

INTRODUCTION

Orbiting between the green sphere of Kua and the ember body of Lubau lies the acidified Jina – a yellow-green hell-hole. There is only a single colony: Aram's Ravine, where they mine salt and bauxite. Orbiting the planet is its jewel – the luxury moon Cala Duriha, which is frequented much more often than Aram's Ravine.

EVEN THOUGH IT is formally independent of the factions in the Kua-system, Aram's Ravine is replete with intrigue. Self-appointed lesser dukes vie for power through devious machinations, subterfuge, and of the employment of useful idiots – like visiting adventurers! At the same time, a dark power lies hidden in the ravine. A power originating from the Portal Wars, that in time may come to endanger the future of the ravine...

Aram's Secret introduces the acidified planet Jina and its single larger settlement, Aram's Ravine. Here you will find everything you need to create exciting scenarios on the acidic surface of Jina, but also details on the luxury moon Cala Duriha. The booklet is separated into three parts, where the first part provides possible reasons for the player characters to visit Jina as well as

describing the salt and bauxite colony of Aram's Ravine. After that we get acquainted with the schemers on the moon Cala Duriha. The booklet concludes with the adventure Aram's Secret.

INTRODUCTION

Aram's Ravine is by its nature a scenario location (see page 342 in the *Coriolis* core rulebook). A scenario location is not constructed of scenes but by places, and the motives of different individuals. The scenes will occur when and where they fit, there are no acts, and the dramaturgy is more unpredictable.

The GM has to be well prepared with this kind of setup, it's important to have a clear-cut understanding of the motives and capacities of the different parties. The three-act-model gives the PCs a limited number of options and urges

them more firmly in a certain direction. In the scenario location model, the PCs are instead allowed to roam freely, and the need for improvisation from the GM is obviously greater.

Aram's Ravine offers an exciting environment for the PCs to explore and experience. Going by its area it is not a large location, but the GM will discover that there is no need for huge amounts of space. The actions of the PCs soon lead to a convoluted web of relationships and events. Some final advice for the GM: Read through the location carefully, decide what you want the different actors to strive for, and what they are prepared to do to achieve it. Consider possible chains of events, and cool scenes that may occur.

And don't forget to enjoy the unpredictability!

WHY TRAVEL TO ARAM'S RAVINE?

Coriolis, as well as this adventure, assumes that the PCs mutually share a ship. Maybe they have experienced adventures together before, or maybe this is their first journey on the ship. Aram's Ravine is not a place where cruisers go, not even free traders frequent the colony with any sense of regularity. The colony is at the mercy of the random influx of goods and mail as smaller ships pass the planet on their route from Coriolis to the portals in the center of the system. Few ships have Aram's Ravine as their actual destination. Often, it is the luxury moon Cala Duriha, hovering above Jina, that

draws them in. After having delivered luxury goods there, some freighter pilots realize that it might be worth a detour to the planet to pick up complementary cargo (bauxite, salt), or to get rid of goods of inferior quality. In this manner, Aram's Ravine receives much needed contributions of supplies.

The PCs could have a range of reasons to travel to Aram's Ravine, but they must have at least one explicit goal for their visit. An incursion to load new cargo is a possible idea, an emergency landing is another. An additional possibility is that one of the PCs has a personal connection to the ravine, grew up there, or has relatives that have moved there. Few people would land on the planet out of curiosity. Those who can choose settle for savoring the colorful acid storms on the planet's surface over a glass of diluted wine behind one of the enormous panoramic windows of the luxury moon. Several of the reasons to dock at Aram's Ravine that are listed below can serve as covers for other, secret, missions. Several of the parties in the ravine have good reasons to ask the PCs to work undercover (Free Trade, Lay Low, Emergency Landing) while actually working towards other goals (Research Support, Mercenaries, Prospecting, Investigate the Colonial Agent).

Below is a rundown of plausible reasons for the PCs to come to Aram's Ravine and why they may have to stay a while, more or less voluntarily.



⚙️ EMERGENCY LANDING

The PCs' ship conks out and they are forced to make an emergency landing on Jina. Aram's Ravine lies in direct connection to the only space port on the planet. The ship's problem can be benign (furiously blinking warning lights, unclear what is really the matter), or more dramatic (unstable gravitation generator). Maybe their ship collides with scrap orbiting above Jina when they are about to land or depart from the luxury moon Cala Duriha, and they are forced to interrupt their journey with a pitstop on the planet. Regardless, the ship touches down under relatively controlled conditions in the once impressive, but now worn down, space port of Aram's Ravine. While repairs are underway, the PCs are drawn into the intrigues of the ravine. This is also the prelude to the scenario Aram's Secret on page 21.

⚙️ SABOTAGE

One exciting possibility is that pirates in the ravine conspire with an agent on the luxury moon, who discreetly disables parts of the PCs' ship so that they are forced to land in Aram's Ravine. The repairs might become extensive, and of course they need a specific spare part that a certain someone in the ravine is in possession of. Maybe the sabotage is an act of pure desperation. The situation in the colony of Aram's Ravine is deplorable, and certain individuals are very anxious for aid or protection. One possibility is of course to combine Free Trade with Sabotage, meaning that one of the parties in the ravine has an agent sneak aboard and remove an important component from the ship so that they can then offer to sell it back to the PCs in return for dangerous favors.

⚙️ FREE TRADE

Delivering supplies and mail to the colony is of course a potential reason for the visit, since free traders can seldom afford to say no, not even to smaller missions. A ship delivering delicacies and luxury goods to the moon Cala Duriha probably has room for common goods, sold at a profit down in Aram's Ravine. There is also the possibility of loading local cargo for the return trip. Once planetside, the PCs can be contacted by local interests, some offering birr, while others appeal to the PCs' gentler sensibilities.

⚙️ LAY LOW

Aram's Ravine is well-suited for PCs who have earned the ire of the Coriolis Guard or who have good reasons to stay away from the bigger thoroughfares for a time. The proximity of the luxury moon may seem like a risk factor, but also an opportunity to intercept the radio traffic of other ships and keep up to date with current affairs in the system.

⚙️ INVESTIGATE THE COLONIAL AGENT

The Colonial Agency has its doubts about the resourcefulness of the actions of the local colonial agent, and wants a report on the situation. They may even deem it necessary to take more immediate action. The agency has a spy in the ravine (the doctor, Salim Nasser). Maybe they are unsure of him as well, or maybe they don't wish to compromise the doctor, instead sending the PCs so that they can take greater risks in their investigations and then disappear if things get hot. It is possible that the PCs are instructed to contact Nasser to get an update on the situation. In that case, it's most likely as a first step to direct action against the colonial agent. Regardless of the method of investigation, it is in all likelihood performed undercover.

⚙️ MERCENARIES

A conflict is growing between the parties of the ravine, and one of them enlists mercenaries, namely the PCs. The contract can be signed on Coriolis, the luxury moon Cala Duriha, or when the PCs have landed in the ravine for other purposes. The Mine Lord, the Salt Widow, and the colonial agent possess the means to employ mercenaries. The popular militia can also mobilize the funds for reinforcements. Regardless of which faction they throw in with, the PCs are soon embroiled in the ravine's conflicts. They may realize that they fight for dubious employers, and choose to switch sides. Maybe the PCs quickly see that there are great opportunities to let themselves be contracted by several local lords, and then try to pit them against one another for a chance to earn even more birr.

⚙️ RESEARCH SUPPORT

Through their contacts the PCs learn that the scientist Hommar Lannah offers birr to those willing to help him with his latest project. It is possible that it later turns out that what Lannah actually meant was that the payment will be made when his research has been published, and he himself is showered with birr.

⚙️ PROSPECTING

Jina was earlier assessed as rich in resources, and Aram's Ravine is a remnant of that flagging optimism. Overenthusiastic prospectors (perhaps contacts of the local entrepreneur, Torilan) seek the PCs' support to perform necessary surveys. Payment is of course poor, but shares in future riches are promised.

Another version is that cynical parties on Coriolis or Cala Duriha offer the PCs "secret" information that will make them rich. The reports on deposits that the PCs are offered weren't necessarily fake when they were written almost two decades ago. Once they arrive at the ravine, it of course turns out that someone else has already claimed the alleged deposits, or that the estimated findings lie on the other side of the tableland, in close proximity to the holy mesa of the aggressive tribes (see page 13).

ARRIVAL OF THE PCS

PCs who touch down in Aram's Ravine will most likely try to land in the old space port. The deserted and worn

down docks provide good protection from acid storms. A skilled PC can activate the lift that lowers the ship below ground and seals the shields above the dock (see more under the heading The Space Port). If the PCs announce their arrival via radio, the colonial agent will rush to meet them, and with him comes, almost certainly, a number of the more prominent characters in the ravine. A more discreet arrival makes it more likely that the PCs' first encounter is with the curious technician Niniack, and possibly also old Lomar who, with his mechanical workshop, can be found in close proximity to the space port. If the PCs have made an appointment with one of the parties in the ravine, they will greet them as agreed – unless the GM finds it more interesting to let the PCs expect a meeting in the space port only to be left standing alone in the deserted dock, with an acid storm boiling on the horizon, and the wan light of Aram's Ravine flickering through the mists.



ARAM'S RAVINE

Between the deep forests of Kua and the smoldering wastelands of Lubau, we find Jina, an acidified hellhole with only one colony, Aram's Ravine. The colony is a mining station for bauxite and other mineral salts, and rife with intriguing Mine Lords competing for power.

THE SCENARIO LOCATION Aram's Ravine is the only major settlement on Jina. Frequent visitors to the colony are rare, except for freighter crews hauling the minerals away. Read up on Jina on page 284 of the *Coriolis* core rulebook before introducing Aram's Ravine into your game.

OVERVIEW

Aram's Ravine is situated at the edge of the Lamka plateau. The Desera river has slowly eaten away at the porous stone surrounding the colony and left a strange landscape of tall, spindly pillars of harder rock in its wake. The colony sits on top of these high pillars, with thin rope bridges connecting the different pillar islands. The settlement is covered in a constant mist making for poor visibility, courtesy of Jina's acidified atmosphere. Residents not working in the mines or on the salt trawlers try to stay indoors to get away from the mist. The colony is ravaged by strong acid storms every now and then, forcing everyone inside, except for the Kalites, the local nomads.

Methane gas from the swamps is the Ravine's primary source of power. Long pipes climb like vines up the ridge and worm their way between the houses on the pillars. There is one larger power station in the colony, distributing electricity to the inhabitants. The water on Jina is very acidic and must be processed before it is fit for human consumption. This is most easily done by vaporization and condensation, or through chemical purification.

Aram's Ravine is surrounded by the deserts of the Lamka plateau, empty of all life except for the lamka lizard (see the *Coriolis* core rulebook, page 323) and a surprisingly strong population of butterflies resistant to the atmosphere.

✿ THE SPACE PORT

Landing platforms large enough for medium freighters usually covered in dust and sand from the plateau. The platforms can be lowered into underground silos and sealed to protect the landed ships. This is done from a small command unit next to each platform. Unless a landed ship is protected from the corrosive mist in this fashion, service costs are doubled (see the *Coriolis* core rulebook, page 155). There is a fusion reactor in the spaceport, but it is out of commission due to lack of resources.

✿ THE OFFICES OF THE COLONIAL AGENCY

A fancy, crescent-shaped single-storey building made from white, glazed stone, designed for the mayor of the planet. Colonial agent Boro uses only a small part of the western wing, and the rest of the building rests in silence, dusty sheets covering the expensive furniture. The covered main entrance with its worn, mosaic-covered columns has not been used for decades. Agent Boro and his bodyguards use the side entrance, since it is closer to the inhabited parts of the settlement.

✿ THE BATH HOUSE

The colony's bathhouse, or hammam, is the jewel of the Ravine. It was built for an elite that never came, and today it serves the common folk of the colony and functions as the de facto offices of colonial agent Boro. Priceless mosaics, beautiful lighting and the soothing babble of the water makes the hammam a much needed place of rest from the toils of life on Jina. Agent Boro holds court from a dais in the back. When he is not resting on his divan, he can usually be found in the steam sauna or in the warm water pool with a tray of imported delicacies at his side.

ACID STORMS

The acid storms use the fire rules (Coriolis core rule-book, p 97). The storms have an attack value of 3 against people with masks and armor, and an attack value of 6 against those without. Thick clothing will protect the skin during the storms but are destroyed in the process. Someone with the Resistant Talent will be less affected by the storms – attack value 3 if unprotected, and 1 with a mask on.

ARAM'S RAVINE

- ◆ **AVERAGE TEMPERATURE:** 25–40 degrees centigrade during the day and around 10 degrees at night.
- ◆ **POPULATION:** Roughly 3,000, 900 of whom live in Aram's Ravine. The rest live on small claims along the fault line or on salt trawlers in the Desera delta.
- ◆ **GOVERNANCE:** Formally an independent colony under the protection of the Colonial Agency. In reality, tensions are high as local oligarchs compete for power (the Colonial Agency, the Mine Lord, the Salt Widow).
- ◆ **LAW AND ORDER:** A popular militia with a hundred members keeps the peace. The militia is formally under the control of the Colonial Agency, but is de facto a lot closer to the Salt Widow. The militia is being challenged by the Red Hand Crew, which is allied with the Mine Lord and has some fifty members, as well as by unruly miners on leave. The Agency tries to play these different groups against one another.
- ◆ **IMPORTS:** Livestock, spices, foodstuffs, medicine, metals, spare parts, survival gear.
- ◆ **EXPORTS:** Bauxite ore, salts.

ARAM'S RAVINE

NOHAK'S CANTINA



A simple but pleasant atmosphere greets visitors to Nohak's. The clientele usually consists of hands on leave from mines and salt trawlers mixed with members of the Red Hand Crew.

02

01

04

05

06

09

03

ARAM'S RAVINE

1. The Offices of the Colonial Agency
2. The Bath House
3. Nohak's Cantina
4. The Chapel of the Icons
5. The Doctor's Office
6. The Lair of the Witch Doctor
7. The Palace of the Mine Lord
8. Larval Silk Farms
9. The Oasis Cantina
10. The Salt Widow's House

THE BATH HOUSE



The colony's bathhouse, or hammam, is the jewel of the Ravine. It was built for an elite that never came, and today it serves the common folk of the colony and functions as the de facto offices of colonial agent Boro.



THE PALACE OF THE MINE LORD



A large main house sits in a walled-in yard with fountains and what would have been a beautiful garden – if this hadn't been Jina.

THE AREA AROUND ARAM'S RAVINE



THE AREA AROUND ARAM'S RAVINE

- A. Aram's Ravine
- B. Lomar's Workshop
- C. The Spaceport
- D. Bauxite Mines



ARAM'S CUISINE

Indigenous butterfly larvae are the cornerstones of the local cuisine. The larva is edible, but not the evolved butterfly. The larvae are mashed into a high-protein paste and then marinated, grilled, cut into thin slices and eaten. Couscous, beans and chickpeas all have to be imported and are therefore quite expensive. Some forms of algae from the river delta are also part of the local cuisine.

☼ NOHAK'S CANTINA

A simple but pleasant atmosphere greets visitors to Nohak's, an establishment where robust beams support a low ceiling and the guests sit or lie on mats and cushions on the floor. The clientele usually consists of hands on leave from mines and salt trawlers mixed with members of the Red Hand Crew. The kohôl is flowing and the hookahs are rarely stuffed with tabak. Nohak runs the cantina, along with the three courtesans, Lhirra, Omon and Zelena, and the village idiot Amil, who also purports to be a courtesan.

☼ THE CHAPEL OF THE ICONS

A simple and stern-looking building, and as such a rather accurate architectonic rendering of the local preacher's interpretation of the will of the Icons. The Icon statues are dark and beautiful, brought here from an old temple on Algol by the preacher Aravak Poho herself. Popular targets for her righteous fury are the bathhouse's fixation on the Dancer and the village's witch doctor.

☼ THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

The offices of Salim Nasser are simple but well run. The examination room is clean and smells of antiseptics. The rest of the house, hidden behind curtains and draperies, is the total opposite: messy, dirty and smelly. The doctor can offer an m-dose or two if the injuries one has sustained are really bad, but otherwise works with primitive medicurgy only.

☼ THE LAIR OF THE WITCH DOCTOR

Behind the rusty door, a curtain made from rat bones and dried insects rattles in the toxic wind. The chamber inside is dark, dirty rugs cover the floor, and strange talismans and totems litter the walls and ceiling. This is the home of Ekbian, the Ravine's oldest inhabitant, well versed in the world of herbal remedies and mystical talismans.

☼ THE PALACE OF THE MINE LORD

Next to the offices of the Colonial Agency, the palace is the colony's most imposing building. A large main house sits in a walled-in yard with fountains and what would have been a beautiful garden – if this hadn't been Jina. Acid-resistant lichen and algae have conquered the sculptures long ago and are well on their way to covering the mosaic floors of the yard. The violent Barhan, leader of the Red Hand Crew, can often be found here along with a handful of underlings.



✿ LARVAL SILK FARMS

A failed attempt at silk farming. The larvae spin their silk about as quickly as the acidic mist destroys it, and the results are lumpy clusters of black, stringy goo. The larvae feed off the lichen that thrives on the floors, walls and ceilings. They evolve and live a short time as butterflies before the corrosive atmosphere destroys their wings.

✿ THE OASIS CANTINA

The unofficial headquarters of the popular militia. A simple building with thin columns supporting a domed ceiling. Spirits are often high here – hookahs purr and soldiers slurp loudly on spicy tea, betting their meager earnings on high-prestige games of shah.

✿ LOMAR'S WORKSHOP

A fenced-off field filled with all sorts of technological gadgets, slowly eroding in the acidified mist. The chaos continues inside the machine hall, but things in here are generally in better condition. Long rows of unfinished projects share the space with engineer Niniack's current work. The aged

JINA'S BLACK LUNG

PCs who spend a longer period of time on Jina risk coming down with Jina's Black Lung disease. Creatures with the Resistant Talent (such as Kalites and lamkas) are immune to the affliction. PCs who use protective masks are also unaffected. Those affected develop a painful cough, and suffer a -1 to Strength until someone treats them by passing a hard (-2) **MEDICURY** test.



THE KALITES

Deep in the ravine below the colony, and on the far edges of the Lamka plateau, there is a considerable humanite population known as Kalites, characterized by their acid resistance and harsh xenophobia. The Kalites live in tribal communities on mesas and in ravines on the Lamka and only leave their villages to search for lichen and larvae. Technologically, the Kalites are primitive, but own some ordinary technology as well, generally thought to be plunder from reckless prospectors, but the amount of tech makes the more knowledgeable residents doubt this. Rumors have it that the Kalites have domesticated the lamka lizards and use them as sentries, and that a few lizards have escaped and sought refuge in Aram's Ravine. The origin of the lamka lizard is unknown, as Jina has no native animals for them to prey on, apart from humans.

Lomar has a hard time maintaining focus long enough to finish something, and moves around in a jungle of promising dreams and lost hopes. When Niniack really needs a hand on something, Lomar obliges, but only for a short while.

⚙ THE SALT WIDOW'S HOUSE

A simple house, empty except for the Salt Widow herself and her right hand man and bodyguard, Bhofass. The occasional hand from one of the Widow's many salt trawlers down in the delta comes through every now and then, but they never stay long. Not even fine wines and luxurious food can make up for the thick, uneasy atmosphere of the house.

⚙ BAUXITE MINES

Claims in many sizes and forms are scattered along the fault line. The Mine Lord's people run most of them, as the majority of the so-called independent miners are indebted to him. Hands in masks and worn exos mine, purify and transport the bauxite ore to the Ravine from where it is hauled offworld.