



Pictured: Computer generated image of Grootveld.

Geography, climate, and atmospheric conditions:

Located towards the warmer side of the goldilocks zone of her host star, Sigma Tallus, Grootveld (A name given by the colonials, from Afrikaans - “Groot” meaning great or large, “Veld” meaning field or plains) is a decidedly arid planet - characterized by most of the surface being covered by continental landmasses and only a few hypersaline oceans and seas.

In terms of topography, most of the continental biomes consist of badlands, deserts, and large, open plains - Much of the surface is battered by sandstorms, with the most hospitable regions being sheltered valleys harboring prairies and grasslands.

The atmospheric composition of Grootveld is roughly the same as Earth (Atmospheric oxygen is slightly higher, and atmospheric nitrogen and argon are slightly lower.), though in general it is thinner, registering as only .9 ATM. While smaller than Earth, Grootveld is denser - with a nearly Earth-like level of gravity at .98 Gs.

Of special note is the unusually high concentration of lithium found on the planet - lithium mining is the most profitable industry, and it is zealously controlled by the Marais family.

Native flora and fauna:

The flora of Grootveld is mostly limited to scrubby plants. Tall grass-analogues are widespread across the entire planet, and mostly reproduce by specialized colonial seed-spores - also common are fungi-analogues which aggressively leach off of the plants of the world. There exist some modest sources of alienwood, tree-like organisms existing in the protected valley grasslands. The colonials greatly value the wood from these stout, needle-y trees - it is exceptionally strong and robust. The wood of the Veldcedar is in fact one of the most common exports of the otherwise unremarkable world.

The fauna are similar to the flora in the sense that they are adapted mostly to survive in difficult conditions. Most species are cold-blooded, as a metabolic process such as the one found in mammals would be quite inefficient. Reptile-analogues dominate the world, and most creatures tend to be on the smaller side of things. Some megafaunal organisms exist in the great deserts - massive mammal-analogues which dig to find underground reservoirs, and then store the water internally. The greatest opponent of the colonials until the arrival of the pirates was the Grasjagter, a reptilian pack hunter that existed as the primary apex predator within the region. Another extremely common sight is the "Gruncher" - a four-legged insectoid that eats the grasses of the colonial site (Goudbos). The "grunch" refers to the characteristic clicking of the mandibles. The Gruncher is so widespread within the Hawe valley that Pieter Marais (The original patriarch of the Marais family) suggested that instead of the Orange-White-Indigo flag, they should have a khaki field with a bug on it.

Marine life is hampered by the salinity of the ocean - only specialized creatures live here - similar to brine shrimp and so on.

History:

Jan Uys - an ultra-wealthy diamond magnate from South Africa - is the man responsible for the colonization of Grootveld. Though the exact date is lost to time as a result of Humanity's informational dark age, it is known to have occurred fairly early on in the process of the era of the First Trans-Stellars. Uys was something of a megalomaniac - a charismatic man, but deceitful to a fault and with a very manipulative nature. Like many men of big business, Uys was likely a psychopath.

It is this quirk of Mister Uys' neurology that lead him to reach out to a large number of his fellow wealthy South Africans - with the growing destitution of Earth the colonial fervor gripping much of Humanity was felt especially hard at around this time, and Jan's bunch of pioneers were quite willing to partake. His offer seemed too good to be true - frankly, because it was. Grootveld was advertised as a fabulously wealthy world, only unexploited due to sheer distance. While it is true that lithium could be found in great supply, it was by no means enough to be as profitable as he claimed.

Uys' true desire was, in essence, to create his personal little micronation. Grootveld was fairly marginal - even in the most viable regions, Human habitation would be difficult - this mattered little. Uys was going to have his colonists do the heavy lifting, whilst he did policy. As an experiment in one's ego, it was perfect. His colonials were highly homogenous in terms of culture, class, and so on and so forth. Grootveld was far enough away from the rest of Humanity that nobody would come to spoil the fun, and as a largely useless planet nobody would really want to - Mediocrity was a perfect preservative.

Uys' experiment would not last long in the form he desired. While Hawestad was established easily enough, people became aware that Grootveld was not the El Dorado Jan made it out to be. Furthermore, his efforts to become Hegemon of his little outpost were futile - The colonists were unsurprisingly of the frontier spirit. They had little enthusiasm for authoritarianism, and as a colonial governor he was unpopular. So unpopular, in fact, that Pieter Marais (Uys' former right hand) executed something of a "soft" coup seven years after the initial colonization. Pieter promptly abolished the office of governor (Except as an emergency measure - if necessary, a governor can be elected in case of a catastrophe or another scenario that necessitated it.), and established a proper frontier democracy - a direct democracy. With this the Marais family was catapulted into immense popularity, and it is Pieter - not Jan - who is seen as the father of the nation.

Existence from the early years onwards was uneventful. Farming and mining dominated the economy, and the First Interstellar War saw the little nation siding with the Coalition of Colonies. It should come as no surprise as the fiercely independent Grootvelders opposed the Solarian yoke, and provided what they could to the war effort.

Today, Grootveld exists as it always has. Hawestad stands as the only proper settlement in the region - the number of people living there still in the tens of thousands (Though, nearer to six digits to than to four) She still exports mostly lithium, and those that are allowed to visit are typically anthropologists and biologists fascinated by a stunning example of colonial insularity or the remarkable wildlife of the dry planet. The Grootvelders fight off pirates and tend to their crops - and remain mostly shut off from the rest of the galaxy, content with their way of life.

Society, Religion, People:

The colonials of Grootveld are overwhelmingly descended from the initial colonists of Uys' expedition. The first language of most is "Kaans", a syncretic dialect that combines Afrikaans vocabulary with Freespeak. Most Grootvelders speak Freespeak to a degree as well, being the primary language for facilitating commerce and trade with other frontier nations.

Grootveldian values are fairly standard for a hardy frontier folk - Everyone who pulls their weight has a say in the Koloniale Raad. Just about every family owns a firearm of some sort (oftentimes, though, these weapons are outdated surplus gear purchased in bulk and then sold by the Marais family at a profit. Cheap bolt action hunting rifles are especially common.) Honesty is a cherished virtue, and they're somewhat humorless as a people - Many traders who've dealt with them will insist that "They can't take a joke."

A common theme amongst the Grootvelders is the notion of "Die Stam". In essence, there is a notion that every Grootvelder is part of the same "Tribe", and that they must stick together. An amateur outsider might think the average Grootvelder is individualistic to a fault, but this isn't quite the case - the community is extremely important, as Die Stam is all you can truly rely on in the frontier. Debts often go unpaid and forgiven, and charity is more common than trade.

The isolation of the Grootvelders has led them to be a prominent example of colonial insularity. Their culture is essentially singular in its origin, with outside influence being kept to a minimum as a result of a lack of immigration and mass media. This isolation has hurt the people of Grootveld in some ways: Many are under-informed as to the dealings of the rest of Humanity, let alone other sentient species, and in terms of technology Grootveld is decades behind the ball at the very minimum.

An important component of Grootveldian society is the Koloniale Burgermag - the colonial militia. In order to vote in the Raad, one must be an adult and one must be part of the Burgermag. Within the militia, there are two types of soldier - The Guard, which is the primary force, armed with relatively modern equipment. Then there is the Reserve - Often wielding only hunting rifles or handguns and wearing but cast steel helmets, they are the component the overwhelming majority belongs to. The Guard trains once a month, and consists mostly of volunteers and constables who would've formed the first line of defense. The Reserve trains once a year, and mostly exists to supplement the Guard in case of an emergency.

In a land of aridity and scarcity, discipline is a treasured virtue. A Grootvelder, in spite of their lack of equipment and in the case of the reserve, training, is a good soldier - a rugged life along with a deeply-ingrained sense of duty to one's community has made some of the few who have expatriated famous. And there is absolutely no doubt that a pirate is more likely to break and run than a Grootvelder in defense of his home.

Unique amongst societies of the modern age, Grootveld is still mostly religious. A descendent of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Hawestad Reformed Church, serves as the Christian Denomination practiced by most Grootvelders.

Government:

The Koloniale Raad forms the government of Hawestad and in extension Grootveld. By virtue of the modest number of colonists and the size of the planet its reach is limited, with the outdated pair of transport gunships owned by the colony being the only source of force projection.

Meeting once a month or when the situation requires it, anyone who is part of the Burgermag may attend and make themselves heard. The Raad has a reputation for being an informal and sometimes rowdy thing - each year a "Speaker of the Raad" is elected by all members of the Burgermag, and ostensibly they are the only person required to attend Raad meetings.

Law enforcement is conducted by the Koloniale Constabulary, the full time police force of the colony. The current Chief Constable is Rudi Nieuwoudt, patriarch of the Nieuwoudt family and coffee farmer.

Other settlements:

The name for someone who lives outside of Hawestad is "Stoflander", and the native Grootvelders mostly see them as squators to be removed. Typically bandits and outlaws, a number of Stoflanders are exiles from Hawestad itself - A small number, as exile is a capital punishment that has only been served a handful of times. Once in a while a pirate incursion will lead to a permanent outpost being established, and in turn a punitive expedition being dispatched to destroy it.

There are rumors that somewhere in the Grand Stof, Uys and some of his few supporters established a second, smaller colony. No information exists to corroborate this, and many think that the few hundred who left with Uys simply went back to Earth.



Pictured: The Grootveldian Flag