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BEANSTALK

Lester W. Smith

Trouble-shooting on Beta Canum's Elevator to the Stars

Game Designers' Workshop

2300

BEANSTALK

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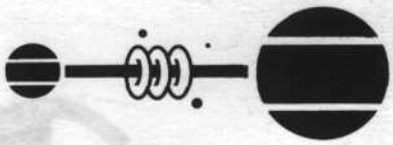


Introduction

We humans are a strange breed. From our earliest beginnings we have looked with envy on birds in flight, and we have striven over the ages to fly ourselves, with varying degrees of success. That urge to fly, along with the urge to explore, quickly led us beyond the limits of atmospheric flight to the very stars. But we are still land animals; we still like the feel of something solid beneath our feet.

That's why most everyone on this beanstalk capsule spent the last day and a half shut in their cabins: once the novelty wears off, few people really enjoy the sensation of near-zero G. Only now are the other passengers beginning to show their faces—now that they can feel the effects of gravity increasing hour by hour, and they can walk *the corridors instead of floating along them.*

Now they begin to mingle with each other. They gather in the Rec Room and stare out the transparent dome of its ceiling in awe at the magnificent vista of star-bejeweled space above them. They feel no terror at the sight of the emptiness because they have a solid floor beneath them. They can ignore the fact that we hang suspended by two tiny magnetic couples more than twenty thousand kilometers above the planet.

No, they don't want to be reminded of that. And that's why I have the solitude of the lower observation deck to myself. None of the others wishes to stand on a large, transparent vision port in the floor and watch the world approaching from thousands of kilometers away—but I do. I pass the hours here, gazing down at the swirl of white and blue and dirty green, and I wonder what Rebco has in store for me on Beta Canum this time.

But I have to admit that the view of empty kilometers beneath me makes even my *pulse race just a bit.*

Beanstalk is an adventure module for **Traveller:-2300,** Game Designers' Workshop's science-fiction role-playing game of life in the 24th century. It is intended to be enjoyed by a *referee* and any number of players; the size of the group depends only upon what the referee feels comfortable with. The scenarios included are intended to be solved mainly by thinking and role playing rather than by violence. Ideally, then, as more players are involved, there will be a greater diversity of suggested courses of action for the party to choose from. Also, the more player characters there are, the greater the range of talents available for solving the scenarios.

Materials needed are a copy of the **Traveller: 2300** rules, pencils, paper, and several 6- and 10-sided dice. Access to a copying machine for the photocopying of character sheets and supplementary material for the players can be a great help.

SUBJECT

A beanstalk is, in the simplest sense, a cable stretching from a planet's surface to a space station at geostationary orbit (an orbit at which the station always remains above the same spot on the planet), and beyond. Instead of sending rockets or spaceplanes (both of which are very expensive and very damaging to the planetary ecology) to and from the space station, the beanstalk serves as a rail along which capsules travel. This method of travel is much cheaper than others (barring the initial outlay of money for the beanstalk's construction) and less violent in takeoff, but requires much more time for the trip (page 34 of the **Traveller: 2300** *Referee's Manual,* states that time to orbit for a beanstalk is approximately two hours—it is actually more like five days).

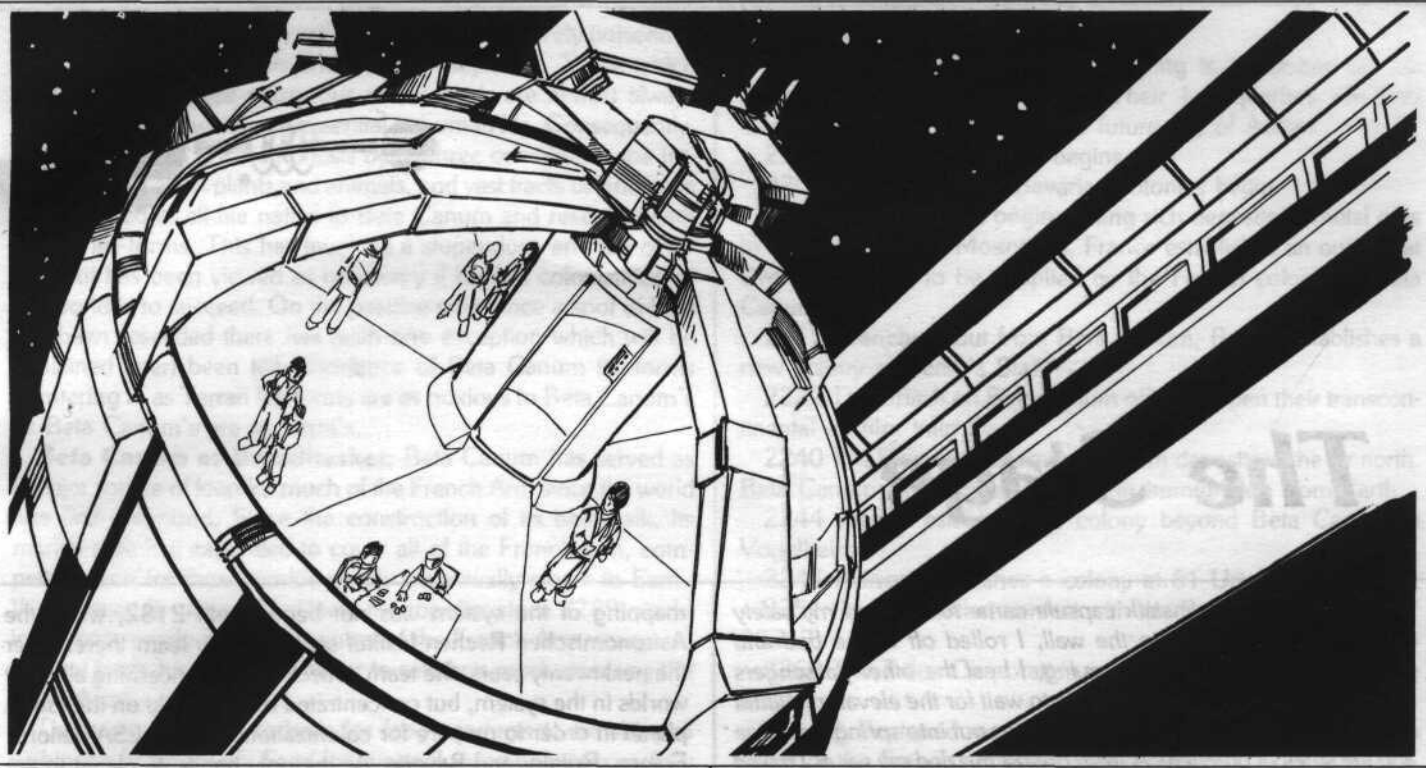
Beanstalk describes Beta Canum Venaticorum-4, the world on which the first beanstalk in human history was built. The book covers the history of the human colonies on the planet, technical data on the beanstalk (including some material on the beanstalk later built on Earth), non-player characters (NPCs) likely to be encountered by the players, three suggested scenarios, and a general discussion of the stellar system of Beta Canum Venaticorum to *prepare* the referee for future adventures there.

CONTENTS

The material in this book is divided into chapters, each of which covers a different topic. It is recommended that, after reading this introduction, the referee read *The Stage, The Actors,* and *The Technical Data* before running any of the adventure scenarios. It is not necessary for the referee to read *The Drama,* which includes the three scenarios, and the *Afterword* in their entirely before running one 6f the adventures, but they do contain material which will lend a broader understanding of Beta Canum Venaticorum-4.

The Stage: This chapter begins with a discussion of the overall history of Beta Canum, including a timeline of important events on the planet. The bulk of the chapter is then divided into four subheadings, one for each of the world's continents, *The French Continent, The British Continent, The German Continent,* and *The Southern Continent.* These sections detail the development of each of the continents from first colonization to the year 2300. A thorough familiarity with this chapter will serve the referee well in bringing the world of Beta Canum to life for his or her players.

The Actors: This chapter introduces the referee to the major NPCs which the players are likely to meet on Beta Canum. The NPCs are presented in the order in which they will be encountered



if the adventure scenarios are played through in the order in which they are listed. Physical appearance and personality descriptions are included for each NPC, as well as illustrations of the most im portant or most commonly encountered NPCs. Each NPC is mentioned again in the scenarios in which he or she appears, with an explanation of what part the NPC will play in that scenario, as well as how the NPCs reaction to the players may have changed because of previous scenarios. In this way, the referee can read *The Actors* for basic knowledge of any NPC, then simply update that knowledge as each scenario is played. It is hoped that this will make the *referee's* job easier.

The Technical Data: This chapter explains the world map, charts and diagrams, and the pamphlet included in the pullout section. The *referee* should read this chapter before running the adventure, but need not commit it to memory, as the map, charts, and diagrams can be *referred* to as needed during play. It is suggested that photocopies of the world map, charts and diagrams, and pamphlet be given to the players before play, as these contain information which their characters are likely to know.

The Drama: This chapter includes three separate scenarios *(Acts)* for the *referee* to run. They are presented in the order in which they are intended to be played, but none of the scenarios actually relies upon the others, so the *referee* is free to present any or all of them in whatever order he or she chooses. There is no need for the *referee* to read through all of this chapter before beginning play; the chapter's introduction gives a synopsis of all of the adventures, and as the scenarios are designed to be able to stand alone, familiarity with any one of them is sufficient to run it.

Afterword: The *Afterword* contains supplementary material, such as a description of the planetary system of the star Beta Canum Venaticorum, and its military importance to the French arm. Also included are further scenario suggestions for the referee who is running a campaign which will be centered in, or close to, the Beta Canum system. Knowledge of this chapter is not necessary in order to run any of the scenarios in *The Drama.*

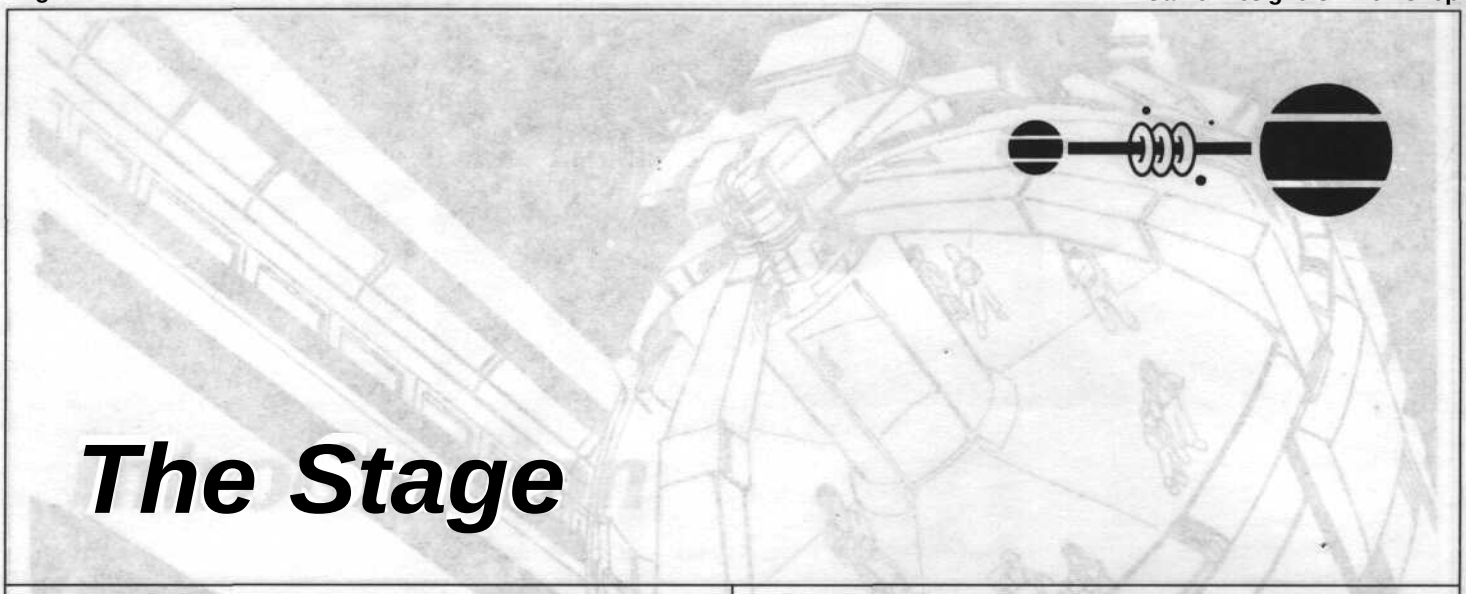
PLAYER CHARACTERS

As in *The Tricolor's Shadow,* the introductory adventure included in the **Traveller: 2300** rules, Rebco is again hiring troubleshooters on Beta Canum. Therefore, troubleshooting is the most likely occupation for player characters in *Beanstalk,* but this is not to say that characters of other occupations will not be useful. It is left up to the *referee* to determine what types of characters will be appropriate for the adventures as that *referee* runs them. It should be noted that political tensions have run high on Beta Canum since the War of German Reunification. As a consequence, the nationality of each player character may play an important part in determining how certain NPCs will react to that character. The *referee* will want to keep this in mind, as well as occupation, in determining what player characters should be used.

A FINAL NOTE

As aids to the *referee,* each chapter includes sections of narrative in italics, and tasks are separated from the text for visibility, just as in previous **Traveller: 2300** materials. At the *referee's* option, the italicized narrative may be read aloud to the players to set the scene, or alternatively, photocopies of the narrative may be given to the players.

WARNING: IN ORDER TO PRESERVE SUSPENSE, PLAYERS SHOULD READ NO FURTHER IN THIS BOOK. REFEREE'S MATERIAL FOLLOWS.



The Stage

As soon as the beanstalk capsule came to rest and my safety webbing folded back into the wall, I rolled off of the bed and gathered up my bags. By hurrying, I beat the other passengers out of their rooms, so I didn't have to wait for the elevator. Within minutes I had exited the capsule and was out into spring sunshine and the smell of greenery. A fresh breeze nuzzled my ear as I hailed a cab (bypassing a crowded shuttle bus)—the breeze carried the city sounds of traffic and voices, and the city smells of humanity and warm concrete, but underneath them I caught an alien scent, the tang of a planet which did not spawn Man.

That mixture of mutually exclusive sensations reminded me of something I've noticed before in my wanderings. Most people on Earth visualize the extraterrestrial colonies as groups of clapboard houses gathered together in the midst of fields, or pastures, or mountains and mining equipment. To them, the frontier means a primitive lifestyle. But actually, each colony world is a collection of contradictions. Beta Canum, for example, contains ultramodern cities such as Premiere (between whose gleaming office buildings my taxi was now winding its way; within whose businesses and factories could be found the very latest in technology) and primitive sites such as the fishing village of New Woking.

Actually, New Woking itself is an even better example of that disparity. As a fairly new community in which the economic feasibility of fishing Beta Canum's seas is being tested, it boasts a fleet of fishing boats which use electromagnetically enhanced nets to collect their catch; but at home the people carry water from a central purifying well in the village square and must walk a hundred meters to an outhouse to relieve themselves. On a colony world, you either have a piece of equipment or you make do with what you can. If you have it, it's probably a very advanced design; if you're making do, it's most likely very primitive:

The taxi pulled to the curb outside the airfilm train terminal. I paid the driver his fare and tipped him well for luck, then walked to the entrance. An electric eye opened the door for me; a voice-activated computer took my money and dispensed a ticket for Adrian, the international city on the upflung peninsula of the southern continent. Later, as the train left Premiere's city limits, I microwaved a packaged meal and ate. Outside my window, kilometer after kilometer of primitive, unexplored wilderness fled by.

THE WORLD OF BETA CANUM

Although the Beta Canum Venaticorum system was first visited by a French exploratory squadron in 2181 (which staked a French claim on the garden world discovered in the fourth orbit), a detailed mapping of the system was not begun until 2182, when the Astronomischen Rechen-Institut sent a survey team there. Over the next twenty years, the team collected data concerning all eight worlds in the system, but concentrated most heavily on the fourth planet in order to prepare for colonization by three ESA nations: France, Britain, and Bavaria. As the only habitable planet in the Beta Canum Venaticorum system, Beta Canum Venaticorum-4 is commonly *referred* to as Beta Canum (or occasionally as BC at some of the planet's more primitive sites).

To the early explorers, the world appeared to be so similar to Earth as to be ideal for colonization. Its star is very similar to Earth's sun, and the planet orbits it at exactly 1.13 au, precisely the optimal life zone. It orbits the star once every 407.9 local days, each of which is 20.4 Terran hours long, which translates into an orbital period of 346.8 Terran days, or just under one Terran year. The planet's axis is tilted 18°, 56', compared to Earth's axial tilt of 23°, 27'. Consequently, the Torrid and Temperate Zones of Beta Canum are narrower than on Earth, and the Frigid Zones are wider, but the seasonal temperature changes within each zone are somewhat less noticeable, and overall weather patterns on the planet are less violent than upon Earth.

Beta Canum is 12,000 km in diameter, as compared to Earth's 12,750 km. Its mass is 0.82 times Earth's; its gravity is 0.94 Gs. The planet's atmospheric pressure is 0.92 atmospheres, with 19 percent oxygen, resulting in an oxygen pressure of 0.18 atmospheres, compared to Earth's 21 percent oxygen and 0.21 atmospheres. There are a number of types of trace metallic ions in the mesosphere (an approximately 40km thick layer of atmosphere just above the stratosphere) which are not present in Earth's atmosphere, but they are not present in the lower levels of atmosphere and seem to have no effect upon the planetary ecology, nor are they dangerous to Terran life forms.

Sixty percent of the planet's surface is covered by water; the remaining 40 percent is divided into four continents and a few large islands (see the world map on page 23). The smallest of these continents covers the southern pole and is largely uninhabitable. The other three were claimed as sites for colonies: the French settled upon the westernmost, the Bavarians upon the easternmost, and the British upon the middle continent.

All things considered, Beta Canum has been very successful as a site for Terran colonization. The only major problem which has been encountered is that the majority of the plant and animal life native to Beta Canum contains a mixture of amino acids which were not designed to support Terran life-forms. That is to say, most

contain amino acids which are either mildly or severely poisonous to humans and the plants and animals they raise. Those which do not contain these poisonous amino acids are almost always lacking in others which are essential to human life. Consequently, there has been a great emphasis by all three colonies on the importation of Terran plants and animals, and vast tracts of land have been cleared of all life native to Beta Canum and reseeded with Terran life-forms. This has involved a stupendous amount of effort, but has been viewed as necessary if human colonization of the world is to succeed. On the positive side, once a spot of land has been reseeded there has (with one exception which will be explained later) been little incidence of Beta Canum life-forms reentering it, as Terran life-forms are as noxious to Beta Canum's as Beta Canum's are to Terra's.

Beta Canum as Breadbasket: Beta Canum has served as a major source of food for much of the French Arm since the world was first colonized. Since the construction of its beanstalk, its market area has expanded to cover all of the French arm, competing even for those worlds which are actually closer to Earth. With France (a nation of business monopolies since 2289) working to gain nearly complete control of the French Arm, many nations of Earth have found it easier to sell their products along the other Arms.

There are several standards for food products to be shipped within the French Arm. Feed for livestock need only successfully pass inspection by the government of the colony from which it is being shipped and by the government of the colony which is receiving it. Food for humans, however, falls under more universal standards. The two standards which are accepted in the French Arm are ZFR 1.7 Bulk (Zapamoga Food Relief Standard, current version 1.7, bulk supplies) and the French Approuvée standard. The Zapamoga standard is for bulk quantities of foodstuffs, such as would be used in institutionalized preparation of meals on military ships, large outposts, or very new colonies. The Approuvée standard concerns the preparing and packaging of individual meals, such as would be issued to the crews of small starships or outposts, to passengers on commercial transportation (whether on a world's surface or in space), to soldiers and explorers, or to anyone else who wishes the convenience of a meal which can be both stored and prepared with a minimum of bother. Zapamoga approval is fairly easy to receive. French Approuvée status is another story.

Beta Canum as Gateway: Having a beanstalk makes it much easier to maintain excellent orbital facilities for the maintenance, repair, refueling, and resupplying of starships. It also provides a very natural location for the maintenance of a military base in space. These two facts have made Beta Canum a hub of space travel for the French Arm. This makes the world of tantamount importance to France, and Beta Canum has consequently become an arena of fierce political competition for the nations and corporations which have established outposts and colonies along the French Arm.

TIMELINE

The following timeline gives an overall view of the history of Beta Canum Venaticorum-4. It includes events which do not necessarily take place on Beta Canum, but which have a bearing on the development of the world, such as the establishment of colonies and outposts beyond Beta Canum which rely on Beta Canum for supplies. Further explanation of many of the events included in this timeline is given in the individual sections for each of the colonies.

2181 A French exploratory Squadron working for ESA first visits the Beta Canum Venaticorum system.

2182-2202 Exploration and mapping is performed by das Astronomischen Rechen-Institut. Their headquarters on Beta Canum forms the center for the future city of Adrian.

2205 The French colony begins.

2207 The British and Bavarian colonies begin.

2211 The Bavarians begin mining rich deposits of metal ores in the Ludwigberge Mountains. France establishes an outpost at DM+ 36 2219, to be supplied by the French colony on Beta Canum.

2217 Branching out from Beta Canum, Britain establishes a new colony at Henry's Star.

2222 The British on Beta Canum officially open their transcontinental air film train lines.

2240 The Bavarians discover tantalum deposits in the far north. Beta Canum experiences a boom in immigration from Earth.

2244 France establishes a colony beyond Beta Canum at Vogelheim.

2248 France establishes a colony at 61 Ursae Majoris.

2251 France has first contact with the Pentapods at DM+ 27 28217.

2260 The Trilon Corporation establishes a colony at Xi Ursae Majoris.

2261 A Pentapod request to build an enclave on the western shore of the French continent is approved.

2264 Construction of the Pentapod enclave is completed.

2268 The French experience Year I of the Beta Grain Blight.

2269 Year II of the Beta Grain Blight affects all three continents. The cause is discovered to be a worm native to Beta Canum which has adapted to consume the hair roots of many Terran grains.

2270 Beta Canum suffers Year III of the Beta Grain Blight. The French begin using "Terraban," a fast-growing lichen which the Pentapods devised by combining a fungus native to Beta Canum and a Terran algae. Terraban serves as a barrier to the blight worm, allowing fields to be cleared of the pest and put back into production.

2271 The British and the Bavarians import Terraban. A Bavarian rancher discovers "Drahtgras," a long grass native to the Bavarian continent, which, with the addition of certain missing amino acids, can support livestock.

2272 France begins construction of Beta Canum's beanstalk. The Bavarian engineering firm of *Folie, Lysander, et Geiger* is hired to direct the work.

2274 France establishes an outpost at DM+ 27 28217.

2276 "Brindle-fish," a creature native to the shoals just off of the island to the southwest of the British Continent, is found to be edible by Terran life-forms. It gains particular importance as a product to be dried and ground into a meal which is added to Drahtgras to make up the missing amino acids in the cattle feed. The village of New Woking is begun by the British firm of *Merriweather Products, Ltd.* to harvest the brindle-fish.

2282 The Central Asian War begins on Earth. With France's efforts directed toward the war, work on Beta Canum's beanstalk slows to a near halt.

2285 The French colony at 61 Ursae Majoris begins a war for independence from France.

2287 The Central Asian War ends.

2289 Weakened in spirit by her poor performance in the Central Asian War, France suffers a military coup on Earth, followed by a rise to power by business monopolies. Control of Beta Canum is viewed as a means for France to regain its former preeminence among the nations of Earth—the work on Beta Canum's beanstalk returns to full swing, funded by a group of French businesses.

A second, internationally funded beanstalk is begun on Earth.

2291 Beta's beanstalk is in operation. The French colony at 61 Ursae Majoris is granted its independence.

2292-2293 The War of German Reunification is fought on Earth. On Beta Canum, Bavarian crews are laid off from beanstalk operation, and the firm of Folie, Lysander, et Geiger is removed from beanstalk direction and delegated to the role of consultant. The French firm of *Le Chemin Juste* is entrusted with directing the beanstalk. Forty outbound capsules (including three passenger capsules) are destroyed when they uncouple with the beanstalk and fall back to the planet's surface. The unemployed Bavarian crews accuse the French of negligence; the French accuse the Bavarians of sabotage. International investigations of culpability begin in an atmosphere of anger and mistrust. The shortage of capsules causes an increase in shipping charges.

2295 The lost capsules on Beta Canum have been replaced, but shipping charges do not decline, as the French begin to concentrate on using the beanstalk as a tool for economically controlling all of Beta Canum. First contact with the Kafers occurs in the Arcturus system.

2296 The French farmers' co-op creates *Nous Partagons, a* food products distributor, in order to realize a greater share of the profits from crops sold off-planet. Zapamoga and Approuvée (French standard) approval are readily given to the new corporation's products.

2297 British farmers, following the French farmers' lead, create *Four Star as* their distributor. Zapamoga approval is granted without delay, but red tape and foot-dragging in the French Ministry of the Interior's Office of The Commissioner of Exports causes constant delays in the receipt of Approuvée status. The British seek some way to break this deadlock. The Kafers destroy the research outpost in the Arcturus system, sending emotional shock waves throughout the French Arm.

2298 The Kafers invade Eta Bootis. The Kafer War begins.

2299 Earth's beanstalk is completed.

2300 On Beta Canum, Herr Professor Hans Geiger, of Folie, Lysander, et Geiger, quietly approaches Rebco to hire troubleshooters.

The French Continent

The air film train rushed smoothly toward the southeast along its rail. As the sun sank to the west, the Great Southern Mountains stretched their shadows eastward to catch us as we fled by. I leaned my seat back and let the motion of the car soothe me.

I have read that when the steam engine was first invented centuries ago, the trains which travelled the rail lines which soon covered Europe and North America passed over the land with a great deal of noise. Their engines puffed and tooted, and their cars rattled along the rails, often waking people from their beds as the trains roared by In the night. But an air film train is a different story. There is no contact with the rail, and, therefore, no rattle of metal wheels on metal tracks. Instead, an air film train passes like a whirlwind. At six hundred kilometers an hour, nearly half the speed of sound at sea level, they fly over the land with a whispered roar.

It was nearly dark now. The lighted windows of a solitary farm house shone like a beacon in the distance, and I found my mind drifting back to my last visit to Beta Canum. Several other troubleshooters and I had been hired to survey a remote valley in the Great Southern Mountains. I'm not at liberty to tell exactly what we found, but suffice it to say that it led us to make an unplanned trip across all three of Beta Canum's colonized continents. Because of that I've seen a lot of Beta Canum, and I've developed a fondness for the world.

Take the French Continent, for instance. Those Great Southern Mountains are some of the most gorgeous in the galaxy. And native life abounds within their sheltered valleys. If a traveller is careful, he can live off of what can be found there, despite the differences in ammo acids between Terran and Beta Canum life forms.

And the great central plateau which makes up most of the continent has its beauty as well. A traveller can stand beneath its wide sky and look to horizons which are more than a month's walk away. Many is the time I've wished to return to drink in the rich colors of its native flowers on a rain-washed day.

Smiling at those gentle memories, I passed into a peaceful slumber as the air film train raced on into the night.

From its inception nearly 100 years ago, the French colony on Beta Canum has played a crucial role in France's struggle for control of the French Arm. The following information on the French Continent's geography and history will help to explain why it has been so important to France.

Geography: The French continent is the largest of the four on Beta Canum, with an area slightly greater than that of Asia. It lies almost entirely within the Temperate and Torrid Zones of the planet, with only relatively small projections into the Frigid Zones. These projections into the Frigid Zones are cut off from the rest of the continent by the Great Northern and Great Southern mountain ranges. The bulk of the continent lies between these two ranges, and is consequently rather high in elevation; the mountains also protect this tableland from cold air currents flowing from the polar regions (this protection is much better in the south than in the north). As a result of these factors, the French Continent enjoys cooler summers and milder winters than are common to the same zones of the other continents.

Precipitation on the western half of the French Continent is mild and regular. With the polar air currents blocked for most of the continent, humid westerly winds reach from the western coastline almost to the middle of the continent, dropping precipitation in the form of gentle rain and occasional light hail as they rise along the way and meet colder layers of air above. The northeastern region of the continent is watered a bit more heavily as humid air from the eastern coast travels inland and meets polar currents east of the Great Northern Mountains. This area receives heavy rains during the spring and fall and some snow during the winter. Southwest of Premiere, the land is much drier as the westerly winds which pass over have lost the majority of their water vapor, and the extensive Great Southern Mountains almost completely block the polar currents from the south. (Note: If the players should find themselves for some reason north of the Great Northern Mountains or south of the Great Southerns, they will find these regions to experience periods of bitter cold when the winds rush from the poles, followed by slightly warmer temperatures, but nearly constant snowfall, when the absence of the polar currents allows moist air from the northern or southern coasts to flow inland and rise along the mountains.)

In all, the majority of the French Continent may be viewed as very similar to the American Midwest. The rich soil and regular, gentle rainfall combined with the moderate temperatures year-round make it ideal for farming, once the land has been cleared for Terran crops.

History: Colonization of the French Continent began in the year 2205 at the present site of Premiere. This central location took advantage of the fact that skies are clearer close to the dry southeast—allowing for regular, safe spaceplane flights to and from orbit—yet farming could begin there and then spread to the northeast, northwest, and southwest. It is very likely as well, although

there is no documentation, that the site was also chosen because of its location on the equator, as the French most likely were considering the possibility of a future beanstalk even that early in the colony's history.

The early emphasis of the colony was almost totally on farming. Although there were some surveys done in both the Great Northern and Great Southern ranges in 2211 (when the Bavarians found rich mineral deposits on *their* continent), no particularly impressive discoveries were made, and further exploration was put off until the colony had grown to cover a larger portion of the continent. When the British officially opened their transcontinental transport system in 2222, the French used it to export large quantities of farm products to the Bavarian Continent in exchange for partially processed metal ores—the three colonies were developing an economic interdependence. Later, when the Bavarians discovered deposits of tantalum ore in the extreme north, all three colonies experienced a sudden surge in immigration from Earth.

During this period of time, life on the French Continent was idyllic. Crops were good, the climate was wonderful, and the colonists felt satisfaction with the shape their new home was taking. Excitement reached a new peak in 2260 when the Pentapods, who had been first contacted about nine years earlier at DM + 27 28217 requested permission to construct an enclave on the western coast. In 2161, the Pentapod request was approved, and the hydrogen road which reached from Premiere west was improved and extended to the site of the enclave. In early 2264 the Pentapod enclave was finished, and bioengineered products began to flow from it at a slow but steady rate. (For more detail on the Pentapods and their products, see *The Pentapods* in *Understanding 2300,* a free booklet which can be obtained at your local game store or by writing to us at the address on the back of this book.)

Then, in 2268, the French suffered the first year of what was to be later called the Beta Grain Blight. That first year, over 65 percent of the wheat crop (the colony's primary grain crop) withered and died in the field, its roots eaten away by an unknown agency. There was some fear among the farmers that the Pentapods were behind the blight, as the French colony had existed without any such problem for nearly half a century before the Pentapods arrived. Some theorized that France had hired the Pentapods to create a biological weapon to use against the colonies of other nations on other worlds, and that it had gotten out of control. The Colonial Government's scientists answered that it was simply a case of something in Beta Canum's ecosystem having finally had enough time to adapt to Terran crops.

Whatever the cause, the Pentapods set to work to solve it, and the French farmers concentrated upon grains other than wheat the next year. Unfortunately, so did the pest. That year, not only did wheat suffer (also on the British Continent, where farmers sought to cash in on the shortage of wheat which would be caused by the French switching to other crops), but several other grain crops were hit hard as well. Oats, for example, suffered nearly 80 percent losses, and barley and rye just under 40 percent. Only corn remained untouched. Late in the year, the Pentapods announced that they had found the cause—a nearly microscopic worm native to Beta Canum which was rapidly developing an affinity for Terran crops—and that they were working around the clock to find a solution to the problem.

In 2270, all three colonies concentrated upon planting corn. Other crops were planted simply because the seed was there, and because corn seed had become so expensive. Tension ran high on Beta Canum and the several younger colonies further along the French Arm who relied upon Beta Canum for food and seed. To a large extent, further exploration and colonization along the French Arm depended upon a quick and thorough solution to the problem of the Beta Grain Blight.

About halfway through the planting season, the Pentapods distributed a new product, "Terraban," a lichen-like symbiont created by combining a Beta Canum fungus with a Terran algae. This lichen was to be planted in bands kilometers wide around the grain fields, to serve as a barrier not only to the blightworm, but to most other ground-based Terran and Beta Canum life forms (both plant and animal) as well. The fields themselves were chemically treated during planting (at great expense) to try to kill the blightworms which were already present. With the Colonial French Government picking up the tab, just over 70 percent of the fields on the French Continent were able to be treated that year. The British and Bavarian colonies used the chemical treatment, but were unable to acquire the newly developed Terraban. The French Arm seemed to hold its collective breath as it waited for the results of Beta Canum's harvest.

On the British and Bavarian Continents, the blightworm destroyed nearly 80 percent of the grain crops, or about 50 percent of the edible crops planted. Plants toward the middle of the fields suffered less heavily, indicating that the chemical treatment had destroyed many of the blightworms at planting, but that they had reentered the fields from the edges as the season progressed. On the French Continent, those fields unprotected by Terraban suffered similarly; those which were protected lost only about 15 percent of their crops. It seemed that the Pentapod's offering would be able to prevent future critical losses.

Hope was high for the next year's harvest, but the slimness of this year's harvest was still to take its toll. Not only did vegetable food prices soar along the French Arm that year, but the price of meats first plummeted, as millions of animals were slaughtered to avoid the necessity of feeding them with scarce grains, then skyrocketed with the resulting scarcity of livestock. The colonial governments on Beta Canum, particularly those of the British and Bavarians, were forced to subsidize thousands of farmers and farm corporations in order to prevent their ruination and subsequent return to Earth. These governments in turn drew heavily upon their parent nations for financial support. But the worst had been avoided, and the outlook for the future looked bright. The next year, 2271, the Pentapods were able to supply Terraban to all three continents, and the Beta Grain Blight had become a thing of the past.

As a side note, there was one serious problem with Terraban the first year of its use. Part of the reason that it served well as a barrier to animals was that it smelled so terrible to most of them. This included humans, and if it had not been for the seriousness of the need, Terraban may well not have sold at all the first year. When complaints about the smell were made to the Pentapods, however, they managed to tone down the odor somewhat the second year; to cover what remained, they added a third plant to the product simply for its perfume. It should be noted, however, that while Terraban is no longer quite as distasteful to humans as it once was (farmers think of it as a strong smelling medicine), it still works well as a *barrier* to most animals since they rely more heavily upon scent as a sense.

After the three years of the Grain Blight, the next two decades were peaceful on Beta Canum. Following the Pentapod's development of Terraban, discoveries were made by the British and the Bavarians which added to Beta Canum's success as a food producer. Construction of mankind's first beanstalk was begun on Beta Canum to take advantage of the large crops which the world was now producing. The wars on Earth and colonial rebellions

on other worlds late in this period had little more effect on the general populace of Beta Canum than to provide topics for conversation, although work on the beanstalk was brought to a near halt when France's resources became tied up in the Central Asian War.

France lost some prestige and power on Earth after the Central Asian War, but her prestige remained high on Beta Canum as she returned to the ambitious project of constructing a beanstalk on that world, with the direction of an engineering firm from her ally Bavaria. Beta Canum would soon be able to compete in a market area with a radius extending almost all of the way back to Earth, giving the French a near-monopoly on food products in the French Arm.

The beanstalk was completed and began operation in 2291. Use of the catapults and scramjet fields declined to such an extent that the French and British shut theirs down; the Bavarians kept theirs open only because of the catapult's usefulness in sending inorganic materials such as semi-processed ores into orbit.

In 2292 the War of German Reunification began on Earth. The Bavarians on Beta Canum soon found themselves in an awkward position. They had traditionally enjoyed friendly relations with the French Continent, in fact, many of them were working maintenance on the beanstalk under the direction of the Bavarian firm which had built it. They found it difficult to side against the French. Their dewy-eyed innocence didn't last for long.

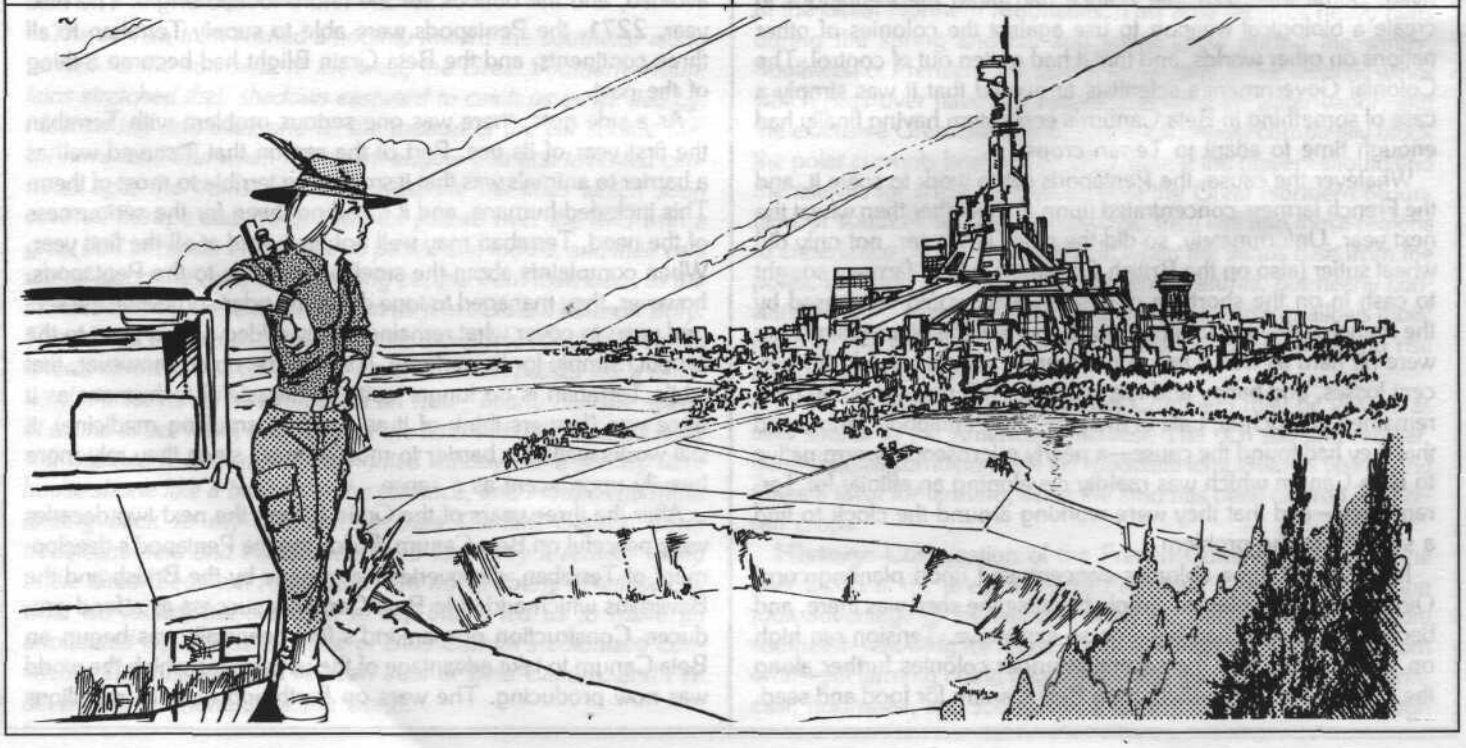
Fearing sabotage of their most valuable resource on Beta Canum, the beanstalk, France ordered that the Bavarian maintenance crews be laid off and sent to their home colony. The Bavarian engineering firm of Folie, Lysander, et Geiger was replaced with the French firm of Le Chemin Juste (which had influence with certain of France's governmental officials); the Bavarian firm's directors were given the choice of leaving, or of accepting figurehead positions as consultants to Le Chemin Juste. All but one of them, Herr Professor Hans Geiger (the real genius behind the beanstalk's design), left and returned to Earth.

The war ended in 2293 and the Bavarian Continent was now the German Continent. The Bavarian maintenance crews had been off the job for about four months. Unexpectedly, exactly 40 outbound capsules fell off of the beanstalk when the beanstalk's electrical power failed for about three hours, causing a shutdown of the magnetic rails, and the capsules' mechanical grapples failed to close. The 40 capsules (three of them passenger capsules) fell from a height of over 1000 kilometers back to Beta Canum's surface, where they wrecked portions of the surface facility and left many great craters in the surrounding countryside. The capsules were completely destroyed. The force of their impacts caused shock waves similar to earthquakes which demolished homes for kilometers in every direction. In all, over 200 people, capsule passengers and others on the ground, lost their lives.

The Bavarian maintenance crews sent home to the now German Continent had been bitter at the loss of their jobs; they now had validation for their anger. They accused the new French maintenance crews of incompetence; the French accused the new Germans of sabotage. In an attempt to avoid violence between the colonies, their parent nations on Earth agreed to allow officials from the British colony to conduct the investigation of the cause of the accident. (After seven years of investigation, the British have yet to discover anything conclusive, but they remain on the job in hopes of something coming to light, and in order to keep the French and the Germans from renewing their accusations toward one another.)

A few weeks before Earth's decision to allow the matter to be investigated by the British reached Beta Canum, Herr Professor Geiger submitted a report to the office of Gustave Lafontaine, the Beanstalk Director. In it, Geiger explained that according to his reading of the technical data gathered from the remains of the capsules, he believed that the safely valves on the hydraulic lines to the mechanical grapples were in the closed, inspection position rather than the open, functional position. Lafontaine, because of his personal dislike for Geiger, did not believe the report to be of any import, and as a consequence, after briefly scanning it, left it in his computer files without taking any action on it. No one else has seen the report.

Due to the shortage of capsules following the accident, the French began to raise the costs of shipping by beanstalk. Even at this, alternative methods of transporting large masses of products to space had become so scarce that business for the beanstalk did not drop off. Within two years the lost capsules had been replaced,



yet prices still did not drop. Instead, the French colonial government began to invest the money in ways by which they could enhance French power on Beta Canum. The majority of it was spent in improving facilities at the starship terminal end of the beanstalk so that the beanstalk, and therefore the French Continent, might become *the* doorway to the world of Beta Canum.

A French nationalistic spirit was growing on Beta Canum, and it was a spirit of monopolization, just as on Earth. As another example of this, in 2296, a cooperative of French farmers, realizing that the majority of the money made on the sale of their crops was made by international distributors, formed their own distributing corporation, *Nous Partagons.* They obtained both Zapamoga standard approval and French Approuvée status very easily, and have been prospering nicely ever since.

The British Continent

I woke up when we stopped at a small city about halfway along the airfilm route to pick up some more passengers. Deciding that some coffee might be nice, I got up and worked my way to the dining car. Most of the seats were filled, but a young couple occupying one side of a booth crowded closer together and invited me to share their seat.

After ordering, we got to talking, as is the habit among travellers—no matter what their individual origins. Even those people who are making the only trip of their lives feel for the moment that they are somehow related to all other travellers in a bond of shared experience.

I soon learned that they were from the British Continent. They were newly married and had been honeymooning first at Greenford, then at Premiere, and were now headed for Adrian to see the city which had once aspired to be the capital of the entire French Arm.

I steered them toward the topic of the British Continent, trying to fill in some of the gaps in my knowledge, if possible, but I soon discovered that they knew next to nothing about any part of the continent except the area which surrounded their home city of Bayview.

I tried to convince them that they should take the time to explore their continent and see its wonders, attempting to put into words the fascination which I felt for the depths of its jungles, the storm-battered cliffs of its northern coast. I told them of places where the trees reached heights of more than three hundred meters, and both sunlight and wind were blocked out from beneath, so that walking in the dim hush between their boles was like walking the aisles of a cathedral built for titans. I described the awesome sensation of standing upon a rocky cliff a hundred meters high and feeling the stone tremble to the pounding of the violent, relentless Northern Sea.

But they were not impressed. They seemed to think that anything that was a part of their native continent must be mundane. "Exotic" to them meant "belonging to someone else," and they couldn't believe that some of Beta Canum's most precious treasures might be right in their own back yard, so to speak. So after thanking them for sharing the booth, I wished them happiness and returned to my seat in the passenger car.

Just a few more hours and we would be in Soissons.

When Britain began her colony on Beta Canum in 2207, she accepted the smallest and most difficult to tame of the three habitable continents. She did not put much official effort into colonization, but instead relied on those British citizens on Earth who had a strong desire to tame a wilderness. The sections on geography and history which follow will reveal the strategies which underlay Britain's decision, and what results these strategies have yielded over the past century.

Geography: The British Continent is the third largest of Beta Canum's land masses, and the smallest of the three which are colonized. In area, it is approximately the size of North America. It lies entirely within Beta Canum's Temperate and Torrid Zones, and remains relatively low in elevation over nearly all of its area (with the exception of a few very low mountains in the north and east). Due to these factors, temperatures average higher on the British Continent than any other place on the planet.

Another effect of the continent's low altitude is that air currents and weather systems pass across the continent relatively unchecked by obstacles. As a result, The British Continent experiences much variance in weather, and annual rainfall averages very high.

The warm temperatures and heavy rainfall have given rise to heavy forest coverage over nearly all of the British Continent, with a broad band of true rain forest across the middle. On the northern half of the continent, forest runs to the very edge of the rugged coastline. This northern coast consists of timbered cliffs overlooking rocky fjords into which the rough surf pounds incessantly. The southern half of the continent is just a bit higher in elevation than the north and experiences some protection from severe weather patterns by the projecting finger of the Southern Continent and the massive Great Southern Mountains of the French Continent. Because of this, the forest coverage is not quite as thick as in the north, being broken by occasional ranges of veldt. The southern coastline is a bit less rugged than the northern one as well.

With its vast regions of forest and rain forest and its broad areas of veldt, the British Continent bears many similarities to Africa, with the addition of a rugged, storm-battered northern coast. And as in Africa, the warm, humid climate fosters a multitude of exotic, colorful plants and animals. These similarities have given rise to the term "New Africa" among many of the colonists, and they picture themselves as repeating the efforts of their ancestors on Earth, who explored the original Africa.

History: Colonization of the British Continent began in 2207, concurrently with the colonization of the Bavarian Continent, with the establishment of Bayview on the southern edge of the continent's northwest arm. From the very beginning, Britain did not aim to compete with the French or the Bavarians. Instead, she had two goals in accepting the smallest and least farmable of the three inhabitable continents on Beta Canum.

Her primary goal was to gain some leverage in obtaining a better area on future worlds—by diplomatically accepting the least impressive of the choices on Beta Canum, she could legitimately claim that she ought to be compensated by getting first pick from other worlds which might be discovered in the French Arm. Britain also realized that while France and Bavaria were pouring their resources into the development of their new colonies, she could preserve her resources for the quick development of future colonies.

Britain's secondary goal was that if her colony could not be a leading force on Beta Canum, it could at least be made indispensable to the others. For this reason, she spent some of the resources she would have liked to save in creating a transportation system which would carry the French Continent's crop surpluses to the Bavarians and the Bavarian Continent's ores to the French.

The first goal was realized just 10 years after the British colony on Beta Canum began. Britain got the opportunity to establish a new colony at Henry's Star. The second goal took a few years longer. In 2222, the British Colony officially opened a transcontinental airfilm train line.

This line ran from Bayview on the western arm, along the

northern limits of the rain forest, to the newly established city of Dockton on the eastern arm. To travel the distance from Bayview to the French Continent, and from Dockton to the Bavarian continent, fleets of cargo ships were created in which the cars of the train could be loaded. Using this system, cargo can travel from La Porte on the French Continent to Jurgenburg on the German Continent in the space of 120 hours: 50 hours to cross the 1500 kilometers of strait from La Porte to Bayview, 20 hours to cross the British Continent by air film train (a distance of 10,000 kilometers), and another 50 hours to cross from Dockton to Jurgenburg. This translates as about five local days. Passenger service is quite a bit faster, as hovercraft cross each of the two straits in about seven and a half hours, resulting in a total travel time from La Porte to Jurgenburg of 35 hours, just short of two local days.

From the beginning, the train has made stops at several spots along the line to collect goods from the small communities which grew up along the way. Some of these communities were established where a particular natural resource, such as a certain type of lumber, was found. Others arose where the terrain permitted agriculture. The city of New Middlesex, for example, was first established as a collection of farms within the few northern mountains where the land was high enough that the trees were thin. Being situated midway along the continent, it soon enjoyed popularity as a natural stopover point for passenger trains.

The next four and a half decades were relatively uneventful for the British, both on and off of Beta Canum. On Earth it was business as usual for Britain. The colony at Henry's Star progressed nicely. And on Beta Canum, inroads were being made into using the natural resources of the British Continent. In particular, strip mines were begun on the southern end of the continent, and one of the mining towns there eventually grew into a city, the city of Carmody. It was also during this time that the tourist city of Greenford was opened on the large island which lay between Bayview and La Porte.

British farmers suffered a major setback in 2269. The French farmers had lost most of their wheat crop to a grain blight the year before, and were abandoning wheat in favor of other grains this year. The British farmers decided to plant mainly wheat so as to take advantage of what would surely be a shortage of wheat in Beta Canum's coming harvest. Unfortunately, the Beta Grain Blight (as it was soon to be called) swept across all three colonies this time, and it was the French who, by planting various other crops, suffered the least.

With the help of their colonial government the British farmers were able to survive that year and the next despite heavy losses of crops. In 2271, Terraban became available to all three colonies and the British farmers began to work hard to recoup their losses.

In 2276, Merriweather Products, Ltd., a firm from Britain, created a fleet of fishing craft to harvest "brindle-fish" off the southwestern coast of the British Continent. Brindle-fish was one of the few creatures native to Beta Canum which had been found to be edible by Terran life forms, and which grew in numbers great enough to harvest. After the establishment of the firm's fishing village of New Woking, work was begun by the colonial government to upgrade the hydrogen road running from New Middlesex to Carmody by constructing an air film route which would run beyond Carmody all the way to the coast. In this way, bulk loads of both brindle-fish and ore could be moved more quickly and easily to New Middlesex, and from there to the other two colonies.

Initially, a small fleet of cargo ships carried goods and passengers from the southern coast of the British Continent to New Woking, the international city of Adrian on the Southern Continent, and to Soissons on the French Continent. Within a few years, this fleet was expanded into something more closely resembling the fleets which ran from Bayview to La Porte and from Dockton to Jurgenburg. At about the same time, the French created an air film line from Premiere to Soissons. These developments resulted in a new, faster route for the transport of brindle-fish and metal ores which were destined for space by way of the catapult at Premiere (and eventually the beanstalk, which was presently under construction in orbit).

In 2297, a British farmers' co-op purchased a food processing plant south of New Middlesex from a Terran firm which wished to liquidate its holdings on Beta Canum. The original firm had held certification by both Zapamoga standards and French Approvee. The co-op's plan was to bring to the British farmers a larger share of the profits from food products sold off-world, much as the French farmers had done with Nous Partagons. The new British farmers' company was called "Four Star."

After revamping the plant and putting it back into operation, Four Star reapplied for certification by Zapamoga and Approuvée. Zapamoga approval was granted immediately after inspection, but Approuvée status was withheld. When Four Star inquired about what was holding things up, the answer received from the French Office of the Commissioner of Exports (a subsection of the Ministry of the Interior) was that portions of the application had been removed for further study by a subcommittee. Another inquiry made several weeks later revealed that reapplication would have to be made as someone in the main office had found the original application to be missing several parts and, considering that it was over a month old, had believed it to be useless and had therefore thrown it away. The French officials apologized profusely, but from that point on, every application which Four Star has made has been nullified by some technicality or other.

Four Star is managing to maintain operation by selling bulk products with Zapamoga approval, and shipments of animal feed by way of the German catapult are continuing, but at least half of the floor space in the processing plant is taken up by equipment for the making of individual rations, and without Approuvée status those rations cannot be sold. This means that several tons of product which was made during the first four weeks while Four Star was waiting for approval of its original application are taking up space in a warehouse, and half a factory worth of equipment is now sitting idle. And both are being taxed as inventory.

Alastair McBride, Four Star's director, has been struggling for three years now to try to find some way out of this stalemate, and he is now at the point of desperation. He has recently approached Rebco for help.

The German Continent

I've never had the opportunity to see much of the German Continent firsthand, but I hope to get the chance sometime soon. What I have seen are the cities of Jurgenburg and Uethen and some of the fertile basin which lies to their north. This region of the German Continent comes the closest I've seen to what I imagine paradise must be like.

But to the north, from what I've been told, lies the closest thing to hell. The northern half of the continent contains the youngest, and, consequently, the most rugged mountains on the face of the planet: the Ludwigberge Mountain Range. Here miners struggled to survive in the thin air of high altitudes, the unbelievable cold, the almost-daily snows, and the winters in which the sun never rises for half the year, just to grub ores from the rocks. But the people who toil there have learned to love it, and they have a saying which goes, "Only in suffering may life's sweetness be truly

enjoyed; only in sorrow may joy be perfected." And as they stand shivering In the night's bitter winds, they point to the aurora which burns and flares overhead, and they smile triumphantly.

At the time that Beta Canum was first colonized, Bavaria was an ally of France and a member of ESA. For 86 years, the majority of Beta Canum's history, the third continent was known as the Bavarian Continent, and interaction between the French and the Bavarian colonies was friendly. Each colony produced commodities which the other needed, and trade was the order of the day.

Earth's War of German Reunification changed all of that. Bavaria became a part of Germany, and the Bavarian Continent became the German Continent. At the same time, the French became more nationalistic (paranoically so in the estimation of the Bavarian colonists). The following information on geography and history of the German Continent will shed more light on how the present situation has developed.

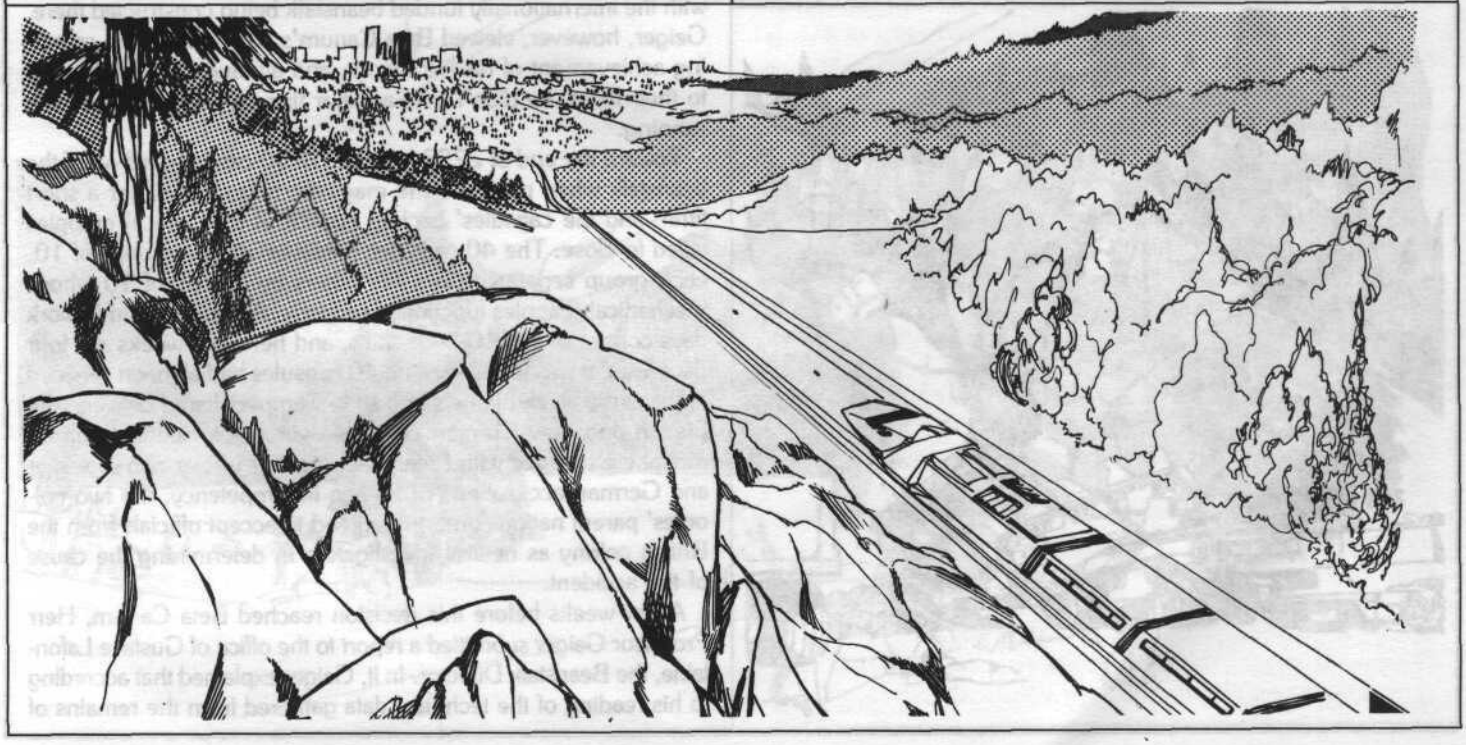
Geography: The German Continent is the second largest of the three colonized continents on Beta Canum, with an area approximately the same as that of Africa. Nearly half of the continent lies within Beta Canum's Northern Frigid Zone. The southern half of the continent lies within the Northern Temperate Zone and the Torrid Zone. The German colony also claims the two large islands which occupy the Southern Temperate Zone.

The northern half of the continent is divided from northwest to southeast by the Ludwigberge Mountain Range. The geological upheaval which created these mountains also brought a diverse number of metal ores close to the surface, including deposits of tantalum in the extreme northwest. Weather on this half of the continent is almost constantly windy and cold, particularly north of the mountain chain where snowfall is an almost daily occurrence. South of the mountains, cold, dry westerly winds sweep across the bare landscape, and permafrost prevents the growth of all but the hardiest of native grasses nearly all the way to the border of the Temperate Zone.

The southern half of the continent is quite a bit more inviting. As with the French Continent, the altitude here is uniformly high enough to prevent excessive rainfall; if anything, the southern half of the German Continent is even drier than the central French Continent. There are local variations, however. For example, warm, humid winds from off the central western coast sweep inland over an area centered on the port city of Jurgenburg, and reach from Uethen at their southernmost limits to an area nearly 2000 kilometers north of Jurgenburg at their northernmost limits, well within the Northern Frigid Zone. It is within this region that most of the German Continent's crops are raised. South of Uethen the land rises rapidly. The western shore becomes a line of impressive cliffs which range in height from a few meters to hundreds of meters. The region east of these cliffs is grassland similar to the Argentinian pampas.

History: Colonization of the German Continent was begun with a Bavarian colony in 2207, the same year in which the British began their colony. From the beginning, the emphasis of the colony was on mining the Ludwigberge Mountains. A catapult was built at Uethen, the colony's capitol, for the purpose of sending partly processed ores into orbit, where interstellar freighters could pick them up. (Uethen was chosen as a catapult site because its weather was good, its location was centralized between the fertile basin to the west and the ore-rich mountains to the north, and it had a deep valley nearby which was ideal for building a catapult.) Within four years, a steady flow of ores was moving from the Ludwigberges to other worlds on the French Arm. This flow increased in 2240 when tantalum was discovered at the northwest end of the mountain chain. The flow of immigrants to Beta Canum, and particularly to the Bavarian colony, increased markedly, and small prospecting companies flocked to the Ludwigberges in hopes of finding a vein of the precious metal for themselves.

But mining was not all that the Bavarian colony did; some emphasis had been placed upon farming the fertile basin which surrounded Jurgenburg and upon raising livestock (mainly beef) in paddocks of imported Terran grass around the capitol city of Uethen. There were some major problems involved in raising livestock on an alien world. On Beta Canum, the native life was based upon a set of amino acids different from Earth's, many of which were either poisonous to Terran life or indigestible. For this reason, livestock could not be allowed to wander lest it eat the native plants and die of poisoning or malnutrition. At great expense, relatively small areas of land were cleared of native life, fenced

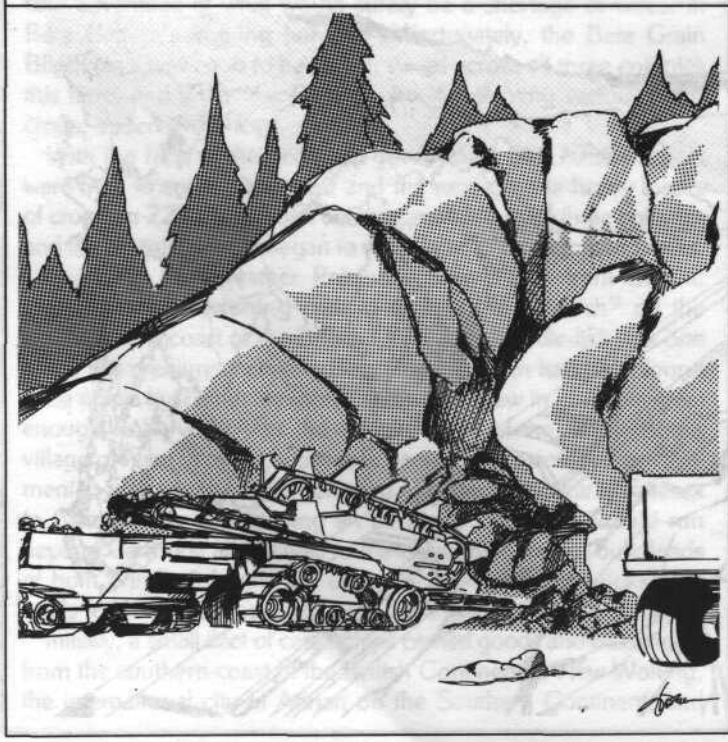


off, and reseeded with Terran grasses. This gave the Terran animals space to move about in the out-of-doors, but could not hope to produce enough grass to keep them fed. Rather than import expensive feeds from other worlds, the Bavarians devoted much of the fertile basin to the north to the production of crops for livestock feed. Within a few years, the Bavarian colony on Beta Canum became famous as a supplier of both metal ores and good beef.

In 2269, the second year of the Beta Grain Blight, the Bavarian colony suffered heavily. What crops survived the blightworm were needed for human consumption, and even with an increase in slaughtering (and a consequent drop in meat prices), reserves of crops from previous years were largely used up. The next year was even worse. The colonial government was forced to subsidize both farmers and ranchers to prevent them from going completely out of business. Hundreds of thousands of animals were slaughtered and sold before they could starve, meat prices plummeted along the French Arm as grain prices soared. If it had not been for the taxes on the steady income from the mines in the Ludwigberges, the colonial government would have been thrown into economic chaos.

Then, in 2271, the Pentapod creation Terraban became available on the Bavarian Continent. The Bavarian colonial government purchased great quantities of the product and issued it to farmers and ranchers alike. Its effectiveness in agricultural applications had been proven by the French; the Bavarians hoped that it would be useful to ranchers as a means of protecting pastures of Terran grass as well.

That same year, another important event in the history of agriculture on Beta Canum took place. A Bavarian cattle rancher discovered that some of his cattle had broken out of his fields of Terran grass, and had wandered off. When he finally found them, they were on a riverbank eating a long native plant. He rounded them up and took them back, and watched them closely for the next few days for any ill effects. When none took place, he collected specimens of the plant and had them analyzed. The newly discovered plant proved to be harmless to Terran farm animals, and to be nutritious as well. To be sure, it was lacking in a few amino acids and vitamins which the animals needed to prosper, but these could be added to the harvested plant as supplements at a fairly modest cost. The Bavarian rancher named his find "Drahtgras."



The discovery of Drahtgras did not mean that Terran cattle, for example, could be let loose to forage along the riverbanks for food; there were still plenty of plants there which were poisonous. What it did mean was that there was a plant native to the southern end of the Bavarian Continent which could possibly be planted in fields surrounded by Terraban to prevent the ingress of other native plants, and which could be harvested as animal feed, allowing the farms of the fertile basin around Jurgenburg to concentrate on other crops which allow them to compete for markets on other worlds.

Eventually, Drahtgras turned out to be more valuable than could have been hoped. It grew well in fields in which it did not have competition from other native plants, and it stored well for long periods of time after harvest. Within a few years, in fact, with careful husbandry, fields of Drahtgras had grown to such sizes that cattle were allowed to wander loose and graze at will in them, the Terraban barriers serving to fence them in. Slowly and steadily, the southern end of the Bavarian Continent was being transformed into a great range of cattle country. In 2276, when the harvesting of brindle-fish began off of the British Continent, a meal made from the dried fish took the place of supplements from Earth in the cattle's diet. The colonies on Beta Canum were working together and prospering.

The War of German Reunification on Earth in 2292 and 2293 destroyed that cooperation on Beta Canum. Things had not been well for France for some time now, and it was beginning to result in a resurgence of nationalism which included the French colonies along the French Arm. When Bavaria became a part of Germany once again in 2293 (and the Bavarian Continent became the German Continent), the French colony replaced the Bavarians working on the beanstalk with French colonists. This included both the Bavarian maintenance crews and the firm of Folie, Lysander, et Geiger. Because of their roles in the building of the beanstalk, the three principals of that firm were given the option of taking an office as consultants to the new French firm, Le Chemin Juste, which would be replacing them. Mortally offended, Folie and Lysander refused and returned to Earth where they hoped to help with the internationally funded beanstalk being constructed there. Geiger, however, viewed Beta Canum's beanstalk as the crowning achievement of his life's work, and although he didn't say it to their faces, he didn't trust another firm to keep the beanstalk running.

Toward the end of 2293, a group of 40 capsules fell off of the beanstalk when power to the magnetic rails stopped for a short time, and the capsules' backup system of mechanical grapples failed to close. The 40 capsules consisted of four groups of 10, each group separated from the others by groups of 10 whose mechanical grapples functioned properly. As Beta Canum's work days consist of two 10-hour shifts, and her work weeks are four days long, it was found that the 40 capsules had all been serviced in the same week by the same shift. Tempers flared between the French and now German colonies over this incident. In an atmosphere charged with French accusations of German sabotage and German accusations of French incompetency, the two colonies' parent nations on Earth agreed to accept officials from the British colony as neutral investigators in determining the cause of the accident.

A few weeks before this decision reached Beta Canum, Herr Professor Geiger submitted a report to the office of Gustave Lafontaine, the Beanstalk Director. In it, Geiger explained that according to his reading of the technical data gathered from the remains of

the capsules, he believed that the safety valves on the hydraulic lines to the capsules' mechanical grapples had been left in the closed, inspection position rather than the open, functional position.

This supports the conclusion that the cause of the accident was human beings, but not whether it was deliberate sabotage or simple ignorance. Only a study for the causes of the magnetic rail's power failure can prove if the accident was the result of incompetency, or of foul play. If the power failure was the result of sabotage, then it is obvious that the intent was to destroy the capsules. If it was the result of an equipment problem, then the safety valves were probably left closed through ignorance or negligence. Lafontaine, because of his great dislike of Geiger, neglected to read the report. It has remained in Le Chemin Juste's computer storage, unread, ever since.

Geiger has not said anything up to this point because he does not wish to be separated from his beanstalk, and he trusts that the British officials will eventually come to the same conclusions he has. In the meantime, he has been monitoring other reports from stations on the beanstalk and he believes another problem has arisen. It is for this reason that he has approached Rebco. Further explanation will be given in *The Drama: Act I: The Exfoliation Project.*

The Southern Continent

I rode a hydrofoil from Soissons to Adrian. The crossing took about eight hours, but I had slept for most of the trip from Premiere to Soissons, so I was rested enough to remain on the hydrofoil's deck for the entire time (except for a short break for breakfast about midway through). We arrived in Adrian's harbor at about noon, local time, and I was happy I had decided to remain topside.

How can I describe the beauty of that first sight as we rounded the point and Adrian suddenly lay revealed before us. The city had been laid out with just this view in mind. Cobalt blue water lapped a beach of brilliant white sand. Just beyond that, the slender spires of public buildings rose like prayers from emerald parks and gardens. Further back, a protective curve of mountains rose gently to form a backdrop to the city proper. Their gentle grey slopes bore a dusting of low green shrubs and were dotted with the magnificent homes of the people who lived and worked here.

But as we drew closer, I could have wept with disappointment. I began to recognize that many of the buildings had windows which gaped emptily. There were sections of the city where streets had been laid out, but homes had never been built, or had been begun, only to be let fall to ruin. These outlying areas did not convey a sense of being merely unfinished, but of neglect. I was struck by the thought that despite the beauty of the beach and the city proper, Adrian was slowly dying, slowly sinking into decay. And for a moment, I felt that just as this city which had been intended as a tribute to Man's glory was decaying, so must all of his efforts come to ruin.

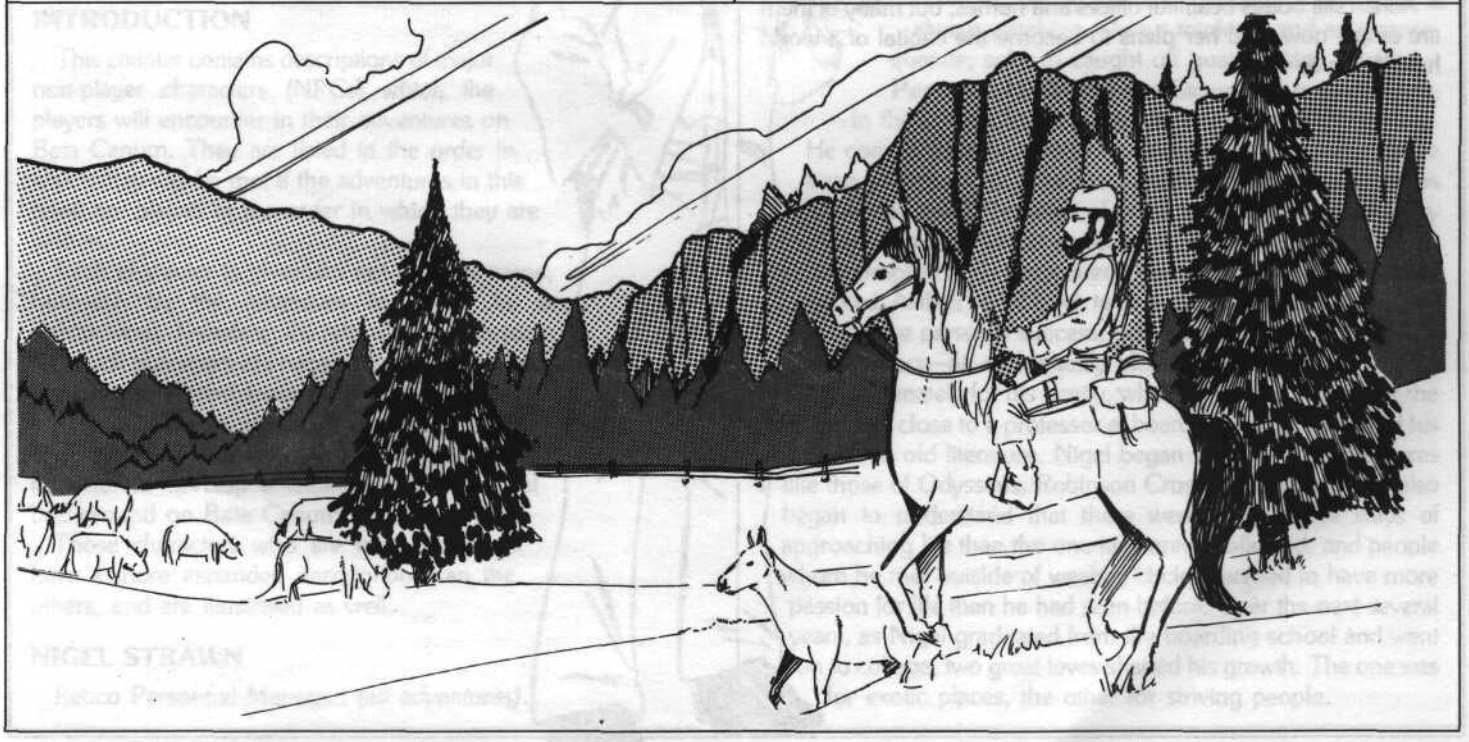
I turned my back upon the city and went below to gather my things.

Although the greater part of the Southern Continent is not habitable, the continent has nonetheless been useful to certain groups. As Beta Canum is the gateway to the frontier of the French Arm, it has been helpful to locate branch offices of several international organizations there. By placing these offices on the Southern Continent, a neutral ground was created in which these corporations could avoid the appearance of ties to any particular nation. That neutral ground also serves as a natural spot for diplomats from various nations to meet.

Geography: The Southern Continent is the smallest of the four on Beta Canum; it is about equal in size to South America. All of the continent but the very tip of its northward-reaching peninsula lies within Beta Canum's Southern Frigid Zone, and as a consequence, is uninhabitable.

The peninsula's northern tip, however, is warmed somewhat by an ocean current which sweeps south and west from off the southern coast of the British Continent. The weather which results is uniformly cool but mild. Frosts are common at night, preventing the growth of most plants, but seldom last through the day. About half of the days have some form of precipitation, either light snow flurries or misty rains. Once or twice a year a great storm will be experienced, with high winds and dense sheets of rain. During these storms, great waves of dark water sweep inland nearly half a kilometer up the rocky shores.

History: In 2182, when das Astronomischen Rechen-Institut



came to map the Beta Canum Venaticorum system, it set up its main ground base on the northern tip of the Southern Continent's peninsula. The French had already staked a claim to the largest of the habitable continents, and the Institut knew that other nations would soon be following. As the directors of the Institut wanted to remain free from political ties, the Southern Continent seemed to be a perfect location for the establishment of their offices.

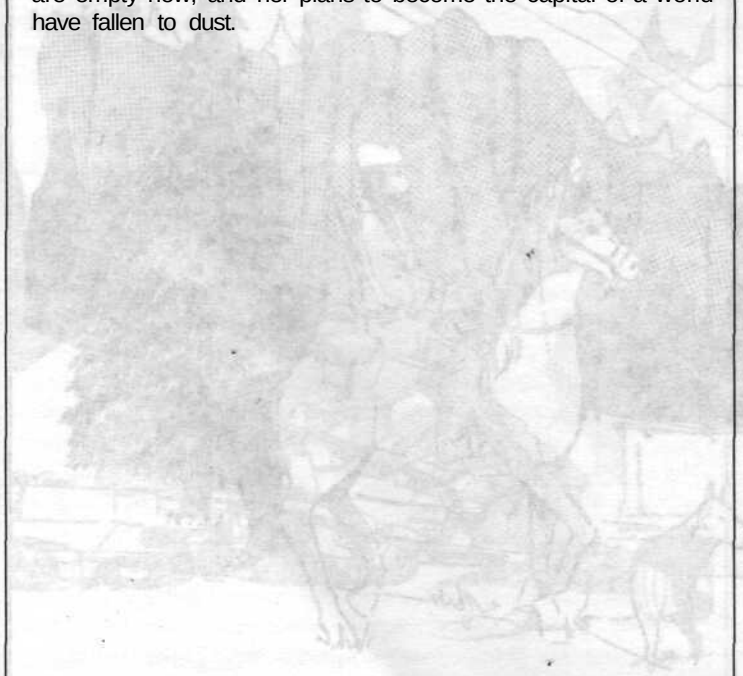
A site was found on the eastern coast where a large natural harbor lay nestled within a semicircle of low, weathered mountains. Here the Institut set up a fusion plant for their power needs and built their offices and other facilities. The head of the Institut named the location "Adrian," in honor of Jean Adrian, the commander of the French exploratory squadron which had visited the system under the authority of ESA.

When ESA sent a delegation to Beta Canum to found an office before the colonists began to arrive, Amanda Evans, the leader of the delegation, became infatuated with the natural beauty of Adrian's surroundings. Within a short while, she had convinced the officials at Earth's ESA offices that effort should be devoted to making Adrian *a* truly international city, a center of art and learning which would naturally become the capital of the entire world of Beta Canum.

Over the next several decades, ESA devoted much time and effort toward accomplishing these goals. The most advanced architectural procedures were used in the building of public buildings, and Adrian soon boasted the most beautiful offices, the best theaters, libraries, schools, and hospitals, and the most prestigious university within the French Arm. This naturally attracted the very rich; consequently, Adrian also soon contained the most beautiful homes as well. Drawn by this dedication to excellence, other corporations soon set up offices at Adrian. A partial list of those offices includes Rebco, Zapamoga, The Life Foundation, and Consulates from most nations on Earth.

Then came Earth's War of German Reunification and France's beanstalk. Beta Canum was no longer a world of allies united by a common cause. Premiere began to compete with Adrian for the attentions of visitors to Beta Canum. Adrian was still an excellent location for organizations to whom an international status was important, but to others, Adrian was losing her glamor.

Adrian still boasts beautiful offices and homes, but many of them are empty now, and her plans to become the capital of a world have fallen to dust.

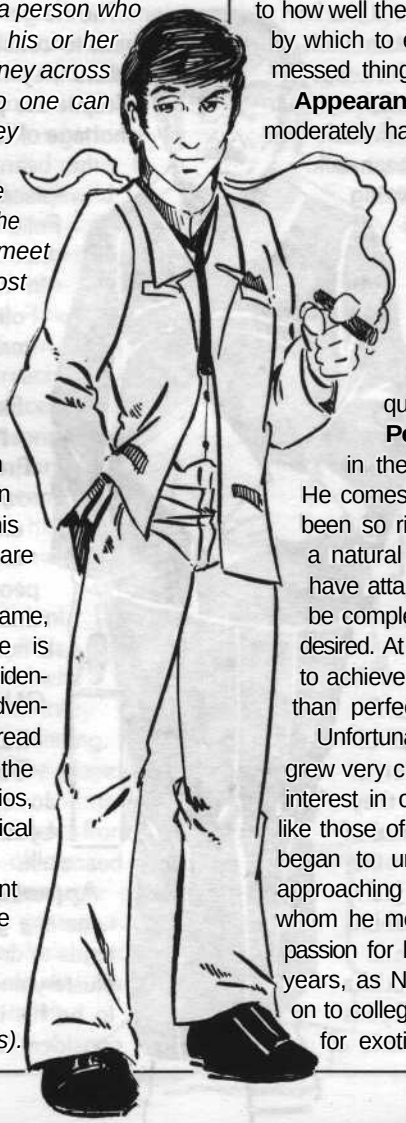


The Actors

Life for the average person is much less orderly and dependable on a colony world than on Earth. The Beta Grain Blight provides a good example of that fact; just when everything seemed to be going great for the colonies, one little worm, one little factor in Beta Canum's ecosystem, made a change which threw the colonists' lives into turmoil.

It takes a long time to get to know a planet thoroughly, and in the meantime, all sorts of surprises can take place. Because of this, people on colonial planets tend to be more adventurous than on Earth. Even an accountant or a librarian, a person who would not expect to face much danger in his or her occupation on Earth, must at least face a journey across the stars to reach a colony world, and no one can guarantee what will be discovered once they arrive.

So the traditionalists stay on Earth, and the adventuresome go to the stars. That's one of the benefits of my job as troubleshooter I get to meet many of what I consider to be Mankind's most interesting people.



INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains descriptions of major non-player characters (NPCs) which the players will encounter in their adventures on Beta Canum. They are listed in the order in which they will be met if the adventures in this book are played in the order in which they are written.

Each character is identified not only by name, but also by the adventure in which he is encountered. Therefore, the referee can easily identify which characters are necessary for which adventures. It is suggested, however, that the referee read once through the descriptions for *all* of the characters before running any of the scenarios, in order to develop a feeling for the political background on Beta Canum.

Those characters who are most important have a more expanded description than the others, and are illustrated as well.

NIGEL STRAWN

Rebco Personnel Manager: *(all adventures).*

As the personnel manager for the Beta Canum office of Rebco (located at Adrian on the Southern Continent), Nigel Strawn will be the first important NPC who the players will encounter. He will meet with them at the beginning of each adventure to assign them their tasks and at the end of each adventure to debrief them. Mr. Strawn's main purpose in these instances is to provide a vehicle through which the referee can give the players the information they will need in order to complete their tasks, and through which the referee can critique the players at the end of each adventure as to how well they did. He can also be of use to a referee as a means by which to extricate players from sticky situations if they have messed things up badly in attempting to perform their tasks.

Appearance and Personality: Mr. Strawn is a lean, moderately handsome, dark-haired man of about average height. He is thirty-one years old. There is nothing in his appearance to make him stand out in a crowd. He dresses in a conservative business fashion, but his clothes are of expensive fabric and tailoring, so that he projects an aura of affluence. He is usually smiling affably, and genuinely likes people. His eyes, however, betray the intelligence of a man who is always watching, always thinking, and as a consequence, seldom caught off guard in any situation.

Personal History: Nigel Strawn was born on Earth, in the United States of America, in upstate New York. He comes from the ranks of a group of families which have been so rich for so long that wealth is eventually viewed as a natural state. Members of these families believe that they have attained a sort of perfection. They believe their lives to be complete and, consequently, there remains nothing to be desired. At their social level, to show any desire, even the desire to achieve personal success, is to admit that one's life is less than perfect—an unthinkably plebeian confession.

Unfortunately for his family, when Nigel was a teenager, he grew very close to a professor at boarding school who fired his interest in old literature. Nigel began to yearn for adventures like those of Odysseus, Robinson Crusoe, and others. He also began to understand that there were many more ways of approaching life than the one his parents followed, and people whom he met outside of wealthy circles seemed to have more passion for life than he had seen before. Over the next several years, as Nigel graduated from the boarding school and went on to college, two great loves shaped his growth. The one was for exotic places, the other for striving people.

Needless to say, Nigel's new interests didn't set well with his family. Before too long, he came to see that they viewed him as an alien. It was incomprehensible to them that anyone would prefer the simmering passions of the common masses to the stability and safety of near-limitless wealth. Nigel began to realize that they would never be able to accept him, never be able to understand his joys or his sorrows; so upon completing a Master's Degree in Psychology, he hired on with Rebco and volunteered for a position on Beta Canum. From there he is able to touch the lives of many people as they work to finish the taming of an alien world.

Due to his self-confidence, Nigel Strawn should be treated as an Experienced NPC.

NPC Motivation Results: *Heart Jack:* Mr. Strawn is a very amiable sort of person who takes a great interest in other people. He also gets a great deal of enjoyment out of watching the ways in which people interact, and tends to be a good judge of character. He can be a very important friend to the players if they treat him right. *Spade 7:* His personal goal is to become well enough known and respected on Beta Canum that he can eventually be successful at opening his own troubleshooting business on that world.

HERR PROFESSOR HANS GEIGER

Designer of the Beanstalk: *(The Exfoliation Project).*

As the past Director of the Folie, Lysander, et Geiger Engineering Firm, Herr Professor Geiger is the one man most responsible for the building of the beanstalk on Beta Canum. His Bavarian firm, however, has since been removed from directorship and maintenance of the beanstalk due to the turmoil following the War of German Reunification. Although the main offices of the firm moved back to Earth in 2293 in an attempt to obtain work on the second, internationally funded beanstalk which was being constructed there, Geiger remained on Beta Canum in a token role as advisor to Le Chemin Juste, the French firm which took over direction of Beta Canum's beanstalk. Geiger considers the beanstalk to be the crowning achievement of his life's work, and pours his attention into it as if it were his only child.

Appearance and Personality: Herr Professor Geiger is in his mid to late sixties, slightly obese, with thinning black hair combed back to cover a balding crown. He tends to wear rumpled, old-fashioned suits. Geiger is a genius at physics, but not very good at human relations. He respects only ability and expertise, only those people who obtain results. This does not mean that he encourages dishonesty; on the contrary, he sees it as a great waste in the long run, as he believes that most everyone who pursues dishonest practices gets caught in the end. He is a man who engenders respect, but seldom love—the ultimate authoritarian father figure.

Personal History: Hans Geiger was born on Earth in Hamburg, Bavaria (which has since become part of the German Republic). His father was a professor of History, his mother a concert violinist. Early on they began to recognize the unusual intellectual potential of their only child, and his difficulties in relating to other children. After some discussion, the Geigers decided to pull little Hans from the public school and to direct his education themselves in their home.

Hans read voraciously as a child, mainly about the secrets of Nature which Science was laying bare. By his early teens he had absorbed most of the functions of algebra, geometry, and calculus. He entertained the thought of possibly devoting his life to breaking new ground in the field of pure mathematics, but eventually abandoned this for the lure of applied physics.

During this time, Hans developed a crush on a girl in the congregation of the Lutheran church his family attended. She was 22, Hans was 17, and when she eloped with a banker's son, it broke poor Hans's heart. Never again, he vowed, would he let himself play the fool for a woman, and never again would he enter another church. Religion had led to his suffering, he believed, and he rejected it and took refuge in his studies.

By the time he was 20, Hans Geiger was famous in Bavaria for the miracles he performed in the field of Constructional Engineering. He was quoted as saying that by the application of Physics to the crude, raw materials of the Earth, Nature could be made to serve man in forms which reflected the perfection of Mathematics. But his disdain for the majority of humanity was growing as well.

By the time he was 25, Geiger had gained a PhD in Physics and was sought by the most progressive engineering firms on Earth. Due to his national pride, when the Bavarian firm of Folie et Lysander offered him a full partnership, he accepted. Geiger's love of theoretical mathematics and his talent for applying it to the field of engineering in ever-new ways soon made his company the most demanded in Europe. His partners found that as long as Geiger had a problem to solve, had space to work, and was kept from speaking to their customers or employees, everyone was happy.

The height of the firm's career was when France hired them to construct a beanstalk on Beta Canum. For many years they had devoted their attention to getting it built, despite the problems of adapting to a new world and the shortage of funds during the Central Asian War, and at last the beanstalk was in operation. But when France replaced them with a French firm, Le Chemin Juste, Folie and Lysander decided to return to Earth. To their disappointment, Geiger decided to stay, even in the token role of advisor to Le Chemin Juste. Folie, Lysander, et Geiger, the firm which built mankind's first beanstalk, is no more.

Herr Professor Geiger should be treated as an Experienced NPC because of his self-assurance.

NPC Motivation Results: *Spade Jack:* Herr Professor Geiger is completely convinced of his own superiority over most other people, and he unconsciously projects that attitude in his dealings with them. *Spade 8:* He tends to think of people as tools to be manipulated just as he manipulates the laws of physics. Unfortunately, he is not as good at the former as he is at the latter.

GUSTAVE LAFONTAINE

Beanstalk Director: *(The Exfoliation Project).*

Gustave Lafontaine is the director of Le Chemin Juste, the French firm which has replaced Folie, Lysander, et Geiger in running Beta Canum's beanstalk.

Appearance and Personality: In appearance, Lafontaine is a graying, corpulent man in his mid fifties who tends to dress in light gray, woolen suits. His manner is blustery and a bit condescending with those he considers to be his inferiors, polite and respectful with those he considers to be his equals, and eagerly servile to those

whom he views as superiors.

Personal History: Gustave Lafontaine was born on Earth in a village near Paris, France. His father was a druggist who desired nothing more from life than to be able to maintain a modest home in which he could sit evenings before a fire drinking wine and watching his children grow up. Gustave was the last of five children, and spent his school years feeling that he was always working in the shadow of the accomplishments of his brothers and sisters.

As a young man, Gustave worked his way through the law school in Paris as personal secretary to the owner of a publishing firm. Gustave began to develop a knack for ingratiating himself with people in power and soon found himself working as an assistant to the city's mayor. Next came several years of working in the political campaigns of various contenders for national office. By the time he had turned 35, Gustave had used some of the favors he had accumulated to enter politics himself.

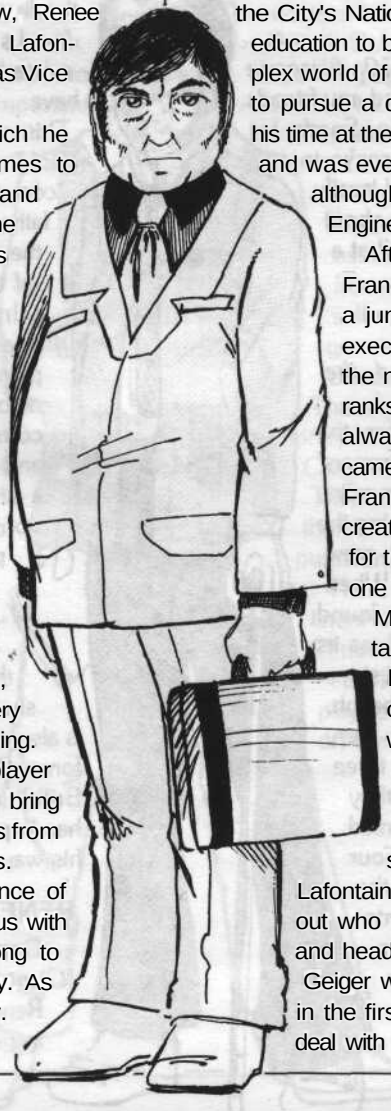
Over the next 20 years, Gustave Lafontaine served the public interest: first as a Commissioner of Police in his home town; then as a Public Defender in Nice; and finally as Commissioner of Transportation in Paris. It was this last position which gained him note as, in the words of Nicolas Ruffin, the Emperor of France, "A nice fellow who keeps things running with a minimum of friction." Soon, Lafontaine found himself appointed Director of Beta Canum's beanstalk, with the newly created, nationally owned firm of Le Chemin Juste under his control as the replacement for Folie, Lysander, et Geiger.

Director Lafontaine takes great pride in his present position and has used his authority to obtain the position of the French Continent's Commissioner of Exports for his sister-in-law, Renee Quist. He has also appointed his nephew, Armand Lafontaine (son of Renee Quist and Jacques Lafontaine) as Vice President in Charge of Beanstalk Maintenance.

Although Lafontaine revels in the authority which he holds, he is almost totally ignorant when it comes to engineering. He recognizes this ignorance himself, and worries constantly that at some point in the future he will make a blatant enough error that his superiors on Earth will replace him with someone else. Therefore, his highest priority is to keep the beanstalk's operation on schedule at all costs, and thereby to avoid making waves which will reach back to Earth. He also tends to avoid any chances of hearing bad news, which is one of the reasons he has never read Herr Professor Geiger's report following the loss of the 40 capsules seven years ago. Lafontaine still has nightmares in which his superiors discover that that accident was somehow his fault.

But do not picture Lafontaine as a vacuous fool. What he knows, he knows well, and that is politics. It is this talent which keeps him in his job, and which, it must be admitted, keeps the political machinery which surrounds the operation of the beanstalk running. Because of this, if Lafontaine believes that the player characters are preparing to embarrass him, he can bring quite a bit of heat to bear on them by calling in favors from the heads of various colonial governmental offices.

Lafontaine, with his political abilities and ignorance of science, and, Herr Professor Geiger, with his genius with physics and ineptness at personal relations, belong to opposite ends of the spectrum of human personality. As a consequence, they hate each other passionately. Gustave Lafontaine is a Green NPC.



NPC Motivation Results: *Spade Queen:* Lafontaine is concerned more than anything else with maintaining his position as beanstalk director, and he will let no one interfere with that goal. *Heart 7:* He does, however, have a group of people toward whom he feels loyalty. Most of these are heads of various governmental offices; a few are members of his own staff, such as his assistant director.

ANTOINE MARQUARDT

Assistant Beanstalk Director: *(The Exfoliation Project).*

Antoine Marquardt is the lynchpin upon which Beta Canum's beanstalk operates. He is the one man in the French directing firm who makes sure that the work gets done.

Appearance and Personality: Antoine Marquardt is in his late forties, about six and a half feet tall, lanky, with a long, lined face. He is usually dressed in a suit, minus the jacket, with the neck of his shirt open and his sleeves rolled up.

Marquardt is intensely practical, with one finger oh the pulse of political change and another on the physical requirements for maintaining the beanstalk. He has a good enough background in the sciences to understand the reports given to him by engineers, as well as enough of an understanding of financial matters to make intelligent recommendations to the beanstalk Director, Gustave Lafontaine. And he is usually able to convince Lafontaine to follow those recommendations.

Personal History: Antoine Marquardt was born on Earth in Lyons, France, the second son of a father who was a General Practitioner of Medicine and a mother who was the Director of the City's National Museum. His parents considered a good education to be of vital importance in understanding the complex world of the 2200s and encouraged both of their boys to pursue a degree. Antoine's older brother spent most of his time at the university drinking wine and chasing the ladies, and was eventually expelled for poor grades. But Antoine, although no genius, worked very hard at a *degree* in Engineering, with a minor in Psychology.

After receiving his *degree,* Marquardt entered France's army, where he received a commission as a junior officer. His first assignment was as the executive officer of a transportation battalion. Over the next two decades he rose steadily through the ranks and established a reputation as an officer who always got the job done. It was here that he first came to the attention of the military leaders of France. As a consequence, when the government created Le Chemin Juste as the new directing firm for the beanstalk on Beta Canum, Marquardt was one of the first men chosen to serve on it.

Marquardt is not perceived as a threat to Lafontaine's security, because it is very obvious that he does not want the director's job, but is very content to remain where he is. Marquardt might work around Lafontaine to achieve a necessary goal, but would never work directly against him.

It should be noted that Marquardt has not seen the report which Geiger submitted to Lafontaine, and if he does, it is assured that he will find out who was responsible for leaving the valves open, and heads will roll. Actually, Marquardt is the man who Geiger would have had most success in approaching in the first place, but Geiger would not condescend to deal with the *Assistant* Director while the Director himself

was available.

Antoine Marquardt is a Green NPC.

NPC Motivation Results: *Heart 7:* Marquardt has a strong sense of loyalty to those he works for and with. This loyalty is manifested as a dedication to the beanstalk as a corporate entity. *Spade 5:* Marquardt has a desire to succeed at his occupation, but no real desire to rise any higher in the corporate structure. He has found his niche.

SIMONNE GUIRGUIS

Maintenance Foreman: *(The Exfoliation Project).*

Simonne Guirguis is a maintenance foreman on the starship station at the upper end of the beanstalk. He will be of use to the player characters in fulfilling their task for Herr Professor Geiger (as will be explained in *The Exfoliation Project).*

Appearance and Personality: Simonne Guirguis is a short, thin man with long, bony arms and legs. He has lank black hair which hangs greasily above very large, pale blue eyes. His sharp nose juts like a plow from a face which narrows to a point at the chin. This pointiness is emphasized by a thin goatee which hangs beneath his small, thin-lipped mouth. Guirguis speaks with excessive nasality.

Guirguis is concerned with one thing only, and that is money. He sought his present job because it pays well, especially as he receives bonus pay for working off the planet's surface. He is also not above making a little money on the side, even if it involves less than honest activities. Although Guirguis is likely to be hired by the players, it is important that the referee make them feel that they cannot completely trust him.

Guirguis is a Green NPC.

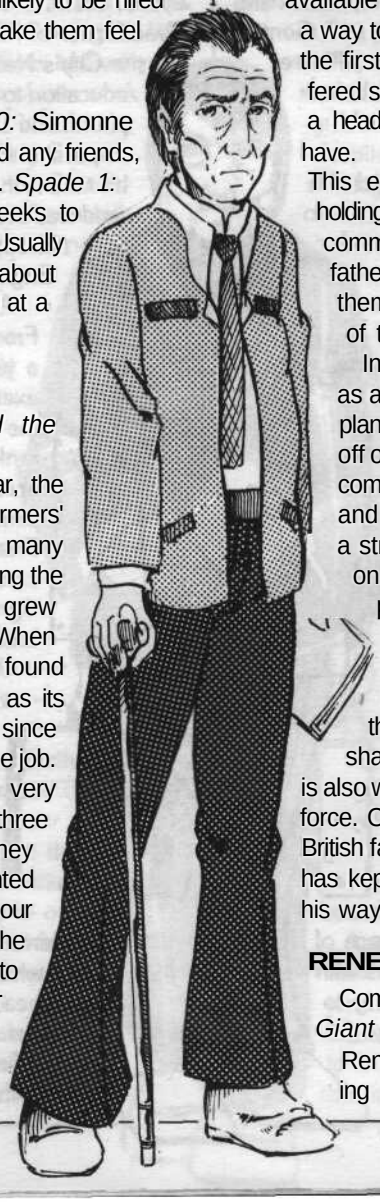
NPC Motivation Results: *Diamond 10:* Simonne Guirguis's main love in life is money. If he had any friends, he would gladly betray them for financial gain. *Spade 1:* Guirguis is also a braggart. He constantly seeks to impress anyone he meets with his importance. Usually this takes the form of hinting at dark secrets about other people which he would be willing to sell at a price.

ALASTAIR MCBRIDE

Director of Four Star: *(The Giant and the Beanstalk).*

Alastair McBride is the director of Four Star, the food products distributor created by the British farmers' cooperative. He has been a farmer himself for many years, and after finding himself a leader in shaping the opinions and actions of his fellow farmers, he grew very active in the British farmers' cooperative. When the distributing company was formed, McBride found that there was an opportunity for him to work as its director. He took it immediately, and has since worked very hard to prove himself capable in the job. Unfortunately, the French have not been very cooperative with him. He has spent the last three years trying to work past the several obstacles they have put in the way of his company's being granted Approuvée status, a prerequisite for the half of Four Star's processing plant, which is devoted to the making of individual rations, to be put into operation. McBride has run out of ideas for breaking the French impasse, and so has secretly contacted Rebco for help.

Appearance and Personality: McBride is a short and stocky man of about 45 years, with thick gray hair, a weathered complexion, and bushy eyebrows. He has broad shoulders and massive arms. When he talks, he often gets caught up in what he is saying and begins to stump back and forth on his short legs, gesturing wildly with his arms. McBride looks like the kind of fellow who might be found in a British pub, challenging people to arm-wrestle.



Personal History: Alastair McBride was born on Earth in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland. His father worked as a clerk for an accounting firm; his mother died of a rare viral meningitis when he was five. Alastair's father was nearly destroyed by her death, and feeling that all of his middle class plans for the future had died with his wife, he began to drink heavily to numb his sorrow. One Sunday morning, after waking hung over to his son's sorrowful eyes, the elder McBride suddenly realized that he wasn't solving anything this way. He decided upon a complete change of lifestyle: he would return to the way of his ancestors and start a farm on a colony world. The man and his son were soon citizens of the British Continent on Beta Canum.

Alastair's father poured his every effort into making the farm prosper. All of his rage at the unjust universe which took his wife, all of his love for his son and for growing things, and all of his intelligence became devoted to the task of farming. He was always watching for new crops and new methods which would work well in the alien soil, and his effort proved worthwhile. In 2270, the third year of the Beta Grain Blight, when Terraban became available on the French Continent, the elder McBride found a way to acquire some of the new product, and was therefore the first British colonist to use it. That year his crops suffered so much less than those of his neighbors that he had a headstart on economic recovery that the others did not have.

This edge allowed the McBrides to expand their land holdings and become an important voice in the British farm community. The dynamic personalities of Alastair and his father, together with their economic success, soon led them to become involved as spokesmen for the farmers of the British Continent.

In 2297, when the British farmers created Four Star as a food processing company and bought a processing plant from a company which was liquidating its holdings off of Earth, they chose Alastair McBride to head the new company. His father remains at home, running the farm, and has recently remarried at the age of 67. Alastair feels a strong motivation to succeed in his new venture, not only for his own sake, but also to make the old man proud.

Alastair McBride is an Experienced NPC.

NPC Motivation Results: *Heart 7:* Alastair McBride's main impetus in life is to make sure that the farmers on the British Continent receive their fair share of the income from their labor. *Club 4:* McBride is also willing, as a last resort, to settle a matter with physical force. Only the fact that he believes a representative of the British farmers must keep up an appearance of respectability has kept him from using his fists on people who stand in his way.

RENEE QUIST

Commissioner of Exports for the French Colony: *(The Giant and The Beanstalk).*

Renee Quist is the woman directly responsible for granting or refusing French Approuvée status to companies

on Beta Canum which wish to produce prepackaged meals for export from Beta Canum. As such, she has been furthering the aims of French dominance of trade within the French Arm by denying Approuvée status to all but a very few non-French companies.

Appearance and Personality: Commissioner Quist is short and round, with a cloud of white hair. She is about 60 years old. Quist is a friendly little woman with a cheery smile, which takes some of the sting out of her refusals of Approuvée status, at least for the first year or so. Quist does not dislike people of other nationalities, but is intensely loyal to Family and Country. For this reason she obeys the wishes of the Colonial Government in all of her decisions.

Personal History: Renee Quist was born in the French Colony's capital city, Premiere, the daughter of the city's Chief of Police and the granddaughter of one of the leaders of the original French colonists on Beta Canum. This lends some distinction to the Quist family name among the present citizens of the French Continent.

As a young woman, Renee trained to enter the police force. After her father's retirement, Renee was appointed to fill the position herself, at the age of 35. During a celebratory visit to Earth that year, she met and married Jacque Lafontaine, an older brother to Gustave. When Gustave was appointed to the Directorship of the Beanstalk in 2292, he used his influence to have Renee promoted to her present position as Commissioner of Exports.

Renee Quist is a Green NPC.

NPC Motivation Results: *Heart 6:* Renee Quist has a high sense of loyalty to her Family and Nation, and can be best convinced to take an action if it is presented in terms of one of those two things. *Spade 5:* Quist enjoys the benefits which come from positions of authority and also wishes to lend respect to her family name by performing important functions.

ARMAND LAFONTAINE

Vice President of Beanstalk Maintenance: *(The Giant and the Beanstalk).*

Armand Lafontaine is the man who made the decision to remove the Bavarian teams from beanstalk maintenance before four full teams of French maintenance personnel were adequately trained. As a result, one of his teams had a member who was to inspect the mechanical grapples on outgoing beanstalk capsules, and who mistakenly left them inoperable. That individual disappeared mysteriously shortly thereafter, and any others who have found out about the mistake have either disappeared as well, or are remaining silent.

Appearance and Personality: Armand Lafontaine is a very thin man of average height and about 35 years of age. He has pale skin, a very delicate bone structure, and a narrow face below curly black hair. He dresses in a dapper fashion, even carrying a cane, and maintains an aristocratic bearing.

His refined appearance belies the cruel heart which lies within him. Armand is totally selfish and ruthless in his dealings with other people. Given the right circumstances, he could be party to a murder.

Personal History: Armand Lafontaine was born on Beta Canum, the only child of Renee Quist and Jacques Lafontaine. He studied corporate management at the university in Premiere, but had not held a job until his present position in Beanstalk Maintenance. Now that he has a well paying position, he refuses to let it be taken away. The safety of other people is of secondary importance to him.

Armand Lafontaine is a Green NPC.

NPC Motivation Results: *Spade Queen:* Armand Lafontaine is an entirely selfish man who will let nothing stand in the way of his maintaining his present position. He will manifest whatever attitude he believes will serve his purposes, from friendly and helpful to threatening or violent. *Heart 10:* Quist's greatest love in life is himself; his second greatest love is money, and he believes that it can solve all problems.

OTHER CHARACTERS ON BETA CANUM

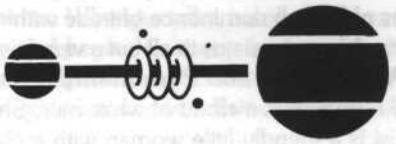
If the referee desires to create other NPCs for adventures on Beta Canum, or if a player wishes to design a character native to that world, there are several other facts about Beta Canum which will help to flesh out the personalities of these characters. First, it might be helpful to think of the colonies on Beta Canum as being somewhat similar to the American colonies before the Revolution. What this means is that attitudes among the people living there range from those having very strong ties to the mother nations on Earth, to others who have cut off all ties from Earth and consider themselves to belong solely to Beta Canum.

Those who feel the strongest ties to the mother countries tend to live in or very near to the largest of Beta Canum's cities. They are often people who were born in the mother country and have been assigned to live on Beta Canum by governments or businesses on Earth. These people call themselves *French Colonials, British Colonials,* or *German Colonials,* depending upon which continent they live. They tend to hold the same attitudes toward life as their governments on Earth. For example, they are almost always against capital punishment for violent crimes.

Those who feel no ties toward the mother countries tend to be descendents of the original colonists and usually live in rural areas or very small towns distant from the larger cities. They have a greater sense of self-sufficiency and view their mother countries as growing rich off of the fat of the colonies' efforts. Occasionally, they might even be revolutionaries. These people refuse to term themselves *Colonials,* preferring to be called *French, British,* or *German Beta Canumites.* Sometimes they even go by the term *BCer.* Their attitudes toward life tend to be somewhat rougher than those of the Colonials: they believe in capital punishment, for instance.

There is also a group of people on the German Continent who insist upon calling themselves *Bavarian* Beta Canumites, reflecting their origins from a free Bavaria.

By keeping these things in mind, the referee and players can create characters who truly reflect an origin on Beta Canum.



The Technical Data

The most fascinating thing about Beta Canum might very well be its beanstalk. There is something amazing about that relatively thin cable stretching from the ground we walk on, to an orbit in the airless void of space. The distance is so long that if the cable were laid out along the planet's equator, it would reach one time completely around the planet.

There is something else I like about the beanstalk as well, and that is the amount of time it takes to travel it. In these days of high technology, when everyone is rushing to beat the clock, the cheapest, safest, most comfortable way off-planet is to take a slow, five-day cruise on the beanstalk.

The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the map, charts, and diagrams of the pullout section. It is suggested that the referee read through this chapter at least once before running any of the Acts included in *The Drama* in order to become familiar with the background of the world on which the Acts are to be played.

When reading through this chapter, it is best if the referee keep the pullout section close at hand for reference. To remove the pullout section, simply turn to the very center of this book, bend the staples up, remove the pullout section (the center sheet of the book), and bend the staples back down.

Also, it is recommended that the players be allowed to peruse the pullout section to become familiar with the world maps, charts and diagrams, and ESA leaflet welcoming travellers to Beta Canum Venaticorum-4, as these items present information which their characters will need to know when adventuring on Beta Canum.

THE MAPS OF BETA CANUM VENATICORUM-4

There are actually two maps on this page, each at a different scale, as evidenced by the relative sizes of the triangles into which the maps are divided. The smaller of the two, the upper map, illustrates the entire world of Beta Canum Venaticorum-4, including those triangles which are occupied mostly or completely by water. The larger, bottom map includes only those triangles which have a direct bearing on the three colonized continents. The upper and lower rows of triangles on the small map are labeled with the letters A-J, starting with the upper left-hand triangle and proceeding in a clockwise direction to the lower left-hand one. These letters correspond to the letters on the upper and lower rows of triangles on the large map, indicating which areas of the world are included in it and which have been left out.

North on both of these maps is toward the title of the page; south is toward the opposite edge. As can be seen from the small map, the French Continent is the westernmost of the continents, the German Continent is the easternmost, and the British Continent lies in the middle. The Southern Continent, of course, occupies portions of each of the southernmost triangles. A much better idea of the relative sizes and positions of the four continents can be gained by photocopying the small map (perhaps increasing its size in the process), cutting it out, and assembling it into a globe. To do this, when cutting the map out, be sure to leave tabs on the right edges of each of the triangles. Next, fold along the borders of all 24 triangles; this is easiest if the borders are scored first. Then bring the edges of adjacent but unconnected triangles together, gluing the tab of each to the backside of the next.

The Temperature Zones: The world of Beta Canum is divided into climatory bands, just as Earth is. These bands are, from north to south: the Northern Frigid Zone, the Northern Temperate Zone, the Torrid Zone, the Southern Temperate Zone, and the Southern Frigid Zone.

The Torrid Zone is a relatively narrow equatorial band which receives the light and heat of Beta Canum Venaticorum (the star) from almost directly overhead throughout the year. As a result, temperatures average higher here than on the rest of the planet, and the seasonal variations in weather are negligible. On the large map of Beta Canum Venaticorum-4, this zone falls within the belt indicated by the horizontal lines extending outward from both the east and west edges of the map. (On the west edge of the map, for example, these lines lie just above and just below the word *Pentapod* in the reference to the Pentapod Enclave on the western shore of the French Continent.)

The Temperate Zones are those zones which, because of a somewhat steeper angle at which the light of Beta Canum Venaticorum strikes them, experience moderate temperatures. Also, these zones experience more variations in seasons than the Torrid Zone, due to the world's axial tilt. On the map, the Northern Temperate Zone stretches from the northern border of the Torrid Zone to the southern edge of the map's northernmost row of triangles. The Southern Temperate Zone stretches from the southern border of the Torrid Zone to the northern edges of the southernmost triangles.

The Frigid Zones are those zones which, because of the shallow angle at which the light of Beta Canum Venaticorum (the star) strikes them, are coldest. These regions are so cold that seasonal variations in temperature are relatively minor, but as Beta Canum Venaticorum-4 (the world) has less axial tilt than that of Earth, its Frigid Zones are considerably larger than Earth's are. For the

purposes of play, the *referee* can consider the entire area of the northernmost triangles on the maps to be the Northern Frigid Zone, and the entire area of the southernmost triangles to be the Southern Frigid Zone.

The Map Key: The key at the lower right corner of the map page identifies all other points of interest on the two maps.

THE CHARTS AND DIAGRAMS

The next two pages of the pullout section consist of several charts and diagrams concerning beanstalks and their operation. Before discussing them, however, an explanation of the forces which act on a beanstalk is in order.

In an orbit, one object revolves around another. The path it follows may be elliptical or circular (which is actually just a special type of ellipse). A comet is an example of an object which follows an elliptical orbit. Planets and their satellites tend to follow circular or near circular orbits, as do most man-made satellites. For this reason, we will focus our attention in this discussion on the topic of circular orbits.

In a circular orbit, two forces are constantly balanced against one another. One of these is the gravitational pull of the object being orbited; the other is the linear velocity of the orbiting object perpendicular to the pull of gravity. (The correct term for the orbiting object is "satellite," and we shall call the other object the "orbited.") When these two forces are exactly balanced, the satellite's linear velocity is constantly bent in such a way that it maintains a circular path around the orbited. If the satellite is close to the orbited, the force of gravity is relatively strong, and the linear velocity must be high to counterbalance it. If the satellite is distant from the orbited, the gravitational force is weaker, and the linear velocity must be slower to remain balanced with it.

When the orbited is itself revolving on an axis, as the Earth is, there is a particular height at which the linear velocity of the satellite exactly matches the period of the orbited's rotation. This height is called geosynchronous orbit. In the case of the Earth, for example, a satellite in geosynchronous orbit completes one pass around the Earth in exactly one day.

A special case of geosynchronous orbit is "geostationary" orbit. This is an orbit in which the satellite not only completes one circuit in one day, but it also remains constantly above the same spot on the planet which it is orbiting. (One example of a geosynchronous, but not geostationary, orbit would be one in which once each day the satellite's path crossed each of the planet's poles.) Geostationary orbits are only possible at a planet's equator.

A beanstalk is a cable which is stretched from a point on a planet's equator to a satellite which is in geostationary orbit above that point, and beyond. The reason that it must stretch beyond is explained by considering the forces at work on the length of cable. Below the geostationary point, we have seen, a satellite must have a higher linear velocity in order to counterbalance the effect of gravity. But the beanstalk cable is travelling at a speed which keeps it constantly above the same point on the equator, a speed which is much too slow to counteract the force of gravity. Therefore, for the entire length of the cable below the geostationary point, there is a net downward pull. In order to counterbalance this pull, the beanstalk cable must continue beyond the geostationary point, where its linear speed will actually be too high to remain in orbit. By extending this cable far enough, enough outward force is created to keep the entire cable in constant tension, and to counterbalance the weight of capsules which are attached below the geostationary point.

To summarize: At geostationary point the linear velocity of the cable is such that it exactly counterbalances the attraction of gravity. Objects at this height are weightless. Below the geostationary point, the attraction of gravity exceeds the counterbalancing force of the cable's linear speed, causing objects along it to feel a downward pull. Above the geostationary point, the attraction of gravity is overbalanced by the linear speed of the cable and objects there feel an outward pull. The closer to the planet, the greater the feeling of weight; the further past geostationary height, the greater the outward force.

With the concepts firmly in mind, we are now ready to look at the charts and diagrams themselves. We will begin with the *Sample System Diagram* which lies across the bottom of both pages, then move to the pair of diagrams labeled *Beanstalks in Existence: A Comparative View* at the upper left of the two page layout, and work our way to the *Gravitational Effects Table* at the lower right.

Sample System Diagram: This diagram illustrates the common features of a typical beanstalk design. The cable is anchored to a massive weight just under the planet's surface. This serves to hold it in place against the tension created by the length of cable beyond the geostationary point and the asteroid which is tethered at the far end. A large complex of buildings is constructed on the planetary surface where the beanstalk is attached. The asteroid at the far end of the cable can serve as. a high velocity launcher for ships travelling within the solar system.

At the geostationary point, a starship station is built. This station has large constructions which rotate about the axis of the beanstalk cable in order to simulate gravity. These constructs contain living quarters, offices, shops, and even some light industries. Other satellites maintain a planetary orbit alongside the starship terminal: some are constructed for special purposes, such as drydocks for the repair of starships; others are asteroids which have been towed into place where they can be mined for raw materials. In many ways, the starship terminal and its neighbor satellites form a self-contained world, and many people live out their entire lives there.

Beanstalks in Existence: A Comparative View: These are two, paired diagrams which illustrate the similarities and differences between Earth's beanstalk and Beta Canum's. First, note that the diameter of Beta Canum is slightly less than that of Earth. The dividing marks along the length of each planet's beanstalk are in terms of each planet's diameter. Thus, Earth's geostationary point is distant from Earth's surface by approximately 3.8 times Earth's diameter. Beta Canum's geostationary point is approximately 3.6 times the planet's diameter out from the surface. It is obvious that a capsule on Earth's beanstalk has farther to travel to reach the starship terminal than a capsule on Beta Canum's beanstalk, and as both capsules travel at 300 km per hour, the trip from surface to starship terminal takes much less time on Beta Canum's beanstalk than on Earth's. However, as the days are nearly four hours shorter on Beta Canum than on Earth, it takes just under five local days to make the trip on either beanstalk (that is to say, it takes five Terran days to travel the distance from surface to starship terminal on Earth's beanstalk, and it takes five Beta Canum days to travel the distance from surface to starship terminal on Beta Canum's beanstalk).

As can be seen from the arcs labeled *Limits of Atmosphere,* for the majority of the trip in each case the capsule must be pressurized. In actuality, the capsule is pressurized for the entire trip, as the atmosphere on each planet is only dense enough for breathing for a distance of about 11 km, and even though the capsules take some time to accelerate to 300 km per hour when they leave the surface, the limit of breathable atmosphere is exceeded within about the first five minutes of travel.

Note also that Earth's beanstalk is much longer than Beta

Canum's. To make up for the outward tension lost by shorter length, Beta Canum's beanstalk has a much larger asteroid tethered to *its far end than* Earth's has. Earth's beanstalk's long tail is used as an accelerator to whip loads of harmful substances such as radioactive wastes into the sun. It can also be used to launch ships to other destinations within the solar system. Using the tail in this way lends velocity to launched objects without consuming any fuel.

Power for a beanstalk is generated by large solar-power panels. Once the system has been set up, this power is, in effect, free. Enough power can be generated in this way to supply all of the needs of the beanstalk, including movement of the capsules which traverse it; lighting, lifesupport and even manufacturing at the starship terminal; and power needs at the surface facility as well. Enough extra power can be generated in this way to also supply the needs of much of the planet. This is the reason for the power net spreading outward from Premiere on the French Continent (see the world maps on the previous page of the pullout section).

Because of the distance from starship terminal to tethered asteroid on Earth's beanstalk, the largest collection of solar panels has been congregated around the starship terminal for ease of maintenance. In the case of Beta Canum's beanstalk, the close proximity of starship terminal and tethered asteroid made the location of most solar panels on the latter more practical.

Cross-sectional Diagram: There is not much to say about this diagram, except to point out the purposes of the three rails around the beanstalk cable. The rail which is made up of a collection of superconductive power cables is marked. The other two rails are what the capsules travel along: one is for ascending capsules, the other for those descending.

Supplementary Information: The box just below the *Cross-sectional Diagram* contains information supplementary to that provided in the various diagrams, and should be of use in helping the referee and players to understand the capacities of cargo and passenger capsules.

Capsule Diagram: This diagram illustrates a side view of a passenger capsule travelling along the beanstalk, with the front of the capsule cut away to reveal the various decks inside. The diagram also shows the pattern of braces which connect the rails to the main cable.

Given the space constraints in a capsule only 9 m in diameter, conditions are similar to those on a present day passenger train. The Recreation Level, therefore, contains mainly tables and chairs; its clear, domed top allows a view of the stars. The Dining Level again contains mainly tables and chairs; slots within the walls dispense prepackaged meals which have been brought to the correct serving temperature by machinery on the Food Preparation and Storage level below. (The purpose in keeping Dining and Recreation Levels separate is to allow passengers to eat at their convenience without disturbing or being disturbed by those who wish to pursue other activities.)

Very occasionally, a capsule may be leased for a trip by a very wealthy individual or group. In such cases, it is possible for human cooks to use the equipment in the Food Preparation and Storage Level to make dishes fresh from stored ingredients. (In these cases, cooks and other servants usually occupy the Coach compartments during the trip.)

The First Class and Coach Levels are covered in detail on the next page of the pullout section, as is the Cargo Hold and Observation Deck.

Passenger Capsule Floor Diagrams: Not much remains to be said about these three diagrams as they are illustrated in detail. However, the following items are of interest.

First, pairs of staterooms are connected by doors which may be locked from both sides, offering privacy from each other, or which may be opened to create a suite.

Second, the curved boxes which lie against the walls of the elevator are entertainment consoles featuring the latest in music, art, and drama, including both prerecorded material and broadcasts from the planet and the starship station. The staterooms are laid out in such a way that these entertainment consoles can be viewed easily from any location.

Third, the generators in the Generator Room on the bottommost deck of the capsule generate magnetic fields around the grapples which extend from the capsule and clasp the magnetic rail. Pulses through this rail are what propel the capsule along the rail. In the case of power failure, the magnetic grapples are equipped with mechanical backups which physically grasp the rail and keep the capsule suspended.

Fourth, entrance into a passenger capsule is gained through ports in the floor of the Observation Deck. Before the capsule begins its trip, it hangs about two meters off the ground from a gantry. A boarding ramp similar to those used for present day passenger jets is wheeled up to the opening and passengers ascend from it into the capsule by ladder or mechanical lift. The main entrance into a cargo capsule is also gained through the floor, but in this case, the floor *is* the cargo hatch. In other words, the entire floor opens up and cargo containers are raised inside to be supported by beams which are attached on all sides to prevent shifting during acceleration and deceleration of the capsule.

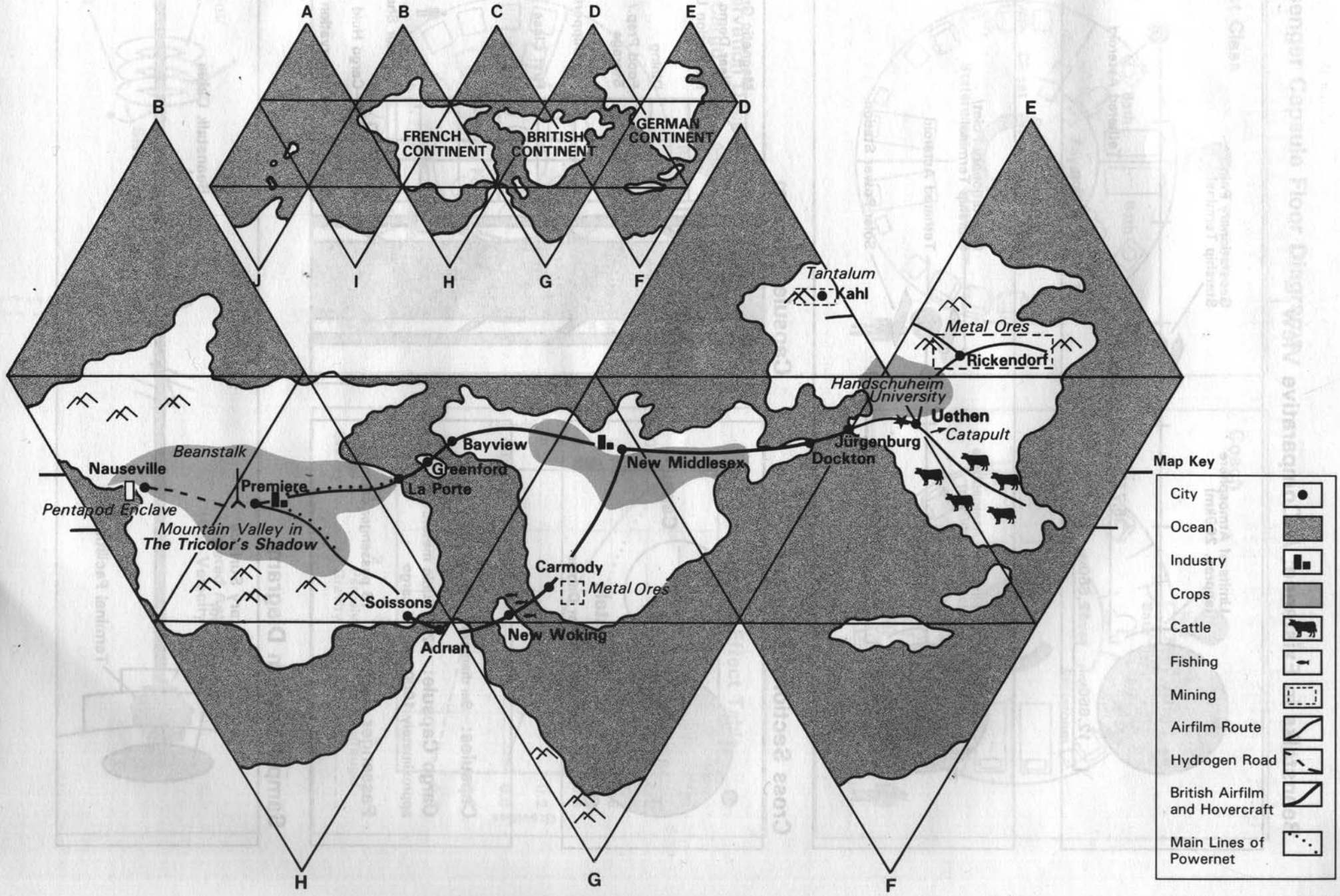
Gravitational Effects Table: This chart is the last item to be discussed in the center layout of the pullout section. It is a chart of the change of gravity in a beanstalk capsule as it travels from a planet's surface to the starship station at geostationary orbit. On-planet gravity is indicated at the left, and starship station gravity on the right. This particular chart was designed from data about Beta Canum, but can also reflect a similar trip on Earth's beanstalk, with the sole exception that the gravity at the beginning of Day 1 is exactly 1 G as opposed to .94 Gs.

The dotted line at the top represents actual gravity (which varies inversely as the square of the distance from its source) at each point during the five day trip. The dashed line at the bottom represents centrifugal force (which we have been calling "linear velocity perpendicular to the force of gravity," and which increases directly with the distance along the cable) for the same period. The solid line in the middle indicates what a capsule experiences as a consequence of the actions of the two forces upon it. This line shows what a passenger on a capsule perceives as gravity during the trip.

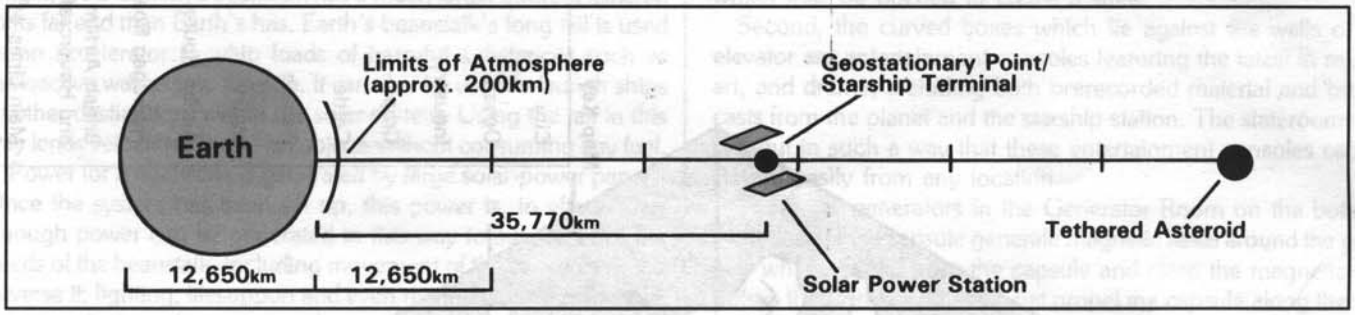
To understand what a passenger experiences on a trip from the starship terminal back to the planet, simply follow the solid line from the right edge of the chart back to the left.

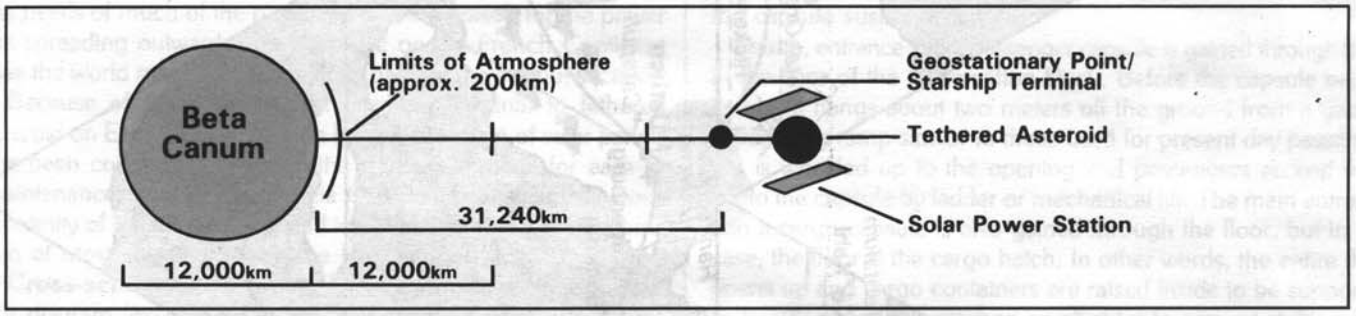
The Leaflet: The last page of the pullout section is devoted to an ESA leaflet which is given to all visitors to Beta Canum to introduce them to the world. It may be helpful to photocopy this page and distribute a copy to each of the players.

Beta Canum Venaticorum-4

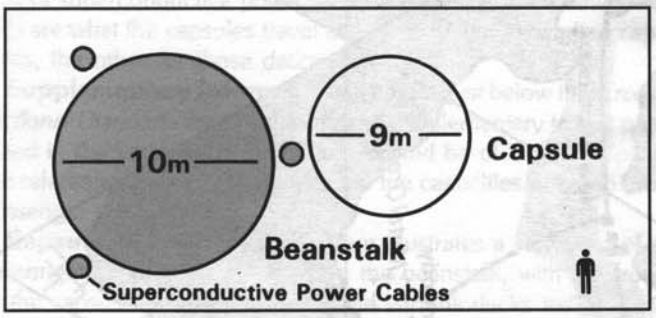


Beanstalks in Existence: A Comparative View





Cross Sectional Diagram

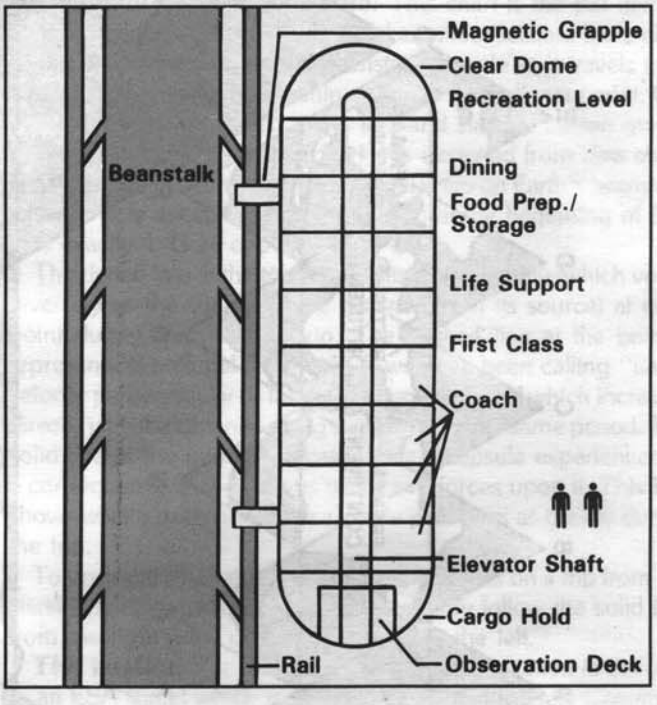


Capsules: 9m diameter, 25m length

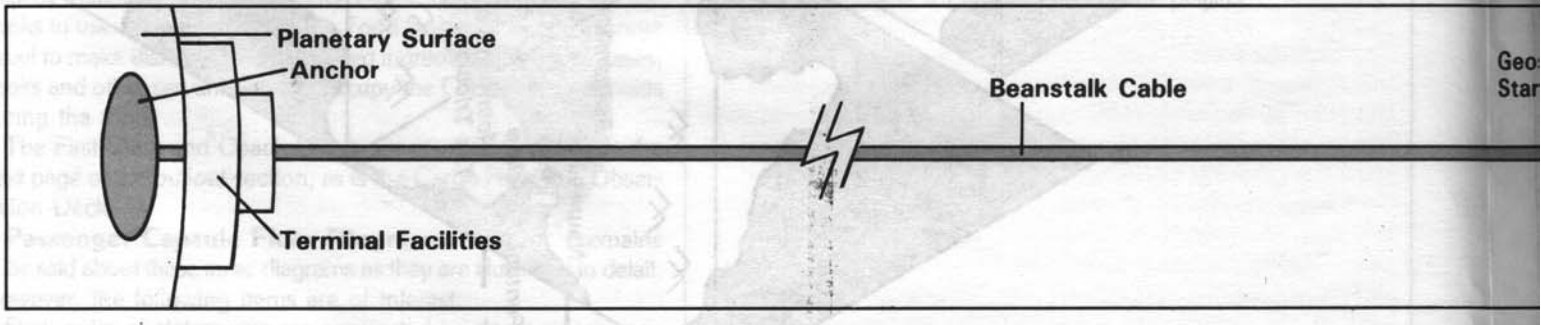
Cargo Capsule: 1200 cubic meters capacity
approximately 1000 tons of cargo

Passenger Capsule: 18 passenger capacity

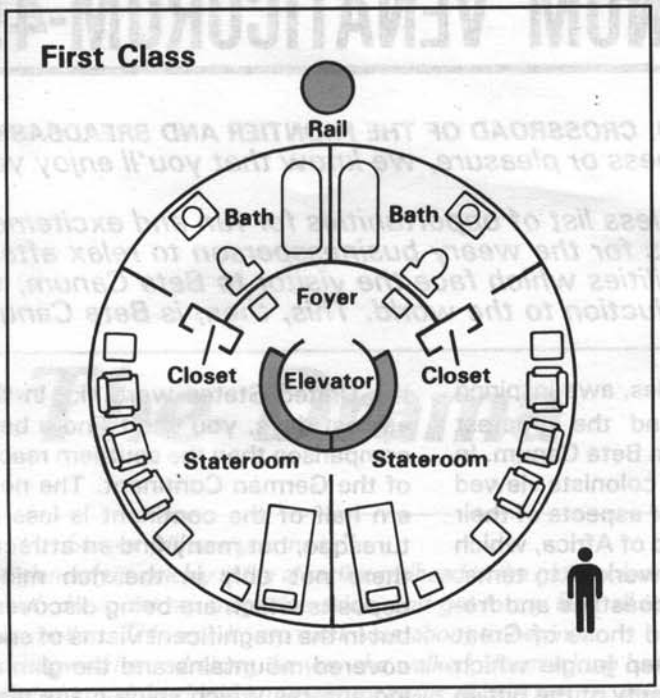
Capsule Diagram

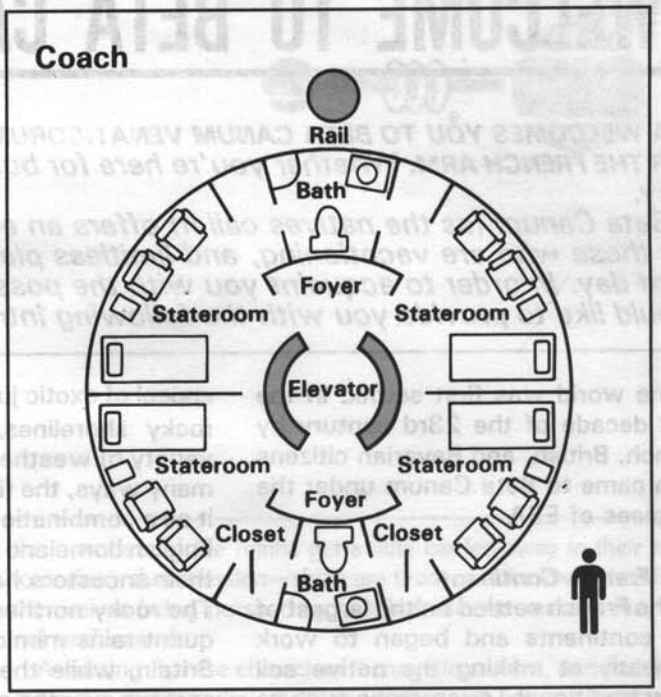


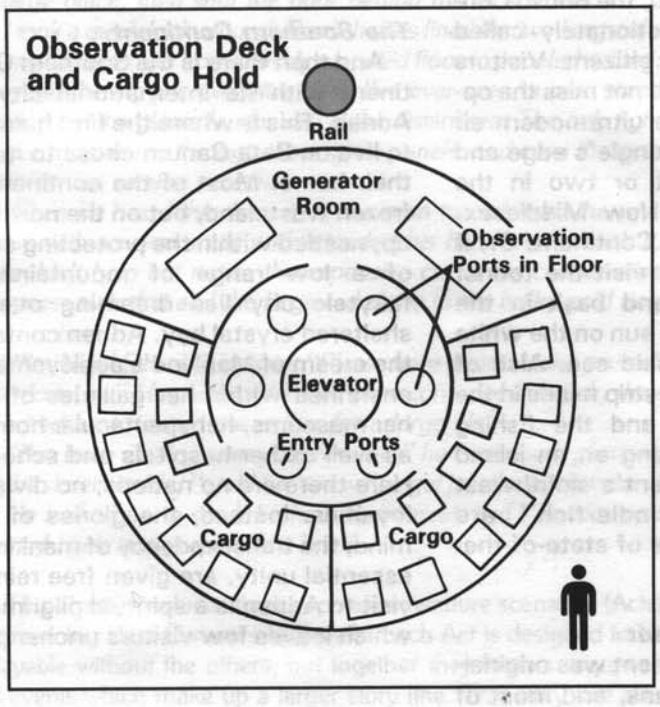
Sample System Diagram

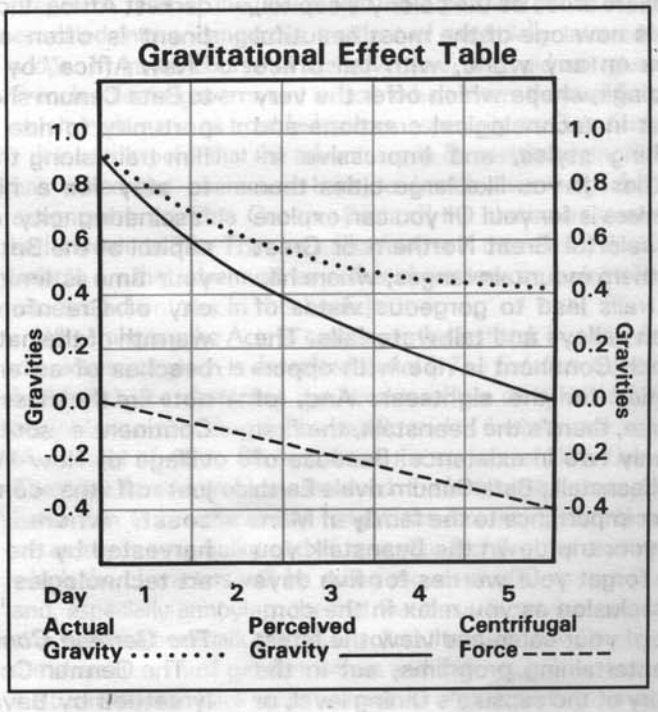


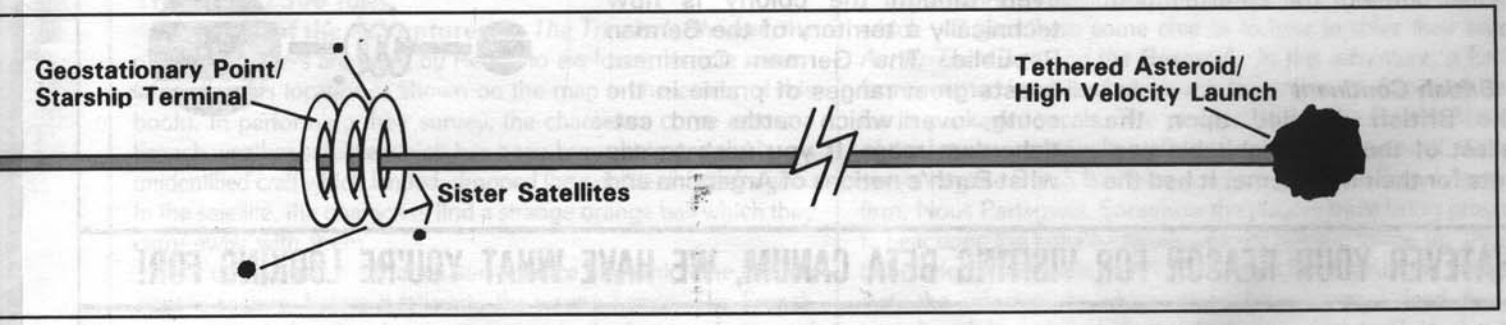
Passenger Capsule Floor Diagrams











WELCOME TO BETA CANUM VENATICORUM-4!

ESA WELCOMES YOU TO BETA CANUM VENATICORUM-4, CROSSROAD OF THE FRONTIER AND BREADBASKET FOR THE FRENCH ARM. *Whether you're here for business or pleasure, we know that you'll enjoy your stay.*

Beta Canum (as the natives call it) offers an endless list of opportunities for fun and excitement for those who are vacationing, and limitless places for the weary businessperson to relax after a hard day. In order to acquaint you with the possibilities which face the visitor to Beta Canum, we would like to provide you with the following introduction to the world. This, then, is Beta Canum:

The world was first settled in the first decade of the 23rd century by French, British, and Bavarian citizens who came to Beta Canum under the auspices of ESA.

The French Continent

The French settled on the largest of the continents and began to work earnestly at making the native soil grow traditional Terran crops such as corn, wheat, and other grains. Premiere arose as the colony's capitol, and is now one of the most beautiful cities on any world, with tall office buildings, shops which offer the very latest in technological creations and clothing styles, and impressive industries. If you like large cities then Premiere is for you! Or you can explore the colorful Great Northern or Great Southern mountain ranges, where hiking trails lead to gorgeous vistas of green valleys and tall waterfalls. The French Continent is ripe with opportunities for the sightseer. And, of course, there's the beanstalk, the first of only two in existence. Because of the beanstalk, Beta Canum rivals Earth in her importance to the family of Man. On your trip down the beanstalk you can forget your worries for five days of seclusion as you relax in the comfort of your cabin and view the latest in entertaining programs, eat in the luxury of the capsule's Dining level, or view the heavens in rapture through the clear dome of the Entertainment level.

The British Continent

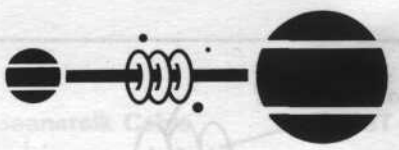
The British decided upon the smallest of the three habitable continents for their new home. It had the appeal of exotic jungles, awe-inspiring rocky shorelines, and the greatest variety of weather on Beta Canum. In many ways, the first colonists viewed it as a combination of aspects of their English homeland and of Africa, which their ancestors had worked to tame. The rocky northern coastline and frequent rains mimicked those of Great Britain, while the deep jungle which spreads over the majority of the British Continent reflects the depths of darkest Africa. Indeed, the British Continent is often affectionately called "New Africa" by her citizens. Visitors to Beta Canum should not miss the opportunity to ride the ultramodern air film train along the jungle's edge and to stay for a night or two in the fascinating city of New Middlesex, capitol of the British Continent. Or, if your time is limited, visit the tourist city of Greenford and bask in the warmth of the native sun on the white beaches of an emerald sea. Also of note are the massive strip mines in the Continent's south, and the fishing village of New Woking on an island just off the continent's southwest coast, where "brindle-fish" are harvested by the use of state-of-the-art technologies.

The German Continent

The German Continent was originally settled by Bavarians, and most of the population is still of that origin, even though the colony is now technically a territory of the German Republic. The German Continent boasts great ranges of prairie in the south, over which cattle and cattleherders roam. If you wish to see what Earth's nations of Argentina and the United States were like in their earliest days, you can't find a better comparison than the southern reaches of the German Continent. The northern half of the continent is less picturesque, but many find an attraction there not only in the rich mineral deposits which are being discovered, but in the magnificent vistas of snow-covered mountains and the glimmering auroras which shine many nights of the year.

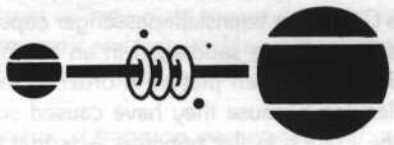
The Southern Continent

And then there is the Southern Continent with its international city of Adrian. This is where the first humans to live on Beta Canum chose to make their home. Most of the continent is frozen wasteland, but on the northern tip, nestled within the protecting arms of a low range of mountains, a fairytale city lies dreaming over a sheltered crystal bay. Adrian contains the cream of Mankind's achievements enshrined within her galleries of art, her museums, her spectacular homes, as well as her hospitals and schools. Here there are no nations, no divisive loyalties. Instead, the glories of the mind, the transcendency of mankind's essential unity, are given free rein. A visit to Adrian is a spiritual pilgrimage which leaves few visitors unchanged.



WHATEVER YOUR REASON FOR VISITING BETA CANUM, WE HAVE WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR!

Courtesy of the Offices of ESA, Adrian.



The Drama

"Mr. Strawn will see you now."

I glanced up quickly at the attractive redhead in the glossy black sheath dress, set my magazine aside, and got to my feet, all in one motion. This was it; my work was about to begin.

I followed her, admiring the way she walked, down a long hall paneled in redwood and hung with portraits of bald men in dark suits. When we reached the far end, the redhead ushered me into a large office, then shut the door behind me as she left.

I took a quick look around. Bookshelves lined the two long walls to my left and right from plushly carpeted floor to paneled ceiling. Beyond the biggest executive desk I've ever seen, a man stood gazing out the glassed-in far wall at the distant sea. The only light in the room came through those glass panels, and even that was dim—II was raining outside.

When he heard the door shut, the man turned from the windows with a warm smile and extended his hand. As I shook it, I couldn't help but notice the expensive cut of his conservative business suit; that and the large red stone in the bulky gold ring on his hand.

"I'm Nigel Strawn," he said. "Please have a seat. Make yourself comfortable." He perched himself on a corner of the desk, then reached back toward the center for a large file.

"I've been reading over your resume," he continued, glancing at the sheets inside, "and I believe we've got just the job for you."

He looked up to see if he had my interest, and I nodded as I settled back and prepared to listen.

This chapter includes three separate adventure scenarios (Acts) concerning Beta Canum's beanstalk. Each Act is designed to be playable without the others, but together they form a sequence of events which make up a larger story line. This story line also includes *The Tricolor's Shadow,* the adventure included with the **Traveller: 2300** rules.

Synopsis of the Adventures: In *The Tricolor's Shadow,* the player characters are hired by Rebco to explore a remote mountain valley (its location is shown on the map in the center of this book). In performing their survey, the characters come across a French weather satellite which has been brought to ground by an unidentified craft which landed, dropped the satellite, then left again. In the satellite, the characters find a strange orange ball which they carry away with them.

That orange ball is a French surveillance bug which the French want to recover before it falls into the wrong hands. The French militia is sent after the characters to regain the bug, and some of the members of the militia get a little carried away in their zeal to perform their mission—shots are fired, and the characters find themselves being pursued by hostile forces for reasons they do not understand.

Assuming that the characters manage to survive, and that they settle the problem diplomatically, Rebco will be very impressed with their performance in a situation for which they were not prepared. That is, they were sent on a peaceful mission which escalated into a dangerous incident of potentially international scope. If, in the course of the adventure, they did not give the French colonial government reason to hate them, they will be very much in demand as troubleshooters, especially on Beta Canum.

It is at this point that the adventures in *Beanstalk* begin. Rebco has asked the characters back to handle two very delicate assignments on Beta Canum. (Note: If the characters were not so fortunate in *The Tricolor's Shadow,* or if the referee does not want to run that adventure, any other characters can be introduced into the adventures in this book.)

When playing the Acts in sequence, the first task that the player characters are given is described in *Act I: The Exfoliation Project.* In this Act, the characters are hired to obtain samples of the atmosphere surrounding the beanstalk, and of the beanstalk's skin, at a height of 40 to 80 km above the surface of Beta Canum. There are several problems involved: the fact that the atmosphere is too thin to breathe at that height; the fact that the equipment necessary is very bulky and clumsy; the fact that the capsule in which the characters will be riding moves at 300 km per hour; and, especially annoying, the fact that they do not have permission from the beanstalk officials to collect these samples. Somehow, the characters must get themselves and their equipment both up the beanstalk and back down without the officials finding out about it.

In the course of playing *Act I,* the players may learn certain things which will give them some clue as to how to solve their task in *Act II: The Giant and the Beanstalk.* In this adventure, a British farmer-owned food distributor wants to gain French Approuvée status for its packaged meals. The problem is that the French Ministry of the Interior continually stalls in granting that approval, thereby preventing the British firm from competing with the French farmers' firm, Nous Partagons. Somehow the players must bring pressure to bear upon the French officials who are holding things up. (Again, if the referee wishes to run *Act II* without having run the previous Act, the information which gives the players a lead can be introduced by other means which are explained in the text

for *Act II.)*

In *Act III: Assassin!,* the final Act, the player characters leave Beta Canum by beanstalk passenger capsule, only to find that the capsule has been sabotaged in an attempt to take their lives. If the Acts have been played in order to this point, the characters are leaving because they have caused so much embarrassment for the French in the previous Acts that they are asked to leave Beta Canum. At some point in the previous adventures, they have also made a personal enemy who is willing to destroy an entire passenger capsule full of people in order to kill the player characters. If, on the other hand, this adventure is to be played alone, the *referee* will need to provide a reason for the assassination attempt—perhaps it is not directed at the player characters at all, but instead toward another passenger. In any case, the goal of the characters will be to prevent the destruction of the capsule, thereby saving their own lives and those of the other passengers.

How to Begin: The referee should begin the first adventure by explaining to the players that they have received a letter from Rebco, asking if they would be interested in taking another troubleshooting job on Beta Canum. If the player characters have been through *The Tricolor's Shadow,* the letter states that Rebco understands that they might be a bit hesitant about accepting the job, as their last assignment on Beta Canum turned out to be much more difficult than anyone expected. However, they performed so admirably under the unexpected stress that their portfolios have gained the attention of certain officials within the company who think that the characters are just the people for a couple of tough tasks.

The letter emphasizes that pay will be commensurate with the difficulty of the assignments. To be exact, the player characters will each receive an advance of LvlOOO before beginning each of the tasks, and will be paid another Lv2000 (for a total of Lv3000) per person upon completion of each of the tasks, plus reimbursement for expenses incurred (provided that they submit an account for approval after each adventure). Each of the two tasks is expected to take under two weeks to complete, and after completing the first, the player characters are not required to perform the second, although it is hoped that they will.

Assuming that the characters are interested in taking the job, Rebco has prepaid for their transportation to Beta Canum, down the beanstalk to Premiere, and from Premiere to Adrian. Once in Adrian, the characters must go to Rebco's offices and ask to see Nigel Strawn, Rebco's Personnel Director. Strawn will then arrange for lodgings for their stay in Adrian, and he will answer what questions he can (which aren't many at this point) about the type of work which the characters will be doing.

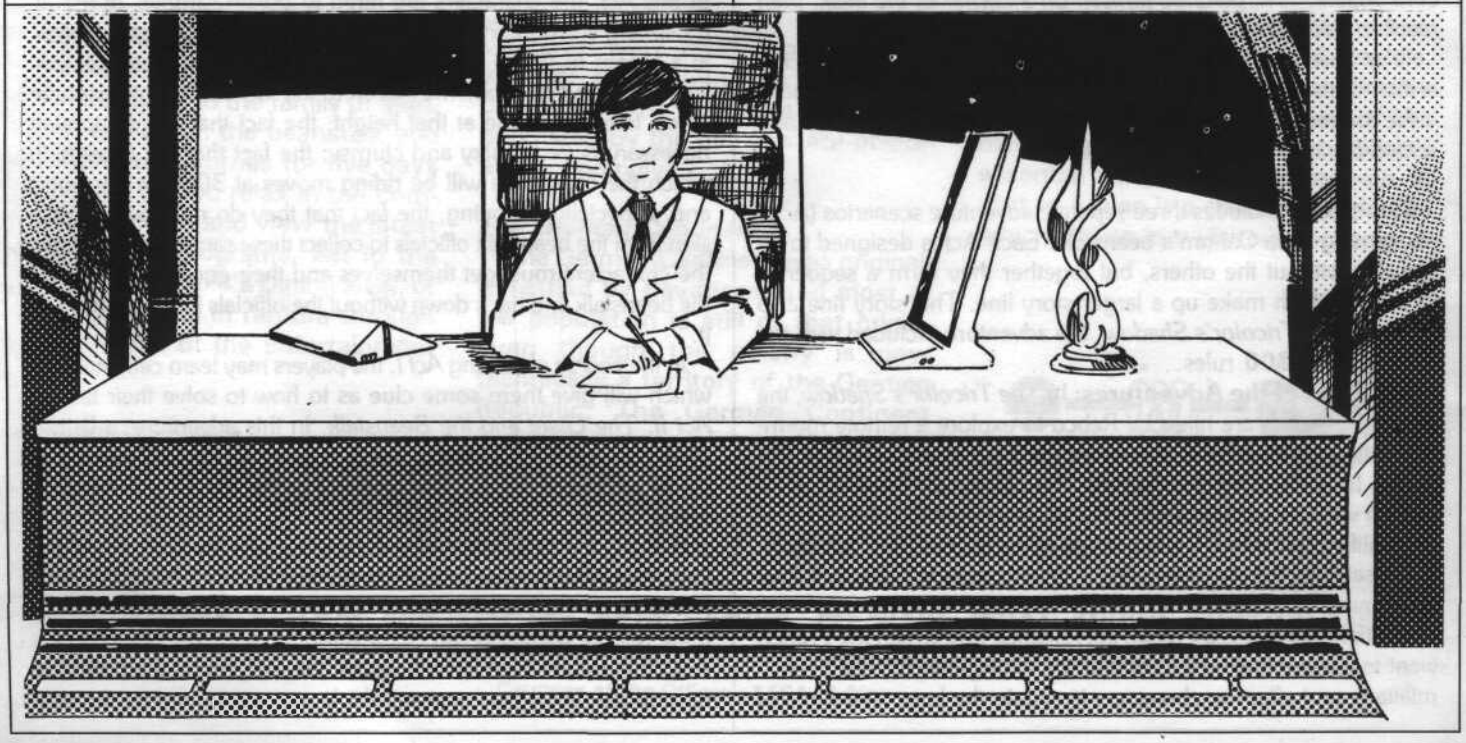
Note: Due to the sensitive nature of the tasks they will be performing, the players will not be informed as to what a task involves, other than in the most general of terms, until after they have signed a contract to complete that task. They will have to accept each job sight unseen. Although they may complain about this, in each case Strawn will explain that it cannot be helped, but that they may rest assured that the job will not require them to take part in any illegal activities. (This is not completely true, particularly with the second job, but Strawn does not know this, and neither should the players at this point.)

After accepting a task, the characters will be taken to a hotel in Adrian, where they will stay for a few days while word is sent to the first client for whom they will be working. In each of the Acts, that individual will travel to Adrian to meet the player characters. In each case, Strawn will introduce the individual to the characters in a briefing room within the Rebco office complex. At the completion of each mission, the player characters will return to Adrian, where they will be debriefed in the same room before being returned to the hotel for a few days of rest.

NOTES TO THE REFEREE

(1) Player characters who are French will *not* be hired for these jobs. This is because the tasks involved might require working against the interests of the French colonial government on Beta Canum, and, therefore, against France's interests in the French Arm.

(2) The player characters should be allowed to use the expense account to buy some things which are not strictly necessary for completing the tasks. Rebco will not complain about a few expensive meals or souvenirs, for example—not even if they include such things as very nice knives or small handguns. However, if the players try to take advantage of the company by buying all sorts



of expensive items which have absolutely nothing to do with the performance of their tasks, have Nigel Strawn send them a message explaining that he is aware of their spending and warning them that Rebco's accounting department is likely to refuse to reimburse them for some of their purchases. If Strawn's message does not convince them and they continue to spend more than they ought, simply have Rebco refuse to pay a portion of the bill when they submit their expense account at the end of an adventure. If any of the excess items which they purchased are not consumables—if they are pieces of heavy weaponry, for example—Rebco will offer to buy those items from the player characters at 80 percent of the purchase price.

(3) It is possible for the player characters to convince Rebco to pay them a bit more than Lv3000 *apiece* for each of the two adventures. Just before the first adventure begins, if it enters the players' minds to haggle over the salary, Nigel Strawn will listen to their arguments. This should be role played, with the players explaining to the referee, who acts the part of Strawn, why they should be paid more for their work. If the referee believes that the players have presented a good argument, they should be allowed a task roll to see if they convince Strawn.

To convince Strawn to increase their pay: Difficult. Bargain. 3 minutes.

If they are successful at this task, Strawn will agree to raise their pay by Lv250 apiece.

If, after the first Act has been played, the players are hesitant about pursuing the second one, Strawn will inform them that he is authorized by Rebco to increase their salary by Lv250 over what they were paid for the first. This offer is made before the players make any attempt to talk him into an increase. They may still try to talk him into a further raise by following the same procedure outlined above. However, if they are successful, Strawn will only grant them another Lv100 this time.

Act I: The Exfoliation Project

In which the players attempt to perform a very difficult and hazardous task for a person whom they thoroughly dislike.

There was a lurch, then a feeling as if I had suddenly gained about fifty kilos in weight. I struggled to my feet and headed for the vacc suits. It was awfully difficult under that acceleration, trying to stand on one leg while I slipped the other into the suit, but we didn't have any time to waste. Eventually I managed.

By the time I finished, the acceleration had too—a minute and a half gone already, I thought to myself. I looked over at Andrea and saw that she and Martin had already gotten the first two sections of the skin-sampling boom together. I slid down the ladder to the cargo doors and went to work on the lock.

It's not easy working inside an electrical control box when your hands are encased in thick gloves designed to keep out the cold of space, but eventually I finished. My breath caught in my throat as I looked out the open hatch—I'm afraid of heights.

I tore my eyes away and looked at my watch—blast! another ten minutes gone. I looked up to see how the others were doing. They had finished the first boom and were well on their way to finishing the second. Well, at least we'd get the skin sample and one of the atmosphere.

I rushed up the ladder and took the second boom from them, allowing them to take the first one down to the open cargo doors and fasten it to them so that it stuck out of the capsule. Within a few seconds I had finished the second, and I moved to hand it down to them.

I don't know what happened then, but somehow I slipped, and the next thing I knew I was falling—right toward the open hatch! I flailed out blindly with my arms and legs, and I somehow managed to grab ahold of the first boom just below where it exited the capsule.

My heart pounding wildly, I hung on desperately and cursed the fact that under my prompting, the group had chosen to forego safety lines in favor of parachutes.

"The lines will just get in our way," I had said, "and besides, no one's going to fall out if they're careful."

It was just about then that the boom I was hanging from gave way from the excess weight. As I fell, paralyzed with fear and fervently hoping that my chute would work correctly, one ridiculous little voice echoed in my mind even through my terror.

"It's too bad you broke the boom with the skin sampler on it." It said, "If you'd broken one of the others, at least there was a replacement, and Andrea and Martin could have finished the mission."

Scene 1: At the opening of this adventure, Strawn sends a note to the player characters' hotel, asking them to meet him at his Rebco office at 0900 the next morning. When they arrive, Strawn welcomes them and informs them that the person for whom they will be working has arrived and is waiting to speak to them. When the player characters show up at his office the next morning, Strawn leads them to a basement-level briefing room. Along the way, he explains to them that their new client is Herr Professor Hans Geiger, the one man most responsible for the construction of Beta Canum's beanstalk.

In the guise of Strawn, the referee should at this point explain to the players Geiger's history, including his role in the beanstalk's construction and his tragic reduction to the present position of mere advisor to the current beanstalk director, Gustave Lafontaine. (A review of Geiger's personality description in *Chapter 3: The Actors* will provide the referee with the necessary information.) The referee should be sure to mention that Geiger seems to view the beanstalk almost as his own offspring. Any questions the players may have about Geiger may be answered by Strawn at this time, *except* those about the nature of the job which Geiger has for the player characters.

As soon as Strawn's description of Geiger is finished and the players' questions are answered, the group will arrive at the door to the briefing room. Strawn will lead the characters inside, where Geiger is pacing impatiently across the far end of the room. (At this time the referee should describe Geiger's physical appearance to the players, as given in *Chapter 3: The Actors.)* Strawn will then ask all present to be seated at the meeting table near the door; when everyone has done so, he will introduce each person in the room, then invite the Herr Professor to explain what it is that he requires of the player characters.

Geiger begins by pronouncing with much pride, "I am the creator of the beanstalk!" (The referee is encouraged while acting the part of Geiger to use a thick German accent and make every sentence sound as if it were spoken with the authority of an emperor.) Geiger continues by describing how the "treacherous French" have robbed him of his authority, and how Folie and Lysander, his "traitorous friends" in his old firm, have abandoned him. He says that if it were not for his willingness to forego his professional pride for the sake of mankind, he too would have left long ago and permitted the beanstalk to come tumbling down at the inept hands of the fools who are overseeing its operation at present. He then stops and glares around the room as if daring

anyone to contradict him.

If one of the player characters asks him to explain just what it is they are supposed to do, Strawn says, "Perhaps you'd better explain just what the problem is, Herr Professor."

Geiger then takes on a lecturing tone as he explains that sensors within the skin of the beanstalk indicate that a chemical reaction may be taking place between certain mesospheric metallic ions and the substance of the beanstalk itself, and that, if his suspicions are correct, that reaction may be gaining in speed logarithmically with the passage of time! Geiger ends this statement dramatically, as if it explains all. To most everyone else, this most likely explains next to nothing. When asked by the player characters or Strawn to please clarify the importance of this, Geiger will continue as if he were talking to five-year-olds. What this means is that within Beta Canum's mesosphere—that is, the layer of the atmosphere which lies within the 40 to 80km range—there are certain metal ions which appear to be eroding the surface of the beanstalk, and that the process of erosion seems to be progressing more and more rapidly with time. If it is allowed to continue, the beanstalk will finally snap, with the first 40 to 80 km falling back to Beta Canum's surface where it will do considerably more damage than the 40 cars did seven years ago. The remaining length of the beanstalk, starship terminal and all, will go flying off uncontrollably into space.

Geiger will continue by stating that what he wants the player characters to do is to ride up the beanstalk, take samples of the surface of the beanstalk and of the atmosphere surrounding it at that level, and bring those samples back to him.

The players should have several questions to ask of Geiger by this time; therefore, the following information is presented in a question and answer format. As the questions may not occur to the players in exactly the order which follows, the referee may want to place a check mark by each question as it is asked. These check marks serve two purposes: (1) Unless otherwise indicated, if the players do not think to ask all of the questions given below, Strawn will ask those which they have not thought of; and (2) If someone asks a question which has already been marked as answered, Geiger will grow very disgusted and suggest to Strawn that perhaps the members of this group are not intelligent enough for the job.

THE QUESTIONS

Q. What is this about 40 cars causing a lot of damage seven years ago?

A. Geiger details the history of the accident, including the fact that a British team of investigators has been appointed to determine the cause of the accident, but that they have revealed nothing of import in seven years of research. In a bitter aside, Geiger will mention the fact that he has filed a report about the accident with Lafontaine but has never received a reply to it. He will *not* tell what the conclusions of his report were unless the players convince him to do so, which is a task.

To discover Geiger's conclusions (Unskilled): Routine. Psychology or Information Gathering. 1 minute.

Q. Why doesn't Geiger just have the French firm which runs the beanstalk take the samples?

A. Geiger is afraid that the director will not believe him, especially as he has ignored him in the past (another reference to the report which Geiger filed following the loss of the 40 capsules in 2293).

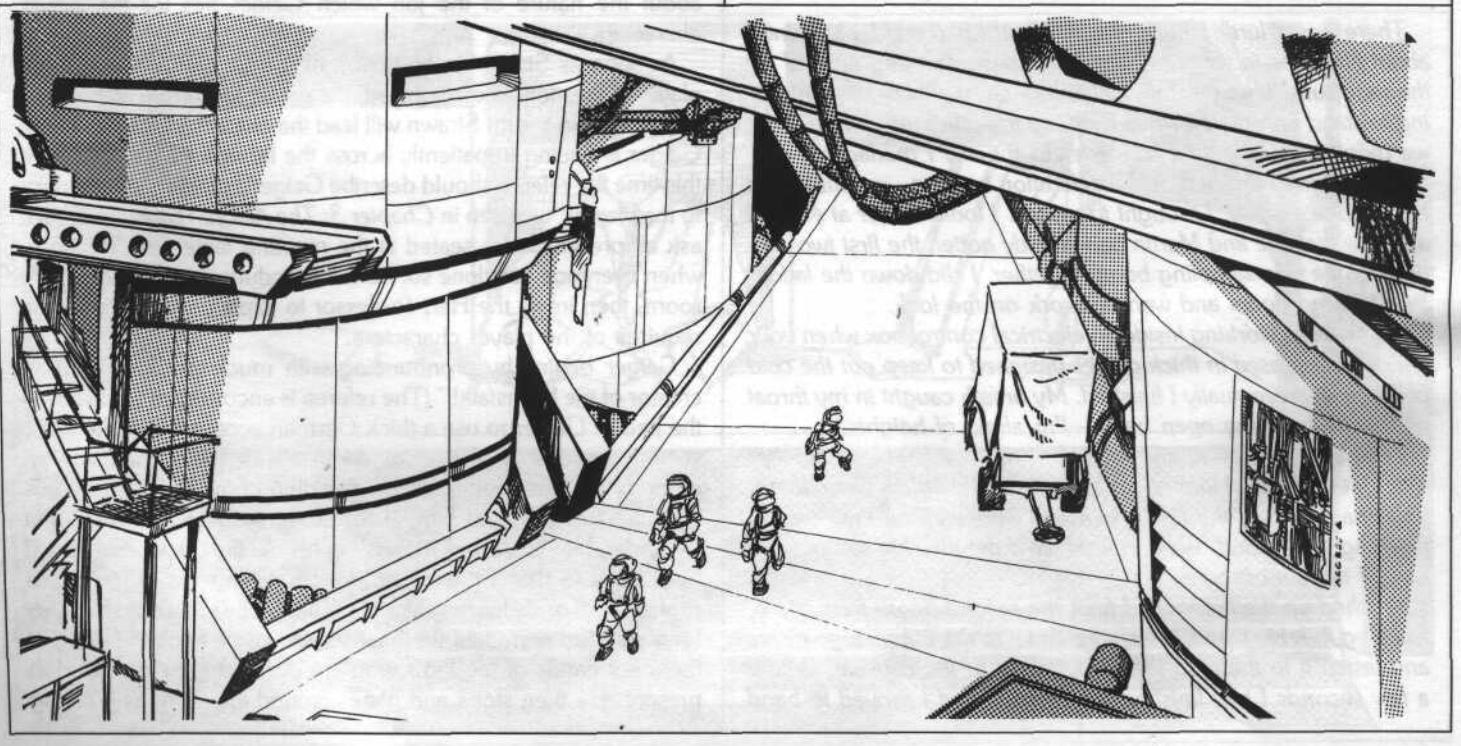
Q. What will the task of obtaining the samples entail?

A. The characters will have to apply to the director for permission. It will be best if they present themselves as a scientific team wishing to take samples from Beta Canum's mesosphere in order to study its unusual metallic ion content. They will then have to ride a capsule up the beanstalk and set up the sample equipment when they reach the mesosphere. Afterward, they will ride the capsule back down, taking a second set of samples to compare to the first, and then report to Geiger.

Q. Is Director Lafontaine likely to believe their story and grant them permission?

A. Geiger goes into a tirade about what an imbecile Lafontaine is, as well as his family of bureaucratic fools all scattered throughout the French colony's government. He says that if Lafontaine *doesn't* grant them permission, he (Geiger) will break him in pieces with his own two hands.

Q. What relatives does Lafontaine have within the French



Ministry of the Interior? (Note: If the players do not think to ask this question, neither will Nigel Strawn.)

A. Lafontaine's nephew is Vice President in Charge of Maintenance for the beanstalk, which is probably why Geiger's report was not acted upon, and his sister-in-law is the Commissioner of Exports. (Note: If the players have not yet asked Geiger about his report and its conclusions, and do so now, allow them to attempt the task mentioned in the first question, above.)

Q. How long before the beanstalk is destroyed?

A. It will most likely take at least a year, but the point at which the beanstalk would have to be shut down for repairs, rather than merely developing some way to prevent further erosion, might be reached in as early as two months; and the point at which it becomes irreparable, even though it will not have broken, might be only six months away. There is no way to say exactly without samples to study.

Q. Why not allow it to be shut down, causing embarrassment to the French Director? (Note: If the players do not ask this question, neither will Nigel Strawn.)

A. Geiger is afraid that if there is any shake-up in the organization which oversees the beanstalk, future personnel may prevent him from having anything at all to do with the beanstalk, as they may believe that he purposely failed to warn Lafontaine in order to cause him trouble.

Most questions which the players will come up with will likely be variations of the ones above. If any are raised which do not match these, the referee will have to answer them from his or her knowledge of the adventure's parameters.

Note: The importance of any information which the player characters may be able to get out of Geiger concerning the report which he filed following the loss of the 40 capsules and Lafontaine's relatives within the French Colonial Government will be explained in *Act II: The Giant and the Beanstalk.* If the players do not gain this information from their interview with Geiger, they will have other opportunities to do so later. Therefore, its importance should not be overstressed at this time.

Scene II: After having their meeting with Geiger, the characters travel to Premiere to meet with Director Lafontaine. Rebco has told Lafontaine that the player characters are members of an internationally funded scientific team from an obscure foundation on Earth, who want to talk with him about performing an experiment during a trip on the beanstalk.

Geiger has given the player characters instructions to explain to Lafontaine that they wish to use a cargo capsule as a laboratory from which they will extend instruments on booms to take readings of the atmosphere, and that they will have to travel along as well in order to monitor the equipment. After they obtain approval for their journey up the beanstalk, they are to return to Geiger to be outfitted with the necessary equipment. Geiger warns them not to let their connection with him be learned by Lafontaine, or their mission will likely be rejected out of hand.

Upon arriving at the offices of the beanstalk, the party is ushered into the office of Antoine Marquardt, the assistant director. (The referee should describe Marquardt's physical appearance to the players at this point, as he is described in *Chapter 3: The Actors.)* Marquardt entertains them for about twenty minutes while they wait for Lafontaine to return from a lunch engagement which has run late. During their time with Marquardt, the referee should work to make sure that the players begin to view him as a very competent individual who is willing to entertain the ideas of others and who is concerned, more than anything else, with keeping the beanstalk running on schedule. The referee can accomplish this by having the following things interrupt Marquardt's time with the player characters: (1) An angry man bursts into the office waving a sheaf of papers at Marquardt and asking, "How the heck am I supposed to keep shipments on time if my cargo capsules keep being bumped from the schedule?" It turns out that Lafontaine has authorized an unscheduled passenger run for a pair of diplomats returning to France, requiring that a cargo capsule be removed from the schedule. Marquardt calms the man, reproves him for making a scene in front of visitors (the player characters), and countermands Lafontaine's order, saying that the diplomats will just have to wait for the normal passenger run. (2) A secretary enters and asks Marquardt to sign an authorization for the British investigators to access the main computer in the maintenance building in order to reexamine some of the technical data. As he signs the paper, Marquardt is heard to mumble under his breath that he wishes these incompetent fools would give it up and let him assign his own team to discover who was at fault. By golly, then some heads would roll.

Shortly after this, the secretary returns to announce that Lafontaine has arrived. Marquardt excuses himself from the player characters in order to go and let the director know that they are waiting. He returns in a few moments, a little red in the face, and sends the player characters in to see Lafontaine. The referee should describe Lafontaine to the players at this point (he is described in *Chapter 3: The Actors).*

Lafontaine is in a foul mood due to the fact that his authorization of the unscheduled passenger capsule for the diplomats from France has been countermanded. He listens politely enough to the players' request, then flatly turns them down, saying that it is too dangerous and he will not be responsible for the safety of their lives and others by allowing them to go through with this plan. The referee should allow the players to present any arguments they wish, but Lafontaine will not change his mind. If the players do not leave of their own accord after a few moments, Lafontaine will call a guard to see them out of his office and into the hall.

If the players decide to return to Marquardt and try to convince him to allow them to take the samples, their success will depend partly upon what they tell him. If they tell him exactly the same story they have told Lafontaine, to convince him is a task.

To convince Marquardt: Formidable. Psychology. 5 minutes.

If at any time they reveal to Marquardt that they are actually seeking to determine if the metal ions in Beta Canum's mesosphere are eroding the beanstalk, he will ask how they arrived at that theory. If they refuse to tell him, or concoct a false story about the source of their theory, to convince him to grant permission is a different task from the one above.

To convince Marquardt (Unskilled): Difficult. Psychology. 2 minutes.

If the player characters reveal to Marquardt that they are working for Herr Professor Geiger, or that he is the source of their erosion theory, to convince Marquardt will be an easier task.

To convince Marquardt (Unskilled): Routine. Psychology. 1 minute.

If the player characters succeed in convincing Marquardt to approve their trip to obtain specimens, Marquardt will caution them that this must still be done without Lafontaine's knowledge. Therefore, he says, he will contact Geiger himself and work out the details of the plan and Geiger can inform the group of how

the plan will be carried off once it has been worked out.

If the player characters do not convince Marquardt, they will have to return to Geiger with news of their failure. He will not be happy. But after a few minutes, he will calm down enough to tell them, "Then we must do it without their approval."

Either way, the party will be told to wait for a call from Geiger to tell them that it is time to *prepare* for their trip.

Scene III: The player characters receive a call from Geiger early one morning, asking them to come to his office within the hour if possible. Once they arrive, he begins to explain the procedure of their mission.

It has been arranged that on the following evening the party will be let through a gate in the beanstalk compound and led to a cargo capsule which will be waiting to be sent up the beanstalk. The equipment they will need will be waiting inside the capsule. This includes electronic equipment for disabling the safety on the main hatch on the bottom end of the capsule so that it can be opened in transit (without setting off alarms in the ground control station); vacc suits for working in the capsule once it has been opened to the mesosphere; the pieces of sampling equipment, with sectional, 10m booms for projecting them out of the capsule and connectors for locking the booms to the hatch; a lifeboat for the characters to spend the majority of the outbound trip in relative comfort; and a second set of vacc suits which carry enough supplementary water, food, and waste disposal equipment to last the five days of the return trip.

Geiger explains that once they are inside the capsule they will have to remain very quiet to prevent discovery until the capsule begins to move. Then they will have to move very quickly to don their vacc suits, open the hatch, assemble the boom sections, affix the sampling equipment to the assembled booms, project the booms out of the capsule, and take the samples. From the time the capsule lifts off, they will have 15 minutes before they reach the lower limits of the mesosphere, and as they will be travelling at nearly 300 km per hour by then, only five minutes more will pass before they leave the mesosphere's upper limits.

Also, he says, since they will be working with the bottom end of the capsule open, he wants them to be very careful not to fall out; if a body were to fall into the ground station, the whole mission would be betrayed. (If the players ask him about parachutes, he will say that they may bring some along if they wish, but putting on a parachute will take up some of that precious 20 minutes, as well as making anyone who might fall very visible—but at least they could get up and walk away afterward, which would decrease the chance of the mission being discovered. On the whole, he recommends against parachutes, but he will not forbid them. Also, if they ask about connecting themselves to safety cables, Geiger will throw his hands up in the air and say, "I suppose you can bring them, if you think that you can do your job without getting all tangled together.")

After taking the samples, the player characters will have to disassemble the booms, close the cargo hatch, and get into the lifeboat. When they reach the starship terminal about four and a half days later, they are to again remain very quiet until the maintenance foreman at that end comes to get them. They will then get into their second set of vacc suits and carry the sampling gear and boom sections as the foreman leads them to another cargo capsule which is set to descend.

The maintenance foreman's name is Simonne Guirguis. (Whether Marquardt or Geiger set the plan up, Guirguis is the only man that they could get for this job without Lafontaine learning of it.) Geiger describes Guirguis, as to both physical appearance and personality, in almost exactly the terms in which he is given in *Chapter 3: The Actors.* Geiger tells the player characters to watch Guirguis closely and to try not to offend him, as he is probably not trustworthy and may decide to report them all, especially if he feels there is a profit in doing so.

The group will have to survive on the water and concentrates stored in attachments to their vacc suits for the entire trip down, as very few cargo capsules have heat or atmosphere, and this is not one of them. They can open the bottom cargo hatch and set up the sampling equipment for its second pass at any time (although they will probably want to wait until the morning of the fifth day to do so, as several days of looking down from that height could be disconcerting), but they should not turn the equipment on until sensors installed in their suits inform them that they have entered the mesosphere once again.

They will take samples for five minutes, then work quickly to disassemble the equipment and close the hatch within the 15 minutes left before the capsule reaches ground. Care should be taken once again to keep from falling out, especially as during the last minute of travel they will be experiencing about one and a half Gs due to the effects of deceleration. Once the capsule docks, the characters will have to remain very silent once again until another confederate comes to collect them and their samples and take them to Geiger. After that, their mission will be complete, and Geiger will have the samples he needs to prove or disprove his theory.

After giving the characters this briefing, Geiger will attempt to answer any questions they might have, although there is not a lot to tell beyond what he has already provided. He will then lead them to a workshop where they can spend the afternoon practicing getting into and out of vacc suits, assembling and disassembling sample equipment and booms, and reading up on the operation of the lifeboat and the cargo capsule main hatch. They are then sent back to their hotel rooms to rest up until the following night.

Scene IV: The following night the characters report to the gate through which they are to be let into the beanstalk compound. The gate area is unlighted, and the characters wait for several minutes until a shadowy figure arrives on the other side and unlocks the gate to let them in. The figure is not much for small talk, and says only, "Follow me," then leads them to a large hangar where capsules on gantries wait to be moved to the beanstalk, which is visible through the hangar doors. The figure leads to the one capsule with the bottom hatch open, and motions the characters up a ladder suspended from inside. As the characters climb the ladder, they view the interior of the capsule.

The capsule is a great, hollow shell; its interior is ringed every two meters by meter-wide platforms set against the walls. These decks are connected to one another by metal ladders. Hanging from the domed upper end of the capsule is an interstellar lifeboat which takes up about two thirds of the capsule's interior. Along the walls of the bottommost tier hang a collection of vacc suits and various pieces of sampling equipment—the disassembled booms lie beneath them on the deck.

As soon as all of the characters have boarded and they pull the boarding ladder up, their guide waves, then touches a control which causes the hatch to close. The characters must wait for about half an hour, sitting very quietly, until the capsule and gantry exit the hangar and attach to the beanstalk. To do so is a task.

To sit very quietly: Simple. Endurance. Instantaneous.

If one of the player characters should happen to fail at this task (a near impossibility unless they roll a "0"), within a few moments they will all be startled by a loud "bong" as someone outside

pounds upon the hull. This will only happen once, as long as the characters make no other noise (the *referee* can assume that they do not), then the person outside will apparently wander on, satisfied that the noise did not come from the players' capsule. A short time later, the capsule and gantry will be towed outside and attached to the beanstalk cable.

The characters feel a sudden lurch upward, which settles out into a sensation of about one and a half gravities as the capsule begins to accelerate to its final speed of 300 km per hour; this acceleration continues for approximately one minute, then gravity returns to normal as cruising speed is reached. It is time to go to work. First, everyone must don vacc suits. This is a task.

To don a vacc suit (Unskilled): Routine. Vacc Suit and Dexterity. 20 seconds.

(Note: All of the following tasks have been increased one degree of difficulty as a result of the fact that the characters are working in vacc suits. Any character with Vacc Suit as a skill may add his or her skill level to the roll of each of the tasks. Also, each of these tasks is Hazardous once the hatch is open, so failure at a task is always a 3D6 roll, with a Total Mishap resulting in the character falling out of the capsule.)

If the players wish for their characters to don parachutes and they have brought them, they may. To do so is a task.

To don a parachute: Routine. Dexterity. 20 seconds.

If someone falls out of the capsule while wearing a parachute, an automatic altitude sensor opens the chute at the correct altitude and the character can guide his or her descent so as to land a few kilometers outside of Premiere.

(Note: If the players wish for their characters to wear safety lines, they may have them do so, providing they have brought some along. To attach a safety line is not a task, and takes almost no time at all, but each of the following tasks becomes one degree more difficult as the characters must concentrate on not tangling equipment or people in their safety lines.)

Next, one character must begin to work at disarming the safety mechanism and alarm on the main hatch. To do so is a task.

To disarm the safety (Uncertain): Difficult. Electronic or Mechanical. 30 seconds.

Although it will be obvious if the safety has been disarmed, as the hatch can now be opened, the character may not be sure that the alarm has not been set off at the ground station. (Even if it has been, Simonne Guirguis will be the person assigned to check out why, once the capsule has docked at the starship terminal, and all he will do is chastise the characters for their clumsiness.) Once the cargo hatch is opened, the only places the characters will have to stand are the decks which ring the inside of the capsule.

While one character is disarming the safely on the hatch, the others will have to assemble the booms and fasten the sampling equipment onto the ends. There are three sets of these, one to drag against the beanstalk for the skin sample, and two to sample the atmosphere. To assemble each boom and its equipment is a task.

To assemble the equipment (Teamwork, Unskilled): Difficult. Mechanical. 1 minute.

For every person working on the same boom beyond the first, the difficulty is decreased by one and the time roll is reduced by three, with a maximum of three people working on each boom, and a minimum of two.

Next, the booms must be fastened into place against the edges of the hatch so that their equipment ends project outside of the capsule. The boom which is to sample the skin of the beanstalk is the most important one, and ideally should be set up first. To set up each boom is a task.

To set up a boom (Teamwork, Unskilled): Difficult. Mechanical. 30 seconds.

Two people are required to set up a boom: one to hold it in place, and the other to fasten it down. If three people work on a single boom, the difficulty is decreased by one level, and the time required is halved. No more than three people can work at setting up a single boom at once.

Note: If a character rolls a Total Mishap and falls out of the capsule, he or she has a chance to catch on to a projection and hang from it until someone else can help in climbing back to safe footing. To catch a projection and hang on are tasks. (If the character is wearing a safety line, these two rolls are automatic successes.)

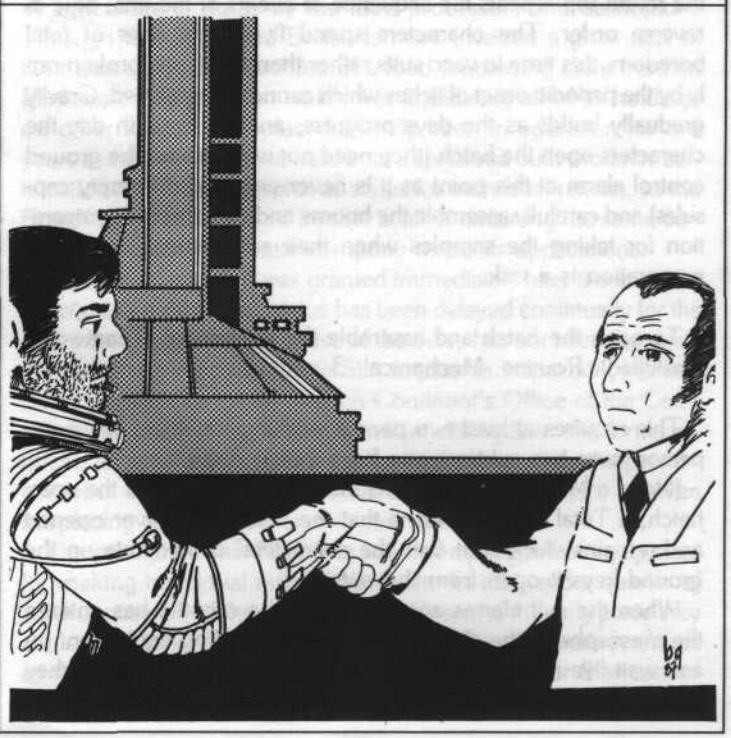
To catch a projection: Difficult. Dexterity. Instant. (This task may be repeated a maximum of 1D3 times if failure results in a roll of Reroll, Retry, or Check Determination.)

To hang on to a projection: Routine. Strength. Instant.

If no one is available to help the fallen character, he or she may attempt to climb back to a deck without aid. This is a task.

To return to a deck without aid: Difficult. Strength and Dexterity. 10 seconds.

After the samples have been taken, the booms will have to be disassembled and stored, the cargo hatch will have to be closed, and the safety will have to be rearmed. As the characters have all the time they can use to accomplish these things (to a maximum



of nearly the next five days), the referee should have them make only one task roll.

To pack things away and close the hatch (Teamwork, Unskilled): Routine. Mechanical. 3 minutes.

This requires at least two people working together. For every person over two, subtract one from the time roll.

Note: A Major Mishap on this task means that the cargo hatch is stuck open, and a Total Mishap means that the cargo hatch is stuck open *and* a boom falls out of it.

Scene V: Five crushingly boring days drag by within the cramped confines of the lifeboat. The referee should go into great detail about just how little there is for the characters to do to pass the time, how uncomfortable they are with no bathing facilities, how the nearest thing to excitement is the steady loss of gravity as they approach the starship station and its zero-Gs, and how badly they want to kill each other from growing irritability.

Eventually, about half a G of deceleration is felt for a minute, then zero-G returns as the capsule comes to a stop. This is followed by several moments of the feeling of shifting sideways and down as the capsule is moved into a torus-shaped hangar which rotates about the beanstalk, thereby simulating gravity—about half a G. Eventually the capsule comes to a complete stop, and the characters wait expectantly for Guirguis to come get them.

They wait for hours. Finally, when they can't seem to stand it any longer, they hear the cargo hatch open, and someone climbs to the lifeboat hatch and calls for them to come out. It is Guirguis. As the characters emerge from the lifeboat, the referee should describe Guirguis's appearance to the players once again.

Guirguis rocks from foot to foot impatiently as the characters get into their second set of vacc suits and collect the sampling equipment and booms. He nags them incessantly in his nasal voice until they are prepared to leave (if the characters answer him crossly, he turns red, shuts up entirely, and glares at them with his bulging eyes), then leads them hastily across an immense hangar toward another capsule.

This capsule is similar to the one they have just vacated, with the exception that it is being returned to the planet empty. Likewise, the return trip repeats the sequence of events of the first, only in reverse order. The characters spend five more days of total boredom, this time in vacc suits rather than a lifeboat, broken only by the periodic onset of itches which cannot be scratched. Gravity gradually builds as the days progress, and on the fifth day the characters open the hatch (they need not worry about the ground control alarm at this point as it is never engaged on empty capsules) and carefully assemble the booms and equipment in preparation for taking the samples when their suit alarms buzz. This preparation is a task.

To open the hatch and assemble the equipment (Teamwork, Unskilled): Routine. Mechanical. 3 minutes.

This requires at least two people working together. For every person over two subtract one from the time roll.

(Note: a Major Mishap means that a boom is lost out the open hatch; a Total Mishap means that the hatch was never opened and remains stuck shut until the characters' confederate on the ground keys it open from the outside.)

When the suit alarms announce that the capsule has entered the mesosphere, the characters turn the sampling equipment on and wait five minutes. After the five minutes have elapsed, they have fifteen minutes to disassemble everything and close the hatch.

Since they are descending into atmosphere of ever increasing density at this time, air will begin blowing into the capsule: a thin *breeze* first, but rapidly building to 300 km per hour, the speed of their descent (the characters will be sheltered quite a bit from this wind by the decks they are standing on).

Although they have been through a similar experience of working with the hatch and the equipment booms under time pressure before, which would tend to make occasion time easier, conditions are now more difficult: winds are rushing into the capsule and the characters are not as fresh as they were on the upbound trip. Therefore, the following tasks are at the same level of difficulty as their counterparts on the upward trip. Also, falling out of the capsule is impossible during descent below the mesosphere as the wind will blow the falling character toward the upper end of the capsule, then drop him or her toward a side. Successful rolls to catch on to a projection after falling, to hold on, and to return to a deck unassisted (see *Scene IV)* will therefore deposit the character onto a higher deck than he or she fell from.

To disassemble each boom in these conditions is a task.

To disassemble the boom (Teamwork, Unskilled): Difficult. Mechanical. 1 minute.

Two people are required to detach a boom from the hatch and disassemble it. If three work on a single boom, the strength of the strongest character involved may be used as a modifier to the roll, and the time required is halved.

To close the hatch and arm the safety is a task, and may begin when someone starts working on the last boom projecting from the capsule.

To reengage the safety: Difficult. Electronic or Mechanical. 30 seconds.

One major difference between the downbound sampling and the upbound sampling is that although the characters had to don vacc suits during preparation for the first sampling, they do not have to spend time removing them in the preparation for coming to ground after the second sampling. However, if they find that they have time to remove their suits after disassembling the booms, they will have a strong desire to do so in order to feel the air of Beta Canum (the relatively gentle backwash in the shelter of the decks) blow over their unwashed bodies. Unsuiting now will also prevent them from having to wait to remove their suits until the capsule is towed to the hangar and their confederate arrives.

During the last minute of descent, the capsule will once again decelerate rapidly; the characters will experience the equivalent of one and a half Gs of downward force. If the cargo hatch is still open, each of the characters should roll to avoid falling. This is a task.

To avoid falling (hazardous): Routine. Strength and Dexterity. Instantaneous.

The *referee* can assign modifiers to this roll based upon any precautions which the players take.

Note: Characters who fall get the same rolls to catch a projection and to hold on as are listed above, but roll to return to a deck unassisted (if they so desire) at one degree higher difficulty, as their muscles are pulling against one and a half Gs. (For descriptions of these tasks, see *Scene IV.)*

Scene VI: After the capsule has reached ground and has been ferried into the hangar, the same person who originally saw them

off will come to get them. If the cargo doors are stuck open, this figure will become very agitated, and will rush the characters off of the compound. In either case, the characters will be guided to a car which will then take them and their sampling equipment to Herr Professor Geiger's home.

Once they arrive, Geiger will eagerly take the equipment off of their hands and send it to be analyzed. Only then will he think to ask the characters how the mission went.

If the characters have successfully gathered two sets of specimens, one going up and one coming down, Geiger will be ecstatic. He will treat them as guests in his home for two days, wining and dining them all the while.

If the characters have collected only one set of specimens, Geiger will congratulate them thoroughly on a job well done and will offer to let them stay the night.

If the characters did not succeed in obtaining even one set of specimens, Geiger will go into an icy rage and will call his driver to take them to their hotel. He will not answer their calls during the next day. The characters may be able to convince Geiger to let them try again. To do so is a task.

To convince Geiger: Routine. Psychology or Bargaining. 5 minutes.

If the characters go through the whole trip again, each task will be one step easier due to their experience.

If the characters have not only failed to obtain any specimens, but have also lost a piece of equipment, Geiger will have his driver take them to their hotel, and in the morning they will receive a call from Nigel Strawn asking them to return to Adrian as someone else has been assigned to the case.

Act II: The Giant and the Beanstalk

In which the player characters seek to find the means to coerce a giant.

Luck was with us so far. Andrea got us past the gate of the maintenance compound by convincing the guard there that we were sales personnel come to demonstrate paint samples to their buyer. Martin quickly led us across the compound to the correct office building, as if he had been there before. We slipped through the corridors without alerting any of the security guards, and, unbelievably, we found Armand Lafontaine's office empty, the door ajar. The light was also on, suggesting that he might be back at any time.

While Martin watched the corridor for Lafontaine's return, Andrea began searching the room, and I sat down at the computer terminal. A glow of satisfaction began to grow in me as I worked past Lafontaine's programmed safeguards and began to access his private files—even this was going easier than could have been expected. It seemed that we were on a roll.

For a couple of minutes I was aware of nothing except my fingers on the keyboard and the flicker of light from the computer screen across my face. From over my shoulder, Andrea watched the parade of letters and figures on the screen. Suddenly we both caught our breath.

"Oh my...," Andrea said, covering her mouth with one hand; her eyes were wide with horror. Martin started toward us to read the screen for himself.

"It seems that Armand Lafontaine hasn't just been paying people off," I told him with an affected air of nonchalance. "He has also had a few of them killed."

Martin muttered a curse. "Get it on hard copy, and let's get out of here!" he said. I didn't need any prompting; the printer was already running.

Just then our luck ran out. The door swung open and Lafontaine stepped in. He took one look around the room, saw the three of us frozen around the computer, and pulled an immense pistol from under his coat.

I hit the floor as the first shot was fired. Above me the computer screen exploded, showering fragments of glass and plastic over the back of my jacket. The room suddenly went dark as Andrea or Martin hit the light switch. The printer chattered on.

There was a sudden, dull thud, as of something solid striking flesh, and someone groaned. Without waiting to find out who had struck whom, I leaped up, tore the copy off the printer, and made a dash out the door. Martin and Andrea were right behind me. Two shots from the office tore holes in the corridor wall as we left.

We sprinted out of the building, praying for our lives. So much for our run of good luck.

Scene I: This adventure begins with the player characters summoned once again from their hotel rooms in Adrian to meet with Nigel Strawn. This time, the client they are introduced to is Alastair McBride, Director of Four Star, the food processing and distributing corporation created by the British Continent's farmers' co-op. At this time, the referee should describe McBride's physical appearance to the players (as given in *The Actors).* Also, during the characters' interview with McBride, the referee should take care to present him as an honest, direct, likable guy who is unfairly being taken advantage of by a giant, impersonal bureaucracy.

When the interview opens, McBride is very friendly and pleasant as he exchanges greetings with the characters, and he compliments them on their excellent records as troubleshooters. He says that he trusts that they will be able to come up with something that will help to get him out of his predicament as well. He then proceeds with a description of his problem.

McBride explains to the characters that he is the Director of Four Star, a food processing company created by the British farmers' co-op. Four Star, he continues, was intended to be a tool by which the British farmers could reap a greater share of the profits from the sale of their crops, as most of the money made in the field of agriculture is made by the food processors and distributors. Through the co-op, the British farmers invested a great deal of their assets into the purchase of a food processing plant from an Earth-based corporation which was liquidating all of its holdings on other worlds. The plant had only been in operation for two years at the time, and had held both Zapamoga bulk products certification and French Approuvée status for individual rations, so the British co-op expected no trouble at all in obtaining the same certifications when their new company made its applications.

Zapamoga approval was granted immediately after the initial inspection, but Approuvée status has been delayed continually for the past three years. And the cause of the delay has not been the result of a failure on the part of Four Star to pass an inspection; instead, it has been a case of the French Continent's Office of the Commissioner of Exports making constant changes in the forms required for application, letting applications expire while the personnel who were to study them were away on vacation, or even misplacing applications or throwing them away.

The problem is that Four Star has half a plant full of equipment for making individual rations sitting almost idle, and a quarter of a warehouse full of the rations themselves, and the only place they can sell the rations is to companies on the British Continent, such as the one which runs the air film train lines. Four Star cannot remain in business much longer while supporting the idle half of

the plant, and if something doesn't give soon, the corporation will have to close up shop. McBride slams his fist upon the table in frustration at this point.

McBride insists that it is not that Four Star has not earned the blasted certification, it is simply that the French are using paper-shuffling and foot-dragging to prevent Four Star from being better able to compete with Nous Partagons, the French farmers' food processing and distributing company. He says that he has personally travelled to the French Continent almost monthly for the past three years trying to find some way to push the certification through, but has met with no success. He has tried every way he could imagine, including bribes, but nothing has worked.

At first, he says, he thought that he could reason with Renee Quist, the French Commissioner of Exports, and reach some sort of an agreement, as she is such a pleasant old woman. But it has become obvious, he remarks, that she will not be moved. She has an overwhelming devotion to the desires of the French colonial government, largely because so many members of her family work within its offices in one way or another. The two most obvious cases are her son, Armand Lafontaine, who is Vice President in Charge of Beanstalk Maintenance, and her brother-in-law, Gustave Lafontaine, who is Beanstalk Director.

McBride says that when he finally realized that no matter how likable Renee was, she was not going to grant French approval to a British farmer, he went to ESA to make a complaint. He spoke with some officials who were not of French origin, and they confessed to him with embarrassment that although the situation was most definitely unjust, they could do nothing without documented proof that the Commissioner was purposely withholding the certification for political reasons. And even with that proof, the best they could do was to appeal to world opinion on Earth. This might embarrass the French before the other nations of Earth at a time when world opinion was very important, as all nations were jockeying for the right to influence the scheduling of transportation on Earth's beanstalk. In other words, the French colonial government might cave in and grant Approuvée status to Four Star rather than cause an uproar on Earth when the nations there learned that beanstalk scheduling on Beta Canum was not only French dominated, but French *monopolized,* and began to fear that the same thing would happen on Earth.

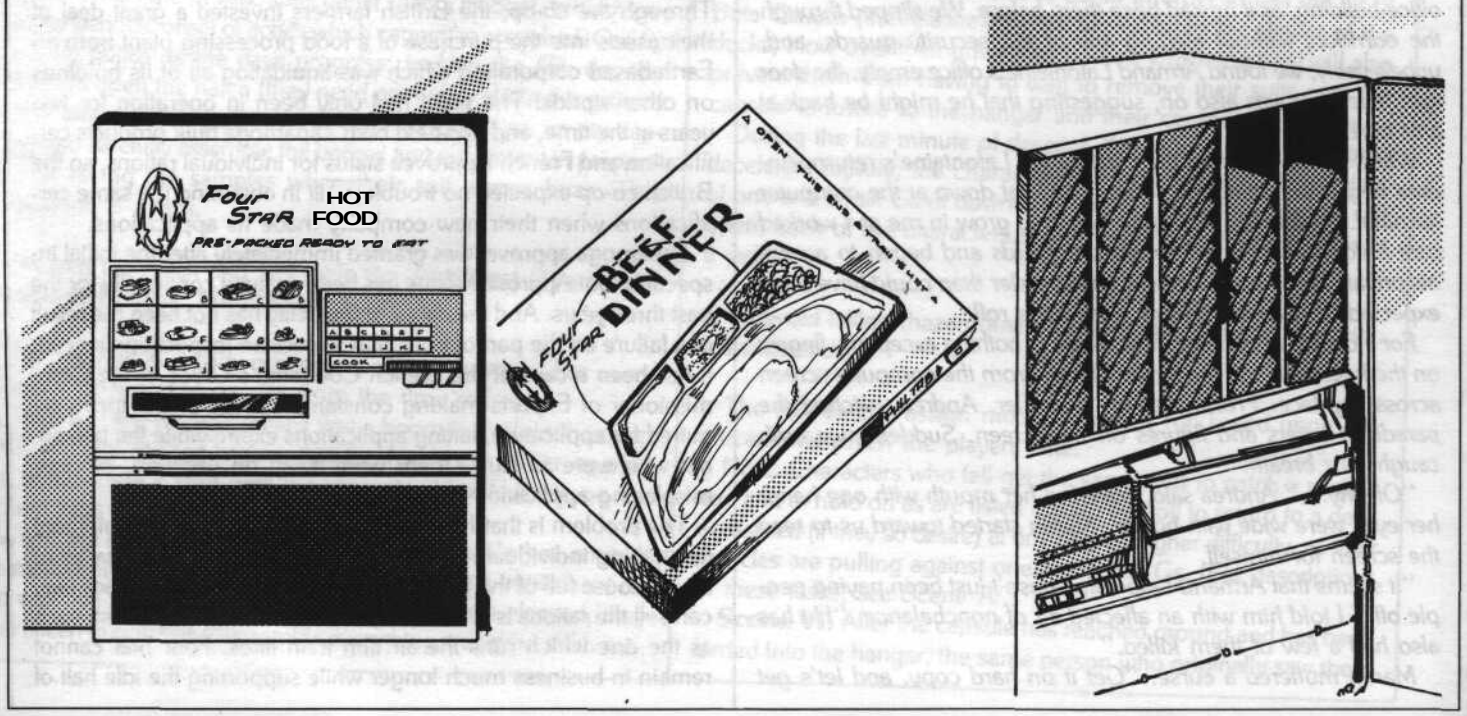
But without hard evidence, the ESA officials told him, nothing could be done, and they had no authorization to go digging for that proof. McBride's last hope was destroyed, until someone told him about Rebco and its troubleshooters.

McBride ends his explanation with the following words, "Aye laddies, 'tis a cryin' shame it is. We thought we had a good thing a goin' when the other farmers and me joined together and created Four Star. But we dinna reckon wi' the sneaky, underhanded, backstabbin' officials we'd be forced to kowtow to, and now't appears our dreams were for nought."

"Ye laddies are our last hope. Have ye any ideas a'tall how to wrangle our certification outa the money-grubbin' parasites? If not, I ha' one suggestion meself, but I dinna think ye'll like it."

McBride's suggestion is that the characters break into Renee Quist's office and search her computer for files which he can present to ESA as proof that she is withholding Approuvée status from Four Star for political reasons. However, he will not reveal this suggestion to the characters at this time. Whether the players come up with any ideas at the moment or not, even if they put forward the same suggestion as McBride has been harboring, he will only talk with them for a few more moments before saying, "Why not think the matter over a bit, and I'll talk to ye again in th' mornin'." He will then excuse himself and leave.

Scene II: When the characters meet with McBride and Strawn the next morning, those two gentlemen will listen to any ideas the players might have for solving McBride's problem. The referee should be careful to consider the merits of each plan within the framework of what he or she knows of the political situation on Beta Canum. For example, if the players suggest that someone in Renee Quist's family be kidnapped until the Commissioner grants certification to Four Star, Strawn and McBride will forbid it as unworkable because Quist must be able to convince the French colonial government that granting the certification is in their best interests. In other words, it is not so much that Quist has to be coerced as that the government must be, and this is most likely only possible by threatening to embarrass them on Earth. Strawn will therefore naysay any threats of violence or personal blackmail. Instead, he says, some digging must be done until something turns



up.

If the players suggest using the loss of capsules off the beanstalk in 2293 as a starting point, Strawn will encourage them to follow up any leads they may have. If, on the other hand, the players have no ideas of how to start, McBride will suggest that they search Renee Quist's office for signs of official orders that she refuse to give Four Star French Approuvée status.

Note: If at any time in this Act, the characters are found in a place where they don't belong and they cannot convince the person who finds them that they actually belong there, enough guards will be summoned to escort them out after examining their identification. If the characters are discovered after breaking into a locked area or accessing private files on a computer and they cannot talk their way out of it, they will be taken to police headquarters, where they will be searched and all of their belongings will be confiscated. Then, after a wait of three days in jail they will be escorted off of the French Continent to whatever location they wish, with the price of the ticket deducted from any money they may have had with them. Their identities are now on file with the French Police, and if they are caught in shady dealings on the French Continent in the future, they will be returned to their home worlds at their own expense. If in their adventuring they have maimed or killed anyone, they will be placed into a home for the criminally insane until they can convince the officials that they are cured, which is a task.

To convince the officials that they are cured (Unskilled): Impossible. Psychology. 1 month. (Make a time roll even if the character fails the task. The result is the amount of time which must pass before the character can try again. Psychology can be studied during this time to make the task easier.)

If the characters decide to search Renee Quist's office...they must first travel to Premiere. Once in the city, they must make preparations for breaking into the building which houses the French Ministry of the Interior, and then into the wing which is devoted to the Commissioner of Exports. A visit to the building during the day (there are tours for visitors) will reveal that it is a very old structure which relies upon armed guards for its security, even overnight.

During working hours, the building contains too much activity for the characters to get a chance at Commissioner Quist's office; they will have to return after hours. To enter the building after closing, however, they will have to unlock a window or an unlit door, which is a task.

To unlock a window or door (Unskilled): Difficult. Mechanical or Strength. 30 seconds. (Major Mishap means so much noise was made that 1D6 guards have come to investigate.)

Once they have gained access to the building, they must work their way to Commissioner Quist's office, which is on the second floor. This requires that they travel through the patrolled areas of three different guards: one on the ground floor near the point the characters have entered, one in the lobby where the elevators and stairwells are, and one on the second floor in the wing which contains Commissioner Quist's office. To pass each of these guards unnoticed is a task, which must be rolled by each character each time the group passes through a patrol area.

To pass unnoticed (Unskilled): Routine. Stealth and Dexterity. 10 seconds.

Once in the Commissioner's office, someone should watch for the guard while another unlocks the door. These are tasks.

To watch for the guard (Unskilled): Simple. Determination. (Minor Mishap means a guard has noticed them and has gone for help. Major Mishap means that Renee Quist has walked in on the characters and wants to know what they are doing in her office.)

To unlock the door (Unskilled): Simple. Mechanical or Strength. 10 seconds.

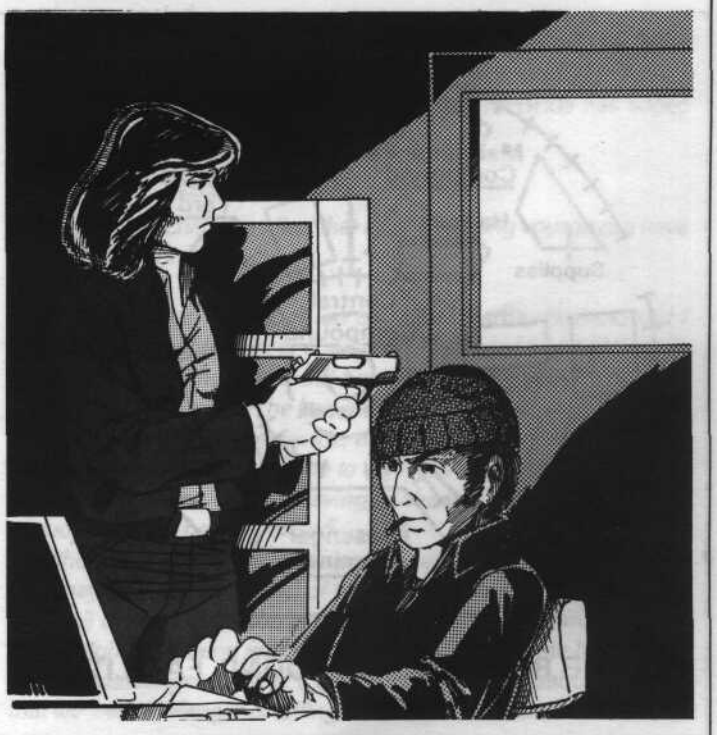
Next, while someone continues to watch for the guard, another must work with the Commissioner's computer. The character on the computer must gain access to the Commissioner's private files, which are stored on microfilaments within the computer itself. This requires breaking an access code for each of the files individually, which is a task.

To break an access code: Simple. Computer. 30 seconds.

Note: Each time the character successfully breaks an access code, thereby opening a new file, the referee should roll 1D10. On a roll of 0, the character has found a report which indicates that Commissioner Quist's son, Armand Lafontaine, may have paid off someone on a French maintenance team to prevent them from talking about the loss of 40 capsules in 2293 (There is only one of these reports). On a roll of 1-5, the file contains information which may be of use in proving that the granting of Approuvée status is often not based upon the merit of the company applying, but instead on political ties. Each time one of the second type of file comes up, the referee should assign it an importance level by rolling 1D10. Once the sum of the files' importance levels reaches 30, the character has gathered enough information to prove McBride's claims to the ESA officials.

Also note that each time a new file is accessed, the character on watch must roll again to watch for the guard.

Once the characters are satisfied that they have gathered enough information, they must exit the building, checking to pass the guards undetected as per the task statement above.



Finally, they will return to McBride with what they have found. If this is a collection of reports which prove that the Commissioner is withholding Approuvée status for political reasons only, then McBride will take the material and leave for Adrian, where he will speak to the ESA officials. Unfortunately, although the ESA officials are convinced, they don't believe the evidence is strong enough to sway world opinion on Earth. McBride will return to New Middlesex a few days later very disheartened and say, "Tisn't enough, ye'll have to go back in." If at any time the characters bring him the report that Armand may have paid someone off to cover up the beanstalk accident in 2293, McBride will grow very excited and say, "Now we're gettin' somewhere, lads. We need only search that blighter's office and we may be home free."

*If the characters decide to search Armand Lafontaine's office...*they must go to the beanstalk ground facility in Premiere. Once there, they must get into the maintenance compound, then find the Vice President in Charge of Maintenance's office.

The beanstalk ground facility is divided into four major areas, one central and three in a ring about it. Three of the four areas are fenced in (as explained below), but all four have direct access to each of the others by shared gates. In other words, the central compound has three gates, one leading to each of the other three compounds, and each of the others has a gate leading to the central compound as well as one leading to each of the other compounds. The three outer compounds also have gates for traffic from outside the ground facility.

The central compound contains the surface end of the beanstalk itself, and equipment for placing capsules on, or taking them off, the rails. This area is not only fenced off, but is also heavily patrolled night and day by a large force of armed guards.

The passenger terminal is the one compound which is not fenced in, and is patrolled the least. This compound also contains the offices of the beanstalk Director and his entire staff.

Another of the compounds in the outer ring is the freight terminal. Due to the value of many of the freight items which are shipped on the beanstalk, and due also to the hazards involved in working around a freight yard, this area is fenced off and patrolled more heavily than the passenger terminal.

The last of the compounds in the outer ring is the maintenance compound. This area is also fenced in, and is patrolled about as heavily as the freight area. The maintenance compound is further subdivided into a hangar area (in which beanstalk capsules are held while being serviced in preparation for their next trip), which is close to the gate leading to the freight yard; a supply area (containing several buildings devoted to different sorts of maintenance supplies), which is toward the outer gate of the compound; and an office complex (containing several different office buildings), which is just inside the gate leading to the passenger terminal.

All of these compounds are open day and night, as beanstalk travel goes on around the clock. During the day, guards will form a minority of any NPCs which the player characters may encounter; during the night, however, they will form the majority (this is reflected in encounter rules below). Whenever the player characters visit the maintenance compound, they may either wander until they find Armand Lafontaine's office themselves, or they may ask someone for directions. Either of these is a task.

To find the office without directions (Unskilled, Hazardous): Routine. Education. 5 minutes.

To find the office with directions (Unskilled, Hazardous): Simple. Education. 2 minutes.

Note: In the event of a failed roll on either task:

(1) If the characters have not asked for directions, Superficial Damage means that they become lost and must wander about for a bit before getting their bearings again. The *referee* should roll 1D10 and the result is the number of times the characters are confronted by a suspicious employee before finding the office. If the characters ask for directions, Superficial damage means that they have aroused the suspicions of the person to whom they are speaking. In either case, the characters must convince any suspicious employee that they have legitimate business on the compound, which is a task. (If they fail to convince the employee, any Mishap result means that the employee will alert the guards to the characters if they leave him or her.)

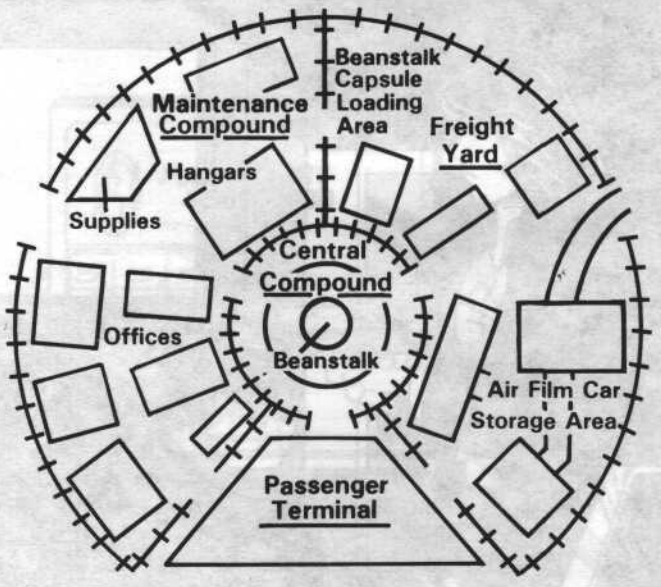
To convince a suspicious employee (Unskilled, Uncertain): Simple. Eloquence and Psychology. 5 seconds.

(2) Minor Mishap means that the characters have become so lost that they must ask for help, even to find their way out of the compound. This automatically entails convincing a suspicious employee at one degree more difficulty than the task above.

(3) Major Mishap means that the characters have been noticed by a guard and must lose him before continuing their search. This is a task. (A mishap on this task roll means that the entire security force becomes alerted, as with Total Mishap.)

To lose a guard (Unskilled, Uncertain): Difficult. Stealth and Dexterity. 1 minute. (Characters may retry until a mishap occurs, at which time the *referee* should proceed as under (4) Total Mishap, below.)

(4) Total Mishap means that the entire security force has been alerted to the presence of intruders, the compound has been sealed off to prevent escape, and the characters are being hunted down. There is a possibility that the characters may be able to escape or to surrender and talk their way out of the situation. They may choose as a group to pursue one option or the other, but not both. Either is a task.



THE BEANSTALK GROUND FACILITY

To escape the compound (Unskilled, Hazardous): Formidable. Stealth, Dexterity, and Physical Endurance. 2 minutes.

To talk their way out (Unskilled): Formidable. Eloquence and Psychology. 30 seconds.

There is also a 50/50 chance that the characters will encounter a suspicious employee each time they enter one of the following areas: (1) the main gate to the maintenance compound; (2) the grounds of the office complex, supply complex, or hangar complex; (3) the entrance to any office building they enter (they need to go to the main office building); (4) each floor of any building they are in (they need the top floor); and any office they might enter (the Vice President's is plainly marked). This employee must be convinced that the characters have a legitimate reason to be where they are. This task is listed under Superficial Damage in the note above. (Note: During the day, the chance is only one in ten that the suspicious employee is a guard; during the evening the chance is eight in 10. In all cases, if a guard is encountered, he or she will be one level more difficult to convince.

Once the characters have found Armand Lafontaine's office, they will discover that the office is empty at the moment, but the door is unlocked, suggesting that someone may return at any moment. They can slip inside easily, and then someone must keep watch while another works at the computer. Each of these are tasks.

To keep watch (Unskilled): Simple. Determination. (Minor Mishap means that a guard has noticed them and has gone for help. Major Mishap means that Armand Lafontaine has walked in on them and tries to kill them with a Hancock Nine-Twenty-Three Enforcer, see page 34 of the *Player's Handbook.)*

To access Armand Lafontaine's private files: Routine. Computer. 30 seconds.

Each successful roll of the latter task will reveal another person that Lafontaine has paid off to keep quiet about the fact that his decision to use incompletely trained crews led directly to the loss of 40 capsules off the beanstalk (the referee should assign each of these files an importance rating, just as in Renee Quist's office, above; once the total has reached 10, enough information has been gathered to prove that Armand was ultimately responsible for the loss of the 40 capsules). Also, in making the task roll, a natural roll of 1 means that the character has instead found evidence that Lafontaine paid to have a person he couldn't buy off murdered, and a natural roll of 3 indicates a mention that Geiger may have to be silenced to prevent him from telling what he knows.

Once the characters believe they have enough information, they must exit the maintenance compound, with the referee rolling the same chances of their encountering a suspicious employee as on their way in. After exiting the compound, they return to McBride with the information.

*If the characters decide to approach Herr Professor Hans Geiger...*about his report to Beanstalk Director Gustave Lafontaine, they will have to convince him to provide them with a copy. This is a task.

To convince Geiger (Unskilled): Formidable. Psychology or Bargaining. 3 minutes. (This task may be easier or more difficult, if the characters have worked for Geiger before. For each sample the characters obtained for him in *The Exfoliation Project,* make the difficulty level one lower. If they failed to obtain any samples, increase the difficulty by one level; and if they lost any of his equipment, increase the difficulty yet one more.)

If the players decide to break into Beanstalk Director Gustave Lafontaine's office...the referee should run the adventure just as for breaking into Renee Quist's office, with the exception that the only file of any importance to be found here is that of Herr Professor Geiger.

Scene III: Once the characters have returned to McBride with information which indicates that Armand Lafontaine may be guilty of any wrongdoing, McBride will thank them profusely and reward them by giving them the keys to Four Star's executive suite in the tourist city of Greenford on the island off of the western arm of the British Continent. The characters are welcome to stay there for two weeks of vacation before returning to Adrian. In the meantime, McBride will go to talk once again with French Commissioner of Exports, Renee Quist.

If the information which the players have found proves that Armand Lafontaine has had one or more people murdered to protect his secret, the French will agree to grant Approuvée status to Four Star in exchange for the privilege of prosecuting Lafontaine before any other nations find out about his crimes. In this way, the French can save face by demonstrating to other nations that they are constantly watching their beanstalk organization to make sure that all its activities are above board.

If the files the players give to McBride prove only that Armand Lafontaine has been paying people off to keep silent, then the results depend upon the strength of the evidence. If the sum of the files' importance (as figured above) exceeds 20, then the French will react just as if they had been provided with proof of murder. If the total importance is from 10 to 20, the French will still grant Approuvée Status to Four Star and will begin their own investigation of Lafontaine. Within a few days, however, the body of Herr Professor Hans Geiger will be found in some bushes in Premiere's city park. The first report is that he was mugged and robbed, but within a few days it will be revealed that Armand Lafontaine was behind the murder and that it was only one of several he has had done. Again the French will have saved face, but at the cost of Geiger's life. If the total importance is less than 10, Four Star will get its certification, Geiger will be murdered, but Lafontaine will not be suspected.

At any rate, if the characters have managed to provide McBride with the means to gain Approuvée status, upon returning to Adrian to see Nigel Strawn, they will discover that McBride has added a bonus of Lv500 apiece to their pay.

Act III: Assassin!

In which the characters find that even a relaxing voyage can have its exciting moments.

The celebration had gone on all night. Martin, Andrea, and I were the guests of honor, of course—we had tried to get Delacorte to share some of the credit, but he wouldn't hear of it. "You people are the real heroes," he had said. "You are the ones who conducted the search for the device, and you are the ones who found it and destroyed it. You deserve to enjoy the spotlight of your fellow passengers' praise without having to share it with me. I, too, am proud of you," he had added.

Although some of our fellow passengers had been a bit irritated that they had not been told of their danger from the very beginning, all of them had soon accepted Delacorte's explanations that there might have been uncontrollable panic if everyone had known that our passenger capsule's generators had been sabotaged and that we were in danger of falling off of the beanstalk to our deaths.

No one believed that they themselves would have panicked, of course, but they all believed it possible of their neighbors.

Once the danger was over and they had all been informed of the reason for the search, there had been a moment of incredulity, followed by a wild celebration.

I looked around me. Nearly everyone was asleep from exhaustion and excessive drinking. I have never understood people's desire to drink themselves insensible, I mused, but they seem ready to make anything an excuse for a party.

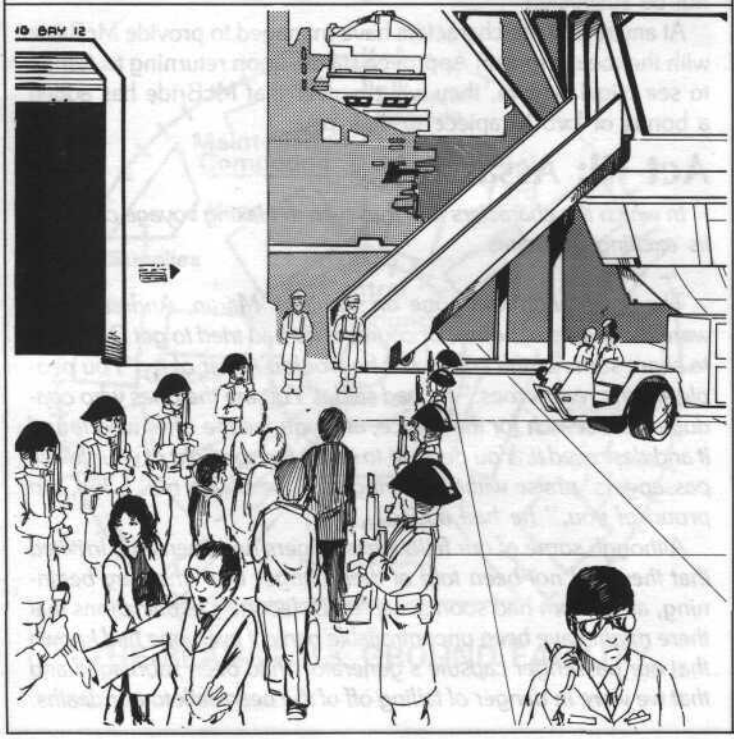
Still, I was rather satisfied with myself for having found the radio transmitter. If that thing had gone off, the generators would have shut down, and we would be dead by now. Who would have believed that the device would be disguised as an automatic blender on the Food Preparation Level. It had taken me some time to notice the extra circuit board in the blender, especially as I don't normally work on small kitchen appliances and had never seen that particular company's products before, but I was sure that the extra board didn't belong there. I was anxious to take it to a more experienced electronic technician to find out how it worked. Well, we'd be arriving at the Starship Terminal in a few short hours and I could get it analyzed there.

The fact that we had never managed to break through the doors into the Cargo Holds did bother me somewhat, though. The transmitter could have been hidden in there as easily as on the Food Preparation Level.

Oh well, no use worrying about it now. I leaned my head back against my chair's headrest and smiled with satisfaction.

It was just then that the floor dropped out from under us.

Prologue: If, as suggested in the introduction to *The Drama,* the players have played through *The Tricolor's Shadow, The Exfoliation Project,* and *The Giant and the Beanstalk,* in that order, then their characters have held a French surveillance device which had been in orbit over the German Continent, have been employed by a German to sneak aboard a beanstalk cargo capsule to obtain unauthorized atmospheric samples, and have been employed by a British businessman to break into several French offices in order to gain illegal access to files of French officials. In each of these instances, the French have come out looking poorly, and they don't appreciate it. Therefore, the French colonial government has assigned agents to follow the player characters wherever they may go on Beta Canum, in order to assure that they don't get involved in any more plots against the French. They have also offered to pay the player characters' passage off-planet whenever they are ready to leave Beta Canum. With this kind of attention, it doesn't take the player characters long to decide that as Nigel Strawn has no more jobs at present for people of their caliber (actually, he won't hire them again anyway until a few years have passed and the ire of the French begins to cool toward them), they might as well take advantage of the free tickets and leave.



What they do not know is that Armand Lafontaine has had a pair of the generators, which create the magnetic couples which hold beanstalk capsules to the magnetic rail, specially modified and held in storage until he might need them. These generators each have an extra circuit board which, when activated by a particular radio signal, causes the generators to shut down, canceling the magnetic couples. When Armand Lafontaine learns that the player characters are scheduled to take a passenger capsule off-planet, he orders that the regular generators be replaced with the doctored ones during servicing of the capsule preparatory to its trip. The mechanics involved in making the switch do not know that the replacement generators have been tampered with; they only know that they have been ordered to pull these particular generators out of storage and put them on the passenger capsule.

In order to activate the disabling circuits in the generators, a radio transmitter with a timer is smuggled onto the capsule just before it begins its trip off-planet. Again, the person who has smuggled it on board (in a crate of electronic toys) does not know what the device is for, only that he was paid well to make sure it got on the capsule.

Finally, Lafontaine has an agent disable the mechanical backup grapples, so that once the generators cease functioning, the capsule will fall off of the beanstalk and be destroyed.

Armand Lafontaine is arrested, just after the capsule leaves Beta Canum's surface, for masterminding several other murders, but his latest plan is already in action and he is confident of getting his revenge upon the player characters. Therefore, on the second night following the capsule's departure, Lafontaine confesses what he has done, in order that the player characters might be told and made to suffer in anticipation of their doom.

Note: If the referee prefers, the person behind the assassination attempt might instead be Simmone Guirguis, some nameless official within the French Continent's government, or anyone else the referee believes would have motive to kill the characters and enough power or money to get it done. Also, if for any reason the referee does not want to run this Act as an attempt on the characters' lives, it can instead become a scheme to assassinate a diplomat from France who is either coming to visit the President of the French Continent or just leaving from such a visit. Behind the plot to assassinate the diplomat is a radical group of French colonists who want Beta Canum to be independent from France.

The Extras: The following is a list of other passengers travelling on the same capsule as the player characters, including brief descriptions of each. The referee is encouraged to let the player characters get acquainted with each of these NPCs before beginning the main action of the Act. (Note: There are 14 passengers listed below. As a beanstalk capsule only holds 18, if there are more than four player characters, they will take the places of some of the passengers listed—starting from the bottom of the list. If there are less than four player characters, some of the staterooms in Coach will remain empty.)

Philipe Delacorte: This is the French diplomat whose assassination is being attempted if not the player characters'. Delacorte occupies one of the staterooms on the First Class Level. He is a tall, elegant man of nearly 50 years and is quite likable. He spends half of his waking hours reading in his room and the other half playing chess or bridge on the Recreation Level.

Amelie Delacorte: Amelie is a stunning brunette of about 30. She is as likable an individual as her husband, and indeed the two complement each other nicely. Amelie and her husband are usually seen together. Amelie occupies the other First Class stateroom.

Eugene Winfred: Eugene is a freshman college student from London who won a scholarship to study on Beta Canum for one year. He is tall and bony, and a bit shy as well. He spends much of his time in his stateroom as he suffers from motion sickness. This is especially aggravated when the gravity is below 0.5 Gs—during which times Eugene is usually in the lavatory. The *referee* should make sure that Eugene occupies a stateroom which shares a bath with one of the player characters' staterooms.

David Barrett: A writer of pulp westerns, David Barrett has come to Beta Canum to feel what life is like on the cattle ranches of the German Continent. Barrett is a short and pudgy man of about 35 and is never seen without cowboy hat, vest, and boots.

Candace Barrett: Candace Barrett is a shy, slight woman of about 35 with mousy brown hair and very large brown eyes. She is never seen without David.

Katheryn Streid: Katheryn Streid is the president of an investment firm based in Phoenix, Arizona. She has come to Beta Canum to view the fishing village of New Woking as a possible investment for her company. Katheryn is in her 40s, of average height, and attractive, and she projects an aura of authority.

Stephen Randall: Stephen Randall is a new colonist from the British Continent who is returning to Earth because of homesickness for his native Australia. He is tall and heavy, about 25 years old, and newly growing a beard.

Christine Randall: Christine Randall, Stephen's wife, is a Registered Nurse. She is a carefree sort of person who never doubts in any situation that everything will turn out well in the end. She is in her late twenties, about 5' 8", and a devotee of flowered blouses.

Jennifer Stone: Jennifer Stone is a model who has come to Beta Canum to do a series of holographs for a perfume company. She is 17, stands 5' 4", and is very aware of her attractiveness to men. She loves to *receive* compliments.

Martin Stone: Martin Stone is Jennifer's husband. He is in his early twenties, and is a popular musician among the youth on Earth as his songs usually carry an emphasis on the brotherhood of all races. Martin's feelings of brotherhood stop where other men's attentions to his wife begin.

Duane Smith: Duane Smith is a tourist who takes a great interest in plants. He has smuggled a few samples of Beta Canum's native plant life aboard the beanstalk capsule and is very frightened that he will be caught. Because of this he acts very nervous, even guilty. He is a prematurely bald man of 35 and about average height and weight.

Andrew Portifoy: An expert at linguistics, Andrew Portifoy has come to Beta Canum from Vogelheim to study the language of the Pentapods. Andrew is a 75-year-old man of medium height with a shock of pure white hair above a serious face. He is returning to Vogelheim to be with his older brother who is dying.

Myrtle Adams: Myrtle Adams and her husband Wallace (below) are owners of a restaurant in Beta Canum's starship terminal. They have been to the planet's surface to visit their son who is studying at the Handschuheim University on the German Continent. Myrtle is a homely woman of 40 who devotes herself to cooking. She spends most of the trip complaining about the food in the Dining Level.

Wallace Adams: Wallace Adams is a morose, obese man in his early fifties. He spends most of his time in his stateroom watching sports programs.

Scene I: The player characters are escorted to their beanstalk passenger capsule by an "honor guard" of half a dozen militia members. There they board in the company of the other passengers, then go to their staterooms and sit or lie down to prepare for leaving the planet's surface facility. Acceleration lasts for about one minute, during which time passengers feel the effects of about one and a half Gs, then they are free to explore the capsule for the next five days. Only four areas are sealed to prevent entry: the Life Support Level, the two Cargo Holds, and the Generator Room.

The referee should have the players spend quite a bit of time playing out the first two days of travel. During this time, their characters can become familiar with the passenger capsule and with their fellow passengers. By reviewing chapter four, *The Technical Data,* the *referee* can be ready to describe what travel aboard the capsule is like, including such things as the steady loss of gravity, the view of Beta Canum from the observation ports in the floor of the Observation Deck, and the view of the heavens from the Recreation Level. Also, the personality descriptions of the other passengers should yield ample material for role playing.

If possible, the *referee* should lull the players into a sense of security before springing the news of the next Scene on them.

Scene II: Midmorning of the third day, Philipe Delacorte comes looking for the player characters. He appears worried, but maintains a restrained manner as he asks if they will come to his stateroom to discuss an important matter. The players should be left wondering what the important matter is for a few moments while Delacorte leads them to the First Class Level. Along the way, the group is stopped 1D6 times by other passengers who want to wish Delacorte a good morning. In each case, he is polite but abrupt as he tells these well-wishers thank you, then excuses himself from them as he has some rather pressing business.

Once Delacorte and the player characters have reached his stateroom, they find that Lady Delacorte has laid out refreshments and is waiting in the room. After everyone is seated, Delacorte apologizes for imposing on them in this way, but he is afraid that circumstances have forced him to. He then begins his explanation.

"About half an hour ago," he says, "I received a call from the French Continental Security Department. Apparently, they have been doing some criminal investigations lately, particularly of certain persons connected with the beanstalk's operation, and one of their informants led them to believe that all was not right with this capsule. After a bit more research, it was discovered that someone had been paid to secret a package on board, and eventually it was discovered that the package is the timer to a bomb of sorts."

"That is, on the lower level of this capsule is a room in which two generators work to maintain the magnetic couples which hold the capsule to the beanstalk rail. Several hours before we left the surface, those two generators were replaced with two other generators which had been waiting in a back room for a special occasion. You see, the replacement generators have certain unauthorized circuits in them which will cause them to cease operation upon the stimulus of a particular radio impulse; the package smuggled aboard was a radio timer, disguised as some other sort of electronic device; and the special occasion for which the generators were prepared was the perceived need for someone's death. It seems that you people are the someones whose deaths

are perceived as needful."

(Note: If the referee wishes the assassination attempt to be directed at Delacorte, change his last sentence to "It seems that I am the someone whose death is perceived as needful.")

Delacorte pauses a moment to let all of this sink in, then continues. "I have it upon good authority that you have faced danger before and have kept cool heads, and it has been suggested that I ask you to find the radio device and disable it before it activates the circuits within the generators. Otherwise, when the generators cease to function, this capsule and everyone in it will fall back to the planet's surface, now some fifteen thousand kilometers below us. We can hardly be expected to survive the experience. Apparently, there are backup mechanisms which are intended to mechanically clasp the capsule to the beanstalk rail, but they have been disabled as well. I'm afraid that our only hope is to find that radio transmitter.

Unfortunately, the investigators have not been able to ascertain where it has been secreted. So we will have to search everywhere, but without causing panic among the other passengers. I have been authorized to take command of the capsule; and I am authorizing you to conduct the search for the radio timer device. I'm afraid that we cannot trust any of the other passengers to help, because one of them may have smuggled it aboard purposely but without knowing what it is. In that case, they certainly will not give it up, and we cannot afford to tell them what it is for fear of panic and chaos resulting."

"Well, that is the sum total of the situation. Are you willing to conduct the search?"

To which Amelie Delacorte replies, "What choice do they have, my dear?"

Scene III: Although no one on the capsule knows it, the transmitter has been included in a crate full of electronic toys which was loaded in the left-hand cargo hold. It is set to go off on the morning of the fifth day of travel, just a few short hours before the capsule would normally reach the starship station. The reason for this is that the assassin wants the player characters to suffer for as long as possible before they die, and a fall from that height will take some time to complete.

Once the player characters begin searching the capsule, each room they search will have 1D6 electronic items in it which fit the general description of the radio timer. To find all of the electronic items in a room is a task.

To find all items in a room (Unskilled, Uncertain): Simple. Electronics and Education. 1 minute.

Referee: On a roll of total truth, the characters are sure they have found all of the room's electronic items which fit the radio timer's description; on a roll of some truth, they think they have found all of the items, and actually they have; and on a roll, of no truth, they think they have found all of the items, but they have missed one.

Remember that in order to search a stateroom, the player characters will have to convince the occupant to allow them access, which is a task.

To gain access to a stateroom (Unskilled): Routine. Eloquence or Psychology. 1 minute.

Referee: The difficulty of this task should be adjusted up or down to reflect the personality of each passenger and the character who is trying to gain access. As a guide to this adjustment, the following summaries of each passenger's suggested reaction are given.

Philipe Delacorte: Philipe Delacorte will insist that his cabin be searched first (the players need not make a task roll to gain entrance) in the presence of any passengers who care to watch. By doing this, he hopes to set an example that everyone else will follow.

Amelie Delacorte: Amelie Delacorte will volunteer her cabin to be searched next (no task roll to gain entrance is necessary). However, Philipe will request that witnesses, and searchers if possible, be female only. Amelie would prefer this as well, but will not insist upon it. Amelie will also suggest that when the searchers prepare to enter any other female passenger's room, they come to get her so that she might comfort that passenger.

Eugene Winfred: If the referee is running this adventure as an outbound trip, by the time the search begins, gravity will be low enough that Eugene's motion sickness will keep him in his stateroom. He will willingly allow the player characters to search his quarters (treat the task to gain access as Easy), but the sight of them moving about in low G will aggravate his sickness. Therefore, when the search of his room begins, Eugene will be lying on his bed, but when the searchers are only half finished, he will suddenly try to dash to the lavatory. (It is, of course, difficult to dash anywhere in a reduced G environment.)

David Barrett: David Barrett will readily agree to have his stateroom searched (treat the task roll to gain access as Easy): he is caught up in the excitement of the whole situation. Unfortunately, he will also unintentionally get in the way of the searchers, slowing them down by his presence and by a continual stream of conversation. Because of this, searching his room takes twice as long.

Candace Barrett: Candace Barrett will be terribly embarrassed to have her things searched (treat the task roll to gain access as Difficult—if Amelie Delacorte talks to her, the roll will become Routine for the players once again). Because of her embarrassment, David will want to be there to comfort her, and is once more likely to slow the player characters down in their search.

Katheryn Streid: Ms. Streid will readily agree to have her stateroom searched (treat the task roll to gain access as Easy), but she will be very irritable about it. She will remain in the room during the search, making occasional criticisms about the way it is being conducted. (Because of this, the referee might wish to increase the difficulty of the search roll to Routine, in order to reflect any problems the characters might have in concentrating under Ms. Streid's critical eye.)

Stephen Randall: When the player characters make the roll to convince Stephen Randall to allow them access to his room, the referee should play the part of Randall as arguing vociferously against the search. Randall should argue for the duration of the time roll as if he were not going to acquiesce, then suddenly he will give in with the words, "Oh what's the use!" He will not remain in his room during the search.

Christine Randall: Christine Randall will readily agree to have her quarters searched (treat the roll to gain access as Easy). She will betray no embarrassment whatever, and will actually suggest places to search.

Jennifer Stone: Jennifer Stone will pout prettily and put up some argument when asked to allow her room to be searched, but eventually she will agree (multiply the time roll on the task to gain access by 3). Actually she enjoys the excitement and the attention, and will flirt with the searchers if they look through her belongings (multiply the time roll on the task to search by 2).

Martin Stone: If Jennifer's stateroom is searched first, Martin will be so angry at the flirtation which goes on that he will be very difficult to deal with (treat the roll to gain access to his room as Formidable, with any Mishap resulting in a fist fight between Martin

and one of the player characters—the referee should treat Martin as a Green NPC).

Duane Smith: Duane Smith will do nearly anything to prevent his stateroom from being searched, as he does not want his smuggled plants to be found (treat the roll to gain access as Impossible, with a Mishap meaning that he locks himself in). If Duane refuses to let the player characters search, he will give in only after Philipe Delacorte talks to him and promises him immunity.

Andrew Portifoy: Andrew Portifoy will allow the player characters to search his quarters on a normal roll to gain access. He will give them no problems during the search.

Myrtle Adams: It will be very difficult to convince Myrtle Adams to allow the player characters to search her room (treat the roll to gain access as Formidable) until Lady Delacorte speaks with her, at which time she will agree without a further roll.

Wallace Adams: When the player characters knock at his door, Wallace Adams will simply holler, "Whaddaya want!" The player characters must shout to be heard through the closed door over the sound of the sports program which Wallace is watching on his entertainment console. Wallace will eventually let them in and will ignore them as they conduct their search.

In the event that the passenger cannot be convinced by the player characters, Philipe Delacorte will have to be summoned to convince the passenger to cooperate. Finding Delacorte is also a task, as he is wandering the capsule, gauging the emotional atmosphere of all of the passengers and working to keep things calm.

To find Delacorte (Unskilled): Simple. Intelligence. 1 minute.

Once Delacorte has been summoned, he will do whatever is necessary to convince the passenger to let his or her room be searched. This includes promising Duane Smith immunity from prosecution for smuggling plants, personally guaranteeing the safety of personal items, and the like.

Unfortunately, there are four rooms on the passenger capsule which are locked. These include the two Cargo Holds, the Generator Room, and the Life Support Level. To enter any of these rooms requires that its electronic lock be bypassed, which is a task.

To bypass an electronic lock: Difficult. Electronics. 30 seconds.

The Life Support Level can also be entered through an unusually wide air vent on the Food Preparation and Storage Level. Only characters of size 10 or less can fit through the shaft behind the vent. To do so is a task.

To enter Life Support through the air shaft: Routine. Dexterity. 30 seconds.

Referee: Allow the character in the air shaft to modify the die roll by + 1 for every point under 10 in body size.

The doors to the cargo hatches can also be broken down by using table legs or the like as clubs if necessary. To do so is a task.

To break down a cargo door: Difficult. Strength. 3 minutes.

Referee: For every person working on the door beyond the first (to a maximum of three people), subtract 2 from the time roll.

Once the player characters have gained access to a room and have searched it, the items found there will have to be analyzed in order to determine whether they are or are not, in fact, the radio timer. This is a task.

To analyze the items of a room (Uncertain): Routine. Electronics. 10 seconds times the number of items in the room.

Referee: If the items come from any room except the left-hand Cargo Hold, a result of total truth means that the characters know exactly what each item is; a result of some truth means that they aren't totally sure what one of the items is, but they don't believe it contains the radio timer; and a result of no truth means that they believe one of the items may contain the device, but they cannot be sure without better testing facilities. If the items come from the left-hand Cargo Hold, a result of total truth means that they have identified the radio timer out of the crate of toys; a result of some truth means that they think that one of the toys might contain the timer, but they don't know which one; and a result of no truth means that they don't believe the radio timer is in the left-hand Cargo Hold.

In order to lend more of a sense of reality to the search, whenever the characters find an item and analyze it, the referee can identify it as one of the items from the following list (or he or she can invent other items if desired): portable computer, alarm clock , communicator, blood pressure monitor, ovulation monitor for birth control, biorhythm feedback device (for relaxation), voice recorder, electronic game or puzzle, pager, antimugger alarm or stunner, 3D map of the explored galaxy, portable library (a common item).

The referee should keep track of the hours which go by in searching the capsule, adding some time as he or she sees fit for discussion or panic among the players. For every four hours which go by without a rest, all tasks become one level more difficult due to fatigue. A rest of fifteen minutes will return the task rolls to their normal levels. Once 16 hours have gone by without sleep, the difficulty level of each task increases by one, and again by one level for each additional two hours which pass beyond that. Four hours of sleep will return the task levels to normal once again. Note that all effects are cumulative, so if the characters work for more than 16 hours and are not taking any short rests either, task difficulty levels will increase by one each two hours, and by another one each four hours. Once a task level reaches Impossible, it cannot be adjusted any higher.

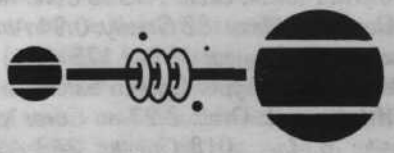
If the radio timer is not found and disabled within 40 hours from the time that Delacorte informs the characters of its presence, the

passenger capsule falls off of the beanstalk. The *referee* should describe to the players the sensation of a sudden weightlessness as the capsule detaches and begins free fall. The sensation of weight does not return, and eventually the capsule burns up upon reentry into Beta Canum's atmosphere.

If, on the other hand, the radio timer is found before 40 hours pass, it can easily be destroyed by tearing out its wires, crushing it, or burning it.

Scene IV: Assuming the player characters manage to discover and destroy the radio timer, they will arrive at the starship station safely. Once there, they will be received as heroes, they will each be decorated with a French medal of valor, and they will be greatly in demand by the news media for about two days. At the referee's option, some of the other passengers may want to reward them when they find out what was behind the strange activities on the trip, and at the least, the player characters will have made some interesting contacts which might lead to future adventures.

Shortly after the hubbub dies down, they will be contacted privately by Philipe and Amelie Delacorte, who will tell them that despite their newfound celebrity, the French Continent's President still suggests that they go somewhere else for work and excitement.



Afterword

As has been seen, Beta Canum is a very important world to the French, perhaps the most important on the French Arm. There are many reasons for this, some being:

It provides food for almost the entire Arm.

It lies at the branching of routes deeper into the frontier.

It has been colonized for nearly a century now, which means that it is developed enough to serve as a headquarters for efforts to colonize further along the French Arm.

It lies far enough behind the frontier to give it some protection from the Kafer War which is raging further out (although for how long, no one can say).

Its beanstalk makes it easy to move people and products on- and off-world regularly and cheaply.

All of these things combine to make the world a center of activity in the French Arm. As a consequence of this, the world makes a rich setting for other adventures than those which have been included in *Beanstalk.*

The adventures in this book have emphasized the political tensions on Beta Canum. But the world offers many other types of adventure as well.

For example, the French Continent has vast mountain ranges to be explored, large tracts of frozen wasteland which can serve as sites for desperate searches for downed air- or spacecraft, and even an enclave of an alien race, the Pentapods, to provide an imaginative referee with adventure ideas.

The British Continent's main attraction is its tens of thousands of miles of jungle full of exotic plants and animals to be discovered. But it also holds frontier villages such as New Woking, or the mining town of Carmody, which can serve as settings for interesting adventures. And there is the tourist town of Greenford to be explored as well.

The German Continent has many more deposits of ores such as tantalum yet to be found in the cold, mountainous north; and where there are rich mines, rough individuals flock there to find their fortunes. The cattle" ranches to the south can provide various types of work for troubleshooters as well, from protecting the herds from native life forms to protecting them from other men.

And each of the continents, including the Southern Continent, have ultramodern cities which can provide the setting for any type of futuristic city adventure.

Besides this, Beta Canum also has many large islands which can serve as the locations for strange new life forms, secret bases of covert organizations, and the like.

Off-planet, the starship terminal provides an unusual city-like environment for adventuring, as well as companion satellites which house such things as an impressive French Naval Base, perilous asteroid mining operations, and shipyards which service every sort of craft imaginable (as Beta Canum boasts the best maintenance facilities and the cheapest fueling stations this side of Earth).

The upshot of the matter is that Beta Canum is a natural meeting spot for all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons, and because of this, it is one of the richest settings for adventures in the explored galaxy.

BETA CANUM VENATICORUM SYSTEM DATA

In order to provide further information for the referee who wishes to run adventures in the Beta Canum Venaticorum system, the following excerpt from *das Nachschlagewerk de Sternen,* a publication of *das Astronomischen Rechen-Institut* is provided. This particular excerpt is from the 2202 edition.

BETA CANUM VENATICORUM

Although first visited by a French exploratory squadron in 2181 (which staked a French claim on the garden world discovered in the fourth orbit), a detailed mapping of the system was not begun until 2182, when das Astronomischen Rechen-Institut sent a survey team to the system. Over the next twenty years, the team collected data concerning all eight worlds in the system, but concentrated most heavily on the fourth planet in order to prepare for colonization by the ESA nations: France, Britain, and Bavaria. At the present time, colonization is just beginning.

Statistics on the system are as follows:

Coordinates: X -22.2 Y -3.1 Z 19.8 *Stellar Type:* GO V *Radius:* 1.03 Mass: 1.04 *Luminosity:* 1.21 *Effective Temperature: 6000°* K,

First Planet: *Orbit:.2* au *Core:* Rocky *Diameter:* 5000 km *Density:* 1.2 *Mass:.*071 *Gravity:.*431 *Atmospheric Type:* Standard (bordering on thin) *Atmospheric Oxygen:* None *Water:* None *World Type:* Hot house (bordering on desert) *Satellites:* Two: one ring at 15,000 km, one 4000 km diameter rock at 450,000 km orbit

Second *Planet: Orbit:.*3 au *Core:* Rocky *Diameter:* 6000 km *Density:* 1.3 Mass:.13 *Gravity:.*538 *Atmospheric Type:* Standard *Atmospheric Oxygen:* None *Water:* None *World Type:* Hot house *Satellites:* One 4000 km diameter rock at 240,000 km orbit

Third Planet: *Orbit:.*63 au *Core:* Rocky *Diameter:* 19,000 km *Density:.*8 Mass: 2.61 *Gravity:* 1.338 *Atmospheric Type:* Dense *Atmospheric Oxygen:* None *Water:* None *World Type:* Hot

house *Satellites:* None

Fourth Planet: *Orbit:* 1.13 au *Core: Rocky Diameter:* 12,000 km *Density:* 1 Mass:.82 *Gravity:* 0.94 *Atmospheric Type:* Dense *Atmospheric Oxygen:* 19% (.175 atms) Water: Oceans, 60% coverage *World Type:* Garden *Satellites:* None

Fifth Planet: *Orbit:* 2.27 au *Core:* Icy *Diameter:* 4000 km *Density:*.6 Mass:.018 *Gravity:*.243 *Atmospheric Type:* Very thin (bordering on vacuum) *Atmospheric Oxygen:* None Water: Ice, 30% coverage World Type: Ice ball *Satellites:* None

Sixth Planet: *Orbit:* 8.16 au Core: Icy *Diameter:* 7000 km *Density:*.6 Mass:.098 *Gravity:*.436 *Atmospheric Type:* Standard (bordering on thin) *Atmospheric Oxygen:* None Water: Ice, 10% coverage World Type: Failed core *Satellites:* None

Seventh Planet: *Orbit:* 12.25 au *Core:* Icy *Diameter:* 4000 km *Density:*.1 Mass:.003 *Gravity:*.099 *Atmospheric Type:* Vacuum *Atmospheric Oxygen:* None Water: Ice, 20% coverage Word Type: Ice ball *Satellites:* None

Eighth Planet: Orbit: 15.92 au *Core:* Rocky *Diameter:* 16,000 km Density: 1.3 Mass: 2.53 *Gravity:* 1.436 *Atmospheric Type:* Massive *Atmospheric Oxygen:* None Water: 1% atmospheric ice crystals *World Type:* Gas giant *Satellites:* Five: one 4000 km diameter ice ball at 16,000 km orbit, one 100 km diameter rock at 32,000 km orbit, one ring at 90,000 km orbit, one 5000 km diameter rock at 112,000 km orbit, one 2000 km diameter ice ball at 1,760,000 km orbit

FLORA AND FAUNA OF BETA CANUM VENATICORUM

For the referee who wishes to create adventures concerning the native life of Beta Canum, the following information is provided as a background from which to work. A brief discussion of each continent is provided, as well as an extensive section of examples of animals from the jungles of the British Continent.

The French Continent: In game terms (pun intended), native life on the majority of the French Continent fits into the abundant food chain pyramid (see the *Referee's Manual,* page 49, for an explanation of food chain pyramids). Southeast of Premiere, where the terrain is drier, and within the Great Northern and Great Southern Mountain Ranges, the sparse food chain pyramid should be used instead. Within the French Continent's Frigid Zones, the referee should use the barren food chain pyramid for animal encounters.

When using the *Animal Encounters* rules *(Referee's Manual,* pages 48-49) to create animals for the French Continent, the referee can follow the suggestions of the *Random Characteristic* section, modifying one characteristic by a 1D6 roll.

The British Continent: Native life on the majority of the British Continent falls into the teeming food chain pyramid. North of the air film train line, along the coastlines, and on the two eastern islands, the referee should use the abundant food chain pyramid instead.

The British Continent is famous for its plant life as well as its animal life. New species of beautiful exotic flowers are constantly being discovered here, and many of the older discoveries are being cultivated and shipped to florists on other worlds (after suitable testing to ensure that they won't harm the ecosystems of these other worlds by contaminating them with harmful microorganisms or insect-sized creatures, of course). Many people make their living by searching out new flowers or by trying to cultivate them.

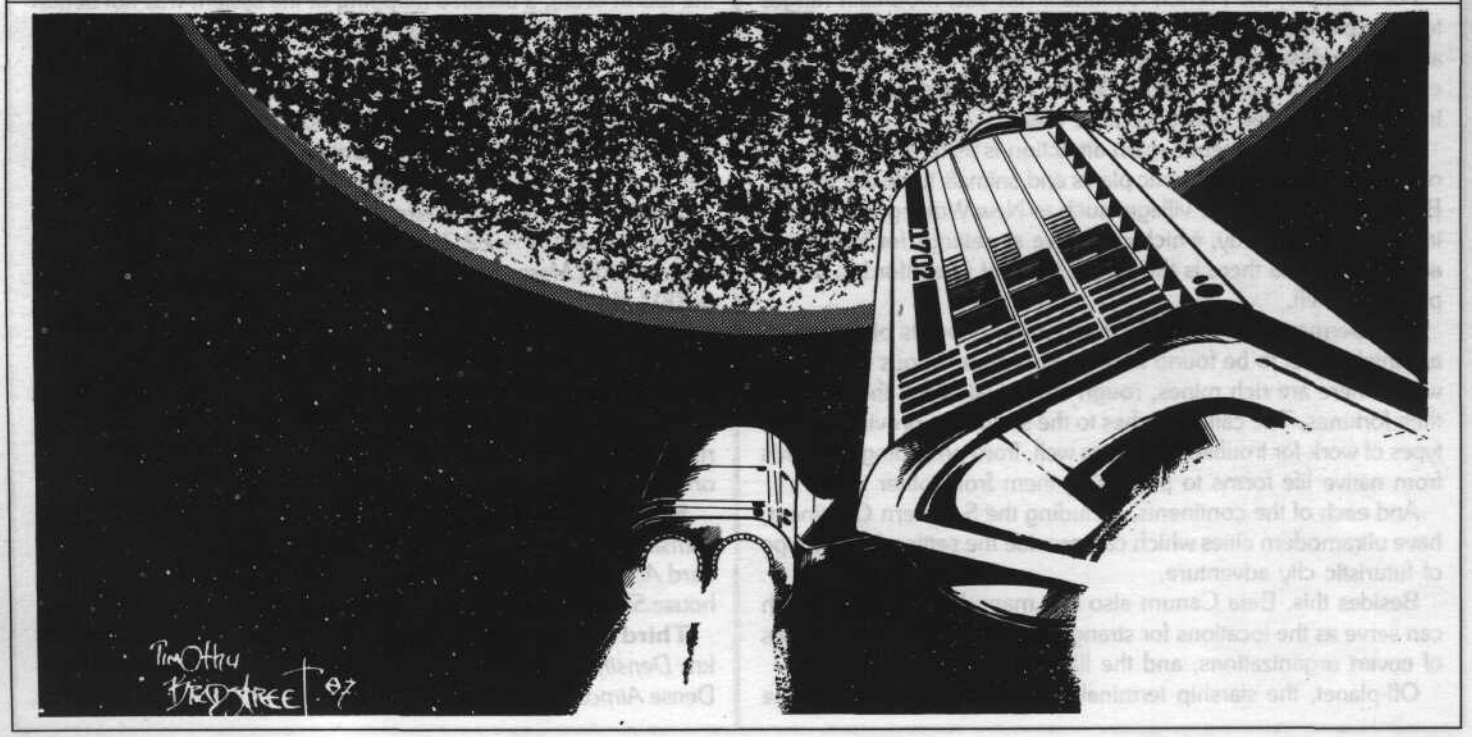
When creating animals for encounters on the British Continent, the referee is encouraged to modify one characteristic by a 1D10 roll, or two characteristics by a 1D6 roll. This reflects the exotic nature of animals on the teeming British Continent.

Sample Animals of the British Continent: The following is a list of ten animals which exist upon the British Continent. They are listed in order of their appearance upon the teeming food chain pyramid.

(1) Bush Baby: Bush babies are small, omnivorous animals that look something like a warty, hairless pig. They are fairly fast runners, and with their small size are able to disappear into the jungle undergrowth very quickly if disturbed. If cornered, they fight ferociously, doing considerable damage with their sharp teeth and claws.

Number Appearing: 1D6 - 2 *Initiative:* 3 *Melee Hit Chance:* Difficult *Size:* 10 kg *Speed:* 100 m *Armor:* 0 *Wound Potential Modification:* -4 *Consciousness Level:* 0.5 *Life Level:* 1 DPV: 0.8 *Signature:* None

(2) Bounder: Bounders are Beta Canum's equivalent to the



Terran antelope or deer. Small herds of bounders graze the ranges of veldt on the southern half of the British Continent. They are hunted for their colorful pelts, which range from uniform tones of tan or cream to a near red marked with random blotches of blue-gray. (A cousin of the bounder also dwells on the southern half of the German Continent, but in much smaller numbers and with a much less impressive coat.)

The difficulty in hunting bounders is that they can run at such great speeds. They leap gracefully across the plains, covering 10 m at a leap, and at times maintain speeds of nearly 50 km per hour for an entire day.

Number Appearing: 2D10 *Initiative: 2 Melee Hit Chance:* Difficult *Size:* 150 kg *Speed:* 130 m *Armor:* 0.1 *WPM: — Consciousness Level:* 7.5 *Life Level:* 12 DPV: 0.4 *Signature:* None

(3) **Benny:** Bennies are tree-dwelling pack animals something like a cross between an iguana and a coyote. They live in the depths of the jungles, where they hunt nearly anything that moves. Their usual prey is birds, but many times they will attack larger ground animals by dropping on them en masse from overhanging branches. Bennies are not usually hunted by humans, except farmers who find them preying upon their livestock. Bennies are very resistant to stun attacks.

Number Appearing: 2D6 *Initiative:* 6 *Melee Hit Chance:* Routine *Size:* 40 kg *Speed:* 110m *Armor:* 0 *WPM: -2 Consciousness Level:* 5 *Life Level:* 4 *DPV:* 0.1 *Signature:* -3

(4) Fruit Teddy: These large, bearlike animals are called fruit teddies because despite the fact that they are large and have long claws, they are actually delicate, timid creatures. The claws of a fruit teddy are used for climbing and for opening some of the tougher of the British Continent's fruits. Fruit teddies have never been known to use these claws for fighting, but none of the other animals of the British Continent seem to realize this fact; therefore, they do not molest fruit teddies. It should be noted that fruit teddies tend to die from even relatively minor wounds, or sometimes even from fright.

Number Appearing: 1D6 *Initiative:* 4 *Melee Hit Chance:* Routine *Size:* 200 *Speed:* 70 *Armor:* 0.2 *WPM:* -5 *Consciousness Level:* 10 *Life Level:* 12 *DPV:* 0.5 *Signature:* 0

(5) Night Stalker: Night stalkers are large, hairless, catlike beasts which hunt alone and at night. On the average, a night stalker will make a kill about once a week, usually of a very large animal, gorge itself, then retire to its lair for a week of hibernation. Once the night stalker has begun to hibernate, it is almost totally helpless, but night stalker lairs are nearly impossible to find. Due to its thin skin, the night stalker is somewhat easier to kill in combat than an equivalently sized Terran big cat.

Number Appearing: 1 *Initiative:* 5 *Melee Hit Chance:* Easy *Size:* 500 *Speed:* 65 *Armor:* 0.1 *WPM: — Consciousness Level:* 10 *Life Level:* 12 *DPV:* 1 *Signature:* +1

(6) **Minotaur:** The Beta Canum minotaur is a large carnivore which kills its prey by butting it with its knobbed, bony skull-plate. Whether hungry or not, the minotaur will attack anything which moves within its field of vision, which is rather short and narrow. Once the minotaur has knocked its victim to the ground, it continues to pummel and grind it with its bony head until most of its prey's bones are broken. When the victim ceases moving, the minotaur bugles for several minutes, apparently to announce a kill, and then, if hungry, feasts upon the victim's flesh. If not hungry, the minotaur leaves its victim and moves on for other prey.

Fortunately for other animals, the minotaur's nearsightedness and narrow angle of vision prevents it from noticing most potential victims. Also, the minotaur is somewhat easier kill than might be expected for a creature of its size and ferocity. In fact, minotaurs are often killed in battles with other minotaurs or with other large carnivores.

Number Appearing: 1 *Initiative: 7 Melee Hit Chance:* Routine *Size:* 300 *Speed:* 75 *Armor:* 0.1 *WPM: — Consciousness Level:* 10 *Life Level:* 6 *DPV:* 0.8 *Signature:* 0

(7) **Buffalope:** These shaggy animals run the veldt regions of the British Continent in very large numbers. They are the natural prey of many of the continent's large carnivores and are prized by humans for the thickness of their pelts. Buffalope tend to be an easy catch for predators because they are quite a bit slower than might be expected for their relatively small size. However, they breed in such large numbers that there seems to be no danger of their becoming extinct.

Number Appearing: 1D6 x 1D10 *Initiative: 2 Melee Hit Chance:* Difficult *Size:* 100 *Speed:* 65 *Armor:* 0.1 *WPM: — Consciousness Level: 5 Life Level:* 10 *DPV:* 0.3 *Signature:* 0

(8) **The Noose:** The noose is a large, well camouflaged, snakelike animal. It hunts by dropping its front half from an overhead branch and coiling tightly about its victim's throat, while keeping its back half coiled about the trunk of the tree in which it has hidden. Once it has strangled its victim, the noose consumes it by tearing small chunks of flesh free with its tiny, but very sharp, teeth.

Number Appearing: 1 *Initiative:* 10 *Melee Hit Chance:* Impossible (all attacks after the first, which is Easy). *Size:* 60 *Speed:* 90 *Armor:* 0 *WPM:* - 1 *Consciousness Level:* 3 *Life Level: 6 DPV:* 0.2 *Signature:* -1

(9) **Blood Monkey:** The blood monkey is a small, solitary hunter which dwells near the tops of the trees and preys upon birds and other small animals. It is rarely seen by humans and has therefore taken on a significance in local stories as a mysterious, native intelligence.

Number Appearing: 1 *Initiative: 8 Melee Hit Chance:* Easy *Size:* 40 *Speed:* 100 *Armor:* 0 *WPM: -2 Consciousness Level: 2 Life Level:* 4 *DPV:* 0.1 *Signature:* -3

(10) **Gobbler:** The gobbler gained its name not from any sound it makes, but from the fact that its large jaws tend to gobble things down in an unbelievably short time. The gobbler is a scavenger which tends to feed upon the kills of other animals, such as those

Bush Baby

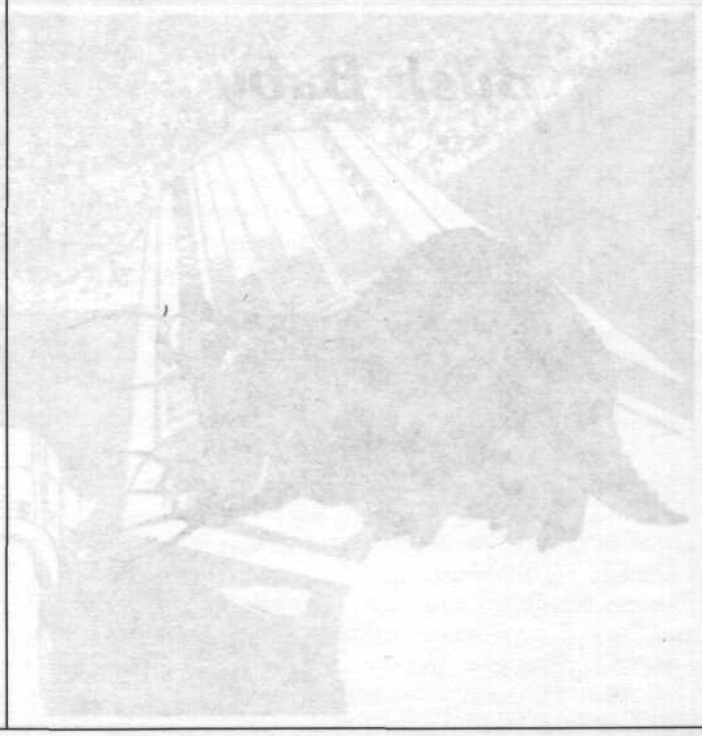
of packs of bennies. But the gobbler does not merely chase the original killers off; instead, it springs on them from hiding and often eats them as well as their prey.

Number Appearing: 1 *Initiative:* 9 *Melee Hit Chance:* Routine *Size:* 100 *Speed:* 70 *Armor:* 0.1 *WPM: — Consciousness Level:* 5 *Life Level:* 10 *DPV: 8 Signature:* 0

The German Continent: For animal encounters within most of the German Continent's Frigid Zone, the referee should use the sparse food chain pyramid. North of the Ludwigberge Mountains, the barren food chain pyramid should be used. The southern half of the continent falls under the abundant food chain category. This is also true for the northernmost of the two islands off the southern tip of the German Continent, but the *referee* should use the sparse food chain pyramid for the southernmost of the two islands.

The Southern Continent: All of this continent except for the northern tip upon which Adrian is located falls within the barren food chain pyramid for animal encounters. That northern tip, however, has a food chain which is considered sparse for game purposes.

In conclusion, the author would like to say **Welcome to Beta Canum Venaticorum-4. May your visit be rewarding, and may you find ample reason to stay a long while.**



2300™

Beanstalk

*"**Welcome to Beta Canum Venaticorum-4, breadbasket for the French Arm, and crossroad of the frontier!"** That was the sign at the starship receiving station. I walked to a viewport across the lobby and took my first look at Beta Canum's beanstalk.*

The beanstalk hung above the horizon of this stark, airless asteroid like a shining silver thread against the backdrop of the star-sprinkled blackness of space. As I watched, a cargo capsule (almost invisibly small at this distance) slipped from beneath the edge of the main station and began to crawl down the beanstalk in its long descent to Beta's surface. Eventually, like the beanstalk itself, the capsule disappeared against the bright haze of the planet's atmosphere.

The beauty of the view brought a gentle smile to my face. This, I reflected, is one of the bonuses of my job. I am a troubleshooter.

In 2181 a French exploratory squadron discovered a garden world in the Beta Canum Venaticorum system. Within about 25 years, three ESA nations (France, Britain, and Bavaria) had established colonies there. Over the next eight decades all three colonies cooperated in an attempt to adapt the planet to human uses. The Bavarians began extensive mining of their continent's mineral resources. The British created an extensive transportation network between the colonies. France built their colony a beanstalk.

Then came Earth's War of German Reunification. The colonies on Beta Canum began to experience rising tides of nationalism as they jockeyed for power by the judicious use of the world's resources.

But the most valued commodity on Beta Canum is the safe, regular access to orbit granted by the beanstalk. The French have found themselves holding the reins of power on Beta Canum. Tension continues to grow as they seek to consolidate their position and the British and Germans seek to undermine it.

The French control the beanstalk. But a Bavarian built it—and he thinks he's found a problem.

Opportunities are ripe for troubleshooters looking for work.

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Design.....Lester W. Smith

You must have **Traveller: 2300** *in order to play this adventure module.*

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