 billion kilometres – a vast, stellar, orbital area that requires considerable resources and logistics to accurately survey and exploit.

Asteroids are found further afield within a star system – beyond the orbits of the major gas giants – but these clusters tend to be relatively small compared with the main belt and are the result of collisions during the main belt's formation which ejected material out of the belt's orbital trajectory.

The density of the belt varies throughout its circumference. Certain areas – clusters – are densely packed, numbering tens of thousands

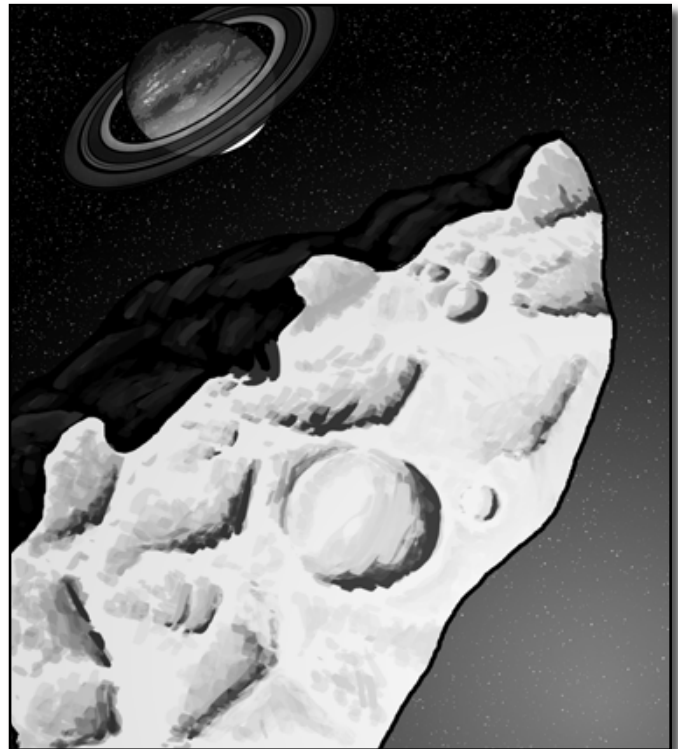
of objects varying in size. In other parts of the belt the density is considerably less, with great distances separating substantial objects, but still filled with very small particles and dust.

However, given the immense circumference of asteroid belts, even in the densest clusters, individual asteroids can be tens of thousands of kilometres from their nearest neighbour. Collisions between major asteroid bodies occur, on average, every 10 million years, which, by astronomical standards, is quite frequent. Where general human visitation is concerned, even in the most concentrated clusters, hitting an asteroid 'accidentally' is nigh-on impossible, and it requires careful navigation to isolate and approach any given major body. The image of a whirling cloud of deadly debris is largely mythical, although, when collisions between major bodies take place, clouds of dangerous, high velocity debris and dust is the result which can pose a threat to any ship unlucky enough to be caught in its wake.

It is also possible for larger asteroids to have their own moons, with smaller bodies occupying regular or eccentric orbits around the parent body.

Asteroid Composition

Planet dwellers consider asteroid belts to be the junkyards of the star system; the dumping ground for all the material that never made it into a worthwhile planet. Belters see asteroid belts as a frontier packed with riches and opportunity.



The types of asteroids commonly found in a typical belt vary considerably, but tend to fall into three classes: Silicates (S class), Metals (M class) and Carbonaceous (C class). The distribution of these three classes is smooth across the entire composition of the asteroid belt, but for those interested in exploiting the belts, three distinct zones can be differentiated.

N Zone

The inner belt. This band contains predominately M class planetoids and debris, usually with a high concentration of nickel-iron, hence the N designation. The N zone occurs roughly 1.25 times the star's optimum zone for supporting life – so, in the case of our own solar system, the N zone of Sol's asteroid belt occurs 187 million kilometres from the sun.

M Zone

The mid belt. A zone of transition between the N and C zones, here the asteroids and planetoids are a mixture of M class and C class. The M zone is located between 1.25 and 1.5 times the distance of the optimum zone for supporting life.

C Zone

The outer belt. C class asteroids and planetoids predominate; figure on 90% of the material being carbonaceous. The C zone is greater than 1.5 times the distance of the optimum zone for supporting life.

Trojan Clusters

These are asteroid clusters found in the Trojan points of gas giants, if present in a star system. Trojan points are empty points of space that exert their own gravitational influence due to the gravitational forces of two larger celestial bodies – such as a gas giant and its parent star. An object in a Trojan point remains in place as long as no other force is brought to bear. Trojan points are remarkably stable points in a solar system and tend to collect C class asteroids and planetoids. These are found in the same orbit as the gas giant, but 60-degrees ahead of and behind the planet,

ASTEROID TYPES

The material found in an asteroid belt falls into one of four categories or classes.

S class: silicate based. Anything from a floating pebble through to a mountain-like chunk of rock, but lacking in any mineable metals or precious ores. S class material is found widely throughout all the zones of an asteroid belt.

M Class: Metallic based. Usually nickel-iron, but with the potential to yield precious and heavy metals depending on the location within the belt. M class asteroids are reasonably dense in composition containing high-grade sources of metal, along with exotic elements such as radioactives and super-dense metals. This makes them valuable for manufacturing industries and the larger examples can

be turned into starship hulls at any orbital A class starport or similar grade of dockyard. M class asteroids are most common in the N zone of the belt and are the targets for most prospectors.

As an example of the value of M class asteroids, an average earth-sized world of Tech Level 6 or 7 has an average iron ore production value in excess of 1,000 million metric tons. Compare this with an M class asteroid with a mean diameter of just 1 kilometre: at this size and density, a 1 kilometre M class asteroid could yield in excess of 2,000 million metric tons of iron - nickel - ore – which is two to three times the annual production requirements for the planet. In our own asteroid belt, the asteroid 16 psyche is believed to contain 1.7×10^{19} kilograms of iron-nickel – enough to satisfy current-day iron ore production requirement for several *million* years.

C Class: carbonaceous asteroids are the most common across the belt but with the highest concentrations in the M and C zones (but with little tangible presence in the N zone). Consequently they have the lowest monetary value but often a high utility depending on the materials present in the carbonaceous make-up: hydrogen, oxygen, and other elements, including organic compounds, that can be exploited for fuel refining and tend to be of particular value to belt habitats where water is a precious, imported commodity

Ice: 'Dirty snowballs' containing water, ammonia, methane and other, frozen volatiles, ice chunks are a source of hydrogen for fuel and the necessary compounds for water extraction. Ice chunks tend to be of greatest value in systems that have no easy, or present, gas giant exploitation programme and to asteroid habitats where water is a valued commodity.

None of the four classes of asteroid are, in themselves, highly valuable, although Belters can make a decent living from exploiting the basic commodities each type possesses. The real value is generally hidden, especially in M class material. Precious metals such as gold, platinum, iridium and various exotics and radioactives are where the largest pay cheques are to be found, and once a Belter has conducted a standard composite scan of an asteroid the real work lies in determining what additional materials are present, in what quantities, and how easy they are to exploit. Some asteroids have configurations and compositions that are valuable for research purposes, rather than industrial utility, and so Belters are on the look-out for unusual shapes and sizes and may even be commissioned to hunt for specific configurations for a particular scientific research project.

And, of course, there is always the chance of encountering something truly unique: ancient, alien artefacts, for example, left over from long-gone civilisations such as the Ancients; or the lost remains of an early system probe; and the wreckage of an unfortunate belt-born collision. Belters are masters of spotting the potential value of anything found in the enormity of the asteroid belt and figuring out how to get their find to yield its secrets.

DETERMINING ASTEROID

COMPOSITION: PROSPECTING

Prospectors intent on mining an asteroid body first need to determine its composition. This requires careful scanning and study of the results to identify components, quantities, accessibility and likely yield values.

Scanning takes time and patience. Sensors need to be focused in the right areas and multiple readings taken, over an appreciable length of time, for an accurate assessment of an asteroid's properties to be formed. Every Belter has hours-worth of anecdotes about those who, in a rush to stake a claim, miscalculated a sensor reading and ended-up towing home a lump of useless iron slag instead of the diamond-encrusted windfall they thought they had. Good Belters are *patient*.

Prospecting Process

The standard process for any prospecting mission is as follows:

The Belter sets his ship into an orbit (Pilot 8+) that will carry the vessel through the desired part of the belt. Once the orbit is established, drives are cut because constant acceleration would take the ship through the belt too quickly for sensor data to be accurately processed. The aim is to pitch the ship's speed to just above that of the material in the section of the belt being traversed.

Scanning begins. This is the most laborious of processes and is usually split into watches of 6 hours. If the Belter is a solo independent, then good discipline is for two 6 hour watches, separated by a two hour break, and eight hours of sleep.

A Prospecting roll (Prospecting 8+) is allowed for every 6 hour watch, up to a maximum of four rolls in any 24 hour period. If the same Belter undertakes two watches back to back, he suffers a negative DM representing boredom and fatigue. A roll of 8+ indicates that something of *potential* value has been identified, but there is no guarantee that the initial readings are fully accurate. Once the potential has been identified, detailed surveying and logistics is needed to determine the true possibilities.

The time, in watches, required to fully survey an object depends on its size. See the Asteroid Size and Yield Table on page 7.

Thus, a full scan and survey to assess mining and yield logistics could take up to 20 hours.

PROSPECTING PROCESS MODIFIERS

Situation	DM
Scanner operator has worked the scan for 6 hours or more	-2
Ship is undergoing acceleration	-2
Scanner operator has Prospecting skill	+1 per level
Within a cluster identified as having existing yields	+1
Within a heavily mined cluster or region	-2
Within Trojan cluster	+1
Within planetary rings	-1

If the Prospecting roll is successful, indicating a potential find, roll on the Scan Potential Table below to determine the likely nature of the composition.

SCAN POTENTIAL TABLE

Roll	Belt Location			
	N Zone	M Zone	C Zone or Trojan	Planetary Rings
2	R	D	D	D
3	R	R	D	C
4	D	D	C	C
5	C	C	C	C
6	C	C	C	C
7	D	C	C	C
8	C	C	C	C
9	C	C	C	C
10	D	D	C	C
11	R	R	R	R
12	E	E	E	E

C = Crystalline materials (including ice)

D = Dense materials (including metals). Apply +1 DM to the Resource Yield Roll.

R = Radioactives (Plutonium, uranium, iridium, and so on)

E = Exotics

A roll of 12 yields an Exotic result. Roll on the Exotic Table to determine the nature of the Exotic yield.

EXOTIC TABLE

Roll	Exotic
2	Singular, valuable, stone (diamond, amethyst, ruby, and so forth): +2 DM when rolling for Resource Yield.
3	Singular precious metal (gold, platinum, aluminium, silver): +2 DM when rolling for Resource Yield.
4	Strange configuration/shape/size with a pleasing aesthetic value
5	C class material with very high concentration of organic compounds – DNA and RNA building-blocks: +1 DM when rolling for Resource Yield.

- Determine the asteroid's composition (the asteroid's class – M, C or Ice) using the Composition Table
- Determine if the resource is present using the Resource Presence Table. Cross reference the

6	C class material with very high concentration of organic compounds – DNA and RNA building-blocks: +2 DM when rolling for Resource Yield.
7	Concentration of radioactive isotopes useful for radioisotope thermoelectric generators (used in both Jump and Manoeuvre Drives)
8	Concentration of radioactive isotopes useful for radioisotope thermoelectric generators (used in both Jump and Manoeuvre Drives)
9	C class material with very high concentration of organic compounds – DNA and RNA building-blocks: +1 DM when rolling for Resource Yield.
10	Strange configuration/shape/size with a pleasing aesthetic value
11	C class material with very high concentration of organic compounds – DNA and RNA building-blocks: +2 DM when rolling for Resource Yield.
12	Artefact – Roll 1D6 1-2 Old starship, probe or satellite debris with a traceable origin 3-4 Old starship, probe or satellite debris with no traceable origin 5 Old, out-of-system technological debris. Tech Level equals 6+1D6 6 Old, out-of-system technological debris. Tech Level equals 8+1D6

Detailed Survey and Logistics

Once an interesting rock has been identified, the referee needs to determine, secretly, if the potential translates into a realistic find:

- Composition of the material from the Composition Table with the Resource indicated in the Scan Potential Table. The result is the target number for a roll of 2D indicating that the resource type is actually present.
- Determine the size of the asteroid and its yield using the Size and Yield Table (page 7). This table also indicates the number of watches it takes to fully survey the asteroid.

COMPOSITION TABLE

Roll	Belt Location			
	N Zone	M Zone	C Zone or Trojan	Planetary Rings
2	C	C	M	C
3	C	M	I	C
4	M	I	C	C
5	M	C	C	I
6	M	C	C	I
7	M	C	C	I
8	M	C	C	I
9	M	C	C	I
10	M	M	C	I
11	M	M	I	M
12	I	M	M	M

RESOURCE PRESENCE TABLE

Resource	Asteroid Composition		
	C	M	I
C	8+	10+	9+
D	12+	9+	-
R	12+	11+	-
E	10+	10+	11+

PLANETOIDS

These are large asteroids that exhibit planetary characteristics but which are too small to be considered planetary bodies in their own right: Ceres, in our own solar system, is the ideal example. Planetoids may, but are not guaranteed to, exhibit some or all of the following characteristics:

- Be spherical
- Possess magnetic monopoles
- Have weak gravity
- Have a trace atmosphere

Asteroid Size and Yield

Roll 2D twice: once for the object's size, and again for the object's Resource Yield. The Resource Yield indicates the percentage of the object's mass that has been determined in the Resource Presence Table. Remember to apply any DMs for Dense materials or Exotics.

Roll	Size/Extent (Tons)	Survey Time (Watches)	Object Radius	Resource Yield
2	1	0	-	1D %
3	10	1	-	2D %
4	100	1	-	3D %
5	1000	2	-	4D %
6	10,000	3	-	4D %
7	1,000,000	3	-	4D %
8	Small Planetoid	4	2D x100 metres	4D %
9	Small Planetoid	5	2D+1 x100 metres	10 + 6D %
10	Small Planetoid	5	2D+2 x100 metres	20 + 6D %
11	Large Planetoid	10	2D-1 kilometres	30 + 6D %
12	Large Planetoid	10	Roll 1D 1 = 2D kilometres	60 + 6D %

The key importance for planetoids, as far as Traveller is concerned, is their suitability as a stellar habitat. Given the right Tech Level (8+), money and resources, planetoids can be rendered habitable simply by hollowing-out the inside, installing atmosphere generators or sealed life support systems akin to those found on starships, and then either installing gravitic generators or increasing the planetoid's spin artificially (with surface-mounted thrusters, say) to impart gravity. A body the size of Ceres, with a diameter of 950 kilometres, could, if rendered habitable in this way, support a population of several millions in relative comfort.

STAKING THE CLAIM

Once a body with an appreciable yield has been identified, Belters need to stake a claim. Only registered Belters are allowed to do this; claims from unregistered prospectors are generally unrecognised by the belt's governing secretariat.

The most common way to stake a claim is to plant a Claim Beacon either on the body's surface or place it in orbit around the body. Claim Beacons are typically half a metre in diameter and emit a constant sensor signal that transmits the identity of the claimant, his registration number, the date of the claim and any other pertinent information the claimant needs or wishes to communicate. The deliberate destruction or removal of an existing Claim Beacon is a Cr 1 Million fine and the revocation of the prospecting licence. It is up to every prospector to ensure a Claim Beacon is in position;

without one, the body can be legally claimed by any other prospector who happens upon it.

To counter claim jumping by individuals removing beacons, placing their own and then using faster craft to register their claim, most Claim Beacons will send a signal direct to the relevant authorities, although this is not always the case in some systems. The use of broadcasting Claim Beacons and other methods to prevent tampering has led to claim jumping becoming very rare in most systems.

Once a claim has been staked, it usually takes 1D+1 weeks for the claim to be verified and released to the claimant. Until the verification goes through, the asteroid cannot be exploited in any way. Usually the verification formality does not prevent Belters from preparing whatever operations they need to begin exploiting the yield and some, who are confident that the claim will not be rejected, might even start operations whilst waiting for the verification to come through. However there is always the chance that a claim *might* not be recognised – because a particular corporation uses its influence to secure the claim ahead of an independent, perhaps, or because the claim has already been registered and the Claim Beacon has been destroyed or removed. Verification fails on a roll of 2 or 3 on 2D. Belters gain a +1 DM for each level of Admin skill.

If a claim is not worked upon for five years it becomes dormant, and a new claim will have to be filed with the authorities. If a claim is constantly resubmitted, but no work is carried out upon it, then after twenty years the original claim holder will have relinquished all rights to that claim.

Realising a Claim

With a successful claim, Belters must decide whether or not to mine the claim personally or sell it to someone else (usually a corporation or a Free Company). The decision is going to be based on the costs and logistics involved in exploiting the yield – and many asteroids are simply not worth the trouble of an independent or Free Company attempting to mine it.

MINING

Mining requires some or all of the following equipment:

- A ship-mounted pulse laser for heavy duty cutting or drilling or...
- Dedicated asteroid drilling equipment, either manually operated or attached to a Mining Drone (see Belt Equipment on page 23)
- Ship-mounted collection scoop, or a Collection Drone
- Vacc Suits, with harnesses and tether lines
- Mining exoskeleton

This degree of technology is an obvious cost to any Belter, and is often beyond the scope of lone operators. Mining is therefore the province of Free Companies and corporations although some solo Belters have managed to develop effective, solo mining operations that are both profitable and efficiently executed, extracting the

maximum yield from a seemingly inauspicious lump of rock. Solo miners tend to have patience, whilst Free Companies and corporations work to deadlines and within a variety of operating constraints to minimise risk.

If machinery is being used for the bulk of the mining operation, the amount that can be mined in a single watch is determined by the machine's capacity – see the Belt Equipment chapter for more detail. If the operation is being handled manually, then the miner, working in zero-g, is capable of extracting and loading two tons of yield, plus half his Str DM, per watch. A full watch's rest is required after such physical exertion, and if the Belter attempts to work a double shift manually mining, then his extraction capacity is halved and he suffers a -2 DM on the Mining Incidents table.

Whether or not machinery is being used, a 2D roll is made every watch. A roll of 8+ is needed to avoid an incident with the following DMs being applied:

If an incident occurs, roll on the appropriate column of the Mining Incident Table to determine the outcome.

MINING INCIDENT DMs

- 2 per additional watch
- 1 for Int of 5 or less
- 1 for End of 5 or less
- +1 for Int of 9+
- +1 for End of 9+
- +1 per level of Zero-G skill
- +1 per level of Athletics skill
- +1 per level of Engineering skill (machinery-led operations only)
- +1 per level of Remote Operations skill (machinery-led operations only)
- +1 per ten watches already worked on this asteroid (maximum +4 DM)

Once an asteroid has been exploited to the Belter's satisfaction, the resulting ore can then be traded.

Trading a Claim

The costs, intricacies and dangers of undertaking a mining operation are often not worth the risks for independent Belters and it is far simpler just to sell a claim rather than exploit the commodities personally. Corporations and Free Companies are the likely customers for unexploited claims – the former more so than the latter – because the claim acquired through open market sale costs less than the market value of the mined ore. Belters also get to realise their profits much more quickly, but obviously realise a lesser amount than if they had the resources to fully exploit the claim themselves.

How a claim is sold depends on the relationship the Belter has with those who would buy the material. Also the asteroid's yet to be



mined ore is of a lesser value to fully processed material, so the base price in any negotiations is 10% of the value of the commodity.

- On an Admin roll of 8+ the Belter has an established sales channel with a nominated corporation. The Belter must provide the estimated market value of the yield and the corporation conducts a cursory check of the detailed survey analysis. It then offers the Belter 1D + 7% (that is, 8% - 13%, with an average of 10%) of the claim's value as an immediate cash realisation, plus enough to cover the survey cost. The Belter can attempt to bargain on the price: if he has the Broker skill then on a roll of 8+ he influences the percentage by 1 % for each level of skill in his favour. For example, Bowman has a sales channel agreed with Consolidated Belt Inc. His recent strike of a large nickel-iron asteroid is of interest to them, and the rolled percentage is 11%. Bowman has Broker 1 and rolls 9; he haggles with his contact and increases his percentage by 1, increasing his share to 12%.
- Belters can go to the open market. The trade rules for selling goods on page 164 of the Traveller rules apply here, but based on the Commodity Prices outlined in the table below.
- Belters can auction their claim. Full survey details are broadcast on whatever communications network the system supports and bids are invited against a reserve price (usually the cost of the survey +10% as a minimum). Bids are made by those interested in the commodity and the Belter can accept or reject any bid as it is made.

To calculate the amount of a bid, take the yield percentage, as determined by the Resource Yield column of the Size and Yield table on page 7. Next, apply that percentage to the tonnage of the

MINING INCIDENTS

Roll	Manual Operation	Machinery Operation
2	Fall, collision or other catastrophe ruptures Vacc Suit or life support. Character sustains 4D damage.	Machinery mysteriously fails or malfunctions. Requires 2D hours to diagnose problem and a further 2D hours to get it working again.
3	Tether-line damaged or severed. Character must make Zero-G 8+ to gain safety of vessel. If failed, and if no back-up harness or tether is available, character tumbles into space.	Tethering, guidance or grav generators on the equipment fail causing it to tumble into space. To retrieve equipment the character must either make a Zero G roll to follow the tumbling equipment into the vacuum, or some other means (a Drone, or pursuit in the craft) to retrieve it. If the attempt fails, the equipment is lost.
4	Sprain or pulled muscle halves amount that can be mined by the character for the next 1D watches	Equipment overheats. Production and output halved for this watch. Requires a rest of one full watch to cool down to operating temperature.
5	Rip or tear to Vacc Suit forces character to return to ship for repairs. Roll 1D to determine how many hours into the watch the accident occurred.	Equipment becomes trapped in a fissure. Requires manual intervention to free it. Takes 1D hours and requires either Engineering or Mechanics roll.
6	Manual mining equipment malfunctions. Repair can be done in situ if character has Mechanics or Engineering on a roll of 8+. Repairs take 1D hours. If repair fails or skills not available, the character is forced to return to the ship to make repairs.	As above, but the machine is severely trapped. Takes 2D hours to free and Engineering or Mechanics roll is at a -2 DM.
7	Drilling strikes an undiscovered pocket of gas which is released with explosive force. Character must make a Zero-G roll (with Dex DM permissible) to avoid effects of the explosion. Otherwise result is as for Tether line damage.	Drilling strikes an undiscovered pocket of gas which is released with explosive force. The mining equipment must make achieve 8+ on 2D, with modifiers for equipment quality, to avoid serious damage. If damaged, roll 1D to assess severity: 1 Can be repaired in 1 hour 2 – 4 Can be repaired in 1D+1 hours 5 Needs specialist repair at a properly outfitted workshop 6 Equipment irreparably damaged.
8	Vital piece of equipment is dropped or damaged, causing it to tumble into space. To retrieve equipment the character must either make a Zero G roll to follow the tumbling equipment into the vacuum, or some other means (a Drone, or pursuit in the craft) to retrieve it. If the attempt fails, the equipment is lost.	Vital piece of equipment is damaged, causing it to tumble into space. To retrieve equipment the character must either make a Zero G roll to follow the tumbling equipment into the vacuum, or some other means (a Drone, or pursuit in the craft) to retrieve it. If the attempt fails, the equipment is lost.
9	Character's limb becomes trapped in a fissure in the body's surface. Freeing the character requires 1D hours and either an Engineering roll or a Survival roll. The character is unable to free himself.	Remote Operations software fails aboard the spacecraft. Computer roll needed to track down the bug and correct it, taking 1D hours. Equipment has to be shut-down manually whilst software link is fixed.
10	Loose debris from the body flies out and damages the spacecraft's sensors or avionics. The damage is not extreme, but requires 1D hours to repair.	Drilling equipment strikes a super-hard or super-dense outcrop of material. The mining equipment must achieve 8+ on 2D, with modifiers for equipment quality. If the roll succeeds, then work proceeds as normal. If it fails, then the outcrop is too difficult to mine and operations must be suspended for 1D hours whilst the equipment is moved to an easier mining location.
11	Mining proves to be far more arduous than anticipated owing to the density and composition of the asteroid. Amount extracted this watch is halved.	Dust and fine debris clogs the equipment's sensitive mechanical parts. Output or production is reduced to a quarter and machinery overheats. Requires 2 full watches to be cleaned and cooled.
12	Roll Twice on this table.	Roll Twice on this table.

body determined on the same table. This determines the actual tonnage that is saleable. For example, an asteroid of 10,000 tons with a resource yield of 80% would have 8,000 tons of saleable material.

Once a bid has been accepted, a further bid cannot be accepted. If a Belter reneges on a deal, he must pay the contracted bidder a fine equal to 10% of the bid the Belter has accepted. Furthermore, his auction record is marked unfavourably, which may effectively blacklist him as a reliable auction supplier. If a Belter reneges on an agreed bid three times (not necessarily consecutively), his prospecting licence may be revoked.

- Brokers can be used, functioning exactly as described on page 163 of the Traveller rules.
- Claims to C class and Ice cannot be sold at all. M class asteroids can only be sold if the asteroid is in the 10,000 – 1,000,000 ton size range, and if the local starport is class A or B – in other words, capable of building ships with planetoid hulls.
- Mining yields are not usually put up for auction but instead sold on the open market as general commodities. The amount any Belter can sell depends on how much he has extracted on each expedition to mine a claim; unrealised yields cannot be sold and neither can the claim be sold or auctioned once extraction has started. Belters therefore need to decide up front if they will mine, sell or auction their claim.
- Artefact prices are very difficult to quantify owing to their potential diversity. Wrecks can usually be sold as scrap or to an official salvage channel, but alien technology or ancient technology is going to attract the attention of the system's government.

As an abstract rule of thumb, use the following table for determining an artefact's value:

ARTEFACT VALUE TABLE

Roll	Value
2	Worthless for any purpose
3	
4	
5	
6	Moderate value (salvage interest, for spare parts, scientific interest, and so forth)
7	Scrap: Cr100 per ton
8	Salvage: 1D x 10% of original value
9	Historical artefact (up to 500 years old): Cr 1000 per ton
10	
11	
12	Something Unique. Archaeological artefact (500 years old +): System government sets price paid to the Belter: usually 20% of the artefact's actual value. Artefact of the Ancients: Priceless. Keeping such items might be in the Belter's own interests, although if word leaks out, it will doubtless attract the attention of the authorities and other, less-reputable, collectors.

COMMODITY PRICES TABLE

Type	Basic Value (Cr/Ton)	Sale DMs
Crystals	20,000	Industrial +3 Rich +2
Dense metals	50,000	Industrial +2 Rich +3 High Tech +1
Radioactives	1,000,000	Industrial +3 High Tech +1 Non-Industrial -2 Agricultural -3
Carbonaceous material	75	Habitat/Orbital +3
Nickel Iron ore	1,000	Industrial +3 Non-Industrial +1
Nickel planetoids	Iron 400	Shipbuilding Starport -3
Uncommon Ore	5,000	Industrial +3 Non-Industrial +1
Ice	75	Habitat/Orbital +5 World with Gas Giant -3 World with water available -6

A ROUGH GUIDE TO MINERALS

The following minerals are all found in asteroids, principally S and M class rocks. A guide to their general usage is provided as a guide for which industries are most likely to buy or bid on a particular mineral yield.

Bauxite: An abundant metal element found in M class asteroids. Bauxite is a general term for a rock composed of hydrated aluminium

oxides. It is the main ore of alumina to make aluminium: a ubiquitous metal used throughout many industries.

Antimony: Antimony is extracted from stibnite and other minerals. Antimony is used as a hardening alloy for lead, especially storage batteries and cable sheaths, also used in bearing metal, solder, collapsible tubes and foil, sheet and pipes, and is a principle metal used in semi and superconductor technology.

Stibnite: The most important ore for antimony. Stibnite is used for metal antifriction alloys, metal type, shot, batteries, in the manufacture of pyrotechnics. Antimony salts are used in the rubber and textile industries, in medicine, and glassmaking.

Asbestos: A group of silicate minerals that can be easily separated into thin, strong, flexible fibres that are heat resistant, and chemically inert, asbestos minerals are suitable for use in fireproof fabrics, cloth, paper, paint filler, and as a reinforcing agent in rubber and plastics, electrical and heat insulation, cement, and chemical filters. Asbestos dust, if inhaled, can lead to the debilitating and fatal condition of *asbestosis*.

Barium: A heavy additive in lubricants, in the paper and rubber industries, as a filler or extender in cloth, ink, and plastics products, in radiography, as an alloy in vacuum tubes, as a deoxidizer for copper, and as specialised lubricant for anode rotors in X-ray tubes.

Beryllium: Beryllium alloys are widely used in applications in spaceship, ground vehicles, computers, oil and gas drilling equipment, and telecommunications. Beryllium salts are a component of fluorescent lamps, in X-ray tubes and as a deoxidizer in bronze metallurgy. Beryl is the source of the gem stones emerald and aquamarine.

Chromite: The ore for chromium, and widely used in the chemical and metallurgical industries.

Cobalt: Used in superalloys for power plants and M drives, in chemicals (as paint driers, catalysts, magnetic coatings, pigments, and in rechargeable batteries), magnets, and cemented carbides for cutting tools.

Columbite: Columbite is a natural oxide of niobium, tantalum, ferrous iron, and manganese. Columbium, in the form of ferrocolumbium, is used mainly as an additive in steel making and in superalloys for heat-resisting and combustion equipment, drive components, and rocket subassemblies.

Copper: A ubiquitous metal, used in electrical cable and wiring, switches, construction industries, chemical and pharmaceutical machinery, as part of alloys (brass, bronze, and a vibration resistant alloy containing 3% beryllium), alloy castings, electroplated protective coatings and so forth.

Feldspar: This is a rock-forming mineral that is hugely important in the glass and ceramic industries, pottery and enamelware, abrasives, bond for abrasive wheels, aggregates, cements and concretes, insulating compositions, fertilizer, textiles filler and paper.

Fluorite (fluorspar): Used in the production of hydrofluoric acid, which is essential for electroplating, stainless steel production, coolants, and plastics industries.

Gold: Needing little introduction due to its value, gold is also a component in dentistry and medicine, and in scientific and electronic instruments. It is also an electrolyte in the electro-plating industry.

Halite (Sodium chloride): More commonly known as salt. Its uses are legion: human and animal diet, food seasoning and food preservation, the preparation of sodium hydroxide, soda ash, caustic soda, hydrochloric acid, chlorine, metallic sodium, metallurgy, curing of hides, mineral waters, soap manufacture, home water softeners, de-icers, photography, as herbicides, in fire control management, and in nuclear reactors. Single halite crystals are used for spectroscopy, ultraviolet and infrared transmission.

Iron Ore: Another ubiquitous mineral find within asteroids. About 98% of iron ore is used to make steel.

Powdered iron: Used in metallurgy products, magnets, high-frequency cores, machine components, and as a catalyst. As a radioactive isotope (iron 59), it is used in medicine and as tracer element in biochemical and metallurgical research.

Lanthanum: Lanthanum is malleable, ductile, and soft enough to be cut with a knife. Its uses are many, and it is critical for the function of jump drives. It is also used in many alloys in industry and although a common element it is highly sought after.

Lead: Extremely dense yet soft and easily worked, lead is used in batteries, fuel tanks, solders, seals or bearings, protective coatings, for ceramics or crystal glass, tubes or containers, radiation shielding, as a soundproofing material in construction industries, and in ammunition.

Lithium: Lithium compounds are used in ceramics and glass, in primary aluminium production, in the manufacture of lubricants and greases, starship fuel, vitamin A synthesis, silver solders, underwater buoyancy devices, and batteries.

Manganese: Essential to iron and steel production.

Mica: Mica commonly occurs as flakes, books, or sheets. Sheet mica is used in electronic insulators (mainly in vacuum tubes), ground mica in paint, as joint cement, as a dusting agent, and in plastics, rubber, and welding rods.

Molybdenum: The two largest uses of molybdenum are as an alloy in stainless steels and in alloy steels. Stainless steels include the strength and corrosion-resistant requirements for water distribution systems, food handling equipment, chemical processing equipment, home, hospital, and laboratory requirements. Alloy steels include the stronger and tougher steels needed to make vehicle and starship parts, construction equipment, and gas transmission pipes. Molybdenum is an important material for the chemicals and lubricant industries. It has uses as a catalyst, corrosion inhibitor, smoke and flame retardant, dry lubricant (molybdenum disulfide) on starships and is resistant to high loads and temperatures.

Nickel: Vital as an alloying constituent of stainless steel, and plays an essential role in the chemical and space industries.

Platinum Group Metals (includes platinum, palladium, rhodium, iridium, osmium, and ruthenium): Platinum is used principally as a catalyst for the control of starship, ground craft and industrial plant emissions, as catalysts to produce acids, organic chemicals, and pharmaceuticals. Platinum Group Metals are used in glass fibre, fibre-reinforced plastic and other advanced materials; in electrical contacts, in capacitors, in conductive and resistive films used in electronic circuits, in dental alloys used for making crowns and bridges, and, of course, in jewellery.

Pyrite: Used in the manufacture of sulphuric acid and sulphur dioxide.

Quartz (Silica): As a crystal, quartz is used as a semiprecious gem stone. Cryptocrystalline forms may also be gem stones: agate, jasper, onyx, carnelian, chalcedony and so forth. Crystalline gem varieties include amethyst, citrine, rose quartz, smoky quartz, and so forth. Because of its piezoelectric properties quartz is used for pressure gauges, oscillators, resonators, wave stabilizers and density fluctuation regulators in gravity generators; because of its ability to rotate the plane of polarization of light and its transparency in ultraviolet rays, it is used in heat-ray lamps, prism, spectrographic lenses and beam lasers.

Fused silica is used as an ablative material in M drives and spacecraft shielding.

Silver: A key component in analog photography, silver is also an important constituent in electronics due to its very high conductivity. It is also used as a catalyst in the manufacture of ethylene, mirrors, semi and superconductors, batteries, silver plating, and in jewellery.

Tantalum: A refractory metal with unique electrical, chemical, and physical properties that is used mostly as tantalum metal powder in the production of electronic components - mainly tantalum capacitors (key to starship power plants and other, energy management systems). Alloyed with other metals, tantalum is also used in making cemented carbide tools for metal working equipment, and in the production of superalloys for M drive components.

Titanium: Titanium is a strong lightweight metal often used in starship construction. When titanium combines with oxygen, it forms titanium dioxide (TiO₂), a brilliant white pigment used in paint, paper, and plastics.

Tungsten: Used in metalworking, construction and electrical machinery and equipment, in transportation equipment, as filament in lightbulbs, as a carbide in drilling equipment, in heat and radiation shielding, textile dyes, enamels, paints, and for colouring glass.

Vanadium: Used in metal alloys, and essential in the production of starship titanium alloys.

Zinc: Used as protective coating on steel, as die casting, as an alloying metal with copper to make brass, and as chemical compounds in rubber and paints.

ZERO GRAVITY

Zero gravity is a fact of life out in the asteroid belt, and it poses unique challenges to those working the rocks of the asteroid fields.

The Zero G skill described on page 59 of the Traveller rules gives a very brief overview of the zero g environment, but the nature of zero g is presented in greater detail here.

Moving in Zero G

The Zero G skill prepares characters for the disorientation that is an inherent part of the environment: up, down and sideways lose their value in freefall, but those trained in zero g movement have already become acclimatised to this. Movement, however, is tricky. Without an opposing force like gravity to act as a brake, it is possible to propel oneself with a seemingly infinite range – Newton's First Law of physics being vividly apparent. However, once an action is committed to, it is nigh-on impossible to stop it without the aid of equipment (a tether line or propulsion unit, for example). Control is also difficult to maintain, although someone with Zero G o has been trained in the fundamental arts of establishing control in freefall and, perhaps most crucially, *not panicking*.

An object propelled remains in motion at a set velocity until an equal and opposite force is applied to stop it. Any untethered character (or without a propulsion unit) must rely on handholds and obstacles to prevent infinite forward motion. In space, this is especially risky and so all Belters take the utmost precautions when working outside a ship: handholds and obstacles are carefully noted and tether lines are always worn, even when a propulsion unit is present.

Whenever a character attempts an action in zero g, consider all the applicable factors using the Zero G Activities table, below. To remain in control of the situation the character must make a *Control* roll of Dexterity 10+, applying the appropriate DMs from the table.



Each change in vector requires a Control throw to be made; so, to move from one point to another a character must throw Dexterity 10+ once to remain in control and then again to check his motion when he reaches his destination.

If the Control roll fails then he misses his target and must roll again to check the failed action, and then again to reach his target. Inexperienced characters, or those with appalling luck, can find themselves in grave danger in zero g conditions.

If control is lost when executing a manoeuvre or vector change, one Control roll is allowed every combat round, after any combat activities have been completed. If control is lost, no further activities can be undertaken until it has been regained.

ORIENTATION

Concepts of up, down and sideways have little value in zero g, but remain a handy frame of reference. Forward is the direction

Action	DM
Zero G skill	+2 per level of skill
Battledress	+1 per level of skill
Forward movement	+2
Sideways movement	-1
Backwards movement	-2
Using magnetic grips	+4
Free jump	-2
Using tetherline or handholds	+3
Using propulsion unit for a slow vector change	0
Using propulsion unit for a fast vector change	-2
Jump towards a short-range target	-2
Jump towards a medium-range target	-4
Jump towards a long-range target	-6
Unencumbered or not wearing vacc-suit or battledress	+2
Wearing a low encumbrance vacc suit	+1
Firing a standard weapon with recoil	-4
Firing a recoilless weapon	-2
Firing a laser	0
Using handholds	+5
Striking with a fist, kick, or melee weapon	-6
One-handed actions	-1
Two handed actions	-3
Violent motion	-6

a character faces; backwards behind him. Sideways is another direction – up, down or diagonally to this present facing.

SPEED

Speed is constant until a change in vector occurs and is measured in the standard Traveller range bands. Any character that is accelerating (by using a propulsion unit, for instance), needs to check all accumulated velocity before he can come to rest.

GRIPS, TETHERS AND ENCUMBRANCE

Magnetic grips greatly reduce the risk of tumbling away from a target, especially when working on a starship hull or on the surface of a rock where grips can work. However, Dexterity is compromised for the purposes of moving: reduce the speed of a character to 1 metre for combat round purposes.

Tether lines do not impede movement or speed, but they do impede range. A standard tether is anchored to a spool or winch and can be anything up to 1,000 metres in length.

If a character is not wearing a vac suit or battledress he is considered to be unencumbered and this is an advantage to control; some high TL vacc suits are tailored to minimise encumbrance issues (TL10+, and +50% to the standard vac suit cost. The DM for being unencumbered is +1 when wearing such a vacc suit).

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Prospecting, mining, close-quarters sampling, repairs and so forth constitute general activities. Each activity requires one Control roll with another being made when the activity changes. Referees may call for additional rolls if activities are hazardous, complex, or distractions are occurring around the character.

Violent motion is considered to be anything requiring an application of brute force: taking a rock hammer to a stubborn lump of ore, for example, or attempting to wrench-free a stuck airlock mechanism. Such situations vary considerably and must be adjudicated by the Referee.

Low Gravity Environments

Anybody that exerts a gravitational pull lower than that of Earth standard is a low gravity environment. Many asteroids create their own, small gravity well if they have an imparted spin. The *gravity factor* (or GF) is expressed as a decimal: 0.3, 0.5 and so forth.

Any object falling towards a low gravity object – a person descending towards it without any restraint or a dropped spanner – falls at the square root of the gravity factor: so, an object falling towards an asteroid surface with a gravity factor of 0.3 would fall 0.54 times as fast as it would in standard, Earth gravity. This is because although the gravitational force is weaker, it has more time to act on the falling object.

Velocity of Factor of a Falling Object = GF

For an object to reach a given velocity similar to that found under Earth gravity, it has to fall further. This is expressed by taking the Earth's GF of 1 and dividing it by the square root of the environment's gravity factor: $1/GF$. So, for an asteroid with a GF of 0.3, then it would be $1/0.54 = 1.85$. For an object on an asteroid with a GF of 0.3, it has to fall almost twice as far as on Earth to reach the same velocity on reaching the ground.

For a character who falls in a low gravity environment, the distance he can fall without getting hurt is therefore dependent on $1/GF$. A fall of 1 metre is comfortable and a fall of 3 metres can be survived without injury – if one knows how to roll to absorb the impact. On our GF 0.3 asteroid, a character could fall 5.55 metres (3×1.85) without incurring serious injury.

$1/GF$ is also used to calculate the distance an object can be thrown. If a character can hurl an object 10 metres on Earth, he can throw it 18.5 metres on the asteroid.

Jumping requires raising one's centre of gravity to a given height. For an average person the centre of gravity is about 1.2 metres from the ground and, with a standing jump, it can be raised by 0.5 of a metre. A standing jump on the 0.3 GF asteroid would raise the centre of gravity by $0.5/GF = 0.92$ metres, plus the height of the centre of gravity, making a jump of 2.12 metres.

For the length of a jump, the time spent in the air is a factor. In a low gravity environment a body jumps higher and falls more slowly, so the length of a jump is $GF \times GF = \text{the GF}$. For an initial push (the velocity provided by the legs, which doesn't depend on gravity), the time taken to return to the ground is $1/GF$. For the 0.3 GF asteroid, this makes 3.33. This means a character on a 0.3 GF planetoid could leap 3.33 times as far as he could under standard gravity.

BELTER CHARACTERS

Those who are born in, work in, or come to find themselves living in, asteroid belts, are known colloquially as Belters. This might be a derogatory term when used by those coming from major planets, but for those who come from the belt, and spend time working or living there, it is an honourable description. Life in the belt is tough, uncompromising, risky and, if one has the tenacity, hugely rewarding. Belters are frequently grizzled, bluff, hard-living men and women who stand for little nonsense, speak as they find, and, whilst not averse to taking risks, and have a keen eye for risk mitigation. Belters tend to be loyal to each other, scornful of the cosseted lives the people of the major 'Gas Balls' lead, and hard-nosed in their dealings with others. Living and working in the depths of space, where the integrity of a vacc-suit is of absolutely prime importance, and where a casual knock against a sharp edge could spell death, Belters have little time for those who like things easy.

BELTER BASICS

Several options exist for Belter characters:

- Those who have chosen to make life in the belt part of their career (miners, prospectors, engineers and so forth)
- Those born in the belt and have remained within it for most of the adult lives
- Those born in the belt that have, for one reason or another, left it to follow other pursuits.

Any Traveller character born in the Belt can be susceptible to the effects of partial or no gravity at all at lower Tech levels (TL7 to 8). When generating Characteristics for native born Belters, a DM of -1 is applied to Str and End, and a DM of +2 to Dex. At higher tech levels the use of artificial gravity removes these adjustments to characteristics. Characters who make life in the belt part of their career path before adventuring use the Belter career table (see page 16) to determine what physical effects life amongst the asteroids has imposed.

Native Belters – Asteroid Homeworld Basic Skills

Native Belters are born and raised in the asteroids. These are low-gravity, vacuum-affected environments. Every native Belter gains Zero-G o and Vacc Suit o as Basic skills. Roll on the Belter Home table to determine the other key characteristics of the asteroid where they spent their formative years:

1D	Asteroid Type	Skill
1	High Population Habitat	Streetwise o
2	High Technology	Computers o
3	Industrial	Trade o
4	Low Technology	Survival o
5	Mining	Mechanic o
6	Research	Admin o

DEFINITIONS

High Population Habitat

The asteroid is a self-contained city habitat built within the hollowed-out inside of a major asteroid. Habitats have all the usual hallmarks, benefits and hazards of any other kind of city.

High Technology

The asteroid specialised in high-tech projects such as starship construction or high-level scientific research, with its populace living and working in the same space.

Industrial

The asteroid is used for both mining and manufacturing, with a constant flow of workers, merchants and traders streaming through its airlocks.

Low Technology

A relatively low-key combination of mining and industrial pursuits that has been deemed too short-term for major technological investment.

Mining

An asteroid devoted to heavy duty mining of minerals, metal ores, gases and other essential commodities.

Research

Dedicated to specific research projects best suited to zero-G environments.



THE BELTER CAREER

Belters live amongst, and work, the asteroid belts. The career is tough, uncompromising and frequently dangerous. In assignments such as Prospecting, Belters can expect to spend many lonely hours in space, staring into sensor-views and scouring scanner reports for details of the next, important rock for potential exploitation. In assignments such as Mining and Worker, the manual labour is hard and hazardous.

Enlistment: End 8+

If you are aged 34 or more, -2 DM

If born in the belt, +1 DM

Per previous career, -1 DM;

Gain a +1 DM if Dex is 6+, and a +2 DM if Int is 9+

As a career path, Belters have several assignments available during any particular Term of Service.

Choose one of the following

- **Miner:** You are involved in the hazardous task of mining an asteroid for its payload of metals, ores, precious stones and trapped gases.
- **Prospector:** You are involved in travelling the belt conducting investigations into the likely properties and yields of hitherto unexploited asteroids, either privately or as an employee of a major corporation.

- **Researcher:** You are engaged in specific research into either the properties of a particular asteroid, or in other research that is best conducted in a zero-g environment.
- **Worker:** You are a blue-collar worker in one or more asteroids, focusing on manufacturing, heavy industry or service industries.

Assignment	Survival	Advancement
Miner	Str 8+	Int 4+
Prospector	Dex 8+	End 5+
Researcher	Edu 4+	Int 8+
Worker	End 6+	Edu 8+

SKILLS AND TRAINING

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education
1	+1 Str	Vacc Suit	Astrogation
2	+1 Dex	Z e r o - G Environment	Medical
3	+1 End	Gun Combat	Pilot
4	Carousing	Comms	Computers
5	Brawling	Astrogation	Engineering
6	Vacc Suit	Pilot (small craft)	Jack-of-all-Trades



SPECIALIST

Roll	Miner	Prospector	Researcher	Worker
1	Athletics	Sensors	Admin	Drive (any)
2	Engineer (Life Support)	Pilot (spacecraft or small craft)	Computers	Engineer (any)
3	Explosives	Astrogation	Science (any)	Mechanic
4	Mechanic	Prospecting	Sensors	Science
5	Prospecting	Prospecting	Investigate	Survival
6	Jack-of-all-Trades	Comms	Jack-of-all-Trades	Trade (any)

RANKS AND BENEFITS

Rank	Miner	Prospector	Researcher	Worker
	Skill	Skill	Skill	Skill
0		Zero-G 1		
1			Computers 1	
2		Survival 1		Technician Trade 1
3	Supervisor Broker 1		Investigate 1	
4				Craftsman Mechanic 1
5		Admin 1	Pilot 1	Science (Space Sciences) 1
6	Ops Director Advocate 1			Master Craftsman Engineering 1

MISHAPS

2d6	Mishap
2	Corrupt government officials deliberately void claims by your company in favour of a rival corporation. When your employers are eventually taken over you are one of those who lose their jobs. Lose 1 Social Standing.
3	You are accused of claim jumping. You are sacked from your position although are exonerated much later and clear your name, gain Advocate 1.
4	Something goes badly wrong on your watch resulting in the death of a colleague. You are cleared of negligence but your reputation is tarnished. Gain an Enemy as a friend or relative of the deceased continues to blame you for what happened.
5	Framed for causing an accident through negligence and face serious repercussions. Forced to leave this service and into hiding or on the run. Gain Streetwise 1.
6	Injured. Roll twice on the injury table and take the lower result (see page 37 of the <i>Traveller</i> main rulebook).
7	Risk all on staking a rash claim to valuable mineral deposits which turn out to be worthless. -2 DM to Benefits roll.
8	Severely injured. Roll on the injury table (see page 37 of the <i>Traveller</i> main rulebook).
9	Betrayed by supposed friends over a discovery of a rich seam of precious metal in a newly found asteroid. -1 DM to Benefits roll and Gain an Enemy.
10	Claim jumpers push your company out of business. Gain a Rival.
11	Free for All. A breakdown in governance of the asteroid belt leads to a ruthless free for all, with belters and corporations in constant conflict with one another. The high costs involved force you out of the service. Gain a Rival.
12	War! Privateers and warships of different factions make working in the asteroid belt too dangerous. Belters are killed before all operations in the asteroid belt are shut down. Gain a Contact with the local Navy or Marines who was your point of contact with the authorities during the conflict.

MUSTERING OUT BENEFITS

1d6	Cash	Other Benefits
1	1,000	Scientific or Prospecting equipment
2	2,000	+1 Int
3	5,000	Contact or Prospecting License
4	10,000	Ship Share or Prospecting License
5	25,000	+1 Edu
6	40,000	Planetoid Share
7	75,000	Seeker Mining Ship or Belter Singleship

EVENTS

d66	Event
11	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table but you are not ejected from this career
12	A significant breakthrough in a project you are part of. Roll Prospecting 8+, Investigation 8+ or Astrogration 8+. If you succeed, increase one of these skills by one level: Engineering, Jack-of-all-Trades, or Science (any).
13	Strike it relatively rich in the survey of an asteroid. Gain a +1 DM to the Benefits roll from this term.
14	Establish a network of reliable friends and contacts in your assignment. Gain 1d3 Contacts.
15	Earn Advanced Training on a roll of Edu 8+. Gain one level in any existing skill.
16	You are involved in a massive brawl involving independent belters, free companies and the employees of a major corporation as tensions between these groups flare. Gain 1d3 Rivals as a result, but also gain a rank in Melee (any) or Advocate.
21	Your efforts help avert a major disaster, or save the lives of those caught-up in one. Gain either one rank in your assignment, or a +1 DM to the Benefits roll for this term. You are feted in the media and internal communications. No need to buy drinks for a whole a year.
22	Uncover either a blue-collar scam or corporate corruption. This might benefit you illegally. If so, gain either Streetwise 1 or a +1 DM to the Benefits roll. If you choose to go legit with your knowledge, gain Advocate 1 and Gain an Enemy.
23	Gain specialist training. Gain one of the following: Pilot 1, Prospecting 1, Zero-G 1
24	Discover a major strike in an asteroid previously considered worthless. Gain automatic promotion and Prospecting 1
25	You learn how to use the system to your benefit. Gain a +2 DM to your next Advancement check.
26	You befriend a senior representative of a local corporation. Gain an Ally.
31-36	Life Event. Roll on the Life Events table on page 34 of the <i>Traveller</i> main rulebook.
41	You are approached by a smuggler who wishes to use your company's ships to get goods past customs. If you agree gain a +1 DM to one Benefit roll. If you refuse roll on the Injury table (see page 37 of the <i>Traveller</i> main rulebook) but you gain a +2DM to your next Advancement check.
42	New government regulations are enforced on the industry. Gain one of Admin 1 or Advocate 1 as you struggle to avoid falling foul of them.
43	You are involved in a mining accident. Roll twice on the Injury table (see page 37 of the <i>Traveller</i> main rulebook), taking the higher result but gain either Survival 1 or Athletics 1.
44	You work alongside a long-time belter who teaches you many tricks of the trade. Gain a rank in Prospecting.
45	One of your friends is hurt in a mysterious accident. If you look into the matter you are able to identify the culprit, who loses his job as a result, gain one level in Investigate. Instead you can concentrate on helping your friend, gain an Ally.
46	A major corporation tries to corner the market for belt produced ore, forcing you to go looking for customers outside your normal markets. Gain a rank in either Streetwise or Broker.
51	You are given Advanced Training. Roll Education 10+ to gain any one skill of your choice at level 1.
52	You make an unexpected connection outside of your normal circles. Gain a Contact.
53	There is a major economic boom as the Belt economy thrives on government subsidies. Gain a +1 DM to your Benefit roll for this term.
54	You manage to offload an unstable asteroid full of minerals to an unsuspecting buyer. Gain a Rival but also a +1 DM to any one Benefit roll.
55	You gain experience in the field. Increase Comms, Engineer, Prospecting or Sensors by one level.
56	You have the opportunity to take advantage of another belter's precarious position. If you do so gain a +4 DM to your next Advancement check. If you decide against this you gain an Ally.
61	Attacked by pirates. Roll Gun Combat (any) or Melee (any) 8+ to avoid Injury, if you succeed gain one level in Tactics or Gun Combat.
62	You become involved with a feud with a rival belter outfit. Roll Stealth or Gun Combat (any) 8+. If you fail roll on the Injury table (see page 37 of the <i>Traveller</i> main rulebook). If you succeed gain one extra Benefit roll.
63	You learn of a little used loophole in the government regulations regarding belt prospecting and use it to your advantage. Gain a level in Advocate or Admin.
64	You find an area of the belt rich in profitable asteroids. Gain a rank in Prospecting or a +1 DM to one Benefits roll.
65	You are embroiled in legal troubles. Gain one of Advocate 1, Admin 1, Diplomat 1 or Investigate 1.
66	You uncover a major conspiracy against your employers. You are automatically promoted.

ADDITIONAL BELTER SKILLS

Prospecting

The character is experienced in searching out mineral deposits on the surface of a planet, asteroid or in deep space. The skill allows a character greater likelihood of discovering mineral deposits and, in any situation calling for such a search, a roll of 8+ with the Prospecting skill DM indicates success (assuming the area has anything to yield).

Prospecting is not enough, on its own, for the discovery of vast mineral wealth; but it does improve the chance of finding out what is available and can be exploited.

Surveying an area for trace elements: 1 – 6 hours

Determining specific mineral compositions: 2 – 7 hours

Determining logistics for mining or other exploitation: 2 – 7 hours

MUSTERING OUT BENEFITS

Seeker Mining ship or Belter Singleship: You receive five ship shares towards a Seeker Mining Ship (see page 114 of the Traveller main rulebook) or Belter Singleship (see page 25). Alternatively you receive two ship shares towards any other vessel.

Prospecting License: You receive a license to investigate and mine asteroids in a system. See page 19.

Asteroid Share: You gain a small share in the profits of a planetoid you helped bring into production. You gain a monthly income of Cr 500 for life.

THE BELTER'S LIFE

Life out in the boondocks is tough, unglamorous, often lonely and dangerous. Belters learn to trust each other but, more importantly, to respect both their equipment and the harsh mistress that is deep space and the asteroid belt. Belters are noted for rigorous checking procedures: equipment, vacc-suits, oxygen supplies, spares. It is said Belters check everything *four* times: once for safety, twice for faults, thrice for comfort and fourthly for luck. Most Belters have seen too many friends and colleagues lost to a terrible accident because that seal was not tight enough, or the drill-bit not calibrated properly. Belters take their time and *never* take risks with their equipment; there is always plenty of risk beyond the airlock or at the end of a mining shaft, if that is what one seeks the most. Belters who fail to follow these procedures tend to have very short careers.

This dedication to safety is sometimes ridiculed by others, who have learned to either trust to their technology or like to take a gamble. Ridicule gains, at best, a wry smile or at worst, a detailed account of what happened to someone who *failed* to check their

gear sufficiently. Belters do not like to be hurried; neither do they like to scorned or ribbed for making sure they have everything they need, that everything works and that they can rely on it one hundred percent.

Belters, despite their gruff, no-nonsense demeanours, tend to be, above all, patient. Space teaches that. Prospectors spend long periods in solitude in their soloships, scanning the belt for likely yields, verifying results, manoeuvring close enough to gain accurate scans, and then painstakingly surveying the rock that has attracted their interest. Rushing might mean missing a significant clue that will result in that yield of a lifetime. Miners understand that hurrying to finish something could cause important geological faults to be missed resulting in a cave-in or breach to the vacuum. Most Belters, then, are capable of concentrating on a single task, without being easily distracted, for long periods. If speed is of the essence, Belters are honest up-front about the chances of success, but work with diligence to get the job finished. But no *true* Belter will ever, ever, take short-cuts or work with sub-standard tools just to get a job done quicker.

Prospecting Licenses

Belters have no right to simply find an asteroid that has valuable commodities, mine it, or haul it back to gain a rich reward. Belt mining is rigorously controlled either by a system's government or by large, powerful corporations. Independent prospectors are a constant thorn in the side of authority, and so prospecting is usually licensed.

A license grants the right for a prospector to navigate the free areas of the belt and to stake a claim for any find they make. The license is more than just permission to roam: without it, no prospector can dock at a belt station or habitat, get his ship serviced, or buy essential equipment and supplies. The terms of the license ensure that the major stakeholder in an asteroid belt receives a percentage of the claim (usually 25%), and has the rights to buy the claim outright once the claim's value has been established and verified. The price paid for a claim is usually the remaining 75% of the claim's value, plus a lump-sum payment of CR10,000 to recognise the prospector's efforts and finder's title. A licensed prospector can either choose to keep his claim or sell it to the licensing authority or their agents; he cannot sell it on the open market. If he does, he risks losing his license and facing a severe financial fine, which may include confiscation of his ship and/or equipment.

Unlicensed prospectors are treated as pirates and thieves by both the controlling authority and other, licensed Belters. These mavericks are often poorly trained and equipped, take far too many chances, and, of course, queer the pitch for legitimate independents. The controlling authority might sequester a previously free area if unlicensed independents continue to target it, denying the legitimate independents any prospects the area might have to exploit.

Buying a Prospecting License is as follows:

- Application to the system government secretariat handling belt affairs (roll Soc 8+, DMs for Admin and Prospecting)
- Proof of work in the belt (minimum of one Term of Service) with suitable references. If a character was discharged due to Mishap, then the application is subject to a -1 DM.
- CR10,000 up-front fee
- CR5,000 per year license maintenance thereafter

Prospectors are issued with a license number and code, and their details entered onto the licensing database which is accessible by all corporations and agents already licensed to work in the belt, along with starports, orbital facilities and other institutions where Belters are likely to go for supplies, equipment and other essential facilities.

If a character musters-out with the Prospecting License benefit, then he is considered to have already paid the up-front fee and the first year's charge. If he receives the benefit twice, then he has paid for two years, and so forth.

A Prospecting License can be revoked at any time by the issuing secretariat.

Corporates, Solos and Free Companies

Any licensed Belter choosing to work the belt for adventure and profit has three choices open to him: join a corporation as part of its survey section; go solo; join a free company.

CORPORATE SURVEY TEAMS

The mega-corps running many belt operations naturally have their own in-house survey teams. Many Belters, as part of their career during character generation, will have worked for them and received much of their training through the corporate structure. Assuming that nothing untoward has happened during their career, and that the Belter character is happy remaining as part of the corporate machine, then there is no reason why he should not continue as part of a Corporate Survey Team. It provides a regular salary, licensing is not a problem, and the character, if he makes a major find, may get a small percentage of the gross yield.

However, Belters are, by nature, suspicious of authority. Most leave corporate service to go it alone as solos or join Free Companies.

SOLOS

The lone Belter, out in space in his solo-ship, plying the routes of the belt, rugged, taciturn and driven, is the common image of the typical Belter. Solos choose to work for themselves, risking everything in the hope of striking a big claim that will set them up for life. Solos invest in a solo-ship (usually a modified Scout – see Ships, on page

25) and then spend countless months out in the belt, watching, scanning and surveying, waiting to find that one rock that is filled with precious commodities worth millions or billions of Credits.

Solos take all the risks. They run-up lots of debts. The cost of maintaining their license, their ship, and all the kit necessary to their trade, costs in the region of CR100,000 per year. Of course, they might get lucky and strike a yield that clears a year's debts in one go, but the reality is that the truly astonishing yields are rare. Most strikes involve yields of low-value commodities worth a few thousand at a time. So, Belters generally do not prospect for the money (although the lure is always there). They do it for the lifestyle – the risk, the promise and the love of the solitary life of the lone prospector.

FREE COMPANIES

Free Companies are groups of licensed prospectors who have come together to pool resources and expertise and, hopefully, strike it rich. Free companies can be as small as four or five individuals, or as large as 200 – 400 employees. They are, however, unattached to any corporation, which means they can work as they wish without corporate interference.

Corporations often employ free companies on a per-job or retainer basis. This has the advantage of transferring operational risk to the free company, whilst guaranteeing a share of any profits if a big yield is discovered. In return the free company gets to work in areas that might otherwise be off-limits to solos or other, fully independent free companies, and they get to earn revenue without having to rely on discovering a profitable yield.

Considerable rivalry exists between free companies who are chasing a particular corporate project or deal. Corporations often put projects out to tender in order to drive-down the cost. The lucky free company who gets the job is the one who can complete the job at the lowest cost but with the best chance of success: this might mean taking some risks that many Belters are uncomfortable with. In other cases, it means double-dealing, calling-in favours and greasing palms. But corporate projects can pay very well – and not all projects are risky or crooked.

Some free companies, of course, will have nothing to do with the corporations, preferring to remain fully independent. Again, there is considerable rivalry and, sometimes, animosity, between these independents and those who are prepared to work to corporate contract. Independent free companies often consider themselves to be 'true' Belters, whereas contracting companies are seen as little better than mercenaries and opportunists.

EXPEDITIONS, EQUIPMENT AND SHIPS

Mining the asteroid belt is resource-intensive. Even though ship fuel can be economised because constant acceleration is often unnecessary, Belters, especially Free Companies and Solos, need to privately invest in the equipment they require to realise a yield. This chapter looks at the logistics for belt expeditions, the equipment required and issues relating to both.

OUTFITTING THE EXPEDITION

First and foremost, Belters need a ship. A Belter might be fortunate enough to either own a ship outright (or through Ship Shares) or be in a position to lease a craft. Whilst any kind of ship can be used for belt prospecting, there are some essential requirements:

- Cabin space: many Belter ships sacrifice comfort for cargo capacity, and Belters are famed for enduring uncomfortable/minimal accommodation if it means optimising profit
- Free cargo space tonnage for the yield and for equipment; 10 tons is considered the minimum
- Appropriate sensor arrays calibrated for the part of the asteroid belt being surveyed
- Communications equipment capable of rapidly reaching known outposts in case of emergency (supplied, usually, as part of the ship's comms package, but by no means guaranteed)

Corporate Belters can expect their craft to have all the above as standard and provided by the corporation. Free Companies may well enjoy corporate contracts that either include an appropriate ship for the job (on contracted lease), or have their own vessel suitably upgraded; or they are more likely to own or lease their own equipped vessel. Solos face the most difficult time: as solo operators there may be credit or lease implications, and, unless the Belter is prepared to hire additional help – or partner with another Solo – there are clearly limitations on how much one person can do, leading to potentially missed opportunities.

Essential equipment is as follows:

- Vacc suits and repair kit
- Oxygen supplies
- Lanyards/tethers and/or personal propulsion units
- Anchors, crampons and other climbing/securing gear
- Ore samplers
- Drills (both laser and direct impact)
- Ore processing/excavation drones or manually operated machinery

Life Support Requirements

Life support systems obviously take-up valuable cargo space but cannot be scrimped-on given the lengthy nature of some

expeditions. Life support costs are Cr1,000 per person per week. 150 person-weeks of life support supplies and equipment consumes 1 ton of cargo space at a cost of Cr150,000 (thus supporting one Belter for 150 weeks, two for 75 weeks, 3 for 50 weeks and so forth). Life support equipment includes:

- Rations (generally dried)
- Air
- Water
- Waste treatment/recycling (CO₂ recyclers, human waste storage and recycling, dehumidifiers, and so on)

Servicing and Safety

Notoriously vigorous with regards to equipment safety and reliability, only the most risk-embracing Belter ignores pre-expedition servicing and maintenance checks. Most starports or habitats with consistent Belter traffic offer Prospector Servicing packages that will, as a minimum, establish general reliability and highlight existing or potential areas of risk. Package names vary from system to system but can be roughly categorised as follows:

Bronze Standard (Cr1,000): A basic equipment survey designed to inform the Belter of existing and potential problems. Any repairs or upgrades are charged for on an item-by-item basis, separately. DM of 0 for Quality and Servicing Package Results.

Silver Standard (Cr8,000): A more detailed survey that includes essential repairs to existing faults, but excludes upgrades to prevent against future degradation. DM of +1 for Quality and Servicing Package Results.

Gold Standard (Cr15,000): A comprehensive survey and repair/upgrade service that ensures all equipment is functioning, with preventative action taken to guard against likely malfunction. The cost includes insurance against the likelihood of equipment failure and up to Cr1 Million for medical expenses and loss of equipment and yield. DM of +2 for Quality and Servicing Package Results.

Each servicing package covers the ship and prospecting-specific equipment. The packages also offer a DM influencing equipment quality (see below).

Referees may wish to include the below, optional, Servicing Package Results table as part of any prospecting expedition's preparations. Throw 2D; if the result is 2 or 3, then roll on the Servicing Package Results table and apply the Servicing Package DM.

SERVICING PACKAGE RESULTS

1D	Service Outcome
0	Servicing fails to pick-up on a potentially life-threatening fault with either the ship's life-support or infrastructure
1	Servicing fails to pick up on a general fault with the ship. Not life-threatening per-se but may involve space-borne repairs
2	Servicing fails to pick up on a serious malfunction with drilling or prospecting gear, leading to a +3 DM on the Mining Mishaps table (see page 17)
3	Servicing fails to pick up on a serious malfunction with prospecting sensors
4	Servicing fails to pick up on a minor fault with drilling or prospecting gear, leading to +2 DM on the Mining Mishaps table (see page 17)
5	Servicing fails to pick up on a minor fault with drilling or prospecting gear, leading to +1 DM on the Mining Mishaps table (see page 17)
6	Servicing indicates that 1D6 xCr1,000 is needed to repair auxiliary equipment not covered by the service package
7	No adverse effects.

EQUIPMENT QUALITY

Prospecting missions have high running costs which impact on every Belter's bottom line. There is, therefore, a tendency for all operations, even corporate ones, to scrimp on equipment quality in order to save on cost.

Equipment quality varies enormously but can be categorised as follows:

Grade A: premium quality equipment costing anything up to 110% to 150% of the standard equipment price. Chance to fail under normal usage is 1 on 2D

Grade B: standard quality equipment costing the standard price listed. Chance to fail under normal usage is 2 or less on 2D

Grade C: used, surplus equipment that has not undergone regular servicing or has suffered very heavy use. Price is 75% of standard. Chance to fail under normal usage is 3 or less on 2D

Grade D: suspect, jerry-repaired equipment sold at 50% of standard. Chance to fail under normal usage is 5 or less on 2D.

Whenever a piece of equipment is subjected to above heavy use – and the Referee should determine the specific circumstances – the user should roll 2D and compare the result with the Chance to fail indications for the equipment's grade. If the equipment has been serviced, then apply the Servicing Package's DM to the roll.

Unserviced equipment applies a –1 DM to the Quality check, which effectively raises the Chance to Fail by 1.

For example, Jarans Regan, a prospector, is using a Grade C laser drill which has been serviced under a Silver Servicing package deal. The Chance to fail is ordinarily 3 or less on 2D, but with a Silver Service having been recently performed, the Quality check receives a +1 DM, effectively reducing the chance to fail to a 2D result of 2.

BELTER EQUIPMENT INVENTORY

Laser Drill (TL9)

Length: 1500mm
 Weight: Drill, 10kg; Tripod 1kg; Powerpack 8kg
 Cost: Cr7,500 (extra powerpacks Cr3,000; tripod Cr250)

A heavy-duty, semi-portable laser specifically designed for mining tolerances and calibrated for low and zero-gravity use. The drill is tripod-mounted and equipped with hydraulic, self-fixing and releasing bolts for added stability. The tripod is gimbaled to allow a 360 degree horizontal rotation and 270 degree vertical rotation, damped and counterbalanced (using small internal gyroscopes). In terms of its power, it is far more powerful than a laser rifle, but is heavier and much less accurate; if being used as a weapon, rather than for drilling, attacks suffer a –3DM and inflicts 7D6 damage.

The powerpack is not compatible with laser rifles or other energy weapons and it provides the equivalent of 1 hour of intermittent use or 200 shots. If subjected to sustained use in a 1 hour period, this constitutes excessive use and calls for a Quality/Chance of Failure check. This can be mitigated by using an auxiliary capable hooked to a Prospecting Buggy, vehicle, or ship outlet.

Laser Drill (TL10)

Length: 1200mm
 Weight: Drill, 8kg; Tripod 1kg; Powerpack 6kg
 Cost: Cr10,500 (extra powerpacks Cr3,000; tripod Cr250)

As above, but a reasonably more compact version available at the higher Tech Level. If used as a weapon, the drill suffers a –2DM to accuracy.

Ore Sampler (TL8)

Weight: 25kg
 Cost: Cr3,000

A computerised sensor array used in situ to determine the quality and grade of ore from a deposit. Several samples need to be run through the sampler's analysis routine to gain a true picture of the ore quality and therefore its value. The sampler can be either mounted on a test-bench aboard a ship, or fitted to a Prospecting Buggy so that samples can be analysed in the field. It takes 1 hour to run one sample and three samples are generally required to establish an accurate reading. If time is at a premium, then a reading can be determined from only one or two samples. If only one sample is analysed then the reading is accurate on a roll of 11+, and 10+ if

two samples are used. Each level of Prospecting provides a further, positive DM to this roll.

Claim Beacon (TL8)

Weight: 1kg

Cost: Cr4,000 (+Cr1,000 if fitted with a propulsion unit)

A roughly head-sized box that broadcasts a Prospector's claim details (Prospecting License code, date of claim, plus any additional notes) that can be read by all standard prospecting sensor packages. A beacon can be either fixed to a rock or fitted with a small propulsion unit and then set into a fixed orbit about the claim. The electronics of a beacon are shielded against EMP attacks and are also tagged with a unique identity chip which, again, records a prospector's details. It operates on a long-life battery with a life of 100 standard years.



Suit Patches (TL7)

Cost: Cr2 for a pack of 5

10cm square patches of airtight, self-adhesive fabric used for temporary vacc suit repairs. The patch has a finite usefulness of 1D3 hours and only half this time if used on a vulnerable suit area, such as a knee or elbow joint.

Mag-Grips (TL5)

Cost: Cr20

A pair of permanent magnets that can be attached to the boots or gloves of a vacc suit and allowing the user to attach to any magnetic surface under zero-g conditions. It takes 1D3 minutes to install a set of mag-grips.

At TL7 powered versions are available (Cr100) that allow items to remain in situ up to an acceleration of 4G.

Prospecting Buggy (TL8)

Weight: 4,000kg

Price: Cr750,000

This 4-ton vehicle is a pressurised air/raft variant styled and equipped for non-atmospheric prospecting. The vehicle can be operated with the Flyer (Grav) specialisation in atmospheres, and Pilot (Small Craft) specialisation in zero-g. The buggy is equipped with a 'mule unit'; a reinforced rig with a heavy-duty winch, laser drill platform, work-bench (large enough to house an Ore Sampler) and toolkit. It is configurable to carry four people with no cargo; two people with two tons of cargo or a single occupant with three tons of cargo. Changing the internal configuration takes 10 minutes per stage (meaning that changing from four persons to two takes 10 minutes, and two to one a further 10 – or vice versa).

Hand Propulsion Unit (TL7)

Weight: 2kg

Cost: Cr1,000

A handheld, low thrust jet used for zero-g manoeuvring. The jet uses a pressurised air canister with a 20-use shelf-life before it needs to be recharged. The unit can fire fore and aft for both forward and counter-momentum.

Backpack Propulsion Unit (TL9)

Weight: 5kg

Cost: Cr3,000

Similar to the handheld propulsion unit, but backpack mounted and capable of providing 100 uses before needing to be recharged.

Mining Drone (TL11)

Strength 30 (+8), Dexterity 12 (+2), Hull 3, Structure 3

Traits: Armour 5, Integral System (comm.: audio visual), Integral System (grav belt), Integral System (holographic camera), Integral System (prospecting sensor array)

Cost: Cr50,000

A cross between a Probe Drone and a Cargo Robot (see pages 94-95 of the Traveller core rules), mining drones are equipped with two ore samplers and a laser drill, plus sensor arrays, holographic cameras, comms packages and the equivalent of a backpack propulsion

unit. The drone also has four retractable, fully articulated service arms that can be fitted with additional tools and can be slaved to a remote operator onboard a buggy or a ship. The drone can be programmed to undertake a wide range of common prospecting tasks autonomously using a standard program package, or be programmed to undertake a selection of specific, focused tasks, as appropriate to its mission.

When used for extracting ore, the mining drone can extract 1D+3 tons of ore per watch, plus a further +1 tons for each Tech Level above TL11 (so a TL13 drone extracts 1D+6 tons). To be able to extract ore, the mining drone requires an adaptation system that adds Cr20,000 to the cost, and reduces its Dexterity by 2. The extraction equipment increases the bulk of the drone, but enhances its capabilities and efficiency. At TL 13, the extraction unit does not impede its Dexterity.

Cargo Drone (TL 11)

A modified version of a cargo robot (Traveller rules, page 94), with similar capabilities and at a similar price, but designed to complement the Mining Drone. The cargo drone can carry up to 20 tons of payload in a custom hopper designed to slot directly into a ship's cargo bay.

Tri-Dee Imager (TL 13)

Weight: 10kg

Cost: Cr12,000

The tri-dee imager interfaces with any standard sensor or imaging package to project a large, holographic representation of the scanned/imaged subject. It is a useful research tool in many areas, but when hooked to radar or sub-surface sensor systems, can provide a three dimensional interior representation of a planetoid. Calibration settings allow different elements and compounds to be colour-coded according to user-defined settings.

The unit consists of a flat projection screen and a control assembly with wireless/universals connections to most, commonly available sensor packages. Its internal library comes complete with over 1,000 3D grids that can be projected over an image, allowing it to be peeled away, layer-by-layer or piece by piece to reveal hidden details.

SHIPS

Any kind of vessel can be outfitted for the Belter lifestyle. The most common modification is to remove cabins/staterooms in order to boost cargo tonnage and fuel capacity; in many instances the Jump drive may also be sacrificed in order to gain additional capacity for improved Manoeuvre drive and the all-important cargo room. As many Belters operate within a single system (and most asteroid belts are more than large enough to warrant long-term exploration), Jump capability is a luxury more than a necessity.

Belt Seeker Singleship

Solo Belters tend to favour the Seeker/Singleship, as described on page 115 of the Traveller rules. Removing the Jump drive offers an additional 10 tons of cargo and fuel capacity allowing for an upgrade of the Manoeuvre drive (although Thrust 2 is generally ample for in-system operations). Solo Belters who have no wish to rely on others even go as far as converting the two staterooms into a further 8 tons of cargo space, and use the bridge as both control centre and living space. If one is travelling alone, and resources are at a premium, personal hygiene becomes less of a concern (and contributes further to the myth of Belters as unkempt, unwashed space-rednecks). Free Company and Corporate ships usually maintain a basic set of crew facilities although comfort always comes a distant second to cargo capacity.

This is a typical, system-confined Seeker Singleship, operated by a Solo Belter. Jump drive and Staterooms have been sacrificed for an increased cargo tonnage of 50 tons, with a Prospecting software package and sensor array replacing the usual Seeker military-grade software and sensors. The bridge is rigged to form a living space designed for the pilot/pro prospector only.

The turret is left unadorned but could be equipped with additional laser drills if needed – although, typically, a plexiglass dome is fitted to allow for naked-eye observation – something all seasoned Belters prize over simple reliance on the sensor array.

Mining Platform

The province of corporations and a handful of very successful Free Companies, the mining platform is 5,000 tons of mobile mining and processing rig. Smaller ships conduct the prospecting, with the mining platform moved into position to extract and process the yield later.

Due to their size and configuration, mining platforms are built either in orbit or within a colonised part of the belt in zero-g. Their sole purpose is to extract and render ore and minerals but they can also be outfitted to act as research posts bringing with them a crew of scientists as well as the prospecting technicians. The platform has no Jump drive, but has reasonable thrust capability based on its Power Plant and Manoeuvre drive.

Mining platforms are designed to either land on an asteroid or to work in orbit around it, using a mixture of drones, robots and telescopic tools and drills to exploit the waiting yield. At normal working capacity a platform typically processes 200 tons of ore per 6 hour watch, but this can be doubled if conditions demand it with a subsequent effect on equipment and resource durability. The processed ore is accelerated through a mass driver in small batches, taking a free flight path towards a pre-assigned location elsewhere in the system. Alternatively, smaller craft are used to collect and ferry consignments requiring greater safety or special conditions of storage (certain radioactives and precious yields). For high value ores there is a significant amount of cargo space to store them, preventing them from being intercepted by unscrupulous individuals.

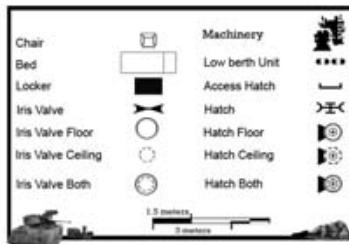
Every mining platform is equipped for long-term use, typically carrying supplies for a six month mission without need for additional supplies. Hanger space allows the platform to service up to four 100-ton craft, such as the Seeker mining ship or other hull configurations up to 400 tons.

A crew of seven is the minimum requirement for a mining platform: pilot, navigator, three engineers, and two medics being the usual corporate crew structure. Additional personnel include up to ten administrative personnel and up to 132 workers, technicians, operators, researchers and so forth. Up to 36 additional personnel of a non-critical nature can be accommodated.

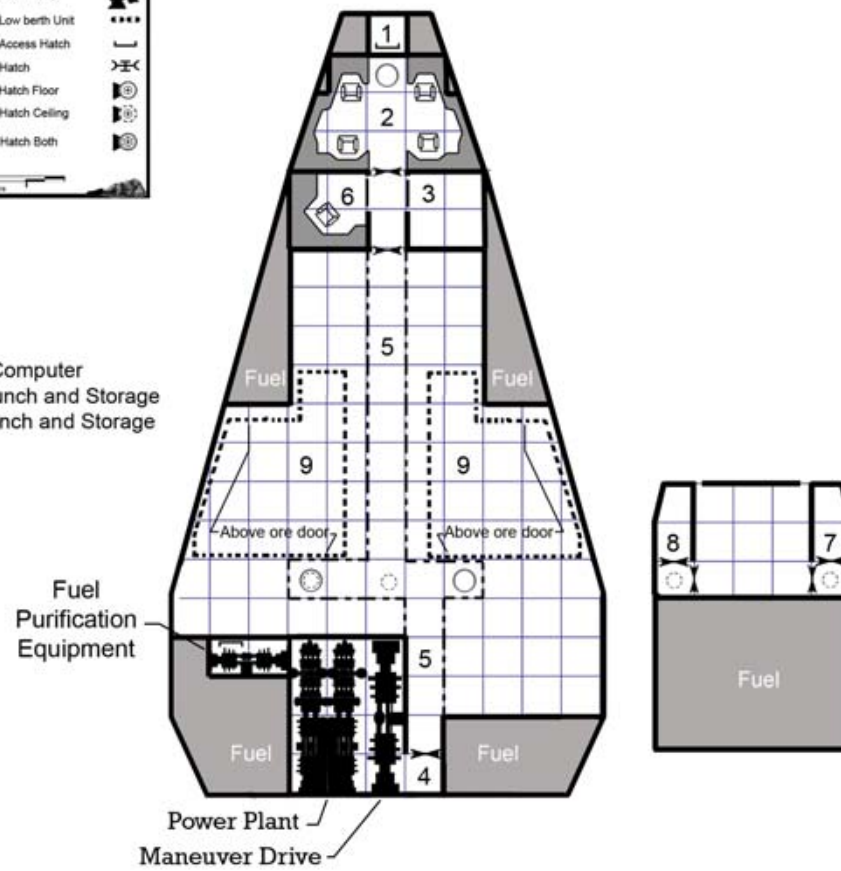
A typical mining platform has an operational life of between 20 and 50 years, sometimes remaining in one place for the duration. Decommissioned platforms are sometimes sold as going concerns at a hefty discount on their build price, but usually require extensive refurbishment and servicing to render them effective business propositions. However, even a platform capable of producing only half its usual processing capacity can be a boon to Free Companies who are prepared to make the investment in order to gain a significant edge on their competition.

BELT SEEKER SINGLESHIP

			Tons	Price (Cr)
Hull	100 tons	Hull 2		2,200,000
	Streamlined	Structure 2		
ARM OUR	Crystaliron	4 points	5	400,000
Manoeuvre Drive	A	Thrust 2	2	4,000,000
Powerplant	A		4	8,000,000
Bridge/Living Area			10	500,000
Computer	Model 1/bis	Rating 5		45,000
Electronics	Prospecting Sensors	+o DM	2	1,000,000
Weapons	Hardpoint #1	Double Turret (empty)	1	500,000
Fuel	23 tons		23	
CARGO	50 tons		50	
STATEROOM S	None			
EXTRAS	Mining Drones	1	1	50,000
	Cargo Drones	1	1	75,000
	Prospecting Buggy		-	750,000
	Fuel Scoop			
	Fuel Processor		1	50,000
	Ship's Locker			
SOFTWARE	Manoeuvre/o			
	Prospecting/o			
	Library/o			
MAINTENANCE COST (MONTHLY)				1,465
Life Support Cost (Monthly)				1,500
Total Tonnage and Cost			100	17,570,000



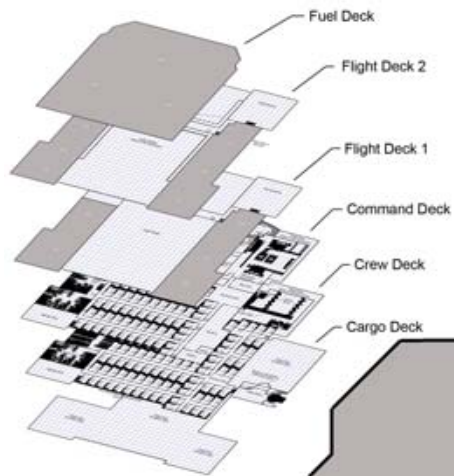
1. Avionics
2. Bridge
3. Ship's Locker
4. Engineering
5. Raised Platform
6. Sensors/ Ship's Computer
7. Mining Drone Launch and Storage
8. Cargo Drone Launch and Storage
9. Ore Storage



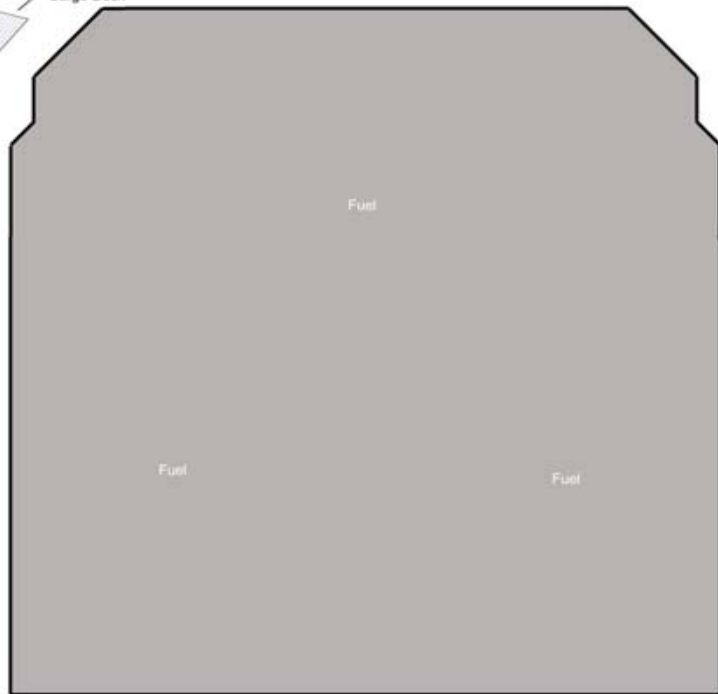
EXPEDITIONS, EQUIPMENT AND SHIPS

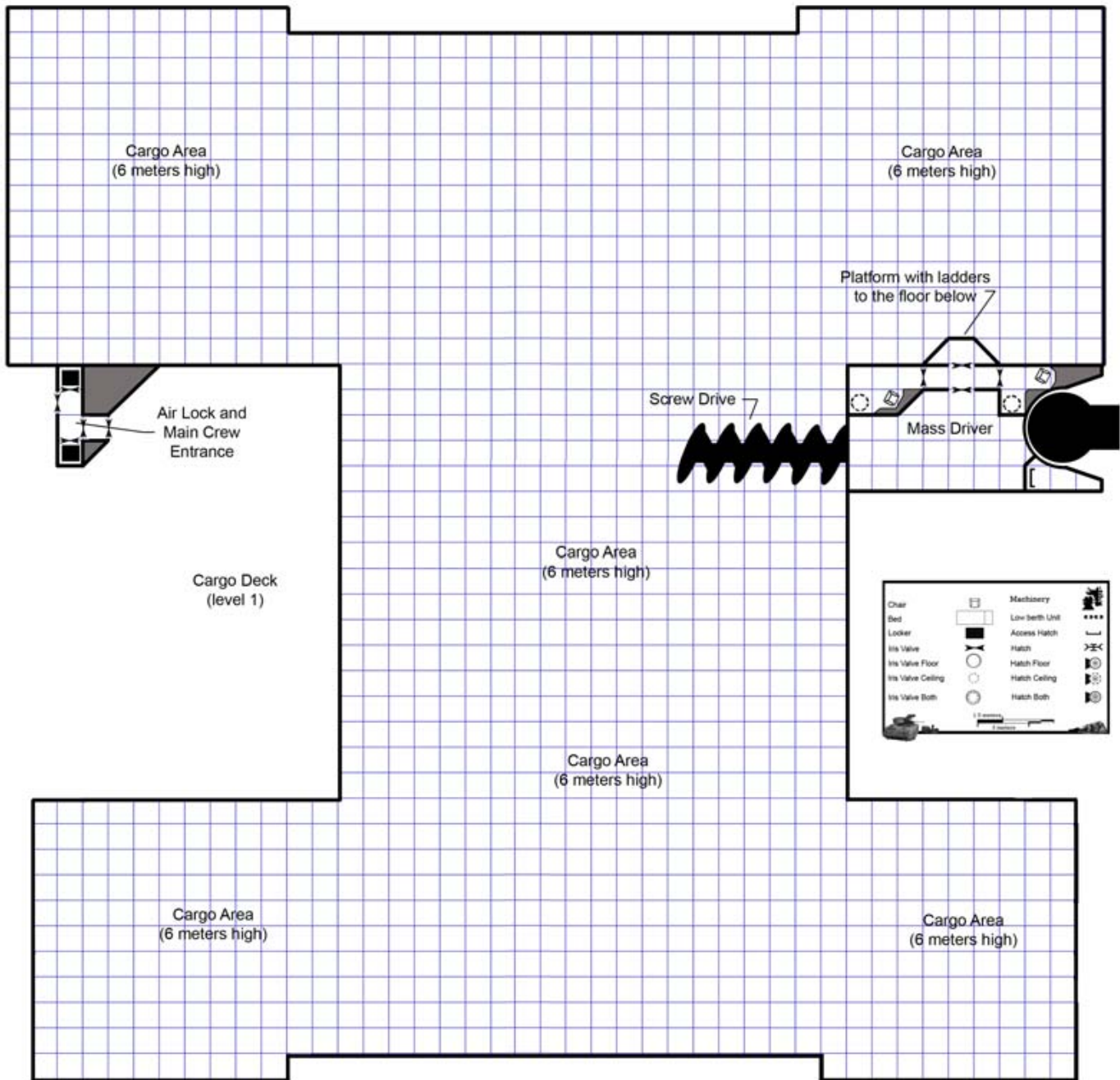
MINING PLATFORM

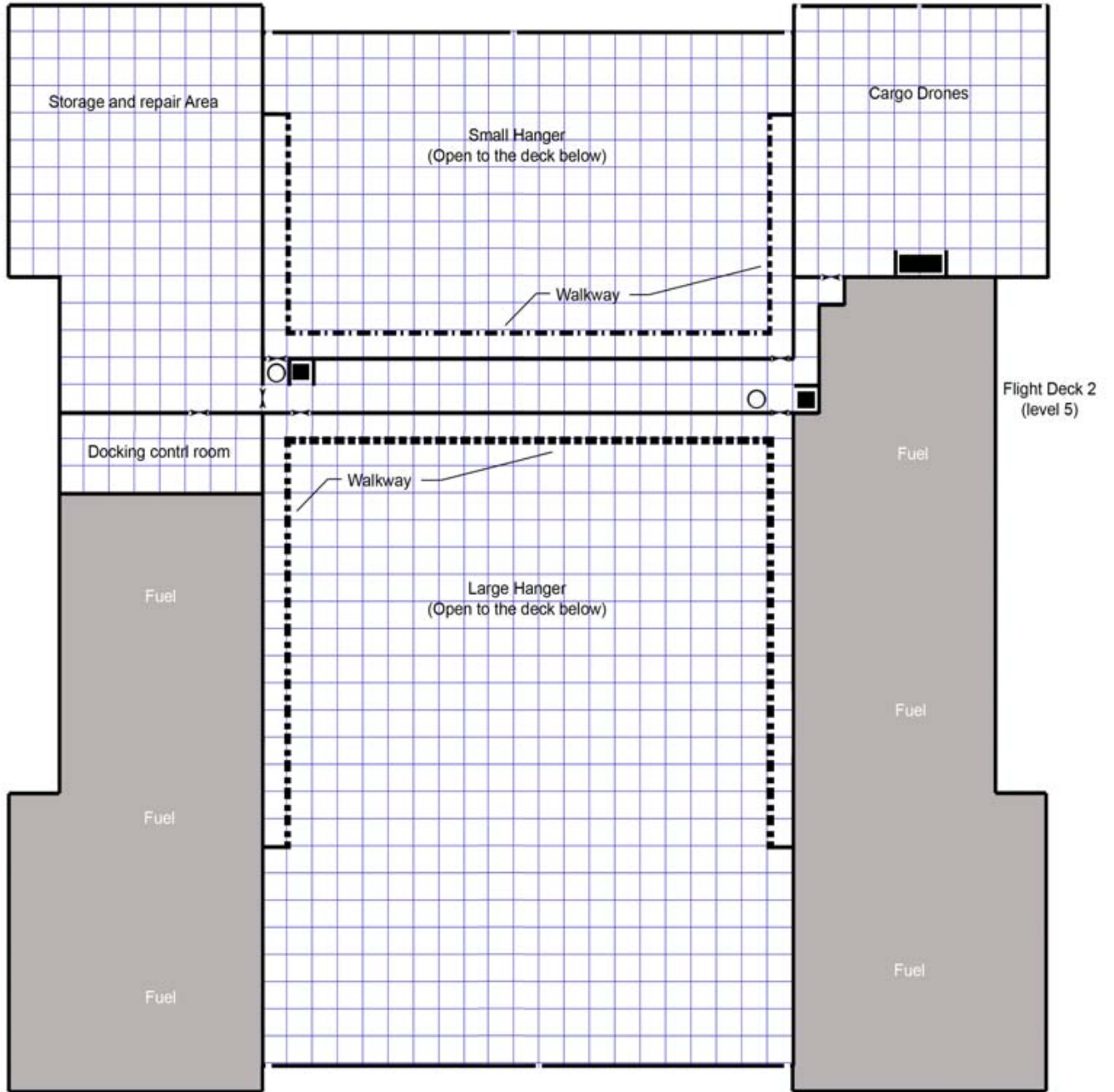
			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	5,000 tons	Hull 100 (Engineering), 50 (Forward)		250
	Dispersed Structure	Structure 100 (Engineering), 50 (Forward)		
SECTIONS	Engineering	Forward (Life support & quarters)		
COM M AND UNITS	2		50	5
Armour	None			
MANOEUVRE DRIVE		Thrust 2	62.5	31.25
Powerplant			100	200
Computer	Core/3	Rating 40		12
Sensors	Survey (Engineering) Advanced (Forward)	+0 DM	6	.4
Weapons	Hardpoint 1	Single Turret (Laser Drill)	1	.5
	Hardpoint 2	Single Turret (Laser Drill)	1	.5
Fuel	1700 tons	Six months' operation	867	-
Cargo	50 tons		1790	-
Hanger			780	156
Staterooms	175		700	87.5
Extras	Mining Drones	50	50	2.5
	Cargo Drones	50	50	3.75
	Mass Driver		25	2.5
	Laboratory Space		100	-
	Processing Bay		400	40
	Fuel Processor		5	.25
	Ship's Locker		3	-
Software	Manoeuvre/o			
	Prospecting/o			
	Library/o			
MAINTENANCE COST				.0452
Life Support Cost				.35
Total Tonnage and Cost			4990.5	542.15

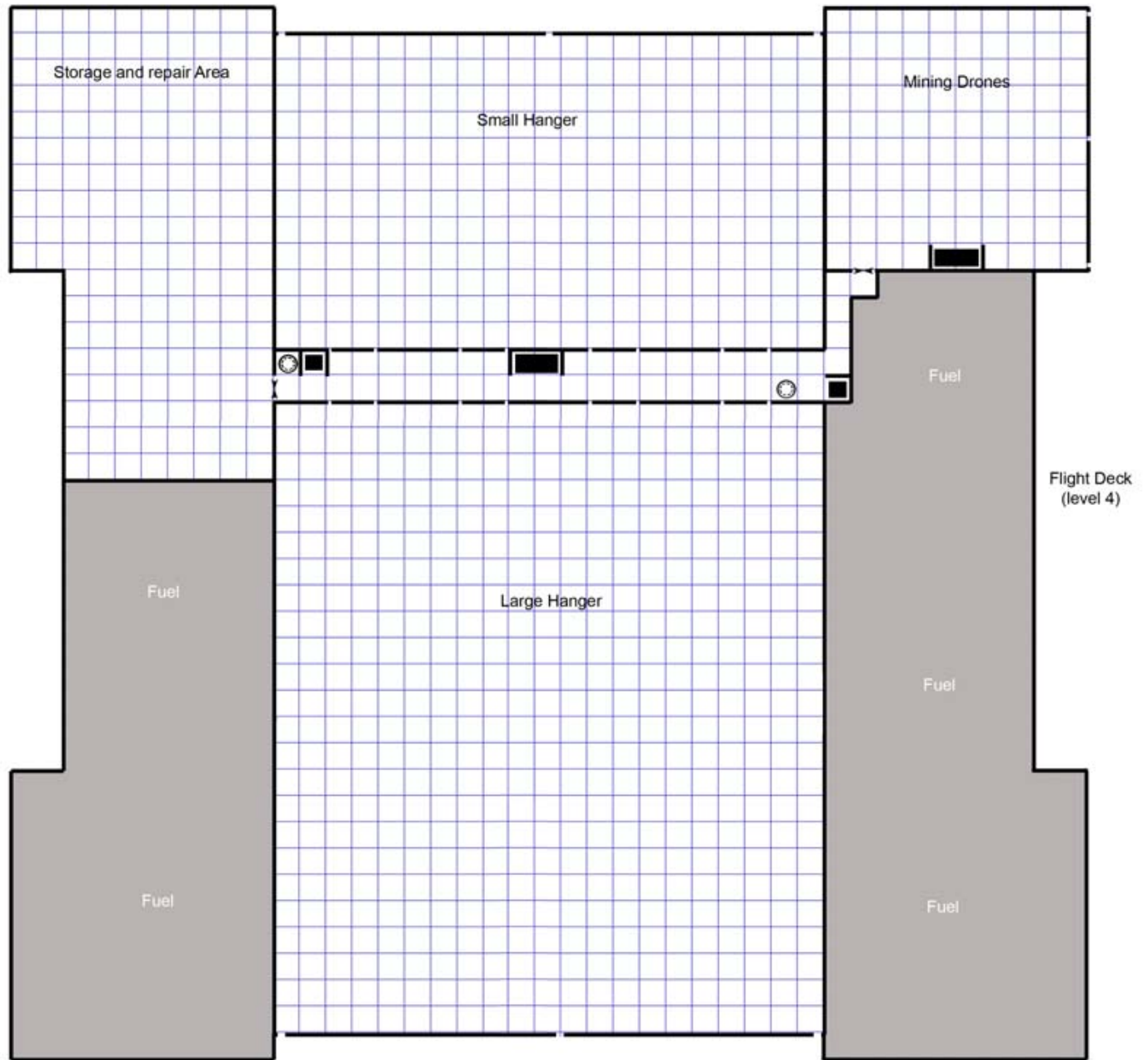


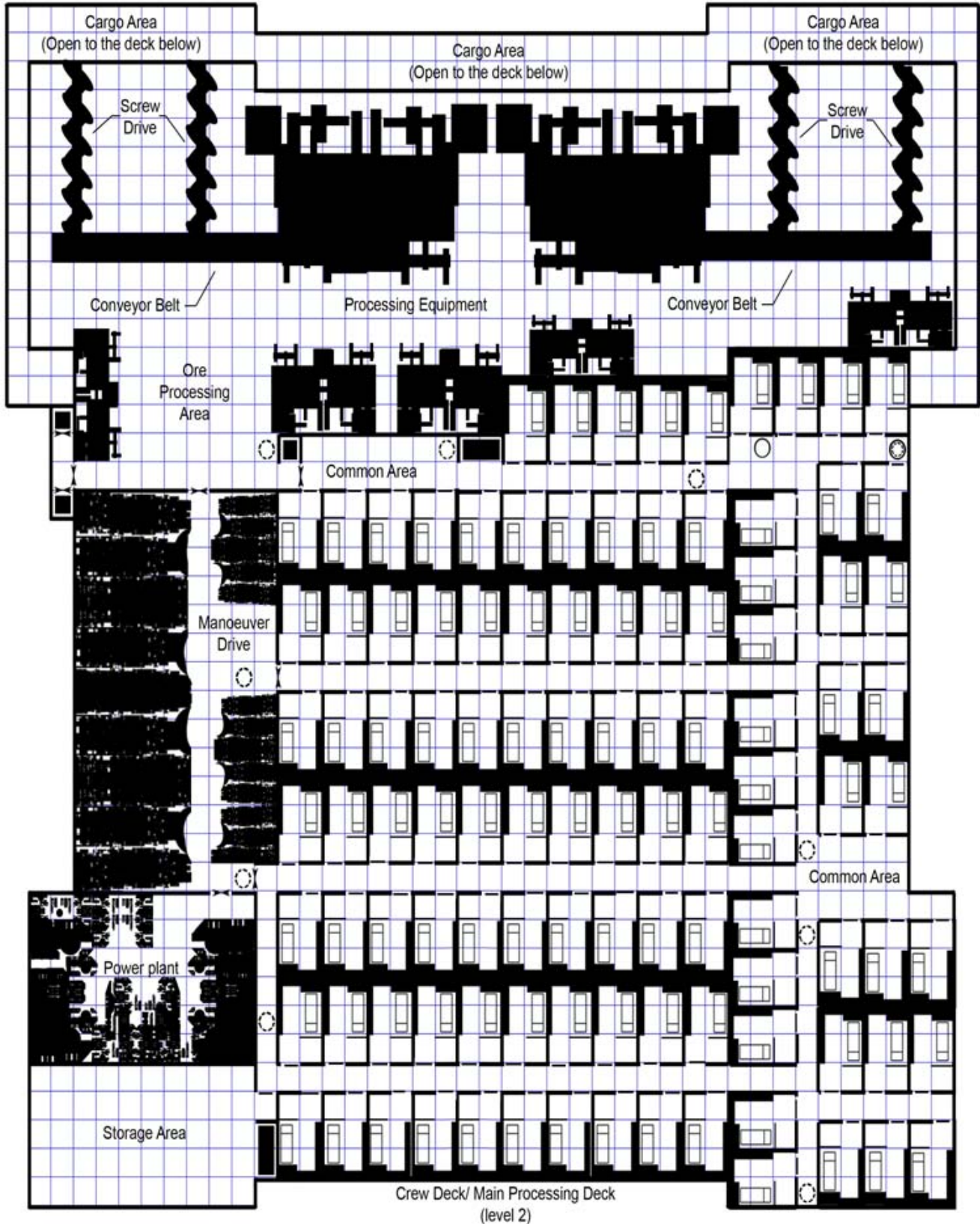
Chair	Stairway	Stair

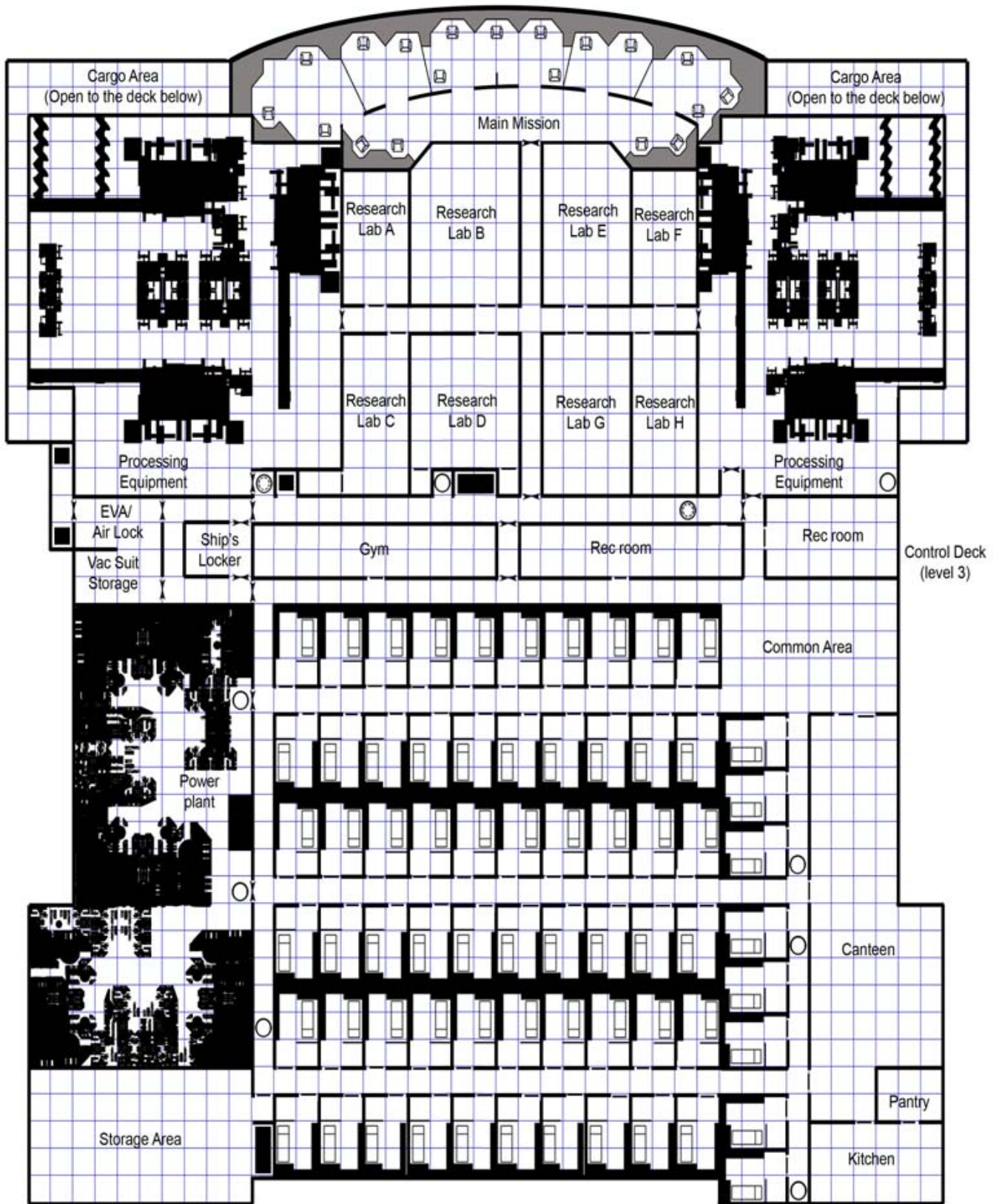












THE SCHAEFFER BELT

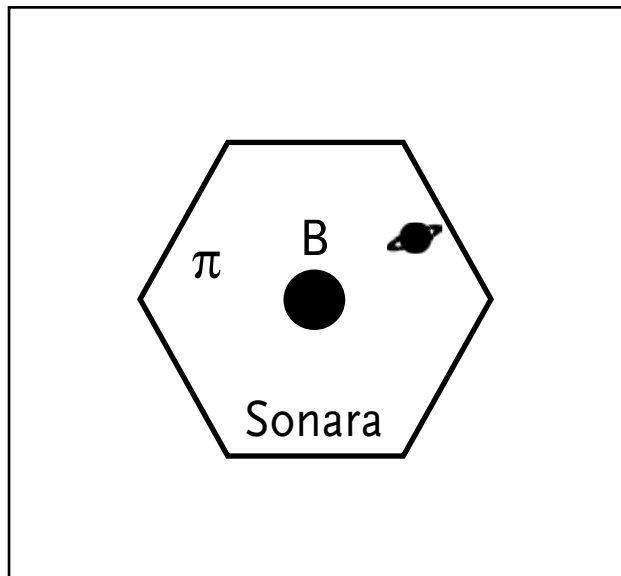
The Schaeffer belt forms the backdrop to the campaign occupying the rest of this book. This chapter looks at the belt in detail both in preparation for the campaign and as an example of an asteroid belt that can be used in homespun Traveller campaigns and those set in the Third Imperium.

USING THE OFFICIAL TRAVELLER UNIVERSE?

If you intend to use the Schaeffer belt as part of a campaign set in the Official Traveller Universe of the Third Imperium, then it can be located in any unoccupied/undeveloped hex of the following sub-sectors:

Darrian
Five Sisters
District 268

As this chapter shows, the Sonara system is a backwater. It is untouched by the Imperium and, with no Jump drive capability, the Sonares humans are limited to their own system. However, they were not the first inhabitants: as the scenarios of the campaign reveal, alien intelligence was present in the system long before humanity arose. If you are using Beltstrike in the Imperium, then this is clearly the Ancients, although a little fudging of the facts as presented in the scenarios may be necessary to ensure a smooth fit with the OTU.



SCHAEFFER OVERVIEW

The Schaeffer belt is located in the Sonara system between the first of Sonara's gas giants, Geddes, and the second of the system's two habitable worlds, Sonares II. It conforms to the general characteristics of most belts, being residual material from the creation of the planetary system some 4 billion years before the present day. The belt has a variety of clusters – dense concentrations of asteroid material – around its circumference that are classified as either Controlled or Free Radical.

Controlled clusters are the defined territory of the Maas Industries Corporation (MIC), Sonara's chief system mining company. These clusters yield a mixture of typical S, C and M asteroids that are used in heavy construction industries such as starship hull production, fuel exploitation, and astrochemicals. MIC has exclusive rights to all material within Controlled clusters, secured by the Schaeffer Declaration of Commerce agreed between Sonares I and II around a century ago.

Free Radicals are clusters that have been declared free for independent prospecting and exploitation under the Schaeffer Declaration. These clusters are therefore the province of several Free Companies, a number of smaller corporations operating from either the Schaeffer belt habitats such as Vinen, Sonares I or II and, of course, independent Belter operations.

SONARA SYSTEM PROFILE

Sonara is a Sol-comparable star with a similar age and magnitude. The system contains six planets, as follows:

Chasaesus (Gas Giant)

The outermost of the Sonaran gas giants, Chasaesus is ringed and unexploited.

Forlneaux (Gas Giant)

Largest of the gas giants, orbiting between Chasaesus and Geddes.

Geddes (Gas Giant)

The innermost gas giant, and the smallest, Geddes is ringed and undergoing Maas Industries exploration.

Masaron (Gas Giant)

Occupying a similar orbit to Forlneaux, Masaron is approximately half the mass of its sister planet.

Sonares I (Prime world)

The main habitable world of the Sonara system, Sonares I, or Prime, as it has become known since the colonisation of Sonares II, has the

following World Profile: Sonares: B964AAC-9

Starport: B (Good)
 Size: 9 (15,000 km, Gravity 1.25 Earth standard)
 Atmosphere: 6 (Standard)
 Hydrographics: 37% (Wet World)
 Population: A (approximately 30 billion people)
 Government: A (Charismatic Dictator – two factions: Sonares World Assembly and the Industrial Combines)
 Law Level: C
 Tech Level: 9 (Developed gravity generators. No reliable Jump Drive development)

Sonares I is dominated by two factions: the Sonares World Assembly, which is under the effective control of Asrofalk Murghen-Chaeseyn, the charismatic, benevolent dictator who seized control of planetary affairs following the disastrous industrial wars that saw the emergence of the Industrial Combines. The Sonares World Assembly is an appointed assembly consisting of hand-chosen representatives from the seven major nations (a mixture of republics and fading monarchies). Murghen-Chaeseyn ratifies all decision-making but is held in check by a series of voluntary codes and decrees that he was instrumental in drafting. The SWA controls the armed forces of both Sonares I and II and a significant amount of industry and commerce.

The Industrial Combines are those powerful corporations that survived the destructive Industrial Wars which saw the planet's previous system of monarchies and republics all but ripped apart. At the end of the wars the corporations were poised to take control of Sonares affairs, until General Asrofalk Murghen-Chaeseyn and his military supporters intervened. His considerable military prowess led to the defeat of six of the fractious industrial families that had instigated the wars and sent a clear message to the remaining combines: submit to a centralised, planetary government or face destruction. Those that accepted the legitimacy of the Sonares World Assembly were permitted to form the Industrial Combines; those that did not were forcibly absorbed into the SWA's military-industrial architecture. The Industrial Combines, led by Maas Industries, are forced to deal equitably with the SWA.

Sonares II (Colony world)

Starport: B (Good)
 Size: 7 (11,200 km, Gravity 0.9 Earth standard)
 Atmosphere: 5 (Thin)
 Hydrographics: 9: 93% (Wet World)
 Population: 7 (approximately 54 million people)
 Government: 7 (Balkanised: Sonares II Assembly – S2A; SWA agencies and Maas Industries)
 Law Level: 3
 Tech Level: 9 (Developed gravity generators. No reliable Jump Drive development)

Mostly ocean, Sonares II has one large landmass, roughly the size of western Europe, and a panoply of much smaller islands. The continental landmass is the centre of Sonares II colonisation supporting a core population of 54 million and growing. The colony is subject to tripartite rule: the S2 Assembly, representatives from the SWA, and all industrial activity controlled by Maas. Maas's involvement was a precondition of assisting in the colonisation project. Relations between the three governmental stakeholders are not always cordial but have, so far, avoided serious conflict.

Sonares II is a rich source of minerals and nutrients and the fertile plains for the central landmass are given over to agriculture to feed both itself and Sonares I. For this reason industrialisation is strictly regulated and this ensures Maas maintains an emphasis on its belt interests.

SONARA HISTORY

Space exploration began on Sonares I three hundred years ago and followed the typical pattern of unmanned orbital flights followed by manned exploration of Sonares I's moon, the establishment of orbital stations around the planet, geo-stationary satellites for communication and planetary observation/defence. Two hundred and fifty years ago the first unmanned surveillance vessels, produced by Maas Industries, headed out to both Sonares II and the Schaeffer belt (named for the astronomer Laans Schaeffer, who discovered the belt three hundred years before Sonares I began space exploration).

Sonares II had long been considered habitable and the first surveillance confirmed it. The Schaeffer belt surveillance mission headed into the densest of the known clusters and returned encouraging reports of considerable reserves of iron, nickel, zinc, platinum, and a wide variety of radioactive exotics. The surveillance mission continued for the next eighteen years, in which the remote spacecraft circumnavigated the entire belt, establishing the presence and relative density of the various clusters. Meanwhile, efforts were underway for the first manned visits to Sonares II.

The Sonares II expedition was a joint venture between Maas Industries and the Sonares World Assembly. The mission took a decade to plan and resource, but eventually a team of eight made the

SONARES RELIGION

Sonares religion is pantheonistic. Dozens of gods are worshipped, each representing different elements or facets of life. The creator goddess is Sonara herself, represented by the sun. Despite this extensive network of individual gods, the Sonares people are not overly religious. People believe and worship, but fundamentalist devotion is very limited. In the Schaeffer belt, Belters trust to their instincts and equipment: not the auspices of one – or many – gods.

four month journey from Sonares I to Sonares II and found a world with a breathable atmosphere and precisely the habitable potential the over-populated, over-industrialised Sonares I inhabitants had guessed at and hoped for. Over the next thirty years the Sonarese colonisation project got underway, administered principally by the Sonares World Assembly, but with considerable financial and technical input from Maas Industries.

As a parallel venture – and to take cunning advantage of the manufacturing potential of the Sonares Colonisation project, Maas Industries commenced detailed, manned surveillance of the first of the Schaeffer belt clusters and established, within five years, that the cluster had significant potential for exploitation. As the first industrial orbitals were built around Sonares II, Maas Industries had already commenced production of the first Belt Located Orbital Communities (BLOCs) in order to start exploiting the Schaeffer belt's yields.

THE SCHAEFFER BELT

A vast ring of stellar debris, with a radius of 398 million kilometres from Sonara, the Schaeffer belt is divided into roughly six clusters, three of which are controlled by Maas and the remainder declared Free Radicals.

Under Sonarese law, no corporation may control more than 50% of any asset within the Sonara system – an edict designed to prevent the circumstances that led to Sonares I's Industrial Wars. Maas, the

controlling interest of the three corporate clusters, heavily disputes the legality of this and has been mired in a protracted litigation with the Sonares World Assembly for decades. As the principle investor in belt exploration and exploitation it believes its share should match its investment – which is total – and as a result, Maas is often at odds with the Independent Belter and Free Companies who prospect the Free Radicals.

The six clusters are separated by hundreds of millions of kilometres of sparse asteroid debris which is largely inconsequential S-type material. The clusters are as follows:

Shoranan Cluster

The centre of the Maas operation, Shoranan contains the huge Shoranan Habitat which acts as a Maas Industries' arcology: a port, base of operations, research centre and living space.

Mhajejr Cluster

The larger of the controlled clusters but the second to be actively explored, Mhajejr includes several very large asteroids that Maas has spent decades mining, using a mixture of spacecraft and orbital industrial platforms

Paradaen Cluster

Also known as the Diamond cluster due to the discovery of the fabled Paradaen asteroid – the largest single concentration of diamond anywhere in the Sonara system.

Name	Cluster	Diameter (km)	Location	Population (Millions)	Spaceports
Atiensis	Chlaer Radical	284	Outer/Mid Belt	6.3	1, C
Atras	Shoranan	129	Inner/Mid Belt	-	
Aviada	Shoranan	339	Outer/Mid Belt	13.2	1, C
Banna	Vinen Radical	304	Outer Belt	-	
Chypese	Shoranan	247	Mid Belt	-	
Cursed	Chlaer Radical	245	Inner Belt	3.2	1, C
Gascoyne	Paradaen	255	Outer/Mid Belt	-	
Grael	Chlaer Radical	322	Outer Belt	7.7	1, B
Heras	Spindrift Radical	252	Mid Belt	-	
Hygris	Mhajejr	459	Outer/Mid Belt	-	
Keneres	Paradaen	253	Mid Belt	15.7	2, both A
Marantan	Chlaer	345	Outer/Mid Belt	-	
Mein	Mhajejr	580	Inner Belt	-	
Paternalis	Spindrift Radical	122	Outer Belt	-	
Shoranan	Shoranan	1085	Outer/Mid Belt	37.4	2, both B
Solstice	Paradaen	158	Mid Belt	-	
Theyar	Spindrift Radical	244	Outer/Mid Belt	-	
Tythis	Mhajejr	300	Outer/Mid Belt	-	
Vinen	Vinen Radical	620	Mid Belt	27.5	2, both B
Warmonger	Mhajejr	279	Outer/Mid Belt	-	

SCHAEFFER ASTEROIDS AND HABITATS

Even now, Sonares I suffers from chronic overpopulation, with some 30 billion people inhabiting the planet. The colonisation of Sonarese II has assisted this population crisis, and so too has the Schaeffer belt. Many of the belt's asteroids have been converted into habitats for the Sonaran populace who cannot afford the extortionate costs of life on Sonares II.

The asteroids with populations are known as habitats. Essentially the asteroid has been hollowed-out and smoothed, to create an internal, habitable surface, and then spun to impart gravity. That essential commodity, water, is either imported or drawn from natural occurring reserves from water-bearing minerals and hydrocarbons (supported by draconian water preservation and recycling measures)



Chlaer Radical

As large as Mhajejr, and the Free Radical Maas desperately seeks to control, Chlaer contains valuable iron and exotic deposits.

Vinen Radical

The most dispersed of all the clusters, but considered potentially as rich as Chlaer. Vinen contains the Vinen Habitat, built by the Sonarese World Assembly and gifted to the system as a free community.

Spindrift Radical

Heavily mined by the earliest independent Belters and Free Companies, Spindrift includes the marvellously shaped and eccentrically orbiting Praet asteroid –a tripled-peaked mountain composed of dense rock with a thick band of interior iron.

Atiensis

A teardrop-shaped planetoid and named for Sonares's god of war, Atiensis was the first of the Free Radical habitats and was built by independents without any backing from the Industrial Combines. It is still rich in water-bearing minerals and organic compounds.

Its settlement is a fissure-city: a domed city built into the vast Axis Fissure that slices neatly down through the centre of Atiensis. The settlement is arranged in tiers carved from the rock and built onto it, with large, fast, elevator platforms running the full length of the fissure walls on both sides, and a network of high-speed tube trains running laterally and around the outside of the fissure.

Atiensis is home to many wealthy families linked with the SWA and the old ruling clans of Sonares I.

Aviada

Aviada is Maas Industries' attempt to create an artists' haven and cultural centre. The planetoid itself is an attractive, lop-sided sphere with strangely regular craters and fissures along its surface. The Aviada settlement is within the hollowed-out core, a collection of geodesic domes known as counties that favour a particular artistic pursuit (music, painting, performance, and so forth). Maas sponsors frequent exhibitions, galas, festivals and celebrations. Scala County is the home of a thriving film industry that rivals the major entertainment studios of Sonares I.

Cursed

So called because the members of the first expedition to the asteroid died mysterious deaths all within a few short years of each other. Cursed is now an asteroid providing cheap, block accommodation for miners, Belters, spacers and zero-g specialists and their families. Its facilities are basic and the industries it supports centre on ore and mineral processing. Despite the bad luck associated with the origins of the asteroid, no one has died from the (now near legendary) curse said to plague the rock. The inhabitants of Cursed have come up with hundreds of separate conspiracies, urban myths and fanciful

explanations for the demise of the original Belters, but common understanding is that the unfortunate deaths were the result of simple coincidence.

Grael

A thriving bubble habitat in Chlaer Radical, Grael's community includes Belters, miners, those working in cargo and haulage and a burgeoning leisure industry. The habitat – a single, huge, geodesic dome covering the enormous central crater of the asteroid – is a place of contrasts. The wealthy live along the rim, occupying many-roomed apartment complexes whereas the less well-off live along the crater floor in a tenement complex built on a grid pattern. Grael's port is one of the busiest in Chlaer, and the asteroid supports one of the vast system communications networks used as a hub for both belt and general systems message co-ordination. The mid-section of the Grael crater is home to a series of high-tech industries requiring low gravity for essential development work, including the manufacture of semi and superconductors.

Keneres

The capital of Paradaen cluster and a secondary base for Maas, Keneres supports heavy industries including the construction of spacestations, orbital platforms and starships. The hollowed-out habitat is shared between Maas Industries and its partner industrial combine Sonares Construction and Utilities. The construction yards occupy vast areas of the planetoid's surface whilst the inner hosts the living space, administration facilities and training centres for both Maas and SCU employees. Keneres' research and development credentials are first-rate with extensive research, testing and development laboratories across a range of scientific disciplines.

The current buzz project is the construction of a one million ton spacestation that will become the first orbital platform to research and study Chasaesus and its rings.

Shoranan

An immense, jagged, roughly-tetrahedral, freefall mountain, Shoranan was fully exploited decades ago and left with a vast hollow core which Maas rapidly converted into the Shoranan Habitat. Shoranan is now home to some 37 million people, with a considerable number employed directly by Maas Industries which has established its Schaeffer belt industrial wing within Shoranan.

Shoranan has been popular as a living destination because the accommodation offered is so cheap when compared with Sonares I and II. For Maas employees there is little option, but for those with a taste for the exotic or simply seeking somewhere different, Shoranan proves to be an ideal living environment, offering plenty of employment and excellent leisure facilities.

Shoranan is very much a working asteroid. Its two spaceports are constant hives of activity. Shoranan is a major trading post for belt commodities, starship parts, belt equipment servicing and all

types of good and service in between. Many Belters use Shoranan as their home base when not out in the field and the habitat is an eclectic mix of corporate worker, freelance companies, and indebted solo prospectors.

Shoranan is not without its problems: despite Maas's considerable presence crime is rife, debt out of control, illicit drugs easily obtainable, and alcoholism a consequence of the hard living. Maas sponsors several rehab clinics and detox programmes within Shoranan habitat but this only deals with the symptoms and not the root cause of the problems. In this regard Maas is concerned only with its own employees, who are not immune to the underbelly of Shoranan existence, but receive better treatment than the general non-Maas populace who need far more help and support than the corporate casualties. Shoranan is therefore a habitat in crisis, with many of its residents trapped by addiction, debt or both, or committed to the corporate lifestyle, that imposes its own unique pressures.

Vinen

The only habitat of Vinen Radical, Vinen Habitat is fully independent of the industrial combines and, although it supports a large, diverse population, suffers few of the issues experienced by Shoranan. Vinen has its disreputable areas in its long, tube-like, internal habitat, but crime is relatively low and low-key. The independent Vinen Habitat Authority mixes SWA and corporate government principles to reach an innovative approach to administration which results in individual accountability supported by entrepreneurial incentives and rewards.

As a consequence free companies and solo enterprises tend to thrive on Vinen. Debt is managed and supported by credit unions and banking collectives. Taxes and trade levies are reviewed regularly to ensure parity with external markets, and not set in stone as is the case in habitats like Shoranan and Keneres.

Habitation on Vinen is controlled through a points system, which safeguards jobs and allows the Vinen Habitat Authority to recruit essential skills for key areas. Visits to Vinen for trade and pleasure are welcome: long-term stays are more difficult unless accompanied by the necessary visas and work permits.

The centre of Vinen Habitat is the area known as The Lung, a long ribbon of parkland and botanical garden that stretches the length of the habitat, protected by a transparent plexiglass dome. Creatively placed gravity generators within the Lung allow for zero-g sports to be easily mixed with traditional pursuits requiring gravity for enjoyment. The huge array of plants, flowers, fruit trees and root crops represent the best botanicals from both Sonares I and Sonares II, and the Vinen Garden Guild controls and maintains the vast spread of the Lung's greenery: everything from cool, forested glades, to complex, high-tech hydroponic and anaerobic cultivation facilities.

CHARACTERS AND THE SONARA SYSTEM

Characters can come from either the Sonares habitable worlds of the various habitats. Many are born, live and die in the belt habitats, never once setting foot on either of the main worlds. Those born in habitats tend to be tall and lanky as a result of the low gravity environment. They are easily recognisable compared with the 'gravity-shufflers' of the main planets.

Over-population has been a huge problem for Sonares for the two and a half centuries. A mixture of religious doctrine suppressing contraception and decent nutrition led to a population explosion that imposed severe conditions on Sonares I's resources. Every character will be aware of the population problems experienced on Sonares Prime and the crisis of shortages in resources being faced. Incentives to disperse the population across orbital habitats and habitats situated in the Schaeffer belt were seized upon, leading to an exodus that saw the belt habitats burgeon into the millions. However, free of the zealous religious practices experienced on Sonares I, and with a concerted willingness to do things differently, the habitat populations, whilst large, are not unmanageable and remain roughly stable.

TECHNOLOGY

Sonares technology is at TL9. Gravity generators are in use across spacecraft, orbitals and asteroid habitats, and the performance of power plants and M drive systems are efficient through the development of semi and superconductors. Jump drive principles are being explored but have not reached a stage for prototype development. Key stages of the essential FTL physics are still not fully understood despite great advances in the understanding of super-string theory and gravity manipulation. However, a Jump drive breakthrough is, perhaps, less than a decade away. Maas works on its own projects, as does the considerable research network of the SWA. An unspoken race is on to develop the energy conservation physics necessary to make FTL/jump space travel a reality and it is too difficult to say which authority will develop a working, testable prototype first.

Maas Industries and Sonares Construction and Utilities dominate the spacecraft sector. Maas hulls and build qualities are considered to be the best and many Belters will trust their souls to no other. Sonares Construction and Utilities specialises in capital hull production, testing and outfitting and is responsible for habitat development, spacestation design, and the construction of rigs such as the Factory explored in the subsequent chapters. Maas and SCU maintain a healthy partnership which is strong enough to guard against incursions by the other corporate entities from Sonares I and II. Its presence across the Schaeffer belt is a benign dictatorship with the control of countless industries essential to belt survival. Mining and mineral extraction is an important facet of Maas activity, but by no means its only interest or focus.

On Sonares I, weapon possession is strictly controlled following the corporate wars. However, in the outer regions of the system, such as the Schaeffer belt, restrictions are more relaxed and dependent on the outlook of individual habitats. The Law Levels of the inhabited asteroids are summarised below.

LAW LEVELS TABLE

Habitat	Law Level
Atiensis	5
Aviada	7
Cursed	4
Grael	3
Keneres	4
Shoranan	7
Vinen	6

Habitats

The various Schaeffer belt habitats are of one of two forms:

'Bubble' habitats are surface-built settlements surrounded by a bubble or canopy to retain atmosphere. Gravity is either the product of the asteroid's natural spin or, as is most common, supplemented by gravity generators. Bubble habitats use the natural terrain of the surface to act as the foundation of the settlement. Buildings follow traditional methods, modified to meet the needs of the asteroid's size and the requirements of being contained within the bubble. Commodities such as water, power generation and waste management are handled deep within the asteroid, usually in specially built and shielded units purpose designed for the task. Most are fully automated with surface or near-surface control centres monitoring vital processes.

As the bubble itself is the single point of failure for the habitat, weapon control tends to be strict and the community has a variety of customs associated with maintaining the bubble's integrity. In reality the fabric of the bubble is exceedingly strong, consisting of dense, transparent, shatter resistant glass/plastic amalgams that can withstand all but a full-on nuclear strike. However from within the bubble, its surface appears as fragile as any window to the outside and the residents are always aware of the membrane separating them from the instant death of vacuum.

'Shells' are hollowed-out asteroids where the living space has been created on the inside. Again, either spin, gravity generators or a combination of the two, are present. As the inside of the asteroid tends to be curved in many areas, following the contours of the inner walls, the topography of the habitat can be hard for the newly-arrived or those unfamiliar with low or zero-g environments to come to terms with. Flat areas are common, and most living areas are built either onto those flat regions or on large tiers of rock that create a stepped environment with elevators and escalators linking the lower and upper tiers. Strategically placed gravity generators maintain

the sense of up and down, but in some habitats, such as Vinen, gravity generators are occasionally located to allow movement across the ceiling and sides of the habitat – a disconcerting sight and experience for the non-initiated.

Shell habitats are, naturally, very strong. The asteroid's substance offers air-tight protection (supplemented by foamed protective coatings around the interior surface to ensure against atmosphere leakage), but at the expense of any natural light. 'Sun-strips' are built into the ceiling of the habitat – vast, long, lighting tubes that approximate daylight (but never truly replicate it), keyed to a standard day/night cycle of approximately 12 hours each, with automated dimming and intensification to replicate dusk and dawn.

All the habitats in the Schaeffer belt replicate standard gravity to between 0.7 and 0.9 of Earth Standard. Solar power is harnessed by surface-mounted solar panels and, in some instance, directable sails, set into a geosynchronous orbit around the asteroid and connected by strengthened superconductors linking with the internal power-management systems.

Access to any of the habitats is via the asteroid's spaceport which, in the case of Bubble Habitats, is surface-located with access tubes or underground conduits connecting the port with the main, domed living area. In shell habitats the starport is located partially on the surface, but with the bulk of its facilities within the habitable shell of the asteroid.

Standards of Living within Habitats

Despite the large surface areas habitats can afford, space is still at a premium. Within a shell habitat, where upward expansion is limited, building height is carefully regulated and enforced by the authorities. In bubble habitats, only the bubble's ceiling limits building height and the canopy can, in some circumstances, be flexed, but this is a rarity.

Habitat living therefore means rubbing shoulders with many people in a confined area. Shell habitats are naturally claustrophobic – something Belters are unconcerned with, but some visitors find intimidating. Bubble habitats are similarly restricted, but the ability to gaze out at the stars lends a feeling of space that simply cannot be replicated in a shell habitat.

As the atmosphere is artificially produced and maintained, the internal odour of the habitat can be overwhelming for those used to a natural atmosphere although Belters, used to having to compromise on hygiene, and accustomed to living in a synthetic atmosphere environment for weeks or months on end have little difficulty with the scents, odours and humidity of asteroid habitats.

Populations are always strictly controlled. Short-term stays are usually of little issue, but long-term or permanent residence is highly regulated to ensure that the habitat's resources are not stretched or overloaded. The population figures given in the table

above are the standing, optimum populations supportable by those habitats; perhaps an increase of 10% can be absorbed without a serious impact on living standards or resource consumption, but nothing greater than that.

As a consequence, birth control is enforced within almost every habitat. Birth control drugs are commonplace in Sonares society as a whole, but within habitats the principle is straightforward: pregnancy *has* to be approved beforehand. An unauthorised pregnancy usually results in the couple or the mother being forced to leave the habitat without any right of appeal. Habitats are therefore generally light on children and minors. Similarly the old and infirm are encouraged to return to either Sonares I or II; habitats are not environments suited to the very young or the very old. They are working communities that need to be regulated by different principles to 'real' worlds.

EXAMPLE HABITATS IN THE SCHAEFFER BELT

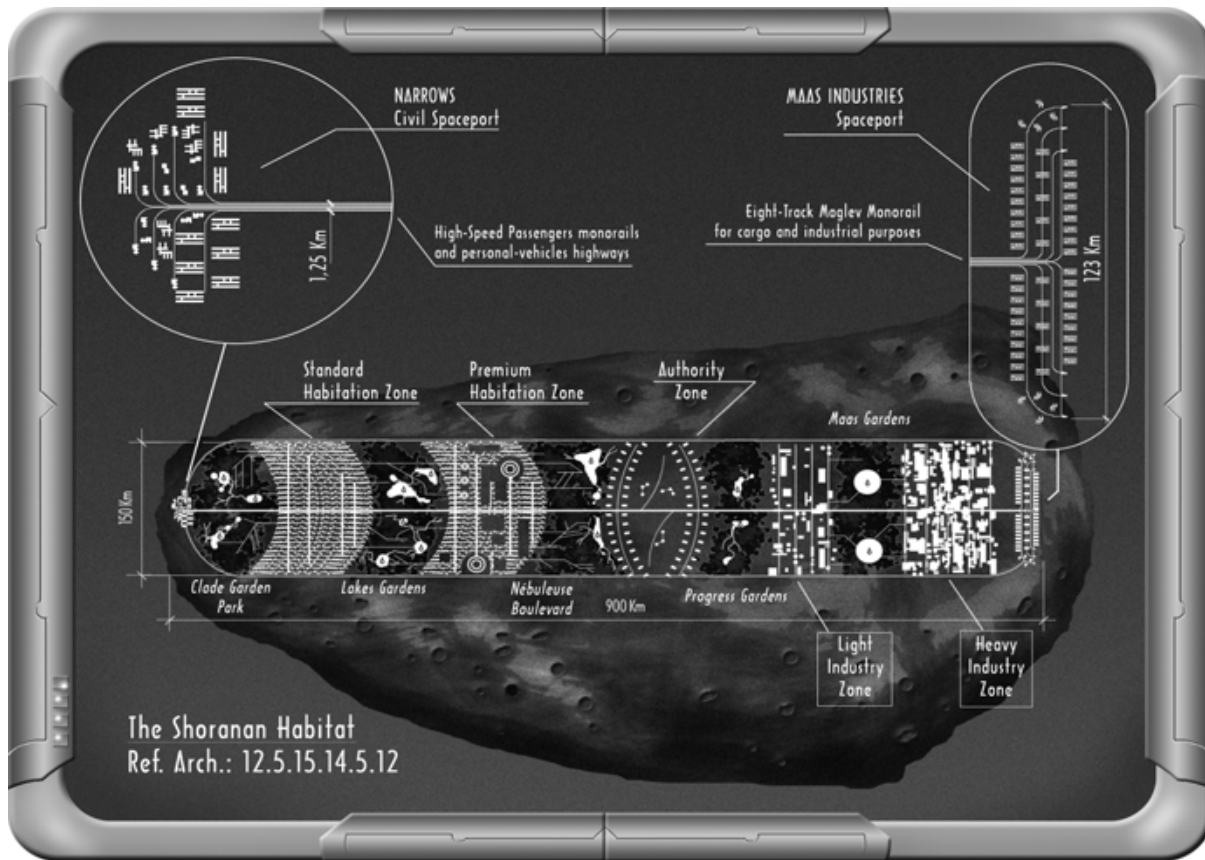
The two habitats used in the Beltstrike campaign are Shoranan and Vinen. Both are shell habitats and are described in broad-brush terms in this section.

Shoranan Habitat

The Shoranan planetoid is an immense, jagged, roughly-tetrahedral, freefall mountain. It was the first to be converted into a fully-functional habitat by Maas Industries and the corporation rules supreme. 90% of the populace is employed by, or linked with, Maas, in some capacity, and Shoranan is home to the thriving industrial wing of the corporation, focused on ore processing and manufacturing industries with its products exported throughout the system.

The interior of the Shoranan mountain is a rectangular living space with a pair of ceiling-mounted sun tubes running the length of the upper surface. The space is 900km long, 150km wide and 200km deep. Gravity generators maintain gravity at the base, with a gentle, horizontal axis spin imparted to ensure a constant 90% of standard gravity is maintained, with an up and down orientation. Some portions of the habitat are able to control the gravity field to allow for zero-g pockets necessary for certain, key, industries and recreational pursuits.

Buildings span the length of the interior space and are built against the sides of the hollow, with stepped tiers ascending towards the ceiling. The central floor of the habitat space is dominated by three separate transit systems running the for the entire length of the asteroid's inside. On the port side of the asteroid is the cargo transit system, an enclosed tube that is dedicated to industrial transportation requirements. Its interior is an eight-track MAGLEV high-speed monorail with cargo and industrial stations placed at strategic points, matching to industrial requirements, along its length.



The second transit is of similar size and design but is used for high-speed passenger carriage. The third system is an open, poured concrete highway that runs beside the passenger transit axis and is used for small, personal, vehicles that require local access to different parts of the habitat. A network of access ramps, bridges and underground conduits provide easy access to the domestic, commercial and industrial districts.

Shoranan is arranged into seven administrative bands: two for each of the starports, which dominate either end of the habitat; two industrial zones – one for heavy industry and one for light industry, commercials and services; two habitation zones (premium and ‘standard’ accommodation) and, finally, the Authority zone, which forms the governmental heartland for Shoranan. The delineations for each band are clear, with each being separated by one of five ‘garden parks’ – huge acreages of enclosed parkland offering both recreation and production of crops/foodstuffs.

CIVIL SPACEPORT: ‘NARROWS’

Located at the narrower end of the Shoranan asteroid, the civil spaceport, or Narrows Terminal, as it is known colloquially, is reserved for all civilian and independent space traffic. Its facilities are enclosed within the asteroid shell, with only the approach platforms exposed to vacuum. The landing berths are held behind the immense airlock doors and vessels of greater than 1,000 tons displacement, and all commercial craft, must use the Maas Industries spaceport at the opposite end of the habitat.

Narrows is a Class B spaceport. Its berthing and fuel costs are Cr1,500 for vessels of up to 400 tons, and Cr2,500 for vessels of 400 to 1,000 tons.

Its repair yards are relatively unsophisticated but offer hull maintenance and repairs, general servicing and other, routine tasks. The flight operations, arrival/departure and customs areas run in a narrow band behind the berthing platforms, moving into the Shoranan interior. Narrowstown is the commerce, recreation and accommodation centre, a long, narrow strip of bars, clubs, hotels, flop-houses, brothels, gambling dens, drug-squats and countless seedy dives that have, somehow, managed to escape the attentions of the Authority. Narrowstown has a reputation for seediness and vice with a high petty crime rate that the Maas Security Service struggles to keep in check, despite frequent clean-up operations and occasional clamp-downs on major criminal activity.

Some of the key establishments found in the Narrows spaceport and Narrowstown are as follows:

Narrows Palace Hotel

The foremost hotel serving the Narrows, this upmarket hotel has over 2,000 rooms ranging from the cramped, cheap, overnight cells through to presidential penthouse suits and every price bracket in between. The hotel is operated by Zaderaa Leisure, a Maas subsidiary specialising in hotels and leisure activities. Zaderaa is a corrupt outfit controlled by the extended, insular Zade

GRAV BALL

The most popular sport on the Sonares core worlds and in the habitats, Grav Ball is a contact ballgame played in zero-g between two teams of eleven players. Using jet-packs to manoeuvre, the players must force a 10kg ball into a 1metre-wide goal from inside a scoring zone. Pockets of gravity generators located on the floor of the Grav Ball court introduce random gravity pockets to spice-up the game play.

There are few rules. Punching, kicking, gouging and headbutting are illegal, but blocks, full-body tackles, side-slams and grapples are legal manoeuvres. Grav Ball is fast, aggressive, exhilarating to watch and dangerous to play. Each game lasts for four quarters of 15 minutes each with the team scoring most goals being declared the winner.

Every habitat fields its own team, and it is common for independent teams, comprising of solo Belters and free company members, to compete with the official habitat sides., The Schaeffer League includes all registered teams – professional and amateur – across the entire belt, with fixtures rotating through the habitats of the Clusters and Free Radicals. Maas has a dozen different teams of its own entered into the league, and each habitat has its home side. Even the FRS has a Grav Ball team.

This is a sport that appeals to Belters who are used to controlled aggression and the zero-g environment. Many ex-Belters have become professional Grav Ball players, finding fame and fortune in the Grav Ball arena after failing in the prospecting business.

Betting on Grav Ball games (scores, injuries, player-averages) is illegal on Shoranan, but countless illegal betting operations ensure that there is always an outlet for gambling. Most betting is run through the crime syndicates based in the Narrows but other, small one-man books operate throughout the habitat.

The Shoranan Senators have not enjoyed a good season. Beaten in the last season's semi-finals, they are currently near the bottom of the league. The Vinen Warriors – an independent team of ex-Belters – are the Senators' biggest and most hated rivals, they are currently mid-placed in the league and doing well. Another well known, and largely disliked, team are the Hekates Heroes, a Maas-sponsored team known for their dirty tactics and (reputed) corruption of team officials.

family. It has very close links with the Maas corporate structure, offering hefty, preferential discounts to senior Maas executives. Through a complicated network of front companies and additional subsidiaries, Zadeera controls around 50% of the illegal gambling and prostitution within Narrowstown and employs freelance 'security enforcement' staff to safeguard and police its interests. It maintains its position and shady activity through regular bribes to the Authority directorate responsible for the Narrows spaceport administration and is, effectively, a law unto itself.

Hotel Grange

A reasonably priced and outfitted independent hotel popular with Belters and those who disdain the Zade family on principle. Hotel Grange occupies a long, three tiered strip opposite the main transit terminal outside the Narrows. Its rooms are bland, comfortable affairs appealing to those with a no frills attitude and stretched Credit line. The owners, Grange Associates, are ex-Belters who have tired of the prospecting business and decided to move into the accommodation business; they have a similar establishment on Vinen habitat.

The Underground

Beneath a run-down bar and grill at the far end of the Narrowstown Strip, the Underground is the place for trading illegal commodities. Drugs, weapons, and controlled hard and software is available via its owner. Gerhertz Ekorl, a renegade Maas employee who has a string of false identities and connections within both Maas and the



Authority allowing him to obtain the goods Shoranan habitat tries to keep off the streets. The typical trade price for controlled items is 150% to 200% of the usual market price. Gerhertz asks no questions when entering a deal but only deals with people who are introduced to him via known associates. His contacts and associates range from respectable Maas executives to the low-lives who frequently wander through Narrowstown and have no qualms about taking radical action when it is called for. Gerhertz is not a man to cross.

The Rondella

A three storey nightclub and overpriced drinking establishment with a formidable cadre of prostitutes, erotic dancers and speciality acts performing the bizarre and, sometimes, sickening. Its lower floor is a typical, garishly-lit dancehall and bar with music played at deafening levels. The upper floors are reserved for the speciality entertainments which are conducted on a number of private stages or in closed booths. A suite of fifty private rooms are used for 'individual rendezvous' at a rate of Cr25 per hour (with the cost of the entertainment extra). The Rondella is operated by the Slik sisters, Josetta and Jarence, twins who wear their hair in sculpted Mohawks of complementing colours and have a predatory business style that even the Zade family envies. Most pleasures are available, at a price, in the Rondella, and it attracts everyone from Maas corporates to bored Belters – anyone seeking an illicit thrill and break from the daily grind.

Free Radical Society

A non-descript office and meeting centre close to the starport entrance, the Free Radical Society is an independent association for Belters, solo, free company and corporate, that provides a relaxed atmosphere for socialising, drinking and relaxation. The FRS is open to any Belter with 4 years experience and a current prospecting license (roll Social 7+ to join; further DM of +1 for every term spent as a Belter above the second full term) and functions almost as a gentleman's club. In the various meetings rooms and bars of the FRS's building, members can gather, discuss claims, learn gossip and pick-up private contracts. Membership costs Cr1,000 per year to join, but the various FRS buildings – and there is one on every Schaffer belt habitat – offers reasonable food and drink at reasonable prices and a place for like minded Belters to meet on whatever terms they wish. The Shoranan branch of the FRS is chaired by Anjers Cirtesh, a retired Belter with twenty years experience as a corporate, a solo and a free company member. She is genial, but no-nonsense in her approach, and insists that the FRS on Shoranan is always a civil, courteous place. Anyone abusing the club's rules can be expelled and even face a termination of membership, depending on the transgression.

The FRS is the Belters' equivalent of TAS.

Almost any information relating to the Schaeffer belt and those who work it can be picked-up via the FRS. Sensitive or secretive information requires a Streetwise roll of either 9+, 10+ or 11+, depending on the sensitivity of the information being sought.

CLADE GARDEN PARK

Separating the Narrows from the first habitation district, Clade Garden Park is an enclosed, climate-controlled parkland with woodlands, lakes, outdoor sports, botanical gardens, and many secluded glades offering peace and quiet. Entry is free to all with transit terminals on both the habitation and Narrows sides of its boundary. Like all garden parks, Clade is administered by the Authority and is tended by the Clade Wardens who undertake all park duties from gardening through to organising activity holidays based on the outdoor sports the park offers. The starboard end of the park has a massive zero-g sports park and arena, where the Shoranan Grav Ball team, Shoranan Senators, play their home games.

HABITATION ZONES

The two habitation zones are where the populace of the habitat live.

The first of the two zones is the Standard zone. A plethora of cheap, two and three room apartments and houses offers affordable accommodation (sometimes free, to certain Maas employees) with a relative degree of comfort. Local taxes provide for standard amenities such as garbage removal but end there. Policing is provided by the Authority Security Service, but its presence is limited to routine patrols along the common thoroughfares. The Standard zone is tiered, with better housing in the higher levels, and the level of safety is dependent on the district and level of affluence. It is a cramped, dense area of habitation with the mixture of squalor and ostentation found in any residential city area. Local stores and bars are located in purpose-built blocks serving a district of ten or so streets on each tier.

The second is the Premium zone: a mixture of mid-priced and luxury homes for the affluent and well-to-do. Accommodation is a mixture of styles and sizes, ranging from three or four room detached properties, up to corporate-owned mansions with their own estates. Ranged on tiers on either side of the transit rails, the wealthiest properties are on the upper tiers with the more modest dwellings at the base. Regulated by the Authority, local taxes fund a security service and a maintenance service that provides repairs and so forth free of charge. Taxes are based on the property floor-size with a discount based on number of occupants. The Premium zone is quiet, exclusive, peaceful (on the surface), and a goal for aspirational families living in the Narrows and the Standard zone.

AUTHORITY ZONE

The Authority is the Shoranan Habitat Authority – a semi-elected body responsible for the administration of the habitat. Heavily subsidised by Maas, it has a high Maas-executive presence, along with elected officials from the Narrows and the two habitation zones.

All public amenities and services (garbage processing and recycling, transit system control, and so forth) are based in the spacious

Authority zone buildings, which are often surrounded by their own gardens and parklands.

The Authority is notoriously corrupt – and not always on the Maas side. In any urban environment with a large bureaucracy there are individuals more interested in lining their own pockets than serving the common good. Maas representatives on the Authority council secure corporate interests, but the elected officials are often bought or controlled by people such as the Zade clan from Narrowstown, ensuring that private interests are furthered whenever and however necessary.

The Authority has a police service, the Authority Security Service, which is, naturally, equipped and outfitted by Maas, and is responsible for providing security and law enforcement in the Narrows, Standard habitation zone and the industrial zones. However the service is understaffed, overstretched, and as prone to corruption as any beleaguered institution. Its lack of efficiency contributes to the high levels of crime found in Narrowstown and the Standard habitation zone, and is the reason why the residents of the Premium zone maintain their own security presence. The Authority Security Service is staffed by many who see law enforcement as a way to exercise personal power and muscle – not necessarily those interested in law and order.

INDUSTRIAL ZONES

Both the light and heavy industrial zones are owned and operated by Maas Industries and its subsidiaries. The light zone supports light manufacturing, warehousing, assembly units, service industries (catering, retail outfitters, light vehicle repairs, and so on) whilst



the heavy zone is dedicated to bulk manufacturing, ore refinement, casting, foundry work, major assembly plants and the generation of the power that keeps Shoranan ticking over.

Both zones provide the employment for about 80% of the habitat's populace in one form or another. They are mazes of warehouses, factories, industrial units, office blocks, foundries and assembly yards. Separated from each other by Industry Park (which is, like Clade garden park, covered and climate controlled), this garden park grows food crops to help feed the Shoranan populace. Food processing and production is handled within the light zone.

Naturally, Maas has its extensive base of operations here, a vast arcology of geodesic domes located in the light zone. All Maas activities in the Schaeffer belt are administered from the Maas arcology and the three domes house top secret research and development labs, an entire support and bureaucracy infrastructure, and, effectively, the Maas arcology operates to its own rules and regulations with no interference from the Authority.

As one would expect, the two industrial zones are noisy, functional, intimidating places. Maas focuses on functionality and utility rather than appearance. With the exception of the domed arcology, the Maas industrial buildings are ominous, utilitarian places, wreathed in bright lights and pockets of dense shadow, wrapped in dull steel gantries and gleaming aluminium, chugging, whirring, grinding and belching with whatever it is they are concerned with making or assembling. The industrial centres never sleep: the huge workforce allows for round the clock operations ensuring that Maas continually exceeds its millions of productivity targets.

As a corporation, Maas fits the epitome of the corporate world: immense, overarching, arrogant, profit-driven and, ultimately, faceless and power-hungry. It has its fair share of corruption and ruthless high-end executives, but, by and large, Maas operates with a certain degree of accountability to the Sonares World Authority largely due to the ruinous effect of the Industrial Wars that sundered Sonares and almost wrecked civilisation. Maas is, therefore, a vast, monolithic, hugely competitive industrial combine, but it is not necessarily the kind of evil corporate entity so many megacorporations become. Some of Maas's direct competitors on Sonares, such as Global Systems and Concerns, are far more predatory and immoral in the course of their business activities.

MAAS STARPORT

At the industrial end of the asteroid is the massive Maas Industries spaceport. All commercial traffic with direct dealings with Maas, and vessels of 1,000 tons and above, use this facility, which includes extensive spacecraft berths, repair and serving operations, huge, automated, cargo handling platforms, and its own range of accommodation and servicing facilities.

Every spaceship using the Maas starport for direct Maas dealings has a Maas Liaison Representative assigned to it. The Liaison handles all the administration for the transaction, including arranging

accommodation for the ship's crew, refuelling, routine maintenance and, of course, transfer and payment for cargo. The Liaison officers are expert administrators, bureaucrats, project managers, facilities co-ordinators and, to a lesser extent, advocates. Their priority is to serve Maas interests by ensuring a smooth transaction, no matter how large or small, and to maximise profit, but they also serve as the human face of the corporation. Liaison Representatives take time to get to know those they deal with and regular accounts deal with the same Liaison, often for years, building a healthy (and often productive from both sides) relationship.

Although not as large as the Keneres shipyards, or as well appointed, the Shoranan Maas starport is nevertheless a well equipped, high throughput dock and trading centre. Operations are slick, automated as far as possible, and geared towards a rapid turnaround of cargo and vessels. Delays are resolved as swiftly as circumstances allow, and a good Liaison will have anticipated any likely delays or hiccups and already set the gears of resolution in train before a ship's crew has even had time to disembark. Belters in particular admire and respect this efficiency, irrespective of their feelings towards Maas as a corporate body. Red tape is kept to a minimum (relatively speaking: some deals are still mired in regulations, forms, permissions and licenses), but overall, Maas has a reputation for business-like efficiency that keeps the work of the Schaeffer belt fluid.

Vinen Habitat

Vinen planetoid was mined and hollowed-out by some of the first independent and free company Belters to operate within the Schaeffer belt. The habitat, developed by a combination of Belter and SWA resources, is independent of both SWA and corporate influence but cleaves, politically, towards the former more than the latter.

The planetoid is a roughly squashed oval, almost melon-like in appearance. Its surface is peppered with solar panels and communications equipment, and its interior habitable space is a long, narrow tube, akin to that of Shoranan, but wider and not as lengthy. The habitation space is 500km in length, 286km wide and 200km deep. In the centre is The Lung, the vast greenhouse and parkland that provides Vinen with food and recreation. Habitation and industry is mixed around The Lung, moving outwards and up the walls towards the domed ceiling where eight, squat, sun tubes provide daylight operating to a similar 12 hour nocturnal/diurnal cycle to Shoranan's.

The interior is navigated through the web-like transit system. Transit tunnels circumnavigate the living space and The Lung, with eight shorter branches linking The Lung to the outer perimeter. Like Shoranan, the system carries both domestic and freight traffic in a high-speed MAGLEV pod system that is fast and efficient in its operation. The lateral transit tubes divide Vinen into eight distinct districts, each of which mixes domestic living areas with places of work. Two spaceports are set opposite each other and heavy industry

focuses around these huge docks rather than being arranged in units as is the Shoranan practice.

The habitat is administered by the Vinen Habitat Authority, or the VA as it is known colloquially. Mimicking the bicameral assembly of the Sonares World Assembly, but a bureaucracy based very much on a corporate infrastructure, the VA maintains effective control and representation over the habitat, avoiding the considerable failings and corruption of Shoranan (although the VA is not without its own, internal problems and corruption).

Each district mixes residential, service, recreation and industrial functions, usually within discrete areas within the district's location. Industrial and service facilities are based close to the transit lines whilst residential areas fan out across the rest of the locale. The districts, each named for a Sonaran god, are as follows:

Kahlos

Named for the god of communication and trade, Kahlos is a hub for light industrial manufacturing, entertainment production (movies and tri-vision shows) and for its thriving theatre and performing arts community in the 'downtown' region of the district. The inner residential areas range from the run-down to the exclusive with more affluent properties ranged along the district's arc of The Lung.

Towards the starport-side of the district are scores of hotels, restaurants and stores, varying in quality and price, that serve the starport community.

Severs

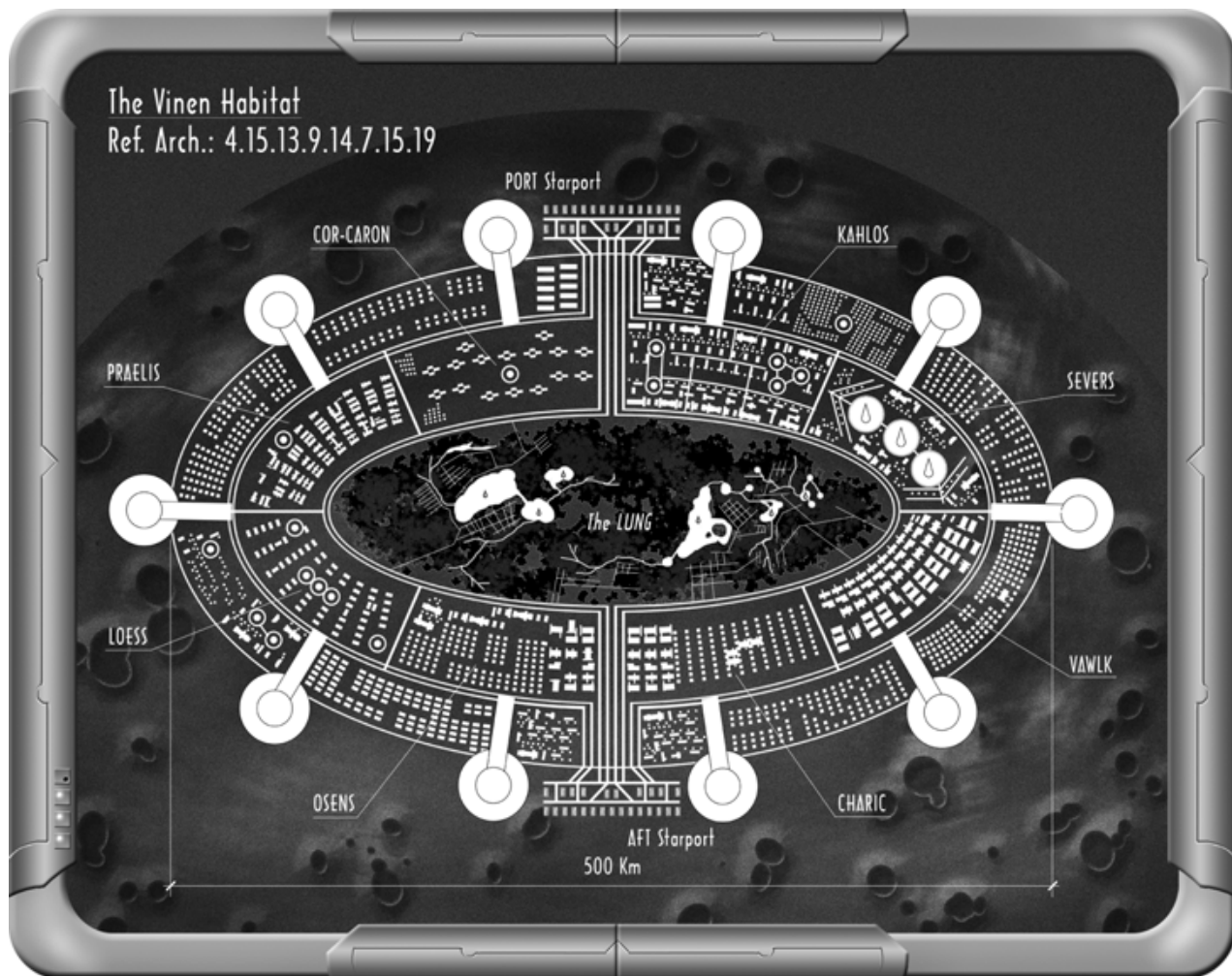
Named for the god of the sea, Severs has several large, deep, artificial lakes, stocked with freshwater fish. Fishing is not done on any form of commercial scale, but small operators do sell their catches in the local Severs markets. Housing is of a common standard and, around the arc of The Lung, food processing plants handle the output of the vast, enclosed fields and crop bays situated within The Lung itself. Severs forms the breadbasket of Vinen habitat with a reputation for excellent produce that fetches a premium when exported outside of the asteroid.

Vawl

Named for the god of volcanoes, Vawl is dominated by heavy industry, primarily smelting, ore processing and metal manufacture. It is also the centre for two or three small ship building and repair companies, specialising in Belter singleships, drones, cargo robots and specialist outfitting. The large capacity transit tubes serving the Vawl district take large items, such as ship hulls or engine units round to leased outfitting bays at the starport straddling Charic and Osens where assembly occurs.

Charic

Named for the goddess of knowledge, Charic is a mixed district of private and VA-owned accommodation units, apartment blocks, tenements, office and warehouse units, and medium to heavy



industries related to Belt activities. The Lothrain Free Company, which features heavily in the scenarios section, is based in Charic, close to the starport end of the transit network.

Osens

Named for the god of the sky, Osens district is, like Charic, a mixed and diverse region, but is characterised by the huge veins of blue apatite that run through the walls of the district and up into the ceiling, creating a bluish infusion. With the help of strategically placed lighting, the apatite is illuminated to give the impression of space. The industry of Osens is focused on mineral processing, particularly fine precious and semi-precious minerals such as gemstones. Some of the finest jewellery in the Sonara system is the work of the Osens jewellers occupying the Quartz Quarter of the district, close to where the veins of apatite emerge from the rock below.

Loess

Named for the goddess of love and friendship, Loess district is noted for its high-class clubs, restaurants, bars and 'recreation centres' (brothels) in its circular entertainment zone, at the

district's heart. The district is ostentatious: those with money to burn on Vinen burn it in Loess. The rich villas and mansions built into the curving tiers of the arc wall are the preserve of well-to-do independents, Sonares celebrities, and those who have struck it rich not through prospecting, but through the manufacturing and production industries.

Praelis

Named for the goddess of healing, the Praelis district is, again, mixed, but with a heavy focus on independent scientific and medical research. The huge, ziggurat-like Praelis-Vinen hospital is the main medical centre for the whole of the habitat. It has a formidable reputation that has attracted scientists, doctors and consultants from around the system. Many medics who work on Sonares I or II spend an internship at Praelis-Vinen as part of their training, studying zero-g conditions, stellar radiation, and a variety of other conditions those living in simulated gravity and low-g environments are susceptible to developing.

Praelis is also home to a number of secret, independent, scientific institutes that are investigating a host of technologies, many with

THE VINEN FREE COMPANIES

Several free companies of prospectors and in-system cargo operators are based on Vinen habitat. Lothrain Free Company (LFC) is foremost, and the target of some malicious jealousy from others, owing to LFC's strong connections with Maas, but most have to do business with Maas Industries in one shape or another, and so this jealousy is somewhat disingenuous.

Free companies are the ideal starting point for Beltstrike characters. They provide a stable framework for employment in prospecting and other areas of belt work, offer access to ships, and engage in the exploitation of the Schaeffer belt outside the corporate strictures. LFC is the employer in the scenarios that follow, but other free companies, all based on Vinen, are as follows:

Free Company Name	Vinen District	Notes
Hezeera	Kahlos	A small company with three ships and ten employees. Specialises in prospecting within the Spindrift and Vinen radicals. Very jealous of LFC's success.
Vinen Radical Free Company	Osens	Five wealthy entrepreneurs set-up this free company as an outlet for their cash and interest in adventure amongst the belt. Moderately successful in terms of finds and trading, but focused on finding exotics and high-price mineral yields. Owns a 400-ton trader: Brilliant Gem
Schard Transport	Loess	Owning two 400-ton traders, Schard deals in transport within the Free Radicals of the belt, with a little prospecting work thrown-in for good measure. A high-turnover of staff recently means it is looking for good pilots and ship crews.
Marantz Company	Kahlos	Dedicated to prospecting and engaging in high-risk ventures, especially in unexplored parts of the belt. Owns a single, 800-ton modified cruiser (see page 127 of the Traveller rules), outfitted for long-term prospecting and mining.

secret backing from the SWA. Research into FTL technology, psionics, and phased weapon technology find a good home in Praelis district, away from the prying eyes of the corporations. Nevertheless, the research conducted in Praelis is of considerable interest to Maas and others, and industrial espionage is a constant threat, especially concerning FTL technology. Whichever side masters its first – SWA or corporate – will be in a position of supreme political, technological, and political power.

Cor-Caron

Named for the god of Justice, Cor-Caron is the district where the VA has its administration centralised. Its formal streets, walkways and administrative blocks reek of central government, but the VA administration, being wholly democratic, is far more relaxed than either the SWA or the struggling Authority of Shoranan habitat. Every district of Vinen elects eight members to the VA senate and sixteen members to the Hall of Representatives. Policy for Vinen is

made in the latter and ratified by the former. The VA also elects a figurehead president, who acts as envoy for the Free Radical clusters and carries some voice in the SWA administration in Sonares Prime. The current president is Vahrena Masq, an accomplished advocate and career politician who has lived in several Schaeffer habitats over the years and is well-versed in the needs and agendas this special environment requires.

VINEN STARPORTS

The twin starports of Vinen are both class B installations, and privately controlled by Vinen Spacefaring Holdings, a subsidiary of the private starport interest that operates three Sonares Prime starports. The two starports on Vinen share a similar design, but the port starport is devoted to passenger and light haulage traffic whereas the aft starport is focused on industrial and prospecting traffic.

The docking bays are external with light shuttles and cargo robots used to ferry passengers and goods into the pressurised area. Each starport operates a string of hotels, bars and other necessary functions for through-passengers. Servicing, maintenance and essential repairs for ships are available at both starport, as is processed fuel.

FREE RADICAL SOCIETY

The Free Radical Society's base of operations is Vinen habitat, in the Kahlos district. Its offices are impressive and include the best club section out of any of the FRS's extensive network. Branch clubs of the FRS are located in Charic and Osens districts; again, well appointed and open to all FRS members.

THE LUNG

The enormous market garden and parkland known as The Lung dominates the floor of the habitat. Its transparent dome visible for many kilometres. Within its 15,000 square kilometre, climate controlled interior, The Lung supports lush, pleasant parkland, artificial lakes and rivers, and, at its starboard end, vast market gardens dedicated to growing cereal crops and vegetables using a variety of different techniques to compensate for the deficiencies in the soil and the unique conditions of a low-gravity environment. Production is intensive and strictly controlled by the Vinen Market Garden Board, but enough is produced to support the habitat's residents, with a small amount available for export across the belt and to the core worlds.



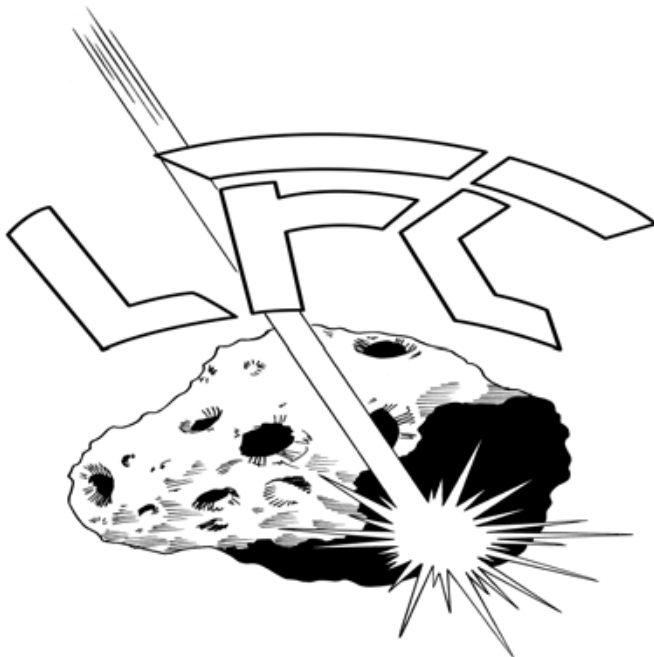
THE FACTORY

This is the first scenario in the Beltstrike Campaign. It introduces the Lothrain Free Company which can be used as a handy entry point for either new Belter characters, created using the earlier chapters, or for existing characters needing a way into the campaign. As an alternative, the non-player characters that figure as part of the Lothrain Free Company can be used as player characters: full statistics and biographies are given for each major Lothrain player.

As the first chapter of the campaign this scenario sets the background for the adventures that follow. Each adventure is linked in some way to form a campaign arc, or they can be used as stand alone scenarios that are dropped into an ongoing campaign with other adventures inserted between the chapters.

LOTHRRAIN FREE COMPANY

Founded twenty year ago by Haro Lothrain, the Lothrain Free Company has prospered through a combination of astute investments, luck, and Haro's exceptional business acumen. Lothrain employs twenty five Belters from the Sonara system and has a reputation for being a fair, if strict, employer that enjoys good relations with the wider corporate world. Whilst its success as a belt mining company has been adequate, Haro's ability to invest and speculate creatively has led to financial security and continued success in the mining and haulage fields. Lothrain operates a fleet of six craft, ranging from the standard Belter Seeker singleships up to larger vessels capable of mining and transporting throughout the Schaeffer belt. The company's single biggest investment is just about to be realised: after three years of negotiation and legal wrangling, Lothrain is on the verge of completing the purchase of a 5,000 ton mining platform that would, otherwise, be decommissioned and left to the rigours of vacuum.



Base and Location

Lothrain Free Company (LFC hereafter) is based in the Vinen Habitat of the Vinen Radical. Its office complex is a low-key building nestled in the jumble of similar structures close to the port area of Charic District; non-descript and unassuming, the LFC logo (a laser drill superimposed over an oval asteroid with the LFC letters arcing above it) attached to the entry-com buzzer is all there is to advertise LFC's presence. The building is simple enough: offices for Haro Lothrain, Jenna Marcuro and Desna Greer; a boardroom/meeting room, IT room, storage lockers and a reception area. The decor is slightly shabby and highly functional – as befits Belter sensibilities.

LFC's employees spend most of their time either aboard the ships LFC owns or out in the field. Once a month Haro convenes a team meeting which all habitat-present personnel are expected to attend and this is where he runs through current assignments, the company's commercial outlook and any other news he cares to share with his staff.

The LFC Fleet

The LFC fleet consists of the following eight ships:

LFC-101 ('Rockhound') – 100 ton Seeker equipped for a crew of two.

LFC-102 ('Spindrift') – 100 ton Seeker singleship

LFC-104 ('Comet Chaser') - 100 ton Seeker equipped for a crew of two

LFC-201 ('The Free Radical') – 200 ton Free Trader type A (no Jump drive. Cargo capacity increased to 98 tons)

LFC-202 ('Mistress of Enterprise') – same configuration as LFC-201

LFC-401 ('Master of Enterprise') – 400 ton Subsidised Merchant, Type R (no Jump drive. Cargo capacity increased to 220 tons)

When not out in the belt, LFC maintains docking, repair and servicing facilities with the Vinen Habitat Port Authority and has dedicated berths for each of its craft.

Operations

If LFC had focused solely on mining the belt it would have gone bankrupt within a few years. Instead LFC both prospects and hauls general cargo from Sonares I and II into and across the various Schaeffer Belt clusters. Prospecting is still the LFC's core business, but the cargo business is substantial and Haro and Jenna have been very canny in the contracts they have picked, enabling them to maintain profitability in a business where debt is the norm.

LFC maintains excellent relations with Maas Industries. Haro Lothrain was a senior prospector with Maas for twelve years before becoming independent, and this positioned LFC well for working on Maas tenders and assignments. Several lucrative strikes sealed

LFC's reputation as prospectors of excellence and led to both Maas prospecting contracts and haulage assignments.

In the past three years LFC has stuck rigidly to its haulage and cargo business. Only one or two prospecting forays into the Chlaer Radical have been mounted (none of them profitable) and otherwise costs have been strictly controlled. Some of the hardened Belter employees of LFC have become frustrated with this conservative direction and the company has lost four or five of its prospectors who have either gone solo, joined another Free Company or got out of Belting altogether.

The reason for this circumspection is due to the negotiations Haro has been involved in for the purchase of the redundant mining platform Maas is releasing. No other Free Company has its own platform and the purchase affords LFC a significant, if costly, competitive advantage. LFC's priorities are therefore to commission the platform, move it from its present location in the Mhajejr Cluster, and commence some serious, long-range prospecting in the Chlaer Radical.

LFC PERSONNEL

LFC is controlled by Haro Lothrain, Jenna Marcuro and Desna Greer. Haro is the CEO, Jenna the Finance Officer and Desna the Head of Operations. Haro established LFC after leaving Maas and managed to lure Jenna and Desna away from their relatively stable Maas company positions with a tempting share scheme. The three of them form the LFC board and they are responsible for all decisions and undertakings. It is known that Haro also has a number of advisers – all ex-Belters or Maas officers – who provide ad-hoc guidance, but their names are unknown and they have no board presence. This secretive advice is, most LFC employees speculate, what has made the company as profitable as it is.

Haro Lothrain

Tall and stocky with a mane of luxuriant grey hair, Haro Lothrain has spent his life as a Belter. Born on Sonarese Prime 56 years ago, he began his career as a trainee prospector with Maas and subsequently worked his way up through the Prospecting Directorate having secured several very lucrative claims for the company in the Mhajejr and Paradaen Clusters. His talents did not just lie in prospecting: Haro proved himself to be an excellent project manager and administrator with an acute business brain. Had he stayed with Maas a senior board position would have been almost guaranteed.

His resignation from Maas was unexpected and not without controversy. He resigned on the eve of what became known as the Skillern Fix – a clandestine attempt by Maas to extend its operations into the Free Radicals of the Schaeffer belt through a series of cleverly established front companies and solo operators. No one has accused Haro of being involved in the Skillern Fix (its name coming from the scheme's chief architect, the Legal Vice President Ansul Skillern) but it is widely believed that Haro knew



of it and may have assisted Skillern in some of its logistics. The subsequent Sonares World Assembly investigation caused several high-ranking Maas officers to lose their jobs, with Skillern and two others facing hefty legal proceedings. Skillern killed himself on the eve of his sentencing, which would have seen him sent to prison for at least fifteen years for corporate fraud. Two of his accomplices, Cam Larno and Madris Fhaerun, were convicted and served eight years apiece for their complicity in the fraud. The senior officers in Maas escaped censure.

Haro went solo for a year before establishing the Lothrain Free Company. His first solo strikes netted him substantial revenue and allowed him to buy outright LFC-201. Without debt and with a solid independent reputation, he engaged Jenna Marcuro and Desna Greer from Maas – two people he had worked with extensively before leaving the corporation. Since then, LFC has gone from strength to strength, a combination of Haro's capabilities and Jenna and Desna's own astute business brains.

Haro is a complex man. He is forthright, prone to bouts of anger when he does not get his own way, and not always the most diplomatic of people to deal with. He has an eye for human weakness and knows how to exploit it. That said, he is also a man of considerable integrity and is extremely loyal to those who contribute 100% to LFC's success. He does not skimp on paying bonuses or ensuring the welfare of his employees.

He has not prospected himself for several years, preferring to engage himself in the running of LFC's business affairs from the Vinen Habitat rather than taking off into the belt. He has a penthouse

suite in the Gharenon Tower apartment complex in Vinen Habitat but spends the majority of his time at the LFC office or travelling to meet with business colleagues and prospective customers. When he travels to either the core worlds or other belt habitats, he takes LFC-104, Comet Chaser, preferring the Spartan style of a belt-configured ship to the more luxurious accommodation of commercial passenger ships.

Jenna Marcuro

A financial maestro, Jenna Marcuro is in her early 40s, slight of build, with auburn, bob-cut hair and attractive, wide, grey-green eyes. Figures are her forte and she served as a senior financial officer with Maas for a decade before leaving to join LFC. She is considered an expert in Belt economics and trade strategies and was personally responsible for engineering Maas's 18% increase in profitability in a two-year period.

She left Maas because she was becoming increasingly unhappy with the corporation's financial strategy – even though she was influential in its formation. Boardroom back-stabbing was creating a very unhealthy atmosphere which Jenna wanted to distance herself from; when Haro Lothrain asked her to consider becoming LFC's Finance Officer, in return for a 20% stake in the company, she readily accepted.

It is possible that Haro and Jenna are lovers. They are certainly close friends and share a certain intimacy that is a constant source of speculation – not least because Jenna's marriage of eight years collapsed a year or so after she joined LFC. Her husband, a senior researcher with Maas, was clearly unhappy with the risk Jenna had taken in joining LFC and returned to the Shoranan Habitat to resume his career.



Jenna is easy company; witty, astute and with a ready laugh, she also has an acerbic sense of humour quite fitting for Belter company. She maintains rigid control over LFC's finances, knowing precisely what the company can (and cannot) afford and ensuring that its financial direction always trends towards strength. It was her advice for the LFC to rein-in its prospecting activities for the past three years whilst Haro sought the purchase of the mining platform. It is her belief that, whilst the platform is a very costly asset and financial risk, it is the key to LFC being able to expand rapidly in the course of the next five years.

Desna Greer

In her late forties, with a stocky, unfeminine build, Desna was, like Haro, a Maas prospector of noted success. Very much a maverick, she was noted for her impetuosity which was, fortunately, tamed after she found herself in difficulties whilst surveying an asteroid that promised a very healthy yield of radioactives. The accident left her badly scarred down the left hand side of her body, but the injury served as a sobering influence and Desna became an operations director within Maas noted for her uncanny ability to bring mining projects in on-time and below budget without comprising either safety or efficiency.



She joined LFC shortly after Jenna's recruitment, seeking an opportunity to return to direct operations management that contained the kind of edge she had enjoyed during her earlier years. Her talents have been fully exploited by Haro and she is now responsible for all logistical co-ordination of LFC's prospecting and haulage contracts. As a hands-on manager she ensures she surrounds herself with the best staff for a particular job and is responsible for all the hiring within LFC. The purchase of the mining platform is music to her ears: the challenge of recommissioning 5,000 tons of mining rig, and putting it solely to LFC's use is precisely her forte and as the closing of the deal with Maas nears, her excitement at getting the project underway is palpable.

LFC PERSONNEL - STATISTICS

Haro Lothrain	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 56	Belter 5 Citizen 4	7	6	8	11	9	8

Pilot-1, Zero-G-1, Prospecting-2, Vacc Suit-1, Astrogation-1, Trade (Belt Commodities)-2, Admin-1, Broker-1, Gun Combat-0
Penthouse suite in Vinen Habitat, Cr3.3 million in personal wealth, 60% shareholder in Lothrain Free Company

Jenna Marcuro	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 43	Citizen (Corporate Officer) 6	6	8	8	12	10	8

Advocate-1, Admin-2, Broker-2, Trade (Finance & Commerce)-2, Computers-0,
Vinen Habitat apartment, Cr1.1 million personal wealth, 20% shareholder in LFC

Desna Greer	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 47	Belter 6	10	6	9	9	8	7

Pilot-1, Prospecting-3, Astrogation-2, Zero-G-2, Gun Combat-2, Broker-1
Vinen Habitat apartment, Cro.9 million personal wealth, 15% shareholder in LFC

Farno Capiros	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 40	Belter 4	6	8	8	10	10	7

Pilot (spacecraft)-3, Mechanic-2, Vacc Suit-2, Comms-1, Gunnery (Turret)-1, Engineer (M-Plant)-2 Engineer (Life Support)-1, Melee (unarmed)-1
Toolkit, Snub Pistol (3d6-3)

Galen Bherendt	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 36	Belter 2	6	8	5	7	7	4

Pilot (Spacecraft)-1, Remote Operations-1, Vacc Suit-0, Zero-G-0, Gun Combat-0, Sensors-1, Gambler-1
Toolkit, playing cards, Snub Pistol (3d6-3)

Druhk Xeren	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 42	Navy (Engineer) 3	6	9	7	10	11	8

Mechanic-1, Vacc Suit-2, Engineer (Electronics)-2, Engineer (M Drive)-1, Comms-1, Computers-1
Toolkit, Hand Computer, Geiger Counter

Marsa Aloven	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 37	Scholar (Scientist)	5	7	7	12	13	9

Admin-0, Computers-2, Engineer (electronics)-1, Medic-2, Science (Minerals and Ores)-2, Science (Astronomy)-1
Hand Computer, Medical Kit

Desna is, like most Belters, blunt and forthright. She is not, unlike Haro, quick to anger, but she says what she thinks and makes no effort to hide her displeasure over something that runs contrary to her plans or wishes. This makes her intimidating to work with, especially for those who have had limited experience with hard-bitten belters, but her competence and attention to detail is never in question and she is precisely the kind of person essential to lead a free company operation.

These three are the directors of LFC. Of the operational staff, there are some 25 individuals, all Belters, and all with varying degrees of operational expertise. Notable staff are as follows:

Farno Capiros

And experienced belt pilot and the usual pilot for LFC-201, 202 and 401. Of typical Belter stock: quiet, safety conscious and used to the rigours of belt prospecting loneliness

Galen Bherendt

The second of LFC's pilots, an a much livelier character than Farno, Galen is a decent pilot but also an inveterate gambler with a particular love for Nine Card Whist, a cardgame popular in the Vinen Habitat.

Druhk Xeren

LFC's senior technician and engineer, Maas-trained but with no liking for the corporation nor loyalty to it. Druhk is most at home with machines and equipment; he finds human company unedifying and tedious.

Marisa Aloven

Marisa is one of LFC's scientists and medics. She was trained in the Sonarese World Assembly's Science and Research directorate, moving to the Belt five years ago to take up her current position with LFC. She is straight-talking and passionate about her work, but a compassionate individual when someone, or something, secures and holds her interest.

Additional LFC Characters

The player characters fulfil the roles of additional LFC employees, but the remaining team consists of prospectors, technicians, a pilot or two, and security personnel. The Sample Non-Player Characters found in the Traveller rules, pages 84 and 85, can be used for ad-hoc NPC statistics, with the following character types being particularly useful to fulfil LFC personnel requirements:

- Security Officer 1*
- Technician*
- Crewman*
- Belter*
- Trader*

As the way with Traveller characters, someone may suspect that Haro is not telling the complete truth. Any attempts to detect economy with the facts (such as a Deception skill check, or Life Sciences (Psychology), comes-up blank. Haro does not seem to be hiding anything.

BRIEFING

*Vinen Habitat
LFC Offices Briefing Room*

The characters have been summoned to a meeting at the LFC offices. Haro Lothrain, Jenna Marcuro and Dresna Greer are present, along with Druhk Xeren and Marisa Aloven, if the characters do not include either engineering or science expertise.

Haro leads the briefing and opens by calling up a holographic map of part of one of Schaeffer belt's clusters. The on-image co-ordinates show that this is one of the corporate controlled clusters bordering on the edge of a free radical area of the belt. As Haro talks, the map zooms into a particular asteroid. 'As you know, we have been in lengthy negotiations with Maas to secure the purchase of a mining platform that the corporation finds is surplus to requirements. This map shows its location; the edge of Mhajejr Cluster bordering the Chlaer Radical.

'Negotiations are nearing completion and LFC has secured permission to conduct the first pre-purchase survey of the platform in readiness for the contract exchange. I'm assigning you to this task. We need a thorough check-through of the platform, including structural assessments, engineering assessments and a full inventory of vital repairs. This will help us secure the final price for the acquisition, and I am expecting to negotiate a healthy discount on the asking price. The platform has been derelict for four years; it is also old, so I'm expecting to buy something of a relic, but one that we can salvage and make operable. Once the survey has been completed and the contract signed, we can start the real work – getting the platform working again and detaching it from its current rock so we can move it into Chlaer Radical and start some serious prospecting and mining work.'

Haro takes questions; some answers to likely questions are below.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PLATFORM'S CONDITION?

It reached the end of its useful life a decade ago but was kept online for a further six years to be used as a research outpost. It hasn't mined a thing in ten years. Maas reports say it is in 'need of attention', so we can expect damage and neglect across just about every aspect of its structure.

HOW LONG DO WE HAVE TO CONDUCT THE SURVEY?

From Vinen to the edge of Mhajejr is a one week trip. Once there, you have up to three weeks to conduct the survey. With the return trip the whole exercise is five weeks.

WHAT RESOURCES DO WE HAVE?

You'll take 'Master of Enterprise'. She'll be equipped with engineering sensors, repair equipment, and all the supplies you'll need for 5 weeks. We have the schematics for the platform and these will be loaded into the ship's library, along with engineering manuals for a rig of this size. Remember; this is a survey and assessment, not a repair mission.

ANY SURPRISES COURTESY OF MAAS?

There shouldn't be. This is a functional mining rig that simply reached the end of its shelf-life. Maas can either write-it off as scrap or make some money on its sale – which is the better alternative all-round. I'm not expecting you to come across anything untoward. The far edge of Mhajejr Cluster is all-but mined out, so all we need to do is survey the rig, buy it, and then move it to somewhere profitable for us.

DOES THIS HULK HAVE A NAME?

Its Maas designation is Mining Platform AM90125. We will call it 'The Factory' for now. I'm open to any suggestions for a suitable name once you've surveyed it.

The characters have a day to prepare for the mission. Navigation codes are loaded into the astrogation systems for the Master of Enterprise and the supplies into the hold; the characters are expected to assist with these preparations. If the crew for this mission lacks any of the engineering and survey requirements, then add Druhk Xeren and Marisa Aloven to the crew mix. If the characters lack any piloting skill, then Galen Bherendt takes the helm.

Once completed, final pre-flight checks are carried out and Master of Enterprise is cleared for launch and its run to The Factory.

MASTER OF ENTERPRISE

The largest ship in the LFC fleet, *Master of Enterprise* is a modified 400 ton Subsidised Merchant. The Low Berths have been converted into an additional stateroom, boosting its 'in comfort' passenger capacity to 14 staterooms. Its two forward turrets are mounted with pulse lasers calibrated for drilling, and the hold carries two survey drones and a cargo drone.

Master of Enterprise offers travel in relative comfort for a Belter ship. As it is primarily a cargo hauler, any luxuries found in a typical stateroom have been stripped back to the basics, but the entire party of characters will be travelling to The Factory in greater comfort, and with more space, than they might be used to in, say, a Seeker or singleship.

However she is a working ship, and there is a maintenance routine to be conducted throughout the voyage, including cleaning, general maintenance checks and tweaks and the occasional repair.

VINEN TO THE FACTORY

The safest course to reach the Mhajejr Cluster is to circuit Vinen Radical and head into uncluttered space, letting the astrogation systems take control for the bulk of the journey. At Thrust 1 and constant acceleration Master of Enterprise reaches the Mhajejr Cluster just inside a week including a deceleration period. Once inside the Cluster the ship's pilot needs to rely on both the

astrogation systems and his own readings to bring the ship into the vicinity of the Factory's location.

The journey itself can be as eventful as Referees wish to make it. The edges of the asteroid belt clusters are not noted for dense populations and there is no Maas Belter activity this far out; so the outward journey should be uneventful.

Approach to the Factory

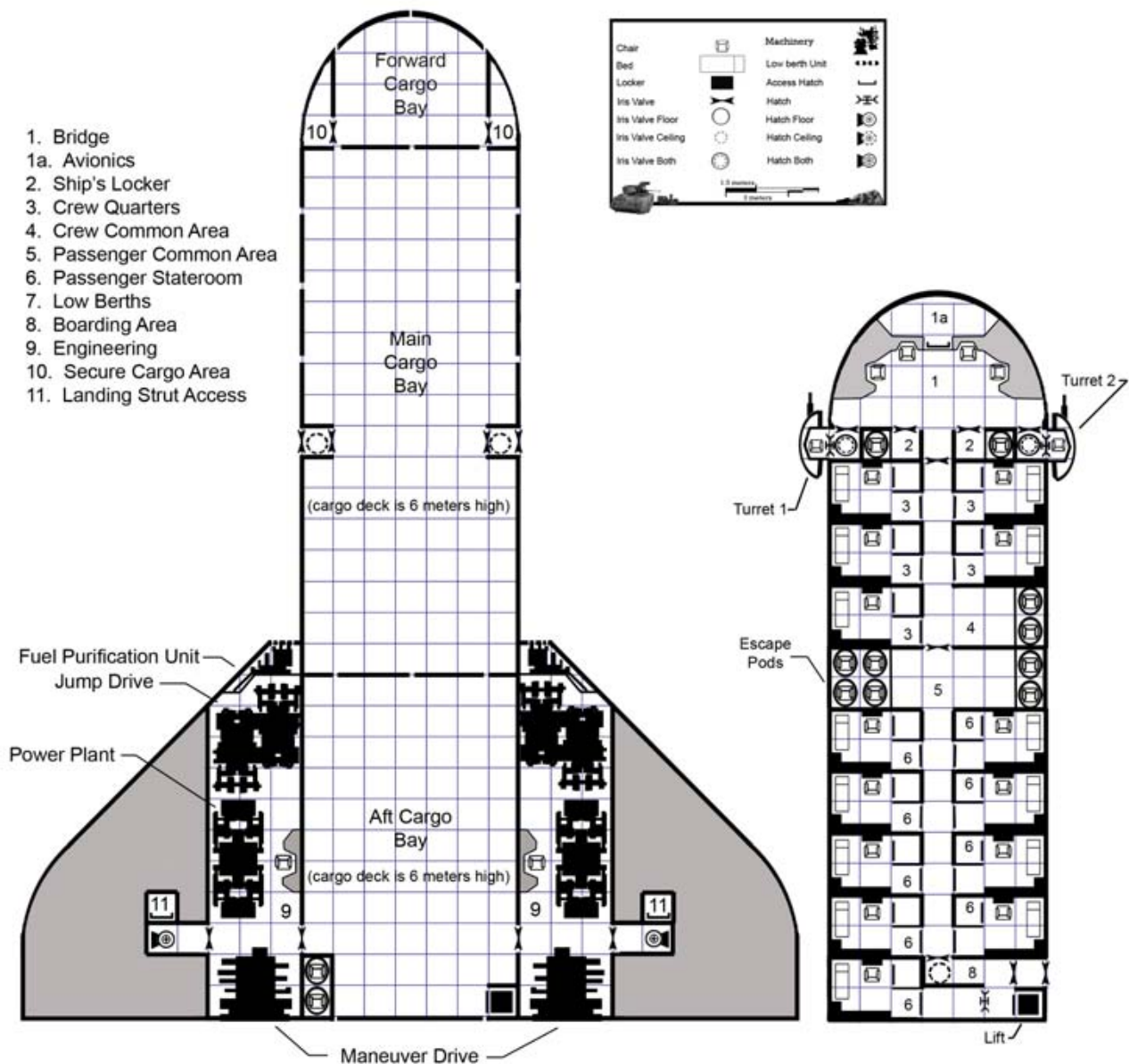
Mining Platform AM90125 is anchored to a 1200-metres radius M-class rock designated MM6AE-90125. It takes 4 watches to survey the planetoid, if the characters are interested in doing so, and scans reveal that only scant, worthless traces of nickel iron remain within the rocky shell. As Haro said in the briefing, the mining platform has reached the end of its shelf-life.

The platform itself is a two-tiered rig attached to the surface of MM6AE-90125 by a standard gravitic locking web: essentially a series of grav plates and self-driving locking bolts that penetrate the surface of the planetoid and keep the platform in-situ.

It takes 1 watch to fully survey the Factory from the ship, drifting around the structure using controlled thrust (Pilot 8+. If the roll fails then extend the length of the watch by 30 minutes for every point the roll is failed by as the plot struggles to maintain a stable and smooth approach trajectory). To carry out a successful, superficial assessment the exterior one of the characters needs to make an Engineering roll of 8+. For each point above 8 the character learns the following about the outside of the rig.

Roll Result	Information
8	The exterior of the rig seems to be structurally sound, but with light, incidental damage from wear and tear on various parts of the superstructure
9	The main docking bay for the platform is open: one would normally expect it to be sealed shut if the rig is not in use.
10	The mining laser drills have been obviously removed when Maas left, but the mounting rigs, which should be present, according to the schematics Maas have provided, have also been taken
11	Some form of power source is active in the rig itself: very low level, but the platform should be completely powered down.
12	Trace sensor readings for area pick-up the kind of ionisation patterns normally associated with a Manoeuvre drive.

If the survey roll of the Factory failed then the characters note only minor external wear and tear but nothing out of the ordinary.



CUCKOOS IN THE NEST?

At the Referee's option the Factory is inhabited by a small, yet tenacious group, of renegade freebooters/pirates. Having mounted several small, but violent raids on ships around the Sonara system, these thugs have taken themselves into the Schaeffer belt to hide from the authorities. They stumbled across the Factory by lucky accident several months ago and have used the platform to effect essential repairs to their ship (a 200 ton Type A Free Trader) and lie low whilst planning their next sortie.

The pirates have used the mounting rigs for the laser drills for hull and internal structural repairs, and to graft a crude disguise onto the outer hull. They lack the facilities and expertise to effect any repairs on the rig itself and are far too selfish to do anything but concentrate on their own ship, which sustained damage in a firefight with a vessel they were attempting to raid. The pirates are wanted by the Sonares World Assembly, carrying a Cr500,000 bounty on their miserable heads and they are not about to let themselves be captured.

They are eight in total and a combination of failed Belters and career space-lanes criminals. If the characters check the ship's library archives for news on piracy between Sonares I and II, they will find news service reports on six relatively recent raids on small vessels, each accompanied by violence and death, undertaken by a crew piloting a 200 ton Free Trader.

Pirates

Pirate	Role	Stats, Skills and Weapons
1	Captain/Leader	Str 9, Dex 7, End 10, Int 8, Edu 8, Soc 5 Athletics-1, Gun Combat (slug pistol)-2, Melee (unarmed)-1, Leadership-2, Recon-1, Comms-1, Vacc Suit-1 Autopistol (3d6-3), Cloth armour (5)
2	Pilot	Str 5, Dex 7, End 6, Int 11, Edu 9, Soc 6 Pilot (spacecraft)-1, Pilot (small ships)-1, Computers-1, Comms-1, Sensors-1, Gun Combat (slug pistol)-1, Vacc Suit-1 Snub Pistol (3d6-3), Cloth armour (5)
3	Technician	Str 8, Dex 6, End 7, Int 9, Edu 10, Soc 5 Mechanics-1, Engineering-2, Science (electronics)-1, Science (physics)-2, Gun Combat (slug pistol)-0, Melee (unarmed)-1, Vacc Suit-0 Body Pistol (3d6-3), Flak Jacket (4)
4	Thug	Str 8, Dex 7, End 9, Int 5, Edu 6, Soc 7 Athletics (co-ordination)-1, Gun Combat (slug pistol)-1, Recon-1, Melee (blade)-2, Streetwise-1, Vacc Suit-1 Autopistol (3d6-3), Dagger (1d6+2), Flak Jacket (4)
5	Thug	Str 8, Dex 8, End 11, Int 6, Edu 6, Soc 4 Gun Combat (slug pistol)-2, Melee (blade)-1, Streetwise-2, Leadership-1, Stealth-1, Deception-1, Vacc Suit-0 Snub Pistol (3d6-3), Dagger (1d6+2), Cloth armour (5)
6	Thug	Str 6, Dex 10, End 9, Int 9, Edu 8, Soc 7 Gun Combat (slug pistol)-1, Gun Combat (Slug Rifle)-1, Melee (blade)-1, Streetwise-1, Stealth-1, Vacc Suit-0 Body Pistol (3d6-3), Assault Rifle (3d6), Dagger (1d6+2), Cloth armour (5)
7	Thug	Str 11, Dex 5, End 6, Int 7, Edu 8, Soc 6 Gun Combat (slug pistol)-1, Gun Combat (Slug Rifle)-0, Melee (blade)-3, Streetwise-1, Vacc Suit-1 Body Pistol (3d6-3), Assault Rifle (3d6), Dagger (1d6+2), Flak Jacket (4)
8	Thug	Str 7, Dex 12, End 7, Int 8, Edu 5, Soc 6 Gun Combat (slug pistol)-3, Streetwise-2, Stealth-1, Deception-2, Vacc Suit-0 Snub Pistol (3d6-3), Flak Jacket (4)

The pirates are ruthless and determined. Their strategy, once the Master of Enterprise has either set-down or docked in some way, is to overwhelm the crew and take the ship. Anyone who gets in their way is expendable and they have no qualms about killing. For them, the characters' ship is the major prize: their own is marked and damaged; a 400-ton vessel like a Trader will make an excellent replacement and, because it carries registered system permission codes, allows them to pass through all kinds of territories unchallenged.

If the chances of taking the Master of Enterprise are limited, the pirates disperse around the mining platform in groups of two or three, waiting in ambush to capture or kill anyone who comes searching. They have had plenty of time to learn the mining rig's layout and can easily find excellent ambush spots that the characters will be unaware of until too late. The pirates may opt to capture and use a character or two as a hostage in order to secure the Master of Enterprise. These might be thugs and murdering lowlifes, but they are devious and know a good angle when they see it.

If Referees opt to use the pirates as part of the scenario, there is no question that they must be neutralised before the characters can continue their assignment. Of course, the easiest option would be to return to Vinen Habitat and alert the authorities, but by the time anyone can return to the Factory the pirates will be long-gone. And, in an attempt to prevent the alarm from being raised, the pirates will pursue in their own ship, firing upon the Master of Enterprise, attempting either to disable, board and capture her, or blow her out of space.

The pirates' ship is a 200 ton Free trader Type A conforming to the standard deckplans provided on page 117 of the Traveller rules. Its port turret is mounted with a Beam Laser (2d6) and the starboard turret with a Missile Rack housing six Basic Missiles (1d6). The ship is in a poor state of repair and should be treated as having Hull 3 and Structure 3.

THE FACTORY

The Factory is of an old, but standard mining platform design based on 5,000 tons displacement (see page 57). All essential and salvageable equipment has been removed by Maas prior to the abandonment of the facility, leaving behind the superstructure, electrics, life support systems, powerplant and M drive in situ, but deactivated and hard-coded against re-activation without the correct computer codes (which will be provided on completion of the sale to LFC). The platform's computer system is in place but has been reformatted leaving only the major system programs (life support, power control, fire control, and so on) in hard memory. The platform is therefore very much a shell but, with work, can be brought back online and made functional again, at some expense.

Assessing the Factory

The characters have no alternative but to make their way through the platform floor by floor, room by room to assess it thoroughly. Vacc Suits are essential and without working gravitics, they must work in low gravity (the planetoid has a GF of 0.03).

A floorplan for the Factory and a level by level key is provided. However, several general hazards will be encountered as the characters move through the structure. Zero G rolls are necessary every hour. 8+ is required, with the Dex modifier being applied as a positive DM, to avoid meeting with a hazard from the Hazards Table, below. If moving carefully and taking time to avoid such problems the skill roll should be considered as Easy, with a +4 DM, however if a character is unable to take his time and be careful during this period (if having to run for cover whilst a pirate shoots at him, for example) then this positive DM is lost for that hour as the task will be considerably more difficult.

FACTORY HAZARDS

Roll	Hazard
2	Fall, collision or other catastrophe ruptures Vacc Suit or life support. Character sustains 1D damage.
3	Fall or collide with solid object if a Zero G roll of 8+ is failed. Sprain or pulled muscle halves what the character for the next 1D watches. Suffer a -2 DM to all physical skills.
4	Rip or tear to Vacc Suit forces character to return to ship for repairs if he does not have a set of repair patches with him. Roll 2D. On a roll of 5 or less, the tear is too acute to be repaired in the field.
5	Failure to make a Zero G roll of 8+ results in the character's limb becoming trapped somehow. Freeing the character requires 1D hours and either an Engineering roll or a Survival roll. The character is unable to free himself.
6	Loose debris is disturbed which hurtles around threatening to cause injury or damage. Roll Dex 8+ to avoid the debris. If the roll fails, roll 1D. 1-3, Sprain or pulled muscle halves what the character for the next 1D watches. Suffer a -2 DM to all physical skills. 4-6, Rip or tear to Vacc Suit forces character to return to ship for repairs if he does not have a set of repair patches with him. Roll 2D. On a roll of 5 or less, the tear is too acute to be repaired in the field.
7	Serious fall, collision or other catastrophe ruptures Vacc Suit or life support. Character sustains 2D damage.
8	A piece of personal equipment mysteriously fails or malfunctions. Requires 2D hours to diagnose problem and a further 2D hours to get it working again.
9	Dust and fine debris disturbed by the survey clogs personal equipment's sensitive mechanical parts. Output or production is reduced to a quarter and machinery overheats. Requires 2 full watches to be cleaned and cooled.
10	Very serious fall, collision or other catastrophe ruptures Vacc Suit or life support. Character sustains 4D damage.
11	Debris or sharp object ruptures air supply to the Vacc Suit. Vacc Suit roll of 9+ needed to effect immediate repair, or suffer 1D damage to Endurance characteristic for every 2 minutes until a repair is made by another character (one Vacc Suit roll takes 2 minutes to effect).
12	Roll Twice on this Table.

To gain the full, detailed assessment Haro Lothrain requires takes a team of three or four characters two weeks, working for two, 4 hour watches per day. It is not necessary for every single watch to be accounted for and played through; some of the survey time will be spent onboard the Master of Enterprise running diagnostic scans and interpreting the results, as well as checking through the results of diagnostic scans taken whilst moving through the Factory's structure. However, when it comes to working through the room-by-room assessment, the characters should be involved in the detail.

For the general structural assessment, using diagnostics and sensor scans, the character responsible for the interpretation needs to roll on either Engineering (Electronics, Life Support and Power specialities) 8+, Investigate 10+, or Mechanic 9+ to compile a detailed and accurate report.

For the detailed area by area assessment of the Factory, each unsurveyed area requires the following routine:

- Engineering (Electronics) 8+, Engineering (Life Support) 8+, and Engineering (Power) 8+ to determine the integrity of the area and calculate necessary repairs. If all these Engineering specialities are not present in the survey party, then three Engineering rolls at DMs of -1, -2 and -3 can be substituted.
- Investigate 8+, Recon 8+ or Int 10+ to check around for anything unusual an area might contain (and if anything unusual is to be found, it will be noted in the key to the Factory).

Assume that each area takes one full watch to completely assess per two characters involved. Small areas, such as staterooms, take only half a watch.

General Conditions in the Structure

Without any heat or central lighting, the Factory is dark and very, very cold. Frost coats most surfaces making walking and moving an almost treacherous affair, and cables that have not been secured properly when salvageable items were removed dangle and sway, snake-like in the gloom. Sharp spurs of metal and poorly secured fixings project at potentially harmful angles and, in any enclosed area, care needs to be taken if suits are not to be punctured or limbs snared.

Most of all, the Factory is funereally quiet. The occasional clash of unsecured or free-floating objects echoes ominously from time to time, causing the unwary to startle. Otherwise, the only sounds in the Factory are the odd creak and the movements of the characters as they make their survey.

Flight Decks

Besides the fuel deck, which is impossible to access without cutting through bulkheads, the uppermost levels of the platform are the two flight decks. The level is arranged into two separate, airlocked hangars divided by a central engineering concourse. The primary hangar is designed to accommodate larger vessels and this is where the Master of Enterprise can be safely docked. The secondary hangar is designed to accommodate ships of up to 200 tons and is where Seekers and the pirates' (if used) ship is docked. Two further hangars are reserved for drones and robots.

This level also has fuel reservoirs both for ship refuelling and as part of the fuel store for the whole complex. The bulk of the fuel has been drained, but there is enough in the reservoirs to power the UPS system that provides localised power to certain areas of this level.

HANGAR 1

A massive, functional docking, maintenance, repair and engineering space, Hangar 1 is airlocked with five maintenance hatches arranged along the wall facing the outer hangar doors. On first approach the outer doors are open to vacuum and all loose contents of the hangar have been stowed safely or removed completely. This is a standard Maas procedure. Once docked, the first priority will be to close the outer hangar doors. These operate on an independent uninterrupted power supply (UPS) that can be accessed and activated (Engineering or Mechanics 8+) from the service arrays on either side of the main hangar. The same UPS provides low-level lighting for the hangar but no other life support functions.

The floor of the hangar is set with docking lights that operate once UPS power has been established. Set at strategic points (where standard landing gear is found on a ship) are restraining rigs to hold a docked ship in-situ. These are manually set from the service arrays.

HANGAR 2

Save for its smaller size, Hangar 2 works in precisely the same way as Hangar 1.



The outer doors to Hangar 2 are closed when the characters first approach the Factory. This is either due to a failure in the outer door system, or because the pirates have closed them (if the pirates are used). The outer doors cannot be opened from outside, but the locking mechanism can be overridden by either Engineering (electronics) 8+ or Mechanics 9+ from the Docking Control area.

Both the hangars are in reasonable repair and require only cursory attention to make them completely functional and serviceable.

STORAGE/REPAIRS

A large storage warehouse and repair centre, most of the equipment and stores have been removed, but some items of old machinery, worth, perhaps a few hundred credits as scrap, are to be found in the multitude of storage bays (there are over 100) and open lockers. The area contains workbenches, bolted to the floor, and open areas for repairs to be made to large objects such as laser drills and other mining equipment.

The storage bays form a series of nooks and crannies that would make an excellent ambush point (or hiding area) for anyone with hostile intentions.

If the pirates are being used as part of this scenario, Hangar 2 is a key area for them. However they will be aware of any approaching ships and have plenty of time to vacate and take up ambush positions around the structure. They also know how to operate the hangar airlock mechanisms and can, if needs dictate, isolate the characters from their own ship.

MAINTENANCE AND DRONE HANGAR

Similar to the main Hangars, this airlocked area is for mining and cargo drone storage (although all drones have been removed) and maintenance. Holding brackets for the drones line the walls and in the centre of the area is a recessed workbay two metres deep (accessible by a ladder). A winch is attached to the ceiling directly overhead which is controlled from a control panel on the port side of the hangar. The winch will not operate until central power is restored.

DOCKING CONTROL

This narrow area is the control centre for all docking and remote operations. Control bays line the aft wall with a series of eight, large, external viewing monitors set into the wall above. Docking control works from the Hangar UPS so power can be restored in here, and control over all three hangars on this level maintained. However, without a working connection to the central computer system, the characters can do little but open and close the Hangar airlocks.

ELEVATORS

Three elevators provide access to the lower decks of the Factory. Without central power, they do not work. Additional access to the lower decks is via the three iris valves located along the central concourse.

Control Deck

The next level down is the Control deck. Here, all mining, refining and processing functions are controlled. This level also houses many of the crew staterooms, recreation areas, kitchen, and other supply areas.

CARGO AND REFINERY AREAS

The main function of the platform is spread over three decks, with conveyor belts allowing material to be sorted and sent to the relative processing equipment and storage area. The twin cargo and refinery areas are accessible from the outside and inside. Here, all mined material is either stored and/or processed in readiness for transportation elsewhere by the ships serving the platform. Cargo drones are used to move material between here and the hangars.

These huge areas contain a mixture of cargo bays and refinery/purification machinery. When fully operational, the noise is deafening as the machinery does its work, being fed by conveyors and automated traction systems to load the ore into the processing chambers. All this equipment is still in-situ but disabled without the right activation codes.

The machinery is not in very good order. In all areas the refining units require full servicing and substantial repairs; some equipment will need specially ordered parts, manufactured only by Maas, in order to work again. Aside from the financial cost, the amount of effort in effecting repairs will be substantial, requiring almost a complete dismantling of some machinery so that new parts can be fitted.

Any Engineering roll of 12+ when examining the machinery notices that the damage was caused by a lack of a decent servicing routine and considerable overloading. The equipment was worked to its absolute capacity and the subsequent strain caused auxiliary units to burn out and possibly explode.

Some machinery is in better shape, needing a fraction of the parts required elsewhere. Again, it was worked hard, but the servicing routine was most likely much more rigorous.

CREW QUARTERS

The crew area is divided into 175 separate, self-contained, en-suite staterooms. Those staterooms arranged against an outer wall are fitted with panorama plexiglass windows for views out into space and were the quarters for the senior staff and privileged visitors.

The inner stateroom blocks are functional but relatively spartan. Each contains a bed, shower/toilet facilities, personal entertainment systems and lounge furniture. None of the furniture is in particularly poor condition, but neither is it at its best. Some rooms are much better than others. Some rooms have been daubed with graffiti – the work of bored technicians and crewmen – and in some of the personal lockers found in each stateroom there are a few personal effects either forgotten or left deliberately behind (posters, pictures, pornographic magazines, and so forth).

FACTORY SECRETS 1

In one of the staterooms, chosen randomly, the locker contains a memory stick that will fit any standard hand computer. The stick is password protected and requires Computers 10+ to break the protection. On the stick are several files which, when read, appear to be diaries.

The author of the diaries is someone calling himself Yorath – a nickname, perhaps. The diaries are, largely, a hum-drum account of life aboard the mining platform recording mundane activities, personal observations, moans about conditions, disparaging remarks about certain officers and other crew members. However, some of the entries are a little more disturbing.

Yorath describes how the regime at the platform became increasingly draconian. Recreation time was reduced, watches lengthened and rations cut-back. Quotas, it appears, were not being made and the whole crew felt the strain. Yorath notes that the crew responsible for the starboard refinery were particularly stressed and forced to effect repairs to equipment that should have been replaced. The inevitable result was a severe malfunction that cost the life of two crew members, named as Hamus and Kells. Yorath says that the senior officers ordered an inquiry and found six members of the starboard team to be guilty of negligence. 'But,' Yorath remarks, 'the poor bastards, like Hamus and Kells, were just victims of Rogan's ego. If anyone should have been jailed, it was Rogan.'

Any character who has worked for Maas and can make a roll of Int 11+ might know of Hamus, Kells, Rogan or any of the six who were indicted for negligence.

Hamus and Kells were recorded as having died during an industrial accident. Their bodies were returned to their respective families, at Maas's full expense. The families received a full year's bonus as compensation.

Rogan was the CEO for the platform. A notorious hardliner, he specialised in remote mining operations. There were also rumours that he suffered from some form of mental illness and had, early in his career, suffered a full mental breakdown. His recovery was due to Maas medical expertise, but everyone who knew him either hated him or feared him. His loyalty to the company was total and he was known to work every resource at his disposal way beyond its capabilities.

GYM

The gymnasium was fully equipped with the usual paraphernalia found in any self respecting gym, such as weights, treadmills, rowing machines and so forth, but these removable items are long gone. Wallbars are fitted along one length of the gym wall and swing ropes on a movable trestle can be wound out roughly half-

way along the gym's length, but these are the only items of fitness equipment remaining.

RECREATION ROOM 1

A common area with a mixture of communal and single seating, arranged around tables moulded out of the floor. A pair of large monitor screens (both broken and beyond repair) are fixed to the walls at either end of the room, and a hot and cold beverages dispenser, still bearing brand names, sits, empty and forlorn in one corner.

RECREATION ROOM 2

This room functioned as a sports and games hall. Triangular Grav Ball goals hang from the ceiling at either end of the room, and the rubberised surface of the hall is marked in red, blue and amber lines for the various scoring and penalty zones of the court. A storage locker at the far end contains a number of palm-sized, heavy gravballs, a set of goal keeping gloves and various other pieces of kit (elbow and knee pads, plus a pair of goal-keeping codpieces).

CANTEEN

The canteen is filled with tables and seating (moulded from the floor) for up to 100 at a sitting. The furniture is utilitarian and around the walls are more display screens (two will work, the remaining three are beyond repair). A serving area (closed-off by a roll-screen) provides access to the kitchen behind.

KITCHEN

The kitchen is still fitted with its food preparation equipment: ovens, hobs, hotplates, fryers, warming plates, storage areas and food preparation areas. All the accoutrements are of brushed steel but things such as plates, dishes, pots and pans have been removed. Five refrigeration units line the aft wall and one of them has its door hanging from its hinges. The units were cleaned out before the platform was evacuated and each of them is serviceable.

PANTRY

Storage lockers, cold units, shelves and other storage facilities for both food and kitchen equipment. All empty save for some discarded wrappers that float lazily around the area.

RESEARCH LABORATORIES

Before being left to rot, the platform functioned as a research centre as well as a mining operation. These eight research laboratories were equipped for rock and mineral analysis and, whilst the equipment has been removed, the workbenches and lockers are still present.

Plexiglass windows separate each unit, allowing full vision to be obtained through each row. The plexiglass acts as 8 points of armour if anyone chooses to subject them to damage, such as small arms fire.

The two farthest units act as the medical centres for the mining platform. The aft medical unit is equipped with twelve medical

FACTORY SECRETS 2

In one of the refrigerators is a dead body which falls out dramatically when a door is opened. The corpse is frozen solid and is without a Vacc Suit. A wound to the head – clearly the cause of death – could be either a gunshot wound or result of a blunt instrument impact. The head is caked with frozen blood and the face is contorted into a gruesome rictus.

Who is the corpse? This is for the Referee to decide. It might be a hostage taken by the pirates from a previous raid that they have decided to store in the refrigerator simply for their own, twisted amusement. Perhaps it was a crew member who, in the final hours of the platform's previous life, got into an argument with someone in the kitchen and things turned nasty. Perhaps the poor soul is Yorath who, being resentful of Rogan's regime challenged the commander secretly and paid for it with his life.

The aim of this secret is to lend some mystery and provide a little excitement. Maybe the mystery of the dead man will remain forever that: a mystery. Or perhaps it will become a catalyst to further adventure for the characters.

bunks, arranged in rows of six, and lifeless monitoring equipment is still attached to the walls above each bunk. The fore medical unit has operating and treatment facilities, with the operating theatre lights still in situ and functional once main power is restored. Items such as scalpels, bonesaws and other operating equipment are absent.



FACTORY SECRETS 3

The research area has its own computer system kept separate from the main computers. When main power is restored, the computers can be accessed and, although the memory banks have been wiped, a Computers roll of 11+ discovers that the memory systems still have a number of files that, whilst hidden, have escaped erasure. It requires several hours and a further Computers roll of 11+ to retrieve and break the password coding.

The files document research that had nothing to do with mining.

Anyone with either Science (Biology) or Science (Chemistry) can, on a roll of 10+, determine that the scientists working here were developing drugs designed to enhance human endurance capabilities using a combination of enzymes and steroids. The drugs negated the need for sleep, enhanced physical strength and stamina, and suppressed the appetite for up to 72 hours. The records show that up to twenty crew members were treated with the drug, acting as volunteers in return for enhanced corporate bonus packages on top of anything they would have made from enhanced productivity.

The studies show that the drug worked, but the side effects were horrendous: psychosis, emotional instability, violent dreams, aggression and hallucinations affected all but two of the subjects – Hamus and Kells, and both of these subjects died outright within four hours of being administered with the drug. One of the subjects is named only as subject 'C'. In reality this was Rogan who volunteered for the programme in the hope that his depression might be cured. It was not, and his psychosis simply became more pronounced.

The scientists involved in these experiments do not appear to be Maas employees and, indeed, they are not. If the characters decide to investigate further, they will, in time, discover that they are members of a Sonarese World Assembly pharmacological unit that was working on the platform without Maas knowledge. The intention was to refine the drug, making it safe and without side effects which could then be sold to Maas at a premium. Rogan, it transpires, had been approached by the SWA team a few years before and had bided his time waiting for an assignment like the factory to come up, before inviting the science team onto the platform to conduct their experiments.

MAIN MISSION

Main Mission is the control centre at the heart of the mining platform. From here, all aspects of prospecting, mining and refining are conducted. The control bays that form a horseshoe before the huge, plexiglass windows looking out of the platform are arranged into discrete bays for survey, analysis, drilling, remote operations,

cargo loading and processing, refining, life support, and structure-wide support functions and communications.

The control bays are still intact, but rendered inoperative without the necessary access codes to bring them back online once main power is restored. From here, every aspect of the platform's operations can be controlled with huge display screens and head-up displays projected into the plexiglass, showing every conceivable read-out necessary to the mining operation.

The equipment, whilst in a reasonable state of repair, needs attention. The life support systems are outmoded and require hardware and software upgrades. The drilling control centre needs recalibration because the laser drills and rigs have been dismantled. Several key displays and management information systems simply do not work due to a variety of technical issues and the HUD projector has been damaged so that the display wavers, flickers and crackles and eventually fades-out with a hiss and a fizz.

MAIN CREW ENTRY

This airlock contains elevators that transport crew members to ground level and back up, either when boarding the platform for the first time or when descending to the payload for mining operations. The control systems for the airlock and elevators are located in Main Mission. Neither elevator works even when power is restored, and the lifting mechanisms need to be completely replaced.

STORES QUADRANT

The stores quadrant is a giant Ship's Locker. Here, everything from spare parts for life support, the kitchen and Main Mission, through cleaning and laundry equipment, to the platform's armoury (obviously empty) was stored in a series of neat and secure bays, rooms, alcoves and lockers. The area has been completely cleaned out, but the walkways, gangways, passages and freestanding lockers and storage units create a labyrinth with the storage quadrant – again, ideal for hiding in and ambushing from.

Crew Deck

The crew deck contains more of the processing area, most of the crew staterooms and the ship's drives. Whilst the drives need some repair work they are in far better condition than most of the machinery found on board the facility.

Cargo Deck

This vast area is where the ore was stored, but before and after processing. The mechanical trucks that help shift the material stored on this deck are long gone and will need replacing, and the area is full of floating rock particles. The deck is also home to the mass driver, which is in a surprisingly good condition.

COMPLETING THE SURVEY

By the time the characters have completed the survey, they will know that upwards of Cr5 million needs to be spent on refitting and repairing the basic systems of the platform. A further Cr2.5 million

is likely to be needed to equip the Factory to a basic living standard, irrespective of operational capability.

Outside, the laser drills and rigs need to be replaced, and the whole drilling cycle tested and calibrated.

The M drive, Power Plant, fuel store and fuel processors work, but require a major service, adding Cr 1 million to the bill.

Detaching the entire platform requires a combination of operations from Main Mission, plus manual graft with powered tools down at the feet of the rig. The Factory therefore cannot be moved until all operating systems are back online, gravitics restored, life support functioning and the drive, power plant and fuel systems flushed, serviced, calibrated and test-run. In all, it will take a year, not including travelling time to and from the Factory, to make it operable.

Consequence of Secrets

If the characters found it necessary to tackle and eliminate the pirates (if used), and this information is conveyed to Haro, he makes arrangements for the Schaeffer Belt authorities to be made aware. If any of the pirates survive and are brought back, then the characters are eligible for the Cr50,000 bounty (pro-rated according to how many are alive). Maas sends its thanks via Haro for the characters' bravery and efforts in saving what is, still, a Maas installation from these villains.

If any of the secrets relating the clandestine drug research, or the draconic nature of Rogan's regime, are brought to Haro's attention, he recommends that the characters forget what they have learned. He is willing to pay them Cr5,000 as a bonus for them to maintain their silence. What they do in the intervening time is up to the characters to decide and the Referee to develop, but some of the secrets explored in this opening chapter – and some fresh ones – will be developed in the following scenarios.

Downtime

The sale of the Factory takes a further two months to finalise and Haro gets the deal he wants. A party is held to celebrate this new chapter in Lothrain's development as a company and Haro proudly outlines his grand vision for the Factory: to create the first, independently-owned and operated mining platform for the Free Radicals. His intention is to conduct LFC's own projects and charge other free companies and independents for use of the Factory's facilities. He knows there is serious interest in this scheme and he believes that, within five years, the Factory will be profitable. Jenna displays graphs showing the projections which, whilst conservative, are nonetheless impressive.

The next task for the characters will be to accompany Desna and a full repair crew back to the Factory to start the hard work of refitting the rig – but that will not start for a further three or four months. For now, the characters have time to relax and wait for the full repair project to commence.

SIGNALS TO NOISE

This chapter provides several small scenarios that fill the time between the survey of the Factory and its refitting. The characters have the opportunity to follow-up some of the mysteries revealed by the Factory survey or can become involved in tangential events and general prospecting.

Each scenario begins aboard Vinen Habitat and some remain within it. Others go beyond, into the Schaeffer Belt.

THE SHORANAN HABITAT RUN

The characters are summoned to the LFC briefing room by Desna Greer. Dressed in a sober grey suit, Desna outlines the next task for the characters. 'You'll take the *Master of Enterprise* out to Shoranan Habitat. You're to dock at the Maas docking terminal and collect the first of the spares needed for the Factory recommissioning. Its principally stuff for the life support systems; fresh filters, capacitors... routine stuff. A full inventory is loaded into the Master's library so all you need to do is check it as it goes aboard and come home. Boring, I know, and this will be the first of quite a few Shoranan runs, so you need to get used to it.'

The characters leave the next day and the journey to Shoranan Habitat, at full thrust, takes ten days. The journey itself is uneventful. If the characters review the spares inventory (and they should), it lists the following:

- Air Purification Unit x2
- Air Filters x20
- Gas Exchange System Unit x1
- Fitting Rigs x3
- Air Purification Unit Energy Management Unit and Capacitors x2
- Heating and Air Conditioning Units x20

The equipment tallies with the assessment the characters undertook in the previous scenario and all the equipment is routine. The machinery is bulky but especially heavy and the loading will be conducted by cargo drones. All the equipment is of Maas manufacture; the Factory's infrastructure will not accept non-proprietary parts. With the listed equipment fitted, the life support systems at the Factory should come online once central power is established.

Docking at Shoranan Habitat

For a description of Shoranan Habitat see page 63.

The Maas docking terminal is a huge network of external and internal docking platforms. It functions as a Class B starport and

the berthing costs for the trip have already been agreed and paid. The docking is routine and requires no Piloting tests to complete successfully. The Characters are instructed by Docking Control to berth in Docking Bay 94, an internal platform in the Cargo and Commerce docking platform array.

Bay 94 is busy. Three other ships of various tonnages are already docked – Maas supply vessels and another Free Company ship that is likely to be on a Maas contract. Its hull insignia is easily identifiable as belonging to Hezeera Prospecting, a smaller rival to LFC.

Once docking formalities are completed and clearance to disembark given, the characters are approached by a Maas official as they come down the ship's access ramp. He wears the company's slate-grey coveralls emblazoned with the stylised Maas logo. His hair is long and scraped back into a flowing ponytail, his skin glistening with fake tan. He introduces himself as Jedran Khaer, External Partner Liaison. He is in charge of ensuring that the cargo exchange goes smoothly. His manner is slick, as expected of a Maas liaison operative, and he is easy going whilst remaining business-like. 'We've had a delay in getting the purification units. They've only just arrived and we need to check them out before we hand them over. It will take a couple of days, so I've arranged rooms for you at one of the port's hotels. Maas, naturally, is covering the cost, but if you want to stay onboard your ship, then that's fine with us. So, kick-back, relax, and I'll be in touch to get the transfer underway.'



The characters have little alternative but to wait. The choice is their's to wait onboard the Master of Enterprise or to accept Khaer's offer of the hotel.

If they choose the hotel, they find it a comfortable, if low-grade, Belter hotel. Its facilities are basic but it has a reasonable bar and restaurant. The rooms are nothing special, but there is free data network access (via a Maas interface which is most likely monitored) and, if the characters are interested in such things, Maas-sanctioned prostitutes that can be ordered through discreet enquiries via the hotel concierge (Carouse 9+).

If the characters stay aboard their ship, then they have whatever comforts they have brought with them.

The Hezeera Connection

Wherever the characters stay, they are approached by Hezeera. The Hezeera crew are either staying at the same hotel, and invite the characters to join them in the bar, or they come across to the ship, bringing with them several bottles of decent *Sonares II* wine and spirits. They seem to be in the mood to carouse.

VESNA CLANT, CAPTAIN

A grizzled, bearded man with gold teeth. A cunning gleam in his brown eyes.

Vesna Clant	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 50	Belter (6)	5	4	4	7	8	8
Bribe-1, Mechanical-1, Navigation-1, Vacc-1, Streetwise-1, Computer-1, Gun Combat-1, Prospecting-2							
Snub Pistol (3d6-3), Flak Jacket (4), Cr231,000							

HOLST AHLET, PILOT

Thin, shy-acting, with thick, black hair despite his age.

Holst Ahlet	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 54	Belter (9)	5	4	4	7	8	8
Vacc Suit-1, Gunnery-1, Mechanical-1, Pilot-3, Prospecting-2, Melee (Unarmed)-2							
Knife (1d6+2), Cr76,000							

AURORA JAX, MEDIC/NAVIGATOR

Attractive, bald-headed, with a gutsy, abrasive sense of humour.

Aurora Jax	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 34	Belter (4)	7	4	6	7	8	9
Vacc-2, Jack of all trades-1, Medic-1, Mechanical-1, Astrogation-1							
AutoPistol (3d6-3), Flak Jacket (4), Cr6,850, Hand Computer							

MHARL MAROUS, TECHNICIAN

Red-haired, freckled, and looks younger than his years. Wears a vest filled with all manner of tools.

Mharl Marous	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 46	Belter (7)	4	7	6	8	7	4
Admin-1, Gambling-1, Flyer (air/raft)-1, Gun Combat (Shotgun)-1, Engineering-3							
Shotgun (4d6), Flak Jacket (3), Cr2,300							

The Hezeera crew are sociable and happy to drink, swap stories and crack jokes. The booze they have brought (or buy) is excellent and flows freely. Aurora Jax flirts outrageously whilst Mharl Marous constantly fiddles with a set of gaming dice. Eventually though, conversation turns to Lothrain and the purchase of the Factory.

Vesna Clant lets the characters know that some of the free companies are not happy at what LFC s doing. 'Quite a few think that this is just a front. Maas is forbidden from exploiting the Free Radicals; given the price Lothrain's negotiated for this mining rig, it seems to us that Maas is playing an angle. They get one of their rigs into Free Radical belt and start to cream the profits using LFC as its agent. That cuts-down opportunities for us. So, what's the story?'

The mood changes when Vesna asks this question and Hezeera's crew have already made-up their mind, no matter how much the characters protest LFC's innocence or their own ignorance of Haro Lothrain's agenda. Whatever answers they give, Vesna is dissatisfied with anything less than the characters agreeing with his own summation. He believes LFC is intending to eradicate its independent competition and become a Maas subsidiary.

There is the potential for an argument and a brawl to break-out here. None of the Hezeera crew carry weapons, save for Holst Ahlet, who carries a knife secreted in his boot. Hezeera become antagonistic, calling the characters 'Company Suits' and 'Corporate Sell-Outs' – potent insults to independent belters. The Hezeera crew is both bored and resentful; they are in the mood for a fight, but only if the characters take the bait and rise to it.

If a fight breaks out in the hotel, Maas security, armed with stunners, arrive inside five minutes to subdue the brawl. Everyone is held overnight in the port's security block, but Jedran Khaer arranges for their release in the morning. He is angry and acts very coolly towards the characters, but understands that brawls like this happen when rival free company paths cross. No charges will be pressed against the characters.

If the fight breaks out aboard the Master of Enterprise, then things could get ugly. The Hezeera crew fight to damage both the characters but also the ship, if possible, inflicting damage that will require attention before the characters can depart the station. There is no security to intervene unless one of the characters can get to a commlink and alert Maas security, in which case it takes ten minutes from the point of the alert for security officers to get to Bay 94 to break-up the affray. In this case the Hezeera crew are arrested and the characters can avoid arrest themselves on an Intelligence + Deception or Diplomacy roll.

MAAS SECURITY

Use the same statistics for each security officer. Five officers appear to deal with any affray.

For added intrigue and adventure possibilities, in the melee with the Hezeera crew, Aurora Jax drops her hand computer and fails to realise the loss (until later, of course). The memory chip contains a lot of personal and useless information but it does contain details of the characters' arrival; clearly, Hezeera were expecting the characters to show-up. How they came by this information is unknown. Furthermore, the hand computer also contains information (co-ordinates) relating to a particular region of the Spindrift Radical – clearly the next prospecting destination for the Hezeera crew. If the characters can get there first, then they could gain some revenge on the Hezeera mob for their antagonism.

Obviously Aurora comes looking for her missing hand computer. She cannot prove that the characters have it, but strongly suspects they do. If they do not give it back to her, her resentment to them grows considerably.

The Hezeera crew leaves the habitat before the characters. If any of the characters keep a watch on the Hezeera 200-ton Free Trader, they see that it, too, is loading cargo – food supplies, water, drilling equipment and several larger packing crates.



Maas Security	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
	Average Guard (Army)	9	8	7	7	6	5
Melee (unarmed)-2, Gun Combat (slug pistol)-2, Gun Combat (slug rifle)-1, Athletics (co-ordination)-1, Stealth-1.							
Stunner (2d6+3 stun), Autopistol (3d6-3), Cloth (4), Comm, Handcuffs/Restrainers							

The Load

At the end of the second day on Shoranan Habitat Khaer contacts the characters to let them know that the full inventory is ready for loading.

Hezeera's Deception

At the Referee's discretion there is scope for duplicity here. Hezeera is clearly resentful of Lothrain Free Company's grand scheme and is intent on making life difficult. Hezeera has its own contacts within Maas; several corrupt officials who work in the Contracts and Supplies departments. A hefty bribe has been paid to these Maas employees to gain inside knowledge of the Factory deal and, in the few days Hezeera have spent on Shoranan, ahead of the characters, they have managed to arrange for the supplies the characters are meant to be collecting to be diverted to their own vessel – with a load of worthless supplies replacing the load the characters have to collect.

The characters will only realise the deception if they investigate Hezeera's own load somehow – otherwise they will not realise what has happened until they check the contents of their own cargo. By that time, the Hezeera ship has left the habitat, with a full 6 hours head-start on the Master of Enterprise.

A Maas cargo robot ferries the stocks to the Master of Enterprise and commences the loading operation. Storage crates are loaded smoothly aboard the character's ship and Khaer goes through the documentation with whichever of the characters has been placed in charge of the inventory. All the packing crates are sealed.

If the Referee wants a simple conclusion to this scenario, then all is in order and the characters can return to Vinen with their load (but see *Bushwacked!* below). However, if the Hezeera Deception option is being used, and the characters later open the crates to check the contents, then they discover they have been duped.

Khaer is unsympathetic. Maas entered the deal for the equipment in good faith and he cannot (and will not try to) explain what has gone awry. He insists this is not Maas's problem, but Lothrain Free Company's. 'Independents, eh?' He says, shaking his head. 'Can't trust 'em, can you?'

An Admin roll determines that LFC's insurance will cover the theft of the spares, but obtaining a fresh set is going to take 1D6+1 months as some of the equipment needs to be either manufactured or imported from Keneres habitat. Returning to Vinen empty handed will certainly incur Desna Greer's wrath.

If the characters have discovered the theft of the items before they have signed for them then Khaer will be a little more sympathetic. Although he will say although Maas will be able to come up with replacements some parts will take six months to order and manufacture, causing a serious delay in the fitting out of the Factory.

Khaer will be able to discover that the cargo was (but obviously not due an error on the part of Maas) loaded onto the Hezeera ship and is more than willing to help characters find out where the contents of their shipment has gone.

The characters can give chase. The Hezeera ship has the same Thrust (1) as the Master of Enterprise, so the best that the characters can do is match speed and course with the Hezeera ship (Sensors and Astrogation rolls, to capture the Hezeera drive signature and extrapolate its course). The Hezeera craft is heading out towards the Spindrift Radical, as per the co-ordinates of Aurora Jax's hand computer, and so following their ship is a relatively routine matter. However, giving chase is going to lengthen the character's mission by a month – although they have enough fuel to reach the Spindrift co-ordinates and return to Shoranan Habitat for refuelling before returning to Vinen.

Bushwacked!

This is an option to add colour to the scenario if the Hezeera crew has not hijacked the spares.

As the Master of Enterprise heads out of the Shoranan Habitat and into the wider belt space of the Shoranan Cluster, the Hezeera vessel is lying in wait, intent on inflicting damage on the character's vessel – but not to destroy it or board it.

Aurora Jax knows the Shoranan Cluster well, and the space routes used in and out of it. The Hezeera vessel waits, on auxiliary power to mask its drive signature, in the shadow of a 5,000 metre lump of rock known as Hudrus's Folly. The Master of Enterprise has to pass within 5 kilometres of Hudrus's Folly en-route to Vinen Radical and, as the ship passes, the Hezeera ship springs its ambush.

It powers-up as the Master of Enterprise draws level with the Folly and then accelerates to reach a parallel trajectory and draw within beam laser range (their ship has a mining pulse laser mounted in the port turret, and a single beam laser in the starboard). Hezeera aims for the cargo area of the Master of Enterprise, but intends simply to inflict a single hit on the craft before turning and accelerating out towards Spindrift Radical.

The characters have the opportunity to return fire if they so wish, but it should be obvious that this is a warning and a message – not a serious attack.

SPINDRIFT

If the characters have either gained Aurora Jax's hand computer, or trailed the Hezeera ship, they can head towards Spindrift Radical (see page 37).

The co-ordinates the Hezeera ship is heading towards is the position of a small, C-class planetoid, 1,100 metres in radius, which is relatively rich in radioactives (Silver-110m, Cobalt-60, Lanthanum-

140, Scandium-46, Gold-198, which are all used in heavy industry to measure furnace and smelting performance, and in various radiography processes including sensor array production). The planetoid's yield has an estimated value of Cr 5 million, but carries significant risk of irradiation for anyone mining it. The radioactives are buried quite deep beneath layers of carbonaceous rock, needing approximately 20 watches (80 hours) of continual drilling to reach the sizeable deposits.

The planetoid has no claim beacon marking it – Hezeera are, working on an earlier, incomplete survey, returning to stake their claim – so it is, officially, claimable by whoever gets there, and fully surveys it, first.

The planetoid has no official designation on Spindrift Radical charts. It is also revolving on its own axis, making a complete revolution every standard hour – so its spin is quite fast for a planetoid and makes landing on its surface hazardous (–6 DM to any Pilot or Zero G skill rolls to make surface-fall). The rock has a GF of 0.02.

Hezeera has not fully surveyed the planetoid, and so this is its first activity. A full survey requires 5 watches (30 hours). As the planetoid is spinning on its own axis, any prospecting ship needs only to remain stationary within scanning range and let the planetoid's spin do the hard work.

If the characters arrive before the Hezeera ship, then they can commence their own survey. If they arrive later, as is most likely, Hezeera has commenced its own scan.

As the potential yield is so valuable, Hezeera is going to protect its find vociferously. Even before its scan is fully complete it launches a claim beacon into a counter orbit around the planetoid. As the character's ship approaches Vesna Clant comes over on the comm system to growl a warning against trying to take the claim away. 'In fact, you can get the hell out of our way *now*, or we'll consider your presence a hostile act under Belt Regulation 751A, subsection C5, and we *will* open fire. You have one hour to comply.'

Attempting to shoot down the claim beacon Hezeera launch is a hostile act and provokes Hezeera to return fire against the characters. As the beacon is a small target, it has a –6 DM for rolls to hit it. On the other hand, any claim beacon the characters launch is also fired upon by Hezeera. As should be apparent by now, Hezeera play dirty.

The outcome of this episode depends entirely on how the two sides react. The planetoid's yield is substantial but dangerous to mine; the sensible course is to sell it on the open market, and it is a commodity that Lothrain would be prepared to pay for (at 60% of its total, mineable, yield value), so this is a tactic the characters could use to diffuse a firefight. Credit notes to act as a down payment on the yield can be exchanged electronically and the details remote-filed, and Hezeera will be willing to consider the immediate trade if it is suggested (but not without some negotiation: they begin wanting 100% of the value, and are prepared to barter to the 60% mark. Every

level of Broker skill a character employs in the negotiation adjusts the percentage in LFC's favour by 10%). Hezeera have no capability of mining the planetoid in-situ and, probably, only a small capability of getting the right equipment to mine it safely even if they return to get the right kit. LFC, on the other hand, has the right equipment back on Vinen and has it in spades once the Factory is brought online. These facts can be used in the subsequent negotiation.

If a firefight erupts and cannot be diffused, the consequence are possibly severe.

- Destroying the Hezeera ship commands severe penalties under Sonares system law. It is an act of piracy carrying a capital penalty
- If the characters acted in self-defence they are still liable for trial and possible imprisonment
- The Hezeera crew represents half of the Hezeera Company. Hezeera will pursue full legal action against LFC and the characters in retaliation. The characters cannot rely on Haro Lothrain's support, if they can be proved to have initiated the violence.
- If the characters can show that the Hezeera crew stole the supplies for the Factory, then any litigation goes in their favour, but its potency is reduced if violence ensued.
- Boarding the Hezeera vessel to retake the stolen supplies is a viable action as long as the characters can prove the theft –otherwise it is piracy.

If the characters are seeking the return of the stolen supplies, then Vesna Clant offers them for sale, claiming that it was clearly a legitimate misunderstanding, but under Belter law the supplies are theirs' legally. He suggests a price of Cr500,000 (about 125% of the market value) as a fair rate for their return but can be bartered down to Cr250,000.

Of course, the characters can attempt to board the Hezeera's Free Trader and take the supplies by force. In this case use the rules for Boarding Actions found on page 149 of the Traveller rules, and the Free Trader deckplans on page 117. The Hezeera crew put-up a defence of their ship, but if two or three of their number are seriously wounded or killed, they surrender their cargo to the characters. The Hezeera ship carries only its own supplies, plus a mining drone, two laser drills, and a few claim beacons, in addition to the stolen Factory equipment.

FACTORY SHADOWS

On Vinen Habitat the characters get news that questions are being asked about who has negotiated the purchase of the Factory. The best source of this news is through the regulars in a bar called Nightside Moves, a popular Belter hang-out in one of the Habitat's rougher quarters.

Investigation into who is asking the questions reveals 1D's worth of the following on a successful Investigate 8+ roll, or Intelligence 9+ (if either roll is 12+, then all the information is discovered).

1D	Information
1	A single, off Vinen man has been asking questions about the purchase.
2	The questioner is in his early 50s and persistent in his questions although polite. He's been prepared to buy drinks for information.
3	The questioner's name is Sal Baledo. He came to Vinen from <i>Sonares Prime</i> .
4	Sal Baledo claims to have knowledge of the Factory that would be useful to LFC, but he does not want to make a direct approach.
5	Sal Baledo is a forlorn figure. He drinks heavily and his hands shake. He does not come across as threatening.
6	He is staying at a low-cost hotel near the commercial dock but comes back to the Nightside from time to time. No one knows how long he intends to stay on Vinen, but his appearance suggests he has little money.

The Scientist

Sal was a member of the Factory's research team. Not the official Maas scientists, but the clandestine group Commander Rogan brought onto the Factory to test and refine the productivity drugs alluded to in the previous scenario.

The unfortunate side effects – and deaths – of crew members drove Sal to the edge of his sanity. When he left the Factory he returned to *Sonares Prime* and rapidly became an alcoholic, unable to cope with the guilt of his team's actions. A large payment to buy his silence has been spent almost entirely on drink, and his life has all but collapsed in the intervening years.

When he learned that the Factory was to be resurrected by LFC, he could stand it no more. He scraped together the money to travel to Vinen and is now desperate to tell his story in exchange for money and/or help with his alcoholism.

SAL BALEDO

Thin, with deeply lined, sorrowful features. He is a pharmacology expert with a specialisation in stimulants and neuro-suppressants. He is constantly nervous, even more so when drunk (which is most of the time), and clearly suffering from paranoia. However he is, fundamentally, an honest man looking to find some salvation. Although he needs money to live (and for drink) he is aware of the extent of his addiction and wants to get enough to enter a full detox programme. He is looking to sell his story for Cr50,000.

Once his identity is established, Sal is not difficult to find. He prefers to meet in a public place – preferably the Nightside, but any bar or restaurant will do. He refuses to meet at either the LFC offices or his hotel.

After a couple of drinks (which must be bought for him), he comes straight to the point. He wants Cr50,000 to tell his story, in full, and off the record. Without the payment, there is no deal. He does not know how useful what he has to say will be to the characters but he *has* to tell his story to someone.

Finding the money is going to require either Haro Lothrain or Jenna Marcuro's involvement. Haro is far less sympathetic than Jenna. He rejects any idea of learning what Sal has to say; the Factory is LFC's now, and the past is the past.

Jenna, on the other hand, can be persuaded with a Persuasion 10+ roll. She is more socially minded than Haro and, if death occurred aboard the Factory, and she was a relative of someone who died, *she* would want closure. However, she is not prepared to pay the amount upfront; she offers the following:

- Cr10,000 in cash (which can be easily masked in the company accounts)
- Enrolment in a reliable detox/rehabilitation programme on *Shoranan Habitat*
- A one-way, standard-class ticket back to *Sonares Prime*.

It takes a further meeting and a further Persuasion attempt (9+) to convince Sal to accept these terms. Jenna accompanies the characters to the meeting and uses her own powers of persuasion to get Sal to talk.

'I worked on AM90125 for two years as part of a research team brought onboard without the company's knowledge or sanction,' he says. 'This was a private operation by Commander Rogan and we were well-paid for our work. We were developing robust, reliable stimulants to boost productivity on the mining platform. Our work was illegal on *Sonares Prime* but we could see great commercial benefit in what we were doing. We were, unfortunately, naive in that.'

He describes how Rogan, a relentless taskmaster, was always seeking a greater payout, bigger bonus and better results from those who worked for him. 'A violent man. A disturbed man. Possibly insane. He ran AM90125 like a fiefdom, not a mining operation. Anyone stepping out of line was disciplined severely – but he showered his favourites with gifts and rewards. He was a bastard.'

Sal tells that the research initially went well and the results were impressive. Men could work at double or triple their capacity. 'But things went wrong. We developed a more effective dose of the

Sal Baledo	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 55	Scholar (Scientist) 8	4	4	3	11	12	4
Admin-2, Computers-2, Engineer (electronics)-1, Science (pharmacology)-4, Science (biology)-3							
Hand Computer, several bottles of cheap liquor, Cr1,200. Alcoholic –2DM to all skills.							

drug but this caused almost immediate psychosis. Two died within hours of the injection. Others became unstable and this led to more injury. Rogan shifted the blame to incompetence and had refining machinery rigged to look like a servicing negligence fault. At that point we, the scientists, wanted out. We were paid off and left, but Rogan stayed to cover his tracks. Soon after, AM90125 was closed down because it had reached the end of its operating life, but that wasn't the only reason.'

'The relatives of the people who died don't know the real reason. Rogan covered his tracks well, and he profited by their deaths. When AM90125 was closed down, he left Maas and disappeared. My colleagues have been bought and stay silent, but me? I can't sleep nights unless I get so blind drunk that I blot out everything I saw and did. I don't want to live like this any more.'

'I also want to see that bastard Rogan paying for what he did. When he left Maas, he vanished alright – vanished into the belt. He's working as an independent prospector now and under an assumed name. I made enquiries. But there's more. Working that rock where AM90125 is still, Rogan found something *unusual*. Something he never *declared*. Something that could make him rich. That's why he didn't care about what happened on AM90125 much; he had set himself up for life.'

Verifying the Scientist's Tale

It proves tough to verify most of what Sal says. Only the databanks of the Factory could verify the presence of the research team, and these are locked down until Maas releases the operational codes. And, in all likelihood, incriminating records will have been wiped.

The rock where the Factory is located mined and processed both minerals and radioactives; any cursory scans during the characters' assessment gleaned nothing – it will take a very detailed survey to find any trace of this unusual find Sal claims Rogan made, *if anything* remains to identify what it is.

Tracing Rogan is also not easy. In the years since the Factory was vacated, there are thousands of Prospecting Licenses that have been issued by the Soranese World Assembly. Assuming Rogan did go into belting, as Sal says. It would take a great deal of diligence, money and time to find anything resembling a lead for tracing Rogan. Jenna Marcuro doubts Haro Lothrain would entertain such an idea – unless evidence of this miraculous find could be turned-up, which could then be made to work to LFC's advantage and profit.

Concluding the Scenario

Sal accepts the payment and conditions Jenna can arrange and returns to his hotel to prepare for the trip to Shoranan habitat. Jenna suggest that the characters take him on their next trip to Shoranan to pick-up spares for the Factory outfit; that way, they can make sure he gets into the rehab programme she has arranged for him.

It is perhaps a few weeks before the next outfitting run. Sal is seen in local bars, still drinking, but perhaps happier in his mood.

Then he disappears. When he next turns-up, he is dead. His body is found behind garbage transits in a grubby end of Vinen Habitat. It looks like alcohol poisoning and the Vinen coroner's inquest concludes the same.

However, Sal did not die a miserable, alcohol-induced death. This is murder. Two agents from Maas's Black Ops team have been on Vinen for a while quietly watching LFC as part of Maas's usual surveillance of likely competitors. Maas wants to find Rogan as much as the characters might want to. Maas wants to know what it was Rogan found in the rock of AM90125; they certainly do not want LFC to find it first. Had Sal Baledo not journeyed to Vinen, the Maas Agents' interest would never have been aroused and it is sheer chance that they have learned of this supposed secret find. Furthermore, Maas's interest in AM90125 is rekindled, yet hampered by the fact that the Factory has now been officially sold and is no longer *their* property.

Plans and schemes will be set in motion.

The Agents have left Vinen Habitat before Sal's body is discovered and they are experts in covering their own tracks. Their next move is to start the hunt for Rogan – and they do have the resources to find him, no matter how long it takes.

The characters might be suspicious about the circumstances of Sal's death. To prove foul play, though, they will need to get access to medical and coroners' reports and there is no concrete proof of murder – only supposition. Sal was killed because he refused to co-operate with the Agents and would have warned the characters of their presence. They forced three bottles of strong, but expensive, liquor into his system – more than enough to kill someone with twice his constitution. But Sal Baledo was a poor, sad drunk, and alcoholics are capable of quite incredible feats when it comes to pursuing their addiction.

Sal's death hits Jenna Marcuro hard. She liked the man and felt great pity for him. She suspects foul play and, in a secret meeting with the characters, has to fight-back her tears. 'Maybe what he said is only partially true,' she says, 'but he was a weak man trying to do the right thing. There's no smoke without fire. Something bad happened on the Factory. I want you to get to the bottom of this, but act carefully. Don't let Haro know. I'll deal with him when the time is right. Say nothing to Desna either. This is between *us*.'

MISCELLANEA

Further trips to Shoranan Habitat continue over the next few months, each to pick-up spares and equipment for the Factory's rebuild. Khaer is the liaison on each trip and the characters have the opportunity to build a relationship with him.

As far as Maas employees go, he is trustworthy although he is always coy if questioned about how Hezeera managed to get hold of the original supplies consignment.

If Sal Baledo is mentioned, Khaer has never heard of the man. If the circumstances of his death are described, Khaer shrugs it off as another tragic alcoholic binge. 'We get them here on Shoranan all the time,' he says, 'but there's a good, Maas-sponsored rehab programme.'

Despite his trustworthiness, Khaer is, like many Maas employees, overworked and underpaid. He can be bribed (Deception 9+). Cr10,000 can buy his internal knowledge and a certain willingness to divulge information. 'You do know that Lothrain Free Company is under surveillance?' He says at an opportune time. 'Its standard procedure for a deal of the kind you've struck. Maas wants to sure the mining platform you've bought is put to the right kind of use and not to Maas's disadvantage. Don't ask me who is keeping tabs on you because I can't, and won't try to, find out. But watch your backs. Don't do anything stupid.'

And the characters will be monitored by Maas Black Ops agents on every trip to Shoranan Habitat. Stealthy, unassuming Maas spies watch where the characters go, who they talk to, what they do... they blend seamlessly into the background, changing personnel at strategic intervals so that the same agent does not become conspicuous. An Intelligence 12+ or Investigation 11+ is needed for a character to identify a Maas agent and, if spotted, they quickly use their knowledge of the Habitat to disappear.

MAAS BLACK OPS AGENTS

Non-descript individuals who are highly trained in stealth and deception.

After four trips out to Shoranan, Haro Lothrain calls the whole company together at the Vinen HQ. He holds up an attaché case of brushed aluminium. 'In here are the operational codes and circuits to bring the Factory back online. We have taken delivery of all the equipment we need. Now the hard work starts: we return to the Factory and get our rig working again...'

Typical Maas Agent	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age Varies	Agent (4)	8	9	8	8	7	7
Comms-1, Computers-1, Deception-2, Gun Combat (slug pistol) Investigate-1, Jack of All Trades-1, Stealth-2							
Snub Pistol (3d6-3), Cloth (4), Hand Computer, Comms link							



WORKING THEM ANGELS

The previous chapter gave several vignettes surrounding the preparations for bringing the Factory back online. This chapter follows in the same vein and concerns the work on the Factory itself. It occurs almost exclusively on the mining platform but has opportunities for adventure elsewhere in the Schaeffer Belt. In this chapter the following events unfold.

- The Factory comes back online and starts to yield more of its secrets
- The characters take part in the re-commissioning programme
- Maas Agents take a direct interest in the rock where the Factory stands
- Rogan makes his return

RESURRECTING THE MACHINE

Now in possession of the activation codes for the Factory, Haro temporarily shifts the entire base of operations for LFC out to the edge of Mhajeyr Cluster. The whole fleet makes the trip to the Factory and is berthed in the twin hangars. All tools and supplies are shipped to the rock (a task requiring two or three trips in Master of Enterprise) and Desna Greer is placed in charge of bringing the platform online.

Desna has recruited a twenty-strong workforce from Vinen Habitat, in addition to the LFC direct employees. This is a mixture of engineers, technicians and manual labourers recruited on short-term contracts to assist in the heavy work and clean-up operation that follows. Haro, Jenna and Desna use Master of Enterprise as their base, living and working aboard the ship. The characters and repair crew are berthed in the remaining ships. Living conditions are cramped until the staterooms are brought up to a usable standard and then the crew decants to them.

Four of the team are Maas agents: their task is to observe everything that goes on and, especially, to find out what it was Rogan found on the rock before the platform is disengaged and moved out of the cluster. If they find time is compromised, they are under instructions to use subtle sabotage to increase the repair process in order to get the time they need to learn as much as they can.

Order of Work

Restoring the Factory takes the following steps, with each step having a completion time.

What projects the characters find themselves working on depends on their particular skills, with characters having a speciality (such as Engineering (electronics)) being assigned specialist jobs by Desna. Characters with no immediately applicable specialisation are used as general labouring hands to the current assignment, fetching, carrying, lifting and so forth.

Stage	Time
Life Support Systems repaired	2 weeks
Power Plant overhauled and tested	2 weeks
Gravitics repaired	3 weeks
Life Support, Power Plant and Gravitics brought online	3 days
Main Mission electrics and computers repaired and calibrated	2 weeks
Central computer restored, checked, cleansed and programmed	1 week
Staterooms, kitchen and stores overhauled	10 weeks
Elevators repaired	1 week
Cargo areas repaired	4 weeks
Ore processing and refining equipment repaired and serviced	6 weeks
M drive repaired, serviced and tested	2 weeks
Drilling rigs and mining lasers installed and tested	1 week
Test drilling and processing conducted	4 days
Total	35 Weeks

For every two weeks on an assignment, characters should make a 2D roll. On a result of 8+ (DMs for Survival and Intelligence), no special event occurs. Those failing the roll should make a roll on the Assignment Events table, below, so see what special events occur during their work.

FACTORY ONLINE

By week 10 of the overall project the main computer is back online and the Factory starts to fully hum into action. Critical systems are functioning smoothly and Haro is pleased by the progress. He and Desna start to go through the extensive logs and databanks that are still resident in the memory, accompanied by the character with the highest Computers skill.

After days of review, Haro summons the core team to a meeting in Main Mission.

'I've been through the records for when the rig was used by Maas. Most of the logs are mundane and necessary for the technical performance reports. Other stuff has been either wiped or should be, but I've come across some EVA logs that don't seem to stack up. This rock was mined clean and then worked a little more before Maas decided to decommission the Factory, but there are no less than three EVA logs for two-man teams going down the main drilling shaft into the rock's interior.

'I need someone to go and take a look down in the heart of this rock. There might not be anything there, but I want to be certain. I want you,' and he points out the characters, 'to run this errand.'

D66 Event

- 11 Assignment goes smoothly and the character learns new techniques. Referee selects a skill applicable to the assignment: if character has no expertise, he gains the skill at level 0. If the skill is present, he gains 1 level
- 12 Character incurs a minor injury (1D) as a result of cramped or awkward working conditions
- 13 Character incurs a moderate injury (2D) as a result of cramped or awkward working conditions
- 14 Character incurs a major injury (3D) as a result of cramped or awkward working conditions
- 15 A major problem such as an equipment malfunction impacts on the assignment causing a delay of 1D+1 days.
- 16 The spares or equipment being used in the assignment proves to be faulty or unsuitable. A delay of 6+1D days is incurred whilst a solution is found.
- 21 Excellent work and progress in this assignment speeds-up the completion of the next. Reduce the time taken for the next assignment in the programme by 1D+1 days.
- 22 The character falls ill, either through exhaustion or from a bug caught due to the cramped living conditions. Roll Endurance 8+. If successful, the bug lasts only a day and the character works through it. If failed, the bug forces the character to lay-up for 1D+1 days, too ill to function. A successful Medic roll from a fellow character halves the illness time.
- 23 Explosion! Every character on this assignment must roll Dex 8+ or suffer 3D damage. If the roll is successful, only 1D damage is suffered.
- 24 The hired hands complain about the working conditions and threaten a go-slow. Character must make either Persuasion or Diplomacy roll of 8+ to get them back to work. If the roll fails, then the assignment is delayed by 1D days. If the roll succeeds and scores 11+, the character learns that one or two agitators are behind the unrest (Referee note: this could be Maas agent sabotage).
- 25 Character discovers that successfully completed work has been tampered with, potentially causing either a delay or, at worst, injury. Make either an Engineering or Mechanics roll of 8+ to correct the error. If the roll fails, the assignment is delayed by 1D3 days whilst it is made safe.
- 26 Someone working on the project is placed in danger, risking a moderate wound. The active character must make an applicable skill roll of 8+ to get the person to safety. Roll 1D. 1-3 One of the other characters; 4-6, a Hired Hand.
- 31 Character incurs a minor injury (1D) as a result of cramped or awkward working conditions
- 32 Character incurs a moderate injury (2D) as a result of cramped or awkward working conditions
- 33 Character incurs a major injury (3D) as a result of cramped or awkward working conditions
- 34 A major problem such as an equipment malfunction impacts on the assignment causing a delay of 1D+1 days.
- 35 After a hard but successful day of work, an impromptu party starts in the characters' quarters. Roll 1D
 1-3 A good time is had by all, although there are hangovers the next day
 4-5 Everyone parties so hard that the hangovers the next day prevent any work from being done, incurring Desna's anger.
 6 Things get out of hand and a brawl breaks out. Run a melee between the characters and 1D of the hired hands (use Petty Thug and Technician statistics from page 84 of the Traveller rules). The brawl lasts for 3+1D combat rounds until Desna and Haro appear and break it up.
- 36 The character inadvertently causes offence to one of the hired hands, gaining that person as an Enemy.
- 41 The character's negligence during the project results in injury to a colleague. He or she never forgives the character for the accident. Gain a Rival.
- 42 The assignment forces the character to work outside the Factory. Make a Control roll. If the roll succeeds, then there are no undue effects. If the roll fails, then the tetherline is severed and the character goes into freefall away from the Factory. Character must make either a Dexterity, Comms or Survival roll to find something to cling onto or radio for help. If this roll fails, then character is in freefall for 1D6 hours before a rescue mission can be scrambled.
- 43 As above, but the character's Vacc Suit suffers a breach. Make a Vacc Suit roll to repair it quickly, or suffer 2D damage due to decompression and the effects of the cold.
- 44 The character's innovative approach to a particular problem results in Desna recommending him for a payment bonus of Cr1,500.
- 45 Although they appear to be working normally, the character is aware of two hired hands engaged in suspicious activity. This could be an innocent misunderstanding, or it could be collusion between the Maas agents. How the scenario plays-out is dependent on what the character chooses to do.

- 46 A grudge between the character and one of the hired hands becomes personal and the character is attacked by surprised. The assailant manages to inflict 1D+2 damage before the character can react, but a melee develops thereafter. Use the statistics for Petty Thug on page 84 of the Traveller rules. The melee lasts for 1D rounds before others break it up.
- 51 The character discovers a secret compartment hidden in an internal area he is working on. Roll 1D for the compartment's contents:
 1. Personal effects of an old crew member of an intimate nature
 2. Cr1,000 x1D in cash
 3. A melee weapon, such as a knife or other blade
 4. A handgun, such as an autopistol or body pistol
 5. A memory stick that provides a clue to the secret find Rogan made within the asteroid
 6. A stash of the stimulant drug the secret research project was engaged in. The drug, if taken, doubles Endurance for 10+2D hours. However, the character must make a roll of 10+ to avoid incurring disturbing hallucinations or a psychotic episode lasting 1D hours. Referee should adjudicate the effects.
- 52 One of the hired hands tries to claim credit for an exceptional piece of work the character has just completed. Desna rewards him with a Cr1,000 bonus. Character gains that hired hand as a Rival.
- 53 Excellent work and progress in this assignment speeds-up the completion of the next. Reduce the time taken for the next assignment in the programme by 1D+1 days.
- 54 Work being done causes a hull breach. If the assignment occurs after Life Support has been restored, rapid depressurisation occurs. Everyone caught in the area must make Endurance 8+ to avoid suffering 2D damage before pressure is restored.
- 55 One of the Hired Hands accuses the character of stealing his tools. Character is innocent, but must roll either Diplomacy or Persuasion 8+ to convince the colleague otherwise. If the roll fails, a melee develops. Use the statistics for Petty Thug on page 84 of the Traveller rules. The melee lasts for 1D rounds before others break it up.
- 56 Character discovers that successfully completed work has been tampered with, potentially causing either a delay or, at worst, injury. Make either an Engineering or Mechanics roll of 8+ to correct the error. If the roll fails, the assignment is delayed by 1D3 days whilst it is made safe.
- 61 This assignment is completed 1D days ahead of schedule.
- 62 Unforeseen difficulties lengthen the next but one assignment by 1D6+1 days.
- 63 A fire breaks out in the area of work. 1D people working in that area suffer burns. If working in vacuum, then Vacc Suits are damaged. Make a Vacc Suit roll to repair it, or suffer 2D damage due to decompression and the effects of the cold
- 64 One of the Hired Hands is killed during an assignment. The character is called to an inquiry by Dresna which take 1D3 days. Character must make either an Intelligence + Diplomacy or Persuasion roll to avoid culpability. If found culpable, Desna imposes of Cr10,000 fine and legal proceedings will be levelled on return to Vinen. Character is confined to barracks under guard for 1D days before being transferred back to Vinen to face charges of negligent conduct
- 65 Someone working on the project is placed in danger, risking a moderate wound. The active character must make an applicable skill roll of 8+ to get the person to safety. Roll 1D. 1-3 One of the other characters; 4-6, a Hired Hand.
- 66 Assignment goes smoothly and the character learns new techniques. Referee selects a skill applicable to the assignment: if character has no expertise, he gains the skill at level 0. If the skill is present, he gains 1 level

When the main excavation of the asteroid was completed, Rogan ordered for a final deep survey of the core, to ensure nothing had been missed. The scans revealed something dense was at the core of the asteroid, but its signature had, up until then, been masked by the radioactives the rock was being mined for.

Rogan himself and his lieutenant went into the core. What they found there was never discussed although rumours filtered out in the way rumours are apt to do. This is what Sal Baledo was referring to when he spoke of an 'unusual' find.

Rogan never got the chance to retrieve what was there; Maas ordered the decommissioning and Rogan had no choice but to vacate the platform. But his find is still buried, its signature still obscured by trace radioactives.

This is what Haro Lothrain has also stumbled upon. And what the characters have been charged with investigating.

The characters need to equip for sub-surface EVA. That is, Vacc Suits, tether lines, reserve oxygen, Geiger counters, long-life lamps,

recording equipment and a constantly open two-way comm link. Before anyone enters the core of the rock a mining drone is sent in first, but its sensors scramble and break up after 50 metres relaying nothing but static. There is no option but for a team to delve deep.

Into the Breach

The main core shaft is drilled about 200 metres fore of the Factory's position. This is the larger of the excavation areas the Factory worked on during its tenure; there are other, smaller shafts elsewhere on the rock, but these have no relevance to the character's investigation.

The shaft is laser-drilled so with smooth, sheer, vertical sides 5 metres in diameter. As the environment is zero g, Control rolls are needed to manoeuvre into the shaft and then, using personal propulsion units (see page 23 of the Equipment chapter), drop themselves down into the blackness.

The shaft is pitch-black. After a drop of 40 metres the characters find that the shaft opens into a vast, mined cavern running as far as the eye can see in all directions. This is where the main yield was located and where mining drones conducted the bulk of the excavation. The cavern is 20 metres high, floor to ceiling, and hewn with the tell-tale marks of laser drills.

Sensor readings are fine at this point. Ambient radiation is at tolerable levels although Geiger counters need to be monitored regularly.

At the far side of the main cavern a secondary, mining-drone bored tunnel runs laterally for a further 10 metres before ending in a wall of stacked and laser-welded stone. Sensor readings in this tunnel go haywire, but before they do, register an object or yield of immense density beyond the wall of stone. Anyone making a Computers, Comms or Sensors roll can deduce that the massive object is both reflecting and scrambling the sensor fields rather than directly disrupting them. It is a passive activity rather than being a generated form of energy disruption.

A Prospecting or Intelligence roll of 8+ determines that the wall was built by human hand, not drones.

To get to the object, this stone wall needs to be shifted. Remote operation drones cannot work in the tunnel with any reliability, meaning that the characters have to handle the excavation manually. While they do so, they will be out of comms contact with Main Mission, so need to co-operate and focus on safety.

The excavation takes three watches to clear the wall. Use the Mining Incidents table on page 9 of the Asteroids chapter to determine if any mishaps befall the characters as they work away at the wall.



Beyond the Wall

When the wall comes down, or a hole is large enough to permit viewing is created, the characters see that the passageway continues for 3 metres before it widens into a spherical, smooth-walled room, lined with a greenish-grey material that is clearly not native to the asteroid.

In the centre of the room is a sphere, 5 metres in diameter, with a perfectly smooth and reflective surface. It does not react to light, save to reflect it, and so any attempt to use lasers against it are reflected away, possibly directly towards the firer. Physical objects simply bounce off it.

This artefact is of a kind no one has ever seen before. It was clearly placed here deliberately but there is nothing to indicate who – or what – placed it. The surface of the sphere is clearly an energy field of some form, but what is generating it from within cannot be defined. If anyone attempts to estimate the age of the sphere's cavern, it will take time and sophisticated dating techniques that only a decently outfitted laboratory can provide – however the cavern could be tens, or hundreds, of millions of years old.

The sphere is a stasis field. Within the sphere all time is halted, preserving the contents perfectly. The only thing that can disrupt the stasis field is a sustained bombardment of anti-matter – something that the Soranese will not develop for a hundred years. Or, the internal timer for the stasis field reaching a preprogrammed point and clicking the field off.

A Science (Physics) roll of 11+ is needed to guess at what the stasis field is, but there is no way, outside of complex physics calculations, to determine precisely what it is. Clearly the technology generating the stasis field is within the field itself and of a TL far in excess of anything currently capable (TL 24+).

Clearly is it alien. If the campaign is set in the Imperium, then it is a relic of the Ancients. If your campaign is set in a different Science Fiction milieu, then choose an alien race fitting with your story.

What does the stasis field contain? That is for Referees to decide. Some possibilities are suggested below.

- The alien survivor of a galactic war, the stasis field being used as a survival bubble or escape pod
- A cache of weapons or other advanced technology
- A cache of treasures or riches, deposited by someone wanting to keep his wealth securely hidden
- A creature of frightening and destructive capabilities that must be kept imprisoned
- The results of a chemical, biological or nanotechnology war – something so fundamentally harmful to all life that it needs to be eternally contained and hidden
- If the sphere is transported to the alien habitat discussed in the next scenario, then the stasis field may turn off of its own accord as comes into the proximity of ancient alien sensors designed to nullify stasis settings.

It is feasible that a stasis field could pass through the heart of a sun unscathed. Here, though, whoever deposited it wanted it hidden and chose this asteroid as the hiding place. There is clear design in the location: a remote part of an asteroid belt where the chances of finding it are exceedingly small.

Its value is incalculable. The technology used to generate the stasis field, on its own, is the stuff governments and powerful corporations will go to war over to possess. The contents the field protects may be even more important.

Rogan had an inkling of what it was he found but knew he could not remove it easily or without detection. His own ego prevented him from declaring it to Maas, and he has spent the last decade researching the nature of the technology and how it can be retrieved. His return to collect is imminent.

Removing the Sphere

The sphere is immensely dense but can be moved easily in zero g if the tunnel is widened to create egress (a process taking a watch to complete). Physically the sphere exhibits the density characteristics of iridium but once subjected to a standard gravity it behaves differently, almost as if the internal generator is compensating for the changing circumstances around it, and the sphere can be moved, although it requires mechanical effort to do so. Touching the sphere with naked flesh find that the surface is cool to the touch, but generates a tingling warmth that spreads throughout the body. Anyone touching the sphere for as little as a second generates static for about one hour afterward.

Haro commands that the sphere be left where it is for now. The priority being to get the Factory fully operational first. The characters and rest of the LFC crew are under strict orders not to mention a word about the find to any of the hired hands and are forbidden from discussing it even amongst themselves until Haro has had time to consider the options.

The Maas agents working as part of the hired hands are keeping the LFC crew under close, but discreet, observation. They know when the characters descend into the mining shaft that they are looking for something specific, but do not what it is at this stage.

Haro is reluctant to set any kind of guard over the sphere; it saps needed resource and would draw attention to the sphere. However he is prepared to station a mining drone within the cavern, just out of range of the sensory scramble, to monitor any signs of life.

The Maas agents are willing to take the chance to get into the shaft to see what it is the characters have found, assuming any gentle attempts they make to pump the characters for information fail. They are prepared for some form of surveillance and make their recon attempt at a time when the vast bulk of the crew are involved in heavy-workload projects. The aim is for one of the agents to gain access to Main Mission and use Computers to remote access the drone and switch-off its sensors, allowing two of the agents to rappel down to the caverns and investigate. A fourth agent keeps watch and attempts to deflect suspicion away from Main Mission or the shaft of any of the characters or LFC crew happen by.

If the agents gain access to the sphere they make detailed notes on hand computers that will be beamed back to Maas using high-level (-6 DM) encryption codes. The sphere disrupts image capture or photography, so anecdotal evidence is all they can provide.

If caught and challenged the agents put up a spirited defence but are not prepared to die for the cause. If possible they try to escape by taking one of the LFC 100 ton ships, but if captured protest innocent curiosity and do not divulge their true natures unless subjected to particularly brutal forms of interrogation. Again, how things develop needs to be adjudicated by the Referee according to

the circumstances of the scenario, but these are tough, loyal, well-trained agents who can hold their tongues and provide plausible cover stories for their actions.

WHO OWNS THE SPHERE?

The asteroid is technically owned by Maas, and as the sphere is in the asteroid, it can be legally proven to belong to them.

If the sphere is brought into the Factory, it can be legally claimed as legitimate salvage by LFC, although a salvage recompense would be payable to Maas – and since the sphere is priceless, any such charge is well beyond the means of LFC.

Rogan, the one who found it, is deranged enough to consider it belongs to him, and he means to take it.. His arrival is imminent.

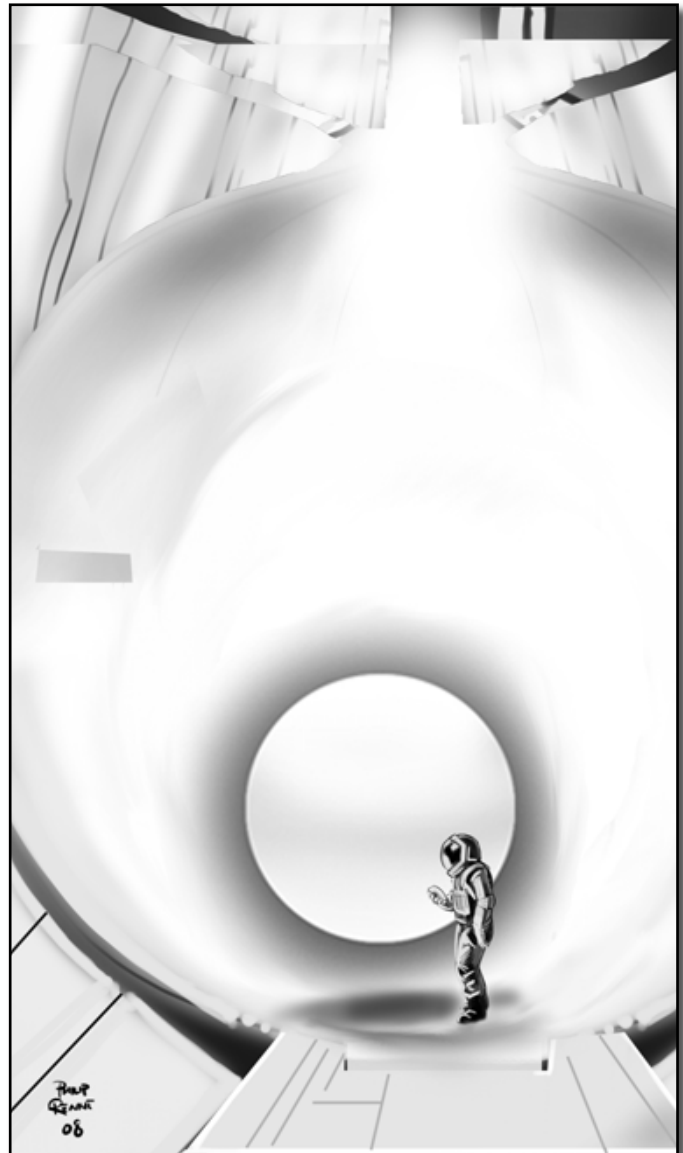
Maas will, naturally enough, want the sphere for investigation and exploitation, and, once it knows of its existence, comes to claim it. However, if the Sonares World Assembly learns of the discovery, it will want the sphere too, and has the political, legal and financial clout to go to war with Maas to secure ownership. There are legal precedents that can be used to argue that any item of alien origin belong not to the whoever controls the sector of the belt where the item is found, but to the Sonares system as a whole. Maas, though, can counter-claim with complex belt law to show that any find within a boundary it has legal rights over gives it sole ownership rights.

Any individual who takes the sphere is going to find himself the target of retrieval attempts by both the SWA and Maas, each employing its own array of dirty tricks, up to and including armed intervention and murder, to obtain it. For an artefact of this importance, individuals are entirely expendable.

ROGAN'S RETURN

Feyr Rogan, previously in the employ of the Maas Mining Directorate, has spent the past ten years at large in the belt, working independently to research the possible nature of the sphere, and build-up the finances to return with a reliable, sizable crew and retrieve it. Rogan is mentally unstable, but sensible enough to play a long game and bide his time. Maas has had no reason to suspect that the asteroid harbours such a secret because Rogan himself has been ultra careful about covering his tracks (even going as far as murdering the only other person who went into the core with him and helped him build the wall hiding the sphere from view).

By the time of this scenario, Rogan has established himself as Johnas Chryr, the entrepreneur behind Silverlight Free Company, a free company mining the remote reaches of Spindrift Free Radical. His free company mixes the competent and the disreputable; money



is the primary motivator and Rogan has surrounded himself with a crew as desperate and ruthless as himself.

His ship, the Silverlight, is a 1,000 ton Heavy Freighter (see page 125 of the Traveller rules) fitted with the standard armaments of sandcaster and two beam lasers in each of its two, triple turrets. His crew numbers twelve, including himself, and he has waited patiently to see what is to become of the Factory.

He knows the Factory's layout intimately, of course, and now that the Factory has passed into the hands of a free company, he is prepared to stake his claim to the sphere – violently if necessary. He could have done this at any point in the last few years but his paranoia led him to believe Maas was still watching his every move. With the Factory now owned by LFC he fears the loss of the globe and has now chosen to return.

FEYR ROGAN/JOHNAS CHRYR

A stocky, white-haired man with pale skin and intense, blue eyes. He smiles rarely and even then, with little humour. He is authoritarian and reacts with irrational violence when his orders and commands are not acted upon to the letter. Clinically he is a sociopath. He cannot empathise with individual or social restraints and feels no guilt or remorse for his actions. He is, however, charismatic and clever, traits that served him well in the Maas hierarchy.

Freyr Rogan	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
48	Agent (3) Belter (2) Navy (4)	10	8	7	10	8	8
Admin-2, Astrogation-1, Broker-0, Comms-0, Computers-2, Deception-1, Gun Combat (slug rifle)-1, Gun Combat (slug pistol)-1, Investigate-1, Leadership-2, Persuade-1, Prospecting-2, Remote Ops-0, Science (belt)-1, Vacc Suit-2, Zero G-2							
Snub Pistol (3d6-3), Accelerator Rifle (3d6), Cloth (4), Hand Computer, Comms unit, knife (1d6+2), Cr110,000							

MUGHR VROSS

Rogan's current lieutenant and a veteran of various corporate armies in his guise as a mercenary. Vross is blond-haired, confident, fit-looking, and almost as arrogant as Rogan himself. He ensures Rogan's instructions are carried-through to the letter and he brooks no dissent.

Mughr Vross	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
39	Army (5)	9	9	12	6	6	6
Athletics (co-ordination)-1, Athletics (endurance)-1, Comms-1, Flyer (grav)-1, Gunner-0, Gun Combat (slug pistol)-2, Gun Combat (slug rifle)-2, Heavy Weapons-1, Melee (blade)-1, Melee (unarmed)-1, Recon-1, Stealth-2, Survival-1. Vacc Suit-0							
Snub Pistol (3d6-3), Accelerator Rifle (3d6), Cloth (4), Hand Computer, Comms unit, knife (1d6+2), Cr7,800							

EELSA DESSEN

Rogan's lover and the ship's pilot, she is tough but besotted by Rogan's ruthless power. Above all, she wants to be rich and feeds Rogan's schemes with praise so that she can become closer to her desires. She has also enjoyed clandestine relations with Vross, and the two occasionally liaise when Rogan is distracted with other matters.

Eelsa Dessen	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
34	Navy (4)	6	11	6	10	10	9
Astrogation-1, Athletics (co-ordination)-2, Comms-3, Computers-2, Persuade-2, Pilot (spacecraft)-2, Pilot (small craft)-1, Pilot (capital ships)-1, Vacc Suit-1, Zero G-1							
Stunner (2d6, stun), Hand Computer, Comms unit, Flak Jacket (3), Cr13,000							

STOCK HEAVIES

The remaining nine of Rogan's crew are stock heavies who do Rogan and Vross's bidding. All are hard-bitten ex-Belters or mercenaries who are in with Rogan to get very rich.

Heavies	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
	Army (5)	9	9	12	6	6	6
Athletics (co-ordination)-1, Comms-1, Gun Combat (slug pistol)-2, Gun Combat (slug rifle)-2, Melee (blade)-1, Melee (unarmed)-1, Recon-1, Stealth-2, Survival-1. Vacc Suit-0							
Snub Pistol (3d6-3), Accelerator Rifle (3d6) or Shotgun (4d6), Cloth (4), Hand Computer, Comms unit, knife (1d6+2),							

Arrival of the Silverside

Rogan's ship, the Silverside, arrives one week before the completion of Factory's restoration. Eelsa Dessen makes contact on an open comms channel identifying the ship as a Free Company mining vessel seeking permission to use the Factory as a base for repairs. She beams across the Silverside Free Company prospecting license details, which check-out.

As the Silverside is too big to use the Factory's hangar facilities, it assumes a geo-stationary position 500 metres from the Factory's secondary hangar and sends over its shuttle for docking purposes. Eelsa pilots it, with Rogan, Vross and four heavies as the passengers.

Haro, Desna and the characters meet the crew of the Silverside in the hangar bay. Anyone succeeding at 9+ in Admin has heard vaguely of Silverside Free Company but little of its background; just another bunch of prospectors working the Schaeffer belt.

Rogan is affable and offers warm greetings to the 'famed Haro Lothrain'. He explains that his freighter has developed power plant problems which became evident whilst conducting a prospecting run in Chaer Radical, adjoining Mhajejr Cluster. 'You are the closest thing to anyone having anything approaching a repair shop this far out, so we took a chance on being able to park up here while we get things sorted out. If you have an engineer you can spare for a day or so, I'd be grateful for that. Happy to pay any berthing charge you want to levy.'

Rogan uses his Deception skill to play-up his spiel and any character can use their own Deception in an opposed check to penetrate the charade, but any cursory scans on the Silverside do pick up a power plant fluctuation, which adds +1 to Rogan's Deception skill.

Haro invites Rogan and his team to share refreshments. In their private discussion he agrees to loan Silverside tools and an engineer (use Druhk Xeren, see page 53) to get the power plant fixed, and charges standard berthing costs as part of the deal. In return, Rogan offers the aid of some of his heavies for any fetching or carrying the LFC might need. Haro also offers the Silverside crew stateroom use 'for a change', but is, in reality, eager to show-off the Factory in the hope of encouraging future business. Rogan remains courteous and affable throughout this meeting.

Rogan's Strategy

Rogan is very careful in what questions he asks about the Factory, so as not to expose his knowledge of the facility. He deliberately avoids any talk of what might lie within the rock. His strategy is to gain LFC's confidence over the next day or so, whilst his men, principally Vross and Eelsa Dessen, try to pick-up on rumours and gossip about the project and, in particular, any finds LFC have made.

Once Haro seems comfortable with Rogan's presence, Rogan sends three of his heavies, accompanied by Vross, down into the rock

to check on the find. They do nothing for now, save check on the sphere's presence, and, if caught, say only that the prospecting gene in their blood made them curious to see if the rock was completely mined out or not.

If the sphere has been moved, Vross and Dessen are put in charge of trying to find out where it has been moved to. If it is still in place, then Rogan moves to phase two of his plan.

- Once the power plant issue has been fixed (it is a minor, manufactured, malfunction), Rogan prepares to leave in the shuttle
- Four armed and vacc-suited heavies and Vross take up hiding places in the Factory. They do not return with the shuttle
- The heavies seize Main Mission by force and lock-down the Factory.
- Eelsa Dessen moves the shuttle either down to the rock's surface or round to the main hangar, depending on where the sphere is located
- Rogan comes over on a comms channel, demanding Haro Lothrain's attention. If he meets with no opposition, he says, then there will be no damage.
- Rogan and his heavies either enter the core shaft or the Factory via the main hangar, armed, and prepare to take the sphere. Vross and his Main Mission team take control of whatever systems the need to make this operation easier. They threaten to shut down life support if necessary.
- If they secure the sphere they load it aboard the shuttle using cargo robots and manoeuvre back to the freighter.
- Any attacks from the Factory are repelled by the freighter's beam weapons. The shuttle is unarmed, but Eelsa issues commands from the shuttle to the fire team on the freighter, which provides full cover for the shuttle.
- Vross and his men vacate Main Mission and head up to the main hangar where they are picked-up by the shuttle. They fight their way through if necessary

This part of the scenario is intended to offer excitement within the Factory as the characters and LFC battle Rogan and his mercenaries. If the Maas agents have not been exposed yet, then they offer direct aid to keep the sphere where it is, and even have the sense to check their own records and identify Rogan.

If Rogan and his team meet with superior tactics and resistance they fight for all they are worth to capture the sphere. It will take a significant losses on his side to cause Rogan to flee (surrender is not his style) – although he is prepared to suffer the loss of Vross, Dessen or any of his crew if it means securing the sphere.

If he obtains the sphere, then Haro decides against giving chase, no matter how much the characters might want to do so. 'That sphere is a curse,' he says, somewhat philosophically. 'Maas and the SWA will pursue him from one side of the belt to the other, so let him take it, if it means that much to him. I'll not risk more lives to keep hold of it.'

The Maas Objective

If the Maas agents succeed in learning of the sphere's existence, and LFC holds onto it, despite Rogan's efforts, high-ranking representatives from Maas Industries pay the Factory a visit. Their initial approach is to view how Lothrain has handled the re-commissioning of the investment, but, eventually, discussion turns to the sphere.

Haro is given no alternative but to surrender it, if it is still in his possession and not secreted elsewhere. Legal precedents are cited, and the potential litigation outlined in no uncertain terms. Haro has no options. Within a few weeks Maas scientists are all over the rock and remove the sphere, taking it to one of Maas's secure R&D laboratories in the Shoranan habitat.



Haro is also told to get the Factory off the rock as soon as possible, and warned that mention of the sphere will have far-reaching repercussions. The full weight of Maas's resources means that Haro has to meekly comply.

However, if Rogan has captured the sphere and escaped with it, Maas may request – or demand – LFC's help in finding it. Had Haro notified Maas immediately, they reason, then the sphere would now be safe, instead of in the hands of a madman.

In the case of a hunt for the sphere – which is outside the scope of this book – the characters can be directly involved in the chase, searching for Rogan as he moves through the Schaeffer belt attempting to outrun Maas. Eventually the Sonarese World Authority will learn of the sphere's existence and enter the fray, effectively placing the characters in the centre of a conflict between the system government and the megacorporation as the sphere, and its secrets, are sought.

Hide and Seek

A final option for this chapter involves Haro deciding to keep the sphere – if neither Rogan nor Maas have managed to take it away from him and it still remains a relative secret.

In this case, the characters are charged with delving deep into Chlaer Radical and finding an unclaimed planetoid, sufficiently obscure, but sufficiently placed, for LFC to hide the sphere and then examine it at its leisure. This involves a prospecting trip with the possibility of both Rogan and Hezeera run-ins as they conduct their survey. Rogan, if he has survived, is obsessed with owning the sphere and uses considerable ingenuity to take his revenge on the characters. Similarly Hezeera, which still believes LFC is a front for Maas, is ever-keen on disrupting its interests, and can make a considerable nuisance of itself, especially with the crew of the ship the characters encountered in the previous scenario.

Chlaer Radical has many suitable, large rocks that would make a good home for the sphere and are unlikely to be the target of rival prospectors. It is up to the characters to find such a rock, survey it, and then conduct the excavations necessary to house the sphere. The new rock also serves as the starting point for the Factory's new missions in the Chlaer Radical as it goes about its legitimate business of prospecting and mining.

ADVENTURES IN THE CHLAER RADICAL

Lothrain's intention has always been to establish the Factory as a fully-functional mining platform for LFC's own use, and as a freelance mining rig that other free companies can pay to use without the usual complications of involving Maas Industries. This chapter explores some of these possibilities beginning with the removal of the Factory from its rock in Mhajejr Cluster and its transport out to Chlaer Radical where it can legally operate.

Chlaer Radical is as large an arc of the belt as Mhajejr Cluster but protected from Maas predations by Sonares World Assembly law. Its expansive territory crosses the three belt zones and is a haven for independent solos and free companies like Lothrain.

BAU

Six weeks after the Factory is brought back online, Desna Greer summons the characters to a meeting in the Factory's common area. Their next task is to delve deep into Chlaer Radical and find a planetoid of at least 1,000 metres in radius that will form the staging post for the Factory's first forays as a working unit. Full surveys and claims should be made along the way, but LFC wants a large enough rock, with a good yield, exotics if possible, to put the Factory's capabilities to a full test. They are to take LFC-201 ('The Free Radical') and spend up to two months searching for a new home. Minor claims along the way are fine; this is effectively a BAU – Business As Usual – run.

The following asteroids are all potential claims or targets for the Factory base. Referees should use these asteroids, identified by their Chlaer Radical designation code (CRXXXXX), as asteroids the characters come across in their travels.

CR100520

First Impressions: A roughly spherical rock left jagged by a distant impact with another object. A single, large crater in the sun-side of the asteroid

Location: N Zone
C Class (No yield)
100 tons
Survey Time: 1 watch

CR252819

First Impressions: An oval asteroid pock-marked with craters. Largely worthless crystalline material

Location: C Zone
C Class (Radioactives)
1,000,000 tons

Yield Type: Uranium, Thorium (useful in nuclear fuel production)
Yield Amount: 1% (10,000 tons)
Survey Time: 3 watches

CR234837

First Impressions: a 10km ovoid with a relatively smooth, crystalline surface. Although its yield is likely to be low-grade minerals and ore, it could be hollowed-out for use as a Habitat.

Location: M Zone
C Class (Crystalline materials)
Large Planetoid: 10km radius
Yield Type: Quartz, mica, copper, zinc
Yield Amount: 23% (1,000,000 tons)

CR326078

First Impressions: A 1km radius flattened slab of ice-covered rock with an eccentric axial spin.

Location: Outer Trojans
C Class (Organic compounds)
Small Planetoid: 1km radius
Yield Type: Organic compounds (methane, carbon, potassium), ice-locked
Yield Amount: 20 tons
Survey Time: 5 watches

CR476067

First Impressions: A dull globe of rock, with two large ice-filled craters (ammonia).

Location: M Zone
M Class (Nickel Iron)
Small Planetoid: 700 metre radius
Yield Type: Nickel Iron core surrounded by valueless rock
Yield Amount: 34,000 tons
Survey Time: 4 watches

CR242159

First impressions: A wedge-shaped, glistening asteroid with surface-level mineral deposits.

Location: N Zone
M Class (exotic minerals)
10,000 tons
Yield Type: Zircon
Yield Amount: 3,400 tons
Survey Time: 3 watches

CR401109

First Impressions: An irregular ovoid of carbonaceous material with a lively concentration of radioactives at its core.

Location: C Zone

C Class (Radioactives)

Small Planetoid: 1,400 metre radius

Yield Type: Strontium, Plutonium

Yield Amount: 4,100 tons

Any of the small planetoids is useful as the staging post for the Factory and it is up to the characters which of these (if any) they choose to recommend to Desna Greer (CR401109 is the best choice). All of the asteroids have something to offer yield-wise, and to maintain presence in Chlaer the characters have permission to commence small-scale, ship-based mining operations, or to wait until the Factory is released from its current holding and can be moved out to the designated asteroid.

If the characters are looking for a new home for the sphere, then CR476067 is as good as any: an appreciable yield, and unlikely to be the target for major claims, but with no surprise for any prospectors to find a claim beacon around it.

MOVING INTO BUSINESS

Eventually, the Factory moves. Its bindings on the rock it has occupied for so long are released, its M drive spun-up and, accompanied by the Lothrain fleet, it makes its steady transit to its designated asteroid and is manoeuvred carefully into position and locked down. Once system testing and calibration has completed, drilling and processing begins.

The mining process with the Factory is largely automated. The characters are required to monitor operations, assist in processor and refining maintenance, and for transporting cargoes of refined ore to the key markets – a mixture of Maas and other, smaller companies, some based in orbit around Soranese Prime and II, others planetside.

Business as Usual continues for a year. Production is good and no major disasters strike the Factory with only the odd machinery failure causing minor delays. Desna is left in charge of the Factory whilst Haro and Jenna return to Vinen Habitat. The aim is to recruit two long-term Factory managers who will rotate duties. Some of the characters may be eligible for the position: any character who has distinguished himself during the previous scenarios will be urged by Desna or Jenna to apply for the job. Any character with Admin 2, Leadership 2 or Int+Edu of 18+ is given an interview. Getting the job is down to the Referee to decide, depending on candidates and how the campaign is to progress.

LFC also recruits additional crew for the Factory – 12 in all – who will assist in maintenance, processing and housekeeping (cooking, cleaning, and so forth).

So, for the next 12 months the characters spend their time shuttling between the Factory, Vinen, Shoranan, Sonares I and II and the belt, hauling cargo, spares and relief crew members. Business is stable, but not brilliant; it will take time for the Factory to start paying for itself.

The following vignettes take place after a year and can be dropped, in any order, into the campaign.

Tchain Gang

The Tchain Combine is the first free company to contract the Factory's services. Tchain is a free company slightly smaller than LFC but reasonably profitable. It has extracted 300 tons of radioactives from a planetoid in the Chlaer Radical and wants the ores processed to maximise the market value.

The ore arrives aboard a 400 ton Far Trader similar to the Master of Enterprise. It has a crew of six who stay onboard the Factory during the processing – which will take a week. As a sideline the Tchain crew trade narcotics; mostly stimulants but also some addictive leisure drugs. The standing crew of the Factory are considered potential customers and the Tchain crew manage to sell some of their stash to 1D+1 of the Factory crew (which may include the characters).

The leisure drug is known as Steam. A potent hallucinogenic it releases all inhibitions for a short time but causes lethargy for 1D3 days following the dose. Not only does the drug hit the Factory's productivity, but it also poses serious issues for safety.

- The first the characters know of the presence of the drug is when three of the production staff fail to report for their shift. They exhibit 'flu like symptoms and complain of dizziness. A Medic roll does not immediately confirm substance abuse; it takes someone with Medic 3 and a roll of 9+ to determine Steam as the cause. Furthermore, the three men are unable to work for 2 days, which impacts on their colleagues and the general smooth running of the Factory.
- The second incident resulting from Steam abuse is a fight in the canteen between one of the Tchain Belters and one of the Factory crew. The Belter is trying to sell a dose of Steam at twice its previous rate and the Factory engineer is enraged. The brawl spills out to encompass more men from both the Factory and the Tchain gang; several are injured and the technician who started the brawl is stabbed. The characters have to intervene to stop the escalating violence: knives are involved and one of the Tchain Belters pulls a concealed body pistol. Neither side owns-up to the real cause of the fracas, but what the Tchain have done so far warrants their expulsion from the Factory. However, as the first contract from an external customer is on the line, there is reluctance to press charges against the Tchain. Tensions grow as the Tchain, knowing what they have got away with, swagger about the Factory dropping non-too subtle hints about how important they are to the Factory. Violence threatens

to break out again several times over the next few days and the characters have to keep the peace until the processing is complete and the Tchain can be compelled to leave.

Mayday... Mayday...

Main Mission picks-up a distress beacon. It is estimated that the mayday source is 500,000km from the Factory, on the edge of the C Zone – about 6 hours at Thrust 2. The characters are sent to investigate, taking LFC101 as the rescue craft.

As the characters approach the distress location they find a yacht (of the type found on page 126 of the Traveller rules) without any forward momentum but revolving on its own axis at a rate of one revolution per minute. A survey shows that the yacht has an impact on its port side; not a missile or a laser burn, but caused by a collision with a large object. The impact was enough to damage the power plant and M drive, and in trying to correct the course the pilot has killed the thrust and somehow sent the ship into its dizzying spin.

The yacht is carrying eight passengers: the wayward children and their friends of a Sonarese industrial tycoon who had chartered the yacht for a tour of the outer clusters and Geddes, the innermost of the Sonara system gas giants.

The damage was caused by a collision with a 50 ton asteroid. The asteroid was inert, but the yacht's pilot is one of the tycoon's daughters and she is inexperienced. The yacht's navigation programmes are sub-standard for this region of the belt and, although collisions are rare, this part of the solar system is filled with all kinds of unpredictable natural debris.

The characters have a number of objectives.

- Stop the yacht's spin. It is too dangerous to dock the characters' ship with the yacht, but an individual could EVA across to the stricken vessel and gain manual access. This requires a Control roll at a DM of -6 to achieve safely. Inside, anyone with Pilot 1 or higher will be able to fire-up the ship's stabilisers to correct the thrust and stop the ship's spinning. There are other ways, such as imparting a gently increasing counter thrust to slow and then halt the yacht's spinning. This is a risky manoeuvre requiring Pilot 10+ to avoid damage to the characters' ship.
- Assess the situation within the yacht. Of the passengers two are dead as a result of the impact. The pilot, a 21 year-old girl, is unconscious, and the remaining five passengers are hysterical and exceedingly ill with motion sickness. The characters need to clean them up, attend to the pilot and dead, and get the passengers off the yacht and back to the Factory.
- Tow the yacht back to the Factory

The yacht is badly damaged but could be salvaged . It will require a dry dock and several months of work. Messages can be got to the

pilot's father who is on Sonares II, and he arrives after two weeks, relieved that his children are safe and grateful for the Factory's help. As a result he pledges to ensure that LFC is foremost in ore processing and haulage contracts from both his companies and others he can influence. This deal is potentially worth Cr10 million to LFC, and Haro Lothrain expresses his personal gratitude to the characters.

In the fortnight between the rescue and her father arriving, Leishea, the daughter, forms an emotional bond with one of her rescuers which, if allowed to develop, turns into a love affair. How this develops is entirely up the Referee and player whose character is the recipient of Leishea's affections.

Signs of Life

News of LFC's acquisition of the Factory has reached the Sonares World Assembly (perhaps as part of the recommendations by the tycoon father in the previous section) and a trade delegation from the System and Belt Trade Directorate pays a visit to the mining rig, arriving in a spectacularly ostentatious yacht that berths in the main hangar.

Haro and Jenna make the trip over from Vinen to greet the delegation personally. The visitors include the Vice President of Belt Affairs, Vice President of System Commerce and various officials and flunkies. They are keen to see how LFC has adapted the Factory operation to an independent way of working and are curious to know how dealing with Maas on such a grand project has worked out.



The characters are introduced to the delegates during a dinner held aboard the yacht. The delegates are keen to discuss the various events of the past year or so, and hear 'from the working men'. The characters should be encouraged to tell individual stories but Haro and Jenna watch them carefully and interrupt courteously if the conversation strays into areas such as the sphere.

No matter how much the characters steer clear of this subject, however, the Vice President of Belt Affairs is determined to raise it in some form. 'We've heard rumours that something special and unique was found in the shell of the Mhajejr asteroid. I wondered what you know of this speculation?'

No matter how much the characters or Haro skirt around the issue, the conversation becomes quite serious and the Belt Affairs VP presses on. 'Whatever it was, you should know that it is not the first strange thing encountered in the Schaeffer belt. Clearly, LFC is capable of managing large and sensitive projects discreetly, and we would like your help on a research mission we have in mind.'

This unexpected turn of events disturbs Haro, Jenna and Desna, and they ask for a recess to discuss. It is clear that the delegation knows more than it is saying, and also clear that it is displaying a level of trust that could work to LFC's advantage. Debate over what to do should be encouraged amongst the characters, but Haro finally decides to listen to what the delegation has to say.

'Six months ago an independent Belter by the name of Garna Sohl staked a claim for an asteroid in the Spindriff Radical designated SR7747-09346. What he found there was not saleable but of considerable interest to the SWA, if his story is true. What we want is a research team that is independent and that we can trust to fully survey SR7747-09346 and provide its opinion.'

The obvious question is, why does the SWA need the LFC? As a world government it has considerable resources to draw upon and could easily put its own, state-sponsored research team into the field. 'This is true,' the VP says, 'but government departments work to budgets. Projects require approval. Belter hearsay, no matter how intriguing, is insufficient grounds for getting the green light. Also, there are certain projects that our directorates wish to pursue without various other directorates becoming involved at too early a stage. I am sanctioned to hire freelance consultants, hence my request.'

More debate continues but Haro agrees, and the details of the deal are hammered out privately. But, needless to say, the characters are assigned to the task.

SOHL'S RECORDING

Garna Sohl found this asteroid on a routine prospecting run and promptly filed his claim. The asteroid showed nickel iron deposits and some radioactives; no great yield, but enough for one man and his singlenesship.

Sohl found the asteroid to be hollow. When he delved inside, he found that the innards had been deliberately hollowed-out, in much the same way small planetoids are hollowed out to turn them into Habitats. He also found a habitat: but certainly not one of human origin.

Being superstitious and safety conscious, he backed-off. Knowing that this was the kind of find that could make him very rich, he did not go through the usual broker channels but went, instead, to the Belt Affairs Directorate directly. They listened to Sohl's story, looked at the video feeds, and formulated the strategy they have proposed to LFC. The Belt and System Commerce Directorates want to investigate but have to keep it low-key. An official project would end-up involving half a dozen SWA directorates with competing aims, claims and agendas. For now, the Belt and System Commerce Directorates want to own the discovery, research it as far as they can, and 'keep it within the department' before playing their hand elsewhere within the SWA. They would be effectively sidelined if the research was made official, and this is too great a discovery to relinquish so easily.

The VP for the Belt Affairs Directorate plays the team the recording Sohl made.

The recording is of poor quality and not very lengthy. In grainy, flickering pictures, clearly taken using the low-key recording capabilities of a hand computer, the characters see that buildings of a strange design have been carved into the inner walls of the hollowed-out asteroid. Tall columns come into focus that could be statues or support pillars and several huge archways are visible before the recording ends.

This could be a clever hoax: a Computers roll or other suitable skill determines that it is impossible to accurately verify it. If it is a forgery, then considerable effort and expense was gone to make it look realistic. If it is real, then it is the ultimate find: proof of intelligent life in the Sonara system predating humankind.

Sohl, the characters learn, has been an unsuccessful solo Belter for a decade. He has a reputation for embellishment and he is in considerable debt. But the Belt Directorate is prepared to take a certain risk to verify his claims. Sohl is currently on Sonares I living in a high grade hotel at the directorate's expense whilst his claim is investigated. If proved to be true, his money worries will be over.

The journey to SR7747-09346 is 8 days at Thrust 1 and 6 days at Thrust 2. Haro assigns the characters LFC-201 ('The Free Radical'). Video recording gear is provided, along with essential prospecting gear.

THE SITUATION

The habitat Sohl has stumbled upon is a remnant of the same civilisation that created the stasis field sphere. Highly advanced,

they established several belt colonies whilst fleeing from a terrible war in their home system, hundreds of light years distant. The atmospheres of Sonares I and II was hostile to them, and the refugees knew that, if their pursuers followed, a planet would be the first place they would look. Hence, the species found refuge in the Schaeffer belt, thereby eluding detection.

What became of them is unknown, and only a handful of refuges were established before the species died out (or was found and killed). Amongst the countless rocks and asteroids in the Schaeffer belt, stumbling across the remnants of their civilisation has astronomical odds but Sohl, and Rogan before him, struck lucky.

The precise nature of this discovery is up to Referees to detail, but guidelines are given below. Consider these suggestions, rather than hard-and-fast encounters, although what is provided here can be used as-is without the need for significant work.

SR7747-09346

Location: Spindrift C Zone
 C Class (Nickel iron; trace radioactives)
 Small Planetoid: 800m radius
 Yield Type: Nickel Iron and radioactives
 Yield Amount: 20 tons
 Survey Time: 4 watches

The asteroid is a blocky sphere of dark, ore-bearing stone. Sohl's claim beacon emits its information as soon as The Free Radical enters sensor range. The rock has a very slow spin on its horizontal (0.15 GF) axis, so landing on its surface is an easy enough task for a competent pilot.

Three craters pock-mark the asteroid's surface: these are not deep – only a few metres – but they are cone shaped and a successful Prospecting or Science (Geology) roll suggests that these are not natural craters, but crafted to look natural. Sohl's drilling point into the asteroid is in the second of the craters with a natural shaft forming five metres into the rock and large enough to allow two people abreast to gain entry to the interior.

THE HABITAT

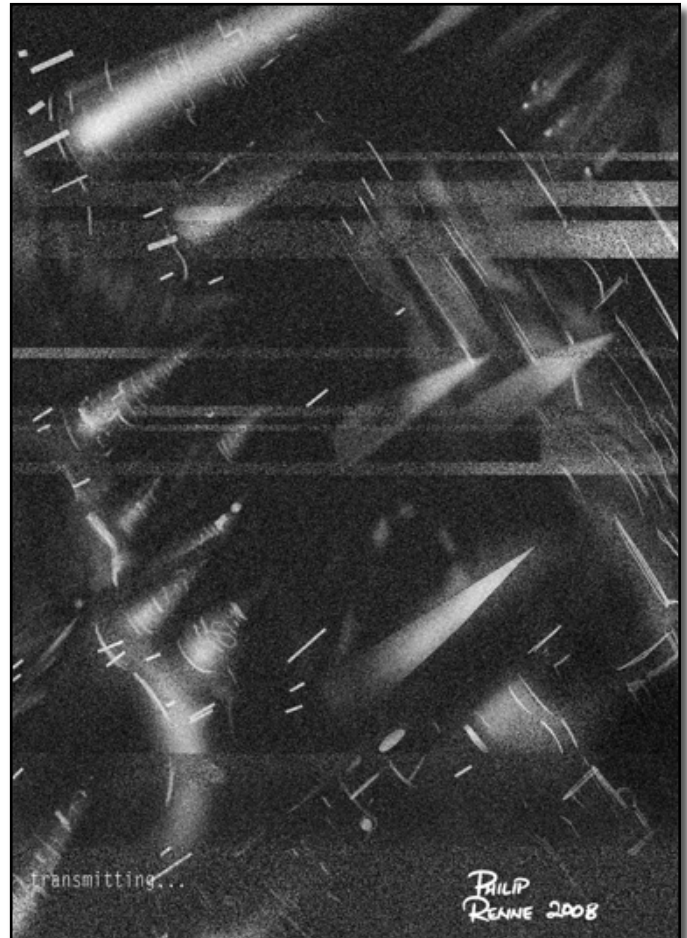
As Sohl's video showed, the inside contains remnants of a civilisation. As the characters descend through the shaft, their suit lights pick-up the outlines of buildings carved into the interior walls of the hollowed-out asteroid. The hollow is roughly elliptical and about 700 metres deep, 500 metres wide and 650 metres end-to-end. The buildings become more visible as the characters descend: huge, conical, ornate structures decorated with intricate, swirling carvings across almost their entire surfaces. Windows and arched doorways appear at regular intervals indicating internal levels and, at the base of each cone (and there are 50) is a semi-circle of columns. The conical buildings are 13 metres in width at the base, tapering to five metres at the apex. They are spaced regularly and it takes no genius to deduct that whoever carved this incredible vista had both

advanced tools and time. With lasers the carved city, including all its intricacies, would take a century to create.

The columns at the base of the cones are more like totem poles than statues. Sohl never got close enough to examine them. Each is eight metres high and a half metre across. The columns are carved straight from the rock of the asteroid which has been smoothed and then etched in the same way as each of the cones. The designs run in double helical bands mimicking the structure of DNA. Between each pair of bands are thousands of small, swirling inscriptions and it is possible to make-out repeating characters and patterns of characters, indicating that this is most certainly script rather than decoration.

The whole habitat is awe-inspiring and it is impossible to tell if this is a temple, a set of residences or a mixture of the too. Any signs of habitation have long-since disappeared; there are no representations of what these people looked like – although astute observers (Investigation 9+) notice that the numbers 10, 50 and 150 seem to be represented in various structures and repeated throughout the complex.

The floor of the asteroid has been rendered flat and smooth and inscribed with a complex pattern of long, unbroken, straight lines radiating out from a central hub in the very centre of the floor. There



2D	Event
2	<p>Find a hidden alcove, compartment or small chamber, concealed in one of the cone rooms or at the base of one of the columns. The hidden area contains one of the following (1D):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A small, fist-sized stasis field sphere. The sphere, if it can be opened, contains a thumb-sized device that is a memory stick of alien manufacture. It also contains a palm-sized device, flat and crystalline, that is the stasis field generator. Once the generator is switched off, it cannot be reactivated. The memory stick contains sound files that are clearly an alien language. The voice is low and booming, the words almost a chant. This is a diary, describing the alien's exodus from a distant galaxy in a bid to escape a civil war 2. The petrified skeleton of an alien. The skeleton has a narrow, elongated head with a beak-like mouth and shallow, round eye sockets. There is no apparent nose, but there are apertures for ears. The hands are five-fingered, as are the toes; all are long and slender, with human-like joints. The spine is not a columnar collection of vertebrae, but a strong lattice work of bone that is connected with complex ligaments to allow for considerable flexibility. The lattice extends to the front of the creature forming a complex ribcage. The legs are short, in comparison with the torso, but powerfully built. It is impossible to determine the alien's gender or how it died. 3. A collection of very thin slabs of mica, approximately the same size as a piece of A5 paper. The mica is translucent grey and covered in yet more symbols, arranged in vertical lines. 4. A discus of a crystalline material that is a complex amalgam of molecules unlike anything the characters have ever seen before. If twisted in two hands (roll Dex 8+) the discus changes its form, its molecular structure reshaping the crystal into a pyramid shape. The structure of this object is fascinating: a collection of molecular gears programmed to transform the substance's intrinsic shape when pressure is applied. Its commercial possibilities are staggering. 5. An exquisitely carved crystalline blade, set with a tooled, steel handle. The blade is very sharp (1d6+4 damage) and very strong. 6. A set of pipes, made of crystal, that are not unlike panpipes. When played they emit a low, bass sound.
3	<p>When touched in a particular place, one of the columns slowly starts to revolve, screeching as it twists on its ancient mechanism. As it rotates it pauses and observant characters notice that striations at the base of the column align perfectly with the lines carved on the floor. The combination of the floor lines and sigils carved into the column form a complex mathematical relationship – but it will take years to decipher its purpose. After one full revolution the column stops and will not move again.</p>
4	<p>A peculiar grey algae is found growing along the ceiling of one of the cone rooms. It is slimy to the touch. If analysed, it is a simple organism akin to a mould but capable of surviving in anaerobic environments and extremes of temperature. It is a harmless substance that thrives in laboratory conditions, doubling in size at room temperature every hour. If left long enough, it could run riot. It cannot be damaged by either fire or cold, but can be dissolved by an acute alkali solution.</p>
5	<p>The floor in one of the levels does not consist of 150 straight lines, but is a series of concentric circles. Along one of the outer circles are small, wavy marks. Science (Astronomy) or Astrogation deduces that this is a representation of the Sonara system. The rings indicated the orbits and relative positions of the planets. The ring marked with wavy lines represents the Schaeffer belt. Could the wavy lines represent the location of other such habitats? There are six in total.</p>
6	<p>A palm-sized device, flat and crystalline, etched with a series of equally-spaced wavy sigils, is found lodged in a naturally occurring fissure in one of the walls of a cone. This is a stasis field generator that has never been activated. If the sigils are touched in the right sequence (Int 12+), the field operates, enveloping the user. The field is set to switch itself off in one million years' time. For the person caught inside, no time will seem to pass at all. There is a five second delay before the stasis field forms allowing a character to leap clear on a roll of Dex 8+.</p>
7	<p>One of the floors or ceilings of a cone building has become inherently unstable and crumbles away if any pressure is exerted upon it. In zero g this poses a mild hazard from loose debris, but nothing else.</p>
8	<p>One of the rooms has 150 palm-sized ovals of crystal embedded into the wall. If the right one is pressed (a roll of 11, 22, 33, 44, 55 or 66 on D66), beams of brilliant white light shoot between all the crystal shards, forming a webwork across the room. Pin-pricks of red light form along different parts of the network of light, forming hundreds of different points. This is a representation of the aliens' home galaxy and the extent of their empire.</p>
9	<p>A fist-sized hole in a wall forms an arm-length tunnel terminating in an oval of crystal. If grasped, the crystal glows and its holder receives a burst of mental imagery depicting war, carnage and the death of entire solar systems with sun-bursting weapons. Battles are fought on a mathematical level with weapons of pure geometry that take nanoseconds to achieve their destructive potential. Entire stars die in an instant. The character experiencing this must roll Endurance 10+ or be forever haunted by the mental imagery he has experienced.</p>
10	<p>One of the columns, when touched, topples and floats free of its anchoring. Anyone nearby must roll Zero-G 8+ or Dex 9+ to avoid a collision with the toppling column. If struck, the column causes 3d6 damage and ruptures the Vacc Suit.</p>
11	<p>In a room, a sliver of crystal is set into a stone plinth in the centre of the room. When squeezed it produces low, sonorous music that lasts for precisely 150 seconds. If activated again, the tune is always different.</p>
12	<p>A sliver of crystal is set into a stone plinth in the centre of the room. When squeezed a beam of light forms a holographic image before it. The creature it depicts is tall, lithe, six limbed, and with no discernible head – just a stump of a neck from which project eight, arm-length fronds of dark material. The creature's image revolves, showing incredibly powerful musculature, clawed feet, and long, three-fingered hands. This is not one of the aliens that built this place, but one of their enemies.</p>

are 150 such lines and, between them, at regular 10 metre intervals are symbols resembling those found on the pillars and the outside of the cones.

Investigating the inside of the cones takes time. Most of them are devoid of features, save for more of the inscriptions found on the outside and more decorations of straight lines, always 150 of them, radiating from a central point either in the floor or ceiling. Each cone is divided into twenty levels connected by steep, narrow, spiral stairs, again carved from the rock of the asteroid. Some of the stairs are worn through use, indicating a period of significant habitation in some of the cones, but not in others. The levels are mostly open and grow narrower as one scales the inside of the cone. Some of the lower levels are divided into separate, regular-sized chambers by partition walls of asteroid rock.

EVENTS WITHIN THE ALIEN HABITAT

The habitat, whilst deserted, need not be without incident. The events in the following table can either be rolled randomly or deliberately inserted into the characters' exploration of the asteroid interior.

If used as a random even table, characters should roll 2D every hour. A result of 4+ indicates there is no event. There are no DMs for skills or characteristics.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FIND

Anything the characters find or retrieve from the asteroid is of acute scientific interest to the SWA Belt Affairs Directorate. A full debriefing with the characters is held either at the Factory or aboard the Directorate's yacht and the characters are questioned in detail about every aspect of their investigation: what they saw, touched, felt, thought and found. Any artefacts the characters bring out of the asteroid are requested by the Belt Directorate and taken away for analysis: it is made clear to the characters that if they are trying to hide anything, and such items are subsequently found or traced to them, they will face personal prosecution under SWA and Belt law.

The asteroid is placed under SWA protection. This is done anonymously, with a new claim beacon being placed around the asteroid that emits a transmission warning of dense radioactive hazards.

The Belt Directorate will continue to investigate the site for many months and LFC may well be involved in these explorations. Trying to gag the characters or LFC is not a productive policy, especially if LFC's silence can be better bought with continued, if limited, involvement.

Haro rewards the characters for their part in the investigation with a Cr10,000 bonus and the customary warning not to discuss the find with anyone.

Whether or not the asteroid habitat goes on to determine the deep history of the Sonara system is for individual referees to decide; it is beyond the scope of the Beltstrike book. However, a secret as massive as this has a habit of getting out, with or without the characters' involvement, and so there is plenty of scope for the characters to be involved in either protecting the habitat from prying eyes or even helping others to gain clandestine access, depending on the characters' actions and agendas.

One thing to be considered for developing this vignette as part of a Beltstrike campaign is the existence of other alien activity elsewhere in the Schaeffer belt. The characters may very well be engaged to survey these other relics, and indeed the stasis sphere so coveted by Rogan may prove to contain more information and clues that will either hinder or assist in future surveys. Rogan himself, if he is still active and has the original sphere, may even launch his own campaign to research the alien presence in the belt: perhaps he learns of Garna Sohl's find and makes contact with the (now rich and retired) Belter (and with his ruthless streak, Rogan would be merciless in any dealings with Sohl).



BELT WAR

Maas Industries has, for many years, sought control of the Free Radicals in the Schaeffer Belt. Its claim is that as the largest single investor in belt exploration, it should be given the freedom of the entire belt. The SWA, seeking to control the power of the corporations, has maintained that the belt should be divided into corporate clusters and free areas for independent enterprise. For decades this has been the norm.

The political situation on Sonares Prime has, in recent years, become unstable. Asrofalk Murghen-Chaeseyn, the charismatic dictator of Sonares, is in declining health. His political position is becoming untenable. Around him, potential rivals are gathering in preparation for his death, and as so much of Sonares prosperity has been linked with Murghen-Chaeseyn's personal influence, a new order would inevitably emerge with his passing. Several of his senior aides are moving to unite more closely with the industrial combines whilst others are pushing for greater restrictions on the combines' activities across the Sonares system.

ASROFALK MURGHEN- CHAESEYN'S DEATH

Something happens resulting in the death of the dictator. He is either assassinated (by his own people, or by the combines) or dies of natural causes or the cancer wracking his body. No one is sure, but a power struggle is triggered.

The combines, led by Maas, ally closely with the senior aides who seek the new order. Against them are Murghen-Chaeseyn's faithful followers seeking to maintain the division between SWA and industrial powers. This is of prime importance on the Sonares homeworld and Sonares II, but out in the Schaeffer belt, life continues with relative normality. Until, that is, Maas makes a bold move and starts to shift its business into the Free Radicals.

Free company and solo prospectors suddenly find the sacrosanct areas of the Schaeffer belt swarming with Maas-mandated prospectors. Anger turns into open hostility as independent claims are annexed by Maas claim beacons. Angry independent Belters turn their mining lasers on these Maas claim beacons and, in some isolated incidents, on Maas prospectors. Deaths result. War in the belt is imminent.

The independent habitats receive a message to each of their governing authorities:

*From: The Sonares Industrial Alliance
To: All residents of the Free Radicals*

Be it known that, with immediate effect, Maas Industries, a proud partner of the Sonares Industrial Alliance, considers the Free Radicals of the Schaeffer belt to be open territory for exploitation and gain. With the death of the most august leader, Asrofalk Murghen-Chaeseyn, certain statutes are now void: this includes the edicts that had secured the Free Radicals as purely independent territory. They are now considered, by the Sonares Industrial Alliance, to be free markets open to any and all interests.

As the principal mining conglomerate at work in the Schaeffer belt, Maas Industries intends to take full opportunity of the commodities the Free Radicals have to offer. It wishes to share this with the independent prospectors and free companies who work the Radicals, but hereby makes it known that retaliation or hostile action levelled against Maas installations and/or employees will be met with appropriate force.

Those who wish to become partners in the Sonares Industrial Alliance will find themselves beneficially placed in this new order. The Schaeffer belt is large enough to accommodate all interests. The Sonares Industrial Alliance does not seek hostility, but co-operation.

End Message

The message is a gauntlet. The Sonares Industrial Alliance is the new organisation consisting of ex-SWA movers and shakers and the industrial combines. This new organisation commands its own armed forces including a navy capable of enforcing its presence in the Free Radicals. The message is clear: accept this new situation or face Maas imposition.

THE FREE RADICAL RESPONSE

The Free Radicals are split in how they take the Maas message. Vinen reacts angrily: Vinen habitat's links with the SWA and support for the old regime was strong, and it intends to resist Maas intrusion in whatever way it can. Spindrift radical, through having no habitat, is free-game, and the most likely front for any hostile activity. Chlaer Radical, through Atiensis habitat, sees the incursion as an inevitability and urges Vinen to accept the terms, perhaps working towards some kind of diplomatic settlement beneficial to all.

For Lothrain Free Company, the position is uncertain, with its previously good relations with Maas are now under threat. Pressure

from Vinen habitat on Haro to side with Vinen's stance is heavy. Chlaer Radical, where the Factory is now working, seeks Lothrain support for its position of mediation and pacification. Delegations from both sides travel out to the Factory to try to sway Haro to their cause.

Haro, Jenna and Desna meet with the two delegations privately. Raised voices are heard in both meetings. The Chlaer delegation arrives with a Maas executive as part of its entourage – someone Haro seems to know, but the Maas executive's demeanour is anything but friendly. The Vinen delegation includes the current president of the VA, Vahrena Masq, and she is greeted warmly by Haro Lothrain. After the private meeting, Vahrena Masq and her security entourage tour the Factory and meet with the LFC employees, including the characters. She takes the opportunity to discuss their feelings regarding the current situation and listens to their views. She then, eloquently but quietly, states her own case for opposing Maas and its cronies. Treat Vahrena Masq as having Advocate 3 and Persuasion 3. In her conversations with the characters, make an opposed test for Vahrena against each character's Intelligence (roll 2D and add the Int DM). The one with the highest Effect (see page 50 of the Traveller rules) is the winner:

If Vahrena Masq wins – she successfully convinces the character to take a stand against Maas. The Free Radicals must remain free!

If the character wins – they may make up their own mind on which side to take. Vahrena is disappointed if they are sympathetic to appeasement, and delighted if they side with Vinen.

Swinging the Odds

After the meetings with the two delegations, Haro, clearly troubled, summons Jenna, Desna and the characters into a private meeting. Here they will discuss what they are to do. Haro sees three options:

- Side with Vinen and effectively plunge LFC into the impending war
- Side with Chlaer and Maas, taking advantage of the old relationship, but risking complete ostracism from the independents on Vinen
- Declare no affiliation and attempt to remain neutral.

Haro currently favours the second option, despite Vahrena Masq's representations. The Factory and LFC is vulnerable. As Haro sees things, war can be avoided, but not if Vinen remains belligerent.

Jenna sides with Haro. Desna favours Vinen. There is a clear rift between the two women, and Desna is resentful of Jenna's loyalty to Haro when, in her mind, independence is all that matters. However, Haro wants the opinions of the characters. He asks each in turn to state how they feel and how they should act. Any character refusing to take a stand is counted as favouring neutrality.

The Referee should allow each character to make either an Intelligence, Advocate, Diplomacy or Persuasion roll (8+). The Effect of their roll reflects the strength of their argument. Add together the Effects for each position and compare. Add 4 to the total Effect for the second option, reflecting Jenna and Haro's stance; and add 2 to the first option Effect to reflect Desna's. The option with the highest effect determines how LFC aligns itself in the forthcoming confrontations: either with Vinen, against it, or remaining neutral.

Haro is accepting of the majority outcome, listening to the reasoned arguments and making a conclusion based on consensus.

If the LFC sides with Chlaer and Maas, Desna immediately resigns her position and tells Haro, in no uncertain terms, that he is a traitor to everything they have built together. She leaves the Factory, taking one of the 100-ton ships, plotting course for Vinen habitat.

If LFC sides with Vinen, Jenna, fearful of the consequences, also makes plans to leave, heading for Shoranan habitat.

In either case the characters, depending on their reactions, may try to persuade either woman to remain. Either Diplomacy or Persuasion skills can be used, but at a -6DM. If either is convinced to remain, they grudgingly accept the majority decision but substantial tension exists between them, Haro and the characters of the opposing view.

LFC's stance is crucial to the way the following scenarios are handled as part of the Belt War. Referees will need to adjudicate the unfolding events carefully, taking into account the various strengths of feeling and, of course, the position LFC occupies.

MAAS ATTACKS!

This scenario concerns how Maas treats the Factory following the LFC's decision.

If LFC has sided with Chlaer Radical and Maas, or opted for neutrality, Maas effectively commandeers the Factory, leaving Haro as a puppet owner.

If LFC has sided with Vinen, Maas attempts to annex the Factory by force.

The Situation

The Factory is still located in the Chlaer Radical. A Maas heavy cruiser (identical configuration to the Mercenary Cruiser on page 127 of the Traveller rules) nears the Factory and slows to an approach speed. No one, not least Haro, is expecting an armed cruiser. When comms channels are opened, the appropriate message for the situation is broadcast:



'This is Captain Aghayt of the *Sonares Industrial Alliance* vessel 'Random Pattern'. I am authorised by Maas Industries to commune with Haro Lothrain concerning an urgent threat to the mining installation known as The Factory. Our shuttles are being despatched. Please have docking facilities prepared immediately.'

Or, if LFC has sided *against* Maas...

'This is Captain Aghayt of the *Sonares Industrial Alliance* vessel 'Random Pattern'. The mining installation known as The Factory is considered a hostile entity and is hereby under orders to stand-down all weapons and defences and prepare to be boarded.'

Random Pattern

The Random Pattern is an 800-ton corporate cruiser. Its crew consists of 9 standard crew officers and 20 mercenary marines employed by Maas. Captain Aghayt is an experienced corporate mercenary who has been in the employ of Maas for a decade. His orders are to secure The Factory either peacefully or by force. If LFC is standing against Maas, then the crew of the Random Pattern intend to take complete control of the Factory, expelling, subduing or eliminating the LFC crew forcefully. If LFC is sided with Maas, then the LFC crew is allowed to remain, but operational control of the facility passes to Captain Aghayt with Haro Lothrain (or the Factory's duty commander) becoming a mere figurehead. It is intended to use the Factory as a mobile repair station and fuelling centre for Maas ships operating in the Free Radicals. In time, the Factory will be armed to act as a weapons platform and used in direct action against Belter rebels.

CAPTAIN NHYR AGHAYT

A seasoned mercenary commander, Aghayt has the complete loyalty of his men. If faced with people willing to see reason, then he can charming and equitable. If faced with resistance, he is ruthless and single-minded.

Nhyr Aghayt	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 49	Marines terms	5 9	8	11	8	9	6

Athletics (endurance)-1, Vacc-Suit-2, Comms-1, Computers-1, Explosives-1, Gunner-1, Gun Combat (slug rifle)-3, Gun Combat (slug pistol)-3, Heavy Weapons-1, Recon-2, Stealth-1, Streetwise-1, Survival-2, Zero-G-2
Accelerator Carbine (2D+5), Snub Pistol (3D-3), Ballistic Vest (5), hand computer, comms unit.

MERCENARIES

20 loyal marines, all as ruthless as Aghayt

Mercenaries	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
		9	10	10	7	7	6

Athletics (endurance)-1, Vacc-Suit-1, Comms-1, Computers-1, Explosives-1, Gun Combat (slug rifle)-2, Gun Combat (slug pistol)-2, Heavy Weapons-1, Recon-1, Stealth-1, Streetwise-1, Survival-1, Zero-G-1
Accelerator Carbine (2D+5), Snub Pistol (3D-3), Cloth (4), hand computer, comms unit.

If the Factory is threatened, Haro is willing to put-up a fight. The drilling lasers can be used as weapons at a DM of -4 owing to their limited-rotation mountings. However, the ships of the LFC fleet carry their own lasers for mining and are capable of being used in a battle. If it comes to a fight, Haro seeks volunteers and, if none are forthcoming, he knows he has little option but to surrender. If others (the characters) are prepared to stand-up to the Random Pattern, then he is prepared to withstand an assault from the mercenaries.

Battle For the Factory

The Random Pattern has four of its eight turrets fitted with pulse lasers and three fitted for missiles. If challenged by the Factory it uses its lasers and missiles to target strategic sections of the Factory hull but is not mandated to destroy it. As the cruiser opens fire, it despatches two of its cutters, each with 10 mercenaries, to board the Factory. The mercenaries then mount an interior raid to secure Main Mission, the hangar bays and the crew quarters, in a bid to control the mining rig.

Haro is prepared to fight, but if it looks clear that substantial loss of life is inevitable, he surrenders.

If the Random Pattern is severely damaged by the Factory, or its mercenaries outnumbered/out-fought, then Captain Aghyat is prepared to parley. Severe losses will force him to tactically retreat and consider his options. If the Factory can force this kind of situation – and it depends purely on the characters' tactics and ingenuity, then the mercenaries can be repelled and the Factory wins.

Aghyat's Puppet

If the mercenaries seize the Factory by force, then everyone bar Haro is expelled – put onto the ships of the LFC fleet docked at the Factory and forced to flee into the belt. They are allowed to fuel and provision the vessels, but weapons are confiscated or deactivated.

If control of the Factory is ceded relatively peacefully, Aghyat assembles the LFC crew in the canteen. 'This installation is now under the aegis of Maas Industries. Maas recognises the legitimate claim of ownership by LFC and I am authorised to recompense Lothrain Free Company to a value equivalent to the negotiated purchase price. Given your input into re-commissioning the facility, Maas is also prepared to return LFC's management services in a caretaker, non-executive capacity.'

What this means is as follows:

- Maas retake control of the Factory
- LFC loses all money invested in getting the Factory online
- Everyone becomes an unofficial Maas employee
- The Factory returns fully to Maas control
- The characters may find themselves on the frontline of any skirmishes with rebel Belters



Aghyat's regime is draconian. Any showing disobedience are punished with confinement to quarters and beatings if the transgression warrants it. Aghyat and his crew dominate Main Mission and all essential systems are under their control.

Unwelcome Discoveries

Naturally Aghyat plunders the databanks of logs of the Factory and will, in due course, discover any intelligence regarding the stasis sphere and the alien habitat located in Spindrift Radical. Eager to please both his Maas employers and secure some glory for himself, Aghyat is keen to exploit either or both of these however possibly – forcibly if necessary.

He uses threats and intimidation to coerce the characters and other LFC employees into telling what they know. If he gains enough information, Aghyat is quite prepared to launch his own expedition out to SR7747-09346 to see what is there and annex the asteroid in Maas's name. In this event, the characters are taken aboard the Random Pattern to act as guides and advisors, under threat of violence if they resist. The cruiser flies out to SR7747-09346, ahead of the Factory, which is piloted out of Chlaer Radical and out to Spindrift. Aghyat splits his mercenary band half and half, leaving one lot on the Factory and the other going with the characters out to the alien habitat.

The SWA has not left the habitat unprotected. When the political situation broke down, the habitat existence was made known to the SWA loyalists. A Sonares naval ship is now stationed in close

proximity to SR7747-09346, acting as both a protector for the alien remains and a support vessel to enforce SWA presence in the now, lawless, Spindrift Radical.

The ship is a SWA Naval Corsair – the Atiensis Blade. It conforms to the statistics of the corsair detailed on page 129 of the Traveller rules, but is armed with beam lasers and sandcasters in its turrets. It also has a contingent of five, 10-ton fighters (Traveller rules, page 136) in its cargo bay, which is modified for fighter launch procedures.

The Atiensis Blade is under orders to fire upon *any* vessel approaching SR7747-09346, and to engage with fighters if so appropriate. Aghyat relishes the chance to engage the SWA old regime in a space battle and is only too happy to take on the corsair. A battle for the control of SR7747-09346 and the alien habitat becomes an inevitability: the characters may be in a position to either alert the corsair, sabotage the Random Pattern, or take other action that will determine the course of the battle.

IF AGHYAT PREVAILS...

Should Aghyat win the battle for the asteroid, it becomes annexed in Maas's name and comms are sent requesting both scientific and armed presence. Maas takes some time to respond, but despatches a laboratory ship from Shoranan habitat, plus its own armed corsairs to reinforce its claim to the alien habitat.

In the habitat itself, SWA scientists are at work analysing the habitat's secrets. They have brought with them the most advanced analysis tools available, and have made a couple of discoveries that Maas would pay dearly to own:

- Samples of anagathic drugs that may be capable of doubling the human lifespan
- Tantalising clues relating to FTL travel that, if fully researched and exploited, will advance Sonares understanding the Jump physics by several years, bringing the development of Jump Drive technology to within the next two years.

When Maas arrives, scientists and troops swarm over the site and the characters, unless they can prevent a build-up of Maas agents, are heavily questioned on what they uncovered and what secrets the SWA research teams have also found. The SWA scientists are held as prisoners and Aghyat pursues an aggressive agenda to discover what they know. The secrets above will not stay secrets for very long.

In this situation the characters may have the opportunity to effect and escape, saving the SWA scientists held hostage by Captain Aghyat. The asteroid and alien habitat is a major coup for Aghyat that will make him exceedingly wealthy once Maas assume control of the site. The characters are considered expendable, and they should be left with this firm impression, once Aghyat has learned all he can from them and the SWA scientists.

IF AGHYAT IS DEFEATED

The Random Pattern may or may not have had an opportunity to send comms to Shoranan habitat for reinforcements. The characters may have time to intercept or block any transmission, thus retaining the secrecy of the alien habitat. If Maas has been alerted, it takes three weeks for their laboratory ship and Corsair to reach the asteroid; plenty of time for the characters and SWA navy to plan a welcome party.

If Aghyat is not killed, he is made a prisoner of the remaining SWA regime and arrangements made for his transport back to Sonares Prime: it appears he is wanted for war crimes anyway. His mercenary cruiser is requisitioned by the SWA captain of the protective Corsair and will be used to supplement the security presence in Spindrift Radical.

The characters will be feted for any part they played in the mercenary's defeat and may find themselves being offered the opportunity to further aid the SWA in its war against Maas in the Schaeffer belt: Referees should work out the specifics according to the overall direction of the campaign.

There is, however, the matter of the Factory. This is following Aghyat at a slower speed, and, of course, its crew is held hostage by the remaining mercenaries. The characters therefore have the opportunity to effect a rescue, with the support of the SWA marines stationed on the Corsair.

Consequences of Maas Attacks!

Maas's actions, whatever the original stance of LFC, are overtly hostile and effectively signal all-out war between the SWA and loyalists in the belt, and Maas. The alien habitat is a catalyst and a prize for further conflict – one that either side prizes at all costs.

Once word filters out that LFC and the Factory has been used/abused in this way, the rebellion by the independent Belters accelerates. All Maas vessels are considered legitimate targets, even though the Sonares navy warns against such action. The whole Schaeffer belt will, from here-on, become a frontline for the political and military control of the whole Sonara system, with the SWA navy and the rebels pitted against the industrial combines who have always secretly developed their own fighting capabilities. The actions of the Belt War are explored in the following vignettes.

THE CURSED ASSAULT

Even though Grael habitat in Chlaer Radical has opted for co-operation with Maas, its sister habitat, Cursed, has not. Rebel Belters and mercenaries from around the system have based themselves on Cursed and it forms the hub of the rebellion in Chlaer, just as a similar hub is located on Vinen habitat.

Vinen is the more prestigious target for Maas to go for, but Cursed is a better way of making a statement: it is smaller, sends a clear

message to Chlaer Radical, and cements Maas presence in that region. Cursed is assaulted by Maas troops and mercenaries.

The assault takes the form of a blockade. Six Maas mercenary cruisers, similar to the Random Pattern, take up position around Cursed and prevent all traffic from entering or leaving. An ultimatum is given: the rebels who have actively engaged in attacking Maas ships and installations have three days to surrender, or Cursed will be invaded and rebels hunted down.

This is a critical situation for the Belt community and a decisive time for the war. How will the characters respond to the blockade and threat of Cursed's invasion?

- The characters or Haro receive advanced warning that a blockade is imminent. Haro sends the characters to assess the situation, provide aid, and even start organising an evacuation ahead of the Maas cruisers arriving. The characters may well have friends and family on Cursed: but Haro will not allow the belt community to be intimidated in this way, regardless of his stance. Cursed is an easy target, and Maas's actions offend his sensibilities.
- The characters, on a job, errand or mission for Haro are caught in the blockade. The Cursed administration needs resourceful people to get women, children and the infirm out of the habitat which may involve running the gauntlet of the Maas cruisers' firepower – or a tense bluff/negotiation with the Maas commanders to let those who are 'innocent' leave peacefully
- The characters reach Cursed as the invasion commences. The active Belter community puts-up a fierce resistance, and Cursed becomes a battlefield. The first battle is for Cursed's starport. The second is effectively guerrilla warfare waged in the streets of the habitat: the Belters of Cursed know their habitat intimately – Maas does not. For Maas to find the rebels it needs to literally search, and fight, street by street, district by district. Here are opportunities for the characters to become actively involved with the Belter resistance and fight for Schaeffer belt's independence.
- The characters reach Cursed after the invasion to find scores of rebel Belters and the resistance leaders captured and held aboard one of the cruisers or in a hastily erected containment camp in the starport. A daring rescue is essential if these men and women are not to be hauled before a show trial and condemned to death for armed resistance, murder and treason.
- If Cursed falls easily, Vinen habitat will be next. The situation on Cursed needs to be monitored (the characters being powerless to do anything) and then Vinen habitat warned and preparations co-ordinated.

In the assault on Cursed, Maas does not necessarily want to create bloodshed – but things will move that way rapidly as the Belters defend their territory. Maas has superior numbers and firepower, but the Belters have the advantage of local knowledge and their own firepower is not lacking. There are also those in the Cursed administration who urge appeasement and will assist Maas in rooting-out the active rebels. The characters can therefore be involved in this assault without necessarily being involved in direct conflict or firefights.

FINAL CONFLICT: THE BATTLE OF VINEN

Whatever the outcome of events on Cursed, the industrial combines are determined to control the whole belt and set their sights on taking control of Vinen habitat. This is a move the SWA navy and independent Belters are expecting and prepare for. As the home of LFC, the characters have a stake in the outcome.

The navy despatches its belt fleet to defend Vinen; Maas and its industrial allies assemble their own. This is a clash of large ships and smaller vessels that can be played out using the High Guard rules, but doing so limits the characters' involvement. Fleet details are provided in the nearby boxed text.

Of course, in the battle itself the characters can take a direct part as starship crews defending the habitat against the Maas forces: Haro Lothrain, despite any earlier affiliations, is prepared to place the LFC fleet at Vinen's disposal in the battle, and the Factory itself, now moved back to the Vinen habitat, is used as a launch and defensive platform for the Belter rebels.

Outcome of the Battle

The outcome of the battle determines the fate of the Schaeffer belt. If Maas wins (and will accept surrender), Vinen is annexed and Maas domination of the Schaeffer belt is guaranteed. If the Vinen/SWA forces defeat the Maas fleet (again, surrender is acceptable) then Maas is forced to retreat to its own clusters.

On Sonares Prime, a political settlement is being drawn-up. The SWA offers Maas the control of all Jump drive research, in return for the industrial combines ceasing all political challenges to the SWA's authority. The aim is to reach a peaceful accord with shared progress. The industrial combines agree in principle and withdraw their claims to the entire belt, but on condition that the research into the alien habitat is shared as a joint venture. These terms proving acceptable, peace is restored although the distrust now felt in the Schaeffer belt is acute and the SWA navy is forced to maintain a permanent presence in the Free Radicals to guard against further trouble. The navy bases its fleet at Vinen, the habitat best equipped to serve its needs.

Use of Weapons

In enforcing the blockade of Cursed, Maas employs the following:

- 6 x Mercenary Cruisers, each equipped with:
- Hardpoint 1 – Triple Turret x3 Beam Lasers
- Hardpoint 2– Triple Turret x3 Beam Lasers
- Hardpoint 3– Triple Turret x3 Beam Lasers
- Hardpoint 4– Triple Turret x1 Beam Laser, x1 Particle Beam
- Hardpoint 5 – Triple Turret x3 Missile Racks (Smart Missiles)
- Hardpoint 6 – Triple Turret x3 Missile Racks (Smart Missiles)
- Hardpoint 7 – Triple Turret x3 Sandcasters
- Hardpoint 8 - Triple Turret x3 Sandcasters

Standard crew, plus 80 corporate mercenary troops (use Mercenary marines statistics on page 89)

Cursed's defences are the ships held in the starport. These are as follows:

- 50 x100 ton Mining Seekers, armed with 2 x Drilling Pulse Lasers
- 20 x200 ton Free Traders, armed with 4 x Drilling Pulse Lasers
- 10 x200 ton Far Traders, armed with 2 x Drilling Lasers and 2x Beam Lasers
- 5 x 400 ton Fat Traders, armed with 2 x Drilling Lasers, 2x Beam Lasers, 1 x Missile Racks (Standard Missiles).

The control centre for the starport has access to 10 batteries of Missile Racks, each holding 12 Standard Missiles, and a battery of Beam Lasers and one Particle Beam. These weapons are used primarily for defence against pirate raids and have not been used in defence of Cursed for many decades.

There are sufficient pilots on Cursed to operate the various available ships, but the blockade presents a formidable wall of weaponry. Maas's tactic is to deploy mercenary forces in the cruisers' cutters to take and hold the starport, limiting or stopping altogether, the Belters' ability to use their own ships. Once garrisoned, an additional six Maas cruisers can be expected to arrive within 72 hours to further reinforce the occupation of Cursed.

In response, the SWA mobilises the navy, which sends its own Corsairs and Cruisers (four of each) to come and liberate Cursed. The naval presence arrives 72 hours after the initial blockade and its combination of superior firepower and fighter capability forces the Maas ships to vacate the region, leaving behind any mercenaries on the habitat.

Vinen/SWA Naval Force

- 6 x 800 ton Mercenary Cruisers
- 4 x 400 ton Corsairs
- 4 x 400 ton Close Escort (Gazelle class, page 123 of the Traveller rules)
- 10 x 100 ton Mining Seekers
- 10 x 200 ton Free Traders
- 4 x 400 ton Type R Merchants
- The Factory (equipped with a 25-ton mass driver for use as a Rail Gun)

MAAS/INDUSTRIAL COMBINES FORCE

- 8 x 800 ton Mercenary Cruisers
- 8 x 400 ton Corsairs
- 8 x 400 ton Close Escort (Gazelle class, page 123 of the Traveller rules)

The Maas fleet also includes nuclear missiles (4 on each ship) which will be used as last resort weapons to force Vinen into surrender.

Opiate of the Masses

The alien habitat is no longer a secret. As it part of the peace negotiations news of the alien habitat seeps out and, soon, this momentous find is the talk of the entire Sonara system.

As some of the first to see the habitat, the characters are demand from media services and various research organisations looking for their views and opinions. There is the opportunity for them to become minor celebrities for a while and to become actively engaged in the joint research.

As Maas now has full control over the project to achieve FTL travel, its operations gear towards finding large yields of the radioactives and exotic minerals that are essential to the research. Free companies are, once again, contracted to work the Free Radicals for Maas to find and exploit these precious yields. Most free companies refuse such contracts, bitter at Maas aggression, but Lothrain, ever the business man, agrees, prepared to put the past behind him. How do the characters react to this? Do they share Haro Lothrain's pragmatism, or are they forced to part company with LFC and go it alone?

PROGRESSING THE BELTSTRIKE CAMPAIGN

This campaign is intended to bring new Traveller characters, Belters or otherwise, into a series of adventures set in an asteroid belt. It includes scope for mundane prospecting, corporate dealings,

risky ventures, piracy, rescues and high adventure and discovery surrounding the alien presence in the Sonara system. Certain details are left vague for Referees to develop according to their own preferences or to make it easier to adapt the Schaeffer belt to their own campaigns.

Working the asteroid belt in terms of prospecting only is likely to prove tedious and is better handled as an abstraction in campaign downtime, with the results of prospecting forming the backdrop to more involved stories and engagements. The structure of the Lothrain Free Company is such that the characters can gain responsibility within LFC whilst also maintaining the kind of freedom necessary to adventuring. If Referees use LFC as an active backdrop for the characters and the campaign, then this relative freedom is desirable to maintain adventuring flexibility.

Some ideas for consideration in taking Beltstrike forward as an active campaign are as follows:

- LFC's investment in the Factory is extensive and risky. Does it pay-off financially? What measures do Haro, Jenna and Desna need to take to keep LFC profitable? How will this involve the characters? Perhaps LFC is forced to consider black market business and shadier practices than otherwise in order to realise a return on the Factory investment.
- Other free companies are jealous of LFC's positions and contacts. What do they do to wreck LFC's chances of becoming the major independent player in the Schaeffer Belt? Possibilities include sabotage, espionage and attempts to implicate LFC in scandals of one form or another to discredit the business.
- Piracy in the Schaeffer belt is not a major problem but it is a problem nonetheless. LFC may find its ships a target of pirate attacks as a result of its growing success (or perceived success). Perhaps the pirates from the first scenario chapter return to take their revenge against the characters.
- The alien relics in the Sonara system hint at caches of exotic technology and secrets. As mentioned before, this could form a backdrop to an extended campaign as LFC is actively engaged to assist the SWA's research. This will inevitably put them in direct competition with Maas and its Black Operatives – especially as some of the relics indicated in the Spindrift habitat are located in Maas-controlled regions of the belt.
- Does the alien habitat hold the key to FTL travel? With Maas controlling the FTL project, the opportunity to achieve a working FTL drive is tantalisingly close – and, perhaps, the alien relics scattered throughout the belt help realise that possibility much sooner than expected. Might the characters be the ones who make the discovery?
- The three leaders of LFC are human and flawed. Haro and Jenna have been lovers and Jenna's marriage collapsed as a result. Could her bitter, estranged husband return to make trouble for Haro Lothrain, perhaps trying to get at him via the characters?
- Rogan and Aghyat are the villains of the campaign but are, again, subtle for their ruthlessness. If either survives his encounter with the characters revenge will be in his mind – and they have the entire belt to use as the backdrop for it.
- Above all, the Schaeffer belt is a vast ring of debris. Much of it is useless, valueless rock, but there are also pockets of considerable riches. The point of acquiring the Factory was to be in a better position to exploit this wealth and the characters will remain critical to LFC's plans in this regard.

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In the Sonares system the Schaeffer belt offers riches to those equipped to exploit it - the hardy men and women who ply the dangers of the asteroid fields: the Belters.

When Lothrain Free Company invests in a mining platform, in a bid to gain ground on its immediate competition and the powerful Maas Industries, it triggers a series of events that drive Schaeffer belt tensions to new highs. Everything is at stake: Lothrain's interests and reputation; the Maas stranglehold on the most profitable areas of the belt; and certain people within the Sonares system will stop at nothing to either put Lothrain out of business, or take the mining platform for themselves. The characters find themselves embroiled in secrets, intrigue and deception all the way as they attempt to recommission the platform. They will have to face piracy, the duplicity of other Free Companies, the shady world of Maas' dirty tricks department and the secrets of the Schaeffer belt itself - secrets so explosive that they could ignite war across the entire Sonares system.

Beltstrike provides everything needed for adventures set in the depths of the asteroid belt. Character creation, rules for prospecting, plus the equipment needed for a career in belting. The Beltstrike campaign then takes the characters through the unfolding events of the Schaeffer belt as Lothrain Free Company struggles to realise its position against those who would see it fail.



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