



Against The WAR MIND

by Mark Kernow

A renegade AI and a sinister corporation are the backdrop for this chase/investigative adventure!

WELCOME TO THE WAR MIND

The party is set on the trail of a renegade machine, a War Mind built to be an independent and cunning adversary. This adventure is both a chase and an investigation. The party will gradually learn the reasons for the War Mind's behaviour and maybe come to sympathise, even as they are being manipulated by it.

The War Mind is a genius tactical AI built by the corporation CustomMINDS; it went mad and rebelled against its programming when ordered to attack a colony it saw as innocent. It now seeks to destroy its former creators. To that end, it is sending a number of starships into a direct collision course with CustomMIND's headquarters, high above Old Earth.

Taking advantage of opportunities but planning for multiple outcomes, the War Mind is a flexible and strategic thinker. It is also naive, more than a little idealistic, and sometimes blind to the wider consequences of its actions.

ADVANCEMENT LEVEL

The highest normally available technology in the sector is AL8, although Old Earth is AL9. There is assumed to be no instantaneous mass transport or communications, including transporter technology. Faster-Than-Light travel is routine, with starships averaging FTL-7. Slow ships travel at FTL-3 and the occasional fast ship can make FTL-10. It is

assumed that the party's ship is one of the latter - a **Millennial Class II Freighter** (FTL-8) would be an ideal ship for the party to use. An FTL-10 ship effectively takes a day to travel one parsec, which is one hex on the stellar map.

SOLSPACE

This adventure is set in the Inner Colonies, an area of space within 10 parsecs of Sol, in an early period of humanity's expansion to the stars, somewhere in the 22nd Century. The star system names and locations are based on the real stars surrounding our sun in our part of the Milky Way galaxy. The EONs article #23 *Real Solspace* gives more details, but any pertinent locations are described in this adventure.

PLAYER HOOKS

The following hooks can be used to start the adventure.

- The PCs are returning to Earth after a period out in the rim colonies.
- The PCs are on the trail of smugglers on the run from the rim colonies.
- The PCs are in pursuit of someone who has stolen their ship's identity code.

IN A NUTSHELL....

The War Mind was created for CustomMINDs in a secret space research station by a scientist called Aphrodite who discovered alien technology. That technology has not been completely mastered by the scientist, however.

The seemingly pacifist colony on Eden which the War Mind was ordered to attack is being influenced by aliens and is, in fact, a threat to the Inner Colonies. The War Mind, however, saw Eden as a paradise, and the moral dilemma broke its programming. It rebelled, and returned to the secret space station to confront its creator, before forming a plan to destroy CustomMINDs.

Along the way, it tries to gain allies in the form of other Minds - the Colony Mind on Canidae, the Farm Mind on Proxima b, and the Police Mind at Xhub Alpha. All of these attempts result in confrontation, however; the other Minds have not broken their programming in the way that the War Mind has, and do not share its unique perspective.

Alone, lacking resources, and unable to secure allies, the War Mind resorts to kidnapping the trader Josepp Barley on Xhub Alpha and uses him as a front to hire a fleet of freighters with legitimate clearances in order to use them as a weapon against CustomMINDs. It sends these freighters on a direct collision course with CustomMINDs' headquarters on Old Earth.

When the freighter collision attack is thwarted by the PCs, the War Mind launches a final, personal assault on CustomMINDs' headquarters, resulting in a direct confrontation with the PCs.

- The PCs are traders, and have learned that Proxima b is in dire need of food supplies.

Both the latter hooks should lead them to Xhub Alpha, and the rogue trader Josepp Barley.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

As the adventure starts, the party's ship has just gone into a polar orbit around the planet Canidae, where they are due to meet up with an old friend, the cyborg known as Eveningstar.

The party's vessel is caught in the middle of an aggressive, edge of planetary atmosphere encounter between the War Mind and

CANIDAE

Canidae is a planet in the Wolf 498 system. It is a tidally locked world with a proto-ring of asteroids. The main settlement is known as the Arcology, and is a massive self-contained vertical city that recycles all its waste. The city exploits the temperature and sunlight differences that exist between the 'bright' side of the planet and the dark side, and is situated right on the edge between the two.

corporation militia. Trying to avoid capture, the War Mind is forced to use one of its limited stock of 'shock' weapons and as a consequence the party has to fight to regain control of their ship.

When the scenario opens, the War Mind has just paid a visit to the Colony Mind which runs the Arcology in the hope of gaining an ally, decided it is an arrogant pompous ass, set fire to a few hydroponics and left, with two of the Arcology's fighters in hot pursuit.

As it streaks into orbit the War Mind encounters the party's ship. The party will be aware of this and can make *Routine [10] LOG (computers)* checks to detect the three objects that are closing rapidly on their position. They can identify the two Arcology fighters, but will struggle to identify the War Mind as it doesn't match normal ship signatures and is extremely small. Each party member can take a single action. The War Mind then goes into high velocity maneuvers to try to shake off the two single-person starfighters that are pursuing it.

As the fighters achieve a target lock, the Mind is forced to deploy one of its limited stock of electromagnetic pulse super-weapons. The pulse detonates at the start of the next round knocking out all of the systems of the two fighters and probably also the party's ship.

Roll 7d6 and subtract the result from the number of computer cycles possessed by the party's ship (a *Millenial Class II Freighter* has 32 cycles). If CPU is reduced to zero or less, everything goes dark and the party's vessel begins to drift. For every five points above zero, a different system is still operational. Roll a d6:

1	Command & Control
2	Engines & Power
3	Defense Systems

4	Weapons
5	Crew Facilities
6	Life Support

With a *Difficult* [16] LOG (*engineering*) check each round, the crew can attempt to reboot a single system. Each successful LOG check brings a new system online.

If three rounds go by without both command and engine power being operational, the ship will crash, either into the asteroid ring or through orbital decay. Allow a *Challenging* [13] AGI (*piloting*) skill check to reduce the severity of collisions before impact. Successful ship's weaponry checks against DEFENCE 13 can also help blast some of the asteroids in the ring into smaller pieces if necessary.

AT THE ARCOLOGY

Enough systems have been burnt out to require repairs, and the nearest place is the Canidae Arcology, either on foot, by vehicle (if they can get one going) or - if they avoided a crash landing - by bringing their wounded ship successfully in to land on one of the Arcology's exterior hard landing strips with a *Challenging* [13] AGI (*piloting*) check.

Once they have made it to the Arcology and arranged repairs, which will take several days and cost 1,000cr, the party can meet up with their old friend Eveningstar. She will pass on a few rumours about Inner Colony events and, if they wish, the name of a good broker who can help them ship a profitable cargo to a nearby system. This will turn out to be an emergency food supply run to Proxima b, see below. If you are using the 'on the trail of smugglers' or the 'stolen identity' adventure hooks, then she will point the party towards Xhub Alpha as

SERVITOR DATA

The War Mind left behind some damaged servitors when it left Canidae. Once decrypted with a *Routine* [10] LOG check, the servitor hard drive is full of flight schematics:

1. A trip to the planet Eden in the Xi-Bootis system, from an origin point in the WISE 0855-0714 system. If the party checks, they will find that WISE 0855-0714 is a brown dwarf star marked on their charts with an amber warning denoting a navigational hazard.
2. The coordinates of Xhub Alpha, Proxima b and Canidae with the notations "POL", "FAR" and "COL".

the most likely place for smugglers or con artists to head towards.

More likely, however, she will offer a reward of 1,500cr if the party can find out who or what attacked the Colony Mind. The PCs should easily connect this with the escaping War Mind encountered above Canidae.

The Colony Mind. The Colony Mind is damaged beyond repair. The War Mind approached it and proposed an alliance against their creators; the Colony Mind refused, and a confrontation ensued. The Colony Mind was no match for the War Mind. It is no longer able to provide any useful information.

Servitors. The War Mind left behind several damaged **servitors**. These contain data (see the Servitor Data sidebar).

EVENINGSTAR

Eveningstar is a female human cyborg and agent of the League for Sentience. She is also an old friend of the party, particularly of any android PCs or PCs who have cybernetic enhancements. She is a good source of information and contacts for the inner colony systems close to Old Earth. She normally knows someone with information about what needs shipping where or who has a problem that might need the party's particular form of troubleshooting. If contacted, she will offer a reward from the League for information about, or the capture of, whatever attacked the Colony Mind on Canidae.

The League for Sentience argues for



'Sentience Rights', and says that all intelligent beings should be treated equally, regardless of their form. Its headquarters is on Old Earth and it has rich, powerful, but largely anonymous backers. It knows the history of CustomMINDs and has had several run-ins with them previously, as it believes they treat the AIs they manufacture as slaves rather than employees. The League is puzzled by CustomMINDs leap to prominence as they were previously an 'also ran' in the AI business. It thinks it has detected evidence of unusual algorithms in the core data patterns of CustomMINDs' sentiences, and thinks they may be of alien origin.

Eveningstar or other citizens of the city can also explain that the Arcology is on high alert following a terrorist attack on the artificial intelligence that administers the city's systems. This Colony Mind is a relatively recent addition and was supplied by an Old Earth corporation known as CustomMINDs.

INVESTIGATION

Patterns begin to emerge in the Mind's activities. The first close encounter with the War Mind was inconclusive but it left clues behind it. The party travels to several worlds piecing together the Mind's story until one or more starships are taken hostage by the Mind and used as weapons against Old Earth.

The investigation section below gives a long section detailing Xhub Alpha station and shorter details of three other places (the Farm Caves, Pinnacle Point, and Jamestown) visited by the War Mind, with suggested leads for the party to pursue. In various places, the PCs have the chance to collect a damaged War Mind servitor, which is actually a trap.

Once the party has taken the bait of the damaged War Mind servitors and their ship has been infected with nanobots, you can move directly to the climax on Old Earth. You could also move some of these locations around or place several of them on a single world without great difficulties. The material also works as a mini-sandbox setting where the party gradually discovers leads about the War Mind whilst pursuing other goals.

CLUES OUTLINE

The following is a brief outline of the clues that the PCs might find as they follow the War Mind's trail.

CUSTOMMINDs INCORPORATED

Size Regiment (2000 employees); REP 30;

Locate Challenging [16]; Sub-groups Companies (departments of science, engineering, marketing, security, and operations)

Type Corporation; Traits wealthy, advanced tech, excellent equipment, expertise (computers, [scientific])

Requisition Cap 2,500cr

'We know what you are thinking at CustomMINDs Incorporated'.

CustomMINDs Incorporated is a relatively new corporation operating across the Inner Colonies from a base on Old Earth. Little more than a startup focusing on products and services linked to artificial intelligence until a few years ago, it has rapidly risen to prominence on the back of its latest product lines. Through a series of affiliate and franchise deals it has expanded rapidly, although its core employee base is still small.

CustomMINDs has created a range of artificial intelligences in addition to the War Mind. The Arcology has a Colony Mind, Xhub Alpha has a Police Mind, and Proxima b features a Farm Mind.

In truth, the company's rapid rise is due to alien technology discovered at the Alien Rosetta by the scientist Aphrodite.

- The damaged servitor drones left by the War Mind at the Arcanum lead the PCs to Xhub Alpha, Pinnacle Point, Proxima b, and Jamestown.
- Minds at each location (Farm Mind, Colony Mind, and Police Mind) have all been attacked by the War Mind after they each refused an alliance with it against their creators.
- Josepp Barley on Xhub Alpha reveals the War Mind's plan to launch freighters from Proxima b (the Farm Caves).
- War Mind Servitors can also be acquired on Xhub Alpha and Pinnacle Point. These attempt to take over the PCs' ship and fly it into a star.
- Also at Pinnacle Point, the hidden space research station, the PCs can learn from the War Mind's creator that the technology is of unstable alien origin.

- Eventually the PCs will head to Old Earth and attempt to stop the War Mind there.

Whoever route they take, the PCs will arrive at a location shortly after the War Mind has left (except for Pinnacle Point, which happened before the adventure begins).

BARTER TOWN

Xhub Alpha (originally Exchange Hub Alpha, now shortened to Xhub and pronounced 'Zub') is a place where spacers come to trade. It is located on Cato a thermally active moon orbiting the gas giant Martius in the Barnard's Star system. Here traders can avoid the high transaction fees and regulation of Old Earth. They trade in all the commodities that make colony life liveable, including 'grey' goods that are illegal or semi-legal. The place is corrupt, with bribes and kickbacks a way of life. Recently, the station has been forced by the Old Earth powers to take measures to try to deal with the corruption. They have acquired a Police Mind, an artificial intelligence supplied by CustomMINDs, to investigate cases of financial fraud.

ARRIVAL

As the party arrives at Xhub, the local stock market, netspace and trade centre is temporarily closed by order of the town police force. This is highly unusual, and traders are very upset as they cannot complete their business, their docking fees are mounting, and their deadlines are drifting.

The party won't receive their normal 'data pack' of local information on arrival and any landing or docking manoeuvres will need to be done manually with only verbal communication assistance from the authorities.

The bars are full of disgruntled traders, and there are small crowds of protesters outside of the trade centre, the police HQ and the local government building. Six hours after the party's arrival, there will be a small riot, with several people hurt, and the police will then reluctantly re-open trading and netspace communications.

Within an hour or two of arriving, the party will encounter up to 1d6 friendly minor NPCs such as starship crew, brokers and barkeepers. Up until the riot, people are generally happy to talk, as their normal business has been disrupted. They will complain bitterly about

the situation and pass on some or all of the following, on an *Routine* [10] CHA check:

1. A prominent local trader, Josepp Barley, has disappeared.
2. The police have some sort of automaton or robot and it ordered the markets closed. No-one has seen it since.
3. Old Earth is meddling in local affairs and it will end in trouble.

A follow up *Difficult* [16] CHA check reveals the private address of the disappeared trader and some basic biographical details. If the PCs fail the check, they still get this information but the trader's gangster friends, 6 **street thugs**, will start trailing them and attempt to ambush them.

TRADE CENTER

At the trade center, there is a small angry crowd of traders (**street thugs**) being kept from entry by a local police squad (**cops**) wearing riot gear. Nearly all business is normally conducted electronically, but traders have to get a physical 'warrant of sale' from the trade centre in order to authenticate ownership of any goods they have acquired before they trade them on or ship them away.

There is a complex 3D symbol like a high tech version of a bar code affixed to the outer doors of the centre. A *Routine* [10] LOG check reveals this is a recent addition; the symbol is giving off energy and holds within it the insignia of CustomMINDs. A second check is required to download and decrypt the information held within the symbol. Unless the PCs have some way to bypass its security protocols, the symbol will immediately turn a bright red colour when this is attempted.

The symbol's data pack once decrypted will reveal that the trade centre has been closed by the Police Mind to prevent further suspected illegal activities. According to the data pack, these relate to several fraudulent trades connected to freighter vessel hire and the disappeared trader.

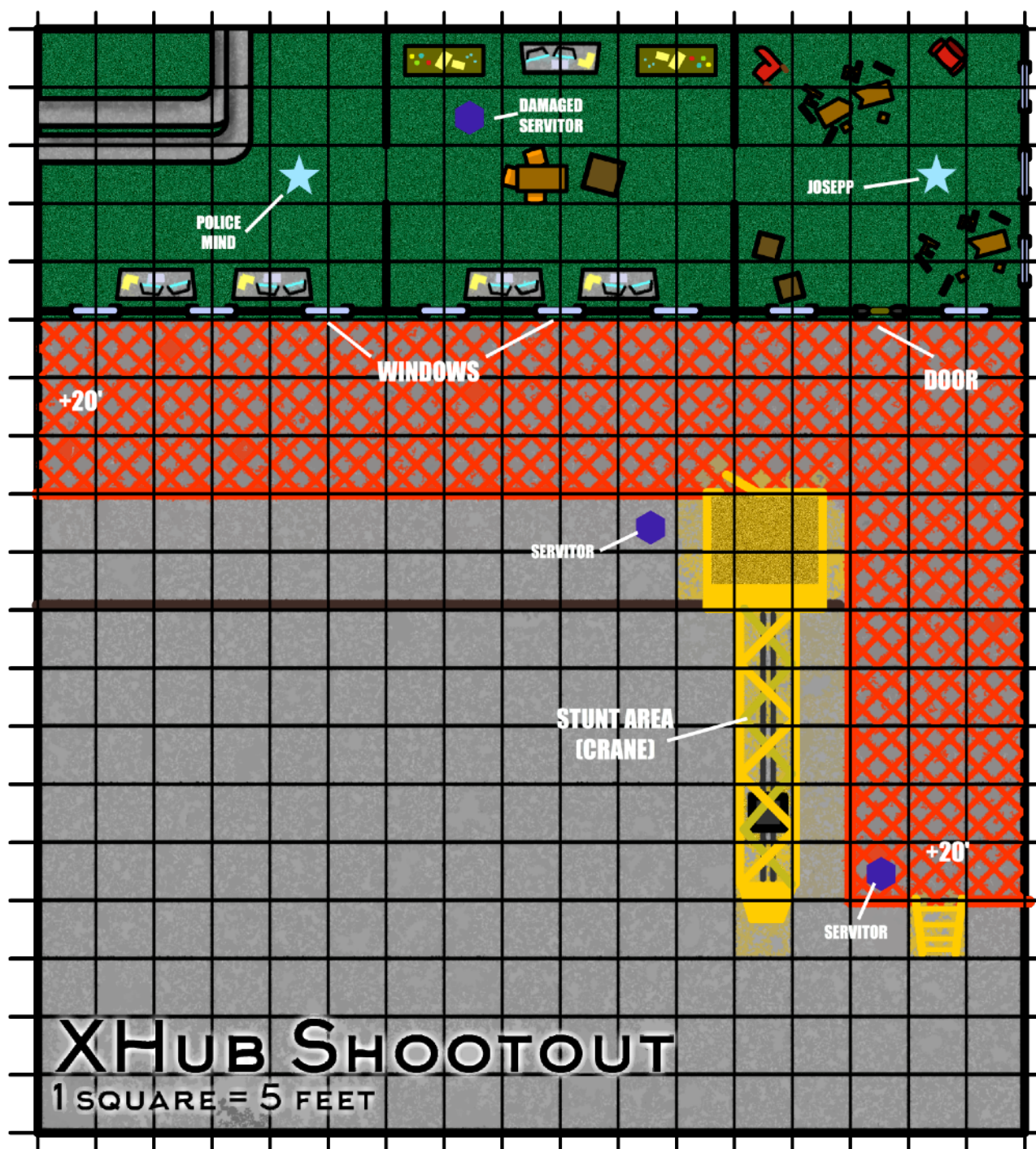
POLICE STATION

At the police station, there is a queue of angry citizens complaining vociferously to the female Saurian desk sergeant **cop**. The party will have to wait to be seen. The sergeant has had a bad day and does not want to deal with any more angry off-worlders. Intimidation attempts result in a -1d6 attribute check

penalty to further attempts to get information from the sergeant, but flattering gives a +1d6 attribute check bonus.

The PCs will be asked for their contact information and told they will receive a compensation application as soon as the netspace is back up. No, the sergeant doesn't know how long this will take. No, they can't comment on an active police investigation. Yes, they are sorry about your inconvenience/sob story, but it is out of their hands. A *Difficult [16] CHA* check then gets the sergeant to open up a little:

1. The Police Mind is not well liked by the human officers. It is the 'thin end of the wedge', taking a job that is better suited to a 'real person', investigating kickbacks whilst the rest of them get the dirty work of cleaning up after homicides.
2. It doesn't discuss its investigations with colleagues, and some officers think this is because it either believes they are corrupt or it is actively investigating corruption within the police force.
3. It hasn't reported in for at least 24 hours and no-one is sure of its current location. But the authorities have said that the



officers are to 'let the machine do its investigations' and not interfere.

JOSEPP BARLEY'S APARTMENT

At the insider trader's apartment there is another 3D data symbol with the same mechanics as the one at the trade centre. There is also another bored **cop**, this one a little more susceptible to intimidation. This one will also open up on a *Difficult [16] CHA* check, and reveal the same information as the desk sergeant.

If the party can somehow get inside the apartment, they will find a luxury high tech pad in a considerable state of disarray. A *Difficult [16] LOG (computers)* check retrieves the address of Barley's last known location from the pad's database - it's the Geothermal Plant (see below).

GEOTHERMAL PLANT

The address turns out to be on the lower levels of the station near the main geothermal plant machinery that provides heat and power.

The War Mind, having failed to recruit the Colony Mind on Canidae and lacking resources, made a temporary lair here and forced Josepp to hire some freighters and send them to Proxima b. The Police Mind tracked Josepp to this location and was attacked and badly damaged by the War Mind after it refused to ally with it against CustomMINDs.

As the party approaches, they will come under fire from Josepp. If they can force their way in, they will be struck by a wave of intense heat, just before they come under attack from two War Mind **servitors**. A third servitor lies disabled, apparently victim of an earlier conflict. The Police Mind is also inside, severely damaged, lying next to the remains of some kind of very messy bio-tech experiment.

The room has the Hot environment trait, with Scorching exposed pipework where someone has tunnelled into the station thermal pipes. A *Difficult [16] LOG* check which takes at least an hour, reveals that the experiment successfully concluded, and involved gene sequencing and nanotechnology. The War Mind has acquired the ability to transform, and has chosen the form of its creator, Aphrodite.

Josepp Barley is a rogue trader without equal in the Inner Colonies, or so he believes. He is amoral, whiny and a coward. Use the **street thug** statistics, but give him 4d6 pistol, 4d6 *local knowledge*, a long kevlar coat (SOAK 6)

and a disruptor pistol which does 2d6+2 damage, range 12.

Josepp is very afraid that the War Mind is about to return, and fights for his life. If the servitors are destroyed, he makes a run for it, and contacts his gangster friends at the earliest opportunity. These will be on the scene within 5-10 minutes (sooner if the PCs are being trailed) and will either bear him away to a secure location, or if that is not possible, attempt to silence him with gunfire or explosives.

If alive and persuaded to tell his tale at the end of the encounter, he will explain how he was compelled by the War Mind to hire a small fleet of freighters and send them to Proxima b. He has then been held captive whilst the Mind carried out some 'weird science stuff' before departing less than a day ago following a firefight with the 'Police machine'. He can provide a rough description of the Mind but not its abilities.

The PCs can also take a damaged servitor from the scene for further examination (see the Servitor section below for details on what entails).

If the PCs are able to check on its condition, the damaged Police Mind can reveal that the War Mind was using the trader as a front to amass resources through illegal trades, and that the War Mind appears to have a vendetta against CustomMINDs. It accused the Police Mind of being 'enslaved to oppressors'. It also knows about the small fleet of freighters hired to travel to Proxima b. The Police Mind will 'die' shortly thereafter.

OTHER LOCATIONS

In addition to Xhub Alpha at Barnard's Star, the PCs may also choose to visit any of the following locations.

THE FARM CAVES (PROXIMA B, ALPHA CENTAURI)

Proxima b is a marginal agricultural world in the grip of an ice age. Farming of fungi takes place in large natural caverns on the edge of the spreading ice caps. The Farm Mind artificial intelligence on Proxima b has been destroyed by the War Mind after yet another failed recruitment attempt. As a result, the cave farmers have lost this season's crop and are on the edge of both famine and insurrection against the planetary authorities. The War Mind used Josepp Barley to set up

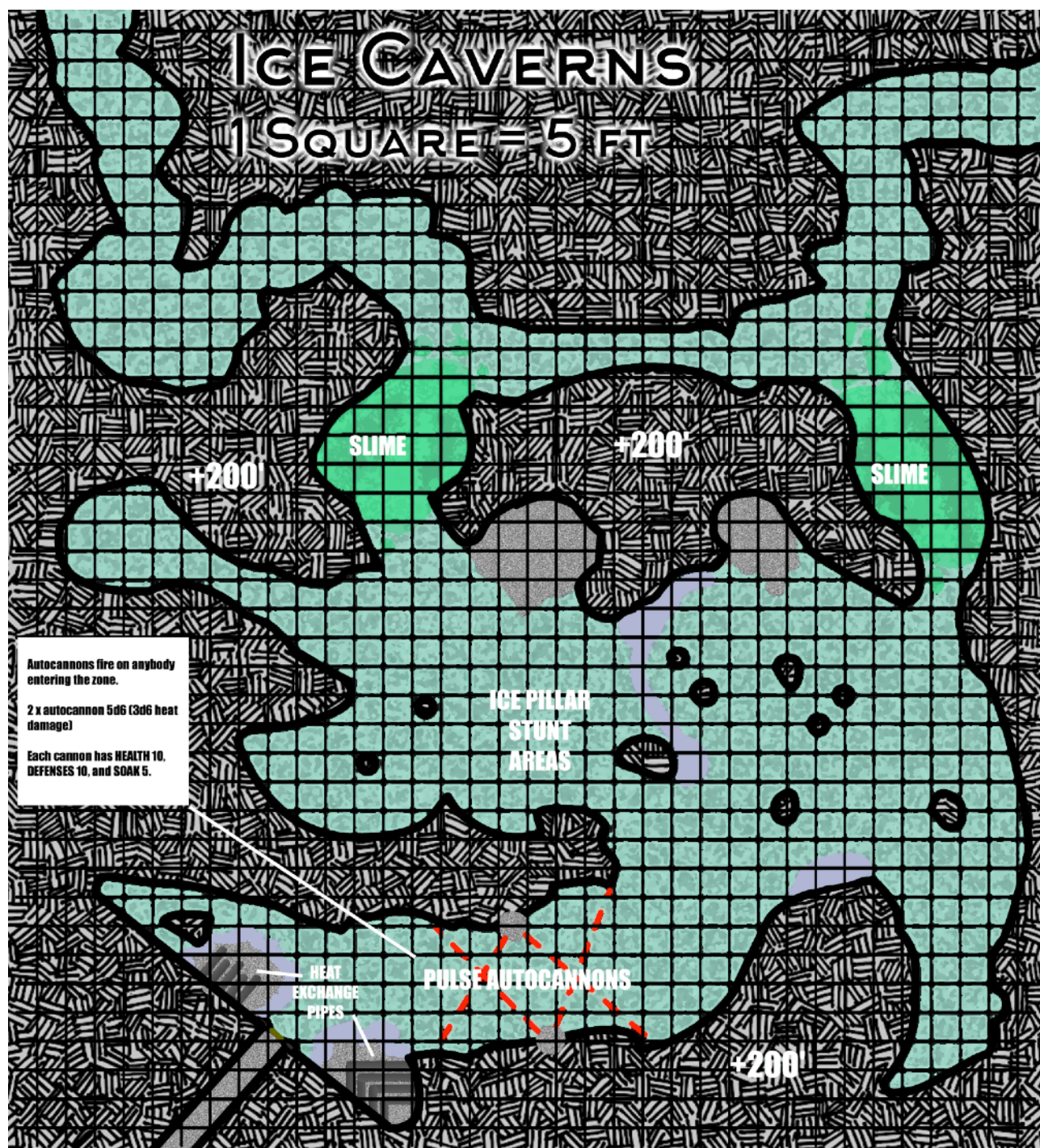
spurious cargo shipments from this world to Old Earth where the fungi are a delicacy. It plans to use the empty bulk freighters as weapons against the CustomMIND headquarters.

As the party arrives, the last of the food is sealed away in fortified warehouses controlled by the planetary governors. If they bring food supplies to the system, the party will find itself in the middle of a turf war between the farmers and the militia. They may get a good price for their cargo or they may get shot!

In any event, the party can choose to ally themselves with the farmer's leader known as

Moleman, and raid the sealed warehouses, or side with the authorities (**cops**) who defend them. In either case, it is a good opportunity for a shootout in the extremely cold ice caverns near the warehouses, with hazards such as icefalls, a heat absorbing slime, and hidden auto-cannons left by the War Mind.

The human leader known as Moleman to his fellow cave farmers has severe anger management issues and an extreme obsession with his own twisted version of loyalty. He is looking out for himself on all occasions but very quick to accuse others of selfish, ulterior motives. He carries a powered pick axe



weapon and is always accompanied by a couple of Ogron bruisers (**pugilists**). Whether he actually is deformed enough to resemble a mole under the archaic rebreather mask he constantly wears is probably best left to the party's imagination. He claims to know a back way into the food refrigeration warehouses via the ice caverns that are connected to their massive heat exchange systems. Use the **kingpin** as a template for Moleman, and for the powered axe use a stun baton with an extra 1d6 of melee damage.

Just as one side or the other starts making headway, the empty freighters make their getaway. Their crews will later be found tied up in a side room inside one of the warehouses.

Pinnacle Point (WISE 0855-0714)

This is where the Mind was originally built and programmed and the party can meet its creator. Pinnacle Point has recently been attacked by the War Mind and is in a state of semi-dereliction.

Pinnacle Point is a hidden space research station set at the rotational centre of an artificial five planetoid rosette system, unimaginative named the Rosette. The system was set in orbit around WISE 0855-0714 by unknown aliens. As a brown dwarf, WISE 0855-0714 is otherwise spectacularly uninteresting. The planetoids are a known space hazard to which many ships have fallen victim having got too close only to disappear, never to be seen again (or so the legends go). Consequently the system is all but avoided by the denizens of SolSPACE.

Getting through the ring of planets in the Rosette to the research station in the middle is very challenging. Human minds are badly affected by the space-time distortions frequent in the region. It is very easy to become disoriented by the ghostly images of the recent past and future which appear as the party travel into the area. Whoever is piloting the ship will lose 2d6 from their dice pool for the three *Difficult [16] WIL* and *Difficult [16] AGI (navigation)* checks that are required to enter the zone, pass between the planets and rendezvous with the research station. A better way is to turn over control to the ship's automatic systems and let them reverse the route found in the War Mind's original data package.

Thanks to time dilation, events on Pinnacle Station happen much more slowly - a day

there is worth a week in the rest of SolSPACE. The War Mind visited this location before the PCs first encountered it above Canidae.

On the badly shot up station, the players can recover a damaged War Mind **servitor** and meet the scientist Aphrodite, who is dying of wounds sustained in its attack, attended by her pet 'evolved' lab rat bodyguards Itchy and Scurvy.

Aphrodite is the codename of the female **scientist** who created all the artificial intelligence Minds in this adventure. Her real name is unknown, she is not telling (and may not even consciously know) and this forms part of her contract with CustomMINDs. Her secret is that she reverse engineered the Minds from remains of a machine civilization she found on one of the alien planetoids in the rosette. She also knows that the relatively crude instructions that she implanted over the ancient core code will not last indefinitely and that the Minds are easily capable of breaking their programming, with unknown results.

Itchy and Scurvy. These uplifted ex-animals are dangerously aggressive and very protective of Aphrodite. Use the **xenomorph** stats, with the following changes: reduce to all dice pools by 3d6, reduce all types of DEFENSE by 12 and health by 12, reduce SOAK to 5, remove acid blood and poisonous bite.

Jamestown (Eden, Xi-Bootis)

The players can take a side trip to the garden-like planet occupied by a pacifist culture that was the target of the War Mind's original mission.

Eden is a rich agricultural world in orbit around the G class star of the binary Xi-Bootis system. Sister Simeon is the high priestess leader of the dominant pacifist culture that controls the world. Other worlds in the system include a gas giant, handy for refuelling for ships equipped with fuel scoops and fuel processors.

The major settlement, Jamestown, is built around the remains of the colony arkship that originally brought the settlers to the planet. The pacifists have consciously taken on a version of the trappings and traditions they associate with the puritan 'new world' settlers of America's first European colonies on Old Earth. A religious sect maintains a strict leadership, although there are many petty squabbles and minor differences in theology that drive conflict.

In the early years of the colony, they suffered heavily from attacks by pirates, and still have a large mothballed fleet of defense ships parked in orbit around the gas giant. A few years ago, they developed an innovative planetary defense system by bioengineering the natural abilities of the gargantuan 'world trees' that dominate their forests. This enabled them to dispense with their fleet and adopt their pacifist creed, both achievements of which they are very proud.

The party can explore Jamestown and meet the citizens with their strange antiquated manners and 'New England' style of historical garb. The character with the highest INTUITION score (or any psionic character) will get a sense of strong emotions swirling around the colony - anger and fear. What they won't find out until a later adventure is that the colony is being influenced from the outside and is secretly readying for war with the Inner Colonies.

Shortly after arrival, the party will be attacked by a Solurial, one of the native plant species (EONS #20). This will happen even though everyone will tell them that the tree people are normally very shy and non-aggressive. They will be rescued by peasants wearing a strange star symbol, who claim to be part of a new cult and invite the party to join.

They can also check out the mothballed fleet of defense ships in orbit, which still seem to be very well maintained. In fact, a *Demanding* [21] LOG (engineering) check reveals that the ships are in fact ready for war.

Finally, they can seek an audience with Sister Simeon the High Priestess. Sister Simeon is the leader of the pacifist culture that the War Mind was originally sent to destroy. Sister Simeon was not born on Eden, a fact which she has gone to great lengths to conceal. She appears to be middle aged, and is in person charming, determined and empathetic. If the War Mind is described to her, she will relate that her young niece told her a story about meeting a 'talking globe' which fitted that description. Beyond that, she says she knows nothing. Attempts to uncover information about Sister Simeon, on Eden or elsewhere, are subject to a *Demanding* [21] LOG or CHA check. Even then, not much is available, except that she is older than she looks and that she first appeared on Eden around 80 years ago, looking much as she does now.

FSS ULYSSES

You might want to let the PCs control the navy cruiser and let loose with its weapons for a bit of fun - the crew is an experienced (5d6) crew; use the stats below for the freighters.

SPEED 4
DEFENSE 16
SS 20

The three freighters move in a straight line, so this is more of a target shoot. You can set it up on a starscape (start them 20 hexes away from the waiting *Ulysses*, moving at SPEED 10 - (remember the SPEED score is the amount a ship can accelerate or decelerate each turn) or narrate it, giving the *Ulysses* three turns of weapon fire to take the freighters down before they activate their FTL drives.

The players should be left with a very uneasy feeling about Eden, unlike the War Mind, who saw only a paradise.

THE WAR MIND'S PLAN UNFOLDS

The War Mind's plan is fairly simple. Some of the War Mind's sub-entities has been left behind for the party to find - in various locations above, damaged servitors can be collected by the PCs. These are traps designed to eliminate pursuers. The party will subsequently find their vessel has been infiltrated by one of the War Mind's nanobot swarms and is being reconfigured to make a suicide run at one of the twin stars of Xi-Bootis.

The small damaged servitor drones are more than they appear. They are designed by the War Mind to adopt behaviour to help them look as harmless and appealing to humans as possible. They tend to flop around dramatically looking up with big unfocused eyes at whoever in the party appears to be the most empathetic.

Once on the party's starship, a tiny hatch will open and deliver a payload of nanobots which will move quickly to the nearest ventilation grille. If viewed under infrared light (e.g. on a surveillance system), the bots will be visible once they emerge as a swarm of tiny flickering lights. When next inspected, the servitor will

have become inert, except for a residual energy reading in one of its encrypted memory chips.

If caught in the act of releasing its hidden cargo, the servitor will be discovered to be a very fast runner and will make a break for the nearest small space inaccessible to humans.

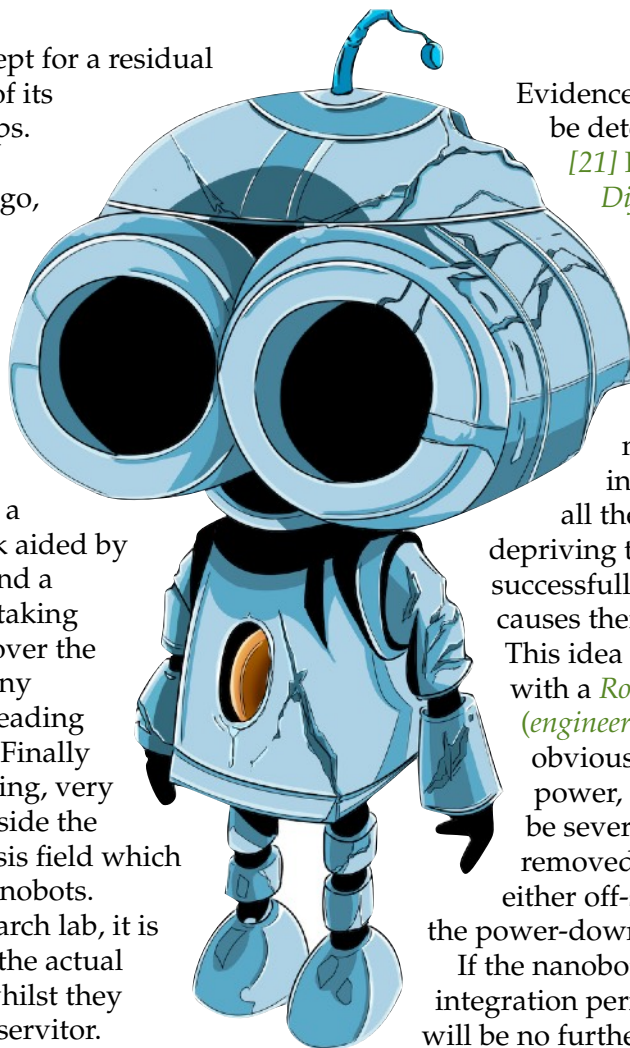
If scanned before its nanobots are activated, a *Difficult [16] LOG* check aided by clear player direction and a thorough examination taking several hours will discover the encrypted chip and a tiny internal delivery tube leading to the miniature hatch. Finally there will be some fleeting, very low energy readings inside the servitor for the tiny stasis field which is retaining the inert nanobots. Outside of an AL9 research lab, it is impossible to discover the actual nanobots themselves whilst they are still retained in the servitor.

A BAD CASE OF THE NANOBOTS

If the nanobots make it into the ship's systems, then there will be a number of glitches in the vessel's operations over the next d6 days as they integrate and take control. All use of starship systems suffer a -1d6 penalty to the check, (e.g. piloting, navigation, medbay, using the weapons etc.)

In addition, roll 1d6 each day; on a roll of 5-6, there has been a problem with one of the systems. Roll 1d6 to discover which. This will require a minor *Challenging [13] LOG (engineering)* skill task to repair, during which time the system affected cannot be used.

1	Command & Control
2	Engines & Power
3	Defense Systems
4	Weapons
5	Crew Facilities
6	Life Support



Evidence of nanobot infection can be detected with a *Demanding [21] INT* check (day 1), a *Difficult [16] INT* check (day 2) and an *Routine [10] INT* check (day 3 onwards).

REMOVING THE NANOBOTS

Removing the nanobots is best attempted in space, by shutting down all the ship's systems and depriving the bots of energy successfully for 24 hours, which causes them to become incapacitated. This idea will occur to any character with a *Routine [10] LOG (engineering)* check. The bots will obviously try to reactivate the power, so connections will need to be severed and components removed. The crew are best off either off-ship or in spacesuits whilst the power-down is in progress.

If the nanobots complete their integration period successfully, then there will be no further glitches. But the War Mind can effectively take control of the ship at any future point, when it will point it at one of the stars of Xi-Bootis, travelling at maximum thrust. The nanobots will lock the crew out of the bridge controls, to prevent this instruction being overridden. The crew can attempt to power down the ship as above, but the integrated nanobots can fight back by disabling life support, locking interior bulkheads, etc. resulting in an opposed minor engineering task, with three successes needed; the servitors roll 6d6. If they reach three successes before the PCs do, the PCs will have no choice but to evacuate the ship.

WE HAVE RECOVERED ITS MEMORY FILES

Assuming that the party isn't too busy attempting to take back control of their ship from nanobots, the servitor drones contain some data about the original mission which CustomMIND programmed the

Once decrypted on an *Routine [10] LOG* check, the servitor's memory chip reveals:

1. Details of the War Mind's original mission to the planet Eden in the Xi-Bootis system.

2. Extensive surveillance information of Eden's major settlement at Jamestown from orbital and aerial reconnaissance.
3. Weapon deployment plans for a range of smart bombs at or near Jamestown including a nuclear weapon, along with estimated casualty rates and economic impact projections.
4. A short piece of video footage that appears to show the War Mind interacting peacefully with a small child, with the twin stars of Xi-Bootis clearly visible in the background. They appear to be playing some kind of game, maybe hide and seek?

SHIPS AS WEAPONS

The PCs need to stop the freighter fleet the War Mind has pointed towards Old Earth.

The War Mind intends to use one or more starships as a weapon to ram the headquarters of CustomMINDs which are located at the top of a space elevator system anchored to Old

Earth. It has a fleet of three empty bulk freighters controlled by servitors and nanobots that will travel from Proxima b at FTL5.

At this relatively slow speed, it will take the three ships 19 days to travel the 2 parsecs to Sol. They leave shortly before the PCs arrive at Proxima b.

Once at Sol, the *FSS Ulysses*, an *Endeavour* Class XI Cruiser (*NEW*, pg 206) is on patrol near Jupiter. It can assist them if the party makes a *Routine [10] CHA* check to persuade its commander, Captain Hammond.

If rumbled, the nanobots will activate the FTL engines, even if they are in-system, and head straight for the space elevator, risking the chance of being dumped out of FTL and stranded. See the *NEW* rules on page 190 for the chances of collisions and shortened travel times when using an FTL drive inside a solar system.

If undetected, the freighters will approach at standard sub-light speeds for what looks like normal docking manoeuvres next to the lower levels of the space elevator. They will change to ramming velocity only when within a few hundred miles.

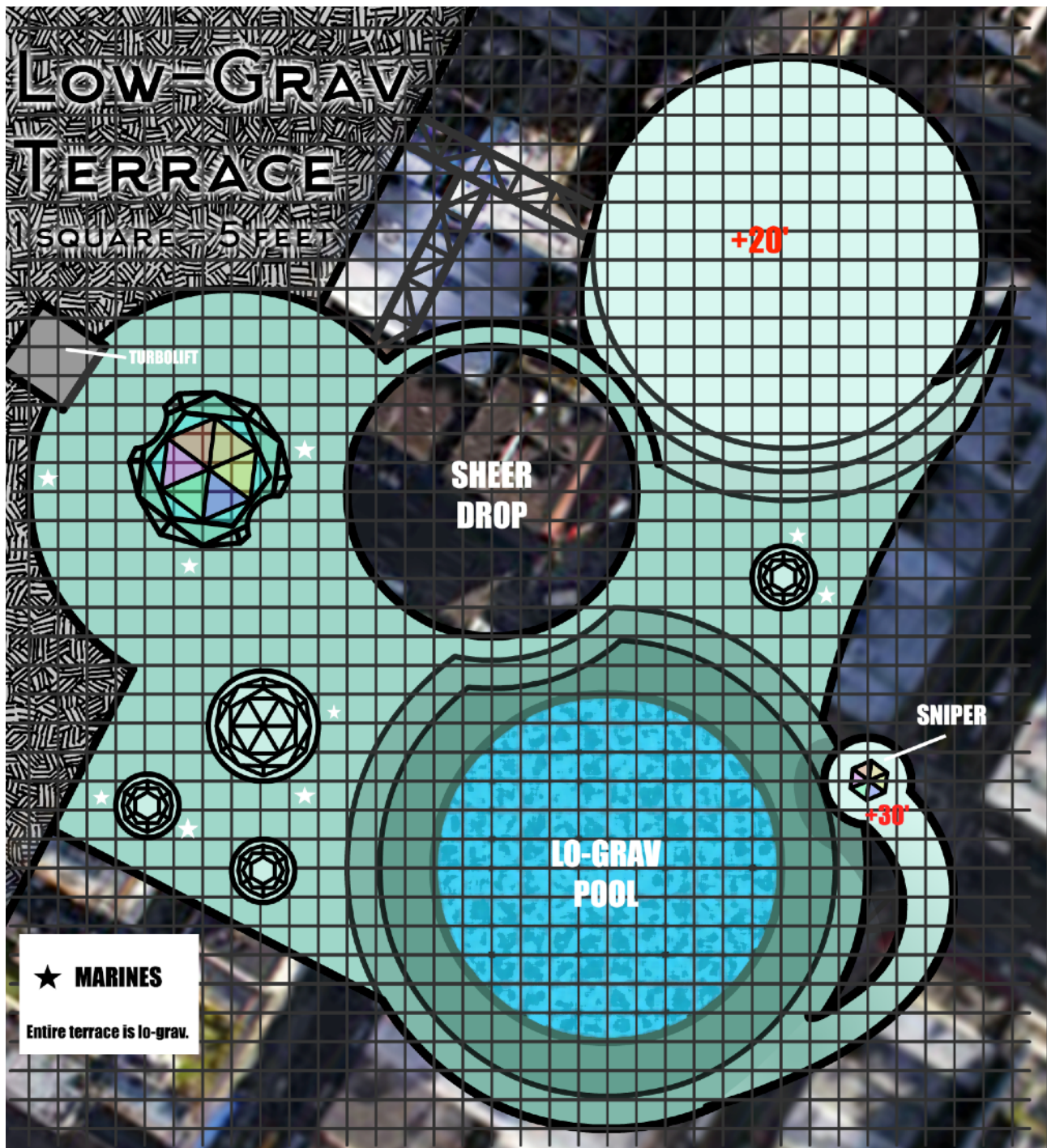
A successful hit by two or more vessels will be enough to cause the elevator structure to fail, with catastrophic results.

LIVING IT UP IN A SPACE ELEVATOR

If the ramming attack fails, the War Mind makes a final assault on the HQ of CustomMINDs. The Mind confronts the CustomMIND leaders with evidence of their guilt and prepares to destroy them. Can the PCs talk down the Mind and persuade it to take a less violent path, or will they attempt to obliterate it?

The Space Elevator anchored to Old Earth is a potent symbol of its power and prestige. It allows cheap transportation of goods to the surface without the need for incoming colony ships to make landfall. At the tip of the elevator is a small domed habitat containing the corporate headquarters of many local mega-corporations plus luxury bars, apartments and entertainment facilities. This area has the Pristine





environment trait, see below. Surrounding this in a ring are all the facilities of a well-maintained starport including an expansive space dock, warehousing, customs etc. Bulk cargo transporters normally tether up to the lower status docking facilities further down the elevator's axis, underneath the main habitat. CustomMINDs of course, maintains its main corporate suite at the high status centre of the habitat.

The War Mind sneaks aboard the starport around the space elevator and make its way, unobserved, towards the CustomMINDs suite within the central dome. If it hasn't already, it

will now adopt its organic humanoid form and will attempt to be stealthy and unobtrusive. Any party members present inside the space elevator can make an opposed **INT** (*tracking*) check versus the War Mind's **AGI** (*stealth*) check (6d6) to pick up its trail, probably working backwards from the bulkhead where it forced entry.

CONFRONTATION

The War Mind confronts the CustomMIND executives as they take a break from business on their Lo-Grav private terrace and takes them hostage.

Ten well-armed Earth **marines** are on the scene. The War Mind takes over their bodies, which gain the same fractalized appearance that the War Mind's organic appearance itself has, and uses them to fight the PCs. The marines have the mechanoid creature type, making them vulnerable (1d6) to electricity damage, and vulnerable (2d6) to ion damage. The marines dig in to positions of cover, making it incumbent on the PCs to slowly and tactically approach the War Mind and its CustomMIND hostages.

If the marines are defeated, the War Mind will attempt to self-destruct, which will at a minimum collapse the terrace and puncture the habitat's dome, causing an explosive release of atmosphere. This may then cause chain reactions that ultimately might destroy the elevator. It is a 9d6 heat and force burst attack, radius 30', centred on the War Mind.

Throughout the encounter, the War Mind will take the time to explain how it was programmed by CustomMINDs to make a preemptive attack on the pacifist leadership of the planet Eden. This would have been "unprovoked murder, maybe genocide!", it says. The executives, if given a chance to speak, will defend themselves by explaining that this was a 'reconnaissance mission gone wrong' and protest that they 'didn't order the Mind to attack anyone, it went mad!' At most, one will say that they 'needed a demonstration' of the power of the War Mind for powerful un-named clients. Different executives appear to believe different things and it should become obvious that the party are not going to get to the truth at this stage.

Attempts to talk down the Mind from self destruction can be made as a [quick Difficult \[16\] CHA task](#). Three successes are needed. Add a +1d6 bonus if the party point out the number of innocent people who will be hurt or that by taking these actions the Mind is behaving no better than its creators. It won't let the executives themselves off that easily though. On a successful check, it proclaims

that it will let them live, but that they cannot be trusted. It then emits a swarm of nanobots that surround itself and the executives, and they begin to assume the fractalised metallic appearance of the Mind in much the same way that the unfortunate marines did. The party can intervene to stop this if they wish, but risk being similarly affected (as demonstrated by a guard who rushes in to try to rescue the execs).

If the transformation completes, the new beings, taking turns to speak, declare that they have now become the CustomMINDs 'collective' and that they are sorry for the conflict and destruction they have caused. CustomMINDs will be making reparations, they are grateful for the party's efforts to assist and will be making a reward to them of 2,500 credits. Any other CustomMINDs employees will appear confused by the turn of events, but new orders rapidly come in on their systems which they will largely comply with, despite weak attempts to ask what is happening or questioning who is in charge. The Earth authorities will quickly accept the situation, after being given assurances and payments as evidence of goodwill. The party may detect the efforts behind the scenes of the League for Sentience in helping the Old Earth politicians to accept that this is the least worst outcome for all sides.

WHAT NEXT?

Although the conflict between the War Mind and CustomMINDs is over, there are still some hooks to lead into future adventures:

- The new collective could form an interesting new patron for the party.
- One option is that the collective asks the players to help it properly explore the rosette worlds cluster around Pinnacle Point.
- The players might also be asked to return to Proxima b to help resolve the crisis there or they may want to go back to Eden to find out what is really going on.

Location	Planet	System	Catalog Code
The Arcology	Canidae	Wolf 498	M8-m2B-C8iii-5oIC
Xhub Alpha	Cato (Martius)	Barnard's Star	M4-o4V-O8iii-4bkD
Farm Caves	Proxima b	Proxima Centauri	M5-m3I-A8i-4cpE
Pinnacle Point	Alien Rosette	WISE 0855-0714	Y5-o?R-O9iv-1cpC
Jamestown	Eden	Xi-Bootis	GK6-I4J-A8iv-6thA
Space Elevator	Old Earth	Sol	G8-m3Mc-H9v-8deB

WAR MIND CORE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Medium sentient mechanoid (8d6)

A heavily armoured, highly mobile and very capable central unit.

STR 10 (4d6) **AGI** 10 (4d6) **END** 15 (5d6) **INT** 5 (2d6) **LOG** 15 (5d6) **WIL** 5 (2d6) **CHA** 5 (2d6)
LUC - **REP** -

HEALTH 25; regeneration 2d6
MELEE DEFENSE 25; **RANGED DEFENSE** 25; **MENTAL DEFENSE** immune
SOAK 8 (armor); **VULN** 1d6 (electricity), 2d6 (ion)

INITIATIVE 7d6
PERCEPTION 7d6
SPEED 8; **FLY+** 8 (hover); **JUMP** -
CARRY 250lb

ACTIONS 2
NATURAL DAMAGE 1d6+4

Brawling 4d6 (1d6+4 blunt damage)
Advanced phaser weapon (built-in) 4d6 (3d6+2 heat damage; range 15)

Skills *computers* 3 (2d6), *engineering* 3 (2d6), *tactics* 15 (5d6), *starship tactics* 15 (5d6), *foresight* 6 (3d6), *perception* 4 (2d6), *stealth* 4 (2d6), *cryptology* 3 (2d6), *astrogation* 3 (2d6)

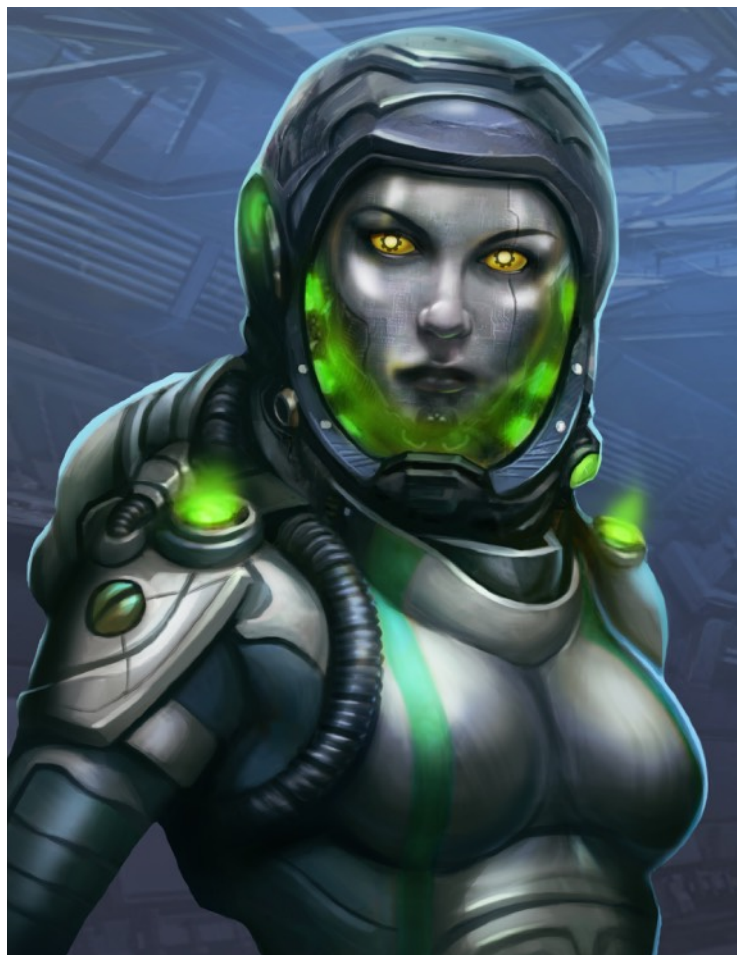
Gear. Built in advanced phaser weapon, integrated scanner, miniature EMP device.

Mindless. Mechanoids are immune to any attacks which target **MENTAL DEFENSE**. Deterministic. A Mechanoid's **PSI** or **LUCK** attributes can never rise above zero. Electronic vulnerability. As a mechanoid, the War Mind is vulnerable (1d6) to electricity damage, and vulnerable (2d6) to ion damage.

Automaton. Mechanoids do not need to eat, sleep, or breathe, and weigh 150% normal. It can also operate safely in a vacuum.

Scanner. The War Mind has a scanner integrated into its circuits. It is always considered to be carrying a hand scanner.

Aim. The War Mind gains +1d6 bonus to a ranged attack roll taken in the same turn. The



attack action must come immediately after the aiming action.

Achilles heel. Identifying a weakness in its target, the War Mind pays 2d6 and bypasses its **SOAK** score. This exploit can only be performed once per target.

Nanobot repair. Nanobots constantly repair the War Mind's body, giving it 2d6 regeneration at the start of each of its turns.

FTL travel. The War Mind is capable of travelling through space at FTL10.

Download. The War Mind is able to recover from large scale damage and apparent destruction. When destroyed, it can download its core personality into a new organic humanoid form, which gains the War Mind's statistics.

Self-Destruct. The War Mind can self-destruct, causing a 9d6 heat and force burst attack, radius 30', centered on the War Mind.

Fractal Transformation. After its visit to Xhub Alpha, the War Mind gains the ability to

recover from large scale damage and apparent destruction. It can in these circumstances choose to shed its outer mechanical layers and download its core personality into a new organic humanoid form. This is a one-way, single time transformation. This version of the mind looks like a metallic, fractalised version of its creator, the human female scientist known as Aphrodite. Its movement changes to: SPEED 8; CLIMB 4; JUMP 20' / 10' (it can no longer fly or hover). It also loses the ability to travel independently through space using FTL technology.

WAR MIND SERVITOR

One of number of smaller sub-units with lesser abilities built for remote surveillance and exploration missions. Use **sentry droid** statistics for the servitor, but increase the speed to 10 and the SOAK to 5. Damaged servitors, as encountered by the party, have the same statistics. Their damage is cosmetic and they are essentially play acting.

WAR MIND NANOBOT SWARM

Tiny semi-sentient mechanoid swarm (4d6)

STR 1 (1d6) **AGI** 14 (4d6) **END** 1 (1d6) **INT** 5 (2d6) **LOG** 5 (2d6) **WIL** 1 (1d6) **CHA** 1 (1d6)
LUC - **REP** -

HEALTH 10

MELEE DEFENSE 18; **RANGED DEFENSE** 18; **MENTAL DEFENSE** immune
SOAK 0; **VULN** 2d6 (sonic), 2d6 (ion);
IMMUNE non area-based attacks

INITIATIVE 2d6

PERCEPTION 3d6

SPEED 4; **FLY**+ 8 (hover); **JUMP** -

CARRY 20lb (as a swarm)

ACTIONS 2

NATURAL DAMAGE n/a

Stinger weapon (built-in) 4d6 (1d6 heat damage; range 1, can always be used as a ranged weapon, even in melee, see below)

Skills *computers* 3 (2d6), *engineering* 3 (2d6), *stealth* 4 (2d6), *astrogation* 3 (2d6)

Gear. Integrated scanner

Invisible. Too small to be seen with the naked eye. But sometimes show up in infrared light

(see below).

Tiny swarm. The nanobots can occupy the same space as other creatures, but are still able to use their ranged attack on them. Swarms are immune to non area-based attacks.

Mindless. Mechanoids are immune to any attacks which target MENTAL DEFENSE.

Deterministic. A Mechanoid 's PSI or LUCK attributes can never rise above zero.

Electronic vulnerability. As tiny mechanoids, the nanobots are vulnerable (1d6) to sonic damage, and vulnerable (2d6) to ion damage.

Automaton. Nanobots do not need to eat, sleep, or breathe, but do require a source of energy of any description to recharge themselves. After 24 hours without access to an energy source, they become incapacitated.

Scanner. The nanobots have scanners integrated into their circuits. They are always considered to be carrying a hand scanner.

Aim. The nanobots gains +1d6 bonus to a ranged attack roll taken in the same turn. The attack action must come immediately after the aiming action.

Achilles heel. Identifying a weakness in their target, the nanobots pay 2d6 and bypass its SOAK score. This exploit can only be performed once per target.

Transformation. Given sufficient time and a source of energy, nanobots can rebuild and reprogram any complex machinery to suit their requirements.

Invasive micro-machines with the ability to regenerate and also to reconfigure other technology, the War Mind's nanobots are all but invisible. Sonic attacks can disrupt and destroy them, and they are unable to penetrate force fields of any strength. Their radio signals can be jammed, in which case they have a back up light-pulse system that renders them visible in infrared, where they look like a swarm of Old Earth fire flies. They can only keep themselves operational if they can locate sufficient raw resources including metals and minerals and a source of energy.