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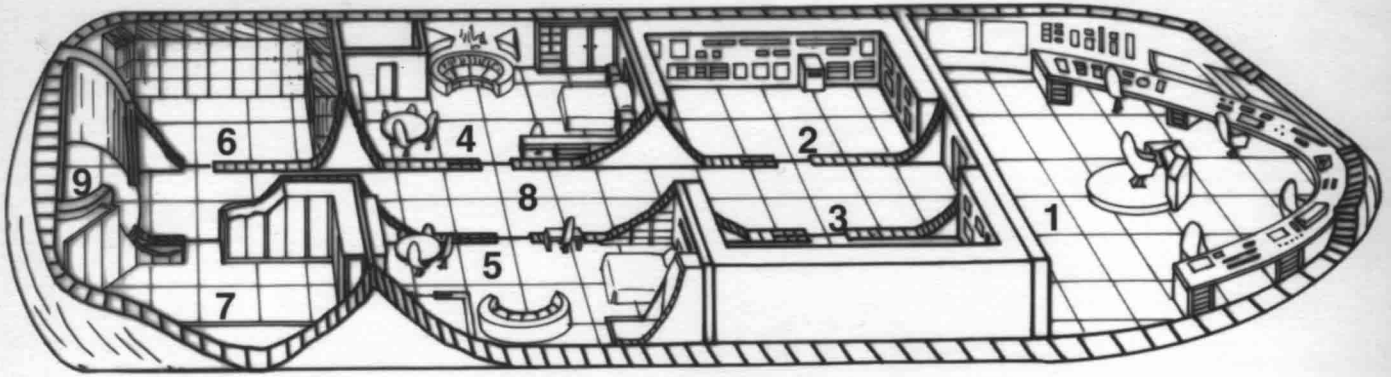
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Into the Horde Wall



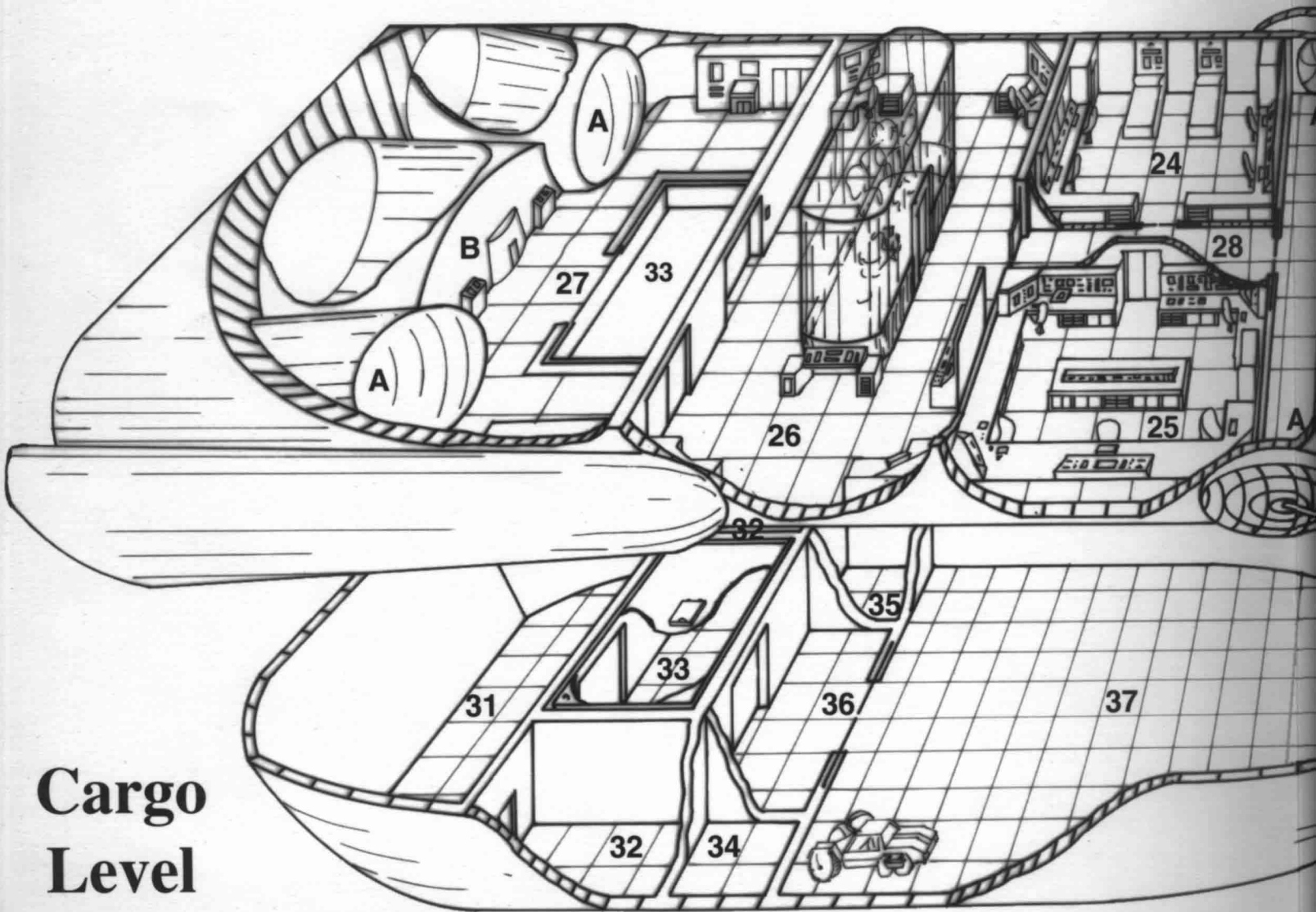
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Level 1

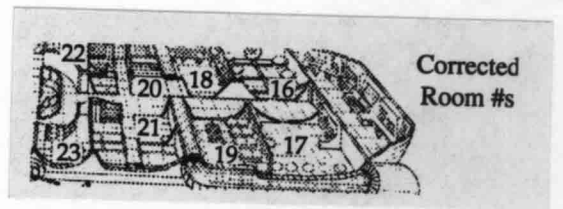
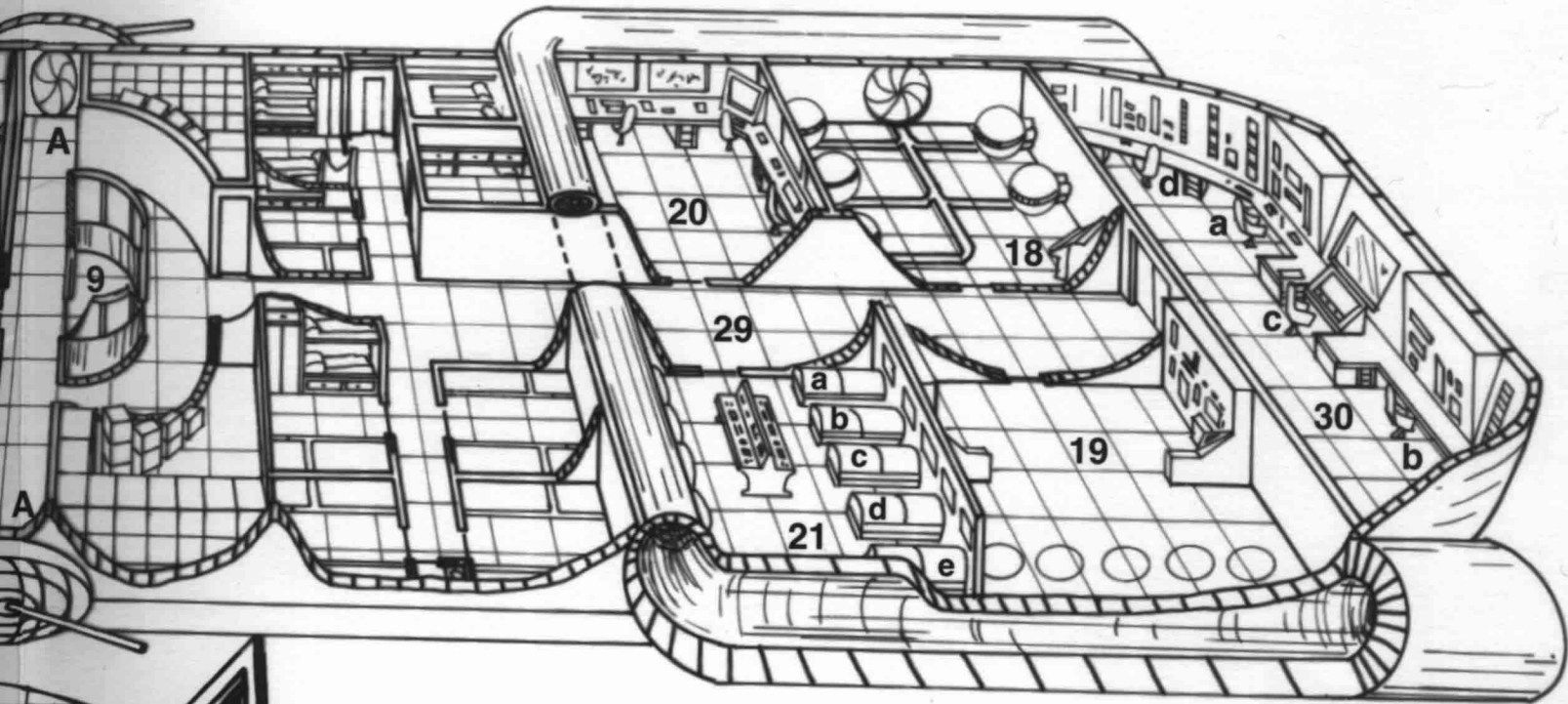
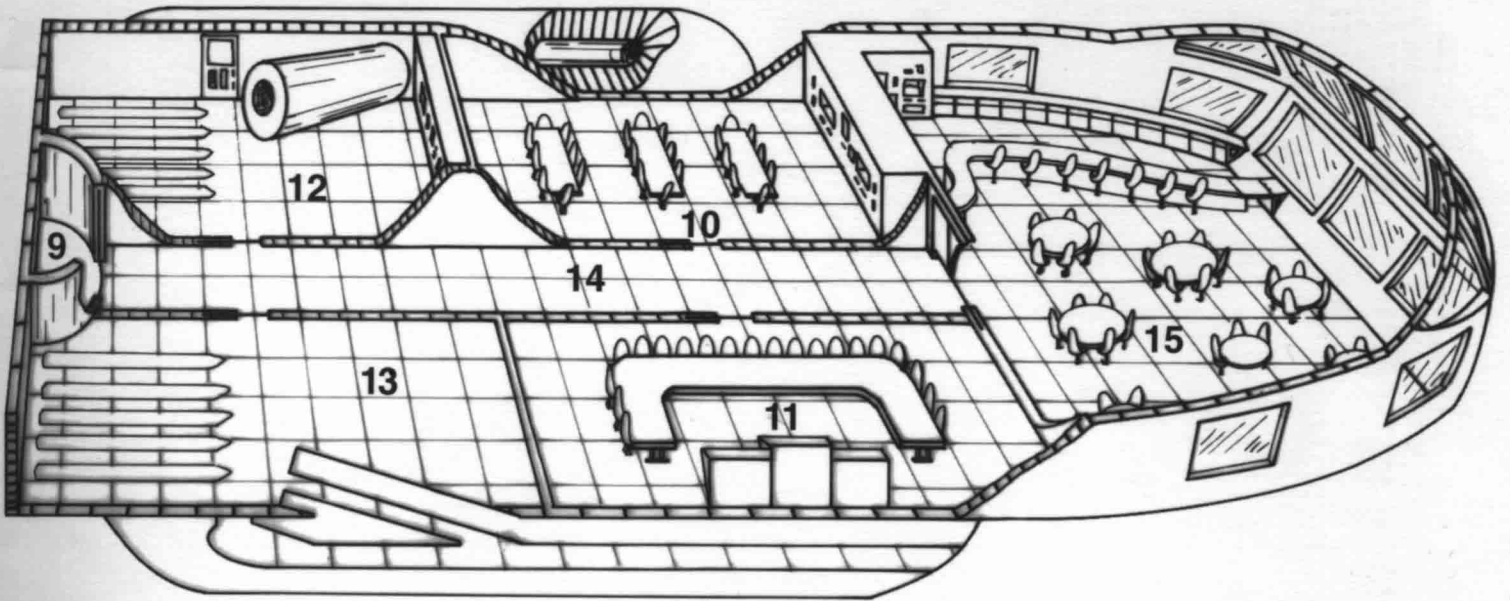
Skarak "Science" Ship

Level 3



**Cargo
Level**

Level 2



2nd Adventure of the Darmoth Series

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ISBN 1-56974-010-0

Product #11001

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Introduction

Setting the Scene

The cave was dark, very dark, Tomar was lost in the endless mazes of tunnels running underneath the surface of this miserable sand swept planet. He had been told that there was something down here, something that could help him and his team escape from this hell hole. So with that in mind he went further into the dangerous depths of the caves under the high cliffs. Some tunnels would end in flat dead-end walls, while others would open up into large gaping pits. Tomar searched every passage that he could for two days, and still found nothing. He had fought countless battles with the alien creatures that infest this diseased planet, and he had searched miles of caves but all to no end. He was beginning to wonder if there really was any salvation from this planet.

The ache in Tomar's bones was growing with every step he took, so he entered a large room and set down to rest. He laid his head back and closed his eyes. At first he thought the strange feeling in his body was the euphoria one experiences just before slipping into unconsciousness, but the feeling kept growing and it was making every scale on his body quiver. Perhaps his battle trained danger sense was attempting to warn him of more aliens coming for another attack. Forcing himself to his feet, ready for action, Tomar stared at the entrances into the room, ready and waiting but nothing came. Then a sound to the right, and Tomar instinctively spun around thinking that the attack must be coming from there. But, before him was a pulsating pillar of stone that sent chills all throughout his body. As Tomar stepped toward the obelisk, he began to realize that the sensations he was feeling was not so much euphoria, but power. Power like he had never encountered in his 20 years of space exploration. Could this be their salvation? Could this be the item for which he sought? It must be. The feeling of victory pulsed through his body rejuvenating his aching muscles and refreshing his spirit.

Without warning, all hopes of victory were shredded as intense pain rippled from the back of his head. Falling to his knees, he desperately clawed at the creature which wrapped itself about his head and began to enter into his psyche. No, NO!, he would not be defeated is such a way, he ... would ... force himself ... to His last thought was of his team, broken, and stranded—alone on Vergra-7.

Welcome to Adventure

Into The Horde Wall is the second adventure in the Guild Space™ Setting. It chronicles the beginning of the horde invasion into the outer edges of Guildspace. The Guild was warned by the Kryll in the first adventure, *Shakna — Assault on the Hive*, of the coming horde. Now experience the horrors of the hideous creatures of which the Kryll were prophesying.

Read the entire adventure before running it—there are many suggestions for effective GMing and roleplaying, and it is important that you keep the overall plot in mind as the adventure progresses.

History and Background

Almost 7000 years ago there was a massive invasion by an alien force that almost destroyed all civilization in the Trinium Scape™. This was known as the Great Chaos Wars. Mighty empires fell in single swoops to the numberless ranks of advancing aliens. No world in its path was spared, no civilization was offered quarter, and no creature was shown pity.

The struggle was not faring well for the defenders, until the five dark races banded together.

The Shanask were the first to come forward and offer their help to the fleeing races of the galaxy. They used mystical powers to destroy entire legions of the aliens, but even they were pushed back. Then came the Quantum Knights who numbered only eighty but fought like ten thousand. The knights were an undead necromantic race who used mystical powers and ancient technologies. They were, as many other knightly orders, religious, disciplined, elite fighters on an important quest. They agreed to help in exchange for knowledge and equipment to aid them in their ultimate goal. Even with these two great powers, the Shanask knew they could never win. So, they called upon the Zodar. Zodar are an entity form with unlimited knowledge and abilities, yet they often seem oblivious to their surroundings. A single Zodar would often fight thousands of aliens alone and occasionally call upon a power not unlike the Sorce to destroy entire planets with a single blow.

Together with the other two dark races (of which little is known) they began to push the aliens back. It took centuries, and the powers used destroyed entire systems of planets and stars. The very fabric of time and the Scape™ were stretched to the limits of existence, but finally, in the end, with the combined energies of the five dark races they locked out the main powers behind the advancing aliens. The five races then spread throughout the universe to hunt down and slay what remained of the invading forces.

An now... they're back!

In *Shakna — Assault on the Hive*, your Dha team set into motion a series of events which will change Guildspace forever. Both the Shanask and Kryll races were represented at an emergency meeting with the Guild Council. After only eighty hours of discussion, both races were accepted into the Guild and, in an unprecedented move, assigned as guardian races of Dha. The Kryll hive-ship was transferred into orbit around Dha Prime, and the occupants of Glory can now look up and count six moons orbiting their secret base.

But, these events, as unusual as they seem, were nothing compared to a decision made by Admiral Nelos (supreme leader of Dha), Marshal Ketuvorra Morrax (commander of the House of the Guides) and President Val Markala (leader of the Great House). These three individuals elected to send a secret Guides reconnaissance mission deep into the outer rim to determine the validity of the Kryll and Shanask warnings: mission destination—the Vegra System; mission commander—Cyberlord Tomar!

Plot Summary

Early in the morning Admiral Nelos, supreme commander of Dha, is awakened by the disheveled voice of Marshal Ketuvorra Morrax. In a few brief sentences Morrax informs Admiral Nelos that the Vega Guides team has failed to report in during their last three scheduled communicaies. Due to the possible gravity of the situation, Val Markala himself has authorized Nelos to send a trained Dha team to investigate, with a personal request that members of the heroic team involved in the Kryll-Hive incident be included if possible. Mission classification: top secret — admiral clearance.

Within hours Nelos dispatches her personal assistant, Dracan Cyber Lord Dremoch, as mission chief. Nelos feels Dremoch is especially qualified to arrange and brief the team as Tomar and Dremoch were brothers.

After being briefed by Dremoch, the team flies their mission assigned vessel to rendezvous with a superdreadnaught from the seventh fleet. A wormhole is opened taking them to a point within the sixth fleet's patrol. Here, they are scheduled to rendezvous (after several days travel through hyperspace) with a sixth fleet vessel which will open a long range wormhole rimward, into the Vega System.

On the way to their second rendezvous (with the sixth fleet vessel), they are forced out of hyperspace and will likely become involved in a ship-to-ship altercation between a kurg/skrak vessel and an Empire ship charadeing as a House of the Star patrol ship.

Most likely the Dha team will end up boarding the kurg/skrak vessel and encounter their first horde alien. Shortly thereafter, a detachment from the sixth fleet will show up and arrest the situation.

From here the team will proceed as planned and enter the wormhole to the Vega System.

Eventually the team will land on Vega-7 (the seventh planet) and begin their search for the missing Guide team. As the Dha team explores the sand and wind swept planet in their ground vehicle, several strange creatures will be encountered. Finally, the team will locate one of the Guide's abandoned bases hidden in a shallow cave beneath a stone ledge. Here, they will discover several Guide log entries and some of the horrors of Vega-7 will be revealed. It is also likely that the Dha team will discover and free an ancient being who fought in the Chaos Wars of old — the Quantum Knight, Lord Lokoth. Even more importantly (at least in the team's eyes), they will uncover ground coordinates to the Guide's ship.

The first alien attack will be encountered on the way to the ship. After the battle, the team will locate the ship and enter it. No crew will be found, and the ship will appear to be abandoned.

In order to install an autopilot uplink (to fly the vessel in-tow back to Dha), the main engines will have to be restarted from lower engineering. Here, the team will stumble upon an alien nest in which many of the Guide's crew are encysted. As combat erupts, the team will realize that victory is hopeless, and they

will be forced to flee. Once back on their own ship, the team will discover that it is under attack. In order to escape the planet, the team must succeed in taking back their own vessel.

Once the team leaves the planet's surface, the nightmares of Vega-7 will seem to fade as the planet diminishes on their rear view screen. Back on Dha Prime, the team will be debriefed by Admiral Nelos and staff, and life will appear to return to normal.

However, later that night, as the team relaxes in their quarters, a sudden darkness will grip the night as Shakna (of the Shanask) sends minions to transport the team back to Vega-7. The next morning, the team will awaken amidst another nightmare. They will be in their transport vehicle back on Vega-7. A large black crystalline shard will reveal that Shakna has sent them on a personal quest, to locate and retrieve the Zodar entity. The team may either comply or die.

The Zodar is located deep within one of the alien's underground cave complexes (which is remarkably similar to the interior of the Kryll hive ship). After adventuring through countless tunnels, the team (if they survive) will locate the chamber of the Zodar. By using the crystalline shard, the Zodar's tomb can be opened and one of the most powerful entities in existence will be released. A hasty withdrawal from the alien caves will ensue, and the team will likely jump into their transport to flee the area. Escape from the planet can be accomplished in one of two ways — recapture the stranded Guide ship or locate a Sorce sphere sent by Shakna.

Either way, a crafty team will manage to once again return to Guildspace. Here, Shakna will meet the team and all will be explained (including a good deal of interesting history concerning the Great Chaos Wars).



GM Tips/Notes

Quantum Knight: If the party does not encounter the quantum knight or fails to free him, run the rest of the adventure as described (except eliminate all references to the quantum knight). Then, when the PCs are sent back to Vegra-7 by Shakna, they will be forced into freeing the knight. Thus the adventure runs fine either way.

Psi-Bands: Some of your characters may be wearing psi-bands found in *Shakna—Assault on the Hive*. If so, you need to be aware of their side effects. Anyone wearing a psi-band will be first choice targets by horde creatures. If slain, the psi-band will be removed, slipped on the horde creature and used against the PCs. If attacked by a mindspider, however, psi-bands will provide +1c immunity to having their minds taken over.

Stretching the Adventure: This adventure spans nearly a month of in-game time. You can easily stretch the amount of adventuring you get, by fully mapping out the alien cavern complex discussed at the end of this adventure, adding in your own encounters and areas. Also, if the Dha team decides to track down the rest of the Guide team, you could easily have fun exploring half of the planet. There are even hints of ruins on some of the other Vegra planets.

Encounter Balance: During game play, be sure to increase or decrease the number of aliens to suite the abilities of your party. You should also adjust encounter ratings up or down to achieve the desired effect. Keep this in mind: there is no such thing as too difficult or too easy of an adventure, only GMs who don't adapt to their parties. You are in control of all elements which define difficulty, use them. This directly ties into the next tip.

Ad-libbing: Remember that the MetaScape™ Game system was designed for ad-lib GMing, be sure to use it. For example, at one point the team will be trying to circumvent a repulsor field. If your party includes a Shanask, they might just walk through the wall and turn the field off. To have more fun, you may decide that the repulsor field was enhanced by one of the Guide team's Shanask consorts such that it has a 25 Dif resistance to being bypassed by the *Sorce*. Never allow the printed words in an adventure to limit the possibilities. Use your imagination everywhere! Treat this adventure simply as a framework upon which to build. If you need to give the Quantum Knight a special power, then do so. If you want to add or delete an encounter, then it is your prerogative.

NPC List

The following section lists those creatures likely to be encountered during play, along with their likely maximum numbers per encounter. Those marked with an asterisk are unique to this adventure, and not listed in the *Setting Guide*. This list is provided so that you can look up information and prepare miniatures and chits for the upcoming encounters.

Note: the listed ratings are for average encounters only. They should be adjusted to suit the party's abilities and the encounter's purpose.

Ships/Automatons/Vehicles

(the PCs' ship and vehicle follow below)

| | | |
|---|----------------|-------------|
| 1 | Empire Ramship | 12*/20S*/20 |
| 1 | Skrak Frigate | 16/12S/20 |
| 4 | Androids | 8/6/16 |
| 1 | A-Frame | 10/40/4 |
| 2 | Battledroid | 10/24/8 |
| 1 | Scout Walker | 12/16/8 |
| 2 | Robodogs | 16/8/4 |

Space & Others

| | | |
|----|-----------------|------------------------|
| 8 | Anthroposslaves | 12/8/12 |
| 1 | Dha Council | var/var/var |
| 1 | Draca | 16/40/16 |
| 3 | Drones | 4/6/8/ (Def40) |
| 1 | *Garbageworm | 16/18/1 (Death Poison) |
| 12 | *Holo Creatures | 18/22/12 |
| 1 | Kurg Captain | 15/24/14 |
| 2 | Kurg Elite | 12/12/12 |
| 1 | mBari Captain | 24/40/14 |
| 4 | mBari Guard | 16/24/8 |
| 7 | Murrk | 12/20-30/6 |
| 4 | Skrak | 10/10/8 |
| 4 | Skrak Elite | 15/20/10 |

Vegra-7

| | | |
|----|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 6 | Anthropos | 16/12/16 |
| 5 | *Bokhorum | Var./Var./Var. |
| 40 | *Builder Creatures | 12/10/5 (Spd 20, 16 Str Web) |
| 1 | Calemora | 20/40/12 |
| 24 | Dreadar | 15/25/4 (BioT 16) |
| 1 | *Guardian Horak | 10/70/20 (Atk 20) |
| 12 | Horak | 8/40/10 (Atk 15, BioT 24) |
| 2 | Marines | 16/20/16 |
| 20 | Mindspiders | 15/10/3 (Str 15) |
| 1 | *Quantum Knight | 20/60/20 (60 Atk, 20 Str) |
| 1 | Sand-Squid | 12/60/2 (MR4) |
| 1 | *Zodar | special |

Introduction

PCShip and Transport

Ship—The Stardart

Registry: Dha, Guild

Rating: 8M*/6MS*/8M

Weapons: PlasCan4*360-Top (6MS), BlstCan2-Rearx2 (10HV), TorpTb*A*Sx2 (8MS)

Ammo: 10 Torpedo reloads (see previous line)

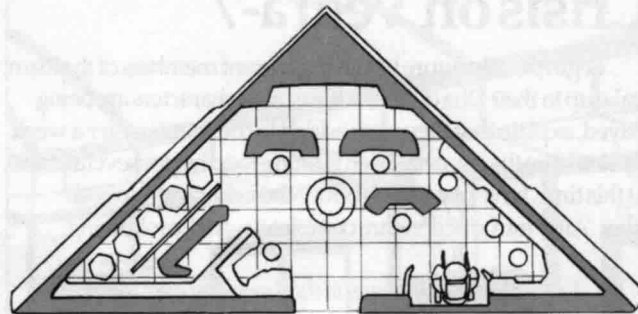
Bridge: MdTran, CapSta, CenComp, ComSta, HelmSta, LifSup, TacSta, View, TacUpl,

Engineer: ArtGrav, AtmFit, EngLab, HypDr, InDamp, Integ, LnchGr, Sublt, TacFit

Science: Cloak, PrCon, Scan, SciSta, SciLab, Sen, Trac,

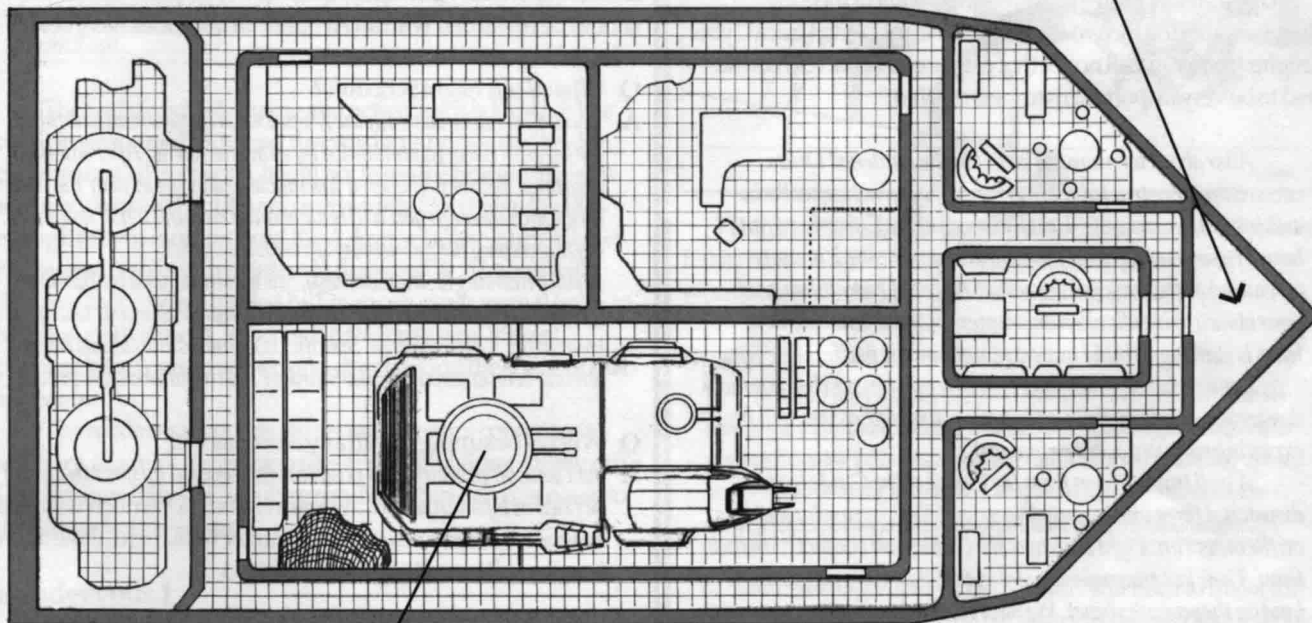
Medical: MedLab

Other: APod, EPod, Cargo bay with Seeker VII (see below).



Bridge

Photocopy this page and handout to the players.



Transport—Seeker VII

(for an appropriate interior schematic see EM vehicles, p. 64)

Registry: Dha, Guild (enhanced halberd class)

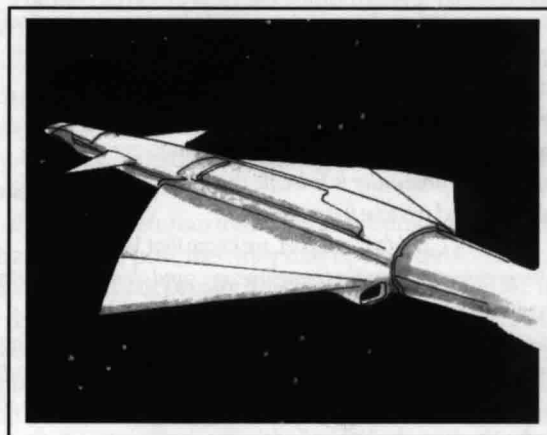
Rating: 6H/8MV/6M (Sen 6H, Scan 10M)

Weapons: BlastCan2*360-Top (6HV), PulsCan2*270-Top (10HP), PulsCan2-Front (6HP), PulseCan2*Arm (6MV), MslBat*d (6LV)

Command Systems: CenComp, CapSta, ConSta, DrivSta, SciSta, TacSta, MedLab, SciLab,

Engineer: Sen, Scan, VehEng*T

Cargo: 100 nutritabs, 2 hyper bikes



Crisis on Vegra-7

Begin the adventure by having current members of the team wake up in their Dha quarters. If any new characters are being played, explain that they were added to the team's roster a week ago, and that the team has been training together for several days. At this time, have players introduce their characters to each other. After introductions are complete, read the following.

Just as the team sits down to their morning meal together, amidst the grunts and groans common among military personnel, a quick message comes across your quarter's comm unit, "Team (name of team) report in full mission gear to chamber 5 of the mission assignment building". The correspondence comes from a rather impressive looking Draca Cyber Lord.

Use whatever means you wish to get the team up to the assignment building (ground shuttle, groundcar, etc.).

Upon arrival the team will be shown into a meeting chamber guarded by two very large and imposing Draca Cyber Knights (the team will notice that they are 9th rank and considered to be very important members of Dha).

After about ten minutes an old battle hardened Draca, covered and constructed with all types of cybernetics, walks in and introduces himself, "I am Dremoch of the Cyber Lords and I have a mission assignment for you and your team. You were assembled at the personal request of Admiral Nelos because of your ability to handle alien encounters in the unknown. Your team is starting to build quite a reputation for itself.

I must warn you however that this mission will be extremely dangerous. We have little information available as you will be exploring rimward... deep rimward.

A well trained team from the House of the Guide was dispatched three weeks ago to investigate the Vegra solar systems on the outer rim. Eight days ago, the Guides lost contact with their team. Their last transmission stated that they were preparing to land on the seventh planet. We have received no further messages. Your team, captain (Captain's Name), is being sent in.

This computer wafer (hands wafer case to captain) contains your orders. Your first order is to locate and retrieve all members of the Guides Team. A full crew roster is included in your order files. The team is lead by the Draca, Tomar, my brother. Your second order is to retrieve all data, logs, and technical information which the Guides team managed to compile. Your final order is to locate the Guide's ship, the Explorer II, and retrieve it if possible.

From the Guide's last report, we know that Vegra-7 experiences frequent and extremely severe sand storms. Its surface is deeply crevassed with temperature ranges from 40 degrees during the day to nearly 100 below zero at night. Planet lighting is dim due to its large orbital radius and sand storms. I must tell you, we have no idea what you should expect out there, and in all honesty, this is one heck of a mission.

Your team will be furnished with the starship Stardart, located in docking bay Alpha-97. Her cargo bay holds a transport vehicle and miscellaneous supplies. Androids will fill any empty ship positions in your roster. You are also being supplied with an autopilot uplink so that you may remotely fly the Explorer II, in tow, back to Guildspace, assuming she is discovered.

Operation and installment instructions for the uplink can be found in your orders file.

We have arranged a double transit flight schedule, with the help of the sixth and seventh, and you should arrive at Vegra-7 in a little over 64 hours. Your window for liftoff begins in 42 minutes, with the mission title "recovery-7." Mission clearance is top-secret — admiral level.

That is all, do you have any questions?"

Answers

The following are answers to several possible questions. You will have to answer other questions to the best of your ability. Particularly intelligent questions (e.g., those listed below) should be rewarded with an AP (after all questions have been asked).

Q What is our Flight Schedule?

A: *You will rendezvous with the Malicious, a Superdreadnaught of the seventh [fleet] commanded by Admiral Kerns. After mission clearance, Kerns will open a wormhole to a location near the planet Url. Once through you will have about a two and a half day flight via hyperspace before meeting up with the sixth's superdreadnaught, the Colunesy. She is commanded by Admiral Omboro, who will open up the final wormhole that will take your team to the Vegra System. Specific coordinates and details have already been entered into the Stardart's astrogational computers.*

Q Will we be supplied with any automatons?

A: *As I said, all primary ship positions not covered by your team will be filled in by androids. (If the team is small, Dremoch will offer to send a battledroid or a scout walker with them. If the team is real small he will offer to send both.)*

Q How will we get back to Guildspace from Vegra-7?

A: *The Colunesy of the sixth fleet will maintain a minimal wormhole opening. You can communicate through the wormhole if your ship is within 100 miles of the opening. When the proper mission title is given, the wormhole will be expanded to accommodate your return.*

Q What kind of ship is the Stardart.

A: *The Stardart is a guardian-class frigate with a halberd-class armored transport aboard her.*

Q What was the Guide team investigating?

A: *Dremoch will hesitate at this question. Then he will say, "Officially, they were sent to map out the geo-structure of the system's nine planets, and that is all that I have been told." He will then lean forward, "Unofficially, I have heard rumors that they were investigating some sort of new life form, some kind of alien threat. Take your pick"*

The Adventure Begins

Again, provide some means for the team to get to docking bay Alpha-97. Remember, the team has only 42 minutes. Thus, if they want to buy supplies along the way, they will have to be quick about it. You may describe the docking bay and any formalities required to get on board as you wish.

As you board the ship you notice that androids already fill any missing crew positions. You also find a massive heavily armed walker silently standing at the back of the bridge. One look at its incredible fire power makes you glad that it is on your side, although, at the moment, it doesn't seem to be powered up. As you get seated at your station the comm light starts blinking.

When someone answers the comm read the following.

Dha team (Team's Name) you are cleared to launch. Please proceed to the outer orbital boundary before engaging your hyperdrive systems. Good luck, and have a safe mission. Dha control out.

The walker is an A-Frame and activating it is Dif 12. It has been programmed to defend the Stardart's bridge and bridge crew against all invasions. It will not leave the bridge unless its security routines (Dif 180) are overridden. Don't give the PCs enough time to inquire about the A-Frame before launch. Later, if someone breaks into its internal registry (Dif 20), they will discover that it was supplied by Dremoch as a personal favor to help assure that the PCs succeed in their mission. It's real purpose is far more involved and goes beyond the scope of this adventure.

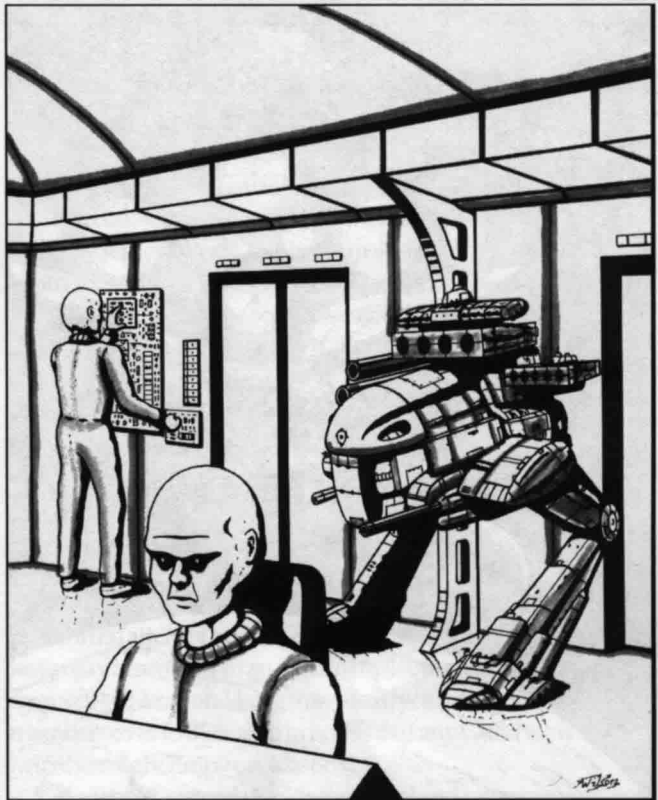
The rendezvous points are set in the central computer's memory, as are all the mission files and destinations. Lifting off of Dha Prime is only Dif 5. Failure results in ship damage equal to the amount of the failure.

Rendezvous 1

The team will reach the Malicious, a superdreadnaught of the seventh fleet, about four hours after they engage their hyperdrive. In this time the characters may explore the ship, learn its systems, find the transport, and other things if they wish. However if they spend the entire time on one ship system (i.e. scanners) give them +1d when they use that system for the first part of this adventure.

Admiral Kerns is expecting the Stardart and will open a wormhole after receiving transmission of the team's mission clearance (e.g., recovery-7).

With a flash of blue light, the Malicious uses its quantum wedge to pry open a wormhole. Twelve brilliant rays of pulsating energy rip through space and hold the wormhole wide enough (Dif 10) to allow the Stardart to navigate through.



Failure results in damage equal to the amount of the failure. If the roll is a 1-4 the Stardart will bounce off the edge of the wormhole and must try again (after taking the damage).

Space

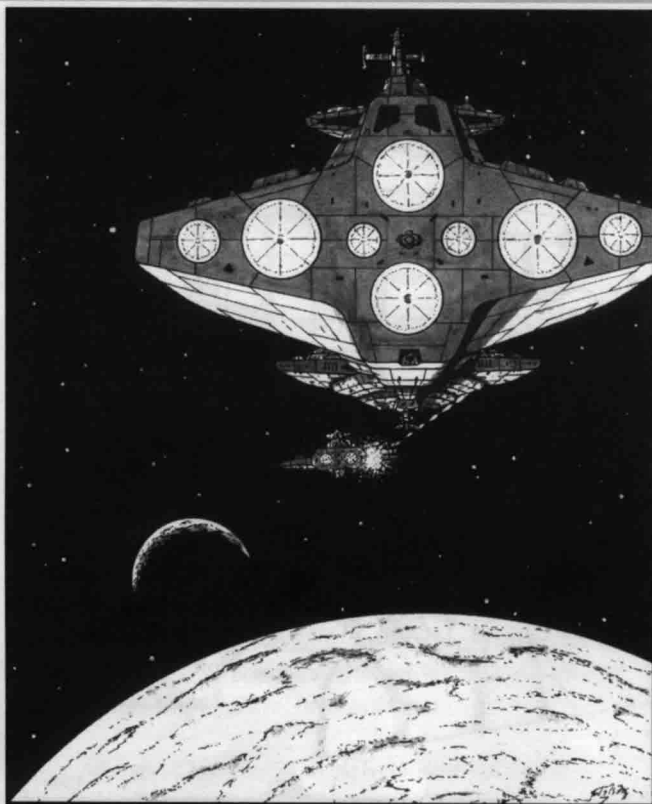
In a few brief moments, your starship emerges from the far side of the wormhole, having traveled over 2000 light years. After your astrogator takes the required readings of surrounding space, you set course to the second rendezvous with the Colunesty, the sixth's superdreadnaught commanded by Admiral Omboro.

After plotting a course, the Stardart will need to make the jump into hyperspace (no roll necessary as the astrogator would eventually succeed anyway).

The next 28 hours will pass without event. This may be a good time for the PCs to complete their exploration of the Stardart, the Seeker VII, and read up on their mission details (such as how to install the autopilot uplink and a list of the Guide's crew manifest). Specifics of the crew manifest are left up to the GM; you should finish reading this adventure before forming it.

If a character studies the Seeker's instruments associated with a particular post, then they may operate the specific equipment without penalty (this may also warrant an AP to the first character who thinks of it). Otherwise, a -1d penalty may be applied for the first couple of rolls. For example, a character with *drive vehicle* skill might want to look over the Seeker's instrumentation and drive-train to familiarize themselves with its operation.

Crisis on Vega-7



After approximately 28 hours of hyperspace travel, the Stardart's proximity sensors go off, "Warning, warning, massive object detected in flight path."

The characters have two choices as explained in RB p. 47: 1) drop out of hyperspace or 2) attempt to make astrogational corrections (Dif 12) at the risk of shooting off to infinity. Unless the PCs have a death wish, they should drop out of hyperspace.

When the team drops out of hyperspace into normal space, you should ask each player what their character is doing. In other words, the team gets one free round of activities before events begin overtaking them. If anyone thinks of activating long range scanners to see what's going on and/or activates the cloaking device, give them an AP (results of sensors or scans are discussed below).

Betrayal in Space

The PCs will soon encounter two ships: a larger "Attack" vessel pursuing a smaller "Science" vessel. The attack ship is actually an Empire Ramship (equivalent to a Guild destroyer) attacking a Company owned scientific explorer. Several weeks ago, Company operatives uncovered clues about the Guild's exploratory missions into the outer rim. The Company determined that the purpose of these missions was to investigate some form of new and highly hostile life form. Reacting on the potential profit of such a discovery, the Company hired a band of skrak/kurg pirates to perform a rather dubious and deadly mission. The skrak/kurg were provided with a Company

science ship (equipped with an Arthirian transponder for cover). They were to fly it through a wormhole opened by Headquarters, locate and retrieve an alien specimen (preferably alive), and return.

The plan went as scheduled: the science ship, under command of the kurg captain, recently traveled into the horde wall, and with phenomenal luck, captured two mindspiders. Then the foolish kurg captain decided to explore nearby space hoping to locate other potential sources of profit. Upon exploring the Vega System, the science ship encountered a strange alien bio-ship which began to swiftly overtake them. In desperation, the science ship began transmitting distress signals. By chance, the signals were close enough to the Colunesy maintained wormhole, that Admiral Omboro authorized its opening. The science ship immediately shot through the wormhole at extremely high speed and entered into hyperspace before the Colunesy could react.

Unknown to the Company, the Empire has been monitoring the progress of the mission. Once the science ship was back in Guildspace, the Empire dispatched one of their special forces attack ramships (disguised as a Star Patrol Ship) to intercept and retrieve the valuable cargo at any cost (for use in their bio-weapons department). The Empire plan was unfolding flawlessly until ... the PCs entered the scene.

Empire "Attack" Ship

Registry: LC, House of Star Light Cruiser (actually RS, Empire Ramship)

Rating: 12*/20S*/20

Weapons: BlstCan-front (24S), PulseCan2-rear (40V), BlstCan4*360-side x2 (20S), IonCan2-front x2 (12S), MslBat*G x10 (16S)

Other: Trac

Skarak "Science" Ship

(map is on inside of adventure cover)

Registry: SE, Arthirian Scientific Explorer (actually SE, Company Scientific Explorer)

Rating: 16/12S/20

Weapons: BlastCan4*360-top (16S), PlasCan-side x2 (10S), TorpTb*H*L-side x2 (10S)

Ammo: 10 Torpedo reloads

Bridge: CapSta, CenComp, ComSta, HelmSta, LifSup, TacSta, View, TacUpl,

Engineer: ArtGrav, AtmFit, EngLab, HypDr, InDamp, Integ, LnchGr, Stasis Field, Sublt, TacFit

Science: Cloak, PtCon, Scan, SciSta, SciLab, Sen, Trac,

Medical: MedLab, Cryogenic Lab

Other: APod, EPod, MdTran, small transport vehicle, five 8M class science probes.

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Initial Encounter

Scanners (Dif8) may detect the two vessels heading toward the PC's location. The vessels are traveling along a nearly perfect vector opposite of the PCs (i.e., they came from the direction of the Colunesty). If the scanning rolls are high enough, the PCs may learn some or all of the following: the lead vessel is an Arthirian ship, the trailing ship has the markings and transponder code of a House of the Star patrol vessel. A particularly high roll may divulge more of the truth: the lead ship is actually a Company science ship while the trailing ship is actually an Empire attack vessel. In any event the PCs will witness an exchange of fire between the two vessels with the upper hand going to the trailing attack ship.

What unfolds next is largely up to the PC's current status (cloaked or not) and their actions:

If cloaked: The PCs can stand by and watch for quite awhile without being detected.

Not Cloaked: Both ships will hail the PCs. First the science ship will hail the PCs claiming that they are an Arthirian science vessel under attack:

An Anthropos (kurg using a hologuise) appears on the screen and in a real rough croaking voice you hear, "Help, this is the Meteor II an Arthirian science ship, we ar—shhhhh crrraackpopshhhhh—der attack. We need assistance or we will be destroyed. In the background you hear someone say, "Captain our shields are failing and we are loosing power in the reactor core, what should I"—BOOOO MMMM.

A general distress signal will be emanating from the science vessel. The Empire's attack ship will soon follow with a demand to know the PC's intent, after which, they will ask the PCs to leave this region of space claiming, "You are interfering with official House of the Star business." However, if the PCs take no offensive action, no further threats will result. But, the science ship will continue to beg the PCs for assistance.

If the PCs state that they are with the Guild, the attack vessel will ask them to assist in disabling the "Pirate ship," so that the space police may board her. If questioned about the pirate ship's crime, the attack ship will simply say, "They are a band of ruffian pirates well known for their constant plundering and looting of vessels and systems in this region of space."

In any event, have the characters witness the attack vessel dock with and board the science vessel. If the team boards the science ship they will discover its real occupancy as well as the true identity of the attacking Empire ship. The kurg and skrak will fight along side the Dha team until the Empire's troops have been defeated. They will then turn and attack the PCs, hoping to eliminate any loose strings (as well as gain control of the PC's ship if possible).

Handling Event Flow

Ideally, you want the PCs to board the science vessel. You may wish to skew your comments and the information which the PCs learn through sensors and scanners to help make this choice more likely to occur. You can also use enhancements and skills such as *common sense*, *danger sense*, etc. to prod the players into this course of action. Some of the androids on board the Stardart may even provide the team with additional reasons to board the science vessel (such as, "Captain, I have detected large explosions on board the science vessel and signs of internal weapons fire are prevalent."). If all else fails, have a skrak or kurg officer turn on their main view screen just as a band of Empire troops invade the room. It will then be all too obvious that the Empire is at work. If the PCs still don't react, inform them that any trained Dha warrior would immediately leap to the aid of anyone being attacked by Empire forces.

If the PCs opt to sit by and watch events develop, you can either use the view screen technique above, or you can bring the encounter to them — Empire troops may transport onto their vessel in an attempt to take over their ship. Terrified skrak and kurg may beam over in an attempt to flee the mayhem on their own vessel. Skrak and kurg may also try to transport team members over to their ship in hopes that any Guild crew would help them fight Empire soldiers.

If a few PCs board the science vessel and others remain, you may want to implement the ideas in the previous paragraphs in order to include all players in the encounter (it's a long one).

If the PCs decide to board the Empire's attack vessel, you have several choices. You can ad-lib the vessel and its encounters. You can have the PCs appear on an Empire assault pod just as it is being launched at the kurg vessel. Or, you can have the transporter beam intercepted by a simultaneous kurg transport, causing the individuals to materialize on the science ship.

If the PCs decide to flee, you can simply allow it (which would eliminate a large section of this adventure). Alternatively, you can use the view screen idea above to coax them into staying, have several characters transported off their vessel, transport Empire and/or skrak/kurg onto their vessel, etc.

Finally, if the PCs decide to attack either vessel in ship-to-ship combat, the Empire's attack vessel will immediately return fire. The PCs will find themselves severely outmatched.

No matter what you do, be sure the players "believe" that they are in control and that you aren't forcing them to board the science vessel — i.e., be sneaky about it.

Onboard the Kurg/Skrak Science Ship

If the PCs board by using a transporter, they may select a general location on the ship at which to materialize. If they succeeded in a detailed floor plan scan (never allow this to work too well), they will be able to select a room location even though they will not know the exact function of that room. If they fail to select an area, then you may select any appropriate area.

If the PCs board by using an assault pod, you should select the room they enter based upon their targeting description (i.e., where they are aiming at).

Crisis on Vegra-7

LEVEL 1

1. Bridge

Read the following if the team has been on any other level prior to this one:

You come on to the main bridge of the ship and see a captain's nest in the middle of the room and four officer stations located toward the front. As you look around you see several kurg and skrak lying on the floor dead, including two particularly large skrak. Standing around trying to figure out the bridge layout are two mBari guard, six Murk, and one mBari captain.

Read the following to the team if they haven't been on any other level:

You come on to the main bridge of the ship and see a captain's nest in the middle of the room and four officer stations located toward the front. As you look around you see an Anthropos in the captain's chair, a kurg standing next to him, 3 skrak at different stations, and two larger, more imposing skrak standing on either side of the door way. The 2 large skrak start to restrain you but the captain turns around and tells them to hold. He then asks who you are and why you are here.

If alive, the kurg captain is still using his Anthroplan hologuise. If the characters make an Awa roll (20) then they will see through the illusion. If any of them notice the hologuise, the captain will realize this and will order his guards and crew to attack the team. If no one notices then he will tell the team that the other levels of his ship are being attacked by Empire forces.

The bridge is guarded by an anti-transporter shield (Dif 50 to break through). It is used to prevent hostile takeover through direct transport. (GM Note: this is a good device to include on most larger starships.)

Bridge crew:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 1 Kurg Captain | 15/24/14 he is using a hologuise Dif (20) |
| 1 Kurg Elite | 12/12/12 |
| 3 Skrak | 10/10/8 |
| 2 Skrak Elite | 15/20/10 using Blaster rifles |



Empire Squad One:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1 mBari Captain | 24/40/14 using a disk cannon |
| 2 mBari Guard | 16/24/8 using plasma swords |
| 6 Murrk | 12/20-30/6 They will be using one of three weapons: A plasma sword (20), a Scythe-cannon (24), or a disk cannon (30) |



2. Engineering Lab

In this room there are many computer panels and blinking lights. Lying by two of these panels are two dead skrak who appear to have been killed when one of the computes exploded during ship combat.

If there is an engineer in the group he will be able to tell that this is a secondary engineering room. Each skrak has two yellow and a red credit chip on them and each has a pulse laser pistol.

3. Holo-theater

The door whisks open to reveal a large turbolift with another set of doors on the far wall. Next to these doors you see a control panel with buttons labeled: "Bride, Engineering, Science Lab, Cargo Bay, Weapons Control, Crew Quarters, and Planet Surface"

This room is actually a holo-theater and a program is running. The turbolift is actually a simulated illusion. If any button, besides "planet surface", is pressed, ask the player to make a luck roll. This roll is a hoax. No matter what the result a message will light up stating, "Destination — Planet Surface." Then read the following.

The turbolift must have been some sort of transporter for the doors open upon the surface of a marshy planet. The turbolift cubical is resting on a mound of marsh grass surrounded by swamp. The croak of ugly, black birds drifts down to you. Then motion, 12 grotesque hideous creatures with nine arms and two large gaping mouths in the center of their bodies rise out of the mud.

The turbolift is part of the program. If only part of the team entered, those outside the room will notice that the turbolift returns empty (as would be expected). Thus, they can join their

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comrades at any time. However, those on the holo-planet will have no success in operating the turbolift to escape the "planet surface" until they satisfy the requirements of the program.

During the "turbo-ride" all of the characters physical possessions will be transported off of their bodies and replaced with identical "holo items." Cyber implants are an exception.

If a character specifically requests to determine if this is an illusion or hologram, then they may make an Awa 50 to pierce the veil. However, the holomatter is real and will still affect them.

The program includes a vast swampy jungle with nowhere to run. Have everyone roll a Nish and run the battle normally. Have more and more creatures keep appearing until almost the entire party is down or severely wounded. Do not let any of the characters flee in any way. Always block the attempt with something, whether it is more creatures or a malfunction in the device that they are using (i.e., Loen the Anthropos tries to use his personal transporter to escape. Rule that the moisture of the planet and the combat have damaged the device and it will not work). If someone can fly or levitate have flying creatures attack them. This is meant to be a combat test for anyone who enters the program. Try everything possible to keep them in battle until they are all down or severely wounded. This is only a test, so the computer will stop if anyone is close to dying, and no blow will result in wounds which require death checks.

12* Holo-Creatures 18/22/12

*There are twelve to start but when 10 are killed 12 more will show up, and so on. Don't just have the creatures pop in, have them ooze up from the ground or jump down from the trees. Mix it up and get creative. Also give out APs for good ideas and imaginative combat.

When the characters think that they have finally had it, the program will stop. Read the following to them.

All of a sudden there is a bright flash of light and you are in a dark blue room lined with florescent yellow disks. You are all standing around in your underclothes without any items. Even the turbolift has vanished. All that remains are one set of doors, next to which you see your missing equipment.

Since most equipment was holo substituted, the characters didn't actually use up their supplies except for cybernetic items and powers.

Depending on how well the characters do read the following to them.

A computerized voice comes across the room's speakers and says....

1-4 creatures killed (no bonus AP)

You have fought poorly and are not worthy of your status aboard this ship, you must resign your positions at once and go back to training school. Pack your bags and whimper in your rooms till you arrive on Blackport.

5-10 (give AP to individuals for good roleplaying)

Congratulations you are coming along fine in your training. Keep up the practice and maybe one of these days you will be true pirates.

11-16 (GM option to give 1 AP to each team member)

You have done outstanding in battle, you all shall receive promotions and special leave passes. Your fighting would impress the master pirate himself. Report to the bridge at once for your extra benefits.

17 and up (GM option to give 1-3 AP to each team member)

That was an incredible battle. You have fought beyond any other skrak in history. You should go strait to the bridge and take control of the ship. For our mightiest warriors should be in command positions aboard this vessel. If the captain refuses to give you command you should have no problem slaying him as you are the mightiest warriors in the galaxy.

4. Captain's Room

This room is lavishly furnished, it has thick furry carpets, a relaxation pool that doubles as a plush couch, and many more luxuries. This is obviously the room of someone very important.

If the characters take time to search this room, Awa (10), they will find a credit card with 452 credits (security 10), a genesis capsule, and the room's auto defense (no Awa check needed).

Auto Defense: One above the bed and one above the doorway (20/15/1 Def4, AR20).



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5. First Officer's Quarters

As you enter through the door you see a well decorated room with a nice bed and a relaxation pool. You figure that this is probably an officer's room.

If the PCs search the room they will find a Company uniform (Very strange) and a grapple gun. Have who ever is searching roll an Awa check. If they roll better than a 6 they will find a Plasma Bolter (See New Equipment Items section for further details).

6. Special Storage

As you look around in this room you see storage compartments stacked along all the walls.

All of the compartments are locked by electronic codes. If someone has a *counter security* skill they may break the codes (Dif 12) and look inside. If they don't have any such skills they can try to break in by causing 25 points of damage or a Str check (25). Any excess damage over 25 will be inflicted on the items inside, destroying most of them. Most of the compartments have uniforms, badges and nice clothes, but two of them contain 1 ultralock utility belt and 1 comm unit each.

7. Suit and Weapon Storage

This room is filled with closet and locker units. Several skrak turn to face you.

Most of the items from this room are in use. Remaining are one pair of ultra-lock boots, two blaster carbines and four space suits.

4 Skrak Elite 15/20/10

8. First Level Hallway

You are in the main hallway. Several doors are open along its length. You can hear weapons fire off in the distance.

9. Power Lift

You step into this section and see a small control panel with the letters T, 1L, 2L, and 3L.

This is where the Dha team might see Empire squad 1 on their way to the bridge. If the team has already taken care of squad 1 then the area will be empty.

Control panel:

- T T will take them to the turret on top of the ship.
- 1L 1L is the first level of the ship.
- 2L 2L is the second level of the ship.
- 3L 3L is the third level of the ship.

LEVEL 2

10. Dining Room

As you come in through the door you recognize the officer's dining room. Some of the chairs have been knocked over and there is still food on the plates. It looks as if someone left here in a big hurry.

There is nothing of real interest here. If the characters wish they may try some of the food, but it is not very tasty unless they like the taste of decaying raw meat (raw decaying meat is a traditional dinner of the skrak).

11. Meeting Room

This is a meeting room of some sort. There is a horseshoe shaped table with many chairs around it facing one large chair and several large computer screens.

The only thing of value in this room are some computer disks near the computers in the front of the room. It will take 10 to 15 minutes to fully access these disks. It is unlikely that the team will have the luxury of decoding them until after the ship is secure. On the disks is the information pertaining to this vessel's real mission (i.e., that it is a Company mission, etc.). Once decoded, you can read them the appropriate background information from above.

12-13. Torpedo Rooms

Several torpedoes lay on the floor of this room waiting to be loaded and fired.

For torpedo types, see the ship's layout under NPC list.

14. Hallway

The hallway is empty unless the characters come from room 15 — Crew dining area. If the team comes out of the crew dining area they will see the Empire squad 2 in the hallway.

Empire Squad Two:

- 1 mBari Guard 16/24/8 using plasma swords
- 7 Murrk 12/20-30/6 They will be using one of three weapons: A plasma sword (20), a Scythe-cannon (24), or a disk cannon (30)
- 8 Anthropos Slaves 12/8/12 using daggers and caring the weapon reloads for the Murrk.

15. Crew Dining Area

You are in a nice dining area that is used by the crew. It has a bar and many comfortable tables. A small hovering drone crosses the room and asks, "May I show you to a table, or would you like to sit at the bar? How about having one of our special dimmers, all you can eat for only 5 credits, or maybe you only need something to quench your thirst. We have many wonderful drinks from every part of the galaxy."

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There are a few small drones in the room that will serve the team (food and drink only). The drones may not be removed from the area, unless physically overpowered, and they will not fight. However, the drones are used to being attacked by angry customers and have developed excellent defensive programs.

3 Drones 4/6/8 (Def 40)

Upon leaving this room and going into #14, the hallway, the party will be attacked by squad 2 from the empire ship. On an Awa check (10) they will see squad 1 (if they have not already seen them on level one or three) going up the powerlift.



LEVEL 3

16. Probe Room

In the room are 5 scientific probes and a control panel for programming them.

All of the probes are 8M science probes. They may be left to operate around planets or used to gather data in areas where ships may not venture.

17. Transporter Room

You have found the ship's transporter room, and it appears to be unguarded.

The transporter is a medium range transporter. **THE TRANSPORTER MAY NOT BE USED AS A WEAPON.** There are security codes on all transporters to stop anyone from doing this. If the characters try to override these codes (Dif 100) and succeed, they may transport only one individual before the security codes reset. However, if they attempt to break the code and fail, all transporter functions will shut down and it will take an engineer or a computer specialist 2 hrs to fix them.

18. Secondary Probe Control Room and Torpedo Guidance

There are many control panels, visual uplink screens, and guidance controls in this room. Working the controls are three skrak.

The probes and torpedoes can be controlled from here. This room also acts as an internal ship security area where videos of the ship can be viewed. The player characters can launch some pretty effective attacks throughout the ship if one member remains to track them on the cameras. However, don't allow this room to be abused by examining every room in the ship. If this is attempted, another party of three skrak will attack the room, and their weapon's fire will "just happen" to destroy the control console.

3 Skrak Pirates 10/10/8

19. Cryogenics Room

Entering the room you see five long cryo tubes near one wall and a control panel in the center.

- A. Open cryo tube (held one of the skrak Elite)
- B. Open cryo tube (held one of the skrak Elite)
- C. Closed cryo tube (still holds a skrak Elite)
- D. Closed cryo tube (still holds a skrak Elite)
- E. Empty cryo tube (no recent use is evident)
- F. Cryo tube controls. Attempts to open cryo tubes are

Dif 10, using the controls to kill the skrak is Dif 50.

If the characters try to open the occupied tubes the skrak will attack (the skrak are awake and are feigning sleep in hopes of surprising their adversaries (Shock 8)). If the characters try to kill the skrak and fail, the skrak will awake and attack.

2 Skrak Elite 15/20/10

20-21. Crew Barracks

This looks like the sleeping area for the crew members. It is currently deserted.

If the team searches these rooms they will find many different uniforms ranging from Zin-Shee military to Empire military. It would seem as if they have uniforms for every major part of Known Space.

A. Inside of the closet, in room 21, is a terrified skrak. The skrak is holding a high explosive grenade and will throw it at the first person who opens the door. His attack and damage with the grenade are 40/40x however after he throws it his stats are 10/10/8.

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22-23. Storage Areas

This room contains clothes, boots, some food, and electronic devices.

Let the characters use the electronics however you feel they should. If they come up with any creative ideas award an AP.

24. Medlab

The doors open upon a medical room equipped with all of the apparatus you would expect to find in such a place.

If any of the characters are wounded and they have a medic in the group, allow the medic to combine(cat) to heal the party members. The lab is an 8M. If no medic is in the group but they have someone who has *first aid* skill, give them some bonus to their first aid roll.

25. Science Research lab

There are many different scientific devices laying around on tables and counters. You can tell that most of these would be used for exploratory surgery.

Looking around in this room the characters will find a handcomp(10L). If the party needs any clues about what is going on or some reason to stay on this ship let them bring up a couple of files on the handcomp that will suit your purpose. Let them know a little about the mindspider cargo and its importance to the mission and the Guild, and so on and so forth.

26. Engineering Lab

As you walk into the room you see a large stasis field in front of you. Inside the field are two strange spider-like creatures. Two kurg and four skrak flee through the rear doors.

The two creatures in the stasis field are mindspiders 15/10/3 (Str 15). When mindspiders attack they latch on the back of their victim's head, insert their neural spike into the victim's spinal column and take control of the victim's mind. (For more details see the description of these creatures in the SG pg. 60.)

If any of the characters try to take down the stasis field a warning comes up stating that the creatures are considered highly dangerous. The computer will then ask if they wish to proceed as well as request for a security code (Dif 12).

When the field drops the spiders will attack with incredible speed. Have everyone roll a shock vs 20 or lose Nish.

27. Engineering Room

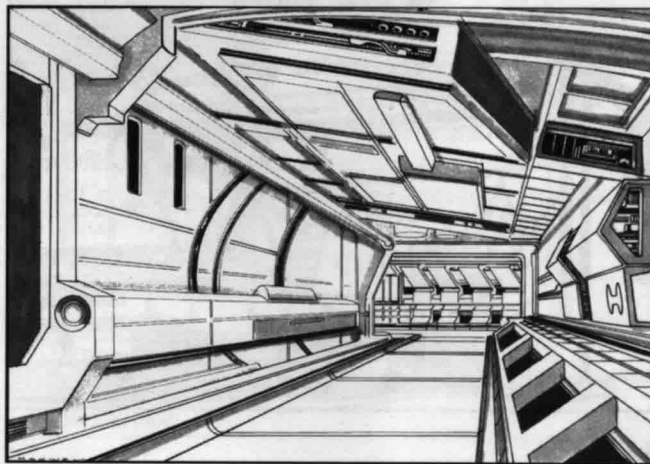
You enter into the room just in time to see two kurg and four skrak roll out a large weapon from the center door in the back of the room. They turn the gun towards you with a look of fear and uncertainty on their faces.

At this time go into Nish and run a normal combat. If the characters do not attack have the kurg fire the ion cannon at the most heavily armored PC. Ion Cannons cause malfunctions in items that require power (i.e., powered armor, energy weapons, etc.) For more details see Weapon Systems on pg 58 in the EM.)

2 Kurg Elite 12/12/12 (Ion Canon Dmg 30)
4 Skrak 10/10/8

- A. These are the main engines.
- B. This is the hyperdrive engine area and the storage area for the kurg's secret weapon (Ion cannon).

Also in this room is a large cargo elevator that can take the characters down into the cargo bay. The elevator is further described in #33 below.



28-29. Hallways

The hallways are empty most of the time, with small blinking lights and computer panels next to each door.

- A. These are the doors that lead into the two side turrets.

30. Secondary Bridge \ Probe Launch Control Room

This room reminds you of a bridge that a smaller vessel might have. It has all of the necessary stations, but most of them have several additional controls. However, the room seems too small for a ship of this size, and it is unguarded and unoccupied.

If the other bridge becomes damaged in battle or is inoperable the characters may use this one. The engine systems are off line due to damage, and the weapon systems need some repair.

- A. Captains and controllers chair.
- B. Tactical and Scanner \ Sensor control for the probes.
- C. Helm and information transfer and storage for the probes.
- D. Communications \ Science and probe launch controls.

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CARGO LEVEL

The cargo level is surrounded by an anti-transporter field that stops all transporters from beaming things on or off this level unless they beat a Dif 50. The field can be deactivated only on the main bridge.

31. Rear Storage Room

As you enter, an almost overpowering stench comes over you. Garbage and rotting corpses litter the floor while slime drips off of the walls.

If the players search this room they will find a Kryllian feeder in one of the corners feeding away. They will also find a large garbageworm (relative of the swampworm and has the same abilities, read swampworm descriptions in SG).

1 Garbageworm 16/18/1 (Death Poison)

32. Storage Rooms

These rooms are filled with garbage, and it is evident that they have already been ransacked. There are two dead kurg and one dead skrak in them. They seem to have been recently killed.

Anything that was of value in these two rooms has been destroyed or taken by the skrak.

If the characters search carefully, Awa (20), they will find a small computer panel behind some of the debris against the wall opposite of the door. If activated the entire wall will fade out, revealing a completely dark room (see area 34-35).

33. Cargo Lift

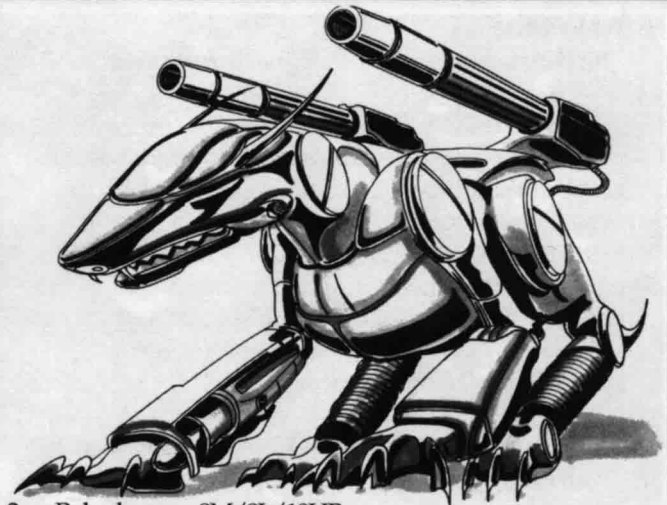
A large cargo lift fills the area with doors on both sides. There are two simple buttons on the control panel. Even a Calemora could use them with ease. One has an up arrow and one has a down arrow.

The skrak and kurg use the lift to take their garbage down to the garbage areas. However on an Awa (10) or better the team will be able to tell that a group of humanoid creatures (due to foot prints in the sticky garbage residue) have very recently used this elevator. The group is squad three from the Empire vessel and they are in area 37 by the main cargo bay door.

34-35. Secret Storage Rooms

You go through the secret entrance and come into a small completely dark room. Before you can get your bearings you bump into something hard about knee high, and hear a soft mechanical growl.

In each of these rooms are un-programmed robodogs. If anyone has a *computer* skill they may automatically program the dogs to follow their orders. If not, someone with a related skill (Dif 15) may attempt to program the dogs. If the team attacks, the dogs will only defend themselves as they have not been given attack parameters.



2 Robodogs 8M/8L/10HB

They are equipped to have 8M blaster carbines mounted on their backs. These weapons are not available in these rooms, but may be found elsewhere (GM discretion).

36. Cargo Bay Entrance

You stand in a plain room with large doors in the front and back. Both are equipped with consoles.

Have the characters roll an Awa (20). Ask if anyone has enhanced or handicapped hearing. If they beat the 20 Dif they will hear some strange noises coming from the cargo bay (the Empire squad talking and walking). If anyone rolls a critical success allow them to hear a rustling in area 31, if they have not already gone in that direction.

37. Cargo Bay

You determine that you are in, by far, the largest open area on the ship. A small two person transport vehicle is strapped down in one corner. Various boxes and barrels rest here and there. You also notice an Empire squad near the large loading door in the front of the room.

The Empire squad was beamed directly into the engineering room and ordered to come down to the cargo bay to see if the cargo that the Empire was after was down here. They foolishly didn't even bother to check the room next to them labeled "Engineering Lab." The other two squads were beamed to other locations and told to search the first and second levels in order to bring the ship under the Empire's control.

Empire Squad Three:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1 mBari Guard | 16/24/8 using plasma swords |
| 7 Murrk | 12/20-30/6 They will be using one of three weapons: A plasma sword (20), a Scythe-cannon (24), or a disk cannon (30) |
| 8 Anthropos Slaves | 12/8/12 using daggers and caring all of the weapon reloads for the Murrk. |

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After Combat

Read the following after the ship has been secured by the PCs.

Across the ship's comm you hear, "Attention diseased Guild slime! You may have defeated our squads but now you face the awesome power of our Ramship. Surrender all cargo and both ships immediately or we will blow you out of the universe! You will bow before the Mighty Empire and serve her, or I will see to it that you are put to the most horrible deaths possible. You have one minute to comply. The terms of your surrender are complete, unconditional and nonnegotiable."

The Empire would now rather kill the Dha team then retrieve the cargo, as they have insulted the Empire and must die for it. When the minute is up the Empire will once again contact the characters.

Well you infested Guild scum, what is your answer? Do we need to blow your pathetic little selves to bits now or are you willing to serve the Empire and lick her boots. Of course you only have one real choice here, so what is your...A break in the communications causes the katha's words to be cut off and you hear a new transmission.

This is commander Meekem of the Dreadnaught Tiberioun, from the 27th detachment. Team (the team's name) do you require assistance?

If any of the team members look out a view port or use a view screen they will see a dreadnought flanked by two light cruisers.

Even without a response, the detachment opens fire on the extremely inferior (and this is a MAJOR understatement) Empire ship. Within just a few minutes you witness only a small part of the incredible, destructive power of this small detachment, while it totally obliterates the Empire ship. Commander Meekem then responds, "Is everything OK over there captain? Do you require any assistance?"

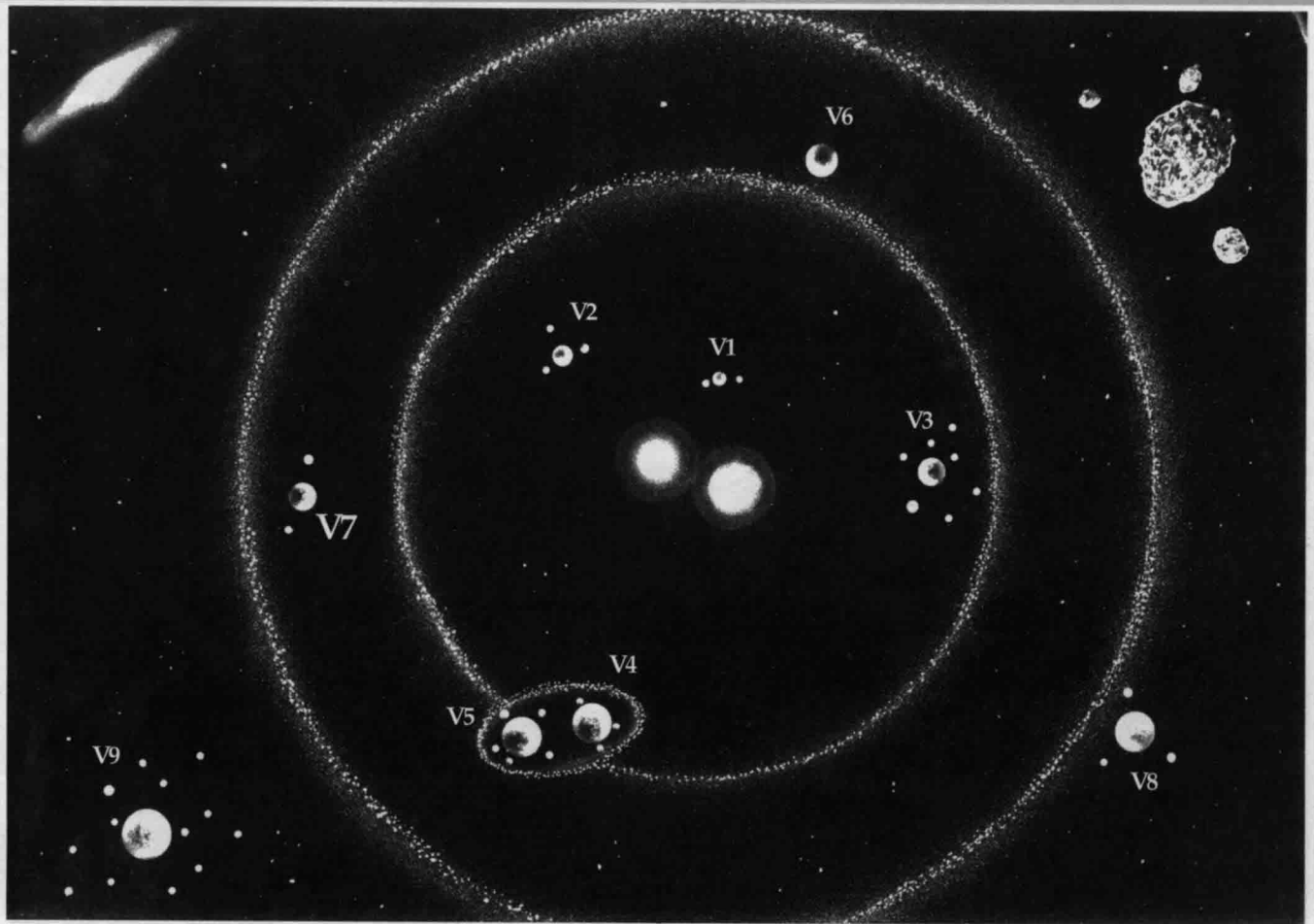
The detachment will escort the team to their final rendezvous with Admiral Omboro. Several engineering teams will be sent to repair any damage which the PC's ship has suffered.

When admiral Omboro contacts them he will inquire about the situation which has just occurred. He would also like to have the mindspider cargo transferred to his ship for further research (assuming the PCs captured them). Allow any other conversation to occur which the team pursues. The team may buy (not lease) any equipment or items which they may need from the stores aboard Omboro's superdreadnaught. Finally, a medic team will attend to any of the character's wounds.

With a final farewell, Omboro will instruct his engineers to activate the quantum wedge and open a wormhole for the PCs. Again the difficulty to fly through will be 10. And then... the PCs will be on the outer-rim.



Vegra System



Vegra System

The Vegra system consists of 9 planetoid bodies orbiting around a binary star. Vegra-7 is a little over 120 million miles away from the nearest star. Astrogration and piloting through the system is difficult (Dif 12) due to the numerous moons that circle the planets and many asteroid belts. Because of the two stars and the way the asteroids orbit, collisions and explosions are very common, sending thousands of small fragments in every direction. This is one of the darkest, most chaotic, and hostile systems you have been to. It almost seems that the system itself is trying to ward you off.

If the characters scan the planets they will find that only a small number of them are able to support life, and even fewer of the moons have this capacity. However, unless they stop and perform extensive scans they will find no life forms on any of these planets. If they travel to Vegra 5 and render extensive scans they will find that there are partial remains of some artificial structures on this planet. Remind them of their mission if they start talking about landing there. This planet may be explored in later missions.

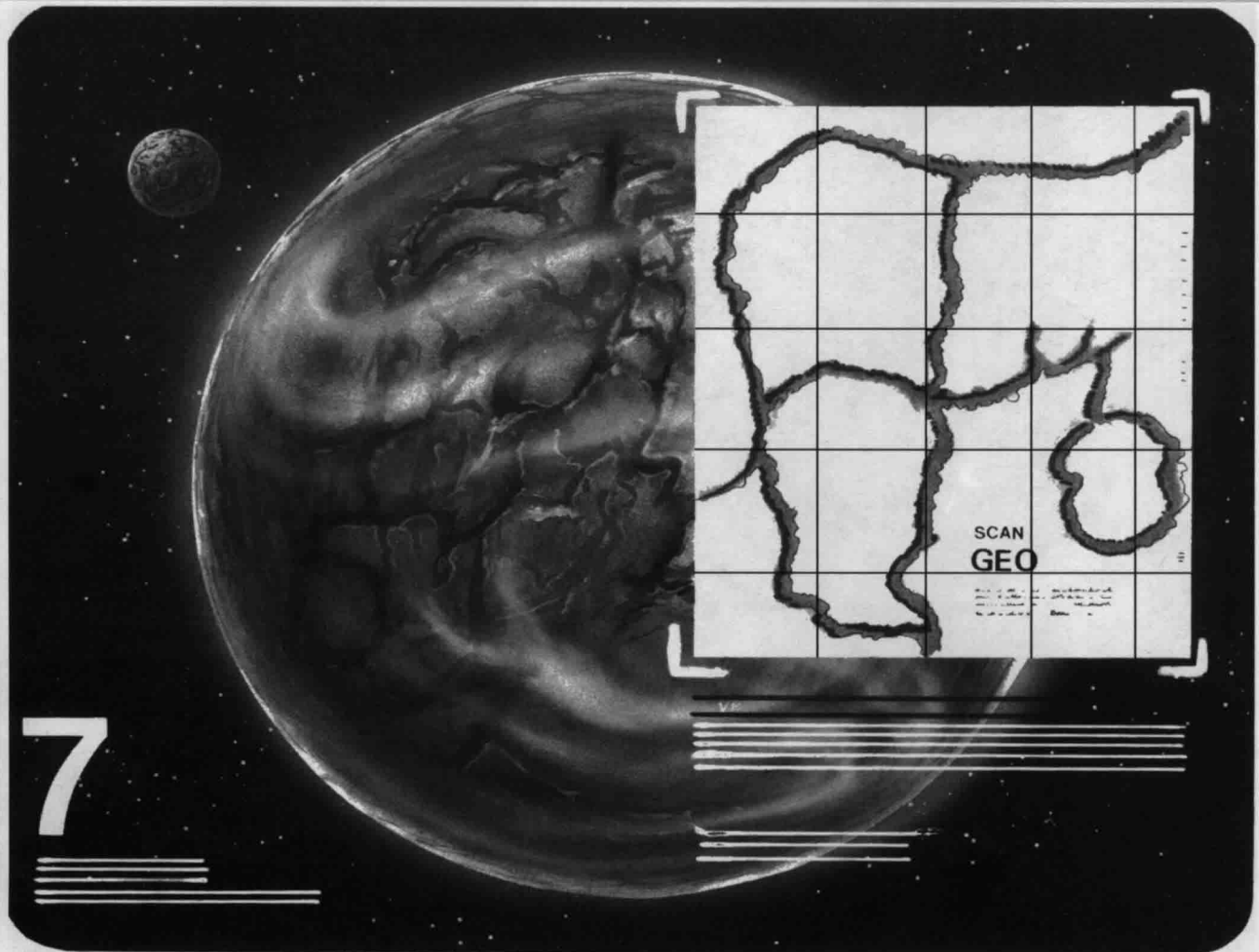
Scanning Vegra-7

As you break into standard orbit around Vegra-7 your sensors detect huge clouds of sand sweeping across the entire planet's surface. Every now and then your scanners and sensors are able to penetrate the veil of sand, revealing deep, sheer-walled canyons with sand swept bottoms.

Attempts to scan for the missing Guides team will be all but futile. A truly great scan may reveal a transport vehicle at area A. If they roll 100 or more trying to detect life then give them a small reading at area C. However, any descent scan will detect a distress beacon coming from area A. Further scans will prove useless due to increased storm activity.

If the team's communications officer is at their station, inform them that they are picking up some kind of weak signal from the same coordinates (Area A). If they attempt to boost the signal (Dif 20) tell them that there is some kind of vehicle in the area.

Vegra System



Landing on the Planet

Due to the severity of the sand storms, transporting onto the planet will require a lock Dif 100, and a transport Dif 100. Any sane group will decide to land the ship instead of attempting transport.

This section was designed to run from area A. Thus, steer the team to land and explore from there (be sneaky about it, don't force them). If they want to land elsewhere and haven't yet detect the distress beacon in area A, allow them to automatically detect the beacon as they begin their descent.

Landing in the sever sand storm is rather difficult (15) due to the force of the strong winds and sand blasting the hull. Trying to fly around and search (Dif 40) is near suicidal because of the cliffs which are obscured by the storms.

Canyon floors are filled with sand, making walking difficult. Heavy characters will sink into the sand with each step, destrons going in to their knees. You may ad-lib the effects of this (i.e., reduced movement, reduced defense, poor balance, etc.).

Sand storms will vary in frequency and severity, but they never stop all together. Sand-blasting damage is a constant threat. Down in the canyons the damage will vary from 5-20 every 15 minutes. Up on the canyon tops the damage increases to 10-50 points every 15 minutes.

Due to the sand storms, visibility will be greatly reduced: typically from 5 to 50 feet. Communications will become fussy and broken as range increases. Almost no communications will be possible beyond a mile. Likewise, sensors and scanners will be nearly useless.

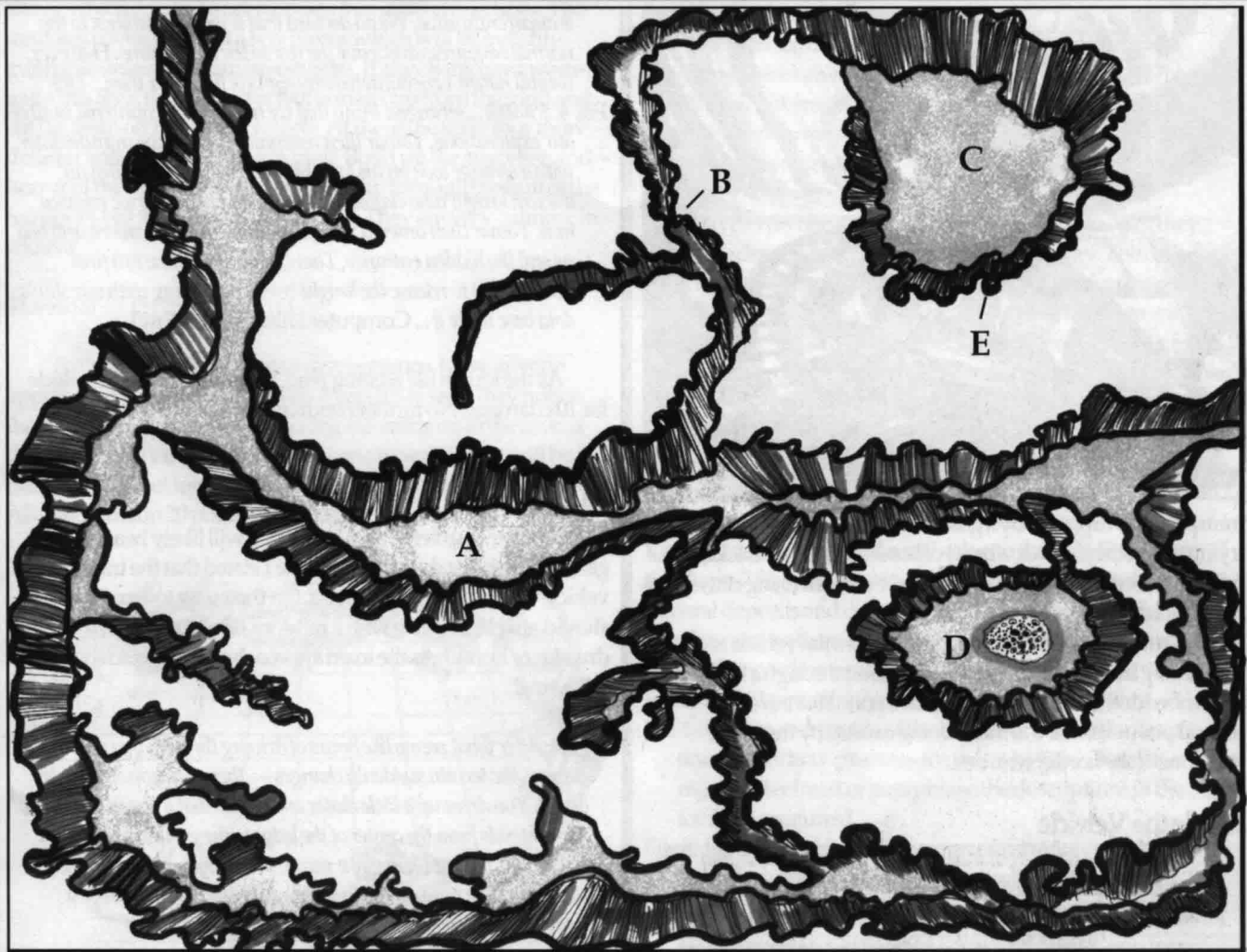
Characters who remain outside of heated environments may suffer freezing damage as the planet drops to around 100 degrees below zero at night, warming to a maximum of 40 above (Fahrenheit) during the day.

Random Encounters while Exploring the Canyons

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Bokhorum | Var./Var./Var. |
| Sand-Squid | 12/60/2 (MR 4) |

Whenever appropriate, feel free to interject random encounters with bokhorum and sand-squid. Such encounters should be used to keep game play moving, provide hack-and-slash players with adequate combat, and to prod the team in the right direction. However, be sure to build the suspense and horror of Vegra-7 (i.e., DON'T attack the team with a horak or dreadar until they first encounter them in one of the planned events below).

Vegra System



Area A

As the PCs land, read the following

Finally, your hellish descent seems to end. With a tremendous shudder and a great jar, the Stardart sinks into the sandy bottom of some lonely canyon on Vega-7. Looking out the viewports, your sprits sink. All you see are the dark streaks of sand racing through the night, propelled by the relentless winds. Then your ears pick up the dull howl of the wind, punctuated by the constant scraping of sand upon the hull.

Vegra-7 is a very inhospitable planet. The PCs current location puts them in a time zone two hours before sun up. The storm around them is particularly severe at this point. A rare break in the storm will come with the sun, allowing the PCs to view the surface of Vega-7. This break will only last for 10 or 15 minutes, and the PCs will likely not experience another one. The cover of this adventure and the MetaScape™ Game Box depicts the surface of Vega-7. You should show the players these to give them an idea of their environment. If you own the MetaScape

GM Screen, it depicts a much larger view of Vega-7. Inform the players that they are currently located on the floor of one of the canyon bottoms.

If any player has their character look around for the source of the metal or distress beacon during the brief break in the storm, award them an AP, and inform them that they see a shining glint off in the distance. In a few minutes the storm will pick up and the glint will be gone. At this time, the only real course of action will be to board the ship's transport vehicle and explore the surface.

As you are driving toward the area where you suspect the distress call was coming, you start to see a glint of metal growing in the distance. As you get closer you realize that it is a vehicle of some kind partially sticking up out of the sand with large snake-like tentacles wrapped around it. It says, GUIDE EXPLORER II-B, Research Vehicle, on the side. From all of the holes ripped in the hull, the vehicle looks as if it were in an incredible battle.

This is one of the Guide team's transport vehicles. There is little to be salvaged. The vehicle has rested here for over a week and all clues into the battle will be sand-blasted away. However, for your information (or if a character rolls a critical success) the

Vegra System



transport was captured by a giant sandsquid. As the team was trying to free themselves, a band of horde creatures attacked. The holes in the vehicle's side were caused by horak using claws and boneswords.

The transmission which is coming from the vehicle is originating from a survival knife, skewered through a tentacle and imbedded into the hull of the transport. There are also several pits in vehicle's armor plating caused by the acidic weapons of the horde creatures.

Inside the Vehicle

The vehicle is listing at a 20 degree angle in the sand, and half of its interior is buried. As you enter you see that the battle extended here as well. Computer panels are smashed, stations and lab areas ripped apart, blaster, plasma, and pulse laser marks are everywhere. The struggle must have been incredible by the signs left behind. However, you notice that there are no bodies of crew members or of their adversaries.

There are some computer files that may be recovered if power is restored (Dif 15). The files will be sketchy and broken due to the damage:

File 1: *We are now exploring southwest from camp. We are hopping to find... @\$ (Computer Glitches).*

File 2: *@\$% The planet itself seems to be on the offensive, as the very rocks and ground themselves ... @\$%*

As the next file is being pulled up the computer system starts to spark and smoke, then shuts down. It will take a repair Dif 15 to fix the system. If fixed (award an AP) two more files may be read:

File 3: *(@#^% ... searching one of these underground cave complexes we found some very strange and interesting things. Most of the caves seem to have been dug out by creatures with large claws, but deeper in, the caves glowed and were made of fleshy material which*

is apparently alive. We all decided that it was best to stick to the normal cave areas and leave the rest to the other teams. However, we still haven't encountered any signs of life, other than... |.#\$^?
File 4: *.\$%@@ ... strangest thing that we have ever encountered in all of our explorations. Tomar then reappeared about two minutes later with a strange look on his face. He said that he had visited an ancient knight who claimed that he would help us if we released him. Tomar then ordered us all back into the main cavern and had us seal the hidden entrance. That evening we came to a final decision not to release the knight before conferring with our ship's data base to see if ... Computer failure (see below).*

As the fourth file is being read, the computer will explode for 10x damage. No further files may be retrieved.

Area B

From encounter A above, the PCs will likely head in a general northeast direction since file 1 stated that the transport vehicle was traveling southwest. On their way to area B, you should attack the party with a random encounter or two (still no dreadar or horak). As the team approaches area B read the following:

After what seems like hours of driving through this narrow canyon, the terrain suddenly changes — there is a drop off ledge up ahead. You drive up a little closer and notice that a rough stone arch extends from the center of the ledge to the ground on the level below you, almost like a giant ramp. The canyon is only 300 feet wide here. The ramp is 120 feet wide, 200 feet long and drops a total of 80 feet down.

If the team scans or uses sensors to find metal they might detect fluctuating readings from the east side of the ramp. If they are searching for any energy, they will get a reading from the west side of the ramp.

Buried beneath the sand on the east side of this ramp are some of the Guide crew member's armor. There are four suits of marine armor that have been torn apart and 3 suits of assault

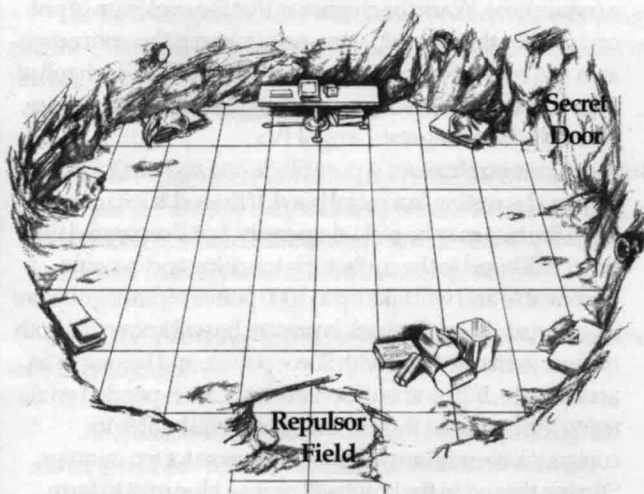


Vegra System

armor which have also been ripped into different sections. The sand has covered all but a few pieces which will be indistinguishable unless the team investigates. If any characters investigate this area, three dreadar will burrow up from the sand and cut the team off from their vehicle. At the same time, four more dreadar will attack the vehicle itself. Build up the suspense and horror of the dreadar. They can cut or rip through the hull of the transport, but it will take them awhile. They are very cunning in combat.

3 Dreadar 15/25/4 (BioT 16)

To the west of the ramp is a cave entrance. Have anyone approaching this entrance roll an Awa (10) to see if they notice that there is a repulsor field blocking the entrance to the cave. If they do not notice the field, the first one to walk into it will be flung back 20 feet into the canyon wall. They will have to roll an AR check to stop 20 points of damage.



The repulsor field is nearly transparent. Looking in you see several cases and boxes, a roughly hewn out counter and stools with a computer terminal set up on the counter. Just inside the repulsor field is a metal box that says, "Property of the House of the Guide." You think this is the control panel for the repulsor field.

There are several ways to enter this cave. The first is to cause more than 100 points of damage in a single attack against the repulsor field (Note: any damage by physical attacks will be repelled with a strength equal to the damage). A Shanask might circumvent the field with some *Sorce* enhancement. Of course if the team thinks of a creative way to get in you might give them an AP to the first character who succeeds.

Inside the Guide Base

As you step into this hollowed out room an automatic lighting system shimmers on providing you with dim, cold blue light. You look around and see some basic supplies that must have been left here by the lost team. Also, you notice a computer set up on the back counter.

Have everyone roll an Awa (12). The roll is to see if they notice the dreadar on a ledge above the doorway. The dreadar is dead and preserved for study. However, do not let the team know this (this is a good comic relief event as the team will likely attack and rip the dreadar to shreds before realizing their folly). If anyone noticed the dreadar have everyone roll a Nish to let them think that they are going into combat (everyone automatically has Nish over a dead creature).

Computer files

Most of the computer files cover the other planets in the Vegra System and are of no real value to the PCs. Even many of the Vegra-7 files are less than interesting covering such topics as mineral deposits and descriptions of the planet's topography, weather, atmosphere, geology, etc. However, good computer rolls will uncover some or all of the following files:

File 0: This file contains coordinates to the Guides' ship.

File 1-3: There are records of the bokhorum (read the descriptions under new creatures for this entry), the dreadar, and the mindspider (read or paraphrase the descriptions in the SG for these creatures).

File 4: *We have established base camp using part of a cave located beneath a naturally occurring stone ramp. After unloading supplies and technical equipment Joe discovered a hidden room. Tomar had an unusual experience in the room and has ordered that the contents not be disturbed until he can consult with the ship's data base. Tomar will take team 2 back to the ship while team 1 remains here to conduct additional explorations. We still haven't encountered any signs of life.*

File 5: *Commander Lindel has divided team 1 into two groups. Group 1, made up of combat oriented personnel, will take the transport south, while the technical personnel remain to establish base camp. Three combat trained officers will also remain.*

File 6: *Our team's transport has failed to report in now for 18 hours. On a more positive note, Jerrod thought he saw motion near the ramp's base. Perhaps there is life on this planet after all.*

File 7: *We were just attacked by horrid aliens. We fought off the first two groups that assaulted us but it cost five lives including all but one of our combat personnel. One of the engineers jury-rigged a repulsor shield to seal the cave entrance.*

File 8: *Six hours into the night, a large force of a dozen or more aliens (we have named them dreadar) accompanied by even larger creatures attacked the cave entrance. It was quite a sight to watch as the creatures bounced off the field and slammed into the canyon wall and one another. After several fearful minutes, the band realized the futility of their attack and left. They took most of their dead and wounded with them. But, fortunately, they missed one. We went out and retrieved it as a specimen for further research.*

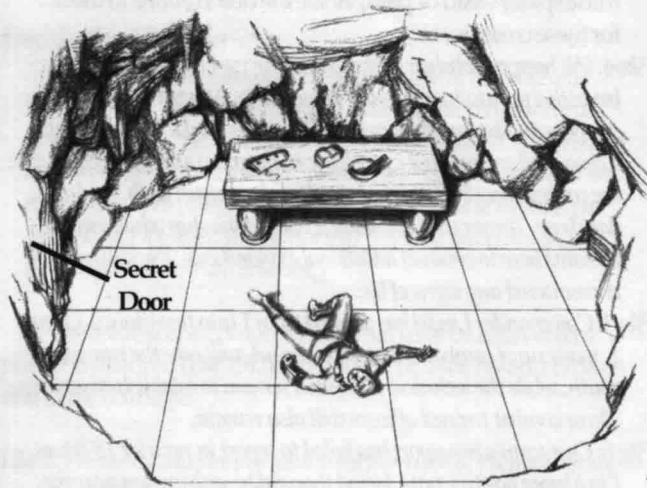
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File 9: When the next force came they stood at the door and hissed at us a couple of times and left. I hope I never have to hear that hiss again, it was almost hypnotizing.

File 10: It is now two days since group 1 left in our team's transport. We were beginning to lose hope, when Tomar's team contacted us. They are a half mile up the canyon and should be here within ten minutes. Unfortunately, static cut us off. I sure hope they are faring better than us.

File 11: Tomar's team arrived. Tomar is not with them, he and several others were exploring another cave entrance when the vehicle was attacked by aliens so ferocious that the vehicle driver was forced to flee. Now everyone is inside our shelter. During the night we heard terrible scrapping and crunching sounds. We assume that the transport is being attacked by the aliens.

File 12: We went out this morning to repair the vehicle and to perform some other studies. While out there we were ambushed by a very large force of the aliens. They must have been gathering over night. They had several of the larger aliens with them, which we are calling the horak. These horak killed most of the team this time. I managed to escape back to the base with my life. I could not believe the awesome strength of the horak. I watched as my friend Senchi was torn apart inside his Assault armor, it was horrible. Eventually everyone jumped into the mostly repaired vehicle and opened fire with everything they had. The battle was intense but in the end they had to flee the area. Now I am alone, I can only pray that they don't count me among the dead, and will return soon.



Secret Room

If the team finds the secret passage and the other room read the following.

You slip through the secret passage and enter a small room with an ancient wooden table against one wall. The table contains several items, however, your attention is drawn to the technician's body which lies on the floor.

The technician is the same individual who made log entry 12 above. He has a wristcomp which contains his last log entry:

I have now gone five days without food or water, and I have not seen or heard from anyone in well over a week. I can feel my consciousness slipping. As soon as I regain my strength I'm going to use the vambrace and free the ancient knight. He may be our only hope. But for now I must rest...

The technician never regained consciousness and malnutrition overcame him.

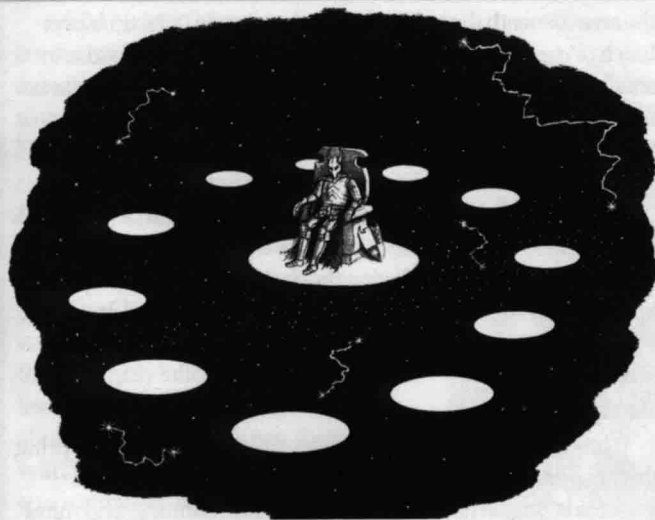
The items on the shelf are listed below with stats and full descriptions. Only tell the team what the items look like and let them figure out what each item does. If you have a sorcist in the group, they will be able to tell what the rod and bowl do.

Atomic Grenades: One metal box with two atomic grenades in it. Atomic grenades are very powerful and very dangerous items. These are normally used to destroy small meteors or to blow up small ships. The grenades may be launched from a vehicle or ship grenade launcher, thrown, or set to explode at a certain time. Warn the characters that the explosion of just one of these things could very easily take out this entire cave area and most of the canyon wall around it. On a Tech roll of 10 or higher from anyone trying to figure out what these are, reveal the following stat: Dmg 6HVx.

Bowl of Communication: A pure black, one and a half foot long, onyx rod is resting in a metal bowl. If the rod is left in the bowl the two may be picked up easily, but if separated the bowl will bond to the surface it is touching and become immovable and will take up to 1000 points of damage before it will break. If any Shanask is present he will know that both of these items are filled with Sorce power, and belong to an ancient race. If 20 points of Sorce energy are expended while using the bowl and the rod, the sorcist will be able to communicate with anyone in the universe for ten minutes. Stirring the rod in the bowl will cause a blue mist to form which will transmit the user's image. The rod may then be used to transmit the user's voice.

Quantum Bracer: This ancient vambrace has three colored stones on it, a black stone, a green stone, and a red stone. (GM Tip: Now you will learn of an old GM trick. Here are the parameters: there are three stones, but you want the PC to push the stone which transports them into the Quantum Knight's chambers (see below), however, you still want the player to feel that they are controlling the adventure plot (i.e., they have a choice of three stones). The solution: whichever stone they choose is the one which transports them). The other two stones perform arcane feats which only a quantum being could understand. For the vambrace to work, it must be placed upon the user's arm.

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Quantum Knight's Chamber

The following encounter will occur between one character and the Quantum Knight. You should conduct this encounter in private.

Read the following to all players:

Just as (Character Name) touches the (Color of Stone) stone, you see his entire body sucked up into the stone as if it were some black hole. In an instant his body stretches out and vanishes as if he were made of plastic. Even the vambrace vanishes.

Read the following (in private) to the player who's character uses the vambrace.

All of a sudden everything goes black and you find yourself standing on a thin five foot diameter disk of unknown translucent material. You seem to be floating in the dark void of space, but the stars are too close and small arcs of energy dance throughout the heavens. There is no sensation of temperature and you realize that you have no need to breath. Looking around, you see several other disks like the one you are standing on. They are arranged in a tight orbit about ten feet away from a slightly larger disk. Upon this disk is a tattered throne of ancient design. It is black with deep red cushions upon the seat and back. Tarnished gems adorn the exterior. But your attention is draw to a lifeless suit of armor slouching upon the throne. The armor is girded with, what must be, a costume sword sheath, due to its cardboard thickness.

The armor is actually worn by the Quantum Knight, Lord Lokoth. Lokoth will do nothing until the PC speaks or makes a quick motion. Even then, the only response will be two points of red, kindling within Lokoth's visor (the equivalent of consciousness).

Lokoth's Motives

In order to run this encounter properly, you must understand Lord Lokoth's motives and a little of his personal background.

Lord Lokoth is a Quantum Knight. Once, thousands of years ago, he was a living nobleman on a medieval based planet. Through a twist of fate, he and his knightly order were transformed into undead warriors. Although his knightly code and personal ethics remained intact, the centuries of living as an undead have slowly torn at their stability. Deep down, he is still a good being, however his surface personality will often appear harsh, abrupt, and suspect of evil intentions.

Lord Lokoth fought along with the Shanask race in the Chaos Wars to rid the Scape of its invaders. In one of the final campaigns, Lokoth was sent to this planet to rescue a Zodar entity. In a desperate battle with a high sorcerer of the enemy, Lokoth's quantum vambrace was ripped from his arm just as he was transporting into the quantum realm (which is where the PC is now). Without his vambrace, Lokoth was trapped, helpless and alone, and so has he remained for well over 6000 years. Several days ago, a lizard man visited Lokoth wearing the item of his salvation—a quantum bracer. Throughout the conversation, Lokoth believed that he was imagining the event, and eventually, the specter vanished. Now, lokoth is confronted with yet another specter (the PC) wearing a quantum bracer, and Lokoth is a little unsure of his sanity.

Lokoth's technical skills are equivalent to a medieval knight. Many things a PC might say will seem like foolish gibbering (lasers, space, etc.), which will only add to Lokoth's distrust of the PC's existence. However, several concepts will trigger a significant response: Shanask, Kryll, dreadar, horak, mindspider. Lokoth will actually identify with the names Shanask and Kryll. The other words will mean nothing (dreadar, horak, and mindspider are new names), however descriptions of them will have meaning.

If the PC brings up any of these topics, Lord Lokoth will begin to consider the PC's reality. Lord Lokoth is a skilled conversationalist, and will control the flow of communication, asking questions, but almost never answering any in return. Remember, he has not spoken to anyone in over six millennium.

Question 1. What are you?

Question 2. Where do you come from?

Question 3. What do you want?

If the PC gets on the subject of a demon invasion (demon is Lokoth's equivalent to alien), the knight will become much more lively, even standing up. At this point Lokoth will begin to believe the PC, believing that the battle he left so long ago is still being fought. He will believe that he has been trapped by the evil sorcerer in some type of time cage in which he lived the past 6000 years while only a few minutes or days passed on the planet's surface (of course, he is grossly wrong).

Vegra System

Lord Lokoth will now try to convince the PC to give him the quantum bracer. As GM you may handle this in any way you want. You know your roleplaying group, use whatever tactics (force, threats, promises, skilled conversation, show of strength, etc.) which will most likely succeed.

Note: neither Lord Lokoth nor the PC can leap between the disks, an attempt to do so will simply cause them to land back upon their own disk (like computer screen wrap-around). However, the bracer is a quantum device and it can be tossed to the knight (you may want to add the suspense of a near miss, if the bracer is lost both entities are trapped here forever, until rescued by another quantum being).

Stranded

If the knight gets the bracer, he will feverishly put it on (totally ignoring the PC), touch a button and vanish. At this point, allow the PC to believe that he has been trapped. Actually, Lokoth has traveled his last quantum conduit to the surface of the planet (which is several hundred yards from the PC's transport vehicle. He will see the transport (some sort of shiny enclosed wagon), and will make his way there. After a few minutes he will locate the cave entrance.

At this point, you need to arrange it so that Lokoth and the other PCs meet. If anyone is in the outer room, they will see an ancient knight standing just beyond the repulsor field. If no one is here, you might have him speak, "I am Lord Lokoth, is anyone within." Or, you could have the transport's proximity sensors go off and warn the PCs over their Dha communicators. In any event, when the other PCs meet Lokoth, you will have another fun opportunity to do some roleplaying.

Lokoth's motives at this point are to determine if the PC he has trapped in the quantum realm is indeed an ally of the dark races (i.e., an opponent of the demons a.k.a., aliens). This is a delicate meeting, for Lokoth has the ability to defeat most, if not all, of the party if combat should erupt. If Lokoth is not convinced, he will simply leave (either walking or traveling through the quantum realm).

If convinced, Lokoth will vanish, appearing beside the trapped PC. Lokoth will simply reach out an index finger and tap the PC (be sure to specify where he taps the PC and be sure to note the location for future use in this adventure—this PC will be referred to as the "chosen PC"). Lokoth will then vanish back to the planet's surface. He will then operate his bracer and the chosen PC will appear next to him.

After any additional dialogue which you wish to run, Lord Lokoth will inform the PCs that he must complete his quest. Before anyone can respond, he will vanish, with no indication whether or not he shall return.

Leaving the Base

When the team decides to leave the base to find the ship they will be ambushed by horde creatures. As the party is walking across the sand to their transport, have a dreadar's claw lurch up from beneath the sand and grab a character (play up the horror and fear). You may have any number of other dreadar in

the area (beneath the sand) attack as you see fit. If the transport hatch or cargo doors are open, you may allow two dreadar to sneak onboard and attack (if it is occupied) or stow-away (to be used in the next encounter).

The main purpose of this encounter is to place some sense of foreboding upon the Dha team as they proceed to locate the Guide ship. Play up the fear and horror of the dreadar, but break off the attack before the party becomes too damaged (save this for the next encounter). Having the dreadar suddenly stop their attack and mysteriously vanish back beneath the sand may leave the player's with the intended sense of trepidation.

Ambush

Just as the PCs are about to leave the narrow canyon, spring this encounter on them. The purpose of this encounter is threefold: 1) to demonstrate the intelligence, cunning, and mind control of the horde, 2) to demonstrate the true offensive power of the horde aliens, and 3) to terrify the players into believing that their character's lives are at stake.

This is a two part encounter. In the first part, the horde mind will use several Guide personnel (under control of mindspiders) in an attempt to ascertain the Dha team's purpose, strengths, and weakness. In the second part, the horde will simply try to eliminate the Dha team.

PART 1: As the PC's transport rounds some corner in the canyon, read the following:

Suddenly everyone is tossed forward as your driver slams on the brakes. Before you, through the blowing sand, you see a Calemora and two marines. They all have Guide emblems upon them and they are trying to wave you down. One marine even fires a flare gun over the cockpit of your transport.

The marines are Anthropos led by a Calemora Mutak. They are under the control of mindspiders. At this point, the spiders have sublimated beneath the skin's surface. Close inspection of the back of the neck may reveal a large area of scar tissue covering a fleshy protrusion. However, all three Guide personnel will do their best to keep their necks out of view (marines using helmets, the Mutak through body placement).



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GMNote: When an individual comes under control of a mindspider, the horde mind is able to use all of their skills and abilities. However, their past memories are sketchy, at best. Thus, the conversation will seem a little odd to a wary player.

The Guide team will act normal when confronted. However, they will only talk in short emotionless sentences and if questioned about their memory lapses, they will claim to have a rare form of space amnesia. Almost all of the talking will be done by the Calemora while the marines seem to just follow silent orders. GM, run this encounter as slyly as you can, giving APs out for good roleplaying and ideas. If the characters figure out what is going on and try to save the team members, give them an AP.

Their main goal is to determine who and what the PCs are and why they are here (i.e., for use by the horde in making tactical decisions). Their secondary goal is to get aboard the character's transport for purposes of sabotage and ambush. If they aren't found out, they will accompany the character's to the Guide ship, where they will try to divide the party up (taking one member at a time back to the engine room). If found out, they will attack the party in an attempt to kill them (at which time any stow-away dreadar will also attack).

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| 1 Calemora | 20/40/12 |
| 2 Anthro. Marines | 16/20/16 |

PART2: If the Guide team is discovered for what they are, spring this part of the encounter immediately. Otherwise, take your time, and spring the encounter when it feels appropriate.

The main purpose of this part of the encounter is to truly terrify the characters. This is one of those encounters where the PCs should have to flee. However, build the fear, don't hit them with everything at once. A recommended way to proceed follows:

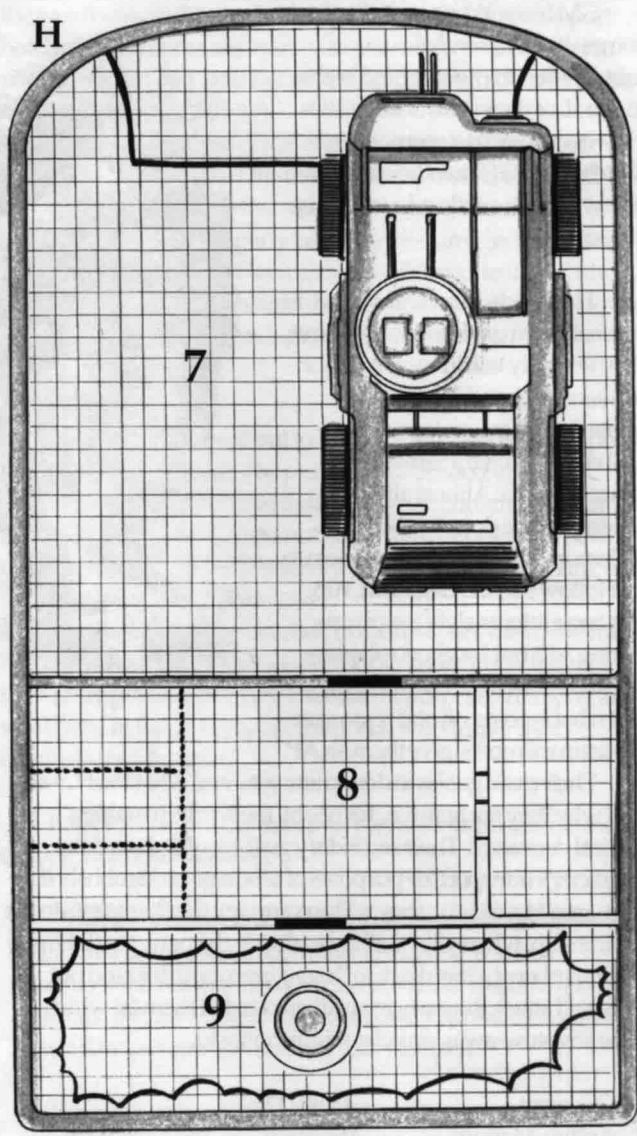
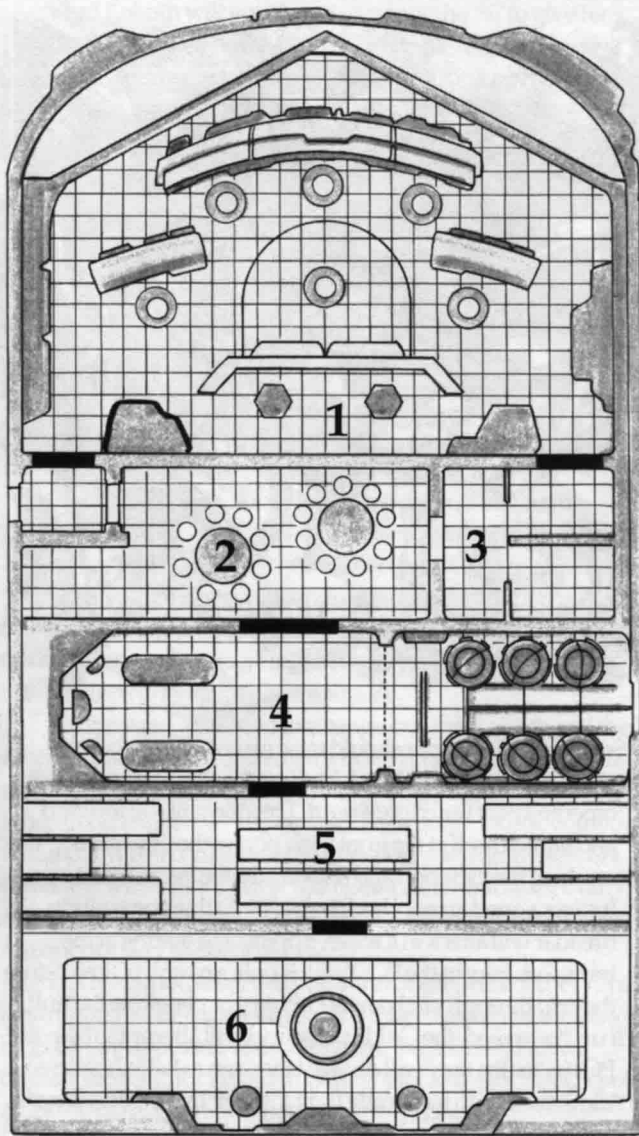
- 1) Have the front of the transport bog down in a shallow sand trap.
- 2) Several dreadar will leap off of the nearby canyon walls and land on top of the transport (with an ominous thud). These will begin searching for any unlocked entryways (or they may be let in by the Guide team).
- 3) As the PCs turn their attention to the outside, have any stow-away dreadar attack



- 4) Several (4-10) dreadar should raise up out of the sand, and stand hissing. Then a horak (the first the PCs have seen) will emerge just at the edge of sight. This one will run forward and launch itself at the front view port of the transport, cracking the viewport and shaking the entire transport (unless a good armor check is made). At this point, all the dreadar will attack in a wave, ripping and tearing at the transport. Inform the PCs that it is only a matter of time before they rip through vital power circuitry or penetrate the hull.
- 5) If undiscovered, the Guide personnel will attempt to help the PCs (actually, they will do what they can to help the aliens).
- 6) Allow the PCs to frantically fight for their lives. Difficulty of getting out of the sand trap is 50. Just when the players are considering the situation hopeless, have two horak burst up out of the sand (in front of the vehicle) grab it and hoist the front into the air (Dex 15 rolls for anyone standing). They will begin shaking and tearing at the vehicle. This is the PCs chance, if they gun the engines, they can escape the sand trap. However, several dreadar will hang on and continue working away at the hull. The PCs will have to handle this however they want (i.e., opening the hatch and crawling out on top as the vehicle is traveling). Also, if they run over the horak, it will jab a bone sword upward — ad-lib any superfluous damage you want (i.e., grinding drive train, loss of interior lighting, etc.).

GMNote: If the battle starts to go very badly for the PCs (i.e., one slain, or more than one unconscious), you may have Lord Lokoth “coincidentally” show up at this time. Otherwise, he will arrive at the Guide ship. If he does show up, he will seem to spring out of the chosen PC at the exact location at which he previously touched him.

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Area C

As you look out across this huge open area the sand storm seems a little less severe, allowing you to see some of the region in front of you. Then something catches your eye in the distance towards the center of the area. You can't quite make it out, but you are sure that it is not consistent with the landscape of the planet.

The team sees the tip of the Guide ship's wing sticking up from the sand. The storm has almost completely covered this side of the ship with sand. When the team arrives at the ship it will take them about a half hour to dig down to one of the hatches. During this time, you can ask for awareness checks and haunt them with illusions of moving shapes just beyond the range of vision.

Again, due to the reflective properties of the sand, any scans of the ship's interior will be very difficult (50 or higher). However, the team will be able to tell by simple observation that the ship is not powered up.

If the Dha team is still relatively healthy, you may want to attack them with 2-5 Dreadar 15/25/4 (BioT16) just as they gain entrance.

The Guide Ship—Explorer II

The Team's main purpose onboard the Explorer should be to install the autopilot uplink (this must be installed into the helm station on the main bridge) and to power up the ship's main engines (which can only be done at lower engineering).

Once inside the Explorer, the PCs will discover that there are very few doorways. To go from one room to the other the players need to restore power to the intra-ship transportals. If the roll to restore power is higher than 10 it partially succeeds allowing the portals to work but not allowing vision through the portals. If the roll is above 20 then vision is also restored, once a

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PC steps through the transportal and activates the vision capabilities on both ends (i.e., first one through each transportal won't know what the area looks like). Next to all of the transportals are button panels. The buttons are labeled B for bridge, R for recreation and security, S for science/medical/probe room, C for crew sleeping area, E for engineering, and H for cargo hold. All rooms are completely dark save for engineering which is filled with a faint green glow. If any power is restored at all (5), then minimal lighting will come back on-line, on a roll of 10 or higher environmental control will be regained and the ship will begin warming back up to a comfortable level.

Power Restoration:

| Roll | Affect |
|-------|---|
| 0-1 | Critical failure (RB pg.16) |
| 2-4 | Failure |
| 5-9 | Restoration of lighting only |
| 10-19 | Restoration of lights, primary computer functions, transportals, and environmental control. |
| 20-99 | Restoration of all internal ship functions (not the engines, shields, or weapon systems) |
| 100+ | Restoration of all ship functions, except the engines. They can only be turned on from lower engineering. |

Note: the team will need to go to engineering to restore full power to the ship and its engines before it can actually fly.

LEVEL 1

1. Ship Bridge

You are on the bridge of the ship. It is a typical bridge save that the main computer panel is located near the helm station. There are two transportals at the back of this room. Next to each is a panel labeled R, S, C, E, and H.

Someone with a computer or engineering skill needs to install the autopilot uplink. Along with installing the uplink, the characters will have to restore power to the ship's engines and all main systems. This may be fully accomplished only from lower engineering.

2. Recreation Area

This is the recreation area on the ship where crew members relax, eat, play games, etc. Unusual for this vessel, you notice a small doorway in the east wall.

The recreation area is where the crew would relax and eat their meals.

Have all the characters roll an Awa (15) in this room. If any succeed they will see something move at very high speeds from one wall to another. The thing is a mindspider traveling from a vent on one wall to a vent on the other. These vents are too small for any team member to use. If someone gets down to look into the vent, have them roll a shock (20). If they make the check allow

them to roll Nish. If the individual being attacked fails, the mindspider will get a free attack (Atk 30 this round only). After the first round, run combat as normal.

1 Mindspider 15/10/3 (Str 15)

3. Brig

The team has found the brig. It is used when the House of the Guide acts as bounty hunters. There is no one in here at the moment but there are some items in one of the cells.

If the team searches the area they will find a power enhanced sword (+1d to Dmg), a personal crawler 8/5/5 (see EM pg.5), and a survival kit (see EM pg.13) inside of the crawler.

4. Science \ Probes \ Medical

Looking around this room you can tell that it is an incredible science area (6H) with all of the latest equipment available for scientific research. Some of the equipment is so advanced that not even (best science character) recognizes it. There are also six high level scientific probes located on the opposite side of the room. In the back of the room is a transportal with lettered buttons next to it. The letters read B, R, C, E, and H.

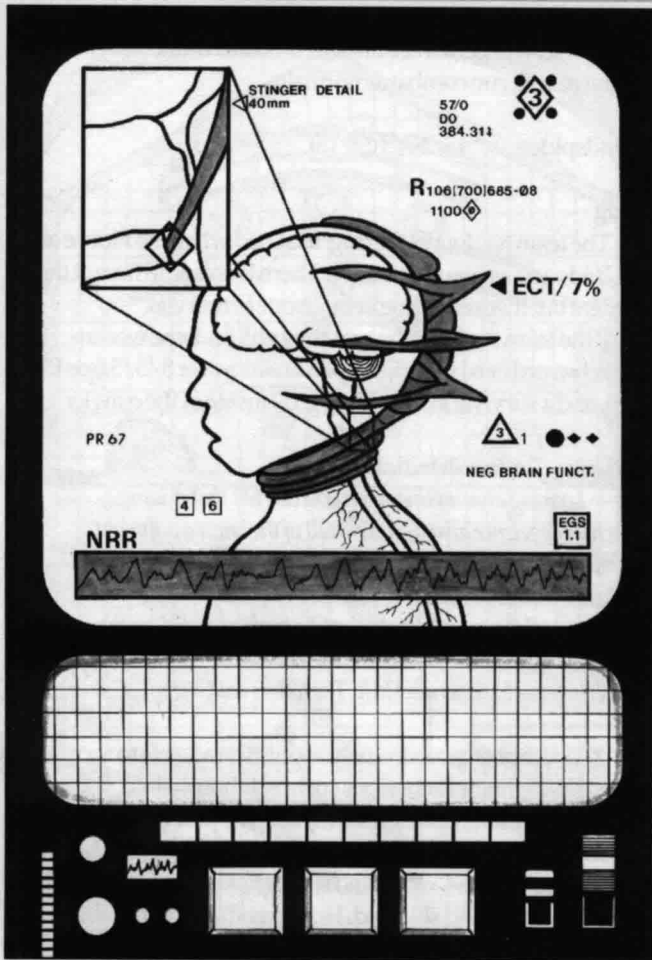
These probes are extremely sophisticated, able to accomplish tasks in multiple environs such as: lithospheres, hydrospheres, atmospheres, and space. The probes have arms and claws so they may manipulate items, cargo areas to hold item(s) smaller than 4'x4'x4', and scanner and sensor arrays. They are armor plated and shielded. However their combat abilities are limited to a small cutting laser and two claws. Probes 8/12*/32, Dmg with cutting laser is 32, the claws do 12 Dmg.

This is the main area for scientific research and study of planetary bodies and solar systems. The probes may be programmed and launched from here, however they may not be programmed to self-destruct due to their extreme value and importance to the House of the Guide. Characters attempting to do this will lose access to all probe controls.

The third function of this room is to act as a medical lab. It is a fully equipped medical lab (10M) specializing in the study of new life forms (10H). If the sheet is lifted on the lab tables deep gouges will be found. A Medical log will state the following if the team activates any medical files:

Two of the crew members have been assaulted by creatures which lock themselves onto the back of their victim's heads. The creatures then insert their neural stinger into the victim's spinal column just below the axis vertebrae. When the connection is made the crew member acts stunned for a few seconds and then goes berserk, attacking everyone around them. Luckily I had a sedative power syringe strong enough to overcome the individuals. Strangely enough the creatures were also effected. I believe this is due to their direct spinal connection. We then brought the two victims into the med lab where we immediately began surgery to extract these two "mindspiders" from their hosts. The creatures were ordered destroyed after being removed for

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security purposes. One of the crew men survived the operation and recovered but he could not remember anything during the time he was in contact with the creature.

5. Crew Quarters

Without any doubt the room that you have just entered is the crew sleeping area. All of the beds are exactly the same. They are bunk beds with gray blankets white pillows and three drawers underneath. At each end of the room are two storage lockers protected with magnetic security locks. On the far wall is another transport with buttons reading B, R, S, E, and H.

The storage lockers are very durable (Str 80). If someone attempts to break the lock's security code (Dif 25) and fails, gas (Dif 20 or suffer 10 points of lung damage—natural armor only) will billow out of vents on the top and bottom of all of the lockers. The gas will completely fill the room in four rounds (so begin Nish immediately). The room will clear in two hour's time. Inside of the lockers are officer uniforms, two credit cards with a total of 812 cr (547, 256) security 10, and a pair of Ultralock gloves (See new items sections).

6. Upper Engineering

You enter the upper level of engineering which is dedicated to hyperdrive maintenance and control. This room is warm and unusually moist. Catwalks extend around either side of the room to the control alcove on the far wall. Built into the alcove are two hydrolifts to lower engineering. The bulk of the room drops ten feet to a large mesh grid. In the center of the room, penetrating the grid, is the ship's main reactor core. It is still active, but no longer supplying power to the ship's engines or major systems.

The characters need to get to lower engineering in order to reconnect the ship's power conduit to the reactor. Thus, they will need to travel the catwalk to the alcove and take the hydrolifts down. During this time, nothing unusual will happen unless a character has *danger sense* or some similar enhancement. There is a **HUGE** danger in lower engineering. Also, anyone looking at the grid may notice (Dif 8) that it is slime coated. A better Awareness roll (Dif 15) will allow the character to notice the mindspider sacks hanging from the grid (20 in all). If noticed, read the following:

You notice that the mesh grid separating upper and lower engineering is coated in a moist mucoid substance. (If the roll was a 15 or higher continue reading) Suspended from the grid's intersections are numerous bags. They are about a foot and a half in length, looking a lot like a leather punching bag. A strange sense of foreboding comes over you.

If the characters walk slowly, nothing bad will happen at this point. However, sudden or jolting movements (such as combat) will cause random sacks to split open. The fully developed mindspiders will then crawl out and leap upon opponents. If a character attacks a mindspider while it is still in its sac, the difficulty to hit is only 5 but the sac adds an extra 5 to the mindspider's armor.

LEVEL 2

7. Main Cargo Hold

You are in the main cargo hold where the transport vehicles and hyper bikes are usually stored. The area contains only one transport at this time.

The transport vehicle in the cargo bay is a the Guide's equivalent to the Guild's Scimitar-Class armored transport. 10M/10MV/8M (Sen 10H, Scan 8H) EM pg. 65. An intelligent party will determine that the vehicle has already been out on patrol. If inspected, character's may notice (Dif 8) the highly polished exterior resulting from the sand-blasting it has undergone. Close inspection will reveal sand caked into every nook and cranny.

The transport will show signs of attack by horak and dreadar. Inside the transport, the party will find several holding cells with indications that they have been recently used. If

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computer files are accessed, a really good roll (Dif 20) will reveal that the last three log entries were erased (by crew under mindspider influence).

ASIDE: What really happened. This team is the remnants of Tomar's team after rescuing some of the personnel at the ramp-cave. On their return, they were able to capture a dreadar and several mindspiders which were clinging to the transports hull. These were placed in the holding cells and then brought back to the Explorer II. In the middle of specimen transfer a struggle erupted in securing the dreadar, and one of the mindspiders got loose and took over control of a technician. As the rest of the Guide team worked on restraining the dreadar, the mindspider used the technician's knowledge to open the cargo bay. It then contacted the hive mind and a band of horde aliens arrived and sneaked aboard. Then, the real battle erupted, in which most of the Guide team were overpowered and subjected to the control of mindspiders. After capturing the Guide personnel, the horde aliens set up a nest in lower engineering (next to the warmth of the reactor core).

8. Live Cargo Holding Area

Entering this room, you immediately notice the signs of combat but strangely there are no bodies of friend or foe.

Numerous weapon marks cover the walls along with several strange pocked areas. A large hole exists on the back wall of the east holding cage. The hole looks as if it were caused by extreme heat.

Live creatures are normally stored here for scientific study. There are stasis fields and other lesser holding areas throughout the room.

The pock marks and large hole were caused by horde aliens firing bellygun equivalents (i.e., acid damage not heat damage).

9. Lower Engineering

A mysterious looking room lies before you. Slime drips off of everything and many cyst-like chambers line the walls. There is a great sense of evil here that sets your nerves on end. Although the room's lighting system is not functioning, you can see by the eerie green light given off by the cysts. Within their translucent membranes, you can make out bipedal forms. Hanging from the ceiling grid that separates upper and lower engineering are nearly two dozen punching bag like sacks.

For an explanation why the aliens are located in this room, see the aside in area 7 above.

When the PCs arrive in this room, everything will be calm, however, as they begin to talk or move, the hibernating horde aliens will increase their activity (none will attack in the first round). As GM, keep increasing the alien activity (i.e., a few more join the battle each round) until the PCs are forced back. This room contains a large supply of aliens (5 horak, 12 dreadar, and 20 mindspiders).

If anyone walks within one square of a mindspider sack it will start to shake. If the character becomes very still (Dex 15) the bag will stop shaking, otherwise it will slowly start splitting open, and the next round a mindspider will creep out of the ooze and slime of the sack and attack the team.

When the cysts are opened, catatonic crew members will be discovered within. If their mindspiders are not removed or killed immediately, the crew members will awake and start attacking the team members within two rounds of being freed. If the spider is killed the crew member will slump to the ground and die. If surgical removal (Dif 20) fails, the crew member will die, however, if the process succeeds, the crewman will wake up in a day. They will be extremely weak, unable to perform any actions for one week, and all memory during mindspider control will be lost.

Attacking Horde Creatures:

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| 20 Mindspiders | 15/10/3 (Str 15) |
| 12 Dreadar | 15/25/4 (BioT 16) |
| 5 Horak | 8/40/10 (Atk 15, BioT 24) |
| 6 Crew+Mindspiders | 14/12/6 (If the crewman dies then the mindspider will began to attack on its own) |

The main computer panel is next to the reactor core in the middle of the room. If the players miraculously prevail during this encounter, they may actually succeed in powering up the engines (i.e., reconnecting them to the reactor core).

If the players flee this area (a likely occurrence), have the horde aliens pursue them throughout the ship. Be creative, let the aliens crawl through air ducts and ambush the party, etc.

For special effects, you should have Lord Lokoth return at some point to help the PCs out. He will reappear next to the chosen PC (he is actually traveling through the quantum conduit he established when he previously touched that PC). Play up his combat prowess in this battle. When the situation is under control, he will accompany the PCs until they return to their ship.

During his travel with the PCs, feel free to have him engage in idle conversation. Lord Lokoth has determined that this is the far distant future from when he was last on Vegra-7. He also has extensive knowledge of the demons ("horde aliens"). However, he will not share major secrets with the PCs at this time. Also, remember that he is a lord, and has spent the last several millennium alone, so his speech will be short, and to the point.

GM NOTE: Whether or not the characters succeed in powering up the ship is not important. Even if they do establish engine control, the horde aliens will sabotage the ship before the PCs can fly it out of the system (see below). This is VERY important, because horde aliens should not be directly introduced to the Guild at this time.

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Leaving the Ship

As you step out into the blowing sand, your heart races as your feet swiftly take you to the safety of your transport

Read the following as the first character steps onboard.

And then a sense of dismay threatens to strip your sanity away. Two leathery sacks catch your eye as they quiver above the control console. With a quick glance, your worst fears are realized. a large hole has been ripped and melted through the floor of your transport. The tiny arcs of power indicate that the primary power coupler has been severed and a large section of it is gone.

If the team remains, have an appropriately difficult horde creature (horak and / or dreadar) slowly rise up out of the hole in the transport floor and hiss ominously. The creature will then attack, causing the two mindspiders to break out of their sacs.

If the PCs prevail, they will discover that the transport is beyond repair (unless an engineer makes some phenomenal roll). However, a wise player may remember the transport located in the ship's cargo hold. If no one remembers, or if the team never visited the cargo hold, have everyone roll Intelligence checks, and (conveniently) set the difficulty equal to the highest roller. Inform this player of the other transport (or its likely existence).

The team must now sneak back into the Explorer II, board the transport and make good their escape. Fortunately, the cargobay door is only slightly buried in the sand; the door's hydraulics will be sufficient to force them open. Several lesser attacks onboard (i.e., one dreadar at a time) may add to the event.

Finally, just as the team is leaving the cargo hold, several more dreadar and a horak will rise up from the sand. Let the team simply run them over and succeed in leaving (no doubt with a great sense of relief).

Area D

As you approach this huge mound, you begin to make out hundreds of openings. You estimate that it is about a mile wide and who knows how deep. As you watch, several membranous sections seem to pulsate as if it were living, and a great sense of danger issues forth from this hive like mound.

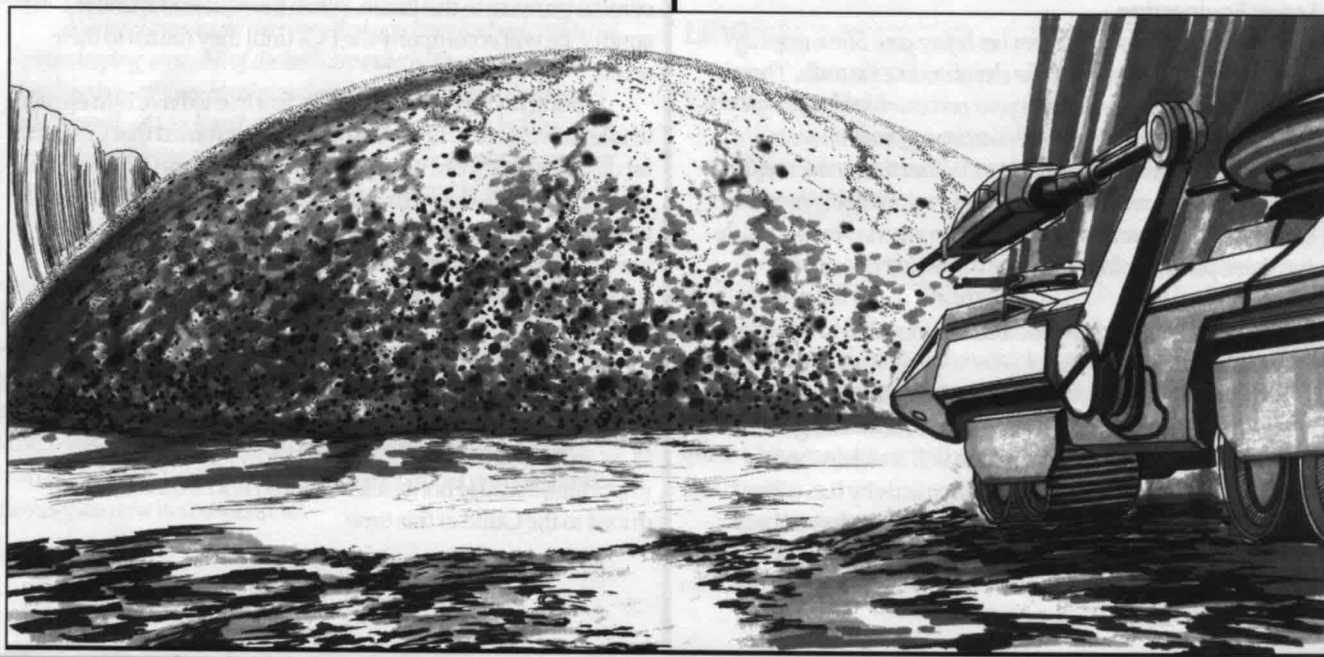
If there is a Kryll in the group, read the following to that player.

Something in your very being screams at you to flee this area. Pictures of horrible alien beings cross your mind, so hideous that you shudder at the thought. An ancient presence begins to tug at you, trying to overcome your consciousness. You sense that this thing is a gigantic spaceship capable of horrible acts of destruction, and you must leave this area before it senses your presence and destroys you all.

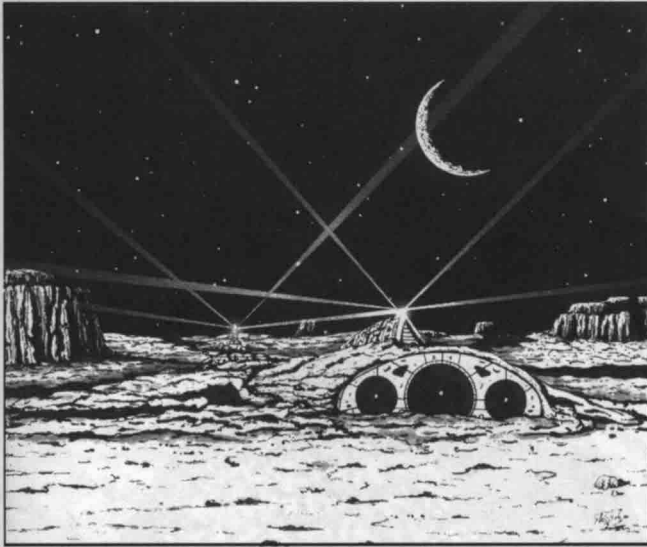
Let the characters know that the fear and dread here is so powerful that even the strong willed Calemora or Shanask feel a sense of foreboding. Keep building the danger levels if the characters persist in approaching the horde bioship. Once the characters are within 100 yards of the mound, hundreds of aliens start jumping out of the holes in the mound and begin running towards the character's vehicle. The characters must make Shock (50) rolls or be forced to flee.

Anyone foolish enough to remain will be attacked by 5 horak and 50 dreadar. The horde creatures will rip the transport to shreds without effort and proceed to kill the team outright.

The mound is a large living hive ship (somewhat like the Kryll bioship in the previous adventure) half buried in the canyon floor. The ship is depositing a large colony of horde aliens upon Vegra-7 and transforming part of itself into a living hive complex beneath the planet's surface.



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Returning to the Ship

This encounter won't occur until the team returns to their ship for the final time (i.e., if the team decides to make several exploratory probes to and from their ship, don't spring this encounter, until they are returning with intentions to leave the planet).

As you near your ship's last known coordinates, you see little more than a large mound of sand. Your ship is almost entirely covered. Your sense of alarm increases when you see flashing red lights streaking along the outer hull. That particular pattern is reserved for one purpose... internal intruder alert!

If the players attempt to establish communications Dif 15 (i.e., remotely log into the ship's internal comm system), read the following.

As you establish communications with your ship you hear the massive A-Frame firing all of its weapons with horrible screams and hisses in the background. The ship computer continues to repeat, "The ship is under attack by hostile forces, situation is critical."

The main hatches are buried beneath the sand and it would take dozens of precious minutes to uncover them. Characters will have to use other means to get onboard, such as: using the transporter to blast a hole in the side of the ship, using the *Sorce*, or remotely operating the ship's transporter (Dif 25). External scans may detect (depending upon the results) two life forms in the cargo area and several life forms on the bridge. Some of the life signs on the bridge are fluctuating and fading.

Main Bridge

As you arrive on the bridge you see alien bodies strewn everywhere. Most of the bridge stations have been damaged. Just then a searing pulse of laser energy blows a dreadar in half. The A-Frame is still operational, although several of its panels are dangling on wires, the servos on its left leg are paralyzed, and only its missile battery and one pulse laser remain functional. You not even sure if its safety override programs are still intact. You see movement throughout the room.

Depending upon the team's current condition, you may want to increase or decrease the number of aliens on the bridge (try to make the number defeatible). A recommended mix is 1 horak and 5 dreadar.

| | |
|-----------|---------------------------|
| 5 Dreadar | 15/25/4 (BioT 16) |
| 1 Horak | 8/40/10 (Atk 15, BioT 24) |

After the battle the team will find that most of the systems are damaged but not destroyed. The number of dead aliens total three horak and 20 dreadar. The A-Frame was worth its weight ten times over in credit chips.

Cargo Area

A ship-wide investigation will reveal a large hole torn in the side of the cargo bay. If the ship enters orbit at this time, the cargo bay will depressurize and all adjoining doors must withstand the vacuums of space (see RB, Critical Damage, Hull Breach on pages 42 and 43). Of course, the team may decide to remain while those with appropriate skills instigate repairs.

Unless the team beamed directly to the cargo area when they boarded their ship, the horak and dreadar who were here will have gained access to the ventilation system and will stow-away. Sprung them on the party in the next section (see below).

| | |
|-----------|---------------------------|
| 1 Dreadar | 15/25/4 (BioT 16) |
| 1 Horak | 8/40/10 (Atk 15, BioT 24) |



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Leaving Vegra-7

At this point, Lord Lokoth will inform the team that he must remain on Vegra-7 in a near futile attempt to complete his quest. If questioned about his quest or offered assistance, he will only say that he must find the keystone, and that his battle is an old one which does not concern the PCs. With that, he will once again vanish.

Unless the team somehow unburied the ship, the difficulty to launch from the planet will be 20 (otherwise it is 12) — failure indicates the amount of damage the ship suffers. Once in orbit the team can activate the Explorer II's autopilot uplink (if it was installed and the engines were powered on). The Explorer will take off and make its way through the planet's atmosphere. Half way up, several error messages will streak across the helm station's screen, indicating that the uplink is losing navigational control (alien sabotage).

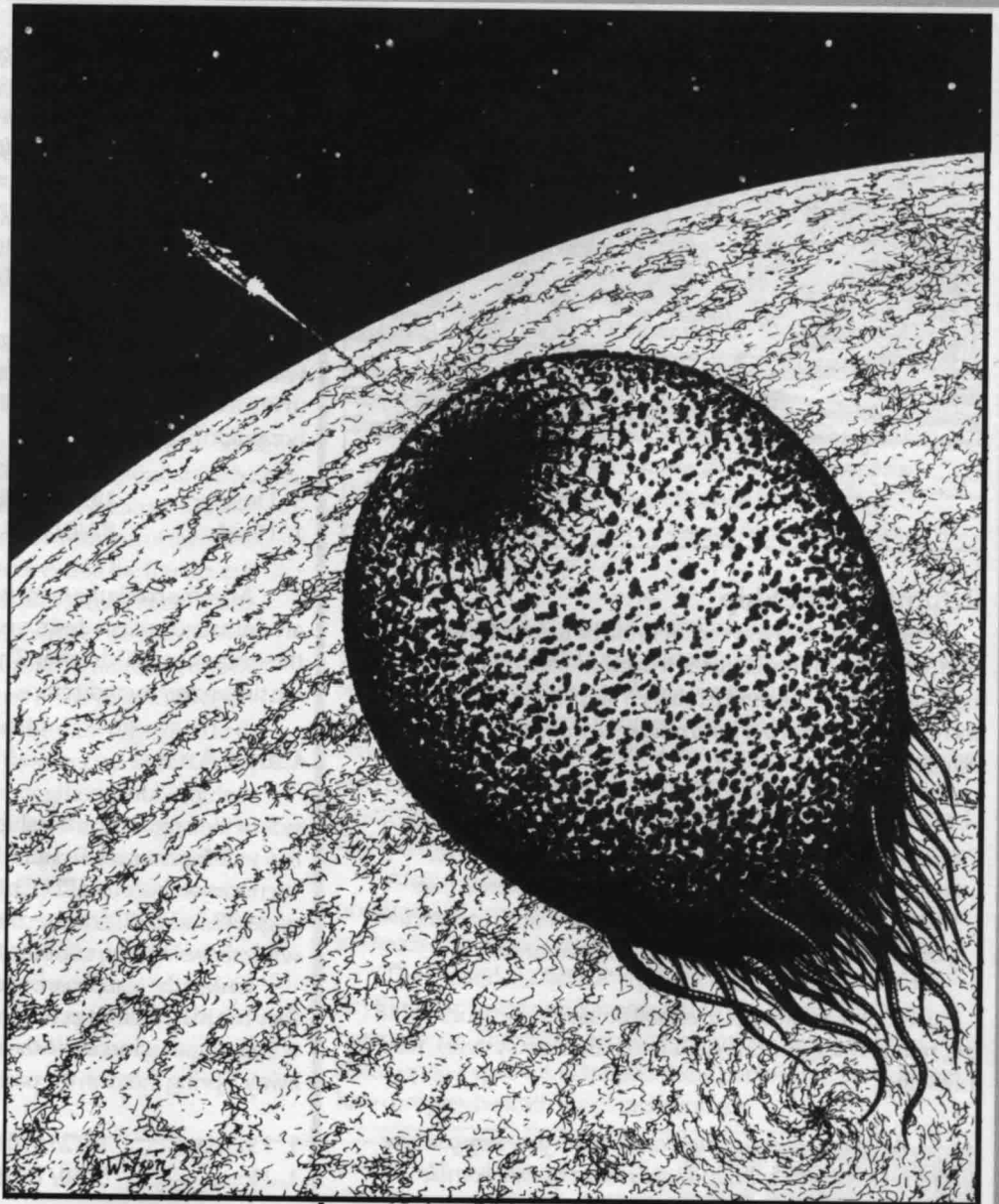
This is a great point to have the stow-away aliens attack just to add madness to mayhem.

No matter what the PCs do, the Explorer II will begin to arc back towards the planet's surface, where it will impact with a sizable explosion.

As soon as this event ends, another crisis will arise.

As you look back at the planet and contemplate recent events, your ship's proximity alert goes off, "Warning, unidentified life form approaching from planet's surface." Glancing at your view screen, you see a large vortex forming in the sand clouds below.

The vortex formed when the alien ship from area D launched itself into the air. If the characters break orbit and run, they will never know what was "coming for them." However, if they remain, they will witness the awesome size of the alien vessel as it pierces the eye of the vortex and rises to meet them 10/30S/20. (50 Hull Points)



If the team remains, the horde bioship will retract its tentacle like appendages (formed as it was lining the planet's caverns), and begin forming a vacuous opening large enough to envelope the team's entire vessel.

Allow the team to take several shots at the bioship before the purpose of the vacuous opening becomes apparent. At this point, the bioship will move to envelop the Dha vessel. If the team flees, they will be able to outrun the ship and escape. If the team remains the bioship will fire slugs of mucous matter which will attach to the ship's hull and slow it down. Eventually, the bioship will either be destroyed (unlikely) or it will catch the Dha vessel and envelope it. If enveloped, the bioship will immediately disable the vessel's guns. Next several holes will be digested through the vessel's side and hordes of aliens will spew into the ship... and yet another song shall be sung about a brave, but foolish, Dha team who died among the cold reaches of the outer rim.

Return to Dha

The team will have no further difficulty locating the coordinates of the wormhole. After sending the proper transmission (Recovery-7) through the macroscopic wormhole to Admiral Omboro, the wormhole will be opened to near maximum width (Dif 3 to fly through). Once the PCs are through, the hole will close behind them, and they can finally breathe free.

The next several days will pass uneventfully, as the team makes their way back to Dha. When they arrive read the following:

Finally, the dim form of Dha Prime begins to grow on your view screen as you come out of the stellar dust. The routine process of landing clearance is welcomed as your ship is once again embraced by the protoplanet's space dock.

When you land, you receive an Admiral clearance communique complete with coordinates instructing you to transport immediately to Admiral Nelos' personal meeting chambers.

Assuming the PCs follow orders, read the following:

Two towering Anthropros in full assault armor guard the door. They wear the emblems and decor of the admiral's personal guard. Seeing you appear before them, they salute, then activate the doors, stating, "You have been expected."

After the team enters the room, the doors will silently whisk shut.

This chamber is rather large with ancient tapestries hanging from the walls representing different races of the Guild. Two large well armed walkers stand at ready in the back corners of the chamber. In about two minutes Admiral Nelos enters followed by the top ranking military officials from each of the moons orbiting Dha. The team notices that Cyber Lord Dremoch is present as well. He frequently glances your way, with the look of hope in his eye. These are some of the most decorated and respected members in the Guild. Once everyone is seated Admiral Nelos activates a holocorder and says, "Well captain (Captain's Name), I am pleased to see that your team made it back. Lets dispense with any further pleasantries and have your report."

The team should fully explain what happened at this point. Give APs for those players who roleplay well by explaining events from their character's points of view. Don't allow the players to just look at you and say, "We explain everything that happened." There are some special things that can occur here so have them explain everything.

Below are listed some special subjects. If any of the following are mentioned break into the character's conversation and read the descriptions listed below.

1. If the team mentions the **Quantum Knight**.

As you mention the Quantum Knight you notice the Shanask in the room wavers for a second as if he is using some kind of power. Then he is normal again. For some reason an uneasy feeling comes over the whole group and then it is gone.

2. At the mention of the black onyx **rod and bowl**.

Shakna will ask for the items as they are artifacts belonging to an ancient race known to the Shanask. He will not force the characters to give them up but he will be very disappointed in them if they don't.

3. If the encounter with the **Empire** and the other ship are mentioned.

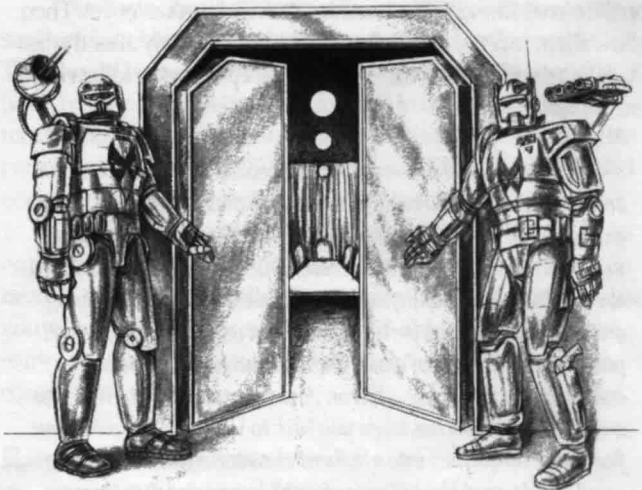
Admiral Nelos looks at the team and says, "Yes, we have been fully briefed by Admiral Omboro on the situation with the Empire. We are very grateful that you acted in the interest of the Guild in this matter. Please continue with your story after this encounter."

4. If Dremoch's brother **Tomar** is mentioned.

At the mention of his brother Cyber Lord Dremoch speaks up and asks, "Yes did you find my brother? Is he all right? Is he alive?"

After the team tells Dremoch that they didn't find him. Dremoch looks a little saddened but he straitens in his chair and looks at you saying, "It is too bad that you did not find him, it is a regrettable event." You can tell that he is hiding something within his words.

After the team relates their story, Admiral Nelos issues mission salaries and grants the team two weeks personal leave beginning tomorrow morning at 0900.





Darkness within the Night

Allow the PCs to spend their credits at this point. This is important, for any new purchase may inadvertently help them on the remainder of this adventure — which isn't over yet! Then allow them to retire to their barracks to rest. Shortly after the last PC falls asleep (among those who do sleep), run the following encounter.

Your dreams this evening (day dreams or night dreams) are particularly disturbing. You imagine that an evil black form enters your mind and takes control of your thoughts. You wrestle in an attempt to force out the invader, but eventually, you weaken and reality seems to slip away. Time passes, now you are laying on a cold hard surface, perhaps stone, and you can hear the shrill penetrating screeches of wind. The constant howl, the never-ending wail, ... madness ... terror. And then you imagine that you awake. Your dream has taken you back to Vegra-7. The cold stone floor has transformed into a halberd-class transport. The raging wind wields sand like millions of small knives dancing through the dusk. But your heart lurches to life, beating within your chest, and a scream erupts from deep within your being. This is no dream!

An Explanation

This section is provided for the GM.

The course of events which led to this spot began when Shakna (the Shanask leader) was called to Admiral Nelos' chambers. Shakna was informed that a Dha team was returning from the outer rim, with news of a new alien threat. During the debriefing, Shakna was particularly alarmed when the PCs mentioned the Quantum Knight. Immediately, the powerful Shanask froze the passage of time in the room, and left to send his minions out to verify the PC's story. Afterward the Shanask returned, reestablished the flow of time, and listened to the rest of the report.

After the debriefing broke up, Shakna consulted with his minions and learned that a Quantum Knight was dispatched to the planet during the Chaos Wars to fulfill a very important quest. Shakna then exerted a tremendous amount of power and tracked Lord Lokoth down.

A long conversation ensued, the details of which are not important. However, the gist of the conversation was that Lord Lokoth was sent to the planet at the end of the Chaos Wars to locate and retrieve a Zodar (an ultra powerful entity) who had been miraculously captured by the forces of Darmoth. The knight succeeded in locating the Zodar, but he was attacked while trying to open the obelisk-like case which contained him.

In the combat, Lord Lokoth lost the keystone (to open the case) and was stripped of his bracer (thus trapping him until his rescue by the PCs). Lord Lokoth has been scouring Vegra-7 since his recent release in a near futile attempt to find the lost keystone. Fortunately, the forces of Darmoth were banned from the Trinium Scape™ just as they were about to transport the captured Zodar back to their own Scape.

Shakna then returned to Dha Prime, realizing what must be done. Shakna drained the last of his vast power into forming a new keystone — a black crystalline shard. The tired Shanask then called upon his personal minions once again, with the decree that they deliver the PCs and the keystone back to Vegra-7. They should be informed (by the crystal) to locate Lord Lokoth and deliver to him the keystone. And now that the PCs have been so delivered (the bad dream above was the side effect of being transported by Shakna's minions), the story continues...

Who is Darmoth? — More History is Revealed

Darmoth is a super sorcerer of tremendous power and evil who's abilities rival Jodar's (the Shanask who allowed the players to Scape into Trinium). Darmoth led the invasion of Trinium over 7000 years ago during the Chaos Wars. Now, it appears that his forces (and presumably he) is back.

Toward the end of the Chaos Wars, Darmoth came out with a new hybrid alien known as the Kryll (yes, the same ones who are now player characters). Just as Darmoth's Kryll warriors were making their way into the Trinium Scape, a desperate pact by the five dark races succeeded in closing the inter-Scape portal, sealing Darmoth on the other side (presumably forever). In the intervening 7000 years, the few Kryll who made it through

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the portal and were trapped on this side, became self-reliant and formed a society unto themselves. These Kryll were the first to detect the return of Darmoth's forces. Wishing to remain free, the Kryll hive queen ordered her hive-ship to flee the area. The rest of this story is told in *Shakna — Assault on the Hive*.

GM note1: The dark ancestry of the Kryll is a secret kept only by the Queen and her most trusted personal servants. Kryll PCs should not be informed of this link at this time.

GM Note2: Speaking the name "Darmoth" will almost always result in an ill effect. Typically, mist will form and begin to swirl upon the ground. Out of the misty vortex will crawl a shade of Darmoth (some horrible demon-like creature). The shade will immediately attempt to kill the defiler, slaying any who gets in its way. Typical ratings of such creatures are 30/50/10. If it succeeds in slaying its victim, the shade typically vanishes (although some have been known to take up permanent residence in this Scape—more than one story of demons has resulted in this manner).

Arrival

Allow the team time to realize the full impact of their situation. They are back on Vega-7, and this isn't a dream! A random PC will wake up holding a long black crystalline shard (of great significance).

Once the team mills about for awhile read the following:

Without warning an arc of power leaps from the strange shard to your computer console. For an instant all power in the transport fails, then comes back on line. A single message is displayed on the main console readout, "Deliver this Shard unto Lord Lokoth or die."



Finding Lord Lokoth can occur in several ways. The best way to proceed is to simply allow the PC's first good idea to work (perhaps the chosen PC touches the conduit spot and calls his name; maybe they drive to the last place they saw him; etc.). If all else fails, Lord Lokoth will eventually sense the PCs' presence and will appear before them.

If the players decide to add in some roleplaying, allow them to keep the shard's presence secret at first. Once the shard's existence is revealed to Lord Lokoth, he will respond in a rather unexpected way stating, "I may not use this shard for it is not the keystone of my quest. Clearly, you have been sent as the bearer of the shard."

No doubt the PCs will begin questioning the knight, asking him why they are back on Vega-7, etc. At this point, Lord Lokoth will reveal as much history as is required to win over the team's confidence.

Once Lord Lokoth has convinced the team to join his quest to free the lost Zodar, he will instruct them to head for area E. Lokoth has tracked horde creatures traveling to and from that area and correctly suspects that it is an entrance into the hive.

Area E: The Hive

When the PCs arrive at the entrance to the alien hive, they will not find any discernible opening. However, Lord Lokoth knows that the aliens conceal their entrances. A quick scan of the area should reveal a fissure opening up ten feet beneath the sand. It is up to the team to determine a means of digging, removing, or transporting through the sand.

The hive is a very strange and evil area of the planet. The team will enter a living network of caves with hundreds of horrid alien devices that serve all kinds of obscure purposes. There are auto defense systems, traps, transport devices, not to mention all of the horde creatures. Some of these items are described below.

You may notice that many of the horde bio-systems are very similar (if not identical) to those found on the Kryll hive ship. This should be the first strong clue that the horde aliens and Kryll have a common ancestry. Also, feel free to use any additional rooms and/or encounter areas out of the *Shakna — Assault on the Hive* adventure (especially those elements which your team did not encounter while playing this adventure).

The exact layout of the hive complex is left up to you. Map out a region sizable enough to fit your roleplaying group's needs. Draw upon the following encounter descriptions to assist you. Highly skilled GMs may prefer ad-libbing the entire hive complex off of the PC's actions with only a rough sketch of the complex to go by.

Random Encounters

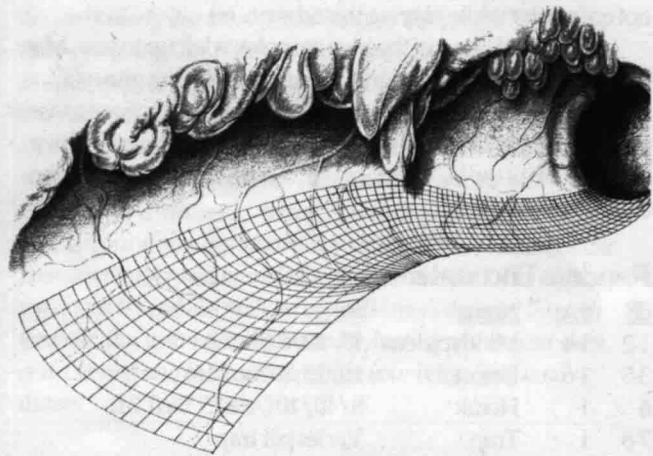
| d8 | #Ap | Name | Stats |
|-----|-----|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1-2 | 1-4 | Mindspiders | 15/10/3(Str 15) |
| 3-5 | 1-6 | Dreadar | 15/25/4(BioT 16) |
| 6 | 1 | Horak | 8/40/10(Atk 15, BioT 24) |
| 7-8 | 1 | Trap | Varies per trap |

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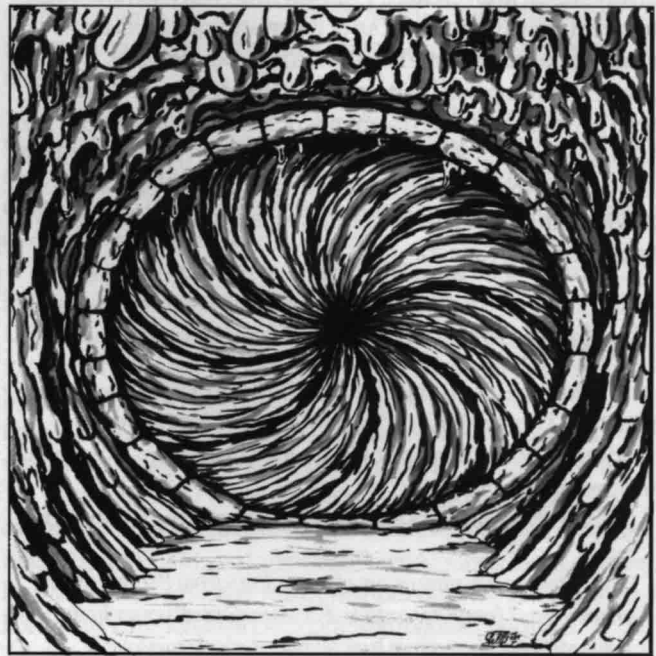
Corridors

Most corridors within the hive resemble long, tubular hallways, full of clusters of organs, glands and other organic items. All are filled with different types of creatures ranging from simple building creatures to deadly auto defenses. Give colorful descriptions, and throw in any ideas you have to spice up these areas. You can put auto defenses, traps, and even horde creatures in these areas.



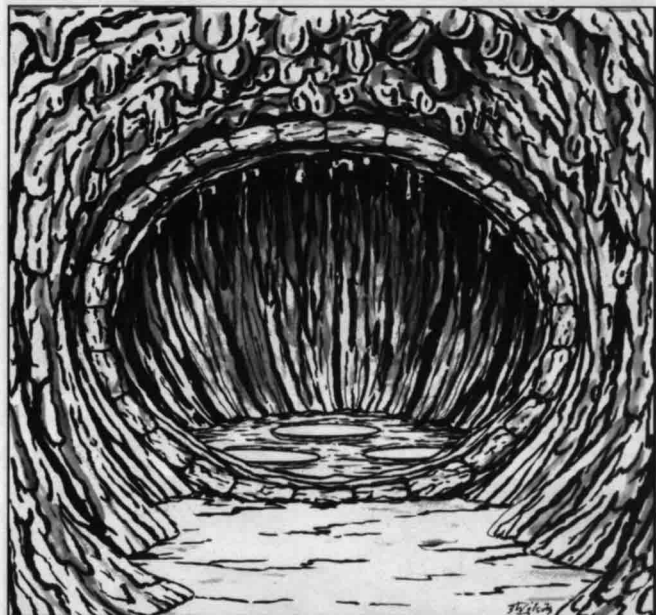
Doors

Doors appear throughout the hive. These doors are organic, membranous things which open and close with a pop, like a camera shutter. If open, they may close unexpectedly (such as when the team is only half way through). If closed, they can normally be opened only through the use of Pheromonal triggers. They can be forced open with Str (15-20) checks or equivalent damage. If there is a Kryll or bio specialist in the group they may attempt to open a door with a Biotech roll (10).



Teleport Nodes

The fastest method of transportation in the hive is a small, circular chamber (it will hold up to three characters) which, when it is entered and its iris-door closes, will instantly teleport its occupants to another part of the hive.

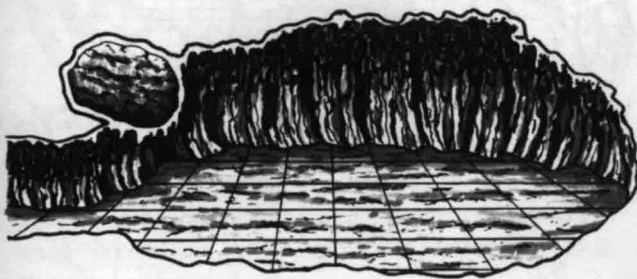


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Traps

Boulder Trap

The sandstone of Vegra-7 is very unstable. Large boulders can often dislodge, ripping through the living tissue of the hive complex to fall upon characters. These boulders can be of any weight and size as best fits the situation. Typical damage should range between 5 and 30. These boulders may fall and block passages or open holes into new levels of the cave complex. If the team is not fairing well against several opponents, you may allow a luck check so that one falls from the ceiling and kills a creature or two.



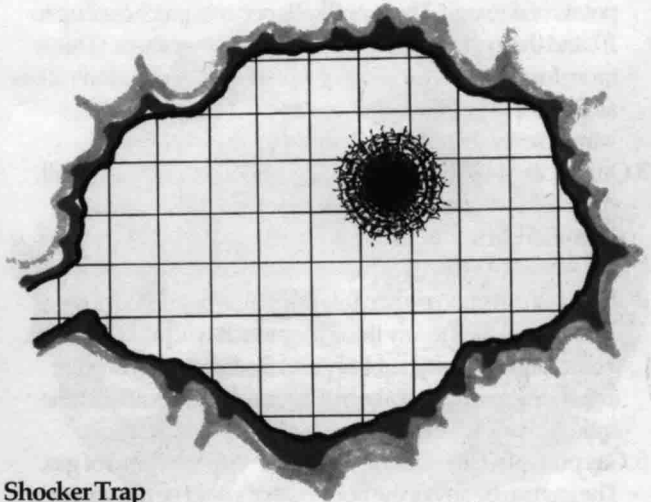
Gas Trap

This is a funnel shaped organ that can appear in any wall, floor, or ceiling. There can be triggers for these traps, or they can go off for other reasons. Some times the gas is harmless and just smells bad. But other types can cause choking, death, unconsciousness, sleep, or any other ailment that you deem appropriate for the situation. Very deadly poisons could include acid, radiation, disease, or even cause blindness or other side effects.



Pit Trap

The characters can be walking along anywhere, when the floor beneath them will open up revealing a large pit with sharp spikes lining its walls. The characters need to make a Dex (18) or fall into the pit. The pit drops 20 feet so any character falling into the pit needs to roll AR check per the falling rules in the RB. Once in the pit the walls will start to contract inward squeezing the character(s). The spikes that line the walls will start to pierce the characters unless they can climb out. The amount of damage and difficulty to climb out each round are the same: 10 the first round after falling into the pit, or 15 the next round, and 20 the round after that, etc.



Shocker Trap

A massive discharge of organic electricity strikes the party. Each party member must make a Def (16) roll. Those who succeed have flung themselves out of the way and take only 6 points of damage (armor rolls are allowed). Those who fail are hit for 12 points of electrical damage, plus one for every point by which their roll failed. Powered armor makes armor rolls at a -2d penalty.



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Puffball Trap

These are small, round, porous growths which emit various clouds of spores. Puffballs may erupt if touched, disturbed by the vibration of walking (Dex 12 to avoid), or simply if something approaches them. Roll a d6 to determine the nature of the spores.

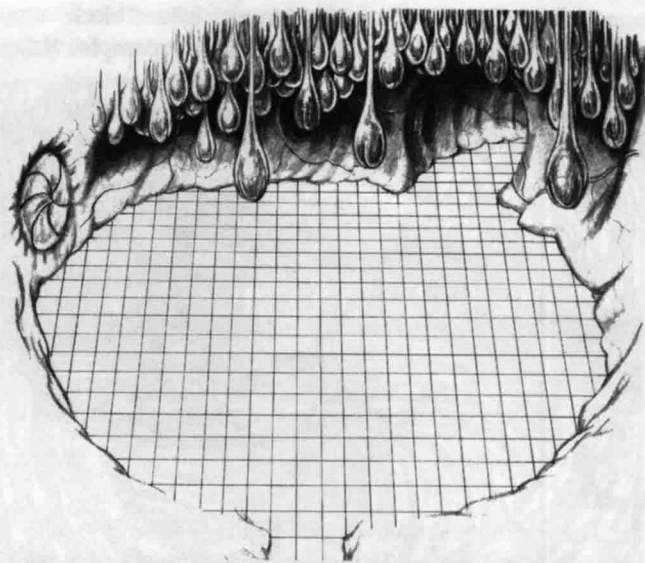
1. Acid Spores: A cloud of acidic spores explodes from the puffball. Team members must make Def (12) rolls to avoid the spores. Those who fail take 12 points of damage. Armor rolls are allowed for natural and full armor only.
2. Exploding Puffball: The puffball explodes, inflicting 20x points of damage. These puffballs occur in patches of up to 20, and the explosion of one often sets off the others. (This is more for color and excitement than anything else; don't allow an explosive puffball patch to wipe out the party!) Afterwards, several dreadar will show up to investigate.
3. Quills: Large, nasty-looking spikes shoot out of the puffball. Attack and damage are 15 to the closest PC, 12 to the next closest, and 8 to the next.
4. Predator puffballs: An explosion of sticky strands will shoot out in all directions when this puffball is disturbed. The strands will stick to any thing they touch with a 6H strength. The strands will stay rubbery and flexible, and will pull anyone hit to a large spike in the center of the puffball. The spike's attack is 10 and its damage is 15.
5. Gas puffball: This puffball will explode into a cloud of gas. The gas can be any of the poisons that could be in a gaseous form. The strength of such a puffball can be anywhere from 5-30. Also some of these puffballs are filled with extremely volatile gases that will ignite into a fire ball without any warning with the damage being 30x.
6. Fertilizer Puffball: This puffball is not really as dangerous as it is gross. When triggered it will shoot out green liquid of intense odor. If the liquid hits a character it will stain whatever they are wearing and it will take them two hours of scrubbing and cleaning to get the smell off of them.



Specific Rooms/Encounters

Hive Main Entrance

The main entrance to the hive is a long dark tunnel that leads almost 100 yards back and down into the cave structures. The cave then opens up into a medium sized chamber.



The chamber is filled with mindspiders suspended from the ceiling in leathery, punching bag-like sacks. If someone walks under one of the sacks it will begin to quiver (unless a Dex 15 succeeds). The next round it will open up and attack the first thing it sees.

As this encounter proceeds, allow an awareness roll (Dif 8) to notice a horak slowly coming out of the wall about 50 feet behind the characters (i.e., up the passage from which they just came). The horak will not notice the team if they quite down (thus, this is an excellent time to attack with a random encounter). It will just slowly unfold out of the side of the wall, put its legs down and start to move off in the other direction.

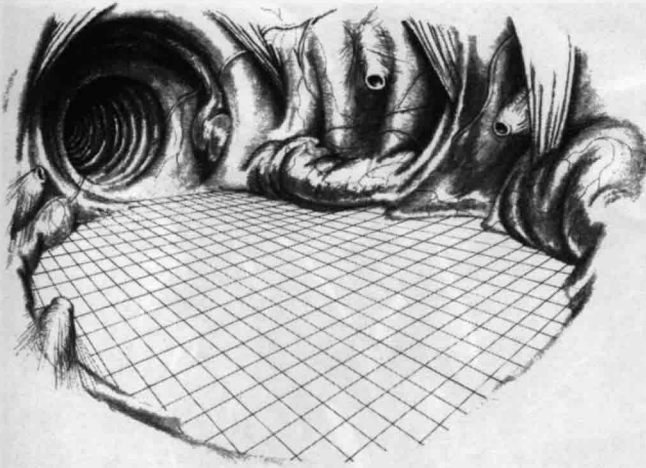
| | | |
|----|-------------|---------------------------|
| 12 | Mindspiders | 15/10/3 (Str 15) |
| 1 | Horak | 8/40/10 (Atk 15, BioT 24) |

Auto Defense Room

When the characters enter this room nothing will happen at first, but once someone walks to the middle of the room they will be attacked. There are four Web slingers in here mounted on the walls. They will shoot at each of the characters until nothing moves or until they are destroyed.

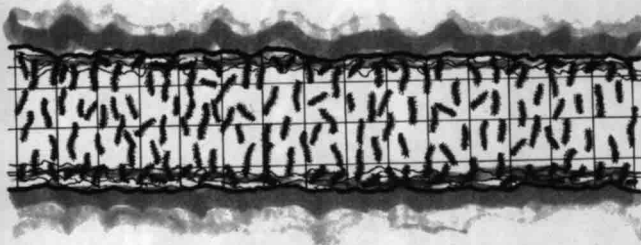
| | | |
|---|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 4 | Web slinger | 16/20*/4 (Mv 0, Def 4, Web Str 24) |
|---|-------------|------------------------------------|

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Blocked Corridor

This is an extremely long corridor which will lead into some rather strange creatures. The creatures are foot long worm-like creatures with many spiny legs around their bodies. They are racing back and forth across the corridor building the living walls that surround most of the area.

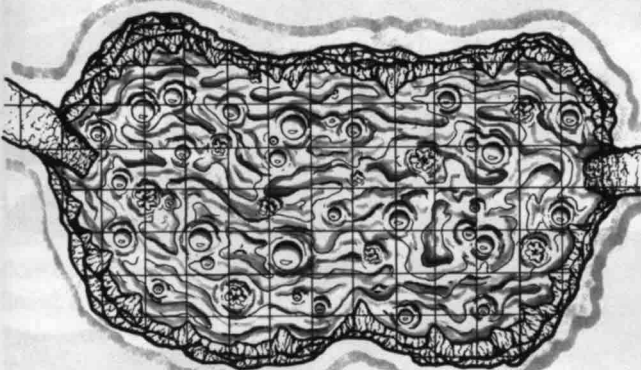


If the characters try to get past the creatures, the creatures will attempt to cocoon them where they stand. The sticky secretions they use will have a 16 Str.

40 Builder Creatures 12/10/5 (16 Str Web, Spe 20)

Lava Room

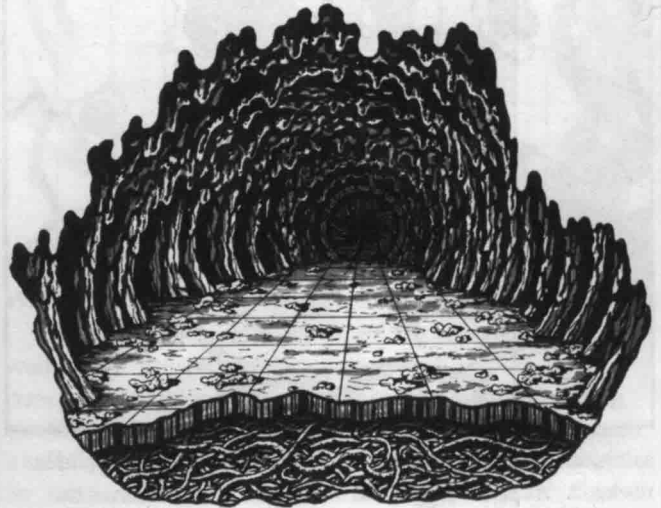
You see a large pit in front of you filled with lava. The pit is about 60 feet across with no apparent way to walk around it.



There are several options the characters have. One is to climb along the wall until they reach the other side (Dif 12). Another is to use grapple guns or such items to get across. If someone fails a climbing check they will start falling towards the lava. Since the pit slopes in, they will have two chances to catch themselves before entering the lava. The lava does 40 points of damage every round ("Game over man! Game over!").

Living Rope Room

Slime drips off the walls and fleshy material hangs everywhere in this room.



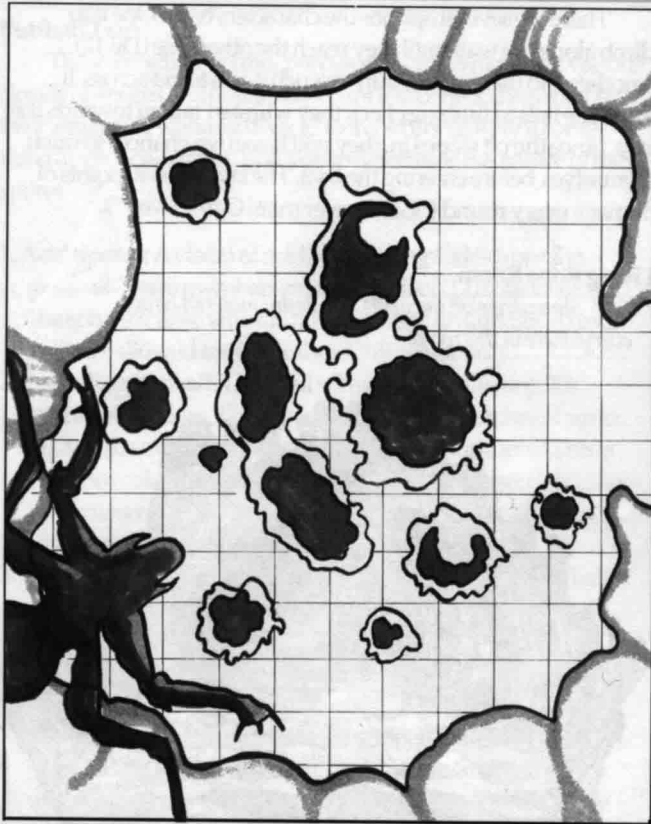
Hidden beneath the floor are many living ropes which will not move until they feel the pressure of something standing above. Then they will attack by wrapping around the individual's leg and holding them tight just as a band of horde creatures enters the area (1 horak and 5 dreadar). The strength of a rope is 20 and it can hold up to 1000 lbs. If there are any Kryll in the group they may phenomenally command the ropes to let go with a Biotech roll of (15) or higher.

Salve Room

As you enter this room a foul stench, worse than anywhere else in this complex, comes over you. There are several large rock formations rising up from the floor about three feet high with a boiling brownish green liquid spewing out of them. As you peer around you get an uneasy feeling that you are being watched. Then, in your search, you look up to notice what has to be the largest, most horrible creature you have ever seen. It is suspended by hundreds of large web like tendrils which are locked onto the surrounding walls.

The boiling pools of liquid are pools of healing salve that the horde creatures use when they are injured. If someone touches the salve, they will feel a tingling sensation in their hand. If someone applies the salve to their body they will feel the tingling everywhere and it will heal 10M points of damage. If the

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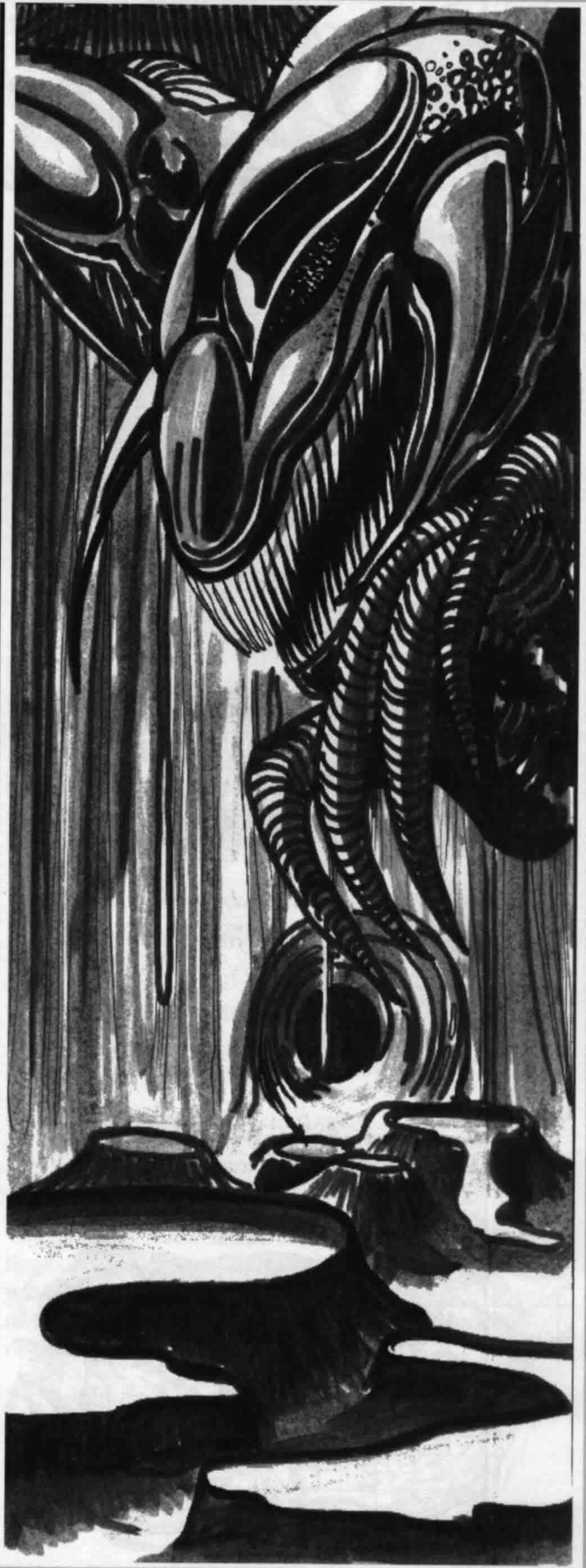
salve is taken from the room it will dry into a solid form and be useless after a short time. Even if it is sealed in a container, the effectiveness will diminish over the period of several days.

The creature hanging from the top of this cavern is the guardian of the salve. It is far larger than any normal Horak and a lot tougher. The first two rounds, during which the characters are in the room, the creature will be slowly lowered down by the tendrils holding it. The third round it will issue a blood curdling hiss that will nearly deafen the characters. Then it will attack.

Guardian Horak 10/70/20 (Atk 20, BioT 40, 20 psionic points)
Size 20 feet tall 3000 lbs.

If the characters flee, the guardian will not pursue farther than one or two areas. If the characters are using mostly ranged weapons it will pull down a large bellygun and shoot back. If they engage in melee combat it will pull down a 12 foot bioblade. If a character uses one of these weapons the stats are as follows:

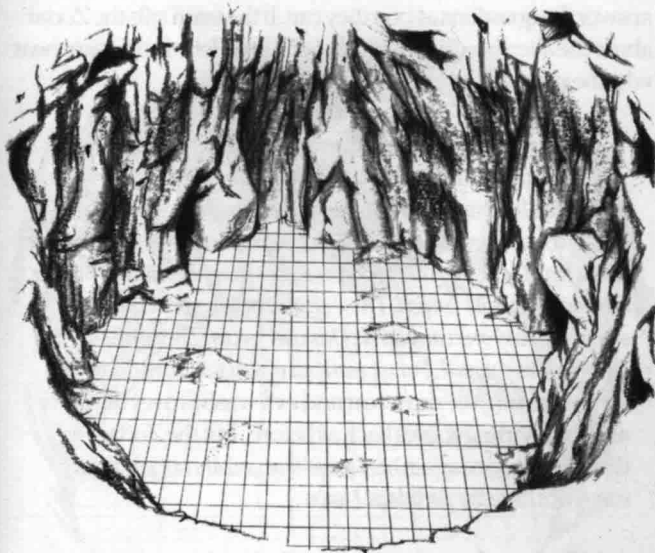
| <u>Name</u> | <u>BioT</u> | <u>Cr</u> | <u>AP</u> | <u>IC</u> | <u>Base</u> |
|----------------|-------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | <u>Dmg</u> | <u>Enc</u> | <u>Range</u> | <u>Ammo</u> | |
| Giant Bioblade | 8MB 6LT | - 102 | 40 - | 20 - | Meele-6d |
| Giant Bellygun | 6M 6LT | - 116 | 60 20 | 30 20/10 min | Range-6d |



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Sand Filled Room

For some reason the aliens have not converted this room to one of their own. The walls are solid as is the floor. The roof spirals upward for about a hundred feet with some cave openings beyond fifty feet. There is also another opening on the ground floor about eighty feet strait across from where you stand. The only noticeable thing in the whole room is that the floor has a scattering of sand on it.

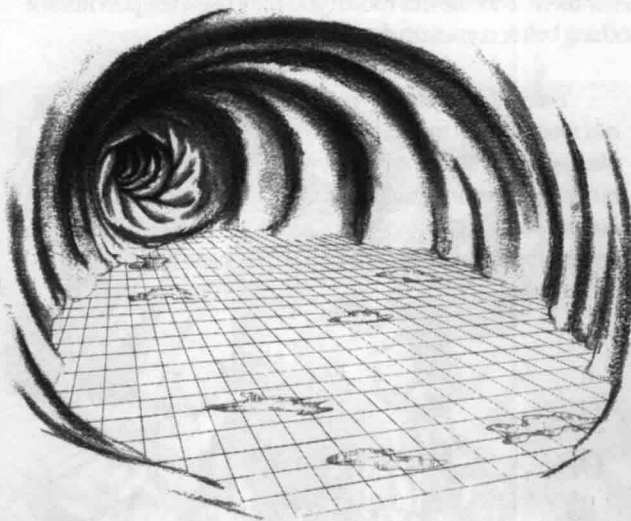


If the characters make any noise (such as a random encounter) besides walking (Dex 8), a membrane in the top of the ceiling will rupture and sand will come pouring in. By the end of the first round the passageways on the bottom will be covered over and become inaccessible. The sand will fill the room 10 feet every round. In five rounds the sand will be high enough for the characters to enter one of the other passage ways if they are still alive. Each round characters must make Spe (10) checks. Failure indicates the number of feet which they are buried. Breaking out requires a Str check equal to twice the number of feet buried (either from the character or from someone who is digging for them). Characters who are buried are subject to suffocation hazard.

Stomach Room

This room is a giant stomach like creature which waits for organic material to be tossed into it. If the characters enter this room the stomach will move in all directions and start excreting digestive fluids. The characters will fall down and be tossed around unless they make a Dex (30). Trying to stabilize themselves or getting up requires a Dex (20). The difficulty to move 1/2 normal is Dex 20. The stomach will only stop what it is doing if someone opens a passage out of the room or if someone does more than 40 points of damage (in one blow) to the stomach lining. If a door is opened the stomach will think that more food

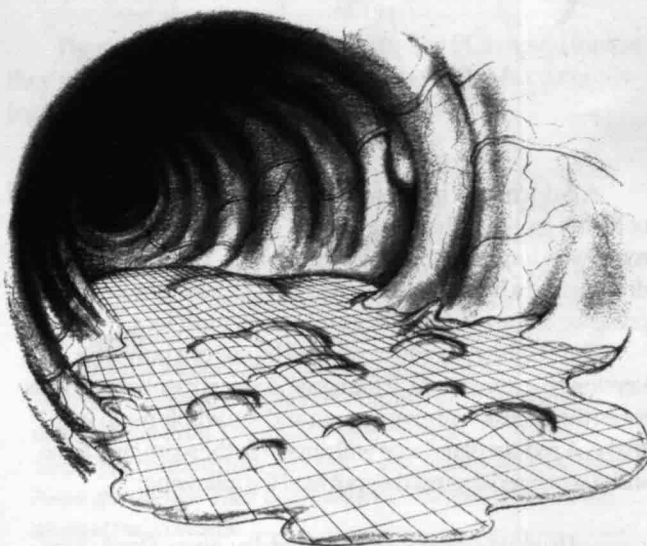
is coming in and will wait for two rounds before resuming its actions. If more than 40 points of damage occur then the stomach will spit the characters out through the nearest opening.



White Glob Room

In this room there is a soft white floor that the characters can walk across. The soft white floor is actually a life form that crawls from room to room eating all of the dead and decaying creatures that are in the hive. It will attack anyone who walks on it by letting them sink into it and enveloping them (requiring a Str 20 to break out). It will then start secreting a digestive fluid which will cause acid damage to the victim.

1 White Glob 15/20/1 (AR5, Vit 200)



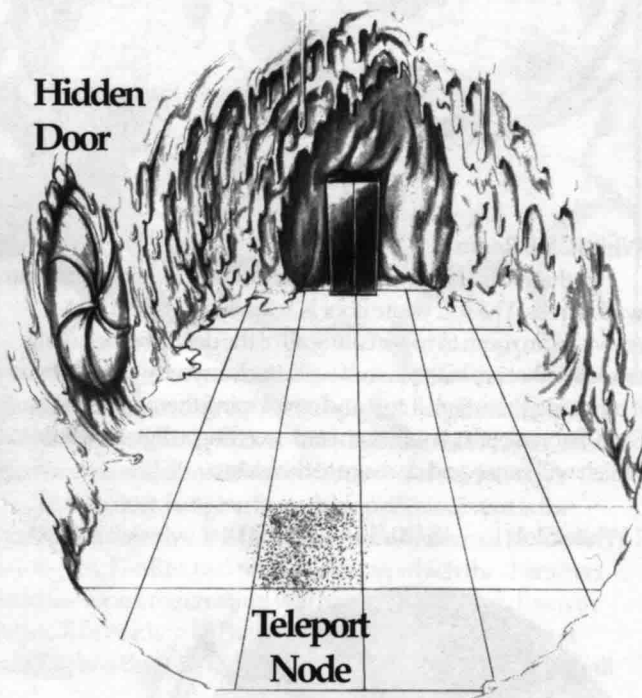
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Zodar Room

See Zodar description in the new life forms section to help with this encounter. When the players have adventured enough, allow them to locate this room (you may use a teleport node if nothing better comes up during play).

You find yourself in a small ovoid room with a high ceiling and mucus coated walls. At the far end of the room rests a large black obelisk. It stands nearly ten feet tall, four feet wide and you notice a seam running down the front of it. You sense an ancient but extreme power issuing from the obelisk. The obelisk is perfectly smooth and is not coated with the room's abundant slime.

Hidden Door



A hidden door into this room may be found on an Awa roll of 10. It is coated in the room's slime. This door leads into a large room with four other doors lining its walls. There are also four dreadar and a horak in this room. They can sense the team's presence and are trying to determine their exact location.

The obelisk can only be opened by use of a powerful keystone (i.e., the shard). If the name Zodar is mentioned in this room the obelisk will give a groan and the whole room will shake. A red circular shape will appear in the seam, and if the shard is pressed against the spot read the following:

The shard sinks into that area and disappears. Slowly doors form upon the obelisk and silently open, pushing the living slime from the floor, causing the cave to shutter. You see a large obsidian boulder floating in mid air encased in a red glow. The shard is standing upright on the floor within the obelisk-like case. Power arcs up to surround the ball, and you sense a tremendous amount of energy coming from the obsidian ball and the word

Zodar begins pulsating in your minds. Then, the black orb floats forward and speaks, "I may speak only three times during my existence, and I choose now to be one of them. Who are you, and why have you disturbed me?"

The team will no doubt look around for Lord Lokoth. However, as the shard was being used, he vanished, the shame of his original failure was to great for him to bear. He could never face the Zodar after such a length of time. Thus, let the team answer the questions as best they can. If the team tells the Zodar about the alien horde he will talk to himself letting the team hear what he says.

This is very disturbing. Darmoth must be trying to return. At the mention of this name you feel a great evil sweep over you and a mist like vapor starts to swirl upon the floor. (Everyone needs to make a WP check (50) or experience a great sense of dread and fear.) An arc of power issues from the orb and the fear and swirling mist vanish. These creatures you speak of may simply be the front vanguard of his vast forces. They are truly evil and must be stopped. I must warn all of you not to mention the name Darmoth (the same fear and evil washes over the party and the swirling comes back as before, but the Zodar disperses it once again) as I sense that you are not powerful enough to close the portals as I have.

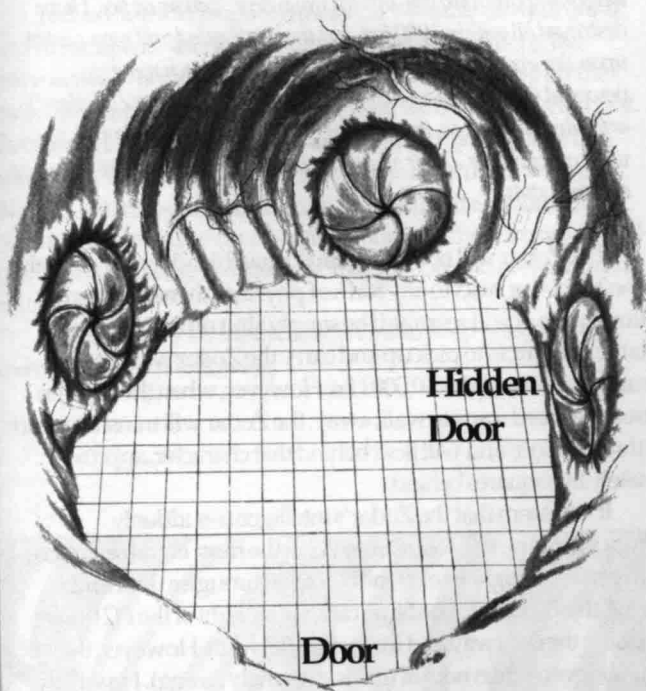
If someone does say the name all of the fear, evil and swirling will come back to be dispersed by the Zodar. The Zodar will then warn them again not to say that name. If some one says the name again, even if it is a slip, all the usual will happen but the Zodar will not stop it. The swirling will continue and one to four horrible creatures will appear. Each of the creatures is incredibly powerful (drawn by the Zodar's presence). They can poses any or all of the three powers that the PCs use. Once the PCs are engaged, the Zodar will dispatch the creatures and the team may move on.



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I will accompany you (he looks at the PC who used the shard) as the cause is worthy of my attention. Even as you watch the orb transforms into a faceless, eight foot tall, completely smooth, humanoid form.

You may add anything that you want or need the Zodar to say as long as it fits with his description as listed here and in the new life forms section.



Once this conversation is over, a dreadar from the adjoining room will open the concealed door and a horak will be seen towering over it from behind (shock 15). They will immediately attack. More dreadar and horak will arrive to help in the fight. Allow the team to begin the fight, while the Zodar stands idly by. Without Lord Lokoth to help (as he has done throughout the cave complex until now), the team will begin to sense the hopelessness of the situation. Just at this point the Zodar will act.

Now, the PCs will observe the true meaning of power and might. The Zodar will fight with fists and strength alone.

As you stand cursing Lord Lokoth for leaving you in such a plight, your attention is suddenly drawn to the Zodar as it lurches to action. A quick backhand knocks a dreadar through the cave's wall and into the adjoining room. Several other dreadar attack. Acid bubbles across the Zodar's surface and flows to the ground without effect, bone swords crack upon his skull and break in two. Then a horak bellows a battle screech and hurls itself full at the Zodar. The impact is tremendous, and the Zodar takes a step back to catch its balance. Then its arms come up and around the creature's back while the horak's powerful claws and teeth dig at the obsidian surface. You hear the crunch of bone and carapace as the horak begins to flail madly at the Zodar, realizing its own

death. As the Zodar emotionlessly drops the horak's broken body, you hear the horrid mucoid pop as several doors open in the adjoining room. The Zodar steps through the wall to meet the onrushing horde creatures.



The ensuing battle is tremendous. The PCs should (unless they're suicidal) cower back against some wall. After determining their actions, read the following.

Dreadar are being ripped apart like you might rip a rag doll. Bone crunching blows shatter horak like glass. Then a dozen more horak enter the room accompanied by twice as many dreadar. All concentrate upon the Zodar (unless a PC gets in the way). The fury of the battle completely encompasses the Zodar so that nothing but a mound of aliens can be seen. A cacophony of screeches and the bursting of bone beat down upon your ears. After several minutes, the motion stops and a few horak and dreadar begin extract themselves from the mass of bone and tissue. The creatures then turn to face you, issuing blood curdling hisses of challenge. Their voices are joined by another two dozen aliens at the doorways.

The Zodar will not be visible. However, as the aliens begin their slow advance upon the PCs (maybe even run this for a round allowing the PCs to frantically get off a volley of attacks), read the following:

Darkness within the Night



Your plight seems all too obvious. Then, the mound of dead aliens trembles and the Zodar rises from its center. All the aliens turn back and you almost imagine disbelief in their gaunt faces. You can barely make out the Zodar's battered and chipped head, but something is different. Two dim areas of red light glow from where eyes should normally be. There is a sense of great power as if the energy in the room just multiplied ten fold. The mound of bones and tissue slides apart as the Zodar extends his arms, arcs of power dancing across his palms. It seems that time itself has slowed as everyone and everything in the room pauses, attention poised upon the Zodar. Slowly the Zodar raises both hands into the air, fingers outstretched as if to grasp the fabric of time. As he does so the room begins to tremble as if a minor quake has struck. Even the air seems to be glowing with the energy of the moment. Suddenly, every alien reacts, wide eyed as if suddenly realizing their fate, they scramble for the room's exits. Just as the first few aliens make their way through the doors, the Zodar clenches his fists and jerks his arms down.

The sound is defining as if a sonic boom centered upon the room itself. The cavern floor lurches sideways (Dex 30 to remain standing). Glancing up you see the aliens explode into a dry cloud of bone and dust. Small fragments rain down upon you.

The Zodar then turns and motions at the ground. The floor splits and a fissure streaks toward the wall, swallowing it in a rumble of rock and dust. With an up thrust of his hand, the

obelisk-like case begins to resonate as a geyser of power jets from the shard and arcs across its surface (inform the PCs that they suddenly feel like seeking cover). Just as the last of your group dives for cover the case cracks like thunder and shards explode through the air like shrapnel (you may cause minor damage to any PC who is not well protected).

With arched back and arms flung wide, the Zodar's voice booms 'Vindication is mine!'

Then, turning toward you he says, "I can help you no longer, my captivity has drained my power. You must flee. I have destroyed all within 1000 feet, but the horde mind will soon center upon this event, and those who arrive will be much more powerful than the ones you call horak." With that, the Zodar's arms drop to his side, the glowing points of red light fade and wink out, and the Zodar stands motionless like some large obsidian statue.

The Zodar will not talk again during this adventure. He also won't move or react to any form of physical, mental, or verbal stimulation. It will seem as if he simply shut off and became a statue. Attempts to pick up and carry the Zodar will prove fruitless as he weighs 10,000 Lbs. However, when the PC who used the shard starts to walk away, the Zodar will transform into a three foot orb and will float behind that character, approximately five squares behind.

It will seem that the Zodar's intelligence suddenly dropped, for he will follow that PC in the most literal sense (i.e., in a perfect straight line). If the PC steps through a door and turns, the Zodar will continue moving straight at the PC (thus missing the doorway and impacting the wall). However, the Zodar (even when not "lit up" is extremely strong). He will fly right through walls of solid rock as if they were butter.

You can have the team go through any rooms you want on their way out and even have them fight a few creatures but keep them moving along.

Anytime the followed PC stops, the Zodar will hover to a stop. Every time he moves the Zodar will begin to move. The Zodar will not help the PCs fight aliens during the retreat. Even when attacked, he will simply float emotionlessly as enemy weapons chip and break upon his surface. You can think of it this way: The Zodar's consciousness has recessed within the confines of the orb. The orb has been programmed with a very simple set of commands under the guidance of a very simple mind. Its primary instructions are, "Follow the one who used the shard." It knows and notices nothing else. You can use this for a bit of comic relief. However, some element of the Zodar's consciousness is present enough that he will not allow the PCs to abuse this simple set of instructions (i.e., if the PC tries to weave in and out of walls, the Zodar will simply float down one side; if the PC steps forward, stops, steps forward, stops, etc. the Zodar will just hover until they walk forward with the serious intention of going someplace).

Darkness within the Night

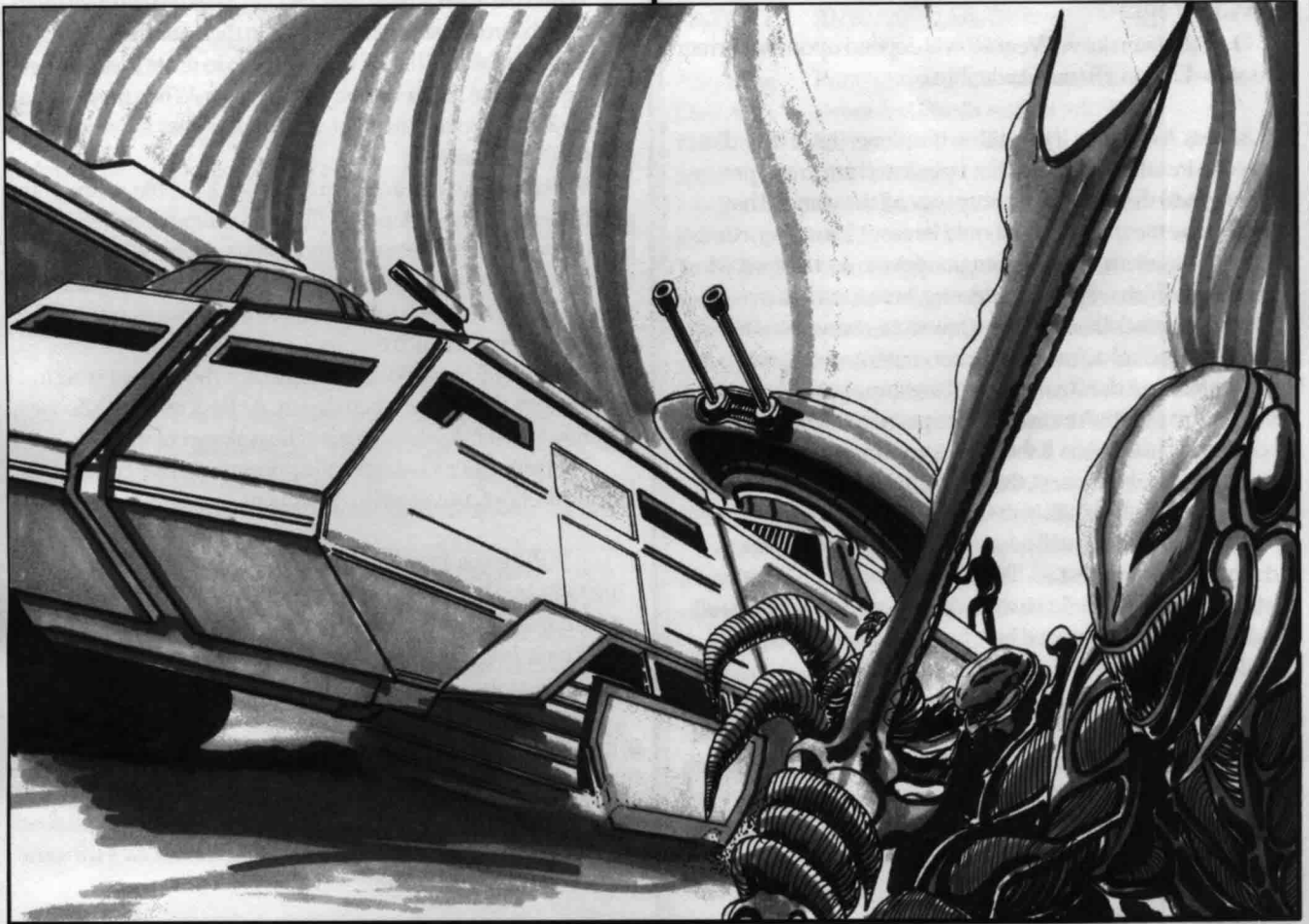
Outside the Hive

Once the team and the Zodar are outside the hive they will need to go to their transport vehicle. If the followed PC gets into the transport, the Zodar will float straight toward it (allow the PCs to become concerned about the Zodar flying through the transport wall). However, if the PC remains within the vehicle, the Zodar will simply float up the side and come to rest on its top. When he settles down on the vehicle the tracks will sink into the sand an inch or so and he will cause a small dent to appear.

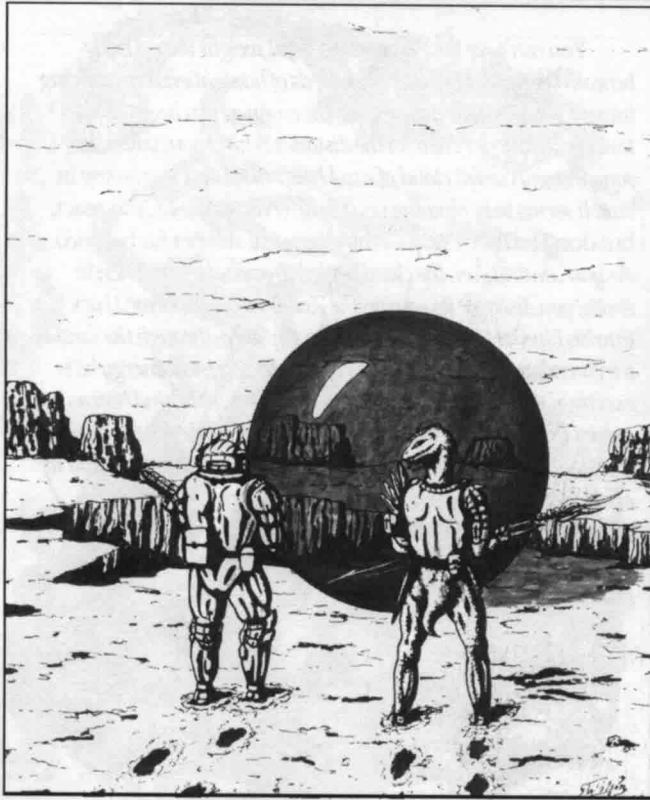
Just as the team prepares to leave, a veritable army of horak and dreadar will start to emerge from the sand all along the canyon wall. As the vehicle takes off the Zodar will roll off the back (his simple mind was not prepared for the unexpected jolt). Even if the PCs can't see the Zodar, they will know that he has fallen off by the thud, thud sound, and the large dents where he impacts the transport roof. Inform the team (if it isn't already obvious) that if they stop, even for a moment, the alien horde will catch them and utterly destroy both transport and crew within a round or two.

The only way for them to survive is to keep going. As they move off read the following:

You can't see the Zodar as his great weight buried him beneath the sand. However, hundreds of horde aliens begin racing toward you. As your driver guns the engines, you begin outdistancing the aliens. Then, in the distance behind you, you notice something. A small cloud of sand has formed and is growing in size. It seems to be blowing your way. (Allow the PCs to react, but don't let them stop as the aliens are still not far behind). As you continue on, the cloud begins to overtake you. Then in shock, you discover its source; the Zodar has transformed back into his bipedal form and is running, hip deep, through the sand at a tremendous speed, you can't imagine the physical energy he is exerting. A veritable plume of sand erupts from behind him as he moves like a horse through water. The alien horde is soon blocked from sight, and you notice the last few diving beneath the sand to avoid the torrential Zodar-induced sand storm. As you watch, still awestruck, the transport lurches with the impact of the Zodar's body. You hear the clang, clang as he crawls aboard and latches firmly onto the top.



Darkness within the Night



Leaving Vega-7

How the team leaves Vega-7 will depend upon the current state of the Explorer II (the Guide ship).

Ship is Available: If it is still on the planet (i.e., if they didn't succeed in installing the autopilot uplink and returning power to the engines) then this is their only way off the planet. They must relocate the ship (which should be easy), board her, combat the remaining aliens, reconnect engine power, and take off. Most of the aliens which were in engineering have since left.

You can attack the PCs with a few stow-away aliens as you see fit—just enough to make them nervous (most of the original nest have left), but don't run them off the ship again. However, feel free to play up the uncertainty the players will have about the occupants of the ship. If the team comes up with some great plan to attack the horde nest, then let them have their fun by supplying a few aliens still in that area.

Repairing the ship will take several long, nervous, hours, and a few good rolls (just ad-lib whatever you deem is appropriate). The launch should be shaky and ragged (even if the roll is good) as the ship has rested here for over a month, and it's internal systems have been damaged by the aliens.

Ship is Destroyed: If the ship is not available, the PCs will be aimlessly hunting for some possible means of escaping the planet, read the following:

Ahead, you see a large black bubble resting upon the ground. The wind and blowing sand don't seem to be affecting it, and you notice that it is hollow.

This is a Sorce sphere sent by Shakna to retrieve the team.

If the team stops and examines the bubble on foot, they will discover that it can be stepped through as if it were made of soap. However, once inside, you can't get out again. If everyone gets inside, the bubble will leave the planet. If not, the bubble will begin to roll across the sand, slowly at first, but gathering speed as it goes. Eventually, it will catch each and every PC, rolling over them and absorbing them into its center (those in the center can stand or sit; from the inside, the bubble seems to be sliding not rolling). If the PCs don't get out of their transport, the bubble will chase down their transport (have some fun with the chase scene) and envelop them.

Once all are inside (including Zodar), the bubble will float into the sky, rising into space, then whisk away toward Dha (at magical speeds). Take your time in describing all of this as the characters will be able to see through the bubble as they zip through space (kind of like a fairy tail ride).

Back on Dha

When the team arrives back on Dha, Shakna will greet them (either on board the ship as it lands, or in their quarters if they traveled by bubble). Shakna will ask them to relate their story on all the events that happened on their mission. When they tell him that the Zodar spoke to them he will become very interested and question them intensely.

Shakna will hand each PC a small black pebble, stating, "In gratitude for your assistance, I will give you each a *Sorce Stone*. Each may be used once to assist you, you will know what to do when the time comes, use them wisely. (As GM, simply allow these stones to be called upon, once each, to perform any reasonable service which the *Sorce* could perform).

Shakna will then speak at the Zodar (who will not react in the slightest). Shakna will then depart. As he does so, the Zodar will transform back into an orb and float along behind him.

That night, Lord Lokoth will appear next to the chosen PC. During the brief conversation he will say:

"I thank you for aiding me on my quest. Now it is time for me to find my brethren. However (facing the chose PC), you may call upon me once more in the future, and, if I am able, I shall come to your aid." He then vanishes as quickly as he came.

This is the end of *Into the Horde Wall*, the second adventure in the Darmoth series. Look for further adventures in the near future. In the mean time, game on, and enjoy life!

New Life Forms



Bokhorum

FORM: Rock - Boulder
 HABITAT: Desert canyons
 LOCATION: Rimward
 STATUS: Unknown

RATING: Var./Var./Var.
 Young: 40/50/4 (Spe 6V)
 Adolescent: 30/10V/5 (Spe 8V)
 Adult: 20/20V/6 (Spe 10V)

Atk/Dmg: Ram, Trample

Size: 2' to 30', 500lbs to 100 ton

Bokhorum have only been found on Vega-7 at this point in time. There are rumors of these creatures being found on other planets toward rimward space, but this has not been confirmed. The Zin-Shee also believe that they have encountered this race in space, and they claim that the Bokhorum have attacked their ships.

Bokhorum are indistinguishable from ordinary boulders. They come in many shapes and sizes from 2' in diameter and weighting 500 pounds to 30' in diameter and 100 tons. The creatures are incredibly fast, catching even some of the swiftest vehicles, moving by super heating the sand and rock under them, and then surfing upon the molten surface. They attack by charging at opponents and ramming into them, or just flat out running over them. It is not know what provokes these creatures because sometimes you may walk up and touch them and other times they will attack on sight. Little else is known at this point.



Quantum Knight

FORM: Humanoid
 HABITAT: Unknown
 LOCATION: Unknown
 STATUS: Dark Race

RATING: 20/60/20 (60 Atk, 20 Str)

Atk/Dmg: Punch, Sword (usually Sword)
 Def/AR: armor (enhanced ancient full plate)
 Sci: B8/C0/T4
 Size: 5' 10" 180Lbs
 Lang: Anthropian (ancient dialect)

The Quantum Knights are one of the dark races. They are an ancient order of holy knight which (through a twist of fate) were converted into undead. They detest their undead state and the necromantic powers that altered them, however they have many necromantic abilities which they will only use in the most dire of situations (specific abilities are left up to GM discretion). Their chosen weapon is the quantum sword. If held with the edge toward someone it is invisible due to its quantum thickness. Quantum swords cut with almost no effort.

Quantum Knights also use special bracers which allow them to establish conduits and travel from one location to the other in a moment, even across the vast distances of space.

The appearance of these knights is startling to most as they have red glowing points of light set into their helmet which are thought to be their eyes. The rest of their bodies are covered in black armor, black boots, black gauntlets, and tattered red cloth. They do not breath, eat, sleep, or perform any other function associated with living beings.

Most Quantum Knights have retained their knightly style and code of ethics. However, due to their condition, they lead lonely lives, far from the confines of civilized space.

New Equipment Items



Zodar

FORM: Any
 HABITAT: Unknown
 LOCATION: Unknown
 STATUS: Dark Race

RATING:

Normal 40/200/20 (Atk 100, Vit 1000)
 Red Eye 200/500/40 (Vit 1000)

Atk/Dmg: Punch
 Def/AR: Impervious to non-physical effects

Special: When eyes light up they are 10MS Sorcists
 Sci: N/A
 Size: typically 6-10 feet tall and 10,000 Lbs.
 Lang: All (Will only communicate verbally 3 times ever)

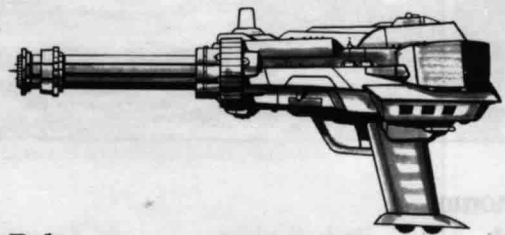
Zodar are one of the ancient dark races. They can appear in any form they wish, however, they usually chose between two forms either a large black sphere or a humanoid form. In the humanoid form they have no facial features and are completely smooth.

When they activate their Sorce abilities (which is seldom), they usually use them to enhance their already incredible physical abilities (which also naturally increase as indicated above).

They have near infinite knowledge, though most of the time, they seem to be oblivious to their surroundings.

Zodar are mysterious even to the other dark races. They are very unpredictable. Sometimes they will fight when there are only one or two opponents and other times they will stand back and do nothing when there are thousands attacking. It is assumed that Zodar are part of some master plan known only to the creators of the Scape. As evidence, Zodar only appear during events which shape the very flow of time itself.

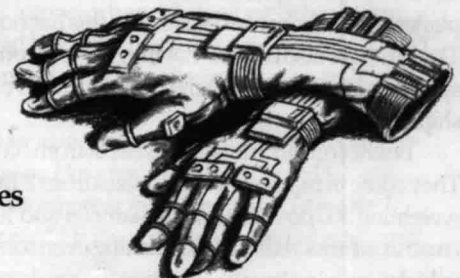
New Equipment Items



Plasma Bolter

| Tech | Cr | AP | IC | Base | Dmg | Enc |
|-------|-------------------------|---------|--------|---------|-----|-----|
| 8L | 375 | 24 | 12 | Range-4 | 10M | 6 |
| Range | Ammo | Cr | Enc | | | |
| 15 | PlasPrec\ Capsule 20 | - 50 | - 1 | | | |

When fired, this weapon's barrel will recoil back then spring forward launching a bolt of white hot plasma. The outer covering around the barrel is filled with liquid nitrogen to keep the weapon cool. This weapon can use the same plasma capsules that a plasma sword uses, giving it 20 shots. A holster and back strap normally accompany this weapon.



Ultralock Gloves

Tech: 10MB
 Cr: 300
 Enc: 1

Ultralock gloves use the same technology as all ultralock items with one exception. The gloves will not only hold onto any surface but also will hold onto the user's hands and forearms. While wearing these gloves the user has a +1c to their grip while holding something or climbing.



The Cave Was Dark...

Tomar was lost in the endless mazes of tunnels running underneath the surface of this miserable, sand swept planet. He had been told that there was something down here, something that could help him and his team escape from this hell hole.

He had fought countless battles with the alien creatures that infest this diseased planet, and he had searched miles of caves but all to no end. He was beginning to wonder if there really was any salvation from this planet.

The ache in Tomar's bones was growing with every step he took, so he entered a large room and set down to rest. At first he thought the strange feeling in his body was the euphoria one experiences just before slipping into unconsciousness, but the feeling kept growing and it was making every scale on his body quiver. Perhaps his battle trained danger sense was attempting to warn him of more aliens coming for another attack. Forcing himself to his feet, ready for action, Tomar stared at the entrances into the room, ready and waiting but nothing came.

Then, without warning, intense pain rippled from the back of his head. Falling to his knees, he desperately clawed at the creature which wrapped itself about his head and began to enter into his psyche. No, NO!, he would not be defeated in such a way, he ... would ... force himself ... to

His last thought was of his team, broken, and stranded — alone on Vergra-7.

In this adventure, your Dha team is sent to investigate the disappearance of a Guides exploratory mission, and they stumble upon an alien threat of huge proportions.

This is the second adventure in the Darmoth series. The first adventure is *Shakna — Assault on the Hive*.

Playing this adventure requires the use of the MetaScape™ Roleplaying Game System.



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