

TRAVELLER

CORE ADVENTURE 1
INVASIVE SPECIES



SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	02
REFEREE'S INFORMATION	04
SUPERB STARLING	06
THE EDGE OF THE TWILIGHT ZONE	13
THE DUKE'S PLAYGROUND	22
THE GAUNTLET	30
EPILOGUE	35
ALLIES AND OPPOSITION	36
EQUIPMENT	39



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INTRODUCTION

This adventure occurs on several worlds in the Perite subsector of Core sector, the heart of the Third Imperium. The Travellers are hired to transport a safari ship from its home port of Sirma to the exotic world of Akussanja, where they are to meet their noble patron and go on a hunting expedition. After obtaining specimens of a particular exotic animal, the group proceeds to Tinea-Fabre, the noble's private playground, where they are to put captured animals in a game preserve with others from many worlds that have been assembled.

The Travellers are not required to have a starship for this adventure but they should be competent at operating one. If they do have a ship, they must berth it on Sirma for the duration of the adventure since they will be flying the safari ship. In addition, the Travellers should have an assortment of skills that enable them to operate in the wild spaces of alien worlds. Skills such as Animals, Athletics, Gun Combat, Medic, Navigation, Recon, Stealth and Survival will come in handy. Engineer (life support) and Science (biology or xenology) might also be useful. If the Travellers do not have Animals skill, they are given rudimentary training in the equestrian arts on Tinea-Fabre so they can handle riding animals in the planet's wilderness.

OVERVIEW

Invasive Species begins on the world of Sirma. The Travellers have been hired by Arvinen Elios Okhotnikov – the ducal heir of the powerful Alekvadin system – to crew the *Superb Starling*, a Type-K safari ship that is docked at Sirma Downport. The ducal heir himself is not present and intends to meet the Travellers later, on Akussanja.

When they arrive at the ship, they meet two of Okhotnikov's crew; his chamberlain, Ivy Golba, and his steward, Rill Dunknever. The interior of the ship is in fine condition having just received a thorough cleaning by the two servants, or more specifically the robotic cleaning crew put to the task. Despite the *Starling's* beautifully appointed accommodations, the ship's engines and other systems have not been well maintained. The *Starling* is in dire need of service and the Travellers' first order of business is having that done. A technically apt group of Travellers can get her

up and running but clearly the ship needs to receive its annual maintenance at a starport. Sirma, with its capable but pedestrian Class C starport qualifies but, unfortunately, the ducal heir is quite particular about where he wants the service to be performed, which puts some constraints on the Travellers.

The Travellers proceed to Akussanja, where they meet Okhotnikov for the first time. The tone of the expedition changes significantly with his presence. The ducal heir is an exacting taskmaster and inflicts his ire upon the Travellers if they struggle or fail at any of their assigned jobs.

After obtaining the appropriate gear, they travel to the Akussanjan outback in order to obtain a rare and elusive animal called the shakuurzarpi. Akussanja has a frontier feel to it. It is a cold world made seemingly more so by the chilly relationship between its two main occupants: the Scout Service and SuSAG. Steering clear of the conflict between the two entities, the Travellers proceed into the wilderness to obtain their quarry. The difficulty of the task varies depending on how quickly they got to Akussanja from Sirma. The shakuurzarpi, like many Akussanjan species, hibernates until the system's companion star comes close enough to slightly warm the planet and wake them up. If the Travellers are early, it is merely a matter of finding shakuurzarpi dens, sedating one or more specimens and carefully transporting them to the multi-environment spaces on the *Starling*. However, should they arrive a mere week or two later in the season, they must hunt the animal in the wild, which is significantly more challenging.

Transporting the captured shakuurzarpi to Tinea-Fabre has its challenges, all of which occur during jump. The multi-environment spaces are designed to replicate the native environments of most species but simulating those of Akussanja is difficult. The Travellers' success at getting things right during transport may drastically affect the health of the creatures before they reach Tinea-Fabre.

Upon arrival, the Travellers are to insert the shakuurzarpi into a game preserve and then depart, allowing the creatures time to acclimate themselves to their new surroundings. Meanwhile, the Travellers

return to the planet's primary hub to learn basic equestrian skills if they do not have them already. They might even get a little hunting in before their expedition to the preserve begins.

The Travellers and Okhotnikov return to the preserve so the hunt can begin in earnest. Okhotnikov insists upon the removal of all communication devices as described in The Fine Print on page 29. The hunt is challenging, made more so by the number of exotic and dangerous species integrated into Tinea-Fabre's ecosphere. The Travellers and their noble patron soon discover they are getting more than they bargained for. The shakuurzarpi is a wily prey and has several tricks up its proverbial sleeve that were unknown before the hunt. The group ends up fighting for their lives in an increasingly hostile environment and must make their way back to their base camp – the safari ship itself – on foot with limited supplies and ammunition.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS

To run *Invasive Species*, all that is required is the *Traveller Core Rulebook* but there are other books that the Referee might want to have on hand. For a more detailed selection of equipment, refer to the *Central Supply Catalogue*. For more information on the setting of this adventure and Core sector in general, refer to *The Third Imperium*.

Invasive Species provides several new animal species from the worlds of Akussanja and Tinea-Fabre. Should more animal encounters be desired, the *Traveller Companion* and *Referee's Briefing 6: Garden Worlds* provide dozens of additional species.



REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The following information is for the Referee and contains data that might or might not be made available to the Travellers. Some of this data could be obtained by using public information systems, a ship's Library software or by interacting with individuals from various star systems. Keep in mind that the information the Travellers discover could be out of date, biased, obscured by forces beyond their control or sometimes just plain wrong. Partial information or misinformation can be stumbling blocks on the road to becoming fully informed. Furthermore, the process of putting together the pieces of a puzzle can be an enjoyable and fulfilling experience.

ALIEN ECOSPHERES

The universe is filled with planets with a vast array of unique ecospheres. Most complex life forms develop and prosper on worlds with stable and long-lived stars that fall within a certain range. For example, main sequence stars with spectral classifications of K and G – also called orange and yellow dwarves, respectively – are far more likely to foster life than others. These stars are neither too large nor too small and have long, multi-billion-year existences that give life the time needed to evolve.

Complex life has also been found on the worlds of some F-type stars but this is rare. These stars give off too much radiation and have too short of a lifespan for life to have time to develop. Stars with spectral classifications of A and higher almost never support native life. The radiation that emanates from them is detrimental to most life forms and, besides that, they burn their fuels too quickly for complex life forms to

even begin development. However, non-native life has been found around such stars, some of which may have been transported there by the Ancients, Vilani or other starfaring civilisations.

M-type main sequence stars, also called red dwarves, often have challenging environments but the universe has many that have managed to create life of their own. On the plus side, red dwarves have unusually long lifespans, burning their reserves of hydrogen for tens of billions of years, trillions for the smallest of them. In comparison, Terra's star Sol is likely to exist for no more than 10 billion years. Having such a long lifespan provides ample time for the chemicals of life to coalesce and develop. However, planets in the habitable zone of a red dwarf must be very close, which almost invariably means they are tidally locked. One side eternally faces the star, often roasting its surface mercilessly, while the other side is likely to be bitter cold unless some natural device brings it a portion of the bright side's heat; for example, liquid oceans that carry warm convection currents. The instability of many red dwarves limits their ability to create life as well. Frequent stellar flares result in powerful extinction events that kill off life forms before they can properly develop. In red dwarf systems that are reasonably stable, life has the greatest chance to occur in the narrow twilight zone, the sliver of a world's surface between the dark and light sides.

Blaukasa and Iona, the binary pair of red dwarves in the Akussanja system, are somewhat unusual. Both are relatively stable, emitting few flares, none of which have been exceedingly destructive. The two stars



orbit a common centre of mass but the companion star orbits at a 45° angle off the ecliptic compared with planets in the system. Its orbit brings it quite close to Akussanja once every two and a half years, ever so slightly illuminating, heating up and exerting tidal forces on the planet.

Most Akussanjan animal species are heterothermic. Attuned to the interaction of the two stars, they hibernate when the companion is far away and stir to life when it is close. The shakuurzarpi, which the Travellers have come to capture, is one such species. Taking such an animal out of its native environment, especially one as unique as that of Akussanja, can be dangerous. It can certainly cause harm or even death to the animal. Intermixing species from different worlds can also wreak havoc on the ecosystem to which they are taken. Some examples:

- Taking an apex predator to an environment that already has one or more.
- Taking an apex predator to an environment whose native species are woefully unprepared for the challenge.
- Inserting a voracious herbivorous eater into an environment with a dearth of edible resources.
- Removing a fast-breeding animal from a system that controls its reproductive rate and adding it to one where such limitations are not present.

Careless mixing of species and environments can have adverse effects. Humaniti and other starfaring sophonts have made a habit of upsetting the ecosystems of many worlds by introducing species that throw the balance completely out of whack.

THE PERITE SUBSECTOR

Perite has a distinctly Vilani flavour. Pacified but never fully incorporated during the era of the Ramshackle Empire, many of its worlds returned to their Vilani roots during the Long Night. After inclusion into the Third Imperium, Perite became host to a hybrid Solomani-Vilani culture but both languages are spoken in the region. Subsector Duke Evander Konig has ingratiated himself with the locals by adopting the Vilani name, Dagalu Kiinlarsuush Rikhummi.

A popular form of entertainment in Perite are its 'Shugillii shows', holovid series that celebrate the Vilani tradition of food processing. The Vilani are descendants of humans taken from Terra and transplanted to Vland 300,000 years ago by the Ancients. Most of the native animal species of Vland were indigestible by the Vilani, so learning how to process them for nutrients became a

necessity for survival and a staple of their culture. The hosts and film crews of the shows travel Perite, showing people how to process flora and fauna from its worlds. The most popular of the shows is 'Shugillii Shimiirkhuki', in which the host hunts a multitude of animal species and shows how to field process the animals. The hosts of these shows are huge celebrities in the Perite and Apge subsectors but less well known elsewhere.

The astrography of Perite consists of several small clusters of stars and is not conducive to easy transit by jump-1 starships. The rimward portion of the subsector features three such clusters, one of which contains Tinea-Fabre, the primary locale of this adventure.

CORE SECTOR NOBILITY

The Imperial nobility consists of honour and rank nobles. Honour nobles are awarded titles based on their service to the Imperium and rarely receive additional responsibilities. Rank nobles are awarded titles based on status and their position in Imperial society. Rank noble titles are typically passed down from generation-to-generation, although they may be revoked by the Emperor under various circumstances.

A subset of the rank nobility holds political office and administers the star systems of the Imperium. While all classes of nobility confer exalted station and privilege, the rank nobility of the Core are afforded special status that exceeds that of other sectors. To put it bluntly, the nobles of the Core consider themselves to be significantly *more* noble than those of any other sector. This is primarily due to their proximity to Capital and other key worlds of the Core, the birthplace of the Third Imperium.

This is not to say that all high nobles of the Core are haughty, insufferable or intolerant. A great many are philanthropists and dedicated public servants. Many are veterans of the military and diplomatic corps. However, the enhanced fame and fortune of being a Core noble is worn by most as a badge of honour.

In this adventure, the Travellers' patron is a member of the rank nobility, the ducal heir to one of the Core's most powerful industrial worlds. As such, he expects a degree of deference from those in his employ. He holds them to a high standard and refuses to accept anything short of absolute excellence. The rewards of working for such a patron can be many; the nobility pays well for services rendered. Furthermore, reputation and social standing go a long way in the Core. Conversely, those who fail while in the employ of a powerful noble can expect to see their prospects noticeably diminish.

SUPERB STARLING

Sirma (C42498A–C) is an industrial world of the Perite subsector. The Travellers have been contacted by Ivy Golba, chamberlain of Arvinen Elios Okhotnikov, the ducal heir of Alekvadin, one of the most powerful worlds in the Core. The Travellers have been offered a job that requires them to have an array of skills. They must be able to operate a starship, in this case a Type-K safari ship called the *Superb Starling* and must have planetside skills that make them handy in wilderness environments.

The job has two key objectives: The first is to get the ship to Akussanja where the Travellers are to meet their patron, go on a hunting expedition with him and capture specimens of an exotic and elusive animal species. The second is to transport the captured animals to the world of Tinea-Fabre, insert them into a wildlife refuge on the planet and then hunt them once again, this time seeking to kill their prey.

Golba offers them standard monthly crew salaries for the duration of the assignment (see page 145 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook* for crew salaries), a Cr350000 bonus to be divided amongst the group and the chance to make a Contact out of the ducal heir himself. As the seat of empire, the Core is a politically charged environment; having friends in high places can have immeasurable value.

Golba has some negotiating room on the bonus but has a cap of Cr500000. The chamberlain informs the Travellers that the ducal heir will hold them to a very high standard. He only hires the best and he expects to get the most out of anyone in his employ. They will have to earn every Credit of that bonus.

TOUR OF THE SAFARI SHIP

The *Superb Starling* is actually owned by Baroness Olga haut-Pettetzwallier of Siduka but she and her family have become quite urbane and have little use for a safari ship. She lends it to other members of the peerage from time-to-time including the Duke of Alekvadin and his son, both of whom are avid hunters.

Upon their arrival at Sirma Downport, Golba takes the Travellers on a tour of the ship. Approaching its bow, Travellers unfamiliar with the class might be impressed by its broad observation deck and viewing portals. They enter through the airlock, located on the fore of

the lower deck. There are two customisations to the lower deck; the trophy room has been converted into a biological laboratory and the aft has a retractable rear porch. The launch is present in the docking space and contains a standard ATV. The staterooms are neat, trim and spotlessly cleaned.

Proceeding to the upper deck, it is much the same. The ship is luxuriously appointed with a bridge whose comfortable seats and exotic wood trim invoke the feel of a posh tiki lounge instead of a high-tech control centre and the common area resembles a hunting lodge dining hall. Golba introduces the Travellers to Rill Dunknever, who is seated at the table as they enter. Dunknever is a gregarious sort and asks if they have any dietary preferences he should know about before they begin their voyage. The Travellers might note that the ship has a luxury stateroom on this deck but Golba does not take the tour into that room since it is the private sanctum of their patron. An open-top air/raft is present in its docking space and there is a turret, although the ship is not armed. At this point, the Travellers have good reason to be impressed with the vessel. However, as they make their way to aft, the engineering section tells a different story.

The engine room is as clean as the rest of the *Starling* but an examination of its drives reveals that it has not been well maintained. The ship has not received its annual maintenance service and a check of the logs reveals it is nearly three months overdue. The Travellers might be afraid to fire up the engines and rightly so. Refer to Running Costs and Maintenance on page 144 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. When the Travellers fire up the ship, roll 2D adding DM+2 since it is two months overdue. On a result of 8+ the ship incurs a critical hit. Travellers with Engineer or Mechanic can repair the damage as normal but the ship's problems continue to get worse if they do not get it serviced at a starport. See the Dilapidation table, which describes the additional decline of the ship if they do not get it serviced promptly.

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE

The *Superb Starling* needs its annual maintenance done. Sirma's shipyard is capable of doing the job but Chamberlain Golba informs the Travellers that

Dilapidation

Passage of Time Before Maintenance

Passage of Time Before Maintenance	Results
Upon receipt, the <i>Superb Starling</i> is more than two months overdue for annual maintenance.	As described above, roll 2D with DM+2. On an 8+, the <i>Starling</i> incurs a critical hit.
Two weeks after receipt of the mission, the ship passes into its third month without maintenance.	As above but the <i>Starling</i> now incurs DM+3 on the maintenance check.
Six weeks pass after receipt of the mission.	As above but the <i>Starling</i> now incurs DM+4 on the maintenance check.

Okhotnikov wants the service performed at a Class A or B facility; apparently, the ducal heir believes he can tell the difference just by the sound of the ship's engines. Dunknever then tells a story about how a previous team of ship handlers – much like the Travellers themselves – had the *Starling's* maintenance performed at an inferior starport and Okhotnikov's complaints were all they heard for the rest of the voyage. Every little ping, chuff or clank from the ship's engines was registered by Okhotnikov as having been caused by subpar service.

In truth, Okhotnikov knows little about the care of starships. If he did, he might be more diligent about having them serviced. However, he is the patron and the Travellers might want to give his instructions careful consideration. A check of the *Starling's* maintenance logs reveals that unfortunately, this is not the first time it has had its engines neglected. In the process of being bandied about between various noble families, the care and feeding of the ship has often been overlooked.

Golba segues into the timeline of their voyage. They must get to Akussanja quickly, otherwise the shakuurzarpi will have arisen from hibernation and the animal becomes much more difficult to hunt. The Travellers have two things to consider: First, they must have the ship serviced soon or the risk of catastrophic failures increases. However, maintenance takes time and the longer they take to get to Akussanja, the more difficult it becomes to obtain their quarry. Do they forego maintenance in order to get to the planet quickly, risking a total breakdown of key engine components? Or do they get the ship serviced now but risk a long and difficult struggle to hunt down the animal? Neither is the right answer but both paths have consequences.

There is a third option that enables them to have their cake and eat it too. Sirma has a perfectly capable Class C starport and it can service the

ship just fine. If Okhotnikov finds out the Travellers had the ship serviced on Sirma, he is going to be extremely displeased and it might have an effect on their relationship with him. However, he will also be displeased if they struggle to find shakuurzarpi specimens because the Travellers are late getting to Akussanja. The fastidious ducal heir will be indignant in either case. There are no excuses as far as he is concerned. He is a high-ranking noble and accustomed to getting his way even when what he asks for is technically impossible.

If the Travellers opt to fool the ducal heir, they must get buy-in from his two servants, Golba and Dunknever. While both are loyal to Okhotnikov, they might be convinced it is worthwhile to get the ship serviced immediately and then fake the log records so that their master never knows. Convincing the two of them to go along with the ruse requires the Travellers to make a Very Difficult (12+) Persuade (SOC) check. They might be able to obtain favourable DMs by deceiving the servants into believing the ship simply must be serviced immediately or they are all in danger, or a similar fiction. If they attempt to do this, allow them to make an Average (8+) Deception (INT or SOC) check to fool the servants. Then apply the Effect to the Persuade check.

The servants are loyal to the ducal heir and do not like the idea of putting one over on him but they also know what working with him is like. Being stuck with an angry Okhotnikov for an extended period of time

THE FINE PRINT

The Travellers' contract is quite specific on a number of points and vague on others. Among the many caveats described is the removal of all communications devices during the hunt on Tinea-Fabre. Okhotnikov claims to be a 'paleo hunter' and while he does not completely eschew the use of all technology, he insists upon his hunting party cutting off all communication with the outside world for the duration of the hunt. The language is hidden away and written in confusing syntax, so the Travellers might overlook it. If one of them pours over the contract in great detail, allow them to make a Very Difficult (12+) Advocate (EDU, 1D hours) check to catch these details. The Referee should consider making the roll to avoid giving the Travellers the suspicion that something about the contract is unusual.

can be unpleasant. If the Travellers come up with a creative way to get to Akussanja quickly and with a fully functional *Superb Starling*, the servants might be willing to go along.

VOYAGE TO AKUSSANJA

The Travellers have choices to make:

- Obtain maintenance along the way to Akussanja at a Class B starport (there are no accessible Class A facilities), making three jumps in the process, thereby arriving too late to acquire a hibernating shakuurzarpi.
- Skip the maintenance for now, making two jumps to Akussanja, arriving in time to catch the shakuurzarpi while they are hibernating but risking critical damage to the ship.
- Pull a fast one on the ducal heir, getting the maintenance done on Sirma, then proceeding to Akussanja with a fully functional ship on time to obtain hibernating shakuurzarpi.

No matter which course they take, the voyage requires multiple jumps. The following sections describe the worlds they might visit during the trip and extenuating circumstances encountered.

Kinuu

Kinuu is an unlikely stop for the Travellers but if they are determined to avoid Uurgin due to its Amber Zone, then they must pass through Kinuu.

The size of the system's red giant star, called Maagaarkhi lini or simply 'Maag', and an unfortunate planetary arrangement makes travel both within and through Kinuu problematic. Maag is nearly 300 million kilometres in diameter, so the outer shell of the star extends outward from its core approximately 2AU, two times the distance from Sol to Terra. The stellar diameter makes jumping into and out of the system difficult because of the star's massive 100-diameter limit. All three of the system's gas giants are in the inner zones, therefore requiring long sublight journeys to reach them and making wilderness refuelling impractical. One of the gas giants is in the habitable zone, and even has moons with liquid water and breathable atmospheres, but because it is so far within Maag's 100-diameter limit, few go there.

Given the challenges of travelling in-system, Kinuu was declared the system mainworld simply by virtue that it can be jumped to and from without the dangers of incurring a misjump. Kinuu is an unpleasant and

resource-poor world and has only a frontier-quality starport, little more than a paved landing pad for one or two ships. Its government is a colonial administration whose roles are assigned to the individuals with the top 12 scores on a bi-annually held standardised test. The world's inhabitants are engaged in light industry and resource development but have little to trade. An interesting secret about Kinuu is that its starport does indeed have unrefined fuel, acquired from long sublight forays into the system interior but the locals are resistant to sell it due to the difficulty they endure to obtain it. However, should visitors find out about the fuel reserves and express interest in purchasing some, the locals might be convinced to part with a tankful of unrefined liquid hydrogen for Cr2500/ton.

Uurgin

If the Travellers take the spinward route to Akussanja, they can have the *Superb Starling* serviced at one of the Class B starports along the way. Uurgin is the first of the two options and the only destination they may choose if they want to avoid suffering an additional DM-1 on their next skipped maintenance check.

Uurgin is a highly militarised system with both naval and scout bases present. One of the primary responsibilities of the naval squadron and scout assets posted to Uurgin is patrolling the Coreward Mekee Gap, the region that is absent of stars in the upper portion of the Mekee subsector. The Imperium keeps a close eye on deep space energy signals and other anomalies in the gap in order to better defend the Core. Terrorists and pirates have been known to inhabit such regions and must be ferreted out.

At the time of the Travellers' arrival, there is an increased military presence in the system. Rumour has it that deep space patrols have detected something in the empty parsec just rimward of Uurgin. The increased presence of military ships makes docking at the highport difficult and access to starship maintenance facilities hard to come by. Nevertheless, savvy Travellers might be able to sidle the *Starling* into a maintenance bay for a quick tune-up by bribing the right people or making a Very Difficult (12+) Admin check (SOC). Success results in the crew obtaining much-needed service for the ship provided they pay double the fees. Should they succeed, they had best do so in secrecy since the navy has claimed all starport assets for the duration of the crisis. Failure not only indicates they do not obtain maintenance services but that they also garner the undesired attention of the Imperial Navy, who are not too pleased about the Travellers' attempt to consume much-needed resources. A navy patrol corvette is dispatched to inspect the *Starling* and

its highly annoyed commander threatens to detain their ship. The Travellers can avoid this fate by making a Difficult (10+) Diplomacy or Persuade (SOC) check. Add DM+2 to the check if they invoke the name of the Duke of Alekvadin, whose son is chartering the ship.

Uuniluu

The naval base at Uuniluu dominates the system but ample civilian facilities are present as well. This system represents the Travellers' best bet to acquire prompt and high-quality service for the *Starling*. They may do so at either the highport or downport since there is little difference in the quality of service between the two facilities. Uuniluu is an interesting spectacle from space, a tidally locked half-frozen water world. Its bright side faces the circumbinary pair of two of the system's three red dwarf stars, while proximity to the two stars provides enough heat to melt ice and produce warm convection currents that reach like tendrils onto the dark side of the world. The third star of the trinary system is distant enough to have little effect on the other two.

Uuniluu has deep oceans and no land masses that reach above the surface of its water. The downport is emplaced on a particularly large glacier, 500 kilometres east of the world's twilight zone. Therefore, the downport exists in eternal night, with its artificial lights visible from close orbit. It obtains the majority of its energy from hydroelectric sources. If the Travellers descend to the downport, the visit serves as a preview of their upcoming experience on Akussanja where the conditions they will encounter are similar.

Asmi

Asmi is the site of a failed colony in its final death throes. It would have completely disappeared by now if not for the fact that the Imperial government prefers to keep at least a minimal population in each of the Core's star systems,

no matter how limited their resources, challenging their environments or subsequently poor the prospects of settlers might be. The Asmians are subsidised by the Imperium to maintain a token presence on the world. As such, its solitary settlement is unimpressive but perhaps a great place to go if one wants to get away from urban societies... or hide from them.

Asmi has no highport and its downport is about as basic as they come. Much of the equipment at the refuelling centre was actually of higher technology at some point but has been patched together with low-tech materials and subpar replacement parts over the years. Refuelling a starship takes an inordinately long amount of time with the frequent component failures and poor throughput of the jury-rigged system. Many visiting ships forego the starport and simply dip their refuelling skimmers into one of the world's oceans, extricate and refine the hydrogen and then get on their merry way to the next star system.

Imguu

Imguu is a frontier outpost, the largest world in a system of tiny, airless rockballs. Even after millennia of exploitation, its two planetoid belts still yield a reasonable amount of high-value minerals, so the transient belter community is strong and outnumbers the system's permanent inhabitants by a factor of 10. Imguu has a quality Class B highport and downport, and its small craft shipyard is used primarily by the belter community but can serve up custom designs when requested.

The lack of a real society or legal system means buyers should beware. Goods and services purchased at Imguu are often faulty and many fail shortly after departing the system, usually a few weeks after a Traveller has gone a few parsecs and it is too much trouble to go back to argue about it.



THE SUPERB STARLING

TYPE: K

The *Superb Starling* is a customised Type-K safari ship. Like others of its class, the *Starling* is an excursion vessel, designed to transport people of means to distant worlds in luxury and comfort so they can engage in hunting expeditions or wildlife tourism. The ship has two multi-environment holding tanks to contain live animals. The space normally

reserved for a trophy lounge has been converted into a laboratory, in which one may examine specimens taken from captured or killed prey. There is a retractable observation porch that extends from the port-aft underside of the ship, enabling its owner and crew to relax and enjoy the view.

TLI2

		TONS	COST (MCr)
Hull	200 tons, Streamlined	—	12
M-Drive	Thrust 1	2	4
J-Drive	Jump-2	15	22.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL 12), Power 140	6	6
Fuel Tanks	J-2, 4 weeks operation	41	—
Bridge		10	1
Computer	Computer/5bis	—	0.045
Sensors	Civilian Grade	1	3
Weapons	Double Turret	1	0.5
Systems	Docking Space (20 tons)	22	5.5
	Launch	—	2.367
	Docking Space (4 tons)	5	1.25
	Air/Raft	—	0.25
	Fuel Scoop	—	—
	Fuel Processors (40 tons/day)	2	0.1
	Multi-Environment Space	8	0.5
	Multi-Environment Space	8	0.5
	ATV (on Launch)	—	0.155
	Laboratory	8	2
	Retractable Rear Porch	2	0.05
Software	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre	—	—
Staterooms	Standard x9	36	4.5
	Luxury Stateroom	10	1.5
Common Areas		12	1.2
Cargo		11	—

Crew

Pilot, Astrogator,
Engineer

Hull: 80

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr5971/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr71.656

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems

40

Manoeuvre Drive

20

Jump Drive

40

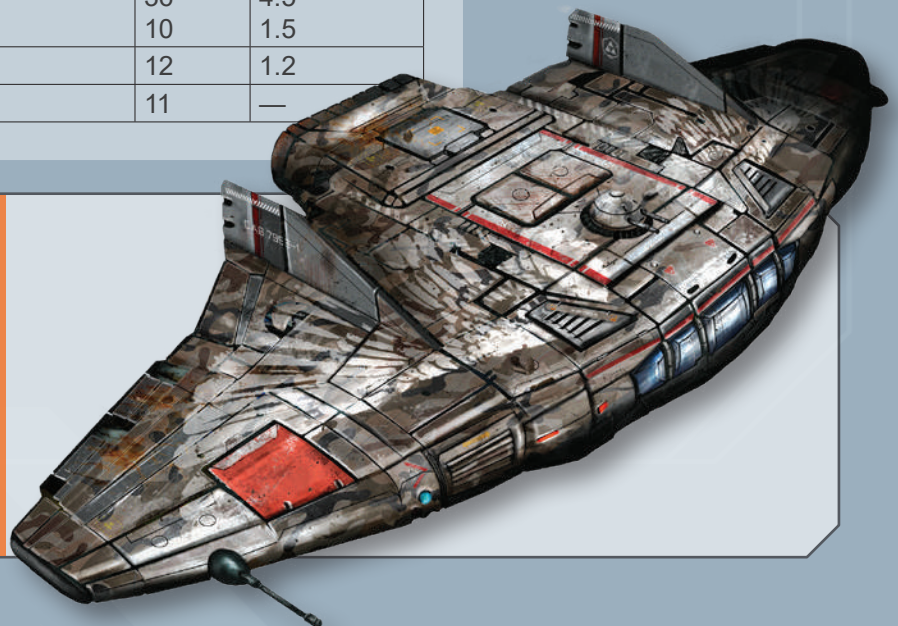
Sensors

1

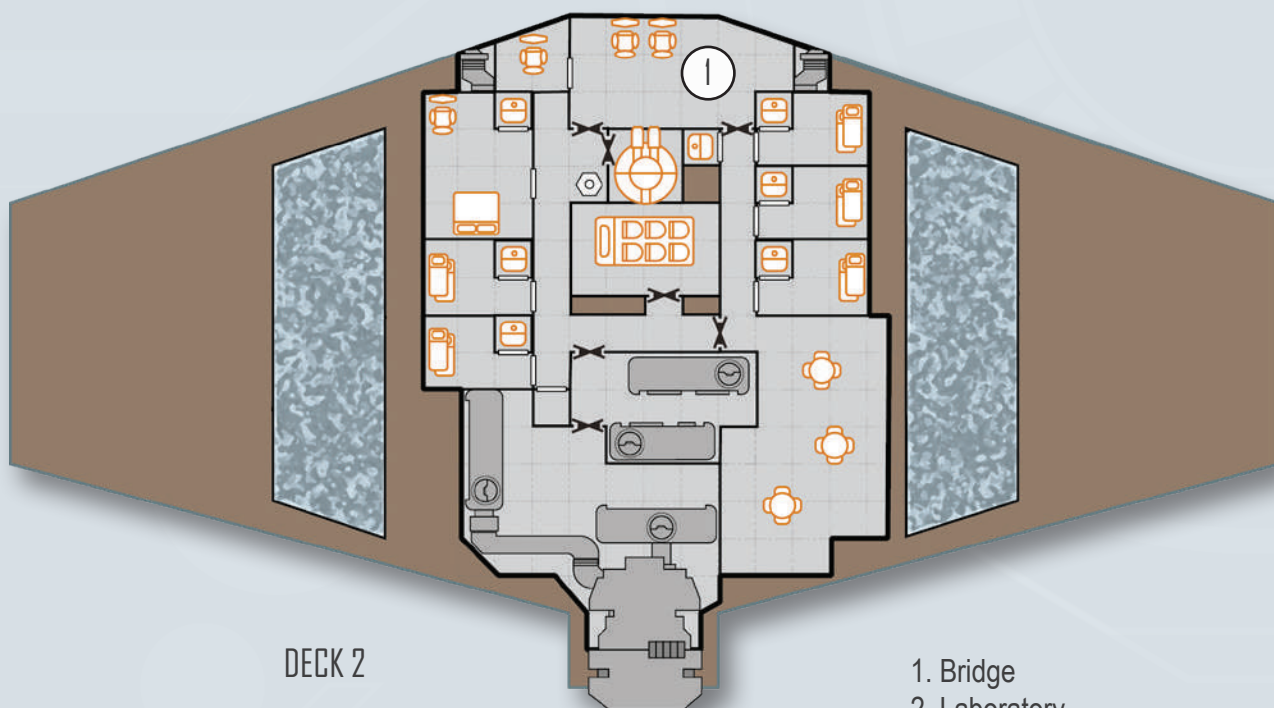
Weapons

1

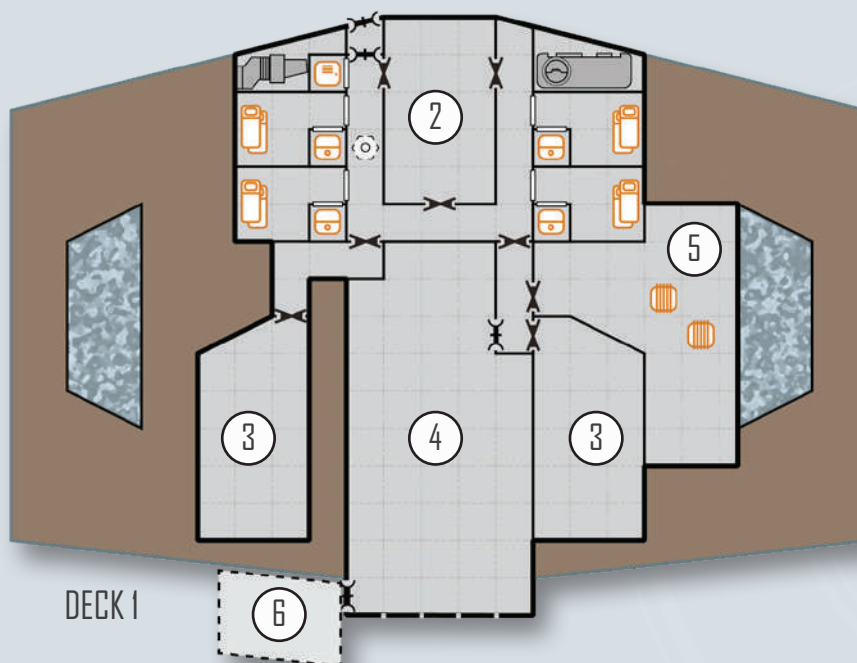
THE SUPERB STARLING



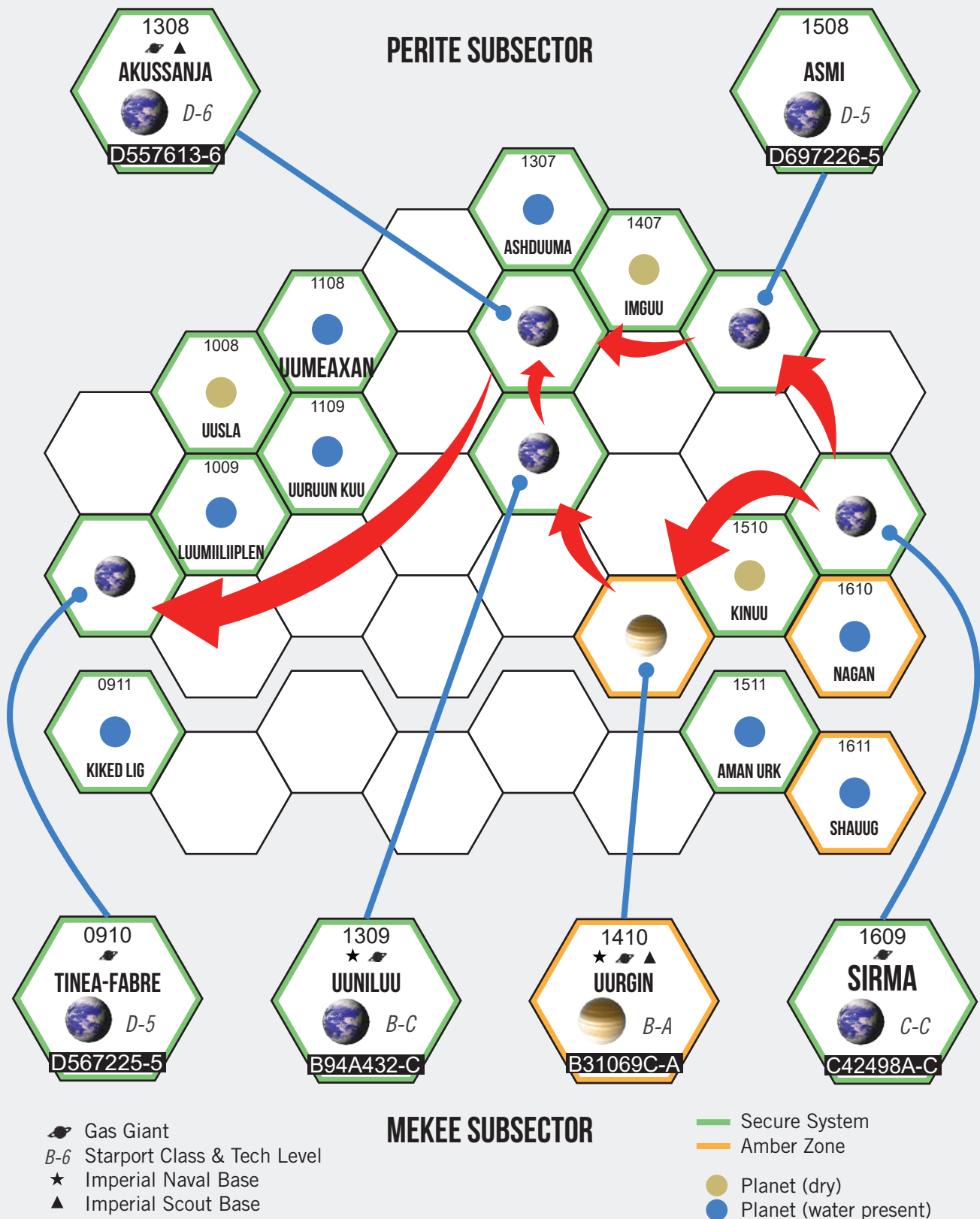
TYPE: K



1. Bridge
2. Laboratory
3. Multi-environment Space
4. Launch Docking Space
5. Cargo Bay
6. Retractable Rear Porch



Possible routes to Akussanja and Tinea-Fabre



THE EDGE OF THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Whether they make two jumps or three, and have the *Superb Starling* serviced or not, the Travellers eventually arrive at the world of Akussanja (D557613–6), the tidally locked mainworld of a binary star system. After a brief foray into the startown and an introduction to their patron, they must prepare for an expedition into the frozen wilderness at the dark edge of the Akussanjan twilight zone, the narrow band of daylight between the bright and dark sides of the planet.

Akussanja is a frigid world and the Travellers are going to need cold-weather clothing and gear to operate in the wilderness. Refer to Arctic and Cold Environments on page 43 of the *Central Supply Catalogue* for a listing of appropriate kit. In addition to any of the items listed in this section, their patron provides them with an allowance of Cr10000 apiece to acquire other items they might need.

Akussanja Downport is a utilitarian affair, designed to serve SuSAG, the company that governs the planet and an array of subcontractor companies that provides services to the vastly larger megacorporation. The Scout Service maintains a base on the planet as well. The scout base was adjacent to the downport at one point in time but a falling out with SuSAG resulted in the scouts moving their operations to a new campus several kilometres away.

After landing, Golba departs to collect Okhotnikov and brings him to the *Superb Starling*. After a cursory introduction, he gives the ship a thorough inspection. While the ship does not actually belong to him, he makes frequent use of it and treats it as if it were his own. He has the Travellers run the ship through an exhaustive sequence of tests that last about an hour. He walks the halls, checks all of the staterooms and performs a white-glove examination of the common area and laboratory. It might seem to be overkill at some point, with the Travellers potentially rolling their eyes at the excessive inspection but then he goes to the bridge to check the logs. If the Travellers have not had the ship serviced yet, he questions them mercilessly about why they have not attended to the ship's needs. On the other hand, if they have had the ship serviced at one of the Class B starports and are therefore a week late, he chastises them for making

the hunt on Akussanja that much more difficult. After perforating the Travellers with verbal abuse and leaving them to sulk for a while, Okhotnikov has second thoughts about the whole situation and calls for them to assemble in the common area, where he says the following:

You have been tasked with the delivery of this ship in good working order to this planet under very tight, some would say impossible, time constraints. You have failed, of course, but your valiant attempt is not unappreciated. You did the best you could. Now, let us prepare for the hunt.

If they attempted to deceive the ducal heir by having the ship serviced on Sirma, allow the Travellers to make a Deception check opposed by Okhotnikov's Admin check. If the Travellers win the opposed check, he seems mildly pleased, tells them to prepare for the hunt and then departs. However, if he wins the opposed check, thereby exposing the ruse, he becomes extremely silent and scowls at them with contempt. He comments:

I understand why you did what you did but please do not ever lie to me again. We had not yet been acquainted, so perhaps you took me for a fool. I am not one. Let us proceed with a relationship based on trust and honesty from here forth.

Allow the Travellers to have a discussion with Okhotnikov about the situation. If they are honest and exhibit proper deference to the ducal heir, the mission may proceed as planned. If they are disrespectful, he puts them in their place. Golba does what she can to arbitrate but ultimately the Travellers must understand that in the Core, the nobility wields a great deal of power and they expect to be treated with the utmost respect.

No matter which course of action they took en route to Akussanja, the Travellers were faced with an impossible situation. They may feel as if they have gotten off on a bad foot but give the Travellers every chance to get the mission back on track. Ultimately the ducal heir is a reasonable man and there is no reason that the Travellers and their patron should not be able to work together going forward.

AKUSSANJA AND ITS NATIVE LIFE

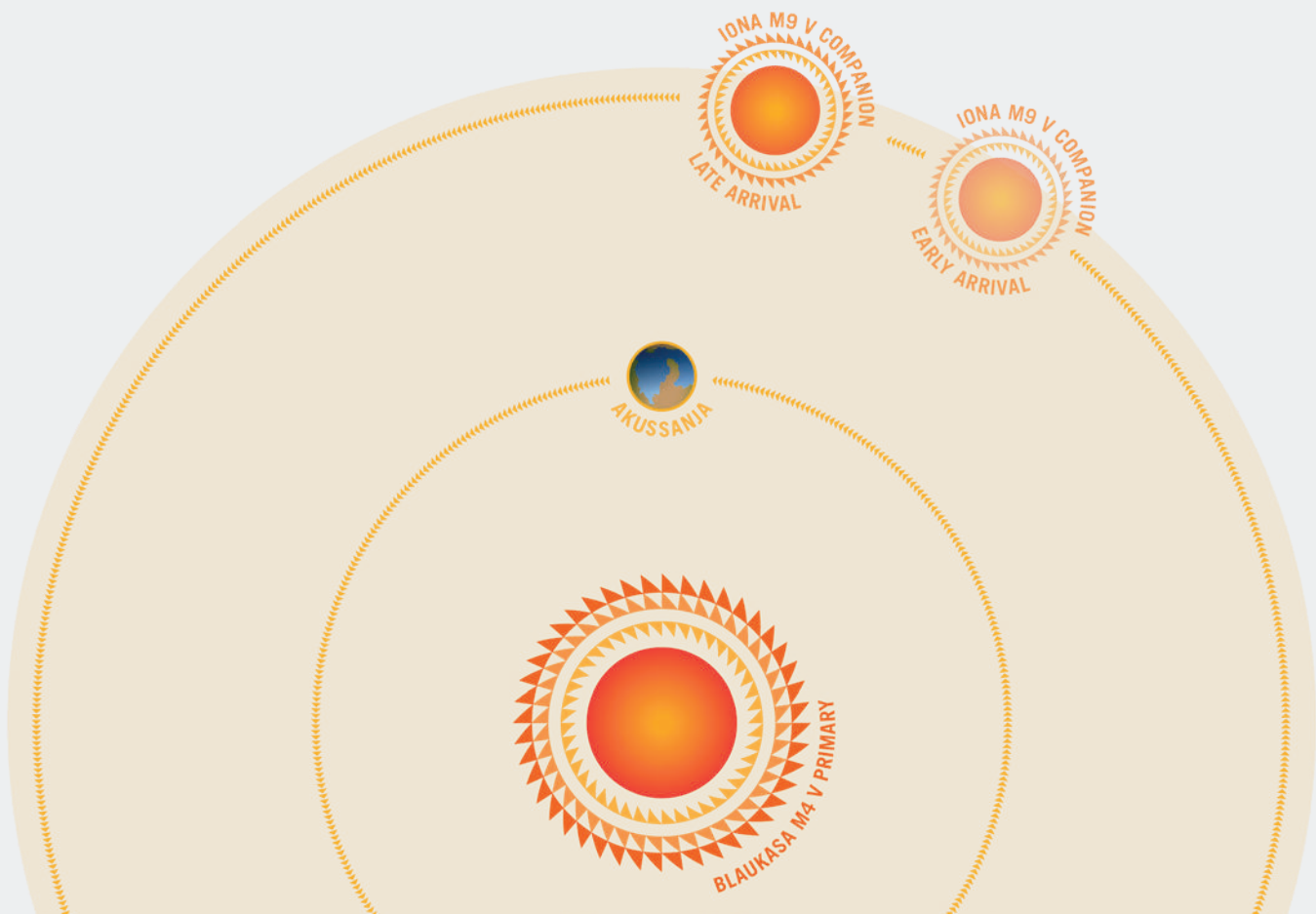
Akussanja hosts a variety of unusual life forms whose behaviours are affected by its red dwarf binary pair, Blaukasa and Iona. Akussanja orbits Blaukasa, the larger of the two stars. Companion star Iona has an eccentric orbit, approximately 45° off the plane of the ecliptic. Every 2.5 standard years, Iona comes close enough to Akussanja to have a significant effect on the system mainworld. When Iona is distant, Akussanja's hydrosphere is frozen, creating ice caps the world over. The planet's abundant sea life mostly goes dormant during this period but when Iona is close, its frozen oceans partially melt and the seas come to life. Most Akussanjan aquatic and amphibious life forms hibernate during the cold periods and become active only when they have significant heat from both stars. In addition, Iona casts its dim light on what is otherwise Akussanja's dark side.

The existence of native life is rare in red dwarf systems but Akussanja has a complex ecosystem. It might have been more so if not for the interruption of a cataclysmic event approximately 500 million years ago, interrupting

the equivalent of Terra's Devonian Era, thereby limiting the world's panoply of animals to aquatic and a few amphibious species.

The awakening is a very active period for the world's biosphere. As Iona comes close, animals burst into activity, consuming available plant and other animal life, mating and nesting. Amphibians and oceanic mammaloids race to build up much-needed body fats, which enable them to survive and extend their active period. The cycle of activity extends for nearly two years for most of the heterothermic species, long after the orbit of Iona has taken it to the far side of Blaukasa. As the cold increases, the animals return to hibernation for six to nine months.

The personnel at the scout base are present to observe and study the unusual Akussanjan life forms. IISS scientists believe that studies of these creatures might have applications in the cryogenics field. The scouts have an uneasy partnership with SuSAG, with whom they share governance of the world. SuSAG is present for much the same reason as the IISS but focuses on developing commercial products from their research.



HUNTING THE SHAKUURZARPI

Depending on when they arrive at Akussanja, the Travellers have different hunting experiences. If they forego maintenance on the *Superb Starling* and rush to the system in two jumps, then they are in time to capture shakuurzarpi during the hibernation period. A few early risers may have awakened and entered the sea or made their way to the western taiga but the majority are still sleeping away in their dens. However, if the Travellers have the *Starling* serviced at one of the Class B starports en route to Akussanja, adding 10–15 days to their travel time, they will have missed the hibernation period completely and must hunt active animals in the western taiga, which is a considerably more difficult task. Either way, the Travellers have challenges to overcome.

There are no laws preventing starships from overflying or landing anywhere in the wilderness regions of the planet as long as they clear it with both the scouts

and SuSAG first; therefore, the Travellers may fly the *Starling* directly to the hunting zone. Safari ships have specially designed hydraulic landing gear that enables the craft to land on loose, rough, uneven or aquatic surfaces without damaging the ship. In addition, well-maintained safari ships operate quietly so as not to frighten away all game for kilometres around.

If the Travellers had the ship serviced before coming to Akussanja, it lands as stealthily as an eight-legged krvn. If they have not, their landing thrusters rattle like a freight train coming down the tracks. Increase the difficulty of all Recon and Stealth checks by one level for the first two days of the expedition if they enter the region with a noisy ship.

Alternatively, the Travellers may drive the *Starling's* air/raft, ATV (stored in the launch) or the launch itself to the site. Okhotnikov has no preference. It takes significantly longer, but he enjoys overland journeys and relishes the chance to see the terrain of this alien

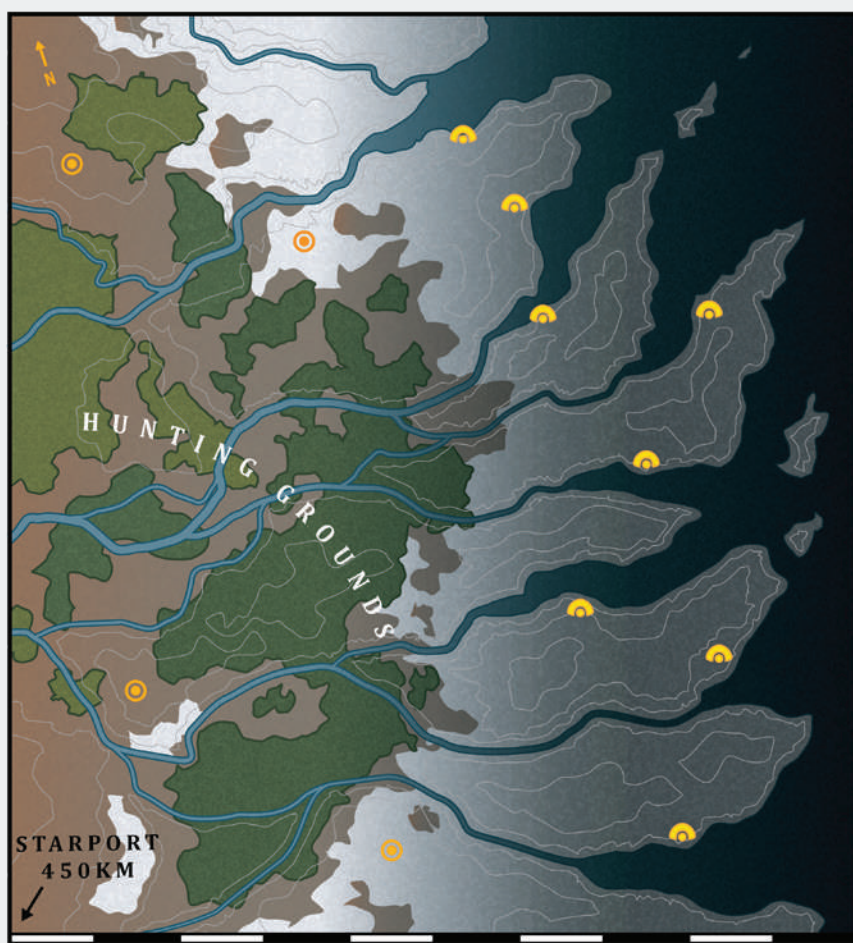
world should they choose to simply drive the ATV from the downport to the hunting zone. If the Travellers prefer the comfort of a warm bed, then bringing the ship is the best idea. Okhotnikov leaves it entirely up to them.

For the ATV and air/raft, refer to the Vehicles chapter of the *Traveller Core Rulebook* or the *Vehicle Handbook*.

The Akussanjan Wilderness

The climate of the eastern twilight zone ranges from coastal marine to taiga. The temperature ranges from 3–5 °C, so it is quite cold. The Travellers' quarry is on the eastern edge of the planet's twilight zone. The taiga zone, shown on the western portion of the map, experiences eternal sunset with the system's primary star, Blaukasa, just peeking over the horizon. The coastal zone on the eastern portion of the map is in dusk.

The companion star, Iona, is slowly making its way across Akussanja's sky. Its red visible disc approximates the size of Luna viewed from the surface of Terra. Travellers who arrive later see Iona closer to its zenith.



Shakuurzarpi

Shakuurzarpi are sexually dimorphic oviparous amphibians. They are equally comfortable in the sea and on land but typically rest and hibernate in coastal dens. Solitary animals, they meet only for mating and generally avoid contact other than that. Shakuurzarpi are brood parasites who lay their eggs in other animals' nests and dens, and force them to care for the eggs from incubation to hatching. They do this with a specialised talent that enables them to psionically 'convince' animals to do the job. Shakuurzarpi put this to other uses as well, such as forcing prey to succumb to their attacks or put two species into conflict with each other. Attempts to use it on humans and other animals of higher intelligence produces a mildly unsettling psionic effect but little else.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Shakuurzarpi	12 (18)*	10m
Skills	Melee (claws) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Telepathy 2	
Attacks	Claws (2D, AP 2)	
Traits	Armour (+4), Clever, Heightened Senses, Psionic (8)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Hunter	

*After coming out of hibernation, shakuurzarpi are gaunt and weak and have only 12 hits. After they feed for a few weeks, they get significantly stronger and larger and their hits rise to a maximum of 18.

TELEMPATHY

It is not generally known that shakuurzarpi have a psionic talent. SuSAG biologists have witnessed the animals' behaviours in the wild and are conducting experiments to determine if the animal secretes pheromones to achieve these effects. They have yet to hypothesise the use of psionics. IISS researchers are closer to discovering the psionic link but have yet to publish their findings.

To Catch a Shakuurzarpi

While the shakuurzarpi is an elusive prey, there are a number of ways the Travellers can get the job done and they are given equipment for various approaches:

- Tranq shot – The Travellers may shoot the animals with tranquiliser darts but there is some concern about how the chemicals might interact with the animals' alien physiology.
- Nets and catch poles – If the Travellers are stealthy and can get close enough to their prey, they can catch them with either of these tools. See Equipment on page 39 for details.
- Snares and traps can be set up to catch them but shakuurzarpi are quite clever. They can often defeat traps, stealing bait without becoming ensnared or injured. To set up a snare or trap, have a Traveller make a Very Difficult (12+) Survival check (3D minutes, INT) and record the Effect, positive or negative. Shakuurzarpi have the Clever trait, as described on page 87 of the *Traveller Companion*; for each snare or trap, have the animal make a 10+ check to see if they can defeat it, subtracting the Effect of the Traveller's Survival check. For example, if the Traveller rolls a 9 on the Survival check, achieving an Effect of -3, that becomes DM+3 for the animal to figure out the trap. Conversely, an Effect of 2 on the Traveller's Survival check becomes DM-2 for the shakuurzarpi.



Early Arrival

Travellers who get to Akussanja early are in time to capture the animal as it sleeps, a considerably easier task than tracking it down in the wild. Nevertheless, there are some obstacles they must get past. Shakuurzarpi dens are located in coastal areas. The terrain is a freezing cold, muddy, slushy bog. The inlets from the sea are littered with salty marshes and ponds that give off a strong smell of sulphur. Navigating the terrain is difficult and it is easy to slip and fall into a bog, pond or slurry quicksand.

Refer to the map and allow the Travellers to select which hibernation dens they want to investigate. Note that the locations on the map are approximations based on previous den locations. Therefore, finding an actual den is not as simple as pointing to the map and going there. Have the Travellers make a Difficult (10+) Navigation check (D3 hours) to make their way to a den site. Success indicates they get there without issue. The Effect of the check indicates how many dens they find at the site with a minimum of one den found. Failure indicates that the Travellers encounter a problem, generated by rolling on the Random Complications table.

Not all of the dens they discover are live dens. Some may be from previous seasons or abandoned part way through the current season for one reason or another. For each den they discover, roll 2D. On a 10+, they have found a live den with one shakuurzarpi sleeping inside. Even in deep hibernation, the animal is sensitive to predation. The Travellers must win a Stealth check (DEX) opposed to the animal's Recon. Success enables the Traveller to sneak up and make an unopposed capture using a net, catch pole or tranq round. Failure indicates the animal has been awakened and attacks the Traveller. However, all attacks are made at DM-2 since the animal is still groggy from hibernation.

If the Travellers do not think of it themselves, Okhotnikov suggests that they should obtain more than one shakuurzarpi specimen. They are taking the creature out of its native element. Although they are going to store it in one of the multi-environment spaces aboard the *Superb Starling*, they cannot be certain that a single animal will survive the trip to Tinea-Fabre. The shock to the animal's system might be too much for it. If they expect to have live specimens when they reach their final destination, they might want to hedge their bets and acquire multiple animals.

Random Complications

D6	Event
1	Orienteering issue. The Travellers wander off course but can correct their error with a successful Average (8+) Navigation check (INT), adding only one hour of time spent.
2	Lost. The Travellers wander off course and must spend 1D hours getting back to where they were. After retracing their footsteps, they may reattempt the Navigation check.
3	Bogged down. 1D Travellers get stuck in slurry mud. To get out of it, each Traveller must make an Average (8+) Survival check (2D minutes, STR or DEX). Those who fail must get assistance from a Traveller who succeeds on their check.
4	Way off course. Not only do the Travellers fail to find a den at the current location but they automatically fail the next check. Add D3 hours of searching futility.
5	Are we missing someone? A Traveller gets separated from the group. Spend D3 hours to find the lost party member. Reduce the time by 1Dx10 minutes by making an Average (8+) Recon check (INT). Minimum search and recovery time is 10 minutes.
6	Tidal flooding. The system's companion star affects the tides. The Travellers wander into a gully just as a tidal flood rushes in. One Traveller must make an Average (8+) Survival check (INT) to get the group out of the gully in time. Otherwise, they are trapped for 1D hours and all suffer 1D damage from frost bite, chilblains or a similar malady.

Late Arrival

Travellers who take three or more weeks to get to Akussanja from Sirma have missed the tail end of the hibernation period and the dens are empty by the time they arrive. They can try to find a few stragglers still in the dens but are unlikely to succeed. While there are always a few late wakers among the shakuurzarpi, the chances of finding them among the coastal dens is very low. Those who awaken late have unwittingly subjected themselves to a difficult struggle for survival. The shakuurzarpi have a limited amount of time to catch and consume prey in order to obtain much-needed body fat to survive the season. Even if the Travellers do manage to catch a straggler, it is likely to be smaller and weaker than those that have awakened on time. Nevertheless, should the Travellers attempt to search the dens at this late stage, the Referee may allow it, also subjecting them to the encounters described on the Random Complications table.

Ultimately, the Travellers are likely to discover that they are going to have to acquire the animals the hard way; by hunting them down in the taiga. The shakuurzarpi is an amphibious species and the vast majority do their hunting in Akussanja's oceans. The Travellers may obtain spear guns or other aquatic hunting weapons, enter the ocean in dry suits and try to hunt them down that way but finding specimens this way is nigh impossible. The oceans cover a vast and deep region and the freezing temperatures of the water make such a hunt especially difficult. More easily obtained quarry may be found in the western taiga along coastal rivers.

Taiga is swampy forested territory, lodged between stretches of tundra and steppes. Moving through this type of terrain is difficult and must be done on foot if they expect to catch their prey. Tracking down the elusive shakuurzarpi is a challenge. There are several ways that the Travellers can hunt them down.

- **Tracking** – Shakuurzarpi leave tracks next to the rivers when they come up to rest after hunting for freshwater fish. The Travellers may track them to temporary dens they build, which are typically 10–25 metres from the riverside. Have them make a Difficult (10+) Survival check (1D hours, INT) to find the tracks of an individual shakuurzarpi. Success enables the Travellers to track one of the creatures to its den; however, they must make a Difficult (10+) Stealth check (DEX) to avoid being detected upon approach. If they make both checks, allow them to attempt to capture the animal with whichever weapon or device they have chosen.
- **Finding gutted prey** – Akussanja has no native land-based life forms but does have several imported ones. Among these, the grey esklot is the preferred prey of the shakuurzarpi. Similar to a Terran beaver, the esklot lives near the riverbanks, hunting and eating fish. Esklot do not metabolise fat efficiently and are therefore an excellent source of it for the shakuurzarpi. Allow the Travellers to find gutted esklot along the riverside by making a Difficult (10+) Recon check (1D hours, INT). Add DM+1 for Travellers with Heightened Senses as the smell of the gutted animal is quite pungent. Should they find one, they may then track the shakuurzarpi that consumed it – probably only a few tens of metres away, fat and happy from the meal – by making an Average (8+) Stealth check (DEX).
- **Searching the forests** – It might seem contrary to logic but staying away from the rivers can actually make it easier to catch a shakuurzarpi. The animal is capable of operating away from water but is much less elusive when doing so. The reduced amount of ambient noise makes stealth an absolute necessity on the part of the Travellers, including complete radio and auditory silence. The Travellers can heighten their chances of success by using hand signals or some other form of silent communication. To establish effective non-verbal communication, have one of the Travellers make an Average (8+) Language (2Dx10 minutes, EDU) to build an agreed-upon set of signals, recording the Effect of the check. Add the Effect of the check to subsequent Recon and Stealth checks made while hunting the shakuurzarpi in the forests.

Navigating the dense and boggy taiga has similar perils to that of the coastal dens. Have the Travellers make a Difficult (10+) Navigation check (D3 hours) to make their way through the taiga and find opportunities to hunt prey. Success indicates that they avoid pitfalls and get the chance to track or snare prey, as described above. The Effect of the check indicates how many sets of tracks or other evidence that they find, indicating



that a shakuurzarpi is present. Failure results in an encounter or event, generated by rolling on the Events and Encounters table.

A Chance Meeting

In addition to random encounters and events, at some point the Travellers run into Dunkha Gunkii, host of the popular Vilani hunting and cooking show, Shugilii Shimiirkhuki, along with his film crew. Gunkii is a competitor for the shakuurzarpi, which he is featuring on an upcoming show. Gunkii might turn up more than once during the expedition, establishing an annoying repeat presence.

If the Travellers chat with Gunkii and his crew, they find out how difficult it is to process shakuurzarpi for consumption. Most of its amino acids are not digestible by humans; therefore, it is wasteful to kill the animal unless one is simply collecting trophies, a practice Gunkii severely frowns upon. If Gunkii has already taken shakuurzarpi specimens from the taiga, he is willing to help them hunt down one of their own. Allow the Travellers to make an Average (8+) Carouse or Persuade check (SOC) to get his assistance. Gunkii helps them for one day, adding DM+2 to all Survival and Navigation checks. Okhotnikov is not averse to enlisting Gunkii's aid, especially if they have struggled to catch shakuurzarpi of their own thus far.

Securing and Transporting the Quarry

Any shakuurzarpi the Travellers catch are extremely displeased to have been captured. They screech, growl and bang about in their cages, nets or other receptacles. If the Travellers come anywhere close, they risk being bitten by the feisty animals. Barring additional difficulties, the Travellers should be able to get them back to their ship.

The *Superb Starling* has two eight-ton multi-environment spaces – also called capture tanks – both of which can be configured to simulate the native climate of Akussanja in order to keep the shakuurzarpi alive and comfortable. The animals must be stored and fed in the tanks for multiple jumps, so are likely to spend several weeks in them before they can be transferred to the wildlife preserve on Tinea-Fabre.

Setting up the tanks requires a task chain, the first of which is a Difficult (10+) Animals (veterinary) or Science (xenology) check (1D hours, EDU). Success provides the data to program the tank. The follow-up task is an Average (8+) Engineer check (life support) (2Dx10 minutes, EDU) to configure the multi-environment space. The Travellers will not know if their configuration works until they execute the program.

Events and Encounters

D6	Event
1	Orienteering issue. The Travellers get lost in a dense portion of the taiga but can correct their error with a successful Average (8+) Navigation check (INT), adding only one hour of time spent getting back on track.
2	Lost. The Travellers wander off course and must spend 1D hours getting back to where they were. After retracing their footsteps, they may reattempt the Navigation check.
3	Quicksand. 1D Travellers get stuck in a quicksand pit. To get out, each Traveller must make an Average (8+) Survival check (2D minutes, DEX or END). Those who fail must get assistance from a Traveller who succeeds at their check.
4	Trapped! Akussanja has esklot furriers who trap the animals for their fur. A Traveller steps into an esklot trap. Make a Difficult (10+) DEX check to avoid being wounded; otherwise, the Traveller takes 2D damage and is stuck in the trap. Make an Average (8+) STR check to get out, taking D3 additional damage or have a fellow Traveller make an Average (8+) Mechanic check (DEX) to release the trap with no additional damage incurred. Get medical assistance within 2D hours to avoid infection.
5	Beaten to the punch. The Travellers' next successful find is snatched from their grasp by competitors, either the film crew of Shugilii Shimiirkhuki or members of the Scout Service or SuSAG, who are studying the species.
6	The cold wind blows! The Travellers must seek cover for 2D hours to avoid exposure to a flash blizzard. Make an Average (8+) Survival check (INT) to obtain adequate shelter. Failure results in 1D damage to each Traveller, indicating pre-frostbite conditions.

After the program is initiated, the Travellers can check the health of the animals by making an Average (8+) Animals (veterinary) check (2D minutes, EDU). A successful check indicates whether or not the configuration was successful. If this reveals that the Travellers failed to properly configure the tanks, allow them to retry their attempt.

Success on both tasks stabilises the simulated environments in each tank so that the *Superb Starling* may begin her voyage. Failure to properly program the tanks, followed by a failed veterinary check, results in a health hazard to the animals. Since they failed both

checks, they do not notice the hazard until 1D hours after the animals have begun to suffer. Each affected animal takes 1D of damage. Saving affected animals and restoring their health requires a Difficult (10+) Animals (veterinary) check (1D hours, EDU) with the following results:

D6	Event
2+	The animal is successfully treated and a number of hits are restored equal to the Effect.
0 to 1	The animal is successfully treated and may recover as normal with continued treatment over the course of the voyage.
-2 to -1	The animal takes 3D damage. The Animals (veterinary) check may be reattempted but a second failure of any type results in the death of the animal.
-3 or below	The animal goes into shock and dies.

Even if the capture tank configurations are successful, they are likely to require adjustments during transit to Tinea-Fabre. The shakuurzarpi is a tough and resilient creature but highly specialised. If the Travellers do not provide proper care and feeding, they may well arrive at the ducal heir's retreat with two tanks full of dead animals. Their vital signs remain strong for 2D days + the Effect of the initial Engineer (life support) check. Add an additional 1D days of effective operation if the Travellers installed aspects of the shakuurzarpi native environment into the tanks, a few hundred kilograms of native flora and fauna help to make the environment more sound.

Unfortunately, this may not be the only challenge they face during transit. If multiple shakuurzarpi are stored in each tank, the creatures begin to attack each other after D3 days. They can kill or badly wound each other quite easily, so the Travellers must act quickly if this occurs. The Travellers can solve the problem by creating partitions in the capture tanks but this requires either tranquilising or restraining the animals beforehand.

If worse comes to worst and the Travellers somehow lose all of the shakuurzarpi, they can always go back to Akussanja and hunt them down all over again. However, access to the animals is limited. Within a few more weeks, the animals enter the 'aquatic phase' of the season, in which they spend the majority of their time in the ocean for the next several months. Technically the Travellers could still hunt them down but the ocean presents a broader and far more challenging hunting environment.

CHALLENGING TRAVELLERS

The Referee must take care to ensure that the hunting expedition is exciting and challenging. It might be tempting to reduce it to a series of dice rolls until the Travellers have a shot at their quarry but this somewhat misses the point. Hunters know that not every expedition is going to be successful. Finding prey and successfully catching or killing it requires a dedicated and methodical approach. While ultimately the Travellers must obtain their quarry for the adventure to continue, the process of doing so should be challenging but ultimately rewarding.

Use events and encounters to make the hunt an exciting experience. The Travellers must use teamwork and cleverness to overcome the obstacles that appear before them. If they come up with a solution that falls outside the boundaries described, give them the opportunity to make it work if it seems reasonably sound. After all, there is more than one way to skin a shakuurzarpi.

Any mishaps along the way, from the slightest misconfiguration of the capture tanks to the death of one or more of the animals are loudly cursed by Okhotnikov, who vociferously blames the Travellers for each and every misstep and failure. However, he does ultimately recognise that the job is a challenging one. Cooler heads eventually prevail but the Travellers might have to endure a temper tantrum or two along the way.

A Pleasant Voyage

In addition to the management of the captured shakuurzarpi, the Travellers are also responsible for the operation of the *Superb Starling* during the trip to Tinea-Fabre. If they rushed to Akussanja and have not yet had the ship serviced, it is still having problems from lack of proper maintenance. While in jump from Sirma, the *Starling* passed into its third month without maintenance and the ship suffers DM-3 when checking to see if it incurs another critical hit as described on page 144–145 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. The Referee should keep track of time since departure. Should an additional four weeks pass before getting the ship serviced, a total of four months will have gone by and the repairs and maintenance check now suffers DM-4.

Although eager to get to Tinea-Fabre to get the distressed shakuurzarpi deposited into his personal wildlife preserve, Okhotnikov insists upon having the ship serviced during the voyage. Regardless of whether the Travellers have already had the ship serviced once, the ducal heir plans to continue having it serviced at each four-week interval, determined to take better care of the *Starling* than its owner. Unfortunately, he still demands that the ship be serviced at a Class A or B starport, which means their voyage from Akussanja to Tinea-Fabre will be extended from two jumps to three. They have an array of choices as far as which facility to visit: Uuniluu (described on page 9), Uumeaxan or Luumiiliipen, all of which have Class B facilities. The extension of the voyage subjects the captured animals to a longer period in captivity, which might have adverse effects on their health, as described before, but the ship simply must be serviced.

The Travellers could cut the length of the voyage to only two jumps by stopping at the C class starport on Uuruun Kuu. If they suggest this to Okhotnikov, he sputters that there is simply no way he would even consider having it done at such an inferior port. However, with some effort he might be convinced. Should the Travellers attempt to change his mind,

allow them to make a Very Difficult (12+) Persuade (SOC) check. If they have had one or more crises with the captured shakuurzarpi, apply DM+2 to the check. He relents on a successful check but the Travellers must then endure his constant complaints on the final jump to Tinea-Fabre. The staff at Uuruun Kuu Highport are perfectly capable but they get by with inferior technology and resources. Nevertheless, they should be able to do an acceptable job of servicing the ship. Okhotnikov will be critical of the starport staff's efforts no matter how well or efficiently they get the job done. After departure from Uuruun Kuu, should the engines emit a single audible ping or clank, he cites his own 'horrific lack of good judgment' and the error of trusting the Travellers with the proper care of the *Starling*.

The voyage to Tinea-Fabre is likely to be a stressful time for the Travellers but at least they are well cared for. The ship's steward, Rill Dunknever, sees to it that they are well fed and watches over them like a doting father. He feeds them three gourmet meals per day and grants access to the ship's extensive collection of whiskeys, bourbons and wines. Dunknever lends them a sympathetic ear as well. He is the faithful servant of the ducal heir and does not disparage his employer but understands that Okhotnikov can be a difficult boss.



THE DUKE'S PLAYGROUND

Tinea-Fabre (D567225–5) is an Imperial Reserve World in everything but title. It is the playground of Duke Ernst Vohdk Okhotnikov and serves the same purpose for his son, the ducal heir Arvinen Elios Okhotnikov. Tinea-Fabre is a beautiful world with its own highly developed ecosphere that has been put to many uses. There are vast oceans, pristine seas and lakes, extensive mountain ranges, varied climates and habitats with thousands of native life forms that live in them.

The dukes of Alekvadin have used Tinea-Fabre as their own private resort for hundreds of years. Over the last half century, the current duke has created dozens of lush resorts and getaways for his guests to enjoy. Upon their grounds, he has hosted hundreds of parties, housed visiting dignitaries and fellow nobles from far and wide and built a staff of hundreds to manage the events and properties. The duke – and each of his predecessors for that matter – tends to get bored of these facilities after a while and eventually abandons them, creating new ones elsewhere in their stead. Tinea-Fabre is littered with these abandoned resorts, most of which are allowed to naturally crumble and be consumed by nature over time. No one is quite certain why but the duke has also seeded the world with caches of supplies, secret lairs and allegedly even

a subterranean hangar for his yacht, the locations of which only he and select members of his staff know. Even his son, Arvinen, is not privy to all of them.

The ducal estate and residential community are housed within Ozerska, a walled town adjacent to the starport, which is elegant for a Class D facility. Its four docking bays are low-tech but meticulously attended to by the staff. Its terminal was designed by Fatih Tarmin, one of Alekvadin's most reputable architects and the concourse walls are decorated with a mural that depicts the glorious history of Alekvadin, painted by the famous cyborg artist, Skryaga, whose works are renowned throughout the Sanches subsector. Staff accommodations are small but refined and the commissary and stores are always well stocked. Tinea-Fabreans live a provincial life but are well cared for by their benefactor.

While the duke has used Tinea-Fabre for many things, its primary purpose for the ducal heir is to host exotic game. Okhotnikov the younger is an avid outdoorsman and hunter, having travelled far and wide, mostly in the Core, with a fascination for worlds that have animal native life. Over the millennia, colonisation and exploitation has altered these worlds, with very



few resembling their pristine states. On some level, Okhotnikov has an appreciation for nature but is also a realist and a bit of a cynic. There is no way to completely restore worlds to the way they once were after thousands of years of human habitation, for they have been irrevocably changed and trying to turn back the clock is a hopeless endeavour. To that end, he casually uses the world of Tinea-Fabre as his own experimental breeding ground, a place where he brings exotic and fascinating animal species in order to see how they fare when mixed with dozens, possibly even hundreds of other imported species. Some do reasonably well; others die off, unable to adjust to the foreign environment they have been dropped into. So far, nothing terrible or especially unsettling has occurred.

That is about to change.

THE TINEA-FABREANS

The few hundred permanent residents of Tinea-Fabre are all technically in the employ of the Duke of Alekvaadin. The world itself is independent and therefore not 'owned' by Alekvaadin or any other world but all of the resources and wealth it has are from the duchy.

When the duke and ducal heir are not present, the people are left to govern themselves. The form of government is officially listed as a participating democracy. Basically, the chamberlain of House Okhotnikov meets irregularly with the various heads of staff and they vote on which projects need to be done to maintain the manor, small starport, refuelling station and other essential resources of the planet. In addition to management, every member of the staff has a degree of agency when it comes to additional tasks that need to be done on the planet.

The staff see themselves first as employees of House Okhotnikov and second as custodians of Tinea-Fabre. The world has been inhabited for millennia dating back to the Ziru Sirka when the Vilani, who called it Gisid, used it in much the same fashion that Alekvaadin does. Its surface is littered with relics of past civilisations and more current structures built by the dukes of Alekvaadin. There are two main groups that work to preserve these artefacts of lost ages: the Gisidi Rangers and the Knights Errant. The former focus on the Vilani ruins and the latter the Alekvaadin properties. The two groups are basically conservation clubs and have a collegial relationship with one another.

ZOOLOGICAL DYSTOPIA

It is not easy being the ducal heir. Okhotnikov and others like him are born to unrealistic expectations and go through their entire lives trying to measure up. Okhotnikov will one day inherit the Duchy of Alekvaadin, one of the most exalted positions in the peerage and one that comes with great responsibility. Many nobles-to-be while their time away as dilettantes, never showing a wisp of ambition or honour before they inherit their family's noble patent. Others strive to make a name for themselves in military, diplomatic, corporate or other careers, so that by the time they acquire the family title, they have impressive laurels to rest upon.

Arvinen Elios Okhotnikov has not had an illustrious career, nor has he been a directionless wastrel. He is fascinated with alien animal species and imagines creating an animal taxonomy that spans Charted Space. If only he had dedicated himself to university the way his less well-to-do colleagues did, he might have had the academic credentials to accomplish his goals. With a passable knowledge of the biological sciences and a passion for the hunt, Okhotnikov has used his family's resources to explore the wild spaces of dozens of planets. He is an intergalactic game hunter with delusions of grandeur.

On Tinea-Fabre, Okhotnikov has inherited a panoply of animal species, intermixed in unnatural and contentious environments, the likes of which the galaxy has never seen. The creatures brought to the planet have wrought havoc on its ecosphere. He believes he is doing the animal kingdom of the Core a favour; that their destiny is to be endangered because of human habitation and that their best opportunity to survive is to be combined into sustainable ecosystems. No matter how much Okhotnikov might try to convince himself that his actions are altruistic, Tinea-Fabre is no laboratory and its patchwork ecosystems do not comprise a viable experiment in environmental management.

RIDE 'EM COWBOY!

If any of the Travellers do not have the Animals skill, they must obtain training before going out into the wilderness of Tinea-Fabre. Okhotnikov intends for the group to ride on Terran horses, so they will have to become familiar with the animal and learn how to ride one. The horses owned by the estate are well-trained. When Okhotnikov leads them in a caravan, they proceed in orderly fashion. However, should the Travellers become separated from one another over the course of the expedition, they will need more training to manage their individual horses.

Okhotnikov's horse wrangler is Vandia Tarjesto, a rugged and capable young woman who was born and raised on Tinea-Fabre. She trains the Travellers over a two-week period so that they *nearly* have Animals 0, after which they can ride reasonably well, making any necessary task checks at DM-1.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Horse	30	9m
Skills	Athletics (strength) 2, Survival 1	
Attacks	Kick (2D)	
Traits	Large (+1)	
Behaviour	Herbivore, Grazer	

The Terran horse has been widely bred and disseminated among worlds with viable atmospheres and gravity levels. The breed present on Tinea-Fabre are slightly smaller but faster and nimbler.

THE INTEGRATION

Provided that one or more shakuurzarpi survived the voyage from Akussanja, one of the first orders of business after the arrival of the *Superb Starling* is to deposit the animals into the wildlife preserve. After the challenges the Travellers faced transporting the animals to Tinea-Fabre, they might be concerned about how well the integration will go. Okhotnikov himself does not intend to participate in this phase of the expedition but is willing to allow interested Travellers to attend Preserve Ranger Tillanidi Cerny on her journey to where the deposit is to take place. However, Okhotnikov discourages members of the team who have yet to master horseback riding. Any Travellers who need to brush up on their equestrian skills should stay at the downport ranch.

CONSERVATION CLUBS

While the entire population of Tinea-Fabre is barely that of a small town, the people take pride in maintaining their world. In addition to those who care for the world's parks and preserves, the Gisidi Rangers and Knights Errant are dedicated to the preservation and renovation of the archaeological sites and abandoned resort facilities, respectively.

A team lead for the Gisidi Rangers almost invariably has at least one or two levels of Science (archaeology) and a lead for the Knights Errant has a minimum of two levels in Profession (construction) or Mechanic. All teams have a guide with the Flyer or Drive skill. In addition, at least half the members of each conservation club have a modicum of skill in Navigation and Survival. The ducal manor may feature some high-tech wares from Alekvadin but the average Tinea-Fabrean has access to lower-tech gear and vehicles and must be skilled in the arts of wilderness survival.

Ranger Cerny does not want to risk transferring the animals between vehicles and would prefer to simply let them into the preserve directly from the capture tanks of the *Starling*. This means the safari ship must go on a relatively quick trip to the preserve, located on the other side of the planet. Okhotnikov appoints qualified members of his staff to help operate the ship as needed. Assigned staff member have level 0 or 1 in ship operation skills.

Once they land the ship on the preserve grounds, the Travellers find it is not quite as simple as opening the doors to the capture tanks and letting the shakuurzarpi run free. If asked, Ranger Cerny informs the Travellers that this has indeed been done in the past, often with disastrous results. The animals deposited into the preserve have typically been selected for their adaptability but, even so, the shock to their systems can be overwhelming for alien physiologies. Many animals brought to the preserve and summarily dropped off have died shortly thereafter, unable to cope with the adjustment.

To prevent the animals from suffering such a fate, Ranger Cerny intends to carry out a two-phase process. The first is the subtle adjustment of the capture tank environments to more closely resemble that of Tinea-Fabre. Atmospheric pressure, chemical composition and temperature are slowly altered in the tanks so the animals are prepared for the change. Cerny is competent at many of the required skills but allow the Travellers to participate in the transition. To properly adjust the tanks, make an Average (8+) Animals (veterinary) or Engineer (life support) check (2D hours, EDU). If the Travellers and Cerny have access to both skills, the Referee may alternatively allow them to set up an appropriate task chain that enables them to achieve a superior result. For example, have one of them make the Animals check and allow any positive points of Effect to support the Engineer check.

The second phase is releasing the animals. Individual animals often behave differently when finally given the opportunity to escape a capture tank. While many jump at the chance, others become leery in the artificial environment and afraid to leap into the great wide open of an alien world. Roll 2D for each surviving animal. On 6+, the animal willingly leaves the capture tank and scurries off into the preserve. Otherwise, the animal refuses to leave and requires additional coaxing. Leave this up to the Travellers. They may use live or dead bait, calls or loud noises that encourage or frighten the animals to leave. They might even try using gravity by firing up the ship's manoeuvre drives and tipping the ship, forcing any reluctant animals to literally slide out of the tanks. Allow the Travellers to be creative when solving this problem.

If the Travellers physically get involved in extricating the shakuurzarpi from the capture tanks, there is a risk that they could get into a violent encounter with the beasts. Hopefully the Travellers are wise enough to realise this would not sit well with their patron and take care to avoid such a thing.

After depositing the animals, the Travellers might want to investigate the preserve. Ranger Cerny discourages them from doing so, as she believes it is Okhotnikov's

desire that they allow the animals to enter the preserve without further interference. The Travellers risk encountering the shakuurzarpi repeatedly, which might prevent the animals from finding a niche in their new environment. However, if pressed, Cerny allows them to explore the preserve. If this happens, the Referee may allow the participating Travellers to preview the map shown in The Gauntlet on page 30 and interact with the environment. In any case, the ranger insists that they return to Tinea-Fabre Downport after less than an hour of exploration. Okhotnikov is waiting for them and will not want them to spoil the upcoming hunt.

TINEA-FABRE INTERSTELLAR ANIMAL PRESERVE

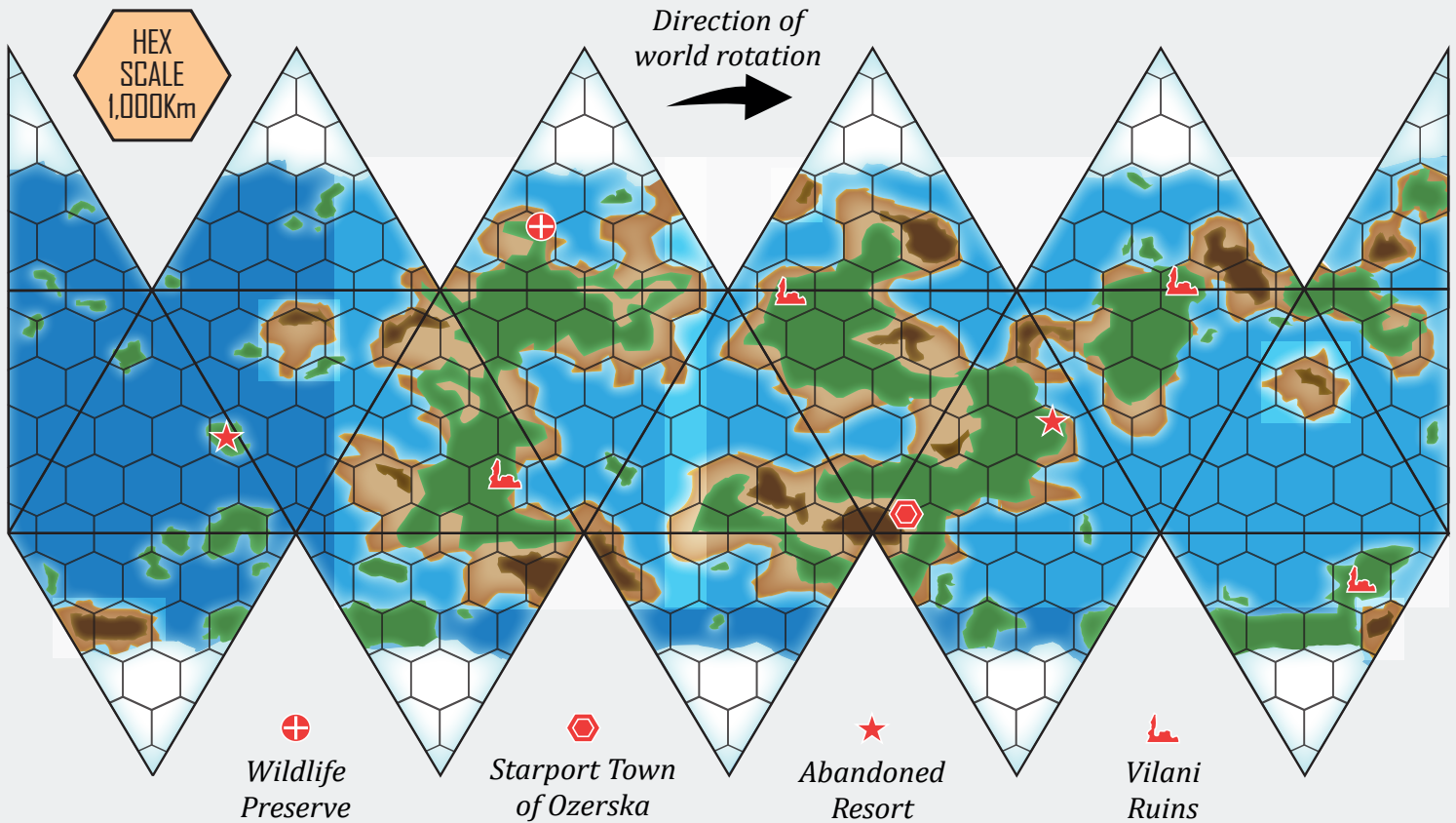
The concept of an interstellar animal preserve is not uncommon. Well-organised zoos and preserves can be found throughout Imperial space. Adaptable animals from hundreds of worlds have been transported between worlds as livestock, beasts of burden, pets and zoo attractions. Many have been genetically engineered to assist survivability. Most are carefully managed with a great deal of concern for their welfare. Rules and regulations on most worlds prevent the animals from experiencing exorbitant discomfort or harm.

Tinea-Fabre has few such restrictions, employing more of a 'survival of the fittest' approach. Animals introduced to the preserve may be given rudimentary examination but the on-site veterinarian does not treat animals before they are inserted into the park.

The preserve has hundreds of animal species, about half of which are native to Tinea-Fabre and the remainder imported from other worlds. Following are some of the game species that the Travellers might encounter. In addition to those listed here, Referees are encouraged to use other suitable animal encounters from the *Traveller Core Rulebook* and the *Traveller Companion*, or invent entirely new ones. Tinea-Fabre has a rich ecosphere stocked with dozens of additional foreign species.

TINEA-FABRE

UWP: D567225-5



Gisidi Enveloper

The Gisidi enveloper was once referred to by the Vilani as *unkheki diugu*, or 'falling shadow'. The origin world of the enveloper is unknown. Envelopers evolved on a world with a dense and possibly nitrogen-dioxide-tainted atmosphere and struggled to acclimate to Tinea-Fabre. The creature was thought to have gone extinct but had merely gone underground where it could obtain nutrients from the soil. Not seen for decades in the wild, the enveloper is forced into the open by the psionic *shakuurzarpi*, which desires access to the envelopers' subterranean nests.

The enveloper is not an especially wily or savvy beast but it is a stealthy one. It works its way into the trees and waits for unsuspecting prey to pass below. Then it drops from its perch and attempts to envelope the target, consuming it with digestive acids. Its underside is an external 'stomach', with which it wraps and consumes prey. Allow the Travellers to make a Recon check (DEX) opposed by the Stealth of the enveloper.

If the enveloper wins the check, it has fallen upon the Traveller, latching on with hundreds of suckers and adhesive glands. It immediately attempts to digest its prey, consuming 1D points of armour every combat round. After it works its way through armour, it inflicts 2D points of damage until removed. Travellers can escape the grasp of the enveloper by making a STR or Melee (unarmed) check opposed to the enveloper's Melee (natural). Other Travellers may assist, using the same skills to pry off the sticky, acidic creature before it dissolves their friend.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Gisidi Enveloper	26	3m
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Stealth 3	
Attacks	Bite (1D)	
Traits	Camouflaged, Toxic (melee, 2D)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Pouncer	

Ginkus Ankii

The ginkus ankii is thought to be native to Tinea-Fabre but conclusive research has yet to confirm this. Also called the slithering foot trap or the fanged cornucopia, the creature's method of capturing prey is to ease itself into a sizeable hole or burrow created by another animal and wait for something to fall in. Once prey steps or falls into its mouth, the ginkus encloses it, stuns it with anaesthetic enzymes and begins to digest it. The ginkus sometimes gathers leaves, dead vines and other detritus into its mouth to provide additional camouflage.

The ginkus is a mild annoyance to humans who step into one. The creature usually recognises that a human limb is not its natural prey and refuses to enclose it. Being highly inert, it can do little other than show its teeth, undulate in a disturbing fashion and wait for the individual to withdraw the entrapped appendage.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Ginkus Ankii	10	1m
Skills	Melee (unarmed) 1, Stealth 2	
Attacks	Bite (1D)	
Traits	Camouflaged, Poison (average/ D3/1D minutes), Small (-1)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Trapper	



Gisidi Enveloper

Elleby's Cricket

Elleby's crickets resemble their Terran namesake but are large for insects. Like most invertebrates, there is a limitation to how large they can grow but evolution seemed intent to test those limits in this case. Ellebies eat certain leaves, berries and nuts but like to include a generous portion of protein in their diets. They typically avoid humans and other sophonts, preferring to attack and consume smaller animals. To capture their prey, they mass in groups of 6–12 individuals and overwhelm it with bites until it succumbs. Ellebies are one of the species easily consumable by humans and Vargr. While the prospect might seem disgusting, they are a nutritious option for the intrepid survivalist.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Elleby's Cricket	4	6m
Skills	Athletics (strength) 2, Survival 1	
Attacks	Bite (D3)	
Traits	Heightened Senses, Small (-1)	
Behaviour	Omnivore, Eater	



Elleby's Cricket



Ginkus Ankii

Sylvie's Greycat

The greycat is not a cat at all but its resemblance to Terran feline predators earned it the name from Solomani explorers. The animal has highly attuned sensory organs, including four eyes that see in wide spectrums and tentacle-like appendages that detect movement in its vicinity. The greycat is native to Tinea-Fabre and has done well adjusting to the additions of other species. Its digestive tract is highly adaptive, enabling it to break down alien proteins. The greycat is smart enough to know that humans are dangerous and generally avoids them. However, if one of the Travellers wanders off alone into a forested area, the reward might outweigh the risk and it might attempt to kill the loner. It is a solitary hunter and may only be found with additional members of its species when mating or raising young. Greycats serve an important role in the ecosystem, often leaving portions of their kills for scavengers to eat.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Sylvie's Greycat	20	8m
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Melee (natural) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1	
Attacks	Bite (2D)	
Traits	Armour +1, Heightened Senses	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Killer	

Gilaash

Another of Tinea-Fabre's native species, the gilaash is a small herd animal that consumes the world's native grasses. The dangerous animals introduced to the preserve have forced gilaashes into the surrounding hills where they are safer from predation. Their food supply is in the valleys and gaps between forested areas, so they still come down to graze during daylight hours in groups of 10–20 before retreating to the hills. The changes to their habitat have had an effect on their population. Their numbers have dropped precipitously but those born with greater agility are better suited to survive the changes. Females are equipped with forward-curving antlers used to protect their young.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Gilaash	16	6m
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Recon 2, Survival 1	
Attacks	Gore (1D+2), Kick (1D)	
Traits	Heightened Senses	
Behaviour	Herbivore, Grazer	



HUNTING HIGH AND LOW

Travellers who do not require training in the equestrian arts may engage in hunting excursions near the grounds of the downport. Okhotnikov forbids them to return to the wildlife preserve at this point, expressing a desire to give the shakuurzarpi time to adjust to their new environment. The animals are being given ample time to find their niche in the preserve ecosystem. He hopes that, given the chance to acclimate, the beasts prove to be difficult and challenging quarry.

The animals near the downport are mostly small creatures but some are viable game. The Travellers are encouraged to practice their hunting skills before the big expedition at the wildlife preserve.

PREPARING FOR THE HUNT

Okhotnikov intends to fly with the Travellers to the wildlife preserve aboard the *Superb Starling*. The safari ship will serve as their base camp but they will spend little time there after arrival. The ship is merely the starting and endpoint of the hunt. A few days before departure, Okhotnikov provides each of the Travellers with the following equipment:

- V-rifle with one full dispenser of ammunition and one reserve dispenser
- Hunter's field garb
- Hunting knife
- Bivvy pack with one week of rations and optional gear selected by each Traveller
- Bedroll
- (Optional) hammock and tarpaulin

Okhotnikov swears by the hammock and tarp, and encourages the Travellers to carry a set as well despite the added encumbrance. He insists that sleeping in a suspended hammock, covered by a tarpaulin for shelter from the elements, is far superior to night after night of squirming on the ground like a common beetle.

See Equipment on page 39 for detailed descriptions of the v-rifle and hunter's field garb. The v-rifle is a highly specialised hunting rifle. Okhotnikov gives the Travellers an opportunity to become familiar with the weapon, including time for target practice in a range just outside Ozerska.

Okhotnikov introduces the group to a concept he calls 'paleo hunting'. Essentially, this means that they shall travel almost entirely on foot or mounted on horseback. Once they begin the hunt, the only items of high technology they will have are their rifles and field garb.

All communication devices are given to a member of Okhotnikov's staff so that they are utterly cut off from civilisation. The hunt does not end until they have successfully caught their prey and lugged it through the wilderness back to the safari ship. If the Travellers express displeasure with the blackout, he points out that their participation without comms was guaranteed in their contracts. See The Fine Print on page 7.

Ranger Cerny and Rill Dunknever accompany the expedition; the former to assist the group and care for the horses, the latter to serve as a mobile chef. Dunknever brings his field kitchen, an array of herbs and spices, and protein processing chemicals so he can serve up some of the creatures they manage to kill in the preserve.

Cerny scans the Travellers for hidden comms devices and other forbidden technology. The sanctity of the paleo hunt is very important to Okhotnikov. Once they are in the wilderness, he expects everyone to abide by his rules and forego the use of any technology not provided.



THE GAUNTLET

The safari starts at the location where the shakuurzarpi were deposited and proceeds deep into the wildlife preserve. Okhotnikov expects the animals will have moved to a more suitable location and he is correct. He and the Travellers discover that the animals did adapt and have quite literally sought greener pastures.

The journey into the preserve is conducted with a series of events and encounters that involve the animals and elements of Tinea-Fabre. The Referee should insert additional animal encounters as they travel through the preserve, using those provided in the adventure or inserting additional ones, as desired. While they do have rations, Okhotnikov encourages the group to 'live off the land'. Chef Dunknever is on hand to field process and cook whatever they kill.

Travelling on foot and on horseback is slow and strenuous. They should be able to cover approximately 30 kilometres per day on foot or 50 kilometres on

horseback, depending on how rugged the terrain is. If the Travellers try to extend their range, have them make Difficult (10+) END or Survival checks to increase the distance covered by 25%. They should get the sense that they have covered a great distance as they make their way through the preserve.

Once they have managed to track down the shakuurzarpi to its new home, things begin to get more interesting. Not only have the animals adapted but they have begun to use telepathy to alter the behaviours of other animals in the environment. There are hints that this is happening as the Travellers wander deeper into the shakuurzarpi's adopted territory.

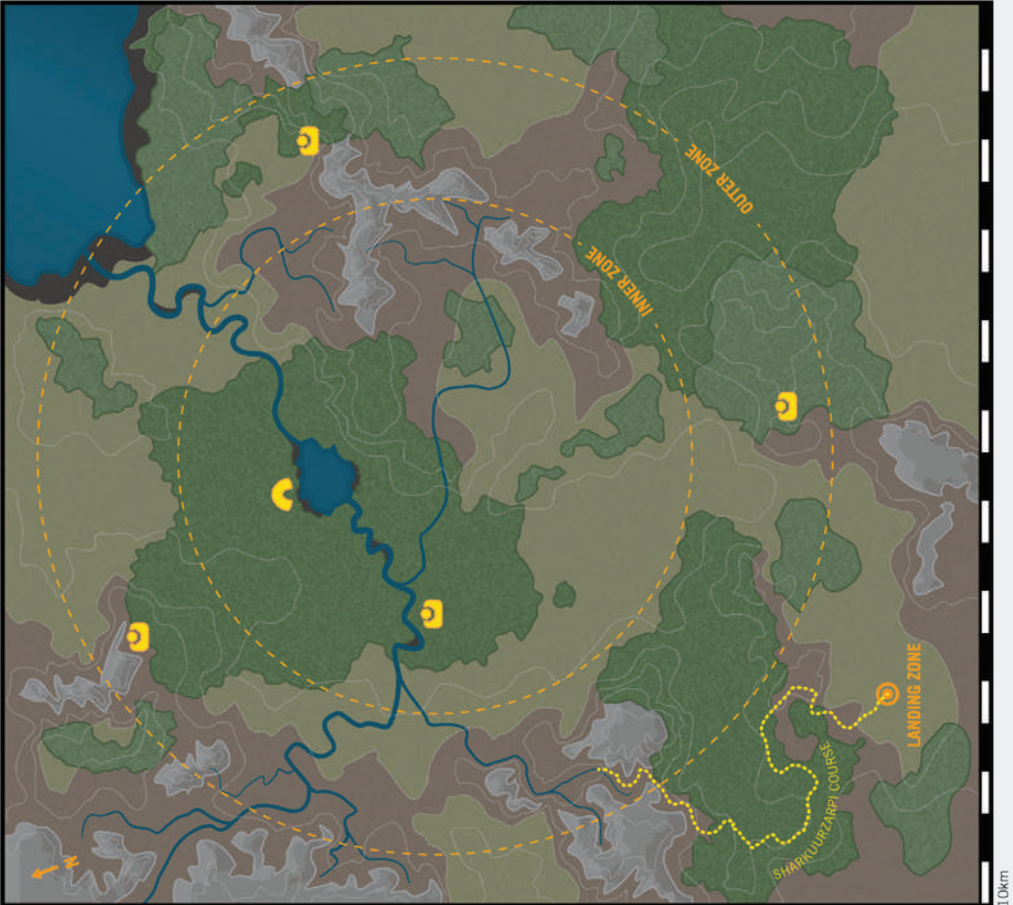
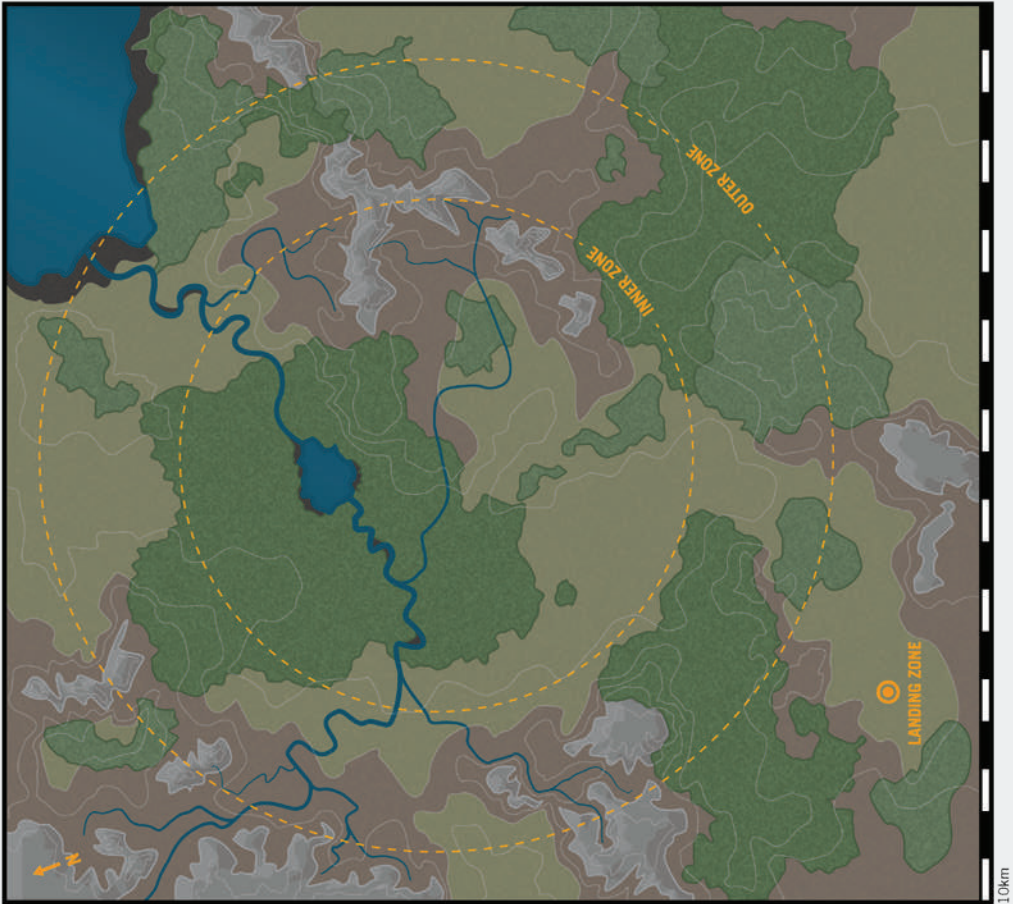
THE WILDLIFE PRESERVE

The preserve is in the northern hemisphere of Tinea-Fabre, which is currently in its cold season. The climate is different than that of Akussanja but is sufficiently cold to be within the shakuurzarpi's comfort zone. The

Hunt Encounters

D6	Event
1	Gilaash herd sighting. If the Travellers do not approach with caution, the animals are spooked and run for the hills. However, if they detect the gilaashes in advance by making an Average (8+) Recon check (INT), they can make a subsequent Difficult (10+) Stealth check (DEX) to get close enough to observe or hunt them. Okhotnikov endorses the latter. Gilaashes make for great eating if treated with the proper digestive chemicals.
2	Plague of crickets. The Travellers hear a loud buzzing as they approach a copse of trees. A swarm of Elleby's crickets buzzes through the air, whizzing past them like winged knives. The Travellers must duck and cover to avoid being injured. Make an Average (8+) DEX check to avoid being struck and taking 1D damage. Okhotnikov informs them that they are not the targets of the insectoid assault; they merely got caught in their path as the creatures hunted other prey.
3	River crossing. An unexpectedly wet winter has filled the dry riverbeds. The Travellers must ford the river. Make an Average (8+) Navigation check (2Dx10 minutes, INT) to find a good crossing.
4	Cold snap. The weather takes a turn for the worse and the Travellers must find shelter or be subjected to a heavy hail. Allow them to make an Average (8+) Survival check (2D minutes, INT) to find an outcropping, gorge or small cave, where they can wait out the hailstorm, which lasts 2Dx10 minutes.
5	Injury. One of the Travellers or horses takes a bad step and is injured, taking 2D damage. Allow the Travellers to make an Average (8+) DEX check to reduce or negate the damage by lowering the amount by the Effect of the check. Injured horses inevitably slow down the expedition. Fortunately, Ranger Cerny is on hand with a medical kit to treat both Travellers and animals, as necessary.
6	Supply cache found. These are very old and have been obscured by decades, if not centuries, of overgrowth. To find one, the Travellers must be near one of the caches shown on the Referee's Map and make a Difficult (10+) Recon check (INT). Caches are small dens that were once filled with survival rations, bedding and other supplies for park rangers and other visitors. Allow the Travellers to make a Very Difficult (12+) Mechanic check (EDU) to salvage any useful items.

Below are separate maps for the Travellers and Referee.



safari begins at the southern edge of the preserve and proceeds northward once the Travellers manage to track the creatures' progress. Have the Travellers make an Average (8+) Survival check (INT) to pick up the shakuurzarpi's tracks near the starting point. If they succeed, they may begin to follow the trail shown on the Referee's Map. If they fail, give them the opportunity to find the tracks again later, as they delve deeper into the preserve.

ENCOUNTERS ON THE HUNT

As the Travellers make their way into the preserve, a number of events and encounters take place. The Referee may roll randomly or select appropriate events and encounters from the Hunt Encounters table and include additional ones as desired.

AFTER FINDING THE SHAKUURZARPI

After the Travellers enter the proximity of the shakuurzarpi or actually come into contact with the animal, the environment begins to change rapidly. See Finding Their Quarry for more information about where the animals can be found.

As the Travellers approach, the shakuurzarpi begin to lash out with their telepathic abilities, wreaking havoc in the region that surrounds their adopted dens. The wildlife preserve seems to come alive and its animals become hostile. The animals pick up the Travellers' scent as they approach and treat them like an invasive species that must be repulsed.

The events and encounters that follow describe what happens after contact or near-contact is made with the shakuurzarpi. Things gradually build up until the Travellers recognise that they are in a dangerous situation of their own making. The introduction of these alien animals to the preserve has unleashed chaos and the Travellers end up in a fight for survival as they either continue to pursue their quarry or beat a hasty retreat to the *Superb Starling*.

Allow the Travellers to come up with theories about the strange behaviours of the various animals that they come across. Okhotnikov serves as a sounding board for their ideas and can provide them with more information about the animals that they encounter. Alternatively, they can simply ask the Intellect program that comes with their v-rifles. The program contains a database that describes all known animal species on Tinea-Fabre. In addition, any samples taken from

other animals they kill or capture may be examined at the ship as described in *Superb Starling* Laboratory on page 34.

If the Travellers manage to figure out what is going on, Okhotnikov insists on addressing the problem one way or another. They must either continue to hunt the shakuurzarpi in order to confirm their ideas or retreat and regroup to handle the situation later. The wildlife preserve is one of the key features of Tinea-Fabre and cannot be allowed to become a restricted area. Either way, the Travellers find themselves in a difficult situation, deep in the wildlife preserve without the benefit of communication devices.

FINDING THEIR QUARRY

If the Travellers persist deep into the central forests, adjacent to the lake, they have a chance to track one or more shakuurzarpi to their adopted dens by making an Average (8+) Survival check (D3 hours, INT).

The shakuurzarpi have managed to intrude upon the dens of Gisidi envelopers, a species imported to Tinea-Fabre and thought to have died out. One or more of the female shakuurzarpi in the group attempted to use telepathy to get the envelopers to care for their eggs. The attempt did not succeed and the envelopers consumed the eggs instead. Apparently, the evolutionary conditions that enabled the shakuurzarpi to be brood parasites on Akussanja have less predictable results when used on alien animals. Frustrated by the failed attempt, the shakuurzarpi used their telepathy to cast the reclusive envelopers out of their own dens.

When the Travellers arrive, the shakuurzarpi are holed up in one or more of the dens, frightened, confused and striking out with the only effective weapon that they have: their telepathic powers. Despite being cornered, the shakuurzarpi are elusive creatures. They tuck themselves into corners or find deep crevices in the dens. One or two Travellers at a time might be able to squeeze into one of the dens and must then make a Recon check (INT) opposed by the shakuurzarpi's Stealth in order to find them. The Travellers may make repeated attempts to find the creature, with each attempt taking 2D minutes. If they fail the opposed check and no one bothers to guard the entrance of the den, the animal furtively escapes. If the Travellers win the check, they corner the animal, either inside the den or making its way to the exit. The creature might strike out at them given no alternative or it might hold its position, growling at them in warning.

After the Shakuurzarpi

D6	Event or Encounter
2	White water river crossing. The Travellers approach a river whose waters are deep and rough for kilometres in either direction but may be crossed by making a raft or by other means. Alternatively, the Travellers may hike downriver to find an easier crossing. Make an appropriate Survival check to cross the river and add 2D hours to find gentler waters. Pinned up against the raging river, they might be attacked by various animals if they do not cross quickly enough.
3	Swarmed. The Travellers are assaulted by a swarm of Elleby's crickets. Okhotnikov remarks that he has never seen them attack humans before. Killing the insects is difficult but if the Travellers manage to reduce their numbers by one third, the remainder fly off.
4	Stampede. As they awaken from sleep one morning, the Travellers' horses have formed a herd and rush their riders, attempting to trample them. The animals have been turned against them and must either be killed or abandoned.
5	While on foot, the Travellers enter a paddock covered in moss and brush, and one of them steps into a ginkus ankii, also known as a slithering foot trap. The creatures normally do not enclose around the limbs of human prey, preferring smaller creatures, but this one bites down on the Traveller's foot. Furthermore, it has filled its mouth with sharp shale, inflicting an additional 1D of damage. Several more are in the paddock, so the Travellers must cross a 'mine field' of the creatures to get to safety.
6	Forced from their subterranean dens, several Gisidi envelopers drop upon the Travellers as they make their way through a forested region. Okhotnikov is familiar with the species from old holovids of the preserve but thought they had long gone extinct. They normally prey upon smaller animals, and typically pose little danger, but these ones attempt to consume the Travellers.
7	The pack. The Sylvie's greycat is a solitary animal that only encounters others of its kind when mating or raising their young. However, the Travellers are attacked by a trio of adult greycats that seem to be operating as a pack. The animals try to separate one of the group from the others in order to make a kill. Allow the Travellers to make an Average (8+) Animals (handling) check (EDU) or Survival check (INT) to figure out what they are doing and possibly regroup to frighten them off.
8	The Travellers are overflowed by a Gisidi Rangers or Knights Errant air/raft patrol. If they flag the patrol down, the air/raft comes in for a landing but is assaulted by a swarm of ellebies. The vehicle crashes, badly injuring or killing the occupants. The Travellers might be able to get the air/raft operational again but must do so while under assault by waves of psionically affected animals.
9	Landslide. As the Travellers make their way into a clearing, they find themselves next to a steep gravelly hill. Atop the hill, a large herd of gilaashes stomps on the gravel and creates a small landslide that gains momentum as it gathers larger rocks on the way down. Each Traveller must make D3 Average (8+) DEX checks to avoid being struck by a large rock. Failure results in 2D damage. Travellers may make an Average (8+) Survival check (DEX) to avoid the landslide altogether by spotting loose ground.
10	Shakuurzarpi attack. After using other animals to divide or distract the Travellers, the hunters become the hunted. A lone shakuurzarpi attempts to single out one of the Travellers and goes for the kill.
11	Superior supply cache found. A more recently stocked cache is discovered. Rations and other perishables are useless but allow the Travellers to salvage working technology from the cache by making an Average (8+) Mechanic check (EDU). The Referee may determine the content of the salvage, which might include comms equipment.
12	A sunken Vilani temple is found. The ancient ruins provide a defensible shelter for the Travellers. Some of the larger species in the preserve sniff the group out and try to make it inside to attack them.

If a shakuurzarpi manages to escape, it is relatively easy to pick up its tracks. The animal has been weakened by overuse of its telepathic abilities and the effort it has made to acclimate to its hostile environment. The shakuurzarpi has been reduced to a pathetic creature, frightened, separated from its natural habitat and exhausted from its efforts to survive. The Travellers and their patron can easily kill those they find, leave the animals to their fate or attempt to

capture the creatures once again, perhaps relocating them to a more suitable environment or even returning them to Akussanja.

Okhotnikov's tendency is to kill the creatures. The Travellers and their patron have been through a lot to get to this point. Although Okhotnikov does have a conscience, he ultimately sees himself as a hunter. Cornering one's quarry only to show it mercy is anathema to him. However, given the



unusual circumstances, he might be convinced to do otherwise. He feels responsible for the failure of the experiment. The ecosystem has been irrevocably altered by the inclusion of numerous alien animals but it is clear that the shakuurzarpi represent a threat to the preserve. The animals must be either killed or extricated to avoid having to interdict the region, which would be an embarrassment to his family and likely prevent House Okhotnikov from establishing Tinea-Fabre as a reserve world.

The Travellers have an array of choices before them. At this point, they are probably exhausted, likely wounded and perhaps eager to get away from the dangers of the wildlife preserve. Okhotnikov insists they finish the job one way or another and that doing so is a condition of the Travellers' contract. There are many ways to proceed with the adventure from here but if the Travellers expect to be paid, they must work with Okhotnikov to find a way to either kill or remove the remaining shakuurzarpi from the preserve.

SUPERB STARLING LABORATORY

If there are Travellers with Science (xenology) or similar skills, they may want to use the *Superb Starling's* laboratory to get some answers about the events they experienced in the wildlife preserve. If they take samples from the animals they encounter, there are some things they might discover:

- All of the animals whose behaviours were affected experienced something that altered their stimulus-action centres. A study of their brains might reveal they have been motivated to perform actions out of the norm.
- A study of the shakuurzarpi itself reveals that although it has only animal intelligence, its brain does possess two hemispheres and the pathways between the two are highly developed, a feature commonly seen in psionically talented sophonts and animals.
- If they manage to recover and examine any shakuurzarpi eggs from dens they search, the Travellers discover they are not fertilised, which may not bode well for their ability to breed and survive on Tinea-Fabre. There was evidence on Akussanja that they are brood parasites but without willing incubators for their eggs, the embryos contained within cannot survive for long.

If the Travellers manage to overcome the challenges of the Tinea-Fabre wildlife preserve and reach a satisfactory conclusion, they are given an unexpected bonus in addition to their agreed-upon pay: a 180-day lease on the *Superb Starling*. The Travellers must pay the ship's running costs and maintenance fees but it is otherwise theirs to use, free of charge. At the conclusion of the lease, they must return the ship to her home port on Sirma. Okhotnikov even offers to pay Chef Dunknever's salary to serve as the ship's steward for the duration of the voyage if the Travellers so desire.

EPILOGUE

The Core has many worlds with open wilderness areas, home to fascinating game for the Travellers to hunt and unique environments to explore. With the *Superb Starling* as their conveyance, the wild spaces of the sector are theirs to explore.

In addition, if things have gone well, they have made Contacts of Okhotnikov and members of his staff whom they befriended. They certainly got more than they bargained for in working with the ducal heir but having friends in high places is invaluable in the Core.



ALLIES AND OPPOSITION

HIS GRACE, THE DUCAL HEIR, ARVINEN ELIOS OKHOTNIKOV

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Vilani			Male	32
TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	8	INT	7	Admin 1, Animals (handling) 3, Athletics (endurance) 1, Carouse 2, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Medic 0, Melee (blade) 2, Navigation 2, Recon 0, Stealth 1, Survival 1
DEX	10	EDU	10	
END	9	SOC	15	
EQUIPMENT			Binoculars, Canteen, Portable Hammock, Survival Kit, Sleeping Bag, Tarpaulin Weapons: Revolver (3D-3), V-Rifle (variable), Machete (2D) Armour: Hunter's Field Garb (+4)	

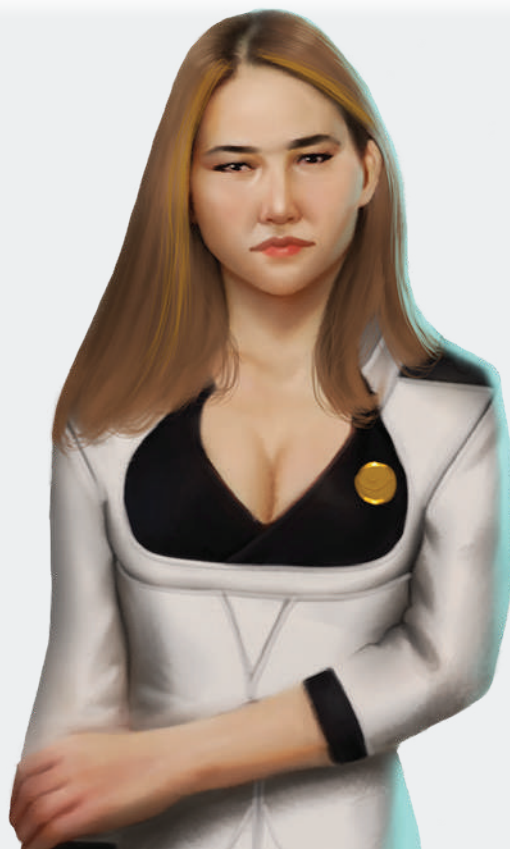
The dual heir, or 'your grace' as the Travellers are permitted to call him, is a competent outdoorsman, although by no means an expert, and an excellent shot. He is obviously not a person who has ever wanted for anything in his life and he tends to inflict his elevated status upon those around him.



CHAMBERLAIN IVY GOLBA

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Vilani			Female	31
TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT	9	Admin 2, Advocate 0, Athletics 0, Diplomat 2, Language (Vilani) 2, Persuade 1
DEX	6	EDU	11	
END	6	SOC	10	
EQUIPMENT			House Okhotnikov Uniform, Portable Computer/3 Weapons: None Armour: None	

Ivy is new to her role of chamberlain to the ducal heir but is taking to it well. She has served the ducal family for just over a year, is ambitious and, with the duke's chamberlain retiring soon, has confidence that she can ascend the administrative ranks of House Okhotnikov.



RILL DUNKNEVER

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Vilani			Male	51
TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	6	INT	6	Animals (veterinary) 1, Art (performer) 1, Carouse 1, Gambler 2, Medic 0, Profession (chef) 2, Stealth 0, Steward 3, Survival 0
DEX	7	EDU	8	
END	5	SOC	9	
EQUIPMENT			House Okhotnikov Apron, Field Kitchen Weapons: Kitchen Knife (1D) Armour: Jack (+1)	

Rill is the ducal heir's personal steward and attends to his every need during the expedition. During the jumps from Sirma to Tinea-Fabre, the Travellers come to know and appreciate old Rilly's excellent cooking. Even when the *Superb Starling* is sputtering and stalling due to poor maintenance, at least they get to eat well.



DUNKHA GUNKII

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Vilani			Male	46
TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT	9	Animals (handling) 2, Art (performer) 2, Athletics (endurance) 2, Carouse 2, Drive 0, Flyer 0, Profession (holovideo personality) 3, Recon 2, Stealth 2, Steward 3, Survival 2
DEX	7	EDU	11	
END	10	SOC	9	
EQUIPMENT			House Mobile Holovideo Gear, Satellite Uplink Weapons: Hunting Rifle (3D), Blade (2D) Armour: Jack (+1)	

Gunkii is the host of the popular show, Shugilii Shimiirkhuki. Superficially, he seems to be an egotistical holovid star but, given the chance, the Travellers might discover that he can be a helpful ally.



PRESERVE RANGER TILLANIDI CERNY

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Vilani			Female	35
TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	10	INT	8	Animals (handling) 2, Animals (veterinary) 1, Athletics (strength) 1, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Medic 2, Navigation 1, Profession (park ranger) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 0, Science (xenology) 1, Survival 2
DEX	7	EDU	10	
END	11	SOC	6	
EQUIPMENT			Medikit (TL14), Hunting Gear* Weapons: Shotgun (4D), Blade (2D) Armour: Hunter's Field Garb	

*Described in Preparing for the Hunt on page 29.

Cerny is the chief ranger at the Tinea-Fabre wildlife preserve. She has been employed by Okhotnikov for about a year and does not approve of his methods. However, she does not debate with him about his approach as she enjoys the job immensely and

does not want to jeopardise her role. Rumour has it the previous chief ranger was fired by Okhotnikov after a disagreement with him about his wildlife management philosophy.



EQUIPMENT

The following equipment is either stored in the cargo hold of the *Superb Starling* or provided to the Travellers over the course of the adventure.

Catch Pole: The catch pole is thrown over a target's neck with the intention of restraining it. An animal restrained by a catch pole does not sustain damage. Allow the animal to make a Melee (natural or unarmed) check opposed by the Melee (unarmed) check of the attacker, as if being grappled. If the check is failed by the animal, it is restrained. The animal cannot free itself as long as the Traveller maintains a hold on the catch pole.

Net: The net, which includes weights fastened to its extremities, is thrown over a target with the intention of entangling it. An animal tangled in a net does not sustain damage. Allow the animal to make a Melee (natural or unarmed) check opposed by the Gun Combat (archaic) check of the attacker, as if being grappled. If the check is failed by the animal, it is captured. The animal can free itself by making a successful Difficult (10+) Melee check (1D rounds), so the Travellers must quickly sedate or transfer the animal to a cage to prevent its escape.

Folding Cage: The folding cages used by the Travellers to contain captured animals are made from lightweight and durable crystaliron composites. They are easy to transport but must be wrapped in a tarp or other material to prevent them from clanking or rattling.

V-Rifle: The v-rifle employs gauss technology to propel a round using a variable electromagnetic power regulator to increase or reduce the ballistic force of the shot. The 'magazine' of the weapon is a reservoir containing a high-density, ferro-reactive liquid polymer/metal alloy that forms ammunition on the fly. Each round is extruded and shaped moments before use. The structure and fragmentation characteristics of the ammunition are pre-set by the weapon's software before a hunt. Switching ammunition types requires a single combat round. Range, Damage and ammunition quantity vary based on usage.

The v-rifle comes with a Computer/3 running Intellect, Expert/1 (recon) and a database of known animals in the sector.

Hunter's Field Garb: In addition to providing light protection, the hunter's field garb regulates the wearer's body temperature to 36–38°C, neutralising the effects of extreme heat or cold. It also provides superior camouflage, adding DM+2 to Stealth checks.



EQUIPMENT	TL	RANGE	KG	COST
Catch Pole	1	Melee	2	Cr25
Net	1	5	1	Cr25
Folding Cage	12	—	6	Cr1200

WEAPON	TL	RANGE	DAMAGE	KG	COST	MAGAZINE	MAGAZINE COST	TRAITS
V-Rifle	13	Variable	Variable	4	Cr35000	50	Cr2500	Scope

AMMUNITION SETTING	RANGE	DAMAGE	MAGAZINE USAGE	TRAITS
Marker	1000	0/1	1	Scope
Lethal 1	1000	1D	1	AP 1, Scope
Lethal 2	1000	2D	1	AP 2, Scope
Lethal 3	800	3D	2	AP 3, Scope
Lethal 4	600	4D	3	AP 4, Scope
Tranq	1000	Special*	1*	Stun, Scope

*A successful hit with a tranq round renders most animals unconscious within 1D combat rounds. The tranq setting requires an additional add-on to the magazine that adds 0.5kg to its weight.

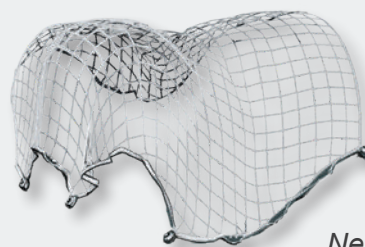
ARMOUR TYPE	TL	PROTECTION	RAD	KG	COST	REQUIRED SKILL
Hunters Field Garb	12	+4	—	3	Cr10000	None



Hunters Field Garb



Catch Pole



Net



Folding Cage

TRAVELLER

CORE ADVENTURE 1
INVASIVE SPECIES

The Core is the seat of empire for the Third Imperium, a highly populated and industrialised region of space civilised for thousands of years. It is also home to several reserve worlds, some of which are places where the Imperial feudal nobility go to rest and play. Tinea-Fabre is a candidate to become the fourth reserve world in the sector, hosting a lush ecosphere with dozens of imported alien animals.

The Travellers are hired by the ducal heir of Alekvadin to fly a safari ship first to Akussanja, to obtain specimens of a rare and wild species, and then to Tinea-Fabre where the animal is to be deposited into a wildlife preserve. After it has settled in, the young duke-to-be enlists the Travellers to hunt the elusive creature in its adopted habitat but it proves to be a wily prey with heretofore unknown abilities. The hunters become the hunted and are seemingly forced to fight off the entire animal kingdom of the preserve. They will end up in a pitched battle for their very survival.

Invasive Species includes:

- A complete adventure set in the Core
- The *Superb Starling*, a customised Type-K safari ship
- New and exciting animal encounters, including the sly and ferocious shakuurzarpi of Akussanja
- Maps of two wild alien worlds



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