

Turning Up the Heat:

Using Traits to Bring Environmental Hazards to Life in STA 2E

By A. Lewanika Miller ~ Co-host of *Tabletop Journeys* 🎧 🗣️

Welcome, Travelers

I'm Lewanika, one of the voices behind the *Tabletop Journeys* podcast, and your humble guide through the final frontier. In our *Star Trek: Preservations* campaign, we explore the Alpha Quadrant in the post-Dominion War era, in a living shared universe where characters and players cross campaigns and contribute to an ever-evolving narrative tapestry.

Recently, our *Preservations* cast embarked on a mission titled “**Some Like It Hot.**” While I'll avoid spoilers (the episode airs Tuesday, May 20th!), I wanted to share a peek behind the curtain, specifically, how I used one of my favorite mechanics in *Star Trek Adventures* 2nd Edition: **Trait rules.**

When the Setting Becomes a Character

The central theme of this mission was *environmental pressure*, quite literally. The characters found themselves on a world plagued by **extreme and escalating heat**. I didn't want that oppressive temperature to be window dressing. I wanted it to matter, I wanted it to influence every decision, every roll, and every breath.

To do that, I turned to STA 2E's **Trait system** and built out a hazard that grew more dangerous over time, altered complication ranges, and challenged even the best-equipped officers in their EV suits.

Building the Hazard: “Oppressive Heat”

To keep it manageable at the table, I created a simple one-page GM handout:

📄 *Environmental Hazard: Oppressive Heat*

Here's a breakdown of how the heat escalated and what it meant for the players:

- **Act 1:** OP Heat 1 (Complication range starts at 20)
- **Act 2:** Automatically increases to OP Heat 2 (Range becomes 19–20)
- **Shuttle Rescue Scene:** Escalates again to OP Heat 3 (Range 18–20)
- **Threat Spends & Complications:** Used narratively to push the hazard higher, maxing out at OP Heat 5 (Complications on 16–20!)

Even with suits, the crew was **sweating, disoriented, and increasingly fatigued**. Each step forward raised the stakes, and as the temperature rose, so did the tension, until the heat itself became the mission's true antagonist.

Traits in Action

Using Traits this way helped me reinforce the story's tone without interrupting gameplay. It was immersive, mechanical, and thematic all at once. Traits didn't just *describe* the heat, they *defined* it.

By having a clear progression path and rules for integrating Threat and Complication effects, I was able to keep things fluid at the table while selling the severity of the situation. It became one of our most memorable and satisfying episodes yet.

I'd Love to Hear From You

How do *you* bring Traits to life at your table? Have you used environmental hazards as active threats in your stories? What tips do you have for keeping those elements front and center without bogging down the narrative?

Let's share some ideas, swap stories, and keep building better missions together.

Until the next briefing ~

IDIC, y'all. And happy gaming.

A. Lewanika Miller

Co-host of *Tabletop Journeys*

Freelance writer, lifelong gamer, and granddad who still rolls d20s for glory. 🙌