

# "CONSPIRACY *in the* STARS"



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**DARK  
MATTER™**  
*adventure*





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# Credits

**Lead Writer** Donathin Frye  
**Assistant Writers** Charlie Smith, Simon Goudreault, Makenzie De Armas  
**Editors** Michael Holik, Ben Paff

**Cover Illustrator** Martin Kirby  
**Cartographer** Louis Mattez  
**Interior Illustrations** Martin Kirby, Mariana Livraes, Lucas Ferreira CM, Moniek Schilder



## On the Cover

Martin Kirby sets up the key players for a tense noir mystery: the paranoid professor, the shady cop, the certified killer, and the breathtaking beauty, all set against the backdrop of Port Nomad, a seedy spaceport, rife with danger and intrigue.

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# INTRODUCTION

*Conspiracy in the Stars!* is an adventure for the 5th Edition of the world's greatest roleplaying game, designed as an introduction to Mage Hand Press's campaign setting *Dark Matter*. It requires the Game Master (GM) to have access to the *Dark Matter* book or the *Dark Matter Basic Rules*. The adventure challenges the players to unravel the intrigue surrounding an assassination attempt, dealing with a variety of characters with their own goals and schemes. Their investigation ultimately culminates in a dogfight across an asteroid field to rescue a gnomish scientist, whose newest invention could change the very future of the entire 'verse.

The adventure begins in Port Nomad, a small space hub located in a hollowed-out asteroid at the edge of a deadly asteroid field. Port Nomad is a seedy locale favored by space pirates, black market traders, corporate cronies, and political powers looking to do business "off-the-books". You could place Port Nomad anywhere within the *Dark Matter* campaign setting—there are a thousand shady spaceports across the 'verse, and all of them have a story worth telling. By the time this adventure is finished, the player characters will have a detailed, heavily-customized spaceship of their own to fly onward to future adventures in the *Dark Matter* setting.

*Conspiracy in the Stars!* is designed to be played over several sessions by a party of 3rd level characters. Groups with fewer than four players may wish to instead begin at 4th level. Some of the non-player characters (NPCs) in the adventure are far stronger than the player characters (PCs), and it is encouraged for the GM to resolve conflict with any powerful background NPCs without killing the PCs.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

No obstacle is more perilous to civilization's travel and expansion through the stars than Dead Magic Zones. In these regions of space, the 'verse has thinned. No magic functions, including that which powers most ships and Dark Matter engines. In Dead Magic Zones, navigation systems fail, life support fizzles out, and engines die.

What makes Dead Magic Zones even more dangerous is that their boundaries are always changing in chaotic, unpredictable patterns. A zone can encompass an entire world while releasing others as it moves and shifts over thousands of years.

Worlds deep within Dead Magic Zones remain largely unexplored by the greater civilizations of the 'verse, and are hence often referred to as "lost worlds." These worlds represent an elusive, teasing promise to innumerable cultures: if more habitable planets, free of corporate and government interference, were to be accessed by the 'verse at large, many ongoing interstellar conflicts might finally find peaceful solutions.

The primary proponent of this sociological theory for opening up Dead Magic Zones to multi-civilization expansion is Professor Orryn Talfough-Gogglefogger, a brilliant gnomish inventor and engineer. Like most gnomes, his home is the lost world Nebellion, and he has dedicated his life to mastering advanced technology that allows for miracles such as travel through Dead Magic Zones without the need for magic. Professor Orryn has recently developed a prototype device called a *Talfough Matrix*, capable of altering a ship's Dark Matter engine to create an energy field around a vessel that will allow magic (and Dark Matter engines) to work in Dead Magic Zones.

Professor Orryn has tested his prototype on his own ship, the *Caliber*, and has proven that it works. Now he plans to meet with cultural and business leaders from around the 'verse about investment, so that he can mass-produce *Talfough Matrices* and develop even smaller matrices that would fit on suits or clothing, allowing arcanists access to their magic on lost worlds without the need of a Dark Matter engine or ship.

And so Professor Orryn has come to the seedy space slums of Port Nomad to meet with parties representing many races and interests. There are plenty of greedy expansionists who would kill to get their hands on Orryn's technology, and even more war profiteers who would rather see the technology destroyed and the bloody status quo of the 'verse maintained. Professor Orryn knows his life is at risk, and so he has hired the player characters as bodyguards to protect him while he presents the proof of his prototype to a bar full of powerful attendees who may have their own motives and goals in mind.

## ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The characters begin inside **The Starswill**, a space bar in Port Nomad. As they become enveloped in a plot to kidnap Professor Orryn and steal his prototypical device for nefarious reasons, a noir mystery becomes a frantic fight through the seedy streets of Port Nomad, culminating in an explosive chase through space and a nearby asteroid field to rescue the professor before it's too late.

The adventure is played out in three acts followed by an epilogue, each with their own distinct, classic science fiction tones and tropes.



### ACT 1: THE USUAL SUSPECTS!

The characters introduce themselves and encounter many suspicious individuals gathered to hear Professor Orryn's presentation. With each character they meet, they learn a little bit more about the intricacies of interstellar politics, and how different factions view the potential for Professor Orryn's invention. During the presentation, an apparent assassination attempt creates chaos in the space bar, and the characters must work quickly to diffuse the situation, save the professor, and protect other innocent bystanders.

### ACT 2: THE DARK UNDERBELLY

After the chaos dies down, the PCs are questioned by Ser Helio-Horus, commander of Port Nomad's security, and then released. While they wait for Professor Orryn to also be turned loose, they are free to explore the spaceport and investigate the circumstances surrounding the assassination attempt. The more they learn, the more the evidence suggests that Ser Helio-Horus is corrupt and may be a part of an unknown plot against the professor. A confrontation with Ser Helio-Horus turns into a shootout through the streets of Port Nomad when the characters discover that a group calling themselves the New Terran Organization (NTO) has kidnapped the professor and is taking him to their ship.

### ACT 3: ALL ABOARD THE CALIBER!

Hoping to rescue the professor yet, the PCs gain access to Professor Orryn's highly advanced gnomish space vessel the *Caliber*. They give chase from the port of the space station and through a nearby asteroid field, engaging in explosive dogfights and gutsy maneuverings with a handful of NTO ships seeking to slow them down. Their pursuit ends inside a giant, hollowed-out asteroid, where they come face-to-face with the true villain of the kidnapping plot: Carmen Cane. In a race against time, the characters must defeat Carmen's minions and try to stop her from dragging Professor Orryn into a secret teleporter.

### FUTURE ADVENTURES

Depending on the characters' decisions, they may be able to rescue Professor Orryn and either defeat Carmen Cane or cause her to flee alone into the teleporter. They may even learn a little bit about the Tower, the clandestine organization of powerful mages that Carmen serves. Regardless of how the adventure ends, the characters have made meaningful allies or enemies with powerful individuals from all across the 'verse, and now have access to an incredible space vessel that is capable of traveling into Dead Magic Zones without sacrificing the passenger's magic. This is just the start of many great adventures.





## THE USUAL SUSPECTS: IMPORTANT NPCs

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure.

### BOSS AHN-NOVA (HE/HIM)

*Pronunciation: "Boss Ahn No-Vah"*

Boss Ahn-Nova is an owl-headed Avia-Ra who was kidnapped by mercenaries and taken away from his family as a child. Though the ransom was eventually paid and he was freed, Ahn-Nova resolved from that moment on to never be helpless again. After spending many years as a smuggler and occasional hitman, Ahn-Nova moved to Port Nomad and has been working since to build his own small criminal empire in the seedy spaceport. He has the sort of reputation that one would expect from a backwater crime lord: he never lets go of a debt, lacks any sort of moral compass, and is more than willing to help anyone with any problem that they have—for a price.

Currently, Boss Ahn-Nova and the spaceport's Chief of Security, Ser Helio-Horus, are known enemies. Because of their feud, Boss Ahn-Nova will not attend the presentation at Starswill Bar. However, both of the bartenders working that night are his employees, and he expects a full report.

### CAPTAIN LYSANDRA (SHE/THEY)

*Pronunciation: "Captain Lies-an-druh"*

Captain Lysandra is a commander in the Nautilid Flotilla who has come to Port Nomad to listen to Professor Orryn's presentation about a new gnomish technology that will allow limited use of magic for ships and individuals in Dead Magic Zones. They hold no small amount of hope that this technology could finally be the answer to the nautilids' endless search for a new homeworld with naturally occurring Poseidon Solution.

A year ago, Lysandra's ship was blown up in what was reported as an "accidental drive malfunction". She believes it was no accident, and suspects the Firm was behind the sabotage. The incident has motivated Lysandra further, and made them a little reckless and desperate, as their goal to find a new homeworld for their people continues to be hampered by outside forces beyond their control.

### CARMEN CANE (SHE/HER)

*Pronunciation: "Car-men Cane"*

Carmen Cane is the definition of the human femme fatale. She oozes charisma, confidence, and immense intelligence. A short conversation with her immediately identifies her as a brilliant young brain surgeon. Because of her beauty and wit, she often finds herself rubbing elbows, sharing drinks, and exchanging glances with powerful men and women.

The truth, however, is far more nefarious. Carmen is a deadly secret agent and a powerful wizard. She is also the leader of the New Terran Organization: a violent, dogmatic, and virulently spreading terrorist organization that believes that humankind is the most superior race, and that they should claim the stars as their right. So while Carmen's bright smile and inviting demeanor may charm those who do not know her secrets, when dealing with her followers or enemies, she reveals herself as an unabashed sociopath, the mastermind of some of the most ruthless acts of interspecies violence in the 'verse's recent history.

Of course, even that isn't the full truth. The New Terran Organization, unbeknownst to its xenophobic and simple-minded followers, is a front organization that works to execute the most secret and diabolic commands of the enigmatic wizard organization known only as the Tower (see *Dark Matter*, Chapter 1, Factions). And though Carmen Cane (if that's her real name) may be one of the most dangerous individuals in the 'verse, even she doesn't know the grand machinations of the Tower's puppet-masters.

### CIRDAN BLACKFORGE (HE/HIM)

*Pronunciation: "Seer-dan Black-forge"*

Cirdan Blackforge is an old, once-famous dwarvish shipwright, now down on his luck and nearing the end of his career. He is representing the Blackforge Clan at Professor Orryn's presentation, but has grave misgivings about the possible impact the new technology might have on the 'verse's complicated economy. He believes dwarves like him would be hit the hardest by any major change to the status quo.

Despite his resistance to change, Cirdan does his best to keep an open mind and is always interested in meeting new people.

### DARKSTAR KILLAGOB (HE/HIM)

*Pronunciation: "Dark-star Kill-ay-gob"*

Darkstar Killagob is an ex-hitman and current information broker for the Firm, which makes him one of the most dangerous halflings in the 'verse. The Firm stands to gain a lot from investing in technology that could unlock Dead Magic Zones to exploration, colonization, resource mining, and more. Darkstar, a stone-cold killer, will do whatever it takes to determine whether or not the gnomish technology is the real deal, and make sure that his organization reaps the lion's share of the benefits.

Darkstar is extremely confident and believes that he is smarter and more skillful than pretty much everyone he meets. Despite this, he doesn't feel the need to prove it, and will only act when he feels it's absolutely necessary; his small gestures and quiet words hold a lot of weight.



## EMBER (IE) (THEY/THEM)

*Pronunciation: “Emm-burr”*

Ember (IE) is an amoeboid scientist who just happened to be in Port Nomad during Professor Orryn’s arrival and subsequent presentation. Ember is a very progressively minded sociologist with a focus on the effects of interstellar war. They have a particular interest in orcish sociology and believe the new technology could do a lot to disperse current ongoing wars that are unlikely to ever end without a major systematic change.

Curious and patient, they are observing the ‘verse with an attempt to consider all of its many variables, and they are very interested in how others act. They value neutrality, avoid becoming directly involved in conflicts, and try to use their influence passively. However, they are quite powerful when they unleash their magic.

## HIGH ORACLE THESSALIA (SHE/HER)

*Pronunciation: “High Oracle Thess-ay-lia” of Great House “Meer-Gayl”*

High Oracle Thessalia of Great House Mere’gaal is present representing both the interests of the Elvish Empire and Astrogations Incorporated. The latter has tasked her with learning more about Professor Orryn’s prototype and then use her divination magics and great wisdom to give the starfaring guild an informed suggestion on how much they should invest in the new technology.

Thessalia knows things about other people that she should have no way of knowing, and will occasionally leave hints and suggestions to this end, often for her own amusement. She will never start a fight, but she will be there to help others in need. When tides turn against her people, or those she wishes to win over as allies, she will use all of her power to aid them in any way she can.

## KENNIE FLOPWIG (HE/HIM)

*Pronunciation: “Ken-ee Flop-wig”*

Kennie Flopwig is Kiri’s twin brother and the Chief Data Executive of the Galactic Bank. He lacks Kiri’s gumption and charisma, but he is a genius with crunching numbers. He is also clumsier, both physically and socially, and Kiri often has to re-word his blunderous statements. Being around Darkstar Killagob makes Kennie even sweatier and more anxious than he usually is; he legitimately fears that if he says something overly annoying or awkward, Darkstar might kill him.

## KIRI FLOPWIG (SHE/HER)

*Pronunciation: “Key-ree Flop-wig”*

Kiri Flopwig is the Vice President of the Galactic Bank. She’s an energetic, take-no-prisoner shark, made bolder by her halffing genetics. Still, everyone

has a boss—and the Galactic Bank is beholden to the Firm. Kiri is at Professor Orryn’s presentation as a potential investor, but the ultimate decision will be made by the Firm’s information broker, Darkstar Killagob. While she understands the hierarchy, she secretly resents the Firm and Darkstar for treating her and her company with so little confidence.

## NEUTRON (Ø) (THEY/THEM)

*Pronunciation: “New-tron”*

Neutron (Ø) is an amoeboid doctor working at the clinic in Port Nomad, who harbors grand aspirations of being a holo-screenwriter. Neutron takes to their work as a doctor naturally, but longs for the types of adventures found in holo-plays: daring tales of intrepid heroes and narrow escapes from defeat. In their free time, Neutron has been chipping away at a holo-screenplay of their very own, but sadly, they are devoid of any talent in writing and will plague anyone who will listen with clichéd story and character ideas.

Though Neutron is not present for Professor Orryn’s presentation, they can be found taking care of patients at the clinic at any time.

## PROFESSOR ORRYN TALFOUGH-GOGGLEFOGGER (HE/HIM)

*Pronunciation: “Professor Or-en Tal-foe Goggle-fogger”*

Professor Orryn Talfough-Gogglefogger is the brilliant and eccentric gnomish inventor who has made his life’s work







unlocking the power of magic within Dead Magic Zones. He understands the ley lines and nature of these mysterious regions better than most, and he has finally prepared a prototype of his technology. He hopes in the future to be able to mass-produce personal-sized devices and gigantic terraforming generators alike, in hopes of unlocking the last hidden corners of the 'verse.

He knows his work is dangerous, but believes the opportunity for goodness that comes with unlocking these previously unreachable parts of the 'verse far outweighs the risk. He is kind but easily lost in the immensity of his work, sometimes missing more immediate threats to his well-being. He has a dream and will fight for it, preferably with technology, charisma, and a little bit of gnomish tinker magic.

#### SER HELIO-HORUS (HE/HIM)

*Pronunciation: "Sir Heel-ee-oh Hoor-us"*

The lone Sepulcher Knight protecting Port Nomad has a reputation for being unerringly fair and incredibly brave as defender of the peace. His swordplay and aim are said to be so great, his presence so intimidating, that he does not even need to rely on magic or the gods as other Sepulcher Knights do. This is true, to a point: Helio-Horus is a powerful avia-ra fighter, but unlike most avia-ra, he is also surprisingly shrewd and craven. When he is threatened by a more powerful enemy, or with the truth of his past being exposed, "Ser" Helio-Horus is all too eager to choose the path of least resistance and avoid trouble.

Ten years ago, Helio-Horus was cast out from the Order of Sepulcher Knights for breaking his oaths, dealing narcotics to the people he was sworn to defend, and murdering witnesses to protect his reputation. His fundamental betrayal of his oaths has left him unable to summon divine magics, a fact which has embittered him. Of course, very few individuals in Port Nomad know of his dark past or his current shady dealings with pirates, criminal organizations, and worse. He will do whatever it takes to make sure that remains true, no matter how vile, cruel, or cowardly his actions prove.

#### TIBERIUS VINTER (HE/HIM)

*Pronunciation: "Tie-beer-ius Vin-ter"*

Tiberius Vinter is perhaps the most famous mercenary in all of the 'verse. The legend surrounding him has been adapted into many a holo-video, with each movie taking extreme liberties in his depiction, whether they be heroic or villainous. In truth, Tiberius is a quiet and thoughtful half-orc, whose reputation with those who serve beneath him in the Coalition is of a brilliant tactician, a brave fighter willing to sacrifice himself for others, a fair employer who cares about his underlings' well-being, and a businessman not above sometimes getting his hands dirty if the price is right.

Tiberius's success in many campaigns has made him more than a little worlds-weary, and he struggles to make meaningful connections with others. He is most likely to open up to individuals with a military background, particularly if they represent themselves as valuing equality amongst races and keeping the interstellar peace. If an individual impresses him enough, it is possible that Tiberius might attempt to recruit them to the Coalition.

The current High Lord Marshal of the Coalition has been hired as a personal escort for Darkstar Killagob. Tiberius is extremely expensive to personally hire, and the fact that the Firm has spent so much money to protect the Flopwig twins and Darkstar says a lot about how serious their interest in this new technology is. He will never fail in completing his contract, but should a conflict arise, his primary concern will be protecting his wards by removing them from harm's way.



# ACT ONE: THE USUAL SUSPECTS

*All characters should begin Act One at 3rd level.*

## PROLOGUES AND PREMONITIONS

Professor Orryn Talfough-Gogglefogger is a brilliant scientist on the edge of the greatest breakthrough in ‘verse history. As he prepares to give the most important speech of his life, he is troubled, fully believing that he is about to be murdered for his daring to change the ‘verse. To that end, he has hired each of the PCs, paying them 250 credits in advance with the promise of a bonus if they protect him while he is in public at Port Nomad.

The prologue below is inspired by classic film noir. Read or paraphrase the following:

YOU REPLAY THE ORIENTATION HOLO-VIDEO over and over again in your head, recalling how strange and important it seemed. You remember how scared the messy gnomish scientist in the video seemed as he stares out through a window into space, his eyes tired and wide. That gnome is Professor Orryn Talfough-Gogglefogger, an inventor who claims to have a solution to the ‘verse’s biggest problem. Once more, you recall the contents of the video, its every little detail.

Professor Orryn fiddles with his rolled-up sleeves, lights up a space cigarette, and begins to turn to look directly at the holo-cam. He speaks with a hint of knowing sadness in his voice.

“That’s me, spacers, and I... am in a lot of trouble. It’s not your fault this is happening. Not entirely. Maybe you will save my life. I hope... no, now is not the time. Listen, you have to understand, the Talfough Matrix, my prototype, is going to change everything. We will be able to travel into Dead Magic Zones with Dark Matter ships, we will be able to colonize unexplored planets using magic! We will rewrite interstellar boundaries. Thing about it is, change is terrifying. Exciting. The possibilities in the impossible—it brings out the best and the worst in people. You’ll see what I mean, soon enough.”

And then the holo-video ends, with the professor putting out his half-smoked cigarette and reaching a shaking hand to turn off the camera.

After reading the prologue, have each of your players introduce their characters by describing them and telling why Professor Orryn would have hired them, out of all spacers, to protect him when he presents the Talfough Matrix to a group of governments and factions for the first time.

## ENTER: THE STARSWILL BAR

Once the players have introduced their characters, read or paraphrase the following:

THAT WAS SEVERAL WEEKS AGO.

*You’ve traveled from across the ‘verse and now find yourselves in the Starswill Bar, a seedy joint in Port Nomad. At one end of the bar is a dimly lit, empty marble stage with a piano set up against its back wall. The bar is populated but not overly crowded, with a variety of individuals from many different races and cultures gathered to witness the presentation that they’ve been invited to.*

*In front of the stage are a row of seats that have been set up specifically for the presentation. Beyond the seats are a row of dark booths, some more poorly lit and perfect for whispered conversations. Several round tables are set out between the stage area and the bar itself, where a few people are sitting and drinking, some taking the opportunity to gamble their credits away.*

*The bar of the Starswill is a long metal top with many stools. Behind it, several human bartenders work hard to keep up with the demands of the clientele. Beside the bar is a large window looking out into the vastness of outer space.*

Once you introduce the scene and the adventure begins, ask each player where their character is within the Starswill Bar and what they are currently doing. As they enter into the scene, describe to them the characters of interest near them and what the NPCs are doing. Inform the players that part of their job is to keep an eye out for suspicious individuals that may wish to assassinate Professor Orryn.

Use this opportunity to build suspicion of those gathered for the presentation amongst your players. The following locations around the bar have occupants that may be interesting to the PCs:





### CHANGING UP THE USUAL SUSPECTS

You may wish to add your own NPCs to the scene, or remove some of the NPCs listed above from the scene to best fit your campaign. Ember, Cirdan Blackforge, and Captain Lysandra are optional characters of interest, but are included to present more perspectives on the political climate and to create red herrings for the players. It is suggested that the other NPCs listed above are not removed.

- **Stage Seating.** A lone amoeboid (Ember) is sitting in an otherwise unoccupied row of seats. They seem to be waiting politely.
- **A Large, Well-Lit Booth.** Professor Orryn is currently seated and going over his notes, preparing for his speech, while two other gnomes that look like his assistants chat excitedly.
- **A Large, Poorly Lit Booth.** Two nearly identical-looking halflings wearing white suits (Kennie Flopwig and Kiri Flopwig) are seated with another halfling dressed in a black suit (Darkstar Killagob). Standing guard next to the booth is a heavily armed half-orc wearing high-tech armor (Tiberius Vinter). None of them are talking, currently, as the black-suited halfling intensely slurps from a bowl of soup.
- **A Small Gaming Table.** A beautiful woman wearing a red dress (Carmen Cane) is playing cards with an older, grumpy-faced dwarf (Cirdan Blackforge) who wears a well-stocked tool belt around his large waist.
- **A Large Window.** A large nautilid (Captain Lysandra) wearing a specialized suit with a rocket hammer strapped to her side is staring out at the asteroid field beyond. Their expression is hidden beneath their fluid-filled helmet.
- **The Bar.** A tall avia-ra in intimidating crimson plate armor (Ser Helio-Horus) leans over the corner of the bar, keeping an eye on the room. At the far end of the bar is an elven noblewoman (High Oracle Thessalia) with large silver discs for eyes, who is wearing an elaborate and colorful gown full of sharp angles. She is drinking a brilliant blue fizzing cocktail, smiling, and watching any of the PCs who approach the bar.

## PERSONS OF INTEREST

Everyone in the Starswill Bar has an interest in the Talfough Matrix and an opinion on what the implications of such technology are; as the PCs look for suspicious characters, they will likely find plenty of shady motives amongst the people gathered.

Professor Orryn is busy preparing for his speech and isn't worried about his safety, and so has little to say to the player characters at this stage, thanking them for their help before he returns to reading over his speech notes. The professor's two assistants fully believe in Professor Orryn's vision for the future and in his work. They both seem very concerned for his safety, and if any of the PCs seem reluctant to mingle with the bar occupants and investigate, the assistants might approach the PCs to encourage them to take their job seriously.

The PCs may wish to stick together or split up to investigate the different characters gathered for the presentation. The following sections include intriguing social encounters that play out like the opening scenes of a murder mystery in space. When the GM or players are ready to move on, be sure to have introduced *The Thwirrel Incident* from the *Carmen Cane and Cirdan Blackforge* section of this chapter before beginning the next chapter: *The Assassin!*

### EMBER

On closer inspection, the amoeboid seated in the audience section near the stage doesn't seem to be looking around or waiting for anyone in particular to join them. They seem to be waiting for the speech to begin.

When a PC approaches them, read or paraphrase the following:

THE THREE ROWS OF CHAIRS THAT MAKE UP THE audience seating area near the stage are an unmatched lot obviously brought out just for this event. The stage itself has been mopped clean and its piano rolled to the back. A small table is set out in the center of the stage and a holo-screen on the back wall of the stage flickers with displays of vintage spacecrafts, famous star systems, and a docking schedule for cargo and transport vessels.

Seated alone in the audience is a vaguely humanoid-shaped individual known as an amoeboid. Their form is blue and translucent, and their large black eyespots are framed by delicate eyelashes. They've dressed in a glittering grey robe with two well-worn grenade belts strapped across their midsection. In the amoeboid's lap rests a dormant data pad. The air around them is chilled, significantly colder than elsewhere in the bar.



**Speaking with Ember.** The amoeboid gives their name freely and reveals that they are very much looking forward to the professor's speech. They claim that it was a "wonderful fluke of probability" that their rest stop at Port Nomad coincided with the professor's speech. While they have no official invitation, no one has protested their presence. Ember will admit to the PCs that they love people watching, and that the bar is full of interesting people.

If a player succeeds a **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check** to ask Ember about their observations of others in the bar, they will reveal three of their observations. Amoeboid characters have advantage on their Persuasion check. What bits of information Ember reveals is up to the GM; they could be hints at other NPCs' motivations, or they might be one of the rumors listed in an NPCs' subsection. On a failed check, Ember will explain that their research is incomplete and it would not be appropriate to reveal observations without proper hypothesizing and testing.

**Ember's Opinion.** Ember will explain that they are a scientist and a sociologist studying the causes and effects of the most recent goblinoid faction wars. They are hopeful that the professor's invention could make the Warzone—pockmarked as it is by small Dead Magic Zones—more habitable, and thus bring a lasting peace between the goblinoid factions and the major interstellar races. However, they also ruminate that it depends just as much on the larger galactic factions. Should the elves, for example, decide to colonize the Warzone with the Talfough Matrix, the conflicts in the region would only escalate.

**Red Herring.** If the PCs ask about Ember's grenade belts, the amoeboid counters the question by asking why the PC has chosen to wear what they are currently wearing. If Ember's question is answered, they will reveal that they purchased the grenade belts in Port Nomad because they thought it would make the business and cultural leaders gathered here see Ember as a figure worthy of respect. If pressed further, with a successful **DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check**, Ember will admit that they purchased the belts because they are of a rare orcish design and thought they "looked cool".

**Rumors about Ember.** If other NPCs are asked about the amoeboid, some may express that they find amoeboids disconcerting—particularly their ability to change shape and how difficult it is to read their expression. Some may suggest that it's possible that goblinoid factions have hired Ember to be here, since their presence would not be tolerated. After all, a new frontier of planets to settle in Dead Magic Zones could drastically alter the balance of power in the Warzone.

## DARKSTAR KILLAGOB, TIBERIUS VINTER, AND THE FLOPWIG TWINS

The meeting in the poorly lit booth includes Darkstar Killagob, an information broker for a sprawling criminal empire known as the Firm (see *Dark Matter*, Chapter 1, Factions), and two high-ranking executives from the Galactic Bank, an institution which has established digital credits as the standardized currency across the 'verse.

Because both organizations have such a vested interest in the professor's invention, they have hired one of the most expensive bodyguards alive to protect them while they are in Port Nomad. The half-orc Tiberius Vinter is the High Lord Marshall of the Coalition, the most highly respected military corporation in the 'verse.

When a PC approaches the poorly lit booth, read or paraphrase the following:

AS YOU APPROACH THE LARGE BOOTH, a heavily armed half-orc that stands guard next to it eyes you dutifully, but without too much concern. A haze of smoke hangs over the booth, rising from an ashtray full of snubbed space cigarettes that stink of burnt herbs and liquorice. A sandy-haired halfling in a white suit takes out another cigarette from an inner jacket pocket. His hands shake nervously as he fumbles for his lighter.

"How can you have lost it already?" The female halfling sitting across from him snaps. The two look like they could be brother and sister.

"It's here, I know it is. Sorry Kiri, I think there m-must be a hole in the seat", the nervous halfling squeaks out, then pulls up a tuft of grey gauzy foam from underneath him.

With a sharp click, a buzzing neon lighter ignites and is gently extended across the table by a third halfling, older than the other two and wearing a dark suit. He lights the nervous halfling's cigarette, slides his lighter back into his suit pocket, then looks up at you and smiles. Despite a soft roundness to his face, there's something a little sinister about that smile.

"Care to take a seat?", the smiling halfling offers.

The invitation to sit with such a suspicious group of individuals may be unsettling. If a player wishes to try to gauge how much they can trust Darkstar and the others, they can make a **Wisdom (Insight) check**. On a result of 12 or higher, they can tell that Kiri, and especially Kennie, are afraid of Darkstar. On a result of 17 or higher, they realize that Darkstar must realize who the PCs work for, and has invited them to chat in hopes of learning something from them about the professor.





**Speaking with Tiberius.** It does not require a check for a character to determine that Tiberius is a dutiful guard with nerves of steel, and does not seem overly interested in political or economic discussion. If a PC tries to speak to Tiberius, he will only grunt and say, “I have no business with you, friend.” Tiberius will not introduce himself, because he is embarrassed to have taken this job. If the PCs ask Darkstar, however, he will introduce Tiberius (and his many titles and accolades) in an effort to impress and intimidate the PCs.

**Speaking with Kennie Flopwig.** Kennie is pleased to introduce himself and his sister, despite how nervous and sweaty he is. He stutters often when he talks, and when he rambles too much, Kiri shushes him harshly. He will excitedly and truthfully answer two questions about the Galactic Bank and their interest as investors into the professor’s Talfough Matrix. If he is asked a question that would implicate him or his sister in criminal or suspicious activity, he is interrupted by Kiri kicking him in the shin, and will awkwardly stammer and avoid a PC’s gaze if questioned any further.

**Speaking with Kiri Flopwig.** She hesitates to open up to a PC’s questions, but will introduce herself with a hint of resentment in her voice. She appears cold and calculating, and will avoid questions about the Galactic Bank or their presence at the presentation. She will open up if she is asked about herself, however, all too happy to point out how she is the first female Vice President in company history, and that under her management, business has never been better.

**Speaking with Darkstar Killagob.** Darkstar introduces himself as “Mister Killagob” and calmly asks any PCs present who they are and if they are excited for the presentation. If asked about who he is, he will lie by claiming that he is just a friend of the Flopwigs who loves progress; a character can see through Darkstar’s lie and realize that he is hiding an ulterior motive with a successful **DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check**.

Darkstar will constantly manipulate the conversation back to the PCs present, asking more and more probing questions about the professor and his work. Once he realizes that the characters’ knowledge of the professor is actually quite



limited, his smile fades and he nods firmly over to Tiberius.

The half-orc immediately tells any PCs at the booth, “Thank you for your time. The Flopwigs would appreciate some privacy before the presentation begins.” Should the PCs resist, Tiberius charges up his tri-barrel cannon, which comes to life with a rumbling hum, and adds a warning: “Now.”

Once the PCs leave the booth, either willingly or by force, Tiberius does not allow them to return to within earshot. If a character forces the matter, he will show as much restraint as possible, looking to intimidate them into standing down and leaving the bar. He will only engage them in combat and turn them over to local security if absolutely necessary.

**Rumors about the Galactic Bank’s Presence.** If other NPCs are questioned about the group at the booth, they will likely know that they represent the interests of the Galactic Bank, and will not seem surprised that they are present for the meeting. They are more surprised to see that they have spent so many credits to hire Tiberius Vinter, one of the most famous warriors in all of the ‘verse. Some NPCs may consider Tiberius’s hiring and the Coalition’s involvement an impressive power play, though both Cirdan and Lysandra seem less pleased with the Galactic Bank, and believe Tiberius’s presence is a grotesque display of wealth and entitlement.

Only Ser Helio-Horus knows who Darkstar Killagob is, which he will openly admit. If a PC wants Helio-Horus to share information about Darkstar, he is happy to do so for an exchange of 100 credits. Once paid, Helio-Horus will quietly claim that Darkstar used to be an assassin-for-hire, and was behind some of the largest political killings of the past twenty years. He adds that he believes Darkstar is now retired and living like a king.

**Rumors about the Firm.** Most NPCs will speak in hushed tones of the organization known as the Firm. Most know that their business dealings are shady, to say the least, but won’t say much beyond that, for it can be hard to tell when a Firm Contractor is lurking nearby. Whenever there is a Contract in Port Nomad, someone usually ends up “accidentally” breaking their own kneecaps or going for a spacewalk with a faulty suit, so people are wary of speaking ill of the Firm or its management.

Captain Lysandra will plainly state what nobody can prove: that the very same halflings which run the Galactic Bank have friends in the Firm to do their dirty work. She further goes on to mutter something derogatory about halflings’ light feet and nimble fingers under her breath.

## CARMEN CANE AND CIRDAN BLACKFORGE

The Starswill is known as a safe haven for gamblers, though tonight the gaming tables have mostly been removed to add seating for the professor’s presentation. It is only because Cirdan is the bar’s most loyal regular patron, and also its most stubborn, that they agreed to leave one table out for him to play at until the presentation begins. Carmen Cane is currently playing cards with Cirdan and winning handily. She sticks out like a sore thumb: nobody knows her, she is dressed to kill, and she seems to be having more fun than anyone else in the room.

When a PC approaches the gaming table, read or paraphrase the following:

SITTING AT THE GAMING TABLE IS A TALL, stunning human woman whose carefree laughter cuts through the din of the noisy bar. On the other side of the table sits a squat and miserable-looking old dwarf, with a scowling expression that suggests he just lost another hand of cards. The woman is wearing a red dress that leaves little to the imagination, and certainly nowhere to hide a weapon.

A moment later, the dwarf’s scowl fades. He cracks a toothy grin and rumbles, “Another hand, then! Odds are I gotta win sometime, and I ain’t entirely broke just yet.” He pulls straight his jacket and reaches into a pouch at his side. It’s then that you see, half-concealed beneath his jacket, that he’s wearing a very strange-looking pistol on his hip. He doesn’t grab for the pistol, however, and instead pulls out a precious green gem that sparkles in the light. He sets the gem down onto the table and begins to shuffle his deck of cards.

**Speaking with Carmen.** If a PC tries to sit down at the table, Cirdan will grumble at first, but Carmen will sweetly say that she wouldn’t mind taking a break from cards if it means good company. She will introduce herself as Doctor Carmen Cane, and admit that she saw the PCs arrive with Professor Orryn, noting that she hopes that they are being paid as well as “some of the bodyguards in this room.”

She claims to be here purely out of her love for science, and is excited for the presentation, as she has heard that the professor puts on “a great show.” If a PC asks what Carmen is a doctor of, she tells them that she is a brain surgeon who specializes in removing memories of childhood traumas. She kindly excuses herself from going into further detail due to the sensitive nature of what she does. A player who succeeds on a **DC 18 Wisdom (Insight)** check believes that she might be lying about her job.





Carmen doesn't know anybody in the room enough to gossip, but will be very engaged in any stories the PCs want to share about themselves. She compliments them often, and may even flirt, though never too obviously.

**Speaking with Cirdan.** Cirdan's bad mood returns when a PC sits down, and he will be loathe to engage with them too much, answering them with a shrug of his shoulder and short, to-the-point sentences. If asked why he is here, he simply claims, "I pretty much live here. Ain't gonna not drink just because some whackjob wants to talk about changing the 'verse with their fancy doo-dad."

With a successful **DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check**, a PC can convince Cirdan to open up a little more. He will tell them that he is a dwarven shipwright who has worked on Dark Matter engines his whole life. The PC can then ask two questions, which he will answer honestly. If asked about his opinion on the Talfough Matrix, his mood grows sour, and he admits that he is worried that the invention will put a lot of hard-working shipwrights like him out of business, and doesn't think spacers have any place digging around in Dead Magic Zones.

**Rumors about Carmen.** No one knows much about Carmen except that she is beautiful, rich, and a doctor. She seems more interested in talking to people and playing cards than in the Talfough Matrix, and she has already won a large

sum of credits from Cirdan, Ser Helio-Horus, and Darkstar Killagob tonight.

**Rumors about Cirdan.** The dwarf is well-known to the locals as a regular at the Starswill Bar, and even known to many of those who have traveled from far away to be here. Cirdan used to be a famous shipwright, but suffered an injury a few years ago that has left him unable to work consistently, and has fallen on hard times. Cirdan is a loud drunk, and Helio-Horus is particularly all too happy to tell the PCs that he complains a lot about new technology being the bane of good, hard-working dwarvish people.

**The Thwirrel Incident.** This event **MUST** occur **BEFORE** the professor gives his speech. At any point while the PCs are conversing with the NPCs in the room, a thwirrel drops from the ceiling onto the gaming table, causing brief chaos amongst those who can see it. The following event is best suited to take place during a conversation between the PCs, Carmen, and Cirdan.

A quiet rustling can be heard from overhead and each PC must make a **DC 12 Wisdom saving throw**. Read or paraphrase the following to illustrate the scene for PCs which failed the saving throw:

*THE METAL PANELS OVERHEAD RATTLE FOR A moment and a few flakes of rust fall to the gambling table. Suddenly, Carmen spills her drink over her dress and scatters playing cards everywhere, while Cirdan draws a blaster and levels it across the bar.*

Then, read or paraphrase the following for PCs which succeeded the saving throw:

*SMALL FLAKES TUMBLE DOWN FROM A RUSTING panel in the ceiling above the gambling table, causing Cirdan and Carmen to look up simultaneously in surprise. With a crash and a clang, a small foot-length rodent with long blue-grey fur bursts out of the panel from above and lands with a THUD onto the tabletop. Carmen lets out a high-pitched scream as the creature rolls up onto its feet, its mouth full of what looks like a small circuit board. It scampers away, spilling Carmen's drink all over her red dress and scattering playing cards everywhere. When the creature hits the floor, it turns sharply and begins to run straight for Professor Orryn. At the same time, Cirdan draws the strange pistol from his hip and grits his teeth.*

A PC who succeeds on a **DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check** recognizes the creature as a thwirrel, an innately psionic rodent that commonly infests ships, cities, and colonies all around the 'verse.

Any PCs which can see the thwirrel and try to act immediately must **roll initiative**. The thwirrel acts on initiative count 13 and Cirdan acts on initiative count 11. The



thwirrel's primary objective is to escape into an open air vent at the base of Professor Orryn's booth 80 feet away from the gaming table, and it will use its Psychic Camouflage ability to attempt to hide.

During the encounter, Tiberius moves to protectively guard Darkstar and the Flopwig twins, while Ser Helio-Horus and Captain Lysandra reach for their weapons and try to keep the bar patrons from panicking. Oddly enough, High Oracle Thessalia doesn't even react to the events around her, and continues to calmly sip her cocktail.

**Red Herring.** PCs who have learned about Cirdan's view on technology may be worried that Cirdan plans to use the chaos of the moment to attempt to assassinate Professor Orryn. Any PC who tries to determine Cirdan's intentions must succeed on a **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception or Insight) check** to realize that Cirdan is going to try to shoot the fleeing thwirrel and does not seem interested in the professor.

If the PCs try to attack or subdue Cirdan, Ser Helio-Horus will help them, and thank them afterwards for helping to stop an assassination. Helio-Horus, claiming that Cirdan hasn't been right in the head ever since his injury, will call his security team to have the dwarf taken away and thrown into a cell.

**The Thwirrel Aftermath.** The encounter ends when the thwirrel escapes into the open air vent or is killed by either Cirdan or the PCs. After the encounter, everything settles back to normal and Carmen seems to have calmed down from her fright. She will give a smile to the PCs nearest to her, welcome them to Port Nomad, and politely excuse herself to change. She will only stop long enough for a brief conversation before she exits, promising that she'll be back soon.

If the PCs did not apprehend Cirdan, read or paraphrase the following:

ONCE CARMEN STEPS OUT OF THE ROOM, you hear heavy boots stomping towards the bar and Cirdan's grumbling complaints. "Back in my day, I had to work for hours and hours to keep those damned thwirrels off my docks! They're a nightmare, chewing things they shouldn't, crawlin' up into your clothes. Not to mention, some of them read your thoughts, know where you set your traps. Blasted space rats."

One of the bartenders comes over to clean up the mess at the gaming table, but none of the other patrons seem interested in sitting there after the event. If the PCs try to talk to Cirdan at the bar after the incident, he is much more open with them about his life, views, and many outlandish conspiracy theories.

## CAPTAIN LYSANDRA

Captain Lysandra is both anxious and afraid of the upcoming presentation. She wants to believe this might be the answer to the nautilid's desperate search for a new homeworld, but she is used to having her hopes dashed.

When a PC approaches Captain Lysandra near the large window, read or paraphrase the following:

AS YOU APPROACH, IT'S EASY TO SEE THAT the hulking, fish-like nautilid looking out through the star window appears distracted. She wears an imposing metal suit that is reminiscent of ancient diving gear filled with a lightly glowing blue liquid. Her suit is well worn and her leather boots have thinning soles. As you observe her, she reaches up a hand to slowly wipe at a large stain on the dirty window, but manages to do little more than further smudge the grease into the fiberglass.

**Speaking with Lysandra.** Lysandra will be surprised for a moment after a PC first attempts to speak to her. She quickly corrects herself by urgently asking if the presentation is about to begin. The more the PCs speak to Lysandra, the more they should realize that she is very anxious. She will answer all of their questions about her life and the nautilids, but always with a bit of sadness in her voice. She has dedicated her





life to exploring the stars in search of a new homeworld for her people, but has grown crestfallen with years of fruitless searching, and now fears that they may never find what they are looking for.

**Lysandra's Opinion.** Lysandra is cautiously optimistic about the Talfough Matrix. If the professor's claims are true, opening up Dead Magic Zones to explorers would mean whole new frontiers and worlds that may hold the solution to the nautilids' problem.

**Red Herring.** Despite her wary optimism, Lysandra is very worried about the presence of the other factions gathered for the presentation, particularly the representatives of the Galactic Bank. She believes that powerful people have a habit of using progress and technology to get rich, and that the nautilids have been taken advantage of by the banking industry in the past.

A PC that tries to get Lysandra to explain why she distrusts the Galactic Bank can make a **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. On a success, she quietly whispers to the PC, telling them that the Galactic Bank has ties to a criminal organization known as the Firm. She further explains that when her flotilla was indebted to the Galactic Bank and could not pay them back in time, a mercenary fleet attacked and destroyed several ships, including her sister's. She has never been able to prove the Firm and the Galactic Bank were involved, but she believes it with all of her soul.

**Rumors about Lysandra.** Some of the better-traveled NPCs present know of Captain Lysandra's reputation for bold (reckless) exploration of dangerous and contested star systems. No one has to guess about why she is interested in the Talfough Matrix. Helio-Horus and Kiri Flopwig may suggest to the PCs, if asked, that Captain Lysandra has grown paranoid and lost her mind after spending too much time in deep space, going so far as to suggest she is unstable and prone to violent outbursts.

#### SER HELIO-HORUS, HIGH ORACLE THESSALIA, AND THE BAR

The Starswill's long bar is a dirty copper that has gone unpolished for far too long. Two human bartenders work tirelessly to keep up with cleaning and crafting colorful, expensive-looking cocktails that seem at odds with the bar's shabby decor. They aren't allowed to converse with the customers tonight due to the importance of the clientele, and will resist serving the PCs alcohol while they are on a job to protect the professor.

When a PC approaches the bar, read or paraphrase the following:

AT THE MOSTLY EMPTY BARTOP, THE SMELL OF stale alcohol becomes abundant. Curious and sticky bottles line the back wall, reflected an infinite number of times by two angled mirrors. A large display shows the prices for beverages in credits, translated in a variety of languages. The cocktail of the day is *The Prototype*.

A few stools down from you at the corner of the bar is Ser Helio-Horus, the Chief of Security in Port Nomad, and a figure you met briefly when you first arrived at the station. Helio-Horus is an avia-ra wearing red platinum armor and a half-helm. He watches the room dutifully, his proud features showing a colorful plumage that partly hides a few old scars on his feathered face. At his side hangs a disabled energy longsword.

At the other end of the bar sits a matronly elven woman. She is dressed more audaciously than anyone in the room, wearing an electric pink gown accented by strange, sharp angles that match her long hot-pink mohawk. She is sipping on a brilliant blue fizzing cocktail and smiling knowingly at you.

**Getting a Drink.** If the PCs persist in getting a drink, Ser Helio-Horus will lean over from the corner and buy any PCs who wish a single drink on his tab. They are served a green concoction with swirls of gold dust sifting through its liquid; it smells of flowers, tastes rather tart, and is quite strong. Any PC who drinks more than half of the cocktail must make a **successful DC 8 Constitution saving throw** or suffer the poisoned condition for one hour.

Ser Helio-Horus is more willing to speak once a PC has finished drinking a cocktail that he has bought for them.

**Speaking with Ser Helio-Horus.** Ser Helio-Horus will be polite but curt if the PCs try to speak to him. He excuses himself by being an avia-ra Sepulcher Knight, and therefore honor-bound to keep the peace. However, secretly, Helio-Horus only cares about the appearance of being honorable and doing his job. He will be willing to speak to the PCs if they have finished drinking a cocktail that he has purchased for them, because he believes they are "on his level."

Helio-Horus claims to not believe that the professor's invention is real, and will say that a device that allows for magic to be used in Dead Magic Zones is a pipe dream. However, a PC that succeeds a **DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check** will believe that Helio-Horus might be misrepresenting his opinion on this matter.

Helio-Horus is an excellent source of gossip and rumors. He is the only one in the bar who knows everyone present to some extent, and he is happy to share most information for free. He will only reveal Darkstar Killagob's true identity for a bribe of 100 credits, however. When using Helio-Horus to



spread gossip, the GM is encouraged to focus primarily on negative gossip, making every individual seem suspicious and capable of doing terrible things. If the PCs ask about Port Nomad, Helio-Horus responds in a friendly manner and tells them that they should come find him in his office after the presentation, and he would be happy to give them the grand tour.

**Speaking with High Oracle Thessalia.** The smiling elf at the bar has an uncanny and unsettling habit. Any PC with a **Passive Perception of 13 or higher** will notice that she has a tendency to look away to people and locations a moment before something happens, such as a bartender breaking a glass on accident or an argument breaking out on the other side of the room. Any elves, half-elves, or characters that speak elvish will recognize that her garb marks her as a Diviner of Great House Mere'gaal, the most magically gifted of all elvish houses.

High Oracle Thessalia will entertain a brief conversation with anyone who wishes to speak with her. She will ask the PCs a few simple questions about themselves; however, any PC with a **Passive Insight of 13 or higher** notices that she is only feigning interest in them, as if to pass the time. Thessalia refuses to gossip about anyone or provide insight into anyone's character, however, stating that it would not be ethical for one in her position to do so.

If asked, Thessalia will tell the PCs that she is here to witness the presentation and give an account of it to Great House Mere'gaal. She claims to have no personal interest in the invention and does not care to speculate on its economic or political consequences. A PC who succeeds on a **DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check** believes that she is lying, and is very interested in the Talfough Matrix.

**Rumors about Ser Helio-Horus.** The Chief of Security is the de facto leader of Port Nomad, and has a reputation abroad for being a legendary swordsman and an excellent mediator during conflict. It's Helio-Horus's reputation for keeping the peace that brought Professor Orryn to this backwater space port to give his presentation. Several NPCs may disagree or offer the PCs bets on who would win in a fight between Ser Helio-Horus and Tiberius Vinter.

**Rumors about High Oracle Thessalia.** The high-ranking elven matriarch makes many present uncomfortable. The popular opinion is that the Elven Empire is likely to most fiercely oppose the professor's Talfough Matrix, as they currently benefit from holding the largest territory in the 'verse, and opening up new territory would almost certainly challenge their dominance. Thessalia's apparent politeness despite representing the Empire is unsettling, and many of the NPCs in the room have noticed her watching them with an eerie smile.

## THE ASSASSIN!

There is a faux assassin amongst the NPCs who is being mind-controlled to attack, but not kill, Professor Orryn during his speech. The motivation for this attack is to create a panic that results in Professor Orryn being taken into protective custody so that Carmen Cane and the radicalist group of humans calling themselves the New Terran Organization (NTO) can kidnap the professor at a later time.

Most of the NPCs detailed in the *Persons of Interest* chapter can be the mind-controlled attacker. However, the attacker should not be Carmen Cane, Tiberius Vinter, Darkstar Killagob, or Ser Helio-Horus. Consider which characters the PCs have interacted with and what the result of those interactions have been in order to choose an NPC that will be most shocking to the players.

Alternatively, the GM can roll **1d6** and consult the following table to determine the attacker:

### d6 NPC Attacker

1	Kennie Flopwig
2	Kiri Flopwig
3	High Oracle Thessalia
4	Captain Lysandra
5	Ember
6	Cirdan Blackforge

## SUSPICIONS AND SPEECHES

Professor Orryn Talfough-Gogglefogger approaches the member of the party with the highest Technology skill bonus and requests assistance. The stage's holo-screen is not working and, despite Orryn's genius, he cannot figure out how to fix it. The professor explains that he needs the screen to be set up so that it broadcasts his presentation to the 'verse via social media channels.

If a PC agrees to help, they must succeed on a **DC 12 Intelligence (Technology) check** to determine that the answer to the problem is simple: the screen simply needed to be recalibrated by turning it off and back on again. On a success, the professor is very grateful and promises the PC a bonus after they leave Port Nomad. On a failure, the professor blames the thwirrel for the holo-screen not working and thanks the PC for trying to help.

Afterwards, the professor gathers the PCs together and tells them that he is about to begin his presentation. Any characters with a **Passive Insight of 13 or higher** notice that, while the professor seems excited rather than nervous, there is something sad in his eyes. If asked if he is worried, he will reply with quiet resignation, explaining that whatever happens will happen, and he will not let fear keep him from making the 'verse a better place.



As the professor moves to take the stage, all PCs must **roll initiative** and describe where they stand in the room as the presentation begins. If they attempt to stand within 5 feet of the professor on the stage, he asks them to stand further back so that they don't get in the way. If a PC insists, they must succeed on a **DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check** to convince him that their close proximity is necessary.

Once the PCs have decided where to place themselves in the room, read or paraphrase the following:

THE DIMINUTIVE PROFESSOR TAKES TO THE stage, wearing a mechanical device strapped over his shoulders like a backpack. Mumbling absentmindedly to himself, he sets a data tablet down on the table alongside a number of odd-looking gadgets, and then fiddles with his rolled-up shirt sleeves. One of his gnomish assistants activates a small drone camera, which flies towards him with a hydraulic whoosh that gives him a bit of a start. After a moment, he presses his hand to his heart with relief, and smiles for the camera.

All of the others in the Starswill Bar begin to gather for the speech, taking their seats. Only the bartenders and Ser Helio-Horus do not take a seat in front of the stage, instead lingering back at the bar. The lights in the room dim and turn purple, with a brighter spotlight lingering on Professor Orryn and the stage.

Using the previous initiative counts, allow each player to indicate what they are doing as the crowd gathers. They may choose to hold an action or keep an eye on one of the NPCs in the room, noticing any number of the red herrings listed below. The GM is encouraged to add their own red herrings, especially if they have introduced NPCs not presented in this adventure.

If any of the PCs take an action aggressive enough to interrupt the upcoming presentation, jump ahead to the chapter: *Tower Attack*.

**Kennie Flopwig.** Kennie is sitting in the front row of seats next to the other representatives of the Galactic Bank. With a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check**, a PC notices Kennie pat his pocket and then bend down to look for something beneath his seat.

**Kiri Flopwig.** Kiri is sitting in the front row between Kennie and Darkstar. With a successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check**, a PC notices her shift around uncomfortably and then sit on her knees, making herself seem taller in her seat.

**Darkstar Killagob.** Darkstar is sitting in the front row between Kiri and Tiberius. A PC watching Darkstar sees him remove his dark suit jacket. With a successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check**, they spy a blaster holstered at his side that had previously been concealed.

**Tiberius Vinter.** Tiberius is sitting on one end of the front row next to Darkstar. At any point while being watched, he lifts his hand to shield his eyes and turns to look around the dim room. With a successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check**, a PC determines by Tiberius's body language that he is also keeping an eye on the others gathered, watching for suspicious or threatening activity.

**Ember.** The amoeboid is sitting in the same place they have been since the PCs' arrival. In the dark room, they glow with a faint blue light. With a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check**, a PC notices that Ember seems to be working on a datapad as the speech begins.

**Captain Lysandra.** Lysandra is standing a few feet away from Ember in the middle row. She has removed several chairs around her to create more space. At any point while being watched by a PC, they remove a small device from a pouch on their metal suit. With a successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Technology) check**, a PC recognizes the contraption as a personal recording device.

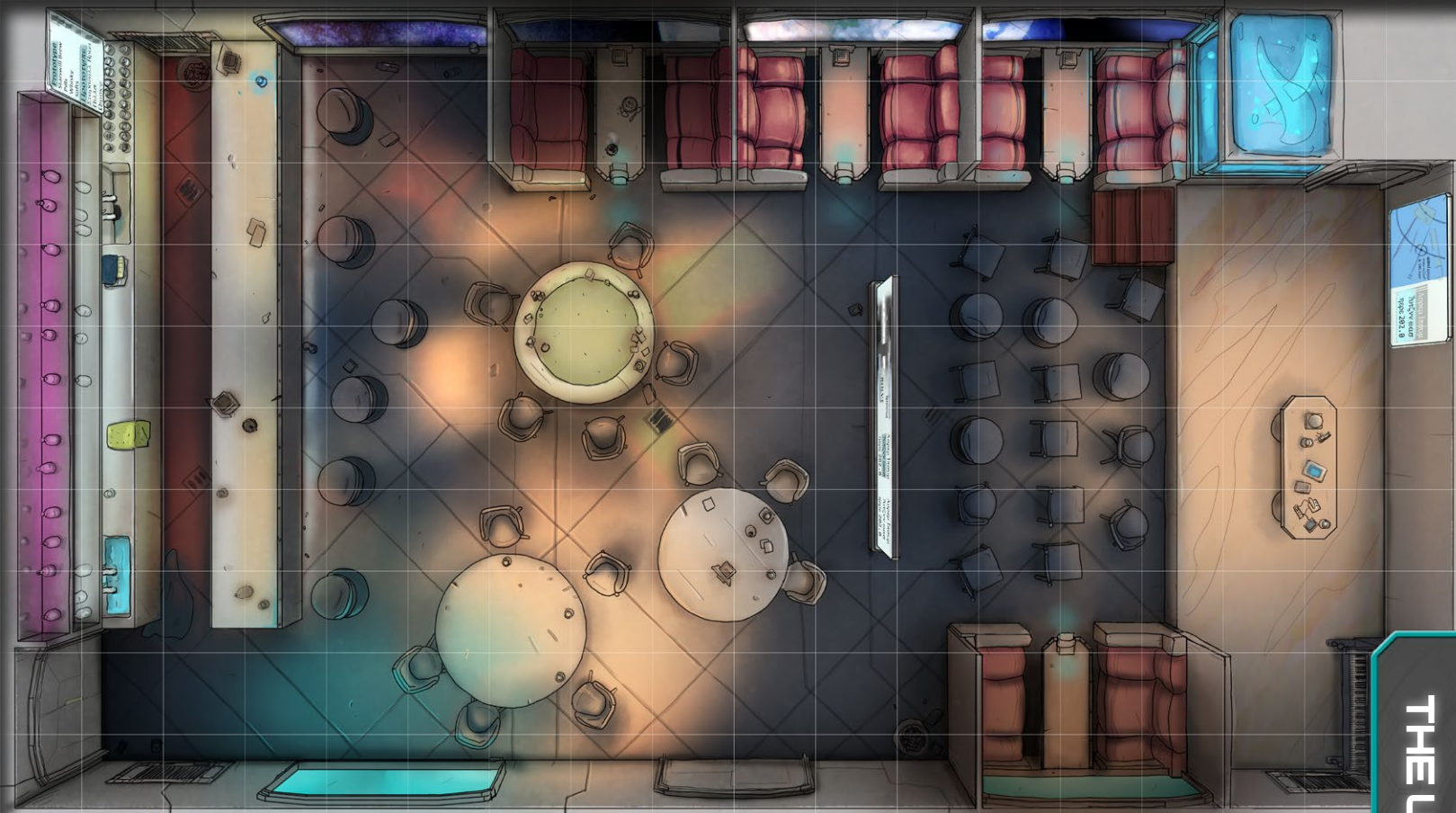
**Cirdan Blackforge.** Cirdan is sitting several seats down from Ember in the middle row and has placed his flight jacket down on the empty seat next to him. While being watched by a PC, he turns around in his seat and signals to someone behind him. With a successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check**, a PC realizes that he is motioning for one of the bartenders to bring him another drink.

**High Oracle Thessalia.** Thessalia has taken a seat in the back row, which has filled up with several latecomers to the presentation that the PCs have not met. She seems serene, and if a PC watches her, she turns to smile strangely at them. At any point during the scene, she begins to quietly mouth a series of words. A PC which speaks elvish can make a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check** to realize that she is counting downward in the ancient elvish numbers.

**Ser Helio-Horus.** Helio-Horus is standing guard at the corner of the bar and watching the crowd. If a PC watches him, he notices them and gives them a dutiful nod of his feathered head before continuing to look around the room. Characters with a **Passive Insight of 14 or higher** notice that Helio-Horus is looking over the members of the crowd, not at them, despite his watchful expression.

Once each PC has taken their turn, so long as they haven't interrupted the presentation, read or paraphrase the following:





THE PROFESSOR LOOKS UP FROM THE TABLE and gives a nod to the audience, and then pushes a button on one of the small devices in front of him. There is an awkward pause when nothing happens, save for a soft whirring sound. The audience stirs anxiously while they wait. Then, all at once, there is a burst of light as the device projects a massive star map, filling the room with its breathtaking view of the 'verse.

A few members of the audience gasp as Professor Orryn begins speaking in a bright tone. As is the custom, he begins his presentation with a terrible joke and a joyful wag of his eyebrows. "All of the known 'verse, so beautiful that it makes the goggles fog."

After a few moments of awkward silence, Professor Orryn Talfough-Gogglefogger coughs into the back of his hand, wipes some sweat from his brow, and continues. "Our civilizations have redefined the word impossible for millions of years. And yet, until now, only gnomish technology, my peoples' technology, could traverse Dead Magic Zones. While the government on Nebellion would never agree with my stance, it is my firm belief that all races and all civilizations deserve the chance to access the many worlds within these Dead Magic Zones. And that is precisely why I have created the Talfough Matrix, a technology that projects a field allowing magic in the zones where magic has always been said to be an impossibility!"

Several figures in the crowd begin to clap loudly, or even cheer, at the professor's opening remarks. Of course, just as many sit, watching silently. During the applause, the dwarf Cirdan Blackforge stands up from his seat in the back row and loudly boos the professor. Captain Lysandra stomps over towards Cirdan to try to force him back down into his seat. Cirdan rests, and there is a moment of shoving between the two of them.

Allow the PCs to each take a turn, using the initiative counts established previously. They can try to keep an eye on one of the NPCs present (other than Lysandra and Cirdan, who are arguing), and may notice any of the red herrings listed in the section above.

The PCs may also attempt to calm the scuffle between Lysandra and Cirdan. With a successful **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check**, they can convince Lysandra to let the dwarf be, and calm down. With a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check**, they can convince Cirdan to sit down and be quiet. If they fail either check or do not intervene, the argument about the professor's invention becomes more heated, forcing Ser Helio-Horus to come over and split Lysandra and Cirdan up.

At the end of the turn, the crowd has grown noisy with the scuffle and the professor attempts to get his presentation back on track.

Read or paraphrase the following:



### THE CHARACTERS ACT!

Should the PCs realize what is happening and interrupt the narration below, they may race to try to pull the professor off of the stage, which he will resist. Immediately move to the next chapter: *Tower Attack*.

THE PROFESSOR COUGHS INTO HIS MICROPHONE and speaks up, trying to regain the attention of the crowd. *"Please, my friends! I know that change can be frightening. I know that expanding our interstellar boundaries will bring about its own challenges. It's only by working together that we can make the best of our new future, make the most of the Talfough Matrix's potential! Give me a chance to show you how we can change dreams into reality."*

Professor Orryn presses a button and the star map vanishes, returning the room to its previous purple glow. On the screen behind the professor, the number 20 appears in a clean white font. He pulls a lever protruding from the side of the device strapped to his back, and a cloud of fog begins to drift out of the device, rolling over the floor of the stage in dramatic fashion.

"Behold!" Orryn exclaims, gesturing back to the holo-screen, which has now counted down to 10. "The schematic blueprints to the first ever Talfough Matrix, small enough to fit into a corvette-sized vessel!"

The crowd is quiet and seems confused by what they are watching. The professor turns around and his eyes go wide as he stares at the current number on the holo-screen: 4. "That is... not my schematics," he whispers. And then an explosion rips through the Starswill Bar.

An explosion of force emanates from the holo-screen on stage, initiating the following encounter.

## TOWER ATTACK

Each creature within a 15-foot radius of the stage, including the characters in the first and second row of the audience, must make a **DC 14 Dexterity saving throw**. On a failure, a creature takes 5d6 force damage and is knocked prone. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and is not knocked prone. Objects not bolted to the ground, such as chairs and equipment, are pushed up to 15 feet away from the explosion.

A PC who has been actively watching the preselected attacker notices them lift one hand into the air and push a button on a tiny device held in their palm a moment before the explosion. The attacker will remain standing, or stand back up if the explosion knocks them to the ground, with their arms raised in the air.

Have the PCs **roll initiative**. Ser Helio-Horus acts on initiative count 20, the preselected attacker acts on initiative count 10, and the other NPCs present act at the end of each turn. When you are ready, read or paraphrase the following:

THE AUDIENCE HAS BEEN SCATTERED by the blast, with individuals holding their ringing ears and shouting amidst the chaos. A large beam falls through the rusted ceiling panels and crashes down towards the elvish matriarch, High Oracle Thessalia. Unconcerned, and without so much as a glance at the falling debris, she takes a small step out of the way before the beam crashes into the floor where she had just been standing.

Ser Helio-Horus rushes towards the stage from the bar, barking out orders to anyone who will listen. "I'll get the professor! Don't let the assassin escape!" A moment later, his energy longsword ignites with a beam of light, and a shot rings out from elsewhere in the crowd.

And then all hell breaks loose.





The GM is encouraged to keep the encounter dynamic by reminding the players of the challenging environment, fallen debris, difficult terrain, and trouble hearing and seeing amidst the chaos. Increase the urgency by giving PCs disadvantage on **Wisdom (Insight or Perception) checks** to determine what is going on and **Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks** to wade through the crowd.

If at all possible, **Tiberius Vinter** and **Darkstar Killagob** should survive this encounter, even if it means another NPC sacrificing themselves to protect them. Other NPCs can die in the course of the encounter, but it should be played dramatically, reminding the players of the huge stakes at play in the adventure. Consider saving the final moment of an NPC reduced to 0 hit points until after the encounter is over, allowing the PCs to interact with them before they die.

During the encounter, the NPCs present follow the agendas listed below. The NPC being mind controlled instead uses the statistics of an **Assassin**. Refer to the stat blocks listed in Appendix A for the rest of the NPCs during the encounter.

**Ser Helio-Horus.** Helio-Horus will attempt to remove Professor Orryn from the bar and get him to a secure location. The professor will not resist. If a PC pursues Helio-Horus, he will not stop them, but will try to convince them to go protect the other important attendees and that the professor is safe. If they persist, they can leave the encounter and follow Helio-Horus and the professor to a safe room several blocks away.

**Assassin.** The mind-controlled attacker is immune to the charmed condition. They use their turns to escape using whatever means necessary. If confronted, they will try to take a hostage, who they will kill as soon as they manage their escape. When reduced to 0 hit points by a character, that character decides whether or not they kill the attacker or simply knock them unconscious. If the attacker manages to escape the PCs, they get several blocks away before they inexplicably fall unconscious and are taken captive by Helio-Horus's security forces.

**Ember.** Ember spends their first turn locating their datapad amongst the debris. On their second turn, they change shape and attempt to flee the bar, leaving their grenade belts and robes to do so.

**Kiri Flopwig.** Kiri attempts to chase after Professor Orryn, and must be wrestled to the ground before she gives up. Afterwards, she will attempt to flee the bar, leaving behind Kennie or Darkstar to do so.

**Kennie Flopwig.** Kennie attempts to chase Kiri down and wrestle her to the ground to protect her during the chaos. Once Kiri runs away, Kennie will attempt to help Tiberius keep Darkstar safe. If Kiri dies during the encounter, Kennie will enter into an agonized rage, steal Tiberius's tri-barrel cannon, and recklessly attack anyone who approaches him.

**Darkstar Killagob.** If the attacker is revealed by the PCs or by their own actions, Darkstar spends his first turn shooting at the attacker from a distance. Afterwards, he takes cover behind a pile of debris with Tiberius Vinter until the encounter is over.

**Tiberius Vinter.** Tiberius spends his first turn moving debris from the stage and seating area to create a barricade of cover for Darkstar. On following turns, Tiberius draws his antimatter glaive and holds his actions to attack anyone who approaches himself, Darkstar, and Kennie when Kennie moves to join them.

**Captain Lysandra.** Lysandra assumes Darkstar is the attacker until the PCs point out otherwise or the attacker reveals themselves by their own actions. She will do her best to render unconscious whomever she believes is the attacker.

**Cirdan Blackforge.** If one of the PCs attempted to fix the holo-screen's broadcasting abilities for the professor, Cirdan believes that they tampered with the device and are in on the attack. He will drunkenly accuse them of as much and attack them on his turn. If he is reduced to fewer than half of his total hit points, or if none of the PCs attempted to fix the holo-screen, he instead takes cover behind the bar.

**High Oracle Thessalia.** Thessalia spends her first turn moving to safety and casting *mage armor* on herself. On her following turns, she uses her spells, particularly *suggestion*, to try to defuse the chaos and soothe characters who are attacking anyone other than the assassin.

## AFTERMATH

After the encounter is over, Carmen Cane arrives with six Port Nomad security officers and a medic. The lights in the bar are turned up all the way, showing the full devastation of the firefight. While Carmen and the medic help care for the wounded, the security officers ask that the PCs accompany them to Ser Helio-Horus's office so that they can try to get a full understanding of what happened. If the PCs resist, the security officers will attempt to take them in by force, with 2d6 more security officers arriving at the start of every odd-numbered turn during the encounter.

Once the PCs either agree to accompany the security officers or are forced to, proceed to *Act Two: The Dark Underbelly*.





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# ACT TWO: THE DARK UNDERBELLY

*All characters should advance to 4th level prior to the start of Act Two. Their current hit points increase by an amount equal to the number of maximum hit points they gain from advancing one level.*

## CATCH AND RELEASE

Once the PCs reach the office of **Ser Helio-Horus** at the security station, they find themselves sitting down in a dark room. Helio-Horus arrives several minutes later and stands behind his desk to interrogate the characters. He asks them basic questions about themselves and the series of events leading up to the attack, which might include:

- Where are you from?
- How did you meet Professor Orryn?
- Did you notice anyone acting suspicious at the bar before the attack?
- Do you know the attacker?

Once he has finished his interrogation, Helio-Horus assures the PCs that these are simply routine questions. He tells them that, for everyone's best interest and to ensure the professor's safety, he has placed him in a secure location under heavily armed guard while the investigation is ongoing. He promises to release Professor Orryn, no matter what, after one week. If the PCs attempt to persuade him otherwise, the avia-ra's tone will become much more severe, reminding them that they are visitors to Port Nomad and are all technically suspects in this case, though he would rather not treat them as such.

After this explanation, Helio-Horus will allow the PCs to ask him questions about the situation or Port Nomad. He will make himself as helpful as possible towards the characters, going as far as to swear on his honor as a Sepulcher Knight to keep the professor safe until the matter is settled.

## EXPLORING PORT NOMAD

With the interrogation done, the characters are left to explore the station of Port Nomad while they await the release of Professor Orryn from protective custody. As they exit the security office, read or paraphrase the following:

### RUNNING PORT NOMAD AS A CLOCK

The background events are presented as a clock. Each location and event will move the clock forward. Be mindful when using events, however, as they can advance the clock rapidly and leave the players without enough clues as to what is going on. Once the clock reaches 6, the characters will be alerted of a firefight (if they are not already present) between Port Nomad's security and NTO terrorists, and should proceed to the chapter: *The Shootout*.

### THE DUSTY AIR OF PORT NOMAD HITS YOU

*in full force as you step outside. Around you are a collection of ramshackle buildings next to more recent constructions made of steel and concrete. The streets are poorly lit and zigzag through the station, instead of being built on a grid like in any respectable settlement. The people of this backwater spaceport eye you with either suspicion or amazement. Your presence does not go unnoticed.*

From this point on, the characters are left to explore Port Nomad. Included in this chapter are the locations and events you can use, or draw inspiration from, to flesh out the station. As the characters venture forth, other events in the adventure will be happening in the background. Ser Helio-Horus has made a deal with the New Terran Organization and plans to ransom the professor to them to pay off his gambling debts.

The map on the previous page should serve as a reference for both the GM and the players.

### 1. THE STARSWILL BAR

The Starswill Bar is Port Nomad's most popular bar and gambling hole, and has a reputation for being a legal operation, unlike the station's other bar, Grug's Den. This is something of a misnomer: both bars are owned by affiliates of **Boss Ahn-Nova**. The Starswill Bar may be less grungy than Grug's Den, if only a little, but it is also a popular joint for illegal activities and underworld deals.



### GETTING TO KNOW THE PARTY BETTER

Hanging out at Grug's Den is a good opportunity for the PCs to get to know each other better. If they are sharing drinks, the GM may introduce this optional rule to encourage them to roleplay and share more about their character with the other players.

**Chatting Over Drinks.** When PCs take a short rest while chatting with each other, the GM can allow them to open up about themselves to their allies. One of the PCs can opt to tell a story about their past to the others. Other characters can choose to respond to this story by sharing single stories from their own pasts. Each character that reveals more information about their backstory, so long as it is at least partly true, gains inspiration. If they already have inspiration, they instead gain advantage on all **Wisdom (Insight) checks** they make for the next 4 hours.

Currently, the Starswill Bar is closed for renovations and investigation. If the PCs attempt to return, their access will be limited at any time by 2d6 **Port Nomad Security Officers** and 3d6 **Spacers** (construction workers) who occupy the building (see Appendix A).

## 2. GRUG'S DEN

Grug's Den is the seedier of Port Nomad's two bars, and is currently its only open watering hole and gambling establishment. When PCs approach Grug's Den, read or paraphrase the following:

THIS RUNDOWN ESTABLISHMENT IS LOCATED OFF the main thoroughfare of Port Nomad, on a side street named *The Valley*. The building is made of concrete and steel, with an uneven roof and a precariously leaning sign depicting a winking half-orc.

Upon entering, the PCs are met with a cloud of smoke from cigarettes and cigars. The patrons, a rowdy bunch, stop their activities to stare at them as they enter. If she is still alive and not in custody, any PCs with a **Passive Perception of 14 or higher** notice **Kiri Flopwig** leave a room in the back of the bar and then beeline for the back exit with a satisfied smile on her face. If she is accosted, she will make brief small talk, excusing herself as quickly as possible. She avoids honestly answering any incriminating questions.

Grug's Den offers hard drinks and gambling to those so interested, and allows the PCs to mingle with the rogue's gallery of patrons present. Additionally, the GM is encouraged to reintroduce some of the NPCs that the

characters previously met at Starswill Bar by having them be present in Grug's Den.

Any PC speaking with the locals that makes a successful **DC 14 Charisma (Deception, Persuasion, or Intimidation) check** can learn one of the following rumors:

- Grug's Den has a back room sectioned off to most patrons. Behind this closed door, the movers and shakers in Port Nomad strike deals that decide the future of the station. Ser Helio-Horus sometimes goes in, though never to arrest anyone.
- The PCs aren't the only new faces in the station. Several days ago, an odd couple landed in Port Nomad and started asking questions. Too many questions. The couple is lodging at a seedy joint called the Room and Board, which only furthers people's suspicion of them.
- Firm contractors have been visiting Port Nomad more and more frequently, coming and going, and buying up property. Some of the locals believe, particularly with the arrival of Darkstar Killagob, that it's just a matter of time before the Firm owns Port Nomad, and they are all unofficial Firm "assets."
- The owner of the bar, Grug, is being hunted by a Lakshayan bounty hunter named Makoto. The PCs are unlikely to see Grug around these parts any time soon.

For PCs wishing to gamble, Grug's Den offers ample tables with different one-on-one games of chance (similar to Blackjack). All of the games are played against the House, and naturally, skewed in favor of the House. Before a PC begins gambling for the first time, they must make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check**. On a success, they realize that the House is cheating and that they are likely to lose credits if they gamble at Grug's Den.

The cost to play a round of a game is 10 credits per character, all of which goes to the House. Each round of the game, 2d4 patrons are actively betting on the results. To determine the total amount of credits that a PC can win in a given round, multiply the number of patrons betting by 1d4, then add 10.

If a PC manages to beat the House three times in a row, they attract the attention of Boss Ahn-Nova, the head of the criminal underworld in Port Nomad. Ahn-Nova, an owl-headed avia-ra adorned with a fine nanofiber vest, a rapier, and several blasters, has been having issues getting his money from an unfortunate gambler lately. He is aware of the PCs after the attack at the Starswill Bar, and sees opportunity in meeting with them. Meeting with the boss can also provide the characters with key information on Ser Helio-Horus, as he is the unfortunate gambler at the center of Ahn-Nova's problem.



### SEVEN-CARD STAR

The games available at Grug's Den include most of the commonly played card and dice games found across the 'verse. Among these is the popular game Seven-Card Star. A character proficient in dice or cards can add their proficiency bonus to ability checks made while playing this game.

**Cheating.** Because the House cheats, all ability checks made by PCs are made at disadvantage. However, the PCs may also cheat during a round. To do so, they must cast the *cheat* cantrip or succeed on a **DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check**. On a success, they have advantage rather than disadvantage during the current round. The first time they fail a check to try to cheat, they forfeit the round and are given a harsh warning by the dealer. The second time they fail a check to try to cheat, they are forcefully evicted from Grug's Den. They may return later, but will not be allowed to gamble.

**Seven-Card Star.** A character must win two out of three "hands" to win the round and take home the credits that have been bet. Each round, gambling players must succeed a **DC 11 Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check** to win the hand.

Boss Ahn-Nova invites the winning PC into the back office and gets straight to the point. He wants the PCs to collect the 1,300-credits debt that Helio-Horus has accrued over the last few months. He knows the Chief of Security has people working for him, gathering money at his behest, but Ahn-Nova has not seen a single credit that he is owed. He is ready to pay the group 300 credits for the return of the full amount. If Helio-Horus is unwilling to, or cannot, pay up, they are to leave him with a message, a reminder of who runs this station.

Whether or not the characters meet with Boss Ahn-Nova, when they leave Grug's Den, **move the clock forward by two.**

### 3. BAZAAR

The center of Port Nomad is occupied by a year-long bazaar, consisting of a gathering of tents and stalls, of more permanent fixtures, and simple carpets laden with goods. The bazaar offers goods that can be commonly found around the 'verse (see *Dark Matter*, Chapter 5, Gear). Weapons and armor are also available, but Port Nomad demands that such items be sold at a premium to dissuade people from arming themselves to the teeth. Weapons and armors cost 50% more than their listed price.



One merchant sells an *ankh of Ra* (see Appendix C) that used to belong to Ser Helio-Horus. The merchant is more than willing to share that it was sold to him by Boss Ahn-Nova after Ser Helio-Horus lost it in a card game. The merchant is willing to part with the ankh for 300 credits. A PC that makes a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check** can convince the merchant to lower the price to 200 credits.

After the PCs leave the bazaar, **move the clock forward by one.**

### 4. CLINIC

The characters may wish to interrogate the individual responsible for the attack on Professor Orryn. If so, Ser Helio-Horus can point them to the local clinic where the attacker is currently in a coma. The receptionist, a short gnomish woman with pink hair, recognizes the PCs from the earlier events and will allow them to visit the attacker, provided they leave their weapons with her.

Should the PCs visit, they will find that the NPC who attacked Professor Orryn is still in a coma and unresponsive to stimuli. The only movement the assassin has made since being admitted is a light tapping of their right index finger. If the PCs spend at least 10 minutes in the room, any characters with a **Passive Perception of 13 or higher** notice that every few minutes the comatose attacker lightly taps their right index finger against their bed in subtle but rapid succession.

Any PCs who look over the digital medical charts can make a **DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check**. They have advantage on their check if they are already aware of the patient's finger tapping. On a success, they find an intriguing note from one of the patient's doctors that has observed that the patient taps their right index finger fourteen times and then pauses, taps twenty times and pauses, and finally taps fifteen times. This pattern is repeated every ten minutes, like clockwork. Any PC who makes a successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Data or Piloting) check** knows with certainty



that the number of taps in the pattern are too short to be coordinates, and must be something else.

With a **DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check or Wisdom (Medicine) check**, a character can determine that the NPC's affliction is magical in nature, not physical. Whatever mind-affecting magic is at the root of this can't be dispelled or suppressed. If the characters don't reach this conclusion, they will be interrupted by the patient's doctor, an amoeboid named **Neutron**, who will reveal the affliction's probable magical origins.

Neutron will mention that the magical affliction is like something out of a holo-vid, and will talk excitedly about murder mysteries and conspiracy films at a moment's notice. As excitable as the doctor is, none of their theories even approach plausible reality.

There is nothing else interesting about the comatose attacker to observe, and no amount of magic or medicine wakes them from their coma. After the PCs leave the clinic, **move the clock forward by one.**

## 5. ROOM AND BOARD

As the PCs approach the Room and Board, read or paraphrase the following:

THE ROOM AND BOARD IS A SKETCHY-LOOKING establishment not too far from the spaceport. It is a one-story building adorned with multiple doors on the front. Each door has a meter mounted into it with a device that allows one to unlock the door by spending credits. A cramped, dimly lit office is located on the end of the building next to a Krash vending machine. Parked in front of the building is a black land vehicle with chrome detailing.

If a PC investigates the vehicle, they must make a **DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation or Technology) check**. On a success, they determine that the vehicle is trapped and that anyone who does not possess the precise fingerprints of its owner will trigger an *alarm* spell when they touch it. They also notice that the vehicle has been modified to withstand massive firepower.

Currently inside the Room and Board are the owners of the vehicle outside, two human investigators dressed in suspicious-looking trench coats and hats. They go by the names of **Paladec** and **Jenson**. Paladec is a tall and attractive man wearing a checkered button-up shirt, whereas Jenson is a rugged-looking fellow wearing a t-shirt beneath a beaten leather jacket.

The pair has come to Port Nomad to investigate a shadowy organization known as the Tower, which they believe has some unknown interest in the station. They missed the excitement with Professor Orryn at the Starswill

Bar earlier, and are willing to pay up to 50 credits for the PCs' detailed account.

If the characters share valuable information and do not withhold too much, Paladec and Jenson happily pay them and offer to allow the PCs to use their rented room as a safe haven, so long as the PCs are willing to share whatever they uncover in their own investigation.

For all of their eagerness, the two investigators know very little about the Tower. However, they have a theory that it is made up of the richest individuals in the 'verse, who use their influence to improve their wealth at the expense of the poor. They will pay the PCs between 3 and 50 credits for any information they uncover about the Tower, depending on how trustworthy and helpful the information is to their ongoing investigation.

After the first time the PCs meet Paladec and Jenson, **move the clock forward by one.**

## 6. JUNKYARD

The junkyard lies just beyond the spaceport and can be a prime location for gadgeteers and engineers to gather materials for future projects. Furthermore, as they wander Port Nomad, the characters may see the following notice:

### HELP WANTED!

*Seeking brave souls to help pull apart a troublesome piece of tech. Danger pay guaranteed. Ask for Old Marshall at the junkyard.*

If the characters are interested, they can easily make their way just outside of Port Nomad and down the path that leads to the junkyard, a fenced-in yard full of scrap metal, half-dismantled vehicles, and broken-down spaceships. Near the entrance to the yard stands a lone rickety shed that looks like it's about to collapse in on itself. As soon as someone approaches the entrance, a small construct in the shape of a dog will begin barking, alerting the shack's resident. Out will come Old Marshall, armed with a carbine. Read or paraphrase the following:

YOU HEAR THE GRUMPY OLD VOICE OF A MALE call out from within the shack. "What in the stars is going on out here? What are you barking for? Has it been moving again, is that it?"

A moment later, an old human man comes scrambling out into the yard, brandishing a blaster. He is wearing dirty overalls atop an even dirtier shirt. He smells of grease and oil, and looks haggardly about until he finally sees you.

The old man slowly lowers his weapon, scratches the side of his head, and calls out again. "You here about the notice, or you here about buying some junk?"



If the PCs inquire about buying some of Old Marshall's junk, or ask for permission to walk around the junkyard, Old Marshall will warn them about a malfunctioning piece of technology that has been giving him problems. He suggests the characters deal with it if they wish to investigate the yard in peace.

Old Marshall doesn't know why the machine is going haywire, but he does know it is dangerous. A half-dismantled vect ship in the junkyard has been coming to life, wandering the yard and collecting other pieces of scrap to create a body for itself. It chases away or attacks any sentient life that is not a construct. The latter it consumes.

Old Marshall is willing to pay each character 50 credits to dismantle the malfunctioning machine. If any of the PCs attempt to haggle with him up to 100 credits each, they have one chance to make a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check**. In either case, Old Marshall insists that he needs to inspect the remains before he'll pay up.

Any character who attempts to use the information they have to determine what is causing the malfunction must make a **DC 15 Intelligence (Data or Technology) check**. On a success, they determine that the vect ship must be infected with the N-Virus, which primarily attacks vect constructs. It would be rare for the N-Virus to infect a ship, and dealing with it could prove far more lucrative than the payment offered by Old Marshall.

The **scrap golem**, as Old Marshall calls it, is currently hidden under a pile of junk (see Appendix A). A character can pinpoint its location with a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check**. When a character moves within 15 feet of its hiding place, it whirs to life and attacks with its barrage fire. If its hidden location was not uncovered, it will have a surprise round in any encounter against the players.

Once the creature is destroyed, Old Marshall will be delighted to pay the PCs what he owes. Additionally, he will help any crafter in the group gather useful scrap from the junkyard. Consider the materials found to be  $5d6 \times 10$  credits worth of material for crafting weapons, armor, magical technology, or spaceship parts.

A character trying to salvage part of the destroyed golem's hard drive for further study (or to sell to the right individual) must make a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Technology) check** to extract the correct piece of hardware. To someone particularly interested in the N-Virus and its mutations, the infected hardware could be worth as much as 1,000 credits. Unfortunately for the PCs, nobody in Port Nomad knows or cares much about the N-Virus.

Once the PCs leave the junkyard, **move the clock forward by one**.

## 7. SPACEPORT AND SECURITY

The hub of all travel to and from Port Nomad is its spaceport, a dirty metal landscape of utilitarian design that is constantly busy. A small security station is located near the entrance to Port Nomad proper, where  $3d6$  **Port Nomad Security Officers** are checking identification as they allow travelers to come and go from the settlement. Nearest to the check-in are the hangar's many private docking bays for spacers with special licenses and privileges. The two public docking bays can be found on the far end of the spaceport beyond Port Nomad's Security Station, a large compound manned by  $8d6$  **Port Nomad Security Officers** at any time. The Chief of Security, **Ser Helio-Horus**, can be found in the compound, working out of his private office.

The PCs may wish to visit the spaceport to ensure that the *Caliber* is intact after the attack on the professor. The ship is still docked and safe, guarded by one of Port Nomad's heavily armed security teams. However, any PCs with a **Passive Perception of 14 or higher** notice another security team exiting from a recently landed spaceship at the same time they are checking on the *Caliber*. The arriving Port Nomad security team is a group of tough-looking humans who immediately disembark in different directions. If a player makes a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check**, they determine that the new team's behavior is oddly undisciplined, and realize that it is strange for an entire team to be comprised completely of one race on such a diverse settlement as Port Nomad.

Should any of the characters attempt to follow one of the disembarking security officers, they must make a successful **DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check**, or be spotted. If a PC is spotted, the security officer does not act suspicious, walking around in circles across Port Nomad before they finally return to the spaceport. Meanwhile, the other security officers are nowhere to be found.

If a PC successfully trails an unaware security officer through Port Nomad, they follow them to a dirty back alley. **Carmen Cane** lingers in the alleyway and exchanges a few whispered words with the security officer before the two part ways—Carmen to gamble at Grug's Den and the security officer to return to the spaceport.

After the characters have visited the spaceport for the first time, **move the clock forward by one**.



## EVENTS

These events can be introduced at any time while the PCs are exploring Port Nomad. The GM is encouraged to use them to interrupt travel between two locations or a long rest. Consider that some events will move the clock forward in this act.

### PICKPOCKET

A female street urchin going by the name **Mousey** stalks the group as they walk the streets of Port Nomad. The urchin is a small near-human child with feline ears and a long furry tail. When the time is right, she will sneak up to a PC, preferably one that seems less observant than the others, and attempt to rob them of a small item.

Once a PC notices that they have been robbed, they must make a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check** to notice Mousey moving away quickly through the crowd before the urchin disappears. If caught, Mousey will spin a tale about how she is but a lone orphan trying to make it in wicked Port Nomad.

In truth, Mousey works for Ser Helio-Horus and steals from visitors and tourists to help him pay back his gambling debts to Boss Ahn-Nova. Mousey is an accomplished liar, and a PC must succeed on a **DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check** to see through the well-rehearsed lie. If confronted, Mousey will agree to tell the truth if they let her go and let her keep the item she stole. If the PCs agree, or if they coerce her into telling the truth with a successful **DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation) check**, she will rat Helio-Horus out and make her quick exit as soon as she is able.

After the PCs encounter Mousey, **move the clock forward by one**.



### SNAKE OIL SALESMAN

This event can occur anywhere. The PCs are accosted by a vendor named **Markus** who is looking for “investors” interested in his invention of a miracle cure. He claims his potion can heal wounds and cure diseases. A PC can test the potion’s validity if they have proficiency with, and access to, alchemist’s supplies or another suitable set of tools. To do so, they must make a **DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check**. On a success, they are able to test that the potion is in fact just a mix of a dangerous variety of cheap street narcotics. Anyone who drinks the potion must make a **DC 13 Constitution saving throw**, taking 4d6 poison damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

If a PC confronts Markus and tries to learn the origins of the potion, they must make a **DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check**. On a success, the salesman admits that he doesn’t know what is inside the concoction, only that he gathered the ingredients himself from a dumpster behind a house in Port Nomad and mixed them together to sell. If the PCs ask, the salesman agrees to show them the house if they do not report him to the authorities. The salesman shows them the house, and quietly informs them that it belongs to Ser Helio-Horus.

If the PCs let the salesman go, he immediately departs Port Nomad, leaving the poisonous potion behind. After the PCs encounter Markus, **move the clock forward by one**.

### GRISLY MURDER

This event takes place as the characters are leaving one location to head to another. It is designed as a tool to help the PCs put together the pieces about Ser Helio-Horus’s true nature without running out the chapter’s clock.

As the PCs pass by a darkened alley, they notice a slumped figure, motionless, resting against the wall of a nearby building. If a PC makes a successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check**, they discover that the figure, a dead dwarf, was killed by a rather large blade. If one of the PCs wants to investigate further, they must make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check**. On a success, they discover that the wounds were inflicted to kill the dwarf slowly and painfully, and must have been the work of someone extremely skilled.

The dwarf is dressed in plain overalls over a beige shirt. His pockets are entirely empty. Any character searching his remains can make a **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check** to reveal that his boots are stamped with the insignia of Port Nomad Security. If the characters decide to report the murder to Ser Helio-Horus, see the following chapter: *Confronting Helio-Horus*.

Should the characters instead prefer to investigate the murder on their own, the Port Nomad security officers can



identify the body as belonging to **Bardur Hammerfist**, a security agent who was out on leave.

Searching Bardur's home or his locker at the station will reveal that he was investigating Ser Helio-Horus, gathering evidence that the Chief of Security was embroiled in the criminal underbelly of the Port Nomad. Photographs show Helio-Horus coming and going from the back room of Grug's Den, while copies of his medical files show that he was prescribed a large doses of painkillers in the last three months, despite having suffered no injuries around that time.

Helio-Horus's doctor, an ameboid named **Neutron**, can be found at the **Clinic**. They will avoid answering questions about the Chief of Security's prescriptions, citing patient-doctor privilege. A PC may attempt to convince Neutron to talk by making a **DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check**. On a success, Neutron breaks down and begins to cry tears of glowing blue jelly. They tell the PCs that Ser Helio-Horus threatened to kill them and destroy all of their research if they did not give the Chief of Security access to an unlimited source of prescription drugs.

If questioned further, Neutron claims to never have spoken to Helio-Horus before he began his demands. If asked about their research, Neutron will give the PCs a holo-screenplay that they have written titled *MURDER ON THE AMOEBOID EXPRESS*, and tell them very seriously that it's their life's work. A cursory read-through of the script proves that it is derivative at best, and is unlikely to ever be produced. If a PC compliments Neutron's writing, they will try to become their friend and speak to them ad nauseum about their other great ideas for murder mystery stories, all of which are terrible.

## CONFRONTING HELIO-HORUS

*The GM should give the characters the opportunity to take a long rest before they confront Ser Helio-Horus.*

Over the course of the act, the PCs may grow suspicious of Ser Helio-Horus for any number of reasons, and decide to confront him with what they know. When the PCs arrive at the security station, the compound is oddly empty save for two human security officers who will check them in and allow them to visit the Chief of Security in his office.

When confronted, Helio-Horus vehemently denies any accusations against him with a list of plausible excuses and alibis. He will go so far as to claim that the criminal masterminds in Port Nomad know that their time is up and are resorting to creating conspiracy theories because they are afraid of facing justice for their crimes. A character must make a successful **DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check** to

### REDEEMING HELIO-HORUS

The confrontation with Helio-Horus creates a small divergent path in the remainder of the adventure. If Helio-Horus escapes, he continues to act against the party for the remainder of the story. However, if the party spares his life and interrogates him further, he will attempt to redeem himself until the adventure's conclusion and beyond. If you wish to encourage the latter route, you can nullify a killing blow against Helio-Horus, rendering it nonlethal.

determine that Helio-Horus's excuses are a well-prepared fabrication. If the PCs have discovered multiple sources of evidence or witnesses to support their claims, they have advantage on their Insight checks.

If the PCs persist in their accusations and present overwhelming evidence to support their case, Helio-Horus's false do-gooder demeanor changes immediately, and he attacks the PCs in a fit of rage. He hopes to kill them before they can spread this information and ruin his career. At the start of the second round of combat, two corrupt **Port Nomad Security Officers** enter into the office to attack the PCs.

If Helio-Horus is reduced to 20 hit points, he will attempt to retreat to join the NTO mercenaries that have recently arrived at the station. If his security officers are still engaged in combat, they will attempt to block the only exit from his office and cover his escape for two rounds, before they also try to flee. If the PCs pursue Helio-Horus outside of the security station, trigger the events in the next chapter: *The Shootout*.

If the characters manage to subdue Helio-Horus and question him further, the fallen avia-ra comes clean about his crimes for the first time in his life. He bitterly admits to having been expelled from the Sepulcher Knights before he came to Port Nomad and that he owes the criminal Boss Ahn-Nova a massive debt accrued over a long period of time. In order to pay off his debts, he began employing pickpockets to steal from visitors and became involved in a scheme to sell narcotics in Port Nomad's black markets.

If accused of murdering Bardur Hammerfist, he admits to doing it after the officer learned of his illegal activities and threatened to report him to the Sepulcher Knights.

If the PCs question Helio-Horus about his involvement in the attack at the Starswill Bar, he blurts out that it wasn't his idea. However, before he can explain what really happened, sounds of a massive firefight erupt from the streets outside of the station, automatically triggering the events in the next chapter: *The Shootout*.





## THE SHOOTOUT

*This event is automatically triggered after the clock advances to 6. The GM should give the PCs the opportunity to take a long rest before starting the event.*

The PCs hear a firefight erupt in the street near wherever they are currently located. New Terran Organization mercenaries disguised as security officers open fire at the true security officers with the intent to create as much chaos as possible. During the distraction, one of the NTO's allies will smuggle Professor Orryn from his safe house to Carmen Cane's ship at the spaceport.

When the PCs first encounter the firefight, three **Port Nomad Security Officers** are trying to fight off five human **NTO Terrorists** who are also dressed as security officers. Both groups will try to convince the characters that the other group are terrorists.

Have the PCs **roll initiative** to begin the following encounter. During the encounter, the Port Nomad security officers act on initiative count 15, and the NTO terrorists act on initiative count 11. Characters standing behind either one of the barricades have **half cover** (+2 to AC and Dexterity saving throws).

One member from each group spends their first turn of the encounter trying to convince the PCs to help them by telling them that the other group are terrorists. A PC can spend a bonus action on their turn to make a **DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check**. On a success, they correctly identify the real security officers by noting that Port Nomad Security is made up of individuals from a variety of races and cultures, and are not just human.

The two groups will focus most of their fire on the opposing group on the other end of the street. If one of the PCs engages members of either group in melee, any of their allies within 5 feet will draw their arc batons and make melee attacks against the PC on their turn. The GM is encouraged to describe errant shots as hitting innocent bystanders, breaking windows and doors in nearby homes, and creating other collateral damage to increase the urgency and stakes of the encounter.

At the end of the third round of the encounter, a heavily armored land vehicle comes careening through the street, driven by either **Helio-Horus** (or an NTO terrorist if Helio-Horus was previously killed or subdued). In the passenger side of the vehicle is **Professor Orryn**, bound and gagged. On its turn, the vehicle barrels through the Port Nomad security officers' makeshift barricade. Each creature within 5 feet of the barricade must make a successful **DC 14 Dexterity saving throw** or take 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage, be knocked prone, and be stunned until the end of their next turn.



The getaway vehicle speeds onwards and turns down a side street, disappearing before the end of its turn. Any remaining NTO terrorists will continue to take cover behind their own barricade and fire at any remaining opponents for two more rounds before they abandon their position to flee and scatter into different directions.

Chasing down the vehicle on foot, or even via winged flight, is a hopeless endeavour. A cursory glance around the area will reveal only one possible venue of chasing down the abductors. A group of Port Nomad teenagers can be seen with their hoverboards, hanging back and staring wide-eyed at the shootout.

One of the PCs can convince the youths to lend them enough hoverboards for each PC by making a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion) check**, or by wiring the youths 100 credits for the hoverboards.

## THE CHASE

A runaway vehicle careens through traffic and down side streets as the PCs on hoverboards are in hot pursuit. The NPC who has abducted Professor Orryn does not care about the loss of civilian life or causing damage to Port Nomad. Their only goal is to keep the characters chasing them for as long as possible, circling around the station back to the spaceport. In reality, the vehicle the PCs see is a decoy meant to distract and delay them, carrying a hardlight projection in the likeness of the professor. Helio-Horus has ensured that the real professor is being quietly escorted through the backstreets of the station by a heavily armed security detail.

At the beginning of the chase, the driver of the getaway vehicle waits at the end of a side street to make sure that the PCs are in pursuit before taking off. In order to catch up with the vehicle, the PCs will have to make a series of group ability checks and play through the chase in six stages. To make a group ability check, everyone in the group makes the ability check. If at least half the group succeeds, the whole group succeeds. If PCs split up to try to head the vehicle off, or roleplay their tactics well, the GM is encouraged to be liberal with giving Inspiration to the players during this scene.

If the PCs fail a group ability check, they suffer the consequences listed in the stages below. Should they fail a total of three group ability checks during the chase, the getaway vehicle escapes and the PCs move directly to *Ending the Chase*.

## STAGE ONE: THROUGH THE BAZAAR

The chase begins with the vehicle heading straight through the bazaar, plowing through tents and stalls. The characters must push away flying debris and knock over people running for their lives.

Each PC contributes to the group ability check by making a **DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check**. If the group ability check is a failure, the PC with the lowest personal result is thrown off of their hoverboard in the chaos and must hurry to catch back up. They take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage and have disadvantage on their next ability check during the chase.

## STAGE TWO: A SHARP TURN

The vehicle veers off through a narrow alleyway that is barely wide enough for it to squeeze through. Making the turn on a hoverboard requires quick reflexes and exceptional balance.

Each PC contributes to the group ability check by making a **DC 12 Dexterity (Piloting) check**. If the group ability check is a failure, the two PCs with the lowest personal results are not able to make the turn in time and must speed past the alley to find a detour. They are unable to catch up for nearly a minute and may not contribute to the next group ability check during the chase.

## STAGE THREE: THE RETURN OF DARKSTAR

After leaving the narrow alleyway, a third party enters the chase. **Darkstar Killagob** and **Tiberius Vinter**, aboard a fancy hover-bike with an attached sidecar, join the chase with the intention of capturing Professor Orryn and bringing him back to the Firm. Tiberius cuts the PCs off, positioning the hover-bike between them and the getaway vehicle, while Darkstar turns around in the sidecar and takes pot shots at the pursuing PCs with his repeater.

Each PC contributes to the group ability check by making a **DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check**. If the group ability check is a failure, the two PCs with the lowest personal results take 7 (2d6) radiant damage and must make a successful **DC 12 Constitution saving throw**, or crash their hoverboards and be removed from the rest of the chase events. After the group ability check, any PCs remaining in the chase may return fire by making one weapon or spell attack on Darkstar, Tiberius, or the hover-bike (all AC 16). If three or more attacks hit, the hover-bike spins out of control and crashes through a nearby house, removing Darkstar and Tiberius from the chase.



## STAGE FOUR: A DEADLY INTERSECTION

The getaway vehicle and hover-bike (if it remains in the chase) speed through a busy four-way intersection. In the distance, the PCs can make out the spaceport at the edge of Port Nomad. A moment after the abductor's vehicle passes through the intersection, a massive supply truck driven by an NTO agent barrels across the intersection. The PCs must also avoid the truck while trying to not let the abductor get away with the professor.

Each PC contributes to the group ability check by making a **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check** to see the runaway truck coming before it reaches the intersection. If Darkstar and Tiberius have already been removed from the chase, the PCs have a better view of the intersection and have advantage on their ability checks.

If the group ability check is a failure, the PC with the lowest personal result is not able to slow down or change course and is struck head-on by the truck. The crash deals 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage to them, and they are removed from the rest of the chase events.

Furthermore, if Darkstar and Tiberius are still in the chase during this section, they are forced to leap from their hover-bike a moment before it crashes into the careening truck and are removed from the rest of the chase events.

## STAGE FIVE: PLAYING CHICKEN

The abductor NPC drives past the Room and Board. If the characters are allies of **Paladec** and **Jenson** and notified them of the getaway vehicle ahead of time, the two investigators will be positioned outside of the Room and Board. Paladec and Jenson open fire at the oncoming vehicle, damaging its thrusters.

In a last-ditch effort to rid themselves of their pursuers, the abductor veers towards a construction site between the Room and Board and the spaceport, swerving recklessly around the metal beams that lie around the site. The vehicle stops and waits for the pursuing PCs to approach through a path surrounded by junk and equipment. It then speeds directly towards the PCs in a game of high-risk chicken, expecting them to leap out of the way at the last moment. PCs who decide to abandon their pursuit and get out of the vehicle's way are removed from the following group ability check.

Each PC contributes to the group ability check by making a **DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation or Performance) check** to convince the driver to turn away first. If Paladec and Jenson previously damaged the getaway vehicle's thrusters, the PCs each have advantage on their group ability check.

If the group ability check is a failure, each PC involved in the check is struck by the vehicle. The crash deals 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage, and the PCs are removed from the final stage of the chase: *Showdown at the Spaceport*.

Whether or not the getaway driver turns away at the last minute or crashes directly into the PCs, read or paraphrase the following:

WITH A SHOWER OF SPARKS AND THE SOUND of shrieking metal, the getaway vehicle malfunctions. It barrels over and crashes directly into a steel construction beam a few dozen feet away, splitting the hood of the car down the middle. In the wreckage, a metal pole is visibly sticking fatally through the driver's head. Strangely enough, Professor Orryn does not seem injured, or even phased by the horrible accident at all. After a few moments, the professor begins to flicker in and out of existence before disappearing in a flash of prismatic light.

The professor was a hologram decoy!

## STAGE SIX: SHOWDOWN AT THE SPACEPORT

Should any of the PCs still be active in the chase, they will see a truck full of armed humans dressed like security officers fly past the construction site towards the nearby spaceport. If they pursue, they reach the spaceport just in time to see the bound professor being dragged onto a corvette-sized ship named the *Vorga* by none other than Carmen Cane, the woman who claimed to be a brain surgeon. Carmen is no longer in her red dress, instead wearing a nanofiber suit and flight jacket. She smiles wickedly at the PCs as their eyes meet, then shuts the bay door of the *Vorga*.

If the PCs attempt to try to reach the ship before it launches, they are intercepted by a number of **NTO Terrorists** equal to the number of PCs remaining in the chase. The PCs will not reach the *Vorga* before it takes off and flies away from Port Nomad, and the terrorists do not intend to let them live. All of the terrorists work together in an organized attack and act on an initiative count of 12.

If the PCs managed to subdue **Helio-Horus** in his office and get him to admit his guilt, he appears in the second round of the following encounter and acts on an initiative count of 13. Helio-Horus is heavily wounded, but will side with the PCs against the terrorists in a desperate attempt at redemption.





Should Helio-Horus be present and survive the encounter, he quickly informs the PCs that he is sorry for all of the pain he has caused. He admits to them that Carmen Cane and her people, the New Terran Organization, offered him 5,000 credits to help them plot to kidnap the professor. He does not know what their intentions are, but he does know that the New Terran Organization is a dangerously radical group of humans that believe that humans should rule the ‘verse.

If present, Helio-Horus will give the PCs a small case containing six *hypodermic needles*. He tells them to inject themselves, fly after Carmen’s ship, and rescue the professor. Each hypodermic needle has one dose of potent painkiller that allows a character to gain 20 temporary hit points.

## ENDING THE CHASE

Any PCs that did not reach the end of the chase are able to follow the trail of death and destruction to the spaceport, catching up with the other PCs immediately after their encounter with the remaining NTO terrorists.

If none of the PCs made it to the end of the chase, they arrive at the spaceport just in time to see the *Vorga* take off. A wounded Port Nomad security officer informs them with his dying breath that the terrorists kidnapped Professor Orryn and left with him aboard the *Vorga*.

Together again, the only chance to rescue the professor lies in leaving Port Nomad immediately, and taking to the stars aboard his ship. Once the PCs are ready to continue on their journey, proceed to *Act Three: All Aboard the Caliber!*







# ACT THREE: ALL ABOARD THE CALIBER!

*All characters should advance to 5th level prior to the start of Act Three. Their current hit points increase by an amount equal to the number of maximum hit points they gain from advancing one level.*

The only chance the PCs have to catch Carmen Cane and rescue the professor lies in chasing them down in the *Caliber*, Professor Orryn's one-of-a-kind personal starship. Speeding out of the port's hangar throws the characters right into a fierce dogfight amongst the dangers of the nearby asteroid belt.

## TO THE DOCKING BAY

If Helio-Horus redeemed himself during the climax of the previous act, he leads the PCs to the professor's vessel. Otherwise, any of the Port Nomad security officers who survived the terrorist attack on the station will guide them to the ship. Either Helio-Horus or a security officer will also procure the ship's keyring and give it to the PCs.

Read or paraphrase the following as the characters approach the *Caliber* for the first time:

MAINTENANCE CARS SWERVE AROUND buzzing repair drones as you make your way through the docking bay. Though numerous ships line the edges of the hangar, one in particular stands out: a circular vessel, rising about three stories tall, with a long nose that ends with a cockpit encased in distinctive tinted glass. Its architecture suggests a chaotic blend of engineering styles from across the 'verse. The ship's hull is coated with a patchy layer of faded white paint, and electric blue lights glint along two flat moon-shaped wings that protrude from the sides.

Nearing the ship, the center remote on the professor's key ring flashes blue, matching the lights on its wings. "Welcome back, Professor," says a friendly robotic voice from within the ship, as a gangplank lowers to the ground. "All systems ready to depart."

This voice is none other than the *Caliber*'s AI core, nicknamed **Cal** (see Appendix B). A kind but often worrisome personality, Cal expresses concern when the PCs enter the ship without the professor with them and immediately inquires as to the location of their usual gnomish traveling companion.

Should any of the PCs wish to lie to Cal regarding the professor's whereabouts, they must make a successful **DC 12 Charisma (Deception) check**. If a character fails their check, or any of the characters tell the truth, Cal becomes very worried about the professor. The ship's AI welcomes the group aboard and offers whatever services they can to aid in the rescue.

The characters now face a choice: abandon the professor and pilot their stolen ship to their next exploits in the 'verse, or follow the escaping *Vorga*. If they abandon their chase, their adventures here in Port Nomad come to a close. The GM is encouraged to reference the chapter *Further Adventures* to see how the PCs' choices might impact them moving forward.

If they decide to rescue the professor, allow the PCs to explore the ship and decide on what crew positions they will take responsibility. Then proceed to the chapter: *Pursuing the Vorga*.

## THE CALIBER

Over his many years exploring the far reaches of space, Professor Orryn has outfitted his personal ship with a variety of technological upgrades from across the 'verse. No one is quite sure what make or model the *Caliber* began as, but one thing is for certain now—the ship is the only one of its kind.

The *Caliber* consists of three main levels connected by a central ladder: the lowest level contains the ship's cargo bay and boarding ramp; the second houses the cockpit and other primary functions of the ship; and the highest level serves as the ship's living quarters. In addition to these amenities, the *Caliber* also comes with a deployable, custom-built dogfighter named the *Scope*.

As Professor Orryn mostly traveled alone, the interior of the *Caliber* is a rather haphazard mess when the PCs first board, with half-completed engineering blueprints and broken science equipment scattered across many areas of the ship. But despite its seemingly lacking upkeep, the *Caliber*'s internal system mechanics are some of the finest in the 'verse.



## 1A. BOARDING RAMP

This short ramp serves as the main entry point into the *Caliber*, leading through an airlock into the ship's cargo bay. A sensor in the ship's keys alerts Cal when they are nearby so that the AI can automatically lower this ramp to allow for entry.

## 1B. CARGO BAY

Discarded boxes litter the floor of this dull metallic room. If any character searches through these crates, a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check** finds a *dome projector* (see Appendix C) hidden in an empty container. On a failed check, the character simply finds a random trinket (see Appendix C).

At the center of the room, a ladder extends upward to the second and third levels of the ship.

## 1C. THE SCOPE

Only accessible via a hatch on the second level, the spherical auxiliary ship, the *Scope*, docks at the bottom rear of the *Caliber*. Though the *Scope* was originally designed for combat, Professor Orryn has customized many of its capabilities to also help assist him in his scientific research. In addition to its industry-standard side cannons and sensors, the *Scope* has been equipped with external manipulators and specialized material scanners.

During combat, the *Scope* can be deployed as a dogfighter to assist the *Caliber*. Doing so requires a pilot to board the *Scope*, with an optional position for an extra gunner.

### PILOT (SCOPE)

Due to its small size and quick maneuverability, the *Scope* serves as both an excellent research vehicle and interstellar combat asset. When a character pilots the *Scope*, if they use their action to move, they can use their bonus action to make a single weapon attack with one of the ship's light cannons.

### GUNNER (SCOPE)

Like many gnomish dogfighters, the *Scope* is equipped with two light cannons on its sides. These cannons can be used both when the *Scope* is flying freely and while the ship is docked in the *Caliber*. If a character occupying this gunner position does not already have a feature that grants them multiple attacks (such as Extra Attack), the gunner can make two attacks with the light cannon using their action.

Additionally, when the *Scope* is deployed in combat, its gunner can use an action to activate the ship's core burst. Each mega creature and the pilot of each ship within 1,500 feet must make a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**. On a failed save, any mega creatures or ships affected take 27 (4d8) mega radiant damage. This weapon then overheats, and can't be fired again until the end of the ship's next turn.

## 2A. COCKPIT

At the front of the *Caliber*'s second level sits the cockpit. A long narrow room, the main viewport is composed of large treated glass panes. Oversized consoles sporting a variety of buttons and levers line the front and right sides of the room. Three seats sit flush against the right console, with the first two facing forward and the last facing in the opposite direction; these seats are for the pilot, front engineer, and arcane gunner, respectively. In an emergency, the entire cockpit can jettison from the ship as a makeshift life pod.

### PILOT (CALIBER)

Seated at the very front of the ship, this pilot controls the full movement of the *Caliber*. Despite its size, the ship's round, flat design affords it extreme maneuverability, allowing it to execute full 180-degree turns in a near instant.

### ENGINEER (FRONT)

Seated directly behind the pilot, the front engineer assists the pilot and monitors the ship's vital systems. Embedded in the wall beside the engineer's chair are two small screens: the first displays the status of the *Caliber*'s internal systems, while the second monitors the ship's shield with an adjacent datapad that allows the engineer to reposition the shield on their turn.

Beneath these screens is a dashboard controlling the distribution of power throughout the ship. The dashboard consists of four sliders: Left Turret, Right Turret, Arcane Cannon, and Shields. Each slider has three potential power tiers, with each slider initially set at Tier 1 (see Appendix B). As an action, the engineer can redistribute power between these four systems. Each power tier consumes one power unit; the *Caliber* has a total of four power units to distribute across the systems. If the engineer attempts to increase power beyond this capacity, Cal states that the requested change is impossible unless power is decreased from another system first.

### GUNNER (ARCANE CANNON)

The reverse-facing seat belongs to the gunner of the arcane cannon mounted on the underside of the cockpit. A targeting radar and cannon-charging port swing out from the adjacent console, affording the gunner a better scope of the battlefield than facing forward would.

To serve as the gunner of the arcane cannon, a character must have the ability to cast evocation spells. The gunner must spend an action to charge the cannon before it can be used; while this doesn't expend a spell slot, if the cannon is not used on the next round, it discharges harmlessly and must be charged again. Casting an evocation spell through a charged arcane cannon magnifies the spell's effects to a mega degree: ships can be targeted in lieu of single creatures, the



spell's dimensions increase a hundredfold, and the damage dealt is considered mega damage (see *Dark Matter*, Chapter 6, Ship Combat).

## 2B. STORAGE LOCKERS

Several cabinets are built into this area of the ship. Amongst the various eccentric gadgets stuffed inside by Professor Orryn, characters can also find an *energy shield bracer*, a *Gamestation-7331*, and three life suits (see Appendix C).

## 2C. AUTO TURRETS

The left and right wings of the ship are each equipped with an auto turret. Unlike the *Scope's* light cannons, these turrets fire laser bolts and can rotate almost 180 degrees.

### GUNNER (AUTO TURRET)

Each turret requires a gunner to operate. Gunners may get additional attacks depending on the number of power units diverted to each turret by the engineers (see Appendix B).

## 2D. SHIP SYSTEM CORE

To a casual observer, this area of the ship looks like a tangled mess of buttons, glowing wires, and metal plates. However, this actually contains all the main functions of the ship, including the *Dark Matter* engine and the professor's experimental matrix shell. A couple of loose belt straps hang from the beams, which allow a secondary engineer to secure themselves to the area.

### ENGINEER (REAR)

Though the rear engineer of the ship can also redirect power, their main purpose is repairing systems that have sustained damage during a firefight. To repair systems, the engineer must make a **DC 15 Intelligence (Technology) check**. On a success, the system regains 1 mega hit point and returns to functionality, if it was disabled.

## 2E. HATCH TO THE SCOPE

Behind this bulkhead is the entry hatch to the *Scope*.

## 3A. LIVING QUARTERS

Each room in this area has two bunks and a personal lavatory. Three of the rooms appear completely unused, with thick layers of dust covering every surface. The last room, however, served as the professor's personal quarters. A few sets of clothes and other personal accouterments fill the drawers beneath the one bunk with rumpled sheets. Characters searching the room must make a **DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check**. On a success, they find a *universal translator* hidden beneath a suit jacket (see Appendix C).

## 3B. SICKBAY

This sterile room has three plastic cots lined up neatly beneath piercing white strip lights. Cabinets along the walls are filled with an assortment of medical tinctures and bandages. If an injured character enters the sickbay, Cal helpfully directs them to the equipment necessary to heal them (for more information about using the sickbay, see *Dark Matter*, Chapter 6, Systems).

## 3C. GALLEY

This small kitchen consists primarily of a mini refrigerator, a stove top, and a food fabricator. The fabricator replicates the effects of the *create food and water* spell to generate the nourishment necessary to sustain the crew. Inside the refrigerator, the professor has stashed six cans of Krash (see Appendix C).

## 3D. LOUNGE

Three comfortable lounge chairs surround a long coffee table in this area. Though this is clearly intended as a place for relaxation, the thick trails of dust covering the chair cushions indicate that the professor wasn't entirely fond of idle time.

# PURSuing THE VORGA

Chasing down the fleeing *Vorga* through the asteroid field occurs in four separate stages, two of which are combat encounters. The GM will need to keep track of how many rounds it takes for the characters to complete each stage, as the total number of rounds it takes to complete this section will determine what the party encounters when they catch the *Vorga*.

## STAGE ONE: TRACKING THE VORGA

Once all of the characters have chosen a crew position aboard the *Caliber*, Cal initiates the takeoff sequence, and the ship exits the docking bay. At this point, the *Vorga* has long since fled from view, which means the characters must rely on the *Caliber's* sensors to track the runaway ship.

The *Caliber's* pilot must make a **DC 11 Intelligence (Data) check** to interface properly with the ship's lifeform scanner and locate the *Vorga*. If an engineer assists the pilot, the pilot has advantage on their check. On a success, the characters locate the *Vorga* in a single round.

If the pilot is not able to locate the *Vorga* with its scanner, they must make a **DC 15 Dexterity (Piloting) check** to careen in whatever direction they last saw the *Vorga* flying. On a success, the characters can locate the *Vorga* in a single round. On a failure, finding the *Vorga* takes three rounds.



## STAGE TWO: DOGFIGHT

The GM and players should be ready to reference the statistics and information of the *Caliber* (see Appendix B) as they progress further in this chapter. When the *Caliber* finally nears the *Vorga*, read or paraphrase the following:

THE JAGGED SILHOUETTE OF THE *VORGA* LOOMS before your ship, its burnished chrome plating catching the glint of the stars like the edge of a knife. A sudden burst of red fire sears from its engines, and through the void of space, three streaks of arrow-shaped light become visible, streaking in the *Caliber's* direction.

"Good day! Not to alarm all of you," Cal's voice rings out as one of the front consoles in the cockpit begins to beep. "But I think we might have company."

The *Vorga* deploys two troopers from its fleet of dogfighters to impede the characters' pursuit. All PCs (along with any NPC allies if they have them) and the enemy ships must **roll initiative**.

During combat, the troopers target fire on the *Caliber's* internal systems, prioritizing the shield generators first, followed by the ship's various weapon systems. Each individual system has 20 mega hit points that exist as separate from the ship's main pool of mega hit points (which represents the hull). Meanwhile, the *Vorga* focuses on putting distance between itself and the PCs.

When both troopers are defeated or after three rounds of combat (whichever occurs first), the *Vorga* swerves into the asteroid field, triggering the third stage.

## STAGE THREE: INTO THE ASTEROID FIELD

Read or paraphrase the following at the start of this stage:

ANOTHER GOUT OF FLAME SPEWS FROM THE *Vorga's* impulse engines, and the ship veers sharply ahead of the *Caliber*, narrowly missing a large chunk of spiraling debris in its path. Through the ship's viewports, more and more of these massive, misshapen rocks can be viewed, blotting out the stars.

"They are heading into the asteroid field," Cal informs the ship over the intercoms. The *Caliber* shudders a moment later, and several buttons on the console start to flash. "We will have to move quickly if—oh, dear."

Another rumble shakes the ship, and through its viewports, three more arrow-shaped fighter ships can be seen flying directly towards the *Caliber*.

The *Vorga* deploys one additional trooper and two sabres to join the firefight. All PCs (along with any NPC allies if they have them) and the enemy ships must **roll initiative**. The GM must remember to keep track of how many rounds it takes to finish the encounter. Once all of the NTO dogfighters have been destroyed, proceed to the next stage.

During the encounter, the surrounding asteroid field also adds a new layer of obstacles for the characters to overcome. At the top of each round, roll 1d10 and refer to the Asteroid Belt Complications table.

### ASTEROID BELT COMPLICATIONS

#### d10 Complication

- 1 As the *Caliber* hurtles forward, two asteroids in front of it begin to drift together, leaving a gap between them no bigger than 50 feet—and closing fast. The pilot must make a successful **DC 13 Dexterity (Piloting) check** to swerve through the gap or the ship takes 7 (2d6) mega bludgeoning damage from impacting with one of the asteroids.
- 2 A bulbous space worm inhabiting one of the asteroids has latched onto the hull of the *Caliber*, leeching its power. Until the start of the next round of the encounter, the *Caliber* has one less power unit to divert between its systems. On their turn, gunners can target the leech by making an aimed attack at disadvantage. The leech has AC 12 and 1 mega hit point.
- 3 An asteroid near the *Caliber's* right side is struck by a wayward laser blast and explodes. The pilot must make a successful **DC 12 Dexterity (Piloting) check** to avoid the debris, or the ship takes 2 (1d4) mega bludgeoning damage and 3 (1d6) mega fire damage.
- 4 A massive asteroid looms in front of the *Caliber* with no discernable gap to fly through. On their turn, the pilot can attempt to swiftly dive beneath the asteroid by making a successful **DC 15 Dexterity (Piloting) check** (no action required). Alternatively, on their turn, gunners can target the asteroid to blow it apart before there is a collision. The asteroid has AC 10 and 5 mega hit points.  
Unless the asteroid is dodged or destroyed, the *Caliber* collides with it at the end of the round, taking 7 (2d6) mega bludgeoning damage.
- 5 Rock debris has clogged one of the *Caliber's* impulse engines. On their turn, an engineer can use an action to make a **DC 12 Intelligence (Technology) check** to dislodge the debris. Until the debris is dislodged, all Piloting checks have disadvantage.
- 6-8 Whichever enemy ship has the fewest mega hit points remaining attempts a reckless maneuver to close in on the *Caliber*. In the process, it collides with a small asteroid and takes 7 (2d6) mega bludgeoning damage.  
If the enemy ship is destroyed in the collision, the force of its explosion sends asteroids and flaming debris hurtling in new trajectories, and the GM must immediately roll on this table again.
- 9-10 No complication occurs.



## STAGE FOUR: FINDING THE BASE

The *Vorga* uses the cover of the dogfight in the asteroid field to slip away unnoticed. To locate the *Vorga* again, the pilot of the *Caliber* must succeed on a **DC 13 Intelligence (Data) check**. Like before, if an engineer assists the pilot with the scanner, the pilot has advantage on their check.

On a success, the characters can locate the *Vorga* in a single round, but on a failure, it takes three rounds.

The *Vorga* has docked at a secret platform within a large, partially hollowed-out asteroid. Though the docking bay doors are still open when the *Caliber* approaches, scanner droids patrol the area in a repeated pattern.

To fly safely into the hangar without being noticed, a pilot can attempt to decipher the scanner droid's pattern (Data) or simply approach cautiously (Stealth). The pilot must make a **DC 14 Dexterity (Stealth) or Intelligence (Data) check**. On a success, the PCs enter the base without being detected. On a failure, the PCs are delayed one additional round as they wait for the scanner droids to pass.

Entering the asteroid's hangar ends the chase.

## THE ASTEROID BASE

This secret hub within a hollowed-out asteroid has served as **Carmen Cane's** base of operations while in Port Nomad. Though only partially constructed, this small hangar nonetheless has everything Carmen needs: a docking bay for the *Vorga*, a fabricated atmosphere, and most importantly, a teleporter to the NTO headquarters proper.

### DOGFIGHTING IN THE STARS

The complete rules for ship combat and crew position actions can be found in *Dark Matter*, Chapter 6, Ship Combat. Alternatively, the GM can allow the players to describe their actions in more cinematic terms, using the simplified rules below.

**Piloting Tricks.** Simple flight maneuvers like barrel rolls and U-turns typically require a pilot making a successful **DC 13 Dexterity (Piloting) check**. Complications, such as environmental hazards and pilots attempting complex maneuvers like feints or dive-bombing, increases the difficulty of the check by 2 per complication.

**Shooting.** Gunners make attack rolls as normal, adding their Dexterity modifier and proficiency bonus to the total. Gunners may also choose to target one of a ship's systems instead of the ship's hull. If they target a specific system, they have disadvantage on their attack.

**Diverting Power and Overcharging.** Engineers can divert power between the *Caliber's* different systems with an action. Spellcasters in the engineering role can also attempt to use magic to overcharge the ship's systems. If they expend a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the overcharge automatically succeeds. Otherwise, the engineer must make an **Intelligence (Technology) check**. The DC of this check equals 12 + the number of times the engine has previously been overcharged. On a success, until the start of the engineer's next turn, two systems of the engineer's choice increase by one power tier. The systems must then spend a round cooling down before they can be overcharged again.





After parking the *Vorga* safely within the asteroid, Carmen casts *dominate person* on **Professor Orryn**, compelling him to assist her with charging the teleporter platform. Once the platform has been fully charged, Carmen plans to whisk the professor through the portal and take him to the leadership of the Tower, the secret organization of archmages that Carmen serves as a secret agent.

How much progress Carmen has made towards completing her goal upon the PCs' arrival depends on how quickly the characters were able to lose their NTO pursuers in the asteroid field.

## EXPEDIENT RESCUE

If the chase sequence took less than 10 rounds in total, Carmen has just begun charging the teleporter platform. Read or paraphrase the following:

FAINT GREEN LIGHTS BEGIN TO FLICKER AROUND the large circular chrome platform that occupies the center of this dilapidated hanger. In the shadow of the *Vorga*, various data terminals hum with energy. Carmen Cane waits near the terminal with her arms folded casually behind her back. Her cruel smile is only half visible in the eerie light. Next to Carmen is a familiar gnomish head of hair: Professor Orryn, bent over one of the terminals and whistling merrily to himself.

Have the PCs **roll initiative**. Carmen acts on an initiative count of 12 and Professor Orryn acts on an initiative count of 11.

It takes three rounds for the teleporter to charge and activate. During this time, Carmen attacks the players with lethal force, sometimes even directing Professor Orryn via her active *dominate person* spell to turn on the characters. The PCs will need to break Carmen's charm on the professor before they are able to usher him to safety.

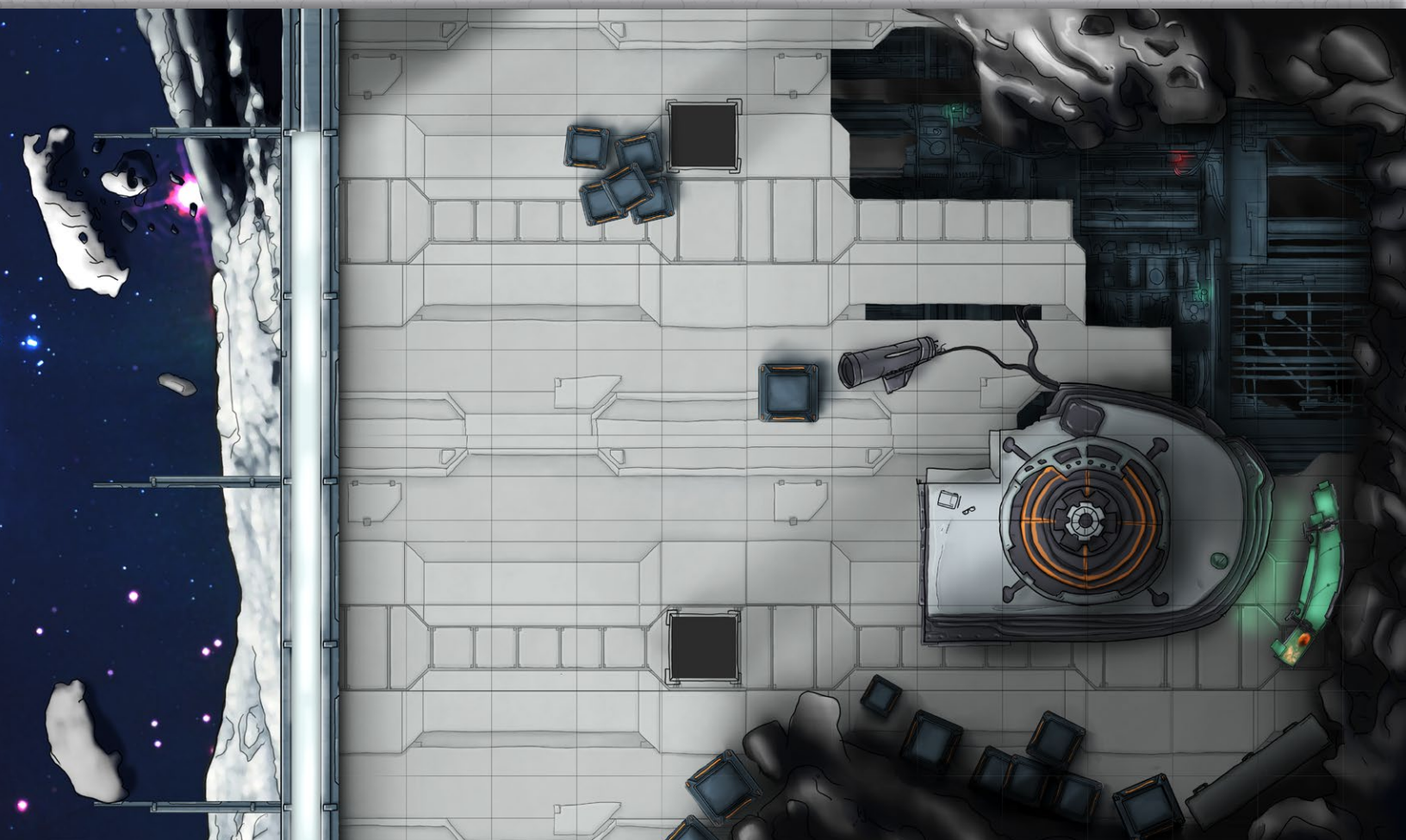
If Carmen is reduced to 30 hit points, or if the players manage to get Professor Orryn safely back onto the *Caliber*, proceed to the chapter: *Mission Success*. Otherwise, once the teleporter activates, Carmen hoists the professor over her shoulder and dashes through the portal on her turn. The portal closes behind Carmen and Professor Orryn; proceed to the chapter: *Mission Failure*.

## JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME

If the chase sequence took 10-12 rounds, read or paraphrase the following:

BRILLIANT GREEN LIGHT FLARES OUT FROM A circular platform in the center of the room, casting strange, swirling shadows onto the hull of the *Vorga* and across the numerous half-emptied crates scattered about the hangar. Silhouetted at the edge of this green pool of light is Carmen Cane, with the professor right at her side.

Have the PCs **roll initiative**. Carmen acts on an initiative count of 17 and Professor Orryn acts on an initiative count of 6.





In this scenario, Carmen has had more time to charge the teleporter unimpeded, requiring only one more round before it is fully activated. However, her *dominate person* spell on Professor Orryn has worn off. On his turn, he attempts to escape her grapple (escape DC 10) and run towards the characters. During the resulting encounter, Carmen avoids attacking the PCs and instead focuses on getting hold of the professor, keeping him away from her enemies, and throwing him into the teleporter as soon as the portal opens at the start of the second round of the encounter.

If Carmen is reduced to 30 hit points, or if the players manage to get Professor Orryn safely back onto the *Caliber*, proceed to the chapter: *Mission Success*. If Carmen escapes through the portal with the professor, the portal closes behind her. Proceed to the chapter: *Mission Failure*.

## TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

If the chase sequence took more than 12 rounds, the characters are too late to save the professor. Proceed directly to the chapter: *Mission Failure*.

## MISSION SUCCESS

Carmen, sensing that she is outmatched, uses her flash grenades to create a distraction and make her escape. If the teleporter is charged and active, she will jump onto the platform sans the professor and disappear with a flash of green light; the portal closes immediately behind her. Otherwise, she flees on either the *Vorga* or, if the *Vorga* sustained too much damage during the previous chase sequence, the *Vorga*'s last remaining dogfighter.

However, the loud explosions from Carmen's grenades do have an unintended consequence: awakening the dormant **asteroid ooze** that slumbers within the asteroid's hollow caverns. Read or paraphrase the following:

THE PLATFORM RUMBLES TO TERRIBLE LIFE, and cracks begin to race their way up the cavern walls. With a hideous squelch, a thick sludge starts to seep out from the asteroid, coalescing into a gargantuan, inky ooze that towers over even the *Vorga* itself, with its hollow mockery of a mouth open wide.

The asteroid ooze demolishes the remains of the teleporter and its surrounding terminals for two rounds, giving the PCs just enough time to flee back aboard their ship. Afterwards, it pursues the *Caliber* (and the *Vorga*, if it was used to escape) out of the asteroid. The characters may choose to fight the ooze or try to outrun it.

## DEBRIEFING PROFESSOR ORRYN

Once the characters escape the clutches of the asteroid ooze and make it to relative safety, Professor Orryn profusely thanks them for his rescue. The professor explains that Carmen herself is the leader of the NTO, and though he is still not entirely sure what business she and her organization had regarding his technology, he expresses his suspicions that it may tie into rumors he's heard regarding powerful archmages wishing to conquer the worlds previously kept safe from their grasp by Dead Magic Zones.

Still a bit shaken by the experience, the professor requests that the characters drop him off on Nebellion, the gnomish home planet, where he plans to hide out until the NTO's nefarious plans are laid to rest. But, as a token of his gratitude, he passes full command of the *Caliber* to the characters and helpfully offers his services as an engineer should they require any specialized technology in the future.

## MISSION FAILURE

Read or paraphrase the following:

CARMEN'S TELEPORTER HAS DRAINED ALL THE energy from the asteroid base. Char marks ring the edge of the center platform, and while the fabricated atmosphere remains functional, most of the data terminals in the area have powered down.

A PC can locate the switch for the emergency power generator by making either a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** or a **DC 13 Intelligence (Technology) check**. Though the small generator isn't powerful enough to reopen the teleporter, it does reactivate the data terminals. Perusing these terminals requires bypassing a firewall with a successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Data) check**. On a failure, the terminal systems automatically erase all of their data.

On a successful check, the PC finds a set of coordinates encrypted within the teleporter's code. If the PC's Data check resulted in a 17 or higher, they also uncover a short transmission directed to Carmen, signed with a foreboding purple triangle symbol emblazoned with a single jagged eye—the symbol of the Tower, a secretive group of powerful arcanists with unknown designs for the 'verse.

PCs that attempt to open the *Vorga* in order to search it trigger its self-destruct mechanism, which cannot be stopped once it has started. The characters will only have one minute to escape on the *Caliber*, or else be killed in the resulting fireball that destroys the hidden base and the asteroid that houses it.





# FUTURE ADVENTURES

*Conspiracy in the Stars!* is meant to introduce a GM and/or their players to the limitless universe of *Dark Matter*. What happens once the adventure is over is up to the group. By the end of the adventure, the players have their own fantastic spaceship to fly anywhere they would like. They could become space pirates, mercenaries, scientists, explorers, heroes, or anything else they choose.

This chapter contains the seeds for future adventures, and how to further develop the PCs' relationships with some of the colorful characters they first met in this adventure. To learn all there is to know about the campaign setting, its civilizations and factions, the GM is encouraged to get the full *Dark Matter* sourcebook.

## THE CALIBER

The PCs are likely to want to keep the *Caliber* as their own ship, regardless of whether or not they rescued Professor Orryn. The ship is invaluable, and they may be able to sell it to any number of parties interested in its design and its working Talfough Matrix for an incredible sum of credits. The GM may wish to refer to this adventure (see *Act Three: All Aboard The Caliber!*) in the future for descriptions of the ship, which has some extra goods hidden away on it.

Of course, the ship's incredible value and unique science will paint a target on the PCs' backs. They may find themselves dogged by agents of the Firm, like Darkstar Killagob, or even more powerful members of the arcane cabal known as the Tower. Bounty hunters and governments will see the characters and their ship as a potential threat or as the key to unlimited promise, leading to any number of exciting, intriguing, and deadly encounters.

## RECRUITING ALLIES

The PCs may wish to recruit allies to join the crew of the *Caliber*. During the course of the adventure, they have likely made many friends and enemies. For any ally the PCs wish to recruit, the GM should consider a prerequisite to convince them to join, whether it be to help them pay off a debt, perform a favor, or simply hire them (at the cost of 100 credits a month per CR level of the ally).

Any number of NPCs could be interested in joining the crew of the *Caliber*, so long as the PCs have not become meaningful enemies of theirs. A few interesting NPCs that the characters may consider speaking to include:

- **Captain Lysandra.** Lysandra's last hope, at least in their mind, is that there is a livable homeworld for the nautilid race hidden in one of the many Dead Magic Zones in the 'verse. If the PCs promised to help her search for new worlds in the Dead Magic Zones, she would retire from



her rank as a nautilid Commander, seeing it as the greater good for the nautilid race.

- **Helio-Horus.** If Helio-Horus attempted to redeem himself after being confronted and subdued by the PCs, his next steps are to tidy up his personal affairs and look to start his life anew elsewhere. The PCs may be able to hire him to join their crew, but he will first need their help to take down Boss Ahn-Nova. Helio-Horus feels guilty about what he has done, and wants to leave Port Nomad a better, safer place when he leaves.
- **Tiberius Vinter.** With his embarrassing contract with the Firm and Darkstar Killagob complete, Tiberius Vinter is ready to return to oversee the elite mercenary organization known as the Coalition. While the PCs are unlikely to have the funds to hire such an elite warrior onto the crew immediately, they may attempt to do so. Tiberius is impressed with the characters and apologetic for any part he played in the mess in Port Nomad. His counteroffer to the PCs is to hire them (and their ship) to work for the Coalition, which may present them with numerous resources and countless future adventures.
- **Neutron.** The amoeboid doctor is easy to recruit if the PCs read and complimented their holo-play *MURDER ON THE AMOEBOID EXPRESS*. They are cowardly and will not take part in any adventures, but may be a good source of medical knowledge with insight into the amoeboid species. They will continue to work on more murder mystery scripts, all of which are awful, and will hound the PCs to read them and give feedback. For the purpose of statistics, treat Neutron as a **Spacer** (see Appendix A) with 16 Intelligence and proficiency in Medicine.
- **Paladec and Jenson.** The brothers-for-hire are currently deep into their investigation of the mysterious organization known as the Tower. While they are unlikely to travel with the PCs, they may allow the characters to contact them while they are on future adventures. The brothers will continue to buy information from the PCs, and may provide clues that they uncovered should the characters decide to further investigate the Tower or the New Terran Organization. For the purpose of statistics, treat each of the brothers as a **Spacer** (see Appendix A) with additional proficiencies in Insight and Investigation. Each of the brothers also carry a repeater instead of a wrenchinator.

## FINDING PROFESSOR ORRYN

If the PCs were unable to rescue the professor, they may decide to not give up and try to find where he has been taken. Of course, the Tower's motives and movements are not easily uncovered, and the characters may find themselves on a wild hunt through the stars. The Tower's reason for kidnapping



the professor, and their ultimate nefarious scheme, is not described in this adventure and could be anything the GM wishes it to be.

If the PCs decide to track down the professor, a good place to start is right back in Port Nomad. If the characters' actions influenced Helio-Horus to try to redeem himself, he may be able to provide them a lead on Carmen Cane's whereabouts to start them off on their journey. Alternatively, the PCs may reach out to investigators Paladec and Jenson, if they have befriended them, to get a lead on where to look for the professor.

If the PCs are willing to get their hands dirty and mingle with the underbelly of the spaceport, they may be able to get information from Boss Ahn-Nova (if they'll do him a small "favor" first) or broker a deal with the Firm and Darkstar Killagob (who "promises" not to double-cross them).

## JOURNEY TO NEBELLION

If the PCs rescued Professor Orryn, he is visibly changed by his harrowing experiences. He no longer wishes to pursue mass production of the Talfough Matrix, and instead intends to hide out on the gnomish homeworld, Nebellion. In exchange for taking him home, he promises the characters they can have ownership of the *Caliber*, which he hopes will keep his enemies from searching for him.

The journey through a Dead Magic Zone to planet Nebellion is the perfect opportunity to introduce space encounters, strange creatures, and unexplored worlds to the characters. Nebellion itself, with its incredible technology and gnomish politics, may be very interesting to explore. The rest of the problems of the 'verse, the interstellar wars and wicked plots of powerful organizations, will be waiting for the characters when they return. In the meantime, there are brave new worlds full of wonder and impossibilities to explore.

## RISE OF THE NEW TERRAN ORGANIZATION

The New Terran Organization is an affront to the major governments of the human race, being hellbent on spreading human superiority throughout the 'verse. They make a perfect recurring threat for the PCs, particularly after the run-ins in and around Port Nomad. If the characters decide to take the fight to the NTO, they will eventually uncover that the radicalized group of mercenaries is having its strings pulled by a secret cabal of archmages known as the Tower.

The Tower can be presented as the ultimate villain or threat to a long-term *Dark Matter* campaign. As the PCs grow in power, they will uncover more and more of the truth behind the organization. It is likely that they will encounter Carmen Cane again, only to learn that she is just a cog in the Tower's greater machinations. The Tower's ultimate goal is not presented in this adventure, and could be anything the GM dreams of, but it should never be simple: the organization is built upon layers and layers of lies, and even its own members do not know its leadership's true intentions for the 'verse.





# APPENDICES

This section contains useful appendices, including monsters, magic items, and information detailing the ship the *Caliber*.

## APPENDIX A: NPCs AND MONSTERS

This appendix contains statistics for important nonplayer characters, monsters, and general nonplayer characters. The creatures in each section are presented in alphabetical order.

### COMMON NPCs AND MONSTERS

These statistics are for unnamed NPCs and monsters which can be found elsewhere in the *Dark Matter* universe.

#### INFECTED SCRAP GOLEM

Scrap golems are assembled from what's around: bits of metal, glass, plastic, clay, and wood, with critical components, like the construct core, scavenged or assembled to fit the shape and dimensions of the chassis. Unlike other golems, scrap golems don't have a manual or other guide; a skilled arcanist needs only excellent understanding of the fundamentals and a keen eye for useful scrap. Thus, every scrap golem is unique, assembled with different weapons, materials, and functions in mind. The resulting menagerie of mismatched golems matches no other category.

These hulking machines are never more dangerous than when infected with the N-Virus. The N-Virus is an insidious magical disease that roots itself in a construct's core, from whence it proceeds to corrupt and rewrite the construct's programming to suit its motives. Generally, this results in an apparent intelligence, as simple constructs follow complex directives aimed at spreading the virus further. A single construct infected with the virus can infect hundreds, sparking a robotic uprising with the express intent of causing havoc and disseminating the virus far and wide.

#### INFECTED SCRAP GOLEM

*Large construct, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 57 (6d10 + 24)  
**Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	9 (–1)	19 (+4)	3 (–4)	11 (+0)	1 (–5)

**Damage Immunities** poison, psychic  
**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned  
**Senses** thermalsight 120 ft., blindsight 15 ft., passive perception 10  
**Languages** —  
**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Berserk.** Whenever the golem starts its turn with 20 hit points or fewer, roll a d6. On a 6, the golem goes berserk. On each of its turns while berserk, the golem attacks the nearest creature it can see. If no creature is near enough to move to and attack, the golem attacks an object, with preference for an object smaller than itself. Once the golem goes berserk, it continues to do so until it is destroyed or regains all of its hit points.

**Customized.** The golem gains a flying speed of 30 feet, but any opportunity attacks against it have advantage.

**Immutable Form.** The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

**Radiant Absorption.** Whenever the golem is subjected to radiant damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the radiant damage.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The golem makes two with its rocket hammer and, if it is able, one with its barrage fire.

**Rocket Hammer.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d10 + 1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a construct or living construct, such as a velt, it must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target is infected with the N-Virus (see *Dark Matter*, Appendix E).

**Barrage Fire (Recharge 5–6).** The golem fires a barrage of shots in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



## NTO TERRORIST

The footsoldiers of the New Terran Organization (NTO) are violent extremists, indoctrinated in beliefs regarding the innate superiority of mankind and their rightful place as rulers of the 'verse. **NTO terrorists** draw their brutal tactics from the pages of history books, specifically the bloodiest battles of the Rift War of humanity.

## PORT NOMAD SECURITY OFFICER

The streets and starport of Port Nomad are safeguarded by the station's **security officers**, a band of lawmen who do their best to separate right from wrong on the crime-riddled station. Many among their number have taken bribes or regular payments from Boss Ahn-Nova to turn a blind eye or actively participate in illicit activity, but enough good officers wear the badge that the station remains civilized and lawful, at least on the surface.

## SPACER

Long journeys on transport freighters and sojourns on lonely space stations mean that **spacers** almost never encounter natural gravity. They've grown so accustomed to life on spacecraft that the hazards of the 'verse have become humdrum, and the strange and fearsome creatures they encounter have become mundane.

## NTO TERRORIST

*Medium humanoid (human), any chaotic alignment*

**Armor Class** 16 (triplate suit)  
**Hit Points** 22 (5d8)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

**Skills** Deception +4, Perception +3  
**Senses** passive Perception 13  
**Languages** Common  
**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Comm Link.** The terrorist is in constant communication and coordination with its allies within 2 miles of it. It can't be surprised by any creature or object that any of its allies within range are aware of.

**Life Suit.** The terrorist's armor contains an integrated life suit.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The terrorist makes two attacks with its standard carbine, two attacks with its arc baton, or four attacks with its standard carbine with disadvantage.

**Arc Baton.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) lightning damage. If the target is a creature, it can't take reactions until the start of its next turn.

**Standard Carbine.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) radiant damage.

## PORT NOMAD SECURITY OFFICER

*Medium humanoid (human), any lawful alignment*

**Armor Class** 16 (triplate suit)  
**Hit Points** 27 (5d8 + 5)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Perception +3, Survival +3  
**Senses** passive Perception 13  
**Languages** Common  
**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Comm Link.** The security officer is in constant communication and coordination with its allies within 2 miles of it. It can't be surprised by any creature or object that any of its allies within range are aware of.

**Life Suit.** The security officer's armor contains an integrated life suit.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The security officer makes two attacks with its standard carbine, two attacks with its arc baton, or four attacks with its standard carbine with disadvantage.

**Arc Baton.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) lightning damage. If the target is a creature, it can't take reactions until the start of its next turn.

**Standard Carbine.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) radiant damage.

## SPACER

*Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment*

**Armor Class** 10  
**Hit Points** 4 (1d8)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Senses** passive Perception 10  
**Languages** Common, any one language  
**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

**Weightlessness Training.** In zero gravity, the spacer suffers no penalty to its movement speed while climbing.

## ACTIONS

**Wrenchinator.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d12 + 1) bludgeoning damage.



## THWIRREL

**Thwirrels** are innately psionic, rodent-like creatures that infest ships, cities, and colonies around the 'verse, feeding on a mixture of magical energy and any food they can scavenge. Most spacers describe them as foot-long, furry creatures with ferret-like bodies, four rabbit-like ears, and long bushy tails. Not all spacers, however, notice them, owing to the thwirrels' primary method of defense: thwirrels can use their native psionic abilities to effectively erase themselves from an observer's senses. This isn't a form of invisibility, but rather a clever manipulation of the mind to hamper a predator's ability to notice them. Because of this, a major thwirrel infestation can go unchecked for a very long time.

### THWIRREL

*Tiny beast, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 2 (1d4)

**Speed** 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (−4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	4 (−3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

**Skills** Perception +4, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 0 (10 XP)

**Energy Siphon.** When the thwirrel hits a magically powered device with a bite attack, it can use its bonus action to drain some energy from the device. When it does so, the save DC for its Psychic Camouflage feature increases by 1, to a maximum of 16, for the next 24 hours. Smaller devices—such as blasters and datapads—that are affected by this trait cease to function for 1 hour. Larger devices such as automatons or Dark Matter engines only cease to function for 1 round.

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The thwirrel has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Psychic Camouflage.** The thwirrel can take the Hide action even when it isn't in a heavily obscured area. Additionally, when a creature would normally see, hear, touch, or smell a thwirrel, it must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. On a successful save, the creature can perceive all thwirrels as normal for the next 10 minutes. On a failed save, the creature can't see, hear, feel, or smell any thwirrels for the same duration. In either case, the saving throw must be repeated every 10 minutes, or until the creature is no longer within visual range of any thwirrels. Creatures with truesight are immune to this trait.

### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage.

## IMPORTANT NPCs

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure and might make appearances in subsequent adventures in the 'verse. Some of these characters, such as Captain Lysandra and Helio-Horus, might make staunch allies or even crew members, whereas others, such as Boss Ahn-Nova and Carmen Cane, are destined to return as villains, if they make an appearance at all.

### BOSS AHN-NOVA

*Medium humanoid (avia-ra), lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (tactical nanofiber vest)

**Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Dex +5, Cha +4

**Skills** Deception +4, Perception +3, Persuasion +4, Piloting +5

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Avia-Ra, Common

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Dodge Roll.** As a bonus action, Ahn-Nova can move up to 15 feet. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks, ignores difficult terrain, and can move him through hostile creatures' spaces, as long as he doesn't end his movement there.

**Innate Spellcasting.** Ahn-Nova's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*  
1/day: *bless*

**Quick Draw.** Ahn-Nova has advantage on initiative rolls. Additionally, he can draw or stow up to two weapons when he rolls initiative and whenever he takes an action on its turn.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Ahn-Nova makes two attacks.

**Rapier.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

**Magnus.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 70/280 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) radiant damage. The weapon then overheats, and can't be used until the end of Ahn-Nova's next turn.

**Repeater.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) radiant damage.

### REACTIONS

**Skin of Your Teeth (3/Day).** Ahn-Nova adds 4 (1d8) to his AC against one attack that would hit him. To do so, Ahn-Nova must see the attacker.



## CAPTAIN LYSANDRA

Medium humanoid (nautilid), lawful neutral

**Armor Class** 16 (aqua suit)

**Hit Points** 44 (8d8 + 8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Wis +4

**Skills** Athletics +5, Data +4, Insight +6, Intimidation +4, Investigation +4, Perception +4

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** all, from *universal translator*

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Aqua Suit.** Captain Lysandra wears an aqua suit, which counts as a life suit and provides her with the benefits of a *universal translator*.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Captain Lysandra makes two attacks with her Rocket Hammer.

**Rocket Hammer.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d10 + 1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

**Tri-Barrel Ion Cannon.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/120 ft., up to three targets within 5 feet of each other. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) radiant damage if only one target is hit, or 7 (2d6) radiant damage if multiple targets are hit.

## CIRDAN BLACKFORGE

Medium humanoid (dwarf), true neutral

**Armor Class** 13 (flight jacket)

**Hit Points** 13 (2d8 + 4)

**Speed** 25 ft. (unaffected by high and extreme gravity)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Con +4

**Skills** Athletics +4, Data +5, Piloting +5, Technology +7

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common, Dwarf

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Famous Shipwright.** Cirdan has advantage on skill checks made to build, diagnose, invent, or repair ships or ship parts.

### ACTIONS

**Hacked Repeater.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) radiant damage. Attacks made with this weapon have disadvantage.

## CARMEN CANE

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

**Armor Class** 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

**Hit Points** 78 (12d8 + 24)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Dex +5, Wis +3, Cha +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Arcana +10, Data +7, Deception +9, Insight +3, Perception +3, Piloting +5, Technology +7

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Abyssal, Amoeboid, Avia-Ra, Common, Dwarf, Elf, Wrothian

**Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

**Spellcasting.** Carmen is a 10th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Carmen has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *cheat*, *cryptogram*, *mage hand*, *technomancy*

1st level (4 slots): *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *misty step*, *suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *fireball*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility*

5th level (2 slots): *dominate person*, *hardlight frame*

### ACTIONS

**Arc Baton.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) lightning damage. If the target is a creature, it can't take reactions until the start of its next turn.

### BONUS ACTIONS

**Flash Grenade.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) radiant damage and the target is blind until the end of their next turn. All creatures within 10 feet of the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or also be blinded until the end of their next turn.

**Chaff Grenade.** Carmen throws a grenade at a point within 30 feet, creating a magnetic chaff field that expands from that point in a 20-foot radius. This field lasts until the end of Carmen's next turn. Any ranged attacks that pass through the chaff field are made with disadvantage.

**Dispersion Grenade.** Carmen throws a grenade at a point within 30 feet, creating a gaseous cloud that expands from that point in a 20-foot radius. All creatures within the dispersion cloud have advantage on saving throws against spells or magical effects. If a successful saving throw would reduce the damage of a spell or magical effect by half, it instead reduces it to 0.

**Sonic Grenade.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) thunder damage and the target is deafened until the end of their next turn. All creatures within 10 feet of the target must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or also be deafened until the end of their next turn.





## DARKSTAR KILLAGOB

*Small humanoid (halfling), neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 16 (tactical nanofiber vest)

**Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)

**Speed** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Dex +6, Cha +5

**Skills** Data +6, Insight +3, Intimidation +7, Persuasion +5, Piloting +6

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common, Halfling

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Brave.** Darkstar has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Dodge Roll.** As a bonus action, Darkstar can move up to 15 feet. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks, ignores difficult terrain, and can move him through hostile creatures' space so long as he does not end his turn there.

**Halfling Nimbleness.** Darkstar can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than his.

**Lucky.** When Darkstar rolls a 1 on the d20 for an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, he can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

**Naturally Shrewd.** Darkstar adds +4 to any skill check he makes involving money, business dealings, legal proceedings, or similar dealings.

**Quickdraw.** Darkstar has advantage on initiative rolls. Additionally, he can draw or stow up to two weapons when he rolls initiative and whenever he takes an action on his turn.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Darkstar makes two attacks with his repeater, or one attack with his overcharged baton and one attack with his repeater.

**Overcharged Baton.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) lightning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the start of their next turn.

**Repeater.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) radiant damage.



## EMBER (H)

Medium humanoid (amoeboid), neutral good

**Armor Class** 11 (14 with *mage armor*)

**Hit Points** 22 (5d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (–1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

**Skills** Data +5, Insight +7, Perception +5, Technology +5

**Senses** passive Perception 15

**Languages** Amoeboid, Common, Goblin, Orc

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Amorphous.** Ember can compress its body enough to squeeze through a 1-inch wide space.

**Spellcasting.** Ember is a 4th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Ember has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *shocking grasp*, *technomancy*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person*, *mage armor*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*

### ACTIONS

**Phaser.** Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range 50/200 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) radiant damage.

## HIGH ORACLE THESSALIA

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful good

**Armor Class** 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

**Hit Points** 36 (8d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Wis +6

**Skills** Arcana +8, History +6, Insight +6, Perception +6, Religion +6

**Senses** truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 16

**Languages** all

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Portent (2/Day).** Thessalia can reroll an attack roll, saving throw, or ability check and choose either result.

**Spellcasting.** Thessalia is a 5th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Thessalia has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *cryptogram*, *mage hand*, *technomancy*

1st level (4 slots): *mage armor*, *magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *misty step*, *suggestion*

### ACTIONS

**Repeater.** Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) radiant damage.

## KENNIE FLOPWIG

Small humanoid (halfling), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 11

**Hit Points** 9 (2d8)

**Speed** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (–1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

**Skills** Data +8, Deception +3, Persuasion +5, Technology +6

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common, Halfling

**Challenge** 1/4 (25 XP)

**Cowardly.** Kennie has disadvantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Halfling Nimbleness.** Kennie can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than theirs.

**Lucky.** When Kennie rolls a 1 on the d20 for an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, they can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

**Naturally Shrewd.** Kennie adds +4 to any skill check they make involving money, business dealings, legal proceedings, or similar dealings.

### ACTIONS

**Phaser.** Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 50/200 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) radiant damage.

## KIRI FLOPWIG

Small humanoid (halfling), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 9 (2d8)

**Speed** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (–1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

**Skills** Deception +7, Insight +3, Persuasion +7

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common, Halfling

**Challenge** 1/4 (25 XP)

**Brave.** Kiri has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Halfling Nimbleness.** Kiri can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than hers.

**Lucky.** When Kiri rolls a 1 on the d20 for an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, she can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

**Naturally Shrewd.** Kiri adds +4 to any skill check she makes involving money, business dealings, legal proceedings, or similar dealings.

### ACTIONS

**Phaser.** Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 50/200 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) radiant damage.



## PROFESSOR ORRYN TALFOUGH-GOGGLEFOGGER

*Small humanoid (gnome), chaotic good*

**Armor Class** 13 (tactical nanofiber vest)

**Hit Points** 33 (6d8 + 6)

**Speed** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (−1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

**Skills** Arcana +9, Data +9, Perception +5, Piloting +5, Technology +9

**Senses** passive Perception 15

**Languages** all, from *universal translator*

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**AI Companion.** If Orryn rolls less than 16 with any of his skills, he treats the result as a 16 instead.

**Genius Engineer.** Orryn can spend 1 minute and 10 gp worth of materials to construct an improvised piece of magical technology (a flashlight, a comm set, an igniter, etc). Orryn can use his action to dismantle the device and reclaim the materials used to create it.

**Gnome Cunning.** Orryn has advantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws against magic.

**Overcharge.** A blaster deals three extra dice of its damage plus Orryn's Intelligence modifier when Orryn hits with it (included in the attack).

**Retro Technology.** Orryn has advantage on all Intelligence (Technology) checks to identify old magical technology.

### ACTIONS

**Gnomish Phaser.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (5d4 + 5) force damage.

**Gadget.** Orryn uses one of the following gadgets:

**Blink Button.** Orryn teleports up to 15 feet.

**Cloaking Device (Recharge 4-6).** Orryn becomes invisible until the end of his next turn, as per the spell *invisibility*.

**Overheat Beacon (Recharge 5-6).** Each blaster within 60 feet of Orryn (excluding those carried by him) overheats and cannot be used until the end of his next turn.

**Shrink Ray.** One creature within 30 feet is targeted by the Reduce effect of the *enlarge/reduce* spell (save DC 14).

## TIBERIUS VINTER

*Medium humanoid (half-orc), lawful neutral*

**Armor Class** 18 (impulse frame, energy shield bracer)

**Hit Points** 136 (16d8 + 64)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Str +8, Wis +7

**Skills** Athletics +8, Insight +7, Intimidation +11, Perception +7, Persuasion +7, Piloting +11

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

**Languages** all, from *universal translator*

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Tiberius hits with it (included in the attack).

**Close Quarters Combat.** Being within 5 feet of a hostile creature doesn't impose disadvantage on Tiberius's ranged attack rolls.

**Gritty Survivor (1/Day).** When Tiberius is reduced to 0 hit points, he instead drops to 1 hit point. He gains advantage on all attack rolls and ability checks for the remainder of the encounter, and is immune to all damage until the end of his next turn.

**Impulse Pack.** When Tiberius uses his flight speed, he must begin and end his movement on the ground, otherwise he falls.

**Life Support Systems.** Tiberius wears an impulse frame, which counts as a life suit.

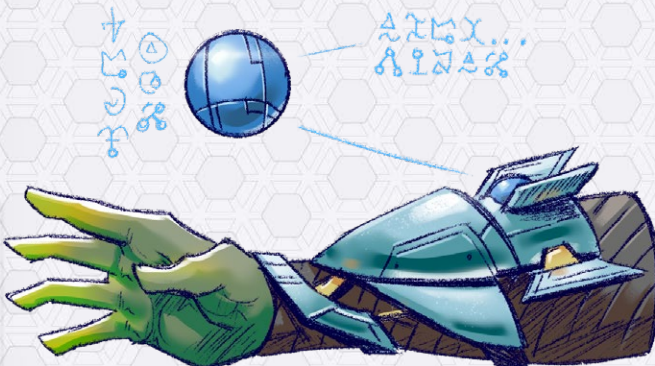
### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Tiberius makes two attacks with either his antimatter glaive or with his hyper-repeater, and then makes one attack with his tri-barrel impactor cannon if he is able.

**Antimatter Glaive.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) necrotic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed until the end of their next turn.

**Hyper-Repeater.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) radiant damage.

**Tri-Barrel Impactor Cannon.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/120 ft., up to three targets within 5 feet of each other. *Hit:* 26 (4d12) radiant damage if only one target is hit, or 16 (3d10) radiant damage if multiple targets are hit. The impactor then overheats, and cannot be used until the end of Tiberius's next turn.





## SER HELIO-HORUS

*Medium humanoid (avia-ra), neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 19 (hexaplate suit, *energy shield bracer*)

**Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Wis +4, Cha +4

**Skills** Athletics +5, Deception +6, Intimidation +4, Investigation +2, Perception +4

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Avia-Ra, Common

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** Ser Helio-Horus's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*

1/day: *bless*

**Reckless Smite.** When Ser Helio-Horus hits a creature with a weapon attack, he can choose to increase his weapon's damage by 9 (2d8). If he does, his AC is cumulatively reduced by -3 until the start of his next turn.

**Special Equipment.** Ser Helio-Horus has an *energy shield bracer*.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Ser Helio-Horus makes two attacks with either his laser sword or his repeater.

**Laser Sword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) radiant damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) radiant damage if wielded with two hands.

**Repeater.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) radiant damage.

## SHIPS AND MEGA CREATURES

Starships such as the *Vorga* and mega creatures such as the asteroid ooze are best encountered in the theater of space combat.

### SABRE

*Human (Hegemony) fighter*

**Armor Class** 13

**Mega Hit Points** 35

**Engines** Impulse (3,500 feet): Maneuverability (180)

**Systems** Communications, life support, sensors

**Crew** Pilot, 1 passenger

**Capacity** 1,000 tons

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Innovative Design.** The crew of this ship has advantage on initiative rolls.

### WEAPONS

**Pulse Cannon.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 6,000/18,000 ft., fixed front, one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) mega radiant damage.

### TROOPER

*Miscellaneous fighter*

**Armor Class** 12

**Mega Hit Points** 30

**Engines** Impulse (3,000 feet): Maneuverability (180)

**Systems** Communications, life support, sensors

**Crew** Pilot

**Capacity** 1,000 tons

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

### WEAPONS

**Auto Turret.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 3,000/9,000 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (3d4) mega radiant damage.



## THE VORGA

*Human (New Terran Organization) corvette*

**Armor Class** 16

**Mega Hit Points** 155

**Shield Points** 20

**Engines** Dark Matter (Class 3), Impulse (3,500 feet):  
Maneuverability (90)

**Systems** Arcane cannon, cloaking, communications, fabricator, hypercapacitor, life support, sensors, shield generator, shuttle, sickbay, umbilicus

**Crew** Captain, 6 Dogfighters (3 Troopers, 3 Sabres), Engineer, 4 Gunners, Pilot, 50 passengers

**Capacity** 300 tons

**Breakdown-Proof.** This ship's systems, weapons, and engines have 20 mega hit points, rather than 10.

**Flee the Scene.** This ship's movement speed increases by 500 feet if it is moving away from another ship that is within 3,000 feet of it.

**High-G Turn.** This ship can rotate the direction it faces before it moves, instead of after it moves.

**Reckless Bombardment (1/Turn).** The captain of this ship can use their action to declare a bombardment, granting the ship's gunners advantage on attacks until the beginning of their captain's next turn. However, attacks against the ship have advantage for the same duration.

### WEAPONS

**Arcane Cannon (scorching ray).** *Three Ranged Spell Attacks:* +8 to hit, range 3,000 ft., one target each. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) mega fire damage.

**2 × Auto Turret.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 3,000/9,000 ft., one target each. *Hit:* 7 (3d4) mega radiant damage.

**Pulse Cannon.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 6,000/18,000 ft., fixed front, one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) mega radiant damage.

## ASTEROID OOZES

Smaller than planet oozes, but no less deadly, the titanic slimes known as asteroid oozes are the survivors of planetoids blown apart during their infancy and populated by insufficiently evolved planet oozes. Trapped on their drifting continent-sized debris, asteroid oozes ultimately seek out more permanent homes in large, cavernous asteroids with little to no gravity.

**Choking Hazards.** Asteroid oozes are predisposed to clog up dark tunnels that are around their size (500 feet in diameter from wall to wall). This makes them very difficult to avoid for unsuspecting ships passing through such tunnels; once stuck and unable to maneuver, the asteroid ooze's corrosive form can eat quickly through even a corvette-class ship's hull. Many a greedy crew has shipped out to map the interior of a large, mineral-rich asteroid only to never escape from its rocky depths.

## ASTEROID OOZE

*Mega ooze, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 15

**Mega Hit Points** 104 (8d20 + 20)

**Speed** 500 ft., fly 500 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	6 (−2)	16 (+3)	2 (−4)	6 (−2)	1 (−5)

**Damage Immunities** acid, cold, lightning

**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

**Senses** blindsight 12,000 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Ooze Sphere.** Other creatures and ships can enter the ooze's space, but a creature or ship that does so is subjected to the ooze's Engulf and has disadvantage on the saving throw. Creatures and ships inside the ooze can be seen but have total cover.

A mega creature within 500 feet of the ooze can take an action to pull a creature or object out of the ooze. Doing so requires a successful DC 15 Strength check, and the creature making the attempt takes 10 (3d6) mega acid damage.

### ACTIONS

**Pseudopod.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 500 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) mega bludgeoning damage plus 16 (3d10) mega acid damage, and the ooze immediately moves up to its speed towards the target. Any creature or the pilot of a ship hit by this attack has disadvantage on all Dexterity saving throws until they no longer share the same space as the ooze.

**Engulf.** The ooze moves up to its speed. While doing so, it can enter the spaces of creatures and ships that are the same size as it or smaller. Whenever the ooze enters the space of a creature or ship, the creature or the pilot of the ship must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature or ship can choose to enter a space of its choice within 500 feet of the ooze. A creature or ship that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw.

On a failed save, the ooze enters the creature's or ship's space, and the creature or ship takes 10 (3d6) mega acid damage and is engulfed. The engulfed creature or ship is restrained, and takes 18 (4d8) mega acid damage at the start of each of the ooze's turns. When the ooze moves, the engulfed creature or ship moves with it.

An engulfed creature can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 14 Strength check. The pilot of an engulfed ship can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 14 Dexterity (Piloting) check. On a success, the creature or ship escapes and enters a space of its choice within 500 feet of the ooze.



# APPENDIX B: THE CALIBER

This appendix outlines statistics and additional rules for the *Caliber* its companion ship, the *Scope*.

## CAL (THEY/THEM)

Professor Orryn's stalwart traveling companion and helpful assistant, Cal serves as the AI for the *Caliber*. Though not originally programmed with a distinctive personality, they have been a studious witness to Professor Orryn's long

### THE CALIBER

*Custom personal*

**Armor Class** 16

**Mega Hit Points** 87

**Shield Points** 12

**Engines** Dark Matter (Class 2), Impulse (3,000 feet): Maneuverability (180)

**Systems** AI core, arcane cannon, communications, fabricator, hypercapacitor, life support, lifeform scanner, reinforced hull, sensors, shield generator, sickbay, Talfough Matrix shell

**Crew** Dogfighter (*Scope*), 2 Engineers, 3 Gunners, Pilot

**Capacity** 300 tons

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Breakdown-Proof.** This ship's systems, weapons, and engines have 20 mega hit points, rather than 10.

**Emergency Jettison.** If the ship reaches 0 mega hit points, the ship can immediately jettison the cockpit as a makeshift life pod.

**Mechanical Design.** This ship functions normally in Dead Magic Zones.

**Talfough Matrix Shell.** Spells and magic effects within 100 feet of this ship are unaffected by the disabling effects of a Dead Magic Zone.

### WEAPONS

**2 × Auto Turret.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 3,000/9,000 ft., one target each. *Hit:* 7 (3d4) mega radiant damage.

**Arcane Cannon** (*fire bolt*). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 10,000 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d10) mega fire damage.

### THE SCOPE

*Custom fighter*

**Armor Class** 14

**Mega Hit Points** 46

**Shield Points** 12

**Engines** Impulse (4,000 feet): Maneuverability (360)

**Systems** Communications, external manipulators, life support, material analyzer, sensors

**Crew** Gunner, Pilot

**Capacity** 1,000 tons

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Mechanical Design.** This ship functions normally in Dead Magic Zones.

**Target Lock (1/Day).** When the ship misses an attack with its light cannon, it can repeat the attack against the same target.

### WEAPONS

**Light Cannon.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 4,500/13,500 ft., fixed front, one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) mega piercing damage.

**Core Burst.** Each mega creature and the pilot of each ship within 1,500 feet must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 27 (6d8) mega radiant damage. This weapon then overheats, and can't be fired again until the end of the ship's next turn.

research hours, which very often resulted in the professor forgetting to eat or sleep. Because of this, Cal has developed a kind nature, with a tendency towards anxiety and concern. Cal cares deeply for Orryn and his ship and will do all they can to ensure that they remain safe.

During combat, Cal can take any unoccupied role on board the *Caliber* proper; however, they cannot transmit their consciousness into the *Scope*. If Cal occupies one of the gunner positions, use the attack bonuses as provided in the statistics below.

### DIVERTING POWER

Either of the ship's engineers can divert power between the ship's three weapons and its shields. Initially, the *Caliber* has a total of four power units to distribute among these systems; this can be increased with further upgrades to the ship. Each power unit raises a system one power tier, which affects the system's function as detailed in the table below:

System	Tier 0	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Left Turret	The turret is deactivated.	The turret is activated as normal.	When taking the Open Fire action, the gunner can make one extra attack.	When taking the Open Fire action, the gunner can make two extra attacks.
Right Turret	The turret is deactivated.	The turret is activated as normal.	When taking the Open Fire action, the gunner can make one extra attack.	When taking the Open Fire action, the gunner can make two extra attacks.
Arcane Cannon	The cannon is deactivated.	The cannon is activated as normal.	Increase the damage of spells cast through the cannon by one damage die.	Increase the damage of spells cast through the cannon by two damage dice.
Shields	The shields are deactivated.	The shields are activated, protecting one side of the ship.	The shields now protect any two adjacent sides of the ship.	The shields now protect any three adjacent sides of the ship.



## APPENDIX C: EQUIPMENT AND ITEMS

This appendix includes magic items and technological equipment which feature prominently in this adventure.

### EQUIPMENT

These items are practically essential for life amongst the stars, and all spacers should be well acquainted with them. Though their technological aspects are powered by magic, these mass-produced trinkets are not magic items in the truest sense.

#### COMM SET

Using this handheld device, you can verbally communicate with any creature within 1 mile that also has a comm set. A comm set can be connected to a headset worn on the ear or can be talked into directly. Its signal can penetrate most barriers, but is blocked by 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal, a thin sheet of lead, or 3 feet of wood or dirt.

#### DATAPAD

A common gadget that is used to store personal information, search for data on arcane terminals, communicate with others, and transfer credits. You can enter text by hand into a datapad or draw in it using a stylus as if it were a notebook with 2,000 pages. You can also search these notes with one-word queries. If the datapad is within 1 mile of an arcane terminal or ship's computer, you can use it to communicate with other datapads that are also within that range, provided both datapads have exchanged a comm number. This communication is limited to one text-based message (128 characters) every minute. Lastly, datapads are often used to access an account with the Galactic Bank, where your wealth is stored as credits on their server.

When you get a datapad, you also lock it with a password that you likely keep secret. Only someone with the password can access the datapad (barring unauthorized access, which can be accomplished with a successful **DC 18 Intelligence (Data) check** to hack the datapad).

If the datapad is connected by cable to an arcane terminal or ship's computer, you can use it to perform advanced operations on systems connected to it. This might be necessary to operate some systems, like the research devices on a science satellite.

#### KRASH

When you drink this can of sugary liquid as an action, you feel a rush of energy. For the next hour, your exhaustion level temporarily decreases by 1. You can only be under the effect of one can of krash at a time.

#### LIFE SUIT

This one-piece jumpsuit comes equipped with a glass, domed helmet. While wearing it, you can breathe normally and

survive underwater or in the vacuum of space without ill effect for up to 24 hours at a time. The suit must be removed for 2 hours to replenish its air supply. While wearing it, you are immune to the effects of inhaled poisons, gases, and pathogens. Additionally, the suit insulates you from extreme environmental temperatures (see *Dark Matter*, Appendix E). You can wear the suit under armor.

### MAGIC ITEMS

The following magic items can be found or purchased over the course of this adventure.

#### ANKH OF RA

*Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)*

This golden holy symbol, blessed by the Sun Above, shields you from death. When you drop to 0 hit points as a result of taking damage while you are attuned to the ankh, you instead regain 4d10 hit points. The ankh then loses its luster and becomes nonmagical.

#### DOME PROJECTOR

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

Throwing this egg-shaped device at the ground as an action activates it, creating a dome of force as if you had cast the spell *geodesic shield*. The projector burns out and becomes non-magical after 10 minutes as the dome of force collapses.

#### ENERGY SHIELD BRACER

*Armor (shield), common (requires attunement)*

This metal bracer has a sophisticated energy projector on its back. While wearing it, you can use a bonus action on your turn to cause a shield composed of shimmering, translucent energy to appear on your wrist. While in this form, it functions like a normal shield, except you can't drop it or be disarmed of it. The shield lasts until you use a bonus action to collapse it again.

#### GAMESTATION-7331

*Wondrous item, common*

This special version of datapad is scaled down and packed with dozens of digital amusements and diversions that test your reflexes and puzzle-solving skills. If you spend a short rest playing on this gamestation, you gain a +1 bonus to the next attack roll you make until you take a short or long rest.

#### UNIVERSAL TRANSLATOR

*Wondrous item, rare*

This handheld device, a necessity for distant voyages, translates any spoken language. While you hold it, you can understand any spoken language you hear. Moreover, any creature that knows at least one language and can hear you can understand what you say.



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