

DEATH, DIRT, AND THE NERF RANCHER'S DAUGHTER A STAR WARS ROLEPLAYING GAME ADVENTURE

Modified for the Star Wars Saga Edition Role-playing game by the Sparky22 and Prom.

Some dialogue taken from <http://www.angelfire.com/va2/iliveinhell/articles/episode7.html>

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ADVENTURE SUMMARY

A mission to a nerf ranch on Engebo V to buy a fresh supply of nerf steaks, a delicacy prized by the wealthy, seems like a simple enough task. But soon after the heroes arrive on the forgotten Outer Rim planet, a shocking accident will turn their visit into a terrifying ordeal of survival. *Death, Dirt, and the Nerf Rancher's Daughter* is a free mini-adventure for the Star Wars Roleplaying Game designed for four 6th-level characters. The setting is not specific to any particular era of play and can be adjusted to fit any time period in the game. Gamemasters can incorporate it easily into their ongoing campaigns as a side trek, use the story to launch a game set on the Outer Rim, or run it as a stand-alone over the course of one or two sessions. Some things have been left open for the GM to create or modify. This adventure uses aliens and creatures from the *Knights of the Old Republic Campaign Guide* and *Galaxy of Intrigue*. It also introduces the skekfish, a deadly new predator that was created using special guidelines in the *Anthology* that make it easy for you to whip up your own challenging critters!

BACKGROUND

Our story opens outside a small, isolated settlement called simply the Landing, the sole outpost on the Outer Rim backwater called Engebo V. Engebo V is not a barren rock, but it's no garden spot, either. There's not much in the way of trees, but plenty of scrub foliage and grasslands keep the atmosphere breathable. Because the planet lacks major mountain ranges, fast-moving winds blow across the surface constantly from west to east, never changing direction. The Landing is the last remnant of a once-prosperous mining installation. Founded a few centuries earlier, the installation used questionable methods to extract ore rapidly, Outer Rim Oreworks' backers and executives were more concerned with quick profits than environmental impact. The mineral deposits began to dry up over a decade ago, and soon after, ORO's last representative left the planet. The Landing would likely be a pirate hideout by now if not for Davengatt's Double-Zed Nerf Ranch. The Human Jaffro Davengatt, an entrepreneur who claims to be from "all over the Mid Rim," established the ranch shortly after ORO abandoned Engebo V, and he's had remarkable success. In fact, Davengatt's come to regard the Landing as his town. His nerfs, grungy, foul-smelling herd animals, have taken to the local grasslands surprisingly well, growing fat and slightly larger than is typical. Davengatt employs over a dozen individual nerfherders, most of whom are usually out in the fields with their flocks, putting up with the dirty, smelly work in order to procure nerf meat, a delicacy favored by the wealthy throughout the galaxy.

GETTING THE HEROES INVOLVED

The heroes have been hired by Lady Wylla, an Alderaanian noble, to deliver a supply of Davengatt's finest nerf steaks. Her highness insists the steaks be delivered within three days of pickup to "preserve freshness." She provides them with a Corellian freighter (use the unmodified YT-1300 described on page 182 of the *Star Wars Saga Edition* core rulebook) and 10,000 credits (6,000 for the steaks and 4,000 for the heroes' advance). If they succeed and return to her in time, they will be given the freighter and another 6,000 credits. Unfortunately, their ship strikes an unexpected plasma storm on the way into the system and blows out several key hyperdrive systems. They can fly at sublight with no difficulty, but they won't be able to leave the Engebo system without repairs to the hyperdrive. Now, the heroes have two goals: pick up the noble's nerf steaks and fix their ship. Note: If you will be playing in this adventure, read no further, only the Gamemaster should go beyond this point.

"I am Lady Wylla of Alderaan, Senator Organa suggested I contact you for this particular task. I need you to pick up a cargo of Nerf steaks from the Double-Zed Ranch on the planet Engebo V and have them delivered here before the 9th of this month. I'll wire you ten thousand credits to start with, that's six to purchase the cargo and four as an advance. I'll pay you another ten on delivery and will have one of our finest techs add any modification you like to your armour or any weapon. The proprietor of the Double-Zed and the man you'll be purchasing the cargo from is named Jaffro Davengatt. From what I understand, he shouldn't be difficult to locate."

Assuming the heroes agree, they should head off as soon as they are ready.

The couple of days in hyperspace are uneventful but, just as the ship is a few minutes out; the ship's sensors begin beeping wildly. A DC 15 Use Computer check will identify the Plasma Storm and a DC 10 Knowledge (Physical Sciences) lets them know it is quite dangerous and it would be a good idea to drop to sub-light. The hyperdrive sputters and clanks as it is shut off.

A DC 15 Mechanics or Knowledge (Technology) check can identify that "the alluvial dampers have been shorted out and the negative power coupling has been polarized." This will probably set the heroes back about 8,000 credits.

Info the heroes can get about Engebo V: Knowledge (Galactic Lore)

"Engebo V is not a barren rock, but it is a close enough description. Scrub-brush and grasslands keep the atmosphere Type I breathable, but the lack of trees and mountain ranges causes a constant wind to sweep over the landscape from west to east, never changing direction.

"In the last days of the Republic, Outer Rim Oreworks, or ORO, established a strip-mining outpost on Engebo V. The remnants of that outpost have become known as 'the Landing', the only thing on the planet which could be considered a space port.

"It seems that ORO's backers and executives were more interested in making money than in environmentally friendly ore extraction, as they pulled out of Engebo as soon as they had depleted most of the planet's useful ores, leaving it an almost barren wasteland. The Landing would have become a pirate-haven in just a few short months had it not been for the human Jaffro Davengatt.

"Jaffro Davengatt, proprietor of the Double-Zed Nerf Ranch, who claims to be from "all over the mid-rim", established the Double-Zed shortly after ORO pulled out from Engebo V, and has had remarkable success. His Nerfs have taken to the local grasslands surprisingly well, growing larger than is average for their species. Davengatt employs most of the citizens of the Landing."

SCENE 1: THE ARRIVAL

The only "spaceport" on Engebo V consists of several wide, flat areas outside town. It boasts little more than a few droids, some refuelling equipment, and a once-temporary repair station that has been forced to maintain permanence. The heroes' landing field is maintained by a weathered CZ model protocol droid.

From this repair station emerged an old, half-rusted CZ protocol droid. He picked up a refuelling tube and began dragging it toward the ship as the landing ramp descends.

The droid turned quickly toward the crew and shuffled over, the sound of its rusted servomotors grinding together with each step.

"Hello, sirs. I am See Zee Twenty-Two." he said in a dull but polite tone. "How can I be of service to you?"

If heroes mention busted hyperdrive:

"Oh my." said CZ, "Please. Allow me to examine your hyperdrive, sir." He added stepping on board the landing ramp of the Spirits.

A few moments later the droid returns. "I'm afraid your alluvial dampers have been shorted out and the negative power coupling has been polarized. The repair equipment at the station is functional but repairs would take at least a day or so. Lurbi's Mercantile should have the parts you need as well as anything else you may be wanting, but Mistress Lurbi's prices are known to fluctuate on a whim, so try to be nice to her."

If asked about Davengatt:

The droid turns and points to a tall expensive-looking structure standing on a hill overlooking the town. "That's Master Davengatt's home. But I wouldn't suggest trying to find him there. His automated sentries don't like to be surprised by visitors. If you need to negotiate business regarding the Double-Zed, you should talk to Mistress Nell, Master Davengatt's daughter. She should be at Lurbi's having her morning meal before going to check the herds."

When the heroes move on:

The reddish-orange star Engebo creeps up over the horizon, striking what appears to be an expensive mansion — the home of Davengatt, the nerf rancher, according to CZ-22. The smell of the nearby nerf slaughterhouse is pervasive. A bright sign indicates a cantina on the outskirts of the small town. Sounds of conversation and low music can be heard streaming out from the building's open door. There are no other signs of life. This must have been the place that the droid at the landing field was talking about. A lone figure steps out of a building across the street from the cantina and approaches — a tall, middle-aged Human with long, Gray hair pulled back, a braided beard reaching his chest, a wide swagger, a patch over one eye, and a heavy blaster hanging from his hip. He flips you a lopsided grin as you approach. "Hold up there, friends. What brings you to the Landing?"

This is Gall, the "sheriff" of the Landing. Once a miner, he suffered an accident over 20 years ago that cost him an eye and won him a large compensatory payment from Outer Rim Oreworks. The company put him in charge of security at the station, and when ORO pulled out, he accepted Davengatt's offer to head up security in the Landing.

Gall simply wants to find out a little about the heroes. Visitors to the nerf ranch are not uncommon, and Gall assumes that's why the heroes have come, too, unless they tell him otherwise. Whatever their needs, repairs, nerf steak, or just a hot meal, Gall tells them they'll find someone who can help them at Lurbi's Mercantile, pointing to the cantina across the street. "Now if you're lyin' to me, if you're here to start some kind of trouble, I'll hear about it," he cautions. "Otherwise, enjoy yourselves." He tosses them a casual salute and heads back into his office.

The heroes may wish to explore the rest of the town. It seems virtually deserted, but that's only because the residents are either working or drinking in the cantina. All the residences are locked up tight. If that doesn't convince the players to check out the cantina, coax them gently in that direction.

SCENE 2: THE CANTINA

Lurbi's Mercantile is part trading post, part cantina, and part hotel, and there are always half a dozen people inside drinking, eating, or sleeping at any given time. This morning is no exception. The owner, Lurbi, is a Gotal - a mammalian humanoid (native to the moon Antar 4) with Gray, shaggy fur. She has red-tinted eyes, a flattened nose, a broad mouth full of sharp incisors, and a pair of cone-shaped protuberances sticking out of the top of her head that serve as her primary sensory organs.

When the heroes enter the establishment, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Lurbi's Mercantile, a two-storey structure bigger than most anything else in sight, except the mansion, appears to be the only functioning business in the Landing other than the Double-Zed. Inside, you can see half a dozen or so people drinking, chatting, or just sitting alone, brooding. The place seems part cantina, part trading post, and part hotel.

Along the rear wall runs a long, lighted bar, behind which stands a Gotal female with Gray fur and two cone-shaped protuberances on top of her head, no doubt Lurbi, the proprietor. She is drying glasses and chatting casually with a stunning young Human woman sitting at the bar. The Human is sipping a steaming mug of caf. The blonde woman and the Gotal are the only beings in the cantina that pay any attention to you.

"What ya need?" growls Lurbi. As she looks you up and down, you notice her red-tinted eyes and the sharp teeth that fill her broad mouth.

Lurbi is more than happy to serve the heroes if they order a drink or some food, but she eyes them suspiciously if they purchase nothing. In addition to food, drink, and lodging, she has a number of supplies for sale. If the heroes are looking to stock up, she has 10 medpacs and plenty of ammunition for weapons. She even has a few thermal detonators for the right price. All of Lurbi's goods are available to the heroes (who she doesn't entirely trust) at twice their listed price in the Star Wars Roleplaying Game core rulebook. For the most part, if the heroes want to buy something, the Gamemaster can decide that it's available here (though Lurbi's weapon selection is extremely limited). She does have access to the parts and can get them delivered to the 'spaceport'.

Lurbi keeps a blaster carbine and a baton behind the counter. If trouble arises, she'll use these to break it up.

Lurbi

Female Gotal Non-heroic 6

Init +8 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision;

Languages Gotal, Basic

Defences Ref 10 (flat-footed 10), Fort 9, Will 11

HP 13; **Threshold** 9

Speed 6 squares

Melee +3 (1d4-1, punch)

Ranged +4 (3d8, blaster carbine)

Base Atk +4, Grp +4

Abilities Str 9, Dex 11, Con 9, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 13

Special Qualities Energy reading, Uncanny Dodge

Feats Skill Focus (Persuasion), Skill Training (Knowledge(Bureaucracy), Skill Training (Treat Injury), Weapon Proficiency (Pistols, Rifles, Simple Weapons)

Skills Persuasion + 14, Treat Injury + 9

Possessions Baton, blaster carbine, numerous trade goods, trading post (Lurbi's Mercantile).

Energy Reading: A Gotal may choose to re-roll any Perception checks to sense deceptions if the target is within 6 squares, but the result of the re-roll must be accepted even if it is worse. If trained in Survival, Gotals can take 10 when using their head cones to track members of a specific species or beings whom they have met before.

The Nerf Rancher's Daughter

If they don't speak to her within 3 rounds, the blond Human female confronts the heroes, asking what brings them to the cantina and the planet in general.

Her name is Nell Davengatt, daughter of Jaffro Davengatt. Nell runs the day-to-day business of the ranch. Her father has become more and more reclusive in the past few years, she says, preoccupied with adding gadgets and "conveniences" to his mansion on the hill. Nell wears a blaster on her hip and a chip on her shoulder, she hates having to run her father's business, but can't bring herself to leave, either.

Nell Davengatt

Medium Human scout 2/noble 2

Init +9; **Senses** Perception +13

Languages Basic, Basic, Huttese, Ryl

Defences Ref 18 (16 flat-footed), Fort 15, Will 17

HP 38; **Threshold** 15

Speed 6 squares

Melee vibrodagger +1 (2d4+1)

Ranged blaster pistol, heavy +4 (3d8+2)

Base Atk +2; Grp +4

Atk Options Point Blank Shot

Abilities Str 9, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15

Special Qualities Bonus Trained Skill, Bonus Feat

Talents Inspire Confidence, Barter

Feats Linguist, Point Blank Shot, Skill Focus (Perception, Survival), Skill Training (Persuasion), Weapon Proficiency (advanced melee), Weapon Proficiency (pistols), Weapon Proficiency (rifles), Weapon Proficiency (simple)

Skills Initiative +9, Knowledge (Bureaucracy) +8, Knowledge (Life Sciences) +8, Perception +13, Persuasion +9, Ride +9, Stealth +9, Survival +13

Possessions vibrodagger, heavy blaster pistol, credit chip, datapad

"Listen folks, I've got more important things to worry about than some Alderaanian dilettante. Davengatt's Nerf Steaks are available on the open market. Why don't you just stop by the grocery market and pick up some? Or order it from the packers?"

By the same token, Lady Wylla is paying three times the going rate for the steaks, so Nell's annoyance isn't entirely justified. She confronts the heroes because she's been told by Lady Wylla to expect them.

"Even so, I don't have time to waste playing nice with a bunch of off-world space cowboys."

"Be my guest. My father doesn't seem to have time to do much of anything except add what he calls 'conveniences' to that mansion of his. I don't think you'd get past the sentries anyhow..."

Local Trouble

Suddenly, the young woman stops speaking, cocking her head to one side. A low, rumbling roar can now be heard in the distance, a roar that quickly becomes the scream of atmospheric friction, the unmistakable sound of a ship making an uncontrolled re-entry. Nell leaps to her feet and heads out to the street. The other denizens of the cantina begin to stand and head for the door. Lurbi eyes you suspiciously, but also begins to move toward the door.

The heroes will probably go out into the street with everyone else, but if they choose to stay behind for any reason, Lurbi stays, too. If the heroes refuse to leave the cantina, the Gotal proprietor starts to prod them. "Blast it, I want to see what's out there, but I'm not leaving strangers hanging around my store. Get out there!"

As soon as the heroes enter the street, read or paraphrase the following:

Nell stands staring at the sky, jaw dropped in disbelief. The orange, burning hulk of a now-unrecognisable space transport screams overhead like a meteor. Nell tracks the vessel, her eyes growing wider as she sees where it's going to hit. Not far away, Gall stands in similar awe.

"The herds!" she cries. "It's heading for the herds! Gall, contact my father!" The burly man obliges immediately, and you realize that the "sheriff" clearly works for Davengatt, too.

Nell turns to you, desperation evident in her eyes. "You want those steaks? Help me now, and I'll give them to you at wholesale. Your boss doesn't have to know, you can keep the change. My speeder's this way." With that, she turns and runs toward a ragged, eight-seater landspeeder parked across the street. The scream of the incoming ship hits a crescendo, and then the whumpf of a distant explosion rocks your ears.

If the heroes refuse to go with Nell, sweeten the deal: offer them the repairs to the ship for free, or lower the cost of the steaks by another 20 percent. If they still balk, Nell leaves without them, and Gall asks for their help instead. If they go with Gall, skip ahead to Scene 5. If the heroes refuse to help either character (perhaps they want to hide out in Lurbi's, for instance), they're attacked by a swarm of 36 skekfish (see below) after 10 rounds, and the GM is encouraged to improvise an escape from the planet.

SCENE 3: THE WRECK OF THE MADMAN'S FORTUNE

Nell's speeder is faster than its bulk would indicate, and within a few minutes, she and the heroes arrive at the crash site. The wreck of an unrecognisable type of freighter sits in a smoking crater, surrounded by dead nerfs and, to Nell's dismay, a few dead Humans who must have been watching the herd. She calls out their names, but none of them move. On the horizon, survivors of the herd gallop away from the scene in all directions.

As the heroes and a grimly determined Nell exit the speeder, an escape pod settles to the ground nearby as its autopilot kicks in the automated landing system. Nell checks a scanning device in the speeder's cockpit and gets the transponder beacon transmitting from the pod. She learns that the ship is called the Madman's Fortune, a museum exhibit ship in a popular travelling "freak show." She approaches the pod and beckons the heroes to follow her. See "Pod Opening" (page 7) for information on running the encounter.

SCENE 4: DEATH AT THE LANDING

The trip back to the settlement doesn't take long, but it's apparently long enough. As the speeder pulls onto the main street, bloody parts of bodies can be seen lying everywhere. Lurbi stands on a rickety pile of firewood, blasting skekfish (which have already grown considerably) left and right. She's quite happy to see the speeder and waves to beckon Nell over. See "Landing Massacre" (page 9) for the information on running this encounter.

If the heroes are reluctant to accompany Nell, wanting instead to remain in the Landing to help the residents, the GM should make it clear that there's little to be done. It seems that no one is left alive, and while Gall's body is not among the dead, his building across from the cantina is empty. The longer the heroes tarry in the Landing, the more skekfish attack them, until it seems that the only option is to join Nell and head to her father's mansion.

SCENE 5: DAVENGATT'S MANSION

The heroes arrive now at Davengatt's. See "Mansion Swarms" (page 10) for the details on this encounter.

Inside the Mansion

Once the heroes get inside (and finish off any skekfish that followed them in), they see Davengatt himself. Read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players. If the GM wants to let the players learn more details about the skekfish, Davengatt can relate the information (having learned it himself any number of ways), but it's not required in order to complete the adventure.

GOONTIRK'S LAST SHOW

One exhibit on the Fortune was an ancient mummified Duros modestly nicknamed Archregent Vardovin IV, "Lost King of Duro" — in a vacuum-sealed plasteel coffin tube filled with a murky yellowish gas. The pilot owner of the Madman's Fortune, a Snivvian named Goontirk, had actually picked up "Archregent Vardovin" from a Rynn merchant who assured the Snivvian of its authenticity. Goontirk didn't particularly care, but figured a decent mummy, even a fake one, was always a morbid curiosity. The Fortune's captain practically picked it up for a song.

Unfortunately for Goontirk, the mummy contained a surprise — over a dozen skekfish eggs. Even more unfortunately for Goontirk, the brittle, millennia-old plasteel of the mummy's coffin tube cracked when the freighter hit the same plasma storm that knocked out the heroes' hyperdrive. The inert gas in which the mummy had been preserved quickly leaked out, exposing old Vardovin and the skekfish eggs to the atmosphere. After a few minutes, the eggs hatched. After another thirty minutes, the first fist-sized hole appeared in the plasteel tube, and yellow gas poured into the confines of Goontirk's vessel.

The Snivvian was immediately besieged by a swarm of young skekfish and attempted to flee to an escape pod. He managed to get inside, but so did several skekfish. Thirty seconds later, what remained of Goontirk's corpse lay slumped in the pod, and the Fortune's automated safety systems launched the pod into the atmosphere.

A round, smiling Human in expensive robes, out of place next to his ion rifle and the electronic rangefinder he wears over one eye, welcomes you into an opulent room filled with hanging tapestries and bright natural light that pours in from several large skylights. This must be Jaffro Davengatt. To Davengatt's right stands Gall. The sheriff's clothing is caked with blood and he's breathing harder than seems normal, but he is alive.

"Welcome! You're the couriers from Wylla, right?" laughs Davengatt. "I'm afraid we're not going to be able to fill your order! Nell, come with me." Then he turns toward Gall. "Get the rest of them out of my house. Looks like we're going to be here a while, and I'm not sharing anything with them." Ion rifle trained on you, he backs slowly toward the lift tube in the rear of the room. Nell follows her father, objecting to the way he's treating you and trying to explain how you've helped her.

Gall turns to you and frowns. "Sorry, fellows. I kind of liked you, but you heard the man." Stroking his beard, Gall watches Davengatt back into the lift tube, then turns and says to you, in a low voice: "Tell you what, there's another speeder out back that might at least get you to your ship. Maybe you got lucky and the repairs are done. If not, at least you'd have a place to hide. Just move along, like I'm kicking you out, and we'll..."

Gall doesn't get a chance to finish his sentence. A cutting scream bursts forth from Nell, followed by a bellow of pain from her father, who stumbles out of the lift tube, bleeding profusely. The tube is filled with knife-fish, and they're pouring into the room!

The skekfish set to work devouring Davengatt. Nell grabs his ion rifle and runs back toward the heroes and Gall.

If the heroes try to fight the skekfish here, they're soon overwhelmed. (Eight packs of skekfish each emerge from the lift tube, with two new schools entering each round.) The skekfish can't burrow through the hard floor of the mansion, but they can still leap into the air. It should soon become apparent that the heroes need to leave the dwelling.

"Run!" Gall cried out, firing wildly into the mass of writhing metallic creatures. "Run!"

"Follow me to the garage!" Nell cries out, but Gall stops her.

"No," he said. "You'll never make it. There's another speeder, a Ubrikkian 9000. It's completely enclosed. Go through the side door over there!" he said, pointing in the opposite direction of the main entrance. He then pulled out a pair of thermal detonators which he had hidden in his jacket.

"Come on, Gall!" Nell cried back. "Let's go."

"Sorry, Nell. But I'm not going to make it. I'm too old and too fat and too wounded. I'd only slow you down. But I can still buy you some time." Gall called back.

"No Gall. You're going to live. Come on!" Nell cried to her old friend.

"It's too late now, Nell. You better get out of here. These things are going to go off as soon as I let go of them, and I won't be able to hold on to them for much longer!" Gall shouted as a pair of the knife-fish plowed through his leg and shoulder. He fell to one knee. "Go!" he shouted one final time, and this time Nell listens.

When that door is opened, the heroes see a chaotic scene of diving skekfish, flying dirt, and an intact Ubrikkian 9000.

Now Leaving Engebo V

The action from here on out is fairly straightforward. The GM should throw enough of the beasts at the heroes to challenge them, but still give them decent odds of pulling through in one piece. The heroes must fight their way to the Ubrikkian 9000, board the speeder (which is enclosed and protected from the skekfish), and get to the landing field.

Cue End Credits

When the heroes make it back to their ship, they find that the repairs have been completed ahead of schedule, the droids weren't bothered by the skekfish. Nell asks to join them, as there's nothing left on the planet for her.

"Would you take me with you? I want to personally make reparations with Lady Wylla, I can have some steaks shipped in from one of the packing factories fast enough, but I owe her a great deal more than that."

What for?

"For hiring such an excellent group of couriers." Nell replied. I'd and also like to arrange for the planet to be bombarded from orbit and make sure this doesn't happen again," she says, stoically. "I never liked that place anyway. It's time I went into another line of work."

The ship then lifted straight up into the sky and blasted through Engebo V's atmosphere into the coldness of space. Looking down on Engebo V as the freighter begins to move toward hyperspace, she sheds a single tear. "Goodbye, father."

POD OPENING

CHALLENGE LEVEL 6

If the heroes don't do it first, Nell moves to open the escape pod. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

Nell triggers the release on the pod. Immediately, she screams and jumps back as dozens of small, wriggling silver creatures begin to pour out of the pod and burrow into the ground. Dozens of the fish-like beasts disappear under the soil as Nell looks on in shock.

Suddenly, a group of the creatures burst back up from the ground, and one strikes Nell's left arm. Blood begins to flow as she screams and draws her blaster, firing wildly at the ground. "They're like living knives!" she shouts.

The young skekfish that emerge from the escape pod are not particularly hungry, after all, they've had a full meal of Snivvian in just the last few minutes. There are several of them, however. As long as the heroes remain standing on the ground, the skekfish will attack them in eight packs.

(Although the heroes won't know this, at least that many skekfish have already escaped into the soil and even now are swimming to the Landing in search of more prey.) The GM should roll separate initiative for each skekfish group for a more effective fight.

Young Skekfish CL 2 (3)

Diminutive Skekfish (young) beast 3

Init +12; **Senses** darkvision, Perception +3

Defences Ref 24 (18 flat-footed), Fort 11, Will 12

hp 21; **Threshold** 11

Speed 3 squares, 12 squares (burrowing)

Melee Bite +8 (1d3-3)

Base Atk +2; Grp -7

Special Actions Desperate Gambit

Abilities Str 4, Dex 23, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 15, Cha 5

Special Qualities Darkvision, Metallic, Razor-sharp snout, Subterranean

Feats Desperate Gambit, Weapon Finesse (Bite)

Skills Acrobatics +7, Climb -2, Deception -2, Endurance +2, Initiative +7, Jump -2, Perception +8, Persuasion -2, Stealth +22, Survival +3, Swim -2

Metallic The skekfish's digestive system retains the elemental metals contained within the creature's food. They take damage from blaster fire like any other creature, but they are particularly vulnerable to ion weapon fire. When an ion weapon successfully hits a skekfish, if the ion damage (before being halved) exceeds its damage threshold, the skekfish moves -2 on the condition track, otherwise it moves -1 step. If the ion damage reduces the skekfish's current hit points to 0, the skekfish moves -5 steps on the condition track and is knocked unconscious.

Razor-sharp snout A Skekfish deals bite damage as if it were one size category larger.

Subterranean May reroll Perception checks but must keep the second result even if it's worse.

Young Skekfish Pack CL 4 (4)

Tiny Armored Subterranean Beast Pack 3

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision, Perception +8

Defences Ref 20 (15 flat-footed), Fort 11, Will 12

hp42; **Threshold** 21

Speed 3 squares, 12 squares (burrowing)

GM Notes: The Skekfish

The skekfish — or “knife-fish” as they're sometimes called — are a hybrid of carbon- and silicon-based life. Each individual ranges in length from 30 to 40 centimetres.

They're obviously not true fish, but the name was given by those who first encountered them because of the way they “swim” through the soil. Skekfish move in schools, propelling themselves through any soil with hundreds of tiny, razor-sharp, metallic fin-scales that line their bodies, controlling direction with four rudder fins as long as their entire body. They can move at one-quarter their burrow speed through solid rock, and one-half their burrow speed through wood. They have no apparent eyes and hunt entirely with their sense of hearing.

With their bizarre dual-element physiology, the skekfish must consume both dirt and flesh to survive. An adult skekfish can only survive up to 48 hours without ingesting some animal flesh. They have voracious appetites and a speedy reproductive rate; on any undeveloped world (and even an occasional developed one), skekfish can rapidly consume almost all large fauna. When animal biomass begins to run out for any reason, skekfish will lay a clutch of eggs in the bodies of their last remaining victims, which they then instinctively cover with fresh soil. If the “nest” is left undisturbed, the eggs can last for thousands of years. When fresh meat arrives, the young begin to hatch, and the cycle begins anew. Young skekfish are about one quarter the length of adults, but they reach full size within 24 hours.

When hunting, schools of 2d4+2 skekfish will dive in formation out of the ground (up to 2 meters off the surface) in an attack arc, mouths open. (Thanks to their small size and school behaviour, up to four adult or eight young skekfish can occupy one 2-meter square.) Their razor-sharp snouts bore straight through their prey's torso, leaving a gaping wound. With their victim suitably staggered, the school then breaks up into a more chaotic attack, swarming over the meal until virtually nothing remains of the corpse.

It is unknown exactly where the species originated or whether their DNA has been modified. It seems unlikely that such a bizarre creature could have arisen through natural means, but the galaxy is a strange place.

Melee Bite +8 (1d4-2)

Base Atk +2; Grp -3

Special Actions Desperate Gambit

Abilities Str 6, Dex 21, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 15, Cha 5

Special Qualities Darkvision, Metallic, Pack Traits, Puncture Dive, Razor-sharp snout, Subterranean

Feats Desperate Gambit, Weapon Finesse (Bite)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Climb -1, Deception -2, Endurance +2, Initiative +6, Jump -1, Perception +8, Persuasion -2, Stealth +16, Survival +3, Swim -1

Pack Traits: The melee attack of a pack is an area attack that affects all squares within reach. The ranged attacks of a pack are considered to have a 1-square splash. Area attacks deal an extra 2 dice of damage against a pack or swarm.

Puncture Dive Moving in schools, skekfish approach their target just under the surface of the soil. When about 1 square away from their target, they leap from the ground and dive directly at the target. If a Skekfish pack deals damage to a living target with its bite attack and succeeds on an attack roll (1d20+8) against the target's Fortitude Defence, the target moves -1 step along the condition track.

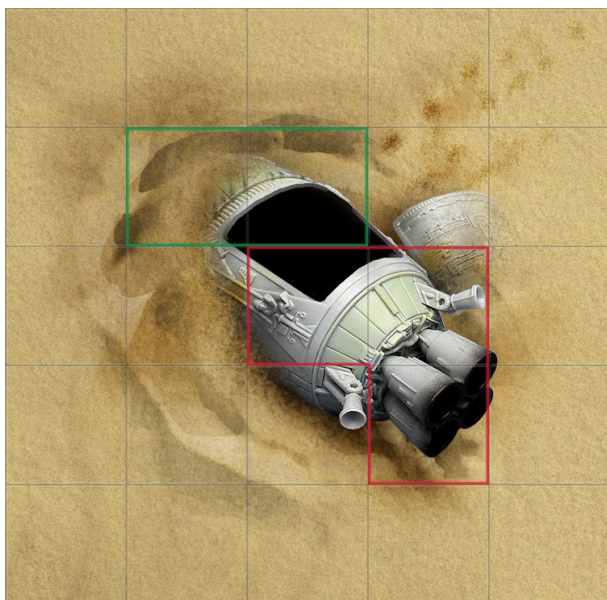
CONCLUSION

Nell immediately heads for the speeder; it takes her at least 2 rounds to get there. She insists that they return to the Landing and warn the others. After a few rounds spent fighting the skekfish, the heroes will likely agree.

If the heroes have ion weapons, they might learn the creatures' weakness at this point. If they manage to kill over 16 skekfish young, the rest disappear under the ground to find easier prey. Naturally, they head back to the Landing.

As soon as a character gets in the landspeeder, the skekfish leave that character alone. This might clue the heroes in to the easiest way to avoid the skekfish attacks: Don't walk on the ground! Once all heroes and Nell are on board (the GM should make sure Nell gets on the speeder as soon as possible), Davengatt's daughter kicks the vehicle into gear and heads back to the Landing.

ENCOUNTER MAP



FEATURES OF THE AREA

The downed escape pod is partially buried, making the front of it easily accessible.

LANDING MASSACRE

CHALLENGE LEVEL 7

Bodies and parts of corpses litter the street - apparently, the silver knife-creatures were able to outrace Nell's speeder and have begun to feast. Lurbi stands on a shaky-looking pile of firewood, clutching two ion pistols and firing them rapidly at the surrounding "fish." "Nell! Help me!"

As the speeder approaches, the creatures attack the gray-furred Gotal in earnest. Although Lurbi catches many with ion fire, which, for some reason, causes the little biters to explode, one punctures her chest, moving through her as if she were simply dirt. The Gotal chokes, staggers, and falls to the ground.

By the time the speeder reaches Lurbi, all that remains of the shopkeeper are the two cones that stuck up out of her head and a pair of ion pistols.

If the heroes haven't figured out that the ion weapon fire is especially damaging to the skekfish, Nell points out that the creatures exploded when hit by Lurbi's weapons. If need be, she suggests that they try to get the pistols.

The easiest way to retrieve the pistols is for any Force-users in the group to use Move Object. If this occurs, four packs of skekfish each begin to leap up into the open-topped speeder, attacking at random, the bloodlust of the feeding frenzy means that the heroes are no longer safe by staying off the ground. If the heroes step out of the landspeeder in order to pick up the pistols by hand, they're attacked by the same number of creatures on the ground.

Young Skekfish Pack CL 4 (2)

Tiny Armored Subterranean Beast Pack 3

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision, Perception +8

Defences Ref 20 (15 flat-footed), Fort 11, Will 12

hp42; **Threshold** 21

Speed 3 squares, 12 squares (burrowing)

Melee Bite +8 (1d4-2)

Base Atk +2; Grp -3

Special Actions Desperate Gambit

Abilities Str 6, Dex 21, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 15, Cha 5

Special Qualities Darkvision, Metallic, Pack Traits, Puncture Dive, Razor-sharp snout, Subterranean

Feats Desperate Gambit, Weapon Finesse (Bite)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Climb -1, Deception -2, Endurance +2, Initiative +6, Jump -1, Perception +8, Persuasion -2, Stealth +16, Survival +3, Swim -1

Adult Skekfish Pack CL 6 (2)

Small Armored Subterranean Beast Pack 5

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision, Perception +9

Defences Ref 21 (16 flat-footed), Fort 13, Will 12

hp 126; **Threshold** 23

Speed 5 squares, 20 squares (burrowing)

Melee bite +8 (1d6)

Base Atk +3; Grp +3

Special Actions Desperate Gambit

Abilities Str 10, Dex 21, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 7

Special Qualities Darkvision, Metallic, Pack Traits, Puncture Dive, Razor-sharp snout, Subterranean

Feats Desperate Gambit, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +7, Climb +2, Deception +0, Endurance +5, Initiative +7, Jump +2, Perception +9, Persuasion +0, Stealth +12, Survival +4, Swim +2

Pack Traits: The melee attack of a pack is an area attack that affects all squares within reach. The ranged attacks of a pack are considered to have a 1-square splash. Area attacks deal an extra 2 dice of damage against a pack or swarm.

Puncture Dive Moving in schools, skekfish approach their target just under the surface of the soil. When about 1 square away from their target, they leap from the ground and dive directly at the target. If a Skekfish pack deals damage to a living target with its bite attack and succeeds on an attack roll (1d20+8) against the target's Fortitude Defence, the target moves -1 step along the condition track.

CONCLUSION

If the heroes are becoming gravely injured, Nell's got them covered. Her speeder's cargo trunk holds four medpacs, and if the heroes have no medic among them, Nell offers her help with any injuries. Of course, she attends to her own, as well.

Once the heroes gain the pair of ion pistols, they see that each one still has about 25 shots. Nell believes they can recharge the weapons at her father's house, if, she adds with a chill, her father is still alive. With that, she revs the speeder, waits for the heroes to get on board, and heads toward the mansion on the hill.

ENCOUNTER MAP



FEATURES OF THE AREA

Lurbi will be on the firewood outside the shop to the north and drop her Ion Pistols next to her. No matter how the heroes try and retrieve the pistols, there will be at least two packs of skekfish that jump inside the speeder.

MANSION SWARMS

CHALLENGE LEVEL 8

Nell tears into the large speeder garage adjoining the four-story mansion, coming to a stop with a jolt. Dozens of the knife-fish follow, although they seem unable to get through the floor of the garage, for now. Several leap out of the ground and wriggle along on the surface toward you.

Nell points out the entrance to the mansion, 30 or more meters away across the yard that lies between the garage and the dwelling. "I have to go first," she says grimly. "Otherwise, the auto-sentries will fry you. They're programmed not to shoot at me, my father, or Gall, but they can take out you, or that speeder, with one shot. Cover me, and follow when I wave you over."

With that, Nell draws her own ion pistol and takes off running across the yard to the mansion. Red laser bolts fly, trying to target the schools of knife-fish that follow with little success. Just as she reaches the entrance and slams her hand onto the I.D. panel, Nell is struck in the leg by a knife-fish and falls to the ground, screaming. The air around her is suddenly alive with diving silver knife-fish.

If the heroes never retrieved the ion weapons back at the Landing, Nell's pistol was already on her person. If they did recover the weapons, then Nell's is one of those two. In either case, the heroes will no doubt try to save the lady in distress. The squares between the garage and the mansion contains at least four packs of skekfish. (If the heroes don't find this challenging, add two more schools.) The heroes will have a very difficult time running across the yard, since they'll frequently be adjacent to enemies.

Adult Skekfish Pack CL 6 (4)

Small Armored Subterranean Beast Pack 5

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision, Perception +9

Defences Ref 21 (16 flat-footed), Fort 13, Will 12

hp 126; **Threshold** 23

Speed 5 squares, 20 squares (burrowing)

Melee bite +8 (1d6)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Special Actions Desperate Gambit

Abilities Str 10, Dex 21, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 7

Special Qualities Darkvision, Metallic, Pack Traits, Puncture Dive, Razor-sharp snout, Subterranean

Feats Desperate Gambit, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +7, Climb +2, Deception +0, Endurance +5, Initiative +7, Jump +2, Perception +9, Persuasion +0, Stealth +12, Survival +4, Swim +2

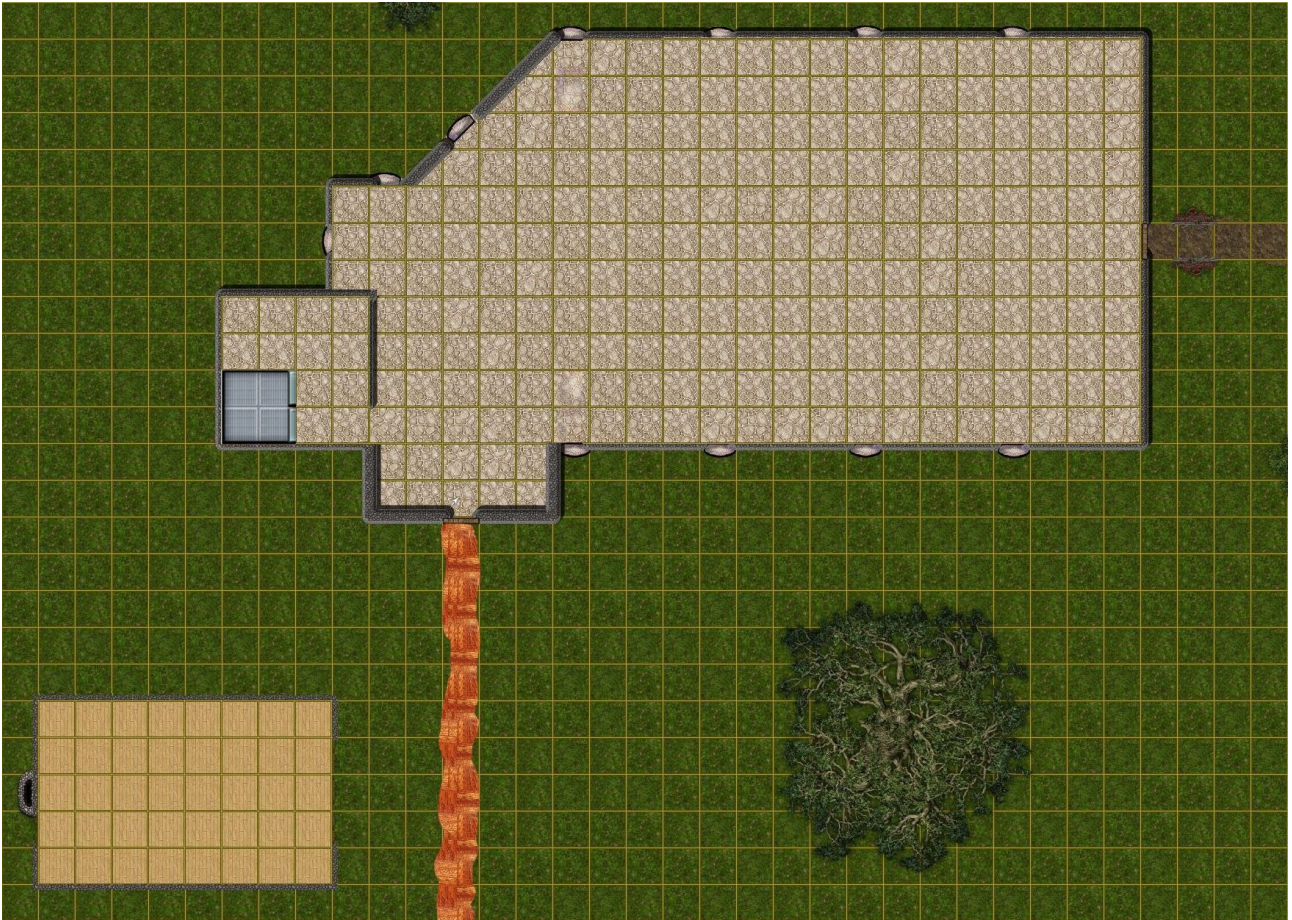
Pack Traits: The melee attack of a pack is an area attack that affects all squares within reach. The ranged attacks of a pack are considered to have a 1-square splash. Area attacks deal an extra 2 dice of damage against a pack or swarm.

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CONCLUSION

Nell manages to fight off her assailants successfully, although she is drenched in her own blood by the time the group arrived to her position. Once all of the heroes are adjacent to Nell, she triggers the door (she's waited so the house doesn't fill up with skekfish while the heroes cross the courtyard).

ENCOUNTER MAP



FEATURES OF THE AREA

The encounter features a speeder garage and Davengatt's mansion and takes place as the heroes make their way from one to the other. There should be no real let up from Skekfish until the characters and nell get inside.