

Memory ★ ICON

Passageway

by [Will Hindmarch](#)

INTRODUCTION

"Passageway" is a role playing game adventure for the ***Star Trek: The Next Generation Role Playing Game*** from [Last Unicorn Games](#). It is designed as a stand-alone game scenario involving Starfleet officers, though it could be incorporated into an existing series with a little wrangling. The antagonists in "Passageway" are written as Jem'Hadar, the dedicated foot soldiers of the Dominion, though they could be replaced with Romulans or Breen to suit individual campaigns. See "Fitting the Campaign" for more information.

OVERVIEW

Based somewhat on the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode "Rocks and Shoals," "Passageway" concerns the efforts of a stranded team of Starfleet officers on a distant alien world. To survive and escape the planet they will have to brave a harsh environment, outwit a Vorta, and make sense of an aging alien technology. Suggestions then follow for pregenerated characters, fitting "Passageway" into your regular series, and possible follow-up adventures.

SET-UP

Two days ago, Starfleet sensor stations near Dominion space detected a powerful, unidentified energy surge originating from within the Anaxim system. Due to concerns on the front lines, the Anaxim system remains unexplored by both the Federation and the Dominion. This energy reading could indicate a new Dominion presence in that system, although no Intelligence reports support this possibility. To learn more, Starfleet has sent the *U.S.S. Hawking* (an *Oberth*-class starship) to investigate in hopes that a science vessel will not provoke the Dominion into contesting the system.

In fact, the Dominion had no interest in the system until they, too, detected the energy surge from the system's second planet (Anaxim II). Unwilling to pull major resources from bases along the Cardassian front, the Dominion instead sent a single Jem'Hadar fighter to investigate. This vessel arrived at Anaxim II just shortly before the *Hawking* and took up a position beyond the planet's only moon to analyze sensor data and await further developments.

At 0238 hours the morning after the *Hawking*'s arrival, a new energy surge began to build up in the system, centering on a position on Anaxim II's surface. This surge brought the Jem'Hadar vessel out of hiding and began a brief, tense stand-off. As the Jem'Hadar prepared to storm the *Hawking* the energy build-up focused into a powerful ray of highly charged particles aimed at Anaxim II. The extreme energy output overloaded the systems of both starships, driving the Jem'Hadar into the planet's atmosphere and tearing the *Hawking* apart. A single lifeboat escaped the Starfleet ship and fell to the surface of Anax II.

This is where the adventure begins.

ACT ONE: INTRODUCTION

The characters are awakened by the wild shrieking of high winds and a blasting chill coursing through a hole

in the lifeboat's hull. They find themselves battered and in some cases wounded from the crash, with the lifeboat in bad shape. All the major systems have failed, with only auxiliary life support available if it is brought online. The emergency transponder beacon is available but has not self-activated. The starboard hull of the small craft has been crushed and split open on steep, jagged rocks. All in all, the survivors are in a bit of trouble.

Scene One: Taking Stock

Before the characters turn their attention to the world outside, they should take stock of their status within the lifeboat. In addition to auxiliary life support and the transponder beacon, the lifeboat has enough food for all the survivors to eat regularly for five days. There are three Type II hand phasers and two standard tricorders available, in addition to four wrist lights, three medical kits, and one engineering kit. Each character is assumed to have a functioning communicator as well.

The characters were thrown around pretty well during the crash, and each has taken one die of damage from the crash. Be sure to account for the characters' Resistance, or the survivors will be virtually crippled from the start. Assume all injuries to be minor cuts, abrasions, or bruises.

When the survivors decide to power up the life support systems, they'll find it a bit warmer inside the lifeboat wreck, but not much more comfortable. High winds still bring considerable cold inside, but unless the characters choose to remain in one place for several hours, they should not suffer any damage from exposure. When they activate the transponder, request a Routine (5) Shipboard Systems (Communications) action. If successful, the character realizes that anyone else on-planet will be able to detect the transponder signal once it's activated. They could be opening themselves up to attack from the Jem'Hadar. If this occurs to the players on their own, let their characters realize it too.

Scene Two: Survey

The characters know fully well that the *Hawking* has been destroyed. Any characters serving on the bridge at the time of the incident realize that the Dominion fighter may not have been. Judging by the location of both ships at the time of the *Hawking*'s destruction, the crash sites should not be too far apart. An accurate survey of the area, including a detailed atmospheric profile, will take between fifteen and thirty minutes and a Personal Equipment (Tricorder) action versus a Difficulty of 7.

With some careful thought and computing, the characters can even get an approximate idea of where the energy surge would have impacted the planet. In game terms, this requires either a Space Sciences (Astrophysics) or Physical Sciences (Physics) action at Moderate (8) Difficulty. The calculations can take up to twenty minutes on a tricorder. Alternately, a character might simply try to find higher ground from which to perform a long range survey of the area. With a successful Moderate (7) Personal Equipment (Tricorder) action the character can determine the impact position of the energy surge. There is no sign of the Jem'Hadar ship.

Readings indicate that the energy surge would have touched down on the planet just over nine kilometers away, although there are no signs of damage to the surrounding rock in that area. There are, however, peculiar low-level energy readings which might suggest a power source. Over the rough terrain, through the narrow cracks in the huge stones, the survivors could make it to the impact site to investigate in just under 12 hours.

The characters should decide on a course of action and prepare to carry it out. There are two major options:

Move to the impact site and investigate the anomalous energy readings.

Wait in the lifeboat for rescue (or attack).

MEANWHILE

While the Starfleet personnel are licking their wounds and scanning their surroundings, the Jem'Hadar commander – a Vorta named Kallum – is dispatching five of his ten Jem'Hadar soldiers to investigate the lifeboat wreck. The fighter's sensors are still partially functional, and Kallum knows that some Starfleet personnel may have survived. While he might just kill them and move on with the war, he would hate to miss the opportunity to obtain some prisoners or find a way off the planet.

In the time the characters spend surveying their surroundings and deciding on a course of action, shrouded Jem'Hadar are closing on their position. If the characters stay at the crash site for more than five hours (Narrator's should keep track of time themselves) the Jem'Hadar will get close enough to listen to their conversations. Once the characters have settled on a course of action, the Jem'Hadar will return to their ship and report to Kallum.

ACT TWO: HARSH ENVIRONMENT

Two scenes are presented here to represent the major courses of action allowed to the characters. Although they all lead the characters to about the same location, each will impose different circumstances and obstacles on them.

SCENE ONE-A: TO THE IMPACT SITE

Travel to the impact site is uncomfortable at best, and dangerous at worst. Without active tricorder scans it's difficult to see more than ten yards in the windy, rainy haze. Rocks and dust are frequently shaken loose from large stone formations, slick with rain. Even during the day, the sky is a smokey gray, with no visible sun or stars. The rocks and soil are blackish, almost purple at times, and offer very little purchase for climbing or bracing. Traversing the nine kilometers to the impact site requires three Athletics (Climbing) actions from each character. The Difficulties are 6, 5, and 8 respectively. (At the Narrator's discretion, Acrobatics (Balance Walking) actions may be made instead.) A failed action results in one point of damage (regardless of Resistance) as the character slips, trips, or tumbles into slabs and shards of broken rock. Any character who manages all three actions without failure can be awarded 1 point of Reknown (Skill).

If the Narrator wants to stress the difficulty of the trip to the impact site, she could include a steep ravine to cross, a small avalanche, or extremely high winds as the characters near a precipice. It is important to challenge the characters without squashing them outright. They'll need their strength when they reach the impact site.

The whole of the trip takes $9 + 1d6$ hours, plus fifteen minutes for every failed action during the excursion. This time stranded and alone could be a good time to encourage role-playing in the players. Perhaps someone reveals a problem they had with another character aboard the *Hawking*, or their secret fears that they may not survive this mission. If such a scene can be included, remember to bring it back up in the third act to close the subplot (unless you are including this adventure in an ongoing series).

At some point during the trek, the characters' progress will be interrupted by a deafening hum. It will grow rapidly louder and louder, to the point of threatening permanent hearing damage, before a brilliant off-red light appears in the sky. With a loud, thunderous sound a huge beam of reddish light flashes out of the planet's surface just a few kilometers away and rushes into space. A second later the beam vanishes and the intense sound fades away. It's not difficult for the characters to realize that they have witnessed another one of the planet's mysterious energy surges and that this one was emitted from the planet very near the previous impact site.

Players and characters may draw their own conclusions.

SCENE ONE-B: WAITING

If the characters choose to wait in the lifeboat, they will begin to take one point every damage every hour from exposure to the elements, regardless of Resistance. After two hours of this (the characters may, of course, choose to investigate the impact site after boredom sets in) the Jem'Hadar arrive. Ten soldiers surround the lifeboat while becoming visible and demand that the characters come outside. Once they've complied they are lined up against a rock face and stripped of their equipment, from communicators to phasers. Then they are introduced to Kallum.

The Vorta is somewhat short for his kind, and his demeanor oscillates quickly between friendly and deadly. He sports a typical Vorta hairstyle and dark, lightless eyes. His pale skin seems flushed and his clothes show obvious signs of manual labor and injury uncharacteristic of a Vorta. Kallum insists that the characters examine his ship and, if possible, repair it. Regardless of their willingness, they are brought to the Dominion crash sight and shown to the ship. Surface flaking and tears in the outer hull indicate severe structural damage. The ship cannot be repaired without a Starbase.

While Kallum is deciding whether or not to kill the characters, the air fills with a deafening hum and the energy ray described above is witnessed leaving the planet's surface. Once the Jem'Hadar have calmed down and Kallum makes sure the characters are secured, he decides to continue with his original mission. With the characters in tow, the Dominion agents proceed to the impact site.

SCENE TWO: THE IMPACT SITE

The location of the impact site looks much like all the surrounding rock surfaces. Only a single, large doorway distinguishes it from any other massive expanse of rock (at least from the ground). The characters, if alone, can investigate at their own pace, unaware that Jem'Hadar soldiers are just hours behind them. If they have arrived with Kallum, the Vorta sends all the Starfleet officers through the doorway with an armed Jem'Hadar escort (1 soldier for each character) lead by the Jem'Hadar First: Verklmiklar.

The doorway is cut directly from the rock and leads to an long, smooth, and empty corridor carved from the stone. Lighting fixtures can be seen set into the ceiling, but there is no means to activate them. The corridor continues for 85 yards into the rock before expanding into a dark chamber. A successful Moderate Search action allows characters to notice field emitters set into the rock just before the chamber. Tricorder readings suggest the power in the field is substantial. By means of demonstration, anything human-sized or less impacting against the shield is disintegrated. If the characters are being accompanied by Jem'Hadar soldiers they will learn this when one of the soldiers touches the field when he tries to enter the chamber and is dissolved in a smokey flare.

The field can be brought down by striking it with a phaser or disruptor blast using 80 Charge or greater. The Jem'Hadar discover this right away (as it is their preferred means of bypassing force fields).

SCENE THREE: HOLDING CHAMBER

Once the field is down, characters may enter the chamber. It is about five yards by eight yards, with a ceiling six meters high. Comfortable-looking benches are lined up along the longer walls, while doors (such as the one the characters have entered through) and small, alien computers are inset into the shorter walls. There is no power available to these systems. If the Jem'Hadar are present, they will proceed through this room quickly.

No force field prevents entry to the next chamber.

This room is a lobby, or waiting room, for the launch bay beyond. The computers would normally display dispatch information. Although no power is present with which to use the terminals, if characters investigate the chamber hint at its function in your descriptions.

SCENE FOUR: LAUNCH BAY

The final room of the site is an immense chamber, nearly 100 yards on each side, with several pillars supporting its high ceiling. In the center of the room is an immense mechanical construction surrounded by platforms with computer equipment and access panels. The base of the machine is made of heavy metal plates and is bristling with pipes, wires, and lights. Atop this is a large metallic housing with a small, man-sized door on one side. Extending from this housing on large support beams is a chute. It rises at a 40 degree angle towards the ceiling where it contacts a huge lens. Further investigation will reveal a sleek, armored pod parked within the housing.

ACT THREE: NEW LIFEFORMS

What follows is a description of the large chamber for the Narrator. How it is conveyed to the characters is up to him, though guidelines follow.

This is an alien launch station. Instead of developing warp drive or some similar technology, the aliens who built this device utilized a kind of high-powered transporter beam to travel the galaxy. Powered by a huge underground thermoreactor, the machine converts the shuttlepod into high energy particles and accelerates it along an energy beam to its destination. The beam itself is a highly powerful weapon as it is designed to clear obstructions from the shuttlepod's path with an emitter not unlike a huge phaser. The aliens, however, all but abandoned the technology hundreds of years ago due to energy constraints and an unforeseen side effect. Prolonged use of their transporter technology creates an instability in normal matter which leaves travelers in a state of energetic flux. With prolonged use it can permanently transform a being into one of unorganized energy.

This is why the device has been in use as of late. The aliens who built it are disassembling all of them throughout the galaxy so that they won't be misused. The individuals performing the work are, however, suffering the effects of prolonged use. One is present in the launch chamber when the characters arrive and can be detected with routine tricorder scans.

If Jem'Hadar are present, they will not discover the creature until they are about to return to Kallum and make their report. They will then spot the alien being and begin firing on him. Due to the being's high-energy state,

however, the disruptor blasts have little effect. In defense, the alien responds by returning the blasts back at the Jem'Hadar, killing them. It will not harm the characters, however, as it recognizes that they are not violent beings. The fight has left it extremely weak and on the verge of death. It can still communicate, however. It appears to the characters as a slightly-illuminated humanoid with a sleek, long head extending into two rounded points behind its neck. A stylized space suit and reddish skin can be made out through the glow, beneath which organs and blood can be faintly seen pumping shimmering fluids – part energy and part matter – throughout its body. In a weak, faltering voice it will answer some questions for the characters, describing itself as a Velusinder, and revealing as much information on the launch station as the Narrator feels necessary. All the while, portions of the alien slowly convert to energy and bleed off it into the air. As it dies it begs the characters to destroy the launch station. "The process is al...most complete," it says. "Acti...ate...the flash...flashing...panel..." Finally, with one long, last breath the Velusinder is consumed by the light within him and dissolves, spreading into the air like cinders.

If the characters are alone when they enter the facility, the alien is slumped next to a console, weakened and dying from overexposure to the transport process. The communication process proceeds exactly as above before the alien dies.

An analysis of the power grid for the launch station suggests that, if destroyed, the station will be consumed by a power overflow in seconds. It's important for characters to learn this information, so regardless of what someone rolls, give them this information. It is not possible for the characters to run from the facility before its destruction. There is only one obvious plan of escape: the shuttlepod.

This is where the adventure climax can get complicated. In order to escape the launch station's destruction, the characters have to decipher the alien technology (requiring a variety of Challenging Engineering, Science, and Anthropology actions tailored to the strengths of your crew), aim, and activate the transport device. Someone has to remain behind to activate the destruction sequence. Jem'Hadar soldiers (either five or ten, depending on the previous scenes) arrive with Kallum and demand the characters stop the procedure. Juggling all of these elements is going to be tricky for everyone involved.

There are only a few guidelines to running this scene, as it depends so much on the actions of the crew. Remember to play up the drama of leaving a crew member behind, and don't gloss over the action of dodging Jem'Hadar disruptor fire as the characters settle into the shuttlepod and escape. The acceleration process is frightening. As the shuttle is about to impact the lens at the edge of the chamber the entire vehicle vanishes in a vivid flash with a head-splitting roar. The characters can see each other as colorful, blurred images and can even make out stars and planets passing outside the vessel through a thick, off-red haze. Meanwhile, the character left behind might find himself overrun by Jem'Hadar soldiers who climb to the control platform and accost him, only to notice the panel nearby. "Vorta! Some sort of program seems to have been activated!" Kallum's response would be lost in a burning crash and the floor and then the launch station is dissolved in the reactor's explosion.

Experience and Renown Awards

Escaping Anaxim II: 2 Experience Points

Destroying the Velusinder Launch Station: 1 Experience Point

Prevented the Jem'Hadar from escaping or capturing the Launch Station: 1 Experience Point
Gaining an especially large amount of information from the Velusinder (possibly leading to formal first contact processes): 1 Experience Point

Displaying skill or valor in combat with the Jem'Hadar: 2-3 Renown
Discovering how the Velusinder Transporter Passage works: 3 Renown
Staying behind to destroy the Launch Station: 7 Renown

Note: Each of these Renown awards could be amplified by actions in following episodes. For example, applying knowledge of how the Velusinder Passageway operates could have a profound effect on Federation technology (5-10 Renown). Likewise, a character introduced later in a series could be related to the heroic martyr who stayed behind to destroy the Station, and would then enjoy a Renown bonus by association (of no more than 3 or 4 Renown, however). See page 180 of the Core Book for more information.

STAGING TIPS: FOLLOW-UP EPISODES

"Passageway" is intended as a convention episode, and so was written with a distinct beginning and ending. There are plenty of places you could go from here, though. The Velusinder homeworld is near the galactic core in the Delta Quadrant, and could be the destination programmed into the shuttlepod when it was launched. Or the shuttlepod could be left just a few light years outside of Federation space at another Velusinder waystation awaiting disassembly. What if the characters are left on a world in the Gamma Quadrant and manage transport back through the Bajoran Wormhole, arriving at Deep Space Nine?

It's also possible that the episode ends very differently than originally outlined. Maybe all of the characters stayed behind to sacrifice themselves, or maybe they were unwilling to destroy the technology (or their friend). Now they are captives of the Dominion, which provides its own adventure possibilities.

STAGING TIPS: FITTING THE CAMPAIGN

There are a few variations you can try to fit "Passageway" into a regular series. Have the characters sent to Anaxim II in a Runabout, so that you don't need to destroy your regular starship. Or maybe they become stranded on the planet during a Dominion attack and can't be transported back to their ship due to atmospheric disturbances. Their ship might have to track them down following the adventure to rescue them, which could work very well for groups playing troupe-style.

If the Dominion aren't logical antagonists for your series, the Anaxim system would just as easily be near Romulan space (which could result in a tense negotiation over who gets to keep the technology, rather than a fight for it) or on the Breen border (which would promise a heated battle). Look to Geordi LaForge's experience stranded on a rocky, hostile world with a Romulan crewmember or Picard's dilemma over the use of Iconian technology for inspiration.

STAGING TIPS: CHARACTERS

If running "Passageway" as a stand-alone game, be sure to keep the characters balanced. An Engineer, Science Officer, and Operations Manager could be essential in deciphering the alien technology, while a Security Officer could make combat easier. A Vulcan could make the choice of who to leave behind easy, while a Betazoid could make communication with the Velusinder easy. The pregenerated characters written

for use in the game were:

Human Science Officer, Lt. Commander
Vulcan Flight Controller, Lt.
Hollinian Security Officer, Lt. (basically they're humans)
Human Engineer, Ensign
Bolian Operations Manager, Ensign

For the Dominion agents, look to the Racial Templates for [Jem'Hadar](#) and [Vorta](#) included here on TrekRPGNet.

STAGING TIPS: HANDOUT

If possible, try to give the characters a sample of the Velusinder Astrogation console. It's much more fun to let the players decipher what those funky alien buttons mean than it is for them to just roll dice. If available, a handout will be included for this scenario at a later date.

AUTHOR'S COMMENTS

The Anaxim system is named for a Greek philosopher, Anaximander.

Kallum is a variation on the Celtic name Calum, meaning "peace messenger."

The *U.S.S. Hawking* is, of course, named for Professor Stephen Hawking.

Velusinder is completely made up. I don't know what it means.

Please let me know what you think of "Passageway." I can take criticism.

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