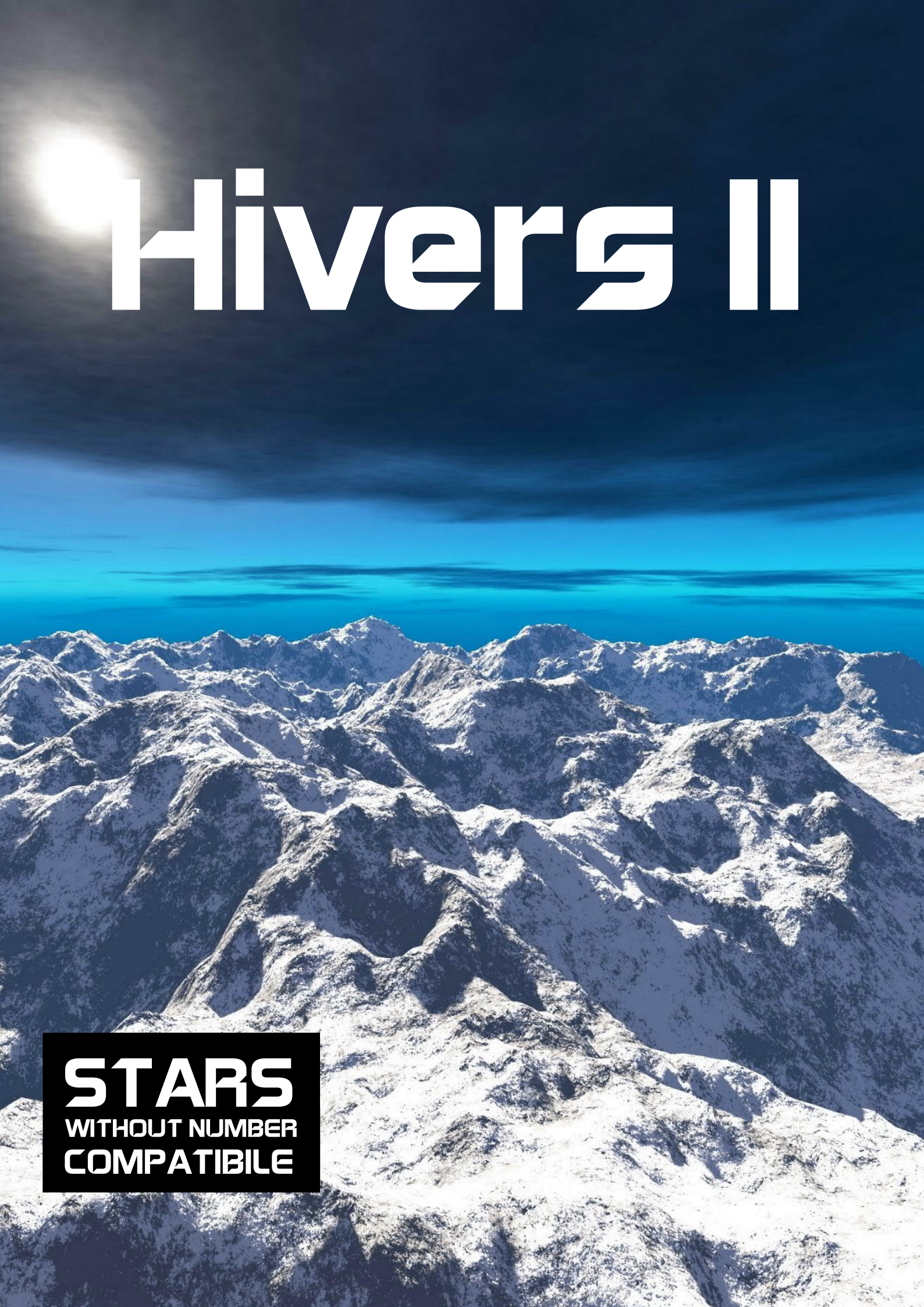




Hivers II

STARS
WITHOUT NUMBER
COMPATIBLE

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Introduction

If this adventure follows on from Hivers I, then you will be familiar with the Hivers and how their ship exploded in the upper atmosphere at the end of the previous episode.

If you have not played Hivers I, here is a synopsis.

What the average person understands is this:

The world upon which you stand has been suffering a global famine. When things got desperate a massive food convoy was arranged to import food. As the convoy approached the planet it was attacked and destroyed. Most people blame pirates for the attack, some spacers say it was aliens. One freighter survived the attack but was crippled and the crew sucked out into the vacuum of space. A rescue mission was sent out and the freighter brought back to the orbital station even as it was brought to the planet's orbital station parts of the ship were breaking up and burning up in the planet's atmosphere. The spacers that rescued the freighter were a team of off-worlders and their freighter's cargo of thousands of tons of protein powder were sorely needed.

As a GM what you need to know is that the convoy was attacked by an intelligent alien species called the Hivers, a mutant insectoid species. The freighter was left as a lure to invite the planet to bring it into orbit. Once there, part of the alien craft that was locked on to the freighter detached and headed to the planet. It exploded in the upper atmosphere scattering Hiver eggs across much of the planet surface.

These events happened eight days ago.

The characters liaison with the authorities was called Lt. Bessie Powall, a naval officer. If this is a continuation, then Lt. Bessie Powall can be used to make contact with the characters again. The navy would prefer this as it keep the circle of people 'in the know' about the aliens smaller.

If this is a new group of characters then anything that brings the characters in contact with the authorities, anything from a speeding ticket or irregular paperwork to gunfights and barroom brawls will put the characters on the authority's radar and bring a visit from Bessie.

Bessie is your plot hook, mentor and enabler for these adventures. She is a competent naval officer and former fighter pilot.

The Hiver series of adventures can be played out on any world that you don't mind inflicting a global famine and an alien invasion upon. In that sense it is setting neutral. It was written with the Spinward Marches in mind.

Scene I: Roof of the World

The team of characters are assembled, if they know Lt. Powall (Bessie) she will welcome them back and impress upon them that they are trying to keep the existence of hostile aliens under wraps and that they need the characters help again.

If the characters are new, she will explain she can make whatever trouble they are in 'just go away' if the characters are willing to do some work for the government. She will then go on and explain that given the ongoing food crisis the government does not want to cause any panic or anxiety. A previous group of off-worlders were instrumental in bring some hostile aliens to the world and now they are trying to get the situation under control.

The current situation is that there have been some disturbing reports coming from a mountainous region. There is a chain of polar research facilities on this world. The northern pole is an extremely mountainous continent and the research stations were constructed to be autonomous and self-sufficient. As such they have been unaffected by the famine. They have used underground hydroponics to grow food and there is an abundance of a particularly hardy mountain capra the stations have long used for milk, cheese and meat.

The most northerly research station is called Polar One. Six days ago, communications were lost with Pole One. Pole One is supported by a secondary research station, imaginatively called Polar Two. Polar Two comprises an airstrip, hangers for a few light fliers and a habitation block. It is two days hike from Pole One but is the last place you can land an aircraft. Comms with Polar Two was lost five days ago. Polar Three went silent 2 days ago. Polar Three is 500 km south of Polar Two. The Communication Officer at Polar Three sent a broadcast before going offline saying they were under attack and described the attackers a giant insect. They filled the sky and had dug under their perimeter fence. At the end of the communications Comms Officer Jarret did not sound particularly alarmed, and the impression given was that the giant insects were still outside, and they felt safe inside the base, more curious than scared. This implies that the communications were cut off from the outside.

High altitude over flights have shown no unusual activity at any of the sites but heat signatures suggest that all three sites are powered down and there are no signs of life.

Lt. Powall's superiors have authorized an off the books mission to investigate. They wish to use off-worlders so there is no trace back to known employees of the government, nor do they want to put civilian lives at risk.



The characters will be provided with a pre-programmed drone. It will know the locations of the two polar stations that can be reach by air and is controlled by voice commands.

The drone is armed, and they will have full access to the weaponry.

The navy will supply all the necessary cold weather gear, suitable for high altitude polar work and any personal weapons the characters may desire.

As soon as they are ready the drone will be prepared, fuels and launched. Where it takes them is down to the characters.

The Drone

The drone is operated by software that can respond to voice or typed commands both locally and via any of its communication channels.

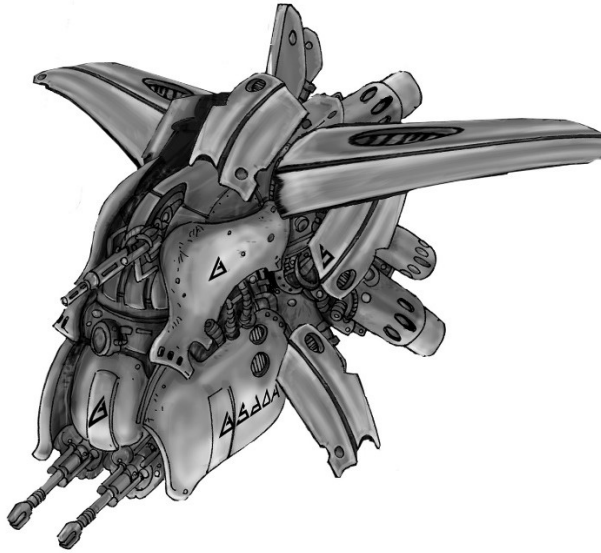
It can home in on an open communication channel, in essence it can come and get you if you stay in contact with it.

Its only preprogrammed destinations are its home military base, where the characters start out from and the two polar stations.

This is military grade hardware and there are no controls for a humanoid pilot just as

there are no ports for connecting external devices.

The only controls the characters can access are two weapons seats, the first is for a turret mounted heavy machine gun and the other for a pair of forward facing heavy recoilless rifles.



Scene 2: Polar Three

Arriving at Polar Three will leave the characters in no doubt that the base was over run in some form of attack!

Polar Three is a tower constructed on a mountain top. The atmosphere is so thin at this altitude that there is little sideways pressure on a tall structure.

Surrounding Polar Three are five landing pads that look like large trampolines connected to the central tower by 'zip lines'.

Incoming freight is connected to a harness and motors drag it up to a store part way up the tower. Passengers can either use walkways to the base of the tower or go up the wires, mainly this is only used for stretchered casualties.

Outside the ring of landing pads is the remains of a security fence.

An aerial survey shows that the fences have been both tunneled under and trampled down.

All over the tower access panels and hatches can be seen to have been ripped open circuitry destroyed. This isn't confined to just the lower levels. The area around the tower is littered broken electronic debris.

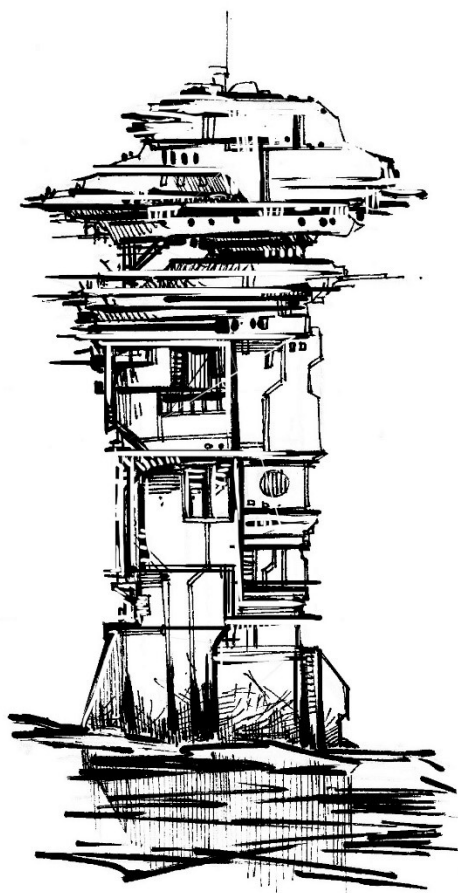
The service doors on the third level where the winch wires enter have been ripped off their hinges and lie on the ground outside. It appears that this was the point of entry.

The characters will have to find a way to get to this their level. Once inside it is immediately apparent that there are still some functioning systems. Lights flicker on and off, exposed electronics short out sending showers of sparks into the air.

There is a central elevator shaft about 3 m in diameter that runs from an engineering basement level to an observatory top level.

The floors are:

- 5th Observatory
- 4th Mess and Living
- 3rd Stores and supplies
- 2nd Living and Sleeping
- 1st Communications
- 1 Engineering and Maintenance



The Observatory

Once this section was used for collecting and analyzing data from sensitive antennae. The main function was to monitor weather patterns and solar activity.

Now there is a large grey, ridged mass that takes up the center of this level. This is a part of the aliens organic tech. It is part machine, but the electronics are replaced by organic synapses of the same type found in an insect brain. What can be seen is the huge chitinous mass. It is at the same temperature as its surroundings but does move by flexing occasionally. When it moves it is breathing through pores in its chitin. The flexing draw air deep within its structure. The mass has grown over, into and through most of the electronics here. Its function is to take control of all the antennae and communications, which were routed through here.

Mess and Living

The area was the scene of intense fighting and destruction. Although there are no bodies there is plenty of dried and congealed blood on the floors, walls and furniture.

The mess and day rooms are situated near the top of the tower as they are naturally warmer than the lower parts. The level is a single circular room with the elevator shaft rising up through the center. In front of the elevator doors are chairs and a long table that seats twelve.

Behind the elevator is a cooking and food prep area and a pair of smaller tables with bar stools used for eating alone.

It appears that much of the kitchen equipment was used as improvised weapons or at the very least in self-defense.

Stores and Supplies

This is the area most likely that the characters will enter (here or Communications on level 1).

The doors were ripped of their hinges and the place has been open to the elements ever since. The screens are black and lifeless, the elevator doors have been peeled back with great claw marks in the thin metal skin of the doors.

Patches on the wall appear to be made of a dull grey ridged material out of keeping with the white plastic and steel construction of the rest of the room.

Most of the area was once neatly stacked storage crates of supplies. The crates are smashed, ripped open and dented beyond recovery.

There is plenty of evidence of violence from people shaped dents in storage lockers to blood sprays up the walls and across the floors.

Living and Sleeping

This is the first encounter with a Hiver for the characters. There is a single Hiver Drone, 2 m tall humanoid insect with an

ant-like head and waspish wings. This Hiver is the last to leave and is making final preparations.

The actual level is made of twelve narrow sleeping chambers each radiating out from a small landing outside the elevator.

The Hiver can be in any one of them, you can play this so that each sleep pod the characters search is empty until they start to get sloppy and then spring the Drone upon them or roll randomly. The pods are well sound insulated so they will either hear the Drone nor the Drone hear the characters unless they are particularly noisy.

The Drone has two missions. The first is to protect the Hiver 'computer' in the observatory and the second is to protect the eggs in the basement. The Drone would rather escape with its life than lose it needlessly. Its wings are pretty useless inside the tower so it will try and get into the elevator, out of a service hatch in the ceiling and up and out of the open front of level 3.

Communications

This room, like the others is a single large room with the central elevator. The communication desk was the main focus but behind the elevator there is a large amount of person exercise equipment including a treadmill and exercise bike. Amongst all the fitness gear is a personal games console and gaming VR headset.

The communications desk is covered in fragments of a transparent yellow tinted wax and shreds of thick fibrous grey material. This is where the century drone, currently in the living and sleeping pods has pupated several times. When it arrived it was a soldier? It then stockpiled all the 'food' and then pupated into a queen, see the basement, and then into its current form, the drone.

Basement

The basement is where the Hivers have concentrated their attention. All twelve of

the base staff are here stuck to the ceiling. They are dead, drained of all bodily fluid and encased in a cocoon of chitinous fibers that bonds them to the ceiling panels.

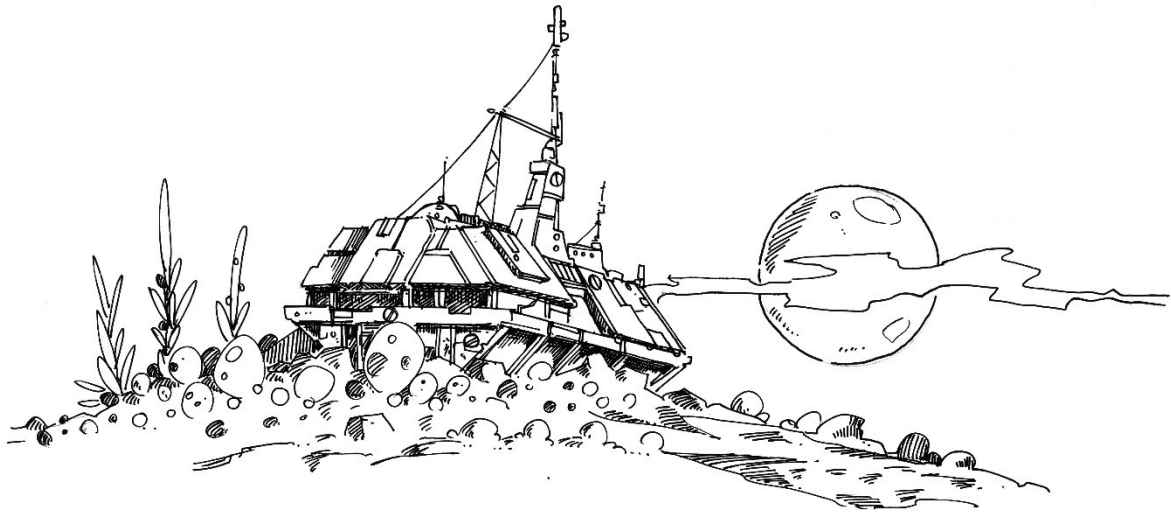
Covering every centimeter of the floor are Hiver eggs. Each look like a grain of rice stood on its end but they are about 60 cm tall and 20 cm diameter. There are in the region of 300 Hiver eggs here. Normally, eggs hatch in 14hrs but the cold in this region has slowed their development. They will hatch into adult workers in another two days.

Concluding Polar Three

The objectives at Polar Three are to show the characters what they are up against. They can deduce the scale of the threat. They can learn how people that the Hivers catch are treated.

They can destroy the eggs and the Hiver computer using the Drone's guns and destroying Polar Three in its entirety or they can try and find another way of killing all the eggs. Alternatively, they can just report their findings to the authorities that will probably take samples and then destroy the rest.

Scene 3: Polar Two



Polar Two is little more than an outpost and landing strip. It is built like a squat, angular box. The crew that have to live here refer to it as 'The Dumpster'.

Set on top of the building are radio communication towers. About 60 m away from the building are three underground fuel dumps.

Due to the thin atmosphere there is little chance of explosion or ignition, but the dumps are covered with the regulation warnings about naked flames and danger of explosion.

From the air there is an obvious track leading out of a mountain pass to the north.

The track leads right up to the front of Polar Two where the tracks are lost in a confusion of trampled snow and smashed equipment.

On the drone's approach there is no communication, all requests for permission to land are ignored.

When the drone lands the evidence of some kind of fight or battle are more obvious. The outside of the building is scarred with bullet marks and there is spent ammunition cases on the ground. More worryingly there are plenty of red smears and splashes in the snow.

Outside the drone it is eerily silent. It is extremely cold but there is no wind and no other natural noise. As the drone powers down it there is no other noise bar the characters own breathing.

Inside Polar Two you have two levels. The ground floor is like a warehouse with boxes of engineering equipment stacked up at one end, pallets of cold weather survival gear against a wall. There is a central desk with a computer terminal, but it has a couple of bullet holes through it, one through the screen and other has ripped half the desk unit to pieces.

The second level only overs one end of the building. It is a mezzanine floor reached by permanently fixed ladders.

This is where the bodies are.

There is a mass of grey ribbed chitin molded to the back wall. It stretches from one wall to the other and floor to ceiling. Through a thin layer of yellow tinted wax, the emaciated looking faces of the crew can be seen. The bodies are deathly white and shriveled.

What Happened Here?

The Hivers came, fed and left the same way they arrived, on foot and in single file. It was too cold for them to fly all the way here. When it is extremely cold it takes a lot of energy to remain airborne in this thin

atmosphere. (at Polar Three the target was an obvious tower with the entrance on an upper level so they Hivers had no choice.)

Polar Two also offered no resources, for a Hiver, to use as a staging post.

In this case they came, they destroyed and then fed to restore the energy they expended and retreated.

Although some Hivers were killed by the defenders Hivers will cannibalize their own dead. This is why there are no Hiver bodies.

There is little or nothing new to learn here. There is plenty of fuel in the tanks and once the generator is restarted power can be restored. This will provide heat and light. All the communications equipment is working, and it can be used for reporting back to the authorities if that is needed.

Any attempt to fly the drone to Polar One causes all sort of alarms to sound. Firstly, the navigation module flashes up warnings that location is unknown or position unstable. If the characters, ask the authorities they will confirm that this close to the planets magnetic pole the GPS does not function, and the satellites used for the drone's control sometimes dip below the polar horizon. That is why Polar One cannot be reached by aircraft.

From this point on the environment becomes a significant threat. The characters can stock up on all the food and emergency equipment that they like. You can throw all sorts of challenges at them depending on the kind of game your players enjoy. Suggestions are massive hungry bears that track the party. Either solitary or bears that hunt in packs. A stampede of large mountainous capra (goats) that the characters startle into flight, all bar a large male that takes the leading character as a dominance challenge.

The terrain is roof of the world mountains and there should be sheer cliffs to climb and crevasses to cross. The route the Hivers took was, no pun intended, a bee line from

Polar One to Polar Two. The advantage the Hivers had is that they can fly for short distances allowing them to get over cracks and crevasses and up and down sheer drops. The characters have to do it the hard way.

You should play the mountains and cold as a pair of forces out to kill the characters because in its own way it is. Force your players to be ingenious and brave to survive but bear in mind that they may have to walk back afterwards!

Scene 4: Polar One

The most important and immediately obvious fact when the characters reach Polar One is that it isn't there anymore. Where the station was is not just a scattering of a few bits of broken equipment and a crater in the ice.

In amongst the debris the characters will find body parts of both Terrans, who were the resident scientists but a lot more Hiver body parts.

Normally, Hivers would cannibalize their fallen swarm members but in this instance their mission was to attack and move on. The explosion here caught them by surprise and there were too many killed to consume them all.

The method was the same as Polar Two. The Hivers approached in single file and on foot. Only when they reached the station did they spread out and attack.

What exploded and the cause will probably remain unknown? The real reason is that the last few survivors had locked themselves into a maintenance pod and rather than awaiting death meekly they attempted to build a jet powered skidoo using gas cylinders and an emergency stretcher. Over 40 Hivers were killed in the explosion.

One of the things that survived is a box, 20cm x 30cm x 50cm and weighing about 5kg. It is clearly marked DANGER EXPLOSIVES. It is secured with a basic

padlock. Inside, each in well padded and insulated compartments are rods of anfo explosive, several meters of detonator cord and a wireless detonator (range 250m). Anfo looks like polystyrene beads and much be compressed to explode. The blocks are about the size and shape of a fat cigar and there are 20 of them in the case. Each rod has a hold down the middle to thread the detonator cord through.

This is here as the crew at Polar One had occasional need to remove rock and stone that they could not remove by manual labor.

It is relatively easy to follow the Hivers track back to where they came from. Their trail leads to the actual magnetic north pole. Polar One was build on the other side of a rocky outcrop because of magnetic interference to communications at the actual pole. The pole is only 50 m in a direct line, but the walk is just over 500m on foot. As there is a vertical cliff face between Polar One and the pole.

There is a chance of an encounter at Polar One. Because of the amount of blood that was spilled here it has attracted scavengers.

If the characters are in good condition and well equipped then the encounter will be with a huge snow bear, the end of the adventure for details.

If the characters are struggling, then the encounter will be with an aggressive Capra.

All the clues point to the Hivers having come from the north pole.

Scene 5: The Hive

The Hivers have built a towering hive over the site of the magnetic pole. The entire structure is grey, almost black and covered with course ribs cause by the weight of the structure pressing down on the chitinous material.

A sensible party of characters will take one look at the hive and all in the military!

Luckily for the characters most of the Hiver soldiers are away.

On the map provided the very top level (4th) is made of two square chambers. These hold a single grey chitinous mass in each. Buried into the mass are parts of local technology. These parts have been scavenged by drones from Polar One, Two and Three. The Hivers have created a fusion between organic Hiver computing and the scavenged computer and communication parts. The Hivers are then using them to locate habitations.

At first, they discovered Polar One by chance. The first Egg was planted at the pole (following the high-altitude explosion at the end of Hivers 1). The scientists at Polar One came to investigate and the first were used as food. When queen had produced enough eggs to produce soldiers Polar One was attacked and that ended in its destruction. The parts of computer and basic communicators were scavenged at this point.

There were clear tracks leading to Polar Two and the Hiver Soldiers marched on Polar Two. Once that had been taken the Hivers had two locations from which they could start to triangulate the positions of other radio sources.

This led to the locating, attack and destruction of Polar Three. The Hiver second Hiver computer was moved to the top story of Polar Three as this gave improved communications range and accuracy.

It should be possible to connect various bits of equipment together to create a dangerous short circuit, a fire and eventually an explosion that will take the top of the tower off.

Below the computer level is the queen and egg storage (3rd).

You can roll randomly to decide which chamber she is in, or better still make it the last chamber searched. The reason being that the other chambers have eggs in

perfectly neat rows completely covering the floors, walls and ceiling. Each looks like an oversized grain of rice 50cm-60cm tall and 20cm diameter. With each chamber searched the eggs will be nearer to completing their maturing. Normally, Hiver eggs take 14hrs to mature but in these cold temperatures it is nearer to 32hrs-48hrs. There are approximately a thousand eggs per chamber.

The Queen will be in the last chamber and will both scream for assistance and attack the characters once she is aware of them.

The Soldiers 'barracks' (2nd) level. The soldier Hivers all have wings so use this entrance to the hive. The back walls of this level are used as a larder and ever missing people from Polar One and Polar Two are molded into the wall with wax and being used as a food source for the soldiers. Hivers have no concept of personal space, so although this level does not seem particularly large it can house hundreds of soldiers. Luckily for the characters most of them are away hunting.

The ground (1st) level is the worker entrance and although it is above the snow level, it can be reached by a ridged ramp. Workers are coming and going constantly bringing blocks of ice, used to cool the hive and as drinking water.

The basement (-1st) is full of pupating Hivers. It is simply normal for Hivers to reconfigure their population to suit their needs. The cold conditions and thin air here mean that raids need to be carried out on foot, they lack the energy to fly long distances.

It takes 6 hours for a Hiver to pupate normally but here the time is doubled as their metabolic processes are working more slowly.

There are more bodies stuck to the walls with wax here.

Explosives?

If characters want to use the explosives from Polar One (See scene 4) to destroy the

alien computer on the top floor all the soldiers from the 2nd level will launch. Unless the characters are particularly skilled in explosives it should be assumed that the top has been blown wide open and you can play a King Kong style scene with the Hiver soldiers swirling around and diving in to attack the characters on the exposed top.

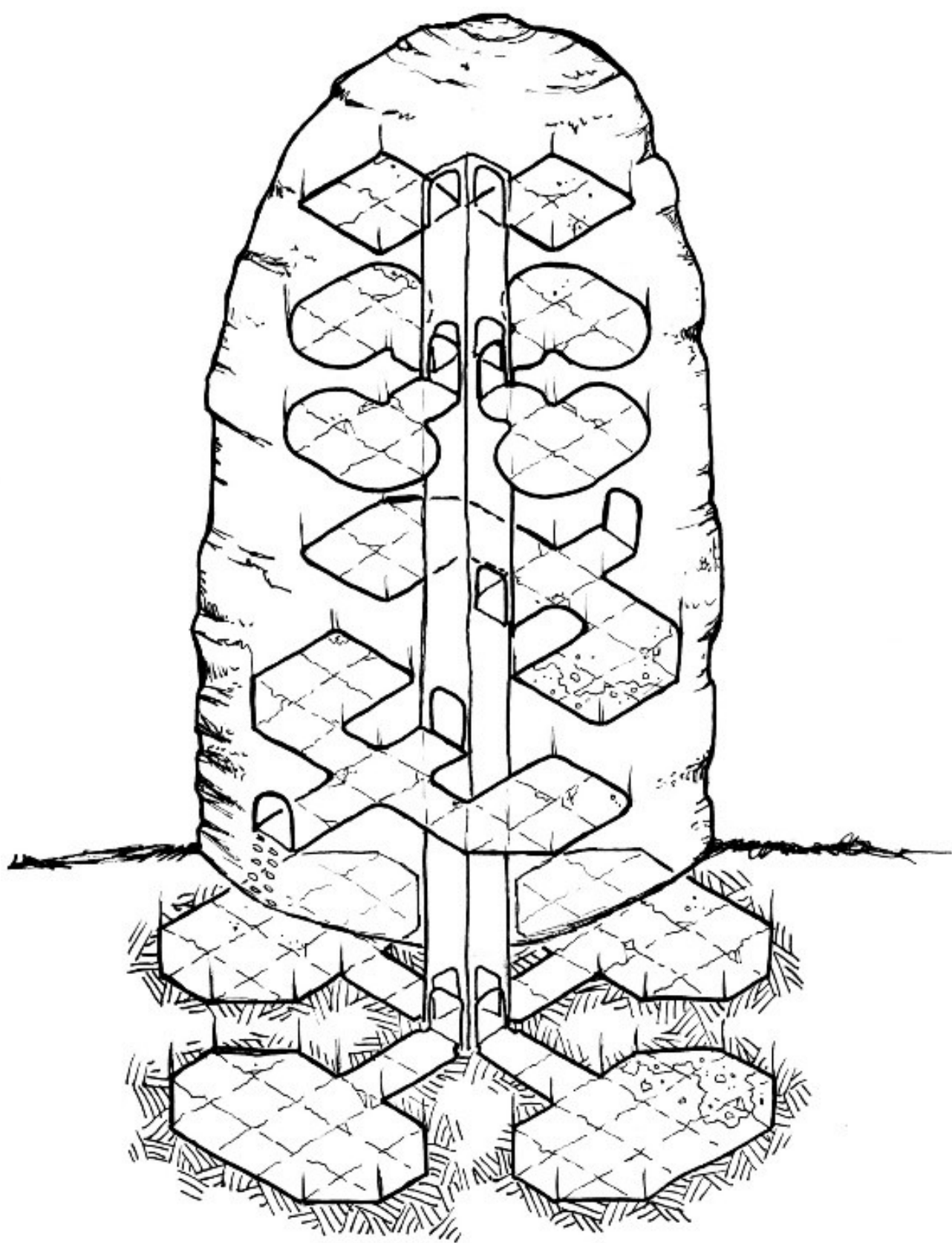
If the characters, try to bring down the entire tower then this is certainly possible but most of the eggs will survive. Furthermore, if even one Hiver survives it will feed on all of the surviving organic matter, pupate into a Queen, lay a hundred or so eggs and then pupate into a worker and start to reconstruct the hive. The material it is made from can be chewed up by a worker until it becomes malleable, shaped and then allowed to harden. More chitin can be produced by a process of scraping their own exoskeletons to get chitinous material and then chewing and molding it.

Hivers call to each other using clicks and vibrations through the fabric of the hive. If any hiver discovers invaders it will click and stamp to attract soldiers to deal with the threat. These should arrive one per round, using the central shaft, every round.

There should be no more than 20 Soldiers in and around the hive at the time the characters arrive.

This battle should be treated as the climactic final battle of the adventure. Once the soldiers and the queen are defeated there is little to threaten the characters.

The do have to survive the journey back to Polar Two if they want to get out of here alive!



NPC Roster

Bessie Powall

Naval Officer

Class and Style Str **Dex** **Con** **Int** **Wis** **Cha** **HP** **Atk.** **Bon.**

Expert (Nimble) 10 (+0) 14 (+1) 12 (+0) 11 (+0) 9 (+0) 7 (-1) 4 +0

Skills: Administer-0, Talk-0,
Connect-0, Perform-0

Focus: Specialist/Sneak
Assassin



Hivers

Hiver Worker

Basic Animal Features: *Insect*,

Body Plan: Humanoid

Skin Novelty: Exoskeleton

Main Weapon: Claws

Size: Calf-sized

Predator: Hunts in kin-group packs

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Large Pack Hunter	2	14	+2	1d6	15m	9	+1	14+

Hiver Soldier

Basic Animal Features: *Insect*,

Body Plan: Humanoid

Limb Novelty: Wings

Skin Novelty: Exoskeleton

Main Weapon: Claws

Size: Calf-sized

Predator: Hunts in kin-group packs

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Large Pack Hunter	2	14	+2	1d6	15m	9	+1	14+

Hiver Drone

Basic Animal Features: *Insect*,

Body Plan: Humanoid

Skin Novelty: Exoskeleton

Main Weapon: Claws

Size: Calf-sized

Predator: Hunts in kin-group packs

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Small Pack Hunter	1	13	+1	1d4	15m	8	+1	15+

Hiver Queen

Basic Animal Features: *Insect*,

Body Plan: Bulbous

Skin Novelty: Exoskeleton

Main Weapon: none

Size: greater than Elephant-sized

Prey: Breeds at tremendous rates

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Terrifying Apex Predator	8	16	-	-	20m	9	+2	11+

Snow Bear

Basic Animal Features: *Mammal*,

Body Plan: Quadruped

Skin Novelty: Thick Thermal Protective Coat/Camouflage

Main Weapon: Claws

Size: Bull-sized

Predator: Hunts as a lone, powerful hunter

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Terrifying Apex Predator	8	16	+8 x 2	1d10 each	20m	9	+2	11+

Capra

Basic Animal Features: *Mammal*,

Body Plan: Quadruped

Skin Novelty: Thick Thermal Protective Coat/Camouflage

Main Weapon: Horns

Size: Calf-sized

Predator: They're vicious if threatened

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Large Aggressive Prey Animal	5	13	+4	1d10	15m	8	+1	12+