



FEAR AGENT FEEDING TIME



SAVAGE
WORLDS

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'05

FEAR AGENT™

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CHARAMANTA

Feeding Time is actually a series of adventures set on Charamanta, Earth's first independent colony. These adventures span a period of time from shortly after the first human settlers arrive on Charamanta all the way to the point where the colony meets an early, and very bloody, end at the mouths of alien monstrosities.

But before we get to the meat of the adventures, here's a little background on the colony itself.

Consolation Prize

Following the Annubius Conflict, Earth found herself thrust into the United Systems without much preamble. The interplanetary government awarded humanity a probationary intellect rating of Class C more out of guilt than any actual accomplishment on the part of humans. In all fairness, humans were woefully lacking in technological achievements, most of the race's contribution to the galactic arts rate slightly higher than the average kindergartener's class project on other worlds, and the best trick we can manage psionically is bending a spoon with our thumbs while no one's looking.

On the other hand, the war left Earth devastated, her cities destroyed, and her population was reduced to a rounding error of what it had been. And the United Systems bore a great deal of responsibility for that, thanks to their over-eager soldiers, the Dressites.

So as recompense, the United Systems gave humanity a leg up with regards to technology, immediately providing the survivors a crash course in warp physics, starship design, and advanced manufacturing techniques. They also gave Earth dibs on a staging a few colonies to solidify humanity's claims to Class C status.

Go Spaceward, Young Man!

Not even six months after the end of the war, Earth began the process of settling its

own colonies. Not only did the colony hold political value for Earth, but the planet's leadership realized the value in making sure all of humanity's eggs weren't being stored in one basket—or even one star system. We came close enough to being a footnote in some alien history book already. No one saw any reason to make a second attempt at genocide any easier for other invaders.

The call went up for colonists for Earth's first settlement, and there was no shortage in volunteers. You see, the handful of humans who survived the Annubius Conflict were, by and large, fighters who refused to lay down and die during Earth's darkest hour. They'd just faced down robot warlords, walking acid monsters, *and* rocket-pack-wearing dinosaurs.

Climbing onboard a rocket ship to travel to a star they couldn't even see from their home planet was tame in comparison.

Little Orphan Planet

The first planet Earth's leaders targeted for colonization was over 70,000 light years from the Sol system. Charamanta was intended to be our "training" colony—the atmosphere is breathable for humans, the climate is relatively mild, and there are no overly-aggressive flora or fauna to menace the first wave of colonists.

The planet is actually something of a gem, as far as a habitability goes. The reason it's uninhabited is real estate isn't exactly in high demand in the universe. There are billions of stars in the United Systems boundaries alone. Nobody's exactly fighting over dirt for dirt's sake.

Charamanta didn't hold tremendous appeal for the other species in the coalition. While several surveys have been conducted, none have turned up any sizable concentrations of valuable minerals or other commodities likely to induce competition from other member races. Furthermore, it lies a little too far off established trade routes to make it an attractive commerce center.

So, the central council of the United Systems was more than happy to point the Earthers in its direction when they started looking for a site for their first off-world settlement.

Growth

The first settlers on Charamanta found colonizing an alien world considerably easier than anticipated. This was thanks in no small part to the advanced technology made available by the galactic coalition, but also the fact that Charamanta was fairly hospitable to humanity.

The atmosphere was almost a perfect match with Earth's. Charamanta's axial tilt was slightly less than humanity's home planet, making the seasons milder. And while there was no shortage of plant and animal life, local predators were no more fearsome than those on Earth, so humanity had little competition for the top of the food chain.

The initial outpost developed quickly, growing from a few hundred initial settlers to a thriving colony of over 15,000. While not a teeming metropolis by any definition of the word, it was still by far the largest population of humans outside of Earth's home system. Charamanta soon came to be Earth's pride and joy, a symbol of humanity rising from the ashes of the Annubius Conflict to assume their place among the stars.

Charamanta

Charamanta can serve as a sort of home away from home for your Fear Agents. In the first few years after joining the United Systems, other humans are few and far between in the Outer Quadrants—or anywhere outside of Earth's home system for that matter. The only non-human sentients on the planet are the rare alien merchant trying to sell his wares to what he hopes is an audience of country rubes just off their own planet for the first time.

Not only can the heroes find other human company, they can also experience many of the comforts of home. Restaurants, bars, and other establishments might be in relatively short supply, at least early in the colony's founding, but at least they serve Earth food, drinks, and alcohol. Likewise, Charamanta is the only place outside of the Sol system where a traveler can get copies of human movies, novels, or other entertainment.

The colony may become a favorite stopping point for the explorers, somewhere they visit often enough to build relationships with merchants, local officials, and clients of all sorts over the course of your game. Should that happen, all the better, because it's likely to make the eventual fate of Charamanta that much greater an impact on them when it occurs.

(And if you don't know what's in store for Charamanta, we encourage you to read the awesome *Fear Agent*™ graphic novels—or the **Feeding Time** adventure at the end of this book. Let's just say it ain't pretty.)

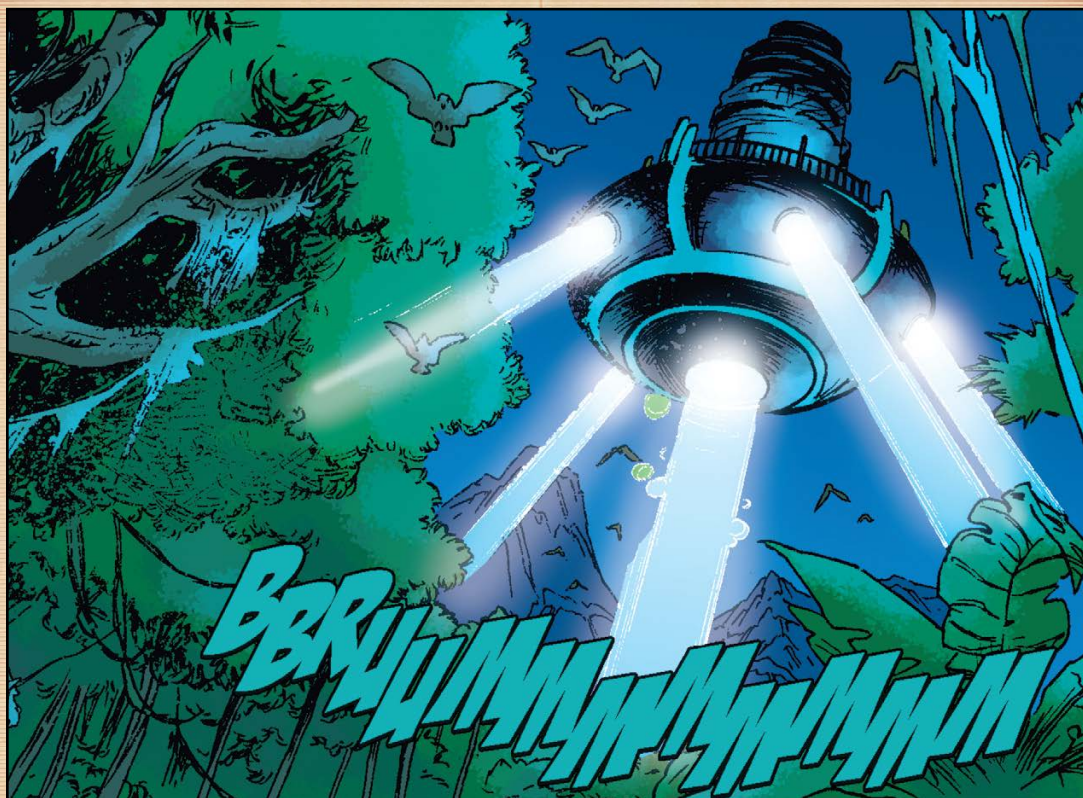
As a fast-growing outpost, Charamanta experiences some pretty drastic changes over its relatively short life. Below, you can find descriptions of the colony when the settlers are taking their first steps, as well as later, as the colony begins to reach maturity and a measure of independence.

Foundation

The first ships brought a little over 300 settlers. A mixture of construction crews, security officers, and scientists made up the initial landing parties. The first group of colonists is charged with laying the groundwork for the next, larger wave of humans to arrive from Earth.

The colony's administrators keep the teams concentrated on expanding and building the infrastructure for incoming settlers. Jungle-clearing and construction around the central settlement, unofficially referred to as New Plymouth, is the focus of most of the initial large-scale efforts, with projects like the landing field, medical facilities, and administrative hub receiving the lion's share of early resources.

Since United Planet surveyors had visited the planet in the past, purely scientific research is very low on the priority list for the settlers. Most of the scientific effort is concentrated on areas such as identifying weather patterns, immunological threats, and assisting in agricultural pursuits. Of course, the interactions of a biosphere are often incredibly complex, so members of the scientific teams do occasionally delve into evolutionary biology or comparative biochemistry—it just requires a lot of fast talking to the governor



to keep those endeavors rolling once they're discovered.

Growth

During this period, the influx of new colonists from home steadily grows the population. Initially, the outpost grows by about 100 new settlers each week. After the first few months, that number more than doubles, with more than a thousand new souls arriving every month.

Colonists for the advance party and early follow-on groups were carefully selected to give the fledgling outpost the greatest chance of survival. Nearly every passenger on ships bound for Charamanta has a skill set applicable to the challenges faced by the colony, from medicine to heavy equipment experience. A few hucksters manage to slip aboard, but those who do quickly discover there is a lot more hard work than opportunities for con artists or get-rich-quick schemes on the new frontier.

Nearly all humans live within the boundaries of New Plymouth during this period. There's little reason to expand beyond its limits, as the settlement is building infrastructure far exceeding its current populace. Furthermore, farming and ranching are nonexistent with

all food being shipped from Earth. Any local resources required, like lumber, are easily drawn from the clearing of the nearby wilderness as New Plymouth's footprint expands.

Government

As there are no particularly valuable resources—at least none readily available for settlers to exploit—the early stages of Charamanta's development share little resemblance to some of humanity's more glamorous historical expansion efforts. There's no sense of a frontier boomtown or the lawlessness that usually follows. Instead, it is a fairly ordered environment, managed carefully by the colonial government.

Rachel Williams, the colonial overseer, keeps abreast of all new arrivals, resources, and progress of vital projects. She's an able administrator, chosen both for her likability and capacity for competent management of subordinates. Williams is a great believer in delegation of authority and responsibility, but also in remaining in the loop on all important matters.

Law enforcement for the colony is handled by 30 security officers commanded by Kwanele

Mthemba, a former South African soldier. While they overlook many technical offenses as a necessity of frontier life, other infractions are treated as serious matters, since something as small as the theft of a few cans of rations may mean the difference between life and death when you're 70,000 light years from the nearest grocery store.

Mthemba's officers are also for protecting the colony against any potential threats from life forms native to Charamanta. Thus far, these have been few and far between as the largest predator known to exist on the planet is roughly analogous to a terrestrial tiger—certainly more than a match for an unarmed human, but also not immune to laser blasts.

Services

For the first few months of its existence, the colony is limited to spacecraft accommodations only a little more sophisticated than a hard-packed field with a few glow sticks for navigational aids. Refueling is handled by ground tanker vehicles. By the time it reaches its half-year mark, the facilities have been upgraded to more permanent structures, with elevated landing pads, refueling gantries, and minor repair shops.

A small emergency clinic provides the entirety of the initial settlement's medical capabilities. The clinic hosts only 20 beds and its services are geared to treatment of physical trauma, like broken bones, lacerations, and so on. Patients displaying symptoms of serious diseases or chronic ailments of any kind are ferried back to Earth as soon as possible.

Entertainment options are limited during the initial months. Alcohol is available only at a single bar, the Stardust, and Mthemba's officers always have a visible presence during evening hours. Skilled manpower is too valuable a resource for the colony to risk losing to bar room fights. The most popular source of entertainment is the Charamanta theater which has a surprisingly large library of pre-Conflict films to draw upon.

There are only a few merchants on the colony, at least at its inception. Necessities, like rations and tools, are distributed by the colonial administrators, but some trade does take place. The settlers earn wages, even in the early stages, and they want to spend it. Clothing as well as comfort and luxury items are in high demand, as are non-survival

foodstuffs, such as candy, pastries, and the like.

Weapons are also commonly available, as the colonists haven't forgotten recently fighting for humanity's very survival against not one, not two, but *three* invading alien races. While Mthemba and his officers don't exactly encourage the open carry of weaponry, as long as lasers, blasters, or what-have-you stays holstered, they allow it.

In general, while Williams' government allows merchants to price their merchandise to account for the costs of shipping and also make a profit, it does impose some mild price controls to avoid spiraling inflation. After all, when you're the only person selling cupcakes for tens of thousands of light years, it is tempting to gouge the price just a *little*. In game terms, most goods and services are about 50% higher than book prices.

Sample Adventures

During this period, a group of freelancers is likely to find employment exterminating troublesome local creatures or serving as guards for expeditions beyond New Plymouth's boundaries. Mthemba and his officers consider both tasks to be distractions from their primary role, safeguarding the colony as a whole.

Crews with their own ship have even more opportunities for earning income from colonists. Not only might they be hired for trips further afield from New Plymouth, but their ability to travel between planets might earn them jobs obtaining hard-to-get commodities for sale, serving as interplanetary couriers, or even tour guides for Earthers itching to get a look around the local region of space.

The Savage Tales **Infestation** (pg XX) and **Predators** (pg. XX) are also appropriate for this period of the colony's development.

Maturity

Within a little more than a year, Charamanta reaches its initial goal of 15,000 colonists. Immigration from Earth is stabilized at this point to match losses from Charamantians (as the settlers have begun to call themselves) due to departures, injuries, or the rare death. The colony enters the second phase of its development: self-sustainability.

The number of Charamantians now exceeds the accommodations of New Plymoth, which can only house about 12,000, but that is also part of Earth's plan. The remaining settlers reside in farms and ranches or in small, satellite towns that support clusters of these individual homesteads. While Charamantian food production is barely getting underway, the early teams of agriculturalists and xenobotanists have already identified which crops and livestock are best suited to the planet. As a result, the farming industry on the colony hit the ground running.

Children are rare on Charamanta. Planet-wide genocide is particularly hard on kids, so they're a rare, cherished commodity on Earth. Furthermore, pregnancies were strongly discouraged during the early stage of the colony's founding, due to the dangers and rigors of forging a life on a new world. Consequently, there are currently only 20 children on the colony, all between the ages of 8 and 14, and they are considered by all to be the colony's most valuable citizens.

Government

Once the settlement's early goals were accomplished and the population stabilized, Charamanta transitioned from being administered by government appointees to a democracy. Rachel Williams secured the title of first governor of Charamanta, opposed only by Tyler Higgins, who ran on a platform of complete separatism from Earth. While he garnered a few fringe votes, largely from the settlers outside New Plymouth, he was soundly defeated.

Williams left most of her staff in place upon assuming the governorship. She'd been careful in her initial appointments and over the intervening year had weeded out the few missteps she'd made in her selections. Being responsible for the capital city's infrastructure and governance, she also holds the unofficial title of mayor of New Plymouth, although no such office exists as yet. The smaller towns and hamlets in the surrounding jungle are either run by a council or a mayor, depending on the size.

Kwanele Mthemba continues to command the colony's small security force, which remains at 30 officers. The security force has grown into more of a law enforcement agency than anything else and remains focused in

New Plymouth. Outlying population centers rely on appointed constables to manage minor disputes and transgressions.

Mthemba recognizes his force is solely undermanned and underequipped to deal with a serious threat, such as a Tetaldian or other alien incursion. His calls for a strengthening of the force or even a creation of a standing armed defense force have so far been shelved by leaders on Earth who counsel relying on the United Systems for protection. (This, incidentally, was one of the rally cries Higgins used in his campaigns.)

As a stop gap, he's pressing Williams to allow him to conduct militia training for volunteers. She's not opposed, but is currently seeking a way to sell this to Earth before okaying it.

Services

Although not a large city by any measure, as a meticulously-planned urban area, New Plymouth has all the amenities one would expect in a city twice its size. A full-access quantum communications array is now in place in geosynchronous orbit above the capital. It provides not only communication with Earth, but all other similarly-equipped locations throughout the United Systems.

The streets are laid out in a logical grid pattern. Although there is no public transportation system, the city is small enough and laid out to make most points close enough to walk to in less than half an hour.

The colony is now serviced by a major, 100-bed hospital, outfitted with the best of human medical technology. It's also beginning to experiment in integrating some of the equipment and techniques developed by some of the advanced races of the United Systems. There are also two smaller outpatient clinics for handling less serious issues.

Entertainment options have also grown. In keeping with the careful design of the colony, all establishments serving alcohol and similar substances in New Plymouth are restricted to a two-block area, referred to as Bourbon Street. Charamantian security officers regularly patrol this part of the city, but that doesn't stop the occasional bar fight from breaking out here. Other entertainment options include two theaters, a sporting club where colonists can watch live quantum broadcasts of events on Earth and elsewhere in the coalition,

and three athletic fields hosting a variety of amateur sports.

Plans are in place to establish regular routes for the larger outlying communities, but currently folks on the outskirts are left to fend for themselves. These settlers, however, tend to be a little more individually minded. Usually, they have their own ground transport, ranging from ATVs to bulky four-wheel-drive vehicles. Still, that doesn't stop this from being a frequent complaint for farmers.

The landing facilities are capable of servicing up to three ships of Large Size or smaller, as well as several smaller landing pads for Small space- and aircraft. Huge and larger vessels park in orbit and are serviced with one of the colony's dedicated shuttles.

Sample Adventures

At this point, Charamanta is a full-fledged outpost of humanity. Although alien species are still very rare here, the colony is attempting to establish regular trading ties with other

planets in the coalition. As a result, a band of freelance spacers may run across the seeds for nearly any off-world scenario.

And although the settlement is beginning to stretch its legs, so to speak, it is still only a dot on the planet. Vast areas remain unvisited by humans, and the scientists on Charamanta are less focused on ensuring survival by this point, so expeditions into the wilderness are more common. Mthemba's force is understaffed and fully engaged with day-to-day duties, leaving other security undertakings like bodyguarding VIPs or riding shotgun on valuable shipments in the hands of private contractors. Finally, the frontier farms and settlements are virtually left to fend for themselves when it comes to dealing with predators, either indigenous or otherwise.

Any of the Savage Tales presented in this book are suitable for this period in Charamanta's history. Just be sure you run **Feeding Time** last, for obvious reasons!



SAVAGE TALE: INFESTATION

This adventure is set relatively early in the colony's founding, before humanity has solidified its presence. It can serve as the heroes' introduction to Charamanta and its settlers.

The colonists have encountered fire sloths and discovered they are far more dangerous than their languorous appearance would have observers believe. Depending on how the group handles the situation, they could open a new avenue for profit for the fledgling colony—or they could just end up setting a lot of stuff on fire.

Cocapples

Cocapple trees are a surprisingly resilient, and for reasons that will become apparent, fireproof tree with a nut-like fruit. On average, a ripe cocapple fruit is about a foot in diameter and weighs approximately 5 lbs. Inside the shell is a flavorful and intoxicating—but incredibly flammable—liquid. The shell of the cocapple fruit is incredibly tough.

On the other hand, the volatility of the juice inside a cocapple shell is such during summer months, even a few hours of direct sunlight can cause the fruits to explode. This is actually how the trees reproduce. Fruit that falls outside the shade of the grove explodes once the growing season begins, spreading seeds over a large area.

In game terms, the shell functions as Heavy Armor +2. Any fire-based attack or even one that just generates heat by kinetic energy, like most armor-piercing rounds, causes the cocapple to explode. In addition to the flames, the shell pieces form deadly shrapnel. Treat this explosion like a fragmentation grenade (MBT, 3d6 damage).

None of the tools the colonists have can pierce it without creating enough heat to ignite the juice—usually with disastrous results. The first attempt to pierce a cocapple shell with a carbon-tipped drill caused a massive detonation, and destroyed the drill and the workshop housing it, killing two colonists and

hospitalizing another. Since then, the colonists have just learned to leave well enough alone.

Fire sloths are the only creature on Charamanta that feed on cocapples. Their specially evolved jaws and teeth are able to puncture the shell without generating excess heat, like a conventional or laser drill would. Fire sloths are also quite addicted to the liquid inside the cocapples, relying on it for the entirety of their diet...as well as a constant, killer buzz.

Employment Opportunity

At some point during a visit to the colony, a construction foreman named Abner Jones approaches them with a job offer.

"We've hit a bit of a snag in our expansions on the southern side of the colony. We were hoping your crew could take care of a little pest extermination job for us."

Jones goes on to explain the construction crews have reached a cocapple grove. The trees have to be brought down manually, as they're completely non-flammable. Unfortunately, they're also home to sizeable troop of fire sloths.

At first the settlers were loath to harm or even chase the creatures off because, *"They're just so darned cute."* Eventually, it became obvious they would have to evict the animals.

And that's when things took a turn.

"Turns out, those little fuzzballs turn into demons straight from the Pit once you hurt one of them. They put two of my crew in the hospital and set fire to half-a-million dollars worth of construction equipment. Turns out they can vomit fire."

"They're hiding in the grove, and none of our hunters can get a clear shot from outside it. Once you're inside, those cocapples go off like grenades if they get hit by a stray round, so that complicates going into the brush to flush 'em out."

"Even worse, they seem to recognize anyone who's antagonized them in the past and they hold a helluva grudge. The little buggers go nuts

when any of my crew even gets on site now, much less root them out of the cocapples. We can't get a thing done."

Jones offers a flat fee of \$5,000 for what he calls a "simple job": Evict or exterminate the fire sloths. With a successful Persuasion roll, the team can get him to include expenses (with documentation, of course). A raise gets him to agree to up to \$6,000, but that's as high as he's willing to go.

Cocapple Grove

The foreman points out the grove in question to the spacers. He declines to get closer than a hundred yards or so. *"They don't like me much,"* he says.

The stand of cocapple trees lies at the eastern edge of a cleared stretch of ground. A sea of waist-high grass surrounds the grove on three sides. A trio of badly burned pieces of construction equipment sit just outside the grove. Even at a distance, it's obvious the vehicles need serious repair before they'll be ready for use.

The grove itself is a dense mass of multi-trunked trees tangled together, with some of the individual trunks growing to the size of palm trees. Thanks to the tangled mess of trunks and leaves, it's virtually impossible to see into the grove from outside it. The heroes can see only one or two of the fire sloths, and even those have near total cover (-6 to attack).

Guns Blazing

If the team decides to take the direct route, it quickly discovers a fight on its hands. Should any of the characters open fire from outside the grove, the sloths retreat further into the grove where they can't be seen at all. Engaging the troop requires the exterminators to enter the grove.

Vehicles cannot penetrate it, and the cocapple trees are too close together to even allow the spacers to make use of rocket packs. The entire grove is difficult ground for the characters. Each 1" of ground there counts as two inches for purposes of movement. Conversely, the fire sloths move normally through the tangled trunks, branches, and root networks.

Fire Sloths (24): Use the stats for Fire Sloth on page 28.

Flaming Death from Above

Once the spacers harm even one of the fire sloths, the rest turn into jet-fueled, drunken murder monkeys. The creatures swarm over the adventurers, getting Gang-Up bonuses when possible. Those that can't close for combat use their fire-breathing ability, since the flames can't harm the other fire sloths.

Any time a fire sloth breathes fire, roll a d6. On a 1, there is a cocapple on the ground within the area of effect. Determine its location randomly. It detonates for 3d6 damage in a Medium Burst Template. Characters in the area of effect can roll Agility (-2) to avoid the blast as usual.

The fire sloths even use this as a tactic. One chucks a cocapple fruit at an enemy, and another ignites it with its flame belch. And of course, if the spacers are dense enough to use fire-based weapons inside the grove, not only do they have no effect on the trees or tree-hugging aliens, they have the same chance to ignite a random cocapple.

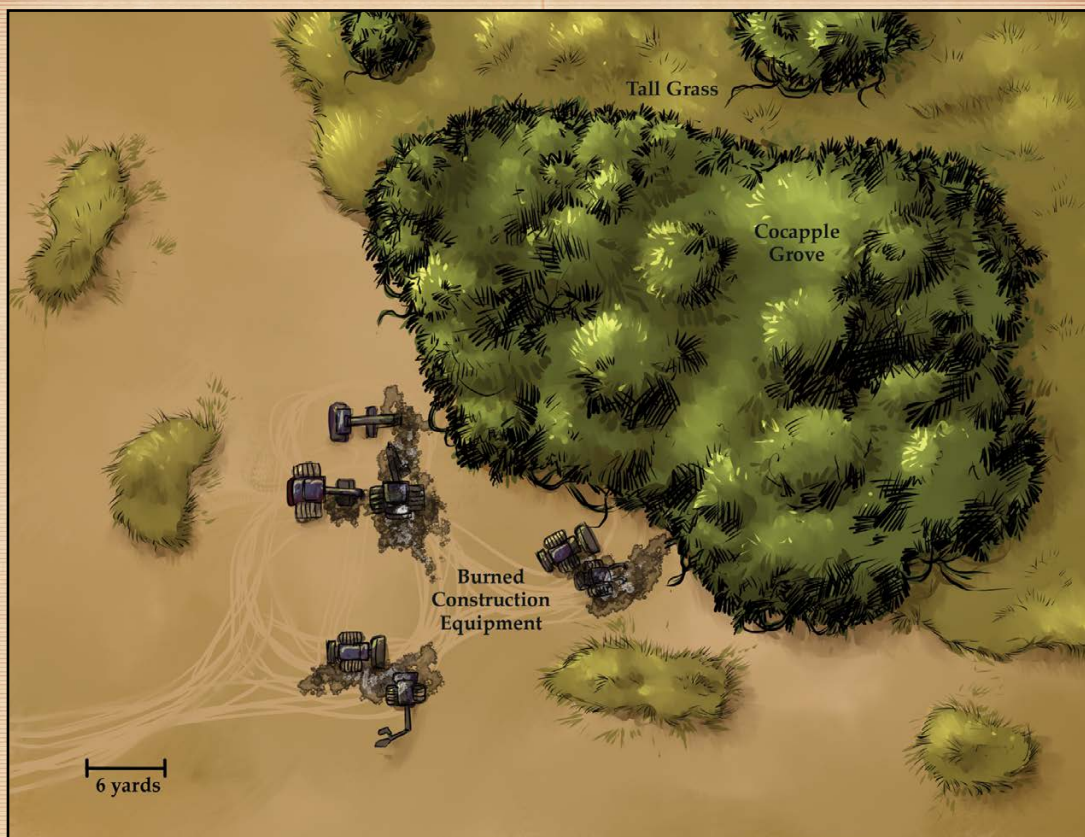
The fire sloths fight to the death once they begin a rampage. If they prove successful in clearing the animals from the grove, Jones pays the team the agreed-upon sum.

First Contact

If the exterminators don't go in blasting away at everything in sight, they can spend some time observing the animals without arousing the creatures' ire. The adventurers can watch the grove from the outside or even enter it without any risk of attack, unless they provoke the fire sloths first. An hour of observation from outside grants a spacer a Notice roll at -6, whereas one spent inside the grove itself gives a Notice roll at only -2. Each hour spent watching the fire sloths after the first grants a +2 bonus to the roll.

With a success, the hero begins to detect behavior patterns seemingly out of place in simple herbivores—even alien ones that can spit flames. The fire sloths appear to be communicating with each other in a primitive fashion, but the crew isn't able to decipher any actual words.

Should the team think to record the fire sloths' actions and analyze them with the assistance of a computer or AI, allow the characters to make a Knowledge (Computers)



or Knowledge (Anthropology) roll. With a success, the researcher can puzzle out enough to open basic communication with the fire sloths.

If the crew is in possession of the *Hope* from the *Cold-Blooded Revenge* Plot Point Campaign, no roll is necessary. Thanks to its alien database, the *Hope's* AI can interpret the language automatically.

At the Bargaining Table

Even conveying basic principles to the fire sloths requires a Smarts roll, and more complex ideas are simply impossible. However, if the team succeeds in opening up a parley with the creatures, they can attempt to broker a deal between the colonists and the fire sloths.

Once the settlers learn they can communicate with the fire sloths, they quickly come to an agreement benefiting both sides. The humans can easily cultivate and gather cocapple fruit. In exchange for all the cocapples they can

eat, the fire sloths can open the shells of the excess, allowing the colonists to harvest the juice safely.

The juice turns out to be a very valuable commodity for the fledgling colony. Researchers quickly learn it can be diluted to make a potent alcoholic beverage, which gains popularity in the Outer Quadrants especially. It can also be blended with hyperfuel, effectively reducing the cost of refueling at Charamanta by 25%, which in turn helps boost merchant visits to the planet.

If the crew successfully opens communications between the colonists and fire sloths, the colony rewards them with a bonus of \$15,000, on top of the original sum offered by Jones. Additionally, from this point on, one of the heroes can make a Streetwise roll while on Charamanta. A success means she's been recognized as one of the team who opened relations with the alien critters and drinks for free during that visit!

SAVAGE TALE: PREDATOR(S)

A Charamantian farmer or village mayor contracts the spacers to address a problem with predatory attacks on livestock.

Mistaken Identity

The settlement noticed a few dogs going missing about a week ago. Since then, goats and even cows have begun to disappear. The settlers believe they're being plagued by a particularly aggressive "tiger chicken"—the local name for Charamantian raptors. The colony's security officers have no interest in dealing with a "few missing animals," so they offer the crew a bounty of \$5000 for what should be an easy extermination job.

Actually, the livestock and other animals have fallen prey to a band of K'ktch'k hunters who recently came to the planet. The K'ktch'k are engaged in their race's ancient ritual of wooing a mate by proving their hunting prowess. The aliens have used Charamanta for these hunts for centuries as it was uninhabited by any intelligent life who might take offense.

Unfortunately, they've not updated their databanks and are unaware humans have not only colonized it, but are also members of the United Systems. They've mistaken the settlers and their animals for, well, fair game. The K'ktch'k are currently engaged in a game of one-upsmanship leading soon to inevitable attacks on the colonists.

Be Very Quiet...

Checking the sites of some of the recent disappearances lets the adventurers make Tracking rolls. At one of them, a success does turn up the distinctive bird-like tracks of a raptor. However, a raise on that roll or any of the other attempts does turn up some odd marks unlike any animal known to the heroes.

The raptor tracks are a few days old, and if the team thinks to correlate that with the timing of the disappearance at that location, they find it doesn't match up. However, they can easily follow them into the jungle. After two hours of tracking the raptor, allow the

spacers a group Notice roll each hour at a -8 penalty. Reduce the penalty by one for each additional hour they search.

With a success, they find the raptor. While a powerful predator, the beast is probably little match for a band of trigger-happy spaceship jockeys. After the group presents their employer with the carcass, the grateful Charamantian transfers the agreed-upon sum.

Charamantian Raptor: See page 29.

Unhappy Customers

Within a day or two of collecting their bounty, the crew is confronted by a delegation from the settlement. It seems the disappearances not only did not stop, this time the predator took one of the farmers. The Charamantians stop short of accusing the spacers of defrauding them, but ask the group to either refund their fee or deal with the problem.

Charamantian security officers do take notice of the situation at this point, but they also appear to be interested in enforcing the verbal contract. If the adventurers want to hold on to their funds, they have to solve the problem before the government does.

...We're Hunting Something

There are a number of ways the heroes may come up with to try to trap the actual culprit. They may have found the strange tracks earlier and look for more of them. The group may set up a trap, using an animal or even one of their own as bait. Or they might just pad off into the jungle and hope to stumble across the responsible party.

Let them try whatever plan they concoct, because the secret they don't know is any of them is going to work. The K'ktch'k hunters have been constantly hunting even more impressive prey to impress their female leader. The spacers, likely well-armed and appearing to be competent fighters, have climbed to the top of the list of candidates.

Initially, the K'ktch'k work alone, trying to pick off solitary heroes as the opportunity allows. They are masters at using stealth and attacking from ambush. Depending on the situation one may even get The Drop on a party member (see *Savage Worlds*).

These K'ktch'k are masters at attacking from ambush. A hunter can take a multi-action penalty to move out of a hiding spot, attack a hero, then move back and attempt Stealth again to hide. It usually takes a Wild Attack, both to offset any multi-action penalty and to increase its damage. Spacers can attempt an opposed Notice roll as a free action to spot the alien after it pulls this hit-and-run, and even if they fail they can attack it as if it were invisible (-6) to hit.

Once the party puts down one or two of them, the remaining K'ktch'k begin attacking in greater numbers. However, they're not working together so much as trying to take advantage of any distraction caused by the others. They never Gang Up or use similar tactics.

K'ktch'k Hunters: See page 30.

End Game

Once the hunting party is down to a single K'ktch'k, it attempts to flee back to its ship. You can handle this as a Chase or simply allow it to reach the vessel. If the adventurers overtake it or kill it before it reaches the objective, the party has to gather the information from it in a Social Contest (see *Savage Worlds*) or find and follow another K'ktch'k's trail back with Tracking rolls at a -2 penalty.

The ship rests in a small clearing and is of obvious alien design. If the crew can access the United Systems' database, it identifies the vessel and gives them a basic rundown on the species and their practices.

Regardless, the captain—the K'ktch'k female the males were trying to woo—speaks to the group over an external intercom. After some initial bluster, she explains they were unaware Charamanta had been colonized or humanity had been granted Class C status. She apologizes for the inconvenience and asks the group return the last surviving K'ktch'k hunter, as he has won the test by default. A successful Intimidation or Persuasion roll can elicit a \$5,000 payment for each success and raise provided they release the alien and forget about her ship.

The captain is no fool. She knows they've inadvertently violated United Systems' law by killing at least one Class C species—and inadvertent violations are the best violations in most bureaucrats' eyes. Whether the party agrees to release the hunter (if any even survived), she powers up the engines and leaves.

The heroes can try to stop the ship from leaving, but unless they're carrying Heavy Weapons, they are facing a *very* uphill battle. The K'ktch'k captain doesn't hesitate to fire back if she's attacked, and odds are she has the biggest guns in this fight.

K'ktch'k Ship: Use the stats for Scout Ship from the *Fear Agent*™ setting book.



SAVAGE TALE: FEEDING TIME

This adventure is best suited to characters of at least Seasoned or even Veteran Rank.

During a visit to Charamanta, the crew receives word the head of the colony's security forces, Kwanele Mthemba, would like to meet with them at his office—sooner, rather than later. Whether the summons arrives via communicator or a courier, any further questions they have go unanswered.

First Contact

Mthemba's office is located in the security complex in the center of the city. With no real threats to humans on the planet, the security forces on Charamanta serve more as the colony's constabulary than a standing military force. The construction of the compound conforms to that mission.

There are no walls or even fencing around the buildings making up the complex. Four buildings comprise the entirety of the compound: a two-story barracks, armory, administrative offices, and jail. All of the buildings are constructed of the same steel-framed, polymer walls and roofing common to most of the colony's structures.

The chief's office is in the administration building. When the spacers arrive, they're immediately escorted to see him. Mthemba's workplace is as austere as the aging African soldier himself.

There is one less chair in the office than the number of heroes, regardless of the number in the party. This is intentional on Mthemba's part. He prefers to keep visitors uncomfortable in any negotiations, in part because he feels it gives him the upper hand, but mostly because he chafes at being little more than a desk jockey.

Initially, the security chief briefly grills the adventurers on their purpose for being in "his colony." Mthemba interrogates them about any permits, licenses, docking fees, and taxes they may have outstanding. He seizes on any comment, no matter how innocuous, to imply the spacers are potentially involved in illegal

pursuits. Again, he doesn't actually believe that to be the case; he's just ornery and likes to watch people squirm.

Something Amiss

After grilling the characters for long enough to begin to annoy them, he abruptly changes his approach.

"A few weeks ago, we sent a ship, the Demeter, to an uncharted system, just 20,000 light years from here. Surveys indicate it held black ore, a common component for much of the advanced tech the United Systems has made available to Earth. While common elsewhere in the galaxy, it's not available on Earth or Charamanta. If we could mine it from there, it would save us from buying it from those bug-eyed merchants who always try to rob us blind with their prices."

Mthemba slams the desk at this last statement. It's clear whatever petty transgressions he might have been persecuting the heroes over moments ago have been forgotten in his anger at alien merchants he feels are taking advantage of humanity's first colony.

"The team was to begin laying the foundation for an outpost. The Demeter was due last week to resupply and submit preliminary findings. They have not. Obviously, there is no quantum array in place to talk to the team, and I don't have the time to wait 40 millennia to have a conversation via radio."

"Scans of the planet detected only a few, lower-order life forms—just rock, dirt, and ice at the poles. Most likely, the ship has blown a capacitor or its warp generator is on the fritz. However, the survey team did not carry enough supplies for an extended stay on the planet."

Manpower is at a premium in the colony, and Mthemba feels he can't spare enough of his small detachment to man a relief mission to the unnamed planet. Instead, the security chief wants to hire the adventurers to conduct a resupply mission for the survey team and also re-establish contact with them.

He offers the heroes \$500/day each for a six-day mission to relieve the advance team. If the

spacers have their own vessel, he adds another \$5,000 flat fee, plus refueling costs. If they don't, Mthemba scrounges up a beat-up scout ship for their use (and a pilot if necessary). Each success and raise on a Persuasion roll opposed by Mthemba's Smarts nets the characters a 10% raise, to a maximum of 50%.

If the survey team does indeed have mechanical difficulties they are unable to repair, he adds the colony will hire the characters for a second mission to carry the needed parts and equipment, at the same price.

❖ **Kwanele Mthemba:** See page 31.

Mission of Mercy

Although he doubts there is any pressing danger—the survey team has enough food for another week—the security chief doesn't want to cut things too close. Mthemba has a few crates of rations and drinking water loaded onto the heroes' ship.

Mthemba details two of his security detail to assist the heroes, “just in case.” They are Elke Schmidt, a statuesque and taciturn German woman, and Tim Baldwin, a young, red-headed man who couldn't have been old enough to legally drive during the Annubius Conflict. Baldwin is excitable and chatty, constantly pestering the heroes about their adventures, whereas Schmidt spends most of her time cleaning her weapons and checking her gear. Baldwin also has a fairly obvious crush on Schmidt who seems to have made ignoring him a fine art. Neither are Wild Cards.

The chief issues any unarmed character a laser pistol, but only if he specifically requests. Mthemba doesn't think this is a particularly dangerous mission, but acknowledges the universe can be a dangerous place.

After their own ship is loaded and fueled, Mthemba sees them off. He reminds them due to the lack of a quantum relay, they are effectively on their own until they return.

Schmidt and Baldwin: Use the stats for Human and apply the Soldier (Grunt) template. Body armor (+4), laser pistol (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6, RoF 1), nightstick (Str+d4), personal commlink, 2 spare energy packs.

Charmanta's Armory

The contents of the armory aren't likely to be of tremendous importance early in the adventure, unless your characters are woefully under-armed.

Once the feeders reach Charamanta, the armory takes on central importance. After a few failed attempts to burn cocapple groves, construction teams began relying on freeonium to clear plants. For safety purposes, Mthemba has the freeonium guns and fuel stored in the colony's central armory when not in use.

The armory usually contains the following gear, but you can adjust as necessary to fit events in your game:

- 20 laser pistols
- 10 laser rifles
- 3 freeonium guns
- 1 missile launcher
- 10 body armor vests
- 5 armored spacesuits
- 25 fragmentation grenades
- 10 EMP grenades

In addition to the weaponry above, the armory also contains enough ammunition for three reloads of each ranged weapon in its stock.



DEAD PLANET

Depending on the speed of the adventurers' ship, the voyage to the new system takes between one-and-a-half to two days. Unless you want to complicate the trip, the voyage is like most trips at warp speed—uneventful and dull. The lack of activity might even lead the team to believe the mission is every bit as mundane as Mthemba seemed to think it would be.

The security officers have a complete manifest for the *Demeter* and survey team. If any of the spacers wants to review it, they learn the team consisted of nine members: two geologists, a xenobiologist, a doctor, two security officers, a pilot, and a navigator. The two officers had laser rifles and the ship crew was armed with laser pistols, but there were no weapons other than those.

For equipment, the team had a wide variety of sampling gear, some field-testing equipment, and a fair amount of digging apparatuses. A successful Investigation or Knowledge (Geology) roll tells the heroes there was nothing on the manifest out of the ordinary for this type of exploratory mission. The *Demeter* was outfitted identically to a standard scout ship from the *Fear Agent*™ rulebook.

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie

Actually, things are far from mundane. Unbeknownst to the Charamanta colonists, the planet is home to one of the most fearsome predators in the known universe—feeders. Feeders exist only to eat and reproduce. Every single atom they consume is converted to either energy for themselves or matter for creating more feeders.

They are so efficient they regularly devastate the planet's biosphere, devouring nearly every lifeform on the planet down to grasses and molds. Once they've scoured virtually all organic life from the surface, the monsters slip into hibernation to wait for the biosphere to recover.

Currently, life on the planet is in one of these down cycles and has been for several centuries. The feeders have been hibernating for so long most have been buried by blowing

sand and dust which—thanks to the lack of plant life—the planet has in abundance.

The survey team landed and began taking geological samples. One of their digs exposed a small group of sleeping feeders. Roused from their hibernation, the alien eating-machines made quick work of the team, but not before one of the members had time to activate an emergency beacon.

Peeping Amoebas

Unknown to either humanity or the United Systems, the Dressites have been monitoring the progress of the Charamanta colony since day one of its founding. The Dressites would like nothing better to see it fail, and the more horribly, the better. Depending on the point in the timeline you choose to run this adventure, they may or may not have discovered Heath Huston's role in the destruction of their homeworld. Regardless, they hold Earth and its inhabitants at least partly responsible for the near-extinction of their race.

When the survey ship departed Charamanta, a Dressite assault ship followed it. The aliens observed the deaths of the team members with interest, taking note of the ferocity and efficiency of the feeders. Jealous of the relatively easy time the humans had founding their first colony, the commander of the Dressite ship decided to send them a belated welcoming gift of an invasive predator, although he didn't realize exactly *how* invasive the feeders would be come.

The assault ship's crew disabled the Charamantian ship's AI and emergency beacon. They then carefully lured a few of the newly awakened feeders into the vessel. Setting a simple autopilot routine, they set the ship and its deadly cargo on a course back to Charamanta. To make sure there would be no awkward encounters with other ships coming from Charamanta, they set the ship on a slightly roundabout course, adding a few days to its travel time.

I've Got a Bad Feeling...

Regardless of their vessel's top speed, less than an hour before they reach the planet, allow any crew member manning the bridge to make a roll for Knowledge (Electronics),



Knowledge (Computers), or any other skill you deem appropriate.

A success detects an emergency beacon signal originating from the planet. There is no message encoded, just a general call for help. The broadcast is barely a blip at the speed the spacers are traveling, but if the team thinks to analyze the length of the broadcast, a Knowledge (Computers), Knowledge (Math), or Knowledge (Warp Science) roll tells them it originated about a week ago and broadcast for about a day before being interrupted.

There is no indication as to why or how the beacon was shut down.

Missing Persons

Once the heroes are in orbit around the unnamed world, they may scan the surface with their ship's sensors to locate the *Demeter's* landing site. Ten minutes of scanning and a successful Knowledge (Electronics) roll, at +2 for the sensors, tells the crew there's no sign of the ship on the planet's surface.

If the crew scans for life forms, they find faint and scattered readings on a similar roll at -2. With a raise, the hero can tell the life signs are very weak, but do not match with those of humans. (Any feeders are either still hibernating or beginning to enter hibernation again, having devoured all food from the survey team several days ago.)

The spacers can search for signs of recent human habitation, but this is a bit tougher. The original survey team chose a spot in a shallow valley surrounded by rocky outcroppings. The cliffs on either side provide shelter from the dust-filled winds sweeping the planet, but also make it harder to spot from above.

With an hour's effort, the characters can make a cooperative Knowledge (Electronics) roll to find the survey team's landing site. This roll begins at a -6 penalty (including the +2 for the sensors). The heroes can try again each hour, with a cumulative +1 bonus for every hour after the first. So the first hour, the roll is at -6, the second hour it's at -5, and so on.

With a success, they locate the landing site of the *Demeter*. Should they scan for life forms at that location, they achieve the same results as before.

Ghost Camp

Landing at the site is trickier than putting down at a first-class docking facility, but not too tough. The pilot must make a successful Piloting roll or inflict a wound on her ship as it bashes against an unseen outcrop.

Once on the ground, the group can examine the camp site. There is no sign of the original survey team. A Notice roll does locate several pieces of personal gear, diaries, photographs from Earth, and so on, but nothing indicating what may have happened.

As soon as the security officers confirm there are no signs of the missing team, each moves to the top of one of the ridgelines surrounding the valley to better keep watch.

The team used three tents—one for sleeping, another for dining, and the last as a field laboratory. All three have been torn in several places and knocked down. However, the site does not appear to have been ransacked. Comparing the gear in the tents with the manifest tells the heroes most of it is lying among the wreckage, although some has been damaged.

Any spacer examining the damaged gear can make a Smarts roll. On a success, he realizes, although there are a few random laser burns around the site, most of the damage appears to have been from blunt force.

A Tracking roll finds old human tracks, all about a week old. A raise identifies several large flattened areas crisscrossing the site, as if a medicine ball the size of an elephant had been rolled across the area. These all dead-end, as outside of the shelter of the valley, the winds have wiped the ground clean of any trails.

There are blast marks where the *Demeter* landed and took off, and the backwash obliterated any tracks in that area. The emergency beacon is lying on its side near the edge of the landing site. A successful Knowledge (Electronics) roll tells a character the device was switched off and not damaged.

If anyone makes a Tracking roll near the beacon, she finds a single set of human prints. From the tracks, the individual who left them was running most of the time. A raise on the Tracking roll also reveals a single booted track near the beacon. It is slightly larger than a human boot and thanks to the engine's blast and passage of time, too indistinct to identify.

The human tracks lead from the beacon a short distance to the base of one of the outcrops. There's no sign of the team member, but a single hand-held video recorder lies there.

Monster Movie

The recorder is intact and still has enough power for playback. There are several days of dry commentary and documentation of drilling samples. Skipping to the end, however, reveals the fate of the team. Read the following if they do.

The recording shows two of the team's geologists setting up a portable drill on an open stretch of ground, presumably preparing to take some core samples.

One says to the camera, "We got some anomalous readings on density here. It could be a small lava cave or even a subterranean water pocket, so we're going to take a sample."

After a moment of fiddling with the controls, the scientists activate the drill, and it begins to bore into the dirt. It appears to go only a few feet when a thick, yellowish slime bubbles up from the hole.

The ground begins to rumble causing the drill to snap and fall over. Barely keeping their feet, the scientists stumble backwards, as the dirt erupts in a geyser several yards across. The area is obscured by heavy dust at first, but a ropy tentacle more than twenty feet in length snakes out of the cloud, followed by a second.

The scientists begin to flee, yelling warnings, but the camera remains focused on the action as a huge green-skinned sack of flesh clambers out of the hole, propelled along by dozens of tentacles like the first two.

The view shifts chaotically and is cut off suddenly.

The recording commences at the camp site with the security officers firing laser rifles at the creature. Although the weapons appear to burn its hide, it hardly seems to notice it. A tentacle whips out to grab one of the officers, stuffing the poor man into a greedy maw at the center of its body.

A second one of the creatures crests the ridge. The recording again stops.

When the recording resumes, it is focused on a man's face in close up.

"I am Anatoly Chernikov, xenobiologist from the human colony on Charmanta. Our scientific team inadvertently awakened a group of large, predatory life forms on this planet. Our weapons have proven virtually ineffective against the creature."

The camera rotates to view the campsite as several of the creatures rampage through it. One of the monsters snatches a fleeing human, gobbling her up as quickly as the security officer.

The camera turns back to Chernikov.

"These creatures appear to reproduce asexually and very rapidly. I've watched one spawn another fully mature specimen in the short time since we've awakened them. Their reproduction rate seems to be tied to their intake of sustenance. The more they eat, the faster they breed.

"None of us made it to the ship. I've triggered the emergency beacon. I'm hiding near our ship, but I don't expect to survive long enough to see any rescue party. My only hope is this recording can serve as a..."

Chernikov's face warps in horror and he begins a scream only to have it cut short as he's snatched upward. The camera falls to the ground, with the large tentacle that appears in frame the only hint to his terrible fate.

Welcoming Party

At some point during their exploration of the destroyed camp, one of the feeders not captured by the Dressites awakens from its pre-hibernation state. The exact timing of this depends on how successful and thorough the heroes are in their investigations. If the adventurers are digging in and unearthing clues, let them keep at it until they discover the video and have a chance to view it. If not, the feeder attacks before they lose interest or give up.

Baldwin spends more of his time watching the team rooting around in the debris—or admiring Schmidt on the opposite ridgeline. Consequently, he's taken almost completely by surprise when the feeder crawls up from a nearby crevasse to attack. Baldwin has just enough time to yell and stagger back before the monster is on him.

Give the characters Notice rolls to turn in time to see the feeder consume the hapless security officer. If you're feeling mean, you can even require a Fear check. After all, it is a pretty horrifying sight! Any character who failed the Notice roll is surprised the first round, but those who succeeded can act normally.

Unfortunately for the group, the feeder wasn't alone. The second feeder crests the ridge as the first finishes off Baldwin and makes a beeline toward the heroes.

Worse, the first alien was close to critical mass for reproducing; Baldwin pushed it over the edge. The first feeder spends the first two of rounds spawning another of its kind. The two then close the distance with the spacers.

The team has a few rounds to either muster a defense or flee. Schmidt fires on the monster with her pistol as she moves down to join the rest of the crew, but the hand weapon isn't likely to cause the feeder any serious damage. If they're well-enough armed, they might be able to take the creatures on successfully, but should it become obvious the group is in over its head, Schmidt encourages a retreat.

If none of the spacers discovered the recorder before this time, have one of them stumble across it during the fight (or hurried retreat).

Feeders (3): Use the stats for Feeder from the *Fear Agent™* rulebook.



LOST COLONY

The information on the recorder should give the characters the suspicion the *Demeter* wasn't being piloted by a member of the survey team when it left. If they figured out the beacon was turned off intentionally, they should have their guard up—even more so if anyone found the strange print near the beacon.

What all that means probably isn't clear to them just yet—and even if it is, there's not much they can do about it. And no matter what they did or didn't learn, they are left with little choice but to warp back to Charamanta to report their findings. Like the original team, they have no way to directly contact the colony.

Special Delivery

Thanks to its roundabout course, the *Demeter* arrives at Charamanta only hours before the heroes do. Running on a crude autopilot program with its AI disabled, the *Demeter* doesn't respond to hails from the planet as it approaches. This doesn't cause any serious alarm. After all, the colonial government had assumed the team had merely experienced technical difficulties, and the lack of response only seems to confirm that.

When the ship fails to touch down at the colony's small spaceport, the Charamantians begin to become concerned. The *Demeter* overshoots the colony by almost ten miles, crashing in the jungle to the east of the settlement. Not expecting the ship to be filled with tentacle-waving eating machines, Mthemba dispatches a rescue team.

Garbled broadcasts sent from the hapless team members as they are slaughtered by the ravenous feeders provides him actual little information about the alien threat. By the time a well-armed security detachment reaches the site, the feeders have been gorging on the rich buffet of life in the Charamantan jungle. Dozens of the creatures quickly overwhelm the security officers.

Since then, the feeders have been rapidly spreading across the area, multiplying almost exponentially as they do. By the time the spacers get back to the colony, the main

settlement is only hours from being under siege by the alien horrors.

Plague Ship

Shortly after the crew emerges from warp, they receive an emergency message from Charamanta. Mthemba's face appears on their screen, and he's obviously more than a little concerned about something.

"What the hell happened out there? The Demeter popped out of warp a couple of hours ago and crashed into the jungle! Now I've lost contact with the rescue team I sent—and the team I sent to rescue them!"

The heroes may or may not have any relevant information to relay to the security chief regarding the feeders. Either way, Mthemba says, *"We've lost half our force between the colony's advance team and this mess, so I'm scrambling to get enough bodies into uniforms. While I'm doing that, I'm blind here. I need you to get eyes on that crash site and tell me what's going on. Get me as much information as you can."* Before signing off, he adds, *"And for pity's sake, be careful."*

Dead Zone

Only a short hop (by spaceship) from the main settlement, the wreck of the *Demeter* isn't hard to locate. Normally, even a crash site of a starship could be lost in the thick foliage of Charamanta's jungles, but the vegetation surrounding the *Demeter* has been stripped to the ground in an area almost 100 yards in all directions.

The feeders have been feasting—and multiplying—to an almost unbelievable degree. The more energetic specimens plunged into the jungle, chasing various prey animals as they tried to flee. Stragglers contented themselves gorging on the copious plant life, slowing down only long enough to pop out more of their kind. Even so, they've already managed to create a circle of devastation greater than even the largest conventional warheads might.

The ship itself is relatively intact. While it chose a heavily-forested area to set down, the autopilot managed a controlled landing, as opposed to simply falling out of the sky. There is some damage to the fuselage, enough to require a few days of repair work to make her space-worthy again, but the *Demeter* is

otherwise in decent shape. The main cargo door is open.

Two medium-sized VTOL aircraft sit near the spaceship, their passenger compartments open as well. There is no sign of any humans at the site, and as the heroes' ship gets closer, they can see the pilot compartment to at least one of the aircraft appears to have been torn open from the outside.

A character watching the treeline can make a Notice roll. On a success, she spots a feeder on the edge of the clearing tearing at one of the trees. With a raise, she sees several of the alien devourers around the perimeter.

Landing requires a Piloting roll. The feeders did a good job clearing most of the trees and ground cover, but there are still a few stumps—or in some cases, holes where stumps would have been—to upset the touchdown procedure. A failure on this roll causes a wound to the group's spacecraft.

Poking Through the Wreckage

The adventurers may choose to play it safe and conduct only an aerial reconnaissance of the area. If they do, Mthemba encourages them to put boots on the ground and see if they can gather any more intelligence on what the colony is facing. However, if they decline, he doesn't push the issue. The speed with which his other teams were obliterated makes him more inclined to accept a cautious approach.

If they do land and just randomly poke around the area, give each a Notice roll every round. On a success, the character finds a broken strap, a torn (and bloody) piece of a security uniform, a commlink, or other small item left by one of the feeders' victims. With a raise, the hero stumbles across a laser rifle or laser pistol with 1d10 charges remaining. There's an equal chance of either, but no more than five of each can be found.

Their ship quickly draws the attention of nearby feeders. The aliens rush across the cleared terrain to close the distance with the new food source. The first reach the heroes six rounds after their ship lands.

The spacers might choose to play it safe and clear out any visible feeders with onboard weapons before setting down. Should they do so, they gain an additional four rounds to search before the monsters arrive.

Either way, once the creatures reach the site, one feeder arrives every other round until the characters either flee or end up tentacled-monster chow. If the group shows an intention to honor the better part of valor, give them every opportunity to escape. The real fight is yet to come.

Feeder: Use the stats for Feeder from the *Fear Agent™* rulebook.

Digital Fingerprints

Any hero who boards the *Demeter* can attempt to examine its logs. Most of the terminals are heavily damaged, but the character can rig a temporary interface to access the ship's computer. Doing so is a Dramatic Task (from *Savage Worlds*) using either Knowledge (Electronics), Knowledge (Computer) or Investigation roll, all at -2.

The timeline for this Dramatic Task is how many rounds before the feeders overrun the spacers' position at the crash site—or at least how long before they decide to make a run for their own vessel. Because of this, the investigator may get more than five rounds/actions to work on the logs. The character must still accumulate five successes to accomplish the task.

Possible complications include the hacker getting a nasty shock from her jerry-rigged connection for 2d6 damage on a failed roll, or maybe an additional feeder crawls out from under the wreckage to hassle her guards.

If the adventurer does manage to break into the *Demeter's* logs, she doesn't find any information on the feeders or the attack on the advance team. What she does discover is the ship's AI was disabled days *after* the survey team was slaughtered.

Furthermore, the canny searcher uncovers a blurry image from the *Demeter's* internal monitors. The image is of a roughly human-sized figure with four legs and four arms, garbed in a bulky space suit, bent over one of the ship's terminals. It's neither possible to refine the image or download a copy through the cobbled-together interface the hero has assembled—so while the spacer may be certain the culprits were Dressites, the intrepid investigator hasn't a shred of hard evidence to take with her.

First Wave

Whether the team chooses to land and search for clues or decides to play it safe and just watch from above, it's not long before they receive a distress call from the colony. It's Mthemba, and his strained face reveals the gravity of the situation.

"I need you to return immediately! We have underestimated the reproductive speed of these creatures disastrously. They're already on the edge of the settlement. I'm deploying what resources we have, but we need any help you can provide."

Given the speeds spacecraft are capable of—even within an atmosphere—the crew can be back at the settlement in a matter of minutes.

Strafing Runs

The feeders are rolling out of the jungle on the eastern side of the colony when the heroes arrive. There are scores of the monsters visible from the ship, threatening the entire eastern edge of the settlement.

As they approach, Mthemba strongly cautions them against setting down near the fighting. However, the spacers may decide to engage the creatures from the safety of their spaceship. Its laser cannons are some of the largest ordinance on the planet. Should they offer aerial support, the chief readily accepts.

If they do, rather than run a few rounds of combat, treat this as a Dramatic Task. The primary skill is Shooting, with a -4 penalty, as the exact, tactical placement of each shot is critical, due to the vast numbers of feeders facing the colony. Other characters can assist as normal, but can also use the following

skills: Knowledge (Electronics), to create better target resolutions; Knowledge (Battle), to pick the best tactical shots; and Piloting, to position the ship for better firing positions.

If the heroes have achieved five successes by the end of the five actions, they manage to buy the settlement a little breathing room. However, the outskirts of the town is still infested with the monsters.

Resupply and Recruitment

Mthemba contacts the team and thanks them for their efforts, if they managed to beat back the first onslaught. In any case, he directs them to set down on an open field on the west side of town and make their way to the security compound.

"Images we're getting from some drones show a larger wave of these things headed toward the spaceport. I received a message from the United Systems a few minutes ago. Sounds like a Dressite patrol is only a few hours away. I'm not a fan of the blobs, but I'll take any help we can get."

"We need to hold the spaceport, just in case they're late. Otherwise, the colony becomes one big buffet for the xenomorphs. I need you to grab the remaining weaponry and scare up as many able bodies as you can to help us hold the line and meet us at the spaceport."

The security chief provides them with the authorization code to access the armory. The usual officer assigned there is out with the rest of the security contingent trying to save as many colonists as possible.

Once they touch down, the heroes can either try to scare up a vehicle with a Streetwise roll or make their way on foot through the panicked streets.

Along the way, they can recruit a citizen to the defense with a successful Persuasion or Intimidation roll and raise. If they're driving, the spacers can make three such rolls each. On foot, they have more contact with the colonists and can make five rolls each. In either case, they can scrounge only enough weaponry to supply 20 militia members; Mthemba's own officers need the rest.

If the crew secured a vehicle, it takes roughly fifteen minutes to visit the armory, rally what colonists they can, and reach the spaceport. On foot, it takes thirty minutes.

Of course, players may come up with other options, like airlifting the gear and militia



directly to the spaceport. Use your judgment in those cases; if a plan seems reasonably clever, allow them to reach the spaceport quicker than a half hour. Time is important, as they soon discover!

Charamanta’s Last Stand

When they arrive at the spaceport, they find the security forces already engaged against a new batch of feeders, who are pouring out of the jungle. You can play this out as individual fights between the heroes and their allied Extras, but we recommend using the **Mass Battles** rules from *Savage Worlds*.

The Battle of the Spaceport

At the start of the fight, Mthemba’s security force has 20 officers. There are 20 feeders. The feeders receive 10 tokens and the security team gets 2 tokens. The security team receives a bonus token if the heroes managed to recruit at least 10 colonists, or two if they succeeded in raising 20 of them.

Mthemba coordinates the defense, unless any of the heroes has a higher Knowledge (Battle) skill. Alternatively, a hero can make a Persuasion roll opposed by the chief’s Spirit to convince him to let her run the defense regardless of her skill. (Either way, let one of the players make the actual roll.)

The colony defenders receive bonuses according to the table below, as well as any you decide appropriate if they come up with a good (or *bad*) battle plan.

The feeders aren’t particularly smart and lack organization or leadership, so they roll default for Knowledge (Battle)—d4-2. They have no Wild Cards in this fight. They receive an additional -1, as the colonists have a slight advantage in knowing the terrain better. Of course, even with those disadvantages, thanks to their sheer toughness and numbers the monsters receive a bonus of anywhere from +5 to +3 depending on how successful the spacers were in raising support.

Battle Modifiers

Modifier	Circumstance
+1	Heroes use ship for air support
+2	Heroes brought freeonium guns

The feeders receive a +2 bonus on any morale checks, thanks to their mindless frenzy. Even worse, at the end of each round, another token is added to the feeder total, as more of their kind swarm from the jungle. The colonists do not receive any reinforcements.

The battle may well come down to the success of individual character actions, as detailed in the **Mass Battle** rules. In addition to the skills listed in *Savage Worlds*, an adventurer can use Piloting if the crew is using their ship for aerial support. Only one character can use Piloting in this situation, but heroes manning shipboard weapons can use Shooting, up to the number of weapons (or linked-weapons) the vessel carries. Track usage of ship ammunition as usual.

Outcome

If the feeders win, the surviving colonists are driven back from the spaceport as the monsters overrun the primary escape route available to the settlers. Mthemba survives, along with a handful of security officers. He tells the heroes he plans to organize his survivors and try to fight a delaying battle until the Dressites arrive. The last part he utters with palpable distaste.

If the colonists succeed, they manage to force the feeders back and secure the spaceport in case an evacuation is needed. Mthemba splits his forces between maintaining a perimeter and preparing to deploy elsewhere in the main settlement.

In both instances, he urges the heroes to hurry back to their own ship to protect it should the feeders envelop the area. If they used their vessel to provide air support, he recommends they land in the open field on the other side of the settlement to keep the spaceport open for the arriving Dressite reinforcements.

They also have enough time to each receive a single Healing roll, either from another character or one of the security officers. Either way, Mthemba allows the group access to his teams’ medikits, granting a +2 on the rolls.

Before any of his other plans can progress beyond the discussion stage though, his commlink buzzes and a look clouded by disappointment, anger, and even fear crosses his features.

From Frying Pan to Nuclear Fire

Mthemba patches the dispatch from his private channel to his security teams and the adventures. The garbled voice of a Dressite comes through the earpiece briefly before the translator chips kick in.

"This is Commander Glorp'thorb of the Dressite assault ship Gleefflorp. Our sensors are showing a massive infestation of aggressive alien life forms of unknown origin. They appear to be reproducing at an exponential rate. Current projections show the creatures overrunning the planet in less than a local solar week.

"Their proximity to the colony makes conventional intervention implausible. We have forwarded our findings to the United Systems and received approval to sterilize the infestation before it destroys the planet's biosphere completely.

"Unfortunately, we are a small force and our ships' inventory of nuclear weaponry is severely limited. We are unable to effectively blanket an area larger than approximately 400 square miles. The alien infestation will soon expand outside that. To prevent planetary extinction, we must deploy the weapons within the next hour.

"The United Systems Emergency Management Agency has been fully briefed and sanctions this action.

"We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause, and suggest you use the remaining time to make peace with any primitive deity or deities your species chooses to revere."

The security chief immediately engages Glorp'thorb in an angry exchange. Assuming none of the spacers speak Zulu, this exchange introduces them to an entirely new range of expletives, helpfully interpreted by their translator chips. The characters can also interject in the conversation if they're of a mind.

The Dressite remains unswayed. *"Your position is untenable. Even now the life forms are moving through the surrounding jungle, enveloping your settlement."* If the colonists managed to hold the feeders on the spaceport at bay, Glorp'thorb helpfully offers, *"We see you have secured your landing facilities. Perhaps you can make use of your remaining time evacuating those that you can?"*

Damage Control

If the human force lost to the feeders at the spaceport, Mthemba revises his plans. He and what surviving officers he has left plan to try to retake the facility or at least a ship or two to get as many colonists off planet. If they succeeded in defending the port, he instead begins laying plans to evacuate as many as possible within the deadline.

The chief turns to the spacers. *"The school is on the other side of the settlement. Those children are the highest priority to not just the colony, but humanity in general. We don't have the resources to reliably get them to a ship in time. You, however, might."*

He asks the group to rescue the children—and any other adults they can fit on their vessel—for the colony. There are only 20 children and four teachers. While that number is likely to tax their vessel's resources, the spacers should be able to ferry the group back to Earth before their life support system is overwhelmed.

If they accept, he redistributes ammunition among the group, ensuring each hero has at least a laser pistol and two full power packs. If they brought the freeonium guns, he allows them to take one, while keeping the other for his detachment. He considers the safety of the children important enough to allow the group to take the rocket launcher if they ask. In this case, there is at least one rocket remaining.

In parting, the security chief thanks and salutes the team. His expression makes it clear he does not have high hopes for either group's success. *"Perhaps we will see each other again on Earth. If so, I would consider that an honor. If not...go with God, my friends."*

Streets of Fire

The local government decides to notify the colony of the Dressite plan in the hopes at least some settlers may escape. Getting to the school takes 20 minutes from the spaceport, due to the general panic and mass confusion in the streets.

If they use rocket packs or their own ship as a ferry, the crew can cut that time in half. The nearest landing site to the school is the field to which Mthemba directed them earlier. From there, it is only a five-minute walk.

The trip to the school can be as eventful or easy as you choose. On the off chance your heroes have had an easy time of it, feel free



to toss another feeder or two at them, as the monsters begin encroaching on the edges of the capital city. They've got a big fight ahead of them though, so don't get too heavy-handed.

Feeder: Use the stats for Feeder from the *Fear Agent™* setting book.

Schoolyard Bully

Reaching the school, they see it is, like most buildings in the capital, a prefabricated structure with a steel frame and polymer siding. The school displays the colony's hopes for expansion and growth, standing two stories tall with a footprint covering several thousand square feet.

The government's announcement, combined with crawling, viridian people-eaters pouring out of the jungle has the children in a panic. Their teachers recall all too well the horrors of the Annubius Conflict. As a result, terror, more often than order, rule in the colony's school building. Most of the children are in hiding, either in groups or individually, and some of the teachers as well. The few remaining in the open are ready to fight for their lives.

Complicating the crew's mission, just as they arrive, a gigantic father feeder erupts out of the nearby jungle on a collision course with the school. The only checkmark on the

positive side is the father feeder's massive appetite has left little for the more run-of-the-mill monsters to feast on, so the creature is alone.

Before the heroes can rescue the kids, they have to deal with the gargantuan monstrosity.

You can handle this as a regular fight, or if you want to keep the pace moving to give the feel they're racing a clock, you can use a modified version of **Dramatic Tasks** from *Savage Worlds*.

In that case, the heroes divide themselves between those trying to find the children and those trying to hold off the father feeder. The spacers fighting the father feeder perform combat as usual, using whatever skills they feel appropriate on their actions. Each round of combat resolves normally.

The adventurer(s) trying to round up the students make Notice rolls at -2 on their actions. As usual, she has five actions to achieve five successes, and other characters can assist with cooperative rolls, but one of the group is the primary actor. Complications could include having to coax a frightened child (Persuasion at -2) or being struck by debris from the battle outside on a failed roll, requiring him to roll Agility at -2 or suffer 2d6 damage.

Should the heroes either manage to defeat the father feeder outright or amass the necessary five successes at Notice rolls, they rescue and evacuate all 20 children and four teachers. If the Dramatic Task ends without the spacers meeting either condition, they collect four students and one teacher for each Notice success before the monster forces them to stage a fighting retreat back to their ship.

<WC>**Father Feeder:** Use the stats for Father Feeder from the *Fear Agent*™ setting book.

Aftermath

True to their word, in exactly one hour, the Dressites blanket the area for miles around the capital city and the *Demeter's* crash site with weapons of mass destruction. Any humans still on the surface are lost in the white-hot blast of nuclear fire.

Sadly, even if the colonists held the spaceport against the initial feeder flood, this is the majority of the colony's population. There were only three ships available to the settlers besides the heroes' vessel, and even packed to the gills, only one thousand souls escaped.

If they failed to beat back the feeders from the landing facility, the characters and any of the colonists they rescued are the only survivors of humanity's first interstellar colony.

Long Voyage Home

The voyage from Charamanta, counting the time to reach full warp, likely takes the crew between four and a half to six days, depending on their vessel's top speed and acceleration. Provided they refueled before departing on the mission to the feeders' home planet, their ship should have ample fuel to make it back to Earth.

However, depending on how many colonists they rescued, they may find themselves running short on food and life support. They can stretch their air supply just long enough to make it, but the heroes and their passengers are likely to be making Vigor rolls as detailed under **Provisions** in the *Fear Agent*™ setting book. Hopefully, they did at least a few calculations before overloading their ship with refugees...

No Comeuppance

While the team may well have very strong suspicions about the Dressite involvement in the feeders' presence on Charamanta, they have no hard evidence. If the spacers approach Thomas Yorke, Charlotte Hutson, or any of Earth's other leadership, they quickly remind the team of this.

In spite of their actions—and subsequent sanctions—during the Annubius Conflict, the Dressites are one of the cornerstones of the United Systems. Humanity is the new kid on the block, and one whose position is very tenuous indeed. Any accusations they level against the aliens are going to be subject to heavy scrutiny, as the entire coalition is well aware most of humanity holds no small grudge for its near extinction.

On top of that, the Dressites made certain to thoroughly document their fleet's official actions and obtain all the correct authorizations before proceeding. Every step they took was by the book, paragraph, and line of the coalition's ordinances. And if there's one thing the bureaucrats of the United Systems value it's attention to meaningless detail—even more than life itself. Without hard evidence, Earth's protests will not only fall on deaf ears, but also likely garner more enmity, both from the Dressites and the other older races in the coalition.

Humanity's Heroes

No matter how things turned out on Charamanta, humanity mourns the loss of its first colony. However, the spacers are recognized as heroes, although there's never a ceremony to recognize them. More importantly, the adventurers gain a +2 Charisma to any humans who've heard of their exploits on Charamanta. You can decide this on a case-by-case basis, but thanks to the coverage, there's at least a 50% chance any person on Earth at the time of this adventure is likely to recognize the characters' faces and/or names.

Finally, Earth's leadership provides a full resupply of provisions, life support, and fuel without any prompting from the crew. The planetary government also scrapes up a small honorarium for their efforts, amounting to \$50,000.



BESTIARY

Charamantian Raptor

This beast is the planet's apex predator. It's a quadruped about the size of one of Earth's great cats, but with a more avian ancestry. The raptor is covered in feathers, and has bird-like claws rather than those of felines. Males can be identified by a feathered mane they can spread to attract females during mating season.

Locals often refer to them jokingly as "tiger chickens," but they are fearsome predators. Not only do their claws pack the same power as a great cat's, but their feathery coat actually provides increased protection.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Dense feathers.
- **Bite or Claw:** Str+d6.
- **Improved Frenzy:** Raptors may make two Fighting attacks each action with no penalty.
- **Low Light Vision:** Raptors ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Lighting.
- **Pounce:** Raptors pounce on their prey, often from above. The creature can leap 1d6" to gain +4 to attack and damage. This reduces its Parry by -2 until its next action.
- **Size +2:** Raptors can weigh over 500 lbs.

Fire Sloth

Fire sloths are the most advanced species on Charamanta. They resemble a cross between an orange-haired koala bear and a ground sloth. They have dense, powerful claws which they use to cut the thick stems of cocapples, their only food source. They crack the fruit's unbelievably hard shells with their hyper-dense incisors powered by a set of jaws that function like a biological hydraulic press.

Normally, fire sloths move at a plodding, deliberate pace—when they move at all. The creatures spend most of their lives in peaceful troops of 20 or more, sitting in cocapple groves and sipping the fruit's nectar, which has an extremely intoxicating effect on them. In spite of the appearance of easy prey, predators on Charamanta generally avoid them, though. When one of their troop is killed, they become a herd of extremely unpleasant drunks, attacking recklessly and ferociously until either the attackers are driven off or dead.

These creatures have a rudimentary intelligence and communicate through a simple series of grunts and body postures. However, fire sloths move so slowly—at least when not enraged—no sentient species has yet recognized their "language."

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Throwing d6



Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6, counts as a Heavy Weapon.
- **Claws:** Str+d6, AP 2.
- **Explosive:** Any fire sloth killed by an attack that pierces its skin (GM's call) explodes in a Medium Burst Template. Anyone inside the template can make an Agility roll at -2 to avoid the damage. Those who fail suffer 2d8 damage and must check to see if they catch fire.
- **Flame Belch:** Once per day, a rampaging fire sloth can regurgitate flaming cocapple nectar using the Cone Template. Every target under the cone may make an Agility roll at -2 to avoid the attack. Those who fail suffer 2d10 damage and must check to see if they catch fire. The fire sloth cannot attack with its bite or claw the round it belches fire.
- **Fleet-Footed:** A rampaging fire sloth rolls a d8 when running.
- **Immunity (Fire/Heat):** Fire sloths are immune to fire- and heat-based attacks, including lasers.
- **Improved Frenzy:** When rampaging, fire sloths may make two Fighting attacks each round at no penalty.
- **Rampage:** When a fire sloth is killed, the other members of the troop automatically go on a murderous rampage, attacking any creatures in the area at the time that aren't members of their troop. Rampaging fire sloths gain Pace 8, Toughness +2, and +2 damage.
- **Size -1:** Fire sloths are the size of chimpanzees.

K'ktch'k

The K'ktch'k are members of a insectoid race with several attributes in common with Earth mantises, not the least being a strong predation impulse. The aliens are classified as Class C intelligences by the United Systems, but the K'ktch'k seldom participate in the coalition. The sentient arthropods have a well-deserved reputation for not playing well with others.

The average member of this species stands around 7' tall, but the creatures possess unusually slender bodies and weigh about the

same as a human more than a foot shorter. The tough exoskeleton of a K'ktch'k is covered with pigmentation cells which the aliens can alter to blend almost completely into their surroundings

They have four arms, a pair at the shoulders and a second pair slightly above the waist. The K'ktch'k prefer to use the upper pair for heavier tasks, preserving the mid-torso ones for more precise work, but the arms are of roughly the same strength and dexterity.

K'ktch'k lack the hive mentality—much less the hive-mind—sometimes encountered in arthropodal species. They are most comfortable when alone, except during the race's annual mating periods. At these times, males compete to win a female's approval with primitive displays of hunting prowess and physical combat, even though the K'ktch'k mastered warp science before humanity discovered gunpowder.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Tracking d8

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Alertness

Gear: Translator chip. K'ktch'k seldom use other gear, relying on their own abilities.

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Chitinous shell.
- **Chameleon:** A K'ktch'k's shell has light-refracting properties allowing it to blend almost perfectly with its surroundings. As long as the alien is stationary, it gets a +4 bonus to all Stealth rolls to remain unobserved. This ability is lost when the K'ktch'k is killed.
- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Distortion:** The shell of this alien makes it difficult to focus on, even when moving. All attacks against K'ktch'k are at -2 as a result.
- **Extra Arms:** Due to their additional arms, K'ktch'ks get one extra non-movement action per round at no multi-action penalty.
- **Wall-Walker:** These aliens can walk on vertical surfaces at their normal Pace.

❧ Kwanele Mthemba

Kwanele Mthemba was a sergeant in the South African army when the Tetaldians attacked Earth. His unit made a brave, but ultimately futile stand against the robot invaders, before being overwhelmed. He was gravely injured in the fight, losing his left eye, but just too tough to kill on the first attempt.

He went on to lead a hodge-podge force of former soldiers, school teachers, tribal warriors, and construction workers in a guerilla war against both the Tetaldians and Dressites for the remainder of the conflict. His success and leadership skill led to him being selected to oversee the security of humanity's first colony in outer space.

Mthemba is a hard man to like at first. The Annubius Conflict took all of his loved ones from him, and he has subconsciously adopted a brusque, almost abusive demeanor to prevent him from forming close bonds again. Underneath his coarse façade beats the heart of a man who'll stop at nothing to accomplish his duty—protect the colonists under his care.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d4

Cha: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (4).

Hindrances: Loyal, One Eye, Habit (Abrasive)

Edges: Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Command, Hard, Hard to Kill, Inspire

Gear: Body armor (+4), laser pistol (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6, RoF 1), 2 spare energy packs, personal commlink, Charamanta security uniform.



CHOMP!