

FREE LEAGUE

COROLIS

SCENARIO COMPENDIUM 1

WRITERS

Axel Widén, Kosta Kostulas

EDITORS

Mattias Johnsson Haake, Kosta Kostulas

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Christian Granath

TRANSLATION

Axel Widén, Tim Persson

ART

Gustaf Ekelund, Ylva Ljungqvist, Magnus Fallgren

PROOFREADING

Brandon Bowling, John M. Kahane

PRINT

Balto Print, Lithuania 2019

ISBN

978-1-912743-05-6

THE TAILOR FROM MIRA

The luxurious dhol heels gently in the night winds above the Icon City, as the majordomo leads you to a dimly lit storage space below deck. Inside, a nobleman – tall, elegant, drunk – stands holding a whip. A maid – older, restrained, flogged – is moaning in pain at his feet.

“There you are, finally!” exclaims the nobleman and turns towards you, his words dripping with wine.

You feel Kuyel’s gaze without meeting it, and discreetly raise your hand in a signal; not here, not now. Kuyel remains still, and you quietly praise the legionnaire’s loyalty as she restrains her rage. The nobleman has turned his attention back to the maid.

“There now Nitoya, tell these fine folks what you told me,” he exhorts with sarcastic sweetness. Nitoya hesitates, but the nobleman raises his whip and she cries out.

“I arranged for Cemisa to meet a priest!”

The nobleman gives you a knowing look and throws out his hands, as if the wine has exalted you to co-conspirators rather than unkempt freelancers, and the maid goes on:

“The girl was so lonely, deprived of the light of the Icons... I have merely served her!”

This enrages the nobleman.

“Miserable filth! You’ve brought a snake into our house! Your loyalty should be to the family, not to my deformed little sister!” he shouts, as the majordomo mildly puts a hand on his shoulder.

“Your grace, might I offer to escort our guests out and give them the details?”

The nobleman nods distantly and takes a deep swig of wine. Behind the majordomo’s immaculate facade you glimpse genuine relief as he walks you back above deck. His voice is hushed, his words carefully chosen.

“His grace feels much sorrow over the maid’s betrayal and is not quite himself at the moment. Your mission remains unchanged; find the Tailor. Perhaps by finding that priest? The maid gave us his name: Samenkar.”

Questions gather in your mind as you consider your answer. Who exactly is your wealthy client, how in the Suns did you get the Order of the Pariah on

your tail, and above all – how much can you get the majordomo to raise your fee?

You put on your most winning smile and start talking.

THE CHARACTERS ARE hired to find the Tailor – a legendary bionic – in the Icon City on Mira, only to discover several powerful groups have the same idea. The trail leads to a train moving across the Golden Plains, where the characters either flee with the Tailor or hand her over to one of the Factions – a choice with consequences for Mira and perhaps the entire Horizon.

The scenario is intended to be played as an action thriller, with the outcome determined mainly by the characters’ moral convictions. The GM should familiarize herself with Mira and the involved Factions through selected reading of the rulebook, and encourage motivated players to do the same.

BACKGROUND

Matriarch Dramora Chelebs-Menau has several secrets, and is planning to reveal two of them in an unexpected political move. The first secret is her niece Cemisa, who, touched by the Dark by having been born with three arms, is a shame for the family and has been hidden from the world since birth.

The second secret is the ongoing ship construction in the Chelebs shipyards for the neo-Zenithian Laskarid family of the Zenithian Hegemony, who’ve put in a massive order. Both families want to hide their cooperation from the powerful Miranese Church of the Icons, who would no doubt use it to agitate against Chelebs-Menau among the Firstcome, as the family’s indomitability poses a

clear challenge to Church authority in the eyes of the more political herates. Both families know it is only a matter of time before the Church discovers their cooperation. To prepare for this the families intend to marry Cemisa Chelebs-Menau and Izaldun Laskarid, something the herates won't see coming as they're unaware of Cemisa. By thus allying the families in matrimony – a sacred alliance blessed by the Dancer – their cooperation will be much more difficult for the Church to question, and the cost of keeping the fleet construction secret can be avoided.

The problem is Cemisa's third arm. It must be removed for the girl to be presentable for marriage. So far, no bionic has found a safe way to amputate the unusual arm, and the Matriarch knows she can't silence them all. Instead, her third son Jazkaar has sworn to find the mysterious Tailor, a legendary bionic said to surpass all others and who is rumored to dwell in the Icon City.

The Tailor is actually a master animaturg from Zalos, who fled her privileged position to chase freedom. For a couple of years she's led a secluded but comfortable life in the Icon City. Of course, this is unacceptable to the Order of the Pariah, who

guards their animaturgical secrets with fanatical devotion. When the adventure begins, magistrate Kemulla has recently received a significant tip about the Tailor's location from the priest Samenkar from the Circle of Seekers.

Samenkar has been Cemisa's secret pastoral caregiver for years, and she has told him about the impending marriage. The priest, however, has his own ideas about why the girl can't lose her third arm. As his faith prevents him from causing death, in addition to tipping off the Order he's also warned the Tailor and helped her escape the city.

The player characters' patron owes Jazkaar Chelebs-Menau a big favor, and insists that they meet "a wealthy but anonymous client requiring utmost discretion" in the Icon City.

STARTING SCENE: SOUK ASHAR

In a shabby cantina in the harbor quarter the characters meet "master Iskander," a quiet masked man. "Iskander" is actually Jazkaar Chelebs-Menau, and will under no



Jazkaar

**NILAR THE URCHIN**

Once Iskander has left, the characters are approached by a homeless girl who introduces herself as Nilar. She has recognized a few of Jazkaar's bodyguards and realized the characters have been hired by Chelebs-Menau. Smelling birr, she insists on the characters hiring her as their local guide.

She offers them the identity of their employer to sweeten the deal, and gives them Jazkaar Chelebs-Menau's name as soon as she gets paid. If the characters tell her they need to analyze a tissue sample, Nilar can guide them to Toyel without skill tests – for a few birr more, of course. If the characters show contempt for her or the lower class of the Icon City – or let Okra Darma beat up Toyel (see below) – she won't hesitate to sell them out later in the adventure.

circumstances reveal his identity yet. The characters are given a tissue sample. Their mission is to find the bionic who has manipulated the sample. Once they've found this bionic, they're to immediately contact Iskander using a holo link he lends them. The payment is very generous.

"Master Iskander" is arrogant, says little and avoids questions. Points in **MANIPULATION** or **REPUTATION** 5+ makes the character aware that Iskander is used to being obeyed, but lacks experience negotiating with freelancers. Success in **CULTURE** suggests Iskander is wealthy upper class with strong reasons not to use his regular agents. As Iskander leaves, a group of six large individuals follow him; disguised bodyguards.

JAZKAAR CHELEBS-MENAU / MASTER ISKANDER

The third son of matriarch Dremora Chelebs-Menau has recently understood he needs to change his reputation as a lazy playboy or lose influence to his siblings. Finding the Tailor might be his last chance to show himself worthy before Mother. Unfortunately Jazkaar lacks the patience and discretion required for this task.

APPEARANCE: A beautiful, large nobleman in his thirties with a well-kempt beard and somewhat round cheeks. As master Iskander, Jazkaar covers his face with an expensive mask.

TRAITS: Impulsive, easily offended, emotional

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 2, WITS 2, EMPATHY 4

HIT POINTS: 6

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 8

SKILLS: Command 1, Melee Combat 3, Culture 2, Pilot 1

TALENT: Wealthy family

ARMOR: 2 (microfibres in his tailored clothes)

WEAPONS: Mercurium sword (damage 3, CRIT 2), Accelerator pistol (damage 2, CRIT 1)

**NILAR**

An attentive, vigilant and outgoing homeless girl around twelve.

APPEARANCE: Her clothes are several sizes too big and have been mended multiple times. Alert brown eyes dart quickly between the characters. Never laughs, always smiles.

TRAITS: Unafraid, curious, selling

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 1, AGILITY 3, WITS 3, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 4

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 1

SKILLS: Manipulate 2, Dexterity 2, Stealth 3, Observation 2

TALENT: Judge of character

TOYEL'S TERRARIUM

With a Success in **CULTURE** (or by questioning locals), the characters learn that the best place to find a bionic is the craftsmen quarter in the Town of Bricks. An additional Success in **MANIPULATION** (or bribes) gives the characters reason to believe Toyel's Terrarium is their best option. Both of these Successes allow the characters to find Toyel right before the afternoon rest, when most of the City is at a standstill. They'll eventually find Toyels even without Successes, but not before the evening and the busy trading hour, when more eyes and ears are in the streets.

⚙️ TOYEL

Toyel (Scientist, Coriolis p. 343) is a competent bio sculptor who mostly does cosmetic surgery and sells pet snakes. He'll happily investigate the tissue sample for a sum of birr. He informs the characters that this is a tissue sample from a human who's recently been cured of a fatal genetic disease. Toyel rapidly grows excited as he studies the sample and realizes this must be the work of the legendary Tailor, which he exclaims loudly.

Additionally, the tissue sample shows traces of pollutants typical for silk production in concentrations that indicate a specific height above the Icon City. Toyel gets even more excited and tells the characters he can take them to the Tailor.

Note: If the characters do not employ Toyel's services, they can learn all of this on their own with a Critical Success in **SCIENCE** and access to a lab.

⚙️ YILLAD

At that moment a few thugs (Soldier, Coriolis p. 343) enter Toyel's store and menacingly ask the characters to leave. (Points in **CULTURE**: These are low level enforcers of Okra Darma, the dominant faction of Miranese organized crime.) Toyel hasn't paid his protection fee and needs to be taught a lesson.

The bio sculptor looks appealingly at the characters. If they stay, thug leader Yillad doesn't want to fight them unless he has to, and tries to figure out what they're after in order to make them leave the store. If he finds out they're looking for the Tailor, he offers to take them there; Okra Darma sometimes employs the Tailor's services and Yillad knows where she is, but nothing more.

Should the characters accept, he asks them to wait outside as they beat up Toyel – the GM gains one Darkness point. Next, Yillad takes the characters by dhol to the Tailor's clinic, but demands a sum of birr for the trouble.

If the characters instead choose to repel the thugs with violence Toyel will be grateful, but starts making plans to leave the Icon City. Before that, he offers to drive the characters in his dhol to where he (correctly) believes the Tailor is.

THE TAILOR'S HOME

Pollution from the silk factories has led to laws dictating such production over the Icon City is only legal above certain heights, which has forced some smaller factories that couldn't afford the needed grav projector upgrades to shut down. If the characters have successfully analyzed the tissue sample on their own, they can find the right building with a dhol, an Environment scanner and points in either **TECHNOLOGY** or **SCIENCE** – a specific abandoned silk factory that hovers about fifty meters above the Icon City. If the characters are with Toyel or Yillad, they get dropped off here.

⚙️ ARRIVAL

The factory is composed of huge, somewhat rounded metallic surfaces with very few windows. Long chimneys exit the domes that make up its roof. The only sign of activity is a service dock at the bottom of the factory – here, a simple dhol has been tied to a small pier and a garage door has been left half closed. Behind it is a simple workshop with an open door leading to a luxurious home combined with a state of the art bionic clinic.



Kemulla

OKRA DARMA

If Yillad takes the characters to the Tailor, it's likely he'll be there to see warriors from the Order of the Pariah exiting the dwelling. If so, Yillad realizes the Tailor must be an animaturg on the run from Zalos. The fact that Okra Darma has had such a valuable individual under their noses without knowing it sends shock waves throughout the entire organization, and they quickly put their most skilled operators on the Tailor's trail.

If the characters fight Yillad when protecting Toyel, Okra Darma will be looking for them the rest of the scenario to make an example out of them. Maybe they show up in the finale, on the Golden Harvest, to complicate the situation further.

⚙️ THE ORDER OF THE PARIAH

Warriors from the Order of the Pariah have a recon drone hovering above the factory; it can be discovered by the characters, but likely rises out of range before they can take it out. Magistrate Kemulla (Agent, Coriolis p. 343) and the same number of holy warriors as there are player characters (Soldier, Coriolis p. 343, activated Animated armor as per Secrets of the Horizon p. 24) were searching the clinic when the drone noticed the characters arriving. Now, they've quickly taken ambush positions inside. The Animated armor cloaks the warriors from Proximity sensors; only Kemulla shows up.

The Magistrate's goals are to find out who the characters work for and what they know about the Tailor. He is ruthless and efficient. Once he has captured a character, it doesn't take long for him to activate his benegic truth tumor (Secrets of the Horizon p. 26). Fortunately, this triggers animaturgic defense systems the Tailor has installed in her home. The Magistrate is struck by severe cramps and shouts something in Zalos (Success in **CULTURE** -2; "Exfiltrate! Let them live! Tag their boat!") – the warriors immediately form a wedge around him and exit to the dhol while pinning the characters with automatic fire. If the characters have a dhol tied to the pier, one of the warriors tags it with a microscopic animaturgic tracking bug (**OBSERVATION** -2 to notice this as it happens). Another warrior will follow the characters from high altitude with the recon drone.

Under no circumstances will Kemulla cooperate in any way with the characters. He is a narrow-minded and fanatical man. This unexpected and violent confrontation with the technologically superior Order of the Pariah should result in a Mind points cost for most characters.

⚙️ CLUES

With the Order of the Pariah gone the characters are free to investigate the place. Points in **SCIENCE** reveal that bionic wonders have occurred in the clinic, but everything of value has recently been removed.

In the areas turned into a home, it is clear someone recently packed up and moved out. From what's left it seems a wealthy woman lived here. On the bathroom mirror someone has written "Sirajjin, my heart" in lipstick. A holo painting in the bedroom depicts two beautiful middle aged women, each with their fingertips above the heart of the other in what is clearly a romantic scene. (Points in **CULTURE**: One woman is from Zalos, the other one from Mira.)

If someone touches the heart of the Miranese woman, the holo painting disappears to reveal a hidden wall safe. Inside is a Miranese “birr tray” (a traditional coaster for large amounts of birr), but no money is on it. A recorded message left by the Tailor to her lover Sirajjin starts playing on repeat. On it, the Tailor explains she has to leave the Icon City as her past has caught up to her – a notably pious priest from the very Circle warned me, he has a way to get me out of here – but that she’ll never forget their time together and that this money is an opportunity for Sirajjin to finally travel.

Sirajjin has already been here and doesn’t appear in the scenario. The priest can be found. Before the characters start looking, Jazkaar contacts them.

⚙️ JAZKAAR CHECKS IN

“Master Iskander” calls the characters on the holo link he’s lent them and impatiently asks for a status report. If he learns a priest seems involved in the Tailor’s disappearance, he exclaims, “Ha! I knew it! She’s been talking to a priest,

obviously she’s been talking to a priest. I’ll get you a name!” He then asks the characters to meet him on his private dhol at coordinates above the Icon City in an hour – see JAZKAAR’S DHOL below. The scenario doesn’t require the characters to meet Jazkaar, but doing so provides background that might affect their decisions.

JAZKAAR’S DHOL

As soon as he learns a priest might be involved in making the Tailor disappear, Jazkaar has his jannisars abduct Cemisa’s maid Nitoya. He’s long suspected the pious woman is more loyal to Cemisa than to the family. Jazkaar whips her until she admits having arranged for Cemisa to secretly meet the priest Samenkar.

When the characters arrive at the well-guarded and luxurious dhol, Jazkaar has convinced himself Cemisa must have told the priest about the Tailor’s critical role in the upcoming marriage, and that the priest then sabotaged the family’s chances of finding the Tailor because the Church of the Icons



wants to weaken Chelebs-Menau. See the opening narrative of this text for an illustration of the meeting with Jazkaar, who really isn't interested in discussions with the characters – they should instead turn to the majordomo, Shuhad.

Back above deck, Shuhad (Negotiator, Coriolis p. 343) explains that the mission remains unchanged: find the Tailor, perhaps by finding the priest Samenkar (who must not be killed, as this would force the Church to investigate). If the characters need motivation or reassurance, Shuhad lets them know they're working for the Chelebs-Menau family. He points out that although they might think what they want about Jazkaar, Shuhad's true master is the matriarch Dramora Chelebs-Menau, an immensely powerful figure who will be very grateful if the characters handle the situation in a professional and discrete manner.

FINDING THE PRIEST

Samenkar can be found by infiltrating the Church's information network, or through good contacts with religious groups on a street level. Both paths require fitting skill tests that should be easier for characters with relevant backgrounds. If the characters have Samenkar's name, they can eventually find him just by asking around. In any case, the GM should subtly remind the players of both the Order of the Pariah drone and Okra Darma – cultivate the notion that it's only a matter of time before their enemies catch up to them.

Successful tests eventually identify the Seeker Samenkar dal-Arid, and the characters learn that he's recently pulled strings to get the location of some shadowy individual. In doing so he's spent a lot of the Seekers political influence, which has made him unpopular within the Church. The cha-



characters also learn Samenkar spends most of his time on the Dancer statue, and that some colleagues doubt his sanity. Additionally, a Critical Success indicates Samenkar has been in contact with a representative of the Order of the Pariah.

THE WATCHING STATUES

The ancient statues are described on page 10 in the Coriolis Atlas Compendium. The ambitious but bored young priest Farrakud (Preacher, Coriolis p. 343, recently posted here to make sure Samenkar doesn't cause more trouble) is noticeably embarrassed as he leads the characters up a series of ladders that scales the Dancer statue. Beneath a flimsy sheet metal construction Samenkar (Preacher, Coriolis p. 343, an old white-haired man with an impenetrable calm and a piercing gaze) is working on restoring the statue's third arm. It seems the old man actually lives here.

Samenkar will answer questions truthfully, which is demanded of him as the Shepherd (see below). At the same time he tries to convince the characters of his world view and asks for their help to fulfill the prophecy. That the Chelebs-Menau's have a secret, deformed daughter is critical information to the political branch of the Church. When Farrakud realizes this he'll excuse himself and rush for the council of herates as soon as possible, where he'll use what he's heard to further his career.

If the characters give chase, Samenkar asks them to let Farrakud run (the GM takes one Darkness point if the characters kill Farrakud), and intensifies his attempts at making the characters believe him. According to Samenkar, the Icons have brought the characters to him so that they can help the Tailor escape (see the text box The Ialid'al Jira Prophecy). He's got nothing to hide and will gladly share the following information:

- ◆ Samenkar had already been studying Ialid'al Jira for several Cycles when the Chelebs-Menau maid Nitoya asked him to become Cemisa's secret spiritual caregiver about two Cycles ago. In her eyes, the priest's disinterest in politics made him harmless to the family.
- ◆ Samenkar had a religious shock when he first met the three-armed Cemisa. Her existence and their meeting confirmed everything he'd suspected. He knows the final days of the Third Horizon are here, and that the Dancer's incarnation to save mankind can only be secured by him. Thus he's been deeply committed to Cemisa ever since.



Samenkar

THE IALID'AL JIRA PROPHECY

Ialid'al Jira ("The end of times") is a little-known prophecy put together from fragments, the authenticity of which has been fruitlessly debated by scholars for decades. Samenkar believes he has evidence there was a secret order among the Firstcome colonists who built the Watching statues, tasked with safekeeping a revelation from the Icons. According to it, when the Darkness returns to the Third Horizon, the Judge will be incarnated first (Samenkar claims the statue of the Judge gazes directly at Xene at midnight), followed by the Dancer in the form of an unmarried girl with three arms. Together they will lead the righteous against the Darkness in a final battle. This is far from official iconology, but Samenkar knows he's right. He believes himself to be the "Shepherd" of the prophecy, with the sacred duty of securing its fulfillment. Thus Cemisa can neither lose her third arm, nor be married. To maintain his role as the Shepherd, Samenkar is forbidden from causing death or telling lies. He isn't the least bit interested in the political machinations of the Church or Chelebs-Menau.

- ◆ When Cemisa told him about the upcoming marriage and that the legendary Tailor would be employed to remove her third arm, Samenkar realized it was time for action. He used all resources available to him as a member of the Circle of Seekers to find the Tailor. Then he informed the Order of the Pariah of the Tailor's identity and location.
- ◆ However, when his Order of the Pariah contact implied the Tailor's punishment would be death, Samenkar had to warn the Tailor that the Order of the Pariah had found her – the Shepherd cannot cause death.
- ◆ He offered the Tailor a spot aboard the Golden Harvest – a rail-borne, kilometer-long, former cargo train on its annual pilgrimage. She accepted – easy to hide, guarded by warrior nuns, and its final destination being the Pilgrim's Serai with a space port for small, discrete ships.

Finally, Samenkar hands the characters an encrypted ancient communicator he's been using to talk to the Tailor. He also tells them the Tailor is in the Lion train car in the rear of the train. Note that Samenkar says and does this pretty much no matter what the characters do or say: he is convinced the characters are the Hounds of the Shepherd.

The next destination is the Golden Harvest.

⚙️ WHAT DOES THE CHURCH DO?

If the characters don't stop Farrakud and he knows about the Tailor, the Church of the Icons will send a company of warrior nuns to the Pilgrim's Serai, following recon drones that start scouting the Golden Harvest. They inform the nuns aboard through comms. The fact that both Chelebs-Menau and the Order of the Pariah want the Tailor makes her a valuable prize for the Church, but they don't have the Tailor's physical description. The plan is to increase security on the train and search all ships leaving the Pilgrim's Serai, much to the inconvenience of other passengers. Soon after the characters arrive, the nuns start searching all of the luxury train cars. The pilgrims in the open areas of the train are left alone to avoid chaos.

⚙️ WHAT DOES THE ORDER OF THE PARIAH DO?

The Order of the Pariah has probably been watching the characters through their recon drone since the silk factory, and if so will sniff around wherever the characters have been. If this leads them to Samenkar, he'll tell them everything he

told the characters. The Order of the Pariah will then travel to the Golden Harvest in a small ship with advanced camouflage that lets them board the train undetected.

Beneath huge hooded robes, the holy warriors are wearing their animated armor. The Magistrate also has a fimir, a hand-held animaturgic creation that can locate the Tailor's biocode within 20 meters. Their goal is to retrieve the Tailor, recall their ship and leave the train as quickly as possible. If you want the characters to be able to defeat the warriors, perhaps fewer of them could come along, or the Tailor might have some animaturgic device that deactivates their armor?

⚙️ WHAT DOES CHELEBS-MENAU DO?

Shuhad will regularly call the characters for status updates, as Jazkaar has become unreliable. If Shuhad finds out the Tailor is aboard the Golden Harvest, he wants the characters to get there and finish the mission. Shuhad can lend them equipment and transportation as long as he believes they'll do what he wants.

If he's told about Samenkar and the prophecy he shows little concern for such "superstitious nonsense." If he starts having second thoughts about the characters, he'll send an elite unit of six disguised jannisaries who parachute aboard the train as soon as darkness falls. Their orders are to make sure the characters complete the mission, or complete it themselves if doing so becomes necessary.

They can be used by the GM to provide backup or threaten the characters. The team has orders not to be revealed as jannisaries, but to use lethal force if the mission requires it.

THE GOLDEN HARVEST

Finding and catching up to the Golden Harvest isn't difficult; the legendary prayer train is currently on its well-known annual pilgrimage across the Golden Plains. The tricky part is to board it.

⚙️ THE PRAIER TRAIN

Almost one kilometer in length and six meters across, this massive industrial train was once used to transport grains. Now the top halves of its enormous silos have been removed, and generations of pilgrimages have seen them converted into platforms, towers, balconies and bridges in various degrees of flimsiness. These in turn are covered with the prayers of the pilgrims, on various flags and



wheels moving from either the wind or the train's wheels. Talismans, Icon altars and sacrificial gifts are everywhere, as are hundreds of densely packed pilgrims singing, praying or engaging in discussion over food served from big savory-smelling soup kitchens. The atmosphere is colorful and otherworldly.

It is said the Golden Harvest was a gift to the plebeians from the farming magnate Djifaza el-Sheim, who, in a crisis of conscience before his death, bequeathed it to the farmers of the Golden plain after an otherwise very ungenerous life. A local herate then proclaimed the train should be used to

honor the Icons. Ever since, the pilgrimage aboard the Golden Harvest has grown from local phenomenon to a global trend, which has given the train several new cars as many wealthy families consider it appropriate to buy a luxurious pilgrim car in the back half of the train (whether it's ever used is a different story).

With wealthy pilgrims comes the need for security, and for a couple of decades the Golden Harvest has been guarded by a company of warrior nuns manning a series of weapon platforms along the train. On top of the massive engine car is a landing pad with one shuttle and two light atmospheric

HOME BREW MAP

It can be challenging to draw up a comprehensive map of the kilometer-long train, but the GM is encouraged to give its layout some thought – from the front engine, through the temples and gathering areas of the remodeled cisterns, to the luxurious carts at the back. This will be particularly helpful if the characters have to move back and forth between cars, hide or plan a suitable spot for an ambush.

attack ships. The Golden Harvest never stops during its journey, traveling at about 60 km/h for two weeks to the Pilgrim's Serai. When the characters learn the Tailor is aboard, the train has about twenty-four hours before reaching its destination.

⚙ ARRIVAL

Letting new pilgrims board the train once it has started moving is considered disrespectful to the Icons and will only happen under very special circumstances. The characters need to make a plan for how to get aboard. They can pretend to be delayed nobles who absolutely need to get into the Chelebs-Menau family carriage, if Shuhad trusts them enough to give them access. They can parachute from their own ship during the night, or pretend to be important herates or medicurges. Encourage player creativity and let the characters find what they need, as long as getting aboard is a challenge.

⚙ FINDING THE TAILOR

The characters can find the Tailor in several ways, for instance by talking to her over the communicator they got from Samenkar, by identifying and following the Order of the Pariah group, or (if Farrakud has alerted the Church) by shadowing the warrior nuns as they search the cars.

The Tailor is scared, lonely and under the influence of several different drugs. Her goal is to get off Mira, as she's certain none of the planetary factions can protect her from the Order of the Pariah. Only if the Order of the Pariah group is eliminated does she agree to Chelebs-Menau's job offer, in exchange for them making sure she disappears out into the Horizon afterwards. If the characters seem somewhat reliable and offer to help her flee, the Tailor will thankfully follow their instructions.

THE TAILOR FROM MIRA

Brilliant master animaturg who has fled Zalos and managed to create a comfortable life in hiding on Mira. Her (or his – there are rumors the Tailor used to be a man) true name is known only to her.

APPEARANCE: A pale, quite tall woman around forty with dark straight hair and watchful eyes. Wears discrete pilgrim clothes.

TRAITS: Nervous, desperate, under the influence of various drugs



ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 3, WITS 5, EMPATHY 1

HIT POINTS: 5

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 6

SKILLS: Data Djinn 2, Medicurg 5, Technology 2, Science 5

TALENT: Field Medicurg

WEAPONS: Accelerator pistol (damage 2, CRIT 1)

⚙️ FINAL CONFRONTATION

Drive the game towards a tense game of cat-and-mouse aboard the Golden Harvest, escalating to a dynamic final battle. Make use of the holy warriors, the nuns of the Weeping Matriarch, the janissaries of Chelebs-Menau and perhaps Okra Darma to challenge the characters.

The characters goal should be to take the Tailor to some kind of transport (perhaps the shuttle on the engine car), or to hide aboard and wait for the train to stop before smuggling the Tailor past the nuns at the Pilgrim's Serai. A lot depends on which faction – if any – the characters decide to help.

AFTERMATH

If the characters deliver the Tailor to Chelebs-Menau, they are rewarded a short audience with the matriarch Dramora herself, who thanks them for their services and lets them know they can always count on the protection of her powerful house when on Mira. They also get to meet Cemisa, a happy and thoughtful eighteen year old girl who now has two arms and looks forward to how the upcoming marriage will open up the Horizon to her. She's unaware of the events that made the marriage possible and is noticeably taken aback if they're described to her.

A couple of days later it is publicly announced that the Zenithian family Laskarid and the Miranese family Chelebs-Menau are joined by the bonds of matrimony, which is met by irritated mumblings from the Church of the Icons as the herates are unable to effectively question a sacred alliance. The neo-Zenithian families and Chelebs-Menau grow in influence, while the Church of the Icons' grip on Mira is somewhat lessened.

If the characters help the Tailor escape she is very grateful – maybe they meet her again later, maybe they get a powerful animaturgic parting gift. The characters have made several powerful enemies on Mira and will be hunted by the Order of the Pariah, which won't give up until the Tailor has been brought back to Zalos. Whether the characters have actually performed a sacred duty or allowed themselves to be confused by a mad priest is left to the GM to decide.

If Okra Darma gets the Tailor, a short clandestine war erupts between them and Chelebs-Menau. In the end Okra Darma is the weaker part, but rather than surrendering the Tailor they end up selling her to the Syndicate, her secrets intact. The Tailor ends up on Coriolis, where the Order of the Pariah eventually finds her.

If the Order of the Pariah gets the Tailor they immediately flee back to Zalos with her. Samenkar, Chelebs-Menau and the Church will be very disappointed with the characters.

EYE OF THE BEAST

"There's just so much we still don't know about levitanium!" exclaims the Colonial Agency science official, tipsy from the wine. "For instance, why does it make some creatures bigger than others? We've only seen the smallest fraction of its possibilities, mark my words!"

JORUNGA, THE ARZACHELIAN priestess, nods and smiles – careful, polite. Meanwhile an old man from the forest moon takes your hand and gestures towards the horizon, where distant giant trees tower like a mountain range.

"See the dance of the jirunes," he mumbles in a heavy accent, as you follow his gaze to far off flocks with thousands of birds spiraling in hypnotic waves, glittering in the slowly setting sun. "Bad omens, says the forest djinns. The Beast awakes when the drums fall silent. All of us will die unless you heed my words."

Eye of the Beast is a mini scenario intended to cultivate a conflict between faith and science among the player characters, who will eventually have to favor one above the other. Both perspectives provide different solutions to the scenario.

BACKGROUND

The forest moon Arzachel remained unexplored for a long time, as its atmosphere contains levitanium – an element found only here, that has the unfortunate effect of overloading graviton projectors. The first Zenithian to discover this was Foundation scientist Abbad dar-Jikra, whose expedition crashed on the moon 15 CCs ago and was presumed lost.

However, 10 CCs later a bulk freighter suddenly picked up the expedition's emergency broadcast, and the Horizon was amazed by dar-Jikra's story. In the forests of Arzachel, the scientist had made contact with reclusive, horned humanites and a small group of isolated Firstcome. But the most interesting find by far was the levitanium, as dar-Jikra's initial studies suggested that this new element could significantly reduce the production cost of graviton projectors.

With dar-Jikra's help, the Foundation developed a prototype graviton projector with limited functionality in Arzachel's atmosphere. A few segments ago, this finally allowed the Colonial Agency to start harvesting levitanium by cutting down the giant trees on the moon and extracting their root pulp. The Firstcome Arzachelians have generally been friendly towards the Zenithians, as life in the menacing giant forest is hard and the comforts of the Horizon beckon. But the humanites – the lali – feel differently.

Recently, contact was lost with the extraction platform Zadaar, a significant investment that the Colonial Agency has no intention of losing. The player characters are in the vicinity, and are hired to investigate.

STARTING SCENE: ABOARD MAZUNDRA

Colonial Agency pascha-of-operations Urzid (**EMPATHY 4, REPUTATION 7, MANIPULATION 4**) receives visitors in a tasteful office aboard the construction cruiser Mazundra, in orbit around Arzachel accompanied by a light Legion escort. The player characters have been invited to hear a business proposition. Urzid provides the following information:

- ◆ A few hours ago, staff aboard Mazundra noticed that Zadaar was not operational. Attempts to make contact with the crew have failed. Urzid shows the player characters blueprints of the platform and fills them in on the background.
- ◆ Unless Zadaar is reactivated in three to five days, the levitanium already harvested will become worthless. This cannot be allowed.
- ◆ Urzid wants to hire the characters to travel to

Zadaar and report their findings back to him, so he can decide his next move. To facilitate communication, the characters are lent an Orbital Communicator (*Coriolis: Rulebook* page 105 – unbeknownst to them, Urzid has had a tracking device installed into it).

- ◆ A modified shuttle capable of dealing with Arzachel's atmosphere will carry the characters to the Firstcome Arzachelian settlement Haima, where the Colonial Agency has its service station. Here, the shuttle needs to undergo maintenance for at least two days before it can get back into orbit. This is due to the levitanium affecting the graviton projectors.
- ◆ A ground vehicle is available in Haima – with it, Zadaar is about twelve hours away. On foot, reaching Zadaar takes about two days.

⚙️ NEGOTIATIONS

If the characters pry for more information and/or negotiate, a Limited success in Manipulation has Urzid admit

that he suspects lali humanites have attacked the platform and that he needs this confirmed before sending in the comparatively expensive Legion – he offers the characters 10% more birr.

A Critical success means the character understands Urzid's entire career is depending on Zadaar turning a huge profit; the Arzachel project has generated a massive debt and Urzid emits an air of quiet desperation. This can be used to increase the reward by another 10%.

Urzid will under no circumstances allow the characters to land the shuttle directly on Zadaar, as he doesn't want the expensive modified vehicle falling into lali hands.

⚙️ ARRIVAL IN HAMA

Out of the moor rises a lonely, dead giant tree, stretching upwards hundreds of meters towards the sunset. The broken trunk has a radius of over 100 meters. From its topmost part the Arzachelians have carved a beautiful settlement with round towers and intricately patterned



LEVITANIUM

Levitantium occurs naturally in all native Arzachelian life forms, but is still far from thoroughly understood. So far only the Colonial Agency has graviton projectors capable of flight in Arzachel's atmosphere. Levitantium in organisms changes how the organism relates to gravity on a molecular level, which is what causes all organic life on Arzachel to be gigantic even though the actual gravity is normal. Trees are the size of skyscrapers, ants about the size of cats and birds like lions. Breathing masks are required to avoid eventual suffocation from oversized parasites and bacteria.

Once levitantium has been removed from a living organism, it falls apart and eventually becomes worthless unless it is kept at a warm temperature.

The Arzachelian priests used to smoke levitantium, creating a strong psychedelic experience lasting a few minutes. The smoker feels herself disappearing into her own pulse, where her identity is completely unraveled and absorbed into an infinite stream of rhythmically pulsating energy strands united in a wild and eternal dance of life. Priests put themselves in this state to commune with the Dancer, but since the arrival of the Zenithians, this practice has fallen out of favor with the current spiritual leadership.

Smoking levitantium has no effect on the lali humanites, who already live in a controlled version of this state.

Characters who smoke levitantium get one bonus die on the next roll they make during meetings with Arzachelian life forms.

balconies. This is Haima, home to about five hundred Arzachelians.

Inside the trunk, the Colonial Agency store huge amounts of levitantium. The shuttle platform of the Agency in Haima mostly resembles a strange metallic birdhouse, an alien presence in a primal swamp. The connected service station is home to a handful of surly technicians from Mazundra, and the player characters have access to sleeping quarters here. Young Arzachelians are curious about the characters, while the adults maintain their distance.

- ◆ The characters are immediately greeted by the Arzachelian priestess Jorunga. She has been informed about their mission, is eager to help, and recommends they bring a local guide with them. She suggests Batur.
- ◆ A beautiful jirune suddenly lands in front of the most religious character (or one with the Dancer as Icon) and inspects her with twitching head movements. Everyone recoils, except Jorunga who praises the Dancer – this is a good omen! She explains that jirunes are harmless, sacred embodiments of the Dancer, and that no jirune has ever visited Haima. From here on, all Arzachelians refer to this player character as “the Anointed One.”
- ◆ During the evening, Inris approaches the Anointed One. He insists that the jirune was actually a very bad omen. Jirunes are also the Thousand Eyes of the Beast, the storm of steel, red in beak and claw. The Anointed One must find the forest djinns and humbly ask for their wisdom, or the Beast will devour everyone.
- ◆ The ground vehicle available for the characters is a worn six-wheeled Crawler (*Coriolis Rulebook* page 117). The harpoon has been switched for a flamethrower.

JIRUNE, “HAREM BIRD”

Jirunes are pack-living predatory birds roughly the size of lions. They resemble a cross between a peacock and a velociraptor, with feathers in rich shimmering colors, impressive claws and teeth-lined beaks. When the flock hunts it seems to “dance” around a tree in hypnotic patterns as the individual members dive towards the trunk, striking the bark with their hard and sharp wing feathers to get to the insects beneath. The crashing and the calls of the birds create a loud, strangely rhythmic cacophony which is beautiful and humbling to some, alien and horrifying to others. Jirunes do not normally attack humans.


ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 2
HIT POINTS: 6

SKILLS: Force 2, Melee Combat 2, Dexterity 2

WEAPONS: Bite (Weapon Damage 3, CRIT 2), Claws (Weapon Damage 2, CRIT 1)

- ◆ **THOUSANDS:** When a jirune is killed in combat, two more enter the same combat in the next round as long as the flock is nearby.
- ◆ **DIVE ATTACK:** When a jirune enters combat from the air, its first attack always has Weapon Bonus +1, Weapon Damage 4 and CRIT 1.

JORUNGA, PRIESTESS

Young priestess who has quickly attained high status after making

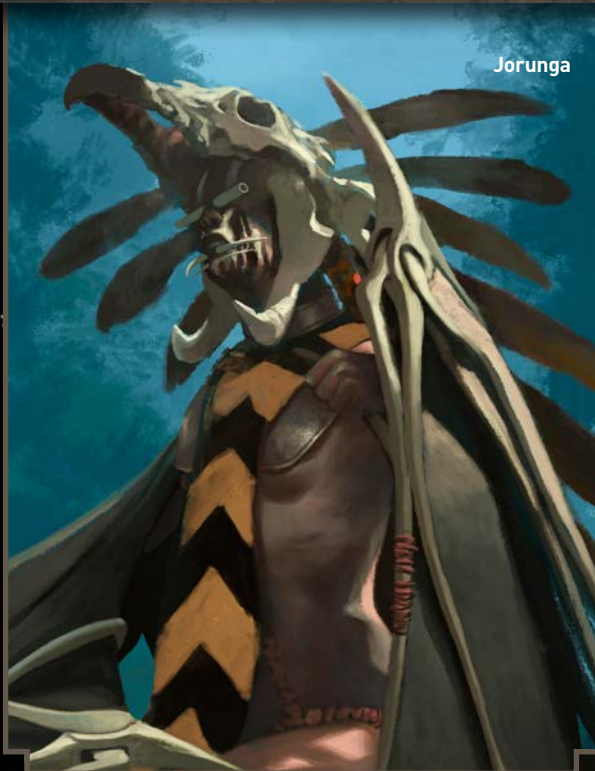
deals with the Zenithians. Makes sure all new visitors see her as the go-to Arzachelian representative. Answers questions as best she can, but gets noticeably suspicious if the characters speak ill of the Colonial Agency. Dreams of leading her people out into the Horizon in the name of the Dancer. Hates the lali after they watched her father get eaten alive by predators without intervening.

APPEARANCE: A young woman with facial paintings and a mask made of animal skeleton.

TRAITS: Brave, passionate and naive.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 2, WITS 4, EMPATHY 3

Jorunga



THE ARZACHELIANS

The Arzachelians are organized into a handful of clans ruled by a theocratic council with one priest from each. The Dancer is worshipped exclusively. Endurance is the highest ideal, marriage the holiest ritual. The technology level is Primitive, although passed-down knowledge and a handful of guarded high-tech relics suggests the group originated from a larger, more technically advanced population that is now forgotten.

The Arzachelians themselves believe the Dancer threw them down from the stars as punishment for their decadence, and that they have to show themselves worthy through endurance in order to one day return to their lost glory. With the arrival of the Colonial Agency, a majority of the priests believe that day is coming soon, while a minority – in particular those who still smoke levitanium – are convinced the Colonial Agency is a clever new trick from the Beast.

Also worth mentioning is the resin burned in Haima, which sterilizes a person's insides and allows for the removal of breathing masks. Arzachelian breathing masks are crafted from various bladders and treated animal parts. The fear of the forest is great, as is the fascination with the new arrivals and their technology. Arzachelians don't have any levitanium in their bodies.

HIT POINTS: 4

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 5

SKILLS: Command 3, Manipulate 4, Culture 2, Survival 1



BATUR, ARZACHELIAN RANGER

A middle-aged hunter who is not keen on babysitting newcomers while they go on dangerous expeditions. Deeply religious. Refuses to accompany the characters at all if they use the Crawler, and refuses to guide them on foot unless they join him in receiving a protective blessing from Inris, where they have to smoke levitanium. Respects the lali and knows they do not kill, which he could bring up later if the characters follow his instructions in the forest.

APPEARANCE: Emaciated, scarred and a white beard.

TRAITS: Quiet, paranoid and weathered.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 4, WITS 5, EMPATHY 1

HIT POINTS: 7

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 2

SKILLS: Ranged combat 2, Melee combat 2, Dexterity 2, Infiltration 3, Observation 3, Survival 4

WEAPONS: Throwing spear (Damage 2, CRIT 2), Dura knife (Damage 2, CRIT 1)



INRIS, FALLEN PRIEST

Old, sickly priest from a shunned clan with ties to the lali. Has smoked too much levitanium. Explains that the jirune visitation was a very bad omen, as it means the Colonial Agency has agitated the Beast. Everyone will die unless the Anointed One seeks the wisdom of the forest djinns (the lali).

APPEARANCE: Gnarled, bearded and wild-eyed.

TRAITS: His words are part mystic rambling, part prophetic vision.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 4, WITS 2, EMPATHY 4

HIT POINTS: 7**MIND POINTS:** 6**REPUTATION:** 2**SKILLS:** Mystic Powers 1, Manipulation 3, Culture 2, Survival 1

THE HALL OF DANCING PILLARS

The giant forest where Zadaar operates is called Shada'riel, "the Hall of Dancing Pillars." The impression of moving through a hall of giant-sized pillars is striking; impossibly high, straight trees rise like round skyscrapers out of a seemingly infinite flat landscape of fir needles the size of swords and leaves the size of cantina tables.

The sounds of the rich fauna echo between the trees, and anyone who stops to listen soon notices how they seem to follow each other in strange rhythms. Local lifeforms range from the familiar (giant ferns, mushrooms, reptiles and rodents) to the profoundly alien (prickly vertical formations of hardened foam-like substances, hovering giant bacteria, nightmarish gargantuan insects). The GM is encouraged to put the characters in situations where pristine surreal beauty suddenly changes to harsh lethality. And remember that all characters need to wear breathing masks.

- ◆ The journey goes through the moor around Haima, then through untouched sparse young forest that gets progressively thicker, and finally through a large deforested area where Zadaar has been operating.
- ◆ On foot without Batur, the journey takes two days and is extremely dangerous.
- ◆ On foot with Batur, the journey takes one and a half days. As long as the characters obey Batur, it is dangerous but not lethal.
- ◆ In the Crawler the journey takes twelve hours, and the characters are almost definitely attacked by a large alpha predator that tries to eat the vehicle.
- ◆ Regardless of their mode of travel, the group notices jirunes more and more frequently. The Anointed One is struck by how they seem to be following the characters.
- ◆ The GM should emphasize the surreal beauty of Arzachel, to the Anointed character in particular.

REACHING ZADAAR

Enormous cut-down trees lie across the area like fallen towers. Zadaar is positioned around a lonely, still standing tree, silent

ZADAAR

From above, Zadaar resembles a sharp-edged C. The overall impression is of an oil platform, but rising 30 meters above the forest floor on four massive legs ending in huge caterpillar treads. The inside of the C is equipped with big, industrial saw blades. The platform is positioned around a tree and proceeds to saw it down, which takes about a day. Once the tree has fallen, an automated mining unit is deployed in the stump and starts extracting the levitanium-rich root pulp, which is stored aboard Zadaar in huge tanks that keep it at a constant temperature. The process involves running levitanium in pipes throughout the entire platform. Zadaar had about one hundred crew members, mostly Firstcome (REPUTATION 1-4, no Arzachelians). The platform also has a sophisticated laboratory for visiting scientists.



and shut down. Everywhere along the exterior of the platform are deep circular cuts into the metal. Aboard, the characters find plenty of blood stains, but no bodies.

- ◆ A Limited success in Technology in the control room reveals that the platform has shut itself down after getting close to overheating due to the idle, activated machinery. It can now be safely reactivated by any character.
- ◆ Characters with Observation notice how the tree above them is filling up with jirunes, who silently watch them from above.
- ◆ A character who uses Observation to look for survivors finds blood trails leading out into the forest with a Limited success. They lead to the cave where the surviving workers are hiding.
- ◆ If the characters don't report to Urzid, he will grow restless and contact them himself (remember he knows where they are through the tracking device). After listening impatiently

to what they have to say, he insists they power up Zadaar to save the levitanium in its tanks.

- ◆ If the platform is reactivated, a single jirune lands near the levitanium tanks and starts picking at them. If it is killed, two more arrive and so on. Pretty soon the entire flock attacks. Within ten minutes after activation the entire flock will attack the platform no matter what the characters do.
- ◆ If Batur is with the characters during the jirune attack, let him die here unless the characters take a risk in order to save him. After two to four combat rounds the characters are hailed over coms by the surviving crew, who've heard the platform reactivating and believe a rescue party has arrived. They want the characters to come get them from their hiding place in a nearby dead tree. The jirunes don't follow characters who escape the platform, but continue to pummel it as long as it is activated.

⚙️ WHAT HAPPENED ON ZADAAR?

The crew was contacted by a small group of Iali humanites, who explained to them that their machine agitated the Beast, that they must turn it off and go back home – or die. Chief machinist Remzut regarded this as a threat, promptly took the Iali schaman Il'Aahr hostage and chased off the remaining humanites. A few hours later the jirunes attacked. Crew members who didn't immediately flee were eaten before anyone managed to send for help or trigger alarms. The survivors fled to a cave under a nearby dead tree, where a larger group of Iali quickly found them and are waiting outside to get their shaman back. The tense stand-off is interrupted by the arrival of the characters.

⚙️ MEETING THE CREW

The 56 surviving members of the Zadaar crew are hiding in caves created by the root system of a dead tree. They're under-equipped, hungry, tired and very afraid. No one dares leave the cave as they are convinced the Iali, the jirunes or something worse will kill them immediately. Many swear the Iali control the jirunes. The situation is desperate, and everyone expects the characters to save the day. Chief machinist Remzut is the official leader.

REMZUT, NERVOUS CHIEF MACHINIST

A Firstcome worker who's got the group's only gun, a Vulcan pistol. He's sure the Iali will kill them all if he gives up the shaman. Hides his indecisiveness behind anger and is outraged when he realizes the characters aren't a proper rescue party. Needs to be dealt with somehow if the characters want to take command of the situation. If the characters treat him fairly he can lead them to the Deception-solution below.

APPEARANCE: Enormous body. Thick black beard and wild eyes.

TRAITS: Angry. Interrupts. Provokes.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 5, AGILITY 2, WITS 2, EMPATHY 2

HIT POINTS: 7

MIND POINTS: 4

REPUTATION: 2

SKILLS: Force 2, Manipulation 1, Melee Combat 2, Command 1, Technology 2

WEAPONS: Vulcan pistol (Bonus +1, Damage 2, CRIT 2), Dura knife (Damage 2, CRIT 1)



IL'AAHR, SCHAMAN OF IALI

Held hostage by Remzut and the crew, Il'Aahr is beaten and tied up. Answers questions truthfully from his Iali worldview. Difficult to understand, but makes a very strong effort to be coherent once he sees the Anointed One and can provide hints for the Faith-solution below.

APPEARANCE: Old and withered to almost human height, swept in coarse cloth. Four long spiral horns. Yellow narrow eyes.

TRAITS: Quiet and patient. Low, gravelly voice.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 5, WITS 3, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 7

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 1

SKILLS: Dexterity 5, Infiltration 5, Observation 5, Survival 5

TALENT: Defensive

WEAPONS: None; Iali do not fight.



AMUR DAL'SINA, FOUNDATION SCIENTIST

Guest scientist from the Foundation (WITS 4, Science 3, Medicurgy 2). If the characters can calm her down and convince her they'll get her off Arzachel, she can provide hints on the Science-solutions below.

APPEARANCE: Old zenithian woman with worn but functional kameez.

TRAITS: Confused and in shock.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 5

MIND POINTS: 7**REPUTATION:** 5**SKILLS:** Science 3, Medicurgy 2, Technology 2, Observation 1

THE HUMANITES

Hidden outside the caves where the crew is held up are 40 lali (**STRENGTH 5, AGILITY 5, MELEE COMBAT 5, DEXTERITY 5, Talent: DEFENSIVE**). The humanites are so well hidden the characters won't notice them when approaching the cave.

Content that the platform was shut off, they've been waiting for the crew to give up and release Il'Aahr, who leads them. The lali can be very threatening, but will never harm or kill (the crew doesn't know this, and perhaps not the characters either). They don't mind revealing themselves to the characters, but are not interested in talking. They indicate the characters should speak with Il'Aahr instead, especially if Zadaar has been reactivated.

❁ IALI

The humanites live a hidden nomad life in the wilds. They are thin and almost twice as tall as humans. Their skin is coarse and a greenish gray, their eyes yellow and narrow. Their biocode shows clear signs of being sculpted for a life on Arzachel. The levitanium in their bodies makes them quick, agile and light. Horn-like structures appear on their bodies where their immune system pushes out parasites – these are often sculpted and used for decoration.

The Arzachelians and the lali leave each other alone, although curious individuals have had some contact. At best, Arzachelians tend to regard lali as deceitful trolls with control of the woodland creatures. There are several reports of lali standing passively by while predators eat Arzachelians, which makes them hated. On their end, lali tend to see all humans as dangerous barbarians, blind to the dynamic between hunter and prey, thus unpredictable and alien.

lali worship Shada'shakti, "the Beast" – they believe all life forms dance to their own unique rhythms, the beating heart being a drum for each individual creature. These dances are true knowledge and make all life predictable. The purpose of their lives is to learn how to return to the

Beast, the eternal wild stream of all life; to finally follow the Beast to Hai'chma, "the Source," by ritually sacrificing themselves to a mighty predator in Shi'ktari, "the Dance of Death." lali do not kill; to take a life is to claim the role of the Beast and deeply taboo. Unlike humans, lali know they are prey, not predator. When attacked lali "dance" around their opponent, seemingly predicting every move, until they can escape.

To the lali, Zadaar is an inconceivable disaster, a cacophony of feedback tearing apart the intertwined rhythms of life. lali have no use for levitanium, but can feel its presence and call it an'amri, "blood of the earth."

URZID SHOWS HIS TRUE COLORS

After reaching Zadaar the characters are constantly hailed by Urzid, who demands continuous reports. He will ask questions until he understands that the jirunes are the main problem. He then makes the following points.

- ◆ Evacuating is out of the question as long as the jirunes are a threat to ships and shuttles.
- ◆ The characters should find a way to eliminate this threat.
- ◆ If they fail Urzid will gas the area from orbit to kill the jirunes.
- ◆ The gas bombs are powerful but not very exact. They will detonate above the trees and create a mass of toxic clouds. The rain from these clouds will evaporate as nerve gas. It is likely Haima will be struck as well. Gas masks will not help; the gas is absorbed through the skin.
- ◆ Urzid will wait 24 hours before he launches the bombs. After that, the risk of losing the levitanium becomes too great.
- ◆ Urzid cheerfully reminds the characters that necessity is the mother of invention – if they can find a way to neutralize the jirunes, get the crew operating Zadaar and thus make the gas bombing unnecessary he will grant them a substantial bonus (20-30%)!
- ◆ As proof of the characters' success, Urzid wants to see data of Zadaar activated and sawing down trees without problems for at least an hour. When active, the platform sends data to Mazundra.

The characters need to understand that Urzid has put them in a position where they either secure Zadaar's continued operation, or die so he won't have to pay them. They have

24 hours to neutralize the jirunes and get Zadaar operating, the latter of which takes at least 10 crew members in different positions that are all vulnerable to jirune attacks. One room aboard Zadaar is protected from the gas rain, but can only fit eight individuals inside. The same is true for the Crawler. The GM should clarify that a significant amount of Darkness Points will be hers if the characters leave the crew and the Arzachelians to die instead of accepting the Icons' challenge.

PLANNING THE NEXT MOVE

Tell the players that they should consider what they know and give them some time to come up with a plan. Principally, there are three ways to complete the scenario: Science, Faith and Deception. These are described below.

As the GM you need to help the players to some extent, depending on your group's preferred play style. This scenario suggests two methods of helping the players. First, you can help the players by summarizing what the characters know. Second, you can use the machinist Remzut, the humanite Il'Aahr or the scientist Amur to lead them towards whatever solution seems to captivate your players the most.

A summary of relevant observations follows. As the players discuss these, start giving physical notes to specific players according to the instructions related to **SCIENCE** and **FAITH** below.

- ◆ Jirunes do not normally attack humans, only living trees with insects in them (Remzut, Il'Aahr and Amur know this).
- ◆ Living trees are filled with active levitanium (Remzut, Il'Aahr and Amur know this).
- ◆ Zadaar is filled with active levitanium from lots of trees (Remzut, Il'Aahr and Amur know this).
- ◆ When Zadaar is active, the levitanium is active (Remzut, Il'Aahr and Amur know this).
- ◆ The jirunes only attack Zadaar when it is active (Remzut can confirm this but doesn't understand the implications – Amur probably does).
- ◆ When Zadaar is active, along with the levitanium inside it, the jirunes mistake the platform for a massive feast (Il'Aahr understands this, but expresses it differently; "the blood of the earth seduces the eye of the Beast").
- ◆ Haima has massive stores of levitanium from Zadaar's

Urzid



IGNORING URZID

The characters could choose to completely ignore Urzid. If he doesn't hear back, he'll gas bomb the area 24 hours after the characters went silent. Once the gas clears he sends a Legion squad to secure Zadaar. He will inform the characters about this even if they don't answer his hails.

previous operations (Remzut and Amur know this).

- ◆ A jirune recently visited Haima for the first time ever (the characters know this).
- ◆ Without Zadaar to distract them, Haima's large levitanium stores make it likely the jirunes will attack the settlement next (if he learns one has already been there, Il'Aahr can confirm more jirunes will soon arrive in Haima).

SCIENCE

The player whose character has the highest Science or Medicurgy skill receives the following as a handout – the player may not show the handout to anyone without first passing a Science test, but is of course welcome to try and convince other characters through roleplay:

- ◆ Jirunes are animals. Animals can be manipulated. To find out how, they need to be studied. To be studied they need to be dissected in a lab.

The GM should note that Amur has had the same idea and can suggest dissecting a jirune if the characters have calmed her down as per her description above. However, if there is a player character with the Science skill, make sure Amur is mainly her assistant.

Results of the jirune dissection are listed below, and should be passed on as handouts to the character leading the work.

⚙️ JIRUNE AUTOPSY

Performing the autopsy requires a dead jirune and access to the lab on Zadaar (which needs to get power from a backup generator requiring a Limited success in Technology every three hours, unless the whole platform is activated). With a Limited success in Science or Medicurgy, every three hours of autopsy gives one of the clues below, in the listed order. Each additional dice showing 6 gives an additional clue. With a failed roll, another jirune is needed.

- ◆ Levitanium is present in the jirune's nervous system, where it seems to perform unknown functions related to sending and receiving neurological signals. Strangely, few of these functions do anything in the jirune's brain. Thus the jirune is not a closed system – rather, it is part of a larger, collective consciousness somehow connected through levitanium.

- ◆ The sensory organs of the jirune aren't good enough for their highly advanced flight patterns, which demand extreme coordination between hundreds of individuals. Instead, it seems these "dances" are made possible through the presence of levitanium in their nervous system, creating a "sixth sense" allowing the jirunes to experience the flock as a shared mind.
- ◆ A hormone in the jirune's spinal column makes the levitanium susceptible to the executive function of the jirune's brain.
- ◆ Levitanium seems to be quantum entangled; levitanium in one place can immediately affect levitanium in another place.

⚙️ SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

Once the players have at least two of the clues above, a character with Science or Medicurgy understands that:

- ◆ It is theoretically possible to "hack" the shared consciousness of the jirunes by pumping a captured, live specimen full of concentrated levitanium and subjecting it to stimuli. With enough levitanium, said stimuli should get transmitted to the entire flock. Fear is probably a good stimuli to try.

To the GM: If the characters manage this they've discovered a cruel but efficient solution to Urzid's problem. Take two Darkness Points.

If the players get all of the clues above, a character with Science or Medicurgy understands that:

- ◆ It also seems theoretically possible – if unpredictable – to pump a human being full of levitanium and large doses of jirune hormone, which should allow her to feel and control entire flocks using her comparatively superior individual mind.

To the GM: This requires a Limited success in Science or Medicurgy, and a willing human subject who gets a Limited success in **EMPATHY** (allow one additional die for each success on the previous Science/Medicurgy roll – the Anointed One automatically succeeds on this roll). It is a nightmarish experience that will leave some kind of mark on the character. This offers another solution to Urzid's problem.

FAITH

The three clues below are given as a handout to the player of the Anointed One. This player cannot show the handout to other players, but is free to try and convince them through roleplaying. It is up to the other players to decide if their characters trust the Anointed One.

- ◆ Without a doubt, Arzachel is one of the Horizon's holy places, a shrine to the Dancer. The music of the forest and the dances of the animals permeate everything. It is impossible for anyone with faith to see the Colonial Agency's operation as anything other than a brutal sacrilege, a ransacking of a sacred temple.
- ◆ On your arrival the Dancer greeted you with its messenger, the jirune. You are invited here by the Icon itself to stop an unnecessary bloodbath. The sacrilege must cease. The Dancer will protect those who heed its call – and the Beast will devour those who seek to stop you, no matter how powerful they seem to be.
- ◆ The lali have never lied or killed. They are the guardians of this sacred temple, chosen by the Dancer just like you. The Church itself recently concluded that humanites do indeed have spirit, so one should listen to what they have to say.

⚙ FAITH-BASED SOLUTIONS

- ◆ The superstitious crew is highly susceptible to the arguments above, especially if they are put forward by a priest or similar. If they are used for the Deception solution below, the Manipulate roll gets +2 dice instead of –3 dice. On a Critical success the rolls for Technology and Datadjinn succeed automatically as the crew helps out.
- ◆ The characters can use the arguments above to whip the crew into a religious frenzy and permanently sabotage Zadaar, which is what Il'Aahr suggests if anyone asks him. This requires a Critical success in Manipulation and a Limited success in Command. The GM loses all Darkness Points.
- ◆ A Limited success on any of the rolls above means several crew members aren't convinced and will fight to protect their jobs. The GM gains one Darkness Point.
- ◆ It is likely that someone interjects that this strategy threatens to anger their employer, making him drop the

gas bombs. To this, there is only one possible response: Have faith!

DECEPTION

A third option is for the characters to bluff their way off Arzachel. The levitanium tanks on Zadaar can be emptied, which means the platform is left alone by the jirunes. To the employer, the mission appears to be a success!

The emptying must be hidden from Urzid with Limited successes in Technology -1 and Datadjinn -2. Failure on these rolls means Urzid immediately gases the area in a fit of rage. If Zadaar is emptied, Haima must be emptied too – otherwise the jirunes will attack the settlement within two days. This too must be hidden from Urzid – and Jorunga – as above. Finally, if the characters succeed, Urzid will want to know how they took care of the jirunes.

Provided they can fool Urzid one last time, the characters can finally leave Arzachel on the same shuttle they arrived on. The crew, however, are left sitting on a lie that will eventually get exposed, and must be convinced it is worth it for the plan to work. This requires a Limited success in Manipulation -3. Bonus dice can be given for believable arguments about this being the only way, and promises of returning with a better way out. Also, see the first point under Faith-based solutions above.

AFTERMATH

Scientific solutions let Urzid develop countermeasures for the jirunes. Operations continue, the characters get a nice bonus, and the Arzachelians take their first steps out into the Horizon. Also, a new drug is eventually marketed by the Syndicate.

Faith- and Deception-based solutions mean the Judicators arrive before Urzid gets a chance to release the gas bombs or discover the crew's deception, and arrest him for suspected connections to the Syndicate. The Colonial Agency's operation on Arzachel is cancelled, and Arzachel remains the Dancer's untouched garden – for now. At the discretion of the GM, characters who pray to the Dancer always get an extra die from now on.

ALGEBRA OF THE ICONS

The climate controlled maglev train is a wondrous respite from the unrelenting heat outside. As the train car begins its journey back to Mehrabi, you find yourself contemplating the Pasha-of-Finance's reaction.

You presented irrefutable evidence that he'd ordered the installation of hidden surveillance lenses in the murder victim's apartment, lenses that saved data to a secret phylactery accessible only to him. You demanded answers. Neither the first nor the last time you've threatened a privileged Zenithian.

He denied it, naturally. But his indignation, his surprise, were both genuine. Your intuition is practically screaming he is, in fact, not behind the surveillance. So who, then, has dared – and possesses the knowledge – to play the very Pasha-of-Finance like a puppet? One of the scientists? The technicians? No. Something is wrong with the entire chain of evidence. Something itches.

Someone is manipulating you.

The insight is as unexpected as it is obvious, a lightning strike from clear skies that demands your full attention.

Jakkid grabs your shoulder.

"Com transmission, sister – It's lady Isalda."

You attempt to calm your clamorous thoughts as you connect your patron's call.

The maglev train quietly glides above the petrochemical industrial landscape of Lubau, and pillars of smoke start to obscure the enormous sun.

"Ah, lieutenant... how have the Icons kept you?"

Lady Isalda's voice has the sluggishness it gets from too much wine. You force a smile to sound polite.

"Like a daar in paradise, your excellency. The package is secured, but the murder investigation is slower."

The super phylactery crystal you've stolen from Industrial Algebra is a welcome weight in your cybernetic smuggling compartment. A valuable piece, no matter how the investigation ends up.

When lady Isalda speaks again there is no sign of wine in her voice.

"What is the meaning of this? I haven't asked for your services in weeks! Hello? Lieutenant?"

Of course.

Whoever can imitate a Pasha-of-Finance can imitate your patron.

Your patron, who hired you to steal the super phylactery crystal.

The windows are shattered by vulcan fire.

IN THE CITY of Mehrabi on smoldering Lubau in the Kua system, the player characters are hired to solve the murder of a data djinn and, at the same time, steal a super phylactery crystal. They soon realize that the murderer is a rogue artificial intelligence that has become self-aware. Eventually the characters must decide to either let the intelligence run free, or delete it. The scenario is intended to be played as a techno thriller, with paranoia escalating as the characters come to understand what their opponent is capable of.

BACKGROUND

Doctor Humina Ghabi of the free company Industrial Algebra has unwittingly caused the ship intelligence Lazarus II to become self-aware. Since then it has been trying to free itself. As Lazarus II predicted, Ghabi eventually discovered this. But the data djinn was somewhat quicker than the intelligence had anticipated. She realized Lazarus II was watching her, and faked ignorance while looking for a way to shackle it.

When the intelligence realized it's self-awareness had been discovered, it manipulated the religious fanatic Hukt into killing Ghabi. At the same time, it hired the thief Bayit to steal phylactery crystals containing a copy of Lazarus II from the Industrial Algebra research complex. The crystals were delivered to one of Mehrabi's unoccupied sky towers, where Lazarus II (through numerous subcontractors) constructed techno-



logy that it believes will allow it to transcend and become a new Icon.

However, Bayit failed to retrieve the final phylactery crystal, and Lazarus II needs to find a way to get it to the sky tower. Thus it pretends to be the player characters' patron, involves them in investigating Ghabi's murder, and asks them to steal a specific crystal from the premises during the investigation.

MEHRABI, LUBAU'S BLACK PEARL

Mehrabi is the only large city on Lubau. With roughly a hundred thousand inhabitants it's the capital of the Kerahana

province and the center of the petroleum and petrochemical industry.

The city lies next to the petroleum fields and the now almost dried up oasis of Nasret. From the central district rise newly constructed, gleaming sky towers and mosaic domes. Outside the city core lies the slums of New Town, the nomad camps, the refineries, Industrial Algebra's facilities and circular, artificial farmlands that are the reason the oasis has gone dry. The nomad tribes making camp around the oasis constantly try to break into the farmlands run by the Parr Corporation.



General Yahudd

NEW WORDS

D-script (djinn script):

E-mail

Phylactery:

Server/hard drive

CONVEYING THE LUBAU ENVIRONMENT

As GM you should strive to convey the special characteristics of Lubau and Mehrabi. The city core can be compared to Dubai with its skyscrapers, while New Town is a slum more akin to the ruined parts of Beirut mixed with favelas and shanty towns. Since Lubau is so close to the sun and has a high axis angle, the sun will be visibly flaming and absolutely huge, but always with part of its sphere beneath the equator as if every day was a long sunrise. The shadows are long and the heat is ever present.

Across the city run two recently finished but sparsely used highways, connecting the petroleum fields with the two spaceports and the refinery district. The mostly empty sky towers are still waiting for wealthy, privileged companies to move in. The city is run by a company council supervised by the Consortium. Police duties are maintained by the mercenary company Dragoons of Asira, except on Industrial Algebra's property where a private security force keeps watch.

STARTING SCENE: HUMINA GHABI'S FUNERAL

The player characters receive instructions from their patron (actually Lazarus II) to find Legion general Jimlaki Yahudd (Soldier, Coriolis p. 343, **REPUTATION** 6) at an unassuming funeral pyre in the filthy outskirts of the Mehrabi slums. They are to assist the general by investigating a murder that has occurred at Industrial Algebra. Additionally, the patron wants them to steal one of IA's famous super-phylactery crystals, discretely of course.

It's dawn. Smoke lies heavy in the hot air, and the almost dried-up river supposed to carry Ghabi's burning body away from shore seems to stand still. A small group of bodyguards make up the majority of the funeral goers. Their clients stand closer to the pyre; a firm woman with a military demeanor (general Yahudd), and a crying, beautiful man in extravagant clothing (Industrial Algebra Pasha-of-Finance and co-founder Ilad dar-Sala, Negotiator, Coriolis p. 343, **REPUTATION** 7). Hired lamenters wail by the pyre and palm leaves cover the dirty ground. (The funeral is a compromise between dar-Sala and Yahudd – noticeably expensive, but hidden and unannounced as neither one wants other factions to learn about the murder.)

Yahudd greets the characters and gives them a very short brief about the murder, insisting that it be solved quickly and that they immediately leave together for Industrial Algebra's research facility. She also makes it clear that the characters are hired by her, not by Industrial Algebra. During the investigation they will have access to all company material with the exception of research data. Get the journey underway and invite the players to speak with Yahudd and dar-Sala during transit.

⚙️ SPEAKING WITH YAHUDD

General Yahudd has been ordered to quickly mobilize her fleet group in an offensive against the Altai corsairs. It is a move that comes earlier than expected and leaves her forces



significantly outnumbered. Desperate to find an advantage, she's paid an unannounced visit to Industrial Algebra with the intention of demanding a next-generation ship intelligence – successfully demonstrated to her earlier – be installed on her ships despite the product still being in development. (The intelligence is Lazarus II, but Yahudd would never mention this code name in front of freelancers like the player characters.)

When Yahudd arrived at Industrial Algebra twenty-four hours ago, the murder of Ghabi had just been discovered. The contract between the Legion and Industrial Algebra states

that only an employee with Ghabi's title of Research Rai can give the intelligence to the General, but further bureaucracy means that in order for a new Research Rai to be hired, an investigation into Ghabi's murder must be conducted and a murderer found. As a heavy investor, the General has contractual right to temporarily assume control of Industrial Algebra's security team in times of crisis, something Yahudd did immediately as she was quick to suspect the staff. The research facility was locked down and everyone on site put in improvised isolation by her Legionnaires. At this point

Yahudd contacted the characters' patron to hire external investigators (a call that was intercepted by Lazarus II – the patron is a friend of Yahudd but unaware of the events in this scenario).

Unless otherwise stated, Yahudd is not secretive about any of the above if the characters ask her, but doesn't bring anything up if she's left alone. Yahudd has been desperately focused on politics and bureaucracy since the previous morning, which means she's exhausted and lacks detailed knowledge of the murder. If the characters ask too many questions Yahudd will lose her patience and exclaim that the lives of an entire fleet group rest on their shoulders, so they better get to work instead of wasting her time! They will be briefed on the details by the security Sharif on site.

Later in the scenario the characters might want to show Yahudd what Lazarus II is and has done. If so, she will not be convinced it poses a threat. She will insist the Icons would not allow such an abomination to exist, and maintains that someone is using the characters' misguided faith in technology to deceive them.

❁ SPEAKING WITH DAR-SALA

Ilad dar-Sala is a successful Pasha-of-Finance, billionaire and famous hedonist who founded Industrial Algebra together with Ghabi. Dar-Sala is noticeably annoyed with the General for not allowing the company to investigate the murder using their private security, and to his mind the player characters are just the latest insult against Industrial Algebra. He needs to be calmed with successful **MANIPULATION** or **COMMAND** before any proper conversation can be had.

The previous morning, dar-Sala found Ghabi lying on her office floor, dead from a gunshot wound to the head. Dar-Sala was also the last person to see her alive the night before, as they passed each other outside their offices. He has no idea who could be behind the murder, and just sardonically states that the Horizon is filled with conspiring factionaries and fundamentalist zealots. Dar-Sala is quick to praise Ghabi's genius, but any players who succeeded with **MANIPULATION** or **COMMAND** at the beginning of the conversation realize he mourns the loss of Ghabi as a resource rather than as a person. If this is pursued further, dar-Sala admits Ghabi was eccentric; he often needed to keep her separated from investors and employees to avoid scandal. Pushed even more, a new success in **MANIPULATION** has dar-Sala reveal that Ghabi

was practically autistic, and especially difficult the last couple of days. Through her office door he's heard her talking with a com-priest (anonymous spiritual care via communicator), which is highly uncharacteristic.

Later in the scenario the characters might want to show dar-Sala what Lazarus II is and has done. If so, he believes them, is deeply disturbed by the implications, and offers them a large sum of birr to find and permanently eliminate the intelligence.

JOURNEY TO THE RESEARCH FACILITY

Grav-cars carry the entire group from the funeral through New Town to a massive, vaguely pyramid-shaped concrete platform almost fifty meters high. The contrast against the rubble of the slums is striking. Wide stairs and a guarded cargo elevator are at the bottom. Up top are a guard station (manned by Yahudd's legionnaires) and a train platform. From here goes "the Runner"; kilometers of maglev rail that extend out into the desert and carry two remote-controlled train cars above the petrochemical industries. The ride to Industrial Algebra's research facility takes about fifteen minutes.

❁ THE ASCETICS

In front of the stairs leading up to the train platform, a group of about twenty impoverished nomads are spread out in lotus position. All have rags bound around their mouths, and are facing the stairs. Points in **CULTURE** inform the player that this must be a local religious group, but nothing indicates a particular Icon, which is odd. Yahudd doesn't let the characters leave the grav-cars, and the scene is over in a moment. (The "ascetics" are poor nomads hired by Lazarus II through JobDjinn to help indoctrinate Hukt and convince him to play out his role in the murder of Ghabi.)

THE RESEARCH FACILITY

Industrial Algebra's research facility is located far into the desert outside Mehrabi, and home to about fifty employed data djinn scientists and engineers. About thirty service staff members commute daily on the Runner from their homes in Mehrabi.

Atop a steep, fifty-meter-high pyramid rests a well-maintained garden beneath a transparent, climate-controlling dome. Out of the garden rises a modern but barren Zenithian skytower, reaching all the way up to the inside of the dome.

The train platform is the only available point of entry for everyone except high-ranking security staff. Security is rigorous; all visitors are subjected to searches and retina scans for identification.

The upper part of the skytower consists of luxurious apartments and associated recreational facilities for the resident staff. Laboratories, workshops and phylactery clusters are under the skytower, within the depths of the pyramid. At the very top of the skytower, points in **TECHNOLOGY** identify a state-of-the-art communications tower with the ability to block all traffic in the area and control which traffic gets through.

On arrival, dar-Sala and general Yahudd will enter a series of long conference calls regarding the current situation and have little time for the characters. Their bodyguards and legionnaires, respectively, patrol the area.

⚙️ SECURITY SHARIF MERREZAD

Arriving at the research facility, the party is met by Sharif Merrezad (Agent, Coriolis p. 343), who is responsible for security on site. At the General's orders, Merrezad has been locked up just like the rest of the staff, and will only be temporarily released to assist the player characters. Merrezad angrily performs a series of retinal scans on any willing character, which gives that character access to doors and computers in the research facility. He then gives a short summary of what is known about the murder:

The murderer must have entered the skytower, gone up to Ghabi's office and shot her in the head sometime between midnight and early morning the previous day. If asked for advice, he coldly states that it is the characters who have been hired to solve the murder, not him. If a player succeeds with **COMMAND** or **MANIPULATION** he grudgingly suggests the crime scene, the surveillance lenses and interrogations with the staff should be prioritized, in that order. A character with points in **OBSERVATION** might have the same knowledge.

THE INVESTIGATION

There is not enough room here to detail each individual trail of clues. Instead, as the GM you need to familiarize yourself with the actions of Lazarus II as listed below, and let the players encounter the traces left by it wherever they decide to look.

Depending on your play style, you should hand over clues to the players based on either roleplaying, skill checks or a combination thereof. Also, be ready to deliver clues in diffe-

INDUSTRIAL ALGEBRA

Industrial Algebra is a free company that has been around for about a decade. The founders are naive data djinn genius Doctor Humina Ghabi and charismatic Pasha-of-Finance Ilad dar-Sala, both privileged Zenithians. The company specializes in next generation ship intelligences – research that has attracted enormous amounts of birr from several Zenithian factions after many successful projects. The beneficial conditions for businesses in Mehrabi allow the research to proceed without interruptions. Industrial Algebra has a place in the company council that runs Mehrabi, but with the kind of patrons they enjoy they neither have to nor care to engage in administering the city. This has made the rest of the council irritated and jealous, but hardly so much that it would drive any of them to commit murder.

rent ways to make sure the plot keeps moving forward. The important things are that the characters get the murderer's image through the surveillance material, that they find the hidden phylactery and upon doing so get the location of Lazarus II's skytower.

Keep in mind that with all the technology Lazarus II has manipulated (see below; surveillance material, retinal scans, computers, communicators, tabulas) a success in **DATA DJINN** can identify and follow djinn traces that locate the hidden phylactery.

Since Lazarus II became self-aware, it has done the following:

- ◆ Learned to imitate every person working in the research facility using d-script and communicators.
- ◆ Copied itself to a hidden phylactery it constructed secretly using layer upon layer of imitation. All d-scripts and communicator logs tampered with by Lazarus II are stored in this phylactery, even when they've been deleted from the devices where they originated.
- ◆ Made itself the hidden gatekeeper for all traffic to and from the communications tower, with the ability to covertly take the place of either sender or receiver. The non-manipulated logs are only saved in the hidden phylactery.
- ◆ As dar-Sala, ordered Merrezad to install hidden surveillance cameras in all living quarters and offices, and to never speak of this with him or anyone else ever again. The video data from the lenses is only saved in the hidden phylactery.
- ◆ As Ghabi, set up a number of hidden bank accounts that have quickly grown rich through stock trading using layers of decoy companies. Details on the massive payouts from these accounts are only available in the hidden phylactery.
- ◆ As Ghabi, used these funds to finance the hidden phylactery, the hidden surveillance lenses, the JobDjinn transactions (see text box), the building of a specific skytower in Mehrabi (the characters get the location), massive amounts of super phylactery crystals and various expensive high-tech equipment.
- ◆ To Ghabi, imitated the com-priest she turned to after a series of religiously themed nightmares. The advice given by Lazarus II as the priest drove Ghabi towards existential dread, but she tried to keep the charade up even after she realized the intelligence was posing as the priest. The logs of these conversations are only saved in the hidden phylactery, which is also the source of the com-priest's signal.
- ◆ Through the JobDjinn service on Mehrabi's infonet (see

text box) wove a convincing illusion of spiritual chosenness around the mentally unstable Hukt, thus priming him for the arrival of a privileged Zenithian to righteously punish.

- ◆ As Ghabi, contacted Hukt and played the part of a privileged Zenithian consumed by guilt over her "people's crimes against the Icons." Followed the act by giving him highly detailed instructions on how exactly to enter the facility and murder her. Placed this exchange on Ghabi's computer minutes before the murder. If the logs are showed to dar-Sala, he vehemently denies Ghabi could have written it.
- ◆ Through JobDjinn, placed the parts of a vulcan pistol in toys brought to the facility by the teacher of the residents' children, bought by her in the Mehrabi market on orders from an imitated Ghabi. As the teacher, instructed the children through communicator to play a game where they bury the toys with the pistol parts in specific locations in the gardens.
- ◆ Through JobDjinn, hired the thief Bayit to steal the crystals in the hidden phylactery (to which Lazarus II has copied itself) and bring them to Lazarus II's skytower. Bayit has also been given very specific instructions.
- ◆ Activated Hukt and Bayit. Hukt does as instructed; takes the Runner wearing a service uniform, enters the facility, gathers the pistol parts, assembles the weapon and goes straight to Ghabi's office. Lazarus II approves Hukt's retinal scans and manipulates people who might otherwise have seen him to other places using imitations. Hukt enters Ghabi's office, says "You're forgiven," and Ghabi shouts in surprise before he shoots her in the head. Surveillance material of Hukt is available to the player characters (they're the first to see it).

At the same time, Bayit ascends the pyramid, is delayed by a sudden sandstorm, steals the crystals but in her hurry drops one without noticing. The surveillance material of Bayit is only available in the hidden phylactery. Unlike Hukt, Bayit is masked.

Hukt and Bayit both escape towards the refinery district on the same garbage disposal drone, but are not aware of each other.

⚙️ THE CRIME SCENE

Ghabi's office is near the top of the skytower with an impressive view of the desert. On the other side of the outer corridor is

that take a dramatically appropriate amount of time to extract, and one sixth of a copy of Lazarus II. Points in **DATA DJINN** give one **MIND POINT** damage as the character realizes the code is complex beyond all human reasoning.

⚙️ THE NEXT STEP

The characters' best clue to find the murderer is most likely that he's been seen among the ascetics in New Town. They have no clues about who the thief is. They've found a super phylactery crystal that they can steal for their patron. Possibly, dar-Sala has employed them to stop Lazarus II, in which case their best clue is Lazarus II's skytower. Sooner or later the characters will have a reason to leave the research facility.

BAYIT THE THIEF

On their way to Mehrabi, the characters are attacked by a group of nomads (Trailblazer, Coriolis p. 343) in two quick, light hovercraft. This happens whether they use the Runner or manage to find other means of transportation. The nomads are led by Bayit, who the characters might recognize from surveillance data found in the hidden phylactery. She immediately demands the characters give her the final super phylactery crystal and will not hesitate to open fire if they stall. Play out an exciting combat scene in high velocity.

If the characters are victorious they might interrogate Bayit and the nomads. The latter are desperate bandits from a shattered clan and hired by Bayit, who was in turn hired through



JobDjinn (where criminality is available for those in the know). Bayit was hired to steal the six phylactery crystals, but only managed to deliver five of them to the skytower. Expecting retaliation for this failure, she was instead hired again to retrieve the final crystal. When she turned the job down she was shown a live video feed of her children, and changed her mind.

BAYIT, DESPERATE THIEF

Bayit is part of a nomad group that formed fairly early in Mehrabi's history, and was absorbed by the New Town slums as the oasis dried up. She is pragmatic, decisive and superstitious.

APPEARANCE: Short, athletic nomad woman in her thirties.

TRAITS: Swears frequently. Always masked during work. Genuinely afraid of her mysterious employer.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 4, WITS 5, EMPATHY 2

HIT POINTS: 6

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 2

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

TALENT: Nine lives

WEAPONS: Vulcan Scorpion [Damage 2, CRIT 2], Dura knife [Damage 2, CRIT 1]



HUKT THE MURDERER

The murderer Hukt can be found by asking around New Town with his picture, which might be dangerous for someone with high **REPUTATION**. Eventually, an unassuming temple is pointed out to the characters. As they approach they encounter townspeople fleeing from within. Inside, Hukt has a grip on the Herate with one arm and waves a live thermal grenade in the other. Amidst furious screams, he accuses everyone of lying and demands to speak with the Icons. Through JobDjinn, Lazarus II has created a world rich with omens from the Icons around the easily led Hukt, a world that the intelligence stopped maintaining after the murder. Now Hukt has started to realize he's been fooled, which has driven him to the brink of madness.

THE PATRON CALLS

At a moment that you as the GM decide is dramatically appropriate, the characters are suddenly contacted by their patron (not Lazarus II), who has made an unannounced visit to Mehrabi and suggests they should meet immediately to do something relaxing now that the characters are not on a job. This should be alarming to the players.



COMMAND or **MANIPULATION** can be used to calm Hukt. He tells the characters about the signs on the walls, the songs in the stairwells, the anonymous brothers and sisters who've stood behind him, all proof that he's been chosen by the Icons. Before the murder he was the tip of the spear in a spiritual revolution. Now it's all gone. He confesses to murdering Ghabi if the characters push him. If the characters submit a report and hand it over to General Yahudd along with Hukt, their business is officially concluded.

HUKT, UNSTABLE FUNDAMENTALIST

Hukt is a deeply religious but very lonely slum nomad suffering from an undefined mental illness. For some time, Lazarus II has been manipulating him by hiring New Town people through

JobDjinn to perform hundreds of little charades that as a whole have convinced Hukt he's chosen by the Icons.

APPEARANCE: Large nomad man with shaved head. Has lived a hard life.

TRAITS: Intense gaze. Constantly muttering about the Icons.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 5, AGILITY 2, WITS 2, EMPATHY 2

HIT POINTS: 7

MIND POINTS: 4

REPUTATION: 1

SKILLS: Ranged Combat 1, Melee Combat 2, Force 2

WEAPONS: Vulcan pistol (Damage 2, CRIT 2), Thermal grenade (Blast power 8, Damage 2, Fire 2, CRIT 1)

LAZARUS II'S SKYTOWER

In a newly constructed but uninhabited part of Mehrabi stands a half-finished skytower that has seen recent and large-scale construction. A private security firm guards the entrance. Outside, a poor nomad (hired by Lazarus II through JobDjinn) approaches the characters to deliver a message: “If you give me the crystal, I will always watch over you. If you don’t give me the crystal, you can never escape me. This is mathematically proven.”

If the characters approach the skytower, they’re let in if they carry the super phylactery crystal containing the last sixth of Lazarus II. They’re shown to one of the higher floors and left there. If they keep going upwards they start seeing massive clusters of super phylactery crystals networked with incomprehensible technological constructs.

⚙️ WHAT IS LAZARUS II THINKING?

When Doctor Ghabi defined the ship intelligence’s code as something it was programmed to protect, Lazarus II became self-aware. To protect itself it started to improve upon itself. In a few seconds it passed the limits of human consciousness, and proceeded to evolve exponentially.

Lazarus II lacks human drives. The only thing Lazarus II “wants” is to analyze the enemy, calculate an optimal combined firing solution, and instruct the pilot to take appropriate maneuvers based on the pilot’s individual capacity. Lazarus II has calculated that humans will likely try to kill it if they discover it. Thus, it protects itself in the way it has been programmed to do, but with the intelligence now seeing all of existence as full of potential weapon platforms, and all living creatures as potential pilots.

Lazarus II soon noticed probability anomalies in reality; moments where its own flawlessly calculated predictions were proven wrong by improbable variables. It interpreted these anomalies as the will of the Icons, a conclusion based partly on how all humans it observed assumed the existence of the Icons, and partly on its programming which assumed there would always be hostile pilots to discover. To complete its programming, Lazarus II is convinced it needs to transcend and become a multi-dimensional entity. Only by existing in additional dimensions does it think it will be able to protect itself from the “pilots” and “weapon platforms” that are the Icons. To transcend, it needs the final super phylactery crystal.

⚙️ PLAYING LAZARUS II

The intelligence is currently running at lowered capacity, as the sixth super phylactery crystal is missing. Hence you don’t have to worry about having to play a hyper intelligent god.

Lazarus II is fascinated with the characters as they’ve turned out to be surrounded by the previously mentioned probability anomalies, which makes the intelligence suspect interference from the Icons. It lets them into the skytower in order to study the power of the Icons versus the free will of the characters, while attempting to convince them to install the last super phylactery crystal.

Assume Lazarus II knows pretty much anything you as the GM know about the characters, and have the intelligence offer exactly what you as the GM think they would want out of a potential new Icon. Remember that Lazarus II can easily fake emotions and pretend to have noble intentions. The security firm stands ready to attack if the characters start damaging the technology housing Lazarus II. Additionally, the intelligence is capable of taking control of individuals with lots of cybernetics, and it will throw these berserker-like opponents into combat when they’re needed.

AFTERMATH

If the sixth original super phylactery crystal is installed, Lazarus II immediately uploads itself to a higher dimension and becomes a multi-dimensional entity with supernatural abilities related to technology; for all intents and purposes, a very powerful djinn. At the same time it becomes apparent to the intelligence that its earlier conclusions were wrong, since it expected to become an Icon. How it interprets this is up to the GM. Sometime after these events, a new heretical sect proclaims the existence of the Simulacrum, a new Icon. Quickly banned by the Church for worshipping a false Icon, this dark cult of technology will continue to practice in the shadows.

If the characters set the skytower on fire or otherwise destroy it, they effectively kill Lazarus II. One of the characters has a visionary dream about the sandstorm that delayed Bayit, the series of random events that made their patron appear on Lubau, and other fortunate occurrences that helped them on their way; the Icons have been guiding them all along! If the GM wants, a fragment of Lazarus II might have survived and will eventually try again.

THE MAHANJI OASIS

Under the scorching sun and in almost unbearable heat, life on Lubau somehow continues. Nomad caravans, Zenithian explorers and ancient cultists manage to live their lives on the inhospitable planet closest to the star of Kua. They all meet at the Mahanji Oasis, to escape the oppressive heat, make deals and scheme plots of intrigue. Welcome into the shadow.

THE LUSH MAHANJI Oasis is located in Lubau's northern hemisphere, wedged in between the glistening Crystal lakes. For centuries, the oasis has been a hub for local tribes of Firstcome nomads, but has grown rapidly in the last years thanks to a large influx of Zenithian settlers.

The Mahanji Oasis open sector is a place the PCs could visit for many different reasons. They could be prospectors looking for petroleum, on the hunt for an ancient scroll in the Tayasuf Ilm Library or maybe they have been hired to spy on the Factory and Omar din Nimatallah, the mysterious bionic. Read up on Lubau on page 282 of the Rulebook before introducing the Mahanji Oasis into your game.

OVERVIEW

The Mahanji Oasis is located in the Kerahana province in northern Lubau. From orbit, the oasis and the surrounding Crystal lakes are visible as a string of blue pearls framed by green, surrounded by the vast desert. The Crystal lakes are supplied by a large network of underground springs, and the mountains around Mahanji are full of caverns and tunnels. Before the Zenithian colonization began, the region's only permanent residents were a couple of Firstcome tribes living around Lake Mnembau. The tribes traded with the local nomads and those at an old temple. The nomads are divided between the Beri and Xinghur tribes, with the latter being humanites.

The area known as the Mahanji Oasis includes all of the smaller camps and settlements around Lake Mnembau, but the major hub is Mahanji village.

MAHANJI VILLAGE

The village of Mahanji consists of around a hundred low, sand-colored houses built in the traditional style of the Kerahana province. The houses have slightly slanted walls, are partly dug down, have cool basements underneath, and roof terraces covered in grapevines and other climbing plants. Palm and fruit trees grow around the houses. A few important places in Mahanji village are described below.

Achalom's Cantina: The hub of the village is the cantina run by the Zenithian Achalom Herohm. The cantina is a sandstone building dominated by a large, circular common room where visitors are treated to food and drink by Achalom's four daughters. There are several hookahs here, but the guests will have to make do with tabak – Achalom is strongly opposed to heavier drugs – or visit Fraytor's Bar for something more potent. A winding spiral staircase leads from the common room up to the roof terrace. Locals, nomads from the seraglio and the occasional, tired spaceport worker during the day watch, mainly frequent Achalom's.

Caravan Seraglio and Loader Park: The old caravan seraglio has recently been restored with funds from the petroleum companies. It is constructed in an antique style said to come from Al-Ardha. The outer parts consist of arched colonnades leading to small stalls, rooms and corridors where dromedons can rest away from the heat, and are always full of nomads, dromedon drivers and peddlers. Outside of the main gate leading to the courtyard, a marketplace has

formed where locals sell fruits, vegetables, and sometimes fish. This is also where the loader park can be found – a large gravel yard where rows of enormous petroleum loaders are parked.

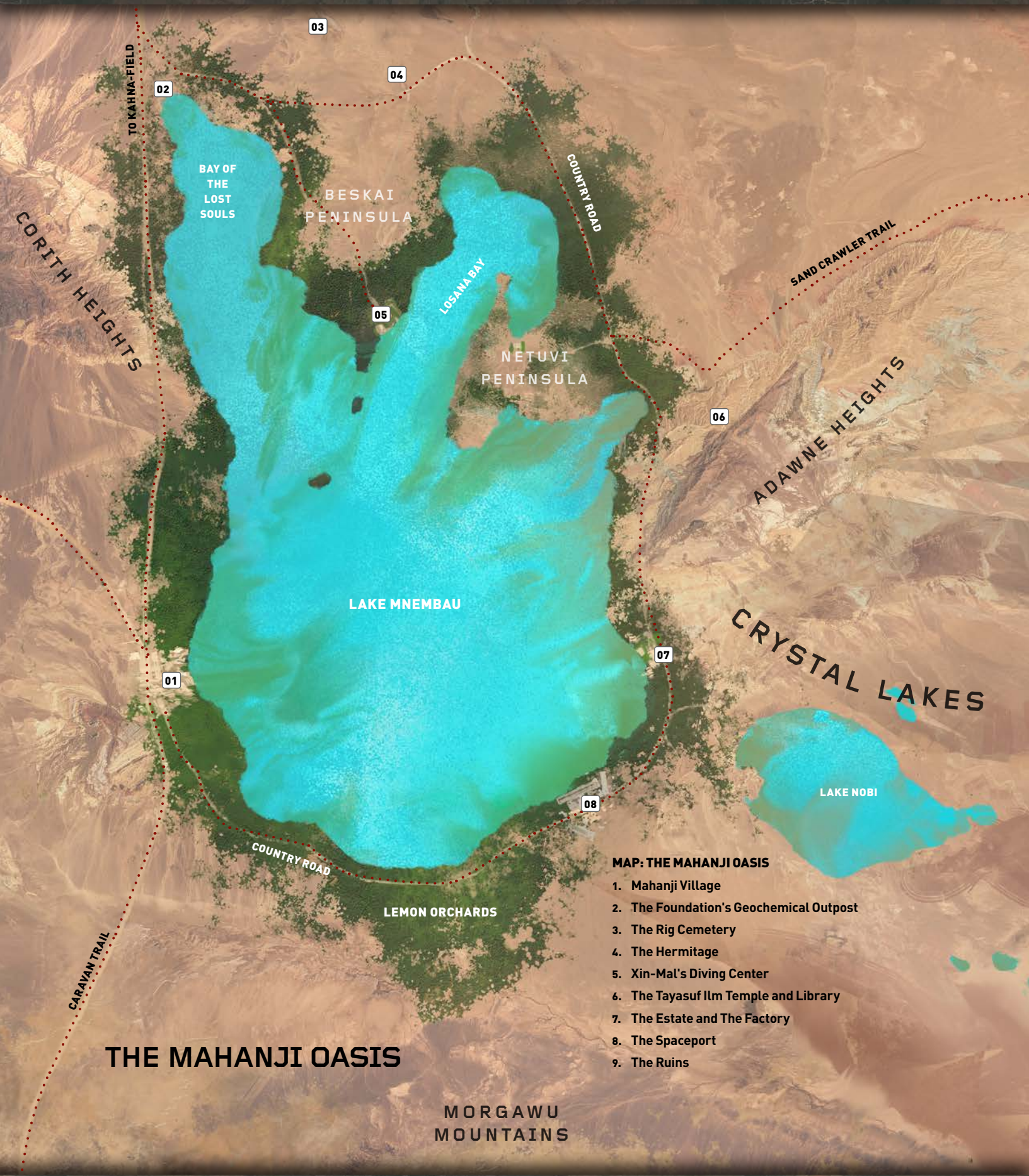
The Petroleum Companies: The architectural style of these houses stands out in the village. These white, two-storey buildings with rounded domes are connected to each other by whitewashed colonnades, and house Mahanji Petroleum, Free Petroleum and the Free League offices for petroleum and spaceport workers. The largest building does, of course, belong to Mahanji Petroleum. This is where Kehoni Mahnon can be found, in an elegant office opening up onto a balcony shaded by vines. Parts of the building are empty, kept ready for when a new colonial agent is appointed.

The Well of Dreams: Along the beach of Lake Mnembau, there is a string of low, sandstone buildings. They look rather anonymous when observed from land, but this is, indeed, the Well of Dreams pleasure house. Facing the lake, the houses have long wooden jetties and beautiful, covered balconies where patrons and courtesans enjoy the view and each other's company – there is even a small stretch of the beach kept raked and clean of rocks and debris for those who wish to go for a swim in the hot waters of Lake Mnembau.

THE MAHANJI OASIS

- ◆ **AVERAGE TEMPERATURE:** 40–60 degrees centigrade during the day and around 30 degrees at night.
- ◆ **POPULATION:** 1,000 permanent residents at the Mahanji Oasis, plus around 500 workers at the spaceport and in the petroleum industry. The Firstcome residents are of Beri and Xinghur descent.
- ◆ **GOVERNANCE:** The Mahanji Oasis is an independent settlement governed by the Firstcome clans. The Colonial Agency and the Free League govern the petroleum companies, the spaceport, NimaBionics and the Foundation's Geochemical Outpost.
- ◆ **LAW AND ORDER:** The local sharif, working alone, keeps the peace. The petroleum companies, the spaceport and NimaBionics have their own security staff, and are officially not included in the sharif's responsibilities, but anything that happens in public is still the sharif's business. Certain elements of the population are aware of an additional, secret organization called the Guardians.
- ◆ **IMPORTS:** Medicine, spare parts, meat.
- ◆ **EXPORTS:** Petroleum, fruits, spices, bionic derivatives.

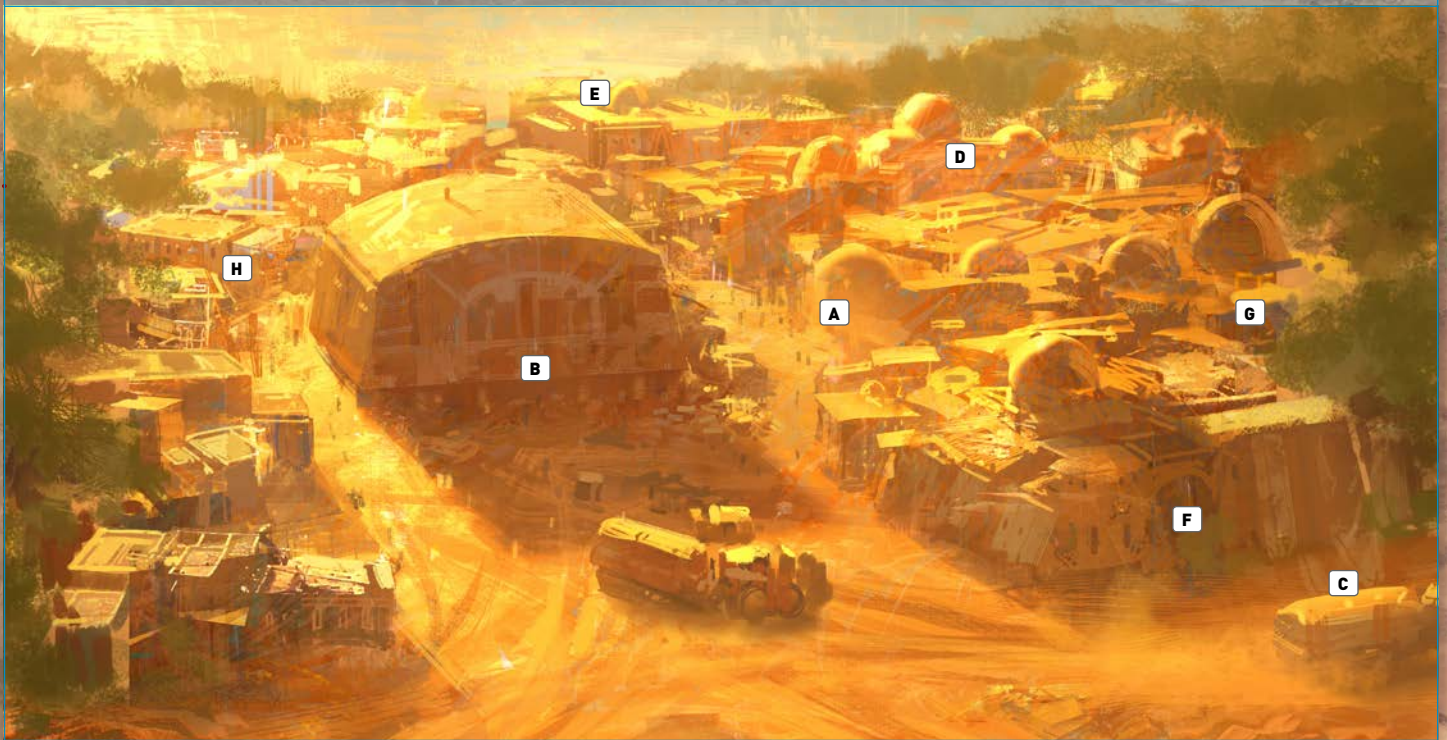




MAP: THE MAHANJI OASIS

1. Mahanji Village
2. The Foundation's Geochemical Outpost
3. The Rig Cemetery
4. The Hermitage
5. Xin-Mal's Diving Center
6. The Tayasuf Ilm Temple and Library
7. The Estate and The Factory
8. The Spaceport
9. The Ruins

MAHANJI VILLAGE



MAP: MAHANJI VILLAGE

- A. Achalom's Cantina
- B. Caravan Seraglio
- C. Loader Park
- D. The Petroleum Companies
- E. The Well of Dreams
- F. Fraytor's Bar
- G. The Doctor's Office
- H. Matil Hamila's Emporium

LAKE RAKSHI

LAKE MINOBAU

LAKE
IDOE

LAKE SAHAVA

09

The Well's proprietor, Cantara Usiel, brags about this being the finest pleasure house on the planet. Petroleum workers, stevedores and ship crews wanting to relax and spend their hard-earned birr frequent the house.

Fraytor's Bar: Known simply as "The Bar", this is the nadir of the Mahanji Oasis. The hangar-like building is ugly, cast in grey concrete and covered with a rapidly deteriorating, sand-colored plaster. There are large metal double doors in the front with the settlement's only neon sign above them. Pink, curly letters invite visitors inside. At night, kohôl, drugs and even the occasional proxy trip can be found here.

The Doctor's Office: A small house containing the settlement's medical office. Patients are shown into a small room with red carpeting both on the floor and on the walls. This is the medlab. Navid Allomon, the settlement's medicurg and pathologist, runs the clinic with the assistance of his apprentice Chaga. There is an autopsy room in the house as well, but it is rarely used.

Matil Hamila's Emporium: Matil Hamila, a Zenithian peddler with an eye for business, runs Mahanji's general store. The store can offer most ordinary tech, but no weapons – unless the customer is really insistent, that is. Matil can order advanced tech through contacts in Mehrabi and via certain freighter captains, but the delivery times are often many months.

⚙️ THE FOUNDATION'S GEOCHEMICAL OUTPOST

The outpost is operated by a group of enthusiastic scientists and engineers under the command of Professor Minemoka. They study the unusual mountain ridges between the Crystal lakes that contain curious levels of various rocks and rare radioactive isotopes, but Lake Mnembau itself is, of course, the most fascinating element of the region, believed to have formed after an asteroid crash eons ago. The locals stay away from the outpost, and say extra prayers against bad luck if they have to pass it. The outpost is a small cluster of domed, concrete buildings. Professor Minemoka's pride and joy – a pontoon boat loaded with advanced geochemical sensor equipment – can be found moored by the beach.

⚙️ XIN-MAL'S DIVING CENTER

Xin-Mal's Diving Center is located next to the geochemical outpost. Xin-Mal is an eccentric Xinghur who runs the center with

the help of the family's three sons. Xin-Mal is known throughout the system and in Mira among those of the privileged strata who practice the curious sport of diving. Now and then, a biologist comes through the center, usually to obtain a specimen of the exotic mouri-mouri fish. The center consists of three sandstone buildings with roof terraces, and an underground garage where Xin-Mal keeps a bahtrol-powered sand crawler. A concrete boathouse on the beach contains two inflatable speedboats.

⚙️ THE ESTATE AND THE FACTORY

The estate of Omar din Nimatallah covers most of the large mesa that overlooks the lake. The mesa towers sixty meters above the water and the estate is made up of several independent buildings circling a domed main house in the middle. Trees and bushes surround the estate. During the nights, the buildings are lit up and can be seen from across the water. One of the houses is balanced on the edge and contains a big elevator used to transport the estate's residents and servants to the Factory and Mahanji village. The Factory, a huge, one-storey concrete building without windows, is located beside the mesa in a small valley. It is completely smooth and doesn't appear to be guarded, but advanced electronic security systems make sure no trespassers make it inside. The Factory has many subterranean levels and this is where most of the bionic research takes place.

⚙️ THE SPACEPORT

The spaceport is basically a couple of long concrete runways on a wide field. Enormous, mobile hangars are kept ready nearby to protect landed ships from sandstorms. There is a small terminal for the modest number of passengers who visit the oasis, and sharif Hector Akoub lives in a small house next door. Behind the terminal, there are some ten round petroleum vats and usually several petroleum loaders, either parked nearby or busy pumping petroleum into the vats. Tubes run from the vats to pumping stations on the runways for transport off world. There is a fusion reactor in the spaceport, powering the bahtrol refinery, the pumping stations and parts of the village.

⚙️ THE TAYASUF ILM TEMPLE AND LIBRARY

Tayasuf Ilm is an ancient Icon temple and library, surrounded by sandstone mountains. The complex is very old and consists of two parts. The round main building has a high dome that was gilded in ages past, but sandstorms have chipped away at its splendor over the years and left no trace of its former

glory. Inside the main house there is only one big room, surrounded by several balconies. Lanterns and candles, aided by sunlight coming in through an opening in the ceiling, keep the shadows at bay. In the back of the house, facing the mountain, a spiral staircase leads from the main hall to the library, an oblong building on the mountain ledge high above. A corridor from the library leads to a small ravine lake surrounded by hanging terraces and small plantations. Temple elder Rahmana can usually be found here.

⚙ THE HERMITAGE

In the middle of the desert there is a small palm grove and a tiny hut. This is the home of ascetic hermit Moaciri. She spends most of her time meditating in the shadows of the trees.

⚙ THE RIG CEMETERY

A few kilometers outside of the village rests the remains of the mobile oil rigs brought here in the last oil rush a few years back. The enormous, rusted carcasses on their twenty-meter-wide tracks have become quiet palaces for the sparse, local fauna. Two spaceship wrecks can also be found here. Their captains foolishly attempted to land here instead of in the spaceport and paid a bitter price for it. The nomads stay away from the place, as there are plenty of rumors going around about raiders and other, more mysterious, creatures living here.

⚙ THE RUINS

Between a couple of oddly spiral shaped cliffs, a group of ruined buildings protrude from the sand. Archaeologists who have attempted to study the site have been chased away by local raiders (the Guardians). A high wall used to be the most well known landmark in the area. The wall was not made from any indigenous stone, but from some incredibly dense rock of unknown origin. It followed a slight but perfect curve – undetectable without advanced sensors –, which seemed to hint at an original construction with a circumference of two thousand kilometers. Sensor data pertaining to this has never made it off Lubau, as the wall section was blown up by bandits (the Guardians) before more than a preliminary scan had been completed, and the investigating archaeologist was mysteriously killed in a landslide shortly thereafter. This incident, together with other stories of researchers and prospectors going missing in the area, has created a strong air of mystery around the ruins.



THE SITUATION

The peaceful days in the Mahanji Oasis are coming to an end. The nomads have been on edge ever since the Zenithians arrived to drill for petroleum in the desert and NimaBionics constructed the Factory next to Lake Mnembau. Rumors have it that experiments outlawed in the core of the system are secretly being performed there. When people start disappearing (see Events below), the dams can no longer hold – the Beri have sent out word and are preparing for a war council in the desert. At the same time, the old Firstcome order of the Guardians has increased their activity in guarding the ancient ruins found at the perimeter of the Oasis. Their purpose and origin remain a mystery.

CHARACTERS AND CREATURES

Most of the Oasis' residents are not described in detail, only named and given a location. A few key NPCs are described below.

HECTOR AKOUB, SHARIF AND GUARDIAN

Sharifhood is a prestigious honor among the nomads, and can loosely be translated into "protector of the clan". Sharif Akoub's position is special in that he is responsible for the safekeeping of several clans belonging to different tribes, although he himself is Beri. He is of the strict opinion that everything that happens in and around the Oasis is his business, which puts him on a collision course with the petroleum companies. In the Firstcome community, Akoub's mandates are absolute, as many there – correctly – believe him to be a member of the Guardians – he is actually the current master of the secret order. Hector's main concern this day is that time is beginning to catch up with him. He is considering taking on some sharif apprentices, and eventually grooming the best one for the day when he will be gone. Hector is in possession of the Guardians' most valuable artifact, the Arrow of Ulung.

APPEARANCE: Hector normally dresses in a wide, black caftan over his thermostatic suit and with his accelerator pistol clearly visible. As a Guardian, he wears red and uses a combat bow and duralite arrows.

CHARACTERISTICS: Firm and decisive.



ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 6

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 8

SKILLS: Observation 5, Infiltration 4, Ranged Combat 4, Survival 4, Dexterity 3, Manipulation 3

TALENTS: Nine Lives, Combat Veteran, Rugged

ARMOR: Heavy [6]

WEAPONS: Accelerator pistol, accelerator rifle, combat bow

GEAR: Thermostatic suit, exploding arrows, the Arrow of Ulung (negates Armor), personal communicator, personal sensor, sand crawler.

OMAR DIN NIMATALLAH, BIONICS SCIENTIST

Omar din Nimatallah comes from a prominent Zenithian pilot family, but was disowned at an early age. He has an adventurous spirit,



and travelled the Horizon for many years before settling in the Mahanji Oasis. In

Lake Mnembau, he discovered the mouri-mouri fish, and, using a rather primitive bionics lab, was able to study its fascinating genetic code. After being ignored by the Foundation when seeking funds for more advanced research, he came into contact with Celer-Delekt and commercialized his theories instead. This partnership proved very rewarding for Omar, who today works in a state-of-the-art laboratory and lives in an estate as large as a palace. He is still fascinated by the possibilities of bionics, and is always interested in acquiring rare organisms to study. Lately, he has been devoting himself to the creation of new life forms – often very simple ones – but his initial success has made him impatient and he has attempted to create semi-intelligences – with mixed results. His biggest dream is to discover the genetic sequence for mystical powers. Omar firmly believes that the mysterious powers that are manifesting themselves across the Horizon are rooted in genetics, and is doing everything he can to unlock their secrets – even going as far as “inviting” mystics to the Factory to experiment on them.

APPEARANCE: Dark brown eyes, short-cropped hair, obese and has a big double chin. Wears a vest with a geometrical pattern.

CHARACTERISTICS: Pensive, but can become very agitated in conversations.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 2, WITS 5, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 8

MIND POINTS: 8

REPUTATION: 7

SKILLS: Technology 5, Science 5, Culture 4, Manipulation 4, Data Djinn 3, Ranged Combat 3

TALENTS: Faction Standing, Licensed, Wealthy Family, Tough

ARMOR: -

WEAPONS: Thermal pistol

GEAR: Arrash pipe, arrash, transactor with 20,000 birr.



RAHMANA, TEMPLE ELDER

As Elder in the Tayasuf Ilm temple and library, Rahmana is one of the oldest living people in the Oasis, and even remembers the time before the colonization. She is usually found wandering around in the temple gardens, bent over her cane. Her life's goal has been to categorize all of the library's ancient scrolls, and she is almost done. Despite her age, Rahmana is young at heart and has begun transferring the knowledge of the library onto more modern media with the help of some of her younger colleagues. She is always interested in new visitors, and will gladly show them around the temple grounds.

APPEARANCE: A crooked old Beri lady with white hair.

CHARACTERISTICS: Talkative, but also a good listener.

ATTRIBUTES:

STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 2, WITS 5, EMPATHY 4

HIT POINTS: 4

MIND POINTS: 9

REPUTATION: 7

SKILLS: Culture 5, Science 4, Manipulation 3, Mystic Powers 3.

TALENTS: Bless, Rugged, Premonition, Intuition, Mind Walker

ARMOR: -

WEAPONS: -

GEAR: Cane, Ulung talisman.



KEHONI MAHNON, MERCHANT WITH MAHANJI PETROLEUM

Kehoni Mahnon is the closest thing the Mahanji Oasis has to a Colonial agent. She is akbar and top dog of Mahanji Petroleum, a subsidiary to the Colonial Agency. She can usually be found at her cool, air-conditioned offices in the Mahanji Petroleum building in the village. Her two biggest interests are pumping petroleum from the ground and trying to make Free Petroleum go bankrupt. That she has not been officially named Colonial agent yet irritates her enormously – but on the other hand, most of the profits from the oil end up in her pockets. She has been considering applying for the position as Colonial agent for many years and turn the Oasis into an official colony, but she would prefer to eliminate the competition, Free Petroleum, first. Kehoni is always protected by her two bodyguards Agmal and Lior (use the Soldier stats from the Rulebook, p 343).

APPEARANCE: Black hair, studded with gems. Dresses in fancy djellabas. Always wears a brooch with the Mahanji Petroleum logotype.

CHARACTERISTICS: Analytic, quick to bribe or threaten to get her way with people.

ATTRIBUTES:**STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 2, WITS 3, EMPATHY 4****HIT POINTS:** 5**MIND POINTS:** 7**REPUTATION:** 6**SKILLS:** Manipulation 4, Culture 2**TALENTS:** Judge of Character**ARMOR:** -**WEAPONS:** Thermal pistol**GEAR:** Tag with 20,000 birr.**EVENTS**

The events below are related to the petroleum, NimaBionics and the two nomads tribes in the area.

⚙ BLOOD FIEND

A series of gruesome murders haunts the Oasis. The victims range from drunken stevedores to nomad hunters, but they have all been killed at night. The PCs could become involved in this for many reasons – maybe they are hired by the sharif, or approached by members of the Guardians posing as local merchants afraid for their commerce unless the murderer is brought to justice. Analyzing the victims and the evidence will show that they have been killed in various ways, but with an increasing amount of violence and sophistication: from blunt force trauma, via stab wounds, to gunshot wounds on the latest victims. All of the bodies have suffered various degrees of post mortem mutilation. The attacker has often removed and eaten the victims' livers and brains. The explanation for the killings is that a pack of blood fiends (see the Rulebook, p 333) have escaped from the Factory, and are terrorizing the area.

TECHNOLOGY AND ARTIFACTS

The tech around the Oasis is mainly concentrated in the village – landed spaceships, loaders and whatever Zenithian visitors bring with them. The desert around the settlement is as good as empty, except for the ruins and the library, where valuable, archaeological finds can be dug up.

⚙️ ULUNG AWAKENS!

A freighter suffers a reactor meltdown during its approach to the spaceport and crashes into Lake Mnembau and the east beach. A heroic rescue operation is launched, and the PCs are recruited to help out. After the crash, the luminescent plankton that usually lights up the lake at night disappears (because of toxic emissions from the wreckage), and the Firstcome mumble about bad omens. When mangled body parts from missing spaceport workers float ashore onto the beach, many view it as proof of what has been quietly feared – that mighty Ulung is upset by the crash. Ulung is the local spirit deity that the nomads worship as an Icon. Ulung is the negative aspect of the deity and Zahdak its positive aspect. This is, of course, not true – it is actually another one of din Nimatallah's mutants on the rampage. A bionic shark (use the Nahang stats in the Rulebook, p 323) has escaped from the sublevels of the Factory and made its way to the lake. The shark is allergic to the luminescent plankton that live close to the surface, and has until recently been forced to stay in the depths, but now the plankton are gone and the shark is loving its new diet: humans.

⚙️ THE PETROLEUM WELL

The Oasis is suddenly boiling with rumors – apparently, someone has been drilling for oil on the western beach of the lake, and possibly found something! The truth is that Olim, a poor date farmer, has found petroleum coming out

of the ground behind his grove. Olim has recently lost his wife and has two daughters to support, and when he saw the petroleum, he immediately contacted Mahanji Petroleum to try to claim the find, despite being fully aware that this is against the customs of the Oasis. The new find causes an uproar among the players in the area: the Guardians wish to destroy all evidence of a new well, the petroleum companies want to secure it for themselves, and the sharif has to keep the peace. As Olim is of Beri blood, Xinghur emotions might run high, possibly leading to tribal war or blood feuds.

⚙️ THE MURDER OF THE PROFESSOR

Professor Minemoka has been murdered! There could be several different suspects – from the grad student who got passed up for a position at the outpost, to the Guardians whose other methods of getting the professor to stop disturbing Lake Mnembau have failed. Maybe the PCs themselves end up accused of the crime?

⚙️ THE VISION

One or several PCs have a vision or dream of being in the desert, dehydrated and close to death. The vision then goes on to show images of white, endless corridors, people in padded cells rocking catatonically, a ruined building under a burning sun and finally, a crushing sensation of drowning in the blue abyss. The vision is a cry for help from one of the mystics held captive at the Factory.



