Planets D20 / The Shoal

The Shoal

The Shoal is a substantial star cluster with significant gravitational anomalies that make hyperspace travel into and out of it more difficult than most other places. That?s not to say that it?s necessarily difficult to get in at all, just trickier. It was first mapped by the great astronomer Krith Vigolithot who managed to mark nearly five thousand individual stars on the galactic map in his lifetime, and all without visiting one of them.

However, it was not until long after his death (over a century) that explorers actually managed to penetrate the Shoal and truly explore the places he?d marked. Inside the Shoal they only found a handful of inhabitable systems. Of these, Carmine was the most significant since it seemed to be the gateway to the rest of the cluster. It sits directly in the center of the hyperspace pathway that is the smoothest into the rest of the cluster.

The Shoal holds little in the way of interesting history that is of galactic importance. It was discovered and explored and quickly set upon by entrepreneurial types who wanted to get rich from its natural resources. Only one native sentient species was found in the whole cluster, keeping the Republic?s Sentient Rights Council mostly out of the way of progress.

The only interesting part of their history is a consistent pattern of successfully defended freedom. The inhabitants, native or otherwise, have consistently repelled those who would subject them unjustly. The locals of Vigolithot V3688-211 forced the CIS to abandon their occupation because the cost-benefit ratio was not in their favor, and the native Ack?kem of Dy?rel have violently fought off any galactic government, even into Imperial times.

The Empire, however, does find a strong foothold in the cluster. It is a redoubt, a hole into which dark things can, and do, crawl to do inhumane experiments or perform unrighteous sacraments. Between its relative inaccessibility and its out-of-the-way position in the galaxy the Empire uses this territory for an experimental testing ground and secret training facility. The two Imperial Ministers they?ve had to watch over the cluster have both been deeply troubling men with terrifying projects. They have had complete freedom in how to conduct their experiments. Some of these have been handed down to them by higher ranking Imperials, and even the Emperor himself, while others were tests of their own devising. All in all the Empire does its best to use this system to the fullest.

Game Rule Information

Piloting to anywhere inside the Shoal adds 5 to any Astrogate check DC. The only exception to this is Carmine, which is in a position just outside the gravity fluxuations. If someone tries to navigate through a route other than through Carmine the DC is increased by 20 because of the gravity anomalies. Some smugglers and pirates have tried this, but most just get lost inside the clusters of stars and few are heard from again.

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