

Incident at ICEREACH-1

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THEY SAY BAD LUCK COMES IN THREES. The Central Lunar colony was struck head-on by an x-ray and gamma ray burst from the Sun, and the corresponding mass coronal ejection is imminent. Much of the colony's personnel was dispatched by lunar trawlers to shelter at the southern outpost... but the solar storm's interference has fouled communications between the colony and the three caravans. A series of flashes were seen in the last satellite pass over the mining outpost of ICEREACH-1 and jolts were picked up by seismometers, but Central Lunar command gets only radio silence. Colonial skeleton crews are working round the clock, repairing damage caused by the x-ray and gamma burst, as well as battening down the colony for the imminent coronal mass ejection. But Central Lunar command needs to know what's going on at ICEREACH.

They were due a monthly supply run anyway, and one of the old manned-descent shipping containers has been taken out of mothballs and recommissioned in order to get eyes and ears inside ICEREACH outpost, assess the situation, restore communications from the outpost's end, and either prepare for the caravans' arrival or warn them away to another of the basin's smaller outposts.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The south pole of the moon hosts the largest impact crater in the Solar system, thought to have been caused by a collision with another moonlet in the youngest years of the Earth-moon system's formation. Cometary collisions brought ice to the crater, too, discovered during the early 21st century by the fledgling space exploration services of Earth. When humans finally returned to the moon to lay down roots, it was private industry leading the charge. The United Earth governments stepped in at the last minute, consolidating several independent industrial colonization efforts, merging them into a single multipurpose industrial/science complex, which was dubbed Central Lunar colony. Resident industries chafed at the additional expense of long transport times of crew and cargo, and several branched out to found their own, smaller self-sufficient stations and outposts closer to their areas of operation.

One such industrial outpost is the North Atlantic Heavy Industries' ICEREACH-1. They hold the majority of the water-ice mining contracts with earthbound corporations, as well as for Central Lunar, based on the near-side. Because of their near monopoly of harvesting and equipment — even if the UEG were to carry out its own operations, they would still use NAHI's equipment and facilities — the UEG has left the facility largely alone. ICEREACH ships ice regularly and reliably, and unlike many of the other remote industrial sites, aren't constantly clamoring for increases in rationing, budgets, or personnel. They pass muster on their quarterly inspections, and the crews return from station rotation often in better condition than when they left Central Lunar.

Increased solar wind activity has fouled radio communications with the facility, and the backup fiber-band has likewise suffered some sort of malfunction. With news of the pending massive solar flare brewing, Central Lunar Command has evacuated most of the main colony's peripheral staff and residents. ICEREACH-1's deep mining staging area, by way of the outpost itself, was to be their primary holdout until the storm passed. One day into the three-day trip by lunar trawler, a trio of flashes

and tremors indicating some sort of explosion have put the viability of using ICEREACH in question.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The PCs are tasked with discovering what has happened at ICEREACH-1, and reporting their findings back to Central Luna, as well as contacting the incoming trawlers to either warn them away, or direct them to shelters. In order to do that, they'll need to stabilize the outpost's power supplies. They can then reposition the comm-sat array and resume either radio or laser-burst contact with the UN-LUNA-6 orbital or ground-based relay stations.

FOR THE GAME MASTER

North Atlantic Heavy Industries found more than just water ice in the shadows of the Atinken basin. Tests of the ice returned from the deeper bores were coming back with strange ionic readings, and what had previously been only trace amounts of odd elements they'd chalked up to sample contamination were now showing up in higher and higher concentrations. Some weeks later, the work crews came across something metallic, buried deep beneath the ice — too regular in shape and far too large to be any sort of meteorite.

Further digging revealed that it could only be some sort of spacecraft, of a metallic alloy not known to Earth. Best guesses based on its depth beneath the ice put its age at several million years, though finding its age any more accurately has thus far been impossible.

NAHI elected to keep the news under wraps until they had more answers. It would not do to have work disrupted when they were already falling behind on their contracts.

One of the mining crews blasted into the spacecraft, coming away with a large metallic cube. That artifact awakened on inspection, collapsing into several biomechanical exploratory drones of the machine-intelligence on the buried starship, which itself was beginning to awaken from a long, cold sleep.

INTRODUCTION. HAPPY LANDING!

A secondary explosion in one of the outpost's reactors sends up a cloud of debris, damaging the PCs' supply hauler, and also fouling comms with the landing/retrieval array. They'll either need to make a hard landing, or manage a soft reset of the landing array's computer-aided gravity "net."

ACT 1. THE LIGHTS ARE ON...

The PCs will most likely be disappointed to find the EVAC rover deployed by the station's landing bunker devoid of personnel — it acts autonomously, on pre-programmed emergency response protocols.

Investigation of the launch/retrieval communications bunker shows signs of a hasty exit. System logs indicate a spate of power surges, but little else. If the PCs want more information, they'll have to journey down the 2-mile access tunnel connecting the bunker to the bulk of the outpost.

Moving from module to module, the PCs will be able to see that something is definitely wrong: there are signs of struggle, yet no signs of life. Their investigation is hampered by unstable power: the lighting and computer systems are iffy. Attempts to access the stations' computer network at any given

time are difficult at best until the power can be stabilized or fully restored.

Along the way, the PCs may make contact with two of the survivors of the disappearances: the facility director's young daughter (a young naive **civilian** who reads voraciously), and the remaining officer of the token security detail (an alert **cop** who secretly reads old pulp detective novels).

The PCs find the outpost's access keys to restart the idling second fusion reactor, the bunker for which is located some five miles from the main outpost dome. They encounter their first drone in the reactor access bunker, manage to restart the secondary fusion reactor, restoring the outpost's life support, lighting, communications and computer systems... as well as providing full power to the hive tree in the garden dome.

ACT 2. GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?

The PCs are greeted on their return to the outpost — by the first of the cybrid-ized inhabitants hatched from the freshly powered hive trees. They'll have to retrace their steps through the outpost to get to the Slingshot bunker, to warn off the approaching Central Luna trawlers. The PCs progress will be hampered by either more cybrid-ized outpost personnel or packs of Entity hunters.

NANITE CONVERSION SICKNESS

Illness	Transmission	Pool	Interval	Difficulty	Effect
Nanite conversion	Injury	END	Hourly	<i>Demanding [21]</i>	Mobility/Death

The first phase of the nanite infection attacks the victim's nervous system, as the nanites begin spinning out nano-filament bio-wiring, taking greater and greater control of the voluntary muscular system. As the victim moves from autonomous control to being slaved to the Entity, the victim is paralyzed once the first phase's END countdown reaches zero, and hunters then move the body to a hive tree for further conversion.

The second phase of the infection begins a second END countdown within a hive tree cocoon, where the victim's skeletal and muscular

system are reinforced. The biowiring and cytronic circuitry is expanded in the victim's brain, and its sensory organs are replaced with superior synthetics. Because ICEREACH-1 has been operating under backup power, this conversion follows a slow countdown. If full power is restored, the hive tree conversion process speeds up to a medium countdown. Cutting power, to either the entire station or just the garden dome stops the countdown.

Once the countdown reaches 0, the victim emerges a **mechanoid** under total control of the Entity, a slave to its will.

ACT 3. CYBRIDS & NANITES

The PCs should notice that the cybrids all seem to be trying to get to the same “spoke” — the access way leading to the NAHI mining transports. It would go badly if any of the cybrids or accompanying drones should spread to other outposts. Their reaching Central Luna would be disastrous. Their encoded commands compel them first to return to the Entity spacecraft, where they can fully restore its systems and bring the Entity itself to full power and sentience. This would also awaken its hunter-killer production capabilities.

If the PCs can keep the drones and mechanized inhabitants confined to ICEREACH-1, the outpost sits close enough to the upper rim of the basin that the plasma wave from the coronal mass ejection will destroy the nanite threat within the facility. But is it enough to shut down the Entity?

POWER, PCs, AND PARTIAL CONVERSION?

Cutting power to the Hive Trees in the garden dome halts the mechanization process for those already cocooned. It also stabilizes the backup reactor, bringing rest of the outpost back up to full power. The PCs would need to cut three of the four power conduits that run through access paneling beneath each of the dome’s four entrances in order to power down the agricultural dome. The hive tree will dispatch a hunter-killer to investigate at the first sign of tampering.

It is possible the PCs may become infected with the Entity’s nanites in combat with any of its drones. If they can expose themselves to microwaves or a strong magnetic field, they can add an extra LUCK die to their next countdown roll. Even if the PC manages to fend off the first phase of the nanite infection, they are plagued with Discomfort from tingling extremities or headaches for 2d6 days after.

Having a companion in the clutches of one of the Entity’s hive trees certainly is motivation for the rest of the team to end the threat. But what of the out-of-play PC? The GM could hand over one of the existing NPCs for that player to use. Or perhaps another survivor can be found for that player to

run (either using an existing miner or specialist, or having a secondary character ready to go).

If all of the PCs succumb to the Entity’s nanite infection and conversion, it certainly doesn’t signal an endgame. Their objective could simply switch to one of lunar domination. The Entity might use the exceptional PCs to infiltrate the other flesh-beings’ society and gather more information while it slowly builds up its army of hunter-killer warriors for the impending invasion of the blue-green home planet...

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The Hauler isn’t pretty — not really much more than a shipping container on a rocket-studded frame, with a crew cabin on one end — but it doesn’t have to be terribly aerodynamic or comfortable for such a short trip.

It’s hard to tell where the rattling of the ship ends and your teeth begin, but then the g’s ease up as the Hauler clears top of its trajectory. The frame shudders as course-stabilizing jets give brief squirts, and you immediately see that something is definitely wrong with mining operations. Or rather, you *don’t* see anything: no lights, from either the habs, or the agro-dome, or the operation site deeper within the basin. Then there is a glimmer, a spark, a bloom of orange-yellow, and seconds later, the Hauler shakes, and then a hard clatter of debris and regolith hammers against the outer hull. The correction-jets fire again, and again, then sputter as the Master Alarm begins to wail: one of the propellant tanks has been punctured, and the Hauler begins to slew, and spin.

The PCs will have to act fast! A *Challenging* [13] LOG (*engineering*) check or *Difficult* [16] AGI (*piloting*) check can keep the Hauler from drifting too far off course. It will take more time on the ground to affect anything more than the quickest of jury-rigs to the maneuvering jets and propellant tanks.

Once the Hauler stabilized, they’ll need to worry about landing the Hauler (A *Difficult* [16] *quick extended piloting* task.)

HAZARDS

The power fluctuations have frayed the outpost's already-overtaxed electrical systems. Some possible consequences of the power surges are listed below:

2-4 Power surge causes a nearby panel, cathode, or overhead lighting fixture to overload, showering those within 10 feet with sparks and/or glass, for 2d6 electrical or heat damage. Exposed combustible items are ruined, per the **singed** condition. If the GM determines that the lighting fixtures have blown out, the module or access way will be completely **dark**.

5-6 Pipeline: Damage to electrical conduits has also stressed the outpost's water circulation infrastructure: A nearby overhead pipe bursts, releasing gouts of superheated steam or super-cooled vapor, for 3d6 heat or cold damage. Additionally, until they move out of the cloud, the PCs will be blinded and slowed. Unless a cutoff can be found, within an hour, the module or access way's environment will become either **hot** or **cold**. Iced-over walkways also become **slippery**. PCs may

Usually, the landing process is automated, using a telemetry feed from the target location's landing strip. Communications with the landing strip's comm array returns nothing but static. A *quick challenging* [13] *computers* task will remotely reboot the automated landing system, with each success after the first lowering the pilot's landing check benchmark (From *Difficult* to *Challenging*, then *Challenging* to *Routine*)

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

ICEREACH Outpost consists of the EM-landing strip, its small command bunker, and the geodesic garden dome complex. Several outlying modules are used to store mining vehicles and processing equipment. The station's power is provided by three fusion reactors, which are kept several miles from the main dome of the complex. Radio communications are screwy near and within the outpost: comm-links fade in and out, the transmissions clouded by static or a strange throbbing hum that sounds almost like some sort of mechanical heartbeat.

find these areas helpful in avoiding or escaping notice of the Entity's minions.

7-8 Hatchway malfunction: Either the hatch seals itself, refusing to open, or the magnetic clamps refuse to hold after it shuts behind the PCs. A *Challenging* [13] LOG check will bypass/engage the magnetic clamps, but then a *Difficult* [16] STR check is needed to haul the door open or closed. Annoying as this would be during initial exploration, it could add another layer of tension, should the PCs find themselves pursued by hunter or hunter-killer drones...

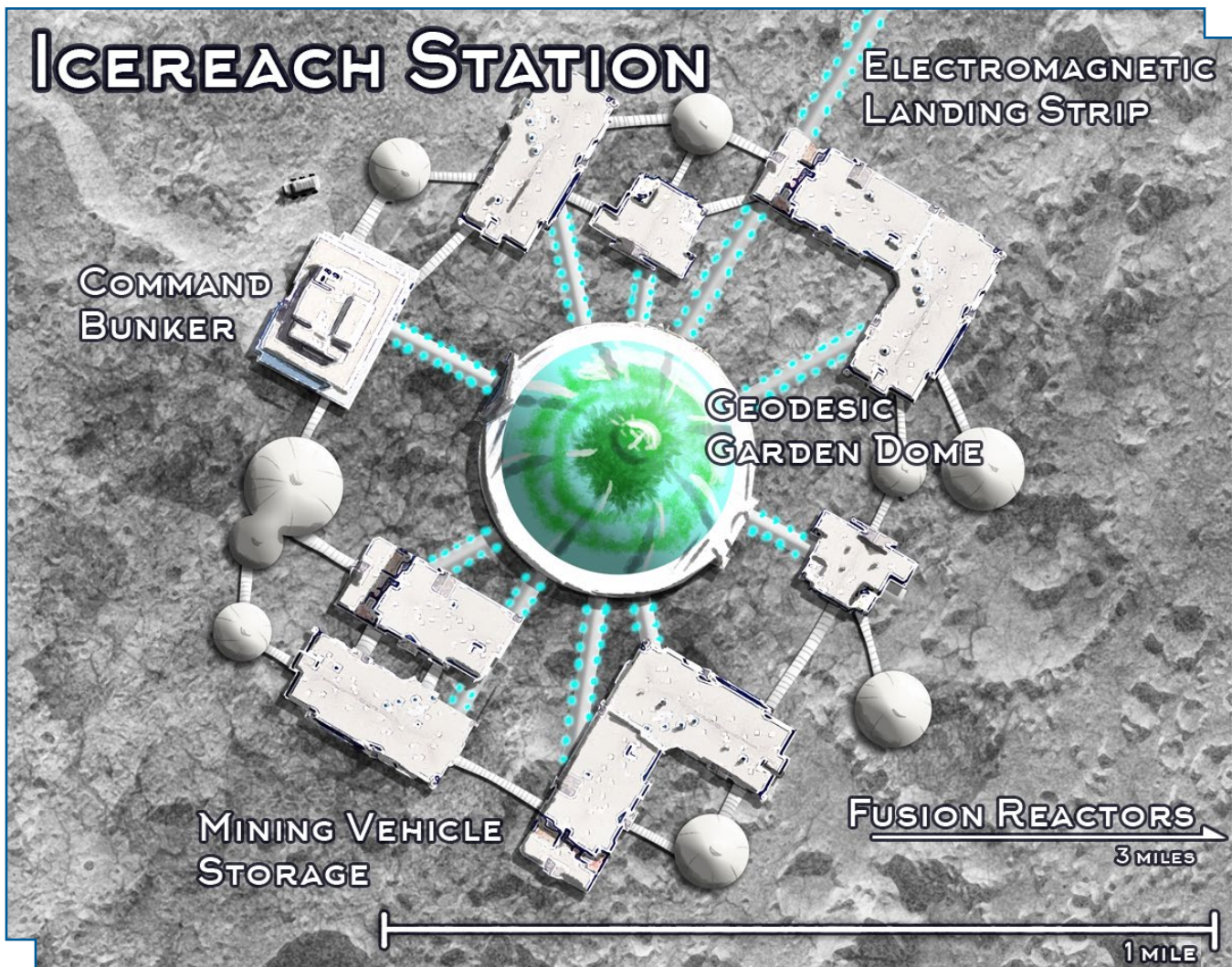
9-10 Explorer drone pack. The PCs encounter 2d6 **explorer drones** feeding on an exposed power conduit. It is up to the GM to determine whether the PCs or the drones are surprised. Treat this result as "Hunter Pack" if the PCs have already engaged and been injured by explorer drones.

11-12 Hunter Pack. The PCs encounter 2d6 **hunters**. A result of 9-12 indicate a hunter pack encounter if one or more PCs have been injured by explorer drones in a prior engagement.

CARGO LAUNCH & RETRIEVAL STRIP.

A half-mile long strip of leveled, smooth-baked regolith is split down the middle by the Hauler catch gantry, which looks like — and is referred to by the outpost residents as — 'the Slingshot.' Rather than use rubber bands, the twelve-foot-wide forks are lined on each side by smaller versions of the superconducting magnets that run the sides of the landing strip's central groove. Computer-aided laser guidance mechanisms correct the incoming Hauler's trajectory so it is caught and suspended between the forks, shedding velocity through a combination of the container assembly's retrorockets and the slingshot's electromagnetic braking. Containers are then offloaded at the end of the 'runway' by automated rovers, which deliver the cargo to the outpost's shipping and distribution extension.

The Launch and Retrieval command bunker (dubbed "The Pillbox") squats some five hundred feet off the three-quarters point of the landing/launch strip. The Pillbox is topped by a conventional radio dish as well as laser-based comm array. A cramped airlock allows emergency access from the lunar surface.



Inside, the usual conglomeration of computer terminals, comms and radar workstations can be found. Like everything else at the outpost, the interior is under red-tinged emergency backup lighting when the PCs arrive. The communication equipment is only capable of short-range transmissions until main power is restored, at which point the arrays can be directed to either an orbiting relay satellite, or one of several ground-based laser-burst repeaters. A LOG or *computers* check is enough for the PCs to find the correct auto routine in the bunker's main terminal.

Access to the main outpost dome is through a nearly two mile-long tunnel bored through the lunar surface.

TRANSIT TUNNELS

All of the transit tunnels bear the same general description, only varying in length. *This corridor is nothing more than a long, twelve-foot-wide tube burned*

just below the lunar surface, with a Plasteel arch making up the "ceiling." A wide yellow stripe is painted down the center of the tunnel, broken by black arrow markers, pointing in the direction of the main outpost dome.

Access panels placed every 15 feet contain vacuum masks and gloves, as well as a small dumb terminal-and-display. A *Routine [10] LOG (computers)* check allows a PC to call up the most basic of information on the outpost's severely outdated network.

The transit tube from the Slingshot ends in a slightly wider garage, which houses two four-seater battery-powered buggies, obviously meant to alleviate the need for hiking the length of the tunnel. One of these buggies is parked haphazardly by the airlock hatch, as if its users were in too much of a hurry to bother with the niceties of properly lining up the buggy in its charging station.

The buggies have enough power for approximately 30 miles of travel before their batteries

deplete. They won't be able to recharge until main power is restored. The skewed buggy has only a half-charge remaining.

CENTRAL RING AND COMPLEX ACCESS

The main body of the outpost surrounds the geodesic garden dome in a segmented ring. The rest of the complex sprouts from this central ring like spokes from a wheel, or the hours of a clock. Addressing within the outpost often refers to this clock position. The "spoke" corridors are not wide enough for buggy access.

- 12:00. Main administration & records, operations, security and med-bay. Director General's suite.
- 1:00. Electrical stores, backup data cores.
- 2:00. Access tunnel to Primary Reactor A; Reactor operations post, engineering quarters and workshops.
- 3:00. Science 'wing:' access to labs A & B (Geology/metallurgy, inorganics); technicians' quarters, scientific stores.
- 4:00. Residential/recreation. Personnel family quarters, galley/mess, education & recreation stations
- 5:00. Residential stores.
- 6:00. Residential/recreation: Personnel bunking/ barracks, galley/mess, recreation stations.
- 7:00. Residential stores.
- 8:00. Access tunnel to secondary reactors.
- 9:00. Science 'wing:' access to labs C & D (Biological/hydrological/hydroponic); technician's quarters, reserve scientific stores.
- 10:00. Access tunnel to mining operations, manufacturing and storage.
- 11:00. Access tunnel to the Slingshot.

Though the outpost can house 500 individuals, it is currently only staffed by about 200: a compliment of 100 miners, 50 technicians/scientists, another 50 maintenance, support workers, plus the administrators. The director general as well as several of the scientists and many of the service personnel

have brought their families to live at the outpost.

- 12:01. Central Administration and records: A handful of cubicles with data terminals are all that are needed to maintain day-to-day operations at the outpost.
- 12:15. Central Operations: This module sports the graphical displays and work stations needed to coordinate mining operations, from shift details down to the prepping and shipping of ice blocks back to Central Luna.
- 12:30. Security and Medbay: these two sections sit opposite each other. The medical bay has a fully operational surgical suite and small recovery wing; anything short of an organ transplant can be conducted here.

The security office contains CCTV monitoring stations, a small-arms armory, and a four-person cell (usually only used as a drunk tank for when the miners have one too many and cause a ruckus). A man lies on one of the cots, and he starts awake, wild-eyed at the PCs approach, raising an orange-tipped taser pistol. When he sees that the PCs mean him no harm, he slowly lowers the weapon. Sergeant Caleb Conolley locked himself in the brig in order to keep the Entity's drones at bay. Indeed, one of them lies disabled at the cell's doorway, its bio-organic circuitry fried by repeated zaps from the taser.

WHAT CONOLLEY KNOWS

Conolley knows the following information:

1. About two day-cycles ago, the miners were all abuzz about something they'd discovered. It must've been something, though, because that whole work crew got sloshed and caused a bit of an uproar at mess, two of them fighting over which would get to hold onto 'it.' Conolley had to cuff them to opposite sides of the cell so they wouldn't keep at each other. They and their whole crew went to see the Director General the next day, and they were all put on suspension.

2. 'It' turned out to be some weird looking metal cube, with raised sides and corners. It was weirdly slick to the touch, even with gloves on. Conolley had to practically tear the crew-chief's dorm apart to find the thing. Per the DG's orders, he brought it to the inorganics lab, where they locked it up in the vacuum-chamber.
3. The power went out that night, and only came partway up when it came back online. But when it did, the whole place was in chaos. Some weird metallic bug-like things the size of dogs were crawling all over the place, people were screaming. He went to the security office to arm himself, and wrangled with one of the 'bugs,' managing to fend it off with the taser-pistol. ("Fries 'em real good, these things do!") He's since locked himself in the cell between forays to the galleys for food.
4. The 'bugs' keep semi-regular patrols; it's been hard to time them with the flickering of the power and the CCTV monitors going in and out. The majority of them seem to be concentrated in the geodesic dome.
5. The security armory holds two more taser-pistols (treat as **electro-arcs**), as well as three **stun batons** and three suits of **riot armor**.

12:45. The Director General's suite, located through a secured hatchway off his main offices, is perhaps the only spacious living quarters in the facility: three bedrooms are located off the central sitting room. The suite also supports a fully equipped kitchen and full sized dining area, with seating for eight, though the Director General has never had to entertain so many visitors at once, even when the facility was first opened for operations twelve years ago.

The hatchway control panel to the suite is damaged, from the office-side. The partially-exposed wiring makes opening this particular hatch a *Challenging* [13], rather than *Difficult* [16] LOG, *computers* or *electronics* check to disengage the magnetic seals.

An Entity **hunter** lurks beneath the Director General's desk, awaiting the PCs' opening the hatch, so it can complete its sweep of the suite. It is not actively attempting to hide, and thus a *Routine* [10] INT (*perception*) reveals its location, if the PCs don't specifically think to look under the desk.

Lilly, the Director General's nine-year-old daughter, hides in the crawl space beneath the floor of her bedroom closet. PCs will need to make a *Challenging* [13] INT (*perception*) to spot her. Otherwise, they may encounter her making a run to the galley for food, or the library for a book.

WHAT LILLY KNOWS

Lilly knows the following information:

1. There was quite a hubbub (that's what Mama called it) several day-cycles ago, and all the miners were abuzz about something.
2. Papa was furious that one group of the miners did something they obviously weren't supposed to, and they got suspended. "It" was moved into the lab. (Whatever "it" was...)
3. The power went out, and when it came back up, there was lots of shouting. Papa and Mama told her to hide, and locked her bedroom hatchway. She's been sneaking back and forth to the kitchen for food over the past couple days, but her food stores are running low, and she'll need to either sneak into the galleys at 5 and 6, or — much closer — steal into the garden dome.
4. She has a copy of her father's key-card, which Mama said to hold onto just in case, because Papa's always losing things.

1:01. Electrical stores. Sensitive electrical equipment is stored in these modules, portions of which are set up as Faraday cages. The backup computer core data banks are buried in a vault beneath the main module, accessible only with the DG's and a master electrician's key-cards.

2:01, 8:01. Reactor 1 Access tunnels is half a mile long. The reactor maintenance crews' quarters and workshops branch off the main tunnel, which itself

ends in the reactor relay control room. The reactor controls are linked to an identical terminal in the respective reactor bunker. An airlock leads to the clean room and decontamination showers, and e-suit lockers. An exterior airlock leads to a docked rover that will only drive a dedicated path to and from its designated reactor (See “Fusion Reactors” below).

3:01 & 3:30: Low-g specialty labs A & B Lab A is home to teams of geologists are studying some of the deeper strata of the Aitken basin, while another group researches various types of crystal growth under the moon’s lo-gravity conditions in Lab B. The artifact the miners brought back from the Entity’s ship was held in Lab B, which is now in massive disarray: spilled sample cases, instruments knocked over, tables overturned. The vacuum containment chamber has been breached, apparently from the inside.

4:01-4:45. Family residential suites Several families are stationed at the outpost — mostly technicians or administrators. Those with children use the half dozen family suites down the 4:00 wing. Like the Director General’s quarters, these consist of sitting room, bedrooms and private shower/wc. Unlike the GD’s, family suites do not have full kitchens — just a small refrigerator and microwave. Meals are normally taken in the common mess/galley.

4:55: Education/recreation The outpost maintains a small school room, where the children can take lessons with visiting tutors from Central Lunar, many of the scientists in residence, or through telepresence with classes either at Central Lunar or on Earth.

5:01-5:45. Residential stores Just about anything replaceable is stored here, from spare beds, bedding, furnishings, fixtures, LED lighting panels, cleaning supplies to paper goods and small appliances.

6:01-6:55. Dormitories, Galley/Mess The main galley and mess hall are located at the front of this wing, with a recreation room and gym behind those. Further down the access way, the mining personnel dorms begin: simple two-bunk modules with attached privacy nooks, and a common shower/wc facility for every half-dozen dorms.

7:01-7:45. Residential sores II More of the same from 6:00 is stored down this branch, with

additional modules for storing dry foodstuffs as well as the fruits and vegetables raised in the garden dome. One of the smaller, spare modules (7:35) has been converted into a library.

8:00. Secondary reactor access Like the corridor at 2:00, this hallway houses more technician quarters and workshops. The clean room and airlock at the corridor’s end is larger, and hosts two exterior airlocks, with rovers dedicated to reactor bunkers 2 and 3. The Reactor 2 rover does not startup, returning a “Radiological Hazard” error if the PCs should try to take it to the crater of what is left of the secondary reactor.

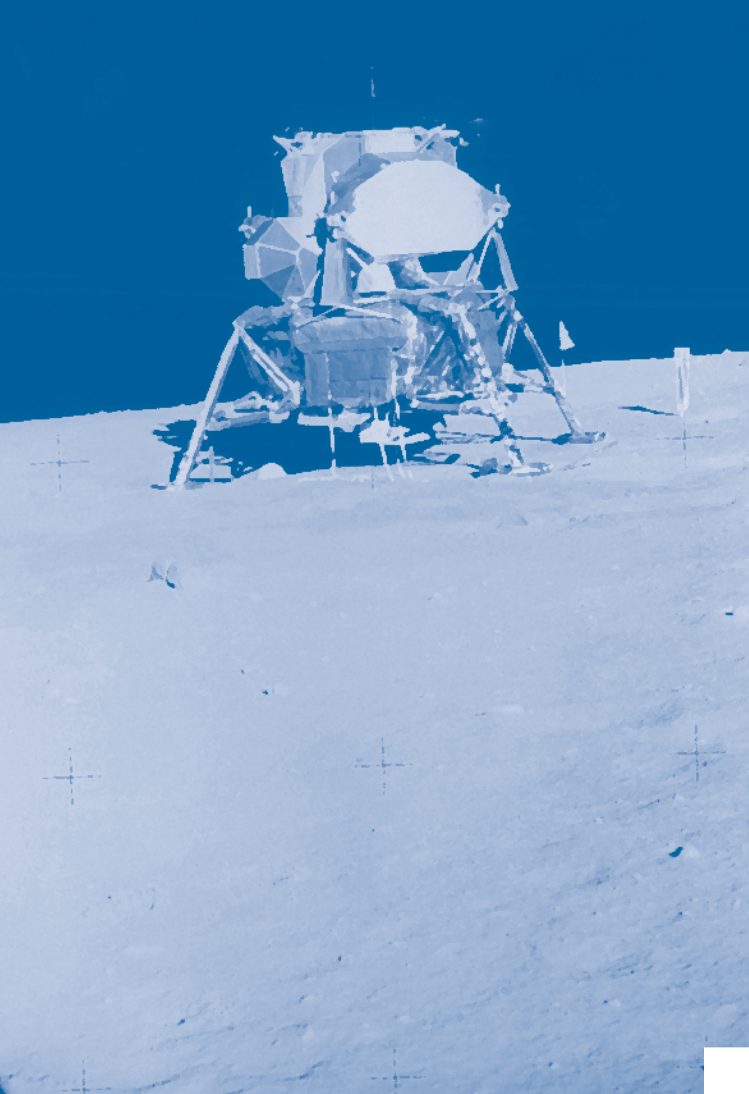
9:01 & 9:30. Low-g specialty labs C & D Lab C is home to teams of botanists, growing various strains of elongated potatoes. Several genetic experiments were on-going in Lab D. The dozen mice have been infected with the Entity’s nanites, and are now **robocritters**.

10:00. Ice Mining Access Tunnel Instead of small buggies, four 12-seater electrical trams are parked at the garage-like entryway. The tunnel leads slightly downhill, towards the Ice Mining Facilities.

GARDEN DOME

Several acres worth of Earth soil have been “transplanted” to the outpost’s centralized agricultural dome, to facilitate the growing of various fruits, vegetables, and grains for the crews stationed there. This dome is kept under a minimal (thin) atmosphere, so PCs will need vacuum-masks in this area. The dome is under nighttime conditions when the PCs arrive, and will remain so until they or repair crews can restore full power to the outpost. Still, the dome is not pitch black; emergency exit lights strobe over the four dome airlock hatches, and an eerie blue-green light can be seen amidst the trees of the orchard quadrant of the gardens.

Several of the trees in the apple orchard quadrant have been infected by the Entity’s nanites, and have mechemorphed into a Hive Trees. Their modified roots have burrowed into the outpost’s electrical mains, allowing the trees to draw off a major portion of the power put out by the remaining fusion reactor.



If the PCs manage to restore more than the quarter-power that the outpost is currently under, the countdown to the Hive Trees' conversion of the personnel goes from slow to medium. Conversely, if they think to cut power to the garden dome, the countdown freezes.

NORTH ATLANTIC HEAVY INDUSTRIES ICE MINING FACILITIES

NAHI's mining complex is a series of warehouse-like utility bunkers a mile out from the main body of the outpost. Each contains excavation, processing, and shipping machinery, in addition to pressurized facilities for the work crews, administration offices and a small infirmary for handling all but the most serious of injuries. With the reactors falling offline, all of the machinery has shut down, and the vast hangar-like bulk of the facility is downright spooky under the red glare of the emergency lighting.

FUSION REACTORS

Two small-mass fusion reactors normally provide more than enough power to the outpost, with a third acting as a redundant backup. The outpost is currently running off Reactor 3, but it is rapidly approaching its critical threshold due to the additional power drained by the Entity's nanite-infected **hive tree**. Reactor 2 exploded just prior to the PCs' landing at ICEREACH, due to the Entity's explorers' tampering. Reactor 1 underwent a failsafe shutdown, which requires a 'hard restart.'

The fusion reactor access bunkers jut just above the lunar surface, surrounded at the quarter-mile mark by radiation hazard markers. Once past the cramped airlock, the interior of the bunker contains two terminals, displaying the most basic of information. A heavily shielded interior airlock grants access to the hundred foot deep access shaft. Another airlock hatch lies at the bottom of the shaft, and the space between is filled with water, which acts as further shielding, as well as an emergency source of coolant.

Performing anything more than routine status checks at the consoles requires key-card verification from registered UEG engineering, as well as the outpost's director general. The interior hatches, likewise, do not open without the same dual-key verification. A *minor difficult computer task* should be enough to forge credentials, if the requisite key-cards cannot be found in the complex. Actual switches and levers must be thrown in the reactor chamber itself to bring the reactor back online. Once the reactor powers back up — a process that takes approximately fifteen minutes — the shielded hatchway and airlock at the base of the reactor shaft seal themselves, and cannot be opened while the reactor is operational. After the reactor's fifteen minute startup, the chamber becomes irradiated.

An Entity **explorer drone** hides (*Challenging [13] INT (perception) to spot*) in the control room ceiling, waiting for the PCs to open the hatch. It is left to the GM whether the drone attacks in the upper bunker, or after the PCs have descended the shaft and initiated the reactor restart sequence.

MONSTERS

BIOMECH EXPLORER (DRONE)

Roughly the size of a large cat, or small dog, the Entity's exploration drones are a fusion of something mechanical and spider-like. Their chitinous exoskeletons are criss-crossed by wires and circuitry. While the two main eyes appear to be organic, the lesser six definitely have mechanical and manufactured lensing in place. In the place of mouth-parts, they have a semi-flexible proboscis, adapted to interface with electrical systems, or bore into conduits. If a drone should score a bite attack, it injects nanite 'markers' into the victim's bloodstream, which attract biomech hunters.

BIOMECH EXPLORER DRONE

Small common semi-sentient mechanoid(4d6)

STR 3 (2d6)	AGI 10 (4d6)	END 3 (2d6)
INT 8 (3d6)	LOG 3 (2d6)	WIL 4 (2d6)
CHA 2 (1d6)	LUC 0 (0d6)	REP 5 (2d6)

HEALTH 16

MELEE DEFENSE 15; RANGED DEFENSE 15;
MENTAL DEFENSE 11

SOAK 2; VULN 1d6 (electricity), 2d6 (ion);
immune poison

STATUS IMMUNITIES - Nausea, Tiredness

INITIATIVE 5d6

PERCEPTION 5d6

SPEED 6; CLIMB+ 6; JUMP 12'/6'

CARRY 60lb (max lift 300lb)

ACTIONS 2

NATURAL DAMAGE 1d6+3

REACH 5'



Bite 5d6 (2d6+2 piercing + nanite marker infection)

Skills *perception* 4 (2d6), *reactions* 3 (2d6)

stealth 3 (2d6)

Gear -

Feint (1). Scouter drones are quick and seemingly unpredictable; they can feint, using one action to gain a +1d6 bonus to their next attack roll if taken on the same turn.

Insectoids. Scouter drones are basically insectoid in shape, with tripartite bodies and six legs. The creature gains a CLIMB speed equal to its regular SPEED and does not need to make checks to climb. Such creatures can move on walls and ceilings normally

Lifesense. Because of their enhanced, multi spectral vision, scouter drones can sense and effectively see living creatures to a distance of 40' even through darkness, cover, concealment, etc.

Called Shot. The explorer drone's eyestalks and antennae are about the only unarmored portions of the creature. A called shot with piercing, slashing, or ballistic weaponry can severely hamper the mechanoid's sensory systems. A successful hit bypasses SOAK. If it deals 5 or more points of damage, an eyestalk (1-3) or antenna (4-6) is severed. Destroying one of the creatures' antennae hampers its live link to the Entity's hive tree. It must pass *Routine* [10] LOG check to receive new orders, or it will continue performing its last instructions. Severing both antennae completely cuts its communication to the hive tree, and inflicts the Confused status on the creature. Damage to the eyestalks pushes the creature down the Sight status track

BIOMECH HUNTER (DRONE)

A slightly bulkier version of the scouter, Hunters have the same basic arachnoid shape, but add a metallo-crystalline shell over the main abdomen area. The Hunter's mandibles are more developed, and it uses its bio-active "bite" to deliver the first stage of conversion nanites. These gradually induce paralysis, after which the hunter then uses its filament spinnerets to bind its quarry and brings to the nearest Hive Tree for assessment and possible mechanization.

BIOMECH HUNTER DRONE

Medium uncommon semi-sentient mechanoid (5d6)

Arachnoid harvesters which gather prey for their Hive Tree.

STR 6 (2d6)	AGI 12 (5d6)	END 6 (3d6)
INT 8 (3d6)	LOG 2 (1d6)	WIL 2 (1d6)
CHA 1 (1d6)	LUC 0 (0d6)	REP 7 (3d6)

HEALTH 16

MELEE DEFENSE 18; **RANGED DEFENSE** 18;
MENTAL DEFENSE 11

SOAK 5; **VULN** 1d6 (electricity), 2d6 (ion);

immune poison

STATUS IMMUNITIES - Nausea, Tiredness

INITIATIVE 3d6

PERCEPTION 3d6

SPEED 7; **CLIMB+** 7; **JUMP** 30'/4'

CARRY 120lb (max lift 300lb)

ACTIONS 2

NATURAL DAMAGE 2d6+2

REACH 5'

Bite 5d6 (2d6+2 piercing+ nanite disease)

Web 5d6 (restrains damage; range 3)

Skills *perception* 4 (2d6), *reactions* 3 (2d6)

stealth 3 (2d6)

Gear -

Nanites. The hunter's bite attack contains the first stage in conversion nanites, which steadily override the victim's central nervous system. (See "Nanite Conversion Disease" sidebar)

Filament (1). An hunter's web attack is a ranged attack which restrains a medium sized target or smaller. Escape is a *Challenging* [13] STR check and requires one action. The filaments are flammable and can be burnt off, but this causes 2d6 heat damage to the trapped creature. They can also be dissolved with alcohol.

Lifesense. Because of their enhanced, multi spectral vision, scouter drones can sense and effectively see living creatures to a distance of 40' even through darkness, cover, concealment, etc. A hunter will concentrate its attacks on those who have been injected with the scouter drone's marker nanites before it attacks anyone else.

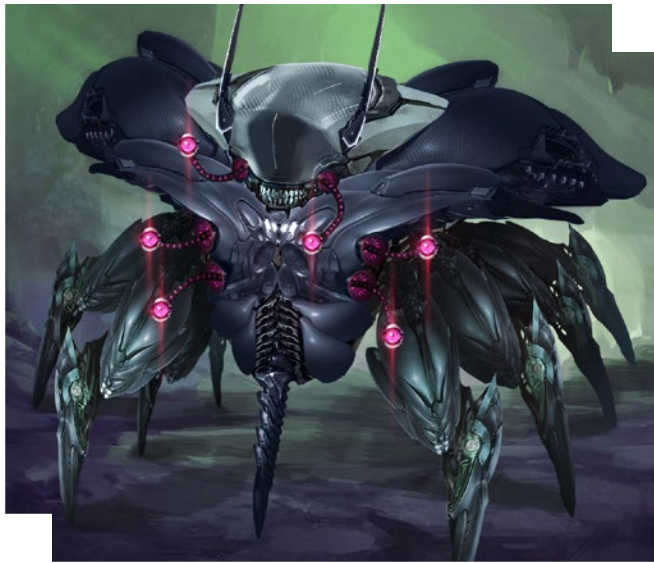
Called Shot. The Hunter's eyestalks and antennae are about the only unarmored portions of the creature. A called shot with piercing, slashing, or ballistic weaponry can severely hamper the mechanoid's sensory systems. A successful hit ignores SOAK, and if it deals 5 or more points of damage, an eyestalk or antenna is severed. Destroying one of the creatures' antennae hampers its live link to the Entity's hive tree. It must pass *Routine* [10] LOG check to receive new orders, or it will continue performing its last instructions. Severing both antennae completely cuts its communication to the hive tree, and inflicts the Confused status on the creature. Damage to the eyestalks pushes the creature down the Sight status track.



BIOMECH HUNTER-KILLER

As Hunter +2d6; large. The Hunter-killer has SOAK 8, and its bite deals +1d6 electrical rather than injecting conversion nanites. It also has a claw attack 5d6 (2d6+2 slashing)

Anything the Entity cannot convert or subsume with its hunters it marks as a threat to be eliminated with extreme prejudice. For this task, the Entity has reserves its hunter-killer variant: a bizarre half-spider, half-crab-like mechanoid modeled after the native life it encountered beneath the icy crust of Europa. A hard, carbon-fiber-enhanced carapace encloses most of the creature, with only its six sensory eyestalks and pair of antennae exposed. The thing's mouth-parts have been replaced with retractible needle-like appendage, with which it



pierces power conduits to ‘feed.’ It has kept its host species’ regular digestive system, but only feeds in the normal sense as a last resort.

BIOMECH HIVE-TREE

Hive trees are the result of nanite corruption crossing over into plant life. They are used as energy production and storage factories for the machine-entity. Those trees which bear fruit have been converted to a more sinister purpose: supporting cocoons from which the Entity can more efficiently convert other host-species.

A hive tree resembles its host tree, but its leaves are slicked over with a thin layer of silicate, which act as photovoltaic cells. Power conduits gleam and strobe just beneath the tree’s bark, emitting unsettling flashes, pulses, and streamers of light. The bark is reinforced with thin metallic filaments, which act as a low-grade armor, while leaving the woody bark to act as natural electromagnetic shielding.

Elongated, pulsing sac-like cocoons, dangle from the thicker, lower branches, or bulge, tumor-like, from the girth of the trunk. These cocoons are made of a tough, fibrous material similar to kevlar, but somewhat more transparent. The steady orange-red glow from within is interspersed with twinkling and pulsing lights. The hazy silhouette of whatever creature may be in the process of mechanization can be seen in the murky depths of a cocoon, but exact details can not be made out (perhaps for the best for the casual observer).

Hive trees cannot move, and normally rely on hunter-killers for defense. As a last resort, the hive tree can lash out with its filament-infused vine-like growths. The Entity also uses hive trees to ‘evolve’ drones into either hunters, or hunter-killers if its own full production capabilities are not online.

BIOMECH HIVE TREE

Large rare semi-sentient mechanoid plant (6d6)

Conversion factories for the alien machine Entity.

STR 12 (4d6) **AGI** 1 (1d6) **END** 12 (4d6)

INT 6 (3d6) **LOG** 1 (1d6) **WIL** 3 (2d6)

CHA 1 (1d6) **LUC** 0 (0d6) **REP** 10 (4d6)

HEALTH 32

MELEE DEFENSE 17; **RANGED DEFENSE** 10;

MENTAL DEFENSE 11

SOAK 10 (barkskin); **VULN** 1d6 (fire) 1d6 (electrical) 2d6 (ion)

INITIATIVE 6d6

PERCEPTION 3d6

SPEED 0; **CLIMB** -; **JUMP** -

CARRY 360lb (max lift 900lb)

ACTIONS 3

NATURAL DAMAGE 2d6+2

Vine 5d6 (2d6+2 piercing/electrical damage; range 6)

Skills *combat* 3 (2d6) *hardy* 3 (2d6)

Gear -

Called Shot. An individual vine can be targeted with a called shot. The vine does not have any SOAK, and 10 slashing damage is enough to sever it, freeing any victims. The hive tree has many vines, so severing one does not otherwise reduce its capabilities.

Many vines. A hive tree has an extra action for its size; unlike most creatures who cannot use an action more than once per turn it is able to use all three of its actions to attack, although no more two attacks can be directed at a single target.

First Blood. The vine’s attack is considered piercing until it draws blood. It must spend an action immediately after to analyze and assesses the targets’ viability for conversion. If it meets the Entity’s criterion, subsequent attacks on the target deal electrical damage, attempting to knock the target out, whereafter they are dragged close enough to the tree to be absorbed into an existing pod, or a new cocoon can be spun around the paralyzed victim.



Grab (m). Hive trees can grab their opponents with a ranged attack using a vine. A grab is an attack with a -2d6 cost. A creature struck by the grab attack is grabbed and remains so until escape. An escape requires a STR or AGI attack against the plant's MELEE DEFENSE and is an action which places the victim free from the grab in an adjacent square. It costs the plant an attack each round to maintain the grab, but it does not need to make any further checks; however it can use that action to make an opposed STR check and drag the victim 5 squares closer. Once a victim is brought adjacent to the hive tree, it attempts to deposit them into a conversion pod.

Swallow whole (m). A hive tree can pay 3d6 to drag an adjacent large or smaller creature into a conversion pod. The victim begins to drown in the nanite-infused conversion solution (Fast END countdown). Escape requires a single melee attack against the reinforced biomaterial which does 20 damage. The hive tree's SOAK does not apply, if attacked from within.