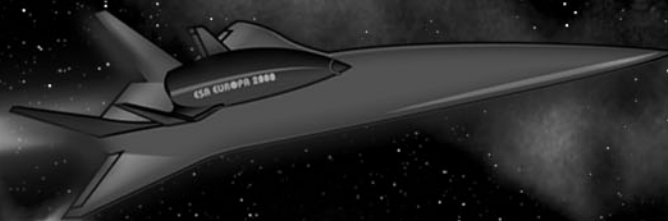




HARDNOVA II

MINISERIES alpha THE VANGUARD



THIS BOOK REQUIRES
HARDNOVA II

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THIS BOOK REQUIRES HARDNOVA II: SPACE OPERA ADVENTURES

Welcome to **HardNova 2 Miniseries Alpha: The Vanguard**. This book contains a collection of adventures for HardNova 2 which tie together to create a complete story, in which the characters wage a continued battle against the ruthless Ruthdii Komar. Also included are pre-generated characters that the players can use and ship schematics for the USU Dagger, plus information on a wide variety of non-player characters and ships.

Because portions of this book make use of material from the HardNova 2 Enhancement Pack, possession of that book is strongly recommended as well.

The five adventures in this story are meant to be played in order, though most are easily adapted to single adventures outside the main story. The player characters must all be members of the newly formed United Sovereign Navy (United Navy), and they should possess a variety of skills as represented in the pre-generated characters in the appendix. If the playing group is smaller than the full crew of the USU Dagger, the pre-generated characters may be used to fill out the remainder of the crew, but should remain background characters, allowing the game to focus primarily on the player characters and their exploits.

THE USU DAGGER

For the length of this campaign, the heroes are assigned to the *USU Dagger*, a small but agile scout stationed aboard the *USU Vanguard*. The ship's crew numbers six officers, including the pilot, two gunners, astronavigator, trooper, and medical officer. The Dagger has hyperspace capability and significant offensive and defensive capacity, and can also accommodate up to five passengers or their equivalent space in cargo.

USU scouts are remarkably versatile vessels. They are designed primarily for special missions involving speed, agility, and firepower. Scout ships can accompany hyperspace-capable ships as escorts, and yet they are small enough to dock in the landing bay of a carrier. They can carry impressive weaponry for their size and still manage to negotiate in an atmosphere, and even land on a planet without requiring a shuttle.

USU DAGGER (STRIKE SCOUT)

+3	+3	+2	1	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	-		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>

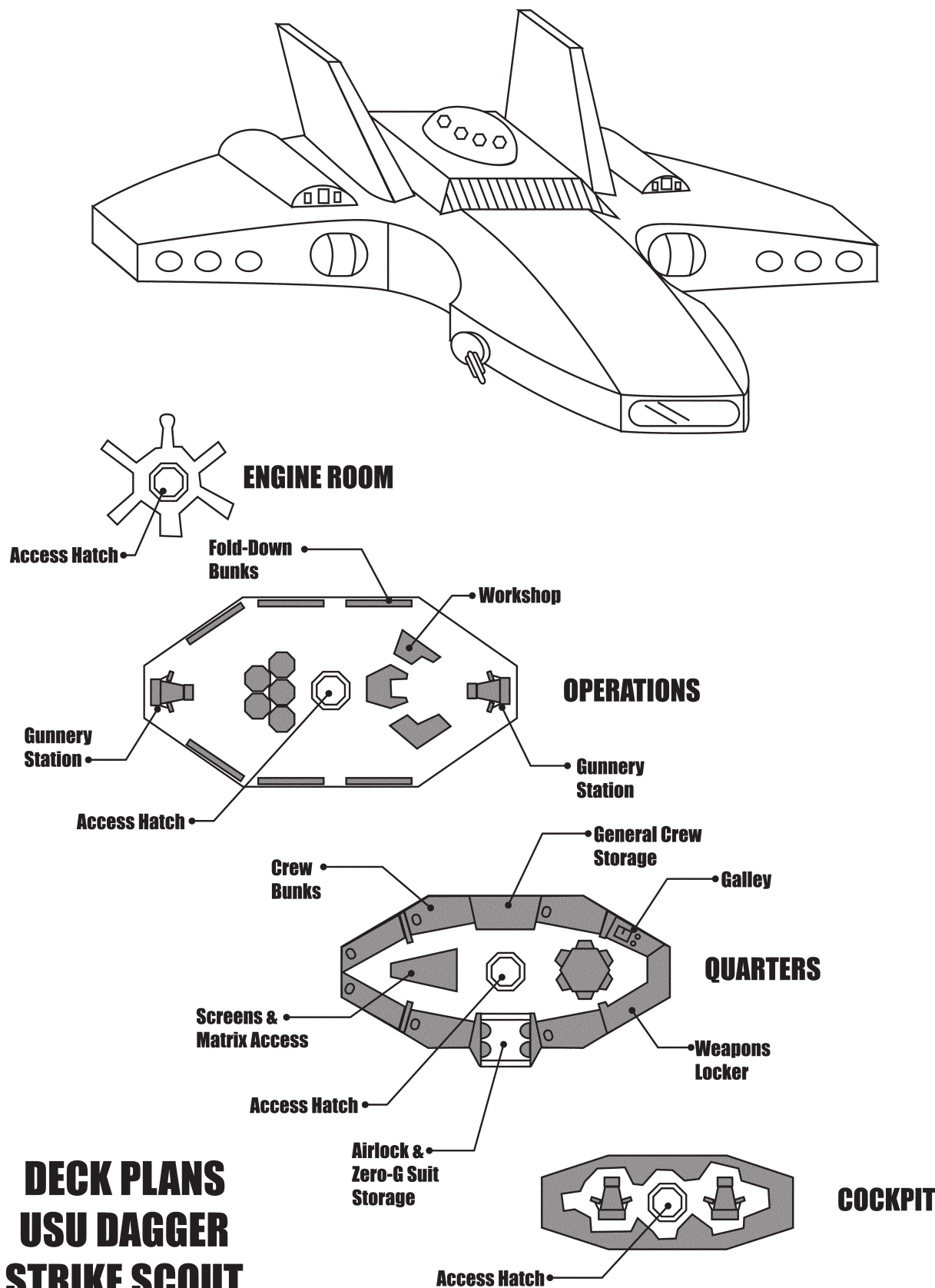
WEAPONS

- 1 laser cannon turret (linked pair)
- 1 hunter-killer missile launcher (forward; 4 missiles)
- 1 ion cannon turret

GIMMICKS

- hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +1)
- ablative hull plating¹

¹ See the *HardNova II Enhancement Pack*.



DECK PLANS USU DAGGER STRIKE SCOUT

SCENARIO ONE: JUMP POINT ALPHA

The Living Frontier has only recently become a contested sector of space, with the Ruthdii Komar carrying out frequent destructive raids on the colonies and ships of the USU member worlds. The hyperspace route between Qern and Digron is crucial for trade, though the Ruthdii Komar have not yet established themselves as a particular threat on that route.

This critical trade route is not destined to stay calm, however. The Ruthdii Komar have discovered a weakness in the hyperspace matrices, and this information combined with the Komar's new ability to create jump portals is about to make the route a battleground. Jump portals are windows to hyperspace which function similarly to stargates, allowing a multitude of craft to traverse hyperspace via an established route. The advantage a portal has over a regular stargate is that the destination coordinates may be reprogrammed from a stationary portal generator located at its origin. The USU has experimented with this technology in the past, but concluded that it was too unstable and dangerous for further development.

Ships travelling under their own power in hyperspace (not using a stargate) between Digron and Qern generally make the trip in two segments. This is due to anomalous fluctuations in hyperspace between those two worlds that makes it both dangerous and difficult to calculate the entire trip. The traditional calculations call for starships to drop out of hyperspace and recalibrate for the second half of the journey in an area of space simply designated **Jump Point Alpha**. The Ruthdii Komar have discovered this pattern, and recently began harassing and destroying merchant ships and transports as they make this brief stop. Several starships have been utterly destroyed and many more lost in space.

In the midst of this turmoil, the digronian ambassador Hogor Fronkual is returning home after a long series of debates in the inner galaxy. The United Navy assigns a carrier, the *USU Vanguard*, to escort Hogor's envoy ship safely to Digron. Two merchant ships, the *Great Cat* and the *Hopeful*, also join the convoy. This small fleet must pass through Jump Point Alpha, and the Vanguard must protect them.

USU VANGUARD (CARRIER)

-4	-4	+4	5	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

10 particle cannon turrets
3 hunter-killer missile launchers (1 forward, 1 aft, 1 turret; 15 missiles each)
5 rocket battery turrets
gravitic mines¹

GIMMICKS

hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +2)
shuttle bay (2 shuttles)
fighter bay (10 T-50 fighters)
remote network
reinforced systems
troop bay
point defenses¹
bot bay¹

¹ See the *HardNova][Enhancement Pack*.

T-50 FIGHTERS

+4	+3	0	1	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

1 linked pair of laser cannons (forward)

DIGRONIAN ENVOY SHIP

-3	-3	+2	3	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

2 laser cannon turrets (linked pairs)

GIMMICKS

hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +2)
passenger quarters
shuttle bay

GREAT CAT (MERCHANT SHIP)

-2	-3	+1	2	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

1 laser cannon turret (linked pair)
1 rocket battery turret

GIMMICKS

hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +3)
cargo bay

HOPEFUL (MERCHANT SHIP)

-3	-2	+1	3	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

2 laser cannon turrets (linked pairs)
2 rocket batteries (1 forward, 1 aft)

GIMMICKS

hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +2)
cargo bay

AMBUSH

The convoy leaves Qern with little or no trouble, but upon arriving at Jump Point Alpha, discover that their trip is not to be peaceful. As the astronavigators aboard the Vanguard and her charges calculate the second leg of the voyage, scanners pick up a strange aberration at long range. The aberration is a jump portal created by the Komar, and before the Vanguard can do much more than send all hands to their stations, a dozen Ruthdii Komar attack scouts materialize from within the portal and make top speed for the small fleet.

RUTHDII KOMAR ASSAULT CRAFT

+4	+4	+2	2	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

2 laser batteries (forward)
2 rocket batteries (1 forward, 1 aft)

GIMMICKS

hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +2)
cloaking device
reinforced systems

The Vanguard has just enough time to scramble fighters and the Dagger before the enemy ships close for combat. The Ruthdii Komar have a very specific goal at this point, and will split into four groups of three vessels each. Each group will assault a separate USU vessel, targeting the engines and hyperspace generator of each ship. Their intent is to cripple the USU ships and retreat back through the portal, which will close behind them as they leave.

The Komar scouts are intent on their task of crippling the USU ships, and will not attempt to engage the USU fighters or scout. They will not leave before their mission is accomplished, and each time a USU ship is stripped of its engines, the Komar attacking that ship break off and join the assault on the Vanguard's engines. As soon as all four ships are stranded, the Komar scouts speed back away to their portal. A few minutes after the scouts disappear into the portal, it disappears.

SITTING DUCKS

The USU ships are in a state of disarray and panic after the Komar attack. Hundreds are dead or wounded, ships are burning, and all four starships are stranded in space. Repairing the hyperspace generators is of the utmost importance, but immediately following the attack, there is no way to force enough organization to begin the repairs.

The Vanguard's commanders are the most organized and effective of the small fleet. They quickly take control, transferring the digronian ambassador to the Vanguard and beginning repairs of the engines. The work is difficult and slow, and the engines will require considerable repair. While the repairs are being organized, the character's commanding officer calls them into a conference aboard the Vanguard.

The commanding officer, Captain Roland Grosse, commands the fighter fleet aboard the Vanguard, and thus the heroes fall under his jurisdiction as well. Once he has the crew assembled, he briefs them on the situation.

The Ruthdii Komar emerged from a jump portal that appeared at the beginning of the fight, then disappeared through it when they retreated. Grosse is certain that the scouts were only sent to delay the small fleet until more powerful reinforcements could arrive, and he is also fairly certain that the Komar will return through the portal. He wants the Dagger to be on patrol when the enemy returns, and rather than engaging the attackers, to fly into the portal as soon as it opens. Once the Dagger emerges on the other side, the heroes are to find the source of the portal and destroy it using time-delay explosives, then return via the portal and assist in the defense of the Vanguard.

DESPERATE MISSION

The little fleet does not have long to wait. The Dagger has only been on patrol for a few hours when the portal opens again, this time closer to the USU convoy. The Komar forces now consist of a Komar battlecruiser, frigate, and the remaining scouts from the first attack. The Dagger can elude them easily and enter the portal just as the battle is joined.

RUTHDII KOMAR BATTLECRUISER

SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	MEC	I	STR
-3	-2	+2	4	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

- 9 laser batteries (1 forward, 8 turrets)
- 3 particle cannon turrets
- 1 hunter-killer missile launcher (forward; 25 missiles)

GIMMICKS

- hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +2)
- fighter bay
- remote network
- troop bay

RUTHDII KOMAR FRIGATE

SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	MEC	I	STR
-1	-1	+2	2	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

- 3 laser battery turrets
- 1 particle cannon (forward)
- 2 rocket battery turrets

GIMMICKS

- hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +3)
- troop bay

RUTHDII KOMAR FIGHTER

SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	MEC	I	STR
+4	+4	0	1	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

- 1 linked pair of laser cannons (forward)

The trip through the portal is quite disorienting. Space and time seem to twist, and every character is subjected to powerful hallucinations. The trip is remarkably quick, however, and before the heroes can go completely mad, they emerge on the edge of an asteroid belt. Their location is not immediately obvious, though astronavigation and the ship's computers can determine the location if given time.

Nothing appears on scanners immediately—the Ruthdii Komar portal generator is hidden within the asteroid field, and all Komar fighting vessels have been sent through to attack the convoy. The Dagger is momentarily alone.

The heroes can detect the portal generator with a challenging scanning task. If they are unable to spot the generator on their first try, they may try again every twenty minutes. The generator is built into an asteroid at the edge of the field, and once detected, the characters should be able to pilot their way through the asteroids to a point near enough the generator base to disembark and board the asteroid.

The only obvious sign identifying the presence of the generator is a domed array mounted on the outside of the asteroid. The dome protects the generator, making it impossible to destroy the generator from the outside. They will have to find one of the metal hatches that leads into the interior of the asteroid and plant their bombs inside the base (see the Portal Generator Map).

PORTAL GENERATOR

Note: The asteroid is far too small to have any gravity, and the Komar who stay within make no attempt to create a breathable environment inside. The heroes will have to complete this mission in space suits, and will have the disadvantage of operating in zero-g (see page 23 of the core rules).

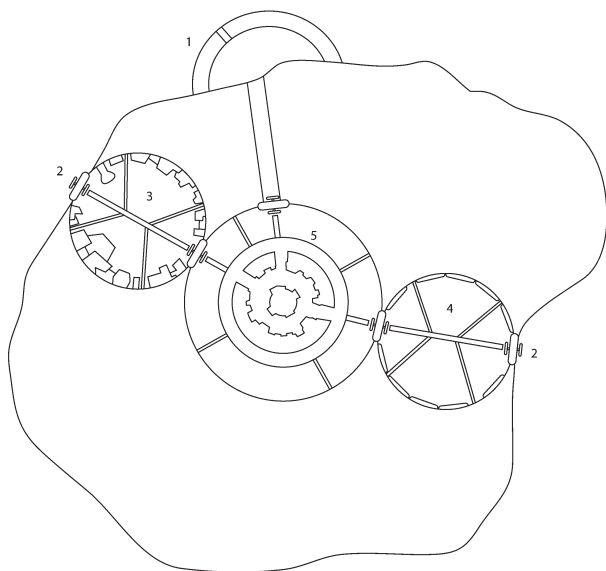
1 Exterior Generator Dome. This heavily shielded dome is built to protect the generator's exterior machinery from damage caused by stray weapons fire or collisions with other asteroids. The shielding is thick enough to ignore all but the most powerful ship weapons, and will thoroughly ignore the characters' explosive charges.

2 Exterior Hatches. These metal hatches are easily spotted if the characters search the area near the dome. They are not locked and open freely, allowing access to the interior of the generator base.

3 Storage Room. A small circular room holds a variety of equipment needed for maintaining and repairing the generator. All equipment is stowed securely against the walls, and a metal pole through the center of the room allows navigation in zero-g. The Komar are aware of the heroes and are awaiting their intrusion, so there are three Komar guards armed with EP rifles waiting inside when the hatch is opened. If the heroes enter from both hatches at once, only one guard is here, as the others are in area 4.

4 Sleeping Quarters. The Komar assigned to the generator base rest in this room. Seven sleeping chambers are built into the walls. A metal pole through the center of the room allows navigation in zero-g. The Komar are aware of the characters and are awaiting their intrusion, so there will be three Komar guards armed with EP rifles waiting inside when the hatch is opened. If the characters enter from both hatches at once, only two guards are here, as the other is in area 3.

5 Generator Control Room. This large room holds the equipment needed to run the portal generator, as well as the enormous power supply that provides it power. A large metal platform is supported in the middle of the room by three metal poles, and control panels and instruments are mounted on both sides of the platform. This is the most logical place to plant the explosives, though the heroes will have to defeat the enemies in the room before they can plant their bombs. Any guards who escape the heroes are present, as well as four operators busily attending to the portal's fluctuating power output. All of the Ruthdii Komar present will attempt to fight the characters, using EP rifles and pistols.



Note: Any shots fired by the characters that miss the Komar have a chance of striking sensitive equipment. If any control panel or instrument is hit by a weapon with a damage rating of 4 or greater, it is badly damaged and the portal collapses. The Komar can repair the damage easily, however, and the characters will still need to plant their bombs for a more permanent effect.

RUTHDII KOMAR GUARD

4	3	1	2	1
FITNESS	AWARENESS	CREATIVITY	REASONING	INFLUENCE

FAT	I	INJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

SKILLS

brawling 4, melee 3, firearms 4, zero-g 3, composure 4

GIMMICKS

heightened touch, heightened hearing, toughness (2), reduced stamina

EQUIPMENT

ep rifle

RUTHDII KOMAR OPERATOR

2	2	1	3	1
FITNESS	AWARENESS	CREATIVITY	REASONING	INFLUENCE

FAT	I	INJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

SKILLS

melee 1, firearms 2, zero-g 2, computers 4, composure 2

GIMMICKS

heightened touch, heightened hearing, toughness (2), reduced stamina

EQUIPMENT

ep pistol

ESCAPE

Once the characters defeat the Ruthdii Komar operators and guards, and plant their bombs, they only need to return to their fleet. If the portal has been disabled, however, their return flight will be canceled, and they will have to determine their location and plot a hyperspace route for Digron. It will be nearly impossible to plot a course which will return the Dagger to Jump Point Alpha.

If the portal is still operating, the heroes can head for their escape. Just as they get the Dagger close to the portal, however, the remains of the Ruthdii Komar assault force emerge from the portal with their tails between their legs. The USU forces have soundly defeated them while the heroes sabotaged the portal generator, but they are still strong enough to deal with a single scout ship. The ships emerging from the portal include the battlecruiser (with significant damage), four fighters, and two scouts. They block the path to the portal, and the characters must flee if they wish to avoid certain death.

The only hope for escape lies in computing hyperspace coordinates to Digron, but calculating these requires considerable time. The heroes may run and hope to avoid the fighters and scouts pursuing them, or they may take shelter in the asteroid field to buy time. A direct assault is suicide, as the battlecruiser will hammer them with rockets and missiles before it ever allows them to approach the portal.

The heroes can dodge between asteroids and hide deep enough to evade the Ruthdii Komar for a few hours, but the Komar will eventually just start blasting asteroids to flush out the Dagger. In the meantime, the bombs planted at the generator will explode, destroying the portal. If the characters take too long to calculate their coordinates, the battlecruiser will slowly approach the asteroid belt, employing its heavy weapons to harass the Dagger.

Assuming the heroes are able to escape the Ruthdii Komar and return to Digron, they can meet back up with the Vanguard. The Vanguard and its convoy won the battle at Jump Point Alpha, but the cost was high—both merchant ships were completely destroyed, the envoy ship was heavily damaged and has been condemned, and the Vanguard will be undergoing repairs for several months. If the portal was closed before the Komar fleet could retreat, the fight went even worse—the envoy ship was also destroyed, and the loss of life aboard the Vanguard was very high. Of course, the Komar were completely destroyed, so there are those aboard the naval vessel who will swear that the sacrifice was worth the reward.

By destroying the portal, the characters allowed the Vanguard enough time to repair its engines after the bitter battle without fear of a return of the Ruthdii Komar attackers. The characters are true heroes, and they are much admired aboard the carrier Vanguard. Not only does the United Navy appreciate their work, but Hogor Fronkual is also very grateful. He offers an honorable commission in the Digronian Planetary Guard, along with a sizeable financial reward. The heroes will be treated with great respect while stationed at Digron—but they should probably not get too comfortable, as they will be shipping out again soon.

HYPERSPACE ON THE FLY

The following rules can be used when an astronavigator is attempting to calculate a non-charted hyperspace route to a known world without taking the required time and rechecking figures. Such a situation might occur, for example, when the ship in question is under heavy fire and running for its life.

Calculating coordinates typically requires eight hours and a routine task. Success indicates that the jump succeeds as planned. Trimming the time increases the difficulty, as noted below.

Time Spent	Difficulty
8 hours	routine (0)
4 hours	complex (2)
2 hours	challenging (4)
1 hour	impossible (6)

Failure on this roll indicates that the astronavigator has not been able to chart the course. A calamity indicates that the astronavigator has generated incorrect coordinates, but believes them to be correct—entering hyperspace with these coordinates will send the ship to a random location, as determined by the gamemaster.

Another complication that can arise when calculating hyperspace coordinates is that the astronavigator must know his location to begin calculations. Ordinarily, this is not a serious factor, but on occasion, a ship may find itself lost. Determining location is a routine task for an astronavigator requiring fifteen minutes of calculations, assuming that the ship is near a relatively well-known sector of space. If the ship is far away from charted courses that the ship's astronavigational computers could easily recognize, the time is doubled and the difficulty becomes complex. Failure on this roll indicates that the navigator must invest another fifteen minutes, while a calamity indicates that the navigator believes his coordinates to be correct. This has the same effect as incorrect hyperspace coordinates.

SCENARIO TWO: RETURN TO SERVICE

The heroes are able to enjoy their newfound fame for only a short time before new orders are issued for the Vanguard. The carrier is to return to Jump Point Alpha with a small fleet of other vessels and conduct patrols for Ruthdii Komar. The enemy cannot be allowed to disrupt the trade route between Digron and Qern, and it is up to the Vanguard and her crew to keep the area free of danger.

The Vanguard is joined by a small fleet of other warships. The *USU Promise* is a frigate, with considerable maneuverability and firepower. The *USU Elemental* is a powerful destroyer, and the *USU Hero's Call* is a cruiser. The Dagger will be the only scout ship in the area, and will be charged with frequent patrols at the edge of the jump point. The characters will spend their time between assignments on the Vanguard, relaxing while their ship is refitted for another tour.

USU PROMISE (FRIGATE)

+1	+2	+2	3	3		MEC	I	STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS			-	
						+1DIFF		
						+2DIFF		
						+3DIFF		
						+4DIFF		

WEAPONS

- 3 rocket battery turrets
- 2 hunter-killer missile launcher turrets (5 missiles each)
- 2 particle cannons (1 forward, 1 aft)

GIMMICKS

- hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +2)
- shuttle bay (1 shuttle)
- remote network
- reinforced systems
- bot bay¹

¹ See the *HardNova][Enhancement Pack*.

USU ELEMENTAL (DESTROYER)

-3	-3	+3	4	3		MEC	I	STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS			-	
						+1DIFF		
						+2DIFF		
						+3DIFF		
						+4DIFF		

WEAPONS

- 3 rocket battery turrets
- 6 hunter-killer missile launchers (1 forward, 1 aft, 1 port, 1 starboard, 2 turrets; 10 missiles each)
- 10 laser battery turrets

GIMMICKS

- hyperspace generator (supralight speed: 0)
- shuttle bay (1 shuttle)
- reinforced systems

USU HERO'S CALL (CRUISER)

-2	+1	+4	4	4		MEC	I	STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS			-	
						+1DIFF		
						+2DIFF		
						+3DIFF		
						+4DIFF		

WEAPONS

- 1 rocket battery turret
- 6 laser turrets (linked pairs)
- 4 particle cannons (1 forward, 1 aft, 1 port, 1 starboard)

GIMMICKS

- hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +2)
- shuttle bay
- assault bay
- reinforced systems

HOT LZ

Upon arrival at Jump Point Alpha, the fleet will quickly see that the Ruthdii Komar have not wasted their time. The enemy has stationed a battlecruiser with fighter capability in the area, and has been harassing travel through the area for several weeks. The battlecruiser is no match for the USU fleet, but will launch its scouts and fighters to protect its retreat. The Komar are nothing if not pragmatic—the battlecruiser will immediately flee, leaving all the fighter pilots and scouts to near certain death.

This battle ought to be very one-sided. The Vanguard hosts more fighters than the Komar battlecruiser can launch, and while the Komar have more scouts, they are very underpowered compared to any of the USU command ships. The Komar battlecruiser launches a total of fifteen fighters and four scouts before scurrying away. The characters will have to ignore the fighters and scouts if they wish to pursue the battlecruiser, and will probably not meet with much luck, since the Komar fighters will concentrate their fire on any ship attempting to pursue the larger prey. Unless the USU forces are particularly lucky, the Komar battlecruiser will escape into hyperspace. The characters, and many of the crew members aboard the Vanguard, will note that the Komar do not use a jump portal this time.

RUTHDII KOMAR SCOUT

+4	+3	+1	1	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC	I	STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

- 1 ion cannon turret
- 1 rocket battery (forward)

GIMMICKS

- hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +2)

The Komar scouts will only attempt to escape after the battlecruiser has entered hyperspace. They will then make a run for safety, attempting to get clear of the battle in order to make their own jump into hyperspace. The fighters will oppose the fleet to the finish—with no hyperspace generators, they have no hope of survival. They will pilot their craft into the larger ships, fire every weapon, and otherwise fight with total abandon.

Once this battle is won and the Komar are temporarily ejected, the USU forces can organize and deploy. The characters will have just enough rest to get the Dagger repaired before they are sent out to begin the first of their regular patrols.

RUTHDII KOMAR BATTLECRUISER

-3	-2	+2	4	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC	I	STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

- 9 laser batteries (1 forward, 8 turrets)
- 3 particle cannon turrets
- 1 hunter-killer missile launcher (forward; 25 missiles)

GIMMICKS

- hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +2)
- fighter bay
- remote network
- troop bay

RUTHDII KOMAR FIGHTER

+4	+4	0	1	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC	I	STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

- 1 linked pair of laser cannons (forward)

BOARDING PARTY

The Dagger's patrols consist of long runs through largely empty space. The scout is to run the borders of Jump Point Alpha, which is a considerably huge section of space. They are able to communicate with the Vanguard via their comm systems, but cannot hope to have support in anything resembling a timely manner. If the characters encounter a situation they believe is within their capability, they are to do their best to resolve the encounter. If they are outmanned or outgunned, their orders are to communicate the nature of the problem to the Vanguard and make haste for the command vessels.

The first few patrols are largely uneventful. The gamemaster is free to throw in some short encounters with smuggling craft or errant merchants, or even the odd pirate lurking in the distance from Jump Point Alpha. However, it is not until the characters have begun to get used to their patrol that they run into the Komar again.

The Ruthdii Komar send a small cutter through a jump portal to hunt merchants or other vessels at the edges of the hyperspace point. The cutter cannot approach the larger vessels, as it needs to stay out of scanner range. The Komar decide to target the Gremlin, a cargo transport whose crew has slightly miscalculated their hyperspace coordinates, landing

them at the very edge of Jump Point Alpha. Thankfully for the crew of the cargo ship, the Komar are not yet aware of the Dagger's patrols, and the Dagger is in range to assist the cargo vessel when the Komar strike.

The heroes receive a distress call from the Gremlin, requesting immediate assistance. The Gremlin's crew has never seen a Komar vessel, and report that they are under attack from pirates. The Dagger can close on the location within minutes, but the distress call is shut off just as the characters find the ship on their scanners.

Scanners will show two vessels—the Gremlin and the Ruthdii Komar cutter. The two ships are very close, firing short bursts at each other. Both are hopelessly under-gunned, and the skirmish could last hours before either ship is hurt badly. The cutter is incredibly fast, and as soon as the characters fire a few shots at the Komar ship, it leaps away from the fight. The characters can chase, if they want, but just as they begin their pursuit, scanners report a third vessel in the conflict. A Komar launch has attached itself to the hull of the Gremlin, and unless the Gremlin's crew supports some serious firepower, the cargo ship has probably been boarded by the Komar.

The heroes will be forced to decide between chasing the cutter and rescuing the Gremlin. The cutter could be easily destroyed as long as the Dagger can pull into range, but by the time they return from pursuing the Komar ship, the Gremlin's crew will almost certainly be dead.

If the heroes decide to hunt down the cutter, the Komar ship leads them on a merry chase. The cutter is extraordinarily fast, making up in speed what it lacks in firepower. The chase becomes a contest between the pilots of each ship (a contested piloting task). If the cutter's pilot wins the contested task, the ship pulls away long enough to enter hyperspace. If the Dagger's pilot wins, the characters can get close enough to destroy the cutter easily. Either way, when they return to the Gremlin, it has been destroyed by the Komar boarding party. The Komar boarders set explosives throughout the vessel when they realized that they were stranded, then blew themselves up with the Gremlin's crew.

If the characters elect to board the Gremlin, the cutter escapes easily. The launch is grappled to the Gremlin at a hatch on the port side of the Gremlin, leaving the starboard hatch available for the heroes. There are four civilian survivors aboard the Gremlin, and ten Ruthdii Komar shock troopers hunting them. The following key provides information to accompany the deck maps of the Gremlin.

THE GREMLIN: DECK INFORMATION

Note: A ladder leads directly from the bridge to the engine room, with a hatch wide enough to support two people, one on each side of the ladder. Since the ship is currently without gravity, this ladder is the only way a person unskilled in zero-g movement can negotiate between the floors.

Bridge

The bridge contains seats for the pilot, co-pilot, navigator, and scanner operator. The seats recline fully to allow those seated in the bridge to brace for impact or powerful acceleration.

The bridge is currently empty, as the Ruthdii Komar have already searched it and determined that no crew members are present.

Operations Deck

The operations deck contains three separate stations. The first is the two-seat gunnery station, where gunners are able to man the two laser turrets that make up the ship's only offensive capability.

The second station is a collection of tables, clamps, and tool lockers. This workstation is used by the crew to work on anything portable that needs fixing. The stool can be slid around along the floor in a series of tracks that prevent it from flying loose in a zero-g environment.

RUTHDII KOMAR CUTTER

+2	+1	+1	2	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS		<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

3 laser cannon turrets

GIMMICKS

hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +3)
shuttle bay

GREMLIN (CARGO TRANSPORT)

+0	-1	0	3	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS		<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

2 laser cannon turrets (linked pairs)

GIMMICKS

hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +1)
cargo bay

The third station is a powerful computer bank, which links with all other electronics aboard the ship, allowing anyone sitting at the array to obtain instant damage reports. It also provides a convenient workstation for anyone requiring a computer. A vast array of entertainment devices are also built into this station.

The operations deck is empty, but two Ruthdii Komar are returning from the bridge when the characters enter this area. They open fire immediately and attempt to retreat to the bridge to barricade themselves inside.

Crew Deck

This deck is the main living area for the crew, and includes a small sick bay, several cots behind a thick curtain (attached to the floor and ceiling on runners), the table where the crew takes meals, and a shower and toilet.

This deck is flanked by the two airlocks that allow the crew to leave and enter the ship. Two space suits and small firearms are stored in lockers next to each airlock, though at the time, the guns have been removed.

The characters will be entering the ship from the starboard side of the Gremlin, and the airlock across the room is gaping open. The hatch leading outside is also open, but the Ruthdii Komar landing craft is attached directly to the port, preventing a loss of atmosphere inside the ship.

The crew deck shows evidence of a fierce fight. Furniture is damaged, debris and spent shell casings float through the air, and two bodies hang suspended in midair. One body is a human, with a scorch mark on his chest from the Komar energy weapons. The other body is one of the Komar boarders, with multiple gunshot wounds oozing blood into the air.

A rear guard of two Ruthdii Komar shock troopers is stationed here to make sure the survivors of the Gremlin do not escape to the airlocks. The noise caused by the characters' docking, and their subsequent decompression inside the airlock, alerts the troopers to the invading forces. They are hidden in the sick bay and waiting for the opportunity to attack by ambush. While they realize that their cause is desperate, probably even suicidal, they are determined to inflict as much damage to the rescuers as possible, if only to increase the chances of success for their mission.

Cargo Hold

This large container takes up nearly a third of the length of the ship. The cargo hold is attached to the spine of the ship, and will be detached once the Gremlin reaches her destination. The ladder that passes through the hold can be sheathed in air-tight metal, preventing the loss of atmosphere when a hold is not attached. The sheath is currently withdrawn, however, since the hold is airtight.

The hold is full of hexagonal barrels containing Digronian spices and preservatives. The contents of these barrels will be next to valueless to anyone but a merchant. A small corner of the hold has been equipped with an exercise machine bolted to the wall.

When the heroes arrive, the cargo hold is serving as the last stand for most of the Gremlin's surviving crew. They are not expecting help, but will certainly be delighted to have it. There are five Ruthdii Komar shock troopers firing on the three surviving crew members, and the crew is returning fire as vigorously as they can.

The firefight has caused an incredible amount of confusion in the hold. The barrels that were securely fastened to the interior walls of the hold have been blasted free, and several dozen barrels drift through the air or ricochet off the walls. The crew members are pinned behind a rapidly diminishing wall made of the still fastened crates. The Komar, on the other hand, are adept at zero-g maneuvers, effortlessly moving about the room, using any floating barrels as waypoints for their sinuous leaps.

When the characters arrive, they are unnoticed for a single turn. The spices and preservatives have spilled out of several containers, and they form a twisting cloud that blocks vision in many places. The characters may take advantage of this cloud as it drifts past the entrance to the hold, and will have the advantage of surprise when they engage the enemy.

Once the heroes have rescued the survivors and slain the shock troopers, they hear gunfire from the engine room.

Engine Room

The computers and control panels in this cramped room allow the ship's engineer to study and manage the enormous engines that provide the power needed to enter hyperspace. Narrow maintenance tunnels snake through the engines, so the engineer can maintain and repair his ship.

The engineer was in the engine room when the Komar attacked, and took refuge in the maintenance tunnels when the captain informed the ship of their impending boarding action. He was discovered by a single Komar trooper, and the two have been exchanging fire while they creep around inside the narrow, twisted tunnels. So far the only real damage has been done to the engines, as neither has been able to get a clear shot at the other.

The last Ruthdii Komar is not expecting the heroes, and the noise of the engine room has drowned out the battle in the cargo hold. The characters can enter the maintenance tunnels and pursue the Komar, or wait until it emerges on its own. Unfortunately, if it does emerge on its own accord, it is because the trooper has managed to slay the engineer.

Once the Komar are repelled or killed, the Gremlin may continue on its way to Digron with its somewhat diminished

cargo. Captain Greebok will be thoroughly appreciative, offering each of his rescuers a small gold stone as a symbol of his gratitude. If Greebok is slain in the final battle, a member of his crew will give each rescuer a smaller stone. These stones are ceremonial for the digrons, but are worth approximately a week's pay (or a day's pay for the smaller stones) if sold on a civilized world.

CAPTAIN GREEBOK

GREMLIN CAPTAIN/PILOT (DIGRONIAN)

2	2	1	3	4
FITNESS	AWARENESS	CREATIVITY	REASONING	INFLUENCE

SKILLS

brawling 2, melee 2, firearms 3, zero-g 3, piloting (starships) 3, commodities 4

GIMMICKS

musclebound, night vision, claws

EQUIPMENT

autothrower

FAT	I	INJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

TISHUMI

MERCHANT ON THE GREMLIN (MIGADO)

1	2	3	3	3
FITNESS	AWARENESS	CREATIVITY	REASONING	INFLUENCE

SKILLS

firearms 2, zero-g 2, commodities 4, negotiation 3, composure 2

GIMMICKS

elite, reduced stamina, clumsy, constitution, toughness (1), psychokinesis

EQUIPMENT

light blaster, bioframe

FAT	I	INJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

BRIGHTON

GREMLIN ASTRONAVIGATOR (X-AN)

4	2	1	4	1
FITNESS	AWARENESS	CREATIVITY	REASONING	INFLUENCE

SKILLS

athletics 3, brawling 2, melee 4, firearms 4, zero-g 4, scanning 3, astronavigation 3, computer 3, composure 5

GIMMICKS

toughness (3), logic, pain tolerance, microscanners, inexhaustible energy, electrical vulnerability, clumsy

EQUIPMENT

light blaster

FAT	I	INJ
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<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

JERRY KOWASKI

GREMLIN ENGINEER (HUMAN)

2	2	3	2	2
FITNESS	AWARENESS	CREATIVITY	REASONING	INFLUENCE

SKILLS

brawling 2, firearms 2, zero-g 3, engineering 3, advanced engineering 4, computers 4, composure 2

GIMMICKS

none

EQUIPMENT

none

FAT	I	INJ
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<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

RUTHDII KOMAR SHOCK TROOPER

4	3	1	3	1
FITNESS	AWARENESS	CREATIVITY	REASONING	INFLUENCE

SKILLS

athletics 3, brawling 3, melee 4, firearms 5, zero-g 4, composure 5

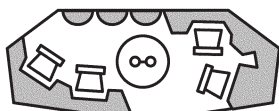
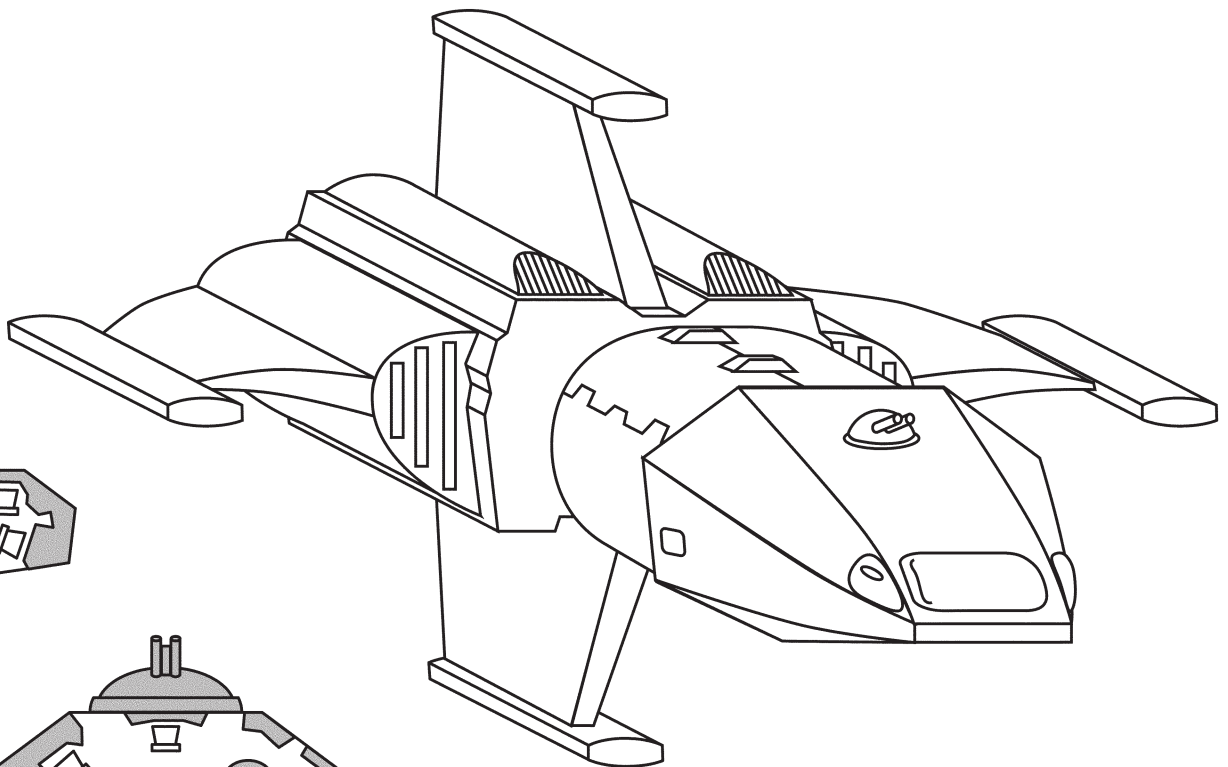
GIMMICKS

heightened touch, heightened hearing, toughness (2), reduced stamina

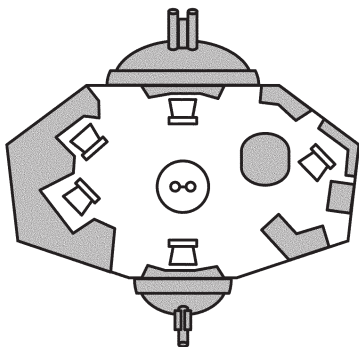
EQUIPMENT

ep rifle

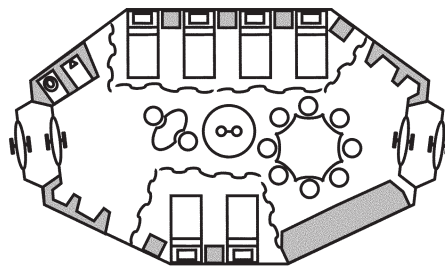
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<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>



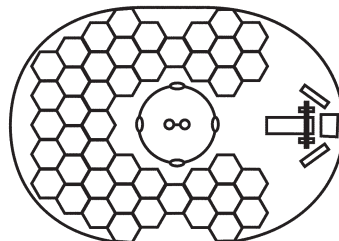
BRIDGE



OPERATIONS DECK



CREW DECK



CARGO HOLD

SCENARIO THREE: TOUR OF DUTY

The heroes are not going to be allowed to settle into a routine. Their regular patrol route loops around the edges of Jump Point Alpha, and it seems there is always something happening. This chapter provides three scenarios to keep the patrols interesting, though there is no reason the gamemaster must decide to use them all.

BUSHWHACKED

The characters are at the edges of their patrol route when the scanners pick up a Ruthdii Komar scout within a few minutes travel distance. Triumphs (or near-triumphs) on scanner tasks will reveal that the Komar scout has a dangerous number of systems offline, a situation that points to a badly damaged ship. It should be easy for the characters to close on the Komar scout's position.

The scout is cruising slowly near an unnamed dead planet, and from the state of the ship's engines, will most likely not be able to escape the gravity well of the planet. However, as soon as the heroes are in weapons range, the scout's systems begin to come on line, and it turns to face its attackers. To make matters worse, two more scout ships emerge from their hiding place behind the star, and they are not handicapped at all. The crew of the *Dagger* will be hard pressed to escape this lethal ambush, unless precautions have been taken to avoid such a scenario (such as charting a short hyperspace jump across the system).

The scout ships will waste no time in closing the trap and attempting to obliterate their prey. However, just as the situation begins to look dire (and this should not take long), a fourth vessel enters the fray. A strangely modified freighter blinks into existence nearby when its hunter-killer missiles disable the cloaking device that has kept it hidden during the ambush. The ship neither sends or answers any hails. It simply even up the fight and helps the characters pound the Ruthdii Komar vessels into submission.

Once the threat is past and the *Dagger* is free to return to the *Vanguard* for repairs, the mysterious ship once again turns on its cloaking device and departs, still with never a word. If the

heroes pursue the mystery ship, it easily outpaces them. If they fire on the ship, the vessel returns fire as it flees, but will not slow to engage them.

THE STORY OF THE AVENGER

Not too long ago, in an area not far from Jump Point Alpha, Malcole Grund was a relatively successful freighter pilot. He carried thoroughly banal cargoes between planets in his uncle's ship, the *Blue Star Shining*. The business was fairly profitable, but it kept Malcole very busy. When he finally married his navigator, the two were quite happy—until the day the Ruthdii Komar destroyed his life.

A Ruthdii Komar cutter attacked the *Blue Star Shining* when Malcole dropped out of hyperspace on a long haul across the stars. The Komar cutter easily disabled Malcole's ship and boarded. Malcole and his bride were the only crew of the freighter, and were easily captured by the Ruthdii Komar. They were hauled back to the command ship, where they were both subjected to terrible tortures and experiments. The brutal treatment killed Malcole's wife, and broke his mind.

Malcole flew into a dark rage when he saw his wife die a horrible death right in front of him. He does not remember escaping from the command ship, nor does he remember stealing back the *Blue Star Rising*. He does have vague recollections of the dozens of Ruthdii Komar he killed on his way off the ship. The first clear memory after his escape was of lying, covered in the slimy blood of the Komar (and quite a bit of his own) on the deck of the *Blue Star Shining's* bridge.

The event so scarred Malcole that he has not been able to speak since—and even if he could, he has nothing to say. He sold every asset he had accumulated during his career and devoted everything to refitting the *Blue Star Shining*. In the end, his ship was one of the most formidable fighting ships in the galaxy. Part of the reason that the vessel is so powerful is that no space is wasted on crew quarters, recreation areas, or cargo space. In fact, Malcole built himself into the ship, creating life support and feedback systems that allow him to link directly to his vessel and never leave. Finally, Malcole renamed his vessel the *Avenger*.

Malcole's body is a mass of wires and cybernetic implants. In fact, Malcole no longer even considers himself an individual—he is just one of the integral systems of the Avenger. His ship feeds him nutrients, and he controls the ship as if it were part of himself. This makes the Avenger incredibly nimble, fantastically powerful, and thoroughly deadly.

Since the day that the last cable was attached to Malcole, he has thought only of avenging his dead wife. The Avenger hunts through the space lanes, attempting to single-handedly destroy the entire Ruthdii Komar race.

THE AVENGER

+4	+5	+5	2	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC	I	STR
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

3 laser cannon turrets (linked pairs)

KENDALL**BARRISTER ASSISTANT SCIENTIST (TARKOSIAN)**

3	2	2	3	2	FAT	I	INJ
					<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

FITNESS AWARENESS CREATIVITY REASONING INFLUENCE

SKILLS

melee 1, firearms 2, general knowledge 3, sciences 2, composure 6

GIMMICKS

constitution, sure-footed, musclebound, electrical vulnerability, discrimination

EQUIPMENT

blaster carbine

HOD'GK**BARRISTER MECHANIC/ENGINEER (TARKOSIAN)**

3	3	1	2	1	FAT	I	INJ
					<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

FITNESS AWARENESS CREATIVITY REASONING INFLUENCE

SKILLS

athletics 2, firearms 3, pilot (ground) 2, advanced engineering 3, composure 2

GIMMICKS

compound vision, toughness (1), heightened touch, heightened hearing

EQUIPMENT

light blaster

JORDAN**BARRISTER SECURITY OFFICER (HUMAN)**

3	2	2	2	3	FAT	I	INJ
					<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

FITNESS AWARENESS CREATIVITY REASONING INFLUENCE

SKILLS

athletics 4, brawling 3, melee 3, firearms 4, composure 5

GIMMICKS

none

EQUIPMENT

autothrower

The trip back is not as uneventful as the approach. A strike team of Ruthdii Komar set down on the planet an hour before the characters arrived. They have arranged an ambush in the canyon, firing from ledges in the narrow canyon, hoping to kill the heroes and capture the Barrister's survivors.

Assuming the characters escape the ambush and return to the Dagger with their survivors, they are still not out of the woods. Just as the ship lifts off, the Ruthdii Komar strike scout emerges from the thick clouds to harass the USU vessel. The Komar scout uses the dense cloud cover to dodge in and out, striking and then fading away. The Komar know that they cannot hope to defeat the Dagger in a straight-up fight, but they would love to be able to cause enough damage to ground the ship on the fiery planet below. The Dagger's best bet is to head out of the atmosphere, where the Komar's tactics are useless.

If the characters reach orbit and continue to monitor DS-r418 to spot the Komar ship as it leaves orbit, they are disappointed. The Komar ship is overconfident in its abilities to stay hidden in the clouds, and is struck by an erupting volcano. The Dagger's scanners never even spot the Komar scout as it plummets to the surface, killing everyone aboard.

RUTHDII KOMAR STRIKE SCOUT

+4	+3	+1	1	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC	I	STR
					<input type="checkbox"/>	-		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF		<input type="checkbox"/>

SPEED HANDLING SENSORS FRAME SHIELDS

WEAPONS1 ion cannon turret
1 rocket battery (forward)**GIMMICKS**

hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +2)

GHOST SHIP

The Dagger is on yet another routine patrol through Jump Point Alpha when scanners pick up another distress signal, this one very weak. The signal is simply the automated, looping message announcing a general request for help, and no information can be gleaned on the nature of the emergency. Not only is the signal very weak, but it is also somewhat outdated—possibly as much as ten years old.

As the Dagger approaches the source of the signal, the scanners will reveal a large, if somewhat outmoded commercial liner. The ship obviously holds several dozen cabins, and a relatively impressive array of defensive weaponry. The ship appears to be undamaged, but all systems are offline except for nominal life support.

The ship is the *New Tomorrow*, designed to carry several hundred colonists to their long-forgotten destination. The ship is currently unmanned, since every person aboard has been dead for years.

On their quest for a new home, the survey team from the New Tomorrow set down on a distant alien planet. The team decided against settling the planet, but they unwittingly returned with more than information. A deadly and insidious parasite crept aboard the landing craft. Upon its return to the New Tomorrow, the parasite began to attack the hundreds of people aboard the ship.

Before the crew and passengers were able to discover the source of their problems, dozens of people fell ill and died with violent fevers. The bodies were preserved aboard the ship for burial on their destination planet. Unfortunately, the ship never reached a destination, and the eggs laid inside the bodies hatched a horde of the deadly parasites that completely depopulated the New Tomorrow.

The crew of the Dagger does not know of the parasite, of course. They simply see a ship floating through space with no systems online and no desire to answer hails. The ship's landing bay is large enough to accommodate the Dagger, and while it is not open when the Dagger arrives, it is simple enough for the characters to rig a comm signal to open the bay doors.

Inside, the ship is eerily quiet and dimly lit. The only lights in the ship are fading emergency lights, and in several locations, whole sections of corridors or rooms are shrouded in darkness. The only sound in the ship is an occasional keening moan, often seeming to come from within the walls.

Even a cursory search of the New Tomorrow will reveal skeletons, and lots of them. All told, more than two hundred people died aboard this ship thanks to the parasite. None of the skeletons bear any flesh. The skeletons are actually fairly old—the last person to die, Doctor Russell, was killed more than six years ago.

The atmosphere aboard the New Tomorrow is surprisingly breathable. The ship's life support continues to recirculate the air through the badly-overgrown hydroponics level. The air is stale and smells of rot, but the heroes can remove their helmets once inside the airlocks.

It would be nearly impossible to map the New Tomorrow without making it a separate project. The following list of areas describes a few places of interest aboard the New Tomorrow.

Command Deck

Piloting controls, navigation, scanning, and science consoles are all located on this spacious and open deck. Of course, the entire area is only dimly lit, and the ship does not have enough residual power to activate the regular lighting. The entire command deck is strewn with skeletons. Scorch marks and

bullet holes mark many of the surfaces in this large room, and the skeletons appear to be armed to the teeth. More than one skeleton has holes in its skull, possibly indicating suicide.

The ship's log can be pulled up, though it must be transferred to either a handheld device or the Dagger's computers before it can be read. Time and the loss of power have deleted most of the entries, but a few of the last entries can be recovered. If they are able to recover the log, the characters can read the following entries:

“...was the first. At first it was just a slight fever, but he got a lot worse within 24 hours. Doc said he had an unidentified virus, but was unable to treat it before... pretty ugly when he went, but he wasn't the first. Three more of the colonists got the virus, and were quarantined. That didn't work—the fever keeps spreading, and now some of the crew are starting to talk about ghosts in the walls. The bodies will be stored until we can bury...”

“...time, half the ship is sick or dead. Doc is out there—he won't save himself—but the rest of us have locked ourselves on the command deck. Nobody in here is sick, but we're all starting to hear the noises... saw the wall move, but nobody else saw it. I only pray these aren't the first symptoms. Do you lose your mind before...”

This is the last entry, and the date can be recovered well enough to see that this entry was made nearly ten years ago.

“...coming. I can hear them, and now we've all seen the walls move. We can't fight what we can't see, but we sure mean to try. There's no way into this room, and the air is all recycled to block the fever, but I still had to throw four men out when they started shivering with the fever. Don't know how long...”

Crew Quarters and Weapons Lockers

These miniscule cabins housed the small security force attached to the New Tomorrow. This is one of the few areas that does not contain skeletons—the security personnel all died in other parts of the ship as they attempted to save it.

The weapons lockers are wide open, but only a few weapons are still inside. The few weapons that are here are all at least ten years out of date.

Hydroponics

The maintenance bots who tended the hydroponics deck have done an exceptional job in the last ten years. The trees, vines, shrubs and other plants have all grown very near their capacity, though they are starting to wither. As the parasites die off from a lack of food, the last sources of carbon dioxide on the ship are being exhausted, and while the plants may be enormous now, they cannot live long without the air they need.

Several parasites (the last survivors aboard the New Tomorrow) make their home in the twisted undergrowth of the hydroponics deck. When the characters arrive, they call to any other parasites patrolling the ship and wait patiently for the opportunity to attack by ambush. They use their extraordinary camouflage abilities and incredible speed to flit from shadow to shadow. The characters see nothing more than brief movement out of their peripheral vision, and hear nothing but the occasional rustling leaf or the low cry of the parasites summoning their cohorts for an attack.

The attack comes after the heroes have spent one minute on this deck. The parasites suddenly and silently swoop out of their hiding places, each attempting to stab a character and inject eggs. There should be two parasites for each character—make sure that at least one character becomes a host for the parasites. Once a parasite has injected a character, it withdraws immediately into the thick foliage, waiting for its next victim to die.

Sick Bay

Row after row of hastily erected cots hold roughly fifty human skeletons in the ship's spacious sick bay. As large as the sick bay is, the cots still take up a lot of space, making swift maneuvering out of the question.

Doctor Windham, the ship's head medical officer, died in this room after he created an antidote for the parasitic infection. Unfortunately, by the time he finished the antidote, he was too close to death for it to work. He was also the last survivor outside the command deck, and so was unable to save anyone else. He has prepared a brief message on a portable communicator, which lies prominently displayed on the doctor's desk. A note even draws attention to the device, simply asking, *'please play.'* If a character plays back the message, a small hologram of Doctor Windham appears atop the device, reciting a message recorded almost a decade earlier. The hologram represents a sick, tired man using the last of his energy to record the following message.

"If you are playing this message, we are all dead. The parasites got us all. If you get this, the odds are good that you are in terrible danger. The parasites the survey team brought back have infested this ship. We could have stopped it early on, if we had known. I'm telling you so you can know, and hopefully stop this terrible fate from spreading.

The parasites have a sort of chameleon camouflage, but terribly advanced. They can look just like whatever they are near, even shifting hue as they move. They are long, skinny, and hairless. They each possess a single proboscis used for infecting a host with a dreadful disease.

At least, that's what I thought it was at first—a disease. The truth is so much worse. The single sting from an adult parasite floods the host with microscopic eggs, which grow incredibly fast before hatching, roughly

forty-eight hours after the inoculation. The antidote will work, I'm sure, if you can inject it within six hours of being stung. After that, the eggs are too well developed to kill without killing the host. If anyone hearing this has been stung by a parasite, you must know two things.

First, without the antidote, you have less than three days to live. The fever sets in, then the bleeding, and finally the gory projectile vomit. Everything happens so fast that it was nearly impossible to create the antidote, and I was too late to save anyone here.

Second, the parasites spread easily. If you're on this ship, you could already be a carrier. If you or someone you know dies after a parasite sting, you must commit the corpse to space and pray it does not happen to anyone else. The parasite thrives on dead bodies, and will not harm a living creature except to sting, and then only once. If only we had known...

Most of the ingredients are here, pre-measured and sealed. The only thing you're missing is the strange pseudo-blood of the parasites. You only need a few drops for each inoculation. If you are able to cure yourselves, get off this ship. Set the engines to overload and destroy every last parasite aboard along with the New Tomorrow. Most importantly, do not carry parasites off this ship. Search and be careful, or you could find yourself inadvertently causing a plague that could destroy a planet."

The device also contains instructions for brewing the antidote. The characters must still make the antidote themselves if they want to save whichever members of the team were stung. As Doctor Windham said, the characters have everything they need—except for the body of a parasite.

The heroes will have their work cut out attempting to track the elusive parasites. Their bodies do not give off heat, and they can hide in plain site. However, the characters do have one thing in their favor, assuming at least one of them was able to avoid being stung—the parasites want meat. All the characters need to do is return to the hydroponics deck and wait for the parasites to attack again. If they have already slain a parasite, they can carry it back to the lab and create the antidote. It is up to the characters to decide whether to destroy the ship, but if they do not, there is a very real chance they could accidentally kill whole civilizations.

As long as the heroes take reasonable precautions, they can be certain that no parasites travel with them back to the Dagger. Not only that, but the antidote works just as Wyndham promised—any character who is stung but gets an antidote shot within six hours will survive with no harmful effects.

THE PARASITES

When the survey team of the New Tomorrow set down on an uncharted planet to determine its plausibility as a colony, they never dreamed that they were dooming their people. The parasite with which they returned from the planet was so deadly that it completely eradicated every man, woman and child aboard the colony ship.

The New Tomorrow parasite is an agile, sinuous creature with sixteen legs. At its largest, the parasite grows to be up to one meter long, though most specimens do not grow longer than a third that size. The creature has photosensitive skin that allows it to blend seamlessly with any background, and its multiple legs are equipped with tiny grasping claws that let the parasite climb nearly any surface.

The parasite attacks by stabbing its prey with a long needle that shoots out of its mouth. The needle stabs deep, sometimes up to six inches, but unless the needle strikes the heart or brain, the wound is rarely more than a scratch. After a parasite successfully strikes a victim, it scurries off to wait for the prey to die.

Hundreds of microbial eggs are injected into a victim via the mother parasite's needle. If the parasite attacks when a victim is sleeping, the victim may not even know it was struck until the fever starts. The attack does no damage, and is almost painless if the blow is not too deep.

Within twenty-four hours, the victim begins to suffer from a low-grade fever. The fever escalates quickly as the eggs course through the victim's blood stream, causing rashes on the inner thighs and underarms that itch terribly and ooze pus. After two days, the victim is rendered unconscious, though the victim continues to decline. Before a victim dies, he or she may vomit blood, turn pale and clammy, bleed from the eyes and ears, or suffer heart attacks. By this time, no treatment could save the victim—the eggs are already beginning to hatch.

By the time a victim dies, the parasite's eggs are distributed throughout the entire corpse. When the eggs hatch, the tiny larva eat their way out of the body. When two parasites meet inside a body, a brief fight ends in one eating the other. It takes two days for a parasite to eat its way out of a body, emerging less than one inch long. The parasite will then burrow back into the corpse and dig a cocoon in the victim's flesh. The mother parasite will generally approach at this point, eating around the cocoons.

When these cocoons open, the infant parasites are simply smaller versions of their mother. They require an incredible amount of food to reach maturity, and generally devour a corpse before they depart their first home. They are usually not more than three inches long when they scamper away to hide for their first hunt.

New Tomorrow parasites hunt in packs, when they can, attempting to inject eggs into as many hosts as possible. Their attacks will often be a total surprise to their prey, as the parasites are immensely patient creatures. After a parasite survives for three or four months, its body can hibernate for months without a meal. They are nominally aware of their environments during this hibernation, and can attack by ambush if they have had time to camouflage themselves.

NEW GIMMICK

Undersized

The character is smaller than the typical humanoid. Because of this, all attacks directed at him receive +2DIFF.

NEW TOMORROW PARASITE

5	4	0	1	1
FITNESS	AWARENESS	CREATIVITY	REASONING	INFLUENCE

SKILLS

brawling (sting) 4, athletics 5

GIMMICKS

sure-footed, camouflage¹, undersized

FAT	I	INJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹ See the *HardNova II Enhancement Pack*.

SCENARIO FOUR: DOUBLE CROSS

The efforts of the Vanguard fleet have been very successful to date, and the Ruthdii Komar are being forced to reconsider their tactics. Unbeknownst to the USU forces that protect Jump Point Alpha, the Komar are gathering a large fleet to attack the alliance ships. The Komar would prefer to have an advantage before they attack, however, and concoct an elaborate plan to weaken the USU forces.

The Komar capture Gromund, an emissary and representative of the United Trade Alliance. The UTA is a powerful mercantile organization that controls at least half of the trade in the known galaxy. Gromund is a high-level administrator attached to the X-an trade guild. When plied with promises of money and power, he gladly tells the Komar all he knows of both the X-an trade guild and the UTA.

GROMUND

UNITED TRADE ALLIANCE EMISSARY (X-AN)

2	2	3	3	4
FITNESS	AWARENESS	CREATIVITY	REASONING	INFLUENCE

SKILLS

firearms 1, brawling 1, melee 2,
negotiation 6, composure 3

GIMMICKS

toughness (3), logic, pain tolerance, microscanners,
inexhaustible energy, electrical vulnerability, clumsy, elite

EQUIPMENT

none

FAT	I	INJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

political ship and convene at Jump Point Alpha, under the protection of the USU forces in the area.

The Komar are delighted to gain this information, and pay Gromund handsomely for his cooperation. Unfortunately, dealing with the enemy is never as easy as a single transaction, and the Komar want their new spy to create a conflict to weaken the USU forces without ever forcing the Ruthdii Komar to show their faces.

Gromund follows his directions, and seeks out the Black Fang Clan. These ruthless pirates are known for their fearless and brutal tactics. The Clan is rumored to offer no quarter to any who resist, and even darker rumors speak of torture and ritual murders aboard the pirate vessels.

The Black Fang Clan currently has two small frigates and two cutters. Gromund persuades the Clan that if it strikes hard and fast, it can easily board and steal a wealthy merchant ship right from under the noses of the USU forces. He is referring to the emissary vehicle, and he conveniently neglects to mention to the Black Fang how important the political ship is to the USU, or how hard they would fight to defend the valuable ship. Gromund also tells the pirates that he will be light years away when the attack takes place, though he will in fact be present aboard the emissary ship.

Gromund also misleads the pirates about the strength of the USU forces. He tells the Black Fang Clan that the USU currently has only two major vessels and one scout in the area. He knows these numbers to be a lie—as a participating member of the summit, he has complete access to the military force at Jump Point Alpha and simply tells the pirates that his numbers are accurate as of his last batch of information. If they confront him later about his inaccuracy (assuming they survive), Gromund intends to play dumb.

To further the Komar plot, Gromund also intends to poison and kill every non-X-an person aboard the political vessel just before the Clan arrives. Gromund is planning to use the chaos of the pirates' attack to slip a deadly neurotoxin into the ship's life support systems, killing every organic life form aboard.

In order to protect the pirates' approach to the USU ships, Gromund also informs the Black Fang Clan of the Dagger and

One particularly damaging piece of information that the Ruthdii Komar are able to extract from Gromund is the place and time of a huge secret meeting of the UTA. The Trade Alliance has taken a particular interest in Jump Point Alpha, and wish to examine the defenses personally. The UTA has arranged for a summit involving many important UTA inspectors. These inspectors will meet aboard a special-purpose

its routine patrols. Any pirate ships in the area would most likely be spotted by the USU scout, ruining any chance for a surprise attack. The pirates concoct a plan to capture the scout, and use it as part of their attack.

Gromund is not particularly concerned about money—he is getting a huge amount of payoff from the Komar. However, he still needs to maintain the illusion of greed, so he makes the pirates promise to give him a substantial share of the profits raised by taking the political ship. Once his business is completed, Gromund leaves for the summit.

THE BLACK FANG VENOM

For the heroes, the adventure begins when the UTA *Gold and Silver* arrives at Jump Point Alpha. All crew members have been briefed as to the overwhelming importance of the political ship, and everyone in the USU forces is prepared to defend the Gold and Silver.

UTA GOLD AND SILVER

-4	-3	+4	3	5		MEC	I	STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

2 laser cannon turrets (linked pairs)

GIMMICKS

hyperspace generator (supralight speed: 0)
passenger quarters
shuttle bay

The arrival of the summit vessel does not particularly affect the characters. Their regular patrols continue, they just enjoy a little more fanfare between missions. They still must depart at their scheduled time, and are forced to leave the party just as it gets under way.

The Dagger's patrol is fairly short this time. After only a few hours, two ships disable their cloaking devices and appear on the Dagger's scanners, well within weapons range. These two ships are the *Black Fang Venom* and the *Black Fang Bile*, the light cutters assigned the task of detaining the Dagger.

BLACK FANG VENOM

-1	+2	+4	3	3		MEC	I	STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

4 laser battery turrets
1 hunter-killer missile launcher (turret; 5 missiles)

GIMMICKS

hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +2)
assault bay
cargo bay
cloaking device

BLACK FANG BILE

-1	+1	+3	2	2		MEC	I	STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

2 laser batteries (forward)
2 rocket battery turrets
1 particle cannon turret

GIMMICKS

hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +1)
assault bay
reinforced systems
cloaking device

The Dagger is hailed and ordered to power down weapons and proceed to dock with the Venom. If these orders are not obeyed instantly, the two ships open fire in a brief display of obviously superior firepower. They stop firing after just a couple salvos, leaving the Dagger reeling and badly damaged after just a few shots. The heroes may, of course, insist on fighting, but if they do so in the face of such one-sided odds, the gamemaster should feel free to destroy them completely. The rest of this adventure assumes that the characters are smart enough to surrender and hope for the best.

A band of motley villains carrying powerful firearms greets the characters. The escort takes them to the commanding officer of the Venom, Captain Rose Bloodthorn (not her real name—the pirate captain uses an alias). The captain is quite friendly to the heroes, assuming they did not damage her ship. She talks to them as she escorts them to the brig, and as long as the characters are at least marginally friendly, will describe the pirate plan to board the Gold and Silver.

TYPICAL PIRATE

(HUMAN)

4	3	2	1	1
FITNESS	AWARENESS	CREATIVITY	REASONING	INFLUENCE

SKILLS

firearms 5, brawling 4, melee 4, athletics 3, composure 2

GIMMICKS

criminal

EQUIPMENT

plasma sword, autothrower

FAT	I	INJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

have been tricked. She will be willing to discuss the matter with the other captains, and see if they can come to a conclusion.

Bloodthorn leaves the heroes to their uncomfortable cells in the brig, then calls a meeting of the other pirates. She describes the situation, and the pirates agree to at least consider the possibility of a double-cross. However, they want proof that the situation is as dire as the characters describe—they want to know for certain that Gromund is aboard the Gold and Silver, since he assured the pirates that he will be far away when the attack begins.

In order to procure the proof that they need, the pirates are going to send the Dagger back to the fleet—except that for this trip, some of the crew will be left behind as hostages. The crew members selected for this trip will be escorted by three pirates, one of whom is Captain Bloodthorn herself. The pirates who travel with the Dagger will wear uniforms taken from the Dagger's storage lockers.

The gamemaster should carefully consider which crew members are selected as hostages. Those characters will not take part in the rest of this adventure. If the crew of the Dagger is fleshed out with non-player characters, these characters should stay behind. If any regular players are absent, their characters can serve as hostages. The number of hostages can be anywhere from one to three, depending on the needs of the group. The pirates choose their hostages at random, but the gamemaster should not deliberately exclude any players from the rest of this adventure.

CAPTAIN BLOODTHORN

(CENTAURIAN)

3	3	3	3	3
FITNESS	AWARENESS	CREATIVITY	REASONING	INFLUENCE

SKILLS

firearms 4, brawling 3, melee 5, piloting (starships) 4, scanning 4, astronavigation 3, negotiation 5, composure 6

GIMMICKS

criminal

EQUIPMENT

light blaster, ablative vest

FAT	I	INJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>

The characters will probably want to attempt to talk Bloodthorn out of her attack. It is in their best interest, and the best interest of the USU forces, to avoid a battle with anyone but the Ruthdii Komar. The single best argument that the heroes can produce is to describe the number of ships protecting the Gold and Silver, since Gromund told the Black Fang Clan that there were only two ships guarding the prize ship.

Bloodthorn will naturally be skeptical of the heroes' information. Their motives are fairly transparent—this is a bad time for the USU to be fighting anyone but the Komar. Still, she will describe the person who gave the Clan the information on the prize, and the characters should be able to easily identify Gromund from his appearances on the Vanguard since the summit already began.

Once Bloodthorn hears that the characters know Gromund, and that the X-an should have much more accurate information on the USU forces, she may begin to suspect that the pirates

THE LIGHT OF TRUTH

The Dagger returns to the Vanguard fleet, but Bloodthorn cautions the heroes that if the pirates aboard are found out, the hostages will be killed. She tells the characters to find an excuse to dock with the Gold and Silver, so that they can look for Gromund without running into anyone who might be looking for the rest of the Dagger's crew.

Happily, the commanders of the Vanguard allow the Dagger to dock with the Gold and Silver, as long as they recognize the speaker who hails the command ships. The characters can then proceed through the corridors of the Gold and Silver, and it will not take them long to locate Gromund. Bloodthorn recognizes the X-an traitor at first glance.

Unfortunately, Gromund also recognizes Bloodthorn, despite any attempts to avoid contact with the X-an. He realizes that his trick is most likely about to backfire, and moves quickly to proceed with his plan to dump the neurotoxin into the life support system.

The heroes notice Gromund excusing himself from the rest of his coalition. Bloodthorn is concerned that she may have been spotted, but is glad for the opportunity to avenge herself upon the two-faced liar. She feels fairly certain that Gromund will not

betray the pirates, since he implicates himself if he blames her. She is right, but she does not know that Gromund is about to kill everyone aboard the ship.

Bloodthorn insists that the heroes follow Gromund with the accompaniment of the three pirates. She is not above extorting the characters, or even promising them their freedom as long as she is able to deal with Gromund.

If the characters resist the pirates, or alert the authorities to the presence of the Black Fang Clan, Bloodthorn fights to leave the ship in the Dagger. She will first try to capture Gromund, however, as the reputation of the Black Fang Clan is at stake. She wants to make it clear that no one double-crosses the Black Fang Clan.

If the heroes go along with Bloodthorn's desire to follow Gromund, they will be able to avert a terrible loss of life. The motley band catches up to Gromund in an isolated corridor, just as he is preparing to dump the neurotoxin into an air intake. The pirates attack immediately with knives and clubs, since they do not want to use their sidearms lest they alert the crew of the Gold and Silver to their presence.

Bloodthorn does not want to kill Gromund. She wants to take him back to the Black Fang Clan, where he can explain exactly what he had in mind and answer for his duplicity. She will force the characters to escort the X-an traitor back to the Dagger, reminding them that the lives of their friends are worth a great deal more than a murderous villain willing to kill hundreds of people.

Gromund knows that the pirates have a terrible fate awaiting him. He would rather take his chances with the USU military police, who might decide to imprison him for life in exchange for a full confession. Just as the group passes a patrol of MPs, Gromund jumps away from the heroes and starts yelling for help. The heroes are arrested, along with the pirates, and Gromund's confession gets him a cell as well.

The heroes could decide to try to fight their way off the Gold and Silver. However, all the security surrounding the summit means that this escape would be almost impossible. The characters would almost certainly be killed if they try to fight, and will definitely be captured. The pirates, on the other hand, have an ace up their sleeves—the fleet commanders may be interested in a trade with the hostages aboard the Black Fang ships. Bloodthorn therefore surrenders peacefully.

SCENARIO FIVE: END OF THE WAR

The crew members of the USU Dagger find themselves in a tight spot. Black Fang Clan pirates hold half of the crew, preparing to execute them if Bloodthorn and her two escorts do not return soon. The other half of the crew is imprisoned aboard the Vanguard, in a cell right next to the pirates who got them into this mess in the first place.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

Interrogators come to question the heroes after they have been imprisoned for only a few hours. The Dagger's reputation helps considerably here—the interrogators are willing to believe nearly anything, and as long as the characters are honest and helpful, they should be released quickly. Their story about Gromund's betrayal would be more questionable, were it not for Gromund's quick confession. The characters are all released within only a matter of hours.

The pirates are not treated quite so well. Bloodthorn and her escort are questioned extensively, and any part of the story that the heroes do not corroborate is taken as a lie.

Gromund, however, is treated very well. His status protects him from a military court-martial, and he is hoping to reduce his sentence by confessing to selling the Gold and Silver to pirates. He is not ready to admit his involvement with the Komar, since the military could court-martial and execute him for being a traitor.

The characters, however, are at the center of the investigation. Since their word can be believed more or less without supporting evidence, their stories have the power to free the pirates and condemn Gromund. When they explain that Gromund also double-crossed the pirates, and that he was captured in the act of killing everyone aboard the Gold and Silver, the interrogators suspect that Gromund may be hiding something. They finally get him to confess to his dealings with the Ruthdii Komar, with their agreement that he will be tried in a civilian court, rather than a military one.

When Gromund tells the USU forces of the impending Ruthdii Komar attack fleet, they suddenly take the entire situation a great deal more seriously. The command vessels decide to attempt a desperate alliance with the Black Fang. If both fleets combined to battle the Komar, the odds would go strongly in their favor.

The commanders return the characters to their ship, and send Bloodthorn and her pirates back with them. They want the pirates to join the fleet for a short time, just long enough to defend against the Ruthdii Komar, with the following terms:

1. The pirates will be granted complete amnesty while with the fleet, and any pirates who surrender after the battle will be granted full pardons.
2. The Black Fang Clan will be granted any Ruthdii Komar ships captured in the action.
3. The pirates must agree not to trouble Jump Point Alpha in the future.

A single high-ranking interrogator catches up with the heroes just as they are preparing to board the Dagger. He pulls them aside, out of earshot of the pirates, and explains that they are authorized to offer one additional incentive—Gromund. Bloodthorn made no secret of the fact that she wanted to kill Gromund for the sake of the Black Fang's reputation. The USU organization can arrange to have Gromund escape in a launch, to be picked up by the pirates while the battle rages, but only as a last resort. The interrogator explains that they would rather not have to do this, but having heard Gromund's description of the invasion fleet, they are desperate to get the Black Fang's help.

DEALING WITH THE DEVIL

The heroes depart and head back to the Venom. Once aboard, Bloodthorn releases the hostages held aboard that ship and convenes a meeting with the other pirate captains. The other captains are hesitant to offer their assistance to the USU military. They think that the USU can handle the threat alone, and if they are significantly weakened, will not be able to combat the pirates as effectively.

The terms of the agreement eventually sound attractive to the pirates, however. The captain of the Black Fang Bile is a greedy man, and the prospect of a captured Ruthdii Komar vessel appeals to him greatly. The captain of the Black Fang Marauder, one of the two frigates, is getting old and would very much like to retire; a full pardon is considerably attractive. The only hold-out is the captain of the Black Fang Wolverine. He does not like dealing with the USU, and will protest the plan with all his

strength. The only way to persuade him is to offer up Gromund. Once the heroes agree to let the Wolverine capture Gromund's escape craft, every captain in the pirate fleet agrees to assist the USU—for now.

After a short deliberation, the Dagger is allowed to lead the Black Fang ships back to the USU fleet. The two fleets keep their distance from each other—their uneasy alliance can only hold against a common enemy, and neither trusts the other at all.

BATTLE ROYALE

Gromund's description of an invasion fleet was actually understated. The Ruthdii Komar were able to recruit more ships than they had originally projected, and the enemy fleet now has enough ships to challenge the Vanguard fleet.

The Black Fang fleet has only been with the USU fleet for two days when the attack begins. The Komar ships arrive at Jump Point Alpha a considerable distance from the allies, and begin to develop a formation with which to attack. The Ruthdii Komar fleet is composed of a battlecruiser (with eight fighters), three frigates, four assault ships, two strike scouts, and a gunship. All available ships and fighters are scrambled, and within one hour, all three fleets are ready to finish the battle for Jump Point Alpha once and for all.

The gamemaster should allow the characters to partake in any action they desire. There are enough ships in the battle to allow them to tackle any opponent they want. At the beginning of the battle, chaos is the general rule, with the pirates doing whatever they want and attempting to capture Komar ships, rather than simply destroy them. Once the Komar gunship moves into position, however, the heroes will have their hands full.

The Ruthdii Komar have brought a powerful gunship with their fleet. This vessel is slow and bulky, and maneuvers very poorly. The strength of the gunship is the oversized particle cannon that takes up half the ship. The particle cannon can only fire once every four turns, but when it does, the damage is considerable. Not only is the ship terribly powerful, but the gigantic particle cannon has an absolutely awesome range. The gunship sits behind the battle, tracking the larger USU ships and waiting for the opportunity to tear holes in the USU fleet.

The larger ships of the USU fleet cannot approach the gunship, because they cannot get past the Komar vessels. The pirates are not likely to attempt the approach, because the gunship is neither particularly profitable nor poorly-defended. The job of disabling the gunship falls to the heroes.

The commanders aboard the Vanguard send the Dagger to take out the gunship. Three fighters offer an escort, and together these four must break through the Ruthdii Komar lines and pour firepower into the gunship.

This final battle should be the focus of the battle for the characters, though the gamemaster should feel free to arbitrarily describe the battle as it occurs behind them. The characters' only concern at this point is to disable the gunship, and as the greater battle rages around them, the gamemaster should concentrate on that fight.

BLACK FANG MARAUDER

-2	0	+3	3	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

- 6 laser battery turrets
- 1 particle cannon (forward)
- 3 hunter-killer missile launcher turrets (8 missiles each)

GIMMICKS

- hyperspace generator (supralight speed: +1)
- assault bay
- reinforced systems

BLACK FANG WOLVERINE

-3	-1	+2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

- 4 laser battery turrets
- 5 particle cannons (2 turrets, 2 forward, 1 aft)
- 2 ion cannons (1 forward, 1 aft)

GIMMICKS

- hyperspace generator (supralight speed: 0)
- assault bay
- fighter bay (3 fighters)

PIRATE FIGHTER (MODIFIED T-60c)

+4	+3	0	1	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC		STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

- 2 laser cannon turrets
- 1 particle cannon (forward)

RUTHDII KOMAR GUNSHIP

-4	-4	+4	2	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEC	I	STR
SPEED	HANDLING	SENSORS	FRAME	SHIELDS			<input type="checkbox"/>	-	<input type="checkbox"/>
							<input type="checkbox"/>	+1DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
							<input type="checkbox"/>	+2DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
							<input type="checkbox"/>	+3DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>
							<input type="checkbox"/>	+4DIFF	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAPONS

- 6 laser cannon turrets
- 1 multi-chambered particle cannon (forward)

GIMMICKS

- hyperspace generator (supralight speed: 0)

NOTES

the particle cannon is effective at up to twice normal range, and inflicts 8STR. The cannon may only fire once every four turns.

THE DUST SETTLES

The final battle between the two huge fleets can end in one of three ways. If the heroes are able to destroy the gunship, the USU fleet suffers relatively minor losses, thanks largely to the pirates capturing two of the deadly vessels in boarding actions. The gamemaster can select one or two ships in the USU fleet that were destroyed. The Black Fang Wolverine was destroyed, and all hands lost, only minutes after they captured the *escaping* Gromund.

If the characters fail to destroy the gunship, the USU still carries the day, but with much greater losses. The Komar fleet is completely destroyed, including the gunship, once the others are out of the way, but the only ship still operable among the USU forces is the Vanguard. The pirates suffer as well—they lose three out of four ships, and are not able to capture a single Komar ship.

Either way, Jump Point Alpha is now safe for years to come. The Ruthdii Komar will not be able to amass such a fleet for a long time, and the USU has proven, with the help of the characters, that it is not worth the trouble to harass this particular corner of space. The space lanes stay open, and the characters will be remembered as heroes long after they leave Jump Point Alpha.

HARD [NOVA

ROMAN TERREL, ENSIGN
CENTAURIAN
ASTRONAVIGATOR

2

INFLUENCE

2

FITNESS

3

CREATIVITY

3

REACTION TOTAL

AWARENESS

4

REASONING

FATIGUE

/

INJURY

DAZED ☐

-

☐ BRUISED

STRESSED ☐

+1DIFF

☐ SPRAINED

STRAINED ☐

+2DIFF

☐ WOUNDED

EXHAUSTED ☐

+3DIFF

☐ MAIMED

UNCONSCIOUS ☐

—

☐ INCAPACITATED

SKILLS

firearms 3

zero-g 3

astronavigation 6

mechatronics 4

composure 5

melee 3

advanced engineering 3

piloting (starships) 2

computers 4

noise 2

GIMMICKS AND GEAR

brain pick, military rank

blaster pistol, flight suit, hand matrix, zero-g kit, mechakit, systemskit

HARD [NOVA

GANOMAR VIN, ENSIGN
TARKOSIAN
PILOT

2

INFLUENCE

3

FITNESS

2

CREATIVITY

3

REACTION TOTAL

AWARENESS

4

REASONING

FATIGUE

/

INJURY

DAZED ☐

-

☐ BRUISED

STRESSED ☐

+1DIFF

☐ SPRAINED

STRAINED ☐

+2DIFF

☐ WOUNDED

EXHAUSTED ☐

+3DIFF

☐ MAIMED

UNCONSCIOUS ☐

—

☐ INCAPACITATED

SKILLS

brawling 2

melee 4

finesse 2

piloting (starships) 6

streetwise 3

composure 2

firearms 4

zero-g 3

athletics 2

scanning 5

street cred 2

GIMMICKS AND GEAR

criminal, military rank, constitution, sure-footed, musclebound, electrical vulnerability, discrimination

blaster pistol, flight suit, hand matrix, zero-g kit, vibro knife

HARD [NOVA

DA CR'KATTA, ENSIGN
KT'SORII
GUNNER

1

INFLUENCE

5

FITNESS

3

CREATIVITY

4

REACTION TOTAL

AWARENESS

2

REASONING

FATIGUE

/

INJURY

DAZED ☐

-

☐ BRUISED

STRESSED ☐

+1DIFF

☐ SPRAINED

STRAINED ☐

+2DIFF

☐ WOUNDED

EXHAUSTED ☐

+3DIFF

☐ MAIMED

UNCONSCIOUS ☐

—

☐ INCAPACITATED

SKILLS

firearms 4

brawling 4

gunnery 6

piloting (ground) 3

composure 4

melee 3

athletics 3

zero-g 5

demolitions 4

GIMMICKS AND GEAR

military rank, compound vision, toughness (2), heightened touch, heightened hearing

blaster pistol, flight suit, hand matrix, zero-g kit, vibro knife

HARD [NOVA

BRANDON BOLT, ENSIGN
HUMAN
GUNNER

4

INFLUENCE

4

FITNESS

2

CREATIVITY

2

REACTION TOTAL

AWARENESS

2

REASONING

FATIGUE

/

INJURY

DAZED ☐

-

☐ BRUISED

STRESSED ☐

+1DIFF

☐ SPRAINED

STRAINED ☐

+2DIFF

☐ WOUNDED

EXHAUSTED ☐

+3DIFF

☐ MAIMED

UNCONSCIOUS ☐

—

☐ INCAPACITATED

SKILLS

firearms 4
zero-g 4
gambling 2
seduction 4
composure 6

melee 4
gunnery 6
piloting (starships) 2
performance 3

GIMMICKS AND GEAR

dextrous, military rank

blaster pistol, flight suit, hand matrix, zero-g kit,
plasma sword

HARD [NOVA

BODERGOR KUNK, ENSIGN
DIGRONIAN
TROOPER

1

INFLUENCE

5

FITNESS

1

CREATIVITY

4

REACTION TOTAL

AWARENESS

3

REASONING

FATIGUE

/

INJURY

DAZED ☐

-

☐ BRUISED

STRESSED ☐

+1DIFF

☐ SPRAINED

STRAINED ☐

+2DIFF

☐ WOUNDED

EXHAUSTED ☐

+3DIFF

☐ MAIMED

UNCONSCIOUS ☐

—

☐ INCAPACITATED

SKILLS

firearms 6
brawling 6
zero-g 4
interrogation 2

melee 6
athletics 5
tracking 2
composure 6

GIMMICKS AND GEAR

musclebound, night vision, claws, military rank

blaster pistol, flight suit, hand matrix, zero-g kit, plasma
sword, blaster carbine, ablative vest, plasma grenades (3)

HARD [NOVA

SHANNAN CRUMLEY, ENSIGN
HUMAN
MEDICAL OFFICER

2

INFLUENCE

1

FITNESS

4

CREATIVITY

1

REACTION TOTAL

AWARENESS

6

REASONING

FATIGUE

/

INJURY

DAZED ☐

-

☐ BRUISED

STRESSED ☐

+1DIFF

☐ SPRAINED

STRAINED ☐

+2DIFF

☐ WOUNDED

EXHAUSTED ☐

+3DIFF

☐ MAIMED

UNCONSCIOUS ☐

—

☐ INCAPACITATED

SKILLS

firearms 2
zero-g 2
piloting (starships) 2
advanced engineering 3
biomechanics 3
composure 3

melee 2
medicine 5
engineering 3
sciences 4
general knowledge 5

GIMMICKS AND GEAR

military rank

blaster pistol, flight suit, hand matrix, zero-g kit, medkit,
biokit, bioscanners