

RUL SYSTEM ADVENTURE PACK



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CHAPTER 0001

RUL SYSTEM ADVENTURE PACK

The *Rul System Adventure Pack* is a collection of six (6) White Star adventures set inside the Rul System. These adventures follow a path that starts with the characters' arrival in the Rul System and ends with the awakening of the cosmic horror known as Varr the Destroyer of Worlds.

The adventures are meant to be run in order, however, the Referee should not be in any rush to get to the finish. Small Niche Games plans to release several other adventures in the Rul System, on Tathkee Station, and in the open skies of Varrul. These adventures, as well as adventures of the Referee's own design, should be inserted before unleashing the final adventure, *Endgame*.

The adventures contained in the *Rul System Adventure Pack* are summarized as follows:

ROCKY ROAD TO VARRUL: The PCs start in V-Space where they can interact with travelers aboard a Gundarran mining station. They join a starship convoy traveling to Varrul and are attacked by space pirates along the way. The characters have the chance to earn a reward by rescuing a wealthy young lady.

CELEBRITY DEATHDROP: While on Tathkee Station, the characters are recruited into a sporting event known as DeathDrop. Before the game starts, they are approached by several different factions, each with their own agenda. Winning, losing, and even showing up to the event come with a price. If all goes well, the PCs also get the chance to collect a bounty on a dangerous criminal.

BLOOD ON THE RANCH: The characters run afoul of a group of mercenaries who have taken over a floating skyranch. The characters can help the skyranchers and perhaps discover a small vein of unguarded Varrulium on the range.

AGAINST THE HIVE: The characters join a mining company and assault a Tikatikatik Hive. The fighting is brutal, and neither side is inclined to show mercy. The battle ends with the conquest of the Hive or the characters' retreat. The ruthlessness of the miners and the plight of the Tikatikatik may cause the characters to question the nature of the mining trade.

THREE TRIALS OF CHUTATAY: The characters have the opportunity to forge ties with the Tikatikatik and learn more about their alien culture. They must also deal with Tikatikatik factions who support and oppose this alliance. In the end, the characters travel to the mysterious temple on the planet's Core where they are confronted by the true horror of Varrul's past.

ENDGAME: The monstrous Varr awakens from its slumber and resumes its destruction of living worlds. The PCs have a chance to return it to dormancy, however, other, darker interests across the galaxy have their own designs.



CHAPTER 0002

ROCKY ROAD TO VARRUL

The road to Varrul is a dangerous one. The Rul System is filled with asteroids the size of small moons, ionic fluctuations that can fry even the most heavily shielded systems, and space pirates who prefer to leave no witnesses. Still, the lure of Varrulium is strong, and they say a miner can make a fortune working for himself, so isn't that worth a little risk?

Rocky Road to Varrul is a short *White: Star Galaxy Edition*[™] adventure designed for three to six characters of 1st-3rd level (about 12 levels total). The adventure begins aboard a Gundarran mining station in V-Space at the edge of the Rul System and assumes the characters are preparing for a weeks-long trip to Planet Varrul. If this is not the case, the Referee must amend the text accordingly.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

OLKAN III is one of several mobile mining stations and ore refineries located in V-Space, just outside the Rul System. It is owned and operated by the Olkan Clan of the Gundarran Mining Company or GMINCO for short (pr. jee-MIN-koh).

OLKAN III is one of the few facilities in V-Space that accepts visitors. It serves as a small spaceport where travelers can stop to refuel and resupply before making the dangerous trip to Planet Varrul.

Visitors are not allowed to stay aboard the station for more than three (3) days at a time without permission from a GMINCO official. Docking and refueling fees cost 15 ic per day. Cold food is served from dispensers in the landing bays (5 ic per meal) and cramped (Gundarran-sized) accommodations are available for 15 ic per night (cold meal included).

Outside of the landing bays, visitors are confined to a large, two-level promenade known as the Olkan Faesthous (see below) which doubles as a cantina, eatery, and open-air market.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Rocky Road to Varrul assumes the PCs have stopped at OLKAN III on their way to Planet Varrul. Why they have come to the Rul System is left to the Referee. A few sample reasons are listed below.

- The PCs plan to break into the Varrulium mining trade—along with countless others. They might be independent miners looking to start their own company or they may be willing to hire out as Varrulium scouts or miners to an established corporation.
- A request for seasoned mercenaries has gone out and the PCs have answered the call. They may have a job already waiting for them on Varrul or they may plan to sell themselves to the highest bidder once they reach Tathkee Station.
- The PCs are brave members of the Restoration. They have been sent to assess the mining trade, forge alliances with prominent mining companies, and sabotage Consortium interests in the system.
- The PCs are agents of the Galactic Consortium. They have been sent to Varrul to scout the planet prior to an upcoming blockade and takeover. They may be operating in secret or may come at the helm of a Consortium dreadnaught. Vigilance is key. This far away from the Galactic Center, treacherous corporations, criminal organizations, rival Consortium agents, and Restoration Slime lurk in every shadow.
- One of the PCs is a Star Knight who has sensed a dark resonance in The Way. Sleep no longer brings peace—only dark dreams of a nameless terror from beyond the Void. The character is drawn to Varrul and must find answers which can only lie deep within the planet's Core.

OLKAN FAESTHOUS

The Faesthous is a combination cantina and eatery capable of holding several hundred guests. It is a large, open hall built around a central stage, where nightly performers lead raucous crowds in various Gundarran drinking songs.

A cover charge of 10 ic buys a trencher of hot food and a mugful of spicy Gundarran brew. Additional drinks can be purchased at a cost of 2 ic per mug.

Goods may be bought, sold, and traded along the outer edges of the hall, but the Gundarrans do not allow guests to set up shops or stay aboard the station for more than a few days at a time.

RANDOM EVENTS

The PCs should experience 1d3 of the following random events during their brief stay at OLKAN III. These events may be expanded upon through good roleplaying, at the Referee's discretion.

1. TROPHIES: A shady Norbelise (thin, gray fur, long snout) merchant named Xil Ogara opens his robes to show a collection of Varrulian war trophies including four (4) tusks, three (3) quills, and six (6) small pieces of chitin fashioned into necklaces. Xil tells the PCs that "Bug" (Tikatikatik) war trophies are "all the rage" on Tathkee Station and people wear them as a symbol of power and success.

Xil offers to sell each piece for 25 ic (he can be talked down to 5 ic). A Deep Space Explorer or any character who makes a Knowledge Check can tell the trophies are actually fakes that were taken from a variety of mundane alien creatures.

2. DUCK GUIDES: A pair of unusually charming Kwakeese (Space Duck) brothers named Dannot and Oulerd Dwill offer to guide the PCs through the Rul Asteroid Cluster to Planet Varrul. They guarantee the PCs will arrive safely and can display a series of recorded hologram messages from other mining families as proof of their abilities.

The Dwill brothers' fee is a "mere" 1,000 ic, firm. The Dwill are actually scouts and saboteurs for a band of pirates known as the Kelmoraz (see below). Anyone who can afford to pay their exorbitant fee is targeted by the pirates. If hired, Dannot accompanies the PCs aboard their vessel while Oulerd hires on with Denala Toola (see below).

Dannot and Oulerd Dwill (Kwakeese): AC 5 [14] (natural); HD 1+1; hp 6; THB +4; AT 2 (Duck-Fu); SA Duck-Fu, Swimming; ST: 18; MV 12/12 (Swim); HDE/XP 1/20; snap sword (concealed), holdout laser (concealed), fine clothing, mini-computer, 250 ic (plastic chits).

3. MINING WOES: A weary human miner named Oska Shoret is trying to sell off his mining equipment to pay for his trip home. He's asking 50 ic, but would settle for 20 ic and a mug of Gundarran Red. His gear includes a Varrulium Sifter, but it is so worn out that it breaks after 2d6 uses.

If befriended by the PCs, he tells stories of his friends all being killed by poison gases, Varrulium pirates, and terrible "Bug" swarms. He just wants to return to his home planet of Breone III.

4. DIVA PRICES: A high-end gambling operation known as the Twelfth Gildal stops at the station on their way to Varrul. Their leader is a charming but ruthless Aristocrat named Barten Sythe. Sythe commands a troupe of traveling starlots known as the Fyrsoth Divas whose elegant manner and appearance causes quite a stir among the less refined miners.

Sythe sets up a few gambling tables in the back of the Faesthous and the Divas begin working the crowd. This encounter can be used to foreshadow

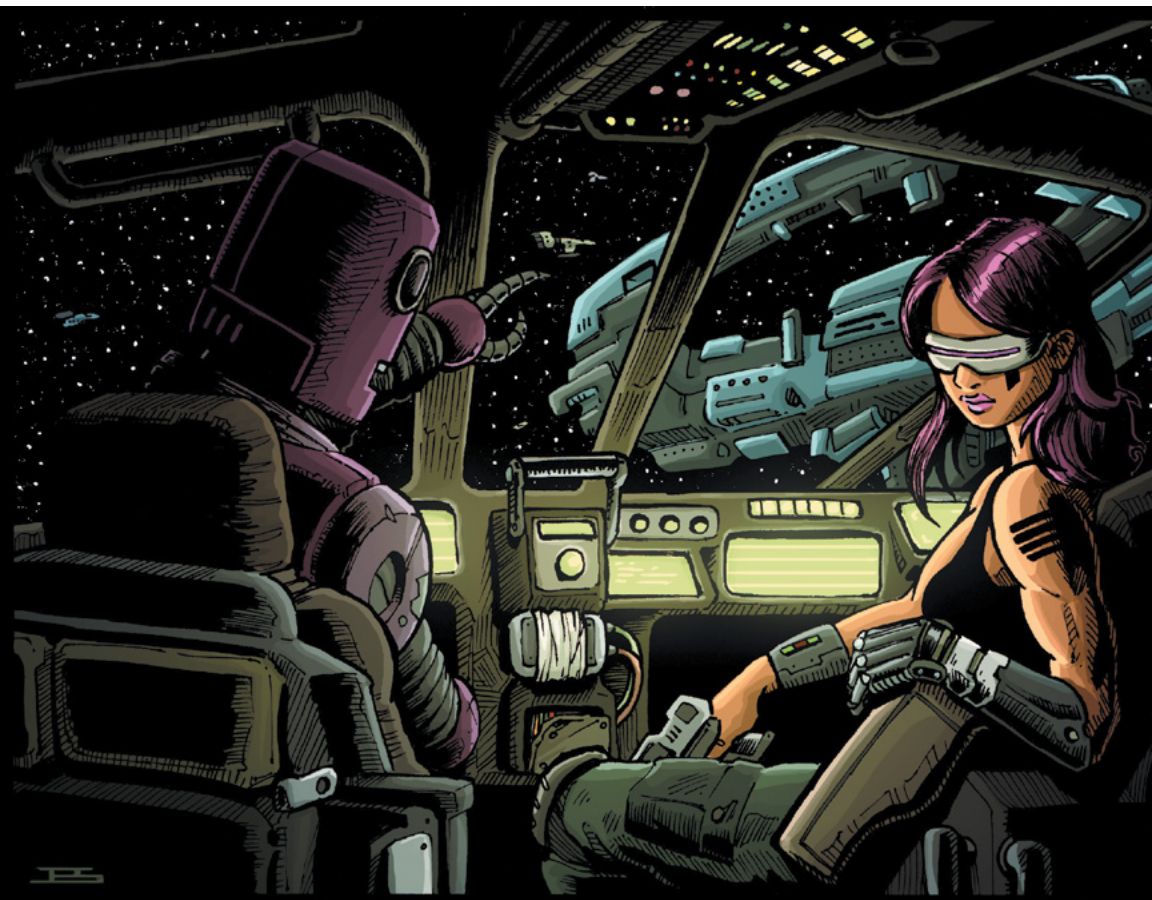
future interactions with Sythe and his crew after they set up shop on Tathkee Station.

Barten Sythe (3rd-level human male Aristocrat): AC: 7 [12] (energy cloak + Dex); HD 2; hp 10; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +1; SA: Dex 15, Cha 16, Interaction 2, Larceny 2, Knowledge 1, Powerful Speaker, Silver Tongue; ST 12; MV 12; XP 3/60; holdout laser, mono-sword (in cane), dagger, clothing (fine outfit), cape.

5. ROYAL THRILLS: Denala Toola is the adventurous daughter of the Noble Prime Minister of Artoolan IV. She is exploring the galactic frontier with a small retinue, including her friend and bodyguard, a Rawrarr named Lukkas.

Denala's antiquated diplobot MNM-97 (a.k.a. "Eminem") mistakes the PCs for royalty and introduces himself. Denala apologizes and informs the characters that Eminem often gets confused, but has been with the Toolas so long that he is almost part of the family.

Denala is excited to be traveling to Varrul. She has joined a GMINCO Starship Convoy (see below) that leaves in the morning, but has hired the Kwakeese guide Oulerd Dwill (see above) just in case they get separated



during the trip. Denala invites the PCs to dine with her aboard her luxury space yacht, the *Wals Orpa*, and may even invite them to accompany her to Varrul if they have no vessel of their own.

6. MERCS WANTED: A grizzled human recruiter named Stalet Turgan stands on a table and offers free mugs of Gundarran brew to any PC who looks dangerous. Turgan is a recruiter for the Hammerfist Mercenary Company. He offers free passage to Varrul (aboard a rickety transport named the *Crestvell*) and standard mercenary rates when they arrive.

7. ENGINE BOMB: A PC Pilot or other PC crew member finds an explosive device attached to their ship's engine during a routine check of the ship. The device can be removed at will, however, unless the character is a Mechanical Robot, Freed Assimilant, or Two-Fisted Technician, there is a 1 in 20 chance it explodes causing 2d6+2 damage to all lifeforms, vehicles, and starships in a 30' radius (Saving Throw for 1/2 damage).

The device was set to explode in ten (10) days, which would have happened deep in Rul space. If the device explodes, or the PCs report the device to OLAN III security, they are questioned about their business and any possible enemies they might have before politely being asked to leave the station.

8. PERSUASIVE GUIDE: A turbaned human guide named Molosto o'Tos claims to know a safe path through the Rul Asteroid Cluster. He offers to guide the characters to Planet Varrul for a fee of 50 ic.

Molosto is actually a Mindoid with a Gift that allows him to implant a telepathic suggestion in any PC that does not make a Saving Throw. The suggestion causes the character to transfer all of his credits into Molosto's minicomputer. Molosto accompanies the PCs to Varrul, but his presence offers no benefit—the trip still takes four (4) weeks at sublight speed, with the normal chance for any mishaps or encounters.

Molosto o'Tos (Mindoid): AC 9 [10] (natural); HD 5; hp 22; THB +5; AT 1 (weapon) or 1 (psychic energy; 2d6); SA Detect Thoughts, Suggestion, Initiative bonus; ST: 14; MV 12; HDE/XP 5/600; mini-computer.

9. GOOPY REPAIRS: A bloblike Gloop named Alloop Gloop (a.k.a. Allie) is looking for passage to Varrul, where she hopes to hire out as a repair tech at Tathkee Station.

If the PCs have their own starship, she offers to provide free maintenance and repairs to all starship, vehicle, and personal devices until they reach Varrul. Allie is a skilled technician who may hire on long term with the PCs, at the Referee's discretion. Like all Gloops, she is fond of slapstick comedy and practical jokes, which may provide some comic relief.

Alloop Gloop (1st-level Gloop): AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 1; hp 4; BHB +0; AT 1 (weapon); SA Oozy Tough, Mechanical Understanding, Reroute the Power, ; ST: 13; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/15; tool kit, mini-computer, pink hairbow.

Note: Gloops are detailed in the Small Niche Games class sourcebook *Star Gods Help Us*.

10. BLIND WOMAN'S VISION: An elderly blind woman stumbles up and touches the face of a PC Star Knight (or one of the Optional Mystic Classes). "Are you one of the Old Ones?" she asks. "The Living Stars of Rul? No, you cannot be. All gone now. All dead. All but one. . .way down. . .deep within the Heart of Varrul. . ."

She then wanders off. If stopped, she acts confused and can provide no further information.

The poor old woman has been driven mad by her connection to The Way and has seen the Living Stars (Rulloth people) in dreams and visions. The Gundarrans have let her live on the station for the past few weeks, but do not know how she got here.

STARSHIP CONVOYS

The month-long trip to and from Varrul is rife with danger. The Rul System is full of asteroids, ion clouds, and pirates, forcing travelers to band together in starship convoys for protection. Some draw up formal mutual aid agreements while others just hope the number of vessels will scare off potential threats—or at least provide additional targets in case of attack.

GMINCO CONVOY

A starship convoy is set to depart the station the morning after the PCs arrive. Its flagship is OIII-80 (pr. OH-three-Eighty), a GMINCO Mining Junker captained by a cagey Gundarran named Dumont Olkan.

The PCs should know their best chance of navigating the Rul System safely is by joining a Starship Convoy. There is no cost, but they must check in with Captain Dumont first.

If the PCs hired Dannot Dwill or any other guide, they suggest traveling with the convoy for about a week before breaking off onto a shorter route.

The convoy vessels, their "marching order", and a brief summary of their occupants are listed below.

- *Whisper Breeze* - Scout Ship – Mining surveyors for a private mining company named Stoddol Planning and Integration.
- *OIII-80* – Mining Junker - A relief force of GMINCO miners, mining equipment, and security personnel heading to Planet Varrul.
- *Wals Orpa* – Space Yacht – Private vessel of Denala Toola and her retinue (see above).
- *Gildal Starre* – Light Transport - Barten Sythe and the Twelfth Gildal gambling and leisure operation (see above).
- *Crestvell* – Light Transport – Rickety vessel packed beyond capacity with would-be miners and mercenaries.
- *Lutaanda Mara* – Medium Transport – Private mining company named Unity Enterprises made up of several different families.

- PC Starship – If the characters join the GMINCO Convoy, Captain Dumont sends them to the end of the line.

NAVIGATING THE RUL SYSTEM

The PCs eventually leave V-Space and enter the Rul System on their way to Planet Varrul.

The Rul Nebula is hauntingly beautiful. The gas clouds are a haze of soft greens, blues, and reds. Asteroids of all sizes tumble gently through space, with some being as large as a small moon. Ionic fluctuations and magnetic interference wreaks havoc on most ships sensors as the red Rul sun burns brightly even this far across the galaxy.

The trip to Varrul is considered “downtime” with only a few scripted events. The Referee is free to add other random encounters as needed to spice up the journey.

BAD BOT BUSINESS

The convoy ships spread out in a ragged line, leaving a few hundred yards between each vessel to allow for safe navigation through the asteroid field. An autopilot link between the ships helps keep the convoy together, but communication between vessels is spotty at best.

It is assumed the PCs are traveling at the end of the GMINCO Convoy, or at least somewhere behind the *Wals Orpa* space yacht. If this is not the case, the Referee should inform the characters that a dense collection of asteroids has forced the convoy line to temporarily break apart.

As the starships slowly gather back together, something thuds into the hull of whatever ship the PCs are traveling aboard. If they investigate, they discover MNM-97 (see above) pressed against the forward viewport. The old diplobot is inactive and appears to have been hit with a laser pistol at close range.

Any PC crew member can retrieve the robot through a nearby airlock. A Technology Check is required to reactivate it, however, there is a 1 in 20 chance that reactivation causes it to attack for 1d3 rounds.

If activated, MNM-97 explains that it discovered Oulerd Dwill on a communicator coordinating what appeared to be an upcoming attack on the convoy. Oulerd Dwill shot Eminem with a laser pistol and then tossed him out of an airlock.

If the PCs fail to activate MNM-97 or are forced to disable it, the robot’s memory core can be accessed showing a recording of the Oulerd Dwill encounter, if the PCs think to look.

Note: If Dannot Dwill is aboard the PC vessel, he attempts to disable the starship’s controls while the characters are dealing with MNM-97. Once this is done, he flees in an escape pod. A Technology Check is required to get the controls working again. In the meantime, the Kelmoraz Attack begins (see below).

MNM-97 (Diplomacy Robot): AC 6 [13] (Metal Body); HD 1; hp 3 (currently 1); THB -1; AT 0 or 1 (fist; 1d3); SA Interaction 3, Scanners, Self-Repair, Metal Body, Mechanical Understanding, Diplomacy Model; ST: 19; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/5.

KELMORAZ ATTACK

The Kelmoraz are a motley band of ruthless space pirates led by a brutish Croc named Captain Sylss. The pirates are waiting in the asteroid field ahead. They begin their attack by launching six (6) stunt fighters to strafe the convoy, targeting vessels at random. Their main ship, an older model blockade runner named the *Blood Huntress*, hangs back unseen in the asteroid field.

Dinh-D4-class Stunt Fighter (6): Starship; AC 5 [14]; hp 15; SS 2; TAR +2; AT Laser Cannon (4d6) [pilot-linked]; MOD FTL Drive; MV 15.

ArmoliHITE-class Blockade Runner (*Blood Huntress*): Starship; AC 2 [17]; hp 60; SS 6; TAR +2; AT Laser Cannon x4 (4d6); MOD FTL Drive; MV 9.

CONVOY RESPONSE

The GMINCO Mining Junker intercepts the fighters and bears the brunt of the attack. The other convoy vessels defend themselves, but try not to break formation. If the PCs engage the stunt fighters, the Referee should describe a cinematic battle, with laser blasts, explosions, and small ships zipping in and out of the asteroid field.

All pilots engaged in combat or pursuit through the asteroid field must make a Navigation Check each round to avoid striking an asteroid for 6d6 damage and suffering a Minor Damage Effect as per the House Rule: Damage Report table in CHAPTER SIX: STARSHIPS & STARSHIP COMBAT of *White Star: Galaxy Edition*™.

This part of the Rul Asteroid Cluster is considered Light, so the pilots receive a +1 bonus to the Navigation Check.

The stunt fighters break off the attack after six (6) rounds. If the PCs help destroy the stunt fighters, Captain Dumont congratulates them on a job well done. A quick tally of the convoy shows that only one vessel, the *Wals Orpa* space yacht, was lost. A brief distress signal from the *Wals Orpa* was recorded by ship's scanners, but there is no sign of the vessel or its wreckage. The convoy continues on towards Varrul without further incident.

WALS ORPA DAMAGE

The stunt fighter attack was simply a diversion. As the battle began, Oulerd Dwill (and his brother Dannot, if present) set off an ion charge to disable the *Wals Orpa*'s engines. Denala's bodyguards were knocked unconscious by the blast. The derelict vessel then drifted into the asteroid field out of sight of the rest of the convoy.

The PCs should have no problem locating the vessel if they search for it. They arrive just as the *Blood Huntress* and any remaining stunt fighters close in to board (see below).

Note: If the PCs were aboard the *Wals Orpa* at the start of the stunt fighter attack, they may confront Oulerd (and Dannot) as they dump MNM-97 out of an airlock. However, the characters are unable to stop the ion charge from exploding and disabling the ship's engines.

BLOOD HUNTRESS BOARDERS

Once the GMINCO convoy has gone, the *Blood Huntress* emerges from the asteroid field. Its crew boards the *Wals Orpa* and engages Denala's remaining retinue in a firefight. Captain Sylss plans to take Denala hostage and hold her for ransom.

If the characters are aboard the *Wals Orpa*, they can join the crew and try to repel the boarders. The most defensible site is a narrow corridor just outside the *Wals Orpa's* airlock. The stubborn pirates attack head on, ignoring their own losses. Captain Sylss stays aboard the *Blood Huntress* and does not risk himself in the attack.

If the PCs are in their own starship, they can engage the *Blood Huntress* and any remaining stunt fighters in a space battle (with normal chances of striking an asteroid, as above). Or, they might try a subtler approach, perhaps attempting to board the *Wals Orpa* to affect a rescue or even waiting to follow the pirates to their lair. In this case, they get a firsthand view of the Living Asteroid Attack (see below).

Kelmoraz Pirate (Assorted Alien Species): AC 7 [12] (light armor); HD 1; hp 4; THB +0; AT 1 (weapon); SA Referee's Discretion; ST: 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/15; laser rifle, laser pistol, sword, spear, dagger.

LIVING ASTEROID ATTACK

After six (6) rounds of combat between the pirates and the PCs (or the pirates and the *Wals Orpa* crewmen), a living asteroid is drawn to the commotion and attacks.

The Referee should roll 1d6 each round to determine which vessel the creature attacks with its rocky bite: 1-4 = the *Blood Huntress*; 5-6 = the PC starship (or the *Wals Orpa* if the PCs decided to hang back). If the living asteroid reduces a vessel to 0 hit points, that vessel has been devoured. The PCs should be able to narrowly escape in the ship's escape pods before the vessel is crushed.

The *Blood Huntress* retreats two (2) rounds after the living asteroid arrives. If the living asteroid sustains 10 Hit Points damage or more, it retreats deeper into the asteroid field.

Living Asteroid: AC 1 [18] (natural); HD 14; hp 80; THB +5; AT 1 (bite 5d6); SA Starship Combat Creature, Surprise Attack; ST: 10; MV 6; HDE/XP 14/2,600.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the characters save Denala, she pays them a handsome reward of 1,000 ic each. They also earn the gratitude of the future Noble Prime Minister of Artoolan IV. Unfortunately, the naïve Denala found the attack exhilarating and cannot wait to be involved in more such adventures on Varrul. She may attempt to hire the PCs later to protect her while she explores the dangerous planet.

Captan Sylss and his Kelmoraz pirates may seek revenge on the PCs at a later date. Or the characters may encounter Dannot and Oulerd Dwill (if they escaped) scouting other victims in V-Space or aboard Tathkee Station.

If the characters were forced to abandon ship, their escape pod broadcasts an automatic distress beacon. The PCs are picked up in two days by a passing vessel of the Referee's choice and taken to Tathkee Station.

CHAPTER 0003

CELEBRITY DEATHDROP

Jumping thousands of feet into clouds of poisonous gas doesn't sound like fun. So why is everyone trying to get you to do it? Bribes, requests, and outright threats are all on the table. But doesn't anyone stop to wonder why you might be reluctant to compete in a sport named the DeathDrop?

Celebrity DeathDrop is a short *White: Star Galaxy Edition*[™] adventure designed for three to six characters of 1st-3rd level (about 12 levels total). The adventure takes place aboard Tathkee Station and centers around a deadly sporting event known as the DeathDrop. Any type of Class would be suitable for this adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The DeathDrop competition is a galaxywide sporting event where contestants drop from a great height and try to land in a small defined space. This landing space is positioned over some sort of deadly hazard, so an element of danger always accompanies failure.

The first DeathDrop took place over the lava fields of Shurrekast, but the event has expanded to a number of harsh environments and settings. Other popular DeathDrop sites include the Spiketop Forest of Feesan-Pyne, the Bollie Croc Ponds of Jurglo, and the Tiklas Factory metal grinder on Predom V.

On Tathkee Station, the DeathDrop landing pad floats in the sky a few miles beneath the station. The contestants must jump from the Long Walk atop Tathkee Arena, deploy drop chutes, and then glide to a landing. Those who miss the platform risk falling into the swirling winds of Varrul's turbulent skies—but most believe the 10,000 ic prize is well worth it.

CELEBRITY PLAYER CHARACTER

The Referee should select one character at random to be the Celebrity Player Character. The Celebrity PC draws a lot of attention during this adventure and must ultimately decide whether or not to compete in the DeathDrop event, so the Referee may wish to pick the character who is most likely to play along. Although an Aristocrat or Rock Star would be ideal for this role, a less likely Class such as a Robot or Alien Brute may provide some good opportunities for roleplaying.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure can take place at any time, but should begin while the PCs are still relatively new to the station.

A widely-anticipated DeathDrop event hosted by Pereg-Doil Entertainment is scheduled to take place tomorrow at “midday”. If the PCs have been aboard Tathkee Station for longer than a week, the Referee should foreshadow the event by introducing the different DeathJumpers (see below), mentioning the various flags and banners throughout the station, and letting them see the betting odds fluctuate from hour to hour.

CELEBRITY GROUPIES

This encounter occurs any time the Celebrity PC appears in public (disembarks from his vessel, steps out of his residence, enters a cantina or eatery, etc.).

A crowd of smiling groupies surrounds the Celebrity PC. They call the PC by name and beg for digipics and autographs. The PC is likely surprised by the attention, but the giggling groupies are too starstruck to answer any pertinent questions.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

As the crowd grows, a luxury stretch skycart with tinted windows and a Starlite Casino logo on the side glides up. A holoprojector on its hood begins showing images of the Celebrity PC trekking across alien wilderness environments while a cheerful voice booms over its P.A.:

“The Starlite Casino would like to welcome the galaxy’s greatest celebrity thrill seeker to Tathkee Station!

Born in the heart of the Sterling Sector, this adrenaline junkie has done it all—undersea fishing with Gootlo tribesmen on Aburaks, skyboarding the slopes of Mount Igglon on the ice planet Bervol, and skydiving through the molten Core of the gas giant Xerinae.

As the lone survivor of the Space Savage raid on *Comeetross II*, the star of the hit series *Into the Galactic Beyond*, and the newest surprise contestant in tomorrow’s DeathDrop, it’s everyone’s favorite, the most interesting lifeform in the galaxy, <insert Celebrity PC name>!”

The crowd erupts in cheers as the PC’s name is spoken.

FIRST CLASS TREATMENT

As the PCs are wondering what is happening, a stunning Alurean hostess named Miyala Newo appears and ushers them into the skycart. Miyala was assigned as a private concierge to the Celebrity PC and his guests. She knows each of the PCs by name and assures them that all their questions will be answered once they reach their suite at the luxury Starlite Casino—the finest hotel and casino on Tathkee Station.

If the PCs refuse to go with her, she acts disappointed, but does not press the issue.

If they agree to go with Miyala, she takes them to one of the Starlite Casino's largest suites where Dorbolo Harru and his henchmen are waiting.

Miyala Newo (Alurean): AC 8[11] (natural); HD 1-1; hp 4; AT 1 (weapon); THB +1; SA Pheromones; ST: 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/20; mini-computer, headset communicator.

STARLITE CASINO

The Starlite Casino is a high-end hotel and casino located in the Entertainment Module. It is the premier lodging place for wealthy visitors to Tathkee Station. The staff waits on its guests hand and foot and it is said that anything can be had here for a price. There is a darker side to the Starlite Casino—it is owned and operated by criminal elements who are rumored to use blackmail and extortion on unwary guests.

MEETING DORBOLO

Dorbolo Harru is a Kaltoin (large, bloated, froglike aliens) crimelord who specializes in gambling and extortion on Tathkee Station. He is a prominent member of the Harru-Spolo Kaltoin Family, with contacts all over the galaxy.

If the PCs refused the ride to the Starlite Casino, Dorbolo and his henchmen are waiting for them wherever they decide to go next. Otherwise, Dorbolo is waiting for them in the Starlite suite.

Dorbolo Harru introduces himself and admits he is the one responsible for the Celebrity PC status. He claims it was a simple, but costly, matter for his contacts to create the new identity. He chose the PC because the character was relatively unknown aboard Tathkee Station.

Dorbolo has entered the PC in the DeathDrop competition scheduled to take place tomorrow at midday. He offers to pay 1,000 ic for entering, but there is a catch—he wants the PC to intentionally lose.

Dorbolo says that he spent a small fortune creating the Celebrity PC's thrill-seeker identity. He believes the character's entry in the DeathDrop will skew the gambling odds in favor of the real winner. If asked who the real winner is, Dorbolo's froglike mouth stretches into a grin.

Dorbolo pays 100 ic up front; the rest upon satisfactory completion of the event. The credits have already been wired to the PC's bank account or minicomputer.

Dorbolo says he expects the Celebrity PC to be at Tathkee Arena an hour before midday. Until then, he suggests they enjoy the pleasures the Starlite Casino has to offer. Dorbolo snaps his fingers and several starlots and marlots enter the room carrying mind-altering drugs and fermented likwids.

Dorbolo won't take no for an answer. Even if the PC refuses, he tells him to carefully consider his decision. Dorbolo and his henchmen then depart. The starlots crank up the music, the hot tub bubbles to life, and a wild party starts to heat up.

Dorbolo Harru (Male Kaltain Crimelord): AC 6 [13] (atomic duster + natural); HD 5; hp 21; THB +5; AT (weapon); SA Interaction 3, Larceny 3, Amphibious, Jump (20'), Swimming; ST: 14; MV 9/9 (Swim); HDE/XP 5/240; fine clothing, dagger, communicator.

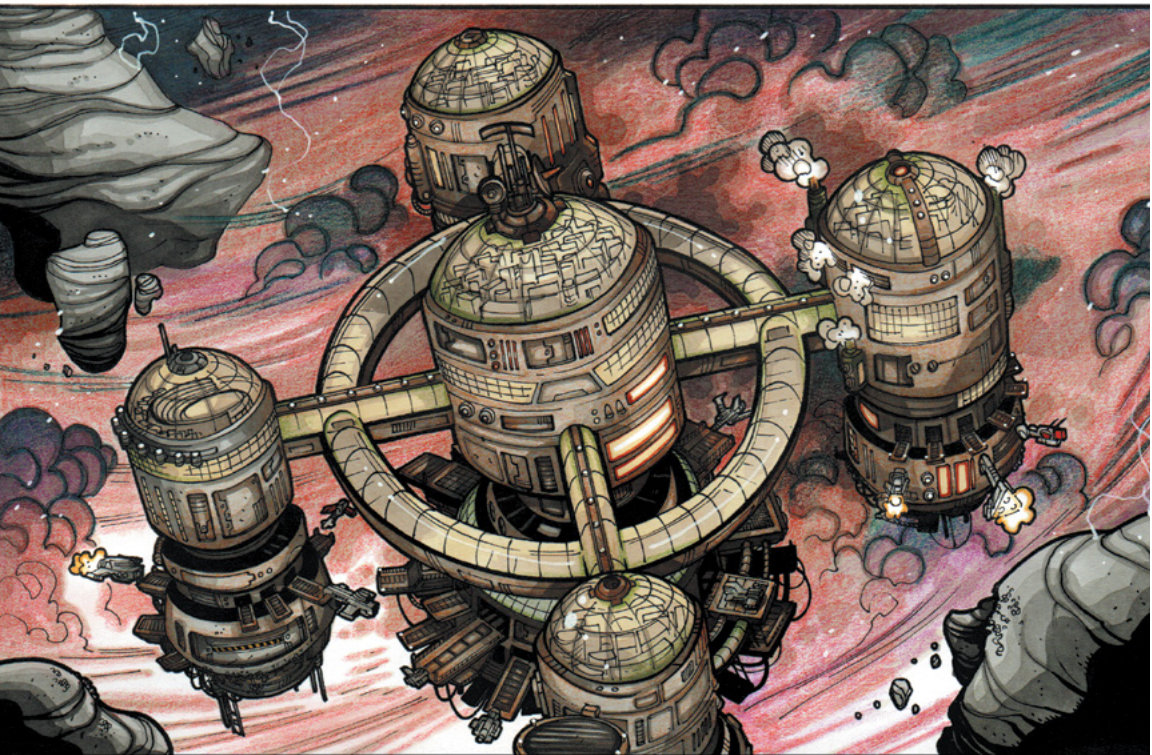
Henchmen x2 (Human): AC 6 [13] (light armor + atomic duster); HD 1+2; hp 6; AT 1 (weapon); THB +1; SA None; ST: 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/15; laser pistol, communicator.

MEETING LAM

At some point after their meeting with Dorbolo, the PCs encounter Lam Cheng Yuet Ngor and her bodyguard Filtan Hykg son of Gytos.

Lam is a beautiful young woman with a charming smile and a shrewd mind. She is a former starlot who has earned the respect of her peers on Tathkee Station by slowly amassing wealth and influence. She is now the silent owner of the Salassian Dove pleasure house in the Entertainment Module.

Lam approaches the PCs in a nonthreatening manner, offering green tea and gesa steam incense. She claims to represent several mining families on



Tathkee Station who have fallen on hard times. The miners feel the Celebrity PC has the best chance to win the DeathDrop competition and they have pooled their remaining money together—almost 2,000 ic—to make the wager.

Lam is telling the truth. The mining families are her friends and she is trying to assess the PC's manner and his chance of winning. If she thinks the PC is honorable, she warns him to make sure to double check his DeathDrop pack because one of the last contestant's chutes did not open.

Lam Cheng Yuet Ngor (7th-level Human Female Aristocrat): AC: 7 [12] (energy cloak + Dex); HD 4; hp 20; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +3; SA: Dex 17, Cha 15, Interaction 3 (5 with males), Larceny 2, Knowledge 1, Powerful Speaker, Silver Tongue; ST 8; MV 12; XP 7/600; holdout laser pistol, mono-dagger (coated with deadly poison), listil powder, sleeping powder, blinding powder, clothing (fine gown), ornate fan, communicator.

Filtan Hykg son of Gyts (Cybernetic Male Qinlon): AC: 4 [15] (medium armor + Sub-skin Armor); HD 3+3; hp 17; AT 1 (weapon); THB +3; SA: +2 melee damage, Cybernetic Eyes, Sub-skin Armor; ST 16; MV 12; XP 3/75; laser pistol, dual-bladed sword (cha'leth), dagger, communicator.

MEETING SARKOV X

At some point after their meeting with Lam, the PCs encounter Sarkov X. This meeting begins in dramatic fashion as Sarkov X turns off all lights and computers in the room (or on the ship) and then turns them back on with a power surge that causes crackling electricity to arc from the circuit panels.

Sarkov X then “teleports” into the room with the sound of a ringing chime. Sarkov X has a cylindrical fabriglass head, retractable arms, clawed hands, and tank-like treads. Any NPCs in the area scream in terror and flee the room at its frightful appearance.

Sarkov X's voice is tinny and robotic:

“I am Sarkov X, hyperadvanced robotic lifeform. You <insert Celebrity PC name> are banned from competing in the DeathDrop. This is your only warning. Failure to obey will result in grave consequences. Do you understand?”

If the PCs attack, their weapons pass harmlessly through the robot's body. Sarkov X utters a tinny laugh and says:

“You cannot harm me with your primitive aggression devices, but I can harm you.”

A bolt of electricity then arcs from a nearby power source (computer, wall outlet, security camera, etc.), striking a random PC for 1d6 damage unless the PC makes a Saving Throw to avoid the attack.

“I am Sarkov X. I could terminate your life force now, but that is not my mission. <insert Celebrity PC name>, I repeat. Do not attempt to compete in

the DeathDrop tournament. Do not even show up for the event. You have been warned.”

With that, Sarkov X’s form shimmers and disappears with the same ringing chime.

Sarkov X: see Code Blue (below) for details.

WHAT TO DO, WHAT TO DO...

The PCs are presented with a bit of a dilemma and have the entire night and all morning to ponder their options.

Dorbolo Harru wants them to enter the DeathDrop and lose. Any investigation into Dorbolo Harru’s background reveals he is a local crimelord who it is unwise to cross.

Lam Cheng Yuet Ngor wants the PCs to enter the DeathDrop and win. Investigation into Lam’s background reveals she is an honest starlot who frequents a local pleasure house named the Salassian Dove.

The mysterious Sarkov X wants the PCs to stay away from the event entirely. No one on Tathkee Station has ever heard of or seen Sarkov X before today. That is because Sarkov X does not truly exist. . .

CODE BLUE

Code Blue (a.k.a. Blue for short) is a skinny teenager who grew up as an information thief on the tech-heavy world of Digitarri Logus. Blue narrowly escaped capture by Logus, Inc. security during a botched data heist and has been traveling with the bounty hunter Mica Traylor ever since.

Blue created the holographic identity known as Sarkov X based on a robot depicted in his favorite Technosense flick. Blue uses an advanced hotbox to take control of a location before “teleporting” Sarkov X in to negotiate. He is able to manipulate computers and overload power sources, giving the appearance that Sarkov X is fully capable of backing up his threats.

Any Cypher who thinks to check for tampering after an encounter with Sarkov X suffers a bonus or penalty to the Codeslinger Check equal to the difference between his Codeslinger Skill and Code Blue’s. If successful, the character is able to trace the code back to Blue’s hideout—a cramped, dingy room inside the station’s Habitat Ring.

If cornered, Blue reveals Mica Traylor’s plan to capture Ki’halo Washoon during the DeathDrop, and offers to cut the PCs in on the bounty. Blue apologizes for threatening the Celebrity PC. Because of the late entry, he did not have time to research the character to see if he was likely to interfere with the capture.

Code Blue (6th-level Human Cypher): AC: 8 [11] (Dex); HD 5; hp 22; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +3; SA: Int 15, Dex 17, Technology 3, Larceny 2, Knowledge 1, Codeslinger 4, City Rat, Underworld Contacts; ST 10; MV 12; XP 6/400; holdout laser, dagger, advanced hotbox, communicator.

PARTY LIKE IT'S 19,999,999

If the Celebrity PC and his companions go out in public, they are treated to free brews, likwids, and other forms of entertainment all night. The Referee can treat this night as “downtime” or allow time for random encounters and roleplaying, if the PCs are having fun. However, too much drinking might result in penalties to DeathDrop Skill Checks, at the Referee’s discretion. The Referee can also take this time to introduce some of the Celebrity PC’s fellow DeathJumpers.

DEATHJUMPERS

DeathDrop contestants are known as DeathJumpers. They are thrill seekers from all over the galaxy who adore fame, but despise competition. The DeathJumpers for this event are listed below.

NAME	DESCRIPTION	ODDS
Apowl Oberr	Human Thrill Seeker	15 to 1
Ki’halo Washoon	Nakal Pilot	3 to 2
Mica Traylor	Cybernetic Human	10 to 1
Owinn “Cannonball” Brone	Human Miner	1,000 to 1
Rimartha Thun	Human Acrobat	50 to 1
Tocket “the Rocket” Tubbs	Yabnab Glider Pilot	5 to 3
Celebrity PC	-	25 to 1

APOWL OBERR

Apowl is a cocky young human who travels the galaxy looking for the next big rush. He is a professional thrill seeker who records his feats and then broadcasts them to his followers on the Galaxy Wide Web (GWW).

Apowl Oberr merchandise (T-shirts, bags, etc.) is available for sale in the week leading up to the DeathDrop event. His sponsors include many known companies including Dragonfruit minicomputers, Daddy Jack’s cheesepie restaurants, and Supernova energy drinks.

Apowl Oberr (Human Thrill Seeker): AC: 8 [11] (Dex); HD 1; hp 5; AT 1 (weapon); THB +1; SA: Dex 15, Athletics 2; ST 18; MV 12; XP 1/15; bladed gauntlet, minicomputer, camera drones.

KI'HALO WASHOON

Ki'halo is a tall, native Nakal alien (fishlike, blue skin, webbed hands, water breather). Ki'halo wears a specially designed environmental face shield and armor that pumps water through his gills.

Ki'halo is extremely arrogant. He believes aquatic lifeforms have an advantage over "dirtfoots" in any type of aerial or space maneuvers since they are already accustomed to operating in 360-degree environments.

Ki'halo is a ruthless killer. He is currently Wanted for murder in the Panotollo System after he flooded the undersea dome on Pan Vectus, killing over 500 Panotollon colonists. Ki'halo claimed the flooding was necessary after the dirtfoot colonists refused to allow him to swim in their freshwater supply.

Ki'halo Washoon (3rd-level Nakal Pilot): AC: 4 [15] (medium armor + Dex); HD 3; hp 14; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +1; SA: Dex 15, Navigation 2, Technology 2, Knowledge 1, Space Ace, Jury-Rig; ST 13; MV 12; XP 3/60; medium armor aquatic suit, laser rifle (surrendered for contest), laser pistol (surrendered for contest) snap sword, minicomputer, communicator.

MICA TRAYLOR

Mica was a female mercenary for Vitserk Solutions until she was blown apart during the Deeliz Conflict on Hinta Prime. The company replaced Mica's damaged limbs and organs with cheap cybernetic components and then ended her contract. She has since found work as a bounty hunter, and has only entered the DeathDrop competition so she could get close to Ki'halo Washoon and take him without a fight (since the contestants are all searched for weapons before the event).

Mica Traylor (2nd-level Cybernetic Human Mercenary): AC: 5 [14] (medium armor); HD 2; hp 12; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +1; SA: Con 15, Athletics 2, Survival 2, Interaction 1, Combat Machine, Weapon Specialist (Fist), Cybernetic Arm (left) with ElectroStun touch, Cybernetic Rocketpack, Cybernetic Eye (left), Cybernetic Lungs; ST 13; MV 12; XP 2/30; laser rifle (surrendered for contest), laser pistol (surrendered for contest) minicomputer, communicator. Commands the light freighter Osprey Blast.

OWINN "CANNONBALL" BRONE

Owinn is a human miner for the Alba-Lee Mining Company. He is a jovial, heavysset man who claims he can go drink for drink with any Gundarran on Varrul. Owinn entered the DeathDrop contest on a dare and has been drunk on free brews for the past week. He is in way over his head and no one thinks he stands a chance of winning the contest, but he's a huge fan favorite.

Owinn "Cannonball" Brone (Human Miner): AC: 9 [10]; HD 1+1; hp 7; AT 1 (weapon); THB +1; SA: None; ST 18; MV 12; XP 1/10; shirt with cutoff sleeves.

RIMARTHA THUN

Rimarta is a human female and former slave, born on the forest world of Lottus Three. At a young age, Rimarta began to display unnatural athleticism and her master started entering her in sporting events. She grew to love the adulation of the crowd, but loathed being a slave.

Rimarta escaped years ago and has been making her way across the galaxy ever since, entering a variety of physical tournaments and competitions. Rimarta sometimes supplements her income by gambling on herself.

Rimarta Thun (4th-level Untrained Initiate): AC: 6 [13] (light armor + Dex); HD 3; hp 13; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +1; SA: Wis 16, Dex 15, Athletics 2, Survival 2, Interaction 1, Talented Combatant (laser pistol), Instinctive Meditations (Acrobatics*, Manipulate Object); ST 9; MV 12; XP 4/180; laser pistol (surrendered for contest), dagger (surrendered for contest), energy cloak, minicomputer.

*Rimarta activates her Acrobatics Meditation to receive a +1 bonus to her DeathDrop Landing Skill Check (see below).

TOCKET “THE ROCKET” TUBBS

Tocket is a burly Yabnab with black fur except for a white, triangular patch on his chest that looks vaguely like a missile. Tocket usually goes shirtless, wearing only a loincloth to show off his gnarled muscles. He is a womanizer who likes to swagger around the station, and is quick to fight anyone who doesn't take him seriously.

Tocket won the last DeathDrop event and is heavily favored to win this one. He claims his experience as a glider pilot battling shocktroopers on Yabo has more than prepared him for the dangers of the DeathDrop.

Tocket “the Rocket” Tubbs (Yabnab): AC: 8 [11] (natural); HD 1; hp 6; AT 1 (weapon); THB +1; SA: Survival 2, Group Tactics, Keen Senses; ST 18; MV 6; XP 1/15; holdout laser, loincloth.

GAMBLING ODDS

The following odds are assigned to each DeathDrop contestant. These odds are locked in just before the event begins. The PCs may wager as they wish.

Name – Description – Odds

Apowl Oberr – Human Thrill Seeker - 15 to 1

Ki'halo Washoon – Nakal Pilot - 3 to 2

Mica Traylor – Cybernetic Human - 10 to 1

Owinn “Cannonball” Brone – Human Miner - 1,000 to 1

Rimarta Thun – Human Acrobat - 50 to 1

Tocket “the Rocket” Tubbs – Yabnab Glider Pilot - 5 to 3

Celebrity PC – 25 to 1

MORNING BUILDUP

As dawn breaks, Tathkee Station is brimming with excitement. Tathkee Arena and most of the casinos and cantinas are filled to capacity. Crowds have begun to gather at viewports, viewscreens, and holoprojectors throughout the station. Flags, signs, and banners supporting favorite DeathJumpers are everywhere. Vendors, street performers, and shop owners stand to make as many credits as loan sharks and bookmakers.

OPENING CEREMONY

The host Wolectus ifor Manubria begins the opening ceremony at Tathkee Arena just before midday.

Wolectus is an Obros (yellow-skinned humanoid, four arms, bald head, enormous mouth) from the grassy plains planet of Amoruba. He is a showman with a flair for the dramatic, who dresses in ostentatious robes and carries a digital scepter that acts as a microphone which enhances his already booming voice.

Wolectus serves as the Master of Ceremonies for most of the sporting events on Tathkee Station. He introduces the DeathJumpers one at a time and lets the crowd cheer their favorites. The DeathJumpers are each allowed to give a speech as camera drones buzz by, recording them from different angles.

Tocket growls his disdain for the other contestants. Ki'halo's speech sounds as if he has already won. Apowl grins for the cameras and thanks his fans across the galaxy. Owin gives a drunken speech while raising a mugful of Gundarran brew. The Celebrity PC is allowed a few words, if desired. Each speech is met with a raucous cheer and a frenzy of new wagers.

Wolectus ifor Manubria (Obros): AC: 9 [10]; HD 1-1; hp 3; AT 1 (weapon); THB +0; SA: Voice Modulation; ST 19; MV 12; XP 1/5; fine robes and clothing, digital scepter.

WEAPONS CHECK

After the speeches are done, all contestants must submit to a weapons check. A scannerbot with a wand-like hand scans all of the contestants for weapons. Although physical contact is allowed (and encouraged!), attacking other contestants with weapons is not. Anyone who uses a weapon during the contest is immediately disqualified and charged with Assault.

The scannerbot pulls a holdout laser from Tocket's loincloth and a bladed gauntlet disguised as a charm bracelet from Apowl's wrist. The crowd boos the scannerbot as these items are removed. If the PCs attempt to conceal a weapon, there is only a 1 in 6 chance the scannerbot does not find it.

PACK ASSIGNMENTS

The DeathJumpers are issued DeathDrop Packs of various colors of the rainbow. These specially modified backpacks contain a breathing mask and a colorful parachute rigged for easy deployment.

The parachute canopy is rectangular in shape and made of lightweight fabric cloth, with pull cords that allow for limited steering. The pack also contains a magnetic cablegun and winch system to be used if the DeathJumper overshoots the DeathDrop landing platform.

If the Celebrity PC checks his pack, he finds the parachute disabled. The Celebrity PC can get a replacement pack upon request, kicking off another round of furious wagers.

Although there is no way to know this at the time, Dorbolo had the chute disabled to ensure the PC did not have second thoughts and try to win the contest.

ON YOUR MARK, GET SET...JUMP!

The DeathJumpers line up on the edge of the platform known as the Long Walk and peer out over the edge. The drop from Tathkee Station to the DeathDrop Landing Platform below is over three miles long. To avoid cheating (and voiding all bets), no starship or vehicle is allowed within one (1) mile of the landing platform.

A firework launched from Wolectus's scepter is the signal to jump. When it goes off, the DeathJumpers leap from the Long Walk and freefall through Varrul's poison skies.

DEPLOYING THE CHUTE

The DeathDrop parachutes deploy approximately one (1) mile below Tathkee Station. The colorful chutes unfurl and the DeathJumpers begin lazily circling down towards the landing platform.

DEATHDROP SHENANIGANS

The DeathDrop contestants do everything they can to foil each other on the way down. Environmental factors may also help or hinder the PC. The Referee should roll 1d6 to determine which of the following shenanigans the Celebrity PC must deal with.

1. Acid Spray: Ki'halo has filled one of his water-breathing tanks with acid. He sprays the acid on the Celebrity PC's chute as he passes overhead, forcing a Saving Throw. Failure means the chute disintegrates and the PC plummets past the DeathDrop Landing Platform. If this happens, the PC automatically hits the platform with his magnetic cablegun and reels himself to safety.

2. Ripped Chute: Tocket attempts to rip the Celebrity PC's chute with his toe claws. If successful, the PC suffers a -2 penalty to the DeathDrop Landing Skill Check.

3. Antigrav Projectors: Apowl tosses a handful of small antigravity projectors at the Celebrity PC's chute. The character must make a Saving Throw. Failure means the projectors slow the character's descent, inflicting a -1 penalty to the DeathDrop Landing Skill Check.

4. Accident: The drunken Owinn careens into the Celebrity PC, causing 1d3 damage. The terrified Owinn apologizes profusely as a thermal draft snatches him away.

5. Downdraft: A thermal downdraft helps stabilize the PC's chute providing a +1 bonus to the DeathDrop Landing Skill Check.

6. Magnetic Tide: The Celebrity PC is caught in a magnetic tide that carries him right past the DeathDrop Landing Platform. Add a bonus of +2 to the character's DeathDrop Landing Skill Check.

DEATHDROP LANDING SKILL CHECK

The DeathDrop Landing Platform is approximately twenty-five (25) feet in diameter. A successful landing requires a successful Athletics, Navigation, or Survival Skill Check (player's choice). Failure requires a Saving Throw just to stick the landing.

As the DeathJumper lands on the platform, his parachute automatically retracts into its pack. Anyone who misses the landing platform while his chute is deployed has three (3) shots with the magnetic cablegun before the weapon is out of range. The platform is AC 9 [10] for purposes of this attack. If all three (3) shots miss, the character plummets to his death.

DETERMINING THE WINNER

The Referee should make Landing Skill Checks for all contestants. If more than one contestant succeeds, the contestant with the highest Skill Rating is the winner. If the Ratings are tied, the contestant with the highest relevant Attribute wins.

If all Skill Checks failed, the contestant who made the Saving Throw to stick the landing wins. If more than one contestant made the Saving Throw, the contestant who rolls the highest number on the Saving Throw is the winner.

BOUNTY HUNTER BATTLE

As soon as the bounty hunter Mica Traylor lands, she attempts to stun Ki'halo Washoon with her cybernetic arm. Ki'halo produces a snap sword and the two do battle on the small platform. The Referee can run the combat normally. The platform tilts dangerously from side to side as the battle rages.

CLOSE QUARTERS HAZARDS

All contestants on the platform must make a Saving Throw each round as bodies collide in the cramped, precarious space. If the Saving Throw fails, roll 1d6: 1 Fall, 2-3 Hanging from the Edge, 4-5 Knockdown, 6 Damage.

1. Fall: The character falls off the platform and plummets into Varrul's poison skies. The character has one (1) round to fire the magnetic cablegun at the platform before the weapon is out of range. The platform is AC 9 [10] for purposes of this attack. If the shot misses, the character may activate the DeathDrop parachute at any time and then hope for the best.

2-3: Hanging from the Edge – The character suffers 1d2 damage from a Knockdown and barely manages to grasp the edge of the platform as he falls over the side. The character must make an Athletics Check next round to climb back onto the platform. Failure means the PC suffers a Fall.

4-5: Knockdown – The character suffers 1d2 damage and is knocked prone. The character must make a Saving Throw next round or be sent Hanging from the Edge.

6: Damage – The character suffers 1d2 damage.

TIKATIKATIK ATTACK (OPTIONAL)

This optional encounter may be thrown in to involve the PCs not participating in the DeathDrop.

A swarm of Tikatikatik warriors observed the throngs of people crowding the platforms of Tathkee Station and decided to launch a surprise attack. The attack creates chaos as the swarm descends. Laser bolts and quills fill the air as men, women, and children run for cover.

The PCs are caught in the open and must defeat a number of Tikatikatik equal to one-half (1/2) the number of characters in their group before the swarm withdraws. If this is their first encounter with the Tikatikatik, they get to witness the "Bugs'" ferocity firsthand. As the swarm retreats, the characters see them carrying decapitated heads, tattered limbs, and other grisly trophies into the stormy skies. This is the first attack on Tathkee Station in months.

Tikatikatik (30): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: Flight; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

Kendree Crab (6): AC: 4 [15] (natural); HD 3+3; hp 13; AT 1 (bite); THB +3; SA: Dive Attack, Flight; ST 18; MV 12/15 (Fly); XP 3/60.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The DeathDrop Landing Platform is recalled once the commotion is over. The crowds slowly return, but armed men and women closely watch the skies.

Wolectus ifor Manubria leads the closing ceremonies at Tathkee Arena. The winner is given 10,000 ic and a gold wing-shaped DeathDrop pin to wear above his heart as a sign he has defied Death. All other contestants are given silver

wing-shaped pins. The crowds then retreat back inside for a night of revelry.

If the Celebrity PC won the event, Dorbolo is furious, but careful not to let his anger show. Kaltroins are a long-lived race and have learned to be patient. Over the next few weeks, the PCs realize there are certain shops that refuse to do business with them for fear of angering the crimelord. Dorbolo takes revenge on the PCs later, when they least expect it.

If the Celebrity PC lost the event, Dorbolo pays the remaining 900 ic fee. He may hire the PCs for other jobs now that they have proven they can follow directions. Or he may try to have them killed to keep them from revealing his part in fixing the event.

If Ki'halo was captured, Mica Traylor and Blue prepare to leave the station. If the PCs helped Mica subdue Ki'halo, she offers to cut them in on the reward. Ki'halo has several brothers who are just as ruthless as he, so she may even attempt to hire the PCs to escort her to V-Space.

The Tikatikatik attack angers a lot of Tathkee Station residents and there is talk of launching a retaliatory strike. The Referee can use this event to introduce the PCs to the world outside the station's walls.



CHAPTER 0004

BLOOD ON THE RANCH

A skyrancher has been killed and his daughter has fallen on hard times. The Bugs are on the warpath and the mercenaries she hired to protect the ranch are a disreputable bunch that can't be trusted. Can you help the lady out before more blood is spilled?

Blood on the Ranch is a short *White: Star Galaxy Edition*™ adventure designed for three to six characters of 1st-3rd level (about 12 levels total). The adventure takes in the open skies of Varrul and involves intrigue at a local skyranch as well as an encounter with dangerous "Bugs". Any type of Class would be suitable for this adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

A few weeks ago, a skyrancher named Glax Malloreë stumbled upon a small, unguarded vein of Varrulium hidden in a cave on a floating island at the edge of his Dome-Star-Bar skyranch. Glax said nothing to anyone about his find, fearful of putting his daughter Jayne in danger.

Glax organized what appeared to be a routine supply trip to Tathkee Station, where he tried to purchase some heavy mining equipment in secret. Unfortunately, this caught the attention of a group of mercenaries-turned-Varrulium pirates named the Krole Mercenary Company.

Krole Galmon and his mercs ambushed Glax and his ranch hands on their return to the Dome-Star-Bar. Glax's men were thrown into the sky and Glax was tortured to death, but he refused to admit he had discovered Varrulium.

Krole made Glax's death look like the work of a Bug raiding party. He returned Glax's body to Jayne at the Dome-Star-Bar skyranch and convinced the grief-stricken girl that a Bug attack on the ranch was imminent. Jayne agreed to let Krole and his mercenaries stay on to protect the ranch, and the mercs have run roughshod over the remaining hands.

In an effort to destabilize the skyranch and cover their search for Glax's Varrulium, Krole mercenaries have been traveling into the Middle Atmosphere to raid a Tikatikatik "Bug" Hive. The Bugs have responded by killing skyranch hands, destroying range machinery, and stampeding the Hooshar herds. Only a few Dome-Star-Bar skyranch hands remain, and these men clearly see the writing on the wall.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The characters have ventured out into the open skies of Varrul for reasons determined by the Referee. While cruising the turbulent skies, they see a wrecked skyhauler under attack from a Bug raiding party.

The Dome-Star-Bar skyranch foreman Ditch Mindrick is trapped inside the skyhauler. He lost his projectile rifle early in the fight and, as the Bugs pry at the skyhauler's damaged hull, he is fending them off with a long knife.

The raiding party consists of six (6) Tikatikatik "Bugs".

If the PCs do nothing, they gain access to the skyhauler and kill Ditch Mindrick. If the Referee wishes to continue this adventure, the characters can run into a search party led by Jayne Malloreë. Otherwise, the adventure is essentially over.

Tikatikatik (6): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

MEETING DITCH

Assuming the characters rescue Ditch, he is extremely grateful. He tells them that the Bugs have been extremely active lately, attacking and killing skyranch hands and destroying the ion pylons that are crucial to maintaining the herds.

Ditch received a sensor reading that suggested Bug activity here on the Northern Range and came out to investigate. If asked why he came alone, Ditch's eyes darken and he says:

"Well, I wasn't supposed to be alone. I had some mercs with me riding escort, but they broke off to chase a pack of Dirch Dogs off the range. Mebbe they ran afoul of other raiders, and mebbe that wouldn't be a bad thing if'n they did."

Ditch asks the PCs to watch the skies while he repairs the skyhauler. Fixing the skyhauler takes two (2) Turns and requires a Technology Check. The check receives a +1 bonus if a character assists Ditch. This character notices that the fuel cells have been deliberately sabotaged.

If asked who would sabotage the skyhauler, Ditch looks the PCs over.

"I'll not speak outta turn. It's not my place. I've worked for the Malloreës most my life and there was never any doubt I'd come with them out here. Glax Malloreë was a good man and a good friend. The Bugs killed him a few weeks ago on his way back from Tathkee Station."

"It was Krole Galmon and his mercenaries that brought his body back to the ranch. They been staying there ever since, and I'd be hard put to say it's a coincidence that there's only a few of us hands left."

"I don't mean to bring you into trouble, but Miss Jayne could use some extra help, if'n you know what I mean. That Krole's a bad'un and his lot are lowdown mean. Don't matter none to me if you never ranched before. I can

see you're prize. You stopped to help me when many would have kept flyin'. I'd be honored to take you on. Say 5 credits a week? It ain't much, but you'd be doing me a favor and one I won't forget."

The PCs are invited to return to the Dome-Star-Bar with Ditch whether or not they accept his offer.

DOME-STAR-BAR SKYRANCH

The Dome-Star-Bar is a small skyranch located on a cluster of barren floating islands near Tathkee Station. It is owned and operated by Jayne Malloreë. Up until recently, the ranch had been extremely successful, with a dozen hands and miles of open range.

MAIN RANCH

The main ranch is unofficially divided unto the West Complex and the East Complex.

AIRLOCK ENTRANCES

These airlocks offer full decontamination. Environmental suits and masks hang in wall lockers around the chamber. A locked armory inside each airlock contains six (6) projectile rifles (firearms).

BUNKHOUSE

The skyranch hands stay here in the bunkhouse. It contains sleeping racks, footlockers, and personal effects. The Krole mercenaries have moved into the bunkhouse with the skyranch hands Ditch Mindrick, Hal Parseer, and Frane Fra'sel.

GENERATOR

These generators power the ranch's life support and air filtration systems. They are large enough to act as backup generators for the entire complex if one or the other malfunctions.

HANGAR

The hangar contains two (2) skyhaulers and three (3) skybikes belonging to the Dome-Star-Bar ranch. Eight (8) skybikes belonging to the Krole mercenaries are also kept here. Spare parts and vehicle maintenance equipment line the walls.

HEAD RANCHER'S QUARTERS

This chamber is divided into sections by fabriplast partitions. Jayne Malloreë moved into these quarters after her father's death. They contain her personal effects and several holopix depicting Glax Malloreë.

KITCHENS AND MESS

The kitchens and mess double as the common area, where the ranch hands can meet and engage in leisure activities. An antiquated chefbot named CK-E (Cookie) prepares and serves processed food.

The mercenaries can usually be found drinking likwids here at all hours of the day, unless Krole has sent them to stir up the Bugs. A holopic overhanging the table shows Glax Malloreë standing on the tall rock formation where he was buried, looking out over a Hooshar herd (see Glax's Burial Site, below).

CK-E: The chefbot "Cookie" is a noncombatant. Its AI has been damaged by exposure to Varrul's harsh environment. It only knows how to talk about food and recipes, and is not a particularly good cook.

KROLE'S QUARTERS

This chamber used to belong to Jayne Malloreë. Krole Galmon has moved into these quarters. A minicomputer here contains a map of the Dome-Star-Bar floating island clusters. Several areas along the North Range have been checked off and it should be obvious that Krole is searching for something. If asked, Krole states that he is searching for signs of a Bug lair hidden on the range.

OVERHANGING ARCH

This large stone arch is a natural rock formation that connects the east and west complexes. It protects the entrances from the worst effects of Varrul's plasma storms and other turbulent weather.

STORAGE

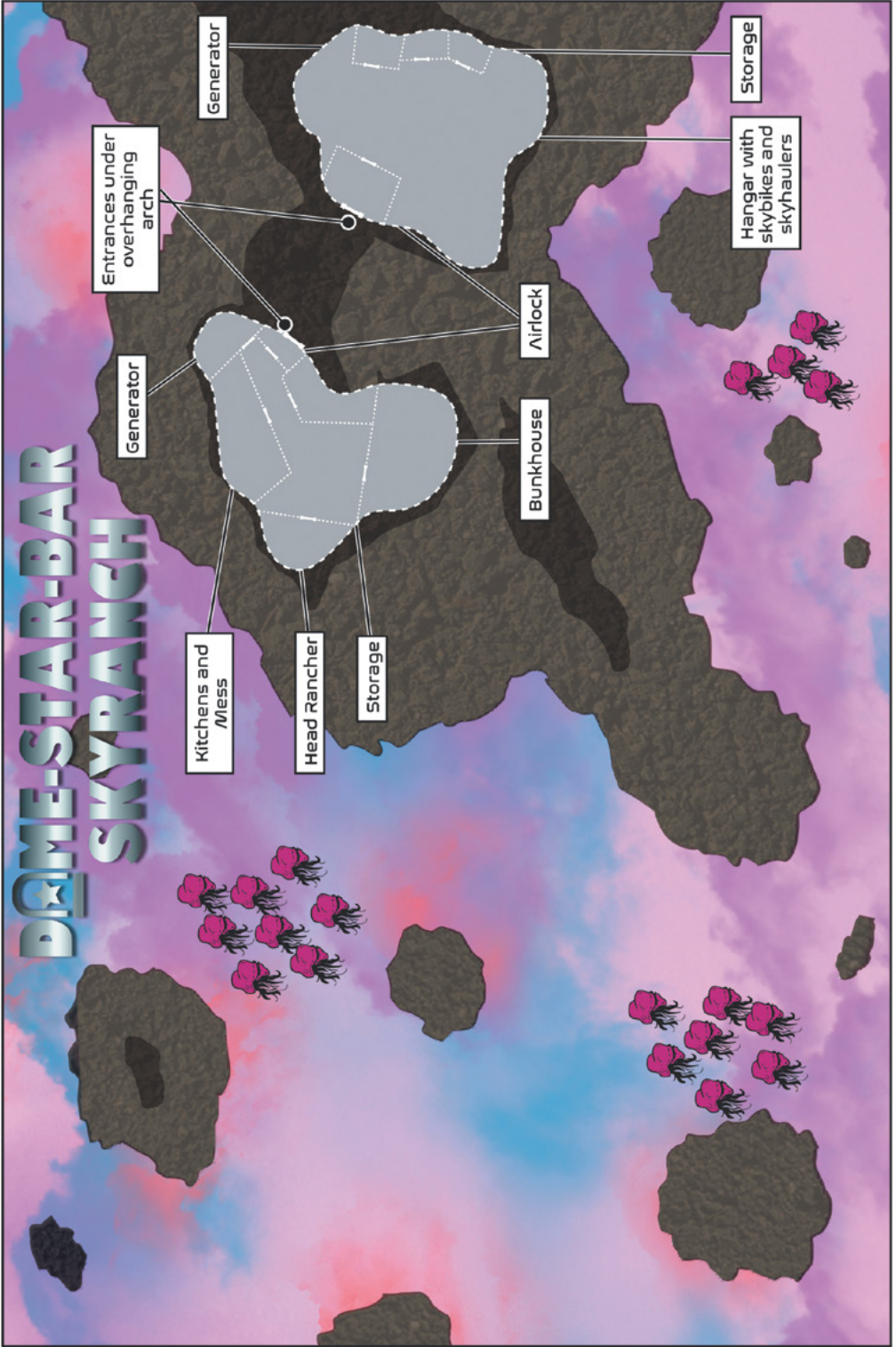
Two storage rooms are located in the complex. The western storage room contains food, water, spare parts, and other skyranching supplies. The eastern storage room contains vehicle maintenance equipment, Hooshar herding gear, and ion pylons. The heavy mining equipment Glax Malloreë purchased at Tathkee Station is covered by a tarp in the back of the chamber.

SKYRANGE

The Dome-Star-Bar skyrange is divided into the North Range and the South Range. These ranges stretch for miles around the main ranch. The range consists of clusters of floating islands that constantly circle the main ranch, so "north" and "south" are actually relative at any given time. Hooshar herds drift lazily between these islands, feeding on manmade fields of Ickon created by carefully placed ion pylons.

It takes approximately one (1) hour to safely traverse the range by skycraft, with the main ranch located in the center.

DOME-STARBAR SKYRANCH



FEATURES OF NOTE

The following features of note may be encountered on the Dome-Star-Bar Skyrange.

GLAX BURIAL SITE

The remains of Glax Malloreë are buried on a tall rock formation at the outskirts of the South Range. The holopix floating over his grave marker is a duplicate of the one hanging in the Mess. Jayne chose this site because it was Glax's favorite place. He liked to sit here and watch the Hooshar herds float peacefully by. See South Range Ride (below) for more information.

FASJAL SHIPWRECK

A few months ago, the wreck of a large mining starship known as the Elon Fasjal crashed onto a large floating island in the North Range. The ship has been stripped of anything valuable, but skyranch hands often take shelter in the wreck during plasma storms.

HOOSHAR HERDS

The skyrange is home to about three hundred native Hooshar broken up into two separate herds. The adults bear the Dome-Star-Bar brand laser-inscribed into their gelatinous hides. The Hooshar are normally peaceful, but the Krole Mercenaries have been riling them up by doing flybys and killing them indiscriminately. Because of this, the male Hooshar have become aggressive and are more prone to attack.

HOOSHAR PROCESSING CAVE

A small Hooshar processing station has been set up inside a cave on a floating island close to the main ranch. The Dome-Star-Bar prefers to deal in live Hooshar and leave slaughter to the buyers; however, they do have the capability to process Hooshar if needed. The cave contains slaughter racks, tables, and other equipment.

ION PYLONS

A few dozen ion pylons are scattered throughout the range. Most are mounted on floating islands, but some have their own skyplatform. The pylons produce an ionic charge that attracts ickon. They also contain low-yield transponders identifying the skyrange as the Dome-Star-Bar.

REMOTE GUNS

These small gun batteries are mounted on rock formations throughout the range. They can be activated remotely and are designed to target Bugs. The guns act as a Vehicle Class Light Rayblaster (2d6).

Unfortunately, electronic interference has caused them to become unreliable and there is at least one case in which a gun battery has targeted a group of passing skyranch hands. Most skyranchers give them a wide berth.

MAJOR FACTIONS AND NPCS OF NOTE

The following factions and NPCs may be encountered at the Dome-Star-Bar skyranch.

SKYRANCHERS

The Dome-Star-Bar has recently lost over a dozen skyranch hands. The majority of these men were killed by Bugs or by Krole mercenaries who made it look like the work of Bugs. The rest have moved on to avoid a similar fate.

JAYNE MALLOREE

Jayne Malloreë is an attractive and intelligent young woman who owns and operates the Dome-Star-Bar skyranch. She is a hard worker and competent businesswoman who has earned the respect of her skyranch hands. Jayne has been grieving the death of her father these past few weeks, and Krole Galmon has exploited her vulnerability to make his mercenaries appear indispensable.

Jayne Malloreë: AC 7 [12] (atomic duster + Dex); HD 1; hp 4; THB +1; AT (weapon); SA Dex 15, Cha 15, Knowledge 2, Survival 1; ST 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/10; projectile rifle (firearm), projectile pistol (firearm), dagger, minicomputer, communicator.

DITCH MINDRICK

Ditch Mindrick is an old, salty foreman who has worked for the Malloreës for years and is fiercely loyal to the brand. He knows Krole is an evil man and suspects he had a hand in Glax Malloreë's death, although he cannot prove it. Ditch has reached out to several other skyranchers for help, but fears their help will come too late.

Ditch Mindrick: AC 8 [11] (atomic duster); HD 2; hp 9; THB +2; AT (weapon); SA Survival 2; ST 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/10; projectile rifle (firearm), projectile pistol (firearm), dagger, communicator.

HAL PARSEER

Hal is an idealistic young skyranch hand who was forced to leave Tathkee Station after several shooting incidents, none of which he initiated. Although Ditch has managed to keep him from doing anything rash, he refuses to be pushed around by the Kroles and knows that a showdown with the gunslinger Xerl Qotry is imminent.

Hal Parseer (1st-level Gunslinger): AC 7 [12] (atomic duster + Dex); HD 1; hp 5; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +1; SA Dex 15, Survival 2, Athletics 2, Knowledge 1, Quick and Deadly, Stare-down; ST 14; MV 12; XP 1/10; projectile pistol (firearm), dagger.

FRANE FRA'SEL

Frane Fra'sel is a mild-mannered skyranch hand who has worked many types of ranges along the Galactic Edge. He is only out for himself and wants no trouble from the Kroles. The PCs can expect no help from Frane.

Frane Fra'sel: AC 8 [11] (atomic duster); HD 1; hp 4; THB +1; AT (weapon); SA Survival 1; ST 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/10; projectile rifle (firearm), projectile pistol (firearm), dagger, communicator.

KROLE MERCENARY COMPANY

The Krole Mercenary Company (Kroles) is a disreputable band of mercenaries run by Krole Galmon. The Kroles were based in Tathkee Station, where they hired out as extra muscle or guards for crime factions, corporate overseers, and other private interests. In-between jobs, the Kroles ventured out into the open skies of Varrul in search of Varrulium. They have robbed and murdered



several independent miners, but are always careful to cover their tracks. The Krole standard is a stylized “K” overlying a pair of crossed laser rifles.

KROLE GALMON

Krole is a large, cunning mercenary and a master manipulator. He appears honest and caring, and even chastises his men when they become rude or get out of hand. Krole came to the Dome-Star-Bar to find Glax Malloreë’s Varrulium, but has decided the ranch would make a great base of operations.

Krole has convinced Jayne that he has her best interests at heart. Once he removes the foreman Ditch Mindrick, Krole plans to make Jayne a marriage offer she cannot refuse.

Krole Galmon (3rd-level Human Male Aristocrat): AC 6 [13] (light armor + energy cloak); HD 2; hp 12; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +1; SA Str 15, Con 15, Cha 15, Interaction 2, Survival 2, Technology 1, Powerful Speaker, Silver Tongue; ST 12; MV 12; XP 2/30; projectile rifle (firearm), projectile pistol (firearm), communicator, minicomputer.

GURD SON OF HALOG

Gurd is a large, brutal Qinlon who was sentenced to death for the unsanctioned murder of his father’s kin. Gurd escaped a prison transport on the way to his execution and has been roaming the Galactic Edge as a mercenary ever since. Gurd is fiercely loyal to Krole.

Gurd son of Halog (Male Qinlon): AC 4 [15] (medium armor + Dex); HD 3+3; hp 16; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +4; SA Species Training (+1 melee damage); ST 16; MV 12; XP 3/75; projectile rifle (firearm), cha’leth (dual-bladed sword), li’cha’leth (dual-bladed dagger).

XERL QOTRY

Xerl became a gun-for-hire after his wife and kids were killed in the Barban Ring Civil War. He considers himself smarter than Krole and eventually plans to take over leadership of the company. Xerl is always eager to test his speed against other gunslingers.

Xerl Qotry (2nd-level Human Gunslinger): AC 5 [14] (light armor + atomic duster + Dex); HD 1+1; hp 6; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +1; SA Dex 15, Survival 2, Athletics 2, Knowledge 1, Quick and Deadly, Staredown; ST 13; MV 12; XP 1/20; projectile pistol x2 (firearm), holdout pistol (firearm), dagger.

WEELOS TWILL, BLANTOR LEDBY, AND TY CHOMMERS

These three Ruskans (reptilian humanoid, narrow eyes covered by goggles, brown, leathery skin) are former Igarl slavers who narrowly escaped death during the Notol Slave Rebellion. They are cowardly creatures who only serve Krole because they

Weelos Twill, Blantor Ledby, and Ty Chommers (Ruskan Outlaws): AC 6 [13] (light armor + atomic duster); HD 1; hp 4; THB +1; AT (weapon); SA none; ST 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/10; projectile rifle (firearm), dagger, communicator.

MAJOR EVENTS

The following events occur after the PCs arrive at the Dome-Star-Bar with Ditch Mindrick.

RETURN TO THE RANCH

The Ruskan mercenaries that had accompanied Ditch return to the ranch, saying they lost contact with him on the range. Jayne is in the process of organizing a search party when Ditch and the characters arrive.

Jayne is overjoyed to see Ditch alive. Ditch tells her his skyhauler malfunctioned and the PCs saved his hide. He mentions nothing about the sabotage.

Krole Galmon introduces himself to the PCs and says: "Welcome aboard. As you can see, the Bugs are on the warpath and we need every hand we can get. Ion pylons along the range have been destroyed. Without those pylons, the Hooshar herds will start to disperse which could mean ruin for the ranch."

Ditch looks at Jayne and says: "Is this true, ma'am?"

"I'm afraid it is," Jayne says. "Krole and I were about to discuss the best way to defend the range when the Ruskans arrived. Grab some chow and then meet me in my quarters in an hour. We'll make a plan for tomorrow."

Ditch turns to the PCs and says: "I'll take you to the bunkhouse and help you get settled in. Cookie'll serve grub while I'm meeting with Miss Jayne. It ain't the best eatin', but it'll do. Thank you all again for your help."

SETTLING IN

Ditch gives the PCs a brief tour of the main ranch, then gives them time to get settled in the Bunkhouse. He does not protest if they choose alternate sleeping quarters (such as their skycraft or the Hangar).

If the PCs take a look around, they may ask about the holopix in the Mess or discover the mining equipment under the tarps in the hangar. Ditch knows from the receipts that Glax purchased the gear, and thinks he must have been planning to prospect in the Middle Atmosphere.

The other skyranch hands, Hal Parseer and Frane Fra'sel, arrive a short time later. Ditch introduces them to the PCs and tells them what happened on the range. Hal is furious and wants to confront the mercs, but Frane looks like he doesn't want to get involved.

"Don't you do nothin' rash," Ditch tells Hal. "That Qotry's a mean hand with a gun and he's got his eye on you. We ain't gotta hold out long. I already reached out to the foremen of the Y-Arrow and the Zed-Wing-X skyranches.

They should have some hands here in the next few days and Krole won't dare go to war with all those brands. He'll have no choice but to move on. In the meantime, you gotta watch yer back. Check all yer gear before you go out and don't give them no excuse to call you out."

Jayne, Ditch, and Krole then retire for a closed meeting in her quarters. Meanwhile, the skyranch hands and mercenaries meet in the Mess where the chefbot "Cookie" serves steaming plates of chilco and hard biskits.

THE CHALLENGE

Krole has instructed his men to goad someone into a fight. Xerl Qotry has targeted Hal, but would be just as happy if a PC gunslinger intervened.

The mercenaries are rowdy. They make a mess of the hall and complain about the chefbot's food. Finally, Hal has had enough.

He jumps to his feet and says: "If'n you don't like the food, maybe you should get on your skybikes and tuck tail like the yeller drogues you are!"

Xerl Qotry stands up and the mercenaries grow silent.

"Them's fightin' words, boy," Xerl says. "You man enough to back them up?" "You bet I am," Hal says.

He steps out onto the floor and hitches at his belt. Xerl faces him down, hand hovering near the pistol slung on his hip.

If the PCs intervene, Xerl says: "Unless yer steppin' into his shoes, you'd best shut yer mouth. Don't matter none to me. I'd rather kill you than this boy anyways. Make yer choice."

THE DUEL

Xerl does not care if he fights Hal or one of the PCs. He has been in many fights and is confident in his ability.

This duel can be run by rolling Initiative and conducting combat normally. However, to make things more interesting, the Referee may wish to use the rules for Quick Draw Duels found in CHAPTER 0004: TATHKEE STATION).

If the PCs try to exit the Mess to warn Jayne or Ditch, the mercenaries block their path. If the PCs attack the mercenaries outright, skip to Aftermath after the first shots are fired.

AFTERMATH

Jayne, Ditch, and Krole are drawn in by the commotion. If Hal or Xerl are dead, Krole asks if the fight between them was fair. If it was, even Ditch has to admit there is nothing that can be done. That's the way things work along the frontier.

Jayne is extremely upset. If Hal was killed, she wants Xerl Qotry removed from the ranch. Krole orders him to pack his things and leave. Krole furiously berates the rest of his men and sends them to the Bunkhouse. This is all a show and they know it.

While this is happening, Xerl takes his skybike to a rocky cave on a nearby floating island on the North Range to await Krole's instructions. If followed, he attacks.

Ditch pulls the PCs aside and asks for details of what happened. The dead (if any) are encased in a freeze container to await proper burial. A distraught Jayne then retires for the night.

RANGE REPAIRS

The rest of the night passes by uneventfully. In the morning, Jayne assembles the skyranch hands and mercenaries in the Mess. She appears composed, but it is obvious she has been crying.

"The Bugs have destroyed ion pylons all across the range," she says. "The Ickon fields have already begun to drift apart and the herds are spreading out. Today, I'm breaking you up into two groups. Krole and his mercenaries will ride the North Range, locating and repairing any pylons that can be salvaged or replacing those that can't. Frane will go with them, in case they're not familiar with the tech."

"Ditch, you and the others will ride the South Range and do the same. I'll be sending drones out from here to monitor for Bug activity. Keep your heads on a swivel. You are all more valuable to me than the pylons so don't hesitate to head back to the ranch house if you run into trouble. I'll see you back here before nightfall."

The PCs are given full environmental suits for the ride. They may take their own skycraft or starship, or use one of the ranch's skycraft. The mercenaries take their skybikes.

NORTH RANGE RIDE

Krole has decided that today is the day to make his move. He and his mercenaries head onto the North Range. They spend half the day finding and fixing pylons.

Around lunchtime, they kill Frane Fra'sel and toss his body into the sky. They then drop into the Middle Atmosphere, kill a few Bugs, and return to the main ranch.

At the main ranch, they take Jayne prisoner and begin questioning her about Glax's Varrulium. Jayne has no idea what they are talking about.

SOUTH RANGE RIDE

Ditch leads the PCs (and Hal, if he's still alive) along the South Range. He stresses the importance of fixing the pylons or else losing the ranch. The characters see clusters of Hooshar drifting on the winds in the manmade Ickon field.

Ditch tells them a little about the planet's ecosystem as they ride.

"The Ickon is the key," he says. "The Hooshar eat the Ickon and just about everything else on this planet, including the Bugs, eats the Hooshar. Sure, there're a few other Ickon-eaters out there, but they ain't got the numbers oike the Hooshar. I've seen herds that stretch for miles in the Lower Atmosphere. 'Course there's fewer of them now that offworlders found a use for 'em and there'll be even fewer of them in the days to come. You can't stop progress."

The Referee can roll normally for any plasma storms or encounters. Around lunch time, they stop to rest beneath a rocky ledge and Ditch points out Glax Mallore's burial site on a nearby rock formation.

"That hill was Glax's favorite place in the world," Ditch says. "He liked to sit atop that rock and just watch the Hooshar float by. Found it peaceful. You mighta seen that pic Miss Jayne snapped of him up there hanging in the Mess. It's why she chose that place to bury him. That was a sad day."

If the PCs express interest in visiting the site, Ditch is willing to go to pay his respects. He removes his atomic outrider hat and says a few words over Glax's grave.

DISCOVERY

At some point while at the Burial Site, have the characters make a Survival Check. Success means they notice a small pool of glimmering Ickon in a shallow depression beneath a slanted rock. The pool can be sifted with the proper equipment to produce one (1) gelt of Varrulium dust.

Closer inspection of the rock reveals six (6) Varrulium nuggets (weighing 5 gelts each) and a vein of raw Varrulium embedded in the rock. If mined over the course of a few weeks, the vein produces 100 x 1d6 porls of Varrulium ore.

If the PCs bring the ore to Ditch's attention, his brow furrows and he says: "Glax told me before he left for Tathkee Station he was onto something big. I just assumed it was something he was doing at the station. Now I know why he bought all that mining equipment back."

"Boys, unguarded Varrulium is worth a fortune. Men'd kill for this kinda money sure enough. We can't let Krole know about it. He'd kill us for shore. Come on. We'd best get back to the ranch and see what Miss Jayne has to say about it."

RETURN TO THE RANCH

The Tikatikatik "Bugs" have finally had enough of Krole's mercenaries and have decided to mount a raid on the Dome-Star-Bar. On the return trip to the main ranch, the PCs see several "bug" swarms swirling below them in the roiling clouds of the Middle Atmosphere.

Ditch says: "Something's got the Bugs all riled up. Last time I saw that many, they attacked the ranch."

FIGHTING THE MERCS

The characters arrive to find the main ranch locked down. The airlock access codes have been changed and Ditch is unable to raise Jayne on the comms. A successful Technology Check is required to open an airlock.

The eastern complex is empty, but the skybikes are present, meaning the mercenaries have returned.

Krole and his men are in the western complex. They have locked Jayne in her quarters and are waiting in the Storage room to ambush the PCs. The mercs have erected makeshift barricades inside the chamber. They open fire as soon as the characters enter.

The mercenaries attack with their projectile weapons. On the third round of combat, Gurd son of Halog rushes the PCs with his cha'leth (dual-bladed sword). If Gurd and Xerl are killed, Krole retreats into Jayne's quarters, leaving the Ruskan mercenaries to fend for themselves. Krole offers to free Jayne in exchange for safe passage off the ranch.

The Referee must decide how this negotiation plays out. Jayne is no pushover, so she may attempt to escape or make it easier for the PCs to attack, depending on the situation.

If Krole is killed, any surviving mercenaries attempt to surrender.

BUG ATTACK

At some point during the negotiations, a war party consisting of thirty (30) Tikatikatik "Bugs" descends on the main ranch. The characters hear proximity alarms sound and on the surveillance cameras see flickering images of the Bugs flying around outside the complex.

The Bugs reshape the rocks overhead, opening three (3) tunnels into the roof of the Bunkhouse. A stream of Bugs then flies through the tunnels and into the chamber.

Environmental alarms sound as the complex is flooded with Varrul's poisonous air. If the PCs are not wearing protective gear, they must make a Survival Check to don it in time. Failure means the character suffers 1d6 damage.

The Bugs attack anything that moves and wreck everything in sight. Their goal is to kill offworlders and destroy the ranch. If Krole is still present, he attempts to escape in the confusion of the attack. If ten (10) or more Bugs are killed, the rest retreat.

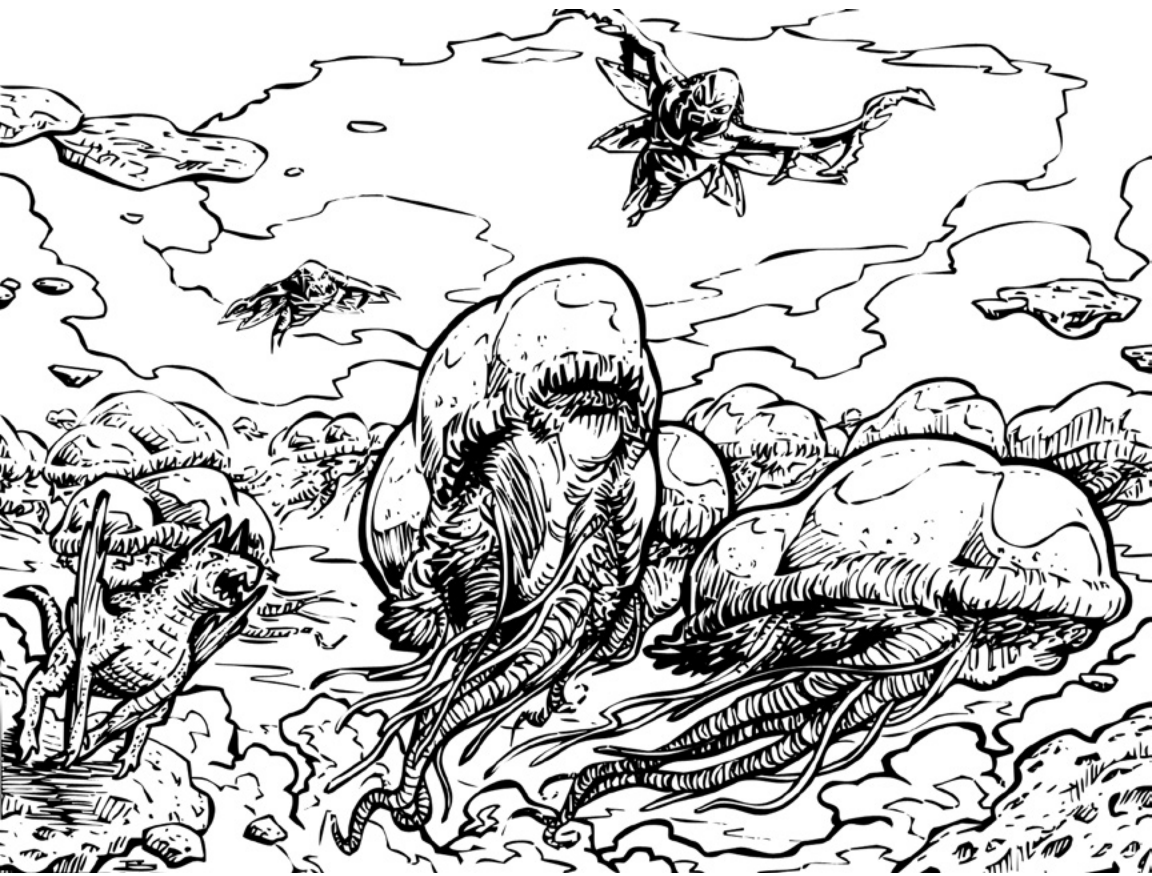
Tikatikatik (30): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Jayne Malloreë is extremely grateful if rescued. She pays the characters 100 ic each and asks them to stay on as skyranch hands. If the PCs decline, she says they are welcome to return whenever they like. Skyranch hands from the nearby ranges arrive a day later and help clean up the main ranch.

If the Varrulium vein was discovered, Jayne offers the PCs a cut of the profits if they stay on to help mine the ore and guard the shipments. If Krole escaped, he may return with more mercs to seize the Varrulium or he may try to ambush the PCs as they transport shipments to Tathkee Station.

The characters have made lifelong friends of Ditch Mindrick (and Hal Parseer, if he survives). The men are quick to brag on the PCs. Word of their fight with the Bugs can lead to a number of interesting roleplaying encounters and may even segue into a job offer for the Against the Hive adventure.



CHAPTER 0005

AGAINST THE HIVE

The skies of Varrul are fraught with danger, but you and the other miners aboard the Plasma Dark are determined to strike it rich. A scout team has just returned with news of a Hive hidden in the clouds below. Time to gear up and lock and load. Exterminate all the Bugs on the island and their precious Varrulium is yours!

Against the Hive is a simple *White: Star Galaxy Edition*[™] adventure designed for three to six characters of 3rd-5th level (about 18 levels total). The adventure involves a full-scale assault on a Tikatikatik Hive by the Dandol-Barstow Mining Company.

The PCs have the opportunity to participate in the scouting and assault of the Hive in many ways, so the Mercenary, Pilot, Alien Brute, and other combat-oriented Classes are recommended. The Referee can use Against the Hive as a blueprint for just about any Hive assault.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Dandol-Barstow Mining Company (DBMC) was formed by a coalition of independent miners and investors. The company's ships are manned by dedicated workers who have successfully mined several Tikatikatik Hives. The DBMC mining vessel Plasma Dark has recently returned from an unsuccessful scouting mission. After a brief furlough, the Plasma Dark again leaves Tathkee Station in search of an active Hive.

PLASMA DARK

The Plasma Dark is a modified Class-7 Stinto-Klyne model Mining Junker, complete with retractable construction equipment and a primary drill. The ship possesses a crew of twenty (20), with fifty (50) mercenaries and one hundred (100) miners along for the ride.

In addition to normal mining equipment, its cargo bay contains two (2) six-wheeled earthrollers, a civilian model assault springer, and two (2) armed skycruisers.

Plasma Dark (Mining Junker): Starship; AC 6 [13]; hp 75; SS 0; TAR +0; AT Light Laser x4 (2d6); MOD Energy Damper, Faster-Than-Light Drive, Heat Shielding (75), Redundant Systems; MV 3.

Earthroller (2): Vehicle; AC 6 [13]; hp 30; EXD 3d6; PP +5; RED 6; MV 18/3 (Waterborne); TAR +2; AT Light Rayblaster Turret x2 (2d6), Rollover (1d6 or 3d6); MOD None.

Assault Springer: Vehicle; AC 4 [15]; hp 40; EXD 4d6; PP Complete; RED 10; MV 15; TAR +4; AT Light Rayblaster (2d6); MOD None.

Skycruiser (2): Vehicle; AC 6 [13]; hp 25; EXD 3d6; PP +3; RED 4; MV 25 (flight ceiling 1,500 ft); TAR +2; AT Light Rayblaster Turret x2 (2d6); MOD none.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Against the Hive assumes the PCs have been hired by the Dandol-Barstow Mining Company to assist with ongoing mining operations on Planet Varrul. The characters have been assigned to a Mining Junker named the Plasma Dark. Examples of what kind of roles they might serve are listed below.

The PCs are scouts searching the skies of Varrul for active Tikatikatik Hives. They may be company employees or private contractors. The characters must contend with all the normal threats and hazards discussed in the Open Skies of Varrul section. Once a Hive is located, they report back to the Plasma Dark and try to lead the crew back. During the assault, they can either provide close air support to mercenaries on the ground or infiltrate the Hive itself as part of an assault team.

The PCs are mercenaries housed aboard the Plasma Dark (or their own accompanying vessel), waiting for action. Once a Hive is located they are either deployed in a defensive perimeter around the Plasma Dark or sent to infiltrate the Hive itself as part of an assault team.

The PCs are aboard the Plasma Dark as observers. They might be potential investors who want a firsthand look at DBMC operations, Restoration diplomats trying to establish ties with company officials, or Consortium agents conducting an audit and assessment of the company's efficiency and worth. The characters can opt to get involved in the assault at any time, or hang back inside the Plasma Dark and watch it all unfold.

MAKING IT REAL

The crew of the Plasma Dark is competent and experienced. The miners are a mixed lot of hardworking men and women trying to provide better lives for their families. The mercenaries are a bit on the rough side, with the dark sense of humor common to the trade.

The Referee should give the characters a chance to roleplay some of the journey, making friends, acquaintances, and even enemies aboard the Plasma Dark. This might make the death of these NPCs during the Hive assault more impactful.

SCOUT TEAM

A Scout Team is a mixture of pilots, explorers, and mercenaries who fly a company shuttle or personal starship through the skies of Varrul, searching for floating islands, Tikatikatik hunting parties, or other signs of Tikatikatik activity.

As the Plasma Dark cruises safely along through the Upper Atmosphere, its Scout Teams deploy deep into the Middle Atmosphere. Their mission is not easy, and a good Scout Team must learn to be self-reliant. Varrul's open skies are vast and full of dangers, including pirate vessels, natural hazards, and hostile fauna. With sensors and long-range communications being unreliable at best, any misstep could spell disaster.

If the PCs take the role of a Scout Team, the Referee should check normally for random encounters each day. After a week of searching, the Referee should proceed to either Tikatikatik Sightings or Land Ho! in order to continue the adventure.

TIKATIKATIK SIGHTINGS

A Tikatikatik hunting or raiding party is encountered in the open skies. These can be monitored at a distance using short-range sensors, but sensors can be unreliable in Varrul's harsh atmosphere—there is a 1 in 6 chance each day using sensors that the Tikatikatik manage to slip away. If this occurs, one (1) PC may make a Survival Check to determine their most likely path and pick up their trail.



A good Scout Team can follow a hunting party for days or even weeks at a time until they return to the Tikatikatik Hive. If the Tikatikatik realize they are being followed, they may attack the Scout Team, attempt to evade detection, or even lead the team into a trap. The Tikatikatik are fully willing to sacrifice their own lives to keep offworlders away from the Hive.

LAND HO!

A floating island is located. The PCs either followed a Tikatikatik hunting party back to the island or stumbled upon it by pure chance (Referee's discretion). Now the team must determine whether or not the island is a Badland Cluster or an active Tikatikatik Hive.

Things to look for:

Ickon Pools: Clear pools of Ickon are often a sign of Tikatikatik activity. Tikatikatik mystics draw the Varrulium dust out of the pools and add it to their tribe's Vicha ak Vocha.

Battle Signs: If the Hive has already been mined, there are usually signs of battle and/or mining operations (blast marks, drill sites, trash, broken mining equipment, etc.) littering the island. Most companies also like to "plant their flag" on successfully mined Hives, tagging the islands with corporate logos, metal signs, or other identifying markers.

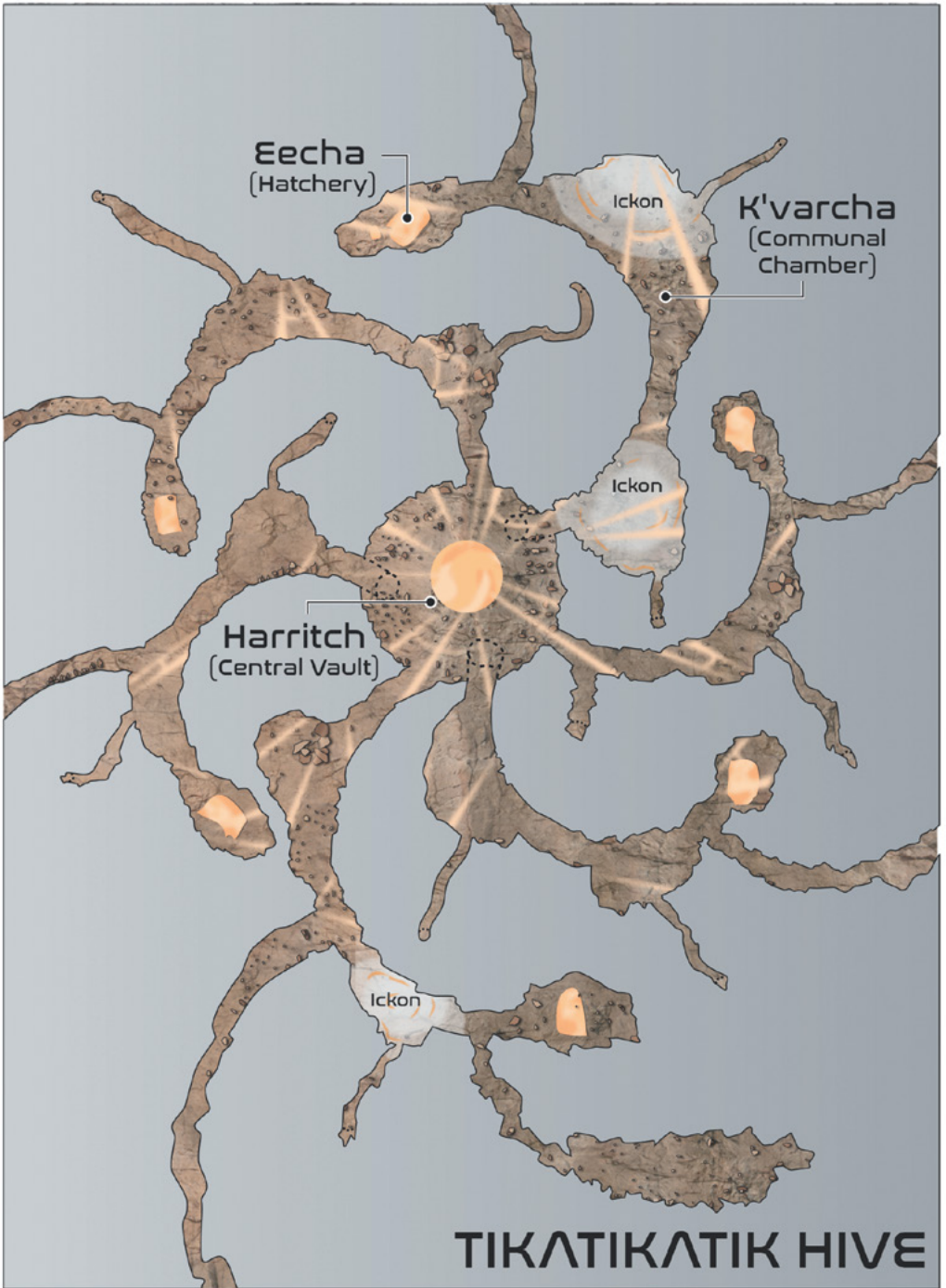
Cave Entrances: Tikatikatik Hives are riddled by tunnels that open onto the topside and underside of the island's surface. These entrances are usually concealed among rocks, grass, and briar patches. The Scout Team should locate and map as many of these entrances as possible to make it easier for Strike Teams (see below) to infiltrate during the assault.

Tribal Markings: Tikatikatik tribes mark the surface of the Hive with their tribal symbol. These symbols vary from tribe to tribe, with some (such as the broken skull of the Skull Splitter's tribe) being readily recognizable while others (such as the piled cairn of the Balancing Rocks tribe) being less easy to spot.

Ritual Grounds: Tikatikatik tribes often decorate the surface of their Hives with ceremonial piles or scaffolds of bones, carapaces, and weapons of fallen enemies. These are said to grant strength to the tribe and serve as a warning to other tribes.

Scavengers: Rutza lizards are scavengers who make their home near Tikatikatik Hives. An abundance of Rutza, especially on the underside of a floating island where debris and waste are expelled from the caves, may signal the presence of an active Hive.

Tikatikatik Activity: The Tikatikatik spend most, but not all, of their time inside the tunnels. However, Treka mystics sometimes seek solitude atop lofty heights, K'chak workers (and Takta slaves) gather food from aboveground, while K'tee guardians patrol the surface of the island in groups of 1d6+1, searching for signs of invaders.



Hunting Parties: Hunting parties of 4d6 Atrak warriors leave or return to the Hive every few days, however, if the hunting party realizes a Scout Team is following them, they may lead them to an empty cave system, the lair of a predator, or even the Hive of a rival Tikatikatik tribe.

DETECTION AND RESPONSE

The only sure way to confirm the presence of an active Hive is to explore the island's cave system and see if it houses Tikatikatik. This is as dangerous as it sounds, for a variety of reasons.

Instead of Tikatikatik, the caves may be home to native predators such as Dirch Dog packs, clusters of Kendree Krabs, or lone Kilana Beasts, none of which take kindly to intrusion. The natural porous rock tends to be less stable than those maintained by the tribal Workers and can collapse from explosions. The Scout Team's vessel might get caught in a plasma storm while the team is away exploring.

At an active Hive, Tikatikatik tribes post guards to watch for offworld intruders and raiding parties from other tribes. These guards attack on sight, raising an alarm that brings a swarm of the tribe's Warriors and Guardians.

The Tikatikatik chase offworlders as far as they are able. A few tribes have even delegated teams of Warriors to break off from any fighting in an attempt to locate the offworld vessel. If the Scout Team can be killed and their vessel destroyed, the Hive is safe for another day.

CONFIRMATION

The Scout Team locates the Sharp Wing Hive (see below) after about one (1) week of searching. The Referee may include any of the indicators noted in Things to Look For (above) and roleplay the Tikatikatik response.

The good thing for the Scout Team is that they only need to see evidence of Varrulium in the tunnel walls to know they have located an active Hive. Once this is found, they can withdraw from the island, secure in the knowledge that the caves are rich in Varrulium ore.

RETURNING TO THE HIVE

After the Scout Team has confirmed the presence of an active Hive, they return to the Upper Atmosphere and rendezvous with the Plasma Dark. All remaining Scout Teams are recalled, and the Mining Junker descends into the Middle Atmosphere.

The floating islands of Varrul are in constant motion, carried along by invisible magnetic tides. This means that returning to a Hive requires more luck than skill.

Under normal circumstances, the Referee can handle this return with an arbitrary 1d20 roll. The roll is typically successful on a roll of 20 or greater, with +1 bonuses added for things like Navigation Skill, relevant Class Abilities,

Gifts or Meditations, or experience flying through the skies of Varrul.

In this case, however, luck is with the PCs. With their help, the Plasma Dark navigator locates the Hive after less than a day of searching.

ROUGH LANDING

The Plasma Dark goes on Red Alert as the ship descends towards the island's surface. Miners and mercenaries rush from deck to deck, donning breathing masks and readying weapons as they prepare for battle on the island's unforgiving surface.

The pilot warns the crew to brace themselves as the vessel touches down, shuddering with the impact as its landing feet crunch deep into the porous rock. Blast doors open, loading ramps descend, and the miners and mercenaries deploy onto the windswept ground.

The assault on the Hive has begun!

SHARP WING HIVE

The Sharp Wing Hive is located on a rocky island that measures roughly two (2) miles in diameter. The Sharp Wing tribe consists of 64 Atrak warriors, 11 Treka mystics, and 166 K'chak workers, with 100+ grubs, 26 K'tee guardians, and 68 Takta slaves. Sharp Wing tribesfolk clip the rounded edges of their wings to give them a pointed appearance. Their Warriors are known for stealth and speed, and some say this is due to the modified wings.

HIVE LAYOUT

The Sharp Wing Hive consists of a central Harritch vault with tunnels linking it to K'varcha communal chambers and Eecha hatcheries. The walls, floor, and ceiling are porous rock, smoothed over by Workers. The chambers are lined with nests made from the lush purple foliage of Gahth Bushes which grow wild throughout the warrens.

Varrulium deposits embedded along the tunnel walls are inscribed with Vicha story patterns that recount the history of the Sharp Wing tribe. Bioluminescent Ilik Moss reacts with the Varrulium to illuminate the darkened tunnels with a soft blue glow. Rutza scurry underfoot.

CAVE ENTRANCES

There are over a dozen cave entrances to the Hive on the topside and underside of the floating island. These are not difficult to spot for those familiar with the layout of a Tikatikatik Hive. If possible, the Scout Team should convey the locations of these entrances to the Strike Teams before the assault begins.

TUNNELS

The winding tunnels stretch throughout the Hive in a vaguely spiral pattern centered around the Harritch central vault. The walls are lined with Varrulium and Ilik Moss, producing a soft blue glow that lights up the tunnels. During the assault, the tunnels swarm with Tikatikatik ready to repel invaders. Strike Teams are subject to a series of grueling attacks as they try to make their way to the Harritch.

ICKON POOLS

Large pools of clear Ickon are found in some of the low-lying tunnels and chambers. Salima Eels make their homes in the porous rock nearby and are cultivated as a secondary food source. The eels are nonaggressive and prefer to flee rather than fight.

Salima Eel (2d6): AC: 7 [12] (natural); HD 1+1; hp 4; AT 1 (bite 1d2); THB +0; SA: Flight; ST 19; MV 15 (Fly); XP 1/15.

K'VARCHA COMMUNAL CHAMBERS

The Tikatikatik prefer to fight invaders in the tunnels, so during the assault the K'varcha communal chambers are empty of adults. A few dozen grubs hide beneath Gahth foliage, in holes, or in shallow crevices, but these pose no threat to the Strike Teams and can be exterminated later, after the Hive is taken.

Dozens of harmless Rutza lizards also scurry along the walls, feeding off Tikatikatik leavings. They may climb into backpacks or other gear in search of food, and the PCs could easily end up with a Rutza infestation if they return to their starship unaware.

EECHA HATCHERIES

The Eecha hatcheries are sealed off by K'chak workers during the assault. All tunnels leading to them end abruptly in porous rock. However, the Varrulium veins lining the tunnel walls are a clear indicator that the tunnel continues past the rock. The wall can be battered down with tools in six (6) rounds or cleared in one (1) round with explosives.

A group of six (6) K'chak workers and ten (10) Takta slaves await the Strike Team inside each of the six (6) Eecha. The Tikatikatik here fight to the death in order to protect the eggs and grubs within.

K'chak Worker (6): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2; hp 8; AT 1 (claws); THB +2; SA: Flight, Rock Shaping; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

Takta Slave (10): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2; hp 7; AT 1 (claws); THB +1; SA: Flight; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

HARRITCH CENTRAL VAULT

The Harritch central vault is sealed off by K'chak workers during the assault. All tunnels leading to it end abruptly in porous rock. However, the Varrulium veins lining the tunnel walls are a clear indicator that the tunnels continue past the rock. The wall can be battered down with tools in six (6) rounds or cleared in one (1) round with explosives.

A group of nine (9) Treka mystics, two (2) Atrak warriors, and twenty-three (23) K'chak workers await the Strike Team inside the Harritch. The Tikatikatik here fight to the death. This is their last chance to save the tribe and keep the Harritch from being defiled.

If the Tikatikatik are defeated at the Harritch, skip ahead to Activating the Beacon.

Treka Mystic (9): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 1+2; hp 5; AT 1 (claws); THB +1; SA: Flight, Varrulium Shaping, one (1) extra Gift; ST 16; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/45.

Atrak Warrior (2): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

K'chak Worker (23): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2; hp 8; AT 1 (claws); THB +2; SA: Flight, Rock Shaping; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

ASSAULT ON THE SHARP WING HIVE

The Referee should be sure to describe the chaos of the assault, with Tikatikatik buzzing in from all directions, explosions ripping through the tunnels, and mercenaries and miners screaming in agony as they are torn apart by Tikatikatik claws. Afterwards, the players should have time to reflect on the bloody cost of the Varrulium trade, which may lead to more roleplaying later.

ASSAULT TEAMS

A Hive assault involves numerous teams of miners and mercenaries. The teams coordinate their actions, with each having a specific role during the assault. The PCs may choose to be part of a Perimeter Team, Close Air Support Team, or a Strike Team. They may also split themselves up between the different teams.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

Victory Conditions for each type of team effort are listed at the end of each team description. Victory is essentially decided by an abstract die roll. However, the PCs have the ability to affect the roll by overcoming challenges relevant to their team's assignment. Each challenge the PCs overcome awards an additional +1 to this die roll. The Referee decides how many challenges the team must face (usually 1d3).

PERIMETER TEAM

The Perimeter Team is made up of twenty to thirty (20-30) mercenaries. They are the first to deploy, taking up defensive positions in the rock formations around the Plasma Dark. Their job is to protect the ship from ground-based attacks and provide cover while the Close Air Support and Strike Teams deploy.

The Perimeter Team has two (2) earthrollers and one (1) assault springer at their disposal. The PCs may take command of these vehicles or use their own personal vehicle during the assault.

The Tikatikatik swarm responds quickly to the presence of offworlders, so the Perimeter Team is usually the first to engage. Atrak warriors, K'tee guardians, and K'chak workers make up the bulk of the Tikatikatik's outer defenses, with a few Treka mystics joining in the attack. Kendree Krabs and Dirch Dogs may also be utilized.

The Perimeter Team may encounter the following challenges:

1. SWARM ATTACK: A buzzing swarm of Atrak warriors, K'chak workers, and K'tee guardians (some riding Kendree Krabs) attack the Perimeter Team. The Atrak warriors hurl back-quills or make diving passes against anyone in the open (such as anyone operating a skybike, skyboard, jetpack, etc.). They receive a +1 bonus to all Attack Rolls against non-flying races. The characters must kill a number of Tikatikatik equal to the number of PCs on the Perimeter Team in order to overcome this challenge.

Atrak Warrior (8): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

K'tee Guardian (6): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: N/A; ST 18; MV 12/12 (Climb); XP 2/30.

K'chak Worker (22): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2; hp 8; AT 1 (claws); THB +2; SA: Flight, Rock Shaping; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

Kendree Krab (10): AC: 4 [15] (natural); HD 3+3; hp 13; AT 1 (bite); THB +3; SA: Dive Attack, Flight; ST 18; MV 12/15 (Fly); XP 3/60.

2. GRAB AND DROP: K'tee guardians riding Kendree Krabs swoop down and grab members of the Perimeter Team. A random PC is targeted for attack. If the attack succeeds, the character must make an Athletics Check to break free before the Krab secures its hold. If not, the character is lifted into the air and dropped from great height, suffering 2d6 damage from the fall.

A trapped PC may only use small weapons (daggers, laser pistols, etc.) against the Krab. Damage from third party attacks is split evenly between the PC and the Krab. The PC must avoid, break free of, or survive the Grab and Drop in order to overcome this challenge.

K'tee Guardian: AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: N/A; ST 18; MV 12/12 (Climb); XP 2/30.

Kendree Krab: AC: 4 [15] (natural); HD 3+3; hp 13; AT 1 (bite); THB +3; SA: Dive Attack, Flight; ST 18; MV 12/15 (Fly); XP 3/60.



3. GRAB AND GO: K'tee guardians riding Kendree Krabs swoop down and grab members of the Perimeter Team as noted above. Instead of dropping them onto the island, however, the Krab drops them over the side of the floating island. It takes three (3) rounds for the Krab to reach a suitable drop site, giving the PC plenty of time to break free or be rescued by friends. The PC must avoid, break free of, or survive the Grab and Go in order to overcome this challenge.

K'tee Guardian: AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: N/A; ST 18; MV 12/12 (Climb); XP 2/30.

Kendree Krab: AC: 4 [15] (natural); HD 3+3; hp 13; AT 1 (bite); THB +3; SA: Dive Attack, Flight; ST 18; MV 12/15 (Fly); XP 3/60.

4. RAIN OF STONES: K'tee guardians riding Kendree Krabs drop rocks onto the Perimeter Team. The Attack Roll suffers a -2 penalty and does 2d6 damage to characters or 1d3 damage to vehicles. The PCs must kill a number of K'tee guardians equal to the number of characters on the team in order to overcome this challenge.

K'tee Guardian (6): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: N/A; ST 18; MV 12/12 (Climb); XP 2/30.

Kendree Krab (6): AC: 4 [15] (natural); HD 3+3; hp 13; AT 1 (bite); THB +3; SA: Dive Attack, Flight; ST 18; MV 12/15 (Fly); XP 3/60.

5. ROCK TRAP: A K'chak worker reshapes the rocky ground beneath the Perimeter Team, enveloping their feet to the knees. Trapped characters lose

all AC bonuses from high Dexterity and suffer a -2 penalty to Attack Rolls made against enemies attacking from above or behind.

The character may make an Athletics Check to break free in one (1) round, but can perform no other action that round. The rock may also be battered away with a pick or rifle butt in three (3) rounds. The Swarm Attack (above) usually follows the Rock Trap. The character must break free of the Rock Trap in order to overcome this challenge.

6. UNSTEADY GROUND: K'chak workers reshape the rocky ground, raising walls in front of earthrollers and opening holes at the feet of the assault springer. A PC vehicle operator must make a Navigation Check to avoid these hazards (Dexterity bonuses/penalties apply). If unsuccessful, the vehicle crashes, suffering 2d6 damage. The PC vehicle operator must avoid the hazard in order to overcome this challenge.

PERIMETER TEAM VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Tikatikatik have the advantage of numbers, but the Perimeter Team is well equipped. Roll 1d10 for the Tikatikatik and 1d10 for the Perimeter Team (adding all PC bonuses for overcoming challenges, if any). The highest number achieves victory. The Referee makes the rolls for both sides, if no PCs are on the Perimeter Team.

If the Perimeter Team fails, the mercenaries and miners on the team suffer heavy casualties and are forced to retreat back to the Plasma Dark. If the team succeeds, small groups of mercenaries and miners break into Strike Teams and enter the Hive in search of the Harritch. The rest take cover as the Plasma Storm gathers (see below).

CLOSE AIR SUPPORT TEAM

The Close Air Support Team's primary responsibility is to protect the Plasma Dark from aerial attacks. Its secondary responsibility is to provide cover and extra firepower to the Perimeter Team and the Strike Teams, as needed.

The Close Air Support Team has two (2) modified skycruisers. The PCs may take command of these vehicles or use their own personal vehicle or starship during the attack. Close Air Support Teams also operate the light laser turrets aboard the Plasma Dark.

The Close Air Support Team may encounter the following challenges:

1. DIVE ATTACK: Atrak warriors concentrate their Ch'katch dive attack on the Plasma Dark. The Atrak fly to height and then descend, surrounded by mystical energy. The attacks automatically hit, inflicting 1 damage per Warrior, and possibly creating a Hull Breach (see below). The PCs have two (2) rounds to kill a number of Atrak warriors equal to the number of characters on the team before they strike the Plasma Dark in order to overcome this challenge.

Atrak Warrior (53): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

2. HULL BREACH: In addition to normal damage, there is a 3 in 6 chance that at least one of the Ch'katch dive attacks breaches the Plasma Dark's hull. When this happens, the Tikatikatik fighting against the Perimeter Team and the Close Air Support Team swarm to the breach. The PCs must kill a number of Tikatikatik equal to twice (x2) the number of characters on the team in order to turn back the tide and overcome this challenge.

Atrak Warrior (all remaining after Dive Attack): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

K'chak Worker (60): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2; hp 8; AT 1 (claws); THB +2; SA: Flight, Rock Shaping; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

K'tee Guardian (10): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: N/A; ST 18; MV 12/12 (Climb); XP 2/30.

3. ION NETTLES: Atrak warriors hurl nets made of Hooshar nettles charged with ions at support vehicles and the Plasma Dark. The nets cause no damage, but deliver an ionic charge that disrupts electronics. If a net strikes a vehicle, the pilot must make a Saving Throw or the vehicle's controls are ionized for one (1) round. If a net strikes the Plasma Dark, one of its light lasers is rendered inoperable. The PCs must kill the Warrior before he throws the net or make the Saving Throw in order to overcome this challenge.

Atrak Warrior: AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

4. FLYING BLIND: Atrak warriors attempt to ram the cockpit of the skycruisers with their Kendree Krabs, leaping to safety just before impact. If successful, the collision kills the Krab, inflicts 1 damage to the vehicle, and covers it with gore. The vehicle suffers a -4 penalty to all 1d20 rolls, a -4 penalty to AC, and a -2 penalty to all vehicle-related Skill Checks until the gore is cleaned off. The PCs must kill the Krab before the collision or avoid the ramming attack altogether in order to overcome this challenge.

Kendree Krab: AC: 4 [15] (natural); HD 3+3; hp 13; AT 1 (bite); THB +3; SA: Dive Attack, Flight; ST 18; MV 12/15 (Fly); XP 3/60.

5. FIRE SKINS: As the assault commences, K'chak workers on the ground release Hooshar skins filled with flammable gases into the air. There is a 1 in 6 chance per round that a flying vessel strikes one of these balloons, causing an explosion that does 1d6+1 damage to all vehicles (2d6+2 to creatures) in a 30-foot radius. The PC vehicle operator must successfully navigate through the balloons for three (3) rounds in order to overcome this challenge.

6. MYSTIC WYRM: A Treka mystic calls upon the power of the Great Wanderer and uses her Phantasmal Force Gift to create the illusion of a giant Yuhacta Wurm. The phantasmal Wurm attacks the Close Air Support Team and Perimeter Team. The PCs must either kill the Mystic or successfully disbelieve the Wurm's existence in order to overcome this challenge.

Treka Mystic: AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 1+2; hp 5; AT 1 (claws); THB +1; SA: Flight, Varrulium Shaping, Phantasmal Force; ST 16; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/45.

CLOSE AIR SUPPORT VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Close Air Support Team's weapons are far more devastating than the Tikatikatik defenses. Roll 1d6 for the Tikatikatik and 1d10 for the Close Air Support Team (adding all PC bonuses for overcoming challenges, if any). The highest number achieves victory. The Referee makes the rolls for both sides, if no PCs are on the Close Air Support Team.

If the Close Air Support Team fails, the skycruisers are destroyed as the Plasma Storm rolls in (see below) and the mercenaries and miners on the ground suffer heavy casualties. If the team succeeds, the Tikatikatik are forced to retreat ahead of the Plasma Storm, giving the teams plenty of time to take cover before it strikes.

STRIKE TEAM

Strike Teams are made up of six to ten (6-10) heavily armed and armored mercenaries accompanied by three to five (3-5) armed miners. Strike Teams infiltrate the Hive through cave entrances scattered across the island's surface. Their job is to push through the tunnels until they reach the Harritch central vault and then activate a locator beacon to guide the Plasma Dark (see below).

The Strike Teams usually meet the stiffest resistance. Treka mystics and K'tee guardians lead the charge against them, followed by K'chak workers, and Takta slaves.

The Strike Teams may encounter the following challenges:

1. DIRCH DOGS: The Tikatikatik unleash packs of 2d6 Dirch Dogs to hunt down and attack intruders. Any fight in the tunnels brings six (6) K'chak workers in 1d6 rounds. The PCs must kill a number of Dirch Dogs and/or K'chak workers equal to the number of characters on the team in order to overcome this challenge.

Dirch Dog (8): AC: 7 [12] (natural); HD 2; hp 8; AT 1 (bite); THB +2; SA: Flight; ST 18; MV 6/15 (Fly); XP 2/30.

K'chak Worker (6): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2; hp 8; AT 1 (claws); THB +2; SA: Flight, Rock Shaping; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

2. SWARM ATTACK: The Strike Team is attacked by a swarm of K'chak workers and Takta slaves. The Tikatikatik use the terrain to their advantage, climbing along the walls and ceilings and attacking from odd angles. This grants them a +1 bonus to all Attack Rolls. The PCs must kill a number of Tikatikatik equal to the number of characters on the team in order to overcome this challenge.

K'chak Worker (4): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2; hp 8; AT 1 (claws); THB +2; SA: Flight, Rock Shaping; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

Takta Slave (8): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2; hp 7; AT 1 (claws); THB +1; SA: Flight; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

3. BLOOD SACRIFICE: If the Strike Team throws grenades or other explosives, the Tikatikatik cover the grenades with their bodies. This results in the death of the Tikatikatik, but no other damage.

An unexploded grenade (possibly thrown by another Strike Team) lands at the feet of one of the PCs. The PCs must either run for cover, make an Athletics Check to kick the grenade far enough away, or a Technology Check to safely disarm it before it explodes in order to overcome this challenge.

If the grenade explodes, there is a 1 in 6 chance it triggers a cave collapse, inflicting 1d6+1 damage on all within thirty (30) feet of the explosion and sealing off the exit.

4. COCOON: A K'chak worker hiding in the ceiling uses his Rock Shaping Gift to envelope one of the PCs in a rocky cocoon. The character is unable to move and suffers 1d6 damage from suffocation each round after the first. The character may make an Athletics Check each round to break free. Those outside the cocoon may break it apart with tools in three (3) rounds. The character must escape the cocoon in order to overcome this challenge.

K'chak Worker: AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2; hp 8; AT 1 (claws); THB +2; SA: Flight, Rock Shaping; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

5. SURPRISE ATTACK: A K'chak worker uses his Rock Shaping Gift to hide a band of six (6) Tikatikatik behind a thin sheet of rock in the floor or ceiling. When the Strike Team passes by, the Tikatikatik burst free and attack, achieving Surprise on 1-4 on 1d6. The PCs must kill the Tikatikatik in order to overcome this challenge.

K'chak Worker (6): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2; hp 8; AT 1 (claws); THB +2; SA: Flight, Rock Shaping; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

6. SEALED TUNNEL: A K'chak worker seals the tunnel in front of the PCs. The porous rock may be battered down in one (1) round with an Athletics Check or five (5) rounds with a tool. K'tee guardians and K'chak workers await the characters on the other side of the rock. They automatically achieve Surprise if the PCs opt to use the Athletics Check. The PCs must break through the tunnel in order to overcome this challenge.

K'tee Guardian (2): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: N/A; ST 18; MV 12/12 (Climb); XP 2/30.

K'chak Worker (8): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2; hp 8; AT 1 (claws); THB +2; SA: Flight, Rock Shaping; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

STRIKE TEAM VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Strike Team is better armed, but the Tikatikatik inside the Hive are fighting for their very survival. Roll 1d10 for the Tikatikatik and 1d6 for the Strike Team (adding all PC bonuses for overcoming challenges, if any). The highest number achieves victory.

If the Strike Teams fail, they are driven from the Hive by an overwhelming swarm of Tikatikatik. If they succeed, they automatically reach the Harritch central vault (if they haven't done so already) and must contend with the Tikatikatik there.

PLASMA STORM

The increased energy output generated by vehicles, weapons, and other systems during the assault stirs up a Plasma Storm. As the storm gathers, the Perimeter Team takes cover in predetermined positions, usually under rock formations or inside caves. The Close Air Support Team either retreats back into the Plasma Dark's cargo hold or vacates the island entirely.

The Tikatikatik attempt to "ride the storm", sporadically attacking mercenary positions as they weave in and out of the plasma rains. This requires a Survival Check each turn.

The superheated drops of liquid plasma are worse than acid. The Plasma Dark (and any exposed PC starship) automatically suffers 1d2 damage per round from the burning rains. Exposed vehicles suffer 1d3 damage per round while creatures suffer 1d6 damage per round.

The Plasma Storm lasts for 1d6 turns before dispersing. The crew of the Plasma Dark relies on its Heat Shielding Modification to absorb the damage. If the vessel is reduced to less than 75 hp from attacks and the Plasma Storm, the ship's captain issues a recall command. All Strike Teams, Perimeter Teams, and Close Air Support Teams have ten (10) rounds (i.e. 10 minutes) to return to the vessel before it lifts off and rockets straight up into the Upper Atmosphere for repairs.

ACHIEVING FINAL VICTORY

Two (2) of the three (3) teams must achieve Victory in order for the Hive assault to be successful. However, if the Plasma Dark suffers too much damage and is forced to retreat, the assault fails, even if all three teams achieved Victory.

ACTIVATING THE BEACON

If Final Victory is achieved, a Strike Team activates a locator beacon from inside the Harritch central vault. The mercenaries then fortify the chamber against future attacks while the miners attach magnetic cables to the giant deposit of Varrulium hanging in the center (the Harritch) and wait for extraction. The Plasma Dark, guided by the beacon, trundles over the chamber

and deploys its retractable drill.

It takes less than an hour for the drill to punch through the roof. The cables are secured and the Harritch Varrulium deposit is ripped free, to be hauled up into the Plasma Dark's cargo bay. The mining operation then begins in earnest, with teams of miners descending through the Harritch vault and systematically extracting the Varrulium deposits from the surrounding tunnels and chambers. The entire process takes about two (2) weeks to complete.

FLIGHT OF THE SHARP WING TRIBE

The Tikatikatik are in tune with the Harritch and immediately know when it has been extracted. This heralds the end of the Sharp Wing tribe. The majority of the tribe flees into the open skies of Varrul. However, a Treka mystic named Heetak (The Whistler) leads a few surviving Atrak warriors and K'tee guardians in hit-and-run attacks against the miners.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure ends when either the Hive is taken or the Plasma Dark retreats after suffering significant damage.

If the Plasma Dark retreats, the PCs receive only normal weekly rates. The crew is angry and disappointed. The Dandol-Barstow Mining Company suffered heavy losses and must actively recruit more miners and mercenaries. The PCs can stay on with the company or seek their fortunes elsewhere.

If the Hive is taken, the company casualty rate is about 25%, which is considered acceptable for a successful assault. Just over one (1) grenne of Varrulium is extracted during the mining process. The PCs are paid normal rates for three (3) weeks of work, plus a bonus of 1,000 ic each (a little over .00001%) for their efforts.

As the mining commences, company mercenaries ruthlessly execute any wounded Tikatikatik, slaughter grubs, and crush eggs, citing future safety concerns. This is standard practice for most of the mining companies on Varrul, but might not sit well with the PCs.

If it doesn't, the Referee may want to explore the moral implications of the Varrulium mining trade, especially if the characters begin to question what they've been told about the Tikatikatik. At some point, the PCs should realize that the Tikatikatik are not just mindless "Bugs".

Maybe they recognize the Tikatikatik's tribal nature, observe advanced tactics (such as the Hooshar barrage balloons), or see the story patterns etched into the Varrulium on the walls. Or maybe they learn more about the Tikatikatik when they are assigned to hunt down the Treka mystic Whistler and his band of renegades.

What they do with this information can lead to a number of interesting roleplaying encounters and may even segue into the *Three Trials of Chutatay* adventure.

CHAPTER 0006

THREE TRIALS OF CHUTATAY

There are some who believe the Bugs are not Bugs. If they are not Bugs, does that mean they are men? And if they are men, how can we sleep knowing what we have done to them?

Three Trials of Chutatay is an event-based *White: Star Galaxy Edition*[™] adventure designed for three to six characters of 5th-7th level (about 30 levels total). The adventure involves peaceful interaction with the Tikatikatik, so charismatic Classes like the Aristocrat, Diplomacy Robot, or Brimling are recommended. Characters of winged or insectoid races would also be a plus.

At least one member of the party **MUST** be a Star Knight, Alien Mystic, Star Pilot, Star Squirrel, Untrained Initiate, or some other Class in tune with the mystical energy known as The Way. The character should be at least 7th-level or higher. The Referee must provide some way for this character to understand the Tikatikatik language (Meditation, Gift, translator chip, Diplomacy Robot, etc.).

Note: This adventure is intended to have an “epic” feel. It marks a major turning point in the *Heart of Varrul* setting, representing the first peaceful contact between the Tikatikatik and offworlders since hostilities began. It also gives the characters a chance to learn the truth about the mysterious Planet Varrul.

The Referee should avoid running this adventure until well after the PCs arrive on Varrul. The characters should have a good understanding of the dynamics of the mining trade and its effects on the Tikatikatik and the planet overall, at least from the miners’ perspective.

What they learn in this adventure should change all of that. . .

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

A nomadic Tikatrekatik mystic named Sees-the-Fight (see below) has been troubled by dreams and visions of impending doom on a cosmic scale. The recurring image of a particular offworlder has been appearing in these visions. Sees-the-Fight and his band have been traveling across the skies of Varrul in search of this Chee’havarr or “Chosen One”. He believes the mysterious offworlder holds the key to saving the planet and his people.

HREECHAKTA (TRIBELESS)

Hreechakta are Tikatikatik who refused to join another tribe after their Hive was destroyed. Hreechakta are usually led by a strong Warrior or Mystic. They are nomads who travel the skies of Varrul, hunting and raiding to survive.

Hreechakta bands may be granted shelter with an active Hive if they bring gifts of food or war trophies to the tribe's elders. They sometimes hire out as mercenaries, helping fight off rivals tribes or offworld invaders.

Hreechakta were once few in number and commonly viewed with pity or scorn. As offworlders continue to destroy Hives, more and more Tikatikatik are forming Hreechakta bands to wage war against the invaders.

The two Hreechakta bands encountered in this adventure are the Teektrakot, made up of Tikatikatik who are fanatically loyal to Sees-the-Fight, and the Varrookta, which is made up primarily of Atrak warriors who share the hatred for offworlders shown by Sees-the-Fight's rival, God's-Will (see below).

THE CHOSEN PLAYER CHARACTER

Three Trials of Chutatay starts with Sees-the-Fight trying to establish contact with one of the PCs. The Referee should select one character who Walks in The Way to be the Chosen Player Character. The Tikatikatik are a spiritual people who hold warriors in high regard, so ideally, the Chosen PC should be a Star Knight. However, any of the Optional Mystic Classes will suffice.

KEEPING THE OTHER PLAYERS INVOLVED

At the beginning of this adventure, the Chosen PC is subjected to a series of trials to see if he is worthy of being accepted by the Tikatikatik. This does not mean the rest of the players must sit idly by and watch. In some cases, their characters may help the Chosen PC overcome the trials by providing guidance and advice. In other cases, they may have to contend with threats and challenges unrelated to the Chosen PC's trials. A few of these Alternate Encounters (see below) are listed later in the text.

FORESHADOWING THE ADVENTURE

It is important that the Referee foreshadow this adventure weeks before it begins. In the leadup to *Three Trials of Chutatay*, the Chosen PC finds himself troubled by dreams and visions of death and destruction.

These include:

- A fleet of Galactic Consortium starships blockading V-Space and the Rul System.
- Images of Tathkee Station being torn apart by what appears to be chunks of rock propelled upwards from below.
- Thousands of dead bodies—Tikatikatik and miners alike—floating through the skies of Varrul. The Referee can insert NPCs that the Chosen PC cares about into this vision to increase the sense of urgency.

- A snake-eyed Void Knight at the helm of a dreadnaught, gazing down upon Planet Varrul.
- Planet Varrul being consumed by the Void. This manifests in the character's visions as a black hole, but the Chosen PC knows that the "black hole" is simply his mind trying to make sense of something he cannot yet fathom.

The Chosen PC also catches glimpses of a one-eyed Tikatikatik—a light in the darkness who projects a sense of hope. This is the Tikatrekatik mystic Sees-the-Fight.

The Chosen PC sees him:

- Mediating a truce between rival tribes on an unoccupied floating island.
- Traveling the skies of Varrul with a band of Tikatikatik followers.
- Meditating atop a Harritch Varrulium deposit. The PC gets a sense that he is searching for something or someone. Sees-the-Fight suddenly opens his one good eye and the Chosen PC knows he is looking directly at him.
- Circling in the air with hundreds of other Tikatikatik above a tall spire that hums with the power of The Way. The spire is the Temple of A'li'tha during the Ritual of Wonderment.
- Fighting a Bolto-G'san Mining Company assault on a Hive. Bolto-G'san is a moderate-sized company that employs mostly Dreetonid (short, hardy insectile species) mercenaries and miners. The company is extremely insular and the Dreetonids rarely associate with non-insectoid species. If the PC asks about Bolto-G'san mining operations later, he learns it has been several months since their last successful Hive assault.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The Tikatrekatik mystic Sees-the-Fight and four (4) of his followers have been captured by a band of mercenaries named Kruvallon's Raiders. The raiders land at Tathkee Station and parade the "Bugs" in a caged skycart through Tathkee Plaza. A large crowd gathers to hurl insults and trash at the stoic captives.

The Chosen PC recognizes the one-eyed Sees-the-Fight from his dreams and visions. What's more, the Chosen PC sees the same recognition in Sees-the-Fight when their eyes meet. This should make the Chosen PC want to contact Sees-the-Fight.

If asked, Stote Kruvallon claims his raiders landed on a floating island to scout it out and these stupid "Bugs" just flew up to them "like they were neighbors stopping by for a chat". Kruvallon says his men were ready to kill the

“Bugs”, but then the one-eyed “Leader Bug” forced the others to surrender. Kruvallon plans to sell the “Bugs” to a Tathkee Arena fight organizer.

If the PCs offer to buy the Tikatikatik, Kruvallon demands 1,000 ic for each for a total of 5,000 ic (he’ll only sell them as a set). Tikatikatik usually flee or fight to the death, so captives are rare. If the PCs seem interested, other wealthy residents begin to step up, turning the sale into an impromptu auction. The bidding reaches 5,000 ic for each for a total of 25,000 ic.

If the PCs can match that, they can purchase Sees-the-Fight and his followers. If not, the Tikatikatik are housed in the cells beneath Tathkee Arena and the characters must find some other way to make contact with Sees-the-Fight.

Stote Kruvallon (2nd-level human Mercenary): AC 5 [14] (medium armor); HD 2; hp 12; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +1; SA Str 15, Athletics 2, Survival 2, Interaction 1, Combat Machine, Weapon Specialist (Heavy Laser Pistol); ST 13; MV 12; XP 2/45; medium armor, heavy laser pistol, dagger.

Kruvallon’s Raiders x6 (Assorted Alien Species): AC 7 [12] (light armor); HD 1; hp 4; THB +0; AT 1 (weapon); SA Referee’s Discretion; ST 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/15; light armor, laser rifle, laser pistol, sword, spear, dagger.

PLAYER INDIFFERENCE

If, for some reason, the characters show no interest in the Tikatikatik, the Referee must amend the text of this adventure accordingly. Certain events and encounters (such as the *Three Trials of Chutatay*) do not take place while others (such as the Expulsion) occur regardless of the PCs’ actions.

As a general guideline:

Sees-the-Fight and his followers are killed in the Morko-Kill Fighting event (see below), so the Chosen PC never travels to the Broken Song Hive to undertake the *Three Trials of Chutatay*.

The Pipes of Attachin sound a few weeks later. Oolorah the Ancient One focuses all of his energy to teleport the Chosen PC to the Vault of the Rulloth (see below) to undergo training. The effort almost kills him and leaves him unable to perform any Meditations before the Expulsion (see below).

The Tikatikatik war chieftain known as God’s-Will leads a coordinated assault on Tathkee Station, leaving hundreds dead. The remaining PCs may help defend the station during the assault.

The Chosen PC may interact with the Arhalan Mirrors and must figure out how to save himself from the Expulsion.

A few days after the Tikatikatik attack on Tathkee Station, the characters hear the sound of the Great Drum and witness the Expulsion, as the blast of energy crackles past the station and hurtles out into space.

TATHKEE ARENA CELLS

The dingy cells beneath Tathkee Arena are used to hold beasts for violent sports and games. An entertainment company named Morko-Kill Productions has rented the facility from Ingan Tathkee and is preparing a night of brutal fights. In addition to the Tikatikatik, a number of other native and offworld creatures have been shipped in for the event.

Morko-Kill has hired six (6) burly Tathkee Station residents as security guards. The guards are violent when needed, but underpaid and more than willing to make a few extra credits on the side. For a fee of 20 ic per person, the guards let the PCs view the captured beasts, including the Tikatikatik.

Morko-Kill Security x3 (Humans): AC 7 [12] (light armor); HD 1; hp 4; THB +0; AT 1 (weapon); SA N/A; ST 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/10; ion stick, dagger, communicator.

Morko-Kill Security x2 (Crocs): AC 4 [15] (natural); HD 5; hp 24, 19; THB +5; AT 1 (weapon or bite); SA +1 melee damage; ST 15; MV 15/18 (Swim); HDE/XP 5/240; battle axe, dagger, communicator.

Morko-Kill Security (Muddt): AC 5 [14] (natural); HD 3+1; hp 16; THB +3; AT 1 (fist); SA Always Lose Initiative, Delivers x2 Damage with Melee Attacks, Takes 1/2 Damage from Piercing Weapons, Takes x2 Damage from Fire-Based Attacks; ST 16; MV 6; HDE/XP 3/60; communicator.

TEEKTRAKOT (SEES-THE-FIGHT)

Sees-the-Fight is a respected Tikatrekatik mystic of the former Wall of Thorns tribe. He is strong in the power of Acheevak (The Way). His visions allowed him to predict three attacks on the Wall of Thorns Hive. The first two were successfully repulsed, but a Bolto-G'san Mining Company assault proved too much for his weary people to overcome.

After the Hive was destroyed, Sees-the-Fight became a Hreechakta nomad, traveling from Hive to Hive, trying to help them predict where the offworlders would strike next. His troubled dreams are filled with visions of war and destruction.

Sees-the-Fight knows that the Tikatikatik cannot win this war against the offworlders. The offworlders are too many and their Power (technology) is too strong. He has not yet made this knowledge known to the other tribes.

Teektrakot (Sees-the-Fight): AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 5+5; hp 28; AT 1 (claws); THB +5; SA Flight, Varrulium Shaping, Gifts (3/2); ST 14; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 5/320.

Atrak Warrior (4): AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

MEETING SEES-THE-FIGHT

Sees-the-Fight and his followers are huddled in a holding cell. Sees-the-Fight stands when the characters arrive and addresses the Chosen PC:

"I am Sees-the-Fight. I was born to the Wall of Thorns tribe during the Days of the Quiet Lightning. Now, the Wall of Thorns is no more. Their spirits have joined the Great Wanderer in the Long Sleep, slain by you who have come from the Skies Beyond.

I am not here to fight with you or cause you harm. The Great Wanderer has chosen me to be his voice. A time of great darkness and destruction approaches. I have foreseen the death of all we know in a fight we cannot win.

You are the reason I have come. I must take you to the home of the Broken Song Tribe. You must undergo the *Three Trials of Chutatay* and become accepted by the People. Only then will the Great Wanderer reveal your true Path. Is your mind, body, and heart strong enough to undertake these trials?"

If asked about the other PCs, Sees-the-Fight says:

"They are your Hreecha, your family. They may accompany us to the Broken Song Hive under the Blue Quill of my protection."

FREEING SEES-THE-FIGHT

The characters must find some way to free Sees-the-Fight from the arena holding cells. The easiest (but most expensive) way to do this is to bribe the guards to look the other way. This costs 500 ic although the guards initially ask for 1,000 ic.

Another way to free Sees-the-Fight is to break him out. The security guards are quick to fight, but are not being paid enough to die. Each one attempts to flee or surrender after taking any damage.

As an added complication, one of the other fighting beasts (Dirch Dog, Firefly, Brutasaur, etc.) may be unleashed, at the Referee's discretion. Keep in mind that the PCs may have to answer to Station Security later for any death or damages that occur during the battle.

After the Tikatikatik are freed, the characters must make arrangements to get them off Tathkee Station. Taking them through the station draws unwanted attention, so the smartest course of action is to pick them up from the Long Walk outside the arena dome in a starship or vehicle. The characters should be familiar with this setup if they participated in the Celebrity DeathDrop adventure.

The characters may come up with other ideas to free Sees-the-Fight and his followers, with the success of their plan decided by the Referee.

JOURNEY OF THE TIKATIKATIK

After Sees-the-Fight is freed, he leads the PCs back to the Broken Song Hive. The Tikatikatik prefer to fly by day, landing on floating islands at night to rest. The characters may follow along in a starship or vehicle. Winged characters who fly alongside the Tikatikatik begin to earn their grudging respect.

The trip takes three (3) days. Random Encounters (from CHAPTER 0010: OPEN SKIES OF VARRUL in Heart of Varrul) may be added to spice up the journey, at the Referee's discretion. In the evenings, Sees-the-Fight attempts to answer any questions the characters have about the Tikatikatik, Varrulium, and the Great Wanderer.

Sees-the-Fight tells the Chosen PC that the *Three Trials of Chutabay* are designed by the Broken Song Council and are different for each person tested. The trials test the Mind, Body, and Heart of the Chosen PC. If successful, the Chosen PC is accepted as a member of the Broken Song Tribe and entitled to all the rights of a Tikatikatik.

If pressed, Sees-the-Fight admits there are many Tikatikatik who oppose an alliance with offworlders and want to see the Chosen PC fail. But he is sure the Great Wanderer would not have brought them together if failure was a possibility.



BROKEN SONG HIVE

The Broken Song Hive is located on a rocky island that measures almost one-hundred miles in diameter. The tribe consists of 272 Warriors, 29 Mystics, 601 Workers, 74 Guardians, and 193 Takta slaves. It has absorbed several smaller tribes whose Hives have been destroyed including the Hooshar Hunters, the White Mist People, the Wall of Thorns, and the Burning Rains tribes.

The tribe takes its name from three separate songs made by throat chirps, wing snaps, and mandible clicks. The songs were composed individually by the tribe's Warriors, Mystics, and Workers. When sung together, the Broken Song produces a haunting melody that is said to soothe the spirit of the Great Wanderer.

The Broken Song leaders are well respected and wise. They are quick to Accept Takta, knowing their numbers may be needed to fight offworld invasions. They welcome Hreechakta bands for the same reason, but have forbidden Sees-the-Fight and God's-Will's followers from roaming the Hive without a K'tee escort after several bloody confrontations between the two.

BROKEN SONG TRIBAL COUNCIL

The tribal council of the Broken Song consists of a War Chief named War-Spirit, a Head Mystic named Power-Shaper, and a Keeper of the Hive named Joins-the-Hunt.

A'chee'trak (War-Spirit): War-Spirit is the venerated War Chief of the Broken Song Tribe. She is the victor of many raids against rival tribes and battles against the offworld demons. War-Spirit has grown weary of the ongoing war. She has seen the endless flow of ships to and from Tathkee Station and has begun to suspect the Tikatikatik cannot defeat the offworlders in open combat.

A'chee'trak (War-Spirit): AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 5+5; hp 33; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +5; SA Flight, Death Spiral; ST 14; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 5/240.

Chee'vee (Power-Shaper): Power-Shaper is the Head Mystic of the Broken Song Tribe. Power-Shaper is old, vain, and insecure. He feels threatened by Sees-the-Fight's influence among the Broken Song and opposes the plan to Accept an offworlder into the tribe. Power-Shaper has the support of many of the older tribesfolk and has become an ally to God's Will, although he tries to appear neutral in public.

Chee'vee (Power-Shaper): AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 5+5; hp 19; AT 1 (claws); THB +5; SA Flight, Varrulium Shaping, Meditations; ST 14; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 5/320.

Chroohatooch (Joins-the-Hunt): Joins-the-Hunt is the Keeper of the Hive of the Broken Song Tribe, and one of the oldest members of the tribe. In his youth, many of the tribe's Warriors were killed by a Yuhacta Wyrms named Sky Lord. Joins-the-Hunt took to the skies in order to provide for his Hreecha.

In doing so, he earned the respect of the entire tribe, especially among the Atrak. Joins-the-Hunt is one of War-Spirit's closest friends and advisors. He supports Sees-the-Fight's plan to Accept an offworlder, but has reservations.

Chroohatooch (Joins-the-Hunt): AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 7+7; hp 40; AT 1 (claws); THB +7; SA Flight, Rock Shaping; ST 12; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 7/700.

OFFWORLDERS ARRIVE AT THE BROKEN SONG HIVE

The characters arrive on the surface of the Broken Song Hive after three (3) days of travel. They are immediately greeted by a swarm of angry Tikatikatik who buzz about, ready to drive off the invaders.

Sees-the-Fight holds up a quill that has been dyed blue with Kendree Krab blood and says:

"Hold, my people! The day has come at last. I have found the Chee'havarr. Here stands before you <insert Chosen PC name>, of whose coming I have foretold. He will take the *Three Trials of Chutatay* and join the Broken Song Tribe as one of the People. I ask you now to welcome <insert Chosen PC name> and his Hreecha family under the Blue Quill. They are bound to my care and protection, until the Council rules otherwise."

The Tikatikatik react with a murmur of chirps, wing snaps, and mandible clicks that reveal a mixture of fear and trepidation. Sees-the-Fight is asking the tribe to allow offworlders free access to the Harritch. This has never been done before. The Atrak warriors and K'tee guardians are particularly concerned the characters might use the knowledge to better assess the Hive's defenses.

HARRITCH COUNCIL

The PCs are brought to the Harritch central vault where the entire tribe gathers in a mass of chitin, claws, and wings. The Tikatikatik cling to the walls, floor, and ceiling, piling atop one another to get a better view of this monumental occasion. Their dislike for the offworlders is evident and the PCs should be more than a little nervous being surrounded by over a thousand hostile aliens.

The Referee should not rush this encounter. Give the PCs a few moments to reflect on the enormity of the situation and the consequences if it turns bad. No offworlder has entered a Tikatikatik Hive except by force. If that is not enough to make this encounter special to them, the sight of the Harritch and over four (4) grennes of Varrulium spread throughout the Hive should impress even the most mercenary characters.

APPEAL TO THE TRIBE

This part of the adventure is scripted. The Referee should feel free to present the following dialogue verbatim or paraphrase the important bits, so the players get an idea of the current power struggle.

The Referee should read the parts of Sees-the-Fight and God's-Will. However, the players can read the dialogue of the War Chief, Head Mystic, and Keeper of the Hive to keep them involved, at the Referee's discretion. The Referee can give the players Handout #1: Appeal to the Tribe and direct them when to speak.

If the PCs try to intervene during the meeting, Sees-the-Fight tells them that only Tikatikatik are allowed to speak during a tribal council.

Sees-the-Fight lands on top of the Harritch and addresses the entire tribe:

"I am Sees-the-Fight. You know me. You know I bear the Gift of Sight, granted by the Great Wanderer himself. I have been shown a battle to come. A battle greater than any we have ever seen.

A great Darkness arises, one which the Great Wanderer knows we cannot face alone. If we are to survive this Darkness, if we are to protect the future of the People, we must Accept the Chee'havarr.

I ask you now to set forth the *Three Trials of Chutatay* so that the Chee'havarr can become one of us. Only then can we know what part the Great Wanderer plans for him in the battle to come."

VARROOKTA (GOD'S-WILL)

The speech is suddenly interrupted as a prominent Warrior named God's-Will flies up to the Harritch and lands near Sees-the-Fight. Their dislike for one another is apparent.

God's-Will is an Atrak warrior of the former Burning Rains tribe. He was away leading a hunting party when his Hive was defiled by a Mantle Crack Industries assault.

God's-Will claims that the Great Wanderer came to him in a vision and chose him to lead the Tikatikatik against the offworld Hroolatt (Demons). God's-Will has vowed to unite the tribes and drive the offworlders from Varrul. He is a powerful speaker who is able to rally others before a battle (+1 bonus to Attack Rolls).

God's-Will is respected and feared among the Tikatikatik.

Varrookta (God's-Will): AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 7+7; hp 38; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +7; SA Flight, Death Spiral; ST 12; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 7/600.

DISSENT OF GOD'S-WILL

God's-Will angrily addresses the tribe:

"Bah! It is an affront to the Great Wanderer for these Demons to even be here, in this sacred place, the very Heart of the Broken Song.

If the Great Wanderer has truly shown this Chee'havarr in a vision, I say he was chosen as a sacrifice. Let us kill this offworld pretender. Let us take his Power. And let us use that Power to unite the tribes and destroy the Metal Demon Hive from the Skies Beyond. I say that is God's Will!"

RULING OF THE COUNCIL

God's-Will receives a rustle of approval from the gathered Tikatikatik, but this quiets as the three members of the tribal council land atop the Harritch.

The War Chief says:

"We have heard your words before, God's-Will. Though you are not of the Broken Song, we honor your bravery and respect your counsel. You have won many battles against the offworld Demons. And yet, the People are still losing this war.

Time and again we have seen our brethren slain, forced to flee their homes, their Vocha defiled. It is only by the will of the Great Wanderer that the Demons have not yet reached our Hive.

As the War Chief of the Broken Song, I will present the Trial of the Body to the Chee'havarr. The Great Wanderer has brought him here. It is my hope that he prove himself worthy."

The Head Mystic says:

"I have heard the words of Sees-the-Fight. I respect and honor his bravery. But his visions are not mine. I agree with God's-Will. The Demons are a plague upon Varrul. A curse. Their ways are not ours. All they have bought is suffering, lies, and death.

As the Head Mystic of the Broken Song, I will present the Trial of the Heart, if the Council so wills it. But my own heart will be heavy. I can never believe the Demons will become our allies. Their hearts are blackened by murder. Their eyes are forever blind to the will of the Great Wanderer."

The final vote comes down to the Keeper of the Hive.

The Keeper of the Hive says:

"The War Chief sees war. The Head Mystic sees visions. All I see is the world around me. The People. The Hive. The Harritch.

I have heard the stories from those of you who were once of the Hooshar Hunters, the Burning Rains, and others. Your Hives attacked. Your people slaughtered. Your Harritches defiled. It makes my heart heavy with sadness to think that might happen to the Broken Song.

I do not believe the Great Wanderer would guide these Demons here to destroy us. I will place my trust in Sees-the-Fight. As the Keeper of the Hive, I will present the Trial of the Mind."

The War Chief says:

“And so, the Council has decided. The Chee’havarr will undergo the *Three Trials of Chutatay*. If he proves himself worthy, he will be Accepted as one of the Broken Song. The offworlders may stay here under the protection of Sees-the-Fight and his Hreechakta. Tomorrow, the Trial of the Mind begins.”

PREPARATION

The characters are allowed to return to their vessel or explore the Broken Song Hive (under the watchful eyes of K’tee guardians). Sees-the-Fight is available to answer any questions about the tribe and the different factions, if he hasn’t done so already.

He does have a few rules for the PCs during their time at the Hive:

“Do not touch the Vicha ak Vocha. The Vicha tells the story of the Broken Song Tribe. The Vocha is sacred to the Tikatikatik. It is our connection to the Great Wanderer who lives within the world around us.”

“Do not attempt to mate with any Tikatikatik. This is forbidden to any who are not of the tribe.”

“Respond to aggression by holding up the Blue Quill or calling it by name. By doing so, you divert any challenges to me. You must only engage in battle to defend yourself if you are attacked.”

THREE TRIALS OF CHUTATAY

The *Three Trials of Chutatay* consist of the Trial of the Mind, the Trial of the Body, and the Trial of the Heart. The trials are determined by the Keeper of the Hive, the War Chief, and the Head Mystic, and are different for everyone seeking Acceptance.

The first trial, the Trial of the Mind, begins in the morning. The Chosen PC may make use of whatever personal technology is available to help him overcome these trials—this is considered part of his Chee (Power).

TRIAL OF THE MIND

The Trial of the Mind is presented by the Keeper of the Hive. The Chosen PC is taken to the Harritch vault and allowed to view the story patterns that recount the history of the Broken Song Tribe. The Chosen PC must recite the tribe’s history at a Harritch gathering in front of the entire tribe.

To resolve this, the player of the Chosen PC must paraphrase the story of the Broken Song Tribe and learn a few important terms in the Tikatikatik language. This takes approximately three (3) days of “game” time during which time the Chosen PC studies the story patterns etched into the Varrulium.

The player should be given Handout #2: History of the Broken Song to study while the Referee runs an Alternate Encounter (see below) for the other characters.

HISTORY OF THE BROKEN SONG

Once, long, long ago in the Time Before (T'trika), the great Varrichik (Great Wanderer) traveled across the universe, spreading his knowledge of Acheevak (The Way), the mystical energy that ties all living things together. A thousand-thousand worlds were uplifted by his passing and the very stars sang praises to his name.

Alas, there were those who opposed the Great Wanderer's teachings and chose a darker path. They sought to corrupt Acheevak for their own gain and soon, the Great Wanderer found himself beset on all sides by powerful Hroolatt (Demons).

A fierce battle was waged, and the demons were vanquished, but the Great Wanderer had grown weary from his exertions and was forced to begin the Long Sleep. This marked the current era of Tikatikatik reckoning, which is known as the Time of Slumber (T'kees).

While the Great Wanderer slept, his most loyal and trusted servants, the Tikatikatik (The People), vowed to protect the Great Wanderer from the evil Hroolatt.

The Tikatikatikabrak (Broken Song Tribe) once dwelt upon the Harritch (Heart) of Varrul. When the Great Wanderer heard the tune of the Broken Song, he lifted the Hive into its rightful place in the sky to await his coming.

The Abrak are the favored of Varrichik and have defeated all enemies, the greatest of which were the Sting Bolo, the Under the Storm, and the Rock Breaker tribes. Broken Song warriors have achieved victory over many offworlders including a Hroolatt Guhminka vessel.

The Mystics say that one day, the Great Wanderer will awaken from his slumber and return to his wandering. The Tikatikatikabrak will make the journey with him, bringing peace and harmony to the Skies Beyond.

Thus will begin the Time of Travels (T'chika). Blessed and glorious be that day.

RESOLUTION

The entire tribe gathers in the Harritch to hear the Chosen PC recount the tale of the Broken Song tribe. This is a good way to introduce the Tikatikatik version of the history of Varrul to the rest of the group.

If the Referee feels the player did not do an adequate job of paraphrasing the history, the Chosen PC must make a Knowledge Check. The Chosen PC receives a +1 bonus to the Knowledge Check for correctly translating each of the following words that the player can translate without looking at Handout #2: History of the Broken Song. If the player translates at least five (5) of the following words, the Knowledge Check automatically succeeds.

- Abrak (Broken Song Tribe)
- Acheevak (The Way)
- Harritch (Heart)

- Hroolatt (Demons)
- T'chika (Time of Travels)
- T'kees (Time of Slumber)
- T'trika (Time Before)
- Tikatikatik (The People)
- Tikatikatikabrak (Broken Song Tribe)
- Varrichik (The Great Wanderer)

If the Chosen PC passes the trial, the Keeper of the Hive says:

"In the Trial of the Mind. . .your eyes have been opened to our world. Your tale will now be added to the story patterns of the Broken Song Tribe. May the Great Wanderer guide you through the remaining two Trials."

TRIAL OF THE BODY

The Trial of the Body is presented by the War Chief. The Chosen PC must spend three (3) turns navigating the swirling winds of a full-on plasma storm that gathers near the Broken Song Hive. This is known as "riding the storm" and is a mark of a Tikatikatik's mastery over the skies of Varrul.

"Riding the Storm" may prove problematic if the Chosen PC is from a non-flying race. Listed below are a few of the more common ways to address the problem. Creative characters may come up with other ways to grant the power of flight to the Chosen PC.

The Chosen PC may use relevant Class Abilities, Meditations, or Gifts to aid with flight.

The Chosen PC may use personal technology or even vehicles, as long as the character is exposed to the plasma rains. For example, "riding the storm" with a jetpack, hoverboard, or skybike would be acceptable, but locked safely inside a skycruiser or starship would not. Of course, the Tikatikatik are unfamiliar with modern technology, so something like an invisible forcefield may also be used.

The Chosen PC may try to ride a Kendree Krab into the storm. The Chosen PC must first "break" the Kendree Krab as outlined in the Krab Riders Alternate Encounter (see below). The Survival Check to "ride the storm" suffers a -1 penalty unless the character spends at least one (1) week familiarizing himself with the creature.

RESOLUTION

"Riding the storm" requires a Survival Check each turn (for creatures) or a Navigation Check each turn (for vehicles) for three (3) turns.

If the Check fails, the Chosen PC suffers 1d6 damage per round for ten (10) rounds (one turn). Any vehicle used suffers 1d3 damage per round for ten (10) rounds (one turn). The character may seek cover at any time during the turn or suffer through the damage round by round. If the Chosen PC seeks cover, he has failed the Trial of the Body.

If the Chosen PC is piloting a vehicle, he must also make a single Saving Throw to avoid the ionic lightning accompanying the storm.

If the Chosen PC succeeds on all three Checks, six (6) Atrak warriors from the Varookta Hreechakta fly through the storm and attack during the final turn.

These Warriors are looking to earn favor with God's-Will although he later denies any involvement with the attack. The fight should be dramatic, with swirling winds and burning plasma flying all about. The Referee should start by making Survival Checks for each Warrior before combat commences. They have a 4 in 6 chance of succeeding because of their familiarity with the skies of Varrul. The Warriors fight to the death.

Atrak Warrior (6): AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

If the Chosen PC passes the trial, the War Chief says:

"In the Trial of the Body. . .you have been found worthy. The skies of Varrul welcome you for all time. May the path of the Great Wanderer guide your wings to glory."

TRIAL OF THE HEART

The Trial of the Heart is presented by the Head Mystic. The Chosen PC must decide whether or not to take the life of innocents in his quest for Chutatay Acceptance. This trial takes a few days to set up, so the Referee may wish to allow the Chosen PC to participate in an Alternate Encounter alongside the other characters.

When the Referee is ready to run the trial, the Chosen PC is awakened at night by the Head Mystic and a few grim-faced Atrak warriors.

The Head Mystic says:

"You must come alone. It is time for the Trial of the Heart to begin."

The Chosen PC then accompanies the Head Mystic to a small floating island where a battered skycruiser is parked next to a shallow crater. A few dozen Tikatikatik are perched on the jagged rocks surrounding the crater. The Chosen PC sees Sees-the-Fight and God's-Will, along with several members of their Hreechaktas in attendance.

A family of independent miners named the Lawstonnes is seated on the ground inside the crater, next to a pool of sparkling Ickon. The family consists of the father Dustrom, his wife Ciara, two sons, Bligus and Narloo, and a daughter named Celestra.

The Lawstonnes spent their last credits on the trip to Tathkee Station and then begged and borrowed enough to buy the skycruiser and a mining rig. They have sifted 600 ic worth of Varrulium Dust from Ickon pools on the island and were in the process of collecting more when the Tikatikatik descended on their camp.

The Head Mystic addresses the Chosen PC:

"These Demons have killed the Ickon and defiled the Vocha. The sentence for this is death. You <insert Chosen PC's name> must be their executioner. Only then can we see if your heart is worthy of the Broken Song Tribe."

Dustrom Lawstonne does not know what is being said, but he senses the fate of his family hangs in the balance. He stands up and addresses the Chosen PC.

"Please, sir. You have to help us. These murderous savages are going to kill us. I'm surprised they haven't already, Star Gods curse them all. I've got a sack full of Varrulium dust. I can get more. I promise. Just get me and my family to safety. I beg you."

Sees-the-Fight stoically directs any questions or concerns the PCs have to the Head Mystic, responding with:

"It is not my place to comment or advise. What you do here will resonate across the skies. You are the Chee'havarr. Ask yourself what the lives of these few offworlders are worth to you. Only you know where your heart lies. The People await your decision."

If the Chosen PC kills the miners, he fails the Trial of the Heart. Sees-the-Fight looks away in disappointment while God's-Will and his followers snap their wings in triumph.

The Head Mystic says:

"In the Trial of the Heart. . . you have shown your true nature. Only an offworld Demon would kill a helpless member of its own kind. You can never be trusted among the People. You are less than nothing."

If the Chosen PC refuses to kill the miners, God's-Will and his followers snap their wings in anger and then fly off in disgust. Sees-the-Fight appears pleased.

The Tikatikatik recover the Varrulium Dust and destroy all mining equipment, but allow the Lawstonnes to fly away in their skycruiser.

The Head Mystic reluctantly addresses the Chosen PC:

"In the Trial of the Heart. . . you have chosen wisely. The lives of your people should be precious. If we are quick to turn our backs on our own, how can we earn the trust of our allies? This was the final Trial of Chutatay. I shall spread the word among the Broken Song people. Tonight, at the Feast of Chutatay, <insert name of the Chosen PC> will be Accepted as a full member of the tribe. May the Great Wanderer guide us in the days to come."

FAILING A TRIAL

If the Chosen PC fails any of the trials, God's-Will is triumphant while Sees-the-Fight is disgraced. God's-Will takes the Blue Quill from the Chosen PC, holds it aloft and addresses the Tikatikatik.

“Now you see! It is as I have said all along. No more lies. No more false visions. There can be no Acceptance between the People and the Hroolatt Demons. No Peace. Now, my kinsfolk. Now is the time for war!”

With that, God’s-Will breaks the Blue Quill in half. The Tikatikatik click their mandibles, stamp their claws on the ground, and snap their wings as a show of support.

Sees-the-Fight and his followers quickly whisk the Chosen PC away before the Tikatikatik turn on them. Sees-the-Fight’s followers then fly off to warn the other PCs (if they are not present).

Sees-the-Fight says:

“You have failed the trial. You must leave the Broken Song Hive. I will protect you until you get away, but they will kill you if you stay. I do not understand why the Great Wanderer would—”

At that moment, the Pipes of Attachin sound (see below).

Sees-the-Fight pauses only for a moment and then says:

“Now I see the path ahead. I must take you to the holy Temple of A’li’tha which lies at the Heart of Varrul. You must make the sacred Return to the Wanderer and witness the glory of the Wonderment. It is there that the will of the Great Wanderer shall be revealed. Come, we must go quickly.”

CHUTATAY ACCEPTANCE FEAST

If the Chosen PC passes the *Three Trials of Chutatay*, the entire tribe gathers for a great feast beneath the Harritch in the Harritch vault. The food consists of raw Hooshar, Broosts, and Salima Eels, with native garnishes. The food is poisonous to most offworlders, but the Chosen PC is expected to eat some of it.

The characters can expend a med kit to neutralize the deadliest toxins, but must make a Medicine Check to avoid becoming sick from the foul-tasting meat. The sickness begins immediately and imposes a -1 penalty to all Attack Rolls and Skill Checks for one (1) week. (If the med kit is used by a Combat Medic, there is no chance of the characters getting sick.) Other Gifts and Meditations may also neutralize the poison.

THE BROKEN SONG

After the food has been devoured, the tribe begins singing the Broken Song. The Workers start the song, the Warriors join in, and the Mystics add the final harmony. The throat chirps, wing snaps, and mandible clicks of a thousand Tikatikatik produce a haunting melody that tells the history of the Broken Song Tribe in musical form.

The song hums with the power of The Way. The Chosen PC and any character who Walks in the Way can sense a powerful connection between the Tikatikatik and the Varrulium of the Hive.

The song fades at the end and the vault goes silent.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Sees-the-Fight, the War Chief, the Head Mystic, and the Keeper of the Hive beckon the Chosen PC to the top of the Harritch. (Two of Sees-the-Fight's followers carry the Chosen PC up to the Harritch if the Chosen PC cannot fly)

Sees-the-Fight says:

"<insert Chosen PC's name> has passed the *Three Trials of Chutatay*. He has proven himself worthy of Mind, Body, and Heart to become one of the People. Let the Broken Song Tribe now Accept him forever into their ranks."

The War Chief, the Head Mystic, and the Keeper of the Hive place their claws upon the Chosen PC's shoulders.

The War Chief says:

"Let the People look upon you as if for the first time. Know that you and your Hreecha are forever welcome among us. May the Great Wanderer guide us to the path of peace between our two peoples."

The Tikatikatik show their support with chirps, wing snaps, and mandible clicks. Unfortunately, the Chosen PC does not have time to revel in the moment. . .

KUTAR DUEL

With a loud war cry, God's-Will and his Hreechakta swarm into the Harritch vault. A hush falls over the gathered Tikatikatik as God's-Will lands upon the Harritch.

God's-Will says:

"Bah! What talk is this? What War Chief speaks of peace? Sees-the-Fight has poisoned your mind. Made you weak.

You have Accepted this Demon into your Hive. He is now bound by our laws. Two-Claw has come to challenge <insert Chosen PC name> to the Kutar Duel. Does your Chee'havarr have the courage to stand against her?"

Sees-the-Fight tries to intervene, but the Head Mystic steps forward and says:

"God's-Will is right. The Chee'havarr has been challenged. If he be brave, let him accept the challenge for all to see. The Great Wanderer will decide his fate."

T'HRARCHIK (TWO-CLAW)

Two-Claw is a deadly Tikatikatrak warrior of the former Burning Rains tribe. She is fanatically loyal to God's-Will and acts as his enforcer. Two-Claw is violent and cruel. She is an expert in torture.

Two-Claw's left arm ends in two scythe-like claws instead of one, enabling her to do an additional +1d3 damage on a successful strike. The claws are coated in pure Varrulium giving Two-Claw a bonus of -1 [+1] AC against someone wielding a Star Sword. There is a 1 in 6 chance each round of melee

combat against a Star Sword that the Varrulium rubs off and the claws lose their energy-resistant protection.

T'Hrarchik (Two-Claw): AC 5 [14] (natural); HD 5+5; hp 29; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +5; SA Second Claw, Flight, Death Spiral; ST 14; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 5/240.

VICTORY OR DEFEAT

If the Chosen PC accepts the Kutar challenge, he must face Two-Claw in an epic battle atop the Harritch. Two-Claw shows no mercy and refuses to surrender, so the fight is to the death.

If the Chosen PC wins the duel, the Pipes of Attachin sound (see below) just as Two-Claw falls.

If the Chosen PC refuses, is killed, or the other PCs intervene to save the Chosen PC's life, God's-Will is triumphant and Sees-the-Fight is disgraced.

God's-Will says:

"Now, you see! It is as I have said all along. No more lies. No more false visions. There can be no Acceptance between the People and the Hroolatt Demons. No Peace. Now, my kinsfolk. Now is the time for war!"

With that, God's-Will breaks the Blue Quill in half. The Tikatikatik click their mandibles, stamp their claws on the ground, and snap their wings as a show of support.

Sees-the-Fight and his followers quickly whisk the surviving PCs away before the Tikatikatik turn on them. If the Chosen PC is dead, Sees-the-Fight tells the remaining PCs to leave quickly.

If the Chosen PC is still alive, Sees-the-Fight says:

"You have lost the Kutar Duel. You must leave the Broken Song Hive. I will protect you until you get away, but they will kill you if you stay. I do not understand why the Great Wanderer would—"

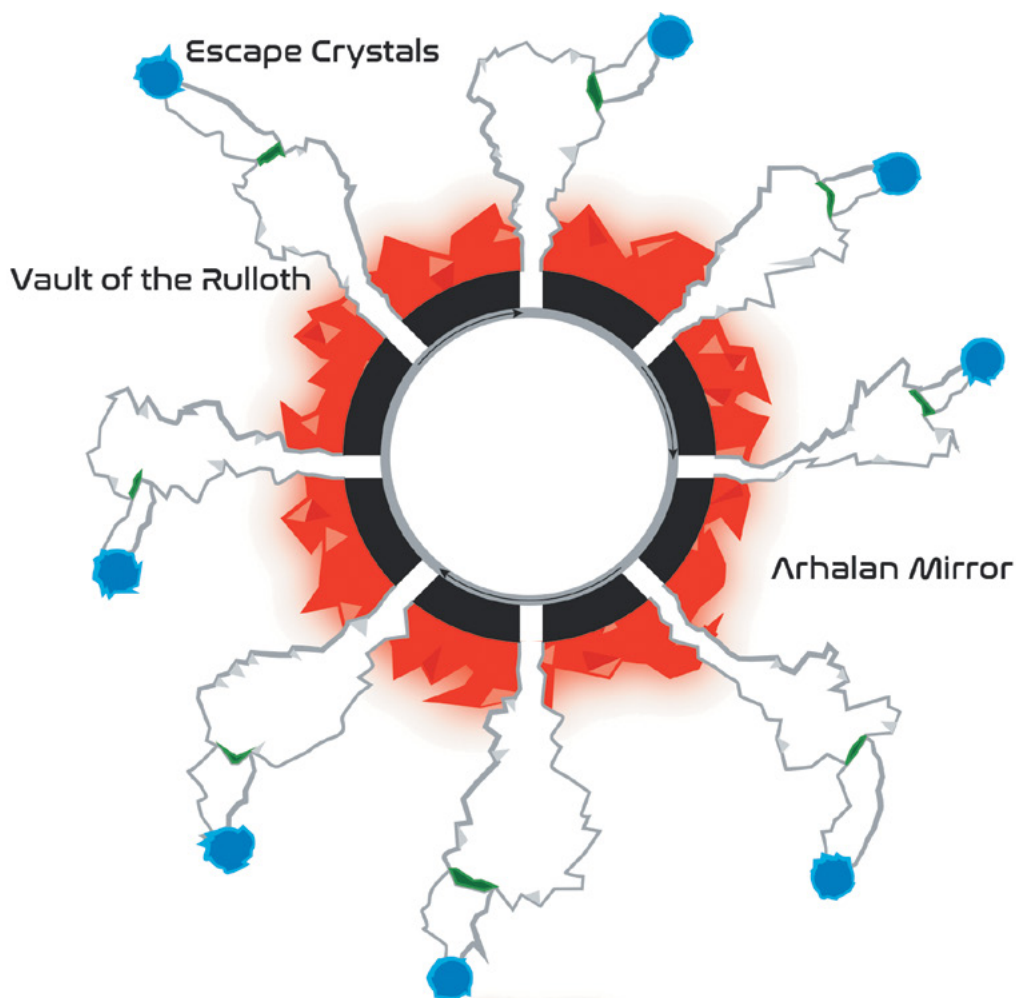
At that moment, the Pipes of Attachin sound (see below).

Sees-the-Fight pauses only for a moment and then says:

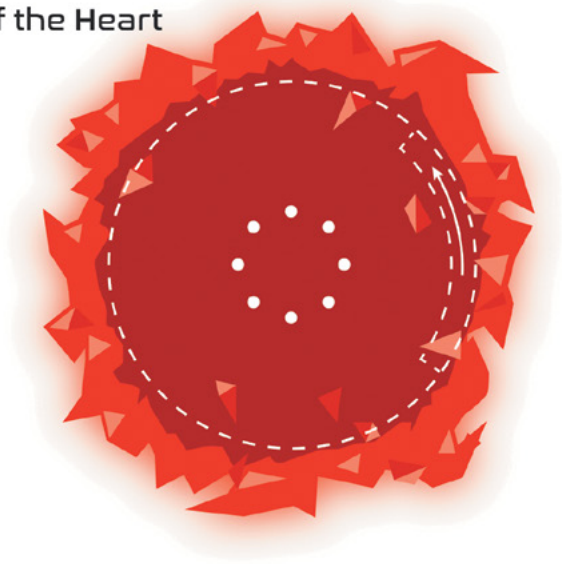
"Now I see the path ahead. I must take you to the holy Temple of A'li'tha which lies at the Heart of Varrul. You must make the sacred Return to the Wanderer and witness the glory of the Wonderment. It is there that the will of the Great Wanderer shall be revealed. Come, we must go quickly."

PIPES OF ATTACHIN

The air is suddenly sliced by a shrill, ear-piercing whistle that can be heard all across the planet. The sound lasts for several minutes, during which time the Tikatikatik fall to their knees in prayer. Any character with sensitive hearing suffers 1d2 damage from the sound. The Chosen PC and any character who Walks in the Way feels the sound resonate deeply with The Way and knows it is no normal whistle.



Chamber of the Heart



There is a moment of tense silence after the sound dissipates.

Sees-the-Fight then turns to the Chosen PC and says:

“This can be no coincidence. I must take you to the holy Temple of A’li’tha which lies at the Heart of Varrul. You must make the sacred Return to the Wanderer and witness the glory of the Wonderment. It is there that the will of the Great Wanderer shall be revealed. Come, we must leave at once.”

CHACHEEVAR

Sees-the-Fight and his Hreechakta set out after the Pipes of Attachin sound. They guide the PCs through the Middle Atmosphere, into the Lower Atmosphere, and ultimately to the Temple of A’li’tha on the surface of the Core. It takes approximately three (3) days to navigate the skies of Varrul, during which time Sees-the-Fight does not stop to rest.

If asked about the Wonderment, Sees-the-Fight says:

“When the Great Drum beats, the Guiding Light of Travels Beyond will spring forth from the Temple of A’li’tha and point the way into the Skies Beyond. The light is more bright and powerful than any you have imagined. It is a direct sign from the Great Wanderer.”

BREATH OF THE WANDERER

The characters must fly through the perpetual plasma storm known as the Breath of the Wanderer, which marks the boundary between the Middle Atmosphere and the Lower Atmosphere.

It takes three (3) turns to navigate the turbulent storm in either direction.

PLASMA EFFECTS

A starship caught in the storm automatically takes 1d3 damage per round for thirty (30) rounds.

A vehicle pilot may make a Navigation Check each turn to “ride the storm” and avoid taking 1d3 damage per round for ten (10) rounds (one turn) from the superheated plasma rains. Three successful Checks are needed to avoid damage.

Flying creatures can better navigate the storm so long as they keep a watchful eye and avoid the worst pockets of superheated plasma rains. This requires a Survival Check each turn to “ride the storm” and avoid taking 1d6 damage per round for ten (10) rounds (one turn). Flying creatures native to Varrul or familiar with Varrul’s atmosphere receive a +2 bonus to the Check.

IONIC EFFECTS

Starship pilots and vehicle operators must also make a Saving Throw each turn to avoid the dangerous ion strikes that accompany this storm. Three (3) Saving Throws are required to avoid these strikes. Otherwise, the vessel is struck by ionic lightning, frying all ship’s systems, including weapons and shields.

Vessels equipped with the Redundant Systems Modification may bring their backup systems online with a Technology Check to avoid crash landing on the surface of the Core.

If a crash occurs, the vessel is reduced to 0 Hit Points and all aboard take 3d6 damage. Sees-the-Fight and his Hreechakta quickly carry the PCs to safety before the vessel is overrun by Grounded Tikatikatik (see below).

The characters are brought to a cave high atop a tall spire and told to wait until the Chosen PC returns. The cave is large enough to accommodate a vehicle or small starship if the PCs succeeded in navigating the Breath of the Wanderer.

THE CORE

The characters may be awed by the Varrulium Dust scattered across the surface of the Core. If they have any experience with mining, they immediately realize the Core must be riddled with veins of pure Varrulium. The wealth here is unimaginable. Safely extracting that Varrulium is the problem.

GATHERING OF THE GROUNDED TRIBES

After the Pipes of Attachin sound, hundreds of thousands of Grounded Tikatikatik swarm over one another and encircle the Temple of A'li'tha. There are so many, that from a distance the earth looks to be alive with their movement.

The Grounded Tikatikatik do not recognize the sanctity of the Blue Quill and attack offworlders on sight. It is taboo for them to fly, but the PCs won't know this unless they ask.

Grounded Tikatikatik: AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA N/A; ST 18; MV 12/12 (Climb); XP 2/20.

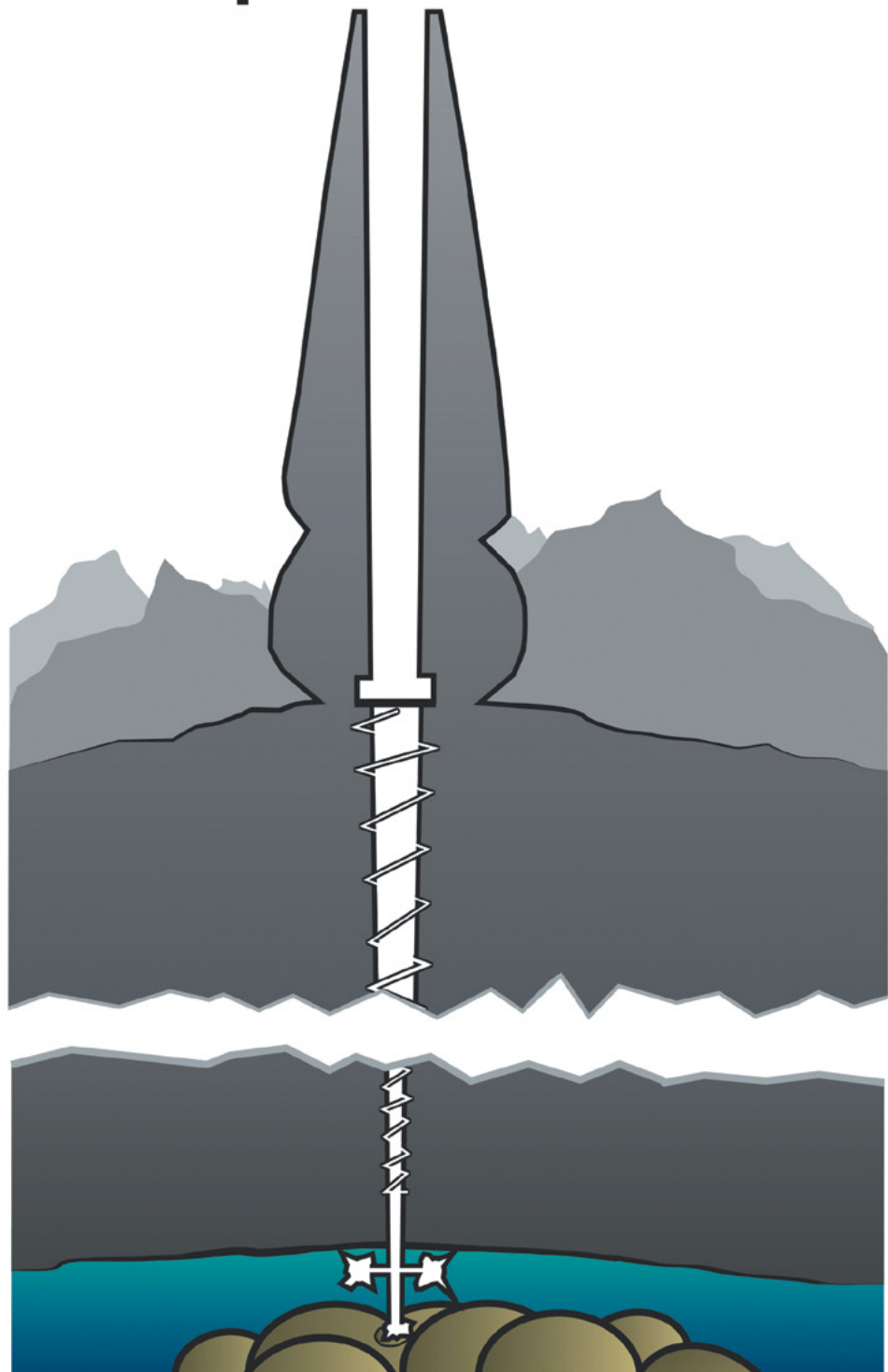
TEMPLE OF A'LI'THA

The Temple of A'li'tha rises from the center of a ring of eight (8) hollow stone flutes known as the Pipes of Attachin. The flutes are physically unremarkable and empty, but those who Walk in the Way can sense they are the source of the loud whistle from days ago.

Hundreds of Tikatrekatik mystics from dozens of tribes have already gathered inside the temple. They kneel on the temple floor, huddled together in a spiral pattern around the yawning hole of the Acheevak Gate. The Mystics are deep into their chant as they await the sounding of the Great Drum and the Guiding Light of Travels Beyond.

The Referee should familiarize himself with the layout of the Temple of A'li'tha and the Vault of the Rulloth below, as described in CHAPTER 0013: TEMPLE OF A'LI'THA of Heart of Varrul.

Temple of A'li'tha



THE SPIRAL CHANT

Sees-the-Fight leads the Chosen PC through the top of the spire and down into the Temple of A'li'tha. The other PCs are left in a cave nearby, guarded by members of his Hreechakta.

Sees-the-Fight and the Chosen PC take up positions on the temple floor in the spiral pattern created by the other Treka mystics. The Mystics are so enthralled in the chant that they take no notice of the Chosen PC.

The Chosen PC can feel the power of The Way coursing through the temple. This power is on a cosmic scale, and is far greater than anything the Chosen PC has felt before.

TELEPORTATION

In the Chamber of the Heart, far below the temple, Ooloorah the Ancient One (see below) senses the arrival of the Chosen PC. He uses the Crystal Staves of Stra'thi'hool to harness the cosmic power of Varr the Great Destroyer and teleports all PCs to the Vault of the Rulloth. The characters feel a sense of vertigo and disorientation before materializing inside the Chamber of the Heart.

Ooloorah the Ancient One addresses the Chosen PC:

"Welcome <insert Chosen PC's name>. I am Ooloorah, who some have called the Ancient One. You stand before me at last, here in the Chamber of the Heart, atop the very Heart of Varrul, inside the monster that is the Doombringer, the Worldbreaker, the Devourer of Worlds. Yes, the benign entity the insectoids worship as the Great Wanderer is actually a cosmic horror from beyond the Void.

Long ago, we named this monster Varr, which means Destroyer in the Rulloth tongue. Many ages past, it came to the Rul System and ravaged the five planets of the Rulloth people. Although we were powerless to stop the beast, our mystics used the light of Arhala to force it to slumber.

As Varr slept, a cocoon formed around its body. You know this cocoon as the Core above. Its breath became the skies. Its lifeforce bound these things together, creating the gas giant above. The Rulloth named this planet Varrul, for that is what the monster is, the Destroyer of Rul, and countless other worlds.

Those of us who survived swore a sacred oath to remain behind and keep Varr asleep until a way could be found to extinguish the monster's lifeforce. This oath is known as The Vigil, and we have kept it for years beyond your reckoning.

Now, I am the last. My time grows short. Even a race as long-lived as mine is not immortal. In three days' time, you will see a tiny glimpse of Varr's devastating power and then you will understand the threat to the universe and to all you hold dear."

OOLORAH THE ANCIENT ONE

The Rulloth were an ancient race of tall, luminous beings that existed in the physical and spiritual realm at the same time. Their mystics were well versed in The Way, which they called Arhala, and it is said the strongest could live for millions of years.

Oolorah is a venerable Rulloth, very likely the last of his kind. His form is bathed in warm light. His long, doglike face is wizened, with sad eyes and a drooping mustache. He moves slowly, and has an air of stateliness about him.

Oolorah is a fount of knowledge who offers to teach those who Walk in the Way the hidden mysteries of Arhala. Although his intentions are good, Oolorah has given into fear and despair. His ultimate goal is to convince one of the PCs to take up the Vigil—and he won't accept "no" for an answer.

Oolorah the Ancient One (10th-level Arhala Mystic): AC 9 [10]*; HD 10; hp 55; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +5; SA Str 15, Knowledge 5, Technology 5, Medicine 5, Navigation 5, Luminous, Gifts (5/4/3), Meditations (3/3/3/3/3); ST 6; MV 12; XP 8/800.

OOLORAH'S MOTIVATIONS

Oolorah confesses that he was the one who sent visions of death and destruction to the Chosen PC. He knew the Chosen PC would never make it to the Temple of A'li'tha without a guide, so he sent the same visions to Sees-the-Fight. If asked about Sees-the-Fight, he states that "the insectoid" has played its part and is no longer needed.

Oolorah's dismissive attitude towards Sees-the-Fight (and the Tikatikatik in general) might be a sign that the ancient mystic is not as kind and noble as he appears. He is similarly indifferent to the thoughts and concerns of the other PCs, even to the point of being impatient and rude. His focus is solely on the Chosen PC.

Oolorah is driven by the Vigil and has the following motivations:

Oolorah is the last of the Rulloth. He is currently the only thing keeping Varr from awakening during each Expulsion (see below).

Oolorah is dying. When he dies, Varr awakens upon the next beat of its massive heart.

Oolorah intends for the Chosen PC to assume the Vigil and take his place.

Oolorah hopes the Chosen PC accepts the Vigil willingly, but he does not plan to give the Chosen PC a choice. He knows the Chosen PC's physical form will be consumed during the Expulsion, leaving only his spiritual form bound to the Chamber of the Rulloth.

Oolorah brought the other PCs here knowing they will be killed in the blast. In his mind, they are an earthly liability that might distract the Chosen PC from assuming the Vigil.

CALM BEFORE THE STORM

The PCs are stuck in the Vault of the Rulloth for the next three (3) days. Ooloorah claims he does not have the power to teleport them back to the surface until after the Expulsion. This is of course a lie.

The PCs are free to explore the Vault of the Rulloth and the Chamber of the Heart. There is no food or drink present, however, the characters soon find eating, drinking, and even sleeping is unnecessary—being this close to Varr's lifeforce is enough to sustain them indefinitely.

The Chosen PC should also realize that his Meditations and Gifts are greatly enhanced by Varr's power. Any character who Walks in the Way is capable of preparing ten times (x10) the normal number of Meditations or Gifts per level, and their effects (duration, # of creatures affected, etc.) are magnified tenfold.

The PCs are unable to communicate with anyone outside of the Vault through normal technological means. They may access the green Arhalan Mirrors to learn more about the history of the Rulloth, the coming of Varr to the Rul System, the formation of Varrul, and the rise and betrayal of the Tikatikatik. The mirrors also reveal the destructive power of the Expulsion.

ARHALAN MIRRORS

The green crystal Arhalan Mirrors located in the white crystal caves of the Vault of the Rulloth project holographic recordings of Rulloth history into each chamber. These recordings are imbued with the spirits of Rulloth who have died. Those who Walk in the Way may interact with these spirits on a limited basis. All others may only view them as they would any other holographic projection.

MASTERS FROM BEYOND

Once the characters have had time to accept the situation, Ooloorah introduces the Chosen PC to the Arhalan Mirrors. He offers to teach the character new Meditations or Gifts, hoping to distract the Chosen PC until the Expulsion.

The current buildup of cosmic energy allows the Chosen PC to learn new Meditations at a much faster rate than normal. Ooloorah calls upon the spirits of his former companions, Sarsoon the Dreamer and Qari'rosoo of the White Staff to help him teach.

The Chosen PC spends three (3) days with the mystics and learns one (1) Meditation or one (1) Gift from each, as described below. The instruction takes place in a holographic recreation of Planet Rul. This was a land of rolling green hills littered with crystalline rock formations and tall crystal spires of varying colors. The holographic images fill the chamber and are so intense that they seem real to the Chosen PC.

Sarsoon the Dreamer: Sarsoon the Dreamer was an Arhalan mystic who died over a thousand years ago. She was Oolorah's consort and was said to be one of the greatest Rulloth mystics and teachers of old. It was Sarsoon who foretold the coming of Varr to the Rul System.

Sarsoon teaches the Chosen PC one of the following Meditations or Gifts, depending on the character's level:

Meditations: Detect Life, Detect Void/Star, Detect Invisible, Detect Thoughts, Find Traps, Locate Object, Psychometry, Expand Senses, Share Senses, or Vision.

Gifts: Light, Purify Food and Drink, Bestly Kinship, Invisibility, Dispel Effect, Environmental Harmony, Invisibility II.

If the Chosen PC makes a Knowledge Check, Sarsoon also teaches the PC how to focus his mind, providing a permanent +1 bonus to all Saving Throws made to resist Meditations or Gifts.

Qari'rosoo of the White Staff: Qari'rosoo of the White Staff was an Arhalan mystic who died over five-thousand years ago. Qari'rosoo was a great warrior who was skilled in the ancient art of Dha'hool (quarterstaff combat).

Qari'rosoo teaches the Chosen PC one of the following Meditations or Gifts, depending on the character's level:

Meditations: Acrobatics, Protective Meditation, Combat Coordination, Alter Reflexes, Defensive Coordination, Protection from Missiles, Danger Sense, or Missile Redirection.

Gifts: Hold Portal, Mystic Wards, Hold Person, Levitate, Phantasmal Force, Alter Time, Fly.

If the Chosen PC makes an Athletics Check, Qari'rosoo also teaches the Chosen PC how to sense attacks, providing a permanent +1 bonus to the character's Armor Class.

Oolorah the Ancient One: Oolorah teaches the Chosen PC the Stupor Gift or the unique Meditation known as Quietess (see New Meditations, below). If the Chosen PC already knows this Gift or Meditation, Oolorah teaches him how to double its strength and effects. When focused through the Crystal Staves of Stra'thi'hool, Quietess (or Stupor) disperses the energy generated by the beat of Varr's massive heart organ, channeling it up through the Temple of A'li'tha, and out into space. This Meditation (or Gift) is vital to keeping the beast asleep.

COMPLICATIONS

Sarsoon and Qari'rosoo know that Oolorah plans to bind the Chosen PC to the Vault of the Rulloth. They disagree with his plan, believing the Vigil should never be forced upon another.

Oolorah attempts to be present whenever the Chosen PC activates the Arhalan Mirrors. He tells the character he is concerned that his spirit might get

lost for all time in the power of the mirrors. The truth is that he does not want Sarsoon or Qari'rosoo warning the Chosen PC of his plans.

After a day or so of instruction, the Chosen PC should get the sense (through exchanged glances, guarded answers, etc.) that Sarsoon and Qari'rosoo have information they are withholding.

If the Chosen PC (or another PC who Walks in the Way) activates the mirrors while Oolorah is not present or is distracted (perhaps by the other characters), Sarsoon and Qari'rosoo warn him of the dangers of the Expulsion. They also tell the Chosen PC of the crystaltech Escape Crystals hidden behind the Arhalan Mirrors.

FIGHTING OOLORAH

Oolorah is a being of great power. Inside the Vault of the Rulloth, he is almost unstoppable. It would be smarter for the characters just to escape the Vault of the Rulloth by using one of the Escape Crystals, but they might not know of these yet.

If the characters attack Oolorah directly, he uses his Meditations and Gifts wisely to defend himself, but he is no murderer and has no wish to harm the Chosen PC.

The Referee should keep in mind that this close to Varr, Oolorah is capable of using ten times (x10) the normal number of Meditations and Gifts, and their effects (duration, # of creatures affected, etc.) are magnified tenfold.

If a fight occurs, Oolorah becomes insubstantial (Luminous) to avoid any physical attacks. He then uses his Charm Creatures Meditation to attempt to pacify the PCs. If that does not work, he uses Crystal Shaping to seal the characters in the surrounding walls.

If the characters still persist, he retreats to the Chamber of the Heart and teleports all characters except the Chosen PC to the surface of the Core.

Oolorah then uses his Crystal Shaping to seal the Chosen PC into the crystal walls. If the character causes harm to himself or threatens to harm himself, the spirits of Sarsoon and Qari'rosoo materialize and plead with Oolorah to reconsider his actions.

The character may make an Interaction Check at a -2 penalty to help Oolorah come to his senses. If the Check succeeds, Oolorah hangs his head in shame and sets the character free. He begs the PC to willingly accept the Vigil. If the PC refuses, Oolorah sadly teleports him to rejoin the other characters.

If the Interaction Check fails, the Chosen PC remains trapped until the Expulsion. Ironically, the crystal walls protect the Chosen PC from the blast and weaken the structure enough that the character can break free on his own. He may then access the Escape Crystals behind the Arhalan Mirrors.

THE VIGIL

If the Chosen PC is still in the Vault of the Rulloth after three (3) days, Oolorah summons him to the Chamber of the Heart. The Chosen PC can feel the cosmic power building all around him.

Oolorah says:

“It is time. Soon, Varr’s massive heart organ will beat and generate a pulse of cosmic energy. I will use the Crystal Staves of Stra’thi’hool to disperse this energy in the Expulsion one more time. This is my final hour. The effort will kill me.

I am the last of the Vigilloth. When I die, no one will remain to keep Varr from awakening. I implore you now to take up the Vigil and ensure that the sacrifice of the Rulloth people was not in vain. Will you commit your mind, body, and heart to protect all that you love?”

If the PC refuses, Oolorah says:

“My heart is saddened by your choice. I had hoped you would see the worth in a cause greater than yourself. Go then. Once the Expulsion has ended, I will have enough life left in me to transport you and your companions back to the surface. May the Light of Arhala forever guide your path.”

The Chosen PC may decide to take up the Vigil and remain in the Vault of the Rulloth. This is a noble cause and an excellent way to retire a high-level PC.

If the PC accepts, Oolorah says:

“I die in the Light of Arhala knowing that my people are reborn in you. One day, this great Darkness will be no more, and my spirit will rejoice. Until that time, I commend you to the Vigil.”

With that, he teleports the other PCs back to the surface of the Core. The Chosen PC has no time to ask questions before the Great Drum sounds.

THE GREAT DRUM

A moment of unnatural stillness precedes the beat of Varr’s heart. The Chosen PC feels as if the universe itself is holding its breath. Then, with a deafening boom, Varr’s massive heart expands.

The sound reverberates throughout the Vault of the Rulloth, knocking the PCs off their feet. High above, in the Temple of A’li’tha, the Tikatrekatik mystics take to the sky and begin circling the spire to await what they call the Guiding Light of Travels Beyond.

THE EXPULSION

As the sound of Varr’s heartbeat echoes across time, a blinding flood of crackling energy fills the Chamber of the Heart. With a raw scream, Oolorah uses his Quietess Meditation to focus this energy through the Crystal Staves of Stra’thi’hool and hurl it up the shaft. The blast courses like a living thing, up through the Temple of A’li’tha and out into space, destroying everything in its path. The blast dissipates at the very edge of the Rul System.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Any character inside the Vault of the Rulloth when the heart beats is immediately incinerated by the blast. All that remains is a charred silhouette on the crystal walls.

The physical forms of those who Walk in the Way are also destroyed. However, they become luminous creatures of spirit as Oolorah had planned. These spirit characters can interact with the Arhalan Mirrors and manipulate the Crystal Staves of Stra'thi'hool to keep Varr asleep, however, they are bound to the Vault of the Rulloth and cannot leave.

Unfortunately, their time is limited. The Rulloth existed simultaneously in the spiritual world and the physical world. Unless the Chosen PC's race had similar characteristics, they can only survive a number of Expulsions equal to their Experience Level. Oolorah did not anticipate this.

Oolorah dies during the Expulsion. The noblest part of his spirit lives on to join the other Rulloth in the Arhalan Mirrors. If the PCs converse with him later, he apologizes for his plan to trap them in the Vigil.

Oolorah now sees the error of his ways and does his best to make amends. He cannot restore the physical form of any character killed during the Expulsion, but he can help them construct a crystaltech golem to house the trapped spirit of those who Walk in the Way. The golem looks exactly like a crystalline version of the PC and may make for some interesting roleplaying.

In the skies of Varrul, Sees-the-Fight and his Hreechakta spend the next few weeks combing the surface of the Core looking for the Chosen PC and his companions. If they were teleported back to the surface, Sees-the-Fight takes them back to the Broken Song Hive.

If the Chosen PC survives, he may attempt to reestablish contact with the Tikatikatik. The character is in tune with the Harritch of the Broken Song Tribe and may find his way back to the Hive at will. If the Chosen PC returns as a crystaltech golem, the awed Tikatikatik interpret it as a sign of the Great Wanderer's blessing.

God's-Will and his Hreechakta may become a recurring enemy. God's-Will attempts to unite the tribes for an attack on Tathkee Station. The PCs may try to stop him or may help with the defense of the station.

If the Chosen PC tries to tell the Tikatikatik the truth about Varr, some sort of vision sharing may be required to gain Sees-the-Fight's support. Even then, changing the belief system of an entire race is a monumental task that is unlikely to succeed. God's-Will denounces the Chosen PC as a false prophet and begins rallying others to his cause.

If the PCs return to Tathkee Station, they may have to answer for any crimes committed when freeing Sees-the-Fight and the other Tikatikatik at the beginning of this adventure.

The characters must be careful if they mention their dealings with the Tikatikatik. The PCs might be ostracized as "Bug Lovers" which can cause

problems for them if they seek work. They may be attacked by friends and family members who have lost loved ones to Tikatikatik swarms. They may even run into the Lawstons from the Trial of the Heart, which should present some more roleplaying opportunities.

The subjugation of intelligent races is against Galactic Consortium law (unless the Consortium is the one doing the subjugating). The PCs may try to convince offworlders that the Tikatikatik are more than just mindless insects. This can lead to introductions and tense negotiations between Tikatikatik leaders and various offworld activists, diplomats, religious leaders, and politicians over the course of the next few months.

If successful, public pressure and the threat of legal action may force some of the larger mining corporations (such as the Gundarran Mining Corporation, Sinthlife Industries, etc.) to halt or scale back their operations to avoid backlash. This leads to an increase in independent mining, but an overall decrease in the number of full-scale Hive assaults.

Tathkee Station is abuzz with talk of the energy beam generated by the Expulsion. Galactic Consortium agents aboard Tathkee Station believe it was some type of weapon and are quick to report the incident to their superiors on Omega Consor. If the PCs display knowledge of the beam, they may be brought in for “questioning”.

Characters who boast about their trip to the Core might also draw unwanted attention. The Varrulium-rich Core is a myth that every miner and mining company wants to believe. The PCs may be hired as corporate consultants, paid to pilot a vessel back to the Core, or even kidnapped, held, and interrogated to obtain (and contain) their knowledge of the Core.

If the Chosen PC accepted or was bound by the Vigil, the other characters may take up the quest to find a way to destroy Varr. This can set the scene for adventures all over the universe. If the truth of Varrul becomes known, Star Knights and mystics from across the galaxy may come to Varrul to take up the Vigil. Void Knights and other evil beings may also arrive, although with darker intentions.

NEW MEDITATIONS

The following new Meditations are used by Oolorah in this adventure. Oolorah may possess additional Meditations, at the Referee's discretion.

CRYSTAL SHAPING

Spell Level: 1st

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Crystal Shaping allows the mystic to reshape the crystalline formations found beneath the Temple of A'li'tha in an amount equal to 10 cubic feet per level. While being Shaped, the crystal flows like thick liquid at the mystic's command.

The Rulloth used this Meditation mainly in construction and in the manufacture of their crystaltech. However, it can also be used for defense by opening and sealing crystal tunnels, and even enveloping foes behind a crystal wall. The character suffers no damage, but cannot move. A character with Strength 15 or greater may make an Athletics Check each round to break free, but each attempt inflicts 1d6 damage.

QUIETESS

Spell Level: 1st

Range: 240 feet

Duration: 1 hour

Quietess puts enemies into a mystical slumber (no Saving Throw permitted) by dispersing the energy generated during their heartbeat. It affects creatures based upon their Hit Dice or Experience Level. The creature must have some type of heart organ for this Meditation to work.

HD of Victim Number Affected

Less than 1 to 1 2d8

1+ to 2+ 2d6

3 to 3+ 1d6

4 1

ALTERNATE ENCOUNTERS

While the Chosen PC is undergoing the *Three Trials of Chutatay*, the rest of the party does not need to sit idle. The PCs are allowed to come and go as they please and explore the surface of the Broken Song Hive and the surrounding skies. Broken Song Warriors and Guardians keep watch on the PCs from a distance, but do not confront them unless they pose a danger to the tribe.

The Referee should run one (1) of the following Alternate Encounters for the other PCs as the Chosen PC undertakes each trial. The Referee may flesh these encounters out, as needed.

1. CHALLENGE OF THE BRAVE (TREEKARRITCH): Two-Claw and a band of six (6) Atrak warriors confront the PCs. Two-Claw insults the courage of the toughest character (preferably a Mercenary) and dares him to test his will against the might of a Kilana Beast. The challenge is simple. The character must go unarmed into the lair of a Kilana Beast and return with one of the beast's white tresses.

The character must make a Survival Check to enter the lair and sneak up on the Kilana Beast undetected. Ripping the tress from the Kilana Beast's head requires an Athletics Check. The character may perform no other action that round.

If the character is detected, the Kilana Beast attacks, spewing superheated plasma and chasing fleeing characters out of its cave complex. The agitated Beast then prowls its lair for the next 1d3 weeks, automatically detecting and attacking any who enter.

If the character retrieves a Kilana Beast Tress, he may wear it draped over his left shoulder as a symbol of his courage.

If the character fails to retrieve the Tress, Two-Claw openly mocks the characters at the next tribal gathering.

Kilana Beast: AC 0 [19] (natural); HD 8; hp 44; AT 1 (Breath) or 7 (Gore (2d6), Claw x2 (2d6), Claw x4 (1d6); THB +8; SA Plasma Breath (3d6), Vehicle Combat Creature; ST 11; MV 12; XP 8/800.

2. CURIOUS GRUB: A curious Tikatikatik grub begins following the PCs around. It examines their food and gear, observes their customs, and may even try to explore their ship. The grub eventually bonds with the PCs, adopting the characters as its Hreecha family. The grub may even grow up to become a member of the party, at the Referee's discretion. This is a good way to introduce a Tikatikatik PC into the game. The Broken Song tribesmen view the relationship as an oddity at best or an affront at worst.

3. DERELICT VESSEL: The PCs find the wreckage of a Breesi-class light transport named the Cull Raiser that wrecked during a plasma storm. Alternately, the derelict vessel could belong to a friend or acquaintance of the PCs, at the Referee's discretion.

The six (6) crewmen died on impact. Their skeletal remains are inside along with two (2) laser pistols, one (1) laser rifle, six (6) environmental suits, two communicators, and a hidden storage compartment containing 1,500 ic worth of Varrulium Dust and Varrulium Nuggets.

4. DIRCH DOG PACK: A pack of 1d3+1 Dirch Dog pups begins lurking around the PC camp or vessel. The dogs were separated from their pack during a plasma storm. If fed or befriended, the Dogs begin following the characters wherever they go. They can be domesticated and trained, at the Referee's discretion.

Dirch Dog (1d3+1): AC 7 [12] (natural); HD 1 (2 when adult); hp 4 (8 when adult); AT 1 (bite); THB +1; SA Flight; ST 18; MV 6/15 (Fly); XP 1/10 (2/30 when adult).

5. HOOSHAR SLAUGHTER: A band of nine (9) Atrak warriors from Sees-the-Fight's Hreechakta invite the PCs to accompany them on a hunt. They are looking for Salima Eels, Broosts, or Hooshar. A day into the hunt, the band comes across a floating island littered with slaughtered Hooshar carcasses.

This is the work of offworld hunters. The animals were killed for their energy-dampening blubber and the meat left to rot. The Tikatikatik are extremely angry and set out in search of the hunters. If the PCs accompany them, they find the hunters' skyhauler on the surface of a nearby island.

The hunters are stripping the fat from dozens of dead Hooshar. They grab weapons and attack the Tikatikatik (and the PCs) on sight, taking cover behind the Hooshar carcasses. The hunters defend themselves with small arms and the skyhauler's rayblaster. They expect no quarter from the Tikatikatik or the "Bug-loving" PCs, and fight to the death, although they may attempt to trick the characters into letting their guard down by pretending to surrender.

The filthy skyhauler is packed with enough Hooshar blubber to dampen the energy signature of 100 vessels (about 2,500 ic worth). If the PCs want to undertake the nasty job, they can strip the blubber from another 50 more. However, the Tikatikatik are disgusted by the act and do not associate with them further.

Skyhauler: Vehicle; AC 5 [14]; hp 30; EXD 4d6; PP +5; RED 5; MV 18 (flight ceiling 1,500 ft); TAR +2; AT Light Rayblaster Turret (2d6); MOD Energy Damper.

Hooshar Hunter (12 Assorted Alien Species): AC 7[12] (light armor); HD 1; hp 4; THB +0; AT 1 (weapon); SA Referee's Discretion; ST 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/15; light armor, laser rifle, hand axe, dagger.

Atrak Warrior (9): AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

6. KRAB RIDE: A group of six (6) Atrak warriors from Sees-the-Fight's Hreechakta invite the PCs to help them capture Kendree Krabs. The Warriors have located a large nest atop a tall cliff. The PCs must climb the cliff with an Athletics or Survival Check or fly up to the cliff without using a starship or vehicle (which would scare off the Krabs).

The Tikatikatik distract the Krabs by tossing rotted meat on the ground. As the Krabs eat, the Warriors leap onto their backs and attempt to break them in for riding. The remaining Krabs attempt to flee.

Any PC that jumps on the back of a Krab must make a Survival Check. Success means the Krab submits to being ridden. Failure means the PC is thrown from the Krab's back for 1d6 damage. There is a 2 in 6 chance the Krab attacks the thrown PC instead of flying away.

The PC is allowed to keep any Krab that submits to being ridden, but suffers a -1 penalty to all Skill Checks while riding the Krab until he becomes more familiar with its movements (about one (1) week of riding). The Tikatikatik respect any character who can tame and ride a Kendree Krab.

Kendree Krab: AC 4 [15] (natural); HD 3+3; hp 17; AT 1 (bite); THB +3; SA Dive Attack, Flight; ST 18; MV 12/15 (Fly); XP 3/60.

7. NOSE HORN RAIDERS: A raiding party of fifteen (15) Warriors from the rival Nose Horn Tribe sneaks into the Broken Song Hive and attempts to steal females, grubs, and Kendree Krabs. The characters are the first to encounter the raiders and can choose to fight or raise the alarm.

The Nose Horns flee in disgrace if five (5) or more of their Warriors are killed. The Broken Song K'tee give the PCs a notched nose horn as a trophy if they assist with the defense of the Hive.

Nose Horn Warrior (15): AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA Gore (automatic hit for 1d2 damage if claw attack hits), Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

8. PIRATES: A scurvy band of Varrulium pirates known as Hirr Break is cruising the skies in a modified light transport, searching for easy prey. The starship makes several passes over the surface of the Broken Song Hive, strafing away for fun at a group of K'chak workers who were out collecting Orter Berries.

The PCs recognize the ship as the *Winowath* and know the Gundarran Mining Corporation has placed a 1,000 ic bounty on the pirates' capture or proof of their death. The pirates retreat if their vessel suffers any damage.

X1-Dallo Class Light Transport (Winowath): Starship; AC 6 [13]; hp 60; SS 0; TAR +0; AT Laser (2d6) [pilot-linked]; MOD FTL Drive; MV 9.

Hirr Break Pirate x14 (Assorted Alien Species): AC 7 [12] (light armor); HD 1; hp 4; THB +0; AT 1 (weapon); SA Referee's Discretion; ST 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/15; light armor, laser rifle, laser pistol, sword, club, dagger.

9. VAROOKTA CHALLENGE: Two (2) Atrak warriors from God's-Will's Hreechakta confront the PCs in a threatening manner while other Tikatikatik look on. If encountered in the tunnels, the Warriors refuse to let the PCs pass, forcing them to return the way they came. If encountered on the surface of the Hive, they vandalize the characters' property or ship to provoke a reaction. Any physical contact with the Warriors is considered an attack (the PCs should know this).

If the characters invoke the Blue Quill, the Warriors grudgingly back down. If the PCs attack, God's-Will demands they be tortured and executed for breaking the sanctity of the Blue Quill. The Council gives the characters the opportunity to redeem themselves by allowing one of the PCs to retrieve a Kilana Beast tress, as outlined in the Challenge of the Brave Alternate Encounter (see above).

Atrak Warrior (2): AC 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

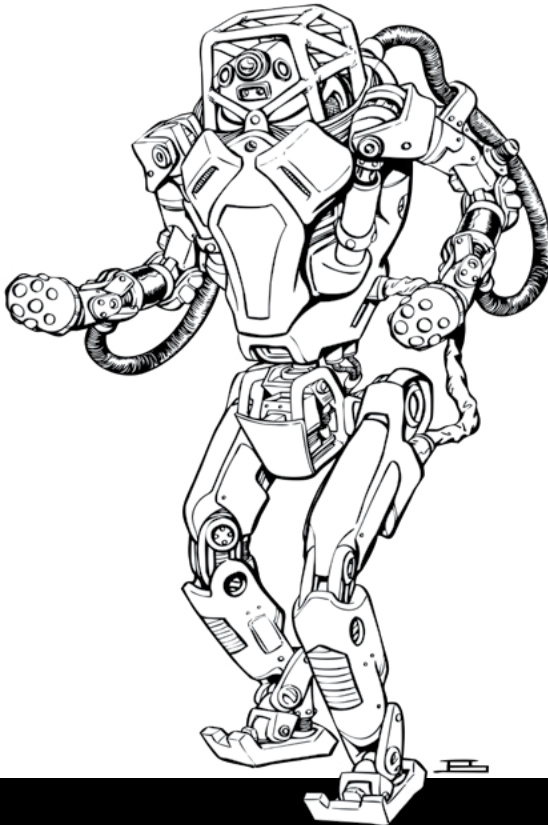
10. WYRM ATTACK: A giant Yuhacta Wyrms known to the tribe as Hattachik (Sky Lord) descends upon a band of K'chak workers on the surface of the Hive. The monster devours several Workers in one bite and the survivors flee in all directions.

One of the Tikatikatik flees right in the direction of the PC camp or starship. If the PCs do not take cover, or if their vessel is out in the open, the Wyrms attacks.

The Wyrms fights for three (3) rounds before continuing on its way. The PCs should quickly realize the awesome power of the Yuhacta Wyrms.

If Sky Lord is killed, the Tikatikatik rejoice. The monster has been a plague upon the Broken Song for years beyond number. The Wyrms's body is prepared for a feast to honor the PCs and two (2) Chuhoth Crystals are removed from its belly. The Head Mystic keeps one (1) of these crystals for himself and gives the other to the PCs in a gifting ceremony.

Sky Lord (Yuhacta Wyrms): AC -2 [21] (natural); HD 14; hp 80; AT 1 (mandible); THB +12; SA Flight, Ionic Pulse (15d6), Starship Combat Creature; ST 5; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 14/2,600.



HANDOUT #1: APPEAL TO THE TRIBE

The Referee can print and separate this dialogue, handing it out for the players to read during the Appeal to the Tribe.

WAR CHIEF #1

"We have heard your words before, God's-Will. Though you are not of the Broken Song, we honor your bravery and respect your counsel. You have won many battles against the offworld Demons. And yet, the People are still losing this war.

Time and again we have seen our brethren slain, forced to flee their homes, their Vocha defiled. It is only by the will of the Great Wanderer that the Demons have not yet reached our Hive.

As the War Chief of the Broken Song, I will present the Trial of the Body to the Chee'havarr. The Great Wanderer has brought him here. It is my hope that he prove himself worthy."

HEAD MYSTIC

"I have heard the words of Sees-the-Fight. I respect and honor his bravery. But his visions are not mine. I agree with God's-Will. The Demons are a plague upon Varrul. A curse. Their ways are not ours. All they have bought is suffering, lies, and death.

As the Head Mystic of the Broken Song, I will present the Trial of the Heart, if the Council so wills it. But my own heart will be heavy. I can never believe the Demons will become our allies. Their hearts are blackened by murder. Their eyes are forever blind to the will of the Great Wanderer."

KEEPER OF THE HIVE

"The War Chief sees war. The Head Mystic sees visions. All I see is the world around me. The People. The Hive. The Harritch.

I have heard the stories from those of you who were once of the Hooshar Hunters, the Burning Rains, and others. Your Hives attacked. Your people slaughtered. Your Harritches defiled. It makes my heart heavy with sadness to think that might happen to the Broken Song.

I do not believe the Great Wanderer would guide these Demons here to destroy us. I will place my trust in Sees-the-Fight. As the Keeper of the Hive, I will present the Trial of the Mind."

WAR CHIEF #2

"And so, the Council has decided. The Chee'havarr will undergo the *Three Trials of Chutatay*. If he proves himself worthy, he will be Accepted as one of the Broken Song. The offworlders may stay here under the protection of Sees-the-Fight and his Hreechakta. Tomorrow, the Trial of the Mind begins."

HANDOUT #2: HISTORY OF THE BROKEN SONG

Once, long, long ago in the Time Before (T'trika), the great Varrichik (Great Wanderer) traveled across the universe, spreading his knowledge of Acheevak (The Way), the mystical energy that ties all living things together. A thousand-thousand worlds were uplifted by his passing and the very stars sang praises to his name.

Alas, there were those who opposed the Great Wanderer's teachings and chose a darker path. They sought to corrupt Acheevak for their own gain and soon, the Great Wanderer found himself beset on all sides by powerful Hroolatt (Demons).

A fierce battle was waged, and the demons were vanquished, but the Great Wanderer had grown weary from his exertions and was forced to begin the Long Sleep. This marked the current era of Tikatikatik reckoning, which is known as the Time of Slumber (T'kees).

While the Great Wanderer slept, his most loyal and trusted servants, the Tikatikatik (The People), vowed to protect the Great Wanderer from the evil Hroolatt.

The Tikatikatikabrak (Broken Song Tribe) once dwelt upon the Harritch (Heart) of Varrul. When the Great Wanderer heard the tune of the Broken Song, he lifted the Hive into its rightful place in the sky to await his coming.

The Abrak are the favored of Varrichik and have defeated all enemies, the greatest of which were the Sting Bolo, the Under the Storm, and the Rock Breaker tribes. Broken Song warriors have achieved victory over many offworlders including a Hroolatt Guhminka vessel.

The Mystics say that one day, the Great Wanderer will awaken from his slumber and return to his wandering. The Tikatikatikabrak will make the journey with him, bringing peace and harmony to the Skies Beyond.

Thus will begin the Time of Travels (T'chika). Blessed and glorious be that day.

All the Varrulium on the planet cannot illuminate the Darkness at its core. The time has come for the evil which lies beneath to awaken. Can you stop the horror before it destroys the galaxy. . . or will all you hold dear be consumed by the Destroyer of Worlds?

Endgame is an epic *White: Star Galaxy Edition*™ adventure designed for three to six characters of 7th-9th level (about 36 levels total). This adventure presents a series of loosely scripted encounters and events that involves the cosmic horror known as Varr awakening from its millennia-long slumber.

The scripted encounters occur over the course of several months. The Referee should run other adventures in-between these events, so a normal mix of Classes is recommended. In order to see *Endgame* to its conclusion, at least one of the characters must be a Star Knight, Alien Mystic, Star Pilot, Star Squirrel, Untrained Initiate, or some other Class in tune with the mystical energy known as The Way.

Endgame assumes the PCs have access to their own starship (light transport, space yacht, scout ship, etc.). If this is not the case, the Referee must make changes to the text or introduce an NPC pilot and crew.

Note: *Endgame* marks the end of Planet Varrul as detailed in the *Heart of Varrul* sourcebook. The Referee should refrain from running this adventure until he is ready to take the campaign in a different direction. Once Varr is unleashed upon the universe, there is no going back to Varrul.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The blast of energy delivered during the Expulsion has caused alarm throughout the Galactic Consortium. Supreme Lord Adlar sensed a resonance in the Void and believes someone has developed (or discovered) a mystical weapon of unimaginable power. The Consortium has named this Weapon V and has begun allocating resources to make sure it does not fall into enemy hands.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

V-Space is the nearest safe jump point at the edge of the Rul Nebula. A few mobile mining stations and refineries float through V-Space, awaiting shipments of ore from Planet Varrul. The PCs should already be familiar with one of these stations (OLKAN III) if they participated in the *Rocky Road to Varrul* adventure.

The Galactic Consortium begins a blockade of the Rul System by sending a fleet of six (6) dreadnaughts, multiple support ships, space mines, and an orbital battle station named Maul to secure all traffic to and from Varrul. A powerful Void Knight named Lord Ossiron (see below) leads the fleet.

Lord Ossiron issues a decree that a new 50% Varrulium tax is to be levied on all Varrulium leaving Varrul. All vessels and stations are subject to interdiction, search, and seizure. Those found in possession of undeclared Varrulium are placed under arrest.

The decree is a pretext. Although a few Consortium officials have enriched their private coffers by investing heavily in Varrulium mining operations, the Galactic Consortium as a whole is not interested in Varrulium or the Varrulium trade. The decree simply allows Consortium forces to hide their true reason for stopping vessels—the search for information about Weapon V.

DARK LORD OSSIRON

Lord Ossiron is a Settari noble of House Sanduss. He is Supreme Lord Adlar's most trusted Void Knight disciple and has been granted command of the entire Consortium 6th Fleet. Lord Ossiron is feared and respected by those under his command and his officers are fanatically loyal to him alone.

Lord Ossiron was actually planning a military coup against Supreme Lord Adlar when news of Weapon V reached his ears. If he can gain control of such a weapon, he knows that even the Supreme Lord must bow before him.

The characters do not encounter Lord Ossiron in this adventure, but his stats are included below for reference.

Lord Ossiron of House Sanduss (Void Knight): AC: 6 [13] (energy cloak + light armor); HD 9; hp 54; AT 1 (weapon or constriction); BHB +5; SA: Str 15, Interaction 3, Athletics 2, Knowledge 2, Shapeshifting, Charm Person, Corrupted Energy, Force of Will, Meditations (3/3/3/2/2); ST 12; MV 12; XP 11/2,300; Two-Handed Star Sword (Red).

VARRULIUM TRADE

In response to Lord Ossiron's decree, the large mining corporations flood the skies of Varrul, desperately sacrificing valuable resources and lives to mine and export as much Varrulium as possible. In some cases, their efforts are successful. However, after numerous vessels are impounded in V-Space and their crews imprisoned, the corporations begin to shut down operations. Individual shareholders begin increasing investments in smaller companies and independent mining operations.

TATHKEE STATION

The Galactic Consortium sends a garrison of one hundred (100) shocktroopers to occupy Tathkee Station (and any other stations orbiting Varrul) and await further instruction. Although martial law is not officially declared, squads

of shocktroopers on patrol become a common sight and Consortium agents occasionally bring people in for “questioning”. They do not otherwise interfere with station operations.

The residents of Tathkee Station become anxious at the increased Consortium presence. Many have checkered pasts, which is why they came to the Galactic Beyond in the first place. Ingan Tathkee has been around long enough to see the writing on the wall. Although forced to cooperate with Consortium interests, he begins making plans to relocate Tathkee Station to another system, far away from Consortium oversight.

RUL CORRIDOR

The Galactic Consortium begins construction of the Rul Corridor soon after the blockade begins. The Corridor consists of a series of linked outposts called Waystations that stretch across the Rul System from V-Space to Varrul. The Waystations are equipped with weapons and starships designed to clear away asteroids.

The Corridor takes several months to complete. When finished, the Rul Corridor will create a narrow lane of asteroid-free space that reduces the time of travel through the Rul Cluster to approximately four (4) to six (6) days instead of the normal four (4) to six (6) weeks. The Corridor also opens up communication lines (monitored by the Galactic Consortium), using the Waystations as comm relays.

Of course, this corridor of open space is also much easier for the Galactic Consortium to patrol.

ADVENTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The Galactic Consortium takeover does not happen overnight, so the types of adventures on Varrul remain unchanged.

The characters may still engage in intrigues aboard Tathkee Station, hire on as scouts or mercenaries for mining companies, and explore the skies of Varrul as normal. They may even venture to the Core and discover the Temple of A’li’tha, if they haven’t already.

After the advent of the Consortium blockade, Varrulium smuggling becomes a lucrative trade for starship captains willing to transport unprocessed ore off the planet. This persists even after the Rul Corridor is established. The risks are high, but the rewards are great.

If the characters are part of the Restoration, they may take an even more active role in defying the Consortium (see below).

ENCOUNTER 1: RAID ON WAYSTATION XL-17

Consortium interests along the Galactic Edge have stretched themselves thin constructing the Rul Corridor. The Waystations are manned by skeleton crews who are awaiting reinforcements and supplies before the Corridor opens. The Restoration has planned a series of lightning-fast raids against several Waystations, hoping to halt construction of the Rul Corridor and find out what the Consortium is up to.

Waystation XL-17 is one of dozens of outposts located along the Rul Corridor. The station is due to receive a shipment of military-grade hardware (proton missiles, heavy lasers, tractor beams, shield generators, etc.) that would be worth a fortune on the black market. The Restoration wants to intercept this shipment and then mine the Waystation with explosives.

If the characters are members of the Restoration, they are recruited for one of these raids. If the characters are unaffiliated, they are hired by the Restoration (maybe even unknowingly), and promised a cut of the profits. If the characters are agents of the Galactic Consortium, they happen to be aboard Waystation XL-17 when the raid occurs.

RAIDERS!

A Consortium medium transport escorted by a stunt insurgent and two (2) BOE-class stunt fighters lands at Waystation XL-17. Two (2) additional stunt fighters remain on combat air patrol. If the Waystation is attacked, it takes three (3) rounds to scramble the two (2) grounded stunt fighters.

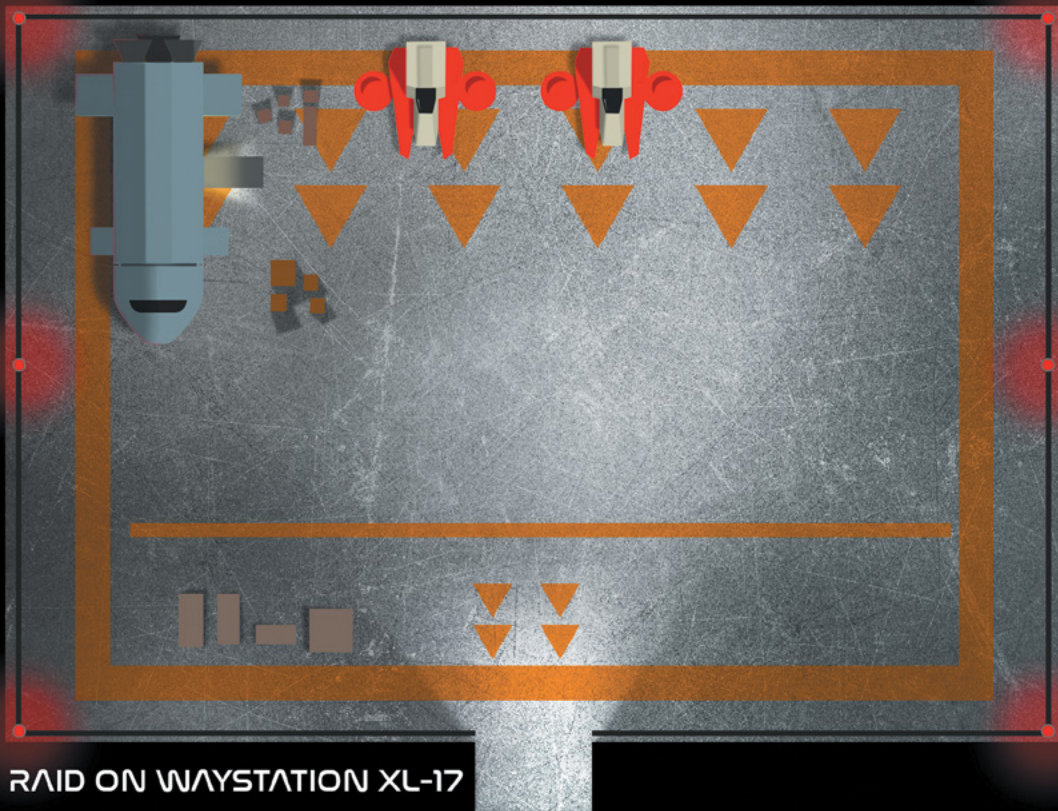
The raid is timed to take place as the crew of the medium transport begins unloading its cargo. The Waystation Crew attempts to hail any incoming vessels. An Interaction Check is required to bluff a reason for landing. If the Check fails or the hail is ignored, the two (2) stunt fighters flying combat air patrol attack.

The shocktroopers take cover behind crates on the landing pad and defend the Waystation. They must make a Saving Throw to avoid surrendering if more than half of their number are killed. The Waystation Crew and Medium Transport Crew surrender if the shocktroopers are killed or incapacitated.

WRAPUP

Once the Consortium forces have been dealt with, it takes no time at all to mine the station with explosives and destroy it remotely from a distance. The PCs may turn any prisoners of war over to the Restoration or allow them to leave in one of the captured vessels. The stolen cargo nets the PCs a bonus of 25,000 ic. The PCs may negotiate a trade of some of the weapons or gear in lieu of credits, at the Referee's discretion.

The coordinated attack on several Waystations temporarily slows down construction of the Rul Corridor, but the Galactic Consortium juggernaut is impossible to stop. Additional Waystations are eventually shipped in and



RAID ON WAYSTATION XL-17

deployed, each containing a full shocktrooper garrison.

Medium Transport: Starship; AC 7 [12]; hp 75; SS 3; TAR +0; AT Light Laser (2d6) [pilot-linked]; MOD FTL Drive; MV 6.

H2Y-class Stunt Insurgent: Starship; AC 5 [14]; hp 30; SS 1; TAR +3; AT Laser Cannon (4d6) [pilot-linked], Rayblaster (x2, 4d6 [vehicle]); MOD FTL Drive; MV 15.

BOE-class Stunt Fighter (4): Starship; AC 3 [16]; hp 25; SS 0; TAR +2; AT Laser Cannon (4d6) [pilot-linked]; MOD none; MV 15.

Shocktrooper (12): AC 5 [16] (medium shocktrooper armor); HD 1+1; hp 5; THB +1; AT 1 (weapon); SA none; ST: 18; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/15; laser rifle, communicator (in helmet).

Medium Transport Crew (2): AC 9 [10]; HD 1-1; hp 4; THB +0; AT 1 (weapon); SA Navigation 1; ST: 19; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/10; space suit, laser pistol.

Waystation Crew (6): AC 9 [10]; HD 1-1; hp 4; THB +0; AT 1 (weapon); SA Navigation 1; ST: 19; MV 12; HDE/XP 1/10; space suit.

OPENING THE CORRIDOR

It takes several months for all Waystations to be deployed along the Corridor. Once in place, the Galactic Consortium warns all vessels to remain clear of the

Rul Asteroid Cluster until the Corridor is opened. This can be a problem for anyone currently traveling to or from Varrul.

The Corridor opens in spectacular fashion, with the Waystations unleashing a barrage of proton missiles at the largest asteroids in their sectors. The missiles pulverize the asteroids into smaller rocks. Heavy lasers then blast these rocks into even smaller fragments. Space barges equipped with reverse-polarized tractor beams begin making routine passes between each outpost, slowly pushing the debris out of the Corridor until the lane is open.

This is a massive expense incurred by the Galactic Consortium, but Lord Ossiron is willing to spare every credit at his disposal to gain control of the mysterious Weapon V.

CONTINUING ADVENTURES

The opening of the Rul Corridor provides much faster access to Planet Varrul. Traffic is heavily monitored and regulated by the Galactic Consortium, with the Waystations maintaining logs of all vessels that pass through the Corridor. Communication is also greatly enhanced between V-Space and Varrul, with the Waystations acting as relays.

The Referee should feel free to run several months' worth of adventures after the Rul Corridor is opened before the Consortium's final plan is unveiled (see *The Spike*, below).

THE SPIKE

As the Rul Corridor was constructed, Galactic Consortium surveyors spent the months examining Planet Varrul's floating islands, poison gases, magnetic fluctuations, and ionic energy. They have gathered enough data to theorize that a rocky core lies at the center of the planet, and military analysts believe Weapon V can only be located on this core. Consortium scientists have analyzed the problems presented by Varrul's turbulent atmosphere and have come up with a solution.

The Spike is a three (3) mile long vessel shaped like an enormous conical dagger. Its point is one (1) mile long and made of solid borganium, which is one of the hardest substances in the galaxy. The rest of the vessel consists of research facilities, troop barracks, and assault contingents, with enough supplies to last well over a year.

The vessel was designed to be dropped point-first from orbit to embed itself in the Core. Once there, Galactic Consortium forces could deploy and conduct a proper search for Weapon V across the surface of the planetoid.

SPIKING THE CORRIDOR

The Spike has no propulsion system and is unable to move under its own power. It is towed horizontally through the Rul Corridor by five powerful spacetugs, with one (1) attached at each end and one (1) at every 1/2 mile point.

The Spike is escorted by a Consortium dreadnaught named *Massakier* and its support vessels. *Massakier* is Lord Ossiron's personal flagship. He plans to be on hand when the Spike is deployed and has left the rest of his fleet in V-Space to continue the blockade.

ENCOUNTER 2: STRIKE FORCE

The Restoration receives intel that the Galactic Consortium has located a superweapon hidden on Planet Varrul and that the Spike is on its way to somehow recover this weapon. Restoration leaders are determined to keep the Consortium from obtaining the weapon, and a Strike Force has been hastily assembled to destroy the Spike.

RESTORATION FORCES

The Strike Force consists of one (1) of the new Andean-class heavy starcruisers, three (3) stunt bombers, twenty (20) stunt fighters, and any mercenary vessels that can be hired on short notice. The starcruiser is captained by a veteran officer named Jatolan Frakes. His plan is for the starcruiser to distract the dreadnaught while the stunt bombers conduct bombing runs along the length of the Spike. The stunt fighters are to provide cover for the bombers, and attack the Consortium spacetugs and any enemy fighters.

Andean-class Heavy Starcruiser (Shieldwall): Starship; AC 5 [14]; hp 150; SS 12; TAR +3; AT Heavy Laser x10 (6d6), Ion Charge x2 (2d6), Proton Missile x2 (8d6); MOD Advanced Shielding (2), Automated Weapons (8), FTL Drive, Ion Charge (2), Proton Missiles (2), Tractor Beam (2), Shield Capacitor; MV 6.

SB-29-class Stunt Bomber (2): Starship; AC 4 [15]; hp 30; SS 3; TAR +3; AT Light Laser (2d6) [pilot-linked]; MOD FTL Drive; MV 12.

Wildcat-class Stunt Fighter (20): Starship; AC 3 [16]; hp 25; SS 3; TAR +2; AT Laser Cannon (4d6) [pilot-linked]; MOD FTL Drive; MV 15.

If the PCs are members of the Restoration, they are asked to participate in the assault. Opportunities for additional roleplaying and banter exist in the leadup to the assault, if the characters know Captain Frakes or other members of the Strike Force.

If the PCs are mercenaries, they are hired as extra muscle. The Referee should have the Restoration officers negotiate a fair price for their service, based on their capabilities. With Restoration finances being limited, equipment, vehicles, or even a used starship may be offered in lieu of credits.

If the PCs are agents of the Galactic Consortium, they may be aboard one of the Consortium vessels or flying their own ship as part of the escort when the assault begins.

RESTORATION AMBUSH

The Restoration Strike Force navigates through the Rul Asteroid Cluster to avoid detection by the Consortium Waystations. The ambush point is located approximately one (1) day away from Varrul. When the Spike and its escort are detected, the Strike Force breaks into the Rul Corridor to engage—and quickly realizes they have bitten off more than they can chew. The Consortium force is MUCH larger than anticipated.

GALACTIC CONSORTIUM FORCES

The Consortium escort consists of the dreadnaught *Massakier*, three (3) gunships, a medical frigate, and sixty (60) stunt fighters. The gunships and ten (10) stunt fighters remain on constant combat air patrol. The other fifty (50) stunt fighters can be scrambled in three (3) rounds.

Dreadnaught (Massakier): Starship; AC 5 [14]; hp 200; SS 20; TAR +3; AT Heavy Laser x20 (6d6), Ion Charge x8 (2d6), Proton Missile x4 (8d6); MOD Advanced Shielding (3), Automated Weapons (16), FTL Drive, Ion Charge (6), Proton Missiles (4), Tractor Beam (4), Shield Capacitor; MV 3.

INT-class Gunship (3): Starship; AC 5 [14]; hp 85; SS 8; TAR +2; AT Laser Cannon x8 (4d6), Ion Charge x4 (2d6), Proton Missile x2 (8d6); MOD Automated Weapons (6), Ion Charge (4), FTL Drive, Proton Missile (2), Shield Capacitor (3); MV 6.

H-class Medical Frigate (Hattock II): Starship; AC 5 [14]; hp 85; SS 2; TAR +0; AT Laser Cannon x4 (4d6); MOD FTL Drive, Medical Bay; MV 9.

BOE-class Stunt Fighter (60): Starship; AC 3 [16]; hp 25; SS 0; TAR +2; AT Laser Cannon (4d6) [pilot-linked]; MOD none; MV 15.

Spacetug (5): Starship; AC 9 [10]; hp 40; SS 0; TAR +0; AT none; MOD none; MV 6.

The Spike: Starship; AC 2 [17]; hp 200; SS 0; TAR +0; AT none; MOD Medical Bays, Plasma Shielding, Redundant Systems; MV N/A.

SPACE COMBAT

The gunships and the ten (10) stunt fighters on combat air patrol engage the Restoration bombers and fighters as *Massakier* takes on *Shieldwall*. The remaining fifty (50) Consortium stunt fighters join the fight in three (3) rounds.

Massakier and *Shieldwall* trade volleys of proton missiles and heavy laser blasts. The Consortium gunships destroy the Restoration stunt bombers in the first three (3) rounds of combat while the stunt fighters engage each other in a deadly aerial display. Although the Restoration pilots are more skilled, it soon becomes apparent that the number of Consortium fighters is too great for them to overcome. The PCs are free to target any enemy vessel they choose, including the Spike or the spacetugs.

Massakier hails the Restoration vessels as combat begins. If answered, Lord Ossiron's holographic image sneers:

"Restoration Slime. I am Lord Ossiron of House Anduss. To attack me is to attack Supreme Lord Adlar himself. Surrender yourselves at once or face annihilation!"

The Referee should allow the PCs to engage in five (5) rounds of frenetic space combat before explosions rock the length of the *Shieldwall*. A holographic projection of Captain Frakes aboard his ruined helm goes out to the Restoration Strike Force, ordering a retreat. The image abruptly shuts off as *Shieldwall* is cut in half by a final barrage from *Massakier*.

The surviving Restoration stunt fighters flee into the Rul Asteroid Cluster, hotly pursued by Consortium forces. The PCs should realize that continuing the assault is nothing short of suicide. Two (2) Consortium fighters pursue them into the asteroid field for three (3) rounds before breaking off contact.

All pilots engaged in combat or pursuit through the asteroid field must make a Navigation Check each round to avoid striking an asteroid for 6d6 damage and suffering a Minor Damage Effect as per the House Rule: Damage Report table in CHAPTER SIX: STARSHIPS & STARSHIP COMBAT of White Star: Galaxy Edition™.

WRAPUP

The raid is a failure and does little to slow the advance of the Spike. If the Spike was attacked, any damage done to the sturdy vessel was minimal and easily repaired. If the spacetugs were destroyed, a gunship is modified to tow the Spike the rest of the way to Varrul. The remainder of the journey is uneventful.

ARRIVAL OF THE SPIKE

The spacetugs drag the Spike into orbit over Varrul. One-by-one the tugs systematically detach the giant booms keeping the massive ship horizontal, causing the tip to swing down and point towards the heart of Varrul. Eventually, only a single spacetug holds the enormous vessel in place.

The residents of Tathkee Station watch in nervous anticipation as they await the drop. If the PCs fled back to the station, they observe the vessel maneuver into position. They do not have long to wait.

END OF VARRUL

At Lord Ossiron's command, the final spacetug releases its boom. The massive Spike falls slowly at first, picking up speed as it passes by Tathkee Station and disappears out of sight into the cloudy skies of Varrul.

The Spike descends through the Upper Atmosphere and into the Middle Atmosphere. As it crosses the Breath of the Wanderer into the Lower Atmosphere, superheated plasma burns its thick hull and ionic lighting crackles along its sides.

The Spike passes through the storm and slams into the Core like a giant nail. Its borganium point drives deep into the porous rock, sending shockwaves throughout Varr's cocoon. The energy produced by these shockwaves causes Varr to awaken for the first time in millennia.

Note: If the spirit of the Chosen PC from the *Three Trials of Chutatay* adventure resides within the Chamber of the Heart, he is overwhelmed by the sudden and unexpected surge of raw energy. After Varr has fed, the Chosen PC may attempt to return the monster to dormancy, as outlined in Encounter 3: Soothing the Great Beast (below).

VARR IS RISEN

Varr shakes off its age-long sleep with a throaty roar that stirs dread in lifeforms all across Varrul. The monster shifts in its great cocoon and slowly begins to uncurl. This triggers ionic strikes and earthquakes across the Core, and causes it to break apart. Grounded Tikatikatik die by the thousands as magnetic surges carry chunks of the cocoon up into the sky.

A short time later, the cosmic entity known as Varr emerges from the floating debris—the Destroyer of Rul is reborn!

FATE OF TATHKEE STATION

Varr begins circling through the planet's atmosphere in a spiral pattern as its strength and awareness return. The monster is famished from the Long Sleep. It reaches out with mystical power to locate an energy source large enough to slake its eternal hunger.

It takes less than a day for Varr to reach the Upper Atmosphere. The residents of Tathkee Station see a great darkness blot out the horizon as it rushes towards them on an apparent collision course. Proximity alarms activate, terrified residents are crushed in stampedes, and starships and vehicles flee the station in droves.

Tathkee Station is an insignificant speck of dirt to the monster Varr. If the station had lay in its path, the creature would have destroyed it without a second thought.

As it stands, the residents of Tathkee Station are lucky. Varr flies past the station on its way into space. The concussive wave of the beast's passing causes the station to shudder and pitch. Its reactors suffer a sudden energy drain, forcing emergency systems to activate. Otherwise, there is no lasting damage.

COSMIC SCALE

The Referee should keep in mind the enormous size of the monstrous Varr. The creature is approximately 10,000 miles long and 1,000 miles in diameter. This makes its length almost five times the distance across the continental United States and nearly as big around as Pluto in the Milky Way Galaxy.

Varr's body exudes poison gases and ionic energy similar to those found on Planet Varrul. This atmosphere extends around the monster like a bubble for one (1) mile in every direction. The creature generates its own form of gravity, with weight transfer from the top of its back down to its legs underneath. Its chitinous carapace is a wasteland of toxic sludge, wrecked vessels, and chunks of debris from destroyed planets.

While in Varr's bioorganic atmosphere, Meditations and Gifts are greatly enhanced by the monster's life force. Any character who Walks in the Way can prepare twice (x2) the normal number of Meditations or Gifts per level, and their effects (duration, # of creatures affected, etc.) are doubled. This may come in handy during Encounter 4: Attack of the Draj.

TEMPLE OF A'LI'THA

The Temple of A'li'tha is shattered during the Awakening. Despondent Tikatkatik mystics flock to the ruins to seek guidance and find only misery. The floating island containing the broken temple becomes a haven and a tomb as thousands of Tikatkatik from all over the planet journey there to await death.

VAULT OF THE RULLOTH

If the PCs did not participate in the *Three Trials of Chutatay* adventure, any character who Walks in the Way senses that the means to stop the monster Varr lies near the center of what used to be the gas giant Varrul.

The Vault of the Rulloth floats among the shattered islands of the Core. Its crystal chambers are largely intact. A few of the Arhalan Mirrors are broken, however, one connects the PCs with the spirit of Oolorah the Ancient One. Oolorah can teach the PCs the Quietess Meditation or Stupor Gift, and tell them how to utilize the Crystal Staves of Stra'thi'hool to return Varr to dormancy.

The Escape Crystals are tied to Varr's life force. They are powered by crystaltech and can generate a form of Faster-Than-Light travel that is not affected by the ionic interference of the Rul Nebula. The Escape Crystal pod can be used to track and catch up to Varr in 1d6 days after the first week of its awakening, 2d6 days after the second week, 3d6 days after the third week, etc.

Escape Crystal: Starship; AC 3 [16]; hp 60; SS 0; TAR +0; AT N/A; MOD Bound to Varr's Life force, FTL Drive (Equivalent); MV 6.



IMPLACABLE VARR

Varr is extremely hungry and is immediately drawn to the nearest inhabited world of Graloian Ti in the Ti-Lag System, which lies in the Great Beyond. Its path takes it through the Rul Corridor where its passing inadvertently destroys several Waystations. The dreadnaught *Massakier* follows behind the monster at a safe distance.

As Varr emerges into V-Space, Lord Ossiron orders the Consortium battle station Maul and its dreadnaughts to attack. The fleet unleashes a stunning barrage of proton missiles and heavy laser blasts—which only makes the monster stronger! Varr plows through the blockade, destroying the station as well as any ships in its path, leaving the others helplessly adrift with ionized engines.

Holographic recordings of this event are captured and transmitted through back channels despite Consortium attempts to control the flow of information. If the PCs are not present during the battle, they intercept one of these transmissions soon after the event.

After this display, Lord Ossiron is more determined than ever to gain control over Varr's awesome destructive power. The *Massakier* did not participate in the attack on Varr and continues to follow the monster through space.

DESTROYER OF GRALOIAN TI

Varr reaches the Ti-Lag System approximately one (1) week after awakening. It attacks the Graloian homeworld of Graloian Ti, boring through the planet's crust until the monster reaches its molten core. Varr then worms its way around the core in a spiral pattern, causing explosive chain reactions all over the world. Varr feeds on the energy generated by these shockwaves over the next three (3) weeks as the planet slowly breaks apart.

The devastation is unimaginable. Millions of Graloians die in the attack. Millions more flee the system in overloaded starships. Graloian refugees begin showing up all along the Galactic Edge with horrific stories of the planet's destruction. This information is slow to reach the Galactic Center, and when it does, much of it is denounced as the wild imagination of uneducated frontier denizens.

Graloian Ti's fate should give the PCs an idea of the enormity of the threat Varr poses to all living things, without shaking up the campaign world too much. With the destruction of Graloian Ti, Varr's hunger is temporarily sated. It slowly drifts for days, weeks, or even months in the direction of its next meal.

Its next target is left to the Referee. It can be another isolated system in the Galactic Beyond, or a system more familiar to the PCs along the Galactic Edge. This could provide an even larger sense of urgency to the characters' actions, giving them a reason to stop Varr and return it to its dormant state.

Note: If the characters are unable or unwilling to take Varr on, the Cult of Draj (see below) returns the monster to dormancy and then transports it to the Tenebrae Nebula where Lord Ossiron and his Void Knights can study it at their leisure.

DEFEATING VARR

The cosmic entity known as Varr is immune to all physical attacks. It feeds on energy, so energy attacks (from heavy lasers, proton missiles, etc.) actually make it stronger. Varr may be susceptible to attacks utilizing The Way, but this would require a massive amount of spiritual energy.

Varr makes no attempt to communicate or negotiate. Its thought processes are entirely alien. It seems to exist only to feed, traveling the vast expanses of space in search of living worlds.

The only way to stop Varr is to slow the beating of its heart and return it to a dormant state. This requires a character who Walks in the Way to visit the Vault of the Rulloth and learn the Quietess Meditation or Stupor Gift. The character must then land on Varr's back and enter the Chamber of the Heart to access the Crystal Staves of Stra'thi'hool. This process was outlined in the *Three Trials of Chutatay* adventure and is further summarized below.

Note: If the spirit of the Chosen PC from the *Three Trials of Chutatay* adventure resides within the Chamber of the Heart, he is unable to return Varr to a dormant state until the monster has fed on Graloian Ti. In this case, the Chosen PC senses the coming of the Cult of Draj and telepathically reaches out to the other characters for protection as he guides Varr's sleeping form to the Vortex of the Dark Lady (see below). If the PCs respond, they arrive on Varr less than one (1) day before Encounter 4: Attack of the Draj.

ENCOUNTER 3: SOOTHING THE GREAT BEAST

If the Chosen PC did not remain in the Chamber of the Heart during the *Three Trials of Chutatay* adventure, or the group contains no characters who Walk in the Way and/or are willing to accept the Vigil of the Rulloth, an alternate method of returning Varr to dormancy is provided here.

Note: Encounter 3: Soothing the Great Beast assumes most of the PCs are of Star alignment and want to stop Varr. If not, the Referee can flip-flop the roles of the Cult of Draj and the Order of Syfert to reflect the motivations of the PCs.

ORDER OF SYFERT

The PCs are traveling in their starship when they are hailed by a sleek stunt insurgent named the *Dira'tejjan*. Its crew consists of ten (10) Star Knights of the heroic Order of Syfert. The Star Knights have been receiving visions since Varr's awakening and have vowed to accept the Vigil of the Rulloth.

The Star Knights plan to enter the Chamber of the Heart and place Varr into

a dormant state. They know the effort will strip them of their physical forms, but they are willing to make the sacrifice for the good of the universe. They ask the characters to help them reach the Chamber of the Heart and deal with any threats.

Mistress Heathra Nalindarri (7th-level Star Knight): AC: 7 [12] (energy cloak + Dex); HD 6; hp 28; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +3; SA: Int 15, Dex 16, Interaction 3, Knowledge 2, Athletics 1, Meditations (2/2/2/1/1); ST 9; MV 12; XP 7/700; Star Sword (Green).

Master Kindus Rayne (5th-level Star Knight): AC: 4 [15] (medium armor + Dex); HD 4; hp 22; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +2; SA: Dex 15, Con 15, Athletics 2, Interaction 2, Survival 2, Meditations (2/2/1); ST 11; MV 12; XP 5/320; Star Sword x2 (Yellow).

3rd-level Star Knight (3): AC: 8 [11] (energy cloak); HD 3; hp 13; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +1; SA: Interaction 2, Athletics 2, Knowledge 1, Meditations (2/1); ST 13; MV 12; XP 3/90; Star Sword (Blue or Green).

1st-level Star Knight (5): AC: 8 [11] (energy cloak); HD 1; hp 6; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +0; SA: Interaction 2, Athletics 2, Survival 1, Meditations (-); ST 15; MV 12; XP 1/20; Star Sword (Blue or Green).

Ellai-class Stunt Insurgent *Dira'tejjan*: Starship; AC 5 [14]; hp 30; SS 1; TAR +3; AT Laser Cannon (4d6) [pilot-linked], Rayblaster (x2, 4d6 [vehicle]); MOD FTL Drive, High-Yield Thruster (3); MV 18.

LANDING ON VARR

Varr is the size of a small moon and is surrounded by its own volatile atmosphere.

Any large power source (such as a starship) that enters this atmosphere is automatically struck by crackling bolts of ionic lightning that drain its power cells. The vessel loses power (no Saving Throw) and is forced to crash land atop the monster's back, suffering 5d6 damage. Every occupant must make a Saving Throw to avoid taking 1d6+1 damage from the impact.

Vehicles, robots, and personal electronic items aboard the vessel are too small to be affected by these strikes. Normal communication devices function on Varr, but transmissions to and from those in space suffer serious interference, if they get through at all. The crystaltech Escape Crystals from the Chamber of the Rulloth are immune to these effects.

The *Dira'tejjan* and the characters' starship immediately lose power and crash land on Varr's back upon entering its atmosphere. If the vessels survive intact, the characters can eventually crib together enough material to make homemade solar panels from the space debris and other wreckage found in the hills and valleys of Varr's carapace. This gives the sublight drives just enough power to take off and limp to a nearby system.

The repairs take approximately one (1) week to complete. The vessel has Movement 3, with no weapons or shields. A Pilot or Mechanical Robot

conducting repairs improves the ship's Movement to 6. A successful Technology Check raises the vessel's Shield Strength to 1/2 normal and powers one (1) weapon of the character's choice.

However, the Tikatikatik presence on Varr make such repairs almost impossible at first.

TIKATIKATIK PRESENCE

Tikatikatik legends said that the return of the Great Wanderer would herald the Time of Travels, where Varr would carry the Tikatikatik tribes into the Skies Beyond. This prophesy actually came true. . . in a manner of speaking.

As Varr circled through the skies of Varrul, thousands of Tikatikatik hopped aboard its back and found refuge in the deep crevices, planetary debris, and dark caverns embedded in its ridged carapace. Although most of the Tikatikatik are terrified and trying to make sense of Varr's awakening, they still attack offworlders on sight.

TROOT'ACHEEVAK GATE

The Chamber of the Heart can only be accessed from Varr's back, by means of the hole the Rulloth bored through its carapace ages ago. The hole measures approximately fifty (50) feet in diameter. A red crystal ramp hugs the inside of the hole, descending into darkness and eventually ending at the Chamber of the Heart.

The Tikatikatik have named this hole the Troot'acheevak Gate and consider it taboo for anyone to enter. Any character who Walks in the Way is immediately drawn to this hole.

GODRIDER ATTACK

The caverns near the Troot'acheevak Gate are inhabited by the newly formed Godrider Tribe of Tikatikatik. This tribe consists of hundreds of Tikatikatik who have banded together to bask in the glory of their living legend.

The Atrak warrior God's-Will from the *Three Trials of Chutatay* adventure leads the Godrider Tribe. (If God's-Will was killed by the PCs, another member of his Hreechakta takes up the mantle of God's-Will.)

A swarm of 10d6 Tikatikatik attack any offworlders that land (or crash) on Varr's back. 2d6 Tikatikatik join the attack every other round in a seemingly endless wave.

The Star Knights of the Order of Syfert ignite their Star Swords and form a defensive circle around the PCs. Combat should be conducted normally. There are so many Tikatikatik attacking, that the characters receive a +2 bonus to all Attack Rolls. The Referee can assume that two (2) of the 1st-level Star Knights and one (1) of the 3rd-level Star Knights dies in the ensuing battle, and many others are wounded.

If one of the characters is the Chosen PC from the *Three Trials of Chutatay*

adventure, God's-Will screams in rage and says:

"You! You dare to defile the spirit of the Great Wanderer! Now, you shall die!"

If the Chosen PC thinks to challenge God's-Will to a Kutar Duel, the warrior gladly accepts.

The Tikatikatik swarm temporarily breaks off its attack to observe the duel. Their attention is so focused on the combat that the Star Knights of the Order of Syfert are able to enter the Troot'acheevak Gate unnoticed and descend into the Chamber of the Heart.

In this case, the Order of Syfert returns Varr to dormancy with the next beat of the Great Drum (below) and the Referee may have to amend some of the following text accordingly.

Varrookta (God's-Will): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 7+7; hp 38; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +7; SA: Flight, Death Spiral; ST 12; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 7/700.

Tikatikatik (Unending Swarm): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

THE GREAT DRUM

After the Kutar Duel ends, or after ten (10) rounds of combat with the Tikatikatik, Varr's massive heart organ expands with a deafening boom. A burst off crackling energy leaks from the Troot'acheevak Gate.

If the characters are still engaged in combat with the swarm, Mistress Heathra Nalindarri points to the burst of energy and says:

"That is where we must go!"

The Star Knights then begin fighting their way towards the hole.

God's-Will sees this and shouts:

"Stop the defilers! None may enter the Troot'acheevak Gate! It is forbidden!"

This should give the PCs a clue that the hole might provide them some refuge. The Tikatikatik continue to attack as long as the PCs remain on the surface. They do not follow the characters into the Troot'acheevak Gate. If the PCs do not take the hint, the Star Knights reach the Chamber of the Heart first and then call them down to safety.

CHAMBER OF THE HEART

The red crystal Chamber of the Heart is still intact atop Varr's heart organ. A burst of energy crackles through the cave with each beat of Varr's massive heart, incinerating every living thing in the Chamber.

The only way to return Varr to dormancy is for someone who Walks in the Way to focus the Quietess Meditation or Stupor Gift through the Crystal Staves of Stra'thi'hood and channel the energy from Varr's heartbeat into

space. Quietess or Stupor can be learned from the spirit of Ooloorah the Ancient One who now resides in the Arhalan Mirrors in the Chamber of the Rulloth back on Planet Varrul.

A character who Walks in the Way may also teach himself the Quietess Meditation or Stupor Gift after study and meditation inside the Chamber of the Heart for three (3) months, or if the character advances to the next Experience Level. The death and destruction caused during that time is left to the Referee to describe.

Varr's heart organ beats once every week after it has fed. This heart rate increases to once per day if Varr is actively destroying a world. Remember that any character inside the Chamber of the Heart during the beat of Varr's heart is instantly incinerated. Those who Walk in the Way live on as creatures of spirit after the blast.

The Star Knights of the Order of Syfert were shown the Chamber of the Heart in dreams and visions. They already know the Quietess Meditation and soon learn how to harness the power of the Crystal Staves of Stra'thi'hood. Then it just a matter of waiting for the next beat of Varr's massive heart.

Note: If the spirit of the Chosen PC resides in the Chamber of the Heart, Mistress Heathra defers to his leadership and guidance. The Chosen PC shows the Order of Syfert the process to render Varr dormant and the Star Knights settle in to wait for the monster's next heartbeat.

WRAPUP

It takes approximately one (1) week for Varr's heart organ to beat again. The PCs may use this time to heal, prepare Meditations, and discuss plans to escape Varr's atmosphere.

The Order of Syfert understands the dangers of remaining inside the Chamber of the Heart during the Expulsion. They warn the PCs before the next heartbeat occurs, giving the characters plenty of time to reach the surface.

The heartbeat arrives with a deafening boom. A crackling wave of energy fills the Chamber of the Heart. The Order of Syfert uses the Crystal Staves of Stra'thi'hood to disperse this massive burst of energy into space.

Without the Temple of A'li'tha to focus the energy into a beam, bolts of lightning arc for miles in random directions, destroying several Consortium vessels in the vicinity. Lord Ossiron watches this display of power from the bridge of *Massakier* and becomes more determined than ever to take control of Weapon V.

With a cosmic sigh, Varr closes its eyes and returns to a dormant state. The monster curls into an armored ball the size of a planet and begins to drift aimlessly in space. The Tikatikatik interpret this as a bad omen and retreat deep into the monster's chitinous caves. The characters are now free to make repairs to their starship without being attacked.

Word of the event quickly spreads across the galaxy, and forces of the Galactic Consortium and the Restoration mobilize to take possession of the creature while it sleeps.

MASTIZHEN STANDOFF

Over the course of the next week, Consortium dreadnaughts and Restoration starcruisers begin dropping out of FTL space to square off against one another on opposite sides of the sleeping beast. A few skirmishes occur between stunt fighters and scouting vessels, but neither force is willing to engage in a pitched battle for fear of reawakening the monster.

The standoff is reminiscent of those that occurred during the Mastizhen War of Irls. For now, cooler heads have prevailed, but it is only a matter of time before hostilities break out, and the galaxy is once again plunged into chaos.

ENCOUNTER 4: ATTACK OF THE DRAJ

The Order of Syfert survived the Expulsion as creatures of pure spirit and have been observing the upcoming conflict with trepidation. Mistress Heathra fears the energy discharged during a battle of this size might be enough to jumpstart Varr's heart and send the monster on another galactic rampage. She has recently foreseen the arrival of a Consortium orbital battle station named Consequence which would heavily tip the scales in favor of the Galactic Consortium.

The glowing spirit of Mistress Heathra summons the PCs to the Chamber of the Heart and says:

"A conflict brews outside our very door. I know not who will win. In truth, it matters little.

There are those on both sides of the war who wish to harness the might of this great and terrible beast. We cannot let such power fall into mortal hands. It can never be used for good, no matter how good one's intentions may be. In the hands of evil, all is lost.

We have located an anomaly nearby, what we once called a black hole, but we now understand is something vastly different. You know this anomaly as the Vortex of the Devil Lady, which has been responsible for the disappearance of countless starships.

The Chamber of the Heart greatly enhances our power. The Crystal Staves of Stra'thi'hool allow us to focus this power abroad. With this power, we plan to guide the sleeping monster into the Vortex. Unfortunately, doing so leaves us defenseless.

I suspect our enemies will realize what we intend to do and try to stop us. Therefore, we have one last favor to ask of you. You must guard the Chamber of the Heart until we reach the edge of the Vortex.

Will you accept this final task on behalf of the Order of Syfert, on behalf of the universe itself and everything you hold dear?"

Attack of the Draj



If the PCs accept, Mistress Heathra asks the PCs to stay out of the Chamber of the Heart. The Order of Syfert then gathers its collective mystical energy and begins slowly navigating the massive Varr towards the Vortex of the Devil Lady.

If the PCs refuse to stay and help, Mistress Heathra shakes her head in disappointment. The characters are free to leave as soon as they are able.

VORTEX OF THE DEVIL LADY

The Vortex of the Devil Lady is an enormous black hole in the Signoss System. The Vortex has an unstable gravitic field that unexpectedly extends and retracts as if the black hole is reaching out to ensnare helpless starships. According to space myths, distress calls in a female voice were often heard coming from the vicinity of the black hole. Anyone who approached for a rescue was sucked into the Vortex, never to be heard from again.

If the characters ask Mistress Heathra what she meant by understanding the black hole as “something vastly different” she is unable to put it into words they would understand. Even a shared vision is incomprehensible to creatures who have not forsaken their earthly forms and become spirit. This little mystery should leave the players wondering, and also leave the door open for events the Referee might wish to insert later in the campaign.

BATTLE AMONG THE STARS

Once Varr enters the Signoss System, its course becomes apparent. As the black mass of the Vortex of the Devil Lady looms larger and larger, the Consortium battle station Consequence, ten (10) dreadnaughts, and its support ships arrive and engage the thirty (30) starcruisers of the Restoration fleet in an epic battle.

The characters have a front row seat to the action. The Referee can describe the battle as streaks of laser blasts, silent explosions, and hundreds of fighters zoom around the larger vessels like angry bees.

CULT OF DRAJ

The Cult of Draj is an ancient order of Void disciples founded long ago by a terrible Void Knight named Draj, which means “Darkness” in the Xijjalen tongue. The Cult believes that all light must be extinguished from the galaxy so that the universe can return to the purity of eternal darkness. The Cult of Draj are sworn enemies of the Star Knights, especially the Order of Syfert.

Lord Ossiron is the current High Priest of the Cult of Draj. Once the assault on the Restoration fleet begins, he sends a contingent of his most loyal cultists to Varr’s surface to capture the sleeping monster.

The Cult of Draj descends upon Varr in a modified stunt insurgent. The vessel loses power upon entering the monster’s atmosphere, but the cultists are well prepared. They abandon the starship in an assortment of vehicles, allowing it to crash in a ball of fire.

The cultists attack on sight and fight to the death. Their attacks are lethal, but uncoordinated, with each cultist trying to score more kills than the other.

TACTICS AND ABILITIES

The Cult of Draj consists of the following:

Void Knight: A female human Void Knight on a skybike. The Void Knight circles the battle for three (3) rounds, preparing her Combat Coordination, Alter Reflexes, and Missile Redirection Meditations before attacking. The Void Knight leaps from her skybike and attacks Star Knights first.

Silana Muratt (7th-level Human Female Void Knight): AC: 7 [12] (energy cloak + Dex); HD 6; hp 28; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +3; SA: Dex 15, Interaction 3, Athletics 2, Knowledge 1, Corrupted Energy, Force of Will, Meditations (2/2/2/1/1); ST 9; MV 12; XP 7/700; Double-Bladed Star Sword (Red).

Meditations*: (1st) Acrobatics, Healing Meditation; (2nd) Combat Coordination, Detect Invisible; (3rd) Alter Reflexes, Defensive Coordination; (4th) Danger Sense; (5th) Missile Redirection

Skybike: Vehicle; AC 5 [14]; RED 3; PP +1; hp 15; EXD 2d6; TAR +1; AT Light Rayblaster (2d6) [pilot-linked]; MOD Turbo Booster; MV 30 (flight ceiling 500 ft).

Alien Mystic: A male Illok (muscular humanoid covered in fungus) Alien Mystic on a skyboard. The Alien Mystic descends on a skyboard and uses his Gifts from a distance before closing to attack with his two-handed war club (1d6+2 damage).

Ludok Itorlo (5th-level Male Illok Alien Mystic): AC: 7 [12] (energy cloak + Dex); HD 3+1; hp 15; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +1; SA: Int 16, Str 15, Knowledge 3, Athletics 2, Survival 1, Keen Senses, Gifts (3/2), Contact with skin requires a Saving Throw to avoid infection and death in 1d6 days if fungus left untreated; ST 10; MV 12; XP 3/90; war club, dagger.

Gifts*: (1st) Hold Portal, Darkness x2; (2nd) Hold Person x2

Skyboard: Vehicle; AC 4[15]; RED 1; PP +0; hp 5; EXD 1d6; TAR +0; AT none; MOD Turbo Booster; MV 30 (flight ceiling 500 ft).

Alien Brute: A male Alien Brute with a jet pack. The Alien Brute is a green-skinned Oggar (large, ugly, muscular humanoid) who drops into the middle of the PCs and attacks the strongest-looking character with his spike-gauntleted fists (1d6+5 damage)

Dallup the Oggar (5th-level Male Oggar Alien Brute): AC: 3 [16] (heavy armor); HD 5; hp 32; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +3; SA: Str 18, Con 18, Athletics 3, Survival 2, Larceny 1, Combat Machine, Keen Senses, Unarmed Combat, Species Training (+1 melee damage); ST 9; MV 9; XP 5/240; metal spiked gauntlets, jet pack.

Pilot: A male human Pilot in an assault springer. The assault springer is equipped with a modified rocket assembly to slow its descent. Three (3) rounds after landing, it walks towards the PCs, trying to scatter them with rayblaster and light rayblaster beams. The Pilot operates the rayblaster.

Carder Braiv (5th-level Human Male Pilot): AC: 5 [14] (light armor + energy cloak + Dex); HD 4; hp 19; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +2; SA: Dex 17, Navigation 3, Technology 2, Knowledge 1, Stick Jockey, Space Ace, Jury-Rig; ST 11; MV 12; XP 4/120; laser rifle, laser pistol.

Assault Springer: Vehicle; AC 4 [15]; RED 10; PP Complete; hp 40; EXD 4d6; TAR +4; AT Rayblaster (4d6) [pilot-linked], Light Rayblaster (2d6); MOD none; MV 15.

Mercenary: A female human Mercenary co-piloting the Assault Springer noted above. She operates the assault springer's light rayblaster.

Marrikela Havirrest (5th-level Human Female Mercenary): AC: 4 [15] (medium armor + Dex); HD 5; hp 26; AT 1 (weapon); BHB +3; SA: Dex 15, Con 15, Athletics 2, Interaction 2, Technology 2, Combat Machine, Weapon Specialist (laser rifle); ST 10; MV 12; XP 5/240; laser rifle, laser pistol, holdout laser, dagger.

*The effects of all Meditations and Gifts are doubled in the presence of Varr's lifeforce.

OPTIONAL TWIST: UNEXPECTED ALLY

If the PCs need help, the Referee may wish to (re)introduce Sees-the-Fight from the *Three Trials of Chutatay* adventure. Although his belief system has been shredded, the disillusioned mystic sensed the evil of the Cult of Draj and gathered his Hreechakta to stop them.

Teektrakot (Sees-the-Fight): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 5+5; hp 28; AT 1 (claws); THB +5; SA: Flight, Varrulium Shaping, Gifts (3/2); ST 14; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 5/320.

Tikatikatik (12): AC: 6 [13] (natural); HD 2+1; hp 9; AT 1 (claws, quills); THB +2; SA: Flight, Death Spiral; ST 18; MV 12/15/12 (Fly/Climb); XP 2/30.

WRAPUP

If the characters are killed or driven off, the Cult of Draj takes control of the Chamber of the Heart. The Restoration fleet is destroyed and Varr's massive body is transported to the Tenebrae System. Supreme Lord Adlar then assigns the power-hungry Lord Ossiron to uncover its secrets, which may prove to be a grave mistake or part of some larger plan, at the Referee's discretion.

If the characters defeat the Cult of Draj, the Order of Syfert guides Varr's sleeping form to the edge of the Vortex of the Dark Lady.

The spirit of Mistress Heathra summons the PCs and says:

"You must go now as we pass into this Darkness. The Order of Syfert will never forget your bravery. May the light of the White Star always guide your path."

The characters are free to leave in their starship. The takeoff is filled with turbulence as gravitic forces tug at Varr's body. The Referee may wish to add tension by having the Pilot make a Navigation Check, but failure should only result in further damage to their starship—if the characters have made it this far, they deserve a clean getaway.

If Sees-the-Fight is present, he and his Hreechakta plan to ride the Great Wanderer to the bitter end. At the Referee's discretion, he or some of his followers may willingly accompany the PCs into a new age. They may even ask to be taken back to Planet Varrul where they can try to save the rest of their people.

The epic battle between the Consortium and Restoration fleets is still in full swing as the characters distance themselves from Varr. The Restoration forces are reeling from heavy losses, but are still in the fight. Bombing runs and the concentrated firepower of half a dozen starcruisers has reduced the battle station Consequence to a smoldering husk. The outcome of the battle, however, still seems inevitable.

As Varr continues on its fatal course, tendrils of darkness seem to reach from the Vortex to draw the monster into its maw. Without warning, one of the dreadnaughts suddenly breaks free of the battle and flies towards the black hole.

The PCs recognize the vessel as Lord Ossiron's private flagship, *Massakier!* As Varr disappears into the void, *Massakier* follows close behind and is swallowed by the darkness. The fate of Lord Ossiron and the possibility of his return are left to the Referee.

After Lord Ossiron's unexpected departure, the Consortium fleet breaks off its attack and begins its retreat. The victorious Restoration forces do not give chase. The system is a tangled mess of wreckage, escape pods, and distress beacons. The PCs are free to make contact with the Restoration fleet and assist in any rescue or salvage operations.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Endgame is just that for Planet Varrul. When Varr departs, the planet's atmosphere begins to unravel. The toxic gases disperse, the ion storms become increasingly less frequent and intense, and the broken remnants of the Core become floating islands that drift further and further apart. This process takes approximately one (1) standard year, during which time, the Referee is free to run most of the adventures typical for Varrul.

The Rul Corridor begins to collapse, as the Waystations are abandoned by the Galactic Consortium. They may become the lair of pirates or warlords who attempt to tax passing vessels. The PCs may even decide to claim one of these stations as their own, for use as a base of operations.

Tathkee Station remains open for business as new mining companies flock to the planet to extract the abundant Varrulium ore. Although the value decreases with the increase in supply, there is still enough demand to make the venture worthwhile. Once the Varrulium is gone, Ingan Tathkee packs up the station and heads to another profitable location. This can lead to a number of new adventures of the Referee's design.

The Tikatikatik tribes that remained on Varrul continue to oppose the offworld incursions. However, they slowly realize their way of life, not to mention their very existence, is at an end. Treka mystics feel the power of their Acheevak diminish. The great Hooshar herds thin, game becomes scarce, and the Ickon withers and dies. Within one (1) year of Varr's awakening, all native life left on Varrul (with the possible exception of the Yuhacta Wyrms) dies from exposure to the vacuum of space.

The PCs may take it upon themselves to help the doomed Tikatikatik assimilate into galactic culture. They may even attempt to relocate them to another gas giant which has a similar atmosphere such as Xerus in the Sciridae System. Floating islands can be manufactured and other native flora and fauna can even be imported.

Although this kind of terraforming is a massive undertaking, assistance from several intergalactic humanitarian organizations may be available. This might be a good way to end the campaign on a high note and get high-level PCs involved in politics that could reshape the galaxy.

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