

Memory ★ ICON

Echoes of Faded Glory

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Echoes of Faded Glory is an adventure for *Star Trek: The Next Generation Role-Playing Game*. It can also be adapted for an Original Series or Romulan campaign.

Background

In the year 2170, the Romulans' war with Earth was winding down and the Romulans found themselves on the losing end. They were fast running out of ships and with reports that the humans were getting aid from the Vulcans and the Andorians reached their ears, they knew that unless things changed drastically, they wouldn't last a year. They had a tool to make that change. They had an experimental object called a cloaking device.

The first test bed for this cloaking device was the *D'Deridex*, a *Tellus*- class Warbird located in a secluded sector of Romulan space known today as the Arteline Sector. The test of the cloaking device went without a hitch. The device activated and the *D'Deridex* "vanished." The outpouring of energy, however, was so huge that it attracted the attention of a mechanism of ancient manufacture.

Who created it is unknown (perhaps the T'koni or Iconians). It was a cloud programmed to absorb energy, with a preference to the plasmatic energy generated by starships. Included in its programming was a dictate to preserve life. "Preserving life" to the cloud meant absorbing the psyches of the ships' inhabitants.

That's just what happened to the crew of the *D'Deridex*. They have been living for the past two hundred years in a conscious stasis: aware but lacking all sensation.

The cloud settled in the upper atmosphere of Valer VI to hibernate for two hundred years. Now it has awakened and it is hungry. Lucky for the cloud, there is a Federation starship and colony readily available.

The characters will initially encounter the cloud during their investigation of Valer VI. The probes will rouse it from its hibernation and it will look for something to eat: namely the energy output by the starship. After a game of cat and mouse, it will turn its attention to a bigger (and substantially slower) fish: the Valer IV colony.

Now the characters must find a way to stop the march of the creature while at the same time dealing with ghosts from the past, Romulans from the present, and a mystery to the nature of this gaseous beast.

Crib Notes

This adventure has been designed for *Star Trek: The Next Generation Role-Playing Game* in the Arteline Sector. Although the only book necessary is the Core Rules, access to the *Way of D'era* Boxed Set and *A Fragile Peace: The Neutral Zone Campaign Vol. 1* Adventure would be helpful. If any of these are not on hand, any references to the above have substitutions standing ready. Although the adventure is designed for a Federation crew in the Next Generation Era, it can be adapted for other campaigns.

Players running a Romulan campaign described in to the *Way of D'era* Boxed Set could be in a cloaked ship in Federation space. When they gain the attention of the cloud, they find themselves dealing with a creature who is not only not deceived by a cloak but actually attracted by it.

Those playing in the Original Series Era would find this adventure even easier to adapt. In this instance, the cloud has been hibernating for one hundred years instead of two hundred.

PART I: Introduction

"Captain's Log, Stardate 46041.1: The Colony on Valer IV has detected strange energy emissions coming from Valer VI: an inert gas giant. We have agreed to investigate this situation and possibly gain new insight to the lives of these large planets."

Telepathic Prologue

Provide the telepathic character with **Handout #1**. Once he or she is done reading, take the Handout back and tell him or her that he or she wakes up in his or her quarters soaked with sweat.

The character who had the dream described in **Handout #1** might decide to do some research. Before any of this can be done the character will need to make a Culture or History (Romulan) Test at Routine (5) Difficulty. If successful, the character realizes that the uniforms and technology dated back at least two hundred years ago. Details on Romulan history are sketchy at best. A character can take one of three options. If the character fails to specify the time era, increase the difficulties of these options by three.

The character can go through old intelligence reports. Despite the fact that this may raise a few eyebrows in Starfleet Intelligence, this is the best option. The test will be in Espionage (Traffic Analysis) at Moderate (7) Difficulty. It will also require authorization from the Captain. Analysis will take at least an hour.

Another option is to go through old unclassified message traffic. This would require a Computer (Research) Test at Challenging (11) Difficulty. This does not require authorization from the captain, but it does take a great deal of time (at least two hours). Some people might be wondering what he or she is doing while on duty...

Finally, a character might go over her memories of history. This is a History (Romulan) Test made at Difficult (13) Difficulty. On the bright side, this takes no time at all: either she knows it or she doesn't.

Success will indicate that there was a *D'Deridex* that was a platform for the first Romulan experiments in cloaking technology. It was a catastrophic failure. In the unlikely event of a Dramatic Success, the character will know or learn that there are theories that this system was a host to those first experiments.

If (and only if) the character was successful in this test, he or she can try to get a picture of the crewmembers with a successful Computer (Research) Test at Moderate (7) Difficulty. If successful, the character will recognize the faces of the crew to include Commander Kadius and Subcommander Vasauk.

The character can also search by the names of the crewmembers using the same three options above reducing the difficulties by one level.

If successful, he or she will learn that Commander Kadius had a rather spotty political history before entering the naval arena. His distaste for Romulan politics was overshadowed by his skill as a Commander.

All that is said of Subcommander Vasauk was that he served as Commander Kadius' executive officer. There is also a conjecture that the two of them planned on defecting to Vulcan (this is an incorrect speculation from an intelligence report over fifty years ago).

Initial Investigation

Once the characters are within range of Valer VI, the captain will order the Conn to assume standard parking orbit. Although a Routine task, assuming an orbit around a gas giant is slightly more difficult than that of a Class-M world. The Conn will have to make a Shipboard Systems (Flight Control) Test at Routine (5) Difficulty.

With that done, the captain will hand the mission over to the science officer. He or she states that all the ship's facilities are at his or her disposal. The Captain will request an initial analysis of the atmosphere followed by a look at the planet's core. Describe the

planet to the characters as a vast ball roiling in blueness.

Analyzing the atmosphere will require a Shipboard Systems (Sensors) Test at Moderate (8) Difficulty. An analysis of the Core will require the same test at Challenging (10) Difficulty.

Both rolls are modified by the types of sensors your characters' ship has. The bonus can be found under Lateral Sensors. For every additional five points of power allocated to the Lateral Sensors by the Operations Manager, The science Officer gets an additional +1 modifier to his or her roll.

Probes can be of assistance here too. Below is a chart showing the different types of probes and where they could be applicable during the investigation.

Probe Class	Applicability	Bonus
I	Atmosphere	+2
II	Atmosphere	+2
III	Core	+2
IV	Atmosphere	+2
V	Core	+3

Probes are fired from the Tactical station. Firing a probe correctly will be a Shipboard Systems (Tactical) Test made at Routine (5) Difficulty. In the event that the Tactical Officer scores a Dramatic Success (rolling an eleven or more), double the bonus to the Science Officer's Shipboard Systems Test.

Depending on the number of science stations that the character has available to him or her, the character might decide to put together a science team and make the tests combined.

Each sensor sweep, probe preparation, and firing takes five minutes of time.

Successfully scanning the atmosphere of Valer VI will reveal the following information on the planet's atmosphere:

Element/Compound	Percentage
Hydrogen	48.6%
Helium	48.475%
Nitrogen	1.68%
Methane	1%
Oxygen	.115%
Ozone	.115%
Argon	.015%

In the event of a Dramatic Success (fourteen or more), the science officer will note that the Nitrogen, Oxygen, Ozone, and Argon seems to be concentrated in an approximately 1.5 cubic kilometer area in the upper atmosphere along the planet's equator.

Whether the science officer scored a dramatic success or not, he might note that any oxygen in the atmosphere should be in the form of water. Oxygen is far too reactive of an element to be isolated. This is realized in a Physical Science (Chemistry) Test at Routine (4) difficulty.

A successful analysis of the planet's core will reveal it to be composed of liquid Hydrogen and Helium with trace amounts of solid methane "islands," all tightly compressed. If the character makes a successful Planetary Science (Planetology) or Physical Science (Chemistry) Test at Routine (4) Difficulty, they will note that although the core is non-ignited, the planet is putting out three times the energy it should; mostly in long-wave radiation. Analyzing the data will take five minutes of time.

Twenty minutes into their work, have the tactical officer make a Shipboard Systems (Tactical) Test at Moderate (7) Difficulty. If successful, he or she will learn that the ship was bathed in an energy pulse lasting less than a nanosecond. In the event of a

dramatic success (thirteen or more), the character will pin point the source coming from the gas giant below from the upper atmosphere along the equator. If they previously scored a dramatic success on the sensor sweep of the atmosphere, they will learn that it came from the same area where the high concentration Nitrogen, Oxygen, Ozone, and Argon is located.

Have anyone running a comparison of the energy burst make a Physical Science (Physics) Test at Routine (4) Difficulty. A success will indicate that the energy burst was not dissimilar to the energy emitted by their sensors. A character making a successful Systems Engineering (Sensors) Test at Routine (4) Difficulty will note that at the Federation's current level of technology such a short burst would give no real information. In the event of a Dramatic Success (ten or more), the character will conclude that the only thing that could possibly be gained is the existence of a type of energy or matter. Even then, it would only determine a grossly general direction.

If any of this is reported to the captain, He will order the conn to break orbit but keep the planet within range of lateral sensors. He will order the Communications or Tactical Officer to hail the planet (*"Saying hello is part of our job..."*). Neither of these requires a roll.

In response will be a second energy burst. Pinpointing the source of the burst will require another Shipboard Systems (Tactical or Sensors) at Challenging (10) Difficulty. If the character attempts to continue scanning for subsequent bursts, have him or her make a Shipboard Systems (Tactical or Sensors) Test at Moderate (7) Difficulty. If successful the character will again pinpoint the exact source: this time in the ship (see Ghost in the Machine).

If the tactical officer doesn't order a security team to that point, the captain certainly will. Regardless, the Captain also orders the Tactical Officer to run a Level Five Diagnostic on his or her systems. The diagnostic will reveal that nothing is wrong with the Tactical Station or Sensors.

If a Betazoid (or any other long-range telepath) is present on the bridge, the Captain will ask him or her to telepathically scan the area, filtering out the crew. This is a Receptive Telepathy or Empathy Test made at Moderate (6) Difficulty. If successful, the character will detect a profound sense of misery around him or her including on the bridge! If the character scored a Dramatic Success, the character will notice that the misery has a particularly Romulan flavor to it.

Whether the character was successful or not, a profound chill will overcome the bridge. Unlike the encounter in **Ghost in the Machine**, there will be no visible specters. Seeing these specters will require the characters to put the bridge on the main viewer. Furthermore, the main viewer will have to be altered to show only the narrowband wavelengths of blue in the invisible spectrum. This is reflected in an Extended Test using the Systems Engineering (Sensors) skill. The character must reach a total of twelve before getting the focus right.

If a character pulls this off, they will see not only distorted views of them but of the specters: over ten humanoid shapes lacking in definition surrounded by an eerie yellow nimbus. Have each character roll his or her Intellect augmented by Perception. Whoever scores the highest will notice that two of the shapes are approaching the Captain: one from the front and one from behind! If the character intervenes or even shouts a warning, the figures will again vanish. If the beings touch the Captain, he or she will take 1D6 points of damage as he or she is overwhelmed by feelings of depression, pain, and a desire for release as described in **Sympathetic Misery**. Resistance, in this instance, is determined by Presence augmented by Willpower vice Fitness and Vitality. Like the section below, the captain may begin to babble in Romulan.

Ghost in the Machine

The first character to leave the bridge (the doctor going to sickbay or the chief engineer to main engineering, perhaps) will become subject to a haunting.

At first, the air will become very chilly. Following that the character will see a large Romulan staring at him or her. If the character makes a successful Culture (Romulan) Test at Routine (5) difficulty, he or she will note that the uniform worn by the Romulan dates back at least two hundred years ago.

The Romulan will seem to speak but no noise will come from his lips. Following that he will beckon the character to come closer.

Following that, his eyebrows will furrow and he will vanish. If a security team was dispatched to the area, they will appear just as the ghost vanishes (see **Initial Investigation**).

PART II: Conflict

After Image

Characters choosing analyze the data accumulated during any of the phantasmal visitations should make a Physical Sciences (Physics) Test at Moderate (7) difficulty. If successful, he or she will conclude that the ghosts seem to exist in pulses of unstable “proto-energy.” At times they have some properties of energy and matter; sometimes neither.

Comparing the readings from the cloud after the initial attack to the past readings taken from the ghostly visitation will reveal some similarity in the readings. The same multiphasic energy will be detected. A prolonged scan of the cloud will reveal that the energy accumulated from the cloud’s attack on the ship (if such a thing did occur) is dissipating. Where the energy is going is inconclusive. Once thing for certain is that the energy is not being emanated or dissipated in known space.

A Physical Science (Physics) Test made at Routine (5) difficulty could lead to the theory that the energy does to some other dimension. A Systems Engineering (Sensors) Test at the same difficulty would confirm that by the difficulty that the sensors were having in detecting the cloud. An observant character making a successful Material Engineering (Mechanics) Test at Moderate (7) Difficulty will note that the cloud is exhibiting some mechanical behavior. A character making a Life Science (Biology) Test at the same difficulty will note that the cloud is exhibiting some biological behavior. A character making a dramatic success in either of these two tests will come to the revelation that this cloud is a mechanism so advanced, that it has evolved a limited intelligence of its own.

The Planet Lives!

After the visitation, the Science officer will note that there seems to be unusual activity on the planet below. A successful Shipboard Systems (Sensors) Test made at Moderate (7) difficulty will reveal that some of the gasses from the planet below are congealing and leaving the atmosphere. Getting an exact analysis of the gaseous composition requires the same test made at Challenging (10) difficulty. If the character scored a dramatic success during his initial scans of the planet detailed in Initial Investigation, reduce the difficulty to Moderate (7). If successful, the character will learn that the cloud is composed primarily of Nitrogen, Oxygen, Ozone, and Argon. If the character makes a successful Systems Engineering (Sensors) or Physical Science (Physics or Chemistry) at Moderate (7) Difficulty, he or she will realize that the cloud is absorbing the energy emitted for the sensor scans.

If the science officer was successful, in any of the above tests, the Tactical Officer will realize that the cloud is heading directly to the ship with a successful Shipboard Systems (Tactical) Test at Routine (5) Difficulty. If the Science Officer made no such scans or failed at them, raise the Tactical Officer’s Difficulty to Moderate (8). The cloud will reach the ship in just over a minute.

The characters will have an opportunity to do something before the cloud arrives. Do they let it reach the ship? Do they try to evade? Do they attack? Do they do any combination of the above?

Evading the cloud will require a Shipboard Systems (Flight Control) Test at Challenging (10) Difficulty. If they conducted a scan after they detected the cloud moving toward them, raise the difficulty number to 11. If they fired phasers at it, the Difficulty will be Difficult (12). If they fired photon torpedoes at it, reduce the difficulty number by one for every torpedo fired (a clue!). If the players don’t realize this, have the Tactical Officer make a Shipboard Systems (Weapons) Test at Challenging (9) Difficulty. If he or she makes this test, he or she will note that tidbit.

If the cloud reaches the ship, it will absorb the shields in the first round! After that it begins working on the saucer section. Characters making a successful Shipboard Systems (Tactical or Operations) Test at Moderate (8) Difficulty will note that cloud seems to stay away from both the sections carrying photon torpedoes and the star drive section entirely. Before he or she can share this observation, however, every character and nonplayer character in the saucer section will take 7 +1D6 points of damage as what appears to be St. Elmo’s Fire streaks through the ship. Damage can be avoided entirely with a successful Coordination

Test made at Moderate (7) Difficulty augmented by Reaction. This continues until the Conn gets the ship away from the cloud (see above). Psionic characters have an additional problem detailed in **Sympathetic Misery** below.

The cloud will continue to “attack” the ship absorbing any energy that it emits. If the ship’s energy output dips to 20 or below, the cloud will back off considering the ship to have “vanished.” This could be a way to get the characters out of a bad situation if the Flight Control Officer just can’t get the ship away. The captain (if he or she is a non-player character) might in fact order that all systems be shut down. An enterprising player may arrive at the same conclusion. Shutting everything down in the midst of the chaos will require a Shipboard Systems (Operations or Command) Test be made at Moderate (8) Difficulty.

Once the ship is free of the cloud (by stealth, smarts, or subversion), repairs will probably have to be made. Assessing the damage will require a Material Engineering (Structural/Space frame) Test at Routine (5) Difficulty. In the event that a character scores a dramatic success, he or she will note that both the warp engines and the torpedo room remained untouched (hint, hint).

Whatever the characters do to effect repairs and figure a way out of this mess, it is important that the ship not use more than twenty points of energy. If the characters use more than that proscribed twenty points of energy, give them a warning. Perhaps the cloud starts to move toward the characters’ ship. If they don’t get the hint, zap them again.

The ship’s shield generators and phaser array will be blown after the initial attack. Repairing them will require an extended Systems Engineering (Shields) Test at Moderate (7) Difficulty. Total up the successful numbers rolled. The total equals the maximum amount of strength the shields can emit. Once the total reaches the actual maximum, the shields are repaired completely. Each turn represents five minutes.

The same applies to the phaser array.

If characters use part of their scant energy resources to track the cloud, have the tactical officer make a Shipboard Systems (Tactical) or Computer (Modeling) Test at Moderate (7) Difficulty. If successful, he or she will note that the cloud is on a slow but steady course to Valer IV tacking by way of solar winds. It will reach the planet in ten hours and forty-five minutes. A World Knowledge (Valer IV) Test made at Routine (3) Difficulty will tell the characters that there is a joint Federation-Haralian Colony on that world. Specific information on the planet is provided in **Handout #2** at the players’ request.

Valer IV brings up several questions. What threat is it to the colony? Do they have a right to destroy the cloud? Is the cloud a living entity? What is the connection between the cloud and the “ghosts”?

A character checking over the past movements of the creature should make a Physical Science (Mathematics) Test at Moderate (7) Difficulty will note that its movements follow a pattern with some randomness involved. If the character makes a Life Science (Biology) Test at the same difficulty, he or she will note that the patterns indicate some rudimentary intelligence: it reacts to everything on a simple set of “instructions” much like an Earth insect. Someone following this logic might determine that it may be possible to lead the cloud away from the colony with the proper bait.

It will take some level of prodding to get the cloud’s attention. Phasers alone will not do the trick. A character conducting a repeat performance of a Life Science (Biology) Test might liken the cloud to a shark focusing in on the slower prey. One way to slow its advance on the colony is to have the colony shut down operations on the planet below, cutting all but the most essential power grids. Getting the planet to agree with this is no mean task. A character making an Administration (Logistics Test at Moderate (8) Difficulty will note that such an operation will take 3 hours. A character making a Culture (Haralian) Test at Moderate (7) Difficulty will note that due to the bureaucratic structure of the colony’s government, it will probably take a lot longer than that.

The colony Governor, a Haralian named Stellis, can be reached immediately. Convincing him to do this will require the character to brief the Governor on the entire situation from start to finish followed by a Contested Persuasion (Debate) Test augmented by the character’s Empathy. If successful, the colony will have all power shut off in six hours. If a Dramatic Success is scored, the colony will be shut down in three hours. A failure means that Stellis refuses to believe the crew. A dramatic failure means that the Governor flies into an outright panic (and thus the colony) calling for an immediate evacuation and demanding that the crew’s ship assist in this effort. Statistics for Governor Stellis can be found on page 24 of *A Fragile Peace ? The Neutral Zone Campaign Vol. 1*. If you do not have that adventure, use the Haralian template found on page 209 of the Core Rules. Give him a persuasion skill

of two.

Sympathetic Misery

If the cloud reaches the ship, psionic characters will take additional 1d6 points of damage from a crush of psychic emanations of pain, depression, and a desire for release coming from a confusion jumble of over one thousand minds. The damage can be avoided with a successful Mind Shield Test at Moderate (8) Difficulty. Resistance, as depicted in **Initial Investigation**, is determined by Presence augmented by Willpower vice Fitness and Vitality.

The character, whether damaged or not, will experience the two tiered psyche of the cloud. Analyzing this will require two tests conducted in one action. Analyzing the first tier psyche will require an Empathy or Telepathy Test at Moderate (6) Difficulty. The second tier will require the same test at Moderate (8) difficulty. If the character attempts to analyze both tiers, add a +1 Difficulty to both tests. If the character concentrates only on one, he or she will not have a chance at the other.

A successful analysis of the first tier will dictate that the cloud has two parameters to its programming:

- Consume energy
- Preserve life

If the character scored a dramatic success he or she will realize that “preserving life” to the cloud means absorbing the psyches of life forms that it encounters.

An analysis of the second tier indicates that there are hundred of minds preserved by the cloud. All of them are nearly insane with despair. All of them wish for release. A dramatic success will indicate that the psyches are Romulan.

Those taking damage will also find words that are not theirs coming from their mouths. A character that speaks Romulan will understand them as they say, “*you can end this...*” with a successful Language Test at Moderate (7) Difficulty due to the archaic dialect.

The crew might consider contacting the Romulan Empire concerning this incident. A character making a Law (Starfleet Regulations Test at Routine (4) Difficulty will note that this would be highly irregular, requiring that this would require the characters to go through proper diplomatic channels. An Administration (Starfleet) Test at the same difficulty will tell them that this could take days if not weeks.

Contacting the Romulans will require a Shipboard Systems (Communication) Test at Routine (5) difficulty to get through the channels. Commander Modex of the D’vairin will intercept the call. He will refuse to forward the hail anywhere else. If the characters are going to convince any Romulan, it will have to be him. The characters must describe the situation to him completely. This is followed by a Opposed Persuasion (Oratory) Test. Commander Modex will simply roll his Presence. Regardless, a Receptive Empathy Test made at Challenging (9) Difficulty will confirm that the Commander knows *something*.

In the event of a failure, Commander Modex will confess ignorance to any past Romulan activities in the Valer System. In the event of a Dramatic Failure (scoring six points below Commander Modex), he will angrily denounce “this Federation propaganda” and cut off all communication.

In the event that the character scores a success, he will state that he knows nothing of the past Romulan activities in that sector. He will, however, offer to bring his ship to the system (with the Captain’s permission) and assist in any way he can. If the captain has any semblance of higher sentience, he or she will politely decline.

A dramatic success means that the Commander was moved by their words. He will confirm that there was a Romulan “scientific study” that occurred five years ago but will refuse to go into any detail.

Statistics for Commander Modex can be found on pages 23-24 of *A Fragile Peace ? The Neutral Zone Campaign Vol. 1*. If you do

not have that adventure, use the Romulan Template from page 270 of the Core Rulebook.

PART III: Climax

Planet Bound

As the planet continues its march toward Valer IV, the GM needs to take into account whether the colony's government "shut down." If so, the cloud will halt once most of the planet's power is shut down and take a half hour to readjust its bearing. Its next target will be the corona of the red main sequence star that Valer IV orbits. This change in direction can be noted with a Shipboard Systems (Tactical) Test at Moderate (8) Difficulty. To estimate the time required for the cloud to reach the corona, add ten hours to the time remaining for the cloud to reach Valer IV.

The data on the cloud's consumption rate can be described charitably as limited. A character observing this can make a Space Science (Astrophysics) Test at Challenging (9) Difficulty. If successful, the character will note that the cloud can sustain itself for centuries off the corona. This is only a stopgap measure. The minute the colony powers up again, the cloud will return on its trajectory for the planet. Likewise, if the characters' ship closes in on the cloud closer to it than the cloud is to the sun, it will turn to the ship for a snack.

Theoretically, this will provide ample time for the characters to evacuate the colony. This will make both governments very unhappy, but for the time being, it is the call of the crew. A Strategic Operations (Arteline Sector) Test at Moderate (8) Difficulty will indicate to the character that this action could give the Romulans some ground. A character making a Social Science Test with the specialization of his or her choice at Challenging (9) Difficulty will note that the ramifications of uprooting 2.4 billion colonists could be severe.

In the event that the characters accepted Commander Modex's offer of help, a *D'deridex* class Warbird will decloak. Commander Modex will state that he has arrived to provide what assistance he may. The bottom line is that the Captain invited him in so he is in no way in violation of the Treaty of Algeron. A character making a Diplomacy (Intergalactic Law) at Routine (5) Difficulty will realize it. Any character making a Culture (Romulan) Test at the same difficulty will get a nagging feeling that they've made a big mistake.

He is willing to discuss the situation by way of viewscreen or on the characters' chip but not on the *D'vairin*. If he discusses the situation on the characters' ship, he will bring his "diplomatic staff" with him consisting of six Romulan soldiers armed with disruptors. Use the Romulan Template from page 270 of the Core Rulebook giving them the following skills:

- Dodge 2
- Energy Weapon (Disruptor) 2 (3)
- Unarmed Combat (Romulan Navy Martial Arts) 2 (3)

Romulan Navy Martial Arts are described on pages 28-29 in the *Romulan Characters* Book in *The Way of D'era* boxed set. If you do not have this, replace Naval Martial Arts with Starfleet Martial Arts. Commander Modex has no plans to take the characters' ship. He is just taking precautions.

Self Analysis

The character that had contact in Sympathetic Misery might gain some insight from the psyches he or she encountered in **Sympathetic Misery**. This insight may be gained by way of meditation or by describing the experiences to a ship's counselor. This is reflected in a Medical Science (Psychology) Test at Challenging (10) difficulty. If the character or counselor is successful, the experiences can be likened to the emotions of a terminally ill patient in the last stages of dying. The only difference is that the dying has been going on for the past 100 years.

Some player having seen *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* might decide to go EVA and make contact with the cloud. This is a bad idea but let the player find out for himself. The first round of contact with the cloud will destroy the Environment Suit exposing the

character to damage from the vacuum described on page 131 of the core rulebook. The second round results in the character's psyche being absorbed by the cloud.

An emergency transport, due to the cloud's propensity for absorbing damage is dicey at best. It will require a Shipboard Systems (Transporter) Test at Challenging (10) Difficulty to pull this off; otherwise the character is consigned to oblivion.

The Poison Pill

The cloud's weakness is antimatter. A sufficient amount of antimatter could conceivably destroy it if the cloud tried ingesting it. Back in **The Planet Lives!** the characters might have noticed that star drive section not the torpedo room was attacked by the creature. If they haven't, have them make a Material Engineering (Structural/Space Frame) Test at Moderate (8) Difficulty. Reduce the difficulty to Routine (5) if they previously fired photon torpedoes at it. If successful they get this fact. Let the players try to figure out what those areas have in common. If they have, have them make the same test at the same difficulty. A success will indicate that the key is antimatter.

Character making a Combined Shipboard Systems (Weapons) and Physical Science (Physics) Tests at Challenging (10) Difficulty can estimate that the antimatter contained in two hundred photon torpedoes exploded in the belly of the creature should be sufficient. A Planetary Science (Ecology) Test made at the same difficulty will forewarn the character that the explosion must be at least 270 thousand kilometers away from the planet or it could have adverse affects on the environment. That's about one hour away from the planet.

If the *D'vairin* is present, they will be of little help other than to pick up survivors if things go wrong. Although he will refuse to go into detail, he will note that Romulan weaponry is primarily plasma based.

Unfortunately, the cloud is not so cooperative to ingest the torpedoes for the characters. It knows antimatter when it senses it and stays away from it on principle. The trick will be to hide it in something that the cloud finds much to its liking: namely energy.

While the players will undoubtedly come up with some workable plan, what follows is a "textbook" solution to the problem. Have the crew manually align the torpedoes close to one another in a tight bunch. After that, the ship will vent plasma surrounding the torpedoes. A Combined Systems Engineering (Weapons) and Physical Science (Physics) at Challenging (10) Difficulty will be required to correctly gage the closest the plasma can come to the torpedoes without setting them off. Whether the characters succeeded in the test or not, some formula will be arrived at. The GM should keep track of this.

Venting the plasma is reflected in a Shipboard Systems (Flight Control) Test at the same difficulty. Again, the GM needs to log the result.

Once the two results are logged, the GM needs to compare them on the two tables below. The numbers reflect the amount of power that is drained from the ship. Add the two results together to get the total power drain. If the total is greater than the entire energy output of the ship, they will have to "pause" and start again one the warp core gets a chance to catch up. Depending how close the cloud is to the characters; this could be anything from an inconvenience to an actual problem.

Systems Engineering (Weapons)/ Physical Science (Physics)		Shipboard Systems (Flight Control)	
Dramatic Failure	KA-BOOM	Dramatic Failure	KA-BOOM
Failure	80	Failure	40
Success	40	Success	20
Dramatic Success	20	Dramatic Success	10

"Ka-boom" is pretty self-explanatory. The ship will take 119 points of damage. This could mean the destruction of the ship. You pay your money and you take your chances. Depending how much power is left over, two or three actions can occur before the explosion overtakes the ship.

No matter what, the Operations Manager needs to get involved with power allocation and he or she needs to do it quickly. To

allocate the correct amount of energy to propulsion and shields, the character needs to make a Shipboard Systems (Operations) Test at Challenging (10) Difficulty.

Getting the shields up require with same test and difficulty with the specialization of Tactical. The same applies to propulsion with the specialty being in flight control. The shields would absorb what damage they can. If a character successfully got the ship into warp before the explosion overtakes the ship, then it suffers no damage whatsoever (except burning out a warp coil or two).

Pending the correct creation of the “poison pill”, the next question will be to placement. If the colony was “shut down”, the concentrated plasma is much more attractive to the cloud vice the corona of the star. It will move directly toward the ejected plasma.

On the other hand, if the colony is still active it will continue toward the colony. The characters will have to place the “plasma-torpedo surprise” directly along the cloud’s trajectory path.

Once the cloud has absorbed the antimatter, the characters will need to get their ship out of the way *tout de suite* or suffer damage as if their initial placement got a “ka-boom” result described above. The cloud absorbs the bulk of the damage so the ship risks only 60 points of damage .

PART IV: Conclusion

Valer IV

If the characters managed to destroy the cloud before it was within 270 thousand kilometers of the colony, the characters are hailed as heroes. If it was done in closer proximity, the atmosphere will be irradiated and weather patters on the planet will be chaotic for the next thirty years. Although a solution is possible, it is out of the context of this adventure leaving the GM to create an adventure of his own.

Depending how things went, the characters might have a great deal of injuries to heal and repairs to conduct. This can be carried out at the nearest starbase. If they are incapable of movement, Starfleet will send another vessel to give the characters a tow.

Of course, if the characters foolishly accepted Commander Modex’s offer of help, he will decide to stay around for awhile citing that further investigation needs to be conducted into the past incident. Unless the characters attack the *D’vairin*, it is out of their hands and under the purview of Starfleet’s Diplomatic Corp. The characters will be recalled to Starbase 39-Sierra and have a lot of explaining to do...

A Thank You from Afar

Once the cloud is destroyed, a phantasm of the original Romulan crew will manifest on the ship. Commander Kadius will silently salute the ship’s captain and they will fade to the Great Beyond.

Afterword

Each player will receive at least one experience point for participation, two if he or she role-played the character well. Award an additional experience point for saving the planet but subtract one if they got the (breathing) Romulans involved.

Below is a chart showing recommended Renown Awards.

Action	Renown
Attacking the cloud at first sight before making any attempt to contact it	Aggression +1
	Openness –1

Attempting to make peaceful contact with the cloud	Aggression -1
Contacting the Romulans without going through proper channels	Openness +1 Discipline -1
Inviting the Romulans to enter the system	Initiative +1 Discipline -4*
Successfully convincing Governor Stellis to shut down operations on Valer IV	Openness +1 Skill +1
Valer IV becomes the cloud's lunch	Skill -3
Letting the cloud reach the sun's corona and "quietly" evacuating the planet	Skill -2
Saving the colony and destroying the cloud	Skill +2
Saving the colony and destroying the cloud with the ship undamaged**	Skill +3

* *This is cumulative with the award before it.*

** *Meaning ship structure, not mere damage to the shields.*

If any character gets a skill award of +4 or more, he or she will get a Commendation (Grankite Order of Tactics).

Handout #1

Today, the eyes of the Proconsul are on your ship.

You are proud of this *Tellus*-class *D'Deridex*. She is big and your people like big. And she carries a device that was first and only of its kind. Your pride and joy. Something that even the Humans don't have.

You inflate your chest with a deep breath. Your ship. Well, you can pretend it is yours.

"Approaching the maneuver area, Commander," says Vasauk, his voice carrying more lilt than those words requires.

"Have the probes go out one thousand kilometers and come in on various unannounced attack runs at the ship. Prepare for demonstration of sensors to show we could knock out each of the probes as they appear. And advise the *Tal Shiar* to get the Senators out of their beds. They'll want to be green instead of red today for a change."

Vasauk puts up a valiant fight as he dictates these orders to the appropriate stations, but despite himself, his cheeks turn cyan and his shoulders shake. "They have been red, haven't they, Commander?" he mutters toward you, keeping his voice low and his eye on the other bridge officers.

You smile.

You lean toward him in a manner so natural it has almost become unnoticeable after your years together. "They should execute the bureaucrats. Then things might get done."

Vasauk smirks at you and gives you a delicate glance. "You used to be one of those."

"Yes," you say, "and they should have gagged me. Perhaps by now you'd be Commander and I'd be in the Senate."

"I don't want to be Commander. When all the shooting starts, I like somebody to hide behind."

You turn up one corner of your mouth. “That’s all right. It’s my secret desire never to sit in the Senate. Does the *Romulus* have its sensors aligned? Have they been checked?”

“They reported that they were prepared an hour ago.”

“Prepare demonstration of the cloaking device. Signal the *Romulus* to begin their sensor sweep. And Vasauk,” you add quickly raising a finger, “do it slowly and by the book.”

“Inbound,” comes the dry announcement a few moments later, “*Romulus*, heading four zero true.”

“Visual range?”

“In six seconds, sir.”

“When it becomes visible, we’ll cloak on my order.”

“Yes, Commander. Visibility in three...two...one...mark.”

“Engage the cloaking device.”

You all flinch when the cloaking device is engaged -

There is a near simultaneous *snap* and a white flash across the view screen. At first, it seems the *snap* comes first but now you aren’t sure.

The *Romulus* reports that the *D’Deridex* has vanished from their sensors.

The bridge breaks into cheers.

You pump a sigh of relief from your lungs. “Disengage the cloak, Subcommander Vasauk.”

“Decloaking now, Commander.”

“Good boy, good boy...” you inhale deeply and try to make the sensation of trouble go away. You aren’t really nervous, but for some reason your hands are cold.

“Commander...” Maruk bent over his tactical station.

“Maruk?” you prod, your hands dropping to your sides.

“We have another ship and it’s not one of ours.”

Vasauk dives for the communications station as you bark, “Contact the *Romulus*.”

“Sir, Commander Pallax confirms that the ship is not Romulan”

“Then what is it?”

“I don’t know.”

“What is it? Is it Human?”

“Sir, there’s no log of this...I’m not even certain that it is a ship,” Vasauk says, snapping his fingers to other manned positions in silent orders.

You press up against Maruk’s shoulder. “Some of the greatest tactical minds and you can’t tell me what it is. I want to know whose it is. What’s coming in?”

“It’s headed directly toward us!”

“Engage the cloak. When its in range, disengage the cloak and fire.”

It should work. It should make the *D’Deridex* vanish from the sensors of any ship, any kind at all.

“It’s homing in on us...accelerating now!” Maruk’s voice clatters against his throat.

Vasauk whispers, “Even the humans don’t have anything like that...”

You twist around and plow through the bridge crew to the view screen. You stare out over the field of stars.

There is something out there. It isn’t a ship.

Skimming over the gas giant, making child’s play of the distance between itself and the *D’Deridex*, is a cloud.

An electrical cloud. It sizzles and crackles, makes colors against the stars, shapeless and ugly-the phenomenon looks, more than anything, like an infrared false-color image. Colors inside colors. But there is no basic shape. It is crawling across the atmosphere, larger than your ship.

Behind you, Maruk chokes, “Sensors are out. Communications out now...we’re getting feedback...”

You gasp twice before you can speak. “Full about! Red alert! Red -”

Your voice goes away. Around you, every every piece of instrumentation goes dead. There isn’t even the reassuring sound of a malfunction. In fact, there is no sound at all.

Then a sound comes: an electrical scream swallowing the whole ship as the false-color cloud roars up to the starboard bow and sucks the ship into itself. It is three times the size of the ship itself. *Three times*.

Your last move as a Romulan is to turn to the communications station. You look at Vasauk, who straightens up to stare at his Commander, both hands clasped over his ears, and you two are locked in a gaze, frozen, held. It feels as though all your blood is clotting at once.

Your last perception is of Vasauk’s eyebrows drawing slightly together as you two share the wholeness of that final moment before obliteration.

Then Vasauk’s face is covered with the false-color image, and your mind, mercifully, stops operating.

Planet Name: Valer IV

Class: M

System Data: Valer IV has two moons.

Gravity: 1 G. Valer IV's gravity is Earth-like.

Year/Day: 486/32

Atmosphere: Nitrogen-Oxygen

Hydrosphere: 50% surface water

Climate: Temperate: Dry and windy.

Sapient Species: Haralian (approximately 1.2 billion), Human (approximately .9 billion), Vulcan (approximately 0.3 billion)

Tech Level: Six

Government: Corporate bureaucracy based on Haralian law

Culture: Mix of Haralian-Federation ideals dominated by Haralian corporate policy

Resources: Valer IV provides large quantities of vionium shared by Haralian corporations and the United Federation of Planets

Places of Note: The entire surface of the planet is dotted with Haralian and Federation mining colonies

Ship Facilities: several small orbital facilities designed for tramp freighters

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