

Hivers I



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Hivers I

Set Up:

This adventure is described in 5 scenes. The arrival and final scenes should be played in order, but the intervening scenes can be played in any order. Depending on your players actions. The characters need to be arriving on a commercial starliner, maybe they have been offered work. The first scene takes place on that starliner.

There is very little combat in this adventure unless the characters precipitate it. It is an idea starting adventure for a group to get to know their characters, how their skills work and for the GM it is a chance to try and set a scene either as a foreshadowing for a greater campaign.

Most scenes feature an optional combat encounter. These can be used if your group or just the session needs a bit of action or to give combat centric characters their moment in the spotlight.

Scene I Arrival:

This adventure takes place on a passenger starliner. After jumping, the liner re-enters normal space. Passengers are starting to talk of their plans when the ship docks when distress sirens start to sound. All around the liner space debris can be seen. It is obvious that the wreckage is from many ships. Crew announcements call them to action stations. To the liners starboard the hulk of a freighter looms, it's side blasted open, the ship lifeless. Then from behind the hulk fighter craft appear and open fire on the liner. At this point the blast shielding lowers over the view ports and the passengers are blind.

A pack of 5 fighters are closing with the star liner. Their parent ship had detected

the wreckage and they had been dispatched to investigate. The fighters are not to blame for the devastation. They have just come across it the same as the starliner.

Although the characters are blind, they will hear and feel the battle through the ships infrastructure. On this ship's last cruise, they had lots of trouble with piracy and the crew is well trained and drilled. It does not take them long to pick off the fighters. Of the five four are destroyed and one flees.

For the characters the ship will shudder with impacts and systems will stutter, lights flickering, alarms sounding, bulkheads slamming down and shutting off parts of the ship. Other passengers will be thrown about and minor injuries will be sustained.

After several minutes the battle is over and the blast shielding is lifted over the viewports. The scene is little changed, amongst so much wreckage the remains of the fighters has made little difference.

The starliner appears to be stationary amongst the wreckage, and indeed it is. The captain is scanning looking for any ships that may have survived, disabled. The characters may identify the liners shuttle leave and return on several sorties.

The internal public address system does its best to reassure the passengers that everything is fine and that they will be on their way again very shortly.

The shuttle has managed to retrieve a flight recorder from a wreck. It will soon be known amongst the crew of the liner that this convoy was attacked and destroyed by a massive formation of Hiver ships.

The liner captain is unwilling to move on until he is aware of what he is taking his ship and crew into. This results in the liner remaining static for a day or so while he studies the data from the log.

The situation report reveals that the destination planet has suffered a sudden period of solar activity and crops have been destroyed. The convoy was a relief aid convoy to try and support the planet's population.

A day later, the liner starts its planetary approach. By this time most of the passengers will know about the hiver attack regardless of the information being a 'secret' to be kept to the crew.

The ship will dock at an orbital station and regular shuttle relays will ferry passengers to the planet surface.

Planetfall

Planetside there is an obvious and public military presence. This is ostensibly for controlling the food queues. There is a severe programme of food rationing in place and news of the relief convoy's fate has not gone down well with the population.

People, mainly terrans, are openly starving. They haven't reached the point of leaving the dead on the street, but they are in a bad way and society is breaking down.

The player characters obviously stand out from the general population. Many of the other cruiser passengers were natives returning home, so they have dispersed.

Describe the situation to the players and let them interact or react to the situation.

Within a matter of hours, the characters will be approached by a naval

(starfaring) officer, Bessie Powall offering employment and ticket off world.

Depending on the mix of characters and their motivations you can use the following prompts to improvise.

The job is as follows. The navy has a heavy tug, and pilot available. Having scanned the wreckage there is one transport unaccounted for. An observatory focusing on deep scans thinks they have identified the missing ship and it is a massive freighter, potentially carrying tens of thousands of tons of concentrated protein mass. The ship cannot be raised by communications.

The navy want to send a small team to the freighter, attach tethers to it and tow it back and into orbit. They could send a naval crew but...

- There is growing resentment against off-worlders, eating food they don't deserve.
- Security forces are stretched just maintaining calm in the cities to spare officers for other missions.
- The tug is a civilian orbital ship and the owners are actively opposed to the commandeering of their vessel by the military.
- Using civilians, such as the characters, will get them out of harm's way, appease the tug's owners that the ship is not being commandeered by the military. Retrieving the freighter will provide much needed food stocks until a new relief convoy can arrive.

If the characters reject the mission then the situation on the planet will deteriorate around them, they will be threatened frequently and even the security forces will not be very

sympathetic. They will hear on the news of a band of intrepid heroes that have gone on the mission they were offered, and they will return to a hero's welcome, telling a worrying tale of alien encounters.

If the characters accept the mission, they will be taken into a naval base and introduced to the tug captain Roosevelt Porter.

Notes:

All the challenges in this first scene are role playing. They are a chance for players to get to know their characters. You can improvise situations where characters with first aid skills can encounter minor injuries either on the starliner or following an altercation in a food queue. Technicians can be faced with small technical issues such as failing bulkhead doors that repeatedly open and shut on a loop and passengers cannot get through, while control panels shower sparks all around and the lights flick on and off.

Optional Encounter:

While on the street, a food queue erupts into a riot and the characters are accused of food theft. The characters' lives are not in danger, but the crowd are intent on beating them down and stealing any food or valuables, that can be sold to buy black market food. The characters will be rescued by the security forces if they are in real, mortal danger.

Scene 2 The Mission Begins:

The characters will be ferried to the tug by shuttle. This is a rough and ready, workaday shuttle. The tug vessel will loom into view in a stand-off position away from the orbital station. It is two massive engine nacelles connected by a small living quarters and bridge module. The shuttle docks to the underside of the

tug, an iris valve opens, and ladder descends to allow entry.

The tug is no frills, functional but well maintained. It is also deserted all bar the new arrivals. Captain Porter will assign people to roles on the ship and answer any questions. He will explain in no uncertain terms that although it is his ship, it has been hired by the navy and it is at the characters' disposal, but he will not take it into danger. As far as he is concerned, they are going to haul a freighter back to the orbital station. The route, when to stop, when to go and all that is up to the characters.

The ship comprises a central circular common room for socialising, cooking and downtime. Of this central area there is a semi-circular bridge to the fore and a cluster of double bunked sleeping cubbies to the rear. There is an iris valve in the floor to an airlock and below that the shuttle. In the ceiling of the mess area is a second iris to engineering.

There are two shuttles. The first is the one docked immediately below. There is a second one that can be accessed from engineering via an iris and airlock in the ceiling.

The tug is far from silent. The engine nacelles conduct vibration down from the engines to the hull on both sides. This makes every deck vibrate. The characters should feel the ship come alive as its systems are switched on. The vibration also fills the inside of the ship with a variable background hum and throbbing sound depending on the forces being put through the engines.

No surface of the tug is free from bits of space junk, machinery and tools in various states of repair. Every table and chair is being used to support a stack of spare parts.

The ship will power up and a course has been laid in for the stricken freighter. All the scanner screens will light up showing the distant field of debris from the destroyed convoy.

The characters can attempt to get more information and even computer reconstructions. Successful attempts will identify some of the parts are distinctly alien in their experience. Alien in this sense meaning that they are largely organic rather than metallic in structure.

The tug accelerates slowly as it powers out towards the freighter. Cpt Porter is actually pretty relaxed if the characters are pleasant and wants to know about them and what brings them here. There is little for him to do at this point so is happy to chat. He has been largely unaffected by the famine as he has stayed off planet. The orbital station has hydroponics and waste reprocessing. The food isn't great but there is enough to get by.

As the tug approaches the freighter it can be seen as a massive vessel. As the image grows it becomes apparent that this is actually two vessels. The freighter is there by latched on to the hull is a second ship about half its size like a mechanical spider with its legs wrapped around the outer hull of the freighter and its jaw parts affixed behind the bridge of the freighter.

From the tug no lights can be seen anywhere on either ship. They appear to be dead in space.

A closer examination shows that there are viable shuttle bays on both the freighter and at the rear of the alien looking craft. There also appears to be a small cloud of insect-like aliens floating in space around the spider craft and freighter. They are approximately 2m tall

and bipedal but with ant-like heads and two pairs of wings coming from their thorax.

Optional Encounter:

A gently spinning Insect body will float towards the tug, bumping into and lodging on one of the external cameras. At some point in the scene the body will free itself and may be caught on a different camera. This alien is trying to gain entry to the ship. If anyone does an EVA/Spacewalk, it will use the last of its air to try and attack. It only has air in its muscles for 2 minutes of action.

Notes:

The characters may try to dock with the freighter, Scene 3, the alien ship, scene 4 or bring an alien on board for closer examination, Scene 5. They may also ignore all of these and just try and attach tethers to the freighter, scene 6.

Scene 3 The Freighter:

Docking the shuttle on the freighter is easy. The shuttle bay is open but empty. It is like the crew abandoned ship using the shuttles. There is no atmosphere in the exposed shuttle bay, the doors are open and there is no ship power to close them. The airlock between bay and ship is severely damaged from the inside. As if blasted open. This cannot be closed.

There are no bodies lying around but there are bits of maintenance gear gently spinning in the zero G. A hose is slowly waving in the vacuum as tiny puffs of compressed air escape from a leaking nozzle.

There is no light in the hulk except the head lamps on the characters' vac suits. These beams immediately show the scars of a battle having taken place in these corridors. Brass shell cases hang in space where they were ejected. There is

one of the insect ant beings floating here.

The inside of the ship is very simple. The shuttle bay is at the very rear. The open entrance is part of the long corridor a hundred meters long this has bulkheads every twenty meters that should have seal the ship against loss of pressure but obviously didn't. Halfway between each bulkhead is a cross corridor. These lead to the holds. The holds contain large stainless-steel silos, five meters diameter and twenty meters high and surrounded by complicated stainless-steel tubing and pipework. There are metal ladders leading up and around each silo and they are connected across the tops by an open gantry. In each hold there are six silos arranged as two rows of three. With only a meter or so between each silo. There are eight holds, four on each side of this central spine.

Only the hold at the far end, nearest the bridge is any different. Here the 'jaws' of the spider ship have penetrated the hull of the freighter and have pierced a silo. The 'jaw' is about a meter thick and the end is buried deep into the metal of the silo so it cannot be seen. The jaw is black and appears shiny in the beams of the suit's lights.

The entire ship is in darkness and what can be seen is limited to the thin beams of the vacc suit headlights.

There is no gravity so the characters can pull themselves along and drift. Countless objects gently spin or hang in place.

At the far end of the corridor is a sealed bulkhead door. There is an activation pad beside the door, but it is lifeless.

The characters could attempt to power up the door or force it open. There are plenty of tools with which to do it.

Whenever this central corridor is empty of characters the 'dead' ant creature will drift slightly up towards the bulkhead. It will only move when unobserved. This ant creature is only playing dead and is actually a sentry.

The living quarters and bridge.

If the characters can get this area open, they will find it deserted. Despite the bulkhead having closed there is no atmosphere in here and the artificial gravity is off.

An attempt to search this area will show that the air vents for the circulation system have exploded inwards, into this area leaving the vent grills floating and spinning in place.

There is a myriad of common objects from tea mugs to sneakers hanging in space. The only thing missing are the people.

At some point weapons were fired in here as there is spent brass shell cases spinning in the air and a pair of fluffy dice have had a corner shop off, showing its stuffing poking out.

An examination of the air ducts will show blood stains around and inside them as if something large and bleeding had been dragged into the shafts. Each shaft is 75cm along each side and hexagonal in cross section. A person could easily crawl or float down them but after just a few meters they join a vertical vent.

The ship appears to be abandoned.

Optional Encounter:

The sentry will try and get behind a lone character and rip through their vacc suit

in a sneak rear attack and then play possum again. If that is not possible it will try and pick off and attack any character, it can get on its own.

Notes:

The 'jaws' of the alien ship are not jaws at all. They are best thought of as boarding ramps. They have been thrust into the ship to give the attackers access.

Once in the ship the aliens got control of the ships computer systems and vented all the air.

The were killed and have been dragged to engineering.

The main entrance to engineering has been destroyed. It happened to be where the 'jaws' pierced the ship. It was serviced by the air vents.

If the characters investigate the venting most vents are blocked at some point by large impellers, now stationary that used to feed the air around the ship. These are not nice clean, smooth vents. They are lined with all sorts of tubes, pipes and cabling. It makes them easy to pull yourself along and stop yourself but all this stuff casts shadows and makes it hard to spot identifying marks if the characters are trying not to get lost.

Eventually, the characters will find engineering. There are a dozen bodies here or a variety of races. They are all dead. They appear to have been desiccated and on inspection are covered with many puncture wounds. Each about the size of a finger and as deep. It is here that the alien drained the crew of water.

The single alien sentry has been trailing the characters staying about 50m behind them. It only moves when not observed. If it is encountered again it will continue to play dead. It is only if

someone tries to harm it that it will reveal itself to be alive. It will appear to blink and then try and bite through the persons vacc suit. See the stats for Hiver 1 in the stats section. It would much prefer to be taken aboard the characters ship as a specimen than engaging the characters.

Apart from that one encounter the freighter is a deserted hulk.

The characters can get from the two pierced silos into the alien ship from the freighter if they have discovered that the jaws are actually tubes.

Scene 4 The Hiver Ship:

The shuttle bay on the Hiver ship is a trap. When the Hivers saw the freighter dispatch its shuttles, which were destroyed in the battle, they deduced that this was how the fleshy creatures entered and exited. As the creatures were made of food it made sense to try and attract more. The Hiver Workers set about reconfiguring the ship to build a shuttle bay. The Hiver ship is made of Chitin over a metal framework. The workers can chew up the chitin, softening it and remodel as needed. It is not a fast process, but they had the numbers necessary to do it.

Since the job has been completed the workers have started pupating again to become soldiers.

At the point the characters enter, either through the shuttle bay or through the boarding tubes the whole interior of the Hiver ship will be wall to wall semi translucent cells. Each containing a pulsating fluidy lifeform. These are housed in the abdomen of the spiderlike ship structure. Those at the top appear the most fully formed and hard black bodies can be seen through the seal of the cells.

Once the characters are in the Hiver ship the Shuttle bay will close, very like a fish mouth closing. There will be a very faint whooshing sound that will grow in volume but will not get particularly loud before fading away. The sound is air being released from tanks and filling the ship. Once the sound fades away sensors in the characters vacc suits will tell them that there is a breathable atmosphere outside.

It is breathable but smells disgusting, like the inside of a rotting carcase.

The abdomen of the Hiver ship is a single large space filled with the pupating cells. If the characters entered via the boarding tubes or jaws, they will enter the 'thorax'.

The thorax is a round chamber about ten meters diameter and three meters high. The entire ceiling is ridged with concentric circles of organic looking black and grey chitin. It is slightly pliable to the touch. At the centre of the ceiling is a great black knot of this organic material.

At the front of the chamber are the two boarding tube entrances. One just off centre on each side. At the back of the chamber is a metal door. The frame is the same black and ridged organic looking material.

Anyone studying the ceiling for more than a few minutes will see it ripple very slightly, not very often but once every few minutes.

The door in the back wall opens as soon as anyone approaches and leads into the abdomen. The same is true if characters come from the abdomen and find the door to the 'head'.

The characters have about 10 minutes to explore before two things happen.

The first is that the ceiling in the 'thorax' will convulse and a white, slim covered, slightly soft egg-like body will drop down from the ceiling centre to sit on the floor in the centre of the thorax chamber.

The second is that the cells in the abdomen, at the very top of the structure will suddenly go completely transparent. If the characters witness this they will see ant-like heads staring through the transparent seal. The faces are expressionless but not welcoming. They will start to buzz their wings rhythmically, in short bursts. For now, they are trapped behind the transparent window of their cells.

Optional Encounter:

If the characters have fought one or more Hivers already, they will realise what a threat this hive is. If the characters, try to kill a single pupating Hiver the most mature will burst from their cells. The number of Hivers emerging will be equal to the number of characters. This number will emerge from the top rows of cells every 30 seconds as they break through their glass-like wax seals of their cells. The flood of Hivers will not stop until the characters flee or are slain. There are a total of 55 mature soldiers on this top row. There are 89 cells in the second row, that will mature an hour later. The middle row has 144 cells, then the cells just about the characters heads number 89 and the floor level is another 55. Each row is one hour behind the next until they mature.

Notes:

The Hivers in this adventure are mutants. Normal Hivers have four genders Drone, Worker, Soldier and Queen. These mutants are different. During their life cycle they will pass through all four genders. This gender fluidity works in both directions as the

individual sees the most need. If the colony queen dies another will pupate and become a queen. If the colony is under threat, workers and drones will pupate and become soldiers. In peaceful times the colony will want more workers and drones. It takes six hours to pupate.

The ceiling of the thorax is actually the underside of the queen. It is full of eggs and ready to start laying.

The egg that has been laid, or will, be is intended to be a new queen to be placed in one of the silos in the freighter.

The abdomen is full of the Hivers mutant army. These are about to complete their pupation period.

The dilemma for the characters is that they cannot bring the food to the planet without bringing the Hivers. They cannot leave the food here because the planet needs it.

If the characters, try and kill the pupating Hivers the most mature ones at the top of the abdomen will break out and protect the hive.

Scene 4 The Tethers:

All commercial starships have external hard points where tethers can be attached. The procedure will have the characters use the shuttle to take spools of high-tension cables to the freighter and then 'spacewalk' to attach them to the hard points. They attach the spool to the shuttle and then very gently manoeuvre back to the tug. This way the tug is only connected to the freighter at the very last moment.

The characters will have to carry out this process.

The view the characters will get will show off the enormity of the freighter at over 150m long bow to stern and the

Hiver ship attached to its back. There are also 10 to 20 hiver bodies hanging in space, apparently dead.

These bodies were dispersed intentionally by the hive ship. The Hivers can stay alive almost indefinitely in the vacuum of space while they remain inactive. Once they become active they will use up the oxygen in their muscles quite quickly and die in three or four minutes.

Their plan is that if they come into contact with anything, a shuttle, another ship or a probe they will just latch on and stay attached. If they can get inside a ship, through an open hatch or shuttle bay then they will. By appearing dead there is also the chance that any curious rescuers who come to the freighter may voluntarily bring a Hiver on to their own ship. Once onboard the intention is to find a safe hiding place and pupate into a queen and start laying eggs. The pupation takes six hours and the eggs take 14hrs to hatch. All Hiver eggs hatch into Soldiers initially.

Once the tethers are attached, four need to be connected but they can all be done at once in a single spacewalk, the tug can start to tow the freighter back to the planet.

Any free-floating hivers between the tug and the freighter may be scooped up by the trailing freighter. These can springboard off the freighter and try and make it to the tug only using a moments oxygen for the initial jump.

It is not the Hivers intention to kill the crew. The Hivers want to get to the home world, spread out, pupate into queens and start creating an army of soldier Hivers, but that is an adventure for another day.

If for any reason the characters actively search the tug then they have a chance to find any hidden Hivers. Their preferred hiding places will be behind or even inside tanks and piping in the engineering and technical areas, places full of shadows and alcoves.

The characters are less likely to find any Hivers attached to the outside of the tug.

Optional Encounter:

During the launching of the shuttle and the opening and closing of the shuttle bay a pair of Hivers are 'sucked' into the body of the tug. As soon as the atmosphere is resorted, they will find hiding places. Cpt Porter will spot the creatures on the internal security cameras while the characters are away. He will announce over the comms that there is an alien on board. He will be able to describe one of the Hivers. He has lost sight of the creature. He has spotted one of the two near the shuttle bay.

Scene 5 Returning Home:

This scene is the most open ended. At some point the characters have to return to the orbital station in the tubship and with the freighter in tow.

The most obvious course of action is to inform the authorities that there is a hostile alien presence onboard and the ship will be met by a naval vessel, marines will be shuttled aboard, and the ship thoroughly searched, and any aliens found will be killed.

If and when the navy troops enter the freighter and the alien ship, there will be a full-on battle.

If the characters do not inform the authorities, then the alien ship's presence will soon be noticed when they arrive.

If the characters volunteer to join any assault on the ship, there will be a major battle. The only approach is via the freighters shuttle bay, but by this time the Hivers will have all pupated and the ship will be filled with Hiver soldiers. Only so many marines can be shuttled in at once meaning the superior numbers will be with the Hivers until the marines can get enough numbers onboard for their superior weaponry to take a toll.

At the start of any assault the 'head' of the Hiver ship will detach and blast towards the planet. This is a Hiver landing craft. It will accelerate away and into the planet atmosphere, self-destructing at a high altitude. Their plan is to scatter their eggs over the planet. These are the eggs that they characters may have seen being laid earlier. They are designed to survive the fall to planet surface. Many of course will be destroyed on landing by some will land in water, snowbanks even in trees that slow or soften the impact sufficiently and hide the eggs presence long enough for it to hatch and find shelter.

During the assault some of the Hivers will attempt to cross from the Freighter to the naval ship by using the same long leap technique.

Some Hivers will try and hide inside the silos of protein mass.

Some hivers will try and hide on or in the marines' own shuttle craft to be carried back to the naval base.

The characters do not need to be involved in this battle. If they volunteer, then their help will be accepted. They will even be armed with whatever weapons they need. Although they will have to sign for these weapons and return them afterwards, navies everywhere run on paperwork.

If they are just bystanders, they will see the front of the Hiver ship blast off and see its destruction.

After all the action dies down the authorities will try to hush up the Hiver incident. The public do not need to worry about alien invasions just now. The authorities will also want to parade the characters in front of reporters and present them as heroes for bringing the food freighter in.

The characters will be financially rewarded, you can choose this reward yourself depending on how rich you want your characters to be and how much loss they suffered.

This ends Hivers I. There will be future Hivers instalments coming soon.

NPC Roster

Bessie Powall

(hp 11): AC: 9 [10], HD: 2, Atk: By weapon, Sp: None, Mv: 12, HDE/XP: 2/30.



Tug Captain Roosevelt Porter

(hp 5): AC: 9 [10], HD: 1, Atk: By weapon, Sp: None, Mv: 12, HDE/XP: 1/15.



Hivers

Hiver Worker

A Hiver Worker uses the Insectus Soldier stats

ARMOR CLASS 4 [15]

HIT DICE 2+2

TOTAL HIT BONUS +2

ATTACKS Bite (1d6)

SAVING THROW 17

SPECIAL None

MOVEMENT 15

HDE/XP 2/30

The soldier is the rank and file troop of the Insectus army. They attack in swarms, using their powerful mandibles to bite.

Hiver Soldier

A Hiver Soldier uses the stats for an Insectus, Flier except with an added 1d6 bite attack.

ARMOR CLASS 5 [14]

HIT DICE 3+3

TOTAL HIT BONUS +3

ATTACKS Bite (1d6)

SAVING THROW 16

SPECIAL Drop Attack (3d6), Bite (1d6)

MOVEMENT 15 (flying)

HDE/XP 4/175

Fliers are the Insectus mobile strike force, swooping down on unsuspecting targets and biting them with their razor-sharp mandibles. Creatures that are human-sized or smaller can actually be grabbed by a flier if a successful attack is made against them; the prey is then drawn high into the air and dropped for 3d6 points of damage.

Hiver Drone

Hivers in the Drone gender use an unmodified Insectus Flier stats.

ARMOR CLASS 5 [14]

HIT DICE 3+3

TOTAL HIT BONUS +3

ATTACKS Bite (1d6)

SAVING THROW 16

SPECIAL Drop Attack (3d6)

MOVEMENT 15 (flying)

HDE/XP 4/175

Fliers are the Insectus mobile strike force, swooping down on unsuspecting targets and biting them with their razor-sharp mandibles. Creatures that are human-sized or smaller can actually be grabbed by a flier if a successful attack is made against them; the prey is then drawn high into the air and dropped for 3d6 points of damage.

Hiver Queen

The Hiver Queen is an Insectus, Brain Bug

ARMOR CLASS 4 [15]

HIT DICE 7

TOTAL HIT BONUS +7

ATTACKS Slam (1d6)

SAVING THROW 12

SPECIAL Psychic Static

MOVEMENT 3

HDE/XP 7/800

These massive, slug-like insects are about 60 feet in size or larger. Though capable of lashing out with large pseudopods or biting with their massive maws full of teeth, the true danger in them lies in their remarkable psychic abilities. They are capable of radiating a ***Psychic Static*** that scrambles the minds of sentient creatures that it touches. Anyone within 60 feet of a brain bug must make a ***Saving Throw*** or be rendered unconscious. Those who succeed still suffer a -2 penalty to all ***Attack Rolls*** due to extreme headaches and confusion for 1 ***turn***.