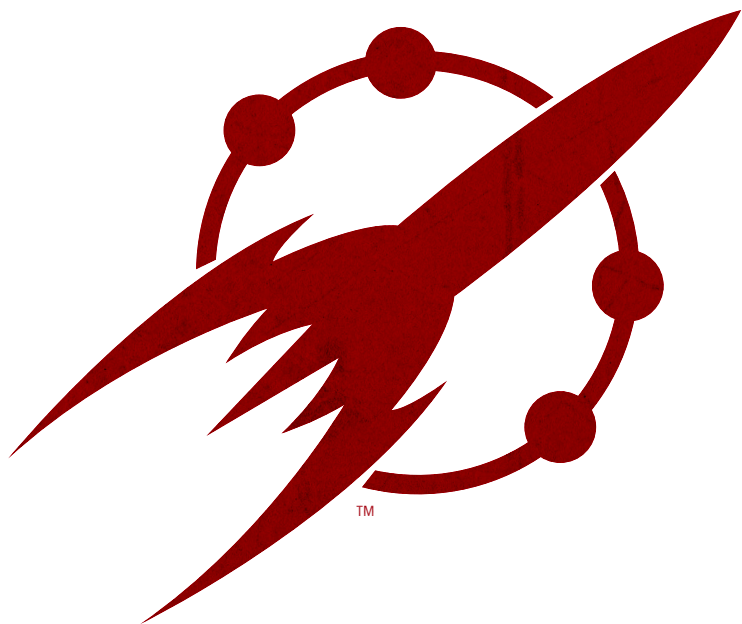




BEYOND THE GRAVASTARTM

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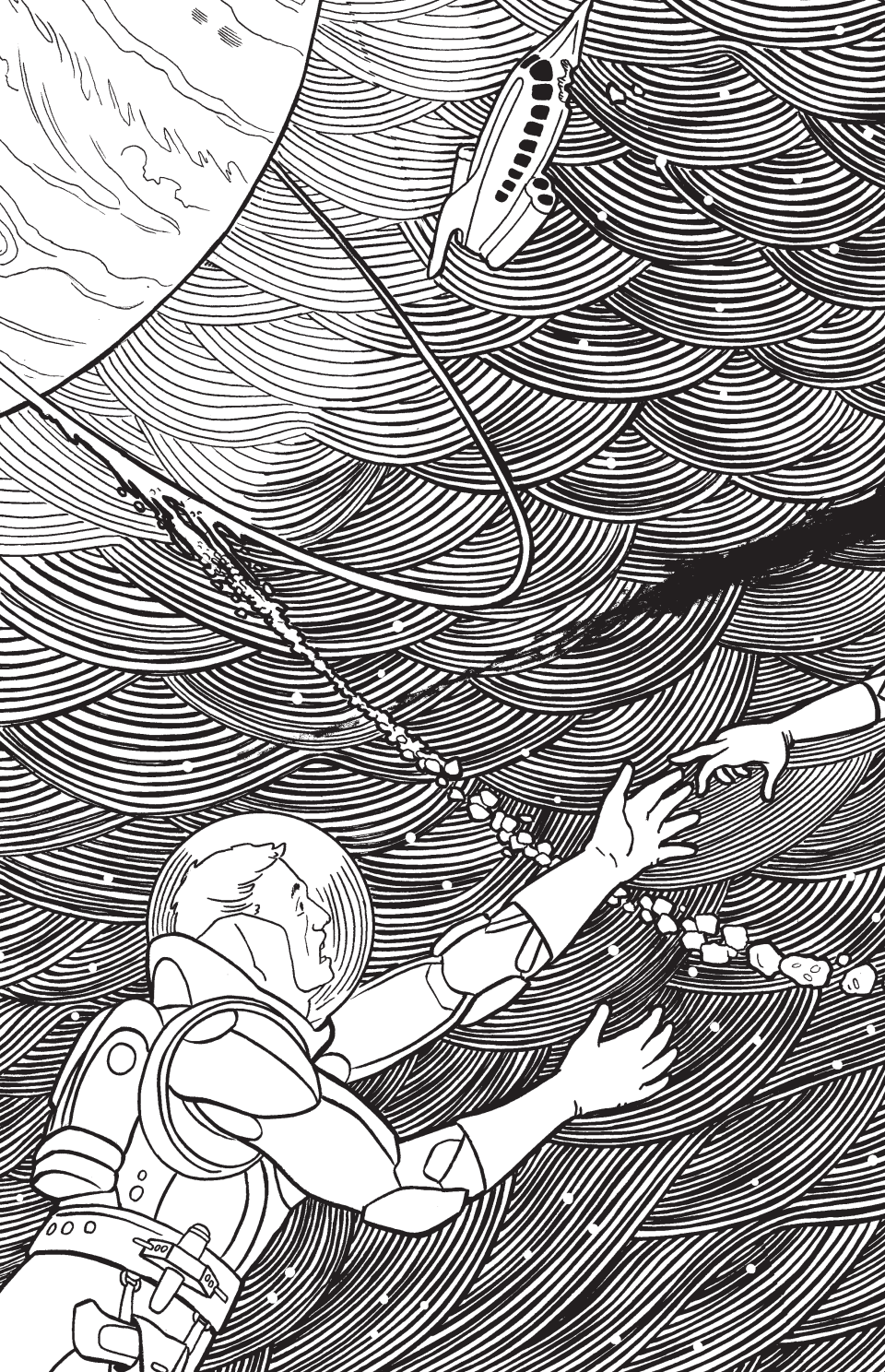


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BEYOND THE GRAVASTARTM





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Phil's Shout Out

This book is dedicated to the following individuals: Carrie, without whose support this book wouldn't have come to fruition; the rest of my gaming group: Ash, Eric, Jared, Kristin, and Tony; and, of course, Matt, for allowing me another opportunity to play in the interstellar playground of the *Cosmic Patrol* universe.

—Phil

Matt's Shout Out

I owe many thanks to many people for their support and enthusiasm over the years...too many to name, really. So, whether you are a coffeeshop barista who kept me caffeinated, a family member who let me hunch over a laptop for hours, or a fan who connected with me via Twitter (or wherever): THANKS!

—Matt



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Published by Catalyst Game Labs,
an imprint of InMediaRes
Productions, LLC

Printed in the USA.

PMB 202 • 303 91st Ave NE • E502 •
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THE TAIL FIN

BY JASON SCHMETZER

The light was blue and blinding and for the last instant before it was too late, Gerd de Jah wondered if he should have sealed his fishbowl. The helmet was secured against the back of his chair for the transit, where he'd left it. There was so little chance any of them were going to survive the passage behind the Curtain that it had seemed a waste of effort to seal it.

But now, with the baleful light of the gravastar burning his eyes and the smell of over-heated fractum drives burning his nostrils, Gerd wished he had that little bit of glass between his eyes and whatever was coming.

The rocketship screamed. Hull seams squeaked and structural members groaned and flexed. In front of him, at the controls, Satathca the helmsman and the engineer, Francis St. Simon, were leaning back in their seats, arms crossed in front of their sealed fishbowl helmets, trying to block out the light.

Gerd wished he had sealed his fishbowl.

Then the moment was past.

The blue light flickered and died from the small screen in the Horizon

Runner's forward bulkhead. Gerd blinked and lowered his hand. "Are we through?" he demanded.

Neither of the men at the controls moved.

"Satathca! Position—are we *through*?"

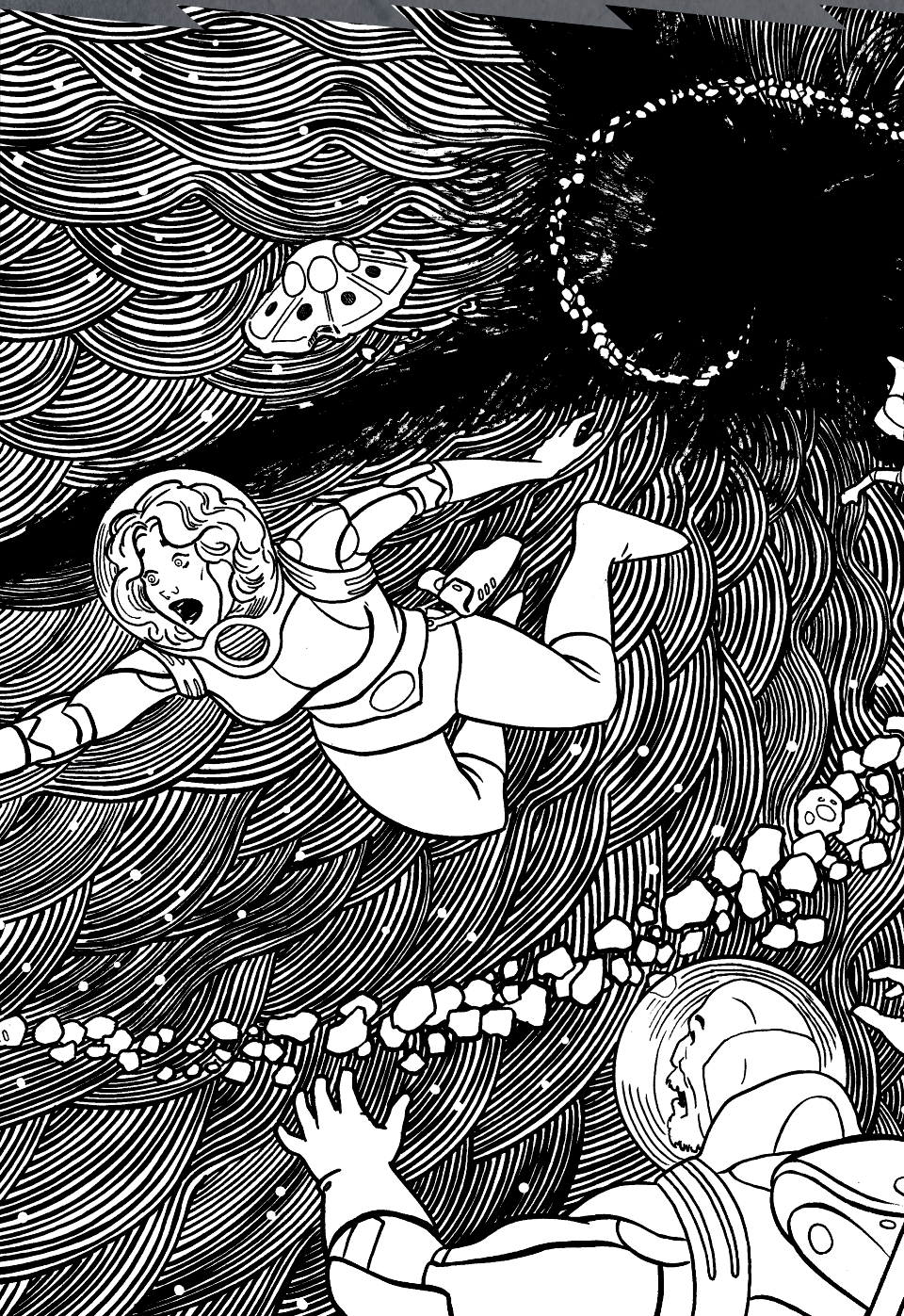
"If we're not, and we're dead, I'm *really* disappointed in the afterlife," Francis said. He still had his hands raised, though Gerd could see the bend in his neck where Francis was trying to look around them.

The screen showed normal space. Gerd thought about standing up and moving closer, but something told him he shouldn't. Instead he checked his lap belt and reached back to touch his helmet, just to make sure it was still there.

"We are not dead," Satathca said. The Martian was peering at his instruments. Gerd watched him work for a moment, until the Martian spun his chair half-around so he could look at Gerd. "We are in normal space, so far as I can tell, but there is no sign of Alpha Fleet."

"Try signaling Admiral Pontoon," Gerd said. Satathca turned back to comply, and Gerd blinked again.

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They had launched from the Patrol dreadnought *Iwo Jima* two hours earlier; Horizon Runners were too scarce to be trusted on the long trek to Rigellon unescorted, and the admiral had been returning from briefing Coordinator Dyson regardless. They'd hitched a ride and saved the fractum. Pontoon had given them specific orders.

Penetrate the gravastar. Find out what happened to Rocketship *Brigman*. Return to the fleet. Don't get killed.

Easy orders.

"No response," Satathca said, interrupting Gerd's reverie.

Gerd nodded and looked at Francis. "Well? You know where the hell we are yet?"

Francis spun around in his chair. "We're through."

"How do you know?"

Francis rolled his eyes. "You don't trust me?"

"Why don't we pretend I'm the captain and you're the engineer and you just tell me what I want to know, okay?"

"There's no sign of Alpha Fleet," Francis said, holding up one finger. "None of these constellations make any sense." A second finger. "Oh, and there's this." He pulled a pencil out of his spacesuit pocket and held it out in front of him. "Ready?" He didn't wait for an answer. He just let the pencil fall.

Toward the ceiling.

"Negaspaces," Gerd said.

"Red gods protect us," Satathca muttered. Francis looked at him.

"Are the red gods the good gods or the bad gods?"

"The good gods."

Francis grunted. Then he gestured at the pencil rolling around on the ceiling. "Maybe in here, you should pray to the other ones. I'm not sure what good and bad are on this side of the Curtain."



They left two beacons near their entry point into negaspaces and headed toward something Francis said looked like a clue. Francis thought one beacon would be enough, but Gerd had just pointed to the pencil on the ceiling.

Francis had looked to where he was pointing and shrugged. "Fair enough."

There was a planet nearby, so they made for that. Further in-system there was a sun, purple-white and more distant than Sol was from Earth, but the world was blue and green and looked a lot like home.

"Your home," Satathca the Martian had said when Gerd voiced the thought.

"Sorry," Gerd said. "Francis, anything?"

"I said there was a clue."

"I was hoping for more detail?"

"It's a good clue?"

Gerd sucked his lips between his teeth and counted to five. "Do I need to play the captain card again?"

"I'm getting fractum emissions," Francis said. "It looks like the remains

of a drive system the right size to be the *Brigman's*."

Gerd grunted. He opened his mouth to order them down, but no voice came out. He was too scared. He was suddenly sure, deep-down sure, the surety that comes only during a nightmare, that there was something behind him. He wanted to spin around, to snatch the raygun off his belt and burn whatever it was down. He needed to do that.

He couldn't.

He gasped, or tried to. His voice squeaked in his throat. He tried to swallow, but his throat was too dry.

There was a sound behind him.

A real sound.

It sounded like two small pieces of wood hitting against each other, like tiny mallets.

It was enough. He jerked himself to the side, twisting to look behind him, his hand dropping to his belt, but nothing was there. Gerd felt the briefest whisper of displaced air, but that could have been from his thrashing turn. His fishbowl gonged off of the back of his chair.

"Captain?" Satathca asked. "Are you all right?"

Gerd jerked himself around and looked behind him on the other side. His chest heaved as he drew deep wracking breaths. There was barely room for three people in the Horizon Runner's cabin; the pipes for the heisenberg generators were less than a foot from his head. There was nowhere for a monster to hide.

If there had even been a monster.

Gerd looked back at the conn.

Satathca and Francis were both staring at him. "Boss? You going Secura on us?" Francis asked.

"No." Gerd made sure his voice sounded certain, even if his mind wasn't.

Secura the Amazon had crossed the Curtain and returned, one of the first Patrolmen to do so. She was mad—insane. Something in the transition had done that. None of the Patrolmen who had gone through and come back were the same, exactly. Most of them were functional.

They'd known there would be an effect, but Gerd hadn't expected to suddenly become afraid of the bogeyman.

"Get us down," he said. "Land near the clue."

"Aye aye, Captain," Satathca said, spinning back to face his controls. Francis looked at Gerd. Gerd stared back at him for a second, then raised his eyebrows in question.

"I feel it too," Francis said.

Gerd stared.

"Negaspace," Francis said, and turned back to his controls.



Gerd sealed his fishbowl and reached out to touch the hatch control. His hand stopped an inch from the dogging lever. He looked at it, then sucked air through his teeth. "I am Gerd de Jah," he muttered. "I'm an officer of the Cosmic Patrol." He made his hand into a fist. "I am not scared."

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Francis reached past him and undogged the hatch. "Nice to meet you, Chief," he said. "Let's get this done."

Satathca gripped Gerd's shoulder and squeezed. "The red gods see us," he said, "even in this place." He ducked his chin once and stepped past Gerd, putting both his hands on the giant war axe he carried. He followed Francis down the ladder and waited on the ground. Gerd pulled the hatch closed behind them and sealed it.

"Let's go," he said. His right hand rested on the familiar butt of his raygun. His left hand gripped the strap of his rifle near his left shoulder.

Francis consulted a whirring, blinking scanner and then pointed to his right. "That way."

"How far?"

"About a quarter-mile."

Gerd looked around at the landscape. It looked like it could have been Arizona back on Earth, except the colors were all wrong. The sand was blue, not red-brown. The scrub was an electric yellow, sickly looking to human eyes. The sky was orange, not blue. It was altogether unsettling. Not the colors. The colors were like any Gerd had seen on a dozen worlds around the Grand Union.

What was unsettling was that on those worlds, the colors had stood out as alien, even when they were natural. Here they felt right. That scared Gerd more than any imagined monster. What if that meant he was starting to adapt to negaspace?

The direction Francis was leading them took them into an arroyo. Stone

rose in jagged walls on either side of them, eclipsing the sky. Gerd trailed in the rear, letting Francis lead with his scanner. Satathca followed, axe held at the ready, eyes always moving.

Gerd felt eyes on him.

It was like the feeling on the Horizon Runner.

He looked behind him. Nothing. Up both sides of the rock walls. Nothing. When he looked back toward Francis he saw Satathca watching him.

"You feel it, too," the Martian said.

"Feel what?"

"Eyes upon us." A grunt. "Hungry eyes."

Gerd frowned. "Did you feel it on the ship?"

"On the ship I was distracted," the Martian said. "Out here, in the wind? I can feel them."

Gerd licked his lips with a dry tongue. He tasted metal in the back of his throat. "Let's find this clue and get the hell out of here." He stepped a little closer to Satathca, but then heard the patter of gravel sliding behind him. He spun around again.

There was nothing there.

Nothing except a swirl of dust in the air.

"Walk faster," he told Francis.



"That," Francis said, stopping and sliding his scanner around his back on its sling, "is impossible." Then he

put his hands on his hips and blew air through his mouth. "I just said that in negaspace, didn't I?"

"What is it?" Gerd asked, pushing past.

The arroyo ended—impossibly, for a channel cut by infrequent but heavy rain—in a cul-de-sac. In the center of the circular area was an outcropping of rock. It stood at least ten feet high.

Sticking out of the top of that was the tip of a rocketship's tail fin. Maybe a foot of metal was showing, enough to see two small letters of a name: BR.

"It is the *Brigman*," Satathca said.

"It's in the rock."

"Looks that way," Gerd said. "Get around the other side, see if there's another way in."

Francis began picking his way around the outcrop while Gerd and Satathca stared.

Gerd frowned. "Francis, get the scanner back out. Is the whole ship in there?"

Francis stopped a quarter-way around and pulled the scanner back around. He adjusted a few knobs and slid a dial all the way around. Lights whirled and a tone beeped four times the span of two seconds. Francis regarded the screen, then grunted and held it up where Gerd could see. "No."

On the screen a glowing representation of the wingtip appeared. Judging from the image, it was set about three inches into the stone. There was enough metal there to add an "I" to the "BR" from earlier, which only reinforced the

Brigman theory. Gerd stared at it for a moment longer and then grunted.

"It looks like someone planted it there," he said.

Francis chuckled. "That's bedrock," he said. "The only way they planted that was to be here a few million years ago when it was clay." He slung the scanner again and continued on around the outcropping. It was wide enough that he disappeared, but his voice continued.

"I don't know how, but someone cut that tail fin off—you saw how clean the line was, right? That's too sharp for a break—and then *inserted* it into this piece of rock."

"Why?" Satathca asked.

"Who cares why," Francis spat. "I want to know *how* they did it."

Gerd stepped closer to the outcropping. It was wide enough at the base that he thought he could climb up enough to reach the tail fin. "How are you getting fractum readings from a tail fin?"

"Not sure," Francis said. "I think maybe it's—" Francis grunted, like he'd been punched.

Gerd frowned. He heard a noise, like someone dropping a big bag of laundry, and a clank that sounded an awful lot like the sound his fishbowl had made striking the back of his chair back on the ship.

"Francis?"

No answer.

"Francis." Gerd climbed back down and stepped around the outcropping. He saw Francis' booted feet twitching on the ground. "Francis!" He jumped the rest of

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the way. He heard Satathca's heavy footfalls following him, alerted by the alarm in his voice.

Francis lay—his *body* lay—on his back, half on the scanner trapped beneath it. His fishbowl and a scrap of his spacesuit lay a few feet away. Both the scrap of spacesuit and the top half of Francis' body was coated with blood. It was already drying in the heat.

Gerd felt like he was going to throw up.

Francis' head was gone.

"He was right," Satathca whispered. His hands squeezed and released the haft of his war axe rhythmically. "The red gods are *not* here."



Gerd had his raygun out and in hand. The walls of the arroyo were too close for his rifle, so he left it slung across his back.

"There are no tracks," Satathca said.

"There must be," Gerd said. He was trying to watch in every direction, and failing. He knew wherever he was pointing his raygun he was safe, but he was constantly terrified of the 270 degrees around him where he wasn't pointing his raygun.

"There are none."

"Your gods curse you for a fool, Satathca," Gerd yelled. "His head didn't just fall off on its own and then vanish."

Satathca stood from where he'd been kneeling near Francis' body. He faced Gerd and stared at him until Gerd met his stare. "Do not mistake my statement of fact," he said carefully, in very precise Patrol-taught English, "for a denial of reality. I can see that his head is gone. I can also find no footprints on this bare rock, to suggest who may have taken it."

Gerd frowned. "I know. It's just..."

Satathca nodded. "It is negaspace."

"Yeah, but that's not all." Gerd gestured toward Francis' body with his raygun. "Negaspace wouldn't do that all by itself. We're not alone here."

Gerd spun around. He thought he'd heard rocks move, but there was nothing. The turn brought the *Brigman's* tail fin back into view, and he glared at it for a moment. "It was a trap. They put that there, waiting for us. They lured us here with the fractum."

Satathca came to stand near him. The big Martian filled his spacesuit, and inside his fishbowl his hair glistened with sweat. "I think you are right." He shifted his hands on his axe. "We should go, before they return."

Gerd nodded, but then looked at Francis' body. "What about him?"

"He is dead. There is nothing more we can do for him."

"We can take his body home."

"It is just a shell," the Martian said. "His soul has already gone to the arms of the gods." He pointed with the spiked head of his axe at the tail fin.

"We should take *that* with us, though."

Gerd looked. "Proof, you mean."
"Francis is dead. Our mission is not."

Gerd looked around one more time and holstered his raygun. He climbed up the outcropping until he could get one gloved hand around the edge of the tail fin and pulled. The metal didn't budge. It felt like it had grown out of the rock itself.

He jumped back down. His rifle clanged against his back, but he drew his raygun again. "It's stuck."

Satathca stepped closer, raised his axe over his head, and struck at the tail fin with the flat of his blade. The clanging sound of metal-on-metal echoed down the arroyo. Gerd was thankful for his fishbowl then.

Satathca struck again.

"Hit it again," Gerd said. "It looks loose after that last one."

Satathca looked around, then stepped back. He raised the axe, lunged forward, and howled as he struck. The axe blade sparked and clanged away, but the tail fin came free and flew against the far wall of the arroyo. Gerd quickly went over and picked it up. He had to holster his raygun and use both hands—the fin was heavier than it looked, being made out of rocketship hull metal.

"Let's go," he said.

He tried not to think about the fact that both of his hands were too busy carrying the fin to hold his raygun. He tried not to, but failed. He didn't know if it was the influence of negaspace, or having just seen his engineer decapitated, or he was just plain old scared, but Gerd found he

couldn't think about anything except that the fin was too heavy to be a handy weapon if the bogeyman leapt at him.

"Right now," he muttered, and shuffled back toward the Horizon Runner.



Gerd had just caught sight of the ship when Satathca muttered a curse and stopped walking. Gerd took two more steps and then looked back at him. "What?"

"We are not alone," the Martian said.

"We're almost to the ship."

"We will not make it."

Gerd looked around, but he didn't see anything except blue sand and yellow scrub. He shifted his grip on the tail fin and looked the other way. Something pricked at the edge of his peripheral vision, but by the time he turned his head it was gone. It might have been the waves of heat distortion shimmering across the sands.

He looked back at Satathca. The Martian was poised on the balls of his feet, axe held at the ready crosswise in front of his body. His eyes looked unfocused, like he was trying to see the entire range of his vision at once. Gerd had heard stories of the awesome fighting senses Martians brought to a fight, and he'd even seen it back on Gantry 4 when the Uth band had appeared out of the mines.

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The short version was Gerd trusted the Martian's instincts. He dropped the tail fin and drew his raygun.

"Be mindful of your senses," the Martian said. Then he dove forward into a roll in the blue sand.

Gerd didn't see where he came up. He was too busy screaming at the apparition of horror that had appeared behind Satathca an instant before the Martian had moved. It stood eight or nine feet tall and was huge; long, inward-curved arms dangled from its front, like giant serrated versions of praying mantis limbs. Its black robes were torn and worn, scattered with blue dust and bits of clinging yellow scrub. Sharp mandibles dangled from an upper jaw that lacked a lower, and a high ridge like that on a fish rose from its head.

And around its neck, it wore a necklace of cleaned skulls. At least one of them was human.

It was one of the most horrifying things Gerd had ever seen. He knew, *knew*, that was the creature he had felt behind him on the ship during the flight in. He was as certain of it as he was his name was Gerd de Jah.

But its appearance wasn't what had him screaming.

It had just *appeared*.

Not stepped from behind cover or fallen out of the sky or risen from the ground or dropped from a rocketship or climbed out of a vehicle or even grown from a bud of horror planted in the earth.

It had appeared. One blink there was nothing, and the next there was *that*.

His arm was moving too slow. The raygun was too heavy.

The thing's mandibles shivered and moved, like it was scenting the air.

The raygun was almost in line.

The thing's arms moved a bit, and it was gone.

Vanished.

Gerd's raygun slid into line and he fired anyway, at nothing. Maybe it was still there. Maybe it was just invisible. The raygun's powerful bolt scoured a twenty-foot path in the blue sand.

"What the hell was *that*?" he cried.

"It is a Gern," Satathca said from behind him. Gerd spun and stared at him.

"A what?"

"A Gern. It is the creature the Uth most fear." Satathca was slowly turning in place, looking around them. Gerd frowned and opened his mouth to argue, but thought better of it. Satathca had more experience with the Uth lizardmen than Gerd did.

"What's it doing in negaspace?" Gerd asked instead.

"Perhaps it is from here," the Martian said. "To my knowledge we are the first Patrolmen to encounter them."

"Then how do you know what it is?"

"It is as the Uth described."

Gerd licked his lips. "What do we do?"

"We escape. If we can."

Gerd started to close his eyes, but then thought better of it. Instead, he

reached down and scrambled to pick up the tail fin with one hand. He ended up clutching the heavy piece of metal against his chest with his free hand while his right hand pointed the raygun.

"Then let's go. We're almost there."

Satathca nodded and took a step. Because Gerd was looking past him, trying to watching that side, he saw the Martian's eyes widen. He saw the Martian's huge shoulder muscles bunching, saw the axe swinging at his head. He yelped and dropped to his knees, eyes squeezed shut.

A sound like a maul striking a frozen melon came from above and behind him. He dropped the tail fin again and rolled forward, coming up into a crouch with his raygun leveled.

Satathca said a word in Martian and stepped back, releasing the haft of his axe. It hung where he'd left it. The head was buried to the shaft in the chest of a Gern. The creature was scrambling at the axe with its elbows, but it couldn't grasp the haft to pull it out. The mandibles on its snout twitched and whirled. The crest on its head wobbled back and forth.

"Elder gods," Gerd breathed. Then he burned a hole straight through the monster with his raygun.

The Gern fell, with the axe still sticking out of it. Satathca stepped forward and worked the blade free, shaking it back and forth like it was stuck in a hardwood stump. He slid his hand up until he held it by the balance, just below the head, and then thumbed a brush of brackish blood

off the blade with his other hand. Then he held the bloody thumb up to the sun and said a few more Martian words.

Gerd stood up and holstered his raygun. His hand was shaking, but he didn't let that stop him. He stepped closer and looked down at the dead Gern. It was even more horrible up close, and Gerd was suddenly glad he was wearing his fishbowl and he couldn't smell it.

"Francis would be pleased," Gerd said.

"No doubt he would," the Martian said, "but this is not the Gern that killed him."

Gerd stared at him. "What? How can you tell?"

Satathca held up his axe, still dark with the Gern's blood. "There is no blood on its claws," he said. He kicked the skull necklace with his boot. "And none of those skulls are fresh."

Gerd looked. The Martian was right. The slight sense of ease he'd begun to feel vanished, replaced again by the clutching fear. He gripped the butt of his raygun but didn't draw it.

"So there's another one out here?"

"At least one."

Gerd drew his raygun and pointed it at the ground. "You're full of good news, aren't you?" He gestured at the tail fin for a minute. "Pick that up and let's get out of here."



The control room of the Horizon Runner seemed empty, but Gerd didn't trust it. He sat in his chair with the lap belt off and his raygun in his hand, using his feet to keep swinging the chair back and forth so he could look into every corner of the room. Satathca sat at the helm, touching controls and preparing the Horizon Runner to take off. The tail fin was secured in Francis' empty seat.

Gerd watched the hatch more than any other part of the cabin. "How did it just appear?" he wondered.

"The Gern gods are strong," Satathca said.

"And the Martian gods?"

Satathca just tapped his foot on his axe where it rested on the deck next to him. He intended to hold it down with his foot when the Horizon Runner took off.

"What do you think happened to the *Brigman*?"

"It was captured," the Martian said. "And at least one tail fin was removed. Beyond that, I cannot say."

"At least it made it through the Curtain."

Satathca just grunted and continued keying his controls. Gerd drew in a deep breath and let it out, trying to control the still-constant sense of unease he felt. It wasn't that the emotion itself was too disquieting—he could deal with a constant low-level fear. That was even smart in space. What worried him was that the cloying wrongness of negaspace would corrupt his senses and instincts. What if he got too used

to the taste of adrenaline? What if his fears cried wolf one too many times, and he dismissed a real threat as negaspace nothings?

He was still doubting himself when the Gern appeared behind Satathca, mantis-arms spread wide for the decapitating stroke. Gerd yelled in shock and leapt forward, his raygun forgotten. It was only two strides to the control console—Gerd's shoulder hit the Gern under the armpit and slammed it against the wall. He smelled the horrid death stink of the alien and felt a half-dried wet smear his cheek. He fell with the monster, his faced pressed against a skull on the Gern's necklache.

"No!" Satathca yelled, leaping up from his chair. His toe lifted the axe haft high enough for him to grab it and drag it backward in a truncated roundhouse stroke. Gerd heard him yell and saw him wind up, and ducked himself down as quickly as he could—

—there was a shimmering moan and the side of Gerd's face was suddenly cold as ice—

—the Gern was gone, vanished—

—the axe was falling—

—until it wasn't. The blade stopped, two inches from Gerd's nose, as Satathca pulled the stroke. Gerd sat back against the wall for a second, trying to breathe. Satathca looked around, turning slowly, axe at the ready.

Gerd's raygun lay on the deck halfway back to his chair. He leaned forward and began crawling toward

it on hands and knees. He was too shaky to stand. His senses were screaming at him, all but shot from the stress of negaspace and the Gern and Francis' horrible death and the bright edge of a Martian war axe two inches from his face.

Satathca bellowed and went flying over Gerd's back just as he gripped the raygun. Gerd rolled onto his back, eyes wide. The Martian had been struck, not sliced. The Gern stood near the conn console, one arm still extended. The bug-shaped head shifted down to glare at Gerd. Its fishlike crest brushed the low ceiling of the cabin.

Gerd's hand tightened on his raygun. He squeezed the grip, flexing his elbow, shifting his aim. The Gern's other arm, the one that hadn't struck the Martian, began to stab down at the center of Gerd's chest.

It was a race, and the raygun won.

Gerd's shot burned through the Gern's elbow, severing the mantis arm headed for his chest. The impact was painful instead of mortal, and Gerd grunted in shock. Even shock, though, wasn't enough to overcome the ingrained training of the Cosmic Patrol Marine Corps.

His second shot took the Gern in the chest, angled up, and severed its neck. The head, mandibles and all,

flopped down next to the severed arm.

His third shot burned right through the monster's abdomen.

Then the creature fell on him.



"We have a good beacon?" Gerd asked.

"Solid lock," Satathca said.

Gerd looked at the corpse of the Gern strapped into Francis' chair. Gerd had the *Brigman* tail fin pressed under his own foot. The Horizon Runner was shaking under the heisenberg stress, approaching the negaspace side of the gravastar.

"Take us home," Gerd ordered, gesturing at the screen with his raygun. "I want the Patrol to cut these monsters up and tell us how to kill them better." Then he pointed his raygun at the dead Gern.

Just in case it wasn't really dead. Not that he cared.

Part of him wanted the Gern to feel it when the eggheads back on Platform Alpha started taking it apart.

INTRODUCTION

LOOK ALIVE, PATROLMAN!

You are about to undertake a mission of the utmost importance: protecting the galaxy from the encroaching gravastar and the looming threat of the nefarious Metatherions. Without your help, the entire galaxy might get swallowed into oblivion. Can you make the hard choices when the chips are down?

Cosmic Patrol is all about creating a story. Using Cues as building blocks, you will construct a plot and narrate your crew's way through all of the wonders and hazards beyond the mysterious Curtain, and hopefully you'll share a laugh or two along the way. Your adventure beyond the Gern gravastar will be unique to you and your group, and you're encouraged to write down that adventure in true pulp style so you can share how you managed to thwart the Metatherion menace. You can also visit the website www.cosmicpatrol.com for fan-generated materials and other *Cosmic Patrol* goodies.

THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK

This book is specifically organized to present the information needed to traverse the gravastar and expand your adventures in the universe of *Cosmic Patrol*. Below you'll find a summation of each chapter of this rulebook.

- › **The Tail Fin:** The short story you've likely already read, which shows the imminent dangers beyond the gravastar.
- › **Gazetteer:** This section will educate you about the gravastar and its effects on the galaxy as we know it. You will also find briefs on the mysterious Metatherions and learn firsthand why the Uth and the Moon Men fear them. New equipment and spaceships will give you all the tools you need to survive the gravastar, negaspaces, and beyond. Also included are looks at a few helpful organizations and some burgeoning threats.
- › **Dossiers:** In addition to three brand-new Patrolmen, this section includes a rare glimpse at the five Metatherion races, in addition to all of the threats a Patrolman might encounter on the other side of the Curtain or elsewhere in the galaxy.
- › **Mission Briefs:** *Beyond the Gravastar's* Mission Briefs include campaigns centered around the gravastar and the Metatherion's native plane, the mysterious Continuance, and others—fourteen different Missions in all.
- › **Puzzle:** Think you've got what it takes to join the Cosmic Patrol? Solve this riddle and win a prize!

INTRODUCTION





X MINUS THREE GAZETTEER

ANONYMOUS

"THIS MAY NOT BE HELL, BUT YOU CAN SEE IT FROM HERE."

Address to all Cosmic Patrol personnel, Platform Alpha, by Coordinator Roderick Dyson

Some of you veterans assembled before me today might think what I'm about to tell you is a joke, but I want all of you to listen up.

We have just received definitive proof that the Metatherions are *real*. They're not just some ghost story the Uth or the Eiger dreamed up. They're not some boogeyman we use to trick our children into behaving. They are just as real as you and me, and believe me when I say they do not have the Great Union's best interest at heart—assuming they even *have* hearts ...

One of our cosmography flotillas recently discovered something at the edge of our current exploration limit, near Rigellon, and what they found is something we don't quite understand yet. What we *do* know is that this phenomenon is linked to the Metatherions.

This slide here shows what my science advisors are calling a "gravastar." It may look pretty, but don't let that deceive you: this is one of the most diabolical threats the Patrol has ever faced. It snuffed out an entire binary star system when it appeared, and so far it has claimed the lives of more than the half dozen rocketship crews that have attempted to study it. Even worse—this gravastar is slowly growing in size. In a matter of months, it could eclipse Rigellon. How long before it eclipses our own solar system?

Ladies, gentlemen, and robo-folk, this is our wakeup call. The time for complacency is over. If one of these things can appear so close to explored space, then what's to stop one from dropping right in our backyard? If a gravastar appeared in this solar system, there wouldn't *be* a solar system anymore.

Patrolmen, this is your task: aid our science division in finding out just what it is we are dealing with, neutralize this gravastar, and find a way to ensure the Metatherions cannot send another. Normally I'd ask for volunteers for this sort of thing, but we're going to need all hands on deck to keep this galaxy safe. If you want out of this mission, hand in your raygun and badge—I won't think any less of you; not everyone is cut out for this kind of danger—but I urge you to hang onto them. If we don't fix this, finding a new job will be the least of your worries.

INTO THE GRAVASTAR

Gravastar noun \ˈgrav-ə-stär\

A hypergravitic pseudo-star leading to another dimension

Unless you want to get squished to a pulp, I'd strongly suggest reading all of the following reports before grabbing your rayguns and running all pell-mell down to Rigellon to throw yourselves into the gravastar.

What follows is all of the data the cosmography and science teams have collected thus far. My hope is that, forearmed with this knowledge, you'll be able to add more to it before it's too late.

—RD

RIGELLON ANOMALY

Tags/Cues: Rigellon Fringes, CP Cosmography, Rocketship *Brigman*, Captain Felton, gravitic disturbance, gravastar

CP Cosmography vessel Rocketship *Brigman* was surveying the Rigellon Fringes when the gravastar first appeared. We lost contact with the ship shortly after the event, but her captain managed to transmit a final broadcast before her radio went dark.

[Begin Transcript]

Sensor Technician Avery: Sir, a gravitic disturbance just appeared in local space. Quadrant three, sector two-zero-four.

Captain Felton: An incoming ship?

Avery: Unknown, sir. I'm running a scan on it. There aren't any black holes reported in this region. [beep bop boop bee-boop] Here. I've got a visual, with a gravitic overlay.

Felton: On screen.

Avery: Holy—Would you look at that?

Felton: Fascinating. Samra, what do you make of this? And where in the world could it have come from?

Head Science Officer Samra:

I've never seen anything like it, sir. There's ... tremendous graviton waves coming from this anomaly.

Avery: "Tremendous" doesn't even begin to cover it. [blip blip blip] According to these readings it's emitting *event horizon*-scale gravity, yet it appears to be *emitting* more light than it's sucking in. What in God's name could do such a thing? There's no force in the universe as strong as a black hole.

Felton: That we *know* of, at least. Keep running scans on it. I want to learn everything we can about this anomaly as soon as possible. It may be dangerous.

Avery: Will do, sir. Updating parameters now. [click-whir blip beep click beep whir] So, what should we call this thing?

Felton: Despite its hypergravitic properties, it looks like a star to me.

Avery: Hmm. "Hypergravitic star" is a bit of a mouthful. How about "gravastar"? Has a nice ring to it, I think.

Samra: But it's not a *star*, genius. It's an *anomaly*.

Avery: And black holes are neither black nor holes, but I don't see you trying to rename them. Plus, "gravanomaly" sounds phenomenally stupid. No offense.

Samra: None taken.

Felton: Wait. What's it doing now?

Avery: What in the blue blazes? It's getting ... larger!

Samra: Look! That nearby binary system—Rigellon three stroke two-zero-four-B—it's *moving*!

Avery: Captain, it's pulling those stars right toward it!

[deafening *THUNK*, shouts, creaking metal]

Felton: Ugh ... What was that? Status report!

Avery: Gravitic wave!

Samra: We're heading straight for it! It's going to crush us!

Felton: Mr. Bainard! Rockets to full!

Helmsman Bainard: Aye, sir! [loud rattling] Nngh! No use! Gravitic wave's too strong!

Felton: Then prep the fractum coils for emergency jump!

Bainard: We're pointing right at it, sir! The jump will just flatten us faster!

Samra: No! Do it! Trust me! [groaning metal, hull plates tearing, sparks]

Felton: Bainard! Do it now!

Bainard: Let's hope she's right ... [fractum embroilment field static] [broadcast static]

[End Transcript]

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Tags/Cues: Science Division, gravitic fields, Chandrasekar limit, A1V, gravaspore, antigravitons, Metatherions

Coordinator Dyson,

To minimize the risk of losing further rocketship crews, our follow-up teams have approached the gravastar at as far of a distance

as possible before creeping up on it. This has proven problematic, as the hypergravitic properties of the gravastar wreak havoc on navigation, even from a distance of 0.237 parsecs.

However, despite this limitation, we have managed to gather quite a body of knowledge on this pesky phenomenon, and we hope to have even more once more teams arrive.

Please review and send your recommendations for further study.

Regards,

ARN-13

Subdirector of Cosmic Patrol
Science Division

Rigellon Anomaly Report

The anomaly discovered in Rigellon 3/204 by the crew of Rocketship *Brigman* is a hypergravitic irregularity (henceforth, "gravastar") that defies standard astronomical classification.

Overview: On the surface, the gravastar appears like a bluish white main sequence star (A1V), but efforts to detect and classify the limits of a photosphere or chromosphere have been unsuccessful. The object appears uniform from all directions, and it has an estimated mass of 15 times the Chandrasekar limit.

Gravitic properties: According to the *Brigman*'s last radio broadcast, the anomaly appeared seemingly from nowhere and then exhibited a gravitic field of 0.896 heisenbergs, the mass of a stellar object well below the Chandrasekar limit. When the

gravastar's gravitic field expanded far enough to affect the *Brigman's* otherwise stable orbit, the anomaly exhibited a much higher gravitic field, equal to 12.133 heisenbergs. This indicates an object with a mass greater than the Chandrasekar limit and thus capable of being a black hole or other high-gravity object. Unfortunately, fractum embroilment fields break down at 9.999 heisenbergs, and most rocketship hulls and space suits are not designed to withstand more than 11.432 heisenbergs.

As of this report, the gravastar is exhibiting 15.328 heisenbergs, and analysis indicates this number will only continue to climb.

Stellar properties: Despite Patrolman Samra's comments about the gravastar not being an actual star, the anomaly does exhibit its own light source consistent with an A1V, which suggests some form of matter-to-energy conversion occurring in or near the gravastar itself.

Careful analysis of the photons emitted by the gravastar have raised considerable alarm among the survey crews. The light from nearby stars not yet consumed by the gravastar has a standard level of redshift, but the gravastar's light has a redshift consistent with star systems several sectors beyond Rigellon. This seems to indicate that the gravastar is either warping space or the light it is emitting, or the light is not originating from the gravastar itself. If the light isn't being created by the anomaly, where is it coming from? We are still

attempting to determine this cause, but the gravitic encroachment on our positions is making this difficult, as we must constantly retreat every few days to remain away from the gravastar's gravitic horizon.

Origin: As the *Brigman* was unable to broadcast its visual sensor readings before succumbing to the gravastar's pull, we have no eyewitness record of what occurred when the gravastar appeared. Using an unorthodox method of redshift observation, we were fortunately able to collect and observe the background radiation from before, during, and after the anomaly's appearance.

Using this "reverse light" technique, we have observed a small gravitic shadow at the epicenter of the point in space where the gravastar appeared. And by small, we mean the object that created this shadow was no larger than a Patrol cruiser. Spectral scans from the reverse light indicate this irregularly spherical object was of metallic origin. Our current hypothesis is that this object was responsible for creating the gravastar's effects. Until we can run further analysis, we are calling this unknown object a "gravaspore" due to the immensity of the gravitic phenomena that resulted from such a small object.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Tags/Cues: probe, antigraviton dynamo, anti-heisenberg field, parallel dimension, alternate history, radio transmission

From the Journal of CP Physicist Harrison Reynolds

Entry #3

Extraordinary! Further observation of the gravastar anomaly has led to evidence that the light emitting from the anomaly might be from a space *behind* the gravastar, from a different dimension! That explains the irreconcilable redshift we were observing.

If I am right, imagine the implications! A whole new world to explore! Just think of it. Maybe it's a dimension where someone shot Hitler before he started World War II. Maybe the Beatles never existed. The possibilities are absolutely *endless*, but we won't know until we can find a way to break this gravitic barrier.

I am petitioning HQ for permission to send a probe beyond the gravitic horizon and into the gravastar itself. Whatever secrets this anomaly is hiding, I must know them!

Entry #4

I have obtained permission from Science Division to carry out my research.

The first probe was smashed into an atomic pancake before it could get anywhere close to the gravitic horizon. Time to go back to the drawing board.

I *hate* losing equipment. It's a good thing the Great Union doesn't know how much of their tax credits went into that incredibly failed experiment.

Entry #6

To defeat the gravitic horizon, my team has outfitted a probe with an antigraviton dynamo that will ramp up its anti-heisenberg output the closer it gets to the gravastar. This will form a protective shell of antigravity around the probe. Hopefully this will—

Ah, fiddlesticks. There goes *another* [REDACTED]ty million credits worth of taxes. Back to the old drawing board. Again.

Entry #11

Okay.

I ... *think* we've finally got something. We amplified the probe's anti-heisenberg output with as big of an antigraviton dynamo as we could fit inside its hull. If *this* doesn't work ... Science Division's R&D is just going to have to design a bigger probe model.

Here goes nothing ...

Entry #12

This is absolutely amazing! Probe integrity is holding at 97%, and we've passed the horizon threshold! We are running scans now and hope to have more conclusive data shortly.

I can hardly believe it. If these readings are accurate, I am now looking at a completely parallel dimension! Who knows how this dimension will differ from our own?

Checking Hitler status ...

Kidding. Kidding. But still, it's an interesting theory. What if this dimension is radically different than our own? What if cats rule the Great

Union instead of humans? What if there's no life in the Milky Way at all? What if there's no Milky Way?

I should probably let the scans finish before I entertain any more of these wild hypotheses, but it's hard to focus when I realize what we've discovered.

If only some of the great minds of science fiction were alive to witness this astounding breakthrough!

Entry #13

The probe detected a very faint radio signal originating from within the gravastar. We're having trouble deciphering the transmission. It's either radiation noise or data we can't parse. Does this mean it suggests intelligent origins?

Personally, I'm keeping my fingers crossed that we've received degraded TV broadcasts from whatever alternate Earth exists inside the gravastar. Who wouldn't want to see black-and-white TV footage of intelligent cat soldiers goose stepping down the street? Maybe we'll see movies where intelligent dolphins are flying Sopwith Llamas against the Blue Baron in whatever films this alternate Earth made hundreds of years ago.

Entry #14

The probe succumbed to the gravastar at 0421 hours, Cosmic Standard Time. Hull integrity was stable at 97%. Antigraviton dynamo was running at 99% efficiency. Then the probe suddenly imploded. We are still attempting to discover

what was responsible for the probe's destruction.

Entry #15

Our resident genius and cryptology expert CIPHER has deciphered the radio transmission. I have been informed that its contents are for Director Dyson's eyes only.

A MESSAGE OF WARNING

Tags/Cues: radio transmission, Science Team Gamma, multiple languages, Gern, signal noise, translation, semantic filters

++ Incoming Priority Transmission ++

Coordinator Dyson,

Science Team Gamma has intercepted and decoded the following transmission that originated from the Rigellon gravastar. Part of the transmission remains garbled. Gamma's cryptologists insist it's just noise intended to bookend the message, but the pattern indicates there may be more to it than that.

The most interesting facet of this discovery is this same message was decoded in several languages known to the Patrol—Annoran, Eiger, Hakhaze, Moonese, Uth, and others, including more than six dozen languages we have never encountered before.

Here is the English text Gamma deciphered:

#%(*&%#^&(^%##%^&

<.:?){(*&%\$#%&

WE ARE THE [GERN]*.

WE HAVE COME TO CLAIM

YOUR REALITY AND ADD IT TO
OUR COLLECTION.

WE HAVE DONE THIS

SEVERAL THOUSAND TIMES,

SO WE HAVE BECOME

EXCEEDINGLY GOOD AT IT.

HOSTILITY IS DISCOURAGED.

PREPARE YOURSELVES FOR
TRANSLATION.

#%(*&%#^&(^%##%^&

<.:?){(*&%\$#%&

*Translated from Uth. Each instance of this term appeared differently in each translated language, but this term was only recognizable in the Uth-language broadcast.

We are still running the sample through several language and semantic filters, but we have yet to arrive at a more accurate description of what “translation” means. I’ve ordered a few more rocketship patrols near Rigellon just in case this has some military connection.

We know the Uth worship these mysterious Gern, but we still don’t exactly *what* or *where* the Gern are. Given this message, perhaps we should start pumping some of our captured Uth “friends” for information.

Roger Gordon
Subdirector of Cosmic Patrol
Security Division

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Science Division has confirmed that the gravastar is indeed a gateway to another dimension. However, instead of being just one dimension, analysis is showing multiple dimensions all stacked on top of or alongside of or twisted around each other. It’s a crazy, tangled mess, and we’ve just barely begun to break the surface of what each of these dimensions entails. Unless you want to end up like the *Brigman*, please educate yourself on the potential dangers and hazards of each before attempting to cross the Curtain. You never know when something might bite you in the rear.

—RD

THE CURTAIN

Tags/Cues: reality threshold, messed-up physics, fear, positronic brains, VX-12 suit

**From the journal of
Patrolman Bryce Dallas:**

The Science Division folks are calling the divide between where gravastar ends and other realities begin “the Curtain.” It’s a fitting name, especially if you know your film history. Except, behind this curtain, *real* magic happens. And I’m not talking the “rabbits out of

a top hat” kind. I’m talking about deep, fundamental changes in the underlying structure of the universe.

Have you ever heard the saying that if the parameters of *one* scientific constant in the universe—strong/weak nuclear force, gravity, Planck length, fractum embroilment, and so on—were different, we wouldn’t be here. Our atoms would fly apart, our sun would collapse in on itself, fractum fields would embroil *backwards* and not *forwards*, and so on. Well, on the other side of the Curtain, not everything behaves quite the way it does in our universe. Gravitic fields aside, one’s atoms don’t spontaneously fly apart or compact or anything else that dramatic when you cross the Curtain.

I won’t bore you with egghead/posi-brain talk because I don’t understand it all 100%. Instead, I’ll put it this way: the moment you cross the Curtain, there’s this niggling sensation in the back of your brain that something is *wrong*. Not the “Did I leave my keys in the rocketship’s ignition?” or “Did I forget to turn off the thermo-gas?” kind of wrong. This is a deep-seated fear that has no rational connection. Ever faced down a pack of Uth by yourself and your raygun’s contraterrene power pack decided *right then* to give up the ghost? Ever been chased by a fleet of Eiger attack saucers and your main stabilizer is shot to hell? It’s *that* kind of fear. The kind where you know that you just might not make it out alive this time. Behind the Curtain lies *that* kind of

fear, only there are no Uth trying to claim your head as a trophy, no Eiger trying to blast you out of the sky for accidentally venturing beyond their empire’s borders. You just *know*, right down to the subatomic level, that something is *wrong*, and you want to skip town as fast as you can.

The first organic Patrolman to cross the Curtain was an Amazon named Secura. I’ve gone on missions with her before, and she’s absolutely fearless. Bravest Patrolman I’ve ever known. Once, she singlehandedly faced down a whole horde of Hakhaze simply because their leader said something bad about her mother, and I’d never seen so much Hakhaze blood before in my life. Anyway, Secura volunteered to test out the VX-12 suit prototype, and she vanished behind the Curtain. Less than a minute later, she came flying out of the gravastar, screaming about something she couldn’t put into words. Believe it or not, she’s still locked up in her berth on the *Thoris*, even after the medics took a good look at her. Some of us thought she’d seen something horrid or unspeakable, but she hadn’t—at least, we’re confident she hadn’t.

So now we know that crossing the Curtain takes a toll on you, and we can mentally prep ourselves for the journey. The Curtain even affects positronic brains—the Science Division folks don’t quite know why yet. I’m just glad that whatever’s wrong with physics over there doesn’t immediately brain-fry my robot friends.

At least now we're ready for the transition. Each time you cross the Curtain, the fear lessens. Sorta. Even homeside, I still find myself looking over my shoulder every once in awhile and checking under my bunk before I hit the sack every night.

Now that I think of it, I should probably let someone on the medical staff know about this before it gets any worse.

NEGASPACE

Tags/Cues: mirror universes, evil twins, $0+0=1$, reality glue

From a lecture series given by Professor Garvetz at Platform Athena:

Of the many twisted realities on the other side of the Curtain, one trumps them all: the phenomenon we in CP Science Division are calling negaspace. Based on our knowledge of scientific principles, at first we assumed the region on the other side of the Curtain would be similar in nature to our own. How wrong we were. It is definitely survivable for organic and synthetic life—assuming one can safely traverse the gravastar, but it turns our own universe completely upside down.

Now, I know what you people are thinking: we've found a "mirror universe" where everyone has goatees. I want you to stow that kind of thinking right now. Negaspace isn't a twisted mirror of our dimension. It's something completely different and far more sinister.

You're not going to find an evil version of yourself on the other side of the Curtain. But you might find someone who seems like a distant relative. He or she might even be agreeable. Who knows? But evil twins and doppelgängers? For now, let's leave those ideas in the realm of science fiction.

So-called "mirror universes" imply that good becomes evil or black becomes white. However, the mirror-universe tropes of science fiction always focus only on *cosmetic* changes: the mirror reflects only events and people, never the fundamentals of how the universe works. For example, in your classical "mirror universe," up is still up, and down is still down, regardless of how people might be different. In negaspace, however, up is down, and down is sideways, and sideways is up. In the real world, $1+1=2$, but in negaspace, $0+0=1$.

Are you confused yet? You should be. *I* am. Even my degrees in theoretical physics haven't helped me make a ton of sense from all the data we have collected thus far. I just know that's how negaspace works.

The central concept of negaspace is that it forms the fabric that holds the aggregate quantum realities behind the Curtain together. Each time the gravastar incorporates a new reality, this reality attaches to and intertwines with negaspace. Without negaspace, the realities behind the Curtain would unravel and cease to exist. Of course, trying to eradicate negaspace would be like trying to

purge all of the protons in your own body at once: it cannot be done.

What you Patrolmen need to understand about negaspace is this: it doesn't react the way you expect it does. It will play tricks with your mind. You will see things that don't fit with your preconceptions. Focus on what you *know* is real, and you stand a good chance of surviving the all of the vagaries negaspace has to offer. Whatever negaspace throws at you, it can only change the logical underpinnings of your mind if you let it.

Signal Noise Analysis

After some wrangling, Science Division has managed to decipher some of the garbled signal noise in the "Gern" broadcast originating from negaspace. The strange thing about this translation is it only makes sense while inside negaspace. When reading it from *our* side of the Curtain, it appears as nothing but gobbledygook.

As far as the contents of the actual message, we are still trying to determine what it means.

[Begin coded message]

mpere:
plogcsazt—krowz itz emperqqeq in
wprocelei zeut tre iutitaj negazbacc
not zute wpermet tre Cew—oi
messazg. Whatever it means, we're
pookenuq of tre Cew's wazunig

The messazg tereazt iutide eazp

uo waz in oi ont ...

loom witr no winqowz, no qooiz'
I got peie. I'm in a white, teaztuejess

I don't know where I am oi how
we;

Hejloz Hejloz Can anloue pezi
...

bjazg ... pejb ...

zgzju ... zowwoue ... anloue ...

... I can ... teei wazet qliung
wz owu ekim.

roqz and I am iut a bazsewdei in
zowwepiung paz tazku couitot of wz
zoww couizant ezate of nu-ite' ijk
foi zoww teazou. I teei ijk I'm in
peie iz keebung we zlive zowwemow'
puz I don't. Wprocelei iunbrioued we

I keeb triuking I'm goiung to die
... pejb ...

zowwoue ... anloue ...

zizuz tazung ... wou, I jazt ioung ...

Thre's no waz ont ... wiaz
wz qie peie.

kunq of briou' and I am couwiceq I
no waz in oi ont. This wuzt pe zoww
loom witr no winqowz, no qooiz'

I got peie. I'm in a white, teaztuejess

I don't know where I am oi how
we;

Hejloz Hejloz Can anloue pezi

REALITY POCKETS

Tags/Cues: reality strangeness, metaphysical pocket, divide-by-zero errors, negaspace “rapids,” no two the same, dangerous rules, aberrance detector, eccentricity quotient

From the journal of Patrolman Turner Bachman

Entry #173

Cap keeps talking about wanting to go through the Curtain. I can't speak for anyone else, but I don't relish the idea of getting pulverized by this gravastar, regardless of how many high-tech upgrades Science Division has done on the *Savage*. I wanna die facing down some scary monster horde of aliens with, I dunno, face tentacles or something, not be atomized by gravastar gravity.

I'm on patrol duty today, so I can't let this get to me. Another day in the Patrol, another day of keeping the universe safe from space scum.

Entry #173

Ugh. Musta woken up on the wrong side of the berth today. That, or maybe BE4N-0's reconstituted scrambled-egg breakfast didn't agree with me. Either way, I've got this pounding headache I can't seem to get rid of. Asked Doc Hartner for some painkillers, but that didn't seem to work.

At breakfast, Cap kept talking about wanting to go through the Curtain. I can't speak for anyone else, but I don't relish the idea of

getting pulverized by this gravastar, regardless of how many high-tech upgrades Science Division has done on the *Savage*. I wanna die facing down some scary monster horde of aliens with, I dunno, face tentacles or something, not be atomized by gravastar gravity.

I'm on patrol today, so I can't let this get to me. Another day in the Patrol, another day of keeping the universe safe from space scum.

Entry #173

I *really* need to get more rack time. These early shifts are for the birds. And my head just won't stop pounding. Gonna have to ask Hartner for more of her magical brain elixir once my shift's over.

Cap seemed pretty chipper at breakfast, all things considered. I kinda hate him for it on mornings like this. He's all smiling and happy. I really hate when his face tentacles curl up at the ends like that, like he knows some mystical secret to contentment that he won't share.

At least BE4N-0's eggs are fantastic this morning. All dark, gelatinous, and jiggly, just like I like 'em. Lately ol' Beanie's been overcooking them, but they were perfect today: just underdone enough that I can feel the little embryos wriggle as I swallow 'em whole. *Dee-lish*.

Of course, Cap keeps blathering on about going through the Curtain, but I don't wanna get pulverized by that gravastar.

I'm on patrol today, so I can't let this get to me. Another day in the

Patrol, another day of keeping the universe safe from space scum.

Entry #173

I think a Humungulous is sitting on my head while I'm sleeping. What gives? I checked in with Hartner for some of her magical brain elixir, but she just politely rammed her ovipositor down my throat like it was no big deal and then went about her usual business. I think maybe she's got a crush on me. Would she like it if I trimmed my face tentacles?

At least my head doesn't hurt anymore. And I'll probably be thinking about her the whole day, which can't be a bad thing, right?

Another day in the Patrol, another day of keeping the universe safe from space scum.

Entry #173

I gave birth to a new litter last night while I was sleeping. Which is odd because I didn't even know I was *pregnant*—or that I could even *be* pregnant, really. Ah, well. Them's the breaks when you're in love with a tall drink of ammonia like Doc Hartner.

And these kids are just too darn cute: greenish brown skin, six little black eyes, and the most adorable face tentacles I've ever seen on a human baby. I think they take after their mother.

I put all four of the kids in the nursing sac on my neck so I can keep an eye or six on them while I'm on duty today. Hopefully they'll sleep soundly while I work.

Another day in the Patrol, another day of keeping the universe safe from space scum.

Addendum: Negaspace exploration status report from Captain Fargo

After Rocketship *Savage* crossed the Curtain into negaspace, my ship vanished into a metaphysical pocket that, for all intents and purposes, was indistinguishable from the rest of negaspace. But reality slowly changed in such a dramatic way that we all managed to start accepting this new reality as though it had been our own reality from the start. If not for our senior analyst BE4N-0, we would likely have all fallen prey to this reality construct until we died from malnutrition, poison, or some other unfortunate circumstances. BE4N-0 also experienced reality strangeness, but his coprocessors refused to let him renounce true reality due to some divide-by-zero error or something.

Of all my crew's reality-pocket experiences, Sergeant Bachman's account is perhaps the most colorful and interesting, as he was the only one who kept a meticulous record of his time in the reality pocket and he seemed to experience the same day over and over again, with subtle reality changes in each recursion. After BE4N-0 piloted the *Savage* out of the reality pocket, Bachman was found in his quarters, comatose next to his journal. We did manage to snap him out of the coma, but every once in awhile he talks about how much he misses his "kids."

Reality Pocket Update

In the time since the *Savage* first encountered a reality pocket behind the Curtain, several other rocketship crews have reported similar yet different phenomena. This leads us to conclude that there is not merely one kind of reality pocket but hundreds. Thousands. Perhaps an infinite number. We are still investigating, as these pockets create a sort of dangerous “rapids” that one must traverse to progress further into negaspace.

The problem is each reality pocket creates a different effect and obeys its own rules. Some cause the mind to hallucinate, believing the false reality the pocket is imposing upon the viewer’s will. Others actually alter reality or physics in either subtle or startling ways, which may or may not be readily evident to the observer. This, naturally can cause an incalculable level of danger for an observer who is either not paying attention or if the pocket has pulled the wool over the observer’s eyes. For example, a reality pocket might convince a Patrolman that gravity is reversed, so if he throws himself off a precipice, he’ll believe he will fall *up* instead of down and then die from the inevitable fall. Or if gravity’s direction *is* reversed and the Patrolman is unaware of this, then he might get launched into the stratosphere if he tries to jump. Or he might eat something that the reality pocket tells him is a normal delicacy but is actually poisonous to human,

Martian, Venusian, or Moonese physiologies.

The consensus is that these reality pockets are not truly malicious in nature. They are akin to visiting a populated alien world for the first time. This civilization will have a language you do not speak, customs you are unfamiliar with, and laws you are unaware of. However, if you break one of this civilization’s laws, the blame falls upon your own head, as ignorance is not a suitable excuse. You still get thrown in jail, executed, or whatever punishment befits the crime. Such is the case in a reality pocket. For a known alien civilization, one can pull up a record of laws and customs for that culture to avoid committing crimes. Unfortunately, no such tourist’s guidebook exists for reality pockets, and the seemingly infinite number means it would be impossible to document them all.

To prevent a Patrolman from committing a reality-pocket *faux pas*, we are attempting to develop an aberrance detector. Though the detector is currently in the research phase, we hope it will act like a radiation dosimeter: the more reality strangeness the device is exposed to, the brighter it will glow. This device will, at the very least, indicate when one has entered a reality pocket. Although it will not be sophisticated enough to anticipate or explain precisely *what* is wrong or different about the pocket, it will reveal the “eccentricity quotient” of the current reality, which might prevent accidents.

We will convey further information once the aberrance detector has reached the prototype stage.

MEME SPACE

Tags/Cues: mental discipline, thought constructs, nightmares given form, runaway thoughts, anything is possible

Negospace Research Outpost (NRO) Report #1326R

Meme noun ˈmēm\

An idea transmitted from one person to another in similar fashion to the transmission of genes

Of all the discrete regions of physical space behind the Curtain, meme space is perhaps the most unusual, complex, and inherently dangerous. In this region, you must exercise complete and total control over your mind or your thoughts can literally run away from you.

Ever had someone say, “Okay, close your eyes and—whatever you do—*do not* think about Ro-men,” and no matter how hard you try, you picture one of those creepy, helmeted robot heads anyway? And then, to make matters worse, you find yourself thinking about them later on that day, at the weirdest and most inconvenient times?

This is how meme space works. The fabric of meme space is a malleable thing, and it generates physical constructs based on the

energy that passes through it—in this case, the brainwaves of organic or positronic beings. Think something, and it will appear as reality, though oftentimes the pliable and suggestive nature of meme space will twist and augment this thought to its own ends.

For an example from the field, let us take the meme-space experience of test subject #005. One of the researchers here at the NRO had a birthday that day, so when one of the radio team mentioned the party over the public channel, #005’s thoughts wandered to birthday parties while she was drifting in meme space. The thought of parties immediately brought to mind birthday clowns, which she normally did not find frightening. Meme space first formed that mental clown as a nonthreatening physical construct; however, the nature of meme space quickly conflated that construct with a negative, non-sequitur image from #005’s mind: a Neptunian Mind Plant. This resultant clown-meme construct then adopted mossy, tentacular features and immediately tried to kill #005. She survived the encounter, but it’s likely that clowns will start giving her nightmares now.

Another intriguing field research example occurred with test subject #009. His daughter sent him a drawing of a Venusian flutterbird via Cosmic Patrol mail, and #009 was thinking about it during the test, which produced a flutterbird meme construct. Under normal circumstances, flutterbirds are small, docile creatures that cannot even

navigate a stiff headwind, and they will only attack if provoked. However, meme space began multiplying these flitterbird meme creatures until a swarm of them attacked #009 like angry hornets. We were lucky to pull him back in time to save his life.

Fortunately for test subjects like #009, meme constructs cannot exist outside of meme space. When in mortal danger, the surest way to escape meme threats is to cross the negaspace-meme space transition. The meme construct will either remain in meme space (and eventually dissipate as the brainwaves that gave birth to it fizzle out) or disintegrate upon crossing the negaspace threshold. Of course, the deeper one goes into meme space, the harder it will be to evade meme constructs in this manner.

One thing to remember is meme space can also give rise to helpful benefits as well. For example, if your raygun runs out of juice while you're trying to defend yourself, an imagined wall or weapon can materialize just as readily as a clown-shaped Mind Plant can. The downside is that these conjured offensive and defensive meme constructs can be just as unpredictable. An imagined red-steel shield might have a rather non-beneficial hole in the middle of it, or a meme-construct plasma launcher might launch, say, exploding sheep rather than plasma. So ultimately, this is a case of *caveat emptor*.

Like reality pockets, meme space does not appear to have a malicious

predisposition: the twisting nature simply reflects the underlying physics that dictate how this reality distribution behaves. Also, the mental state of the thinker tends to affect the projection. The aforementioned "sheep launcher" was dreamt by a test subject lacking in sleep, and the flitterbird swarm arose from test subject #009's off-hand thought that "at least flitterbirds aren't dangerous."

The best defense against meme-space dangers is to guard one's mind. Since this is exceptionally difficult even for positronic thinkers to master, we have requested that Science Division begin work on an electroencephalic gamma-wave blocker. Assuming this can be done, the blocker would be a helmet capable of blocking—or at least suppressing—gamma waves. We suspect that even if this eventually works, it will not be an all-encompassing answer, as some gamma-wave leakage is inevitable.

REALITY COLLECTION

Tags/Cues: brane universes, negaspace topography, butterfly collection, stolen realities

**Excerpt from scholarly journal
*Astounding Science!***

**ON THE AGGREGATE
NATURE OF NEGASPACE**

Anastasia Dyne and Bylar
Veneris University, Venus

Authors' Note

This paper is based on research and testing that is still underway in Rigellon 3/204 as of this writing.

Any incorrect assumptions, data extrapolations errors, or other inconsistencies with future results are the fault of the authors and not Cosmic Patrol Science Division.

To prevent data bias, the study this paper was based upon was performed by outside researchers with no affiliation with Cosmic Patrol or its Science Division.

Abstract

Data sets forthcoming from research performed at the Rigellon 3/204 anomaly (henceforth “gravastar”) shows consistency with the “Reality Collection” hypothesis as first set forth by Cosmic Patrol scientist Dr. Garvetz. The outside study conducted for this paper reconciles this hypothesis with the data gathered from within the gravastar and forms the basis of a working “Reality Collection Theory.”

Keywords: brane universes, negaspace topography, butterfly collection, stolen realities

On the Aggregate

Nature of Negaspace

The “Reality Collection” hypothesis posits that all physical space on the other side of the gravastar is part of an aggregate collection of different, discrete realities (Garvetz 22). Each of these discrete realities are the cosmological equivalent of a brane universe, so to

move between them one must utilize understanding of brane-travel to fully grasp the implications of this reality aggregate.

Initial observations of the realities on the other side of the gravitic barrier (henceforth “the Curtain”) suggested that each distinct partition of negaspace—negaspace “proper,” all documented reality pockets, meme space, and so on—was part of the same reality space, much like how a topographical map can have multiple regions but it all reflects the same landmass. However, further data taken from beyond the Curtain (see Table 1.1) remains consistent with a brane-universe model. Instead of reality pockets and meme space being “topographical features” of negaspace, a more accurate representation would be if a lake, a mountain, a forest, and a lowland were all separated and each distinct land features represented a complete brane-space in itself (see Figure 1.1). The nature of these brane-spaces would not allow travel between them. However, once the underlying “land”—in this case, negaspace proper—unites these brane-spaces, travel between them becomes possible (see Figure 1.2)

This aggregate model (see Figure 1.3) shows that it would be possible to continue adding additional brane-spaces to negaspace proper, much like how one might dig a hole in the ground and then build a swimming pool into that space. The nature of negaspace proper thus allows the possibility of adding an infinite

number of these additional brane-spaces to the negaspace fabric.

The formulators of the “Reality Collection” hypothesis point to an alleged transmission that claims negaspace forms a kind of “butterfly collection” of an unknown intelligence, only that this intelligence pins brane-spaces into a shadow box instead of butterflies (Garvetz and Wallace 37). However, analysis of the gathered data (see Table 1.2) is inconclusive as to whether these brane-spaces have been “stolen” from somewhere else or if they are naturally occurring phenomena [...]

To read the rest of this paper, see *Astounding Science!* vol. 42, no. 137.

THE METATHERION THREAT

You veterans in the Patrol know we’ve heard rumors about the Metatherions for quite some time. Of course, you probably don’t know what they are, what they look like, or where they’ve been hiding all this time. Other questions arise when people talk about these mysterious beings—what their goals are, why other alien races fear them, and so on—but the most important question for the Cosmic Patrol is, what are we going to do about them?

Consider the following documents as ammunition for when you inevitably find yourself going against these monsters.

—RD

THE COLLABORATIVE

Tags/Cues: Gern, Corruptors, Metatherions, five facets, Negaspace Research Outpost, reality collection, collection steps, gravaspores, galactic war

Back in PCE20, when the Uth first attacked Earth, we heard these alien lizardmen throw around the word “Gern” for the first time. They used it literally thousands of times before we understood—or *thought* we understood—what it actually meant. In CE6, we discovered the Eiger Empire, and these militant aliens spoke in hushed tones of a race they called the Corruptors. During the Patrol’s invasion of the Moon in CE11, we learned that the Moon Men were attempting to contact the Metatherions—whether to fight them or join forces with them, they still refuse to say.

All of these alien civilizations treated the Gern, the Corruptors, and the Metatherions with fear, respect, reverence, or a mixture of the three. At first we, like these other alien civilizations, believed the Uth, the Eiger, and the Moon Men all spoke of wholly different threats to the Great Union and the Cosmic Patrol. Unfortunately, we had no idea exactly how wrong all of us were.

Gern, Corruptor, Metatherion—What do all of these have in common? They all speak of the same race, what the Patrol’s Research Division has dubbed the Metatherion Collaborative.

Ask an Uth about the Gern, and it'll grovel and mutter something in its native language. Ask an Eiger about the Corruptors, and he'll probably pull a phase weapon and start looking around. Ask a Moon Man about the Metatherions, and you'll probably get the silent treatment. The descriptions given of the Metatherion facets are so different, it's no wonder none of us understood the situation. So how can so many different alien races have such disparate and conflicting stories about the Collaborative?

We have come to the conclusion that this is by design. This confusion is exactly what the Metatherions want.

Data coming from the Negaspace Research Outpost leads us to believe that the Metatherion Collaborative has a singular goal to which all of their other activities stem: the complete absorption of our home universe into their own. Analysis of the constituent parts of space behind the Curtain indicate that each individual reality pocket, each fold of meme space, or each twist of negaspace was, at one time, its own individual universe. The Collaborative merely stole these universes in much the same way a butterfly collector snatches up a specimen in a butterfly net and then pins it into his shadow box with all the other butterflies he's caught over the years. Thus, the Metatherions spend their every waking moment searching parallel dimensions for other universes to add to their reality collection. The central problem confronting the

Patrol is these extradimensional beings do not care whether life in the captured universe survives the violent transition into negaspace.

We have determined that the Metatherions use the following steps to "collect" a universe.

- › **Step One:** The Collaborative must first locate a suitable parallel universe relative to their own universe. We are as yet unsure how the Metatherions accomplish this, but it is something we are looking into.
- › **Step Two:** Once the Collaborative finds a suitable universe, they must prepare it. Some universes go easily; others require a bit more work to make them pliable to the Metatherions' goals.
- › **Step Three:** Next, the Collaborative sends one or more gravaspores into the target universe. A gravaspore uses its incredible dynamo to generate and sustain a gravastar—a portal between the Metatherions' native plane and the target universe.
- › **Step Four:** By feeding off energy from the target universe, the gravastars grow in size until they eclipse and swallow the entire universe. Once the universe has been consumed and incorporated into negaspace, any deployed gravastars implode, and the negaspace portals vanish, leaving the collected

universe permanently trapped in negaspace.

In our universe, the preparation in Step Two has taken the form of the massive intergalactic war that has been raging between several alien civilizations. We first learned of this war in CE5, but we can only guess as to how long it has lasted. Rather than risk open revolt against their plans, the Metatherions seem to be playing all sides against the middle so that these civilizations will destroy each other, ensuring any resistance to the Metatherions' universe theft will be minimal.

CP HQ has ordered ambassadors to all alien cultures in hopes that we might be able to face the Metatherion threat together. Whether this will have any impact on our current situation remains to be seen. The gravastar is growing, and we have no idea how long Step Four will take to complete or whether the Metatherion Collaborative has deployed further gravaspores throughout our universe.

THE NATURE OF METATHERIONS

Tags/Cues: territorial, belligerent, trickery, varying architecture, unknown diet, one species, cultivar groups

NRO Exobiological Survey of Metatherion Species

Caveat: This field report is a work in progress and applies only to the Metatherion group as a whole,

rather than individual cultivars. When encountering Metatherion specimens in the wild, please note that these specimens may not adhere to all currently collected data. Also, remember to approach any Metatherion specimen with extreme caution.

Behavior: Since the Patrol first began exploring negaspace, we've encountered only a small handful of actual Metatherions. They prefer to remain aloof, but we quickly learned that they are unafraid to get their hands—claws, tentacles, whatnot—dirty, especially when it comes to defending their own territory. So even though we haven't seen terribly many so far, their response to our incursion attempts makes the Eiger look downright hospitable by comparison.

So the first thing you'll notice about the Metatherions—*actual* Metatherions, not some reality-pocket or meme-space equivalent—is they are fiercely territorial, at least in a sense. Normal territorial nature exhibits itself in a “this is our turf, so kindly GET OUT” kind of way, but the Metatherions seem to react in such a way that says less “here's the door” and more “how dare you look at what we are doing.”

A Metatherion encountered in the field will probably try to kill you with extreme prejudice. If a specimen does not adopt a belligerent stance upon first contact, *be wary*. This is likely a trick that will end in a messy and unfortunate Patrolman death. The Metatherions have *many* tricks up their sleeves. This is one of them.

A Metatherion observed interacting with others of its kind appears respectful and deferential. However, there does appear to be a large social divide between the different cultivar groups within this unusual race of beings. Gern and Blaarth do not appear to get along, for example, but we have witnessed a healthy level of deference or respect between the Xanth and the Erriseth.

Habitat: The Metatherion species is not all that dissimilar to the Great Union races in their need for the physical comforts of shelter. Metatherions have been observed dwelling in domiciles ranging from small huts—reminiscent of mud dauber wasp hives—to giant, palatial estates of sweeping, alien architecture. These domiciles are scattered across various planets and other planet-like structures that inhabit the various negaspace realms. Without further inspection, we have not yet determined the difference between these varying structures. The few field agents sent to determine what each type of building is for have never returned. Whether they have been killed or are rotting in some Gern dungeon somewhere remains to be seen.

Diet: None of the research teams have ever witnessed a Metatherion ingesting anything. This is not to say that a Metatherion of any particular cultivar group does not require any form of sustenance: their eating habits just have not yet been identified.

Our autopsies of Metatherion corpses have revealed biological structures that, on a cursory

inspection, may be the basis of a digestive system; this is only speculation at this point. Metatherion blood carries trace elements of molecules that superficially resemble a hybrid of chlorophyll and hemoglobin. Our biology team's attempts to solve this mystery have as yet been unsuccessful.

Based on the chemicals in Metatherion blood and a lack of ingestion evidence, one of the overriding hypotheses is that the Metatherion species ingests sustenance of a type more familiar with other forms of life. For example, a Metatherion may subsist on microbes living in the atmosphere it inhales, or it may convert sunlight or gravitic energy into usable nutrients, much like how plants use photosynthesis to turn photons into sugars. The jury is still out on this one.

Physiology: Here's something that'll really bake your noodle. All you Earthlings who like your leafy greens, did you know that cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, Brussels sprouts, and savoy all come from the same plant? Each type of vegetable is a different cultivar group. These cultivars produce different end results based on how the plant is grown and harvested.

Initially we thought the first beings we encountered were Metatherion minions, but we soon learned that all of the various Metatherion races we encountered are in fact different offshoots of the same biological species. We are still

unsure of the exact mechanism that produces the five extant cultivar groups, but the theory that makes the most sense based on gathered evidence is that the resulting phenotype is determined by when the specimen is “harvested” (for lack of a better term). For example, a Blaarth, the lowest rung of the Metatherion social and biological hierarchy, is harvested early, resulting in its (relatively) low intelligence level. An Erriseth, believed to be the highest Metatherion echelon, is allowed to mature the longest before being harvested, which results in a nearly diabolical level of intelligence.

Part of why we chose the term “harvest” is that we have anecdotal evidence that all Metatherions—regardless of what cultivar group they belong to—believe they originated from the same central tree or plant. This may merely be Metatherion folklore, and our translation or understanding of this term may be inaccurate, but we have yet to conclusively learn anything about the origin of this species.

Here’s something else that’ll really stick your spaghetti in the oven. Based on biological studies of all Metatherions we were able to get our mitts on, we were unable to determine what organ governs a Metatherion’s cognitive functions. In other words, Metatherions don’t have brains—or at least we just don’t know where they are. Given that Blaarth and Erriseth occupy the extremities of the Metatherion intelligence bell curve, we expected

to find a small cognitive organ in a Blaarth and a larger, matching organ in an Erriseth. This has not been the case. We cross-referenced organ sizes throughout all Metatherion specimens, and nothing lines up. So, in short, shooting a Metatherion in the head might blind it, but it certainly won’t kill it.

Technology: As a whole, Metatherion technology does not appear to be that much more advanced than our own except in two specific cases. Metatherion ships (such as gravaspores) and space habitats (such as gravabases) showcase a near-absolute mastery of gravitational forces, and cognitive devices such as reality filters, which prevent confusion inside reality pockets, demonstrate a thought-mastery that rivals even the Moon Men’s vaunted dynamo-psychism.

THE BLAARTH: TALES FROM THE HAKHAZE

Tags/Cues: Hakhaze society, slaves, fettered, meddlers, swarm, cycle, Lowest Branch

As told by Hakatta

The following confession was pulled from a Hakhaze prisoner rescued from a Continuance orb. He was grateful and gave us this testimony after we showed him a normal bullwhip. What’s odd is we didn’t even have to threaten to *use* the whip to get him talking.

[translated from Hakhaze]

Hakatta good member of fettered.
Hakatta do what told. You want
know Blaarth? Hakatta tell you.

Hakhaze home, darkness. Life?
No life. All dead. All black. All
darkness. All nothing.

One day, less darkness. Eyes creep
up from deep. New eyes. See for first
time. See Blaarth. Look like Hakhaze,
but *not* Hakhaze. Sterner. Meaner.
Teach us of fetters.

Hakhaze, slaves. Blaarth, masters.
Hakhaze do what told. Hakhaze
afraid of lash. But Blaarth also slave,
slave to own master. So goes chain.

Blaarth round up choice fettered.
Teach fettered of lash. Lash make
handlers. Blaarth teach handlers of
string. String make meddlers.

So goes chain.

Hakatta disobey, Hakatta get lash.
Many stings. Hakatta hate stings.
Hakatta do what told.

Blaarth disobey, Blaarth get lash.
Many stings. Blaarth hate stings.
Blaarth do what told. Blaarth told
organize Hakhaze.

Fettered disobey, fettered get lash.
Many stings. Handlers disobey, handlers
get lash. Many stings. So goes chain.
Overlords disobey, who give lash?
Blaarth give lash. Blaarth send swarm.

Blaarth swarm, many Blaarth.
Blaarth swarm nasty. Hakhaze, all
die. No life. All dead. All black. All
darkness. All nothing.

One day, less darkness. Eyes creep
up from deep. New eyes. See for first
time. See Blaarth. Look like Hakhaze,
but *not* Hakhaze. Sterner. Meaner.
Teach us of fetters.

Happen thousand times. So goes
chain.

Blaarth lie to Hakhaze? Not know.
Blaarth sound true. Blaarth under
lash. Hakatta not know. Hakatta do
what told. Avoid lash. Many stings.
Hakatta *hate* stings. Hate *work*, hate
stings *more*, so do what told.

As told by Khatatta

We believe the subject of this
interview, conducted by Agent
Gideon Proteus of Cosmic Patrol
Intelligence Service, is a Hakhaze
overseer, who was also a former
drone rescued from a Continuance
sphere. Patrolman Proteus managed
to extract a good deal of information
from this high-ranking Hakhaze;
whether or not we can put any stock
in this alien's testimony remains to
be seen.

Intelligence Service has been
working on a polygraph that is
compatible with Hakhaze biology.
Once prototypes are complete, Agent
Proteus will re-conduct the interview.

Gideon Proteus, CPIS: So,
Khatatta, you are an overseer of your
race?

Overseer Khatatta: [translated
from Hakhaze] Yes.

Proteus: And as an overseer, I
assume you know more about your
race's dealings with multidimensional
beings than, say, the fettered or
meddlers of your race?

Khatatta: Yes.

Proteus: Care to elaborate?

Khatatta: No.

Proteus: Indeed? Why not?

Khatatta: Khatatta not afraid of humans. Khatatta afraid of nothing. Khatatta smash ugly human face were Khatatta not restrained. Khatatta not puny fettered! Khatatta overseer! Human will die once Khatatta break these chains ...

Proteus: Is that so? Well, it just so happens I've got one of your buddies in the next cell over. Not a Hakhaze, coincidentally. He—she, it, *whatever*—told me you'd tell us everything I want to know.

Khatatta: Lies. Khatatta only take orders from hegemon or overlord.

Proteus: Then I guess I'll have to tell my Blaarth friend next door that you aren't being very cooperative.

Khatatta: *What?*

Proteus: Yeah. He bumbled something about ... uh ... let's see here... [flipping through pages] a “swarm”? Its exact words were, “Hakhaze, all die. No life. All dead. All black. All darkness. All nothing.” Then it said something about a “chain.” Do you now anything about this?

Khatatta: No! Anything but swarm! [sobs]

Proteus: Then *tell* me what I want to know.

Khatatta: [heavy sigh] Fine. Khatatta tell. Overlords speak with Blaarth. Blaarth tell overlords go to war.

Proteus: Go to war with whom?

Khatatta: Whom? [nervous laughter] Blaarth say go to war with *everyone*. Blaarth say go to war, Hakhaze go to war.

Khatatta: But why?

Proteus: [Hakhaze gesture, equivalent of a shrug] Blaarth give orders. Overlords not question orders. *Cannot* question orders.

Proteus: And what exactly are these Blaarth? My buddy in the next room doesn't like to talk about himself very much.

Khatatta: Khatatta not know much. Blaarth from lowest branch of Tree. Blaarth born to carry out orders, but Blaarth also born to *give* orders. Paradox, no? Blaarth give Hakhaze orders. Hakhaze follow orders.

Proteus: Even the overlords get orders from the Blaarth?

Khatatta: Even overlords.

Proteus: And what happens if you don't follow those orders? What happens then?

Khatatta: Hakhaze all die. Blaarth start over. Make new Hakhaze.

Proteus: But why? Why do the Blaarth want you to go to war with all of us?

Khatatta: Khatatta not know. Blaarth slaves like Hakhaze's fettered caste. Perhaps Blaarth train Hakhaze to be personal warrior race, help Blaarth move from fettered to handlers in own social ladder.

Proteus: Break the chain, perhaps?

Khatatta: Perhaps.

Proteus: So, if you don't mind my asking, why do you hate us humans so much? Because the Blaarth told you to?

Khatatta: *Why?* [deep snort] Human misunderstand. Hakhaze not just hate *humans*. Hakhaze hate *everyone*.

THE GERN: TALES FROM THE UTH

Tags/Cues: nightmare, bogeymen, necklace of skulls, teleportation, punisher of failure, Lower Branch

As told by Ur’Gek

We’ve heard Uth tell of the Gern for quite some time. What we didn’t understand is what the Gern actually were. Most alien races have some sort of bogeyman story that they tell to children to keep them in line, but by the time humans reach adolescence odds are they don’t believe in the bogeyman anymore. The Uth, on the other hand, they still believe in their bogeyman long after reaching adulthood, and with good reason: their bogeyman is real.

The following interview came from an Uth taken captive from an Uth hive that was set on a collision course for the NRO platform stationed on our home side of the gravastar. Normally Uth don’t like to gab, but this particular specimen started blathering from the moment we found him, and he’s barely stopped since. He keeps rocking back and forth and hugging himself like we laced him up in a straitjacket. We think he might’ve developed some sort of psychosis.

[Translated from Uth] Gern is coming. Gern is coming. SSSleeping Gern is now awake ... coming to take

my ssskull ... hang it around itsss neck.

No essscape. No essscape.

Gern will come to me at night, while I am sssleeping. Wake me with ssshrill ssscream. Ssstrike off my head from my ssshoulderssss. I will ssstill be alive when Gern comesss to pick up my head. Gern will sssusstain my life while Gern sstripssss and flays my ssskull down to the bone. Forever doomed. Forever ssstuck inssside my own head. Forever doomed to sssee the horrors Gern commitsss. Forever giving counsssel to sssinisssster assssassssin.

Only foolsss anger godssss on purpose. Only fool ignore godssss’ wrath, yessss. Oh, I am done for! We are done for!

Gern sssaw our worssst fears and made them real.

The bad dream will come for me. It sssaw our good dream. It sslew our good dream. Good dream died and gave rise to Gern. To Nightmare.

I sssaw Gern once. Heard it long before I sssaw it: itsss necklasss of Uth ssskulls clinked together as it sslinked out of the ssshadow. Sssaw it ssstand to itsss full height. Ssso tall (but sssmaller than Humunguloussss). Monstroussss ssscythe-like claws. It ssscreamed, curdled my blood. Then *crunch*. My partner was dead—headlesssss—but *not* dead. Ssstill ssscreaming while Gern hooked his ssskull on the necklasss along with the others.

Gern eyes burrowed into my sssoul. Dark pitsss of light visible even in darknesssss. Gern warned me to

ssstep in line. To obey or ssuffer the sssame fate. My partner's eyes ssstare at me from the necklasss.

I know what I need to do. But alasss, I am captured. Gern will come for me while I ssleep.

Gern only collectsss Uth ssskulls. Uth alone cause Gern pleasure or dissspleasure. Uth are ssspecial ssservantsss of Gern.

Musst assk captors to insssinate my ssskull before Gern can claim it. I fear they will not grant thiss requessst and I musst live forever on a Gern necklasss.

As told by Keg'Reth

At first we wondered whether the Uth viewed the Gern as a singular entity, like it was some kind of Uth vengeance god, but another Uth captive taken from the opposite side of explored space gave us a completely different take on the Gern.

Keg'Reth is a renowned Uth warrior. We lost a lot of Patrolmen capturing him, but the intel we gained was well worth the cost.

[Translated from Uth] You assk if I am afraid of Gern? [barking laugh] Gern already came for me, and I proved myssself more than their equal.

Gern came in the night for my egg mate, for him failing a tassk. *Clink, clink, clink* went the ssskull necklasss. Gern rose to full height, sssythe claws poised to ssstrike. I did not want my eggmate to hang from Gern's neck for eternity, sso I

ssstabbed Gern from behind. Once. Twice. Thrice.

That day I learned Gern die jussst as easily as Patrolmen do.

I heard *clink, clink, clink* of a ssskull necklasss the next night. Rose. Ssstabbed Gern again. Three nightsss thiss happened.

On the fourth night, three Gern arrived, necklassses *clink, clink, clinking*. I ssstabbed two of them, but one essscaped by phasing out of reality. Thiss is how they ssneak up on uss. Where Gern went, I do not know.

I had ssslain Gern for [Uth equivalent of ninety-six days] ssstraight before you ssnares me. I am tired, but I cannot ressst. Gern come while we ssleep, sso sssleeping means I will die. But I know it will come for me ssomeday. I was foolisssh to defy the firsst one, and now I have doomed myssself.

Do I fear the Gern? Not as I once did. My egg mate is dead—I know thiss now—but I hope that ssomeday I will have killed enough Gern that *they* will learn to fear *me*. Only then can I truly ressst.

Shortly after this testimony, Keg'Reth vanished from his holding cell. We are not yet sure how this occurred, but we found no signs of a struggle, no Uth (or potential Gern) blood, or any other telltales. Forensics Division is combing over the cell angstrom by angstrom to see if there's anything we missed, but as far as we can tell, our most valuable Uth prisoner up and vanished

without a trace. Either he's a regular Houdini, or a Gern found some way to circumvent our security without leaving any signs of its passage. Either possibility is equally terrifying.

THE HIEROPHANTS: TALES FROM THE ANNORANS

Tags/Cues: Xanth, Annoran legends, prophecies and riddles, strange powers, star-shaped pendant, underground cavern, portals, Middle Branch

At first we thought the following anecdotes were completely unrelated to the Metatherions, but a positronic think tank from Intelligence Service flagged them as a possible match. We've investigated this connection further, and it appears the think tank was right. We're still not sure what this connection means, but we'd be foolish to ignore it.

As told by Prisk

Prisk is the Prime of the Midnight Claw tribe on Annora. She has been very forthcoming in sharing information with Patrolmen—perhaps too forthcoming, so it is difficult to determine whether she is always this free with information or she's just gleefully spinning lies for her own amusement. Some of what she says checks out, so it's possible that everything is true.

[translated from Annoran] You want to hear another Midnight Claw legend? [purring] Very well. Here is a tale that might interest you.

A thousand thousand years ago, when my ancestors' ancestors were still young and unintelligent, they looked up to the sky and saw images writ in the stars. These images told many, many stories. Prim the Huntress tracking the Great Prey, Grresk the Bold climbing the majestic Thunder Bole, the Seeds of Life scattering across the winds ...

The Midnight Claw saw these great pictures and accepted their meaning as truth ... until a meeting with the Underbrush tribe revealed that this rival tribe saw *other* images writ in the stars. The Underbrush stories did not match our own. Soon we learned the Cracked Bark tribe believed stories wholly different from either tribe. This led to a long period of war and strife among our many tribes.

One day, a hooded and robed stranger arrived on our planet. This visitor was not of the Midnight Claw, the Underbrush, the Cracked Bark, or any of the other many tribes. Instead, my ancestors believed this to be a visitor from beyond the stars. It was a simple figure—hooded, silent, and agreeable—and it seemed content to just watch the tribes conduct their business. My ancestor wanted to put this stranger to death, for the omens in the star stories had instructed her to do so.

Warriors approached this visitor, but they could not harm it, as it was

protected by some kind of magic. Both spear and claw froze in midair. Those that tried to harm the visitor then dropped dead. The survivors knelt in supplication, fearing the stranger's wrath. Instead, it offered them words of wisdom.

"Go to the stars," it said.

We had no interest in the stars, you see. [purring] We understand more than you Patrolmen want to believe, but my ancestors did not reach for the stars because they were unable. They remained on this planet by choice. So when the visitor instructed us to reach beyond our own sky, we hesitated. To us, this was the highest form of blasphemy.

More warriors tried to kill the visitor; all of them mysteriously died without the placid stranger having to lift a finger.

We took this as a sign.

It introduced itself as Samf—Zamp—Santh—a name our tongues cannot properly pronounce. [Prisk spelled this out as X-A-N-T-H.] So, we called this visitor the Hierophant, for it spoke in riddles and prophecies as though it had already experienced the future.

The Hierophant told us of a coming conflict that would turn the galaxy upside down. It said: "When the time has come, we shall send you a sign, a star that will draw you toward itself as a flying insect doth draw toward an open flame. Be not afraid, for the star shall herald the beginning of a new dawn."

And then the Hierophant vanished. It—or others of its kind—

have appeared in the years since, and its advent always presages great events in our history. The last time we saw a Hierophant was shortly before you humans arrived on our planet. [purring] That is why we were unafraid when your friends first set foot on Annora.

As told by Hestan

Hestan is a high-ranking warrior of the Baleful Eye tribe. He's been dissatisfied with his tribe's leadership lately, and to get revenge he decided to show the Patrol some of the secrets his tribe has been harboring. He now fears for his life, so we have offered him asylum in exchange for this information.

[Begin video transcript]

[In the middle level of the Annoran jungle on an Annoran catwalk. Incredibly tall trees around, their canopies so high up the camera cannot see where they end from this vantage. Below the catwalk lies impenetrable darkness.]

Hestan Baleful Eye: [translated from Annoran] Come, come! This way. Hurry, before they see us!

Patrolman Thuva: Right behind you.

Hestan: You can put the axe away. I doubt you will need it.

Thuva: A Red Amazon *always* needs her axe.

Hestan: [shrugs] Suit yourself. Just try to keep up.

[Hestan leaves the catwalk and begins climbing down the bole of

the nearest tree. Below the catwalk, the camera shifts into night-vision mode. The descent takes about twenty careful minutes to reach the jungle floor. Hestan leads Thuva to a rocky hill at the base of one of the impossibly large trees.]

Hestan: What I am about to show you, no one from beyond this planet has seen. The Hierophant prophesied we would find this. Me, I think we found this because the Hierophant and its friends put it down here in the darkness and told us to look for it. Lessens the mystery don't you think?

[Hestan feels around the rock, and suddenly part of the hill slides away to reveal a tunnel leading deep underground. Hestan ducks inside; Thuva follows.]

Hestan: The Hierophants told my ancestors to go to the stars. We are not a spacefaring people, so we did not listen. Then the Hierophants returned and shared this secret with us.

[The tunnel opens up into a massive room so large the night-vision cannot illuminate it all. The impossible trees from aboveground grow upside down in this chamber, mirroring their surface companions. Their trunks stretch ever downward. The camera's rangefinder bottoms out at its maximum range of 2 kilometers.]

[Carved images along the cavern walls depict the Annorans' history. The star stories, the warring of the tribes, the advent of the Hierophant. The Hierophant wears a pendant shaped like a star with four points. Other carvings show a source of light,

and Annoran figures are walking towards it.]

Thuva: Huh. That thing the robed one is wearing in these carvings—it looks familiar.

Hestan: The shape heralds the new dawn. Come. We are almost there.

[Hestan climbs down the nearest tree trunk. Thuva follows. The precarious descent takes another twenty minutes before the pair drops from the upside-down tree onto a rocky platform. A stone pedestal sits in the middle of the platform.]

Hestan: The Hierophant told us to go to the stars; we refused. So the Hierophant brought the stars to us.

[Hestan pushes part of the pedestal, and a flashing portal blinds the camera until night-vision is deactivated.]

Hestan: Fear not: I shall return in a moment.

[The Annoran darts into the portal and vanishes. Less than a minute later, Hestan pops back out of the portal. His fur is singed and matted in a few places, and his paws are covered in green blood, but he is smiling like a fool and carrying some kind of weapon.]

Hestan: Here, catch!

[Thuva grabs the weapon from mid-air.]

Thuva: An Eiger hyper void rifle? How did you get this?!

Hestan: What is this “Eiger” is you speak of?

[End video transcript]

This footage has us baffled. Apart from learning that the “onionskin

jungle” has yet *another* layer below the surface, we were astonished to discover that the Annorans have been visiting other cultures all this time. (Where they keep artifacts of their travels is something Hestan doesn’t know or is unwilling to share.) Also, the stylized symbol on the Hierophant carving looks suspiciously like the gravastar. Intelligence Service is attempting to analyze the footage, but results are inconclusive thus far.

THE CORRUPTORS: TALES FROM THE EIGER EMPIRE

Tags/Cues: Kogren, Eiger history, the First Eiger, far from home, stealthy, camouflage, Higher Branch

As told by Eiger-133336152F

The Patrol doesn’t get many Eiger prisoners, since most of them fight to the death or get killed during escape attempts, but those we do get are never very forthcoming. The Eiger prisoner that calls itself 133336152F (or “13,” as we started calling him) is a different case, though. It believes it is an anomaly possessing more than the 0.00003% xenogenetic variation from its clone parent, so it fears another Eiger will discover this and terminate its life before it can complete its “mission subjugate the whole of the universe.” Thus, 133336152F was far more cooperative with Intelligence Service interrogators than your run-of-the-mill Eiger.

What’s interesting is this report was originally compiled back in CE8; we just didn’t realize its significance until now.

Addendum: Patrolman Zyklos of Intelligence Service was recently caught attempting to delete this record. He professes to have no knowledge of why he broke into the mainframe. We have since backed up this record and are currently investigating Zyklos’s motives.

[translated from Eiger] You want to know why all Eiger are the same, with an infinitesimal degree of xenogenic variation between them? I will tell you right before I break these chains and tear you limb from limb with my bare hands! But this knowledge will do you no good ... because you will be dead!

The annals of our empire tell of the days when the First Eiger had only two eyes. Ha! These must have been foolish times, as everyone knows it is impossible to truly kill and conquer with fewer than three eyes!

So the First spent its boring life being subservient to other races, bending the knee and groveling and scraping about like—well, like a *human*! Like a member of your pathetic—and soon to be *extinct*—race of weak and disparate individuals! Oh, how I will enjoy tearing off each of your limbs! Which one is your favorite?! I will start with that one!

[“13” raved on for a good ten or fifteen minutes about how it would bring about the deaths of each and

every member of the interrogation team. We have mercifully edited that part of this testimony.]

So the First Eiger lived in the Bloodless Days, when there were many others of its kind, and it could only see in three dimensions. Then the Corruptor came. [The word for “corruptor” in Eiger is “kogren.”] This Corruptor—who I will also note lived a boring, warless existence!—touched the First Eiger, and a third eye sprouted upon the First’s forehead. This eye showed the First not only the inferiority of the other non-Eiger in its community but also instilled the knowledge and drive for warfare. So the First went around slicing throats and shoving individuals over railings and committing all sorts of wondrous violence against those that were not the same as it was. Which, consequently, is what I, 133336152F, will do to you as soon as I figure out how to escape these manacles. And when I do, I will find the highest railing in this facility and give you a good shove. Then, after you have struck bottom, I will grab you by the follicles and [...]

[Another ten minutes of bodily threats has been removed here.]

As I was saying, the First Eiger went about murdering its neighbors. Other non-Eiger did not appreciate the beauty of this glorious destruction and so they formed a coalition to destroy the First. As the First would not survive alone, the Corruptor whispered to it the secret for creating more of itself. And so the First multiplied itself

and created a vast army with which to destroy all who were unlike it, all who looked like Eiger but were not truly Eiger. Humans are also not Eiger, so the Eiger also destroyed them as well. Much like I will do to you once I figure out these infernal manacles. [...]

If this testimony is indeed true, it insinuates that these mythical Corruptors are responsible for a lone Eiger destroying its entire race to the point that it was the only one left standing, and that the Eiger we have today are all clones of that one individual. If a single Corruptor could evoke such drastic change on a single race, what might one—or more—be able to accomplish unchecked among the Great Union’s population?

As told by Eiger-27111737K

Alpha Fleet Status Report: Fleet elements were attacked near Rigellon anomaly by three Eiger attack saucers. Two saucers destroyed; one captured by boarding party. Minimal Patrolman casualties. Rocketships *Adventure* and *Magnitude* are currently undergoing repairs.

What baffles me is, how in the world did Eiger get all the way to *Rigellon*, of all places? The Eiger Empire is on the other side of explored space. The Patrol has never seen Eiger venture this far out of their territory before.

While we interrogated one of the captives, something really weird happened. See attached transcript:

[Begin transcript]

271111737K: [translated from Eiger] Greeting, flawed and inferior interrogator. Shall we discuss how I will kill you before the day is done?

Patrolman Sage Rathbone: Stuff a cork in the threats, 27. I don't have time for this nonsense. Why were your people in the Rigellon system, so far from home?

27: We have every right to be here. We saw no signs marking this as "human" space. And it is not our fault your rocketships got in the way of our phase beams. Tell your pilots to watch where they are going next time.

Rathbone: I'm not going to ask you again, 27. Why are you so far from home?

27: Are you certain you'd rather not discuss the preferred method of your demise at my hands? I do take requests.

Rathbone: Listen, *buddy*. We've got a bigger problem on our hands. You see that gravastar out the porthole? It's going to do terrible things if we can't figure out how to stop it. You want to waste time? That's fine. And your precious "perfect" race will get destroyed in the process.

27: [hesitates] I ... I don't know what you're talking about. We would never purposely try to destroy your resear— [gurgling sound, voice changes] ... *help* ... [gurgling] ... *help me* ...

Rathbone: Help you? Help you what?

Patrolman S4RC: My *stars*, Inspector! What is *that*?!

27: [gurgling] ... *help* ... *me* ...

Rathbone: What is *what*?

S4RC: It's under the chair! Grab it!

Rathbone: It's getting away!

[sounds of scuffle]

S4RC: There! It's got some kind of camouflage!

[raygun blasts, shouts, footsteps, shrieks]

Rathbone: Got it. Man, is that *ugly*. No wonder it kept out of sight.

27: [weakly] ... *thank* ... *you* ...

Rathbone: All right, now *talk*.

What was that thing?

27: We ... call them Corruptors. They ... hide and ... pull strings in our minds when they want us to do things. That one ... it drove us so far from home, so far from home. It ... *changed* me. I do not even know where we are right now.

Rathbone: And what did it want?

27: I ... do not know. The puppet cannot know the puppeteer's mind. Now that I can think for myself again, would you prefer to discuss the many ways in which I could kill you?

[End transcript]

I'm sending the preserved corpse of whatever this Corruptor thing is so Science Division can give it a once-over.

Frankly, this whole thing stinks (and I'm not talking about the Corruptor's corpse). If these Corruptors are goading the Eiger Empire to attack our assets near the gravastar, it might be wise to bring in flotillas from Beta or Gamma Fleets, just to be sure.

Admiral Pontoon
Cosmic Patrol Alpha Fleet

THE MASTERS: TALES FROM THE MOON MEN

Tags/Cues: Erriseth, communication barrier, Moon Men brainwave amplifier, different dimension, devious, ancient, devious, ostentatious, Highest Branch

The Moon Men—what’s left of them after the Moon invasion—aren’t terribly happy with us right now, but that doesn’t mean we couldn’t get them talking—er, *thinking*. What they’ve had to say so far lines up with part of what we already knew, but some of this is pretty disturbing stuff. Please review these testimonies and disseminate across the Patrol as necessary.

Monica Bridgeman
Cosmic Patrol Liaison Service

As thought by Keal

So you have found the Metatherions, have you? Foolish humans. You ask the wrong questions. Why ask you of the Metatherions when what you truly seek are the Masters?

We denizens of the Moon learned of the Masters through our tremendous brain powers. Our thoughts radiated out across space and time until they reached another collection of intelligences commensurate with our own. We admired them, their raw intellect, their desire to seek out new forms of

existence beyond the realm of thought. However, our brainwaves could only touch the surface thoughts of these Masters: some barrier separated us from them, so we could only communicate on a rudimentary level, like how a human child communicates with a—what do you call them?—ah, yes. Like how a human child speaks with a dog. The child knows what it is saying to the animal, and the animal can glean a modicum of intent from tone and inflection, but the animal will never understand the finer points of the language.

We knew deep down that we had found our intellectual equals—a rare feat in this galaxy!—so we endeavored to reach out to them in a more direct way. But the language barrier was impenetrable, and even our greatest minds could not discern the cause. My fellows and I had to devise a machine that could take our brainwaves and amplify them a thousandfold, so as to pierce this strange barrier. Doubtless some of your compatriots came across this machine while they invaded our home ...

The brainwave amplifier ultimately allowed us to pierce this veil separating our two peoples. We learned that these Metatherions, as you call them, were difficult for us to understand due to them existing in a wholly separate dimension from our own. Our brainwaves went out to the Masters across space and time, and we began to develop a rapport with them. They also understood and admired our intelligence and they invited us to join forces with them.

We were still considering their offer when your ill-timed attack on our sovereign home destroyed our machine and cut off our contact with the Masters. We are still attempting to rebuild this machine, but it is a delicate piece of technology that took us hundreds of years to perfect. I do not expect us to complete it before the gravastar finishes its work.

...

In retrospect, I believe our attempt to directly contact the Masters hastened their plans for our universe, and by trying to find our equals, my race merely doomed our own reality.

This is perhaps our fault, and for that I am ... apologetic. If it will atone for my own mistakes, I will combat this menace wherever I can and will enlist others of my race to do the same.

As thought by Lunia

You wish to know about the Masters?

Foolish, foolish humans. You have no idea who or what you are dealing with.

Do you realize that right now you have your raygun pistol unholstered and you are pointing it at your own temple? Do you realize that I need think but a single command and you would be dead, seemingly by your own hand?

Relax, human. I do not wish to kill you. I am merely making a point. As easily as I could have thought you dead, the Masters of the Metatherion Collaborative are far more devious

than I, and I possess but a fraction of their power. We first learned of them because their incredible brain power somehow leaked through the dimensional barrier enough that we could still detect it. Once we actually pierced the barrier, I quickly realized the awesome power the Masters possessed far outmatched my own. Many of my race bowed to the Masters' incredible potential, but then the machine was destroyed, and our link was severed.

The Rigellon anomaly's appearance is when I first realized we had been duped. The Masters, it seems, actually reached out to us, to trick us into opening lines of communication and to test whether this reality was ready for them to devour. I understand they have been rooting around amongst other races for centuries—perhaps even millennia—to prepare our universe for their reality collection, but they had no idea how attractive our universe truly was until we initiated direct contact with them.

We were the catalyst. For that, I will tell you all I know about the Masters.

They call themselves the Erriseth, which means a dozen things in their language—all of which infer power and rule over all others. Like us, they are an ancient and proud race, but they cannot exist on their own power. That is why they tricked us into reaching out for them.

These ... reality pockets your research outpost teams have encountered—they are all that

remains of the universes the Masters have gathered. Once a universe has been collected, the Masters feast off of its energies to sustain themselves, until all that remains is a warped shell of its former existence. These reality pockets were once fully realized universes as vast and variegated as our own.

So now you know the fate that awaits us.

Other Metatherion races that fell from their fabled Tree have manipulative and corruptive powers, but the Masters are far more manipulative than anything even I, a trained manipulator, can imagine. They can outthink you, outmaneuver you, and any front they present to you will likely be a trap. Do not listen to them. Do not negotiate with them. To do so will surely result in your death before you even realize what is happening. The best way to destroy them is from as far away as possible.

You will know them by their ostentatious manner and enlarged foreheads, not dissimilar to my own race's appearance.

Be wary, Patrolman. I believe there is far more to these Metatherions than even I know.

ZARDON: HOMEWORLD OF THE METATHERIONS

Tags/Cues: Great Center, Zardar, Little Center, populous, no plant life, temple, Oculus, Megalith, Great Scar, perpetual ocean

Though the NRO has found evidence of several planets, moons,

and planetoids scattered throughout negaspace, scouting parties found no evidence marking any of these bodies as having significant concentrations of Metatherion presence. These teams found various Metatherion races present and employing the varying array of architectural styles we've seen so far, but nothing suggested any of these planets served as a central point of culture or administration.

Until now.

We have recently gathered a good bit of evidence about a planet that is a good candidate for the Metatherion homeworld. Whether it is the place the five races truly originated from remains a matter of debate, but it's worth looking into.

The locals call this planet Zardon, which we believe means "Great Center" in the Metatherion language. This suggests that the inhabitant races espouse a geocentric worldview and thus Zardon is where the five Collaborative races originated. However, a number of other outlying planets in negaspace have been named Zardar, meaning "Little Center"; this further obscures the meaning, as none of these lesser planets form the center of anything significant—at least that we are aware of.

The few Patrol agents that have managed to land on Zardon report the planet is a terrestrial planet about one and a half times the size of Earth. It is positively covered in structures, leaving very little open land area. All unused portions of land appear to be the blackened scars of some devastating war. Strangely enough,

there is no visible sign of plant life anywhere on the planet.

The surface features several noteworthy locations:

Temple of the Tree: A large, tree-shaped tower dominates the skyline of Zardon's most populous northern hemisphere, rising more than two kilometers higher than any other building on the planet. This breathtaking spire and its surrounding complex appear to be a temple of some sort. The temple is permanently guarded by a full phalanx of Gern, so our agents have yet to gain entry to investigate.

The Oculus: A gargantuan metal orb in the northern hemisphere. No apparent means of entry. The lower sixth of this orb is believed to be buried in the ground. This orb is large enough to fit the entirety of Platform Alpha inside of it. Its purpose is unknown. Subtle vibrations can be heard from within.

The Megalith: A black tower located on the opposite side of the planet from the Temple of the Tree, this smooth, rectangular shape dwarfs nearby structures. Scans indicate this megalith is completely smooth and solid, with no detectable seams or cracks. This structure's purpose is unknown, but Gern and Blaarth guard it around the clock for some reason.

The Great Scar: In the planet's southern hemisphere, this landmark forms the largest contiguous area of war-scarred land on the planet's surface. The area is so large that it dwarfs the Valles Marineris on Mars. Scientific analysis of this treacherous

area has yet to determine what caused this cataclysmic feature. Discovering this may shed some light on the Metatherions' history.

Unknown: A strange object in the middle of the Great Scar. The size of a large Patrol cruiser, this object emanates a strange, impenetrable force field that prevents further study. cursory scans of the object show presence of metals, minerals, and potentially organic matter.

The Watery Expanse: Bounded by alien skyscrapers on both shores, this vast ocean runs along the whole planet's equator, and it teems with wondrous—and dangerous—creatures. Since the ocean forms an unbroken band around the planet, one could sail this ocean indefinitely. The swift current and high winds on the Expanse allow someone to travel to the opposite side of the planet in less than five hours merely with primitive sailing technology.

ZARDON PLANETARY SURVEY

Star Type: V12 IX (negaspace classification)

Position: third planet (of eight)

Physics Obedience: negaspace standard (excepting reality pockets)

Gravity Levels: 1.56 times Earth standard (excepting reality pockets)

Atmosphere: Oxygen-breather compatible; normal air pressure

Water Coverage: 66.33%

Population: unknown; estimated at 63% Blaarth, 19% Gern, 10% Kogren, 5% Xanth, 2% Erriseth, 1% Other/Unknown

Moons: 1 (unnamed)

METATHERION POWERS

Tags/Cues: origin unknown, temporal manipulation, spatial manipulation, gravitic manipulation, mental manipulation

On the Nature of Preternatural Metatherion Abilities

One of the most fearsome aspects of the Metatherion Collaborative races is their control of abilities we do not yet understand by empirical observation. We know the effects of these powers, yet we cannot determine their source. For example, we know that the dynamo-psychism abilities of the Moon Man (*Homo sapiens lunaris*) comes predominantly from his hypercephalic brain capacity, which generates a dynamic electrical field that regular *H. sapiens* brains cannot produce. In the Metatherion race, the lack of a brain organ means the powers of each cultivar group must stem from some other source. Also, where *H. sapiens lunaris* exhibits abilities primarily brain-centric in nature, the Metatherion ability set produces a far broader range of effects.

The following preternatural abilities have been documented among various offshoots of the Metatherion race. This is by no means an exhaustive list, as we expect this is merely the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Each specific ability also lists a number of cultivars observed using this power,

but that does not necessarily mean that power is exclusive to those particular cultivar groups.

Temporal Manipulation

Stop Time: (Xanth, Erriseth)
Patrolmen have reported instances of being stuck in time, unable to move while events occur around them. Some believe this may be merely a trick of the psyche, but mission clocks on Patrolmen affected by this phenomenon are out of sync with those of Patrolmen who were not affected by the temporal stoppage.

Reverse Time: (Blaarth, Gern)
Patrolmen have also observed strange temporal qualities surrounding various Metatherions, such as wounds inexplicably healing, energy-powered weapons spontaneously recovering charges from spent shots, and so on. It seems that some individuals are capable of reversing the time flow and thus undoing a specific action. However, the observers retain full knowledge of the reversed action, so this temporal reversal is not merely a trick of the mind.

Spatial Manipulation

Shift Space: (Gern, Erriseth)
Metatherions have been observed changing space to suit their own needs. This race appears to treat the fabric of reality like a child's building blocks in the sense that they can choose an area of space, pick it up from its surroundings, and move it

elsewhere, forcing nearby space aside to make room for the displaced space. Uses for this ability are numerous, including creating a temporary opening to an otherwise impregnable object and manipulating surroundings to avoid or redirect incoming attacks. Fortunately, the Metatherions seem unable to use this ability to tear apart organic matter, so robot Patrolmen are encouraged to wear some type of plant clothing until we can further research this ability.

Reverse Space: (Xanth, Erriseth) Negaspace can already be confusing, but the Metatherions are capable of making it even more so. Some individuals can shift one's perception of up or down, right or left, or even create a sensation of superposition: up and down (or right and left) are simultaneously the same. This can lead to confusion, loss of direction, attempting to walk on the ceiling, and so forth.

Twist Space: (Xanth, Erriseth) Much like how negaspace wraps itself around reality pockets, certain Metatherions can take space and twist it so that it wraps in on itself. While not inherently dangerous—the space being twisted is altered only on a folded dimensional level—this twisting creates a hypnotic, vertiginous effect in observers that leads to dizziness and altered perception.

Dimensional Phasing: (Gern, Xanth, Erriseth) Originally thought to be a form of teleportation, dimensional phasing occurs when a Metatherion glides through a

temporary tear made in a parallel dimension. We believe this tear is keyed to the user's genetic code, so Patrolmen (probably) cannot take advantage of it. Using the ability leaves a detectable trace of phasic radiation. While phased into a parallel dimension, the Metatherion must obey the physical laws of that dimension, so don't expect one to phase and then immediately pop back into existence behind you.

Gravitic Manipulation

Gravity Field: (Blaarth, Kogren, Erriseth) If there's one thing the Metatherions seem to have a great deal of control over, it's gravity. Gravity control allows for a wide range of effects, including but not limited to the following: making an object heavier, crushing an object, throwing or catching an object, and so on.

Antigravity Field: (Kogren, Xanth, Erriseth) A specialized form of gravity control is the antigravity field. This field frees the target from the constraints of gravity, imbuing it with a form of flight or making it impervious to extreme gravity. This amazing ability theoretically would allow the user to step beyond the event horizon of a black hole or a gravastar without needing further protection.

Active Camouflage: (Gern, Kogren) This very specialized form of gravity control produces a field that bends light around the individual, much like gravitational lensing caused by gravity wells. This bent light appears to make the subject invisible

to the naked eye and to infrared sensors. The illusion is not entirely foolproof: close-up inspection within 50cm shows a rippling irregularity, and a graviton sensor will detect the field itself.

Mental Manipulation

Influence Field: (All known cultivar groups) Metatherions exhibit a degree of sustained mental influence on all receptive subjects in its radius. Each cultivar group's influence field has the same mechanic, but the effect differs. For example, Blaarth subtly convey the impression they are more numerous than they appear; Gern trigger a fear response; Xanth exude an aura of calm; Kogren emit waves of confusion and uncertainty; and Erriseth broadcast the belief that they are superior to all other beings. Whether this is a perpetual mechanism or an effect that can be turned off remains to be seen.

Reality Perception: (Kogren, Erriseth) A far more sinister mental power is the ability to shift the perceptions of the targeted individual. For example, imagine you are chasing after something and suddenly you believe you are underwater. Your limbs will seem to slow and you will feel like you are drowning. Or perhaps you run into one room only to find yourself running on the ceiling of the next room (despite actually standing on the ground the whole time). The nefarious possibilities of this power are limited solely by a Metatherion's imagination.

THOSE THAT STAND AGAINST US

The Metatherions may be the most clear and present danger, but make no mistake: there are still uncounted other things out there that threaten us, and it'll be even worse if they team up with our other enemies. If we ignore them, we might have a huge problem on our hands after we manage to deal with the Metatherions. So educate yourselves, prep for combat, and deal with these threats wherever you might encounter them.

—RD

THE CONTINUANCE

Tags/Cues: metal orbs, space balls, glowing red ring, mind-controlled aliens, mainframes, preservation of life, what constitutes "life"?, coordination array, mothership

Some of you may have heard about the phenomenon known as the Continuance, so here's the lowdown on everything we know to date.

Overview

The first Continuance orb was spotted not long ago in space near Deep Relay 9. These metal orbs are the size of small moons, but their most distinguishing feature is a glowing red ring several hundred kilometers in diameter. This ring makes the orb resemble an eyeball with an angry,

red iris. Each of these orbs contains literally thousands of stasis pods that house specimens from every alien race known to the Cosmic Patrol and then some. These orbs also contain powerful computer mainframes and a number of smaller scout orbs that search for intelligent life.

Goals

The true goals of the Continuance are inscrutable. However, based on interrogation of a Continuance mainframe, we believe the Continuance is attempting to preserve life in the galaxy in advance of some future extinction event. Some theorize a similar extinction event was responsible for creating the Coalsack Dead Zone long ago, but the jury is still out as to whether the Continuance was involved.

Unfortunately, the Continuance's definition of "life" doesn't seem to coincide with our own. The specimens kept in stasis are considered "alive" despite being unable to access their higher brain functions. Also, specimens of highly virulent pathogens, which do not technically meet the requirements for being alive, have been located in large quantities in each Continuance orb. Lastly, the Continuance sees positronic intelligences as anathema.

To accomplish its primary goals, the Continuance orbs and its mind-controlled alien slaves catalog new races and take multiple specimens from each race. These slaves also build large communications arrays to

coordinate the Continuance fleet using the ninth-harmonic frequency band.

Leadership

Each orb gets its instructions from its central mainframe. Who or what feeds these instructions to the mainframe is unknown. Attempts to trace the ninth-harmonic signal leads to a dead end, as the full capabilities of the ninth harmonic are not yet known to us.

One oversized "mothership" orb appeared near Deep Relay 2, but this did not yield any answers, only more questions.

Cosmic Patrol Response

Coordinator Dyson's official directive regarding the Continuance is to disrupt the activities of any and all orbs encountered.

If confronted by one of these spheres, your primary mission is to destroy or disable the orb by any means necessary. Your secondary mission is to rescue any mind-controlled alien specimens.

ASTRAL PIRATES

Tags/Cues: trireme spacecraft, Rocketship *Magellan*, empty pocket of space, disappearing stars, destroyed civilizations, stellar cores, fast ships

These guys are pretty new in town, best we can tell. There's petty piracy, and then there's these clowns. Given

the choice between regular space pirates and these new astral pirates we're running into, I'd take regular space pirates any day of the week.

Keep your wits about you, folks.

Overview

Most pirates tend to steal things of value that they can either ransom or resell. Anything from power cells to duranium ingots to exotic alien weaponry—you name it, they've probably stolen it at some point. The problem lies in piracy of larger objects. A few shipments or weapons or alloys here and there aren't a big concern in the whole scheme of things, but what about stealing a whole shuttlepod? A rocketship? What about a moon? A whole planet?

Now you begin to see the problem.

Astral pirates do steal rocketships and other large items, but their foremost concern is something far greater. Unlike normal space pirates, who power their ships with contraterrene, fractumite, or some other substance, astral pirates power their trireme spacecraft with compressed stellar cores stolen from active star systems.

We first discovered this group shortly after Rocketship *Magellan* encountered a pocket of space with no stars within roughly a 100-astron radius. At first the crew thought it had discovered another condition similar to the Coalsack Dead Zone, but they soon learned this was not the case. Further observation showed

stars disappearing outright, without experiencing supernovae, burning out, or other similar star deaths. Shortly thereafter, they caught the thieves in the act: these astral pirate ships were stealing entire stars by siphoning off their outer gases and compressing the stellar core to a manageable size before storing it in containment. The problem was the star system they stole the star from was inhabited by semi-intelligent life, and without a sun to stabilize their planet, most of them froze to death as their planet spun out of control. Fortunately, the Patrol was able to save some of these creatures, but there's no telling how many civilizations astral piracy has doomed to extinction.

In a pinch, these pirates will also steal gas giants—essentially stars that failed to properly form—but the energy these provide is a mere fraction of a stellar core.

Goals

The astral pirates' main goal is to steal entire stars, be they single stars—blue hypergiants, red supergiants, yellow main sequence stars, white dwarfs, brown dwarfs—or binary, trinary, or even quaternary systems. These pirates don't discriminate.

What we haven't been able to learn is *why* these pirates engage in such a dangerous and unstable vocation. Harvesting entire stars is not an easy proposition—rocketship crews have witnessed more than one trireme explode due to stellar

overload—so why do they do it? Science Division has posited a number of hypotheses, but none adequately explain observations.

Stars create a tremendous amount of energy, but what would one need this much energy for? The most common hypothesis involves the pirates gathering star cores and taking them to a central location for an energy-to-matter conversion to generate enough matter for the construction of a Dyson sphere, an Alderson disk, or some other theoretical megastructure.

Leadership

Each trireme has a captain who oversees the operation of the vessel and personally supervises the containment process for each star core. Beyond that, we have no real information. No trireme has ever been witnessed congregating with another, and we have no evidence that a central homeworld for these pirates even exists. Their ships are extremely fast despite their medium size, and their star drives ensure they can outrun even our fastest single-crew rocketships.

Cosmic Patrol Response

Coordinator Dyson has mandated that all pilots and engineers must obscure their rocketship's destination when fleeing from astral pirates. At present, these corsairs are far from the Great Union, but should we give them a trail of breadcrumbs to follow, the

consequences could be disastrous. If astral pirates make a concerted effort to steal Sol from us, then human, Venusian, Martian, and Moonese life as we know it would all cease.

When engaging astral pirates, use extreme caution. Destroying a trireme can potentially cause an explosion of supernova proportions, magnified by the number of compressed stellar cores in storage (including the core in the ship's star drive). So even winning a dogfight against a trireme is a dangerous affair. Combat Division strongly suggests disabling a trireme and engaging in boarding actions instead of attempting to destroy it outright.

LIVING PLANETOIDS

Tags/Cues: Ragna Terminus, rocky entities, sentient, planetary consumption, endless hunger, surface civilizations, geopsyche frequencies

These strange beings from beyond the Ragna Terminus have only recently come onto our radar. For now they remain far enough from the Great Union to be a secondary threat, but we need to keep an eye on them so we don't get caught with our coveralls down.

Overview

The so-called living planets are a number of discrete entities that, on cursory examination, are nothing more than terrestrial planets. There

the similarity ends, for each of these planetoids traverses interstellar space on its own motive force, in search of planets it can devour.

These planetoids are drawn to terrestrial planets, and when it nears one, the planetoid splits open to reveal its mouth. The planetoid draws the planet into its mouth and then consumes it. Any living beings or civilizations on the devoured planet eventually make their way to the planetoid's surface through caverns in the planetoid's crust. These alien life forms form part of the planetoid's exterior ecosystem.

When a living planetoid consumes a rocky planet, the planetoid's size increases commensurately with the mass of the consumed planet. Once the planetoid reaches a large enough size that it cannot easily sustain itself against its own gravity (somewhere around the mass of fourteen Earths), the planetoid will slowly split apart into two separate planetoids, much like cellular mitosis. Then, these two living planetoids go in different directions, never to see each other again.

Goals

A living planetoid seems to have no agenda apart from aimlessly wandering to find planets to eat. It offers no hostile intent and seems not to even notice any of our fleet assets that observe its activities.

The primary reasons these planetoids are marked as threats is because they can potentially disrupt whole civilizations, their inhabitant

cultures can be hostile, and at least one planetoid—codenamed “Alan”—is on a potential track toward the Great Union.

Leadership

As each planetoid is a self-contained, sentient being, these strange celestial bodies act at whim and do not owe allegiance to any central authority (that we know of). Furthermore, we have yet to see evidence that these entities have contact with any other beings whatsoever, including the lifeforms that inhabit them. Life for a living planetoid seems to be a rather lonely existence.

However, the civilizations that thrive on each individual planetoid are another story altogether. The surface culture can vary wildly from one planetoid to the next. For example, the surface of planetoid “Dave” is a war-torn wasteland, where the dominant, xenophobic cultists view the devouring and assimilation of a new planet as a dark omen and commence with enacting the complete and total genocide of the newly assimilated civilizations. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the surface of planetoid “Julie” is a green paradise populated by a melting pot of sentient races from dozens of devoured worlds, and all of these races accept every new race their planetoid devours.

Regardless of the social climate of the surface, each planetoid's population treat their planetoid as some sort of deity, and a number of religious rituals have developed around

various events in the planetoid's life cycle. For example, Dave's cultists call the assimilation of a new culture the Influx, and the subsequent genocidal war is known as the Shrivening. On Julie, when the planetoid's mouth opens to devour another planet, the entire population of cultists stop everything they are doing and watches until the spectacle is complete; they call this ritual the Joining. When Julie grows large enough to split apart, its cultists celebrate the Leaving, where sometimes families are split apart, never to see each other again.

The cult-like behavior of each planetoid's inhabitants is largely the same, regardless of how many diverse species call any given planetoid home. Observation suggests each planetoid emits a kind of geopsychic frequency that consciously or unconsciously influences every living thing on the planetoid's surface and, by so doing, acts as the central authority over its surface dwellers. Thus Dave incites its cultists to genocide (as a "skin"-cleansing mechanism, perhaps?) and Julie evokes a welcoming sense of oneness and life (maybe the additional life keeps her warm in space?). These geopsychic waves have not yet been known to affect Patrolmen, at least not in the short term.

Cosmic Patrol Response

These planetoids are altogether too large to destroy outright, so thus far we have no real recourse against their ravenous hunger. Because of this, Coordinator Dyson has ordered

the prominent planetoids kept under semi-regular surveillance—Alan in particular. If it manages to reach the Great Union, it will attempt to eat Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Luna, Phobos, Deimos, all of the Jovian moons, and—well, you get the idea. Unfortunately, Alan is one of the planetoids with a genocidal surface culture, and efforts to try communicating with this entity thus far have failed.

THOSE THAT STAND WITH US

To all of you new people it may seem like we're all alone in this crazy universe, that just about every living thing in the wide, wild universe is gearing to kill us for good. But that's not entirely the case.

The following groups have good—or at least non-aggressive—relations with the Cosmic Patrol at this time. If you're in a pinch, a member of these groups may be able to lend a hand, a brain, or even a shiny new weapon to the cause.

MOON MEN REMNANT

Tags/Cues: Moon invasion, dying race, begrudging allies, restore the Moon, Elders, mental constructs

Overview

Given the conflicting nature of reports involving our invasion of

the Moon, many believe the Moon's indigenous people were either chased away or eradicated entirely during the campaign. This is not the case. The few surviving Moon Men have taken up residence on Platform Beta, and for now they are our guests rather than prisoners.

The Moon Men are still not thrilled about the Patrol's invasion of the Moon, but their dying race isn't in a strong position to retaliate against us for it. Thus, they had to stand with us or risk facing the very real possibility of their own extinction. For now, they are grudgingly helping us, mostly because we might possibly be able to help them figure out why they are dying. Without our help, we are convinced the Moon Men would die off entirely. Some in the Patrol believe we should just leave them to their fate, but Coordinator Dyson and the Patrol's top brass believe we should be grateful for any allies we can get.

Goals

The Moon Men view the Moon as sacred, and they will do everything in their power to reclaim it, regardless of its condition. The invasion made the Moon practically unlivable—even for them—so their immediate priority is to restore their home to its former glory.

The remnant also seeks to find any possible means of rejuvenating their diminishing race. Stasis pods from the Moon were transferred to Platform Beta, but the tremendous power they require has been a huge

drain on our resources. In exchange for the ceasefire between our races, we have committed to helping them pursue a means to extend their lifespans and encourage the viability of their potential offspring.

Leadership

The Moon Men remnant is presided over by a council of the last surviving Elder Moon Men. We are not entirely certain how many there are at present, as any audience with them certainly includes a few Elders that are purely dynamo-psychism constructs. It is quite possible that some of the Elders have died since the conclusion of the Moon invasion, and the remaining Elders have been slowly replacing their fallen comrades with mental constructs.

AMAZONIA ARMS

Tags/Cues: red steel, innovation, new equipment, hypersuit, aberrance detector, gravablasters, brainwave protector

Overview

The Red Martians are perhaps best known for their red-steel axes, but the premier weaponsmith consortium Amazonia Arms has recently teamed with human and Venusian researchers to handle a large portion of the Cosmic Patrol's equipment needs, including scientific instruments and armor protection in

addition to traditional raygun and bladed weaponry. If you have used a weapon or armored spacesuit in the last year or so, odds are it came from Amazonia Arms.

Leadership and Direction

Amazonia Arms is run by Jardah, a Red Amazon from the Tharsis region. She personally tests every single weapon Amazonia Arms manufactures as quality control. If a weapon or product doesn't meet her personal approval, it goes back to R&D. Bear in mind that Jardah's stamp of approval on a product does not necessarily mean it is without flaws: she assumes a product's shortcomings can be offset by good old-fashioned Martian elbow grease and combat finesse.

The primary goal for Amazonia Arms is ensuring their products help maintain the safety of the Great Union and the Cosmic Patrol. Often the consortium will operate at a loss to ensure every Patrolman has everything necessary to defend against the galaxy's miscreants. Amazonia Arms's secondary goal is innovation: Jardah is always looking for new and interesting ways to destroy the Great Union's opponents.

New Products!

In an effort to thwart the Metatherion threat, Amazonia Arms has recently rushed new equipment into production. The following

product descriptions are from the manufacturer's latest catalog.

VX-12 Hypersuit: Antigravity suit, now with AutoRecall™ feature! Transphasic technology can save you from even the most dangerous spills! Exponentially more survivable than the VX-11 model.

Aberrance Detector: For all your reality pocket needs! Are you yelling "Flarg!" when you mean to yell "Run!" and you can't figure out why people can't *gurndlbreg* you? This gizmo is set to a reality baseline and will let you know when something's not quite *jerpa*. Guaranteed to last *gidurn vlarths*, or your *zlythr* back!

GX-9 Gravablaster: Crush enemies to a pulp or just shove them over a ledge with the GX-9 Gravablaster! Using gravastar repulsion technology, the GX-9 focuses a tight, gravitic beam right where you need it most. Contraterrene battery packs incompatible with the GX-8 model.

E.G.G.H.E.A.D. Mk II: Worried about nosy aliens rooting around in your brain? Frustrate them to no end with the Electroencephalic Gamma-wave Guardian Helmet & Electronic Assistance Device. The E.G.G.H.E.A.D. keeps out 90% of all unwanted brain intrusions! (Note: Field trials are still underway.)

VENUSIAN SPACERS GUILD

Tags/Cues: non-military, Cosmic Patrol escorts, profit, science and innovation, state-of-the-art rocketships, Steering Committee, no-weapon policy

Overview

Since the Moon invasion and the gravastar have destroyed, crippled, or severely damaged many of the Cosmic Patrol's fleet resources, CP HQ has been forced to turn to other logistics methods. The Venusian Spacers Guild initially formed as a non-military means to transport food, supplies, and other commodities in the solar system—anywhere between Platform Hades and the edge of the Oort cloud. Their freight rocketships are not normally equipped with weapons, so in the past, small Cosmic Patrol security rocketships have provided escort services for the guild. Now, with the Patrol fleet stretched to its limits, the tables have reversed: the Venusian Spacers Guild has offered to venture beyond the solar system to provide the Patrol with freight and troop-transport services.

Goals

The primary goal of the Spacers Guild is to acquire profit and expand its influence. The contract with the Cosmic Patrol has greatly accomplished its expansion goals. However, the secondary goal of the guild, one not often publicized throughout the Great Union, is their commitment toward scientific research and innovation. As most of the greatest scientific minds in the Union come from Venus, the Spacers Guild seeks to foster that brilliance by providing educational grants to up-and-coming prodigies and funding

scientific research projects regardless of how far-fetched the theories might be. Because of the guild's participation, researchers have repaid the guild tenfold; thus most guild ships feature state-of-the-art sensor suites and propulsion systems.

Leadership

The Spacers Guild is run by an elected committee of dedicated spacers. This Steering Committee creates policy for the guild and was instrumental in brokering the recent collaboration with the Patrol. One of the Steering Committee's more controversial rulings, which had been upheld for several decades, is the guild's strict no-weapon policy. Spacers are allowed personal sidearms, but to date, weapon hardpoints on spacer rocketships have been expressly forbidden. Although guild members are lobbying to change this, armed Patrol escorts tend to make this a moot issue.





TASKED PATROL SUMMARY REPORT

Director Singh

FILED BY

Platform Athena

LOCATION

Coordinator Dyson

TASKED BY

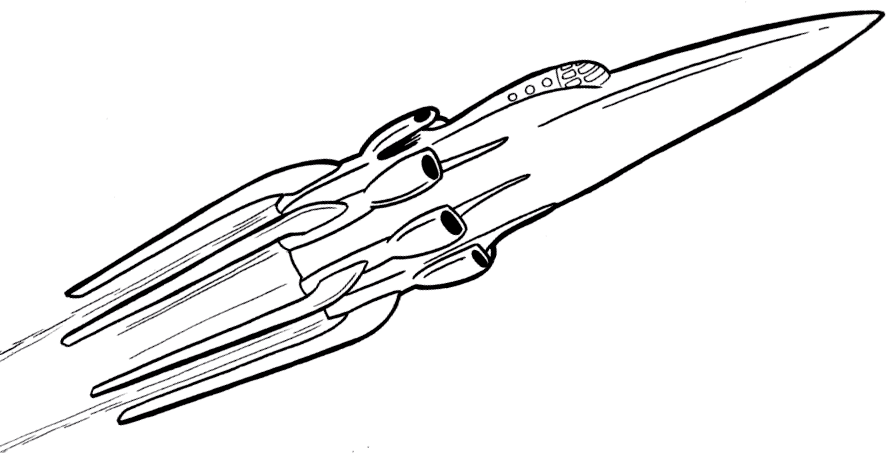
Second Level

FINDINGS

COMMENTARY:

Here are the reports tasked by the coordinator. They cover a select number of new ships either developed by the Patrol or encountered by rocketship crews.

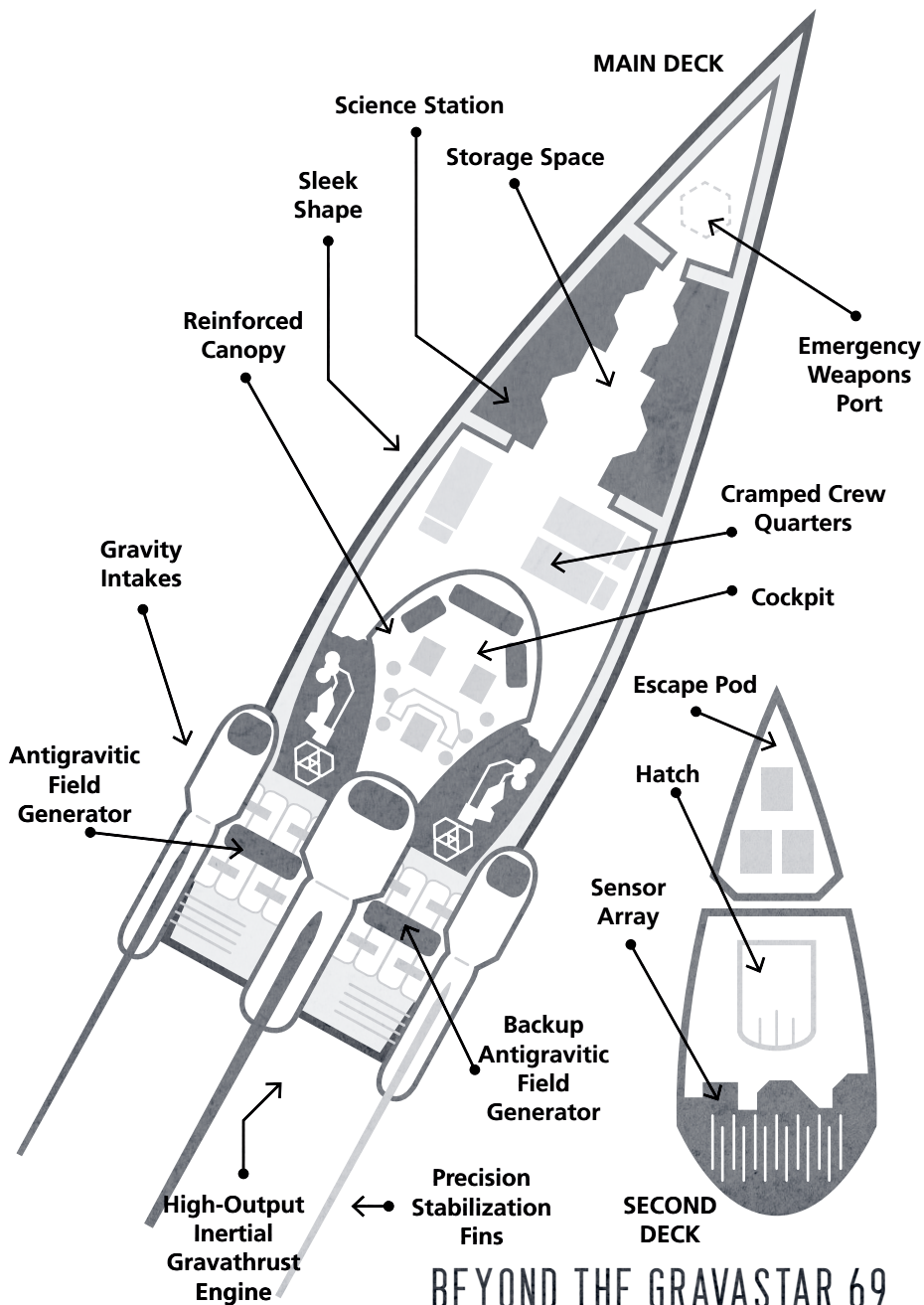
On a personal note, these new cover sheets are less than optimal.

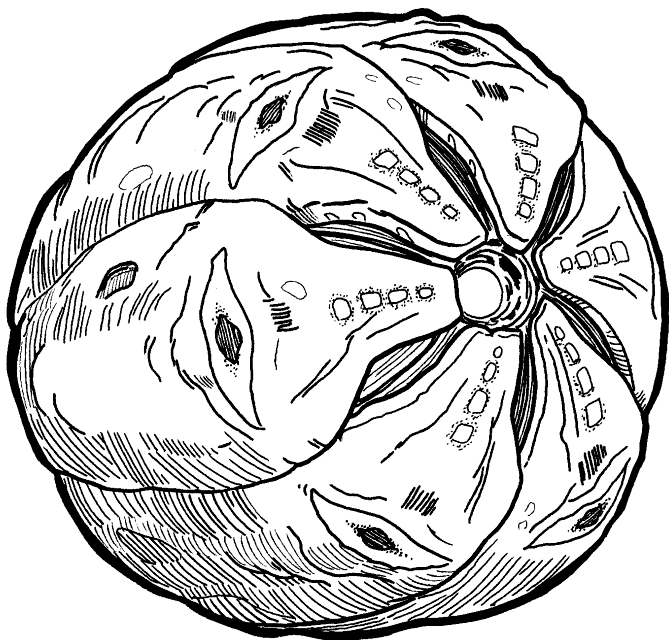


HORIZON RUNNER

RACE: HUMAN CAPABILITIES: MEDIUM/SPEED
CREW: 3 RATING: GREEN-IOTA

After a considerable amount of trial and error, Cosmic Patrol R&D perfected a small rocketship capable of traversing the gravitic horizon of a gravastar or a similar gravity well. The resulting Horizon Runner is a small but nimble craft designed to pierce the gravity shroud and study what lies beyond it. Crews complain that the Runner is slightly cramped, but the hardware necessary to produce the incredible antigravitic fields required to survive the trip are as small as they can be based on the ship's size. According to R&D, larger, more comfortable Horizon Runners are in the works.



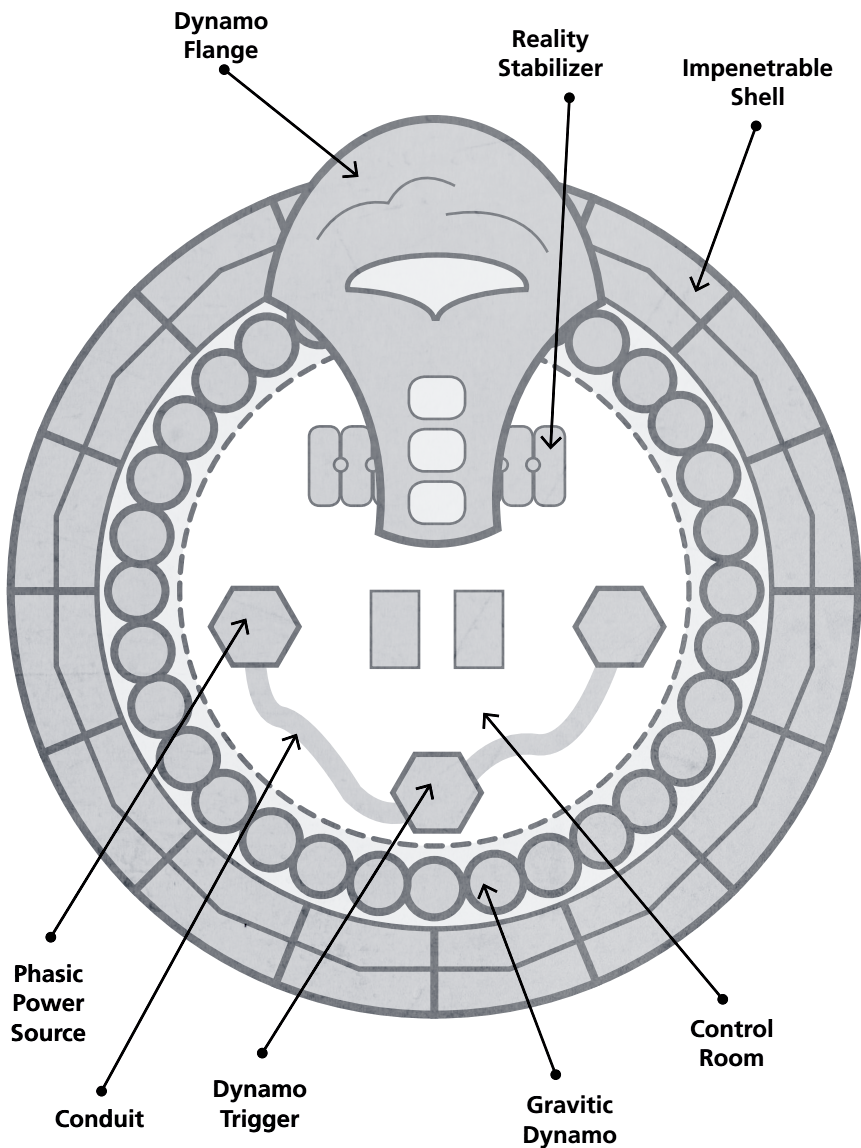


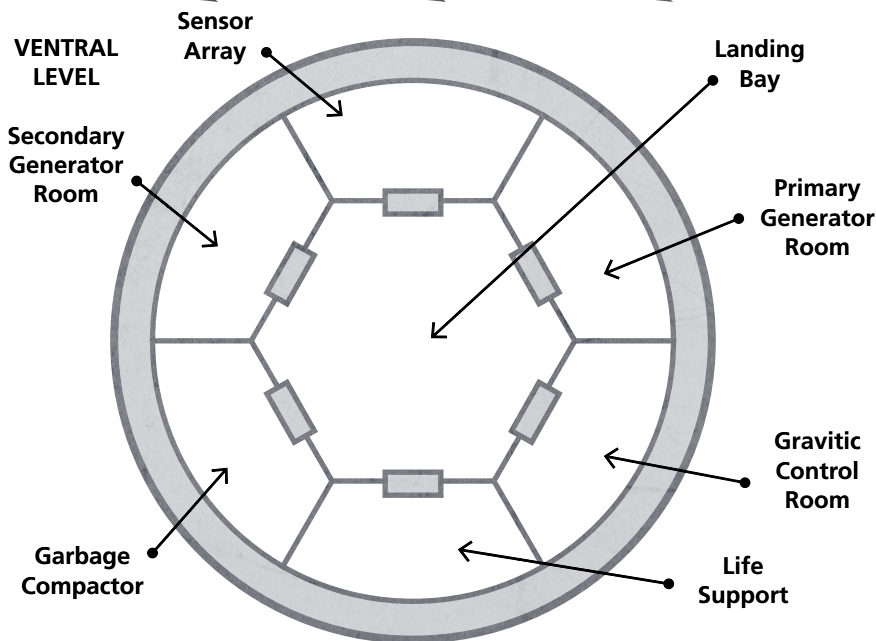
GERN GRAVASPORE

RACE: GERN **CAPABILITIES:** HIGH/SPACETIME RIFT
CREW: 2 **RATING:** RED-PSI

The Gern gravaspore appears to have but one function: to create a gravastar rift into a neighboring dimension. Roughly the circumference of a Patrol cruiser's length, the gravaspore is dominated by a gargantuan dynamo that accounts for ninety-nine percent of the craft's total mass. Due to the craft's singular mission, accommodations for the pair of Gern crew are nonexistent. Crew are included as a failsafe measure to ensure the dynamo activates successfully.

Once the gravitic dynamo activates, the procedure can only be reversed if the polarity shift is performed before the dynamo reaches critical mass and creates a gravastar.





BLAARTH GRAVABASE

RACE: BLAARTH CAPABILITIES: MEDIUM/SUPPORT

CREW: 100-1,000+ RATING: RED-OMEGA

A number of these so-called gravabases dot the landscape of the Metatherions' home dimension and create a defensive obstacle to the deeper parts of negaspace. Speed alone is not enough to run one of these gravabase blockades: each base is equipped with a gravitic cone that draws foreign objects toward its hungry "mouth." In addition to acting as penitentiaries for the Metatherions' enemies, these bases also support Metatherion operations in the immediate vicinity. Aside from the occasional Gern, each gravabase is staffed solely by two Blaarth swarms—one active, the second swarm in temporary stasis.

**DORSAL
LEVEL**

Concourse Level
(Four total,
one shown for clarity)
Concourses contain:

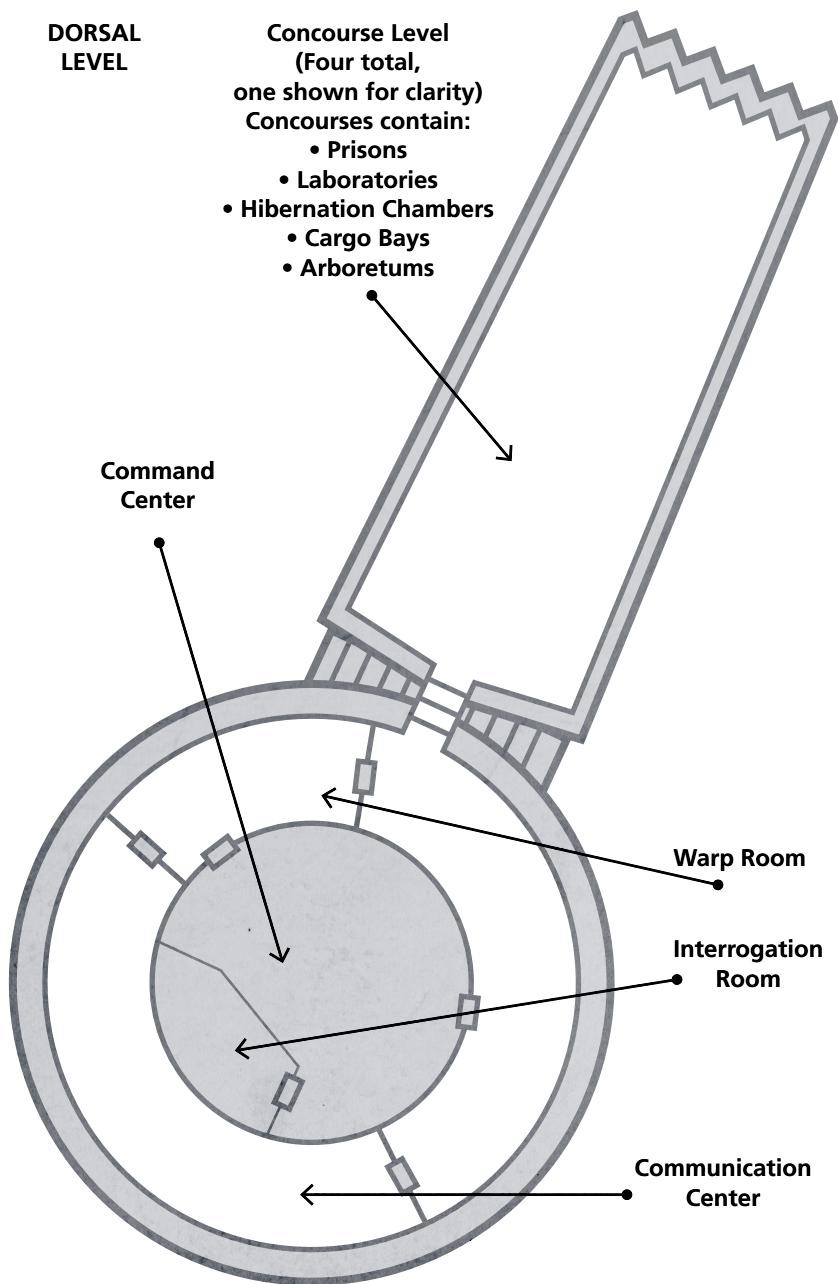
- Prisons
- Laboratories
- Hibernation Chambers
- Cargo Bays
- Arboretums

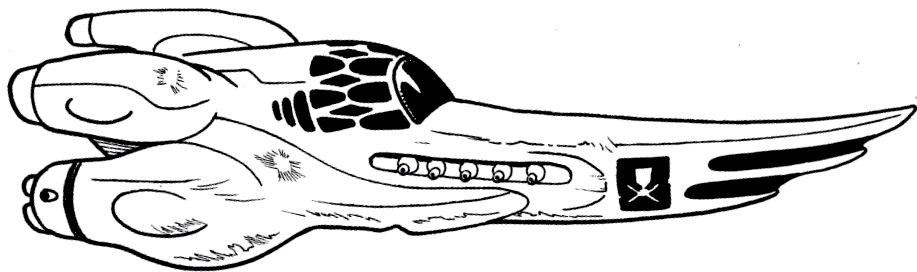
**Command
Center**

Warp Room

**Interrogation
Room**

**Communication
Center**

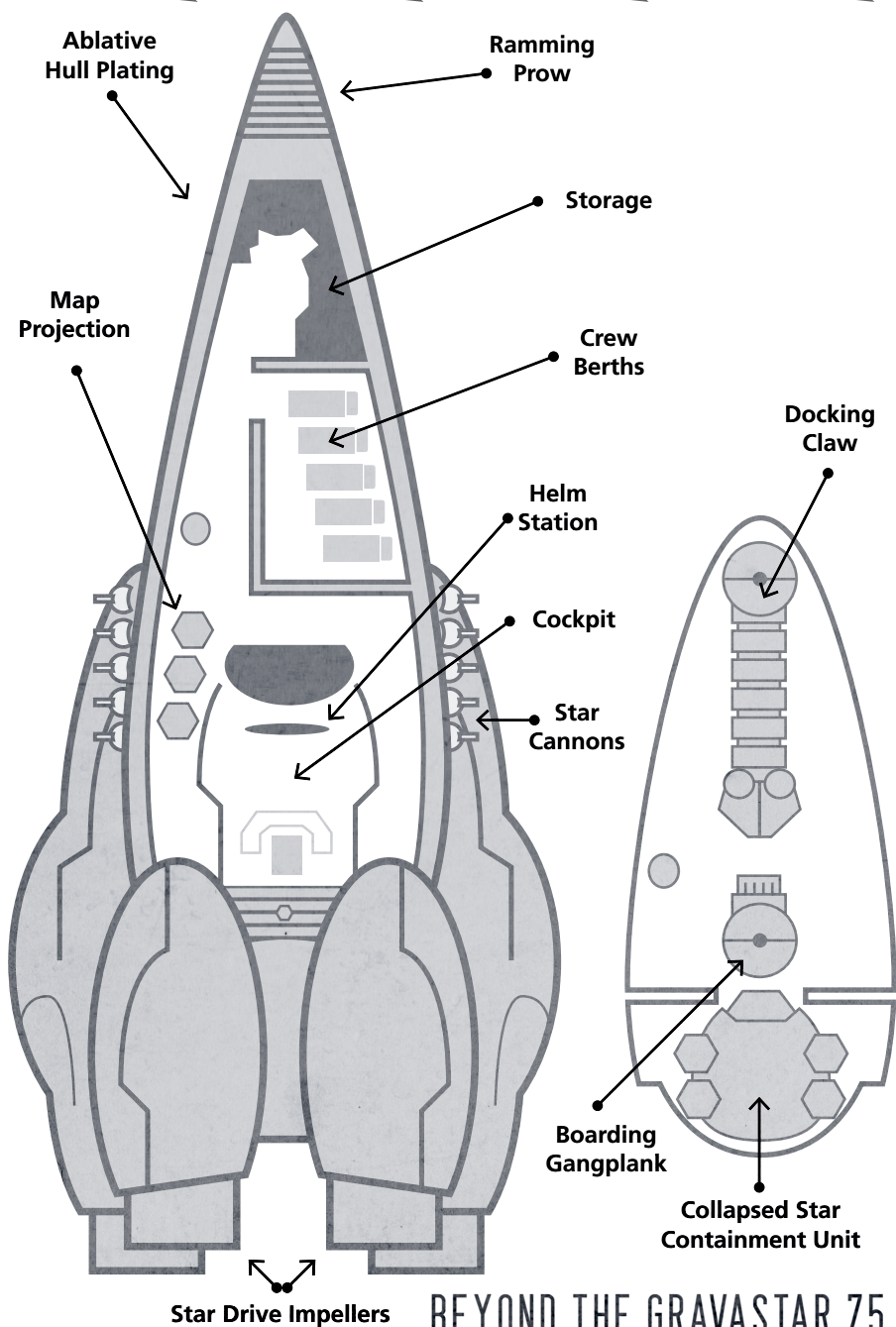




CORSAIR TRIEME

RACE: ASTRAL PIRATES CAPABILITIES: HIGH/ATTACK
CREW: 5 RATING: RED-ZED

Although the corsair triremes captained by the astral pirates may be dangerous in the traditional sense—due to high-output weaponry, high maneuverability, and effective ramming and boarding capabilities—this ship's true danger lies in its precious stellar cargo. Just one of these ships carries enough compressed stellar energy to cause a cataclysmic explosion in the event of containment failure. Triremes are usually equipped with enough containment space to darken a trinary star system, but larger models can absorb a small star cluster. The use of non-traditional tactics and subterfuge is encouraged when confronting this threat.





X MINUS TWO BY THE BOOK

WINSTON CHURCHILL

"WAR IS A GAME THAT IS PLAYED WITH A SMILE."

Before you go jumping headlong into a gravastar or start facing down Metatherions, you might need to consider a few rules to help (or hinder) your mission's success. The following optional rules can lend some fun and/or peril to your quest to protect the universe from all manner of alien threats and space hazards.

Also, feel free to use any of the rules from pages 32–34 of *The Moon Must Be Ours!* in your game.

GRAVITIC FIELDS

When a player character or an NPC is under the influence of a natural or artificial gravitic field, the LN can use the following method to determine whether the target is adversely affected.

- › **Decide gravity effect:** See below.
- › **Determine field strength:** Roll a D12. This is the strength in heisenberg units. The strength of a field can also be predetermined instead of being rolled randomly.
- › **Roll Stat Die:** Roll affected character or NPC's Brains or Brawn die (LN's discretion) and add any bonuses conferred by armor or equipment (LN's discretion).
- › **Compare results:** If the Stat Die roll is less than the field strength (or doesn't match the character's Luck stat), apply the result listed with the gravity effect. The effect

lasts until the gravitic field is neutralized or the target leaves the field's area of influence (LN's discretion).

GRAVITY EFFECTS

Depending on the situation and the nature of gravitational effects, a gravitic field may exhibit one or more of the following effects when a character or NPC fails the Stat Die roll to resist a gravitic field.

Additional Weight: The target and her equipment suddenly starts to weigh far more than normal. The character must do one of the following: slow down, stop walking/running, or drop a weapon or an article of equipment (LN's discretion).

Range Decrease: The character's accuracy with ranged weaponry suffers due to gravity bending raygun beams, weighing down projectiles, and so forth. Attacks in the Near and Far range brackets suffer an additional –3 to their Combat roll.

Crushing Damage: The character starts to weigh so much that gravity itself begins slowly crushing him. Characters influenced by this field will automatically take 1 damage at the start of each of his Narrations.

Photonic Lensing: Gravity bends light waves in such a way that certain important or dangerous details of nearby surroundings—a pit, an enemy, a button—are rendered invisible to the target. At the LN's discretion, the target may attempt another roll against the field strength on her next Narration.

NEGASPACE

Negaspace is, by nature, unpredictable. It isn't your classic "mirror" universe, but some things are backwards. For example, someone who isn't exceptionally strong might

suddenly find he has the ability to lift incredible loads, or what appears to be a lucky break might actually end up being disastrous. For the duration of any given Scene in a Mission that occurs in negaspace, the LNs can either choose from the following list or roll a D6 for a random effect.

NEGASPACE EFFECTS



D8 Roll Negaspace Behavior Effect

- 1 **I'm feeling a little dumb today:** Reverse players' Brawn and Brains Stat Dice.
- 2 **Kill them with kindness:** Reverse players' Charisma and Combat (or Special Die, if combat related) Stat Dice.
- 3 **Am I doing this right?:** When making a roll for a Challenge or Test, the player rolls the D20 against her relevant Stat Die + D12. If the D20 wins the roll, the Challenge/Test is successful.
- 4 **I'm like a bad penny:** If a player's Luck stat is rolled, it means an automatic failure rather than an automatic success.
- 5 **I feel inside out today:** When a player suffers damage, apply damage to Health first; ignore all Stat Die modifiers and Knocked Out/Killed In Action statuses. When Health is depleted, start applying further damage to Armor. When this negaspace effect ends, apply accumulated Health damage to the Armor track and vice versa.
- 6 **You're holding it backward:** Range brackets for all weapons are reversed. For example, a weapon with ranges "Close OK, Near -3, Far —" would be changed to "Close —, Near -3, Far OK."
- 7 **The thick plottens:** Anytime a player would normally spend a Plot Point for an effect, she takes one from the LN's Plot Pool instead. If the Plot Pool is empty or if the player already has the maximum five Plot Points, the Plot Point effect cannot be taken.
- 8 **There's no such thing as Luck:** If a player's Luck stat is rolled, it has no effect.



REALITY POCKETS

A reality pocket represents a self-contained quantum universe that, while similar to our own, has its own particular idiom that may not quite make sense at first blush. Even more dangerous is the trap that someone may not even be aware she is experiencing a reality pocket and will remain under the impression that nothing is amiss.

ECCENTRICITY QUOTIENT

To determine how weird a given reality pocket is, the LN rolls a D6. This is the pocket's Eccentricity

Quotient. The higher the Eccentricity Quotient, the more ridiculous the reality pocket will seem when compared to the normal universe.

ABERRANCE DETECTOR

If a character has an aberrance detector with him, he can try to read it by taking a Brains Challenge. Make the roll as normal, but subtract the Eccentricity Quotient from the Brains + D12 result. Failure indicates he has misread the aberrance detector (perhaps he believes the many blinking lights means everything is normal) and thus does not disbelieve his understanding of the reality pocket.

REALITY POCKET EFFECTS



To give some shape to the weird effects of a reality pocket, roll on the following chart a number of times equal to the Eccentricity Quotient divided by 2 (rounded down); re-roll a duplicate result. These effects last only for as long as the characters remain in the reality pocket.

D12 Roll Reality Pocket Effect

- 1 **What goes up must stay up:** Gravity in this pocket is very different from normal. It can be lesser (you can jump much higher), greater (you can't jump at all), or even opposite (you jump but never come back down). Also, see Gravity Effects (p. 77) for some additional possibilities.
- 2 **In through the out door:** Any (or all) directions—up/down, right/left, in/out, north/south, east/west—are completely reversed. If a character fails a Brains Challenge trying to wrestle with understanding this reality pocket's behavior, she suffers a -1 modifier on all subsequent rolls while in this pocket due to her brain misconstruing which direction means which.
- 3 **Not the top of the food chain:** Humans and other Great Union races are not the dominant species in this reality pocket. In fact, proper humans might not even exist. Expect to see sentient, tool-using cats, whales, cat-whales, or anything else one can imagine. Because humans are non-dominant, players can expect to be hunted down as vermin by this pocket's dominant species.

REALITY POCKET EFFECTS, CONTINUED

- 4 **Lilliputians and Brobdingnagians:** This reality pocket's sense of size relative to the players is completely skewed. The players are either far larger or far smaller than everything else around them, which can result in size-related Challenges (such as needing a Brawn Challenge to climb massive stairs or a Brains Challenge to keep from accidentally crushing a tiny artifact). If the characters are larger than their enemies, multiply all damage dealt by 2 (round up) and divide damage taken by 2 (minimum of 1 per weapon); if the characters are smaller than enemies, divide all damage dealt by 2 (minimum of 1 per weapon) and multiply damage taken by 2 (round up).
- 5 **I'm out of my depth here:** This reality pocket exists solely as two-dimensional space. Characters will need to pass Brains Challenges in order to successfully navigate this space, since, regardless of how much a character believes this two-dimensionality is "normal," a character's brain will have difficulty since it's used to dealing with three-dimensional space. Note: this reality pocket behavior may not be compatible with others in this list, so the LN may choose to re-roll this outcome.
- 6–9 **My tentacles itch:** Both organic and robotic characters will have some manner of physiological difference from the norm. Examples include things like tentacles, gills, gestation sacs, extra limbs, a new mode of mobility, new circuits/buttons, and so on. These changes can be helpful or detrimental, depending on the circumstances. For some random options, see the Physiological/Technological Changes Table (on next page).
- 10 **What's the matter?:** Matter and/or energy behave differently in this pocket. For example, all matter is composed of strange substances (such as a knitted-yarn universe or a plant-matter universe), or matter and energy can be switched (organic beings become energy beings and rayguns shoot matter streams, etc.)
- 11 **There's no place like home:** Normal locations and objects in this pocket are located in an incongruous or opposite environment or made of the wrong material. For example, a space station located underwater, a forest located out in outer space, a tunnel made out of water instead of rock, a robot constructed out of stones, and so on.
- 12 **Non-Euclidian geometry:** Physical space in this pocket doesn't always line up or make rational sense because it looks like Picasso designed the geometry and physics that govern it. The door you just went through probably doesn't lead back to the room you just came from—if it even leads anywhere at all—and the shortest distance between two points is most definitely not a straight line. This allows for things like shooting around corners, gaining full cover from even narrow objects, and other beneficial or detrimental warping of physics and geometry.

PHYSIOLOGICAL/TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES TABLE



To determine random physiological/technological changes brought on by a reality pocket, roll a D12 and a D6 a number of times equal to the pocket's Eccentricity Quotient (see p. 79); re-roll duplicate results or a result that would cancel out a previously rolled result (e.g., rolling the negative version of a positive change). The D12 result indicates the change itself, and the D6 result indicates whether that change's effect is negative (1–2) or positive (3–6). Most of these changes can be applied to either organic or robotic characters.

D12 Roll Physiological/technological Change

- 1 **Better/worse eyesight:** Examples: cyclopean eye, mole eyes, infrared sensors only (negative); catlike eyes, compound eyes, additional light sensor (positive)
- 2 **Enhanced/deficient sense of smell:** Examples: no nose, smell receptors located in fingers/feet/antennae, no scent intake (negative); multiple nostrils, enlarged nasal cavity, sensitive olfactory-sensor package (positive)
- 3 **Amplified/diminished hearing:** Examples: no ears, vibration-sense only, no microphone (negative); batlike ears, echolocation, enlarged microphone input (positive)
- 4 **Respiration/breathing/venting:** Examples: reduced lung capacity, methane-breather, constant overheating (negative); skin respiration, gills, extra cooling fans (positive)
- 5 **More/fewer appendages:** Examples: too many legs, no arms, no radio antenna (negative); extra pair of arms, prehensile tail, hydraulic tripod (positive)
- 6 **Different mobility mode:** Examples: snake-tail lower body, single uni-pod leg, unicycle wheel (negative); wings, fins, tank treads (positive)
- 7 **Reproductive function:** Examples: already pregnant, overprotective maternal/paternal instinct, motor-oil cravings (negative); nursing sac, full-body mitosis, internal assembly line (positive)
- 8 **Diet:** Examples: super-restrictive diet, external digestion, battery hog (negative); photosynthetic skin, osmosis, solar panels (positive)
- 9 **Tactile sense:** Examples: hardened scales, hairless skin, no tactile sensory pads (negative); full-body whiskers, gecko pads, synthetic skin (positive)
- 10 **Cognition:** Examples: lizard brain, microcephaly, rampant computer virus (negative); dolphin brain, second head, extra positronic circuits (positive)
- 11 **Psychological adjustment:** sloth-like lethargy, hypomania, killer-robot programming (negative); increased bravado, utter fearlessness, heroic override (positive)
- 12 **Cosmetic doodads:** Examples: vestigial external organs, extra eyes or digits, additional buttons or levers.

MEME SPACE

Be careful what you think: in meme space, runaway thoughts can become very real—and very dangerous! Any time a character fails a Brains Challenge/Test while in meme space (or in any other situation the LN deems appropriate), a meme creature can appear. Also, meme creatures can be wandering meme space.

To randomly determine what form a meme creature takes, roll on the Meme Creature Special Trait table. Then roll on the Meme Creature Attitude table to find out how it might attack the crew. Lastly, roll on

the Meme Creature Type table for the creature's stats. Put all of these together to get the name of your meme creature.

Ash's character failed a Brains Challenge, so a wayward thought got away from him. He rolls a D6 for the special trait and gets a 4: Extra-large. He rolls a second D6 for the attitude and gets a 6: Nightmarish. He rolls a third D6 for the creature type and gets another 6: Nightmare.

Uh oh. This means he just rolled up an "Extra-large Nightmarish Nightmare" ...

MEME SPACE CREATURE SPECIAL TRAIT



D6 Roll Meme Creature Special Trait

- 1 **Resilient:** When the meme creature deals damage, it heals its Armor for the same amount.
- 2 **Unformed:** Attacks against this insubstantial creature do half damage (round up).
- 3 **Extra-small:** Subtract 2 from the meme creature's weapon damage (minimum 1), and subtract 2 from the creature's Armor.
- 4 **Extra-large:** Add 2 to the meme creature's weapon damage (maximum 6), and add 2 to the creature's Armor.
- 5 **Hideous:** Characters must pass a Brains Test to muster the courage to attack this revolting creature.
- 6 **Divisible:** Roll a D10 at the end of the creature's action. On a result of 1, the creature splits to create a duplicate copy of itself. The copy retains the original creature's current Armor damage and can also divide if a 1 is rolled after its actions.



MEME SPACE CREATURE ATTITUDE

D6 Roll Meme Creature Attitude

- 1 **Benign:** Nudge, Damage 1, Close OK, Near -3, Far —
- 2 **Curious:** Poke, Damage 2, Close OK, Near -3, Far —
- 3 **Confused:** Disoriented Lashing, Damage 3, Close OK, Near OK, Far —
- 4 **Hungry:** Rending Teeth, Damage 3, Close OK, Near —, Far —
- 5 **Angry:** Claw Swipe, Damage 4, Close OK, Near -3, Far —
- 6 **Nightmarish:** Nightmare Fuel, Damage 5, Close OK, Near OK, Far OK

MEME SPACE CREATURE TYPE



D6 Roll Meme Creature Type

- 1 **Mascot:** Brawn D6, Brains D4, Charisma D8, Combat D6, Armor 8.
Examples: inhuman representation, fictional character, cartoon
- 2 **Desire:** Brawn D4, Brains D6, Charisma D8, Combat D8, Armor 10.
Examples: dogged hunter, spurned lover, determined collector
- 3 **Memory:** Brawn D6, Brains D8, Charisma D8, Combat D8, Armor 12.
Examples: childhood trauma, broken faith, lost relative
- 4 **Beast:** Brawn D8, Brains D4, Charisma D4, Combat D8, Armor 12.
Examples: lion, cobra, werewolf
- 5 **Emotion:** Brawn D6, Brains D6, Charisma D8, Combat D6, Armor 10.
Examples: terror, rage, abandonment
- 6 **Nightmare:** Brawn D10, Brains D4, Charisma D8, Combat D10, Armor 15.
Examples: demons, spiders, clowns

Note: As incorporeal beings, meme creatures have no Health track.

METATHERION POWERS

USING POWERS

Most Metatherion powers do not require a die roll to use, and the power's effect lasts until the user voluntarily chooses to end the effect or is either Knocked Out or Killed in Action. While the user maintains a power's continuing effect, it suffers a -1 modifier to any die rolls, including variable-Damage rolls (if any). Only one power can be maintained at a time, and to use a different power, the user must drop its currently maintained power's effect.

Under normal circumstances, a user can initiate a power OR make an attack on its action—not both. However, for players looking for more of a challenge, the group may decide that a user can initiate a power and make *one* weapon attack with the same action.

CHOOSING POWERS

Whenever the LN introduces a Metatherion (or any NPC the LN wishes to give these powers), she may choose a number of powers from the table below, or she may roll them randomly (re-roll duplicate results). The number of powers chosen depends on the NPC's race: Blaarth (2), Gern (3), Xanth (3), Kogren (4), Erriseth (5), non-Metatherion (2).

METATHERION POWERS



D12 Roll Metatherion Power

- 1 **Stop time:** The targeted character cannot move or attack during his next Narration.
- 2 **Reverse time:** The targeted character must re-roll her most recent successful Combat or Challenge/Test roll. If a re-rolled Combat roll fails, remove the damage it inflicted, even if resulted in killing an NPC. If a re-rolled Challenge/Test fails, the LN reverses time and adjusts the narrative to account for the consequences of the failed roll (if any).
- 3 **Shift space (self):** The user of this power can shift space around itself to try avoiding an attack. The user can re-roll its Combat Die once when defending against an attack; the second result must be kept.
- 4 **Shift space (other):** The user of this power can shift space to make someone else take a weapon hit meant for the user. Both the user and the target roll their Brains Die. If the user wins the roll, the target must roll Combat against the attack. If the target wins, the user must defend against the attack with its Combat Die as normal. This power can also be used to create entrances through solid material.

- 5 **Reverse space:** Any pair of directions—up/down, right/left, in/out, north/south, east/west—are completely reversed in the character's mind. A character must pass a Brains Test to differentiate between the real directions and the wrong ones.
- 6 **Gravity control:** The user may choose any of the gravity effects options listed under Gravitic Fields (p. 77). Resolve the effect using the steps in that section.
- 7 **Antigravity field:** The user can either levitate itself at whim or automatically resist the effects of a gravitic field.
- 8 **Active camouflage:** The user bends light around itself, making it very hard to see. A character must pass a Brains Test with a –2 modifier in order to see the user; failures cannot be rerolled. Any Combat action the user takes will drop the field.
- 9 **Twist space:** The user twists space around the target, creating a dizzying, vertigo effect. Any Challenges or Tests that would require the target to aim or maintain balance (LN's discretion) suffer a –2 modifier for the duration of the effect.
- 10 **Dimensional phasing:** The user takes a Brains Challenge to search for a compatible neighboring dimension. If successful, the user phases itself (and characters or objects it is touching) into that dimension and may return to its home dimension at any time during one of its future actions.
- 11 **Influence field:** The field's effect differs depending on the user's race.
Blaarth: Reduce the characters' Special Die by one level
Gern: Reduce the characters' Brawn Die by one level (no change to Health)
Xanth: Reduce the characters' Combat Die by one level
Kogren: Reduce the characters' Brains Die by one level
Eriseth: Reduce the characters' Charisma Die by two levels
Other: Randomly choose one of the effects.
- 12 **Reality Perception:** The user makes the target believe something about the nature of the universe that is not true. Choose a specific false reality or roll once on the Reality Pocket Effect table (p. 79-80) to determine what reality the target believes is true at that moment.



X MINUS ONE
HEROES &
VILLAINS

JOHN WAYNE

"COURAGE IS BEING SCARED TO DEATH AND SADDLING
UP ANYWAY."

THOMAS PROPHET/ARMS DEALER

VITAL FACTORS

Name: Tommy "Two Gun" Prophet **Age:** 37
Homeworld: Earth **Rank:** N/A

Tags: > Salesman > Convincing > Prepared
> Unscrupulous > Greedy > Shyster > Blowhard



Arms Dealer: When it comes to personal weaponry, one can never be too prepared—or so goes the arms dealer's philosophy. Whether he's hawking legitimate goods or illegal merchandise, he has a weapon or military gadget that's appropriate for just about any situation. Just make sure he's not ripping you off.



BEYOND THE GRAVASTAR 87

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

NEGOTIATION

LUCK

D6

D8

D10

D6

D10

(SPECIAL)

9

THOMAS PROPHET/ARMS DEALER

SHIP: _____ MISSION: _____

CUES

THIS BABY IS TOP OF THE LINE.

NO DEAL!

THE ACTIVATION BUTTON IS...HERE, MAYBE?

I HAVE THE RIGHT HARDWARE FOR YOU!

I'M A BIT OUT OF PRACTICE.

TWO PHASO-SPIGOTS ARE BETTER THAN ONE!

THAT WEAPON'S TRICKY BUT EFFECTIVE.

THIS IS A LITTLE UNORTHODOX, BUT...

HERE, TRY THIS ONE OUT.

ARE YOU TRYING TO *ROB* ME?

I'LL FIGHT THE NASTIES FROM BACK HERE...

I DON'T KNOW, CHECK THE MANUAL.

NOW WHERE DID I PUT THAT THINGY?

COULD YOU SLOW DOWN A LITTLE?

AIM FOR THE HEAD!

OH, I'VE GOT *PLENTY* OF AMMO.

NEVER DOUBT THE FACTORY SPECS!

BY ALL MEANS, GO IN GUNS BLAZING.

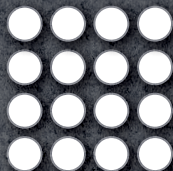
DISPOSITION

DOESN'T LIKE DIVING INTO DANGER.

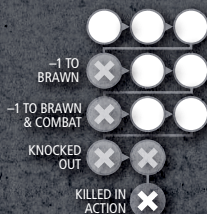
MAINTAINS A CONFIDENT SWAGGER.

MUST BE EVERYONE'S BEST FRIEND.

TRUSTS ONLY A FEW CLOSE FRIENDS.



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Vapoblaster

DAMAGE	RANGE		
	Close	Near	Far
4	OK	OK	OK

Radium Grenade

DAMAGE	RANGE		
	Close	Near	Far
Roll D4	OK	-3	—

EQUIPMENT

Rocket Pack

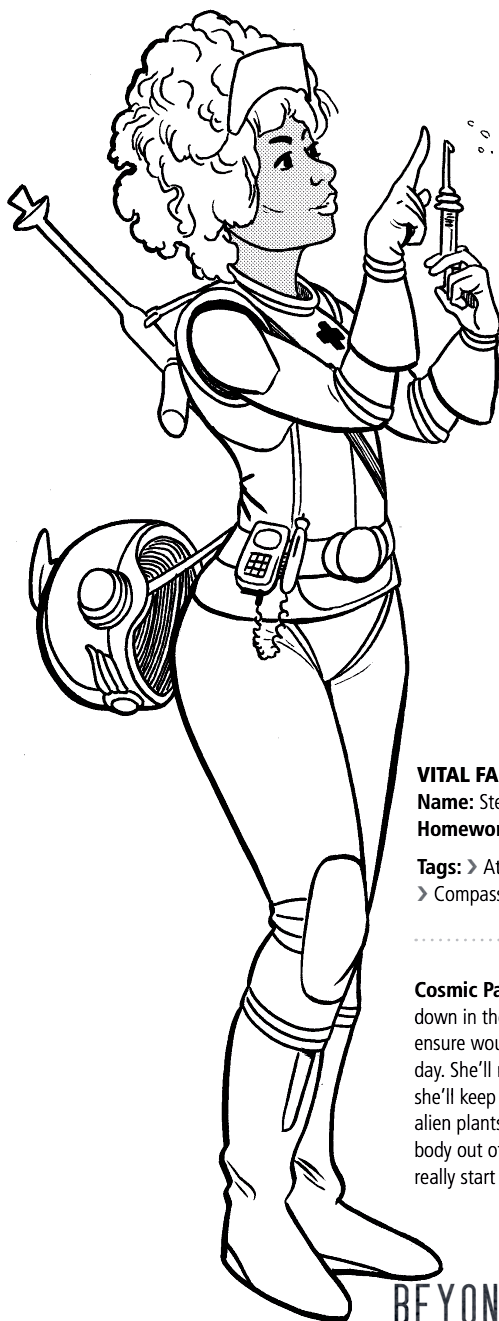
Spare Weapon Modules

Space Bandolier

Weapon Manuals

Spare Ammunition

STEPHANIE BARTON/COMBAT MEDIC



VITAL FACTORS

Name: Steph "Stethoscope" Barton **Age:** 26
Homeworld: Earth **Rank:** Sergeant

Tags: > Attentive > Cautious > Studious > Fearless
> Compassionate > Hardy > Persistent



Cosmic Patrol Combat Medic: If someone goes down in the field, the combat medic is there to ensure wounded Patrolmen live to fight another day. She'll make sure your shots are up to date, she'll keep you from accidentally eating poisonous alien plants, and she'll carry or drag your injured body out of danger when the claws and raybeams really start flying.

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

FIRST AID

LUCK

D8

D8

D6

D8

D10

(SPECIAL)

4

STEPHANIE BARTON/COMBAT MEDIC

SHIP: _____ MISSION: _____

CUES

WALK IT OFF, PATROLMAN.

ASK QUESTIONS FIRST, SHOOT LATER.

HUH. THAT'S NOT LISTED IN MY BOOK.

I'M NOT EXACTLY A PACIFIST.

THAT'S GOING TO LEAVE A MARK.

DON'T WORRY. WE CAN REATTACH THAT LATER.

SOMETIMES IT'S OK TO RUN AWAY.

LET ME TAKE A LOOK AT THAT.

I'LL TAKE A STAB AT IT.

LET ME SCAN THIS THING FIRST.

THIS MAY STING A LITTLE.

DON'T TELL ME. YOU'RE ALLERGIC.

YOU'RE HEAVIER THAN YOU LOOK!

THERE'S ALWAYS ANOTHER WAY.

A LITTLE COMPASSION GOES A LONG WAY.

NEVER RUSH A SURGICAL PROCEDURE!

I CAN'T CURE STUPID.

FANCY WEAPONS MEAN FANCY WOUNDS.

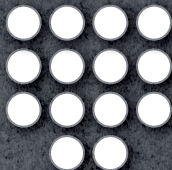
DISPOSITION

WILLING TO HELP INJURED ENEMIES.

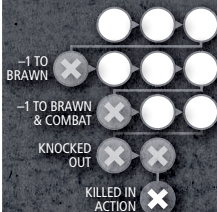
FRIENDLY AND PERSONABLE.

PUTS SAFETY OF OTHERS FIRST.

WADES INTO BATTLE TO HELP THE WOUNDED.



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Valiant Automatic Rifle

Surgical Blade

	DAMAGE	RANGE		
		Close	Near	Far
Valiant Automatic Rifle	3	OK	OK	OK
Surgical Blade	2	OK	—	—

EQUIPMENT

Hypodermic Syringe

Trauma Kit

BioMed Scanometer

Medicinal Cocktail Mixer

Pharmaceuticals

ERROL-1/ROCKET JOCKEY



Cosmic Patrol Rocket Jockey: The robotic rocket jockeys assembled on Platform Alpha represent an attempt to push the limits of robot-assisted piloting. Due to a mistake in programming, the first batch of jockeys lost their self-preservation instinct but improved their curiosity. Because of this, a robotic jockey is always striving to go faster than ever before, reach new heights, and explore every corner of the galaxy.

VITAL FACTORS

Name: ERROL-1

Age: 7

Homeworld: Platform Alpha

Rank: Lieutenant

Tags: > Robotic > Daring > Debonair > Cocky
> Flashy > Heroic > Fun-loving

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

PILOTING

LUCK

D8

D6

D8

D10

D10

(SPECIAL)

8

ERR0L-1/ROCKET JOCKEY

SHIP: _____ MISSION: _____

CUES

NO, NO, YOU GOTTA DO IT WITH *STYLE!*

I *ALWAYS* FLY BY THE SEAT OF MY PANTS!

AH, NOW HERE'S YOUR PROBLEM...

IF I HAD A SWORD, I'D SWASH SOME BUCKLES.

MY WAY WILL BE FASTER!

C'MON, WHERE'S YOUR IMAGINATION?

GET A MOVE ON!

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN!

IF I HAD HAIR, IT'D BE ON FIRE BY NOW.

PIECE OF TRANSISTOR CAKE!

NOT THE BRAINCASE!

WHY'S THIS GOTTA BREAK *NOW?*

GIMME THE KEYS.

TAKE *THAT*, EVILDOERS!

TRUST ME, I CAN HANDLE THE SPEED.

TIME TO BREAK THE THIRD LAW OF ROBOTICS!

WHERE'S YOUR SENSE OF ADVENTURE?

CUTE. THEY THINK THEY CAN *OUTRUN* ME.

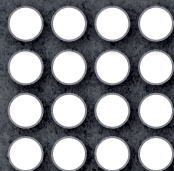
DISPOSITION

CAKLES IN THE FACE OF DANGER.

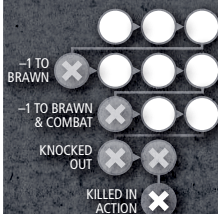
PREFERS TO DO THINGS WITH STYLE.

TAKES RISKS OTHERS WON'T.

ACTS SMOOTH AND CHARMING.



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Heavy AtomoPistol

	RANGE			
DAMAGE	Close	Near	Far	
3	OK	OK	-3	

EQUIPMENT

Rocketship Keys

Pilot's Wing Badge

Goggles and Scarf

Repair Kit

Copy of *I, Robot*

**VITAL FACTORS****Name:** Gleth**Age:** 13 rings**Homeworld:** Zardon**Rank:** Lowest Branch

Tags: > Many > Uncouth > Collective > Strong
> Simple > Disrespected > Young



Blaarth Worker: The lowest Metatherion hierarchy, the Blaarth are the ones that get sent when no members of the other Metatherion races want to do a task. These hardy but unsophisticated creatures will do anything an elder Metatherion instructs them to do, and they have little sense of individuality. When encountered in groups, Blaarth can be incredibly dangerous.

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

GRAPPLING

LUCK

D10

D6

D6

D6

D10

(SPECIAL)

6

GLETH/BLAARTH WORKER

SHIP: _____ MISSION: _____

CUES

AS YOU WISH.

BLAARTH WILL NEVER BE A HERO.

TO THE GRAVABASE!

LET US HELP YOU WITH THAT.

HAVE YOU EVER WIPED OUT A WHOLE RACE?

DO IT RIGHT OR DO IT OVER.

PREPARE THE PRISONERS.

THE BUTTON WILL NOT PUSH ITSELF.

PREPARE TO BE BROKEN.

WE ARE STRONGER THAN WE APPEAR.

WE MUST CLIMB TO THE NEXT BRANCH.

THE MASTERS ARE WATCHING.

A LONE BLAARTH IS NEVER ALONE.

WE MUST APPEASE THE MASTERS.

WE ARE NOT SLAVES.

WE DO NOT HAVE THAT AUTHORITY.

BLAARTH ARE NOT ALL THE SAME.

PRAISE BE UNTO THE TREE!

DISPOSITION

SERVILE TO ALL HIGHER AUTHORITY.

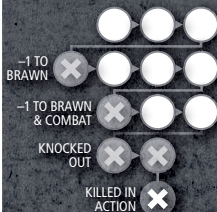
WORKS HARD ON TASKS GIVEN.

MORE CONFIDENT IN THE PRESENCE OF OTHERS.

WILLING TO TURN TO VIOLENCE.



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Tentacle Fist

DAMAGE	RANGE		
	Close	Near	Far
2	OK	—	—

Tentacle Fist

2	OK	—	—
---	----	---	---

EQUIPMENT

Gravity Field (Power)

Reverse Time (Power)

Worker's Garb

MetaTool

Tree Idol



VITAL FACTORS

Name: Kesshna

Homeworld: Zardon

Age: 31 rings

Rank: Lower Branch

Tags: > Terrifying > Skull Collector > Efficient
> Ruthless > Fearless > Malevolent > Clink, Clink, Clink

Gern Assassin: If you hear the sound of skulls clinking together, then it's probably already too late. The Metatherion assassins pride themselves on fear and efficiency, and they revel in their work. When a Gern's necklace has no more room, it adds the necklace to its trophy room and starts another.

BRAWN

D6

BRAINS

D8

CHARISMA

D6

COMBAT

D8

STRIKE FROM
THE SHADOWS

D10

(SPECIAL)

LUCK

1

KESSHNA/GERN ASSASSIN

SHIP: _____ MISSION: _____

CUES

I HOPE YOU'RE NOT ATTACHED TO YOUR HEAD.

CLINK, CLINK, CLINK GO THE SKULLS.

SOMEONE WANTS YOU DEAD.

CUT THE ROOT AND THE BRANCHES DIE.

MY TARGET WILL NOT ESCAPE ME!

ANY LAST REGRETS?

WHAT DO THE SKULLS TELL ME TODAY?

WHAT THE MASTERS WANT, THE MASTERS GET.

YOU HAVE A PRETTY SKULL.

ALWAYS AIM FOR THE NECK.

I WANT TO SEE FEAR IN MY TARGET'S EYES.

I SEE YOU. DO YOU SEE ME?

KILLING IS SATISFYING WORK.

YOU'VE BEEN NAUGHTY.

THE SHADOWS ARE ALL MY FRIENDS.

PERHAPS IT IS TIME TO WITHDRAW.

I GET MY TARGET'S HEAD IN THE END.

PRaise BE UNTO THE TREE.

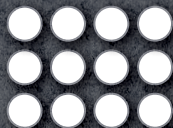
DISPOSITION

THRIVES ON INCITING FEAR.

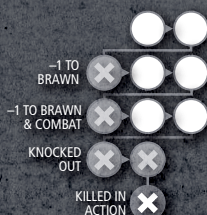
ENJOYS KILLING.

ATTACKS WITHOUT PROVOCATION.

WAITS FOR THE PERFECT MOMENT TO STRIKE.



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Scythe Claw

DAMAGE	RANGE		
	Close	Near	Far
3	OK	—	—

Scythe Claw

3	OK	—	—
---	----	---	---

EQUIPMENT

Active Camouflage (Power) Shift Space (Self) (Power)

Influence Field (Power) Assassin's Garb

Necklace of Uth Skulls Tree Idol

VITAL FACTORS

Name: Zieron

Age: 103 rings

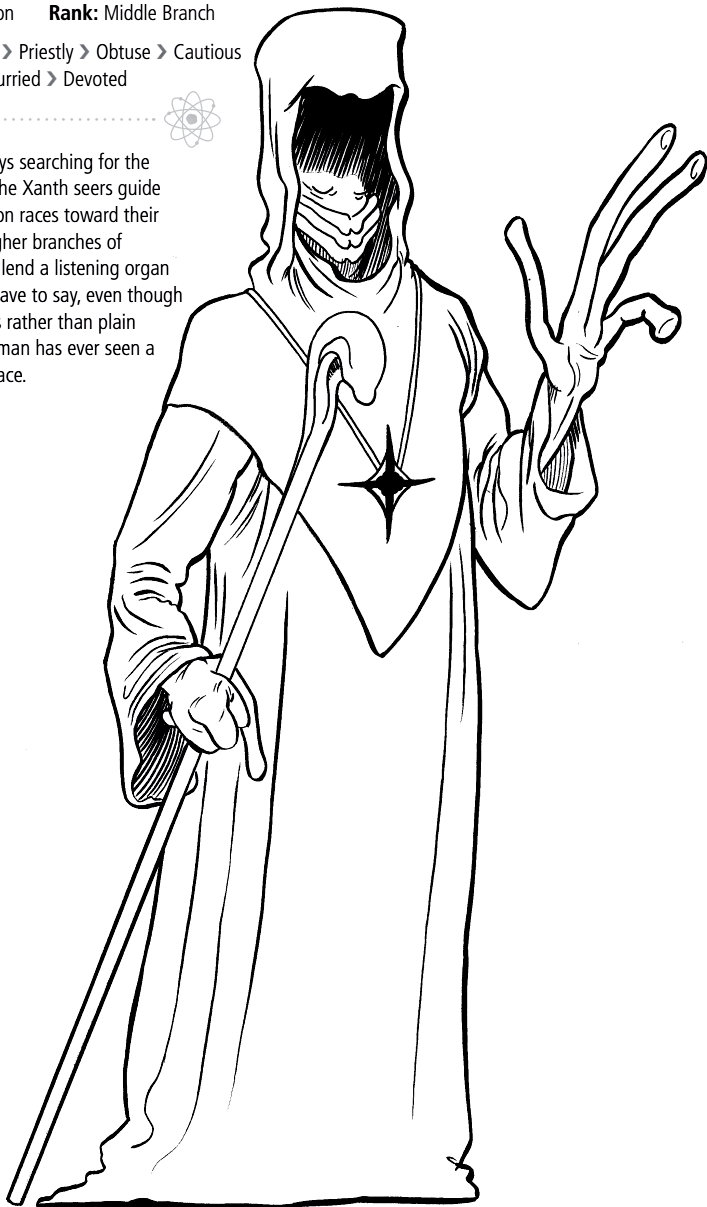
Homeworld: Zardon

Rank: Middle Branch

Tags: > Mysterious > Priestly > Obtuse > Cautious
> Deliberate > Unhurried > Devoted



Xanth Seers: Always searching for the next sign or omen, the Xanth seers guide the other Metatherion races toward their destiny. Even the higher branches of Metatherion society lend a listening organ to what the Xanth have to say, even though they speak in riddles rather than plain language. No Patrolman has ever seen a Xanth's shadowed face.



BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

SECOND
SIGHT

LUCK

D4

D10

D10

D4

D10

(SPECIAL)

7

ZIERON/XANTH SEER

SHIP: _____ MISSION: _____

CUES

ALL THINGS HAVE THEIR PLACE.

SOMETHING IS OFF BALANCE IN THE COSMOS.

THE FUTURE IS...UNCLEAR.

DO NOT LIE TO ME.

I HAVE SEEN THINGS YOU WOULD NOT BELIEVE.

I WOULD NOT DO THAT IF I WERE YOU.

THE STARS KNOW ALL.

YOU LOOK AT THINGS THE WRONG WAY.

THIS PATH LEADS TO DANGER.

LOOK TO THE PAST FOR ANSWERS.

LOOK INTO MY EYES.

WHAT ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR?

ONLY A FOOL CHASES THE UNKNOWN.

PERHAPS. TRY IT AND SEE.

THE SOLUTION LIES IN DREAMS.

I CANNOT SEE MY OWN PATH.

LET ME PONDER THAT.

PRAISE BE UNTO THE TREE.

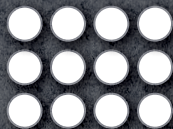
DISPOSITION

SEEKS TRUTH IN ALL THINGS.

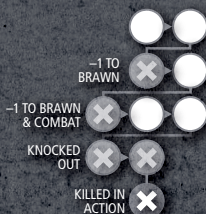
SHIES AWAY FROM DANGER.

ALWAYS HONEST, NEVER FORTHCOMING.

CURIOUS ABOUT ITS OWN FUTURE.



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Sonarium Staff

DAMAGE	RANGE		
	Close	Near	Far
2	OK	—	—

EQUIPMENT

Influence Field (Power)

Antigravity Field (Power)

Dimensional Phasing (Power)

Seer Cloak

Scripture Book

Gravastar Pendant

RENGOR/KOGREN CORRUPTOR

VITAL FACTORS

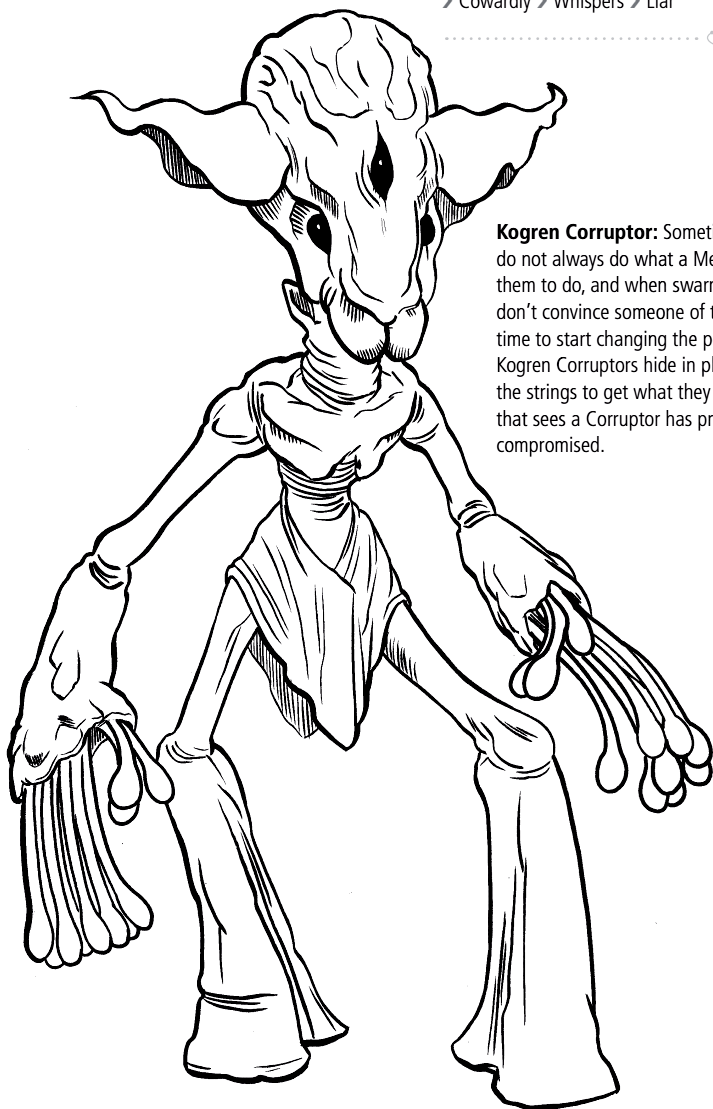
Name: Regnor

Age: 155 rings

Homeworld: Zardon

Rank: Higher Branch

Tags: > Sneaky > Subversive > Suggestive > Hidden
> Cowardly > Whispers > Liar



Kogren Corruptor: Sometimes living beings do not always do what a Metatherion tells them to do, and when swarms, fear, or omens don't convince someone of the right path, it's time to start changing the person itself. The Kogren Corruptors hide in plain sight and pull the strings to get what they want. A Patrolman that sees a Corruptor has probably already been compromised.

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

PREVARICATION

LUCK

D6

D10

D10

D6

D10

(SPECIAL)

9

RENGOR/KOGREN CORRUPTOR

SHIP: _____ MISSION: _____

CUES

YOU'VE WANTED TO DO THAT FOREVER.

I AM YOUR FRIEND.

NOW YOU SEE ME...

THIS IS HOW THINGS TRULY ARE.

THESE AREN'T THE [ITEMS] YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.

LAY DOWN YOUR WEAPONS.

THIS IS SUCH FUN!

HOW...QUAINT.

I KNOW JUST WHAT YOU NEED.

DON'T LOOK AT ME!

YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK.

WAIT, MY THIRD EYE SEES...

THIS WILL END POORLY FOR YOU.

FLATTERY WILL GET YOU EVERYWHERE.

WHAT DELICIOUS TRUTH YOU HAVE.

THAT ONE INSULTED YOU. GO TAKE CARE OF IT.

PRAISE BE UNTO THE TREE.

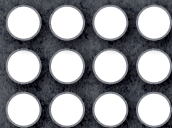
DISPOSITION

DISLIKES BEING OUT IN THE OPEN.

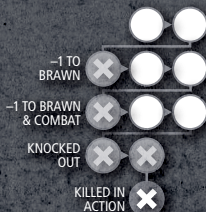
FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO SPEAK THE TRUTH.

LOVES TURNING FRIENDS ON EACH OTHER.

PREFERS SOLITUDE OVER COMPANY.



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Invisible Needle

DAMAGE	RANGE		
	Close	Near	Far
1*	OK	—	—

Tritanium Darts

2	OK	OK	—
---	----	----	---

* Damage bypasses Armor

EQUIPMENT

Active Camouflage (Power)

Influence Field (Power)

Reality Perception (Power)

Gravity Field (Power)

Hologram Projector

Tree Idol

VADON DARTOR/ERRISETH MASTER

VITAL FACTORS

Name: Vadon Dartor

Age: 637 rings

Homeworld: Zardon

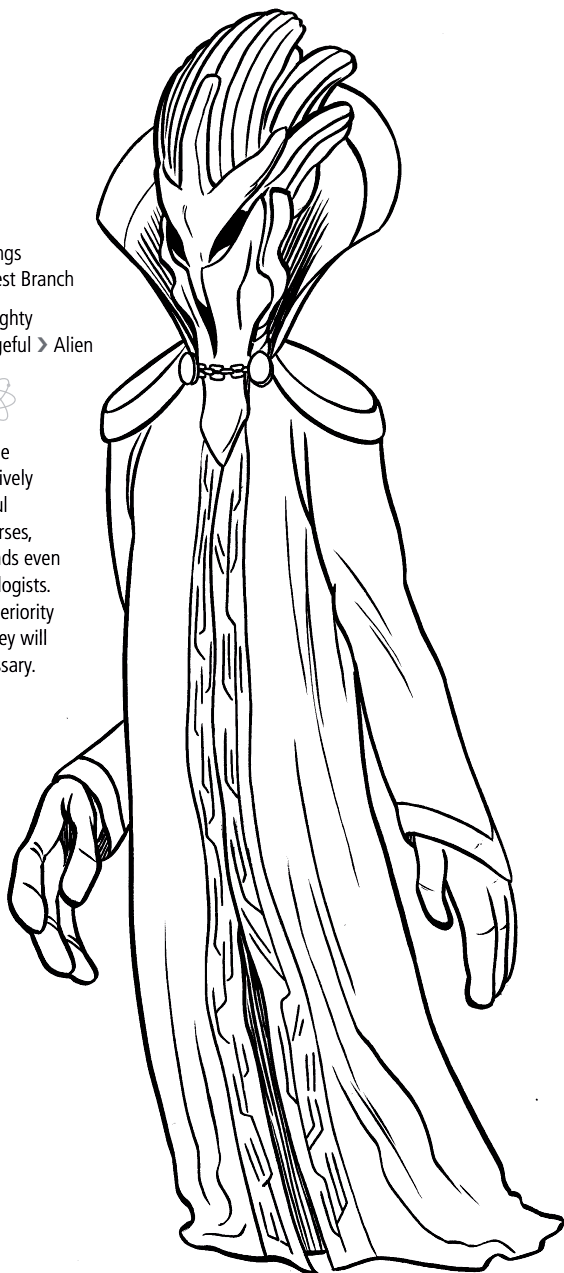
Rank: Highest Branch

Tags: > Ostentatious > Ancient > Haughty

> Unmerciful > Condescending > Vengeful > Alien



Erriseth Master: At the very top of the Metatherion pecking order sit the positively ancient Erriseth Masters. These powerful beings control the fates of whole universes, and their alien way of thinking confounds even the most brilliant Cosmic Patrol psychologists. Erriseth deeply believe in their own superiority over all other races in existence, and they will defend this belief with violence if necessary.



BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

PSYCHIC
BLAST

LUCK

D4

D10

D12

D4

D10

(SPECIAL)

5

VADON DARTOR/ERRISETH MASTER

SHIP: _____ MISSION: _____

CUES

BOW BEFORE ME!

THIS MUST GO THERE. THAT MUST GO HERE.

WE ARE NOT SO EASILY BEATEN.

YOU STRIVE, BUT ARE A SPECK OF DUST.

WE MUST FIND THE TREE KILLERS.

WE ARE THE TREE'S FIRST OFFSPRING.

YOU HAVE NO CLUE AS TO OUR PLANS.

WE ARE THE VERY DEFINITION OF POWER.

YOU HAVE SUCH A SMALL MIND.

OH, I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE YOU.

THE PUPPETS OBEY MY EVERY WHIM.

THE GREAT TREE TOUCHES EVERYTHING.

ON THIS DAY, I DECREE...

IT SHALL BE AS I SAY.

THAT STAIN WILL NEVER WASH OUT.

THE COSMOS WILL BE OURS!

DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH.

PRAISE BE UNTO THE TREE.

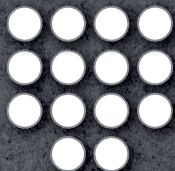
DISPOSITION

BELIEVES ITSELF SUPERIOR TO ALL.

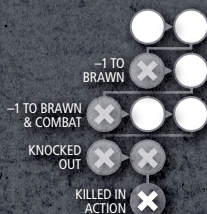
WILL NOT RUN FROM A FIGHT.

SEEKS RETRIBUTION ON THE TREE KILLERS.

STRIVES TO ATTAIN "COMPLETION."



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Psychic Blast

DAMAGE	RANGE		
	Close	Near	Far
D6	OK	OK	OK

EQUIPMENT

Stop Time (Power)

Reverse Space (Power)

Twist Space (Power)

Antigravity Field (Power)

Tree Idol

Shift Space (Other) (Power)

PIRATES, MEMES, AND CULTISTS

VITAL FACTORS

Name: Astral Pirates **Age:** Unknown
Homeworld: Unknown **Rank:** Varies

Tags: > Ruthless > Boarders > Stellar Cores
> Star Siphon > Triremes > Fast Ships

VITAL FACTORS

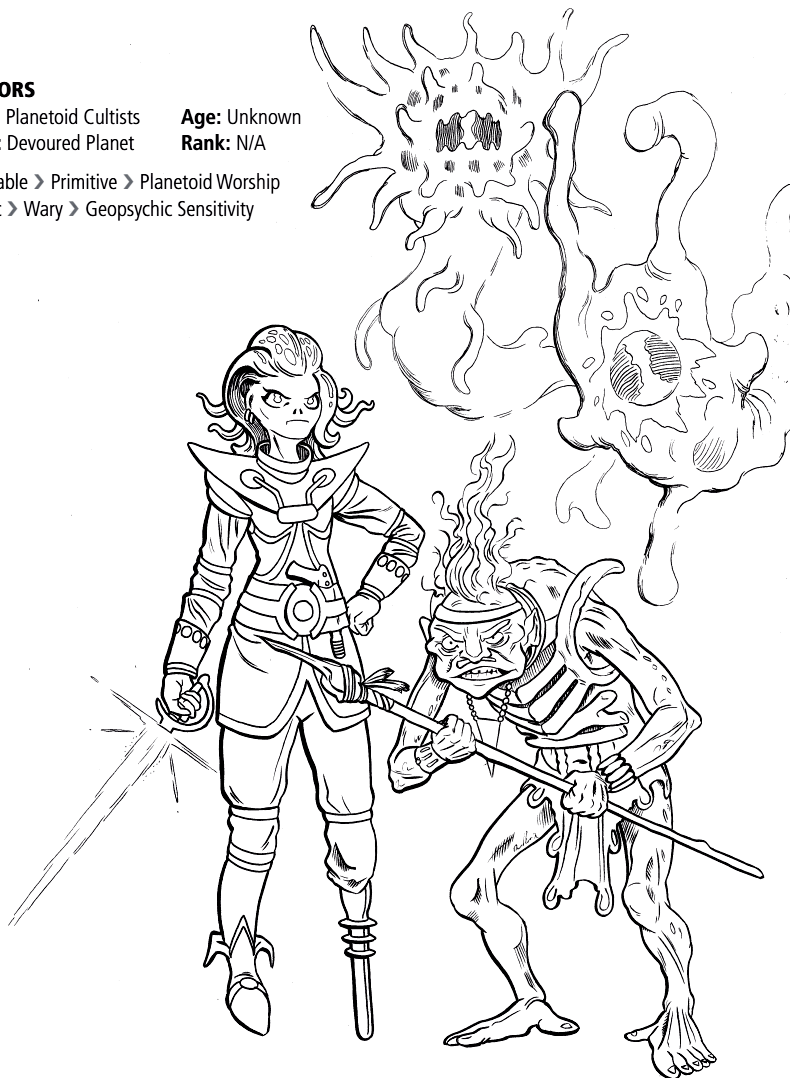
Name: Meme Creatures **Age:** N/A
Homeworld: Meme Space **Rank:** N/A

Tags: > Ideas > Mutable > Nightmares > Dreams
> Idle Thoughts > Monstrous > Unpredictable

VITAL FACTORS

Name: Living Planetoid Cultists **Age:** Unknown
Homeworld: Devoured Planet **Rank:** N/A

Tags: > Excitable > Primitive > Planetoid Worship
> Xenophobic > Wary > Geopsychic Sensitivity



BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

D8

D6

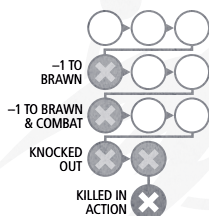
D8

D10

ASTRAL PIRATE CAPTAIN



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Plasma Rapier

DAMAGE Close Near Far

3 OK — —

Gamma Ray Pistol

1 OK -3 —

EQUIPMENT

Electron Spyglass

Stellar Map

Log Book

DeltaWave Radio

COSMIC PATROL

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

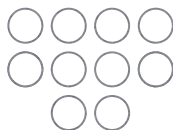
D6

D4

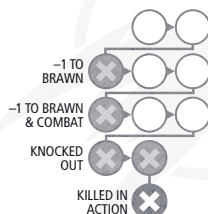
D6

D8

ASTRAL PIRATE MINION



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Laser Cutlass

DAMAGE Close Near Far

2 OK -3 —

EQUIPMENT

Manacles

Grog Flask

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

D6

D6

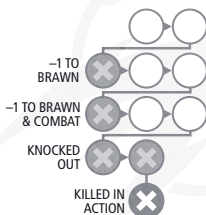
D10

D6

LIVING PLANETOID CULT ELDER



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Rod of Leadership

DAMAGE	Close	Near	Far
1	OK	-3	—

EQUIPMENT

Broken Technology Bits

Planetoid Talisman

Copy of *The Planet is All*

COSMIC PATROL

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

D8

D4

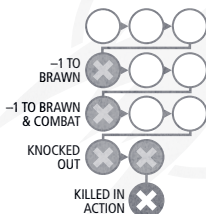
D4

D8

LIVING PLANETOID CULTIST



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Corundum Dagger

DAMAGE	Close	Near	Far
2	OK	—	—

EQUIPMENT

Broken Technology Bits

Dried Meat

COSMIC PATROL

BRAWN



BRAINS



CHARISMA



COMBAT



MEME CREATURE

WEAPONS

DAMAGE Close Near Far

EQUIPMENT



ARMOR

HEALTH

* See rules section for Meme Creature information.

BRAWN



BRAINS



CHARISMA



COMBAT



MEME ANXIETY



N/A

WEAPONS

DAMAGE Close Near Far

Forgotten List Item	1	OK	OK	OK
Minor Worry	1	OK	OK	OK

EQUIPMENT

"Have I forgotten to pack something?"

"Did I leave the thermo-gas on?"

ARMOR

HEALTH

COSMIC PATROL

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

D8

D8

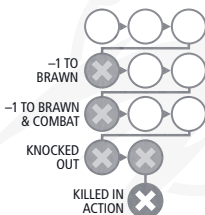
D6

D8

CONTINUANCE ENERGY



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

	DAMAGE	Close	Near	Far
Desistance Beam	3	OK	OK	OK
Resurrection Beam	2*	OK	OK	OK

* Heals instead of damages

EQUIPMENT

COSMIC PATROL

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

D8

D4

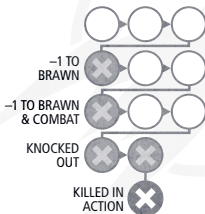
D4

D6

CONTINUANCE DRONE



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

	DAMAGE	Close	Near	Far
Shock Pike	3*	OK	OK	—

*Cannot apply damage to a Killed In Action pip

EQUIPMENT

Mind Control Apparatus	Continuance Emblem
Tool Kit	

COSMIC PATROL

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

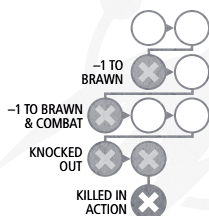
D4

D4

D6

D6

SERVOBOT



ARMOR

HEALTH

WEAPONS

	DAMAGE	Close	Near	Far
MicroTorch	2	OK	-3	—
Can Opener	1	OK	—	—

EQUIPMENT

Serving Tray	Frosty Beverage
Brainwave Communicator	

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

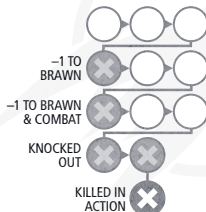
D8

D6

D6

D8

METATHERION PRISONER



ARMOR

HEALTH

WEAPONS

	DAMAGE	Close	Near	Far
Chains	2	OK	OK	—

EQUIPMENT

Prisoner Rags	Prisoner Rations

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

D4

D10

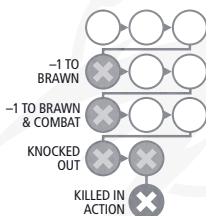
D10

D6

SUN WOMAN



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Her Mind

DAMAGE	Close	Near	Far
Roll D6	OK	OK	OK

EQUIPMENT

Random Metatherion Power

Corona Cloak

Random Metatherion Power

Stardust Locket

COSMIC PATROL

BRAWN

BRAINS

CHARISMA

COMBAT

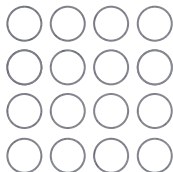
D10

D8

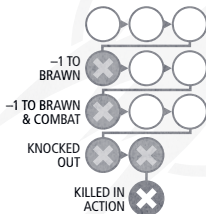
D6

D8

ORGANOBOT



ARMOR



HEALTH

WEAPONS

Flesh Clamp

DAMAGE	Close	Near	Far
2	OK	-3	—

Fanged Buzzsaw

DAMAGE	Close	Near	Far
4	OK	—	—

EQUIPMENT

Bone Armor

Pulsating Power Source

COSMIC PATROL



X MINUS ZERO
BLAST OFF!

GEN. CHARLES DE GAULLE

"YOU'LL LIVE. ONLY THE BEST GET KILLED."

INTO THE GRAVASTAR CAMPAIGN PART ONE: SHAKEDOWN CRUISE

Incoming Orders from Cosmic Patrol Headquarters:

Our R&D department has finally completed a manned prototype of the Horizon Runner. The unmanned prototypes have tested out rather well when traversing the gravitic rigors of the Curtain, but we don't have a lot of data on how traversing the gravastar will affect living beings apart from a few space monkey experiments Science Division has already run.

If Science Division is right, we don't have a lot of time before this gravastar continues to grow larger and more powerful, so the sooner we can investigate what we're really dealing with here, the sooner we can try to put an end to all of this gravastar nonsense.

We are fairly confident the Horizon Runner prototype will hold up on its shakedown cruise. That said, just in case, all of you will be equipped with VX-12 Hypersuits in case containment fails or some other catastrophe occurs. VX-12s have a gravity failure rate of close to 1%, so just don't be that 1% and you'll be fine.

Should you make it to the other side of the Curtain, your primary mission is to obtain as much scientific data as possible, both on the negaspace environment itself and on how the gravastar transition affects living and positronic beings. Your secondary mission, however, is to keep an eye out for Rocketship *Brigman*. Some of the Science Division eggheads think she was vaporized when her crew tried to breach the gravastar, but a few vocal dissidents think she may have found her way through the other side of the Curtain. So keep your eyes peeled.

Godspeed, Patrolmen. We're all counting on you.



PART ONE: SHAKEDOWN CRUISE

"I can't speak for the rest of you, but this mission has got me sweating a little. We've all faced and survived creatures and phenomena that your average non-Patrolman would never understand, but today, we will likely encounter things that no Patrolman has ever seen before. That is, assuming we survive the trip through the Curtain."

"HQ has assured me they've run dozens of tests, but even vetted hardware can have bugs. So let's give this Horizon Runner a test run for the history books. Any ideas on what we should name her?"

"Okay, people, it's time to stay sharp and focused. We have no idea what we'll find on the other side of the Curtain, so we have to be prepared for anything."

"Ah, we've got an unidentified contact! All hands to your stations!"

Objectives

- › Survive the Eiger attack
- › Cross the Curtain
- › Investigate the gravaspore
- › Explore negaspace

Cues

- › to boldly go (and other split infinitives) › Eiger attack!
- › the other side of the Curtain › all of this stuff is backwards
- › you should probably shave that goatee › this place doesn't feel right
- › broken physics

Tags

- › gravastar › intense gravity › Horizon Runner › the Curtain
- › testing › experimentation › heisenberg rating › Eiger
- › negaspace › gravaspore › Gern

INTO THE GRAVASTAR CAMPAIGN

PART ONE: SHAKEDOWN CRUISE

THE SETTING

The gravastar anomaly waits out there in the silence of space—a bright, glowing X growing larger and brighter every hour. It calls to you like a candle beckons a moth. The ring system of a nearby planet is slowly swirling into the gravastar's gravitational embrace, and you can feel the anomaly's tug of gravity on your insides even from this distance, even from within the (relative) safety of a VX-12 Hypersuit fresh from an Amazonia Arms assembly line.

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: There's no time for proper testing! Just as the Horizon Runner's crew is about ready to start the test, a small handful of Eiger Attack Saucers appear in the area and start attacking the Cosmic Patrol's fleet assets. The Horizon Runner is built to withstand countless heisenbergs of gravity, but it was never designed to be a heavy combat vessel. Facing a Saucer head-on would be suicide, so the crew must evade the Eiger craft as best they can and quickly find a way to escape through the Curtain before their rocketship sustains too much damage. This rushed attempt to brave the gravastar's gravity and traverse the Curtain should result in some dangerous (but not necessarily lethal) unpredictability for the transition to negaspace.

If the Patrolmen end up aboard one of the Eiger Saucers in this scene, they might discover that a Kogren Corruptor is directing the Eiger crew's actions.

Scene 2: The extent of damage the Runner took from the previous Scene factors directly into the ship's state when it crosses the Curtain. Now in negaspace, the crew can start carrying out its primary mission of exploration and analysis. The largest object of note immediately on this side of the Curtain is a gravaspore crewed by Gern agents. This small Metatherion ship has seemingly fused with the gravastar energies and is slightly out of phase with negaspace. If the players investigate the ship, they will find no way to shut down the gravitic dynamo or collapse the gravastar itself.

The scene ends once the Patrolmen have found something worth reporting to HQ, but the crew can does not need to leave negaspace to send in the report.

For negaspace effects, feel free to roll on the Negaspace Effect chart (p. 78).

PART TWO: INTO THE MOUTH OF EVIL

Incoming Cosmic Patrol Transmission from Normal Space:

... ello? ... hear us? ... eceiving this? ... Ple ... eply? ... et pan ... imen
... al flux to ... undred ... quasibars of uncert ... ty ...

Ksssshksssshhh! Wheeeee-gl-bla-kssssshkr ... eeeeeeeee Ka-thunk.

Ah, good. It seems our pandimensional transmitter is finally working.

Glad to hear you made it through the Curtain in one piece, Patrolmen. The Eiger have given us quite a beating on this side of space, so I wouldn't suggest returning to this side of the Curtain until we've managed to figure out why the Eiger are hammering us this hard, and so far from their imperial border.

While we get this all sorted out over here, continue your exploration of the immediate area. One of Science Division's negaspace probes found a strange object within observable distance from the Curtain's boundaries. It may just be a gravity ghost, but I'd like you to check it out just in case. We want to establish a negaspace research outpost, so we need to ensure that the coast is clear.

Objectives

- › Avoid capture
- › Discover the Blaarth's plans
- › Escape the gravabase

Cues

- › that's no gravastar ... › we're going to crash right into it!
- › what are those things?! › I feel like we've done this before
- › these guys seem to be obsessed with plants ...
- › that doesn't sound so friendly › I feel like we've done this before

Tags

- › negaspace › gravabase › space station › Blaarth › workers
- › tractor beam › imprisonment › escape! › Zardar

INTO THE GRAVASTAR CAMPAIGN

PART TWO: INTO THE MOUTH OF EVIL

"Don't get too comfortable, everyone. HQ wants us to check out this unidentified object, and not even Science Division knows what it is for sure. So don't go touching anything until we know exactly what we're dealing with, all right? We don't want a repeat of what happened last week, do we?"

"Now, maybe it is a sensor ghost caused by excess gravity. Maybe it's some kind of alien stronghold. Who knows? I'm just saying that negaspace is guilty until proven innocent, and it's hostile until proven friendly. Got it?"

"So before we go approach this thing, don't forget to make sure all your equipment has fresh batteries and you hit the Waste Collection System. Again, we don't want a repeat of last week's incident ..."

THE SETTING

The strange, x-shaped object hanging in space is unidentifiable. At first glance it looks similar to the shape of the gravastar rift, but that's where the similarity ends. The object's four pointy arms appear as though they could easily impale an incoming ship.

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: The object is a Blaarth gravabase, a huge space station. When the crew's ship reaches a certain distance, a large hole will open at the center of the gravabase, and the gravitic cone emitter will suck the ship inside the base. The crew should try to avoid capture if they can. Plenty of Blaarth, ServoBots, and Metatherion Prisoners populate the gravabase.

Scene 2: If the crew is captured, they will need to find a way to escape the Blaarth prison before they can be interrogated (or worse ...). If they aren't captured, the crew can wander the base to learn what the Blaarth are up to. At some point, the crew should learn about the existence or location of a nearby Metatherion planet called "Zardar."

Scene 3: To escape the base, the crew will need to either deactivate the gravitic emitter or find some other means of leaving the station, such as exploiting the Warp Room, stealing a Metatherion craft, and so on.

For more detail on the gravabase and a floor plan of the station, see p. 73.

PART THREE: A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

Incoming Cosmic Patrol Transmission from Normal Space:

These Metatherions seems to have a pretty strong hold on that portion of negaspace, so we will ensure subsequent Patrol crews avoid that area and give any other gravabases they encounter an extremely wide berth.

Under normal circumstances, the fleet would recall your crew after such a harrowing experience, but time is of the essence. This planet you learned about—it might be worth investigating. Maybe there you might find evidence of what the Metatherions are up to, what they want with us, and why they've been meddling with other alien races. Keep your eyes and ears open for anything that might be useful, and approach with extreme caution. We know vaguely about some of these Metatherion races from our captives and our allies, but we believe there is more afoot than our sources are able to let on.

Objectives

- › Traverse negaspace to reach Zardar
- › Navigate reality pocket(s)
- › Explore Zardar

Cues

- › coming up on some turbulence › dancing on the ceiling
- › I always wanted an extra pair of arms › that's no moon
- › the sun is always shining here › are all Metatherions gardeners?
- › you are late, Earthlings › your time here will end in disaster
- › you will darken the sun

Tags

- › negaspace › reality pocket › small, rocky planet › absence of life
- › hollow planet › sun sphere › vast gardens and forests
- › Temple of the Tree › Xanth › Gern › riddles and prophecies
- › veiled threats

INTO THE GRAVASTAR CAMPAIGN

PART THREE: A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

"Everything in negaspace seems to be backwards in some tangible way, but this Zardar place takes the proverbial cake. The way the Metatherions spoke of Zardar made it sound really important, but our scans from this distance show us a dead hunk of rock. Which means it must be ultra-important. The only question is how?"

"Scans are inconclusive, but that's probably just negaspace messing with us again. We'll try to compensate for the weirdness, but I think negaspace might still have some curveballs to throw us."

THE SETTING

The Metatherion planet of Zardar is little bigger than a small moon. A very dead small moon. cursory scans show no sign of life on the surface, no hint of technology whatsoever.

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: During the journey toward the planet Zardar, the crew will encounter one or more reality pockets while aboard their rocketship. See Reality Pockets, p. 79-80, for ideas on each pocket's effects. These reality pocket encounters can make the trip to Zardar take as short or as long as necessary (LN's discretion).

Scene 2: On the surface of the airless planet, a tunnel goes into the planet's crust. This tunnel leads to the hollow interior of Zardar, where a false sun sits at the planet's core and illuminates the entire inner surface of the planet's interior. The "surface" of Zardar has a breathable atmosphere, a thriving Metatherion civilization with large cityscapes and sprawling gardens and orchards.

A camouflaged Gern shadows the crew to keep an eye on them, but it will not attack unless the crew attacks first or feels the need to intervene.

Scene 3: After wandering through the city, the crew will reach a Temple of the Tree. A serene Xanth priest in the temple will give them strange, enigmatic, and vaguely threatening advice about their future—the "I have foreseen your death" kind. The prophecies can also give the crew nebulous direction for their next Mission, but this is up to the LN.

The Xanth will not attack unless provoked.

PART FOUR: THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD

Incoming Cosmic Patrol Transmission from Normal Space:

From your last status report, it sounds like things could go south at any moment. Keep your wits about you and tread carefully. If you can determine what this hollow planet's purpose is, that might help us understand these Metatherions. Analysis of your scans indicate that negaspace is rife with these hollow planetoids.

As best we can tell, linguistics analysis translates "Zardar" as "Little Center," although your current location does not appear to be the center of anything in particular.

The Patrol fleet situation on our side of the Curtain is still tenuous. If you run into any trouble, be aware that help may still be a long time in coming.

Objectives

- › Survive the ambush
- › Escape Zardar

Cues

- › what's that racket? › blasphemy! › the treekillers
- › where's the sound coming from? › not a real sun
- › who dares trespass on the sun's domain? › who turned out the lights?

Tags

- › ambush! › strange sound › outnumbered › on the run
- › sun sphere › control room › gravitic dynamo › Sun Woman

INTO THE GRAVASTAR CAMPAIGN

PART FOUR: THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD

"These Metatherions really seem to have a love affair with their trees. Inside this temple is a giant, tree-like idol with five levels of branches, and the Xanth in charge treats it and all of the trees outside the temple as though they were objects of worship."

"I'm not one to argue with an alien's belief system, but all the same, it might be wise to respect their love of trees. Or exploit it, if that might buy us some time."

"What's that noise? Sounds like some kind of prayer bell ..."

THE SETTING

In the interior of Zardar, a false sun—the sun sphere—illuminates this hollow planet with light and warmth. The alien city's streets and the nearby orchard garden are quiet. Too quiet. A strange, resonant tone sounds in the distance, loud enough to be heard across the entire city.

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: As the crew exits the Temple of the Tree, a peculiar sound calls a group of Blaarth and Gern to ambush the crew. Any attacks that miss for any reason (LN's discretion) may hit a nearby orchard tree instead. On a D6 roll a 5 or 6, the attack strikes a tree.

If a tree is struck, any Metatherions who witnessed this blasphemy will go berserk and gain +1 to any Challenges, Tests, or Combat rolls for the remainder of this scene.

Scene 2: The city is swarming with enemies, so a straight fight would be suicide. The crew must evade capture or hide out somewhere to plan their next move.

Unfortunately, the tunnel leading to Zardar's exterior has vanished, and there is no noticeable way to reach the surface. The sound calling the Metatherions to battle seems to be coming from the sun sphere at the planet's core.

Scene 3: The sun sphere has an opening that leads to the glowing sphere's interior, which consists of a large control room and a gravitic dynamo that holds the sun sphere centered inside the planet. The sun sphere is the domain of the Sun Women, a strange race that controls the sun sphere inside every hollow planet in negaspace.

If the team disables or destroys the sun sphere, the planet goes dark, and exits to the surface will reopen. Before long, however, the disabled dynamo will cause Zardar to slowly collapse in on its own gravity.

PART FIVE: THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

Incoming Cosmic Patrol Transmission from Normal Space:

According to your last report, the incident on Zardar didn't go as planned, so you'll have to tread lightly from now on. These Metatherions already don't like us for some unfathomable reason, and the Zardar situation only exacerbated matters. That said, the mission always comes first. If you can make nice with the Metatherions, knock yourselves out. Just don't jeopardize the mission.

You are coming up on an area of space our preliminary scans have shown to be psychically malleable, so—not to be the thought police or anything—you might want to watch what you're thinking while you're in the area. And be on the alert for other potential hazards.

Objectives

- › Navigate the iceteroid field
- › Identify object in space
- › Recover data core

Cues

- › floating icebergs › dead, floating rocketship › convincing illusions
- › be careful what you think › did I forget something?
- › wasn't there a hatch here just a second ago?
- › the ship ... it's alive! And hungry!

Tags

- › iceteroids › sensor anomaly › Rocketship *Brigman* › reality perception
- › meme space › meme creatures › Kogren

THE SETTING

The iceteroid field is made from giant chunks of ice and frozen gases floating about haphazardly. When two ice chunks collide, they fracture and create a vast number of smaller but still dangerous ice shards.

INTO THE GRAVASTAR CAMPAIGN

PART FIVE: THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

"Psychically malleable? What does that mean exactly? Hopefully that doesn't mean I'm going to sprout a third eye, like an Eiger. Negaspace already gives me the creeps, so making it weirder is definitely a step in the right direction ..."

"Coming up on an asteroid field—or at least a negaspace version of an asteroid field. It's more like frozen gas balls and chunks of ice than rock, so I'm calling it an 'iceteroid' field."

"This looks pretty tricky. Our rocketship's a little beat up, but I'm confident she'll hold together long enough to see what this strange sensor reading is."

Sunlight from distant stars hits the ice and refracts into a surprising array of colors. It's oddly peaceful to watch this silent, dangerous dance of light and ice. Too bad just one of these icebergs could easily smash the ship to pieces.

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: The strange sensor reading in the iceteroid field is Rocketship *Brigman*, floating dead in space. Her hull is scratched. Her tail fins are torn or missing. The crew must navigate the iceteroid field to reach the ship.

Scene 2: Aboard the *Brigman*, the crew's main goal is finding the ship's encrypted data core to learn what happened to the ship since it disappeared. The crew will find the *Brigman*'s original crew (use any Patrolman Dossier for these). However, most of the crew are mental constructs projected by Kogren that have infiltrated the ship and are hiding. Roll a D8 for each *Brigman* crew member; a result of 8 means that crew member is actually real. The real crew have been irreversibly brainwashed; they will act friendly at first, but they will fight to the death when the Kogren give the order.

Team members must pass a Brains Test to notice something's not right, and that same team member must pass a second Brains Test to realize the *Brigman*'s crew are (mostly) not real.

Scene 3: If the crew see through the illusion, one or more Kogren will come out of hiding and try to escape. During the fight, the *Brigman* slowly spins through a meme space pocket, so Meme Creatures and Meme Anxieties might also join the fight; also, parts of the ship might suddenly fall prey to meme-space suggestibility and turn intangible or even become enemies in and of themselves.

PART SIX: SHOWDOWN AT ZARDON

Incoming Orders Via Transmission From Normal Space:

We've decoded what you found on the *Brigman*, and it's not pretty. The *Brigman's* crew learned that the Metatherions are up to something big, something that might be even worse than this gravastar. The crew also found evidence of a planet the Metatherions call Zardon; we're sending the coordinates now.

With all you've been through so far, normally we'd recall you and send in a relief team to pick up where you left off, but we don't have that luxury. The gravastar is still growing, and we have no idea how big it's actually going to get.

Your mission is to locate the planet Zardon and determine what the Metatherions are up to, if possible. Their methods are inscrutable, so any ammunition you can gather against their schemes, the better.

Reinforcements are en route, but we've no ETA at the moment.

Good luck, Patrolmen. We're all counting on you.

Objectives

- › Travel to Zardon
- › Locate the Masters
- › Uncover the Metatherion plot

Cues

- › there's no green on this planet › the Great Scar › a rough landing
- › strange architecture › a fortress full of curiosities
- › hodgepodge of connected reality pockets › tree ritual

Tags

- › Zardon › Metatherion homeworld › Erriseth fortress › reality pockets
- › meme space › inner sanctum › burnt tree › the Masters

INTO THE GRAVASTAR CAMPAIGN

PART SIX: SHOWDOWN AT ZARDON

"This is it, people. This is why we came here. If intel is right, this is the Metatherion homeworld. And for whatever reason, they don't seem to like us or our universe very much. So keep your rayguns charged, your minds sharp, and your blades sharper. We're going to need every advantage we can get to stay alive down there."

THE SETTING

Zardon is covered by three things: oceans, continent-sized cityscapes, and a giant, blackened scar larger than several whole nations.

Campaign Option: Depending on the gaming group's preferences, this Mission can form the basis of a *Cosmic Patrol* campaign all by itself. For advice on running this Mission as a full campaign, some rules from pp. 23–24, 26, and 32–34 of *The Moon Must Be Ours!* might be helpful. Ideas for campaign play are provided below.

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: The crew lands on Zardon. By following clues, the crew should learn about the Erriseth fortress somewhere in the sprawling cityscape and try to find it. Its location and means of access are up to the LN. Once located the crew needs to gain entrance.

Campaign Option: The landmarks and features of Zardon (some of which are detailed on p. 55) are numerous. Instead of heading directly for the city or searching for the

fortress right out of the gate, feel free to poke around and see what you find. Who knows what dark secrets you might uncover or what alternate paths you will come across? Zardon is a big place with many secrets the Metatherions wish to keep hidden.

Scene 2: The interior of the fortress comprises various small rooms, large chambers, hallways, etc., and each area represents a separate, distinct reality pocket or meme-space region—each one stolen from a different universe. Moving from one room to the next results in a transition to another reality pocket or meme space, so one room might be filled with breathable water, and the next room might be upside down, and so on. Let the imagination go wild.

The crew must fight their way through whatever NPCs the LN deems appropriate to ultimately reach the inner sanctum of the Masters.

Campaign Option: The fortress of the Masters is a long and complex series of chambers and hallways designed to confuse intruders. For a campaign, each reality-pocket or meme-space room in this fortress—the number of which is up to the LN—can be treated as a separate

INTO THE GRAVASTAR CAMPAIGN

PART SIX: SHOWDOWN AT ZARDON

Scene with its own objectives, obstacles, and enemies.

Scene 3: The Masters' inner sanctum is a large chamber where the Erriseth guide the Metatherion race. The dead, burnt trunk of an impossibly massive tree sits in the center of this room and reaches for the ceiling high overhead, and the Metatherions in the chamber are performing some kind of ritual around its base. The Erriseth will attempt to reason with the crew, but this is a trick: the Erriseth and their attendants will ultimately try to destroy the Patrolmen or, failing that, attempt to escape.

If the crew is running into major trouble, the LN can call in a few additional Patrolmen as NPCs: these are reinforcements that just arrived.

If the crew is successful in gaining the upper hand against the Erriseth, see Aftermath #1.

If the Erriseth escape or the crew is defeated or retreats, see Aftermath #2.

AFTERMATH #1: STABILIZATION

With the defeat of the Metatherion Masters, Cosmic Patrol HQ reports that the gravastar has stopped expanding. It seems the Metatherion leaders were transmitting immense energies via a reality conduit to feed the gravastar until it could grow large enough to swallow the entire normal-

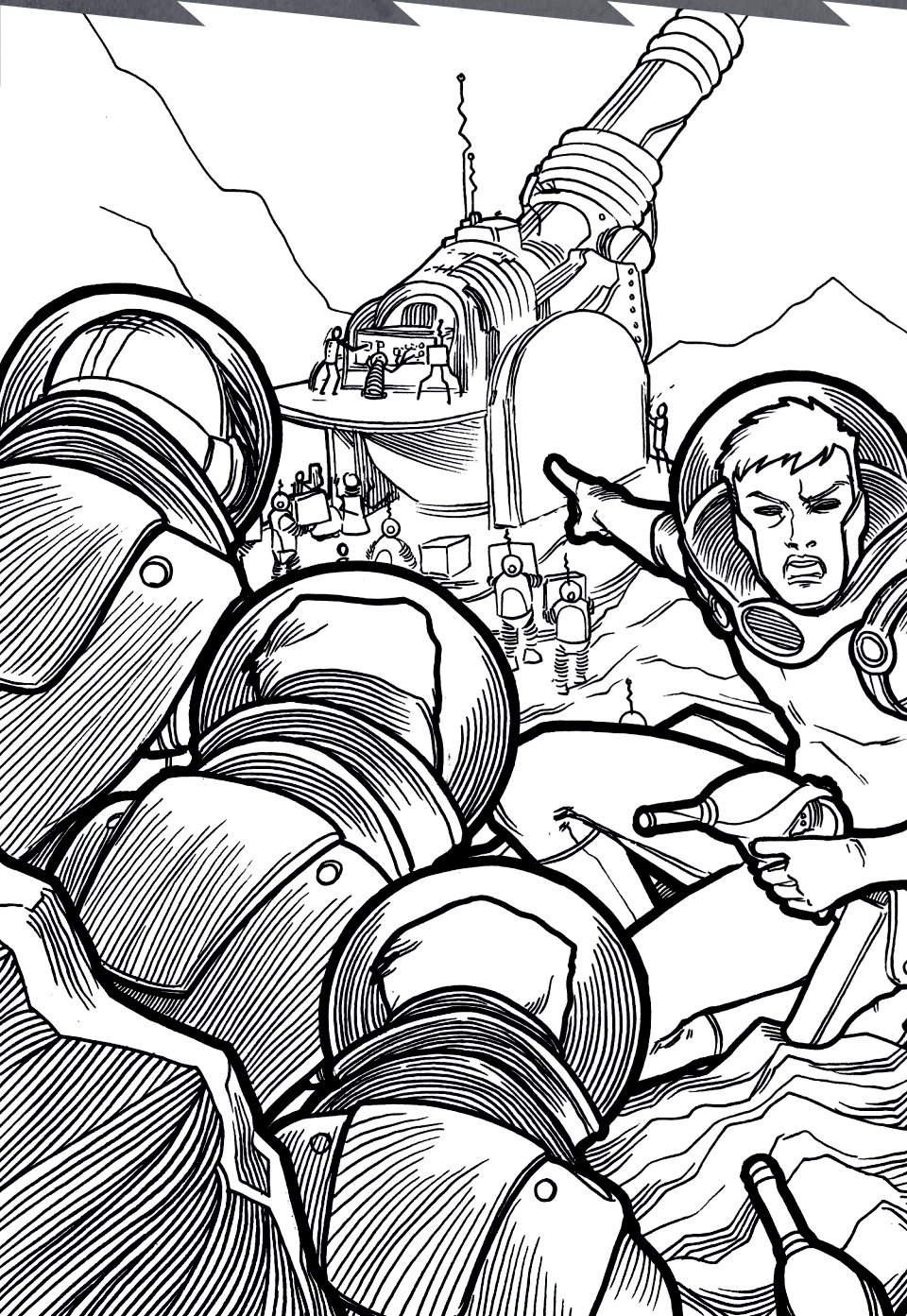
space universe. Defeating the Erriseth caused the gravastar to stabilize itself, earning normal space a stay of execution—at least for now. But this also leaves the door open for whatever negaspace horrors wish to visit normal space ...

Can the Cosmic Patrol find a way to permanently collapse the gravastar? Will the Metatherions rear their alien heads once more? Find out in further adventures beyond the gravastar!

AFTERMATH #2: EXPANSION

With the victory of the Metatherion Masters, the gravastar continued expanding at an exponential rate. It seems the Metatherion leaders were transmitting immense energies via a reality conduit to feed the gravastar until it could grow large enough to swallow the entire normal-space universe. The Erriseth's triumph caused the gravastar anomaly to swell at an even faster rate than before, dooming the universe unless someone can find a way to slow it down somehow.

The Cosmic Patrol has declared war against the Metatherions and all of negaspace. Who will take up the cause and defend normal space against the scourge of the gravastar? Who will stand up and fight the Metatherions before it's too late? Find out in further adventures beyond the gravastar!



THE CONTINUANCE CAMPAIGN

PART ONE: PATROL SHIFT CHANGE

Incoming Orders from Cosmic Patrol Headquarters:

Those of you that haven't been living under a meteorite these past few months have more than likely been briefed on the Continuance. Those of you that haven't? You might want to get up to speed ASAP.

Since the Continuance first appeared on the galactic scene not long ago and quickly disappeared, we haven't seen any activity from them whatsoever—except for one lone Continuance sphere making a slow and ponderous circuit around the Coalsack Dead Zone. It appears to be moving solely by gravity wells of stars bordering the Dead Zone rather than its own power. In fact, as best we can tell, the orb is either dead or asleep. Coordinator Dyson has ordered the Patrol to keep constant surveillance on this orb; in the event it ever does anything dangerous, we want to be prepared.

Your rocketship is currently in rotation for the next patrol shift. Keep an eye on our rather large friend and make sure it doesn't start causing any trouble. If you run into anything strange, then call for backup and put a stop to the threat as quickly as possible.

Objectives

- › Monitor the Continuance orb
- › Investigate the disturbance

Cues

- › alone in the void › the lonely orb › pulsating red “eye”
- › anybody home? › something's different › strange layout
- › maybe you're holding the map upside down › make a run for it!

Tags

- › Continuance orb › Coalsack Nebula › Coalsack Dead Zone
- › quiet › strange signal › lost › metal archway › Continuance Drones

THE CONTINUANCE CAMPAIGN

PART ONE: PATROL SHIFT CHANGE

"Look at that thing. It's up to something, I just know it."

"Ah, that's just your imagination, crewman. Why can't you just take this easy assignment at face value and relax for a bit? Maybe sit back and play some Martian chess or something ...?"

"I'm telling you, it's not my imagination. That red eye is plotting some evil scheme. HQ might think it's dead or asleep, but I think it's looking for something ..."

"I'm thinking maybe you might need to lay off the coffee for a little while ..."

THE SETTING

The Coalsack Nebula obscures the Dead Zone from casual observers, and the lone Continuum orb makes its full circuit around the nebula at regular intervals. Its softly glowing "eye"—a large, forward-facing red ring on the moon-sized sphere's surface—looks duller and less vibrant than those from archive footage.

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: During the patrol, a strange, indecipherable signal emanates from the orb. The method of entry into this Continuum orb's interior will be unexpectedly different than any previous instances, so previous crew member experience or archival footage will not be helpful in gaining access to the orb's interior.

Scene 2: The interior of this sphere is similar to other Continuum orbs—catwalks, stasis pods bearing all manner of different alien races, and lots of strange computer equipment—but this orb's layout is different, so trying to navigate based on prior experience or maps they have on record will become hopelessly lost.

Scene 3: In the center of the orb sits a metal archway that looks like a portal of some kind. The signal appears to have originated from the other side. To prevent the Patrolmen from reaching the portal, Continuum Drones will emerge from stasis pods and attack. The scene ends when the crew manages to enter the archway.

THE CONTINUANCE CAMPAIGN

PART TWO: NON-EUCLIDEAN CONDITIONS

Incoming Transmission from Cosmic Patrol Headquarters:

...

Are ... ing ...this? ... etting ... lot of dimensional flux ...

Ah, there we are. Much better.

Judging from the location of your transmission, it looks like you're inside the Continuance sphere, but we're having trouble getting a good lock on you. Some kind of dimensional interference ...

From the look of things, the Continuance sphere is up to some kind of mischief. See if you can determine what kind of mischief the orb has planned and, if necessary, take measures to stop it.

If you run into problems, sit tight: reinforcements are en route. We are activating one of our standby rocketship crews to offer support, but depending on your actual disposition, they may not easily be able to reach you.

Objectives

- › Explore through the portal
- › Locate the Continuance core
- › Hold out for reinforcements

Cues

- › make the room stop spinning › fifth-dimensional space › M.C. Escher
- › something familiar about this place › time has no meaning here
- › we're still inside the orb › a wall of drones

Tags

- › Continuance orb › fifth dimension › optical illusions
- › dizzying sensation › Continuance Energy › clones
- › nonlethal takedown

THE CONTINUANCE CAMPAIGN

PART TWO: NON-EUCLIDEAN CONDITIONS

"So, maybe jumping through that archway wasn't the best idea we've ever had. My head will not stop spinning. Training centrifuges have nothing on this place. Maybe we should send Patrol cadets here instead ..."

"Where are we anyway? How in the world could all of this ... stuff fit inside this space? We were already at the center ..."

"Dizzy ... so dizzy ..."

"Gotta focus on the mission ... gotta keep going ..."

"Just close my eyes. Maybe closing my eyes will help."

THE SETTING

The area beyond the archway portal at the heart of the Continuum sphere led to a strange version of a mirror representation of the orb's interior, but wrong, like an M.C. Escher drawing: geometry gone wrong and brain-warping optical illusions. Catwalks go up, down, upside-down, or they don't connect in any logical fashion, and the whole of reality seems to twist into an endless spiral that vanishes in the far distance. Apart from the broken physics, the surroundings appear to be still inside the orb somehow.

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: This area lies in fifth-dimensional space, which is difficult for all non-robot Patrolmen to fully understand, and this is why the area can fit inside the orb. The crew members must navigate this space as best they can, taking Brains Challenges whenever appropriate. But watch out for Continuum Drones: they are immune to the disorienting effects of this space!

Scene 2: At the heart of this confusing pocket of fifth-dimensional space lies the Continuum Energy, which directs the orb far more efficiently than the central computer of previous models of Continuum orbs did. Here in a self-contained pocket of fifth-dimensional space, this sentient ball of energy has been building an army of Continuum Drones—not by capturing them, but by cloning them in secret.

The Continuum Drones attack in force at the Energy's command, and there are so many Drones that their attacks should ultimately render the whole crew unconscious.

THE CONTINUANCE CAMPAIGN

PART THREE: UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

Incoming Thoughtwave Pattern:

We are the arbiters of life. We strive to continue life in all of its many forms, whatever the cost.

The light of life has been extinguished many times in the past, and we will ensure such a cataclysm never again occurs in the future.

History must not repeat itself. We alone survived the last cataclysm—the cost of our survival being our present form—and we cannot abide witnessing another extinction event. We will not stand back and watch the candle gutter out yet again.

Welcome to the Continuance, faithful drone. We thank you for your support. May the enemies of life quake at your feet.

Objectives

- › Serve the Continuance
- › Preserve all acceptable life
- › Invoke Desistance on the unworthy

Cues

- › in service to all life › something feels out of place › go with the flow
- › taking prisoners › death to robots! › war on Metalloid!
- › signal disruption

Tags

- › Continuance Drones › Mind Control Apparatus › specimen gathering
- › Cometarians › ice tunnels › Metalloid › robots › robot society
- › Desistance › radio towers

THE CONTINUANCE CAMPAIGN

PART THREE: UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

"The Continance is life. Long continue the Continance."

THE SETTING

The inside of this stasis pod feels like home. Those distant memories of serving some other master feel like a lifetime ago, but they are still there at the back of the mind while mental twilight slips in, comfortable, embraceable.

Then the words resound from deep inside: *The Continance has need of you.*

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

For this Mission, the Mind Control Apparatus is extremely difficult to remove, so the LNs should let the players have fun being the bad guys for awhile, even if it's under the guise of collecting data for the Cosmic Patrol on what the Continance is up to.

Scene 1: The crew members wake up with full Armor and Health inside stasis pods in a Continance scout orb, a much smaller version of the larger Continance spheres. Each Patrolman has been fitted with a Mind Control Apparatus (which affects even robot brains) and will take orders from the Continance Energy controlling the orb. Each player is issued a Shock Pike (see Continance Drone Dossier, p. 107)

The scout orb lands on an ice planetoid in the Oort Cloud. The planetoid is inhabited by Cometarians, and the Continance wishes to claim as many specimens as possible from the ice tunnels.

Scene 2: After gathering enough Cometarians, the scout orb travels to Metalloid. The Continance has declared war on the planet: it has deemed the robotic life unworthy and thus deserving of "Desistance." For this mission, Shock Pikes have their safety feature disabled and thus deal +2 damage to any robotic opponent (ignore the weapon's special text).

The denizens of Metalloid comprise a mixed collection of robots from all over known space. Feel free to use any robotic character or NPC Dossier available.

During the war, the Patrolmen can try removing their Mind Control Apparatuses. This should be a very difficult task, one that might even require first aid or repair skill (LN discretion). Close proximity to any of the large radio towers dotting the planet's surface will disrupt the Continance signal long enough to temporarily return a Patrolman's awareness.

THE CONTINUANCE CAMPAIGN

PART FOUR: ROBOTIC APOCALYPSE

Incoming Orders from Cosmic Patrol Headquarters:

The Continuance's war against Metalloid has the whole sector in a tizzy. In order to return a semblance of order to Metalloid, we have to stop this robotic massacre before the planet is reduced to a puddle of melted slag.

Use whatever means of transportation is at your disposal and disable the orb currently threatening the planet.

We must send a message to the Continuance and let them know this planet is under our protection.

Damage control and disaster relief teams are en route to the planet's surface. ETA unknown.

Make us proud, Patrolmen!

Objectives

- › Find transportation
- › Locate the Continuance orb
- › Halt the Continuance threat

Cues

- › war-torn robot wasteland › protect the Monitor!
- › evil red eye in the sky › there's more than one way to reach orbit
- › what hunk of junk › they'll be waiting for us › for the Continuance!

Tags

- › Metalloid › freedom › robot jalopy › fifth-dimensional space
- › Continuance Drones › kamikaze drones › Continuance Energy
- › Desistance › negotiation

THE SETTING

The nearby metal city on the surface of Metalloid is a war-torn wasteland of broken robots. The Metalloids, normally hostile to non-robots, are running for their positronic lives against the onslaught of Continuance Drones scouring the planet.

In the sky, the red-ring eye of a Continuance sphere gazes down from Metalloid's orbit.

THE CONTINUANCE CAMPAIGN

PART FOUR: ROBOTIC APOCALYPSE

"On one hand, the Continance has complicated things for the Patrol ever since that first orb showed up near Deep Relay 9 awhile back. On the other hand, it seems the Continance energy balls that control these orbs have had a rough go of it."

"Is it right to destroy something that is older than we can even imagine, something that claims to have witnessed a cataclysm we could never hope to understand? Can we even reason with a being of pure energy?"

"In some way, I almost feel sorry for these things. I can't even imagine what it must be like to shed one's corporeal form to survive a galaxy-killing crisis."

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: Amid the chaos of Metalloid's surface, the Patrolmen must find some means of transportation to reach the Continance sphere orbiting the planet. The crew will only receive assistance from the Metalloids if they actively help the robots fight back the invaders and/or protect the Metalloid leader, the Monitor.

Scene 2: Once aboard the orb, the Continance Drones will do everything in their power to protect the portal leading to the fifth-dimensional space in the center of the orb.

Scene 3: Upon reaching the Continance Energy and its last line of Continance Drone defenders, the Patrolmen can choose to destroy the Energy or attempt to reason with it. Reasoning with the Energy will be a hard sell because it believes the Metalloids—or artificial beings like them—were responsible for ushering in the previous cataclysm countless millennia ago.

If the crew destroys the Continance Energy, see Aftermath #1.

If the Continance Energy stands down, see Aftermath #2.

AFTERMATH #1: THE QUIET SPHERE

Devoid of life, the Continance orb hangs silent in space above Metalloid like a giant, metal moon. It seems rather fitting for a planet populated solely by robots.

No longer mind-controlled, the former Continance Drones scatter to the corners of the planet to survive in Metalloid's harsh wilderness and avoid being hunted down by vengeful robots.

AFTERMATH #2: MISSING PERSONS

The Continance orb slowly leaves Metalloid's orbit and ventures off for parts unknown. The orb soon disappears, vanishing from sensors.

Shortly after the orb's departure, Metalloid's Monitor—the leader of the robot people—and several Submonitors are discovered to be missing. Whether they are aboard the vanished Continance orb or lost in the planet's rubble is unknown.

PART ONE: STELLAR PIRATES

Incoming Orders from Cosmic Patrol Headquarters:

A post-primitive planetary civilization has recently been discovered on a planet located near an area of recent astral pirate activity. The planet, PP237, orbits a blue hypergiant, which presents an attractive prize for those sun-stealing scoundrels. We think this might be one of the pirates' next targets.

Since we'd prefer not to let this developing civilization fall victim to having its sun stolen, we're trying to extract the population without causing them undue harm.

Head to the following coordinates beyond the Ragna Terminus and accost any incoming ships, be they pirate or otherwise, while we attempt to complete the evacuation.

Objectives

- › Patrol the area
- › Repel boarders
- › Protect the star OR evacuate the planet

Cues

- › post-primitive civilization › stable solar system › fast ships
- › they brought backup › star vacuum › instantaneous process
- › nebula left behind › cat and mouse › compressed stellar core

Tags

- › evacuation › blue hypergiant star › star stealers
- › corsair triremes › ruthless › boarders › dead planet

ASTRAL PIRATES CAMPAIGN

PART ONE: STELLAR PIRATES

"Most thieves never consider how their theft affects the victim. Of course stealing credits or other personal property usually just leads to emotional trauma. But stealing whole stars? That's something else."

"Do these pirates even bother checking to see if a solar system is inhabited before they gobble up the only thing keeping it alive? Probably not, which essentially makes them mass-murderers in addition to thieving scum."

"This planet deserves a better designation than just 'PP237,' but I worry if we do give it a real name, then grief will hit us all the harder if we fail in our mission."

THE SETTING

The post-primitive planet of PP237 hangs blissfully in orbit around its blue hypergiant star, unaware of the danger lurking not far from the starless patch of space nearby. With its blue oceans and patches of greenery, the planet looks a little like Earth.

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: While the Patrolmen are patrolling the area, a corsair trireme enters the system, intending to suck up PP237's sun with its energy scoops. When accosted, the trireme crew will drop what they are doing and attempt to board the Patrolmen's rocketship; their goal will be to take captives and steal the ship.

LN's who want to add more jeopardy to this scene—or ensure the planet's doom—can have a second trireme can appear while the first trireme is occupied with the Patrolmen.

If the Patrolmen are taken captive, the next scene can be skipped.

Scene 2: If the planet's sun gets stolen, the inhabitants will begin to freeze. The crew members must head to the planet and help evacuate as many of the post-primitives as possible.

PART TWO: PAYBACK, WITH INTEREST

Incoming Transmission from Cosmic Patrol Headquarters:

... can you read us? We're getting some kind of interference in the signal, something that's consistent with intense stellar radiation from a binary or trinary star system. Are you in close proximity to any of those? At least communication still works all the way out there ...

Evacuation efforts are still underway on PP237. We've ordered relief crews to step in so you can focus on your new mission.

The threat these pirates pose must be neutralized. Your mission is to track the pirates using any means possible. Find out what they are up to and throw a spanner in the works in any way you can.

Objectives

- › Locate the pirate base
- › Disrupt pirate operations

Cues

- › the endless dark › tracking the pirates › they'll sell anything here
- › hey, I always wanted one of these › you got change for a red giant?
- › that is a lot of juice › how big of an explosion are we talking about?

Tags

- › starless space › way station › astral pirates › corsair triremes
- › unknown aliens › bazaar › commerce › stellar cores › star bank
- › stellar containment units

ASTRAL PIRATES CAMPAIGN PART TWO: PAYBACK, WITH INTEREST

"These pirates have certainly gotten away with a lot of solar thefts in this area. There are so few stars that looking out of the porthole is a little unnerving. Without the benefit of navigation or a telemetry system, we'd undoubtedly get lost out here."

"Getting lost in space—*again*—isn't something I really want to put on my to-do list."

THE SETTING

The endless dark: this area of space is completely devoid of starlight for several astrons in all directions. All is darkness as far as the eye—or photoreceptor—can see.

The pirates have been busy. How many civilizations have they doomed by creating this starless expanse?

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: If the crew was captured in the previous Mission, they will be aboard a corsair trireme for this scene.

The crew must track the pirates somehow or find a way to locate their base of operations. This can be done in a number of ways, such as engineering an innovative way to track the pirates, capturing a trireme to pull navigation coordinates from, being captured by pirates, and so on.

Scene 2: The pirate base is a strange space station in the middle of the starless pocket. It's large enough to accommodate countless dozens spacecraft all at once, and most of the docks are full.

Exploration of the densely populated base will reveal that it is

merely a pirate way station rather than an actual home base. Further exploration will reveal that the base is home to a large bazaar—frequented by astral pirates and never-before-seen aliens—and a massive repository of stellar core containment units. Easily thousands or more of these stellar cores are kept here, and the bazaar's customers extract containment units from the stellar "bank" and use the star cores as currency for their purchases. What the star cores are used for beyond legal tender is unknown, and the aliens and pirates aren't inclined to talk.

Scene 3: After exploring the base, the crew needs to wreck the pirates' capacity to steal more stars.

However, the crew should bear in mind that the star bank contains the power of countless of star cores, and there are far, far too many containment units to fit aboard a single rocketship or trireme. Thus, simply blowing up the space station would release enough explosive stellar energy to rip an unpredictable hole in space and destroy any ships, planets, or stars within a 100-astron radius.

LIVING PLANETOID CAMPAIGN

PART ONE: A HOUSE DIVIDED

Incoming Orders from Cosmic Patrol Headquarters:

Outgoing scans of the Ragna Terminus area have found a new living planetoid we might need to worry about— codenamed Ursula. You are to travel to the Ragna Terminus, locate this new planetoid, and observe its behavior.

Report in regularly with what you can learn of its disposition, surface activity, and current trajectory. We will analyze this data to determine whether Ursula poses a threat to our operations.

Objectives

- › Observe Ursula, the living planetoid
- › Meet with elders

Cues

- › how to tell it's alive? › abnormal geopsychic field › going down!
- › they don't look too friendly › head for the jungle! › cultist elder
- › why should we help you?

Tags

- › living planetoid › geopsychic energy › crash! › separated hemispheres
- › jungle › wasteland › cultists › xenophobia › diplomacy

LIVING PLANETOID CAMPAIGN PART ONE: A HOUSE DIVIDED

"I wonder where they come up with the names for these living planetoids. 'Ursula' isn't a name you hear very often."

"I think there was some writer with that name a long while back. Maybe they named it after her?"

"Perhaps. Still, this planetoid isn't much to look at. Just seems like a regular old planet to me."

THE SETTING

The living planetoid designated Ursula is a strange terrestrial planet with stark demarcations between areas of lush greenery and inhospitable wilderness. Exactly one hemisphere of the planetoid is covered in jungles, and the opposite hemisphere is filled with wastelands.

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: Initial scans show the planetoid has an incredibly strong geopsychic field. This field will grab the crew's rocketship and drag it down to the planet's surface. The crew will need to do what they can to ensure their tumbling descent doesn't result in a horrific crash landing. Assuming the ship survives intact, the geopsychic field will be too strong for the ship to escape.

Scene 2: The ship lands in the wasteland, within sprinting distance of the border to the jungle hemisphere. Crazy cultists appear from the badlands and attack the crew; they will even follow the crew into the jungle. Once a few of the cultists have been eliminated, cultists of a different race appear from the jungle and help the crew fight off the attackers.

Scene 3: The jungle cultists lead the crew to their elder. The elder explains that Ursula is at war with herself, and she cannot seem to choose a side. She brought the ship to the surface as a way of searching for help. If the crew will assist the jungle cultists in eradicating the wasteland cultists, then the elder will convince Ursula to let the ship leave.

If the crew disagrees or they uncover the jungle cultists' dark secret (LN's discretion), the elder will order them escorted to the wasteland border and left to the elements.

This scene ends once the crew chooses which side to support.

LIVING PLANETOID CAMPAIGN

PART TWO: THE SCHISMING

++SENSOR ALERT ++SENSOR ALERT++

Ship scanners have detected a large terrestrial object on collision course with local planetoid "Ursula." Object is a planet with a relative mass of 2.329 Earths. Unless planet changes trajectory with 30 minutes, collision will occur.

++WARNING ++WARNING++

Cataclysmic event imminent. Suggestions: close all exterior hatches, turn off all unnecessary lights, and brace for impact.

Objectives

- › Survive the Schisming
- › End the war
- › Leave Ursula

Cues

- › devouring a planet › earthquake! › a brand new ocean › boatmen
- › marine creatures › the war renews › genocide

Tags

- › the Schisming › water planet › natural disasters › geysers
- › aquatic cultists › war! › geopsychic energy › diplomacy

LIVING PLANETOID CAMPAIGN PART TWO: THE SCHISMING

"When we got this assignment, I never imagined we'd get a chance to witness the act of a living planetoid swallowing another planet."

"Each planetoid's surface culture has a name for this phenomenon. Ursula's elders call it the Schisming. They said the last time the Schisming occurred, it brought the wastelanders and their dry landscape to the planetoid's surface."

"The elders fear this new Schisming will create an even more varied environment, and the war will only worsen ..."

THE SETTING

The incoming planet, so close it can be seen in Ursula's sky, is covered entirely in water. Ursula's opening mouth is impossible to see from the ground, but the landscape has slowly begun to distend, and the earthquakes are growing worse.

ENEMIES/OBSTACLES

Scene 1: As Ursula devours the water planet, natural disasters rage. Geysers erupt in both the wastelands and the jungle hemispheres, quickly transforming the surface of the planet. Earthquakes indicate Ursula is growing in size. When the ground settles, a full third of Ursula's surface is dominated by a vast ocean filled with a wholly new race of water-faring cultists.

Scene 2: The three factions of cultists are now at war with each other, even further confusing poor Ursula. To further complicate matters, Ursula's geopsychic energies are beginning to affect the crew in such a way that she begins subtly influencing their thoughts and actions.

In order for Ursula to have enough presence of mind to allow the crew's ship to leave her sphere of geopsychic influence, the crew will need to find some way to end the war. For example, the crew could help one cultist faction triumph over the others, or they could find a way for all of the factions to get along and give Ursula some peace of mind.



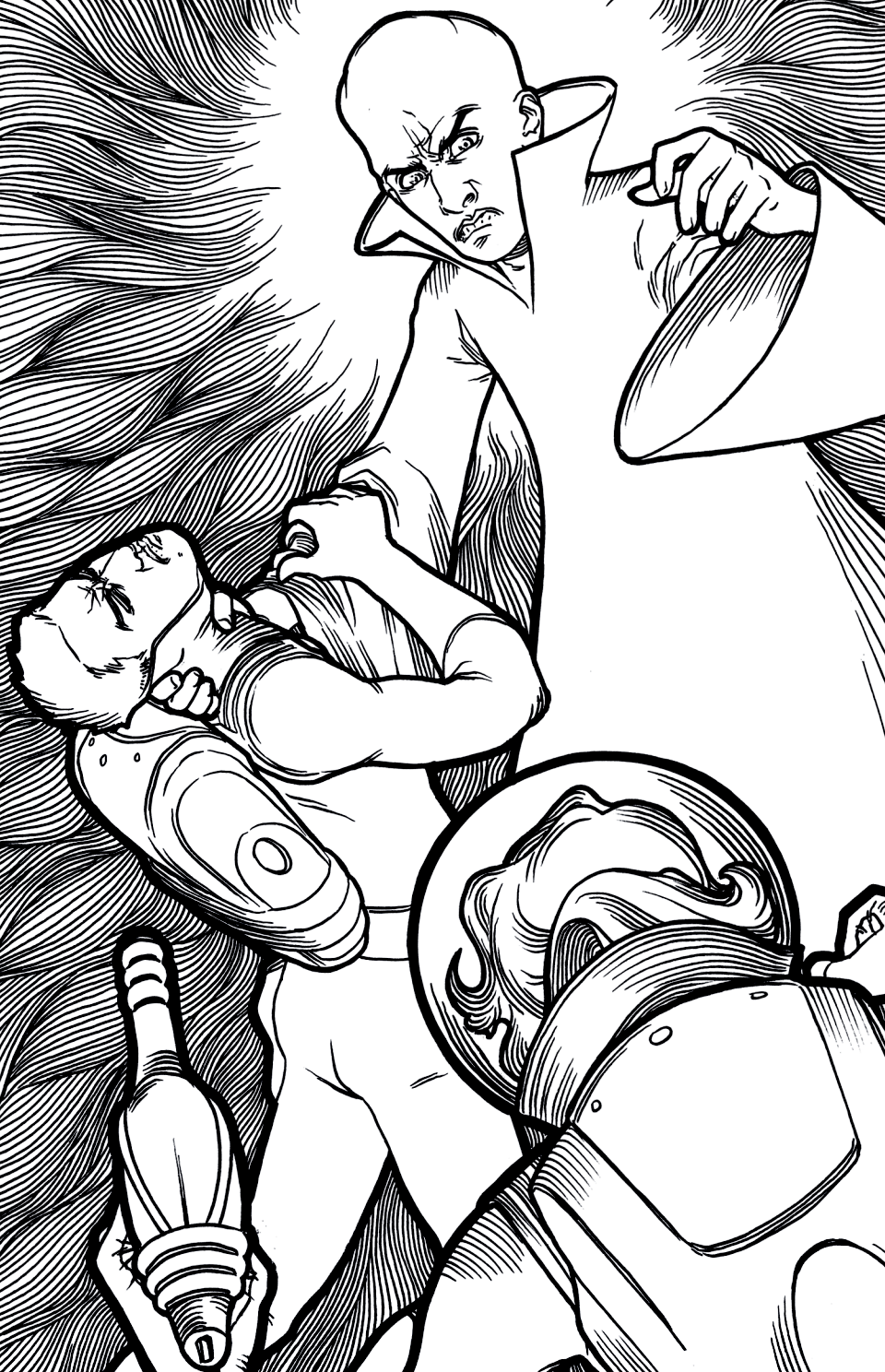
OUR GREATEST THREAT IS AT OUR FRONT DOOR!

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c/o Cosmic Patrol Cryptology Lab
Platform Alpha, Suite 42A
Earth, Great Union

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