

For Referees Only

SPINWARD MARCHES

Call of the Wild

AVENGER ENTERPRISES

ADVENTURE 1: *CALL OF THE WILD*

FOR T²⁰ AND CLASSIC *TRAVELLER*

BASED ON THE AWARD-WINNING *TRAVELLER* GAME SYSTEM AND UNIVERSE BY MARC MILLER

Avenger Enterprises is the private venture of Martin J Dougherty, *Traveller* line editor at QuikLink Interactive. Avenger adventures and supplements are compatible with T²⁰ (*Traveller* for the d20 system) and Classic *Traveller*, and are published under license through QuikLink Interactive.

Adventure 1: Call of the Wild is set in the Spinward Marches of Official Traveller Universe, in the period just after the end of the Fifth Frontier War. As such it is compatible with either the official Hard Times – Collapse – Recovery – New Era timeline or an alternate wherein the assassination of Emperor Strephon does not occur.

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INTRODUCTION

Call of the Wild is the first **Traveller** adventure from Avenger Enterprises. It represents the culmination of a long-cherished ambition; to return to the Spinward Marches and find out where the story might have gone if more LBBs ('Little Black Books') had been published. It may be that there are huge story arcs waiting to be discovered as the product line develops. We're not saying at this point - you'll have to wait and see. What we can reveal is that there will be more Golden Age **Traveller** adventures to follow, and some of them will deal with the colonization of Steel. What the characters do here may affect events elsewhere, and in ways that they might not expect.

STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In order to play this adventure you will need one or another of the **Traveller** rules sets. Stats are included for T20 and for Classic **Traveller** (CT), though other rules sets can be used with a minimum of work. We assume that the adventure will take place in a game setting that looks and feels a lot like the Spinward Marches of the Official **Traveller** Universe (OTU), and that the normal **Traveller** conventions (one-week Jumps, no FTL communications and so forth) apply. If your game universe varies significantly, some tweaking may be necessary.

You will also need some dice as appropriate to your chosen rules set (normal 6-sided dice for CT and a variety of dice for T20). Pens, pencils and paper are useful, plus maybe something to drink and munchies of some kind. Avenger Enterprises recommends corned beef & potato pie to pacify ravenous players, but tastes vary...

Dates: All dates correspond to the standard Imperial calendar. The start date of this adventure is 320-1110 (i.e. the 320th day of the 1110th year since the founding of the Third Imperium). Time will flow normally once the adventure begins. If a different date is required, for example to fit the adventure into an existing campaign, then the start date can be altered with little or no disruption to the adventure.

Place: The adventure takes place on Steel (0709 E655000-0), a world situated in the Sword Worlds subsector of the Spinward Marches.

Theme: The adventure deals with the early stages of a colonization effort. The characters will be tasked with carrying out local surveys and investigating anything of interest. If the world is deemed suitable for colonization, suitable sites will have to be selected for the first communities. However, the survey mission does not go as smoothly as might be preferred. The colonial pioneers will encounter the hazards of an untamed world and be forced to make tough decisions, dealing with problems using only their own resources.

CHARACTERS

This adventure can be played (and completed successfully) by almost any group of adventurers if they are able to think creatively and maximize their strengths. There are no encounters or challenges in this adventure aimed at any specific type of character. Different characters will use different approaches and may struggle in some circumstances, but adventuring is not about having the right weapons, skills or equipment to meet a challenge; it is about meeting what the universe throws at you with what you have and finding a way to win – or at least survive.

Having said that, certain characters are better suited to this adventure than others. Any number of adventurers (or even a lone pioneer) can tackle this challenge, but a band of 3-6 adventurers works best. Useful skills include the ability to drive and repair ground vehicles, operate and maintain sensor equipment, and to survive in a wilderness environment. Adventurers usually find a use for weapons or other combat skills, which may make medical skills useful too. Some adventuring groups may even find it useful to be able to interact with their fellow sophonts (in ways not involving gunfire or unarmed combat!).

Involving the Characters

This adventure assumes that the characters have arrived on Steel to take up a contract as colonial pioneers. Why they came is not usually relevant. They may be demobilized military personnel seeking adventure now that the war is over, professional surveyors, Imperial Scouts or just a band of adventurers in search of a paying gig.

The characters will most likely have been hired by the Imperial Colonial Office (ICO) but may be on the payroll of a major corporation or other organization seeking to determine if the world is worth investing in. As an alternative, they may be freelancers following their fortune. In many cases, the Colonial Office grants licenses to freelance explorers and colonists to develop an area or to stake a claim to a mineral site, knowing that most will find nothing or fail to make a go of their venture. The money saved in terms of outfitting and paying explorers is generally far more than the price of buying out a claim once the world is ready to be opened up for exploitation.

EQUIPMENT

Certain equipment is necessary to this adventure. The characters are assumed to have been issued the minimum they need (see below) and have the use of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) courtesy of their patron. If additional equipment is desired, it can be purchased before the adventure begins or obtained from the base camp store (at inflated prices) during the adventure. The Referee should determine what is or is not available in the camp stores, bearing in mind that this is small settlement on a frontier world with little demand for exotic or expensive items.

The All-Terrain Vehicle

The characters have use of a standard 8-wheeled All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) which will serve as their transport and accommodation in the field. They will be assigned bunk space at the base camp when they are not out on a mission. The ATV does not belong to the characters and must be returned in working order at the end of the commission. A certain amount of wear on the ATV is acceptable (they are meant

to be abused in the field and can take a lot of bashing without any real ill effects). Repairs can be carried out by the crew using spares bought from the base camp stores, or by others at base camp for a fee. Spares and repairs can be deducted from the characters' pay or bonuses.

The ATV assigned to the characters is a TL-14 Ling Standard Products (LSP) *Workhorse*; a fairly standard and well-respected model. This particular example is by no means new and shows signs of several years in the field, but it is well maintained and in any case is designed to take punishment and like it. Powered by a small fusion powerplant, the ATV has more or less unlimited range since it needs refueling only every couple of years. It can cruise on flat terrain or roads at about 50kph and can cross virtually any terrain, albeit more slowly.

The ATV is fully pressurized, though it does not need this feature on Steel, and can traverse calm water using waterjet propulsion. It has cramped bunk space for 8 plus a galley that doubles as a work area for the crew. This particular model has power takeoffs for field equipment and carries a range of tools for the use of pioneers in the field.

The ATV contains the following equipment:

ATV Sensor Package

The ATV's sensors include powerful lights, infrared cameras and a basic ground-mapping radar unit normally used for navigation but useful in creating a limited surface map of an area. The vehicle also has an inertial locator and a long-range radio.

Other ATV Equipment

Racks aboard the ATV contain the following:

- 1 Shotgun plus 50 rounds of standard ammunition
- 1 Carbine plus 3 20-round magazines
- 8 Cold Light Lanterns
- 2 Metal Detectors
- Basic ATV-repair tool kit
- Shovels, spades and picks for digging
- 1 electric chainsaw for vegetation clearance

Medical Kit, Vehicle

A standard TL-C field medical kit containing broad-spectrum antibiotics, anti-venom agents and more basic items such as splints, bandages and wound cleaning tools. These can be used to perform emergency surgery, but they are very limited.

Survival Kit, Vehicle

The ATV carries two kits. Both have been recently restocked.

- 1 Survival Rifle, plus 50 rounds shot and 50 ball. Treat as Carbine.
- 1 Hatchet
- 1 Field Medical Kit
- 4 Personal Survival Kit
- 4 Sets/Emergency Cold Weather Clothing
- 4 Combination Masks plus extra filters
- Field Rations for 60 person-days (15 days for 4 people)
- 4 Bulk water storage containers with filters
- 1 Water Purification Kit
- 2 Pressure Tent

Personal Equipment

Each character has been assigned the following:

Basic 'Bush Kit':

- Boots
- 3 sets of tough coveralls
- Sleeveless 'field jerkin' with several pockets
- Over-jacket or parka for cold conditions
- 'Thorn-proof' gloves
- Bush hat
- Sunglasses
- Filter Mask (not necessary but sometimes useful)
- Small backpack
- Blade (for use as a machete)
- Sample collection kit (bottles, jars, and small tools e.g. tweezers)
- Cold light flashlight (i.e. chemical rather than electrically powered)

Survival Kit, Personal

- Small knife
- Fire-starting equipment

Blanket/poncho
4 days' preserved rations
Water bottle
Compass
Light cord or string
Mirror
Water purification tablets
Survival manual

The characters may in addition have their own equipment and weapons.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The following information is provided for the use of the Referee, who should decide how much of it is freely available to the characters, and also how distorted any information they may discover should be. Note that what is presented here is not the whole story in many cases, and is open to a certain amount of interpretation.

THE IMPERIUM IN 1110

The Third Imperium is 1110 years old. It has weathered civil war, frontier conflict and some rather serious internal crises but remains as strong and stable as ever; at least on the surface. There is no reason to suppose that any of the many problems facing the Imperium and her Emperor, Strephon, are serious enough to merit extreme measures, let alone that they might threaten the peace and stability of the Imperium.

The Fifth Frontier War, fought against a coalition of Vargr, Sword Worlders and Zhodani (and led by the latter) has been recently brought to a successful conclusion. The early stages of the war did not go well for the Imperial forces, mainly due to poor leadership and strategy among senior Imperial admirals. That changed when Duke Norris dramatically took charge of the situation, purging the upper echelons of the Imperial command structure ruthlessly. Some critics have suggested that Norris abused the power given to him by an Imperial Warrant; others say that this is exactly why the Emperor trusted Norris with the Warrant in the first place.

Today, the ripples caused by the war are beginning to subside. The political situation in the region is a little turbulent due to disaffection in some quarters. The sacked admirals (obviously) but also their political supporters and allies are up in arms about the way they were simply sidelined – heroic victor or not, there are many who feel that Norris has over-reached himself and needs to be cut down to size. The implications of Norris' dramatic assumption of personal command may be more far-reaching than anticipated. Already there are rumors that nobles in far corners of the Imperium are seeking to make their own powerplays, though most are proceeding cautiously while they wait to see what the Emperor has to say about the situation.

Reserve naval and ground forces units are already entering the Marches to make good losses incurred in the war, and a new round of shipbuilding has been approved to bring the reserve strength back up to establishment levels. The numbers of warships lost, while large, are a drop in the ocean compared to the might of the Imperial fleets. The war has not significantly reduced the ability of the Imperium to defend its territory.

THE SPINWARD MARCHES

The Spinward Marches Sector has relatively little significance in Imperial affairs, except that it is the Imperial border with the Zhodani Consulate and also with certain Vargr states. Lying fully 44 weeks' transit from Capital by Express Boat (a little less by Jump-6 courier, but not much), and separated from the Imperial core by the upper claw of the Great Rift, the region is considered to be a fairly unimportant backwater that serves as a convenient buffer against the Zhodani. However, the Spinward Marches were also the origin of Admiral Olav Hault-Plankwell's bid to become Emperor. The last thing Emperor Strephon wants is another Civil War, so the government of the Marches must be strong... but not *too* strong.

It will be some time before matters return to normal in the Marches. The naval bases and orbital defenses are being rebuilt and the battle squadrons replaced, but losses to minor warships will take longer to make good. In the interim, the Navy is doing all it can to maintain order on the spaceways but the inevitable upsurge in piracy, smuggling and general lawlessness has the remaining naval assets overtaxed. Some of the slack is being taken up with mercenary and even Scout Service vessels, but things are unsettled at best.

The war has also caused massive economic disruption even in areas where no fighting took place. Local defensive forces are gradually standing down while merchant ships return to their routes from wherever service as naval auxiliaries may have taken them. There are new opportunities for the taking in this shaken-up environment, and dangers to match.

The most troubled regions lie of course along the Imperial-Zhodani border, where tensions still run high. The Sword Worlds subsector is also unstable at present. The defeat of the Sword Worlders has resulted in Imperial occupation forces being based on some worlds, while others have been absorbed into a grouping now known as the Border Worlds. This group includes some former Sword Worlds and also the former Reserve Worlds of Steel, Mithril, Bronze and Iron. There are big plans for this area, which will in time provide a link to Imperial territory in Five Sisters subsector. However, it is early days yet.

SWORD WORLDS SUBSECTOR

Sword Worlds subsector lies on the Imperial border, though there are some allied worlds and states, and a small enclave of Imperial territory, beyond. To Spinward is Darrian subsector, home to the Daryens. The Daryen civilization is a remnant of its former glory; relics of TL-G are found on the Daryen homeworld though the useable technology of the Daryen Confederation is lower.

To Spinward-Rimward lies a small enclave of Imperial territory in Five Sisters subsector, which includes two interdicted Droyne worlds, Andor and Candory. To Rimward lies District 268; non-Imperial territory for the time being. Trailing-Rimward is Glisten subsector; an important outpost on the Imperial border. Rimward of that is the so-called Outrim Void and the Great Rift.

To Trailing of Sword Worlds subsector is Imperial territory all the way back to Corridor Sector and ultimately to the Imperial core. Coreward and Spinward are the remnants of the Sword Worlds (the political entity as distinct from the subsector of the same name), then a belt of

Imperial territory bordering the Zhodani Consulate.

Until fairly recently, Imperial influence in the Sword Worlds subsector was minor. Most of the subsector lay outside the Imperial border, in the territory of the Sword Worlds. Imperial vessels would pass through Biter and Caladbolg on the way to Five Sisters, but the overall Imperial presence was minor. The Fifth Frontier War changed all that.

Today, the rump of the Sword Worlds remains under partial Imperial occupation whilst many worlds (including the Metal Worlds) have been annexed into an Imperial client state known as the Border Worlds. Some former Sword Worlds came willingly, some not. The Metal Worlds, being uninhabited reserve worlds, are not subject to internal security problems in the same way that, say, Sting or Beater are. They thus have no Imperial garrison and are patrolled only intermittently by the overstretched Imperial Navy.

The Sword Worlds were settled long ago by (mainly European) settlers from Terra. A strong empathy with the Germanic traditions of honesty, courage and 'manliness' resulted in a chauvinistic but well-intentioned society that prized strength over stability; the Sword Worlds have been united at times and at one another's throats at others. Although prone to brawling among themselves, the Sword Worlders have always been willing to stand together against outsiders, and so for centuries have been a powerful force in the Marches; sufficiently so that the subsector is named for them.

The Sword Worlders have fought against the Imperium as part of several 'Outworld coalitions' as the popular media likes to call them. This time, they and their allies have been soundly defeated and several Sword Worlds are now under Imperial occupation. Imperial plans to ensure that the Sword Worlders do not become a threat once more include the incorporation of some former Sword Worlds, along with the Reserve Worlds, also called the Metal Worlds, into the Imperium.

The creation of this 'Border Worlds' group will do more than create a buffer zone against the Sword Worlders. The Metal Worlds (Steel, Mithril, Bronze and Iron) lie on the Spinward Main, a huge chain of worlds connected by Jump-1 routes, that snakes through most of the sector. Expanding the starports of the Metal Worlds will effectively open up the way for Jump-1 trade into District 268 and on into Glisten and Five Sisters subsectors. The latter two are or contain Imperial territory; District 268 is not as yet an Imperial subsector.

It seems likely that the expansion of the Metal Worlds is the opening gambit of a plan to increase Imperial influence in District 268. Annexation will no doubt follow in due course. There are various potential occupiers for the Metal Worlds including corporate bodies, Sword Worlders seeking a new home and a range of political and religious groups from across the sector. Who gets to settle on the various worlds depends on many factors but in all cases the colonies will need to be viable, and that means that their resources must be surveyed and catalogued before any colonists are sent.

A PARTIAL MAP OF SWORD WORLDS SUBSECTOR

UWP DATA

World	UPP	Zone	Bases	Codes	PBG	Stellar
0509 Caladbolg	B365776-A		S	Ri Ind	710	F7 V M0 D M4 D
0609 Gunn	E344110-8	A		Ni	602	M3 V
0610 Caliburn	E000514-A			Ast	924	M2 V
0706 Biter	B354623-A		B	Ag Ni	301	G7V M1D
0709 Steel	E655000-0				324	M8 III
0806 Iron	E529000-0				714	F0 V
0807 Bronze	E201000-0			Ic Va Ba	510	M3 V
0808 Mithril	E568000-0				301	F4 D

WORLD OVERVIEWS

Caladbolg is an important Imperial world in the region. It is an Xboat link and has a small Scout Service base to serve the communications link into Five Sisters subsector. Naval vessels transiting to Spinward usually pass through the system, which has been Imperial territory for many decades.

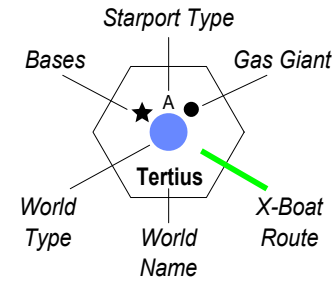
Gunn is currently Amber Zoned by the Scout Service on account of health risks linked with its tainted atmosphere.

Caliburn is populated mainly by scattered Belter populations mining its extensive asteroid and planetoid belts. It is de facto Imperial territory but has little importance and is rarely visited by outsiders.

Biter is one of the Sword Worlds co-opted into the Border Worlds. Long the site of an Imperial trade mission, Biter is the most pro-Imperial of the Border Worlds and relatively untroubled by unrest.

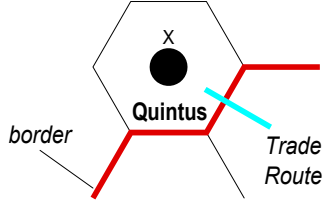
Steel is probably the best of the Metal Worlds in terms of human habitability, though its thin atmosphere results in more extreme

MAP LEGEND



Travel Zone
Code (Red)

No Gas Giant



WORLD CHARACTERISTICS

- No Water Present
- Water Present
- Asteroid Belt

BASES

- ★ Imperial Naval Base
- ▲ Imperial Scout Base
- △ Imperial Way Station
- Military Base
- X Exile Camp

TRAVEL ZONES

Amber Zone

Red Zone

POPULATION

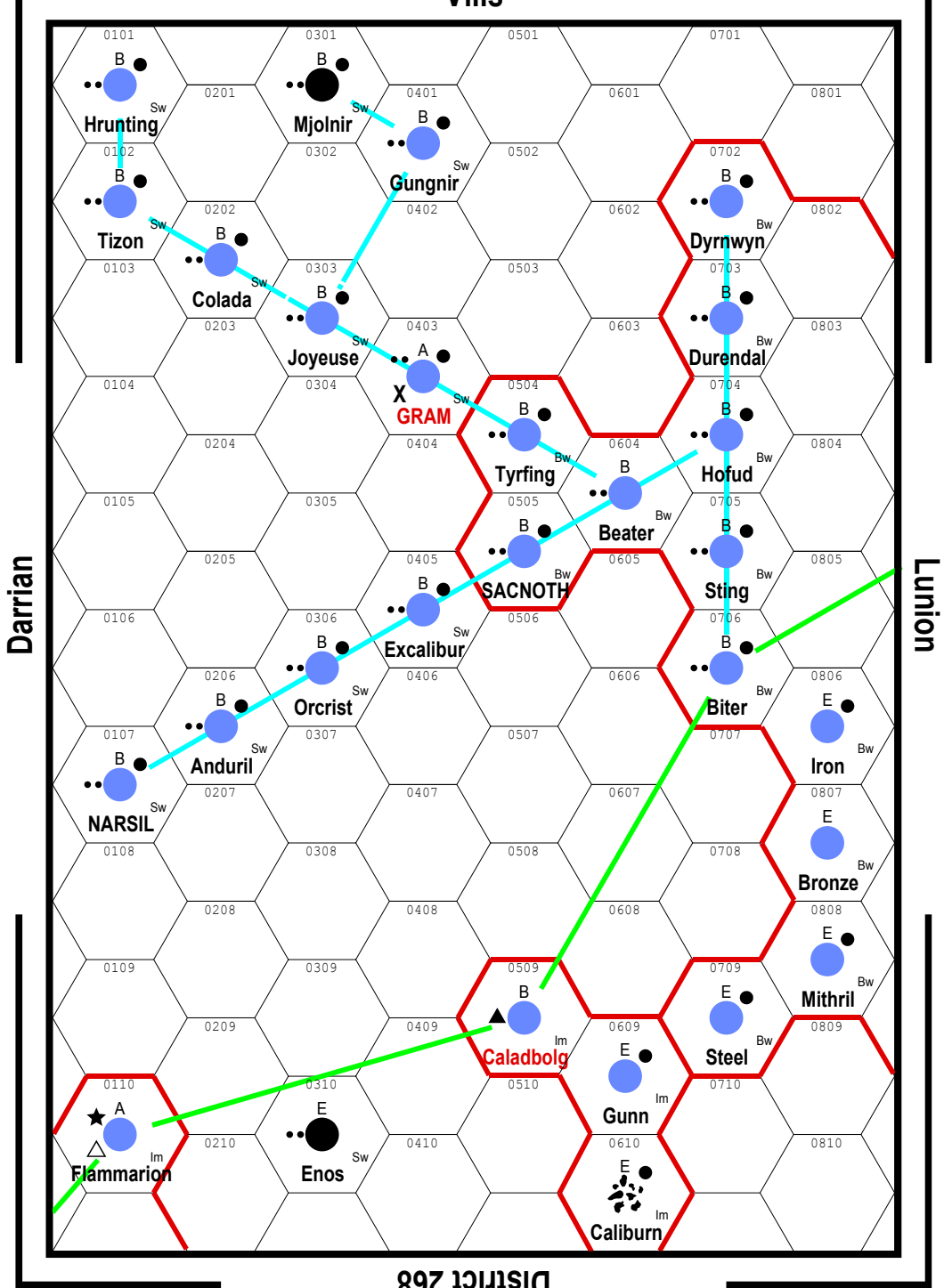
Secundus under one billion

PRIMUS over one billion

World names in red are subsector capitals

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P

Vilis



Sword Worlds Subsector

(subsector J of Spinward Marches sector)

temperatures than might be desired.

Iron actually looks like iron from orbit. Its dull gray oceans of half-frozen water are broken by small mountainous land masses. The atmosphere is too thin to breathe unaided but the possibility of mineral wealth may still draw colonists.

Bronze is a vacuum world with just enough water locked up in ice caps to make it borderline habitable. It is probably the least desirable of the Metal Worlds.

Mithril is a chilly but habitable world largely covered by either oceans or snow. A few years ago a party of adventurers claimed to have found indications that Aslan or other sentients once lived on Mithril. Proof has never been forthcoming.

STEEL – AN IMPERIAL RESERVE WORLD

Steel (0709 E655000-0) is the site of this adventure. Although it has been cursorily surveyed by both the Sword Worlders and the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service, much of the planet remains an unexplored wilderness. Similarly, the remainder of the star system is charted but not thoroughly explored. The occasional Belter ship passes through or picks over moons or planetoids in the outsystem, but otherwise commercial traffic is uncommon.

The Sword Worlds maintained a small rudimentary starport (Class E) and a token presence on the world. This force was removed by a company of Imperial Marines in 1109 after a token 30-minute resistance 'for the honor of the Sword Worlds'. The old Sword Worlder installation was abandoned and remains disused.

The world is currently under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Colonial Office (ICO), which administers it in trust until a world government is enacted. That may be some time, and therefore at present Steel is more or less ungoverned. The various prospecting and survey groups licensed to operate on the world have their own rules and will enforce them within the confines of their base camps or wherever their personnel may be. Additionally, visits are made by Ministry of Justice (IMOJ) personnel. Some of the larger groups have an IMOJ marshal assigned to their camp, but coverage is patchy at best.

There is no central starport as such on Steel. Most of the base camps have a cleared and marked landing area equivalent to a Class E starport. In wilder areas setting down a starship is more risky – what looks like a good site from the air may be swampy, prone to subsidence or plagued by all manner of other hazards. One reason for the planetary survey of Steel is to determine good locations for space facilities and cities.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Steel has a thin atmosphere and is a little drier than Terra, but is quite habitable by humans. Daytime temperatures tend to be a little high for comfort and the nights very cold, but storms are relatively mild and precipitation is fairly light. Characters are able to breathe unaided, though until they become fully acclimatized (a matter of weeks) they will tire quickly if they exert themselves. Sound does not carry so well in the thin atmosphere and most characters will find the world's reddish daylight a bit too bright. The stars are very clear at night however. Steel has two small moons, imaginatively named Alpha and Beta. Neither is large enough to shed much light nor to affect the world's bodies of water to any great extent.

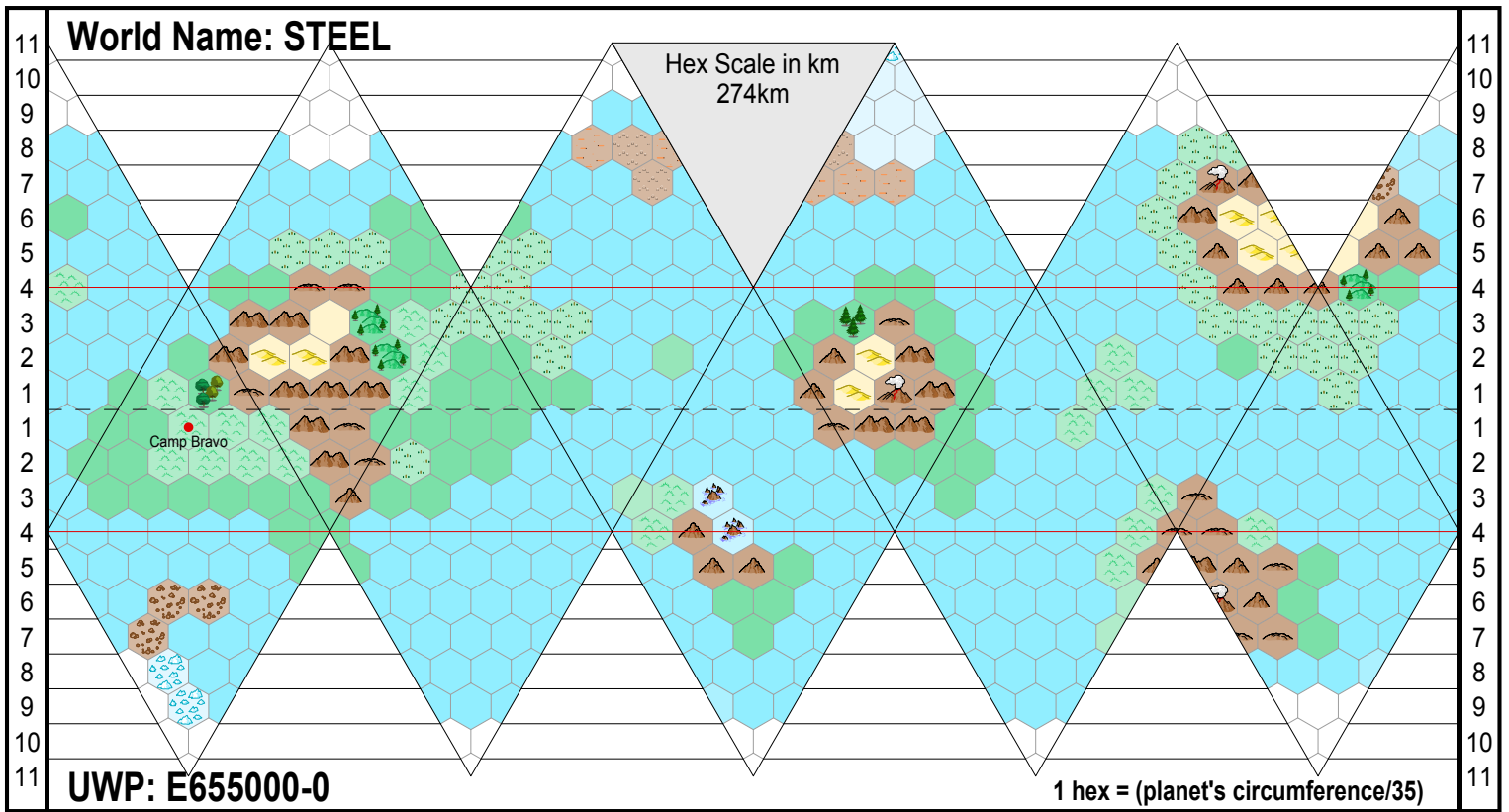
Steel is quite active from a geo-physics point of view, with earthquakes and the occasional volcano as the result of a fair amount of tectonic plate activity. The landscape is quite spectacular in places, with massive mountains unsoftened by weathering and in many cases uncovered with snow. Badlands and rocky areas are not uncommon, with windshadow deserts covering much of the interior of some land masses. Forests cover some areas, especially along the major watercourses, but there are no vast jungles or rainforests on Steel.

Steel has a roughly 22-hour day and gravity of 0.85g. This is close enough to norms that only a little time is needed to become sufficiently accustomed to local conditions that work is not unduly affected. However, over a long period the differences between Steel's conditions and wherever the characters were last will lead to some slight problems including tiredness and irritability. This becomes a problem after about 1-2 weeks. After spending another 7-8 weeks on planet, characters will become well adjusted to local conditions – possibly just in time to move on and suffer the discomfort of adjustment all over again.

WILDLIFE

Steel is home to a variety of indigenous and imported wildlife. For some reason Terran rabbits have flourished since their introduction at some point in the past, perhaps because the main indigenous predator, a Collie-sized beast named Korzan's Pseudo-Mammalian Pouncer but known universally as Korzan's Critter (or just 'Critter') finds them almost inedible for some reason.

The Kian, a flightless bird big enough for a human to ride, has also been introduced to Steel at some point in the past. Herds of Kian are maintained by some optimistic steaders trying to stake an early claim to prime territories and as transport by some of the survey teams. Wild Kian provide food for the world's apex predator, a savage horse-sized quadruped named with the romantic name of the Highland Terror. Highland Terrors also prey on the Great Caski, a long-necked grazer that wanders the wilderness in small family groups, following the seasonal grazing.



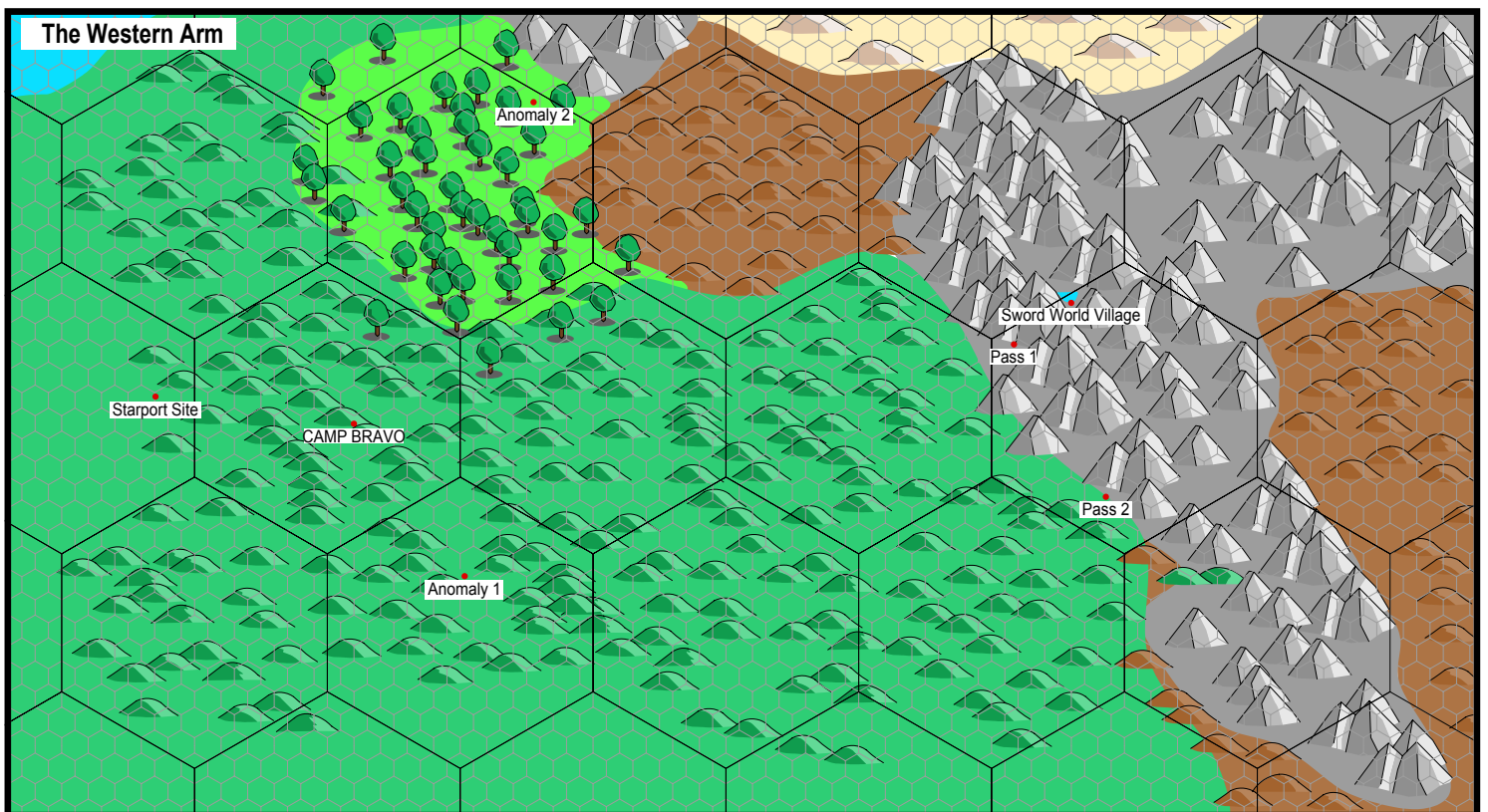
MAP OF STEEL

Note that hexes on the world map indicate only the predominant terrain. Plains may have rolling low hills or light forestation, ocean may have small islands and so forth.

MAP OF THE WESTERN ARM

The main continent of Steel is divided into three main regions. The Central Desert is exactly that; a large inland region with little water and therefore inhospitable to life. The fertile Southeastern

	Mountains		Grassy Hills
	Low Mountains		Deciduous Forest
	Rocky Hills		Coniferous Forest
	Volcano		Forested Hills
	Badlands		Rocks at Sea
	Desert		Arctic Waste



region is known as the Breadbasket, somewhat optimistically, by the survey teams assigned there. The Western Arm of the continent, bounded by the ocean on one side and the Snowless Mountains on the other, is virtually a separate land mass. This was the site of the original Sword Worlder installation, though it lies on a wild seacoast far from the current settlements.

The Western Arm has been surveyed from orbit, albeit cursorily, and has been explored from the ground to some extent. The regions close to the base camps are relatively 'tame', with established roads (in the form of dirt tracks driven over by many ATVs) and outlying steads or temporary camps. Further out, only the most obvious features are even noted on the charts. The mission of the pioneers is to remedy this situation; surveys and exploration missions will be the main task of the pioneers for many months.

PEOPLE ON STEEL

There are probably upwards of 3,000 people on Steel, though its official population is listed as zero. Most of the 'population' is human, with Vargr as the most significant minority. The largest communities on Steel are the base camps of the various surveying/exploration operations. Few of these number over 100 people, with none over 250. This includes the permanent personnel of the camp plus the actual surveyors, explorers and prospectors who operate out of the camp.

Each camp is different, though the overall theme tends to be the same. Each camp needs an open area for vessels to land, a relatively flat area for buildings and such like, and a water source. Most base camps are comprised of prefabricated buildings and situated near a feature such as a major watercourse or a potential mineral resource.

Away from the camps, some enterprising groups have set up small Kian ranches or farming communities in the hope that when the world is opened up their claims will be recognized or at least bought out for a good price. Not all of these groups are properly licensed, but most are friendly enough with the base camp personnel; many rely on the base camps for supplies and offworld communication. Most of these communities use small offroad jeeps and Kian for transport. ATVs are uncommon and grav vehicles rarer still due to their price.

Most of the base camps are gradually growing as more explorers arrive, and a range of secondary industries spring up. There is money to be made without ever leaving the camp region. Merchants, shopkeepers and technicians are now being followed by doctors, lawyers and even accountants as the communities become large enough to require such specialists. Accommodation for the new arrivals pushes the camp outwards, which in turn needs new infrastructure to support it. There is little in the way of permanent structures as yet but the day is coming when the most successful base camps become small towns and – hopefully – Steel will be on its way to becoming an inhabited member world of the Imperium.

HABITATION IN THE PAST

There are hints within this adventure that Steel was inhabited in the past, at least 500 years ago and probably longer ago than that. Players who recall the classic adventure *Mission on Mithril* may tie this information into the discovery that Aslan-style bas-reliefs were once discovered on Mithril, just a parsec away. This is something of an anomaly, since the Aslan are 'known' not to have penetrated this far until quite recently.

For now, the hints of habitation will remain just that; hints. A future adventure in this series will deal with their true meaning.

Referee's Notes

Some of the more remote communities and independent prospectors are essentially squatters with no right to be on Steel. While many of them are quite happy to interact with the legitimate explorers, not all of them are so friendly. Some fear being run off their 'claims' and will defend them with force if necessary – or even if it is not necessary, in some cases.

There are also a number of quite illegitimate groups on Steel. These include Sword Worlder teams looking for a site to build a colony of their own and adventurers following the usual wild rumors of Ancients artifacts, lost cities and other lucrative if half-baked schemes. Again, not all of these people are unfriendly, but their interests may clash with those of others.

A number of air/rafts are available on planet and starships do come in from time to time. Thus rescue and support from the air is possible, though coverage is patchy.

BASE CAMP BRAVO

Bravo is located on the banks of a small watercourse, now grandly named Hawking's River after Rob Hawking, the surveyor who chose the site. Camp Bravo has a population of about 50 permanent residents. The camp lies well away from the coast in an area of uplands that was chosen more for the chances of a mineral strike than its suitability as a city location. Much of the surrounding land is largely unexplored, though some small steads have begun to spring up within 20-30km of the camp.

The permanent staff at the camp are mainly freelancers on retainer to ICO. A skeleton administrative staff deals with claims and records, while an elderly ex-Navy doctor deals with medical (and dental) emergencies. Most of the population are either technicians who make a living maintaining the explorers' vehicles and equipment or the long-suffering families of the people who have come here to work.

About 100 more people are supported by the camp in nearby farmsteads or work as mobile surveyors, explorers and prospectors operating out of Camp Bravo. Many of the latter come in for a few days to rest up, register their findings and blow off some steam in the camp's ersatz bars, then head on out again for another mission. At any given time there may be 10-20 of these transients in the camp. The accommodation they use is basic (mainly bunks in prefabricated dormitories) but it is a great improvement on bedrolls, doss-bags and even ATV bunks.

The Camp Director is Pavel Freve, an ex-frontiersman seeing out his final years before retirement on an ICO salary. Freve is not particularly active, in that he tends not to venture much beyond the camp, but he is a mine of common-sense advice for those who have won his friendship. Freve has under his 'command' two administrative assistants, a technician to maintain and operate the communications and power-generation gear, and the doctor. At present the camp has two IMOJ marshals assigned to it as peacekeepers. There is little for them to do except cordially loathe one another for reasons they do not feel the need to explain. There is little actual crime or violence in the camp, for the very good reason that it is easy to find the perpetrator in such a small community, and frontier justice tends to be rather rough.

The camp has few rules and even fewer laws. Carrying a weapon bigger than a sidearm or blade is considered bad form and suspicious, and wandering around in heavy body armor with automatic weapons is socially unacceptable. If necessary, a posse of residents could be gathered to deal with armed troublemakers. Stealing, gratuitous violence and such like are dealt with by the marshals, but the occasional (fair) fistfight is overlooked if there is no permanent harm done. Similar rules exist in the developed area near the camp. Elsewhere on the planet there is little law enforcement, though the disappearance of a prospecting party and subsequent takeover of their claim would be investigated and if necessary the Ministry of Justice or crew from a passing Navy ship brought to bear.

The camp has two general dealers, one of whom stocks a range of standard handguns, shotguns and carbines, and an ATV repair/maintenance business run by two Vargr brothers who make far more money fixing ATVs than most people do operating one. There are also three 'recreational establishments', all of which serve passable food and bottled beverages, screen whatever entertainment vids they can get and rent out bunk space to visitors.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The characters arrive at Camp Bravo and undertake a range of surveying and exploration tasks. These lead to the discovery of what appears to be a downed spacecraft but turns out to be a Jump-torpedo with some interesting information aboard. The characters then discover that there are rival groups on Steel whose aims are not compatible with those of the legitimate explorers.

MONEY AND MISSIONS

Unless the characters are working as freelancers in the hope of making a strike and selling the mining rights to a larger company, they will most likely come to Steel on a short-term contract to ICO or one of the corporations. Ling Standard Products and Sternmetal Horizons both have interests in the mineral resources on Steel. Alternatively, the characters might be hired by a group interested in setting up a colony. For example, a splinter group of the Denebian faith wishes to make a home for itself and may hire adventurers to report on the suitability of Steel.

A typical salary for explorers is Cr1000 per month, plus an allowance for repairs, food and lodging in town. Characters with a patron will have use of an ATV and will not need to worry about its upkeep unless it needs major repairs. Characters working for a patron do not get to keep the full proceeds of a strike but can expect healthy bonuses if they find anything worth exploiting. However, the real money in exploration work is to be made taking commissions from various interested parties. The characters are free to make money on the side in whatever capacity they can, but they will arrive with (or be offered by the camp director) three commissions, with the following terms and payment:

1. Conduct a survey of a site some 200km from Camp Bravo. This will take about 4-5 days plus transit time. The site looks suitable for a starport (or at least a decent-sized spaceport) and a supporting city. The characters will need to take rock core samples and examine all manner of details like drainage and soil composition before compiling their report. Payment for a detailed and accurate report is Cr15,000 divided among the team.
2. Investigate two sites of interest. Both show concentrations of metal and slightly elevated levels of radioactivity. Both are a fair way out and have only been scanned from orbit. Either might be a suitable site for a mine, in which case a large bonus will be paid when it is established, but in any case the patron will pay Cr10,000 for a detailed survey of each one.
3. Investigation of two possible passages through the mountains some 600km to the east. The high valleys may be suitable for colonization or other exploitation, but only if they can be reached overland. Two good prospects exist, according to the orbital mapping people, but this does not equate to a practicable passage on the ground. A vehicle must be sent through to find out. The patron will pay Cr22,500 divided among the team for a detailed set of maps and passage records including points of interest, hazards and any incidental finds.

These missions can be conducted in any order, though payment will not usually be immediate. Maps, surveys and such like will need to be studied and matched against corroborating data before payment is released (scams are not unknown). Payment is usually a week or two after the mission is complete. People who put in obviously invented reports find it hard to get another job in the same industry.

In addition to the above, each character has already been paid a hiring bonus of Cr1000, in cash. This will have to cover expenses until the first month's pay comes through. Pay can be drawn monthly at the camp's legal office, though most workers just take a small amount of cash for daily expenses and let the rest earn interest on account. There's not much to spend money on in a frontier exploration camp.

The patron understands that frontier exploration can be slow work, but does expect results within a decent time frame. Characters who collect their salary while undertaking their own speculative missions will be fired and quite probably sued in the Imperial courts. The likelihood is that the patron would win the right to take any profits earned on 'company' time, in addition to penalties for breach of contract.

TRAVELLING OVERLAND

The characters will travel a lot in the course of this adventure. Driving overland in an ATV is hard work despite the best instruments and automated assistance, and there is always a chance for mishap along the way. The small hexes on the Western Arm map are 30km across. Cruising at an average speed of 30kph is entirely possible in flat terrain, so in theory an ATV crew should be able to cover about 8 hexes in a day of driving, assuming the odd halt to rest or investigate something and no movement at night.

The actual rate of movement depends on several factors including the terrain, weather and how hard the crew want to push their vehicle. The chances of an event or mishap also vary depending upon circumstances.

Normal Travel: The nominal speed of the ATV is, as already noted, one hex per hour. At this speed the focus is on covering ground; the crew are unlikely to notice much but the most obvious features. Chances of an event are normal (see below).

Pushing Hard: Maintaining a high average speed and approaching obstacles with little reconnaissance or forethought is risky but allows the ATV to proceed 25% faster; i.e. 1 ¼ hexes per hour. Chances of a mishap are higher.

Reckless Driving: In an emergency, or just for fun, it is possible to charge blindly across the landscape with total abandon, relying on adrenaline and reflexes to deal with anything that gets in the way. This is 50% faster than normal travel (1 ½ hexes per hour) but incurs significant risks.

Proceeding Cautiously: Moving more slowly reduces the chance of a mishap and increases the chances of spotting something interesting along the way. Speed is effectively halved (base 2 hours per hex).

Exploring: Moving very slowly and weaving about to investigate anything interesting from the ATV, sometimes dismounting to take a closer look, reduces movement speed to ¼ of normal (base 4 hours per hex) but greatly reduces the chance of a mishap whilst increasing the chances of spotting something interesting along the way.

Driving at Night: Other than making it hard to get any sleep in the ATV's bunks (which rapidly leads to a crotchety and disharmonious crew!), driving at night also increases the chance of a mishap. Speed is reduced to ¾ of base if a full set of instruments is available. If using lights alone, speed is reduced to ¼ of base. Driving at night without lights is... inadvisable. A crash is certain at some point. It is just a question of when, and what will be hit.

Terrain plays an important part in determining movement speed and mishap chance:

Plains: The grasslands and semi-desert of Steel are broken by the odd dry watercourse and low hill, but otherwise fairly easy to navigate at speed. Rolling ground can conceal the odd feature of interest or hazards, but for the most part plains can be crossed at speed without hazard.

Broken Terrain: The rocky badlands and low hills of Steel are tough going; speed is reduced to ¼ of base. Mishaps and events are more common, but there is the possibility of a find that will make exploration worthwhile.

Mountains: Mountains are hard work even for an ATV; speed is reduced to 1/8 of base (i.e. 8 hours per hex). Even using a known pass is tricky; the ATV will need to struggle over obstacles and occasionally backtrack. Mishaps are quite likely.

Seacoast or Lake: Should the characters feel the need to go to the beach, sea and lake coasts turn out to be easy to navigate and are treated as plains.

Open Water: The ATV can cross a calm lake or even a fairly wide river without undue delay or hazard. Attempting to sail to distant lands is a different matter. Speed in open water is reduced to 1/16 of base (16 hours per hex). Mishaps are likely in open sea; less so in a lake.

Human Factors

It is quite tiring to drive an ATV, and in monotonous terrain mistakes become frighteningly common. Drivers should be changed every 2 hours, and should not drive more than 6 hours in every 22. Ideally, the crew should dismount and walk around a little every 3-4 hours or so. Players who roleplay this (for example, playing a game of Frisbee or swimming in a small lake) should be cut a little slack by the Referee in the event of a mishap – they will be less tired, stressed and burned-out than the dour team that just steps out for the regulation 15 minute rest every 4 hours.

For every hour past 2 that a driver remains at the controls, he suffers a penalty to all rolls to deal with a mishap. Also, for every hour past 6 in the last 22 that the character has been driving, a penalty is incurred. In CT, a DM of -1 is applied to ATV skill rolls for each penalty incurred. In T20, the modifier is -2 per penalty.

REGION TYPES

In addition to terrain type, there are three broad regions (as distinct from terrain types) to travel through. How far from civilization the characters are will affect both the likelihood of mishap and the nature of their experiences.

Developed regions are those areas within 3 hexes (90km) of Base Camp Bravo. These areas are familiar to most people working out of

the camp and are traveled quite a lot. Most of the hazards and features are documented and discussed in the camp's bars, so there is no chance of a random mishap or event in this area. Characters passing through the developed region may travel on well-established tracks. They will pass Kian herds, vehicles going out or coming in, prospecting camps and even the odd farmstead. A few of the people working in the region may be grouchy, but open hostility is very unlikely.

Explored regions are those out to 12 hexes (360km) from the base camp. These areas have seen some traffic and ground exploration. Mishap and event chances are reduced. Few people will be sighted. These will mainly be explorers or prospectors either in transit or working a claim. There is virtually no law enforcement beyond the developed region, so people are cautious with strangers. Hostile encounters are unlikely, however.

Wilderness regions lie beyond 12 hexes from Camp Bravo. These have been mapped from orbit and possibly visited by explorers once or twice, but remain largely unknown. Almost anything could be found there.

CONDUCTING A SURVEY

Surveying an entire hex is a lengthy process. Most commonly, a survey team will take an orbital map as the start point, fill in some more details by driving around with instruments running, then make a detailed exploration of the more promising areas. This includes taking water, vegetation, soil and rock samples, collecting images of local wildlife and perhaps droppings, undertaking light excavation and core sampling here and there, and recording all the data to be collated into a full report at a later date.

The most cursory survey takes about 4 hours for a 3-6-person team. This is a scandalously sketchy survey with a good chance of missing anything that is not overwhelmingly obvious. More usually, a team will take 1 whole day to make a basic survey of a hex, then a second day to repeat and extend the survey, creating reliable results in sufficient depth to warrant a payout from the patron. Sometimes additional days are spent following up less promising results. Some of the biggest discoveries in history would have been missed in a basic survey – but the odds are that if it isn't found in the first 2 days, it's not worth finding.

Conducting a survey is automatically successful providing the team has the right instruments and skills. Sensors, Survey, Prospecting, Geology and similar skills will allow a survey to be conducted properly. Characters with Jack-of-all-Trades skill can usually manage. Without at least some of these skills, the survey takes twice as long and may be badly flawed. The Referee should secretly roll 1d6. On a 1-2, the survey is accurate. 3-4 indicates that there are discrepancies and anomalies that will require some fast talking to explain. On a 5, the survey is obviously a load of rubbish and the team will be told to come back when they have done it properly. A 6 indicates a hidden flaw – the team collects their pay and moves on, but eventually there will be repercussions when the flaw is discovered. A firm that pays out millions of credits to conduct test mining on a promising area will not be impressed when the survey turns out to be wrong!

SEARCHING AN AREA

Some regions require a detailed search, for example to locate the source of a curious sensor reading. It will be necessary to dismount from the ATV and conduct a search on foot, using whatever instruments are necessary. Finding what the characters are looking for or producing a detailed map of an area will require appropriate skill rolls. The Referee should adjudicate according to the circumstances. Characters chasing down a magnetic sensor reading with instruments will obviously require different skill rolls to those trying to spot signs of human habitation with the naked eye. Skill rolls can be attempted once per hour.

WEATHER

The weather on Steel is fairly monotonous. Days are a bit too warm, nights are a bit too cold. Storms and other violent weather patterns are uncommon. To determine the weather each day, the Referee should roll 2d6 and consult the Weather Change Chart, below.

Roll	Result
2	Rain squall
3-4	One category colder/wetter
5-8	No change
9-11	Once category warmer/drier
12	Dust storm

Weather Categories

From wettest to driest, the following weather categories apply:

Rain Squall
Rain
Threatening
Overcast
Clear
Bright
Hot
Dusty
Dust Storm

Note that the table is skewed towards dry, warmish weather. The first day of the characters' mission will be Clear, and dust is more likely than rain as they proceed. However, surprises do happen.

Rain Squalls are uncommon but quite unpleasant. Rain falls during the day and hail at night, and it comes down in abundance. Mishaps are much more likely for a team trying to move or work in a squall. Rain squalls are usually short; on a 1d6 roll of 1-4, the following day the weather improves to Threatening. On a 5, it rains the next day. On a 6, the squall continues for another day. Temperatures remain unpleasantly low during a squall.

Rain is usually fairly light and causes few major problems. Rain is sometimes interspersed with brief displays of lightning, but this is uncommon. Long periods of rain might cause flooding or soil subsidence.

Threatening weather is cloudy, windy and fairly cold. It tends to make animals peevish but has no effect on characters.

Overcast days tend to be pleasantly cool; nights are marginally warmer than usual.

Clear days are common since Steel is dry with a thin atmosphere. The days tend to be very hot and nights very cold, with a lot of gusty, thin wind at dawn and dusk.

Bright days unusually cloudless, without even wisps in the sky. There is no real effect on adventurers.

Hot days are unpleasantly warm; even the nights are milder. Surface water dries up fast in a thin atmosphere so conditions can become harsh for wildlife.

Dusty days are the result of a lack of rain or a period of hot weather. Movement can be seen at long distances due to dust plumes, and filter masks are a wise precaution to avoid long-term health problems.

Dust Storms make driving hazardous and working outside the ATV quite dangerous. Visibility is dramatically cut and large amounts of dust tend to be deposited by the wind. This can change the landscape quite a lot and pose a real hazard to unprotected characters. Dust storms can last for a few days but are usually over in a matter of hours; on a 1d6 roll of 1-5, the following day the weather improves to Dusty. On a 6, the storm continues for another day. Temperatures remain unpleasantly high during a dust storm.

MISHAPS AND EVENTS

While outside the developed area, there is a chance every 4 hours that something will happen to make the journey more interesting or less simple. Mishaps are potentially dangerous or adverse situations arising from what the characters are doing. Events are both good and bad and less dependent on what the characters do.

Mishaps

The base chance for a mishap is 12 or more on 2d6, subject to the following modifiers:

Developed Area:	No chance of event or mishap
Explored Area:	-
Wilderness:	+1
Dusty or Rain:	+1
Rain Squall:	+2
Dust Storm:	+3
Driving at Night	+1
Pushing Hard	+1
Reckless Driving:	+1
Broken Terrain	+1
Forest:	+1
Mountains:	+2
Open Sea:	+1
Tired Driver	+1 per hour beyond 2 at the controls, to maximum +4
Overtaxed Driver	+1 per 2 hours beyond 6 driven in same day, no maximum

Roll	Mishap
1	Hidden Obstacle
2	ATV Malfunction
3	Animal Encounter
4	Blocked Passage
5	Ground Subsidence
6	Navigational Error

Exactly what kind of mishap takes place is determined by a 1d6 roll.

Hidden Obstacle: A previously unseen obstacle suddenly makes itself apparent. This will be appropriate to the terrain. For example in plains it might be a hidden gully; in mountains a rockfall, in sea terrain it could be an area of jagged shallows that could snag the ATV's balloon tires. The obstacle can be avoided by quick driver action. CT: Roll 8+, DMs ATV skill. T20: Make a DC15 Drive check. Note that penalties for tired drivers and other adverse conditions may apply. If the obstacle is struck, the ATV is unlikely to be seriously damaged but the crew will be badly shaken up. CT: each crewmember must throw 9+ or take 1D damage. T20: Make a DC15 Reflex save or take 2d6 Stamina damage. On a truly catastrophic roll, the ATV may become stuck or damaged, or both. Subsequent events are up to the Referee.

ATV Malfunction: Horrible noises emanate from some part of the ATV. If the characters choose to stop and deal with the problem, the Referee should determine a non-fatal malfunction. This can be repaired with suitable Mechanical or JoT skill rolls, attempted once per hour. If the crew push on, roll 1d6 every hour: on a 1, the problem goes away on its own. On a 2-4, grinding noises and smoke alarm the crew but nothing worse occurs. On 5-6 the ATV grinds to a stop and requires major repairs. This can be attempted in the field but each attempt takes 1 whole day.

Animal Encounter: None of the animals of Steel pose any real threat to an ATV. However, characters on foot may be attacked by a pack of hungry Critters or a Highland Terror. Alternatively, a particularly dumb Kian or Grazer might bolt into the ATV's path, requiring a control roll to avoid a great deal of mess. Some characters might be amused by running over the nest of some helpless local beast; others would be quite upset. Details are up to the Referee.

Blocked Passage: The characters find their way blocked by some obstacle, be it a fast current at sea, a crevasse or a blind canyon. They will have to backtrack and re-enter the hex, effectively losing twice whatever time it takes to cross this hex.

Ground Subsidence: Dusty conditions have resulted in dangerously weak topsoil, which is noticed only after the ATV is in the middle of a subsided area. The ATV will have to be carefully 'tickled' across. CT: Roll 10+, DMs ATV skill. T20: Make a DC20 Drive check. Failure indicates that the ATV has become stuck. Extricating it is a long process. Roll 2D6 every hour. On 10+ the ATV is free and may continue. It is still in the middle of the hazardous area, of course, and requires another drive roll to get out.

Navigational Error: Having become quite lost, the characters emerge from the hex in a random location. Roll 1d6, counting round hex sides from the top (north) side for their heading. This may take them into new hazards.

Events

Events are not necessarily beneficial, but most are at worst interesting. Every time the characters enter a hex, the Referee should secretly roll 2d6. On a roll of 11-12, an event has occurred. Modify this roll by +1 if the characters are using exploring movement.

Determine the nature of the event by rolling 2d6. Note that some events can only happen once. If a repeat is rolled, treat as No Event.

Roll	Event
2	Settlement*
3	ATV Wreck*
4	Standing Stones
5	Good Site
6	Fellow Explorers
7	ATV Tracks
8	Craters
9	Earthquake
10	Ruins*
11	Magnetic Anomaly
12	Chasm*

Settlement: This event can only be encountered once. The foundations of a very old settlement are just barely visible, having been uncovered by recent wind scouring. Investigation suggests that the settlement was a village of some 2-300 people dating back at least 500 years. The builders were low-tech (TL2 or lower) humanoids of about average human size, but little else can be discerned.

ATV Wreck: This event can only be encountered once. A wrecked ATV is spotted, part-concealed in a small gully. Inspection shows that it has been attacked with some kind of explosive anti-vehicle weapon such as a light anti-armor missile. There are pockmarks where smallarms fire struck the vehicle. The wreck has been completely stripped and there is no sign of bodies. The attack looks like it took place several months or even years ago. There are no reports of any such attacks or missing explorer parties. Detailed investigation will eventually locate three human bodies buried nearby. They have been killed in gun combat and wear typical bush clothing. All ID has been removed. The ATV is a standard Imperial design.

Standing Stones: An observant character realizes that a cluster of nearby rocks seems out of place. A closer look suggests that they have been deliberately arranged in an irregular but somehow 'right-feeling' pattern. Some of the stones have apparently been shaped with low-tech tools, but into irregular curves rather than straight lines. There is no lettering or any sort of decipherable image.

Good Site: A wide, flat area with some surface water suggests itself as a decent spot for a farmstead or a small community, or else instrument readings indicate a small but workable vein of mineral resources. In either case, a bonus of Cr500-1000 could be negotiated for a cursory survey of the area.

Fellow Explorers: An ATV, or a small party on Kian-back, is sighted. They are fellow explorers or prospectors out of Camp Bravo and,

once initial mistrust is allayed, would be glad to swap news and rumors. Some teams are out for weeks at a time, so human contact is a prized commodity.

ATV Tracks: The tracks of an ATV are sighted, no more than a few days old. They cross the characters' path at an angle. If followed, they may (50% chance) eventually peter out. If not, the characters will be able to catch up with a party of fellow explorers (see above), who may wonder why they are being followed.

Craters: The terrain ahead is pocked with craters from a meteorite shower. Some are very large (hundreds of meters in diameter). Crossing the cratered area is only mildly hazardous, and a survey will suggest that small quantities of precious materials could be mined from the meteorite remnants.

Earthquake: The ground begins to shake in one of Steel's many earthquakes. Roll 1d6: on a 1-3, the 'quake is mild and poses no real hazard to the characters. On a result of 4-5 it is quite violent and should be treated as a Hidden Obstacle mishap. On a 6 it is a real buster, flinging people around in the ATV and threatening to overturn it. Characters may avoid injury by grabbing something solid in time: CT: each crewmember must throw 9+ or take 2D damage. T20: Make a DC15 Reflex save or take 3d6 Stamina damage. The ATV is also threatened. To avoid damage, the driver will need to take prompt action. CT: Roll 10+, DMs ATV skill. T20: Make a DC20 Drive check. Failure indicates that an ATV Malfunction mishap must be immediately applied.

Ruins: This event can only be encountered once. The team comes upon the ruins of some kind of ruined structure. It was originally an octagonal building with two storeys above ground and one below, with a minimal lighting system powered by solar cells and not much else in the way of amenities. The top floor has completely collapsed into rubble and there is little left above waist height of the middle storey. The underground segment is more or less intact (if the rubble is cleared to access it), but contains little more than water storage tanks and some decayed shipping crates that once held emergency rations and other supplies. It seems likely that the building was never fully completed.

Characters may recall hearing rumors of a chain of 'octagon shelters' built to assist stranded starfarers, but why one was built on Sword Wolder territory is a mystery.

Magnetic Anomaly: Some of the team's instruments begin to misbehave. Investigation reveals that there is a reasonable deposit of ferrous metal ore close to the surface. If the characters choose to map the deposit and take some core samples (in effect, conducting a cursory survey), they can sell the data for Cr10,000 or perhaps a little more. Alternatively, they might decide to come back and do some more detailed prospecting after staking a claim. If so, a proven workable lode would fetch a higher buyout price from one of the mining outfits.

Chasm: This event can only be encountered once. The characters' path is blocked by a deep chasm in the ground. Its mouth is just a few dozen meters across (too far for the ATV to jump!) and it is probably not visible from orbit. Driving around will take a few hours. If the characters are daredevils (or have some climbing gear available) it would be possible to descend into the depths.

The chasm is quite deep – 10 to 40 meters in places – and receives only a little sunlight. An underground river flows in at one end and spills through a series of waterfalls and hidden lakes. Not only is the place wildly dramatic in terms of natural wonder, it also holds other secrets. Fungi not seen aboveground grow on the damp walls; some of them may have pharmaceutical properties. Also, there is the possibility of locating a gem bed or other treasure if the characters look hard and long enough.

A number of caves lead off the chasm, some of them underwater. Exploration would be a lengthy process.

LIBRARY DATA

The following information represents the truth about the subject so far as it is known. Some aspects of the information may not be 100% correct, just as some of what is known and taught in the colleges of 21st-Century Earth, may turn out to be untrue or subject to misinterpretation, over-generalization or other sources of unintentional inaccuracy.

In other words, what follows is merely an overview of the subject. Closer examination may yield some surprises, but the truth will not be too different from the information presented here. It is up to the Referee to decide how much of this information is commonly available, and how subject to distortion and/or propaganda the generally-known version might be.

SWORD WORLDERS

Each of the Sword Worlds has a somewhat different culture and outlook, but in general their overriding cultural virtues are personal integrity, honesty and courage. On the down side the Sword Worlders are chauvinistic, argumentative and frequently too busy fighting among themselves to get anything done. Their history has been a rollercoaster of rising empires and civil wars, of shifting power balances and daring coups. At their height the Sword Worlders controlled 27 systems. Currently less than 1/3 of those worlds remain full members of the Sword Worlds Confederation, the currently dominant force in inter-Sword World politics.

Although unity and cohesive action are problematical for the Sword Worlders, there has always been a strong sense of 'family' among the various worlds. In much the same way as a family might rally to help out its no-good cousins against outsiders, internal feuds are often put aside to deal with external threats. The sudden re-emergence of these feuds has hamstrung several otherwise successful endeavors.

Sword Worlder 'family loyalty' has been badly strained by the acceptance by some Sword Worlders of Imperial occupation and incorporation into the Border Worlds. Those that remain 'free' often maintain that those under occupation are not fighting hard enough to try to throw off the Imperial yoke. This causes further friction and division, especially since blood vengeance is not uncommon among the Sword Worlders – collaborators can expect short shrift if their worlds become free once again.

The Sword Worlders under occupation are in a cleft stick. If they resist, the Imperials can swat them easily. If they do not at least look like they are putting up a fight, their cousins may turn on them. There is a segment of the population that, for one reason or another, has become loyal to the Border Worlds rather than the Sword Worlds. Whether they have acted for their own profit or for the good of their people, these individuals know that they will never be forgiven by their 'free' brethren; the Border Worlds must remain an Imperial protectorate or a very final and personal fate will befall.

All this has driven deep cracks through the traditional loyalties of the Sword Worlders. In some cases this has led to feuds and vengeance attacks; in others the entrenchment of new political groupings. A few charismatic leaders are working hard for peace while others gather loyal heroes for dramatic gestures such as raids into the Imperium. Some, seeking to escape the bloodbath they see as inevitable, have resorted to other methods. The group which is trying to settle on Steel is one such, but it may be that they are jumping from the airlock in a torn suit...

JUMP TORPEDOES

A Jump Torpedo is a small interstellar 'vessel' comprising little more than a Jump drive, a navigational computer, fuel, and a data storage device. J-Torps are intended to be used to send emergency messages. Their expense means that they are not viable for routine communications use since they tend to emerge from Jump, transmit their data, then drift off into deep space if not recovered by vessels at the receiving station.

J-Torps were developed by a private company, Interstellar Logistics, LIC, which is now known to have faked many of its test results to meet impossibly tight deadlines. Pre-programmed test Jumps went reasonably well, though a Misjump rate of about 1 in 6 torpedoes was observed in test conditions. This is very high and since it means that the message will not be delivered and the torpedo is usually lost, it makes the routine use of J-Torps uneconomical. A significant number (about 30-50%) of those that did arrive on target were subject to large variations in emergence timing and location. Again, this meant that many torpedoes were lost in deep space even if they were detected and successfully interrogated for their data.

However, the test results were promising enough that Bilstein Yards, with an order in hand from the Baraccal Technum, an interstellar exploration company, contracted to Interstellar Logistics LIC to provide a number of J-Torps for use aboard its Leviathan class merchant cruisers. The idea that these vessels, which were intended for long cruises beyond Imperial space, would be able to send home reports of their progress or at least signal that they were in distress, appealed to the Technum's planners. A set of message torpedoes was included as standard equipment aboard all ships of the class; even those bought by other end users.

However, it became quickly apparent that J-Torps were unstable in actual use. Away from the well-known parameters of the 'Jump Range' used by Interstellar Logistics, Misjump rates were as high as 3 or even 4 in 6, and those that arrived sometimes came out so far outsystem that they were never detected. Most users sold their torps for spares and used the torpedo bays to store more useful equipment, such as beer.

Some ships, however, continued to carry them. One such was the Amuar (MC-50247), which owned by McClellan Factors LIC. Amuar was lost on a cruise in the Outrim in 1102. Her fate remains unknown, but perhaps not for much longer. For the present, it is known that at the time of whatever disaster befell her, Amuar's crew launched their J-Torps in the hope that one might be picked up. And as fate

would have it, the wild Misjumps that characterize J-Torp use brought one to Steel where, eight years later, it is discovered by a band of pioneers...

*Author's Note: Jump Torpedoes (J-Torps) are a contentious issue in **Traveller**. They appeared in Adventure 4: Leviathan, which is considered to be part of the **Traveller** 'canon' (the body of information that defines the Official Traveller Universe). However, canon also states that no ship smaller than 100 displacement tons can carry a Jump drive.*

It should be noted that Adventure 4: Leviathan did not say that J-Torps worked properly; just that the ship carried them.

*The issue is further clouded by the 55-ton Jump Boat in the **Traveller: The New Era** supplement, Keepers of the Flame. The J-boat is a high-tech vessel which seems to defy canon. **Traveller** players have debated the issue for years and each group has its own 'house' interpretation. We simply could not resist the opportunity to throw fuel on the flame war by presenting some answers to the J-Torp question.*

J-Torps are simply too expensive and too unreliable to be much use, but they do occasionally work. Their unreliability is partly because ships under a certain size cannot maintain a proper Jump field. The 100-ton limit is the lower safe threshold for a stable Jump field, and the closer to the limit a vessel is, the better its field. Thus the 55-ton J-boat has a better chance of maintaining its field than a 10-ton J-Torp. J-boats are, however, inherently unsafe and require a special kind of hero to pilot them. The desperation of the Recovery Period made such devices acceptable; in the Golden Age the risk was not so palatable.

The other reason for J-Torp unreliability is the nature of Jumpspace. A computer can crunch the numbers and produce a hundred sets of Jump parameters, any of which looks perfectly good. A sentient Astrogator can take these figures and 'feel' which ones are bad, which are mediocre and which represent an excellent Jump. Without the intuition factor of the living Astrogator, Jumps are a lot less predictable. On a regular route, the variance is not quite so bad, but on the sort of 'blank slate' Jump calculation that a starship astrogator must perform, the lack of human input can lead to disaster.

So, there you have it...

LEVIATHAN CLASS MERCHANT CRUISERS

The Leviathan class Merchant cruiser was constructed from 1086 to 1107, when production was curtailed by wartime needs. Some 21 vessels were constructed for various users; most remain in service in a range of capacities. Although it is a large ship (1800 tons), the Leviathan is not a viable commercial vessel since it has only 70 tons of cargo space. The Leviathan is designed for long cruises using its Jump-3 engine (with a backup Jump-2 system). Its usual mission is exploration or exploratory trade. Examples have been encountered as base ships for mercenary units or support vessels for a group of smaller ships conducting a survey or exploration mission.

The Leviathan has a nominal crew of 56 personnel. It is robust, well armed and able to take care of itself. If one is destroyed or goes missing, something very serious must have happened. One Leviathan, MC-50247 Amuar, is currently missing, fate unknown. Amuar was lost Outrim in 1102. Another ship, the MC-51336 Marcucci, was captured by corsairs and may still be in service as a pirate vessel. The MC-52861 Mar de Damas was destroyed by Imperial forces in 1098 after being mistakenly identified as the Mar de Damas. CNS-2023 Batholomeu Dias, registered to the Imperial Grand Survey, has not been sighted for over three years though the authorities have declined to comment on the matter.

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The following information is freely available to the characters.

THE STEEL PROJECT

The exploration of Steel is part of a larger scheme to develop all four of the Metal Worlds. The segment of this plan that takes place on Steel is, unsurprisingly, known as the Steel Project. The project is administered by the Imperial Colonial Office (ICO), though the execution of its various components is licensed out to firms and freelancers across a range of industries. The Scout Service (IISS) has some involvement, too.

Ultimately, ICO intends to settle the world and create a functional government to which it will hand over power. That government will have a number of ready-made relationships with the corporations and small companies that have invested in the world. This should allow the world's economy to be viable more or less from the start, making it an asset to the Imperium rather than an expensive colony.

There has been some criticism of the Steel Project, in that the new world government will be beholden to large corporations and therefore may not be as fair as might be hoped. The Steel Project is very complex, with a great many agencies and commercial groups involved at all levels. Some conflicts of interest are inevitable. Imperial law and the mediation service offered by the Imperial Diplomatic and Bureaucratic Corps will hopefully be able to resolve and/or limit such corporate control of the world's government. All the same, ICO will have to tread carefully.

One reason for wanting a viable economy quickly is Steel's proximity to the Sword Worlds and District 268. Imperial expansion has always been more about economics than military power, and the best way to spread Imperial influence is through strong economies close to the target region. Since worlds are responsible for their own defense, a good economy will be a vital asset in making Steel a bastion against future Sword Worlder resurgence. It may be that the need to develop the Metal Worlds quickly and effectively has blinkered the authorities and may lead to some bad decisions taken in haste.

Only time will tell if the Steel Project is to be a success. For now, there is work to be done and opportunities for freelancers. For those with wit and enterprise the Steel Project offers a chance to make a killing before the bubble bursts.

PIONEER TEAMS

There are some fairly large-scale projects ongoing on Steel, but most of the initial exploration and survey work is being carried out by small freelance pioneer teams. These teams are generally composed of 2-6 multiskilled individuals operating out of an ATV. Some teams spend several weeks at a time in the field.

Many pioneer teams are generalists who carry out whatever commissions they are offered. Others are specialists who only work in a fairly narrow field. Such teams include:

- Prospectors
- Surveyors
- Scientists (e.g. zoologists, planetologists and biochemists)
- Field engineers (building bridges and roads, for example)
- Backup teams (e.g. ATV mechanics, medical support and rescue squads)

Frontier work can be hazardous, so most personnel have a gun or blade somewhere nearby for self-defense, and will be skilled in various areas including survival, medical and mechanical – just in case things go wrong.

RESCUE AND BACKUP

There is no formal rescue service on Steel at present. Emergencies are dealt with on a voluntary basis by whoever is best qualified – or more often, by whoever is available. Near to the base camp, it is a simple matter to put together a rescue party. Farther out, distress signals might not even be picked up. There are a handful of survey and communications-relay satellites in orbit, but coverage is patchy. Rescue, if it comes at all, will arrive in the form of another team of explorers most likely. These good Samaritans may not be any better equipped than the people they are trying to assist, but the sort of rugged individuals who work the frontiers can usually figure out a way to deal with most problems.

If a distressed group is really lucky, there might be a military or Scout Service ship in orbit. Such vessels are in a position to render a range of assistance at need, and usually have the equipment to do it. If there is no ship in orbit, the only chance for a quick rescue is an air/raft from base camp. The only other hope is an ATV slowly toiling its way out to bring aid.

In short, there's not much backup. No wonder pioneers learn to be self-reliant.

ADVENTURE 1: CALL OF THE WILD

ARRIVING ON STEEL

The adventure begins as the characters disembark from a starship at Base Camp Bravo. There may not be another ship for weeks or months; the characters are lost amid the bustle of unloading as individuals seek long-awaited parcels, equipment or packages of spares. There is disappointment, annoyance and the occasional dispute alongside delight at a letter from home or a dozen back issues of *Custom Vehicles Monthly*. It looks like total chaos, and rightly so.

First impressions are not good. Base Camp Bravo is a depressing collection of prefabricated modular buildings and storage areas created by half-burying a shipping container in the ground then cutting a door in the side. Everything is drab with brownish-gray dust, everyone wears tough coveralls and boots, plus usually a hat to keep the sun out of their eyes.

Gradually, the chaos recedes and people start to take some notice of the new arrivals. The delivery of a number of barrels of various beverages draws some of the locals into what are obviously ersatz bars and a town-wide, if rather restrained, celebration begins. It should be possible to talk to various people as they go about the business of getting a beer and putting away what they have just had delivered.

The locals are friendly enough in a too-busy sort of way; most will accept a hand with whatever they are doing in return for advice or suggestions as to what to do next. Anyone asked will tell the characters that they need to see the camp director as soon as possible. There are a few rules that he will want to be sure they understand before they start work.

The characters are as likely to run into the director about the town as to have to go to his office. He was among the mob demanding mail and a package of entertainment vids he'd had on order for nearly a year, and can be found sharing a beer with his buddies unless something pressing comes up.

SETTING UP

Once the characters have found their feet on Steel, they can get set up in Camp Bravo. The first step is a brief and informal interview with director Pavel Freve. Since the character arrived with an assignment charter already in hand, they have all the licenses and such like they will need. Their charter includes payment for basic accommodation at the camp (a shared dormitory in one of the prefab buildings, but better than sleeping in an ATV) and breakfast at one of the bars. Other meals have to be paid for.

Freve outlines the basic rules followed by people in and around 'his' camp:

- Secure your stuff when in town
- Don't steal or damage other people's stuff
- Don't bother anyone who wants to be left alone
- Fair fights are okay so long as nobody gets seriously hurt
- You can carry a handgun or blade in town if you like. Bigger weapons are to be stowed
- You're expected to help out anyone in need; it could be your turn next
- If you get into trouble more than about 200km from the camp, you're likely on your own
- If you're a danger to yourself and others you'll be run off
- There's an ATV-maintenance service in town, a doctor and a legal advisor. None of them are cheap but they're all competent
- Market day is Oneday each week, but people barter and trade all the time. Just be careful what you commit to and keep your end of the deal
- If you run out of cash and have to make a credit deal, fine. Get in too deep and eventually you'll be run off
- It's acceptable to make money on the side however you like – providing services, selling stuff or even gambling for it – so long as you don't violate Imperial Law breach your contract with your patron or annoy other people
- Other than this list, what you do is more or less your own business

Having completed this offhand and informal interview, the characters are now members of the local community and can get on with making a living. They will be accepted by the community on a sort of probationary basis – once they've proven they can work in the field without needing to be rescued all the time they will be more fully accepted.

GETTING THE JOB DONE

It is likely that the characters will want to get on with their work as soon as possible. They may undertake the missions in their charter in any order and in any way that they like. Similarly, they may decide to undertake their own speculative missions or take odd jobs offered in town. In between missions they will probably return to Camp Bravo to rest up and conduct maintenance. During these periods back among the rest of Humaniti, trade ships may come in, new arrivals join the survey teams, VIPs from the big mining corporations or the prospective colonists may nose around, or a Navy or Scout ship may stop over and send a few personnel down for shore leave. The Referee should feel free to make the characters downtime as interesting as they can stand...

The resolution of the team's charter missions follows:

Starport Site

The potential starport site is located about 300km from Camp Bravo, and therefore on the edge of the Wilderness area. In addition to the

hazards and events of transit to and from the site, the characters will have to make a detailed survey requiring 4-5 days. It is important to know the nature and composition of the bedrock, susceptibility to earthquakes and so forth, for obvious reasons.

The survey takes 4-5 days to do properly. It is unexciting work but fairly hazard-free. The Referee might want to add an encounter with wandering explorers or local wildlife to break up the period spent working at the site, but there are no undue hazards. Indeed, the site turns out to be a good one. The local bedrock is solid and close to the surface, and the area seems to be less prone to quakes than some other regions. It is a little remote but remote from what? There is as yet nothing on Steel, and the port will be the hub of civilization on the planet.

In all, the potential site has a lot to recommend it and there will be no real problems collecting the mission payment.

Anomaly 1

Lying 270km from Camp Bravo, this site is located in a fairly well-watered and verdant region. This in turn increases the chance that disgruntled wildlife might try to chase the characters off. The site itself is a moderate-sized lode of nickel, copper and iron. It will take a fair amount of sampling and digging to 'prove' the lode, extracting samples of the ore at various levels to demonstrate both its quality and the 'workability' of the lode.

After 2-3 days of working the site, enough data is collected to allow the characters to return to base. They will receive payment and one day, if a mine is opened on the site, can expect a fat bonus in the tens of thousands of credits. This will be spread into several payments at 'milestones' in the mine's operation – e.g. commencement of extraction then when target amounts of ore have been obtained.

However, the characters will make one other discovery as they survey the anomaly. There is not only metal here – it has been mined in the past!

The characters come across a collapsed mine tunnel in the side of a gully. It is obviously very old – hundreds of years – and was created with primitive hand tools. The mine tunnel is short, just a few meters long. Searching the area turns up signs of habitation in the past, suggesting that Steel once had a low-tech culture of some kind. There is no sign of such a culture now.

Anomaly 2

450km from Camp Bravo, right out in the wilderness, lies Anomaly 2. Like Anomaly 1, there are hints of slightly elevated radioactivity and metal concentrations. In this case, the cause is quite different.

A detailed survey and search shows no unusual concentrations of metal at first, but eventually leads to fragments of what can only be the wreckage of a starship or space vessel. The composition of the scattered fragments is typical of civilian starship hulls within the Imperium. Further investigation reveals a fairly large fragment of the wreck intact, buried in what was presumably a swampy area at the time of the crash.

Digging the vessel out is a long task, but it quickly becomes apparent that:

- This is a small craft of some kind; its original displacement cannot have been much over 20 tons and may have been less
- It seems to have made an unpowered descent and crashed some time in the past decade.
- The vessel seems to have struck at a steep angle and shattered on impact. Most of the main components are fairly close by but lighter fragments have been thrown some distance.
- Fragments of a parawing remain attached to the hull.
- There seems to be no crew access but the vessel has a large cargo or fuel area.

As the wreck is further uncovered, it becomes apparent that this is no ordinary ship's boat or other small craft. It has no maneuver drive or crew position, but is fitted with a Jump drive! As every starfarer knows, vessels under 100 displacement tons cannot mount a Jump drive, but here is one. Of course, the fact that it is crashed on a frontier world may suggest that the drive was less than successful.

Lettering can be made out along the side of the hull. It says 'MC-50247' in standard Galanglic letters.

If a character can get inside the nose of the wreck, he can extract what remains of the flight computers. They are badly mangled (the Jump drive, being quite fragile, is completely shattered and worthless) but might be readable on a standard computer. With a certain amount of effort and the application of computer or electronics skills, it will be possible to extract some data from the J-torp's recording device.

The data is badly corrupted and consists of a log download from the Leviathan class merchant cruiser MC-50247 Amuar, which is at best fragmentary and in need of several weeks of careful piecing back together. The following can be discerned within a matter of hours:

- The J-torp was indeed launched from the Amuar, which was at the time suffering catastrophic systems failures
- The torpedo was launched on 158-1102
- At the time of launch, the Amuar was several Jumps out from Pax Rulin (in Pax Rulin subsector, to Rimward of Steel)
- The Amuar appeared to be near to a world or moon of some size at the time of launch
- The torpedo appears to have Misjumped rather badly and lain undisturbed where it came down here on Steel

A search of records (not available on Steel) will show that the Amuar departed Rimwards from Pax Rulin on 031-1102. Her mission is given as exploratory trade among the worlds of the Outrim.

It may be that the characters wish to hand over this information, or keep it to themselves. They will have to come up with some explanation about the site, but a story about finding unidentifiable wreckage from some kind of small craft will satisfy the camp director and the characters' patron. Salvage from the wreck is hardly worth the trouble; there is little more than hull metal available, and the cost of hauling it to a ship and offworld is high. Enough could maybe be salvaged to create some hull-repair patches for an enterprising adventurer to sell to visiting ships.

The data contents of the computer are worth a little more. The Imperial Navy or Scout Service will (eventually) pay Cr2,500 for the data since it may answer a long-standing 'missing ship' question. McClellan Factors would pay the same since it is their ship. Alternatively, careful deciphering of the data may yield clues as to where the Amuar finally ended her cruise, and why. Characters of an inquisitive nature may wish to follow up this lead and see if anything worth salvaging remains aboard the wreck.

But that is an adventure for another day...

Mountain Passes

It is a long way out to the mountains, with plenty of time for mishaps and events along the way. Upon arrival, the characters are confronted with a forbidding wall of jagged rocks, ridges and steep unweathered slopes. There is little snow on the peaks, but here and there a glacier has formed from a frozen river.

Just finding the mouths of the two suspected passes is quite a task in the rugged, broken terrain. Both are steep, winding valleys that are hard going for even an ATV. Nominal speeds are halved (i.e. base speed is 16 hours per hex) The first pass snakes high into the mountains for about 60km before coming to an end at a glacier. It is not possible to get the ATV onto the glacier (it is too high and there is no way up) but a party on foot might be able to cross and come down the other side. If so, it would be possible to explore a couple of hanging valleys that open up high above. Perhaps one of them leads down the far side of the mountains. However, as far as ATV exploration goes this pass is a bust. What looked passable from low orbit is an insurmountable obstacle on the ground.

The second pass is just as hard going as the first, but after some 80km it descends abruptly onto the shores of a large semi-frozen lake. The valley around is quite sheltered and has relatively lush vegetation (for Steel). Although the valley sides are steep, it would be possible to drive around (or straight across; ATVs can 'swim') and proceed onward down the far side of the valley. After another 120km the pass opens out into the fringe of the central plains. This region is arid due to the wind-shadow effect of the mountains, which strips what little rain falls on Steel out of the clouds before they reach the central region. But if someone wanted to reach the plains overland, the characters have just proven that it is possible.

The characters might not actually reach the plains however, for there is a find to be made at the frozen lake.

WE ARE NOT ALONE

A community of some 2-3000 people lives in the high valley. Their settlement is hidden among the trees of the valley side, and is deliberately camouflaged to avoid detection. The residents have good reason to hide, for they are Sword Worlders. The Swordies hail from a number of worlds and have come to Steel in order to escape the disaster they are sure will overtake their homes. They would be at severe risk if they tried to go home now; having burned their boats they must make a go of it on Steel or perish. However, with the recent Imperial decision to colonize the world they are in a difficult position.

The Swordies keep very much to themselves; they are not responsible for any acts of violence towards the explorers, though they are arming themselves for a struggle if it becomes necessary. They know very well how such a fight would end – with Imperial Marines landing on Steel and the survivors deported back home to face a desperate fate – but they cannot see any alternative. Their pride alone requires them to fight for a home.

The Sword Worlders do not desire any trouble but they do have a range of weapons available; mostly Imperial-made mid-tech smallarms of a sort available anywhere. Semi-automatic hunting rifles and SMGs are common, with a handful of better weapons such as ACRs and even a light machinegun. They have no anti-armor capability other than some improvised land mines, and could not hurt the characters' ATV very much even if they wanted to.

The Sword Worlder community has occasional offworld contact in the form of smuggler ships from the Sword Worlds and even a couple from the Imperium. They have traded most of what wealth they could bring with them for essential equipment and weapons.

The Swordies have a well-hidden village, much of it underground, with some excellent camouflage. However, they cannot conceal their activities entirely. They are cultivating the valley and fishing the lake; their homes are powered with portable fusion generators. Tracks from their few vehicles and work parties are becoming impossible to conceal, though as yet they are not prominent enough to be spotted by an orbital survey.

Every 4 hours the characters remain in the lake region, there is a chance to spot some sign of habitation. The Referee should allow the characters to go about their business in the valley whilst making secret Spot checks or Int rolls to see if something unusual catches their eye. A strangely uniform area of vegetation, a group of figures scuttling under cover, even a boat out on the lake – something will eventually give away that there are people here.

Once the Sword Worlders know they have been discovered, contact is inevitable. They have endlessly worried about and discussed what

might happen, and have tried to come up with a good answer. There are none to be had. Their only real chance is to either kill whoever discovers them and hide the evidence, hoping that no search ever comes to their settlement, or else make contact and try to cut a deal with the discoverers. At the moment when the characters detect them, the choice becomes imminent.

Contact may come deliberately, in that the characters may seek out whoever is living in the valley, or accidentally. If the characters try to just leave, their way will be blocked by an improvised barricade in the valley, and an armed party sent to surround the characters. The Swordies simply cannot afford the characters to just leave; they have to get control of this situation one way or another.

CONTACT

Contact with the Sword Worlders is the main plot point of this adventure. How the characters handle it will have serious implications for the future of the world. Contact occurs when the second valley is explored. If the characters have not completed their other jobs, so be it. They can always perform their surveys later if they wish to do so.

Contact will be a fraught business. Even if the characters deliberately seek out a work group of the locals (who will have only sidearms and maybe the odd shotgun or rifle), an armed party will arrive soon after. There is not much to indicate that the characters have encountered Sword Worlders at first; clothing is typical 'bush' outfits and work coveralls and many tools and weapons are standard Imperial types. The lack of women among groups doing hard physical work, or the way women are ushered away from contact, might be a clue. The Swordies speak Galanglic, though with a definite accent, so once dialogue begins it will be fairly apparent what is going on.

The armed party will contain a leader and half a dozen tough-looking men (no women) armed with good weapons – ACRs, assault rifles and SMGs for the most part. Most have combat experience and know enough not to bunch, where to take cover and so forth. The Swordies are nervous and keyed-up. They do not want to fight but half-expect one and in any case they know that they may have to murder the characters – if they can. However, they will approach and try to talk.

The Sword Worlder spokesman is Olav Gungnirsson, a surprisingly young man to be leading a combat party. Olav is almost exactly what vid stereotypes would portray a Sword Worlder as: tall, muscular and prone to making dramatic gestures when he speaks. He knows that the future hangs in the balance here; a wrong move will doom his people. Trouble is, he just does not know what to do for the best.

Olav begins with some general questions – who are you, why are you here, and so forth, and candidly answers the same questions. He is prepared to reveal the following, and seems quite sincere when he speaks:

- He is one of the leaders of a community of Sword Worlders living in the valley. He refuses to say how many
- The settlers just want to be left alone. They have had little or no contact with anyone else on the world, and like it that way
- His people have not been involved in any acts of violence against the Imperial explorers
- All his people want is to make a home for themselves in this valley; nothing more

Olav adds that he would like to make a deal with the characters. If they will swear to him to keep the Sword Worlders' existence secret, he will grant them hospitality and (of course) let them go unhindered. Indeed, there is the possibility of trade. His people have certain needs and would be willing to pay a fair price for goods brought in through the explorers' camp. A falsified survey of the valley that indicated that it was worthless would keep away others and ensure there was no conflict, and everyone would profit.

Olav adds, quite openly, that his people cannot allow the characters to leave if they will not swear to keep the Sword Worlder presence secret. There is too much at stake here, he says. It is quite obvious that he will be the first casualty in any firefight, and that he has deliberately put himself in that position.

Before things can go any further, there is an interruption.

A DISTRESS CALL

Amid the tension of the standoff, a radio signal comes through on the emergency channel.

"GK, GK...THIS IS SURVEY TEAM D-22. WERE TAKING FIRE!... AIR/RAFT HIT ...WE'RE GOING DOWN! LOCATION FOLLOWS..."

There is no need to listen to the location; anyone looking up can see the 'raft come streaking in over the valley lip. It is trailing smoke and there is what looks suspiciously like a ground-to-air missile plume in the air beyond. It was not a large weapon, probably a shoulder-fired tac missile. but it has crippled the 'raft. The pilot is doing what looks like a tremendous job of trying to keep aloft while he or she seeks a safe place to land. Within seconds the fight is lost and the 'raft tumbles from the sky. It has come down in the valley, just a few minutes away, and there might be survivors.

A horrified look comes over Olav's face. He angrily waves one of his men to lower his weapon and says, "Not us. We don't have any missiles. I swear to you, we did not do this!" After a few seconds in which he clearly considers opening fire, he adds, "Go..." and orders his men to clear the barricade, stand down, and generally get out of the way.

Assuming the characters are not so trigger-happy that they start a fight anyway, they are free to proceed.

TO THE RESCUE

It will take a few minutes of reckless driving to reach the crash site. The mountains block radio and there is no satellite overhead – chances

are the distress call was not picked up by anyone else.

Crashing cross-country, the characters approach the wreck. The 'raft lies in a natural depression, having come down partially on its side and skidded to a stop amid tumbled rocks. At least one survivor can be seen, jammed in a cleft in the rocks with a rifle of some sort cradled in her paws. The survivor is a female Vargr. There seems to be someone else in the rocks, probably unconscious or dead. Rifle fire is coming in from the far side of the depression. As soon as the characters appear on the scene, whoever shot down the air/raft fires on them with automatic rifles. Several figures can be fleetingly made out as they move up through cover to engage the rescuers.

The survivor is using a hand radio, which the characters can pick up without difficulty. She sounds shocked, frightened and hurt, but quickly tells the characters that:

- Her name is Suregh Genshii, a Vargr from Glisten and a licensed surveyor working with her partner, Nick Camm, out of Base camp Bravo. She was scouting a possible ore concentration, spotted a ship on the ground, and went closer to take a look. Then the 'raft took a missile hit.
- Suregh is hurt; possibly a fractured ankle, and Nick is out cold. She thinks he was concussed in the crash but he's also been hit by a bullet as she got him into cover. It looks bad.
- Suregh has a carbine and knows how to use it, but she needs help, and fast.
- She has counted at least seven attackers, and they seem determined to kill her – and probably anyone helping her.

It is obvious that the ATV cannot enter the rocky depression – there are too many large boulders. It might be just about possible for someone to thread their way through to Suregh, but it will be risky and may not help that much. There is a lot of fire coming in, and not much chance of getting the injured surveyors out to the ATV alive.

The Referee should give the characters a few rounds of combat to realize what a problem they have. Nick is bleeding to death and the attackers – whoever they are – are closing in. It is all but suicidal to even take a look out of cover, let alone try to move.

The Bad Guys

There are eleven 'bad guys', equipped with Cloth Armour, assault rifles and a couple of ACRs. They are determined to kill everyone who has sighted them, for reasons not immediately apparent. They are experienced combatants who use suppressing fire and make excellent use of concealment and cover. They will retreat to their craft if they take significant casualties, and are more interested in getting their people out than winning a fight – they are not fanatics – but neither are they a pushover. Almost certainly the characters are overmatched.

OLAV'S GAMBLE

After a few minutes of combat (or being shot at), the ATV's radar picks up three vehicles closing fast from behind; the direction of the lake. Optical sensors soon pick out two 4-wheel jeep type vehicles and an offroad truck, all crammed with Sword Worlders. The jeeps move out to one side and offload a mob of Swordie settlers who begin trying to work around the attacker's flank. The truck skids up and Olav jumps out, followed by a gang of his men. They take cover and begin shooting back at the attackers.

Olav's people fight bravely, some of them being hit. He has little to say at first – he's too busy trying not to get killed. After a moment he realizes that Suregh is a female Vargr – the bad guys, whoever they may be, are firing on a woman! Swordies may treat their women as second-class citizens (by Imperial standards) but they are also extremely protective of them. He is visibly enraged. Then Suregh takes a hit, falling back among the rocks, and Olav goes berserk.

He stands up in the middle of the gunfight, snarling, "Remember what you see here." towards the nearest of the characters, and fires his rifle dry. Flinging it down he charges headlong into the middle of the depression, bullets slamming into the rocks all around him.

Olav has no plan, he is just very, very angry. He fully intends to cross the depression, alone, and carry both surveyors to safety. It doesn't matter that it's suicide, nor that it is impossible. He's going to do it anyway. The characters may come to realize why Olav is a leader among the settlers; Sword Worlders respect this rather special kind of lunacy.

Olav has no chance of success, of course. He will be shot down before he gets halfway to Suregh, unless the characters do something. The sane option would be to give massive covering fire. This might work, but Olav is going to have to cross the depression twice each way if he's going to get both surveyors to safety. His chances are still poor.

Reckless characters may decide to join him in his mad dash. It takes two combat rounds to reach Suregh, one to pick her or Nick up, and three more rounds to carry them to safety. The characters will be under fire the whole time, but with enough covering fire and perhaps several people offering themselves as targets to confuse the enemy's aim it might be possible.

If the surveyors can be rescued, the bad guys fall back. Shortly afterwards a pinnacle takes off from behind a ridge a short distance away. The characters will likely be busy with medical assistance by then. Nick and Suregh will live if they can get help quickly enough. With the 'raft out of action, the only thing even resembling a medical center is the Swordies settlement. Olav (or his replacement, if he has been killed) offers hospitality and the promise of safe passage to the characters and surveyors if they will take the casualties there. They can be stabilized enough for this journey, but traveling overland to Camp Bravo is just too far. The 'raft is too smashed up to use.

It looks like there is another decision to be made here....

CONCLUSIONS

Olav and the Sword Worlders are true to their word. They will lead the characters to their village and look after them. It is obvious that the Swordies are very poor and that their story about having fled their homes is probably true. The characters are now in a position to betray them completely, or to find a more worthy solution to the problem.

Olav says he meant everything he said – including the part where he was willing to kill the characters rather than let them reveal his people's presence on Steel. Now, he is honor-bound to let them go, and the future is in their hands. He offers his word that the Sword Worlders will not trouble the Imperial settlers when they come, and that his people want nothing more than to be left alone in this valley. As to the 'bad guys', Olav knows that armed parties have been sighted in the mountains from time to time, apparently looking for something. He does not know what it might be. He thought they were more Imperials, but it may be that there is some other explanation.

The characters now need to make a momentous decision. Do they reveal the Swordies or conceal them? Can they be trusted or is conflict inevitable? Only the future will show. Only one thing is certain; anyone who accompanied Olav on his one-man rescue bid has won his respect and made a friend for life. That might just make the betrayal harder, or it might be the key to the future.

What happens next is very much up to the characters.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following characters and animals may be encountered in the course of this adventure. Some of the stats below are specific to a particular person; others are general stats that can be used to represent any group of similar type that may be met by the characters.

CREATURES

Korzan's Pseudo-Mammalian Pouncer ('Korzan's Critter')

Critters can be encountered in any terrain. They are roughly the size of a moderately large dog, with rangy bodies and long, muscular legs. Camouflaged by their brownish-green fur, they hunt by creeping close to the prey or lying in wait near a water source, then spring. Critters can jump a surprisingly long way and hit hard, bowling their target over or smashing it to the ground where it can be finished with teeth and claws. Although a family group of 3-8 adults is capable of taking down a human, only the most desperate Critters would try. They have learned to avoid human habitation.

Having pounced, the Critter can run fast but not far. Its gait is rapid but almost comical, and endurance is very limited. Occasionally a group will bring down a Kian by having one or more of their number pounce and cling to the bird, gaining time for others to fling themselves at it. Such bids are unsuccessful more often than not, though larger groups have recently been observed that can pull off this stunt with less effort.

T20: Korzan's Critter – Small (12kg) Carnivore/Pouncer; St/Lb 15/14 (2d10+4); Init +2; To Attack if surprise; To Flee if surprised; Spd 12m (8 squares), jump 6m (4 squares); AC 16 (+2 dex, +1 size, +3 natural armor); AR 3; Atks two claws +5 melee (1d4+1), bite +3 melee (1d6); SA pounce; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 3, Wis 8, Cha 8, Edu --, Soc --.

Skills & Feats: Hide +5, Move Silently +10, Survival +6. Multiattack, Stealthy.

Special Abilities: Pounce – If a Korzan's Critter charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two additional rake attacks (resolve as claw attacks).

CT: Korzan's Critter – 12kg Pouncer; Hits 9/9; Armor mesh; Wounds 5 (as claws); A0 F0 S4.

Kian

The Kian is a large, flightless bird encountered throughout Charted Space. It is used as a riding animal on a great many worlds. While weaker than a horse it has the advantage of being more agile, making it better able to cope with forests and other restricted terrain. Kians can be encountered wild on Steel, having been introduced long ago. Those brought in by hopeful ranchers (the ones that did not just round up some local birds) are a little bigger and stronger than the indigenous type as a result of generations of domestic breeding. They are otherwise indistinguishable and can interbreed freely.

T20: Kian – Large (400kg) Herbivore/Grazer; St/Lb 33/16 (6d4+18); Init -1; To Attack 7+; To Flee 14+; Spd 15m (10 squares); AC 8 (-1 dex, -1 size); AR 0; Atks beak +2 melee (1d8+3); SV Fort +8, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 4, Edu --, Soc --.

Skills & Feats: Listen +2, Spot +2, Survival +9. Alertness, Endurance, Weapon Focus (beak).

CT: Kian – 400kg Grazer; Hits 20/10; Armor none-1; Wounds 16 (as teeth-1); A4 F9 S5.

Highland Terrors

Until humans arrived, the Highland Terror was the apex predator on Steel and afraid of nothing. Today, it has learned to fear and hate humans, and seems to view them as a threat to be eliminated rather than a rival to be avoided. Terrors know enough to stay away from vehicles and buildings, but will sneak up on and attack lone humans or small groups if the chance presents itself.

Like much of Steel's wildlife, the Terror is brownish-gray in color, with wicked fangs and claws. A powerful beast the size of a horse, it generally hunts alone – males and females are equally deadly. A mated pair will produce a handful of young every 2-3 years. If young are present the female will hunt close to their lair while the male ranges more widely. Anyone approaching the lair will be warned off with an impressive array of growling and 'ballooning', where the Terror stalks about as if it were hunting the intruder. This is usually sufficient to drive off rivals, but the noise will also bring the mate hurrying back, hopefully behind the distracted intruders. Several explorers have lost their lives this way.

T20: Highland Terrors – Large (400kg) Omnivore/Hunter; St/Lb 39/16 (6d6+18); Init +1; To Attack 5+; To Flee 7+; Spd 9m (6 squares); AC 13 (+1 dex, -1 size, +3 natural armor); AR 3; Atks two claws +5 melee (1d8+3), bite +2 melee (2d6+1); SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 4, Wis 9, Cha 7, Edu --, Soc --.

Skills & Feats: Intimidate +4, Listen +1, Spot +1, Survival +4. Alertness, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (claw).

CT: Highland Terrors – 400kg Hunter; Hits 19/5; Armor mesh; Wounds 9 (as teeth); A6 F8 S2.

Great Caski

Looking a lot like a furry miniature apatosaurus, the Great Caski is only a little larger than a horse but has been jokingly dubbed 'wanabee megafauna' by Steel's explorers. Caski wander about in small family groups nibbling vegetation and generally causing little harm to anyone. They do not move quickly, and shy away from noises and unexplained movements. They can bite, butt or give a nasty tail slap to predators, but in truth they only pose a danger to humans who cannot walk away quickly enough, are incapable of making a noise, and are mistaken for a tasty piece of vegetation. If there were a prize for 'most harmless beast in Charted Space', the Great Caski would be a strong contender. Even the most avid hunters will only take one for food; they offer no sport whatsoever.

T20: Great Caski – Large (600kg) Herbivore/Grazer; St/Lb 45/18 (8d4+27); Init -1; To Attack 11+; To Flee 8+; Spd 3m (2 squares); AC 8 (-1 dex, -1 size, +6 natural armor); AR 6; Atks bite +3 melee (1d8+4), slam +1 melee (1d6+2), tail slap +1 melee (2d6+6); SV Fort +9, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 18, Dex 8, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 6, Cha 4, Edu --, Soc --.
Skills & Feats: Listen +11, Spot +1. Alertness, Multiattack, Toughness.

CT: Great Caski – 600kg Grazer; Hits 24/11; Armor cloth; Wounds 8 (as teeth); F8 A8 S1.

PERSONALITIES

Pavel Freve, Director of Camp Bravo

Pavel Freve is a long-time frontiersman. Once an energetic daredevil he is now in his late 50s and is slowing down somewhat. In fact, he is becoming positively lazy and while he administers the camp well, his participation in anything requiring actual work is somewhat limited. He does have decades worth of good advice and hilarious stories available for the price of a beer or two, and can be decisive when necessary. It is obvious, however, that this is his last job and all he wants is a quiet success to carry him into retirement with a fat bonus.

Freve is handy with a rifle, like many frontiersmen, and has several in the gun rack at his dwelling. He is never without a knife, not even in the camp, and recommends to all and sundry that they follow his example.

T20: Pavel Freve, Director Of Camp Bravo

(Scout 6/Professional 4) TL14 Medium Human
Stamina 34, Lifeblood 8; Init +1; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 15 (+1 dex, +4 flak jacket), Armor Rating: 4
Str 7, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 13, Edu 16, Soc 12
SV Fort +2; Ref +5; Will +8;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Rifle	+7	1d12	72	48	x2	1	10
Dagger	+6	1d4-2	3	2	19	-	-

Skills: Gather Information +10, K/Interstellar Law +11, Leader +14, Liaison +14, P/Admin +18, Pilot +10, Survival +14, T/Electronics +3, T/Mechanical +3, Trader +5.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (vac suit, light), Carousing, Jack Of All Trades, Legal Eagle, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Professional Specialty (P/Admin), Trustworthy, Vessel (grav, starships), Weapon Focus (rifle), Weapon Proficiency (swordsman, marksman).

Equipment: flak jacket, rifle, dagger, personal communicator.

CT: Pavel Freve, Director Of Camp Bravo 5858B8 Human age 58 10 terms

Admin-3, Carousing-1, Grav-2, JoT-1, Liaison-2, Pilot-1, Rifle-3, Blade-2, Electronics-0, Mechanical-0, Vacc-0

Dr (Lieutenant) Mikhail Wilson, IN (Ret)

Dr Wilson learned his trade in the Imperial Navy, serving a fairly eventful 8-year hitch aboard patrol ships and destroyers. After leaving the service (many years ago now) at the age of 35 he has worked aboard merchant ships, in starport medical facilities, and even aboard the famous *Beneficent Mercy*, a hospital/disaster relief vessel owned and operated as a charity by the Church of Stellar Divinity. Whilst not an ordained minister of the Church, Dr Wilson is a genuinely good man who has received permission from the Church to hold services in the camp. His 'flock' is very small but his circle of friends much larger. Almost everyone in the place has been treated by Dr Wilson at one time or another; he does not mix religion and medicine.

Dr Wilson is liked, respected or loved by everyone in the camp. He plans to settle on Steel and finally make a home for himself (at 73 it's about time!) when the colonists come in. His years of frontier work have resulted in a practical streak to rival any veteran explorer. He habitually carries a Snub revolver loaded with flechette ammunition (for dealing with snakes and other small hazards) but has a Navy-issue officer's Gauss pistol in a box in his home. The rumors that it lies atop his Starburst for Extreme Heroism are totally groundless and a constant source of embarrassment. Dr Wilson is exactly what he seems – an ageing man of medicine who once did a good but unexceptional job as a Navy doctor – and no more.

T20: Dr (Lieutenant) Mikhail Wilson

(Navy 4/Merchant 3/Traveller 3) TL14 Medium Human
Stamina 10, Lifeblood 5; Init -2; Speed 9m (6 squares);
Armor Class: 8 (-2 dex), Armor Rating: 0
Str 4, Dex 6, Con 5, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12, Edu 18, Soc 13
SV Fort +1; Ref +2; Will +8;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub pistol (flechette)	+3	1d4	24	16	x2	1	10
Gauss pistol	+1	1d12	80	54	x3	1/4	40
Fist	+2	1d4-2	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Broker +7, Driving +4, Forward Observer +9, Gambling +11, Gather Information +13, K/Interstellar Law +10, Leader +4, Liaison +16, Pilot +5, P/Admin +13, P/Minister +13, Survival +7, T/Computer +7, T/Medical +17, Trader +7.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (vac suit, light, medium), Barter, Brawling, Carousing, Connections (medical), Fast Talk, Medical Specialization (triage), Steward, Surgery, Trustworthy, Vessel (grav, wheeled), Weapon Proficiency (laser, marksman), Xenomedicine (Vargr), Zero-G/Low Gravity Adaptation.

Equipment: snub pistol, flechette ammunition, gauss pistol, TL14 medical kit, various religious data crystals, personal communicator.

CT: Dr (Lieutenant) Mikhail Wilson 3439C9 Human age 73 13.75 terms

Admin-2, Brawl-1, Carousing-1, Computer-1, Forward Observer-1, Gambling-1, Leader-1, Liaison-2, Medical-3, Pilot-1, Survival-1, Vacc-1, Grav-0, Wheeled-0

Marshal Sarah Naarskiir, IMOJ

Marshal Naarskiir is about 40, and has served in frontier postings for several years. She is technically in charge of law enforcement in the camp (such as it is) and leading the residents in the defense of their homes against whatever threats may arise. The latter usually means driving out to chase off a Highland Terror that's claimed a hunting ground too near a stead. Marshal Naarskiir fits in well enough with the frontiersmen and dresses like them (other than her sidearm and Ministry of Justice badge). She is what might be expected of a 'frontier lawman'; a bit rough and ready in her methods but fair and honest in her dealings. There is little actual law on Steel, so Marshal Naarskiir is mainly concerned with ensuring that the explorers comply with Imperial High Law and do not allow disputes to get out of hand. Her presence is welcomed by the locals who view her as a friend first and an Imperial representative second.

T20: Marshal Sarah Naarskiir

(Traveller 6) TL14 Medium Human

Stamina 27, Lifeblood 13; Init +2; Speed 9m (6 squares);

Armor Class: 16 (+2 dex, +4 flak jacket), Armor Rating: 4

Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12, Edu 14, Soc 11

SV Fort +3; Ref +5; Will +3;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Auto-pistol	+5	1d10	30	20	x2	1	15
Fist	+6	1d4+1	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Drive +11, Innuendo +5, K/Interstellar Law +11, Leader +10, Liaison +10, Pilot +11, Sense Motive +9, T/Computer +5, T/Communications +5, T/Sensors +5, Survival +5

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Brawling, Carousing, Hobby (sense motive), Tactics I, Toughness, Vessel (grav, wheeled), Weapon Proficiency (marksman).

Equipment: flak jacket, auto-pistol, IMoJ badge, personal communicator.

CT: Marshal Sarah Naarskiir 798897 Human age 40 5.5 terms

Brawl-1, Carousing-1, Grav-1, Pistol-1, Streetwise-1, Tactics-1, Wheeled-1, Computer-0, Communications-0, Sensor Ops-0, Survival-0

Marshal Gahr'ahnv Ourgneh, IMOJ

It is rare for a tiny outpost like Camp Bravo to get even one permanent marshal, let alone two. Both of the marshals heartily wish that one of them would be recalled – and in both cases they want it to be Marshal Ourgneh. A young Vargr from Rhyllanor, Ourgneh is a competent enough law enforcer and has useful experience (he served in a planetary army reserve unit before joining the Ministry of Justice), but he just can't get along with Naarskiir at all.

The two disagree about everything. Marshal Ourgneh thinks he should wear uniform at all times; Naarskiir dresses like a bush-bum. Ourgneh feels that his place is in town where he is available to deal with problems; Naarskiir goes haring off into the hills at the slightest provocation, shooting snakes and chasing off predators instead of enforcing the law.

Ourgneh was assigned to Camp Bravo by mistake; he was supposed to be assigned to the new starport project on Mithril where he'd head a small squad of deputies looking after the construction crews. He hates it here and resents the 'lowly' posting he has been given. The real reason for his ongoing feud with Naarskiir is that she likes it here and the people like her, while Ourgneh is desperately unhappy and worried about his future career if this dead-end stint ever ends.

Naarskiir simply thinks that Ourgneh is an arrogant idiot.

T20: Marshal Gahr'ahnv Ourgneh

(Army 3/Traveller 3) TL13 Medium Vargr

Stamina 24, Lifeblood 11; Init +3; Speed 9m (6 squares), 12m (8 squares) without armor;

Armor Class: 17 (+3 dex, +4 cloth), Armor Rating: 4

Str 9, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12, Edu 14, Soc 11

SV Fort +2; Ref +7; Will +4;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Auto-pistol	+7	1d10+2	30	20	x2	1	15
Claw	+7/+7	1d4	-	-	x2	-	-
Bite	+7	1d6+2	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Demolitions +9, Driving +12, K/Interstellar Law +5, Pilot +12, P/Admin +3, Spot +7, Survival +6, T/Computer +5, T/Electronics +8, T/Mechanical +8.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light, medium, vac suit), Carousing, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Tactics I, Toughness, Vessel (grav, wheeled), Weapon Focus (auto-pistol), Weapon Specialization (auto-pistol), Weapon Proficiency (combat rifleman, marksman).
Equipment: cloth armor, auto-pistol, IMoJ badge and uniforms, personal communicator.

CT: Marshal Gahr'ahnv Ourgneh 6B7897 Vargr age 38 5 terms

Demolitions-1, Electronics-1, Grav-1, Mechanical-1, Pistol-1, Wheeled-1, Admin-0, Computer-0, Survival-0, Tactics-0

Olav Gungnirsson

At 23, Olav is very young to be a leader among the Sword Worlders. He has earned the right in the most dramatic fashion possible however, by a combination of good, imaginative leadership and reckless courage. His followers know that he will risk anything to protect them. He is, however, rather prone to risk-taking and dramatic gestures, and will stake all on a throw of the dice where a more cautious approach is just as likely to succeed.

Like his immediate followers, Olav was raised in an environment where skill at arms is valued and so has been trained in the use of many weapons. He is also (like most men from the Sword Worlds) over-protective of women and somewhat patronizing towards them.

T20: Olav Gungnirsson

(Army 4) TL12 Medium Human

Stamina 24, Lifeblood 14; Init +3; Speed 6m (4 squares);

Armor Class: 19 (+3 dex, +6 cloth), Armor Rating: 6

Str 13, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 14, Edu 10, Soc 10

SV Fort +3; Ref +5; Will +1;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Rifle	+6	1d12	72	48	x2	1	10
Auto-pistol	+6	1d10	30	20	x2	1	15
Fist	+7	1d4+2	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Combat Engineering +8, Driving +10, Leader +13, Recruiting +7, T/Communications +3, T/Electronics +3, T/Mechanical +4, T/Sensors +4.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light, medium, vac suit), Brawling, Command Presence, Natural Born Leader, Vessel (wheeled), Weapon Proficiency (combat rifleman, marksman).

Equipment: cloth armor, rifle, auto-pistol, personal communicator.

CT: Olav Gungnirsson 9B9877 Human age 23 1.25 terms

Brawling-1, Leader-1, Recruiting-1, Rifle-1, Wheeled-1, Combat Engineering-0, Communication-0, Electronics-0, Mechanical-0, Sensor Ops-0

GENERAL CHARACTERS

Explorers, Surveyors and Prospectors

Most of the inhabitants of Steel are frontiersmen (frontierspersons just sounds too clunky!) with good survival skills and a rough-and-ready knowledge of their field. A few are university-educated experts, but most have learned their trade in the field. No frontiersman worth his salt will go outside a building without a blade of some kind – there are too many situations where not having one means serious injury or death. Similarly, most have a sidearm, shotgun or carbine available in case of animal attack, claim-jumpers or whatever hazards may crop up.

Experienced Frontiersman

T20: Experienced Frontiersman

(Professional 6) TL12 Medium Human

Stamina 27, Lifeblood 13; Init +1; Speed 9m (6 squares);

Armor Class: 15 (+1 dex, +4 flak jacket), Armor Rating: 4

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 10, Edu 10, Soc 8

SV Fort +3; Ref +3; Will +4;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Auto-pistol	+2	1d12	72	48	x2	1	15
Carbine	+2	1d10	45	30	x2	1	20
Shotgun	+2	3d6/2d6/1d6	3	2	x2	1	10
Fist	+2	1d3	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Appraising +9, Driving +10, (C/appropriate or P/appropriate*) +8, K/Hobby +9, Survival +8, T/Electronics +9, T/Mechanical +9, Trader +9.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Professional Specialty (C/appropriate or P/appropriate*), Trapping, Toughness, Vessel (wheeled).

Equipment: flak jacket, auto-pistol or carbine or shotgun, personal communicator.

CT: Experienced Frontiersman 798775 Human age 34 4 terms

Electronics-1, Mechanical-1, Survival-1, Wheeled-2, (appropriate)*-2, Rifle-0, Shotgun-0

Note: (*) denotes some skill appropriate to the frontiersman's profession.

Inexperienced Frontiersman

T20: Inexperienced Frontiersman

(Professional 3) TL12 Medium Human

Stamina 12, Lifeblood 12; Init +1; Speed 9m (6 squares);

Armor Class: 15 (+1 dex, +4 flak jacket), Armor Rating: 4

Str 10, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 10, Edu 10, Soc 8

SV Fort +2; Ref +2; Will +2;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Auto-pistol	+1	1d12	72	48	x2	1	15
Carbine	+1	1d10	45	30	x2	1	20
Shotgun	+1	3d6/2d6/1d6	3	2	x2	1	10
Fist	+1	1d3	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Appraising +6, Driving +7, (C/appropriate or P/appropriate*) +5, K/Hobby +6, Survival +5, T/Electronics +6, T/Mechanical +6, Trader +6.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Professional Specialty (C/appropriate or P/appropriate*), Trapping, Vessel (wheeled).

Equipment: flak jacket, auto-pistol or carbine or shotgun, personal communicator.

CT: Inexperienced Frontiersman 788775 Human age 26 2 terms

Electronics-1, Mechanical-1, Survival-1, Wheeled-1, (appropriate)*-1, Rifle-0, Shotgun-0

Note: (*) denotes some skill appropriate to the frontiersman's profession.

Townfolk and Ranchers

Less self-reliant and skilled at survival in the field, but still belonging to a tough breed capable of coping far from the comforts of civilization, the townfolk and ranchers of Steel are less likely to be habitually armed, but every stead has a gun or two for emergencies. Skill with weapons tends not to be so important, but even the 'softest' townfolk will know which end of a carbine is dangerous.

T20: Townsman

(Professional 3) TL10 Medium Human

Stamina 9, Lifeblood 10; Init +0; Speed 9m (6 squares);

Armor Class: 10, Armor Rating: 0

Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Edu 10, Soc 10

SV Fort +1; Ref +1; Will +3;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Auto-pistol	+0	1d12	72	48	x2	1	15
Carbine	+0	1d10	45	30	x2	1	20
Shotgun	+0	3d6/2d6/1d6	3	2	x2	1	10
Fist	+0	1d3	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Appraising +6, Driving +6, (C/appropriate or P/appropriate*) +9, K/Hobby +6, Survival +6, T/Electronics +6, T/Mechanical +6, Trader +6.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Athletic, Barter, Endurance, Professional Specialty (C/appropriate or P/appropriate*), Skill Focus (C/appropriate or P/appropriate*), Vessel (wheeled).

Equipment: auto-pistol or carbine or shotgun, personal communicator.

CT: Townsman 777777 Human age 26 2 terms

Survival-1, Wheeled-1, (appropriate)*-2, Electronics-0, Mechanical-0, Rifle-0, Shotgun-0

Note: (*) denotes some skill appropriate to the townsman's profession.

Sword Worlder Settlers

The average Sword Worlder settler is about equivalent to an Inexperienced Frontiersman. These are not hardy pioneers in many cases, but people who have left their homes on civilized worlds and are learning to live in the wilderness the hard way. Like the Imperials on Steel they have weapons (mainly hunting rifles and shotguns) available but no real combat experience

T20: Sword Worlder Settler

(Professional 3) TL12 Medium Human

Stamina 12, Lifeblood 12; Init +1; Speed 9m (6 squares);

Armor Class: 15 (+1 dex, +4 flak jacket), Armor Rating: 4

Str 10, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 10, Edu 10, Soc 8

SV Fort +2; Ref +2; Will +2;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Auto-pistol	+1	1d12	72	48	x2	1	15
Carbine	+1	1d10	45	30	x2	1	20
Shotgun	+1	3d6/2d6/1d6	3	2	x2	1	10
Fist	+1	1d3	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Appraising +6, Driving +7, (C/appropriate or P/appropriate*) +5, K/Hobby +6, Survival +5, T/Electronics +6, T/Mechanical +6, Trader +6.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Professional Specialty (C/appropriate or P/appropriate*), Trapping, Vessel (wheeled).

Equipment: flak jacket, auto-pistol or carbine or shotgun, personal communicator.

CT: Sword Worlder Settler 788775 Human age 26 2 terms

Electronics-1, Mechanical-1, Survival-1, Wheeled-1, (appropriate)*-1, Rifle-0, Shotgun-0

Note: (*) denotes some skill appropriate to the Sword Worlder settler's profession.

Olav's Warband

Olav has created a 'warband' of the toughest and most skilled fighters among his people and armed them with the best weapons he can get; assault rifles, SMGs and the odd ACR for the most part. Olav's band has a few vehicles available and acts as a response force to deal with serious threats. This means rescuing people from rockfalls or diving into the half-frozen lake to save fishermen more often than shooting at something, but shared danger has created a bond among the men (there are no women in the warband).

The warband are the heroes of their community. They have put their lives on the line again and again for their people and they deserve the respect they are given. Each one is known by name to all the settlers, and it is not uncommon to hear 'it's all right now, Arnulf is here' or 'Here's Tomas and Karl, we're saved!' as one or two of them reach a group of people in trouble. The increasing faith of the settlers in the superhuman abilities of their protectors drives them to ever-greater efforts and has resulted in a few too many heroic deaths attempting the impossible instead of making a plan or waiting for help.

T20: Olav's Warband

(Mercenary 6) TL10 Medium Human

Stamina 33, Lifeblood 11; Init +5; Speed 9m (6 squares);

Armor Class: 17 (+1 dex, +6 cloth), Armor Rating: 6

Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8, Edu 10, Soc 10

SV Fort +5; Ref +5; Will +1;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Assault rifle	+7/+2	1d12+1	45	30	x2	1/4	30
SMG	+7/+2	1d10	45	30	x2	1	20
ACR	+7/+2	1d12+2	72	48	x2	1/4	15
Fist	+8/+3	1d4+2	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Driving +10, Hide +6, Move Silently +5, Spot +4, T/appropriate* +4.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light, medium, vac suit), Evasion, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Toughness, Vessel (wheeled), Weapon Proficiency (combat rifleman, marksman).

Equipment: cloth armor, assault rifle or SMG or ACR, personal communicator.

CT: Olav's Warband 897777 Human age 30 3 terms

Combat Rifleman-2, Wheeled-2, (appropriate)*-1, Vacc-0

Note: (*) denotes some technical skill appropriate to the person's role in the warband, such Communications, Electronics and so forth.

'The Bad Guys'

The mysterious 'bad guys' encountered just after the Sword Worlders are obviously combat-experienced. They are armed with assault rifles, ACRs and similar weapons, much like the Sword Worlders, but they also have military-style Cloth armor and helmets. A couple have Combat Armor, and a support gunner armed with a 20mm Light Assault Gun may be identified.

The 'Bad Guys' are in the mountains seeking something, but exactly what that might be is a mystery. All that is known at present is that they are humans, male and female, and are hostile to anyone they meet.

Bad Guy Trooper

T20: Bad Guy Trooper

(Marine 3/Mercenary 3) TL14 Medium Human

Stamina 30, Lifeblood 10; Init +5; Speed 6m (3 squares);

Armor Class: 17 (+1 dex, +6 cloth armor), Armor Rating: 6

Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8, Edu 10, Soc 10

SV Fort +6; Ref +5; Will +2;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Assault rifle	+7/+2	1d12+1	45	30	x2	1/4	30
SMG	+7/+2	1d10	45	30	x2	1	20
ACR	+7/+2	1d12+2	72	48	x2	1/4	15
Cutlass	+8/+3	1d8+1	-	-	18/x2	-	-
Fist	+8/+3	1d4+2	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Demolitions +7, Forward Observer +6, Hide +4, Move Silently +4, Pilot +10

Feats: Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Brawling, Dodge, Evasion, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Sneak Attack, Vehicle (grav), Weapon Focus (cutlass), Weapon Proficiency (combat rifleman, marksman, swordsman).

Equipment: cloth armor, assault rifle or SMG or ACR, cutlass, personal communicator.

CT: Bad Guy Trooper 897777 Human age 30 3 terms

Brawling-2, Blade-1, Combat Rifleman-2, Forward Observer-1, Wheeled-1, Vacc-0

Bad Guy Support Gunner

T20: Bad Guy Support Gunner

(Marine 3/Mercenary 3) TL14 Medium Human

Stamina 36, Lifeblood 12; Init +5; Speed 6m (3 squares);

Armor Class: 17 (+1 dex, +6 cloth armor), Armor Rating: 6

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8, Edu 10, Soc 10

SV Fort +7; Ref +5; Will +2;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
LAG	+7/+2	2d10	96	64	x2	1	40
ACR	+7/+2	1d12+2	72	48	x2	1/4	15
Cutlass	+8/+3	1d8+1	-	-	18/x2	-	-
Fist	+8/+3	1d4+2	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Demolitions +7, Gunnery +5, Hide +4, Move Silently +4, Pilot +10.

Feats: Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Brawling, Evasion, Heavy Metal, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Vehicle (grav), Weapon Focus (cutlass), Weapon Proficiency (combat rifleman, heavy weapons, marksman, swordsman).

Equipment: cloth armor, LAG, ACR, cutlass, personal communicator.

CT: Bad Guy Support Gunner 798777 Human age 30 3 terms

Brawling-2, Blade-1, Combat Rifleman-2, Gunnery-1, Wheeled-1, Vacc-0

Bad Guy Leader in Combat Armor

T20: Bad Guy Leader In Combat Armor

(Marine 6/Mercenary 3) TL14 Medium Human

Stamina 66, Lifeblood 15; Init +7; Speed 6m (3 squares);

Armor Class: 21 (+3 dex, +8 combat armor), Armor Rating: 8

Str 13, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 10, Edu 11, Soc 12

SV Fort +12; Ref +8; Will +3;

ATTACKS:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Rng-S	Crit	ROF	Rnds
ACR	+12/+7	1d12+2	72	48	x2	1/4	15
Cutlass	+13/+8	1d8+1	-	-	18/x2	-	-
Fist	+13/+8	1d4+2	-	-	x2	-	-

Skills: Demolitions +9, Hide +5, Leader +12, Move Silently +4, Pilot +12.

Feats: Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Brawling, Dodge, Evasion, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Second Wind, Toughness, Vehicle (grav), Weapon Focus (cutlass), Weapon Proficiency (combat rifleman, marksman, swordsman).

Equipment: combat armor-14, ACR, cutlass, personal communicator.

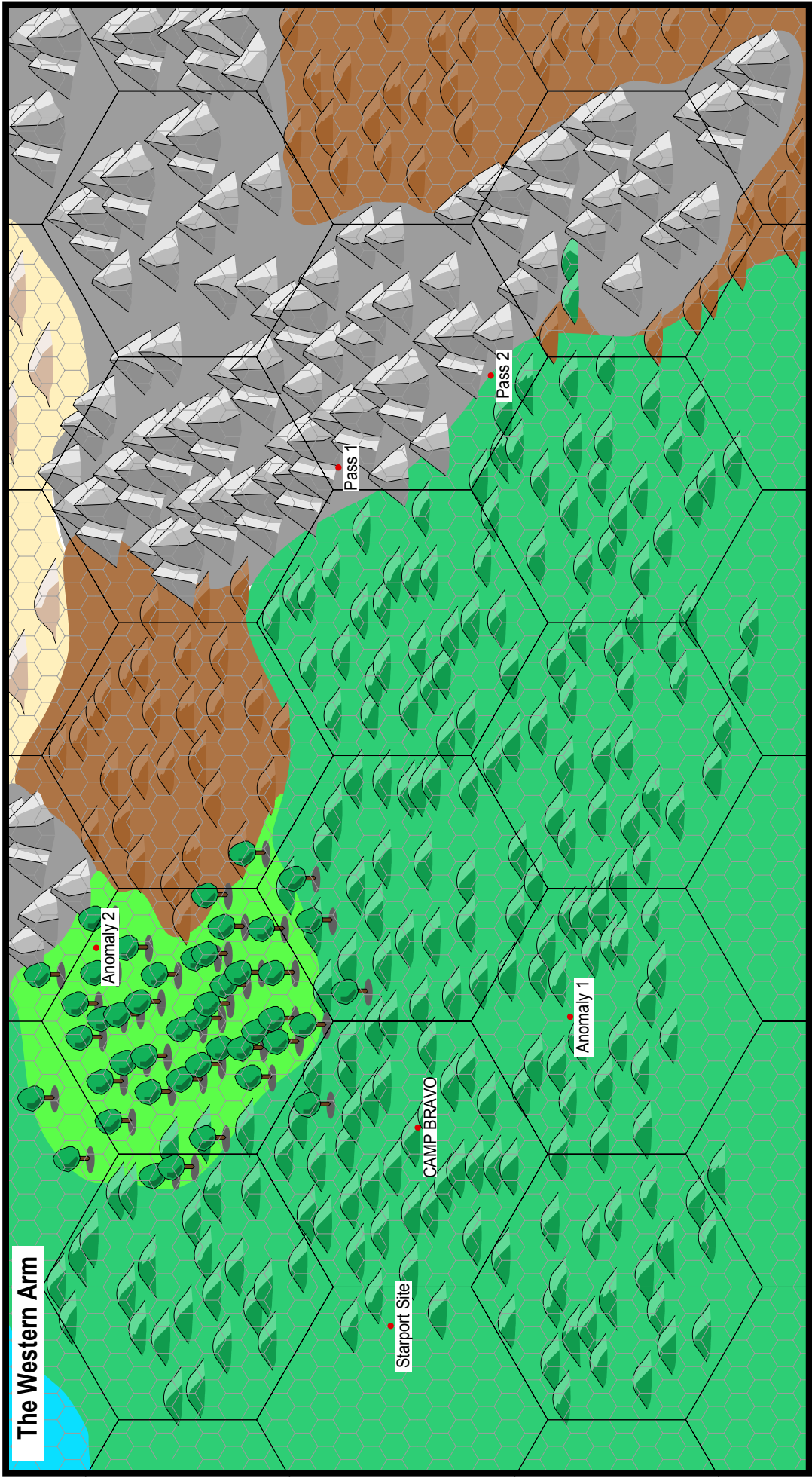
CT: Bad Guy Leader In Combat Armor 9B9778 Human age 38 5 terms

Blade-2, Brawling-2, Combat Rifleman-2, Demolitions-1, Grav-2, Leader-2

FINAL NOTES

This is the first Avenger Enterprises adventure, and the first of a series set on and around Steel. Some plot threads are unresolved. For example, the characters may decide to follow the J-torp information and seek out the wrecked ship. And what of the 'bad guys' encountered near the Swordie village? Who are they and what are they looking for?

Future adventures will expand upon the situation on Steel as the first colonists begin to arrive and mysteries are unraveled. For now, as always, 'the Referee should determine the flow of subsequent events'.



The Western Arm

Starport Site

CAMP BRAVO

Anomaly 1

Anomaly 2

Pass 1

Pass 2

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