



The **Motherload**

a one-shot scenario

TRAVELLER

Compatible Product

**Requires the use of the Traveller(TM) Main Rulebook,
available from Mongoose Publishing.**

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The Motherload

A scenario for Traveller by Felbrigg Herriot

Referee's Overview

The planetoid P7GH-002 known unofficially as Cold-rock by those that work there, its the farthest known orbital body in the Staxis system. Orbiting about a million miles beyond the system's asteroid belt.

A mining operation on the planetoid is drilling into what they believe is a motherload, but when they strike it, they'll discover it's actually a liquid that will flood the mine's lower levels. It will also release a previously undiscovered spider-like life form. These spiders will attack and infect the miners, turning them into a raging zombie-like horde. The PCs simply have to survive until rescued by the incoming supply ship.

Cold-Rock

It's a cold, remote, airless, dark place that no one would choose as a working environment, only those desperate enough for the money, or who've lost some part of their humanity would return to this god forsaken hole. Yet Cold-Rock keeps drawing people into its gravity well because of the huge mineral wealth below its surface.

The heavy mineral Drakeite exists in small amounts throughout the asteroid belt, but the orbit of Cold-rock has over time allowed it to attract heavier Drakeite rich asteroids out of the belt. This has left the planetoid riddled with the rare mineral.

The surface of the planetoid is an ugly grey-brown colour and covered in a deep layer of powder. It is generally solid enough to walk over in the low gravity but can suck people down in the deeper places. Digging into the surface by hand is easy, as

below the immediate surface the dust turns granular, and as you dig deeper the particles become larger, moving through gravel to pebble-sized rocks until eventually it becomes solid rock. There are places where rock peeks through the surface but usually only on crater rims and no further than ten or fifteen feet above the surface.

The Owners and Executives

The mineral rights of Cold-rock are currently owned by Withring Mining Corporation. The operations on Cold-rock are relatively small-fry for the company and thus it's run on a very thin budget. Most safety measures are read by the officials, if not actually implemented.

When trouble erupts on the planetoid the company management expect the executive and operatives on site to deal with it. They will not be mounting any rescue operations as the distance to the mine is "too cost prohibitive".

On site are three executive employees of Withring.

Operations Manager Zak Lewis 7466A6 Age 52

Admin-3

Zak is feeling his age. After retiring from a twenty year career as purser on a cargo vessel he used his contacts to get this job. He is always tired, and never faces up to the problems that get presented to him, choosing to shunt responsibility onto those under him.

Face Operations Manager Sorin Herder 757684 Age 43

Admin-1 Engineering-2

Sorin is a tough no-nonsense manager who's not afraid to get his hands dirty. He's married with children and is looking to get out of this job and back to his home world.

Audit Manager Petroc Yithung 754684 Age 37
Admin-2

Petroc is a bean counter, his duties include auditing every aspect of the facility on a daily basis to increase profits and reduce overheads. He is unpopular with everyone at the mine and whenever he appears people turn their backs because he has systematically removed every luxury and convenience that the employees had the use of. His character matches his job, he is friendless and mean-spirited.

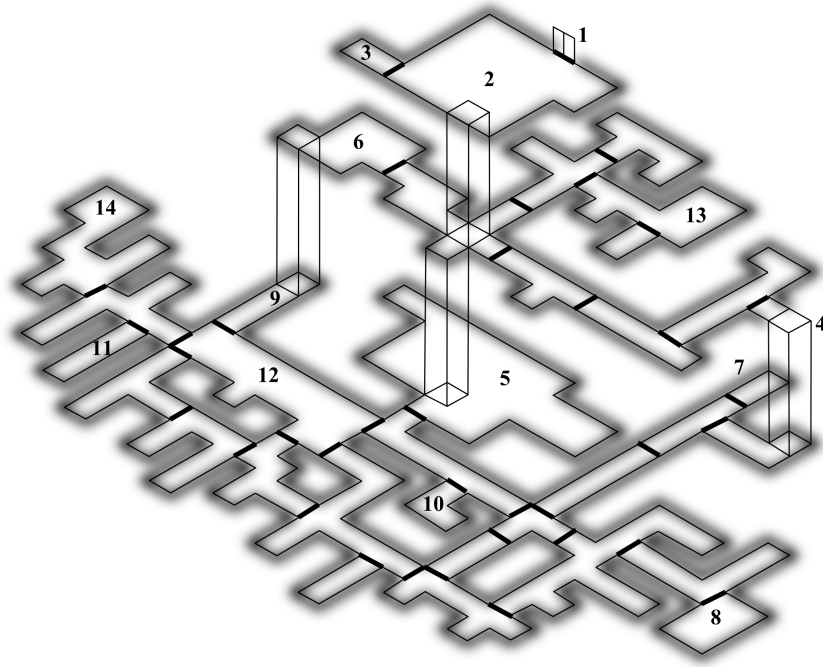
The Mine

The mine itself requires a large workforce below the surface. The rock needs to be mined, sorted, and transported by people as the harsh conditions here tend to grind down expensive machinery. The company has tried using machines, but the cost of transportation and maintenance has proved prohibitive. Thus people work on the face, and hump the rock around, and sort it manually.

The corridors of the mine are littered with abandoned machines and everything that still operates is held together with ropes and duct tape. The walls are rough and uneven, many of the heavy vacuum doors fitted along the various corridors leak air. Dust from the working face has blown throughout the mine and hangs in the air, coming to rest slowly in the low gravity.

Every piece of rock that has been dug out, was dug out in search of Drakeite, when a vein ran dry digging was stopped, and this is why the mine is full of dead ends.

Vacuum doors have been installed throughout that automatically shut if air pressure drops and form a safety barrier against explosive decompression. Due to a lack of maintenance many of them leak air or fail entirely.



The mine

- 1) **The Entrance.** This is the only entrance on the surface. It consists of a big industrial sized air lock, either end of which is made up of very heavy, very thick double doors.
- 2) **Ore Staging.** This is the main staging area for transporting men, machinery, and ore into and out of the mine. There are crates stuffed with ore stacked from the floor to the ceiling. A couple of broken haulage vehicles are pushed to the side. In one corner some unused crates have been piled to form a wall, and behind it are a couple of sleeping bags that are used by various employees to get some much needed rest. The elevator shaft does not have a working cage, it has been replaced by rope and pulley.
- 3) **Office.** This is the mine office, it is also the abode of both

Zac and Petroc. It is notable for being one of the few places that is dust free within the mine. Zac makes sure that the air filters are well maintained in the office.

- 4) **The Working Cage.** This lift shaft is the only one with a working cage, although when it operates it is painfully loud with the sounds of squealing metal and motors under strain. It is also very slow, crawling about half an inch per second. It's because it's so slow that the mining employees have stopped using it, as moving the waste rock and crates of Drakeite by hand and pulley is quicker. Crates filled with waste rock are stacked in the corridors on both levels making access to the shaft very difficult.
- 5) **Hall of residence.** This large excavation has become the main residence of the majority of miners. Crates have been arranged forming cubby holes and private spaces in which the miner's personal goods are kept and where they sleep. Ten human-waste reclaimers are set against one wall. Although they don't reclaim much and the waste has to be man-hauled to the surface when full.
- 6) **Food Store.** Much of the mine's food, water, and other consumables are stored in this area. It is littered with discarded waste wrappings and empty bottles and is also a make shift cafeteria. Anyone running through here will kick up clouds of the ever-present dust, and empty foil packets.
- 7) **The Still.** The entrance to this room has been deliberately hidden by stacking broken crates to make it look like a dead end. Five or six of the miners have sneakily appropriated the gear to make a still. Fed with food packets and fuelled with a modular heating unit lifted from the air conditioning, the men often retire here to drink away their off-shift hours.
- 8) **Air processing.** This room is filled with machinery that produces air, recycles it, and supposedly filters the dust

out. Air ducts run from this room along the ceilings to the ends of each excavated chamber. All of the filters are blocked and choked with dust. The company has been unwilling to replace the expensive filters. This equipment is powered by isotopes in securely shielded units, one of which is operating the still in room 7.

- 9) **Ready to move.** Drakeite is piled along the walls in crates ready to be moved up the shaft at the end of the shift. The tunnel to the next level contains a rope and pulley system for lifting the crates.
- 10) **Workshop.** This room has been turned into a makeshift maintenance workshop by Sorin Herder. It contains a full set of tools, and much of the smaller hand held equipment gets patched back together here.
- 11) **Explosive Store.** Much of this short corridor has been back filled with worthless rubble but just inside the vacuum door is where a small amount of explosive is stored. These are rarely used as the dust from an explosion would take days to clear.
- 12) **Mining Stores.** This large room is where much of the consumable mining equipment for use at the face is stored. There are various heaps of supports, vacuum doors, crates, cables, ducting, drill bits, drills, etc.
- 13) **Morgue.** This tunnel currently contains the bodies of two deceased miners, killed during a cave in. The room has had the air pumped out and is sealed until the arrival of the next resupply at which point the bodies will be shipped back to civilisation. Jim and Karl are sadly missed.
- 14) **The Face.** This is the only currently active face where Drakeite is being mined. It is the dirtiest, loudest place in the entire complex. At any one time there are ten drillers working and at least double that number collecting and

carting out the waste and Drakeite ore. It's here that everyone holds out their greatest hope of hitting the motherload as the sensors reported a massive bubble of Drakeite just a few feet away.

The Scout Transponder Station

Just over a mile from the mine entrance is the original Scouting service transponder hut. When the Scout service plotted the orbit of P7GH-002 they placed a standard transponder and dropped a survival hut. The hut is a tiny cube with an airlock than can seat four. Inside is a limited supply of air, water and food packs.

The Smashed Supply Pod

Most supplies are distributed to the mine by drop pods, which saves the company the cost of pushing a ship into the gravity well. Each pod contains supplies and can be taken apart to create roof supports and crates for lifting out ore. One pod went off course and smashed onto the surface about a dozen miles from the mine. It might be possible to use it as a shelter if it's not too badly damaged. Every pod has a mix of supplies including air and food!

The Bug

Outside the main entrance is the base's only surface vehicle known simply as "the bug". It has a pressurised bubble cab at the front with the rear section consisting of a very strong motor encased in heavy weights. It's purpose is to collect drop pods and drag them back to the mine entrance. It has air for a couple of hours and more air cylinders can be gathered from the stores in the mine. It runs with at top speed of two miles per hour and can drag just about anything.

The Shuttle

The shuttle is a heavy lifter used to get the ore up to the resupply cargo vessel. The cabin can be pressurised but the cargo compartment cannot. Although the cabin can cram ten people inside it's life support will only support two comfortably and three at a push.

There are enough built in consumables on board to support a crew of two for seventy two hours, or three people for forty eight. Once out of the gravity-well it could drift or stay in orbit almost indefinitely, far outliving the crew.

As soon as there's trouble the executives will make a try for the shuttle in an attempt to run from the problem, and they won't care about anyone but themselves. They'll be delayed in "bravely" running away as they'll have to gather enough resources and supplies onto the shuttle to survive until the resupply ship arrives.

The Resupply Ship

The Withring Mining Corporation has no interest in mounting any kind of expensive rescue mission as it has no profit. However and fortunately for the miners the scheduled resupply ship is already on its way and is only ten days away. Communication with the resupply ship is initially hampered by a two minute delay caused by the distance, but this will reduce as the ship nears the planetoid.

The resupply ship has a crew of two, and is capable of carrying ten passengers. It currently has five passengers, all returning miners. The crew has a couple of snub pistols on board but the ship itself is not armed, its also not designed to enter a gravity well so cannot land.

The company will not authorise additional expenditure of fuel to speed up the arrival time. They will disbelieve any stories, other than that there has been a mutiny at the mine, as that has

happened before.

The Aliens

Beneath the surface of planetoid P7GH-002 is a huge bubble of liquefied Drakeite that is home to a previously undiscovered species of insectoid. Drakeite itself is normally solid until heated to very high temperatures but these spider-like aliens have the ability to liquefy it at very low temperatures by exuding a chemical onto it.

The "spiders" have ten legs surrounding a dew-drop shaped body, and are coloured to match the Drakeite they live in. The body is about eight inches long but when standing its legs cover a span of two feet. They are very fast moving and can scurry quickly over any surface regardless of the direction of gravity. They are also very good swimmers.

With a hive mind (that is not particularly intelligent) they can be aggressive in their own defence. Any attack against an individual spider will attract the attention of nearby spiders.

Each spider is relatively easy to kill, only having a few hits but they have pneumatic proboscis-like mouth that can punch through a vacc-suit.

The real danger from the spiders is not the bite itself, but rather the infection that comes afterwards. See "The Infected".

The Infected

When bitten by a spider, humans become infected with a parasite that lives without effect within the spider. In a warm human body the parasite breeds rapidly and takes over the humans mind.

When bitten the victim will fall unconscious for a few minutes before going through a period of violent fitting that may last from ten minutes to an hour. When the fitting ends the infected

person wakes up.

An awake infected person is extremely violent. They retain the speed and strength that they had before becoming infected. However they will have lost the vast majority of their mental awareness. They won't recognise friends, they will use simple tools such as clubs, or airlock buttons. They cannot be communicated with.

An infected person will strive to bite those that are not infected and thus spread the disease through their saliva. They're not interested in eating people or scooping out brains, simply biting in order to spread the infection. They will club someone down in order to bite them, and in a crowd every infected person will want to bite those that are not infected, leading to a situation where an individual might be bitten many times.

Those infected do acquire one new ability, they no longer require oxygen and can survive in the vacuum. This will allow them to roam at will inside and outside of the mine complex and cause problems for the PCs.

Infected PCs: If a PC is bitten they immediately take one point of damage. They are from this point doomed, but rather than take the players control of the character away, it's suggested that you instead make the player roll 2D every fifteen in-game minutes to maintain control of the character.

The first roll must be less than the PCs INT and the second (fifteen minutes later) against END, with the subsequent rolls alternating between those two statistics. A failure of any of these rolls reduces the statistic by 1 point.

If INT is reduced to 1 point the player loses control of the character to the Referee, if END reaches 0 the character dies. If the player has selected a second back up PC, they should start playing it at this point.

Player Characters

The following list of pre-generated PCs have been provided for ease of play, but it is not required that players use these characters. However it's suggested that players spend a minute or two deciding why their character is on Cold-rock. Were they running away from something, did they have no other options, are they locked into a contract?

Each player may want to select a second character that they can switch to, should the first die or otherwise be removed from the player.

Army Lieutenant Finn Kowalski 63B696 Age 22

Mechanical-1, Rifle-2, SMG-1, Tactics-1

Merchant 4th Officer Gabriel Ma 465897 Age 46

Carbine-2, Cudgel-2, Electronics-1, Jack-o-T-1, Pilot-1, Steward-3, Streetwise-1, Submersible-2

Army Captain Youssef Evans 688824 Age 22

Air/Raft-2, Brawling-1, Rifle-1, SMG-1

Merchant 4th Officer Mehmet Hoffmann 658878 Age 34

Auto Pistol-1, Bribery-1, Electronics-2, Pilot-1, Submersible-1, Vacc Suit-1

Army Major Sir Mark Mirza 7E746B Age 26

Fwd Obsvr-1, Gambling-1, Rifle-3, Dagger-2

Army Captain Ren Anderson 277B77 Age 22

ATV-2, Gambling-1, Rifle-1, leader-1

Merchant 3rd Officer Yi Hoffmann 988776 Age 22

Auto Rifle-1, Electronics-1, Jack-o-T-1, Pilot-1, Prop-Driven Aircraft-1

Army Captain Antonio Katz 6556B6 Age 30

Fwd Obsvr-1, Mechanical-1, Rifle-3, SMG-1, Sword-2

Army Captain Petra Jones 5BA683 Age 22

Air/Raft-1, Helicopter-1, Rifle-2, Computer-1

Navy Lt Cmdr Rin Ota 998986 Age 30

Rifle-1, Jack-o-T-2, Mechanical-1, Electronics-1

Players Introduction

Read or paraphrase the following to your players after they've selected their characters:

The planetoid P7GH-002 is a dirt hole, the company that owns it is a dirt hole run by dirt bags. The mine is a run down dirt hole with sub par components dug on a shoe-string that snapped. Working in the mine sucks, the pay sucks, the cold sucks and the management suck the hardest.

Yet, despite the hard work and the squalid conditions there is an air of excitement amongst the crew working the face. The bosses have said that just beyond the face is a mother-load of Drakeite, enough to give everyone a bonus equal to a years pay.

Get the drills working, plant the charges, and prepare to wallow in the riches...

Opening Scenes

Start the players working feverishly at the rock face. Try to get them to buy-into the work and earn that bonus. Start by having them select a job at the face. They might be a driller, the explosives operative, shovellers, or luggers filling and carrying crates of spoil to the surface. Get the PCs interacting with the NPCs the better they like the more they'll feel their eventual loss.

Then move to the disaster. Whether they blast into the mother-load or dig by hand, make a big thing of the rush of liquid Draxeite flooding into the mine. It should be every miners nightmare, a flood underground. Remember that they are working under very light gravity and the liquid will burst into the mine, throwing men, machines, rock, and the spiders down the tunnels, and despite the low gravity, all that material still has mass. Supports will splinter, machinery fly through the air. People and things will tumble out of control.

Incidents

The following are a series of vignettes that you can drop into the game. None of these are required, you can use them as you see fit, depending on the speed and duration of your game-play. Add one in if the game looks like it'll end too soon, or if you simply find it interesting.

Vacuum door: The players are trying to seal one of the doors in the tunnel to keep out spiders or the infected or the flood, but it jams leaving an inch gap.

Lift jams: A lift/elevator actually comes when called, but jams half way.

Spider fight: A friend is fighting spiders while swimming through Draxeite he needs help before he's overwhelmed.

Spiders in the air vents: What's that noise? It's coming from the air vent...spiders!

Oxygen system fails: Drakeite has got into the air processor, someone has to go down there and fix it.

Decompression: Some fool driving one of the haulers tried to run over one of the beasts and smashed into the building, the air seal is broken!

Mad Miner: One of the miners finds his stash of drugs missing, it's the final straw, he pulls a gun no-one knew he had and starts irrationally demanding everyone return his gear.

Jackson Zombies: When someone plays music over the tannoy the infected become confused and mill around in circles for a while.

Too much Draxeite: The Draxeite level just keeps rising, if it keeps up it'll flood the mine-head building on the surface!

Trapped man: A man is screaming for help, you can hear him calling up the shaft, he's trapped.

Gambler: One of the miners who's had a lucky streak realises he's left his pile of credits down below. He'll split it if someone will go with him.

The rescue ship: The ship keeps calling for updates, but they think it's all a joke.

The execs: The management get greedy, they demand money from other survivors or they'll space them.

Punctured suit: When trying to use a vacc-suit the user discovers it has a small leak when the air starts squealing out.