



by Brandon Cope

Art by [andi jones](#)

This mini-campaign requires only the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised* and *GURPS Space, Second Edition*. *GURPS Space Bestiary* and *GURPS Ultra-Tech* are useful but not required. Any page reference with a "B" refers to the *Basic Set*, while a "S" refers to *Space*.

This is presented as a mini-campaign rather than a structured adventure to allow a more "open-ended" exploration of the star system. Specific adventure ideas are given at the end of the article. Since more adventure time is likely to be spent on Reginald, it is more detailed than the other planets. As Gaard was considered uninhabitable for so many years, it can be easily placed in an ongoing campaign, though it shouldn't be located near any important systems (at least 6-10 days FTL travel away).

TL10 is assumed to be average for the campaign. If your campaign isn't TL10 or differs from the "standard" TL10 (as per p.S26), make changes as needed. The term "Alliance" will be used to denote the galactic government, for convenience.

## Previous Exploration

The Gaard system was first visited by the Xinos (see below), a dying raced hunted by the Verm (see *GURPS Aliens*). They settled in the system as a place of last defense, but the Verm never arrived and, eventually, the last Xinos died. Several centuries passed . . .

About 60 years ago, a one-man Alliance Survey ship spent about two weeks doing orbital scans but no landings were made. Since this was the scout's last job before some long overdue R&R, the survey was rushed. On the basis of the incomplete data, the Survey Service felt that the world was not worth the effort of colonization and labeled it such.

Recently, another Survey ship was sent in to update the first report, and it did a much more thorough job. The reports of high levels of useful metals on Gaard Ia and III caused the Survey Service to reclassify the system as "limited colonization:

potential mining."

## The Star System

**Star Name:** Gaard **Type:** M7V **Location:** as desired by GM  
**Biozone:** 0.1 - 0.2 AU **Inner Limit:** 0 **Number of Planets:** 6

Planet	Orbit	Dist	Type	Diameter	Density	Gravity
Reginald	1a	0.1	earthlike	7,100	6.4	1.04
Bernard	1b	0.1	rockball	1,200	4.1	0.11
Franklin	2	0.45	hostile terrestrial	5,700	2.5	0.33
Aldo	3	0.8	icy rockball	2,300	6.8	0.35
Jerald	4	1.5	gas giant	52,000	2.1	2.5
Marbles	5	2.9	asteroid belt	- -	- -	- -
Johnathan	6	5.7	gas giant	46,000	1.9	2.0

### Reginald (Gaard Ia)

This is the most habitable planet in the system. It is tide-locked, with a 21 - day year and a 3 degree axial tilt and no seasons. However, the dense (1.7 earth - pressure) atmosphere rotates clockwise around the planet, following the planet's small moon which completely orbits Reginald once every 24 Earth hours (since the planet does not rotate, its day is measured by the orbit time of its moon). The atmosphere is composed of 71% nitrogen and 25% oxygen, breathable with slight aid (see p.S108).

Eighty-five percent of the surface is covered by water, and humidity is over 90%, resulting in near-constant rain on the light side and snow on the dark side, with some of either on the strip of perpetual twilight. Along this strip, the temperature is 82 degrees and the predominant terrain is jungle. On the light side of the planet, temperature is 146 degrees, while on the dark side it averages 17 degrees.

The temperatures aren't as extreme as one would expect on a tide-locked world, since the rotation of the atmosphere helps to balance things out. However, this also causes high winds (15-40 mph is common) and frequent storms. Most natural resources are scarce or absent, except for industrial and light metals which are extremely plentiful.

The highest observable natural life forms are lower mammals, which primarily inhabit the seas and jungles. However, a developing race, numbering about 20,000, lives in extensive tunnel systems under the planet's surface. They are described below. Most of the land surface is covered by jungle, with a fair amount of plains. There are very few mountains and no signs of recent (within 10,000 years) volcanic activity.

### Bernard (Gaard Ib)

This is Reginald's single moon. If studied carefully, a single ziggurat will be found on the surface near some old meteor craters (see below for details).

### Franklin (Gaard II)

This planet is of little value or note. It has few metals, and its weak magnetic field subjects it to very high levels of radiation. It has a trace methane atmosphere. There are no ruins on the planet.

### **Aldo (Gaard III)**

The outermost terrestrial -type planet, it has large amounts of heavy metals and no atmosphere. There are no ruins on the planet. Even if Gaard Ia is closed to mining, Aldo would probably be opened up.

### **Jerald (Gaard IV)**

A medium gas giant comprised of hydrogen -helium, it has a spectacular ring formation but very few satellites: six moonlets and two moons, one small and one medium. One of the moonlets, perhaps captured from the asteroid belt, has a radically inclined orbit, at 62 degrees to the system's plane.

### **Marbles (Gaard V)**

The belt mainly is of stony/iron composition with a very sparse collection of asteroids.

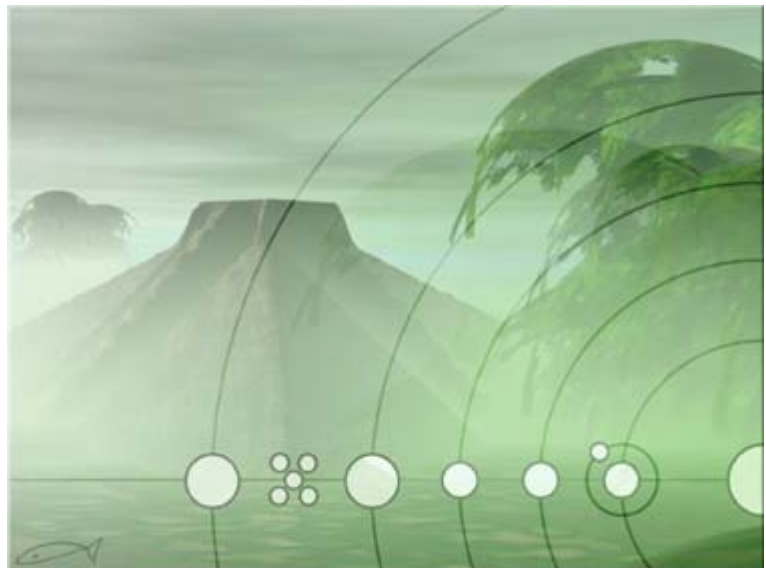
### **Johnathan (Gaard VI)**

Another medium gas giant, this one's atmosphere is primarily hydrogen. It's only unusual feature is a large number of moons: 13 moonlets, six small, five medium and three large moons.

## **Xinos Ruins on Reginald (Gaard IA)**

Careful ground exploration of Reginald's jungles in the twilight strips will reveal stone structures partly covered by centuries of growth. While the materials used were simple stone, there are signs that the actual construction was very high tech (using laser and fusion cutters).

These structures are ziggurats, 34.56 or 69.12 feet per side along the (square) base, with the height equal to the base length. The only entrance is through a 213-lb stone slab at the pinnacle of the structures which covers a vertical shaft. Deep notches are cut into one of the shaft walls to be used as foot- and handholds.



The shaft stops at ground level, and a single short dead-end tunnel leads north. If carefully checked, the dead-end wall is actually a sliding door (A Vision-3 roll to determine this and an IQ-2 roll to figure out how to open it). However, there is a 1 in

6 chance that the door is trapped. Opening it without disarming the trap (requiring separate Traps/TL4 rolls both to find and disarm) causes a stone block to drop from the ceiling and onto anyone within three feet of the door. The traps are quite old and can be avoided with a DX roll (minus encumbrance level). Failure results in the character taking 10d damage (roll on the Falling table for location hit; any damage to the head or torso does not "blow-through").

Beyond the door is a burial chamber very similar to that found in Egyptian pyramids. The body inside the sarcophagus is well-preserved, and can be identified as a Xinos with a Xenology-4 roll or (assuming the PCs' ship has adequate databases) a Research-3 roll. The characters may be very surprised to find various TL9 and 10 items inside, though none of them are usable.

## **Xinos Ruins on Bernard (Gaard IB)**

There is only one structure on the moon, which served as the Xinos' final home. It is large (about 138.23 feet per side), but appears identical to the ones on Reginald. However, there are rungs on the vertical shaft in this one, which leads to an airlock.

On the other side of the airlock is a moderate sized complex, which has not been inhabited for several centuries. If the complex's computer is somehow brought back on-line (a Linguistics-2 roll to figure out the symbols, followed by an Electronics (Computer)-4 roll), the PCs will be able to access the records of the Xinos (see below). If the party is in a Survey or Patrol vessel, they will have a limited database on the Xinos language. Otherwise, the adventurers will have to return to civilization to translate the records.

For the financially-minded adventurer, there is a fair amount of Xinos equipment laying around, most of which can be repaired. However, since the Xino culture was not exceptionally advanced, the equipment has value only as antiques or curios (which may be high anyway!). Note that if the PCs are working for a third party, in most cases the employer is legally the owner of whatever artifacts are found, not the characters . . .

## **Xinos Ruins on Johnathan (Gaard VI)**

Shortly after the Xinos arrived in the system, an automated defense base was set up on one of the moons of the outermost gas giant. The idea was to use it as bait for any pursuing Verm. Some of Johnathan's smaller moons were stripped from their orbits, similarly equipped and then stretched out along the gas giant's orbital path to form a perimeter defense for the system. After several centuries, it became apparent that their enemy was not coming and the bases were abandoned. Their beacons, once meant to attract attention, have not been operational for over 500 years.

Unfortunately for the party, the two principal weapons of each base are functional: an experimental "anti-radiation" beam which causes a ship's power plant to shut off, and a tractor beam (100,000 tons pull to the first weapon's range) to crash the drifting ship into the moon's surface. The pilot of a stricken ship must make a Piloting-4 roll to avoid splitting the hull open. For every point the roll is failed by, assess damage to the ship as if it had taken a hit from a weapon with a firepower equal to 100,000/ship tonnage. If the ship is still operational, the party must make their way into the defense post and shut off its power. There might be a few security robots operational, and perhaps shutting the weapons off trips a self-destruct

device . . .

## The Natives

The natives of Reginald resemble two foot tall crabs with eight legs and four eyestalks. The pincers are fairly small and are adapted to digging. Their most unusual physical characteristic is a single arm underneath ending in a three fingered hand, used for fine manipulation.

They do not use fire but are able to construct some wooden tools. Their language is fairly simple, consisting of only a few hundred or so words formed by chirps, clicks and pincer movement. They have no name for themselves other than "the people," and live in extensive tunnel systems in groups of 20-100. Rival clans are tolerated, but warfare, though rare, leads to total destruction of the losing clan.

They consider the ziggurats to be sacred ground and will be greatly angered if one is disturbed, surrounding it and making threatening gestures to those responsible. They are not especially brave, however, and will flee if frightened.

In combat they fight with their pincers but will sometimes use a branch as a club. Pincers are PD/DR 2/4 and may parry at half DX.

**ST: 7-9 Move/Dodge: 6/5 Size: 3**  
**DX: 10 PD/DR: 1/3 Weight: 200-350 lbs.**  
**IQ: 7 Damage: 1d+1 cut Habitat: Sub**  
**HT: 12/8 Reach: C, 1**

## The Xinos

The Xinos were an advanced race that was destroyed in a series of major wars about 3,000 years ago. The Xinos are not considered a Precursor race, since their technology was not extremely advanced (they were TL10-11 at the time of their extinction) and they had been starfarers for only four or five centuries. However, relics of the Xinos have aided the in the development of technology of humans and others, as well as the detailed histories they kept of other races they discovered adding to the knowledge of this part of the galaxy.

The Xinos were very thin humanoids, almost to the point of being skeletal, and their faces were very triangular. Slightly smaller than a human, a Xino was hairless with off-white skin. They were excellent scholars and explorers but were ill-suited for combat and thus had to rely heavily on technology in war. They were very long-lived, often reaching ages up to 600 years.

They were finally destroyed in a series of wars against the Verm (see *GURPS Aliens*, p.76). The Verm had managed to despoil most of the Xinos colonies as well as wrecking their homeworld. In addition, they used a biological weapon (provided by an unknown race, perhaps the Markaan) that rendered the remaining Xinos sterile. Within 500 years, the race was dead.

A small group made it to the Gaard system and settled on Gaard Ia. However, within a few years the Xinos discovered that there was native intelligent life on the planet. Not wanting to interfere with its development, the Xinos resettled on the moon, but carefully studied the new race (which they named Qusals). While the Xinos stopped

burying their dead on Gaard Ia, they left the existing ziggurats in place; this proved to be a mistake. The Xinos were considered gods by the natives and the Xino tombs were treated as holy structures. The last Xino in the Gaard system died some 700 years ago.

At the GM's option, the Xinos might be unknown in the campaign until their ruins in the Gaard system are found. This is a good option if (a) the GM wants to keep the party very busy in the Gaard system or (b) the party isn't the kind who would normally like dealing with proto-sentient giant crabs, and would rather raid tombs.

## Beasties

Various non-intelligent creatures inhabit Reginald; three noteworthy land animals are listed below. GMs may find *GURPS Bestiary* and *Space Bestiary* useful for additional creatures. None of these creatures have specific names (for example, the natives refer to the Large Carnivore as "big fast thing with sharp teeth").

### Large Carnivore

**ST:** 50-75 **Move/Dodge:** 11/6 **Size:** 12  
**DX:** 13 **PD/DR:** 3/6 **Weight:** 2-3 tons  
**IQ:** 4 **Damage:** 3d imp **Habitat:** jungle, plains  
**HT:** 14/30-50 **Reach:** C, 1, 2

This predator resembles a small to medium-sized allosaurus with natural armor plating. It is not related to dinosaurs, though; it's a mammal. Vision is very poor (Vision 8) but all other senses are very keen (18). It usually attacks from ambush, though it is capable of running down prey.

### Small Carnivore

**ST:** 4-6 **Move/Dodge:** 6/7 **Size:** 1  
**DX:** 14 **PD/DR:** 0/1 **Weight:** 60-90 lbs  
**IQ:** 5 **Damage:** 1d-2 cut **Habitat:** jungle, plains  
**HT:** 13/6 **Reach:** C

Fairly common, it is best described as a sloth with the temperament of a wolverine. Equally at home on ground or in trees, it hunts in packs of 3-5 with larger groups possible. The pack will carefully circle its prey (Stealth-14) and then rush in to attack. Solitary ones drop from trees onto unsuspecting prey (treat as a Contest of the beast's Stealth against the victim's Vision, with success indicating 1d6/2 seconds of surprise).

### Small Herbivore

**ST:** 9-11 **Move:** 14/7 **Size:** 2  
**DX:** 13 **PD/DR:** 0/0 **Weight:** 250-300 lbs  
**IQ:** 4 **Damage:** 1d-3 cr **Habitat:** plains, jungles  
**HT:** 13/9 **Reach:** C

These grazers are about the size of ponies. They have very short necks, dog-like heads and long legs with hooves. The grazers stampede when frightened, which is easy to cause. They attack by kicking and are found in groups of 12-20.

# Adventure Ideas

The nature of the party's adventures in the Gaard system will depend largely on why they're there. Suggestions include:

- \* The party has been sent in to do a pre-colonization ground study, either for the Survey Service or a mining company. The job includes scouting a proposed colony/mining site on Reginald and the land in a 50-mile radius. The site is located in the grasslands of the largest continent with jungles a few miles to the south. Odd holes about two yards wide (entrances to the native's burrows) are located sparsely on the surface, about two per square mile.

When the party enters the jungle, they discover one of the Xinos' ziggurats and (as they exit it) are then discovered by the natives. Assuming the party tries to talk rather than shoot, some communication may be possible (make the players roleplay this!). Suddenly, a Large Carnivore appears, which scatters the natives. If the adventurers can defeat or drive off the beast, it will evoke a good reaction from the natives.

- \* The Xinos ruins were discovered by the second survey team. The adventurers are Patrolmen or mercenaries sent to protect the ruins or scientists going through them until the Alliance can decide what to do. A foreign power (or even an Alliance member!) sends in a small team to steal some artifacts for research. While dealing with the terrible weather and odd animal life, and trying to stop the raiders, the native race makes themselves known.

As a twist, the party could be the ones hired to steal the Xinos relics. How well they are equipped depends on who's sending them, but in general their armor and weapons should be slightly inferior to the Patrol's.

- \* Basically the same as the previous, but it's the natives that are known about, not the ruins.

- \* The party is given the tedious job of searching each of the moons of the gas giants to see if there are any more Xinos ruins. After several weeks of boredom, they discover a ziggurat on one of the many moons of the outer gas giant. However, just seconds after their discovery, a beam fired from the structure hits their ship and disables their power plant. A few seconds later they are hit by a second beam (a tractor beam) which pulls them to the surface (a Piloting -4 roll is required to avoid crashing).

The engineer manages to get the reactor going again, but a few seconds later the ship is again fired on and the reactor quits again. It should be obvious that the explorers will need to enter the ziggurat and disable the weaponry if they are ever to leave the moon.

Other adventures are possible, such as helping set up a small scientific colony on Reginald (the Alliance will not allow mining on the planet, however, after discovering a developing race on the planet, nor can a regular colony be located on the planet). Or, perhaps, the Verm have finally tracked the Xinos to this system, still ready to make war after so many centuries . . .

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