

LEGENDARY ADVENTURES

STARFALL



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STARFALL



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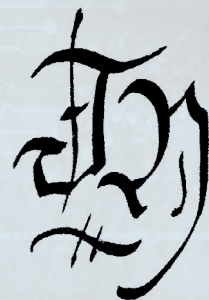
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WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE STARFALL:

What begins as a simple rescue mission takes a turn for the surreal when the heroes are abducted by a great silvery egg that whisks them into the stars. Finding themselves aboard a crippled star-faring vessel, long stranded in orbit around their homeworld, the heroes encounter an enigmatic race of human starfarers, prisoners aboard their own ship by alien foes that threaten their survival even as they menace the heroes' own world. Seeking these alien enemies through tunnels of steel and corridors crackling with energy, the heroes must brave an artificial jungle stocked with fearsome flora and fauna to reach the long-abandoned bowels of the ancient ship, only to come face-to-face with an alien threat of unimaginable horror ... an alien threat that has just initiated the ship's self-destruct sequence!

Starfall is a 5th Edition adventure for 13th-level characters that merges sorcery and spacecraft, blending magic and machines with a touch of cosmic horror to create an harrowing journey into danger that is literally out of this world. Like every product from Legendary Games, it brings together the talents of the top authors and artists in the business to bring you a fantastic play experience at the table and a product that is as pleasurable to read as it is to use. When you combine innovative layout, beautiful aesthetics, and excellence in design that is second to none, that is when you **Make Your Game Legendary!** We hope you enjoy using *Starfall* as much as we enjoyed making it! Game on!



ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Thirteen centuries ago, in a distant galaxy, the homeworld of the Dzjaeri (Diz-jeer-ree) was destroyed by the Empire of the Void, a consortium of malevolent aberrations, powerful alien entities, and nightmare creatures who dwell in the light-less gulfs between the stars. A few forward-thinking Dzjaeri foresaw their homeworld's destruction and fled the disaster in massive starships each designed to carry thousands of passengers in cryogenic hibernation. However, due to the imminent threat of global annihilation, the Dzjaeri engineers had to cut corners in order to build the hundreds of ships necessary to evacuate their world. Instead of constructing an entire starship from scratch, the Dzjaeri designed each of their starships around a central hull made from asteroids harvested from a nearby asteroid field. Though this greatly accelerated the construction time, the Dzjaeri starships ultimately proved slow and graceless. The Empire of the Void swiftly hunted down most of the hundreds of starships that fled during the final diaspora.

One of these fleeing starships was the *Ardent Hope*, whose crew tried desperately to escape the faster, more powerful vessels of the Empire of the Void. Battered by missiles, energy weapons, and horrific, insanity-inducing psychic attacks, the *Ardent Hope* sustained a great deal of damage while most of her sister ships were consumed by fire and madness around her. Miraculously, the crew of the *Ardent Hope* finally engaged the ship's *stardrive* and escaped complete destruction. Unfortunately, one of the Empire of the Void ships was able to strike the *Ardent Hope* with a terrible biological weapon: a missile containing a qomok kept in frozen hibernation. Mercifully, the missile failed to penetrate the *Ardent Hope* and instead embedded itself in the ship's rocky hull without detonating and dispersing its monstrous contents. And there it has remained for millennia.

An instant after engaging its *stardrive*, the battered *Ardent Hope* found itself thousands of light years from Dzjaera, and at least temporarily beyond the reach of the Empire of the Void. Alone and lost among the stars, the *Ardent Hope* piloted by "Father", the *Ardent Hope*'s near-sentient Artificial Intelligence was able to repair some of its damaged systems. However, the damage was extensive, and the cruel weapons of the enemy continued to slowly eat away at the ship and her critical systems. The slowly decaying starship spent the next 1,300 years wandering blindly through interstellar space, desperately searching for a new world for its passengers and crew to call home. Eventually, its *stardrive* and systems on the verge of total failure, the *Ardent Hope* limped into orbit around the PCs' homeworld. As the ship settled into orbit, the Father AI woke the *Ardent Hope*'s command crew from cryogenic stasis for the last time, before failing permanently.

After assessing the situation, the command crew woke a small landing party of well-trained scouts and scientists. The landing party made a foray to the planet's surface and found the world's climate and atmosphere perfect for colonization. Unfortunately, the entire landing party died in terrible agony mere minutes after arriving planetside, as a bacterium in the world's atmosphere harmless to native life triggered lethal brain aneurysms in each of them. Unable to immediately colonize the world and unable to leave orbit, the Dzjaeri scientists began searching for a way to adapt or protect their people from the deadly bacterium. The Dzjaeri leadership decided to keep the majority of their people (numbering in the thousands) in frozen hibernation until such a cure could be found. A small team consisting of specialist researchers and support personnel began working in five-year shifts. A team remained awake for five years, and then returned to hibernation when they were relieved by the next team. During these five years, the awakened team performed critical research, studied the planet below with the help of robotic reconnaissance probes, and performed general maintenance aboard the *Ardent Hope*. This has gone on now for 300 years.

Over the past three centuries, Dzjaeri researchers used their robotic reconnaissance probes to study creatures on the planet below, often collecting the more interesting specimens. Finally, after years of fruitless research, the Dzjaeri made a breakthrough. Sixty years ago, their scientists discovered an alchemical substance that, when ingested, temporarily prevented the deadly bacterium from killing them. This substance was an alchemical extract whose primary ingredient was fluid milked from the pineal gland of a humanoid brain stored in the back of a neh-thalgggu, an alien brain-collecting aberration that also happened to have many members among the hated Empire of the Void. The Dzjaeri pooled together what remained of their decaying technology to create the *Silver Egg*, a technological trap designed to capture neh-thalggus and deliver them unconscious to the *Ardent Hope*. Over the last few decades, the Dzjaeri have captured nearly two dozen neh-thalggus and milked them of the precious pineal gland fluid. But, they require much more in order to synthesize a drug with enough potency to permanently protect them from the brain-eating bacterium. Unfortunately, when several neh-thalggus escape aboard the *Ardent Hope* and inadvertently rouse the qomok from its hibernation, the Dzjaeri—and perhaps the PCs' entire world—face a threat of unspeakable horror.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs are traveling through a region of deep canyons and badlands, when they encounter a party of desperate barbarian tribesmen who claim that a band of giants recently raided their encampment and abducted nearly a dozen of their people. They offer the PCs a reward if they can rescue their abducted kinsfolk. When the PCs finally track down the giants, they discover the raid was engineered by a neh-thalgggu seeking new barbarian slaves.

The PCs may have the opportunity to set an ambush for the giants and the neh-thalgggu. However, shortly after combat begins a 20-foot long, egg-shaped, silver object suddenly appears overhead and emits a pulse of silvery light that envelopes all of the combatants. Everyone enveloped by the radiance is immediately lifted into the sky at an incredible speed and eventually transported safely to the *Ardent Hope*.

Once aboard the *Ardent Hope*, after combat with the neh-thalgggu and the giants concludes, the PCs have the opportunity to befriend and speak with the Dzjaeri, who share their history and explain why they cannot yet colonize the planet below. Whether the Dzjaeri trust the PCs or not, they request a favor of them: they want the PCs to hunt down a band of neh-thalgggus that escaped from their lab several days ago and now reside in the ship's Terrestrial Enclosure. They explain that they cannot enter the enclosure (and are effectively trapped on the Command Decks) because the enclosure's atmosphere is now tainted with a deadly bacterium from the PCs' homeworld. The Dzjaeri promise that once the enclosure is secure, they will revive several of their engineers from hibernation and have them build an escape pod for the PCs, which they can use to return to the planet's surface.

The PCs then have the opportunity to explore the alien jungle inside the Terrestrial Enclosure. After defeating the escaped neh-thalgggu, the PCs discover clues that suggest that one or more neh-thalgggus recently split from the main group and made their way to the Engineering deck. A short time later, the *Ardent Hope* shudders violently and the PCs can hear a series of distant explosions far below them. The Dzjaeri soon contact them and explain that an unknown entity has initiated the self-destruct sequence on the *Ardent Hope's* engines. If the sequence is not shut down, the engines—which keep the ship in orbit—will permanently fail and the *Ardent Hope* will crash onto the planet surface.

On the lower decks, the PCs battle several alien qomoks and have the opportunity to disable the self-destruct sequence. After rescuing the *Ardent Hope*, the PCs scour the ship for any remaining qomoks and are eventually

summoned by the Dzjaeri to the Command deck. There, the PCs find the place in shambles and only a few of the Dzjaeri left alive. The survivors explain that an unknown alien (identical to the one the PCs just fought) attacked them and a slaughter ensued. Unknown to the PCs, one or more of the survivors is actually a qomok in disguise. The PCs must unmask the qomoks and rid the *Ardent Hope* of an unspeakable evil.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

- The PCs should begin *Starfall* as 13th-level characters.
- By the beginning of Part Three, the PCs should reach 14th level.
- The PCs should be at least half-way through 14th-level by the end of the adventure.

PART ONE

The PCs are traveling through a region of hills and desolate badlands. There are few trees here, with most of the vegetation consisting of scrub brush, stunted trees, and dry, knee-high grass.

THE SHADOW CROWS

The PCs round a bend in the canyon wall and find themselves face to face with a small band of savage-looking tribesmen.

A group of four armed men stand only a few yards away. They are dressed in leather and hides and wear simple headbands adorned with black feathers and dried crow's feet. Their faces are smeared with gray ash and red war paint. It's obvious the men have recently seen battle. All of them have freshly bandaged wounds and their quivers are nearly depleted of arrows. They stare wide-eyed at first, with obvious mistrust in their eyes. After a tense moment, one of the men, a young warrior with a confident demeanor, steps forward with a hand raised in parlay.

Creatures: The man stepping forward is Kreth, the de facto leader of this group. He hails the PCs using the Common tongue and asks to speak with them. Kreth and his companions are not looking for a fight. If the PCs attack or react aggressively toward them, Kreth tosses his weapons to the ground and orders his companions to do the same. He then begs the PCs and the gods for mercy. If the PCs kill Kreth or any of his companions, the survivors

TIMELINE

Here is a timeline of important background events.

1,300 years ago	Dzjaera, homeworld of the Dzjaeri people, is destroyed by the Empire of the Void. Though severely damaged, the <i>Ardent Hope</i> escapes into interstellar space. However, as the ship flees it is struck by a projectile containing a hibernating qomok, which remains secretly embedded in the ship's hull.
300 years ago	With its <i>stardrive</i> and internal systems decaying, the <i>Ardent Hope</i> settles into orbit around the PCs' homeworld. The Dzjaeri send a team to explore the planet surface and the entire team is killed by a deadly bacterium in the atmosphere. The Dzjaeri begin researching a way to protect their people from the deadly bacterium so they can adapt to and colonize the new world.
60 years ago	The Dzjaeri discover an alchemical substance (rendered from the pineal gland taken from a stored humanoid brain extracted from a neh-thalgggu) that renders them temporarily immune to the deadly bacterium. Dzjaeri engineers cobble together what remains of their decaying ultra-advanced technology to create a robotic probe called the <i>Silver Egg</i> . They begin to use the <i>Silver Egg</i> to track down and capture neh-thalggus on the PCs' homeworld.
2 years ago	While capturing a neh-thalgggu on the planet below, the <i>Silver Egg</i> accidentally captures a pair of savage hydras as well. The hydras escape before the Dzjaeri can sterilize them and the creatures quickly escape into the Terrestrial Enclosure. The hydras carry the deadly bacterium and within weeks the atmosphere of the Terrestrial Enclosure becomes irrevocably tainted. The Dzjaeri can no longer enter the Terrestrial Enclosure.
2 weeks ago	Eight neh-thalggus escape from their containment restraints, kill three Dzjaeri (including a science officer, whose brain is consumed by one of the creatures), and flee into the Terrestrial Enclosure.
6 days ago	Three of the escaped neh-thalggus break away from the main group of escapees to explore the ship's lower decks.
2 days ago	During their explorations of the Engineering Deck, the three neh-thalggus discover the body of the hibernating qomok embedded in the hull. They retrieve the body.
1 day ago	<p>The qomok awakens. It kills and assimilates one of the neh-thalggus and infects another, spawning a new qomok. The "parent" qomok makes its way to the Passenger Deck and absorbs several sleeping Dzjaeri, including the <i>Ardent Hope's</i> Chief Engineering Officer. With its new knowledge, the parent qomok immediately begins putting in motion its plan to crash the ship on the planet below.</p> <p>On the planet below, a neh-thalgggu sends its giant allies to raid a barbarian encampment and abducts a dozen tribesfolk.</p>

snatch up their weapons and reluctantly fight to the death. If the PCs decide to speak with Kreth, he relates the following story.

Kreth and his companions are members of the Shadow Crow tribe. The Shadow Crows are nomads who have dwelled in these desolate canyon-lands for many generations. They are a proud, peaceful people, though they are quick to take up arms if their tribe is threatened. Just before sunrise yesterday, their encampment was attacked by a large band of ogres led by a brutish hill giant. The attack was devastating. Though the Shadow Crows managed to kill many of the ogres, over twenty Shadow Crow warriors were killed and a dozen men and women of the tribe were carried off by the retreating giants. The tribe's chieftain, Narek, immediately formed a war party and set off to rescue their kinfolk. After

tracking the giants for several hours, the war party was itself ambushed late yesterday afternoon by the giants and a strange, crab-like monster that didn't participate in the original raid. A terrible slaughter ensued. Kreth and his three companions narrowly escaped the carnage, but all of the other Shadow Crows were killed, including Chief Narek. Kreth realized he and his companions could not survive another encounter with the creatures and decided to return to their tribe to report the tragic loss of Chief Narek and the other members of the war party.

Kreth is young, but Chief Narek has groomed him for eventual leadership. Kreth has the wisdom to recognize the PCs are capable adventurers. He becomes very animated as he speaks, and claims that the PCs were sent as agents of the gods to exact justice for his people. He then begs the

PCs to rescue his people from an awful fate. If the PCs seem reluctant, he promises his tribe can offer them a substantial payment in ivory and gemstones equal to 2,000 gp per PC if they succeed in rescuing the missing women. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check can increase this reward to 3,000 gp per PC.

Development: If the PCs agree, Kreth and his companions escort the PCs as they track the giant raiders. Here are answers to a few questions the PCs might have for Kreth:

How many giants participated in the ambush? “I am not sure. The hill giant that attacked our camp survived the ambush. I saw him rip Chief Narek’s arms from his body with his bare hands. There were many ogres, and at least six or eight of them still stood as my friends and I fled the ambush.”

Why did they abduct your people? “To use as slaves or food, I imagine.”

What was the strange, crab-like creature you saw with the giants? “I have no idea, but it was quite powerful and even the hill giant seemed to hold it in reverence. The strange creature used foul sorcery and slew several of our warriors with blasts of lightning.”

KRETH

CR 5

XP 1,800

hp 65, currently 23 (see *Appendix 1: NPC Gallery*)

SHADOW CROW WARRIORS (3)

CR 1/2

XP 100

hp 32, each currently has 3d6 hit points (see *Appendix 1: NPC Gallery*)



FOLLOWING THE GIANTS

Kreth leads the PCs deeper into the twisting, labyrinthine canyons as they follow the giant raiders’ trail. The trail follows an ancient riverbed of hard-packed earth and gravelly scree. The nearly sheer canyon walls average 100 feet high. The trail is relatively easy to follow, and only requires a DC 5 Wisdom (Survival) check (which Kreth or any of his companions can automatically accomplish). However, if any of the PCs succeed at a DC 25 Survival check, they can accurately estimate the raiding party consisted of ten Large-sized humanoids (the hill giant and eight ogres). The neh-thalggu leaves no tracks, as it is flying.

After about four hours, Kreth stops suddenly in an open area where several canyon paths intersect. He explains to the PCs that he thinks he knows where the giants are heading: to a deep canyon known to his people as the Night Rift, a canyon so deep and steeply angled the sun never shines on its lowest reaches. The place is known to be riddled with caves and crawling with many strange monsters. Kreth suggests he lead the PCs along another seldom-used trail that could possibly allow them to reach the entrance to the Night Rift before the giants do. This could allow the PCs to set up an ambush for the giants.

If the PCs decide to allow Kreth to lead them on the alternate trail, they do indeed arrive early enough to set up an ambush, as described in the **Ambush Site** section below. However, Kreth’s route brings them dangerously close to the lair of a fearsome behir.

BEHIR LAIR (CR 11)

Note: Because this encounter is dependent on the PCs following Kreth’s suggested route and may not occur, the encounter details are left intentionally vague. GMs are encouraged to add details to this encounter (including a lair map for the behir) as they see fit.

After about three hours of travel, Kreth’s narrow, winding alternate trail leads the PCs close to the entrance of a shallow cave long used as a lair by a very old female behir.

Creature: Though well beyond her reproductive years, this old behir remains formidable and has grown exceptionally cantankerous in her later years. The behir is highly territorial and her resting place just inside her cave offers a clear view of the path in front of her cave. Unless the PCs take extreme measures to be stealthy or somehow circumvent the entrance to her cave, the behir likely notices them and moves to immediately attack.

BEHIR

CR 11

XP 7,200

hp 168 (SRD)

TACTICS

During Combat The behir begins combat by breathing lightning on as many enemies as possible. She then attacks the largest, most heavily armored foe. If she successfully grapples an enemy, she constricts and rakes her victim for two rounds before swallowing them whole. She repeats these tactics until she is killed or all of her enemies are dead or driven off. She pursues fleeing enemies for only 1,000 feet before returning to her cave to rest.

Morale Cantankerous to the end, the behir fights to the death.

Treasure: The behir has amassed a modest hoard over the years, which she keeps in a large pile in the back of her shallow cave. It consists of 9,610 sp, 2,111 gp, 288 pp, a +1 longspear, and a suit of +2 plate armor.

AMBUSH SITE (CR 11)

As Kreth predicted, the raiding party is indeed heading for the Night Rift, where a large colony of neh-thalggus dwells. At the entrance to the Night Rift is a boulder-strewn clearing bordered by a 30-foot-high ridgeline to the north and the south. The only vegetation is a few bramble bushes and a handful of thin, sickly pine trees.

If the PCs allowed Kreth to lead them on the alternate

trail, they arrive at the entrance to the Night Rift 30 minutes before the giant raiding party does. Allow the players time to plan their ambush. Additionally, each PC receives a +4 circumstance bonus to their Initiative roll and to any Stealth checks they make to try and take the giants by surprise.

Creatures: The raiding party consists of nine ogres, a hill giant, and a neh-thalggu. When the monsters arrive 30 minutes later, they appear as follows:

- Two ogres scout 120 feet ahead of the main group.
- The main group consists of seven more ogres. Two of the ogres carry long chains to which the 12 Shadow Crow men and women are attached by iron neck-collars. One ogre leads six women and the other ogre leads six men.
- The neh-thalggu (hovering a few inches off the ground) and the hill giant bring up the rear.

If the PCs decided not to take Kreth's alternate route, they arrive at the entrance to the Night Rift to find the giant raiding party taking a brief break before they continue deeper into the canyon. However, the PCs are unable to set up an ambush and do not gain any tactical advantages or circumstance bonuses. Additionally, the ogres have abused one of the elderly male prisoners to death and are currently tearing his corpse limb from limb and snacking on it.



NEH-THALGGU

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 105 (see *Appendix 2: New Monsters*)

TACTICS

During Combat The neh-thalggu takes up a defensive position behind the ogres and the hill giant. It supports its giant minions with its offensive spells (*lightning bolt*, *acid arrow*, *magic missile*), but avoids melee if it can.

Morale The neh-thalggu fights to the death until the arrival of the *Silver Egg* (see below).

HUBRAAK THE HILL GIANT

CR 5

XP 1,800

hp 105 (SRD)

TACTICS

During Combat When combat begins, Hubraak throws rocks until the PCs get within 30 feet of him. He then wades into the thick of melee, swinging his club at any target that presents itself.

Morale Hubraak despises “stunty folk” and cannot conceive of being defeated by them. He fights to the death, howling with rage and disbelief in his death throes.

OGRES (9)

CR 2

XP 450

hp 59 (SRD)

TACTICS

During When combat begins, the ogres each throw their javelins (each ogre carries two javelins) and then wade into combat with their ogre greatclubs. When possible, the ogres try to pair-up against the PCs. Each ogre begins melee by making a shove attack.

Morale When their prey turns out to be more dangerous than they thought, a rare moment of good sense seizes the ogres; they flee if reduced to less than 8 hp. Any of the survivors also flee as soon as the *Silver Egg* appears (see below).

THE SILVER EGG

The *Silver Egg* is a rather haphazardly pieced together robotic probe, designed to autonomously track down and abduct neh-thalggus and return them to the *Ardent Hope*. After decades of constant use, the *Silver Egg*—having already been constructed from disparate, centuries-old parts—has, like many of the *Ardent Hope*'s technological



equipment and ship's systems, begun to show serious signs of degradation. When the probe attempts to capture the neh-thalgnu, it malfunctions spectacularly.

The *Silver Egg* appears one round after the neh-thalgnu first takes any amount of hit point damage. Instead of collecting just the neh-thalgnu with its teleportation ray, the *Silver Egg*'s already deteriorating artificial intelligence malfunctions and also targets the surviving ogres, the hill giant, and the PCs.

Read the following when the *Silver Egg* appears:

Suddenly, a 20-foot long, bright silver, egg-shaped object with a rippling liquid surface, appears hovering in the air 30 feet directly above the strange crab-like creature.

Allow the PCs to attempt a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check. PCs that succeed at this check immediately realize the neh-thalgnu has recognized the *Silver Egg* and is terrified of it. As soon as the *Silver Egg* appears, the neh-thalgnu abandons its giant allies and attempts to flee the area.

The *Silver Egg* has an Initiative modifier of +8, an AC of 25, 600 hit points, and flies perfectly at a speed of 100 feet per round. Each round on its turn, the *Silver Egg* emits a pulse

of silvery light that simultaneously envelops all creatures in a 200-foot radius directly below it. Creatures caught inside this effect must succeed at a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw to resist being paralyzed for 3 rounds and immediately lifted into the sky at an incredible speed, following a bright silver column of light that leads ever upward. The neh-thalgnu suffers disadvantage on this saving throw. The *Silver Egg* targets the neh-thalgnu first and then continues to "collect" all of the other creatures present until it has collected all of the PCs or it is somehow destroyed.

"Collected" creatures continue to ascend at an incredible speed and see the ground rapidly shrink beneath them as they are propelled through the clouds and the upper atmosphere. On the second round, the collected creatures enter the mesosphere and the world tens of thousands of feet below becomes a green and blue blur. Though the *Silver Egg*'s silvery ray protects collected creatures from harmful temperature variations and atmospheric pressure, air-breathing creatures must now succeed at a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or lose consciousness from a combination of having the air forced from their lungs and severe disorientation. On the third round, the collected creatures are whisked inside the *Ardent Hope* and arrive in area C13.



PART TWO

In Part Two, the PCs arrive aboard the *Ardent Hope* and meet the Dzjaeri. The Dzjaeri leader asks the PCs to perform a mission for his people, and if the PCs succeed they will be returned safely back to the surface of their homeworld. In the second half of Part Two, the PCs explore the *Ardent Hope's* Terrestrial Enclosure, as they seek to complete their mission.

ARRIVAL

All of the collected creatures appear inside a glass-enclosed arrival chamber (area C13). Creatures that remained conscious throughout the abduction can act immediately; while creatures that were rendered unconscious must succeed at a DC 8 Constitution save at the beginning of each round to awaken. Creatures can also be jostled awake as if the creature was under the effect of a *sleep* spell.

Upon arrival and awakening, the surviving ogres, hill giant, and neh-thalggu (if they still live) spend one round reorienting themselves to the strange new environment (they are effectively stunned) before continuing their fight against the PCs and the surviving Shadow Crow warriors.

The glass that separates the PCs and their opponents from the Dzjaeri observers is the same high-density plastic that forms the *Ardent Hope's* viewport windows (threshold 10, hp 100). Additionally, considering the special nature of this chamber, the exit door is magnetically locked, requiring a successful DC 30 Strength check or Dexterity check with thieves' tools to bypass. The Dzjaeri have temporarily diverted a small amount of energy to power the door in order to detain their retrievals from the world below while the sterilization process completes.

Creatures: Creatures inside the arrival enclosure can easily see three pale, olive-skinned humans with platinum-white hair intently observing them through the transparent walls. The surprised Dzjaeri spend the next four rounds speaking to each other in their native tongue as they try to figure out why the *Silver Egg* transported so many creatures at once. The Dzjaeri include Sub-Commander Orem and the scientists Taela and Essira. When the Dzjaeri finally come to their senses, Orem uses a communicator to summon the security guards Jathis and Tes, who arrive in two rounds.

SUB-COMMANDER OREM

CR 6

XP 2,300

hp 132 (see *Appendix 1: NPC Gallery*)

ESSIRA AND TAELO (SCIENCE OFFICERS)

CR 3

XP 800

hp 22 (see *Appendix 1: NPC Gallery*)

JATHIS AND TES (SECURITY OFFICERS)

CR 4

XP 1,100

hp 75 (see *Appendix 1: NPC Gallery*)

Development: The curious Dzjaeri allow the melee between the PCs and the monsters to play out without interfering. Once the combat ends (assuming the PCs are victorious), Orem addresses the PCs using a communicator built into a control panel on his side of the arrival enclosure. Like all of the communication devices aboard the *Ardent Hope*, the communicator automatically translates any language (as *tongues*). Sub-Commander Orem introduces himself and his companions and tries to explain to the PCs where they are. He thanks them for defeating the neh-thalggu and then apologizes and tries to explain that the neh-thalggu was their intended target, and not the PCs. He also warns them that he must douse them with a sterilizing agent since they are carrying a bacterium deadly to his people. Without waiting for a reply he flips a switch and the entire arrival chamber instantly fills with a cracking, electro-static haze that persists for a few seconds. The sterilization spray is a technological hazard.

HAZARD: STERILIZATION SPRAY

All creatures inside the arrival enclosure are doused with a combination of chemically-infused mist and intense ultraviolet radiation and must succeed at a DC 15 Constitution saving throw to resist being poisoned for 1d6 hours. Even with a successful save, creatures exposed to the sterilization spray are still poisoned for 1d6 rounds. Creatures exposed to the sterilization spray are cured of all diseases (as *lesser restoration*).



INTRODUCTIONS

After sterilizing the PCs, Sub-Commander Orem introduces himself and his companions, but does not yet release the PCs from the arrival enclosure. As Orem speaks, the scientists Taela and Essira turn knobs and monitor displays on the control panel while the security officers Jathis and Tes stand near the arrival enclosure's door with photon pistols in hand (though held down at their side, non-threateningly). Orem asks for the characters' names and then thanks them once again for helping them capture the neh-thalggus. He then excuses himself, turns off the communicator so the PCs can no longer hear him, and begins having an animated discussion with the two scientists and the senior security officer, Jathis.

After several minutes of animated discussion, Orem turns his attention back to the PCs and speaks once again through the communicator. He explains that the PCs are aboard a star-faring vessel called the *Ardent Hope*, and stresses that the PCs are guests and not prisoners. As a gesture of good will, Orem presses a button on a control panel that opens the door to the arrival enclosure. The two security officers step back and allow the PCs to exit the chamber. However, they do not holster their photon pistols.

If the PCs attack the Dzjaeri, Orem draws his photon pistol and he and the security officers defend themselves with their photon pistols set to "stun." Taela and Essira flee into the Lift tube (marked "L" on the map) and make their way to the Bridge (area C1) to warn the rest of the Dzjaeri crew. If the PCs kill Orem or either of the security guards, the survivors lower their weapons and surrender.

DZJAERA

Dzjaera was a small moonless world (roughly 60% the size of Earth) that orbited a massive blue-white star in a galaxy far removed from the one in which the PCs' homeworld exists. The planet was dominated by shallow, emerald-colored seas. Its only landmass was a sprawling, twisting continent located along the planet's equator that was covered by vast jungles, trackless swamps, and a few small deserts.

THE DEAL

The following assumes Orem survives his initial encounter with the PCs. However, if the PCs killed Orem, the next-in-command, a senior security officer named Jathis, takes command. Shortly after releasing them from the arrival chamber, Orem once again apologizes to the PCs for abducting them. He also explains that the robotic probe that abducted them (the *Silver Egg*) was destroyed shortly after

delivering the PCs to the *Ardent Hope*, so he and his crew have no immediate method of returning them to the planet surface. He does, however, have a deal for them.

Orem explains that eight neh-thalggus escaped from their containment restraints in Lab Three (area C16) two weeks ago. During their escape, the creatures killed three Dzjaeri crew members (two engineering officers and a science officer) before escaping into the Terrestrial Enclosure. The Dzjaeri have been unable to enter the Terrestrial Enclosure for the past two years, ever since the *Silver Egg* accidentally captured two savage predators (hydras) two years ago and infected the enclosure with the deadly bacterium from the PCs' world's atmosphere.

The escaped neh-thalggus are a serious threat to the Dzjaeri and must be destroyed, especially since their recent escape has coincided with two critical system failures. One of the reactors in the Terrestrial Enclosure's Environmental Control Center (area TE8) suddenly went offline three days ago. This reactor controlled the lighting in the Terrestrial Enclosure, regulated the temperature, and controlled the simulation of the enclosure's day/night cycle. With the reactor offline, the entire dome is receiving only emergency ambient lighting, which bathes the entire Terrestrial Enclosure in a dim violet light. Additionally, one day after the reactor went offline, all four of the air and nutrient processors (areas TE4) also went offline and no longer collect the vital nutrients from the enclosure that the *Ardent Hope's* systems use to sustain the thousands of Dzjaeri kept in cryogenic hibernation as well as create nutrient paste, the crew's only form of food.

After the deaths of the two engineering officers during the neh-thalggus' escape, Sub-Commander Orem has taken on all of the ship's engineering duties. Though not a trained engineer, Orem has a decent understanding of engineering and ship's systems. He tells the PCs that because both of the system failures were almost certainly triggered manually, he believes the escaped neh-thalggus are to blame. One of the three Dzjaeri crew members killed when the neh-thalggus escaped was a science officer named Arvinen. Orem and the science officers all believe one of the neh-thalggus must have gained enough engineering knowledge from Arvinen's extracted brain to perpetrate the system failures.

Orem then offers the PCs a deal. If they eliminate the neh-thalggus and reactivate the failed systems, he promises to revive several of the *Ardent Hope's* engineering officers and have them construct an escape pod from the disassembled heavy machinery in area E5. He explains that the PCs can use the escape pod to descend safely back to their world.

IF THE PCs REFUSE

If the PCs refuse to eliminate the neh-thalggus, Orem seems visibly agitated. His demeanor becomes suddenly very cold as he reminds the PCs that they have very little choice but to

THE DZJAERI

The Dzjaeri are a race of near-humans, and follow the Pathfinder rules for human characters. All Dzjaeri have smooth pale olive skin, crystal blue, gray, or silver eyes, and silvery or platinum-colored hair, which is always straight and very thin in texture. They are tall (males and females both average just over 6 feet tall) and thin (males average 140 pounds, while females average 100 pounds), with long narrow faces, and small noses and ears. Dzjaeri are serious and rarely smile; they are typically quiet and contemplative and exceptionally curious. These traits stem from their harsh home environment, for through much of its history Dzjaera was a dangerous world populated with a wide variety of predatory animals and plants as well as several savage humanoid races that considered the Dzjaeri food.

Throughout 35,000 years of recorded history, the sport of hunting has remained an important cultural identifier for the Dzjaeri and Dzjaeri speech and philosophy are inundated with hunting metaphors and imagery. Though the Dzjaeri ate meat in prehistoric times, modern Dzjaeri no longer eat meat; they receive all the nutrition their bodies need with a purely vegetarian diet. Most modern Dzjaeri now find the hunting of live prey unsettling, so Dzjaeri scientists developed ways to bioengineer plant- and fungus-versions of animals. Some of these specially engineered animals still roam the Terrestrial Enclosure.

Magic is unknown to the Dzjaeri, though they excel in the fields of science and engineering. At the time of Dzjaera's destruction, the Dzjaeri had only recently discovered interstellar travel and had established a dozen colonies in nearby star systems. What became of these colonies in the wake of Dzjaera's destruction is left to individual GMs to decide.

agree to the deal. He reiterates the PCs likely have no idea how to build an escape pod. Orem once again apologizes for strong-arming the PCs in this manner, but promises to make things right as soon as they succeed in eliminating the neh-thalggus and returning with their brains.

If the PCs threaten Orem or his crew with violence, Orem tries to reason with them again, and he remains calm and responds peaceably even if the PCs continue to threaten him. However, if the PCs attack him or any of his crew, he orders his crew to defend themselves and kill the "dishonorable barbarians." At this point, unless the PCs decide to explore the Terrestrial Enclosure on their own, GMs can skip Part Two and proceed directly to the first event in Part Three.

THE MISSION

If the PCs agree to help the Dzjaeri, they must accomplish the following:

Eliminate the neh-thalggu threat: The PCs must track down and kill the escaped neh-thalggus and bring the humanoid brains the creatures store on their backs back to the Dzjaeri.

Reactivate the offline systems: The PCs must travel to all four of the air and nutrient processors (area **TE4**) and reactivate them. They must also reactivate the reactor in the Environmental Control Center (area **TE8**). Sub-Commander Orem explains he will talk the PCs through the process of reactivating these systems through a device called a *comm-band* (see *Preparations* below).

PREPARATIONS

The next day, Orem provides the PCs with several

technological items to help them accomplish their mission, and the Dzjaeri allow the PCs to borrow the following pieces of technological gear:

Chemical Storage Pack: This storage container resembles a backpack made of a silvery canvas-like material. Sealed with a strong metal zipper, the container contains foul-smelling (but harmless) alchemical goo, and is designed to safely store and carry up to 15 humanoid brains extracted from the neh-thalggus. The pack weighs 5 pounds, plus another 3 pounds for each brain stored inside it.

Comm-band: This light, metal and plastic headband has a thin flexible cord connecting it to a small rubber earpiece. It provides constant communication between the wearer and anyone sitting at a functioning computer console aboard the *Ardent Hope*. A small camera embedded in the headband allows anyone at a computer console to see everything in front of the wearer, as if he or she was standing in the wearer's space. Sub-Commander Orem explains that he will remain at a computer console on the Bridge (area **C1**) and use the *comm-band* to verbally guide the PCs through the Terrestrial Enclosure and talk them through the steps for reactivating the offline systems.

Sonic wrench: This slim, heavy, wand-like device weighs 1 pound. It is made of black steel and features a clear crystal tip that flashes red when activated. After 5 minutes of instruction from Sub-Commander Orem, a PC can use the *sonic wrench* in conjunction with an Intelligence or Dexterity check to reactivate the reactor and the air and nutrient processors. See areas **TE4** and **TE8** for information on how to reactivate the specific systems, including the DCs and time required to reactivate them.

REST AND RECUPERATION

If the PCs agree to Orem's deal, he escorts them to one of the Crew Apartments (area C7), where the Dzjaeri set up temporary accommodations for them. The PCs can rest, share nutrient paste meals with the crew in the Galley (area C6), and recuperate for the next 24 hours. The PCs are given full access to all of the areas on the Command Decks (areas C1 through C17), though they are escorted at all times by one of the science officers. The PCs are otherwise free to explore the Command Decks and mingle with the Dzjaeri crew. The Dzjaeri are a curious people and are very interested in sharing stories about themselves and the PCs' homeworld and cultures. This is especially true of the Dzjaeri scientists, who hover about the PCs and inundate them with a constant barrage of questions.

PLAYER CHARACTER QUESTIONS

Any of the Dzjaeri can provide the information detailed in the "Dzjaera" and "The Dzjaeri" sidebars, which provide an overview of the Dzjaeri homeworld and the Dzjaeri race. They can also provide all of the information presented in the *Adventure Background* section, with the exception of the qomok. Here are answers to a few additional questions the PCs might have for the Dzjaeri:

What dangers might we encounter in the Terrestrial Enclosure? "Aside from the exceptionally dangerous neh-thalggus, the Terrestrial Enclosure is home to several other dangerous flora and fauna that we collected over the centuries after visiting numerous worlds. The most dangerous of these is the enormous creature we call the toadhemoth, a huge gluttonous creature. The *Silver Egg* accidentally abducted two savage, multi-headed predators (hydras) two years ago, which escaped into the Terrestrial Enclosure. We aren't sure if they are still alive or not. Other dangers include smaller predators, a few species of dangerous plant-life, and some bioengineered plant-creatures we used to hunt for sport. Unfortunately, we haven't kept a very good record of the Terrestrial Enclosure's surviving occupants."

Where will we likely find the neh-thalggus? "Neh-thalggus are very intelligent, so they are likely lairing somewhere very defensible, and out of the reach of the toadhemoth. They're most likely holding up inside the Environmental Control Center underneath the island in the middle of the central lake."

Environmental Control Center? "The Environmental Control Center was designed to monitor and maintain the Terrestrial Enclosure's environment and act as an observatory to study the alien animals and plants we collected. However, we stripped it of most of its resources and abandoned it a few decades after we fled Dzjaera. There are two reactors

under the Environmental Control Center. Reactor-1 regulates the air and water quality and processes the vital nutrients collected by the air and nutrient processors to create our nutrient paste and sustain our passengers and crew in cryogenic hibernation. Reactor-2 regulates the heat, the weather, and the day/night cycle inside the Terrestrial Enclosure."

Can we have a photon pistol? "Absolutely not. We only have five functioning pistols left and they're assigned to the sub-commander and our security officers."

Why do you remain on the Command Decks? This ship is very large, what's wrong with the rest of the ship? "The Command Decks are the only areas with full power and reliable life support systems. We diverted power from the Passenger Deck and the Engineering Deck long ago, so they now only have minimal power and are unsafe for permanent habitation. The Passenger Deck is mainly a storage facility for the hundreds of colonists we keep in hibernation. In fact, the Engineering Deck was heavily damaged when we fled Dzjaera. We were only able to repair some of the damage. The Engineering Deck might have entire chambers that have collapsed and even areas with hull breaches. Though the *Ardent Hope's* stardrive failed long ago along with Father, the central artificial intelligence that ran most of the ship's systems, the ship's primary reactor core remains intact and provides just enough energy to keep us alive and the ship in orbit around your world. Besides, there's no easy way to access the lower decks. The Lift no longer functions below the Science Labs subdeck, so it's essentially a 1,500-foot shaft that drops down to the belly of the *Ardent Hope*."

Where are the other crew and passengers? "The *Ardent Hope* has 300 officers and crew and 8,722 passengers. However, in order to conserve our resources, we only keep 12 crew members active at any time. Shortly after we fled the destruction of our homeworld, all of the passengers and most of the ship's crew were placed in cryogenic hibernation. A 12-member skeleton crew remained awake to man the ship. Every five years, the skeleton crew returns to cryogenic hibernation and is replaced by another 12-member skeleton crew. Since we have enough crew members to support 25 separate skeleton crews, each skeleton crew has served a 5-year shift every 250 years. So, this is currently the 4th 5-year shift I've served since we fled Dzjaera 1,300 years ago."

Who destroyed your homeworld? What is the Empire of the Void? "After our scientists developed the stardrive, we began to colonize nearby star systems. Unfortunately, our rapid expansion was noticed by the Empire of the Void, a consortium of malevolent creatures and powerful alien entities that dwell in the dark spaces between the stars, where madness and oblivion reigns. The neh-thalggus are but one of the alien members of this terrible consortium. The Empire of the Void fell upon one of our far-flung colonies and consumed it. Soon after that they ascertained the location of Dzjaera and an all-out war began. It lasted

barely two years. In the end, our lush, beautiful world was literally devoured by a star-sized entity of unspeakable power. The *Ardent Hope* may be the only ship that escaped the carnage.”

KRETH AND THE SHADOW CROWS

If Kreth or any of the Shadow Crow warriors survived the battle with the neh-thalggu and the giants and end up aboard the *Ardent Hope*, they remain wide-eyed and slightly bewildered for several hours after leaving the Sterilization Chamber. Unless they are mistreated, they eventually adapt to their new surroundings and offer their services to the PCs or their new Dzjaeri acquaintances. In fact, Kreth and the senior security officer Jathis strike up an unlikely friendship and the two share many stories of life on their respective home worlds. If allowed to enter the Terrestrial Enclosure, the Shadow Crows find the artificial jungle fascinating and continue to come up with excuses to return to the enclosure (once the toadhemoth is eliminated, of course). Upon facing the qomoks, the Shadow Crows fight bravely alongside the PCs, believing the PCs will prevail against the alien horror.

ARDENT HOPE ROOM DESCRIPTIONS

Though the *Ardent Hope* is severely damaged, its basic systems (gravity, life support, food processing, waste management, and internal power) remain functional. The Command Deck, Passenger Deck, and Engineering Deck all share similar features.

Air Quality: The air aboard the *Ardent Hope* is well-circulated, but smells faintly metallic.

Computer Workstations: These computer workstations feature a monitor screen embedded in a nearby wall or affixed to a desk and a complicated keyboard with a variety of tactile keys, rubber knobs, and sensor pads. The keys, knobs, and sensor pads are labelled with hundreds of letters and numbers in the Dzjaeri tongue. Knowledge of the Dzjaeri tongue and a successful DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check enables a user to perform one of the functions listed below. All of the Dzjaeri can automatically use the computer consoles.

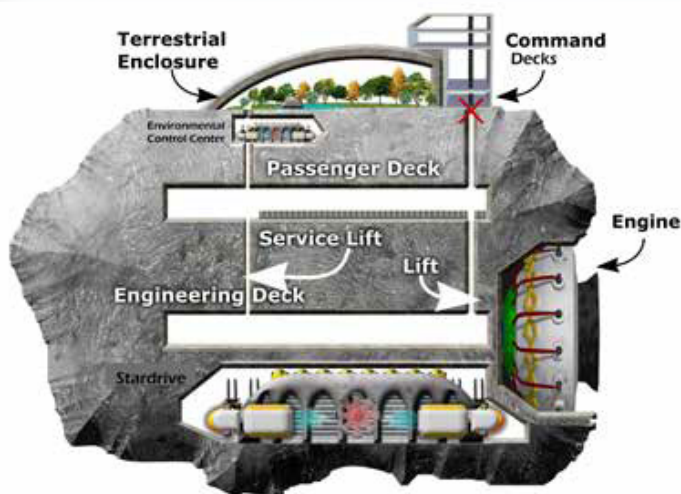
- **Access library:** The *Ardent Hope*'s computer library contains a massive amount of information on the history, culture, and technology of the Dzjaeri people. Answering a single specific question takes 1d6 minutes.

- **Communication:** The computer workstations can be used to communicate visually and verbally with a being sitting at another functioning computer workstation or possessing a *comm-band* (as described in the *Preparations* section in Part One). It is an action to initially establish or terminate communications.
- **Control Robot:** The computer workstations can be used to take control of a single robot aboard the *Ardent Hope*, as if the computer operator cast *dominate monster* on the robot (no concentration necessary). In order to do this, the computer user must know the robot's serial number. Robots aboard the *Ardent Hope* have their serial numbers imprinted on the back of their heads. The serial numbers are very small and require a successful DC 30 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot if the robot is attacking, moving, or otherwise being evasive. A successful check to answer a question using the computer library (see the **Access Library** action above) can also locate a specific robot's serial number, though the DC for the Access Library check increases by 5. It is an action to enter a robot's serial number and another action to attempt to assert control the robot. Once control is established, the computer operator can issue the robot's verbal commands from anywhere aboard the *Ardent Hope*.
- **Control Systems:** Computer workstations in specific rooms can control specific systems. For instance, a computer in the Life Support room (area C2) can adjust or disable the ship's life support systems. See the **Technology** notes in the individual room descriptions for additional information.

Dimensional Travel: Due to the strange metals infused within the *Ardent Hope*'s asteroid hull, as well as interference and reality-distortion from the ship's semi-dormant *stardrive*, the entire ship radiates an aura that blocks dimensional travel of any kind.

Doors: Doors are rectangular in shape, slightly curved at the top, and are typically five feet high and three feet wide. They are one-inch thick and made of the same adamantine-steel as the internal floors, walls, and ceilings (threshold 20, hp 30). Due to the *Ardent Hope*'s current condition, the doors are no longer powered and must be opened or closed manually by turning and then pulling an L-shaped lever located near the door's right edge. This requires an action and a successful DC 10 Strength check. Doors open to the left and slide seamlessly into the wall, where only the edge of the door containing its L-shaped handle remains visible. Since the doors are no longer powered they cannot be locked.

Floors/Walls/Ceilings: Internal walls are generally composed of three-inch thick panels made of an alloy of adamantine and steel (threshold 20, hp 200). External hulls



COMMAND DECKS CROSS-SECTION VIEW



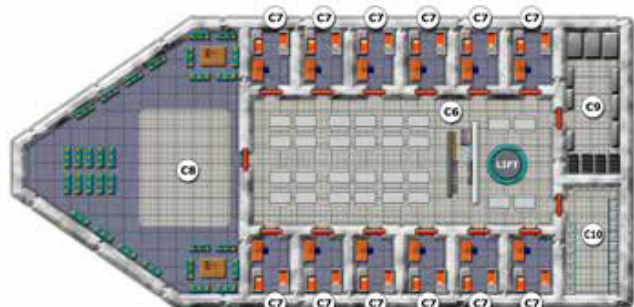
COMMAND DECK

1 Square = 5 Feet



CREW CRYOGENICS

1 Square = 5 Feet



CREW QUARTERS

1 Square = 5 Feet



SCIENCE LABS

1 Square = 5 Feet

are either made of the same adamantine-steel alloy or are composed of the solid rock of an asteroid. The adamantine-steel surfaces are three feet thick (threshold 20, hp 800, break DC 100), whereas the asteroid walls are generally dozens of feet thick (per five feet of thickness: threshold 8, hp 900, break DC 65, Dexterity (Acrobatics) DC 15 to climb).

Gravity: The *Ardent Hope's* internal gravity remains functional, so that "down" is always toward the floor.

Illumination: Unless otherwise noted, most of the *Ardent Hope's* chambers are unlit. This is especially true of the Passenger and Engineering Decks, since the Dzjaeri powered down these decks and diverted most of the remaining power to the Command Deck centuries ago. Only the Command Deck has lighting. Command Deck chambers are well-lit by bright lighting set into panels high on the walls of

each room and along all corridors. A control panel next to each door allows the lighting to be reduced to dim light or darkness as a swift action.

Viewports: These circular windows are typically three feet in diameter and offer stunning views of deep space and the planet far below. The viewports are crystal clear and made of a special material similar to high-density plastic (threshold 10, hp 100).

COMMAND DECK ROOM DESCRIPTIONS

The Command Deck is comprised of four subdecks: the Command Bridge, Crew Quarters, Command and Crew Cryogenics, and the Science Labs. Though the *Ardent Hope*

is crippled, its basic systems (life support, food processing, waste management, and some of its internal power) on the Command Deck remain functional. Having powered down or diverted resources from the Passenger and Engineering Decks far below, the Dzjaeri crew have spent the last 300 years literally trapped on these four small decks. Thus, these areas feel more lived-in than the rest of the *Ardent Hope*. Walls and floors are slightly dingy and the air bears the faint odor of unwashed bodies. The temperature is a constant 75° F.

Command Bridge

C1: Bridge

The Bridge is comprised of twenty-three seated computer workstations set atop a slightly raised platform coated with a rubber-like non-slip coating. A pair of command chairs sits in the center of the chamber, each with a smaller computer workstation attached to them. A massive 5-panel set of viewing screens cover the two forward sloped walls and stretch from the floor to the ceiling 20 feet above. Each screen is 15 feet tall and 10 feet long. The PCs' homeworld, as well as the vast tableau of outer space, can be seen on the view screens.

Creatures: A security officer is always stationed on the Bridge due to the sensitive nature of the systems here. Sub-commander Orem also spends most of his duty time here, so there is a 70% chance of finding him here.

SUB-COMMANDER OREM

CR 6

XP 2,300

hp 132 (see *Appendix 1: NPC Gallery*)

SECURITY OFFICER

CR 4

XP 1,100

hp 75 (see *Appendix 1: NPC Gallery*)

Technology: Of the original 25 computer workstations installed here, only five still function, including one of the command chair workstations. Most of the other computers either deteriorated to uselessness long ago or had their components scavenged to keep the other computers functioning. One of the command chairs also contains a shipboard communications panel. Like all of the communication devices aboard the *Ardent Hope*, the communicator automatically translates any language (as *tongues*).

C2: Life Support

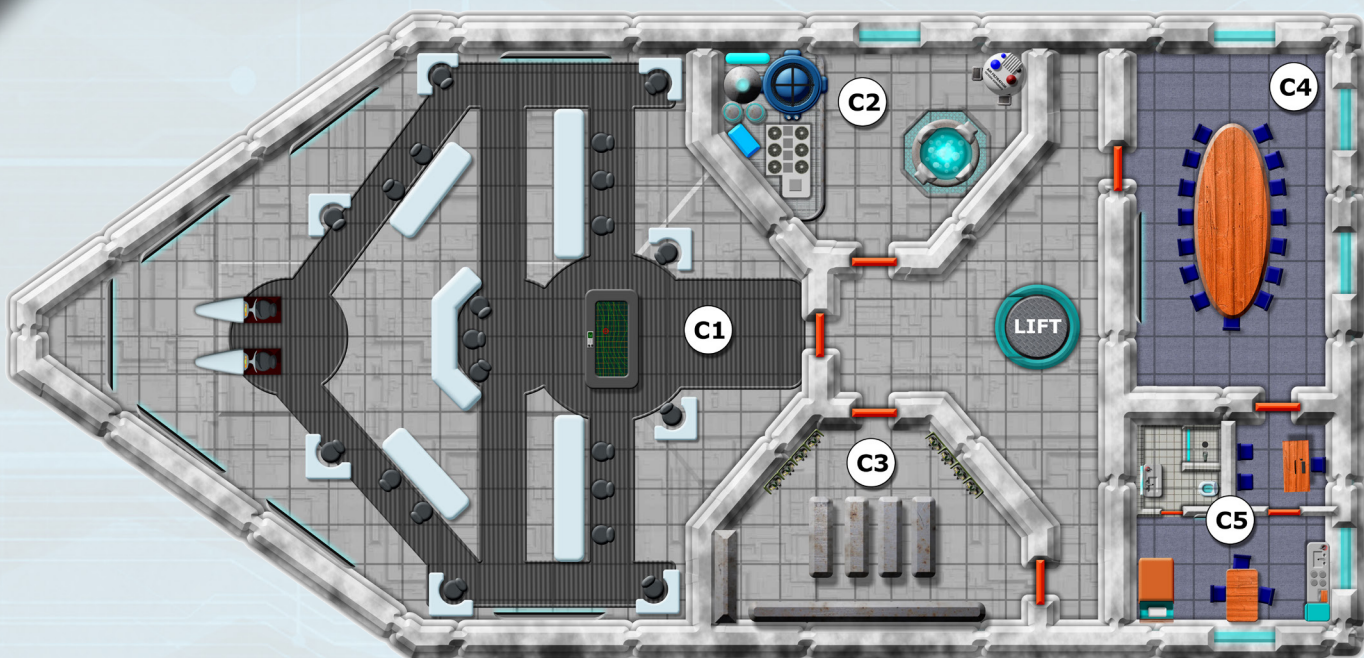
This room serves as a monitoring station for the *Ardent Hope's* life support systems, which include climate control and oxygen processing and renewal.

Technology: There are two computer workstations here, a primary workstation that takes up the entire western

half of the room and a smaller secondary station in the northeast corner. Only the primary computer workstation is functional. In addition to the functions available at all computer workstations (as noted in the **Ardent Hope Room Descriptions** section), the following life support functions are available here. Knowledge of the Dzjaeri tongue and a successful DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check enables a user to perform one of the functions listed below. Sub-Commander Orem and the Science Officers can perform these functions automatically.



- **Activate/Deactivate Life Support:** A computer operator can terminate the entire life support system, affecting the Command Decks, Passenger Deck, and Engineering Deck. If this is attempted, an audible message warns the computer user (in the Dzjaeri tongue) and a loud alarm sounds across the entire ship. A second DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows the computer user to override the message and turn off life support. However, this does not cancel the ship-wide alarm, which continues for 30 minutes. Once life support systems are terminated, those aboard the *Ardent Hope's* Command Decks, Passenger Deck, or Engineering Deck lose access to oxygen in 30 minutes. One hour after that, the environment of the affected decks becomes equivalent to the vacuum of outer-space. A successful DC 20 Intelligence



COMMAND DECK

1 Square = 5 Feet

check is needed to reactivate the life support systems, which restore completely in 2 minutes.

- **Climate Control:** A computer operator can modify the temperature on the Command Decks, Passenger Deck, or Engineering Deck. If the increase or decrease in temperature proves harmful to humans, an audible message warns the computer user (in the Dzjaeri tongue). A second DC 30 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows the computer user to override the message and alter the temperature to as low as 20° F or as high as 120° F (see the rules for extreme temperatures in the SRD). Any attempt to alter the temperature any lower or higher causes the system to override and lockdown the controls and return them to normal (75° F).

C3: Armory

Once used to store the ship's arms, the armory now only provides recharging for the remaining five functioning photon pistols. All of the storage lockers here are either empty or contain disassembled photon pistols, their parts scavenged long ago to keep the currently deployed pistols viable.

Technology A recharging station is built into one of the walls here. The recharging station is a simple waist-high metal platform, with a one-foot square surface. A photon pistol—or at the GM's discretion any other technological device holding "charges"—placed on top of the recharging station automatically recharges at a rate of 1 capacity per minute. Only one pistol can recharge at a time.

C4: Meeting Room

This seldom-used conference room is dominated by a

large table of polished wood harvested from the Dzjaeri homeworld. A blank 5-foot high, 12-foot long view screen viewscreen is set into the west wall.

Technology The seat at the head of the conference table has a functioning computer workstation embedded in the table in front of it as well as an embedded shipboard communications device. Like all of the communication devices aboard the *Ardent Hope*, the communicator automatically translates any language (as *tongues*). The viewscreen on the west wall is functional, but powered down. A computer user seated at the conference table can transfer images and other content to the screen.

C5: Commander's Quarters

The commander's quarters include three adjoining rooms: a small office, living quarters, and the commander's personal bathroom. Sub-Commander Orem can be found here 80% of the time when off-duty.

Technology The commander's living quarters contains a functioning computer workstation and a wall-mounted shipboard communications device. Like all of the communication devices aboard the *Ardent Hope*, the communicator automatically translates any language (as *tongues*).

Crew Quarters

C6: Galley

This cavernous, brightly lit mess hall has seating for 300 people. Metal tables and benches line the length of the hall. There is a Lift access in the eastern section of the galley.

Technology: In the middle of the room, against the center

wall is a beverage and recycling station. The beverage station dispenses clean, cold water. The recycling station is a barrel-sized apparatus used to chemically break down uneaten food and biodegradable refuse.

C7: Crew Apartments

These 12 identical chambers each contain two sets of triple bunk beds and are designed to provide sleeping quarters for up to six crew members. When the *Ardent Hope* was at full crew capacity, crew members slept in these rooms in shifts. Now, many of the rooms remain vacant for years at a time.

Creatures: At any given time, 1d3 crew members can be found here resting.

Technology Each room also has a small desk with a nonfunctioning computer workstation.

C8: Lounge and Recreation Hall

This large room resembles an auditorium, with plenty of comfortable, padded seating, plush carpeting, and a 10-foot high, 12-foot long viewscreen dominating the west wall. A 25-foot by 35-foot section of the floor here is actually a crystal clear material identical to the material used to create the ship's external viewports (threshold 10, hp 100). This viewing area provides a stunning view of the exotic Terrestrial Enclosure 300 feet below.

Creatures: The Dzjaeri enjoy spending their off-duty hours here, losing themselves in recreational virtual reality videos or immersing themselves in their strange, moody ambient music. At any given time, 1d4 crew members can be found here.

Technology Only one of the room's eight computer workstations still functions. The viewscreen has a

separate operating system set into the wall next to it. Knowledge of the Dzjaeri tongue and a successful DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check enables a user to access recreational audio-visual programming and display it on the viewscreen. Aside from its library of bizarre, somewhat morose Dzjaeri music, the system contains many historical and scientific documentaries as well as recreational videos centered on hunting. Though the Dzjaeri are an advanced technological race, hunting has remained a cultural identifier for them and many Dzjaeri have a passion for the sport.

The viewscreen operating system also contains an embedded shipboard communications device. Like all of the communication devices aboard the *Ardent Hope*, the communicator automatically translates any language (as *tongues*).

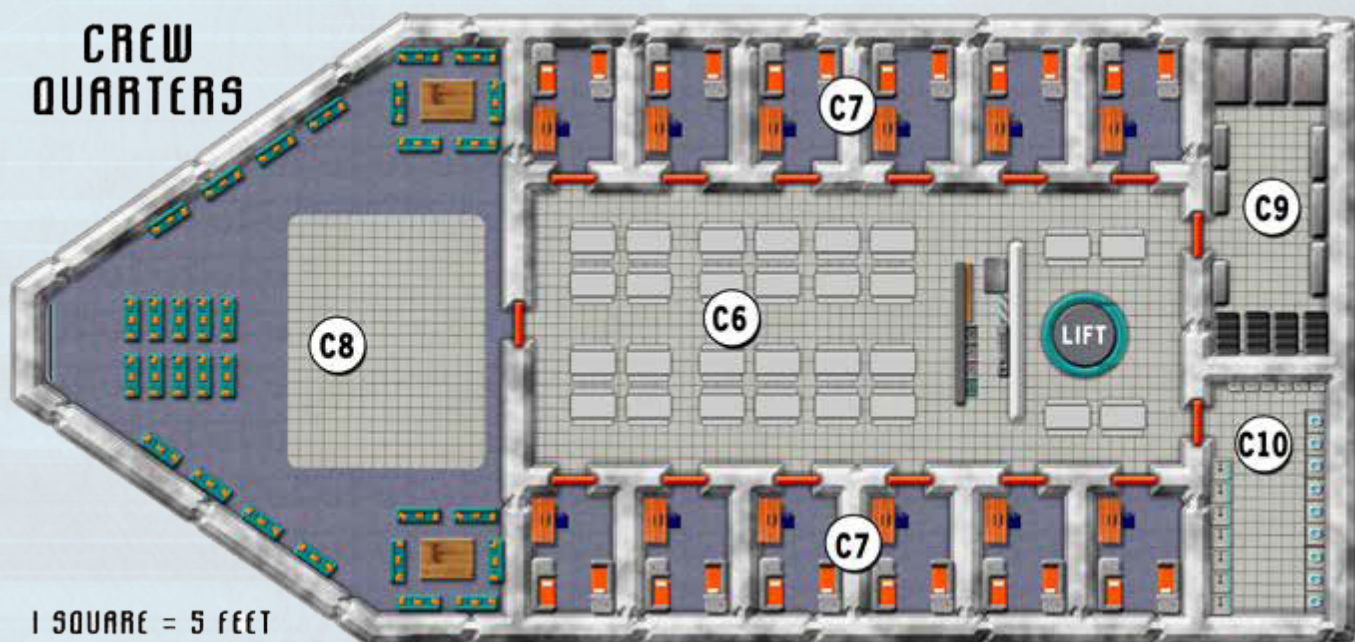
C9: Food Processor

This contains the apparatus that dispenses the Dzjaeri nutrient paste, a purely vegetarian food source that smells and tastes like a cross between jellied beets and week-old cabbage.

Technology This room contains a functioning computer workstation, used to control the food dispenser. Knowledge of the Dzjaeri tongue and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check enables a user to dispense a bowl of nutrient paste. As a result of neh-thalggu sabotage, the food dispenser stops producing nutrient paste 12 hours after the PCs arrive aboard the *Ardent Hope* (as described in *The Deal* and *The Mission* sections). Once the PCs complete their mission and reactivate the nutrient processors, the food dispenser functions normally again.

C10: Refresher

The crew members share this bathroom and showering



facility. It is lined with metal toilets, washing sinks, and glass shower stalls. Walking into a shower stall automatically turns on soothing, hot water. The water cycle stops when the user exits the shower. Immediately after exiting the shower, an instantaneous gust of air blasts the user and completely dries him or her. Though unsettling, the air blast is harmless.

Command and Crew Cryogenics

C11: Cryogenics Chamber

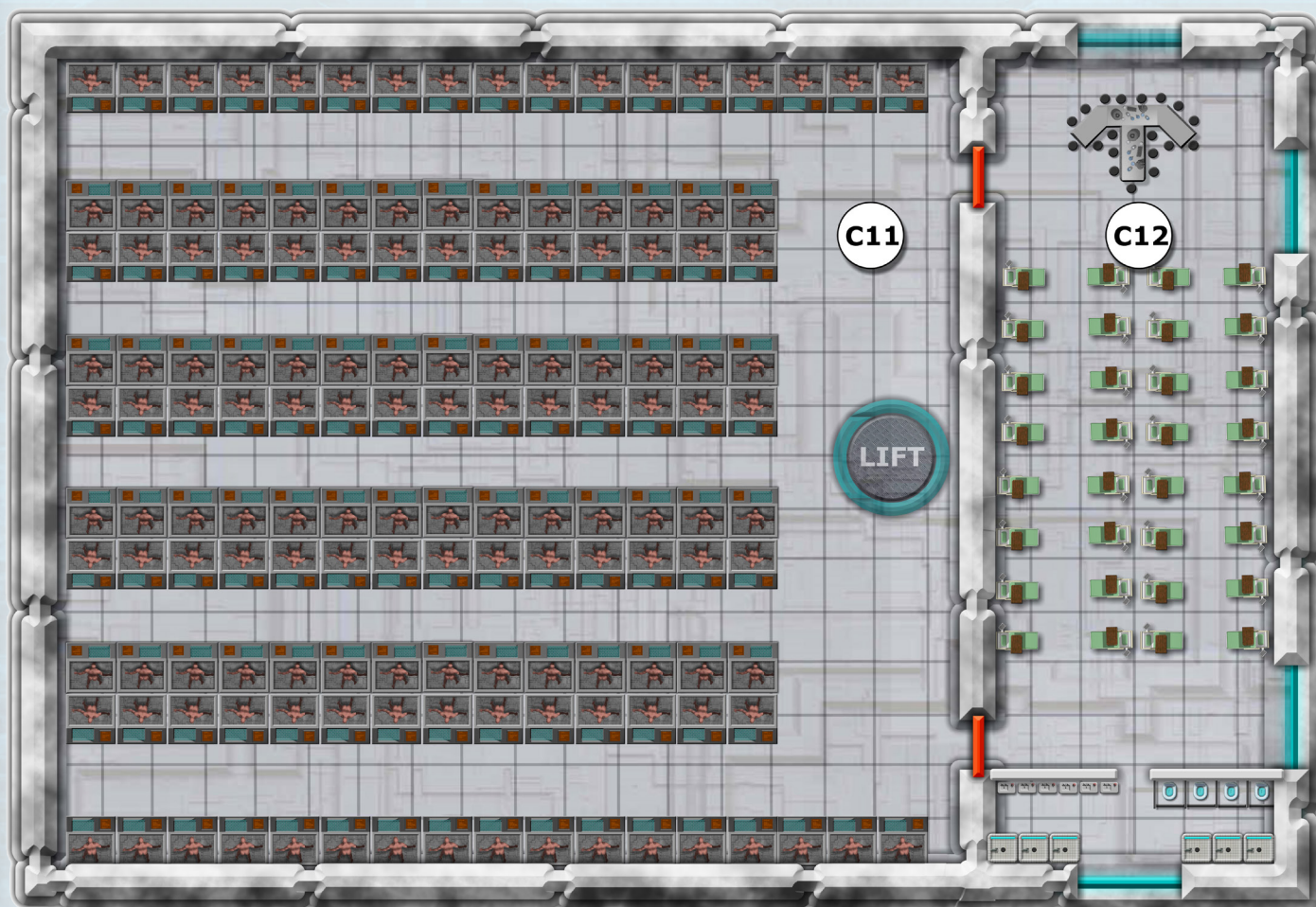
This massive chamber provides storage for the *Ardent Hope's* cryogenically frozen crew. There are a total of 438 cryo-pods, stacked atop one another in three levels, and 282 of the pods contain a cryogenically frozen Dzjaeri. The frozen crew includes the ship's captain, Captain Lorrn Kevaahr (N old male human fighter 10), 11 sub-commanders (identical stats to Sub-Commander Orem), and scores of other crew members. There is a Lift access near the middle of the east wall.

Technology: There is a functional computer workstation attached to the side of the Lift access tube. Knowledge of

the Dzjaeri tongue and a successful DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check enables a user to retrieve a cryo-pod (or lift one into place overhead). Retrieval takes about a minute and involves the pod being grabbed and lifted into position by a large robotic arm. Once a pod is retrieved and set on the floor, wheels extend from the bottom of the pod. The pods are surprisingly light and easy to push on these wheels. Once the Dzjaeri extract a pod, they push it to the medical bay (area C12) so the occupant can be revived under medical supervision. See the **Waking the Dzjaeri** sidebar for further details on reviving a being from cryogenic sleep.

C12: Medical Bay (CR 10)

This large room serves as the *Ardent Hope's* primary medical facility. There is a smaller secondary medical bay on the Passenger Deck (area P3), though its systems were taken offline and its power was diverted to the Command Decks 300 years ago. The room is lined with 32 padded medical couches, each designed to monitor a patient's vital signs and diagnose injury and disease. However, only two of the couches' display monitors are currently active. The northern section of the room contains the autdoc, a



CREW QUARTERS

1 Square = 5 Feet

miracle of Dzjaeri medical technology (see below).

To the south is a small room containing several washbasins, toilets, and storage cabinets. Once filled with medical supplies and various advanced pharmaceuticals, these cabinets are now empty.

Creature: A medical robot named MED-21-001 is stationed here. The last of its kind, some of MED-21-001's critical systems have deteriorated and made it dangerously unstable. Though MED-21-001 is not a threat to the Dzjaeri crew, it becomes confused when it sees the PCs. Programmed to treat the Dzjaeri, MED-21-001 mistakes a PC's alien appearance as a serious medical condition. The robot immediately approaches the first PC to enter the room and—with great, obvious concern—asks the PC to lie down on one of the functioning medical couches (see **Technology** below). If the PC refuses to comply, MED-21-001 attempts to use its sedative spray or restraints on the PC. If MED-21-001 manages to subdue its target, it carries the PC to the medical couch. As the robot does so, it requests any Dzjaeri or other PCs present to “Please do not interfere! The patient requires my immediate attention!” as it tells the PC it carries to “Please remain calm! Do not resist!”

When the medical couch displays its findings, MED-21-001 twitches in disbelief and begins repeating the words “Immediate surgery required!” in Dzjaeri over and over again. The robot then carries the PC to the autodoc and forces the PC inside it (requiring two successful grapple checks against the PC). If MED-21-001 manages to force the PC into the autodoc, the PC must succeed at a DC 25 Strength check to escape while the robot spends the next 2 rounds programming the autodoc to perform a random barrage of harmful and unnecessary surgeries. If the PC is unable to escape the autodoc within 2 rounds, the PC suffers 35 (10d6) points of piercing and slashing damage. If attacked, MED-21-001 becomes completely unhinged and fights to the death. However, even in its current state, MED-21-001's programming refuses to allow it to attack or harm a Dzjaeri.

MED-21-001

Medium construct, neutral

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)

Hit Points 152 (16d8 + 80)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)

Skills Medicine +7

Damage Vulnerabilities lightning

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened,

paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Dzjaeri

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. MED-21-001 makes three slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 23 (4d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Repair. MED-21-001 can repair damage done to itself, healing 11 (2d10) points of damage.

Restraints. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 5/20 ft., 1 target. Creatures hit are entangled until they make a DC 16 Escape check.

Sedative Spray (Recharge 3-6). MED-21-001 can emit an anesthetizing mist in a 20-foot cone. Creatures caught inside the effect must succeed at a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious for 1d6 minutes. With a successful save, a creature is merely poisoned for 1d6 rounds. The save DC is Intelligence-based. This is a poison effect.

TACTICS

During Combat MED-21-001 uses its sedative spray and restraints attack to hinder foes. It uses its slam attacks to dispatch those who enter melee with it.



Morale Its reasoning irrevocably impaired, MED-21-001 fights until all PCs in sight are dead.

Technology: Of the 32 medical couches, only the two couches with active display monitors are fully functional. If a humanoid lies on the couch, the couch instantaneously runs a thorough physical diagnostic and displays its findings (in the Dzjaeri tongue) on the display monitor. The medical couch automatically identifies common injuries and diseases (broken bones, cuts and bruises, the common cold, non-magical diseases, etc.) and grants advantage Wisdom (Medicine) checks made to treat the injury to anyone with proficiency in Medicine who understands the Dzjaeri tongue. The medical couch cannot diagnose supernatural afflictions (like mummy rot) or infestations from molds, slimes, or similar hazards.

The autodoc grants any creature proficient in Medicine advantage on all Wisdom (Medicine) checks. Additionally, the autodoc triples the healing received from spending Hit Dice, and grants the benefits of *lesser restoration* at will.

Treasure: The following medical supplies are currently stored in syringes in the various cabinets around the room:

four potions of heroism, three potions of mindreading, one potion of invisibility, two potions of healing and a potion of greater healing.

Science Labs

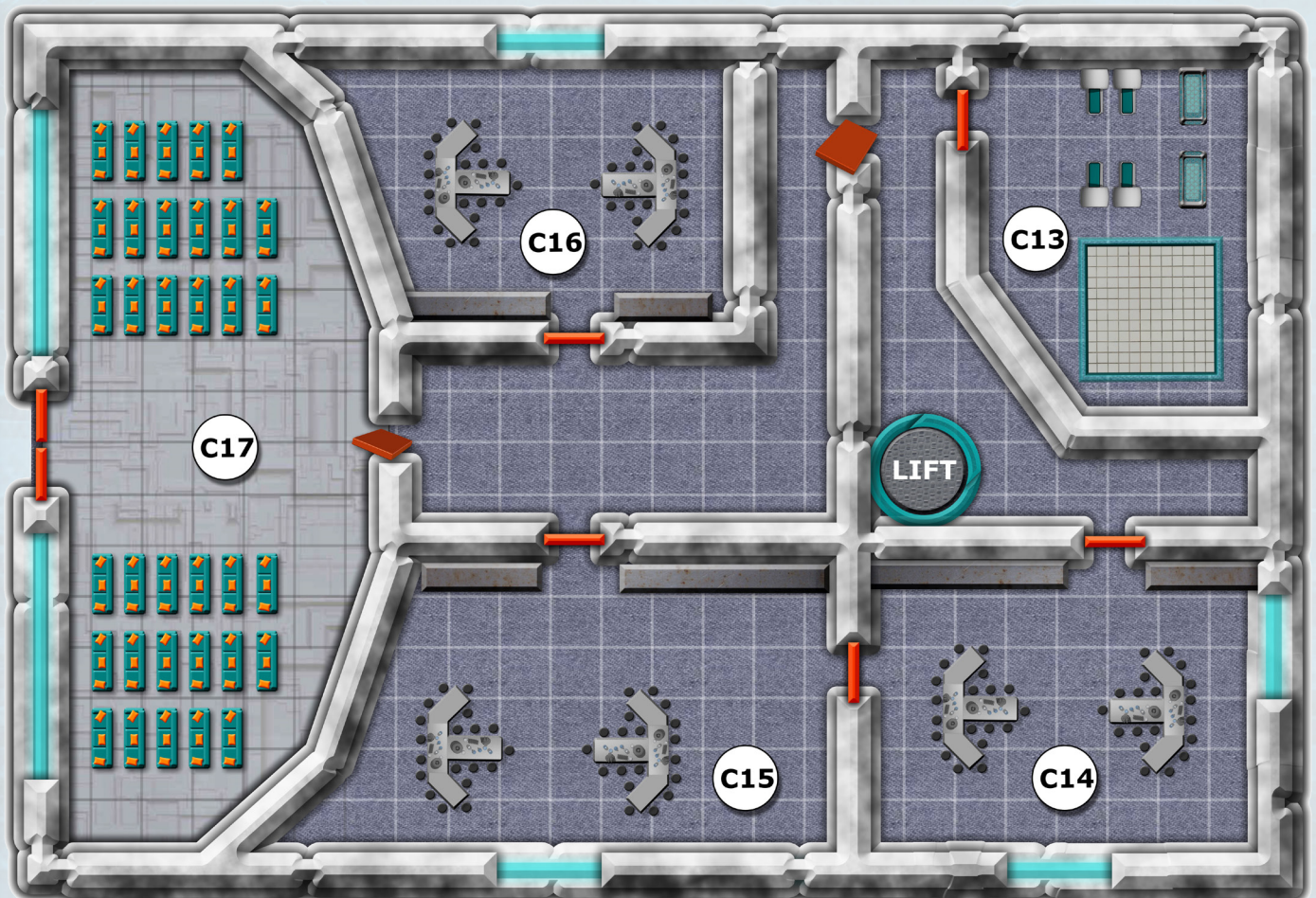
C13: Transporter Arrival and Sterilization

(Note: The PCs initially arrive in this chamber, as described in the *Arrival* section.) This chamber includes a 25-foot by 40-foot glass-enclosed area with a narrow outer area. The outer area contains a control panel and a floor-to-ceiling glass wall that separates the two areas. The glass is the same high-density plastic that forms the Ardent Hope's viewport windows (hardness 10, hp 100, break DC 40).

Hazard: The inner area is the sterilization chamber, used to neutralize any potentially harmful parasites and diseases from the bodies of alien creatures (in this instance, the PCs) before they're allowed to enter the *Ardent Hope*.

HAZARD: STERILIZATION SPRAY

The sterilization spray is a technological hazard. When it is triggered, all creatures inside the glass-enclosed area are doused with a combination of chemically-infused mist and



SCIENCE LABS

1 Square = 5 Feet

intense ultraviolet radiation and must succeed at a DC 15 Constitution saving throw to resist being poisoned for 1d6 hours. Even with a successful save, creatures exposed to the sterilization spray are still poisoned for 1d6 rounds. Creatures exposed to the sterilization spray are cured of all diseases (as *lesser restoration*).

Technology: As described in the Arrival section, the door leading into the sterilization chamber is electronically locked, requiring a successful DC 30 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to bypass. The control panel in the outer-area contains a functioning computer console, controls for the mechanism that locks the door leading into the sterilization chamber, controls used to dispense the sterilization spray, and an embedded communications device. Like all of the communication devices aboard the *Ardent Hope*, the communicator automatically translates any language (as *tongues*). There is a Lift access in southwest corner of the outer-area.

C14, C15, C16: Labs

These three laboratory chambers are nearly identical. They are clean, sterile environments, with white plastic benches, tables, counters, and storage lockers. Most of the tables and counters are crowded with scientific and alchemy equipment.

Creature: Unhinged by the recent escape of the neh-thalggus, a robot in Lab Two (area C15) has grown unstable and may attack the PCs if they antagonize him.

A lone metallic figure shakes glassware filled with liquids and makes vague appraising sounds until it notices the interruption. At this, it turns to face its unwelcome guests, and one of its arms suddenly crackles with electricity.

After the Dzjaeri managed to obtain samples of the deadly bacterium from the PCs' homeworld below, they set an analysis robot (ST-3-VI-3) to the task of identifying any genetic markers they could exploit to counteract the bacterium's effects. After the scientists programmed the robot to use materials they provide to neutralize the bacterium, they left it alone. ST-3-VI-3 only interacts with biohazard-suited Dzjaeri when they have a new sample to test, so it has become accustomed to working alone. Its programming has also degraded and it sees any intrusion, especially by non-Dzjaeri, as a threat to the lab's integrity and assumes that the characters will contaminate all the samples. It warns the PCs to leave immediately; if they do not comply within 1 round, it attacks.

If any Dzjaeri accompany the characters during this encounter, they insist that the PCs leave the lab at once and will summon Sub-commander Orem and any available security officers to help deter the PCs if necessary. While they value the party's assistance, they cannot proceed without ST-3-VI-3 acting as their proxy to discover a cure.

ST-3-VI-3

Medium construct, neutral

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)

Hit Points 152 (16d8 + 80)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)

Skills Medicine +7, Nature +6

Damage Vulnerabilities lightning

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Dzjaeri

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. ST-3-VI-3 makes 2 attacks, either 2 electrified arm attacks or 2 incinerator pistol attacks.

Electrified Arm. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning Damage plus 27 (5d10) lightning damage.

Incinerator Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 5/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 35 (10d6) fire damage.

TACTICS

During Combat ST-3-VI-3 uses its incinerator pistol to drive away its foes, but it will not hesitate to use its more lethal electrified arm to dispatch those who enter melee with it.

Morale Aware that it is the only means to effect a cure for the bacterium, ST-3-VI-3 flees when it reaches 25 hp.

Technology: All three labs have a functioning computer workstation. Lab Three (area C16) is also fitted with 12 steel-enforced restraining harnesses along the north wall. These makeshift devices were used to restrain the neh-thalggus while the Dzjaeri experimented on them. Seven of the twelve restraining harnesses are obviously irrevocably damaged. However, the other five harnesses still function. When a Small-, Medium-, or Large-sized creature is strapped into a harness, it is held fast and effectively paralyzed. The restraints have threshold 10, hp 70).

The neh-thalggu were able to escape from their restraints when one of them melted through its restraining harness by surreptitiously using its *acid arrow* spell over a period of several days. When the creature finally escaped its bonds,

it surprised and overpowered several Dzjaeri and freed its companions. One of the victims was a Dzjaeri science officer named Arvinen. One of the neh-thalggu extracted the officer's brain and now has a rudimentary knowledge of the *Ardent Hope's* computer and engineering systems. The neh-thalggu then enacted a daring getaway and eventually escaped through the doors in area C17 and into the Terrestrial Enclosure.

C17: Observation Lounge

The large chamber was originally designed as a lecture hall and observation lounge. Several rows of large padded chairs line the middle of the chamber, all facing west, where two enormous, crystal clear windows flank a pair of 15-foot tall double doors. The windows stretch from the floor to the ceiling, 30 feet overhead and provide a clear view into the multi-colored jungle of the Terrestrial Enclosure.

Creatures: Since the escape of the neh-thalggus, two Dzjaeri security officers are posted here at all times.

SECURITY OFFICER

CR 4

XP 1,100

hp 75 (see *Appendix 1: NPC Gallery*)

Technology: The massive double doors leading into the Terrestrial Enclosure are electronically and magnetically sealed, though they show signs of lightning and acid damage on the Terrestrial Enclosure side, having been damaged by the neh-thalggus in a recent attack. Despite the damage, the doors remain quite strong (threshold 10, hp 150). The glass windows are made of the same high-density plastic that forms the *Ardent Hope's* viewport windows (threshold 10, hp 100). A control panel used to unlock and mechanically open the doors is located on the wall to the right of the doors.

Another control panel next to the eastern door contains a shipboard communications device. Like all of the communication devices aboard the *Ardent Hope*, the communicator automatically translates any language (as *tongues*).

Additional Areas of Interest on the Command Decks

Primary Lift Shaft: The 12-foot diameter Primary Lift shaft descends 600 feet from the Command Bridge subdeck at the top of the ship down the Science Labs subdeck (area C13), then drops 1,100 feet to the Passenger Deck and another 400 feet to the Engineering Deck (area E7). The Lift consists of a circular 12-foot diameter hole in the floor and/or ceiling. Using advanced magnetic-levitation technology, the Lift provides a permanent *levitate* effect to any creature that steps into the open "pit." Merely stepping

into the Lift shaft allows a creature to automatically hover in mid-air while inside the shaft. A creature hovering inside the shaft can speak the Dzjaeri word for up ("kaah") or down ("ethuu") to ascend or descend the shaft, or speak the Dzjaeri word for stop ("vosh") to hover in mid-air. These effects mimic the *levitate* spell (creatures ascend or descend at a rate of 20 feet per round). However, it is not a magical effect and cannot be dispelled.

Unfortunately, the Lift no longer functions below the Science Labs subdeck. Any attempt to descend below area C13 subjects a character to a 1,500-foot free fall to the Engineering Deck (landing at the Lift location in area E7).

Escape Pods: The primary Lift shaft was once also the access point for all of the *Ardent Hope's* escape pods. However, all of the escape pods were dismantled and their parts were used to build the *Silver Egg* probe. The hatches for the escape pod have all been welded shut and are no longer accessible.

External Airlock: The top of the Lift shaft terminates in a hatch-like door set into the ceiling (threshold 10, hp 250). Beyond the door is a small, 15-foot diameter round chamber ringed by viewport windows (threshold 10, hp 100) and a second, identical hatch-like door that leads into the vacuum of outer-space. The doors are designed so that only one of them can be opened at a time. Additionally, the outer door is magnetically locked and cannot be opened unless someone at one of the *Ardent Hope's* functioning computer workstations enters the proper commands by succeeding at a DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Treasure: A small closet in the airlock chamber contains eight hazard suits (treat as chainmail that prevents all damage from vacuum or radiation), and 1 roll of semi-autonomous tape (treat as *rope of entanglement*).

The Terrestrial Enclosure

The *Ardent Hope's* Terrestrial Enclosure continues to support a simulated environment meant to mimic Dzjaera, the lost homeworld of the Dzjaeri people. Powered by a pair of small fusion reactors (buried dozens of feet below the enclosure), the passage of 13 centuries has seen the habitat's vegetation grow into a dense jungle of brightly colored trees, thick vines, and lush undergrowth (considered difficult terrain). In the center of the enclosure is a freshwater lake of murky dark-green water, surrounded by tall marsh grasses, reeds, and small cypress trees.

Air, Climate, and Illumination: The air in the Terrestrial Enclosure is exceptionally humid and thick with the smell of vegetation and the sounds of countless alien insects. Late each afternoon (from 3 PM until 6 PM) the enclosure simulates a mild rain, which lowers the near-constant sweltering temperature averaging 95° F down to a more tolerable 85° F. The lower temperature lasts during the rain and for two hours afterwards.



Until recently, the metal dome 300 feet overhead simulated Dzjaera's sky and featured a 24-hour day and night cycle. During the day, the sky remained a vivid silver-blue, lit by a radiant blue-white sun, while the moonless nights were dim and barely lit by a sky of simulated stars. However, since Reactor-2 in the Environmental Control Center (see area **TE8**) was recently sabotaged by the neh-thalgggu, the lighting in the enclosure has almost completely failed. Until the reactor is repaired, only ambient lighting emanating from the dome ceiling remains, which casts the entire enclosure in a soft violet light (equal to dim light).

Fauna: The Dzjaeri designed the terrestrial enclosure with the intention to preserve as many of its native fauna as possible, and populated it with a wide variety of creatures native to their world. These creatures were supplemented with a number of alien animals the Dzjaeri encountered during their centuries-long diaspora. Unfortunately, when the toadhemoth (see area **TE3**) awoke from its lethargic state and suddenly grew to its current size, it immediately became the apex predator and devoured nearly all of the animals inside the enclosure. A few hardy animals still persist, including a mated pair of hydras (see area **TE2**) and the bio-engineered veggie-elk that roam the enclosure in small herds.

Flora: The vegetation in the terrestrial enclosure is thick and lush and very colorful. The alien trees average 30 feet in height and feature long drooping fronds with colors like bright scarlet, deep violet, and lustrous emerald-blue. Vines are usually dark red or golden yellow in color, and are dotted with flowers and sweet-smelling orchids. Grasses and undergrowth are typically a very dark greenish-blue. In addition to the benign alien flora,

the Terrestrial Enclosure is home to several varieties of dangerous plant-life.

Pathway: A 10-foot wide cobblestone path winds its way through the Terrestrial Enclosure. The cobblestones were manufactured on the Dzjaeri homeworld long ago and still bear a bio-engineered coating that repels plant growth. Though most of the paths are obscured by the jungle canopy dozens of feet overhead, the paths remain clear of vines, grass, and other vegetation.

Random Encounters

Check for random encounters every 15 minutes the PCs spend exploring the Terrestrial Enclosure. There is a 50% chance of having a random encounter.

ROLL (D20)	ENCOUNTER (CR)
1-5	Dangerous Flora
6-7	Veggie-elk Herd
8-9	Assassin Vine Patch (CR 2)
10-11	Alien Treant (CR 9)
12	Hydras (CR 8)
13	Neh-thalggus (CR 12)
14-20	Toadhemoth (CR 14)

Dangerous Flora

The Terrestrial Enclosure contains a variety of strange, alien flora, some of which are semi-sentient and poses

minor hazards to the PCs. Each time this encounter occurs, roll 1d4 to determine the type of annoying flora the PCs encounter.

1. **Grabber:** A tangle of vines suddenly lurches toward a random PC and attempts to entangle the character. The target must succeed at a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or gain the restrained condition. The restrained condition persists until the entangled PC escapes with a successful DC 20 Escape check or the vines are destroyed. Each round the character remains entangled, he or she takes 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage as the vines slowly tighten and constrict. The vines have 14 hit points. They take half damage from bludgeoning attacks.

2. **Hallucinogenic:** A nearby patch of flowering vines sprays the air with pollen that contains a mind-altering toxin. The flowers target a random PC and all creatures within 30 feet of the target must succeed at a DC 20 Constitution save or become confused (as the spell) for 1d6 rounds, and then remain poisoned for 1d4 hours. This is a poison effect.

3. **Hooter:** A nearby plant frond opens and begins hooting very loudly.

4. **Sprayer:** A plant frond opens adjacent to a random PC and attempts to douse the character with sticky, sickly-sweet smelling goo. A successful DC 20 Dexterity saving throw avoids the spray. If the PC becomes coated with the goo, the chance for having a random encounter increases by 20% for the next 1d4 hours. If the targeted PC rolls a natural 1 on the Dexterity save, he or she is also blinded for 1d6 hours. A PC coated with the goo can only remove it by totally immersing himself in water for two minutes, though this does not negate the blindness. If a PC attempts to do this in the central lake (area TE1), the starving lukwata is alerted immediately.

Assassin Vine Patch (2700 XP)

A clutch of six assassin vines grow in a tangle here, blending in well with the alien trees, bushes, and tall tropical grasses.

ASSASSIN VINE (6)

Large plant, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (7d10+14)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)

Resistances cold and fire.

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages None.

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Camouflage. Assassin vines have advantage when hiding amongst foliage.

ACTIONS

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10ft., one Medium or smaller creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the assassin vine can't constrict another target.

Alien Treant (CR 9)

This 20-foot long mass of vines and hook-like barbs wrapped around a central trunk shares the bizarre, multi-colored hues of the alien flora within the Terrestrial Enclosure.

TREANT

CR 9

XP 5,000

hp 138 (SRD)

Hydras (CR 8)

The PCs encounter the two hydras (see area TE2) while the starving creatures are out hunting.

HYDRA

CR 8

XP 3,900

hp 172 (SRD)

Neh-thalggus (CR 8-12)

The PCs encounter 1d4 neh-thalggus (see areas TE6 and TE8). The neh-thalggus are on their way to inspect one of the air and nutrient processor units (areas marked TE4). If the PCs encounter at least three neh-thalggus, the creatures fight to the death. Otherwise, they flee to the Environmental Control Center (TE5) to warn their companions. Deduct any neh-thalggus killed in this encounters from the creatures in areas TE6, TE7, and TE8.

NEH-THALGGU

CR 8

XP 3,900

hp 168 (see Appendix 2: New Monsters)

Veg-Elk Herd (CR 7)

The Dzjaeri populated the Terrestrial Enclosure with bio-engineered game animals befitting their vegetarian diets. The only creatures remaining from the dozens they originally brought on board are a number of four-legged plant creatures that look and behave similarly to elk from the PC's homeworld. Occasionally hunted by the toadhemoth,

the vegge-elk tend to gather in small herds for mutual protection. Normally docile creatures, they easily startle and jump across the party's path when they get spooked.

VEG-ELK (8)

CR 1/4

XP 50

hp 13 (SRD)

Large plant, unaligned

Toadhemoth (CR 14)

The PCs encounter the **toadhemoth** (see *Appendix 2: New Monsters*).

Terrestrial Enclosure Encounter Areas

TE1: Central Lake (CR 11)

A lake of dark green water dominates the middle of the massive jungle-filled artificial habitat. The lake is ringed by reeds, small cypress trees, and other tropical undergrowth. The lake itself has a mild salty smell. In the center of the lake sits a square metal platform, a few feet above the waterline. It is completely devoid of plant growth.

Reminding the Dzjaeri of their home planet, which was dotted with numerous freshwater lakes and cenotes, the central lake served as a peaceful location for reflection for the crew of the *Ardent Hope*, and as an emergency water supply. Since the Dzjaeri no longer monitor the pumps to maintain the water's purity, it has become brackish and unpotable. It currently only supplies the riot of plants in the Terrestrial Enclosure with water. A 40-foot square island made of dull gray steel (area **TE5**) sits in the center of the lake. The artificial island rises two feet above the waterline and is completely devoid of flora. The lake's bottom drops off very quickly, reaching a depth of 50 feet within 10 feet of the shore.

Creature: An ancient and elusive remorhaz has long called the central lake home, ever since it was captured by the Dzjaeri from a world the *Ardent Hope* visited centuries before they became stranded in orbit around the PCs' homeworld. Utterly famished, the lukwata was content to remain under the bottom of the central lake, away from the simulated light of the Dzjaeri sun, where it hibernated. In fact, none of the currently awakened Dzjaeri even remembers the creature or realizes it still haunts the central lake. However, with the recent dimming of the enclosure lights (due to the shutdown reactor at area **TE8**), the remorhaz has started to patrol the surface of the lake once more, curious about the change in the above-water environment. As soon as it detects a living creature in or

near the lake's surface, it attacks.

REMORHAZ

CR 11

XP 7,200

hp 195 (SRD)

TACTICS

During Combat The remorhaz's tactics are simple and brutish. It focuses on one foe at a time, biting and gnawing at its target with great ferocity.

Morale Famished and exceptionally aggressive, the remorhaz fights to the death.

TE2: Hydra Redoubt (CR 11)

A mated pair of hydras found a burrow at the edge of the central lake where they hide from the toadhemoth.

Rather than through some sort of machinery, a clawed creature seems to have dug out the dark hole here. Though partially obscured by reeds and marsh grasses, it's easy to see the hole is the burrow of some animal.

Creatures: Two years ago, a captured pair of hydras escaped from the sterilization chamber (area **C13**) and fled into the Terrestrial Enclosure, where they introduced the deadly bacterium from the PCs' homeworld and rendered the location hostile to the Dzjaeri. Inside the Terrestrial Enclosure, the hydras found something that approximated their home. However, their enjoyment of the new environment was short-lived, as the toadhemoth attacked the hydras minutes after their arrival. Injured and terrified, they retreated to the central lake, which the voracious desert-dwelling toadhemoth avoided. Nesting near the shore of the lake, the hydras have laired here since their arrival, subsisting on plant life and the remaining fauna (mostly veggie-elk and small mammals) that come to the lake to drink. The pair has a new mouth to feed in a one-month-old hatchling, which heightens their aggressiveness when anything approaches their home.

HYDRA (2)

CR 8

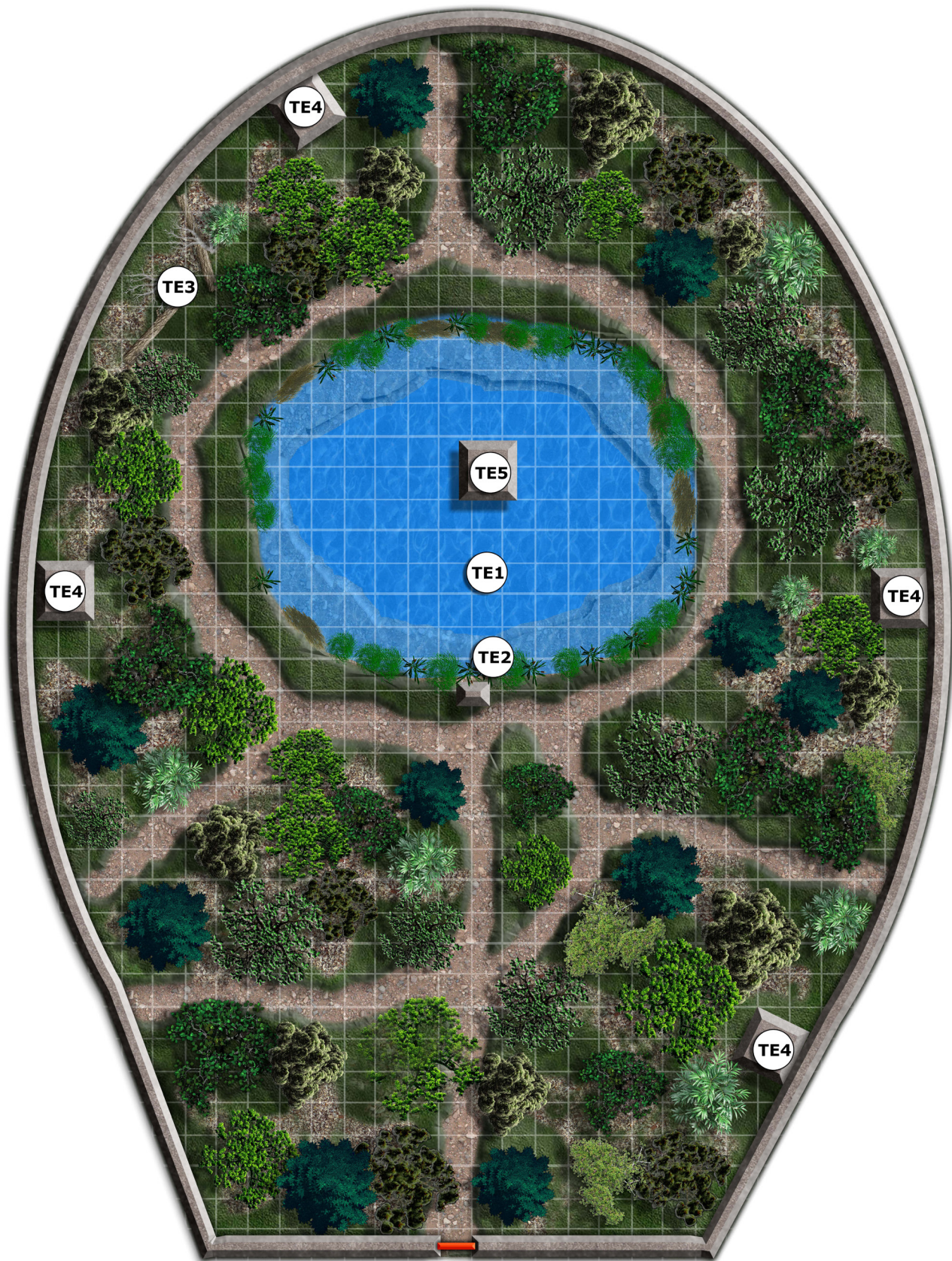
XP 7,800

hp 172 (SRD)

TACTICS

During Combat The pair has hunted together for years and attack foes from flanking positions. They focus on one creature until they have dropped it and then move on to the next.

Morale The famished beasts fight to the death to defend their lair and their offspring.



TERRESTRIAL ENCLOSURE: 1

1 Square = 5 Feet

Development: Even though a hydra is a monstrosity of low intelligence, a PC with a source of food and some cunning can attempt to lure the hydras to more dangerous foes as long as the PC offers the creatures food and does not act aggressively. A PC who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or a DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check is instinctively aware of this fact. The hydras will not leave the enclosure.

TE3: Toadhemoth Lair (CR 14)

The voracious toadhemoth, the undisputed master of the Terrestrial Enclosure, dwells here among a clutter of fallen trees and trampled vegetation.

The overgrowth thins here, where a dozen trees have been knocked down and lie in a tangled and splintered heap resembling an enormous nest. The cause for the lack of growth becomes apparent as a massive toad-like creature bursts through the shattered trees and foliage, sending splintered wood and plant matter flying in all directions as it launches an attack.

Creature: The Dzjaeri visited a barren alien moon long ago that was inhabited by a strange predator distantly related to the common froghemoth. Dubbed toadhemoths by the Dzjaeri, these desert-dwelling froghemoth off-shoots were the apex predators on their small, harsh world even though they were barely larger than a riding dog. The Dzjaeri collected several of the creatures, though all but one died shortly after being introduced to the Terrestrial Enclosure. Shortly after its arrival the creature entered into a dormant state that caused the Dzjaeri to assume that it also might not thrive in its new environment. The Dzjaeri scientists failed to realize that the small creature's metabolism was very slowly acclimating itself to its new, food-rich environment. The toadhemoth "slept" for several hundred years, slowly growing to its current massive size. The Dzjaeri monitored the toadhemoth as it grew—alleviating their concern about the creature's health—and hoped to learn something of its strange physiology. Unfortunately, around the time the monstrous toad-creature awoke from its hibernation, the hydras contaminated the enclosure. In the two years since it emerged from hibernation, the toadhemoth has ravaged the animal population within the Terrestrial Enclosure. It attacks anything it sees. Its nest lacks the vegetation prevalent in the rest of the enclosure, since it crushed the plants into the ground or destroyed plants that attempted to attack it.

When the neh-thalggus escaped into the Terrestrial Enclosure, the toadhemoth ambushed the creatures. The enormous predator leapt into the air and snagged one of the completely surprised creatures as it flew over its nest. Though the toadhemoth immediately killed and ate the neh-thalggus, the toadhemoth found the creature unappetizing and vomited up its remains a few minutes

after choking it down. A PC that succeeds at a DC 12 Perception check notices the neh-thalggus's half-digested remains lying in a tangled heap a few feet from the toadhemoth's nest.

TOADHEMOTH

CR 14

XP 11,500

hp 231 (see *Appendix 2: New Monsters*)

TACTICS

During Combat The toadhemoth begins combat by using its croak ability. Due to its extreme hunger, the monster focuses its attacks on any creatures reeling from its croak first, hoping for an easy meal.

Morale The toadhemoth fights to the death and pursues fleeing prey relentlessly. It only breaks off from pursuit if its prey enters or crosses the Terrestrial Enclosure's central lake or it loses sight of its prey for more than 10 minutes.

Technology: If a PC succeeds at a DC 23 Wisdom (Perception) check, the PC notices a broken *photon pistol* partially buried beneath a fallen tree trunk near the center of the toadhemoth's nest. A terrified Dzjaeri security officer dropped this fully-charged *photon pistol* in his haste to depart the enclosure when the contaminated hydras escaped there two years ago. The toadhemoth inadvertently trampled the pistol and broke it, but a *mending* spell will repair it.

TE4: Air and Nutrient Processors (CR 8)

A 12-foot tall rectangular slab of dark gray metal rises from the ground here. Completely devoid of plant growth, it hums and vibrates softly and radiates a small amount of warmth. One of the slab's wider sides has a strange 1-foot-square seam set into it, at about eye level.

Technology: This is one of the Terrestrial Enclosure's four air and nutrient processors. These devices serve two purposes. First, they process and purify the air in the Terrestrial Enclosure, providing essential nutrients and the precise mix of carbon dioxide, nitrogen, and oxygen for the plants to thrive. Secondly, the devices collect animal and plant waste through the soil and turn it into the nutritious food paste that sustains the hibernating Dzjaeri passengers and crew and serves as the primary food source for the active Dzjaeri crew. The air and nutrient processor is 12 feet tall, 3 feet wide and 6 inches thick. Another eight feet of the device is buried under the ground, and radiating from it is a root-like array of thick wire conduits, rotating sensor modules, specimen gathering tubes, and steel piping that connects each of the other air and nutrient processors as well as critical biological processing systems deeper in the heart of the

Ardent Hope.

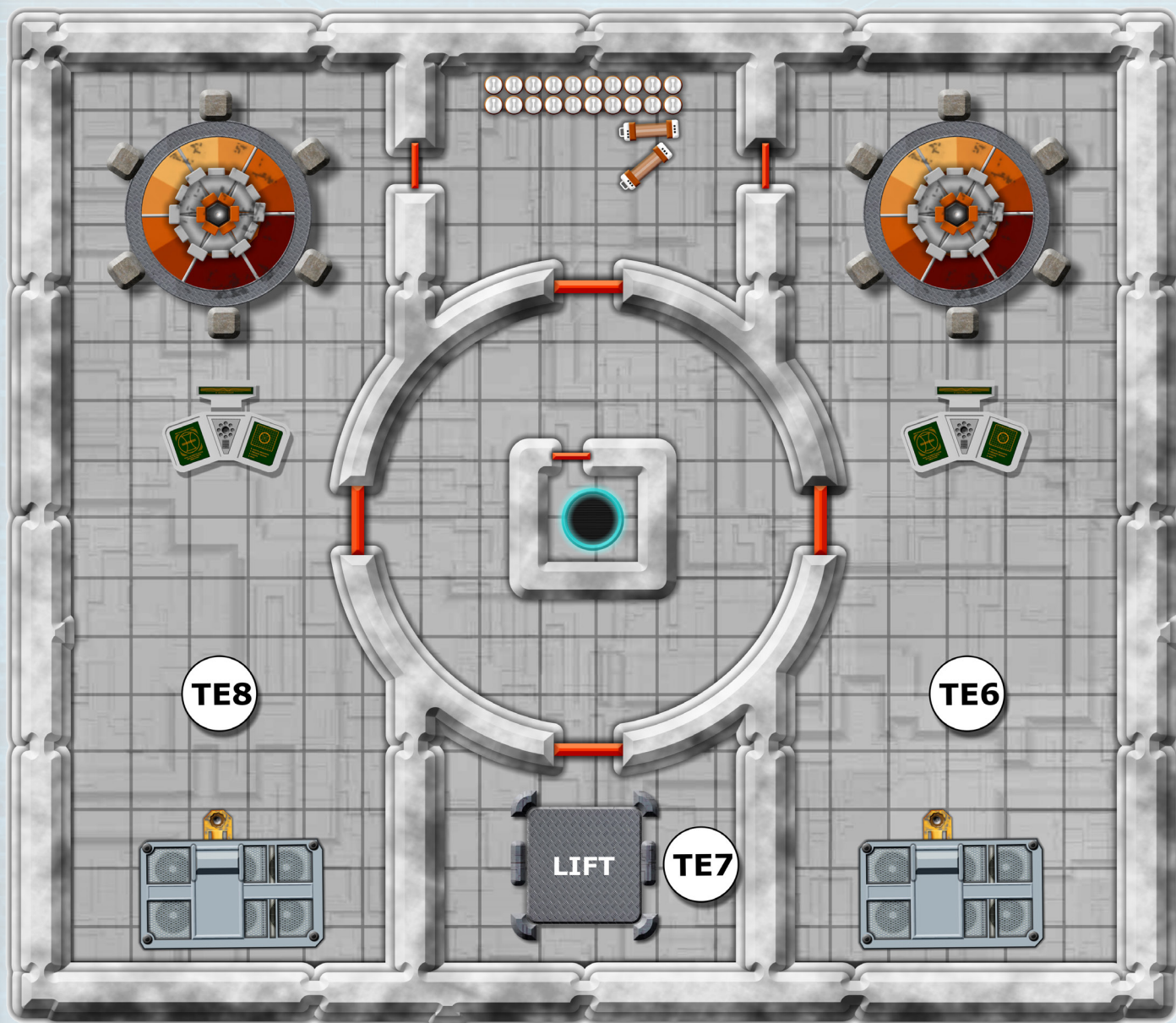
Thanks to some deliberate sabotage by the recently escaped neh-thalggu, all four of the air and nutrient processors no longer work. The Dzjaeri can live with stale air (the *Ardent Hope* is equipped with basic air-scrubbing systems), but more troubling to them (after the deadly, infectious bacterium in the enclosure's atmosphere) are the broken nutrient processors. With the nutrient processors offline, the Dzjaeri face an ever-dwindling supply of food stores and the lives of the passengers and crew in cryogenic hibernation face slow starvation.

When the PCs reach the air and nutrient processor, Sub-Commander Orem (who is viewing their progress via the *comm-band* one of the PC was given) speaks to the PCs over the *comm-band*. Having already trained one or more PCs

on the basics of using the *sonic wrench* (see the *Preparations* section), he begins to talk the PC holding the *sonic wrench* through the process of reactivating the air and nutrient processor. The first step is using the *sonic wrench* to open the control panel, hidden behind the rectangular seam in the face of the metal slab. When the control panel opens, the PCs will have access to dozens of buttons, levers, and multi-colored sensor pads.

Reactivating an Air and Nutrient Processor: A PC must use the *sonic wrench* to reactivate an air and nutrient processor. The task requires a DC 20 Intelligence or Dexterity check (a PC adds his proficiency bonus if he knows how to operate the *sonic wrench*). Each check requires 1 minute of uninterrupted work to complete, whether the check is a success or failure.

Hazard: If a PC fails a check to reactivate an air and



TERRESTRIAL ENCLOSURE: 2

nutrient processor by 5 or more, she accidentally triggers a dangerous backlash of force and electrical energy. If this happens, all creatures within 10 feet of the air and nutrient processor must succeed at a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or take 18 (6d6) points of damage (half of this is lightning damage and half is force damage).

Development: When the PCs successfully reactivate an air and nutrient processor, read the following:

The dark gray metal slab suddenly shimmers with a silvery glow as its humming and vibrations intensify. A moment later, a steady stream of mist begins to leak from tiny pores along the top of the metal slab. The mist drifts high and quickly fades into the air

The mist is actually a precise mix of carbon dioxide, nitrogen, and oxygen, intended to nourish the plants inside the Terrestrial Enclosure, as the air and nutrient processor attempts to heal any biological damage inflicted on the Terrestrial Enclosure's plant life due to being offline for the past few days. Though the gasses are not harmful, the special mixture unintentionally mimics the pheromones of the toadhemoth (area TE3). If the PCs have not yet killed the monstrous creature, the toadhemoth is roused by the releases of these gasses and arrives 1d6 minutes later. Stimulated by the pheromone-like scent, the toadhemoth attacks any creature it encounters with exceptionally savagery and receives advantage on all attack rolls for the duration of the encounter. This encounter occurs each time the PCs reactivate one of the air and nutrient processors, unless they slay the toadhemoth.

TE5: The Metal Island

A square island made of dull gray metal sits in the middle of the central lake. It is completely devoid of plant life.

The artificial island in the middle of the lake rises two feet above the waterline. An access hatch in the center of the island leads to the Environmental Control Center below (areas TE6, TE7, and TE8). A successful DC 23 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the hatch from the far shore of the central lake, though PCs stepping foot on the island or flying above the lake spot it automatically. Beyond it is a 5-foot diameter circular shaft with metal ladder rungs set into the wall. The shaft descends 70 feet to the Environmental Control Center chambers.

At the bottom of the shaft is a 10-foot square chamber that opens into the center of a 40-foot diameter circular chamber. There are dozens of control panels and view screens set along the curved walls of the larger outer chamber, which were once used to maintain the environment in the Terrestrial Enclosure. Conduits of wires lead along the ceiling and attach to the reactors in

the adjacent rooms.

The unmarked room to the north (opposite area TE7) holds fuel cells for the reactors and a pile of discarded strips of metal. A PC that succeeds on a DC 40 Knowledge (engineering) check identifies the discarded metal as shielding for Dzjaeri circuitry, meant to provide a barrier between dangerous live wiring and living beings. If the PCs ask Sub-Commander Orem about the discarded metal and show him the metal via their *comm-band*, he identifies it as protective shielding right away. The neh-thalggus removed the metal shielding from the circuitry around the damaged Lift in area TE7, in order to create the trap described there.

TE6: Reactor-1 (CR 12)

The northern end of this long chamber is dominated by huge cylindrical device made of blue-black steel. The device stands nearly fifteen feet tall and is roughly twenty feet in diameter. Crackling arcs of blue-white and crimson energy dance between the six arm-like appendages radiating from the device. Multiple bands of quickly rotating steel discs whirl in a constant circle near the top of the device, where the strange energy coalesces and intensifies a thousand fold. Aside from the cracking bands of energy and the whisper-like rush of the spinning steel discs, the device is surprisingly quiet.

The reactor in this room hums with life. An array of wires feed from the device up to the ceiling in large bundles that feed through the walls and ceiling. A desk rests against the wall opposite the reactor; it and the chair seated at it have gathered dust over the two years of vacancy. Reactor-1 regulates the heat, the weather, and the day/night cycle inside the Terrestrial Enclosure.

Creatures: Four neh-thalggus hole up here while they plan a course of action for destroying the crew and either taking over the *Ardent Hope* or returning to the surface. After their escape from the lab, the eight neh-thalggus killed several Dzjaeri, including a science officer, whose brain was consumed by one of the creatures. The neh-thalggus evaded Dzjaeri pursuers and escaped into the Terrestrial Enclosure. They avoided the mated pair of hydras lairing near the central lake. However, one member of their group fell to the voracious toadhemoth, which managed to leap high enough to grab one of them from the air. The seven remaining creatures fled to the metal island in the middle of the lake (area TE5), found the hatch leading below, and decided to risk that rather than face an armed contingent of Dzjaeri or wait for the toadhemoth to pick them off one-by-one.

Though the neh-thalggus each carry a full number of brains in the blister-like growths on their bodies, they only have one Dzjaeri brain, and since the brain belonged

to a science officer with only a rudimentary understanding of engineering systems, they have had trouble working out the *Ardent Hope's* engineering systems. However, after days of trial and error, the creature possessing the Dzjaeri-brain was able to instruct the others on how to sabotage the air and nutrient processors and the reactor.

NEH-THALGGUS (4)

CR 8

XP 3,900

hp 168 (see *Appendix 2: New Monsters*)

TACTICS

Before Combat If the neh-thalggus are aware of the PCs arrival, they use their infiltration ability to appear as Dzjaeri in an attempt to peacefully direct the PCs out of the Environmental Controls Center. If the PCs see through this ruse, the neh-thalggus attack.

During Combat The neh-thalggus attempt to decisively win combat and use their most powerful spell-like abilities to destroy their opponents.

Morale The neh-thalggus fight to the death, since they expect no mercy from the Dzjaeri or the PCs.

Development: The four neh-thalggus are annoyed that their sabotage efforts have failed to completely disrupt the biological systems keeping the Dzjaeri alive. When the PCs interrupt them, the creatures have just come to the decision to sabotage the reactor in this chamber as well, in order to cripple the *Ardent Hope's* biological systems once and for all. If the neh-thalggus manage to deactivate this second reactor, the *Ardent Hope* will cease production of the nutrient paste the Dzjaeri depend on for food immediately. Additionally, biological support systems will cease functioning for all of the Dzjaeri in cryogenic hibernation, resulting in the deaths of all hibernating passengers and crew in three days. The neh-thalggus require two hours of uninterrupted work to successfully sabotage the reactor.

Technology: A functioning computer workstation built into the desk flashes with strange Dzjaeri symbols that display the status of this room's reactor and the devices that it feeds. If Sub-Commander Orem is consulted and shown the read-out on the workstation's monitor via the *comm-band*, he can confirm this reactor is functioning perfectly.

TE7: Service Lift (CR 12)

This small room is dominated by a 12-foot square pit in the middle of the floor that drops well out of sight. About a foot or so below the pit's rim, a net-like barrier of sparking wires and crackling circuitry blocks access to the otherwise open shaft.

ABOUT THE NEH-THALGGUS

Though neh-thalggus number among the members of the Empire of the Void, the neh-thalggus that dwell on the PCs' homeworld and those aboard the *Ardent Hope* are not directly affiliated with this terrible inter-galactic network of aberrations and alien monstrosities. The Empire of the Void is unthinkable ancient, yet it is by no means an organized and centralized collective. Long ago, eons before the birth of humanity, the Empire of the Void suffered the first of many violent internal disputes and fractured. Immediately following this splintering, many former members of the Empire were dispersed. These beings included many neh-thalggus, who eventually colonized worlds in dozens of galaxies, including the PCs' homeworld.

This nonfunctioning Lift is similar the one that traverses the Command Decks (though this Lift has a square-shaped shaft and the Lift that traverses the Command Deck has a circular Lift shaft), and it provides a connection to the Passenger Deck (area **P1**) and the Engineering Deck (area **E2**). The neh-thalggus sent three of their number down the Lift shaft to explore the rest of the ship, while the other four remained behind to sabotage the reactors and air and nutrient processors. See area **P2A** on the Passenger Deck for the fate of the three neh-thalggus explorers.

Trap: When the three neh-thalggus failed to return at their appointed time, the remaining four neh-thalggus (see area **TE6**) succumbed to paranoia and came to believe the Dzjaeri were responsible for their companions' recapture or deaths. Unable to guard all of the access points to the Environmental Control Center, the creatures removed the metal shielding to expose the circuitry here and used it to create a trap. Any creature moving to within 5 feet of the edge of the Lift shaft becomes a conductor for the electrical energy from the live circuitry. The exposed circuitry trap is connected to the reactor in area **TE6**, so it will not run out of charges as long as Reactor-1 continues to function.

EXPOSED CIRCUITRY

Mechanical trap

Creatures moving within 5 feet of the Lift shaft's edge are struck by an electrical arc for 42 (12d6) lightning damage unless they make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throws. Creatures who save take half damage. PCs wearing metal armor suffer disadvantage on the save.

TE 8: Reactor-2 (CR 10)

This room is similar in appearance to **TE6**. However, the computer workstation's console screen has been smashed



and the reactor is dark and quiet. Several scorch marks surround the reactor, as it vented radioactive fuel while the neh-thalggus sabotaged it. The neh-thalggus anticipated the radiation discharge and were able to avoid injury. A PC that succeeds at a DC 20 Intelligence check identifies the scorch marks as radioactive discharge.

Technology: When the PCs enter this chamber, Sub-Commander Orem (who is viewing their progress via the *comm-band* one of the PC was given) speaks to the PCs over the *comm-band*. Having already trained one or more PCs on the basics of using the *sonic wrench* (see the *Preparations* section), he begins to talk the PC holding the *sonic wrench* through the process of reactivating the reactor.

Reactivating the Reactor. A PC must use the *sonic wrench* to reactivate Reactor-2. The task requires two consecutive 15 Intelligence or Dexterity skill checks. If trained in the *sonic wrench*, the PC adds his proficiency bonus to these checks. Each check requires 10 minutes of uninterrupted work to complete, whether the check is a success or failure.

Hazard: If a PC fails a check to reactivate Reactor-2 by 5 or more, he accidentally releases a high amount of radiation from the reactor. When the radiation leaks, the *Ardent Hope's* scrubbing systems automatically activate and the door to **TE8** slams shut and locks (threshold 20, hp 40)—anyone standing in the doorway must succeed at a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or be struck by the door and take 17 (5d6) points of bludgeoning damage. A computerized voice then emanates from the reactor, and begins to repeat the following (in Dzjaeri): “Danger. Lethal

levels of radiation detected. Scrubbing systems activated.” The radiation immediately fills area **TE8**, but does not seep further into the Environmental Control Center. The radiation persists for 5 minutes, until the *Ardent Hope's* microscopic radiation-scrubbing nanites finish cleaning the chamber. After the nanites eliminate the radiation, the voice says the following (again, in Dzjaeri): “Radiation levels have returned to normal. Please report to the Medical Bay at your earliest convenience for a complete physical diagnostic.”

Radiation Leak Hazard: DC 20 Constitution saving throw; 70 (20d6) damage or half that on a successful save. A hazard suit prevents all radiation damage.

CONCLUDING PART TWO

When the PCs successfully reactivate Reactor-2 it instantly stirs to life and begins to function like the reactor in area **TE6**. Sub-Commander Orem thanks the PCs over the *comm-band*, and then asks if they have accounted for all eight of the escaped neh-thalggus. However, before they can respond, a series of violent explosions rock the *Ardent Hope*. Proceed immediately with the *Tremors and Explosions* event in **Part Three**.

PART THREE

In Part Three, the PCs venture into the lower decks of the *Ardent Hope* as they race against time to save the ship from self-destructing. After saving the ship, the PCs find evidence that a shape-shifting alien horror even more dangerous than the escaped brain-eaters is responsible for the *stardrive*'s sabotage and now stalks the *Ardent Hope*'s labyrinthine corridors. The PCs must unmask and destroy this alien menace to not only save the Dzjaeri, but to also prevent the alien from reaching the planet surface. Failure could bring an apocalyptic disaster to their world.

EVENT: TREMORS AND EXPLOSIONS

Suddenly, the entire world lurches violently as a series of explosions echo throughout the ship. Distant alarms sound as the ship continues to rock and vibrate spasmodically.

Far below the PCs on the Engineering Deck, the recently revived qomok has initiated the self-destruct sequence for the *Ardent Hope*'s dark matter fusion *stardrive* (see area **E8** for additional details). The *Ardent Hope* shudders violently for several seconds. All creatures aboard the *Ardent Hope* take 4d6 points of bludgeoning damage and are knocked prone and stunned for 1 round. A successful DC 20 Dexterity saving reduces this damage by half and eliminates the stunned effect. The explosions subside after a few seconds. However, every few minutes the *Ardent Hope* continues to suffer from small tremors that last for five to ten seconds. None of these tremors are strong enough to knock the PCs prone or injure them, but they are unnerving.

PCs in view of one of the *Ardent Hope*'s external viewports can see that the lower portion of the vessel is now emitting a massive jet of violet-white energy trailing miles into outer-space. If the PCs do not report this to the Dzjaeri, a somewhat battered and beleaguered Sub-Commander Orem soon contacts them via the *comm-band* to explain that an unknown entity has initiated the self-destruct sequence on the *Ardent Hope*'s *stardrive* engine. If the sequence is not shut down, the *stardrive*—which keeps the *Ardent Hope* in orbit—will permanently fail and the *Ardent Hope* will crash onto the planet's surface. Sub-Commander Orem beseeches the PCs to deactivate the self-destruct sequence, as the Dzjaeri have no safe means of descending the non-functioning Lift shaft and—more importantly—time is of the essence.

The sub-commander explains that the PCs have two hours to descend to the Engineering Deck, gain access to the Main Reactor Control Center (area **E8**), and deactivate the *stardrive*'s self-destruct sequence. The sub-commander will help the PCs navigate their way to the Main Reactor Control Center chamber and will walk them through the

process of interfacing with the *stardrive*'s main computer and deactivating the self-destruct sequence. If the PCs seem hesitant or outright refuse, the sub-commander reminds them that if the *Ardent Hope* crash-lands on the planet below everyone aboard the *Ardent Hope* will perish. Additionally, according to his calculations, the *Ardent Hope* is almost certain to crash in a populated region. Cruel GMs could even name a PC's home settlement as the *Ardent Hope*'s possible crash location.

The Descent

The PCs have two options to reach the Engineering Deck. They can use magic or other means to descend the Lift shaft at area **TE7** or the Lift shaft that links the Command Decks with the lower decks. If Sub-Commander Orem is consulted, he beseeches the PCs to take the most expedient route—the functioning Lift in area **TE7**. The Lift shaft at area **TE7** descends 1,030 feet to the Passenger Deck (arriving in area **P1**) and another 400 feet to the Engineering Deck (arriving in area **E2**). The Lift shaft on the Command Deck descends 1,100 to the Passenger Deck (arriving in area **P5**) and another 400 feet to the Engineering Deck (arriving in area **E7**).

Passenger Deck

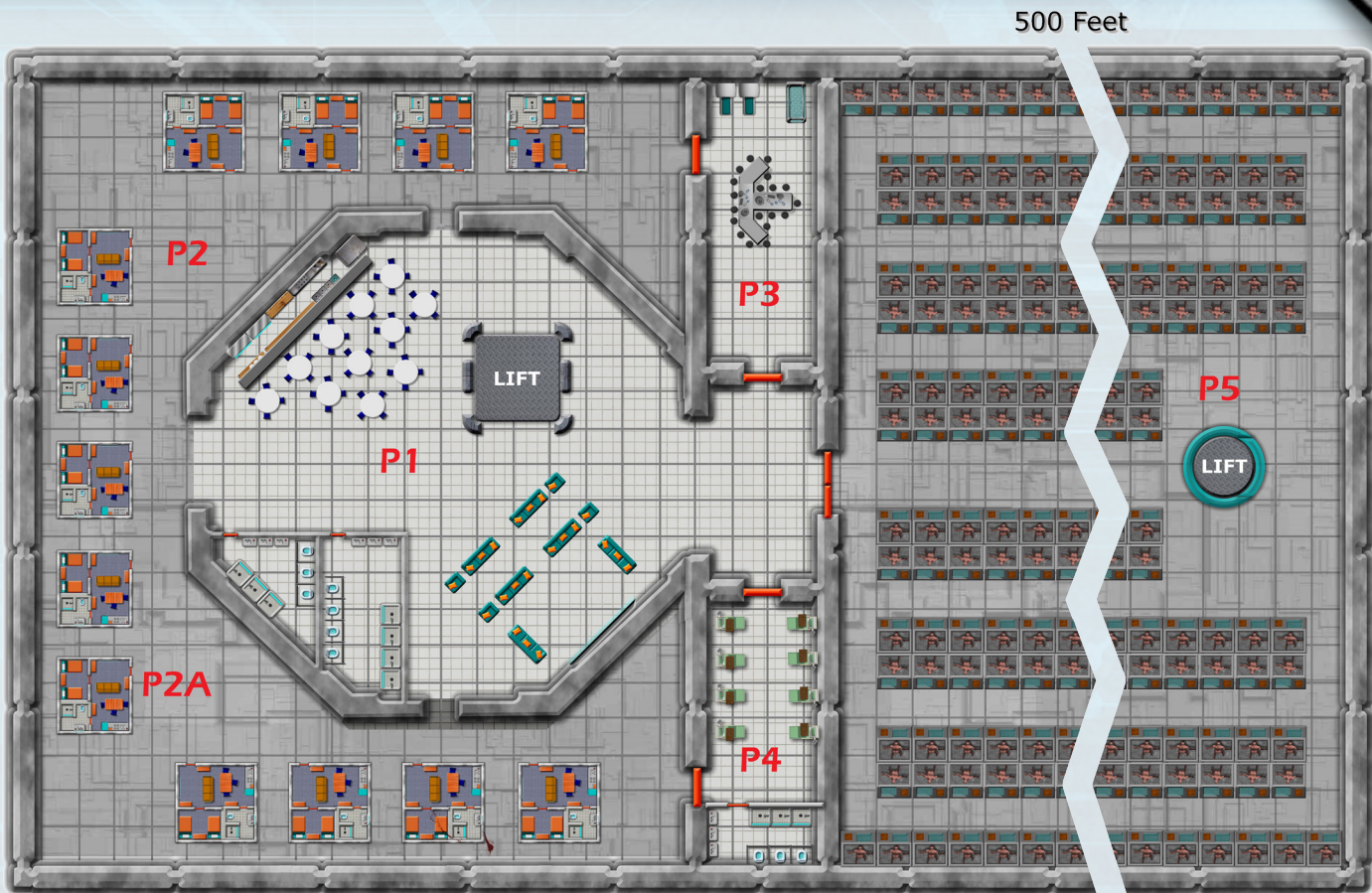
Though the PCs are likely to bypass the Passenger Deck on their initial descent, they might visit here after they deactivate the self-destruct sequence. The Passenger Deck is located 1,100 feet below the Command Decks and 1,030 feet below the Environmental Control Center. The bulk of the Passenger Deck holds the remaining population of Dzjaeri who fled their homeworld's destruction 1,300 years ago. These Dzjaeri have no appreciable skills for maintaining or piloting the ship, so they have spent the last 1,300 years in cryogenic hibernation.

As noted in the *Ardent Hope Room Descriptions* section, with the exception of the Cryogenic Chamber (area **P5**), the Passenger Deck chambers are unlit. Additionally, because the Dzjaeri powered down this deck, repurposed critical wiring and electronics, and diverted most of the remaining power to the Command Decks centuries ago, none of the lighting panels or computer workstations on this deck functions.

P1: Common Area

This large octagonal chamber contains tables, benches, counters, and a dozen or so food dispensers, similar to the ones on the Command Deck above. The entire room is dark and silent.

This unlit large area was designed as a central meeting place for the Dzjaeri passengers. Tables, benches, and a large galley storage area containing vegetarian nutrient cubes



PASSENGER DECK

1 Square = 10 Feet

for the residents take up the majority of the space in the common area, but the engineers also left some open space to allow the Dzjaeri to engage in physical activity. The two small rooms to the south are both refreshers, similar in design to area C10. Though the room remains unlit, the showers and toilets function just like the ones described in area C10.

A PC that succeeds at a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a few drops of recently dried dark blood around the Lift shaft and a few more blood stains scattered across the middle of the chamber. This blood belongs to the wounded neh-thalggus hiding in the abandoned Dzjaeri apartments who fled through this chamber after their disastrous encounter with the neh-thalggus on the Engineering Deck a day ago. Upon noticing the blood, a PC can track the neh-thalggus to their hideout (area P2A) with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Survival) check.

Technology: All of the technological devices—including the computer workstations and the food dispensers standing in the southeast section of the chamber—were stripped of most of the wiring and components ages ago and no longer function. The functioning Lift in the middle of the room connects to the Environmental Control Center 1,030 feet above or the Engineering Deck 400 feet below.

P2: Apartments

This large odd-shaped chamber has a 40-foot high ceiling. A dozen or so columns made of steel and glass, and stretching from floor to ceiling, lines the middle of the chamber. Upon closer examination, each column is actually a four-story structure containing windows and doors. The columns each have a spiral staircase providing access to all four floors.

Furnished with only essentials items, such as floor mats and light bedding, these four-story buildings were designed as living quarters for the Dzjaeri passengers. Each floor was designed to accommodate up to three Dzjaeri families.

Technology: Like most of the other chambers on this deck, none of the apartments has functioning lighting and was stripped long ago of any useful technological trappings.

P2A: Neh-thalggus Hideout (CR 14)

Unlike the other apartments, this apartment reeks of blood and other unidentifiable smells.

From outside appearances, this apartment is the same as all the others. However, the bottom floor apartment is covered in blood (that of the neh-thalgggu). After the neh-thalggus' disastrous battle with the qomok, they retreated to this apartment to recover from the fight.

Creatures: The three neh-thalggus charged with exploring the *Ardent Hope's* lower decks ventured to the Passenger Deck first. Led by the neh-thalgggu that had consumed the Dzjaeri science officer's mind during their daring escape from the Command Decks, the neh-thalggus explored this deck and soon discovered the Cryogenic Chamber (area **P5**). Figuring that the thousands of frozen humanoids posed no threat, the trio moved on to Engineering Deck, where they found engineering equipment and other devices beyond their comprehension. Not wanting to risk destroying themselves by tampering with their finds, they carefully continued their exploration of the *Ardent Hope* and eventually entered the Machine and Robot Storage Chamber (area **E1**). This chamber intrigued the neh-thalgggu, for a large section of the northwest corner of the room was obliterated long ago and is now a gaping hole that leads directly into outer-space. The hull breach occurred centuries ago, the result of a missile attack launched from an Empire of the Void starship as the *Ardent Hope* fled the destruction of the Dzjaeri homeworld. Though the Dzjaeri engineers were unable to repair the massive hull breach, they used their ultra-advanced technology to construct a force field barrier that now prevents the atmosphere from the *Ardent Hope* from leaking away.

As the clever and exceptionally perceptive neh-thalgggu studied the force field and the hull breach they noticed something the Dzjaeri engineers failed to spot centuries ago. Wedged into the *Ardent Hope's* asteroid hull, just a few feet beyond the hull breach, was a strange pod-like object that blended in almost perfectly with the asteroid hull's rocky surface. Insatiably curious, the neh-thalgggu decided to extract and study the pod. One of the creatures used its *alter self* spell-like ability to take the form of a Dzjaeri, and then donned a spacesuit one of the Dzjaeri engineers left in area **E1** when they set up the force field centuries earlier. The creature then ventured outside the shielded area into the void of outer-space and used its *acid splash* spell-like ability to painstakingly extract the pod from the *Ardent Hope's* hull. The neh-thalgggu then brought the pod aboard the ship.

Upon closer examination, the "pod" turned out to be a bizarre, multi-limbed alien creature that had squeezed its form into a ball in its attempt (as the neh-thalgggu surmised) to survive the vacuum of deep space. After their examination of the alien creature, the neh-thalgggu concluded the strange hitchhiker was long dead, and neither a threat nor of any use to them. So, they left it behind and continued their exploration of the Engineering Deck. Three hours later, the qomok emerged from its death-like state of hibernation, tracked the neh-thalggus to the Main

Reactor Control Center (area **E8**), and attacked them. The melee was brief and bloody. The qomok quickly killed one neh-thalgggu and managed to infect another with its alien infection. The two surviving neh-thalggus (the infected neh-thalgggu and the uninfected neh-thalgggu) panicked and fled to the Passenger Deck.

The neh-thalggus are now in hiding on the third floor of this apartment, nursing their wounds. They have not fully healed (as indicated by their hp in the statistics below), so they do not want to leave and risk another encounter with the qomok. The uninfected neh-thalgggu has not noticed that its companion has fallen victim to the qomok's alien infection and is very close to transforming into a new qomok. In fact, only moments before the PCs encounter the creatures, the infected neh-thalgggu succumbs to the qomok's alien infection. If the neh-thalgggu and the qomok do not notice the PCs' approach, the PCs might witness the qomok's transformation or its attack on the uninfected neh-thalgggu.

NEH-THALGGU

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 168 (now 145, see *Appendix 2: New Monsters*)

TACTICS

During Combat The neh-thalgggu only fights if cornered. It fights to the death, using its most powerful spell-like abilities to defend itself.

Morale The neh-thalgggu becomes terror-stricken when its companion transforms into a qomok and tries to flee as soon as possible. The creature makes its way to the Cryogenic Chamber (area **P5**), where it makes its final stand. Unless coerced by magic, the neh-thalgggu prefers death over cooperating or allying with the PCs.

QOMOK

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 264 (see *Appendix 2: New Monsters*)

TACTICS

During Combat During the first round of combat, the newly spawned qomok uses a full-round action to grotesquely transform its body until it only vaguely resembles a neh-thalgggu. It uses its *alter shape* ability to sprout multiple, insect-like legs, an assortment of horns and body spikes, numerous half-formed animal and humanoid faces, and a great misshapen head possessing the worst aspects of a wolf and a reptile. This immediately triggers its frightful presence ability. The qomok attacks savagely and indiscriminately at any creature within reach and tries to attack a new target each round, hoping to infect



Technology: In their haste to strip this room of useful medical gear, the Dzjaeri overlooked three *potions of superior healing* in syringes. If the PCs search the medical cabinets, a successful DC 15 Perception check locates this item.

P4: Recuperation Room

This chamber was designed to provide a place for recently revived passengers to rest and recuperate from the ordeal of being cryogenically frozen. Patients typically remained here for the first week or two after emerging from cryogenic hibernation, where their health was monitored by medical staff and they received intravenous nourishment and other supplemental care.

There are eight offline medical couches here, their components stripped and repurposed centuries ago to keep important systems on the Command Decks functioning. The room to the south contains functioning wash basins and toilets.

P5: Cryogenic Chamber

This massive, mist-shrouded chamber is very cold and hums with mechanical life. Rows upon rows of strange glass and metal containers fill the chamber, each containing a single sleeping humanoid. A thick layer of rime coats everything in this room, including the many pipes and flexible tubing overhead that connects to each of the containers.

The room is kept at a steady temperature of 20° F. A dozen insulated cold-weather jumpsuits (equivalent to padded armor) hang from the wall next to the room's entrance, which the PCs can don if they intend to spend more than an hour here. A thin layer of rime covers everything here and the frigid, misty air somewhat obscures sight, including darkvision. A creature within 10 feet can see normally, anything 10 to 15 feet away are lightly obscured (attacks have a 20% miss chance), and anything farther than 15 feet away is heavily obscured. A moderate wind (11+ mph) disperses the mist immediately, though it returns in 1d4+1 rounds.

as any creatures as possible. When it attacks, it remains in its strange hybrid form as it uses a swift action each round to generate a succession of clawed limbs, maws, or tentacles a different special attack form.

Morale The newly formed qomok shares the memories and experiences of its “parent” qomok (and the long line of qomoks that spawned it) and believes that by fighting aggressively it buys the parent qomok enough time to advance its goal of crashing the *Ardent Hope* into the planet below. The qomok fights to the death, trying to kill or infect as many creatures as possible.

P3: Medical Bay

This secondary medical bay was designed to monitor the health of passengers immediately after they are awakened from cryogenic hibernation. However, its systems were taken offline and its power was diverted to the Medical Bay (area C12) on the Command Decks shortly after the *Ardent Hope* limped into orbit around the PCs' homeworld 300 years ago. The room contains a single offline medical couch, an offline computer workstation, and an autodoc system that has obviously had large components removed. The walls are lined with lockers and various medical cabinets, all of which are mostly empty except for mundane items like surgical masks, patient robes, and assorted nontechnical gear (cotton swabs, tongue depressors, etc.).



This large warehouse-like room holds the passengers of the *Ardent Hope* in thousands of pods stacked atop one another all the way up to the ceiling (40 feet above). There are 10,000 pods here, though the Dzjaeri only had 8,722 passengers when they fell into orbit around the PC's homeworld three centuries ago. Unfortunately, that number was recently been reduced to 8,720.

A little over a day ago, shortly after the trio of exploring neh-thalggus discovered and released the hibernating qomok (as described in areas **P2A** and **E1**), the qomok made its way here. The creature immediately extracted a hibernating Dzjaeri named Neryan and infected the hapless young man with its alien infection (see area **E7** for the Neryan's fate). The qomok then studied the sleeping humanoids until it found the Dzjaeri it wanted: Chief Engineering Officer Tezelle. Instead of infecting Tezelle to create another of its kind, the qomok extracted the sleeping woman from her pod, reduced her body to a soupy sludge with its feeding tendril, and then absorbed and completely

assimilated her. Armed with Tezelle's knowledge of the *Ardent Hope's* engineering systems, the qomok assumed her form and returned to the Engineering Deck. Once there, the creature initiated the self-destruct sequence on the *Ardent Hope's* stardrive (triggering the *Tremors and Explosions* event encounter) before making its way to the Command Decks to deal with the active Dzjaeri crew.

PCs searching the chamber easily spot the two smashed open stasis pods, both with their occupants missing. One of the pods (Tezelle's) has a large rime-covered blood-red stain on the floor in front of the smashed pod. This is where the qomok assimilated the chief engineer. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) check recognizes the stain as a mix of liquefied human blood, flesh, bones, and viscera, though how the human dissolved into such a ghastly state remains a mystery.

Technology: Simple readouts on a pod display the name and status of the inhabitant. See the *Waking the*

Dzjaeri sidebar for additional information on the Dzjaeri cryogenic hibernation process. A Lift access at the eastern end of the chamber ascends 1,100 feet to the Science Lab Subdeck (area C13) and descends 400 feet to the Engineering Deck (area E7).

ENGINEERING DECK

The Engineering Deck lies in the belly of the ship, another 400 feet below the Passenger Deck. This deck was designed to contain all of the *Ardent Hope's* power distribution, production lab, and navigational systems, all powered by an immense dark matter fusion reactor, the Dzjaeri *stardrive*. This deck suffered extensive damage during its escape from Empire of the Void starships 1,300 years ago. Many of the walls are blackened, melted, or warped in some way and show signs of being repaired or shorn up by Dzjaeri engineers long ago. These damaged areas are even more profound in the areas in which the *Ardent Hope's* hull was breached and then repaired (areas E1, E2, E5, and E7, with area E1 featuring the worst breach). There is no lighting on this deck unless otherwise noted. The entire deck vibrates and thrums with the loud rumbling sound of the *stardrive* (which is embedded in the *Ardent Hope's* asteroid hull a few dozen feet below this deck) and various heavy machines and plasma turbines. All of the doors on this level (unless otherwise indicated) are closed and unpowered.

E1: Machine Fuel/Robot Storage and Hull Breach

A huge section of the northwest corner of this room was destroyed long ago, leaving a huge rent that reveals the inky black void of outer-space beyond. A shimmering haze of pale blue energy stands as a barrier between the hole and the rest of the room.

Note: If the PCs have not yet deactivated the self-destruct sequence on the *Ardent Hope's stardrive*, they can see a long jet of violet-white energy emitting from the rear of the *Ardent Hope* that trails miles into outer-space.

The hull breach occurred 1,300 years ago, the result of a missile attack launched from an Empire of the Void starship as the *Ardent Hope* fled the destruction of the Dzjaeri homeworld. Though the Dzjaeri engineers were unable to seal the massive hull breach, they used their ultra-advanced technology to construct a force field barrier that now prevents the atmosphere from the *Ardent Hope* from leaking away. The force field has no effect on living or inanimate matter, and a living being can easily pass through the barrier without harm—though this exposes the creature to the cold vacuum of outer-space (immediately subjecting the creature to suffocation and the intense cold and pressure of the hard vacuum of deep space).

Hazard: Unprotected air-breathing creatures that pass

through the force field begin to **suffocate** (see *SRD*) and take 6d6 points of damage each round (half of this is cold damage and half is damage from intense pressure). A successful DC 20 Constitution saving throw halves this damage.

Technology: Once a storage area and workshop for maintaining the *Ardent Hope's* robots, all of the robots, equipment, and tools kept here were sucked into space when the hull breach occurred. Only a few items bolted to the floor remain. To the south stand nine empty robot storage bins, resembling eight-foot tall, six-foot-diameter door-less cages bolted to the floor.

To the northeast stand 16 four-foot-tall, one-foot-diameter, liquid-filled fuel drums, which have sat here unused since the destruction of the Engineering Lab (area E2) centuries ago. Each drum weighs 500 pounds. To open a fuel drum, a creature must spend an action turning the drum's valves, which requires a successful DC 10 Strength check. Once a fuel drum is opened or otherwise breached (each drum has threshold 5, hit points 20) the fuel automatically disperses and fills a 30-foot radius area with a burning napalm-like substance that continues to burn for 1d6+4 rounds. Creatures and organic material caught in the area take 42 (12d6) points of fire damage each round (DC 20 Dexterity saving throw for half).

A *spacesuit* lies in a heap near the force field barrier, where the neh-thalggu that recently donned it cast it aside a day earlier. Though functional, the suit is soiled and reeks from its previous occupant. It allows its wearer to ignore damage from exposure to outer space, and supplies air for up to 2 hours in a vacuum.

E2: Engineering Lab

This large odd-shaped chamber looks like it once suffered major damage. The floors, walls, and ceiling are rent and melted in places. Sections of the floor and walls have had newer sections of metal welded over them in an effort to patch what must have been the effects of a devastating attack. The northern half of the room is cast in a strange blue-white glow, emanating from a strange device on the north wall.

Before the *Ardent Hope* suffered damage during its escape from the Dzjaeri homeworld centuries ago, this chamber served as an important workshop. However, this chamber was the recipient of several direct hits from devastating Empire of the Void weapons, which resulted in horrific damage. After the *Ardent Hope* safely escaped, the Dzjaeri engineers patched up the damage and then stripped this room of all of the damaged machinery and components.

Technology: A line of plasma conduits run the length of the Engineering Deck, mounted on the floor along the



ENGINEERING DECK

1 Square = 10 Feet

north wall of areas E2, E5, and E7, with more plasma conduits on the east and west wall of E7. The plasma conduits provide bright light to areas within 60 feet and dim light out to another 120 feet. Each plasma conduit is 18 feet high and 40 feet long and consists of two plasma inducers (the plasma inducers are each 20-foot tall steel columns). A constant jet of blue-white plasma energy arcs and sizzles between the two plasma inducers. The jet is set about 15 feet off the floor and is safe, unless of course living matter touches it. Creatures coming into contact with the plasma energy, even for a brief moment, take 8d6 points of damage (half of this is fire damage and half is force damage). A successful DC 20 Dexterity saving throw reduces this damage to half. Creatures reduced to less than 0 hit points by this damage are instantly reduced to a fine gray dust.

E3: Engineers' Lounge

This room was designed to provide the *Ardent Hope's* engineers with a place to rest and unwind after long shifts. A dozen dusty cots, four large dining tables, and a nonfunctioning food dispenser are all that remain in this area.

E4: Tool Closet and Recharging Station

This small room was designed to store tools and other gear useful to engineering tasks. Though most of the useful items were repurposed by the Dzjaeri long ago, a few items were left behind.

Technology: A recharging station identical to the one in area C3 is built into one of the walls here. A search of the shelves and storage cabinets here reveals the following items, three *fire extinguishers*, a *flashlight*, three pairs of *insulated tongs*, a pair of *magboots* (unlimited *spider climb* on magnetic surfaces), and a set of engineer's tools that provide a +2 bonus on dexterity or intelligence checks to operate the machinery aboard the *Ardent Hope*.

E5: Heavy Machinery

This enormous chamber is filled with all manner of equipment, from roaring turbines to disassembled vehicles and other gear. Like other rooms on this deck, this chamber shows signs of ancient damage—warped walls and floors, scorched deck areas, and the like. The northern half of the

THE STARDRIVE

The pinnacle of Dzjaeri engineering technology, the *Ardent Hope* is equipped with a *stardrive*, a massive dark matter fusion reactor that provides power for the ship and once provided the *Ardent Hope* with the ability to instantaneously travel the vast distances between the stars. Even though the *Ardent Hope's stardrive* is effectively crippled, the dark matter fusion reactor still provides more than enough power to keep the ship's life support and other essential systems running and maintain the *Ardent Hope's* orbit. Even in its semi-dormant state, the *stardrive* burns with the energy of ten suns. This energy is safely dispersed through the plasma conduits running through areas **E2**, **E5**, and **E7**, the enormous turbine machines in area **E5**, and the two plasma turbines in area **E7**.

room is cast in a strange blue-white glow, emanating from a long row of strange devices running the length of the north wall.

Technology: The devices along the north wall are plasma conduits (as described in area **E2**). The room is dominated by dozens of enormous turbine machines that help disperse the incredible amount of energy produced by the semi-dormant *stardrive*. These turbines constantly whirl and roar loudly, and impose disadvantage to all sound-based Perception checks made in this chamber.

A number of partially assembled and disassembled vehicles, including tractors, excavators, bulldozers, flight-capable gyro-copters, and small boats with outboard engines line the southern wall. The Dzjaeri leadership reasoned that the vehicles and heavy equipment would be needed when they found a habitable world and needed to construct homes and other buildings on its surface. Though most of these machines should prove incomprehensible to the PCs, Sub-Commander Orem can identify the machines and their purposes if the PCs show him the machines via the *comm-band*.

Development: If Sub-Commander Orem is shown these vehicles over the *comm-band's* camera he suddenly asks the PCs to focus the camera on a strange half-assembled cylinder-shaped machine. The cylinder-machine is six feet long, three feet in diameter, and weighs 400 pounds. At first the sub-commander doesn't recognize the machine, and since the PCs have more important things to do (i.e. save the ship's *stardrive* from self-destructing) he tells the PCs to ignore it and continue to the Main Reactor Control Center (area **E8**). However, the sub-commander will ask the PCs to return to examine the strange machine after

they deactivate the self-destruct sequence. When the PCs return, he asks them to aim the *comm-band's* camera at the machine as he studies it for several minutes. He then concludes that the machine seems to be some sort of half-constructed escape pod and is definitely not a work of Dzjaeri engineering. He hypothesizes that either the neh-thalggu or the strange aliens the PCs encountered in the Main Engineering Hub (**E7**) must have started building it in order to use it to escape to the planet surface. As designed, it looks as if the pod should be able to survive passing through the planet's atmosphere, though it doesn't look as if there is space for a parachute to soften the impact of the pod's crash-landing. However, he adds, it probably wasn't the neh-thalggus since they would have trouble fitting inside the man-sized cylinder.

The sub-commander is correct; this is an unfinished escape pod. The parent qomok started working on the pod, using pieces of machinery scavenged from this chamber, hoping to use it to escape to the planet below. If the qomok is unmasked in the *Who's the Thing* event (see below), it may grow desperate and return here to finish working on the pod. The qomok requires six uninterrupted hours of work to finish the escape pod. It will then carry the pod to the External Airlock at the top of the Primary Lift shaft to make its escape.

E6: Radiation Suit and Reactor Fuel Storage

These two identical rooms contain radiation suits and provide storage for additional fuel drums.

Technology: Eight green, full-body rubber suits—*radiation suits* (see *Appendix 3: New Technology*)—hang from metal pegs along one wall. While the majority of operations regarding the reactor only required two workers, an emergency sometimes demanded dozens of workers enter the reactor to shut it down from inside. A *radiation detector* is kept inside a plastic case embedded in the wall here. It provides a constant reading of the ambient radiation to any PC who reads it. These two storage rooms also contain 20+1d6 fuel drums, identical to the fuel drums described in area **E1**.

E7: Main Engineering Hub (CR 15)

This enormous brightly lit chamber is dominated by a pair of gigantic orange steel machines that whirl and roar and constantly emit a shimmering haze of blue-violet energy. More strange machines line the north, east, and west walls. Like other rooms on this deck, this chamber shows signs of ancient damage—warped walls and floors, scorched deck areas, and the like.

This is the primary engineering hub, where machinery critical to the *Ardent Hope's* engineering systems are kept and maintained. The ceiling here is 40 feet high. The two

plasma turbines and the multiple plasma conduits (see **Technology** below) constantly whirl and roar loudly, and impart a -10 penalty to all sound-based Perception checks made in this chamber. Even with the Ardent Hope's engines operating at minimum capacity, the energy cycling through these powerful machines is extraordinary and the energy coursing through these machines keeps this chamber brightly lit.

A PC that succeeds at a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check realizes a scorch-mark on the floor between the two plasma turbines is from very recent heat damage and is possibly less than a day old. A second successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a scorched and empty fuel drum purposefully hidden in the southeast corner of the room.

Creatures: After the qomok extracted Neryan from his cryogenic hibernation pod and infected the sleeping Dzjaeri with its alien contagion (as described in area **P5**), it carried Neryan's dying body to this chamber and waited patiently for it to transform into a new qomok. As it waited for the new qomok to come into being, the parent qomok decided it needed more than one "soldier" to guard the Engineering Deck from possible interlopers. Using the Chief Engineering Officer Tezelle's memories, the parent qomok retrieved a fuel drum from area **E6** and told the newly made qomok to open it. The ensuing conflagration triggered the qomok's split ability, which divided the newly formed qomok into three Small-sized qomoks. These creatures now lurk in the northeastern corner of the room. These qomoks are significantly weaker than the parent qomok and no longer have access to many of its abilities. See the qomok description (*Appendix 2: New Monsters*) for additional information.

SMALL QOMOKS (3)

Small aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 187 (25d6 + 100)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 60 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +8, Int +6

Skills Acrobatics +6, Deception +6, Persuasion +6, Stealth +6

Damage Vulnerabilities acid, fire, lightning

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, thunder, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, prone, stunned,

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Elder Thing (cannot speak), telepathy 120 ft. (only with Qomoks)

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Infection. Creatures infected by a qomok must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw every minute. They are cured after 3 successful saves, or if they receive lesser restoration or similar magic. If they fail their save, they are transformed into a qomok in 1d6 minutes.

Shapechanger. The qomok can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Split. When a qomok that is Small or larger is subjected to acid, fire, or lightning damage, it splits into two new qomoks if it has at least 10 hit points. Each new qomok has hit points equal to half the original qomok's, rounded down. New qomoks are one size smaller than the original qomok. Qomoks smaller than Small have only 2 Intelligence and focus solely on self-preservation.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. A qomok makes 3 attacks with its extremities.

Extremity. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing damage.

Feeding Tendril. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage. Creatures killed by this attack automatically contracts the qomok's Infection. If the qomok spends a round consuming the remains of the creature killed by the feeding tendril, it gains their full knowledge and memories.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the qomok's choice that is within 120 feet of the qomok and aware of it must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is

Technology: The devices along the north wall are plasma conduits (identical to the ones described in area **E2**) and the two 30-foot tall orange machines are plasma turbines, which siphon and then redistribute energy directly from the *stardrive* below. After the qomok activated the self-destruct sequence, a read-out on both plasma turbines provides a handy countdown timer to devastation.

Along the walls facing the Main Reactor Control Center (area **E8**), are eight interactive consoles with numerous dials and readouts that display a plethora of data about the *stardrive*, such as its core temperature, its operating capacity, energy output, and a hundred other technical details. Figuring out the meaning of the readouts requires a DC 20 Intelligence check, though Sub-Commander Orem can interpret the information on the consoles if he's shown them through the *comm-band*. If the *stardrive*'s self-destruct

sequence has not yet been deactivated, all of these consoles flash red warning symbols and display a countdown to the *stardrive's* final meltdown.

E8: Main Reactor Control Center

Read the following when the PCs examine the door leading into area E8:

It is obvious that someone or something has deliberately jammed several large pieces of metal into these doors to prevent them from being opened.

Shortly after it initiated the self-destruct sequence on the *Ardent Hope's* stardrive, the qomok gathered several steel rods from among the disassembled vehicles and heavy machines in area E5 and jammed them into these doors. To bypass the damaged doors, a PC must succeed at a DC 25 Dexterity check on which thieves' tools or the sonic wrench apply, or the doors must be battered open. The doors have threshold 10, and 50 hit points. Read the following when the PCs enter area E8:

This large room contains ten computer workstations, though only three of these currently look activated. A pair of large display screens dominates the east wall, each covered with hundreds of strange symbols, numbers, and images.

Technology: This room is the command and control center for the *Ardent Hope's* stardrive. There are ten computer workstations here, though only three of them are currently functioning. Two large window-like display screens are affixed to the east wall. They display a staggering amount of information about the *stardrive's* current status that appears as hundreds of blinking multi-colored numbers and alien symbols. As with the consoles in area E7, figuring out the meaning of the readouts requires a DC 20 Intelligence check, though Sub-Commander Orem can interpret the information if he's shown the display screens through the *comm-band*. If the *stardrive's* self-destruct sequence has not yet been deactivated, all of these consoles flash red warning symbols and display a countdown to the *stardrive's* final meltdown.

Deactivating the self-destruct sequence: A PC can deactivate the self-destruct sequence from any of the three functioning computer workstations. It's a complicated process that requires direct communication with Sub-Commander Orem via the *comm-band*. If the PCs lost their *comm-band* or if it was somehow destroyed, they can establish communications with the sub-commander on one of the computer workstations. Communicating via a computer workstation requires knowledge of the Dzjaeri tongue (or a successful DC 20 Intelligence check). With the sub-commander's assistance, a PC can deactivate the self-

destruct sequence with two consecutive DC 15 Intelligence checks. The DC increases to 25 if the PCs somehow lose contact with Sub-Commander Orem. Each check requires 2 minutes of uninterrupted work to complete, whether the check is a success or failure.

Development: If the PCs successfully deactivate the self-destruct sequence, Sub-Commander Orem thanks the PCs over the *comm-band* and actually smiles. He then immediately focuses his attention on the strange creatures the PCs encountered in the Main Engineering Hub (area E7). He then asks the PCs for their assistance yet again. Concerned over this new alien threat, the sub-commander asks the PCs to perform a quick sweep of the Engineering Deck and Passenger Deck and eradicate the creatures if more are encountered. He also asks the PCs to check on the hibernating passengers in the Cryogenic Chamber (area P5). If the PCs seem unwilling to help, he offers them one of the Dzjaeri *photon pistols* as a prize.

Assuming the PCs agree to help, continue with the *Bug Hunt* event below.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE PCS FAIL?

If the PCs fail to deactivate the *stardrive's* self-destruct sequence before the two-hour time limit expires, the *Ardent Hope* is doomed. One second after the two-hour countdown ends, the *stardrive* detaches from the *Ardent Hope* and spins away from the crippled ship. A moment later, the *stardrive* uses all of its remaining power to initiate a jump into the heart of the closest star. The Dzjaeri engineers designed the *stardrive* to do this to prevent it from crashing into and likely destroying a populated world. Once the *stardrive* arrives in the heart of the closest star, it melts down and is utterly consumed, causing little more than a brief solar "hiccup." Meanwhile, the *Ardent Hope's* asteroid hull—now without a propulsion system—falls from orbit and plummets to the surface of the planet below like a falling star. What happens at this point is beyond the scope of this adventure, but the outcome should be exceptionally grim for those aboard the *Ardent Hope* and possibly for creatures on the planet's surface directly hit by the two-mile long asteroid.

EVENT: BUG HUNT

After saving the ship from destruction, the PCs are free to explore the *Ardent Hope's* Engineering Deck and Passenger Deck, as they search for additional hostile aliens. GMs are encouraged to run this event as a sandbox, allowing the PCs to explore the ship at their own pace. If

the players grow restless or begin to lose focus, GMs should use Sub-Commander Orem to subtly guide the PCs to the two critically important encounter areas: the Neh-thalgu Hideout (area **P2A**) and the Cryogenic Chamber (area **P5**). After the PCs visit these encounter areas, they should begin to understand the true threat they face. GMs can then continue with the *Slaughter on the Command Decks* event.

EVENT: SLAUGHTER ON THE COMMAND DECKS

Shortly after the PCs visit areas **P2A** and **P5**, Sub-Commander Orem contacts them over the *comm-band*. Read or paraphrase the following:

Sub-Commander Orem's voice, sounding uncharacteristically anxious, suddenly emits from the *comm-band*. "My crew is under attack here on the Command Bridge. We need your help immediately!" The sub-commander says something else, but his words are drowned out by several loud noises that sound like minor explosions combined with the sound of a burning torch being snuffed out by water. These sounds are followed by a great deal of shouting and inhuman shrieking. The sub-commander looks solemnly through the *comm-band*'s viewscreen and shouts a single word: "Hurry." The *comm-band* then goes black.

PCs that have witnessed a *photon pistol* firing instantly recognize the minor explosion noises as blasts from one of those Dzjaeri weapons. GMs should now continue with the *Who's the Thing* event.

EVENT: WHO'S THE THING? (CR 15 OR 16)

GMs should familiarize themselves with the following actions and reactions of the qomoks and the Dzjaeri crew members. This section is intentionally left as unscripted as possible to give GMs freedom to tailor the qomoks' actions and properly challenge the PCs. This section could be played out as another sandbox, with the disguised qomoks biding their time until the PCs and the Dzjaeri are at their weakest. Alternately, this section could just as easily wrap-up very quickly (and violently), especially if the two disguised qomoks are identified right away.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

While the PCs were exploring the Passenger Deck and the Engineering Deck, the parent qomok made its way to the Command Decks to eliminate the Dzjaeri. Here is a run-down of important events:

- When the parent qomok arrived on the Science Labs deck it surprised the custodial specialist Erem while

the Dzjaeri was cleaning the Sterilization Chamber (area **C13**). The qomok quickly, and horrifically, twisted the man's head from his shoulders. Erem's headless body still lies inside the Sterilization Chamber in plain sight.

- The qomok then made its way to Science Lab 3 (area **C16**) where it encountered the science officers Essira and Taela. Essira managed to flee to the Observation Lounge (area **C17**), where she alerted the two security officers posted there, Renix and Tes. Essira then fled to the Command Bridge (area **C1**) without knowing the fate of her sister or the two security officers.
- Renix and Tes rushed to **C16** and arrived just as it finished absorbing and assimilating Taela. The qomok killed Tes by biting her in half and managed to render Renix unconscious. It then absorbed and assimilated Renix and assumed the security officer's form. Science Lab 3 now looks like a slaughterhouse, with blood and body parts littering the entire room.
- The qomok/Renix then made its way to the Lounge and Recreation Hall (area **C8**), where it shot and killed the security officer Loro. Loro's body still lies in on the floor there, his head blackened and half-erased from multiple *photon pistol* strikes.
- Meanwhile, Essira arrived on the Command Bridge (Area **C1**) and alerted Sub-Commander Orem, the senior security officer Jathis, and the other custodial specialist Inex that a hostile alien was ravaging the crew. This is when Sub-Commander Orem contacted the PCs via the *comm-band*.
- The qomok/Renix soon made its way to the Command Bridge, where it surprised the surviving Dzjaeri, who believed the qomok was actually Renix. The qomok immediately opened fire on the surprised Dzjaeri with Renix's *photon pistol*. During the attack, Jathis and Inex were both injured. All of the Dzjaeri present then witnessed the qomok shed its "Renix" disguise to assume the form of a hairy slug-like creature with multiple rending claws, a wolf-like maw, and dagger-sized teeth.
- The qomok then fled and the sub-commander pursued it.

The PCs Arrive

When the PCs arrive on the Command Deck, they find scorch-marks from multiple *photon pistol* blasts on the walls and floor of the junction hallway between areas **C1**, **C2**, and **C3**. All of the rooms appear abandoned, except for the Command Bridge (area **C1**), where they find Jathis, Essira, and Inex. Jathis is injured (he is currently at 11 hit points) and his *photon pistol* has eight charges left. Inex is also injured (he is currently at 30 hit points).

Inex, however, contracted the qomok's alien infection during the brief melee with the creature. A PC that examines Inex and succeeds at a DC 25 Wisdom (Medicine) check notices that Inex has contracted some sort of very subtle infection. If Inex's condition goes unnoticed, he succumbs to the alien infection 10 minutes after the PCs arrive and transforms into a new qomok. Anyone interacting with Inex after this occurs that succeeds at a DC 22 Wisdom (Insight) check realizes that Inex has undergone an extremely subtle, yet horrific change. If Inex's transformation goes unnoticed, the qomok/Inex does not immediately attack. Instead it bides its time as it waits for the parent qomok to arrive (see *Orem Arrives* below). In the meantime, the qomok/Inex does what it is told and tries to keep a low profile. If the qomok wearing Inex's form is unmasked, the qomok fights for two rounds and then tries to flee down to the Engineering Deck to continue its work on the escape pod in area E5. If cornered there, the qomok fights to the death.

In the sub-commander's absence, Jathis assumes command of the *Ardent Hope* and he openly consults with the PCs on the best way to defend against the alien threat. While discussing their options with the PCs, if none of the PCs mention it first, the science officer Essira suggests the creature can assume any form it wants. She then relates how the creature took on a completely different form when it attacked her and her sister in Science Lab 3.

Orem Arrives

Twenty minutes after the PCs arrive, Sub-Commander Orem returns with Essira's sister Taela. He explains that he pursued the alien and it evaded him on the Science Labs deck. He believes it possibly fled into the Terrestrial Enclosure or back down the Lift shaft to one of the lower decks. "Taela" is in fact the parent qomok; the creature assumed her form and successfully deceived the sub-commander into believing it really is Taela.

At this point a standoff occurs. Jathis and Inex (now a newly formed qomok and in direct telepathic communication with the parent qomok that has taken on Taela's form) become very vocal about not wanting the sub-commander and Taela to re-join them inside the Command Bridge. Jathis fears that one or both of them could be the alien in disguise. Essira, on the other hand, wants her sister to rejoin them and asks the PCs to intervene. Sub-Commander Orem tries to remain calm, but Jathis has become somewhat unhinged by recent events. Unless the PCs intervene, Jathis draws his *photon pistol* and opens fire on Sub-Commander Orem. Orem does not return fire; instead, he and the qomok/Taela flee into the Armory (C3), where he intends to hold up until things calm down. Again unless the PCs stop her, Essira flees with the sub-commander and her sister to the Armory. In his current

state, Jathis may also fire on Essira as she tries to flee and rejoin her sister.

If the parent qomok manages to isolate Sub-Commander Orem (and possibly Essira) in the Armory, it soon attacks them and tries to assimilate one or both of the Dzjaeri. When the parent qomok begins its attack against the sub-commander, the qomok wearing Inex's form also reveals itself and attacks the PCs (and any remaining Dzjaeri).

QOMOKS (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 264 (see *Appendix 2: New Monsters*)

TACTICS

During Combat During the first round of combat, the newly spawned qomoks use a full-round action to grotesquely transform their bodies until they only vaguely resemble the Dzjaeri they are masquerading. The qomoks fight intelligently yet with a savage alien ferocity. Each round they use their alter shape ability to generate a new special attack form.

Morale If one of the qomoks is destroyed the other creature tries to flee to the Terrestrial Enclosure, hoping to lose its pursuers in the alien jungle. The qomok then makes its way to area E5 to finish work on its escape pod. If encountered in area E5, the qomok fights for two rounds and flees again. This time, it makes its way to the Cryogenic Chamber (area P5) and tries to infect as many of the hibernating Dzjaeri as possible. It repeats these tactics (fleeing into the Terrestrial Enclosure, then back to area E5, then back to the Cryogenic Chamber) until it is destroyed.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs destroy both of the qomoks they are hailed as heroes by any surviving Dzjaeri. True to his word, Sub-Commander Orem revives several engineering officers from cryogenic hibernation and oversees their efforts to scrape together some of the Dzjaeri's remaining technology to construct a viable escape pod for the PCs. The Dzjaeri program the escape pod to land anywhere on the planet below, as designated by the PCs. The trip down to the planet surface is an exhilarating five-minute ride, but is ultimately quite safe.

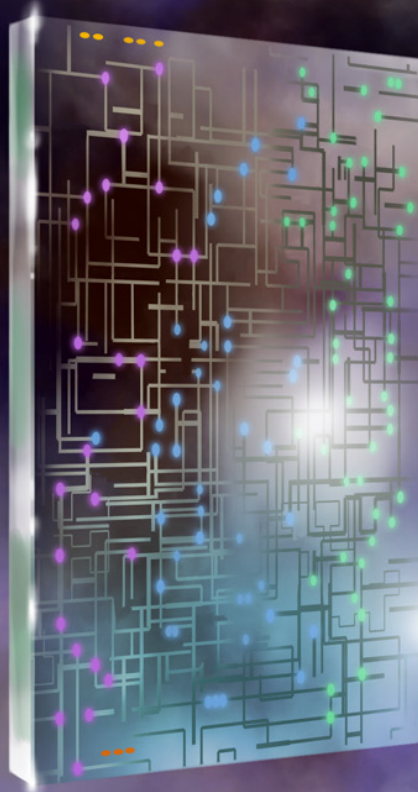
Unfortunately, the Dzjaeri remain unable to colonize the PCs' homeworld since they have yet to solve the issue of the deadly bacterium in the planet's atmosphere. Though they are not in danger of running out of food or air for centuries, they remain trapped on the crippled starship

until their scientists figure out how to protect themselves permanently from the bacterium. This could take decades.

If all of the currently awake Dzjaeri crew members are killed during the battle with the qomoks, the PCs will have to revive at least one Dzjaeri engineering officer from cryogenic hibernation and coerce them into building an escape pod for them.

If even one of the qomoks manages to successfully escape to the planet surface with its makeshift escape pod,

it immediately begins attacking and assimilating every creature it encounters as it attempts to further its goal of absorbing and assimilating all life. Though a qomok can only assimilate Small, Medium, Large, or Huge-sized creatures, the qomok's aggressiveness and tenacity could eventually lead to apocalypse-level devastation to the planet's ecosystem. How this plays out is beyond the scope of this adventure, but the outcome should be spectacularly grim.



APPENDIX 1: NPC GALLERY

DZJAERI

Shortly after the *Ardent Hope* fled its home system, all of the passengers and most of the ship's crew were placed in cryogenic hibernation. A 12-member skeleton crew remains awake to man the ship, and every five years the skeleton crew returns to suspended animation and is replaced by another 12-member crew. With enough crew members to support 25 separate skeleton crews, each skeleton crew has served a 5-year shift every 260 years. So, in the last 1,300 years, the skeleton crew members have only physically aged ten years. Unfortunately, the *Ardent Hope* only has ten qualified officers that survived the initial disaster. Therefore, the commanders of the skeleton crews (including Sub-Commander Orem) have each aged 26 years. The Dzjaeri have lifespans equivalent to normal humans. However, due to the advanced medical facilities and medicine available to them aboard the *Ardent Hope*, none of the skeleton crew members have yet died of old age.

The Sub-Commander

The aging sub-commander still maintains a lithe, muscular physique. Though wrinkles mar his face and his hair has become thin and wispy, Orem's eyes shine with intelligence and compassion for his people.

SUB-COMMANDER OREM

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 132 (14d8 + 56)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

Skills Diplomacy +5, Insight +3

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Dzjaeri

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Orem makes up to 3 attacks with his photon pistol.

Photon Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 100 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) damage. Half of this damage is force, and half is fire.



Dzjaeri Security Officers

The security officers, Jathis, Loro, Renix, and Tes, are well-trained in unarmed combat and expert shots with the photon pistol. Typically stern and discreet, the security officers are career soldiers, prepared to defend their crewmates with their lives. The senior security officer Jathis is effectively the second-in-command after Sub-Command Orem. Jathis is a no-nonsense veteran soldier that does everything by the book. Tall and muscular, he has dark eyes and keeps his head clean shaven.

DZJAERI SECURITY OFFICER

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 15 (shield)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Dzjaeri

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Security officers make up to 2 photon pistol attacks.

Photon Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 100 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d10+3) damage. Half of this damage is force, and half is fire.

Dzjaeri Science Officers

The science officers are the twin sisters, Essira and Taela. Though still distraught at losing their lover and fellow scientist, Arvinen, during the neh-thalggu escape, Essira and Taela remain unflappably optimistic and uncharacteristically bubbly for Dzjaeri. Assigned as escorts while the PCs remain on the Command Decks, Essira and Taela assail their guests with a constant barrage of questions about their world and the creatures that populate it.

SCIENCE OFFICERS

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills History +5, Nature +5, Medicine +3, Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Draconic, Dzjaeri

Challenge 1 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Unarmed. *Melee weapon attack.* +2 to hit, 5 foot reach, 1 target. *Hit:* 3 bludgeoning damage.



Dzjaeri Custodial Specialists

Frem and Inex perform custodial and general maintenance duties aboard the *Ardent Hope*. Though quiet and exceptionally introverted, the men are polite and generally good-natured. Though somewhat dim-witted, Frem and Inex are excellent mechanics and troubleshoot issues with Sub-Commander Orem constantly as the *Ardent Hope*'s systems continue to deteriorate.

CUSTODIAL SPECIALISTS

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 24 (4d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Dzjaeri

Challenge 1 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Unarmed. *Melee weapon attack.* +2 to hit, 5 foot reach, 1 target. *Hit:* 3 bludgeoning damage.

SHADOW CROWS

These hardened tribal folk are well-trained nomadic warriors, having lived their entire lives in this dangerous wilderness region. Though suspicious of strangers, the Shadow Crows are honorable and willing to help those in need.

KRETH

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, tribal tongue

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Wounded (Ex) Kreth is wounded and currently has 23 hit points.



ACTIONS

Multiattack. Kreth makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, he can also make a shortsword attack.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

SHADOW CROW WARRIORS

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 13 (hide armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages tribal tongue

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Pack Tactics. The shadow crow warriors have advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of their allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Wounded (Ex) The shadow crow warriors are wounded and currently have 3d6 hit points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The shadow crow warrior makes two melee attacks.

Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

SHADOW CROW PRISONERS

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 10 (hide armor)

Hit Points 4(1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages tribal tongue

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

ACTIONS

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

APPENDIX 2: NEW MONSTERS

Neh-Thalggu

This crab-like nightmare has a lamprey mouth, twitching eyes on its legs, and several transparent blisters along its back that hold disembodied brains floating in vitreous liquid.

NEH-THALGGU

Large aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 168 (16d10 + 70)

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	16 (+3)	21 (+5)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)

Skills Arcana +5, Perception +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The neh-thalggu's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16). The neh-thalggu can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *Detect Magic*, *Grease*, *Mage Hand*, *Magic Missile*

1/day each: *Acid Arrow*, *Confusion*, *Hold Person*, *Invisibility*, *Lightning Bolt*

Infiltrator. 3/day a neh-thalggu can change its appearance to that of a Small or Medium humanoid for up to 1 hour. This functions like *alter self* but does not require concentration. The neh-thalggu loses its bite and claw attacks and its natural armor in humanoid form, but gains Stealth +5. It can use its action to resume its normal form; any equipment it is wearing or carrying is not transformed and falls to the ground.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. A neh-thalggu makes three attacks: one bite and two claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) piercing damage, and the creature must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take 14 (4d6) poison damage.

Claw. *Melee:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Qomok

A slight tremor in the man's face heralds the arrival of a ghastly horror. What was a man moments ago suddenly rips itself apart: its flesh bursts open, blood and viscera spray in all directions, and its internal organs liquefy and ooze to the floor. As the man-thing contorts and expands in impossible directions, great multi-jointed insectoid legs and a sickening array of clawed limbs, oily tentacles, and sucking mouths sprout from its ruined torso and its face ruptures to form an awful split-faced maw of jagged teeth.

QOMOK

Large aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)



Hit Points 312 (25d10 + 125)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 20 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 60 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	14 (+2)	24 (+7)	22 (+6)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +12, Int +11

Skills Acrobatics +7, Deception +8, Persuasion +8, Stealth +7

Damage Vulnerabilities acid, fire, lightning

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, thunder, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, prone, stunned,

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Wisdom (Perception) 14

Languages Elder Thing (cannot speak), telepathy 120 ft. (only with Qomoks)

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Infection. Creatures infected by a qomok must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw every minute. They are cured after 3 successful saves, or if they receive *lesser*

restoration or similar magic. If they fail their save, they are transformed into a qomok in 1d6 minutes.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the qomok fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Shapechanger. The qomok can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Split. When a qomok that is Small or larger is subjected to acid, fire, or lightning damage, it splits into two new qomoks if it has at least 10 hit points. Each new qomok has hit points equal to half the original qomok's, rounded down. New qomoks are one size smaller than the original qomok. Qomoks smaller than Small have only 2 Intelligence and focus solely on self-preservation.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. A qomok makes 3 attacks with its extremities.

Extremity. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target.
Hit: 16 (2d8 + 7) bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing damage.

Feeding Tendril. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d6 + 7) piercing damage. Creatures killed by this attack automatically contracts the qomok's Infection. If the qomok spends a round consuming the remains of the creature killed by the feeding tendril, it gains their full knowledge and memories.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the qomok's choice that is within 120 feet of the qomok and aware of it must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the qomok's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The qomok can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The qomok regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

- **Contaminate (3 actions).** One target creature must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or contract the qomok's Infestation.
- **Extremity.** The qomok makes one extremity attack.

The remote reaches of the universe are home to bizarre phenomena and horrific alien life forms beyond normal comprehension, most of which pale in comparison to the unspeakable and utterly alien horror epitomized by the qomok. Known by many names throughout the universe, but most often as "Things," qomoks are shape-shifting parasitic organisms with the ability to absorb, assimilate, and then perfectly mimic the bodies of other living creatures. A qomok's original form resembles a fleshy mass of oozing viscera, covered with rope-like tendrils and undulating sucker-mouths that slithers and shambles with surprising agility. In this form, a qomok is roughly 12 feet in diameter and weighs 2,000 pounds. However, most qomoks haven't assumed this shape since the first qomok left its distant homeworld billions of years ago, for the creatures are driven by an irresistible drive to absorb and assume their victims' forms.

Extremely paranoid, and with an unrivaled instinct for self-preservation and survival, qomoks prefer to attack lone targets so they do not needlessly endanger themselves. When attacking, a qomok shifts its body asunder in a spectacle of gore and violence, generating various extremities and toothy maws, in an attempt to surprise its prey. It then ensnares its victim with its feeding tendril so it can be

absorbed and assimilated. When a qomok's true nature is exposed, the creature will react depending on its current size, health, and the nature of the threat. Smaller copies of a qomok will usually attempt to flee, whereas a full-sized and healthy qomok will often attack multiple creatures head on in an attempt to quickly overwhelm and neutralize them. However, true to its self-preserving nature, a qomok will almost always prefer to flee if its cover is not completely lost.

Toadhemoth

This enormous, toad-like creature has three eye-stalks atop its warty head and a massive maw full of sword-sized teeth. In place of arms, six huge tentacles whip about menacingly.

TOADHEMOTH

Gargantuan aberration, neutral

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 231 (14d20 + 84)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	11 (+0)	22 (+6)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Damage Immunities cold, lightning

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Wisdom (Perception) 11

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Cannot Swim. Toadhemoths avoid water because they cannot swim. If a toadhemoth enters deep water it automatically becomes incapacitated, sinks, and drowns a number of rounds later equal to twice its Constitution score.

Fragile Physiology. Froghemoths are immune to cold and lightning damage, but if they would take either, they are instead incapacitated for 1 round.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Toadhemoth makes 1 bite and 2 tentacle attacks.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (3d10 + 7) piercing damage.

Tentacle. Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). If a creature is grappled, the toadhemoth may not make further tentacle attacks.

Croak (Recharge 5-6). The toadhemoth emits a great bellowing croak to disable nearby creatures. Creatures must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be stunned for 1 round and deafened for 1d8 rounds. Otherwise they are deafened for 1d4 rounds.

Toadhemoths are a strange, alien offshoot of the common froghemoth. Toadhemoths dwell in deserts and vast arid plains. Their olive-brown hides are hard and warty, and much thicker than a standard froghemoth's. They avoid water, for they cannot swim, and get the moisture they need by eating plant matter and their usual carnivorous diet. Otherwise, they are similar in demeanor and voraciousness to froghemoths. On their homeworld, toadhemoths are 4 feet tall and weigh 50 pounds. However, once introduced to a world inhabited by a variety of edible animal life, the creature's metabolism undergoes an astonishing alteration that causes the toadhemoth to eventually transform into Gargantuan-sized monstrosity. The completely transformed toadhemoth detailed in this adventure is 36 feet tall and weighs 28 tons.

but provides no protection from severe radiation. The suit's self-repairing rubber fabric automatically seals punctures or tears created by physical attacks to the wearer and damage against the suit itself. The suit repairs 2d6 points of damage per round. Once the suit repairs 60 hit points of damage, it can no longer repair itself. A radiation suit has threshold 2 and 20 hit points.

APPENDIX 3: NEW TECHNOLOGY

PHOTON PISTOL

Price 50,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

Proficiency martial; **Dmg** 1d10 fire and 1d10 force; **Critical** 18-20/x2; **Range** 100 ft.;

Capacity 20; **Usage** 1 or 2 charges

A photon pistol emits a devastating beam of searing light infused with highly agitated photons. Photon pistols have two settings—switching between settings is a swift action.

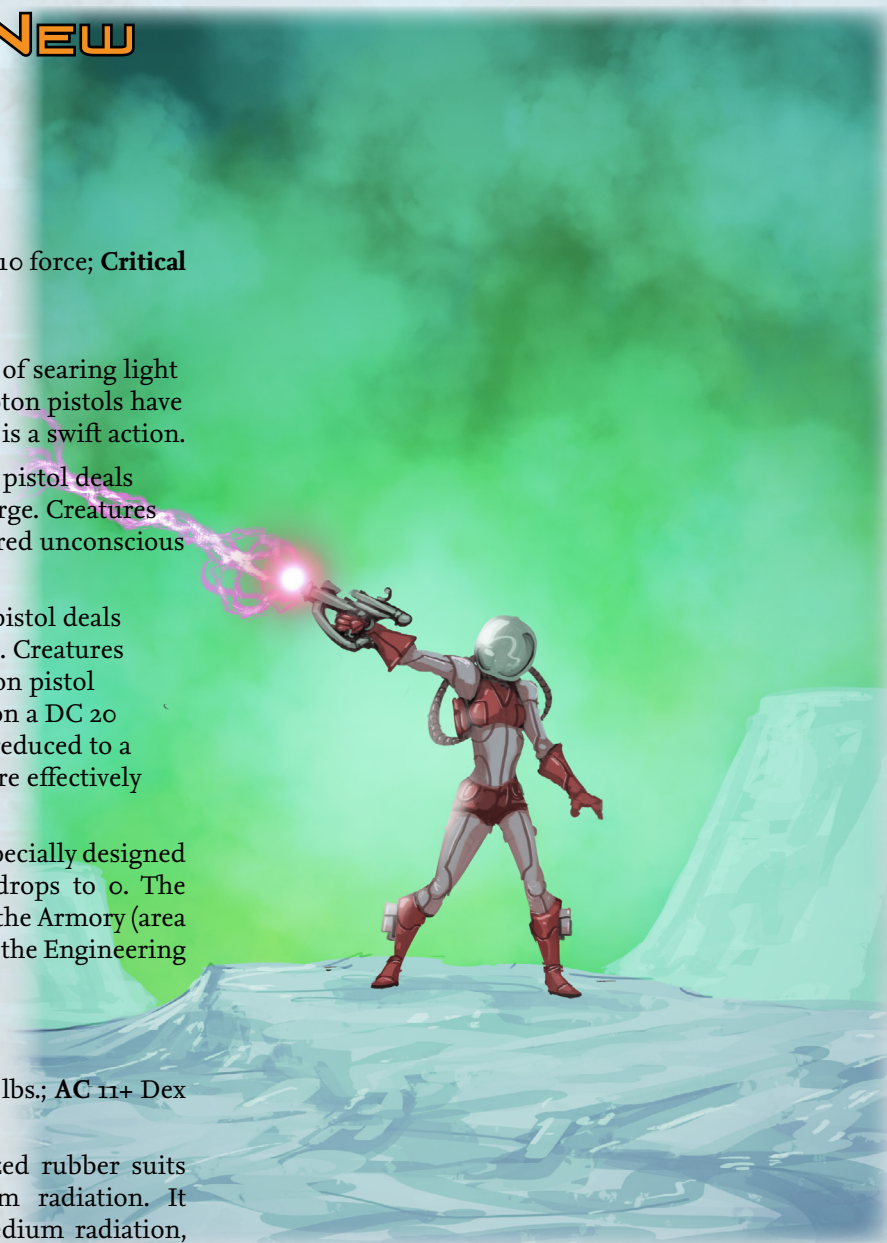
- **Stun:** On this setting, the photon pistol deals force damage only and uses 1 charge. Creatures reduced to 0 hit points are rendered unconscious but stable.
- **Kill:** On this setting, the photon pistol deals full damage and uses two charges. Creatures reduced to 0 hit points by a photon pistol on the kill setting must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be reduced to a puddle of smoldering goo (they are effectively disintegrated).

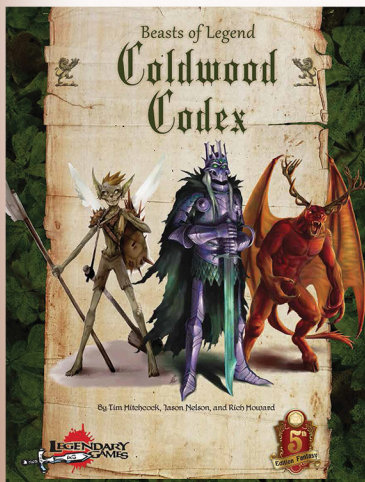
Photon pistols must be recharged at a specially designed recharging station once their Capacity drops to 0. The *Ardent Hope* has two such stations: one in the Armory (area C3) and one in the Tool Closet (area E4) on the Engineering Deck.

RADIATION SUIT

Price 2,000 gp; **Type** medium; **Weight** 10 lbs.; **AC** 11+ Dex modifier (max 2); **Strength** 14

Bulky and uncomfortable, these over-sized rubber suits provide immunity to low and medium radiation. It reduces the effects high radiation to medium radiation,





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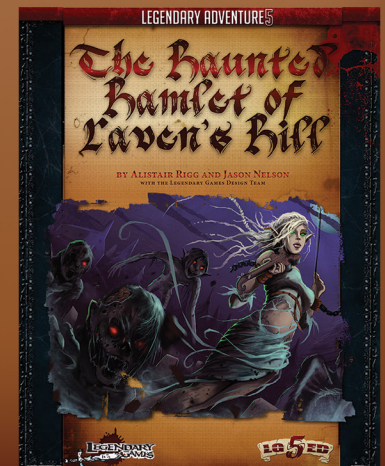
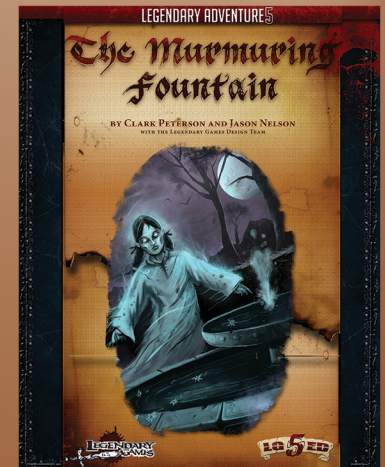
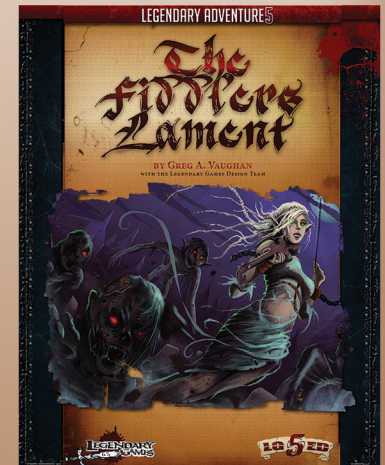
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