

ROGUE TRADER™

DARK FRONTIER™



AN INTRODUCTORY
ROGUE TRADER ADVENTURE

WARHAMMER™
40,000
ROLEPLAY

CREDITS

LEAD DEVELOPER

Ross Watson

DARK FRONTIER WRITTEN BY

Owen Barnes with additional writing by Sam Stewart

EDITING

Leigh Anne Reger

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Kevin Childress

COVER ART

Imaginary Friends Studio

INTERIOR ART

Matt Bradbury, Colin MacNeil, Karl Richardson

ART DIRECTION

Zoe Robinson

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Gabe Laulunen

MANAGING RPG DEVELOPER

Michael Hurley

PUBLISHER

Christian T. Petersen

GAMES WORKSHOP

LICENSING MANAGER

Owen Rees

Thanks to all staff of the GW Design Studio—your work is an inspiration.

LICENSING & ACQUIRED RIGHTS MANAGER

Erik Mogensen

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY MANAGER

Alan Merrett

HEAD OF LEGAL & LICENSING

Andy Jones

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PLAYTESTERS

"All Records Expunged" Sean Schoonmaker with Cliff Drozda, Nate Grover, Andrew McDonnell, Eric Ullman, "No Guts, No Glory" Sean Connor with Mathieu Booth, Karl Lloyd, Stephen Pitson, Benn Williams with Kat Glass, Chris Lancaster, Matt Ricciki, Rebecca Williams, Eric Young



**FANTASY
FLIGHT
GAMES**

Fantasy Flight Games
1975 West County Road B2
Roseville, MN 55113
USA

Copyright © Game Workshop Limited 2009. Games Workshop, Warhammer 40,000, Warhammer 40,000 Role Play, Rogue Trader, the foregoing marks' respective logos, Rogue Trader, and all associated marks, logos, places, names, creatures, races and race insignia/devices/logos/symbols, vehicles, locations, weapons, units and unit insignia, characters, products and illustrations from the Warhammer 40,000 universe and the Rogue Trader game setting are either ®, ™, and/or © Games Workshop Ltd 2000–2009, variably registered in the UK and other countries around the world. This edition published under license to Fantasy Flight Publishing Inc. All rights reserved to their respective owners. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Product Code: RTP2

For more information about the Rogue Trader line, free downloads, answers to rule queries, or just to pass on greetings, visit us online at

www.FantasyFlightGames.com

DARK FRONTIER

"You think man is the only race to dabble in the darkness of the warp? No my friend, there are creatures far older and evil than us out there among the cold stars—aliens whose worship of the warp makes humanity seem as naughty children screaming at the sky."

—Interrogator Milos Helacania, Lost to the Warp 673M40

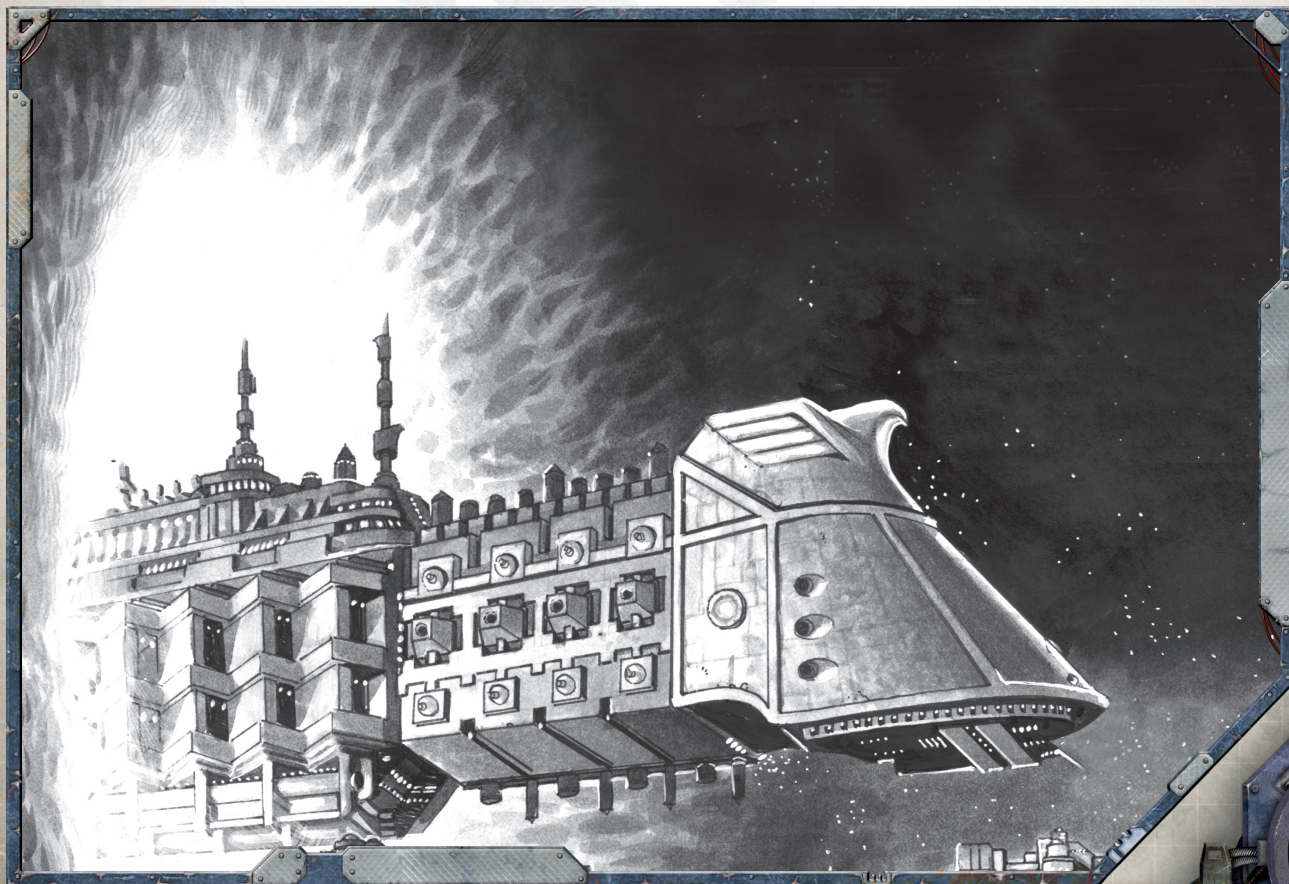
This adventure follows the events detailed in **FORSAKEN BOUNTY**. After facing off against malign influence of the Psycharus Worm, the Explorers find themselves in possession of both the *Emperor's Bounty* and the fell Halo Device that led to its demise. Unfortunately for them, their actions have had more far reaching consequences than they could imagine, and in defeating the thralls of the Worm, they have stirred up dark forces and ancient alien powers. In this adventure, the Explorers will learn of the true power of the Worm and catch a terrifying glimpse into the legacy of its creators. Their vessel and crew will be subverted by the power of a terrible xenos race known as the Yu'vath—an evil thought by most to have been long since extinguished from the galaxy—and they will be drawn into an ancient trap from which they must find a way to escape or become lost forever.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

You do not need a copy of **ROGUE TRADER** to play this adventure. It can be run using the characters and rules presented in the **FORSAKEN BOUNTY** booklet (available for download from the Fantasy Flight website). However if you do possess a copy of the **ROGUE TRADER** rulebook, guidelines have been presented to allow the GM to expand on certain encounters and challenges—adding such things as space battles and alternative enemies.

OVERVIEW

This scenario picks up where **FORSAKEN BOUNTY** left off with the Explorers in possession of both the *Emperor's Bounty* and the Halo Device known as the Psycharus Worm. After stripping the ship and deciding what to do with the Worm—keep it, discard it or destroy it—they make a transition into the warp leaving the battlefield behind. At this point things begin to go wrong for them; it seems that whatever powers they quelled aboard the *Bounty* have infected their own vessel and taken possession of their ship's systems. Out of control, their vessel is cast into the deep storms of the Maw and swept far off course. When the Explorers finally still the horrors that rage across their ship and return to real space, they find that the Worm has taken them somewhere far inside the Ragged Worlds to a remote system where an ancient alien space station hangs in the void in place of a star. This solar fortress was created long ago by the dark and alien Yu'vath and seems to have complete mastery over the system and a gravity shadow strong



WHERE IS THE WORM?

At the conclusion of **FORSAKEN BOUNTY** the Explorers will be in possession of the Psycharus Worm, though it will seemingly be inert. The Worm is linked to the warp, and able to phase in and out of real space, so attempts to destroy it, discard it, or lock it away will fail as it creeps about (though never when the PCs are observing it) and attempts to stay on their ship. If the Explorers do choose to discard or destroy it, then it will simply vanish (the GM can lead them to believe they have been successful) and hide within their vessel until the time is right. The GM can take advantage to this to heighten the PCs' anxiety by having it strangely move across a table when they look away, or having a crewman discover it in a vent decks away from where they left it. For more details on the Psycharus Worm and Halo Artefacts, see page 17 in **FORSAKEN BOUNTY**.

enough to hold orbiting planetary bodies, snare ships crossing the Koronus Passage, and worst of all, create some kind of powerful warp-lock preventing their escape. In addition to the brooding presence of the Yu'vath Fortress, the Explorers will also discover that they are not alone; others have been drawn here and are equally eager to escape. Using their cunning and skill, the Explorers must unite these marooned travellers and lead an assault against the Yu'vath Fortress to break the warp-lock and escape back into the void.

PART ONE: A DEADLY TRANSITION

The adventure begins when the Explorers are preparing to make a transition into the warp, at which time the Worm will become active once more. When exactly this happens is up to the GM. If the adventure follows directly after **FORSAKEN BOUNTY**, then this can be at the point that the Explorers are preparing to leave the Battleground after stripping much of the *Bounty*. Alternately, any amount of time could go by with the Explorers pursuing other opportunities and adventures, unaware that the Worm slumbers within their ship until at some point, when making a transition into the warp (a common occurrence for Rogue Traders), it stirs to life. If this adventure is used directly after **FORSAKEN BOUNTY** and is being played using the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook, the GM should allow the PCs to spend experience gained from that adventure and to acquire new items (it can be imagined that they are salvaged from the *Bounty*) before pressing on.

As the Explorers' ship begins its transition, read or paraphrase the following:

As it has done countless times before, your ship once again prepares to pierce the fabric of the immaterium and plunge into the warp. Like a sickness rising from the pit of your stomach you feel the warp engines roar to life a dozen decks below your feet and the charge in the ship's stale air as the Gellar Field's empyreal web envelops the vessel. The ship's structure shudders and groans as the transition begins and then...

Something is wrong. All of a sudden the bridge is plunged into shadow and the ship seems to buck under the weight of some unseen force—the very deck underfoot rippling and bending. All around you servitors cease their mindless tasks and throw their heads back screaming out of ruined mouths. You are struck by the unshakable feeling that something terrible has just happened.

Although the ship's Gellar Field is active at this point, the ship is wholly within the warp and the proximity allows the Worm to regain its power despite the Field's interference (incidentally, this is what also happened aboard the *Emperor's Bounty*). The Worm has infected their vessel with a Yu'vath Dark-Energy Construct known as a Warp Maggot which has begun to attack the ship's machine spirit. This means that the Explorers will lose control of their ship's helm and systems and servitors all across the ship will go berserk as they are tortured by the presence of the Maggot writhing around inside their sensory links and power feeds.

The Explorers may attempt to use their Gellar Field to disrupt the Worm's control. Unfortunately, while they are in the warp, the Gellar Field will have no effect on the Worm's powers.

DESCENT INTO DARKNESS

At this point, the Explorers will probably be screaming to find out what is going on and why their ship is failing all around them. Finding out that their ship has been attacked by a Warp Maggot (since few people will even know what a Warp Maggot is) is not going to happen straight away—if at all. Instead, the GM should have them treat the symptoms of the problem and show off their leadership skills by putting out some 'spot fires' caused by rampaging servitors and the Maggot's assault on the machine spirit. These can include:

- **Warp Engine Overload:** The Explorers must direct power relays away from the warp engine as its energy field fluctuates. This task can be performed over the vox, requires a **Hard (–20) Fellowship Test** (although for the Rogue Trader or Void-Master, the Test is Challenging (+0) instead), while personally aiding the Engineers requires a **Challenging (+0) Tech-use Test**.
- **Hull Breach:** A section of the ship is open to the warp and must be sealed swiftly. This can be done over the vox, but requires **Difficult (–10) Intimidate or Charm Test** to convince the crew to sacrifice those trapped in the compartments. It can be done linking with the core cogitator, requiring a **Challenging (+0) Tech-use Test**. Finally, Explorers near the decompressing section can personally seal the pressure doors using an **Ordinary (+10) Strength Test**.

- **Catastrophic Life-Support Failure:** The atmosphere within the ship is failing (see page 18 of **FORSKEN BOUNTY** for running out of air). This can be fixed in the same way as a Hull Breach above, however the increased difficulty modifies all Tests by -10.

Failing any of these Tests should not be fatal for the Player Characters, but the GM can go to lengths to describe the rising body count to the rest of the crew and the brutal damage their ship is suffering. The Explorers may also jump to the conclusion (rightly so) that the Worm is behind the chaos, and try to find it. A thorough search will locate it attached to servitor where it released the Maggot into the machine spirit. By this stage, the Maggot will have completed its subversion of the machine spirit and disappear (perhaps to return later) and control of their ship will return. At this time (several hours in game time) their ship will abruptly drop back into real space—heralding the beginning of more pressing problems...

PART TWO: UPON A DARK NOWHERE

While they were fighting the Maggot and the effects of its rampage, the Worm has guided their vessel into the waiting web of a Yu'vath trap—a region of warp space altered to snare the unwary and draw them toward an ancient alien fortress. As soon as they return to real space and take their bearings—scanning the near void to find out where they are—read or paraphrase the following:

Probing the darkness with your ship's sensors, you slowly assemble a picture of the near void around your vessel. At first you think you must be in deep space—such is the emptiness that presses down upon your hull. However after a few moments you begin to detect the presence of what must be a remote solar system containing little more than fragments of cold dead rock and a ring of gutted space hulks. At the centre of the system—beyond the rocks and ring of debris—a tiny black star burns and flickers against the darker void beyond.

At this point, the Worm will also vanish from wherever it linked into the ship's machine spirit, and will not be seen again on the ship. The Worm used the *Sovereign Venture* to find its way back to this ancient alien fortress—which had been its goal even when it took over the *Emperor's Bounty*. Now that it has arrived, it cares little for what happens to the Explorers.

WARP-LOCKED

The dark star is in fact a Yu'vath Fortress—an alien artefact of unimaginable power forged long ago by a twisted and corrupt xenos race. Equal in size to a medium-sized world, it hangs in the void like a black sun, arcing with power and blotting out the stars behind it. Across its surface, hundreds of small islands form a matrix of power relays and energy webs—their true purpose unknown. What is apparent is that the Fortress emits a tremendous gravity field across the near



THE YU'VATH

More than two thousands years ago, during the time of the Lord-Militant Angevin, the Expanse was home to an ancient and alien evil known as the Yu'vath. Twisted servants of the warp, they built an empire on a foundation of dark sorcery, soul slavery and daemon worship. For years the Crusade fought a bloody war against them, slowly pushing them back in the face of massed slave armies and vile warp-technology. Finally Saint Drusus himself struck the final blow and ended their domination over the Calyx Expanse. What was left of their worlds and artefacts were destroyed and their locations purged from Imperial records and over time their existence was slowly forgotten. Whispers persist however that they were never truly defeated and there are Yu'vath worlds still hidden deep within the darkness of the Expanse.

GMs can allow any Explorer with the Scholastic Lore (Occult) or (Legend) Skill to make a Difficult (–10) Test to know something of the tales of the Yu'vath. Alternatively some of the NPCs they encounter in this adventure may be able to pass on dark rumours.

void—drawing asteroids, hulks and even rogue moons into its orbit. Its presence is also felt within the warp, where it creates a deep shadow across the immaterium preventing ships from escape. Furthermore, the station is protected by Yu'vath Void Wasps—small crystalline and dark metal needle-like frigates with substantial firepower. These dark vessels constantly patrol within the upper orbit of the station.

All of these facts will quickly become apparent to the PCs, either from scans of the systems core, readings from the warp engines, or reports from their astropath concerning the shadow in the warp emanating from the star. This should leave them with the knowledge that they have somehow been brought here by the Worm and trapped for some unknown purpose. From the edge of the system, they will also be able to track a number of celestial bodies orbiting the star—most notably a small moon and broad ring of debris. Closer inspection will reveal that there is some kind of settlement on the moon and the presence of a vast space hulk hidden in the debris ring. They will also begin to pick up vox traffic.

Another detail they will quickly realise is that their vessel is locked into orbit around the star. Neither their plasma drives nor their warp engines will operate. It appears they are completely trapped. Luckily, the mysterious force that pins the *Sovereign Venture* in place has no affect on their smaller gun-cutter, which they can use to get around the system.

A HOSTILE SHORE

The Explorers are not the first people to have been drawn into this cursed system by the ancient Yu'vath. Both xenos and human vessels have been plucked from the Maw, either by the malign power of Halo Devices like the Worm or by straying too close to the Yu'vath's web within the warp. The fate of most of these crews and their ships has been a slow death trapped in the orbit of the fortress—unable to flee through the warp or through realspace. A few, however, have survived, and while no living xenos remain, two distinct human factions have taken up dominion over this evil place. The largest is a motley band of void-farers, ex-Imperials, and mutants led by an old naval midshipman named Martek the Just. Martek and his survivors have an established base on the system's only true planetary body: the nameless moon. The other settlement, known as the Brotherhood, is much smaller and led by a cleric named Palar. Marooned pilgrims, they have taken up residence in a space hulk within the debris ring and see their time here as a test by the Emperor himself. Both groups will be understandably interested in the Explorers' arrival and more importantly the presence of their powerful vessel.

MARTEK'S SURVIVORS

Martek commands a settlement of several thousand men and women in a vast shanty town on the nameless moon. Created from the wrecks of ships, the settlement stretches across kilometres of the moon's airless surface. The inhabitants have constructed makeshift habitats out of the crew quarters and life sustainers of scavenged vessels. Like all the inhabitants of the system, they survive by scavenging and farming the few fungus and food rodents that can live in such a claustrophobic environment, and searching the debris field for ice-asteroids they can convert to water and air. The settlement also boasts a sizable mutant population—drawn from the bilges of countless vessels—which play a vital role in its maintenance. Even with the limited resources available to him, Martek has observed the surface of the Yu'vath Fortress for years and watched how its energy matrix binds the detritus of the system together. His attempts to land on the fortress and break the matrix, however, have all ended in failure as he lacks the power to get past its defences.

Things to know about the Survivors:

- Martek believes that everyone in the settlement is equal—beneath him of course.
- The Survivor's settlement is dying—within a generation or two, its population will all be gone.
- The mutant population are restless and will soon outnumber the non-mutants.
- Martek speculates that to end the influence of the Fortress, its power matrix (relayed through its crystal towers) must be destroyed. He has even determined a particular crystal tower that seems larger and more energetic than the rest, and thinks that if that particular tower is destroyed, the force that keeps ships from leaving will be disrupted. He even has a weapon capable of pulling it off, the warhead

from a vortex torpedo scavenged from the wreckage of a ship. However, he has no way of breaking through the Void Wasp blockade that surrounds the planet to plant the torpedo.

THE BROTHERHOOD

The Brotherhood is the remnants of a pilgrim ship that was plucked from the Maw by the power of the Yu'vath Fortress. Led by Palar, it has become more a monastery than a true settlement and survives mostly by scavenging from the debris ring. Far smaller than the Survivor's settlement (numbering only a hundred or so souls), it has nevertheless endured and resisted Martek's attempts at assimilation for two key reasons. The first is that many of the Survivors respect Palar and his followers and their faith in the Emperor, believing that his presence somewhat alleviates their own hopelessness and the damned nature of their predicament. The second is that the Brotherhood is home to Lynara Cobolt, a pious free captain and commander of the *Penance of Iocanthos*—an armed transport ship. For his part, Palar has also restricted ties with Martek because of the mutant population of his settlement—which he sees as an affront to the Emperor. The Brotherhood will welcome the Explorers, as long as they come in the name of the Emperor.

Things to know about the Brotherhood:

- They are religious fanatics that follow only the word of the God-Emperor.
- Lynara is more interested in status and wealth than piety and might be open to a deal that involved her and her ship joining the Explorers' dynasty.
- Lynara's armed transport is trapped in an orbit much closer to the Fortress than the Explorer's vessel. In fact, her guns are in range of the Void Wasps. However, she is unwilling to fire on them for no good reason, since it seems like a bad idea to provoke them.
- They will only follow Martek or the Explorers if all the mutants are purged and Martek submits to a ritual of purification and supplication to the God-Emperor.



GM GUIDANCE: RUNNING THE FACTIONS

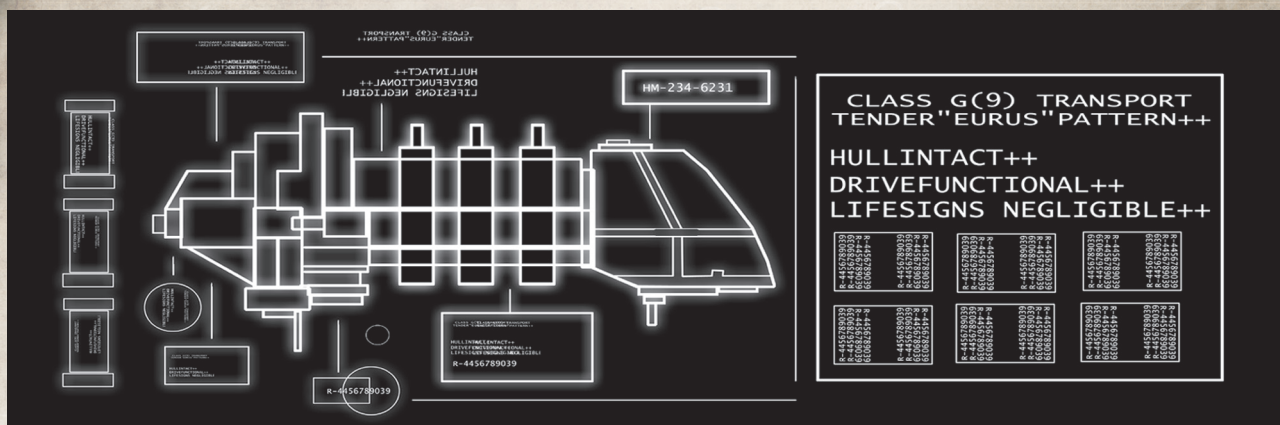
This section of the adventure has been left open for the GM and players to proceed as they choose—either with or without the help of the factions. At its most basic, the PCs can arrive, make contact with either faction and learn what they know about the Fortress and its influence, and learn the fact that they cannot break its defences with their vessel alone. From here, they can then stage an assault with either or both factions' aid and destroy one of the fortress relay towers, thus breaking its power matrix and allowing them to escape.

MAKING DEALS

Both of the factions have something necessary to escape the system. Martek has the plan and the bomb, and Lynara has the shipboard weaponry to blow a hole in the Yu'vath defences. The Explorers have several possible options:

- The Explorers can unite the factions through words and diplomacy. This will require the Explorers to speak to each faction in turn, making **Challenging (+0) Charm or Intimidate Tests** to convince (or coerce) each side to following the Explorers' orders. Martek's faction will be especially susceptible to threats of violence in the form of Intimidate Tests, whilst the Brotherhood may be easily persuaded by a member of the Imperial missionary making an **Ordinary (+10) Scholastic Lore (Imperial Creed) Test** (or a Charm test at the same difficulty) to convince them that their faith allows them to work with unclean mutants, as long as those mutants are used to further the accomplishments of the faithful.
- They can ally with one faction, then overcome and take what they need from the other. This will require the Explorers to fight or trick the opposing faction. Trask, for example, can make a **Challenging (+0) Deceive Test** to trick a faction leader into letting him enter their stronghold with a compliment of armed individuals from his crew or an opposing faction, at which point they can attempt to take it over. Or, if the GM has access to the **ROGUE TRADER Core Rulebook**, he can use some of the NPCs and Adversaries and set up a fight that the Explorers must overcome.

The GM is encouraged, however, to draw out this section of the adventure and force the Explorers to deal with both factions in order to get information about the fortress and also the resources—ships, men, and a bomb—to take it out.



PART THREE: AN ALIEN WAR

Once the Explorers have the support of either Martek or Palar (or both), they will have the men and ships they need to stage an assault on the fortress. As mentioned above, Martek has a plan to destroy the fortress which involves getting a bomb inside one of the fortress's energy towers and setting it off—though the PCs can formulate their own plan along these lines once they learn this is the key to breaking the warp-lock. However, a field akin to void-shielding protects the islands from orbital attack, so whatever their alternate plan is, it will have to involve shuttling down to the surface and destroying the tower from the inside. To do this, the Explorers will need to blast a hole in the patrols of defending Void Wasps while they shuttle over to the structure and plant the bomb. This is where Lynara and her ship will come in handy, though the players may feel that they are skilled enough pilots to evade the Void Wasps without her help.

The Explorers have two options to get through the Void Wasp patrols.

- Lynara's vessel can begin a long-range bombardment of the planet with her macrobatteries, firing as much ordinance as possible. Meanwhile, the Explorers in their shuttle or gun-cutter use their voxes to direct whoever is firing the ship's weapons. One of the Explorers should make a **Challenging (+0) Ballistic Skill Test**. If he succeeds, the gun-cutter's pilot must make an **Easy (+30) Pilot (Space Craft) Test** to fly the gun-cutter through the blockade. If the Ballistic Skill Test fails, the Pilot Test is Routine (+20) instead.
- If the players want to proceed without the covering fire, the pilot must make two **Challenging (+0) Pilot (Space Craft) Tests** instead.

If any Pilot Tests are failed, everyone inside the gun-cutter will take 1d5 Wounds (ignoring Armour and Toughness), as the gun-cutter is hit and buffeted by fire from the Void Wasps. If there are any NPCs with the Explorers, a few of them should die horribly as stray energy bursts puncture one of the passenger compartments. However, the gun-cutter will still make it to the tower whether the Tests succeed or fail.

GM GUIDANCE: SPACE BATTLE

The assault on the station as presented here has been designed so that the GM does not need to keep track of the space battle. Instead, it is assumed that it will be raging in the background as the Explorers make their landing and proceed to an energy tower—essentially allowing them to make their landing without being blown out of the sky. In this case, the GM should emphasise the titanic struggle raging above the PCs heads as the Yu'vath Void Wasps clash with the human fleet, filling the sky with fire and death.

However, if you are running this adventure with a copy of **ROGUE TRADER**, you will have access to detailed rules for space battles and ship profiles. If this is the case, the GM should feel free to flesh out this part of the adventure, having the Explorers fight their way past several Void Wasps before they can get close enough to launch their gun-cutter.

This battle can most easily be done with information found in the **ROGUE TRADER GM'S TOOLKIT**, which has information on Void Wasps and intersystem ships. The GM can also build Lynara's ship using a Vagabond Merchant Trader as the base hull (although the GM should remember that her ship is locked in place and cannot move). If you do this, keep in mind that the Explorer's goal is not to destroy all the Void Wasps, but simply get close enough to the planet to launch a gun-cutter.

Once the Explorers get close enough, they can ferry the bomb across. As their gun-cutter approaches the fortress, read or paraphrase the following:

Your gun-cutter is buffeted and shaken as it flies across the void between your ship and the black star. All around, the darkness is alive with the vivid slash of beams and flashes of exploding ordinance. Soon however, even these fade into the background as you get your first good look at the alien installation. Thousands of kilometres across, it appears as a great ball of liquid darkness seething and rippling against the stars. On its surface, massive honeycomb islands glitter and spark, spewing forth streams of insect-like interceptors to attack your allies in space. However, one island stands out, larger than the others and crowned by a crystal tower connected to the others by flickering streams of energy. As you draw closer, your gun-cutter passes through some kind of pressure curtain and is immediately assailed by wind and black tar-like rain thrown up from the dark surface below. More alarmingly, the gun-cutter's instrument panels begin to flicker erratically.

As the Explorers approach the island, their gun-cutter will be assaulted by energy ribbons and electromagnetic static causing its systems to flicker on and off. The GM should have them make one final **Challenging (+0) Piloting Test** to put down safely on the island—if they fail, then their gun-cutter will land hard and all Explorers must make a **Ordinary (+10) Toughness Test** or suffer 1 point of damage (ignoring Armour or Toughness) as they smack against the gun-cutter's internal components. Such a landing will also disturb the bomb, and the GM can have a few tense moments as it is thrown about and makes ominous noises. Whether or not they make a smooth landing, the Explorers will not be able to get further than the shore of the island due to the power

field surrounding the structure, and will be forced to process on foot toward the tower to plant the bomb.

The GM should determine the size of the vortex torpedo warhead. It can either be as large as a bed and far heavier, requiring it to be carried by several men (thus forcing the PCs to go slowly and protect its bearers). Or it can be small enough to be carried by a single Explorer (though this means it can be more easily lost should the bearer be lost or lose his backpack).

THE MIND MAZE

To reach the crystal tower at the centre of the island, the Explorers will need to navigate through a maze of closed and open tunnels of veined black diamond. The route is long and winding, and the walls alternate between blank corridors that all look exactly the same and claustrophobic tunnels covered in disquieting pictographs depicting unnatural rites and rituals. The real peril here, however, is not getting lost but in losing their minds.

If you are using **ROGUE TRADER**, have each Explorer make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** or suffer 1d10 Insanity Points as their minds are assaulted by the Yu'vath pictographs that cover the tunnel walls. Otherwise, the GM should simply impose a –10 penalty to the Ballistic Skill and Weapon Skill Tests of any Explorer who fails the Willpower Test during the next combat (the Crystal Garden).

At the GM's discretion, if the Explorers are accompanied by Martek or Palar and their followers, they can have some of them go mad and either run off, turn on the group, or even try and set off the bomb. Beyond the maze they will find the crystal garden.



THE CRYSTAL GARDEN

The tower is ringed by an open area filled with a forest of what appear to be crystalline trees—their deadly sharp edges glinting in the light given off by the tower. Many of the trees have shed their branches so that the ground crunches underfoot with broken crystal. Fighting in here is dangerous, and any explosions, such as grenades or bolters, have a 50% chance to cause a rain of razor sharp crystal leaves. If this occurs, have everyone in the combat make an **Ordinary (+10) Agility Test** or suffer 1d10 points of damage (this is reduced by Armour and Toughness as normal). In addition to the dangers of the trees, several Shardspiders (used by the Yu'vath to maintain their structures) prowl the forest—their crunching footsteps audible to any who care to listen (an **Ordinary (+10) Awareness Test** to detect before they attack). Shardspider attacks should be in groups equal in number to the Explorers and their allies.

SHARDSPIDERS

Another construct of the Yu'vath, these deadly little creatures are fashioned from bruised purple crystal and are about the size of a large dog. With twelve legs and a tiny central body they scuttle about with alarming speed. They also have a set of needle-like mandibles which they can alternatively use to mend broken crystal or plunge into an Explorer's soft flesh...

Shardspider Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
39	—	44	41	51	16	37	20	—

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Skills: Stealth (Ag)

Talents: None

Traits: Natural Armour (All 2)

Weapons: Monofilament mandibles (1d10+4; Pen 4)

Armour: All 2

Gear: None

Wounds: 10

THE KEENING TOWER

The needle-like crystal tower that spears the centre of the island has a single, large and obvious entrance ringed by strange Yu'vath markings. There is not untoward danger here; however, unless the Explorers devise some way of more easily getting to the top, they are in for a long torturous climb. Have each Explorer make an **Ordinary (+10) Toughness Test** or suffer a -10 penalty to their Toughness for the following battle.

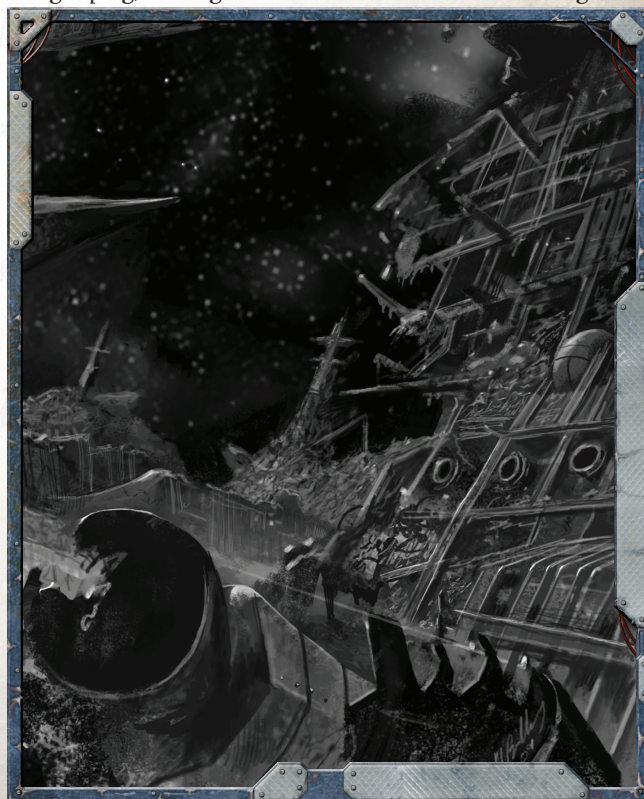
THE CHAMBER OF BONES

At the top of the Keening Tower the Explorers will find the Chamber of Bones—the power nucleus of the island and the lair of the Bone Warden. This is a large vaulted chamber, twisted and veined with purple light like the rest of the island, but here, the light seems to coalesce into a single blazing point above the Explorer's head. Across the floor and walls more of the disturbing pictographs can be seen amid the desiccated remains of humans and xenos corpses. In the centre of the chamber a dim luminous sphere, surrounded by floating shards of crystal, hovers below the nexus of light. This is the Bone Warden (see below) and it will stir as the Explorers enter its lair.

In the rear of the chamber, hovering on a pedestal of dark crystal, the Explorers will notice something very familiar. The Psycharus Worm is suspended in a column of blue-purple light. Obviously this is where it vanished to after leaving the Explorers' ship.

YU'VATH BONE WARDEN

An ancient Dark-Energy Construct, the Bone Warden is a fell union of warp technology and dark sorcery. They were crafted by the Yu'vath primarily to act as watchmen and guardians for their void crypts and solar fortresses; and even now, long after their masters have been forgotten, they remain to fulfil their duty. The Bone Warden has no physical form and instead resides in a collective of dead matter—most often corpses or other once living remains. These corpses are held together by ribbons and arcs of crackling black energy, the air around them charged with constant flashes of midnight electricity and the smell of burning flesh. Acting as a single mass, the corpses form a cloud of grasping, clawing hands and mouths that whirls through the



air. The only way to defeat a warden is to destroy its physical state and thus disperse its dark energy field. However, even as its adversaries blast away its fleshy shell, it uses its warp-shard crown—a collection of dark crystalline fragments that orbit its energised core—to claim more physical matter, regenerating its rotting form. For this reason, Bone Wardens are often found in rooms well stocked with the dead—a ready made supply of material left by their Yu’vath masters.

Fortunately for the Explorers, the Bone Warden they will encounter in the crystal tower has faded in power with time and the weakening of the fortress itself—as such it does not have archeo-warp weapons or its full complement of psychic powers.

Charged with defending the nexus and the crystal tower, the Bone Warden will attack immediately and fight until either it or the Explorers have been destroyed.

Diminished Bone Warden Profile



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
58	33	⁽¹⁰⁾ 54	41	31	40	32	40	—

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Skills: None

Talents: None

Traits: Warp-Shard Crown (see below), Cloud of Corpses (see below) Unnatural Strength x2 (see below)

Weapons: Claws and Fists (2d10+10), Warp Blast (Counts as an Archaeotech Hellpistol—see page 5 of **FORSAKEN BOUNTY**)

Armour: None

Gear: None

Warp-Shard Crown: At any time, a Bone Warden can spend a Full Action to regenerate one wound for every corpse within 20 metres as its shards burrow into their dead flesh and they are dragged into to the creature’s mass. Once a corpse is used in this way, it becomes part of the Bone Warden and cannot be used again. The Warp-Shard Crown also has a secondary power to disrupt energy attacks and fields in its presence as the crystals sap their power. For this reason, power weapons (like power swords) only do half damage against it.

Cloud of Corpses: Because the Bone Warden is not really a physical thing but rather a collection of dead animated flesh, it can also spread itself across a large area by sending out bodies spinning and writhing through the air. Typically a Warden will be comprised of around a dozen or so bodies at one time spread over an area of up to 15 metre radius from its crown. This means that anyone in, or next to, this area can be attacked by the Warden. Furthermore, as a Full Action, the Warden can make a single melee attack against every target in this area. A flamer or similar area-effect weapon inflicts double damage upon the Diminished Bone Warden.

Unnatural Strength (x2): The Bone Warden is a construct fuelled by the warp, giving it strength beyond what is physically possible. When dealing damage with melee attacks, the Bone Warden doubles its Strength Bonus (letting it do 10 additional damage instead of 5).

GM GUIDANCE:

BATTLING THE BONE WARDEN

The Warden is a powerful adversary and should be difficult to defeat for the Explorers. It will strike at them with its flailing corpses and blast them with warp energy from its crown. How difficult the GM chooses to make this fight depends on how much he thinks his players can take—considering they may be wounded already from their journey to the tower. The difficulty of this fight is tied directly to the amount of corpses in the chamber and thus the amount of times the Warden can regenerate. Ten or less will make for a fairly evenly matched fight, while more than 20 will be quite a challenge. The players may also figure out that the Warden draws its power from the corpses once they see it regenerate and choose to destroy bodies before it can use them. This is a legitimate tactic as long as they have a weapon powerful enough to shred a corpse—a bolter on semi-auto (or a flamer burst) should do it. Finally, another way to make this fight a little easier on the PCs is to have their allies take some of the flak—either Martek or Palar and their men can soak up some of the damage. Of course this will create more corpses...

If the players (or GM) are curious as to where the corpses have come from, an examination of the bodies will reveal they are both human and xenos, and appear to be in varying states of decomposition. It should be apparent to anyone who makes a **Routine (+20) Common Lore (Imperium) Test** that the Explorers are not the first to try and destroy this tower, and if they fail, their bodies will join these heaps of corpses.

Once the Bone Warden has been destroyed, the Explorers can set their bomb and make their escape. If the Explorers are particularly bloodied by their trials so far, you might want to go easy on them and simply let them retrace their steps and then take their gun-cutter back to their ship. However, if you feel they have a little more left in them, you can have one of their ‘allies’ turn on them, either due to madness or for a chance to steal their vessel. Perhaps Palar or Martek might flee, leaving some men to block their path while attempting to reach their gun-cutter first and leave them stranded. Thus the Explorers must fight their way out—perhaps past more Shardspiders—while in the background the bomb counts slowly down...

When the Explorers do leave the island with the bomb in place, the GM can read or paraphrase the following:

As your gun-cutter lifts off in a plume of exhaust, you feel a shudder pass through the cabin. Turning your gaze to the image of the dwindling alien tower, your vision is suddenly filled with a flash of dazzling white light. For a heartbeat there is silence and then suddenly the shock wave hits the gun-cutter and it is tossed wildly in the air. As the light fades, you can see the crackling blue sphere of the vortex detonation hanging above the island hungrily drawing in energy ribbons from across the dark fortress. In the distance, you can see other relay towers flaring bright and burning out as the vortex robs them of their energy. And then you are beyond the pressure curtain and into the void once more—just in time to witness the monolithic alien structure start to implode.

CONCLUSION AND REWARDS

With the crystal tower destroyed, the Yu'vath Fortress' guardian Void Wasps will explode, and its warp-lock will fail, allowing the Explorers to escape the system. The rest of the surviving humans will be eager to hitch a ride back to the Imperium and willing to pay for the privilege. This is the point where the Explorers can pillage the system and perhaps pick up some more lasting allies. Certainly if Lynara is still about, she will be willing make some kind of arrangements with them. Finally, if they are very bold indeed (and have not had enough trouble from xeno tech), they can attempt to plunder the ruins of the fortress. What exactly they find is up

to the GM—however it should almost certainly be trouble, perhaps even more Bone Wardens...

Finally there only remains the question of the Pyscharus Worm and what to do with it. With the destruction of the fortress's energy field, it is now truly inert and will no longer phase or cause more mischief. This means the Explorers are free to keep it, destroy it, or try and sell it as they see fit—of course even inert it might cause problems for them as rumours leak out of their involvement with it to shadowy organisations and interested parties.

PROFIT FACTOR REWARDS

- **Scavenging the system and ferrying the survivors back to the Imperium:** +3
- **Recovering any Yu'vath artefacts to sell or pass on to the Inquisition:** +1

EXPERIENCE REWARDS

- **Breaking the warp-lock and escaping the system:** 500 XP
- **Uniting the factions and getting everything they need to assault the fortress without killing either leader or their followers:** 100 XP

If you have a copy of **ROGUE TRADER**, then you can also use this opportunity to set up an Endeavour (as detailed in **Chapter X: The Game Master** of the **ROGUE TRADER** rulebook) such as a permanent colony on the nameless moon or a xenoexcavation of the fortress which could lead to greater and lasting profit for the Explorers.

