

TRAVELLER

THE CROSSING



SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

THE CROSSING

CREDITS

CLASSIC TRAVELLER

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	02
REFEREE'S INFORMATION	03
THE PROJECTED ROUTE	06
CHARACTERS AND CREWMEMBERS	10
BEGINNING THE CROSSING	17
A COSMOS AT PEACE	19
PROTON STORM	27
WALKING ON THE MOON	31
A STUDY IN MUNDANITY	33
PLOOSH	34
MONUMENT	41
CHAIN AND EMBERS	48
ANGRY GIANTS	53
COMETS AND ROGUES	56
CODE DTP	58
THE WEAKEST FORCE	76
STRUGGLING IN THE SURF	79
THE FAR SHORE	87
VOYAGING ONWARDS	94
APPENDIX: GAMES PEOPLE PLAY	94



TRAVELLER

INTRODUCTION

The Crossing is the third expansion for the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign. It covers the arduous transit across the Great Rift; dangerous but necessary to avoid a long detour. Similarly to *The Riftsedge Transit*, *The Crossing* is episodic in nature. The Travellers will have to deal with the problems they encounter one at a time until they finally reach the far shore. The only alternative is to admit defeat and turn back, accepting a longer route around the ‘outer’ edge of the rift as the price of failure.

Reaching the far shore of the Great Rift will enable the Travellers to strike out at last for their destination, and might be considered the midpoint of the mission. From here there are no major astrographic obstacles as far as long-range instruments can determine. There may be local problems and perhaps some regions that require a dogleg around, but on the far side of the rift is a vast starfield stretching all the way to the edge of the spiral arm. All the Travellers have to do is get to it...

At the narrowest point, the Great Rift is about 45 parsecs wide, but there is no convenient route covering this distance. It is likely the Travellers will have to

transit about 60 parsecs to make the crossing, using an indirect route that allows refuelling. The episodic nature of this adventure allows the referee to gloss over parts of the transit or add more stops on the way if that seems desirable. Likewise, the exact route and destination are not specified. This will allow the referee to make whatever alterations are necessary, or perhaps slot the various episodes into other parts of the campaign.

If the Travellers decide not to make the crossing, the material in this book can be held for later use. By definition, the incidents in *The Crossing* are self-contained, and can be used when passing through a region of stars in what is sometimes called a ‘planet of the week’ adventure format. However, the Travellers will not be compelled to deal with the problems and may find a way to bypass them. This is always the case when the Travellers have complete agency – finding a clever way to railroad them into every situation becomes contrived and arguably deprives the Travellers of their ability to make meaningful choices, so if they find a way to bypass any of these incidents, so be it. The material can still be plundered for parts that may be used later in the campaign.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The Crossing begins as the Travellers enter the Great Rift. This adventure assumes the Travellers explored the Near Side of Yonder and obtained the assistance of the races who live there, but this is not necessary for the events of *The Crossing* to take place. It may be that the Travellers have found an alternative crossing point, in which case they will enter the rift directly instead of being assisted in the first deep space transit by their new allies. Whichever is the case is unimportant to the course of this adventure; it begins as the Travellers are poised to make their first jump on the projected route.

The adventure presents a default route, which the referee may choose to utilise unchanged. General information on expected refuelling points is available at the beginning of the transit, and since it appears there are no viable alternative routes the Travellers can be expected to follow it. However, the referee can always slip in additional adventure locations or allow the Travellers to find a source of fuel not detectable from the edge of the rift. This might create a convenient shortcut or lead to a side adventure the referee wants to include. In short, the route presented below does not have to be followed by the referee (and therefore by the Travellers); it is a framework for the incidents and adventures presented in this book and can be replaced by another chain of refuelling points if this suits the referee's purposes.

There is no over-arching ‘adventure of the crossing’ as such. The crossing of the Great Rift is an adventure in itself, but by its nature is episodic and does not feature a struggle against an antagonist. Instead, the Travellers will need to overcome a series of challenges and deal with setbacks, most of which originate from external sources but can lead to major internal troubles. The referee should keep in mind that how the Travellers deal with the people involved will influence how they behave in a later crisis. A situation that might have been quite simple to deal with could be made far more complex by the intervention or outright mutiny of a recurring character with a grudge.

There is also the question of what to do with people deemed dangerous to the ship, crew, or mission. Can they be kept locked up indefinitely? What if their skills are

needed? The Travellers may find themselves bargaining with some of their crewmembers or trying to dictate hard-line solutions to problems that cannot be solved that way. Throughout the crossing – and the expedition as a whole – the referee should keep in mind that people are shaped and changed by their experiences.

Reintroducing characters from previous adventures can be made more interesting if it is obvious their behaviour has been modified by both what happened and how the rest of the crew reacted to it. A previously cavalier crewmember might now be obsessed with minor details; a confident one may now be unsure of himself. Shady characters might become textbook officers, or the opposite. Ultimately, the Deepnight campaign is about the people making the voyage rather than the events they experience.

REFEREEING THE CROSSING

As always, any activity by the Travellers or their crew can lead to an incident or full-blown adventure. Whether the Travellers ‘boldly go’ or creep nervously through the darkness, they are far beyond any assistance and everything they know. The crew are likely to be nervous, though not all of them and not all at once. The Travellers are likely to notice that at times some of the crew are dispirited and openly scared of the unknown, but may later rally and become pillars of strength helping others through their own crises. This is a normal consequence of such a long expedition, and was anticipated, but may still cause problems or make the Travellers wonder if something sinister is going on among their crewmates.

Bizarre behaviour – at least, behaviour that might seem bizarre under other circumstances – will be exhibited by many crewmembers to varying degrees. By now the ship and her crew have had time to develop a culture of their own. The oddball habits of some crewmembers may have become the norm for others, and ideas implemented earlier in the voyage may have been abandoned or become entrenched.

The referee should take care to observe the culture of the crew if the Travellers are portraying one, and present one if they are not. This should be logical, based on the experiences the crew have had so far and how they reacted. The Travellers may not like how the crew are behaving, and may even make out-of-game protests that their crew would never behave in such a way, but these are people living in an isolated metal bubble very far from home, and who have had multiple stressful and perhaps life-changing experiences.

The referee should decide whether factions have emerged among the crew, as discussed in the *Campaign Guide*, and if so how influential they are. Whether or not there are factions, the crew may not be particularly homogenous any more. Do the Mission staff hate the Operations personnel? Has cooperation broken down within some of the Divisions? The referee should show the Travellers how their crew are thinking and feeling through small incidents along the way, and if they take the hint they may start addressing issues before major cracks appear.

There is an infinitesimally small chance that the crew have developed into a razor-sharp team who follow every regulation and cooperate efficiently, dressing in perfectly pressed uniforms, and spending every off-duty hour reading technical manuals in order to impress the Travellers even more. This is unlikely no matter how much the Travellers might want it to be true. It is far more likely that the crew have developed into an effective company but one that is distinctly unique in how it gets things done.

If the Travellers have been lax, it is possible that they are now presiding over a madhouse shambles of crewmembers drunk on home-made hooch most of the time, and who fall out over the slightest matter. Parts of the ship may be filthy or even uninhabitable, with equipment salvaged to keep other items running. Particularly inattentive Travellers may be unaware of the situation, especially if they are the sort to issue grandiose edicts without making an effort to follow up. The most shambolic crew may still be able to look competent (or pass the blame on to someone else) in order to avoid punishment.

It is probable that the crew are somewhere in between these extremes, with a few personnel as outliers. The odder parts of shipboard culture might be positive and even rather charming. A museum of artefacts and souvenirs, perhaps including a sort of shrine to those who have not made it this far, might get in the way if it is situated somewhere awkward but will bolster morale

and contribute to unity within the crew. The crazy sport the crew have been inventing for the past hundred parsecs might cause the odd breakage or injury, but is a welcome distraction from the darkness outside.

The crew can be played as a character by the referee, just as individuals can. This can add colour to an incident and make the voyage as a whole more of a roleplaying experience, and also serve as a warning or foreshadowing of problems in the future. This can work in different ways, but the underlying principle is that the Travellers cannot be expected to spot a sudden change in someone's behaviour if they do not know what that person normally behaves like. By roleplaying the odd vignette involving interaction with crewmembers or observing something mundane the crew are doing, the referee creates the possibility of elevating the detection of a problem beyond mere skill checks.

Much of the crossing will be relatively mundane. The process of jumping to a deep space refuelling source, investigating for deposits of water ice or other useful materials, and then conducting the necessary operations is well established. By now the crew will have done it many times and probably do not need a pre-mission briefing – though not holding one might be a step towards inefficiency and disorder. It is still worth playing out the setup and execution of any such operation.

Not only does this create opportunities for roleplaying and monitoring the crew, it also keeps the Travellers guessing about which situations are likely to explode in their faces. If the Travellers want to gloss over pre-mission briefing and orders they can of course do so, but should play out at least one to give the referee an idea of how they are being done at this stage of the mission. If the Travellers play a slipshod, excessively casual briefing session then simply pick up the dice to resolve the next refuelling with a DEI check, the referee is free to assume they were equally casual the next time around. The Travellers have no right to protest that of course they would have undertaken the correct contingency planning the one time it was necessary, when they have demonstrated they do not bother with such things any more.

As usual, a balance must be struck between following regulations and getting things done. By this stage in the mission, a super-detailed contingency briefing for a mundane task will antagonise a crew who have already established they can carry out this task in their sleep. This will reduce morale and may affect efficiency – doing things by the book might not be the most effective option for an experienced crew. A certain kind of

Traveller will try to figure out which situations are likely to result in problems and insure themselves against difficulties by over-preparing when it matters. The referee should take note of such inconsistent actions as they will puzzle and perhaps annoy the crew.

This comment applies to ‘meta-game’ thinking rather than logical conclusions drawn from information the Travellers would have within the adventure. If a situation looks likely to be hazardous or unusual and the Travellers decide to prepare, this is fine. If they are simply meta-gaming to ensure their success the referee can dissuade them by imposing problems among the crew caused by the bafflingly inconsistent actions of the command crew.

Some of the incidents presented in this book are adventures in the usual sense. Others are ‘things that happen’ and do not have a scripted plotline. This does not mean they cannot become an adventure if crewmembers get into trouble or the Travellers decide to pursue an unexpected course of action. However, there will be occasions where there are no huge problems to overcome and no skill checks to be made. Instead, the situation is an opportunity for roleplaying and narrative. The referee can make as much or as little of this as seems appropriate, but it is important that the Travellers experience the voyage rather than simply grind their way through a series of skill checks to reach the finale. The literary rule of ‘show, don’t tell’ applies throughout *The Crossing*, and indeed all the way to Terminus Point.



THE PROJECTED ROUTE

The following route has been presented by the ship's Mission Division scientists. Sensor data has been carefully analysed and the staff are as sure as they can be that the chain of refuelling points is viable. They know what is at stake if they are wrong and are betting their lives on being right. However, this does not mean they have much information or that all of it is correct.

Refuelling points and star systems have been given temporary 'working' designations, and can be renamed by the Travellers. If they ever get home to Charted Space they can enter these designations into the navigational databases, immortalising themselves and their discoveries. How ridiculous they want the names of 'their' worlds to be is entirely up to the Travellers.

The projected transit cannot be completed in neat 4-parsec jumps. More than twenty refuellings will be required to reach the far shore, with an average rate of advance of 2-3 parsecs per jump. Assuming a little scientific and exploration work is to be carried out, *Deepnight Revelation* may be in the Great Rift for up to a year. She will be more than usually vulnerable during that time, and may have difficulties obtaining basic supplies like food. However, the route has been well planned and the risks can be managed. Many of the deep space refuelling operations or remote-system visits will be quite routine. It would not be wise to expect everything to go to plan, but the Travellers and their crew are up to this task... provided nothing goes seriously wrong.

SCRIPTED EPISODES

The following incidents are intended to take place at certain points on the crossing, though it is always possible for the referee to alter the order in which they occur or to substitute other locations.

A Cosmos at Peace takes place in the DSS-1 system. The Travellers find a planet suitable for resupply and an entire star system to explore. This isolated microcosm is little short of paradise, and some of the crew decide they want to stay longer. Much longer. The Travellers have to deal with near-mutiny among weary crewmembers.

Proton Storm takes place at the DSS-2 system. The Travellers must deal with sudden flaring from the star, flinging hot gas across the system.

Ploosh takes place in the DSS-4 system, where the only source of hydrogen fuel is a large water world named 'Ploosh' by some wag aboard the ship. There are no severe dangers, only novel problems to be solved and an encounter with possibly intelligent underwater creatures.

Monument takes place at the DSA-1 system. The Travellers will encounter the home and birthplace of the Leviathan creatures, and discover a monument built by the Ancients expedition to some of their crew.

Chain and Embers takes place at DSA-2 and the two refuelling points approaching it. The Travellers discover that DSA-2 is a huge mass of stellar matter ejected from the unstable supergiant star at DSS-5.

Angry Giants takes place at DSS-5. The Travellers witness a wonder of the cosmos – two supergiant stars destroying one another.

Code DTP takes place at DSS-6. In this case DTP stands for 'Deathtrap? Probably!', a designation applied by a bored and weary crewmember. The system has an apparently habitable planet, which given recent experiences causes unease rather than relief among the crew. Nevertheless this may be a welcome opportunity to rest, and the need to resupply may be urgent.

The Weakest Force takes place at DSA-3. The Travellers are presented with a cosmic mystery: how is a small brown dwarf able to exert such a huge gravitational attraction over its associated planetary system? The Travellers discover that it does not. There is a gravitational anomaly in the system.

Struggling in the Surf takes place on the last transit, after leaving DSA-3. The weary crew must deal with internal problems and a final obstacle; there is no fuel to be had at DSR-16. They have two parsecs' worth of fuel remaining and must find a way to cross the last three parsecs. Careful searching will reveal a possible alternative source of fuel, but if it does not pan out the crew are doomed.

The Far Shore takes place when the Travellers reach the other side of the Great Rift. They have some urgent tasks to deal with such as resupplying, finding a place to rest and make repairs, and restoring *Deepnight Revelation* to full working order.

Deep Space Refuelling Point One, or DSR-1, is a deep space comet drifting at no great speed through the rift. There is a small chance the comet will be infected with matter from the Deepnight Entity, but this prospect is vanishingly small.

DSR-1

3 parsecs

DSR-3 is a cometary body, hopefully allowing uneventful refuelling.

DSR-3

3 parsecs

A cosmos
at peace

DSS-1

4 parsecs

DSR-2

DSR-2 is another comet, similar to most others. Refuelling at such a body requires melting ice and bringing it aboard the ship for cracking into hydrogen. It is not expected that there will be much scientific work to be done during such an evolution.

Deep Space System One is a complete star system consisting of an M4 primary with an M7 as a distant companion. It is known to have one or more gas giants and should be an easy source of fuel. There may be a habitable or borderline planet in-system which can be used to resupply the ship and perhaps rest the crew. Arrival at DSS-1 should take place around 4-5 weeks into the crossing.

DSS-2 is an isolated K3 main sequence star. Indications are clear that there are planetary bodies in the system, making the presence of water ice virtually certain even if there are no gas giants. This cannot be confirmed at present, so it is possible the Travellers may have to search the system for ice.

DSS-2

Proton
storm

DSR-4 is a rogue gas giant, possibly with moons. Fuel is certain to be available.

DSR-4

DSS-3 is a brown dwarf with moons. No complications are expected.

DSS-3

DSS-4 is a binary pair of M9 main sequence stars with a planetary system. No complications are expected.

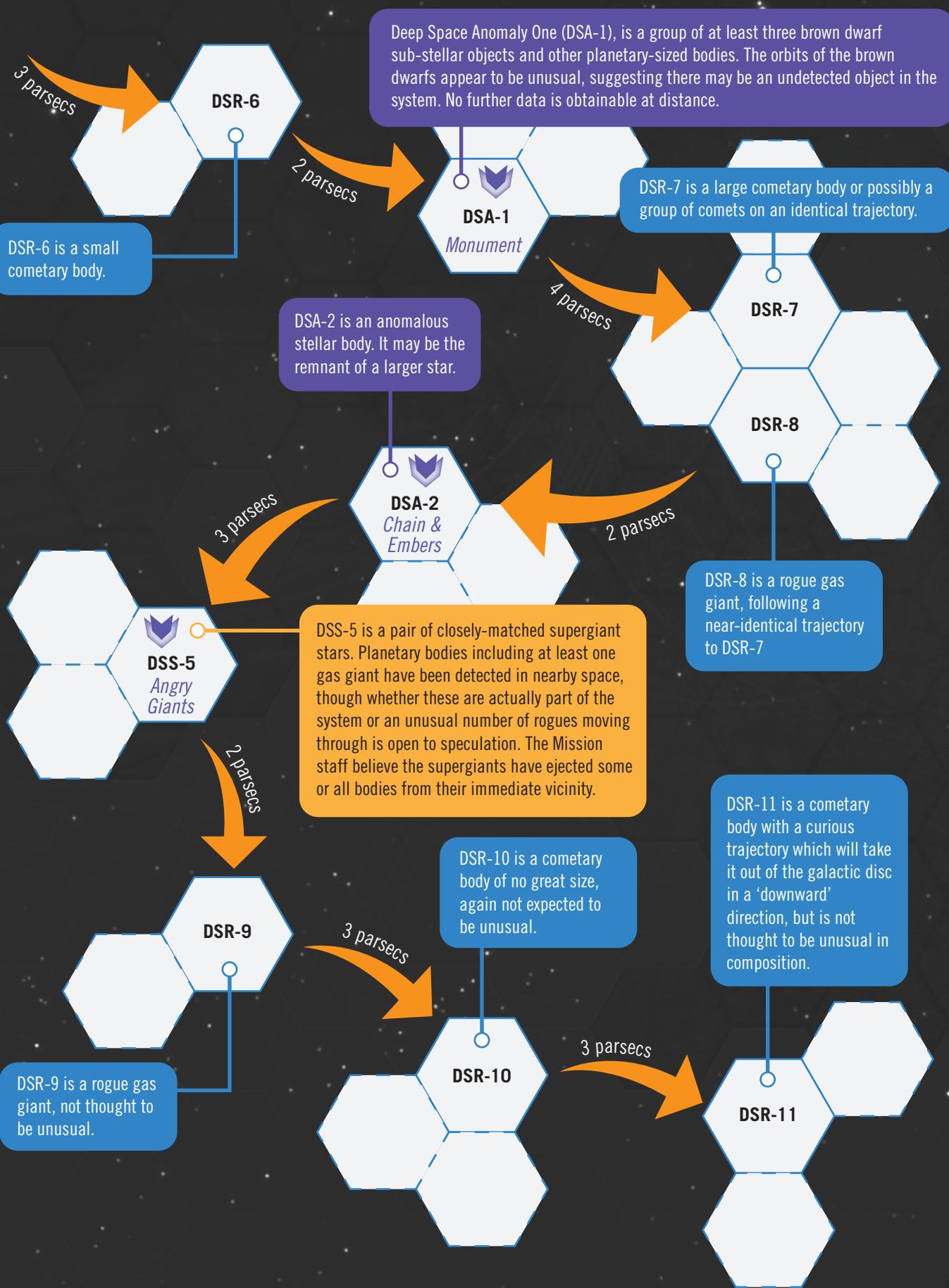
DSS-4

Ploosh

DSR-5 is a cometary body, unusual only in that it is very large.

DSR-5

4 parsecs





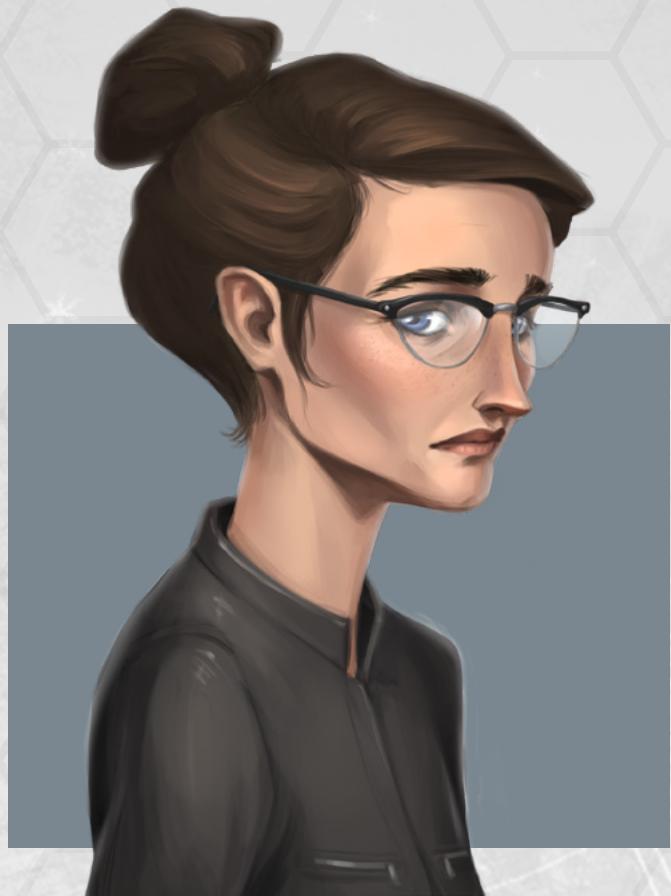
CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTERS & CREWMEMBERS

Certain crewmembers will feature in the incidents befalling the Travellers as they proceed. The referee may choose not to use those presented here, since it may be desirable to insert a recurring character from a previous adventure instead. Detailed skills are not provided, since these identities are intended to be slotted in wherever

the referee chooses. In one campaign a given identity might be a very junior crewmember, in another it may be desirable to assign the same identity to a high-ranking officer. As always, the referee must tailor identities to the needs of the situation.

RAIX DELVAAN: THE CURATOR



Raix Delvaan is a junior member of the Flight Division, but quite old for her position. She is not well regarded in a professional capacity, having underperformed on many occasions. However, she is not known as a troublemaker, just someone who is out of her depth and routinely needs assistance from more skilled colleagues. There are many like her aboard *Deepnight Revelation*, despite attempts to recruit the best people available.

Raix has appointed herself custodian of some of the artefacts found along the way, and has helped create a sort of museum to the events of the voyage. This includes

personal items from fallen crewmates, not all of which were freely donated. Raix goes to great lengths to make sure something belonging to each lost comrade finds its way into the collection, but not everything is appropriate. Thus a careful search of the ‘museum’ might turn up a missing electronic device, a knife, or even a sidearm that is supposed to be in the armoury. Raix means no harm by this, but has become a little blinded by her self-appointed mission to commemorate everyone.

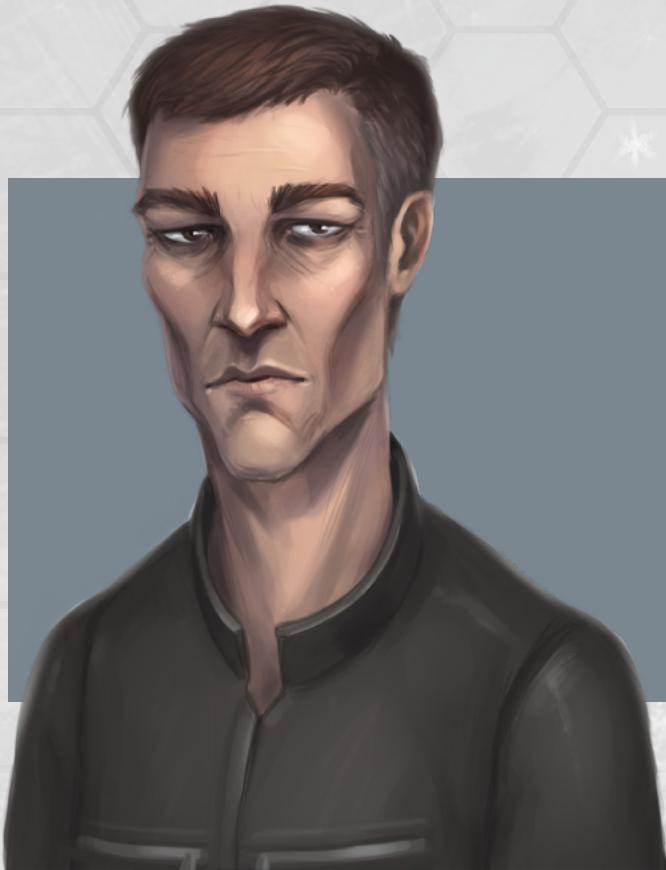
Raix can be found in the museum, probably alone, whilst others are partying or holding a formal ceremony to mark the beginning of the crossing. There is an element of ritual to what she does; touching or slightly rearranging objects and speaking to the people who once used them. She lingers on certain items; the banner of a long-dead civilisation perhaps, or an instrument once carried by an early casualty. Observers might be touched at her reverence, or consider her a bit crazy.

Raix left behind a life of little success and much sadness when she signed aboard *Deepnight Revelation*, and has found a new world. She has few friends aboard as such, but anyone who sees her in the museum will realise the ship and its crew have become the cornerstone of Raix’ existence. She is content to be a small part of the ship’s company, and though she is aware she is not very skilled she is still proud to play her role. Raix would defend the ship and company to her last breath, but might also cause problems trying to obtain souvenirs for a museum that is becoming an obsession for her.

Referee’s Note

If the ship has an ‘official’ museum Raix will likely be involved with it, but she might have a private shrine/collection somewhere whether or not there is a main one.

CARLOZ MIRACARU: THE BLACK MARKETEER



Carroz is assigned to the Operations Division, where he is notoriously lazy but at the same time fairly popular. Carroz has a certain charisma combined with a hint of menace. He has the ability to slide out from under a task and leave someone else to do it, in a way that makes them think it was theirs in the first place. He is known – without any evidence, if anyone thinks to check – as someone who is good to have on your side but will make your life miserable if you offend him. He is not a bully, however; it is more that people are instinctively wary of him for no reason they can explain.

Carroz does not stand out much during the pre-crossing ceremonies. Indeed, he is remembered as being in various places by those who were there, but they cannot quite recall exactly when he was there or what he was doing. Certainly it was nothing out of the ordinary. In fact, Carroz has faded into the background for his own reasons; he is taking the opportunity to move contraband from its long-term hiding place to a stash where he can more easily distribute it. The stuff is mainly homemade booze from a still operated by someone else, but there are a few electronic parts and other difficult-to-obtain spares plus luxury items like a pair of slippers handmade from the fur of some animal encountered earlier in the voyage.

Carroz is engaged in a bit of mostly harmless black-marketeering and has a small clientele who would prefer not to see their supply of contraband dry up. Treating Carroz harshly would antagonise these crewmembers, but he might be co-opted by clever Travellers to serve their interests. He is not a bad person; all he wants is to get through the voyage in as comfortable and safe fashion as he can. A deal could be made to make use of his talents in return for making some of his activities semi-official. Indeed, by this time in the voyage Carroz probably knows more about what is squirrelled away in darker corners of the storage areas or various illicit stashes than anyone else aboard.

Referee's Note

Carroz is in the process of facilitating a really good private party which will result in several crewmembers being all but incapacitated for a day or more afterward. If this is not curbed the situation will escalate, possibly leading to key personnel being out of commission when they are needed.

GUENIVVE AMBRAY: THE MUTINEER



Guenivve is a member of the Mission (or perhaps Operations if this is more suitable) Division. She started the voyage as a solid, dependable, and apparently dedicated member of the crew but has gone through patches where she became disaffected or homesick. At present she seems to be functioning normally, but on the eve of the crossing she becomes morose, argumentative, and difficult to get along with. If left alone she will eventually gravitate to the company of others weary of the voyage. They engage in some rather poisonous venting about things they are unhappy about. This is

wide ranging, including command decisions, shipboard practices, particular types of star, and even the layout of the hangar bays. Once they are finally finished cussing out everything they hate, Guenivve's friends cheer up and move on to more typical interpersonal chat and banter.

On the face of it, this may seem healthy. It is generally better to vent from time to time than allow resentment to fester, and some of the things that receive a really good cussing are laughably trivial. Indeed, this is how the mood lightens; after a vicious diatribe about the ship's command team and general working practices, Guenivve launches into an equally nasty attack on a section of deck plate near her cabin which has acquired a slight misalignment and once tripped her up. The hilarity that ensues conceals a real weariness and resentment, however.

Guenivve and some of her friends are suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), though they are not aware of it. This has reached the point where they are prone to become unreasonably annoyed at quite minor issues and storm away from simple tasks in utter frustration. They are also likely to become involved in reckless or self-destructive distractions such as heavy consumption of illicit hooch or hazardous games played with inappropriate objects. They will also cut corners at times, perhaps leaving a task only partially done, and are intolerant of anyone who they think is trying a bit too hard to follow regulations. This is transferred resentment; the group are disaffected with the mission and resent anyone who they think still believes in it.

Referee's Note

If the Travellers recognise the problem they may be able to do something about it, but the incident reflects a growing weariness among the crew. This will come to a head early in the crossing.

TARAN REENE: THE IMPERIALIST



Taran is a typical recruit to the Deepnight mission. Coming from a poor background, he got himself into a naval training programme at college and enlisted, expecting to serve a couple of terms and come out set up for a career with a merchant shipping line. Instead, he was both enthralled by the navy life and disappointed with the mundanity of serving aboard fleet tankers or naval bases. Having decided to ‘go career’ he heard about the Deepnight Expedition and volunteered to be part of the Imperial Navy contingent. This came with a promotion to Petty Officer First Class well ahead of his time and the strong likelihood of elevation to officer rank upon returning to base, either to muster out as a lieutenant (or lieutenant-commander) or continue in a long naval career.

It was envisaged that the naval contingent might be beacons on the recruiting circuit or move into special positions as exploration experts if they stayed in the navy. Taran expects to be around 46-50 when *Deepnight Revelation* returns to Charted space after a 20-year mission, which leaves time for rapid promotion if he stays on. Alternatively, he will be mustering out with command officer rank if the mission takes longer, having achieved far more than anyone else from his corner of the homeworld ever did.

In the early stages of the mission Taran was known for being a bit too stiff and ‘navy-fashion’ for some of his colleagues, but has relaxed and grown into a professional young team leader who can be relied upon to be impeccably turned out and always have the right tools for the job at hand. He is well respected as a solid member of the crew.

Taran is, if not the leader, then certainly among the foremost exponents of the ‘Imperial’ faction; that is, he is dedicated to the protection of the Imperium and her people. He is young, and has never had any real strategic training however, so his idea of what the greatest benefit to the Imperium or the biggest threat to its people might be is based largely upon the opinions of others. Whilst not exactly naïve, Taran is relatively easy to manipulate and is sometimes used as a spokesman by others as he will passionately argue a case he has been influenced into believing.

If a serious threat to the Imperium is detected, Taran will argue for the immediate destruction of it or a withdrawal to bring a warning. He will argue – and in this he has a point – that pushing on against impossible odds for the sake of honour or ego is in fact a dereliction of duty. The command crew have a responsibility to accept the situation if their chances of success have become too small, and to turn back. Taran might even argue for a direct retirement through the Aslan Hierate if a setback is encountered after the Great Rift is crossed. The rest of the time he is a steadfast voice arguing the continuation of the mission all the way to Terminus Point.

LIEUTENANT-MAJOR JANA IREKIA: THE SECURITY ADVISOR

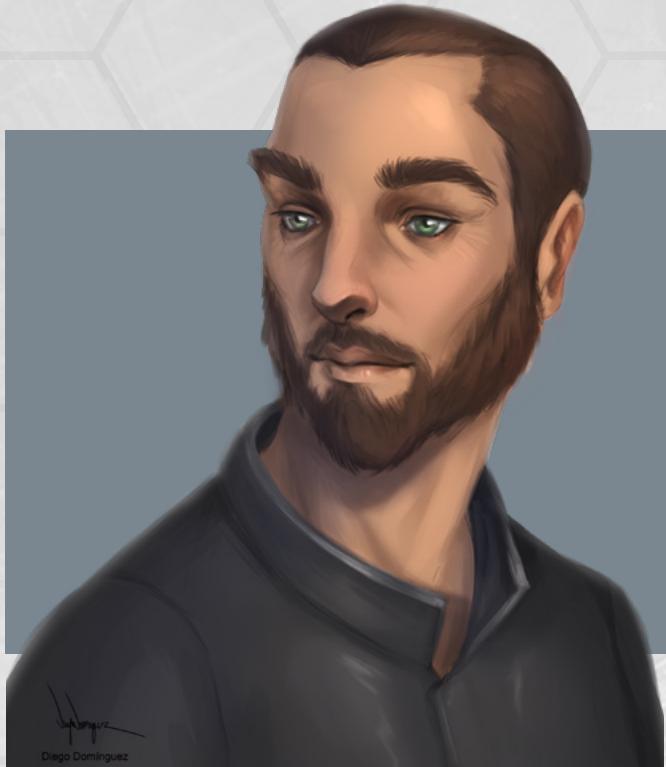


Jana served in the military of her homeworld, rising to the rank of lieutenant-major. This would be the equivalent of a senior captain in most other forces but indicates she was on 'staff' rather than the 'leadership' side of the command equation. This is rather obvious to anyone who has to deal with her – she is no leader and has rather poor interpersonal skills.

Jana's area of expertise was planning and risk management, advising more senior officers of the trade-offs necessary to get a job done. Whilst not exactly a bean-counter she is constantly engaged in mentally balancing the risks and rewards of a set of actions and offering her opinion whether it is wanted or not. Although she can be irritating, Jana is good at what she does and generally argues for a little more caution, a little better security, or at least a briefing on what to do if things go awry. By this time in the expedition her advice will undoubtedly have saved lives.

As a former military officer, Jana is expected by many of the crew to be combat experienced and a generally lead-from-the-front personality. She is quite the opposite, at least by inclination, but has risen to the challenge well enough when she was required to do so. Having to live up to expectations has forced Jana to become what others think she is, with the result that she has grown into a very good field officer. However, she still feels like a fraud and worries that she will get someone killed if they rely on her to haul them out of a bad situation.

AVAN TRUSCELL



Avan is a ‘generic identity’ for the use of the referee. He might be introduced early in the campaign wherever he fits, as a workmate or someone the Travellers interact with from time to time. He features in this adventure as the victim of an unfortunate circumstance and may die or be permanently maimed – as might anyone else, of course, but there is a scripted event revolving around Avan being injured.

The referee might assign the name and identity of Avan to anyone in the crew, including senior officers, but if the Travellers have not already encountered him it is assumed that he is a member of the Deck Division who often joins planetside expeditions. Avan is known to be broadly competent in both shipboard and planetside environments. His reputation among the crew is based mainly on his oft-stated love of cake – though he is not significantly overweight – rather than any outstanding competence or lack of it.

ALOISIO GRAUFFY: CUSTODIAN OF THE NUKES



Aloisio is a former mining engineer, and before that he was a corporal in the Imperial Army. In his mid-40s he is a typical ‘civilian’ recruit to the *Deepnight Expedition*. No close personal ties, short military service followed by a modestly successful career as a freelance expert; the pattern is repeated elsewhere in the crew. Aloisio started out as a member of the Mission Division, serving as a research assistant and expert-when-needed on excavation and extraction methods. As a qualified handler of explosives, he was appointed custodian of the ship’s stocks including the nuclear demolition charges. Aloisio never used nuclear charges in his career as a miner, but did achieve certification to handle such devices and was given additional training for this role.

Aloisio is hard-working, diligent, and popular with his crewmates as someone who can be depended on in a tight spot or to get in a round of drinks. He is known for playing fair, which can be a two-edged sword. On one hand he will remember and return favours; on the other, he will not forget someone who lets him down or wrongs him. Persuading Aloisio to hand out explosives is a challenging task. He likes the paperwork in place, inspections carried out, and never deviates from the rules to the slightest degree. This is generally considered a good thing, since he is in charge of the ship’s nukes.



CHAPTER FOUR

BEGINNING THE CROSSING

The start of the crossing is a momentous occasion for the *Deepnight Revelation*. Whether the crew are departing from the deep space refuelling point created by their new allies or entering the rift from some other system, there is a sense of occasion and some nervousness among the crew. This is offset by an equally strong feeling of purpose and anticipation. Wonders lie ahead, after all. The exact balance of emotions varies from one crewmember to another.

Some elements among the crew want to mark the occasion with a formal ceremony; others with a less organised activity. The Travellers may sanction or even organise some kind of gathering, but whether they do or not there will be last-night-before-departure events throughout the ship. Some or all of these may be covert, and some crewmembers will be absent from any and all gatherings. Of these, a few want to be alone somewhere; others want to be together with a particular someone. Some will of course be on duty, and a few will be pursuing their own agendas. What better time to visit the secret stash of contraband than when everyone else is at a party?

The activities of certain individuals are noted in next few chapters. The Travellers may or may not become aware of them at the time, but some will be relevant later in the adventure and others can be used as colour or will give an indication of how crewmembers will behave in dangerous situations encountered during the crossing of the Great Rift. The characters presented below are left somewhat vague to allow the referee to insert them into an appropriate Division or work group, and can be replaced with characters already encountered or named by the referee.

DSR-1 TO DSS-1

Refuelling from a deep space comet is never an easy undertaking, but the Travellers and their crew are experienced spacers with all the right equipment. This refuelling should be played out, at least briefly, as a model for later attempts. Resolution with a DEI or ECEI check is recommended for routine refuellings after this one.

Deepnight Revelation will emerge at a distance from the comet dictated by the Effect of a Difficult (10+) Astrogation check, as shown on the Travel to Comet Time table. An Effect of -6 or worse indicates a disaster. For most ships this would mean missing the location by a sufficient margin that another jump is required to reach it, but with the extremely precise deep space jump capability of *Deepnight Revelation* the situation is not quite so bad. A ship without a Deep Space Manoeuvring System (DSMS) would still be unable to reach the comet on an acceptable time frame, but for the Travellers the question is one of transit time rather than capability.

Travel to Comet Time

Effect	Time
-6 or worse	4Dx24 hours
-5 to -3	4Dx12 hours
-2 to -1	4Dx6 hours
0	4Dx3 hours
1 to 2	4Dx2 hours
3 to 5	4D hours
6+	2D hours

At the end of this time *Deepnight Revelation* is at rest relative to the comet, at a short distance allowing her small craft to ply back and forth. There is always some risk inherent in this evolution, but careful and patient pilots can keep hazards within acceptable limits.

A DEI check for the Flight Division will indicate how well the refuelling operation is handled. It requires landing equipment on the comet to melt water ice and pump it into tanks ready for transfer to *Deepnight Revelation* herself. Most of this can be done remotely, but there is always a need to deploy personnel so it is possible someone will get into trouble and require rescue.

There is no infestation on the comet, and no threat beyond the usual ones encountered working in deep space. This incident serves mainly to establish – or re-establish – procedures and allow the Travellers to

reorient themselves. It may be that they have been operating in friendly space for some time as they interacted with the civilisations in the *Near Side of Yonder*, and that they need to get their heads back in the exploration game.

Refuelling at DSR-2 is similar, and can be abstracted with a DEI check. It is possible that the scientists of Mission Division will want rock samples to analyse and may offer learned speculation on the origins of the comet based upon its trajectory and the effects of phenomena such as radiation or electromagnetism on its particles. This may be quite interesting but will

reveal no great secrets of the universe. DSR-2 is just a chunk of icy rock in deep space; a source of fuel and nothing else.

It is possible the Travellers will come up with an alternative or shortcut method to conduct deep space mining. Blasting chunks off an icy asteroid and somehow catching them might work, but it is a tricky business that runs the risk of shattering the comet and scattering ice on trajectories that prevent capture. Experienced spacers and scientists alike will vigorously discourage such actions as far too risky, especially if there is a possibility *Deepnight Revelation* might have to retrace her steps at some point.

CHAPTER FIVE

A COSMOS AT PEACE



The first star system encountered in the Great Rift is designated DSS-1, though the Travellers may wish to give it a more interesting appellation. The system is known to be a binary with one or more gas giants, but little more information is available before *Deepnight Revelation* emerges from jump. Initial sensor readings are encouraging, and soon 'encouraging' becomes 'pleasing'. The system has a very Earth-like world which appears to possess abundant life and a breathable atmosphere. The rest of the system is typical, but it would not be hard to find an excuse to spend a little time here conducting exploration and scientific work in between games of frisbee and the occasional barbecue.

DSS-1 PRIMARY (M4 Star)

Primary 1	(X9AA000-0)
Primary 2	(X840000-0)
Primary 3	(X766000-0)
Primary 4	(X100000-0)
Primary 5	(Small Gas Giant)
Primary 6	(X000000-0)
Primary 7	(Small Gas Giant)

DSS-1 COMPANION (M7 Star)

Companion 1	(X210000-0)
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The innermost planet of the primary system is a large, hot water world with an unbreathable nitrogen-carbon dioxide atmosphere. It has primitive life in its oceans, in the form of single-celled and early multi-celled organisms, and is interesting enough to justify placing one or more of the scout vessels in orbit over the world for an extended investigation. Forays to the ocean surface and perhaps shallow underwater dips could be carried out with the utility boats.

The second planet is a desert with a surprisingly large amount of very primitive microbial life. This has put some oxygen into the atmosphere, making the world tolerable with nothing more than a compressor mask. Again, the life here is sufficient to justify some time studying it, and there are weather conditions, geology, and other scientific points of interest to keep the crew busy for a while. These two inner worlds alone will provide a wealth of excuses to extend *Deepnight Revelation*'s stay in the system.

Outside the orbit of the habitable third planet are two small gas giants with the usual gaggle of moons, a rockball terrestrial, and a planetoid belt. The sole planetary body orbiting the companion star is a meteorite-battered rockball with only a trace of atmospheric gas. None of these bodies is out of the ordinary to any great extent; orbits are what would be expected and composition is close to baseline. The system is rather peaceful, interesting mainly for its normality, but it does have a habitable world in its third orbit.

PRIMARY THREE

Unless the Travellers assign a name and make it stick, the third planet of the primary system is likely to be nicknamed PeeThree, or perhaps Paradise Three by the crew. The designation P3 will be used hereafter, but the Travellers are free to assign their own designation.

P3 orbits close to the centre of the system's habitable zone. This, along with its combination of size, composition, and possession of water makes it ideal for life. Spectrographic analysis of atmospheric gases confirms life processes even before a visual image is available, and when it is the general appearance of the world matches expectations. P3's surface is around 63% water, with ice caps at the poles and multiple continents. Volcanism is low as is background radiation but the world has a strong magnetic field with evidence of significant tectonic movement.

All signs point to a lush paradise waiting below, which may ring alarm bells for paranoid Travellers. In fact, P3's ecosystem is relatively tame and there are no unusual dangers, but there is no way to know that from orbit. Wise Travellers will approach P3 with the usual caution, sending sampling parties down and conducting analysis before landing large numbers of personnel. However, there is always some excitement upon finding a lush planet, and with two other interesting bodies in the system the Travellers might find themselves under pressure to begin exploring right away.



First Impressions

P3 does not disappoint. It has a varied ecosystem compatible with the Travellers' metabolism, which means they can eat the local plant and animal life – and it can eat them. There are predators, but they are wary of the newcomers and will not approach a camp or exploration party if easier prey are available. Most other life is harmless; herd creatures wander the plains and brightly-coloured birds flock to the forests. There are no indications of serious danger from the wildlife.

The planet itself is also peaceful. The odd earthquake can be detected, and some areas are more prone than others, but for the most part P3 is as safe as a world with life can be. First impressions gained by the survey parties are of a peaceful world. There are some signs of a possible emerging sentient species, however; piles of discarded fruit stones and nut shells are spotted along the edges of some forests, along with evidence that paths have been deliberately cleared. Sticks jammed into the shallow bed of a river suggest a fish trap. There is no indication of power generation or any sort of urban sites.

The People of P3

Within the forests of P3 dwells a species of multilegged walking/crawling creatures, approaching the lower end of the intelligence range required for sentience but have

not quite achieved it. At present they are very clever animals on their way to self-awareness, but progress is slowed by the comfortable environment P3 has to offer. Intelligence is not necessary to survival, so as a rule only the populations in less welcoming terrain are progressing at any significant rate.

The people of P3 are anything but humanoid and may not initially be recognised as potential sophonts. They have a body the size of a large dog and four sets of paired legs along each side. Each pair joins the torso at a skeletal and muscular nexus point, and arranged opposite a similar pair of legs. This gives a total of eight legs on each side of the torso, plus four forelimbs (evolved from a fifth pairing of legs) again arranged as a pair on each side. All limbs are stubby, meaning the creatures 'walk' just centimetres off the forest floor. Legs end in claws, enabling the creatures to climb a short distance into trees, whilst the forelimbs have weak three-fingered hands with smaller claws.

Bodies are segmented between the leg pairs, with the front segment acting as a head and housing visual and olfactory organs, as well as the brain. Senses are not sharp, except for an ability to 'taste' the air with sensory organs on the skin of the torso. The breathing apparatus, on the other hand, does not include a sense of smell. Reproduction is sexual, though there is little outward difference between genders, and respiration uses a

standard set of lungs unusual only in that there are two pairs of them, creating upper and lower chambers. When air enters the upper chamber some of it is passed to the lower, which is more efficient but slower to extract oxygen. Breathing is thus a rather weird two-stage process with a hiccup-like sound in the middle. This does allow the creatures to hold their breath and remain entirely still for up to twenty minutes at a time, suggesting that perhaps at one point in their evolution they needed to avoid predators.

Diet is mostly vegetarian, but the creatures can digest meat and will take it when found. This is usually in the form of eggs, small snail-like creatures that can be dug out of the ground with a stick, and the occasional nest of insects. Primitive tools are used to dig, cut, or remove obstacles, and some communities have learned how to make fish traps.

The creatures communicate with wheezing or coughing sounds, and are generally cooperative. They dwell in groups of 10-20 individuals which roam over a wide territory but do not seem particularly attached to it. Given the option, they will hide and remain still or amble off into the undergrowth rather than get into a confrontation, but disturbing their refuse piles can provoke a family group into a bizarre and unfortunately rather amusing display of rearing up with one or more sets of legs in the air and making trumpeting, wheezing sounds. If this fails they can deliver a nasty bite, but these creatures are generally harmless unless cornered.

The people of P3 are worth the time to study, as are any creatures on the cusp of sentience. The Life Sciences team will push for at least a week or two dedicated to a study of the ‘people’ and their environment. This is a very short time to spend on a whole ecosystem but the mission needs to progress. They will want to borrow a few personnel to assist them in this endeavour.

Much of the work has nothing to do with the ‘people’, which is perhaps just as well. Unskilled crew traipsing around the forests will likely drive off study subjects, so much of the work is routine sample-gathering or ground-level surveying. Distant regions should be visited to obtain samples, using utility boats or pinnaces from *Deepnight Revelation*. All this could be done in quite a leisurely fashion, combining research with recreation. Indeed, say the Life Sciences team, this could be an excellent opportunity to resupply, rest up, and still get some solid work done. Perhaps the research period might be extended to four weeks? Six?

PEOPLE OF P3

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
PEOPLE OF P3	26	3 m
SKILLS	Melee 0, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Survival 3	
ATTACKS	Bite (1D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+2), Small (-2)	
BEHAVIOUR	Omnivore, Gatherer	

Activity at DSS-1

Even if the Travellers have recently been enjoying the hospitality of local alien powers previously, it will have been months since the crew were able to get out of their ship and walk around outdoors. Natural light, wind, and other basic natural conditions such as rain become desirable by their absence, and the chance to go planetside is welcomed by almost everyone. There will be a few happy to stay aboard ship, but most of the crew are eager for time on the surface.

Even the tightest work schedule offers a change from routine, and at first the most mundane of planetside tasks will attract volunteers from all over the ship. Even senior officers and technical experts begin metaphorically (or literally) queuing up to collect rock and soil samples, or to sit on a hillside in the sunshine coordinating a group of mapping drones. If the Travellers do not include a little recreation time planetside the crew will be disappointed but will make the best of it, but ideally the expedition should be able to spare a few days or weeks for a stopover. The long-term benefits to morale are likely to outweigh any delay.

Ideally, the Travellers will plan a schedule that allows everyone to have at least a few days of complete rest and recreation interspersed with planetside work and some duty shifts aboard ship. If they make a point of obviously including tasks that will keep their ship in orbit for a few more days ‘just to be thorough’ they will win the approval of most crewmembers, who will play along with the slightly skewed balance of work and rest – not that there is any shortage of things to do. If the crew are going to get proper planetside rest they need to set up one or more camps, which requires surveying sites and bringing down equipment and shelters. If there is to be a rest and recreation component to the visit, even setting up the camp becomes an exciting and fun task. Hard work is somehow less onerous when it will lead to having a place to unwind. There is almost a holiday atmosphere among the crew, which may need to be curbed if it gets out of hand.

The crew are well aware that any planet can be dangerous, and they know little about this one. Caution is always advisable in such a situation, but there will be some crewmembers who forget the possible dangers or who cannot wait to start enjoying their downtime. Striking a balance between getting the necessary scientific and security work done and having a rest is up to the Travellers. If they are perceptive they will notice that some crewmembers are rather lax, for varying reasons. In some cases this is simple over-eagerness, but others show signs of long-term fatigue.

This is inevitable on such a long voyage and can be dealt with in various ways. Sometimes fatigue goes away on its own, usually as a result of some incident that refocuses the individual. The support of friends and colleagues can also be therapeutic, even if they are entirely unaware of the problem. Indeed, one of the most important sources of resilience among the mission crew is mutual support. Different members of a group are vulnerable at different times, but if the crew continues to function as an effective unit those struggling may be carried through their difficult times and later support others when they face a crisis. Deliberate intervention, whether medical or social, can also help. This can include taking a couple of weeks to let the crew rest on a habitable planet, so Travellers who spot the signs of incipient burnout may be motivated to extend the rest period.

However, there is still work to be done. A list of tasks presents itself, not all of which are of prime importance. Some jobs should not be skimped, but others can be ignored entirely.

- Orbital mapping of P3 and other bodies in the system
- Initial security and safety survey of landing sites
- Initial sample collection and analysis
- Base camp(s) deployment
- Expeditions to the inner two planets
- Expeditions to the other planets
- Detailed analysis of the local ecosystem
- Study of the ‘people’ once discovered
- Resupply with food and any other materials that can be obtained

Sending personnel halfway across the system in a pinnace might be unpopular, but the promise of a week’s uninterrupted recreation time once the team returns will offset this. On the other hand some of the scientific staff will clamour to be allowed to visit the inner planets and conduct at least a quick (which means multiple days rather than weeks or months) survey.

It is likely P3 and the surrounding system will be a hive of activity over the next few weeks. Pinnaces and scouts ranging to and from at least the inner planets, ground expeditions on P3 (and perhaps the next planet in), work around the base camp(s), hunting and gathering expeditions obtaining food, small craft hopping from one mountaintop to the next setting up monitoring stations to collect climate data... the list of possible tasks is endless.

In short, there will be people all over the place, and some will have the odd misadventure. A well-organised planetside expedition always has a security detail on

call to rescue vehicles stuck in awkward terrain or chase off creatures the scientists have managed to antagonise. There will always be something suspicious or potentially harmful that needs checking out, and it will usually turn out to be a minor risk. So long as nothing goes badly awry the mood is cheerful and the crew seem to be enjoying themselves. Command staff can look upon all the activity and feel a sense of satisfaction as their crew discovers a new world. Even the cookouts and beer-on-the-hillside parties are part of the learning experience. After all, the best way to learn about a world – some explorers would say the only way – is to live there for a while.

The exploration of the DSS-1 system should be played out at least a little. It would be possible to have the Travellers experience or at least receive reports on every single survey party or sample collection, but this is probably not desirable. However, the referee should ensure the Travellers are at least aware of what is going on. The focus can zoom in on moments here and there that encapsulate the exploration of P3. Some of these might be quite mundane, such as a sample collection crew returning to base camp and getting cussed out for leaving their vehicle in a dumb place, or the presentation of an incredibly detailed report about cyanobacteria found in damp patches on the second planet, but they will serve as an indicator of how things are progressing and perhaps keep the Travellers guessing about where important events are unfolding.

There are some warning signs that everything is not quite as positive as a first glance might suggest, and equally there are indications that the crew are enjoying their time at P3 and cheerfully combining exploration with recreation. Two incidents stand out as requiring intervention by the Travellers.

Fistfight at the Game

Some of the crew have invented a curious game which involves at least two – sometimes as many as five – balls in play at once, and seems to require having two of them in the opponents' scoring zone at the same time. Beyond this, nobody is quite sure what the rules are. Indeed, there is a secondary game played by onlookers, who adjudicate scoring attempts according to whatever rules they think should apply.

Good-natured arguments and spurious objections to scored points – which are then debated in minute detail by people who do not actually know how the game is played – keep everyone amused for hours after the game has wound down. The players, naturally, either ignore the onlookers' comments entirely or add their

own equally inane contribution. The combination of physical exercise and pseudo-academic silliness has so far proven popular.

The game can be a bit rough at times, but up to now it has always been good-natured. However, on this particular occasion a crewmember takes it too far. One of the stewards from Operations Division, an otherwise rather gentle woman named Annalysse Evalii, has become notorious for playing in a particularly vicious manner. She is a small woman with no unarmed combat skills, but is adept at delivering sly, painful blows to which most players do not retaliate. However, she catches a burly engineering technician named Sornven May at just the wrong moment and, frustrated with everything in general and Annalysse in particular, he back hands her right off her feet.

The apparent callous brutality of this offends other players, and a confrontation develops. Sornven starts to angrily vent about all the sly digs Annalysse has been taking but whilst some players might agree she has been taking things too far, others only saw a big guy smack a smaller crewmate who was playing a game – those who have not been on the receiving end of Annalysse's spite have no reason to suspect she might have provoked the incident.

Within moments a shoving match begins and Sornven lashes out again, prompting his victim to strike back. Sornven ends up in a fight with one of his crewmates whilst others helpfully try to pull them apart and are also struck. In his rage he kicks and punches at anything within reach, until dragged to the ground. At this point the apparently calm Annalysse dodges around her crewmates and delivers a brutal kick to the side of Sornven's head. She, too, is restrained resulting in minor injuries to several people.

The Travellers might be attracted to the disturbance or called upon to sort it out afterward. Witnesses are as divided about what happened as they were about the game up to that point; some offer explanations similar in tone to their discussion of the game, which others consider to be in bad taste. A general consensus emerges that both participants are normally good company and not prone to violence, and that they have no history of conflict.

Some say that Annalysse has been taking the game too far recently and has been very sly about it; others have not noticed anything. Sornven on the other hand can be a big clumsy galoot sometimes but always seemed to be playing fair and not really trying to hurt anyone. The key



difference is this: Sornven has shoved people a bit hard or run into them on many occasions but he will admit, apologise, and offer a beer to the victim. Annalysse delivers nasty kicks in the ankle or elbow digs under the ribs, which might or might not be obvious as deliberate blows. She always claims to be unaware of anything but accidental contact – which is always someone else's fault – if challenged.

Interviewing Sornven produces a mix of indignation, anger, embarrassment, and mild shame. He is adamant that he is not sorry he hit Annalysse; she has been taking cheap shots at everyone every time she gets the chance, and she is good at causing pain. Sornven is embarrassed at losing his temper, but maintains that it was not fair everyone turned on him – after that he was just defending himself. He was not severely injured by the kick Annalysse delivered but the lump on the side of his head is pretty nasty, and if the Travellers fail to notice it Sornven will point out that he was held down on the ground at the time it happened.

Interviewing Annalysse produces an apparently sincere contrition. As a rather small individual, she says, she gets bounced about a lot by the big guys. Mostly this is within sensible limits, but she does sometimes have to use her pointy elbows to prevent a heavier clash that would be harmful to her. Some crewmembers have decided to get upset about contacts she does not even recall, and she is sure they do not remember all the times they knocked her over. It is all part of the game

and not usually a problem, but Sornven deliberately struck her with the intent to cause harm. Annalysse is not sure why he lost his temper but is adamant that he is the bad guy here. As to kicking him in the head when he was down, she admits that was too much but says she was badly rattled and not thinking straight.

The Truth is somewhere in the middle, and perhaps towards Sornven's side. Annalysse is deliberately vicious whilst Sornven is just playing a rough sport, and Sornven is more willing to admit the truth about what happened. Both did something they should not, but whilst Sornven's blow was an instinctive reaction Annalysse was deliberate and could have caused more harm. Both their actions were out of character, which might suggest a deeper and more serious cause than a dispute over a made-up sport.

The Travellers will have to come up with a solution to the problem and risk offending supporters of one or both parties if they are not seen to have acted fairly. The incident might be seen as a mere bump in the road, but is a symptom of serious fatigue among some of the crew. Neither of the participants normally acts this way, but both are bad-tempered and liable to take it out on those around them. Annalysse is not willing to admit she was out of line, but both will grudgingly accept a fair resolution even if they initially protest. However, any feeling of bias that either has – fairly or otherwise – will cause further disaffection and push them into the mutineers' camp when matters come to a head.

Going Native

Study of the ‘people’ of P3 is a careful business. They can ‘taste’ outsiders at a distance but are not unduly frightened unless the crew approach too closely. The researchers have learned that patient, slow movement combined with basic camouflage will defeat the feeble visual and auditory senses of the ‘people’, and a couple of crewmembers have become quite skilled at creeping into the middle of a family group to record their activities.

The ‘people’ are at this point a mostly unknown animal species, and the possibility exists they might actually be quite dangerous. Thus there are some who feel it is reckless to sit among them as they feed, but the footage is excellent and the Life Sciences team is very pleased with the progress they are making. They are becoming convinced the ‘people’ are on the cusp of sentience, and engaged in an experiment to determine their exact level of intellect. This began with attempts to make a family group become sufficiently used to the presence of researchers that they did not withdraw when that presence was made more obvious. After this the next stage is to try to build a rapport with gifts or even cooperation.

One of the crewmembers assigned to assist the project has managed to sit among a feeding family group and help break nuts. The ‘people’ seemed to initially accept the presence of this helpful stranger without fear, but after a while became nervous and moved away. Still, it is a major breakthrough in establishing communications with the ‘people’. It is not clear why the creatures accepted the crewmember then became nervous, but experienced personnel suggest this is normal animal behaviour.

There are some wild ideas being flung about that the ‘people’ are psionic or have settlements concealed deep in the forests, but there is no evidence of this. All the same, a couple of the research assistants are adamant that further investigation should be carried out even if this means staying additional weeks or months at P3. They are also outspokenly critical of anyone who frightens the creatures, reporting that some of the crew are deliberately antagonising them in order to see their amusing threat-response behaviour.

The latter is true, though not common. A handful of crewmembers are prone to treat the ‘people’ as animals to be driven off if they become a nuisance – and in this case a nuisance is defined by being anywhere near work that needs to be done. Friction between those that want to study and those who do not care about the ‘people’ is increasing. It is not hard to head off; a firmly implemented policy of leaving the creatures alone will

suffice to keep negative interactions to a minimum.

However, there are those who will point out ‘they are just animals’ and that there is a fair amount of meat on the creatures. They would not be hard to hunt and could even be domesticated in the ship’s environmentally controlled spaces. The researchers are horrified at the suggestion and seek to demonstrate the creatures’ intelligence at every opportunity.

This situation requires a decision on the part of the Travellers. Eating a possibly intelligent creature is unacceptable to anyone aboard, but not everyone accepts the evidence of intelligence. All the same, it would be much easier to deflect the ‘hunt-the-creatures’ advocates into another activity than to convince the researchers not to cause trouble if their subjects end up on the dinner table. The researchers’ position is deeply held; the others have many options and are simply considering an easy answer. Allowing a hunt or not punishing an illicit one will result in deep divisions within the crew, whereas a carefully handled veto combined with redirection into some other activity will cause almost no ripples.

However, there are deeper considerations here. Some of the researchers are on the verge of going native... even though the natives are quite possibly not sentient at all. What is happening is a sort of reverse wanderlust; a desire to stay in one place at least for a time. Studying the system and its possibly-people is a worthy endeavour, but for some it is an excuse not to voyage onward.

The Mutiny

Eventually, it will be time to move on. The next target is a deep space cometary body and the unattractive prospect of an ice refuelling followed by more risky jumps. Departure could be put off a few more days without unduly delaying the mission, and there are plenty of people offering reasons to do so. Further research into the inner planets, a more detailed analysis of the inhabitants of P3 or its overall ecosystem, even a mission to the sole planet orbiting the companion star.

Travellers investigating this proposal may uncover a conspiracy to ‘sell’ the idea to the command crew then draw lots or otherwise determine who has to actually carry it out, with everyone else getting to stay behind and enjoy more downtime. There is a considerable amount of bribery involved in getting more senior staff to back the project and crewmembers to volunteer for it. Investigation might make the Travellers aware of Carloz Miracaru if they have not already encountered him, and in any case there are others involved in similar activities.

When the Travellers finally decide to leave P3, they run into a more serious problem. Most of those who would like to stay a bit longer are aware the mission needs to resume and might make a request for just a few more days, but will not be upset by a refusal. However, it becomes apparent that some have a different agenda. Tools, spares, and even a couple of guns are missing, perhaps along with the crewmembers they were assigned to. These personnel have quietly slipped planetside or stayed there when supposed to have come back aboard, and are apparently trying to remain on P3.

The reason becomes apparent when a band of crewmembers makes demands. Initially, this is for an extension of *Deepnight Revelation*'s stay at P3, but if this is refused they start asking to be left behind. Obviously, a group of 12-20 people will need support and equipment, so the demand is that they be given supplies as well as one of the scout craft and a utility boat. This will allow them to investigate the system more thoroughly whilst supplying power to the tiny community.

The leader of the stay-behind party is Guenivve Ambray. Other members might include Sornven and Annalysse, and some of the researchers who have got close to the 'people' of P3. The others are a mixed bag and might even include senior personnel. They do not have a common agenda, other than wanting the voyage to be over, and most have not given the future much thought beyond not having to spend more time aboard that damned starship. A couple want to study the 'people', others just want to make a home and rest for a while. Some are just scared of what lies ahead or unutterably weary with the voyage.

Although motivations vary, the group has a coherent goal: they want to be left behind on P3 with a significant amount of equipment. Their demands would weaken the overall mission, but with some negotiation or bargaining from the bridge of a heavy cruiser it might be possible to let them have enough of what they want without crippling the mission. Nobody is looking for a fight, but at least some of the stay-behind advocates are sufficiently determined that they will stage a mutiny and take what they need.

The situation can be resolved in many ways. Most of the potential mutineers have not considered the long-term implications of being marooned in a lonely star system in the middle of the Great Rift. Some actually have, and are in a mental state where this seems preferable

to continuing with the mission. They are not a cohesive group, though some are friends, and can be broken up by clever Travellers without resorting to violence.

Some of the mutineers can be talked into returning to the crew by simply pointing out the consequences of their actions. They may have convinced themselves *Deepnight Revelation* will come back and pick them up on the way home, but reality can be allowed to intrude with a few choice words; and perhaps a Persuade or Diplomat check. The prospect of scratching a living from the wilderness forty years from now, after the power plants of any vessels or vehicles have run down, will be sobering to most.

Those more desperate may have to be persuaded more forcefully. None of the mutineers will fight to the death for the right to die on a remote planet, but some will resist attempts to reclaim equipment. This is likely to start as a scuffle but they have some weapons and, given their weary mental state, the situation is likely to escalate. If the Travellers can isolate some of the mutineers and disarm them the determination of others might collapse. This is especially true if the Travellers can retrieve equipment the mutineers know they will need.

Guenivve is the ringleader, but she is just as confused, weary, and desperate as the others. An armed standoff around the pinnace she is trying to take could end in violence, but it is just as likely that – given the right encouragement – she will throw down her weapon and collapse sobbing to the deck. She is tired and desperate, not bad or ill-intentioned, and her compatriots are in a similar state. Careful handling can bring them all back into the crew, if that is what the Travellers want. Of course, they will have to deal with the fallout from the attempt or the rehabilitation of mutineers who may well have hurt someone in the process.

How the Travellers deal with this situation is, as always, up to them. *Deepnight Revelation* might leave behind a neat row of graves, or a detachment of the crew in a small settlement that might someday baffle future explorers. Or they may gently talk the mutineers around and help them seek a remedy for weariness and disaffection. It may even be that the next set of chronic fatigue sufferers can turn to the present group for support. Whatever else comes out of this, the Travellers will hopefully learn to be mindful of the crew's fatigue and should seek to offset it whenever possible.

CHAPTER SIX

PROTON STORM



After leaving P3, the next stop is a hopefully uneventful deep space refuelling, after which the next planetary system – designated DSS-2 – centres on a solo K3 star. *Deepnight Revelation* will probably be about 20 days out from P3 at this point, which is sufficient time to deal with the fallout from events in that system. An initial sensor sweep of the DSS-2 system looks promising as far as fuel goes, but there are no habitable planets.

DSS-2 PRIMARY (K3 star)

Primary 1	(Small Gas Giant)
Primary 2	(X521000-0)
Primary 3	(X000000-0)
Primary 4	(Large Gas Giant)
Primary 5	(X310000-0)
Primary 6	(X111000-0)
Primary 7	(X5A0000-0)

Both gas giants are suitable for refuelling operations. The planetoid belt is of typical composition and might yield quantities of useful materials, whilst the four terrestrial planets all have minimal or unbreathable atmospheres. There is no particular reason to spend much time in the system, though the Travellers might decide to conduct surveys of the worlds whilst they are

here. If they do, there are indications that the system is not as safe as it looks.

Orbital scanning of the terrestrial planets indicates ionisation in their atmospheres and surface scorching that suggests very serious solar flare activity. This is corroborated by detailed readings of solar activity, which indicate points of intense magnetic activity and increased heat. Routine monitoring of the star suggests a major flare is likely in the next few hours. This is not a huge problem, but it would be wise to keep small craft aboard *Deepnight Revelation* where her greater bulk will shield them. Prudent Travellers might want to put a planet between them and the star just to be on the safe side.

Fuel skimming can be carried out amid a solar flare without much additional hazard under normal conditions, but radiation can cause ionisation in the upper layers of a gas giant atmosphere, which can interfere with instruments. In extreme cases a ship might encounter heavy turbulence combined with control difficulties from the ionisation, which could lead to serious problems. It is uncommon but conventional wisdom among spacers is to wait out the flare before continuing.



A flare does indeed begin within hours of *Deepnight Revelation* entering the system. The referee can play a little fast and loose with the timing if this is desirable; if the Travellers want to send out small craft they should be permitted to do so, creating a need to scurry back to the parent vessel or seek cover until it passes. The period leading up to the flare – about 70 minutes – is characterised by increased activity in the star, giving plenty of warning.

The flare causes a stellar proton event. This is normal, though the intensity is quite high in this case. A proton event is essentially a storm of ionised particles driven out from the star by a solar flare, travelling at less than lightspeed. *Deepnight Revelation* will have 2-3 hours' warning of the proton storm, which can be expected to last a couple of hours at most.

This is accompanied by a coronal mass ejection. Again, normal for a major flare, sending a jet of plasma out from the star. This particular event is characterised by a large initial mass ejection followed by a series of smaller 'sputters' which go on for an hour or so. The size of the ejection gives an indication of the intensity that can be expected when the proton storm arrives. Since it moves at less than lightspeed, observing the star enables the expedition's scientists to determine what intensity of protons can be expected at any given time.

This observation provokes some interest and then real alarm among the mission's scientists. The coronal ejections seemed to be dying down but then increased rapidly in magnitude. There is no suggestion the star is about to experience any sort of catastrophic event but the proton wind caused by the ejections is not going to die down. Indeed, it will increase in intensity in a couple of hours.

EFFECTS OF THE PROTON WIND

The proton wind causes ionisation in everything it encounters, and can interact with magnetic fields to create a current or emitted radiation. A starship hull is adequate protection from the effects of radiation, but the proton wind can interfere with electronic equipment and even cause false control signals to be received. This can make manoeuvring hazardous. In addition, when the ionised particles strike the atmosphere of a gas giant they cause turbulence and electrical discharges, along with a pleasing aurora-like effect.

The proton wind varies in strength over time, but will not subside as would normally be expected. Every 2Dx30 minutes the referee should roll for the wind strength on the Proton Wind Intensity table. Sooner or later the expedition's scientific staff will point out that the intensity can be predicted by observing the star and estimating the velocity of incoming particles. This will give a couple of hours' warning of a change in intensity, and a good estimate of conditions likely to prevail.

Radiation hazards are discussed on page 77 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. The effects of the flares in this system are as follows.

Radiation Exposure

Level	Rads Per Hour
Lull	1Dx25
Mild	1Dx100
Normal	2Dx100
High	3Dx100
Extreme	5Dx100

Proton Wind Intensity

2D	Intensity	Effects
2-3	Lull	Almost none. Slight ionisation and some minor radiation.
4-5	Mild	DM-1 on all tasks requiring the use of sensors and similar electronics.
6-8	Normal	DM-2 on all tasks requiring the use of sensors and similar electronics. Slight radiation hazard to small craft. Minor turbulence in gas giant atmospheres imposes DM-1 on Pilot checks.
9-10	High	DM-3 on all tasks requiring the use of sensors and similar electronics. Radiation hazard to small craft. False control signals impose DM-1 on all tasks using shipboard systems, including piloting. Serious turbulence imposes an additional DM-2 on Pilot checks in gas giant atmospheres.
11-12	Extreme	DM-4 on all tasks requiring the use of sensors and similar electronics. Significant radiation hazard. False control signals impose DM-2 on all tasks using shipboard systems, including piloting. Serious turbulence imposes an additional DM-2 on Pilot checks in gas giant atmospheres.



Deepnight Revelation's hull reduces exposure by 1,000 Rads per hour. A small craft only offers 250 Rads/hour protection, increased to 500 if it has radiation shielding. Thus it is always safe for *Deepnight Revelation* to operate in a lull or period of mild activity, and activity can be risked in a normal period for a short time. It would be highly advisable to get behind a planet during an Extreme period. Small craft caught away from the parent vessel may have to scurry back, or *Deepnight Revelation* herself may have to dash to their place of cover and make a pickup.

The referee should time the flare such that fuel skimming is largely completed by the time the proton storm strikes. After the initial surge the Travellers could normally expect the intensity to tail off, with the occasional sputter. However, it does not, and observation of the star indicates the flare is going to be of unusual intensity and duration. Indeed, there are indications it may continue for weeks or even longer. It would be possible to simply hide behind a planet, using thrust to maintain station, and wait out the storm but this is nerve-wracking and potentially disastrous. The only alternative would be to complete fuel skimming and make a jump out of the system. This is risky but doable.

Fuel Skimming

The atmosphere of a gas giant will provide an additional 250 Rads per hour protection whilst *Deepnight Revelation* is deep enough to skim fuel. The eerie

purple and green aurora caused by the proton storm is spectacular but also rather scary, and the combination of induced turbulence and hull ionisation will cause additional problems.

If a jump must be plotted whilst in the atmosphere or subject to the effects of ionisation, any DM for impaired sensors applies to the Astrogation check, while DMs for turbulence apply to Pilot checks to make a skimming run or maintain a shielded altitude whilst processing fuel or performing jump calculations. During the final skimming run a sudden surge in the intensity of the proton storm creates a vibrant burst of what appears to be purple sheet lightning. Hull ionisation spikes, then *Deepnight Revelation* is struck by a massive electrical discharge.

The immediate effect is to white out all sensors and cause a control failure, and at the same time trip out the safety cut-outs on the main and some auxiliary power plants. *Deepnight Revelation* is suddenly out of control, blind, and turning beam-on to the prevailing gas giant winds. These gust at hundreds of kilometres per hour and could cause severe structural damage even if there are no worse effects. The ship will start to tumble almost immediately, but prompt action by the pilot might prevent this.

At the same time, fires break out in several places, some crewmembers are injured in falls or are thrown

against bulkheads, and minor systems fail in some compartments. To cap it all, a stressed and fatigued crewmember slams the nearest airtight door and cowers against it, having a complete breakdown at a time they are needed. This may be one of the former mutineers or another crewmember; there are plenty of stressed people to choose from.

Preventing a Tumble requires a piece of brilliant seat-of-the-pants flying. Working on nothing but instinct, memory of data that was displayed until a moment ago, and messages from an inner ear confused by failing internal gravity, the pilot must transfer available power to the manoeuvring controls and guess which way to point *Deepnight Revelation*. With the power plant offline it is possible only to reorient the ship and make minor adjustments, essentially trying to keep a distinctly non-aerodynamic ship pointed into the wind.

A Very Difficult (12+) Pilot check is required, with modifiers for turbulence and false control signals as per Extreme conditions; thus the pilot is operating with DM-4. The near-impossibility of the situation can be offset by the Travellers' efforts. These should be adjudicated by the referee, and as always actions that make a good story should be worth more than mere skill checks.

Possible supporting actions might include transferring data from the secondary bridge – a command officer could make this happen with a Leadership check – or a crewmember who is a bit of a mathematics prodigy might start rattling off vectors and wind velocities based on a best-guess. An excellent gymnast could help, standing in front of the pilot and feeling how the ship is moving, then just pointing in the direction the pilot should turn. Each potentially useful action is worth a DM of up to +2, assuming the Traveller can make a successful relevant check.

If the ship is not prevented from tumbling, all actions (other than piloting and similar control tasks) are taken with an additional DM-3 and the ship suffers 3Dx10 Hull points in damage immediately. Every round the pilot can try to correct the tumble. Once the ship is stable, keeping it oriented requires a Difficult (10+) Pilot check each round. Failure means the ship starts tumbling again and suffers more damage.

Regaining Power is a matter of making the power plant safe and rebooting it. Hull ionisation has resulted in a

heavy static charge hazardous to personnel; not only will this damage controls and equipment if the system is turned back on, it will deliver 1D damage to anyone in close proximity and 2D to anyone touching the power plant. The charge can be dissipated safely by giving it a path out of the insulated machinery to the deck plate, though this will give everyone nearby a minor shock and can be hazardous to people completing the earthing circuit. As usual, dramatic and interesting solutions should be rewarded over mere skill checks, but anyone with Electronics or Engineer skills can earth the system (fairly) safely with an Average (8+) check.

Once the power plant is safe to use it can be brought back online, making the pilot's task in keeping the ship from tumbling far more straightforward. Once power is restored the difficulty of the check is reduced to Average (8+), with modifiers for conditions as before. Meanwhile, the ship's systems are back online and normal-ish function is restored.

Damage Control Tasks include putting out fires, plugging air leaks, and assisting injured or distressed crewmembers. This can be complex; perhaps a panicked crewmember has locked the hatch needed to get to an injured companion and must be talked into opening it. Alternatively, the Travellers may not be dealing with these problems directly but may have to prioritise and coordinate the efforts of others. As many complications and incidents can be created as the referee desires, ensuring that all of the Travellers have a chance to make a difference.

GETTING CLEAR

Plotting a jump to the next refuelling point will be tricky if the Travellers have to do it with instruments impaired by hull ionisation; in this case DM-4 applies to the Astrogation check. However, a simple solution is to make an intermediate jump to any random area of empty space in the direction of the next refuelling point, then make a precise jump from there. Either way, it is not difficult to keep the gas giant between the Travellers' ship and the proton storm on the run out to jump. This is not a perfect solution but will reduce the intensity of the proton wind and permit a relatively normal jump entry. At this point the Travellers' misadventure in the DSS-2 system is over and they can look forward to another – hopefully – uneventful deep space refuelling.

WALKING ON THE MOON

After the rather fraught refuelling operation at DSS-2, *Deepnight Revelation* makes for her next refuelling point, a rogue gas giant designated DSR-4. It is possible that a secondary deep space jump might have been necessary, but there should be no undue complications unless the Travellers or their crew find some way of creating them. Thus reaching DSR-4 should not present major problems.

DSR-4

DSR-4 is a large gas giant in terms of diameter but has a relatively low density. It has a few small moons, most of which are under 100km in diameter. There is a single larger body, around 800km in diameter, which has a trace atmosphere of methane and carbon dioxide. It is notable mainly for its eccentric orbit and extensive volcanism, which may be due to stresses caused by close passes followed by long periods with little gravitational effect. The moon is of interest to the expedition's space scientists, who may request a visit during the refuelling process.

A side expedition to this interesting moon would be best accomplished by multiple craft. The pinnaces and scouts are best equipped for this sort of work, and the scientists will request a minimum of two craft (ideally both scouts but a pair of pinnaces would be acceptable, or one scout and supporting craft) with at least one more on standby as a rescue vessel whilst *Deepnight Revelation* herself is skimming fuel. This is a cautious approach, little different from what the scientists and mission planners have advocated in the past.

The moon is currently seven years past its closest approach and three years past its most distant point. It is beginning to experience significant gravitational stresses and volcanism is increasing. During the 3-4 months of closest approach it will not be a healthy place to be but in the meantime there are no undue dangers inherent in this side trip.

It is possible to land on the moon and conduct surface surveys or collect samples, providing expedition personnel stay away from lava-filled fissures or active volcanoes, and the mission's scientists will certainly request permission to do so. The Travellers may or may not choose to authorise a surface landing, and even if they do not there is always a chance some over-zealous

scientist will conduct one anyway in defiance of orders. The Travellers will have to decide how to deal with this sort of insubordination if it occurs.

An orbital survey indicates a volcanic moon with a surface gravity of 0.013gs, extensive volcanism and a great deal of surface fracturing as a result of gravitic and heating stresses caused by the highly eccentric orbit. There is nothing very unusual about this, but compilation of endless amounts of 'not very unusual' data allows recognition of anomalies and the science team will not be greatly disappointed that all they have done is catalogued yet another moon. A surface landing might yield greater results, however.

MOON LANDINGS

A surface landing on an unknown body is always a bit risky. There is a chance that what appears, even to advanced ground-penetrating sensors, to be solid rock could give way, and in such a low gravity environment the slightest bounce on landing will break contact. The only answer is to apply positive 'downward' thrust which can make for a heavy landing and possibly punch through thin crust.

Landing on such a body requires a Difficult (10+) Pilot check, rising to Very Difficult (12+) or even Formidable (14+) if the landing area has not been sensor-mapped first. The craft will stay in place if not disturbed but would normally be held down by dynamic station-keeping thrust – which is controlled automatically in most cases – or by anchoring pins and tethers.

Similarly, operating on the surface is risky. An overconfident step can carry a crewmember a dangerously long way and send them smashing into jagged rocks or even a lava-fuelled fissure. A mighty bound could send a crewmember floating helplessly out into space; it is necessary to treat the surface of the moon little differently to working in open space. Crewmembers must painstakingly anchor themselves before collecting samples or trying to move objects. This is routine, but always hazardous.

A surface survey and sample-taking session will take around 24 hours of work for a series of landing teams plus a few hours of analysis work in the labs. The results are much as expected, but the moon's volcanism has

brought quantities of rare materials to the surface. A fairly recent lava flow – one dating from the current orbit and thus no more than six or seven years old – can be mined for rare materials at the rate of 1D per 12-hour mining session. This does require going close to active fissures and volcanoes, but the risk can be managed by careful monitoring. A total of 4D rare materials can be obtained in this way, and the whole operation or any part of it can as usual be abstracted with a DEI check.

REFUELING AT DSR-4

In the meantime, fuel skimming at the gas giant is slightly complicated by a necessity to dive deeper than usual into the atmosphere. It would be possible to skim from the thin upper reaches but this would take an excessively long time. Instead, *Deepnight Revelation* must dive down to where atmospheric pressure is higher and a greater amount of gas is forced into the scoops on each pass. This is not dangerous, not any more so than a typical refuelling, but takes a bit longer. On the plus side, the thinner atmospheric envelope allows the Travellers to get closer to the core of the giant. Scans indicate there is no rocky or metallic core, but a super-pressurised ‘core’ of metallic hydrogen. This is electrically conductive and produces a strong field which, whilst not dangerous at fuel-skimming depths, is of interest to the expedition’s scientists.

The Travellers can expect to interact with some pretty excited scientists in the days after leaving DSR-4. Whilst many crewmembers are unimpressed by magnetic fields around globs of metallic hydrogen or unusual compounds chipped out of lava flows, there is a lot of good science to be done and a positive feeling among the Mission Division. This sort of thing is why they signed up, after all.

CRAFT WEAR

The Travellers may be inclined to deploy their small craft lavishly whenever they are required, but over the course of the voyage this can put some or even all of them out of action. Hostile action is unlikely in most systems but operational losses are inevitable in the long term. A sudden disaster such as crashing through thin crust into a lava-filled chamber may catastrophically wipe out a craft, and there is always a possibility of some unexpected hazard. However, this is low-percentage on most deployments. It is long-term wear that will disable most craft.

Every launch and recovery represents wear on a craft’s drives and systems, and the process is accelerated by rough landings, bumps and bangs on the hull, hard use of the throttle, and clumsy crewmembers failing to take good care of the interior fittings. Something as minor as a damaged door seal can take a craft out of commission or make it dangerous to operate. The cycle can be slowed by regular maintenance and inspections, but each of the craft aboard *Deepnight Revelation* has a limited number of operational hours in it, and there is no way to be sure how many any given craft has left even without the possibility of a serious crash or hazard-induced catastrophe.

Wise Travellers will limit the number of craft they assign to any given operation. Some will be undergoing maintenance or repair, and the remainder should be rotated through operational, standby, and reserve. If two craft are needed for a task then two should be assigned, perhaps with a third launched and on standby in case of emergency or ready for immediate take-off. Sending four craft to do the job of two is a luxury the expedition cannot afford if the Travellers wish to have any boats left when they get to their destination.

If the Travellers behave sensibly there is no need for additional book-keeping associated with craft wear, but if they insist on sending large flotillas out to do every task the referee should start imposing Erosion of Capabilities events on the craft as well as the parent vessel.

A STUDY IN MUNDANITY

After DSR-4, the next objective is Deep Space System Three. No anomalies or unusual readings have been detected, but that does not mean there will not be something interesting in the system.

ARRIVING AT DSS-3

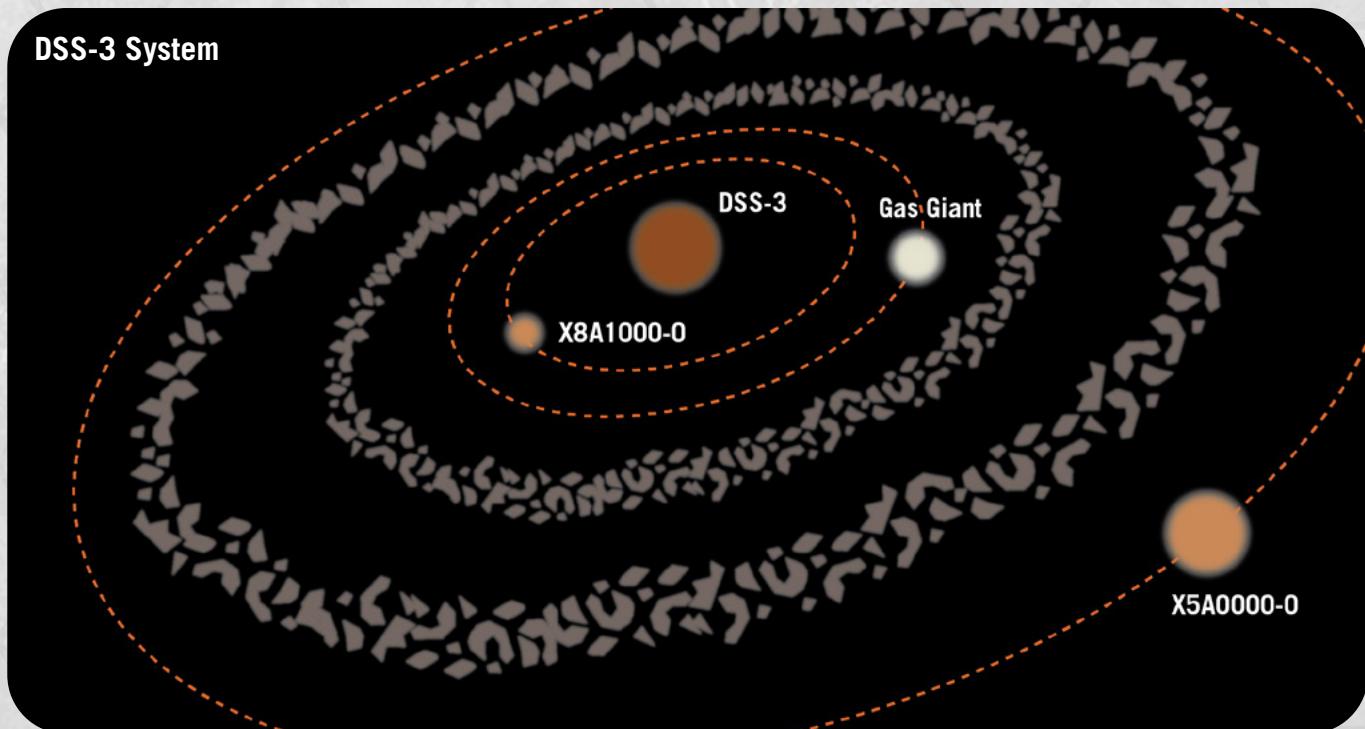
The system designated Deep Space System Three is more or less as expected. It consists of a brown dwarf sub-stellar object and its moon system, which includes a small gas giant. Initial sensor readings suggest this is an entirely normal brown dwarf system, and subsequent exploration confirms this. The inner and outer planetary bodies are large rockballs with unbreathable atmospheres, whilst two orbits are occupied by distinct planetoid belts. The small gas giant is entirely average for its type.

DSS-3 PRIMARY (Brown Dwarf)

Primary 1	(X8A1000-0)
Primary 2	(Small Gas Giant)
Primary 3	(X000000-0)
Primary 4	(X000000-0)
Primary 5	(X5A0000-0)

Refuelling is simplified by the presence of the gas giant, which permits a standard skim to be carried out. If the Travellers are keen to keep moving they could be back underway very quickly, and indeed it seems that there are few reasons to linger in the DSS-3 system. However, discoveries at the last stopover may inspire the Mission Division staff to ask for a survey. It would not be hard to send small craft out to conduct orbital surveys of the various moons, but their results are disappointingly mundane.

There is nothing very unusual about any of the bodies in the system, though their very normal-ness is a piece of useful data in its own right as it confirms the baseline to which unusual results are compared. Not every star system contains wonders of the cosmos, it seems.



CHAPTER NINE

PLOOSH



DSS-3 may have been disappointing for the mission's scientists but an easy refuelling is welcomed by most other crewmembers. The next system visited, designated Deep Space System Four, presents significant challenges in that regard.

Deep Space System 4 looks promising from long-range scans. It consists of a binary pair of M9 stars and is known to have a planetary system. Upon emerging from jump the crew of *Deeppnight Revelation* are presented with a very sparse star system continuing just three planetary bodies. The inner and outer planets are rockballs, but the middle one is more interesting. Remote scans indicate a water world with significant oxygen in its atmosphere; it must therefore have life of some kind. There are comets in the system which could be mined for water ice, but the mainworld – nicknamed Ploosh by the first sensor operator to scan it – is the best prospect for obtaining hydrogen fuel.

Whether the Travellers decide on comet mining or obtaining fuel from the surface of Ploosh, it will be a lengthy business. Suitable comets can be detected sooner or later using long-range scans, but will be located far out from the stars. That means a long transit before ice mining can begin. This is a viable option but will be unpopular with the crew. Getting fuel from the surface requires using small craft and will take a long time but also allows the world to be explored.

DSS-4 PRIMARY A (M9 Star)

DSS-4 PRIMARY B (M9 Star)

Primary AB 1	(X33100-0)
Primary AB 2/Ploosh	(XA7A000-0)
Primary AB 3	(X10000-0)

Ploosh has a dense atmosphere with low oxygen content, tolerable with no more protective equipment than a compressor mask. The atmosphere is gradually changing from a carbon dioxide/nitrogen mix to a nitrogen/oxygen composition as a result of bacterial action in the deep waters. Much of the planet's ocean coverage is very deep, 4-5km on average, but there are shallow seas in some areas where the average depth is less than 100m. There is very little land above sea level, however, and most of this takes the form of mountain-tops which are

part of ranges with many more peaks below sea level. These areas are not suitable for landing, though here and there can be found saddles between two peaks that would allow a seabed landing at a depth of 50m or so.

LANDING ON PLOOSH

Any landing first requires negotiating the dense atmosphere. As with many water worlds it is highly active, with air currents, updrafts, and violent storms. There is a thick cloud layer in most areas, and although this is not a problem for any craft with decent instruments it can be unnerving for personnel about to descend into a cloud layer towards a surface they have not seen.

Once through the cloud layer it is necessary to choose a landing site. There are three viable options: land on the ice caps at one of the poles, find a shallow area and make a seabed landing, or attempt to hover close to the surface. It would also be possible to 'land' in deep water and use thrust to keep the craft close to the surface, but this can be a tricky business.

The polar ice caps are solid enough in most areas to support a pinnace or scout. Show-off pilots might even be able to set down a utility boat on an ice floe or iceberg. Obtaining fuel is easy enough, but the usual method of melting it out of the ice is fraught with risks. It should be obvious that melting the ice floe your pinnace is standing on may plunge it and you into the ocean, but tired or indisciplined crewmembers may choose to try it anyway. The result is more likely to be alarm, chagrin, and a need for rapid relocation than the loss of a small craft in deep, icy waters but there is always the possibility for disaster.

A much safer method is to run hoses down through holes in the ice and take up water from below. This is more laborious than just driving the hose head into the ice, and the cracking process will take a little longer due to the need to remove salt and other chemicals. This is one reason lazy crews might take the quick and easy option.



Taking off again after a refuelling or exploration stopover can be complicated if the landing legs have become embedded in ice. Normally applying extra thrust is sufficient to break free, perhaps with an alarming lurch. If the landing legs are truly embedded it may be necessary to melt them free with the heaters attached to refuelling hoses or another energy source. Laser weapons might seem like a good option and will certainly work but may damage the craft either directly or as a result of ice flashing to steam and expanding rapidly.

Seabed landings are uncommon but the technique is taught, at least in theory, to many military pilots. Some commercial pilots may have had to perform such a landing at times in their career, depending on what sort of ports they frequented. Entering the water is surprisingly tricky as a craft's drive and lifters cause a great deal of disturbance which can result in a very rough entry and rapid pitching, yawing, or rolling movement – or all three – which causes structural stress and can injure passengers or damage cargo.

Entering the water without incident requires a Difficult (10+) Pilot check, with negative DMs applying if the craft does not halt, hover, then insert carefully or if the sea is rough. Failure results in a number of Hull point damage equal to the negative Effect, per 100 tons of craft or part thereof. Thus a 120-ton small craft would suffer 4 points of hull damage on Effect -2. This might not be a lot on any given insertion but multiple water landings can wreck a craft or send it to the repair cradles for an extended period.

Once in the water the craft can be guided down to settle on the seabed. Currents can make this tricky, and underwater manoeuvring is never easy in a vessel not built for it. There is also the possibility that the seabed is covered in deep soft silt which a craft will sink into and become stuck, and so it is necessary to seek a suitable landing point just as a wilderness landing in normal terrain often involves close inspection of the ground below. One solution is to retract landing gear and spread out the weight of the craft on its belly. Coupled with the buoyancy of air-filled compartments this can allow a craft to sit atop silt that could not support its landing legs. However, currents or the action of waves if the craft is in very shallow water can move it around, which is at best alarming for the crew.

GETTING FUEL FROM PLOOSH

Fully replenishing *Deepnight Revelation*'s tanks requires over 27,000 tons of fuel. She cannot descend to the surface to obtain it herself; her small craft must do the job. The simple answer is to use the fuel tanks of the small craft, though there are quicker ways. Each of the scouts has a little more than 70 tons of fuel capacity, and there are eight of them. Assuming none have been lost, a sortie by all eight scouts will bring 560 tons of fuel aboard at a time.

Working on a continuous cycle of filling, processing, and returning to the ship the eight scouts can fully replenish

Deepnight Revelation's tanks in about 48 sorties. Using all available crewmembers to crew the scouts, a sortie can be completed in around 6 hours. Nominal time to refuel *Deepnight Revelation* by this method is thus around 12 days.

These are ballpark figures, which can be improved by efficient course plotting, good personnel management, and other measures the Travellers might wish to take. Maintaining a high-tempo operation for such a long time will be wearing on the crew and craft alike, so the Travellers may wish to take longer about the task in order to reduce fatigue. This also allows exploration of the planet to be carried out.

Clever solutions to speeding up refuelling or spreading out the load among more craft are also possible. The pinnaces and boats have much smaller fuel capacities than the scouts since they are not jump-capable, but could carry water in their cargo holds with little modification. Transporting water rather than liquid hydrogen is inefficient, but putting liquid hydrogen in a standard cargo hold is dangerous. A cargo hold is capable of retaining its standard capacity in water, which can then be cracked into 1/9 as much hydrogen and 8/9 as much oxygen. The latter could be used to replenish stocks aboard *Deepnight Revelation*.

Transporting water will not speed up the process very much – a pinnace can deliver a little more than 18 tons of water which converts to just 2 tons of liquid hydrogen, and a utility boat about half that. However, if the Travellers think to do this the Mission Division scientists will suggest a refinement (or the Travellers may think of it themselves). A modification of the cargo hold into a fuel tank would allow the full capacity of hydrogen to be carried. Attempting to do so without modifying the hold would result in damage to the craft at the very least.

Liquid hydrogen is extremely cold and its small molecular size allows leakage through most containment walls. Cryogenic damage is the least that will happen, disturbing control pathways and perhaps endangering the craft even if an explosion does not occur. This is likely once enough hydrogen has leached through the walls and reached a dangerous accumulation in a neighbouring compartment.

The answer is to find a way to convert the cargo holds, which will require materials that may not be available. Fortunately, there is a kind of seaweed common in shallow waters on Ploosh which can be processed into a very dense lining material and used to seal the cargo bays of any suitable craft. Once set, the lining material

will hold up for multiple trips before beginning to break down. It will be difficult to remove afterward; it may be that for the rest of the voyage the Travellers will encounter odd fragments of faintly seaweed-smelling material to remind them of Ploosh.

EVENTS ON PLOOSH

There are plenty of opportunities for something to go awry with the refuelling operation. A badly settled pinnace could sink into the silt on a saddle between two seamounts or be pushed off the side by an unexpected current. This could occur at any time, and possibly more than once. Storms might strand a craft on an ice floe being blown across the ocean, or force craft to remain underwater until the weather settles sufficiently to permit return to orbit.

These hazards can occur whether a craft is engaged in refuelling or other operations. The scientific personnel of the Mission Division will want to undertake exploration and analysis whilst *Deepnight Revelation* is in orbit. Much can be done with probes and remote sampling units but there is no substitute for getting outside on the ice or on one of the few scraps of land and getting a feel for the place. The scientists will want samples of everything, and will not discover the properties of 'plooshweed' if they do not.

Plooshweed is a seaweed with extremely strong fibres which can be spun into cloth for clothing or even light body armour. A plooshweed garment or other item is off-white when first produced and strangely resistant to being dyed any other colour. Most attempts result in a patchy mess of different off-white shades. However, it is highly useful as a protective material. A smock or tunic will provide Protection +2 against cutting or impaling attacks if the wearer has no other armour, and can be quickly draped over normal clothing for rapid protection. Mittens provide good protection when handling hot or sharp objects.

If spun to its maximum density plooshweed can be set with an artificial resin to create blocks or sheets of material with very high thermal insulation. These might be used as building materials if enough were available, or as insulative sheeting inside a dwelling. They can also be used to insulate and seal a cargo area for temporary use as a fuel tank, though plooshweed sheets will degrade over time when used in this manner. After 4D hours there is a chance that leaks will occur. The chance to avoid this starts at 3+ on 2D, increasing by one every 1D hours of operation thereafter. Unless the ersatz fuel tank is purged and resealed, eventually a leak will become inevitable with potentially catastrophic results.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

The process of investigating the planet, analysing local plant and animal life, harvesting plooshweed, and transporting fuel up to *Deepnight Revelation* will keep the crew busy for some time. Along the way the Travellers will encounter many species of fish and tiny ocean-dwelling creatures not unlike krill. Reports will come in that larger creatures have been detected, though initially the contacts are fleeting and inconclusive.

One reason for the difficulty of detecting some of these creatures is their composition. The deep waters are home to a species of very large jellyfish-like animals. These are mindless filter-feeders which drift on the currents and entrap small sea-creatures they come into contact with, slowly digesting the catch in their tissues. It will be a few days before a confirmed sighting allows any study of these Ploosh-Filters, as they are nicknamed.

Ploosh-Filters are not a direct hazard to crewmembers operating in the water, but could accidentally entangle

someone in their canopy or tendrils. The hapless crewmember will be digested at the rate of 1D hits per day, with armour or clothing digested first. Breaking free requires Effect 6+ on an Average (8+) STR check, with DM-4 applying unless the Traveller has some form of underwater propulsion system or means of anchoring themselves to apply their strength. Several others can help, or the creature could be cut or burned away with energy weapons. A cumulative 20 points of damage is required to free someone from the canopy; for the tendrils the requirement is 10 points. If harmed, the Ploosh-Filter will attempt to float away using movements of its canopy edge and tendrils. It does not fight as such, and behaves more like a plant than an animal under most circumstances.

There are also reports of something more solid and rather large in the deep waters. Instruments have picked up fleeting contacts with objects moving fast – up to 20 knots – close to the seabed or appearing out of deep water trenches before vanishing back in again. No clear image of these creatures, if that is what they are, can be obtained unless they come up from the depths.

PLOOSH FILTER

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Ploosh Filter	200	1 m
SKILLS	None	
ATTACKS	None	
TRAITS	Diffuse Structure, Large (+8)	
BEHAVIOUR	Filter	

THE PLOOSH INCIDENT

At some point, one of the small craft gets into trouble. This could be a result of being unwise in melting an ice floe, tipping the craft into the water, or some other circumstance. The referee can set the incident up one of many ways, but the default option is that the craft is sitting on a saddle between two seamounts, just twenty metres down, conducting scientific data gathering, when a change in water temperature some distance away causes a minor alteration in currents. This no major problem, though it does cause some agitation in the silt and a reduction in visibility.

The craft reports a sensor malfunction and after a few minutes of attempting various field repair expedients requests permission to return to *Deepnight Revelation* for repairs. Then a garbled transmission is received; the craft is sliding across the saddle towards the steep slope down into the depths. The crew are frantically attempting to fire up the drive and counteract the drift, which seems to be caused by something pulling at the craft.

The ‘sensor malfunction’ turns out to have been something else; a Ploosh-Filter drifting rapidly on the current causing a weak return that seemed to be a reception problem. Now the filter is entangled with the craft, its canopy acting like a sea-anchor or parachute. There is no danger the filter’s enzymes will harm a spacecraft, but once the craft dragged off the saddle it will begin to sink. The crew should be able to prevent this using the drive, but with their vessel tipped on its side and entangled in the creature it is tricky to do so and impossible to lift clear of the water.

The Travellers have time to begin formulating a response before another development presents itself. Sensors detect a disturbance in a deep trench and a large object – bigger than a pinnace – hurtling up out of the abyssal depths. At the same time everyone within orbital distance is slammed with a psionic scream that at the very least disorients anyone without a mental shield in place. Seconds later the scream is echoed from other points in the depths, though not as loudly. As they collect their wits, the Travellers get the impression the first psychic noise was a bellow of rage and the others might best be described as shouts of encouragement.

The object coming up from the depths is huge, shaped roughly like a squid or cuttlefish, and proceeding at over 50 knots towards the distressed craft. It is biological, presumably some sort of animal, and broadcasting a powerful psionic signal that all but overwhelms the

craft crew with a combination of rage and motherly reassurance. They are barely capable of acting, let alone controlling their craft, as will anyone else be if they venture within a few kilometres of the creatures without psionic shielding.

The creature streaks towards the sinking craft and savagely rips the filter apart, freeing the vessel. After a moment she – the psionic impression is of a female creature – realises the craft is sinking and dives after it bringing it to a stop. For a few alarming moments she turns the pinnace or boat over in her tentacles, powerful mind framing a semi-coherent question:

WHAT ARE YOU?

She then gently places the craft back on the saddle and moves off, circling around the area broadcasting puzzlement and curiosity. After a while she is joined by a group of smaller creatures which seem to be her brood. She watches and waits, and if the craft does not move away she will come close and inspect it again, touching it gently – by her standards at least – and trying to figure out what it is and who the minds inside might be.

FIRST CONTACT

The deep sea creatures are clearly intelligent and psionic. Travellers with a psionic shield can attenuate their signals enough not to be debilitated, and a partial shield might be rigged using known technology. This would allow meaningful contact.

The sea-creatures name for themselves translates as ‘us’, like most intelligent species. They are curious about the Travellers; they thought they knew everything in the world-sea, as they call it, yet now there are small but brightly shining minds in the water. The creatures do not feel threatened; they are immensely powerful and confident, and will not react with hostility towards something that does not harm them. The first creature the crew encountered is indeed a female and a mother, who sensed the distress of the craft crew and rushed to save them in the instinctive reaction of a protective mother. The filters are no threat to an adult creature but can kill young ones.

The creatures will happily exchange their stories with the Travellers. Their tales take the form of epic mind-poems telling of daring rushes through the deep trenches and battles with rivals. There is not much else to their existence, and they are intrigued by the possibility of working metal and voyaging among the stars. This turns to sadness as the creatures realise they will never be

COLOSSAL PSYCHIC DEEPWATER SQUID

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Colossal Psychic Deepwater Squid	600	150 m
SKILLS		Melee (natural) 1, Recon 1
ATTACKS		Bite (10D)
TRAITS		Armour (+30), Large (+10), Psionic (40)
BEHAVIOUR		Carnivore, Hunter



able to leave their home in the waters of Ploosh. They cannot work metal or make starships, and they quickly understand their new friends must leave.

The creatures want to make the most of the visitation to their world, since it is unlikely there will ever be another one. They want to swap stories with the newcomers and learn about the wonders of a universe they can never visit. The Travellers may come to see this as one of the greatest tragedies of their expedition. They have shown the creatures something they can never have, an infinite universe beyond their confining ocean.

The creatures are for the most part kindly souls, though they do fight among themselves and are savage in defence of their young. Once the incredible volume of

their mental transmissions is attenuated they are good company, and the Travellers may discover that some jokes transcend species boundaries. Unless the crew of *Deepnight Revelation* behave aggressively towards the creatures, they have a chance to make good memories here, and perhaps to leave a record of their voyage. The creatures promise to remember the stories of the starfarers and relate them to anyone else who comes along. There is a tinge of desperate hope to the promise, and of real sadness their new friends must leave.

However, it will be necessary to move on at some time. Ploosh was supposed to be a refuelling stop but instead turned into a first contact situation under very unusual circumstances... and perhaps something more. As *Deepnight Revelation* breaks orbit there is a sudden

psionic bellow from the planet below, painful in its intensity. The feeling is one of triumph, and it is echoed by what seem like shouts of approval.

The Travellers have a clear and distinct impression of a chunk of rock, torn from the side of a deep water trench and split apart with a mighty telekinetic blow. Shiny metal can be made out in the darkness of the deep

ocean, glowing hot and pushed together by sheer will. It begins to take shape, morphed by creatures eager to see what they can achieve. It is a tiny start, the beginning of an all-but-impossible road, but the last message from the planet comes through loud and clear as the jump field begins to form around *Deepnight Revelation*:

WE WILL FOLLOW, FRIENDS.

LEAVING A WAKE

It is perhaps just as well that there is no prohibition on meddling in the affairs of species encountered in the course of the expedition. The Travellers cannot help but leave a wake as they progress towards Terminus Point. Some of these interactions may be negative or neutral, others highly positive, but all of them leave an impression. The Travellers quite literally change the course of history every time they meet a new alien race.

Is it possible that the creatures of Ploosh might learn to wrest metal from the rocks using the power of their mighty minds? Could they somehow interpret the knowledge they gained from the Travellers to build

an interstellar vessel? It is certainly possible, now that they know what can be done, but it will be very difficult. Still, they have many years to work on their new project. Perhaps someday a gigantic ship crewed by psychic colossal squid will come into Charted Space with tales of long-lost friends who gave them the stars. Perhaps another expedition will pass this way and learn the fate of *Deepnight Revelation* – at least up to this point.

The Travellers may never know, but the people of Ploosh will remember them with fondness and gratitude, and will tell their stories alongside their own. In that, at least, the Travellers have achieved immortality.

CHAPTER TEN

MONUMENT

After leaving Ploosh, the next two refuelling points are cometary bodies of no great consequence. There should be no unusual complications regarding refuelling, though some of the crew will be impatient. The next significant objective is designated Deep Space Anomaly One (DSA-1), which promises to be interesting. Distant sensor scans indicate at least three brown dwarf sized objects, and a significant amount of additional mass which is not accounted for.

Emergence at the DSA-1 system provides a wealth of confusing sensor data which has the space scientists baffled and excited. The system has three brown dwarfs as predicted, but none of them is the primary. Instead, they orbit a central point which appears on gravitational sensors but has virtually no emissions. The initial hypothesis is that this is 'a black hole, maybe, of a particularly weird sort' but there is no astrophysical model that could allow such a low-emissions body to exist, and no precedent for it.

After some discussion and analysis of the data, the scientists conclude that this must be a frozen star. Such a phenomenon is theorised to be capable of existing, but has never been observed. The conditions for a frozen star to form cannot be found in the current universe, nor – according to the accumulated scientific knowledge of Charted Space – has it ever. It would require conditions that might come into force in a much older universe. In short, there is no known sequence of events that could cause a frozen star to exist. Yet here it is.

The object at the centre of the system is indeed a frozen star. Its mass is about the same as the other brown dwarfs in the system, but its surface temperature is almost exactly the same as the surrounding space. The star has a surface crust composed of complex materials which would normally be found in a plasma or gaseous form within a hot star, and has virtually no emissions from within. However, close analysis indicates that there is heat inside the star. Deep within its crust is the smouldering remnant of a brown dwarf that almost began fusing hydrogen to become a star then... fizzled out, for want of a better term.

The other brown dwarfs in the system also have unusually low thermal and visible-spectrum emissions,

but they are at the lower end of normal rather than being truly anomalous. Gravitational-sensor contacts begin to resolve themselves into planets as the scan continues... but not all of them. There are other objects registering as gravitational contacts, which have a variable signature or are intermittent. After a while the suggestion is put forward... could they be Leviathan? Large numbers of Leviathan? Whole shoals of Leviathan?

The system is complex, even without its anomalous composition. A few planetary bodies orbit the central frozen star, as do two of the brown dwarfs. The third is a distant companion of DSA-1 Secondary. Each has a few bodies orbiting it. Of these, the belts at Secondary and Tertiary are fairly normal, but the Primary belt is different. Probably as a result of gravitational perturbation, it takes the form of a broad spiral and may be in the process of losing some bodies to one or another of the brown dwarfs. Most moving gravitational contacts are within the spiral belt.

DSA-1 PRIMARY (Frozen Star)

DSA-1 Primary 1 (Small Gas Giant)
DSA-1 Primary 2 (X9A1000-0)
DSA-1 Primary 3 (Small Gas Giant)
DSA-1 Primary 4 (X000000-0)

DSA-1 SECONDARY (Brown Dwarf)

DSA-1 Secondary 1 (X810000-0)
DSA-1 Secondary 2 (Small Gas Giant)
DSA-1 Secondary 3 (X000000-0)

DSA-1 SECONDARY COMPANION (Brown Dwarf)

DSA-1 Secondary/Companion 1 (Small Gas Giant)

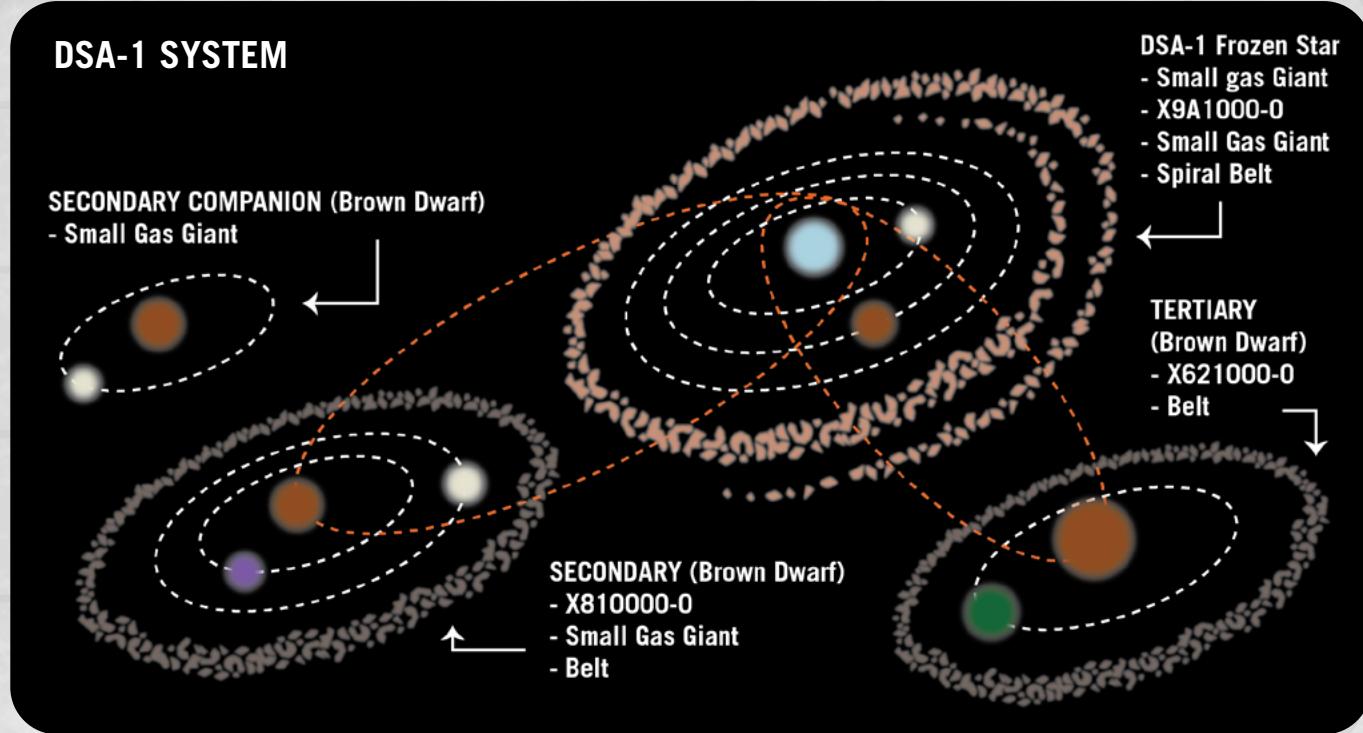
DSA-1 TERTIARY (Brown Dwarf)

DSA-1 Tertiary (X621000-0)
DSA-1 Tertiary (X000000-0)

THE OUTER SYSTEMS

The outer systems, those orbiting the brown dwarfs, are fairly normal. They consist of gas giants, rockballs, and planetoids little different to those found elsewhere. The stars, however, are unusual. They emit less energy than a typical brown dwarf would, and have distinct 'cold spots' deep within their core which defy explanation. Some irregularity in temperature is normal but the existence of stable low-energy areas within a stellar or sub-stellar body is unprecedented. An explanation for these cold spots will present itself in due course.

DSA-1 SYSTEM



THE INNER SYSTEM

There is nothing very unusual about the planetary bodies of the inner system, other than the way the planetoid belt is splayed out into a spiral. Even this is explainable by known gravitational effects. What is not so easily explained is the curious clustering of some bodies. Gravity alone would not hold these bodies together or, more accurately, if such an accretion occurred naturally it would attract more matter and eventually become a dwarf planet. Agglomerations of the sort that exist here and there cannot remain stable for long – they will grow or break up over time. Closer inspection of a cluster will lead to an interaction with the Leviathan.

The frozen star is likely to be the focus of the Travellers' attention. It is safe to approach close to it, since there is little radiation and virtually no thermal emissions. Its mass is around 25 Jupiter masses, with a significantly greater diameter. This, and the low density of matter inside the frozen crust, creates a surface gravity of just under 12gs. Any of *Deepnight Revelation*'s craft, and the parent vessel herself, can sustain a powered orbit just a few hundred kilometres off the surface.

Surface scans of the frozen star are impressive, to say the least. Its crust is dull, like tarnished metal, and there are clouds of gas forming an exotic atmosphere. Here and there are pools of half-frozen liquid, possibly kept from solidifying completely by gravitic stress-heating or slight thermal leakage through thin spots in the crust. Composition of solids, semi-liquids, and

gases are exotic, but this is not the factor that causes what may be the greatest 'what the...' moment of the expedition so far.

There is a structure on the surface.

The outlines of the structure are unmistakably artificial. It takes the form of a conical pyramid over a kilometre in height, with irregularities that might be part of an extensive system of carvings. The overall impression is of Droyne architecture. There is a pit in the surface of the crust not far away, which is shrouded in thick gas clouds but returns utterly incomprehensible sensor readings. Did the Droyne mission land here? Did they mine a star and build a tower? The mission's scientists are desperate to know, but finding out means making a landing.

THE LEVIATHAN

DSA-1 is the birthplace of the Leviathan. Their life cycle is all but inexplicable to small creatures such as humans, but the Leviathan are grand things of the cosmos, not mere planet dwellers. They are birthed in space and reared in a nest of planetoids and space debris pushed together by the parent until old enough to travel by themselves and absorb energy from a star's radiation. This takes several decades, and the juvenile phase goes on for centuries thereafter. Eventually, the Leviathan must make the transition to adulthood. This requires absorbing an immense amount of energy at just the right intensity.

The best explanation human scientists can come up with for how this transition takes place is that the maturing Leviathan sleeps for a few thousand years and slowly changes into its adult form. This can only take place in a high-energy environment such as a brown dwarf. The 'cold spots' within the system's brown dwarfs are actually sleeping Leviathan! The Travellers will encounter at least one scientist excitedly running around shouting this when the truth is discovered.

This revelation leads to some wild theories... which might not be all that wild after all. Could it be that the energy absorbed by Leviathan cools the brown dwarfs they use as a chrysalis? Is that how the star froze? Calculations about how much energy would be absorbed in order to freeze even a modest brown dwarf lead to another astonishing idea. What if the central star was not cooled by Leviathan progressing to adulthood, but by an adult changing into some greater form? If so, would it not have smashed out through the crust? Could there be something titanic sleeping in the star?

This rather Lovecraftian flight of fancy seems impossible to prove, but it is certain that there are a lot of Leviathan in the system. They are quite capable of travelling to other star systems, so they must remain here by choice. It may be that conditions are just right – this is their point of origin, after all – but there may be more to it. Could they be attached to their ancestral home, or is there something here they feel compelled to... guard? Worship? These questions will not be answered during the Travellers' sojourn in the system.

Interactions

The Leviathan cannot fail to notice the arrival of a jump-capable ship. A jump emergence puts a mass into a place where there was not one before, and the gravitational effects, however slight, spread out at lightspeed. The Leviathan will thus notice the new arrival. They are not alarmed, however. Sooner or later one will become curious and begin flying towards *Deepnight Revelation*, intent on investigating. Such long-lived creatures have a different perspective on time to short-lived mortals, so it may be days or even weeks before they react to something that is not an imminent threat. An approach within 24 hours is remarkably quick for these creatures.

Eventually an adult Leviathan, possibly with a couple of juveniles in tow, will approach *Deepnight Revelation* and make a leisurely inspection. It is possible that the Leviathan might prod the starship with a tendril or even give it a gravitic nudge to see what happens. It will certainly want to inspect the ship's drive emissions and may begin to behave oddly if *Deepnight Revelation* is moving under thrust. The Leviathan dips in and out of the drive's primary emission plume, apparently enjoying the sensation.

Unless the Travellers open fire, the Leviathan will not harm their ship or its subordinate craft. Additional Leviathan will come to take a look, which could be intimidating, but there are no hostile actions on their part. Some fly alongside then race ahead before slowing down, perhaps inviting the starship to play with them,



and one behaviour is repeated several times. A Leviathan will drop in just ahead of *Deepnight Revelation* then swerve away in the direction of the nearest gas giant. If the Travellers follow, the Leviathan begin diving into the rings and speeding between planetoids in a complex dance that draws in other Leviathan until there are several adults and perhaps as many as twenty juveniles sporting in the ring system.

If the Travellers launch small craft they are treated as playmates by the juveniles. The behaviour of these creatures, for all their magnificence, is the same as every other species. Their movements are eager, joyful, and apparently intended to entice the small craft to chase them or be chased. This is potentially rather dangerous, as zipping about a ring system tends to be, but the Leviathan are respectful as well as keen to play. Adults will rescue a craft that is about to crash using their ability to project a gravity field. This might be alarming for the crew but it is obvious they have just been helped.

The overall image, as best the scientists aboard *Deepnight Revelation* can discern, is one of adults taking part in a courtly dance of greeting whilst the children emulate their parents' behaviour with rather more joie de vivre. There is no meaningful communication to be shared, but it seems the Leviathan are welcoming a fellow starfarer to their home. What the Travellers may not realise, and may never find out, is that they have just taken part in a mating dance. The juveniles thus produced will not mature for millennia, but will be influenced by the conditions surrounding their conception. Perhaps their shape will be slightly reminiscent of an Imperial heavy cruiser, or their movements oddly mechanical. There is a small possibility the Travellers may find themselves pushed into the future by time dilation and if so they may one day encounter their gigantic star-children.

In the meantime, the Travellers may notice one of the larger juveniles leaving the dance as it winds down, and streaking towards one of the brown dwarfs. It puffs out its tendrils as it approaches, becoming as large as it can appear, then dives into the star leaving what can only be described as a splash of dense hydrogen-rich gas to mark its entry point. Its wake can be tracked as it speeds deep into the brown dwarf's core before emerging. It plunges back in and emerges again, then dives deep and does not reappear. Soon afterward, sufficiently sensitive instruments will detect an area of reduced temperature at the point the Leviathan disappeared. A 'cold spot' develops over the next few hours as the juvenile begins its long sleep and transformation into an adult.

The Travellers will not be impeded if they want to inspect a planetoid cluster. They will find juvenile Leviathan within, some as small as 1-2m long. So long as the young are not harmed the Leviathan will not harass the Travellers, but they will be ushered away after a time. Other than this, *Deepnight Revelation* is free to explore the system. The Leviathan will always be happy to dance with the ship or her craft, but otherwise go about their business as if the Travellers were not there.

If the Travellers manage to get into a fight with the Leviathan they are probably doomed. An average sized individual is around 300m long, and has 4,000 Hull points. All Leviathan have natural ablative armour. Its starting value is Armour 30, and is reduced at the rate of one point per 10 points of damage the creature receives – whether or not that damage penetrates the armour. More details of Leviathan in combat are found on PXX of the *Campaign Guide*.

LANDING ON THE STAR

Landing a small craft with a 4g thrust capability on a body with much higher surface gravity is a difficult proposition at best, and taking off again is likely impossible. Getting down is not the problem; avoiding becoming a crater requires a technological solution. There are a couple of possibilities, however.

One option would be to build a booster engine capable of increasing the thrust of a pinnace or utility boat by a large factor. A chemical reaction drive might be capable of delivering the requisite thrust, but sustaining it for the necessary length of time is an insoluble problem. The answer is to use components from the drives of other craft to build a booster and to attach it firmly enough to one of the craft that the whole assembly can withstand 12gs of sustained thrust.

This is doable. A pinnace can generate 4g of thrust with its existing drives, so in theory trebling the size of the drive should generate 12g. In fact this is not the case; retrofitting drives is inefficient unless a major rebuild is undertaken. However, by taking the main components from three other pinnaces – adding a total of 7.2 tons of drive components – a sufficiently powerful drive can be built to enable a pinnace to struggle to orbit. There is already sufficient power to run these drives, providing the energy-efficient engine components of other pinnaces were used and non-critical systems powered down. By removing the staterooms, it might be possible to jam these components into a pinnace intended for temporary use, or alternatively external engine pods might be added. These will increase overall mass and

require some power generation machinery as well, so four other pinnaces or twelve of the utility boats would have to contribute parts.

Converting a pinnace in this manner will take 2-3 days, and carefully putting all the components back where they belong about three times that, but providing the pinnace is not lost the whole small craft complement can be back in service soon after reaching the next refuelling point. There are insufficient materials to build a second craft however, so if the main pinnace suffers a problem the crew are doomed and *Deepnight Revelation* has lost most of her small craft capability.

Alternatively, if the Travellers have collected Exotic Materials in their travels it may be possible to create a device to nullify some of the gravitational pull of the star. This is not a long-term solution; 4D Exotic Materials will permit the creation of a gravitational induction device capable of affecting a single pinnace for the duration of a sortie to the surface of the star. The device operates rather like a conductor moving through a magnetic field, only with gravity replacing magnetism. Movement induces an electrical current and a great deal of heat. Some of the power can be used or stored, the remainder can be bled off along with the heat. Meanwhile, gravitational hysteresis in the ‘conductor’ counteracts some of the effects of the gravitational field. Such a device is inevitably short-lived due to the power levels required and will destroy itself over time, but should permit a landing and take-off.

Referee’s Note: Theoretically, a less crude version of such a device might be used to counteract extremely high gravitational fields and permit a craft to penetrate the event horizon of a black hole. A stable version would not be available until very high Tech Levels – say, those of the Ancients – are reached, but would allow a risky passage to be made through areas of incredible gravitational forces. Such a device will be encountered in the adventure *Terminus Point*.

Once a means to make a landing is created, a daring crew will be able to land a pinnace or utility boat on the surface of a star. This is still a hazardous business, made more alarming by the groaning from retrofitted thrust pods or the flaring heat from a device the scientists said would almost certainly work. Sensor readings are distorted by the weird surface composition and clouds of gas forming what passes for an atmosphere. Any landing is bound to be rough under the circumstances, but a successful Average (8+) Pilot check will put the pinnace on the surface without damaging it... very much.

When landed it will be necessary to wait for the drives or gravitic device to cool, and to collect sensor data. A typical small craft or starship can protect its occupants from 2-3 times its maximum Thrust in gs, though operating at such a high level strains the systems and will require an overhaul after the mission. This protection is based on the craft’s standard Thrust 4, but is still sufficient that the boat can act as a ‘gravity shelter’ whilst Travellers are planetside.

Going outside is another matter, but the hostile environment suits carried by *Deepnight Revelation* are designed to operate in heavy gravity and could be used to struggle across the surface for a short distance. This is sufficient to reach the structure or take some surface samples. The structure itself is over a kilometre tall, wide at the base but curving upwards in a concave spire to a needle point. It is covered in spiral carvings familiar from other sites set up by the Droyne expedition. Those sensitive to messages contained in the carvings will recognise the Droyne ship and its crew.

THE SPIRE

The spire is mostly solid, and made from the same material as the stellar crust. Within lies a series of chambers with carvings depicting the Droyne interaction with the Leviathan and their expedition to the surface of the frozen star. There is no technical information and no great secrets can be discerned, but the Travellers can confirm what they already suspect about the Leviathan.

Carvings and associated telepathic imagery depicts the mating dance of the Leviathan, the deposit of matter from their bodies which grows into a juvenile within a nest of planetoids and other debris built by an adult Leviathan. Juveniles are independent from an early age, going off to feed and warm themselves from nearby stars, but return to the family group and seem to prefer to be close to an adult. Eventually a juvenile dives into a brown dwarf of the right temperature and metamorphoses into an adult over several centuries.

The final image, located on the ceiling of a central domed chamber, depicts the Droyne ship observing as a juvenile enters one of the system’s brown dwarfs. The image is generated by the imagination of the observing sensitive, so it is possible that the Travellers are simply imagining it, but the juvenile seems familiar. Was the adult that greeted *Deepnight Revelation* the same creature observed beginning its metamorphosis thee hundred thousand years ago? It is not possible to say for certain but any sensitives among the Travellers will be sure they are correct.



A group of Droyne are rendered in statues of the same material as the spire. They gaze up at the carvings with an air of awe and wonder that transcends species and millennia. Sensitives who have experienced visions of the Droyne crew can recognise individuals among the group. Their leader, who the Travellers may by now known as Oyskrusk, gestures with an open hand at the vista above. He seems to be saying 'you followed me, and I gave you this in return', though whether the message is intended for his crewmates or anyone who followed after is an open question.

There is no machinery, not even power generation equipment, within the spire. It is lit by a faint glow from the walls and ceiling, and has a comfortable 0.8g internal gravity. This, like the lighting, is generated without machinery. The spire uses the same gravitational hysteresis concept as the Droyne gravity shielding device, adapted to a static structure. It is gradually breaking down, but should stand for a few million years before collapsing.

There is nothing to loot at the spire, just a wonder to be seen and an insight into the mindset of the Droyne who trod this path before. Incredible as their technology was, they were not so very different to the Travellers.

They gazed in awe upon the birthplace of the Leviathan, landed on the surface of a star and built a monument to themselves, just because they could. The Droyne could not know anyone would follow them, but they ensured that anyone who did knew of them and their great deeds. In that, they achieved a form of immortality.

THE HOLE

About 300m from the spire is an almost perfectly circular hole in the stellar crust, over a kilometre across, about 100m deep, smooth in places and jagged in others. Its sides slope down steeply and clouds of exotic gas pour over the lip to fill the bottom. Something can be dimly seen moving within the crater, something large. An eddy in the gas clouds blows them apart to reveal a young Leviathan, curled up and apparently dormant in the bottom of the hole. It is around 30m long, and there are several smaller ones nearby. None seem to be distressed; a star's gravity is a minor thing to such beings.

These Leviathan have chosen to nest within the rubble left behind when the Droyne excavated material for their spire. They seem content, and if they are aware of the Travellers they give no sign. It would be easy enough to get to the bottom of the hole by sliding down the side,

but getting back out is likely to be impossible. There is no winch that could lift someone against the gravity of a star, and no other means of escape is apparent.

Around the lip of the hole lies debris scattered when it was mined. Most of it is materials the Droyne thought useless and discarded – iron, mercury, platinum, and diamonds, among other materials. There are pure carbon gemstones and gorgeously coloured ones, alloyed with exotic compounds and trace metals. Some are as large as a man's fist; a pure, star-forged crystal worth trillions back home but valuable mainly as a souvenir of this strange world.

The Travellers will be able to find 3Dx5 units of Exotic Materials just lying around. If they had the time and equipment they could mine more, but extracting and purifying the materials is beyond their capabilities. They will have make do with what the Droyne left behind. In addition, the Travellers can harvest as much useful or precious material as they can carry, but must work in heavy gravity and delaying too long risks a malfunction of the ship or a hostile environment suit that will certainly be fatal.

RETURN TO ORBIT

Getting back to orbit will be a challenge, but a craft capable of descending to and surviving on the surface of the frozen star should be able to escape from it. If the Travellers do something truly stupid or push their luck out of greed the referee may wish to give them a warning about impending failure of the drive or some similar disaster, and if they still ignore the hint, the referee should be as merciless as a frozen star.

Some Travellers will try to hold the referee hostage in a situation like this one – ‘we'll stay and chip out a ship full of exotic materials; the drive won't fail because the referee won't deliver a Total Party Kill in one line of narrative’. The fact that the referee is willing to do exactly that is what makes taking risks exciting. Without threat there is no heroism and the game ceases to be about adventure and becomes ‘having it all your own way in the far future.’ This is not desirable, and in any case a TPK taking place on the surface of a frozen star is a story to tell for many years afterward.

CHAIN AND EMBERS

After the wonders of the Leviathan birthplace and a Droyne monument on the surface of a frozen star, the next couple of refuellings may seem rather mundane. Deep Space Refuelling Point Seven is expected to be a large cometary body; DSR-8 is a rogue gas giant. The only unusual thing about either is that they seem to be on near-identical trajectories.

DSR-7

Upon emerging from jump at DSR-7 the Travellers must spend the usual few tense minutes waiting for sensor data. They are in the right place, and a cometary body has been detected, not the dwarf planet or large irregular mass of rock that might be expected. Instead, the 'body' turns out to be a cloud of cometary debris which includes numerous planetoids in the 10-100m diameter range. Remote analysis indicates water ice is likely to be present, but will be dispersed throughout the planetoid group. It may be that a concentration can be found but if not the crew are in for a long job.

The most likely explanation for the strange cloud of debris is that this was once a single comet which has broken up for some reason and remained loosely together due to internal gravitational attraction. Small craft operations within the cloud will be hazardous but not unduly so. Besides, there is really no alternative.

Initial exploration of the cloud can be conducted by probes, but sooner or later craft will have to enter. Sensors are a little attenuated and small fragments of rock or ice rattle on the hull from time to time, but so long as operations are carried out in a careful manner the exploration should go without a hitch. Landing on the surface of a small planetoid is always tricky, but necessary in this case to obtain ice.

If the Travellers request rock samples (or the Mission Division scientists ask for them), analysis produces an interesting result. The density of all rocky material is rather low, as would be expected if a chunk of the upper crust of a planet whose heavier materials had sunk to the centre during formation was blasted off. A major asteroid impact would probably suffice to produce this effect, though the force required to project a piece of a planet right out of the star system is unimaginable.

Ice-mining operations in the debris cloud are interesting (or annoying, depending on the viewpoint) rather than highly dangerous. It is necessary to move from one small deposit to another. Correctly speaking, all personnel should board a craft for any transit, but some begin cutting corners by simply hanging on the outside for a 200-metre 'bounce' to the next deposit. This inevitably means bumping into a few small lumps of rock or ice, but is not significantly hazardous at a low speed. If the senior staff find out there might be a stern talking-to, but this sort of thing comes under 'what we need to do to get the job done on the timeframe we were given' and is a minor matter at most. The chances of anyone being injured or suffering a suit puncture are virtually zero unless something goes badly wrong with a small craft. Unfortunately, it does.

One of the craft (probably a utility boat but possibly a pinnace) suffers a momentary control interruption causing it to crunch into a planetoid instead of braking to a halt just short of it. The impact damages the craft and spills the four vacc-suited workers who were tethered to the sides. One of them was not tethered at all, just hanging on an external hold with the confidence of years of EVA experience. She slips free and crashes into the planetoid, breaking her leg before bouncing back into open space. The craft begins to tumble away with three personnel still tethered to it.

The injured crewmember immediately broadcasts a distress signal and activates her locator beacon. Her name is Lin Garishraak, and she is a stone-cold professional; that is, she knows the risks and balances them against the needs of the job at hand. Even wounded and floating in space she quickly assesses the situation and provides an analysis that is both calm and accurate.

The craft seems to have suffered a power failure. Lin can see emergency internal lights on in the cabin but no signs of movement. There are three crewmembers still tethered to the craft, which is tumbling slowly. This means they are – quite literally – at the end of their tethers being whirled slowly around and impacting with debris as they go. Most of it is small but there is a danger of a suit puncture or impact injury. Lin can see the crewmembers trying to right themselves or haul in on the tethers to reach the craft, but they are clearly in trouble.

Lin adds that the distressed craft will drift clear of the debris cloud, but not for a few hours. This may or may not be a good thing; craft drives will function even less well outside the cloud than within it, though *Deepnight Revelation* and her scouts have Deep Space Manoeuvring Systems which will allow them to chase down the drifting craft over any distance. As to her own status, Lin is in a great deal of pain and cannot be sure how bad her injury is, but her calm evaluation of the situation and available medical care tells her she can hold out until the rescue is completed. The craft crew may be in much worse trouble.

The Travellers will have to decide how to deal with the situation, probably by sending another craft after the tumbling boat. However, before they can begin their operation an additional variable comes into play. Another craft, piloted by the normally pragmatic Orland Vantarrei, has begun a hurried and rather ill-conceived attempt at a rescue. Surging forward at full power, Orland has hit a chunk of debris and suffered a hull puncture in the cockpit. He is badly injured, losing cabin pressure fast, and his suit is holed. His co-pilot is trying to stabilise the situation but Orland needs medical assistance fast.

The Travellers now have a set of problems to deal with: Lin, the boat she fell out of, and the fallout from Orland's ham-fisted attempt at a rescue.

The Tumbling Boat

The boat is out of control and will stay that way until repaired. It has suffered a control systems failure caused by fatigue of critical components, followed by an impact that crippled its primary avionics and control centre. If the craft can be boarded a temporary repair can be made providing some basic spares are available, which will allow a careful flight back to *Deepnight Revelation*. Each attempt at a repair takes 3D minutes, and requires an Average (8+) Engineer check, rising to Difficult (10+) if spares have to be improvised or borrowed

from other systems. The boat will not drift clear of the debris field and out into open space for hours, but time may be critical if there are other tasks to accomplish or crewmembers are wounded. Multiple attempts at a repair can be made, but there will only be enough ready spares for D3-1 attempts aboard the boat.

This all assumes that the craft can be boarded. It is not tumbling very quickly, but a docking is simply impossible. The only answer would be to jump onto the hull and seek an anchor point, then quickly get rid of any safety tether connecting the Traveller to another craft as the tumble will tangle it and eventually yank the Traveller violently off the hull. Making the jump successfully requires a Difficult (10+) Vacc Suit check. Each attempt and reset if the Traveller fails takes 2D minutes.

The three crewmembers currently whirling around on the end of their tethers are probably an inconvenience but may be an asset. None have lost consciousness but they are being battered by debris as they collide with lumps of rock and ice, and are nauseous from the spinning tumble. All are trying heroically to drag themselves down the tether to the boat hull but keep falling back. Every 2D minutes of this, the referee should roll on the Injuries table below for each crewmember still in distress or for every Traveller trying to assist them. Rather than keep track of hits and damage, the crewmembers' injuries are abstracted as follows:

Slightly Injured: The crewmember has been bashed around but is capable of functioning as normally as is possible under the circumstances.

Injured: The crewmember is at END 0.

Seriously injured: The crewmember is at END 0, and both STR and DEX are at half value.

Critically injured: The crewmember is unconscious (STR, DEX and END are all at or near zero) and needs urgent medical assistance.

Dead: The crewmember has died of their injuries.

Injuries

2D	Result
2-3	Increase injury level by 1. Roll 1D: on a 1 a critical suit breach occurs. On 2-3 the breach is major and 4-6 it is minor. A Traveller takes 2D damage instead of increasing injury level.
4-5	Increase injury level by 1. Roll 1D: on a 1 a major suit breach occurs. On 2-4 the breach is minor. A Traveller takes 1D damage instead of increasing injury level.
6-8	Increase injury level by 1. Roll 1D: on a 1-2 a minor suit breach occurs. A Traveller takes 1D3 damage instead of increasing injury level.
9-10	Minor peppering with debris. Roll 1D: on a 1 a minor suit breach occurs.
11-12	Lucky this time. No injury occurs.



A minor suit breach inflicts 1 point of damage per minute and will not increase in severity. It can be easily patched if the Traveller or a buddy can reach it. A major breach inflicts 1 point of damage per round and may increase in severity as a rip spreads. Patching is more of a problem. A critical suit breach inflicts 1D damage per round and requires immediate major action. Examples include a cracked helmet visor or major split in the suit, or failure of life support pack connections.

The whirling crewmembers can be rescued by catching them, detaching their tethers, and hauling them into another craft. They may cooperate with this, or may panic and make things more difficult. If they are not rescued one or two of them might manage to reach the tumbling boat under their own power but it is quite likely some or all will be killed by cumulative damage from debris impacts. Correcting the craft's tumble without catching the crewmembers will result in their tethers tangling round the boat, bringing them inward at increasing velocity until they slam into the hull, probable with fatal results.

Orland's Boat

Orland's boat is in immediate danger and a threat to other craft or personnel as it proceeds through the

debris field. The co-pilot is capable of bringing it to an untidy stop, but is trying to keep Orland alive in a depressurising cabin. He may get the idea that flying Orland to *Deepnight Revelation* is a good idea, which could lead to a repeat of the first accident. If not, help needs to get to Orland in short order.

The co-pilot is in something of a panic, but Travellers with suitable skills might be able to calm him down – an Average (8+) Leadership or Persuade check will do it sufficiently that he can be talked through emergency medical procedures. The choices are to make a dash for the parent vessel, which will result in more debris collisions and cause significant damage to the boat, to leave the boat coasting and get Orland out of the cockpit into a section that has not depressurised for medical treatment, or leave him for a moment and stop the boat.

Making a dash for it is the most risky course of action. The Travellers might be able to provide assistance by feeding a course to the co-pilot or using remote control. This requires an Average (8+) Pilot or Electronics (remote ops) check. The boat suffers damage equal to 50% of its Hull points plus 2D% more per point of negative Effect; it might be destroyed by bad piloting. If not, there is a straight 2 in 6 chance Orland is alive when he reaches *Deepnight Revelation*.

Halting the Boat is a simple task for a pilot, though under the present circumstances it is more of a challenge. If the boat is halted before Orland is given medical assistance there is a 3 in 6 chance he is still alive when assistance reaches him. The Travellers (or whoever they send) will then have to find a way to treat his injuries aboard the boat or at least keep him alive until he can be transferred to a proper medical facility. The boat will take no additional damage, but has lost 10% of its Hull points already.

Providing medical assistance without stopping the boat gives Orland the best chance for survival but will result in more damage to the craft. There is a 5 in 6 chance Orland will be alive when assistance reaches him but the boat will have lost 25% of its Hull points.

Lin

Lin is hurt worse than she thinks, but her injuries are not life-threatening. She will object to plans to pick her up first, urging rescuers to deal with the two boats first. Apart from anything else her position allows her to feed useful information to those trying to rescue the boats. When she is rescued, Lin will need surgery on a very badly broken leg and may always walk with a limp. She does not accept that there was anything wrong with hanging untethered on the outside of a craft making a short movement in an area where rescue was likely to be quickly available. This is a common practice among experienced personnel, though rookies are constantly told not to emulate it. In the event, being untethered saved Lin from worse problems, and though it would have been safer if everyone had been inside the craft there is still no guarantee there would have been no injuries.

After this incident the refuelling proceeds without further difficulties, and the Travellers will soon be able to move on to their next refuelling point.

DSR-8

Other than its trajectory, DSR-8 is not unusual. It is a small gas giant with a handful of tiny moonlets, most of which are in eccentric orbits. The gas giant is following an almost identical trajectory to the debris cloud at DSR-7, suggesting both were ejected from the same star system simultaneously. This is correct. In fact, DSR-7 is a fragment of a large moon that used to orbit DSR-8. If the Travellers make samples from the moonlets remaining to the gas giant, analysis of their composition indicates most are fragments of the same moon, which must have been destroyed by a catastrophic impact or some other event. The rest of the moon was presumably projected on other trajectories or may have fallen into

the gas giant. There should be no undue complications refuelling at DSR-8, and there is really no need to spend much time here.

DSS-4

Deep Space System Four is obviously a bit unusual in terms of its projected mass and spectral emissions. It appears to be a small F7 (yellow-white) star with some planetary bodies, but once *Deepnight Revelation* gets within a few parsecs, refined gravitational analysis throws up anomalies in terms of mass distribution. These cannot be resolved until the Travellers arrive at the system.

Upon emergence from jump the usual sensor data comes in, indicating a highly unstable, hot star and two major planetary bodies. One is a gas giant, the other a large terrestrial. There is also a large and complex planetoid belt which is clearly of recent formation – recent in the sense of a few hundred thousand years or so – since its component bodies cannot be stable in their current orbits.

In fact, the whole system is only a hundred and fifty thousand years old. Prior to this, all its component bodies were part of the DSS-5 system. A particularly violent interaction between the supergiant stars in that system pulled a huge chunk of stellar matter out of one of them and spun it around the other in a slingshot orbit that sent it out of the system. There was enough matter to coalesce without ceasing to fuse hydrogen, though for a few thousand years the clump of matter was highly unstable and prone to spitting out gobbets of plasma.

The lump of stellar ejecta took with it part of the star system, in the form of a gas giant, a terrestrial planet, and chunks of some others. It also flung parts of planets and the odd moon out of the parent system as it passed. Among these are the gas giant and crustal-debris cloud at DSR-7 and DSR-8.

The ‘star’ at the centre of this rogue system is still coalescing and remains unstable. It is prone to temperature fluctuations and occasional bursts of radiation as well as weird emission patterns. This phenomenon has not been seen elsewhere, and the expedition’s scientists will want to study it. This will require at least a few days of hurried observations, leading to the conclusion that the orphaned stellar mass will eventually settle down into a normal star, albeit one of unusual composition. The system will drift generally corewards but will not clear the Great Rift for millions of years. It will remain a viable refuelling point for the foreseeable future, measured in thousands of years at least.

The system's small gas giant is not very remarkable, except that it is still settling into a rather eccentric orbit and collecting debris to form a ring system. The debris is the remains of shattered planets and moons, arranged in an irregular spiral that could be considered an unstable planetoid belt. The gas giant will eventually clear its own orbit and shepherd the planetoids into a more stable long-term arrangement.

The terrestrial planet occupies an even more eccentric orbit than the gas giant. It was knocked out of orbit by an immense impact and almost departed as a rogue planet into deep space. It will eventually be ejected from the system but has a few tens of thousands of years left before its most distant point is too far out for the system's gravitational pull to bring it back. In the meantime it trails debris and perturbs the planetoid field on its passes through the inner system. The planet has retained some of its original quite dense exotic atmosphere of methane and ammonia, which shrouds the surface in clouds. These show an unusual disturbance over a wide area of one hemisphere. This is the ejecta crater from which the debris cloud at DSR-7 was projected into deep space by an enormous impact on the far side of the planet.

The crater is over 100km deep at its deepest, though it has partially been filled by lava from the planet's molten core. Average depth is 30-40km, with deep fissures in some places. Naturally the mission's science team want to descend into the crater to take samples and observe a planet's crust first-hand. This is not particularly dangerous, except for atmospheric gas pressure. Pressure at the surface is a little more than half an atmosphere, but at 30km down in the crater it rises to around 10 atmospheres. At the deepest accessible points it may be twice this.

There is a real risk of suit failure if using standard vacc suits. The heavy hostile environment suits can handle the crater but are rather clumsy, making an expedition into the depths a real slog for those involved. All the same, the science team will be able to extract some good samples and make useful observations. The referee may choose to impose a misadventure, but this should not be over-used. Some planetary expeditions and refuellings, even under hazardous conditions, will go off more or less as planned. If every sample collection trip turns into a major drama the Travellers will become burned out and there is a real risk of running out of personnel before reaching Terminus Point. However, as always, any activity can become an adventure if the Travellers do something dumb or things go awry.



CHAPTER TWELVE

ANGRY GIANTS



After DSS-4 the Travellers journey on to DSS-5, a system known to include two supergiant stars and some other bodies. If they have been paying attention in the recent systems, the Travellers may already have an idea of conditions in the DSS-5 system. If not, they are in for a surprise.

The system centres on a binary pair of supergiant stars, orbiting one another at high velocity. Each is pulling matter from the other, creating a beautiful but rather sinister twisting spiral of plasma between the two and a great deal of radiation, radio-frequency noise and general mayhem. It is obvious that the two giants will eventually spiral into one another, probably creating a supernova event. All that is likely to be left behind is a black hole, but some parts of the star system may survive to orbit it. The supernova will not occur for half a million years or so according to the best predictions available.

There is nothing close to the two supergiant stars; bodies have been swallowed up or projected out of the system as the two spiralled inward. However, the pair has a distant companion in the form of an M9 (red)

main sequence star which has managed to hang on to some of its planets. It is orbited by two small gas giants and a rockball world, all of which show signs of bombardment with fragments of other bodies.

DSS-5 PRIMARY A (Type O Supergiant Star)

DSS-5 PRIMARY B (Type O Supergiant Star)

(Debris and planetoids)

DSS-5 COMPANION (M9 Star)

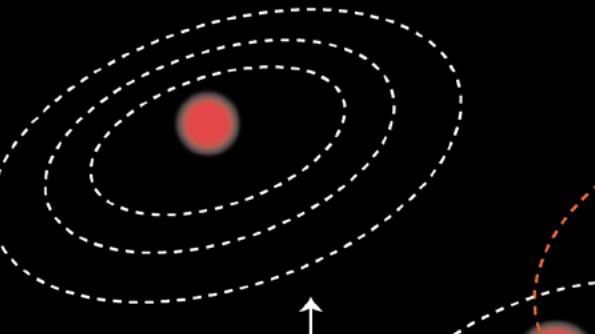
Companion 1 (Small Gas Giant)

Companion 2 (X210000-0)

Companion 3 (Small Gas Giant)

It would be possible to fly a starship or small craft between the two giants to take measurements. This is not without risks but it is relatively easy to stay out of the plasma strands yet get close enough to make minute observations. This is yet another unique scientific opportunity provided by the *Deepnight Revelation* expedition, and provokes some discussion among the crew. There have been some near-misses lately and the prospect of destruction at some point in the mission is brought home every time the ship has a close call.

DSS-5 SYSTEM



- COMPANION (M9 Star)**
- Small Gas Giant
 - X210000-0
 - Small Gas Giant

PRIMARY A (Type O Supergiant Star)



- DSS-5 PRIMARY B
(Type O Supergiant Star)**
- (Debris and planetoids)

FACTIONALISATION

Whilst the Travellers are in-system they become aware of a debate raging among the crew. Should *Deepnight Revelation* turn back? The mission has already made discoveries that could advance the cause of science by many years, and has observed wonders. Do the crew not have a duty to return home and tell of what they have seen so that missions can be sent to study these places in detail? There is some basis to this argument; many of the discoveries made during the expedition were studied for a few days where they would reward years of detailed work, and it will all be for naught if this data is lost in a misjump or systems failure.

This is not a mutiny, but factions are beginning to form within the crew. Some are loyal to the mission, others are developing their own agenda. The possibility of factions developing among the crew is discussed on page 48 of the *Campaign Guide*; which factions eventually emerge will depend on the Travellers' choices. In addition to the factions that may have already emerged, the Travellers will observe the following:

Mission Loyalists believe the mission must be fulfilled no matter what. There are many reasons why, including personal loyalty to the command crew or someone who believes in the mission, hatred for the Deepnight Entity, or a need for answers in the case of someone who was infected but survived. Of the factions mentioned in the *Campaign Guide* the Imperials and the Deepnight Loyalists are both likely to support the continuance of the mission unless some other consideration appeals to their core agenda.

Turnaround Advocates have come to believe that the mission has achieved enough. They want to begin the transit back towards Charted Space whilst *Deepnight Revelation* retains the capability to get home. They do not see this in any way as disloyalty – the expedition has charted a path for others to follow and has achieved great things. The crew have a duty to ensure this knowledge is not lost, and that may mean admitting an honourable defeat.

Not everyone belongs to a faction, and some of those who do may belong to more than one or shift their allegiance depending upon circumstances. For example, the Imperials faction believes that the crew's first duty is to protect the Imperium. Most of the time this equates to the Mission Loyalist agenda, so Imperial faction members will throw their weight behind arguments for continuance of the mission.

However, if a previously unsuspected threat is discovered they may start advocating turnaround in order to bring home a warning.

At this point, the factionalisation of the crew is relatively minor, and disagreements between factions do not cause bad blood. However, the Travellers will become aware of meetings among faction members and may even be invited to speak at one – either to address concerns or support their agenda. It is clear that the problem will only get larger if it is allowed to, and also that factions are not yet hardcore and entrenched. There are a handful of people who fervently support any given agenda, and many more who are friends with them or agree in a general and not particularly deep way. These might be convinced to take a different stance, and even those who hold a viewpoint strongly can be convinced to change if circumstances create an opportunity.

A CHANCE TO COMPROMISE

Many of those advocating turnaround are deeply worried that they may be lost without trace, and that all the work done so far will be for naught. Most of these people are willing to risk their lives but not their legacy. If they could leave behind a record of what they have learned so far, some would be reassured enough to go onward. Whilst *Deepnight Revelation* was dropping off record buoys they were sure their work would be preserved and eventually found, but now there is no such certainty.

The Droyne monument at DSA-1 inspires some of the crew to come up with a possible solution. The Droyne may have built their monument on the surface of a star out of simple ego, but they must surely have known that others following them would be drawn to such a wonder. Perhaps *Deepnight Revelation* might leave behind similar monuments at points of interest that will attract future explorers. It might be those explorers are not from Charted Space, but at least someone will know about the epic voyage of the Travellers.

Foremost in espousing this idea is Raix Delvaan, self-appointed curator of the ship's unofficial museum. She lacks any real credibility with the rest of the crew, however, so the cause needs a champion. The Travellers could simply order the construction of a suitable monument, but to have its desired effect the monument really needs to capture the imagination of the crew.

There are many ways the Travellers could go about 'selling' the idea of a monument-to-ourselves, and



the most outrageous might be the easiest to sell. The present system, with its two supergiant stars, will certainly attract the attention of starfarers operating in the region and would be a good prospect. The only suitable location for a monument would be the rockball world in the companion system. But how to make sure the monument is spotted? The answer is to build or carve something nobody could miss.

The Travellers could make this a competition among the crew to design something that cannot be missed, and also to find a way to record meaningful data. One suggestion is to use the ship's lasers or fusion guns to smooth out an area of rock or a mountainside – such things do not occur naturally – though some

crewmembers want to take this further and carve a 10km long replica of their ship into the bedrock. Whilst it might be considered a piece of cosmic vandalism this will ensure the record point will be noticed!

Recording data is actually fairly simple. A smoothed-off area of rock can be inscribed with words, but patterns of dots can convey far more in the same space. It might not be possible to record everything this way, but the creation of binary plaques would allow at least some critical pieces of information to be inscribed for the ages. This is enough to reassure those who want to leave a record, though crewmembers who are simply homesick will not be mollified for long.

COMETS AND ROGUES

After leaving the twin supergiants behind, *Deepnight Revelation* must make a transit of several deep space refuelling points. It will be five jumps to the next star system. Few vessels have ever made such a long chain of deep space jumps and although the risks are carefully managed this will be a stressful time for the crew. Some crewmembers feel the incredible sight of two supergiant stars devouring one another should mark the pinnacle of the mission and request a turnaround, but others are inspired to push on in search of more wonders. Once the transit begins, the question is academic and the mood aboard *Deepnight Revelation* is rather subdued.

DEEP SPACE REFUELLED POINT NINE, TEN, ELEVEN...

DSR-9 is a rogue gas giant. It is not particularly unusual, but has cooled during its long journey through interstellar space. The Travellers will be able to detect ‘icebergs’ deep in the atmosphere. These are not in fact solid, but pockets of high-density gas which have formed due to low temperature conditions at that level. These ‘icebergs’ are all below a thick, opaque layer of methane clouds which marks a temperature inversion layer. Sensors attempting to penetrate the layer are heavily attenuated, giving just enough data to be intriguing without providing clear answers to the questions thus raised. Other than this, refuelling should proceed without undue difficulty.

DSR-10 is a cometary body, undistinguished other than its location in deep space. DSR-11 is more interesting, as it is on an unusual trajectory. This will take it out of the galactic plane, and cannot be matched to any known point of origin. It may be that this comet has changed course, perhaps due to the gravitational influence of some body it passed by thousands or millions of years ago. It is otherwise unremarkable.

THE GREAT DSR-12 REGATTA

The next refuelling point on this reach is designated DSR-12. It is a small gas giant with a couple of modest sized moons. These are suitable for landing small craft, and some of the flight crew propose a visit ‘to collect

samples’. What they really mean is that they are bored with careful manoeuvring near comets and want to do some proper flying.

This ‘proper flying’ starts out disciplined enough, but soon one of the pilots bets another she can negotiate a course across the planetary surface faster than her rival. An unofficial race is held, and soon the Travellers are beset with requests to launch other craft on distinctly spurious errands. It will take little investigation to find out what has happened, at which point there are some decisions to be made.

The no-nonsense approach would be to ban the race and restrict pilots to approved flights only. This will be greeted with some grumbling but it is fair – and more importantly everyone can see the measure is intended to preserve the craft and their pilots from their own folly. However, if the Travellers permit the event to go ahead there are benefits along with the risks.

After a couple of pilots make the low-altitude run, the course is refined to include several waypoints where a landing, 300-second halt and relaunch is required, plus sections where a pilot whose craft is spotted will be disqualified. This encourages extremely low flying, using craters, rills, and canyons, as well as projecting terrain features to screen the craft from observation by the designated spotters. What started as an innocent desire to open up the throttle a bit could develop into a rather hazardous regatta.

If the crew are allowed to run with the ball, as it were, the event spirals into a major planetside excursion, with small crowds of vacc-suited crewmembers cheering on daring pilots whose craft disappear behind terrain features and reappear an improbably short time later somewhere well past the observation-disqualification point. There are some near-misses and maybe a little damage to craft, but the event becomes a weird sort of holiday for the crew and it is clearly good for morale.

The event could be used as an opportunity for a graduation exercise if *Deepnight Revelation* is training additional pilots, or the Travellers might decide to join in the fun. This is a risky move, since the event is entirely unofficial and command staff would be expected to ‘officially disapprove’ of such antics. However, if a



mysterious figure in a plain vacc suit – who is definitely not the captain so must be someone else, surely – were to take part and do well, this would impress the crew and perhaps endear the command staff to some of them. The Travellers might join the after-party in civilian clothes (or at least, without rank insignia) and ensure the crew understand that whilst the officers who dwell in the bodies of the Travellers strongly disapprove, they are not currently present. This is a tacit acceptance that ‘the book’ was not written for such a long voyage and there is a line that can be trodden between keeping everyone safe and blowing off some steam from time to time.

The impromptu regatta can be resolved with a DEI check as if it was an Operation. A good result indicates a positive outcome which may have Morale benefits. Alternatively, if the Travellers play out a good job of balancing keeping control of the crew and letting them enjoy themselves, a point of Morale might be awarded by the referee without needing any checks. Poor results on a DEI check or bad decisions by the Travellers could result in damaged craft or casualties, or lowered Morale if the Travellers are seen to be unreasonable in their treatment of those involved.

There is an additional benefit to allowing the regatta to go ahead and managing it well; pilots who have been pushing their craft have discovered a number of flaws and defects in early stages of development. Although this results in an alarming job-list for the craft maintenance personnel, it will prevent these problems from becoming serious. The Travellers might handle the situation well by good-naturedly (but firmly) ordering those who took part in the regatta to assist in the enhanced maintenance programme over the next few weeks. ‘You found or maybe even created the problem, now help fix it’ is both fair and beneficial to those relying on the craft. This allows the Travellers to mildly censure those involved without appearing harsh.

Referee’s Note: If the regatta is not allowed to go ahead, problems with the small craft will remain undetected until they become more serious. In the adventures that follow there are numerous opportunities for the referee to impose a system failure or worrying glitch, or even a major breakdown. Some situations will be highlighted but the referee can always substitute others if this seems desirable.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CODE DTP



After the chain of deep space refuelling points, DSS-6 is a welcome relief. Centring on a bright A5 (white) main sequence star, the outsystem contains three gas giants and a sparse planetoid belt, none of which are particularly unusual. The innermost body is a very hot, large gas giant which would be hazardous to skim fuel at. The second and third planets are very interesting to the expedition's scientists.

DSS-6 PRIMARY (A5 Star)

Primary 1	(Large Gas Giant)
Primary 2	(High-Density Terrestrial)
Primary 3/DTP	(X878000-0)
Primary 4	(Small Gas Giant)
Primary 5	(X000000-0)
Primary 6	(Small Gas Giant)
Primary 7	(Large Gas Giant)

PLANET TWO

DSS-6/2 is a high-density terrestrial planet with a thick atmosphere composed primarily of carbon dioxide and nitrogen. There is some oxygen in the air as a result of

microbiological activity, but no advanced life. Lichen and similar organisms are the dominant life form on this planet, growing on almost every surface to create a rather unpleasant landscape painted in tones of brown, green, dull yellow, and dark orange.

Surface gravity is 2.1gs, which is tolerable for a short time without advanced equipment. Driving vehicles is hazardous, as even small dips or bumps are magnified in effect and increased strain is placed upon suspension systems. Nevertheless, the world will reward investigation. The lichens growing there may have pharmaceutical or chemical properties that could be useful, and high-density worlds by definition tend to have deposits of heavy and valuable materials in their crust.

Planet Two is an example of a situation where the referee should reward the Travellers for the amount of effort they put in. If they ignore the planet or just go through the motions of permitting an expedition there, then the matter can be resolved with a DEI or ECEI check and the rewards will be small. However, if the Travellers make an effort to plan an expedition and

take an interest in it, they are creating opportunities for adventure and mishap, and should be rewarded with the chance of something beneficial.

That does not mean that the Travellers should be allowed to 'grind Exotic Materials', so to speak, by insisting on examining every rockball in detail. However, if the referee can establish that effort sometimes brings rewards the Travellers will start to generate their own adventures and will also be behaving more like interstellar explorers should. In the case of Planet Two, the Travellers might decide to take core samples and conduct a survey of the local bedrock, then set up a small mine at a promising spot. This will yield a modest amount of Rare Materials, if worked for a few days at least. Alternatively, the planet's lichens might include one with an impressive pharmaceutical capability, which can be grown in one of the biosphere areas.

Such rewards should rarely be achieved without risk or difficulty. Planet Two presents plenty of natural hazards for the Travellers to contend with, and there is always the chance that someone will have an accident (or was it an accident? There is bad blood between some of the crew) whilst collecting the samples. Vehicle breakdowns or craft damage are particularly serious in a heavy-gravity environment. By way of example, if the erosion of small craft capability was not spotted during the impromptu regatta, one of the boats might suffer a lifter failure on landing. The resulting heavy crash-landing leaves crew stranded, air leaking out, and the possibility of having to improvise a way to get the craft back off the surface so it can be repaired aboard *Deepnight Revelation*.

PLANET THREE/DTP

Planet Three is very promising. Orbiting towards the inner edge of the habitable zone, it is rather hot but otherwise entirely habitable. Fluffy clouds and a vibrant mix of blue and green suggest a world rich in life, which implies an excellent place to resupply and rest up for a week or two. Naturally, given the gallows humour of some crewmembers, the world has been unofficially dubbed DTP, which stands for 'Deathtrap? Probably!' There is as yet no indication that the world is anything but an inviting paradise, of course.

DTP has a rampant ecosystem, diversified throughout its continents and oceans. There are several species of megafauna, notably something that resembles a long-necked, oversized bear which is native to the northern forests and a plains-dwelling mega-grazer not entirely unlike a mammoth. The similarity of these creatures – at least when glimpsed through the clouds from orbit – to known Terrestrial species is not entirely surprising.

There are, after all, only so many answers to nature's questions. If the Travellers do not think to ask, some of the crew will come up with the question: why did these creatures get so big?

The usual answer to that question is for protection against predators, which is the case here. There are several large predators on DTP, but at the apex is what appears for all the world to be Smilodon – the famous 'sabre-toothed tiger' of Terra's late prehistory. Again, this makes sense – Smilodon evolved to predate creatures like those of DTP, so it is not really surprising that something evolved here to fulfil a similar role in a similar way. The Travellers will eventually discover there is more to it than that, but for now the working hypothesis is that parallel evolution has created similar creatures.

Initial analysis of the world's conditions is very promising. Gravity is 0.97gs, mean temperature is a bit high and extensive ocean coverage results in a humid, often downright wet, climate especially on the western side of the continents. The seas are rather turbulent, with vigorous currents and deep water channels carved by them. Ferocious rainstorms are also not uncommon, but this is offset by a tremendously lush countryside. Analysis of samples brought back suggests an ecosystem compatible with the Travellers' metabolism. They can resupply here.

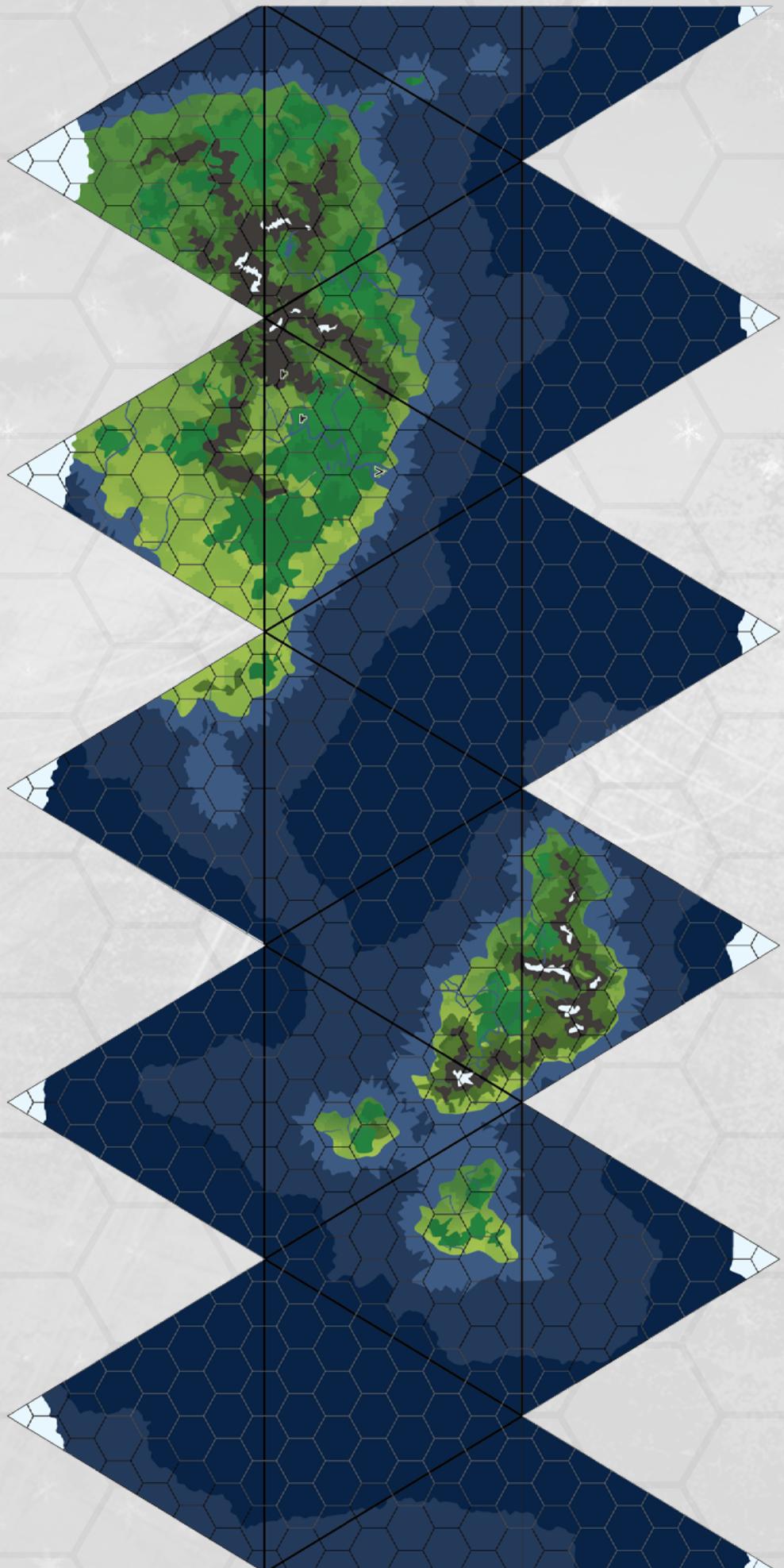
There are some points of interest which stand out once the initial surveys are complete. They have, as usual, been given temporary names by crewmembers. All lie on the world's largest continent, which is located in the southern hemisphere.

The High Valley is almost completely surrounded by mountains. Only one side is open... or was. At some point in the recent past (tens of thousands or perhaps hundreds of thousands of years) a titanic landslide appears to have blocked the low eastern entrance to the valley, creating a sort of 'island' surrounded by mountain peaks. The high valley has multiple small rivers flowing to a lake at its centre, with extensive marshlands along their banks. The lake has three large islands, each surrounded by a curiously regular set of underwater rock formations. There are indications the area may be metal-rich, possibly with radioactive elements. This is particularly true at the eastern end of the valley where background radiation is higher than usual.

The Really Big Marsh was named by one of the planetary scientists after being told she could not assign the original, extremely rude, appellation she wanted. It is, as the name suggests, a huge marsh formed by the delta of a major river complex currently referred to as Bigmarsh River. Again, the original name was rather less

NAME: DTP

UWP: X878000-0



Camp
Ruins



Hex Scale
1149km

World Gravity
0.97G

Mean Equatorial Temp
35°C

repeatable. The Really Big Marsh lies downstream from the Menagerie Plains in the same river basin.

Menagerie Plains were given their interim designation due to their location close to various other terrain types, which has resulted in multiple species competing for the same environmental niches in fringe terrain or pockets of forest, marsh, and hills within the plains. The scientific community are very keen to establish a research outpost there, since it will provide the best opportunity to study as many species as possible. There are indications a city or other large settlement might be buried under millennia of silt at the confluence of two tributaries of the Bigmarsh River.

A HISTORY OF PLANET THREE

The oddly familiar creatures of DTP are not the result of parallel evolution; not all of them anyway. A little over 300,000 years ago the Ancients brought people and creatures from Earth to this region of space. It is probable that this was the work of those opposed to Grandfather's plan for their species, and that they were either creating a bolt-hole or more likely conducting experiments of their own. The latter was the motivation for seeding DTP with Earth-creatures and people, who were in this case uplifted hominids.

The hominids may have been intended as a replacement for humans or as rivals. Since a suitable humanoid species which possessed intelligence already existed, the effort to create another must have been motivated by some now-forgotten goal. Perhaps the Droyne who created this world's ecosystem simply wanted something of their own that had not been touched by Grandfather.

Whatever the reason, an enclave of uplifted hominids was settled on DTP and Terran species introduced. The expected follow-up missions did not come; the Final War saw to that. Indeed, the last ship to pass through was that of Oyskrusk and his companions, who were surprised to find people living on DTP. There were no Droyne, though; they had moved on and their fate remains unknown. It can be presumed they returned to the central Droyne area and were involved in the Final War.

After Oyskrusk and his crew departed, the hominids were left to their own devices in an increasingly hostile world. They had a few advanced weapons and a single large settlement of around thirty thousand people. For some time they prospered, but did not know how to properly maintain or replace the technology that kept their city working. Worse, each generation was on average less intelligent than the last. The uplift process

that had increased their intelligence was not being properly passed on. Their creators might have been fascinated; the hominids were horrified.

Eventually a decision had to be made. The city was breaking down and some members of the new generation were only barely sentient. Within a few hundred years the hominids would be animals once more, with no memory of what they had been. It was possible that intellect might increase in future generations, either because of the changes made by the Ancients or in response to a dangerous environment, but the hominids had to survive until then. There was no prospect of that in a dying city, and the surrounding countryside was filled with sabre-toothed cats and other predators adapted to far more dangerous prey than a semi-intelligent ape. The only viable answer was to find or create a safe homeland.

Most of the hominids made a trek, carrying what they could in their few working vehicles. They marched west, eventually coming to the High Valley, and entered it with grim purpose. This would be their home; the ark that would preserve their species until evolution or intervention brought them back to self-awareness. Major predators were hunted to extinction within the valley, consuming the last of the advanced weapons. The entrance was sealed by a great landslide triggered by a cluster of home-made nuclear bombs.

Once closed off inside their world the hominids built themselves a new city, using a technique of building 'rafts' out of rocks dropped onto the bed of the shallow lake which were then built up with soil and vegetation. These raft-fields, similar to the chinampas which would one day be built by the Aztec people of Earth, were safe from animals and provided a rich harvest. The hominids built dwellings on the islands or around them on piles driven into to the lake bed. Here they were safe and could launch expeditions into the forests of the valley to forage for what they needed.

Over the centuries, the spark of intellect gradually died and the lake-cities were abandoned. The regressed hominids migrated into the forests and lived in small family groups, initially warring with those who intruded from the cities. Eventually there were no more of them; the lake-cities became taboo and were eventually forgotten. The hominids lived a simple life in the forests, using basic tools they fashioned from wood, bone, and stone. The occasional individual was born with greater intellect but often driven out as somehow 'wrong' or were killed. At best they lived lonely lives among creatures who looked like them but were not people at all.

EXPLORING THE HIGH VALLEY

The High Valley presents problems for explorers. It is filled with dense forest, presenting difficulties in landing a boat or pinnace. The lake islands are less overgrown, and it would be relatively easy to land in the shallow water covering the remains of the raft-fields or on a mainland beach. Water levels have risen in the valley by about 12m since the time of the lake-cities, so the fields are under about 10m of water. This is entirely tolerable for a small craft but might present difficulties in getting ashore. It is also possible, with difficulty, to get a craft down safely in the landslide zone at the eastern end of the valley.

The Landslide Zone

The landslide zone is marked by a mix of forest and tumbled boulders, with a gigantic pile of overgrown rubble blocking where the exit of the valley once was. A small lake has formed at the foot of the landslide, and on the outside there are signs a river once flowed eastwards to eventually join the Bigmarsh River. The terrain is entirely unsuitable for vehicles but can be explored carefully on foot.

There are indications this area suffered a nuclear detonation in the distant past. Radiation has fallen almost to background levels but there are a few isotopes still present that register on sensitive instruments. This can be used to date the detonation to around 310,000 years ago – at a time the Ancients were at the height of their power. Blast damage to the surrounding mountains is obvious, but is not commensurate with the sort of detonation required to rearrange the local landscape to the degree it has been unless the explosion took place underground. Such a detonation would have devastated the valley and possibly made it uninhabitable, even though the centre of the explosion was on the outer side of the valley.

It can be deduced that someone deliberately tunnelled under the entrance to the valley and exploded a nuclear device of significant power – several megatons at least – in order to collapse the nearest mountainsides and seal off the valley. What fallout occurred from an underground detonation would be blown eastwards by the prevailing wind, away from the valley, but it is not clear whether the explosion was intended to seal something in or out.

Densitometers and deep-penetrating nuclear magnetic resonance scanners can identify pockets of metals deep under the landslip. These include advanced materials

and alloys that would never occur naturally, but their configuration is impossible to determine. Crushed under megatons of rock and further buried by soil deposition, these materials would be virtually impossible to extract without a major mining operation.

There is not all that much more to be learned about the history of DTP in this area, but there is plenty of wildlife and flora to sample. The radiation from the long-ago detonation has no effect on modern plants and animals, which are quite safe to eat and do not display high levels of mutation.

The Lake-Cities

The islands in the big lake are smaller than they used to be, and in some cases have become clusters of small islands where they were large single land masses. Thousands of years of soil deposition and water effects have buried what remains of the cities, which would require an archaeological dig to uncover. Sensors can provide an image of the layout and composition of the cities without doing any digging, however.

The islands are forested for the most part, but not as thickly as the mainland. Here and there are open areas where tall grasses grow, and these show a not-coincidental resemblance to the cereal crops of old Earth. Likewise, the Travellers may be able to find vegetables of distant Terran origin. These are not the carrots and beetroot of modern times as the Travellers know them, but descendants of their distant ancestors which developed on an alien world without human intervention. Nevertheless, they may be recognisable.

The lake-cities are not the product of an advanced civilisation capable of producing large quantities of alloyed metals or electric power, but were originally built with natural materials worked using advanced equipment. Stone and wood were cut and shaped with fusion and laser tools, and when those finally ran down their mechanical equivalents were used. Deep under the soil of the central island is the remains of a small antimatter reactor laboriously brought here from the original settlement. It provided power for a couple of centuries but eventually ceased to function.

Millenia under the soil have degraded most components but if the Travellers can find a way to dig down about 20m without the hole filling up with lake water they can perhaps salvage some materials or make out the layout of the device. This is nothing like enough to learn how to build an antimatter reactor, but knowledge gained can be added to the databases and might be useful in deciphering other Ancients-derived technology in the future.

SALVAGING THE REACTOR

The first challenge in salvaging the reactor is figuring out it is there at all. Soil deposition over thousands of years have buried it deeply, so it will only be detected on a detailed sweep of the island using terrain-penetrating instruments or if an overflight is used to map surface patterns in the soil. Once the Travellers know something is there they will need to start digging.

From about 3m down, any hole will start to experience significant seepage of water, causing it to very slowly fill and in the meantime loosening the sides or causing mud in the bottom. By 10m down the Travellers will have to contend with constant water influx, sufficient to cause the water level in the bottom to rise at an observable rate. At 20m down the influx rate is such that earth sides will slump into the pit almost as quickly as they can be dug.

One answer is to line the sides of the pit as it is dug and run powerful pumps to clear out the muddy water as it pools at the bottom. Inventive Travellers might drive a circle of narrow wells (pipes with perforated sides will work here) around the hole and use pumps to draw water out of these. A small craft's refuelling hose system would work, providing the well-pipes can be fabricated, but would need thorough cleaning out afterwards. Such a system will draw water out of the surrounding soil and dry out the dig site to a great extent.

However the reactor chamber is reached, it is clear that time has not been kind to it. The original reactor

was housed in a wooden hut, though it stood on a solid metal base. The hut has long since collapsed and the reactor has been buried in wet soil for three hundred thousand years. Most components are completely useless, distorted or decayed, and there is no way to learn how to build an antimatter reactor from the wreckage. However, it is possible to salvage some parts and materials.

Materials are mostly exotic alloys; sufficient to produce 4D Rare Materials and 1D Exotic Materials. Components are mostly in a condition where even studying them will destroy them. However, there is enough to provide D3+1 Insights or Uses, or any combination of those.

An Insight provides DM+2 on any skill check made to figure out the function (or how to use) an Ancients or Ancients-derived device, whilst a Use allows something to be made from parts of the tools. As a rule, each Use produces 2D small items or allows the modification of 1D larger tools or items. For example, if someone wants to make knives using a cutting edge of Ancients alloys, 2D could be produced. These would be extremely sharp and durable, perhaps giving the user DM+1 on tasks associated with the tool. Surgery, cookery, or crafting are possible examples. Likewise, a larger tool could be modified to give DM+1 on tasks associated with its primary function. This might be an augmented chainsaw blade, an improved backhoe for earthmoving, or some other large device providing the amount of Ancients materials used is small.

Archaeological research will indicate that the lake-cities were inhabited for a few thousand years, constantly being rebuilt with ever more primitively shaped materials. They were largely abandoned over 250,000 years ago and are now little more than geographical features. There are, however, exceptions. One section of a city shows signs of habitation and some rebuilding on a few structures as recently as the last few hundred years, giving an indication of how the people of the valley were living then.

This city-fossil is composed of several circular huts on piles driven into the lake bed, connected to the land by a wooden bridge. Basic muscle-powered machines, or the remnants of them, can be found on the land nearby, suggesting the huts provided a safe dwelling and sleeping-place but most activity took place on land. The

last repairs on most of these huts were a few centuries ago, and they have collapsed into a heap of wood and debris inside the circle of piles, but there are two huts showing signs of being recently used. Recently, in this case, means in the past few days.

The island is overgrown and home to a lot of wildlife, but if the Travellers decide to search they will find animal traps and a canoe which was clearly made by hollowing out a log. Fishing equipment is neatly stashed nearby. The Travellers may get the feeling they are being watched, and if they do not act like a threat the watcher will eventually show himself.

He is a strange looking figure, larger than a human and more heavily built but clearly a very similar species. The first impression the Travellers have is 'ape-man' and this



is entirely accurate. He has no name, since until the Travellers arrived he was the only person on the planet. There are others who look like him, but they are animals whereas he is a self-aware being.

The label this individual uses for himself translates best as 'Myself'. He was born in the forests nearby, to a family group of hominids. He learned their hunting skills and the sounds they used to communicate, but soon realised he was different. They realised too, and he was driven out. Wandering alone, he found the decaying remains of the lake-city and evidence that someone like him had dwelled there until a few years ago. He eventually found the body of his predecessor and took some of his tools.

Myself has been alone all his life, albeit sometimes in the company of animals that look like him. He is old now, perhaps 50 years, and his body is in decline even though his health is good. His mind is sharp but untutored, having spent a lifetime trying to figure out the world from a starting point of zero knowledge. He recognises the Travellers as other thinking beings from the way they make sounds to communicate and their obvious informed-curiosity. He is frightened of them but at the same time desperate for the company of thinking people. Hence he has observed carefully and is trying to figure out how best to make contact.

If contact can be made, Myself presents a challenge for the Travellers' communication equipment. He does not speak a language as such, but makes sounds that convey meaning of a sort. Essentially he has made up a proto-language in order to talk to himself, and translating it will be a problem. Fortunately for the Travellers, he is probably smarter than they are. This is in part a freak of genetics; long-dormant genetic manipulations manifest among the hominids as the occasional individual displaying intellect that would be well above average for the original uplifted species. It is also in part self-trained; Myself had to analyse everything from the ground up, as it were, and to fit together a world-view that gradually became more coherent. He knows his knowledge will be lost when he dies, but in the meantime wants to figure out everything he can.

If contact can be made, Myself will hang around the Travellers and try to learn what they are doing. He may also attempt to join in or help, possibly providing insights they have not yet considered. He can act as a 'native guide' to the forests and the valley, and if communication moves beyond the basic point-and-grunt he can convey to the Travellers some of what he has learned. However, this is a two-way street. He will

want to know all about the Travellers, their origins, their strange tools and clothing, and pretty much everything else besides.

Myself has a wealth of practical knowledge about the High Valley and its creatures. He roughly knows where the hominids dwell and that there are a few sites they consider special. He would use the word 'sacred' if he had ever come across the concept. At the same time, Myself's knowledge of why anything happens is based upon observation and guesswork. He has observed it is the nature of water to run downhill but does not understand why it stops when it gets to the lake – which to him is bottomless, away from the shores.

Myself has climbed into the mountains surrounding the High Valley, and knows there is a world beyond. However, reaching it was beyond his abilities and he got hurt trying. He wants to see the outside world and to find out if it is different to the High Valley. How different it could be, he cannot possibly comprehend. He is frightened at the idea of venturing out of the only world he has ever known but at the same time is desperately lonely and would give anything to remain in the company of other thinking people. It may be that Myself joins the Travellers or their crew when they explore, and simply walks into one of their craft with them when it is time to leave.

The Forests

Venturing into the forests of the High Valley is a hazardous business. The hominids long ago exterminated the most dangerous predators but there are still many dangers in the forests. Some are secondary, created by the difficulty of getting a casualty out if something goes wrong. A simple sprained ankle is a real problem in an environment where medical assistance is a day's slow march away through difficult terrain. One answer to this problem is brute force. It would be entirely possible to drop supplies into the forest canopy and cut away whatever was preventing them hitting the ground, or to use explosives to clear a landing area. If the Travellers do not want to do this sort of thing, or fail to think of it, they will have to rely on what they can carry.

Crashing through the forests will drive off any creatures, including the hominids, who live there. If the Travellers prefer to move quietly and can make an Average (8+) Survival check, they can cause a sufficiently low disturbance that they actually see some wildlife. The hominids of the forest will be aware of them as soon as they enter but initially will do nothing more than withdraw as the Travellers approach. However, they are territorial and will eventually try to drive off the Travellers.



Initially the hominids' efforts are aimed at scaring the Travellers. Strange howls and screeches, sudden movements in the undergrowth and the occasional object hurled from a position of concealment are all intended to scare other animals. This works with most creatures of the forest, but the more dangerous predators and rival groups of hominids do not always take the hint, so if the Travellers persist the hominids will escalate. Rather than throwing a clod of earth or a branch somewhere near the Travellers, they will begin flinging rocks directly at them. This is always from a position of concealment, and the hominids are cunning enough to wait until nobody is looking. Rocks will hit on a 2D roll of 8+ and typically do 1D damage.

A Traveller who is targeted must make a Routine (6+) Recon check to spot where the projectile came from. The hominids are adept at remaining very still, and might have thrown something from just a couple of metres behind the Traveller, remaining crouched in the undergrowth unseen whilst the Travellers peer off into the distance. If the Travellers respond with great violence, such as with fusillades of gunfire, the hominids will withdraw and may flee screaming through the undergrowth. However, they will not be driven from their homes without a fight. The Travellers may be ambushed or attacked by an entire extended family group in the dead of night, resulting in a very nasty close-quarters fight from which casualties will be hard to extract.

There is little to find in the forests of the High Valley, just the favourite locations of family groups and evidence of basic tool use. The hominids can shape branches with stones and might make a crude dagger by chipping at flint, but they are not sentient... Not quite, anyway. Persistent Travellers who push into the forest will eventually come to a rock outcrop into which images have been pecked with pointed stones. Hundreds of images depict local creatures, hominids, and abstract patterns whose meaning cannot be deciphered. There are a few – very ancient and faded – that suggest the skyline of a city or a large, fish-like creature apparently hovering above the ground – perhaps a distant memory of a starship. There are also bones along the base of the outcrop; the bones of those who were different and driven here to be ritually killed.

This is a repository of the history of the hominids, such as they remember it, and of their culture over the past few thousand years. Ironically perhaps, it is the place where they kill those who could drag their species back into the light of sentience. They may be happier for that; their cares are limited to whether they are hungry or cold today, and they live in an enclosed environment with no hazards beyond their powers to deal with. Yet they once built great cities and voyaged across the stars, and they have forgotten. The escarpment might be a place of great sadness for those Travellers who realise its significance. For others, it is simply a place of danger.

The hominids are not smart enough to have a religion but the outcrop is significant to them. Intruders are almost certain to be attacked at this point.

EXPLORING THE PLAINS

The Menagerie Plains lie in the basin of several rivers that come together as tributaries of the Bigmarsh River. There are a few small lakes here and there, as well as marshes and low hills, but for the most part the terrain is a mix of forest and open grassland. The Travellers may be surprised to find plants with a genetic connection to Old Earth, including some grasses with very high food value which are related to maize. These areas are capable of supporting significant numbers of mammoth and other large herbivores.

Travellers abroad on the plains will find that despite tall grass concealing the occasional gully or similar hazards, driving a ground vehicle is not too much of a problem. Visibility is short, partly due to grass and partly because of stands of trees, but thermal and radar sensors can cut through organic obstacles to detect most terrain features. Driving at a modest speed (under 20kph) is safe enough except in very broken ground.

However, dismounting from a vehicle is not guaranteed to be safe regardless of what the radar says. There are many hazards in the undergrowth, including thorny plants and hidden bumps that can trip a Traveller or turn an ankle. Small creatures including venomous lizard-like reptiles are little danger to someone with good boots and a set of tough trousers but unwary explorers putting their hands into the undergrowth might inadvertently corner a biting reptile.

There is much to do on the plains, most of it both scientific and mundane. The Mission Division's scientists want to establish observation posts on hilltops and move vehicles away or conceal them to avoid spooking the local wildlife. These observation posts will be manned for a few days with no direct contact from vehicles, hopefully allowing the observers to watch creatures close up without altering their behaviour.

The more security-minded of the crew, notably Jana Irekia, are concerned about leaving parties exposed like this. However, a couple of team members armed with carbines or perhaps heavier weapons, with a rescue pinnace on alert, seems to be precaution enough. So long as the scientific observation parties proceed with caution, taking

DTP HOMINID

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
DTP Hominid	24	4 m
SKILLS	Melee 0, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2	
ATTACKS	Stick (1D+4) or stone knife (1D)	
TRAITS	-	
BEHAVIOUR	Omnivore, Gatherer	

their samples in sight of team-mates and withdrawing to hides on the hilltops at night, they should come to no harm. ‘Should’ is an interesting word, however...

The Ruins

Even after all this time it is possible to see where the city once stood. It lay at the confluence of two major tributaries of the Bigmarsh River, sprawling on both sides of the watercourses and between them. The area was eventually drowned in a swamp before silt deposition moved the confluence eastwards. The result is a low-lying and fertile wetland where most of the city once was, which would be all but impossible to excavate.

The majority of the city lies under a layer of topsoil around 10m deep, with many terrain features resulting from toppled towers or the collapse of wide buildings. Most of the material used to build the city was typical of the Ancients; a sort of light concrete formed from local rock. It is of no value other than as an example of building techniques. Machinery and technology was scavenged for spares as it broke down over hundreds or perhaps thousands of years, and little now remains. Indeed, the city is interesting mainly in an archaeological context, with fragments of pottery or domestic items being the only likely finds. There is nothing to ‘loot’ from the city; no treasure-trove of Ancients technology, but there are fragments of a long-vanished civilisation to inspect and admire, and much can be learned about the hominids’ way of life from the layout of buildings and workplaces.

The people of the city were typical citizens of a colony built by starfarers. They constructed their city from a central and secondary hubs, with tall buildings spaced well apart to create green areas. There is evidence of roads at ground level and a light rail network, but nothing leads out of the city other than to a flat area that might once have been a starport landing field. DTP was once one of those worlds where there is a starport and a ‘rest of the planet’. This is quite common in young colonies, and suggests the population never grew to the point where spreading out was necessary or desirable.

The city area is heavily overgrown, though there are few trees. Setting up a base camp is not much of a problem, though clearing some bushes would be a wise precaution to avoid animals sneaking too close. Investigation or archaeological digs proceed well for a few days until an incident occurs at the city ruins.

The Battle of Avan’s Finger

Among the crewmembers exploring the ruins of the hominid city is Avan Truscill. His task was a simple

one, entirely within his capabilities. He was assigned to drive around the perimeter, conducting measurements at intervals. This required only that he scramble up onto his vehicle and slowly wave a handheld device in a 360-degree arc. Indeed, it was the simplicity of the task that was his undoing. Avan became bored and complacent, vaulting recklessly down from the vehicle to turn his ankle on uneven ground. He fell.

Plunging face-first into a stand of proto-maize would be no big deal on another day, but Avan startled a small reptile which bit him. The way his luck was running, it was no surprise that the reptile was venomous. Not only that, but the vicious little beast bit his finger clean off. In a state of shock, Avan crawled under the vehicle and spammed his emergency beacon until assured help was on its way. He then passed out.

This is the situation as the Travellers find it. If they followed the suggestions of Jana and others like her, there will be a rescue boat on standby to pick up Avan. If not, one must be prepped. In the meantime, Avan is alone in the outback, unconscious, and envenomated. The bleeding from his severed finger is significant but he has other problems which will kill him long before he can bleed out.

Reaching Avan in time very much depends on who is in the area and how fast they respond. He is on the perimeter of the city investigation site, easy to find with his beacon broadcasting, but getting to him will take time. A ready boat can launch from *Deepnight Revelation* and be on the ground in 4D minutes; one that needs to be crewed but is otherwise ready to go can do it in 6D minutes. If a boat must be prepped for launch this adds another 4D minutes.

If the Travellers want to shorten these times they can shave D3 minutes off with an ideal orbital insertion course requiring an Average (8+) Pilot check. A very hot descent from orbit and landing will reduce the transit time by 1 minute for each point of Effect on an Average (8+) Pilot check, but increase it by D3 minutes if the check is failed.

Driving a vehicle to Avan’s location is similarly time-critical. The nearest crewmembers are 2Dx4 minutes away if driving cautiously. This drops to 2Dx3 if they hurry, but this requires an Average (8+) Drive check to avoid damaging the vehicle. Reckless driving gets the crewmembers to Avan in 2Dx2 minutes but requires a Difficult (10+) Drive check. Failure results in a crash causing 2D damage to each occupant of the vehicle. Roll 1D:

1-3	The vehicle will require repairs but can be driven
4-5	The vehicle must be righted or unstuck, taking 2D minutes, but can be driven
6	The vehicle must be recovered and extensively repaired

If the Travellers drive on after a crash, they are assumed to have covered half the distance to Avan, and must check again when they have covered half the remaining distance. Note that a motivated and fit individual can run about half as fast as a vehicle being driven cautiously over the same terrain. Thus if a reckless driver prangs a vehicle beyond recognition about halfway to Avan, the occupants can run to him in 2Dx4 minutes.

The Finger is somewhere in the undergrowth. Sooner or later the small reptile Avan fell on will come back to drag it off to eat it, but for now it can be found with a Difficult (10+) Recon check. The finger could remain viable for a surprisingly long time, even in the warm climate of DTP. However, it has been affected by the reptile's venom and is suffering damage which, ironically, is limited by lack of circulation in the finger.

If found within 60 minutes, Avan's finger can be reattached and regain normal function eventually. This is a fairly routine procedure, requiring an Average (8+) Medic check. DM-1 applies after this time and increases by one every 2D minutes. There is always the possibility a small creature might eat the finger or drag it off to its lair. If this happens, the Travellers will have to search and others may get bitten. There is a hidden bonus to searching for the finger; the Travellers might spot the reptile that bit Avan and identify the venom.

The Venom is not very potent but Avan is in shock, and the combination of the two may kill him. Every 15 minutes there is a chance Avan will go into severe shock; Avan must make a straight check of 4+ on 2D, with DM-2 for each check already passed. If the check is failed, Avan will begin to die.

Treating Avan is relatively straightforward if he has not gone into shock. Basic medical supplies such as IV saline and common field medication will slow the effects of the venom and stabilise Avan so that he will survive transfer to a proper medical facility. Saving him requires a Routine (6+) Medic check at this point. If he has gone into severe shock he must be stabilised before he can be moved. This requires an Average (8+) Medic check and takes 2D minutes. If the check is failed, difficulty rises to Difficult (10+) and then Very Difficult (12+), and so on until the Traveller is successful or an Effect of -6 occurs. At this point Avan will die.

There are complications which will need to be dealt with. Notably, a family of Smilodon have taken exception to the intrusion and are stalking the Travellers. If they are not spotted, their first attack will be a pounce from the undergrowth, taking the Travellers by complete surprise. If they are spotted they can be driven off by a creative combination of noise and threat, or the Travellers could resort to brute force and just shoot them. Killing cubs will enrage the rest of the pack, bringing about a mass attack from multiple directions. The Smilodon are clever and patient unless enraged. They will stalk through the undergrowth or allow a target to become aware one is close by, hoping to trigger flight that will enable the prey to be ambushed. They are also quite capable of waiting for hours until someone turns their back, or withdrawing for a time to allow prey to become complacent.

Saving Avan may require abandoning his finger. This may seem like a little thing but there are those among the crew – including Avan himself – who will come to see it as a metaphor for the irreplaceability of people and items on the mission. Questions about whether the mission can be completed at all begin to resurface at this point, and the same will happen if anyone is seriously injured or killed in the rescue attempt. On the other hand, a well-handled rescue may lift morale. Everyone knows the expedition is dangerous, but seeing the level of backup available is reassuring.

EXPLORING THE MARSH

The Really Big Marsh is exactly that. It is formed by the delta of a river easily the equivalent of the Mississippi or even the Nile, which splits back out into multiple watercourses over 100km from the sea. These wend their way to the coast, creating an area of wide wetlands surrounding a range of low hills. These, naturally, intrigue the expedition's scientists, especially when it becomes apparent there is relatively little animal life there.

Apart from the hills, the marsh is characterised by wet forests, small lakes, innumerable minor watercourses and a number of deep water channels. Some of these run all the way up to the main watercourse, allowing sea-dwelling creatures to find their way far inland. It is readily apparent that the mammoth of the plains tend to stay away from the deep water channels, though initially it is not obvious why.

As with other elevated areas the Mission Division wants to plant an observation post in the hills of the Really Big Marsh and withdraw craft from the area to allow undisturbed observation. This is not especially difficult,

though the selection of a landing site and actual landing will be tricky given the rolling nature of any ground that is not completely waterlogged. As with most such tasks, careful use of sensors and a cautious approach should allow a safe landing to be made, but rushing will always be hazardous.

Jana Irekia will argue against the establishment of an observation post in such an isolated location, but concedes that with a rescue boat on standby the risks are manageable. If the Travellers insist on going ahead she will offer to accompany any party of researchers that lands in the hills and advocates 'decent firepower' just in case. She will also agitate for the establishment of the observation post close to an easy and safe landing spot, just in case rescue is needed, whereas the scientists prefer to set up camp in the most advantageous spot. They will be upset, to say the least, if their little expedition is curtailed due to safety concerns when there are no significant proven threats.

Delta Camp

The 'delta camp' as it becomes known is not difficult to deploy once a landing area is selected, though there is a choice to be made between lugging camp gear up onto the hilltops from the nearest decent landing spot and camping there, or camping at the landing area and climbing up to spend every day in an exposed location. The latter is both safer and in some ways better, as it allows the scientists to be more flexible about where they operate on any given day, but those observing animals from a fixed position day after day might prefer to camp where they work.

Either way, there is much to do in the delta. This includes the usual soil and water samples, observations of wildlife, and secondary tasks such as preserving specimens or conducting field dissections of interesting species. What is immediately apparent is that there are very few large animals in the delta, with no mammoth or Smilodon. There are plenty of smaller creatures, apparently thriving without major predators, and many interesting plant species.

Observers on high ground may note disturbances in the water from time to time. It is clear that something large lives in the deepwater channels and preys on the fish shoals there. After a few sightings it will become possible to get an impression of these creatures by studying recordings, but there are no clear images. A long-necked alligator-esque creature is reported, with varying estimates of its size.

Once the scientists realise how big this creature is – and how dangerous – they naturally want to study it. Requests come in for additional personnel to search the

riverbanks for evidence or perhaps nests, an idea that horrifies the security-minded members of the expedition. The science team also asks for proposals on how to go about capturing a live specimen for study.

This is a highly dangerous undertaking, but it could be done with the right equipment and careful planning. The creatures, which are dubbed 'sea-monsters' even though they live in fresh water, do sometimes come onto land if they cannot reach far enough to grab prey from the water's edge. One might be lured onto land and captured using extremely robust nets. Tranquillisers are another option, but creating one that will incapacitate the creature quickly enough that it does not slip back into the water would require a knowledge of its biology that could only be gained from a captured specimen. Perhaps a nest with young could be found, allowing a tranquiliser to be formulated before tackling an adult.

These ideas are flung around by the scientists, along with objections from security personnel and those who would have to go in harm's way to secure and move the creature. If the Travellers agree, they will have to come up with a plan to lure the creature ashore or a way of netting one in the water. The latter will be rather difficult, perhaps involving a net trap on the bed of the river. Getting the creatures ashore will be less of a problem, since they will take prey close to the water and come ashore to drive off threats to a nest. Indeed, Travellers hoping to grab a few eggs or juveniles are in for a surprise in the form of an angry adult female.

The 'sea-monsters' can move quite quickly on land, and have a long reach. They are also protective of their nests and will chase crewmembers they find in the area. Once ashore a monster may begin aggressively seeking out the Travellers' camp, perhaps requiring an emergency evacuation or an undignified game of tag around the area. This does present an opportunity to obtain a specimen – dead or alive.

The scientists will, up to a point, advocate the creature be captured somehow. They are not idiots, however, and if it presents a severe danger to life they will be as vocal as the security team in demanding permission to open fire. The creatures are difficult to kill, especially without putting so many holes in them they are no longer of any use as scientific specimens.

The problem of how to deal with the creature could be a simple 'shoot-it-enough' situation, but the Travellers will have to balance other considerations. Can it be captured without unduly risking crewmembers? Can it be killed cleanly so as to remain useful to the science team? Are the scientists (or the security team) being unreasonable? Is there a clever compromise that keeps

everyone relatively safe but allows a specimen to be taken? Intelligent and adaptable Travellers may be able to come up with something that satisfies everyone and does not rely on prodigious ammunition expenditure.

CREATURES OF DTP

The Menagerie Plains and surrounding region are home to many species of animal, most of which are native to DTP. However, if the Travellers can obtain samples of tissue from the Smilodon and 'pseudo-mammoth' they can compare them to databases of animals from other worlds. Both are modified versions of Terran animals that lived around 300,000 years ago. There is evidence that Smilodon displaced other top predators to become the apex predator on this world, whilst the mammoth also thrived despite the warmer climate.

Pseudomammoth

Mammoth wander the plains in herds of up to thirty individuals, typically led by a mature bull with a handful of young males as subordinates. These will eventually leave the herd, or be cast out, and will live most of their lives as independent ('rogue') males. These occasionally challenge a dominant bull for control of a herd, resulting in a spectacular display of posturing and trumpeting but little actual violence. A dominant bull that has been wounded by predators may be killed by rogues seeking his position, but fights between healthy males are rare.

The Travellers may notice that whilst the mammoth seem to enjoy playing in small watercourses they stay well away from deep water. There are broad zones around the major rivers where the mammoth do not go, and therefore the large predators also stay away. These areas are characterised by smaller creatures, which will be noticeably nervous around bodies of water.

DTP PSEUDOMAMMOTH

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
DTP Pseudomammoth	60	8 m
SKILLS	Recon 1, Survival 1	
ATTACKS	Tusk (5D)	
TRAITS	Large (+4)	
BEHAVIOUR	Herbivore, Grazer	

Smilodon

Smilodon are found where the mammoth graze, and seem equally happy to stalk the creatures of the woodlands as they are to hunt the plains. Smilodon typically operate in family groups, with a mated pair accompanied by 2-5 young adults or near-adults and about the same number of kittens. Smilodon normally kill by asphyxiating the prey; their teeth are for gripping rather than biting through flesh but they will do the job well enough at need. A large creature will be harassed and worried until it collapses from exhaustion and blood loss; a smaller one will be knocked to the ground and savaged.

Smilodon will hunt humans as readily as they went after the hominids who once lived here. What the Droyne who planted them on DTP were thinking remains unknown; perhaps they just liked the idea of giant sabre-toothed cats. Whatever the reason, Smilodon made the hominids extinct outside their sealed-off valley and would be quite happy to do the same to any Travellers they can catch. They typically attack by stalking close then pouncing, but are clever enough to distract a Traveller whilst another member of the group sets up an attack from behind.

DTP SMILODON

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
DTP Smilodon	40	10 m
SKILLS	Melee (natural) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1	
ATTACKS	Claws and Fangs (3D)	
TRAITS	Large (+1)	
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore, Pouncer	

DTP SEA MONSTER

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
DTP Sea Monster	100	8 m
SKILLS	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 2, Survival 1	
ATTACKS	Bite (6D)	
TRAITS	Large (+5), Armoured (+8)	
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore, Killer	



Sea Monster

The 'sea monster' that plagues the marsh and rivers is a long-necked swimming creature native to DTP. It bears a resemblance to a tubby alligator with a highly elongated neck, which enables it to snap at passing fish as well as reaching out of the water to grab animals from the banks. A modest-sized individual is capable of picking up a Smilodon in its jaws and biting it in half; big ones may be able to endanger vehicles.

The sea monster is highly aggressive and quite smart. It will investigate new people and objects (such as boats)

and learn as much as it can before attacking, unless it is hungry in which case it will kill and eat anything that moves. The creatures are more or less solitary, meeting to mate and staying in the general area to bring food for young when they hatch. In the meantime, the female will make a nest of mud and vegetation on the bed of shallow waters and defend it with a psychotic dedication against anything approaching too close – including her mate. Once the young can swim and feed the pair splits up. Young accompany the male for a while but eventually seek their own territory or kill one another over some choice morsel of food.

MYSELF AS A TRAVELLER

Myself dresses in a mix of animal hide clothing and moccasins, and a tunic woven from natural fibres on a loom he found, figured out, and repaired. His tunic represents an incredible feat of raw intellectual endeavour – he discovered spinning and weaving for himself, working out first what could be done and then how from a few broken pieces of a device and some scraps of clothing on the body of an earlier smart hominid.

Astute Travellers may realise that Myself would have been an intellectual giant if he had the benefit of even a basic education. He is an ignorant genius, and the more he learns the faster he can extrapolate. This does not mean he is right about everything of course; his baseline knowledge is so patchy and in places incorrect that he may jump to wildly incorrect conclusions.

Myself does not know the history of his people, and would be grateful to the Travellers if they can explain how he alone came to be self-aware among the animals who share his form. He knows there have been others like him, such as the earlier individual whose body he found, but has no idea why. He is also desperately lonely, and will want to accompany the Travellers when they leave. He is aware that there may be others like him in the future, but there is little that can be done unless the Travellers leave an outpost and personnel on DTP to look for and educate them. Besides, Myself has never had to consider the welfare of others; there has always only been Myself and anything he can get is his until he no longer needs it. He will have to learn the concept of property from the Travellers, which could lead to some problems.

On the other hand, Myself will quickly grasp the benefits of mutual assistance and cooperation. He has witnessed the behaviour of family groups of hominids and understands the concept of a hierarchy and a cooperative group. It has never been ‘for him’ though, until now, and Myself will need some time to adjust to the idea he needs to consider others before acting. He will undoubtedly make mistakes, but if the Travellers are anything but nasty towards him he will make becoming a member of their society his primary goal.

If Myself joins the crew he will need to be taught how to behave in *Deepnight Revelation*'s society. He is accepting of new concepts, since he is aware he does not know what is possible, which makes him vulnerable to practical jokes. This could lead to serious problems, as the only social interaction Myself remembers is

of being ostracised and then driven out of his family group. However, if he is fairly treated he can bring a lot to the mission.

Myself is an expert at wilderness survival, of course, and also adept at putting together fragmentary information to create a working hypothesis. His biggest contribution might be at Terminus Point when the Deepnight Entity is discovered. Like Myself, it has been alone in the universe and has figured things out from the limited information available to it. Myself might be able to offer some insight into how the entity has developed blind spots and the fact that it might have capabilities it does not know about because it has never had the chance to discover they are possible. Notably, Myself can warn the Travellers that the entity's lack of wide experience is the main limiting factor and that they should be careful what they let it observe.

Myself

APE-MAN GENIUS

STR 5 DEX 7 END 8 INT 11 EDU 2 SOC 0

Skills: Investigate 2, Recon 1, Science (observed natural science) 1, Seafarer (personal) 1, Survival 4

Weapons: Stone knife (1D), Stone-tipped Spear (1D+2)

WHERE'S MY CREDITS?

A certain kind of Traveller may be surprised or even dismayed to find there are no money-treasure-points or loot drops at the end of many adventures. Instead, the payoff is intellectual in many cases; knowledge of how or why something happened, or perhaps a hint that might be useful later. Those who ask 'what's in it for me?' before every mission may be put off by the idea that often there is no tangible reward. But what would they do with it anyway? Credits are not much use a thousand light-years from the nearest Instellarms dealership. When rewards are found they tend not to be in the form of hard cash, and many Travellers will fail to realise how valuable their latest find could be. So be it; the Deepnight campaign rewards those who

think creatively and find a use for the unexpected windfalls they stumble over.

Referees should not pander to the desire of Travellers to fill their pockets. The Deepnight campaign is simply not set up like that. It is about exploration and adventure, and 'you had an adventure, didn't you?' must be sufficient reward in many cases. There are, however, some hidden benefits to apparently irrelevant adventures. In the case of DTP, it is a chance to gain insight into what it is to explore the world from a completely blank knowledge base. This is an interesting intellectual exercise in its own right, but it may also help the Travellers understand and therefore combat the Deepnight Entity at Terminus Point.

THE WEAKEST FORCE



After leaving DSS-6 and the planet designated DTP behind, the Travellers must make a 2-parsec jump to the region labelled Deep Space Anomaly Two. Long-range observation indicates the system has a brown dwarf sub-stellar object as its primary and that there are planetary bodies, but gravitational patterns in the system do not match any known phenomena. Greater gravitational effects can be detected than other emissions can explain. It is clear there is no neutron star or black hole in the system, but what is causing the gravitational effects remains a mystery until *Deepnight Revelation* arrives.

Upon emerging from jump the Travellers are initially none the wiser. The system appears to consist of a brown dwarf orbited by a small group of planets or moons, including gas giants. Immediate worries about fuel availability allayed, the Travellers can begin collecting data on the system. It is immediately apparent the brown dwarf is not the primary of the system, in the sense that it is not the gravitational centrepoin. Indeed, the brown dwarf system orbits another mass. Optical and even electromagnetic sensors trained in the direction of this primary mass are attenuated, suggesting something like an extremely dense nebula surrounds the central mass. There is little or no thermal emission from this object.

The brown dwarf planetary system comprises three more or less unremarkable gas giants, each with a handful

of small moons, and a terrestrial planet with very low surface gravity for its 13,500km diameter. Its lack of heavy elements suggests it may be a fragment of a much larger body thrown clear by an impact during the formation of the star system. The body has a surface gravity of only 0.55g, whereas a standard planet of this diameter might be around twice that. The low-density terrestrial has an eccentric orbit that takes it out beyond the large gas giant for around 10% of its orbital duration, passing near to the inner gas giants at its closest approach.

DSA-3 DWARF (Brown Dwarf Sub-Stellar Object)

- Dwarf 1 (Small Gas Giant)
- Dwarf 2 (Small Gas Giant)
- Dwarf 3 (Low-Density Terrestrial)
- Dwarf 4 (Large Gas Giant)

THE NEBULA

The nebula is an astrographical oddity. Normally such bodies surround one or more stars, but this one is far too small. It is also highly agitated, with particles of dust and gas swirling in eddies and occasional clumps of low-density minerals. It would be possible to navigate a starship or spacecraft into the nebula, but jumping whilst inside would be very hazardous. Instruments cannot penetrate the cloud to any great distance, so whilst it is obvious there is a mass at the centre little more can be discerned.

MAP OF THE SYSTEM



If the Travellers decide to enter the nebula, any vessel proceeding at more than a crawl will suffer an Erosion Of Capability incident as the occasional chunk of ice or rock bangs off the hull. Safe transit will take around 36 hours at this speed. During this time the ship's sensors will be attenuated down to less than 100km range and the sound of dust scraping on the hull may set nerves on edge. However, there is no real danger to a ship proceeding carefully.

As the density of dust and gas gradually diminishes, the nebula begins to show signs of open patches. These surround dense objects which turn out to be planetoids with a high metal content. The dust is thinner overall inwards of this cloud, until its density suddenly begins to drop off sharply. Finally the object – or objects – at the centre of the nebula can be seen.

The centre of the system is not a star at all, but a pair of incredibly dense planetary bodies orbiting one another at very close range. Their high surface gravity – over 15g – makes a surface landing virtually impossible. Even if a device similar to that used to land on the frozen star were built, the speed of the two bodies would make a fatal crash almost inevitable.

The pair are orbited by a smaller body with a surface gravity of around 5g. This high-density terrestrial planet has a number of enormous impact craters and is probably the source of at least some of the planetoids – and possibly the low-density planet in the dwarf system as well.

The gravitational interactions of these bodies are interesting, to say the least, and the mission scientists want to conduct an experiment; ideally one of the scouts or a pinnace would be most suitable. The plan is to make a slingshot orbit around the 5g body, gaining as much speed as possible, then dive between the two 15g bodies under full acceleration all the way. It will be necessary to decelerate hard in order not to enter the nebula cloud but this should not be much of a problem for a well-maintained craft.

The purpose of the experiment is to pass as close as possible to one of the 15g bodies at high speed aboard a vessel packed with sensitive equipment, and attempt to measure the gravitational effects on instruments and equipment aboard. Whilst the speed attained will not alone be sufficient to produce significant time dilation effects the combination of a high gravity field,

powerful thrust, and the increase in speed afforded by the slingshot orbit may be sufficient. Part of the experiment is to run calculations on machines at rest aboard *Deepnight Revelation* at the same time as those aboard the experimental craft. Both the time required to perform the calculation and any effects on the outcome will be of interest to the scientists.

If the impromptu regatta took place and potential problems with craft were dealt with, the experiment goes off as planned. The results may be useful at a later date. Basic number-crunching is not affected: 2+2 is still 4. However, where a complex calculation has to take account of time-dependent variables, time dilation effects on the calculating computer can be significant. Even a slight dilation of perceived time will produce inaccuracies compared to an analysis carried out in a situation where all bodies are more or less at rest relative to one another.

If a couple more runs are made, it will be possible to create a mathematical correction model which will account for the predicted effects of time dilation on a high-speed course through a high-gravity area. The correction is not perfect but will reduce the errors inherent in a calculation made amidst a high-speed or high-gravity passage such as a slingshot orbit around a black hole. The Travellers might not at this time see the benefit of this unless they remember that Terminus Point is a gravitational anomaly. If the experiments are conducted, the Travellers may henceforth apply DM+2 to course calculations or Pilot checks (but not jump plots) made in such an environment. This may be particularly useful during the transit of the gravitational shell at Terminus Point.

If the regatta ran and produced a meaningful maintenance schedule, the exercise is interesting but not especially hazardous. If not, the stresses on the experimental craft will cause significant problems. As the experimental craft makes its slingshot approach, various alarms and warnings go off. An Average (8+)

Electronics (sensors) check allows a quick analysis of the readouts, which indicates that damage will be suffered if the experiment continues.

A Traveller who is the pilot might decide to break off, or Travellers who are senior mission officers might order it. There is no guarantee the pilot will obey, however. If a 'Glory Hound' faction has emerged this is exactly the situation they will take to its extremes, and success will only strengthen their conviction that everyone just needs to hold their nerve and take the risks.

If the pilot decides to break off the experiment they may make an Average (8+) check to do so safely. Failure, or pressing ahead regardless, indicates it is not possible to abort and results in damage to the craft. A second Pilot check, this one Difficult (10+) must be made to fight the craft through the projected course. If successful, the craft slows down enough to be picked up safely at the end of the run, but suffers damage. Roll 2D on the Repairs and Maintenance table on page 52 of the *Referee's Handbook* and apply all results.

If the Difficult (10+) Pilot check is failed, roll for Defects, Failures and Breakdowns, but with DM+2 for every negative point of Effect. In addition, the craft is moving so fast as it passes between the 15g bodies that it cannot avoid entering the nebula. This will cause additional damage. The pilot must make an Average (8+) Pilot check to slow the craft whilst avoiding collisions with significant bodies. Each time the check is failed the craft suffers 2D Hull points in damage.

There is, as usual, no fiscal reward for the Travellers at the end of The Weakest Force. However, they have a chance to learn more about gravitational effects and gain knowledge that may be useful later. The referee can use this incident as an opportunity to ensure the Travellers know enough about time dilation and gravitational effects that it is not necessary to stop and explain during the dramatic events at Terminus Point.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

STRUGGLING IN THE SURF

After leaving DSA-3 the Travellers are faced with a long transit through a chain of deep space refuelling points. The first is Deep Space Refuelling Point Thirteen, an unremarkable cometary body. Next is DSR-14, which is a little more interesting.

MEMORIES

AND MEMORIALS

DSR-14 is a very large superjovian, though well short of the point where it could be considered a brown dwarf. It is hot by the standards of gas giants, and turbulent, but refuelling should not pose great hazards. The Travellers may be concerned to find their sensors do not work as well here as they would like; temperature inversion layers and violent storm fronts confuse and attenuate most instruments. Sensor ghosts are commonplace despite the best efforts of the crew to tune them out.

As refuelling begins, there is a general sense of unease among the crew. Nobody can explain exactly what they are worried about, and most put it down to the situation at hand. However, tempers begin to fray and soon the Travellers become aware of an incident among their crew. The most likely parties are Taran Reene and Raix Delvaan, but others are likely to be involved.

Someone – by default this is Taran – has taken exception to the habit among certain crewmembers – notably Raix – of taking mementoes to place in a museum/shrine. This is normally seen as a good thing, but Taran has lost a shoe and is adamant Raix has appropriated it for her museum. The accusation is rather ludicrous; Taran has simply lost a spare piece of footwear in an act of uncharacteristic carelessness. He is sure he could not have done this, since he is in the habit of squaring everything away navy-fashion, and for some reason he is convinced Raix is involved.

In fact, Taran has indeed lost one of his spare planetside shoes, along with several tools, a datapad, and a knife that was supposed to be stowed in the armoury. Investigation will show that several other crewmembers have also lost small items, and that Taran's cabin is in quite a mess. He would never leave

it in this state – anyone who has known him for even a day or two can confirm that – but it now looks as if ‘some slob from the Scout Service’, as Taran puts it, has been living there. Taran is normally respectful and polite, most especially to those he disapproves of, and whilst he has a not-untypical disdain for the rather loose procedures of the Scout Service, he would not normally speak in this manner about its members.

Raix says she knows nothing about this matter, nor any other missing items, but she is being blamed for just about every piece of lost property aboard the ship. If the Travellers think to check, items are missing elsewhere. Some are found in bizarre but harmless places, such as the spare wheel from a ground exploration vehicle that turns up in a shower cubicle in officer’s country. Others are worrying, such as guns from the armoury and a hyperbaric charge. Then it becomes apparent that one of the nuclear demolition charges is missing.

One of Our Nukes is Missing!

This is both strange and worrying. It is just about possible that someone has decided it would be funny to move objects around the ship and stash them in silly places, but that does not explain how a nuclear demolition charge has been removed from its secure locker or why some crewmembers are acting out of character.

Very few people have access to the nuclear weapons locker, unless of course the Travellers have rescinded standard security protocols. Apart from senior command crew, only qualified technicians have the requisite clearance, and even then access must normally be authorised by a command officer. The senior nuclear-munitions technician is the former mining engineer Aloisio Grauffy, who has special status in that he can access the ‘nuke locker’ on his own authority unless clearance is withdrawn.

The log shows that Aloisio did indeed access the locker a few hours after jump emergence, though he will swear he did not. More oddly, a bridge sensor technician remembers remarking to one of the Travellers that the log showed a munitions inspection in progress even though one was not scheduled. The Traveller simply



nodded and acknowledged the information, leading the technician to assume all was well. The Traveller has no memory of this incident.

It is likely the Travellers will consider a missing nuclear device to be serious enough to merit a search of the ship. If so, all manner of other objects are found to be out of place. Some of the search parties will fail to notice some misplaced objects, or somehow fail to realise it matters they are not where they should be. The Travellers will soon have to ask themselves not only why an SUV has been partially dismantled and part of its navigation computer has turned up in a cold-storage room near one of the smaller galleys, but also how a search party could walk in, look at it, and fail to realise it was out of place.

The mystery deepens when the nuclear charge is found. It is in a stash of bulky items concealed by Carloz Miracru. Most of the items have ‘gone missing from inventory’ or were ‘expended during a planetside expedition’ and misappropriated by Carloz for sale or trade later in the voyage. When confronted about the theft of a nuclear device Carloz seems genuinely baffled. He has no recollection of stealing a bomb and no reason to do so – where is the profit and why would he do something so stupidly dangerous? Even as he speaks, he begins to falter then becomes evasive.

If Carloz is pressed, he will eventually admit that he *did* stash the bomb, moving it using an internal-transport robot he gained access to some time ago. He had no motivation for doing so but he felt no alarm at the time, as if taking the nuclear device Aloisio gave him and putting it in among his stash was nothing out of the ordinary. He is genuinely scared as he says this; partly at what he did and partly because he thought nothing of it at the time. This sort of thinking is not normal for anyone, but for someone like Carloz who analyses the risk and reward of a bit of misappropriation, it is insane.

Carloz is absolutely sure Aloisio asked him to look after the nuclear device and even took the transport bot into the nuclear mentions locker. Its memory shows this to be true. Yet Aloisio has no memory of doing this, and one of the Travellers has no recollection of being told the munitions locker was being accessed out of schedule. Something is clearly amiss.

Meanwhile, other crewmembers are reporting strange lapses, missing items and – in some cases at least – can confirm that others are acting out of character at times. This has caused a few confrontations but there has been no violence. However, people are worried and some of the lapses are dangerous. Already the pilot in charge of setting up a skimming run has ‘zoned out’ and failed to notice the course went dangerously deep... or more

accurately she knew exactly what was going on but did not attach any significance to it.

Ship of Fools

The Travellers may end up arresting crewmembers or otherwise punishing them for their apparent criminality. Dereliction of duty, being absent from duty posts, being caught with other people's property or supposedly secure items and no explanation for how it happened... these are all serious matters but the people involved are simply not the sort to act like this. Nor are the crewmembers who have hated one another since an incident over a year ago likely to be found sharing a bottle of wine. If asked, they will assert they still loathe one another but it stopped mattering, if that makes any sense. In all probability it does not.

The answer is a psionic phenomenon outside the normal range. The large, hot gas giant is home to creatures resembling vast clouds of protoplasm, which drift on methane thermals and think great thoughts. They are not self-aware in the same way that humans are, but those that grow large enough exhibit near-sentient intellect. All are powerfully psionic, broadcasting waves of telepathic power according to their state. Some may be hungry, some content, some warm and sleepy. These potent, primal emotions can overwhelm even a psionic shield and interfere with the thought processes of tiny creatures like humans.

The effect is to place crewmembers in an altered mental state where they may be forgetful, obsessive about odd things, unworried by quite major events and, for the most part, are unable to properly comprehend the significance of actions or events. Thus when Aloisio had a random thought that Carloz would somehow be able to sell even a nuclear device on the shipboard black market, the most important concern at that time was to find out how Carloz would go about it and how much profit he could make. The idiocy of wandering around the ship with a nuclear demolition charge on a robotic trolley looking for the black marketeer just because 'he might be able to sell it, and that would be interesting' simply did not occur to anyone involved.

There is no remedy for the effect; even psionic shielding does not help much. It may be that with study, a tailored protective package could be created but for now the only option is to mitigate the symptoms. Effects are temporary and somewhat random, so having a second person monitor anyone carrying out a critical task will almost always be effective. Those affected tend to be passive and vague in their responses, so a backup pilot who notices the primary bridge team are not reacting to a dangerous situation can usually take over with no

more than mild and confused protests. It should thus be possible to complete the refuelling in relative safety.

The Creatures

As to the creatures, there is no malice in them. They are not intelligent enough to deliberately harm anything, but merely powerful empaths with little more intellect than a garden pond. The only real danger they pose is if one collided with *Deepnight Revelation*. This would likely rip the creature apart and either kill it or disperse its pieces to become many smaller ones. The effect would be distressing to the creature at a primal level, and its empathic emissions could harm crewmembers.

If the Travellers look for an external source of their troubles, they should be able to weakly detect the creatures despite sensor attenuation. By observing where they like to hover and how they are blown about by the gas giant's atmosphere it should be possible to set up skimming runs to avoid contact. This of course assumes the pilot does not wander off course, but personnel backups can take care of this problem.

If a creature is struck, its death-shriek will incapacitate everyone aboard for at least a few seconds, and may traumatisise some crewmembers for a long time after. It may also be necessary to clean protoplasm out of

DEFAULT PROCEDURES

The procedures described in this and other adventures can be assumed to be in place unless the Travellers have changed something. When the expedition was set up by the Deepnight Corporation, advice from the Imperial armed services and major shipping lines, as well as its own experience, was taken into consideration and standard operating procedures were formulated. These cover everything from watch rotations and food preparation to nuclear weapons access.

The Travellers can change any procedure they like, but if they have not thought to do so up until the point where it becomes relevant they cannot protest they 'would not do it that way' in order to avoid consequence. Similarly, if the Travellers have made changes which create dangerous loopholes – such as relaxing biological decontamination protocols or letting crewmembers keep their weapons in their quarters – they must live with any unexpected outcomes.

the fuel intakes, knowing that this is the remains of something alive... the equivalent of scraping roadkill off a ground vehicle. There are no significant ill-effects to a creature-strike once it is dead, but the experience is thoroughly unpleasant for everyone. Crewmembers on the brink of a dispute over a lost shoe or dereliction of duty may find tempers flaring, causing all manner of secondary incidents as the referee pleases.

Ultimately, the incident at DSR-14 is an internal one, though triggered by external events. The Travellers will have to decide how to deal with the many small and large issues thrown up by contact with the creatures, and there may be after-effects. The behaviour of some crewmembers may change, or be imagined to have changed, and there is always the chance parts of a ground vehicle keep turning up months after the crossing is complete.

The Travellers will also have to decide how to resolve problems between Raix and Taran, and what to do about Aloisio and Carloz. The incident may be over when *Deepnight Revelation* enters jump, but the effects may linger for some time.

REFUELLINGS

Deep Space Refuelling Point Fifteen is a cometary body requiring the usual close approach and deployment of ice-extraction equipment. By this point in the expedition such matters are routine. Two parsecs on is Deep Space System Seven, which in reality barely qualifies as a star system; a brown dwarf with a planetary system, known

from remote detection to have at least one gas giant. Such systems are less stressful to refuel from than comets, and knowing ahead of time fuel will be available is also less wearing on the nerves. All the same, the moment sensor data starts to come in after jump emergence is always tense.

In this case, the only planetary body is a large gas giant which orbits close enough to the brown dwarf to lose some of its atmospheric gas over time. Wisps can be detected in a twisting spiral towards the brown dwarf. The Travellers have seen this before on an epic scale; in this case the phenomenon is distinctly underwhelming. The gas giant's handful of small moons might yield some useful minerals, but unless there is some pressing need to investigate even the mission's scientists would prefer to pass this rather disappointing system by.

DSS-7 PRIMARY (Brown Dwarf)

Primary 1 (Large Gas Giant)

SOONER OR LATER...

Two parsecs on from DSS-7 is Deep Space Refuelling Point Sixteen. All being well, this is the last refuelling point. The next jump emergence will be in a star system within reach of the far shore. The mood swings between jubilant and impatient as *Deepnight Revelation* emerges from jump and collects sensor data. However, all is not well. DSR-16 is a cometary body much like others except in one critical regard. It has only the merest traces of ice.

The Travellers may order a detailed search of the comet but the truth must eventually be confronted – there is no fuel to be had here. The far shore is within sight, but not within reach; it is five parsecs to the nearest star system. *Deepnight Revelation* has enough fuel to turn around and begin the long transit back to the Near Side of Yonder; she could reach DSS-7 and retrace her steps.

Morale plummets. For some the disappointing nature of the last system they passed through is now seen as an omen. Others make gallows-humour jokes about preferring to die in deep space than plod back all the way to the Near Side of Yonder. Crewmembers are irrationally angry at one another, the Travellers, the ship, their food, their clothing, and anything else that offers the slightest irritation.

There are three schools of thought at this point.

Full Turnaround: A significant part of the crew wants to call it a day and go home. They have seen wonders and performed near-miracles. They have proven this route is unviable. They have done enough.

Partial Turnaround: Others are determined to get on with the mission somehow. Perhaps there was a link they missed on the crossing, an alternative chain of comets? These crewmembers are willing to spend another year in the rift if necessary, seeking an alternative route. They want to set a time limit and spend that period searching for an alternative crossing before giving up.

Onward At Any Cost: A minority of the crew are passionate in their determination to continue. They are fine with searching for an alternative crossing route, but if that fails they will damned well fly right around the outside of the Great Rift to get to Terminus Point!

Most crewmembers subscribe vaguely to one of these viewpoints and could be persuaded to align with one of the others. Rabble-rousers try to rally crewmates to their cause, hoping to present the command crew with a fait accompli if they cannot be talked around.

Another Option

A detailed and careful sensor sweep, taking a couple of days at least, identifies another option. There is a possible comet two parsecs from *Deepnight Revelation*'s current position. If it has ice, it will be possible to jump onward to the Far Shore. If it does not, this comet will be the final resting place of *Deepnight Revelation* and her crew, and nobody will ever know what happened to them.

The Travellers could simply order the jump to be made, but taking such a risk without consulting the crew would

likely cause a mutiny. It is even possible the engineering crew or some other critical personnel might refuse to implement the order. If the Travellers want to pursue this course of action they will have to win over the crew or convince them the idea is viable.

THE TALE OF TARAN AND THE TABLE

The Travellers will become aware of a disturbance in one of the mess halls. Upon arriving they find Taran Reene, in full Imperial Navy dress uniform, standing on a table haranguing over a hundred crewmembers. His speech is fiery and impassioned, with far too much about honour and duty to be off the cuff. The gist of it is that the Deepnight Expedition is entrusted with an important mission and must go on. The crowd seem mostly unimpressed, and eventually someone throws a bottle. Not at Taran, but to him. An opener follows, with a chorus of 'have a beer and shut up'. Taran jumps down and someone else scrambles up. Her speech is just as impassioned and a lot more sweary, and is all about giving up and going home. Eventually the bottle is thrown and she, too, jumps down to make room for the next speaker.

The crew have invented a bizarre form of public debate, and just as with 'the game' there is much confusion about who is empowered to throw the bottle or whether it is binding before the opener is flung. What is important here is that although heavily factionalised the crew are listening to one another and holding a logical – if distinctly weird – debate about what to do next.

If the Travellers pull rank and address the matter formally, they are likely to crystallise the factions now forming. If instead they take their chances on Taran's Table they will receive a hearing like any other crewmembers and get a beer out of it. This is a chance to convince a large segment of the crew to go along with the Travellers' choice of actions – whatever that may be.

The Travellers should be encouraged to roleplay their speech rather than just making a skill check. The referee should call for an Average (8+) Leadership, Persuade, or Diplomat check, and note the Effect. However, the Travellers' roleplaying should count for more than this check. Good roleplay and a weak or even negative check will win over a significant segment of the crew providing the Travellers respect the bottle and opener. The bottle is a warning to wrap up; when the opener is thrown the Traveller is expected to catch it, jump down from the table and drink the beer – or at least shut up with good grace. Ignoring this weird home-made protocol will cause the crew to disregard whatever the Traveller has said.

The Great Debate

Whatever plan the Travellers intend to follow needs to be ‘sold’ to the crew in order to avoid serious problems. Each general course of action has its supporters and others who will go along with only some grumbling, but the less popular a course of action is, the more likely it is to cause morale problems or even a mutiny. The Debating table indicates the consequences of implementing any given course of action with a level of support or opposition.

Level of Support is a numeric value. The Travellers will not know the exact value but can infer it from the indicators, which are behaviours observed among the crew. When a course of action is implemented the indicated consequences will apply. Note that those who would protest one course of action might support another, but unless a course of action has universal support there will always be someone who opposes it.

The Starting Support Levels table shows where each course of action begins.

Starting Support Levels

Action	Starting Support Level
Full Turnaround	6
Partial Turnaround	8
Onward At Any Cost!	3
Alternative Refuelling Point	0

At present the idea of partially retracing the route and continuing to look for a way across the Great Rift is the most acceptable. This is largely because it does not entirely commit the crew to one action or another. A partial turnaround can be converted into a full one in a year’s time, whereas backtracking and going around the rift is a much bigger commitment.

The idea of jumping to an alternative refuelling point which may not have any fuel available is initially unacceptable, but it has not been considered up until this time because no such refuelling point was known. The Travellers are therefore starting from scratch with a new idea, and it is almost directly opposite to the idea of a partial turnaround which does not commit to anything.

The Travellers may have made a start in the mess hall. If they figured out the ‘bottle protocol’ and made a decent attempt to state their case, acceptance jumps by 1D plus the Effect of a Persuade, Diplomat, or Leadership skill check. If this was negative, acceptance still increases by a minimum of +1. This assumes the Travellers are putting forward the idea of using the alternative refuelling point. If they get behind one of the other ideas its acceptance is altered by the Effect of the check. Note that if the Travellers ignored the bottle protocol then any positive results they achieved are ignored. Negative results stand – the Travellers can harm their cause whilst being jerks but they cannot further it.

Debating

Level of Support	Indicators	Consequences
0 or less	Blunt statements that the action is unacceptable and will be opposed by force.	Mutiny.
1-2	Refusal to consider the action. Occasional fights between advocates and opponents.	Roll 2D: on 6+ the crew mutinies. Otherwise key personnel refuse to implement the action.
3-4	Flat refusal to implement the action and threats of possible opposition.	Roll 2D: on 9+ the crew mutinies. Otherwise key personnel refuse to implement the action.
5-6	Obvious and highly vocal opposition. Delegations demanding a different course of action.	Roll 2D: on 9+ key personnel refuse to implement the action. Otherwise it goes ahead but Morale drops by -D3.
7-8	Strongly worded protests and opposition.	Roll 2D: on 6+ Morale drops by -D3.
9-10	Grumbling, prevarication, and requests to reconsider.	Roll 2D: on 9+ Morale drops by +1.
11-12	General acceptance and support.	The action is implemented without incident.
13-14	Widespread support.	Morale increases by +1D when the action is announced.
15+	Complete support and agreement.	Morale increases by +D3 when the course of action is announced.



Once the idea is on the table, it will become part of the general debate. Most crewmembers are initially quite hostile but given a little time to consider the prospect some will decide it is the best option or at least become less negative. The Travellers will still have to convince a majority of the crew however. There are a few options here.

Good Science is a powerful tool in swaying the options of a crew like this one. If the Travellers can come up with some solid data on the probability of finding ice at the target comet this will increase acceptance by +D3 plus the Effect of a suitable check made to present the data. Typically this would be a Leadership, Persuade, or Diplomat check but a dry scientific presentation would also suffice. If the Travellers are willing to do some work or can persuade a scientist to do it – this would not be hard, even though some of the space scientists are opposed to the idea – they will determine there is a very high (95% plus) chance of ice at this sort of comet. They could also fake the data, but there is always a risk of being discovered. Very high odds of success equate to a small chance of dying, but not everyone is convinced by such an argument.

Emotive Arguments will also work. The Travellers might play on the importance of the mission and the great work done so far, and ask the crew for a leap of faith. This, too, requires a good presentation but will increase acceptance by the Effect of an Average (8+) check.

Going There is actually a viable option. The Deepnight Scouts have a two-jump-2 capability and could reach the comet to bring back samples. Slapping a chunk of ice down on the debating table (or for a truly theatrical touch, offering chilled drinks with chunks of space ice floating in them) makes a powerful argument. There are some problems with this approach; it requires *Deepnight Revelation* to remain dead in space for more than two weeks with an agitated crew. If the Travellers carry out the mission in person they cannot be certain the ship will be there when they get back. If they want someone else to go, they might expect to have trouble finding anyone willing to risk being abandoned. This is not the case, however. Taran and many others will readily volunteer for the mission. Presenting evidence of available fuel at the alternate point increases acceptance by +2D, plus the Effect of an Average (8+) check to present the option.

ONWARD, OR NOT?

This is one of the great crisis points of the expedition, and should be roleplayed as an adventure. There are many possible incidents that might occur; fights between crewmembers, impassioned attempts to convince the command crew to abandon the expedition, perhaps even an attempt to take control of the ship. These events might take place during the Great Debate or whilst waiting for a mission to the comet to return.

If the Travellers choose to short-circuit the Great Debate or ignore its outcome and simply order the ship to do what they want, they will have to live with the consequences. A mutiny might be resolved by more negotiation or there might be bloodshed – intentionally or otherwise. Refusal to obey orders cannot be overlooked even if the situation is defused. On the other hand, Travellers who go along with the wishes of the masses will also have to live with the consequences. If they abort the expedition, so be it – there is much to explore in the areas they have already passed through. If they seek an alternative crossing point the referee may allow them to do so sooner or later, after some more adventures in the Near Side of Yonder. If they choose to voyage around the outside of the rift the material from other expansion books can still be used but will have to be transplanted.

The ideal solution, in terms of continuing the mission, is to convince the crew to make a leap of faith or wait nearly twenty anxious days for the scout to return from the comet. Its news is good – at least, in the eyes of all but those with their hearts set on a full turnaround. There is ice at the comet; huge amounts of it. The crossing can continue.

MAKING THE JUMP

There may still be opposition to continuing. Some of the crew expected to be going home and are now struggling to adjust to the idea of continuing the mission. This may lead to friction later. There are also more than a few who are dissatisfied with some aspect of the Great Debate. Mostly this is a small matter such as a fallout from an unpleasant argument with a crewmate, or a feeling that the crewmember was not listened to. Equally, there are many who are reinvigorated by the Great Debate and the decision to push on. If the Travellers handled the crisis well they will have shown the crew that they are willing to listen and can make good decisions in difficult circumstances. Of course, if the Travellers weathered the crisis by lying and falsifying data this skeleton could come tumbling out of the closet at a later time.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE FAR SHORE



Eventually, one way or another, the Travellers will find themselves within striking distance of the Far Shore. The target destination is a K6 main sequence star with a planetary system. It is three parsecs from the next system and might be considered an outlying system but to all intents and purposes this is the end of the crossing and the beginning of the transit to the mouth of the Great Rift.

Initial readings are not very promising. Some crewmembers were somehow certain their ‘landfall’ at the end of the crossing would be a paradise Earth-like planet. Instead, they are confronted with a system containing a dense planetoid belt, two small gas giants, and four small terrestrial planets. None of these has anything even resembling a breathable atmosphere. Two of the four are simple rockballs, whilst the planet designated Primary 5 is encased in thick sheets of ice. Primary 6 has an atmosphere composed of methane and carbon dioxide. A follow-up scan of the inner gas giant suggests its moons might bear closer inspection.

FSR-1 PRIMARY (K6 Star)

Primary 1	(X000000-0)
Primary 2	(Small Gas Giant)
Primary 3	(X11000-0)
Primary 4	(X40000-0)
Primary 5	(X42A000-0)
Primary 6	(X5A0000-0)
Primary 7	(Small Gas Giant)

THE TERRESTRIALS

The fifth and sixth planets are just barely interesting enough to launch a short expedition. In another system they might be bypassed, but FSR-1 is special simply for being the ‘landfall’ point at the end of the crossing. Some crewmembers want to document absolutely everything about the system; others are less concerned but there is a general feeling that this of all systems should receive at least a solid basic survey.

Planet Five has an extremely thin atmosphere of carbon dioxide and nitrogen, but is extensively covered in water ice. This is very thick; a kilometre or more at most points and much deeper where the underlying terrain drops away. It seems likely that at some point the ice was liquid or semi-liquid; other than a few mountain-

tops the surface of the planet resembles a marble. There is no evidence anything ever lived in the water.

Planet Six is almost the opposite. It is shrouded in dense, heavy gases obscuring the landscape in a sickly yellow-orange haze. Craft breaking through the clouds are confronted by a harsh volcanic landscape mixing lava plains with sharp-edged mountains. As a study in uninviting, the world has much merit and it might be a useful source of minerals. Beyond that there is little of interest here.

THE MOONS

The inner gas giant has several small moons and a rather impressive ring system, but the primary point of interest is the only large body orbiting the giant. With a diameter of around 9,300km the moon is somewhere between Earth and Mars in size, and has an atmosphere. This turns out to be mostly composed of carbon dioxide and nitrogen. Although unbreathable it exerts sufficient pressure that a vacc suit is not needed. A portable air supply and perhaps goggles are entirely sufficient to support surface operations, and the average temperature is high enough that it is possible to walk around outside in shirtsleeves.

The gas giant orbits close to the outer edge of the system’s warm zone, but greenhouse effect caused by the heavy atmosphere raises surface temperature considerably. There is little surface water, but here and there an aquifer is close enough to the surface to allow some seepage. These areas have some primitive life in the form of lichens and fungi, which is sufficient to allow damp areas to be detected visually from low orbit.

One of these damp areas is different to the others. It is not merely a different shade to the surrounding desert; it is green. The area of greenery is a rough semi-circle in front of a high rocky escarpment, suggesting a deep fault in the moon’s crust and a possible aquifer underneath. There are strong magnetic readings from this area, implying ferrous metals are present in large quantities, though the initially data is unclear and rather confusing.

A closer inspection using optical instruments reveals the reason for the strange readings. The area is covered in

what might be termed a forest. It is composed of bushy plants up to 4m high, unlike any others on the planet. The metallic readings are far too concentrated to be natural. There must be a structure or perhaps a vessel under the forest canopy. Suddenly the landfall point is looking a lot more interesting...

LANDFALL

The bushy forest takes the form of a semi-circle several kilometres in diameter, backing on to a high (30m at its lowest point) escarpment formed by a fault in the underlying rocks. The ground atop the escarpment is dry and rocky, making a landing tricky, but this could be accomplished with care. A little water seeps up through the ground even to the highest points, and a curious mix of native fungi and small plants similar to those found in the forest below grows here. It would be possible to rappel down the rock face into the forest if the Travellers were so inclined, though this is an awkward way of bringing equipment down.

At ground level outside the forest line there is a broad zone of grass, becoming more yellow and less healthy as distance from the forest increases. The grass is not native to this planet and if tested will be found to be distantly related to grasses found on DTP and Old Earth. It is not the same species, and scientists can explain the small differences should the Travellers ask, but the important fact is that 'grass is grass' is not necessarily true. There are many plants which are virtually identical to Terran grass which are totally unrelated... but this grass is, indeed, grass.

Landing outside the forest line is no more difficult than anywhere else. The terrain is uneven but firm, which is about as good as a wilderness landing site is likely to be. Initial ground reconnaissance indicates there is no change in the soil or rock that would cause such a radical difference in vegetation patterns; primitive local plants give way to Terran-type grasses then riotous growth of plants and bushes not seen elsewhere on this moon. The grass zone is 200-500m wide, depending on the moisture content of the underlying soil. The Travellers will soon be able to confirm that the area within the grass belt is both vastly better-watered than the surrounding land but also has entirely different plant species. This cannot possibly be a coincidence.

Sensor readings from within the forest indicate a high concentration of metallic elements in a configuration that suggests a starship – a long, generally cylindrical shape with some outlying components. There are very faint energy readings from within the structure. As to the forest itself, most of the bushes seem to be a giant form of *Vibernum Tinus*, an evergreen shrub which is

found in many varieties on Terra. These bushes form a thick canopy that stretches down almost to ground level, making it difficult to enter the forest without use of a machete or simile assistance. There is no sign whatsoever of a path or any movement in or out of the forest.

THE FOREST

The forest is a rather bizarre place, with familiar plants growing in a riot of greens and colourful flowers up from moist, fragrant soil. Of course, it would not be safe to smell the flowers or the soil but there is an elevated oxygen content within the canopy. This is not enough to breathe but would be sufficient to extract and compress oxygen with artificial assistance.

The forest is a few kilometres in depth and diameter, with very low visibility. There are very damp areas here and there, and close inspection of these reveals vertical pipes driven deep into the soil and the rock beneath. These are connected to hoses or pipes running towards the centre of the forest – this place is definitely artificial. Travellers may realise that if the moon had more areas with sufficient water this vegetation would spread out and displace the primitive ecosystem of the moon. Whether this is a good thing or not is open to debate, but for now the forest is contained within the area created to support it. 'Created by whom?' is another very good question.

Advancing through the forest the Travellers will find a small stream. Following it leads to a depression in the ground where a pumping station stands. It is old, covered in rust and soil formed from fallen leaves, and was clearly put together from parts of a starship's fuel skimming apparatus. It is barely functional, and will probably break down in the next few years. This will – according to the best prediction available – cause the stream to dry up and the forest to shrink for lack of water, but the seepage-pipes will still function by natural pressure. The forest should survive the loss of the pumping station.

The pumps are fed with power from a cable running away into the forest. It is buried under decades of soil and leaf mould, and would be hard to locate without electronic detection equipment but can be followed easily enough from the pumping station. It ultimately leads to the starship wreck.

At the base of the escarpment is a cemetery, with neat rows of graves marked with a metal spike atop which is a hinged container. Within each is what can only be a starship crewmember's rank and mission patches. The symbols on them are unfamiliar but not entirely so. It is possible to make an educated guess

at functions such as pilots, groundside explorers, and command staff.

Exhuming the graves would concern some members of the crew but could be justified for research purposes. However, it is possible to obtain a lot of information using remote sensors and ground-penetrating instruments. The results are startling. There are 231 graves, of which 74 contain the bodies of what appear to be Droyne. The remaining 157 are humanoid or quite possibly human.

Exhumation may become more acceptable at this point. If the Travellers do so they find the remains of crewmembers buried in hard-wearing shipboard clothing not dissimilar to that issued aboard *Deepnight Revelation*. Droyne wear similar outfits tailored to their physique, and the best available interpretation of insignia suggests that the crew was mixed, with personnel from both species holding high and low rank across all sectors.

Analysis of bone and tissue, and comparison to existing samples, suggests that the humans are of Solomani origin in the distant past. There is no intermixing of Vilani or Zhodani blood so far as can be discerned, and the samples of both humans and Droyne show considerable genetic drift from modern examples found in Charted Space. This suggests a mixed population of humans and Droyne that has been isolated from Charted Space for thousands of years, but the results are not conclusive.

ORIGINS OF THE WRECK

The crashed vessel originated far to rimward, on a world in what the Travellers will come to know as the Far Side of Nowhere. This is one of many worlds in the region populated by either humans or Droyne – in this case an alliance of both. How this came to be is explained in *The Far Side of Nowhere*. The people of this world found evidence of the expedition led by Oyskrusk in the distant past, and launched a mission to find out more. Although the distances involved were much shorter than those faced by the Deepnight Expedition, the lower technology and shorter jump range available to these people made this an equally prodigious undertaking.

The crashed ship was the last to be sent out, and pushed the furthest before suffering a disaster. Its jump drive suffered a major malfunction, causing a huge misjump. This placed the ship on the shore of the Great Rift, with no chance of rescue. After attempting repairs the crew were forced to admit they were never

going home and found the nearest thing they could to a habitable planet. Setting their ship down they began making their new world as comfortable as possible.

The ship was designed for long-term habitation and would serve admirably as a planetside installation. Cracks in the underlying rock were widened with explosives and energy weapons, and pipes driven down to the aquifer below. What had been a small seepage up to the surface became a steady, reliable flow which could be augmented by pumping at need. Plants from the ship's biosphere modules were carefully nurtured to create a source of food and shelter.

One by one the crew suffered accidents – or the occasional act of violence – or got sick. Some lived long enough to die of old age. No children were born; the crew decided it would be cruel to leave a second generation to dwindle in loneliness on an alien world. The last of them made the decision to wipe the ship's memory of information regarding their homeworld and surrounding space. They did not know if anyone would ever find the wreck but if they did they would gain no information of military significance. The last survivors later took this measure even further.

The last of the crew died forty years ago, alone and very far from home. She of all the crew remains unburied. The others were interred in a graveyard at the base of the escarpment, under the shade of the forest they had made. In her last days the lone survivor considered suicide, but eventually met a peaceful end. By then all robots had broken down and the computers had been destroyed by the crew. Only those required to keep the ship running and a handful of isolated data storage units remain functional. The ship itself went into shutdown mode once there were no life signs aboard. It is sleeping but not quite dead, a monument to those who voyaged so far they could never go home.

THE SHIP

The ship is large and built to a design vaguely reminiscent of some Droyne vessels but using materials available at TL12. Basic hull form is a rounded cylinder with rounded bulges at intervals, intersected by two smaller cylinders ending in spheres. These have sunk into the damp forest floor over the years but the strain of supporting the vessel's weight has still caused the transverse cylinders to sag. The portside cylinders have given way, tilting the whole wreck 12 degrees. Despite its rather alien appearance the ship's layout is generally familiar, with command and control systems forward, general operations in the centre and drives aft.



There is still a little power, sufficient to operate emergency lights and ventilation. When Travellers enter an area the lights will brighten a bit, but it is clear the power plant is on its last legs. Where internal doors have remained sealed there is a breathable atmosphere in the ship, sufficiently close to Earth's gas mix to be comfortable to humans and most other Charted Space sophonts.

In general, the ship is an old, overgrown wreck. She became all but inoperable nearly a century ago and was landed as gently as possible. This still caused serious damage, and time has done the rest. The crew salvaged their own vessel to shore up failing systems, discarding what they could not use. Little remains in its original configuration.

There are still many intact systems and components. The Travellers could spend months or longer salvaging this wreck to replace systems missing from *Deepnight Revelation*. The technology used is compatible in general terms with that of the Travellers' expedition – there are no mystical Ancients devices, only TL12 equipment created by a society descended from Droyne and humans transplanted to the Far Side of Nowhere long ago.

The referee should not impede sensible plans to resupply from this vessel. Electronic equipment is generally inoperable but the components could be

refabricated. Tools and the odd weapon might be found, and adapted to the Travellers' needs. For example, a spanner is a spanner but bolt sizes might be quite different. Still, a bit of machining or other modifications will allow items to be used once more.

The Transverse Cylinders

The four transverse cylinders intersect the main hull immediately fore and aft of the main/central bulge. The cylinders consist of a wide access corridor with a cargo conveyor running down the middle, and stowage areas for spares and equipment to the sides. Internal hatches shut off the cylinders at each end.

The four spheres were originally identical. At the level they are entered by the transverse cylinder there is a handling/marshalling chamber with elevators connecting it to the small craft bays above and the holds below. Outboard of this is a small power plant chamber then a medium particle accelerator bay. A scattering of laser turrets on the outside of the sphere are remote controlled from this area. Above the mid-level is a hangar/maintenance area capable of handling 200 tons of small craft, whilst below it is a cargo area.

Both port spheres are heavily damaged. The lower cargo area has collapsed and the supporting cylinder has sagged and torn, creating multiple openings in the hull which are partially clogged with vegetation. Entry to the ship could be made this way with a bit of effort.

The portside cylinders were stripped of their equipment leaving only mountings and frames, or components too smashed to be of any use.

The aft starboard sphere is in a similar condition, but structurally intact. The lower hull has been converted into a dumping ground for irreparable components. It might be possible to go prospecting in the debris, but since towards the end most of it was simply dropped from the cargo elevator any such undertaking would be slow and hazardous. All the same, crewmembers with nothing better to do might enjoy delving in the heap to see what they can find.

The forward starboard sphere has had its upper hull cut away, and is now a miniature forest open to the sky. Bushes have grown up around the remains of the power plant, with ivy-like tendrils spilling over the sides to fall to the forest floor outside. This is a possible way into the hull, which would be a tale to tell in the future – climbing up ivy to get into a spacecraft is an unusual experience by anyone's standards.

Science Bulge

The forwardmost of the five main-hull bulges was the ship's laboratory and observatory space. The glazed-over observation platform at the very front of the ship has survived, and whilst it faces the escarpment it still allows plenty of light in. Like most other parts of the ship the labs were cannibalised to keep other machinery running, but there is a small section in the observation area left untouched. The last survivors of the crew liked to gather here, and it was in this place that the very last of them met her end.

The last person on this moon was once a young drive technician. She and her dwindling band of friends kept the power plant running to the end, buried their comrades as they succumbed to old age, and finally faded away. At the very end of her life this unknown crewmember brought the dirty shovel that had been used to sprinkle the last earth over every one of her comrades, triggered the last protocols that would preserve the wreck for as long as possible whilst destroying all data on the voyage or point of origin, and picked up the pistol she had prepared for this moment.

The pistol still rests on a console near the main observation point. It has never been fired. The last crewmember lingered here for a while then slipped away quietly. Her bones, still held together by her flight suit, lie in the main telescope operator's chair. The gun, the datapad she closed off final functions with, and a captain's rank insignia lie under thick dust nearby.

Command and Control Bulge

Aft of the science bulge and forward of the first transverse cylinder is the main command and control area. This contains the bridge and associated systems, including several conference rooms and what appears to be a lecture theatre. The whole area has been stripped, and most computer systems seem to have been deliberately destroyed with incendiary devices.

Central Bulge

Between the two transverse cylinders lies the main bulge, which contains living quarters, some cargo holds and the main power plant. Most systems have been stripped but the power plant is intact. It is running on minimal power and close to breakdown but could be salvaged with some basic spare parts of a sort that are easy to fabricate.

Living quarters are set up for humans or Droyne, typically in blocks designed for one or the other. It is clear the crew scavenged and salvaged over a long time, gradually retreating towards the fore end of the ship as their numbers dropped. Most of the aft cabins are completely stripped but those nearer the bow remain as the occupants left them.

Biosphere

Aft of the central bulge is the ship's biosphere, which also contains much of the vessel's life support machinery. The beds have not been tended in decades, and virtually everything is dead here. However, there is still water (and light, if the power plant is fixed) and a few seedlings still try to germinate. It would not take much to bring this area back to life. Indeed, there is so much decayed plant matter in the aisles and corridors that the whole place could become a garden in a few short months. The Travellers will find examples of plants growing outside in the forest, most of which are clearly descended from Terran species.

Aft Bulge

The aft bulge contains drives and machinery along with some fuel. Most of the available systems were pillaged of components to keep power and life support running. The result is a dangerous maze of pipes that end suddenly and piles of discarded plating or components cut away to reach other systems. The aft bulge has not been entered for at least fifty years.

Small Craft

The ship carried multiple small craft; some were lost during the mission, others cannibalised. The remains of most of the ship's craft can be found a few dozen

metres to port of the main hull. Most were landed in a neat grid and stripped of everything likely to be useful, with a couple left operational and used to explore the star system for as long as their patched-up systems lasted. One was taken by a couple of crewmembers who could not stand the company of the others any longer, but met an unfortunate end several hundred kilometres away. The remains of the pilot and passengers are still in the tangled wreckage resulting from a power failure at an altitude of over a kilometre. Nothing useful can be salvaged from the wreck.

Adventures in the Wreck

The wreck is, as already noted, a treasure trove of salvage. It is not, however, entirely safe. In addition to hazards like loose piles of discarded, worn-out components and a sloping deck, there is a more serious threat lurking within the ship. Several security robots and a self-destruct device remain dormant, waiting to be reactivated if necessary.

The initial stages of the investigation of the wreck might play out like a mystery or 'haunted house' scenario as the Travellers try to piece together what happened here. This might become a murder mystery if the security system is activated and eliminates an unwary crewmember. The Travellers should realise the ship is not entirely dead as lights start to come on and air begins to move, but may not realise the significance of tyre tracks in the dust on the floor until someone realises they were not there an hour ago.

The original crew hoped they would be found or that their remains would be eventually located by people from their home society. This was always a remote possibility, and they had to consider the prospect of a hostile alien race finding the wreck and learning from it. The destruction of data devices containing information on the ship's home society was insurance against this, but the last few crewmembers decided to take this further. They had time on their hands and needed something to occupy their minds rather than thinking about the possibility of being the last lonely survivor. Their plan might or might not have appealed to someone in less extreme circumstances but to the survivors it made perfect sense.

Security robots were repaired with available components, and a demolition charge was set up in a concealed location within the ship. The vessel's automatic systems were programmed to bring power back on and re-engage life support if someone entered the hull, but the security robots would also be activated. If the new arrivals made their way to a control area and identified themselves,

as people from the homeworld would know to do, they would be given control of the ship. If they did not do so within a suitable time frame the vessel would take defensive measures and activate the demolition charge. The robots would then try to eliminate intruders and, if that were not possible, fall back to defend the bomb.

Self-Destruct Protocol

Once the Travellers have had time to make at least a cursory inspection of the ship they should become aware of the security robots. This might be fleeting glimpses of something following or observing them, or a direct attack. Then sensors aboard *Deepnight Revelation* detect a power surge and what appears to be leakage from a high-intensity plasma reaction. It at first seems to be a badly damaged power plant starting up but soon begins to register alarmingly high output readings. Analysis suggests an overloaded system – deliberately or not, it is hard to say at this point – is going to flood the ship and the surrounding area with plasma and destroy everything within a kilometre.

Evacuation is an option but if the Travellers can find the bomb and disarm it they can preserve the wreck for whatever purpose comes to mind. The security robots will not impede a withdrawal unless they are attacked, but will defend the bomb's location. It is under the main deck of the biosphere, requiring digging through leaf mulch and forcing open a hatch that has not been used in half a century. How many robots oppose the Travellers and where they are in the ship is up to the referee. They are not smart but have been programmed to stalk and ambush intruders rather than making a headlong charge.

Once the bomb is reached, it is not difficult to disarm. It is basically the high-output generator of a jump drive with all the safety devices disabled. There are no tricks or traps associated with it, other than the difficulty of working with such old equipment and the possibility of being attacked by a security robot whilst trying to figure out the system. The plasma has been set up to vent into one of the fuel tanks, which will create enough pressure to blow the ship apart. However, something as simple as cutting away the side of the fuel tank will allow the plasma to escape. This will not do the surrounding forest any good but will preserve the wreck more or less intact.

The Robots

The robots resemble four-wheeled transport trolleys used to move small cargo items around the ship – which is what they are based upon – and have been fitted with a basic traversing turret mounting a laser weapon. They are well armoured and hard to kill, but slow and inaccurate with their weapons.

SECURITY ROBOT

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED	TL	COST
Security Robot	40	4 m	12	N/A
SKILLS	Gun Combat 0, Recon 0			
ATTACKS	Laser 3D			
TRAITS	Armour (+8)			
PROGRAMMING	Hunter/Killer			



MAKING GAINS

If the Travellers manage to save the wreck they have a chance to resupply their ship with a great many items as well as bulk materials that can be re-forged into deckplate, tools, piping, or whatever else *Deepnight Revelation* needs. They will also gain some knowledge, though this will raise more questions than answers. A thorough investigation of the wreck and its surroundings yields the following facts:

- The ship crash-landed here about a century ago. Some crewmembers were still alive about sixty years after that.
- The crew were a mix of humans and Droyne.
- The crew seem to be from a divergent population. The Droyne have not interbred with those found in Charted Space in tens of thousands of years, but (if enough tissue samples are examined) some of the humans have genetic markers associated with more recent Solomani humans.

- The origin point of the vessel is unknown and was apparently deliberately concealed by the survivors.
- Technology was an indigenous TL12 with recognisable Droyne and human influences.
- The jump drive bore a distinct resemblance to those found in Charted Space, notably in the human-dominated Solomani and Imperial regions. It appears to be derived from Terran/Vilani jump drive technology of the First or Second Imperium era.
- The few surviving inscriptions aboard the ship bear an uncanny resemblance to Anglic. It is possible they are derived from one of the root languages incorporated into modern Anglic.

At this point the Travellers have no answers to their big question – where did this ship come from, and how can it have a connection to Terra? The answer lies ahead in the voyage, and will become apparent when *Deepnight Revelation* enters the *Far Side of Nowhere*.

VOYAGING ONWARD

The crossing of the Great Rift is complete. The crew have faced crises of faith, mutiny, and internal divisions, but they have also witnessed wonders and perhaps walked upon the surface of a frozen star. The discovery of the wreck and the new questions it poses, along with exuberance at surviving the hazardous rift crossing, sends a new wave of optimism through the crew.

Resupplied from the wreck and perhaps with some new foodstuffs harvested from the unlikely forest, the crew

are ready for what comes next. That will be the long transit into the *Far Side of Nowhere* where the Travellers will find a human enclave very far from Terra.

That, of course, is a story for another day. For now it is enough that *Deepnight Revelation* has gained the far shore. Astrographically, she has passed the midpoint of her journey and spiritually the same may also be true. It is easier now to go on than to go back, and there are questions to be answered in the stars ahead.

LIBRARY DATA GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Travellers of a competitive nature might want to play out the regatta or ‘the game’ – or any one of various other pastimes the crew might come up with. Normally such activities can be considered to be going on in the background or resolved with an ECEI check. However, there may be occasions where the outcome is important. Situations could include a risky bet on a contest, the use of one to resolve an issue, or the Travellers might become so obsessed with winning a game they risk their own lives or those of others. Where the outcome – or the level of collateral damage – really matters the contest should be played out in detail.

The Game

‘The Game’ has no name beyond that, and does not need one. Everyone knows that The Game is, and everyone knows how to play it. Of course, the version known by one person may be quite different to that known by another, but there are some general concepts established by precedent and common consent.

The basic idea is that a number of balls – usually two or three, sometimes up to five – are kicked, thrown, or otherwise projected around the playing area. Balls may not be held, other than to prepare a throw, and implements may not be used to project them or impede

other players. Creative use of the playing area is actively encouraged, however.

Exactly how The Game is scored is open to debate, but points are generally given for getting a ball (in the possession of a player) to a landmark on the playing area against the opposition of the other team. Scoring areas thus move as The Game wanders around the playing area; that hummock may be a valid scoring area while there are three opposing players in the way, but if it is undefended it is not valid. Claiming a point for plonking a ball on it will result in howls of derision and vigorous debate among the onlookers.

Games go on for varying amounts of time – depending on the endurance of the players or availability of replacements – and take up as much space as is available. There is no real reason why there have to be two teams; sometimes nobody is quite sure how many there are or who they are associated with. The general chaos of a Game can be simulated by dividing it into 2D periods and resolving each separately.

In each period, teams have a chance to score multiple points. The team with the most points at the end of the Game will probably be declared the winner, subject to

debate about exactly how many points were scored, how many of them counted, and whether the team deserved to win anyway.

In each period, a team must choose a general tactic and one of their players then makes a check, as shown on The Game table. No player can make a second check until all players on that team have taken a turn at making the check, even if this means someone totally unsuited must make the final play.

Each round, the teams score points equal to the Effect of their checks. This can be negative, and in some cases the Effect is doubled. The team with the greatest cumulative Effect at the end of the game has won. Probably. Subject to some post-game discussion or argument. If there are more than two teams, DMs apply if any opposing team chooses the relevant tactic.

If an incident is indicated, that team has caused something to happen that interrupts play. This is usually a minor (and possibly self-inflicted) injury to a player equivalent to D3 or 1D damage, but could be a confrontation, argument among the spectators, or other noteworthy occurrence. The referee should tailor incidents to the tactics chosen; for example, a really bad check making a controversial play might cause a fight among the spectators due to over-enthusiastic argument about the validity or awesomeness of the move. An incident when someone is playing rough is likely to be an ‘unfair’ injury causing resentment, whilst any incident can result in something being broken or a passer-by becoming caught up in the game.

The Game is always chaotic, which is part of the attraction – as is the vigorous discussion of plays and points. Inevitably, there are those who will take it too seriously but it is a way for the crew to let off steam.

The Regatta, and Other Irresponsible Activities

Any operation involving craft or vehicles runs a risk of operational losses or damage to craft. Deliberately pushing the envelope is an unnecessary risk in the eyes of a sensible commanding officer... but at this point in the voyage common sense must be counterbalanced against the need to break the monotony and reduce crew fatigue.

A simple Pilot check can be used, and need not involve too much risk to craft. A piloting challenge could be something like taking off from a specific point and landing at another, or flying to a known landmark and returning. These is a lot of skill inherent in doing this efficiently – the best pilots decelerate at just the right time to hit the landing area with zero velocity. Lesser mortals are slower, whilst hotshots may overshoot and be forced to come back for a second attempt.

When undertaking this sort of challenge, the Traveller must first declare the level of risk and aggression to be used. This determines the difficulty of the challenge and how many points are scored for completing it, as shown on the Regatta table. Points may be an abstract way for the referee to judge performance or could be points scored by formal judges. Level of risk also determines the likely nature of an incident if one occurs.

The Game

TACTIC	NOTES	CHECK	CONSEQUENCE
Just Play	The team just plays the best they can.	Routine (6+) Athletics (endurance)	Incident 10+
Play Rough	The team knocks the opposition about and tries to bull through to score. DM+2 if the opposition chooses Just Play or Go All Out.	Average (8+) Athletics (strength) or Melee (unarmed)	Incident 8+
Agile Play	The team makes use of speed and agility, playing a passing game or dodging the opposition. DM+2 if the opposition choose Play Smart.	Average (8+) Athletics (dexterity)	Incident 11+
Play Smart	The team uses strategy to sucker the opposition out of position. DM+4 if the opposition chooses Play Rough, DM+2 if the opposition chooses Agile Play.	Difficult (10+) Tactics (military)	Incident 12+
Go All Out	The team goes hell-for-leather to get points, and argues every decision.	Average (8+) Athletics (any), double the Effect.	Incident 6+
Controversial Play	Someone tries something new or questionable, then justifies it to the outraged opposition.	Average (8+) Persuade	Incident 9+

Regatta

LEVEL OF RISK	DIFFICULTY OF CHECK	OUTCOME
Extreme Care	Easy (4+)	D3 points per level of Pilot skill
Cautious	Routine (6+)	1D points per level of Pilot skill
Normal, Careful Piloting	Average (8+)	1D+1 points per level of Pilot skill
Bold and Aggressive Piloting	Difficult (10+)	1D+2 points per level of Pilot skill
Extremely Aggressive Piloting	Very Difficult (12+)	2D points per level of Pilot skill
Desperate Risks	Formidable (14+)	3D points per level of Pilot skill

If the check is successful, the Traveller gains a number of points based on their Pilot skill and the level of risk they took. If the check is failed, roll 2D on the Incidents table below. Negative Effect is used as a DM, and the Traveller may use their Pilot skill as a positive DM.

Incidents

2D	OUTCOME
0 or less	The Traveller has a spectacular crash. The craft is destroyed or so badly damaged it requires a dockyard to repair. Each occupant suffers 1Dx1D damage and may require urgent rescue.
1-2	The Traveller has a minor crash, inflicting 2D-2 x 10% of the craft's Hull points in damage. If this is not enough to destroy the craft, it gains D3 Defects.
3-4	The Traveller fails to complete the task and has a serious incident resulting in 1D points of damage to the craft plus a Defect.
5-6	The Traveller fails to complete the task and has a minor incident resulting in 1D points of damage to the craft.
7-8	The Traveller fails to complete the task and scores no points.
9-10	The Traveller makes a hash of the task but sort of completes it. They score a quarter of the usual number of points.
11-12	The Traveller manages to bodge their way through to a successful-ish conclusion. They score half the usual number of points.
13 or more	Despite things looking pretty hairy for a moment the Traveller manages to pull it all together at the last second. The challenge is completed and the Traveller scores full points. Onlookers may have something to say about the close call, however.

A multipart challenge can be constructed, with the pilots choosing how much risk to take at each stage based upon their position so far. The example here is a possible course for the Regatta, if the Travellers permit it.

STAGE	TASK
Stage 1: Takeoff and Waypoints	Craft must pass through each of four waypoints, in any order.
Stage 2: Landing and Timed Halt	Craft must land at a designated point and remain in contact with the surface for 300 seconds.
Stage 3: Low-Altitude Run	Craft must transit between two waypoints without being observed. Line of sight to an observer means instant disqualification.
Stage 4: High-Speed Transit	Craft must proceed between two waypoints by any suitable course.
Stage 5: Precision Landing	Craft must land at a designated point marked with concentric circles. Additional points are gained for proximity to the centre point.

The entire course is timed, with penalties for missing waypoints or repeated attempts at landing. At the end, the total points scored by each pilot give an indication of their time and precision. The referee can impose additional DMs for dangerous parts of the course, and Travellers might take an unconventional approach to some sections, requiring detailed resolution and roleplaying.