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WILDFIRETM
Igniting Imagination

THE STYGIAN CYCLE II: VENUSIAN SUNSET

SERIOUSLY? FREE-TO-PLAY?

Imagination is powerful. To quote Albert Einstein, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand." Well said.

We believe in the power of imagination and how it creates wonder and inspiration. Roleplaying games are one of the few things that can do what they do. Some might say they are the last frontier for wild imagination and creativity. We certainly believe so. That's why we make roleplaying games – to help make that possible.

Making roleplaying games the way we have hasn't helped us spark imagination the way we'd hoped. We want to try something different.

First, we're adopting the Creative Commons license, so that you can contribute to the game in a meaningful way. That way, we can support you in your awesome ideas and help you get them out to your fellow players.

Then, we're going to give away electronic copies of the core book for free. We've all bought games that didn't end up working out for us. That's why we're giving this to you for free – so that you can figure out if you like the game before you decide to spend money on it.

If you like The Void and you play it, we're going to put out a bunch of cool material at very reasonable prices. We're going to do it buffet-style, so you can pick and choose what works best for you and your group. Buying these supplements supports us making more cool material, along with the rest of your fellow players.

After all, life's too short to waste time and money on games you don't like.

– The Staff of WildFire



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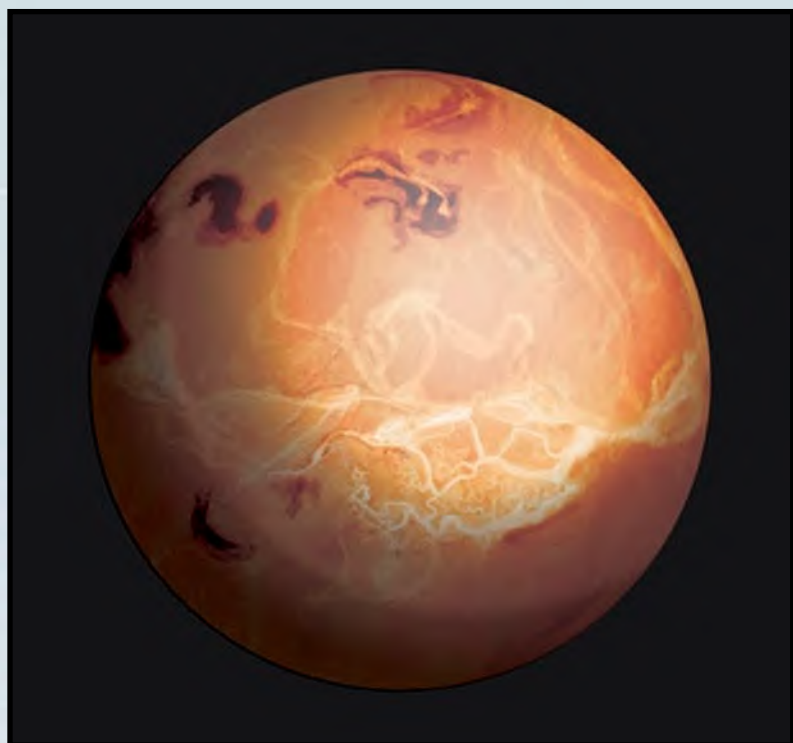


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Welcome to *Venusian Sunset*, the second adventure in the epic story of *The Stygian Cycle*. This is a ready-to-run adventure that can be part of Organized Play.

This adventure is for Level 1 Characters, which are those that have received 10 Advances or less. If your Characters are more advanced than that, you will need to adjust things to be appropriately challenging.

This adventure is self-contained, though it is designed to set Characters up for the next adventure in *The Stygian Cycle*. It involves the Characters being sent to the Diamond Head colony on Venus to investigate a string of mystifying killings and disappearances. What they discover could threaten all life within the colony.

Naturally, these adventures are intended for Gamemasters. However, as a player, you may find the way the setting of *The Void* is brought to life in these adventures useful for your visualization of your Character and game. You probably don't want to memorize the adventures if you plan to play them – it'll only ruin your enjoyment.

This adventure assumes that your group is composed of Wardens. If it is not, the adventure can still work, but requires some adjustments before you run it.

The Stygian Cycle

The Void Organized Play adventures will take you through the most signifi-

cant events in the solar system, as designed.

This doesn't mean that you won't come up with awesome and significant adventures on your own, but these are the ones we designed to hit the high points based on what we've created.

Soundtrack

We've created a soundtrack for *The Void* on the popular *Spotify* platform. It is composed of dark ambient music, designed to provide an eerie background for your game. We will be updating over time, to expand the repertoire of music and moods. If you're interested, check our Facebook page for links – facebook.com/TheVoidCalls.

Venus

The gravity on Venus is Moderately Low Gravity, so Characters will have to deal with those minimal effects – as found on p. 136 of *The Void Core*. Since the effects of this less than 10% shift from 1G, the colonies of Venus don't take any extra precautions such as energized deck plates. However, there are entertainment complexes that rotate in 1G, just to help keep people at maximum health.

A Venusian day is longer than its year – 243 Earth Standard days long. That means there are months of both day and night, depending up the time of year. To combat this, Venus is run on a standard 24 hour Earth Standard day – though there aren't light cues to tell people what time of day it is.

Outside the domes of Venus, the atmosphere is extremely dangerous. It is a Toxic Exotic Atmosphere, as found on p. 135 of *The Void Core*, as well as Super-Heated, as found on p. 136 of *The Void Core*. The Venusians have special vehicles and environment suits to allow people to go outside when necessary, but most people never even contemplate such a trip.

Plot Points

In this adventure, you'll have a chain of related evidence that will be the subject of investigation by the players, the bulk of which together will unravel the mystery for the Characters and put them on the path of resolution. Each piece of this chain can be learned through Plot Points.

Once in the appropriate place to earn Plot Points, the Characters must simply have the resources necessary to gain them and they do. They don't have to make a series of Tests, hoping to succeed at all of the Tests they need to in order to glean the clues or information. To determine if the Characters have the necessary resources, simply total up the requisite dice pools from the Skills + Attributes necessary. If it is equal to or greater than the Plot Point score, they succeed. Easily gained information requires four or five Plot Points, information that requires some expertise requires six or seven Plot Points, and information that is difficult to glean requires nine or ten Plot Points.

For example, the Characters wish to search the quarters of a missing com-

Got Feedback?

We're all roleplayers here. When you're playing *The Void*, you're going to have feedback – whether it be questions, comments, or the awesome stuff you came up with while you're playing. We want to hear it. You've got two options. You can just fire off an e-mail to feedback@fearthevoid.com. Alternatively, you can jump into the pool on our forums and engage in conversation with both us and other players. Find them at <http://www.reddit.com/r/TheVoidRPG/>.

puter technician in Salacia. The key information they need to learn there is that the place has been completely wiped clean (sterilized) and that the hard drive in the dwelling's computer hasn't just been erased, it has been replaced. This requires the Investigate and Computer Skills, but not particularly high levels of either. The GM determines that the Investigate portion rates a four, as does the Computer portion. If the players enter the scene, spend the time, and have a total pool of points from their Investigate + Awareness and Computer + Cleverness ratings that each equals or exceeds four, together they glean all the information there is to gain.

Sometimes players won't have the necessary resources at hand. In many cases, they'll know that they've come to an important juncture and be aware of the resources they are missing. They can simply go away, gather those resources, and return. If they cannot and it's important they gain the information, have them make Tests using the appropriate Skill at whatever Difficulty seems sensible. If they succeed, they get the information. If not, they'll miss it – or just have them spend 2 Tension Points to Get a Clue.

Rules for Organized Play

The great advantage of Organized Play is that players (and GMs) have the flexibility to use their Characters in different groups. Perhaps they're playing an event at a local hobby store or at a convention, they're playing in two groups, or their group dissolves or moves on to another game and they want to keep playing.

Using the guidelines here, players can keep their treasured Characters going through *The Stygian Cycle* without restriction.

Level 1 Characters

This adventure is designed for Level 1 Characters, which means they have earned up to 10 Advances.

If players have been playing *The Void* outside of *The Stygian Cycle*, they may have enough Advances to be considered a higher Level. If this is the case, you'll need to bump up the difficulty and foes in this adventure in order to make it appropriately challenging.

Adventure Rewards

Characters completing this adventure should receive 3 Advances. You can give these out over sessions, or you can give them all out at the end.

Verification

Since players can travel between groups within the Organized Play of *The Stygian Cycle*, any kind of Character advancement needs to be tracked and verified by the GM. This is to make sure that everyone stays honest from group to group.

The simplest method of verification is to note on the back of their Character Sheet the number of Advances awarded, any special gear the Character acquired, as well as the name of the adventure and date or dates played. Please include your name and write in your own handwriting – don't let the players do this themselves. If you're comfortable with it, you may also include your e-mail address.

Since mobile devices are commonplace, an even more formal way to verify advancement is to post the above details to the player's *Facebook* Wall. This creates a digital record that is less easily disputed, if it ever comes to that.

Character Death

If a Character dies, the player shouldn't be handicapped in terms of playing in *The Stygian Cycle*. As per the rules found on p. 225 of *The Void Core*, have the player create a new Character with the same number of Advances as the Character who has passed on.

However, have that player keep the deceased Character with the new one, so that all Advances have been tracked and verified for purposed of Organized Play.

Suspected Cheating

Cheating is poor sportsmanship, most especially in roleplaying games. Most people simply don't, since role-playing games are about the story.

If you encounter a player who you suspect has cheated, ask them to be more detailed about how they received their Advancements or gear. If they can recount the events of their adventure and they make sense, you may choose to let them participate.

However, if a Character has extremely unusual advancements – most especially in terms of gear – or cannot satisfactorily recount where they received them, then you have several choices. You can let them play as is, and adapt the challenges for that Character to make them more difficult. You can also ask them if they will play without the

suspect advancement for the duration of your game. Finally, you can simply not allow them into your game.

Unverified advancement can be suspect, but groups can often be too excited at the end of a session to properly record things.

In any event, make the judgment call that works best for your group.

Playing Outside the OP

Enthusiastic players may wish to play adventures that are not part of *The Stygian Cycle* in between Organized Play adventures. That's awesome and no one should be penalized for that.

However, if anyone wants to bring in such a Character, they should have all outside advancement verified by their GM, just as if they were playing within *The Stygian Cycle*.



Diamond Head is the corporate colony of Geo Excavations on Venus. Like most colonies on that caustic planet, the domed city is built into the ground to protect from the elements. While home to its own tensions, Diamond Head has attracted the attention of the diabolical cult known as the Scions of Blight. Worshipping the Unnamed, they perpetuate suffering wherever they go, feeling that this is the highest form of worship to which they can aspire. Wherever the Scions go, disaster and suffering follows in their wake.

The Scions have been in place for many years in Diamond Head, recruiting its members from the disenfranchised workers of the mining industry that support the decadent corporate bigwigs. Following long lost texts that detail the horrific suffering of victims at the hands of the Unnamed, they began by kidnapping and torturing visitors, all to appease their master.

The cult only recently started to show up on the radars of Warden Command when something occurred to drive the cult to even more depraved and violent acts of terror. A Harbinger, a servant of the Chthonian Star, has found them and possessed the body of the chief lieutenant of the cult. The Harbinger has manipulated the cult to increase the number of kidnapped victims to dozens at a time. These victims are subjected to rites "deciphered" by the Harbinger, which increase the exposure to even the smallest amounts of radiation to lethal levels. The victims literally cook before the cult's eyes, screaming as their flesh withers and

their insides are cooked like a microwave. It is the discovery of the first of the body dumps, located in the center of one of the largest entertainment complexes, that has brought the Wardens to Diamond Head.

Many, if not most, of the lower-level employees live on one of the lower levels known by most as the Hole. Its official designation is the Tier-1 Residence Level. It is serviced by a set of elevators dedicated to transporting those who live in Tier-1, allowing them to reach their worksites rapidly. While the Hole is not a slum by any means, the difference in lifestyle from those above to those below is so dramatic that it has caused tensions in the past. The management of Diamond Head is aware of the growing dissent and has taken steps to improve working and living conditions. In fact, the living conditions in the Hole are better than most other cities' middle-class areas. There are, however, very run-down areas of the Hole, especially in the more isolated areas.

The cult has set up shop in the Hole, as it is much easier to hide itself in the machinery of Diamond Head than up above. It is also from the Hole that it recruits its members. The first sacrifices that the cult kidnapped, tortured, and laid out for display were made in the Hole. This was done in part to start the terror machine rolling, but also to stir up the locals. These acts did not immediately register on anyone's radar and were handled by local authorities that had no idea who committed the crime. It was not until the bodies

started showing up top-side that officials began taking notice. This has brought the Hole to a boiling point, as it appears that the lives of tourists are worth more than their own.

End Game

The Harbinger's end game is nothing short of killing all inhabitants of Diamond Head. It will do this by directing the cult, via manipulation of the cult leader, to expand the scope of the ritual and cause a failure in the radiation shielding of the city. In order to accomplish this, the cult must set demolitions at key structural points within the facility, kidnap enough important sacrifices to power the ritual, and summon more Harbingers to infect and possess the survivors who do manage to get away.

Adventure Synopsis

Venusian Sunset has three distinct Acts, as the Characters riddle through the horrific events in Diamond Head.

Act I: Into the Party Zone

In this first act, the Characters are sent to the Diamond Head colony on Venus. There, they discover a hideous and perplexing mass murder and are given loads of information by their Warden contact within the colony.

Most of this first Act is spent going over all of the data so far as well as doing some preliminary investigations. These numerous leads do not seem connected and the method of murder is mysterious. However, they will even-

tually find a piece of evidence that will point them towards the perpetrators.

Act II: Bring Your Sunscreen

Once the Characters open the strange Box dropped by one of the cultists, they are pointed to what they discover to be a cult safehouse. The cult is armed and will not be shy about opening a firefight with the Characters, or innocent bystanders. This is a challenge for the Wardens, as this sort of overt action can be difficult to cover up – and be a bureaucratic mess.

The finale of the Act will be the unwilling sacrifice of the pursued cultists by the Harbinger watching the encounter. The Harbinger will trigger latent energies that he previously stored within each cult member to kill the pursued. Investigation of the cult hideout will lead the players to the final confrontation with the Harbinger and the plan to destroy Diamond Head.

Act III: Burn, Baby, Burn!

In the third Act, the Characters find that the cult plans to kidnap dignitaries from the Anniversary celebration and kill them in some kind of ritual. Combined with explosives that will crack the dome, the cult will attempt to kill everyone in Diamond Head.

Tracking the cult to their headquarters, the Characters face a final confrontation with cult leadership – and the mysterious Harbinger – in an effort to stop the cult's plans, which are already in motion.

ACT 1: INTO THE PARTY ZONE

Goals: To introduce the Venusian colony of Diamond Head as the main setting, and allow the Characters to investigate the strange deaths and disappearances.

Setting: The Character's Knight's Errant ship, Warden HQ in Diamond Head, various points of investigative interest

Cast: Agent James Capstan, local Medical Examiner, random people at points of interest

The adventure presumes that the Characters are in the process of leaving Mars after the events in *Barsoom*. They are prepping their Knight's Errant to leave when they receive a call.

However, the Characters can come into this mission from anywhere. Just tailor it to their last location and modify the travel time to Venus as appropriate.

Scene 1: A New Mission

As the Characters are prepping to leave Mars, read the following to your players:

The call comes in at 2 am local time. Your internal clock hasn't adjusted from the trip in-system. Bleary eyed, you squint at the message board of your comm panel and see your orders.

SITUATION ON VENUS. ARRIVE
LOCAL OFFICE DIAMOND HEAD

SOONEST. BRIEFING ON SITE. BODY
COUNT HIGH. PROFILE HIGH. NO
GAMES. NO SCREWUPS. WARDEN
COMMAND OUT. EOL.

Diamond Head is a mining colony belonging to Geo-Excavations. It is neither the largest or most populous colony on Venus. They don't call Wardens in unless things are going haywire. As you clear the message and start to get dressed, an ad plays on the monitor.

"Come join us on for Founding Day here in Diamond Head! Celebrate one of the greatest achievements of Geo-Excavations! Job fairs and hiring managers will be available to discuss your future career."

You switch off the monitor, knowing this is probably not going to be much fun.

The Characters can do what they want before they leave for Venus. The trip itself will take 14 days, and the Characters will be in grav-couches the entire time. Any actions they want to take during this part of the adventure will need to take place before departing Mars or immediately after arriving on Venus.

Scene 2: Venus

Upon arriving on Venus, the Characters will awake from A/D Stasis, ready, and head down to the colony.

Read the following to your players:

As the large sun rises on the far side of Venus, the surface structures

of Diamond Head come into view. The structures are simple, no-nonsense affairs that give no clue to the vast complex of a caverns and tunnels the lie below. As you get closer, you can see the Geo-Excavations logo plastered across the surface of the Welcome & Customs Center that affords access to the colony below.

Landing at an isolated docking bay away from the civilian traffic, your shuttle settles down with a gentle bump. As you collect your gear and begins to disembark, you see that the docking bay is empty. Because most Warden missions are off the books, this is not surprising.

A young man enters the docking bay and approaches. This should be Agent James Capstan, according to your personnel roster. Newly assigned to Diamond Head, fresh out of training, he was assigned to a desk here to get his feet wet without throwing him to the wolves right away. Thinking back to your first year in the Wardens, you remember the mindless reports and meaningless interviews that you had to endure – all the while silently begging for some action. If only you could go back and knock some sense into that foolish young version of yourself. However, that's in the past and all you can hope to do is get this green kid through the next few days alive. If you're here, it's likely something back is going to happen.

After nervously introducing himself, Capstan is eager to share the information he has gathered. He sends his files immediately to the Characters wrist

comps. However, feel free to let the players ask the questions. If they miss any of these topics, have Capstan offer them up – he wants to do a good job.

Investigation: General

- Three days ago a collection of ten bodies was found arranged in a neat circle in the center of the main thoroughfare in Diamond Head.
- The bodies all show signs of radiation burns, from the inside out. While they look mostly normal on the outside, their insides appear to have been exposed to something like microwave or gamma radiation.
- There is no residual radiation on the bodies – not even on metallic objects.
- Surveillance feeds from the area were cut, so no surveillance is available.
- The victims are a collection of tourists from the lower end casinos and have no apparent importance.
- There are two families of three, and a family of four.
- Ages range from 15 to 54.
- Families all arrived on different shuttles from different parts of the solar system.
- Two of the families stayed at the same hotel, the other across town.
- Back tracking is currently underway to see if they crossed paths anywhere.

Scene 3: Warden HQ

As the Characters familiarize themselves with the basic details of the

case, Capstan leads the Characters over to an unassuming side alley and slides up a panel cleverly hidden in the wall.

Read the following to your players:

A door-sized panel slides open and Capstan ushers you inside. "Welcome to Warden HQ on Diamond Head. It's not a lot, but it's home for now. All the access points to the undercity are hidden in panels like this. I'll issue you pass codes when we get to my office and upload the layout and location of all passageways. Your pass code will be able to open any of the undercity passage doors here. Transportation around the city is handled by ground cab and moving walkways. Travel in the Hole is primarily the Tube and walking. Your pass codes will get you on the Tube as well."

The HQ is nothing more than a hallway with offices on each side, eight total. The far end of the hallway is another door that has been welded shut, blocking passage off to the rest of the colony. Capstan guides you past three empty offices, and a fourth that has been converted into an interrogation room. The final four rooms hold three confinement cells and Capstan's office.

The Characters are given an opportunity to do further research on the information that has been provided them. Capstan has only provided an overview.

Investigation: Researching Data Plot Points Earned By:

- Awareness + Investigate
 - Cleverness + Research
- *4 Plot Points* – The available data doesn't show any direct connection between the victims.
 - *4 Plot Points* – All of the initial victims worked or lived in the Hole. Their bodies were discovered in areas where vagrants and the dispossessed have taken up residence after failing to make it here.
 - *4 Plot Points* – Because the victims were homeless or worked in the more rundown areas of the Hole, autopsies were only just competed on some of them.
 - *4 Plot Points* – Background information on the six original victims will require talking to the locals in the Hole. The Warden database is limited when it comes to those who dwell in the lowest levels of the colony.
 - *6 Plot Points* – There are six separate deaths that occurred over the last eight weeks in the Hole that have similarities to the deaths of the tourists.
 - *6 Plot Points* – When viewed chronologically, the radiation burns have progressed from minor interior burns to the final victim, whose autopsy looks he was cooked from the inside out.

Scene 4:

Running Down The Trail

At this point, the players will want to formulate a plan. There are several options for both going through the data

and physically going out to salient spots to investigate. Characters can explore:

- Visiting the Medical Examiner
- 10 Most Recent Deaths
- Original 6 Deaths
- Pounding the Pavement

Investigation: Medical Examiner

The bodies of the original six victims have already been cremated. The most recent bodies are all still available for viewing. They are being held in quarantine until the source and possible exposure risk is assessed. All of the bodies show that same withered, desiccated exterior and an interior that looks to have been exposed to the raw solar radiation levels of Mercury's surface. All their faces are frozen in agonizing screams, which indicate they were alive while this occurred.

Investigation: 10 Recent Deaths Plot Points Earned By:

- Awareness + Investigate
- Cleverness + Research

The information in this avenue is the freshest and may seem the most promising. Surprisingly, the cult did choose these victims completely at random. However, there is nothing that is 100% random in the universe and there are trails that will allow the Characters to trace back the victims to common locations. These locations will allow the Characters to find a cell of the cultists and, from there, the cult. The beginning part of this section consists of a lot of research and investigation.

There are three families for the Wardens to investigate, in order to attempt to find common elements. Following is a trail of information the players can glean.

Family 1 – The Henderson's

- Father – Harry (age 45)
- Mother – Joanna (age 42)
- Daughter – Jessie (age 15)
- Point of Origin – Fresno, CA (Earth)
- Planned Stay – 7 days
- Arrived – 5 days ago
- Disappeared – 3 days ago

Investigation: Payment Records

- *4 Plot Points* – Day 1: arrived on shuttle in the afternoon, took cab to hotel (the Jovian Grande), checked into Hotel, had dinner in hotel café that evening.
- *4 Plot Points* – Day 2: had "breakfast" in hotel café (11 am), took bike taxi to central Promenade, apparent exploration of the colony for the afternoon, bike taxi to a restaurant for dinner, took regular Taxi back to hotel room only 35 minutes into the show.
- *4 Plot Points* – Call made to hotel front desk asking for a doctor to be sent up to the room, wife reported not feeling well.
- *4 Plot Points* – Doctor arrived and found door to room open and no one inside.
- *6 Plot Points* – Video feeds to the victims' floor, elevator and main floor are blank.
- *6 Plot Points* – Key lock records only show the Henderson's Key being used when they came back from the restaurant early.

Family 2 – The Wynn's

- Father – Eric (age 54)
- Mother – Bonnie (age 53)
- Son – Fred (age 24)
- Son's wife – Jean (age 22)
- Point of Origin – Ursa (Jupiter)
- Planned Stay – 14 days
- Arrived – 1 day ago
- Disappeared – 1 day ago, missing within 2 hours of arrival

Investigation: Payment Records

- *4 Plot Points* – Arrived by shuttle in the early morning, stopped for breakfast at spaceport dinner.
- *4 Plot Points* – Got in a cab 1.5 hours later, giving directions to go to the Geo-Excavation Historical Museum. Records show the family had reservations there.
- *6 Plot Points* – Destination is determined by the cab company computer, cab driver entered destination before leaving hotel. Cab never arrived at destination.
- *6 Plot Points* – That evening the cab company reported the cab and the driver missing.
- *6 Plot Points* – Cab was found just an hour ago by local authorities. The Cab's GPS system was disabled soon after disappearing.

Family 3 – The Jen's

- Father – Wang Jie (age 39)
- Mother – Li Yan (age 39)
- Son – Li Quiang (age 21)
- Point of Origin – Titan (Saturn)
- Planned Stay – 3 days
- Arrived – 2 days ago
- Disappeared – 1 day ago

Investigation: Payment Records

- *4 Plot Points* – Day 1: Arrived on shuttle at noon, took cab to hotel (Jovian Grande), checked into hotel, different floor from family #1.
- *6 Plot Points* – Key lock records for the Jen's room show multiple entries on their keys that evening. However, the hallway monitors show no one entering or exiting the room – not even the family Jen.
- *6 Plot Points* – A closer look will show that no one entered or left the room for the rest of the night.
- *6 Plot Points* – If the Characters examine the surveillance camera that faces the Jen's room, they will find signs of tampering.
- *8 Plot Points* – The Characters can track the movements of the family to right under the camera position, where they apparently lingered for a while coming in and leaving.
- *4 Plot Points* – Day 2: The family is seen leaving their room and going to the elevator, they are not carrying anything with them, they take a taxi from the hotel to some unknown location.
- *6 Plot Points* – The records of the taxi company that the family used do not show a taxi with that number in their fleet.

Investigation: Original Deaths

Information on these six deaths is sketchy at best. The deaths track back to eight weeks ago, with a body every four days for 24 days, then nothing. Most of the victims were discarded in

an area frequented by former or low-level employees who live on the fringe of the colony now. The first three bodies were not suspicious, so they were not autopsied and simply put in storage for burial at the later date. The last three were in increasingly worse states of radiation burns, and were autopsied to help determine where they were exposed to the radiation.

The information available on the Warden mainframe is listed below. Victims are listed in order of their deaths.

It requires 6 Plot Points using Awareness + Investigate or Cleverness + Research in order to gain all the following information at once. 4 Plot Points will only provide 3 of the entries under each.

Jim Lazarus (age 45)

- Sanitation worker, with interior dome cleaning group
- Failed to show up for work
- Found dead the next day
- No relevant information found in his living quarters
- Contents crated and put in storage, living quarters reassigned

Gary Gannon (age 31)

- Vagrant
- Not reported missing
- Area he generally frequented was picked clean by other vagrants in the area
- No one would speak to officials

Josh Allen (age 29)

- Structural engineer
- Oversaw repairs and verified any changes to the facility

- Nothing found missing from home or office
- Last seen late night in the office, but no record of leaving or arriving at home
- Body found in the Dregs area of the Hole

Elisabeth Shaw (age 22)

- Personal assistant to one of the event coordinators of the gala
- No other signs of assault, other than the burn damage
- Was found in the Dregs
- Last seen leaving a planning meeting for the event

Ed Park (age 33)

- Loan shark
- Wasn't reported missing
- Body discovered with cash still on the body
- Apparently taken from from his home/office

Larry Everett (age 41)

- Ran a mission for the down trodden
- Mission door found open one morning
- Everett was found in a back room
- Nothing was taken from the Mission

Investigation: Pounding the Pavement

During any one of these physical investigations, there is a possibility that the Characters will find the Box that will lead them to Act II. This is not resolved with Plot Points, but instead requires that the Wardens succeed at a Hard Awareness + Investigate Test. If

they do, they find the Box. If not, continue in the investigation.

If the Characters do not find the Box by the investigation of last death, they will find it there.

The Henderson Family

- *4 Plot Points* – The hotel room is still being held for the investigation. There are no signs of forced entry.
- *4 Plot Points* – Investigation of the surveillance cameras in the hallways show that they have been tampered with, and are running on a loop.
- *4 Plot Points* – There is surveillance that shows the people in the room in a panic attempting, to help the mother who was reported to be ill.
- *5 Plot Points* – The door to the closet is open and looking in, it appears that someone was sitting in the closet.
- *6 Plot Points* – The Characters will notice a smell of almonds coming from the closet. This can create a connection, if the Characters went to the morgue to view the bodies and noticed the same smell on the daughter's body.
- *Special* – If found, the Box was dropped by one of the cultists when they went in the closet, in order to get the daughter who was hiding there.

The Wynn Family

- *4 Plot Points* – The hotel room is being held.
- *4 Plot Points* – The cab is also being held.
- *6 Plot Points* – The GPS on the cab was shorted out in some way.

Success at a Cleverness + Engineering: Electrical Test will allow the Characters to determine that the GPS was shorted out before the Wynn family arrived

- *4 Plot Points* – Luggage was still in the trunk.
- *4 Plot Points* – There is no other damage to the vehicle.
- *Special* – If found, the Box was dropped by one of the cultists and is lodged under the seat.

The Jen Family

- *4 Plot Points* – The Cab has not been found or spotted on video cameras.
- *4 Plot Points* – Their room is being held, has been thoroughly searched, and has been completely sanitized.
- *6 Plot Points* – The "Jen's" are a hit team sent by an unknown entity to take out the CEO of Diamond Head at the celebration in a few days.
- *6 Plot Points* – It seems to be just blind luck that they were chosen by the cult to be victims of the sacrifice.
- *Special* – This is a dead end, as far as this adventure goes. However, this could be used as a jumping point to another adventure.

Jim Lazarus

- *4 Plot Points* – The only thing to search is the contents of his habitat, which is currently in storage.
- *Special* – Attempting to search the storage office will have the Characters encounter the the first cultist. He will be sneaking around the facility, looking for the storage container. He will run when

chased and should be allowed to escape. If the Characters find a way to capture or corner the cultist, he will spontaneously combust.

- *Special* – If found, the Box was dropped by one of the cultists and packed up in a storage case.

Gary Gannon

- Investigating this option will require that the Characters convince one of the other vagrants in the area to talk to them (Demeanor + Persuade). An Average Success will convince a woman to tell the Characters that death itself came to claim Gary. The descriptions of the person that took him is a gaunt, frail man whose eyes were dead.
- *Special* – If found, the woman picked up the Box, which was dropped by the attackers.

Josh Allen

- *4 Plot Points* – Josh's habitat is still accessible, as is his office. There is nothing important in the home of Josh.
- *6 Plot Points* – Searching the office, there are signs of a possible struggle and definite signs it has been searched.
- *Special* – With Success at an Average Cleverness + Computers Test, the Characters will be able to find that the last information accessed on the computer were the plans for the entire city of Diamond Head. The plans were copied to an external drive.
- *Special* – If found, the Box was dropped by one of the cultists and is lying under the desk.

Elisabeth Shaw

- *4 Plot Points* – Her habitat is still available. However, there is no information there pertinent to the investigation.
- *4 Plot Points* – Interviewing the Gala event staff will be the direction that the Characters want to go.
- *6 Plot Points* – Elisabeth was leaving with a list of all the dignitaries and their itineraries.
- *Special* – There is no opportunity to obtain the Box from this option.

Ed Park

- *4 Plot Points* – The home/office of Ed has been taken over by a competing loan shark. The players will need to intimidate or strongarm the new owner, John Jeon, to gain access to his place.
- *Special* – Jeon is no real help to the Characters, stating that he took over Ed's turf when he showed up dead. He has an alibi for the time of death, which is why he wasn't arrested.
- *Special* – If found, the Box was dropped by one of the cultists and is lying hidden under the bookcase. Jeon will attempt to claim the artifact.

Larry Everett

- *6 Plot Points* – Talking to anyone at the Mission will reveal that there have been people sneaking through the Mission and talking to residents. Then, some of those residents disappeared.
- *8 Plot Points* – The Mission was the original location where the cult attempted to get its victims. Larry found out what was going on and

was attempting stop the cultists by alerting the authorities. However, they got to him first.

- *Special* – If found, the Box was dropped by one of the cultists in the back office, behind some boxes.

Wrapping Up Act 1

Because the players could choose one of many paths to get to the end of Act I, you will need to bring the action back to the events at the start of Act II. The Characters will eventually find a Box which, when opened, will contain details of a cult safe house.

When they find the Box and examine it, read the following:

"The box is old and rusted. It's three inches square and an inch tall. There's a hinged top that's closed, with no apparent means of locking. However, the lid is shut tight and does not easily open. There's the faint smell of almonds which emanates from the seams of the opening, which are very thin. You are unable to see inside."

Allow the Characters to attempt to open the Box any way that they want. The lid is being held shut by a low power magnetic field. It is actually possible to force the lid open – however, that will destroy the contents of the Box. If they destroy the contents of the Box, they'll find themselves well off the path – encourage them to be smart about this. If they figure it out, they can run an electric current over the Box's exterior. The internal battery will be shorted out and the lid will

open. However, this requires Success at a Hard Cleverness Attribute Test.

"Now that the box is open, you find that the smell was coming from a half-eaten bag of almonds. Also, there's a notebook with encoded numbers scrolled across page after page. Finally, there is a business card for a mechanical repair shop in the Hole on the other side of the city."

ACT II: BRING YOUR SUNSCREEN

Goals: To put the Characters on the trail of the cult, and to have them confront the cult at one of their safe-houses.

Setting: Jim Fezzel's Small Mechanical Repair in Diamond Head

Cast: Cultists, possibly the Harbinger

Scene 5: The Repair Shop

The business card found in the box is for "Jim Fezzel's Small Mechanical Repair." Calling into Warden HQ for any details on the location will provide directions and the following database information.

- Jim Fezzel's Small Mechanical Repair has been in business for the past eight years in the Hole. Tax records show an early profitable business – however no tax returns have been filed in the past 3 years. No reports of problems at the site have been made to local authori-

ties, and a visit by the local tax collectors indicated that the place looked abandoned. However, no reports of anyone moving into the facility have been made and the location remains empty.

- Fezzel's shop is a one hour Tube ride from Warden headquarters. Maps are detailed and give a good sense of the area. The building is in an open area in the middle of the block, with the street in front, an empty lot to the right, and a partially constructed building to the left. The building to the left has only the foundation and studs up, so there is very little cover from that direction. The back of the building is on the exterior bulkhead to the facility – it is of course about five stories underground.

Allow the players time to plan how they intend to enter the location. A small group of cultists are located within. These are one of the teams responsible for the kidnappings, though not the only group. As it happens, the Harbinger has been shadowing the Characters since they arrived and is also watching from a distance when they arrive.

Encountering the Cultists

There are three ways the Characters could approach this entry – Hard and Fast, Soft & Slow, or Silently. The outcome of each option will hopefully lead to the capture of one or more of the six cultists by the Characters. It is not required, but the cultists are not mindless fanatics and will give up if cornered. If no cultists survive, then

just skip to the Harbingers sacrifice at the end. The information in the shop will be enough to lead the players to Act III.

Hard & Fast

With a full-on blitz of the location, the lead will be flying from the get-go. The cultists will see the Characters coming and will have enough time to get to their stash of weapons. However, the Characters will still have the initiative for the first turn. Play out the gun fight and jump to the Act II conclusion section once the Characters round up any survivors and/or start searching the shop.

Soft & Slow

This option entails some of the Characters attempting to talk their way in, while the others attempt to sneak into position. This will involve some impressive Social Skill Tests (the cultists are immediately Unfriendly) for the people going in the front, as they will be in the line of fire when the action starts. Once the cultists get tired of attempting to make the Characters leave, or the Characters make their move to take the place, play out the gun fight and jump to the Act II conclusion section once the Characters round up any survivors and/or start searching the shop.

Silently

While this may be the safest method of taking the cultists down, this tactic still has its dangers, as the Characters will need to wait until the cultists settle down for the night. They are not concerned with getting caught, so there will be no lookouts. Successful Grace + Stealth Tests will allow the Characters

to make it into the building, and a second successful Grace + Stealth Test will allow for the Characters to make it to the rooms where the cultists are sleeping. While there may be a struggle with one of the cultists when the Characters grab them, it will be minimal since they're asleep. The downside to this option is the time it takes to wait for the cultists to go to sleep. If the players choose this option, then the events of Act III will occur much more quickly and they will have less time to prepare.

Average Blight Cultist

Attributes:

Awareness 2 Grace 2
Cleverness 2 Perseverance 2
Demeanor 2 Physique 2

Statistics: Health 6, Speed 8 mph

Skills: Deception 2, Defense 1, Guns: Handguns 2, Insight 2, Notice 1, Reaction 1, Survival 1, Unarmed Combat 1

Equipment: ACC-62 'Bandit' Semi-Auto Pistol, 2 clips of ammunition

Scene 6:

Wrap Up of Act II

If the Characters end up killing all the cultists, skip this section.

"Collecting the cultists together in the main room of the repair shop, you begin to question them. They all look ragged and gaunt. There is something sickly about them. Just when one of them is about to talk, the cultists start going into violent convulsions. One by one, the rest of them do the same, in rapid succession. Their limbs seize up and their faces contort into death masks of agony. Each begins to howl in ago-

ny and the noise is deafening. If you attempt to approach the cultists to offer any assistance, you are struck by the heat coming off the bodies. Your radiation sensors start to go off but, backing off a few feet, the radiation fades to nothing."

Horror Test time! This is a Hard Horror Test.

If anyone fails this test, choose one of the unlucky ones, and – as they turn away from the cultists and begin to heave their lunch on the ground – they will notice another gaunt figure looking from across the street, hidden in an alley. As the Character looks out, the figure will smile an evil smile with no feeling in his eyes and disappear. By the time the Character is able to get up and steady themselves, the figure is gone and no trace can be found.

Searching the Building

With all the cultists dead, there is little to do other than search the dead and the building. The bodies are no longer giving off radiation, so it is safe to examine them. The exterior of the bodies all look similar to the bodies of the tourists found earlier. There is little doubt that the interior is also the same.

The pockets of the cultists contain everyday things you would expect to find on a person. They have ID's that can be run down. If time permits, the ID's will tie back to vagrants and other personnel who came to Diamond Head to make it and failed over the years. One of the cultists has a Box similar to the one found earlier. This Box is open. It also contains a note-

book containing coded numbers and a code key.

Success at an Average Cleverness + Research Test will allow the Characters to decrypt the messages in the notebooks. The notebooks contain map grid coordinates to numerous locations around Diamond Head. There is also a listing with each entry of some item listed in pounds/kg – one pound/0.45 kg at one location, three pounds/1.36 kg at another and so on.

Success at an Average Cleverness + Engineering: Life Support or a Hard Cleverness + Engineering (any other) Test will have a Character come to the conclusion that the numbers at each location list the number of pounds/kg of explosives required to destabilize the dome and kill everyone within.

Also found within the main sleeping area is a map that leads to a spot deep within the bowels of Diamond Head's undercity. This is likely where the kidnap victims were taken.

There are too many bombs planted for the Characters to find and deactivate enough of them to save the city. The only way stop the deaths of thousands will be to get to the cult headquarters and stop the bombs from there. If there is some question from the Characters whether or not this is possible, let them find out that the bombs are not on independent timers but on a single transmitter detonator located somewhere – presumably the headquarters.

ACT III: BURN, BABY, BURN!

Goals: To confront the cultists in their headquarters and stop them from killing everyone in Diamond Head.

Setting: Deep in the undercity of Diamond Head

Cast: Cultists, cult leadership, the Harbinger, most likely local Wardens and police

Scene 7: Cultist HQ

Information found within the cult hideout will give the Characters two key bits of information. The cult are about to attempt to kidnap dignitaries from the Anniversary celebration and kill them to power some kind of ritual. The cult has also stolen numerous explosives packs over the course of the year and placed them at key points around the city's exterior dome with the intent of weakening the dome enough to allow radiation to flood in – which the cult will amplify to kill the citizens of Diamond Head.

The location indicated on the map is in the lowest part of Diamond Head's undercity, below even the generators and air processors. These are the lowest sections of the area excavated many years ago to house the city of Diamond Head. Most of these sections have been closed off and abandoned for years. The cult opened one of these areas and set up shop here years ago. The Harbinger only arrived here about a year ago, possessing the second in command of the cult. It then started

instigating the plan to kill all the people of Diamond Head.

While the Characters are planning the assault, a notice comes over the wire from the Warden local office.

"A shuttle carrying a group of officials from the outlying colonies on a tour of Diamond Head went missing about an hour ago. The shuttle was spotted and detained ten minutes ago, but the driver was found to be some vagrant from below. When the officers attempted to arrest him, the vagrant went into convulsions and died in the arms of the officer. The officer is currently in transit to a medical facility with radiation sickness symptoms"

While a firefight in the upper areas of Diamond Head, or even in the Hole, would cause questions and issues for the Wardens, there is no need to hold back now. The Characters can feel free to enlist members of the local Wardens and the local police force to accompany them on the assault of the cult base. The number of cultists are unknown (about 20), so they should consider bringing backup. Also, a hostage rescue will require a larger team.

Assault on Cultist Camp

The local help will pave the way for the Characters, even laying down their lives so the ring leaders of the cult can be confronted. Take the time to describe the heroic efforts of the lead team dying on the front. Allow the local help to be guided by the Characters to rescue and retrieve the hostages, while the Characters are allowed to focus on the leadership of the cult and

stopping the explosion. The aftermath of the assault will leave the Characters standing against the head of the cult, with his two lieutenants hiding in a back room of the area. The first lieutenant is in actuality a Harbinger.

From time to time, on the lead up to the finale, cultists will get in the way of the Characters on their way to the back room. Use the same stats as before to resolve combat.

Confrontation

Make sure to read all this text before allowing the Characters to act, as this will occur within the time it takes to get in the room and see what is there.

"Breaking into the back room, you finally see the leadership of the cult. Three men stand facing the door chanting. Standing in the front is the cult's leader, wild-eyed, holding the detonator clutched to his chest. He's dressed in rags and has the same withered look that the rest of the cultists have shown. Standing to his right and left are his lieutenants. While both show the tell tale signs of withering, the one to the leader's right looks downright cadaverous."

If anyone saw the Harbinger because of the failed Horror check in Act II, they will recognize him now.

The leader raises the detonator above his head and shouts, *"The Blight consumes all but the faithful!"*

Now the Characters are allowed to act.

Unless they are content to allow the colony to be destroyed, it is likely the Characters will open fire. Let them make their attacks – the cultists have no armor, no cover, and they are targets at close range. The only thing protecting the cultists is their belief in the Blight, and they learn that the Blight does not care.

As you open up, the hail of gunfire tears through the cult leaders. The bodies of the leader and the cultist to the left splay back against the back wall and come to a rest in a broken heap. The cultist on the right gets hit, over and over again. Holes are blown through him as he still stands there. Emptying your clips appears to have no effect.

As the smoke clears, you can see that there are huge gaps where the remaining cultist's body remains standing. Inside him, there appears to be some kind of glimmering energy that's keeping his body together. The cultist/creature reaches down to retrieve the detonator as his body slowly dissolves away. Just as his hand reaches the detonator, the last of his arm sloughs away and only energy remains – which causes the detonator causes it to short out.

All that's left is a gristle-covered skull hanging for a moment in mid-air. With a scratchy voice it speaks, "Pity, the screams would have been glorious. Your victory is meaningless. The oncoming Star is inevitable!" And with that, the skull dissolves, the energy dissipates, and you are alone.

Epilogue:

Pass the Aloe Vera

Once the Characters have had the opportunity to clean up the cultist headquarters, it's time to end the adventure.

You are ordered to report to Warden High Command to be debriefed on what occurred in Diamond Head. The local officers that accompanied you on the mission and survived have been sworn to secrecy, the rescued officials have been told cover stories, and your identities have been hidden from the public record. The official story is that a group of radicals attempted to disrupt the anniversary celebration and were going to use some small explosives to cause a panic. But thanks to the heroic efforts of the local police force, all was taken care of without incident.

HARBINGER

HARBINGER

It has been weeks since you last saw John; he just disappeared from the station in the middle of his shift. Now you finally have information about a person who matches his description. After a chase, you have John in your sites. But something is wrong.

John turns around and steps into the light – but what stands before you is not him. His body is withered and blackened, almost as though it has been through a fire. His hands end in claw-like fingers. His face is ashen, the skin pulled tight over his forehead and cheeks. However, his eyes, although sunken within the skull, are John's – and they appear to plead for some kind of release.

"Yes, he is here," said the thing with John's voice. "He said you would come. How loyal a friend you are. I wish I could see that loyalty repaid, but that will not occur today."

The Harbingers are a race of energy creatures that sweep before the Chthonian Star searching for planets with sentient life. Soon after their arrival violence and destruction follows.

The Harbingers are a creation of the Chthonian Star itself. To accomplish their terrible tasks, Harbingers possess the bodies of sentient beings, trapping the victim's consciousness in a corner of his own mind.

Harbingers are not telepathic and cannot read the victims mind; they just inhabit the body of the victim. While the signs of such a possession are virtually undetectable to those around the victim in the early days, signs beyond the unusual behavior of the victim become apparent. His body begins to wither and desiccate, as well as taking on a decidedly unnatural hue. The victim is slowly transformed into a monstrous creature – though it is rare for a Harbinger to remain in the body long enough to see this transformation through to the end.

Fortunately not all are susceptible to being possessed. A Harbinger must fight for control when it enters a victim. There is no known rhyme or reason to the victims a Harbinger chooses. The end result is always the same though – the victim is forced to perform tasks completely out of character and that often result in death, destruction and chaos to those around him.



Harbinger Game Statistics

Size: 5'-10" tall, 180 lbs. (Male)
m/kg

5'-4" tall, 135 lbs. (Female)
m/kg

Habitat: Any sentient body

Average Attributes:

Awareness	4	Grace	3
Cleverness	5	Perseverance	6
Demeanor	4	Physique	3

Average Statistics:

Health	12	(12/24/36/48)
Speed	12 mph	

Skills: Athletics: Fitness 2, Cryptozoology 4, Deception 3, Defense 3, Guns: Pistols 3, Hand Weapons: Blades 3, Insight 4, Natural Weapons 3, Notice 2, Occult 5, Persuade 3, Reaction 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Survival 2

Weapons: As normal pistols
Claws (1d6 + 2d6 for Physique)

Armor: As normal armor

Horror Factor: Average

Special Abilities:

- **Possession** – a Harbinger can attempt to possess any sentient being. It must first leave its current host. Doing so will render the prior victim unconscious from the trauma of the departure. The Harbinger then enters the new victim. Each hour thereafter, the victim must make an Average Perseverance Test. If he manages to succeed four times in a row, he has fought off the possession and ejected the Harbinger. The victim will know that something happened, but not what unless he succeeds at a Hard Occult Test. During possession, the victim will be in a helpless, but conscious state. As soon as the victim fails one of these Tests, he will be fully possessed.

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