THE LURE OF VENUS

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO VENUS

The story of Venus is not one of the land, though land is a motivating factor. It is the story of people, of passion, of lust, greed, hate, and love. It is a story of those who have come to the Emerald Planet and those who have always lived there. It is not a story of conquest, though conquest plays a role, nor it is a story of nations, even if nations have a part to play. The Lure of Venus is a story of people. It is the story of a billion Lizard Monkeys, of millions of Venusians, and of the hordes of aliens that have come to this jungle world to fulfill their own desires.

Venus draws people in. It really shouldn’t, for the Emerald Planet is a deadly lure. The jungles are filled with deadly plants and animals, the climate is oppressively hot and humid, and the very terrain might shift under your feet and kill you in a thousand ways. Yet still people flock to Venus with high hopes, for the planet offers much to the brave and the lucky. When you feel the call, when the lure is too great, will you strive for it? What will you sacrifice for it? Come to Venus and find out!

The Lure of Venus is the second planetary sourcebook for Rocket Age. Inside you will find everything you need as a player or Gamemaster to explore the Jungle World in all its glory. Most of Venus is unexplored, and unlike Mars, unclaimed by anyone (save possibly the Lizard Monkeys, but they’re just amusing animals after all). Only the highlands can be readily explored, for the pressures and temperatures of the lowlands block all but the most daring and ingenious. Even in the highlands only the Ishtar Range and its associated plateau have seen the tread of alien feet. Or have they? What wonders lie beneath the jungles canopies of distant ranges? Read on and find out.

PLANETOLOGY

Like a rocket pilot on reentry, our first view of Venus is the Emerald Planet laid out before us like a green jewel in the night. Beneath the constant cloud cover lays a sea of mists and fog out of which thrusts the highland mountain ranges where life, at least life as the sophont species of the Solar System understand it, exists. Before we can understand the life of Venus, we must look first at the planet it thrives upon. We begin with the familiar, the Ishtar Range and its associated plateau. For most aliens this is the only part of
the planet they have traveled to, for it is here that colonies, settlements, and mines have been established. Beyond the Ishtars lie other ranges, other highlands hiding secrets dark and wonderful and waiting to be explored. Finally, we delve beneath the mists to see the surface of Venus, and the bizarre lifeforms that dwell in the meltingly hot depths.

**INTRODUCTION**

**PEOPLE OF VENUS: THE VENUSIANS**

When one thinks of the native sophonts of Venus, one thinks of the Venusians. Most of the rocket set like to imagine they know Venusians, even speak the language, but they only know a small segment of the population. The vast majority of Venusians who have traveled off-world have been from the Kindalkakla Concordat, and the rest are all from related concordats from within the Ishtar Range. While this chapter looks in greatest detail at the concordats, cultures, languages, and warrior cults of the familiar Ishtars, it also brings in to focus the concordats of distant ranges, some still not yet contacted by alien explorers.

**PEOPLE OF VENUS: THE ALIENS**

Aliens of all kinds have flocked to Venus, drawn in by promises of wealth, the hope of adventure, and even dreams of conquest. Most of these alien visitors are Earthlings, and the colonies of Brazil, Britain, Germany, Japan, and the United States all feature prominently in the political struggles of the Ishtar Range. Fell funded corporations tear the jungle apart in search of gold, radium, and rare gems, grinding their workers down as easily as they grind ore. Earthlings are not the only aliens that have come to Venus, for rogue Silthuri, Europan scientists, and even a small Ioite enclave have all found homes beneath Venus's jungle canopy.

**FLORA AND FAUNA**

Venus is famed for its abundance of life, its jungles teeming with massive reptiles like some manner of prehistoric nightmare, giant insects buzzing amongst the trees, and poisonous flora that can reach out and grab an explorer. This chapter offers up a cornucopia of strange, beautiful, and deadly plants and animals. The strangest, loveliest, and most deadly might just be the things that eschew the jungle highlands and crawl up from the mists below.

**NEW CHARACTER TRAITS**

It takes a special breed of sophont to risk their lives in the jungles of Venus, and a highly skilled one to survive. You might end up Stricken with some alien disease, or learn to cope with the constant rain by becoming Sodden. Are you a Know It All or possess Situational Awareness? If so, then you just might survive when the jungle drums beat and the natives begin their War Dance.

**NEW EQUIPMENT**

Take to the skies in your surprisingly cheap mini rocket ship or perhaps in a basic rocket pack? The former might just be a Death Trap, while the latter is not anywhere as good as a Rocket Ranger’s Mark III, but still better than walking. Jungle fighting would not be the same without a flamethrower, even if you descend into battle in a flying petal drop ship. Of course you could always wield the fabulous psychic crystal weapons of the Venusians, such as the Thunder Lance and Empathy Gems.

**THE DOWNEY CREEK WAR**

To get them started exploring Venus, the player characters are dumped into the Downey Creek War. Recruited by the McTaggert family to help fight off the latest influx of claim jumpers – United Solar Mining company thugs – our heroes must prepare for the battles to come, resolve difficulties with the local Venusians, and keep the claim running until Papa McTaggert can get back on his feet.
EXCEPETS FROM THE PERSONAL JOURNAL OF ELIAS BAROS

Day 1
This is it! After two months of waiting I have finally received permission by the Kind’alkakla to join one of their bands for a season. I have everything packed, and have had my gear ready, for some time now. I will need to rush, as I must leave in six hours if I am to have any hope of making the rendezvous with the band I have been assigned to.

Day 4
At last I have made it. The journey to the meeting with the Two Fanged Rocks Band (or Ulish’tal Poliki in Western Venusian) involved a short rocket flight into the Southern Range, a fifty mile ride along tracks that could only be barely called a road, and three days of endless hiking, stopping only to sleep. I am starting my study exhausted, soaked in sweat, covered in a thousand tiny cuts, and coated in dust.

My guides have other business and leave as soon as the Ulish’tal Poliki arrive. My host family, for each band is like an extended family or clan, are an imposing sight. The leader, a grave faced silverback named Julitis, an oddly short Western Venusian name that means simply Seen, seems displeased at my presence. He didn’t soften a bit after I handed over the trade goods I was told to bring as gifts. However, these goods did meet with his approval, and what followed was a six-hour argument over the distribution of the blankets, knives, cook pots, beads, and other trinkets. Julitis looked as if he would keep the trade musket for himself, but in the end turned it over to one of the female hunters; I think her name was Yulitiki, which means Catching at Bees.

Day 5
We slept through the afternoon, waking just before sunset. These long Venusian days, and sleeping in the sunlight, take some getting used to. The first thing the band did after a morning ablution was to organize a meal and sit down to debate what to do about me. It seems that there is some concern as to my role in the band. Can I hunt? Can I find food? Will someone need to keep watch on me? I was particularly worried when they argued over what would happen if I died or came to injury. In the end they asked me if I was an adult, and I replied yes. This caused a chorus of hooting and another argument.

Later I found out what was so funny, Venusian infants are born nearly hairless; to them I look like a newborn the size of a teenager. My status was finally decided after I explained that I was working on my dissertation, which they interpreted as a form of Harvititori rite. As a Harvititori I would be cast as not quite a child but not quite an adult. Julitis made the announcement and everyone agreed to some extent, with a few comments that it was for the best as only those without virtue would consider me ripe for mating.

Day 8
The Venusians do not seem to have much sense of personal privacy. They gather in camp in small groups, shout, scratch, make love, and perform all their functions within a few feet of one another. The only time someone not going on a hunt or gathering trip leaves camp is to defecate or urinate, and even then they go in groups. This has taken some getting used to as every action, even the most intimate, tends to draw a crowd.

I have now learned why this is. The jungle is filled with dangers and someone needs to always be on the look out. In camp there are guards posted, the Venusians seem to relax and act at ease. In the jungle, even when seeing to the necessaries, there is always a companion on watch. While this is some comfort, the Venusian tendency to shout advice, and argue about that advice, is a little disconcerting.

Day 12
Yulitiki took me along on my first hunt today. Armed with a bolt action Remington I thought I would make a good showing. Shooting a moving tree lizard is a lot different from the, admittedly rather limited, target practice I had in Roosevelt Station. Yulitiki laughed at my failure to bring down any game, though in my defense she was not terribly accurate with her trade musket. In the end we managed to bag only a few large dragonflies, and only because Yulitiki took them down with her axe. Dragonfly is a lot like lobster or crab, but without the seafood taste.

Day 14
While hunting we came across a group of wildcatters setting up a sluice box along one of the creeks draining out of the South Mountains. One of the hunters spotted them and came back to report to the band. After a short argument (this one lasted all of thirty minutes), it was decided that the intruders were to be driven off. No one in the band could recall having given permission for mining in their territory, although one hunter recounted that he might have said something to someone while in a bar in Roosevelt Station. The band stalked up on the mining camp with amazing...
grace and speed for such large beings. At least half of them came in through the trees, the others on the ground. I declined the offer to join the tree-swinging portion, and it was pointed out by several Venussians that my short stature and lack of toes would be a hindrance. To show them I had toes, I removed my boots, much to their delight and derision. The name the band has given me has grown, I am now known as Arth Faliit’k Pagagino, or Earth Visitor with Removable Feet and Tiny Appendages.

Once the band arrived outside the wildcatter’s camp, they all took to the underbrush and hid. It was three hours before nightfall and the decision had been made to attack after dark. I did my best to stay hidden inside a large open hole in a tree. Those three hours were the quietest I had ever seen the Venussians. Not one voice lifted in argument, I could barely even hear Yulitiki next to me in the hole.

Without any prior signal the darkness erupted in a series of fearsome howls. Yulitiki fired her trade musket into the air, reloaded, and fired again. Stones, fruit pits, and large hunks of wood rained into the camp. The wildcatters were shocked and surprised, but I noticed the various projectiles were aimed to strike away from the intruders or land in their fire. This noise and assault from the darkness continued for some time before it abruptly ceased. Yulitiki told me to stay put and slipped out into the night. Soon, a rising chant and the rhythmic pounding of feet began off to my left, and was picked up somewhere to the right of the camp. At first I thought this would go on for a few minutes, but the minutes stretched to hours, and then continued on through the long Venussian night. I dozed in my hiding hole, woke, and found no other place to perform my necessaries, so I made a small pit in the back of the hole and relieved myself there. This went on for several Earth days until the first beams of light filtered through the cloud cover and jungle canopy. By this time the wildcatters had suffered three days (as we Earthlings count days) with little or no sleep, their nerves wrecked by the constant noise from the jungle.

They were given only a few scant moments of silence before Julitius yelled out in rather passable German that he was coming out to speak with them. It quickly became evident that the wildcatters did not understand, and so the silverback came and got me out of my hole to translate. As best as I can recall the conversation, for I was terrified that one or the other party might become violent.

**Julitius:** I am Julitius Nathirik Olithy, and I speak but am not a Speaker for the Ulish’tal Poliki. I come to talk before blood.

**Henry Sterling (leader of the wildcatters):** Don’t give a damn who you are, you need to answer for attacking us.

**Julitius:** We have not attacked, for if we had you would be dead. This is our territory you have no rights here. Leave and we can remain at peace.

**Sterling:** The hell we don’t have rights. We have permission to set up a camp from the Ulash’al Poliki. Besides, we are American citizens, you mess with us, you mess with the Rangers.

**Julitius:** We are the Ulish’tal Poliki, the Ulush’al Poliki’s territory begins on that side of the creek. You might be Americans, we have no war with the American Concordat, nor with the Ranger War Bands. You might not be Americans, who is to say? I do not see the lines and stars concordat markings on you, so who can say if you are honest or not? All can say you are on the wrong side of the creek. All can see that. You might be too stupid to know which side of the creek you are on. You might be willingly in our territory. Who can say these things are true?

**Sterling:** Now wait a minute here, we can’t just move our camp, that would set us back days, not to mention the time we lost with you caterwauling all night.

**Julitius:** You will move or there will be war. This all can see.

**Sterling:** Whoa there, maybe we can come to an arrangement.

**Julitius:** We have. You move or there is war.

With that Julitius turned and walked out of the camp. I followed a few seconds later, terrified of the violence that may come. I needn’t have worried, for the chanting and stomping resumed the moment Julitius and I were out of the trees. Six hours later the wildcatters were packing up and moving across the creek.

---

**Addendum:**
In the following days some of the Ulish’tal Poliki would yell across at the wildcatters, using me as a translator, and offer jungle game, fruits, and interesting looking rocks in trade. Over the next three months the wildcatters and the Ulish’tal Poliki became good neighbors, if not friends. It should be noted that all communication and trading took place with only one or two Venussians and myself, and at no time did we cross the creek.
Venus is a planet of grand contrasts, from the jungle covered highland peaks to the fiery hellscape that lies beneath the mists. At most, only some of the peaks and the uppermost layers of the mists have been explored by alien sophonts, and the native sophonts rarely know much more than their local ranges. The first alien visitors, not counting the Erisians, came to a broad plateau formed by the Ishtar Range. Here they found a break in the jungle cover, the Carmenta Savannah, a broad grassy plain that covers nearly a third of the Ishtar Plateau. From this relatively safe vantage point first earthling and then other explorers penetrated into the surrounding Ishtar Range, and have not had a chance to do much more than perform flyovers of the rest of the planet.

While the Ishtar Range is by far the most well known, there are dozens of mountain ranges that form highlands suitable of exploration and exploitation.

**THE ISHTAR RANGE**

Sited in the cooler northern temperate zone, the Ishtar Range drew in the first alien explorers to Venus with its wide flat central grassland, relatively gently sloped plateau, and rich radium deposits. The range is roughly circular, with the South Mountains fading slowly down from the Ishtar Plateau into the mists, the East and West Mountains rising steeply to moderate heights, and the rugged North Mountains forming razor edged ridges and blindingly sheer escarpments.

**NORTH MOUNTAINS**

The northern edge of the Ishtar Range reaches past the temperate zone and runs in ragged spines towards the North Pole. The temperature is lower here, though only lower by Venusian standards (meaning the average is around 86°F). These mountains are more rugged than the other ranges and feature steeply sloped canyons, bare spires, and the tallest peaks in the Ishtar Range. Some of the peaks even have hints of snow on them, a rare sight on Venus. Several rivers cut through the mountains and either flow out of the Ishtar Range and off into the mists or come down from the mountains to wend their way across the plateau towards the Carmenta Savannah and empty into Green Lake.

The vegetation is also thinner and only forms full-canopied rainforest in the valleys and on the more hospitable slopes. Most fauna keeps to the valleys or hunts from rocky outcrops, most notably the mountain demons. These huge lizard-like raptors swoop out of the skies and are capable of snatching up a young jungle tortoise. They have been known to hunt as far south as the northern edge of the Carmenta Savannah.

The concordats of the Northern Mountains are culturally distinct from the more familiar Ishtar Range concordats, especially the female dominated Vanastiku’ll (North Mountain Women) and the fearsome Sha'stal'plk (Raging Valley Concordat). These concordats are seen by many aliens as ‘wild tribes’, Venusians who have had little contact with off-worlders and are renowned for being savage and insular.

---

**NORTH MOUNTAINS**

**Theme:** A rugged and unexplored land of great physical splendor and danger

**Complication:** Far from help, deep in the wild, and surrounded by savage natives

**Personality:** Talthiph, Defender of the Pass

---

Talthiph, Defender of the Pass

Personal honor is of paramount importance to the North Mountains concordats, and the greatest displays of personal honor involve violence and physical endurance. This is normally displayed in hunting or war, but sometimes a Venusian of the North Mountains takes it upon himself to perform a deed so extreme it will gain him honor and glory. Other times, as in the case of Talthiph, the great deed undertaken is in order to expiate a wrongdoing. Talthiph’s concordat was contacted by a group of Earthling wildcatters who traded guns, knives, and alcohol for the right to mine radium on Sha'stal'plk land. The exchange was beneficial to all parties, save that Talthiph became overly fond of the alcohol and drink more than a warrior of his rank should have. He became violent and belligerent
beyond all reason, and injured several tribemates. As punishment, Talthiph was cast out and sent to the Fang River valley, his penance to defend the pass against all comers for one Venusian year. He lives there now, eating what he can hunt from his post, drinking sparingly, and living in only the meanest manner. The rocks below the pass are littered with the bones of those who tried Talthiph’s might and failed.

The steep slopes and deep valleys of the North Mountains make exploration by rocket ship difficult. While aerial reconnaissance is possible, nothing replaces actually walking the land. Often, expeditions into the region build base camps where rocket ships can land and resupply from. Our heroes are hired to maintain one of these resupply points, running goods and people from Roosevelt Station to deep in the North Mountains and back.

• For some rocket pilots, the winding steep-sided canyons of the North Mountains are too inviting a challenge. While drinking in an alien bar, one of our heroes is called out on their piloting skill. The challenger makes a simple contest; fly a course through the canyons and winner takes all the glory. Soon the side bets reach ludicrous proportions and a lot of money is riding on the pilots’ skill, not to mention their lives.

• A linguistic study of the North Mountain concordats is being organized by Stanford University, but first they need some basic knowledge of the area. Our heroes are hired to perform a detailed survey, but are warned not to contact the local concordats. They are to fly over land in a few select places to gather more data, but must tread lightly and move swiftly in order to fulfill their contractual obligations.

The Venusians of the Ishtar Plateau are considered by many to be the standard model for Venusi ans, though in truth they are extensions of the concordats that have long held the Western Mountains as their home.

Green Lake
Once upon a time this lake was a wonder of the Ishtar Plateau, a lake brimming with fish and aquatic reptiles, and the home to the warlike and isolationist Jakop’til Princi Nasturu (Green Lake Concordat). Then the United Venusian Mining Consortium followed radium traces into the region. Their activities, as well as the extension of the Ore Fields to the south, led to the lake being poisoned. In 1936, the issues of environmental damage and land theft drove the Jakop’til Princi Nasturu to all out war. An alliance of Germany, Japan, and the Talatilb Hrahra (the White Spire Concordat, ancestral enemies of the Jakop’til Princi Nasturu) destroyed the Green Lakers and divided up the area.
Dr Peter Sawyer, the Hairless Warrior

The Green Lake War destroyed the Jakop’til Princi Nasturu and tore up the land surrounding the lake. Aerial bombardment by both airplanes and rocket ships, not to mention orbital drops and all the horrors of modern mechanized warfare tore great holes in the jungle. The coming of the UVMC and the expansion of the Ore Fields have only added to the damage. Dr Sawyer had studied the flora of the region for nearly three years and had developed a strong relationship with the Jakop’til Princi Nasturu, becoming one of the few aliens they trusted. When the war started, a debate amongst the Green Lakers ended with the offer of membership in the concordat or expulsion. Dr Sawyer, well aware of the greed that was driving Japan, Germany, and the UVMC, chose to forsake his ties to his own species, even going so far as to use what little influence and money he had to get a last minute delivery of smuggled weapons to the Venusians. During the war, Dr Sawyer tried to limit his involvement to providing medical aid and advice, but as the genocide of the Jakop’til Princi Nasturu became apparent, he took up arms. The war is over, and the Green lake Concordat is no more, but small bands still roam the jungles and grasslands, and one of these is led by Kioth-Tanied, the Hairless Warrior.

THE WHITE SPIRE

The White Spire is a barren shaft of pale dolomite that rises out of the surrounding Carmenta Savannah like a spear pointed at the heavens. It is thought that trace minerals in the granite prevent most forms of vegetation from growing on the Spire, giving it a unique appearance amongst the mountains of Venus. The White Spire is the heart and soul of the savannah dwelling Talatilb Hrahra (White Spire Concordat), the lynchpin concordat in the growing Venusian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Following the defeat of their ancestral foes in the Green Lake War, the Talatilb Hrahra and their Japanese allies have managed to lock all others out of the territory surrounding the Spire.

To the Talatilb Hrahra, the White Spire is a holy place and even looking too long on its slopes is held to be vile sin. They themselves do not venture there; for they say it is the home of all evil in the world and is best to not even mention its name. Although the common translation of the concordat name is the White Spire Concordat, that is a bit of a misnomer. Other concordats call them that, the Talatilb Hrahra call themselves the Ghàrtìl-op Hoolkalth, or Those Who Do Not Look.

The true mystery of the White Spire is yet to be discovered, or in other words, it is left to the GM to determine it at her table. Consider it a gift, a blank spot on the map longing to be filled, and a chance to make a piece of Venus yours. Possible answers are listed in the story hooks box.

GREEN LAKE STORY HOOKS

- Dr Sawyer, or Kioth-Tanied as he is now known, has parents and colleagues who are worried about him. While his ‘going native’ is not widely known outside of the Green Lake region, he has been out of contact since the war began. With peace having returned to the region, the Sawyer family and Stanford University have placed a reward for information concerning Dr Sawyer, with a large bonus for anyone who brings him back.

- The Talatil’op Hrahra fought beside the Earthling forces in the Green Lake War, and has been rewarded with land and lucrative trade deals. However, the land they have been given is poor, and with the northern extension of the Ore Fields, the once fertile Green Lake is less green and more gray and polluted. Not all the concordat is happy with the situation, and some have begun contacting aliens in order to bring in modern weapons.

- Rumors abound that the Jakop’til Princi Nasturu possessed a great wealth, and this was the true reason for the war. Some say they had an idol ten feet tall made of solid gold, others that rare and powerful psychic crystals had been gathered and stored for use by the concordat’s speakers. As no great trove was found during the war, treasure hunters have begun scouring the shores of the Green Lake. Nothing has been found yet, but that doesn’t stop the brave and foolish trespassers from risking the ire of the Japanese, Germans, UVMC, or the Talatil’op Hrahra.
THE WHITE SPIRE

Theme: A gleaming tower of barren rock sacred to the Talatil'op Hrahra.

Complication: The White Spire itself is a place of mystery that hides a wondrous secret.

Personality: Dr Karen Summers, Intrepid Explorer.

Dr Karen Summers, Intrepid Explorer

No one truly knows why there is hardly any vegetation on the White Spire, and to be honest few scientists are terribly concerned. There is much to study on Venus, and the so called mystery of the White Spire is not high on the list as it does not compare with the simple act of cataloging an entire planet’s wealth of flora and fauna, studying its geological oddities, or even plumbing the hidden land beneath the mists. Dr Summers is intrigued, and has several theories that contradict the accepted wisdom that there is something in the rocks that prevents the growth of vegetation. She has sought permission from the Talatil’op Hrahra to explore the Spire many times, and each time has been rebuffed. The White Spire is sacred to them, and no outsiders may trespass there. Twice she has been caught by the Japanese authorities trying to sneak into Talatil’op Hrahra land, and twice she has been unceremoniously dumped back in Roosevelt Station. Although nothing has been officially said, the authorities let her know that her next attempt will be unhindered, and the Japanese will let the Talatil’op Hrahra deal with the situation.

CARMENTA SAVANNAH

While Venus is indeed the Jungle Planet, it is also a planet with a varied ecosystem. The Carmenta Savannah is proof of this, for the jungle peters out towards the middle of the Ishtar Plateau, giving way to a grassland dotted by scraggily trees and cut by rivers flowing from the surrounding mountains. Brush fires are common, as are stampedes of thundering herd animals. The natives of the Carmenta are largely extensions of the more common concordats, and the Kindalkakla claim a large portion of the south and west. However, one concordat known as the Tlaxozil (The People in their own language, but called the Hsiportal or Stubborn Ones in Western Venusian) speaks a different Venusian language and practice a different culture. Alien settlers here are less inclined towards mining, the mineral deposits are generally not that great once one gets away from the rivers, but have started farms and ranches. These new enterprises hope to make their fortunes by providing Earthling and Martian foodstuffs to the miners and other aliens.

It is these pioneers that are causing the greatest problems on the Carmenta. The Tlaxozil do not accept that the other concordats that hold territory on the savannah have any right to do so, much less grant concessions to alien outsiders. The Kindalkakla, Talatil’op Hrahra, Lanxit’alo Justivnik (the High Grass Low Peaks, a minor concordat to the north), and Rasti’lorit Hastazit Pilokin (Runs Along the Windy Rivers, a separatist faction of the Kindalkakla) all claim parts of the Carmenta, and all have made agreements with Earthling nations to grant land rights to farmers and ranchers.

WHITE SPIRE STORY HOOKS

• Inside the White Spire are the remains of an Erisian colony or ship. Perhaps the reactor is leaking and thus causing the vegetation, save for a few hardy species, to simply die. If not the reactor, it could be chemicals leaching out and into the soil. Either way, the place would be very dangerous, and also very lucrative for whoever discovers the Erisian remains.

• The spire contains an unusual amount of psychically active crystals. This doesn't so much as poison the Spire, but drives animal life away and causes the local Venusians to be wary of the site. Without animals to spread seeds, distribute pollen, and provide other symbiotic services, plant life has little chance to propagate on the steep slopes. A few species that have evolved to life on the wind swept rocky outcrops hang on to the White Spire, but nothing compared to the amount of flora that covers the rest of Venus.

• It really is something in the make up of the White Spire’s rock that prevents plant growth. This substance would be of great utility to the USMC in their efforts to clear away jungle and build mines. All it would take would be a small sample for analysis. Getting it would be difficult, as the Japanese are invested in keeping the Talatil’op Hrahra content and part of the Venusian Co-Prosperity Sphere.
Further exacerbating the situation, the Venustian concordats do not govern the pioneer settlements aside from making sure they stay to the granted territory. As the Carmenta lies a fair distance from most established Earthling settlements, and the Earthling nations are already strained watching over areas close to home (not to mention jurisdictional issues regarding four Venustian concordats and six Earthling nations), the settlers on the Carmenta are largely left to their own devices. This has created a lawless zone where alien on alien violence is common, banditry is endemic, and open brigandage is the order of the day.

**CARMENTA SAVANNAH**

**Theme:** The largest stretch of open flat land on the Ishtar Plateau.

**Complication:** Pioneering settlers in conflict with the native Venustians and each other.

**Personality:** Earl Leedy, Self-Appointed Sheriff.

**EARL LEEDY, SELF-APPROPRIATED SHERIFF**

Out in the middle of the savannah and thus hundreds of miles from any other Earthling settlement, lies the small collection of buildings named Hope. The town is little more than a general store, three bars, and a mechanic, but it serves the needs of the two mining camps, three ranches, and eight farms that are within a short drive. Every month a rocket ship comes in and lands at an impromptu field outside town to unload supplies and load up minerals, grain, and cattle. Three months ago the ship unloaded something else, a tall man in long raincoat carrying a big gun. This man, Earl Leedy, came to Venus to seek his fortune panning for gold, but soon changed careers to freelance bounty hunter. Hope is well located to serve as a base of operations for him, and he has taken a liking to the place. When not out hunting down a criminal, Leedy polices the town by rousting drunks, settling disputes, and leading posses to hunt down bandits. If you need someone hunted down, and aren't particular about the means or legality of the issue, stop into Hope and ask for Leedy. His prices are fair and his morality is for sale. Just don't start trouble in his town.

**CARMENTA SAVANNAH STORY HOOKS**

- While on some other errand on the savannah, our heroes discover that a bush fire has started. Worse, it is between them and their goal, their ship, or some other place they have to get to. Escaping the fire is only part of the challenge, keeping their cool when they find out that a band of Venustians started it might be harder. It seems that some of the savannah dwelling bands regularly burn off the grass in order to promote new growth and keep the jungle out.

- There is trouble on the savannah. The Tlaxozil are on the warpath over pioneers entering their territory and have already burned out three farmsteads, killing everyone there. The Venustian Co-Prosperity Sphere's boundaries sit near the Tlaxozil lands, and there is the fear that the fighting might spill over. However, this all seems to be according to plan, as a contact of our heroes has discovered that inciting the Tlaxozil to war is part of a Black Dragon plot to recreate the success of the Green Lake War. Can our heroes bring peace before things escalate?

- In order to defend their interests on Venus, the German government has brought a small squadron of Deutsche Marskorps war walkers to the planet. While the walkers are all but useless in the jungles, they can operate freely on the Carmenta. The squadron's personnel have already arrived, but shortly after their equipment lands they find that one of the war walkers has gone missing. Who has it? Just a normal theft, a plot by one of Germany's enemies, or something else? If the war walker hasn't left the planet, there might be someone out on the savannah with an operational war machine and the will to use it.

**THE EAST MOUNTAINS**

Not as tall as the North Mountains, the East Mountains still present a strong barrier to the expansion of the Ishtar Range concordats as well as the alien interlopers. These mountains run mostly north to southeast in orientation, and geologists posit that they are actually a continuation of the North Mountain ranges to the southeast. While the Western and Northern Mountains run on in series of ranges to the edge of the Ishtars, the Eastern Mountains trail off forming islands of jungle covered highlands separated by miles of mist.

These mountain islands are some of the greatest sites of physical beauty in all of Venus. Rising in sharp spires or rolling shoulders out of the mists, the jungle covered
mountain islands are gleaming spears of emerald in a sea of gray. Their isolation and ruggedness have kept outsiders away for centuries; though the largest and most closely grouped have been colonized by Venussians of the Eastern Mountain tribes, often through the use of clever gliders and other primitive flyers.

The concordats of this region are not well known, but have been contacted by a handful of explorers and wildcat miners. They are of a different linguistic and cultural origin than the common Ishtar Venussians, speaking Eastern Venussian and practicing a looser tribal structure led by warrior shamans. The fauna of this region is also different, with more large insects taking ecological niches that reptiles take in the rest of the Ishtar Range.

**THE EAST MOUNTAINS**

**Theme:** A largely untouched region with strange cultures and stranger animals.

**Complication:** The exotic might prove a lure, but how does the exotic feel about it?

**Personality:** Machistil, Presumptive High Priest of the Ten Worlds.

Machistil, Presumptive High Priestess of the Ten Worlds

The tribes of the Eastern Mountains are a divided lot. Their tribal groupings do not form broad concordats and instead squabble amongst themselves in constant internecine warfare. Every few generations one warrior-shaman rises above the others and manages to unite a large number of the tribes under his banner. Currently, the post of High Priestess of the Ten Worlds (a poor translation as the Ten Worlds consist of the eight largest island peaks, the mainland of the Ishtar Range, and the afterlife) is vacant, but one mighty warrior-shaman is on her way to achieving the title. Machistil has managed to unite six tribes beneath her fearsome rule, a remarkable feat considering that three of these tribes are bitter enemies. The remaining twenty tribes of the region tremble in fear, for none can challenge her warriors on its own, yet none can cooperate in any reasonable manner to defeat her. Every season it seems a new tribe might be forced into Machistil’s growing alliance, or wiped out entirely.

**EAST MOUNTAIN STORY HOOKS**

- The US State Department has only a small outpost on Venus, and that largely deals with issues involving the Kindalkakla or relations involving other Earthling powers. However, the overworked and underfunded office on Congreve Street in Roosevelt Station has managed to pick up rumors about a growing Venussian army in the East Mountains, and wants to send our heroes out to check on it.
- The secret to Machistil’s growing power is her willingness to deal with alien traders, or as the authorities on Earth would view them, gun runners. Our heroes could be tasked with quietly investigating the smugglers (who technically are not breaking any laws), or they could be looking to score big, bringing weapons to Machistil. In either case, the wily Venussian knows that simply having the guns won’t help, and a few alien warriors in her entourage would be a major strategic and morale boost. It really doesn’t matter if they want to serve her or not.
- The major political movements in the Eastern Mountains all surround Machistil and her drive to dominance. That is not all that is going on there, as the many mountain top islands are home to endemic life found nowhere else on Venus. They are also highly isolated; some lack even the most rudimentary flat land for a rocket ship to land on. This isolation would be perfect for a group of Martian Kastari who have been forced from their homeworld. Their brand of the Martian religion places a high value on quiet contemplation and a rejection of the outside world. A small mountain island in the Eastern Range would be perfect, and they have a small fortune in gold for someone who can guide and transport them.

**THE WEST MOUNTAINS**

The western edges of the Ishtar Plateau are much like the standard vision of Venus, gently rolling uplands with occasional stark peaks, all covered with an impenetrable canopy of rainforest. The natives of these highlands are of the same cultural model as the well-known Kindalkakla and other concordats. To many of the Venussians of the Ishtar Range, the West Mountains are not just home, but the locations of their most sacred sites, such as Algontawanala and Grand Crater lie near the eastern edge of the mountains.
It is this sacredness that defines the region, and there are very few peaks in the Western Mountains that are not held to be the home of a god or other powerful spirit. Nor is Grand Crater the only such impact site in the Western Mountains. Indeed, the mountains are nearly covered in such sites, some as large as a small town, others little more than a three or four meter divot in the ground. Most of these impact sites are treated as holy places and kept clear of overgrowth, decorated with religious symbols, and studiously avoided by the locals. Aliens who have visited these holy sites have reported thick artifact scatters at some, but also that many are radioactively hot.

**THE WEST MOUNTAINS**

**Theme:** The heart of Western Venusian culture and civilization.

**Complication:** Outsiders are not welcome, but the radium and diamond deposits are thought to be the richest on the planet.

**Personality:** Rev. Jay Colms, Missionary.

**Rev. Jay Colms, Missionary**

There is a certain audacity in going to another planet and trying to convince the natives that they should give up their traditional religion in favor of your own. Jay Colms has that level of audacity and more; he has not only come to Venus in order to convert the Venusians to Christianity, but has intentionally chosen the sacred Western Mountains as the location for his mission. At first the local concordats were willing to let him be, after all he said he was a holy man who spoke with the gods, or something like that. Colms built a chapel and mission house, and started having services every Sunday. He learned Western Venusian in order to communicate better with his prospective converts, and this led to the Venusians having a meeting about him.

What Colms was preaching went against some aspects of Western Venusian culture, but also appealed to others. The debate involved the Kind’alkakla and three smaller concordats, and lasted three weeks. In the end it was decided that Colms was a holy man indeed, but one driven insane by his sometimes violent, sometimes loving god. Every Sunday the chapel is packed with Venusians who have come to listen to the insane madman, receive some form of blessing from the experience, and enjoy communal singing. None have converted yet, but Colms receives gifts of food, tools, and help repairing his buildings after the rains.

**WESTERN MOUNTAINS STORY HOOKS**

- Much as Grand Crater is an archaeological hotbed, the lesser craters of the Western Highlands attract artifact seekers and legitimate scientists. That the locals consider these sacred places poses a problem. The less scrupulous figure out ways to sneak in and out, while the honest try to broker deals that allow access however limited. Which will out heroes be?
- A minor concordat, the Kind’il’opil, is furious over wildcatter intrusions into their sacred peaks. While they themselves are of little consequence in the overarching political landscape of the Ishtar Range, they are close allies of the important Kind’alkakla. To make matters worse, the Kind’il’opil have already captured and executed three German wildcatters, with three more awaiting a trial by the concordat’s Speakers. A daring rescue will save the lives of two men and a woman and give the German government a reason not to go to war. At the same time, it might infuriate the Kind’il’opil to push their larger ally into making some rash decisions.
- While in the Western Mountains, our heroes run afoul of some local Venusians or possibly the deadly wildlife of Venus. While fleeing for their lives, they crash through the jungle into an open crater denuded of vegetation. The pursuit ends at the edge of the crater, and our heroes must wonder if this site is simply a holy one that the natives keep cleared, or one of the hot ones that leak lethal levels radiation.

**THE SOUTH MOUNTAINS**

The South Mountains are barely mountains at all, at least the amount that rises above the mists, comprising of low-lying hills that slope gently towards a vast sea of mists known by the Venusians as Hs’ilfir (Great Death Leap). The first alien settlers and explorers tended to focus their intentions on this region, coming for the rich mineral resources and easier to manage terrain. The Kind’alkakla Concordat occupies most of the South Mountains region, with a few related smaller concordats holding on to pockets here and there. Roosevelt Station, Fort Washington, the Lodge, and other settlements known across the Solar System can all be found in these rugged, but not foreboding, slopes.
**THE SOUTH MOUNTAINS**

**Theme:** The most heavily settled and quiet part of a wild and feral range.

**Complication:** It is starting to get crowded in the South Mountains.

**Personality:** Professor Auguste Piccard and Jacques Piccard.

---

**Professor Auguste Piccard and Jacques Piccard**

A famed pioneer in physics and engineers, not to mention a close friend of Einstein himself, Professor Auguste Piccard and his teenage son Jacques are two of the leading explorers of the mist layers of Venus. Their workshop is set right at the edge of the Southern Mountains near a cliff the natives call Has'ilfir' gothurt (Drop into Unending Pain Cliff). While various Alien nations, corporations, wildcatters, and Venusians concordats have claimed the rest of the Southern Mountains, Has'ilfir' gothurt is held by the locals as an unlucky place, and is devoid of anything of interest to miners. This makes it perfect for the Piccards, for they can work on their pressurized exploration vehicles, special suits that permit a person to survive and work in the heat and pressure of the lower atmosphere of Venus, and a giant crane to lower both into the swirling eddies of the mists.

Whereas the senior Piccard displays the conservative and thoughtful nature one expects from a physicist and engineer, Jacques has more than a little of a wild streak. Only sixteen, he has accompanied his father on numerous expeditions across the Solar System, even having stowed away on the third Einstein led mission to Mars (Uncle Albert was tickled that his mass calculations had a small error in the form of the then nine year old Jacques).

---

**DISTANT MOUNTAINS**

Most of Earthling colonization has been focused on the Ishtar Range and its daughter mountains. Primarily this is because the Ishtar Range is the largest portion of the highlands that lies within the temperate zone. Being at the northern pole of the planet, the heat is less intense than in lower regions, which when combined with the height of the Ishtars and the many braid, flat areas between the mountains, makes for a cooler, low pressure zone that Earthlings and other aliens find to be almost comfortable. A secondary reason, and one not admitted to by the nations of Earth, is that there is a certain comfort and convenience to be found by having fellow Earthlings nearby. Rival colonies are available to provide assistance, and possibly more importantly, one can keep a closer eye on the neighbors than on a colony half a world away.

This is not to say that there are not other alien colonies on Venus. Although far from crowded, the Ishtar Range is beginning to become limited in territory not claimed by aliens or Venusiens. Other ranges offer similar inducements for colonization, namely access to radium and other mineral deposits, opportunities for exploration, and of course national pride. A few colonies have been established because of the isolation of these minor ranges, and not just by the Earthling nations.

Dangerously close to the edge of the temperate zone, Artemis Chasma is rapidly becoming the third largest Nazi base in the inner planets. The twin ranges of Asteria and Beta are home to the wildest of wildcatters, and some of the oldest and most complete undiscovered ruins of the lost Erisians. The tiny Imdr range is home to an Europan base, which while not hidden, is not well known. Broader than the Ishtar Range, yet lacking in the plateaus that make the Ishtars so inviting, the Lada Range sits at the southern pole and is just now starting to be explored and settled.

---

**SOUTHERN MOUNTAINS STORY HOOKS**

- There are only a handful of places in the Southern Mountains that have not been claimed by someone, and any journey though them might cross three concordats, two national colonies, corporate owned land, and dozens of small wildcatter and settler communities. A person with the knowledge and negotiation ability to traverses the Southern Mountains would be in high demand. Should our heroes need one, they can hire one in Roosevelt Station, but it won't be cheap.

- Claimed is not the same as occupied nor explored. There are many areas in the Southern Mountains that have rarely seen a sophont, for even bands of the mighty Kind’alkakla roam vast distances without encountering one another. This leaves places to hide, places to discover, and places to die in far from home.

- The Piccards are planning to send their largest mist vehicle down to a level they think might be below the mists. This would give the first glimpse of the surface of Venus, but it also could result in the death of all involved. While the good professor is willing to risk his life for such a discovery, his son's life is another matter. Brave heroes are needed, the pay is low but the fame might be high.