

FREE LEAGUE

COROLIS



ARAM'S SECRET

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INTRODUCTION

Orbiting between the green sphere of Kua and the ember body of Lubau lies the acidified Jina – a yellow-green hell-hole. There is only a single colony: Aram's Ravine, where they mine salt and bauxite. Orbiting the planet is its jewel – the luxury moon Cala Duriha, which is frequented much more often than Aram's Ravine.

EVEN THOUGH IT is formally independent of the factions in the Kua-system, Aram's Ravine is replete with intrigue. Self-appointed lesser dukes vie for power through devious machinations, subterfuge, and of the employment of useful idiots – like visiting adventurers! At the same time, a dark power lies hidden in the ravine. A power originating from the Portal Wars, that in time may come to endanger the future of the ravine...

Aram's Secret introduces the acidified planet Jina and its single larger settlement, Aram's Ravine. Here you will find everything you need to create exciting scenarios on the acidic surface of Jina, but also details on the luxury moon Cala Duriha. The booklet is separated into three parts, where the first part provides possible reasons for the player characters to visit Jina as well as

describing the salt and bauxite colony of Aram's Ravine. After that we get acquainted with the schemers on the moon Cala Duriha. The booklet concludes with the adventure Aram's Secret.

INTRODUCTION

Aram's Ravine is by its nature a scenario location (see page 342 in the *Coriolis* core rulebook). A scenario location is not constructed of scenes but by places, and the motives of different individuals. The scenes will occur when and where they fit, there are no acts, and the dramaturgy is more unpredictable.

The GM has to be well prepared with this kind of setup, it's important to have a clear-cut understanding of the motives and capacities of the different parties. The three-act-model gives the PCs a limited number of options and urges



them more firmly in a certain direction. In the scenario location model, the PCs are instead allowed to roam freely, and the need for improvisation from the GM is obviously greater.

Aram's Ravine offers an exciting environment for the PCs to explore and experience. Going by its area it is not a large location, but the GM will discover that there is no need for huge amounts of space. The actions of the PCs soon lead to a convoluted web of relationships and events. Some final advice for the GM: Read through the location carefully, decide what you want the different actors to strive for, and what they are prepared to do to achieve it. Consider possible chains of events, and cool scenes that may occur.

And don't forget to enjoy the unpredictability!

WHY TRAVEL TO ARAM'S RAVINE?

Coriolis, as well as this adventure, assumes that the PCs mutually share a ship. Maybe they have experienced adventures together before, or maybe this is their first journey on the ship. Aram's Ravine is not a place where cruisers go, not even free traders frequent the colony with any sense of regularity. The colony is at the mercy of the random influx of goods and mail as smaller ships pass the planet on their route from Coriolis to the portals in the center of the system. Few ships have Aram's Ravine as their actual destination. Often, it is the luxury moon Cala Duriha, hovering above Jina, that

draws them in. After having delivered luxury goods there, some freighter pilots realize that it might be worth a detour to the planet to pick up complementary cargo (bauxite, salt), or to get rid of goods of inferior quality. In this manner, Aram's Ravine receives much needed contributions of supplies.

The PCs could have a range of reasons to travel to Aram's Ravine, but they must have at least one explicit goal for their visit. An incursion to load new cargo is a possible idea, an emergency landing is another. An additional possibility is that one of the PCs has a personal connection to the ravine, grew up there, or has relatives that have moved there. Few people would land on the planet out of curiosity. Those who can choose settle for savoring the colorful acid storms on the planet's surface over a glass of diluted wine behind one of the enormous panoramic windows of the luxury moon. Several of the reasons to dock at Aram's Ravine that are listed below can serve as covers for other, secret, missions. Several of the parties in the ravine have good reasons to ask the PCs to work undercover (Free Trade, Lay Low, Emergency Landing) while actually working towards other goals (Research Support, Mercenaries, Prospecting, Investigate the Colonial Agent).

Below is a rundown of plausible reasons for the PCs to come to Aram's Ravine and why they may have to stay a while, more or less voluntarily.



⚙️ EMERGENCY LANDING

The PCs' ship conks out and they are forced to make an emergency landing on Jina. Aram's Ravine lies in direct connection to the only space port on the planet. The ship's problem can be benign (furiously blinking warning lights, unclear what is really the matter), or more dramatic (unstable gravitation generator). Maybe their ship collides with scrap orbiting above Jina when they are about to land or depart from the luxury moon Cala Duriha, and they are forced to interrupt their journey with a pitstop on the planet. Regardless, the ship touches down under relatively controlled conditions in the once impressive, but now worn down, space port of Aram's Ravine. While repairs are underway, the PCs are drawn into the intrigues of the ravine. This is also the prelude to the scenario Aram's Secret on page 21.

⚙️ SABOTAGE

One exciting possibility is that pirates in the ravine conspire with an agent on the luxury moon, who discreetly disables parts of the PCs' ship so that they are forced to land in Aram's Ravine. The repairs might become extensive, and of course they need a specific spare part that a certain someone in the ravine is in possession of. Maybe the sabotage is an act of pure desperation. The situation in the colony of Aram's Ravine is deplorable, and certain individuals are very anxious for aid or protection. One possibility is of course to combine Free Trade with Sabotage, meaning that one of the parties in the ravine has an agent sneak aboard and remove an important component from the ship so that they can then offer to sell it back to the PCs in return for dangerous favors.

⚙️ FREE TRADE

Delivering supplies and mail to the colony is of course a potential reason for the visit, since free traders can seldom afford to say no, not even to smaller missions. A ship delivering delicacies and luxury goods to the moon Cala Duriha probably has room for common goods, sold at a profit down in Aram's Ravine. There is also the possibility of loading local cargo for the return trip. Once planetside, the PCs can be contacted by local interests, some offering birr, while others appeal to the PCs' gentler sensibilities.

⚙️ LAY LOW

Aram's Ravine is well-suited for PCs who have earned the ire of the Coriolis Guard or who have good reasons to stay away from the bigger thoroughfares for a time. The proximity of the luxury moon may seem like a risk factor, but also an opportunity to intercept the radio traffic of other ships and keep up to date with current affairs in the system.

⚙️ INVESTIGATE THE COLONIAL AGENT

The Colonial Agency has its doubts about the resourcefulness of the actions of the local colonial agent, and wants a report on the situation. They may even deem it necessary to take more immediate action. The agency has a spy in the ravine (the doctor, Salim Nasser). Maybe they are unsure of him as well, or maybe they don't wish to compromise the doctor, instead sending the PCs so that they can take greater risks in their investigations and then disappear if things get hot. It is possible that the PCs are instructed to contact Nasser to get an update on the situation. In that case, it's most likely as a first step to direct action against the colonial agent. Regardless of the method of investigation, it is in all likelihood performed undercover.

⚙️ MERCENARIES

A conflict is growing between the parties of the ravine, and one of them enlists mercenaries, namely the PCs. The contract can be signed on Coriolis, the luxury moon Cala Duriha, or when the PCs have landed in the ravine for other purposes. The Mine Lord, the Salt Widow, and the colonial agent possess the means to employ mercenaries. The popular militia can also mobilize the funds for reinforcements. Regardless of which faction they throw in with, the PCs are soon embroiled in the ravine's conflicts. They may realize that they fight for dubious employers, and choose to switch sides. Maybe the PCs quickly see that there are great opportunities to let themselves be contracted by several local lords, and then try to pit them against one another for a chance to earn even more birr.

⚙️ RESEARCH SUPPORT

Through their contacts the PCs learn that the scientist Hommar Lannah offers birr to those willing to help him with his latest project. It is possible that it later turns out that what Lannah actually meant was that the payment will be made when his research has been published, and he himself is showered with birr.

⚙️ PROSPECTING

Jina was earlier assessed as rich in resources, and Aram's Ravine is a remnant of that flagging optimism. Overenthusiastic prospectors (perhaps contacts of the local entrepreneur, Torilan) seek the PCs' support to perform necessary surveys. Payment is of course poor, but shares in future riches are promised.

Another version is that cynical parties on Coriolis or Cala Duriha offer the PCs "secret" information that will make them rich. The reports on deposits that the PCs are offered weren't necessarily fake when they were written almost two decades ago. Once they arrive at the ravine, it of course turns out that someone else has already claimed the alleged deposits, or that the estimated findings lie on the other side of the tableland, in close proximity to the holy mesa of the aggressive tribes (see page 13).

ARRIVAL OF THE PCS

PCs who touch down in Aram's Ravine will most likely try to land in the old space port. The deserted and worn

down docks provide good protection from acid storms. A skilled PC can activate the lift that lowers the ship below ground and seals the shields above the dock (see more under the heading The Space Port). If the PCs announce their arrival via radio, the colonial agent will rush to meet them, and with him comes, almost certainly, a number of the more prominent characters in the ravine. A more discreet arrival makes it more likely that the PCs' first encounter is with the curious technician Niniack, and possibly also old Lomar who, with his mechanical workshop, can be found in close proximity to the space port. If the PCs have made an appointment with one of the parties in the ravine, they will greet them as agreed – unless the GM finds it more interesting to let the PCs expect a meeting in the space port only to be left standing alone in the deserted dock, with an acid storm boiling on the horizon, and the wan light of Aram's Ravine flickering through the mists.



ARAM'S RAVINE

Between the deep forests of Kua and the smoldering wastelands of Lubau, we find Jina, an acidified hellhole with only one colony, Aram's Ravine. The colony is a mining station for bauxite and other mineral salts, and rife with intriguing Mine Lords competing for power.

THE SCENARIO LOCATION Aram's Ravine is the only major settlement on Jina. Frequent visitors to the colony are rare, except for freighter crews hauling the minerals away. Read up on Jina on page 284 of the *Coriolis* core rulebook before introducing Aram's Ravine into your game.

OVERVIEW

Aram's Ravine is situated at the edge of the Lamka plateau. The Desera river has slowly eaten away at the porous stone surrounding the colony and left a strange landscape of tall, spindly pillars of harder rock in its wake. The colony sits on top of these high pillars, with thin rope bridges connecting the different pillar islands. The settlement is covered in a constant mist making for poor visibility, courtesy of Jina's acidified atmosphere. Residents not working in the mines or on the salt trawlers try to stay indoors to get away from the mist. The colony is ravaged by strong acid storms every now and then, forcing everyone inside, except for the Kalites, the local nomads.

Methane gas from the swamps is the Ravine's primary source of power. Long pipes climb like vines up the ridge and worm their way between the houses on the pillars. There is one larger power station in the colony, distributing electricity to the inhabitants. The water on Jina is very acidic and must be processed before it is fit for human consumption. This is most easily done by vaporization and condensation, or through chemical purification.

Aram's Ravine is surrounded by the deserts of the Lamka plateau, empty of all life except for the lamka lizard (see the *Coriolis* core rulebook, page 323) and a surprisingly strong population of butterflies resistant to the atmosphere.

✿ THE SPACE PORT

Landing platforms large enough for medium freighters usually covered in dust and sand from the plateau. The platforms can be lowered into underground silos and sealed to protect the landed ships. This is done from a small command unit next to each platform. Unless a landed ship is protected from the corrosive mist in this fashion, service costs are doubled (see the *Coriolis* core rulebook, page 155). There is a fusion reactor in the spaceport, but it is out of commission due to lack of resources.

✿ THE OFFICES OF THE COLONIAL AGENCY

A fancy, crescent-shaped single-storey building made from white, glazed stone, designed for the mayor of the planet. Colonial agent Boro uses only a small part of the western wing, and the rest of the building rests in silence, dusty sheets covering the expensive furniture. The covered main entrance with its worn, mosaic-covered columns has not been used for decades. Agent Boro and his bodyguards use the side entrance, since it is closer to the inhabited parts of the settlement.

✿ THE BATH HOUSE

The colony's bathhouse, or hammam, is the jewel of the Ravine. It was built for an elite that never came, and today it serves the common folk of the colony and functions as the de facto offices of colonial agent Boro. Priceless mosaics, beautiful lighting and the soothing babble of the water makes the hammam a much needed place of rest from the toils of life on Jina. Agent Boro holds court from a dais in the back. When he is not resting on his divan, he can usually be found in the steam sauna or in the warm water pool with a tray of imported delicacies at his side.

ACID STORMS

The acid storms use the fire rules (Coriolis core rulebook, p 97). The storms have an attack value of 3 against people with masks and armor, and an attack value of 6 against those without. Thick clothing will protect the skin during the storms but are destroyed in the process. Someone with the Resistant Talent will be less affected by the storms – attack value 3 if unprotected, and 1 with a mask on.

ARAM'S RAVINE

- ◆ **AVERAGE TEMPERATURE:** 25–40 degrees centigrade during the day and around 10 degrees at night.
- ◆ **POPULATION:** Roughly 3,000, 900 of whom live in Aram's Ravine. The rest live on small claims along the fault line or on salt trawlers in the Desera delta.
- ◆ **GOVERNANCE:** Formally an independent colony under the protection of the Colonial Agency. In reality, tensions are high as local oligarchs compete for power (the Colonial Agency, the Mine Lord, the Salt Widow).
- ◆ **LAW AND ORDER:** A popular militia with a hundred members keeps the peace. The militia is formally under the control of the Colonial Agency, but is de facto a lot closer to the Salt Widow. The militia is being challenged by the Red Hand Crew, which is allied with the Mine Lord and has some fifty members, as well as by unruly miners on leave. The Agency tries to play these different groups against one another.
- ◆ **IMPORTS:** Livestock, spices, foodstuffs, medicine, metals, spare parts, survival gear.
- ◆ **EXPORTS:** Bauxite ore, salts.



ARAM'S RAVINE

NOHAK'S CANTINA



A simple but pleasant atmosphere greets visitors to Nohak's. The clientele usually consists of hands on leave from mines and salt trawlers mixed with members of the Red Hand Crew.

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ARAM'S RAVINE

1. The Offices of the Colonial Agency
2. The Bath House
3. Nohak's Cantina
4. The Chapel of the Icons
5. The Doctor's Office
6. The Lair of the Witch Doctor
7. The Palace of the Mine Lord
8. Larval Silk Farms
9. The Oasis Cantina
10. The Salt Widow's House

THE BATH HOUSE



The colony's bathhouse, or hammam, is the jewel of the Ravine. It was built for an elite that never came, and today it serves the common folk of the colony and functions as the de facto offices of colonial agent Boro.



THE PALACE OF THE MINE LORD



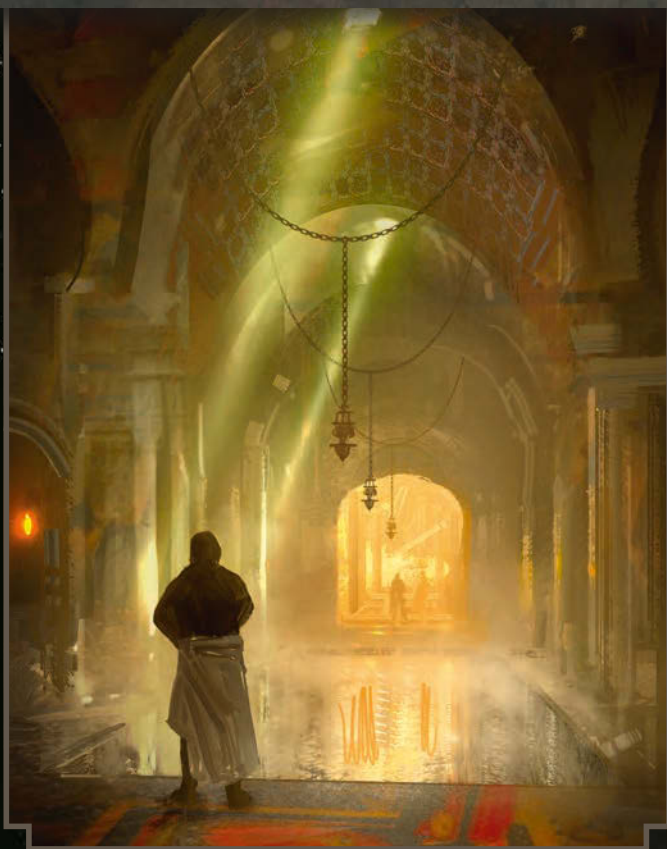
A large main house sits in a walled-in yard with fountains and what would have been a beautiful garden – if this hadn't been Jina.

THE AREA AROUND ARAM'S RAVINE



THE AREA AROUND ARAM'S RAVINE

- A. Aram's Ravine
- B. Lomar's Workshop
- C. The Spaceport
- D. Bauxite Mines



ARAM'S CUISINE

Indigenous butterfly larvae are the cornerstones of the local cuisine. The larva is edible, but not the evolved butterfly. The larvae are mashed into a high-protein paste and then marinated, grilled, cut into thin slices and eaten. Couscous, beans and chickpeas all have to be imported and are therefore quite expensive. Some forms of algae from the river delta are also part of the local cuisine.

⚙ NOHAK'S CANTINA

A simple but pleasant atmosphere greets visitors to Nohak's, an establishment where robust beams support a low ceiling and the guests sit or lie on mats and cushions on the floor. The clientele usually consists of hands on leave from mines and salt trawlers mixed with members of the Red Hand Crew. The kohôl is flowing and the hookahs are rarely stuffed with tabak. Nohak runs the cantina, along with the three courtesans, Lhirra, Omon and Zelena, and the village idiot Amil, who also purports to be a courtesan.

⚙ THE CHAPEL OF THE ICONS

A simple and stern-looking building, and as such a rather accurate architectonic rendering of the local preacher's interpretation of the will of the Icons. The Icon statues are dark and beautiful, brought here from an old temple on Algol by the preacher Aravak Poho herself. Popular targets for her righteous fury are the bathhouse's fixation on the Dancer and the village's witch doctor.

⚙ THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

The offices of Salim Nasser are simple but well run. The examination room is clean and smells of antiseptics. The rest of the house, hidden behind curtains and draperies, is the total opposite: messy, dirty and smelly. The doctor can offer an m-dose or two if the injuries one has sustained are really bad, but otherwise works with primitive medicurgy only.

⚙ THE LAIR OF THE WITCH DOCTOR

Behind the rusty door, a curtain made from rat bones and dried insects rattles in the toxic wind. The chamber inside is dark, dirty rugs cover the floor, and strange talismans and totems litter the walls and ceiling. This is the home of Ekbian, the Ravine's oldest inhabitant, well versed in the world of herbal remedies and mystical talismans.

⚙ THE PALACE OF THE MINE LORD

Next to the offices of the Colonial Agency, the palace is the colony's most imposing building. A large main house sits in a walled-in yard with fountains and what would have been a beautiful garden – if this hadn't been Jina. Acid-resistant lichen and algae have conquered the sculptures long ago and are well on their way to covering the mosaic floors of the yard. The violent Barhan, leader of the Red Hand Crew, can often be found here along with a handful of underlings.



❁ LARVAL SILK FARMS

A failed attempt at silk farming. The larvae spin their silk about as quickly as the acidic mist destroys it, and the results are lumpy clusters of black, stringy goo. The larvae feed off the lichen that thrives on the floors, walls and ceilings. They evolve and live a short time as butterflies before the corrosive atmosphere destroys their wings.

❁ THE OASIS CANTINA

The unofficial headquarters of the popular militia. A simple building with thin columns supporting a domed ceiling. Spirits are often high here – hookahs purr and soldiers slurp loudly on spicy tea, betting their meager earnings on high-prestige games of shah.

❁ LOMAR'S WORKSHOP

A fenced-off field filled with all sorts of technological gadgets, slowly eroding in the acidified mist. The chaos continues inside the machine hall, but things in here are generally in better condition. Long rows of unfinished projects share the space with engineer Niniack's current work. The aged

JINA'S BLACK LUNG

PCs who spend a longer period of time on Jina risk coming down with Jina's Black Lung disease. Creatures with the Resistant Talent (such as Kalites and lamkas) are immune to the affliction. PCs who use protective masks are also unaffected. Those affected develop a painful cough, and suffer a -1 to Strength until someone treats them by passing a hard (-2) **MEDICURY** test.



THE KALITES

Deep in the ravine below the colony, and on the far edges of the Lamka plateau, there is a considerable humanite population known as Kalites, characterized by their acid resistance and harsh xenophobia. The Kalites live in tribal communities on mesas and in ravines on the Lamka and only leave their villages to search for lichen and larvae. Technologically, the Kalites are primitive, but own some ordinary technology as well, generally thought to be plunder from reckless prospectors, but the amount of tech makes the more knowledgeable residents doubt this. Rumors have it that the Kalites have domesticated the lamka lizards and use them as sentries, and that a few lizards have escaped and sought refuge in Aram's Ravine. The origin of the lamka lizard is unknown, as Jina has no native animals for them to prey on, apart from humans.

Lomar has a hard time maintaining focus long enough to finish something, and moves around in a jungle of promising dreams and lost hopes. When Niniack really needs a hand on something, Lomar obliges, but only for a short while.

⚙️ THE SALT WIDOW'S HOUSE

A simple house, empty except for the Salt Widow herself and her right hand man and bodyguard, Bhofass. The occasional hand from one of the Widow's many salt trawlers down in the delta comes through every now and then, but they never stay long. Not even fine wines and luxurious food can make up for the thick, uneasy atmosphere of the house.

⚙️ BAUXITE MINES

Claims in many sizes and forms are scattered along the fault line. The Mine Lord's people run most of them, as the majority of the so-called independent miners are indebted to him. Hands in masks and worn exos mine, purify and transport the bauxite ore to the Ravine from where it is hauled offworld.

KALITE TERRITORY

A high mesa with steep sides rises from the desert. This is the home of the Kalites. Their way of life is a mystery to outsiders, and the Kalites themselves are not overly keen on visitors.

THE JAMSA DROP

A deep pit pierces the otherwise endless plateau. The sides of the hole are loose gravel and earth, making them dangerous to climb (-2 to **DEXTERITY**). How the pit came to be is unclear, but it is said that a freighter crashed there long ago.

THE THREE SENTINELS

Three high pillars of hard, black rock rise above the gravel of the Lamka. All three are shot through with caves and tunnels, and Kalites are said to live here.

THE SAVRA DELTA

Below the Lamka, the slow moving Desera river fans out into a wide delta. The minerals carried down from the mountains end up here, and high banks of brown, black and yellow sand break up the muddy river into smaller and smaller arms. Salt trawlers travel the delta up and down in the hopes of finding a bed rich with some rare mineral, and some get stuck in the treacherous marshlands, never to be heard from again.

SALT LAKE MOKHBA

Salt lake Mokhba is located close to the Savra delta. There are many salt barges here, working with nets, sifters and filters to gather salts from the dark, shallow lake. The salts are refined and purified in big salt ovens on the barges, and then transported on ground loaders to the spaceport in Aram's Ravine.

THE SITUATION

Aram's Ravine has been balancing on the brink of open conflict between the three aspiring rulers for a long time: colonial agent Shulan Boro, Lhorac Ignazu the Mine Lord, and Salt Widow Shana. Using their respective pawns – the militia, the Red Hand Crew and Bhofass the bodyguard – they all try to out-manuever the other two. Their power struggle is mostly free from external meddling, but should a rare find of minerals or metals occur (such as the Tritium! event below) things could get complicated very quickly. The PCs role in all this could be as hired muscle, infiltrators or just free traders looking for a valuable haul.

CHARACTERS AND CREATURES

A few key NPCs are described below. The generic NPCs on page 343 of the *Coriolis* core rulebook can be used for the Red Hand Crew, the militia and other residents of the Ravine.

SHULAN MORO, CORRUPT COLONIAL AGENT

The Zenithian Shulan Boro oversees the sales of claims on Jina for the Colonial Agency. He has got a finger in all large transactions in Aram's Ravine and holds court in the settlement's bathhouse. The hammam is perfect for the paranoid agent, as there are not many weapons one can conceal with only a towel around one's waist. The baths also offer the simple pleasures in life – which, strictly speaking, are the only things motivating Boro to take any risks at all: fine wines, fragrant baths, massages and nimble courtesan boys.

APPEARANCE: Shulan is a huge man, with wide shoulders and a wide face. His nose covers an impressive portion of his flat face and his upper front teeth seem to be retreating to the sides to make room for it. His pale, grey eyes are watery and his hands surprisingly soft.



CHARACTERISTICS: Overly friendly but convincing, talks a lot about the need for “co-*op-er-a-tion*”.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 2, WITS 3, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 4

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 5

SKILLS: Manipulation 3, Culture 2

TALENT: Judge of Character, Faction Standing

ARMOR: -

WEAPONS: -

GEAR: His three bodyguards Houda, Greshla and Pokh, personal communicator, orbital communicator, two ground loaders, trans-actor with 4,000 birr, 450 birr in cash.

LHORAC IGNAZU, SELF-PROCLAIMED MINE LORD

Lhorac Ignazu is said to be a Sadaalian theocrat in exile, a rumor he keeps alive by wearing an expressionless mask over his face at all times. Some people claim that his body is grotesquely deformed underneath his clothing and mask, while other say his incredible beauty angers the Icons and that he wears a mask to protect those around him from the lure of his graces. The truth, however, is more mundane: Lhorac is a middle-aged man with a receding hairline and a soft spot for the drama stirred up by his wearing his stylish protective mask indoors as well. His closest allies and the top lieutenants in the Red Hand know his secret, but keep their mouths shut as they also benefit from the myth. The Mine Lord is known to his henchmen as “Abya Farras”, the Sadaalian name for the white knight in the popular board game shah.

APPEARANCE: Always wears his ceramic battle armor, flowing, white clothes and an expressionless mask over the face. His voice is dark and raspy.

CHARACTERISTICS: Moderate, articulate and mild-mannered – even when he makes threats.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 5, AGILITY 3, WITS 3, EMPATHY 3



HIT POINTS: 8

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 6

SKILLS: Manipulation 4, Dexterity 3, Ranged Combat 3

TALENT: Malicious, Combat Veteran

ARMOR: Heavy armor 6

WEAPONS: Thermal pistol

GEAR: Sensor visor (in the helmet of his armor), 169 birr in cash.

SHANA, THE SALT WIDOW

Shana used to be seen as the grumpy shadow of her outgoing and social partner Harbil. When Harbil died in a suspicious accident, it was revealed that it was Shana who had been running the salt business all along. Shana holds Lhorac the Mine Lord responsible for the death of her partner – an opinion shared by most people who dare to



say anything about the matter. After her partner's death, Shana kept running the salt business and has done remarkably well for herself. Her overly correct butler and bodyguard, Bhofass, conducts all of her business in Aram's Ravine, as the Widow herself prefers the silence of her house or the salt trawlers in the Savra. Shana openly supports the popular militia and its elected leader Desree.

APPEARANCE: Thin, grey hair and dark, piercing eyes. Scarred cheeks. Usually dressed in a grey djellaba with discreet embroidery to hide her armor when she leaves her home.

CHARACTERISTICS: Silent and stern, but always interested in new faces.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 1, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 4

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 7

SKILLS: Manipulation 4, Ranged Combat 2, Observation 2, Survival 2

TALENT: Judge of Character

ARMOR: -

WEAPONS: -

GEAR: Personal communicator with pulse function (set to reach Bhofass), filter mask, tag with 2,000 birr, 110 birr in cash.

BHOFASS, THE WIDOW'S RIGHT HAND MAN

When the tall Bhofass speaks, the people of the Ravine hear the Widow's voice. Overly correct and meticulously dressed with a perfect beard, Bhofass is considered the Widow's extended arm in the Ravine. Several witnesses can testify to Bhofass's skills in violent situations, something that has spawned a lot of speculation as to what the mysterious man did before showing up in the Ravine. Bhofass's feelings for his employer are strong and passionate, and he would do anything to prove that he is worthy of filling the vacant spot as Shana's life partner.

APPEARANCE: Pale face with a black, perfectly trimmed beard. Dresses in a strict, simple caftan with gold embroidery and open sides (to allow for the use of martial arts).

CHARACTERISTICS: Stays in the background, patient, controlled.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 4, WITS 3, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 10

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 4

SKILLS: Melee Combat 5, Ranged Combat 4, Infiltration 4, Observation 4, Technology 4, Dexterity 3

TALENT: Nine Lives, Combat Veteran, Tough

ARMOR: Protective clothing 3

WEAPONS: Accelerator pistol, mercurium sword, combat bow

GEAR: Personal communicator with pulse function (set to reach the Salt Widow), filter mask, wrist-mounted personal sensor, tag with 1,200 birr, 93 birr in cash.

◆ **LEGIONNAIRE WRESTLING:** A martial art taught to Legionnaires. Gives a +1 to **MELEE COMBAT** and a +1 to unarmed weapon damage, but a -1 when parrying.

TYPICAL KALITE

Men and women sent on missions across the Lamka, usually to gather larvae or lichen when the supplies in their villages are running low. Will avoid contact with people from the Ravine, unless the odds are clearly in their favor (such as five against one) – in such cases, the Kalites could take the chance to acquire new slaves and gear for the village.

APPEARANCE: Kalites normally wear long caftans, their weapons and ornaments made of local gemstones and teeth from lamka lizards.

CHARACTERISTICS: Careful and apprehensive, or triumphantly aggressive.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 3, WITS 3, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 6

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 3

SKILLS: Dexterity 3, Observation 3, Survival 3, Melee Combat 2, Ranged Combat 2

TALENT: Resistant

ARMOR: Light primitive (2)

WEAPONS: Bow and arrows or accelerator rifle, mace or sabre (sword).

GEAR: Domesticated lamka lizard.

TECHNOLOGY AND ARTIFACTS

Aram's Ravine is not a wealthy place. The Ravine is technologically primitive, with some limited aspects of ordinary tech. Lomar's workshop sells ordinary spare parts and gear, but otherwise, only the three local rulers have access to weapons or other special gear. Only agent Boro will trade gear to outsiders.

EVENTS

Aram's Ravine offers many opportunities to a GM who wishes to make the settlement the center in a longer campaign. As soon as the PCs arrive, they will get pulled into the dangerous plotting and scheming between the Salt Widow, the Mine Lord and the Colonial Agency.

☼ A KILLER ON THE LOOSE!

Shortly after the PCs' arrival, people start going missing from the colony, and are perhaps found dead and badly maimed some days later. Suspensions run wild – is it a lamka lizard with an appetite for human flesh or a crazy ex-miner seeking revenge for her own misfortunes on the people of the Ravine? Could it be one of the local rulers who has acquired a pet lamka and is using it to get rid of troublemakers? The PCs are contracted as independent investigators because the Salt Widow, the Mine Lord and agent Boro cannot agree on any suitable locals for the job.

Regardless of how it starts, the affair will turn into a complicated investigation for the PCs in which the hunt for the killer is interrupted by secret meetings with the local rulers who try to get the PCs to blame their opponents for the killings – at the threat of pinning the murders on the PCs themselves!

☼ TRITIUM!

Torilan the prospector was right: there is tritium on Jina – it is even close to the Ravine. Tritium is a vital part in fusion reactors and as such, a very valuable commodity in the Third Horizon. Unfortunately, the tritium vein runs into Kalite territory, and exploiting it requires mining underneath their sacred mesa.

As soon as Torilan can produce a good enough drill sample (with or without the help of the PCs), the bigger fish in the Horizon will awaken and fix their gaze on Aram's Ravine. The local rulers will try to keep it quiet as best they can, but the news of a major tritium find will sooner or later make it off world. The corrupt agent Boro is responsible for the sale and registration of claims on Jina, a business that will turn bloody even before the Agency, the other Consortium companies, the Legion and the Free League show up at the scene. If the PCs lack factionary contacts, the most exciting time for them will likely be between the discovery of the vein and the moment the first ship from the Colonial Agency touches down at the spaceport. If the PCs do have factionary contacts, however (such as the talent Faction Standing), their situation could become even more interesting as the major players arrive. A representative from one of the interested factions could contact the PCs and ask to hire them to defend the faction's interests in the Ravine or on the far edge of the Lamka.

CALA DURIHA

The moon Cala Duriha, with its fortunate location, has experienced great prosperity along with the increasing power and influence of Coriolis and the Council of Factions in the Third Horizon. The station (with the same name as the moon) has beautiful domes and huge panoramic windows, and sprawls like a water lily on the surface of the celestial body. Extending beneath the domes are grand interiors that reach far into the depths of the moon – halls that once served a different purpose.

CALA DURIHA WASN'T born in luxury, but in sweat and grime. The station was founded during the Firstcome wave of colonization, as the moon was rich in minerals and metals. The first colonization of the mining moon ended abruptly, however. During the Portal Wars, the moon lost many trading partners and the colonists dwindled in numbers. The vast mine halls eventually stood empty and the mining machines ground to a halt, as the torrents of war swept across the three horizons.

The founding of Coriolis station led to the resurrection of Cala Duriha. The old mining moon took advantage of its close proximity to the hub that the entire Horizon came to revolve around. One man realized this fact early on, and took the opportunity to reinvent Cala Duriha as an alternative to Coriolis. That man was Eferat Doukas, commonly known as the Wizard.

Doukas invited corporations that didn't get a seat at the table of the Consortium. On Cala Duriha, corporations could also operate without scrutiny of the Council of Factions. Here, they could grow without having to pay dearly to have their voices heard. The old mining halls were renovated, and the beautiful domes were built on the moon's surface.

THE CORPORATIONS

The corporations are the backbone of Cala Duriha. With the moon's strategic location in the Third Horizon, they have built up immense capital that they haven't hesitated to make use

of. This is apparent in many ways, not least in from the station's vanity, flair and expensive spectacles.

The many corporations of Cala Duriha are a mix of different businesses from all corners of the Horizon. It is said that the reason they didn't get a seat at the board of the Consortium was that they were either too small or too shady for the Consortium's taste.

When the corporations were invited by Eferat Doukas, many of them viewed the proposal with caution. To establish themselves on the old mining moon was fraught with risks, despite the profitable location. But the Wizard's offer was enticing: if the corporations helped him deport the moon's few inhabitants, they would in return receive a location where they could work indiscriminately. And so, it came to be. The inhabitants were deported to the inhospitable and acidic planet Jina and a joint council, Hakümdar, was formed. The new Cala Duriha was founded.

Today, the station houses a dozen large corporations, such as Chena BioMedicurgy, Unsala Kyber, Tariq, and some forty smaller companies, among them Kalzar Auctioneer, Neshif Beautysculpt, Urduaar, and Zofhor. Usually only the headquarters of the corporations are located on the moon, while production is carried out at industrial sites located all over the Horizon. However, the most sensitive research is conducted in the old mining halls of Cala Duriha, now transformed into secret laboratories.

AZURES OF THE WHISPERER

The Azures form the outer defense of Cala Duriha. They are a collection of fighter pilots, bound by tradition to stay in a zone of their own outside the domes of Cala Duriha. Since their victory over a local fleet of corsairs, the Azures have adopted the strict codes of an order of the Icons. This was done on the initiative of the sole survivor of the great victory, Azahed Haataria. Haataria is now the matriarch of the Azures, proclaiming that all of the mercenary pilots in her fleet must maintain a strict code of honor dedicated to the Icon of the Whisperer, an incarnation of the Messenger. The order of warriors has been recognized by the preachers of Cala Duriha, but not elsewhere – especially not by the Church of the Icons, which denounces the Azures as a heretics worshipping a false Icon.

The Azures have a prominent standing on Cala Duriha due to their victory over the corsair fleet. They have received large monetary contributions since the event, contributions that have been invested and spent wisely. Their fighters and weapons are highly advanced, and their skills are comparable to those of the fighter pilots of the Zenithian Hegemony, though far fewer in number.

The Azures, like Hakümdar, have also been subject to criticism. The order, which is completely funded by the corporations on the luxury moon, costs huge amounts of birr, which has led to demands of increased insight into where the money goes, now that no tangible external threats to the moon seem to exist.

THE ALL-SEEING EYE

Under the shiny facade of pleasure, security is rigorous on Cala Durihia. The moon station has been called “The All-Seeing Eye” in the Bulletin, and it is probably the most surveilled place in the entire Horizon. Using tiny sensors hidden in the architecture, security is maintained in order to prevent espionage and other plots against Hakümdar.

Firearms are strictly forbidden on the station. The reason for this strict regulation is the vulnerability of the many domes and panoramic windows with a view to the cold dark space outside. Even the officers of the Aodhayana, the station's security organization, perform their duties without firearms. Instead, they undergo extensive training in various martial arts.

THE HOME OF GRANDEUR

“See Cala Duriha and then die.” Is a saying attributed to the poet Walid Rushd, said to have written it in a letter to his prince on Dabaran. Those words are also said to have caused his lifelong exile from the principedom.

The riches of the corporations have made the station flourish. What strikes visitors when they visit the station for the first time is the limitless grandeur of gilded details, beautiful bas reliefs, etched arabesques, fountains, fabulous architecture and a street view filled with verdant espaliers and beautiful calligraphy along the esplanades. Luxury seems never-ending.

Not all inhabitants get to enjoy this paradise however. To be allowed to enter the main halls of the station, a visitor is required to own an item of great value, such as a spaceship – otherwise they are directed to the smaller annexes. These annexes exist to accommodate fortune-seeking plebeians hoping to find work under the domes. Few reach their dreams.

The corporations haven't only brought capital and knowledge to the station, but also culture and art from all the corners of the Horizon. Import of luxury goods is the corporations' way to measure up to one another – prestige is a lethal weapon on Cala Duriha. Expensive and spectacular displays never end at the many theatres, art galleries and auditoriums on the moon. The Esplanade of a Thousand and One Delights is a famous location, known by all who have the slightest interest in art and culture. Lyricists and artists say that “once one of your works has been presented on the Esplanade, you have achieved eternal immortality.”

Not only the art connoisseurs have their dreams come true on the moon. Food and drink from systems all over the Horizon can also be found here. Here, you can find only the most exclusive goods: Antha herbs from Mira, frostwine from Algol, crawfish from Ordana, djinn grass from Dabaran. All these delicacies can be found in the many restaurants of the station, their panoramic windows facing the lethally beautiful Jina. Additionally, several restaurants lie adjacent to the mysterious Timur Abbas' Wondrous Garden, where the exotic wildlife entertain the guests.

The true treasures of Cala Duriha cannot be easily seen or tasted, however. The wealth of the station is accrued from the station's work in spearhead research, conducted in the securely protected laboratories deep below the station. Down in secret caverns, research and production of medicine, nanotechnology and biomechanics is carried out. Some claim that the products from Cala Durihia can compare to

faction technology. It is difficult to determine the truth of the matter, but one thing is certain – the technology of Cala Duriha is up for sale, though at a very high cost, whereas faction technology is not.

❁ ANTIQUARIANS OF LUXURY

Cala Duriha is also a hub for all kinds of collectors of antiquities. Free traders can be tasked by various auction houses to search the Horizon for unique water crystals or artifacts from extinct civilizations. These journeys are often costly, but as such they also give rise to prestige tales that can be used in the station's many academic disputes.

The prominent collectors of the station are shrouded in mystery. There are whispers that some have formed secret cabals around special items, such as sacred texts that speak of the inner essence of the Icons and artifacts of the Portal Builders. Some brimstone preachers claim that the Dark Between the Stars has penetrated Cala Duriha. These rumors are most likely gross exaggerations, but there is often a sliver of truth in any story.

❁ THE PURSUIT OF ETERNAL LIFE

Many corporations on Cala Duriha do research in life support systems, which have become a hallmark of the moon. People travel here to be “healed” by the latest technological marvels. The Asclepiads of Cala Duriha don't only possess great knowledge in medicine, but also in stem cell research and cybernetics. This has given the station a reputation for being able to grant people unnaturally long lives, if they can pay for it. This market has also benefited other corporations of Cala Duriha and contributed to the overall prosperity. Free traders have also picked up on these opportunities, and sometimes act as escorts for various wealthy individuals across the Horizon who want to prolong their lives for at least a few decades. The profitability has also caught the attention of corsairs and swindlers, who in one way or another try to capitalize on the wealthy people who travel to the moon.

The Church of the Icons has recently taken a stand against the prolonging of life. “One should be satisfied with the life one has been given by the Icons” or “cheating death is to cheat fate” are cryptic sentences often stated by the faction, but as usual the sentences are open to interpretation.

The corporations' unbridled hunt for prestige has also led to a research institute being formed in the main dome of the

station. The faculties of the institute can't match the ones on Coriolis in size, but the institute has several groundbreaking cross-scientific projects that both confound and astound the scientific community, not least the Foundation. Many professors from the faction have completely distanced themselves from the research conducted at the institute of Cala Duriha, but some have endorsed the research as a counterbalance to more conventional research.

❁ THE SCULPTORS

One controversial organization that has found residence on the luxury moon is Nagina's Biosculptors, or just “the Sculptors.” The Sculptors are a shady organization that attempts to find creation's perfect genetic code through the use of bionics, all according to the thesis of their dead seer, the philosopher Nagina. The search for the code continuously progresses in their laboratories, as well as in field studies. Few know how long the organization has existed, nor who Nagina really was. The Sculptors have operated in several locations in the Horizon, but they have almost exclusively been banished because of their radical research methods. On Cala Duriha, the organization appears to have found sanctuary, and under Chief Scientist Erzana Axum, a successful recreation of Nagina's perfect genetic line doesn't seem that distant.

ADVENTURERS ON CALA DURIHA

Free traders are always in great demand at Cala Duriha, even if the corporations would never admit it. The moon has made itself dependent on free traders, who to handle most of the logistics of import and export. It has proved to be advantageous for both parties. The corporations of Cala Duriha pay well to those who can keep their clandestine operations secret, and free traders are usually good at keeping quiet for the right amount of birr.

Uncomfortable ethical questions are not a concern for the moon's businesses, and so it will remain. Due to the station's disposition for exclusive wares, it has made itself reliant on luxury articles like ambergris, impatiens, henna, myrrh, and musk, as well as rare perfumes and soaps. Apart from ferrying such items to the moon, adventurers at Cala Duriha can be tasked with escorting privileged individuals, finding precious artifacts for rich collectors, or gathering information for shady corporations.





ARAM'S SECRET

The origins of the kalites are shrouded in mystery. Despite scientific efforts to shed light on the matter, much of the group's early history remains unknown. Preliminary data suggests that the group is very young, as no indications of their existence prior to the Portal Wars have been found. Should this turn out to be true, it would make the kalites the youngest of the Horizon's humanites, and as such, a case warranting further study.

FIELD REPORT, JINA - Hommar Lannah

INTRODUCTION

Aram's Secret is a short scenario designed to be played through over a couple of sessions. It takes place in and around the scenario location Aram's Ravine on Jina in the Kua system. If you as the GM feel like expanding the scenario into a mini campaign, additional plot hooks can be found at the end of the scenario.

THE PCS ARRIVE in the Ravine against their will after a ship malfunction (due to sabotage before they departed Cala Duriha) forces them to land in the abandoned spaceport nearby. Their first priority is simply finding spare parts to affect repairs, but they are soon roped into a dark chain of events that has been seething since the final, desperate days of the Portal Wars.

BACKGROUND

The true story of how the settlement known today as Aram's Ravine came to be founded is unknown to most of the Ravine's current residents - and spoken of by none. The settlement was founded by desperate survivors from the banned Nazareem's Sacrifice (page 189 of the *Coriolis* core rulebook). The faction was hunted down and almost entirely wiped out by the other First-come factions at the end of the Wars, and its headquarters in the Odacon system were destroyed. Scattered cells remained here and there, and some of the Ravine's modern inhabitants descend from survivors of those bloody purges. Aram himself, after whom the settlement is named, was a Nazareem agent.

A group of Nazareem traveling away from Odacon survived the attack on the faction thanks to their low rank. The group - an assistant Nazareem diplomat and his entourage - had bought incognito passage on various freighters, and were therefore spared. When they arrived in the Kua system, news reached them about the attack on their faction and Aram, the assistant, made a desperate, decisive move to try to save his people. The Nazareem group hijacked the nomad ship they were traveling on and charted a course for Jina. Secretly, Aram

had been assigned a revered relic that under no circumstances was to fall into enemy hands. Now, with the faction leadership dead, he saw no other option but to hide it and himself while waiting for new orders.

Today, Aram's descendants still live in the Ravine and stay true to their old vow - safeguarding the ancient Nazareem relic. They present themselves as ordinary folk, of course, and lead ordinary lives, worshipping the Dancer rather than its darker aspect, the Beast. The efforts of the curious Hommar Lannah to study the history of the Ravine by poking around in the salty mud places their mission in jeopardy however, and something must be done. Initially, the Nazareem descendants are afraid to blow their cover, and hesitate to move openly against Lannah. Although few in the Ravine are aware of their hidden agenda, and even fewer would give half a peach for Lannah's "research", a sudden disappearance would inevitably bring detectives with questions to the settlement. Another issue is the insistent rumors about hidden treasure underneath the temple in the Ravine that risk stirring up an outbreak of gold fever among the settlement's less fortunate inhabitants. If worse comes to worst, and someone stumbles upon the buried relics, their apocryphal religious nature would surely fan the flames of the local preacher's zealous wrath.

Plans are eventually put in motion to arrange an "accident" for Hommar Lannah, but things quickly become complicated. Lannah offends the local Mine Lord, Lhorac Ignazu, and is provided an armed escort by Shana the Salt Widow - a wealthy rival of Ignazu's. Guess who Shana hires to be Lannah's new bodyguards?

OVERVIEW

The PCs are forced to land in the abandoned spaceport to make repairs (location C on the map of the Ravine). They soon realize that they need an advanced, rare component to be able to take off again. Their predicament is soon known by all in the Ravine, and they are invited to a meeting with Shana the Salt Widow. She has a proposition for them: if they keep a scientist of hers safe while he finishes an excavation nearby, she will arrange for their ship to be repaired free of charge. The scientist is a man named Hommar Lannah who is close to making a break-through in his studies of the local humanite population, the kalites. Shortly after their meeting with Shana, the PCs are offered a counter-proposal by the Salt Widow's nemesis, Lhorac Ignazu. Who they choose to help will affect the outcome of the scenario. Even more trouble is just around the corner, however: the Ravine's Nazareem try to stage an "accident" for the PCs to scare them off, and, failing that, resort to a direct attempt on their lives. The PCs must fight for their lives, but may receive unexpected help from Bhofass, a draconite. Eventually, Hommar makes his break-through and discovers a blasphemous temple underneath the settlement. The trail leads from the temple to Nohak, the cantina proprietor, and across the plateau to the kalite mesa and Aram's tomb for a final showdown.

CHARACTERS IN THE SCENARIO

Several of the characters from the Aram's Ravine scenario location are featured in this scenario. They are described below the scenes in which they are introduced. Two characters play larger roles however, and may feature more heavily throughout the scenario. These two are described in the next section, after which follows a list of the other characters.

⚙️ BHOFASS THE DRACONITE

Bhofass is a mid-level draconite, rising quickly through the ranks thanks to a combination of social skills and blood lust. He has been sent on a hunt for surviving Nazareem agents by his mentor, Ngozi Ohale, and has followed the trail to the Ravine. Bhofass has taken a job with the Salt Widow to be able to calmly plan his next move, and because even draconite warriors need to eat. His job kept getting in the way of the mission, and he found himself developing feelings for the bitter, vengeful widow, much to his own surprise. The trail he had been following grew cold, but he chose not to give up. When Hommar Lannah's

REPUTATION

The Reputation scores listed in the NPCs section below denote the NPCs' status in the Ravine. Should the PCs encounter them elsewhere in the Horizon, their Reputation scores may be different.

NOTES FOR THE GM

Read about the Ravine on page 6 before playing the scenario. Familiarize yourself with the area and the characters, and read through the scenario at least once. The scenario can easily be turned into a mini campaign, and the chapter about Cala Duriha can help you create a prologue before placing the PCs in the Ravine. The plot hooks on pages 4–5 can be used if the PCs wish to explore more of the area's intrigues than just the main story.



work sparked local resistance, Bhofass correctly guessed that this meant that the researcher was onto something, and urged his employer to support the scientist's efforts. He realized that he might need backup, and arranged to sabotage the ship of a competent-looking group of spacefarers - the PCs - on Cala Duriha to force them down in the Ravine. Bhofass will be watching from the shadows throughout the scenario. Portray him as a mysterious figure with a secret agenda - quite possibly a nefarious one.

If you believe that your group wouldn't like a mysterious figure manipulating them from the shadows, you could play down Bhofass' importance, and have him be just the Salt Widow's devoted butler, instead of a fearsome draconite warrior.

BHOFASS, DRACONITE AND RIGHT HAND MAN TO THE SALT WIDOW

Bhofass is the Salt Widow's voice and avatar in the community. He has been seen handling violent situations on several occasions, which has sparked rumors about what he might have been up to prior to his arrival in the Ravine. He keeps his emotions well hidden, but his mistress must by now have sensed what the more keen-eyed among the locals have been whispering about for some time - that Bhofass is in love with his employer.

CHARACTERISTICS: Straightens his tunic. Chooses his words carefully. Greets people he knows with a subtle nod.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 5, WITS 4, EMPATHY 2

HIT POINTS: 11

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 4

SKILLS: Observation 4, Melee Combat 4, Ranged Combat 4, Force 3, Technology 3, Infiltration 2, Survival 2

TALENTS: Intimidating, Tough

ARMOR: Protective clothing (3)

WEAPONS: Accelerator pistol, Mercurium sword

GEAR: Personal communicator (set to reach the Salt Widow), wrist-mounted proximity sensor

- ◆ In a hidden compartment underneath his bed in Shana's house, Bhofass also keeps his mission gear: Accelerator rifle, meson pistol, satchel charge, chameleon suit, communicator (orbit), acid-resistant pressure tent, survival mask, 30 survival rations, tag with 2,000 birr.

NOHAK, KEEPER OF THE BLOOD

The fate of Aram is a well-kept secret on Jina, almost exclusively known by his descendents. Nohak the cantina proprietor is the current Keeper, the highest local guardian of the wisdom of the Beast. The cult is limited to Nohak's immediate family, and has over time morphed into something quite different than its original form. Blood purity has become more and more important, and is regarded as a sign of piety. The original foundation of the Nazareem's Sacrifice, the "divine experience", is still at the heart of the cult's practices, however - taking the form of ecstatic orgies, sometimes featuring cannibalism.

Sacrifices for the rituals are delivered by the kalites - mostly careless prospectors and lonely wanderers. The kalites are expected to serve the cult in return for help and protection. The cult's numbers are dwindling due to too few births within the family, and Nohak has begun recruiting outside of the blood, among the miners and prospectors, but business is slow. Many in the cult feel that recruiting outside of the holy boundaries of the blood is a reckless move.



NOHAK, CANTINA PROPRIETOR

Nohak was born and raised in the cantina, the son of the original Nohak, and so intimately linked to the establishment that no one really remembers if he ever was given another name. In a place full of xenophobia and broken dreams, Nohak rises above the rest, a shining example of tolerance and friendliness. "When Nohak loses his temper" is a saying in the Ravine, indicating an event that will likely never happen.

CHARACTERISTICS: Squints and rubs his bald head. Puts his arm around the person he talks to.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 3, WITS 3, EMPATHY 4

HIT POINTS: 5

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 5

SKILLS: Manipulation 5, Infiltration 3, Observation 3

TALENTS: A nose for birr

ARMOR: -

WEAPONS: None

GEAR: Whatever you need - at least that's what he claims.

CHARACTERS IN THE RAVINE

- ◆ **NINIACK:** Tech djinn eager to help. The Salt Widow's niece. See page 27.
- ◆ **SALT WIDOW:** Owner of the salt mine, hell bent on vengeance. See page 14.
- ◆ **THE RED HAND:** Local gang of thugs, mostly running protection rackets and extortion. Allied with the Mine Lord. See pages 14 and 29.
- ◆ **LHORAC IGNAZU:** Power-hungry, self-appointed local Mine Lord. See page 14.
- ◆ **HOMMAR LANNAH:** Eccentric professor researching the origins of the kalites. See page 31.
- ◆ **THE KALITES:** Acid-resistant, xenophobic humanites living on the Lamka plateau. See page 33.
- ◆ **EKBIAN:** Witch doctor with much knowledge about the Ravine's history. See page 39.

EMERGENCY LANDING

ACT 1

The PCs are forced to land on the Icon-forsaken planet of Jina where they are immediately thrust into a snakepit of local intrigue. To be able to leave the planet, they must ally themselves with one of the local Akbars.

THE PCS MUST quickly find their bearings and figure out what to do to find the spare parts they need. They are forced to help a local bigshot, and soon find that navigating these colonial backwaters is like balancing on a razor. Hommar Lannah is entrusted into their care, but suffers an “accident”, indicating that someone wishes him dead.

OVERVIEW

The scenario begins with smoke and fire onboard the PCs’ ship, and they can only barely catch their breath before the next crisis arrives.

- ◆ **Starting Scene:** Emergency Landing: The PC are forced to land on Jina and realize that a vital system onboard is fried. They encounter Niniack the tech djinn.
- ◆ **Opposing Offers:** The PCs are offered the spare parts they need if they help the Salt Widow protect a controversial scientist in the Ravine.

◆ **Exploring the Ravine:** The PCs get their first glimpse of the tensions below the settlement’s calm surface.

◆ **The Reluctant Client:** Hommar Lannah wishes to be left alone to work, which puts the PC in a tricky situation. An attempt on Lannah’s life is being orchestrated in the shadows.

IMPORTANT FACTS

When the first act ends, both the Mine Lord and the Nazareem have struck against the unfortunate scientist. In the ensuing chaos, something unexpected is revealed – a secret temple is hidden underneath the Ravine.

DARKNESS POINTS

At the beginning of the scenario, the GM receives DP equal to the number of players. Use them wisely.

STARTING SCENE: EMERGENCY LANDING

A loud bang, followed by violent vibrations. Lights flash and the high pitched wails of the collision alarm fill the bridge. You plummet through the greenish yellow atmosphere of Jina, trapped in a spin. The thrusters are strained to the max in an attempt to give you back control of the ship. A heavy rain begins to hammer at the cockpit window. The hull groans in an unnerving way, but you finally manage to even out your descent and stop the spinning. The worst seems to be behind you and

the alarms subside. Your racing hearts slow down, and you send a prayer to the Traveler in the quiet darkness of the bridge, interrupted only by the intensifying barrage of rain against the windows. You made it – but the damage report shows that your ship has seen better days.

THE SITUATION

Shortly after departing the Cala Durina luxury resort moon, the ship begins to act up. There

is no time to identify the faulty system, and the PCs are forced to make an emergency landing on Jina. The scenario begins just as they touch ground, unless you want them to sweat a little and have them play the dramatic tumble through the atmosphere.

IMPORTANT FACTS

The PCs examine their ship and the surroundings. They encounter Niniack the tech djinn just as she is about to harvest some fiber optics from their ship - perfectly "legitimate salvage" if you ask her. A **TECHNOLOGY** +1 test to figure out what is wrong with their ship can tell them the following:

- ◆ **Failure:** They fail to find the malfunction and need help to affect repairs. May try again with help, for example from Niniack.
- ◆ **Limited success:** The breakdown appears to be located in the energy distributor, but exactly which component that needs replacing is unclear. Replacing all the components would fix the problem for sure, but will be expensive. A more careful examination to identify the specific component requires a fresh pair of eyes. May try again with help, for example from Niniack.
- ◆ **Critical success:** They find the broken component and notice cleverly hidden evidence of tampering - this was no accident, it was sabotage!.

THE SPACE PORT

The space port is described on page 6.

NPCS

The starting scene features only Niniack.

NINIACK, TECH DJINN

Niniack is the niece of Shana the Salt Widow, and is employed at Lomar's workshop. She is by far the most skilled mechanic in the Ravine, and has been offered several different jobs by the local Akbars. Her main income comes from her job as a loader driver for the Agency, however. When Lomar eventually leaves to be with the Icons, she has to make a tough decision between either running the independent workshop by herself, or taking one of the Ravine Akbars up on their offer. The shortage of

ordinary and advanced tech in the Ravine makes Niniack very curious whenever a new ship arrives. Her engineering skills are flawless.

CHARACTERISTICS: Pushes her cap back on her head but it keeps sliding back down. Puts her hands on her hips and contemplates the situation. Hums kabbah songs to herself.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 2, WITS 5, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 4

MIND POINTS: 8

REPUTATION: 2

SKILLS: Technology 4, Observation 2, Survival 2

TALENT: Gear head

ARMOR: None

WEAPONS: None

GEAR: Protective mask, cutting torch, ordinary tools

EVENTS

As soon as the PCs disembark from their ship, Niniack calls out to them from nearby. She steps out from behind a cliff with her hands up. She approaches them in a friendly manner. She carries a bundle of fiber optics on her back, and wears a tool belt around her waist. She can assist them with identifying the faulty component on their ship (may test **TECHNOLOGY** again, +1 for Niniack's assistance). Alternatively, the PCs can let Niniack do her thing alone, but letting a stranger onboard to rummage through one's engine room unsupervised is unusual.

If the PCs find the broken component, Niniack says she has a spare one at her workshop. It is unstable however, and she needs a couple of days to fix it. The price for the component is high, however - Niniack has no interest in birr, instead asking the PCs to help out her aunt Shana in the nearby settlement of Aram's Ravine. Niniack can answer most questions about the Ravine, but warns them about trusting either the Mine Lord or the colonial agent. If the PCs accept her offer, she accompanies them to the Ravine and leads the way to Shana's house.

OPPOSING OFFERS

After a brief conversation with her niece, Shana receives the PCs in her office, with Bhofass standing guard in the background. Shana nods as the PCs recount how they ended up here while the towering bodyguard serves them chai or kawah. After hearing their story, Shana clears her throat and says she has a business proposal.

THE SITUATION

The Salt Widow has taken on a protégé - Hommar Lannah - who needs protection. He is a scientist that has managed to stir up emotions in the Ravine by conducting archaeological work at the local cemetery. Shana can vouch for Hommar Lannah's righteousness, but not everyone seems to agree. His work is important from a historical point of view, and Lannah claims to be nearing a breakthrough in the question of the origins of the local Kalite population. As the PCs seem to be reliable folk, Shana suggests that they keep an eye on

Lannah while he wraps up the final week of his research in return for her arranging to have their ship repaired. Discretion in the matter is of utmost importance - there is no need to further upset the local traditionalists. Shana can answer most questions about the situation and the Ravine, but seems biased in her views of the Mine Lord and colonial agent Boro (see page 13). She describes the way to Lannah's dig site. On their way from the meeting, the PCs run into Ibra, Dhorak and Jubal, three of Lhorac Ignazu's thugs.

LOCATIONS

The Salt Widow's residence is described on page 12. The Mine Lord's house is described on page 10.

NPCS

Shana and Lhorac are described on pages 14. Bhofass is described on page 15.

ALTERNATE EMPLOYER

If the PCs accept the Mine Lord's proposal, they are instructed to help arrange an accident for Hommar Lannah. Lhorac suggests a landslide at the dig site (see below). In this case, the scientist's mysterious protector (Bhofass) will turn on the PCs rather than protecting them against the Nazareem. Skip the meeting with Lannah and have Bhofass open fire on them as they are about to trigger the collapse. After that, the Nazareem come sneaking through the shadows to deal with any survivors, same as if the PCs stayed true to Shana. Should the PCs survive all this, the rest of the scenario can be played out as is, with a couple of changes. Lhorac will want to investigate the secrets inside Aram's tomb, and refuses to hold up his end of the bargain until the PCs do so for him. If Bhofass survives, he will stalk the PCs across the Lamka and into the tomb, but his primary goal will be to destroy the alcheme.



JUBAL, IBRA AND DHORAK, RED HAND THUGS

Three former miners with an aptitude for the two main components of a successful protection scheme - subtle threats and carefully controlled violence. They follow the orders of gang leader Barhan and the Mine Lord. Dhorak is usually the one who brings the hurt to those who deserve it, as he seems to take pleasure from inflicting pain on others. Like the rest of the gang, the trio dye their left hands henna red, and often leave bloody palm prints on their victims or their belongings. If they run into unexpected resistance, they retreat under a barrage of curses to fetch explosives (double satchel charges) and prepare an ambush for later.

APPEARANCE: Jubal is short and heavy with a lazy eye, and Ibra is his complete opposite - tall, lanky, and handsome. A mining accident has put a long scar on her left cheek, like a crooked smile. Dhorak is an unimposing, shy man with awkward manners.

CHARACTERISTICS: Chews arrash. Watches newcomers intensely under arrogant smiles.

ATTRIBUTES:**STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 3, WITS 2, EMPATHY 2****HIT POINTS:** 7**MIND POINTS:** 4**REPUTATION:** 2**SKILLS:** Force 4, Melee Combat 3, Ranged Combat 2, Observation 1**ARMOR:** None**WEAPONS:** Sawed-off long rifle, knife**GEAR:** Protective mask, arrash**EVENTS**

The events for the scene are described below.

❁ BHOFASS' FEIGNED DISINTEREST

Bhofass remains in the background during the PCs' meeting with Shana, seemingly not paying attention, but an alert PC (**OBSERVATION**) can catch him observing them intensely when he thinks no one is watching.

❁ THE COUNTER OFFER

After leaving Shana's house, the PCs encounter three of Lhorac Ignazu's thugs. The most talkative of the three, Ibra, invites them to an "audience with Mine Lord Lhorac the White". Dhorak and Jubal stay a few steps away, ready to draw their weapons, making it clear that the invitation is more of an order than an offer. Should the PCs still choose to decline, the thugs try to threaten them to come along. The PCs should have no problems beating them in an opposed **MANIPULATION** test, however, after which the thugs back off. Ibra bows and says, sullenly: "The White Knight remembers".

Failing the **MANIPULATION** test results in the thugs drawing their weapons and forcing the PCs to come along at gunpoint, after roughing them up a bit if they try to resist - the Red Hand trio are hardened criminals whose orders didn't specify in what condition to deliver the invitees. If the PCs accept the invitation (with or without putting up a fight), they are taken to the Mine Lord's villa. After waiting for a long time, they are finally let in to see Lhorac, who greets them from a divan where he reclines looking like a marble statue that has fallen over in his full suit of alabaster white armor. Despite being indoors, Lhorac keeps his white mask on at all times and wears a heavy full-length cape. The splendor of the "throne room" surprises the PCs after what they have seen of the Ravine so far, and it is by far the most lavish room in Lhorac's house. The three thugs position themselves to the left, right, and behind the PCs.

Lhorac appears bored and talks about himself using the royal "we". He claims to know all about the "swamp widow's" mission, and wishes to make the PCs a counter offer: play along and pretend to guard Hommar Lannah, but look the other way when that which inevitably must happen, happens. The scientist has a little "accident" coming up, since "we" aren't too fond of his poking around in a sacred burial site - the long since dead miners there deserve to rest in peace. When speaking of the sacred ground, one of the thugs mutters "By the Lady, most merciful" and the others nod in respectful silence. Lhorac draws the Sign of the Lady in the air with his left hand and continues. He promises to get them the spare parts they need for their ship and says that the "accident" will happen very soon - it shouldn't be long before they are far away from the Ravine. PCs with a knack for interpreting body language may test **MANIPULATION** to spot that Lhorac appears to draw the Sign of the Lady almost ironically, as if putting up a pious front for his goons rather than actually caring.



EXPLORING THE RAVINE

The PCs might wish to acquaint themselves a little bit with the Ravine at some point during the scenario, but the meeting with Lhorac is most likely what piques their interest.

THE SITUATION

The details of the PCs' exploration of the Ravine aren't important. If you feel like it, have them play a short montage of cantinas, street scenes, and meetings with important citizens, but a general description of what they find out could do just as well. The information below is divided into general facts about the Ravine and specific details about the Hommar Lannah situation. Use the section below together with the section about the Ravine on page 6 to describe the settlement. Keep in mind that most inhabitants here are suspicious toward newcomers, and even key figures in the community may need **MANIPULATION** checks and bribes to loosen up.

IMPORTANT FACTS

Test **MANIPULATION** to determine how much information the PCs are able to find. Depending on what questions they ask, they will find out different things.

- ◆ **Failure: (General info)** The settlement teems with life and activity, but most of it is unintelligible to an outsider. There appears to be three important local Akbars: the colonial agent, the Mine Lord, and Salt Widow.

(The Lannah situation) The main reason for people's adverse views on Lannah and his dig seems to be that he is disturbing the local burial site.

- ◆ **Limited success: (General info)** The three Akbars have allies - the Salt Widow is allied with the militia, and both the Mine Lord and the colonial agent are in league with the Red Hand. This appears strange, as the Mine Lord and agent Boro don't seem to be friends.

(The Lannah situation) The Salt Widow has sponsored the dig site. She blames the Mine Lord for the death of her husband, and has made a point of being Lhorac's opposite in all things - a position he shares wholeheartedly.

- ◆ **Critical success: (General info)** The population are tired of the power struggle between the Akbars and the militia's inability to keep the peace. More and more flock to preacher Aravak Poho, a man with a good heart but a somewhat zealous rhetoric. His latest attack has been directed at the "courtesanry" at Nohak's, and the bath house. Religion is a relatively new ingredient in the conflicts of the Ravine, introduced through the harsh judgement passed by the preacher on witch doctor Ekbian and the Mine Lord's subsequent support of Poho's cries for a moral cleansing of the settlement.

(The Lannah situation) Preacher Poho has spoken out against Lannah's dig, defending the Lady of Tears' supreme right to the final resting places of the deceased. Among the older inhabitants, however, a deeper fear stirs - a memory of something best left untouched. No one seems to be willing to speak about it, but an old proverb has made its way back into people's vocabulary: "The wise take care not to wake a sleeping lamka".

THE RELUCTANT CLIENT

The PCs find the scientist down in the ravine (location 11 on the map), busy examining a ledge about half way down. He is sorting through a pile of pebbles, enthralled by his work, and only notices the PCs when they begin to speak.

THE SITUATION

Hommar is startled at the arrival of the PCs, but quickly comes around and gets excited over their presence - have they come to hear about his fascinating discoveries? No? His enthusiasm wanes when they explain why they have come, as he can't see why he would need a security detail. He can hardly decline, however, as Shana pays for a substantial part of his research, but he insists that they stay out of his way, preferably back at the settlement (effectively making protecting him impossible).

IMPORTANT FACTS

To make the scientist tolerate closer involvement from the PCs, they must pass a **MANIPULATION** test. If they fail the test but persist in staying close to their client, he will complain to Shana who in turn orders the PCs to stay further back. If they accepted the Mine Lord's offer, they must start by getting close to Lommar to be able to stage the accident.



THE LEDGE

See the map on page 35.

NPCS

The NPCs featured in the scene are described below.

HOMMAR LANNAH, FREELANCE SCIENTIST

Hommar Lannah is an eccentric scientist without funding or backup, dreaming of making his big discovery in the Jinan dirt. He believes that he has found a previously undiscovered humanite variant in the acid-resistant Kalite tribes living on the Lamka. According to Hommar, the Kalites are very new to Jina, likely imported from another world. Hommar plans to be the first in his field to map the Kalites' bio culture to try to find their home world. Without funding, proper gear, or popular support, however, proving his theory on such a hostile world as Jina will be hard.

APPEARANCE: Unkempt, bushy hair and beard. A face marked by the harsh climate.

CHARACTERISTICS: Deep in thought. Gestures wildly and becomes very agitated when speaking about the excavation. Kind and friendly toward people who respect his work.

BHOFASS THE DRACONITE

Bhofass is hiding on the other side of the ravine and will take out any Nazareem threatening the scientist. Whether or not the PCs survive the fight is of no consequence to him. Spotting Bhofass requires actively testing **OBSERVATION** at -3. After he has begun firing his silenced accelerator rifle, the difficulty drops to -2.

"ASHRA"

Iria and Khorak have met their employer, a person called Ashra, only once, in a shed behind Nohak's cantina. Only capturing either of the two and winning an opposed **MANIPULATION** test will reveal to the PCs this information. They have been instructed to meet Ashra there again, after completing their mission.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 3, WITS 5, EMPATHY 2

HIT POINTS: 5

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 2

SKILLS: Culture 4, Science 4, Manipulation 1
mbat 2, Observation 1

ARMOR: None

WEAPONS: None

GEAR: Protective mask, ordinary tools, assorted incredibly interesting pieces of evidence that he is more than eager to show anyone who asks.

IRIA AND KHORAK. CULT NEOPHYTES

The two neophytes entrusted with arranging the accident for Hommar have been recruited from the miner community for their aggressive natures. Nohak views the mission as an initiation test to see if Iria and Khorak have what it takes. The duo have no idea what the Nazareem really are, or that they are considered lowly grunts by Nohak (see the Ashra box). All they know is that ecstatic, ritualistic orgies take place in the caves underneath the Ravine, and that they would do almost anything to be invited there again. All of the participants wore masks and were escorted to the cave wearing blindfolds, but the experience was unlike anything they had every felt: "...Iconic pleasure, as if the Dancer was actually in the room with us. Even the pain was fantastic".

Iria and Khorak are impulsive and creative in combat, but make sure to have each other's backs. If either of them should fall, the other will enter a blind rage and attack the killer with the kind of fervor only bullets can stop. If they are both injured, however, they will lose heart and try to retreat.

APPEARANCE: Shawls around their faces and wearing heavy miner coveralls. Heavily built.

CHARACTERISTICS: Darting from cover to cover. Speaking as little as possible.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 3, WITS 2, EMPATHY 2

HIT POINTS: 7

MIND POINTS: 4

REPUTATION: 1**SKILLS:** Force 4, Melee Combat 3, Infiltration 2, Ranged Combat 1**ARMOR:** None**WEAPONS:** Power sledge, sawed-off long rifle**GEAR:** Primitive protective mask**KALITES, JINA'S HUMANITE POPULATION**

A small tribe of Kalites live in the caves underneath the Ravine. Tradition dictates that they serve Aram's descendents, and they have therefore been ordered to help Iria and Khorak with their mission. They are proud and will fight to the death. If the PCs try to capture one of them, she will immediately try to throw herself off the side of the cliff. Communicating with the Kalites requires a successful **CULTURE** test. See page 12 for more information.

APPEARANCE: Hairless. Pale, almost yellow skin.**CHARACTERISTICS:** Careful and alert.**ATTRIBUTES:****STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 3, WITS 2, EMPATHY 2****HIT POINTS:** 6**MIND POINTS:** 4**REPUTATION:** 0**SKILLS:** Melee Combat 3, Observation 3, Ranged Combat 3, Survival 3, Force 2, Infiltration 2**TALENTS:** Resistant**ARMOR:** None**WEAPONS:** Spear-thrower, mace**GEAR:** None**EVENTS**

The PCs are expected to protect Lannah from harm, both in the form of "accidents" – such as the landslide rigged by the Mine Lord's henchmen – and outright attacks from the Nazareem, who have nothing to do with the Mine Lord, despite how things may look. Bhofass is hiding in a cave beneath the doctor's office (see page 10) on the opposite side of the ravine. He will make sure Lannah survives the Nazareem attack, but cares little for the

PCs. If any of the Nazareem make it past the PCs, have Bhofass finish them off – as the PCs are left to fend for themselves, this will probably not feel like too much of a *deus ex machina* for the players. The PCs' first priority should be to identify the risk posed by the potential overhang collapse and landslide, and then to escort Lannah to safety (anywhere below the dotted line on the map is considered safe ground, see page 35).

✿ IMPENDING DOOM

If the PCs have successfully convinced Lannah to allow them to stay close to him, they get to test **OBSERVATION** (or **SCIENCE**, if they examined the dig site beforehand) at +1 to spot the imminent collapse.

- ◆ **Failure:** The overhang collapses and Lannah is badly injured (one critical injury). The landslide exposes the temple underneath, but the PCs are left without Lannah's help to understand what they have found until he recovers. The Nazareem sneak up on the PCs in the midst of the confusion, making them harder to spot (**OBSERVATION** -2).
- ◆ **Limited success:** The PCs notice what is about to happen just in time to drag the scientist to safety. The chaos makes it harder to spot the arrival of the Nazareem (**OBSERVATION** -1).
- ◆ **Critical success:** The PCs notice the danger in good time and move Lannah to safe ground. The overhang collapses just as the Nazareem arrive, but the PCs are on high alert and get no penalties to their **OBSERVATION** test to spot the attackers.

✿ THE NAZAREEM DEATH PATROL

The hitmen – four Kalites plus Iria and Khorak – attempt to take the PCs by surprise. Iria and Khorak arrive on the path from the settlement, and the Kalites by climbing up from the lower ravine. A PC standing guard may test **OBSERVATION** to spot the attackers, and warn her comrades if she passes her test, giving them more time to prepare. If she fails the test, she might be ambushed by all six attackers. Bhofass will wait to see if any of the attackers make it past the PCs, in which case he takes them out with carefully placed shots. If the PCs are competent warriors, feel free to add more attackers. The Nazareem perform a sneak attack (page 85 of the *Coriolis* core rulebook) if they win an opposed **OBSERVATION** test against the PCs (modified by the test result above, and by whether or not the PCs have sensor gear).

THE CULT OF THE DANCER

ACT 2

After saving Lannah from the landslide and fending off the attackers, the PCs are free to explore the hidden temple revealed by the collapse. Its dark chambers hold secrets that will lead them to the depths of the Ravine.

ACT 2 INTRODUCES the hidden temple, from where tracks lead the PCs to a shed behind the cantina. Will they be able to unravel the mystery behind the blasphemous temple?

OVERVIEW

The most important clue found in the temple is an ancient cipher that could lead the PCs to the conclusion of the scenario, Aram's tomb. The only inhabitant old enough to remember the establishing of the temple is Ekbian the witch doctor, from whom the PCs can learn more about the Ravine's dark history, and about their coming battle with the malignant forces that fester here.

- ◆ **The Temple of the Dancer:** The PCs investigate the temple and realize that it is still in use! They find a

strange cipher that leads them toward Aram's tomb.

- ◆ **The Face of Ashra:** The PCs learn the true identity of the leader of the cult.
- ◆ **Ekbian's Dance:** Ekbian the witch doctor is the only one who can help them learn the truth about the temple and its dark congregation.

IMPORTANT FACTS

At the end of Act II, the PCs should have figured out that there is another Nazareem temple across the Lamka, hiding a secret that threatens the existence of the entire settlement.

DARKNESS POINTS

The GM gets another 2 DP to his pool at the beginning of Act 2.

THE TEMPLE OF THE DANCER

When the dust settles, the PCs notice a circular chamber laid bare by the collapse. The chamber is a natural cave converted into a temple by the Nazareem.

THE SITUATION

The temple underneath the Ravine is a sister temple to Aram's tomb on the other side of the Lamka. Aside from serving as a secret place for ritualistic orgies, the temple also contains a mosaic cipher in the form of a shah board describing the way to the second temple. Only Nohak can read the cipher, but not even he has ever visited the tomb. A couple of other cult members know that the shah game contains "Aram's secret," but they don't know exactly what that means, or how to interpret the mosaic.

IMPORTANT FACTS

Searching the temple reveals four interesting things to the PCs:

1. The Ritual Dagger
2. The Mosaic Shah Cipher
3. The Ossuary
4. The Way to the Settlement

THE TEMPLE

The natural cave has been remodeled to look like a chapel, but without any Icon statues or depictions. The stone walls have been polished clear as glass, reflecting the light from your globes and torches to create strange shadows darting around the room. On a round carpet in the middle sits a couple of bowls and a dagger,

TEMPLE OF NAZAREEM

1. Desera River
2. Path to Aram's Ravine
3. Ledge
4. Cave opening that appears after the rockslide. Before this, Hommar Lannah's dig is located here.
5. Ritual Chamber
6. Stairway to Nohak's Cantina
7. Ritual Tools
8. Shah Board
9. Ossuary

1x1 meters



DEUS EX?

If the PCs fail to interpret the shah cipher, they must instead catch Nohak and force him to tell them the truth. If this also fails, the time has come for an important choice on the GM's part - will an NPC help the PCs solve the puzzle? Lannah could, for example, come to help them, or it could be someone else suddenly possessing a sharp mind. If not, the scenario ends with the exposing of the temple and, possibly, with the capture of Nohak. In this case, Aram's secret remains safe for the time being - until the doomsday clock in the tomb strikes the final hour and the gnawing alcheme rebirths Aram once again...

DECIPHERING THE SHAH GAME

To solve the puzzle, the PCs must draw two lines across the board - one through the red pieces and one through the green - and extend them across the floor until they intersect. The lines cross over a narrow ravine in the Kalite mesa on the other side of the Lamka, marking the location of Aram's tomb. See player handout #1 in the center of the booklet.

and you see a podium further back with what looks like a shah board on top. A large drapery covers much of the wall opposite a narrow passage containing ascending stairs.

THE RITUAL DAGGER

The carpet covering the mosaic floor is covered in soot and dark stains. Empty stone goblets and bowls are arranged around its edges, together with a curved dagger covered in strange engravings. The stoneware and the carpet look rather ordinary, but the dagger is fine work and exquisitely carved. The carpet is stiff and darkened, with what even to a novice strongly resembles caked blood. The dagger can be examined in detail by testing **CULTURE**.

- ◆ **Failure:** The dagger looks like an ordinary butcher's knife, but the engravings are strange and unintelligible. The PCs must ask Lannah or some other scholar for help to interpret them.
- ◆ **Limited Success:** The engravings are archaic but you make out enough to understand that they are a prayer for mercy in an ancient Miri dialect associated with similar findings from the first wave of colonization in the Odacon system.
- ◆ **Critical Success:** The word used for mercy on the blade of the dagger, "Ashra", is also a name. In an old Odacon myth, Ashra was a heroine who saved her people by hiding them from the coming war underneath the eternal ice with the help of the Dancer.

THE MOSAIC SHAH CIPHER

The PCs should have no problem spotting the decorated floor underneath the rubble and the carpet. They can borrow brooms from Lannah and sweep the floor clean to reveal a beautiful mosaic, depicting what looks like the Ravine and its surroundings seen from above. The Lamka and the mesa beyond it are clearly visible, along with the Desera river and Lake Mokbah. The space port is not on the map, and Aram's Ravine is represented by the pedestal holding the shah board, abandoned mid-game. The pieces and the board are cut from the same rock, thus making it impossible to move them or actually play the game.

Several skills can be used to extract clues from the shah board:

- ◆ **SCIENCE (Limited Success):** The ravines look too small, as if the depiction is very old, from before the Desera had carved its way as deep as it runs today. The exact age is difficult to tell, but given the average rate of erosion in the area, it is no younger than fifty years, but not likely older than a hundred.

(Critical Success) The four discolored pieces on the board clearly mark something, but their positions don't remind you of any famous ciphers or codes. Could they be landmarks for something outside of the edges of the board?

- ◆ **CULTURE:** The game pieces are strangely colored. In some older Odacon versions, a couple of the otherwise black ashuras are dyed red, and a couple of the white devas are made green, but usually only the corner pieces. The red and green pieces here seem out of place.

⚙️ THE OSSUARY

The drapery on the wall hides an ossuary, which used to

be quite common in chapels in the old days. **MEDICURGY** can help the PCs come to some unnerving conclusions - the bones are from humans with a wide age span, most of them have dagger marks across their cervical vertebrae (as if their throats were slit), and some of the bones have teeth marks on them - human teeth marks!

⚙️ THE PATH TO THE SETTLEMENT

A narrow staircase carved directly from the rock leads to a shed behind Nohak's cantina. The shed would be a good place to set a trap for the cultists, see The Face of Ashra below.

THE FACE OF ASHRA

The PCs reach the shed behind Nohak's by climbing the stairs from the ritual chamber.

THE SITUATION

The PCs will most likely want to investigate the stairs leading up from the temple. If they managed to interrogate the neophytes Iria and Khorak, they will know that the mysterious "Ashra" is supposed to meet the assassins there later tonight. Clever PCs will exploit this opportunity to trap and question Ashra.

IMPORTANT FACTS

The PCs might be able to trap and capture Nohak, unless the news of the exposed temple make it back to the Ravine first. Unless the PCs order Lannah not to tell anyone about what has happened, he will spread the news of his marvellous find as far and wide as possible. If the cult are made aware that their temple has been found, no one shows up for the meeting in the shed.

NOHAK'S CANTINA

The cantina is described on page 10 in the Aram's Ravine section.

NPCS

Nohak is described on page 24.

EVENTS

A possible chain of events is described below.

⚙️ TRAPPING ASHRA

To prepare an ambush for Ashra, the PCs must win an opposed **INFILTRATION** vs **OBSERVATION** test against Nohak.

- ◆ **Failure:** The PCs hide and wait in vain. A few people pass by outside, on their way to or home from work.
- ◆ **Limited success:** A man approaches the shed, only to turn around and head back toward the back door of the cantina. The PCs can spring their trap and catch him if they are quick. The man is Nohak and he denies everything.
- ◆ **Critical success:** A man approaches the shed, unlocks the door and goes inside. It is Nohak. When the PCs leap out from the shadows, he doesn't run, instead pretending to search for bar supplies in a cabinet.

⚙️ INTERROGATING NOHAK

MANIPULATION is required to get Nohak to confess to being in the shed to meet with Iria and Khorak. To get him to share the secret of Aram's children in the Ravine, the PCs must force him to suffer a breakdown (see page 92 of the *Coriolis* core rulebook). In this case, he can share most of the information under Background and Nohak, Keeper of the Blood (page 22 and 24). He is unaware of the Mine Lord's involvement in the attempt on Lannah's life, however. He can also divulge the location of Aram's tomb.



⚙️ WHAT HAPPENS IF THE CULT IS EXPOSED?

Exactly what happens if the temple becomes known to the public, and if Nohak is exposed as Ashra, has been left to the GM to decide. The power games in the Ravine are not the focus of this scenario, but are well worth exploring anyway! The PCs might end up at the heart of the drama, in which case you can abandon the traditional scenario form of Aram's Secret and treat the extended adventures in the Ravine as a scenario location instead.

⚙️ COMPLICATIONS

None of the local Akbars (colonial agent Boro, Lhorac Ignazu, or Shana) are members of the Nazareem cult, and they therefore have no interest in keeping its existence a secret. If the cult is exposed to the public, it is very likely that Aravak the preacher will want to seize the opportunity to rid the Ravine of its moral decay - a crusade many of his parishioners will support. The targets for his purge are first and foremost old enemies of his - Nohak's "courtesans" and Ekbian, for example.

He is smart enough not to try to take on any of the three Akbars yet (the pool boys at the baths will have to be left alone - for now). If he feels successful in his quest, however, and none of the three try to stop him, his righteous rage may come to focus on the baths and other immoral establishments as well. The Akbars keep troops at hand, but are unlikely to intervene to rescue accused cultists from public stoning, unless the accused are important to themselves or their allies. Over time,

the risk of a larger, more organized confrontation between the local factions increases. The Mine Lord will eventually entrust the preacher with his soldiers, which will be met with violence from the militia (who work for Shana). Agent Boro will wait and see, and ally himself with whomever appears to be winning. The Red Hand's allegiances are uncertain, but they will likely be the ones whose actions put an end to the fighting, one way or another.

EKBIAN'S DANCE

Witch doctor Ekbian is the only one outside of the cult who remembers the truth about the Ravine's origin.

THE SITUATION

If the PCs ask around the Ravine about the temple, people will immediately suggest that they seek out Ekbian, but leave them with a warning: the doctor is a good man, but not altogether sane - some say that he is plagued by demons, others that he has sampled one too many of his strange potions. Ekbian receives the PCs with an archaic courtesy, shakes his bone rattle unnervingly, and offers them a fuming algae drink (harmless, but very bitter).

IMPORTANT FACTS

One PC may test **CULTURE**. If she accepted Ekbian's drink, she gets a +1.

- ◆ **Failure:** The old man rambles incoherently about the "duel with the darkness" and shakes his rattle violently.
- ◆ **Limited success:** Ekbian nods and giggles: "From the heavens, like a rock, then hiding from the storms, waiting, growing". He starts to dance around the room and says: "They want to dance, waiting and dreaming about dancing, the dance of death" (a hint about the Nazareem's blasphemous Dancer worship). Ekbian gives the PC a talisman to ward off the dark between the stars (one-time use, grants a +1 to any one skill check).
- ◆ **Critical success:** Ekbian nods calmly and says: "You seek the tomb of Aram. Take heed, he so longs to dance, he dreams of it, and he needs a dance partner. Take this, it will protect you from the darkness". The PCs get a blessed talisman each (one-time use, grants a +1 to any one skill check).

NPCS

The NPCs featured in the scene are described below.

EKBIAN, WITCH DOCTOR

Ekbian is the oldest inhabitant in the Ravine, serving as its witch doctor. He is of Kalite descent, and doesn't attempt to hide it - he walks around the ravine without mask or goggles, and has made it very clear that he won't tolerate any fuss over it. No one wants to quarrel with a witch doctor, and Ekbian is left alone. Curious newcomers (and PCs) who bother him about it are met with vague Icon references and insistent bone rattle rattling.

APPEARANCE: A wiry old man wrapped in grey clothes. Deep eyes, sometimes glimmering with warmth and humor.

CHARACTERISTICS: Aloof, mysterious and sometimes smiling about things no one else understands.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 3, WITS 3, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 5

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 5

SKILLS: Medicurgy 3, Observation 2

TALENT: Resistant

ARMOR: None

WEAPONS: None

GEAR: Bone rattle, five herbal remedies

THE HEART OF DARKNESS

ACT 3

The doomsday clock tolls one final time, and the fate of the Ravine hangs in the balance.

THE PCs MUST undertake a dangerous trip, face tough opponents, and defeat a being from the dark void between the stars. The PCs realize that Nohak and the cult were just the tip of the iceberg - the real secret is hidden in a ravine on the other side of the Lamka, at the Kalite mesa.

OVERVIEW

To cross the plateau, the PCs must acquire a vehicle. On arrival at the mesa, Kalite holy warriors block their way together with domesticated lamka lizards. If the PCs survive these challenges, much knowledge is theirs for the taking. Aram's ship is buried deep inside the mesa, and the tomb itself is located not far from it.

- ◆ **Across the Wastelands:** Many dangers lurk in the acid mist as the PCs trek across the Lamka.
- ◆ **The Ship:** The PCs must survive two challenges when they find the ship at the mesa - spotting the hidden Kalite warriors, and defeating them.
- ◆ **Aram's Tomb:** The final battle and the conclusion of the scenario take place in the tomb where the PCs go up against Aram himself in the form of a terrible darkmorph.

IMPORTANT FACTS

The ravine at the mesa contains two important artifacts: the alcheme - a sculpting technology that explains the Kalite presence on Jina - and the doomsday clock, relentlessly counting down to some unknown horror. As they enter the tomb, the PCs encounter Bhofass the draconite again, hellbent on destroying the Nazareem artifacts. The scenario finale most likely sees Aram returning as an undead, foul entity, forcing the PCs to put him back to rest, in a more permanent way. If they survive all this, their trials are finally over - for now.

DARKNESS POINTS

Add as many new DP as there are players to your pool. These points might come in handy

if you wish to toughen the resistance as the PCs come to the close of the scenario.

WAVERING HEARTS

It is a distinct possibility that your group chooses not to cross the Lamka to look for the second temple - they might just settle for the spare parts they need after Act II and leave the Ravine. If they do, the scenario is in no way ruined - you have hopefully had a great time playing the first two acts - but if you feel like your players are on the fence and you want to motivate them into risking their lives for Act III, here are some tips:

Hommar Lannah offers to share the treasures surely waiting in the tomb, plus the ensuing fame and glory, if they escort him there and help him investigate.

The Salt Widow urges them to continue, either as bodyguards for Lannah (who is dead set on going, even if it's on stretcher) or because the Ravine's future existence depends on dealing with its dark past. She is even willing to pay them, if that is what it takes - in this case, she takes care of the crawler rent and offers each PC a salary of 100 birr per day, plus another 1,000 birr each to those who make it back alive. Bhofass remains in the background to see if the PCs will be swayed into raiding the tomb after all - he would prefer it if they went in first to clear the way for him. If the PCs turn down Shana's offer, Bhofass reveals his true identity and mission, pleading with them to seek out and eradicate the Nazareem taint once and for all. If the PCs remain adamant about not going, Bhofass eventually goes ahead alone (or together with Lannah, if he is well enough to travel). If the PCs made a deal with Lhorac the Mine Lord, he simply refuses to hand over the spare parts until they have investigated the tomb.



ACROSS THE WASTELANDS

Crossing the Lamka plateau is preferably done in some form of covered transport, such as one of the Ravine's many eight wheeled stone crawlers.

THE SITUATION

It would appear that very few are willing to part with their crawlers however, and only Shana offers them one for free, as she would very much like to see how it all goes. The Mine Lord and the colonial agent are also curious, but will only consider renting out a crawler to the PCs (100 birr per day plus 1,000 birr deposit). **MANIPULATION** can be used to reduce the price by half, in which case they get a very run-down crawler.

IMPORTANT FACTS

The trip across the Lamka takes three days in a crawler, and at least nine days on foot. Many dangers lurk along the way.

THE LAMKA PLATEAU

The desert surrounding Aram's Ravine is known as the Lamka plateau - a wasteland void of life, except for the lamka lizards (page 323 of the *Coriolis* core rulebook) and surprisingly large swarms of an acid-resistant breed of butterflies.

EVENTS

The crawler driver must test **PILOT** to determine what the group encounters along the way.

- ◆ **Failure:** Hidden lamka nest (see below).
- ◆ **Limited success:** Unexpected acid storm (as described on page 7. As long as the PCs remain inside the crawler, their exposure to the acid is minimal).
- ◆ **Critical success:** Wounded prospector (see below).

❁ HIDDEN LAMKA NEST

The crawler slides into a hidden crevice and breaks down. The crevice also happens to be a lamka nest. Two lizards attack the group (page 323 of the *Coriolis* core rulebook). After defeating the lizards, the PCs must repair the crawler before continuing.

Repairing the crawler

Test **TECHNOLOGY** (with bonus dice for proper tools).

- ◆ **Failure:** Despite a whole day of desperate attempts, the crawler refuses to start. The PCs may not try again, and are thus forced to walk the rest of the way. During their hike, they walk into an acid storm (page 7).
- ◆ **Limited success:** After a long day of hard work, the crawler finally climbs out of the hole. It is still badly damaged, however, pulling heavily to the left. -1 to all future **PILOT** tests.
- ◆ **Critical success:** The repairs are expertly handled and add no extra time to the journey.

❁ WOUNDED PROSPECTOR

A light flickers in the distance. Passing an easy (+1) **OBSERVATION** test allows the PCs to identify the light as an emergency beacon. If the PCs hurry toward the light (an hour's drive), they find Jeila Doro, an exhausted and wounded prospector, walking across the desert toward the Ravine. She was searching for tritium near the mesa when she was attacked by Kalites. She managed to survive and is now trying to make it back to the settlement. She steadies herself on her emptied accelerator rifle and has run out of supplies. If the PCs treat her wounds, she offers some good advice.

Treating Jeila's wounds

Test **MEDICURGY** (with bonus dice for proper supplies).

- ◆ **Failure:** Jeila sees that she will be unable to dissuade the PCs from pushing forward, but is grateful for their help and continues back toward the Ravine.
- ◆ **Limited success:** Jeila warns the PCs about the Kalites at the mesa: their holy warriors are especially dangerous, as they have somehow gotten their hands on accelerator rifles and seem to have a spiritual bond with their familiars, the lamka lizards. Each warrior has a domesticated lizard that helps with scouting and in combat.
- ◆ **Critical success:** Jeila shares a secret with the PCs: she knows of a crashed ship hidden in a narrow ravine in the mesa. It is guarded by holy Kalite warriors and lizards, and she has been unable to come close enough for an inspection. She draws a crude map of the mesa for the PCs, and marks another interesting location - a cave even further in from which shines a faint, strange light. The area also appears to be rich in tritium.

BHOFASS' INTERVENTION

If Bhofass is following the PCs across the plateau, his aim is to sneak inside the tomb behind them. Depending on how you play this character, he will act in one of two ways. He might decide that the PCs are worth more to him alive than dead, in which case he will provide sniper fire in the battle with the Kalites if things start to look bad (but not necessarily to save the lives of individual PCs). If he decides to help the PCs, he will reveal himself to them after

the fight and explain who he is – wearing the Draconite seal clearly visible on his chest and holding a meson pistol. He will then accompany them into the tomb.

Alternatively, he leaves the PCs to fight the Kalites alone and sneaks into the tomb while the battle rages outside. Passing an **OBSERVATION** test at -2 allows the PCs to spot him as he sneaks by. Bhofass is not interested in getting caught in the fight, and will use all of his actions to make it to the tomb unless he is forcefully kept from doing so.

THE SHIP

The Kalite mesa is located on the other side of the plateau. Aram's tomb is located in a narrow ravine in the side of the mesa.

THE SITUATION

A couple of specially selected Kalite warriors serve as tomb guards, presenting the PCs with two challenges: spotting them, and defeating them. Bhofass the draconite remains in the background until the PCs reach the tomb entrance. He can be used to rescue the PCs if the fight with the Kalites proves to be too much for them.

IMPORTANT FACTS

The guards' lamka lookouts make it difficult to approach and spot them without being seen (**OBSERVATION** -2). Two guards watch over the ship at all times, and four more rest inside (two of whom are sleeping). The sleeping guards need three turns to get combat ready, the resting guards and their lamkas only one. The PC with the highest **OBSERVATION** score rolls the dice. Aram and his entourage arrived on Jina in a long since corroded class III freighter. The skeleton of the ship is now the base for the Kalites entrusted with watching over the tomb.

SPOTTING THE GUARDS

Test **OBSERVATION**.

- ◆ **Failure:** The PCs see only a badly damaged ship. The guards spot them at a distance of a hundred meters and open fire (sneak attack).
- ◆ **Limited success:** The PCs and the guards spot each other at a distance of fifty meters.
- ◆ **Critical success:** The PCs spot the guards at a distance of a hundred meters without being seen.

THE RAVINE AND THE SHIP

A deep crack cut through the mesa, harboring an ancient ship and the entrance to Aram's tomb.

⚙ GUARDS

Two guards outside the ship, hidden behind boulders (cover rating 4).

⚙ VANTAGE POINT

DEXTERITY allows the PCs to climb up to get a better view. Position an extra guard here if you are feeling mean.

⚙ CRASHED SHIP

The rusted hulk of a class III freighter. Examining it reveals it to be of First-come design. The PCs find empty rifle cabinets, explaining why the Kalites have accelerator weapons.

⚙ ARAM'S TOMB

The entrance to the tomb is cleverly hidden behind a cliff and cannot be seen from afar.

NPCS

The Kalite holy warriors and their lamkas are described on page 33.





10x10 meters

THE RAVINE AND THE SHIP

1. Guards
2. Vantage Point
3. Crashed Ship
4. Aram's Tomb



ARAM'S TOMB

The tomb is located near the crashed ship.

THE SITUATION

When the PCs walk past the ship, they spot a dark cave. The tomb is an oblong natural cave carved out by aeons of toxic water, almost in the shape of a narrow chapel with high ceilings. The remains of that which once was a person called Aram sleeps in the tomb. If the PCs do not awaken the darkmorph, chances are great that Bhofass will (see below).

IMPORTANT FACTS

The tomb contains three important objects, two of which are linked together with tubes and wires.

1. Aram's Sarcophagus
2. The Alcheme
3. The Doomsday Clock

ARAM'S TOMB

A faint light shines from inside the cave, making it rather easy to spot once the PCs get close enough. A low, rumbling sound seems to emanate from below. The chamber inside is dry and warm, and the pulsating light comes from the largest of the three objects - the alcheme.

⚙️ ARAM'S SARCOPHAGUS

A sarcophagus without many decorations, cast in a humanoid shape. Tubes and wires connect the sarcophagus with the strange, ominous-looking cube next to it.

⚙️ THE ALCHEME

A black cube, roughly the size of a grown man, connected to a power source. It growls and rumbles and is connected to the sarcophagus.

ARAM'S TOMB

1. Aram's Sarcophagus
2. The Alcheme
3. The Doomsday Clock
4. Cliff
5. Boulder



1x1 meters



BHOFASS ENTERS THE TOMB

If Bhofass enters the tomb - regardless of when he arrives and whether or not the PCs are there as well - he will attempt to destroy the doomsday clock and the alcheme. He will give the PCs time to examine the objects first if they'd like. If Lannah is present, he will protest loudly and even take a stand between Bhofass and the precious objects

WOUNDING ARAM THE DARKMORPH

As a darkmorph, Aram doesn't bleed. Instead, a dark substance - not quite liquid, not quite smoke - leaks out if he is wounded. Aram's body has become a vessel for the darkmorph's soul, and when the vessel becomes too badly damaged, it collapses, and the dark soul is swept away by Jina's unforgiving winds.

- ◆ **TECHNOLOGY +1:** The cube collects rain water, from which it extracts hydrogen for some unknown purpose. The technology looks ancient.
- ◆ **SCIENCE:** The machine is a bio sculptor, a device designed to alter the genetic code of organic lifeforms. It is the answer to Hommar Lannah's questions about the origins of the Kalites - they are the genetically altered descendents of Aram's entourage.

⚙ THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK

A curious contraption resembling a mechanical clock. Puffs of scented smoke rise from small pipes at its top. It appears to be counting down to something - but what?

- ◆ **CULTURE +1:** A PC is reminded of holy Aiwezian incense clocks, built to keep track of the segments and the myriad of religious holidays.
- ◆ **TECHNOLOGY +1:** The clock appears to be powered by long stems of slowly burning incense wood, generating just enough heat to keep the clock ticking.

⚙ CLIFF

A large cliff obscuring the entrance to the cave.

⚙ BOULDER

A large boulder providing decent cover in a fight (cover rating 6).

NPCS

The remains of Aram rest in the tomb. If the sarcophagus is opened, moved or damaged, Aram awakens.

ARAM, DARKMORPH

The once proud and strong Nazareem Aram is now a twisted shadow of a man. A few patches of white hair remain on his head, his mad eyes burn with hate, and his nails have turned into long talons. He moves with blinding speed, leaping at the PCs to sink his claws into them with supernatural strength. If a claw attack draws blood, the victim experiences an immediate, strong vision of the dark between the stars and risks losing her next action due to an overpowering sensation of pointlessness. When the PCs have defeated the creature, the pitiful, broken husk before them appears nothing like the hellish being they just fought.



APPEARANCE: A broken memory of his former self. Tall and skinny, his face twisted by dark, murderous thoughts.

CHARACTERISTICS: Bellows forth a blood-chilling shriek, the likes of which none of the PCs has ever heard before.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 8, AGILITY 6, WITS 3, EMPATHY 4

HIT POINTS: 14

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 0

SKILLS: Force 5, Mystic powers 5, Dexterity 4, Melee Combat 4

TALENT: Resistant

ARMOR: 6

WEAPONS: Claws (weapon damage 3, CRIT 1)

GEAR: A locket with a blackened holographic picture of a young, happy boy performing a traditional Odacon dance (his long since dead son).

- ◆ **NIGHT VEIL:** Aram can affect nearby minds with his own darkness. This works like a mystical strength 3 attack inflicting stress. Each use costs 1 DP per target. The victims will experience the world as dark, cold, and surreal. If aimed at multiple PCs, this attack can be incredibly dangerous.

EVENTS

As the GM, you have considerable power to tailor the final showdown to your liking. Bhofass can be used as a catalyst for the disastrous awakening of Aram.

⚙️ BHOFASS

Bhofass throws a satchel charge into the alcheme and turns to the PCs: "Your have thirty seconds to get out. This is Aram's tomb - don't make it yours, too!" He turns and runs out.

The PCs have one turn before the charge explodes:

- ◆ Getting out of the cave requires one fast movement action.
- ◆ Reaching the alcheme requires one fast movement action, and disarming the charge (**TECHNOLOGY**) requires one fast action per attempt.

⚙️ POSSIBLE ENDING

The PCs make it out of the tomb just as the charge detonates. Dust, rock shards, and pieces of the sarcophagus erupt from the cave, but no one is injured.

- ◆ Bhofass gets up and brushes the dust from his shirt with a laconic one-liner: "Fire in the hole, I suppose".
- ◆ The PCs begin collecting themselves for the trek back, but suddenly, something moves underneath the rubble!
- ◆ The sky seems to darken, and the group's torches fade - Aram's night veil has got their minds in its grip.
- ◆ A twisted figure rises from the rubble and lunges at Bhofass. The draconite is taken by surprise but fires a meson shot at his attacker. The shot is a hit, and Aram wails like an abandoned child before sinking his claws into Bhofass, tearing him to pieces!
- ◆ The PCs are possibly targeted by Aram's Night veil ability, after which the final battle begins - Nazareem Aram versus the defenders of the Ravine!

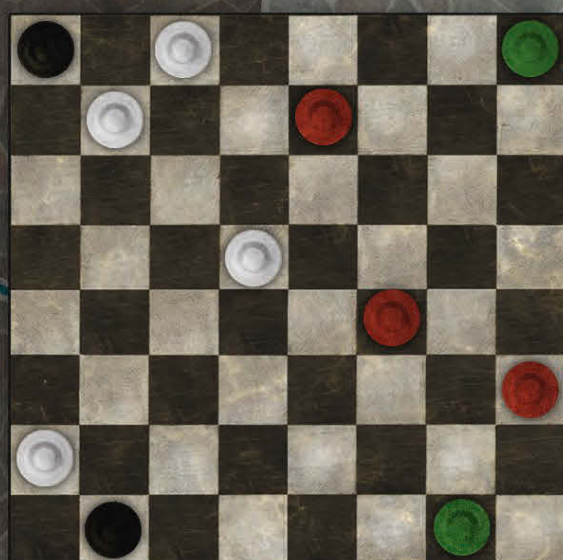
⚙️ ARAM'S RESURRECTION

If either the alcheme or the doomsday clock is removed from their sockets (or destroyed by a quadruple satchel charge), Aram the darkmorph emerges from his dark cocoon as a hollow shadow, harboring something from the depths of the void. Aram is currently slowly being transformed from human into something else, and the actions of the PCs (or Bhofass, or someone else) interrupts the process. The aborted cycle limits the creature's powers, but gives it an insatiable hunger, and it should prove a tough match for the PCs even in its current, weaker form. It fights well, and uses powers no one has seen since the Portal Wars.

AFTERMATH

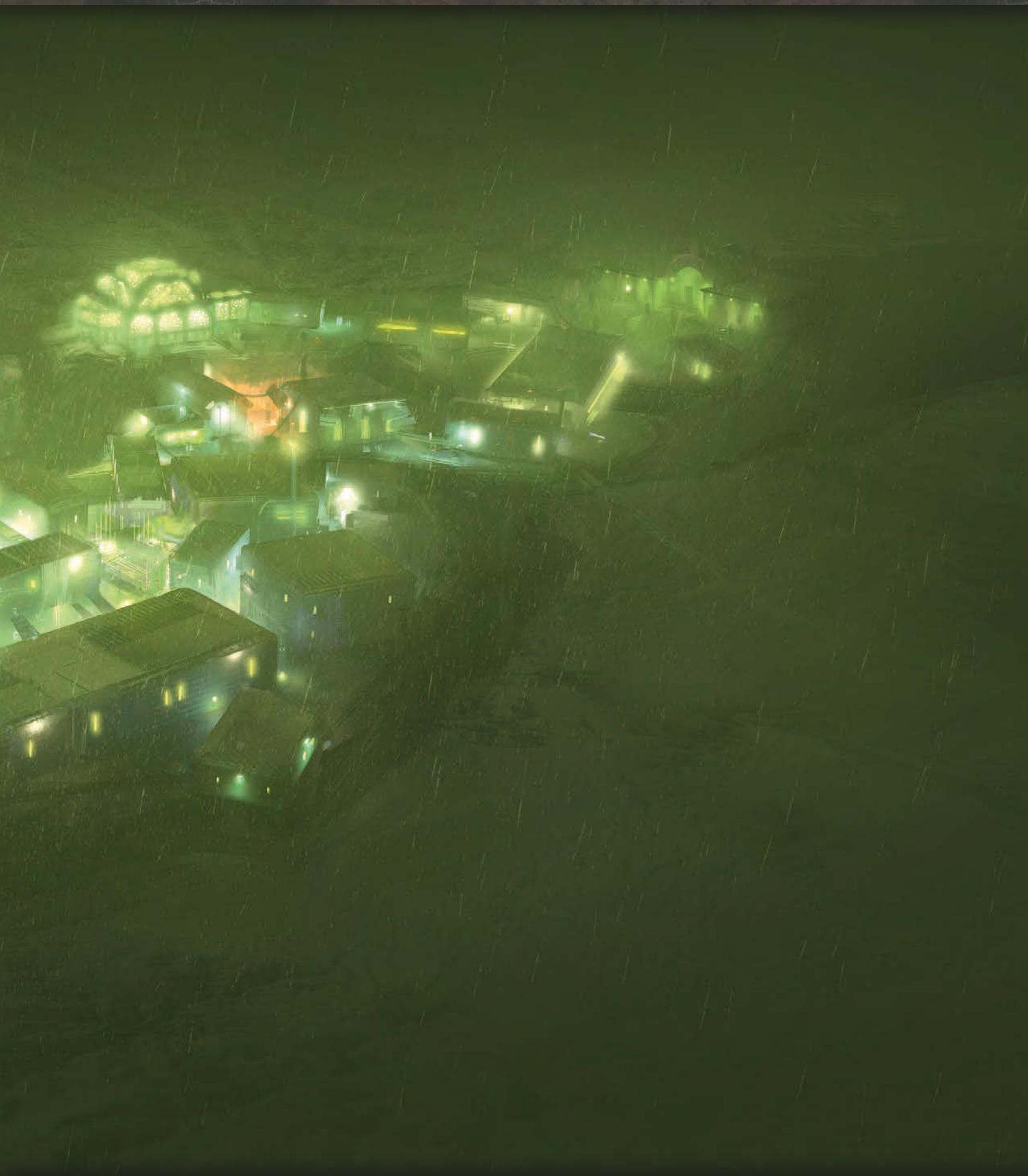
The PCs return to the Ravine across the plateau, were they are beset by insistent questions about the Kalites and the mesa. Few - if any - believe them if they answer truthfully, with the exception of Ekbian. He nods slowly at the PCs with sad eyes, and draws the Sign of the Light in the air between himself and them - as if to ward off some dark taint inadvertently carried with them out of the tomb...

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# ARAM'S RAVINE







SALT LAKE MOKHBA

*Amali cursed his arrogance and stupidity – he shouldn't have gone this deep. Only the Kalites go this close to the bottom of the ravine, and even they prefer their dwellings higher up. It had all sounded so simple back at the cantina: a short detour into the lower ravine to meet up with the smugglers' barge and load the goods.*

*But nothing is ever simple on Jina.*

*A faint light pierced the green mist in the air – a gravcraft, finally! Then, he heard the gravel shift a few steps down in the mist and froze with fear. What if the stories were true? What if the bottom of the ravine actually was home to djinni? He braced himself and looked down – nothing. He breathed a sigh of relief and tried to stop shaking. Maybe this could work, after all.*

*But nothing is ever simple on Jina.*

**The acidified planet Jina is widely considered as an uninhabitable hell hole. Despite this, a hardy mining colony known as Aram's Ravine persists underneath the heavy clouds. Most travelers and traders in these parts choose the luxury resort moon Cala Duriha instead, and only the most desperate descend through the toxic atmosphere to visit the Ravine. Fate forces the PCs down to the planet, however, where the plot soon thickens around them.**

**Contents of this book:**

- ◆ **The scenario location Aram's Ravine, complete with maps, NPCs, and story hooks.**
- ◆ **The stand-alone scenario Aram's Secret, in which the settlement's dark past is revealed.**
- ◆ **An overview of the Cala Duriha luxury moon, in all its splendor and decadence.**



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