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ALTERNITY[®]

Science Fiction Roleplaying Game

INCIDENT AT EXILE

FAST-PLAY
GAME



William W. Connors



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Based on the ALTERNITY® rules created by Bill Slavicsek and Richard Baker.

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T11514_620

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ASIA, PACIFIC, & LATIN AMERICA

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ISBN 0-7869-1514-5

Visit our website at www.tsr.com

FAST-PLAY RULES

Brilliant flashes of laser light leapt through the air, splashing against the strange, green metal. With every second, the dark, spiderlike shapes of robotic warriors moved closer. It wouldn't be long before their infrared sights locked onto the explorers. Young Muri Tsumatso, the ship's tech officer, worked hurriedly with a set of electronic tools trying to bypass the ancient security system that still protected this derelict alien spacecraft from intruders.

Penn Anderson, one-time marine trooper, raised his laser rifle and sent a volley of crimson flashes at the nearest robot. It exploded into a shower of debris and sparks, but another quickly scurried forward to take its place. "There are just too many of them!" he cried. "If you don't get that door open, we're dead!"

Another volley of laser fire filled the air. . . .

In the pages of this short booklet, we will introduce you to the amazing universe of the ALTERNITY® game system, the most versatile science fiction roleplaying game ever designed. The limits of the ALTERNITY game lie far beyond the horizons of individual worlds or even the swirling arms of the galaxy—indeed, the only boundaries to the ALTERNITY game are those of your imagination.

For those who haven't yet experienced the star-spanning adventures of the ALTERNITY game, this booklet contains a complete adventure and all the rules needed to play through it. Those who are already familiar with the ALTERNITY game will find this an excellent tool for introducing new players to science fiction roleplaying games.

What's a Roleplaying Game?

The simplest way to define a roleplaying game (or RPG) is simply that it is an organized set of rules for playing "let's pretend" games. As kids, we all played games like cops-and-robbers—but problems always arose over who shot who or whether or not you could escape from jail. In a roleplaying game, you get to assume fantastic, heroic roles and have adventures the likes of which you can otherwise find only in books or movies.

There are many different types of roleplaying games, each of which allows players to experience different types of adventures. Some allow the players to assume the roles of knights and wizards, others let them take the parts of comic book superheroes, and still others allow them to enter the dark and gritty world of secret agents or private detectives. In the ALTERNITY game, the players take on the roles of space-faring heroes confronting the mysteries and perils of the universe with items of advanced technology, high-tech weapons, sophisticated computers, and, most important of all, their own imaginations.

The most significant thing to remember about roleplaying games is that they are generally less competitive than traditional games. The players almost always need to work together to overcome hazards, solve puzzles, and otherwise work through a story as it unfolds around them. Remember that the players succeed or fail not as individuals, but as a group.

What Do You Need to Play?

This booklet contains all the rules and information you need to play the enclosed adventure. In the adventure, *Incident at Exile*, the crew of the starship *Momotaro* explores a derelict alien spacecraft in the Exile system at the edges of explored space. The only other things you need are players, photocopies of the enclosed hero sheets, and dice.

Players

This adventure calls for a group of four players plus one Gamemaster. The role of the Gamemaster is described a little later on, but it is easiest for now to think of him or her as a referee.

In general, the Gamemaster should be the person most familiar with this booklet. While the players are free to read through the rules on the next few pages, they should refrain from looking over the adventure. They will discover its secrets and surprises as they play through it.

Dice

Many roleplaying games make use of special dice. While everyone is probably familiar with the common six-sided, cube-shaped dice used in many board games, *ALTERNITY* game players need to become accustomed to a few others. These unusual dice are generally called polyhedral dice. They can be bought for only a few dollars at almost any hobby or game store and at many bookstores.

Types of Dice

The illustration on the opposite page shows an assortment of polyhedral dice. All of them are clearly identified and turned so that you can read a "1" (though the die may be at a different angle when rolled).

d20: The die most commonly used in the *ALTERNITY* game is almost round and has 20 triangular sides that are numbered 1 through 20. In this booklet, the abbreviation "d20" is used to refer to it. When you roll a d20, you simply read the number on the top as the result.

d12: From time to time, players are called upon to roll a twelve-sided die, or d12. This die has pentagonal sides and is used to generate a number between 1 and 12. Again, just roll it and read the number on the top.

d10: The next die in a standard set of polyhedral dice has ten sides shaped like irregular diamonds. When thrown, it generates a number between 1 and 10. You will never use the d10 while playing the *ALTERNITY* game.

d8: An eight-sided die (or d8) has triangular sides and looks like two pyramids with their bases stuck together. You will use this die a lot while playing, so keep it close at hand.

d6: We've already touched on the traditional six-sided die that you've been using in other games for years. A six-sided die is referred to as a d6 in the *ALTERNITY* game rules.

d4: The last type of die we need to cover is also the most unusual. It has four sides (and is hence abbreviated as a d4) and looks like a pyramid. You need to get used to rolling and reading the d4, as it comes into play frequently.

There are two types of d4, and it is important that you know which kind you have. When a d4 is rolled, it always lands with a point on top, not one of the sides, so you can't read it like a normal die. The result of d4 rolls on the most common kind of d4 is read by looking at the number nearest the upward point. On the less common kind of d4, the die is read by looking at the number along its base. If your d4 has numbers printed near its points, you read the result of a roll at the top. If your d4 has its numbers printed on the center of its edges, read the number at the base. In either case, the result should be the same no matter which angle you view the die from. The d4 in the illustration is read at its point.

How Many Dice to Roll?

In many cases, you only need to roll one die at a time when playing the *ALTERNITY* game. When this happens, the rules simply say: Roll a d20.

Sometimes, however, you need to roll a given die more than once. When this happens, the number of rolls are added to the abbreviation for the type of die used. For example, roll 2d6 simply means to roll the six-sided die twice. If you happen to have enough dice of the indicated type, you can roll them all at once. In either case, the result of this roll is found by totaling the numbers on each die. Thus, if you're told to roll 3d4 and the dice come up a 2, 3, and 4, the result is a 9.

For Example . . .

To make learning these rules easier, we give many examples. These examples are indicated with a diamond-shaped bullet (◆) next to the word "Example" in bold italic type or placed in sidebars with the word "Example" in their titles. You don't need to read these to learn the game or play out the scenario, but they help.

◆ **Example:** This is an illustration of a d20, d12, d10, d8, d6, and d4. All are positioned so that they have rolled a "1" and are clearly marked to identify their type (for example: d20).

Most of our examples focus on Carrie and Stan as they play out the *Incident at Exile* scenario. Stan serves as the Gamemaster while Carrie assumes the role of Javon Pendergast, captain of the merchant ship *Momotaro*.

Stan and Carrie are ready, so let's get started learning to play the *ALTERNITY* science fiction roleplaying game.

Important Concepts

Before you read further, skim through the list of the following terms to get an idea what they mean. Don't worry about memorizing them; you can always refer back to this glossary later on to refresh your memory.

Ability Scores: Heroes are each defined by six Ability Scores that give their players a good idea of their physical and mental capabilities. The Abilities are Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Will, and Personality. For human beings, these scores range between 4 and 14, with the average being about 10. You will read more about these important values very shortly.

Actions: An action is anything challenging the heroes or that the heroes attempt to do during play. It usually involves the application of special skills or abilities. Examples of actions might include safely landing a damaged survival pod, scaling a wind-swept cliff during a raging storm, or reprogramming an alien

computer to speak English. Many actions are resolved using skill checks or feat checks (see those entries).

Adventure: An adventure is a single, self-contained story. It is also known as a scenario. In its most basic form, an adventure is a problem that the heroes must confront and resolve. If you think of the ALTERNITY game *campaign* (defined below) as a TV series, then an adventure is a single episode. This booklet contains *Incident at Exile*, a self-contained adventure that takes between one and two hours to play.

Campaign: An ALTERNITY campaign is a series of linked adventures that center around a single theme or group of heroes. If one thinks of an adventure as a single television episode, then the campaign is the whole television series.

Feat Check: Feat checks are die rolls made to resolve attempts by heroes to do challenging things that are not covered by specific skills. They are based on heroes' six natural Abilities rather than their skills. A feat check might be used to climb a sheer cliff (Dexterity) or lift a very heavy object (Strength).

Gamemaster: The Gamemaster is the player responsible for designing a scenario and then refereeing it as the other players (in their fictional roles) play through it. The Gamemaster is also responsible for controlling all those characters who are not heroes being directly controlled by the other players. Such characters might be villains, alien monsters, or simply incidental individuals with whom the heroes have only brief encounters. The Gamemaster-controlled heroes are called *supporting cast members*.

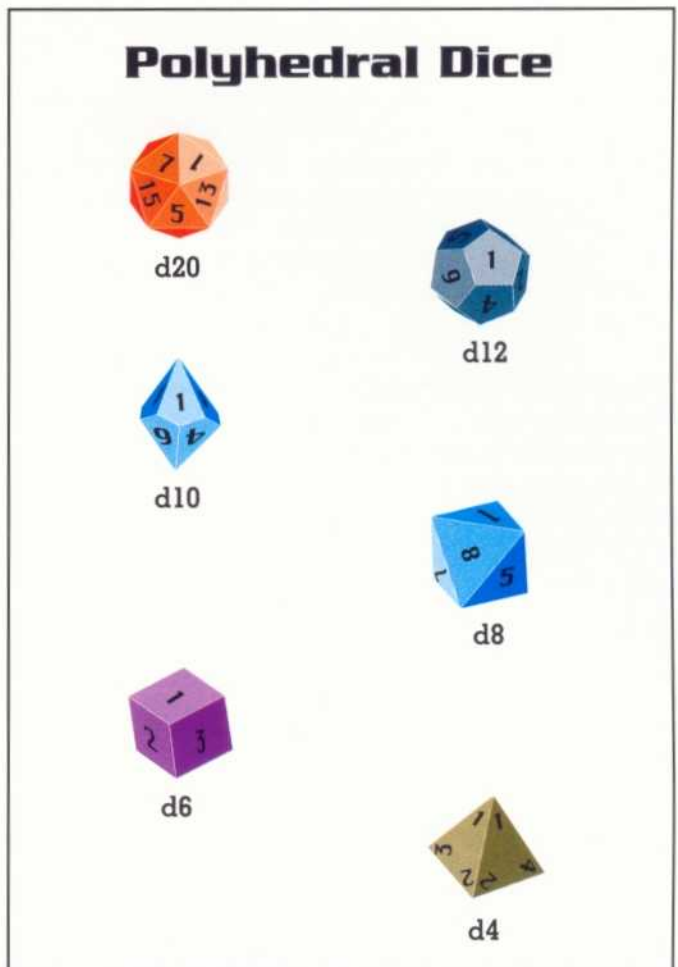
Hero: A hero is the fictional character whose role a player assumes during an ALTERNITY game. In a movie, the heroes would be the main characters around whom the rest of the universe appears to revolve. Heroes are often larger than life and rush forward into situations that normal people would avoid at all costs.

Round: During scenes when time is critical (as in a fight), time is tracked in rounds. Exactly what can and can't be done in a single round depends upon the situation, but a good rule of thumb for our purposes is that every hero gets to attempt two actions per round. There are 5 rounds per minute.

Scene: Scenes are building blocks that comprise adventures. If the heroes are playing in an adventure set aboard an abandoned space station, the first scene might be "arrival at the station" and the second might be "exploring the docks."

Skills: Heroes' skills indicate those things in which they have special training or experience. The skills available to heroes help to define their places in the adventure and set them apart from other heroes. In the scenario that follows, each of the heroes has eight skills. Some skills are common to all the heroes, while only one or two heroes know others.

Skill Check: Skill checks are die rolls used to determine whether a hero succeeds at an action that



involves the use of a skill. Attempts to reprogram a computer or repair a damaged starship engine would both require skill checks.

Supporting Cast Members: Supporting cast members are those heroes not controlled by the players. In general, they have what might be called minor roles in a television program, although some supporting cast members may appear repeatedly and be very important to the storyline. The Gamemaster controls the actions of these characters. In the adventure that follows these rules, the hunter robot is an example of a supporting cast member even though it is a mechanical construct.

Untrained Skill Checks: Untrained skill checks are die rolls used to determine whether a hero succeeds at an action that involves the use of a skill that the hero does not know. Attempts to use a knife to attack an alien by a hero with no Melee Weapons skill would be untrained skill checks.

Meet the Heroes!

Brief descriptions of the four heroes used in this adventure are given on the hero sheets following the Common Equipment sidebar a few pages further on. These heroes are the crew of a small starship called the *Momotaro*. They are all friends and loyal shipmates who carry various cargoes from planet to planet in order to earn money while seeing the wonders of the galaxy.

One of the best ways to get the feel of a roleplaying game's rules is to understand the way in which its heroes are set up. With that in mind, read the following descriptions and refer to the hero sheets to see how they're used. Don't try to memorize everything here; you can always look something up again later.

Name

At the top of the hero sheets are the heroes' names. Players are free to use the names provided or create new ones. If a player does want to use a different name, just make sure the Gamemaster and other players are told the new name.

◆ **Example:** Carrie has opted to run Javon Pendergast, captain and owner of the independent trader *Momotaro*. She is happy with the name provided and is eager to learn what all those numbers and other things written in the hero description mean.

Abilities

Every hero in the *ALTERNITY* game is defined by six different Abilities. Together, these provide a profile of the hero's physical and mental capabilities. Over the course of the game, they are often used to determine whether heroes are successful at the various things they attempt to do.

Each of these Abilities is assigned a numeric Ability Score that allows players to judge just how their heroes measure up in a given area. For humans, all Ability Scores range between 4 and 14, with a score of 9 being just about average. A higher number indicates more ability, so someone with a Strength score of 14 is one of the strongest people you're ever going to meet.

Most of the Abilities are fairly self-explanatory, but a brief description of each is in order. We show the standard abbreviation for each of the six Abilities here as well.

Strength (STR): This is a measure of the hero's physical power and muscular development. It is tested whenever the hero tries to lift a heavy object, bend a prison bar, or break free of some physical restraint.

Dexterity (DEX): This is a rating of the hero's agility and hand/eye coordination. It is used to pick locks, make fine repairs, or dive out of the way.

Constitution (CON): This is a gauge of the hero's physical stamina. It indicates how resistant the hero is to injury, fatigue, illness, or toxins. A hero's Constitution score is used to determine how severely she or he can be injured before being knocked out or slain.

Intelligence (INT): This indicates the hero's ability to reason and learn. It is used when the hero attempts to solve problems (like breaking a code) or notice fine details (like clues at a crime scene).

Will (WIL): This ability indicates the mental stamina of the hero. Will is used to resist emotional stress (like fear), press on in the face of adversity, or break bad habits.

Personality (PER): This ability gauges the hero's social skills and charisma. It indicates how likely others are to obey the hero's orders, accept him or her as a friend, or fear him or her as an enemy.

◆ **Example:** Carrie notes with glee that Javon has a score of 12, well above average, for both Personality and Intelligence. She is not too pleased with her hero's low Constitution score, however, and makes a mental note to leave combat and dangerous situations to the other members of the crew.

Durability

The next item on the hero sheets is a group of small boxes. These indicate how hard it is to incapacitate or kill heroes. There are two types of damage in the *ALTERNITY* fast-play game, each of which is given its own collection of boxes.

► **Stun Damage:** The first type of damage heroes can suffer is known as *stun damage* (or *stuns*). These boxes represent jolts, blows, and other minor injuries. When all of a hero's stun boxes are crossed off, she or he is knocked unconscious. Obviously, unconscious heroes can't do anything to protect themselves from further harm. A hero has a number of stun boxes equal to his or her Constitution score.

If heroes suffer stun damage after all of their stun boxes have been crossed off, these injuries become wounds (see below), which are more severe. Thus, it is possible for an attack that normally causes only stun damage to severely injure or even kill badly wounded heroes.

► **Wound Damage:** The second type of damage a hero can receive is known as *wound damage* (or *wounds*). These boxes represent more severe injuries, such as those associated with gunshots, stabbings, or other major physical traumas. When heroes' wound boxes are all crossed off, they have been killed. Slain heroes are no longer able to participate in the scenario.

◆ **Example:** Following down her hero sheet, Carrie sees that Javon has 8 stun boxes and 8 wound boxes. This makes her one of the two heroes most vulnerable to physical harm. She makes a mental note to stay out of the line of fire and keep her medical pack handy at all times.

AVAILABLE SKILLS

Skill Name	Ability Score	The hero has extensive training or experience in . . .
Administration	WIL	overseeing the actions of others as a manager or supervisor.
Armor Operation	STR	the use and repair of both high- and low-tech armor.
Athletics	STR	climbing, jumping, throwing, or some type of sport or similar activity.
Awareness	WIL	a variety of observational skills.
Business	INT	the world of commerce and industry, in both its legitimate and illicit aspects.
Computer Science	INT	the programming and construction of computer systems.
Creativity	WIL	the use of the imagination and the ability to communicate through a creative medium (writing, painting, and so on).
Culture	PER	diplomacy and the diverse cultures, beliefs, and customs of human and alien races.
Deception	PER	lying, bluffing, and other types of subtle or flagrant deceit.
Demolitions	INT	the design and effective use of explosive charges and the ability to disarm them.
Interaction	PER	bargaining, interviewing, intimidating, being persuasive, and other forms of personal relations.
Investigate	WIL	the skills, tactics, and tools of the keen detective or veteran researcher.
Law	INT	legal systems, statutes, court procedures, and law enforcement.
Leadership	PER	earning the trust and obedience of underlings and followers.
Medical Science	INT	modern diagnosis and treatment of injuries and illness.
Melee Weapons	STR	using weapons like knives and stun batons in hand-to-hand combat.
Navigation	INT	use of maps, charts, and computer systems to plot courses and plan travel.
Physical Science	INT	physics, astronomy, chemistry, and other hard sciences.
Modern Ranged Weapons	DEX	firing pistols, rifles, and other such hand-held weapons with accuracy.
Resolve	WIL	mental and physical determination and fortitude.
Security	INT	design, placement, and operation of security systems and alarms.
System Operation	INT	the use of advanced systems and devices (as opposed to Technical Science), especially starship systems.
Technical Science	INT	the repair and design of advanced devices (as opposed to System Operations).
Unarmed Attack	STR	fighting without the benefit of weapons (martial arts, wrestling, and so on).
Vehicle Operation	DEX	the operation of certain kinds of vehicles (chosen by the player from air, land, space, or water vehicles).

Recovery

It is possible for stunned or wounded heroes to recover from some or all of the injuries they suffer over the course of this scenario. Details on this process are presented later in this booklet.

Skills

The next few lines indicate any special training that the hero has received. Examples include skill in using a pistol, operating a spacecraft, or programming a computer.

Each skill is accompanied by a numeric skill score. Like an Ability Score, these tell players how good their heroes are with each skill. As a rule, these numbers are higher than those listed for heroes' Abilities, but they are used in an almost identical fashion during play. All the heroes presented here have rank 1 in the skills shown on their hero sheets. (Skills can have higher ranks than 1; the heroes we detail here do not.) For the curious, the level assigned to a skill is determined here by adding 1 to the Ability most often associated with its use for each rank that a hero has in the ability.

◆ **Example:** Javon's Modern Ranged Weapons skill is based on the Dexterity Ability Score, while Interaction is determined by the Personality Ability Score. Carrie sees that with a Dexterity of 10 and a Personality of 12, Javon has a Modern Ranged Weapons skill of 11 and an Interaction of 13.

There are no long descriptions of these skills given here, although brief ones are presented on the table on the previous page. (The *ALTERNITY Player's Handbook* gives complete skill descriptions for all skills.) For the most part, the names of the various skills give players and Gamemasters a good idea of what they can and can't be used for.

Unlike the six Ability Scores, which are common to all heroes, every hero has a different set of skills. While more than one hero might have a given skill, the combination of skills a hero has serves to define the hero and his or her role in the adventure. A trained space marine, for example, has very different skills from someone who has sat at a computer terminal battling hackers and viruses all her life.

◆ **Example:** Captain Pendergast is a skilled merchant with a fair degree of medical training. This is reflected in the skills available to Carrie's hero. These include Administration and Business, which are useful in making sure that *Momotaro's* various travels are both efficient and profitable, and Medical Science, which allows Pendergast to double as the ship's surgeon. In addition, Pendergast's journeys around the galaxy have left Carrie's hero well versed in the Culture, Interaction, and Law skills. The fact that *Momotaro's* captain sometimes gets in tight spots is also evident from the presence of the Deception and Modern Ranged Weapons skills.

Equipment

The last bit of information provided on the hero sheets is a listing of the equipment each hero carries. As with skills, detailed descriptions of these items aren't needed for play, although brief ones appear in the Common Equipment sidebar. Everyone can take a pretty good guess at what a laser pistol or personal radio is and how one might use it.

Each of the heroes has a laser pistol, a protective combat vest, and a personal radio. In addition, every hero has a unique item specially suited to his or her duties aboard *Momotaro*. Players are free to swap equipment or otherwise employ the resources of the ship and its crew as they see fit.

At various points in the adventure, the use of a certain item might be called for. These incidents and any die rolls associated with them are clearly spelled out when they arise.

In the event that the players attempt to use an item in some unusual way, the Gamemaster will have to improvise. The best way to resolve such a situation is to consider the use intended and simply call for a feat or skill check that will determine success or failure. The likelihood of success or failure can be adjusted through the assignment of a beneficial or detrimental situation die (explained later under the Action Resolution section).

◆ **Example:** Carrie takes another look at Javon Pendergast's hero sheet and notes the equipment Javon has available during the game. She sees that Javon (like all the heroes) has a laser pistol, an armored combat vest, and a personal radio. In addition to this common equipment, Javon has a medical pack that can be used to tend any wounds suffered by the heroes over the course of the adventure.

Carrie has a question, however, and asks Stan if Javon can use the medical pack on himself, if her hero is injured. Stan smiles and says that's okay as long as Captain Pendergast hasn't been knocked unconscious.

Ready to Go?

As indicated in the above example, the Gamemaster should make sure that the players understand the information on their hero sheets and how it is going to be used during the game. This doesn't mean that every player needs to have a detailed understanding of the rules at this point, only that each of them should grasp the general concepts. If they have that much understanding at this point, they will quickly pick up the rules of play as the game scenario begins to unfold around them.

Exactly how the game itself is played is something we look at in the section following the hero sheets.

Common Equipment

The heroes begin play with a great variety of equipment. The following brief descriptions should help the Gamemaster and players to understand the different pieces of equipment and their uses in the game. Some of this information is reprinted on the hero sheets to help players become familiar with their equipment.

Combat Vest: This sleeveless jacket is made of light, flexible ballistic cloth that has also been treated to make it effective against energy weapons. Heroes wearing vests like this can deduct d4 points from any damage (either stuns or wounds) they receive from gunshots, explosions, or similar attacks. Each of the heroes is assumed to own such a vest, although some may choose not to wear them.

In some cases, a combat vest does not offer the wearer any protection. For example, people exposed to the vacuum of space suffer just as much damage whether or not they have a combat vest on. These instances are spelled out clearly in the course of the adventure, though, so you don't need to worry too much about them right now.

Laser Pistol: This is a standard sidearm worn by many spacefarers. As such, every member of *Momotaro's* crew has one, although they may not always be worn. For the purposes of this adventure, a laser pistol can fire as many times as needed. Anyone shot by a laser pistol suffers d6 points of wound damage. It is impossible to set a laser pistol to cause only stun damage.

Laser Rifle: This weapon is similar to the standard laser pistols carried by every member of *Momotaro's* crew. Unlike those lighter handguns, however, this is a soldier's weapon. It inflicts d10 points of wound damage to its target. Like the laser pistols, a laser rifle can't be set to inflict only stun damage. For the purposes of this adventure, it is assumed to never run out of power. Therefore, it can be fired as many times as needed.

Medical Pack (Trauma Pack): This is a small, self-contained medical pack that can provide basic trauma care. It requires a Medical Science skill check to employ properly, although others may attempt to use it in an emergency thanks to its built-in instructional computer system. (Javon can also use this item on himself unless he is unconscious or dead).

Any hero can use the medical pack to treat someone who has suffered stun damage. This requires a successful Medical Science skill check, or if the hero does not have the Medical Science skill, a successful Intelligence feat check. Success at this action restores all of a hero's crossed-off stun boxes. The medical pack can be used in this fashion for each hero once at the end of every encounter. If the skill check (or feat check) fails, all the stun damage remains. A hero who has fallen unconscious due to stun damage can be woken up through the elimination of stun damage in this fashion. If the attempt to treat an unconscious hero fails, the hero remains unconscious until another attempt can be made at the end of the next encounter.

The medical pack can also be used to heal wounds. Normally, only Javon can do this, as he has the

Medical Sciences skill. If *Momotaro's* captain has been incapacitated or slain, however, the Gamemaster might allow other heroes to make untrained attempts to use the pack based on their Intelligence Ability Scores.

Success at a Medical Sciences skill check (or Medical Sciences untrained skill check) to treat wounds restores d6 crossed-off wound boxes. There are enough supplies in the medical pack to allow it to be used in this fashion six times over the course of the adventure. Once this limit is reached, the kit can be used only to heal stun damage.

It should be noted that an exhausted medical pack can be refilled aboard the *Momotaro*. The Gamemaster shouldn't mention this to the players, but should allow them to do this if they think of it. It is also possible to recharge the pack aboard the alien ship in some cases.

Personal Radio (Comm Unit): This is a small unit similar to a twentieth-century cellular phone. It is assumed to have much greater range, however, and can easily reach a starship in orbit or (with a satellite link) any point on the surface of a world. Players are free to think of these as very much like the communicators on *Star Trek*. Each of the heroes has one of these and feels naked without it close at hand.

Portable Computer: This is a small information processing system that can function on its own or act as a terminal when connected to a larger computer or global network. Although anyone can use it for basic tasks, a successful Computer Sciences skill check is required to use it for more challenging efforts (like breaking into a secured computer).

During this adventure, the portable computer allows the heroes to learn important information about the aliens who built the ship and their legacy in the Exile system. The heroes do not need this information to solve the adventure, but it will enhance the players' enjoyment of the scenario to discover the secrets of this alien race.

Portable Tool Kit: These tools are specially designed for use on high-tech electronic devices like computers, communications systems, and so on. They prove beneficial in any attempt to diagnose system failures and repair or juryrig such equipment.

Also included in the tool kit is an assortment of mechanical tools designed for use on all sorts of machinery. Anyone attempting to fix or juryrig some manner of mechanism or engine would be well advised to have the portable tool kit available when working. In addition to pliers, a universal wrench, and the like, this kit includes a powerful laser cutting torch.

Spacesuit: Although they don't normally wear them, members of *Momotaro's* crew own protective spacesuits. A spacesuit allows its wearer to move about in the vacuum of space or other hostile environments. The suit is self-sealing, so most punctures (including those caused by a laser, knife, or such) do not destroy it, even though they harm the wearer.

1 Javon Pendergast

Javon is a physician at heart, but one who has always longed to travel the galaxy and see its uncounted wonders. After building a prosperous medical practice, Pendergast liquidated it to purchase the *Momotaro*. After hiring a crew for the trading vessel, Javon finally had the freedom to travel and explore the universe.



As the ship's owner and captain, Pendergast takes the business ventures of the *Momotaro* (mainly cargo speculation and occasional passenger transportation) very seriously but loves the chance to stop en route and view the galaxy's more spectacular sights. Pendergast is a compassionate, warm-hearted soul, so *Momotaro* often undertakes so-called mercy missions.

ABILITIES

Strength	8
Dexterity	10
Constitution	8
Intelligence	12
Will	10
Personality	12

DURABILITY

Stun	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

SKILLS

Administration	11
Business	13
Culture	13
Deception	13
Interaction	13
Law	13
Medical Science	13
Modern Ranged Weapons	11

EQUIPMENT

Combat Vest: This sleeveless jacket is made of light, flexible ballistic cloth that has also been treated to make it effective against energy weapons. Heroes wearing vests like this can deduct d4 points from any damage (either stuns or wounds) they receive from gunshots, explosions, or similar attacks.

Laser Pistol: This is a standard sidearm worn by many spacefarers. For the purposes of this adventure, a laser pistol can fire as many times as needed. Anyone shot by a laser pistol suffers d6 points of wound damage. It is impossible to set a laser pistol to cause only stun damage.

Medical Pack: This is a small, self-contained medical pack that can provide basic trauma care. It requires a Medical Science skill check to employ properly, although others may attempt to use it in an emergency thanks to its built-in instructional computer system. (Javon can also use this item on himself unless he is unconscious or dead).

Any hero can use the medical pack to treat someone who has suffered stun damage. This requires a successful Medical Science skill check, or if the hero does not have the Medical Science skill, a successful Intelligence feat check. Success at this action restores all of a hero's crossed-off stun boxes. The medical pack can be used in this fashion at the end of every encounter. If the skill check (or feat check) fails, all the stun damage remains. A hero who has fallen unconscious due to stun damage can be woken up through the elimination of stun damage in this fashion. If the attempt to treat an unconscious hero fails, the hero remains unconscious until another attempt can be made at the end of the next encounter.

The medical pack can also be used to heal wounds. Normally, only Javon can do this, as he has the Medical Sciences skill. If *Momotaro's* captain has been incapacitated or slain, however, the Gamemaster might allow other heroes to make untrained attempts to use the pack based on their Intelligence Ability Scores.

Success at a Medical Sciences skill check (or Medical Sciences untrained skill check) to treat wounds restores d6 crossed-off wound boxes. There are enough supplies in the medical pack to allow it to be used in this fashion six times over the course of the adventure. Once this limit is reached, the kit can be used only to heal stun damage.

Personal Radio: This is a small unit similar to a twentieth-century cellular phone. It is assumed to have much greater range, however, and can easily reach a starship in orbit or (with a satellite link) any point on the surface of a world. Players are free to think of these as very much like the communicators on *Star Trek*. Each of the heroes has one of these and feels naked without it close at hand.

Spacesuit: Although they don't normally wear them, members of *Momotaro's* crew own protective spacesuits. A spacesuit allows its wearer to move about in the vacuum of space or other hostile environments. The suit is self-sealing, so most punctures (including those caused by a laser, knife, or such) do not destroy it, even though they harm the wearer.

Orn McAllister

Orn is a young pilot who had visions of being a proud officer commanding a large vessel in the interstellar navy. Although a gifted student, Orn washed out of the military academy for what officials described as "poor discipline." The truth of the matter is simply that Orn was too much of a free spirit for the strict rules and regulations of military life. In addition to piloting *Momotaro*, McAllister programs and maintains the ship's computer.



Since accepting a job as pilot and astrogator aboard *Momotaro*, McAllister and Captain Pendergast have become good friends. Orn shares the skipper's wanderlust and is a skillful enough pilot to make up for having a somewhat flippant attitude.

ABILITIES

Strength	10
Dexterity	12
Constitution	10
Intelligence	12
Will	8
Personality	8

DURABILITY

Stun	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

SKILLS

Awareness	9
Computer Science	13
Navigation	13
Modern Ranged Weapons	13
System Operation	13
Technical Science	13
Unarmed Attack	11
Vehicle Operation-space	13

EQUIPMENT

Combat Vest: This sleeveless jacket is made of light, flexible ballistic cloth that has also been treated to make it effective against energy weapons. Heroes wearing vests like this can deduct d4 points from any damage (either stuns or wounds) they receive from gunshots, explosions, or similar attacks.

Laser Pistol: This is a standard sidearm worn by many spacefarers. For the purposes of this adventure, a laser pistol can fire as many times as needed. Anyone shot by a laser pistol suffers d6 points of wound damage. It is impossible to set a laser pistol to cause only stun damage.



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Portable Computer: This is a small information processing system that can function on its own or act as a terminal when connected to a larger computer or global network. Although anyone can use it for basic tasks, a successful Computer Sciences skill check is required to use it for more challenging efforts (like breaking into a secured computer).

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1 Penn Anderson

Penn serves a very valuable role aboard *Momotaro*. As a former marine trooper, Anderson is trained in the use of firearms and serves as Captain Pendergast's personal bodyguard. Whenever the need arises, these duties extend to providing security and safety for the rest of the crew as well.



Penn is a likable sort but does tend to be a good deal more aggressive than the other members of the crew. One thing that worries *Momotaro's* security officer is the ship's lack of armament. Anderson has often tried to persuade the ship's owner to install some manner of weaponry on the ship, but to date Javon has refused. Penn's gunnery skills are kept sharp via computer simulations, however, just in case the captain should one day see the light.

ABILITIES

Strength	10
Dexterity	12
Constitution	12
Intelligence	8
Will	10
Personality	8

DURABILITY

Stun	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

SKILLS

Armor Operation	11
Athletics	11
Awareness	11
Demolitions	9
Leadership	9
Modern Ranged Weapons	13
Security	9
Unarmed Combat	11

EQUIPMENT

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Laser Rifle: This weapon is similar to the standard laser pistols carried by every member of *Momotaro's* crew. Unlike those lighter handguns, however, this is a soldier's weapon. It inflicts 2d4 points of wound damage to its target. Like the laser pistols, a laser rifle can't be set to inflict only stun damage. For the purposes of this adventure, it is assumed to never run out of power. Therefore, it can be fired as many times as needed.



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Muri Tsumatso

The newest member of *Momotaro's* crew is a young technical expert who shows great promise. It is Muri's job to keep all parts of the ship, from its computers to its main engines, up and running at all times. Tsumatso accepts this challenge eagerly but is often kept very busy when something goes wrong. To that end, whenever the ship reaches port, Muri starts downloading as many of the newest technical journals as the local libraries permit.



Although the technical officer always tries to act like an experienced spacehand, the position aboard *Momotaro* is Muri's first off-planet job. Nevertheless, Tsumatso isn't afraid to juryrig something when traditional repair techniques don't seem to suit the task.

ABILITIES

Strength	8
Dexterity	10
Constitution	8
Intelligence	12
Will	12
Personality	10

DURABILITY

Stun	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

SKILLS

Computer Science	13
Creativity	13
Investigate	13
Physical Science	13
Modern Ranged Weapons	11
Resolve	13
System Operation	13
Technical Science	13

EQUIPMENT

Combat Vest: This sleeveless jacket is made of light, flexible ballistic cloth that has also been treated to make it effective against energy weapons. Heroes wearing vests like this can deduct d4 points from any damage (either stuns or wounds) they receive from gunshots, explosions, or similar attacks.

Laser Pistol: This is a standard sidearm worn by many spacefarers. For the purposes of this adventure, a laser pistol can fire as many times as needed. Anyone shot by a laser pistol suffers d6 points of wound damage. It is impossible to set a laser pistol to cause only stun damage.



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Portable Tool Kit: These tools are specially designed for use on high-tech electronic devices like computers, communications systems, and so on. They prove beneficial in any attempt to diagnose system failures and repair or juryrig such equipment.

Also included in the tool kit is an assortment of mechanical tools designed for use on all sorts of machinery. Anyone attempting to fix or juryrig some manner of mechanism or engine would be well advised to have the portable tool kit available when working. In addition to pliers, a universal wrench, and the like, this kit includes a powerful laser cutting torch.

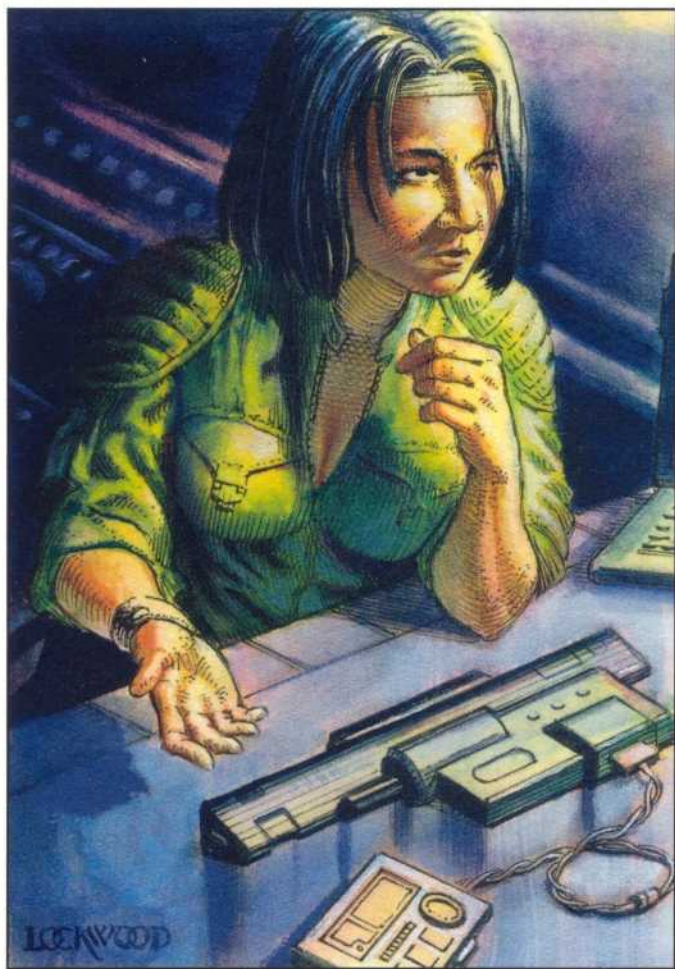
Spacesuit: Although they don't normally wear them, members of *Momotaro's* crew own protective spacesuits. A spacesuit allows its wearer to move about in the vacuum of space or other hostile environments. The suit is self-sealing, so most punctures (including those caused by a laser, knife, or such) do not destroy it, even though they harm the wearer.

1 How is the Game Played?

All roleplaying games operate in more or less the same way. No matter what kind of dice they use or what type of stories they tell, an RPG is based on verbal give-and-take between the Gamemaster and the players.

These exchanges begin when the Gamemaster explains to the players where their heroes are and what is going on around them. The more exciting and detailed these descriptions are, the better. In the adventure that follows, this part of the Gamemaster's job is already done. Each scene includes a short description that the Gamemaster can read aloud. For example, the following text describes the airlock on the outside of an alien ship:

You float in space outside of a drifting alien spaceship. Its hull is metallic green in color and pock-marked from the impact of countless micro-meteorites. The only apparent entrance to this strange vessel is what appears to be a circular door set in the side of the ship. Six small depressions form a ring some 4 inches in diameter at the center of the circle.



Once the Gamemaster has told the players where they are and what they see, it is up to them to decide what to do next. In most cases, they can talk about the situation and come to an agreement about what should be done. In some cases, such as during combat, the Gamemaster might ask them to respond quickly, without any discussion.

The players are also free to ask the Gamemaster for more specific information at this point. For example, a curious player might ask if the circular door is recessed into the hull at all or if the six depressions are all of equal depth. If the Gamemaster feels that the question is reasonably within the power of the hero to determine, she or he should answer it.

Sometimes players ask questions based upon an action they're thinking about taking. For example, someone might ask: "What will happen if we open the airlock door?" Since the only way to find this out is to actually do it, the Gamemaster should respond with something like: "The only way to find out is to do it." Also, since part of the puzzle at this point of the adventure is how to get the airlock door opened, the Gamemaster must be careful not to give away any secrets with his or her answer.

After hearing the description and asking for any additional information they might need, the players should tell the Gamemaster what they want their heroes to do. For example, one of the players might state that his hero is sticking his finger into one of the depressions. Another might decide to get her laser pistol ready in case something unexpected happens. The actions selected by the players are really limited only by their imaginations and creativity.

In some cases, players may be asked to roll dice in order to determine if their heroes succeed at an attempted action. This is dealt with later on in the section entitled Action Resolution. The important thing to remember right now is that heroes don't always succeed at everything they try to do.

Once the players have said what it is they want their heroes to do (and made any required dice rolls), the Gamemaster tells them the outcome of their actions. Using the example presented above, the Gamemaster might tell one player that the depression into which he stuck his finger is glowing with a faint red light. At the same time, the Gamemaster could tell the other player (who was drawing her laser pistol) that there is no obvious threat, but the gun is indeed ready for use.

This back-and-forth process of describing and reacting continues from here. In time, the players' heroes will explore the whole of the alien ship and, with a little luck and ingenuity, complete the adventure successfully.

Time and Movement

At most times, it isn't necessary for the Gamemaster to keep exact track of the movements of the heroes or the passage of time. If the heroes go to an electronics store in search of some repair parts, it matters little whether they spend 30 minutes or an hour transacting this business. Similarly, their exact positions within the store are not important in resolving the encounter.

During combat or other times of crisis, it can be very important for the Gamemaster to keep track of the passage of time. Knowing who gets off the first shot, for example, can be vital to the outcome of even the most minor skirmish.

At times like this, the game passes in a series of rounds. There are assumed to be 5 rounds per minute, so each round is 12 seconds in length. During each round, every hero or member of the supporting cast gets to attempt two things. For example, a hero who has fallen under attack might move to cover and open fire with her gun. In some cases, an especially difficult task might count as both of a hero's actions, preventing her from doing anything else that round. Truly difficult tasks might demand the hero's attention for even longer periods of time.

When combat or a situation in which actions are performed in rounds takes place, all of the heroes and supporting cast members on one side act, then all of the heroes and supporting cast members on the other side act. If more than two sides exist, each must be given a chance to act in turn. To determine which side goes first in this case, toss a d20 for each group. The highest score goes first, followed by the next highest, and so on, until each group has acted.

When a given group is entitled to act, its members announce and resolve their actions in the order of the heroes' Dexterity scores. The hero with the highest Dexterity acts first, then the next highest, and so on.

Action Resolution

An action is an attempt to do something challenging by one of the heroes. In general, there are two ways to resolve actions, depending on whether the action uses a skill or is not directly related to a skill: skill checks and feat checks. No matter what type of action you're attempting, when your roll a check you want to roll as low as possible on the dice.

The Basic Mechanic

No matter what type of action a hero attempts, a single basic system is used to resolve it. Once you understand this mechanic, you've mastered the heart of the ALTERNITY game system.

The Control Die

The basic mechanic used in the ALTERNITY game involves rolling either one or two dice. The first of these is always a 20-sided die and is known as the

Sample Actions

These are examples of what heroes can do in 1 round. Items marked with an asterisk (*) take the entire round. All other actions can be combined as desired. A good Gamemaster should be ready to rule on other actions suggested by players. Keep in mind that a round is only a little over 10 seconds long, so each action should take only 5 or 6 seconds.

► **Draw a Weapon/Ready a Tool:** Heroes are assumed to be able to get their guns out of their holsters, ready tools for use, or undertake similar tasks as one of their two actions. In the case of drawing a weapon, of course, this action can be combined with making an attack.

► **Make an Attack:** Making an attack might mean discharging a firearm, throwing a punch, or attempting to stab with a knife. In less structured combat, it might involve smashing a bottle over someone's head or employing some other improvised weapon. Heroes can do two things in a round, so it is quite possible for them to make two attacks.

► **Move:** Heroes can move about 10 meters (30 feet) as one of their actions. Beings can move twice, of course, increasing the distance traveled to about 20 meters.

► **Evade:** Heroes who think they are about to be attacked can announce that they are evading. This counts as one thing working against any attempt to attack them. Heroes cannot evade twice in 1 round in order to further increase the penalties to attacks made against them.

► **Hide/Seek Cover:** Heroes who take the time to get under cover are harder to hit if attacked or more difficult to detect with a search. Hiding or seeking cover counts as one thing working against any attempt to attack hidden people or locate them with a search. Heroes who are hiding cannot also evade or move.

► **Operate a Familiar Device:** Exactly what falls into the category of operating a familiar device is up to the Gamemaster, but common sense should be sufficient to determine when it applies. A hero entering commands into a computer would be using a familiar device. A hero attempting to disarm an alien security mechanism would not.

► **Operate an Unfamiliar Device*:** Operating an unfamiliar device might involve anything from a hero attempting to disarm a ticking bomb to a human making use of a control panel designed for nonhuman hands. Unlike most of the other actions listed here, this action takes the whole of a hero's concentration for the entire round. If the device is truly foreign, it may even claim a hero's attention for more than 1 round, as decided by the Gamemaster.

► **Provide Medical Care*:** A hero who has the medical pack can spend a round using it to treat the wounds of another hero (or himself or herself). Although medical packs are familiar devices, the nature of their use claims both of a hero's actions for the round. The person upon whom the kit is being used must also spend an entire round doing nothing other than being treated by the would-be physician.

control die. All things being equal, an action is resolved simply by rolling the control die and comparing the result to the skill or Ability being tested. If the die roll is equal to or less than the score associated with that Ability or skill, the action has succeeded.

The Situation Die

The average adventure places a hero in many different situations. Sometimes these are favorable, but as often as not they are detrimental. As might be expected, the environment around a hero and the factors around a given situation can make it easier or harder to succeed at a given action. The situation die is a d4, d8, or d12. Exactly how the Gamemaster decides which type of situation die is called for will be explained in a moment.







In order to determine whether or not the hero's action has succeeded, the hero's player rolls both the control die and the situation die. If the overall conditions surrounding the action are advantageous, the situation die is *subtracted* from the control die. On the other hand, if the situation is disadvantageous, the situation die is *added* to the control. If the result of these two rolls is below the Ability Score or skill score, the action succeeds. If the result is higher, the action fails.

Which Situation Die to Use?

When an action is attempted in anything other than average conditions, a situation die is rolled along with the control die. If the situation favors the hero, the result of this die roll is subtracted from the roll of the control die. If the situation opposes the hero's efforts, the result of the situation die is added to the number on the control die.

SITUATION DIE TABLE		
Die Picture	Die Type	Current Condition
	BONUS	-d12
		-d8
		-d4
	None	Nothing favorable or detrimental
	PENALTY	+d4
		+d8
		+d12

OVERALL ASSESSMENT SITUATION DIE TABLE

Die Picture	Die Type	Current Condition
	BONUS	-d12
		-d8
		-d4
	None	Nothing favorable or detrimental
	PENALTY	+d4
		+d8
		+d12

Unlike the control die, which is always a d20, the situation die might be a d4, a d8, or a d12. It is up to the Gamemaster to decide which type of die is the right one to use at a given time. The Gamemaster can use one of two methods to decide on the appropriate situation die bonus or penalty.

► **Total Up the Factors:** In order to determine the nature of the situation die, the Gamemaster need only consider the conditions in which the action is being attempted. The Gamemaster then totals up the number of factors that favor and oppose success to arrive at which situation die bonus or penalty to use.

If there are some things working for the heroes and some working against them, the Gamemaster can easily determine the type of situation die to use by weighing the number of beneficial and detrimental factors. If there are two things helping the heroes and two hindering them, they cancel each other out and no situation die is rolled. If there is only one thing working against the heroes and two things in their favor, this counts as a single thing in their favor and calls for a -d4 situation die bonus.

♦ **Example:** Let's assume that Carrie, in her role as Captain Javon Pendergast, is attempting to negotiate a better rate of payment for transporting a dangerous cargo for a patron. If Carrie has spent a little bit of money buying the patron a fine meal, the Gamemaster might rule that he is in a better mood to bargain. Thus, Stan might rule that that Carrie has a single thing working in her favor. This means the situation die would be a -d4 bonus. If she had also done business with this patron before and was known to be

an honest, reliable carrier, Stan might rule that two things were working in her favor. This would increase the situation die to a -d8 bonus. Lastly, if the patron were eager to get his goods off the planet for some reason, his motivation might also be considered to be an advantage. With all three things working in her favor, Carrie's situation die would be adjusted to a -d12 bonus.

The reverse of this process is used to determine the nature of a detrimental situation die. Suppose that Carrie were working at the same task, but had offended the patron by saying or doing something tasteless or inconsiderate. This would clearly be a disadvantage, so a +d4 situation die penalty is called for. Other factors can make matters even worse.

► **Go with an Overall Assessment:** Rather than making an itemized listing of each factor involved, Gamemasters should also feel free to simply assign a situation die based on a gut feeling for the situation. For example, if the heroes are caught in a raging ice storm, the Gamemaster could rule that this calls for a +d12 situation die penalty, even though it is only one thing acting against the interests of the heroes. The table at left summarizes this information.

Types of Checks

There are two major types of checks used in the ALTERNITY game. They are almost identical in use and resolution, however. A third type of check, used when heroes want to attempt something at which they are not skilled (also called *untrained*), is also described below.

Skill Checks

A skill check is attempted whenever heroes attempt to put one of their skills into use. For example, if the resident hacker of a group of heroes wants to break into an alien computer, she is going to have to use her Computer Science skill to do it.

Feat Checks

When heroes attempt to do something to which no skill applies, one of their Abilities is tested. Someone whose body is attempting to fight off a deadly venom must make a feat check based wholly on his Constitution score.

A feat check is made in exactly the same fashion as a skill check (described above). However, it is based upon one of a hero's six Abilities instead of his or her skills.

Untrained Skill Checks

Just because someone isn't trained as a pilot doesn't mean she can't take the controls and attempt to fly a planetary lander. Of course, the results are likely to be less than optimal.

In some cases, the Gamemaster may rule that a task attempted by an untrained hero has no chance of

Check Example

To illustrate rolling a check, let's consider our example of Carrie in her role as Javon Pendergast. Carrie is moving down a narrow cave on a swampy, alien world. She has her laser pistol in hand and is very nervous because she is aware that this place is crawling with dangerous predators.

Stan, as the Gamemaster, describes the scene by saying: "You move slowly down the tunnel, your feet splashing in puddles of green slime. The air is thick and humid, making it very difficult to breathe." He knows a sinkhole in the cave floor is concealed beneath a film of green filth that Pendergast is about to step on. Because Pendergast isn't aware of that, Stan says nothing about it to Carrie.

Stan asks Carrie to attempt a feat check on Captain Pendergast's Dexterity score. Although Carrie has announced that her laser pistol is in her hand, she hasn't said that her hero is being careful about where he steps. This is a strike against her, Stan decides, and announces that Carrie should add a +d4 situation die penalty to the roll.

Carrie tosses the dice. The control die (always a d20) comes up an 8. This would ordinarily be a success, since Captain Pendergast has a Dexterity of 10. However, the d4 situation die comes up as a 4, which is added to the result of the control die to make the final total roll a 12. This result is over Carrie's 10, so Stan tells her that her hero plunges through the apparently solid floor and slides down a natural chute to splash into a large cavern that is waist deep in thick, oily water.

Stan announces that something dark appears to be moving in the water on the far side of the cavern. Carrie swallows hard and says that Javon flicks his laser pistol's safety off. The dark shape rises out of the water and—well, we will get to that after we talk about combat.

success. After all, no matter how lucky an untrained person is, he cannot remove a deep tumor from a person's brain. This doesn't mean he can't try, of course, only that the patient will certainly be badly injured or killed outright.

If the Gamemaster decides that an untrained hero has a chance of success, she or he should determine which Ability Score is most applicable to the task and treat the matter as a feat check. In order to reflect the extreme difficulty of such an action, however, the check is made as if the Ability Score were only half its actual value.

Combat Example

Let's return to the example of Carrie in her role as Captain Javon Pendergast. Javon has his laser in hand and some manner of cave creature is surging toward him out of the darkness. Carrie announces that he is opening fire.

Stan, the Gamemaster, calls for a check on her Modern Ranged Weapons skill. As always, the control die is a d20. Stan rules that there is no situation die as the darkness (a disadvantage) is countered by the large size of the creature (an advantage). Carrie rolls the control die and is rewarded with a 10. This is below her skill score of 11 and indicates a solid hit.

Carrie's laser pistol causes d6 points of wound damage. The roll of this die indicates that 5 points of wound damage are inflicted. The creature has a soft, sluglike, unarmored body, so it must take the full force of the attack. The Gamemaster notes this by crossing off five of the creature's six wound boxes. One more point of damage would have slain the beast, ending the threat. As things stand now, however, the creature is only enraged.

The slug is equipped with a whiplike tail that it now lashes at Captain Pendergast with. Stan knows that the creature hits its target on a result of 12 or better (since the adventure supplies this information). Because it has been wounded, he decides that there is one thing working against the horror and imposes a +d4 situation die penalty to its attack.

The dice are thrown. The d20 control die comes up a 7 and the +d4 situation die increases this by 3 points to a 10—well below the target number of 12. A tendril that causes d4 points of damage has hit Carrie. Unlike Javon's laser pistol, this attack only causes stun damage. Stan rolls a die and announces the result, a 4.

Captain Pendergast's armor stops d4 points of damage, so Carrie tosses a d4. It comes up a 1, so 3 of the 4 points of stun damage penetrate her defenses. She crosses off three of Pendergast's stun boxes. If he suffers another 5 points of stun damage, *Momotaro's* owner is knocked unconscious. As things stand now, however, he is ready to take another shot.

◆ **Example:** Assume that Javon is trying to break into the computer system of a major corporation that refuses to honor its debt to him. He doesn't have the Computer Sciences skill, but Carrie argues that her hero is fairly familiar with the company's systems from past interactions. The Gamemaster agrees and allows Javon to make an untrained attempt based on

his Intelligence score. Because Javon's Intelligence is a 12, Carrie must roll a 6 or less in order to succeed. Even under normal circumstances, this is not easy to do. If one or more things is working against the action (as indicated by a situation die penalty), this can be almost impossible. Still, there's always the chance she will make a really low roll. . . .

Combat

In many respects, combat functions almost exactly the same way as other actions. When heroes want to open fire on an alien monster with their sidearms, for example, they roll checks on the Modern Ranged Weapons skill. By the same token, punches thrown in a barroom brawl are simply checks made on the Unarmed Attack skill.

What makes combat actions different from other checks are the results they bring about. A successful hit, for example, is going to injure the target. If the target is already wounded, it might even kill or destroy it.

Wounding

When heroes are successfully attacked, they suffer 1 or more points of damage. If the attack is less powerful, like a punch or unexpected blow, this damage is considered *stun* damage. More dangerous attacks, like a gunshot or explosion, inflict wound damage.

Exactly how much damage a weapon causes is determined by a die roll. A small sidearm, like the laser pistols worn by the heroes in this adventure, might inflict d6 wounds to its target. For every point of damage inflicted, players cross off one wound box on their hero sheets. (The boxes are found under the Durability heading.) If the attack causes stun damage, stun boxes are crossed off instead of wound boxes.

Heroes whose stun boxes are all crossed off are knocked unconscious and can't do anything but lie down or be carried by others until they awaken. In addition, when all of a hero's stun boxes are crossed off, further stun damage becomes wound damage. Heroes who cross off all their wound boxes are slain.

Heroes' Constitution scores (as explained below) determine the number of wounds that they can survive. The number of wounds that creatures like alien predators or security robots can survive is assigned by the adventure. The dictates of the adventure also determine the number of wounds that are inflicted by the claws of an attacking creature or the electrical touch of alien cyborg.

Unconsciousness

Heroes whose stun boxes are all crossed off fall unconscious. Unconscious heroes fall where they are and can undertake no additional actions until they are revived. Additional stun damage to them is

treated as wound damage, possibly killing the already unconscious heroes.

Beings who attack unconscious heroes are assumed to have at least one thing working in their favor (an unmoving target) and are thus entitled to a situation die bonus of at least a -d4. The Gamemaster might increase this advantage further if the attack is being made at close range, or she or he might even decide the attack is an automatic success.

Death

When players cross off the last of their heroes' wound boxes, their heroes have been slain. While an advanced medical facility might yet save the life of people in so dire a condition, that possibility is beyond the scope of this adventure. Thus, heroes who lose the last of their wound boxes are dead and out of the game.

Armor

At the start of this scenario, all of the heroes are assumed to be wearing a combat vest. This is a light, sleeveless shirt of ballistic reflective cloth that provides its wearer with some protection from enemy weapons. It is possible that the heroes might find other types of armor and use them over the course of the adventure. All armor works the same way, however.

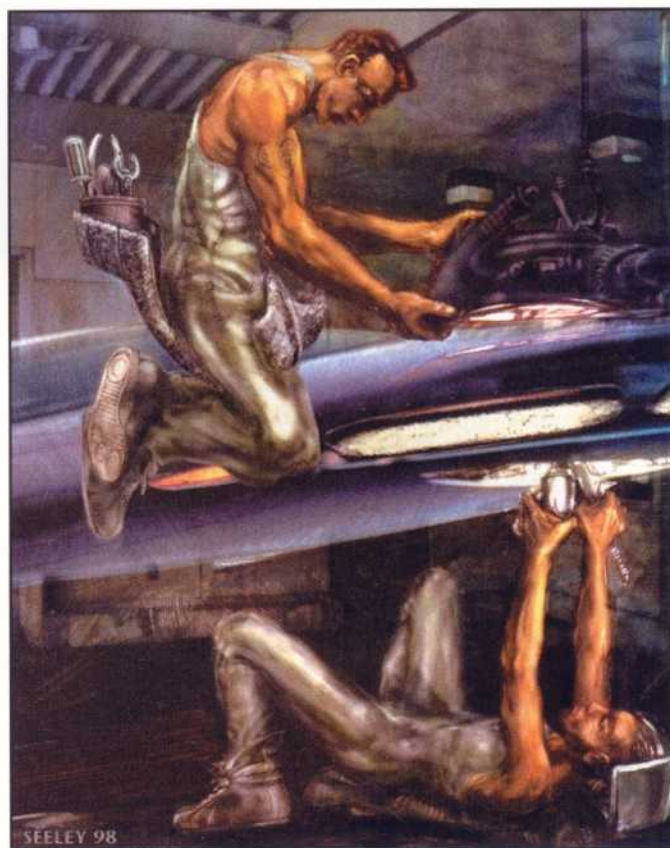
Armor serves to block damage inflicted by an attack. The number of points of damage stopped is determined by rolling a die. The type of die used varies with the nature of the armor. In the case of the combat vests worn by the heroes, for example, d4 points of damage are blocked. If the armor worn blocks more damage than the attack inflicts, then the hero escapes unharmed. It doesn't matter whether the damage is stun or wound damage, the number of points stopped is determined in the same fashion.

Some creatures have natural armor, like a thick exoskeleton. Robots and similar mechanisms also might be treated as if they were armored simply because of their metal construction. In both cases, however, the hide or metal construction is treated just as if the target were wearing artificial armor.

Medical Care

During the course of play, it may be possible for heroes to recover from some of their wounds thanks to medical care. This is the only way for heroes to heal their injuries during this adventure. The type of medical care available in this scenario can do nothing for someone who has been killed.

Stun damage is much easier to recover from than wound damage. A few sniffs of smelling salts, a little painkiller, and maybe a stimulant injection have unconscious heroes up and about in no time. At the end of every encounter (you will understand this term



better once we get to the adventure), Javon can use his medical pack once to restore all of each hero's crossed-off stun boxes. This requires a skill check. If the action fails, another attempt can be made after the next encounter. It is possible for Javon to heal stun damage to a particular hero many times over the course of the scenario.

Javon can heal stun damage even without his medical pack. Other heroes can attempt to heal stun damage as well, although they must have the medical pack to do so. An action attempted by any hero without the Medical Science skill to heal stun damage is considered an untrained Intelligence skill check and is much less likely to succeed. All of this is explained fully in the Untrained Skill Checks subsection of the Action Resolution section.

Wound damage is much harder to recover from than stun damage. Usually, only Javon can attempt to heal a hero's wounds and then only if he has access to his medical pack. The rules for using Javon's medical pack are presented in the Common Equipment sidebar (earlier in these rules) and on Javon's hero sheet.

If Javon is slain or incapacitated during this adventure, the Gamemaster might allow another hero to use the medical pack. If this is allowed, however, using the pack is considered an untrained Intelligence skill check and thus is not very likely to succeed.

GETTING STARTED

By this point, you have a pretty good understanding of the abbreviated *ALTERNITY* game rules we're going to use to run the adventure that follows. From here on, we're going to make an assumption that you (the person reading this booklet right now) are acting as the Gamemaster. The reasons for this will become clear as we move on.

Don't worry if you don't know exactly how everything is going to come together. The verbal back-and-forth between the Gamemaster and players will become natural as you play. Players will quickly learn which dice to use for action resolution and which dice determine how much damage their weapons do.

With that in mind, however, there are a few things you can do as the Gamemaster to help things along. Some of these have to do with the play of the game itself, while others are less concrete.

Picking Your Players

The adventure that follows is best suited for use by five people. Four of them assume the roles of the heroes while the last accepts the task of gamemastering (running the game). Obviously, you want to select friends who have an interest in science fiction adventures and are going to get along well. It is best, but not essential, for all the players to know each other before play begins.

Be sure the players you invite are interested in trying out the *ALTERNITY* game and are willing to give it their best effort. This will make the day more fun for everyone involved.

Picking the Location

The most important thing about the place in which the game will be played is that it should be comfortable. No one will enjoy the adventure in an area where they're cramped or unable to hear what's going on because of background noise. You also want to make sure that each player has enough room to lay out his or her hero sheet, take notes, and roll dice as needed.

For the above reasons, a kitchen or dining room table is often ideal. Other popular locations include

library meeting rooms or school game clubs. Of course, there's no reason everyone can't collapse into bean bag chairs or onto throw pillows and play on the floor. If everyone is comfortable, you've found a good place to play.

It is also a good idea to have some refreshments at hand. What kind of and how many refreshments will be dictated by the people to be involved, but a potluck environment where everyone brings something to share often works well. Remember, roleplaying games call for a lot of talking, so make sure you have something nearby with which the players can wet their whistles.

Picking a Hero

Before play can begin, the players each need to pick one of the heroes to call their own. It is always best to let the players decide who will play which hero. After all, some people would prefer the role of a brave space marine and others might favor being able to order others around in the role of a spaceship captain. If everyone is happy with the hero she or he has been given to run, the game is a lot more fun for everyone.

Once every player has been assigned a role, the Gamemaster should give out photocopies of the hero sheets presented earlier. Players are free to keep the information about their heroes on the sheets secret or share it as they see fit.

If you're short a player or two, simply have one or more players double up and run an additional hero. If other players arrive or can be found later on, the extra heroes can be passed along to them.

Explaining the Rules

It isn't important for all of the players to have a total and precise understanding of the rules presented earlier. Still, the Gamemaster should take a few minutes to go over the basics. The easiest way to do this is simply to go down the hero sheets and explain what each entry means. In this way, players become somewhat familiar with the things their heroes can and can't do and also learn how to read their hero sheets.

If you want, you can walk the players through the resolution of an action. This can be done just as well

the first time it comes up in the game, but some people like to do it ahead of time so that the first time a skill check or feat check happens it reinforces what you already discussed. Whenever you choose to explain action resolution, just make sure that every player has a chance to ask questions if she or he doesn't understand what's going on.

Last, make sure everyone understands that the whole reason you're getting together is to have fun. Remind them that roleplaying games are group activities in which they want to cooperate with the other players instead of directly competing with them.

Putting It All Together

Once all of the players have gathered and selected their heroes, the time has come to get started. Make sure you and the players have some dice close by, as well as some paper and pencils for note-keeping and recording combat damage on the hero sheets.

It should take about an hour to finish the mini-adventure *Encounter at Exile* that begins on the page following the map of the *Momotaro*. Some groups may go slower, causing the game to last longer, while more hasty players might finish it up early. This single episode gives everyone a taste of what an ALTERNITY game is like. If everyone is having a good time and wants to continue, then by all means move along into *Incident at Exile*, which continues the episode into a full-blown adventure.

Missing Skills

It is worth noting that there may be times in the course of any adventure when the heroes need a skill that they simply don't have. The adventure that follows was written assuming that all four of the player heroes would be available at all times. There are some cases where this may turn out to not be true. For example, if Javon is killed, the players are deprived of his Medical Sciences skill. Similarly, if there are only three players and no one has opted to use Orn's hero, the players might have to make due without her ability to pilot and navigate a spaceship (Vehicle Operation-space).

Keeping in mind the fact that the most important aspect of any game is having fun. The Gamemaster must be ready to bend the rules a bit here. Although the normal rules would mandate that untrained skill checks be made during such situations, these are difficult to succeed at and would almost certainly drag the adventure to a halt.

In order to keep things moving and make sure that everyone has a good time, the Gamemaster should allow feat checks to be used in such circumstances. The Gamemaster should determine the Ability used

for this check based on the nature of the missing skill. In some cases, more than one check might be needed.

◆ **Example:** Let's assume that the adventure is being played without Penn and his military skills. The heroes have reached the computer lab and are trying to defuse the bomb planted there. Because they don't have Penn's Demolitions skill available to them, the Gamemaster calls for a feat check on Intelligence to figure out how to disable the explosive device and then a Dexterity feat check to disarm it.

Momotaro

The heroes in this adventure comprise the crew of the starship *Momotaro*. This vessel is a transport ship outfitted to carry cargo and the occasional party of passengers. She isn't a fancy ship, but she is reliable and gets the crew and cargo where they need to go.

The diagram on the next page shows the interior of *Momotaro*. This diagram is provided for the benefit of the players even though it does not play a major role in the adventure. Having this deck plan on hand helps to set the mood for the players, much as the hero illustrations on the hero sheets do.

The exact characteristics of the ship, which might be important in a full-fledged ALTERNITY campaign, are not needed for this adventure. Still, players who are familiar with science fiction games are likely to be a little curious about just what *Momotaro* is capable of doing. For such eager souls, the following summary is provided.

Momotaro is a *Herald*-class ship, designed and built by the Lophir Dynamics Manufacturing Company. It isn't outfitted for combat, and it lacks any offensive weaponry and has a hull that is armored only enough to protect it from the occasional micro-meteorite impact.

When traveling through normal space, *Momotaro*'s antimatter-powered induction engines allow the ship to cruise at 1.5 astronomical units (139.5 million miles) per hour. For the curious, that's just about one-fifth the speed of light. When *Momotaro* engages her stardrive, she can reach a cruise speed of 2 light-years per day.

As a rule, ships of this size are too small to make a living as cargo haulers. Because of this, *Momotaro* specializes in highly profitable, sometimes dangerous, cargo. Although Captain Pendergast isn't a smuggler, he has been known to carry the occasional shipment with no questions asked if enough money is floated his way. He also makes his ship available for charter by passengers looking for quick, comfortable trips to other star systems.

At the start of this adventure, *Momotaro* has been hired to deploy a series of probes in the cometary belt at the edge of the Exile system. This assignment has gone without incident, and the crew has just completed the weeklong task.

Momotaro

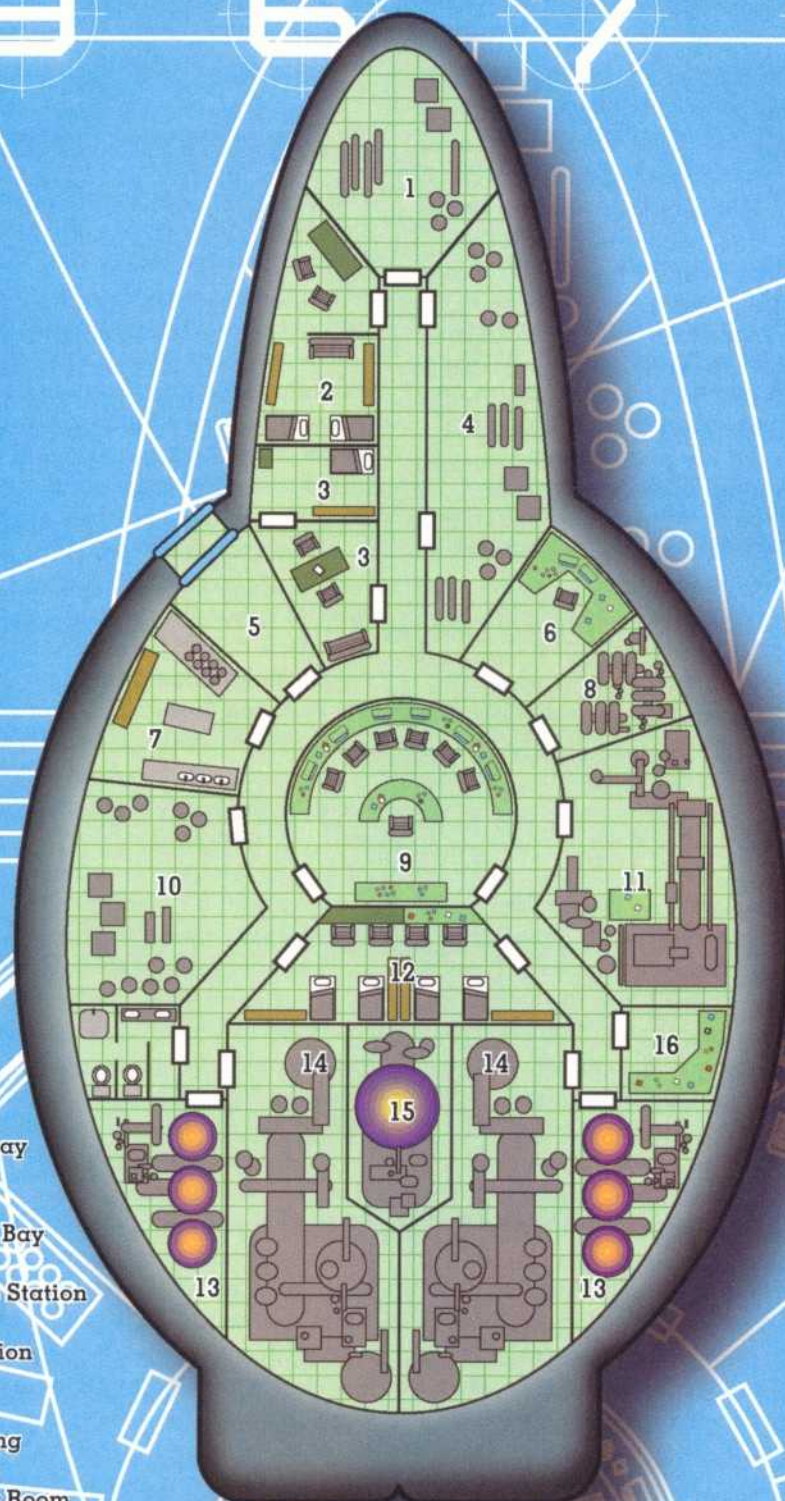
A Lophir Herald-class
Transport

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順美
怒 仁

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順青順

恩



- Momotaro Key**
- 1. Forward Cargo Bay
 - 2. Passenger Suite
 - 3. Captain's Cabin
 - 4. Starboard Cargo Bay
 - 5. Airlock
 - 6. Communications Station
 - 7. Galley
 - 8. Life-Support Station
 - 9. Command Deck
 - 10. Port Cargo Bay
 - 11. Main Engineering
 - 12. Crew Berthing
 - 13. Auxiliary Power Room
 - 14. Induction Engine
 - 15. Stardrive Chamber
 - 16. Computer Room



1 square = 1 meter

ENCOUNTER AT EXILE

The following few scenes serve to introduce the basic concepts of the *ALTERNITY* game to new players and Gamemasters. Everything the Gamemaster needs to run the game has been included in the text.

Boxed Text

Throughout the rest of this adventure, we present information that's intended to be read aloud by the Gamemaster to the players. We call this boxed text, because that's how it will be presented on the page. Here's an example from later in the adventure of how boxed text looks:

As *Momotaro* closes on the drifting spacecraft, you begin to realize that it is unlike any you have ever seen before. Clearly, human hands did not build this vehicle. Instead of being a solid mass of metal, it resembles a delicate matrix of narrow tubes anchoring almost two dozen bubblelike pods in a tangled mass. Such a craft must surely have been built in space, for it could never survive atmospheric flight or liftoff from a planet.

You don't have to read these words exactly as they appear. If you'd like to change the material to make it sound more like the way you speak, feel free to do so. Some people may want to add to the text, making it more evocative and descriptive. Others might be more comfortable with shorter passages and may cut out a few words. The important thing is that the players hear the general information presented in the boxed text.

Gamemasters can also get a feel for their roles through the boxed text. These descriptions are intended to tell the players what they see, hear, or are experiencing. They don't force the heroes to take any actions, put words in their mouths, or otherwise eliminate the free will of the players. The Gamemaster should always strive to make his or her own descriptions fit these guidelines. This may sound like a tall order, but it comes pretty easily with a little practice.

By Way of Introduction

To begin the game, call for everyone's attention. Thank them for coming and announce that it is time to begin

playing. Once that's done, you can read the following text to explain how things are going to work.

Today, we're going to work together to tell a science fiction story. Each of you assumes the role of a starship crew member on a mission to a star system at the edge of explored space. The hero sheets you've been given tell you about the roles you will be playing. You'll be working together to unravel the mysteries and overcome the dangers of deep space exploration.

As we play, I'll be the Gamemaster. Think of me as a combination narrator and referee. I'll be working with you to tell the story by describing what you see and what happens when you attempt to do various things. I'll present you with challenges and dangers, but that doesn't make me your opponent. I'll do my best to be fair and help you understand how the rules work.

If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them now, and then we can get started.

After everyone has had a chance to ask questions, you should ask the players each to briefly introduce themselves (or, rather, the roles they are playing). That doesn't mean having them read their hero sheets aloud but rather quickly summarizing them to set things up for everyone.

◆ **Example:** Our friend Carrie might say:

"I am playing Captain Javon Pendergast. I'm the owner of *Momotaro*, our spacecraft, and also a skilled physician. I love exploring the universe but often go out of my way to ease the suffering of others."

Once all this is done, you can get the ball rolling by moving on to the next section: *Something Unusual*.

Something Unusual

At the start of this adventure, the heroes need to know where they are and how they got there. In addition, they need to be told of any commitments or obligations that might exist. This information is summarized in the following boxed text:

One month ago, representatives of the Thorian Mining Company hired *Momotaro* to deploy a series of survey probes in the cometary belt at the outer edge of the Exile system. You've spent the last week doing just that, and now your work is done.

As you're getting ready to return to civilization, however, the ship's pilot notices something very unusual. At the extreme limit of the ship's sensors is a faint power source. The ship's computer can find no record of any other mission to this part of the star system, so what the source of this reading might be is a mystery.

Now, what would you like to do?

The time has come for the players to take over the task of storytelling. Of course, they may need a little prompting from the Gamemaster to get started. Just remind them to think of the sorts of things they've seen heroes do on shows like *Star Trek* or *Babylon 5*, and they will quickly catch on.

In most cases, of course, any course of action should be decided upon by group consensus. If there is some debate, however, Captain Pendergast has the last word. After all, it was Pendergast's money that paid for the ship. As captain, this player should guide the others in most situations.

The most likely things for players to try (and the results of these efforts) are to move the ship closer to the power emission source or to attempt to learn as much as they can about the emission by scanning it with *Momotaro's* sensor arrays. Both of these actions are detailed in the text below under the Moving Closer and the Scan the Object sections.

Moving Closer

It is very likely that the players will agree to set a course for the unidentified object. This is actually a two-step process that calls for the skills of *Momotaro's* pilot, Orn McAllister.

► Plotting a Course

The first step in any movement of the ship calls for a Navigation skill check on the part of the pilot. The following boxed text explains this to the players:

This part of space is filled with tiny bits of debris—mostly fragments of shattered comets and clouds of microscopic dust. To reach the unknown power source safely, Orn needs to use her Navigation skill.

This is a very simple action. Orn has a fully functional ship's computer to work with and plenty of time to double-check her work. We will call that two things working in the player's favor, so the situation die is a -d8 bonus.

Orn's player does not know if the course has been properly plotted. Because of this, the Gamemaster should secretly roll the d20 control die and the d8 situation die for Orn. Because the situation is advantageous (a bonus), the result of the d8 is subtracted from the d20.

If this total is equal to or less than Orn's Navigation skill score of 13, Orn has no problem plotting the ship's course. If this roll is higher than Orn's skill score of 13, she has made a mistake in her calculations. This is not obvious until Orn actually fires up the engines and starts toward the mysterious object.

► Flying the Ship

Once the course has been calculated, Orn can take the controls and start the ship moving toward the unidentified object. This calls for another action on the part of Orn's player. Piloting the spaceship is based on Orn's Vehicle Operation-space skill. The following boxed text describes the situation for the players:

Orn takes her seat at the controls and engages *Momotaro's* main drive. The stars outside the viewports wheel about as the ship begins to move through the black void of space toward the mysterious object.

If the Navigation skill check made earlier was successful, this action is assumed to be very easy. In such circumstances, the situation die is assumed to be a -d12 bonus. (Because this is an advantage, it is subtracted from the roll of the d20 control die.) If this action succeeds, the game continues with the subsection of the Scanning the Object section entitled Short-Range Scans.

If either the Navigation or Vehicle Operation-space skill check has failed, however, the situation turns dangerous. This is dealt with as described below in the Debris Field subsection.

► The Debris Field

In the event that Orn has made an error in plotting the ship's course and botched her piloting attempt, the ship is in peril. Orn has guided the ship into the middle of a dangerous mass of cometary debris. If *Momotaro* is to escape unharmed, her crew must act swiftly! The following boxed text sets the stage for this situation.

Without warning, a sudden shudder runs through the ship. This is followed quickly by another and another. Everyone aboard understands instantly what has happened: The ship has entered a pocket of cometary debris.

Before you can react, a very heavy blow strikes *Momotaro* and a large shower of sparks explodes from the control panel in front of Orn. She cries out in pain and falls out of her chair as the smell of burning flesh fills the air.

More and more fragments strike the hull, setting off the ship's automated collision alarm system. The main lighting fails for a second but is quickly replaced by the ruddy glow of emergency lighting. If you don't act fast, the ship will be torn apart by this battering!

At this point, Orn's player should be told that Orn has suffered some wound damage. Either the player or the Gamemaster should toss a d4 to determine how many wound boxes the player should cross off. The Gamemaster should also state that Orn is in a great deal of pain.

The burns on Orn's hands count as one thing working against any action she attempts until she receives treatment. Medical care is clearly in order. If Javon chooses to act, he can use his medical pack to eliminate the pain and restore some or all of the crossed-off wound boxes by making a Medical Science skill check. Javon's skill score is a 13. The control die is, of course, a d20. Because of the chaos surrounding the action, however, the Gamemaster should call for a +d4 situation die penalty. Javon's player rolls the two dice and adds them together. If the total is less than or equal to 13, the effort to administer aid has succeeded.

A successful Medical Skill check ends Orn's pain and indicates that some or all of Orn's damage is healed. Javon's player should roll a d6 at this point to determine how many of the crossed-off wound boxes Orn's player can erase the check marks from. Remember, however, that Javon's medical pack has only a limited number of uses, and so it might be wise for the players to wait until later in the adventure to use it. The players must make this decision themselves, of course.

At this point, the adventure continues with the next section, Saving the Ship.

► Saving the Ship

Whether or not Javon has succeeded in healing Orn, the ship's pilot almost certainly announces that she is going to fly the ship out of the debris field. Ordinarily, this would be an excellent course of action. As soon as she attempts to do this, however, the Gamemaster

should point out that the starship's helm is not responding. The shower of sparks mentioned above was caused by an overload that has made it impossible for Orn (or anyone, for that matter) to fly the ship.

In order to get the ship moving, someone is going to have to get the controls working. This calls for Muri Tsumatso's Technical Science skill. Muri must work moderately quickly, so her skill check has a single thing working against it. This single disadvantage calls for a +d4 situation die penalty to be added to the d20 control die when Muri's player rolls a skill check.

Muri's player rolls the dice and adds them together. If the result is equal to or less than Muri's Technical Science skill score of 13, the controls have been repaired. If this check fails, however, things are going to get even worse for the crew of *Momotaro* as described in the section entitled Battered and Broken.

Provided the controls are repaired, Orn can now take the controls again and try to get the ship out of harm's way. This calls for another skill check on Orn's Vehicle Operation-space skill. As with Muri's attempt to repair the controls, it must be made with a +d4 situation die penalty due to haste. Orn's player rolls the d20 control die and (because this is a disadvantage) adds the situation die roll to it. If the total of these rolls is equal to or less than Orn's Vehicle Operation-space skill, the ship is brought out of danger before any serious harm is done. (Move on to the Short-Range Scans subsection of the Scan the Object section.) If this action fails (because the roll is greater than 13), the adventure continues with the Battered and Broken section below.

► Battered and Broken

In order to reach this part of the adventure, things must have gone very poorly for the heroes. If the situation were more grave, the adventure might end here with the ship breaking up and the crew being killed. That wouldn't be a whole lot of fun, however, so a good Gamemaster always has a backup plan ready.

The following boxed text makes it clear to the players that things have not gone their way, but doesn't leave them stranded, doomed, or dead.

As suddenly as it began, the hammering on the hull ends. The ship tumbles out of the debris field as emergency lights call for your attention from every control panel. Alarm klaxons fill the air, and you can't help but feel that you've just had a very close brush with death itself.

At this point, the only thing to do is to get the ship repaired. This task falls primarily to Muri, although it can be assumed that everyone will help. Since the

technical officer is overseeing the work, however, the player running Muri should make this check.

The control die is, as always, a d20. Determining the type of situation die calls for a little bit of thinking, however. Certainly the conditions under which the repairs must be made are less than ideal. Many systems are off-line and others may fail as repairs are being made. We can consider this as one thing working against the action. On the other hand, Muri has help and plenty of time in which to work, which can be counted (as a whole) as one thing working in her favor. All things considered, it seems fair to rule that no situation die is required.

Muri's player rolls the control die and compares it to her Technical Science skill. If the roll is equal to or less than her skill score of 13, the action succeeds and the ship's systems are restored to life.

If the roll fails, the Gamemaster should announce that the repair efforts of the crew members have not yet been completed. They have spent 1 day making repairs, but they have more work ahead of them. Another check on Muri's Technical Science skill should be made the next day to see if the work is completed then. This process is repeated each day until *Momotaro* is functional again.

Penn's player may want to use his Leadership skill (which has a score of 9) to inspire his shipmates to continue with the repairs. There is nothing either favoring or working against such a skill check, so only the d20 control die is rolled. If Penn makes a successful check on his Leadership skill, the time spent on repairs is cut in half. Thus, instead of taking 24 hours for each of Muri's Technical Science skill checks, the Gamemaster can assume that each one indicates the passage of only 12 hours.

The reverse is also true. If Penn fails his attempt to rally the crew, he actually increases the time spent on repairs by 50%. Thus, instead of spending 24 hours for each of Muri's skill checks, the Gamemaster should announce that 36 hours have passed.

It might be noted that the flow of time at this point of the adventure isn't especially critical. Thus, the only real result of Penn's Leadership skill check is theatrical. However, Gamemasters should note that the use of role-playing skills like Leadership can be very important to the game. Things like this add flavor to the game, even if they don't change any of the numbers on anyone's hero sheet or otherwise have obvious game effects. And in other situations, the passage of time might be vital and so the successful or unsuccessful use of this skill might have a direct and measurable result.

► Getting Underway

Once the above scenes have been played through as needed, the ship can again close with the unknown object. This time, however, we needn't make any die

rolls. The demands of the storyline have been met by the first encounter with the debris field. Another such mishap would only be tedious.

In order to keep the players on their toes, however, the Gamemaster should feel free to roll some dice at this point and pretend to note the results. A nod of the head, a slight chuckle, and the players assume that more danger is at hand. If the players ask what this roll was for, the Gamemaster can simply say that they've noticed nothing unusual. When used properly, this technique can make the game more exciting for everyone.

Scan the Object

There are two possible approaches to this action. The first assumes that scanning is being done while *Momotaro* is still a long way from the unknown object. The events that surround such an effort are described under the heading Long-Range Scans. If the ship has begun to move toward the object, the adventure continues as described under the heading Short-Range Scans.

► Long-Range Scans

Although all starships are assumed to have some very advanced electronic sensors, the distance to the unknown object and the scattered debris of Exile's cometary halo limit the range of such equipment. In order to get any useful information at this range, *Momotaro's* computers have to analyze the data gathered by the sensors. This calls for a System Operation action, which might be attempted by either Muri or Orn. Both have skill scores of 13, so it really doesn't matter which of them tries it. If one of them fails, the other is free to attempt the action afterward.

Normally, there is no need to apply a situation die adjustment to the action. If the debris field battered the ship about, though, the Gamemaster should impose a +d4 situation die penalty to the task. This simulates that the ship, although fully functional, is still in less than ideal condition.

Should the skill check fail, the Gamemaster should tell the players that their ship is too far away from the object to detect it as anything more than a faint energy reading and a dot on the radar scope. If the System Operation action succeeds, however, read the following aloud:

Careful analysis of the sensor information by the ship's computer gives you a little more information. The object is about three times the size of *Momotaro* but is roughly similar in mass. The energy it emits is so faint that you wouldn't have picked it up at all if you were any further away.

After getting this information, it is very likely that the players will want to move the ship closer to the object and attempt to scan the object at shorter range. Moving the ship closer is covered earlier under the Moving Closer section.

► Short-Range Scans

After the ship has moved closer to the unknown object, the sensors can be used to get some additional data. The following information can be acquired without any skill checks being attempted:

The unknown object is clearly metallic and obviously artificial. It is giving off low levels of energy, as if it were in some sort of power-saving mode waiting for a command to come to life. There is no indication that the object is currently under anyone's control, since it appears to be randomly drifting and tumbling slowly through space.

As with the long-range sensor scans, a System Operation roll should be made in order to maximize the effectiveness of these readings. This is done exactly as described under the earlier Long-Range Scans subsection, with either Muri or Orn attempting a skill check against a skill score of 13. As this is a fairly routine procedure at short range, whoever makes the roll should apply a -d4 situation die bonus.

After turning the computer loose on the data acquired by the sensors, you're able to tease out a little more information. The object appears to have an irregular metal framework throughout which are scattered several solid nodes. Although there seem to be faint traces of power coming from the whole structure, one of these nodes gives off a stronger signal than the others, indicating that it might be the energy source for the whole ship.

Until *Momotaro* gets closer, that's all the crew members can learn about the object from their sensors.

► Visual Contact

After *Momotaro* has been moved closer to the unknown object and a short-range scan conducted, the next logical step is for the crew to get a close look at the object. This can actually be done at a fair distance using the ship's astrogation equipment. For the purposes of this adventure, however, that isn't really important.

The following boxed text describes the first good look the players have at the strange object at the edge of the Exile star system:

As *Momotaro* closes on the drifting spacecraft, you realize that it is unlike any spaceship you've ever seen before. Clearly, human hands did not build this vehicle. Instead of being a solid mass of metal, it resembles a delicate matrix of narrow tubes that anchor almost two dozen bubblelike pods in a tangled mass. Such a craft must surely have been built in space, for it could never survive atmospheric flight or liftoff from a planet.

The surface of the ship is pitted and pocked—clear evidence that it has floated here for a very long time. The drive is clearly antiquated and depends upon nuclear fusion to propel the ship through space. Script in a language unknown to humankind adorns the assorted nodes.

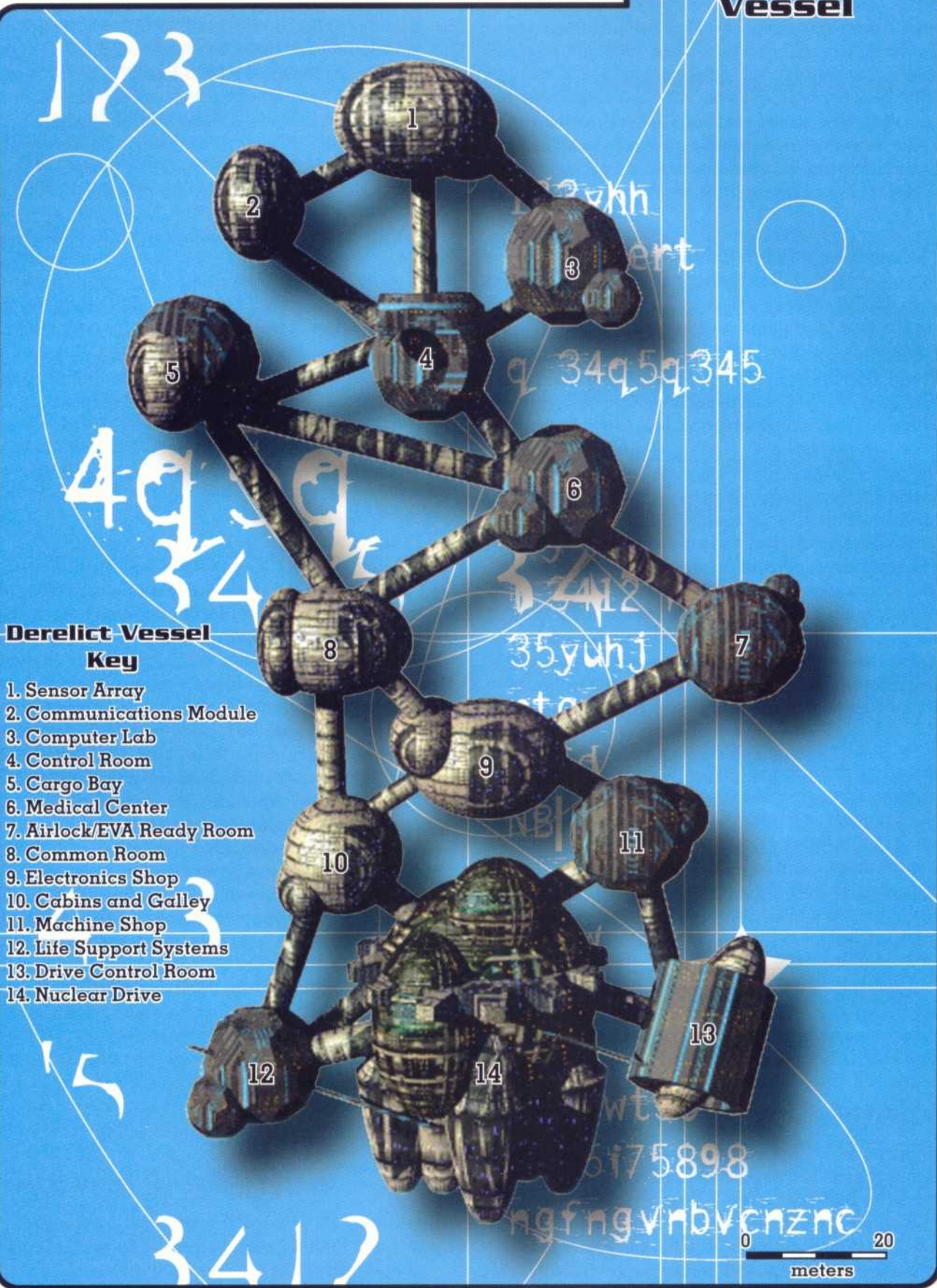
As the mysterious craft rolls slowly through space, you notice an opening in one of the nodes. It is clearly the open outer hatch of an airlock designed for something about two-thirds the size of a human astronaut.

A map of the alien vessel appears on the next page. You can show the map to the players if you wish, provided that you keep the map key covered when you do.

It is very likely that the players will want to turn the ship's sensors on the alien craft and attempt to pry out further secrets. Their efforts are rewarded with only static and confused readings. The makers of this craft (who are described in the next chapter) were very militaristic. They built this craft out of unusual alloys and draped it with electromagnetic fields designed to frustrate clear sensor readings of its internal components and crew. A scientific or military vessel with unusually sensitive detectors might be able to learn something about the interior of the ship in this way, but *Momotaro* is effectively blind.

If the players and Gamemaster wish to continue with the adventure, the alien vessel map is used to run the rest of the scenario.

Derelict Alien Vessel



Derelict Vessel Key

- 1. Sensor Array
- 2. Communications Module
- 3. Computer Lab
- 4. Control Room
- 5. Cargo Bay
- 6. Medical Center
- 7. Airlock/EVA Ready Room
- 8. Common Room
- 9. Electronics Shop
- 10. Cabins and Galley
- 11. Machine Shop
- 12. Life Support Systems
- 13. Drive Control Room
- 14. Nuclear Drive

0 20
meters

INCIDENT AT EXILE

The introductory scenes presented previously in the Encounter at Exile chapter should have provided the Gamemaster and players with a feel for how the ALTERNITY game is played. If everyone is having a good time, the players can continue on and have their heroes explore the interior of the alien spacecraft. On the previous page is a map of the craft. You can show this to the players whenever they ask to see it, provided that you keep the map key covered when you do.

Exploring the Alien Ship

The process by which the players move about and explore the alien ship is very simple. The ship is designed as a series of modules or nodes that are connected by a framework of metal supports. Each of these node chambers serves a specific purpose as indicated on the map key. A more complete description of each area is provided later on in the Scorange Ship section. By referring to these descriptions, the Gamemaster can easily adjudicate the rest of this scenario. In order to make this process clear, let's take a look at an important part of the scenario's design.

Each of the node descriptions includes a complete description of the things the heroes see in it, what might happen to them in it, and what they can do about those events. Each of these entries is presented in the following format:

First Impressions

Following a brief introduction that describes the basic nature of each module is a bit of boxed text. This tells the players what their heroes see as soon as the door to the module is opened. It gives them a basic idea of what lies before them so that they can formulate plans of action.

It is important to keep in mind that this description is far from complete. The players do not know exactly what is going on in a given area until they explore it a little bit.

Resolution

The next section is the real meat of the encounter. It provides the Gamemaster with a complete description of what's going to happen in this area. All of the infor-

mation presented here is intended for the Gamemaster only and should not be read aloud to the players. All of the details and descriptions here are reliable and complete, unlike the abbreviated description that the players receive in the initial boxed text.

This section also describes any actions that might seem logical for the heroes to attempt. The more likely ones are discussed in more detail than those that seem less probable. If the heroes try to do something that isn't covered here, the Gamemaster can use the information presented in this section to help resolve their efforts.

Moving On

Once the players have resolved the challenges of a given area, their heroes can move on to another node via the connecting tunnels, and the process of giving them their first impressions, dealing with the challenges presented in a locale, and moving on is repeated anew. Any special descriptions or closing comments about the node are presented here.

Entering the Ship

The only way into or out of the alien ship is through node 7, which serves as an airlock and ready room for spacewalks or similar missions outside the hull. As the heroes examined the ship at the end of the *Encounter at Exile* mini-adventure, they noticed an opening in the hull. This is the entrance to node 7.

Spacesuits and Spacewalks

In order to board the alien craft, each of the heroes has to put on a spacesuit and make a brief spacewalk. This is a fairly routine operation and probably does not require anyone to make a skill check or feat check. If someone tries to do something more than move from *Momotaro* to the airlock on the alien ship, however, the Gamemaster might call for a die roll of some type.

Moving around in spacesuits is not easy. They tend to be stiff and bulky. Because of this, anyone attempting any action while wearing one is slightly hindered by it. The result is that wearing a spacesuit counts as one thing working against any kind of physical action (whether firing a laser pistol or disarming a bomb). If all other things are equal, then, a +d4 situation die penalty is applied to such actions.

When the heroes first go aboard the alien spaceship, it has no internal atmosphere or pressure. (It is in vacuum.) This means the heroes have to keep their spacesuits on at all times. If they reactivate the power plant (in node 13), they can go to node 12 and turn on the ship's life-support systems. Once this is done, they can dispense with wearing spacesuits.

Common Characteristics

Each of the modules that comprise the alien ship is just shy of 20 meters in diameter and made of an unusual greenish metal. The composition of the ship's hull makes it impossible for those outside the ship to communicate with those inside it or to determine anything about the ship's interior via *Momotaro's* scanners.

Although the nodes are very similar to each other on the outside, they are very different within. The connecting tubes between the nodes are hexagonal in cross section inside a tubular outer skin and just over a meter and a half across in height. They are fairly confining when the heroes are wearing spacesuits, even though there is no gravity on the ship.

Free Fall

The scorange (the alien race who made the spaceship) never managed to crack the mysteries of artificial gravity. Because of this, the heroes float about as they move through the ship. Careful players may wish to have their heroes use tether lines and the like to secure themselves as they explore.

Because we're trying to keep things simple in this adventure, we will not worry too much about how this affects the explorers. It is assumed that they are comfortable enough with working in space that they can move about and operate fairly safely in such an environment. The Gamemaster should simply remember that the heroes are in a weightless setting and mention it from time to time to promote the mood and feeling of a science fiction adventure.

Hatches and Doors

There are two types of portals aboard the alien craft. The first of these, which the players encounter as soon as they move into the ship's airlock, are called hatches. These are sturdy barriers designed to withstand enemy attacks or exposure to dangerous conditions like the vacuum of space.

Defeating the lock on a hatch requires a System Operation skill check. They can also be removed through force with a laser rifle or cutting torch and a successful Demolitions skill check.

Doors are more common and much less sturdy. If the power is off (as it is at the start of the adventure), they can be opened via a simple mechanical latch located near their center. Once the power is on, they open like

the doors on the spaceships on the television program *Star Trek*, sliding cleanly out of the way into the wall when anyone steps near them.

Background Information

The spacecraft encountered by the crew of *Momotaro* was built long ago by an as-yet-undiscovered alien race that calls itself the scorange. It is not as advanced as the starship that has brought the heroes into the Exile system, but it has secrets nonetheless—secrets that can only be brought to light when the heroes go aboard the derelict.

In this section, the Gamemaster learns the story of the alien craft and the unusual creatures that built it. The information is not intended for the Gamemaster to read aloud or to be summarized for the players. (However, clever players may find ways to learn parts of it.) The information is provided here to give the Gamemaster information she or he might find useful as the game goes on. If the players try to do something that isn't covered by the text that follows, this background information will be helpful in resolving their actions. By reading this, the Gamemaster will learn about the scorange, the craft they built, and the fate that befell it.

This information is divided into two parts. At the start of the adventure, the players could know the first part. It represents the knowledge available to the heroes via the library system in the *Momotaro's* computers (if they think to use the computers).

What the Players Know . . .

The following information is available to the players at any time during the course of the adventure. The Gamemaster shouldn't feel the need to read it all aloud to them before the game. She or he should hand it out in response to questions asked by the players. As a rule, most of the information can be assumed to be drawn from the memory of *Momotaro's* advanced computer library.

The Exile System

At the center of the Exile system is a common G-class star not unlike our own sun. Unlike our own solar system, however, Exile's star is circled by only four worlds. Only one of these, the second world, is suitable for human life.

The first planet, Aristides, is a small, dense world washed over by a constant storm of solar radiation. It has an atmosphere that is more or less similar to Earth's, but even at the poles it is hotter than equatorial Africa. At the equator, Aristides is hot enough to boil water.

The second world, which initial surveyors dubbed Cicero, is the homeworld of the scorange (see below). It has a lighter gravity than Earth does and is much warmer than Earth, although its temperatures do not range beyond the upper limits for human habitation. Cicero is a dry world, with no major oceans, although a few minor seas dot its surface. It has a stormy atmosphere driven by abundant volcanic activity. Cicero has a single moon, although this irregular natural satellite is little more than a captured asteroidal fragment.

The third and fourth worlds, Alexander and Rivera, are massive gas giants similar to Jupiter. Both are orbited by a scattering of moons and encircled by beautiful ring systems.

The Scorange

The aliens who built the drifting spacecraft the heroes have encountered were known as the scorange. They inhabited the second planet in the Exile system some five centuries ago. At that time, their civilization had become advanced enough for them to launch large spacecraft and explore their star system. They had not developed any form of faster-than-light drive, however, and never made the leap to the stars.

The scorange were a race that, in earthly terms, might be described as insectoid. They spread across the surface of their world just as humanity did on Earth. Compared to the scorange, however, the human race was passive and gentle—free from war and aggression. The nature of the scorange led them to an almost constant state of war, with hive nations battling other hive nations constantly.

When the scorange became advanced enough to build nuclear-powered craft, they began to extend their conflicts into the void beyond their world. In addition, they also dispatched scientific missions. It is the relic of just such an expedition that the crew of *Momotaro* has found. Even as they began these voyages, however, the use of nuclear warheads on the scorange homeworld was rapidly making the planet uninhabitable.

The final destruction of the scorange as a race came some 500 years ago. For many decades, it had become apparent that their aggression and reckless warfare was destroying their world. Instead of halting this madness, though, the scorange appear to have opted for racial euthanasia. When it became apparent that the point of no return had been reached, the scorange seem only to have escalated their warfare, with each hive nation determined to strike the last blow.

Ashes of the Scorange Civilization

Cicero, the scorange homeworld, shows the scar of endless wars. Circular craters, the remnants of nuclear weapon explosions, dot its surface, and the back-

ground radiation levels are well beyond safe for most living creatures. Large areas of the surface, especially the ruins of scorange cities, are contaminated with chemical agents and stubbornly persistent biological weapons.

Many of the biological and chemical agents used by the scorange are not dangerous to humans, having been geared to affect the alien biology of their designers. Enough of these weapons are toxic to humans, however, that it is very hazardous to explore this world without careful precautions.

In addition to these hazards, the ruins of scorange military, scientific, and government bases are often protected by booby traps and intruder defense systems. These defensive systems are often very complex and deadly and require the attentions of specially trained military personnel in order to disarm them.

What They Can Learn . . .

When the last radio transmission on the scorange homeworld faltered and died, several scorange spacecraft were engaged in various military and scientific missions. None of them, however, had the ability to survive for long without the support of their hive nations. Within a year, each and every scorange astronaut followed his or her fellows into oblivion. Among the last to go were the inhabitants of the craft found by Captain Pendergast and his crew.

The craft encountered by the heroes was built in space and designed for a mission to explore the outer regions of the Exile system. It had a combined military and scientific mission. On the surface, this vehicle looked like nothing more than a survey craft dispatched to gather information about the cometary halo surrounding the Exile system. In addition to this mission, however, it was also expected to redirect several large fragments of cometary debris so that they would tumble inward and impact the extraplanetary bases of rival hive nations.

The final battles on the scorange homeworld wound down long before the redirected comets ever struck their intended objectives. By the time these carefully shunted fragments of stone and ice hit their targets, no one was left alive for them to destroy.

In the end, as their life-support system was failing, the crew members opted to end their lives quickly in the vacuum of space. They all stepped into the airlock node and opened the outer door. Within seconds, every one of them was sucked into space to become a permanent part of the cometary halo.

Before they left the ship, however, they activated the intruder defense system common to all scorange spacecraft. At that time, of course, none of them expected the craft to be visited by anyone, especially travelers from the stars, but tradition called for



anything they left behind to be booby-trapped in some way so as to prevent it from falling into the hands of an enemy.

The Hunter

In addition to the traps and other safety measures scattered about the ship by its scornge crew, a

HUNTER ACTIVITY

Die	As the heroes explore this
Roll	node they . . .
1	do not notice the hunter as it stalks them.
2	have a feeling that they're being watched.
3	spot movement but get no clear look at the hunter.
4	are attacked if they let their guard down.
5	are attacked as they explore the area.
6	are attacked when they start to leave.

deadly mechanical watchdog has been left behind. This automated killing machine is cunning and remorseless.

Unlike the other traps left behind by the scornge, the hunter moves about from place to place. It stalks the heroes as they explore the ship, looking for a chance to attack them when they aren't ready and then surging forward. A skillful Gamemaster can use this device to drive the heroes on when they're slowing down or to spice up the adventure when it is starting to drag.

As a rule, the hunter does not attack the heroes when they first move into the ship via the airlock module. Instead, it waits until they've moved deeper into the ship.

Whenever the explorers enter a node (even if they've already explored it) the Gamemaster should roll d6 on the Hunter Activity table to determine what the hunter does.

The Gamemaster is also free to ignore the table and choose the robot's actions. If the heroes leave themselves wide open to attack, for example, the hunter strikes instantly. Likewise, if they've arranged an excellent defense, it bides its time.

The robot does not fight until it is destroyed. As a rule, it retreats when half of its wound boxes are crossed off. When it retreats the first time, the heroes will probably believe they've driven it off for good. In truth, however, it comes back as soon as it has had a chance to repair itself.

The Gamemaster can use the hunter robot to create the sort of horror action depicted in films like *Alien*, *Terminator*, or *Predator*. If handled carefully, this gives the players a few scares and make the game far more exciting. Care must be taken, however, not to overdo it. You want to keep the players on edge and having fun, not kill off their heroes.

If the hunter is proving too tough for the heroes, the Gamemaster should forget about keeping a tally by crossing off its wound boxes and simply announce that it has been destroyed the next time a hit is scored on it. If the heroes are able to heal their wounds later on and the Gamemaster wishes to spice things up again, another hunter can be loosed on them.

Memory Shards

The scornge computers make use of holographic crystals for data storage and retrieval. Several of these are scattered about the abandoned alien ship. If recovered and examined, they provide a history that the heroes may find entertaining.

Finding the Crystals

These crystals are generally easy to find once the heroes go to the nodes where they were left. There are three crystals that tell the story of the construction and launching of the scornge ship, its mission in the cometary halo, and the destruction of the planet Cicero.

Reading the Crystals

In order to read the crystals within the context of this adventure, the heroes need to have the portable computer with them. (Orn usually has this.) Alternately, if they think to return them to Momotaro, the heroes can try to read the crystals there.

In order to read one of these crystals, the heroes have to make either a Computer Science or Technical Science skill check (or untrained skill check, if they don't have those skills). As to the situation die for the check, if the heroes have gotten their hands on the alien electronic tools, the tools count as one thing working in their favor. If they've managed to interface the portable computer with the alien main frame, this information counts as another thing in their favor. Other factors affect the outcome as decided by the Gamemaster.

Once the heroes managed to read one of the crystals, they should have little trouble reading the others. To reflect this, the Gamemaster should rule that later attempts to read the crystals are always made as if three things were working in their favor (that is, with a -d12 situation die bonus).

The location of the various crystals is called out in the descriptions of the various nodes of the scorange ship given in the large Scorange Ship section following this one. Data crystal 1 is found in the cabins and galley (node 10), data crystal 2 is found in the computer lab (node 3), and data crystal 3 is found in the control room (node 4). The specific information recorded on each crystal is as follows:

► Data Crystal 1: Launch

This crystal shows the construction and launch of the alien spacecraft. When the crystal is hooked up to some manner of data player (like the portable computer), read the following to describe the images it reveals:

There is a moment of static and then the computer screen resolves itself into the familiar blackness of space. Suspended against this backdrop of stars is a vast tangle of bubbles and conduits. It reminds you very much of a giant version of the spacecraft you are even now exploring. After a few seconds, a brilliant glow flares to life and a portion of the structure begins to pull away from the rest. You recognize this piece as the vehicle beneath your feet.

Suddenly, the image is gone, replaced by a graphic representation of the Exile system. A thin line begins to move outward from the second world in a long arc away from the sun. This display lasts for nearly a minute, just long enough for the line to stretch outward and reach the cometary halo.

Then blue static explodes onto the screen. After a few seconds of digital chaos, the images repeat themselves.

The Hunter

The hunter robot is an intruder defense system set by the aliens. It moves about in zero gravity by using jets of propellant.

ABILITIES

Strength	16
Dexterity	10
Constitution	16
Intelligence	10
Will	12
Personality	4

DURABILITY

Stun	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

SKILLS

Melee Weapons	17
Modern Ranged Weapons	11
Technical Science	11

EQUIPMENT

The following equipment has been built into the hunter robot. The heroes cannot remove and make use of any of these devices without breaking them.

Armor: The body of the hunter robot is constructed of an advanced polymer laminate that protects it from harm. This allows it to deduct d4 points damage from any successful attack upon it.

Laser Carbine: This weapon is built into the body of the hunter robot and can fire a beam of deadly coherent light each round. It inflicts d8 points of wound damage to its target, making it more powerful than the laser pistols carried by most of the crew members, but less deadly than Penn's laser rifle.

Cutting Blades: The hunter robot is equipped with a number of cutting edges that can slash and lacerate. They can be used to make one attack per round against any and all heroes within a yard or so of the robot. Thus, if two of the explorers are near the robot, both can be attacked. A slash from the hunter's cutting blades inflicts d4 points of wound damage on a successful strike. It attacks with these blades using its Melee Weapons skill.

Automated Repair: The programming of the hunter robot allows it to repair itself by scavenging equipment from the rest of the ship. Between each encounter with the heroes, the hunter attempts a Technical Science skill check to repair itself. If it succeeds, it erases check marks from d8 crossed-off wound boxes and all of its stun boxes. Even if it fails, it automatically erases check marks from half (round down, minimum of 1) of the stun boxes it has marked off between each encounter.

► Data Crystal 2: Close Encounter

The information stored on this crystal is a brief summary of the mission undertaken by the alien craft. It shows the scorange visiting a comet and redirecting it to fall upon a space outpost belonging to another hive nation. When this crystal is decoded, it produces the following image:

A burst of blue static fades into the image of an alien face. There's something cold and malevolent in its eyes, but you can make nothing of the chirping words that flow from its mouth. After a minute or so of indecipherable narrative, the face fades away.

It is replaced by the image of a tumbling body of snow, ice, and rock rolling across empty space. The lattice of an alien spacecraft drifts into the scene and a number of spacesuited figures leave the ship.

Another change of scenes brings to life an electronic depiction of the Exile system. A bright pulse of light shines fiercely and briefly at the fringes of the display. In its wake, a yellow line traces a slow arc inward. It loops once around the sun and then appears to intercept the innermost planet. A halo of crimson flames rise around that world and the entire screen goes black.

A few seconds later, blue static flashes to life and the images repeat themselves.

► Data Crystal 3: Disaster

This crystal tells the story of the disaster that swept across the scorange homeworld. It features images of the holocaust, but it doesn't show the final actions taken by the crew. That's something the players have to deduce for themselves.

When the crystal is activated, it displays the following images:

This recording begins with a stream of green text across a red background. This flashes by at incredible speed and is replaced by the face of alien creature. The thing looks old and weary as it speaks slow and deliberate words whose meaning you can't begin to guess at. As this monologue continues, a blurry image replaces the face. It depicts the sprawling towers of an alien city that is alive with lights and movement. For a second, this image seems calm enough. Then, a pinpoint of brilliant light explodes at the center of the scene, spreading out to consume the city.

A rotating planet appears suddenly on the screen—a delicate mass of blue-green seas and swirling white clouds. On its darkened half,

bright lights mark the location of numerous major cities. Over the course of the next few minutes, bright balls of burning light blossom here and there across it. More and more of them appear with each passing second until the entire image is replaced with a hissing field of static.

For a few seconds, this electronic blizzard roars violently at you. Then, the images of destruction replay themselves again.

► Other Crystals

The Gamemaster is free to add other crystals to the adventure. Remember that these were the standard recording media of the scorange. Some crystals might have examples of their dramas or music, others might be taped classes or documentaries, and still others might be technical manuals. As a rule, most topics are impossible to understand without a successful Culture skill check. (Javon has this skill.) If this check fails, the Gamemaster should describe the material recorded on the crystal as a jumble of confusing images, dialog, and strange sounds.

When Everyone's Ready

Once the players decide to continue on with the adventure, the Gamemaster should read the following boxed text aloud to them. It sets the stage for what is to come and gives them an idea of their goals.

The craft floating in space before you is not like any you've ever seen before. Although it is not the technological equal of your own, it is certainly of considerable value to the scientific community. If you can manage to get the drive operating and guide the relic back into the inner system, there is little doubt that your rights to this find under interstellar salvage law will be recognized and protected. There's money to be had here, as well as the thrill of discovery.

The Scorange Ship

What follows hereafter is a section-by-section description of the scorange vessel and the activities that the heroes can pursue in each of its spaceship nodes (or the events that are triggered when the heroes enter the nodes). Each node (ship section) entered constitutes a new encounter. The heroes enter the ship at node 7.

1. Sensor Array

At the leading edge of the alien ship is a module filled with electronic sensor equipment. This part of the ship was not normally manned. It was simply a bay in which the avionics equipment was placed.

Because of the importance of this equipment, all of the tubes connecting this module with the rest of the ship terminate in sturdy hatches.

This area is tightly packed with a wide variety of compact electronic equipment. Although the exact functions of these devices are impossible to guess, it is clear that you have found the ship's vital electronic sensors and navigation equipment.

There is nothing dangerous in this part of the ship if the power has not yet been restored. If energy is flowing through this equipment, however, it can be very hazardous.

▶ **Anyone who pokes around in this alien gear** is likely to break something or cause other problems. If the heroes start poking their noses into the equipment (punching buttons, opening panels and peering at circuits, and so on), the Gamemaster should read the following boxed

As you examine the equipment, a sudden shower of sparks fills the air. A jagged fork of lightning leaps from the circuitry and races across your body, searing your flesh and causing you to cry out in pain.

No serious damage has been done to the ship's equipment, since backup systems have already taken over for the affected components. The hero, however, suffers d6 points of wound damage and should cross off the appropriate boxes.

▶ **When the explorers are ready to move on**, they find conduits that lead to nodes 2 (the communications module), 3 (the computer lab), and 4 (the control room).

2. Communications Module

The communications module handled all of the ship's contact with its homeworld. As a part of the security precautions enacted when the captain decided to abandon the ship, an explosive charge was set off in here. While this destroyed all of the codes and other information that an enemy might find useful (as intended), it did not break through the hull.

Secured hatches slow the heroes' attempts to enter and explore this area, but they are not faced with any other type of defensive system.

The interior of this module is burned and blackened. Torn and twisted metal fragments drift slowly about. The few pieces of equipment that as if they were pulled from the embrace of a blast furnace.

There isn't a whole lot to be learned here. Still, the heroes could find a few clues.

▶ **Muri or Orn can examine the equipment** in this room by making a System Operation skill check. Success at this attempt allows either of them to deduce that this was the communications bay and that the crew kept in touch with their homeworld via common radio by using this equipment.

▶ **Penn can determine something about the explosion** by making a successful check on his Demolitions skill. If he can roll equal to or less than his skill score of 9, Penn is able to deduce that the damage in this room was caused by an explosive charge that was almost certainly detonated intentionally.

While this information may not help the heroes much at this point, it might prove of interest to them when they encounter the unexploded device in node 3.

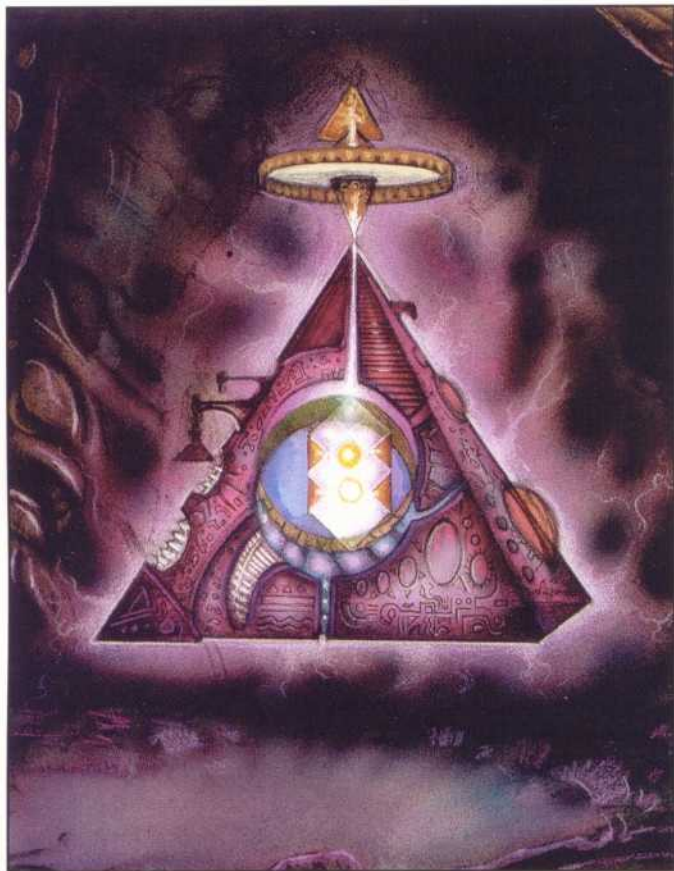
▶ **After the heroes have finished here**, conduits carry them to either node 1 (the sensor array) or 4 (the control room).

3. Computer Lab

This is the ship's brain. Every aspect of its function is controlled from here. It was supposed to have been destroyed by an explosive charge, just as the communications module was. The device set here failed to detonate, however, and has sat here for several hundred years waiting for something to set it off.

Secured hatches connect this node with the rest of the ship. There is no standard ship's defense mechanism here, just the egg-shaped, armed, and undetonated bomb sitting in the middle of the floor.

A pair of large, hemispherical electronic devices are anchored to a pyramidal framework of metal conduits at the center of this room. Numerous screens and banks of lights cover them, but the screens are as dark and cold as the depths of space outside and none of the lights are lit.



Attached to the surface of this assembly by what appears to be a magnetic clamp is an egg-shaped device. Clearly, this was not part of the original equipment installed in this module, as it appears to be made of a different type of metal than what is used on the hemispheres and is a lighter color. A rapidly flashing green light on the ovoid device throws splashes of color throughout this room every second or so.

The device with the flickering light is a powerful explosive charge. A failure in its timing mechanism has prevented it from detonating, which it should have done several hundred years ago.

As they look around the room, the heroes also come upon data crystal 2 resting on part of the framework holding the two large hemispheres. The use of this crystal is described in the earlier Memory Shards section. If the heroes are able to decode the information it carries, they learn a little bit about the mission on which this craft was sent several centuries ago.

► **If any of the heroes examines the bomb,** they may recognize it for what it is. This requires a skill check on Demolitions (for Penn) or Technical Science (for Muri or Orn). In Penn's case, his familiarity with such devices counts as one thing working for him in determining the situation die. The reverse is true for

Muri or Orn, who are not as conversant with such things. They begin the action with one thing working against them.

Failure at this action means that the device is mistaken for something else. The Gamemaster should simply point out that the heroes can't tell what it is and let them speculate. If they choose to believe it is a bomb, that is fine—provided that their theories are not confirmed.

► **If the bomb is recognized, someone will almost certainly want to disarm it.** The hero best suited to this task is, of course, Penn. Although the device is of alien construction, coincidence has made it fairly similar in design to human explosives. This allows Penn to make his skill check without anything working against him. Remember, of course, that the wearing of a spacesuit is still considered one thing working against him if he is still in his. If Penn has access to the alien electronic tools (found in node 9), this counts as one thing working in his favor.

Muri or Orn can try to disarm the bomb, using a Technical Science skill check. Their inexperience with explosive devices counts as one thing working against them in this action. Thus, if wearing spacesuits, they almost certainly have a situation die penalty of +d8, making success very unlikely. The alien electronic tools can be used to count as one thing working for them, reducing the situation die penalty to +d4.

A failed attempt to disarm the bomb causes it to detonate. This blast not only destroys the computer, it injures or kills everyone in the node. Any hero in node 3 must cross off d8 stun *and* d8 wound boxes from the force of the blast. Explorers who are actually attempting to disarm the device suffer even more damage, being forced to cross off d12 stun *and* d12 wound boxes.

► **If the heroes don't try to disarm the bomb,** they are actually in no danger until the ship's power is restored. There is no contact or motion fuse on the device, only a timer. Any hero can pull the bomb free of the computer by making a simple Strength feat check. Once it has been removed from the computer, it can be carried easily to the airlock (node 7) and tossed away into space.

The bomb does explode if any of the heroes shoots it or tries to destroy it. If the bomb goes off, everyone in the node suffers damage as described above (under the previous arrow point). It also detonates if the ship's power is restored before it has been removed or disarmed.

In the latter case, of course, it is unlikely that the heroes are in the computer room. If the bomb is detonated while the heroes are somewhere else in the ship, the Gamemaster should inform them that a sudden, violent tremor has passed through the hull.

► **If the bomb explodes while the heroes are not in the room**, the computer is destroyed. The heroes may jury-rig Orn's portable computer in place to substitute for the alien computer. (They will have to leave it here once they do, though.) This requires a successful Technical Science and a successful Computer Science skill check. Because the heroes are trying to mesh an alien system to one of their own to run the alien vessel, one thing is working against them already and adds a +d4 situation die penalty. If they have and use the alien electronic tool kit from node 9 (the electronics shop), this counts as one thing in their favor, providing a -d4 situation die bonus and possibly canceling out the penalty that they already have.

► **It might be possible to hook Orn's portable computer up to this equipment** in order to learn something of the alien nature of the ship's technology. Doing this requires a skill check on Computer Science. If the alien electronic tool kit has been assembled, this counts as one thing working in the hero's favor when attempting this action.

Failure at this action destroys the portable computer's programming, since the alien data overloads it. If this happens, the portable computer is unavailable for the rest of this adventure.

Success at this action fills the computer with useful information about the alien technology. This counts as one thing working in favor of the heroes whenever they deal with alien controls or technology in any way. This includes activating the life-support systems in node 12, bringing the nuclear reactor on line in node 13, or nudging the ship on its way back into the inner system in node 4, the control center. If the computer information is used in conjunction with the tool kits from nodes 11 and 9, there are two things working in the heroes' favor.

► **Once the heroes have finished in this room**, they may continue on to node 1 (the sensor array) or 4 (the control room).

► **The heroes can finish up the adventure** at this point if they have managed to do the following:

- (1) Restore power to the ship (in node 13).
- (2) Not detonate the bomb here (in node 3) or jury-rig the portable computer to serve as a replacement for the computer if it has been blown up.
- (3) Understand the basic nature of the astrogation and piloting control areas (in node 4).

If all of these conditions have been met, the Gamemaster can conclude the adventure by flipping to the section entitled Wrapping Things Up near the end of this book.

4. Control Room

All of the ship's operations were guided from this node. Heavy security hatches block entrance to the area and a deadly intruder defense system lurks inside.

If the heroes have managed to restore power to the ship (in node 13) and disarmed the bomb in the computer room (node 3), they can fire the ship's engine's from here and start it on a long, slow orbit back into the system. Once the heroes done this, the adventure is at an end. Information about this is presented later in this node section.

This module is clearly the control center or bridge of the spacecraft. Eight horseshoe-shaped banks of instruments each curve around a bulky acceleration couch at even intervals about the room. A pale green illumination flows outward into the node from a hemispherical lighting assembly suspended from the center of the ceiling.

► **As soon as someone enters this module** an intruder defense system is activated. This system uses a series of motion detectors scattered around the command center to guide a laser weapon inside the light fixture. It locks on to the first person who enters the room and continues to fire at him or her each round until it is destroyed.

In order to determine if the laser hits its intended victim, the Gamemaster should call on the target to attempt a Dexterity feat check. If this action succeeds, the hero has managed to avoid the attack. If not, the beam hits and inflicts d6 points of wound damage. One thing is working against heroes making this check if they are still wearing their space-suits.

► **The heroes will certainly want to open fire on the laser mechanism** in order to put it out of commission. It takes 15 points of wound damage to disable the laser mechanism. Hitting it calls for a successful skill check on the firer's Modern Ranged Weapons skill. The person who is being targeted by the laser is assumed to have one thing working against him or her and so must add a situation die penalty of at least +d4 to the control die roll. The other heroes may fire normally.

► **After the laser has been destroyed, the heroes can look around the room.** By making a System Operation skill check, either Muri or Orn can determine what aspect of the ship each of the control centers handles. Seven of these control centers are each dedicated to a single aspect of ship operations. Running clockwise from the access corridor leading to node 1, these are navigation (astrogation), piloting, engineering, communication, sensors/avionics, computers, and life support. The eighth control area is a hybrid



control center (normally manned by the commander) that can be reconfigured to assume the functions of any of the other panels in the event of a malfunction.

Once the heroes have figured out what a given control area does, they can be assumed to be able to give the ship basic commands related to that aspect of ship operations. This doesn't mean they can settle into one of the couches and fly the ship wherever they want it to go. They are like civilian pilots familiar with small private planes who are suddenly given control of an advanced jet fighter. In other words, they have a very basic idea of what they're doing, but most of the systems and controls remain a complete mystery.

While the heroes are looking around, they also find data crystal 3 here sitting in the acceleration couch of the eighth control area. The use of this crystal is described in the earlier Memory Shards section. This crystal can, if the heroes know how to use it, provide them with information about the destruction of the scornge as a race.

► **The heroes can finish up the adventure** at this point if they have managed to do the following:

- (1) Restore power to the ship (in node 13).
- (2) Not detonate the bomb in node 3 (the computer room) or jury-rig the portable computer to serve as a replacement for the computer.
- (3) Understand the basic nature of the astrogation and piloting control areas in this node (node 4).

If all of these conditions have been met, the Gamemaster can conclude the adventure by flipping to the section entitled Wrapping Things Up near the end of this book.

5. Cargo Bay

The cargo bay is a large chamber packed with crates of all shapes and sizes. These contained the important supplies needed to make the mission possible. Because the crew was nearing the completion of its task when the scornge wiped themselves out, most of these supplies have been exhausted. Entrance to this area is by simple doors, not hatches.

This module is about one-quarter filled with large, white containers. These are about a meter and half in diameter and fashioned of something very much like high-impact plastic. Strange, alien writing—a meaningless combination of swirls, circles, and curves—covers each of them.

Each of these remaining containers is filled with a fine, flourlike powder. When mixed with water, it forms a thick paste, which was the food of these alien space explorers. There are six different kinds of food. Each is a distinct color (red, blue, green, orange, black, and purple).

► **If anyone tastes the powder**, a feat check on the hero's Constitution score must be made. Success indicates that nothing too bad happens (although the stuff tastes terrible). A failed check indicates that the hero is allergic to the alien stuff. If this is the case, she or he suffers painful cramps for the rest of the adventure. This counts as one thing working against any action the hero might attempt. Anyone allergic to the powder also suffers d6 points of stun damage immediately after tasting it.

► **When they're ready to move on**, the heroes can travel to node 4 (the control center), 6 (the medical center), or 8 (the common room).

6. Medical Center

This node is where the alien crew members would come for exercise, checkups, or when injured or sick. If the explorers are careful, they do not encounter anything dangerous here.

The doors into this area are not security hatches and can be opened at the touch of an obvious button.

This large, circular chamber is ringed by a half-dozen flat platforms that must be beds or couches. In the center of the room is a large bubble of some transparent plasticlike substance. A circular entrance about a meter in diameter offers admittance to this 4-meter sphere. Within this globe is another bed with a strange tangle of mechanical arms and strange implements suspended from the ceiling above it.

► **If Javon examines the bubble assembly**, he deduces that this is indeed a medical facility. If the power hasn't been restored (see node 13), nothing much can be learned here. Other heroes are not able to deduce the nature of this equipment for sure, although the players themselves might be able to guess at it.

► **If the power has been restored** to the ship, however, this room becomes potentially dangerous. Anyone who steps into the globe and lies down on the bed in it activates the automated medical system. Moving with incredible speed, this system attempts to cure what it believes to be wrong with the intruder. In essence, the computer attempts to cure the explorer of being human. The following text describes this:

As soon as you lie down on the bed, the gleaming arms overhead begin to move. In a blur of silver and neon, a dozen needles lash out to prick your skin. As an assortment of alien chemicals course through your veins, the world around you begins to grow dark.

At this point, the Gamemaster should call upon the hapless explorer to roll 2d6 and cross off that many stun boxes. After doing this, the explorer can either remain in the globe or scramble out (if she or he is still conscious). If the hero can't or doesn't leave, this process repeats itself and the poor hero suffers another 2d6 points of stun damage. Remember that if all of a hero's stun boxes are crossed off, additional points of stun damage become points of wound damage. A successful Strength feat check will suffice for a hero to remove an unconscious fellow hero from the globe.

If the hero can be rescued from the medical system, Javon is free to use his medical pack to cure any stun or wound damage (provided Javon hasn't already treated this hero during this encounter).

► **Javon's player may wish to make use of this equipment in order to recharge the normal abilities of his medical pack**. This can be attempted even before the power is restored and calls for a skill check on Javon's Medical Science skill. Because the chemicals and other equipment here are of alien design, there is at least one thing working against him. If he succeeds at this action, however, his medical pack is improved so that it can be used two extra times.

► **When the explorers are ready to leave this area, they have a number of options**. From here, they can move to nodes 4 (the control room), 5 (the cargo bay), 7 (the airlock), or 8 (the common room).

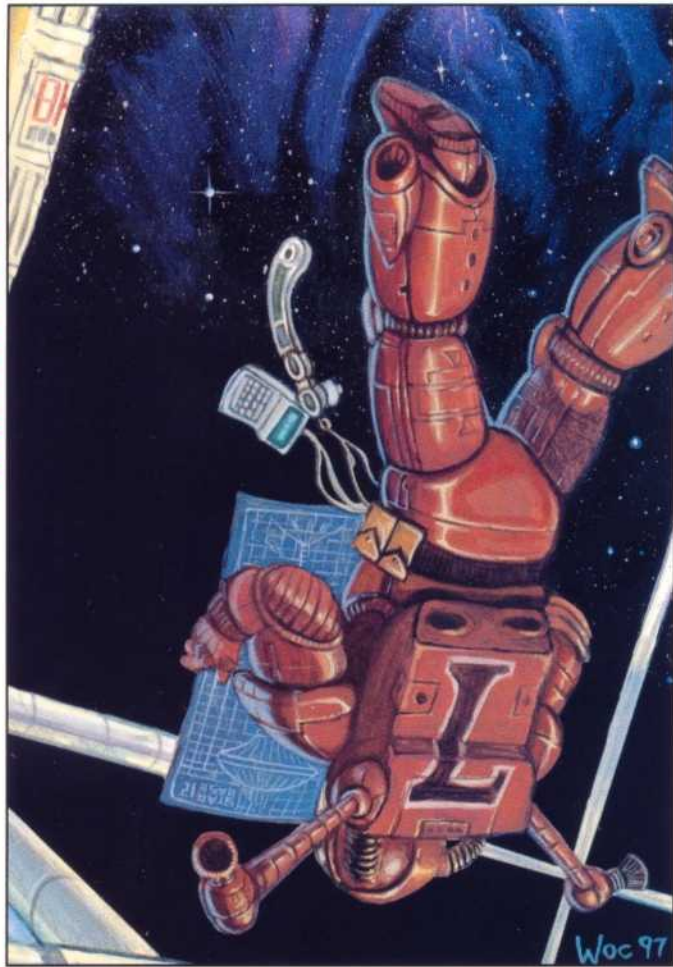
7. Airlock/EVA Ready Room

This is the first part of the alien ship the players are able to explore. It presents them with a minor puzzle, the operation of the airlock mechanism, but offers no physical hazards.

All of the doors into this place are heavy security hatches that can be opened only if their electronic locks are broken or they are physically cut through. At the start of this adventure, the outer airlock door is open and the players may enter it freely.

The doorway in the hull opens into a large chamber some 15 meters in diameter. In the center of the room is a circular console that looks almost like a gleaming metal coffee table. A trio of faintly glowing orbs is secured to the top of the chamber directly above this dais. They give off a faint emerald glow that makes the place look as if you were viewing it through a night vision system. A pair of solid-looking hexagonal hatches appear to lead deeper into the derelict.

Two dozen spacesuits hang on the walls. Although the technology used in these is fairly familiar, they were clearly not designed for use



by human beings. Other spacewalking equipment, like rope tethers and small thruster packs, are stowed neatly around the area.

There are a number of things that the heroes might want to attempt at this point.

► **Examining the spacesuits and equipment** allows the heroes to learn a little bit about the creatures who designed this craft. No skill check is required to obtain the following information:

An examination of the spacesuits and other equipment reveals that they were designed to be worn or used by creatures who, although more or less humanoid in shape, stood only about 4 feet tall. They had two legs and two arms, but appear to have had the ability to turn their entire torso almost all the way around.

A successful Technical Science skill check allows Muri or Orn to deduce that these creatures needed an environment similar to our own in order to survive. This ought to tell the players that their heroes can dispense

with their bulky spacesuits if they can get the outer door closed and the life-support system activated.

► **Examining the center console** makes it clear that this is some sort of a control panel. It has only a little power running through it, as if it had been placed in a stand-by mode. This mechanism is used to operate the airlock chamber in which the explorers stand. These controls can be used to open the inner doors, although this is a challenging task. A security program has locked up the control panel. Overcoming this requires a Computer Science skill action (which can be made by Muri or Orn) and a Security skill action (which can be made by Penn). If both of these succeed, the Gamemaster should read the following boxed text aloud:

Faint traces of light flicker across the surface of the control panel. A humming vibration can be felt through the deck as the door through which you entered slides noiselessly closed. A few seconds after it has locked itself in place, the doors across from it glide open. The way into the alien ship now lies open before you.

Once these doors have been opened, the heroes are free to move deeper into the ship. The Gamemaster can assume that they have a map of the ship that shows them the positions of the nodes (but not their purposes) and allows them to decide whether they to move to node 6 or node 9 from their current position.

► **The heroes can try to force open the doors** if they don't wish or aren't able to get them open in any other way. Although laser pistols are not able to cut open the doors, Penn's laser rifle is up to the task. The portable tool kit carried by Muri also has a cutting torch in it.

A successful check made on either Penn's Modern Ranged Weapon skill or Muri's (or Orn's) Technical Science skill allows the heroes to force one of the doors open. If they do this, they are not able to restore an atmosphere to the ship (see node 12) until they manage to close the outer door in this room, which can only be done with the control panel above.

► **When the explorers are ready to leave this node, they have a number of options.** From here, they can move to node 6 (the medical center) or 9 (the electronics shop).

8. Common Room

The common room was the social center of the alien ship. The crew members gathered here to relax and enjoy themselves when not on duty. There are no

intruder defense mechanisms protecting this part of the ship, and the normal doors leading into it make it easy to enter or exit.

A number of hammocklike seats, obviously intended for use in free fall, are anchored loosely to the sides of this circular module. These are arranged in clusters of four around what appear to be combination video screens and flat tables with numerous clips around their edges. There are eight clusters of four seats and a screen/table.

Each of these tables is a combination entertainment center and zero-gravity coffee table. These tables provided a focus for the recreational activities of the crew. Unless the power is restored, the video screens remain blank. If the engines are brought back on line, they dance with unusual patterns and alien script, neither of which mean anything to the heroes.

► **When the heroes are able to move on**, they may travel from here to nodes 5 (the cargo bay), 6 (the medical center), 9 (the electronics shop), or 10 (the cabins and galley node).

9. Electronics Shop

This room contains an assortment of equipment used to repair and maintain the electronic systems of the alien ship. If the players search the electronics shop, they get their hands on a valuable set of alien tools that can be very useful elsewhere in the adventure.

The entrances to this module are sealed with heavy security hatches that may slow the heroes down a bit, but there is no internal security system protecting this chamber.

This module is cluttered with an incredible assortment of electronic equipment. Although its alien design makes much of the stuff mysterious and unidentifiable, some of it is recognizable. Clearly, this is an electronics workshop in which delicate components were tested, repaired, and even constructed.

In addition to the numerous devices that fill this room, a large number of tools are anchored to a rack on one wall. Although they were clearly designed for alien hands, a human could use them fairly well.

► **If the heroes wish to examine the tools**, they are indeed able to understand many of them. In fact, if any hero with the Technical Science skill (either Muri or Orn) makes a successful skill check, she can assemble the equivalent of an alien electronic tool kit. Using such a kit counts as one thing working in the hero's

favor when dealing with the alien systems in some other areas of the ship. This electronic tool kit is especially useful in node 13 (the drive control room), where these tools prove invaluable to any attempt to reactivate the ship's nuclear power plant.

► **Examining the various pieces of equipment** confirms that they are indeed similar to the electronic diagnostic and repair stations aboard *Momotaro*. This doesn't mean that *Momotaro*'s crew members are able to make much use of this equipment, however, as it was all designed according to alien standards and principles.

► **When the heroes have finished up their examination of this area**, they can continue to explore the ship by going to node 7 (the airlock), 8 (the common room), 10 (the cabins and galley), or node 11 (the machine shop).

10. Cabins and Galley

The scorge did not share humanity's desire for privacy. Indeed, the seeking of isolation was considered a mental aberration in their culture. This chamber served as a large bunkroom in which all twenty crew members slept and enjoyed their off hours. This node is also where meals were prepared and served.

All of the entrances to this module are common doors and can be easily opened.

This is a most unusual chamber. One stretch of the spherical wall is covered with no fewer than 20 hexagonal cells that remind you very much of the honeycombs in a beehive. Each of these appears to be equipped with a video screen, a weblike affair that looks very much like a zero-gravity sleeping harness, and an assortment of controls.

At the center of the room, anchored to floor and ceiling by a long, tapering conduit, is a silver and white ball. At eight points around this sphere are nozzles of some sort that appear to operate via small toggles.

► **The explorers will almost certainly want to explore the honeycombs**. It shouldn't be too hard for the players to deduce that these are sleeping areas for the former crew. Remember that these aliens were not subject to the normal human desire for privacy, so there are no doors or curtains covering them.

The video screens do not operate unless power is restored to the ship. Even after this is done, however, passwords (or, at least, individual account names) that the heroes do not have are required to use them.

In each of these honeycombs is a small, unlocked compartment that contained the personal items of the alien who called it home. The Gamemaster is free to make up all sorts of keepsakes, although there is nothing equivalent to a photograph in any of the

compartments. In each of these compartments the explorers find a gleaming, semitransparent globe. This looks rather like a Christmas tree ornament with a socket or nozzle of some sort on it. This is the drinking bulb of the alien who was assigned the compartment. The drinking bulbs were used to hold the aliens' food.

In addition, the heroes find data crystal 1 in one of the honeycombs. The use of this item is described in the earlier Memory Shards section.

► **The sphere in the center of the room** might be thought of as a vending machine. It dispenses a reconstituted version of the food compounds stored in the cargo bay (node 5). The nozzles are designed to fit into the sockets on the drinking bulbs found in the honeycomb cells. When one of the drinking bulbs is pressed against the nozzles, it clicks into place. At this point, the toggle on the vending globe above the bulb can be depressed, and the bulb fills with a thick syrup. When the bulb is filled, the flow of nutrient stops automatically. At that point, the bulb can be easily removed.

If the heroes wish to taste this alien food, they are in for trouble. Before the scorange crew left the ship, they poisoned all the food in this unit. The toxin they chose to use would be instantly fatal to any of their own kind. Humans, however, are more tolerant of the poison. Heroes who taste this mixture find it very bitter and must make a Constitution feat check. The alien toxin counts as two things working against them, so the situation die of this action is at least a +d8 penalty. If the total score of the control die and situation die is greater than a tasting hero's Constitution score, she or he suffers 2d6 points of wound damage.

This damage can be avoided simply by not tasting the mixture. An examination of the fluid by Javon Pendergast calls for a Medical Science skill check (with a situation die bonus of -d4 if the player states that the medical pack is used in the examination). Using the medical pack in this fashion does not count as treating a patient. A successful examination concludes that the fluid was food for the aliens but is not nutritious or likely to be pleasant for humans to consume.

► **The heroes can leave this area** via conduits connected to nodes 8 (the common room), 9 (the electronics shop), or 12 (the life-support systems). The diagram of the alien ship on the page right before this Incident at Exile chapter also shows a link between this node and the nuclear drive (node 14). This is a structural support, not a passageway (which the heroes may deduce with a successful Intelligence feat check since there is no corridor entrance here leading to node 14), so the heroes cannot enter that area of the ship.

11. Machine Shop

The ship's engineers used this module to maintain and repair the machinery that kept the ship running. Parts that could not be repaired were replaced via an

advanced fabrication facility. A search of this area reveals an alien mechanical tool kit here that makes working with scorange machinery much easier.

The entrances to this module are heavy security hatches that may slow the heroes down a bit. In addition, a dangerous internal security system has been activated that may prove lethal if the explorers are not careful.

This room is cluttered with an assortment of robotic workstations and unusual mechanisms. Some of these are utterly unlike anything you've ever seen before, but others appear to be similar to human devices. Scattered about the room are half a dozen metal spheres that float slowly about like gleaming clouds.

A rack of alien devices is secured to one section of the wall. These are clearly tools, although you can't tell what some of them might have been used for.

► **The metal orbs are a sort of mine that is activated as soon as an intruder moves into the room.** Each of these contains a powerful electrical battery fashioned from an advanced superconductor. Once per round, it unleashes a stroke of deadly lightning at the nearest intruder. Each orb may make one such attack per round.

An orb's attack is made just like a hero's. The Gamemaster rolls a d20 control die and an appropriate situation die (if one seems in order). A roll of 10 or less indicates that the orb has hit its target. Anyone hit by a lightning bolt suffers d8 points of wound damage.

The heroes can attack these objects using their own laser pistols and rifles. Unless something unusual is going on, there is no need to apply a situation die modifier to the control die rolls made by the players (except for the one for wearing spacesuits). An orb is destroyed when it suffers 5 points of wound damage.

When all six of these things are destroyed, the heroes can continue with their explorations.

► **If the explorers examine the tools more carefully,** they discover that most of them have human counterparts. They have been clearly designed to fit hands unlike those of a human being, but they can be pressed into service if care is taken.

The heroes can assemble an alien mechanical tool kit from these implements. Whenever they use these tools to work on the ship's machinery, this kit counts as one thing working in the heroes' favor. It can be combined with the information loaded into the portable computer (see node 3) for two advantages if the Gamemaster deems such uses appropriate.

► **Examining the larger machines** reveals that some are similar to familiar machines used by human engineers, while others are impossible to figure out. All the larger machines are too bulky to move through the conduits connecting to other nodes.

► **Moving onward from this module**, the heroes can travel to module 9 (the electronics shop) or move aft toward node 13 (the drive control room). A supporting brace anchors the ship to the drive (node 14) at this point (as indicated on the diagram of the alien ship), but the explorers are not actually able to enter node 14 since the brace is not a conduit.

12. Life-Support Systems

This is one of the most important areas on the ship. As such, an intruder defense system watches over the place. Curiously, though, the corridor linking this module with node 10 (the cabins and galley) stands open. There is nothing to prevent the heroes from moving freely into node 12.

All aspects of the ship's environment, including atmosphere, lighting, and temperature, were maintained from here. If the heroes have the alien mechanical tool kit from node 11, they can restore life-support operations and rid themselves of their cumbersome spacesuits at this location.

This compartment is filled with coils of thick tubing, electrical components, and complex machinery. At first glance, it is difficult to tell exactly what function it may have served. A glowing hemisphere of colored glass is anchored to the center of the ceiling. It throws a faint blue light across the entire area.

► **As soon as the last of the heroes enters this room**, automated sensors trigger a deadly defense mechanism. The security hatch slams into place, locking them into the room. At the same instant, air jets are activated. Within a minute, a breathable atmosphere fills the room. The following boxed text describes these events to the players:

As the last of you enters this unusual chamber, one of the control panels comes to life. A red light flashes to life and then blinks off to be replaced by a rapidly flashing blue one.

A tremor passes through the hull around you, followed by a sudden jolt as a heavy security hatch slides into place across the entrance you came through. Only a few seconds later, the computer readouts in your spacesuits indicate that the air pressure around you is growing. Shortly afterward, the silence of vacuum is replaced by the drone of high-powered air pumps and the steadily rising hiss of in-rushing air. At its current rate, the atmosphere in the chamber will be safe to breathe within a minute.

In all probability, the players will think of this as a good thing. Soon, however, it becomes apparent that the jets are forcing too much air into the chamber. The following boxed text describes this situation to the players:

For a brief moment, the indicators in your spacesuits reveal that the conditions in this room have become nearly earth-normal. Oxygen content, air pressure, and temperature are all well within safe limits.

This is a fleeting state, however. The hiss of air into the chamber continues unchecked. The air pressure grows greater and greater with every passing second. Before too much longer, you begin to feel the weight of the atmosphere pressing in on you from all sides. If the pressure continues to build, you will be slain by this unseen but inescapable force.

There are a number of ways in which this trap might be defeated. The most obvious of these are described below. The heroes have time to try only two of these actions. If they fail their first attempt, the Gamemaster should tell them that the air pressure is beginning to take its toll on them. If they fail their second attempt to escape this trap, the adventure ends with the tragic deaths of the explorers.

► **If the players attempt to bypass the electronic lock and open the door that just closed**, they find the weight of the air in the room working against them. As stated earlier in the Hatches and Doors subsection of the Entering the Ship section, opening one of these security hatches normally calls for a check on the hero's System Operation skill. Because the area beyond the door is in vacuum, however, an important extra safeguard has been engaged in the hatch. This counts as one thing working against the heroes.

If the heroes have either the alien mechanical or electronic tool kits, this counts as one thing working in their favor, although having both does *not* count as two advantages here. If they have managed to link their portable computer to that controlling the alien ship, this also works in their favor.

Success at this skill check opens the door and causes the air in the room to rush out into the void beyond. This explosive decompression causes d6 points of wound damage to all the heroes unless they are still wearing their spacesuits. Armor offers no protection against these injuries.

Penn can also remove the hatch if he makes use of the cutting torch in Muri's portable tool kit or his own laser rifle. This requires a successful Demolitions skill check. In this case, however, the air pressure works for the heroes not against them. Indeed, it counts as one thing working in their favor. No advantage can be

gained for removing the hatch from the alien tools or computer information, however.

► **The players might also attempt to deactivate the trap via the control panel with the flashing light.** This is a challenging action that can be attempted by Muri and Orn (using their Computer Science skills of 13) or by Penn (using his Security skill of 9). The alien mechanical tool kit is of no use here, but the electronic tool kit counts as one thing working for a hero making this skill check. The portable computer can also aid in the task if it has successfully been linked to the alien computer in node 3.

Success at this action causes the pressure in the room to even out at slightly below earth standard (which is the scornge norm). This happens quickly, but does not cause any injury to those in the area.

► **Some heroes may attempt to use their weapons to puncture the hull of the alien spacecraft, venting the air into space.** This action is doomed to failure, however, as nothing the heroes are carrying with them has the ability to breach this sturdy material. Still, the Gamemaster should allow them to make some die rolls, wasting time as the pressure in the room grows greater and greater.

► **Once the trap has been defeated,** the heroes can attempt to restore a comfortable environment to the ship. This is possible only if they have restored power to the craft and sealed off the airlock (node 7) behind them when they entered the vessel. Of course, it does not work if they've blown a hole in the hull somewhere somehow or otherwise made it impossible for the ship to hold an atmosphere.

Getting the life-support system reactivated is not possible without the alien mechanical tool kit from node 11. If the heroes attempt to do it without those implements, the Gamemaster should call for a Technical Science skill check. This roll is doomed to fail, but in its wake the Gamemaster should announce that it might be attempted again if special equipment or tools were available.

Once those tools are available, the action may be attempted normally. This calls for a Technical Science check. Because the alien tools are *required* for this action, they do not count as something working in its favor. If the portable computer has been connected with the ship's systems in node 3, however, the information it provides aids the heroes.

Failure at this action shorts out the life-support systems, making it impossible to restore a safe environment with the context of this adventure. This doesn't prevent the heroes from completing the adventure and getting the ship operational again, but it makes moving about more difficult since they cannot remove their spacesuits.

If the heroes succeed, however, the whole of the ship is filled with breathable, if somewhat stale, air. This process takes about 10 minutes. After that, the explorers are able to dispense with their spacesuits.

► **When the heroes have finished their work here,** they may leave the area by its only conduit and make their way back to node 10. It should be noted that the diagram of the alien ship shows two links between this node and the nuclear engine (node 14). These are structural members only and do not allow access to that highly radioactive portion of the ship.

13. Drive Control Room

This module was used to monitor and operate the nuclear drive that powered the ship through the void of space. Although the engine is now in a state of partial shutdown (on idle, if you will) it can be restored to operation with the electronics tool kit from node 9 (the electronics shop).

Once the drive control is brought back online, the ship can be moved. Without the guidance of the control center (node 4) or the use of the computer system (node 3), however, actually getting the ship to travel to a given point in space is effectively impossible.

Because this area is so important to the operation of the ship, both a secured hatch at the entrance from node 11 and a dangerous intruder defense mechanism protect it.

You have entered a chamber filled with complex computer control systems. Although clearly of alien design, this area looks remarkably familiar. It isn't difficult to conclude that this was the area from which the ship's nuclear engines were operated. Despite that fact, only a few of the controls in this room seem to be receiving power. Here and there, panels have been opened, and their electrical components lie exposed. Whether or not these circuits have been damaged is impossible to say without closer examination.

A pale blue light fills the room, radiating from a dozen spherical orbs anchored to what must have been thought of as the ceiling. Time has apparently taken its toll on these systems, however, as the four lights in the corner opposite the door are no longer functioning.

► **The first hero to enter this room triggers the security system here.** The four globes that look like burned-out lights of some kind are actually deadly robots. When they sense an intruder in the room, they detach from their nesting points and attack at once. The following boxed text describes what the heroes see when this happens:

A sudden movement overhead catches your eye. Looking up reflexively, you see the four dark globes detach from the lighting fixture. Instantly, four spindly robotic limbs snap outward from each of them, and they leap toward you. At the same second, a bright pinpoint of light appears on the surface of each globe. This looks ominously like a laser projector charging itself up.

The players have no choice but to fight the robots. Even if they flee, these deadly devices pursue and attack them until each and every one of the robots is destroyed. Each of these robots can withstand up to 10 points of wound damage before being destroyed.

The control systems on the robots make normal attack rolls just like the heroes do. On any roll of 13 or less, the robot hits its target. When determining which situation die to apply to these attacks, the Gamemaster must consider the actions of the heroes. Because these robots use motion sensors to target their weapons, a moving hero (even one who is evading) improves the weapon's chance of hitting. Thus, an attack action made against a moving target is assumed to have at least one thing working in its favor.

The reverse is also true. A stationary target is actually harder for these automatons to hit. As such, a drone attacking a more or less stationary target is assumed to have at least one thing working against it.

Each time one of the drones hits its target, it inflicts d6 points of wound damage.

► **The heroes may attempt to bring the nuclear engines back online after the robot sentinels are destroyed.** If they are to start the ship on its way back into the inner system (where their salvage rights can be recognized and the ship studied or further transported), this action must succeed.

The heroes' efforts are doomed to failure unless they have the alien electronic tools from node 9. If the heroes attempt to bring the drive back online without those implements, the Gamemaster should call for a Technical Science skill check. This roll cannot succeed, but in its wake the Gamemaster should announce that by trying, the heroes have learned that they lack certain specialized tools and could try again if they had them.

If the heroes have those tools, there is a good chance that they will succeed. Restoring the engines to operation requires a Technical Science skill check. Because the alien electronic tools are *required* for this task, they do not add any special bonus toward its success. If the portable computer has been able to download information from the alien computer in node 3, however, this counts as one thing working for the heroes.

If they heroes fail on their first attempt to reactivate the drives, the Gamemaster should tell them that they have misjudged the functions of some panels and that

they may try again to reactivate them repeatedly, but each attempt will take two hours. If the hunter robot has not been destroyed by the heroes, the Gamemaster should roll again on the hunter robot's table to see what actions it will take at the end of the two-hour period (as if the heroes had just entered this node). If the hunter robot has been disposed of, all that happens is further time goes by, but the Gamemaster can speak a few tense sentences hinting that another hunter might be lurking about (or have another one show up) to keep excitement up.

► **Once the explorers have gotten the engines back on line,** electrical power flows through the rest of the ship. This makes it possible for the heroes to restore life support (if they have the alien mechanical tools from node 11) in node 12.

► **When the heroes decide to move on,** they can exit via the conduit they entered through and head back to node 11 (the machine shop). The diagram of the alien ship shows a connection between this node and the nuclear drive (node 14). This is a structural support, not a connecting conduit. It is not possible to move directly from node 13 to the drive itself.

► **The heroes can finish up the adventure** at this point if they have managed to do the following:

- (1) Restore power to the ship in this node (in node 13).
- (2) Not detonate the bomb in node 3 (the computer room) or jury-rig the portable computer to serve as a replacement for the computer.
- (3) Understand the basic nature of the astrogation and piloting control areas (in node 4).

If all of these conditions have been met, the Gamemaster can conclude the adventure by flipping to the section entitled Wrapping Things Up near the end of this book.

14. Nuclear Drive

The scornge craft was driven through space by a powerful nuclear fusion drive. This enabled the ship to attain speeds adequate for interplanetary travel but still well below the speed of light. There is enough fuel remaining in the ship's tanks to start it on a long, slow trajectory back into the inner system, but that's about it.

Because it uses a nuclear fission reactor to provide the power needed to sustain the ship's fusion drives, this part of the ship is highly radioactive. Because of this, there is no easy way for people inside the ship to make their way to this module. All of the connections shown on the diagram of the alien ship on the page right before this Incident at Exile chapter represent structural connections only. In order to access the ship's drive, a crew member had to perform a space walk. Although this might seem to be a poor design for a ship, the large amount of radiation put off by the drive made it a necessity.

Wrapping Things Up

The best possible conclusion to this adventure sees the crew of the *Momotaro* firing up the drives on the alien ship and starting it on its way back toward the inner system to obtain a claim to the ship and possible scientific fame. In order to do this, however, there are several conditions that must be met.

► **The Fusion Drive:** First and foremost, the explorers must have managed to get the spacecraft's drive back in operating condition. If they haven't done this, they are not able to move the ship.

► **The Computer Lab:** As with any spacecraft, the alien vessel is almost helpless without its computers. If the heroes have accidentally set off the bomb in node 3, the craft is all but crippled unless they can jury-rig their portable computer to take its place.

► **The Control Room:** In addition to getting the drive online, the explorers must have figured out at least some of the instruments in node 4. To be specific, they must have successfully determined which of the panels are the helm and navigation (astrogation) systems.

If something has gone wrong, making it impossible for the heroes to complete one or more of the above conditions, some tips are offered in the *If Something Goes Wrong* section below to help the Gamemaster bring the game to a satisfactory conclusion.

Assuming that all of these conditions have been met, however, the heroes need to make a few skill checks.

First, Orn needs to make a check on her Navigation skill in order to plot a return course for the alien craft. The situation die applied to this action depends greatly upon the way in which the player describes the undertaking. If the heroes have managed to link the portable computer to the alien one, this obviously counts as one thing working toward success. If Orn's player states that Orn is double-checking her work on *Momotaro*'s computer, this also counts as an advantage.

Next, the engines of the alien craft must be commanded to fire. This requires a Vehicle Operation-space skill check and assumes that Orn remains on the alien ship when the drive is fired. This shouldn't be a problem, but Orn's player may not see it that way.

If Orn wishes to be safely aboard *Momotaro* when the engines are engaged, a Computer Sciences action is also called for to use the alien computer systems to fire the engines in an automated sequence. Success at this skill check indicates that a workable automated firing sequence has been written. If this skill check fails, it is not apparent until the alien engines simply do not ignite on time. In order to recover from this failure, a new trajectory must be calculated and the above actions must be repeated anew.



If all of the above actions have been successfully concluded, the scenario can come to a triumphant end. Read the players the following boxed text:

The seconds tick past slowly as you wait for the moment of truth. Will the alien drive function after who-knows-how-many years of neglect?

The eruption of a bright glare from the tail end of the nuclear engines tells you that all is well. For several minutes, the drive burns hotly. Then, when the last of the ship's fuel is expended, the glow fades and the eternal darkness of space gathers in once again.

Seconds later, *Momotaro's* main computer finishes its evaluation of the situation. A smile comes over your face as the main screen displays a graph indicating that the burn was successful. The alien craft is returning to civilization.

At this point, the Gamemaster can thank the players for making the evening a success and announce that the adventure is at an end.

It is always best to conclude a game with a little discussion of what has happened. Players often have questions about things they didn't understand or mysteries they weren't able to solve.

The Gamemaster should also offer the players a chance to comment on the game and the adventure. What did the players like about the scenario? What did they dislike? The answers to these questions can be used to make future games more interesting to the group. Remember that no two groups of players enjoy exactly the same style of play. A good Gamemaster always works to make sure the players have an enjoyable experience.

After all, having fun is what the ALTERNITY game system is all about.

If Something Goes Wrong

It is quite possible that one or more of the above conditions hasn't been met. This might be because of an oversight on the part of the players or simply through bad luck with the dice. On the surface, this would appear to doom the expedition to failure. In truth, however, a good Gamemaster finds a way to recover from these circumstances.

It might take some hints from the Gamemaster, but sooner or later the players should come to realize exactly where they've gone wrong. When this happens, they will almost certainly come up with some way to counter the situation. For example, if they've accidentally blown up the computer, they might suggest jury-rigging the portable computer to replace its alien counterpart. If they present what

seems to be a workable solution, it should be given a chance of success.

Gamemasters should also keep in mind the most important aspect of this game: fun. If the players fail to get the ship started on its return flight, they certainly won't have much fun. Thus, certain allowances must be made for the dramatic nature of the story. It would likely be impossible for real astronauts to figure out how to operate all but the most basic of newly discovered alien systems. This being said, though, how many times have you seen the heroes of a science fiction novel or movie do exactly that?

The game is supposed to be fun and failure isn't fun, so encourage the players to come up with some possible ideas, assign a situation die and have them make some skill checks. Remember that you can have skill check failures mean that some things take the heroes longer to accomplish rather than making a failed skill check mean the permanent inability to succeed.

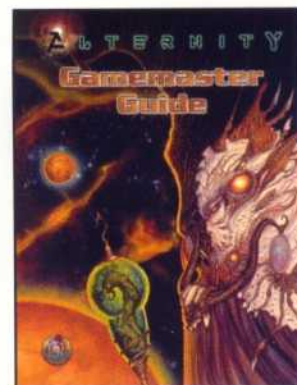
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ISBN 0-7869-1514-5



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U.S. \$4.95 CAN \$6.95