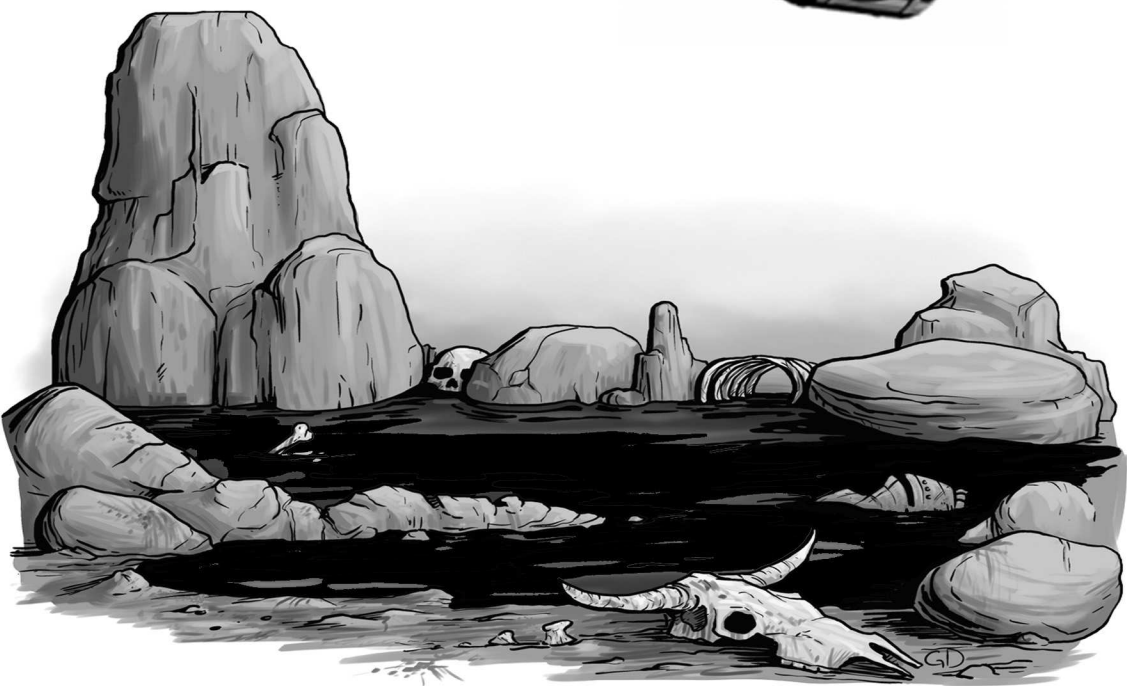


STUCK ON ETHOLK



**A White Star: Science Fiction Roleplaying adventure for
3-6 characters of 1st through 3rd level**



WHITEBOX ONE•SHOTS
SCI-FI

STUCK ON ETHOLK

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STUCK ON ETHOLK

A seedy alien crimelord has broken free from a prison transport and you've been implicated in the escape. You're innocent of course—you were just in the wrong place at the wrong time—but nobody wants to listen. Can you brave the tar pits of Planet Etholk and recapture the escapee before every bounty hunter in the galaxy comes looking for you?

Stuck on Etholk is a **White Star: Science Fiction Roleplaying** adventure for three to six characters of 1st-3rd level. The adventure was designed to be dropped into any multiworld space opera-type science fiction setting. *Stuck on Etholk* involves a mixture of space combat, problem solving, and roleplaying, so a variety of classes is recommended.

Note: The background in *Stuck on Etholk* references the military powerhouse known as the Galactic Consortium and its attempt to stamp out the beleaguered forces of the Resistance. The **Referee** is encouraged to swap out the Galactic Consortium with whatever oppressive intergalactic alliance, regime, or empire exists in his campaign and substitute the Resistance for any small group of opposing freedom fighters, insurgents, or rebels.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The renowned Kaltoin crimelord Pubulbus Bulba was recently captured by Consortium forces in a remote star system of the **Referee's** choosing. Bulba was then loaded onto a prison transport frigate to be taken to the penal planet Molqut to await trial for various crimes including blackmail, arms smuggling, and trafficking of illegal narcotics. Bulba's criminal associates have hired a mercenary company named the StrikeClan to free him en route.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins "in media res" as the PCs exit FTL speed. The PCs enter normal space directly in front of an approaching Consortium prison convoy. Their comm board instantly lights up with an incoming transmission:

"Starship <insert PC vessel's name>, this is Consortium prison transport *Tylee II*. You are interfering with our planned route of FTL travel. Remove your vessel from the space lanes immediately or you will be fired upon."

The prison convoy consists of one (1) frigate and six (6) fighters. The PCs have one (1) **round** to vacate the lane before the Consortium fighters attack.

Consortium Prison Frigate (*Tylee II*): AC: 5 [14]; hp 85; Shield: 5; Move: 7; Target +0; Att: laser cannons x8 (4d6); Mod: FTL drive, prison cells.

Consortium Fighter (6): AC: 3 [16]; hp 25; Shield: 0; Move: 15; Target +2; Att: laser cannons (4d6) [pilot-linked]; Mod: none.

WE GOT COMPANY

Two (2) **rounds** after the PCs enter normal space, a ragtag fleet of eight (8) small, antiquated fighters and starships exits FTL speed in the vicinity of the PCs. The ships bear the markings of the Green Karno space pirates. They immediately attack the prison convoy, bypassing any PC starship in the vicinity. In fact, to the untrained eye, it might even look like the PCs are part of the pirate fleet!

Antiquated Fighter (5): AC: 6 [13]; hp 15; Shield: 0; Move: 12; Target +0; Att: laser cannons (3d6) [pilot-linked]; Mod: FTL drive.

Light Transport (2): AC: 6 [13]; hp 40; Shield: 0; Move: 9; Target +0; Att: light laser (2d6); Mod: FTL drive.

Space Yacht: AC: 3 [16]; hp 30; Shield: 0; Move: 12; Target +0; Att: light laser (2d6); Mod: FTL drive.

BOTCHED RESCUE

The Green Karno pirate ships are no match for the Consortium vessels. However, the attack is merely a ruse perpetrated by StrikeClan mercenaries. The antiquated pirate ships are actually powered by cheap drones. The StrikeClan has also bribed a Consortium prison guard to help facilitate Pubulbus Bulba's escape while the Consortium forces are distracted by the "pirates".

As the battle commences, an escape pod jettisons from the prison transport and hurtles towards the PCs' starship. At the same time, the previously cloaked StrikeClan starship *DarkSpear* suddenly powers up and decloaks in front of them.

The StrikeClan mercenaries had planned to intercept the escape pod and be gone before Consortium forces could respond. It was just fate that put the PCs in their path. The mercenaries prefer not to leave witnesses and attack the PCs on sight. Their vessel is designed mainly for speed and stealth, however, so they activate their cloaking device and flee after suffering any damage.

Meanwhile, the escape pod passes by, disappearing into the blackened atmosphere of the nearby Planet Etholk.

StrikeClan Interceptor (*DarkSpear*): AC: 6 [13]; hp 40; Shield: 0; Move: 18; Target +1; BHB +1; Att: light laser (2d6) [pilot-linked]; Mod: FTL drive, high-yield thrusters x3, cloaking device.

STRIKECLAN

The StrikeClan is a team of skilled human and alien mercenaries who hire themselves out as soldiers, bounty hunters, and sometimes assassins. The StrikeClan is based on the disreputable Planet Barrke in the Wollurral System, which is known to be friendly to mercenaries and bounty hunters of all kinds. The StrikeClan was contracted to rescue Pubulbus Bulba, but would rather not make enemies with the Galactic Consortium.

GETTING THE PCs INVOLVED

The rest of the adventure requires the PCs to travel to Planet Etholk in search of Pubulbus Bulba's escape pod. How the PCs get to the planet's surface and their motivation for rescuing Bulba is up to the **Referee**. A few sample reasons are included below.

- If the PCs are members of the Consortium, Captain Westfield of the *Ty'lee II* hails them on the comm. The prison transport suffered unexpected damage during the brief battle with the Green Karno pirates and is undergoing repairs. Captain Westfield informs the PCs of Bulba's escape and asks them to recapture him.
- If the PCs are members of the Resistance, they receive a transmission from a spy named Minter Vivan who is embedded aboard the *Ty'lee II*. Vivan recognized the PCs' vessel and advises them of Bulba's escape. Vivan tells the PCs that Bulba possesses contacts and information that would be useful to the Resistance if they were to rescue him.
- The PCs receive a broken, one-way transmission from the planet's surface: "This is Pubulbus Bulba, head of the Oniak-Bulba Kaltoin Family. I am stranded on the star-godsforsaken world of Planet Etholk. Anyone who rescues me will be richly rewarded. I repeat, anyone who rescues me will be richly rewarded."
- One of the PCs recognized Pubulbus Bulba's froglike face looking out of a viewport as the escape pod passed by. The PC might be an ally of Bulba's, he might know that Bulba is rumored to have treasure caches hidden all over the galaxy, or he might know an enemy of Bulba's that would pay handsomely to have him delivered alive.
- The PCs (or one of their robots) intercept an encrypted transmission from the StrikeClan mercenaries advising their employer of an unexpected delay in recovering "the package". The PCs should suspect that whoever or whatever was inside the escape pod is extremely valuable.

PLANET ETHOLK

Etholk is a small, inhospitable world of hardpan deserts, rocky canyons, and large, bubbling tar pits. The weather is uncomfortably hot and the air is filled with clouds of black, choking smoke from burning tar. This pollution creates complications to vessels unless proper adjustments are made (see **Mechanical Complications** for details).

Etholk is home to a few native species including the primitive Garkon tribesmen whose warriors prowl the canyons on giant scurtra crabs, and the dreaded stilgk tar monster that preys upon the unwary (see **New Lifeforms** for more information).

The tar pits are hazardous to most lifeforms and are filled with ancient fossils. Anyone with a 17 **Strength** or greater has a 1 in 6 chance of freeing himself on the first **round** after falling into a tar pit. Afterwards, they are unable to free themselves without help.

The tar pits also contain pockets of flammable *betham* gas. Whenever an energy weapon strikes a tar pit, the **Referee** should roll 1d6. On a roll of one (1), the gas ignites, causing 3d6 **Hit Points** of damage to anyone in the pit (**Saving Throw** for half damage). The tar pit continues to burn until extinguished, causing an additional 1d6 **Hit Points** of damage per **round** to trapped creatures.

MECHANICAL COMPLICATIONS

It takes three (3) **rounds** for the PCs to locate Bulba's escape pod in a nearby canyon. However, as soon as the PCs enter Etholk's atmosphere, alarm lights and sensors indicate the planet's polluted air is fouling up their engines and other systems.

A **Pilot** may use Jury-Rig to reroute power from nonessential systems to compensate. This quick fix lasts 2d6 **rounds**, after which time, the starship's **Movement** is reduced by one (1) per **round**. When the ship's **Movement** reaches zero (0), the vessel is grounded until more extensive modifications and repairs can be made.

These repairs take six (6) **turns**. The ship's **Pilot** may reduce the time it takes to effect these repairs by one (1) **turn** per **Experience Level**.

THAT SINKING FEELING

Pubulbus Bulba's escape pod crash-landed in the middle of a bubbling tar pit and quickly sank so that now only part of the pod is visible.

Bulba is sitting on top of the pod looking miserable. He possesses a short range communicator and can talk to the PCs as they approach. Bulba is extremely desperate to be rescued and has begun to suspect he is not alone in the canyon. He has three undocumented credsticks worth 1,000 credits each that he offers as a down payment on any reward.

The **Referee** may wish to roleplay the encounter as comic relief, with Bulba first demanding to be rescued, then offering the reward, then begging for his life in the name of all good and honorable **Star Knights**.

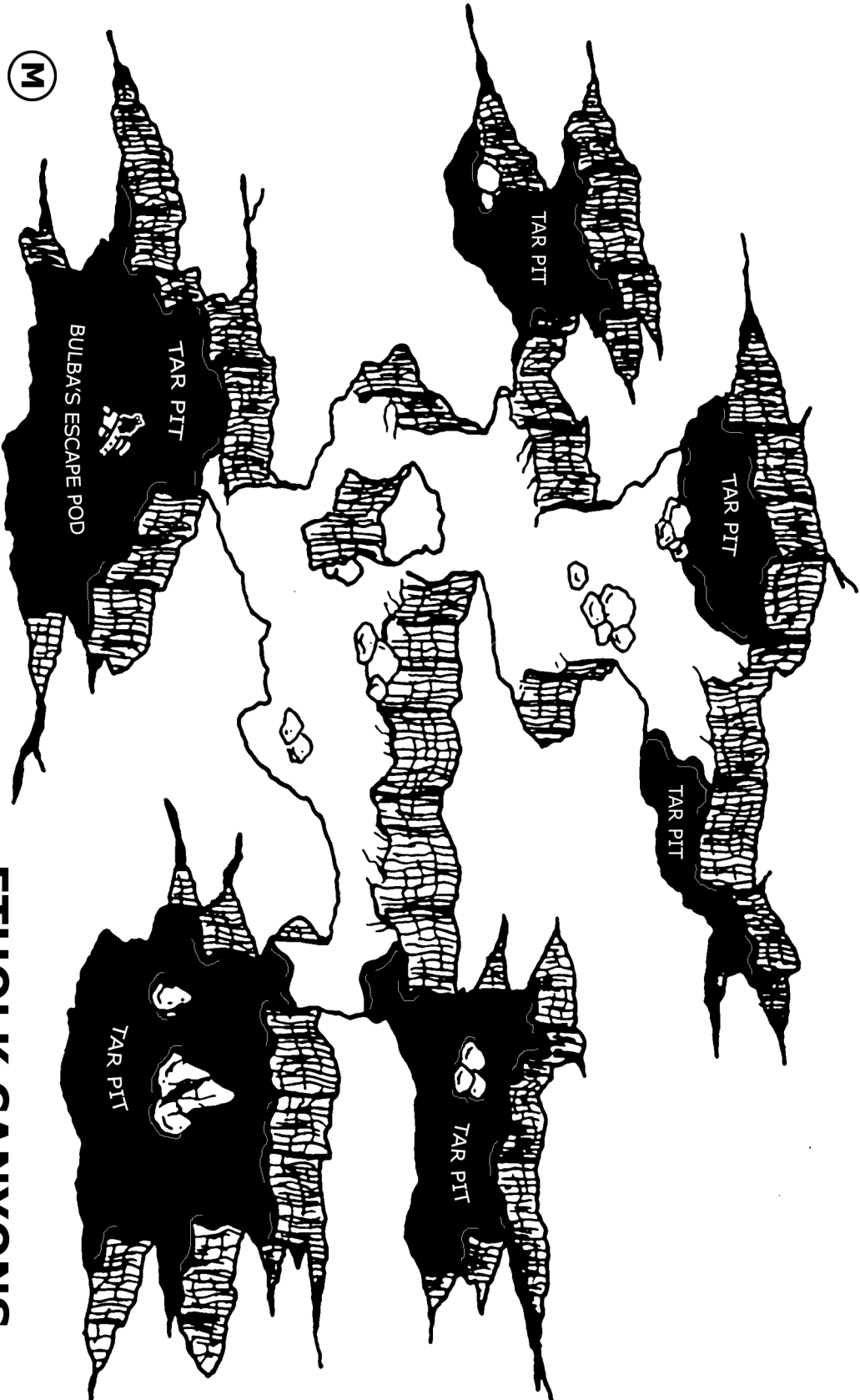
PUBULBUS BULBA

Bulba is a Kaltoin (large, bloated, froglike aliens) crimelord whose criminal enterprises include black market trade, arms dealing, *listil* drug smuggling, and piracy.

Bulba has a reputation for ruthlessness, but is a coward at heart. He has a number of disreputable associates, many of whom he has been blackmailing for years. Most of these "allies" would prefer to see him dead, however, they know that Bulba has made arrangements to reveal their secrets upon his death so they have hired the StrikeClan to rescue him instead.

Pubulbus Bulba (Kaltoin): AC: 9 [10]; HD 1; hp 5; Attacks: none; Special: jump 20', amphibious; Move: 9/9 (swim); XP 1/10, communicator, credstick x3 (1,000 credits each).

M



ETHOLC CANYONS

RESCUING PUBULBUS BULBA

There are a number of ways the PCs can go about rescuing Bulba. The **Referee** should choose at least one of the following encounters, based on the actions of the PCs.

GARKON ATTACK

The PCs may decide (or be forced) to land in a nearby canyon and then travel on foot or by skycraft to rescue Bulba. Once on the ground, the characters eventually encounter a party of Garkon warriors riding scurtra crabs (see **New Lifeforms**). The Garkons surround the PCs and/or their vessel, using the terrain for cover.

If the PCs do not attempt to communicate, the Garkons charge, firing rifles as they come. The Garkons retreat if three or more of their number are slain.

If the PCs attempt to communicate, the Garkons hold off their attack. The Garkons greedily eye the PCs' gear and the characters can win their trust by offering something of value (clothes, weapon, food, etc.).

The Garkons tell the PCs that the other offworlder (Pubulbus Bulba) is trapped in a tar pit and is about to be devoured by a stilgk tar monster. They also warn the PCs that using energy weapons can ignite the tar and kill the stilgk, however, if they don't act quickly, the offworlder will die in the fire as well. Skip ahead to **Stilgk Attack**.

Note: If the PCs are overwhelmed by the stilgk, the **Referee** may allow the Garkons to intervene and drag the tarred characters to safety.

Garkon (6): AC: 8 [11]; HD 1+1; hp 4; Attacks: rifle (1d6+1) or machete (1d6); Special: hold breath; Move: 15/9 (climb); XP 1/15.

Scurtra (6): AC: 4 [15]; HD 2; hp 7; Attacks: leg spike or gore; Special: none; Move: 12/12 (climb); XP 2/30.

STILGK ATTACK

The characters may decide to attempt a direct rescue, perhaps by lowering their starship close enough to drop a

safety line or even convincing Bulba to jump onto an entry ramp.

The canyon walls are approximately 100' tall. The tar pit is approximately 20' deep. A large stilgk tar monster (see **New Lifeforms**) is lurking in the tar pit. The stilgk has been patiently waiting for Bulba to sink into the tar. If the PCs attempt a rescue from their starship or skycraft, the stilgk rises up out of the pit, hurling globs of tar at the PCs' vessel.

The tar itself causes no damage, however, there is a cumulative 1 in 6 chance that any vehicle struck spirals out of control and suffers 2d6 **Hit Points** of damage as it crashes onto a rocky ledge. The vehicle remains grounded until its engines and other systems can be thoroughly cleaned (this takes at least half a day per glob).

The stilgk attacks any downed vessel, ripping open the hatches and sending its tentacles in to snatch up prey. The stilgk suffers a -4 **To-Hit** on this initial attack, and the attack does no damage, however, the character suffers 1d6 **Hit Points** of damage each subsequent **round** as he is dragged from the vessel and slowly crushed by the tentacle.

If the tar is ignited, the stilgk suffers 3d6 **Hit Points** of damage and catches fire. The enraged and burning stilgk lashes out at anything that moves, but suffers -4 **To-Hit**. The PCs then have three (3) **rounds** to get Bulba out of the tar pit before he chokes to death on the roiling smoke.

Stilgk: AC: 5 [14]; HD 7; hp 32; Attacks: tentacle, glob; Special: tar; Move: 6; XP 7/800.

STRIKECLAN ATTACK

The PCs may decide to cut their losses and leave Bulba to his fate. If this happens, they encounter three StrikeClan attack ships as they lift off. It seems Bulba's criminal associates received information that Bulba was trying to strike a deal with the Consortium in exchange for leniency. They have ordered the StrikeClan to kill Pubulbus Bulba instead of rescue him. This includes the PCs. Whether

Bulba is aboard their vessel or not is immaterial—again, the mercenaries can't afford to leave any witnesses.

Three StrikeClan vessels attack and pursue the PCs. If one of the vessels is reduced to 10 **Hit Points** or less, it attempts to flee. The **Referee** should keep in mind the StrikeClan vessels are not outfitted to operate in Etholk's polluted atmosphere and lose one (1) point of **Movement** per **round** until grounded.

Note: This encounter can also be used if the PCs have too easy a time rescuing Pubulbus Bulba.

StrikeClan Interceptor (*DarkSpear*): AC: 6 [13]; hp 40; Shield: 0; Move: 18; Target +1; BHB +1; Att: light laser (2d6); Mod: FTL drive, high-yield thrusters x3, cloaking device.

StrikeClan Fighter (2): AC: 3 [16]; hp 25; Shield: 3; Move: 15; Target +2; Att: light laser (2d6); Mod: FTL drive.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure effectively ends once the PCs leave Planet Etholk, with or without Pubulbus Bulba. If the characters recaptured Bulba for the Galactic Consortium, they can rendezvous with the *Tylee II* and release him to their custody. Good roleplaying and/or the use of proper **Gifts** or **Meditations** may even allow the characters to expose the prison guard who helped Bulba escape.

If the characters rescued Bulba for a reward, Bulba may become a recurring ally or enemy. The characters must transport him to one of his strongholds in the remote Outer Reaches. Once he feels safe, Bulba may try to renegotiate the deal. If the party appears weak, he may attempt to cheat them out of the amount he initially offered. If pressed too hard, Bulba may decide to pay them nothing or, he may pay the reward, but then hire assassins to kill the PCs later.

If the characters are members of the Resistance, their contact sends them rendezvous coordinates. After leaving

Etholk, the PCs may still have to fight their way through a handful of Consortium stunt fighters before they make the jump to FTL. The **Referee** may also have a bounty hunter or even a StrikeClan mercenary track the PCs when they leave the system.

The characters may find their names and/or a screen capture of their starship plastered all over the 3-D televids in connection with Bulba's escape. The real Green Karno pirates are not pleased about being implicated in the attack on the Consortium convoy. The pirates may attempt to contact or capture the PCs to find out what they know. They may even hire the PCs to travel to Planet Barrke and sabotage the StrikeClan headquarters.

NEW LIFEFORMS

Garkon

Armor Class: 8 [11]

Hit Dice: 1+1

Attacks: claw (1d6-1) or weapon

Special: hold breath

Move: 15/9 (when climbing)

HDE/XP: 1/15

Garkons are hairless apelike aliens with rangy bodies, bestial faces, and spindly arms they use to propel themselves along the ground at high speeds. Their chests contain six lungs and their necks are lined with gills that help filter out the polluted air of their native planet Etholk. Because of this, a Garkon can hold his breath for approximately two (2) hours. A Garkon's hands and feet are oversized, with each containing eight long digits that are perfect for gripping and climbing Etholk's rocky canyons. In combat, Garkons prefer long rifles and slashing blades.

Garkon tribes live in caves high on the sides of Etholk's canyons. Garkons have developed a primitive tribal society that is centered around the matriarchy. Females make major tribal decisions while the males hunt and scavenge the tar pits for trapped animals and wrecked vessels.

Garkons dress simply, wearing long cloaks that wrap around the mouth and nose, and harnesses for carrying gear, food, and weapons.

Kaltoin

Armor Class: 9 [10]
Hit Dice: 1
Attacks: weapon
Special: jump, amphibious
Move: 9/9 (when swimming)
HDE/XP: 1/15

Kaltoins are bloated, froglike aliens that are native to the swamp planet Kalto in the Kalto System. Kaltoin culture is centered around criminal behavior, with organized criminal syndicates that span the known galaxy. They believe in survival of the fittest, however, they seldom engage in combat themselves, preferring to use minions to wage wars and settle conflicts.

Kaltoins are amphibious and can breathe water or air. They disdain physical activity, but can jump up to 20' in any direction. They tend to indulge in food, drink, and other pleasures to excess. One of their favorite delicacies is the disgusting tuth slug which can only be found on Kalto's three sludge-covered moons. The slug is poisonous to most other races, but produces a euphoric effect in Kaltoins.

Scurtra

Armor Class: 4 [15]
Hit Dice: 2
Attacks: leg spike or gore
Special: none
Move: 12/12 (when climbing)
HDE/XP: 2/30

Scurtras are large, six-legged crablike alien lifeforms with long necks and horned heads that are native to Planet Etholk. They have been domesticated by the Garkon tribes and are used as mounts. A scurtra crab attacks with its spike-like forelegs or gores with its horns. They are well adapted to climbing and can actually scuttle for short

distances across tar pits, having only a 1 in 6 chance of getting stuck.

Stilgk

Armor Class: 5 [14]

Hit Dice: 7

Attacks: tentacle/tentacle or glob/glob

Special: see below

Move: 6

HDE/XP: 7/800

Stilgk tar monsters are enormous, 50' tall lifeforms composed entirely of tar. Stilgks dwell in Etholk's tar pits and are indistinguishable from normal tar until they rise up and attack. Stilgks are fearless and attack characters and vessels alike (starship weapons deliver double damage to a stilgk).

In melee combat, they attack with whiplike tentacles of tar that do 1d6 **Hit Points** of damage and render the target covered in tar and unable to move. The stilgk can choose to pick up anyone struck by a tentacles and deal 1d6 **Hit Points** of crushing damage per **round**. Characters with a 17 or greater Strength have a 1 in 6 chance of breaking free of the tar each round. Otherwise, the tar may be removed with common cleaners in one (1) **turn**.

In ranged combat, stilgks fling globs of tar at their opponents. These globs have a range of several hundred feet, do 1d6 **Hit Points** of damage to lifeforms, rendering them stuck, as noted above. The glob causes no damage to starships or skycraft, however, there is a cumulative 1 in 6 chance that any vehicle struck spirals out of control and suffers 2d6 **Hit Points** of damage as it crashes. The vehicle then remains grounded until its engines and other systems can be thoroughly cleaned (this takes at least half a day per glob).

If the tar pit the stilgk resides in catches fire, the stilgk also catches fire and suffers damage normally.

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