

TRAVELLER[®]

G R E A T R I F T A D V E N T U R E S 1 - 5



S C I E N C E F I C T I O N A D V E N T U R E I N T H E F A R F U T U R E

TRAVELLER[®]

GREAT RIFT ADVENTURES 1-5

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GREAT RIFT ADVENTURES 1-5

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GREAT RIFT ADVENTURE 1

Islands in the Rift

In *Great Rift Adventure 1: Islands in the Rift*, the Travellers are sent to Amondiage in the Old Islands subsector to pick up a starship. Their mission is to take it to Zuflucht for transfer into Imperial space 'behind the claw' in Deneb or the Trojan Reach. However, the task is not simple; the ship is not sitting on a berthing pad at Amondiage – it is in fact on an entirely different world and not in a flyable condition.

Once the Travellers manage to reach the ship they can finally begin their voyage across the Islands subsectors. This, too, is not a simple matter. The Islands are prone to tension at the best of times and, at present, worlds in the region are on the brink of war. The Travellers risk being mistaken for spies – and not without cause, for their ship is an Imperial intelligence-gathering vessel. The Travellers will need to make a detour to collect a hidden stash of data before transit to Zuflucht and there are those who want to get their hands on it first.

INTRODUCTION

In *Islands in the Rift*, the Travellers are sent to Amondia in Old Islands subsector to pick up a starship. Their mission is to take it to Zuflucht for transfer into Imperial space 'behind the claw' in Deneb or the Trojan Reach. However, the task is not simple; the ship is not sitting on a berthing pad at Amondia and is in fact on an entirely different world and not in a flyable condition.

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RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Islands in the Rift begins on Amondia in Old Islands subsector. The Travellers have just arrived after a long, long transit and may wish to look around or relax before embarking upon their mission. Once they go in search of the ship they are supposed to be picking up, one event will lead to another. However, the Travellers have considerable leeway to find their own path through the adventure. So long as they get the ship to Zuflucht without starting a major war, their patrons will be content.

Before the adventure begins the Referee should ensure the Travellers are familiar with the briefing material in the next chapter. This outlines their task and some background information on the Islands subsectors. Of course, there is no guarantee all of this information is current or reliable. Indeed, the purpose of the mission is to retrieve a vessel whose data storage contains a wealth of up-to-date information on the Islands and their politics... yet this vessel and her crew met with disaster despite having access to better information than the Travellers have available. The Referee should let the Travellers figure out for themselves that a lot of what they 'know' is vague, inaccurate or dangerously misleading.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The following information is for the use of the Referee. Much of it will be available to the Travellers but not always in a reliable or easily digestible form. The Referee must decide how biased, ill-informed or otherwise misleading any data source may be. As a general guideline, the more work a Traveller has to do to get a piece of information, the more solid it should be.

THE SITUATION IN THE ISLANDS

The Islands subsectors have been a powderkeg ever since well-meaning Imperials disseminated jump drive technology to all the major powers. The web of alliances in the region has generally prevented conflicts from escalating, as no power wants to be dragged into a catastrophic conflict over some historical dispute. However, the system is breaking down and some have begun to think they can actually win an interstellar war. Hand in hand with this realisation is the fear that someone else might believe likewise, leading to an increase in paranoia as states wonder who might be considering a pre-emptive first strike.

There was little history of conflict in the Islands subsectors before the introduction of the jump drive. The people of Serendip Belt enjoyed a period of ascendance as a result of reverse-engineering the drive from a mis-jumped Imperial warship but had made only limited gains when the technology was disseminated throughout the Islands. This was a time of great change.

Before the introduction of the jump drive, the idea of interstellar conflict was almost laughable. Perhaps someday a sublight warship might crawl into a neighbouring system to make an attack and a small budget was allocated for defence against this remote possibility. Most spending went on planetside peacekeeping forces or craft capable of policing in-system traffic. A token laser or missile launcher sufficed for such purposes and planetary defences were little more potent.

In most cases, the first indication that the Serendips were building faster-than-light vessels was the arrival of a starship. This caused a great deal of alarm and hurried programmes were put into place to construct orbital forts and in-system warships. In the event, Serendip Belt did not attack any of her peers, although her small force of jump capable vessels were used to forcibly annex Gloire.

By the time jump drive technology was widely available, the Serendips possessed a modest sized fleet and had expanded their power enormously, by economic means and political pressure rather than military action; the great powers of the Islands ensured they were all but invulnerable to attack by any fleet that could be built at the time but could not compete with Serendip's new interstellar trade vessels.

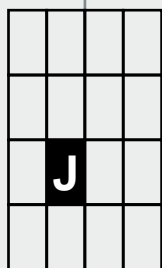
New Islands

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Allegiance	Gas Giants
Berlinchingen	1621		D500437-8	Ni Va			
Besancon	1526	M	C201341-9	Ic Lo Va			G
Elysee	1525	M	B502532-9	Ic Ni Va			
Esperanza	0926	N M	A674ABC-B	Hi In Pz Di (Droyne)	A		G
Gloire	1123		C764567-9	Ag Ni Pr			G
Herzenslust	1426		E995765-6	Ag Pi			G
Joyeuse	1628	N M	A7899B9-C	Hi Pr Pz	A		G
Nebelwelt	1030		C879425-5	Ni			G
New Colchis	1327	N M	A8959AA-C	Hi In Pz	A		
Orphee	1429		X885610-0	Ag Ni Ga Ri Fo	R		
Serendip Belt	1323	N M	A000949-C	As Hi In Na Va			G
St. Hilaire	0930	M	B579763-A	Pi			
Topas	1522		D420899-7	De He Na Po Ph Pi			G
Wellington	0925		C8B0263-A	He Lo			
Zuflucht	0921	M	C545720-8	Ag Pi			

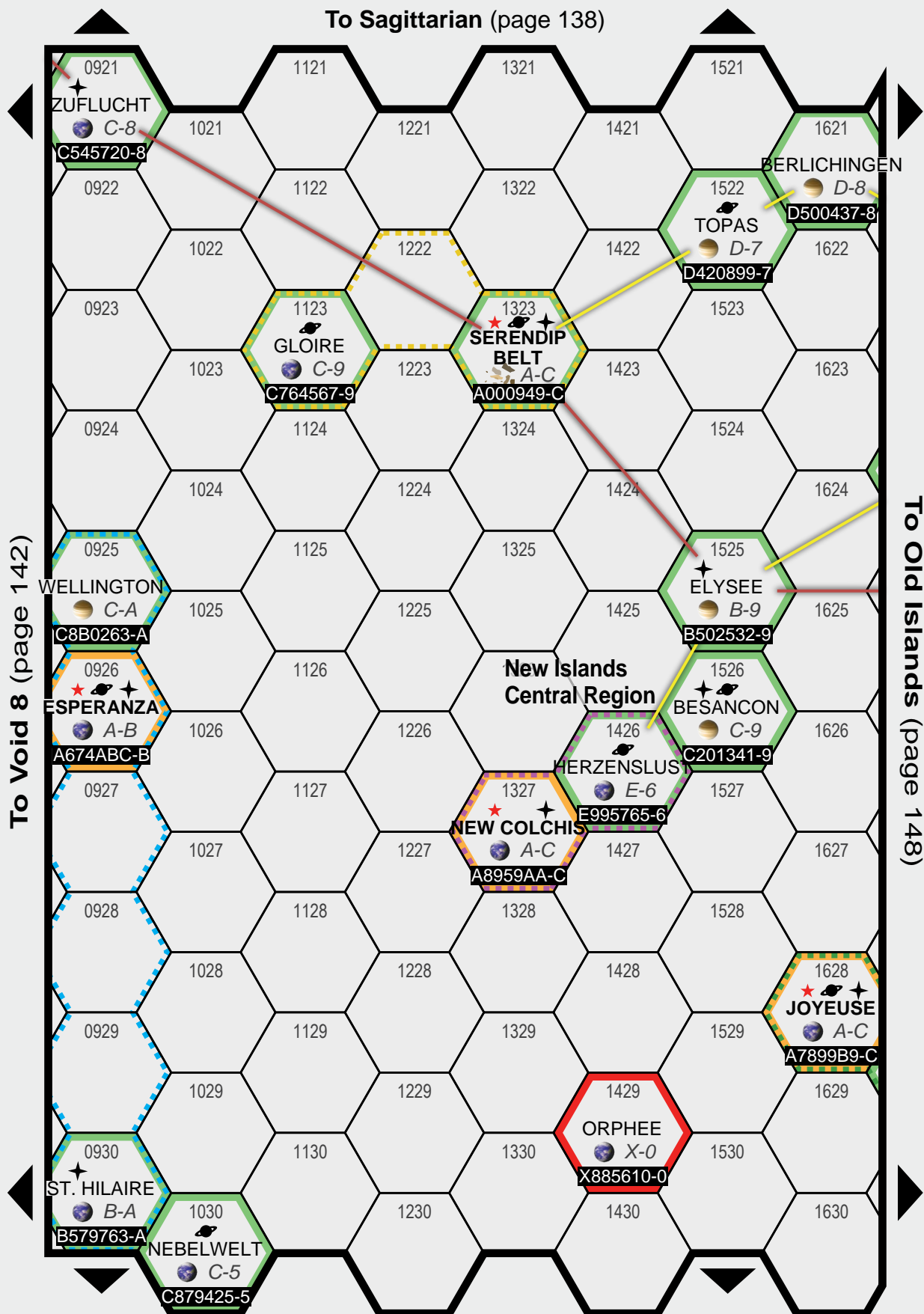
Old Islands

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Allegiance	Gas Giants
Acadie	2225		C868563-9	Ag Ni Pr			
Achille	2324		E301335-9	Ic Lo Va			
Amondiaige	2325	N M	A5629A9-C	Hi Pr			G
Colchis	2026	M	B676898-9	Pa Ph Pi			G
Neubayern	1822	N M	A7889C9-C	Hi Pr Pz	A		
New Home	1925	N M	A565857-D	Ri Pa Ph			G
Quichotte	1729	M	E576667-6	Ag Ni			G
Sansterre	2322	N M	A87A943-C	Hi In Wa			G
Schlesien	1923	M	C000367-B	As Lo Va			G
St. Denis	2423	M	D735764-7				G
St. Genevieve	2123	M	C560100-A	De Lo			G
Sturgeon's Law	1724		DAC1451-9	FI He Ni			G

NEW ISLANDS SUBSECTOR



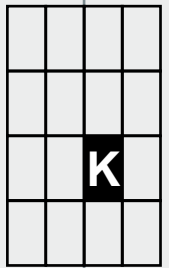
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To Evestin (page 166)

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|------------------|---|-----------------------------|
|  | Other Navy Base |  | Crescent Run |  | Starport Class & Tech Level |
|  | Military Base / Garrison |  | Islands Crossing |  | Planet (Water Present) |
|  | Secure System |  | Esperanza Empire |  | Planet (Dry) |
|  | Amber Zone |  | Colchis Empire |  | Asteroid Belt |
|  | Red Zone |  | Joyeuse Empire |  | Gas Giant |
| | |  | Serendip Empire | | |

To Lost Way (page 140)

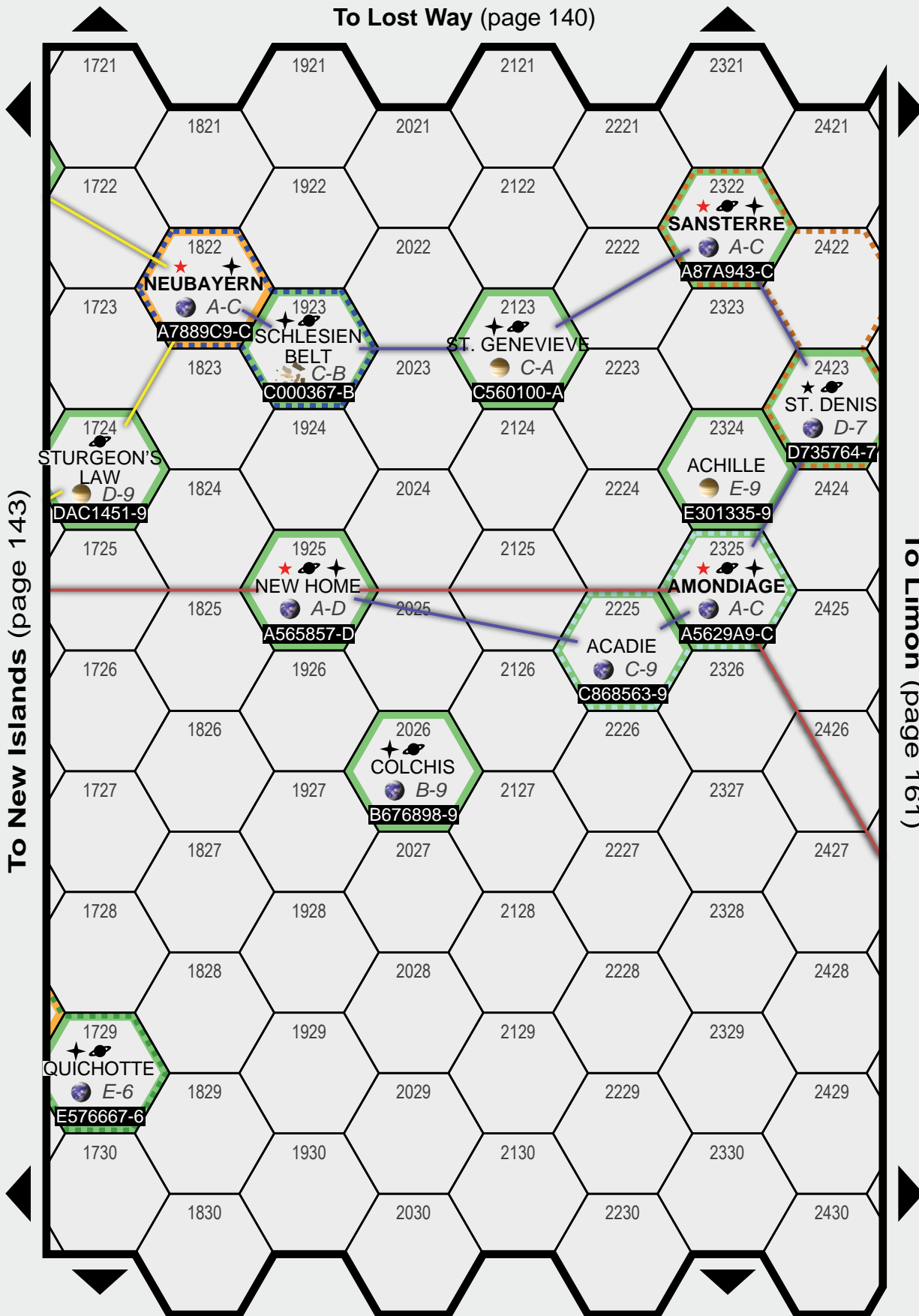


REFT

OLD ISLANDS SUBSECTOR

To Limon (page 161)

To Arcrant (page 168)



- ★ Other Navy Base
- ✦ Military Base / Garrison
- Secure System
- Amber Zone
- Crescent Run
- Loop Transit
- Islands Crossing
- Joyeuse Empire
- Neubayern Empire
- Amondiaze Empire
- Sansterre Empire
- B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
- Planet (Water Present)
- Planet (Dry)
- Asteroid Belt
- Gas Giant

When they obtained the jump drive, the other powers of the Islands had a lot of catching up to do. Early starship building programmes were hurried and prone to disaster, with makeshift vessels launched as quickly as they could be thrown together. A second wave of more reliable and capable ships followed, with the result that many first-generation vessels were retired and left to decay or scrapped for spares. Some of these ships, refurbished in a variety of inventive ways, were taken up by private operators. An explosion of small-scale interstellar commerce then ensued, most of it completely unregulated.

There was little large-scale colonisation, as the Islands had already been settled using sublight ships. However, the availability of faster-than-light travel meant that previously unviable locations could be colonised for resources and independent groups could find a new home. The years that followed saw escalating tensions during the 'scramble' as the greater powers sought to take control over new territories and prevent others from doing the same. The period is sometimes known as the Years of Little Wars due to the small-scale conflicts between groups determined to carve out a homeland or conquer a world. Some wars dragged the greater powers in, resulting in clashes both in space and on the ground. No general war ensued but many lives were lost and bad blood remains.

Another cause for ongoing resentment was the unrestricted use of special-operations and covert-action forces. An explosion at the orbital shipyards over New Colchis did little material damage but caused appalling casualties among an unprepared workforce when the yard depressurised during the launch ceremony for the jump-capable frigate *Watchful*. *Watchful* herself was involved in an incident with ships from Esperanza – suspected but not proven to be behind the attack – in which she blasted the crippled corvette *Numancia* into wreckage despite a clearly broadcast surrender.

Incidents like this have resulted in mistrust and ill-feeling between the powers and hampered efforts to create an alliance. Nevertheless, the other powers finally curbed expansion and forced Serendip Belt to relinquish control over Topas, Elysee and Besancon. This was not without incident but encounters were limited to token groundside skirmishes and exchanges of fire between ships, causing little damage.

Ill-feeling between the powers also grew from failure to fulfil treaty obligations, leaving ships isolated and in danger, and several new deals were brokered at gunpoint after a world switched sides to gain a better

bargaining position. Today, tensions continue to rise as the powers of the Islands attempt to expand their influence over neighbouring worlds, although it is not clear where the flashpoint – if there is one – will be.

Serendip Belt is apparently intent upon regaining its position of dominance and taking an increasingly aggressive posture both in negotiations and fleet deployments. At present, the Serendips are in alliance with Joyeuse and Sansterre, although cooperation is limited and may not last much longer. However, the situation is making New Colchis nervous as Joyeuse is heavily militarised and little short of hostile. A powerplay for worlds close to New Colchis seems likely and to forestall it New Colchis is seeking allies elsewhere. Thus far, this effort has been rewarded only with vague statements of solidarity, as the other great powers tend to their own concerns or exploit the situation to their own advantage.

The massive changes caused by the introduction of the jump drive have demonstrated the impact a new technology can have and all powers are seeking high-tech equipment or the secrets of making it. The Imperium is not receptive to overtures, especially given recent experiences in the Islands, but corporations and world governments may be willing to supply equipment that could tip the balance of power. At present, the single most important factor in preventing a war is the uncertainty about whether it could be won. A power that gains a significant advantage may be tempted to make use of it... and its enemies may feel they have no choice but to strike first to prevent it.

THE FATE OF PERFECT STRANGER

Perfect Stranger conducted a lengthy intelligence-gathering mission in the Islands subsectors, making circuits of the main trade routes and visiting most worlds in the region. Her data cores contain a wealth of information, much of it mundane but still useful in building up a picture of the Islands. Unfortunately, she ran afoul of her own success. Her crew stumbled upon evidence of a major deal between the government of Neubayern and an Imperial broker. Whilst not illegal, the contract was for jump drive components and weaponry and would be of great interest to rivals and potential enemies. Assuming the crew were covert agents of a rival power, Neubayern's own counter-intelligence community took action.

The crew of *Perfect Stranger* were lured into an ambush on Acadie and eliminated, although two managed to escape in their ship's launch. Badly injured, they crash-landed and were rescued by a merchant ship which the counter-intelligence operatives decided not to attack.



Both survivors were placed in low berths and taken to Amondiage where, despite the best available medical assistance, they died. Their bodies were shipped home in accordance with their repatriation bond – which aroused some suspicion as the cost was enormous. Their personal effects, containing data recording equipment that could have been very useful to Imperial intelligence services, went missing.

The intelligence services have no real idea what happened to the ship or their other operatives. All they have are two bodies with what appear to be laser wounds and a missing ship believed to be on Amondiage. The Travellers are tasked with locating and retrieving the ship, and finding out what happened to her crew.

In fact, *Perfect Stranger* is on a landing pad at Acadie starport. She has been 'visited' and 'inspected' by several parties claiming to be officials from Amondiage but who are actually intelligence operatives from Neubayern. They managed to gain access to the ship and know about her modifications, and have removed the data cores from its intelligence-analysis station. The Neubayerners settled for keeping the ship under observation in the hope that some other clue might present itself. This has been a long and boring undertaking which will finally bear fruit when the Travellers arrive.

As for the authorities at Acadie and Amondiage, they have no reason to suspect that *Perfect Stranger* is anything but a merchant ship whose crew encountered an unexpected hazard. Routine notification has been sent to the ship's port of registry and her listed owners and, under Amondiage's laws, if no-one comes to claim her within a year (only a few months remain to the deadline), she will become legitimate salvage. Her situation has slipped under the radar of the Amondiage administration, which has larger concerns than one abandoned merchant ship parked at a colonial starport.

Note: The unrest on Acadie is not entirely the work of Neubayern's intelligence services but they certainly have their fingers in the pie. Some weapons have been supplied to the rebels and intelligence operatives at the starport are in contact with another cell at the troubled mining town of Houillon, who are helping ferment rebellion and providing discreet advice to the ringleaders. The elimination of *Perfect Stranger's* crew was a mistake; they had not uncovered Neubayern activities on Acadie or the large arms deal that was sneaked through the world's starport but, having acted, they believe they must now cover their tracks by dealing with the Travellers. There is nothing personal about any of this but the stakes are high and a bunch of foreigners are distinctly expendable.

T RAVELLER'S BRIEFING

The following information is for the use of the Travellers and should be available to them before and as the adventure takes place, as the Referee sees fit.

THE ISLANDS SUBSECTORS

The Islands subsectors were colonised around the time the Third Imperium was founded by sublight colony ships in transit for many centuries. Most colonists spent the entire trip in cryogenic suspension, with some awake at any given time to deal with contingencies. One result of this long time spent in stasis is that the culture of the Islands is essentially 2,000 years closer to that of Old Earth at the beginning of the Interstellar Wars than Imperial-standard culture. The Islanders also missed out on hundreds of years of Vilani and other cultural influences.

There are several powers within the Islands, most of which have a culture that can be traced back to a nation or region on Old Earth. The major powers are either first or second-generation colonies. The first three systems settled by the colony ships got a head start but the worlds they went to next have also developed into powerful states. Later colonisation, conducted with vessels built at first-generation worlds, resulted in smaller settlement programmes that remained colonial possessions.

Until recently, the Islanders did not have jump drive technology, colonising the worlds of their cluster using sublight ships. This represents a very different mindset to that of the Imperium – as they say: ‘Imperials think a century is a long time, Islanders think a parsec is a long way’. The situation changed when an Imperial vessel accidentally misjumped into the Islands and some of the locals gained the secret of jump travel. To redress the imbalance of power this caused, well-meaning Imperial scouts disseminated the jump drive to all major cultures in the Islands. This did not have the intended effect of restoring stability; quite the opposite.

Despite common origins and a shared heritage – or perhaps because of it – the powers of the Islands mistrust one another deeply. Alliances are possible and can endure but peace is always fragile and tensions run high. It would not take much to trigger a highly destructive war between two powers and such a conflict could spread to engulf the whole region.

THE MISSION

To many citizens of the Imperium, it matters little if a distant region destroys itself in warfare. However, the Islands Cluster is important because it is one of the main crossing points of the Great Rift. Troubled times in the Islands could result in communications delays at a critical juncture, something the Imperium would prefer to avoid. So, the merchant ship *Perfect Stranger* was sent into the Islands on an intelligence-gathering mission.

Ostensibly just a trader, *Perfect Stranger* was crewed by Imperial Navy and Scout Service personnel with a couple of representatives of the major merchant lines and an intelligence expert. The mission was to observe the Islands from the inside, as it were. *Perfect Stranger* would ply the trade lanes within the Islands, sending raw data and any conclusions back when she contacted an Imperial representative.

Something went wrong.

A few months ago, two members of the crew arrived back in Imperial space. They were dead, apparently because of wounds inflicted by a laser weapon. The bodies were shipped in cryogenic units aboard a vessel transiting from one side of the Great Rift to the other and were accompanied by no personal effects. Documentation sent with the bodies simply names the crewmembers and states they were shipped from Amondiage.



What happened to *Perfect Stranger* and her crew is unclear. Apparently, they got as far as Amondiage and met some mishap. The Travellers' mission is to retrieve the ship and bring it to the Imperial representative at Zuflucht, whereupon the intelligence data from its data cores will be sent on and the ship returned to service in the Islands on a new mission. Discovering the fate of the crew and rendering assistance is a secondary goal and must not be permitted to compromise the primary objective.

The Travellers will be given relevant paperwork to take possession of the ship by an Imperial representative – either a member of the Scout Service or a member of the Imperium's intelligence community. The Travellers' mission is to take possession of *Perfect Stranger* (her last known location is Amondiage Starport) and bring her to Zuflucht with her data storage intact. If

necessary, the ship may be considered expendable so long as the data is delivered. Upon delivery, the Travellers will each receive payment of Cr250000. This is a success-only contract.

If they do not possess their own means of transport, the Travellers will be sent to Amondiage in low berths and have very little baggage space available (10 kilograms).

Each of the Travellers will be given passcodes for the *Perfect Stranger* that can be uploaded into any computer, along with Cr10000 assigned for expenses, to be spent as they see fit. Each Traveller also has a credit account of Cr10000 per month, arranged with the government of Amondiage (it may not be welcome in states hostile to that world), expected to be spent on necessities for the mission – this account is monitored and may be withdrawn if purchases that are clearly non-mission related are consistently made.

THE PERFECT STRANGER

Perfect Stranger started out as an ordinary Type R subsidised merchant (see page 210 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook* or page 189 of *High Guard*), capable of jump-1 and four weeks of operation using her internal fuel tankage. Essentially a starfaring removal van, the Type R is ubiquitous within Imperial space and many areas beyond. Its primary feature is the huge two deck high cargo area with fore, aft and side doors. This makes loading and unloading the cargo space quick and easy.

Designed to plod along mains and make endless circuits of clusters, the 'subbie' is a humble ship and not one that would be associated with interstellar intelligence gathering. This is precisely why *Perfect Stranger* was chosen.

Outwardly, *Perfect Stranger* looks like every other Type R in space. Her paint scheme is predominantly an unattractive dark brownish-red, with scrapes exposing bare hull metal. She has dings and dents all over the hull, notably around the cargo doors, and has clearly seen better days. However, appearances can be deceiving.

Perfect Stranger's modifications are mostly in the cargo area, reducing capacity by 188 tons but altering her capabilities enormously. Access to the cargo area is no longer possible by way of the aft doors, although a small personnel hatch has been added. This is not immediately apparent from the exterior, as the appearance of the original doors has been carefully retained.

The lower deck – which is two storeys high – has been converted mainly to carry fuel but some additional systems have been added.

THE SYSTEMS ROOM

The systems room contains a small auxiliary powerplant, a TL12 unit massing three tons and generating 45 Power. With her main and auxiliary units in use, *Perfect Stranger* has 180 power points available – sufficient to run all her systems, including the jump drive, with spare capacity for emergencies. There are also two control stations for pop-up triple turrets mounted on retrofitted hardpoints, concealed by the fake aft cargo door and can be rapidly deployed for a surprise volley.

The arc of fire of these turrets is limited by their position but in a stern chase they may be sufficient to deter pursuit. Each pop-up turret houses three beam lasers, while two dual turrets each housing two more beam lasers are mounted openly towards the prow of the ship.

The systems room also contains a large hardened data bank and an intelligence work area consisting of two computer workstations, an advanced interactive holographic display and holders for the inevitable cups of coffee and snacks. There is a small refreshment dispenser and quite a good coffee maker in this area.

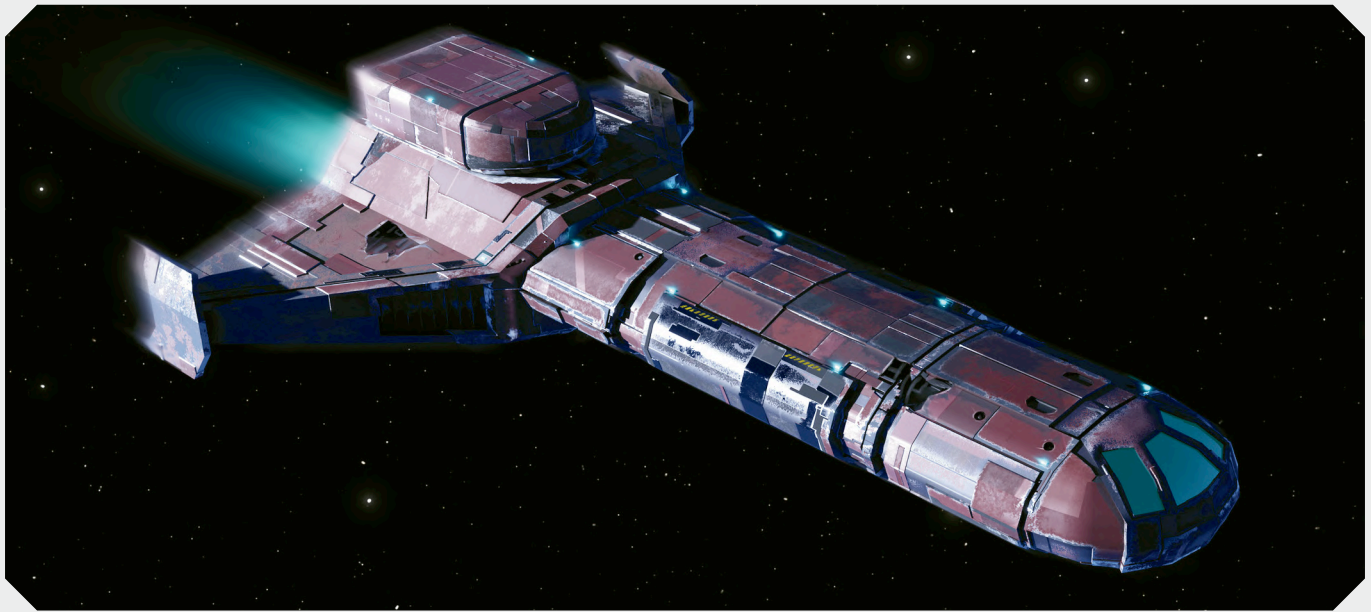
The systems room consumes 20 tons. Twelve tons of this is the human-crewed area, with the other eight tons allocated to power plant fuel; sufficient to run the auxiliary powerplant for two years and provide 26 weeks of endurance if both power plants run to capacity. This is far more than is ever likely to be needed but ships intended for deep-space transits must be prepared for eventualities and have a wide margin of safety.

THE FUEL/CARGO CONTAINERS

Most of the ship's cargo space is divided into four identical fuel/cargo containers, each capable of holding 40 tons of liquid hydrogen fuel. Rather than using collapsible fuel bladders or demountable tanks, *Perfect Stranger* has been refitted to switch between fuel or cargo in a few hours. This requires little more than flushing out the tanks to ensure no liquid hydrogen remains, then loading them up with cargo as needed. For more details of fuel/cargo containers, see page 23 of *The Great Rift Book 2*.

The other advantage to using containers of this type is that personnel access is retained. The modules include accessways, hatches and heavy-duty partitions that make them a part of the ship rather than a component to be added or removed. The downside is that each ton of capacity in a cargo/fuel module requires an additional 0.05 tons of equipment and costs Cr5000 per ton.

These fuel/cargo containers are useful when shipping bulk liquids but used primarily to extend the ship's range or endurance. The fore cargo doors still function and can be used to vent fuel in an emergency.



Each container provides sufficient fuel for one jump-1. The ship cannot jump any further than this but, with all containers full, in addition to her internal tankage, she can cross a five-parsec gap – albeit painfully slowly. When not transiting between mains or distant stars, the modules can be used to carry cargo.

Whilst *Perfect Stranger* is a far less efficient cargo carrier than an unmodified Type R on a one-parsec run, she can go places most other ships cannot. This makes her useful for exploratory trade missions – as per her cover story – or low-budget exploration work. Access to engineering spaces is awkward due to the modifications; a narrow accessway runs aft from the systems room to the drive space iris valve at each side, requiring engineering personnel to detour through the systems room to access the opposite engine space. This is not normally a problem but could impede emergency operations.

THE UPPER DECK

Fewer modifications have been made to the upper deck. *Perfect Stranger* remains entirely capable of carrying passengers or personnel. However, two of her staterooms have been converted to an additional recreation area to provide the crew more space during a long deep-space transit. Two more have been converted to storage areas but could be turned back into basic passenger cabins easily enough, while one other has been converted into a ship's office where reports are written and other mission-related matters dealt with in a suitable environment.

OPERATIONS

Perfect Stranger operates like any other small merchant ship most of the time. She can carry a modest number of passengers and retains a respectable cargo capacity when not making a long haul. Multi-jump transits require one week per parsec, with a few hours of drive calibration and navigational observations between. Crossing a wide area of deep space is at the same time boring and stressful for the crew, so at least a few days winding down portside, away from the ship, is a good idea for every crewmember. Crews that neglect recreation time will find their efficiency drops rapidly as fatigue increases, potentially leading to disastrous errors or crew disputes.

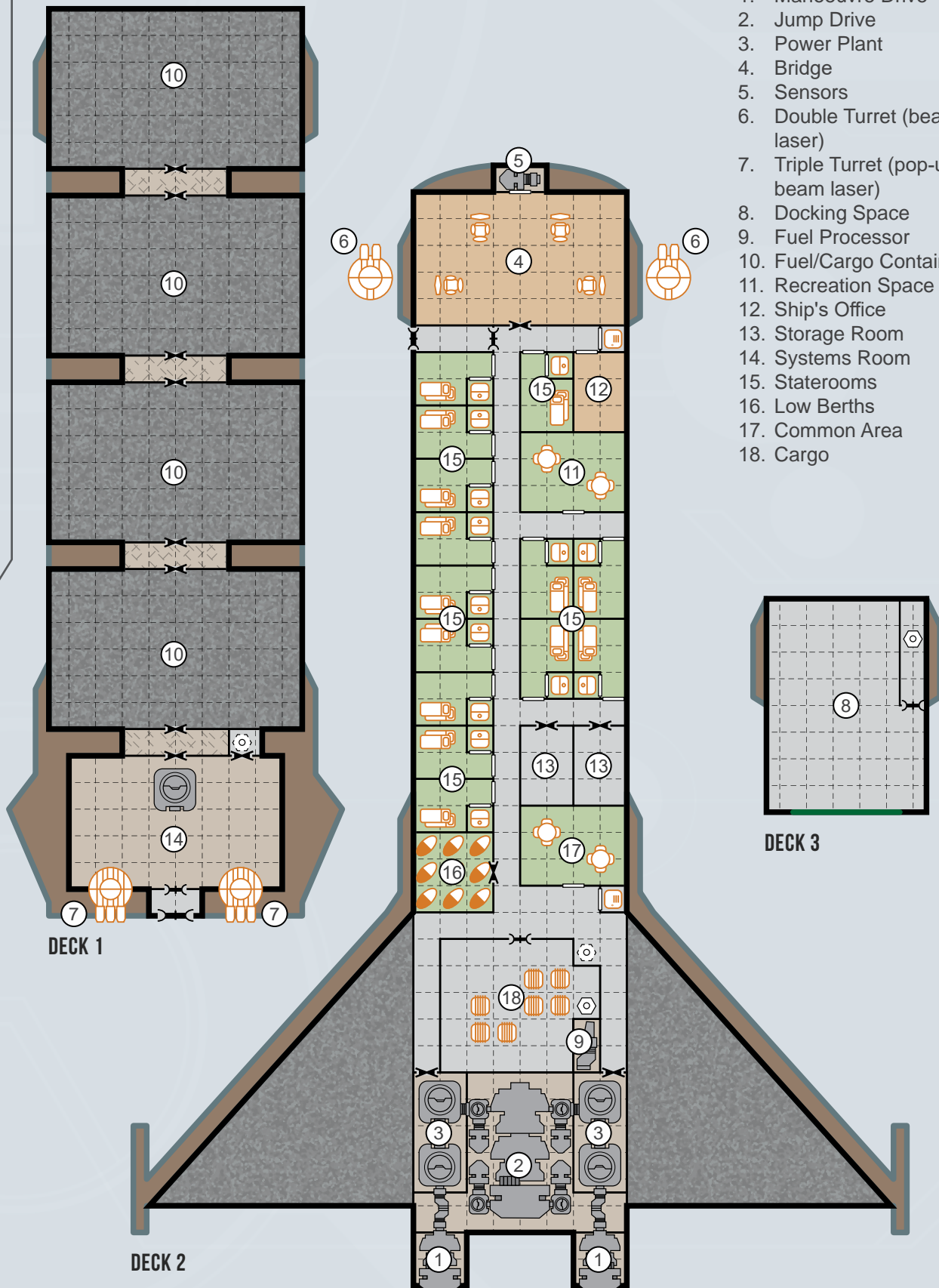
The visible armament carried by *Perfect Stranger* is reasonable for a small merchant ship operating in a frontier area and will not attract undue attention in the way an over-armed trader tends to, nor mark the vessel as easy prey. The presence of two additional military-grade laser turrets certainly would attract attention and, if discovered, the fact they are concealed might make authorities suspicious that *Perfect Stranger* is a pirate or raider.

There is no reason why passengers would access the lower deck during flight. Indeed, most operators of the Type R place a crew-only lockout on the access hatch. This is in effect aboard *Perfect Stranger*; all the Travellers are given codes for it. The accessway leads directly into the systems room, which can be seen from above. An observant passenger near the hatch might realise this is not a standard vessel – the area below would normally be full of cargo rather than consoles and machinery.

1 square = 0.5 Tons

LEGEND

1. Manoeuvre Drive
2. Jump Drive
3. Power Plant
4. Bridge
5. Sensors
6. Double Turret (beam laser)
7. Triple Turret (pop-up, beam laser)
8. Docking Space
9. Fuel Processor
10. Fuel/Cargo Container
11. Recreation Space
12. Ship's Office
13. Storage Room
14. Systems Room
15. Staterooms
16. Low Berths
17. Common Area
18. Cargo



DECK 3

DECK 1

DECK 2

AMONDIAGE

One of the First Three (New Home, Neubayern and Amondiage; the first worlds settled by the ESA colony mission), Amondiage is a dry world with standard atmosphere. Its settlement pattern is typical; most of the population dwell in high-technology arcologies near abundant water sources, with smaller and less well-developed settlements in remote areas.

Amondiage's excellent starport is the point of arrival or departure in the Islands for most Imperial shipping headed across the rimward side of the Great Rift. Enough Imperial ships and personnel pass through that the locals – at least around the port region – are not surprised when someone from a species never seen before in the Islands steps off a ship. The Imperium is cosmopolitan and the people of Amondiage are familiar enough with its ways that misunderstandings are rare... provided newcomers are well-behaved.

The port is efficient, clean and well-run, with a bustle of ships and small craft. Most are from Amondiage's large trade fleet, whose personnel can be distinguished from the independents by smart uniforms and a clean-cut appearance. Indeed, there are uniforms everywhere – port workers, security personnel and private firms all have their own tastefully not-quite-overdone uniforms. The Travellers' first impression might well be that Amondiage is one giant propaganda exercise, which is not far from the truth.

Amondiage is a high-law dictatorship and one function of all the braid at the starport is to impress upon visitors that they should not step out of line. Wherever they have come from, the Travellers are on Amondiage now and Amondiage plays by its own rules.

Personnel at the port are polite and efficient but intolerant of nonsense. There is also a faint air of 'better than you' about virtually everyone in a position of authority, however minor. No weapons or overt body armour are allowed through starport customs and there are stiff penalties for being caught with a weapon. However, secure storage for baggage and weaponry is free of charge and handled in a polite and discreet manner.

The Travellers will be expected to answer simple questions when they arrive: name, business on Amondiage, occupation and so forth. Anyone giving answers that are close to the truth or well-rehearsed will have no problems. Inventing a story off the cuff is more of a problem and requires an Average (8+) Persuade check. Outrageously bogus claims will attract attention, forcing the Traveller to deal with closer questioning and investigation of their identity documents.

Once they have passed the entry point, the Travellers have the run of the very impressive downport. A wide range of entertainment and accommodation facilities are available, along with shops and business premises. The clean and efficient atmosphere of the main concourse is no mere façade; it continues throughout the port and associated city.

INFORMATION AND RUMOURS AT AMONDIAGE

Public news broadcasts are full of 'brink-of-war-tension-rising' stories, revolving around aggressive posturing by Serendip Belt and bold words of defiance from other powers, notably Neubayern and New Colchis. Astute Travellers will notice there is very little substance behind the outraged headlines screaming about intolerable provocations. Ships have been 'aggressively deployed' to patrol stations they routinely pass through and 'escalation' has taken the form of diplomats giving incendiary interviews to their own press.

There is also a lot of propaganda showing Amondiage's powerful and well disciplined naval forces getting ready to repel hordes of invaders whilst earnestly hoping for peace, and loyal citizens getting behind what has been dubbed 'the peace effort'. Again, it is obvious to astute Travellers that this sort of broadcast is more about social control than journalism.

IN SEARCH OF THE *PERFECT STRANGER*

Perfect Stranger is not on Amondiage. The port's data system records no ship of that name currently berthed, nor is she at the highport. A general search for Imperial-registered Type R subsidised merchants may turn up a handful of possible candidates but they are all in service with a crew aboard. There are only about half a dozen Imperial-registered ships of this type in the Islands due to difficulties of getting them across the rift, although there are numerous ships of the same general design but of local manufacture. If *Perfect Stranger* is one of these ships, she will take some finding.

Records of previous ship movements are not publicly available, other than arrival and departure dates. These records can be searched by anyone and do indeed show *Perfect Stranger* passing through the port at Amondiage a couple of times. Her last visit was several months before her crew turned up in Imperial space and, given the transit times involved, that probably means whatever happened to *Perfect Stranger* occurred not long after her last visit to Amondiage.

The informal and rather patchy *Everyone's Guide to Ships of the Islands*, a privately maintained open-submission database, lists *Perfect Stranger* as an 'Imperial-registered garbage can with wings. Surly crew, bad food and shabby cabins. Seems to be working the Amondiage Cluster these days. One star, because you cannot give less than one star.'

The Travellers could gain more information from the port authority, which does keep records of shipping movements but does not simply hand it out to anyone. It may be possible to bribe someone, convince them the Travellers are Imperial officials or gain access to records by hacking the database. However, the direct approach will work well enough here. The Travellers have papers that say they are empowered to take possession of *Perfect Stranger*, so have every right to ask the authorities where she is. Amondiage has powerful traditions of cooperation with lawful authority, so most officials will be happy to assist the Travellers so long as they are polite and have the right paperwork.

However they obtain the information, the Travellers will learn that *Perfect Stranger* did indeed work the local cluster before jumping to Acadie with a flight plan filed for Colchis, then New Home. There is no legal requirement to follow a plan after the first destination – trade opportunities and charters cause sudden deviations – but at least the Travellers know where *Perfect Stranger* went after Amondiage.



ACADIE

Acadie is a colonial possession of Amondiaage, with one major city and a very sparse population elsewhere on the world. The colony is kept deliberately dependent on Amondiaage for industrial and technological goods, with consumer goods heavily subsidised by the central government. This amounts to bribery; the people of Acadie are well-off and comfortable when they toe the line and harshly corrected when they display too much disaffection.

At present, Acadie is going through one of its cycles of unrest and crackdowns, with large numbers of paramilitary law enforcers deployed to the world's one city to deal with labour disputes and protests. The mining complex at Houillon, about 100 kilometres from the capital, is in a state of general strike threatening to spread to other outlying areas. Clashes between angry workers and security forces occur nightly.

The atmosphere in the capital is thus tense and suspicious when the Travellers arrive. They will be subjected to closer questioning than usual at the starport, although a plausible cover story and believable documentation will suffice to permit entry. Security officials will issue a warning about staying out of trouble which may sound like a threat but is actually sincere – Amondiaage does not want offworlders coming to harm on its supposedly happy colony.

Acadie's normally quite liberal Law Level 3 is elevated to 6 at present, which may make it difficult to bring weaponry through the starport. Many weapon-carry laws are suspended and the authorities are suspicious of anyone who wants to be armed. The (perhaps reasonable) argument that the Travellers want to be able to protect themselves – precisely because of the elevated tensions – will get them nowhere. The authorities do not want guns on the streets whilst they restore order to Acadie's society.

FINDING THE *PERFECT STRANGER* II

Locating *Perfect Stranger* is very easy; she is parked on a holding pad where she has been for several months. Whilst not obvious amongst all the other ships, she can be looked up on the 'currently in port' database without any difficulty. The ship is listed as 'on hold', whatever that means.

The port authority will be delighted to have someone finally take possession of the ship. Those back on Amondiaage hoping to claim her as salvage in a few months might be disappointed but the port director just wants the thing off his pad. Verification of paperwork will take a few hours, after which the Travellers will be given access to the ship. Of course, there is the small matter of berthing and port fees to be taken care of before *Perfect Stranger* can leave.

The ship has been sitting on a pad for months, supplied with water and power from external sources and, more importantly, it has been in the way of the port's operations. Berthing fees alone run into the thousands but the difficulties the ship's prolonged presence has caused increases the fee to Cr72000, payable before the vessel can take off. Leaving without paying this fee would be considered piracy; the vessel would be fired upon by port defences and, if it survived, hunted throughout the Islands.

The Travellers' expense account cannot be used to cover this amount – there is a limit on the monthly drawings and costs cannot be pooled. They will need to find some other way to pay the fee.

The port authority is aware that it is pushing the envelope by asking for so much – Cr25000 would be appropriate for fees and inconvenience. A certain amount of bargaining is thus possible. One approach is to cite interstellar shipping law, although this varies within the Islands and, of course, the Travellers may not be familiar with the details. A Difficult (10+) Advocate check (INT or EDU) can be used to knock Cr3Dx1000 off the asking fee, nit-picking some of the items being charged for and pointing out the illegality of certain charges under the circumstances. The Admin skill can be used the same way, navigating the minefield of subsidies, tariffs and surcharges to arrive at a more sensible figure.

Whether or not these two approaches are tried, an Average (8+) Persuade check will halve the final asking price, provided it is accompanied by a good argument to the effect that the port gets its pad back into use once the pesky ship is on its way. Having negotiated, successfully or otherwise, all the Travellers need to do is come up with the money.



The cash may be on hand or the Travellers might come up with some clever scheme to get it. That might be anything from honest work to bank robbery or an investment scam to get locals to fund the ship's departure in return for a share of future profits. There is an alternative, however. *Perfect Stranger*, like many intelligence ships, carried a fair amount of cash and valuable materials (notably gold and platinum). The Travellers may not have been told about this but might infer there are contingency funds aboard the vessel. They can have access as soon as their paperwork clears; taking off is not permitted but there will be preflight checks and perhaps maintenance to carry out after such a long time standing idle.

Going aboard as soon as possible will not be suspicious; indeed, a crew who did not spend a couple of days testing systems before taking off would arouse more interest than one that chose to proceed with caution.

BOARDING *PERFECT STRANGER*

The most obvious thing about *Perfect Stranger* is that her launch is missing; the port authority has records of it being granted clearance to depart for the mining settlement at Houillon some months ago. It did not return and a subsequent investigation showed it had crashed – officially due to pilot error – during the return flight. The report glosses over the details of a gunfight at Houillon for the usual reason; the Amondiage administration that owns Acadie does not like information about unrest and other troubles to become public and even more so when it involves offworlders.

The wreck of the launch was bought by a salvage company out of Amondiage and dismantled in situ. No bodies were recovered from the wreck, although two survivors were reportedly rescued and placed in cryogenic stasis to Amondiage. No other records exist but the remainder of the crew are presumed lost in the crash. Trying to find details of the incident at Houillon simply turns up a report of a 'firearms-related incident' that day, which is vague to the point of uselessness.

The Travellers' codes are readily accepted and the vessel opens her doors for them. Inside, many rooms look as if the crew just popped out for a coffee. Personal effects stand on shelves in the crew cabins; clothes hang in closets. Other chambers are less pleasant; the galley is a giant mass of mould where the remains of a meal has festered for months. At first glance, the ship needs nothing more than a cleanup and good set of preflight checks. Closer inspection shows this is not so.

The ship's electronics are mostly intact and security seems to be in place – it does not appear that anyone has penetrated the electronic security on her critical systems, although there is evidence that the flight logs have been downloaded if anyone thinks to look for it. More seriously, some control systems simply do not work. Inspection reveals that control pathways have been interrupted at various points. 'Interrupted' means either severing of control pathways or removal of components. *Perfect Stranger* has been deliberately disabled.

The Travellers might leap to the conclusion that this was done by her crew to prevent theft. This is not the case. The 'officials' who boarded the ship did a good job of ensuring she could not take off in a hurry.

Finding all the breaks and repairing them or swapping spare components will take some time – hours or even days – for Travellers with engineering skills. Some of the missing components will have to be sourced, although they are common enough to be on sale in the port. The disabling of *Perfect Stranger* was not intended to be permanent, merely to slow down retrieval and gain time for a response.

A search of the ship will reveal two other missing items. The ship's safe has been lasered open and whatever was inside – probably contingency funds – has been removed. The data cores storing the intelligence gathered during her long cruise are also gone. It is unlikely that anyone in the Islands could decrypt the data – at least, not quickly – but someone has taken it. The Travellers' mission is to bring that data to Zuflucht. The ship is secondary but, for now, all they have is the ship.

Note: The data cores were shipped to an intelligence-analysis facility on Neubayern some months ago. They are beyond the Travellers' reach.

SECRETS AND STASHES

The 'officials from Amondiaage' did not find all the ship's secrets. There are two items of import hidden aboard the vessel. Both are likely to be necessary to the play of the adventure, so the Referee needs to ensure they are found. However, it is far better if the Travellers are proactive and rewarded with success rather than spoon-fed the next plot element. The Referee should thus allow them to carry out their own plans before informing them they have found what they need.

The first item is a stash of Imperial credit plaques totalling Cr100000, concealed in a machinery space. This may have been put aside by a paranoid intelligence operative in case the money in the safe was lost or perhaps someone was lining his own nest. Whatever the reason, the Travellers now have sufficient funds to pay off their berthing fees, if they lacked them before, and buy the spares they need. The stash might be stumbled upon whilst looking for breaks in the control pathways or conducting a detailed inspection of the vessel's critical components.

There is also an important piece of information in the ship's data banks. The navigational systems are still in place and contain a very mundane set of logs detailing an exploratory trade mission around the Islands subsectors. The logs have been accessed, their top level of encryption easily broken and someone has taken a download. However, since the Travellers have proper access codes, they will be able to see a couple of hidden files; one of those is designated 'Drop Point Hotel'.

Drop Point Hotel turns out to be close to or at the starport on Herzenslust. Reading the files will lead the Travellers to the conclusion that a backup of the ship's intelligence logs was dropped there. It may not be complete, of course, but a partial recovery should be enough to make the mission a success. There is no indication of where the main data core was removed to at this point.

PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE

The Travellers need to transfer their gear to *Perfect Stranger*, pay off their berthing fees, buy fuel, supplies and spares, and fix the damaged control pathways. They may also wish to engage in some trade. Their cargo hold is currently completely empty; cargo was delivered when *Perfect Stranger* arrived at Acadie and nothing was taken on by the crew before they met their end.

Preparations for departure will take a few days, during which time at least some of the Travellers may be coming and going around the port. The Travellers came under observation the moment they started asking about the ship and very soon the intelligence team assigned to watch *Perfect Stranger* will begin to follow them.

Travellers who have worked in a security-sensitive environment in the past, such as ex-military personnel who served on counter-insurgency missions or intelligence operatives, diplomats and others routinely aware of the possibility they are being watched, have a reasonable chance to spot the observers. Those who state they are being careful, perhaps due to the heightened tensions on the world, have a reduced chance. Travellers who blithely go about their business will simply not realise they are being observed.

To realise they are under observation requires a Difficult (10+) Recon or Streetwise check (INT, 1 day), DM+2 if the Traveller has worked in a security-sensitive environment.

Any alert Travellers going portside or into the city can check each day to see if they become aware of the operatives watching them. A positive Effect indicates an observer has been 'made'; an Effect of 6+ reveals the number and mode of operations of the observers.

There are five intelligence operatives at Acadie downport. One is a technical support expert who rarely leaves their safe house, whilst the other four take turns to watch the ship and follow the Travellers. The operatives do not routinely carry weapons when in the field, as this could cause entanglements with local law enforcement, although they might carry a concealed handgun or similar weapon if danger threatens.

The operatives have no real idea who the Travellers are and want to find out. Travellers aware they are under observation might engage in counter-intelligence work. It will not be hard to discover their personnel records (such as they are) at the starport have been accessed, so presumably the intelligence team knows at least a little about them.

SETTING A TRAP

If the Travellers are so inclined, they might try to draw their 'tail' into a trap and get answers the old-fashioned way. Much depends upon how they go about this; intelligence operators are professionally paranoid and have a habit of using counter-surveillance techniques as a matter of course. A clumsy ambush or grab attempt will be spotted and easily avoided; the Travellers will need to be a lot subtler if they wish to succeed.



One option is to lead the tail into an area they cannot easily get out of or induce him to rush, perhaps to avoid losing contact with a Traveller. Any snatch attempt will be spotted as soon as it begins and the operative will make a vigorous attempt to escape. He will also trigger an emergency beacon which will cause comrades to arm themselves and come to the rescue. Operatives have no illusions about what happens to those who are snatched in this manner and will respond with a desperation and focus that may startle the Travellers.

If an operative is detained, they will stall for time. Even under extreme duress, if the Travellers are inclined to be barbaric, an operative will say little. They believe that once they have given up what they know, execution is likely. Thus, an interrogation will be a long process, with snippets of information extracted only with difficulty.

To successfully gain information from an intelligence operative, a Traveller may use Carouse, Deception, Diplomat or Investigation. Each attempt takes 3Dx5 minutes, requiring a Difficult (10+) check. Success reveals one piece of information, with an Effect of 3+ indicating the Traveller has a good idea of how truthful the operative is being. Which information is revealed each time is at the referee's discretion and can be drawn from the following list:

1. The intelligence team are agents of the Amondiaze government, watching a suspicious ship in case its owners return (totally false).
2. A response to the snatch is already underway. The Travellers are in big trouble and should surrender (basically true).
3. The operatives are not hostile to the Travellers, merely assigned to watch the ship and gather information (sort of true but their colleagues did massacre the previous crew).
4. The operatives are aware that *Perfect Stranger* is an intelligence ship and want to find out what she was doing, what her crew learned in their cruise, and so forth (partially true).
5. The operatives do not know what happened to the previous crew (lie).
6. The operatives believe the previous crew were involved in shady dealings in the mining settlement of Houillon and think they may have fallen foul of skulduggery. They are interested in the situation as part of their general observation remit. (Partially true but misleading; the crew were deliberately eliminated by the Neubayern intelligence services to suppress what they had discovered.)

Note that captured operatives will not reveal they are from Neubayern, nor give details of what really happened to the crew of *Perfect Stranger* unless suborned, broken or 'turned'. This would require a lot of effort on the part of the Travellers and might take time they do not have. A telepath or someone skilled in chemical interrogation could short-cut the process but unless the Travellers have access to such resources they will not be able to get definite answers at this stage.

DIRECT ACTION

Whether the Travellers snatch an operative or not, as soon as they realise they have been 'made' the Neubayern intelligence team begins planning direct action. Their objective depends on whether any of their people have been snatched. They have access codes for *Perfect Stranger*, which the Travellers might not expect, and will try to covertly gain entry to set an ambush in the ship or rescue their comrades. They will settle for grabbing any of the Travellers if the opportunity arises.

The intelligence operatives will be armed for this endeavour and whilst they would rather capture Travellers for interrogation, they will shoot to kill if necessary. These are hard-nosed professionals who know the price of failure. They have no remorse or hesitation.

The ideal approach is to corner some or all of the Travellers somewhere they cannot easily escape and surprise them at gunpoint; inside their own ship would be perfect but perfection rarely happens in intelligence work. Once secured, the prisoners can be transferred to a safe house and later moved outside the city. A ship will eventually take them to Neubayern, drugged and in cryogenic suspension. At that point, they will disappear and never be heard of again.

Wounded or captured Travellers will be subjected to a preliminary and rather general interrogation. Smart Travellers may realise the intelligence operatives are fishing for information and have little idea what the Travellers know. The barrage of questions revolves around where the Travellers are from, who their backer is and if they have access codes for 'all systems' on the ship. There is some emphasis on the 'all' since the operatives are tasked with finding a way to access the encrypted database within *Perfect Stranger's* memory cores.

How well the operatives' plan succeeds depends to some extent on the Travellers' level of caution and observational habits. They may be surprised in the ship or grabbed as they return from a shopping trip. Alert Travellers might realise something is amiss in time to escape – an Average (8+) Streetwise or Recon check will grant the Traveller a few seconds' warning. This could result in a chase through the arcology or across the starport, which the operatives would really prefer to avoid. However, they will take what they can get.

THE TRAVELLERS' RESPONSE

The Travellers will need to escape from the intelligence operatives if they are captured. Fortunately, the present security situation works in their favour. There is serious unrest in the city, often at random as some minor incident ignites in violence. The intelligence operatives (or the Travellers) may be mistaken for undercover police agents sent to quietly arrest troublemakers, causing a mob of angry citizens to burst into the middle of a confrontation, prisoner transfer, or interrogation and attempt to rescue whomever they think is the victim.

This could be tragic, hilarious or just plain confusing, as members of both sides are bundled away 'to safety' whilst others are subjected to a good ranting-at about civil rights, heavy-handed policing and the evils of government. The situation might well degenerate into a free-for-all, with nobody having any clear idea who is on what side... or if there are *any* sides.

The chaos can be an opportunity for escape or a frustrating loss of a prisoner and may well leave the Travellers very confused. Locals who realise the Travellers are not in fact police or Amondia intelligence may provide information amid a general barrage of frustration, annoyance and recounting of brave, foolhardy and tragic events during the intervention. Everyone is very excited and not particularly coherent but the picture that gradually emerges is as follows.

The people of Acadie are usually content under rule from Amondia but unrest occurs in cycles. The present situation is much worse than usual and the authorities' response has been unusually heavy-handed (which is saying something). There is open fighting between what are now being referred to as

rebel groups and security forces in some settlements and riots here in the capital. Rumours are floating around that Imperial-made weapons have appeared among the rebels and the situation is escalating further.

Nobody really knows what is going on but it seems that someone has been stirring the pot. The settlement of Houillon is the apparent epicentre of the trouble; it is common knowledge (which does not mean it is true) that weaponry was delivered there about a year ago by an unknown group and more recently a bunch of merchants from 'that ship that's been there ever since' were murdered in the city. There are some fascinating conspiracy theories about what happened but the general impression is that Imperials provided weapons, for whatever reason. Since these weapons are being used to fight the 'oppression' of Amondia, the angry segment of the population generally approves.

In short, the locals have no real idea what has happened or why but are very angry at the authorities for the way the crackdown is being handled. It is not immediately obvious who the intelligence operatives are (or were) but it seems that they are connected to the deaths of the previous crew.

LEAVING ACADIE

The incident with the intelligence operatives will be noticed by the authorities, who will have questions for the Travellers. If they hang around too long, the Travellers' mission will be complicated or imperilled by official intervention and/or more operatives. Besides, they have a lead on Drop Point Hotel which needs to be checked out. It is probably in their best interests to get moving.

If the Travellers hang around, they will be questioned repeatedly by officials from Acadie's government and in a couple of weeks investigators from Amondia will arrive. The authorities are unsure what the Travellers know or are involved in and cautious in dealing with Imperial citizens. However, they will not give up and will make life difficult for the Travellers with repeated questions, inspections of the ship and fishing for evidence of wrongdoing. In the meantime, if enough of the Neubayern intelligence agents survived, they will make another attempt to snatch the Travellers and/or their ship. In short, Acadie will rapidly become an unhealthy place to be.



The Travellers need to reach Herzenslust and locate Drop Point Hotel. From the name, they might infer it is starport hotel but this would be incorrect. There are coordinates in the database but without going to the world, they are meaningless. Getting to Herzenslust might be quite an undertaking, requiring several deep-space jumps. However, *Perfect Stranger* is well equipped for such a task. The Travellers would do well to check the state of her supplies and inventory; several weeks in deep space is bad enough but if the food runs out the Travellers could starve before making planetfall.

How the Travellers reach Herzenslust is up to them. They could meander all over the Islands subsectors for several years if they wanted but, since the intelligence services of Neubayern are looking for them and the identity of their ship has been circulated to Neubayern and some independent ships, life could get hazardous. The Travellers' interests will be better served by getting to Herzenslust and then out of the Islands.

Perfect Stranger is capable of five one-parsec jumps in a row, without refuelling. Her sensors are not up to the task of finding a deep-space comet or similar refuelling point but she can make a long transit between refuellings. This is hazardous, however, as well as being very stressful and tiring for the Travellers.

The safest route, in terms of fuel reserves and margins for error, would be to make several two-jump-1 transits to Colchis, New Home, Sturgeon's Law and finally Elysee before reverting to normal operations in the Central Islands Region. This would allow enough extra fuel to recover from a badly plotted jump or, alternatively, the Travellers could take on cargo or freight, and maintain their cover as an innocent merchant ship.

ACADIE TO HERZENSLUST

SETBACKS AND BREAKDOWNS

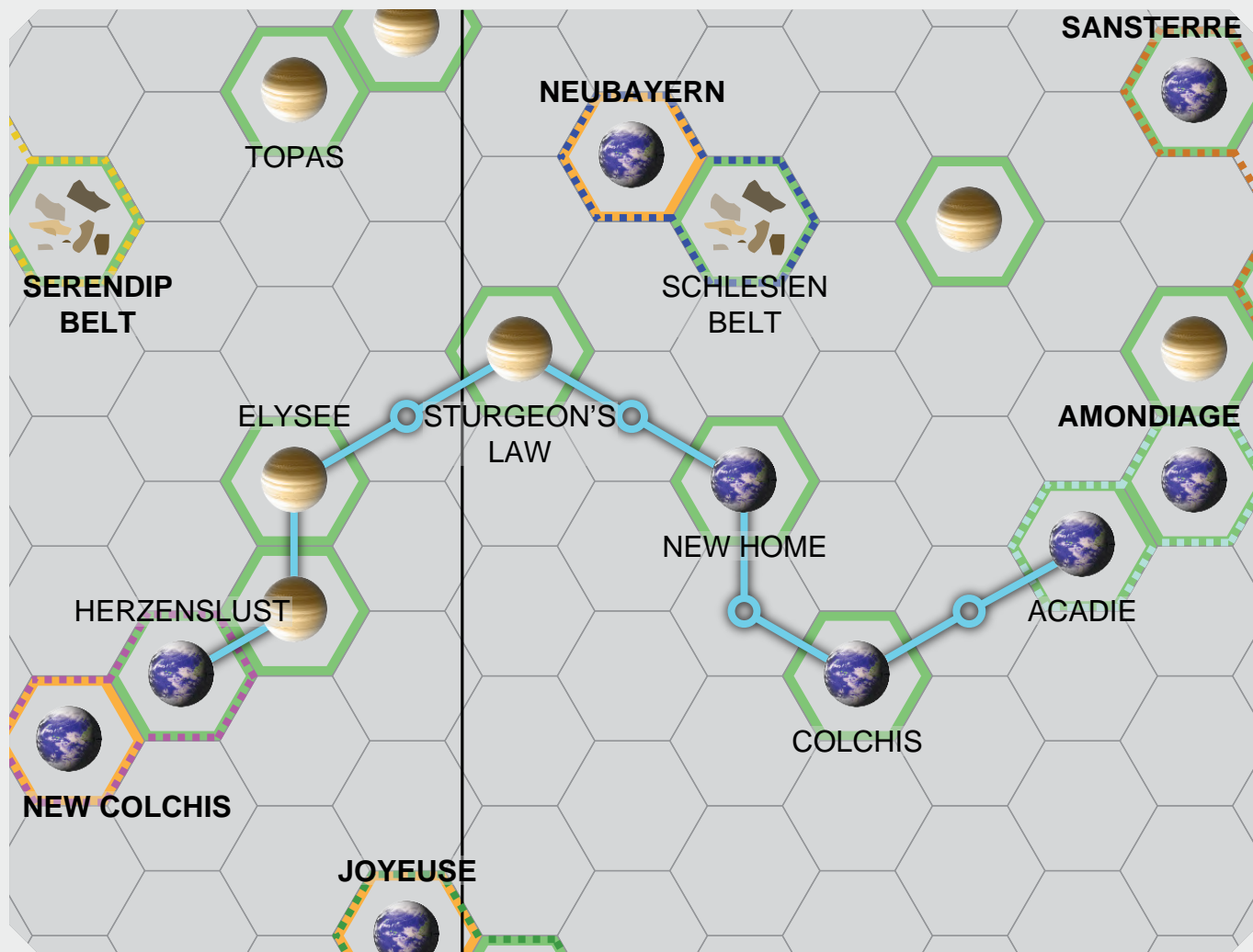
Being cooped up in a starship for an extended period is not good for most people and the added stress of deep-space operations can cause a drop in efficiency eventually leading to a breakdown. Upon leaving Acadie, the Referee should begin keeping track of each Traveller's Stress Index (SI). This begins at 0.

Each week spent in jump adds D3 to each Traveller's SI. An additional +1 is applied if the jump is to an empty map hex, i.e. a deep space jump.

Each Setback encountered by the Traveller adds +1 to SI and requires a Stress check (see below).

Stress Index is reduced by downtime, such as spending a few days planetside hitting bars and seeing the sights. Each three full days of R&R enjoyed by the Traveller reduces their SI by 1D. Particularly memorable experiences – such as visiting a famous landmark or swimming with friendly aquatic animals – will reduce SI by an additional 1D at the Referee's discretion.

The Travellers may come up with clever ways to reduce SI during a long transit. Each measure judged by the Referee to be useful allows a reduction of -1 to everyone's SI. Examples include the use of medication by the ship's doctor, a crew party, screening of a favourite movie turned into a special occasion, or some silly contest that distracts everyone from their surroundings.



Whenever the Traveller encounters a Setback, a Stress check is required. What constitutes a Setback is up to the Referee; it might be nothing more than a rude starport clerk that causes a Traveller with a high SI to snap, although usually it will be a tense situation in which the Traveller has little control over what is happening. Being stuck in deep space unable to jump whilst the engineer fiddles with the drive would constitute a Setback.

A Stress check is an Easy (2+) END check. Success indicates no particular ill effects, although there may be some cussing. If a check is failed, the Traveller reacts in a bad-tempered and unhelpful manner, perhaps downing tools and refusing to work on the drive, or going to his cabin and sulking for several hours. The Traveller is out of action for the next 2D hours and thereafter suffers DM-1 on all skill checks until their SI is reduced to 0. Subsequent failures increase the DM by -1 each time, eventually making the Traveller a liability to himself and everyone else.

A Traveller who fails a Stress check with an Effect of -6 or more suffers a breakdown and is essentially useless until this is dealt with. He will refuse to work on any task linked to the breakdown and become withdrawn or even violent. The Travellers may find they are stuck in deep space until their impromptu psychotherapy sessions have calmed the engineer down. Tackling a breakdown can be done in various ways – camaraderie, leadership, good food, medication or improvised therapy set up by a Traveller with Medic checks are all possible options. The Referee should not doom the Travellers to a slow death in deep space because the ship's astrogator was too stressed to plot a jump but can use the concept of stress-induced inefficiency to nudge the Travellers in the direction of planetside time and associated adventure opportunities.

DEEP SPACE JUMPS

Plotting a jump to a precise location in deep space is a difficult business. Even a small error can strand a ship with dry tanks and no way to reach a fuel source. However, in the case of *Perfect Stranger*, this is not necessary. She carries enough fuel to make another jump, so exactly where the midpoint emergence takes place is not too important – one region of empty interstellar space is much like another. However, the location needs to be known in order to plot the next jump and establishing coordinates in deep space is not simple.

Upon emergence, *Perfect Stranger's* engineering crew need to conduct standard drive checks and calibration. This requires an Average (8+) Engineer (j-drive) check (2D hours, INT). Failure indicates the drive is not ready, requiring another attempt. This is not a huge problem in most cases but being unable to jump is stressful under some circumstances and could constitute a Setback.

Whilst the engineering team are busy, the astrogator must fix the ship's position using known reference points, typically stars and radio sources. It is not a difficult process, requiring an Average (8+) Astrogation check (3D hours, INT) but is lengthy. Once complete, the next jump can be implemented.

It is very unlikely that *Perfect Stranger* will emerge from jump close to another ship or object but, if the Referee wishes, such an encounter could occur. Finding a wreck in deep space would be an impossible-to-resist lure for most Travellers, although disconcerting to more rational people.

HEADING FOR HERZENSLUST

As already noted, there are several possible routes to Herzenslust. The Travellers are free to choose their own path, although some incidents will happen along the way. The Referee should slot these into suitable location. The worlds of the Islands Cluster are detailed in the *Great Rift* slipcase but brief descriptions are included here.

The intelligence services of Neubayern will be aware that *Perfect Stranger* has become active and are now searching for her. Their resources are limited but they have access to a great deal of money. A bounty has been put on the ship (capture or destroy) and her crew (capture alive, if possible) which makes attack by mercenaries quite likely. In addition, arrangements have been made (typically by very roundabout means) to impede and frustrate the progress of *Perfect Stranger*. In some cases, this even involves governments unfriendly to Neubayern; deals have been done through third parties, favours called in and misinformation planted. This has not always worked as well as the Neubayerners might have hoped but such is the nature of intelligence work.

TRAVELLING TO THE ISLANDS

These worlds are not directly connected with this adventure but may prove interesting or profitable for the Travellers to voyage to.

COLCHIS

The Colchis system is very busy, with interplanetary vessels plying between several inhabited bodies orbiting both the primary star and its red dwarf companion. Colchis is an independent second-tier power in the Islands and not formally aligned with any other polity.

NEW HOME

New Home is one of the big players in Islands politics and has the highest Tech Level in either subsector. New Home is determinedly neutral in the current tense situation and doing well acting as a facilitator for both arms procurement and peaceful negotiations.

STURGEON'S LAW

Sturgeon's Law is a very nasty hellworld populated mainly by a moss that can metabolise flesh and metal. The starport is on a cleared island, from

whence access to the world's only settlement is by submersible. The entire population dwells on the bed of the world's single sea.

ELYSEE

Although dominated for a time by Serendip Belt, Elysee is currently independent, although heavily influenced by New Colchis and New Home. It is a rockball world notable as the headquarters of the Islandbridge Trading Corporation, which has assets all over the Islands Cluster.

BESANCON

The world of Besancon is essentially a starport on a rockball. Theoretically independent, Besancon is at the mercy of whichever power is willing to grab it. Ill-feeling towards Serendip Belt is considerable, due to forcible annexation and occupation during Serendip Belt's period of ascendancy. The Battle of Besancon was a minor skirmish to the Serendips; to the people of Besancon it is both a symbol of defiant pride and a dark memory of a very bloody hour.



INCIDENTS

BUREAUCRATIC HARASSMENT

This incident is most likely to occur at a major world such as Colchis or New Home. *Perfect Stranger* is allowed to enter port and conduct her normal business but soon everything starts to take longer than expected. When the Travellers attempt to pay for the fuel they need, their expense account is declined as invalid. This might be put down to bad relations with Amondia, since the account was arranged through that world's government but it soon becomes apparent that there is more to the situation than the politics of the Islands.

Within hours of landing, the Travellers are presented with a Grounding Order. The order is legitimate, issued by the port authority and requires *Perfect Stranger* to undergo a full spaceworthiness inspection. *Perfect Stranger* will not be permitted to take off until this is complete. The port authority has been tipped off that *Perfect Stranger* is carrying contraband and may be involved in piracy. The inspection is an attempt to discover if this is true and is being carried out by personnel acting in good faith on bad information.

Receiving this order would constitute a Setback for most Travellers.

IGNORING THE ORDER

Ignoring the order would be very dangerous and may be completely impracticable. No fuel or supplies necessary to flight operations will be delivered to the ship until she has been cleared, docking clamps will not be released and flight clearance will certainly not be granted. Attempting to leave port without clearance will result in being fired upon by the port's defences and any armed craft on patrol nearby.

For a major installation like New Home Highport this is not survivable but even if the Travellers did something clever like going through a minor spaceport in the outsystem, they will face an immediate response followed by a general alert that makes an encounter with hostile warships more or less inevitable. In short, attempting a daring escape or fighting their way out will have serious consequences for the Travellers. Their interests are better served by using more subtle means.

CHALLENGING THE ORDER

The Travellers can get the order rescinded if they try hard enough, although that will take time. It will be necessary to go through the order and nit-pick it to death with a combination of legal and administrative expertise. The Travellers may be able to show it is invalid due to being based on an unsubstantiated allegation by an anonymous person or find loopholes that make it illegal. It may also be possible to obtain the cooperation of port officials in making the order go away by way of negotiation, schmoozing or simple bribery.

Travellers being who they are will no doubt come up with unexpected and probably convoluted ways to deal with this situation. It might be possible to bypass the whole problem by digging up dirt on the port director and coercing him to quash the order. That might lead to a whole mini-adventure in its own right. A more conventional approach will use a combination of elements, each of which takes 1D hours to complete. Each Traveller can work on only one of these tasks at a time.

To get the order rescinded it is necessary to obtain a total of Effect 10 from the relevant use of skills such as Advocate, Admin, Carouse, Deception, Persuade and Streetwise. Each skill cannot be used twice in succession and efforts should be described in detail by the Travellers or, better, role-played. Unless the Travellers come up with a particularly dumb plan, checks will be Average (8+).

Note that the port authority will not volunteer the information that they are acting upon an anonymous tip-off about piracy and smuggling, and that they are searching for evidence. The Travellers may think they are just the victims of excessive bureaucracy, which might alter their approach.

Admin: Can be used to present strong, clear (and quite possibly bogus) evidence that *Perfect Stranger* has a clean spaceworthiness and maintenance record or to somehow demonstrate that the inspection is invalid or unnecessary.

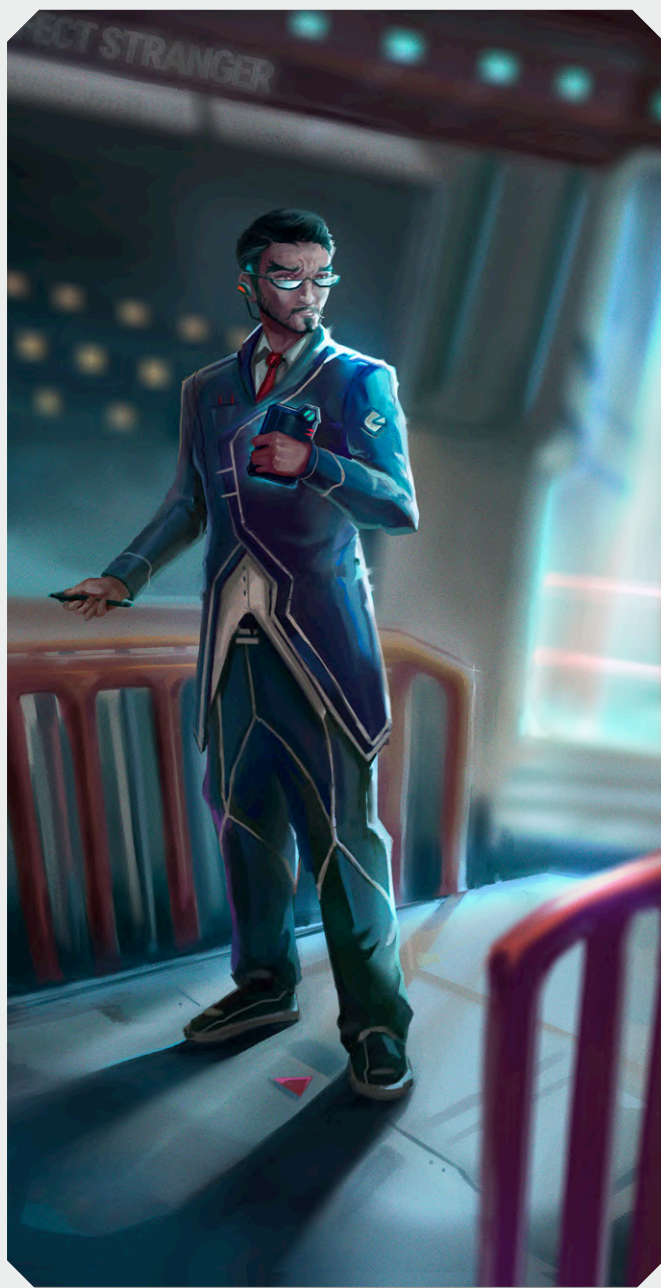
Advocate: Can be used to challenge details of the order or the information it is based upon.

Carouse: Can be used to make friends who apply their influence.

Deception: Has all manner of applications, mostly linked to convincing the port authority that the Travellers are legitimate spacers and there is nothing suspicious about their ship.

Persuade: Might be used much like Deception, with (a version of) the truth as a weapon. Alternatively, it might be used to bribe officials into putting pressure on the port authority to rescind the order.

Streetwise: Can be used to find out information about people involved, perhaps for bribery or extortion purposes, or find someone who can help make the order go away.



Once the Travellers have obtained a total Effect of 10 using these or other relevant skills, the order will be rescinded and the Travellers given clearance to leave port.

COMPLYING WITH THE ORDER

If the Travellers let the inspection take place, they run some serious risks. The fuel/cargo modifications are innocuous but the extra powerplant will raise questions. As for the concealed aft turrets, those might be taken as proof that *Perfect Stranger* is a pirate or commerce raider and, if discovered, the Travellers will be detained indefinitely whilst the authorities try to find out which power they serve or if they are freelancing pirate scum.

The turrets will be discovered if the inspection takes place unhindered. There are only two options – derail the inspection so the turrets are not found or stall to buy time for the order to be rescinded, then indignantly order the inspection crew off the ship.

Derailing the inspection requires somehow inducing the inspectors to omit part of their job. This might be accomplished with simple bribery but the cost would be enormous – given the risk of discovery, the inspection team must be offered at least Cr50000, with DM+1 per Cr10000 above this. A Formidable (14+) Persuade check (SOC) is necessary for the bribe to be accepted by everyone concerned. Failure will land the Travellers in even greater difficulties.

Alternatively, distractions and complications might be arranged. An inspection team frustrated by jammed hatches and awkward equipment, liberally lubricated with apology-drinks from the embarrassed crew, might forget about part of the ship. A Very Difficult (12+) Deception check (SOC) is required and will be made easier by a task chain of actions used to set up the distraction. The Referee might award a Boon for a well roleplayed distraction.

Stalling is an option. The inspection team will turn up after 2Dx30 minutes and want to begin work immediately. If the Travellers can produce suitable excuses about powerplant cooldown cycles or a need to move heavy equipment out of the way of the inspection, they can buy 2Dx10 minutes per point of Effect on a Routine (6+) Persuade or Deception check. Each subsequent flimsy excuse is subject to DM-1 until the check is failed, at which point the inspection team boards *Perfect Stranger*.

The inspection team starts at the bridge and works aft through the upper deck, then descends to the lower deck by way of the aft hatch – straight into the aft space containing the concealed turrets. They will be

found 2Dx5 minutes after the team enters this area. The spaceworthiness check is thorough; inspecting the upper deck will take two hours plus 4Dx10 minutes if the team are allowed to get on with it.

The Travellers may find ways to slow the inspectors down in the upper deck or persuade them that they just need to look over the cargo area before the aft part of the lower deck. Each attempt to slow down the inspection buys 2D more minutes per point of Effect on an Average (8+) Persuade or Deception check. The Travellers can continue throwing obstacles in the way until they fail a check, at which point the inspectors tire of them and no longer take notice.

On average, the turrets will be found 485 minutes after the grounding order is issued, assuming no Traveller interference. The Travellers thus have about eight hours (on average), plus whatever time they can gain from stalling, to get the order rescinded.

If the turrets are found, the Travellers have one chance to persuade the inspectors they are there for some worthy reason. A Formidable (14+) Persuade or Diplomat check is required; failure results in arrest and a lengthy inquiry, at the end of which *Perfect Stranger* is impounded on suspicion of being a raider, although the Travellers are simply deported. Their Imperial citizenship will protect them but their mission is a failure. If the Referee wishes, the inquiry can be roleplayed and the Travellers given a chance to present some piece of epic flannel to get their ship back. If so, they will be seriously delayed but able to continue their mission.

CLOSED FOR BUSINESS

This incident is likely to take place at a less important system such as Sturgeon's Law or Elysee. The Neubayern intelligence services have persuaded the port authority to refuse landing permission to *Perfect Stranger*. She will be warned off and threatened with being fired upon if she tries to land. No reasons will be given. The port authority may have been led to believe she is a raider or crewed by criminals, or simply persuaded to refuse permission. This counts as a Setback if the crew are getting stressed.

Perfect Stranger will need fuel, which cannot be bought and so must be skimmed from a gas giant. This requires a normal-space transit which should present no real problem, followed by a series of dives into the gas giant's atmosphere. Normally refuelling in this

manner is not especially hazardous unless the ship suffers a malfunction or dives too deep but there is an additional hazard here; the gas giant is mined.

The mines are simple drones, each armed with a pair of missiles and basic sensor package. The Travellers are not the intended target; the mines were recently laid by a ship from Serendip Belt as part of a preparedness campaign in case current tensions escalated. The intent was to create a secure refuelling capability, with vessels engaged in skimming protected by the minefield. However, the lack of intent does not make the attack any less lethal.

The first warning the Travellers have is a sensor alert, indicating short-range guidance sensors are locked onto *Perfect Stranger*. Unless the weapons are already manned there is no chance to conduct point-defence against the first two-missile strike. Chances are the Travellers' ship will be hit and damaged whilst engaged in skimming operations. This is a bad time to be taking fire.

Once the Travellers are alerted, they can map the minefield by making a Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (sensors) check, at which point a route can be plotted out of the minefield. However, the Travellers still need to make 1D skimming runs to finish refuelling. They could transit to another fuel source and hope to be luckier there or finish refuelling whilst dodging mines.

Each skimming run risks further attacks. *Perfect Stranger* can stay out of reach of mines if they can be detected in time, requiring a Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check. Failure indicates the ship is attacked by one missile per point of negative Effect, although evasion and point defence fire can now be conducted as normal. DM+2 applies to the Electronics check if the Travellers thought to conduct a full sensor sweep and map the minefield before resuming refuelling operations.

The Travellers might expect a warship to be in the vicinity but they are not attacked – the minefield is a passive measure deployed recently by a minelayer disguised as a small merchant ship. Explosions in the atmosphere of a distant gas giant might not be detected from the mainworld, although if the minefield were a defensive measure it would make sense for it to be monitored. The Travellers may thus be able to infer that the mines are not 'native' to the star system and that someone is trying to make space travel more hazardous for everyone else.

HERZENSLUST

Herzenslust is a habitable world, with a dense, tainted atmosphere and sufficient water to support a vibrant ecosphere. Surface gravity is high enough to be uncomfortable for newcomers but tolerable in the long term. After existing for many years at subsistence level, Herzenslust received an influx of colonists from New Colchis and, not surprisingly, became a colonial possession of that world.

The economic and industrial heart of Herzenslust is its capital city, which enjoys greater technological and social sophistication than the rest of the world. The capital has its own Class C starport but this is off-limits to all vessels other than those coming from New Colchis. Everyone else must make do with a rudimentary port over a hundred kilometres away.

Technology is a sustainable TL6, although the capital has a lot of imported equipment in use and is to some extent a city of New Colchis that happens to be located on Herzenslust. This sharp social divide causes surprisingly little friction as the general population is self-sufficient and for the most part just wants to get on with daily life.

Upon arriving at Herzenslust, the Travellers will rapidly become aware of a force of gunships defending the world, operating out of a space station built from a decommissioned freighter. As their transponder does not indicate New Colchis registry, the Travellers will be directed to the secondary port. No amount of argument will persuade the authorities that the Travellers should use the better port at the capital – they are outlanders and not permitted there; end of story.

As they approach the landing field (starport is too grand a title for it really) the Travellers get their first decent look at a city on Herzenslust. With a population of a few hundred thousand, the city has an outlying belt of towns and agricultural settlements and several obvious industrial zones. These are not particularly large but industry is unusually concentrated. Transportation uses a mix of rail and road, with the occasional grav vehicle.

It seems at first that there is a huge number of starships grounded at the port but after a moment it becomes apparent that the landing field is on the other side of the city and the ships are not in commission. What the

Travellers are seeing is a starships' graveyard; a place where obsolete or broken-down vessels are taken to be dismantled for spares. Processing the coordinates for Drop Point Hotel indicates it is located somewhere within the mass of derelict starships.

HERZENSLUST STARPORT

Herzenslust starport is little more than a large open space where the occasional ship lands, used by small traders for the most part; a far trader or subsidised merchant working the Central Islands Cluster is by no means an unusual sight. More than one or two ships in port at any one time is uncommon however, and large vessels more so; virtually all major traffic through Herzenslust is from New Colchis and uses the main port.

Landing clearance takes a while to obtain. The Travellers will get the distinct (and correct) impression that someone had to drop what he was doing and make his way to the control tower to respond to their messages. Traffic control is limited to 'stay out of main port airspace or you might get shot down. Really. Oh, and land wherever you like within the marked area. It's not like we're busy'.

By the time *Perfect Stranger* touches down, a reception committee is on its way aboard a rather elderly and disreputable-looking wheeled bus/truck combination. Ground crew personnel attach hoses and power feeds whilst a customs official looks over the ship's manifest. The port authority, such as it is, insists that new arrivals show documentation before leaving the immediate vicinity of their ship but this is the limit of personal border controls. Likewise, customs checks are little more than counting containers in the hold.

Attempts to wander into town festooned with guns will result in a warning about local laws. Carrying of any weapon is discouraged, although less-lethal items such as stunners are acceptable for personnel who might have need, such as merchant crews carrying a lot of cash. Shotguns and blades are considered entirely acceptable outside a settlement but questionable at best in the city. The locals have no problem with the Travellers maintaining an armed guard on their ship but anyone carrying a weapon into town will be called upon to show they have a valid reason.

There is no main starport concourse, nor anything that comes close to one. The city just starts at the edge of the landing area, with no delineating fence or boundary. Indeed, local kids use the flat area for ball games and riding a variety of wheeled vehicles. There are derelict ground cars here and there along the fringe of the landing field and a couple of burned-out wrecks in the middle. It is clear the 'starport' is not highly regarded by locals.

From this less than salubrious environment, the Travellers cross into the city and within a few steps the situation changes considerably. The streets are reasonably clean and well-maintained, with local shops and businesses happy to take offworlder money. Those nearest the port get most of the off-world business and are used to strange accents and the occasional alien with strange dietary requirements. The locals are neither impressed nor disdainful of offworlders; they are simply another group of customers.

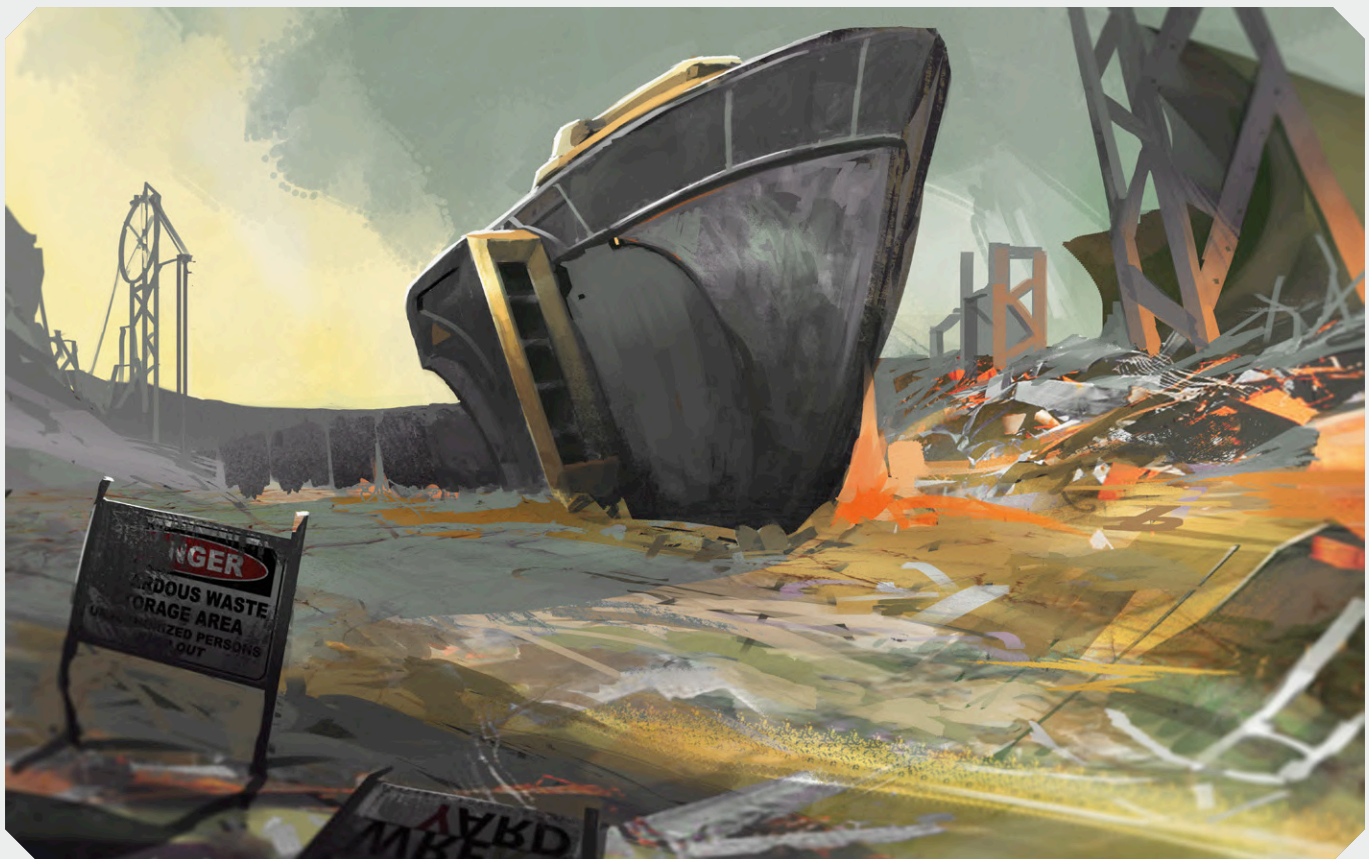
This complete lack of a startown vibe might be jarring to Travellers used to worlds where the port has a distinct identity of its own. Herzenslust simply does not have enough offworld money to make this worthwhile, although the situation is different at the capital with regular ships from New Colchis.

The Travellers might want to have a look around the town, perhaps unwinding after a long period cooped up in a starship. Entertainment opportunities are limited but it would not be hard to find an acceptable hotel, bar, restaurant or nightclub. After staring at the same six bulkheads for a week, a game of card bingo in a parochial little pub may seem like a glorious night out.

Sooner or later, however, the Travellers will want to find Drop Point Hotel. The coordinates they have place it somewhere in the starship graveyard but beyond that the Travellers will have to search. The graveyard is on the other side of town, easy to reach by rail transport or the local bus service.

THE STARSHIP GRAVEYARD

The starship graveyard turns out to be a fenced compound owned and operated by a company called WrekYard. There are also piles of trashed ground cars and even a few railway wagons in various stages of disrepair. WrekYard charges a Cr10 fee to enter the yard, mainly to deter gawkers and idiots who want to climb around the starships, and has a make-an-offer policy on components extracted from the wrecks. The less work the yard's personnel must do, the cheaper an item will be sold.



Thus, if someone expects a heavy component to be removed, cleaned up and delivered to their ship, they will pay several times as much as a client who comes to the yard and does the work himself.

The yard staff know nothing about any data stash but may recall a party of offworlders who came to the yard several months ago looking for parts. They stripped a few bits out of an old Type R subsidised merchant that had been in the yard more or less forever, and asked a lot of questions about the origins of other vessels; mainly those that had suffered battle damage.

Many of the ships in the yard are first-generation Islands Cluster jump-capable vessels. The initial rush of construction once jump drive technology was disseminated throughout the cluster resulted in large numbers of not well-designed vessels taking to the stars. Most passed through a series of owners as better ships replaced them and many were repeatedly upgraded, modified and generally fiddled-with. The yard has several working(ish) starships available at ridiculously low prices. Travellers might be sceptical about a vessel cobbled together with salvaged parts from unreliable first-generation jump-ships and they would be right, although the yard does not deliberately sell deathtraps. Anyone buying a 200-ton trader for Cr300000 ought to realise they are getting what they pay for.

The Travellers could learn a lot about the evolution of starships and design philosophy in the Islands. Starship aficionados will have a field day here; those without an interest in the field will be bored and trip over things. The coordinates for Drop Point Hotel are vague, so it will be necessary to search through a few wrecks and get lost for a while before something stands out.

Amid the local designs is a half-dismantled Type R subsidised merchant. Judging from the weeds growing around access points, it has not been disturbed in months. The Travellers might figure out that if a stash had been left in the wreck, it would not be somewhere a salvage hunter would easily find it. A set of data cores would look valuable and so must be somewhere difficult to access, especially by those unfamiliar with the design of a Type R.

In the Islands, the chances of someone happening by who is intimately familiar with the internal workings of a subsidised merchant are far less than in the Imperium, making the subbie an ideal hiding place.

The data cores are not large; they would fit in a small holdall, so the Travellers are looking for a part of the ship that is hard to access and might be completely overlooked by those not familiar with operating one. The auxiliary flow regulator chamber for the fuel scoops is notoriously difficult to get into for maintenance. Cussed out by generations of engineers, it would be an excellent hiding place.

The starboard side scoop is in pieces on the ground; nothing is hidden inside it except animal droppings and a long-abandoned nest, probably rats, if the Travellers care to speculate. The port side regulator is in place and can be accessed with the usual difficulty and swearing. Whichever of the Travellers gets to crawl inside has the added joy of finding another rat nest, complete with overpowering smell. There is, however, a heavily-nibbled and stinking holdall containing the backup data cores and a bundle of 20000 Credit plaques.

However, just as the Traveller begins trying to extricate himself from the auxiliary flow regulator chamber, a complication occurs.

THUGS INBOUND

Although Zuflucht's intelligence services did not know about the stashed data cores, they were aware of the worlds visited by *Perfect Stranger* during her voyage. Once she was picked up by the Travellers, word went out to intelligence cells on many worlds – impede the new crew of *Perfect Stranger* and capture them if possible.

The handful of intelligence personnel on Herzenslust are based in the capital and require time to put together a response to the Travellers' arrival. In addition, they are inclined to act cautiously and not draw attention to themselves, so they work through local assets, in this case local thugs happy to take money to rough someone up.

The thugs are not well motivated. They have been promised money to beat up and perhaps kidnap the Travellers, and are up for a rumble in the scrapyards, fighting hard so long as it is fun and not too painful; they can be deterred or driven off by determined resistance. They are not in any way organised; one thug will help another by opportunistically bashing his opponent from behind but that is the limit of their tactical abilities.

How the Travellers deal with the approach of the thugs is up to them. They might not even notice until too late, taking the thugs for a bunch of scavengers or yard workers. If the Travellers realise what is going on they may have time to formulate a response. If not, they will have to react as events unfold.

To realise the group of people approaching have bad intentions requires an Average (8+) Streetwise check (1D seconds, INT).

If the Travellers are successful, they have sufficient time to make a run for it or for some of their number to conceal themselves. A quick look around for improvised weapons will yield something suitable on a successful Routine (6+) Recon check. If the Travellers are not successful, they will be jumped without warning by the thugs, who simply walk up and start throwing punches.

If the Travellers decide to confront the thugs as they approach, they may be able to negotiate or deter them from attacking. A Very Difficult (12+) Persuade check will indicate what it will cost to get the thugs to walk away; a bribe of Cr2000 plus Cr250 per negative Effect on the Persuade check – so Effect -4 indicates an additional Cr1000 is necessary.

Deterring the thugs requires a Very Difficult (12+) Persuade or Deception check, with DM +2 if the Travellers have weaponry and DM+4 if the thugs are decisively outgunned (or believe they are). Failure will result in an immediate attack, with an attempt to grab weapons from their users.

The thugs are armed with knives and the odd improvised weapon but will use their fists unless the Travellers escalate the situation. Their intention is to have fun beating up offworlders and drag a few off to a vehicle waiting outside the yard. They have instructions to grab anything of interest the Travellers might have but are not specifically looking for data cores. Indeed, the intelligence personnel who sent the thugs do not know these exist and are merely trying to snatch the Travellers in the hope they have access codes for the database already captured.

The number of thugs should be tailored to the Travellers' capabilities. Two or three more than there are Travellers will be a reasonable fight. The Travellers will have to fight or stall the thugs long enough for their colleague to get out of the flow regulator chamber, after

which they might decide to flee or fight until the thugs are disabled or driven off. The latter is quite likely; any thug who has been wounded or pummelled to the point where he is almost out of END is likely to slope off, uttering dire threats of retribution.

If more than half the thugs are downed or driven off, the rest will withdraw, propping up their battered egos with a barrage of insults and threats, including some that may tip the Travellers off that something larger is going on. The thugs say 'you'll get yours soon enough' and 'you'll wish we'd dealt with you when *they* get here'. Who 'they' are could be beaten out of one of the thugs. All they know is that some guy with an offworld accent – Neubayerner or Zuflucht maybe – sometimes pays them to do dirty jobs. On this occasion, their instructions were to grab the Travellers or detain them until 'we' arrive. There was no explanation of who 'we' are but the thugs assumed it would be their patron.

Thus forewarned, the Travellers would be well advised to be on their way. The local police will turn up sooner or later but the yard staff were thoroughly intimidated by the thugs and will not call for help until they are gone. In any case, the Travellers are unlikely to want entanglements with local law enforcement.

If the Travellers leave the yard by the front gate they will need to explain the holdall, which someone may recall they did not have upon entry. A suitable explanation or a 'gift' of a couple of hundred Credits will deflect questioning. Alternatively, the Travellers might just pay for the data cores. The yard staff will start asking for Cr5000 for what looks like advanced electronic parts but can be bargained down to Cr1000 without undue difficulty. Travellers who angrily demand to know why they yard staff did not warn them about the large number of thugs they just beat up will not be questioned about anything they are carrying. They would also be unlikely to protest if the Travellers 'borrow' one of their vehicles.

BACK TO THE STARPORT

If the Travellers are aware that whoever sent the thugs is on their way, they may feel the pressure of time. If not, they may be caught on the way back to the starport. There are four intelligence operatives, all armed with weapons smuggled on-planet. They want the Travellers alive for the codes they are sure the Travellers must have but are willing to shoot anyone who resists; they want to avoid collateral casualties but would prefer to kill or injure innocents than be captured.

The operatives will attempt to detain one or more of the Travellers at gunpoint and bundle them off to a waiting vehicle. If this fails or they cannot catch the Travellers, they will give chase in a ground car. The operatives are willing to shoot at or even ram a vehicle if they have a chance to stop it but do not want the law involved. The pursuit is more likely to take the form of a cat-and-mouse chase in traffic, which could get complicated as both the Travellers and their pursuers slow down and drive politely past a traffic enforcement vehicle before accelerating and swerving between other vehicles once they are out of sight.

The intelligence team wants to put the Travellers' car off the road where they can snatch the Travellers or, failing that, catch them as they enter the starport. If they are on a train, the Travellers will need to cross the remaining distance to the port, possibly with the intelligence team in pursuit. A breakneck dash in a stolen car is one option; ramming the intelligence team off the road and escaping is another. A smart group of Travellers might get off the train early and conceal themselves among the locals, then sneak back to the ship.

If they lose the Travellers, the intelligence team will go to the port and watch the ship, requiring the Travellers to get past them. They have been given codes to access *Perfect Stranger*, which will work if the Travellers have not thought to change them. If this is the case, an ambush might be staged within the ship.

Note that the intelligence team does not have to be confronted head-on and defeated. They can be bypassed, outsmarted, out-driven or otherwise circumvented. Clever Travellers might find an entirely different way around them, such as tipping off the police about an armed party at large or enlisting the help of friendly locals to smuggle the Travellers past their enemies. In short, the intelligence team is a problem to be solved rather than a bunch of mooks to be shot. The solution might be direct and violent but does not have to be.

Once the Travellers have the backup data cores, they can get on with their mission. The main data cores are beyond their reach but they can deliver *Perfect Stranger* and about half her findings to Zuflucht. That will constitute a success, if not a total one. A prompt departure might be in order, especially if the Travellers have attracted the interest of law enforcement.



Gloire is a habitable world, with a standard atmosphere and sufficient water to support a large agricultural base. Some areas of the planet are arid and there are significant regions of semi-desert that have never been fully explored. There simply was no need; the population is small and can easily be accommodated by the best land, although this situation is slowly changing as settlements are created away from the main hubs. Even these are not being set up on marginal land; there are plenty of fertile river valleys and empty plains to develop before attention turns to less inviting regions.

Gloire is a colonial possession of Serendip Belt, which exercises strict control over the main population centres. This is one reason for the slow drift outwards, although as soon as a town gains a large enough population to be economically significant, Serendip officials arrive to take over. This is presented positively and accompanied by investment and improvement of services but many inhabitants of Gloire would rather do without the Serendip sponsored health centre and school in favour of greater freedom.

Gloire is being developed into a breadbasket for Serendip Belt, providing agricultural goods that cannot be obtained in an asteroid belt. Large intensive factory-farms (known locally as 'government farms') surround small purpose-built communities run by Serendip personnel. These do little for the local economy; their produce goes straight offworld and generates no revenue as the farms are run by Serendip Belt. Most workers are robotic or technicians from Serendip, so there are no secondary benefits in terms of employment or salaries spent in Gloire's shops.

The population of Gloire is wearily resentful of their status but can do little about it. Life is not hard and living conditions are good. A modest amount of dissent is tolerated and ignored, whilst active resistance is harshly punished. Gloire is a showcase of colonial administration in that sense – there is no need to make the people happy so long as they are not miserable and the price of resistance is higher than they are willing to pay.

INCIDENT AT GLOIRE

The Travellers might reach Gloire by way of an epic five-jump transit from Herzenslust or might take the safer route of going back to Elysee and then through Serendip Belt. This part of the mission can be as eventful as the Referee wishes but there is just one last obstacle on the way to Zuflucht.

If the Travellers choose to visit Gloire – they might want to stretch their legs after so many weeks in space – they find the locals pleasant enough and welcoming to Imperials. Resentment of Serendip occupation is obvious but the world is at peace. The Travellers – perhaps to their surprise – encounter no significant hazards on Gloire unless they do something stupid.

As they leave, however, the Travellers come under attack. This incident might be played out elsewhere, perhaps during a gas giant refuelling somewhere or whilst leaving another world if the Travellers take a very roundabout route.

As *Perfect Stranger* heads towards the jump point, her sensors pick up a vessel in high orbit, some kind of freighter; her transponder indicates she is the *Ershi*, an Imperial vessel out of Zuflucht. Her positioning is strange as she is not headed in or out but holding a high position to increase scanning range. The reason for this may become apparent when the Travellers detect her small craft.

Ershi has launched a pair of small craft which are accelerating gently towards a location close to *Perfect Stranger's* jump entry point. It might be coincidence but suspicious Travellers may want to take a closer look with an Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check (INT, 3D minutes).

Success shows the craft are TL12 light fighters (see *High Guard*, page 137), used throughout the Imperium and widely exported beyond it. They are capable of a much higher acceleration but are pretending to be a slower kind of craft.

At the same time the Travellers scan the fighters, they receive a tight-beam signal from the merchant ship *Ershi*. It is curt and to the point:

'Imperial Naval Auxiliary Ershi to Perfect Stranger. Stand down for boarding and crew replacement. Job well done. Time to go home.'

The Travellers may smell a rat here and rightly so. There are no authentication codes accompanying the signal, which is voice-only, and *Ershi* launches another pair of fighters as she makes the signal. These, too, begin a leisurely acceleration.

As soon as it is apparent the Travellers have not fallen for the ruse, *Ershi* makes a broad band signal to the effect that she is a licensed mercenary vessel out of Esperanza and *Perfect Stranger* is a known pirate. Files containing 'proof' (all of it fabricated) are broadcast as *Ershi* claims sole right on capture and bounty. Her fighters begin to accelerate at top speed on an intercept vector, demanding immediate surrender.

Ershi is over 30,000 kilometres away and will remain there out of harm's way. Her fighters are launched in pairs (she carries 12) every three rounds and the leading pair is at Long Range (25,000 kilometres). If *Perfect Stranger* does not surrender she will be fired upon with the intent of crippling her and preventing escape.

It will take *Perfect Stranger* 2D+12 rounds to reach a safe jump distance. She can jump from where she is but risks misjumping, which would likely be fatal in the sparse Islands subsectors. She cannot outrun the fighters but may be able to fight them off. The attackers do not know about *Perfect Stranger's* concealed weapons so if the Travellers pick their moment, they have a powerful sucker-punch after which the fighters will try to close to dogfight range and stay out of the rear arc of fire.

No assistance is likely; *Perfect Stranger* and her crew must win this final fight for survival or last long enough to make a jump to safety.



ZUFLUCHT

Zuflucht has a thin, tainted atmosphere but is otherwise habitable. As the extreme spinward-coreward point of the Islands Cluster it would not normally be important in the affairs of the region but since the arrival of the Imperium in the Islands, Zuflucht has become the arrival/departure point for trans-rift traffic. As such, it is of some importance to the Imperium. The orbital component of the starport has been expanded to serve as a naval base.

In practice, the Imperial naval base at Zuflucht is little more than offices used by liaison and intelligence personnel plus a berthing area only occupied when an Imperial warship is in port. This is not often; the Imperial Navy maintains a presence in the Islands but its ships are constantly engaged in flag-showing cruises and spend little time in orbit around Zuflucht.

Be that as it may, the base at Zuflucht is Imperial territory. As the Travellers' ship emerges from jump space her transponder is recognised and a message is sent within seconds.

'Welcome home, Perfect Stranger. Please proceed to docking bay as per traffic control instructions. Liaison staff will greet you.'

A second message arrives soon after, from the Imperial destroyer escort *Ishsagi*. She is an old *Fer-de-Lance*-class vessel (see *High Guard*, page 211), small and long in the tooth; however within the Islands she is a potent symbol of Imperial might and a reassurance to Imperial citizens.

'Islands Patrol greets you, Imperial vessel.'

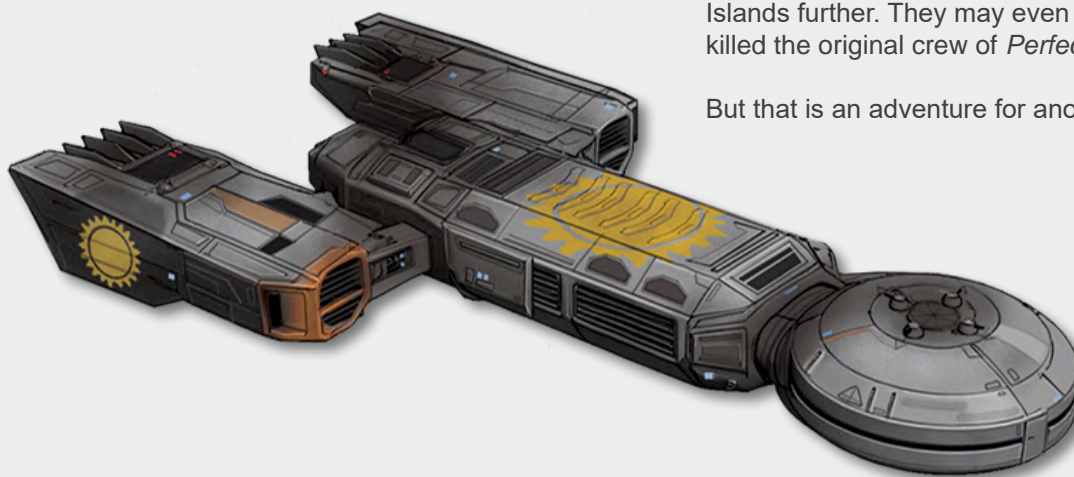
Zuflucht is not home, of course, but the Travellers have reached safety under the guns of the Imperial Navy. They have recovered the ship and most of her data. They may even have added to it along the way.

The Travellers' ship slides into a docking berth and a party of smartly-uniformed navy personnel attaches hoses and power feeds, and the ship's drive powers down as the docking clamps take hold. A naval lieutenant leads the reception committee... she even salutes! This is in part a show for the locals but to a band of Travellers so very far from home it could mean a lot.

Debriefing will take a few days. There are reports to make, statements to clarify and circumstances to explain. The ship's logs will need to be looked over to see what questions have to be answered. The Travellers are not in trouble; they are valued assets who have performed a service for the Imperium and treated as respected colleagues by the naval personnel at the base. They are billeted in the officers' quarters and have access to a very well stocked officers' club, with a bar tab paid by the intelligence services. This might all be a new and strange experience for some of the Travellers.

In due course, the reports are all completed. The Travellers are informed that payment will be made and transport homeward arranged... unless of course the Travellers are interested in remaining in the Islands? Imperial Naval Intelligence has many unanswered questions and would be happy to offer the Travellers a freelance contract to investigate the situation in the Islands further. They may even be able to find out who killed the original crew of *Perfect Stranger*....

But that is an adventure for another day.



EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONRY

The following equipment appears in this adventure but items may be found throughout Charted Space.

LASER REVOLVER

Rather than a direct power feed from a battery pack or external source, this revolver used self-contained one-use cartridges which are expended after firing. The rapid generation of energy produces a lot of heat but a cartridge weapon offers high-power laser capability in a small package. Weapons of this sort are favoured by some militaries, not least because their lack of recoil makes them suitable for use in space and obviates the need for a separate low-G arsenal.

The laser revolver is aimed at the shipboard security marketplace and is issued to Neubayern naval officers as a sidearm. It is also used as a security gun and can be found clipped to emergency-arms stations or carried by boarding parties. Its lack of sustained firepower is not considered a drawback in any of these roles.



SPECIAL PROJECT LASER WEAPON

Built around the standard high-energy laser cartridge, this concealable handgun is used by intelligence operatives in the service of Neubayern. The weapon takes the form of a short rod that resembles nothing more than a bulky pen, complete with pocket clip. It is in no way a 'body pistol' however; the metallic construction and internal electronics will be detected by quite basic instruments, although the device might not be immediately recognised as a weapon.

Triggering the firing stud releases energy from the cartridge, delivering a powerful one-shot laser attack which has a very short range due to the difficulty of collimating a beam in such a small device. The cartridge can be replaced by unscrewing the rear of the weapon but this is not practical in combat. This weapon is not intended for that role; it is a last-ditch means of defence or assassination tool.



WEAPON	TL	RANGE	DAMAGE	KG	COST	MAGAZINE	MAGAZINE COST	TRAITS
Laser Revolver	12	50	3D+4	1	Cr1500	6	Cr30	Zero-G
Special Project Laser Weapon	12	5	3D+2	—	Cr2500	1	Cr5	Zero-G

OPOSITION

INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVES

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE	
—			—		—	
TRAITS			—			
STR	8	INT	9	SKILLS		
DEX	9	EDU	6	Drive (wheeled) 1, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Persuade 1, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2		
END	7	SOC	6			
WEAPONS			Dagger (1D+2); Auto Pistol (3D-3), Laser Revolver (3D+4) or Special Project Laser Weapon (3D+2)			

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Be terse and tight-lipped. Say as little as possible. Project an aura of confidence, even if everything is going to hell around you.

INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVES AT ACADIE AND HERZENSLUST

These operatives are professionals who work in the very hazardous world of intelligence and counter-intelligence operations. Not many years ago there was an almost good-natured aspect to their work – those who lost the game and were captured were protected by rules limiting how badly they could be treated, even ‘off the books’.

Those days are gone and in the tense atmosphere of the Islands, intelligence work has become extremely dangerous. It is far more common to eliminate suspected foreign intelligence agents than return them amid diplomatic posturing and agencies have become paranoid. The Neubayern intelligence community is particularly prone to playing hardball, having lost numerous assets to savage counter-intelligence operations. Thus, the operatives at Acadie and Herzenslust have no compunction about killing anyone who gets in their way. They have orders to capture the Travellers alive if possible but, to their way of thinking, anyone who buys into the game can take their chances.

THUGS

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE
—			—		
TRAITS			—		
STR	8	INT	5	SKILLS	
DEX	6	EDU	3	Melee (unarmed) 1, Streetwise 1	
END	8	SOC	4		
WEAPONS			Dagger (1D+2), Improvised Weapon (2D-2)		

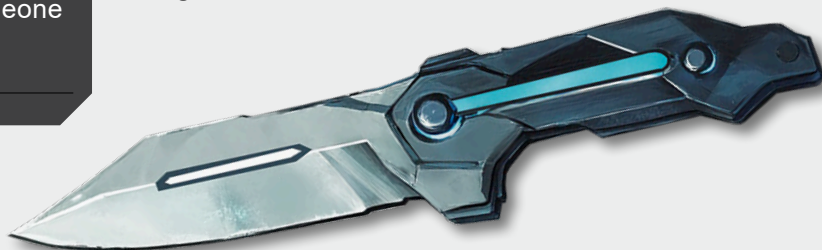
ROLEPLAYING NOTES

These guys are not too bright and are easily distracted. It is not that they are cruel by nature... they just think it is funny when someone else gets hurt. Bigger and louder people will subdue them quickly.

THUGS AT HERZENSLUST

The thugs are a group of bored, disaffected young people who engage in petty crime and violence as much for fun as to make a living. They are not highly motivated and do not work as a team but are still quite capable of delivering a beating or dragging off a Traveller. They were paid to attack the Travellers by their usual contact, who has used them for various other tasks but they never cared enough to ask who they were attacking or why.

The thugs all have knives but will not use them unless the fight escalates.



GREAT RIFT ADVENTURE 2

Deepnight Endeavour

Great Rift Adventure 2: Deepnight Endeavour takes place aboard a derelict exploration vessel which the Travellers must enter to locate fuel. With no way to get home, they discover there are survivors and that the ship has taken aboard a malevolent entity seeking to reach an inhabited planet. The Travellers might simply try to escape or they could attempt to destroy the entity but they will face opposition from the original crew as well as the entity itself.

This adventure includes full deck plans and descriptions of the massive exploration ship, the *Deepnight Endeavour*, along with factions of surviving crew members and the horrifying alien presence that has infected the vessel....

INTRODUCTION

This adventure takes place in the Great Rift, mostly aboard a crippled exploration vessel. The Travellers arrive at the location of *Deepnight Endeavour* with no way to get home and must board the derelict vessel to locate fuel. Exploring the ship, they discover there are survivors and that the ship has taken aboard a malevolent entity. The search for fuel is complicated by the presence of this entity and its minions, who seek to reach an inhabited planet. The Travellers might simply try to escape or they could attempt to destroy the entity. Depending on their intentions, they will face opposition from different groups of survivors as well as the entity itself.

The overall style of the adventure depends upon the Travellers. A claustrophobic 'space horror' theme, played for tension rather than combat, will suit many groups. Some may prefer to treat the adventure as a stand-up fight rather than a bug hunt. This will work if

the Travellers are very well armed but the entity is hard to kill and its minions are insidious. There are some problems that cannot be solved by straightforward violence and opportunities for almost any Traveller to come to the fore even in a head-on confrontation.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins as the Travellers come out of jump in deep space next to the research vessel *Deepnight Endeavour*. They will obviously need a starship to get there, so if the Travellers do not have one of their own they will need to be assigned one – perhaps with a minimal crew to operate it. The Travellers' Briefing outlines a set of circumstances that have led the Travellers to the *Deepnight Endeavour* but if the adventure is to be used in an ongoing campaign the Referee might instead allow the Travellers to find clues to the ship's location.



DEEPNIGHT EXPLORATION, LIC

Deeplight Exploration is an Imperial corporation specialising in deep-space exploration and surveys. It operates a significant number of relatively small scientific and exploration ships, plus a few large vessels. Its primary assets are four very large exploration vessels bearing the corporation's name – *Deeplight Endeavour*, *Voyager*, *Explorer* and *Discovery*. The corporation also has a few permanent bases and outposts.

Deeplight Exploration recruits personnel from a variety of sources, notably the Imperial services and well-regarded merchant shipping lines. Promising graduates are taken on straight after education, serving an apprenticeship aboard a support vessel or outpost before being advanced to the exploration and scientific ships. Some personnel come in by other routes; personal recommendation or expedient recruitment through hiring channels used by other ship operators.

The corporation has an excellent record for quality scientific work and reliability. Safety records are also good, for Deeplight had never lost a ship until recently and the firm has a solid financial record.

The loss of *Deeplight Endeavour* was a severe blow to Deeplight Exploration. Not only was she a major asset worth a significant percentage of the company's net value, she was also the name-ship of her class and one

of the most prestigious exploration ships in operation. The enormous cost of her mission was essentially wasted by backers, undermining the corporation's reputation. Deeplight Exploration has offered a large reward for the location of *Deeplight Endeavour* or any of her personnel, with bonuses for salvaged data and artefacts.

Some aspects of *Deeplight Endeavour's* mission remain confidential but information has been made publicly available to assist in the search. She was engaged in deep-rift exploration work, using a prepositioned refuelling cache to extend her own impressive range. The exact nature of her mission has not been revealed but it is known that she was sent to investigate anomalous or otherwise interesting deep-space objects.

Long-range couriers brought home data from the early part of the mission, along with personnel overdue for furlough. The last courier to return was just over a year ago, reporting nothing untoward. The next vessel failed to find *Deeplight Endeavour*, despite passing through expected rendezvous points. Follow-up searches found no sign of her and eventually she was posted missing, presumed lost. There is still a chance that *Deeplight Endeavour* might be found but she is not at any of her expected rendezvous or refuelling points and has left no message or indication of her whereabouts at any of them.



**DEEPLIGHT
EXPLORATION**

LIC

DEEPNIGHT ENDEAVOUR

Deepnight Endeavour is the name-ship of a design created for Deepnight Exploration, LIC. Only four vessels were constructed, although the plans are available for anyone with the money and inclination to construct such an expensive specialist vessel.

Designed as a long-range exploration and scientific vessel, *Deepnight Endeavour* is built as a close structure, with most of her fuel tankage within six breakaway modules. These are independently operable and referred to as fuel shuttles but remain an integral part of the overall design. Fully loaded, *Deepnight Endeavour* can make two consecutive jump-3 transits using the fuel in her modules, retaining sufficient fuel for a one-parsec jump in her internal tanks. This can be extended to three parsecs if the fuel shuttles are left behind, although would leave the ship unable to obtain more fuel. Internal reserves allow in-system operations for some months whilst *Deepnight Endeavour* awaits assistance. In theory, this capability allows the vessel to leave some or all of her fuel modules behind to skim fuel in one system whilst visiting a neighbouring star system. It is unlikely this capability would ever be used, however.

Deepnight Endeavour is equipped with a vast array of scientific equipment and sufficiently well-armed to not fear small-scale piracy or hijack attempts. She carries a complement of small craft internally and can dock jump-capable vessels or sublight craft of up to 300 tons on external ports, supporting them with power and fuel, and holding them within her jump field.

Computer systems are hardened against radiation effects, as is the main hull; not because combat is expected but in the event that *Deepnight Endeavour* ventures into dangerous areas that interfere with her systems or harm the crew. Radiation shielding also helps prevent interference with sensitive instruments, both from cosmic radiation and the ship's own systems.

Deepnight Endeavour's main hull is rated at 100,000 displacement tons and her drives and power systems are suitable for a 100,000-ton ship. However, this is her maximum possible displacement with a full complement of fuel shuttles aboard and craft on the docking rails, and represents normal operating conditions. The vessel would be considered incomplete without its fuel shuttles but could still jump using internal fuel.

HULL FORM AND CAPABILITIES

Deepnight Endeavour's hull form is a close structure, built around two Primary Structural Members (PSM) which run the length of the ship. Between these are modules containing the primary components of the vessel, command, operations and engineering modules. The flight operations pod and cargo module lie below the axis of the PSMs, whilst the three scientific modules are above it.

A fairly standard 'flight at the front, drives at the back, accommodation and operations in between' layout is followed, although some systems are dispersed between the hull sections. Total displacement with fuel shuttles attached is a nominal 100,000 tons, including twelve craft of 300 tons each attached to the docking rails of the flight operations pod.

Deepnight Endeavour is capable of two consecutive jump-3 transits. Her highly efficient jump drive requires 10% less fuel than standard, so a one-parsec jump with all fuel shuttles and craft attached requires only 9,000 tons of liquid hydrogen fuel. Each of the six 10,000 ton fuel shuttles carries enough for a one-parsec jump, plus additional fuel for their own powerplant or to refuel other craft. A further 11,800 tons of jump fuel is carried internally, enabling a one-parsec jump at full load. In an emergency, this can be increased to three parsecs by detaching the fuel shuttles and leaving them behind. The vessel's displacement is 40,000 tons without the fuellers, requiring 3,600 tons of fuel per parsec, or 10,800 tons for a maximum three-parsec jump.

Deepnight Endeavour has a nominal acceleration of 2G at full load. In emergencies she can use the thrusters of the six fuel modules to increase her power; around 2.2G is possible with a good margin of safety, after which the drives of the subordinate craft begin to interact and may cause one another to twist on their mountings. This could cause severe damage or even tear away part of the Primary Structural Members. The risks increase up to about 2.6G, after which damage is very likely and complete structural failure becomes a possibility. With all the fuel shuttles detached, *Deepnight Endeavour* can achieve a sprightly 5G acceleration.



Deepnight Endeavour's weaponry is for self-defence only. Beam laser turrets are scattered all over the ship and are intended for defence against small craft attempting to board or a salvo of missiles, rather than concentrated fire against a warship. However, there are enough of them to reduce a typical pirate or even a frigate to wreckage.

In the event of a serious threat, *Deepnight Endeavour's* best chance would be to use her four large missile bays to keep hostile vessels at a distance or swamp them with warheads. The bays carry a large stock of ship-to-ship missiles but much of *Deepnight Endeavour's* missile complement is connected with her primary mission; many of her missiles are not combat-capable at all but instead are buses for the delivery of long-range hostile-environment probes, survey satellites and monitoring drones. Exotic warheads are sometimes carried for specialist missions, such as experimental antimatter-burst devices for use in astrophysical experiments.

Deepnight Endeavour also mounts two cruiser-grade particle accelerator bays, which could in theory devastate a modestly sized warship. This is not their primary function, however. The accelerators are intended for scientific use, sending beams of particles into a gas cloud or planetary atmosphere to measure its composition, electrostatic response and other phenomena. The accelerators are converted military weapons and retain their full destructive potential.

OPERATIONS

Deepnight Endeavour is designed to spend a long time in transit and on-station, without external support. Standard procedure is to arrive in a new star system near a source of fuel and detach the shuttles to commence skimming operations. The parent vessel will then proceed to its target (usually the mainworld or prospective mainworld) to begin exploration and survey operations, the fuellers following when ready. Small craft and subordinate vessels are used to land personnel or conduct exploration of other bodies in the system. When exploring a region with relatively high stellar density, jump-capable subordinate craft are commonly used to visit nearby systems for preliminary surveys or follow up anything previously detected.

Many operations involve long deep-space transits. It is standard practice to spend a day or two in normal space between jumps, unfurling the extended arrays and taking all possible sensor readings. Despite this slowing down the primary mission, the data collected is often worth it. This is especially true when operating in uncharted regions, where little data may have previously been gathered.

DEEPNIGHT ENDEAVOUR

TL15

		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	100,000 tons, Close Structure	—	4000
	Breakaway Sections (10,000 tons) x6	2,000	4000
	Radiation Shielding	—	2500
M-Drive	Thrust 2, Energy Efficient x3	2,000	6000
J-Drive	Jump 3, Decreased Fuel x 2, Energy Efficient	7,505	16886.25
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 50,000	2,500	5000
Fuel Tanks	Jump-1, 16 weeks of operation	11,800	—
Shuttle Fuel Tanks	J-3 x2	54,000	—
Bridge		60	200
	Command Bridge	40	30
Shuttle Bridges	x6	360	300
Computer	Core/100fib	—	195
Shuttle Computers	Computer/5 x6	—	0.18
Sensors	Advanced, Extended Array	15	15.9
	Deep Penetration Scanners	10	10
	Gravitational Analysis Suite	5	12
	Life Scanner Analysis Suite	1	4
	Mineral Detection Suite	1	5
Shuttle Sensors	Military Grade x6	12	24.6
Weapons	Large Particle Beam Bays x2	1,000	120
	Large Missile Bays x4	2,000	100
	Dual Turrets (beam lasers) x70	70	105
Systems	Advanced Probe Drones x 500	100	80
	Armoury	8	2
	Briefing Rooms	24	3
	Brigs x4	16	1
	Chart Rooms x4	64	5
	Docking Clamps (type III) x12	120	24
	Docking Clamps (type V) x6	300	48
	Fuel Processor (10,000 tons/day)	500	25
	Fuel Scoops x6	—	6
	Laboratories (60 personnel)	240	60
	Medical Bays x6	24	12
	Multi-Environment Space	210	5
	Observatory (large, advanced)	1,000	1250
	Observatory (medium, advanced)	400	500

Crew

Captain, Pilots
x23, Astrogator x3,
Engineers x138,
Maintenance x42,
Gunners x32,
Stewards x22,
Administrators
x16, Medic x6,
Officers x21, Deck
Hands x30, Mission
Personnel x115

Hull: 55,000

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

MCr3.5728/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr42873.25

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems

20,000

Manoeuvre Drive

5,000

Jump Drive

22,500

Sensors

26

Weapons

870

Multi-Environment Space

10

TL15

Tons

Cost (MCr)

	Scientific Operations Suite (20 scientists) x2	120	96
	Scientific Operations Suite (40 scientists)	120	96
	Workshops	60	9
Craft	Docking Space (500 tons)	550	137.5
Staterooms	Standard x400	1,600	200
	Emergency Low Berths x60	60	60
Software	Advanced Science x6	—	180
	Flight Operations/3	—	15
	Intellect	—	—
	Jump Control/3	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Mentor/3	—	4
	Planetology/3	—	7
	Research Assist/3 x6	—	30
	Science (general)	—	25
Common Areas		2,400	240
Cargo		7,705	—
Total: MCr42873.25			

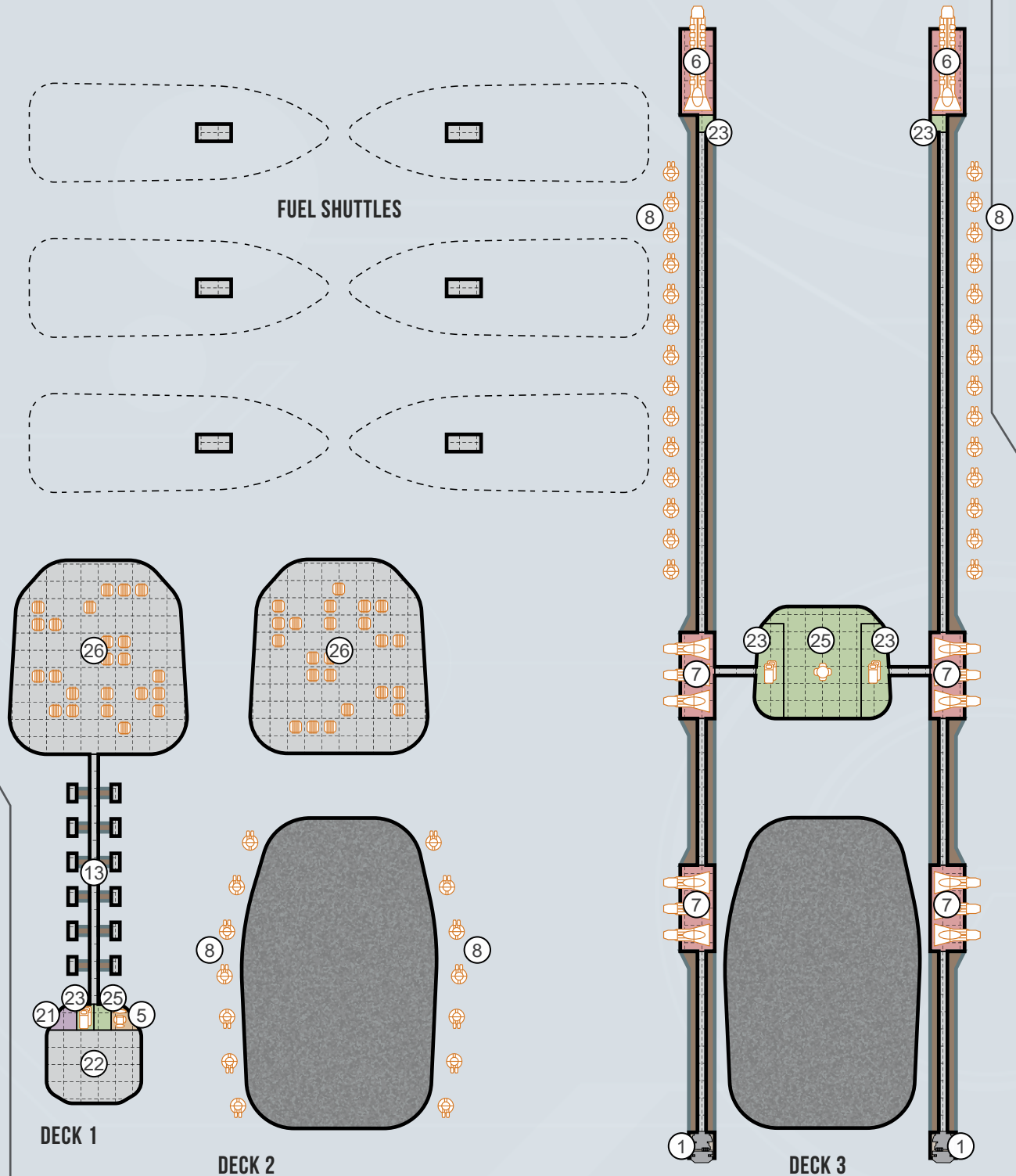


**DEEPNIGHT
ENDEAVOUR**

LEGEND

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Manoeuvre Drive | 10. Armoury, Brigs | 19. Observatroy (medium) |
| 2. Jump Drive | 11. Chart Rooms | 20. Scientific Operations Suite |
| 3. Power Plant | 12. Docking Clamp (type III) | 21. Workshops |
| 4. Bridge, Sensors, Briefing Room | 13. Docking Clamps (type V) | 22. Docking Space |
| 5. Command Bridge | 14. Fuel Processor | 23. Staterooms |
| 6. Large Particle Bay | 15. Laboratories | 24. Emergency Low Berths |
| 7. Large Missile Bay | 16. Medical Bays | 25. Common Area |
| 8. Dual Turrets (beam lasers) | 17. Multi-Environment Space | 26. Cargo |
| 9. Advanced Probe Drones | 18. Observatory (large) | |

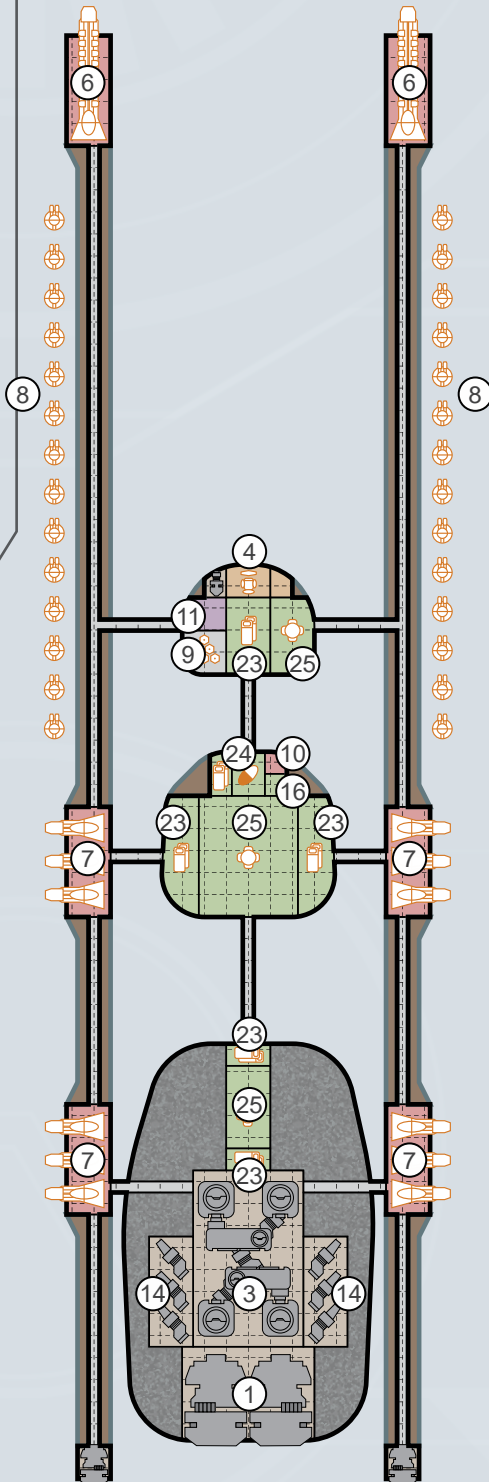
1 square = 25 Tons



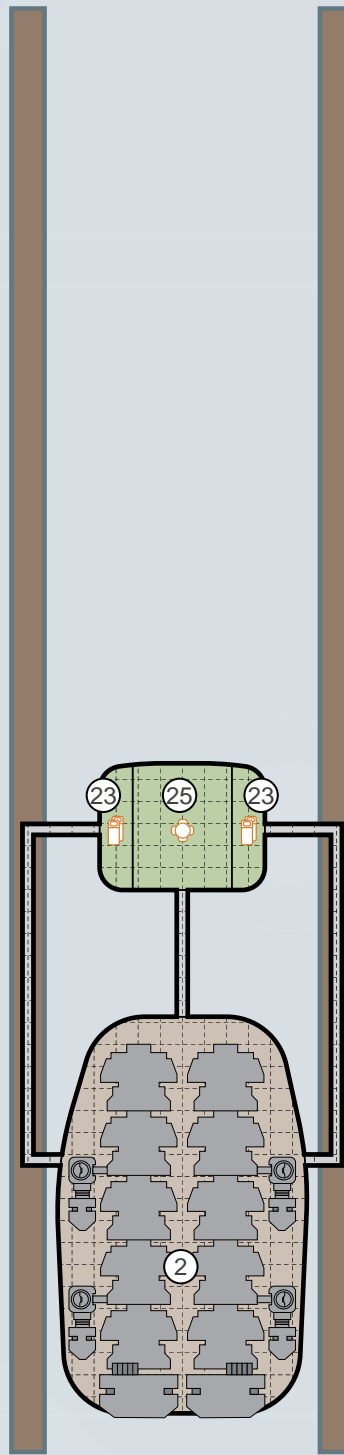
1 square = 25 Tons

LEGEND

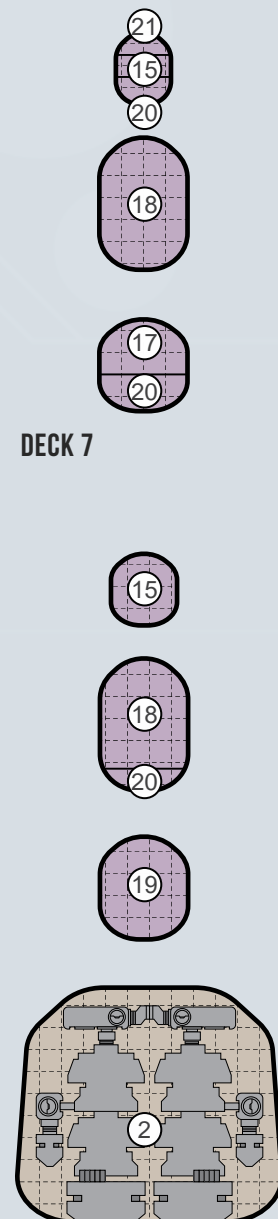
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|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Manoeuvre Drive | 10. Armoury, Brigs | 19. Observatroy (medium) |
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| 3. Power Plant | 12. Docking Clamp (type III) | 21. Workshops |
| 4. Bridge, Sensors, Briefing Room | 13. Docking Clamps (type V) | 22. Docking Space |
| 5. Command Bridge | 14. Fuel Processor | 23. Staterooms |
| 6. Large Particle Bay | 15. Laboratories | 24. Emergency Low Berths |
| 7. Large Missile Bay | 16. Medical Bays | 25. Common Area |
| 8. l r t l | 17. Multi-Environment Space | 26. Cargo |
| 9. Advanced Probe Drones | 18. Observatory (large) | |



DECK 4



DECK 5



DECK 6

DECK 7

DEEPNIGHT ENDEAVOUR SHUTTLE

TL15

Hull	10,000 tons, Close Structure	—	450
	Radiation Shielding	—	250
M-drive	Thrust 2 (Energy Efficient x3)	200	600
Power Plants	Fusion (TL15), Power 5,000	250	500
Fuel Tanks	1,440 weeks of operation	9,000	—
Bridge		60	50
Computer	Computer/5 fib	—	0.045
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Systems	Fuel Scoop	—	1
Staterooms	Standard x8	32	4
Software	Intellect	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre	—	—
Common Areas		24	24
Cargo		432	—

Note that all six fuel shuttles are calculated into the *Deeptime Endeavour's* profile. The above should be used only if a fuel shuttle is detached.

Crew

Captain, Pilot,
Engineers x9,
Maintenance x4

Hull: 4,000

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

—

PURCHASE COST

—

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems
2,000

Manoeuvre Drive
500

Sensors
2

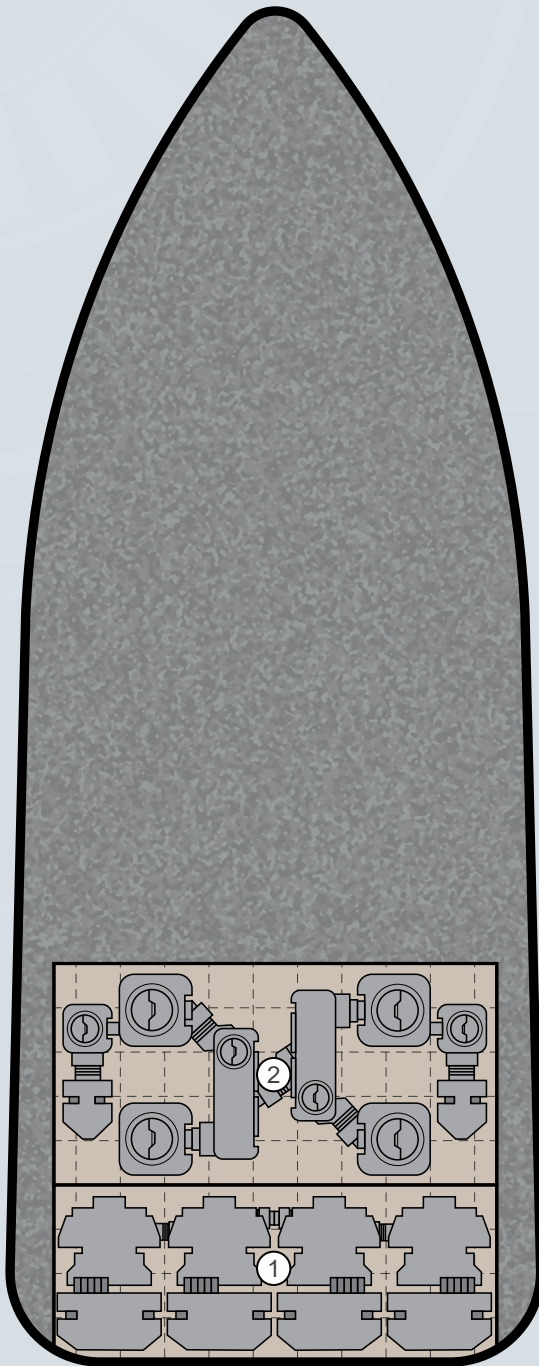


DEEPTIME ENDEAVOUR SHUTTLE

1 square = 5 Tons

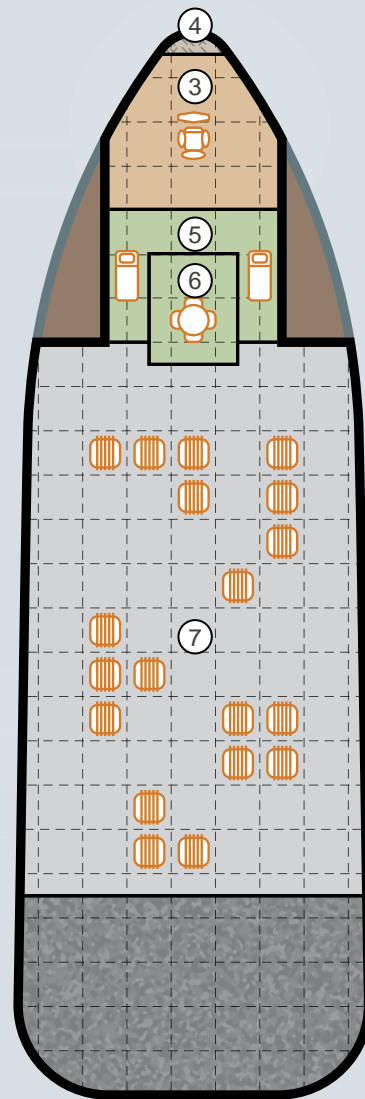
LEGEND

1. Manoeuvre Drive
2. Power Plant
3. Bridge
4. Sensors
5. Staterooms
6. Common Area
7. Cargo



DECK 4

DECK 1-3: FUEL ONLY



DECK 5

CREW

Deepnight Endeavour requires a considerable amount of effort just to keep her systems functioning but as a large ship her systems are arranged more efficiently than on small merchant vessels. 'Operating' crew levels are significantly lower than normal, mainly to reduce fatigue and provide backup in an emergency. Many personnel are multi-skilled, carrying out a range of day-to-day tasks when their specialist area of expertise is not required.

Deepnight Endeavour has a lot of weapons but as a non-military ship she cannot afford to carry large numbers of specialist gunners. Thus her crew is divided into three main areas – Flight, Engineering and Operations – with a small number of weapons specialists attached to the Operations crew. The Command crew is not part of any of these departments and includes the ship's senior officers and some specialists who support them.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

The ship's captain is responsible for the safety and behaviour of the vessel and all her crew. Other senior officers have specific duties or areas of responsibility. In the event that the captain is unavailable, command devolves in a well-understood manner.

The crew of *Deepnight Endeavour* are less formal than those aboard military ships but, if anything, the chain of command is more important. Aboard a vessel many parsecs from assistance and in completely unexplored territory, mistakes can be fatal – as can disputes over who is in charge. The chain of command aboard *Deepnight Endeavour* is indicated by a system of 'nth officer' designations.

Once the end of this chain of senior officers is reached, command devolves to the most suitable officer available. This is (in theory) on the basis of the most senior surviving bridge or flight officer, unless a vastly more experienced officer from another department is available. In practice, once the senior officers are gone the situation is probably too desperate for any prior planning to be relevant. Note that some officers are not in the chain of command – a relatively junior bridge officer would be expected to take over before the ship's doctor, even if the doctor is an experienced naval officer.

The chain of command also dictates who can legitimately give orders to whom. To be valid, an order must come from the command crew and pass down the chain of command from a department head, through his subordinate officers, directly to the recipient. Thus, the ship's engineering officer cannot give a legitimate order to a small-craft pilot whose chain of command runs through the Flight branch. In practice, if an experienced officer makes a 'respectful suggestion' to someone from another department, that department's commander would endorse it and such an order would be considered legitimate unless it contravened regulations or contradicted orders coming through the normal chain of command.

Orders issued by officers with particular responsibilities are normally assumed to be issued with the consent and approval of their superiors. For example, when a department head gives orders to his subordinates, the order is assumed to have the authority of the captain and command crew behind it. There is no need for every order to be checked with the commanding officer and a captain who tries to micromanage a ship by issuing all orders himself will rapidly run into serious difficulties.

Chain of Command

Position in Chain of Command	Responsibility Aboard Ship	Chain of Command Title
1	Captain	Master
2	Executive Officer	First Officer
3	Flight Officer	Second Officer
4	Weapons Officer	Third Officer
5	Operations Officer	Fourth Officer
6	Engineering Officer	Fifth Officer

Mission personnel are not part of the ship's formal crew and are thus outside the chain of command, although they may have useful advice to offer. The mission officer is normally consulted before major decisions but in a crisis the captain is in sole charge.

As might be expected, the Flight department operates the ship's control systems and also crews small and subordinate craft. This gives *Deepnight Endeavour* a large pool of qualified pilots who can be assigned to whatever missions are required. Flight department also includes astrogation, navigational sensor operators and general bridge-watchstanding personnel.

Engineering department carries out all major technical tasks aboard *Deepnight Endeavour* and supplies engineers to subordinate craft as well. Engineering personnel also support subordinate craft operations and maintain any vessels or craft assigned to the parent ship.

Operations department carries out all duties required to keep the ship and her crew functioning. This is subdivided into several specialist areas, whose personnel often overlap in their duties and transfer from one task to another.

COMMAND CREW

The command crew is small, consisting of the following personnel:

Captain: in overall command.

Executive Officer: charged with making the captain's orders happen and having an accurate summary of the situation available whenever needed.

Weapons Officer: responsible for the maintenance and operation of the ship's weaponry. Although *Deepnight Endeavour* is not a military ship, her weapons officer is still very busy. They also oversee weapons-related tasks such as particle accelerator firings for scientific purposes.

Master-at-Arms: Not an officer, but the individual responsible for issuing small arms to personnel and if necessary enforcing the captain's wishes. The Master-at-Arms is often considered to speak for the captain on all matters other than manoeuvring the ship, and is essentially the most senior non-officer aboard.

Administrative Officer: charged with keeping accurate records of stores expenditure and ensuring that mission logs are up to date.

Ship's Clerks x3: Full-time administrative personnel assisting the AO.

FLIGHT DEPARTMENT

Flight Department can be run by a skeleton crew but numerous additional personnel are required to crew small craft, fuellers and other subordinate vessels. Critical positions such as astrogation and sensor operations are backed up by junior officers to provide round-the-clock coverage, cross-check findings and absorb casualties in the event of disaster.

Flight Officer: heads the flight department.

Astrogation Officer: senior astrogator aboard the vessel.

Assistant Astrogator x2.

Sensors Officer: Officer in overall charge of sensor equipment necessary for shipboard operations ('mission' equipment may lie outside his remit).

Bridge Officers x2.

Chief Pilot: Senior pilot, in charge of all manoeuvring operations.

Craft Control Officer.

Pilots (variable complement, typically 22 personnel).

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

The most numerous department aboard *Deepnight Endeavour*, the personnel of Engineering are subdivided into two groups. Engineers are, for the most part, specialists who maintain the power plant, drives and major systems of the vessel and subordinate craft. Maintenance personnel are more general in their skillset and provide supporting expertise as well as carrying out the enormous number of routine tasks required to keep a big ship flying.

Chief Engineer: heads the engineering department.

Engineering Officers x3.

Assistant Engineers x9.

Engineers/Drive Hands x51.

Maintenance Officers x3.

Senior Maintenance Technicians x6.

Maintenance Technicians x36.

OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

Operations is the most varied of all departments, with sub-departments each having a specialist role. Most personnel are multi-skilled and can switch between tasks at need. *Deepnight Endeavour* does not use military terminology accurately, if at all, since her particle and missile systems are intended for scientific applications and would be used against another ship only in self-defence. Note that *Deepnight Endeavour* only carries enough gunners for some of her armament. These personnel maintain all beam weapon systems and are often 'borrowed' by other parts of Operations. At need, a full complement of gunners is created by calling deck and maintenance personnel to the guns.

Deck personnel are the jacks of all trades among *Deepnight Endeavour's* complement. They carry out whatever odd jobs need doing, although each has a definite secondary role – gunner, security/firefighting, medic, assistant steward, cargo handler, and so forth, and have the skills to match their role.

Operations Officer: heads the operations department.

Directed-Energy Systems Officer.

Particle System Operators x4.

Beam Gunners x20.

Remote Systems Officer.

Missile Bay Operators x8.

Missile/Probe Handlers x4.

Chief Steward.

Steward x3.

Assistant Stewards x18.

Chief Medical Officer.

Assistant Medical Officers x2.

Sick Bay Attendants x6.

Senior Deck Officer.

Deck Officer x2.

Senior Deck Hands x6.

Deck Hands x24.

MISSION PERSONNEL

Mission personnel are not critical to the operation of the ship and can vary considerably. Organisation tends to be on a team basis as necessary, with the mission officer liaising with rather than reporting to the captain. Mission personnel are expected to obey the captain's orders in an emergency or any situation where the welfare of the ship or crew is at stake, but the rest of the time they are permitted to get on with their work as they think best.

On this mission, *Deepnight Endeavour* carried mainly space and planetary scientists as it was engaged in exploration work, with a small complement of social scientists and contact experts in case a new culture was discovered. Teams were formed of scientists and research assistants in a roughly 1:2 mix.

Mission Officer: heads the mission department.

Cosmology and Astrophysics Team x38.

Planetary Science Team x26.

Hard Sciences Team x8: physics, chemistry and metallurgy

Life Sciences Team x12: biology and biochemistry.

Social Sciences Team x9: linguistics, xenoarchaeology and sociology.

Contact Team x5.

General Assistants x17.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Deepnight Endeavour's systems were laid out in a manner intended to balance concentration of components (and thus ease of use) with an ability to survive damage. Thus, there are small powerplant rooms throughout the ship and computer cores are likewise dispersed.

Most of the ship's beam armament is mounted in turrets scattered all over the Primary Structural Members, with additional weapon mounts elsewhere to give a wider field of fire. The four large missile bays are located on each of the PSMs, between the fueller cradles, while particle beam bays are at the front tip of each PSM. There is a small amount of 'configurable' space within the various modules, left empty to permit additional stores, equipment or to be converted to mission-specific requirements. This space can be used to carry cargo but is not well situated for loading or unloading. Smaller stores and oddments are often dumped in these spaces.

In general, personnel are accommodated close to their primary place of work but sensitivity to the need to survive a catastrophe prompted a policy of berthing some personnel elsewhere. Most of the engineering and maintenance crew are therefore berthed in the engineering module, close to the primary drive rooms and powerplant but some are elsewhere, ensuring that a meteoroid strike cannot wipe out the entire engineering staff.

The ship's complement is geared towards a three-shift pattern, with most departments and sub-departments capable of carrying out normal operations at standard staffing levels. Large tasks require moving personnel from one shift to another but, given the amount of time *Deepnight Endeavour* spends in transit, most jobs can be done on a steady-effort basis.

Deepnight Endeavour shipped out carrying the following subordinate craft on her central docking rail:

Type S Scout/Courier: 4

Type A2 Far Trader (converted to carry additional fuel and stores): 4

Type A2 Far Trader (converted to low-capability exploration vessels): 4

The following small craft were berthed internally in the Flight Operations Pod, with some space left over:

40-ton pinnacle: 12

The flight complement aboard *Deepnight Endeavour* was not quite sufficient to crew all these craft at once but there were sufficient additional pilots, astrogators and engineers available among multi-skilled crewmembers that the whole subordinate craft complement could be deployed if necessary.

PERSONAL WEAPONRY AND EQUIPMENT

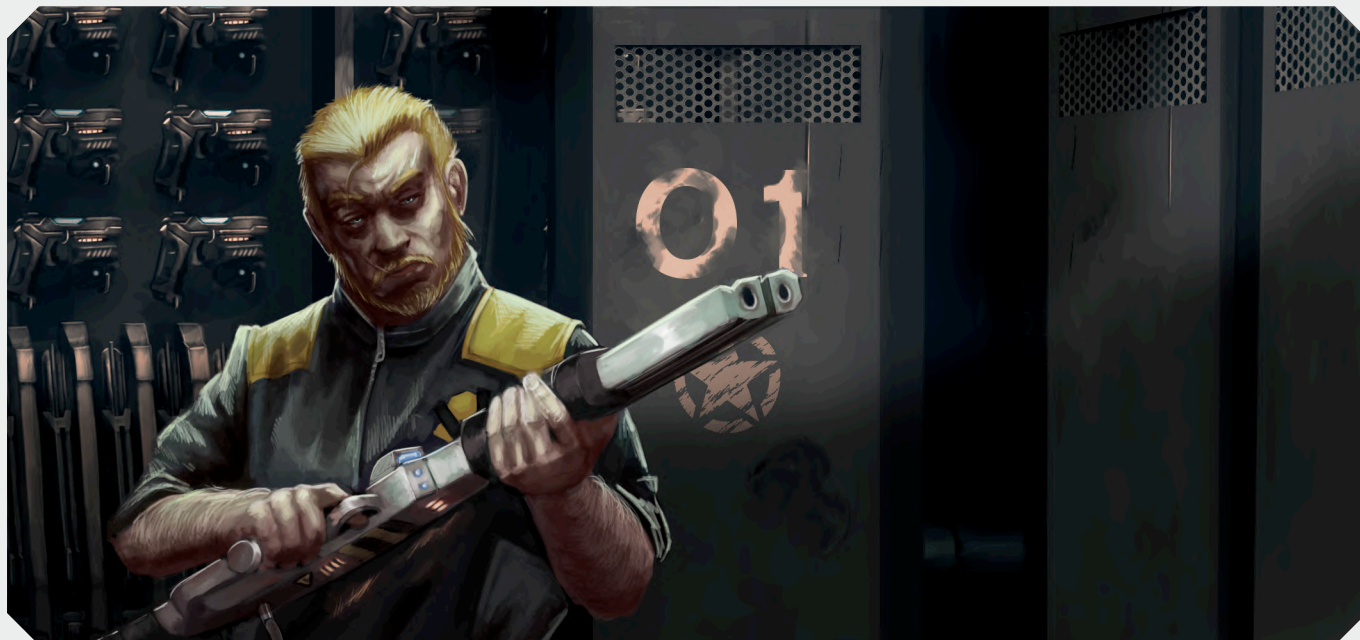
As an exploration ship, *Deepnight Endeavour* could encounter almost anything. Her crew were armed for self-defence, some of the deck crew were specifically trained at shipboard security tasks (including combat but also firefighting, emergency procedures for a hull breach and rescue work) and a very small proportion of the ship's complement had security as their primary occupation. Most of the time this was simply unnecessary, so weapons would be issued when the master-at-arms or senior officers decided it was appropriate.

Most of the ship's guns and other equipment were stored in the main armoury (located with the master-at-arms' office and brig in the central part of the main hull), with emergency lockers scattered around the ship. The decision was taken to use a one-size-fits-all approach to armament for the mission, allowing a single ammunition type to be used for almost all weaponry. The weapon chosen was the snub pistol and a scaled-up version converted into a carbine. Very simple to use and with low recoil, these weapons were deemed ideal for personnel with little firearms training and were eminently suitable for low-gravity operations.

The ship's more combat-experienced personnel might have disagreed with this choice but it was cost-effective and reduced logistics load. In addition to 120 snub pistols and 30 snub carbines, the ship's armoury contained 20 laser rifles 'just in case'. Senior officers were issued a sidearm for emergencies, or could provide their own. Most took the standard snub pistol but a few chose a weapon more to their personal taste.

In addition to these guns, some specialist personnel were permitted to bring their own weapons aboard. These included body pistols for the contact team and powerful rifles for some exploration experts. All such weapons were stowed in the central armoury when not in use.

A few security stations throughout the ship contained a pair of snub pistols and batons for emergency use. These were secured by keycode but accessible by any officer or security specialist. The central armoury was accessed only on the authorisation of the captain, executive officer or master-at-arms.



PRIMARY STRUCTURAL MEMBERS (PSM)

Each of the two PSMs is large enough to be a starship in its own right. Roughly rectangular in cross-section, the PSMs consist of a long, relatively narrow hull section with an external latticework of support and bracing members. Three cradles on the ventral surface of each PSM support the fuel modules when attached. The size of the fuellers can make the PSMs seem thin and flimsy but up close their massive strength is obvious.

Each PSM has a particle accelerator bay at its foremost tip, along with some accommodation, workshops, recreation areas and other general-purpose areas. The main attachment gantries for the primary modules are located on the inner surface of the PSM, between the docking cradles for the fuellers. On the outside of the PSM at these locations are the missile bays and probe storage areas.

The aft section of each PSM contains a small powerplant and manoeuvre drive. In theory, a severed PSM could be flown from the emergency controls contained in its drive rooms but this would be tricky at best. A small amount of fuel is also stowed in this area, along with stores and supplies.

The dorsal and outer surfaces of the PSMs house most of the vessel's deployable sensor arrays and many of her instrument clusters. These are mainly found in the forward half of the PSMs, away from the drive section and its complex emissions.

THE FUEL SHUTTLES

Although spacecraft in their own right, the six fuellers are referred to as shuttles as they are not intended to operate independently other than when skimming fuel – they are essentially detachable fuel tanks that can fly off and refill themselves. Typically, a fueller will carry a crew of eight when skimming – two bridge-qualified personnel, two engineers and four multi-skilled crewmembers to ease the load on the experts. A starship of this size would require more crew but the fuellers are really just ship's boats on a gigantic scale. The fuel modules are capable of 2G acceleration and have a very long endurance even without depleting jump fuel.

The fuel modules are built as self-contained vessels, making them more expensive than a typical breakaway section. However, this increases their survivability and – in theory at least – allows the design to be used for purposes unconnected with the *Deepnight Endeavour*-class of starship. Fuel shuttles of this design might be used to skim fuel from a gas giant and bring it to a refinery, for example.

The fuellers have an inverted teardrop cross-section, with most of the lower and 'fatter' part taken up with a 9,000-ton fuel tank. Fuel scoops are located in a ring around the front of the teardrop. The single crewed deck contains the bridge, crew accommodation and living area, with powerplant and drives aft. Above this is a narrower 'access and cargo' deck which also contains a much smaller fuel tank for the powerplant reserve.

The cargo capacity of the fuellers is deliberately located where it is easy to access from the dorsal surface, as this is where the fuel module docks to *Deepnight Endeavour*. This space is therefore available as extra stowage for anything that does not fit easily in the PSM and is sometimes referred to as 'the basement'. Occasionally, a necessary item is found to be half a system away aboard a module engaged in skimming operations but most of the time the arrangement is satisfactory. Similarly, living space aboard these modules is generous, allowing the primary ship's crew to spread out a bit and enjoy a little more personal space.

ATTACHMENT GANTRIES

The port and starboard PSMs connect to the central modules by short access tubes running within heavy structural members. These are 'plumbed' to allow fuel to be transferred from the fuel modules to the internal tank or directly to the jump drive and they also contain fuel processing equipment. The fuel shuttles cannot process their own fuel; it is pumped into the main hull for refining and then back into the shuttle tanks for storage.

The gantries are nothing more than connection components. They are heavily overbuilt to withstand a 2G turn with fully loaded fuellers attached to the PSMs. Other than a few stores lockers and miscellaneous electronic systems, the attachment galleries are structural rather than 'working' components.

OPERATIONS MODULE (OPSMOD)

The Operations module is the heart of *Deepnight Endeavour*. It contains the main accommodation and stores area, with most of the crew accommodation, galleys, recreational and common areas, and a large meeting hall frequently repurposed as a temporary stowage area whilst inventory is being taken. When not being misused in this manner, it allows the crew to gather for lectures, briefings and mission updates, as well as social activities. The Operations Module also contains a number of other specialist functions such as the brig, security office, armoury and medical centre.

The Opsmod lies between the two PSMs and is connected to each by the main attachment gallery plus additional struts and bracing. The cargo module is directly connected to the ventral surface of the Opsmod but is a separate structural component accessed only at a few points. These include a set of heavy-duty cargo lifts used to move stores up from the cargo hold to the Opsmod's stowage areas.

COMMAND SECTION (COMSEC)

The Command Section is housed in a bulbous projection forward of the Opsmod, housing the bridge, administrative centre and a fair proportion of the ship's computer systems. There is an accommodation and recreation block for the command crew (traditionally termed 'officers' country') and another for members of the flight crew usually assigned to bridge functions as opposed to subordinate craft operations.

The command section is connected to the forward part of the PSMs by bracing and struts but is not normally accessed from them. There are emergency crawlways but these are rarely used unless an inspection of every inch of the ship has been ordered. Normally, access is by way of a connecting tube from the Opsmod.

ENGINEERING SECTION (TEKSEC)

The engineering section lies aft of the Operations Module and is connected to it by a tube encased in supporting structural members. Like other structural components, and given the size of the ship, this looks flimsy but is in fact a heavily overbuilt structural member. Teksec (a corruption of 'technical section') is also linked to the PSMs by way of aft connecting gantries.

Teksec houses the main powerplant, most of the ship's manoeuvre drive components and the jump drive. There is also an accommodation block for most of the engineering and maintenance crew, with associated recreation facilities and common spaces. Most of the ship's internal fuel tankage is here, along with endless lockers for spares, tools and supplies.

FLIGHT OPERATIONS POD (FLOP)

The 'Flop' is connected to the ventral surface of the engineering module. It contains a command bridge normally used to control small-craft operations but which can coordinate a planetside mission or act as a full backup command facility for the entire vessel. In addition, the Flop has docking space for up to 500 tons of small craft, accessed by way of aft doors, with a secondary launch/recovery facility on each side. These are not rapid launch and recovery systems as found on naval carriers but it is possible to have craft entering the ship at the rear and launching from the sides simultaneously.

It also contains workshops dedicated to supporting *Deepnight Endeavour's* subordinate craft, a small amount of cargo space normally used for spares and stores, and fuel tankage for quick resupply of docked craft.



The Flop is connected to the cargo module by the docking rail, a gantry-like structure of lighter construction than the PSMs and attachment galleries but still very robust. Within the gantry runs a corridor subdivided into sections in case of depressurisation. Twelve clamps on the ventral side of the rail each allow a craft of up to 300 tons to dock and be carried through jumpspace.

CARGO MODULE (HOLD)

The cargo module is made up mostly of cargo space, with the main hold subdivided by retractable partitions which can remain gas-tight provided they are not struck hard by a vehicle or cargo container. Smaller holds have permanent bulkheads around them, with some areas capable of being climate-controlled.

A set of cargo lifts connects the hold with Opsmod above and the end of the docking rail also has an entry hatch to the cargo area. At the fore end of the cargo module is a large airlock which can dock craft of up to 1,000 tons for cargo transfer. Alongside this is an excursion chamber containing heavy-duty vacc suits and equipment for rescue and repair work.

FORWARD SCIENCE POD

The forward science pod is connected to the dorsal surface of Opsmod and is currently configured for a mix of space sciences and astronomy, containing *Deepnight Endeavour's* secondary observatory and an array of laboratories and workshops. Like the other dorsal pods, the forward science pod is rounded but not designed to withstand immense stresses in an atmosphere or high-G manoeuvring.

CENTRAL SCIENCE POD

The central science pod is the largest of the three dorsal pods, connected to the aft dorsal surface of Opsmod but not to any other part of the ship. It houses the main observatory as well as most of the ship's conferencing facilities and a very impressive data-presentation suite. Most of *Deepnight Endeavour's* extendable arrays are located on the outer surfaces of this pod or the PSMs.

AFT SCIENCE POD

The aft science pod is located above the dorsal surface of the engineering module, connected to it but not to any other part of the ship, and is primarily dedicated to life sciences and facilities for the social scientists and contact team. It has extensive astrophysics instrumentation along its outer surfaces but these relay to the central and forward pods under the present configuration.

THE FATE OF DEEPNIGHT ENDEAVOUR

The following account is for the use of the Referee. The Travellers may be able to piece it together from logs or accounts of uninfected survivors. Such accounts are likely to be personal and – perhaps unintentionally – biased. Survivors will recount what they saw and what they did (perhaps phrased in a way that makes them seem more heroic or less culpable than the truth might) and will mix misconceptions and possibly incorrect beliefs. With enough effort, the Travellers might be able to fully reconstruct the events that occurred aboard this ship but they should not be simply given a simple and correct narrative at the outset.

The story of *Deeplight Endeavour* is one of conflict between two opposing instincts; to protect and to survive. The crew inadvertently brought aboard the remains of a strange alien being, which infected the crew and began to take over the ship. It was not sentient or even malevolent but its instinct was to survive, grow and spread. The desire of the crew to reach a safe port served the Entity's purpose; had *Deeplight Endeavour* made planetfall, an entire world might have been infected.

How the various crewmembers reacted to their circumstances might have been quite different with another crew but, fortunately for nearby worlds, those who realised the threat early enough were in a position to prevent the ship from returning. By doing so they condemned everyone aboard to a slow death and set themselves against those who believed their first duty was to save the ship – or who simply wanted to get home alive.

Deeplight Endeavour's mission went more or less according to plan at first. Several anomalies and deep space objects were visited either by the vessel herself or one of her subordinate craft, and data was sent home by courier. It was not until the mission entered its final phase that anything untoward happened. Whilst investigating a distinctly mundane – if large – interstellar comet, *Deeplight Endeavour* detected a number of other objects within reach of her jump-capable subordinate craft and dispatched vessels to visit them.

The vessel assigned to this particular object was a scout/courier, which went out with a four-person crew in accordance with standard practice. Jumping to the location of the object, the scout ship found the object was a much larger ship which appeared to be a derelict vessel of Droyne origin. The vessel was very old – the crew estimated tens of thousands of years – and had decayed to the point where its structure was beginning to disintegrate.

Two members of the crew entered the wreck, salvaging artefacts for later analysis. Over a period of a few days, the scout ship crew made repeated forays into the wreck, finally encountering the remains of the Entity's central cluster. They took samples and returned to their vessel, puzzled. During preliminary analysis of the recovered material, the scout ship crew became infected. Infection progressed very quickly as they had been exposed to central tissue from the Entity. Within days two were dead and the others rapidly degenerating into Shamblers.

When the scout did not return, a second ship was sent to investigate. This too was standard practice; standing orders were to return quickly from a mission that discovered nothing of interest and remain on station to gather data if the location seemed promising. Since non-return might be due to a problem or a discovery, a second ship would be dispatched. This avoided wasted time spent returning to report a find then assembling a team to go back. The second crew had no idea what had befallen the first but when their communications were not answered they quickly realised something was wrong.

Finding their sister vessel dead in space, the second crew boarded her and were attacked by the Shamblers. They made a brave attempt to search the scout ship for survivors, not initially realising the Shamblers were their former comrades. Retreating to their ship, the rescue crew jumped back to *Deeplight Endeavour*, unaware that one of their number had been infected. By the time they arrived at the parent ship, all four members of the rescue crew were showing symptoms.

The surviving scout/courier was recovered and her crew sent to *Deepnight Endeavour*'s medical facility, sealing the fate of the entire vessel and her crew. However, it was not immediately apparent what had happened.

Precautions were taken but the crew simply did not know what they were dealing with and infection inevitably occurred as a result of the rescue crew's contact with the Shamblers. Progress of the infection was much slower this time, manifesting at first as what appeared to be a viral outbreak not unlike influenza.

Deepnight Endeavour stayed on station long enough for her other jump-capable craft to return and the scientists aboard discussed whether they could find a cure and thus allow the mission to continue. As ever more crewmembers began showing signs of illness, the captain reluctantly decided to head for home.

En route, *Deepnight Endeavour* suffered a serious misjump. This was no navigational error but a deliberate misplot by the astrogator. Infection was progressing slowly but the astrogator realised what was happening to her and made the decision to quarantine the ship in the most dramatic manner possible. By the time *Deepnight Endeavour* emerged from jump, the astrogator was severely ill and once navigational readings had established a misjump had occurred the assumption was that it had been accidental.

With the ship in deep space rather than at a refuelling point, it was obvious that *Deepnight Endeavour* could not reach her fuel caches with remaining reserves. However, her captain was an old navy man and knew of a hidden deep-space refuelling point within reach – just. By discarding her fuel shuttles as they became empty, *Deepnight Endeavour* extended her jump range and managed to crawl towards the cache. Several fraught weeks passed, during which more of the crew became infected despite the best the science and medical personnel aboard could do.

By the time *Deepnight Endeavour* reached the cache, something was growing in one of the science pods and the crew were fighting Shamblers for control of Opsmod. Factions had emerged among the survivors, centring on the captain, mission officer and chief engineer. The captain was obsessed with bringing his ship home – or to any inhabited world where help might be available. The mission officer was infected at this time and shared

the captain's desire to get the ship to an inhabited world, although for a different reason. The chief engineer mistrusted the captain and led a mutiny, intending to use the ship's craft to evacuate her supporters.

A pitched battle took place as *Deepnight Endeavour* approached the fuel cache, fuelled by fear and paranoia. Factions that had started out arguing about how to go about an agreed necessary task now battled for control of the ship's key functions with snub pistols and wrenches from the tool lockers. In the middle of the chaos, the gunnery officer calmly – and in complete control of her faculties – turned the ship's weapons on the fuel cache. She had realised the ship carried something deadly that could not be allowed to reach an inhabited system and quietly committed suicide to prevent it.

Return fire from automated defences severely damaged *Deepnight Endeavour* and soon afterward a party of mutineers seized some of the subordinate craft. As they attempted to launch, *Deepnight Endeavour* fired upon them, resulting in a collision and fuel explosion that wrecked the flight operations pod.

Deepnight Endeavour still had fuel to run her powerplant but could not jump. Almost within reach of an inhabited world, she lay dead in space whilst survivors entrenched themselves in different parts of the ship. In the medical centre, the Entity reached its final form and began sending Clouds and Shamblers to take over the rest of the ship. It had learned of the existence of populated worlds from those it infected and its imperative was now to reach such a world. Instinctively, and without any understanding of what it was doing or why, the Entity worked towards getting a jump-capable vessel and reaching a world it could infect.

Deepnight Endeavour was no longer such a vessel, and all jump-capable craft were destroyed or inoperable, so the Entity slowed its expansion, eking out resources to last decades before slow deterioration would begin. If *Deepnight Endeavour* was found, the Entity would achieve its purpose. If not, it would go back to sleep for millennia. Time was on its side and the longer some of the crew remained uninfected, the longer the Entity's reserves would last.

The crew fought to survive and the Entity reduced its assault upon them. They tried to repair damaged craft, not knowing their escape from *Deepnight Endeavour* would do the Entity's work for it. They killed one another out of fear or over dwindling resources. And into this perilous situation came a band of Travellers....

THE ENTITY

The Entity was found aboard a derelict starship. It is a form of life not previously encountered and hard to categorise. It appears to have a cunning animal-level intellect taking the form of a central cluster of fungus-like material, capable of controlling distant parts of itself such as humans infected with its cells.

It is old. How old, it does not know. It is not sentient in the human sense but is aware of its existence and imperative. It can learn and adapt. It has done so in the past and has forgotten much of what it knew.

The Entity is made up of living cells, some taken from crewmembers as they were slowly dissolved into the Entity's form. Other cells were grown from any source available – mould on bread, or a potted plant in an office cubicle; anything will suffice at need.

It knows nothing of malice or hatred. It simply does what it needs to survive and grow. It cannot be bargained with or bribed; it has no remorse or mercy but will ignore people it does not need to deal with. It will absorb and use whatever it can but will not seek out what it does not yet need. It is no more inimical than gravity and no less deadly.

The Entity was almost dead when it was found aboard a Droyne starship that had been drifting for millennia. Could it be some weapon left over from the Ancients' Final War, or something unconnected? Where did it come from? Are there more like it? These questions cannot be answered by anyone aboard *Deepnight Endeavour*, including the Entity. It does not know anything; it simply is and does.

It needs water and air, although not much of the latter. It needs living cells to add to its mass and it needs to feed those cells with organic matter. Hydroponics or a similar environment could help sustain it, growing plant matter to feed the central mass. However, the life processes of the Entity slowly break down its own structure, requiring replenishment with additional living matter. Animal cells provide high-value sustenance, with preserved food being of much lower value but still better than nothing.

The Entity exists to live and grow, and although it is not sentient its instincts and understanding of the universe expand as it gains in size. Absorbing self-aware beings with advanced cognitive functions may also allow the Entity to learn but not in the academic sense. Instead, its ability to sense and react will grow as it absorbs more people and wane again as they degenerate and their braincells deteriorate. The Entity will instinctively try to reach a planet with life, without ever understanding what planets or starships are.

It has a primary cluster, the seat of most of its main functions. This is immobile, consisting of twisted fungus-like growths with discernible body parts of previous victims slowly being absorbed. Secondary clusters are similar but smaller. In addition, the Entity has three mobile elements: Clouds, Creepers and Shamblers.

The cluster possesses a form of crude instinctive telepathy which enables it to sense nearby creatures and control remote clusters and minions. It does not seem to have much purpose beyond surviving and growing, but perhaps when the Entity reaches a certain size or level of sophistication a new phase of its existence will begin.

INFECTION

A person or animal exposed to 'spores' from the Entity risks what can be called infection, although it is not quite the same as a disease. The spores are in fact tiny fragments of the Entity, typically just a few cells. Spores can be inhaled or absorbed by skin contact but the most serious risk of infection comes from a wound that breaks the skin. To infect a person, these spores must make contact with the nervous system. Travelling through the bloodstream to reach spine or brain tissue is most effective; outer nerves are much less likely to be successfully infected.

Infection is by no means certain under any circumstances, although resisting it is more difficult if spores have reached the bloodstream. Conventional antibiotics and the like will not help – this is not a normal infection – but specialised drugs could be formulated to help the body fight the effects of infection. The Mission faction has managed to produce a suitable agent but they may not be willing to share it.



To avoid infection when exposed to spores: Easy (4+) END check, DM-1 per point of damage suffered.

A check must be made immediately a Traveller is exposed, such as when entering an area with airborne spores or when a wound is taken. Prolonged exposure requires a check every hour. DM+2 applies to the check if the Traveller is taking basic precautions such as using a respirator. Exposure is not possible if the Traveller is inside a sealed suit, although removing one that has become contaminated might pose a hazard.

Infection is not likely from one-off contact but over time it becomes certain. Once a Traveller becomes infected, they progress through the following stages:

Exposed: The Traveller's body will attempt to fight the infection, resulting in a slight fever, a generally 'unwell and out of sorts' feeling, and irritability. The Traveller is still himself and in complete control of their actions; they may not realise they are infected at first. However, they will gradually become aware of a mental 'pull' which makes some actions seem more attractive than others. In short, they are still human but the Entity is beginning to take control.

Infected: The Traveller's body has been invaded by the Entity's cells, with small concentrations scattered throughout the body. These will grow in organs, especially the brain, and begin converting the tissue around them. The infected person retains free will but is prone to anger and will often display short periods of extreme clumsiness. A Traveller who is at this stage can be saved if the invading cells are destroyed but this would be a complex medical procedure. The 'pull' is much stronger, prodding the Traveller towards actions that benefit the Entity. A Traveller may feel an overwhelming compulsion to take a particular action such as opening a door or bite (and infect) someone else. Resisting this requires an Average (8+) INT check.

Controlled: The Traveller is now under the control of the Entity, at least in a general way. Damage to their cells will be apparent in their appearance and the way they tend to lurch and stumble from one action to another. Controlled people retain their skills to some extent and can be used for complex tasks like changing the ship's sublight course or cutting through a door. They cannot perform complex mental tasks such as setting up a jump plot, however. The Entity itself does not really understand the tasks its minions carry out;

it knows it wants something on the other side of a barricaded door but it is the remnant intellect of the controlled person that realises the door could be cut through. Controlled people gradually degenerate and lose their faculties, eventually becoming Shamblers.

Shambler: Shamblers are little more than animated corpses. Most life functions have stopped and brain activity is virtually zero. Shamblers resemble a mass of fungal matter and protoplasm in a generally humanoid shape and are useful only as raw labour to carry objects or attack enemies. Shamblers degenerate over time and are typically drawn back to the central cluster to be absorbed into it as they become increasingly useless.

PROGRESS OF INFECTION

Every 2D hours, an Exposed or Infected Traveller must make a Routine (6+) END check. Failure results in progression to the next stage of infection. Success indicates the Traveller has resisted progression but is not cured; an Effect of 6+ indicates the Traveller has completely defeated the infection and is now free of it. Medical assistance can help and treatment of symptoms provides DM+1 to resist, whilst a treatment developed specifically to fight the infection will provide DM+2.

Once the Controlled stage is reached, degeneration into a Shambler is inevitable. This typically takes 3D days but can be much longer in some cases. Shamblers last a further 4Dx10 days before the final decline begins. This takes another 4Dx10 days before the Shambler becomes immobile. It will normally be withdrawn to a cluster halfway through this time and end its existence as an increasingly misshapen servitor. Some body parts may retain mobility after the Shambler has collapsed, creating a mass of arms and legs which can be a threat to anyone approaching the central cluster.

CLOUDS

Clouds are made up of spores, small fragments of matter from the Entity. They may be held together by a form of telekinesis; clouds flow as if slightly heavier than air but can rise up a shaft or over an obstruction, although they cannot get past a sealed door or an area exposed to hard vacuum. Contact with a Cloud can result in infection. Clouds are used mainly as relatively fast moving scouts and guards, ensuring unprotected personnel cannot approach an area claimed by the Entity without infection.

The Clouds are able to find their way through poorly secured ventilation grilles and similar small openings but are defeated by measures as simple as good filters or stuffing rags into cracks around doors. They cannot directly harm someone but anyone exposed to a Cloud runs the risk of infection. Clouds will stick to anyone wearing protection such as a respirator or vacc suit, trying to find a way in. This is very frightening and can induce panic.

To avoid panicking when under attack by a Cloud:
Average (8+) END check.

Panicked individuals will try to flee the area or get the Cloud off, perhaps by using a shower or fire hose. They may cause problems such as opening secured doors and allowing the Cloud into a previously safe area, or crashing into other Travellers and perhaps knocking their respirators off. However, for those who keep their heads, Clouds are a creeping, insidious threat rather than an imminent danger.

Clouds can be dispersed by a powerful jet of water or air, although this takes effort and requires the jet to be concentrated where it will have the maximum effect. A dispersed Cloud will reform in a few hours but could be contained in a tank or other sealed vessel. Randomly blowing bits of Cloud around might also expose additional personnel to infection.

To safely disperse a Cloud, or drive it into or out of an area: Difficult (10+) DEX check, (1D rounds).

The Referee should use Clouds as a creeping menace and a way to drive the plot of the adventure. The need to keep filters repaired and shore up failing seals should drive survivors and Travellers to scavenge for components in potentially dangerous parts of the ship, and can provide a backdrop of constant menace and tension. Clouds are in many ways the least immediately threatening yet most dangerous of all the Entity's tools. They will eventually get into an area and infect those within, robbing them of their humanity and turning them into a threat to other survivors.

CREEPERS

Creepers are detached parts of the Entity. They resemble vegetation or fungal matter, and could easily be missed in a cursory glance of a cluttered area. Creepers move slowly through the ship, seeking concentrations of organic matter to feed upon. A Creeper could in time grow into a small or main cluster, although the process would be very slow. Mobile Creeper segments are small; typically less than 30 centimetres long. However, one that finds a suitable source of nourishment – such as a corpse, hydroponic plant bed or pile of ration packs – will begin to grow. Eventually this infestation will grow into another cluster.



Creepers are also more of an insidious threat than an immediate one. They move slowly through ducts or corridors and can apply a surprising amount of force to very slowly bend seals or panels aside. Anyone who touches a Creeper runs the risk of infection, even through protective clothing. The Creeper will sense living flesh and begin to push tiny tendrils into it, clinging to clothing or suits as it tries to penetrate a seam, seal or the weave of cloth. Penetration requires 1D rounds plus two rounds per point of Protection. If the Creeper is noticed during this time, it may be dislodged by scraping or knocking it off but grabbing it is likely to result in attachment to a new host.

To dislodge a Creeper: Average (8+) DEX check (1 round).

Creepers can be completely destroyed by intense heat or immersion in a corrosive substance for a period of minutes. Deliberate destruction with a device such as a blowtorch takes 1D rounds, although the Traveller will need to avoid contact during this time and Creepers will be automatically killed by a Fire weapon. Cryogenic weapons will freeze a creeper and render it dormant for 2D hours but will not kill it. Even if smashed whilst frozen, the Creeper will reform or continue to exist as several smaller Creepers.

They will creep into places where they can be inadvertently touched or slowly force a panel open. Some Creepers take the form of long tendrils leading out from a cluster but most are independent. An infestation of Creepers may grow in a chamber, making it impassable, or may jam a doorway rather than forcing it open. This is not always due to some plan on the part of the Entity; much of its behaviour and that of its minions tends to be instinctive and sometimes counter-productive. Thus, some areas the Travellers might want to pass through could be completely choked with Creepers without being of any benefit to the Entity.

CONTROLLED PEOPLE AND SHAMBLERS

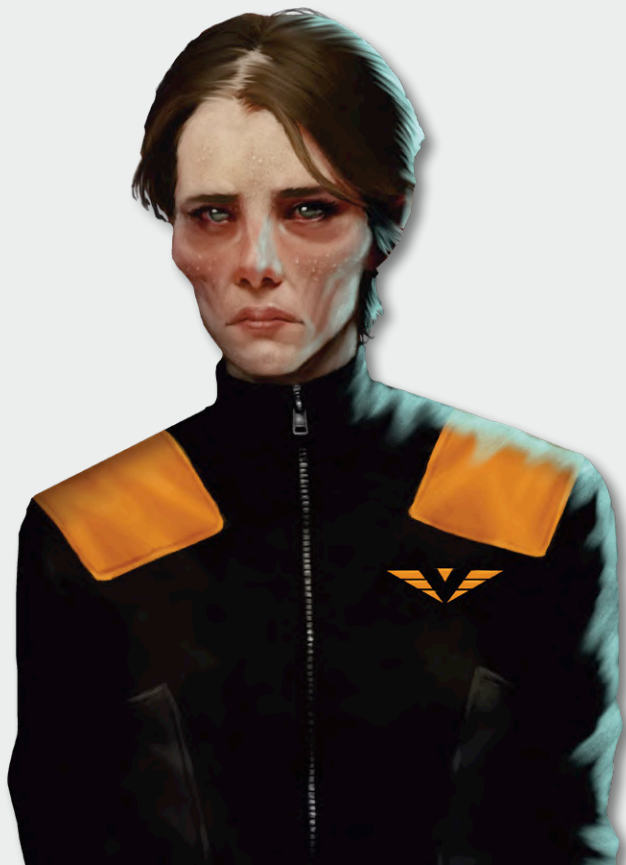
Shamblers are humans who have been fully infected by the Entity, passing through a stage where they retain skills and capabilities, at least to some extent. A Shambler starts out nearly indistinguishable at first glance from the person it used to be. Over time, neural pathways break down until the Shambler is good only for absorption as food. Thus, some early-stage Shamblers are essentially controlled people who can carry out complex tasks or use firearms, whilst those in the later stages are simply lumbering corpses.

Rebuilding a Shambler to the point where it can carry out tasks such as opening an airlock might be possible for the Entity but this would absorb a lot of resources. It would only be done at desperate need unless the Entity had resources to spare. Shamblers do not seem to have much memory – if any – of who they were but do sometimes retain the ability to open electronic doors and may even be able to input a security code. Thus, any Shambler might be able to carry out complex actions, which could surprise Travellers who think they have figured out what Shamblers can and cannot do.

Shamblers and controlled people are treated more like conventional opponents than Creepers or Clouds. A controlled person is still alive and can be harmed or killed by normal means. However, a dead controlled person might immediately become a Shambler if infection is sufficiently advanced. If not, the infection will spread rapidly through the dead tissue and produce a Shambler later. Roll 3D-6 when a controlled person is killed. The result is the number of hours before the corpse becomes a Shambler. A result of zero or less indicates that this occurs immediately.

A controlled person can be stopped from turning into a Shambler by the same means as a Shambler can be destroyed. Cremating the body will work, whilst extreme cold will halt the process until the corpse is reheated. Dismembering a controlled body will prevent a Shambler from arising but the corpse may begin to put out Creepers instead. Fighting Shamblers and controlled people can be a disquieting affair, with some casualties refusing to stay dead and others sprouting Creepers an hour or two later. Scenes of previous encounters could become overgrown and choked with Creepers.

As noted above, controlled people take normal damage from all sources. Shamblers take full damage from explosives, energy weapons and fire but are difficult to kill with other means. Normal projectiles, blades and bludgeoning weapons have their damage halved. Impaling weapons and low-velocity projectiles like spears or arrows do one point of damage per dice normally rolled, ignoring any additional points (so, for example, a dagger normally doing 1D+2 damage only does one point of damage to a Shambler). Cutting or blowing a Shambler apart renders it incapable of action but does not prevent Creepers from growing from the remains. Only destruction by fire or similar means will prevent this.



CONTROLLED CREWMEMBER

SPECIES		GENDER	AGE
Human/Vargr		—	—
TRAITS		—	
STR	8	INT	5
DEX	6	EDU	3
END	8	SOC	3
WEAPONS		Snub Revolver (3D-3) (DM-2 to attack), Improvised Weapon (2D-2)	
SKILLS		Athletics 0, Electronics 0, Gun Combat 0, Melee 0, Recon 0	

Controlled people can use firearms, although not well. They suffer DM-2 to attack rolls with any ranged weapon but fight normally with melee weapons. Shamblers can use melee weapons, although with DM-2 for their clumsiness, and will normally treat firearms as improvised weapons. However, occasionally a Shambler will retain enough memory to loose off a few random shots.



Shambler

Animal	Hits	Speed
Shambler	25	3m
Skills	Melee (bludgeon) 1	
Attacks	Club (2D) or Arms (1D); DM-2 to hit	
Traits	Special (see description)	
Behaviour	Mindless	

CLUSTERS

Clusters are immobile masses of protoplasmic flesh and ropy fungal matter. Typically, a cluster consists of several clumps of matter linked with tendrils, with half-absorbed Shamblers visible here and there. The central Cluster is much larger and has a carpet of half-absorbed Shamblers surrounding it. These can grab at anyone approaching and concealed among them are several servitor Shamblers not yet being absorbed. These can ambush intruders or drag them towards the central Cluster.

Clusters are not defenceless. In addition to the Shamblers, Clusters can also attack with tendrils which are essentially large Creepers. Some are heavy enough to bludgeon a Traveller; others will simply grapple them.

Tendrils can be severed by delivering 6+ damage in a single blow with a bladed implement. This will still leave the end of the tendril attached to the Traveller, which may result in infection in the same manner as having a Creeper attached. A small cluster has 1D tendrils available; the central cluster has 3D. Half of the available tendrils will grapple while the other half are capable of bludgeoning for 3D damage.

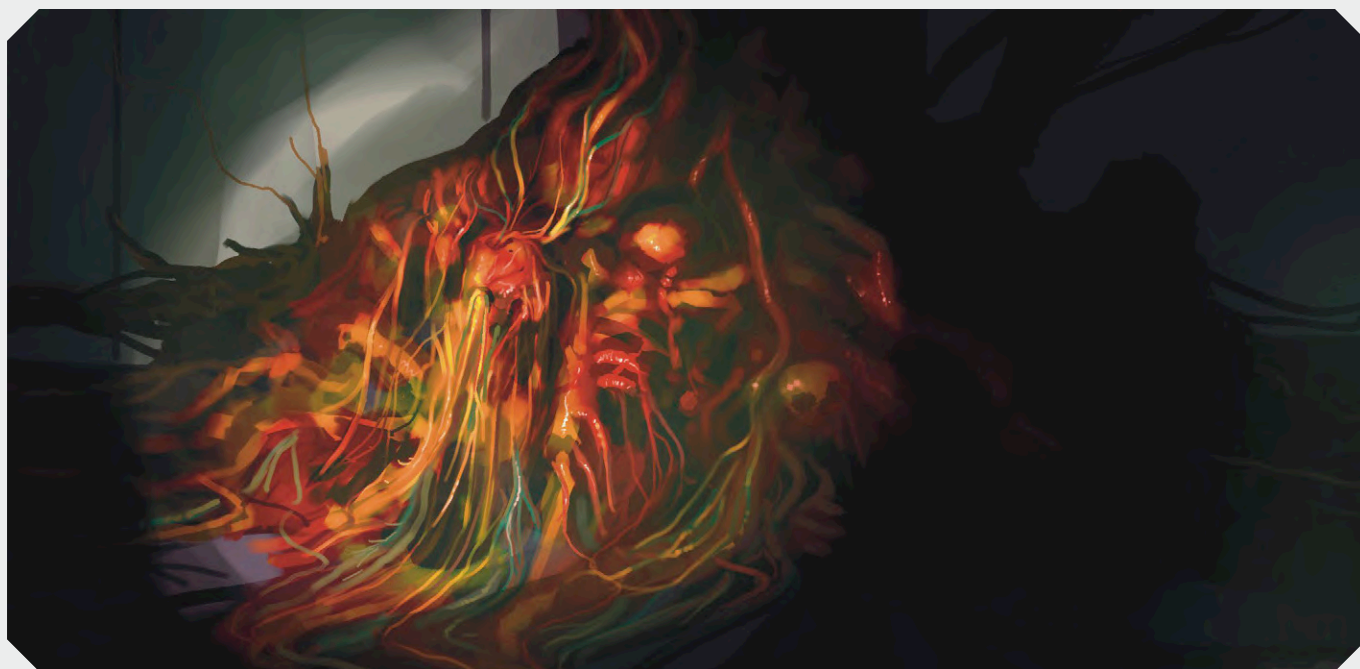
Killing a Cluster is not easy. Tendrils can be cut but will simply fall to the floor and eventually be absorbed or begin to grow from their new attachment point. The Cluster itself is resilient in the same manner as Shamblers and requires a great deal of effort to destroy. If damaged, a minor Cluster regenerates hits at the rate of 1D per hour; this rate is 3D for the central Cluster. Doing so uses up resources, requiring replenishment with organic cells but a Cluster can rebuild its own structure using internal resources for quite some time.

Fire, explosives, or corrosive liquids are the most efficient way to deliver damage to a Cluster, although one could be rendered inert by exposing it to cryogenic fluids or hard vacuum. This will not kill it but will cause it to become dormant which might give time for a more permanent solution.

Even reducing a Cluster to 0 hits will not kill it, merely spread its components around. Eventually, it will recombine and even if just spores and fragments remain, a new Entity may grow once a food source or more people to infect become available. Abandoning an Entity on a dead ship with no organic material to absorb might eventually kill it but it could sustain itself for thousands of years in a dormant state, slowly consuming its own cells.

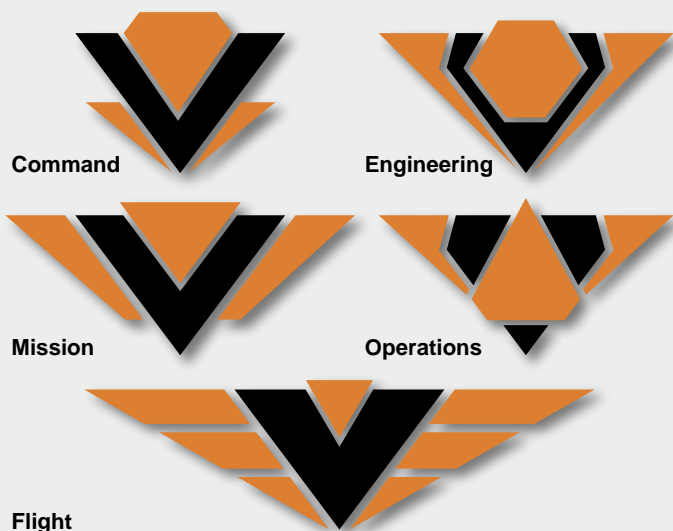
To get rid of a Cluster completely would require utterly destroying its cells with heat or some other form of energy. Intense ultraviolet light will sterilise Cluster cells and spores but not quickly. Fire will kill most of the cells present but may blow some around; intense heat contained in a small area would be sufficient to kill a cluster, as would prolonged exposure to hard radiation. It might be possible to do this but if any material whatsoever survived, there would always be a risk of future infection.

A quick-and-dirty purge of all spaces with heat, UV light and/or radiation might suffice to make the ship operable in the short term providing precautions were taken but if *Deepnight Endeavour* is recovered and put back into service, then sooner or later the disaster will be repeated – and in the meantime, she might infect other vessels or whole worlds. The only way to be sure is to completely destroy the ship, perhaps by sending her into a star.



CREW AND FACTIONS

In the months since the discovery of the Entity, the crew has fragmented into three major factions and several smaller groups. Certain individuals have also emerged as personalities with whom the Travellers might have to interact. In general, the survivors are paranoid and less than completely rational as a result of being trapped in deep space with a malevolent entity capable of turning them into monsters. Most have no real idea what is going on and a variety of wild theories and baseless suppositions exist.



THE BRIDGE FACTION

Members: 23

Primary Location: Command Section

Agenda: Save the ship, get home, put down the mutiny in Engineering

Notable Members:

- Bridge Faction Member
- Captain Miklos Zenkhuirli
- Master-at-Arms Riece Arbonne

The Bridge faction centres on *Deepnight Endeavour's* captain, Miklos Zenkhuirli. It is the largest of the factions, with 23 surviving members, and claims the command section as its territory. The faction is not large enough to control the whole module and remains close to the bridge. Occasional armed parties are sent out through crawlways to the starboard PSM and thence to other parts of the ship, and more commonly the faction scours the command section for useful items.

The faction tends to be authoritarian in outlook and members are convinced they have the right to give orders to anyone as they are reporting directly to the captain. They rarely negotiate as such, preferring to demand obedience to the chain of command or their superior numbers. The Bridge faction is in what might be termed a blood feud with the Engineering faction; many members have become obsessed with putting down the mutiny rather than saving the ship and everyone aboard.

The Bridge faction has been struggling to obtain sufficient food for some time and is considering a raid in force to secure a stockpile of rations that has been recently located. Food would be a useful bargaining chip with them and might offset the malnutrition and physical weakness that many faction members display.

There are significant stocks of bulk rations in the cargo pod, most of which are untouched due to the difficulty of getting at them. The operations module also has large amounts of food and dietary supplements still in the galley storerooms but getting to these might be hazardous – the stocks in safer areas have been picked clean.

BRIDGE FACTION MEMBER

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human/Vargr			—	—
TRAITS			—	
STR	6	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	9	Athletics 0, Electronics (sensors), 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee 0, Recon 0
END	4	SOC	5	
WEAPONS			Snub Revolver (3D-3) or Improvised Weapon (2D-2)	

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

The chain of command is all. And you are in command. Give orders, not requests, and expect them to be obeyed. If someone refuses an order, however minor, they are endangering the entire ship.



CAPTAIN MIKLOS ZENKHUIRLI

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Human		Male		—
TRAITS		—		
STR	5	INT	9	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	10	
END	5	SOC	10	
				Athletics 0, Diplomat 2, Electronics (computers), 3, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Leadership 3
WEAPONS		Snub Revolver (3D-3)		

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Everything is going wrong and it is discipline and training that will put things right. Project a stern exterior and remember you are in charge of everything that goes on onboard this ship.

Captain Zenkhurli is unlikely to leave the bridge area without pressing reason. If he does, he will be protected by the master-at-arms and some of his most healthy supporters.



MASTER-AT-ARMS RIECE ARBONNE

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Human		Male		—
TRAITS		—		
STR	8	INT	6	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	7	
END	9	SOC	7	
				Athletics 2, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee (bludgeon) 1, Recon 1
WEAPONS		Snub Revolver (3D-3), Club (2D)		

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Your captain requires and deserves your support – everyone's survival relies on his command. Protect those who follow his orders, be aggressive to those who do not. Lives depend on it.

The master-at-arms is loyal to his captain, and acts as his bodyguard when not leading expeditions into other parts of the ship. Any party of Bridge faction personnel is likely to be led by him.

THE ENGINEERING FACTION

Members: 17

Primary Location: Engineering Section

Agenda: Escape the ship; gather all useful items and hoard them

Notable Members:

- Engineering Faction Member
- Chief Engineer Dakh Moralder

The Engineering faction is far more pragmatic than the Bridge faction in outlook. They follow the Engineering Officer, Dakh Moralder, as she showed them the impossibility of surviving in the long term aboard *Deepnight Endeavour* and had lost faith in the captain. Dakh, who is racially a Vargr but completely Imperial in cultural outlook, wants only to get her followers off the ship. To this end, she sends out small parties to scavenge absolutely everything that might be of value, even if this means risky expeditions into the parts of the Operations Module infested by the Entity.

The 17 members of the Engineering faction do not return the enmity of the Bridge faction. They will fight if attacked but are focussed on escape rather than conflict. The Engineering faction is the most likely to ignore what the Travellers have to say and simply grab their ship, but is also the most amenable to a practical plan offering a chance of survival for everyone.

The Engineering faction are better fed than the Bridge faction but obsessed with power and fuel. Power plant spares or access to the fuel system would be a potent bargaining chip.

Most members of the Engineering faction have made themselves a weapon (usually a cutlass) in the ship's workshops. Some designs are rather fanciful but all are deadly. There are a few guns in the Engineering section but ammunition is in very short supply.

Dakh Moralder is a Vargr, one of about a dozen among the crew. She is highly respected among her followers, but takes too many personal risks. This has won the enduring loyalty of her faction but her insistence on doing everything herself will sooner or later leave them leaderless.



ENGINEERING FACTION MEMBER

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE	
Human/Vargr			—		—	
TRAITS			—			
STR	8	INT	8	SKILLS		
DEX	9	EDU	7	Athletics 0, Electronics (computers), 1, Mechanic 2, Melee 0, Recon 0		
END	7	SOC	6			
WEAPONS			Cutlass (3D)			
ARMOUR			Tough Coveralls (+2)			
ROLEPLAYING NOTES						

Working together is the key to survival. Take what help you can, avoid confrontation where possible, but the lives of you and your friends are paramount.

CHIEF ENGINEER DAKH MORALDER

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Vargr			Female	—
TRAITS			—	
STR	7	INT	9	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	9	Athletics 0, Electronics (remote ops) 2, Engineer (j-drive) 4, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Leadership 1, Mechanic 2, Melee 0, Persuade 2, Recon 0
END	7	SOC	9	
WEAPONS			Snub Revolver (3D-3), Cutlass (3D)	
ROLEPLAYING NOTES				

Be friendly, be loyal to those you lead but also be a shade too reckless. Dakh is naturally likeable and, in restful moments, light-hearted.

THE MISSION FACTION

Members: 12

Primary Location: Forward Science Pod

Agenda: Find a Cure; purge the Entity from the ship

Notable Members:

- Mission Faction Member
- Mission Officer Jarla Kleine

The Mission faction formed around the Mission Officer, whose agenda was to find a scientific solution to the disaster. Joined by some of the crew, the faction retreated to the forward science pod and destroyed most of the connecting shafts. Faction members make the occasional foray, often using vacc suits to move around the exterior of the hull and gain access to other areas without going through hazardous areas. The faction's scientists are working to slow down the infection and reverse it, and have made significant progress. In fact, they have made more progress than they know.

The Mission Officer, Jarla Kleine, was among the first infected along with several of the life sciences personnel. She successfully concealed her symptoms and worked with her colleagues to find a cure. Most succumbed quickly but they produced an exotic drug which offered some promise. Jarla used the first batch on herself out of desperation and it appeared to work. Indeed, a refined form of the drug can help the body fight the Entity's infection and in some cases even reverse it. However, the first batch was flawed.

Although outwardly fine, Jarla has Entity cells in her nervous system and has increasingly aligned herself with it. She is capable of being her usual charming and highly intelligent self but is secretly plotting to bring the

Entity to an inhabited world. If a whole cluster cannot be transported, enough of its matter to rapidly create a new Cluster will suffice. Jarla's supporters do not share her allegiance but are sufficiently suspicious of the other factions that they will follow Jarla's lead even if obviously questionable acts are called for.



MISSION FACTION MEMBER

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human/Vargr	—	—
TRAITS	—	
STR	INT	SKILLS
5	9	Electronics (computers) 2, Melee 0, Recon 0, Science (varies) 3
DEX	EDU	
8	9	
END	SOC	
9	7	
WEAPONS	Improvised Weapon (2D-2)	

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Science will save us. Collect data, analyse, work the problem. Jarla seems to have some good ideas and deserves your support for now.

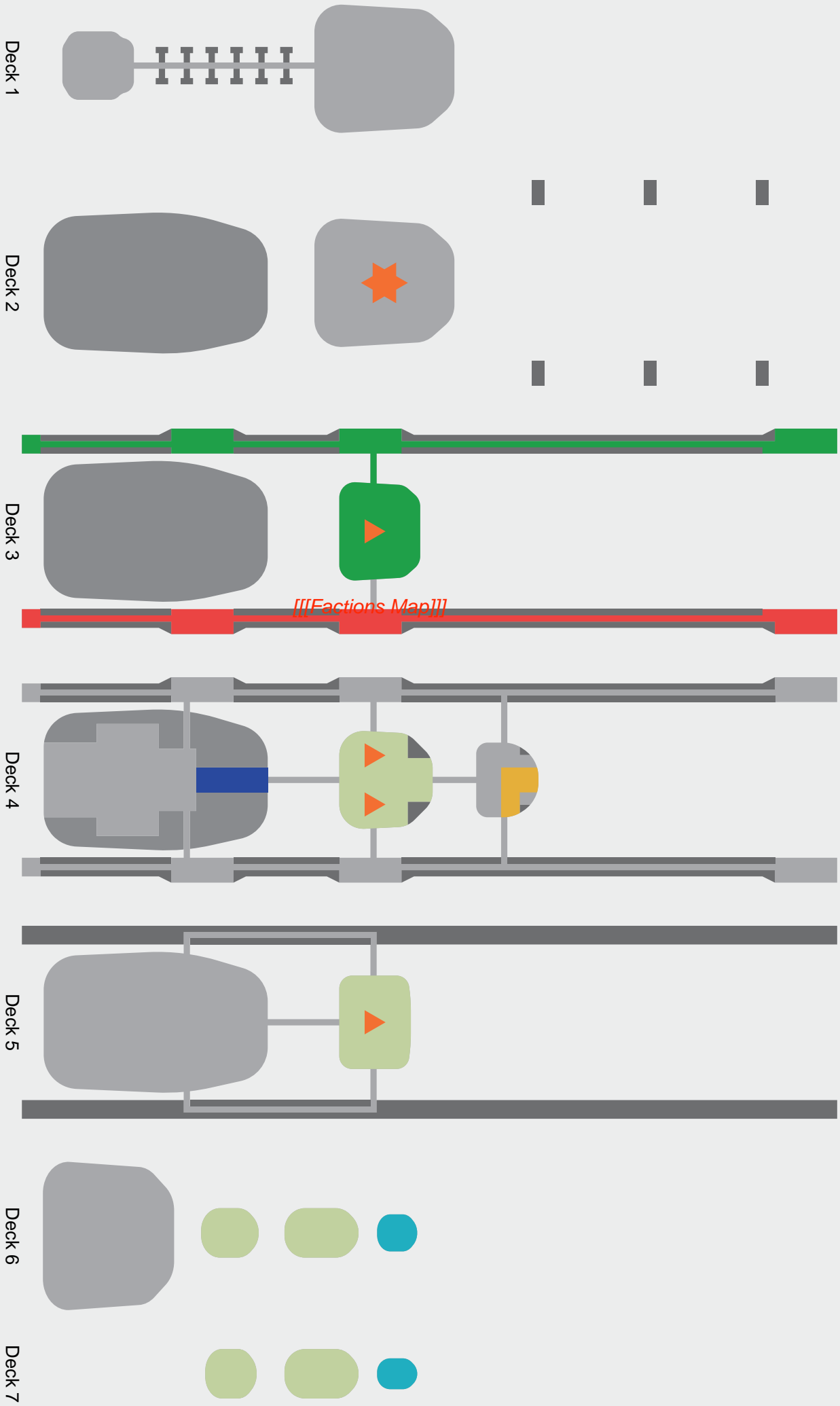
MISSION OFFICER JARLA KLEINE

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	—
TRAITS	—	
STR	INT	SKILLS
6	11	Electronics (computers) 3, Investigate 2, Melee 0, Persuade 3, Recon 0, Science (biology) 5
DEX	EDU	
2	13	
END	SOC	
5	9	
WEAPONS	Snub Revolver (3D-3)	

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

You are almost certainly the smartest person in the room and know it. Layer your cunning beneath a coating of professionalism. Listen to others and help with their survival where useful, but always keep your goals in mind.

FACTIONS AND RESOURCES



STARBOARD SIDER

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human/Vargr			—	—
TRAITS			—	
STR	6	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	8	Electronics (comms) 1, Melee 0, Recon 0, Stealth 1, Steward 1, Vacc Suit 1
END	6	SOC	6	
WEAPONS			Improvised Weapon (2D-2) or possibly a Snub Pistol (3D-3)	
ROLEPLAYING NOTES				

Unless something changes, you are going to die. Be desperate, be willing to do things you would never attempt in normal life, and seize every lifeline offered as if it were the last.

Jarla is both fully in control of herself and wholly aligned with the Entity. She will help prevent Travellers from becoming infected if it suits her long-term agenda, which is to get the Entity's central cluster tissue to an inhabited world. Occasionally, the disruption to her nervous system interferes with fine motor skills, so Jarla tries to get others to do delicate work for her. She moves very carefully, which might be noticed by Travellers, but has a standard explanation: 'Years of working around dangerous... you know, stuff... makes you careful.'

Jarla is not controlled by the Entity. She is something far more dangerous – an ally with all the cunning and intellect of a highly accomplished human. Where the Entity acts on instinct, Jarla makes careful plans. She has no emotional attachment to any part of the Entity, not even the main Cluster. She understands its nature – if any part of it survives, all of it does – and will tell Travellers how to kill Clusters so long as she is sure she can preserve one elsewhere.

THE STARBOARD SIDERS

Members: 8–12

Primary Location: Starboard PSM

Agenda: Not die today

Notable Members:

- Starboard Sider

The Starboard Siders are not a faction as such, although they cooperate with one another to some extent. The only thing they have in common is that

OTHER SURVIVOR

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human/Vargr			—	—
TRAITS			—	
STR	6	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	8	Skills vary, typically including Melee 1, Recon 1, Stealth 1
END	6	SOC	6	
WEAPONS			Improvised Weapon (2D-2) or possibly a Snub Pistol (3D-3)	
ROLEPLAYING NOTES				

Your every hour is lived in absolute terror. You are not a bad person but if others die so you can live... that is just the way it is. Take every opportunity to live, whether it is freely offered or not. Be suspicious of everything and do not think too much – if something looks like a good idea, do it.

their home territory is in the Starboard Primary Structural Member. The Starboard Siders are likely to be the first survivors encountered by the Travellers. They are desperate and frightened but not so far gone as to be completely unreasonable.

The Starboard Siders have retained some sense of crew unity and some are friends. However, they steal from one another when they have to and some survivors have died as a result of losing an item they needed. The Starboard Siders know that infection can be avoided (although not with absolute certainty) by using a cloth to cover the face and avoiding direct contact with Shamblers. They are terrified of Clouds and frightened of the armed parties from the Bridge and Engineering factions who rove through their territory from time-to-time. The usual solution is to hide and hope they pass by but there have been some bloody battles and some areas are booby-trapped to protect essential supplies.

OTHER SURVIVORS

Members: Unknown

Primary Location: Mainly Port PSM and Opsmod

Agenda: Varies

Notable Members:

- Other Survivor

An unknown number of other survivors can be found in the Operations module and what remains of the cargo pod, and in the central part of the Port PSM.

These survivors are mostly individuals or small groups of two to four who have banded together for mutual protection. They are paranoid and very frightened but they are not lunatics. Most are willing to listen to reason but their judgement is clouded by fear and a desperate need to get off the ship. The daily grind of staying alive in the wreckage of *Deepnight Endeavour*, along with the knowledge that others will kill them to take what resources they have managed to gather makes these people dangerous. They are not in any way 'psychotic barbarians' or even 'bad guys'; they are just people who may be too desperate to do anything other than kill intruders and take their supplies.

NOTABLE CHARACTER: 'GUNS'

Primary Location: Anywhere

Agenda: Destroy the Entity; prevent its spread

Andrea Ricardssen was the ship's weapons officer and is responsible for *Deepnight Endeavour's* present predicament. At the time she turned the ship's guns on the fuel cache, she was thinking clearly and acting to protect every world within jump distance. Since that time, however, she has become dangerously (though lucidly) psychotic.

Attacked by several crewmembers after using the particle weapons, 'Guns' somehow fought free of them and escaped, although she was badly injured. She is scarred and limps when walking but can run and fight with a shocking intensity that belies her injuries. 'Guns' is something of a lost soul. She knows the ship and her crew can never return home – must never be allowed to do so – but wants to live as much as anyone else. This manifests as rage against the Entity and leads her to seek out and destroy Shamblers with the laser rifle she has obtained.

'Guns' will assist anyone, of any faction, who is in danger but is also willing to kill to prevent anyone – including the Travellers – from leaving the ship. She will probably become an ally of the Travellers in the short term but will oppose them if they try to leave. Her goals can be overridden by a desire to strike at the Entity, which she hates with a white-hot passion. She would probably trade her life for a chance to cause it some real harm.



WEAPONS OFFICER ANDREA 'GUNS' RICARDSSSEN

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			Female	—
TRAITS			—	
STR	6	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	9	EDU	9	
END	6	SOC	8	
WEAPONS			Gun Combat (energy) 1, Gunner (capital) 3, Recon 2, Stealth 1, Vacc Suit 2	
			Laser Rifle (5D+3), snub pistol (3D-3)	

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

The Entity must be destroyed – everything else can (and perhaps must) be sacrificed to achieve that. Your 'default mode' is a quiet, smouldering intensity but it should be evident that the wrong trigger will launch you into a terrifying, manic rage in an instant. When the trigger is resolved, calm yourself immediately, as if a switch has been pressed.

NOTABLE CHARACTER: TRENNANCE ZEDEHLALE

Primary Location: Starboard PSM

Agenda: Survive, escape, rescue as many survivors as possible.

Trennance is an Imperial citizen of Darrian extraction. Whilst uncommon, this is not remarkable, although there are some who think it has a bearing on his aptitude for science. Trennance was a research assistant aboard *Deepnight Endeavour*, a multi-skilled individual tasked with providing support to any of the scientists and crew. As such, he was occasionally assigned to some distant part of the ship. A long and extremely boring reconfiguration of the portside extendable array (on the port PSM) kept him out of the life sciences area during the initial stages of infection, and his quick grasp of how the infection was spreading enabled him to advise others on protecting themselves.

Trennance found none of the factions to his liking and stayed out of the fighting. Instead, he ranged the ship and eventually created a fairly secure hideout in one of the starboard PSM laser turrets. Gathering what supplies he could, he created stashes and traded items and advice with other independent survivors. Trennance knows most of those in the starboard PSM and is well thought of, although goodwill only goes so far. The rest of the ship is far more dangerous.

Trennance is smart enough to seek out the Travellers and observe them, then make contact if they seem amenable. They represent his best chance of getting off the ship alive, although he will prefer to work with them to save the ship or at least some crewmembers rather than just saving himself. Although Trennance' first approach to the Travellers is motivated by pragmatism, if treated reasonably he will develop a similar loyalty to them as he has to crewmembers of *Deepnight Endeavour* – that is, he will help out even if it does not benefit him, just because it seems like the right thing to do. It would take a lot to make Trennance actively betray someone but he is first and foremost a survivor and knows that others can turn on him. His trust and willingness to provide assistance may only go so far.

Trennance is likely to be a source of information for the Travellers, although that is a two-way street. He will give a little to establish goodwill but thereafter expects something in return. If threatened or mistreated he will slip away and avoid further contact, making the Travellers' task a lot harder.



TRENNANCE ZEDEHLALE

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE
Darrian			Male		—
TRAITS			—		
STR	5	INT	11	SKILLS	
DEX	8	EDU	9	Electronics (computers) 1, Gun Combat 0, Investigate 1, Jack-of-all-Trades 2, Mechanic 1, Persuade 1, Recon 1, Stealth 0, Vacc Suit 2	
END	6	SOC	7		
WEAPONS			Snub Carbine (3D-2), Club (2D)		
ROLEPLAYING NOTES					

You are a natural survivor but not evil. Pragmatic but not callous. If someone needs help and it does not cost you anything, you will lend a hand. By the same turn, if someone endangers you, you will at first try to distance yourself and, if that fails, act against them.

IN THE DEEPEST NIGHT

This adventure does not have a set plotline. Certain events will occur and the Travellers' actions will trigger others. However, there is no single path from one end of the adventure to the other. The Travellers' goal is to survive, which means at the very least gaining access to fuel from *Deepnight Endeavour's* stocks. They may take it upon themselves to retrieve survivors or obtain assistance for the stricken vessel. They might even decide to destroy the Entity and purge it from the ship, although that would be a difficult undertaking.

The adventure could be a simple plunge into the wreckage (which will likely become a lot less simple along the way) to obtain fuel or might be a long and involved mini-campaign in which the Travellers broker an alliance between the survivor factions and assemble the necessary components of an assault upon the Entity. Their actions will determine whether the factions assist them or attempt to kill them, although to some extent the factions will tend to act in their own perceived self-interest and may not be receptive to ideas that run contrary to their own philosophy.

The Referee must adjudicate the Travellers' actions as they go rather than guiding them through a set plotline. If the Travellers become aimless, it may be useful to impose events to get them moving such as an encounter with a helpful survivor or an attack by a group seeking to steal the Travellers' ship.

Whether the Travellers seek to simply escape or aim to destroy the Entity, they will need to move around the ship searching for what they need. This may lead to incidental encounters with Shamblers or hostile survivors but the Referee should resist the temptation to turn the adventure into a 'dungeon crawl'. Too many fights will dilute the atmosphere of creeping menace about the ship and may lead the Travellers to the false conclusion that they can storm through the vessel killing everything in sight on the way to a boss fight with the central Entity. Think of *Deepnight Endeavour* as a science-fiction horror movie in which the Travellers need to find an inventive solution to their problems rather than just shooting everything in sight. It is not coincidental that most of the weapons aboard the ship are ineffective against Shamblers and Clusters.

The information below is presented by location, since the various component modules of the ship are separated from one another. This does not mean the Travellers must 'complete' one module of the ship before moving to another. They can do anything they like, moving back and forth as they please, and the Referee must adjudicate what happens in each place. In the meantime, events may be unfolding in the background.

Once the Travellers have found out a little about the situation, they are likely to formulate one of three goals:

- Obtain fuel and escape
- Take control of the ship and/or unite the factions
- Destroy the Entity and purge it from the vessel

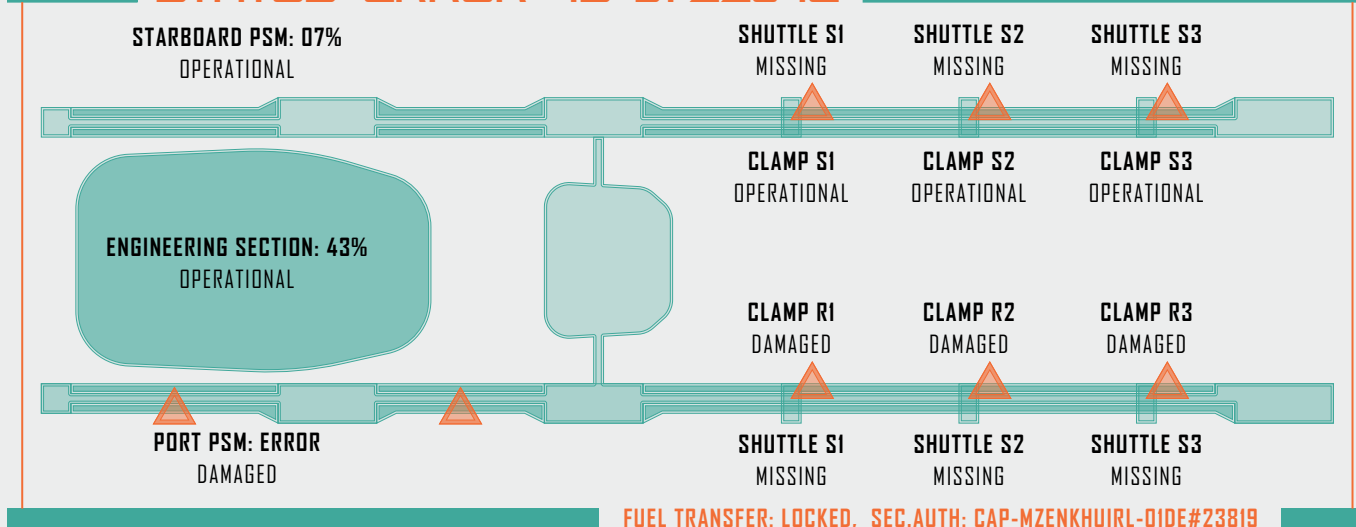
These goals can overlap and many of the tasks required to complete one goal will support another. The Referee should never forget that the survivors have their own agenda and in most cases are desperate to escape from *Deepnight Endeavour*. Few are willing to be used as cannon fodder to help the Travellers refuel their ship and escape, and those who think the Travellers intend to leave without them will – at best – try to convince them to take the survivor along. More likely, they will attempt to eliminate or neutralise the Travellers (perhaps by locking them in a compartment they cannot get out of, with or without additional hazards) and steal their ship.

Smart Travellers may be able to strike a deal with some of the survivors, perhaps by agreeing to take the Starboard Siders (or some of them) when they leave in return for guarding their ship. Arrogant, pushy or self-centred Travellers will probably end up alienating everyone they meet and uniting the factions against them.

OBTAINING FUEL

The Travellers will need fuel to escape aboard their ship. There is more than enough remaining aboard *Deepnight Endeavour* but obtaining it will be a problem. Only a little fuel remains in each of the PSM power plant tanks; most is in the central tank aboard the

STATUS: ERROR #1B-37ZZ04C



engineering section. A ship attached to a docking point such as the three remaining intact on the starboard PSM is connected to *Deepnight Endeavour's* fuel system but the machinery will not function.

Attempting a system diagnostic on the fuel transfer controls indicates the pumping system has been locked down by command from the bridge. Records indicate a rather confusing set of instructions in which fuel was pumped back and forth between the central tank in engineering and the two PSMs. Much was lost from the port PSM, whose system was heavily damaged, before the system was locked. It seems that orders originating from the bridge and the engineering section countermanded one another before the whole system was placed in emergency shutdown on the captain's authority.

To determine the fuel system is locked down and why: Average (8+) Electronics (computers) check (INT, 1D minutes).

Unlocking the system requires the authorisation of a senior officer and must be done from the bridge. However, the situation is more complex than this, as the chief engineer's authority over the system has been revoked by the captain and control over the fuel system from the bridge is no longer possible due to a control pathway interruption. This is not apparent without careful analysis of the fuel system.

To obtain additional information on the fuel system status: Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) or Admin check (INT, 6D minutes).

One way to free the fuel system would be to repair the break in the control system – which was deliberately created by the Engineering faction to prevent the bridge crew from denying them fuel – and to have a senior officer other than the engineering officer reset the system. This will require visits to the command and engineering sections.

There are other ways to solve this problem. An inventive band of Travellers might be able to hotwire the fuel processors to force a transfer into the starboard PSM tanks and from there transfer fuel to their own ship. This would be a lengthy process but provides an alternative means of escape for Travellers unable to complete the adventure any other way.

SEEKING INFORMATION FROM SURVIVORS

Once the Travellers make contact with any surviving crewmembers they will be able to obtain information. Of course, there is no guarantee how accurate or self-serving this information might be. Most survivors are desperate enough to mislead the Travellers in order to steal their ship or gain assistance against one of the other factions. For many, focus has been lost and all that now matters is control of the small and dying world that is *Deepnight Endeavour*. Some are confused or to all intents and purposes quite mad.

Much of the information that could be obtained from survivors is also stored in the ship's logs. However, only the command section has a complete set. Engineering logs deal only with technical matters whilst the mission logs, stored in the forward science pod, are full of a wealth of data of which only a little deals with what actually happened aboard the ship.

Most survivors are aware of the following set of facts:

- A scout ship came back from some alien wreck. The crew got sick and soon afterward other people did too.
- The sick crewmembers were cared for in the ship's laboratory complex in the aft science pod, which contained medical as well as life-sciences research facilities.
- *Deepnight Endeavour* stayed on station long enough to collect her subordinate craft, during which The Big Meeting took place. After a lot of discussion, the senior crew decided to head for home.
- *Deepnight Endeavour* misjumped into deep space and not long after the senior astrogator as well as a lot of the crew got sick.
- According to scuttlebutt, the astrogator said she had deliberately set up the misjump, not long before she went crazy and started attacking people.
- The captain pledged to get the ship home somehow and everyone pulled together for a while.
- The sickness spread as the ship tried to make it to a deep-space fuel cache.
- *Deepnight Endeavour* reached the cache but by then most of the crew were sick and there were weird plant-things in some compartments, with corpses shambling around the corridors. Nobody knows who started it but there was a rush for the jump-capable ships and a big fight in the portside PSM as well as some other parts of the ship.
- The weapons officer turned the guns on the fuel cache and destroyed it but not before it launched a salvo of torpedoes that crippled *Deepnight Endeavour*. 'Guns' was attacked by a mob but according to some rumours managed to escape.
- The captain and the chief engineer got a lot of people killed fighting each other for control of the ship's systems and tried to kill each other's faction off by venting compartments or turning off the power.
- The surviving Mission staff plus a few crew cut themselves off in the forward science pod and promised to find a cure but they never did.
- *Deepnight Endeavour* has been dead in space ever since. Sooner or later the power plant fuel will run out or the Shamblers will get the last survivors.

MOVING AROUND

Moving around *Deepnight Endeavour* is no longer as simple as it used to be. Some areas are barricaded off or cannot be entered by usual means. It is always possible to find a way into an area but this may mean taking a spacewalk in vacc suits and seeking a maintenance hatch or working airlock. Fuel and ventilation ducts, or rarely used access crawlways may provide other ways into an area, but in many cases these have been plugged up with wadded fabric or makeshift filters. Entry points may have covers welded over them. There is always the possibility of encountering a Cloud or Shambler, or survivors who may or may not be hostile.

Internal doors are normally set up to automatically open when someone approaches. This means they open for Shamblers as well as humans, although doors can easily be reset to require identification. It is sufficient to be carrying an identity keycard; doors and other systems can detect and scan ID within a few metres.

Secure access points include airlocks, turrets, weapon lockers and critical areas such as the bridge, computer cores and engineering spaces. These require crew identification and in some cases an additional code which must be manually input using a keypad. Secure access points do not open automatically but require the crewmember to push a stud or make a verbal command.

Crew access requires nothing more than possession of an identity card. Cards belonging to deceased or incapacitated personnel are removed from the database and will not work, but the system has been updated on a very patchy basis. Note that a Shambler with a keycard somewhere in the remains of its clothing can open any crew-access door providing it remembers enough to slap the 'open' control.

Department access is restricted to members of the relevant department plus the ship's senior officers and master-at-arms. For example, any gunner can open a turret or weapons bay but cannot access the bridge or engineering spaces unless a member of that department opens the doors. Some areas are secured at a higher level, requiring an access code known to the department's officers but which can be given to others. Codes are supposedly changed from time-to-time but *Deepnight Endeavour* is not a military ship and security has never been tight.

Restricted access is reserved for highly sensitive areas of the ship such as specialised electronics systems, hazardous materials storage, laboratories, the bridge and the armoury. Restricted access requires possession of both a code and relevant identification card. The captain, executive officer and master-at-arms have all-areas-access cards, whilst other specialised personnel have access to areas related to their role. In many cases, quite junior personnel may have restricted-level access to some areas. For example, the missile technicians had access to the magazines whereas some members of the command crew did not. Laboratory techs had access to the biomedical equipment whilst non-mission staff were locked out of it for their own good.

BYPASSING SECURITY

Most secure-access areas can be entered without the right keycards, given enough time. Doing violence to a control panel achieves nothing beyond breaking it but it is possible to run a hard bypass by interrupting the wiring or reprogramming the lock. Doing either requires a successful Average (8+) Electronics (sensors or computers) check. It is also possible

to directly induce the mechanism to open the door, requiring a Routine (6+) Mechanic check. This requires access to the mechanism, which takes D3x10 minutes if the system has to be dismantled.

Alternatively, it would be possible to create a device which spoofs the electronic locking system. Any electronic device capable of receiving the security system's interrogative signals and transmitting a response could be set up this way. A personal comm or 'frankensteined' device built out of a defunct keycard and some electronics spares could be put together in an hour or so with a Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check. This will give department level access but codes will still be required for some doors. Physically jammed, welded or barricaded doors may require physical means to access them even if the electronic lock is bypassed.

Security access is one of the challenges the Referee can place in front of the Travellers, especially if they need something from a locked area. However, the adventure should not become an endless cycle of traipsing around the ship trying to find the right department keycard to get through a door.



MODULES AND LOCATIONS

Deepnight Endeavour consists of a great many compartments, corridors and working spaces, most of which are in a similar state. It is rare to find a compartment not littered with useless items scattered about during a fight. Dimly lit, smelly and dirty, these areas would take too much time to detail to the Travellers one-by-one. Instead, the Referee should establish early in the adventure what most areas are like and indicate variations rather than attempting to spell out every little detail.

STARBOARD PSM

The starboard PSM is the most likely entry point to the ship for the Travellers. It is very much a disputed territory for the survivors and not controlled by any faction. It is possible to move around the Starboard PSM for some time without encountering any sign of life, although sooner or later an encounter with survivors will happen. Most of the starboard PSM is not contaminated, although a few Shamblers have got in and the occasional Cloud sweeps through to reconnoitre the situation. This area is the most liveable part of the ship not controlled by a faction and, not surprisingly, it has been picked over by scavengers.

The starboard PSM is connected to the command section by a set of crawlways, and to the Opsmod and Engineering section by major access corridors running through the connector modules. The corridor to the operations module contains a makeshift barricade but access to the internal airlock leading to the Opsmod is still possible. The airlock is functional and will open for anyone with a crewmember's identity card. Shamblers get in this way from time-to-time. The corridor to the engineering section is similarly barricaded and guarded by Engineering faction personnel.

PORT PSM

The central section of the port PSM is habitable, with heavy damage forward and less aft. These areas contain some compartments not open to space, which can be accessed by vacc-suited personnel. Some survivors may have constructed hideouts or equipment

stashes in this area, and there is always the possibility of being attacked by a vacc-suited survivor who thinks the Travellers are after his hard-earned stash of food and equipment. The central section sees considerable Shambler activity as the internal airlock to the operations module is jammed.

The port PSM is connected to the engineering module by way of the aft connector but since this leads into an area of mangled and depressurised wreckage the Engineering faction welded it shut on their side. The connection to the Opsmod is open as noted above and the wreckage at the fore end of the PSM is still connected to the command section, although crawlways are depressurised and difficult to negotiate in a vacc suit.

COMMAND SECTION

The command section is the territory of the Bridge faction, although there are too few of them to fill the available space. Most are congregated around the bridge area, with a few dwelling near crawlways to the starboard PSM. The command section is more or less cut off from the operations module; the corridors between them are barricaded and the doors welded shut at the command section end, and choked with Creepers at the Opsmod end as a result of a battle with Shamblers. Crawlways to the starboard PSM are still open. If the Command faction travel anywhere they must make the laborious and scary journey through the crawlways to the starboard PSM and onward from there.

OPERATIONS MODULE

The Opsmod is a sort of no-man's land picked over by scavengers. It has significant Shambler activity and there is a small Cluster in one of the compartments. This is probably the most dangerous part of the ship, other than the central science pod. Few survivors live in this area, preferring the safer territory of the PSMs. However, this does mean there is more intact salvage and better stocks of food than anywhere else, so it is visited frequently. Other survivors are as big a danger as the Shamblers.

The module is cut off from the command section as noted before but can be accessed from the starboard PSM by way of the main access corridor and airlock. The main accessway to the port PSM is jammed open. Movement between the engineering section and operations module is possible by way of the main access corridor, although the airlock at each end requires a crew access card and the Engineering faction guard the entryway to their territory.

Two of the science pods are also accessed from this area. The forward pod is very difficult to get into as the shafts have been opened to space by explosions and the internal airlock at the top requires Mission department ID or that of a senior officer. The main (central) science pod is not easily accessible but for a different reason; the elevator shafts and emergency ladders are choked with Creepers. Access to the cargo pod by way of the internal elevator/airlock is still possible but the pod is depressurised.

CARGO POD AND FLIGHT MODULE

Most of the flight module is little more than wreckage, although enough remains of the docking rail that a vacc suited person could crawl along it from one module to the other. The cargo pod is mostly open to space and contains dangerously jagged wreckage but some compartmentalised areas and lockers have survived. These have, for the most part, not been pillaged by the survivors.

ENGINEERING SECTION

The engineering section is the territory of the Engineering faction, although as with the Bridge faction they are too few to hold down their territory with complete security. Guards are maintained (as far as possible) on the corridor to the Opsmod and starboard PSM. Doors to the corridor leading into the port PSM

are welded shut, as are those leading up to the aft science pod. The latter are also heavily barricaded and the seals are checked frequently. The inter-module airlock between the flight operations pod and engineering section is shut down as the Flop is nothing but wreckage, although still works if powered up.

FORWARD SCIENCE POD

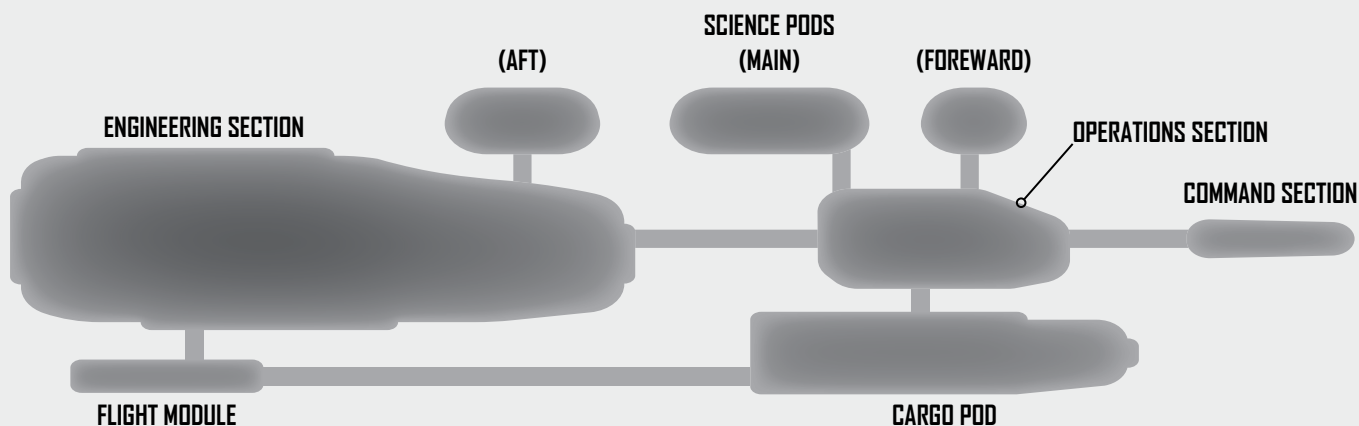
The forward science pod is the territory of the Mission faction, who have secured their position by depressurising the shaft to the Opsmod. The forward science pod is free from contamination and probably the safest place in the ship when the Travellers arrive.

MAIN SCIENCE POD

The main science pod contains the primary Cluster and numerous Shamblers, and for this reason has not been scavenged as thoroughly as the rest of the ship. It is a highly dangerous environment, with Creepers making progress difficult in most corridors and concealing Shamblers waiting in ambush.

AFT SCIENCE POD

The aft science pod contained the ship's medical facility and was the site of the initial infection. A Cluster grew in the medical/life sciences suite and would have developed into the primary Cluster had it not been attacked with improvised flame-throwing devices and laser weapons. Most of the crewmembers involved lost their lives, along with the majority of the available laser rifles. Explosions blew out some compartments, opening part of the pod to space, which had the effect of curtailing growth of the Cluster in this pod. Some of the scientific equipment remains intact and could be salvaged or even used in situ. Not surprisingly, the Engineering faction sealed off this pod after the failed assault on the Cluster.



RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The following is a general outline for how the adventure might play out. Travellers being what they are, this plan might not survive contact with the docking ports but most groups will follow at least the general outline – or parts of it. There is no reason why the Referee has to stick to these guidelines, however. The Travellers' choices might lead to a quite different adventure path, requiring the Referee to adjudicate accordingly.

Note that there may be a considerable amount of to-ing and fro-ing as the adventure plays out. The Travellers may end up acting as middle-men or carrying out tasks for various factions as they attempt to bargain for what they need or create an alliance to take on the Entity. This will require moving around the ship, having incidental encounters with Shamblers, Clouds and survivors, and passing through the same area more than once. The Referee should not forget that the ship is mostly dark and smelly, and that creeping death may lie just around the next corner. Prolonged movement is almost as dangerous as staying too long in one place; there is no real safety to be had aboard *Deepnight Endeavour*.

The Referee should impose encounters whenever they seem appropriate but should resist the temptation to turn the adventure into a series of fights. Success requires negotiation, stealth, ingenuity and improvisation as well as well-timed violence. Different groups of Travellers might even define success in various ways – for many, just getting out alive will suffice.

A quick and easy briefing for the Travellers is provided here but, in an ongoing campaign, the Referee might like his group to begin picking up rumours of the *Deepnight Endeavour* and perhaps engage in several adventures as they finally track down the location of the ship.

TRAVELLERS' BRIEFING

Deepnight Endeavour was a research vessel, the flagship of the Deepnight Exploration corporation's fleet. She was big, capable and highly prestigious. When she went missing a year ago, Deepnight

Exploration suffered a major financial loss; their stock took a serious hit in the markets and the firm lost potential contracts. Not surprisingly, they offered a large reward for information leading to the recovery of *Deepnight Endeavour* or any of her crew.

Nothing was found and the search was reluctantly abandoned. However, not everyone stopped looking. You had your reasons – a friend or relative aboard, hope of sharing in the vast reward for the ship's recovery, maybe the chance to impress Deepnight Exploration and get a berth aboard one of their other ships. Maybe it was the call of the unknown or the hope of salvaging something from the wreck but, for you, the search went on.

Eventually the threads came together. Rumours on the datanet about a trans-rift exploration ship picking up a months-old distress call from *Deepnight Endeavour*, the accidental discovery of records detailing an old navy refuelling cache in the Great Rift... fragments of data that spiralled together. If *Deepnight Endeavour* was there, at that time, then she might have tried for the cache. Perhaps there are clues there...?

The potential payoff seemed worth a week there and back. A simple enough trip – jump out to the cache and run a deep-space sensor sweep. Refuel and head back if nothing was found. It was a long shot but you don't get lucky if you don't give yourself the chance. So here you are, emerging from jump space in the Great Rift, probably on a fool's errand.

Sensor data coming in suggests it wasn't so foolish.... You've found her!

What's left of her, anyway....

PRELIMINARY RECONNAISSANCE

Upon emerging from jump, the Travellers easily locate *Deepnight Endeavour*. She is broadcasting a low-powered transponder signal and has some energy emissions suggesting that at least some parts of her hull are still powered. However, all is clearly not well. *Deepnight*

Endeavour is at the centre of a slowly expanding debris cloud. Her six fuel shuttles are missing and the docking rail as well as most of the flight operations pod are gone. She has no radar or other sensor emissions, and does not respond to communications.

To analyse the debris pattern: Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check (INT, 2D minutes). Success indicates two central points from which the debris was scattered. The first is *Deepnight Endeavour* herself, centring on the flight operations pod but with hits scored elsewhere on the hull. The second debris source was about 500 kilometres from *Deepnight Endeavour*, apparently a catastrophic explosion scattering wreckage at a higher velocity than that originating from the ship. This was the deep-space refuelling cache; there is nothing left of it now.

Anyone with experience of naval operations can deduce that *Deepnight Endeavour* exchanged fire with the cache, which was presumably defended by an automated system. She received a concentrated missile salvo on her underside and a few hits elsewhere on the hull. This has resulted in a slow tumble that will make docking slightly tricky but by no means impossible. The obvious docking point on the flight operations pod is nothing more than twisted wreckage now but there are other options.

A flyby will indicate the general condition of the various components and suggest options for gaining entry.

Starboard PSM: Apparently intact despite some missile impacts. Some lights are on.

Port PSM: Forward section heavily damaged, dark and clearly open to space in some areas. Lights are on in the aft third, up to the connector leading to the engineering section. All three fueller attachment points are destroyed.

Command Section: Apparently intact, lights are on in some compartments.

Operations Module: Apparently intact, lights are on in some compartments.

Engineering Section: Some damage to the ventral surface, lights are on in some compartments.

Flight Operations Module: Comprehensively wrecked, little remains but loosely attached debris.

Cargo Module: Heavily damaged, no lights are on. Forward access airlock is twisted and could not dock a ship but might be used for personnel entry.

Forward Science Pod: Apparently intact but only loosely attached to the hull. Appears to have suffered an explosion at the base attachment point.

Main Science Pod: Apparently intact, few lights on.

Aft Science Pod: Damaged and holed in places. Dark and at least partially open to space.



ENTERING THE HULL

The best prospects for gaining entry are the port and starboard Primary Structural Modules. Docking points for the fuel shuttles along the underside are more or less intact as is the starboard PSM. Any hull breach could be used by personnel, as could the remains of the cargo airlock, although getting from a holed section to one with atmosphere might pose a problem.

Hull breaches are for the most part quite small, too small for a person to fit through. Those that are accessible have jagged edges that could snag and tear a vacc suit, and lead into a depressurised area a few compartments in size. Internal doors and compartmentalisation have reduced the amount of the ship opened to space and limit the area that can be explored from a breach without finding a way into a compartment that still has air. The easiest way to do this is to set up an inflatable emergency airlock and cut through the bulkhead. This will create a weak area which might be torn open by accident or weapons fire but which will allow access without depressurising the chambers beyond.

Depressurised areas will have lost many small objects out of the breach during the first few seconds, although larger and heavier items remain. Corpses found in these areas will not show signs of changing into a Shambler unless already subject to advanced infection, but an infected corpse might begin to change once brought into an area not exposed to the cold of space. Indeed, a recovered body might reanimate at an inopportune time.

To avoid snagging a vacc suit whilst entering a jagged breach: Routine (6+) Vacc Suit check (DEX, 1D minutes).

Entering through a functioning airlock avoids these problems, although it may alert survivors in nearby compartments. The airlocks in the intact parts of the PSMs still function and the Travellers' ship can dock directly to one of the fueller attachment points on the starboard PSM.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Travellers may gain an impression of the situation aboard *Deepnight Endeavour* from an initial flyby, along with physical observations and sensor readings. After docking, they will have a chance to observe conditions inside the ship. The Referee is advised to approach

this part of the adventure slowly and establish the general look and feel of the interior. This can then be alluded to later without having to repeat descriptions. The Travellers should be given time to wonder what has happened and develop a sense of threat about the silent, dimly lit corridors and compartments of *Deepnight Endeavour*.

It is likely that the Travellers will enter the ship through the starboard PSM, arriving in an area of the ship that has light and air. It is obvious that things are not good – to put it mildly – and the Travellers should be asked to make the occasional Recon check. The Referee should play for tension, describing half-seen movements at the edge of vision, odd sounds in the ducts, shouts or shots in the distance from time-to-time and other 'horror movie' gambits to raise tension without resolution.

This should not go on for too long, or the Travellers will become bored and blasé. They should be permitted to search a few empty cabins and compartments, finding plenty of litter and broken personal effects but little of use. The following facts should be established during this phase of the adventure:

1. The lights are dim and often flicker. They are out in some areas, leaving just the emergency lighting. This, too, is non-functional in some places.
2. Most compartments have been ransacked. Personal effects and clothing are strewn about but there are no signs of anything that could be used as a tool or weapon.
3. The air is circulating but smells bad, yet does not set off chemical or biological warning devices.
4. Water supply is intermittent and tastes bad. Chemical analysis shows it is contaminated with unpleasant but not dangerous levels of a variety of chemicals, all of which are found aboard starships. There is nothing to suggest that the water situation is due to anything other than lack of maintenance.

These conditions apply throughout the ship, unless indicated otherwise.

ENCOUNTER WITH A SHAMBLER

The Travellers' first encounter with a Shambler should be played for mystery and horror rather than a simple fight. Ideally, the Travellers will wonder what manner of creature they have encountered, then become slowly aware that it is a caricature of a human (or Vargr, or some other spacefaring race represented in the crew of *Deepnight Endeavour*) and its intentions are hostile. Shamblers are hard to kill, which may result in an initial feeling of confidence turning to desperation.



Once the Shambler has been brought down it can be examined. There is a risk of infection during the fight and subsequent examination of the corpse. Observant Travellers may realise this is the case and any analysis of the Shambler's tissues will indicate the tissues are more like fungus than animal flesh, and that the outer surfaces are covered in tiny hair-fine tendrils that break off to form something like spores. It will also be apparent that the Shambler used to be a person.

Standard precautions like using gloves and probes rather than touching the Shambler's tissues with bare skin will suffice to prevent infection on this occasion and the Referee should not inflict infection upon a Traveller at this stage unless they do something very stupid.

To realise that 'you shouldn't touch that with bare skin': Routine (6+) Recon or Survival check (INT, 1D seconds).

To conduct a basic analysis of the Shambler's tissues: Average (8+) Science (biology) check (EDU, 4D minutes).

This encounter should alert the Travellers to what they are up against whilst posing more questions than providing answers.

CONTACT WITH SURVIVORS

As the Travellers explore further, they will sooner or later encounter survivors. If the Travellers are keen on combat, the Referee can drop in a fight with desperate survivors wanting to steal their equipment, supplies or ship. Survivors who choose to attack will attempt an ambush rather than a head-on attack, although some will prefer to get the drop on their victims and demand they hand over weapons or supplies rather than kill them. This is sometimes due to a reluctance to kill other survivors but can also be self-interest of a sort – the more humans are alive aboard the ship, the more the Shambler threat is diluted.

Sooner or later, the Travellers will encounter someone willing to talk. This may well be Trennance. If so, he will observe the Travellers before making contact. He is good at this but might be spotted.

To realise the Travellers are being watched: Difficult (10+) Recon check (2D seconds, INT)

Trennance will think more highly of a group that spots him and either challenges or sneaks up and corners him without doing violence than one that blunders around unawares. Shooting at him without effect is not a deal-breaker – Trennance knows everyone is jittery and will still attempt peaceful contact if possible.

It is obvious to Trennace (and other potentially friendly survivors) that the Travellers are new arrivals and must therefore have a ship. He concludes that it is in his interest to help the Travellers, although he is only willing to provide so much information without getting something concrete in return.

Trennace can arrange meetings with other survivors in the starboard PSM and the Engineering faction. He is not exactly friendly with the latter but has a working relationship based on mutual benefit. He can also provide a general outline of the situation aboard *Deepnight Endeavour*.

The Referee can use Trennace or other non-hostile survivors to provide guidance to the Travellers and the following advice may be available at a price:

Getting fuel: The fuel system is locked down from the bridge and requires authorisation of the captain or senior surviving officer (other than the engineering officer but most survivors do not know that). The control pathway to the engineering section where the fuel pumping equipment is located has been severed.

Solutions:

1. Reinstate the engineering officer's command privileges (requires the approval of the captain or senior surviving officer).
2. Repair the control pathway breach (control circuits have been physically severed between the Opsmod and Teksec) and run the fuel transfer from the bridge.
3. Any of the senior officers (captain, executive officer and so on, or the senior surviving member of the chain of command, or someone acting with their authorisation) could go to the engineering section and control the fuel system from there. Only the senior surviving officer can authorise someone to do this, essentially co-opting them into the chain of command as a replacement officer and updating the ship's records to show this.

Uniting the factions or obtaining their

cooperation: You're kidding, right? Not long ago the Bridge and Engineering factions were battling to the death, and the Mission group has barricaded itself in the forward science pod and gone silent. You're not kidding? Well then....

Solutions:

1. Everyone has something they want. At the most basic level this is food, water, powerplant fuel and the like; ammunition and tools or spares as well. Minimal cooperation could be set up by third parties perceived to be neutral, perhaps by arranging trade for necessary items as a way of establishing cooperation and reducing enmity. Generating trust and goodwill is a bit much to ask....
2. On a slightly grander scale, one thing very much lacking around here is hope. If someone can present the factions with a workable plan that offers a chance of something beyond a slow death and turning into a Shambler, most survivors will listen. Some have done things they will not believe can be forgiven (and some are right) and will try to steal a ship or increase their power aboard the dying *Deepnight Endeavour* rather than grasp the slim chance of salvation... but most will grab at a lifeline once convinced it is for real.
3. Any sort of concerted action will require clear benefits for everyone and something up front; little is taken on trust aboard *Deepnight Endeavour*. The idea that the Travellers could go for help aboard their ship, leaving the survivors behind, might be the best hope for everyone aboard but getting the factions to believe the Travellers will not abandon them will be very difficult.
4. It might be easiest to ram a plan down the factions' throats by force or with the threat of annihilation as the alternative. That could be done by convincing them of imminent destruction of the ship or an overwhelming attack by the Entity, or by threatening to vent an entire module to space or open it up and let the Shamblers in. Any threat has to be credible and if the Travellers go down that road their bluff is likely to be called. People who have been living in the shadow of a horrible death for months may not react the way outsiders expect.

Destroy the Entity and save the ship: This is not an original idea; others have tried. 'We made a big attack on the aft science pod and tried to kill some sort of... thing... that was growing there. A lot of us died, and we didn't succeed... although we did damage it pretty good'.

Solutions:

1. It would first be necessary to destroy any Clusters and hunt down Shamblers, then undertake a detailed search for Clouds and Creepers.
2. Venting an area to space will freeze all components of the Entity but will not kill them. Shamblers can function for a time in vacuum and air reserves are limited. Causing explosive

decompression to empty a compartment of bad stuff will waste air that cannot be spared.

3. It might be possible to clear out sections of the ship and decontaminate them, gradually moving into the more heavily contaminated areas once enough of the vessel is made safe.
4. A cure for the infection might be possible. The Mission faction was working on one but it is not known how far they progressed.

THE BRIDGE FACTION

Making contact with the Bridge faction is not easy. They gave up monitoring external communications a long time ago and mostly remain sequestered in the command section. Getting into it by way of the Opsmod would be very difficult, leaving the crawlways from the starboard PSM as the only option. Anyone coming in this way is certain to be detected, by a reconnaissance party or sentries at the PSM end of the crawlways if factions members are abroad and at the command section end if not. Contact might be made by sending a messenger – perhaps Trennance – to invite some of the Bridge faction to a meeting in the PSM.

The Bridge faction are defensively minded and very security conscious, to the point they are tending to send out less and less scavenging parties. They are already very short on rations and suffering from malnutrition. At the same time, the faction is held together by respect for the chain of command and the captain's authority, and cannot tolerate any challenge to these concepts. Captain Zenkhuirli knows just how fragile his control over his followers can be and if necessary will make an example of anyone who shows dissent or disrespect. He has a particular and personal hatred for 'Guns' as she destroyed the fuel cache that could have got *Deepnight Endeavour* home. He also despises the chief engineer as a traitor and would be very reluctant to work with her. The Mission faction are an unknown to the captain; the science teams were always outside his immediate remit so going their own way did not offend the captain the way the Engineering-led mutiny did.

The Bridge faction is desperate for food and wants to regain control over the ship's systems. Any plan or bargain that offers this will be attractive but for now the faction members are more stubborn than desperate. A working relationship could be established if the Travellers can set up a reliable supply line, perhaps arranging for independent survivors to scavenge food and necessary components for the Bridge faction. If any of the independents can be induced to swear renewed allegiance to the captain, essentially joining the Bridge faction, this will go a long way towards developing trust.

THE ENGINEERING FACTION

The Engineering faction is both the most amenable to bargaining and the hardest to win over of the factions. The Engineers are willing to make a deal with anyone who has something to offer and tend to play fair with anyone who has not betrayed them. However, their position is probably the best of all the factions. They have control of the main powerplant and plenty of fuel for it, reasonable stocks of food and access to workshops they can use to make whatever they need.

The Engineering faction does not hate the 'Bridgers' anything like as much as the Bridge faction hates them. There is bad blood as a result of the fighting that took place during the mutiny but the Engineers' attitude to the captain is more a loss of faith than enmity. The captain would be very surprised to hear his former chief engineer was willing to work with him and might not believe it, but it is true so long as there are guarantees of good faith.

The Engineering faction simply wants to survive. That seems to mean getting off the ship but if someone were to come up with a workable plan to take on the Entity and destroy it, they would be willing to listen. In the meantime, they have created a workable system and will probably survive longer than the other factions. The Engineers are well aware of the eventual outcome aboard *Deepnight Endeavour* but at present can see little chance of avoiding it other than outlasting the Bridge faction and using the remaining resources aboard the ship to do... something. As yet, no clear plan has emerged.

The Engineers are thus easy to talk to but require convincing to get involved in any plan other than their own. They can afford to wait whereas the Bridgers cannot. If the Bridge faction became enough of a threat, the Engineers might consider cutting off the power to the command section but this would be hard to do and essentially pointless unless the backup power system in the module was disabled. As yet, the Engineering faction does not know its status and has no way to shut it down remotely. If things got bad enough between the command and engineering factions, the Travellers might be asked to assist, perhaps trading the murder of a third of the surviving crew for fuel.

THE MISSION FACTION

The mission faction is more active than the others know, using vacc suits to transit outside the ship. They have a jury-rigged airlock in the port PSM to enter the main hull sections, although sometimes maintenance hatches and other secondary access points are used.

The Mission faction has an adequate supply of water, air and food, and has repurposed scientific equipment in the forward science pod to investigate the Entity and its subordinate beings.

The Mission faction has a partial... antidote, cure... there is no term for exactly what is needed. The antidote at present will only slow down the progress of infection. Each dose is effective for 3D hours and grants DM+4 on checks to avoid infection. For those already infected, progress is halted for the effective period. The Mission faction know how valuable this would be to the other survivors but have not shared or offered it for trade. This is in part because it is difficult to make and requires core cells from a Shambler. Extraction is tricky and dangerous, even after the Shambler has been put out of action.

Cells from a Cluster might work even better and the Mission faction is keen to obtain some. Their own personnel are unwilling to take the risk but Travellers may be willing to give it a go in return for the antidote.

The Mission faction is amenable to bargaining or a workable plan and has no hatred of the other factions – there is plenty of mistrust, however! Jarla will go along with any plan to wipe out the Entity so long as she can save some core Cluster cells. This is all she needs to infect a whole world and if destroying the rest of the Entity is the price tag for that, she is willing to pay it.

Given enough time and a lot (a few kilograms) of core Cluster cells, the Mission faction could create an agent that will kill spores. It will not harm Shamblers or Clusters but will render Clouds inert and harmless, and decontaminate areas. The initial form is a vaporous suspension which would need to be laboriously sprayed into every corner of an area, but with additional work – requiring many weeks in a decent life sciences lab – an airborne agent could be created which could be introduced into the air supply. The ship would gradually become safe again as the air circulated and spores slowly died. However, sources of spores such as Shamblers, Creepers and Clusters would have to be rooted out and destroyed.

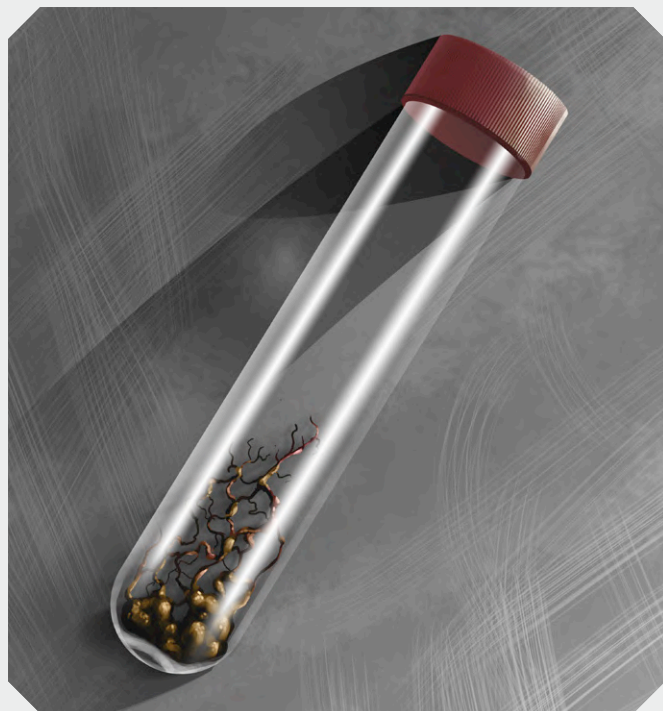
Similarly, a cure capable of reversing infection could be created using core Cluster cells. This would require significant research, building on the existing partial antidote. The only lab suitable for creating the cure or the decontamination agent is in the life sciences section of the sealed-off Aft Science Pod. Much of it is open to space and there is a Cluster inside which would need to be cleared out but, in theory, a concerted effort could retake this part of the ship, after which work might begin on the counter-agent.

Note: Jarla will actively work towards a cure and purge of the ship. It suits her purposes for *Deepnight Endeavour* to be pronounced safe and will allay suspicion. Her only deviation from the plan will be to preserve some Cluster tissue where she can later retrieve it. To this end, she might send someone to make a secret stash – perhaps even one of the Travellers – saying the tissue is needed for a cure and she cannot risk its destruction by well-meaning crewmembers. She will also argue for tissue to be preserved in the laboratory against future need for a cure.

It is likely that unless her plan is discovered, Jarla will never actively betray the Travellers; instead she will allow them to 'win' and carry her to a world where she can begin the infection process. However, if the Travellers are too successful against the Entity and Jarla is not sure she can obtain core cells, she will try to impede or even kill the Travellers. Ideally, she would prefer to send them somewhere the Entity can kill them (and use their cells!) but turning other survivors against the Travellers is also an option.

GUNS

At some point, the Travellers will encounter 'Guns'. She is a zealot these days, fighting the Entity any way she can, and will jump aboard any plan to attack it. The idea



of extracting tissue to study is questionable in her view and will vigorously argue against it unless someone convinces her that it will lead to a cure and maybe the destruction of the Entity as a whole.

'Guns' has an idea to take out the Cluster in the main science pod (and the aft one too, if necessary). The weapons turrets along the upper surfaces of the PSMs could bear on the pods if the safety locks were removed. This would require a major reprogramming job but could be done by a skilled person.

To remove the safety locks from one of the ship's turrets: Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (computer) check (2D hours, INT). It is possible to retry multiple times, adding an additional 1D hours to the time for every negative Effect point.

The guns would also have to be freed to fire. The captain has set the ship's weaponry to 'tight' after the fuel cache incident and 'Guns' has had her authority revoked. It would thus be necessary to convince the captain to allow the Travellers to fire on his ship with its own weapons. The Travellers' own ship may also have suitable weaponry.

Lasers will not completely destroy the Entity but will open compartments to space and freeze what survives, causing it to become inert. This would make harvesting cells very easy. A pod could also be severed, removing whatever Entity components are inside from the ship.

ENDGAME

There are three possible 'wins' for the Travellers:

1. Total Victory: The Entity is defeated and the ship purged using a combination of the antidote/ counter-agent and other means such as ultraviolet light or intense heat.
2. Partial Victory: The Travellers manage to rescue some or all of the crew in an uninfected or cured state. A rescue mission might be arranged now that *Deepnight Endeavour* has been found.
3. Escape: The Travellers manage to refuel their ship and escape without being infected or obtain a cure then make their escape.

Ironically, the two victory outcomes carry a risk of defeat – and defeat of unimaginable proportions. If infected crewmembers are brought to an inhabited world they will sooner or later get sick and the process

will repeat on a planet-wide scale. If Jarla manages to reach an inhabited world (or even another ship) with core tissue, the infection process will be far more rapid and guided by a deceitful but brilliant human intellect. It is possible that the Travellers might be asked to return to *Deepnight Endeavour* seeking a cure or to go to an infected world – they will be the nearest thing to experts the authorities can find.

The outcome of the adventure thus depends entirely on the Travellers' actions. The following checklist indicates what might be necessary to win a total victory, although Travellers being who they are they may well find a much harder way to do it!

1. Board *Deepnight Endeavour*
2. Initial investigation
3. Encounter the Shamblers
4. Meet the survivors
5. Learn about the factions and find out what they want
6. Obtain the Bridge faction's cooperation by securing their food supply
7. Establishing a working relationship with the Engineering faction
8. Enter the cut-off forward science pod and meet the Mission faction
9. Find out what is needed for a cure
10. Obtain core cells from a Cluster
11. Clear out the aft science pod and secure it
12. Stay alive whilst the surviving scientists work on a cure or decontaminating agent
13. Destroy the remaining clusters and decontaminate the ship
14. (Optional: Discover Jarla's intentions and stop her)

Some or even all of these tasks can be carried out despite opposition from some of the factions, and independent survivors may impede the Travellers as they try to get through another day. Ideally, the Travellers will be able to win over the factions and some of the independents, giving them greater manpower and a larger skills pool to work with. However, the Travellers' fate (and that of *Deepnight Endeavour*) is ultimately in their own hands. They will make their own decisions and act upon them.

Perhaps the Travellers will succeed, or perhaps they will join the crew of *Deepnight Endeavour* in a lonely interstellar grave. Perhaps someone else will find the Entity aboard the ancient Droyne ship or *Deepnight Endeavour* herself. Perhaps someone already has....

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONRY

Virtually all guns aboard *Deepnight Endeavour* are of two designs, both based on the snub pistol and its 10mm ammunition.

SNUB REVOLVER

The standard sidearm is a six-shot revolver, a top-break design with chambers accessed by releasing a catch and pulling the barrel down. Cartridges are ejected vigorously if the barrel is yanked, or gently pushed up so they can be picked out if the user is more careful. With a large trigger guard to accommodate gloves, this design offers very modest combat capabilities in terms of sustained fire but is easy to use even in a vacc suit. Snub revolvers are also well suited to poorly trained personnel as they have little recoil and few features. There is no external safety catch; a heavy trigger pull is the only safety feature.

SNUB CARBINE

The ship's armoury also contains snub carbines for use by security personnel or those who might have need of greater firepower. Using the same ammunition as the revolver, the carbine is fed from a 24-round magazine and capable of burst fire. Fully-automatic weapons were not considered desirable by mission planners, although security personnel might disagree.



WEAPON	TL	RANGE	DAMAGE	KG	COST	MAGAZINE	MAGAZINE COST	TRAITS
Snub Revolver	8	5	3D-3	1	Cr160	6	Cr10	Zero-G
Snub Carbine	8	25	3D-2	3	Cr300	24	Cr30	Zero-G. Auto 3

The only 'combat' weapons aboard *Deepnight Endeavour* were TL11 laser rifles (see page 129 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*), intended to be broken out at need but hopefully stored in the armoury for the duration of the mission. Whilst a few snub revolvers were located in security lockers around the ship, all

laser rifles were locked up in the armoury. However, most were used during the assault on the Cluster in the aft science pod and the majority lost with their owners. A handful remain, carefully hidden or carried by owners who prize them highly. These weapons have proven highly effective against Shamblers, which snub weapons have not.

GREAT RIFT ADVENTURE 3

Flatlined

'Flatlined' means many things in Charted Space. It often refers to gear that is disabled or broken, but it can also describe someone whose vital signs have stopped. Flatlining in a low berth means going into cryogenic suspension but not surviving the experience.

The Travellers wake up from cold sleep after nearly flatlining, and find themselves in a sinking ship on an unknown world. They must escape their predicament, make their way to safety and hopefully find their way off the forlorn planet.

They hole up with the staff of a remote mining camp, one that has been besieged by hungry, subterranean creatures. Help is far away and they must survive the night with the miners' help, but something more sinister is going on. The Travellers discover that the creatures are only part of the problem, and the miners might not be who they seem.

INTRODUCTION

Flatlined takes place on the world of Neon, in Usher subsector of Reft. The Travellers wake up in low berths, still groggy from the effects of suspended animation, only to discover they are on a sinking spacecraft that has crashed into a lake. They do not remember how they got there; they barely recall their own names. The crew is nowhere to be found and they must find their way out before it is too late, but their troubles only begin there.

Should they make it to shore, they find themselves in the wilderness of an alien world with no help to be found. With whatever supplies they have thrown together, they make their way inland and find clues about their whereabouts. At last, they make it to a mining complex, run by a small group of workers, a few of whom were the crew of the ship. As they begin to figure out what happened, they discover there was something sinister afoot. They were not voluntary passengers at all, but 'skill jacked' for their technical training, intended to be auctioned off as slaves.

Before they can unravel the mystery, there is a more pressing issue. The camp is under siege by an insidious native species that only comes out at night. Help is far away and there is no way to get to civilisation before the sun sets. The Travellers and the staff of the camp, one or more of whom might have been complicit in their kidnapping, must work together to survive the night... or be eaten in the process.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure requires no in-game setup. Indeed, the opening scene is designed to catapult the Travellers into the middle of a crisis with no idea how they got there. However, the Referee will need to have some answers ready when the Travellers start looking for them. The Referee will need to decide how the Travellers came to be in their present predicament, although the Travellers will initially be told they simply do not remember. Eventually, their memories will return and they will be able to figure out what might have happened. A default version of events is presented below but the Referee can devise some other explanation if this suits his campaign better.

The Travellers awaken from low berths in a crippled vessel, only to discover it is deserted and sinking in a lake. Their first challenge is to escape from the vessel and get ashore, ideally with equipment. Questions about how and why they are here will have to wait until the immediate crisis is over. The Referee should emphasise the tension and limited time available to escape and not allow the Travellers to ponder how they came to be here.

Once ashore, the Travellers find they are in a wilderness, with only one settlement in sight; it should be possible to get there by nightfall. Along the way, the Travellers find a body, presumably a crewmember from the crashed ship. Finally reaching the settlement, they discover there are survivors, including some members of the ship's crew. The settlement is known as Proving Site Nine, a small outpost maintained by a minerals company, and the occupants are in deep trouble.

As night falls, the Travellers find themselves holed up in a remote outpost with no communications. With them are two members of a crew who apparently left them to die, a fellow survivor who may be highly uncooperative and the surviving members of the outpost crew. They tell of how something killed their fellows; something that even now stalks the outpost. However, some of these people are not what they seem and have an agenda that does not include live Travellers once the sun comes up.

Assuming they can survive the night, the Travellers may be able to piece together what happened and begin their journey back to interstellar civilisation.

This adventure can play out in several ways, depending on the Travellers. It is written as a claustrophobic 'alien horror' type story, with the Travellers holed up in a confined space from which there is no escape. Monsters are outside but the people inside might turn out to be worse. As written, the adventure includes few weapons and little ammunition. Simply trying to march to safety while blasting aliens is not a viable option. However, the Travellers might come up with something unexpected – there is no scripted 'right way' to complete this adventure and so long as playing it is an enjoyable experience, that is all that matters.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The following information is for the use of the Referee. How much of it is made available to the Travellers, and in what manner, is for the Referee to decide. Much of this data is commonly known or available through data terminals, info feeds to Travellers' comms and so forth. However, the commonly available version may be incomplete, dumbed-down, or wildly inaccurate for all manner of reasons. The Referee has the whole story; if the Travellers want accurate information they may have to search for it or use inventive means.

USHER SUBSECTOR

Usher subsector lies on the very edge of the Great Rift. With virtually nothing for many parsecs to trailing or rimward, Usher is not on the way to anywhere and not important even as a frontier buffer zone. The regional economy is dominated by the major worlds of Tobia subsector, lying immediately to spinward, but little of its wealth spills over into Usher.

Most of the subsector is empty space, with a collection of worlds at the coreward end reachable by jump-2 vessels. The four worlds of the spinward-rimward end of the subsector are a backwater with even the most populous, Tonnurad, being of little significance in the local economy. A few trade ships ply this end of the subsector but with vastly more lucrative markets just a few parsecs away, there is little local trade of any real value.

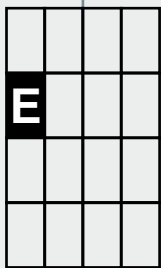
The world of Bastion, with its naval base, is the main centre of power in Usher. However, the base is equipped with just a handful of third-line patrol vessels and contributes little to the local economy. The Imperium is not threatened by the vast expanse of empty space nearby and many have questioned the need to maintain a base in the area at all.

Conspiracy theorists claim the base is used as a staging point for critically important – and highly secret – missions into the Great Rift, whilst more pragmatic thinkers suggest it is a dumping-ground for officers too dull and slow to be trusted in an area where something might actually happen. The official line is that all systems must be patrolled and bases maintained against future need. Certainly, ships from Bastion undertake patrols into Borderland subsector and the occasional task force passes through on missions whose nature is rarely made public.

NEON

Neon is the mainworld of a star system containing three gas giants, two planetoid belts and four terrestrial (rocky) planets, in addition to Neon itself. The mainworld is singularly unimportant but the planetoid belts are mined by vessels operating out of Tobia. Few of these ships call at Neon, although some will send a shuttle for fresh food or to allow crewmembers some liberty outside the artificial environment of their vessel. These occasional visits bring in little more than petty cash for the world's small starport.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Allegiance	Gas Giants
Aldaya	0212	S	B885620-6	Ag Ni Ri Ga		Imperium	G
Banskonn	0112		A582444-C	Ni		Imperium	G
Bastion	0118	N	B737532-B	Ni		Imperium	G
Cerebin	0217		B423662-C	Na Ni Po		Imperium	G
Fraaga	0511		B691420-B	Ni		Imperium	G
Grudovo	0111		B560453-C	De Ni		Imperium	G
Helifil	0313	RS	D310724-8	Na		Imperium	G
Neon	0216		D78227A-7	Lo		Imperium	G
Tonnurad	0416		B563695-7	Ni Ri			G



REF

USHER SUBSECTOR

To Vestus (page 108)

To Sagittarian (page 138)

To Void 8 (page 142)

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| ★ Imperial Navy Base | Secure System | B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level |
| ▲ Imperial Scout Base | X-Boat Route | Planet (Water Present) |
| ■ Research Station | Islands Crossing | Planet (Dry) |
| ● Anomaly | Imperium Border | Gas Giant |

Neon has an official population of just 900 but is officially listed as being balkanised as there is no centralised government. The largest population centre contains around 400 people in a single town co-located with what passes for a starport on Neon. The remainder of the population, around 500 people or so, dwell in small independent settlements scattered across the globe. Some were founded by groups hoping to settle Neon, others by asteroid mining companies to create a recreation site for their workers. Few grew beyond 20–50 people and many have been abandoned over the years.

The port town is a nondescript combination of market town for the surrounding farms and entertainment hub for visiting workers. Its selection of shops and recreation facilities is distinctly limited, which has resulted in a law-abiding environment. Being barred from one of just five bars on the entire planet is a big deal and local security personnel (when they are not working on the farms or in their own businesses; Neon does not have the means to support a full-time security force) are not tolerant of those who break their many rules.

The world itself is dry and uninviting, with little surface water. Settlements are built mostly near watercourses or inland seas, with vast areas in between more or less unexplored. The local population are familiar with their immediate surroundings but lack the means or incentive to undertake a major planetary survey. Most of these settlements have a sustainable TL7, with a fair amount of imported equipment which can be maintained but not duplicated. The world's industrial base is virtually non-existent; there are no significant exports other than small-scale sale of agricultural goods to vessels operating in the planetoid belts.

SMALLHAULERS

A smallhauler is non-jump-capable cargo vessel designed to transport a 100-ton cargo hold around a star system. Smallhaulers are often considered to be boats rather than ships since they are normally associated with an installation or parent vessel. Most spend their entire careers acting as supply transports for outposts or large cargo shuttles plying back and forth between two in-system ports.

Built on a 200-ton hull, the *Maus* smallhauler resembles a flying matchbox, with rounded-off corners but few other concessions to streamlining. The lower deck is entirely given over to cargo, which may or may not be internally compartmentalised depending on the vessel's mission. The upper deck has passenger accommodation forward, common areas and secure cargo lockers in the centre of the deck, and a combined engineering/control space aft. Unlike many similar craft, the *Maus* has no provision for visual manoeuvres – everything is done with camera feeds or remotely operated auto-docking systems.

The configuration of secure cargo areas and passenger cabins can be altered, although this requires a few days in a shipyard or well-equipped installation. In its basic configuration, the *Maus* is designed to transport cargo and a few passengers around a star system in an acceptable time frame.

The *Maus* smallhauler is designed to be operated by a crew of two, a pilot and engineering technician. Those assigned to longer in-system runs usually carry three or four crew members to reduce fatigue but this pushes costs up so not all operators follow the practice. Common space is cramped and not adequate for long-haul flights, but most smallhaulers operate on short runs (less than 24 hours), so this is not usually a problem.

FLATLINED

The term 'flatlined' is a common figure of speech in Charted Space. It typically refers to electronic equipment that has been disabled or broken. A person can also jokingly be referred to as flatlined if they are extremely tired or drunk, or just committed some serious social gaffe. Less pleasantly, the term is also used for a medical patient whose vital signs have ceased to register. Someone who flatlines in a low berth is unlikely to survive due to the difficulty of resuscitating someone in cryogenic suspension; thus, the term is grimly used in a more general context for anyone in a situation where they are as good as dead.

SMALLHAULER

CLASS: MAUS

TL12

		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	200 tons, Streamlined	—	12
M-Drive	Thrust 2	4	8
Power Plant	TL12 Fusion, Power 90	6	6
Fuel Tanks	20 weeks operation	5	—
Bridge	Small	6	0.5
Computer	Computer/5	—	0.03
Sensors	Basic	—	—
Systems	Additional Airlock	2	0.2
	Cargo Crane	3	3
Software	Intellect	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre	—	—
Staterooms	Standard x12	48	6
Common Areas		6	0.6
Cargo		120	—
Total: MCr36.33			

Crew

Pilot, Engineer

Hull: 80

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr3028/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr36.33

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems

40

Manoeuvre Drive

40

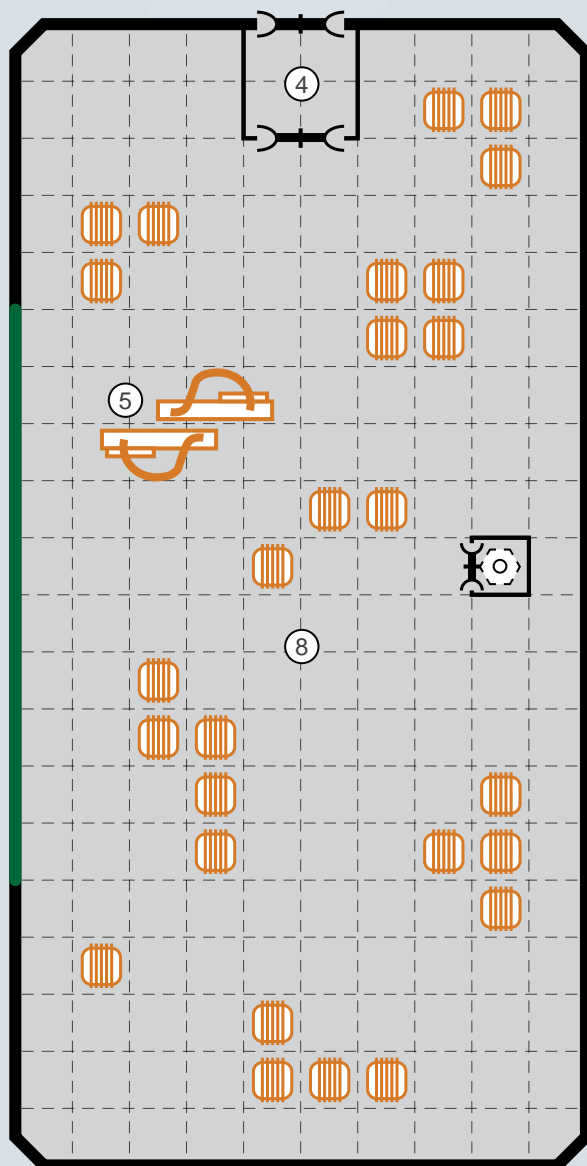
MAUS-CLASS SMALLHAULER



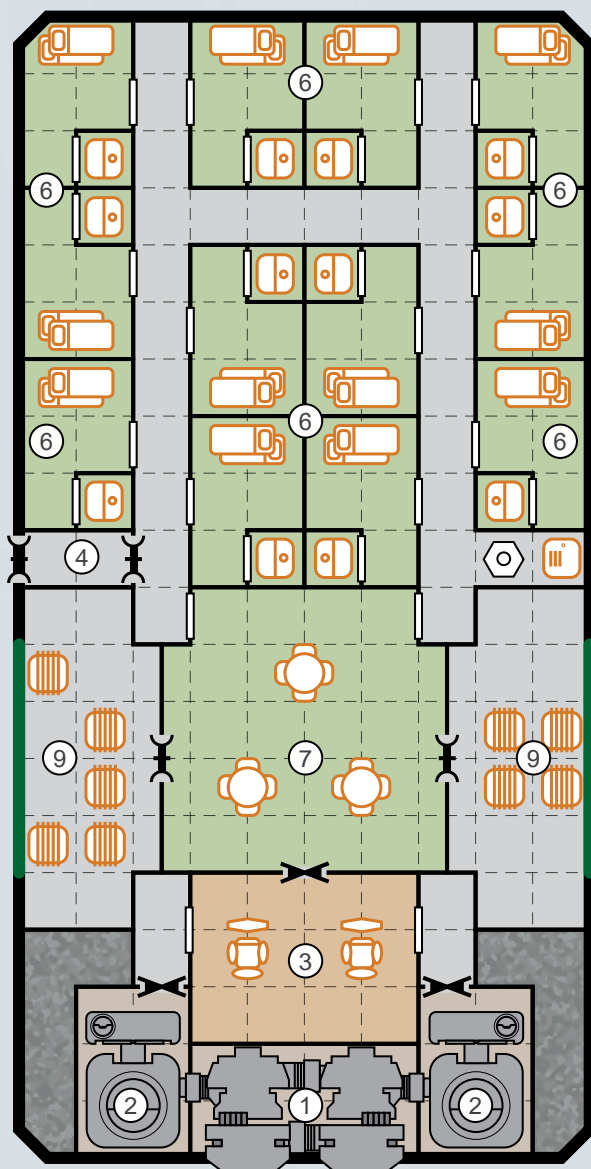
1 square = 0.5 Tons

LEGEND

1. Manoeuvre Drive
2. Power Plant
3. Bridge
4. Airlock
5. Cargo Crane
6. Stateroom
7. Common Area
8. Cargo
9. Cargo Locker



DECK 1



DECK 2

FLATLINED

The adventure begins when the Travellers wake up in low berths aboard a smallhauler sinking in a lake on Neon. Initially, they are confused and have very patchy memories; indeed, they may not know their own names and will certainly have no idea how they came to be in their predicament.

The reason why the Travellers are in low berths aboard a smallhauler is not relevant to this adventure but may have future implications. If *Flatlined* is to be run as a one-off adventure or the opening to a new campaign, the reason may not matter. However, if this adventure is to be inserted into an ongoing campaign, the Referee will need to have a rationale for the Travellers to discover, and they will more than likely want to get back to wherever they left their possessions, starship or other objects of value.

The Travellers might have voluntarily entered low berths to make a long transit, for example returning home after mustering out from their previous career or to reach a distant location for a new job. Alternatively, they might have been drugged, hijacked or almost anything that could end with them in a low berth. What matters is that for some reason they have been transferred without their knowledge to this craft and woken in the middle of a crisis. Any equipment they own is somewhere else; they will have to cope using whatever they can find.

WHAT HAPPENED AT PROVING SITE NINE?

The installation in this adventure is usually referred to as PS Nine or just 'Nine' but is more properly named Stenmore Minerals Incorporated Proving Site Nine. It is owned and operated by Stenmore Minerals Incorporated, a corporation based on Tobia. Stenmore typically investigates sites by setting up a small mineral extraction operation and running it for a few months. If the results are promising, a full extraction operation is implemented.

Stenmore Minerals Incorporated has a couple of mining ships in the Neon system and routinely sends craft to the mainworld to pick up supplies. They bounce over to Stenmore's small proving site to deliver a few cases of supplies, before heading back to the planetoid

belt. The proving site might someday be the basis for a major resource-extraction facility but at present is nothing more than a handful of personnel carrying out a long-term mission to determine Neon's viability as an extraction and processing site.

Stenmore is in dispute with several other local firms, not least because of its refusal to join the Florian-Aslan Trade Consortium and Transactions (FATCAT). This is an alliance of firms with a political as well as economic agenda, which has occasionally resorted to strongarm tactics. The intent here was not to kill anyone but show Stenmore how expensive staying out of the consortium could be.

The smallhauler was disabled by an electromagnetic pulse device hidden in one of its cargo containers. This was supposed to flatline the smallhauler's electronic systems and those of the proving site at the same time, leaving a 30-million-credit transport vessel dead on the landing pad until it could be recovered and repaired. There was no desire to harm anyone; this was intended as nothing more than an expensive inconvenience.

However, the EMP device malfunctioned and detonated early, just as the smallhauler was coming in to land. Normally, such an event would be catastrophic but the crew responded quickly and effectively. The EMP took out the main controls and caused the powerplant to shut down but the pilot managed to use residual energy in the ship's lifters (caused by a phenomenon known as gravomagnetic induction) to make a semi-controlled descent into a lake just short of the proving site. The crew then abandoned their sinking craft (with the low berth passengers inside) and tried to make their way overland to the settlement. There, they found things were equally bad.

The EMP had flatlined the proving site's main power system and taken its worker robots offline as well. That was merely expensive but the other effect of the EMP, one completely unintended by its instigators, was potentially devastating. Neon is home to a predatory species often referred to simply as Creepers but properly catalogued as Pedersen's Neo-Arachnoid Predator. A nest close to the proving site was disturbed and the denizens came out to investigate. Finding edible creatures nearby, they began to hunt.



The EMP device was placed aboard the smallhauler using the same chink in security that allowed the low passengers to be brought aboard. Corrupt personnel in Stenmore Minerals are part of a 'skill-jacking' ring that diverts promising personnel from their intended destination. They are put aboard vessels bound for Neon and delivered to the end client in an unconscious and thus defenceless state. There is no connection between the two events, merely that the greed and corruption of the smallhauler crew enabled someone else to get a bomb aboard their ship.

THE SKILL-JACKING RING

The operation is simple in concept. A network of corrupt or blackmailed personnel working at Tobia's starport and some of the ships operating from it watches for when someone who will not be missed is vulnerable. Typically, this means new arrivals who have made the long trip from other star systems in a low berth or who can be drugged and placed in a low berth. To be eligible, candidates normally must have useful skills, typically technical or scientific knowledge.

Candidates may be intercepted before they arrive at Tobia if they are already in a low berth or drugged and kidnapped from one of the seedier facilities around Tobia Starport. Some are simply abducted by

force. However it happens, the candidate is given a compound that causes confusion and disorientation along with temporary memory loss, and placed in a low berth to be held 'on ice' until shipment to Neon is possible. They are brought aboard a mining vessel and quietly moved to one of its smallhaulers.

At present, candidates are shipped to Neon using vessels operated by Stenmore Minerals, although the company itself is not involved in the operation. This is all covered by a combination of bogus paperwork and a few bribes. Anyone inspecting the smallhauler would be presented with documentation for their transit and no reason to suspect anything untoward is going on. If a ship carrying skilljacked personnel were stopped and searched, it would be impossible to get useful information from awakened passengers, who would be assumed to be disorientated by the normal side effects of low berth travel. Their symptoms would be worse than usual but not out of the ordinary. The cover story – that they are headed to Neon to join a mining ship's complement – is plausible enough in most cases.

From the mining ship, the smallhauler transits to Proving Site Nine on Neon – exactly as it is supposed to – and lands at the site. There, the site's medic administers a stronger dose of the compound to keep the candidates confused and defenceless as they

awaken and the craft bounces to the world's small starport. The crew take a few days' liberty before heading back, while the candidates are offloaded. They are then taken to their destination, typically to serve as what amounts to highly educated slaves.

The operation has only a few clients, who typically use their slaves to gain a technical advantage over their competitors or keep their ships running; among the clients are the spacegoing neo-barbarians of Oghma. This operation has been in place for nearly 10 years, although it was less organised at first and to date nobody on Tobia suspects its existence. The number of disappearances and 'passenger manifest inconsistencies' involved means it cannot continue forever but the members of the skill-jacking ring feel confident that they can get away with it for a while longer yet. That confidence has now led to a serious mistake. Their latest batch of candidates is at large on Neon and perhaps the lid is about to come off the whole operation.

PEDERSEN'S CREEPERS

Pedersen's Creepers resemble a cross between a very large ant and crab or scorpion. The largest can be a metre long; 60–80 centimetres is more common. Six of their legs are used for walking and climbing – creepers can climb most surfaces but are too heavy to manage sheer concrete or similar materials – whilst the front pair of limbs are used for grasping and manipulating objects, as well as for movement. All creepers have powerful mandibles which a serious bite and, perhaps more importantly, can grab and hold prey whilst others nibble pieces off the struggling captive.

Creepers are not in any way related to Terran arachnids (such as spiders and scorpions) but their way of moving and general appearance makes observers think of spiders rather than ants. There are three primary types of creepers, each with a specific function – feeders, breeders and killers. There is a fourth, rarely seen, type known as thinkers, although many researchers discount their existence as rumour.

Feeders are the most common creepers. They do most of the work for a nest, clearing out debris from the tunnels, removing waste, bringing food and regurgitating it for newly hatched creepers, as well as stockpiling organic material for the consumption of others. When a nest is struggling, feeders are expendable. They may be sent out to find new food

sources, possibly into highly dangerous areas, or may be called into the nest to serve as food for others. The term feeder thus refers to the group's typical role and the eventual fate of most individuals.

Breeders look much like feeders but are a little tubbier in appearance. Like feeders, they have no natural armour and are not effective in combat. Breeders are more likely to flee than feeders if a nest is threatened but are numerous and thus expendable up to a point. Breeders are hermaphroditic but swap genetic material between individuals, laying eggs which hatch creepers of all kinds.

Killers are a minority in most nests, although one which has suffered a lot of casualties will hatch additional killers. Little bigger than feeders, killers have scaly plates and, in addition to their mandibles, killers have a stinger, much like a scorpion. This injects venom which will rarely kill an adult human but causes disorientation and hallucinations as well as some damage to the body's systems. Enough venom will immobilise or even kill but usually by the time that much has been injected, the killers will have ripped the victim apart and the feeders begun carrying bits back to the nest.

Thinkers resemble feeders and are usually mistaken for them – one reason why little is known about them. The primary difference is their behavior. Juvenile thinkers engage in what can best be described as 'fiddling with things', using their front claws and mandibles. They seem to learn about the world and how it works by inspecting everything they encounter. Thinkers have been known to operate simple devices – like door handles or a slap-button that stops a machine – although whether they really understand what they are doing remains open to debate.

Once they mature, thinkers retreat to the nest and rarely leave. A nest with one or more mature thinkers is noticeably 'smarter' than one that has none. Its killers coordinate their attacks better and its feeders search more efficiently. It is possible that a very well-established nest with many mature thinkers could perhaps achieve some level of group consciousness.

Thinkers, and perhaps all creepers, seem to be able to sense magnetic fields and are agitated by electromagnetic activity, perhaps by rapidly changing emissions. It is possible to find deposits of magnetic materials such as iron or wreckage from a steel-built structure by observing the motions of investigating feeders. They will also investigate electromagnetic phenomena nearby, which can be bad for humans living near a nest.

Creepers will happily eat humans if they can catch one. Normally, they do not prey on large creatures but a hungry nest will send a mob of feeders and killers to bring down anything they can – if they are killed in the effort, they still provide sustenance – and if agitated by electromagnetic disturbances they sometimes attack humans and other creatures in the area. This is probably a defensive response, assuming the creepers feel threatened by the electromagnetic noise but there is little hard data to go on.

Feeder

Animal	Hits	Speed
Feeder	15	8m
Skills	Melee (natural) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 0, Survival 1	
Attacks	Mandibles (1D)	
Traits	Small (-1)	
Behaviour	Omnivore, Gatherer	

Killer

Animal	Hits	Speed
Killer	36	9m
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 1, Survival 0	
Attacks	Mandibles (2D), Stinger (1D + poison)	
Traits	Armour (+6), poison (difficult/1D DEX & INT/3D seconds)	
Behaviour	Omnivore, Killer	

Breeder

Animal	Hits	Speed
Breeder	18	6m
Skills	Melee 0, Survival 0	
Attacks	Mandibles (1D)	
Traits	Small (-1)	
Behaviour	Omnivore, Eater	

Thinker

Animal	Hits	Speed
Thinker	22	8m
Skills	Melee 0, Recon 3, Stealth 0, Survival 2	
Attacks	Mandibles (1D)	
Traits	Small (-1)	
Behaviour	Omnivore, Gatherer	



IN THE SMALLHAULER

The Travellers awaken groggy and disorientated. This is not atypical after a period in a low berth but the symptoms are worse this time, possibly due to a rapid emergency wakeup. The Travellers will not initially realise what is happening; it will take a while for their cognitive functions to settle down and start processing information coherently.

Initially, all they know is that they are confined somehow, in a small and claustrophobic space with wires and tubes attached to their bodies. A calm and soothing voice says meaningless things – the Travellers recognise the words but cannot make any sense of them. They are confined separately, each wearing a plain grey jumpsuit with turned-back cuffs at the wrists and ankles for wires and tubes. These are withdrawing and the tiny cell is opening. Outside, there is a small chamber containing several other pods or capsules or whatever the devices are.

Low berths. The name comes to mind unbidden. The chamber outside is decorated, if that is the right word, in tones of light grey and beige. It is small but tidy and uncluttered. It is lit only by dim emergency lights and some of those are flickering. It is ankle-deep in water.

Full consciousness arrives with a stabbing shock of adrenaline. The chamber door is slightly ajar and water is trickling in. The deck is canted at a slight angle, with the port-forward area of the vessel lower than the rest. At this moment, the Travellers cannot recall how they came to be in low berths or why there is water in the chamber. They may recall their names, previous careers, incidents in their lives and so forth, but it is all a confused jumble and they have more pressing concerns. They are apparently aboard a vessel of some kind, which is filling up with water. They have no tools, no weapons... not even shoes.

The Referee may choose to have Travellers start to remember their backstory in response to sensory triggers. Putting feet into cold water, tripping on something, smelling an electrical short... memory can be triggered by all manner of stimuli, enabling the Travellers to introduce themselves one at a time.

EXPLORING THE SMALLHAULER

Once the Travellers start exploring, they will realise they know their way around this craft, perhaps because it is a common design they might have travelled aboard in the past or even crewed. At this point the Referee can present the ship's deck plan and let the Travellers indicate where they want to explore first.

The craft is lit by emergency lighting only and, if anyone thinks to check, the life support system is offline. There is plenty of air for the time being but it is not being scrubbed or recirculated. Powered doors and similar systems will likely not work and if they do their operation will be accompanied by a dimming of the already feeble emergency lights. There is water on the deck, ranging from ankle deep in the mid-deck area to almost knee deep in the port-forward passenger cabins. The combination of darkness, water and an angled deck makes even just walking tricky; Travellers will trip or stub their toes on all manner of obstacles. The water is also very cold. It is fresh, however, and not hazardous to drink or be immersed in.

Anyone who thinks to check will realise the water is running down the deck towards the port-forward corner, suggesting that it is getting into the vessel somewhere aft. This deck is the upper one, which contains all living and command spaces. Smallhaulers have a large cargo hold taking up the whole lower deck and no external windows; everything requiring an external view is done with cameras and display screens. This means there is no way to know if the craft is completely submerged or not.

More than likely, the Travellers will want to explore the smallhauler in the hope of finding something useful or a clue as to why they are aboard it... and how it came to be filling up with water.

Each low berth has a small shelf under it with a pair of shipshoes – somewhere between a slipper-sock and proper shoe, and not very robust. It seems likely that the Travellers' personal effects must be somewhere nearby but they have no idea where that might be. There is little else of any use in the low berth chamber. Even the readouts on the berths themselves are flatlined for some reason.



It will become apparent (if it is not already so) that the smallhauler has crashed or crash-landed. Lockers and cupboards have popped open, spilling their contents on the floor. Many of these items are extremely mundane – freeze-dried meal packs, spoons from the galley, odd bits of clothing and so forth. These fragments of people's lives, now floating in shallow water amid the wreckage, may be saddening to the Travellers. They also create constant movement in the semi-darkness which may contribute to a feeling of paranoia.

There are no monsters, berserk robots or space pirates aboard the crashed smallhauler. In fact, there is nobody aboard at all. The crew of three escaped as quickly as they could, abandoning their low berth passengers, but the Travellers were not the only passengers; there were three others. Two died when their low berth units flatlined and the third is alive but very confused and distressed in one of the other low berth areas.

The Travellers will not know how long the smallhauler can support them. It is already getting cold inside due to partial immersion in the lake and occasionally the craft lurches alarmingly. It is partially embedded in soft mud and is settling slowly. In fact, the Travellers are in no immediate danger of drowning but ultimately the craft will fill with water and sink deeper into the mud. It will become untenable sooner or later.

THE COMMAND SECTION (UPPER DECK AFT)

The smallhauler's command section consists of its cramped bridge/engineering control room, two cabins intended for crew use and several small chambers containing electronic systems. Aft of this is the drive chamber, which contains the powerplant and manoeuvre drive.

The command section looks like it was abandoned in a hurry. The crew staterooms seem to have been occupied by two people (a large man and a small woman, both human) and have been quickly stripped of whatever could be grabbed. The impression is that whomever lived here stuffed a bag with their personal effects and a few clothes, leaving everything else hanging out of drawers or spilled on the floor. There are little slices of a typical spacer's life strewn about here and there – a commemorative mug from some spaceport or a collection of pictures of someone's family. There are no weapons to be found.

The bridge, such as it is, has fire damage along one wall but is otherwise in reasonable condition apart from water trickling across the floor. All the ship's instruments are offline for lack of power. If power

could be restored, it would be discovered that most of the electronics operating the ship's systems are trashed. There was clearly a fire in one of the electronics bays, which was messily put out by hand extinguishers. Why the automatic fire suppression system did not function is unclear.

Travellers searching for weapons might think to check the bridge emergency locker, which (predictably perhaps) is not locked and stuffed with all manner of oddments that someone picked up and could not find a place for. Among the old circuit segments, ill-assorted spanners and broken data pads, there is a revolver still in its holster (the holster has a belt clip to fit almost any waistband, but low berth jumpsuits have no belt or waistband) along with an emergency electronic override key (see page 106).

The drive room is in good order for a working spacecraft. It has clearly been well maintained and is surprisingly tidy. There are plenty of tools, all neatly stowed on their racks except where the crash-landing has caused them to come loose. There is also a shotgun on a bracket over the main drive console, loaded with three rounds. This weapon has no sling and is awkward to carry.

The drives and powerplant cannot be restarted. They were critically damaged by an EMP device detonated immediately below the drive chamber, fusing many circuits and crippling other systems. There is a fair amount of useful salvage to be had but removing anything but the most easily accessible components would be a long job.

The source of the incoming water can be found without much difficulty. Like many craft, the smallhauler has maintenance hatches which also serve as emergency escapes. These have no airlocks associated with them; opening one of these hatches will vent the compartment to space so is only feasible when on the ground. There is a hatch in each of the three main upper sections. The one in command/engineering is located on the port side of the vessel and buckled in the crash. Only a small amount of water is getting in this way but this does suggest that the vessel is underwater at least to the depth of this hatch. In any case, it is too buckled to be opened.

THE CENTRAL SECTION (UPPER DECK CENTRAL)

The central section of the upper deck is separated from passenger and command areas by bulkheads, which remain intact. These are penetrated by iris valves which are currently open. The ship is running on emergency reserve power which is sufficient to open or close a valve – slowly – but which will be drained by repeated uses.

This section contains four stateroom-sized areas which on many vessels are used as secure cargo lockers or to carry additional equipment for a mission. On this particular craft, as with a fairly high proportion of smallhaulers, two of the rooms have been converted to carry low berths. It is in one of these chambers that the Travellers awakened. The other rooms have not been converted and are currently empty other than a very large number of what appear to be mining sample boxes. These are brand-new and still have their wrappers. They are, of course, empty.

The central section also contains the small galley and common area, both of which are cluttered with the paraphernalia of daily shipboard life. The storage areas have been rifled, leaving quite a mess, but there is still a fair amount of food and kitchen supplies to be grabbed, mostly in the form of dehydrated meal packs.

The central section has the ship's main airlock and, opposite it, access to the cargo hold on the lower deck. The airlock is closed and unpowered, and in any case is underwater. With some effort and a successful Very Difficult (12+) Mechanics check (1D minutes, STR), it might be possible to get the inner doors open without using power. Inside the airlock is a single TL8 vacc suit (the crew's personal suits are in their cabins) and associated emergency tools. There is also another revolver, identical to the one in the bridge, on a bracket by the outer doors.

The cargo deck access area takes the form of an elevator, whose floor or roof automatically seals the deck when it is in the correct position. Perhaps fortunately, it is not. The elevator is stuck halfway, making it possible to scramble up or down the shaft. There is also an emergency ladder between the two decks. Some water running down the deck is falling through into the cargo hold and by looking down the shaft it is possible to see the lower deck is not by any means full.

In one of the low berth chambers there are two malfunctioning berths containing recently deceased passengers – they died during the emergency wakeup procedure – and another berth containing a survivor who is just waking up. She appears to be in her late 20s and is even more confused than the Travellers. It will be some minutes before she is coherent enough to understand questions, let alone answer them. Her name is Anson (see page 122) but it will be several distressing minutes before she can remember even this.

If the Travellers search the low berth units, they find little out of the ordinary. The usual selection of drugs and emergency resuscitation equipment are present, and appear to be in good order. However, there is also a small case containing several unmarked syringes of a sort used to introduce drugs into a life support unit or low berth. Some are empty, whilst others contain a slightly cloudy liquid. These syringes and the case are unmarked.

If a Traveller takes some of the liquid with him and later attempts an analysis, a successful Routine (6+) Science (biology or chemistry) check (1D hours, INT or EDU) will indicate it is of natural origin and rather crudely turned into a drug or medication of some kind. An Effect of 6 or better indicates the drug is a psychoactive substance which does not match any sort of medication that would be used on low berth occupants.

The maintenance hatch in this section is on the port side and blocked by the jammed elevator. It will not be possible to get at it without moving the elevator, which requires more power than is available.

THE PASSENGER SECTION (UPPER DECK FORWARD)

Separated from the central section by an iris valve, which is open, the passenger section contains 10 of the ship's 12 cabins, most clearly not in use. One is home to the ship's third crewmember and three have been overtaken by a rising tide of junk and 'stuff that doesn't go anywhere else'. This is very mundane and quite a lot is mismatched, broken or battered. Like everywhere else, the passenger section has been rapidly looted for anything useful and it should become obvious that the smallhauler was carrying no passengers other than those in the low berths.

There is a maintenance hatch in the upper (dorsal) surface of the ship, located in the roof of the passenger section and concealed by a false ceiling. It is also, not surprisingly, locked in flight to prevent passengers trying to open it. The hatch can be unlocked from the bridge or any command terminal if there is power and the captain's authorisation is available. Neither are, of course. The only other way to unlock the hatch is by using an emergency electronic override key which is normally kept in the bridge emergency locker.

THE CARGO HOLD (LOWER DECK)

The cargo hold is, like that of most smallhaulers, a single large open space with a cargo crane running overhead. It has maintained its structural integrity, mostly, but has water coming in from above down the access shaft and also somewhere aft. The water is chest deep at the forward port corner and slowly rising.

The hold contains numerous cargo containers, all of which bear the logo of Stenmore Minerals. Most appear to be ore hoppers and are empty but there are several general-haulage containers as well. The majority of these contain supplies for the proving site, such as spares for workbots and large amounts of bulk rations like those used aboard starships. None of the intact containers are open, which will require a Difficult (10+) Mechanics check (3D minutes, STR).

One of the containers is very much open, inasmuch as it has suffered an explosion inside it. This was the electromagnetic pulse (EMP) device which crippled the vessel. A conventional explosion was used to power an induction coil, causing significant damage to the surrounding containers, as might be expected, but most were empty ore hoppers. It has also twisted hull plates sufficiently to let water leak slowly in.

At the fore end of the cargo deck is a large cargo airlock. This would be difficult to operate without power but there is a personnel access hatch which leads into the airlock chamber for occasions where opening and closing the big doors would be too time-consuming. The cargo lock is closed and has no water in it, although that will change if the hatch is opened.

Within the cargo lock are a typical assortment of cargo-handling tools, mainly for locking down containers to the deck. There is also an unopened four-person emergency survival kit (see page 126). The cargo lock outer door is underwater, but could be used to escape the vessel by someone with breathing apparatus or a vacc suit.

GETTING OUT OF THE SMALLHAULER

There are several ways to get out of the smallhauler. The dorsal maintenance hatch in the passenger compartment is the simplest. Getting it open requires obtaining the emergency override key, which is self-powered and will allow the hatch to be undogged and refastened. Alternatively, some other means to disengage or wreck the locks could be found. The roof hatch is difficult to open since its front edge is under several centimetres of water and the smallhauler will begin to slowly fill with water as soon as it is opened.

It may also be possible to force one of the airlocks. Both are underwater and will quickly flood the ship once opened. One way to deal with this would be to use vacc suits, which will work well enough in shallow

water. Vacc suits are not suitable for dives of more than a few metres, however – they are designed to prevent air getting out, not stopping water forcing its way in. Rescue balls could also be used, although the occupants will float around helplessly unless someone with a vacc suit tows them.

Ultimately, the Travellers should be able to get out of the smallhauler somehow. If they are completely stumped and getting bored, their fellow survivor (Anson) will suggest jury-rigging the emergency batteries to supply a last burst of power to the main airlock, requiring an Average (8+) Engineer (power) check (2D minutes, INT). The ship will rapidly flood but it will be possible to get out once the initial rush of water subsides. Of course, it will be necessary to avoid being swept through the ship and bashed off every surface along the way....

The Travellers will eventually find themselves atop the wreck or scrambling for the shore of a large and very cold lake. It is early morning, not much after sunrise. They have with them whatever was salvaged from the wreck and that may not even include proper shoes. On the plus side, they are on a world with breathable air and they are alive....



WELCOME TO NEON!

The Travellers are cold and wet, ill-equipped and still a bit confused from the effects of the low berth (and the drugs they were given when they were redirected to Neon). Their jumbled memories will gradually come back and at various points over the next few days a Traveller will suddenly exclaim, 'I have a degree in art history!' or 'My sister has three cats!' as vivid memories suddenly pop to the surface. This could be a worrying experience for all concerned.

As to where they are, the Travellers do not know. Someone with the Astrogation skill could probably have a go at identifying constellations once it gets dark (a Difficult check would be appropriate) but right now it is morning. All the Travellers really can deduce is that they are on an Earth-like world with a Sol-like star. There is liquid water, grass and trees, and it is quite chilly. Anson, if she is with the Travellers, has little more idea than they do about their location. At some point in the night, assuming she has time for stargazing, she will be able to determine that she is on a world in Usher or Tobia subsector, but by then definite information may well be available.

TAKING STOCK AND SETTING OUT

There does not seem to be any sort of rescue underway and the Travellers have no communications gear. They also have little food and no shelter. The lake blocks progress to the west and north, and to the south they can see an area of open grassland with scrubby bushes here and there, finally giving way to some kind of forest. There is no sign of habitation in that direction.

A few kilometres away to the east, there seems to be a structure atop a hill, although little can be seen of it except a tall antenna tower. If the Travellers cannot make the inference, Anson can; their craft is in a lake, pointing away from an antenna a few kilometres distant. It seems likely this was the vessel's intended destination. There is nothing else within reach, so it makes as good a destination as anything.

Heading east is fairly easy at first. The lakeshore curves away to the north after a while and the ground rises steadily. Bushes and trees dot the landscape, becoming thick in places. After a couple of kilometres, it becomes

apparent that reaching the antenna site is going to take a lot longer than expected as the Travellers detour around a few areas of thick, spiny vegetation. The going is especially hard for those used to a climate-controlled environment with flat and nicely carpeted corridors.

A SOBERING FIND

Along the way, the Travellers spot what looks like a body on the ground ahead. It is dressed in a typical shipboard-type coverall (but with decent boots), with a bright orange ship-jacket over it. This is Davide Maxanni, a crewmember aboard the smallhauler. He is indeed dead.

It appears that this person was injured in the crash; he has a splinted right forearm and bandages on what looks like a bad gash. It is not clear what killed him – he has not been mauled or bitten, nor shot or stabbed, as far as anyone can see.

An Average (8+) Medic check (1D rounds, INT or EDU) will enable a Traveller to make a clear diagnosis of what happened. He received basic first aid for injuries that are unlikely to have killed him and managed to get this far but collapsed and died from serious internal injuries presumably received in the crash.

The dead man's companions abandoned him when he could go no further, although this is not obvious from the state of the body. What is obvious is that at least some of the things he had in his pockets have been taken; pocket-covers are torn away here and there. All that remains is a multitool and a few ration bars that look like they came from an emergency kit.

SIGNS OF LIFE AHEAD

Whatever the Travellers make of this find, they need to press on. The Referee can make the journey more unpleasant for the Travellers by having them note movement in nearby bushes. It could be some harmless creature, or a local predator. The Travellers should be acutely aware of their predicament by the time they site the settlement ahead. They have few weapons, practically no ammunition, no means to communicate and no high-tech tools to solve problems

for them. Something as minor as not being able to see clearly what is at a distance could become intensely frustrating to people used to zooming an orbital map right down to street level.

The settlement ahead is a symbol of hope that the Travellers' problems are coming to an end. All they can see from a distance is that it stands on high ground, atop a flattened-off hilltop. One side of the settlement is bounded by a curved earth berm, presumably made from the soil cleared to flatten the hilltop and there are log piles along two other sides forming an intermittent barricade.

Within this stands a cluster of prefabricated huts, of a fairly typical type. The packed earth between them is littered with odd bits and pieces of equipment, although there is a clear area that obviously serves as a landing pad. There are a couple of vehicles – four-wheel-drive field buggies – close to the buildings and a tall antenna mast in one corner of the settlement. Beyond the landing pad is a depression in the ground with what appears to be a spoil heap on one side.

There are two large workbots immobile in the depression and several smaller mining robots plus automated sample-processing equipment. This seems to be a very small open-cast mine and clearly there is something wrong here; there are people waving urgently to the Travellers as they approach. They seem to think it is very important to reach the buildings quickly....

FIRST CONTACT

Two people come out from the settlement to meet the Travellers; a tall scrawny kid and a woman of maybe 35–40 who has a revolver on her belt and a shotgun in her hands. Both are warily looking around and seem to feel threatened by something other than the Travellers. The woman (Katriona) briskly tells the Travellers that questions can wait; they need to get inside. She leads the way back to the settlement, looking nervously around the whole time.

Approaching the settlement, it becomes apparent that there are several other people here. One (Hambley) is at the edge of the cleared area, apparently trying to build a barricade between two log piles. Another (Sayelle) peers briefly from the largest of the buildings, then disappears inside. In addition, there is one other person in the compound. He is digging a hole; a curiously grave-shaped hole.

Once they get close to the settlement's buildings, the two who came to meet the Travellers (Katriona and Corey) start asking and answering questions. They want to know who the Travellers are and where they came from... and if they've seen any 'creepers'. Anson has heard of them but only vaguely. She knows they are some kind of... creeper... predator native to some worlds on the frontier but not much more than that.

Katriona will expect answers from the Travellers but is willing to give them a potted version of what is going on. The highlights are:



- This is Stenmore Minerals Proving Site Nine, a small mining outpost set up to find out if the local deposits of copper and iron are worth exploiting on a large scale.
- 'Nine' as Katriona calls it, had a complement of eight until the early hours of this morning. Now there are three, plus some new arrivals.
- Two of those new arrivals are crew from the smallhauler. Katriona has met them before. The others are the Travellers and Anson.
- Early this morning, long before sunrise, the regular smallhauler from one of the mining ships in the system's planetoid belt approached the landing area.
- Something happened and all the lights went out.
- The smallhauler dived away to the west and was lost to sight.
- Katriona's best guess is that the settlement was hit with an electromagnetic pulse which flatlined its power system and killed the electronics. It also apparently killed the smallhauler; the crew of Nine lost sight of it in the pre-dawn after all the lights went out.
- Katriona now knows the smallhauler crashlanded in the lake nearby and the crew were able to get out. One died en route. The others reached the settlement a few hours ago.
- Not long after the power went off, the outpost's leader and one of the workers went to have a look around. They did not return.
- Soon after this, something (Katriona now knows it was one or more creepers) crept into the settlement under cover of darkness and killed another of the crew. Two more went to look for the first party once it got light. One managed to get back to the camp, badly wounded. He warned that there was a mob of creepers nearby, and they were very agitated, before lapsing into delirium.
- The crewmember died a few minutes ago. Telford is digging a grave for him right now.
- The power is off, all electronic devices are fried.
- It is getting late in the day and Corey thinks he spotted movement down at the base of the hill.
- Hambley seems to know what to do – he suggested throwing together some defences and waiting out the night. Help might come from the starport in the morning, or maybe it will be possible to fix up a vehicle or get communications back online. Maybe there is a rescue ship already on the way from the mining vessel. The key is to get through tonight.
- Katriona is obviously scared but has assumed the role of sort-of leader.
- However, it seems that Hambley is in overall charge.

WELL, THIS IS AWKWARD...

Hambley will approach the Travellers as soon as he can, slinging his shotgun on his back as he walks confidently towards them. He knows he has some explaining to do – he has deduced who the Travellers are – and seeks to use a combination of bluff and 'no-time-for-that' to deflect questions. He can also use the fact that the Travellers are wearing clothes scavenged from his ship and equipped with his stuff to put them on the defensive.

Hambley's version of events is that he routinely ships personnel to Neon in low berths. That part is not untrue; people do take passage this way to keep the costs of getting to a new job down, although 'routinely' suggests this happens it more commonly than it does. He claims the Travellers came aboard 'prepacked' as he calls it, with the correct paperwork to take them all the way to his next stop after PS9 – Neon starport. He never questioned any of it; shipping orders are shipping orders, right?

As to abandoning the Travellers, he adopts an aggrieved attitude. His ship flatlined under him in the dark, over a frontier installation at the far end of nowhere. He managed to dead-stick what amounts to a flying brick for a controlled crash in the lake using nothing more than residual inducted energy in the lifters. That was a miracle all by itself. But the ship was holed and water was coming in *and* there was a fire in the control room. And his crewman Davide – nice kid, had a lot of promise – was hurt.

Hambley says he thought the low passengers were dead ('flatlined' he says) – Davide checked on them and said they were. This is plausible; two of them were dead and Davide might not have checked thoroughly, given his injuries. He is also not around to refute any of this. So Hambley got his people out but Davide died en route. With Sayelle panicking, he had to get her to safety and figured he would go back for Davide's body when the living were safe.

In short, his position is that he did the best he could under the circumstances and if anyone thinks they can do better, they are welcome to try. Meanwhile, there is something bad out there, no way to call for help, and night is coming. So maybe everyone needs to pitch in....

PREPARATIONS

Hambley's version of events is distorted, but he has a point. The creepers will not concern themselves with who did what; they will simply eat the survivors. If the Travellers and their new companions intend to get through the night, they need to start making some preparations. There is only so much daylight left.

The Travellers should be given a chance to interact with people they meet during the preparation phase – this is an important part of the adventure – but they should also feel the pressure of time and the setting sun.

PROVING SITE NINE

There is not much to Site Nine, just a collection of prefabricated huts and cargo containers repurposed to house workbots. The huts are standard prefabricated living/working modules connected by buried water/sewage pipes and power conduits. Each has limited internal battery power but the settlement normally relies on a feed from the main reactor, which is currently offline.

The settlement comprises several areas:

THE MAIN CLUSTER

The main critical systems section consists of a standard-sized hut containing a self-contained TL12 fusion reactor unit and its control systems (A), a command-and-control hut which also contains the gun locker and safe for valuables – which is empty (B), and a standard hut given over to storage of mission supplies such as spares for the robots (C).

THE LIVING AREA

The living area consists of three huts (D) each with accommodation for four people and a small common/recreation area. There were eight personnel at the base; they spread out through the three huts as they saw fit. A fourth hut (E) contains a larger eating/meeting/everything else area plus a well-equipped galley. The settlement has enough freeze-dried meal packs to last for months... or drive the crew to despair, whichever comes first.

THE WORKING AREA

This area consists of two laboratory/workshop modules built on the same footprint as the other huts. (F) is an ore sampling and minerals laboratory whilst (G) has an electromechanical workshop, tiny medical bay and backup command/communications centre that is as dead as the main one. Hut (G) also has a much larger reserve power unit than the other huts, though badly damaged and offline. Hut (F) has a fair amount of ore and rock samples heaped up behind it where they have literally been tossed out of a window after tests came up negative.

THE GARAGES

Three standard shipping containers have been settled into the packed earth to serve as robot and vehicle garages. (H). They are mostly empty but contain a few tools and spares. The settlement's vehicles have not been garaged since the day they arrived; they are parked outside the garage and currently non-functional.

THE RESERVOIR

A large water tank (I) is buried under the packed earth of the compound, and linked to the huts by buried pipes. The tank is connected to a water recycling unit and shaft drilled straight down to draw water from the ground. In practice, recycling is efficient enough that this is not necessary.

THE ANTENNA

The antenna (J) for the site's communications array is tall and has gantries for maintenance personnel. It stands atop a mound at one end of the berm and is linked to the rest of the camp by underground conduits.

THE LANDING SITE

The landing site (K) is nothing more than a flattened area of earth. It is stable enough to take a small ship like a smallhauler, but each landing creates holes and churned-up areas that look a bit sinister in poor light... like something burrowed in and produced a mound, perhaps....



THE BERM

The berm (L) that forms one side of the camp and part of another was produced by bulldozing the hilltop flat and compacting the resulting soil to create a 2-metre-high wall. This has been stabilised by pile-driving logs through it vertically using a workbot, though a person or animal could run up the berm easily enough. Here and there the elevated position of the berm is used to mount lights or other sensors.

THE LOG PILES

Neat stacks of trimmed logs (M) form an intermittent barrier around one side of the settlement. These were stockpiled for a berm extension that never got built.

THE MINE SITE

The mine (N) is located downhill from the proving site, taking the form of a shallow depression dug out by workbots. Here and there are exposed areas of rock, and into these have been drilled shafts which allow small sample-bots to access deep veins of minerals. All the robots are currently inert, including both large workbots.

GENERAL

The site was provided with a standard security-and-work lighting and camera rig, which is geared more to preventing workers tripping over than defence. Large, powerful light clusters are located on the berm and some huts, as well as the antenna. They are currently pointed into the compound rather, and unpowered. There are a handful of visual and thermal cameras mounted here and there, but coverage is patchy. Again, the cameras were set up mainly to document the site's work and justify a bonus-pay claim rather than security.

GETTING BUSY

There are many things the Travellers and their new companions could be doing, but there will be no time for all of them. Relations between some of the people in the settlement might be strained, to put it mildly, so work could be interrupted by arguments even if everyone agrees on what to do for the best – and there is no guarantee of that.

Each character has time for one major project such as trying to get the power back on, fixing a vehicle or workbot, or building defences. In addition, they can find time for a few minor actions plus maybe a really good shouting match with someone doing something counterproductive. The referee must

decide what constitutes a major project; for example, the 'weaponry audit' will more than likely take only a few minutes and not be a major project. Building improvised grenades or stripping down and cleaning all the guns (not that the users would relinquish them) would be a major undertaking.

Characters who are not engaged in a major project have time to undertake several short actions or interfere with what others are doing. Skulking about spying on what everyone else is doing will eat up time that could perhaps be better spent on preparing for the difficult night ahead.

CONSTRUCTING DEFENCES

The berm and log piles create a partial barrier around the site, but there are many gaps and one side is completely open. It is not feasible to create a wall in the time available, not without powered assistance that is not available, but enterprising Travellers will be able to plug some gaps and at least limit the number of directions an intruder can come from.

REACTIVATING THE VEHICLES AND WORKBOTS

This is a difficult task, to say the least. The EMP fried the electronics of the bots and electrical systems in the buggies. Not every component was burned out, however. Given enough time, it should be possible to scrounge parts from various machines and robots, and get something working. What that depends upon the Travellers' plans.

The buggies are designed to carry two people plus some equipment; maybe three or four could pile in, providing they managed to cling on over rough ground. A reactivated workbot could build a defensive wall and is basically immune to anything the creepers can do. Thus, a workbot could operate through the night, making the settlement more difficult to enter as time went on. It might accidentally kill or injure a creeper, but it would be quite a feat of bot-wrangling to get a workbot to do so deliberately.

Either way, a large robot or buggy will take a considerable amount of time to restore to functionality, and it will be after dark before the unit is available for use.

Reactivating a workbot or buggy requires salvaging enough electronic parts not fried by the EMP – this requires an Average (8+) Electronics (any) check – followed by a major repair and rewiring job requiring a Difficult (10+) Engineer (power) check.



A working workbot can build defences, but getting a workbot to run down or otherwise injure a creeper requires a Formidable (14+) Electronics (remote ops) check.

WEAPONRY AUDIT

It is highly likely that the Travellers will want to know how many weapons are available at the settlement. The answer is... not many. The proving site was issued four shotguns. Katriona is the most used to handling these, though she is hardly skilled, and has appropriated one of them. The other guns are still in the locker at the

command hut, along with most of the ammunition. Not that there is much of that, either; Katriona has a fully loaded weapon plus six loose shells, leaving 41 shells in the locker with the other guns.

Katriona also has a revolver, but no ammunition for it. The site commander had an autopistol but that was lost along with him. Added to this is Hambley's shotgun (he will not relinquish it), Sayelle's derringer (which she does not tell anyone about, but can be found on page 126) and whatever weapons the Travellers have managed to scavenge.

Weaponry could be improvised, of course. The site has seismic charges and mining explosives, which could be converted into crude grenades. There are also various tools and kitchen implements that could be pressed into service. All in all, however, it is not a lot to face alien monsters with.

Creating a grenade using seismic charges is not an easy task. A Difficult (10+) Explosives check is required to produce grenades that do 4D damage with Blast 3. Alternatively, a Traveller could make a crude bomb with a successful Routine (6+) explosives check. A bomb can be command-detonated or set up as a mine to be triggered when something passes by, doing 5D damage with Blast 4.

There are enough charges to make 2D grenades. Alternatively, three grenades' worth of charges can be used to make one bomb.

Referee's Note: The inability of the Travellers to simply shoot their way out of trouble should result in a burst of creativity. It also increases tension, as every shot must count. It would be rather ironic if ammunition was wasted and people got hurt in a fight over the guns... but wholly unlikely.

A very kind (or perhaps perversely cruel) Referee might permit one of the proving site personnel to remember there is another box of ammunition... somewhere. Getting to it amid the general chaos of the attack might be a mini-adventure in its own right. It is possible to have several characters engaged in a desperate scramble to reach a buggy and the shotgun shell Katriona seems to remember dropping in the footwell the other day. In short, ammunition can be used to drive the plot rather than its expenditure being used to resolve it.

POWERING UP

As a rule, the more sophisticated the electronics in a device, the worse it suffered from the EMP. This means the main reactor is thoroughly dead and cannot be brought back online. Not only are many of its circuits fried but there is damage to the connections between the reactor and power distribution network. However, there are other possibilities for getting power. Some huts suffered less badly than others; their batteries could be brought back online. This would be a fairly minor task for someone with the right skills.

Hut G has a larger power reserve than the others and could provide at least partial power to the camp, but the system is heavily damaged and will require significant effort to bring back online. This would constitute a major action, i.e. it will fully occupy a character until well after nightfall, whether the effort is successful or not.

Reactivating any given hut (except G) requires a Routine (6+) Electronics (any) or Engineer (power) check. Reactivating hut G to power the camp through the night requires a Difficult (10+) check instead and is a major project.

DOING RECONNAISSANCE AND SCIENCE

Some Travellers might want to find out more about the creepers or the current situation. A little could be learned from examining the body of the most recently deceased crewmember before he is interred. He was injected with venom by a killer (see page 101) and then bitten very badly, but survived for some hours after he was brought back to the camp. His comrades witnessed and can describe the disorientation he experienced due to the killers' venom. Travellers might recognise some of the symptoms described – they saw them in one another just after waking in the low berths – although this does not prove anything.

Recognising the symptoms requires a Routine (6+) Medic check. It does not provide positive proof that the compound used on the Travellers was extracted from the creepers but indicates a possible link.

A reconnaissance of the mine site does not locate the creepers' nest (it is elsewhere) although it does turn up some pistol ammunition casings where the commander was attacked. There is blood on the ground nearby (some human, some not) but little can be learned from this scene. Personnel straying too far might be attacked by a feeder or two – the creepers are not nocturnal as such, they just find it more effective to hunt at night.

The Travellers might engage in all manner of activity under the loose heading of 'doing science'. If they can come up with some way to gain an advantage or learn a little about what is happening here, this is their opportunity.

NIGHTFALL

The crew are not certain they will be attacked tonight but believe it very likely. Five of their number were killed in the early hours of the morning and soon after daylight, since when there have been no attacks. That might be because the crew have hidden inside the settlement but nightfall will enable the creepers to move close to the huts. The general feeling is that it is best to take a defensive stance and hope that either assistance arrives or it proves possible to fix up the buggies or transmitter. The first priority, then, is to get through the coming night.

There is enough battery power in some of the huts to fix up a meal of sorts and run the internal lights. If the backup power supply is online, it will also be possible to run some of the external lights and cameras. As night falls, the little band of humans will likely be huddled in a small pool of light, scurrying nervously from one hut to another if they must go outside at all.

SURVIVING THE NIGHT

The Referee should play this part of the adventure for tension and drama, responding to the actions of the Travellers as appropriate. Note that most characters here have no weapon skills and are more likely to waste ammunition than kill creepers.

Certain events are likely to occur as a result of circumstances and the general actions of the characters at Proving Site Nine are noted below. Since there are not many people here and the Travellers have had a chance to meet them all, casualties should be quite personal – the dead person is someone the Travellers know rather than a random stranger. Of course, that does not mean any given casualty might not be a cause for relief or vindictive rejoicing.

CREW REACTIONS

Each of the people at Nine will act according to their nature and agenda. Two or three of them are gravely concerned about what will happen if the Travellers survive and the incident is investigated, and may be willing to engineer their demise. However, things are bad enough that survival is an overriding concern; consequences can wait.

Katriona is the most assertive of the three survivors at Nine. She prefers to defer to Hambley however, since he is a much more dominant personality. Katriona favours practical measures. Although she has armed herself with a shotgun, she prefers to remain walled up in the huts and seek a technical or scientific solution, which might come down to waiting for morning and fixing the transmitter to call for help.

Telford is reasonably sure he can avoid the consequences of his actions towards the Travellers and other skill-jacked personnel and is frightened of Hambley. He is a fairly passive sort of individual who wants to find somewhere safe and stay there. He is quite willing to lock someone else out of a hut rather than open the door and grant them refuge. It will be difficult to get him to go outside at all after dark and he will flee back inside as soon as he is able. Telford is the most likely of the crew to freeze or break down in panic.

Corey is out of his depth and very, very scared. He is likely to fixate on technical tasks – perhaps trivial ones – rather than deal with the reality of the situation. Given proper direction he could be very useful but will not display initiative other than to present ideas for increasingly fanciful technical fixes to problems. Most of these involve him safely under a console, jury-rigging some wiring.

Anson is a pretty resourceful individual, although the present situation is way beyond her experience. She is also pretty fatalistic and frequently comments that there are sometimes no good solutions – and there may be no solution at all. She is in favour of fixing up a buggy (or maybe a workbot) with 'unfried' components from elsewhere and heading towards the nearest major settlement. Her repeated urgings to cut and run might make the Travellers suspect she intends to do so and she will consider an escape bid, either solo or working with someone she has come to respect. How willing she is to stay and help depends on how she is treated and whether the Travellers' plan seems to offer a reasonable chance for survival.

Hambley takes charge and resents anyone who challenges him. He already has serious concerns about what will happen if the incident is reported and investigated, and will become vindictive towards Travellers who threaten his position or survival. On the other hand, he is also a 'doer' who will take risks for the group. He will always offer to lead or defend any group going outside and will fight hard against the creepers. However, he will betray anyone but Sayelle without much compunction if he must. He could be made to turn on her too but only if he realises she intends to pin the skill-jacking operation on him if there is an investigation. Convincing him of this would take some clever persuasion from the Travellers or a clear indication from Sayelle.

Sayelle is devious and manipulative. She will find important tasks suited to her skills, such as trying to fix the reactor, to avoid taking risks. Her primary goal is her own survival and ideally Hambley's too. Once she is sure that can be achieved, she will covertly try to get rid of the Travellers and Anson. This is best achieved by using Telford or Hambley as an agent. If it seems that the Travellers will survive, she will reason that an investigation is inevitable and will consider using Hambley as a scapegoat. That will work best if he is dead, of course....

The creepers were agitated by the EMP, prompting an investigate-kill response from the nest. Feeders and juvenile thinkers are exploring the area, with killers ready to follow. This is an animal-level response and not directed specifically at the proving site at first. However, since the EMP occurred there, the nest will come to consider the site as a threat, especially if investigating creepers are injured or killed in the vicinity.

Depending on the style of adventure desired by the Referee, the creepers could be a distant and low-level threat containing the humans in a pressure-cooker where they can destroy themselves, or the situation could play out as an escalating battle for survival with rivalries among the humans taking a secondary role – or an ambitious Referee could combine the two. The Referee should use the creepers in whatever way suits the style of adventure most suited to his Travellers.

MOVEMENT IN THE DARKNESS

As darkness falls, the first creepers begin to appear. They are difficult to make out in the gloom and avoid strong light. Some have stinger tails, which might trigger some scientific debate among the Travellers. The way the creepers move is disturbing to some and everyone will feel at least threatened by movement in the gathering darkness.

Some of the creepers stop in places like the top of the berm, where they are quite clearly seen and can presumably get a good look at the compound. They then begin to sneak closer, moving from one position of concealment to another. There do not seem to be many of them and Hambley advocates going out to scare them off, an blasting a few of them if that does not work.

If the Travellers do not agree to this course of action Hambley (or perhaps someone else) heads out with a shotgun to see if the creepers can be chased off by killing one or two. They move away from anyone approaching closer than 25 metres, retreating towards cover or concealment. Loud noises seem to startle them and they skitter away (or hunker down if they are already protected) but not for very long.

It quickly becomes apparent that the creepers understand the threat posed by humans. They move away when a person is facing them and close in from the flanks when his back is turned. Anyone out in the compound risks being cut off, although at this point it will only be one or two feeders that get between them and the huts.

This stage of the adventure should be run as a tense 'threat out there' situation or a low intensity skirmish. The threat at this stage is not severe; just a handful of creepers that prefer to skulk about and ambush unwary humans. If the Travellers want to blast off all their ammunition at this stage, they will have to manage without it later.

This phase goes on for at least a couple of hours, during which the behaviour of the creepers can be observed. Some randomly wander about the camp, poking in woodpiles and climbing on inert vehicles. Others sniff the ground and eventually someone will make the connection that they are following the underground conduits and pipes. One or two appear to be trying to burrow into the ground – always close to a pipe. Some seem to be attracted to the huts and others to the antenna.



Realising that the creepers seem to be attracted to pipes, vehicles and the like requires a Routine (6+) Science (xenology or biology) check (INT). Anyone who succeeds with an Effect of 6+ will make a connection between electromagnetic radiation from wires, machinery (and the EMP) and the movements of the creepers.

ATTACKS ON THE INFRASTRUCTURE

The creepers can sense electricity and magnetism, and are intrigued and disturbed by the underground cables as well as any machinery that is currently powered or was powered at the time of the EMP. The Travellers have no way of knowing at first but the huge electromagnetic surge imprinted a sort of 'electromagnetism map' of the compound upon the creepers. They are drawn to investigate it and try to eliminate the cause. Of course, the cause is long gone but lower levels of electromagnetic activity in the camp are enough to agitate them after the EMP disturbed their nest.

Feeders will attempt to destroy whatever electromagnetic sources are present or imprinted on their consciousness. Observers may note that sometimes a feeder heads straight for a place where

some piece of machinery was in the morning. If it has been moved, the feeder will wander around its previous location as if searching. Someone of a scientific mindset (Katriona perhaps) may surmise that they seem to know something was there but not what it was. Thus they make no connection between the location of the 'something' and a damaged robot moved just three metres a few hours ago.

Realising the creepers seem to be interested in where things were previously rather than where they are now requires a Difficult (10+) INT check. This can be made after any observation of a creeper ignoring something recently moved and searching the place where it used to be.

When they do find something, the creepers (mostly feeders) try to destroy it. This is mostly ineffectual; there is a limit to what mandibles can do to a ground vehicle. Some attempts are comical – one feeder manages to clamber up onto a ledge around the antenna and tries to chew through an armoured cable housing. It just keeps at it despite a complete lack of success, bashing at the housing with its head and ultimately falling from the antenna.

However, some creepers are more successful. A small group manages to dig up a buried power cable and begins attacking it. There is a chance they could damage the cables, although it will take some time. While all this is going on, other creepers (they look like feeders but are actually juvenile thinkers) will be investigating rather than destroying. They poke and push and fiddle with anything that will move rather than trying to bite it off. This behaviour might be noticed, in which case some characters might become very worried about how smart these creatures are.

Noting that some creepers are investigating rather than attacking requires a Difficult (10+) Recon check (INT) which can be made every time this behaviour is observed. Once the Travellers realise some creepers behave like this and others do not, an Average (8+) Science (biology or xenology) check (INT) will allow thinkers to be identified.

Naturally, any attempt to interfere with these activities will be intercepted by both killers and feeders. There are not enough of them to swarm a character, although their numbers grow over time. Instead, the creepers try to ambush characters although feeders tend to scuttle away when attacked, as do Thinkers, but they are smarter and may try to lead the characters into a killer ambush.

CREEPERS AT THE GATES

Eventually, the number of creepers in the compound grows to the point where it is not possible to keep chasing them off. The humans will have to retreat to positions of security, such as inside buildings or somewhere else defensible such as the antenna's maintenance ledge. The creepers are drawn to any powered buildings and will try to get in. They are able to clamber onto roofs, given a few attempts – there is not much to get a grip on – and will try to find an entry point.

Thinkers are capable of operating a door handle, although mostly by accident whilst fiddling with it. However, a door that is not locked could be opened, causing the thinker to suddenly find itself inside a building with several equally startled humans. The thinker is probably doomed at this point but other creepers might follow. Also, windows can be smashed and once a thinker sees that happen, other creepers will start hurling themselves at any windows they can find. Eventually, they will find a way into a hut.

Barricades might be a solution, or the humans might escape from the building and head for another. There will be quite a few creepers in the compound at this point (the exact number is hard to tell in the dark) but killing humans is not their main priority. They are attacking the electromagnetic disturbance; humans are just a bonus meal. It should be possible to flee to another position of safety, or even to move around the compound to carry out tasks. Anyone who is in the open for long will be attacked sooner or later but smart Travellers may be able to distract the creepers long enough for one of them to complete their task.

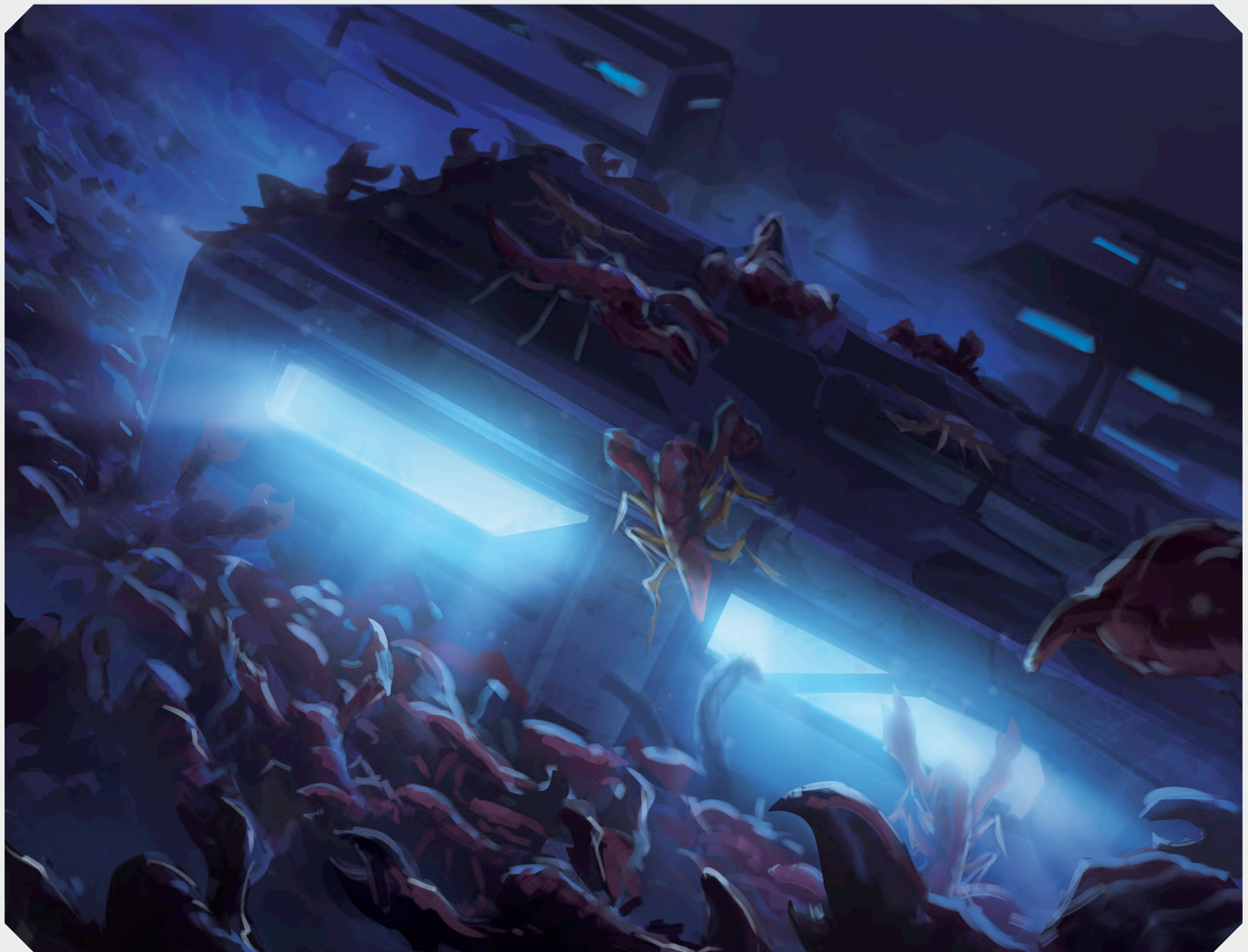
CRISIS POINT

As the night goes on, external lights and cameras are destroyed and huts are breached. The humans may have to scramble from one part of the camp to another to avoid being swarmed. It is impossible to see how many creepers are present but there are a lot. Some actively hunt the humans but most are busy wrecking the camp.

If the backup power is on, hut (G) is the absolute worst place to be as it is the source of emanations that attract creepers from all over the compound. They will begin to swarm it, smashing their way in and chewing all the wiring they can find. This distraction could be used by the humans to engineer an escape or some other plan to survive the night.

During this crisis, teamwork will break down and some characters may decide to further their own interests at the expense of others. It is likely that there will be shouting matches about what to do whilst others fend off attacks. If there is a betrayal, overt or otherwise, it is likely to come at this point. Yet at the same time there is hope; the sky is lightening and the creepers seem to dislike being out in daylight. If the humans can hold on a just little longer they might actually get out of this with their skins intact....

How the situation is resolved depends very much upon the actions of the Travellers. It is possible that everyone will be eaten or murdered by treacherous comrades but an inventive group of Travellers should be able to avoid this. Different groups will no doubt produce various solutions to the problems confronting them. The most likely options are listed below.



Wait for Daybreak: This is a viable option; creepers do not like daylight and will withdraw until the next evening. Climbing the antenna will cause daylight to reach the humans a little earlier but the Referee should note that the creepers are not repelled by sunlight; they just do not like it much. One engaged in eating a human will persist even after the sun comes up.

Escape: It will be possible to jury-rig a buggy or workbot with components from others but this is a lengthy task requiring parts from several sources. A group of characters might cooperate to get spares and protect the engineer while they are installed. It might even be possible to charge through the creepers aboard a reactivated workbot, using its tools to clear a path before heading towards civilisation. Of course, someone might make a run for it early and leave everyone else behind.

Doomsday Devic: It may be possible to set up the reactor to make an uncontrolled discharge that will wreck it even more comprehensively than before but which will draw in many creepers and electrocute them. Fusion reactors cannot be rigged to explode, although breaching the reaction chamber (somehow; it is not easy!) would flood the immediate area with plasma and kill everything within a few metres.

Distractions: Any electromagnetic activity will attract creepers. It might be possible to create a trap using explosives or ambush with blunt instruments to take out creepers that investigate. This would perhaps thin the numbers enough for other plans, or buy time for the sun to come up.

Something Else: The Referee should not give the Travellers an easy ride but this situation is survivable with guts and smart thinking. If the Travellers can come up with something workable, the Referee should let them try to implement it. They may even succeed....

AFTERMATH

Presumably some or even all of the personnel at Proving Site Nine make it through the night. It is possible that someone thought to be dead might have survived and could turn up later as a recurring character – possibly with a grudge. In all likelihood, the survivors are in the wreck of the camp surrounded by dead creepers; or they may have fled into the darkness. Either way, the Travellers still have little equipment and no money. The site is wrecked and more creepers may turn up at some point – tomorrow night, most likely.

The starport is hundreds of kilometres away and would be hard to reach using ground transport but if the Travellers can get a signal out, rescue will come sooner or later – although it will not be healthy to stay at PS9 for another night....

The nearest settlement is another small mining outpost, which has a working transmitter. Perhaps the best option is to gather what can be salvaged and head out, maybe aboard a jury-rigged vehicle. The Travellers should be safe enough once they get clear of the proving site but they are still stuck on a remote planet with no weaponry or equipment.

Getting back to Tobia (or wherever the Travellers started out) might be a challenge but at least the immediate crisis is over. If the Travellers uncovered the skill-jacking ring they may be able to bring it down. If they did not, they might still be in danger depending upon who survived the incident. It is possible that the Travellers might never find out how they came to be on Neon surrounded by creepers, although they are likely to go looking for answers and, being Travellers, payback.

But that is a story for another day....



CHARACTERS AND OPPOSITION

HAMBLEY TOMMERMAN, SMALLHAULER SKIPPER

Hambley is a big man in his early fifties, a career spacer who has been with Stenmore Minerals for two decades. Much of this time has been spent on smallhaulers and similar small transport ships in the Neon system. His grey-brown hair is cut short and he wears his shipboard coveralls constantly, although he does have other clothes. He is not concerned with appearances for their own sake but understands that 'tidy equals businesslike'. He is brisk and confident, and used to being in charge; he is not above a certain amount of physical intimidation but prefers to use a subtle threat like standing too close to someone and leaning over them rather shouting and blustering.

Hambley is not a nice person. He comes over as merely hard-nosed and cynical but has a self-centred streak that enables him to justify anything. He has never killed anyone but could find himself willing if pushed far enough – if he thought there would be repercussions for his involvement with the Travellers' kidnapping, for example.

Hambley is a willing participant in the skill-jacking operation, able to justify conveying people into what amounts to slavery so long as he is only the transport provider. If forced to confront the reality of what he has been doing, he will displace his feelings as anger towards whomever challenges him. Note that Hambley is unlikely to attack the Travellers unless severely provoked but will try to engineer situations where they can come to harm and will abandon any who are in trouble if he can get away with it.

Hambley knows the staff of Proving Site Nine, at least vaguely, and is well-disposed towards them. He will try to help until self-interest outweighs sense of duty, after which he will betray anyone to survive.



HAMBLEY TOMMERMAN

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE
Human			Male		Early Fifties
TRAITS			—		
STR	11	INT	7	SKILLS	
DEX	6	EDU	9	Astrogation 1, Electronics (comms) 1, Electronics (computers) 1, Gun Combat (slug), Leadership 3, Melee (unarmed) 2, Persuade 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 3, Streetwise 2, Vacc Suit 1	
END	9	SOC	7		
WEAPONS			Shotgun with six shells in the weapon and two six-shell holders attached to the butt of the gun.		

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Square your shoulders and intimidate anyone who does not follow your orders. Your size is an asset. Prioritise your life and well-being, trust no one fully and make sure that, whatever happens, you end up on top.

ANSON KOBLEINZ, FELLOW SURVIVOR

Anson is a Belter from Robin in Trin's Veil subsector. She is 29 years old and spent most of her adult life among beltters or working for small mining companies. She was working in the Neon system aboard an independent support vessel, running supplies to remote mining locations, when she was redirected by the skill-jacking ring.



ANSON KOBLEINZ

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE	
Human			Female		29	
TRAITS			—			
STR	6	INT	8	SKILLS		
DEX	9	EDU	6	Astrogation 2, Engineer (m-drive) 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Science (planetology) 1, Vacc Suit 2		
END	8	SOC	5			

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Your default position is distrust and a refusal to submit to authority. If someone can earn your respect, both of these will change. Stay quiet and watch everyone. Do unto others as they do to you.

Anson's last memory (once she is coherent enough to put it all back together) is entering a low berth aboard the supply boat she crewed during transit from her parent vessel to a distant claim site. She does not know how she came to be aboard the smallhauler, only that she and one other crewmember named Olli Hildsen entered their low berths when their craft's systems suffered a critical failure they could not repair. With no rescue ships in range, this offered the best chance of survival. Olli was not aboard the smallhauler and she has no idea who the other two (deceased) passengers were. None of Anson's belongings are aboard the smallhauler.

Anson is mistrustful of outsiders, especially those who have not proven their reliability and has a problem with authority. If someone she respects gives her a command she will obey cheerfully enough but winning that respect is difficult. As far as Anson is concerned, she is the only one who has proven themselves reliable (to her). She is likely to argue with the Travellers, especially if she has doubts about their ideas or capabilities. Despite this, she understands very well that teamwork is vital to survival in a crisis and will go along with a workable idea.

Anson might become a recurring character. She is in a difficult position at present – she is used to being surrounded by people she knows are capable and competent, and who treat her with the respect she is due as a proven spacer – she uses the term 'Shippie' to refer to herself and her own comrades. If she ever refers to one of the Travellers as a Shippie, it means she has come to respect them and considers the Traveller to be as capable and reliable as any of her own people. Shippie does not quite mean the same as family but it is close enough.

If Anson is not treated with respect – and she may make this hard at times – then she will be resentful. However, she is aware that she needs the Travellers for the time being at least. She will accept bad treatment to some extent but will consider she owes the Travellers nothing. She is not a vengeful person but belter culture is hard-nosed about these things – you help fellow Shippies in any way you can, because they will be there for you when you need it. Strangers are treated with cautious courtesy until they show their true colours. Those that demonstrate they are unreliable, jerks, or just bad people will no doubt perish in hard vacuum sooner or later.

Anson could become a loyal friend, reluctant ally or distant and resentful acquaintance. Much depends on how she is treated.

SAYELLE MIKOLOS, SMALLHAULER ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN

Sayelle is a small woman of around 35. Like Hambley, she is a career spacer and specialises in powerplant work aboard small vessels. She speaks little and acts as if intimidated by Hambley, who bosses her around with trivial and sometimes pointless tasks. However, the reality is that she has him in her pocket due to a mix of manipulation and blackmail.



SAYELLE MIKOLOS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	Around 35

TRAITS

—

STR	6	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	9	Electronics (comms) 1, Electronics (computers) 2, Engineer (power) 3, Persuade 3, Stealth 1, Steward 1, Vacc Suit 2
END	8	SOC	6	

WEAPONS Small tools, custom derringer

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Project the air of a mouse. Be quiet, seem intimidated by loud people. If someone approaches you in a calm manner, be respectful and good-natured. Just remember that, under the surface, you are none of these things.

Sayelle is one of the instigators of the skill-jacking ring. She recruited Hambley as a front man and muscle as well as for his spacing skills and got him assigned to the Neon system supply run. He does not know where the jacked passengers come from; Sayelle does. The usual source is interception of people in low berths (typically new arrivals in the Tobia system but sometimes belters or other spacers) and redirection of the entire low berth unit. Sayelle has contacts at the Neon starport who pay for the contents of her low berths. She does not know nor care who the end recipient of these skilled slaves might be.

Sayelle wears grey shipboard coveralls, much like Hambley, with an orange sleeveless ship-jacket. The pockets of her jacket are filled with small tools and concealed among them is a custom derringer (see page 126). She is not a skilled shot and would use the gun only in a dire emergency. The rest of the time she relies on her downtrodden-but-pleasant persona to make others want to protect her. Sayelle is a devious and manipulative individual, who will do her best to pin any wrongdoing on Hambley and allow the Travellers to 'rescue' her from him.

DAVIDE MAXANNI, SMALLHAULER CO-PILOT

Davide, a 21-year-old recruit, was the third crewmember of the smallhauler. He is deceased and not part of the skill-jacking ring. He did not know the low passengers were captives.

TELFORD 'ABE' ABERGEVENNY, PROVING SITE MEDICAL TECHNICIAN

Telford Abergevenny is a 28-year-old 'Administrative and Technical Services Employee' with Stenmore Minerals. His primary role, most of the time, is as an inventory and records clerk for the site but he is paid as a medic (i.e. better than most clerks) and fulfils the role of the site's doctor. Abe, unfortunately, has a serious gambling problem and became involved in the skill-jacking ring to pay his debts. This worked well and he is rapidly becoming wealthy. His money is held in a covert account, ready for the day when he resigns his position and retires. That will be in just one more run... maybe two. He has been telling himself this for two years now but the easy money keeps him in this boring job at the end of the universe for just a little longer...

Telford is aware of the human cost of what he is doing but kids himself that the jacked specialists will be able to earn themselves out of their situation soon enough – he even compares their position to his own; working a crappy job until the money is banked. He is, however, aware that he will face stiff penalties if caught and will start wondering how to get out with his skin intact once the Travellers show up.

Telford is not a violent man but does have a secret weapon. Normally when a ship with jacked personnel in the low berths arrives, he goes aboard for a 'routine crew health check' and looks the low passengers over



TELFORD 'ABE' ABERGEVENNY

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE	
Human			Male		28	
TRAITS			—			
STR	5	INT	7	SKILLS		
DEX	8	EDU	9	Admin 2, Electronics (computers) 1, Gambler 2, Medic 2, Science (biology) 1, Steward 1		
END	6	SOC	8			

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Nothing is your fault. Ever. Say anything to move any suspicions away from yourself but never put yourself in someone else's crosshairs. Inside you are really not a pleasant person but do your best not to reveal this.

before administering a drug derived from the venom of killers. In the right dose, it keeps low berth passengers from coming around too quickly, remaining docile whilst being taken from the low berths to their destination. He might be willing to use the drug on someone causing trouble, either to keep them out of the way or ensure the creepers dispose of them.

Telford does not make the compound himself. It is delivered to him when the smallhauler calls and he originally resolved not to keep any at the settlement. However, there was always some left over and he later decided to have an insurance policy. It is hidden in plain sight among medical supplies at the camp, in drug bottles marked only with a generic hazard symbol and a (fake) batch code. If he is confronted about these, Telford's explanation is that these containers arrived in a resupply run without any documentation. He says he does not know what is inside but did not discard them in case they are something he is supposed to have. The paperwork might catch up someday.

Telford does not know where the low berth passengers go after Proving Site Nine but surmises they are taken to the starport since the smallhauler crew usually take liberty there before making the long haul back. After that, they are presumably handed over to the end client or delivered by another ship. Telford does not want to know the details; he just administers the drugs, takes the money and dreams of retirement on Tobia.

COREY SHIRO, PROVING SITE BOT-WRANGLER

Corey appears to be a tall, skinny kid (he is 23 but looks 17), alternately likeable and infuriating. He is an extremely talented bot-wrangler with an intuitive understanding of how to get a robot to do what he wants as efficiently as possible. He is also a qualified repair technician but this is a distinctly secondary role.

Corey has nothing to do with the jacking ring and is terribly, terribly scared of whatever is 'out there'. He lacks common sense but makes up for this in mortal terror – at the present, Corey is seeing threats everywhere and very cautious about locking doors, checking rooms before entering and so forth. Indeed, he is probably overdoing it and likely to annoy other survivors. He has absolutely no suspicion that anyone else is up to no good – he is just a scared kid whose world has been torn apart.



COREY SHIRO

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE	
Human			Male		23	
TRAITS			—			
STR	6	INT	11	SKILLS		
DEX	7	EDU	8	Electronics (computers) 2, Electronics (remote ops) 4, Mechanic 1, Recon 1, Science (robotics) 2		
END	5	SOC	6			

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

In quiet moments, you are fun-loving to the point of immaturity. However, right now you are terrified, overly cautious to a fault and will pester anyone you think can help you. Basically, you are acting like a scared little boy.

KATRIONA STARVNI, PROVING SITE SCIENTIST

Katriona is 38 and describes herself as 'a scientist, but only just'. She was assigned to the proving site as a materials and minerals expert, although for the most part this means she feeds samples into automated machines and reports the results in long and complex spreadsheets. The nature of her job is such that she spends a lot of time outside the proving site, taking samples and looking over the ground with a view to future expansion. She also acts as communications technician for the site.

Katriona is as scared as anyone else. She has seen the creepers in action and has a better idea of their capabilities than the others. She also has a theory about the EMP that took out the smallhauler; she has



KATRIONA STARVNI

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			Female	38
TRAITS			—	
STR	7	INT	9	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	10	
END	7	SOC	9	
				Drive (wheel) 2, Electronics (comms) 2, Electronics (computer) 1, Electronics (sensors) 2, Recon 1, Science (planetology) 2, Survival 1

WEAPONS Revolver

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

You are scared but will always retain enough awareness to try to figure problems out. Anything important must be analysed and understood. Ask questions, request to see data and be suspicious of anyone who refuses.

figured out that it is what killed systems aboard the smallhauler and the base – which is a bit of a no-brainer – but has also made the connection between the explosion and increased creeper activity.

She has for some time had a vague suspicion that 'something' was happening at the site but never came close to realising what it was, assuming there was some sort of smuggling scam or maybe Telford's gambling habit had caused a problem. She simply had no idea what was happening under her nose and is likely to be outraged if she finds out.

Katriona carries a revolver loaded with four rounds. She has observed that some creepers will flee from loud noises, although they slink back to investigate soon afterwards.

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONRY

CUSTOM DERRINGER

Sayelle's derringer is typical of such pistols. Put together in a small workshop at Neon starport, it is a four-barrel weapon using a rotating firing pin. It fires using a double-action mechanism and is very inaccurate beyond extreme close ranges. Guns of this type are not mass-produced and reflect the 'underground craftsman' end of the marketplace.



WEAPON	TL	RANGE	DAMAGE	KG	COST	MAGAZINE	MAGAZINE COST	TRAITS
Custom Derringer	8	5	2D-2	0.4	Cr250	4	Cr5	—

SHIPBOARD SURVIVAL KIT

Many spacecraft carry a survival kit intended to assist the crew and passengers to survive in the event of a disaster. Since most space-vessel crises occur far from breathable air, there is a limit to what can be achieved at an affordable price. However, a full kit does include a token groundside component to give four stranded spacefarers a chance at survival until rescue arrives. The kit aboard the smallhauler is standard and contains the following:

- Four-person Inflatable Shelter with zipped 'airlock section'
- Air Rebreather Unit and bottled air, sufficient to allow four people to survive in increasing discomfort for at least 24 hours
- 4 Pressure Sleeves
- Medikit
- Multitool (screwdriver, probe, pliers, small blade)
- 4 Life-support Masks
- 12 Chemical Lightsticks, each good for 3–5 hours' illumination
- 4 Survival Ponchos, silvered on one side and grey on the other, can be used as garment or blanket
- 4 Personal Survival Kits

The personal survival kit is a belt-mounted bag containing minimal survival equipment geared to a wide range of circumstances. It contains:

- Waterproof Gloves
- Waterproof Boots
- Knife
- Fire-starting Kit
- Pack of Survival Rations (ration bars good for 2–3 days)
- Water Bottle with water purification tablets

Item	TL	Kg	Cost
Life-support Mask	7	—	Cr1000
Personal Survival Kit	10	1	Cr100
Pressure Sleeve	10	—	Cr600
Shipboard Survival Kit	10	45	Cr10000



TOOLSACK WORKBOT

The Toolsack is a well-respected and widely used unit capable of operating in a variety of environments. It is built on a tracked chassis resembling a small bulldozer and can act as one with the right attachments; a Toolsack can mount a variety of manipulators including a backhoe, heavy-lifting arms, saws, grinders, welding and cutting gear, and a set of lighter arms for fine work.

A modular bay on the back of the robot can be used for various applications including shaping logs, force-drying organic matter, sorting ore chunks or even small-scale fabrication work if optional machinery is installed. Workbots of this size are typically used for heavy tasks like construction or earthmoving and can operate semi-autonomously to perform simple tasks, learning more complicated routines with instructions from a handler. A good 'bot-wrangler' can train a force of workbots to rapidly carry out large-scale tasks with a high degree of efficiency.

Workbots are programmed with inhibitors that prevent them harming humans; even stupid ones who stand in front of a cutting arm. Accidents have happened but these units have an excellent safety and efficiency record. Workbots are also traffic-legal for autonomous operation on the highways of most cities. They are powered by a compact fusion reactor with a variety of electrical and mechanical power takeoffs and

can function as the power source for a collection of smaller robots. It is not uncommon to see a 'bot gang' riding in the Toolsack's configurable bay on the way to a job, all plugged into its power outlets so they arrive recharged and ready to go.

Robot	Hits	Speed	TL	Cost
Toolsack Workbot	50	4m	10	Cr121600
Locomotion	Tracks			
Skills	Athletics (strength) 2m, Drive (track) 1, Mechanic 1			
Attacks	None			
Manipulators	2x (STR 13 DEX 6)			
Endurance	72 hours			
Traits	Armour (+3), ATV, Large (+2)			
Programming	Advanced (INT 6)			
Options	Auditory Sensor, Construction Equipment (medium), Drone Interface, Mechanical Toolkit (basic), Mining Equipment (medium), Spare Slots x28, Storage Compartment (standard) 10 slots, Transceiver 5km (improved), Visual Spectrum Sensor, Voder Speaker, Wireless Data Link			



FIELD BUGGY

A simple utilitarian vehicle, the field buggy has few frills but is adept at handling poor terrain when in the hands of a good driver. With little space for cargo and only capable of carrying one passenger alongside the driver, the field buggy is cheap, easily transportable and yet provides great deal mobility in the wilderness. While intended to support field operations, these buggies are also highly popular among young adults who live in frontier regions and a large third-party market exists to customise them, albeit mostly cosmetically.

TL	7
Skill	Drive (wheel)
Agility	+0
Speed (cruise)	Medium (Slow)
Range (cruise)	400 (500)
Crew	1
Passengers	1
Cargo	0.25 tons
Hull	8
Shipping	2 tons
Cost	Cr4380

Traits	ATV
Equipment	Camouflage (basic), Entertainment System
Weapons	—

Equipment	
Autopilot (skill level)	—
Communications (range)	—
Navigation (Navigation DM)	—
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-1
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—

ARMOUR					
FRONT	6	REAR	6	SIDES	6



GREAT RIFT ADVENTURE 4

The Lost Garden

The Great Rift is a barren stretch of space, with few systems dotted throughout many sectors. Bordering the Third Imperium and the Aslan Hierate, this area is perfect for Travellers to explore and earn Credits. Garden is a world heavily supervised by the Imperial Ministry of Colonisation, attempting to recover from the fraught ecological conditions that plague the world.

Great Rift Adventure 4: The Lost Garden is a xenoarchaeology adventure based in the Great Rift, where the Travellers will visit Garden, an out-of-the way world that was once the homeworld of the Salika. The Travellers will have to delve into an ancient research facility to find the artefact their patron seeks and try not to bring the entire compound crumbling down upon themselves in the process.

INTRODUCTION

The Lost Garden is set on Garden, in the Alone subsector of Reft in the Great Rift. It is intended to be used in a xenoarchaeology campaign or within a larger campaign set in the Great Rift. With a focus on environmentalism, xenoarchaeology and puzzles, it should suit a mixed group of Travellers.

Initially, the Travellers may be in the Great Rift for any number of reasons. The Travellers are drawn to Hope Freeport following widespread rumours of an Ancients artefact, although the Referee may tweak this as they wish. This may be in search of treasure, cargo, information or some other such pull that would enable them to be so far away from civilisation. However, when they arrive at the freeport, they will encounter a Droyne

with information regarding a trove of data that could help lead them to a new renewable energy source. This data, along with the first part of a prototypal starship component, is the main 'loot' of the mission.

The information the Travellers are seeking was created by the Salika, a Minor Alien species originating from Garden. Whilst the Travellers can take the data and prototype back to their patron, and therefore the Third Imperium, they also have the option to return it to the Salika. The former will progress the Imperium's research into the area and net the Travellers a good amount of Credits and reputation, whereas the latter will reunite the Salika with something of their ancient history.

That choice belongs to the Travellers.



THE RIFT

The Great Rift is an astrological anomaly spanning multiple sectors. It is a barren stretch of space, with systems sparsely dotted throughout the region. Most Imperial traffic, tramp traders and merchants will never venture here but it is an area ripe with opportunity and intrigue, should one know where to look. Higher jump-capable ships are required to pass through the rift, although ships carrying extra fuel, whether in expanded main tanks or otherwise, can also make their way across the stretches of uninhabited space.

As such, the Imperial portion of the Great Rift has none of the spacelanes common within other areas of Charted Space. The closest is one sector rimward-spinward in the Riftspan Reaches, which links the Aslan Hierate with its coreward colonies. Despite this, Imperial Navy ships pass through the area to save time redirecting through the Corridor.

The Great Rift provides interstellar security to the Third Imperium through separation, a sector-wide void area that is difficult to traverse, meaning other empires are less likely to move fleets through the area. However, this also means that navy patrols are irregular at best, making the area somewhat of a safe haven for traders of illicit goods. The proximity of the trailing edge of the Great Rift to the Imperium allows these traders an ineffective but mostly safe method of rejoining core Imperial trading lanes.

HERE BE TREASURE

Despite the presence of artefact hunters throughout Charted Space, some seek information, holding it in higher regard than trinkets of long-dead civilisations. These xenoarchaeologists search for knowledge that can advance their research or that of their employer. Many worlds throughout Charted Space contain hidden knowledge and it is the job of these adventurers to find and recover it.

Xenoarchaeology can be seen as the cross-over of archaeology and sophontology, and focuses on artefacts, architecture and cultural landscapes of non-human origin. Expeditions are either funded publicly or privately, depending on their purview. However, many 'illicit xenoarchaeologists' seek lost information for personal gain, whether selling historical research to a

private company for profit or keeping it out of the hands of a hated interstellar government. Whatever their motivations, they are usually scientists and researchers first and foremost, taking great pains to identify and classify any items they might find.

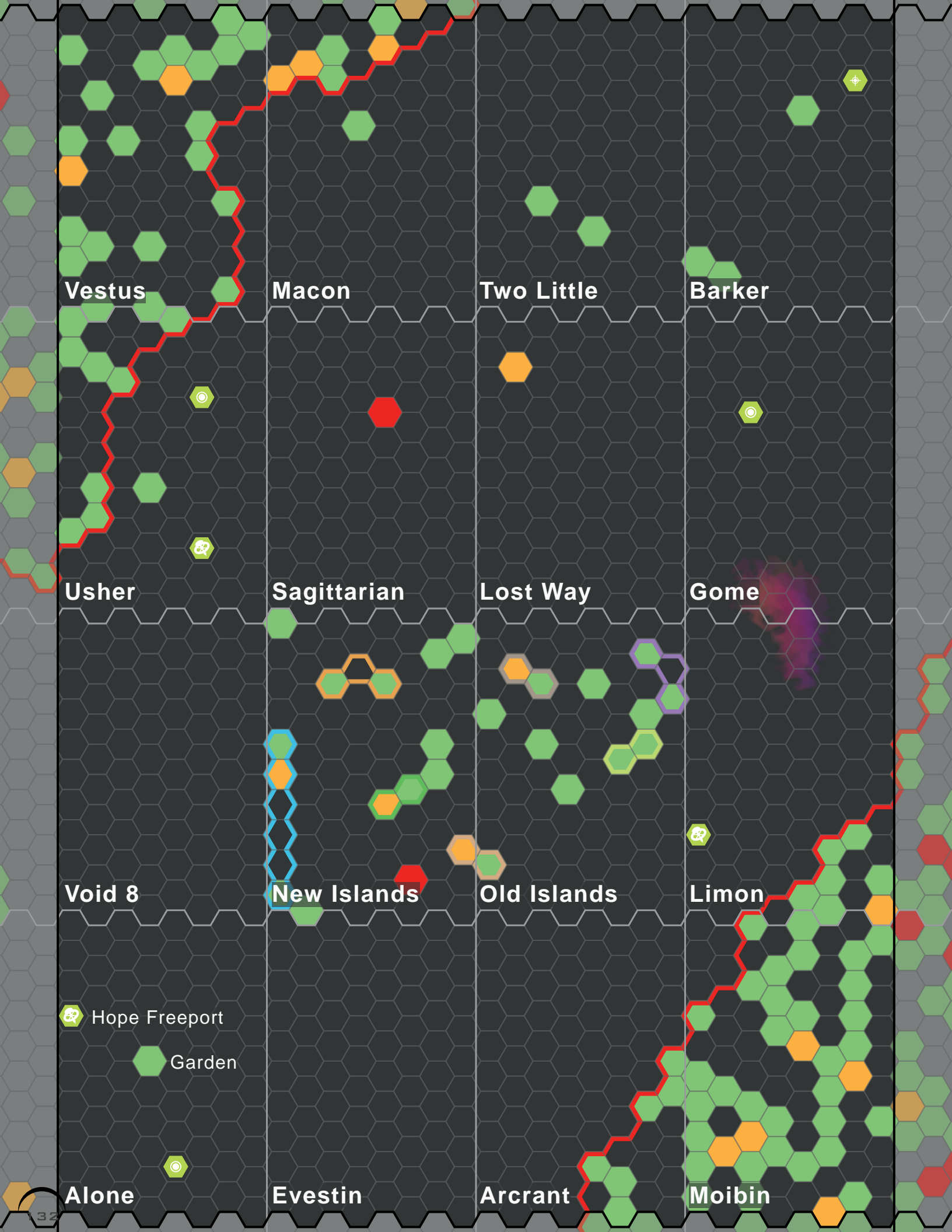
WHY THE RIFT

Following the stories about an Ancients artefact, the Travellers should be suitably motivated to travel to Hope Freeport to find it. As Travellers can be induced by the pull of Credits, rumours about the artefact should hint at astronomical rewards for finding it and gently push them towards ingress into the Great Rift to retrieve it. Should this not be enough, however, tales can be told about those who have gone looking for it prior, cementing their status as famed xenoarchaeologists and treasure hunters. The combination of wealth and fame should be motivation enough. Scientifically oriented Travellers' only motivation may be the discoveries ripe for finding in the Rift.

Garden is the ideal site for an adventure such as this, with a prior civilisation abandoning their homeworld due to environmental conditions and an Imperial colonisation effort underway. Isolated from most of Imperial space, the Travellers will be amongst the first non-natives to uncover the secrets hidden on Garden. The excitement of exploring space and discovering completely alien cultures, architecture and history is a powerful key in *Traveller*.

GETTING TO HOPE

Hope Freeport, where *The Lost Garden* begins, is in the Great Rift where it requires a jump-5 route from the closest system but this is not necessarily a negative. Along the spinward and trailing edges of the rift, in the Hkea'as and Arcrant subsectors, Hope Freeport is well-known by smugglers and traders as a place where they can sell goods that otherwise might bring trouble. Mingling at starports or trading hubs in these subsectors would be a good way for the Travellers to travel to the freeport. Most options would likely be via low berth but basic passage would be offered on occasion, possibly at a discounted (-10%) rate, as many captains would be happy to accept extra Credits from transporting a group into the rift. Alternatively, the Travellers may retrofit their ship to include fuel/cargo containers, collapsible fuel tanks or drop tanks, although each of these will cost considerably more and may make the journey more intensive on their part.



LOST HOPE

Hope Freeport is an anomaly, much like the majority of Reft. It typically does not show up in library data accessed outside of the few closest subsectors, bar a small note about an independent freeport located somewhere in the Alone subsector, a few parsecs coreward-spinward of Garden. As one travels closer, a good proportion of information that can be found about Hope Freeport is outdated, incorrect or heavily redacted. Information beyond a general location and description is either limited to the IISS and Imperial Navy or has been removed thanks to well-placed bribes by the occupants of the freeport.

The freeport was originally named *Shining Hope*, an asteroid hull vessel launched from Terra during the Interstellar Wars. It had tens of thousands of personnel in cold-sleep, sent with the intention of building a colony far separated from Terran space, ensuring species survival in the event of catastrophe. System malfunctions began to plague the vessel and it ended its journey

within the Reft sector. Although the populace struggled initially, across the years they managed to convert the ship, renaming it Hope Freeport and establishing themselves as an independent hub in the region.

Those travelling into the area will see Hope Freeport on astrological scans, although the electromagnetic profile confirms that it is technological rather than natural. The traders who pass through here are used to evading Imperial authority, so the widespread lack of specific information about the freeport suits them well. Most trade is unrestricted, with the only real limitations being slaves and obvious pirate booty. As such, traders making the journey to Hope Freeport can find themselves able to make a more than decent living. Maintenance and repairs are possible at the port and modifications such as mountable and collapsible fuel tanks are easy to come by and have been transferred between many ships on their way further in and out of the rift.



IMPERIAL INVESTIGATION

Trading on Hope is deliberately lax, with few restrictions on imports and exports. The port staff are unlikely to allow anything too dangerous, such as nuclear weapons. The primary objective for the freeport is protecting their independence and allowing highly illegal items to pass through would draw too much attention. The freeport getting shut down, interdicted or more heavily restricted by the Imperial Navy would mean loss of revenue and force it to become even further closed off from Imperial space. There have been several incidents of Imperial spies being caught on Hope Freeport, so the people here are more than aware that their activities are being monitored for potential investigation by the Imperial Navy. Although the freeport is outside the boundaries of Imperial Space, they are close enough to warrant intervention if deemed necessary.

As ships travel closer to the freeport, hailing the Port Authority will allow them past the asteroid's defensive artillery. The Hope Freeport maintains a number of jump-capable vessels that are known to be, amongst other things, trigger-happy, acting as a deterrent for pirates or would-be raiders. This combination keeps those entering and exiting the freeport as safe as can be, although this safety is dependent on the freeport itself. Gangs and criminal organisations are as common as can be expected on a primarily lawless freeport in the middle of empty space and visitors should be mindful of the areas of the freeport they venture into.

The words '*Shining Hope*' can still be seen in some areas of the vessel but there is little of the original ship remaining in the state in which it was launched. The interior has been extensively changed to suit its new use as a freeport, with some smaller chambers converted into shops and restaurants with various materials used to construct stalls, stands and a

sizeable open-market. Problems stemming from lax trading laws are common, with several violent incidents in recent years causing something of a divide amongst the people of Hope and ensuring they keep themselves armed at all times.

There are several different markets, each divided by the goods they sell, such as ship parts, food and drink, textiles and more. These are self-regulated and a new vendor quickly replaces any who go out of business. The majority of the markets are reminiscent of ancient Terra, although the goods have changed somewhat since *Shining Hope*'s launch during the colony missions of the Interstellar Wars. Vendors shout across walkways to advertise their wares; people can be heard haggling over prices, and flashing advertisements can be seen throughout. It is a riot of colour, smells and noise and can be slightly overwhelming compared to the vast emptiness of the space beyond the freeport.

It is in the small restaurants, cafes and food stalls that much business is done on Hope Freeport, with deals and contracts signed over a meal or drink. There are some nicer (safer) areas but these are often gang-controlled or -maintained, depending on how a Traveller views gang members hanging around, protecting businesses in return for Credits and generally aiming to reduce the prevalent lawlessness. However, they also contribute their fair share of violence if and when they deem it necessary. As long as visitors to the freeport stay uninvolved and keep to themselves, they are unlikely to be caught up in it.

CHASING RUMOURS

When the Travellers arrive at Hope Freeport, they will undergo a cursory search, although they may be surprised that nothing is taken from them or instructed to be left on their ship. The people of the freeport are generally friendly, if a little standoffish when questioned too closely, but more than a few seem to be happy to talk about the Ancients artefact. Using Streetwise, Recon or Carouse checks, a trail of questions will allow the Travellers to narrow down the most helpful contacts. Referees may use the Rumours table to determine what the Travellers find out. These can be used to create a chain and the Referee may have the Travellers follow any number of these before moving on.

WELCOME TO HOPE FREEPORT

REFT-ALONE-0134

DECK 1-3

HYDROPONICS [R]

RESIDENTIAL
[PERMANENT]

RESIDENTIAL
[PERMANENT]

UPPER MARKETS

COMMAND [R]

ARMAMENT [R]

DECK 4-5

CARGO [R]

LOWER MARKETS

DECK 6-7

POWER & DRIVE [R]

HANGARS

ARMAMENT [R]

CARGO [R]

RESIDENTIAL
[TEMPORARY]

DECK 11-13

ARMAMENT [R]

DOCKING BAYS

DECK 8-10

DOCKING BAYS

DECK 14-15

MAINTENANCE &
FABRICATION

DECK 16

[R] = RESTRICTED ACCESS

Rumours

1D	Rumour	Referee's Information
1	The Ancients artefact was last seen leaving the freeport on a heavily modified Donosev survey scout named <i>Final Flight</i> . No one heard the intended direction of travel but they were most likely stopping at Browne on their way out of the rift.	The <i>Final Flight</i> is Yosoy's ship. Asking about it at the port will direct the Travellers towards Yosoy.
2	The Ancients artefact is actually from the First Imperium and rumours have been circulating the freeport for long enough that the original story has long since become forgotten.	Yosoy had been planting false information around Hope Freeport to distract people from the artefact he was searching for.
3	An ex-bounty hunter by the name of Fearim once apprehended a mark who was looking for the artefact and may be willing to tell the Travellers more about it if alcohol is applied.	Yosoy was responsible for putting a bounty on the mark, who wanted to interrogate him for information regarding the artefact.
4	The Ancients artefact is on the freeport, although the rumourmonger has no idea where, as they heard about it being brought onboard by a friend of a friend and have heard nothing since.	This is another lie planted by Yosoy to distract interested parties from searching further than Hope Freeport for the artefact.
5	An ex-merchant called Yosoy was looking for the artefact but stopped searching a few years ago and diverted his attention to a nearby world.	This rumour is actually true.
6	A spy from the Imperial Navy was caught by the port staff asking about an Ancients artefact.	The spy was searching for Yosoy, who is well known within the navy, both for his prior service and the reason he left.

The Travellers will finally be able to learn about the Ancients artefact from a Droyne named Yosoy, who frequents one of the port bars. He is a retired merchant, having spent many years plying the lines between the Imperium and its frontier in the Spinward Marches and Deneb. The bar is a five-minute walk from the main docking bays and is a repurposed stateroom frequented by those arriving and departing. It is just out of the way enough to be quiet but close enough to the port itself that it is not an arduous journey if flights are touch and go.

The exterior of the building is somewhat worn, with the remaining neon lights blinking erratically. The door gives a little jingle as it opens and the smell of old alcohol and smoke permeates the interior. Inside are worn blue booths, a couple of which are occupied, and a bar with a lone Droyne talking to the bartender. The menu behind the bar flickers on occasion but on occasion the bartender will give the generator a kick and it will work without fault for a short while.

SPEAKING TO YOSOY

Yosoy is gruff when approached, thanks to years of experiencing people trying to screw him over to get any information he has on the artefacts he hunts. Since hanging his hat a few years ago, he is slightly more open but will require plying with alcohol. When he and the Travellers are a few drinks in, he will tell them about the Ancients artefact. He explains that he seeded the rumours to get Ancients hunters away from the historical objects he seeks. Instead, he suggests the Travellers visit Garden, a world three parsecs to trailing. The world is supremely isolated and the Third Imperium rarely sends the IISS or navy to check on it. Supply runs are made once every year but other than that, the world is left alone.

Yosoy is old, even for a Droyne, a fact made clear by the slow way he moves his limbs and the slight droop of his wings. Now that he is older and supposedly wiser, he is searching for a crew to travel to Garden to continue his search. For years, he has been collecting rumours about a trove of ancient Salika



research regarding renewable energy. He has finally narrowed down the information to a point of interest on Garden, the homeworld of the Salika. Yosoy informs the Travellers that he believes the Salika had almost perfected a carbon scrubbing device that used the carbon removed to produce power. He will request the Travellers retrieve it but will allow them to keep anything else they find within the area they are checking. His best guess is that it will be powering the facility, if it is working, or indeed real.

Garden is environmentally unstable, for want of a better term, but Yosoy has wanted to continue his search on the world for some time and the Travellers represent a perfect opportunity for him. He has knowledge and a ship but the Travellers have the skills to get to the site and back and hopefully remain unscathed. Yosoy recognises his advanced age and relative inability to undertake such a task himself, and is happy to provide the Travellers with assistance if it means he can see his research come to fruition.

Yosoy will walk the Travellers to the port when the deal is struck, showing them a rather beaten-up and converted *Donosev*-class survey scout. The words *Final Flight* have been hand-painted on its hull and extensive work seems to have been done to the ship. New panels can be seen in an array of colours, clearly chosen for price over looks. However, the ship's interior is clean, if a little dusty, and looks comfortable. Yosoy explains that he will loan them the vessel for their journey but it will be returned to him on their return to Hope Freeport, which is necessary if they hope to make it out of the Great Rift.

Before the Travellers depart, Yosoy will explain that he has stocked enough food for a five-week round trip, meaning they will have one week planetside before they must return. They have enough fuel for two jumps, which is just enough to get them to Garden, where they can refuel at one of the four gas giants before returning. Hobbling onto the ship, he will explain to whoever is interested that he has marked a chart of Garden with the most likely location of the information he is seeking and will provide the Travellers with enough information about the world to get by (see Library Data on page 162). He gives the Travellers Cr2000 each to purchase any extra equipment they might require before leaving them to it.

The port staff at Hope Freeport do little more than ask some cursory questions and it appears that Yosoy had already informed them that the Travellers would be using his ship. Their eyebrows pinch with concern as they prepare the docking area for its departure, some of the clamps holding it in place groaning with age as it is released. However, before long, the Travellers are on their way to Garden.

Should the Travellers have their own ship, they will be able to purchase items such as drop tanks on Hope Freeport, with mounts (see *High Guard*, page 48) being retrofitted onto their ship. This will take a few days to complete and the Travellers will need to linger around the freeport in the meantime. If they have already made the journey to Hope Freeport, they may already have jump extending devices fitted and must simply check they have enough fuel to get them to Garden.

FINAL FLIGHT

Yosoy bought this ship with his navy pension, gutting the docking bays and laboratories and replacing them with fuel/cargo containers holding enough fuel to perform a second jump. This makes the ship much less versatile than its original design but allows it to traverse the less populated areas of Charted Space.

The space inside is as open as possible and the staterooms are plusher than what is generally found on scout ships, explicitly converted for longer-range missions. The fuel/cargo containers are plumbed into the primary ship fuel system, a process which took a good few years to complete.

TL14

		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	400 tons, Dispersed Structure	—	10
M-Drive	Thrust 3	12	24
J-Drive	Jump-3 (reduced size x2)	28	65.625
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 210	14	14
Fuel Tanks	J-3, 8 weeks of operation	124	—
Bridge		20	2
	Sensor Station	1	0.5
Computer	Computer/25	—	10
Sensors	Improved	3	4.3
Systems	Fuel/Cargo Container	126	0.6
	Fuel Processor (120 tons/day)	6	0.3
	Fuel Scoops	—	1
	Workshop	6	0.9
Staterooms	Luxury	10	1.5
	Standard x5	20	2.5
Software	Intellect	—	—
	Jump Control/3	—	0.3
	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre	—	—
Common Areas	—	10	1
	Microbrewery	1	0.1
Cargo		19	—
Total: MCr138.625			

Crew

Pilot, Astrogator,
Engineers x2

Hull: 144

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr11552/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr138.625

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems

80

Manoeuvre Drive

120

Jump Drive

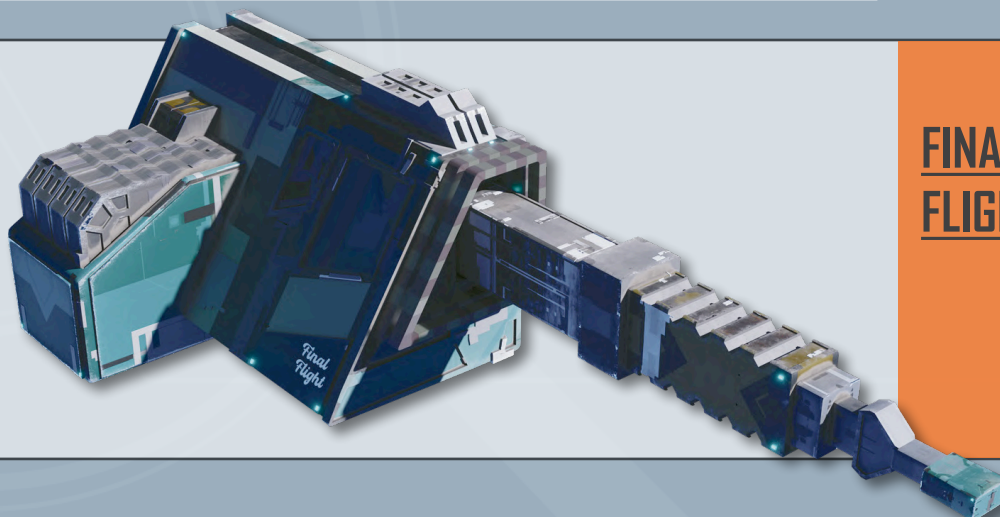
120

Sensors

4

Fuel Processor

6

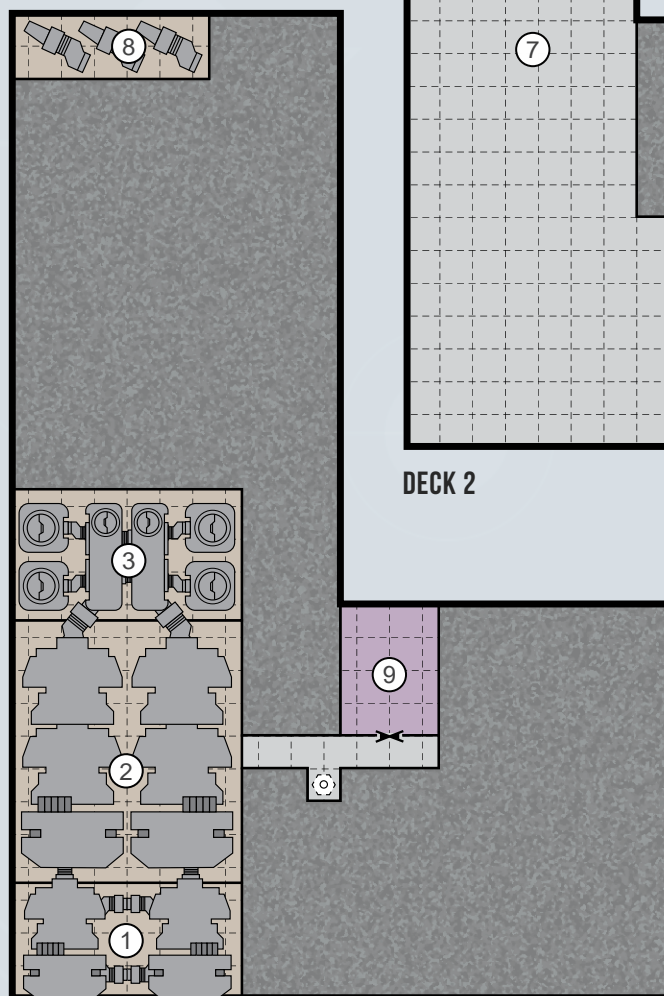


**FINAL
FLIGHT**

1 square = 0.5 Ton

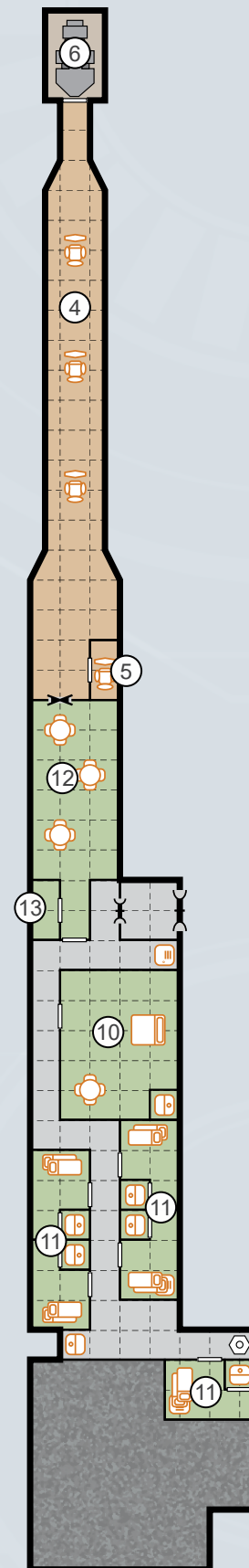
LEGEND

1. Manoeuvre Drive
2. Jump Drive
3. Power Plant
4. Bridge
5. Sensors Station
6. Sensors (improved)
7. Fuel/Cargo Container
8. Fuel Processor
9. Workshop
10. Luxury Stateroom
11. Standard Stateroom
12. Common Area
13. Microbrewery
14. Cargo



DECK 2

DECK 1



DECK 3

DYING GARDEN

The journey to Garden on the *Final Flight* will take a few hours to leave the Freeport, followed by two weeks in a double jump before they reach the system. The ship, as expected, is comfortable enough, with trinkets showcasing Yosoy's old journeys, litter throughout the rooms and plush decorations throughout. It is exactly as it seems, the prized, if aged, ship of a retired artefact hunter and merchant.

The Travellers will likely be stopped by patrol ships on their approach to Garden and survey drones will almost certainly nose about the ship as they enter the atmosphere. Garden would, were it truly inside the Third Imperium's borders, be given an Amber or even Red travel zone due to its vulnerable condition. Pollution in the atmosphere was nearly critical and Gardeners still remember the years of stabilisation beginning in 1079. They are terrified of repeating past mistakes and ensure that any visitors to the planet understand their goal of recovery and preservation.

Garden's competing governments mean that the ships and drones here come bearing different sigils and colouring, although all look to be of solid Imperial make. Similarly, should the Travellers venture farther than the downport and the site marked by Yosoy, they will likely encounter groups of people, differentiated by where they live on the world and what government controls that area. Each imposes different rules on their citizens as how best to contribute to the terraforming of the world but all are strict in pursuing this goal.

TOUCHDOWN

Garden is ostensibly controlled by the Imperial Ministry of Colonisation, although they rarely make landfall on the planet beyond the annual supply drops and collection of environmental information. Despite this, Gardeners still consider themselves full Imperial citizens and as such Imperial law applies on the world. The starport was one of the first buildings constructed when settling the world and has refined fuel available, although the berthing cost is high at 1DxCr1000. This was implemented to supplement the economic prospects of Garden, as they have little to export and require a steady stream of imported goods.

Traders rarely travel here due to the world's isolation and lack of trading supplies. However, some will visit for the story, being able to say they travelled to one of the most isolated worlds within Charted Space, whilst others may come to learn more about the history of the Salika, mostly Solomani and Vilani Imperial researchers keen to learn more about the Salika's forgotten pre-history. The Gardeners will not welcome visitors with open arms but steer clear of being outright hostile or unwelcoming. They do not trust outsiders or their intentions and their utmost concern will be ensuring the Travellers do nothing to harm the still delicate environmental balance of the world.

Before the Travellers disembark, they will be required to undergo extensive security checks, with the Garden Port Authority entering the ship and performing a manual check to ensure they are not bringing anything untoward onto the planet. The inspectors are all sharply dressed in recycled and upcycled clothes, and take their jobs very seriously. They are the first line of defence against people smuggling things onto the world and are aware of it. Travellers with decent Admin or Persuade skills may be able to stop this from happening but it will require a Difficult (10+) check. In the event of success, the authorities will question the group instead of tossing the ship.

Garden does not get many tourists and the Port Authority will question the Travellers on how long they intend to stay planetside and what they plan on doing whilst here. The baseline for authorised landings is 24 hours, which is usually enough for ships to unload and refuel. An Average (8)+ Admin check will extend this to 48 hours, increasing by an additional 24 hours for every point of Effect. However, should any Travellers mention that they are looking for unearthed historical remains, they will likely be detained due to the increased risk of harming the environment.

THE STARPORT

Garden's starport is made of clean lines and recycled materials, and the entire footprint is designed to be as environmentally friendly as possible. This makes it look somewhat patchwork but the exterior of the building has been painted in a solar coating, connected

to multiple converter banks to produce renewable power. Lighting is cool and blue-toned, and numerous speakers are playing announcements about work schedules, deliveries and the importance of staying vigilant regarding environmental sustainability. The starport feels somewhat like a museum exhibit, with the walls lined with artefacts from the ancient Salika. These are all well-researched and have small information displays nearby documenting the origin, possible use and significance of each.

The starport is surprisingly busy for such an out-of-the-way world, with planters lining most hallways and workers cleaning the floors, watering the plants and generally keeping it in a good state. A few ships can be seen loading cargo. Most workers are friendly enough and will direct the Travellers to the fastest way out of the starport.

Once all Travellers are through starport security, they may rent a vehicle rated for use on Garden, one meticulously tested and developed to ensure it has the lowest environmental impact possible. The Garden rover (page 165) is one of the most common types of vehicle available on the world, with all transport here crafted to ensure they will not produce excessive carbon levels and contribute to the abnormally high concentrations in the atmosphere.

GARDEN STAR CITY

The majority of the 400,000-strong population is squarely concentrated within a few miles of the downport, although there are many research and monitoring outposts across the world. At any given time, some thousands of staff are sent to these stations in rotating schedules of six months. Due to fluctuating conditions of the world, the houses are all of similar build to the downport, intended to have a minimal footprint and made of easily repairable and recyclable materials. Waste is kept to an absolute minimum, with several power plants dotted around the starport city that convert waste material into electricity.

They will be required to sign numerous forms indicating their direction and length of travel, intended stop sites for the journey and expected return date. Travellers may speed this process up by 1D hours with a Difficult (10+) Admin check; otherwise, it will take several hours. The Gardener's stringent control over the world's environment should begin to grate on the Travellers at this point.



CROSSING GARDEN

The Travellers have a map of the world with the location of the information trove pinpointed. All they need to do is get there. For the most part, the journey is relatively simple. The site is roughly 3,200 kilometres away from the starport and the drive will take roughly 16 hours with the Garden rover, although it may rise significantly if the Travellers stop at research stations or are held up by drones.

Every time the Travellers encounter Garden officials or researchers, they will be asked the same questions as at the starport – direction and length of travel, expected rest and fuel stops, and intended return date. Gardeners will remain slightly aloof and will be increasingly rude to any non-human Travellers the further the group gets from the starport. There is a good chance they have never seen a non-human and are loathe to welcome them to their world during its recovery period. To determine whether the Travellers are stopped, use the Garden Encounters table every 1D hours of travel.

The landscape of Garden does little for the imagination, primarily featuring long grasses and flatlands speared by occasional streams and rivers, with the monotony broken up by Gardeners spotted in the distance taking soil, plant and air samples, testing everything they can find. Looking to the sky, a steady stream of survey droids will be seen, atmospheric testers (see page 164) working in overdrive. It will become increasingly clear that despite their time on the world, the Gardeners are still working as hard to repair the planet as they were when they first arrived.

Otherwise, the journey will pass unremarkably. As the Travellers approach the area marked by Yosoy, they will begin to see small hillocks rising from the ground and a smattering of trees surrounding the area. A river winds neatly around the site, stretching to connect to one of

the world's vast oceans just beyond the horizon. The sensors on the rover will begin to let out intermittent beeps, indicating there is something of interest on this otherwise half-desolate world.

SECRET GARDEN

Upon disembarking, irregularities in the landscape here become more pronounced, the grass uneven compared to the rest of the otherwise flat world the Travellers have seen so far. There are a few craters that would not be misplaced at the site of an old aerial bombardment, grass growing unevenly and dirt covering the places the grass cannot cover. Exploring further into the area, the Travellers will notice a pattern to the irregularities, with smaller bumps leading to one of the larger hillocks. In the centre is a dented area, with just a small layer of substrate covering what appears to be a dull, mostly rusted sheet of metal.

Using hands or tools to dig away the dirt and substrate will reveal the slab as a small door, which can be made out by dim lighting showing through the minuscule gap around the edges. The surrounding metal slab is inlaid with intricate whorls and writing in an unknown language. The Travellers will not be able to make sense of the letters beyond distinguishing their shapes. A small panel can be seen at the side of the door, with several keys in a similar script to the door's. The passcode is hidden in the central letters of the door, of which there are five. These are separated from the rest by one of the metallic whorls and would stand out provided a Difficult (10+) Recon or Investigate check is made.

Opening the door will require an Average (8+) Electronics check to initiate the power source, after which the panel will be softly backlit. The complex is only a couple of hundred years old and has its own power, so despite the time it has been unused and its slight degradation, it is still functional. A slight sound can be heard as the air inside is released and any monitoring devices the Travellers have will show a surprisingly low carbon content from the air inside.

Garden Encounters

2D	Result
2–4	Nothing happens.
5–8	The Travellers pass close to a research station and are hailed by the Gardeners working in the area.
9–10	Several survey droids swarm the Travellers, bumping into each other gently as they scan the group.
11–12	Nothing happens.



▲ IMoC Research Station 1-G3

▲ IMoC Research Station 1-O5

▲ IMoC Research Station 1-G5

Garden Star City
Garden Starport

▲ IMoC Research Station 1-G6

SITE OF
INTEREST
RIVER
CROSSING

▲ IMoC Research Station 1-G4

▲ IMoC Research Station 1-L2





UNCOVERING THE PAST

When the Travellers pass through the entry door, they will find themselves in a relatively short but steep tunnel, the ground slick with water. The walls have what appear to be handrails carved into them, although they provide little traction, and some parts of the tunnel have caved in slightly. Bugs are crawling across the walls, some making a beeline for the tunnel entrance.

Pressing down the tunnel, the Travellers will notice a thin layer of bioluminescent moss and algae coating the walls. The steady sound of slow-dripping water is a constant backdrop throughout the entire area, with numerous pools, lakes and rivers to be found within. Within the complex, the air is hot and humid, and the Travellers might notice their clothing begins to stick to their skin with sweat. Travellers should use the Heat Exhaustion table every hour they spend inside the complex to ensure they do not succumb to the effects of heat stroke. On a failed check, the Travellers will suffer 2+ Effect in damage.

Heat Exhaustion

Hours	Check
1–2	Average (8+) END
3–5	Difficult (10+) END
6–8	Very Difficult (12+) END
9+	Formidable (14+) END

THE COMPLEX

The Referee should feel free to describe as much or as little about each of these locations as necessary. The rooms within can be explored in any order the Travellers wish, although removing the power source in the main laboratory (20) can have detrimental effects.

The Travellers should be encouraged to investigate as much of the complex as possible. Some rooms contain cultural information about the Salika, whereas others directly relate to their mission objective. However, the mission's patron, Yosoy, is not solely interested in the technology the Salika were developing and will pay for less traditionally useful information the Travellers may uncover.

UNDERGROUND RESEARCH

Due to the presence of the variable star in the Garden system, the pre-sapient Salika were constantly driven into the sea. They became sufficiently adapted for longer diving times than most examples of Humaniti and eventually evolved to work underwater for extended periods. This is just one of the many research centres turned information repositories on the world. Although they had, at one time, made the surface of their world more comfortable, as temperatures began to spike again the Salika returned to the caves and tunnels they had once called home.

They spent years and much of their resources on complexes such as these, and most have not been discovered despite the efforts of the Third Imperium's Ministry of Colonisation. The once bustling hubs now function as tombs of pre-sublight Salikan society. Long since abandoned, they are powered by renewable energy, which makes them almost incapable of shutting down bar damage to generators or their distribution system. Research stations such as this were built early on and added to by later generations. They were initially built in caves to keep the Salika out of the cold climate above ground and often selected due to proximity to natural hot springs.

1. ENTRY

This is very obviously an entry hall, with little furniture in the area. There are, however, several screens built into the walls, all displaying an error message written in Salika code. The panelled metal flooring and walls show signs of rust, both coated in the same thin layer of bioluminescent moss. There are larger clumps of moss dotted around and if the Travellers look closely with an Average (8+) Recon check, they may notice the preon (see page 168) that have made the complex their home. They hang from the ceilings and walls, the chittering of their teeth accompanying the other noises inside the complex.

Occasional flashes of warm-yellow emergency lighting can be seen from the western corridor (2), whereas the soft blue lighting continues to the north (10). The same script that covered the outside door follows through the panelling on the floor, although it is worn by age. A klaxon-like siren can be heard echoing throughout the complex, slightly distorted by the metallic walls and floors. The volume changes to match the emergency lighting and will quickly become very annoying.

2. WESTERN CORRIDOR

This corridor was clearly built rather than carved, the walls inlaid with designs of the Salika and their histories.

3-5. OFFICES

These offices are almost identical, each containing a metal table, a mostly deteriorated chair and rows of data storage. Travellers succeeding at a Difficult (10+) Investigate check (1D minutes) will realise the air held inside the complex left it in a state of semi-stasis, although the presence of life inside has meant that degradation continued. However, an Average

(8+) Animals, Recon or Investigate check will make it clear that furniture that can be chewed upon has been. Animals once kept in check by the Salika now run rampant throughout the complex and some do not have discerning palates.

Powering on the computers is possible, although the Travellers cannot read the information on the screen. Should they have taken the time to study any Salikan works, they may be able to discern small things with Difficult (10+) Language checks. However, this will be a case of recognising one word in ten rather than translating the entire screen. The experience will be like using an operating system in a language the Travellers are not used to and although the Travellers may be able to make educated guesses using Electronics (computers), they will be unable to do anything other than open file systems.

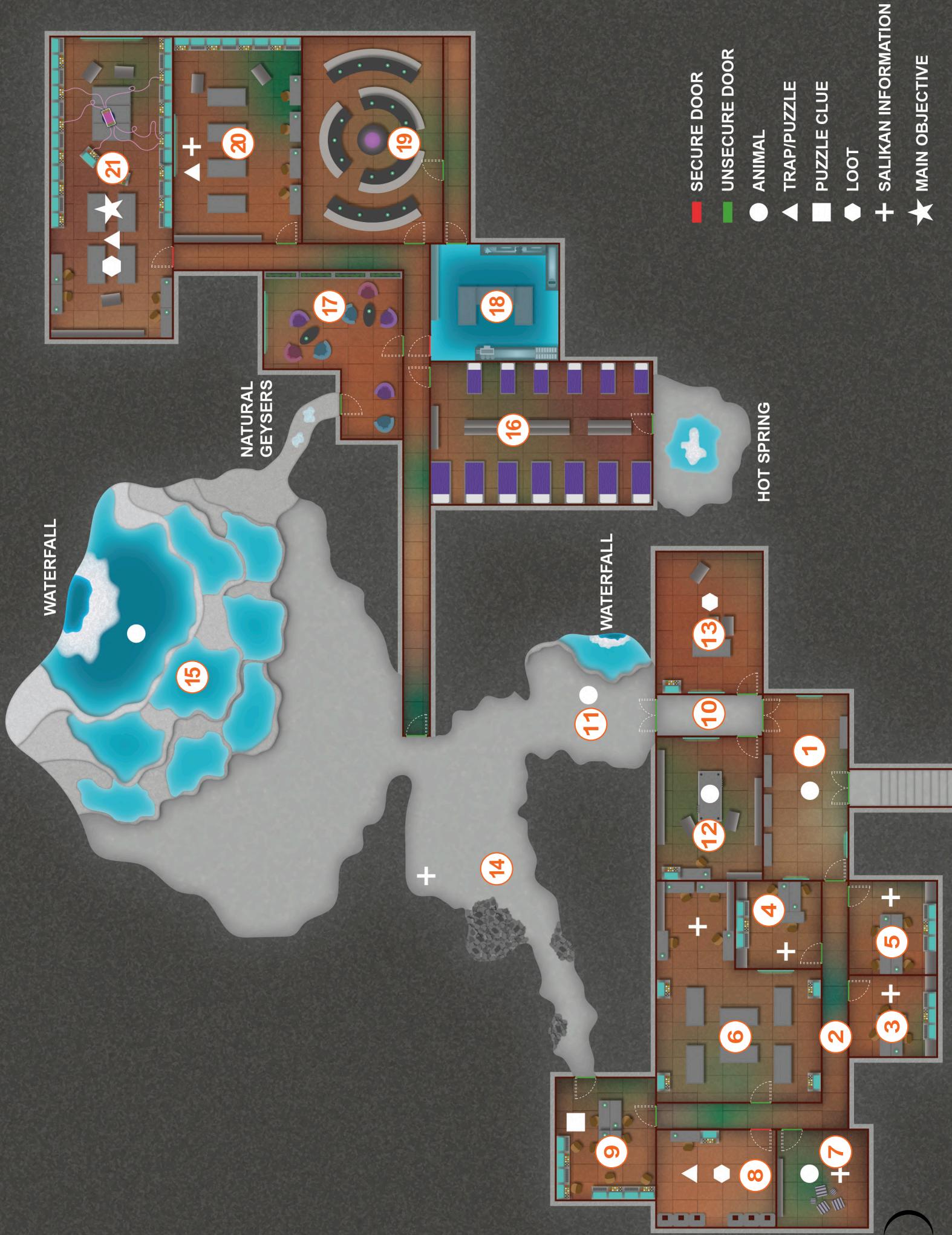
Should they be able to navigate their way to any research notes, likely ones which include pictures, the Travellers may determine, using a task chain, what the purpose of the research complex is. This will require a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (1D

SALIKAN LANGUAGE

Salikan has changed since it was used on Garden and sending out multiple different generation ships meant they each developed their own vocabulary, colloquialisms and phrases. Salika hailing from two different ships would be able to understand each other to an extent, like speakers of two closely related languages, such as Spanish and Italian. However, linguistic nuance is utterly lost between the two disparate groups and they will likely find it impossible to convey complex thoughts, theories or emotions.

The written language of the Salika was similarly once standardised, although slight variations have been introduced since. Their language is logosyllabic, with symbols representing a syllable rather than an individual sound, as in an alphabet. These can be words in themselves or form a polysyllabic word. Despite some phonetic characters being similar, this does not correlate to graphic similarities. There are 300 different syllables, each represented by a different symbol.





SECURE DOOR

UNSECURE DOOR

ANIMAL

TRAP/PUZZLE

PUZZLE CLUE

LOOT

SALIKAN INFORMATION

MAIN OBJECTIVE



hours, EDU), followed by a Difficult (10+) Investigate or Engineer (power) check (1D hours, EDU). The reports the Travellers find are just summaries of the research and will not suffice for them to take back to Yosoy.

6. LAB

Several devices are dotted around here, although Travellers performing a successful Difficult (10+) Computers (electronics) check will realise they are Salika communications devices, although they are long since dead. They look remarkably similar to versions mass-produced a few centuries earlier in the Third Imperium and some may be taken as historical evidence or simply relics of older technologies.

Travellers with vision that allows them to see into the ultraviolet spectrum, and those using PRIS binoculars (*Central Supply Catalogue*, page 76) or another assistive technology, will see a series of diagrams on the southern wall. These appear to be schematics for a Salika sublight ship and contain information (although untranslated) for the ship's design. Transcribing, photographing or otherwise cataloguing this information will grant an additional payment from Yosoy. This design is now significantly outdated, as it was the initial sublight ship designed by the Salika.

SUB-LT GEN-01

This is one of the first of several sublight generation ships launched by the Salika. The GEN-01 was designed to transport enough Salika to continue a self-sustaining population without negative genetic crossovers. The ship has enough resources to maintain a standard diet, with the 500-ton biosphere containing plant and animal life from across Garden. If farmed correctly, this would provide a suitable, if

minimal, number of calories per passenger. Initially, the ship left with just 500 Salika on board, with extra room provided for offspring. The Salika knew they were a good distance from any nearby systems and provided the ship with enough initial fuel to last four years, although this could be supplemented with the fuel scoops and processor.

TLII

		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	15,000 tons, Dispersed Structure	—	375
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 1	375	75
M-Drive	Thrust 1	150	300
Power Plant	Fusion (TL8), Power 5,040	504	252
Fuel Tanks	208 weeks of operation	2,652	—
Bridge		60	75
Computer	Computer/15	—	2
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Systems	Biosphere	500	100
	Brig	8	0.5
	Fuel Processor (400 tons/day)	20	1
	Fuel Scoops	—	1
	Laboratory	40	10
	Library	16	16
	Medical Bays x17	68	34
	Studios x4	16	1.6
	Workshops x8	48	7.2
Staterooms	Standard x2,000	8,000	1000
Software	Expert/1	—	0.001
	Intellect	—	—
	Intelligent Interface	—	0.0001
	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Virtual Crew/0	—	1
Common Areas	—	1,850	185
	Brewery/Distillery (250 litres/week)	12.5	1.25
	Swimming Pool	100	2
Cargo		634.5	—
Total: MCr2416.6511			

Crew

Captain, Pilot,
Engineers x15,
Maintenance x15,
Administrators x8,
Sensops x2, Medics
x17, Officers x3

Hull: 5,400

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr201388/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr2416.6511

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems

3,000

Manoeuvre Drive

1,500

Sensors

2

Fuel Processor

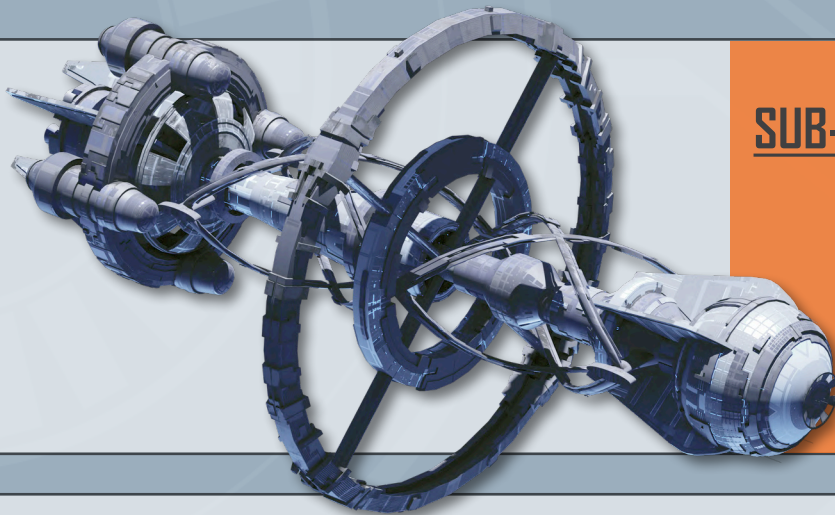
20

Biosphere

500

Medical Bays

17

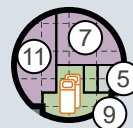


SUB-LT GEN-01

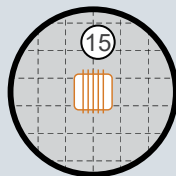
1 square = 10 Tons

LEGEND

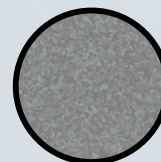
1. Manoeuvre Drive
2. Power Plant
3. Bridge
4. Sensors
5. Biosphere
6. Brig
7. Fuel Processor
8. Laboratory
9. Library
10. Medical Bays
11. Studios
12. Workshops
13. Common Area
14. Brewery/Distillery
15. Swimming Pool
16. Cargo



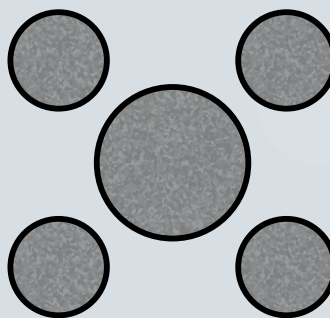
DECK 8



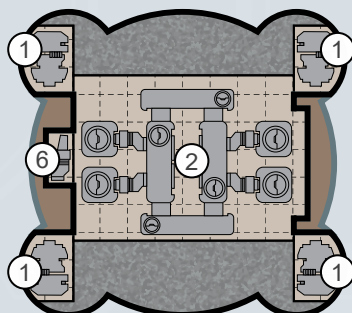
DECK 6-7



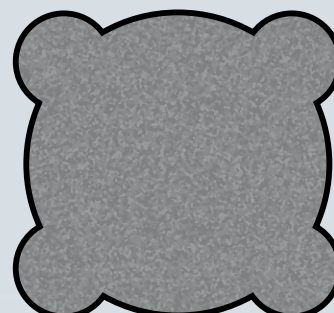
DECK 4-5



DECK 3



DECK 1

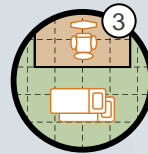


DECK 2

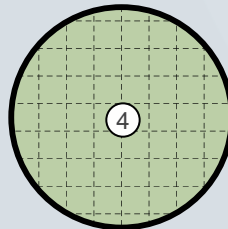
1 square = 10 Tons

LEGEND

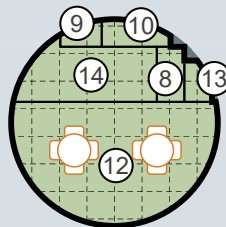
1. Manoeuvre Drive
2. Power Plant
3. Bridge, Sensors
4. Biosphere
5. Brig
6. Fuel Processor
7. Laboratory
8. Library
9. Medical Bays
10. Studios
11. Workshops
12. Common Area
13. Brewery/Distillery
14. Swimming Pool
15. Cargo



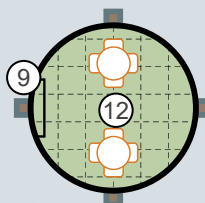
DECK 19



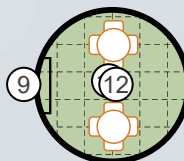
DECK 18



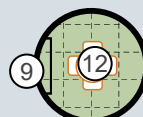
DECK 17



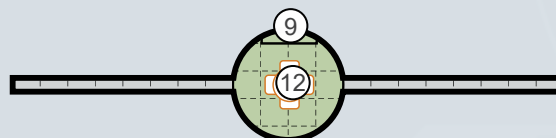
DECK 15-16



DECK 14



DECK 13



DECK 9-12



RINGS (DECKS 9-12)

LEAVING GARDEN

As Garden is so isolated, the Salika had no option other than to build sublight generation ships, sending them out in every direction in a last-ditch attempt to save at least some of their species. Their departure was mostly organised, although a full-scale evacuation of an entire populace is understandably hard to accomplish. Some ships were sent in advance, with researchers and engineers being the last to leave the planet. Engineers, for obvious reasons, and researchers to try and find a way to save the planet, although their efforts proved unsuccessful.

7. STORAGE

This room is empty and, besides the layer of dust that coats most of the shelves cut into the walls, unremarkable. Most of the dust appears to be substrate or guano produced by the preon and there are a few tucked into the corners of the room, heads covered by their wings. When the Travellers enter the room, they will stir and the Travellers will be forced to perform an Average (8+) Stealth check whilst moving around the room without disturbing them further. Failure means the winged creatures are startled and begin expelling the toxins stored in their wings, screeching as they attempt to locate themselves within the now-crowded room.

The only thing the Travellers will find here is what appears to be a shipping manifest in Salikan showing signs of an organised, planned exit. A few empty metal containers can be seen, their contents removed by the Salika before they joined their kin on one of the sublight ships.



Starting Order

8. SECURITY

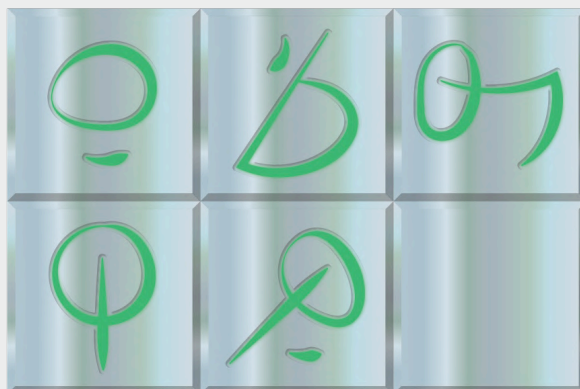
On approach to the security room, all the Travellers can see is a closed door. Upon closer inspection with a Difficult (10+) Investigate or Recon check, the Travellers may notice the panels on the door move. There are five mobile segments in two rows of three, each decorated with a symbol. The last plate (6) is blank and slots into place when the tiles are in the correct position. The order of the symbols can be found in Monitoring (8), located directly next door, but for the Referee's sake, they are numbered.

Referee Information: If you want a more interactive experience, place five dice on the table with the numbers in the current symbol order, and have the Travellers move them as if they are moving the tiles.

The puzzle can be solved in as few as nine moves: up, left, left, down, right, right, up, left, left. However, it may take the Travellers a great deal longer. If the Travellers mess the puzzle up, the easiest way to resolve it would be to write down in what order they moved the pieces and reset it. This way, the group can avoid making the same moves that did not work the first time.

As soon as the Travellers move the pieces into the correct order, the blank panel will shift into position, aligning with the other panels before the door slides open. Upon entering the room, they will see a series of screens along the walls and desks, and the emergency lights and klaxon will shut off. This makes things immeasurably less annoying but will leave the Travellers in dim lighting provided only by the bioluminescent moss.

The room itself is otherwise unremarkable, containing empty lockers that may have once held weapons, although there are a few Salikan armoured vests remaining. These are worn and the metallic inlays are rusted but they would still function in a pinch.



Correct Order

Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Salika Armoured Vest	+2	12	10	0.5	—	None

SALIKA ARMoured VEST

Designed more for aesthetics than protection, these armoured vests are designed to contour to a Salika's comparatively larger ribcage. Inlaid with designs of oceans and the creatures within, they were once worn by Salikan guards stationed at research complexes such as this. They function well against the cave's natural inhabitants but would do little to stop gunshots. However, they do provide a small degree of protection against radiation. These vests can be worn over cloth armour.



9. MONITORING

Upon entry, the room looks completely shut off from power. However, as the Travellers enter the room, the monitors will blink to life and the room will become awash with their reflected pale blue light.

In this room are a number of computers, monitors and desks, all wired into the central security system. The monitors display images of each room and the entryway, and the most recent alert on the screen corresponds with the Travellers entering the complex. To disable the emergency lights and the klaxon sound,

the Travellers must navigate their way to the security room next door. Either by asking more about the room or with an Average (8+) Recon or Investigate check will clue the Travellers in on the repeated motif on the walls. Six tiles, in sequence, surround the room. This arrangement is the order to which the tiles on the security room door (7) must be moved.

10. CAVE TUNNEL

This is another of the few natural areas that looks like it was shaped rather than formed by a natural occurrence. It was originally a smaller tunnel and the Salika extended it after discovering the cave to the north that would provide an additional link from the entryway to the testing facility. It has clear marks of intentional excavation and should the Travellers look closely enough, they will see the marks of the tools on the walls.

There is no metallic plating and the floor is uneven and covered in small stones. Unfortunately, the Salika did not reinforce the area beyond adding small wooden beams, which have now mostly rotted away due to the humidity of the cave and the long years since they were last maintained. The rock ceiling has collapsed in some areas, with piles of debris lying on the floor and the occasional pebble or larger clump crashing down. It does not appear that it will cave in, although the Travellers should be aware that they are exploring a partially unsupported area.

11. SMALL CAVE

This is one of the remaining parts of the natural cave system, with a waterfall on the eastern side connecting to a small pond. It is here the breeop (see page 168) have settled, the clicking of their shells against the stone walls audible just past the entrance. When the Travellers enter, they will see several bumbling around the room, with a few more holding onto the ceiling and climbing down the walls. The creatures will not be outright hostile to the Travellers but should the group make any threatening advances towards the arthropods they will sound an alarm and attempt to flee.

If pressed into a corner, they will rear and attempt to crush the Travellers, although this is only done as an absolute last resort. Otherwise, the Travellers can root around and find the creatures' old, discarded shells and bones of other small critters littering the area.

12. OFFICE

This office is slightly larger than the others and the fittings are more clinical. A large desk sits in the centre with small tunnels on the outside edges and a stool nearby. It looks more like an autopsy table than a standard office desk, with taps at one end and drainage at the other. Monitoring screens are set up with the feed connected to the animal laboratory across the hall and a series of machines are scattered around the edge of the room.

Some screens are broken and a few machines have been thrown to the ground and smashed. Hiding under the desk is a sanaat (see page 167), its hulking figure obscured by the room's low light.

13. ANIMAL LABORATORY

In this room, cages are built into the rock walls and although some of the doors are open, more remain locked, the skeletal remains of decomposed animals faintly visible in the low light. Fluid-preserved specimens can be found on the shelves lining the eastern wall, their biological remains permanently suspended in an embalming solution. Some of these

are now in a state of decomposition, with the ventilation systems long since unpowered. Disturbing the jars will cause some (1D) of the specimens' disintegration to accelerate, although the Travellers may be able to transport the others back to Yosoy.

14. LINKING CAVE

Stalactites hang from the ceiling, with stalagmites lining the floor. These have grown since the Salika once lived and worked here and are now more inconvenient than the decorative features they once were. The care once shown to this part of the complex is still evident in the etchings and paintings that decorate the walls, some seeming more ancient than when the installation was built, whilst others are more recent.

Looking more closely with an Average (9+) Recon check will show the Travellers that the wall carvings tell the tale of the Salika and their lives on the planet, with paintings of the species underwater, swimming alongside the oceanic creatures on the world. Some of them, however, are sadder; parents holding their child at the rear entrance of a generation ship, a family looking at what appears to be a rupture in the earth itself, and more. Should any Traveller succeed



at a Difficult (10+) Art check, they will realise these are the stories of a species that was forced to leave their homeworld by the whims of its star and their own greed. There is a distinct air of sadness about the etchings, with the Salika clearly putting off their departure for as long as they could.

This room is one of the places that Yosoy will pay the Travellers additional Credits for evidence such as photographs and videos, and samples may be taken of the paintings to determine their provenance. Testing in a laboratory will reveal that the older etchings date back to c.700, whereas the newer ones can be dated to c.1000.

15. CAVE ROOM

The largest cave in the complex, this area has stepped pools, with a waterfall feeding the highest. Steam curls from the water, rising in tendrils to fill the room. Most of the sanaat in the complex make their home here and their numerous tentacles spread languidly over the sides of the pools, waving in the heated air. A few can be heard making their way across the cave ceiling, suckers on their appendages making a distinctive noise as they pass overhead.

Relics of the Salikan presence are obvious here, with steps built into the outside walls of each pool, ledges dotted throughout the pools themselves and other amenities, their functions unclear, built into the cave. A large orb hangs from the ceiling, emitting a soft glow throughout the room, swaying slightly when one of the sanaat presses against it.

16. DORMITORY

When the Salika still inhabited the laboratory, this is where they slept. Judging by the size difference between all the beds in the room, entire families lived within the complex. The dormitory is comfortable, if sparse, although the lower half of the walls are covered in decoration painted by unskilled hands.

Stepping around the assortment of beds, tables and chairs will bring the Travellers further into the room, where the rear wall is taken up by large windowpanes and a door wedged open by a heavy metal chest of drawers. Beyond this is another small cave, with a natural hot spring in the centre.

17. RECREATION

This room has a small tunnel linking it to the large cave to the northwest, with jets of high-pressure water squirting from the tunnel's roof. These guided natural geysers once cleaned the Salika before entering

HISTORICAL INTEREST IN THE SALIKA

The Salika are, even for a Minor Race, very minor in the eyes of the Third Imperium. Although they had reached TL11, they never discovered jump technology, although even advanced jump drives would have been of little use as their system is seven parsecs from the nearest system. Because the species spent such a long time on their generation ship, much has been forgotten about their planetside history. Imperial historians and the IISS are keen to gather as much data on this species as possible and scientists seek them out for their evolutionary dispensation to tolerate long stretches underwater.

the shared pools. The rest of this room is filled with chairs, tables and the shells of once-plush seating. Decorations line the shelves in the rocky walls, most of which appear to be models of creatures or trinkets made by children. A few seats are hanging from the ceiling, with holes punctured in the bottom of the seat to allow water to drain back into the pools below.

18. KITCHEN

As soon as the door to this room opens, a flood of water rushes out. Any Travellers in the immediate vicinity who fail a Very Difficult (12+) Athletics (strength) check will be slammed against the cave wall at their back, sustaining 1D damage. This will also accelerate the potential effects of heat exhaustion as the water is produced by the same hot geysers as the pools, adding the equivalent of two hours to the time the Travellers have been in the complex when using the Heat Exhaustion table on page 145.

Connected to the canteen (19), this room is purely industrial. It is one of the few areas that have been entirely metal-plated to protect it from the elements, although the weather-resistant coating has long since worn away. The room and the old equipment inside are entirely rusted through and the source of the leak is immediately apparent. Built into the wall above the sinks are several holes connected to the natural water flow inside the cave system and the filters and regulators the water once passed through have broken down with age. Once, these were motion-activated taps but the creatures inside the cave continually set them off, causing the system to overwork and eventually break down.

19. CANTEEN

If approached before the kitchen, this room will be covered in dust, grime and animal manure. The Travellers will notice tables in concentric circles, with benches surrounding all but the centre-most table. In the middle of the central table is another light fixture similar to that in the cave room (15), although this one appears much smaller and is built into the table itself.

Should the Travellers have looked in the kitchen first, this room will be filled with a knee-deep layer of water, still sloshing against the walls. Some of the tables will be knocked out of their original position but the room will be slightly cleaner and the metal plates that make up the floor will be visible. These plates are inscribed with similar symbology to the rest of the complex.

20. R&D

Despite their necessary departure from the world, the Salika seemed concerned that others might ingress into their research facilities. As such, traps were placed to dissuade the creatures inside the complex from wandering too far into the more dangerous rooms.

This room is alarmed and the doorway has a trigger placed on it that Travellers may notice with a Difficult (10+) Recon check. The trap consists of a small, translucent wire connected to a mechanism that shoots metal pellets through the doorway, similar to a shotgun loaded with buckshot. This is enough to kill or deter even the larger creatures in the cave and possibly any Travellers who set it off. The weapon the trap is connected to is embedded in the rear wall and programmed to self-reset, meaning should the Travellers kick the wire again, the trap will shoot again.

Data banks line the room's eastern wall, with blinking lights and the soft whirring of cooling fans still working despite their age. A few scraps of prototypal machines are dotted around, with tools left haphazardly on the benches.

The Travellers can work out how to transfer the data onto their own devices that they can bring back to Yosoy. A successful Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (computers) check (1Dx10 minutes, INT) will lead the Travellers to

what looks like a laptop with a data port and combined with an Average (8+) Recon check, shows that it matches the ports on the data banks themselves.

21. MAIN LABORATORY

The door to this room is closed, with a slightly crooked, rusted emblem of a sanaat on the front. Any attempts to move it will be difficult but the Travellers can force it with a Difficult (12+) STR check (1Dx10 seconds).

This laboratory is much larger than the one that branches from the northern tunnel, filled with computers, databanks and prototypes. It is very clearly the site of most research completed within the complex.

In the centre of the room is a large table with the device described by Yosoy in the centre, wired into computers on each side of the room. It emits a low humming noise, audible only when Travellers are roughly one metre away. The device is roughly 50x40x35 centimetres and weighs 20 kilograms. It will take two Travellers to carry it out of the cage and its age has made it surprisingly fragile. If jostled too heavily, pieces will fall off and the Travellers will either have to go back, retrieve them and work out how to put them back on, or leave them behind altogether. Granted, Yosoy will not know pieces are missing and what the Travellers choose to do depends on how honest they are.

When the Travellers unplug the device, however, alarms start. These are different to the ones before, emitting noise for 10 solid seconds and then shutting off for another 10. Each of the screens in the room shuts off completely and, perhaps unbeknownst to the Travellers, they have just removed the device that was powering the entire complex. It is, however, what they were looking for. The device is a carbon recycling machine capable of generating power and, although it is a prototype, has kept the complex running in the years since the Salika abandoned it.

22. DORM CORRIDOR

This is the main corridor linking the habitation, research and main laboratory. Its construction is similar to that of the western corridor (2).

WEAPON	TL	RANGE	DAMAGE	KG	MAGAZINE	TRAITS
Wire Trap	5	10	4D	4	50	Bulky

GETTING OUT OF DODGE

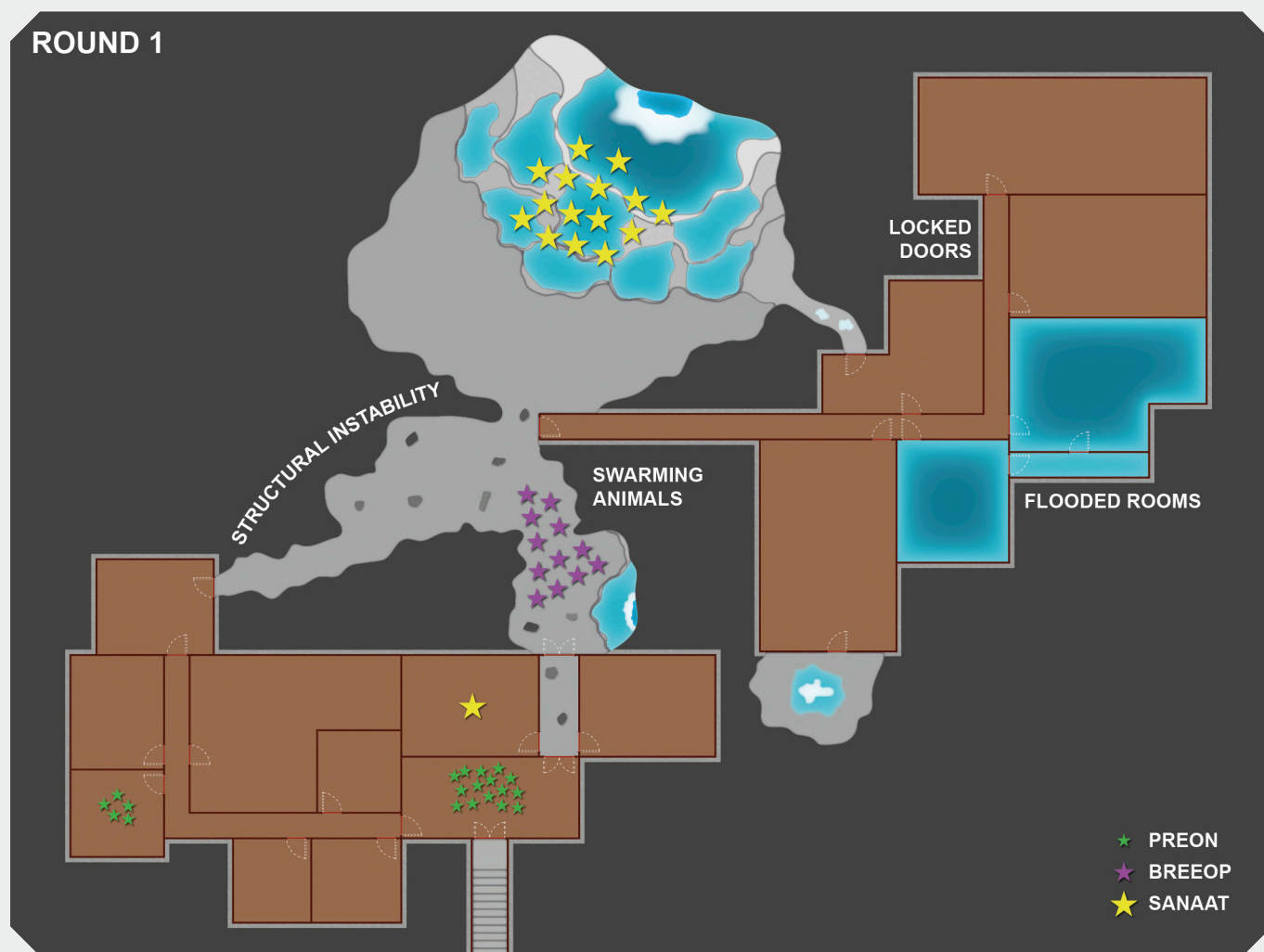
The Travellers will only have a short time before they risk being entombed by the chain of events they have caused. The Referee should spread events out as needed to give the Travellers a fighting chance of escape. However, these events should not be too spread out to ensure the Travellers are aware of the threat of death chasing their heels.

A CHAIN OF EVENTS

As soon as the Travellers remove the prototypal carbon-scrubbing generator, a series of events within the complex will unfold. These are spread throughout the rounds after the generator's removal from its place in the main laboratory.

To start, a series of alarms will ring throughout the entire complex within seconds of the device being removed, emitting loud warning sounds every 10 seconds for a minute, and flashing red lights will illuminate. The alarms and lights last for one minute, with the backup power source failing spectacularly.

When the backup power fails, the emergency power will shut down and a number of things will happen. The Salika built their research bases with the capability to self-cleanse, returning cave systems to their natural state. This was intended to be done when they departed the planet but the last remaining Salika believed they may return here one day and instead decided to leave the facility intact.



ONE ROUND

All doors within the facility will close. Travellers can either break them open with brute strength and a Difficult (10+) STR check (1 round), or hack into the security panel failsafes, which requires a Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (computers) check (1D rounds, INT).

The animals inside the complex will begin to revolt. Smaller creatures will more likely swarm but larger creatures such as the breeop will stampede, causing the structural weakening of the cave tunnel (10) to rapidly accelerate.

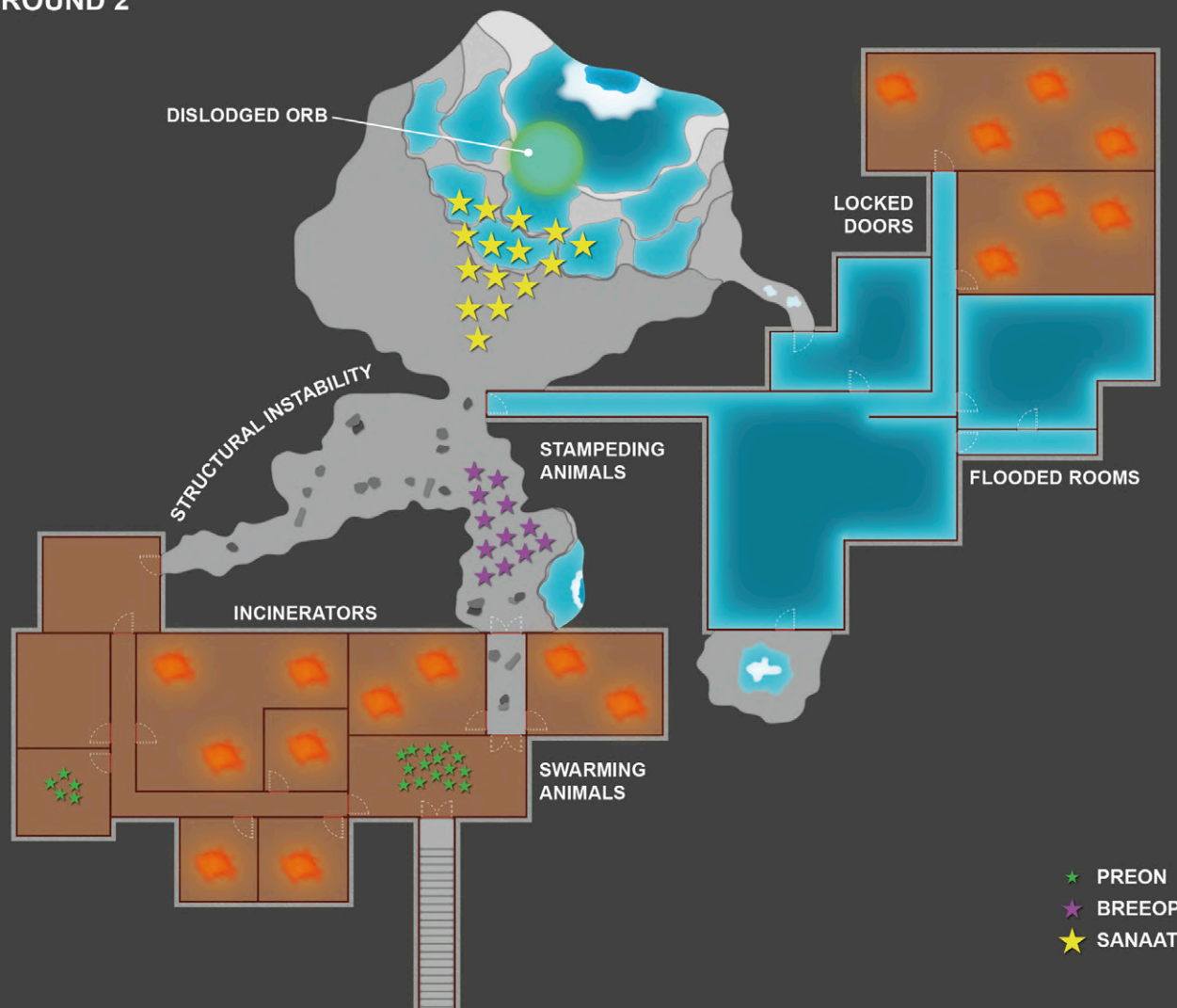
TWO ROUNDS

Incinerators are triggered in the offices (3, 4, 5, 12), laboratories (6, 13, 21) and the research and development room (19). These will raise the temperature within the complex exponentially, accelerating the heat exhaustion of each Traveller by one level (see page 145).

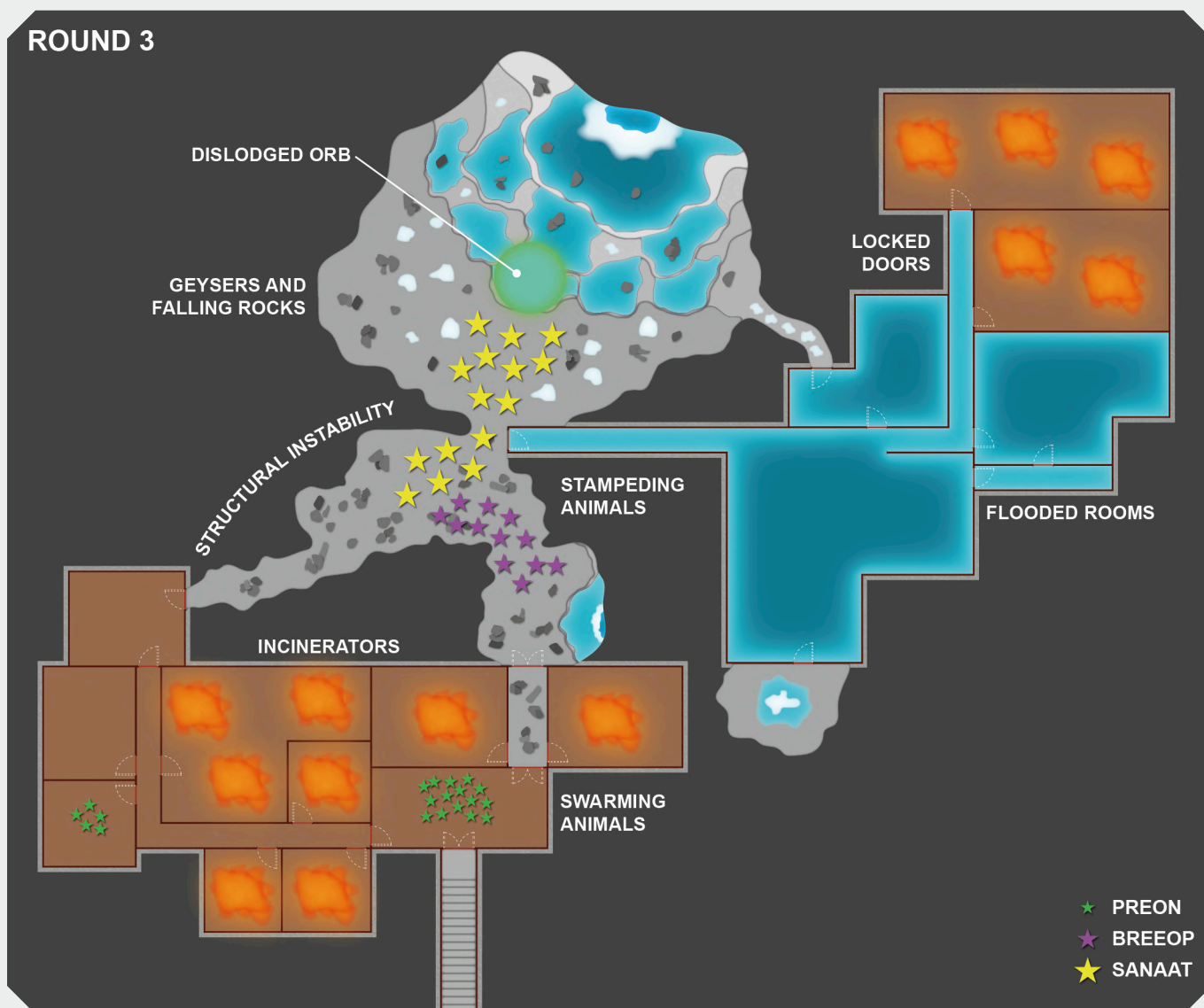
The sanaat will begin to flee, dislodging the hanging orb in the cave room (15), causing it to fall and roll along the floor towards the linking cave (14) and inflicting 2D-2 damage to anything it rolls over.

General chaos throughout the complex will accelerate the weakening of the kitchen (18) walls, leading to collapse. The ensuing change will cause the connected rooms (16, 17, 18, 19) and the dorm corridor (22) to flood.

ROUND 2



ROUND 3



THREE ROUNDS

The rising pressure accelerates the geysers in the cave room (15) and the tunnel connecting it to the rec room (17), meaning the Travellers will need to dodge boiling hot jets of water to pass through these areas using a Difficult (10+) DEX check, taking 1D-1 damage if they fail.

Geysers in the cave room (15) dislodge a number of small, superheated, wet rocks. These bounce against the Travellers, inflicting 1D-2 damage, and obstruct their way through the room by making the floor both slippery and unstable, requiring the Travellers to succeed an Average (8+) DEX check or take an additional 1D-2 damage. The rocks are small enough to be pushed into the pools to create a path, if the Travellers think of this.

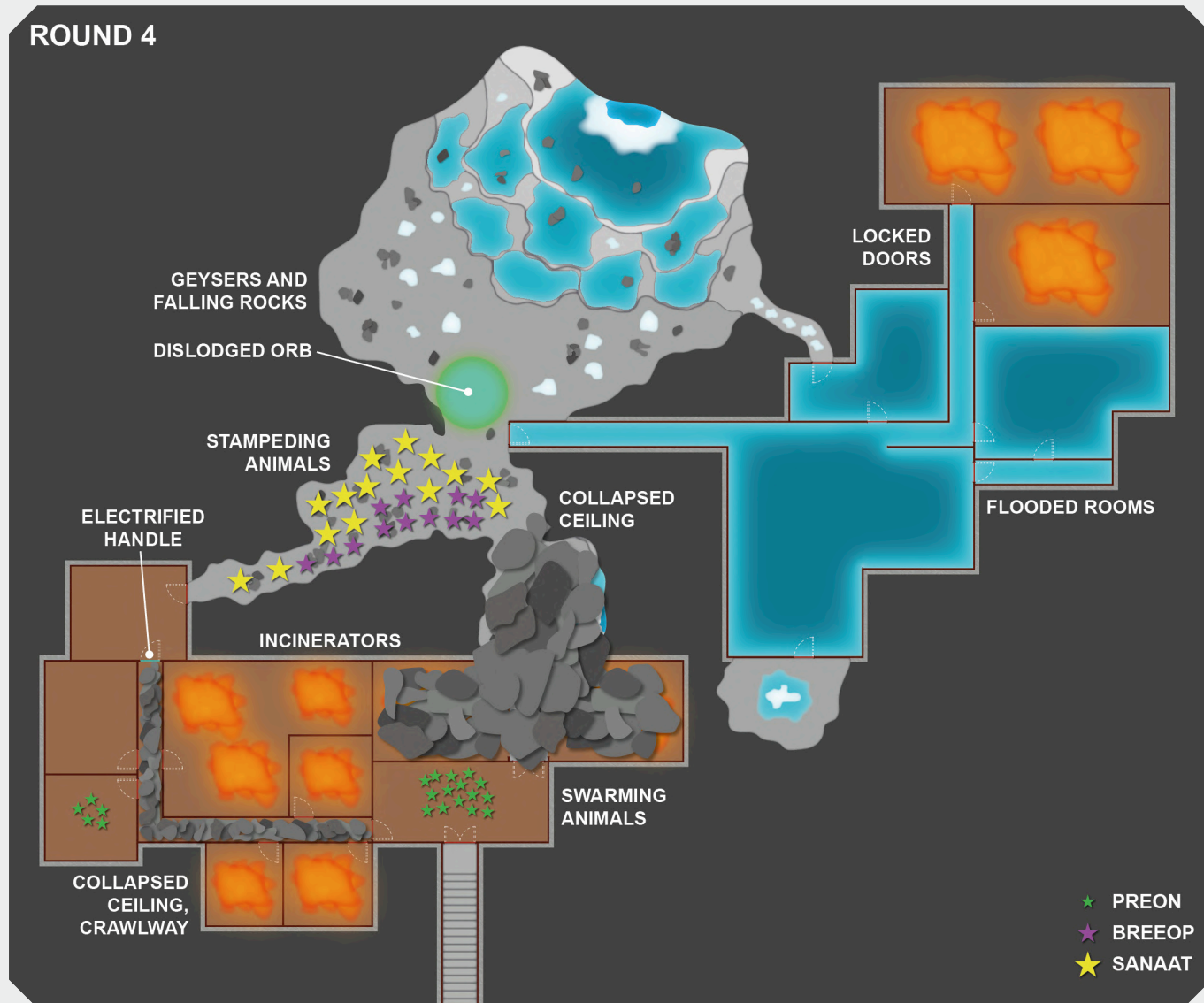
FOUR ROUNDS

The small cave (11) collapses, bringing down the cave tunnel (10), large office (12) and animal lab (13) with it.

Thanks to the disintegration of key systems, the door handle to monitoring (9) will deliver an electric shock sufficient in strength to lock its user's muscles in place. The Traveller holding the handle will need to succeed at a Difficult (10+) STR check to let go or may need the assistance of their friends.

The roof of the western corridor (2) collapses, leaving a sunken crawlspace for the Travellers to pass through. A few sections contain breathable air but the CO₂ has sunk to the bottom, meaning the Travellers must crawl and take occasional breathing breaks.

ROUND 4



The creatures within the cave system will all move towards the exit, rushing in a stampede towards the clean air and light above. They cover the walls, roof and ceiling of the cave system, filling in any unoccupied space.

LEAVING GARDEN

With the doors bypassed, the caves cleared, or another means of escape used, the Travellers will be standing outside the complex entrance, out of breath and wondering how they survived. A group of survey droids (page 164) has gathered around the entrance, some of them peeking into the wanton destruction the Travellers have caused.

The droids monitor errant seismic activity and were alerted to the collapse of the complex. Only a few have arrived but the Travellers may spot more on the horizon heading their way. Within 1D minutes a swarm of them will have appeared and all seem to be setting up to monitor the area, sending their findings back to researchers nearby.

For now, the best bet for the Travellers is to leave Garden and do so before any of the colonists realise they have not only destroyed an ancient Salika research complex but taken important materials from it in the process. Returning to the downport takes an additional 16 hours, although the Travellers are more



likely to be held up after they were seen at the centre of such interesting geographic activity. For encounters returning to the starport, use the Leaving Garden table every 1D-2 hours of travel.

DEPARTING

The colonists at the starport will question the Travellers on their stay and how their journey went, and may begin to prod for information regarding the collapse. Persuade checks may dissuade concerns that the Travellers are involved and before long, the group can

be underway to Lost Hope again. Upon arrival, the Travellers will need to find Yosoy again, likely at the bar he was found at before. He will pay the Travellers handsomely for the generator and any additional information they manage to acquire; Cr100000 each for the generator and Cr2000 to each Traveller who hands him some other information, whether in picture, video or written format, per piece they give him.

Alternatively, the Travellers may lie, say they did not find anything and be well on their way before news from Garden reaches Yosoy.

Leaving Garden

2D	Result
2–4	A group of researchers spot the Travellers, wave them over to talk to them and ask about what they are doing in the area and what they know of the collapse.
5–8	Two rovers pass the Travellers by, each packed with scientists heading towards the old complex. They are talking about the rumours that have run rampant through the scientific community of Garden since the news broke.
9–10	A survey droid starts to scan the Travellers and is focusing heavily on where the Salika artefact is hidden.
11–12	Nothing happens.

LIBRARY DATA

GARDEN

Within the Alone subsector of Reft, Garden is the only system. It is an agricultural, nonindustrial garden world and thanks to the effort of the Imperial Ministry of Colonisation, now has a near-ideal environment. However, it requires extensive imports from the Third Imperium to maintain its society and environmental efforts. Despite its distance, it sees semi-regular Imperial traffic bringing in new supplies and colonists, and taking away research materials. It is unclear why the Third Imperium has taken such an interest in colonising Garden, with it being so distant from trade routes or systems of value.

The original settlers, the Salika, left Garden in the early 1000s. They had evolved to become accustomed to the world's ice age, developing a TL11–12 society that required a large industrial base. Therefore, to ensure the world conformed to their needs, they altered its atmosphere, introducing large quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The failure to understand the reason for the cold temperature of their world proved to be their downfall. When Garden's main sequence star entered its hot phase, global temperature climbed rapidly over 50 years and the world became almost uninhabitable. This led to the development of massive sublight generation ships and an organised effort to depart the planet.

SALIKA

The Salika are a friendly species, not prone to violence and now accustomed to life on a starship. As a result, whilst they make great pilots, engineers and mechanics, they are often unable to drive vehicles. It takes them longer than other species to learn languages and adapt to other cultures, and Salika often seem very similar to each other. Despite this, they are intelligent, pushing their young to pursue intellectual careers. Salika are shorter-lived than Humaniti and its subspecies, averaging 45–55 years.

Bipedal creatures with two arms, the Salika have six digits on each hand that are longer than that of a human, with webbing that extends to the first knuckle. This allows them to swim at greater speed without affecting their manual dexterity. Their bodies are covered in fine fur in various colours, tending

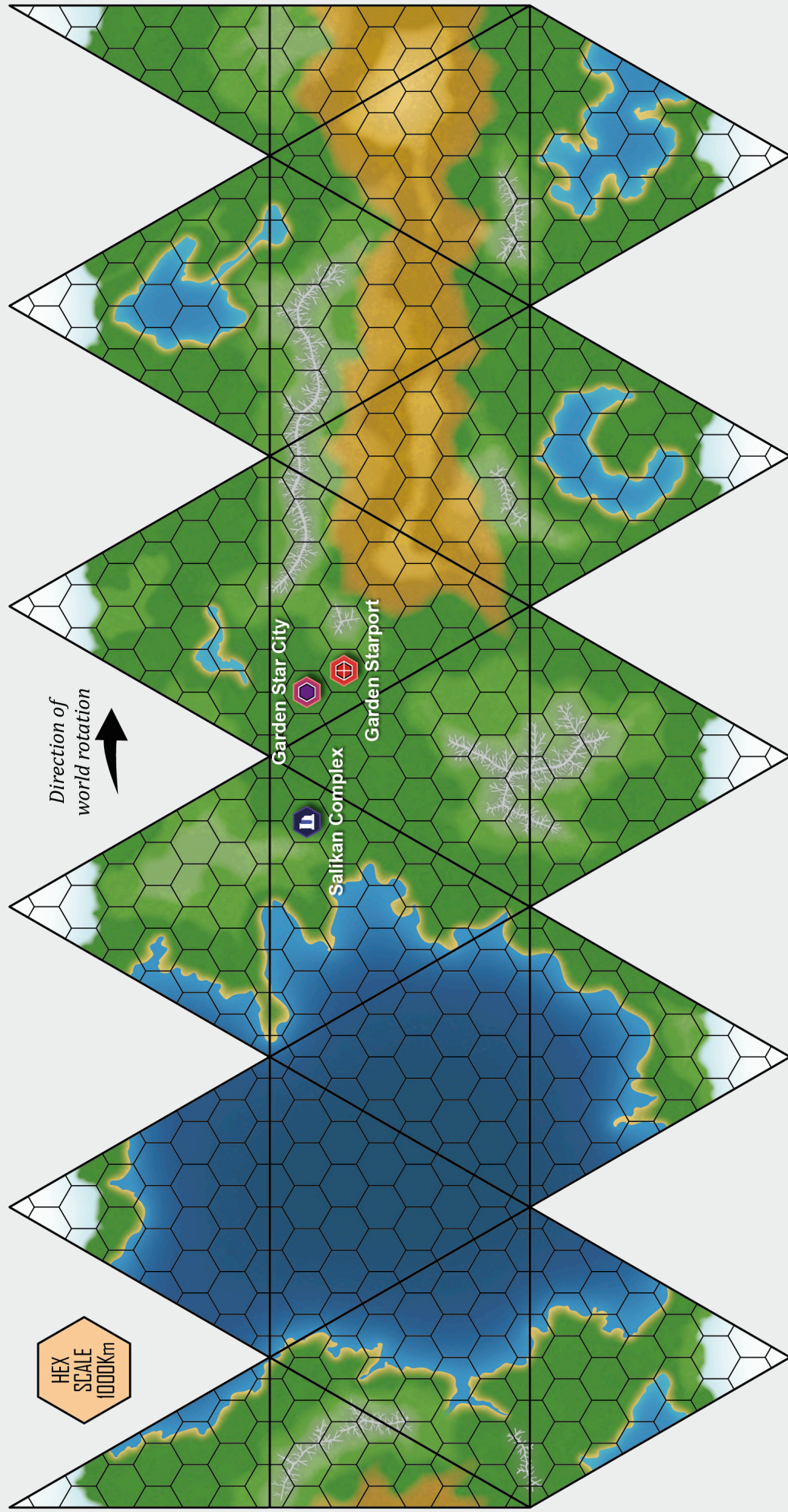
towards shades of blue and green that allow them to camouflage themselves in the ocean. Much like oceanic creatures, the fur tends to be darker on their backs and lighter on their front.

Salikan societies are divided by the generation ships they departed Garden on. Some remained close to each other, whereas others developed distinct traditions and cultures. However, all Salika share the same love of water, with many preferring to spend time in or near oceans, rivers and lakes rather than remaining inside. As such, most Salika ships have these elements built in and it is not uncommon to board a Salika ship and see recreational pools.



GARDEN

UWP: B755578-A



EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES

ATMOSPHERE TESTER

This is a handheld version of the Environment Reader modification (*Central Supply Catalogue*, page 22) and is a similar size to a mobile comm. It detects the composition of the atmosphere, displaying it in a wide array of colours, green for oxygen, blue for nitrogen, red for carbon dioxide, orange for helium and black for airborne toxins.



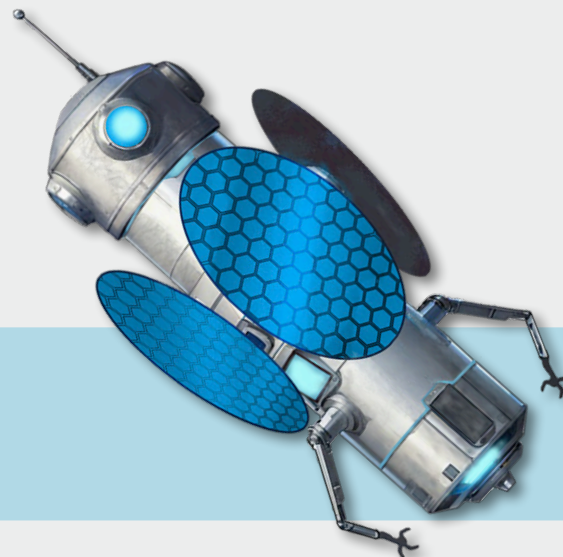
Item	TL	Kg	Cost
Atmosphere Tester	8	0.2	Cr200

SURVEY DROID

Based outwardly on the frame of an advanced probe drone, a survey droid adds the capability of autonomous exploration and scientific analysis at the cost of the thrusters and re-entry capability of a scoutship deployed drone.

Meant to be dispensed from the ground or within an atmosphere from a probe bay or even an open cargo bay, the survey drone's grav units can operate at vehicle speeds for up to 36 hours and at slower loitering speeds for nearly one week before requiring recharging from its inherent solar panels. It can range across thousands of kilometres from its deployment point and return with up to three kilograms or three litres of samples, segregated into up to eight adjustable hazardous material-grade receptacles.

The survey drone's toolkit and expertise focus on chemical analysis but it is programmed with basic knowledge in most physical and biological sciences. Its onboard sensor bay includes an advanced ground penetrating radar unit with three dedicated microdrones to provide a 3D view of subsurface features buried up to 160 metres below ground.



Robot	Hits	Speed	TL	Cost
Survey Droid	20	—	12	Cr180000
Locomotion	Grav			
Skills	Athletics (endurance) 1, Flyer (grav) 2, Navigation 2, Recon 3, Science (chemistry) 2			
Attacks	None			
Manipulators	2x (STR 5 DEX 7)			
Endurance	144 (36) hours			
Traits	Armour (+4), Flyer (High), Heightened Senses, IR/UV Vision			
Programming	Advanced (INT 8)			
Options	Atmospheric Sensor, Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), Autopilot (improved), Drone Interface, Environment Processor, Geiger Counter, Ground Penetrating Radar (advanced), Navigation System (improved), Olfactory Sensor (advanced), PRIS Sensor, Recon Sensor (advanced), Satellite Uplink, Scientific Toolkit (chemistry, enhanced), Solar Power Unit (improved), Storage Compartment (hazardous material, 1 Slot), Transceiver 5,000km (enhanced), Vacuum Environment Protection, Voder Speaker, Wireless Data Link			

GARDEN ROVER

This vehicle is rated for use by the Garden Port Authority, one of the main government branches on the world. Its engine was built to be as fuel efficient as possible, at the cost of speed, although its range remains enough to ensure it can make journeys across the world. Sensors similar to those of a probe drone are fitted, allowing the rover to pick up sub-earth objects when stationed in a location for a short period. However, these are not strong enough to gain accurate readings and must be supplemented by sophont intelligence.

TL	12
Skill	Drive (wheel)
Agility	+0
Speed (cruise)	High (Medium)
Range (cruise)	900 (1,350)
Crew	1
Passengers	5
Cargo	0.5 tons
Hull	24
Shipping	6 tons
Cost	Cr67825

The Garden rover is large enough to carry six people and has an atmospheric sampler and laboratory onboard. These are not as good as can be found in a good stationary laboratory but function well whilst in transit across the planet. Each is designed to be as user-friendly as possible, to allow even less educated colonists to use them if necessary.

Traits	—
Equipment	Atmospheric Sampler, Communication Systems (basic), Laboratory, Navigation Systems (basic), Sensors (improved)
Weapons	—

Equipment	
Autopilot (skill level)	—
Communications (range)	50km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+1
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1
Camouflage (Recon DM)	—
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—

ARMOUR					
FRONT	4	REAR	4	SIDES	4



ALLIES AND OPPOSITION

YOSOY

Yosoy is, for all intents and purposes, a businessman. Although he has been out of the game for a while, he is still well-versed in manipulating those around him to get a better deal. Once known for his trade in special artefacts, it is from him that most of the rumours surrounding the Ancients artefact stem. His



YOSOY

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE	
Droyne			Male		—	
TRAITS			—			
STR	7	INT	8	SKILLS		
DEX	8	EDU	6	Admin 0, Athletics (endurance) 1, Broker 2, Carouse 0, Gambler 1, Gun Combat 0, Gunner (ortillery) 1, Persuade 0, Pilot 1 (spacecraft), Science (xenoarchaeology) 1, Streetwise 1		
END	9	PSI	8			

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Use clipped sentences and keep a knowing smile on your face. Be friendly but polite and mention the Ancients and their artifacts as much as possible.

main focus was on Ancients artefacts but in the years since, the wide spread of Ancients hunters has swayed his interest and he now focuses on the histories of other minor civilisations. His history was in the Imperial Navy, which served him well enough in his goal of exploring as much of Charted Space as possible, possible only because he is of the Sport caste. Unfortunately, the pay was not enough to keep him in service and sourcing artefacts caught his interest both intellectually and financially. It is believed that he has found and sold a number of artefacts throughout his years and has since hidden himself on Hope Freeport as a form of something like self-exile.

HOPE FREEPORT PORT GUARD

Working as a port guard is one of the few truly stable jobs on Hope Freeport, with more guards in constant demand. This is the first and last official line of defence against untoward visitors attempting to smuggle things into the freeport, although lax laws mean very few things are prohibited. These guards are volatile and easy to bribe but will act if they believe their freedoms are at risk from outside intrusion. As such, they hold a great distaste for large governments and will be especially unpleasant to any guests who tout the benefits of their respective empires.

HOPE FREEPORT PORT GUARD

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE
—			—		—
TRAITS			—		
STR	10	INT	6	SKILLS	
DEX	7	EDU	7	Admin 0, Carouse 0, Gambler 0, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Investigate 1, Melee (unarmed) 1, Streetwise 1	
END	9	SOC	8		

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

If the Travellers are breaking the law or attempting to smuggle prohibited goods, be mean. Otherwise, treat them with as little interest as possible. If any are of a Major Race, smile at them smugly and talk about how bad interstellar governments are.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERERS

Several species live within the complex and can be seen wandering throughout its halls and rooms. Although some are not dangerous, others most definitely are. They are generally restricted to areas with subterranean pools, lakes and rivers, although amphibious creatures will be found throughout the complex.

Sanaat

This cephalopod, notable for its 10 legs, dwells in the waters of caves within the Salika research complex but travels through the entirety of the compound. Many of the freshwater systems have been overtaken by the sanaat in the years since the Salikan departure, after the species was once hunted to near extinction. They can squirt bioluminescent ink, which

decorates the pools within the complex. The sanaat are remarkably intelligent, with a large brain-to-body ratio, making them capable of surprisingly advanced decision-making. They typically use their tentacles to stun their prey, strangling them until venom is released through glands in the suckers.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Sanaat	30	15m
Skills	Dexterity (athletics) 2, Melee (natural) 2, Stealth 1	
Attacks	Tentacles (2D, Stun)	
Traits	Alarm, Amphibious, Camouflaged, Large (+1), Poison (difficult/1D/1D minutes)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Hunter	



Breeop

The breeop is a large arthropod. Their bodies have one pair of legs per segment, which range from 51–273 pairs. They typically do not walk over the floor, instead preferring to stick to ceilings or walls. These legs also function well in water, allowing the breeop to live amphibiously. During the heyday of the Salika, they were sometimes used as pack mounts due to their size, speed and relative strength. Since then, however, they have become increasingly undomesticated and are now fearful of Salika and any who resemble them. When faced with danger, the breeop are more likely to flee after sounding an alarm that rattles through their shells; however, given no other option, they will raise their body and slam it down on predators.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Breeop	35	20m
Skills	Athletics (strength) 1, Melee (natural) 2	
Attacks	Body Slam (2D)	
Traits	Alarm, Amphibious, Large (+1)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Hunter	

Preon

The preon is a small flying animal living in the complex and undoubtedly other systems within other cave systems on Garden. They are mammals and surprisingly agile, using echolocation to find their way in darkness, although they have a weak form of infrared vision that can supplement this. They have venom secretion glands on the underside of their wings, allowing them to effectively release small squirts of toxin when flying overhead.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Preon	12	15m
Skills	Melee (natural) 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1	
Attacks	Claws (1D)	
Traits	Flyer (+3), Poisonous (difficult/1D/1D hours) Small (-1)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Pouncer	



GREAT RIFT ADVENTURE 5

The Undying

Misjumps are an unfortunate consequence of space travel and can happen to even the most well-trained of crews. Although there is some risk of death, or exploding in a fireball alongside their ship, sometimes the Travellers may end up in a place they never expected to be, facing more difficult scenarios than a sudden, fiery death.

Great Rift Adventure 5: The Undying brings the Travellers to a world within the Great Rift, Raerrgdzakaek, into the arms of a Vargr doomsday cult who are hellbent on not letting them leave the world. The Travellers will need to work out a way to get off the world alive, avoiding the dangerous wildlife and the roving groups of cultists.

However the Travellers manage to get themselves out of Raerrgdzakaek, they will have to live with the knowledge that they are leaving hundreds of thousands suffering on the world below.

INTRODUCTION

The Undying is an adventure set on Rraerrgdzakaek (Rare-err-guh-dezz-ah-cake), in the Aosola subsector of Reft. Depending on the group of Travellers, this adventure can be played in several different ways. The Referee can include more gory details to turn it into a slasher or turn the cultists into an ominous threat to make it more of a psychological thriller. *The Undying* includes characters, vehicles and new animals to encounter.

This adventure can be used within an existing trader or travelling campaign or as the result of a misjump within sectors of the Great Rift, including Touchstone, Reft and the Riftspan Reaches. Whichever option suits the campaign best, the Travellers will land on Rraerrgdzakaek, an agricultural world inhabited by an apocalyptic Vargr cult. They must find a way to evade or fight the cultists and escape the system while navigating the tense political climate and an uprising of the downtrodden masses.

RIFT

The Great Rift is an astrological anomaly, a wide area of sparsely populated subsectors sitting between the Imperium and the Hierate, with both interstellar empires settled on either side of its gaping maw. Whilst a good portion of worlds within Charted Space benefit from short jump distances between each other, this area can sometimes require jump-6 ships to traverse.

LIFE IN THE RIFT

Rift space contains a variety of humans of varying cultures and societies, living apart from the interstellar empires. They may be here by choice, whether their own or another's, or be unaware of the larger politics of Charted Space.



For Rraerrgdzakaek, and other worlds on the border of the Hierate, Aslan expansion is a constant source of concern. Most of the worlds have barely been explored or were explored by separate polities but access to Touchstone by species other than the Aslan can be immensely problematic. The Vargr on Rraerrgdzakaek have managed to establish tentative trade relations with the closest Hierate world, Ealriysilrai, which gives them access to a larger population to whom they can proselytise.

Life in the rift is tougher than in a densely populated area of space, with other systems and worlds more difficult to access than would otherwise be possible. Marauders, thieves, bounty hunters and pirates are more common here than elsewhere in Charted Space, as fewer surrounding systems provides an ample opportunity for subtler movements and operations.

OVERVIEW

Rraerrgdzakaek is a remote agricultural world inhabited by a cult of apocalyptic Vargr in a Hierate-dominated area of space. Depending on the actions of the Travellers, the cult will either try to convince them to join or may end up attempting to force their conversion. *The Undying* is freeform, allowing the Referee and Travellers to choose their own path. However, tensions are rising as the cult believes they have received signs that the end of the universe is imminent.

The objective of the adventure is to escape the system and the Travellers will need to find a way to repair their ship or take control of one of the older vessels still on the world. This adventure provides the Travellers with opportunities for problem-solving and the potential for combat, and the Referee may roll on tables to determine the nature of the finale, meaning this adventure can be replayed in different ways across several campaigns.

In addition, several things are happening on Rraerrgdzakaek that the Travellers will be forced to navigate. A rebellion is being coordinated, genetically engineered species have escaped containment and the Shunned are realising their lives can be more than just punishment for breaking any of the world's incomprehensible laws.

TRADING

The Undying can be run as a trading adventure, beginning on the nearby world of Ealriysilrai, a Hierate world that purchases luxury agricultural foods from Rraerrgdzakaek. The Travellers will be paid to transport

a shipment of raw materials in exchange for a hold full of fresh produce but the cult on Rraerrgdzakaek will be loath to let them go without any trouble. The Undying are always seeking fresh recruits and Ealriysilrai is unwilling to send any of its own people to the world. Agricultural goods are Rraerrgdzakaek's main export, with a close second being True Believer recruiters.

MISJUMP

A recognisable portion of jumpspace theory is unknown and often misunderstood. Misjumps occur due to a failure in the jumpspace process, although the exact reasons for these failures are not always apparent. Some known causes result from ships attempting to jump with unrefined fuel or being deep within a gravity well but the results are often disastrous.

Misjumps can cause a variety of effects on the ship, not least of which is catastrophic structural failure, resulting in the deaths of the entire crew. Therefore, they are one of the worst fates imaginable for Travellers and one of the reasons astrogators undergo so much training. However, even the best-trained astrogator can make a mistake, meaning these accidents may happen even to a well-trained and experienced crew.

If the Travellers are unsuccessful while initiating jump within Touchstone, Reft, or the Riftspan Reaches, they may end up on Rraerrgdzakaek, exiting jumpspace with a ship riddled with dents and bumps, and alarms blaring throughout the vessel. Their manoeuvre and jump drives will fail, giving no option but to make an emergency landing as quickly as possible. The Travellers are likely to be similarly knocked around but when exiting their spacecraft, they will find themselves on an ideal world.

However, despite the idyllic landscape of Rraerrgdzakaek, the Travellers will soon discover an insidious, apocalyptic cult called the Undying.

OTHER OPTIONS

There are numerous reasons why the Travellers may end up at Rraerrgdzakaek. They are looking for a place to hide while on the run, or they are bounty hunters looking for a mark. The opportunities for work and adventure in the Great Rift are endless and the Travellers may find far more freedom here than anywhere in the Imperium, Hierate or other interstellar polity.

EALRIYSILRAI

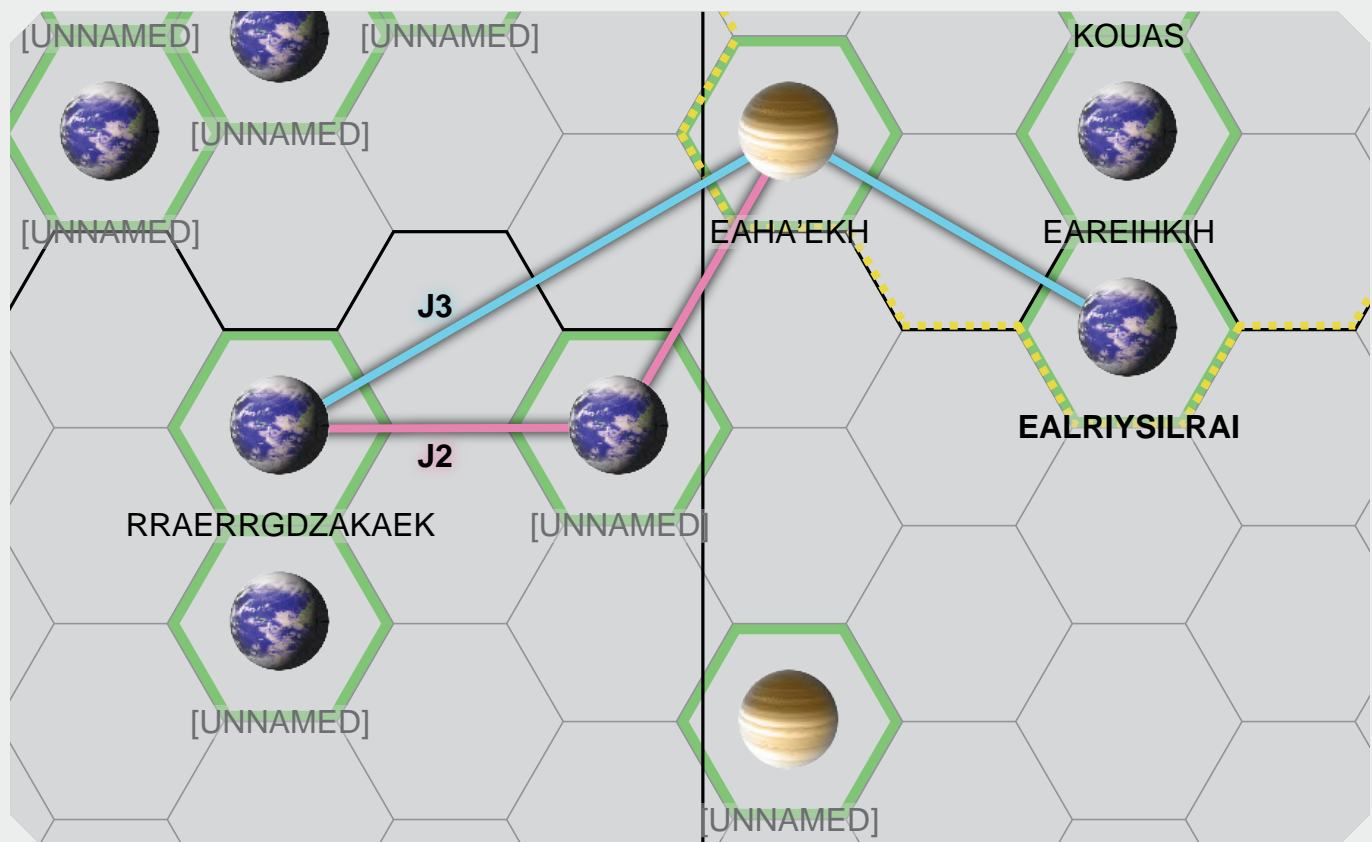
Should the Travellers be in the Touchstone sector, they are able to visit Rraerrgdzakaek without a misjump by visiting Ealriysilrai. They may have a Contact or patron in the system or alternatively may be able to meet one at the starport. The Travellers might be in this area of space for any number of reasons, whether they already have business with the Hierate, about to embark on a greater discovery within the Great Rift, or they already regularly trade with the Aslan here.

MAINWORLD

Ealriysilrai is a high population, industrial world within the Aslan Hierate that regularly trades with Rraerrgdzakaek in return for agricultural goods. The planet's tainted atmosphere and low hydrosphere makes producing enormous quantities of quality foodstuffs an arduous task and the government requires near constant imports of these goods to maintain the lifestyle of the population.

The Class C starport is poorly maintained and many vessels that pass through are domestic traffic from the system's other worlds. It has enough resources to maintain occasional interstellar vessels but repair facilities inflict prolonged delays. The world was originally explored by the Darrians, beginning in ~1079, but they never colonised the world. Continuous Aslan expansion brought their borders to the system and it remains on the edge of the Hierate, just inside the Great Rift.

Ealriysilrai, and the wider Ikairleah subsector, were explored by the seven ship Rikakihr-Dehnehror Expedition undertaken by the Darrians. The Aslan here were friendly and have remained so in the years since, trading with the Darrians for one of their damaged ships before the other vessels returned to Darrian space. They rely on offworld trade for a good portion of their foodstuffs and have made multiple lucrative trade deals with Rraerrgdzakaek. Despite this, they remain wary of the Vargr world and semi-regularly expel the loudest and most aggressive preachers of the Undying.



THE CONTRACT

Ealriysilrai is run by a charismatic oligarchy, with the ruling clan controlling the entire system and requiring extensive imports. Part of this involves the import of interesting agricultural goods from Rraergdzakaek,

which the government subcontracts to vessels passing through the system. These contracts are lucrative, which most agree is the result of a rich government overspending on luxury goods.

The Travellers will be paid a sum of Cr125000 for the journey and safe delivery of the 100-ton cargo, with half paid before they depart and the rest upon their return. Their job is simple; travel to Rraergdzakaek and pick up the cargo, then return it to Ealriysilrai.

REALITY

Rraergdzakaek is controlled by a fanatical Vargr cult and the government of Ealriysilrai is unwilling to send their own people. They have had several instances of the Vargr travelling to Ealriysilrai to preach and are more than aware of the dangers. They are aware of the cult and more willing to pay Travellers to transport cargo than do it themselves and, in their own greed, assume the payment is enough to compensate for any trouble incurred.

THE VESSEL

If required, the Ealriysilrai government will provide the Travellers with a jump-3 ship, allowing them to reach their destination in two jumps. It is a standard cargo hauler in this area of space but has enough room for the Travellers and their cargo. The Travellers will also be able to use their own vessel if they have enough cargo space available.



ADMINISTRATOR FUILAIL IKOH

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE	
Aslan			Female		—	
TRAITS			—			
STR	8	INT	8	SKILLS		
DEX	6	EDU	10	Admin 1, Art (visual media) 2, Broker 3, Carouse 0, Diplomat 3, Drive (wheel) 1, Gambler 0, Language (Gvegh) 1, Profession (administrator) 1, Steward 0		
END	4	SOC	8			
EQUIPMENT			Mobile Comm (TL10)			

ADMINISTRATOR FUILAIL IKOH

Fuilail is an administrator for the Ealriysilrai government within the Department of Commerce, collaborating with outside contractors to fulfil their interstellar delivery obligations. She is little more than a case worker, one of a handful assigned to manage the world's contracts with Rraergdzakaek but takes her job very seriously. Having worked for the government since she joined the workforce, she is adept at navigating a wide variety of middle managers and bureaucratic procedures. Fuilail is neat and organised, her hair and fur always meticulously put into place, and she has an air of frank condescension with non-Aslan.

EIETORL CARGO HAULER

This is a standard hauler produced in the Eietorl Esea subsector of Touchstone, which has been exported to border Hierate worlds. They are of a standard design but capable of high enough jump to traverse sparse areas of space. Although their cargo bay is limited to ~100 tons, this is more than

enough space for the regular, smaller trades made with nearby systems. Despite a straightforward design, the Eietorl is ostentatious and bedecked with gold leaf, glass jewels, clan insignia and sprawling inscriptions.

TL12		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	300 tons, Streamlined	—	18
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 2	9	1.8
M-Drive	Thrust 2	6	12
J-Drive	Jump 3	27.5	41.25
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 225	15	15
Fuel Tanks	J-3, 4 weeks operation	92	—
Bridge		20	1.5
Computer	Computer/10bis	—	0.24
Sensors	Civilian Grade	1	3
Systems	Cargo Crane	3	3
Staterooms	Standard x3	12	1.5
Software	Intellect	—	—
	Jump/3	—	0.3
	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre	—	—
Common Areas		4	0.4
Cargo		110.5	—
Total: MCr97.99			

Crew

Captain, Pilot,
Astrogator,
Engineers x2

Hull: 120

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr8166/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr97.99

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems

60

Manoeuvre Drive

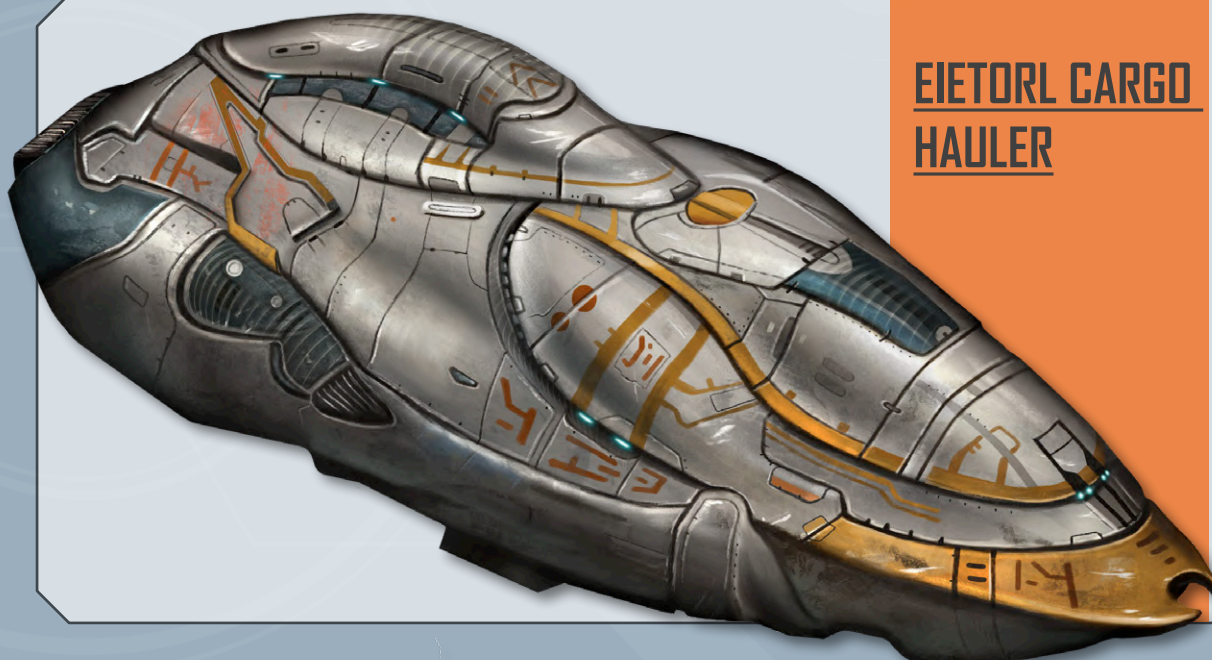
60

Jump Drive

90

Sensors

1

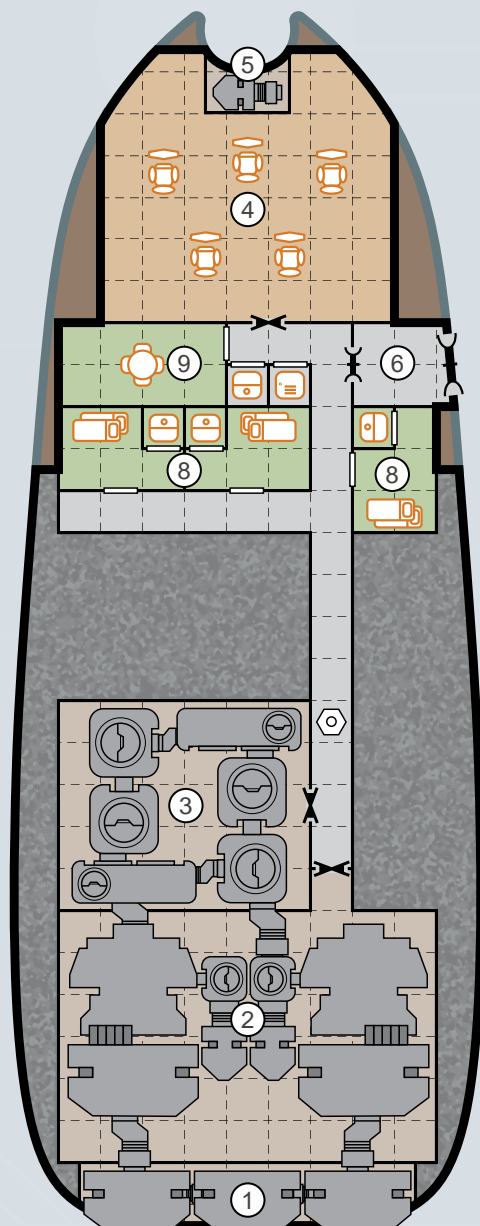


EIETORL CARGO HAULER

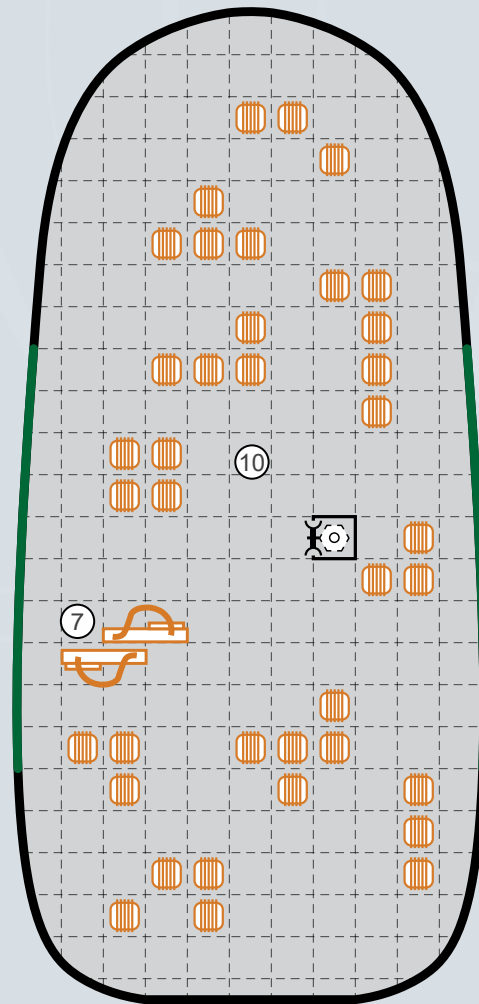
1 square = 0.5 Tons

LEGEND

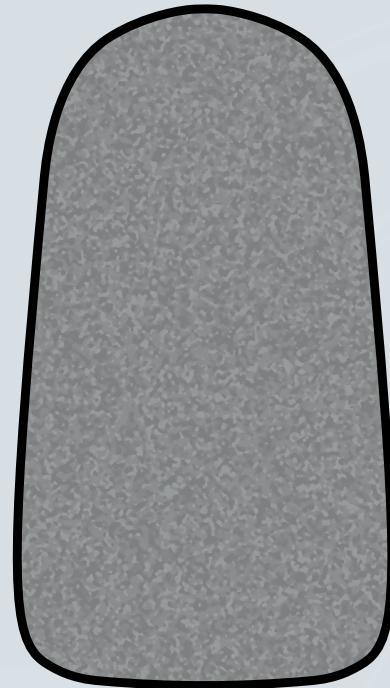
1. Manoeuvre Drive
2. Jump Drive
3. Power Plant
4. Bridge
5. Sensors
6. Airlock
7. Cargo Crane
8. Stateroom
9. Common Areas
10. Cargo



DECK 2



DECK 1



DECK 3



LANDING

When the Travellers land, they will immediately be swarmed by several Vargr wearing different robes and clothes, all bearing the mark of a star on the centre of their backs. They will not be unkind but may seem unnerving, watching the Travellers closely and making very few movements, almost robotic in posture. They will question the Travellers as to their identity and, should any of the Travellers mention cargo, start asking for details of what their ship is carrying.

NOBODY LEAVES

There are several options for the Referee to keep the Travellers on Rraerrgdzakaek, depending on the group of Travellers and the preferred style of the Referee.

- The deal made with the Travellers is false and the Aslan have agreed to send the Vargr 'new recruits' in exchange for foodstuffs. The Travellers are just an unlucky party.
- The Aslan failed to fulfil their part of the trade deal and the Vargr have decided to keep the Travellers as collateral until they are paid, or the Travellers have worked off the debt.
- Recruitment and retention has fallen, and the Vargr see the Travellers as perfect candidates to grow their population and increase the spread of their ideas.
- The Travellers break some convoluted and little-known law, which allows the government of Rraerrgdzakaek to hold them indefinitely and execute them pending a trial.
- The Travellers attempt to ingratiate themselves with the Undying and eventually overstep or inadvertently offend their hosts.
- Making trade deals is far more important than the conditions on the world and the Travellers are far more focused on Credits.

RRAERRGDZAKAEK

Rraerrgdzakaek is a non-industrial agricultural world and one of the main producers of foodstuffs for surrounding worlds. The world government has negotiated contracts to supply nearby systems with fresh produce, with Ealriysilrai as their main client. Rraerrgdzakaek has a low population of around 300,000 sophonts, who are majority Vargr with a few humans. Most of the population resides in the three main agricultural hubs on the north-east, west and centre of the world's primary continent.

There are a few smaller settlements, although these are less economically and strategically important. These are primarily cultural and religious sites, operating under the strict control of the government. The largest religious site, on the southern side of the continent, is also the centre of government and home of the world's leader, Warden Akhllu Ksoeukh. He is a descendant of the original leader, Warden Lovueng Ksoeukh, and the title has passed down throughout the generations, always to the most charismatic member of the Ksoeukh family.

Rraerrgdzakaek has a standard atmosphere and would be considered a garden world were the planet slightly larger. It has no lack of natural resources, including oil, coal and precious metals, and the only limiting factor to the expansion of the Vargr is their workforce. Were they to number in the millions, it is quite likely they would be able to rapidly expand control over the world and, potentially, those neighbouring. Their small population is, therefore, a good thing for nearby systems.

HISTORY

Everything the Vargr have built on Rraerrgdzakaek has been constructed atop the ruins of a civilisation that existed some millennia ago. Cities built here, and their destroyed technological remnants, indicate that the former inhabitants were near or at the level required for interstellar travel, but there are no signs of them on other worlds. All signs point to cities being abandoned rather than being destroyed but the passing of millennia has made any further research difficult.

Some offworlders have suggested these may be the ruins of the Ascondi or Kursae civilisations but these ideas are unsubstantiated. The inhabitants of Rraerrgdzakaek have been unwilling to allow offworld research into the ruins and only have a passing interest in their own world's history. When questioned, they appear smug, believing themselves to be the only ones truly prepared for anything, and the existence of a dead civilisation on their world only reinforces this.

THE STARPORT

Rraerrgdzakaek's starport is simple, both small and basic in facilities, and only regularly used for offworld imports and exports on a frequent but irregular basis. There is a small flotilla of in-system ships but these are used for transporting religious figures and shipments to different towns and colony sites. They have a minimal amount of weaponry.

All facilities within the starport are managed by the government, under the auspices of the Rraerrgdzakaek Interstellar Relations Committee. This panel is run as a collective of eight council members, overseen by the warden. Despite the name of the committee, it is not as grand as it sounds. Their only responsibilities are managing incoming and outgoing ships and any additional work is undertaken by different committees, of which there are many.

The guards at the starport are friendly enough, albeit gruff, and will preach to anyone who lands at the starport. That said, they do understand that not everyone will wish to convert and will not press the matter too far. Their faces are worn and grim, but they will always listen to tales of the wider universe and are keen to hear stories of wars, uprisings and more. They have spent the last 800 years waiting for some event that will cause the downfall of civilisation, after all.

POPULATION

Most of the population is Vargr, the larger portion of whom are descendants of the original arrivals. Their original homeworld is unknown and was either struck from official records or forgotten, but the Vargr maintain that it was a hellish place and many of its people were incapable of understanding the future that awaited Charted Space.

The Vargr are keen to spread their message, having a few vessels capable of high enough jumps to carry members to nearby worlds. Keeping a constant influx of new people to the world is important for maintaining genetic diversity and is the primary reason for the Undying's growth. With only a few hundred initial settlers, it was imperative for the Undying to gain new followers from nearby systems. Each member was expected to spend two to three years travelling to other worlds, spreading their ideas and recruiting new followers.

Thanks to the charisma of Vargr leaders, and subtle manipulations, the spread of ideas and teachings was successful. More Vargr, and some humans, were enthralled and the world has seen a slow but steady increase in population. Humanity is still by far the smaller population on Rraerrgdzakaek, comprising mostly those who either passed through the area and agreed with the teachings of the Undying, or those in nearby systems who were visited by members of the Undying spreading the message of cataclysm.

There is a small number of Aslan on Rraerrgdzakaek, *ihatei* who inhabit small islands and a portion of the northwestern side of the main continent. Mostly, they avoid the Undying, although they have negotiated a trade agreement that benefits both sides. In addition,

the *ihatei* have been constructing staging points to prepare for future conflicts. Thanks to their proximity to the cult, the *ihatei* on Rraerrgdzakaek are far more forgiving than other clans might be and are almost welcoming to any guests they may encounter, at least to a degree.

GOVERNANCE

The world is run as a charismatic dictatorship and the government has been in power for 800 years. Power has passed through the Ksoeukh family for the entirety of this time and is supported by a wider base of followers. Some of these are other Ksoeukh family members and others are the most ardent supporters of the regime on Rraerrgdzakaek.

Each of these supporters, particularly those who donate either Credits or property to the Undying, are given better positions and assigned to more committees. In this way, most of the government is run as a coalition, with committees working together to resolve problems and progress society. This is made more difficult with the number of religious restrictions and regulations in place, each of which must be carefully navigated before changes are made.

Should anyone go against the rule of law, punishments are harsh and strictly applied. Shunning is the least harmful method of reproach the Vargr use and results in the member being forced to wander the wilderness of Rraerrgdzakaek, unable to find a place to sleep or eat within the home of any member of the Undying. The *ihatei* are unwilling to take them in either, seeing their punishment as a mark of dishonour. In the best-case scenario, shunned may be assigned to manual labour in mines or on farms, contributing a substantial amount to the world's economy.

LAWS

Laws surrounding weapons and armour are very lax on Rraerrgdzakaek but there are a vast number of intense, confusing laws. These can be impossible for visitors to navigate and general guidance is to simply say and do as little as possible to ensure as few chances of breaking these laws as possible. The consequences of breaking these laws varies heavily but most are severely punished, and a good portion can result in execution.



Most laws are written like religious edicts, preying on the population's constant tension and anxiety surrounding the, in their minds, inevitable catastrophe that is heading towards Charted Space. The people have been separated from 'traditional' thinkers for over 800 years and their cultural beliefs are so deeply ingrained that they no longer seem untoward or confusing.

TECHNOLOGY

Although Rraerrgdzakaek is a TL10 world, this is afforded due to their research into genetics and biology, and the population has yet to develop reliable transportation, mostly using pack mounts. The most advanced machinery in use tends to be agricultural machinery such as tractors.

The people of Rraerrgdzakaek believe that, when the Ancients finally return, all modern technology will be rendered useless and so instead devote their time to genetic engineering. The centre of this work, Raggio, has recently begun evaluating the creation of a new species of animal, which uses DNA from several of the native creatures of the world.

RELIGION

Outwardly, the government of Rraerrgdzakaek presents itself as a simple religious dictatorship. Rraerrgdzakaek's government is an insidious cult hellbent on spreading conspiracy theories and the eventual downfall of civilisation.

Most beliefs centre around personal freedoms and liberty, which can only be earned by making Rraerrgdzakaek as self-sufficient as possible. By leaving their homeworld the people also broke away from the 'oppression' of larger governments, although they did not know they were heading towards the creation of their own authoritarian regime. Despite how it looks to offworlders, especially the grim labour camps, the people of Rraerrgdzakaek are satisfied with their lives. Their beliefs are only heightened when offworlders visit with news of distant famines, wars and catastrophic events, but the Vargr of Rraerrgdzakaek become gruff and uninterested if any of these are resolving peacefully.



THE UNDYING

The Undying are a fanatical cult established within the Vargr Extents some 800 years ago by Lovueng Ksoeukh. Lovueng was an unimportant but charismatic Vargr known for non-conformist views. This is an important distinction, as all Vargr tend towards non-conformity but Lovueng took things a step further.

As Vargr uncovered Ancients artefacts, Lovueng began his philosophical transformation, studying a variety of mystical theories and alternative religions, as well as any information he could get regarding these artefacts. Lovueng used his charisma to build a small following on his homeworld. He preached the idea that the Ancients would return and elevate those who waited for them, and his ideas appealed to those who were outcast from mainstream society.

These teachings grew into a beast of their own when Lovueng met his first wife, Uroe, who became one of his first followers and one of the loudest preachers of his ideas. Lovueng and Uroe began spreading their teachings to a wider audience, promoting less radical ideas to more moderate audiences to gain more traction. This ballooned their numbers and the pair slowly started to introduce more excessive ideas as time went on. They used several tactics to maintain control and promote 'good thought', including ostracising those who went against their ideals.

Their control spread rapidly and followers were encouraged to pay tithes, which resulted in Lovueng commissioning a large, jump-capable ship equipped to support the entire group. As the ship was nearing completion, Lovueng began telling their followers of the Ancients, expressing their care for the Vargr and

that their species were vital for the Ancient's eventual return. This, combined with increased aggression towards Lovueng and his followers, was the primary reason for their departure from their homeworld. Loading the entire group onto the ship, they travelled for years until they found the 'correct' world, which Lovueng proclaimed to be the site where the Ancients would make contact. Throughout their time shipboard, the group became ever more cohesive, with each Vargr falling into a role that would follow them when they landed on Rraergdzakaek. The time they spent aboard allowed them to refine their doctrine and it was here beliefs formalised into something akin to laws.

DEATH AND REBIRTH

Before they could make landfall at their new home, however, Lovueng succumbed to illness and in turn became a martyr to rally behind. His death was hailed as the first in a series of events that would lead to catastrophe, as precursor to the return of the Ancients. Uroe claimed that those who lead must succumb to these events to appease the Ancients, which had the side effect of ensuring few would try to claim leadership, lest they face the same fate.

With Lovueng dead, Uroe took a larger role in the leadership of the group but had two young pups to care for. She styled herself as a mother figure for the Vargr, with Lovueng as the lost father. Uroe began to delegate control for aspects of the group, including engineering, medical, coordination, food and water, and more. This resulted in the formation of the councils and she spent every day after consolidating control over these threads of power. As she grew older, Uroe began to pass responsibility onto her children, waiting for them to have their own young so she could fully pass leadership onto them.

TRANSITION OF POWER

When the Vargr landed on Rraergdzakaek, Uroe began to transfer control to her eldest son, granting him sweeping power over most of the construction and rehoming effort. Most believe her death was a result of old age but the Undying teach that new leadership will replace the old, and father and mother must die before new leaders can rise.



Power has passed through the Ksoeukh for generations, with parents passing on power gradually, until their death when all changes are finalised. Most die of old age but there are some deaths under suspicious circumstances. Those who monitor events on the world, such as the Aslan of Ealriysilrai, believe these may be examples of overeager children committing parricide.

VARGR AND THE ANCIENTS

Modern Vargr were genetically engineered by the Ancients some 300,000 years ago and are descended from carnivore/chaser stock. The Ancients disappeared because of a cataclysmic war and the Undying believe they were created to welcome and assist them upon their return to Charted Space.

Most Vargr are generally aware of the method of their creation but the Undying have taken this knowledge to an extreme. Ordinary events such as solar eclipses are seen as portents of incoming doom or warnings from their creators, and tales of a new Ancients artefact may inspire an onslaught of new laws, teachings and prophecies. These are all deliberately vague so that if one does not come about, there will be enough doubt over the true meaning to wave off dissent.

These Vargr believe they are special and were created to welcome the Ancients upon their return. Any mention of their extinct creators will instil pride and hope within the Undying, and any insults will create an insatiable need to see the person punished. Ancients-themed art, poetry and theatre are commonplace and the Vargr of Rraerrgdzakaek, as they rise in rank, decorate their bodies in a style they believe reminiscent of the Ancients.

APOCALYPTICISM

The Undying believe there will be some catastrophic event (or series of events) that will lead the universe to the brink of destruction. This could be wars, economic collapse, civil disobedience, some hitherto unknown environmental effect or any combination. The Frontier Wars between the Imperium and Zhodani Consulate have only fuelled these beliefs, as have smaller scale skirmishes and battles.

Throughout their inhabitation of Rraerrgdzakaek, the Vargr here have absorbed local and interstellar news rabidly, disseminating stories of the worst events throughout their populace to further the ideology.

A KERNEL OF TRUTH

Whilst the Undying are incorrect about the return of the Ancients and their role as the prophets who will bring in a new age, they are not strictly wrong about a wave of destruction currently barrelling towards Charted Space. These Vargr are unaware of it but the Empress Wave is heading towards Charted Space and will inflict immense havoc upon those it reaches. The Zhodani have experienced the effects of the wave closer to coreward thanks to their Core Expeditions, and the Imperium is aware of the wave thanks to Project Longbow, but neither knows enough to combat the threat. The Empress Wave is believed to be of Ancients origin, meaning the Vargr of Rraerrgdzakaek could be more heralds of the apocalypse than those protected from it.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The Vargr of Rraerrgdzakaek, originally, were a group focused on civil disobedience because of their beliefs. Civil disobedience is a form of direct action that is unlawful and is the idea that to enact real change, you must break the law in a nonviolent way. Typically, this calls for legal reform by way of a movement of people arguing against one or a set of laws. Civil disobedience is in direct opposition to conscientious objection, as it requires the direct action of a group of people, as opposed to inaction. It also differs from other forms of protest, as it specifically requires the breaking of the law. The Undying started by demonstrating against more superfluous laws, either those that were severely outdated or, they believed, targeted groups unfairly.

This eventually progressed to the group expanding actions to other laws and beginning to perform violent acts. These acts crossed the line into civil unrest, causing property and personl damage, and becoming increasingly more radicalised. Upon expulsion from their homeworld, these Vargr had transitioned massively from their origins and are now regarded as terrorists by their home, although they prefer to call themselves militant protectors of the Ancients.

MAINSTREAM MOVEMENTS

Often, sophonts find themselves drawn into groups for several reasons. For example, religion, much like philosophy, provides hope and answers that science is not yet equipped to provide. Sophonts, and Vargr certainly, are drawn in because they provide a sense of belonging, a group of people who think similarly and believe in ideals like their own. For those whose ideas stray away from these norms, more fringe groups can arise. Some are insidious, such as the Undying, and others are simply more niche, providing outliers with a place they can go to feel comfortable and, crucially, less alone.

Mainstream movements tend to provide large swathes of people with comfort, often by proselytising vague or unobjectionable beliefs, such as 'murder is morally wrong'. These build in popularity because they aim to reach the widest audience and typically do not contain divisive ideals.

TRANSITIONING FROM THE MAINSTREAM

When groups begin to be ostracised, as with the Undying, they can begin to radicalise in their beliefs and begin to commit dangerous acts. Radicalisation is a process difficult to define, as there are no qualities that make one person more susceptible than another. Typically, it is different for everyone and the time it takes to indoctrinate someone varies heavily.

By putting some of their most charismatic members at the forefront of recruitment and emphasising the need for individual connections, the Undying were able to grow their cause. Despite the fact their views were becoming more radical, they were persuasive in attracting others, particularly the vulnerable.

Internally, the group shifted political and ideological views away from the centre of the spectrum. This process was so gradual that many did not notice the change or had come to accept that, because they were the ones who left their homeworld, that it was everyone else who was at fault. The realities of their self-imposed exile were diminished, explained as a necessity to ensure they did not come to harm.

ACTIVITY ON RRAERRGDZAKAEK

Today, the Undying have maintained their home on Rraerrgdzakaek for 800 years, establishing a government that controls every aspect of life on the world. Throughout this time, they have extended their methods of control to levels that far surpass that even of the Zhodani Consulate and their methods are far more brutal.

At Law Level 4, Rraerrgdzakaek prohibits importing light assault weapons, submachine guns and cloth armour. However, these rules are barely enforced by the Undying in favour of implementing harsher rules that benefit their regime. Because the world is so little visited by IISS ships due to its proximity to the Hierate and relative unimportance, the official profile for Rraerrgdzakaek has not been updated since the Second Survey (1065) to reflect the actual laws of the world.

FORMATION

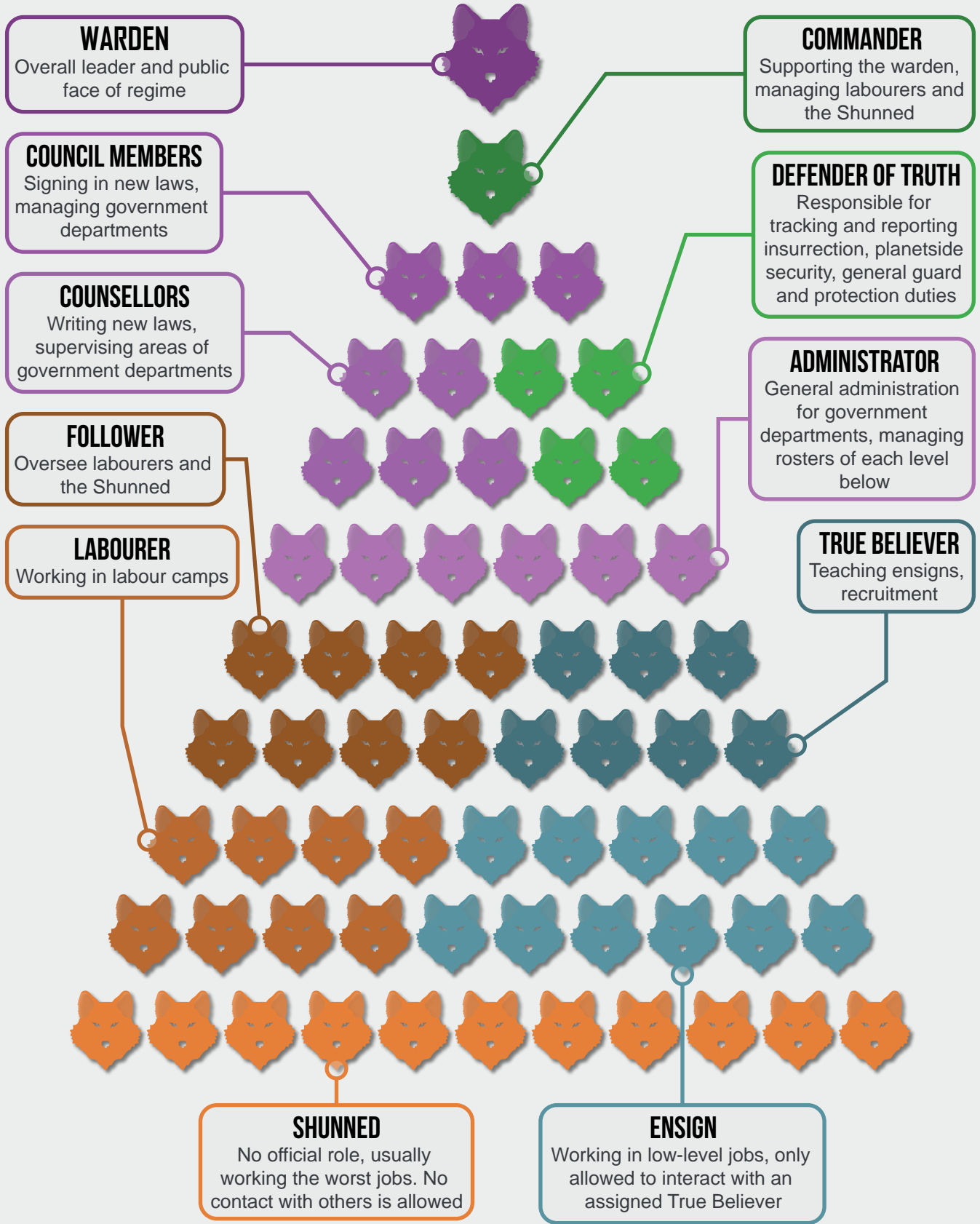
The government is formed through several social strata and a person is rated according to their dedication to the cause. They use a variety of words for members of the Undying, derived from penitentiaries, religious movements, militaries and other governments. Each of these ranks has their own symbol, worn on clothing or, for the highest three ranks, tattooed onto their skin and fur. Lower ranks can opt to have this done and it marks the follower as committed to the faith.

METHODS OF CONTROL

The Undying use a variety of control methods to ensure compliance:

- Shunning those who do not conform.
- Hard labour in camps within the mountains.
- Removal, extortion, torture of close family members.
- Isolation, potentially using stress positions, subliminal messaging and sensory deprivation.
- Deprivation/restriction of food, water, and sleep.
- Control over the dissemination and availability of information.
- Rewards for good behaviour, such as increased rations, rest time and so on.
- Requirement for Credits to be transferred to the Undying upon joining and in perpetuity.
- Young to be raised by guardians other than the birth parents.
- In extreme cases, all family members are punished instead of, or including, the perpetrator.

RANKS OF THE UNDYING









LANDING ON RRAERRGDZAKAEK

As the Travellers enter Rraerrgdzakaek's airspace, their ship will be filled with the sounds of warping metal, alarms peeling out and the acrid smell of burning metals, plastic and more stinging their noses and eyes. Critical systems will be shutting down and the Travellers will feel disoriented and scared. Crashlanding will jolt them around, rattling their teeth and potentially causing further injuries. The Referee can determine how bad the damage is but the Travellers will need to be able to make their ship at least flyable before they can leave the world.

Wherever the Travellers find themselves, they must find Rraerrgdzakaek's jump-capable ships, either to dismantle for parts or use to escape the world. There are several settlements, landmarks, equipment caches and peoples they might encounter whilst planetside, and the Travellers' best bet may be to move as far away from their crashed ship as quickly as possible.

Landing Sites

2D	Locations	Map Symbol
2	Starport	
3	Arronfue	
4	Raggio	
5	Adhgue	
6	Oezzodh	
7	Khaenkeng	
8	Northern Wilderness	N/A
9	Eastern Wilderness	N/A
10	Southern Wilderness	N/A
11	Western Wilderness	N/A
12	Ocean	N/A

LANDING SITES

The tables in this section will allow the Referee to tailor situations the Travellers find themselves in and the people they might meet but can be rolled on randomly instead if desired. Alternatively, the Referee may decide the Travellers can obtain a world map from their ship's library. Each encounter, be it Undying, Wildlife or another, can be found at a variety of locations, which will be marked on the entry.

Wherever the Travellers land, as determined by dice roll or the Referee, they will encounter a variety of dangers, whether from the Undying or the animals, plant life and landscape of Rraerrgdzakaek.

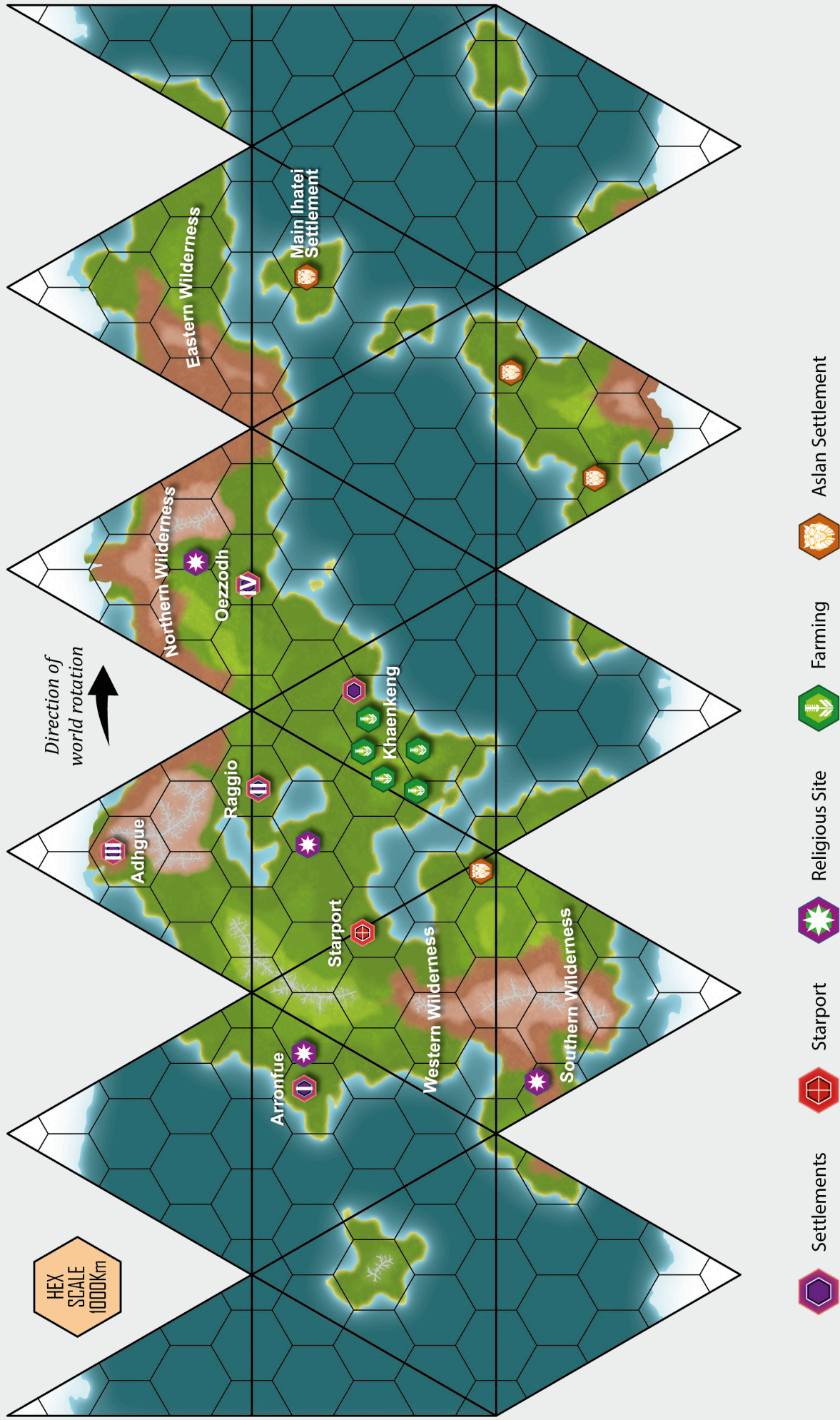
STARPORT

Rraerrgdzakaek's starport is uninteresting but capable. The design is spartan, with no amenities beyond the necessary but there is a large cargo area with many shipping containers of various agricultural goods. A few dozen Vargr are visible at any time, all heavily armed and swamped within heavy robes, large hoods pulled up over their heads. The only fuel available here is unrefined and Travellers will need to refine it before they are able to leave the world.

The central building is kept obsessively clean and paintings and depictions of the Undying are dotted throughout the starport. Despite the typical Vargr preference for bright colours, the entire complex is muted and grey, and the cloying scent of incense is ever-present.

Most starships here are only stationed whilst loading or unloading cargo but there are two or three well-maintained ships within the farthest docking bays from the entrance. These are heavily guarded by squads of Defenders of Truth, working in constant cycles to ensure no one makes their way to the ships. Sometimes, they are lax in their duties and it is common to see one dozing off late at night.

The starport and surrounding area are staffed by Defenders of Truth, council members, administrators, followers and ensigns. Curious fofan (see page 198) are not unheard of.



ARRONFUE

Arronfue is the home of Warden Akhllu and one of the most prosperous areas of Rraerrgdzakaek. The town is supported primarily by fishing and nearby fields benefit from the minerals present in the western ocean. Named after an ancestor, Arronfue has been the principal home of the Ksoeukh family for generations, as the home of the original settlers before they began to spread across the world.

The buildings here are unorganised, and there seems to have been no care for town planning when the site was constructed, but all are well-maintained and kept neat and free of vegetation. There are several large greenhouses and through slightly fogged glass groups of labourers can be seen working. They are overseen by a few followers and work 14–16-hour shifts. Throughout this time, they are subjected to continuous propaganda, played through overhead speakers all hours of day and night.

Most residential buildings house two families, with chores divided between them. Loss of housing 'privileges' is rarely employed here but happens with some regularity in other towns. There are a few stores and trading areas, which are heavily regulated by the world administration, but otherwise the town is a pretty, quiet, affluent area of the world. Compared to other towns there is little foot traffic, with most residents using ghangzu (see page 200) to cross the rocky landscape.

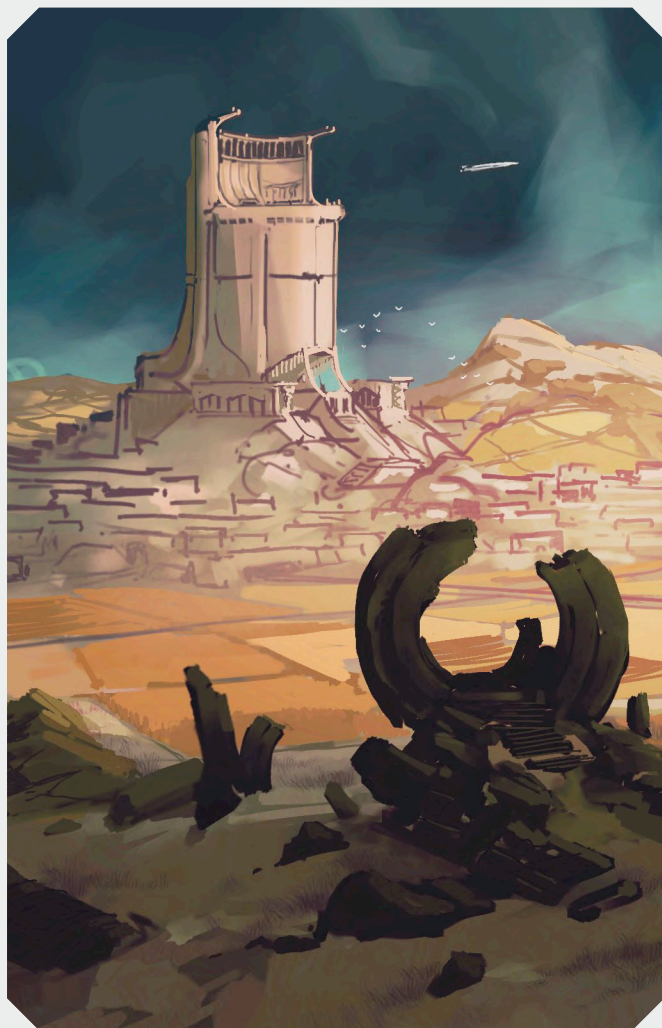
There is a well-maintained jump-capable ship stationed here, hidden within one of the old ruins, some distance beneath the surface of the world. Flying ships from or to the ruins is difficult and all Pilot checks made to exit the path are Difficult (10+) thanks to the tight space and manoeuvring involved. The entrance is nestled in a cove near the shore, the edges of which are raised stone, carved by the ancient hands of a species long gone. Even many of the councils, counsellors and defenders are unaware of this secret ship and it is guarded by an elite few. To ensure continued secrecy, these defenders have their tongues removed and rely on guttural noises to communicate with one another.

Because of the trust the warden has that the regime is secure, Arronfue possesses little in the way of security, with Defenders of Truth being vastly outnumbered by followers, True Believers, administrators and counsellors. This is one of the largest towns on the continent and has a population of 150,000. Nightly shutdowns are common, at least for everyone other than Warden Akhllu, to preserve power in the event of the Ancients' return (according to official propaganda).

This location typically contains Defenders of Truth, several council members, administrators, numerous followers and ensigns, and many labourers. There are a series of farm buildings stretching along the coast, which house agricultural machinery, ghangzu and animals in various stages of preparation as foodstuffs.

RAGGIO

Raggio is the second most populous town on Rraerrgdzakaek and is the primary site of pharmaceutical and biological experimentation. Scientists here have been experimenting with increasing crop yields and animal processing to increase the ratio of edible meat. Raggio is populated by those who have reached True Believer status and higher but there is a large group of the Shunned, who are tasked with deploying new experiments.



The Shunned mostly make their home here because they are, at the very least, guaranteed a meal. There is no such guarantee for their lives, however, and the government has thousands of records of experiments failing, causing death or mutilation to the Shunned. Some experiments hold academic merit but others are little more than convoluted ways to torture the Shunned, in the expectation they will recant their disagreements with the regime and become labourers, working their way to true belief in the Undying.

With a population of around 50,000, Raggio is surprisingly condensed, with most inhabitants living below ground. Council members, counsellors and administrators are given accommodation above the surface.

Pharmaceutical manufacturing started on Rraerrgdzakaek as a result of the world's agriculture, with scientists endeavouring to maximise production. Unfortunately, this quest did not stop at genetically modifying plants and continued until scientists began to play with the genetics of native animals, altering numerous species meant to be more efficient, powerful and pliant. However, very few of these succeeded and as part of the most recent attempt, several gvuzzuez (page 200) have been released into the wild.

ADHGUE

Adhgue is the primary site for new ensigns, where they live and work whilst undergoing training. Permanently staffed with True Believers, who oversee instilling the Undying's beliefs, Adhgue is pretty but sparse, training the new recruits to adapt to spartan lifestyles.

Buildings are short, squat and barely decorated. However, they are more comfortable than the wilderness and provide some protection against animal intrusions. As the first site most ensigns encounter on Rraerrgdzakaek, it is heavily guarded, with ~1,000 Defenders of Truth maintaining constant vigilance.

The people here are constantly stressed, having been subjected to months or years of psychological 'retraining' to accept the teachings of the Undying. As such, they are highly reactive when encountering new people, having had limited chances to speak to interact with others. These limitations were put in place to ensure there were no gaps in their new education and so that they would be less likely to consider alternative ideologies.

ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE

Attempts to leave Rraerrgdzakaek are considered heretical. When a person joins the Undying, they forfeit all wealth to the group. These funds go to the central government and are used to maintain the world and allow the leader to thrive. In total, the group possesses millions of Credits but much of the populace do not see the benefit of these funds. When they are transported to Rraerrgdzakaek, they are cut off financially and socially from anyone they may have left behind. No-one is given access to jump-capable ships except the warden and the commander and attempts to leave are met with unchecked brutality.

Adhgue comprises a series of small buildings and larger barracks, with a mess hall, work areas, guard posts and recreation buildings dotted about. These are always monitored and privacy is an expectation the people here can abandon. They are treated just well enough that they do not revolt but are otherwise kept in a constant state of need, whether for food, water or warmth. The only provider of these things is the administration, keeping them well underfoot.

In addition, Adhgue is the training site for a good portion of Rraerrgdzakaek's ghangzu, with two or three ensigns assigned to each animal. This provides training for the creatures and allows people here some time outside, as well as giving a sense of purpose. Because the ensigns are given the ghangzu when they are young, by the time they are ready to be sworn in as followers, the animal is ready to leave too. This system provides the government with free veterinary and training for their most widely used species of animal.

OZZODH

Oezzodh functions as the centre of government, with tall buildings dedicated to each department, concourses joining them together, and a large, domed building in the centre. The people of Rraerrgdzakaek built atop the ruins of the civilisation that came before, repairing buildings where necessary and expanding them into a centralised complex.

All departments can be found here and the area is staffed and inhabited by counsellors and council members, although higher ranking members live in Arronfue and commute here when needed. It is clear

the Vargr have put considerable effort into making this governmental hub a spectacle to look at, painted according to Vargr tastes, with bright, mismatched colours on every part of the buildings.

Other staff include followers and labourers whose job it is to maintain the grounds and buildings, and to support the workers. It is here the True Believers and Defenders of Truth are trained, albeit for vastly distinct roles. Defenders of Truth are trained in combat and strategy. True Believers are educated in persuasion, granted all the skills they need to recruit new ensigns to the Undying.

This is also the site of most processing and manufacturing plants on Rraerrgdzakaek and is where most food is prepared for transport offworld. In addition, 'survival meals' are made here, long-lasting foods ideal for transport and storage on starships. This is a primary export and the reason for the economic growth the world has experienced in recent years.

KHAENKENG

This is less of a town and more of a series of smaller villages. Khaenkeng is a labour camp, which spreads from the coast to the north and west, with housing, canteens and other amenities built every few miles.

Labourers are sent here to work off debts and misdeeds, and some may never leave the camps before they do so. As the largest percentage of the population, labourers provide free labour and it is thanks to their efforts that the world has extra to trade.

Labourers are not actively harmed, like the Shunned may be if they try to reintegrate into society, but governmental inaction is what causes the most harm. Disease is rife within the camps and there is little in the way of medical assistance. Food and water are limited and some of the labourers may be inclined to go hungry so their loved ones are appropriately fed.

Conditions are dire but the labourers are blinded from realities thanks to the True Believers, followers and Defenders of Truth that supervise them. The workers here may genuinely believe they are working to save themselves and their loved ones from the inevitable return of the Ancients, and this is what keeps them going throughout endless days of manual labour.

ENCOUNTERS

The Referee can choose what the Travellers might encounter during their time on Rraerrgdzakaek or may roll on the Encounters table.

Encounters

2D Encounter

2	The Travellers are met by 1D Defenders of Truth, who begin to question who they are.
3	A lone gvuzzuez has is rampaging through the area, unleashing havoc.
4	Labourers are being moved through the area, escorted by 2D Defenders of Truth and 2D followers.
5	A new declaration, stating all citizens must report for mandatory health screening has been put into effect.
6	The warden is giving a speech in the town centre, calling all citizens to further reject the Shunned and report any strange behaviour or people to the commander.
7	A pack of ghangzu have revolted against the conditions in which they are being kept and are stampeding through streets, crowds and buildings.
8	The Travellers hear a voice (or a signal) calling for help, coming from the waters. A family of untarr have surrounded a fishing vessel and are becoming increasingly agitated.
9	Increased foot traffic near a nest of fofan has aggravated the creatures, resulting in a swarm of 2D fofan attacking the Travellers.
10	Tensions have reached a breaking point and labourers have overwhelmed their guards, swarming the nearby countryside.
11	After a series of breakouts from Raggio, 1D gvuzzuez are nearby and already tracking the Travellers.
12	Commander Azrer Gok has been reigniting the population's fury, setting them against the Shunned. Groups (2D) of Defenders of Truth, True Believers, followers and ensigns are now hunting down the Shunned and anyone else they do not recognise.

Undying Encounters

2D	Role	Purview
1	Counsellor	Writing new laws, supervising areas of government departments.
2–3	Defender of Truth	Responsible for tracking and reporting insurrection, planetside security, general guard and protection duties.
4	Administrator	General administration for government departments, managing rosters of each level below.
5	True Believer	Teaching ensigns, recruitment.
6–8	Follower	Oversee labourers and the Shunned.
9–10	Ensign	Working in low-level jobs, only allowed to interact with an assigned True Believer.
11	Labourer	Working in labour camps.
12	Shunned	No official role, usually working the worst jobs. No contact with others is allowed.

THE UNDYING

The Undying have several places they will typically be stationed or working at but there are some exceptions to this. Sometimes, Labourers are moved from camp to camp, the Warden visits each outpost on occasion and Council Members, Counsellors, Defenders of Truth and Administrators are required to access and attend regions on Rraerrgdzakaek.

Other Roles

Role	Purview
Warden	Overall leadership, public face of regime.
Commander	Supporting the warden, managing the Shunned and labourers.
Council Member	Signing in new laws, managing government departments.



LANDING ON RRAERRGDZAKAEK



WARDEN AKHLLU KSOEUKH

Akhllu Ksoeukh was raised in the belief and expectation that he would one day become ruler of Rraerrgdzakaek, as the eldest child of the main branch of the Ksoeukh family. Most of his education involved how to act as ruler and how to approach the sometimes-tense political situation on Rraerrgdzakaek. Under his rule, Rraerrgdzakaek has made strides in solidifying the beliefs of the Undying, ensuring unwavering loyalty to the teachings and beliefs of the cult. In addition, there has been a strict rise in the amount of the population being Shunned and, eventually, being sent for use as manual labourers in the agricultural districts. They are now little more than labour camps but most are glad to be there, working for the redemption of their transgressions against the Undying.

He is adamant about shoring up support of the masses and subversive in the ways he gains and maintains this support. Through his network of supporters, committee members and administrators, Akhllu has managed to create a world whose people live in constant fear and

WARDEN AKHLLU KSOEUKH

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE	
Vargr			Male		—	
TRAITS			—			
STR	4	INT	9	SKILLS		
DEX	8	EDU	8			
END	10	CHA	12			
				Admin 1, Advocate 2, Art (write) 1, Broker 0, Carouse 3, Deception 0, Diplomat 2, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Leadership 3, Melee (blade) 1, Melee (natural) 1, Persuade 1, Profession (politician) 2, Survival 0		
WEAPONS			Autopistol (3D-3), Rapier (2D)			
ARMOUR			Cloth (+8)			
AUGMENTS			Neural Comm (TL10)			
EQUIPMENT			Portable Computer (TL10), Medikit (TL10), Metabolic Accelerators x2			
ROLEPLAYING NOTES						

Be aloof; the Warden was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and simply does not understand the concerns of the common people. Wave off any moral concerns and look down on the Travellers wherever possible.

vigilance. Whilst the core beliefs of the Undying have not changed in any meaningful way since the time of Lovueng Ksoeukh, the group's messaging has become more insistent, declaring the need for preparation in the face of calamity.

COMMANDER AZRER GOK

The current commander, Azrer Gok, was an obvious choice for Akhllu. The pair were raised near one another and she has functioned as his right hand since they were pups. Known for her cruelty, Azrer excelled in militia training and originally served as a leading member of the Defenders of Truth before transitioning to her new role. Her father was close friends with Akhllu's and the pair were raised with the expectation that they would one day be paired, and she would rise to become the 'mother' of the Undying. In the years since, however, Azrer proved unable to have children and has thrown herself instead to becoming the leading military figure for the regime. She is typically stationed at Raggio or one of the labour camps, preferring to maintain order rather than vying for political power.

COMMANDER AZRER GOK

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Vargr	Female	—
TRAITS		
STR	11	INT 5
DEX	9	EDU 8
END	6	CHA 10
SKILLS		
Carouse 2, Deception 1, Diplomat 2, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Leadership 2, Melee (blade) 3, Melee (natural) claws 3, Persuade 1, Profession (politician) 2, Survival 2		
WEAPONS		Autopistol (3D-3), Rapier (2D)
ARMOUR		Cloth (+8)
AUGMENTS		Neural Comm (TL10)
ROLEPLAYING NOTES		
Azrer is mean, even when it does not make much sense to be. If she can make a joke or comment at someone else's expense, she will.		



LANDING ON RRAERBGZAKAEK



COUNCIL MEMBER

Council Members rise through the ranks of the Undying over the course of years and these are by far the most grizzled section of Rraerrgdzakaek's society. This is the stage they receive a neural comm, allowing them to communicate more easily with one another and the Commander and Warden above them. These members are well and truly involved with the Undying and responsible for the vast majority of government day-to-day operations, including the management of everyone below them. Council Members are the top of government, orchestrating the passing of bills and bearing a good portion of responsibility for the worsening conditions on Rraerrgdzakaek.

COUNSELLOR

Counsellors are the lowest form of government worker on Rraerrgdzakaek, middle management with some extra steps. These Vargr write the laws of the world, to be signed by Council Members, and their work focuses on specific areas of government departments. For example, whilst a Council Member may be the head of finance, it is the Counsellors who do most of the work beneath them. They form most government and only Vargr may progress to and beyond this stage. Within the lower ranks humans are accepted but there has never been a human Counsellor or Council Member.

COUNCIL MEMBER

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Vargr	—	—

TRAITS	—
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STR	8	INT	10	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	8	Admin 3, Advocate 2, Art (write) 1, Diplomat 1, Investigate 1, Leadership 1, Melee (blade) 1, Melee (natural) 1, Profession (politician) 2
END	5	CHA	8	

WEAPONS	Rapier (2D)
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AUGMENTS	Neural Comm (TL10)
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ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Keep a placid smile on your face, even when telling the Travellers some horrific information. Forced serenity is key, especially when discussing the Undying's treatment of labourers and the Shunned. Offer the Travellers food and drinks to keep them in place.

COUNSELLOR

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Vargr	—	—

TRAITS	—
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STR	7	INT	10	SKILLS
DEX	4	EDU	10	Admin 2, Advocate 1, Deception 0, Diplomat 1, Language (Trokh) 1, Leadership 0, Profession (politician) 1, Streetwise 0, Survival 0
END	5	CHA	7	

WEAPONS	Rapier (2D)
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ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Smile constantly, with wide eyes. Be extra nice to the Travellers and constantly offer to show them around. If they say no, keep offering anyway. Attempt to convince them to join the Undying.

DEFENDER OF TRUTH

Defenders of Truth encompass all military, security and other combat-related personnel on Rraerrgdzakaek. Whilst there are no distinctions in title, each member has different patches on their uniform signifying branch and perceived rank. Branches are treated equally but have different responsibilities when it comes to the protection and security of Rraerrgdzakaek: Military, Security and Intelligence. To become a Defender of Truth requires undergoing gruelling training, which sharpens physical fitness and mental fortitude.



DEFENDER OF TRUTH

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Vargr			—	—
TRAITS			—	
STR	9	INT	5	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	5	Animals (handling) 1, Athletics (endurance) 2, Carouse 0, Deception 0, Explosives 0, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Leadership 0, Medic 0, Melee (blade) 1, Melee (natural) 2, Tactics 0
END	8	CHA	6	
WEAPONS			Autorifle (Auto 2), Body Pistol (2D), Rapier (2D)	
ARMOUR			Cloth (+8), Combat Armour (+13)*	
EQUIPMENT			Medikit (TL10), Mobile Comm	
ROLEPLAYING NOTES				

Refer to the Ancients continually and to yourself as the 'Chosen'. Talk about the redemption the Travellers are missing and end it with a grim smile.

*Only used by military personnel when in active combat

ADMINISTRATOR

Administrators are glorified data entry/analysts. They manage the population of Rraerrgdzakaek, record citations, organise departments including the government and military, and are left alone to do their work. This is one of the most comfortable roles on Rraerrgdzakaek, as they are typically forgotten by higher-ranked members of the Undying but feared by those lower.



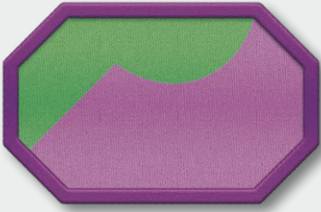
ADMINISTRATOR

SPECIES	GENDER		AGE
Vargr	—		—
TRAITS	—		
STR	4	INT	9
DEX	6	EDU	6
END	6	CHA	7
SKILLS			
Admin 0, Advocate 0, Broker 0, Carouse 0, Deception 0, Diplomat 1, Melee (natural) 1, Steward 1, Survival 2			

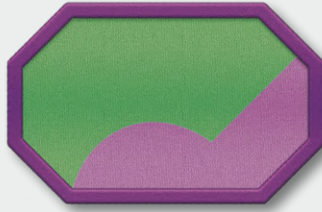
ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Seem surprised if any of the Travellers talk to you. Mention that you are unsure if you should be talking to them. Make lots of small hand movements, acting flustered. Do not look the Travellers in the eyes.

DEFENDERS OF TRUTH



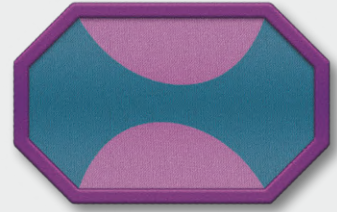
Military – Private



Military – Lance Corporal



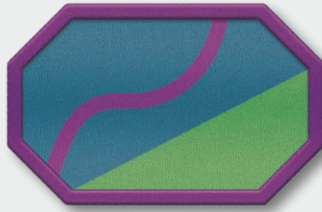
Military – Corporal



Military – Sergeant



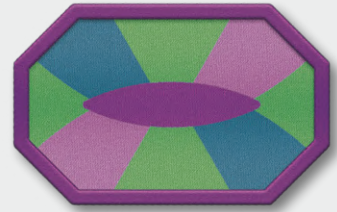
Military – Officer



Military – Lieutenant



Military – Captain



Military – Major



Intelligence – Agent



Intelligence – Staff Agent



Intelligence – Special Agent



Intelligence – Intelligence Officer



Intelligence – Intelligence Analyst



Intelligence – Assistant Chief



Intelligence – Chief



Security – Security Officer



Security – Armed Security Officer



Security – Public Safety Officer



Security – Sergeant



Security – Senior Officer

TRUE BELIEVER

True Believers are both the strength and weakness of the Undying, as they are primarily responsible for the education and recruitment of new Ensigns. This gives them a privileged position, as they are the only members able to leave the world but, in return, they are heavily watched and their families are often kept as collateral. They are charismatic individuals and whilst this aids recruitment and retention, it could become problematic if they speak out against the Undying en masse.



TRUE BELIEVER

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE	
Vargr			—		—	
TRAITS			—			
STR	6	INT	8	SKILLS		
DEX	5	EDU	4	Advocate 0, Carouse 2, Deception 1, Gun Combat 0, Survival 0		
END	7	CHA	8			
WEAPONS			Body Pistol (2D)			

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Act as charismatically as possible. Make references to nearby worlds when it makes sense to do so – True Believers are the most up to date with outside information. Smile, be friendly and attempt to make the Travellers like you.

FOLLOWER

These Undying proved their loyalty to the cause by surrendering everything they had previously earned before their arrival at Rraerrgdzakaek. They have each sworn to protect and uphold the world's ideals and welcome the Ancients' return. At this stage, Followers undergo more targeted behavioural therapy, allowing them to find the role that might best suit their future: Administrator, True Believer or Defender of Truth.



FOLLOWER

SPECIES			GENDER		AGE	
Vargr			—		—	
TRAITS			—			
STR	7	INT	7	SKILLS		
DEX	6	EDU	5	Animals (handling) 1, Electronics 0, Gun Combat 0, Melee 0, Profession (farmer) 1, Streetwise 0, Survival 1		
END	5	CHA	5			

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Keep your eyes down; do not make eye contact with the Travellers. Speak softly and talk about the importance of following the teachings of the Undying. Do not give out information and try to hide as much information about the cult as you can.

ENSIGN

SPECIES				GENDER		AGE	
Vargr				—		—	
TRAITS				—			
STR	7	INT	6	SKILLS			
DEX	8	EDU	7	Deception 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat 0, Melee 0, Persuade 0, Streetwise 0, Survival 1			
END	6	CHA	5				

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Do your best impression of an underpaid and overworked soldier. Restrict your movements, expressions and the emotion of your voice.

FARMING TOOLKIT

These simple tools are used by farmers to sow, maintain and harvest crops, in the absence of agricultural machinery, or alongside it. Small farmers and home growers both swear by these kits, containing a hand trowel, weeding fork, bulb planter, spade, fork, rake, hoe, secateurs and heavy-duty gloves.

Item	TL	KG	Cost
Farming Toolkit	3	4	Cr250



LABOURER

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Vargr			—	—
TRAITS			—	
STR	9	INT	4	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	5	
END	10	CHA	3	
Animals (handling) 2, Carouse 0, Drive (track) 1, Mechanic 0, Melee 0, Navigation 1, Profession (farmer) 2, Survival 1				

WEAPONS Dagger (1D+2)

EQUIPMENT Farming Toolkit

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Constantly look around as if you are afraid of being watched and take a second to respond as if you are evaluating the reactions to what you are going to say. Act tired and hurried but do your best to be kind. Labourers are used to being downtrodden and will not use others to climb the ranks.

SHUNNED

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Vargr			—	—
TRAITS			—	
STR	5	INT	6	SKILLS
DEX	5	EDU	7	
END	7	CHA	2	
				Animals 0, Athletics (endurance) 1, Carouse 0, Deception 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Medic 0, Melee (natural) 1, Persuade 0, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Survival 2

WEAPONS Dagger (1D+2) or Snub Pistol (3D-3, Zero-G)

EQUIPMENT Survival Kit (TL10)

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Use as few words as possible. Be cautious, with lots of deferential movements. If the Travellers are kind, be kind back; if they are rude, become paralysed with fear.

ENSIGN

Ensigns are the rank those on Rraerrgdzakaek begin at, as the population can be called to form a militia if needed. New recruits are brought to the world by True Believers and it is here their indoctrination is completed, through a series of tests and teachings. Whilst Ensigns, they are only allowed to communicate with True Believers, a group of whom are permanently stationed in Adhgue to ensure the ensigns understand the unique future of the people of Rraerrgdzakaek, encouraging them to take their role in the return of the Ancients.

LABOURER

Labourers are the bottom class of Rraerrgdzakaek's society, comprising those who are being punished for one crime or another. These workers are kept in labour camps and provided basic rations. As agriculture is the main export of Rraerrgdzakaek, these Labourers can work under the hot sun of the world, and a good many either shave their fur or succumb to heatstroke in the warmer months. Despite their situation, most still believe in the teachings of the Undying and have an air of reticence for their wrongdoings.

SHUNNED

The Shunned exist outside the formal rank structure of the Undying, not technically members whilst also not allowed to leave the world. Shunning is a tool used to make wrongdoers regret their actions but is typically used when assigning someone to hard labour does not 'fix' them. This practise can last for several years, with the Shunned individual losing contact with friends and family during that time. The Shunned are marked with tattoos and all know to avoid them lest they be Shunned themselves. They are survivalists, foraging, hunting and fishing for food, and forced to live outside of traditional society. Their isolation can sometimes drive them insane.

WILDLIFE

The wildlife of Rraerrgdzakaek is varied and mostly non-hostile, but there are a few creatures the people here must be aware of. Large ocean-dwelling animals swim in the deeper waters and small lizard-like creatures wait along the coasts for unsuspecting visitors. Survival, during initial settlement, was difficult for the Vargr but throughout the centuries they have adapted to life here.



Ensign



Labourer



Shunned

Untarr

These large Chondrichthyes live in the deeper waters of Rraerrgdzakaek and are drawn by the smell of blood and sweat. During the earlier years of settlement, a good number of Vargr died when swimming further out in the waters of the world. With numerous rows of pointed teeth, they attempt to disable victims by embedding their teeth in flesh and dragging them to the depths before tearing them apart. They are large, but nimble, and have been known to leap from the waters to swamp small boats.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Untarr	90	10m
Skills	Athletics (strength) 3, Melee (natural) 4, Recon 1, Survival 1	
Attacks	Bite (6D)	
Traits	Armour (+2), Camouflaged, Fast Metabolism (+2), Heightened Senses, Large (+5)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Killer	

Fofan

A subspecies of Squamata, fofan are reptilian creatures with two large front-facing legs, which can be used to drag their bodies forwards. As such, they are slow creatures but their sharp teeth are capable of shredding skin to the bone. Their bite is venomous and fast-acting, capable of knocking a Traveller out within minutes.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Fofan	15	3m
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 2	
Attacks	Bite (1D)	
Traits	Amphibious, Camouflaged, Fast Metabolism (+1), Poison (10+, 2D, 1D minutes)	
Behaviour	Pouncer, Carnivore	



Zoeth

One of a few land mammals native to Rraerrgdzakaek, zoeth feed on small creatures and bugs. These were one of the first creatures domesticated by the Vargr and are sometimes walked around the fields by labourers to ensure crops remain pest free. Their skin is covered in tufts that look remarkably like clouds, making them a favourite amongst younger children.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Zoeth	30	2m
Skills	Recon 3, Survival 0	
Attacks	Stomp (2D)	
Traits	Large (+1), Slow Metabolism (-1)	
Behaviour	Reducer, Carnivore	

Llaien

The Llaien are a species of flying fish native to Rraerrgdzakaek, making their homes in shallower waters. These creatures use their large front teeth to dig into soft ground, where they lay eggs inside a burrow to be later fertilised. However, they still require air and must 'fly' above the surface to breathe. Their meat, when cooked, is tender and flaky, with a slight buttery taste, and is a favourite amongst the people of Rraerrgdzakaek.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Llaien	2	1m
Skills	Fast Metabolism (+3), IR/UV Vision	
Attacks	Nibble (1)	
Traits	Small (-3)	
Behaviour	Intermittent, Herbivore	



Ghangzu

Ghangzu are a mammalian species used on Rraerrgdzakaek as pack mounts. Their key role is the transportation of supplies between towns and they are typically driven by labourers. They are a hexapodal species and capable of folding their body in half. This makes them adept at traversing the landscape, as they can effectively contort themselves to its shape to scramble up and down cliffs, mountains and other terrain features.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Ghangzu	80	5m
Skills	Athletics (strength) 2, Survival 1	
Attacks	Stomp (5D)	
Traits	Armour (+1), Echolocation, Large (+4), Slow Metabolism (-2)	
Behaviour	Grazer, Herbivore	

Gvuzzuez

These creatures are not native to the world but created by scientists at Raggio. They are the first generation of a new species intended to replace the ghangzu, by increasing their number of legs to make them faster. They have been released into the wild so they can be monitored but they have been wreaking havoc on people and animals alike, thanks to the teeth they were given from the untarr.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Gvuzzuez	60	8m
Skills	Bite (4D)	
Attacks	Athletics (endurance) 2, Melee (natural) 4, Recon 2, Tactics 0	
Traits	Armour (+1), Fast Metabolism (+1), Large (+3)	
Behaviour	Killer, Carnivore	



LOCATIONS AND EVENTS

Throughout their time on Rraerrgdzakaek, the Travellers will encounter various situations and locations. These are detailed here for ease of use and the Referee may include or ignore them as desired. Each can be weaved into the others and decisions made in one can affect results of others.

One of the first questions the Travellers should ask themselves is whether they will be on the side of the Undying or the people it has subdued into compliance. This will affect how most events play out, placing the Travellers in opposition with at least one section of Rraerrgdzakaek's society.

When the Travellers land on Rraerrgdzakaek, they will encounter murmurs of discontent arising from the Ensigns which, if stoked, will spread to the Labourers. These two groups are the largest on Rraerrgdzakaek and throwing away the beliefs of their superiors will grant them freedom, which they have not known for years. In addition, should the two groups throw off the yoke of their leaders, they will be freed from the pseudo-slavery in which they live. In response, the leadership of the Undying have been calculating ways to diminish any hope of resistance, including setting stricter limits on their free time and, as a result, their ability to meet and organise a revolution.

The Travellers must determine which side of the conflict they will be on, whether solidifying the rule of the Undying or helping the Ensigns and Labourers overthrow them.

ENSIGN'S REVOLT

Despite being above Labourers and the Shunned in the hierarchy of Rraerrgdzakaek, Ensigns sometimes become conscious of the mistreatment they endure during training. Proper training and surveillance can rectify this and those who go against the rules of the Undying can be managed more appropriately within labour camps. However, small signs of dissent may go unnoticed for some time.

The Ensigns in Adhgue have been hosting small meetings outside their dormitories to discuss their experiences. While their living conditions are comfortable for Rraerrgdzakaek, they are dismal compared to what many Ensigns are used to. In addition, with training lasting upwards of 12 hours and continual education in the teachings of the Undying, the Ensigns have little time unfettered by propaganda.

After weeks to months of dissidence, some Ensigns will have reached breaking point, at which time they will begin to mobilise. When the Travellers encounter the Ensigns, this tension may have combusted into full-blown revolt.

The Travellers must first decide which side of the conflict to take. Defending the interests of the Undying is likely to gain them brownie points with the government. If this relationship is massaged, the Travellers may land lucrative contracts in the future. Should the Travellers wish to help the Ensigns, particularly if they have already assisted the Shunned, this would set them in greater opposition to the government.

Whichever side the Travellers choose will affect more than just this revolt. By working with the Undying, they will alienate the rest of the population, decreasing the likelihood of assistance from newer recruits or those dissatisfied with the regime. However, they will gain the respect of a planetary government in return, bringing with it lucrative odd jobs that could keep them in work for several years.

Around 1Dx10 Ensigns are revolting, with 2D Defenders of the Faith attempting to stop them. If the revolution succeeds in favour of the Ensigns, their ideas will spread worldwide and attempts will be made to recruit Labourers. This will swell their numbers and allow them to take a control of the world government, freeing themselves from the oppression of the leadership of the Undying.

THE *IHATEI*

A small island is home to a settlement inhabited by *ihatei*. Over the past decade or so, they have moved northward to the same continent as the Undying. They have since established three other communities on Rraerrgdzakaek, each inhabited by a small number of Aslan. These second sons have made their home on the world for several reasons, most notably access to fresh foods that can be used for trade. They are the second highest purchaser of agricultural goods, after Ealriysilrai.

They welcome outsiders in typical Aslan fashion, meaning they must meet expectations of propriety and ritualistic conduct. Their strict code of honour requires visitors to conform to their standards lest they become discourteous. If the Travellers fail to apologise for offending any Aslan, they will be challenged to a duel. However, the Aslan here are, thankfully, more forgiving than most, so the Travellers are less likely to cause offence.

Although the *ihatei* will offer the Travellers a safe place to rest with basic supplies, they are unlikely to assist in a manner upsetting to the Undying, and will not offer

the Travellers permanent haven or a way offworld. The Aslan present an opportunity for Travellers to make contact with *ihatei* from a minor Aslan clan, who may offer work to the Travellers in the future in the form of jobs, contracts or trade deals.

KHAENKENG FARMS

Dotted across the world are farms where the people of Rraerrgdzakaek toil to grow enough food to transport offworld. Supplying Ealriysilrai with fresh produce is no mean feat and labour camps are the only way for the Undying to keep up with this demand. Khaenkeng is a primarily agricultural region, with each farm employing up to 4Dx10 Labourers, overseen by 2Dx10 True Believers and Followers and guarded by 1Dx10 Defenders of the Truth.

When approached, each worker in the fields dutifully ignores the Travellers unless they attempt to speak to them. Then, the Travellers are swarmed by a group of Labourers, and when they notice that work has been interrupted, a True Believer comes to investigate. This group is not hostile and will continue talking with the Travellers, attempting to persuade them to join them on a visit to other towns and cities.



Sheer numbers are working against the Travellers here, potentially with over 400 people taking notice and a good portion of that surrounding them. There will be little of interest for the Travellers here, unless they are particularly keen on agricultural equipment. However, relationships between each stratum of the Undying should give them insight into the operation of the world.

Most Labourers here have shaved fur, covered in welts and scratches, and are sunburnt across most of their skin. The True Believers and Followers are slightly better appointed, although intentional deprivation of luxuries seems standard. Their clothes are tattered but clean and each has the same spark of meanness within their eyes. As they look over the Travellers, a successful Average (8+) Recon check will have them noticing the greed with which the True Believers look at the Travellers as the cultists implore them to join the group in a bigger settlement.

The True Believers' role is to persuade people to sign over their freedom to the Undying and they are very, very persuasive. If the Travellers resist, the True Believers will call in the Defenders of the Truth to assist. Whilst they will not force the Travellers to convert, if they resist, they risk upsetting the carefully controlled regime of the Undying.

HOME OF THE SHUNNED

Thanks to the ostracisation of the Shunned, they have taken to living together in deplorable conditions. Making their homes in the ruins of the civilisation that came before, the Shunned sometimes band together to survive. Although there are few natural predators, the Undying releasing experimental animals such as the gvuzzuez (see page 200) has left the Shunned in far more danger. When they band together, they are far less likely to succumb to the madness common within their social group.

This home is a rarity, a place where several Shunned have congregated and formed a miniature society of their own. They live as a collective, whiling away their years in isolation together and forming lasting bonds. Some have elected not to leave the area once their punishments are over but it is far more common for them to depart and forget those who helped them throughout their more torturous years.

2D Shunned can be found here at any one time, although only a few will make their presence obvious if discovered by the Travellers. To spot others, an Average (8+) Recon check should be made to pick

them apart from the dingy walls and dim lighting. The Shunned are friendlier than might be expected, although they will warn the Travellers not to interact with their solitary kin. Vargr are a highly social species and extended periods of solitude and social stigma have made lone Shunned act with impunity. They are known to roam the wilderness of Rraerrgdzakaek, attempting to 'cleanse' themselves of their sins so they might be welcomed back into the Undying.

Although they have little to offer the Travellers, the Vargr will invite them to share a meal; a warm broth filled with scraps of meat and vegetables that smells slightly acrid. They are surviving off the scraps of the Undying, left without fields or farms to grow food. Instead, the meat comes from the fofan (page 198) the Shunned manage to hunt down. Prepared improperly, they can cause delirium and sickness in even the most iron-stomached Traveller.

Should the Travellers wish, they may attempt to convince the Shunned to join them in their attempt to leave the world. The Shunned live worse than second-class citizens and the risks of leaving the world may outweigh the relative ease of staying. These Vargr have seen the worst of what the Undying have to offer, with some having lost limbs or having been beaten as punishment, all accustomed to working long hours of manual labour to ensure the world's trade goods continue to flow.

Offering the Vargr travel offworld will cause a split within the community and convincing the more optimistic to leave their home will require a Very Difficult (12+) Persuade check (1D hours, INT). The Travellers may also attempt the following:

- Average (8+) Medic check (1Dx10 minutes, EDU) to treat the injured.
- Difficult (10+) Carouse check, to raise the Vargrs' morale.
- Average (8+) Leadership check (SOC) to rally the Shunned around the Travellers.
- Average (8+) Language (Gvegh) to speak to the Shunned in their native language.
- Difficult (10+) Mechanic check (INT) to fix a broken generator the Shunned have been attempting to repair.

The Effect of these actions can be applied to the Persuade check to convince the Shunned to leave. The Referee can change the specifics of these actions as needed to best suit the Travellers.

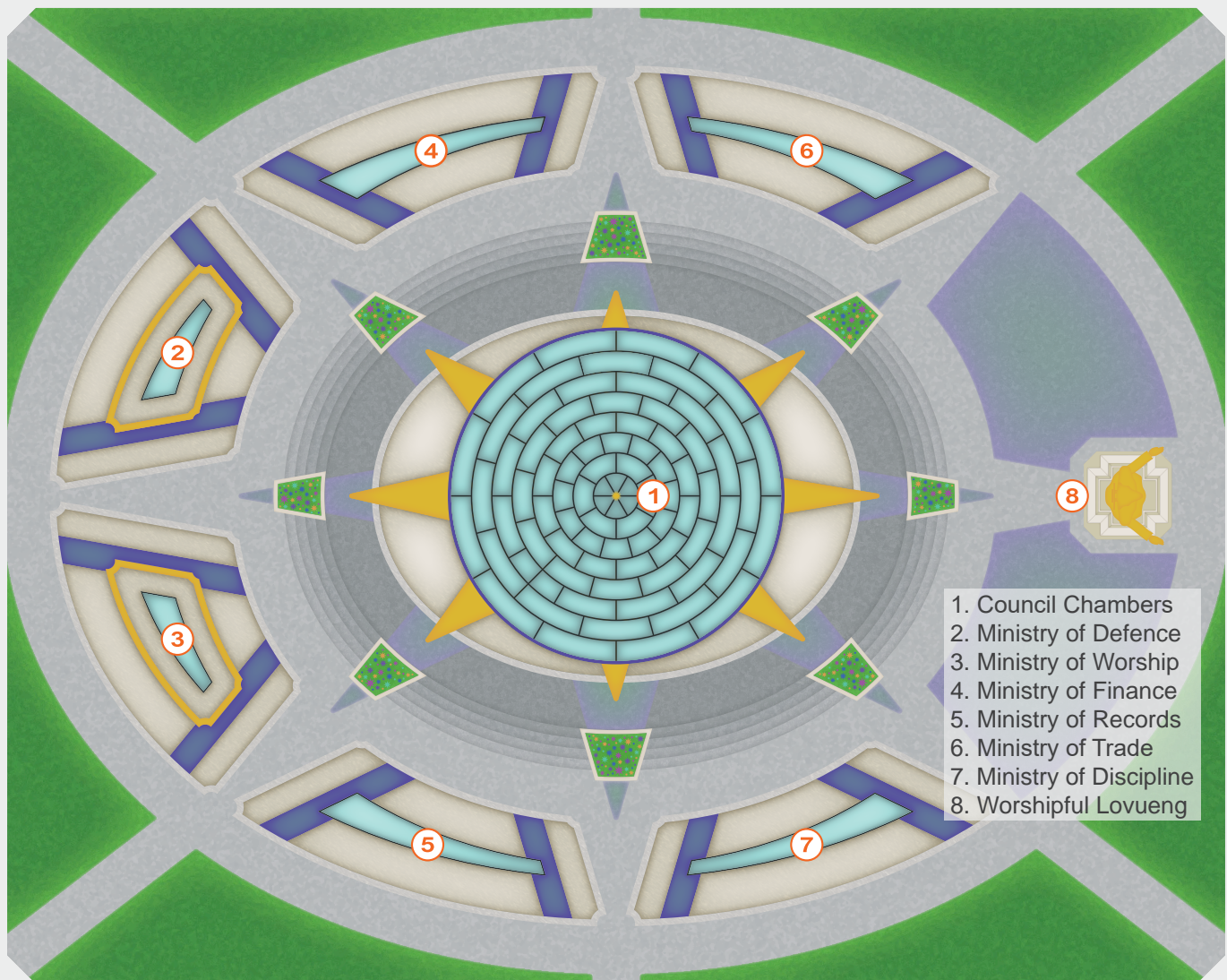
Should Vargr join the Travellers, they will be able to show the Shunned that the universe, outside of Rraerrgdzakaek and the Undying, is not an entirely bad place. If the Travellers enjoy this work, further adventures can be made from rehabilitating the Shunned and warning nearby systems of the Undying should they make it offworld.

OZZODH CENTRAL OFFICES

The government of Rraerrgdzakaek is a charismatic dictatorship headed by Warden Akhllu Ksoeukh, supported by Commander Azrer Gok and numerous Council Members. Oezzodh functions as the centre of this government, with different buildings focused on each state department. These roles are some of the most comfortable, with the higher ranks of government granted an assortment of amenities.

Within the mess of municipal buildings is the central office, the official hub of government. This is a sprawling complex, as each Council Member has a base in the building and their own sites. The Travellers can find the council chambers, records office, treasury, meeting rooms, dining rooms and other offices inside. First, however, they must get through the gates.

It should be immediately obvious to the Travellers that they are not welcome here. The building is heavily guarded, with cameras watching each entrance and exit. It is a grand structure both inside and out, and Vargr are milling about outside, dressed ostentatiously in robes of varying shades, fingers and ears covered in ornate jewellery. These are Council Members, each in charge of a different government department. Their advisors surround them and, provided the Travellers have not been spotted, the groups continue talking amongst themselves.



Sneaking around this group will be complicated, requiring Average (8+) Recon checks and Difficult (10+) Stealth checks on the part of the Travellers. If, at any point, the Travellers managed to find robes like the Undying, or are Vargr capable of passing as a Follower, these difficulties may be reduced, or the Travellers may be able to bluff their way inside.

However they manage it, the Travellers will have just walked into the central information hub of the Undying, including their beliefs, practices and wrongdoings. How much of this information will interest the Travellers depends on the group but interesting artefacts, Credits, equipment and weaponry are available inside. Finding these will require more successive Difficult (10+) Stealth and Recon checks, allowing the Travellers to move throughout the building. If these fail, the Travellers may have to fight against 4D Defenders of the Faith, potentially encountering the Warden and Commander.

ENSIGN DORMITORIES

As the primary training site for new Ensigns, there are over 20 dormitories in Adhgue equipped to support recruits. These dormitories are sparsely decorated but far more comfortable than Labourers or the Shunned are afforded. Whilst Ensigns live here, the Undying attempt to make them as comfortable as possible, albeit keeping communication limited. Within these initial stages of recruitment, the aim is to make new members feel optimistic about joining the cult and witness the 'bounties and luxuries' the Undying offer.

The primary focus of teaching is the importance of patience, as the Undying have been awaiting the return of the Ancients. This manifests throughout the society of Rraergdzakaek, with Labourers being patient for the end of work and the Shunned being patient for the end of their punishment, for example. To this end, the Ensigns are taught methods of seeking patience, such as meditation.

Each dormitory sleeps up to 100 sophonts, with bunk beds large enough to comfortably fit a range of Vargr. These rooms seem more like basic military housing than anything else and each Vargr is given a trunk to store their belongings. During the day, these dormitories are empty, with Ensigns either travelling the world to visit important sites, at work in offices or elsewhere on training exercises. This would be the easiest time for the Travellers to break in and explore, although they will still encounter 1D Defenders of the Faith guarding the site.

Hidden Items

2D	Item
2–3	Mobile Comm (TL8), Cr500
4–5	Cloth Jacket (+5)
6–9	Cr1000
10–11	Camera (TL8), Cr1000
12	Snub Pistol (3D), 2x Magazines, Cr5000

Should the Travellers visit at night, it will be harder, as Vargr are within their dormitories or returning from the canteen, and it will require Very Difficult (12+) Recon or Stealth checks to manoeuvre past them. The Travellers can find some items of interest if they check each bunk area and chest properly, hidden under pillows, in secret drawers inside the chests, tucked inside mattresses and more. The Referee can roll on the Hidden Items table to determine what the Travellers find.

In addition, should the Travellers encounter any Ensigns, they may have the opportunity to question them about their past lives. After they have been initiated as Followers, the Undying are advised to no longer explain their histories and remove all traces of their previous lives. While Ensigns are in training, many share these stories with True Believers. In most cases, their histories are used to extort or threaten them into membership of the Undying. For some examples, use the Ensign Backstory table (see page 206).

WARDEN'S MANOR

Located midway between Raggio and Oezzodh, Warden Akhllu Ksoeukh's home is resplendently built within the surrounding foothills. Compared to other houses and dormitories, this manor is spacious and comfortable, designed to suitably accommodate the ruler of Rraergdzakaek. During the day, the manor is often completely unoccupied, save for the Warden's family. Few guards are posted here to preserve privacy and because little protection is needed from the indoctrinated public.

Akhllu's wife, often called 'the Mother,' spends most of her time working on administrative tasks. She can be credited with most of the Undying's policies, including many indoctrination methods and prefers to assist her husband from the privacy of their home; however, most remain unaware of her role within the cult. Instead, she is regarded as a paragon of the Undying's beliefs, such as assisting her husband, raising their children and extolling the imminent return of the Ancients.

Ensign Backstory

2D	Name	Backstory
2	Oung Zagdhoer	They are a journalist from Ealriysilrai who joined the Undying as research for an expose on the group but have no way of leaving Rraerrgdzakaek.
3	Aez Ongsuerst	After years of ridicule over their belief, a True Believer approached them while waiting to catch a train. The True Believer convinced them that Rraerrgdzakaek would answer their problems.
4	Gaerkfa Urdhouth	Gaerkfa has loose family ties to the warden and was convinced to reunite with their distant relation.
5	Reo Thaegkfeng	An offworlder, when Reo was passed over for an important promotion for the third time, they left their homeworld searching for work with greater meaning and came across the Undying.
6	Ueks Aeokskhangsa	Ueks' child ran away to join the Undying several years ago and they have been looking for them ever since.
7	Dinngagksi Aerrda	After being homeless for several years, offers of a warm bed and three meals a day seemed like a godsend.
8	Aeokh Ighnoeng	Aeokh developed a drug addiction in their early twenties and after 10 years this started to take a toll on them. When approached by a True Believer who promised the Ancients would heal them upon their return, Aeokh could see no better option.
9	Egsououeng Khaerka	They joined the cult to gain fame and notoriety, believing they are destined to be the next warden.
10	Ursro Ghaekknun	Ursro ran away from home at 16 and has lived in the dormitories for three years. They have been slow to learn the philosophies of the Undying and are concerned they will be removed or worse, shunned.
11	Zarrgsau Kokh	Zarrgsau's family is deeply religious but due to the prominence of the True Believers on the internet and holovid shows, they became more radical, eventually leaving to join the Undying.
12	Geakh Gaez	Geakh is on the run from their previous pack leader and Rraerrgdzakaek seemed like a good place to hide.

Traditional gender roles are loosely enforced worldwide, with female Vargr encouraged to bear young and raise them with the ideals of the Undying. These mothers are regarded highly within the society of Rraerrgdzakaek, as they are responsible for the creation and education of the next generation. The Mother takes this role seriously, organising groups with other parents and discussing the Undying's teachings, necessity of future generations and more. When the Travellers visit the house, it is more than likely one of these groups will be meeting here.

Provided the Travellers have not yet alerted the Undying to their presence, joining the group will require some subtlety, such as disguising themselves as women using a Difficult (10+) Stealth check or

explaining they are interested in learning more about women's role on the world with an Average (8+) Persuade or Diplomat check.

Through participation in the group and their conversations, the Travellers will be able to uncover a wealth of knowledge about the Undying and their beliefs. This includes the return of the Ancients, the necessity of 'cleansing' sin through labour, traditional gender roles, preparation for a universal catastrophe and more.

At night, Defenders of the Faith patrol the area every 1Dx10 minutes in groups of 1D. In addition, if Warden Akhllu is home, this will increase the chance of the Travellers being arrested, relocated to labour camps or, at worst, executed.



ENACTING THE LAWS

Throughout their time on Rraerrgdzakaek, the Travellers will witness the laws of the Undying being enforced. Some of these are minor, such as isolation, shunning or removing a limb, but others are far more gruesome. The death penalty is alive and well on this world and breaches of planetary or religious laws are harshly dealt with. The Undying's belief in a cataclysmic event that will precede the Ancient's return requires them to be militant and breaches of their ideology are dealt with similarly.

Crimes on Rraerrgdzakaek may seem banal to the Travellers but they bring uncompromising results. To determine what punishments the Travellers witness, the Referee should roll on the Sentencing table.

The following DMs apply:

DM+1 if the Travellers are in any unnamed town or settlement

DM+2 if the Travellers are in Khaenkeng or Adhgue

DM-1 if the Travellers are in Raggio or Oezzodh

DM-2 if the Travellers are in or near the home of an Undying who is a True Believer or above

Sentencing

2D	Sentence
0-2	Isolation for 1D days
3-4	Incarceration for 2D weeks
5-8	Assignment to a labour camp
9-10	Removal of a limb
11-12	Shunning for 2D months
13-14	Execution

RAGGIO ESCAPEES

Alongside their experimentation with genetically modified crops and livestock, scientists at Raggio have been working on control methods. Most of these involve changing the structure of the brain, specifically the amygdala. These experiments have been focused on creating more impressionable members of the Undying, making them more susceptible to suggestion from government officials and propaganda.

Some of the Shunned have been drafted for these experiments. Neurosurgery is complex and Rraerrgdzakaek's surgeons had been studying control methods for years before attempting sophont experimentation. This did not, however, mean that their experimentations worked without failure. The Shunned are seen as expendable in the grand scheme of things and a few going missing is of little consequence to the Undying.



EXPERIMENTAL SHUNNED

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
—			—	—
TRAITS			—	
STR	12	INT	4	SKILLS
DEX	10	EDU	6	Athletics (strength) 2, Deception 1, Gun Combat 0, Melee (unarmed) 3, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1, Survival 2
END	7	SOC	1	
WEAPONS			Handspikes (2D)	

The problems begin when the Shunned escape their containment areas, either from hospitals, observation rooms or holding cells. The central government covers up this issue, which reinforces the idea that the Shunned are criminals who need to be separated from the rest of society. When performing surgery on a brain, one wrong move can cause irreparable damage; the Shunned who have undergone these treatments are suffering and in desperate need of help.

Damage to their brain has resulted in them attacking at random and their amygdalae no longer process fear as they normally would. Because of this, they are unrepentant in their violence, not taking time to take cover, unflinching when hit and crazed in their attacks. If encountered, they will be roaming in groups of 1D and will almost immediately attack the Travellers.

GVUZZUEZ ATTACK

The gvuzzuez (see page 200) were never meant to be released from Raggio, at least in their current condition. When the scientists first released them, they were thought to be ready to survive in the wild and breed. However, adding additional legs made the gvuzzuez faster than expected and the extra teeth have turned these creatures into predators. Rather than exist on a stringent diet provided by the Undying, they have turned to other means to obtain food.

These creatures have been staging planned attacks on Raggio and the surrounding towns, exhibiting surprising intelligence. Hunting in groups of D3, the gvuzzuez attempt to corner their prey, working similarly to packs of wolves, before subduing and consuming them. They have a surprising amount of endurance, capable of running their prey to exhaustion over hours or days, if necessary. However, they prefer simpler prey that can easily be caught and killed.

EXPERIMENTAL SHUNNED

Thanks to damage done to the amygdala, these Shunned are violent and seeking easy prey to maul. Their damaged memories have left them unsure of who operated on them, causing them to blindly attack anyone they encounter. In recent months, several attacks have been suppressed by the Undying and a lack of survivors makes the news easy to bury.

THE ESCAPE

To escape this world, the Travellers will need to commandeer one of the jump-capable ships on Rraerrgdzakaek, located at the starport and Arronfue. They will have to make their way across the world to do so, potentially battling the Undying and wildlife along the way. If the Travellers convinced the Shunned to join them, any checks should be more difficult, as they will be smuggling Vargr as well as themselves.

The Undying will become aware of their presence, whether from having seen their vessel crashlanding, or having encountered the Travellers in the wilds. Visitors are not allowed, especially without an escort, and the Travellers have broken this cardinal rule. The Warden and Commander are aware that, should word of the conditions on Rraerrgdzakaek get out, trade will be hampered and this is not something they are willing to allow.

REINFORCEMENTS

The ruling elite of Rraerrgdzakaek will pass descriptions of the Travellers throughout the ranks and reinforce the main regions of the world appropriately. Stopping the Travellers, or recruiting them, will gradually rise to the top of their priorities.

To determine if the Travellers encounter anyone when they enter or linger in a region, roll on the Reinforcements table. The Referee may choose whether the Travellers encounter Defenders of Truth, True Believers or both, at their discretion.

Reinforcements may not immediately be hostile towards the Travellers, and may instead focus on trying to recruit them before any other steps are taken (although by rescuing any Shunned, being caught in the Warden's home, or any number of other infractions, the Travellers may have already caused the Undying to become hostile). This should

be roleplayed by the Referee instead of relying on checks and the Undying will promise the Travellers freedom and wealth beyond imaginings. They will use any weaknesses they can exploit. Should the Travellers agree, they will be taken to become labourers, until they genuinely repent past actions.

FINDING A SHIP

The starport has a warehouse at its boundaries; although only containing spare parts and tools, it is home to several jump-capable starships. These are sometimes used by True Believers when travelling to proselytise but are stored in the event the Warden and Commander need to make a quick escape. Despite their continuation of the beliefs of the Undying, they are aware that, should conditions of the world become publicly known, they would encounter resistance from nearby interstellar powers.

Rraerrgdzakaek has no capability for starship production, instead working to maintain some of the vessels their original settlers used. They are now severely outdated, being more than 800 years old, and are poorly maintained but working.

When entering either the starport or Arronfue in search of starships, the Travellers will need to sneak past 2D Defenders of Truth with a Difficult (10+) Stealth check (2D minutes, DEX). Accessing the starships to fly will require general starship-related checks, such as Pilot and Astrogation, but dismantling them will be more difficult, not to mention time consuming. To dismantle the parts, the Travellers must succeed at either a Difficult (10+) Mechanic or Average (8+) Engineer check (6D hours, EDU).

Reinforcements

Region	Encounter (1D)	Defenders of Truth	True Believers
Starport	2+	2D	2D
Arronfue	2+	2D	1D+2
Raggio	2+	2D-2	1D-2
Adhgue	3+	1D+2	2D
Oezzodh	3+	1D	2D
Khaenkeng	4+	1D-1	1D-1
Wilderness	3+	1D	D3



The ships the Travellers find are old and need proper maintenance but are still in (mostly) working order. They were designed to transport members of the Undying to their new world and then take them to nearby systems to spread the faith. Ullgza ships were a limited run and the class was abandoned shortly after the Undying departed their homeworld.

This vessel was used as an outlier ship, following alongside the main fleet and transporting fewer civilians than the others in the small fleet. To determine any vessel's eccentricities, use the Spacecraft Quirks table on page 188 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, applying 1D+6 quirks.

TL12

		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	Streamlined, 300 tons	—	18
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 1	4.5	0.9
M-Drive	Thrust 1	3	6
J-Drive	Jump 3	27.5	41.25
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 195	13	13
Fuel Tanks	J-3, 4 weeks operation	92	—
Bridge	Small	10	0.75
Computer	Computer/10bis	—	0.24
Sensors	Civilian Grade	1	3
Systems	Cargo Crane	3	3
Staterooms	Standard x3	12	1.5
Software	Intellect	—	—
	Jump Control/3	—	0.3
	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre	—	—
Common Areas		6	0.6
Cargo		128	—
Total: MCr88.54			

Crew

Captain, Pilot,
Astrogator, Engineer,
Maintenance

Hull: 120

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr7378/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr88.54

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems

60

Manoeuvre Drive

30

Jump Drive

90

Sensors

1

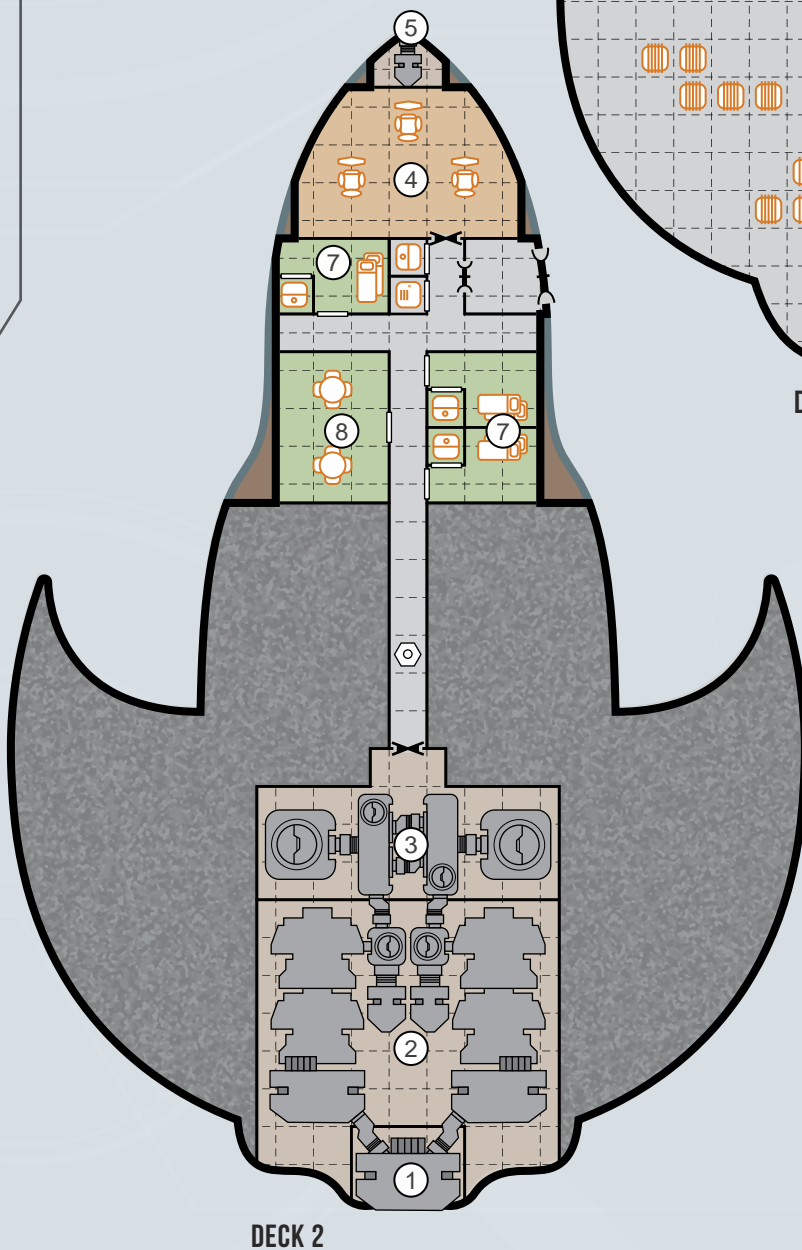


ULLGZA-CLASS TRANSPORT

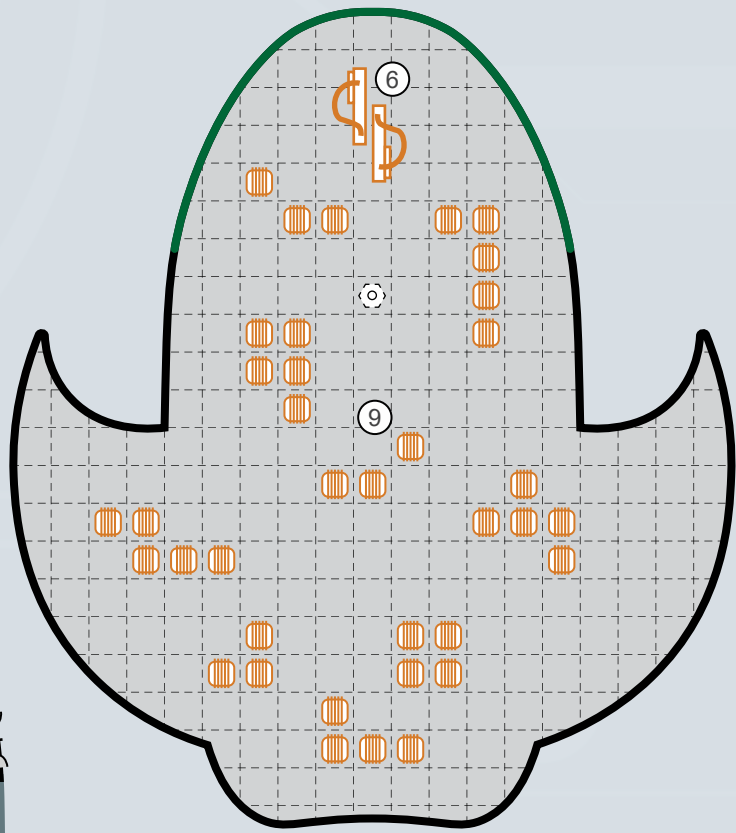
1 square = 0.5 Tons

LEGEND

1. Manoeuvre Drive
2. Jump Drive
3. Power Plant
4. Bridge
5. Sensors
6. Cargo Crane
7. Staterooms
8. Common Area
9. Cargo



DECK 2



DECK 1

REPAIRING THE SHIP

Should the Travellers decide to gut any vessels they find on Rraerrgdzakaek, it will take time to remove, transport and implant the pieces from the other ships. To do so will require Engineer, Electronics, Mechanic and potentially Athletics (strength) checks and take upwards of a day. The Travellers will also need to hide from the Undying as they travel across the world with their newly acquired parts and may have to retake their own ship from any prying Undying who discover it.

DEPARTING RRAERRGDZAKAEK

When the Travellers have either repaired or procured a ship, their next task will be to leave the planet. This should be simple, provided their ship is well-repaired or does not have too many quirks.

If the Travellers try to determine if a ship is in a proper state to launch, they should make a Difficult (10+) Engineer check. The result of this check should determine how well-maintained/repared the ship is and any negative Effect used as a DM in any following Pilot

and Astrogation checks. For the Travellers to reduce any negative Effect of this check, they should continue working to repair the vessel as best they can for 1Dx10 minutes before trying again.

Actually flying away from the planet requires a Difficult (10+) Pilot check if setting off from Arronfue. Astrogation checks are as normal.

WHAT NOW?

Once the Travellers have left the world, they will find themselves in a system bordering the edge of the Great Rift, with a population of angry cultists at their back. Whilst they are unlikely to have earned many Credits from this adventure, they will have picked up equipment from any Undying they encountered, from which they might be able to claw some cash back in resale value. However, the Travellers are free to explore the Rift or the Hierate, as they please. If the Travellers completed other actions, such as rescuing the Shunned, they may have to take other consequences into account when planning their next steps.



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TRAVELLER®

G R E A T R I F T A D V E N T U R E S 1 – 5

Deep in the Great Rift lie ancient mysteries, strange alien races and human cultures who have not seen offworld contact in centuries. Portside rumours speak of giant creatures capable of interstellar flight, and of starship wrecks belonging to no known race. *Great Rift Adventures 1–5* provides a set of adventures that can be inserted into any ongoing campaign set in this region of the Charted Space universe, while showcasing the Great Rift and some of the worlds within.

Inside you will find:

Islands in the Rift: The Travellers are sent to Amondiage in the Old Islands subsector to pick up a starship. Their mission is to take it to Zuflucht for transfer into Imperial space ‘behind the claw’ in Deneb or the Trojan Reach. However, the task is not simple; the ship is not sitting on a berthing pad at Amondiage – it is in fact on an entirely different world and not in a flyable condition...

Deepnight Endeavour: The Travellers board a derelict exploration vessel to locate fuel. With no way to get home, they discover there are survivors, and that the ship has taken aboard a malevolent entity seeking to reach an inhabited planet. The Travellers might simply try to escape or they could attempt to destroy the entity, but they will face opposition from the original crew as well as the entity itself.

Flatlined: The Travellers wake up from cold sleep after nearly flatlining, and find themselves in a sinking ship on an unknown world. They must escape their predicament, make their way to safety and hopefully find their way off the forlorn planet.

The Lost Garden: The Travellers visit Garden, an out-of-the way world that was once the homeworld of the Salika. The Travellers will have to delve into an ancient research facility to find the artefact their patron seeks and try not to bring the entire compound crumbling down upon themselves in the process.

The Undying: The Travellers journey to Rraerrgdzakaek in the Great Rift and into the arms of a Vargr doomsday cult who are hellbent on not letting them leave the world. The Travellers will need to work out a way to get off the world alive, avoiding the dangerous wildlife and the roving groups of cultists.



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