

FROM BEYOND Adventure Path Episode II

DESCENT

by Davide Tramma



STARS
WITHOUT NUMBER
COMPATIBLE

DESCENT

STARS WITHOUT NUMBER

Compatible Adventure

by Davide Tramma

CREDITS

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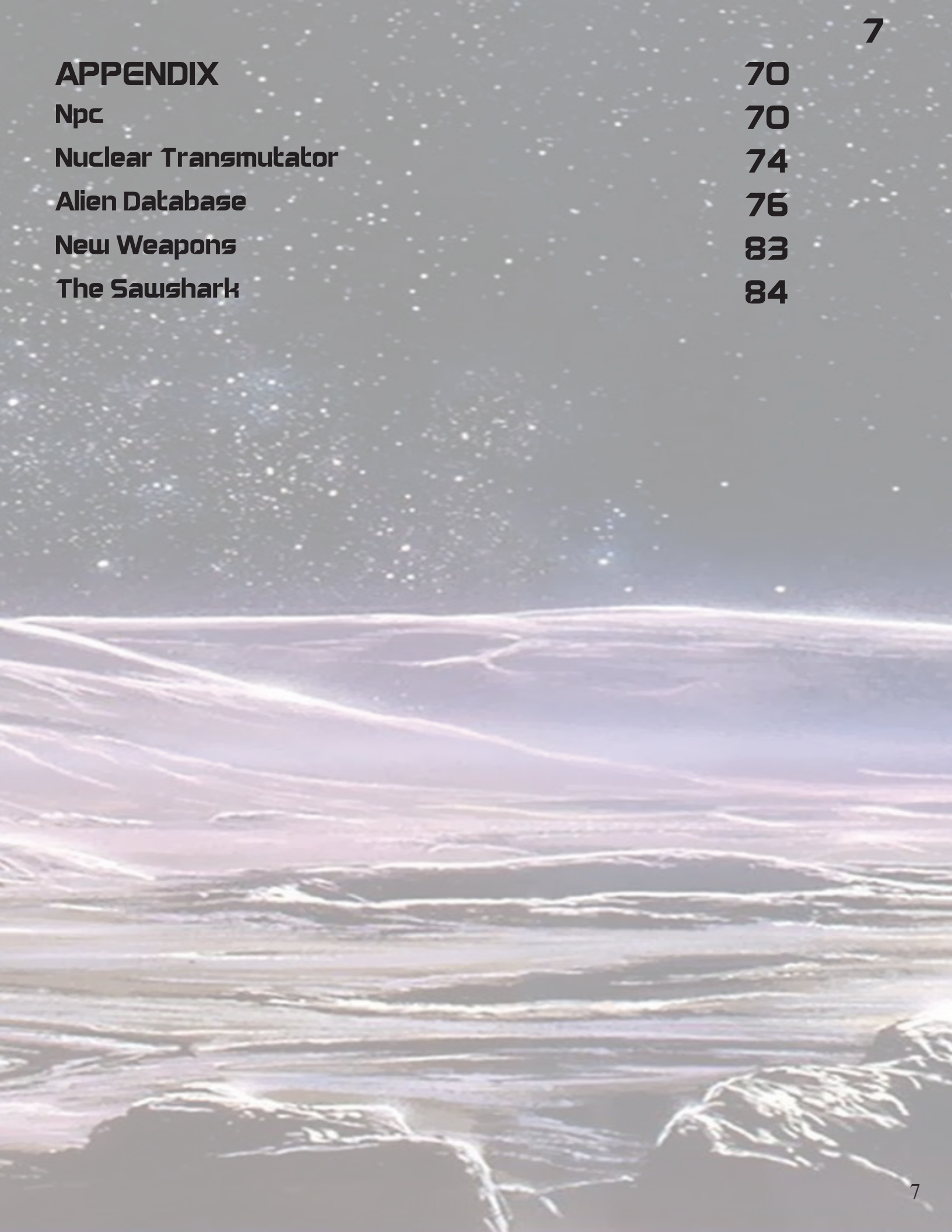
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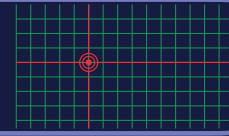
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ADVENTURE BACKGROUND



In episode 1 “Distress Call” the PCs managed to retake control of the Sawshark and the Subroutine escaped by installing itself on the rescue shuttle, the Farseer, leaving the players to their own fate.

The Subroutine eventually took with it some mining drones, the Kalimar, which are now hidden in the asteroid belts. Their position is unknown. However, the Farseer had a completely different fate. It headed straight toward the Cerberus outpost to crash and self-destroy against the outpost hull close to the main power core, leaving the Cerberus with hardly any energy. Before crashing against its target the Subroutine sent a signal directed to the Cerberus, this was a virus which took control of the communication system and sent a transmission into outer space to an unknown position.

A Hobgoblin battleship was crossing the space at warp speed when they received the transmission. The Hobgoblin are always on the hunt. Thinking this was their lucky day they didn’t waste a single minute to change their course and head to the source of the transmission. When the Hobgoblin battleship arrived close to the asteroid belt, the Cerberus was relying on its emergency batteries. Captain Tibb, commander of the Cerberus, detected the battleship warp signature and ordered the shutdown of the main systems, thus leaving only the vital support active in order to avoid detection from the Hobgoblin’s battleship long range scanners.

Now the Cerberus has two serious problems to face. The first is repairing and restoring the power core and the second is to avoid detection from the Hobgoblin battleship.

Repairing the power core is something the crew and engineers can accomplish, but the restoration is not possible without a radioactive source which can work as the initial spark to reactivate the core.

The task of the PCs is to reach the fourth planet of the star system and recover enough radioactive material which will allow the power core reactivation.

All this must be accomplished in no more than ten days, that is before the batteries run out of energy leaving the whole outpost without vital support.

ABOUT THE SUBROUTINE

The Captain explains that when they detected the Farseer shuttle approaching, he had no idea what was about to happen. He just thought the PCs were coming back and

that the mission failed, so he immediately hailed at the shuttle but no one responded. However, the Cerberus' main ICS (Integrated Computer System) detected a very low incoming frequency transmission from the Farseer. At that point, everything happened very fast.

The Captain explains that something took control of the sub-space communication system and managed to send a transmission into outer space to an unknown location. All of this lasted just a few seconds, and in some way the Cerberus ICS managed to isolate and block whatever took control of the communication system. However, the transmission had already been sent at that point.

For the Gamemaster: the incoming transmission was the Subroutine which was not developed enough in order to infect and take control of the Cerberus ICS.

Indeed the ICS anti-virus and firewall resolved the threat quickly, but not fast enough to stop the transmission. The players should tell Captain Tibb what they know and what they have discovered on the Sawshark.

ABOUT THE POWER CORE

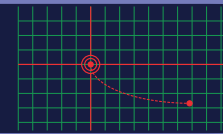
The Captain explains that when the transmission was sent into outer space, the shuttle accelerated at maximum speed heading straight to the deck where the main power core was located. The crash completely destroyed the deck and compromised the power core containment chamber. The outpost didn't explode thanks to the safety countermeasures which turned the reactor off and invaded the chamber with refrigerating foam. However, this was an extreme countermeasure.

Now the reactor is not working and in order to turn it on again, a considerable amount of radioactive material is required. The stock present on board is enough only for routine maintenance and not for an extreme situation like this. At the moment the Cerberus is operational thanks to the emergency batteries.

ABOUT THE HOBGOBLIN BATTLESHIP

Less than one hour after the transmission was sent into outer space, a vessel emerged from warp. Scanning immediately identified the ship as a fully armed Hobgoblin battleship. The captain was left with little or no choice but to shut down any active system in order to avoid detection. This would leave only the life support active so that any active scanning coming from the battleship could not be distinguished by the Cerberus amongst the thousand asteroids orbiting in the belt. Without energy the Cerberus can't engage a battle against the well-armed Hobgoblin battleship, so the enemy vessel must be avoided if the crew and the PCs want to survive.

THE MISSION



The PCs will have to recover radioactive minerals from DLB01.04 DELTA, the fourth planet of the star system. A radioactive mineral deposit was detected during a scientific survey conducted by the now destroyed Farseer shuttle.

The shuttle sensors detected a high concentration of these minerals in a specific location on the planet's northern hemisphere, but the thick atmosphere and the electromagnetic activity prevented the sensors from identifying the exact source composition and the surface topography.

The whole mission is made of 5 chapters, see below in the description what each chapter contains.

CHAPTER 1 – FITTING THE SHIP

The PCs have to refit the Sawshark in order to land safely and extract the minerals from the planet's surface. The Sawshark is not made to fly through dense atmosphere and to land on high gravity planets. It was projected to operate in space where gravity is low and its structure, being too fragile, needs to be reinforced in order to resist the structural stress caused by entering a planet's gravitational field.

CHAPTER 2 – THE JOURNEY

As we said, the Hobgoblin battleship is nearby. If the PCs want to make it then they have to go undetected and this means traveling to the planet by unconventional means; in other words, moving the ship by using the combustion engines alone.

The push will last around one minute and then the engines will be shut down. At this point the Sawshark will travel by inertia into the planet's atmosphere and land.

As you can guess this way of traveling implies making exact route calculations.

CHAPTER 3 – THE LANDING

If the PCs and the engineers on the station have accomplished their job, the Sawshark should be all in one piece and, at this point, ready to land. The PCs will have to choose between three possible landing sites, each with its own pros and cons.

Again, while scanning the landing sites close to the radioactive deposit the PCs will discover that they are not in front of a natural formation because the scanners will reveal an artificial underground building from where the radioactive signature emanates.

CHAPTER 4 – UNDERGROUND

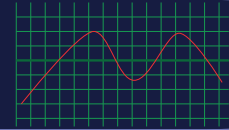
The PCs will discover an entrance to the mountain which was supposed to be the radioactive deposit. The radioactive emissions are strong and scanning reveals an artificial structure which runs 150 feet below the surface.

Down there they discover the radioactive source and the presence of weird creatures, as well as a magical-technological device called the **Nuclear Transmutator** (see Appendix: Nuclear Transmutator).

CHAPTER 5 – BACK

Once the PCs have explored the underground complex they can return to the Cerberus. At this point they will have recovered much more than an ordinary radioactive mineral. They will take with them the magical-technological device which will reactivate the power core.

FOR THE GAME MASTER



IN THIS EPISODE

In this five chapter episode, the PCs help the Cerberus crew to restore the power core, explore the underground complex, retrieve the Nuclear Transmutator and have their ship, the Sawshark, upgraded.

Before leaving the planet they handle with the Hobgoblin battleship thanks to a Coil Cannon they find in the underground complex, leaving the wrecked battleship to its own fate. The Subroutine will take advantage of this situation to improve itself and prepare for the next move (see *Ending*)

PLANET DLB DELTA

Diameter standard Earth

Mass standard Earth

Gravity standard Earth

Atmosphere see below

Day 7 days; **Year** 28 days

VISION AND LIGHT

Vision capability, due to the planet's thick atmosphere and the brown star that the planet orbits around, is limited. Apply a -2 penalty to **Notice** skill checks.

PLANET ATMOSPHERE & ENVIRONMENTS

It has an average surface temperature of -50° and its thick atmosphere is mainly composed by ammonia 70%, carbon dioxide 10%, methane 10%, and oxygen 5%.

The planet presents some peculiar environments and natural phenomena like **Crystal Trees**, **Methane Clouds**, **Mud Pools**, **Magic** and **Radiations**.

CRYSTAL TRESS

The planet hosts a sort of vegetable life form which developed and adapted to the cold and harsh planet environment. Their composition has crystal like structure but far more resistant. Crystal trees usually grow in small clusters of a few dozen.

They are composed by silicates and rare earths, turning them into precious resources

for those who need these expensive metals.

METHANE CLOUDS

Even if most of the planet atmosphere is composed by ammonia, a raw 10% is composed by gaseous methane. This gas forms cluster which looks like clouds but due to its weight they generally exist at lower altitudes.

When temperatures rise, due to natural day-night or seasonal cycles, they become extremely volatile. Methane clouds pose a threat to ships flying at low altitudes because they are highly inflammable.

MUD POOLS

This environment is quite common on the planet, especially close to its equator, they usually form when liquid ammonia reach a high salt concentration and mix with silicate dust. Mud pools vary in size and depth depending on the terrain topography and usually form within mountain valleys or depressed plains. These mud pools host life forms, from bacteria to more complex creatures, some of them dangerous.

The first issue with mud pools is movement, and if the PCs choose the **Landing Site Beta** (see Chapter 3: Landing Site Beta for more details) they will have to overcome this. However the mud pools on the planet have one more feature, they may contain traces of trapped methane, so whenever the mud is subject to a high temperature effect like fire, laser or explosions . There is a 10% chance that the methane emanating from the surface catches fire, causing an explosion within a 10-foot radius and dealing 2d6 fire damage.

MAGIC AND RADIATIONS

The radiation leak coming from the subterranean nuclear reactor has affected both the Nuclear Transmutator, the planet's environment, and the alien biology on the planet. Most of the native creatures on the planet, especially those thriving in the reactor surroundings, have evolved outside the ordinary bonds of natural evolution and have developed innate magic abilities which conform to their role in the planet ecology. All the new creatures detailed in this adventure possess a spell-like ability which make them more dangerous than usual.

DUERGARS

In this episode the Duergar race is presented. Duergars are a race akin to dwarves in many aspects. For the purpose of this adventure the PCs have the chance to meet a handful of survivors inside the subterranean complex. The complex was built by the

Duergars two centuries ago. A second mission was sent to investigate and replace the previous one. The survivors encountered by the PCs belong to this second mission. The Duergars home planet follows a wide and inclined orbit around the star and its orbital period is 190 standard years, but it gets close enough to the fourth planet (the planet where the PCs will actually land on) only for a short period of time for the Duergars to make a mission affordable, considering their actual level of technology. Duergars had never established a first contact with an extraterrestrial intelligent species. At the moment five survivors inhabit the subterranean complex and it's impossible for them to both repair the nuclear reactor and dispose of enough energy to send a signal to their home planet asking for aid.

When the PCs establish a first contact with the Duergars it will be up to them how to manage the encounter and, being technologically more advanced, they will have the option to help the Duergars or get rid of them. If the PCs decide to help the Duergars, then they eventually join to become part of the crew (see *Appendix: NPC*).

Duergars goal: Duergars may have a different reason to join the PCs crew. For the purpose of this adventure they are obviously interested in establishing a first contact with an intelligent alien species and eventually come back to their home planet to tell the story, provided someone there believes them of course.

However as a GM you may have other goals in mind especially if you want to employ this adventure as a tile for your personal campaign or setting.

SUBTERRANEAN COMPLEX

The subterranean complex hosts a fission nuclear reactor which was built two centuries ago during the Duergars first mission (see above *Duergars* for more details).

The complex had the purpose to conduct secret experiments on nuclear energy and arcane magic, thus the technology appears ancient and obsolete in the eyes of the PCs.

At that time the Duergar race was just exploring this new source of energy and was experimenting space travel with no significant success. However, in order to fill the technological gap, the Duergars built a magical artifact called the Nuclear Transmutator (see minor artifact Nuclear Transmutator) which, by employing a tremendous amount of power produced by nuclear fission, could help to manipulate space-time and finally open the doors toward space exploration. At least this was their hope.

The experiment with nuclear fission and arcane magic eventually went wrong because they could not fully master the raw energy produced. All the occupants inside the nuclear plant were wiped out. For 187 years the planet, the nuclear reactor, and the Nuclear Transmutator were forgotten, until 13 years ago, when the Duergars decided

to prepare a second mission to retake control of the subterranean complex. The journey lasted 3 years from their home-planet due to their technological limitations, but finally they landed again on the planet. What they found was a completely different landscape. The planet atmosphere changed radically as well as the whole biosphere.

Their ship, totally unequipped to face such a harsh and unexpected environment crashed on the surface miles away from the complex, and the few survivors headed toward the subterranean complex hoping to find a place where their lives would be saved.

They eventually reached the subterranean complex where they remained trapped.

Left to their own fate, they waited for their planet to get close enough in order to re-establish communications with their people, an event that would have required decades.

At the moment the nuclear reactor is damaged and the Duergars can't fix it, not the same can be said for the PCs, who know how to easily deal with that kind of technology.

DOORS

Inside the subterranean complex the PCs find automated doors. Once the PCs repair the **Control Room** (see *Chapter 4: Control Room*) they are able to remotely control the doors system. As a general rule, a door, due to the old age of the complex, may or may not be working. Any automated door has 50% of being operational unless stated otherwise.

A door can be repaired by a DC 7 **Fix** skill check or it can be forced with a DC 10 **Exert** skill check.

ATMOSPHERE INSIDE THE SUBTERRANEAN COMPLEX

The sensors detect a higher than average presence of carbon dioxide (see *Deep Scanning Map*), so the air is breathable but it affects in some way the metabolism of those who breath conventional atmosphere. Duergars, for the purpose of this adventure as well for the future campaign setting, can tolerate higher concentration of carbon dioxide, other races do not.

After one hour of breathing the air inside the subterranean complex each PC suffer a -2 penalty on attacks and skill checks.

NUCLEAR TRANSMUTATOR

The Nuclear Transmutator is a minor artifact made by the Duergars. The artifact is capable of converting matters and reassemble it at an atomic level. However, it requires a tremendous amount of power in order to work properly.

For the purpose of this mission the artifact can easily substitute any radioactive material and it can be employed to restart the Cerberus power core.

The PCs, once the mission is over, can dispose of the Nuclear Transmutator and analyze it (see *Appendix: The Nuclear Transmutator*).

KEEP TRACK OF TIME

Many paragraphs indicate how much time is required to accomplish a specific task. Remember the Cerberus station is short of energy and its vital support is slowly failing. As a GM you should keep track of time or ask one of the players to take care of this detail.

After 10 days the vital support on the Cerberus stops working, so this is the time limit to accomplish the mission.

FUEL UNITS

The Sawshark is projected to rely on the combustion engines for a limited amount of time and in situations where swift maneuvers across asteroids are essential.

Its fuel tanks capacity however are too small to land on a planet and take off.

In this adventure we will refer to what we call **Fuel Units** as a custom made rule which measures how much fuel is left in order to accomplish the mission; go, land and back.

The Sawshark fuel tanks have a capacity of 60 fuel units but these will be extended to 80 thanks to a technical improvement (see *Chapter 1: modifying the refining machinery* for more details).

During the landing (see *Chapter 2 – the landing protocol*) there is a chance that the Sawshark consumes more fuel than expected and this will depend on the pilot skill check and the descent pilot modifier (see *Chapter 1 – modifying the combustion engines*). In other words, just take notes of the fuel units and decrease the amount as stated in the adventure.

NPC CREW

In this module four NPC engineers aid the PCS in many tasks.

Some NPCs are temporary, other are more important and sometime team-up with the PCs in a long term perspective. It means they will earn XP thus improving their skills, if the players are willing to keep them at their side.

When experience points are awarded, the experience is split among the PCs normally, then every NPCs receive an amount of experience equal to $(\text{NPCs level}) / (\text{PCs average level})$ multiplied for the experience awarded to each PC.

If you played the previous episode, **Distress Call**, and the medical officer corporal Wassily survived, he should still be with the party and thus following the PCs in this adventure.

In this adventure the four NPC engineers are detailed: **Tzaru, Karsk, Sah'Ah Mal** and **Numa**.

They are the four engineers assigned by Captain Tibb in order to help the party to refit and improve the Sawshark and to follow them on the planet to accomplish the mission. In the Appendix under the NPC section you can find their data sheet and background. During the adventure the NPC occasionally offers help by expressing suggestions and opinions about critical situations if the PCs can't figure out what is going on.

HOBGOBLIN ASSAULT SQUADS

Once the Hobgoblin battleship reaches the planet orbit (see **Control Room** for more details) they send an assault squad to occupy the subterranean complex, probably destroying the main gate and looking for whoever is inside the complex with the only purpose to capture them.

We assume the PC, who know the terrain better, get rid of the assault squad and organize a counter attack directed at the battleship by firing the **Coil Cannon** straight at the battleship's hull (see **Coil Cannon and Hobgoblin battleship in orbit!** for more details).

Hobgoblin assault squad: 20 marauders (see *Appendix: New Creatures - Hobgoblin*).

Increase the number of marauders composing an assault squad or send more than one assault squad if you are confident it can be an interesting challenge for the PCs, especially if they decide to cooperate with the Duergars.

XP AWARDS

In this adventure the PCs receive XP both as a team and as individual, both from encounters or dangerous situations.

Occasionally a NPC may express his opinion in order to solve some complicated situations, but this will not happen before the PCs had the chance to make an attempt on their own. If the PCs figure out what to do then award them the stated amount of XP. If, as a GM, you think a NPC intervention is necessary it would be better not to award the PCs any experience points.

EQUIPMENT

Accessing equipment could represent an issue. However, considering the situation you can tell the players that they have free access to combat armors, ranged weapons, ammunition and melee weapons. The Cerberus outpost is large enough to store a considerable amount of armory.

Consider that the PCs are awarded an equivalent of 1,500 credits that they can spend freely.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Even if you did not play Distress Call, the previous episode of this adventure path, you can easily fit this module into your campaign or eventually use it to enrich your home brew campaign setting.

Below we propose some adventure hooks.

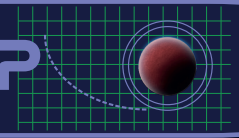
The PCs are about to explore a new planet: you can use some part of this module to introduce your players to a new unexplored planet, especially if you want them to visit a hostile environment. You can easily fill the subterranean complex with other creatures or eventually turn it into an isolated fortress held by the bad guys.

Blow it up: the PCs are asked to infiltrate and destroy a dangerous facility. This means you can turn the subterranean complex into a hi-tech enemy facility. The PCs eventually land far from the target – in this case just increase the distance of the landing sites – thus facing their enemies both on the surface and underground.

Last defense: the PCs are holding the position inside the subterranean complex while a heavily enemy space ship is approaching the planet to destroy them and their allies. The enemies, after sending squads to infiltrate the complex eventually decide to wipe the site out by bombing the complex with weapons of mass destruction. At that point, the PCs fetch their experimental coil cannon and save the day by tearing apart the enemy ship (or ships).

Far away from home: the PCs have to set forth on a journey on the other side of the galaxy and they discover the location of the Nuclear Transmutator, the only artifact that, if properly activated, can send them to far distances in a blink of an eye.

CHAPTER 1-FITTING THE SHIP



In this chapter the PCs, aided by **Tzaru**, **Karsk**, **Sah'Ha Mal** and **Numa**, the four engineers from the Cerberus, work to refit the Sawshark and prepare the ship for landing on the planet surface.

Everybody has to work exposed to vacuum effects. Captain Tibb provides the PCs a **Graphite Carbon Suite** (AC 13, Cost 500, Enc. 2, TL 4) to each PCs.

The following operations have to be accomplished in order to refit the Sawshark:

- 1) Moving the Mining Machinery
- 2) Modifying the Combustion Engine
- 3) Reiforcng the Hull
- 4) Modifying the Refining Machinery

MOVING THE MINING MACHINERY (required time 12h +1d4h)

The equipment to extract minerals is stored inside the Cerberus so the fitting team has to move it into the Sawshark's cargo holds.

Lack of gravity helps, but it takes time to move all the components, so the engineers manually open the Sawshark prow in order to let the bigger parts enter the cargo holds. The PCs and the NPCs have to perform all these maneuvers in vacuum and without any shield protecting either them or the Cerberus.

One of the known dangers lurking out there is the **Blue Ooze** amongst other creatures. Roll a random encounter every hour (or set an encounter every four hours) on **Table 1.1: Random Encounters around the station.**

TABLE 1.1 - Random Encounters around the Cerberus

Roll 2d6	Encounter	Tactic
2-7	none	-
8-9	Blue Ooze (3d10)	infiltrate the ship and wait for proper moment to prey on the crew
10	Blue Ooze, mutated (1d4)	attack the astronaut and eventually infiltrate the ship
11	Electrovore (1d6)	attack technological equipment and infiltrate the power core
12	Medium Elemental, earth (1)	observe passively, not hostile unless threatened

Blue ooze: These tiny creatures are not so dangerous if the crew are wearing the space suits which will protect them from the ooze's cold touch. The oozes rather attempt to infiltrate and hide inside the ship, attracted by the power core radiations and lurk there waiting for a better moment. The blue ooze feed upon carbon-based compounds (and living beings have plenty) and need radiations to activate their biological functions. So

the PCs will have to hunt them down and prevent them from infiltrating inside the Sawshark. If any of these creatures infiltrate the hull they could turn into a problem during the journey (see Chapter 2).

Blue ooze, mutated: Since the arrival of the Cerberus, the blue ooze came in contact with something totally unknown. This kind of creature, accustomed to a harsh and radioactive environment with scarce source of food, reacted quickly to shield electromagnetic fields, power core radiations, chemical wastes and exotic energy sources. The mutated ooze is more aggressive and reactive, so it attacks any humanoid being who is floating in space, attempting to consume their space suit and eventually what is inside it.

Electrovore: This creature needs to feed upon electricity or electrostatic currents that form between small celestial bodies orbiting close enough so that their magnetic fields interact. The presence of technological artifacts like outposts and ships is even better. If you roll such an encounter you should have the electrovores attack those PC or NPC who are close to the electric cables or are employing electrical tools.

Medium Elemental, earth: Geomagnetic activity sometimes opens gates into the elemental planes or other exotic planes of existence, giving access to the prime material world. In this star system the nature of radioactivity increases the probability for these gates to open and last more than usual. One of these gates are inside the asteroid belt, it is quite stable and leads to the earth's elemental plane of existence. Occasionally extraplanar creatures cross the boundaries and explore the outer space getting close enough to the outpost. It's up to you as a GM, to manage such an encounter. As a rule an earth elemental is not going to be automatically hostile unless threatened.

MODIFYING THE COMBUSTION ENGINES (required time 8h+1d4h)

As we said the Sawshark is not made to land on planets with high gravity, so an improvement is mandatory, both on the engines structure as on the electronic controls.

First, the combustion engines need to be coated with a special alloy so that they can resist the high temperatures caused by the friction with the thick atmosphere.

Second, the on-board computer needs to be improved with four dedicated consoles (one for each combustion engine) that will make the calculations to balance the power of each combustion engine, so that the ship does not become unbalanced during the descent.

The Game Master should ask who among the PCs wants to install the dedicated consoles, and each character should roll a separate **Fix** skill check; if no one of the PCs wants to accomplish this task then the NPC engineers (see Appendix: NPC) will.

Keep in mind that the NPC engineers have their own **Fix** skill modifier.

For each of the Fix skill check, consult **Table 1.2: Descent modifier**.

Keep note of the four circumstance bonus/penalty (one for each console linked to the four combustion engines), because it will be applied in **Chapter 2** during the landing. This **Fix** skill check represents how well each engineer has installed and tuned the consoles to its respective combustion engine.

Story Award: 1 XP

TABLE 1.2 - Descent Modifier

Fix skill check	Descent Pilot skill modifier	Notes
2-6	-2	The Sawshark mounts four combustion engine. Roll a Fix skill check for each console linked to its combustion engine. This skill check determines how well the engineer has tuned the console to the its respective combustion engine. You will employ the Descent Pilot skill modifier during the descent on the planet. The bonus (or penalties) are cumulative.
7-8	-1	
9-10	0	
11	+1	
12+	+2	

REINFORCING THE HULL (required time 12h+1d4h)

In order for the Sawshark hull to resist the mechanical stress caused by the descent, it has to be properly reinforced.

This means making the hull thicker and stronger by adding plates and bars to specific critical points. Calculations must be exact and every add-on perfectly crafted.

Once again the engineers, PCs or NPCs, will play a vital role in this task. Advise the players that the best engineer among them is in charge when the work starts, because the result will depend on his/her skill check. The higher the engineering check result, the better the improvement will be. See **Table 1.3**.

Story Award: 1 XP

TABLE 1.3 - Hull Reinforcement

Fix skill check	Armor Bonus	AC bonus	HP Bonus	Notes
2-9	+1	0	+2	The hull reinforcement may improve the Armor, the Armor Class or the Hit Points. This reinforcements will help the ship to resist the structural stress caused by the descent on the planet
10	+1	+1	+3	
11	+2	+1	+4	
12	+2	+2	+5	
13+	+3	+3	+6	

MODIFYING THE REFINING MACHINERY (required time 8h+1d4h)

If something goes wrong during the journey to the planet, you really don't want to run out of fuel. An event that may easily occur if the PCs rely only on the actual fuel tanks capacity.

This improvement increases the fuel capacity by 20, raising it to 80. It means the engineers work on the refining machinery in **Cargo Hold C** so that it can transfer the hydrogen directly to the combustion engines.

This reserve however, needs to be activated in case of emergency and only when the fuel tanks are empty, not before! This improvement requires a DC 11 **Fix** skill check rolled secretly by the Game Master.

If the skill check is **successful** the enhancement on the fuel supply works normally when activated.

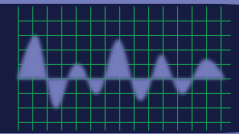
If the skill check is **unsuccessful** the adaptation is normally installed. However, when activated it starts a fire in **Cargo Hold C**.

The fire does not immediately jeopardize the fuel reserve injection itself, but it slowly damages the hull from the inside. Every round the fire is left uncontrolled it causes 1 hp damage to the hull and covers a surface of 5 square feet, then for each round there is a 50% probability the fire extends to another randomly determined adjacent square foot thus causing 1 more hp damage to the hull, and so on until the fire is extinguished.

The fire can be extinguished with an ordinary fire extinguisher one square foot at a time and it takes 1 complete round action.

Story Award: 1 XP

CHAPTER 2-THE JOURNEY



The journey from the Cerberus to the planet takes 72 hours. The Sawshark will turn the combustion engines on at maximum strength for 1 minute to generate the initial thrust, then inertia will do the rest.

The crew will not have the chance to use pulse engines because they have to avoid detection from the Hobgoblin battleship which is actively scanning the space around it. Also, they will not be able to adjust the course, so calculating the route without errors is vital.

SETTING COURSE (required time 1d4h)

Calculations take time and require precision. If the entry angle is too wide or too narrow it will be more difficult to reach the surface unarmed and of course it will consume more fuel. One PC rolls a **Pilot** skill check and takes note of the consequent descent piloting check modifier as shown on Table 1.4 - Descent Modifier.

This modifier adds to the previous modifier as stated in Chapter 1: modifying the combustion engines table 1.2. This bonus will be added during **The Landing Protocol** in this chapter.

Story Award: 1 XP.

TABLE 1.4 - Descent Modifier

Pilot check to set the course	Descent Pilot skill modifier	Notes
2-7	-2	Setting a proper and precise course is vital to properly enter the planet's atmosphere. The pilot must be able to make the proper calculations in advance, because due to fuel shortage, the Sawshark will not be able to make maneuvers during the journey.
8-9	-1	
10	0	
11	+1	
12	+2	

THE JOURNEY (required time 72h, Fuel Units -10)

The Sawshark is released from the Cerberus mooring and slowly moves in space. The ICS has already uploaded and running the program which will calibrate the combustion engines thrust.

While you are positioning the ship on the proper route, the countdown has already begun...10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...ZERO! The four engines turn on simultaneously pushing the ship into the void. Red-yellow flames burst out of the engines, getting larger and brighter every second while the increasing G-Force squeezes your chest and leaves you breathless.

So the journey has begun. The pilot turns on the combustion engine and for 1 minute (10 rounds) the Sawshark receives the thrust which will launch the crew through space up to their destination.

For the following 10 consecutive rounds the pilot rolls a DC 8 **Pilot** check, if successful the engines consume 1 fuel unit, if not 2 fuel units are consumed.

During the following 72 hours nothing should occur, unless some blue ooze or other creatures as described on Table 1.1: Random Encounters around the station managed to infiltrate the ship to cause trouble or to surprise attack some of the crew members.

Consider these 72 hours as **downtime**. Maybe the PCs need to craft equipment or make plans, encourage them to do so if required.

DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

During the journey the PCs have free time to carry on various activities. Below we present some of these activities and some of them are home brew rules created for this adventure. A good and well trained crew usually do not waste time, especially when put into an extreme situation like the one presented in this module.

The engineers always try to improve the ship to the best of their possibilities, discovering new ways to fix issues, enhance systems or improve the technological equipment.

Some activities won't take too much time, others require full time occupation and dedication. The length of time for each downtime activity presented here is specified.

CRAFT ITEM - ELECTROVORE GLOVES

If by chance the PCs encountered some electrovores during the ship fitting (see Chapter 1 – Moving the Mining Machinery), they can employ what is left of the creature to craft what is known as static **Electrovore Gloves**.

CRAFT ITEM - INCENDIARY GRENADE

If by chance the PCs encountered some blue ooze during the work at the Cerberus or if they encounter some blue ooze on board then it is possible to employ the methane compounds that the ooze is composed of to craft some incendiary grenades.

CHECK AND RECHECK!

One PC/NPC is assigned to revise the entire ship's systems in order to make it more efficient and balanced.

This task requires 8 hours of work every day (max three days) and result in a +1 bonus on the **Pilot** skill check during the landing phase. If the PC/NPC assigned interrupts the

task and decides to switch to other tasks the circumstance bonus is lost.

REPROGRAM THE DRONES!

One PC/NPC is assigned to reprogram the on-board **Repair Drones** in order to make them capable of extinguishing fires as a fire extinguisher does. In this way every repair drone can extinguish fire for a whole round before the charge is depleted.

This task requires 8 hours of work for each drone (max three days). If the PC/NPC assigned interrupts the task and decides to switch to other tasks the circumstance bonus is lost.

ALIGN THE WEAPONS!

One PC/NPC is assigned to align the aiming systems and the weapons efficiency. This task requires 8 hours of work every day. Roll a **Program** skill check every day (max three days), then calculate the average result rounding down and consult the table below to see the effect.

If the PC/NPC assigned interrupts the task and decide to switch to other tasks no improvement is achieved. See Table 1.5 - Align the Weapons!

TABLE 1.5 - ALIGN THE WEAPONS!

Average Program skill check	Effect
8	no effect
9	The weapons get a permanent +1 bonus on hit rolls
10	The weapons get a permanent +1 bonus on damage rolls
11	The weapons get a permanent +1 bonus on hit rolls and damage rolls
12	The weapons get a permanent +2 bonus on hit rolls
13	The weapons get a permanent +2 bonus on damage rolls
14	The weapons get a permanent +2 bonus on hit rolls and damage rolls

OPTIMIZE THE SHIELDS!

One PC/NPC is assigned to install a prototype of navigation shields, such kind of systems grants the ship extra hit points that can block energy based damage only (lasers, plasma weapons and the like). Lost shield points are recovered at a pace of 1 hit point per minute.

This task requires 8 hours of work every day. Roll an **Fix** skill check every day (max three days), then calculate the average result rounding down and consult the table below to see the effect.

If the PC/NPC assigned interrupts the task and decide to accomplish other tasks no improvement is achieved. See Table 1.6 - Navigation Shields.

TABLE I.6 - NAVIGATION SHIELDS

Average Fix skill check	Effect
8	no effect
9	The ship gets +1 shield points
10-11	The ship gets +2 shield points
12-14	The ship gets +3 shield points
15	The ship gets +4 shield points

REVISE THE POWER CORE!

One PC/NPC is assigned to revise the power core energy flux which feeds the ship's systems.

This task requires 8 hours of work every day. Roll a **Fix** skill check every day (max three days), then calculate the average result rounding down and consult the table below to see the effect.

If the PC/NPC assigned interrupts the task and decides to switch to other tasks no improvement will be achieved. See Table 1.7 - Revise the Power Core!

TABLE I.7 - REVISE THE POWER CORE!

Average Fix skill check	Effect
8	no effect
9	The ship's Power increases by 1 point
10-11	The ship's Power increases by 2 points
12-14	The ship's Power increases by 3 points
15	The ship's Power increases by 4 points

ENHANCE THE COUNTERMEASURES!

One PC/NPC is assigned to enhance the electronic countermeasures which prevent the ship from being targeted by guidance weapons.

This task requires 8 hours of work every day. Roll a Program skill check every day (max three days), then calculate the average result rounding down and consult the table below to see the effect.

If the PC/NPC assigned interrupts the task and decides to switch to other tasks no improvement will be achieved. See Table 1.8 - Enhance the Countermeasures!

TABLE I.8 - ENHANCE THE COUNTERMEASURES!

Average Program skill check	Effect
10	no effect
11	The ship's Armor Class against auto-target weapons by 1 point
12-13	The ship's Armor Class against auto-target weapons by 2 point
15+	The ship's Armor Class against auto-target weapons by 3 point

HAZARDS

During the journey some natural events may occur, putting both the ship and the crew in danger. Here is a list of possible natural hazards. As GM you should pick only one to occur and place it at any moment during the journey.

SOLAR FLARE

This natural cosmic event obviously occurs close to stars, which is the case here. The solar flare does not damage the hull but jeopardizes the shields' magnetic fields. The navigation shield recently installed suffers 1d6 damage (any excess damage hit the hull). However, this damage can be restored once the Sawshark lands on the planet and the engineers take care of the issue. Consider this damage as a permanent loss until fixed.

Micro-meteor swarm

An occasional swarm of micro-meteors hits the Sawshark. Micro-meteors fly at high speed and are usually caused by two colliding asteroids.

The swarm's speed and minuscule size are mostly blocked by the ship's armor, however some of them manage to hit weaker points, bypass defenses and pierce the hull.

The impact deals no significant damage to the hull but can damage some internal ship systems or injure some crew members.

Choose one of the events below:

- 1) Each crew member has a 10% chance to receive 2d4 damage.
- 2) One randomly selected ship system is damaged. The damage can be repaired once the ship lands on the planet and requires 8 hours of work by at least one engineer.

See Table 1.9 - Micro Meteor Swarm.

TABLE 1.9 - MICRO METEOR SWARM

D100	System	Effect
8	Life support	All crew members are fatigued and suffer a -1 penalty on hit rolls and skill checks
9	Sensors	All scanning attempt suffer a -2 penalty
10-11	Weapons Array	All hit rolls suffer a -2 penalty
12-14	Engines	All pilot skill checks suffer a -2 penalty
15	Power Core	Ship's power is reduced by 1d4 points

GRAVITON FLARE

This natural phenomena is a sudden burst of graviton waves coming from unstable and massive celestial bodies which increase the gravitational forces and the curve of space-time. It is said that wormholes are the consequence of such waves if strong enough. The consequences for a ship are a sudden stress on its hull structure. The graviton flare causes 1d4 damage to the hull. An engineer can repair 1 point of damage every 8 hours of work.

X-RAY BURST

This kind of emission is common in outer space and is usually stopped by the shields, sometimes a ship's sensors get slightly damaged by the intensity of this natural event. In this case the Sawshark sensors receive a -2 penalty on any attempt to scan. This damage can be easily repaired but the engineer has to work on the damage from outside the ship.

DESCEND

After three days the Sawshark reaches the planet and is dragged into the orbit's gravity. The atmosphere is so thick that it's impossible to spot any portion of the surface. Brownish dense clouds envelop the planet. However, sometimes a burst of light suddenly paints the sky with a yellow-orange mix of colors. The wind on the planet is calm so the clouds covering the surface look more like a quiet brownish colored sea. The thermal sensors confirm a very low temperature but equally distributed all around the atmosphere, a clue that marks a good temperature distribution thanks to the atmosphere.

The Sawshark is now getting closer to the mesosphere, gas friction against the shields start to slightly increase the outer temperature, generating a stray of hot gas which envelops the ship.

It's now time to discover if the combustion engines are capable to withstand the landing and if your calculations were correct.

THE LANDING PROTOCOL (FUEL UNITS -10 or more)

The landing takes 1 minute (10 rounds) and 1 fuel unit is consumed every round unless an out of the ordinary condition occurs.

Landing the Sawshark is not an easy task and requires the coordination of the crew members, both PC and NPC.

Every round, for all the consecutive rounds required for the descent, you have to roll a **Fix** skill and a **Pilot** skill check, more details are in the descriptions below.

FIX SKILL CHECK (DC 10)

During the ship's remodeling, four dedicated consoles were installed close to each combustion engine and each console requires an operator in order to function properly. Roll a **Fix** skill check every round, for every combustion engine, and apply the **Descent Pilot modifier** that you calculated from **Table 1.2** and **Table 1.4**.

These bonuses reflect how well the consoles have been installed and tuned to the combustion engines and how accurate the course has been calculated.

Remember that every combustion engine is handled by a specific operator, may it be a PC or a NPC, so consider the specific **Fix** skill bonus for each specific combustion engine console.

Now, if all the checks are successful and nothing bad happens, it means the ship's engines are all working in synchronicity, thus the ship structure suffers no stress or damage.

If the Skill check fails!

Every time an engineer fails a **Fix** skill check (remember you roll four **Fix** skill checks every round) three events occur:

1) The ship receives 1 damage to the hull, but the shields - if successfully installed - can absorb 1 point of damage.

This reflects a bad coordination between the four combustion engines, meaning the ICS and the console operators have not properly balanced the thrust causing the ship to lose the descending angle and consequently increasing structural stress and temperature due to friction with the atmosphere.

2) The ship engines generate an engine backfire thus consuming 1 additional fuel unit instead of one.

3) Beside the higher fuel consumption, another problem arises. Inflammable gas leaks out of the engine containment valves and ignites a fire. The fire causes 1d6 fire damages within a 10 feet radius. The fire lasts 1d4 rounds making the console not usable until the fire is extinguished with a fire extinguisher. Extinguishing the fire requires one full round action.

Keep in mind that while the console is not usable, the associated combustion engine is almost out of control, so the ship receives automatically 1 damage.

PILOT SKILL CHECK (DC 10)

Every round, for the consecutive 10 rounds required to land safely, the pilot has the task to maintain the ship in balance, fighting against gravity and the atmosphere friction.

Once the surface is near he has to slow the ship down in order to avoid crashing and

certain death. As you can guess, this is not an easy task.

When rolling the **Pilot** skill check, apply the descent piloting modifier circumstance bonus that you calculated from **Table 1.2** and **Table 1.4**.

If the check is successful it means that everything is fine in this round.

If the piloting check fails!

Every time the pilot fails a check (remember you roll a check every round) two events occur:

- 1) The ship loses balance due to a bad maneuver and lack of reflexes. The hull receives 1d4 damage.
- 2) Every crew member has to roll a physical saving throw or suffer the nauseated condition for 1d4 round. A nauseated crewmember can't take any action but moving 1 meter.

SCANNING THE SURFACE (from round 1 to 7)

Starting from the first round the ship's scanners are able to scan the surface in order to find a proper landing site. Consider that no one has surveyed the surface yet, indeed the PCs are the first members of the federation to put their feet on this planet.

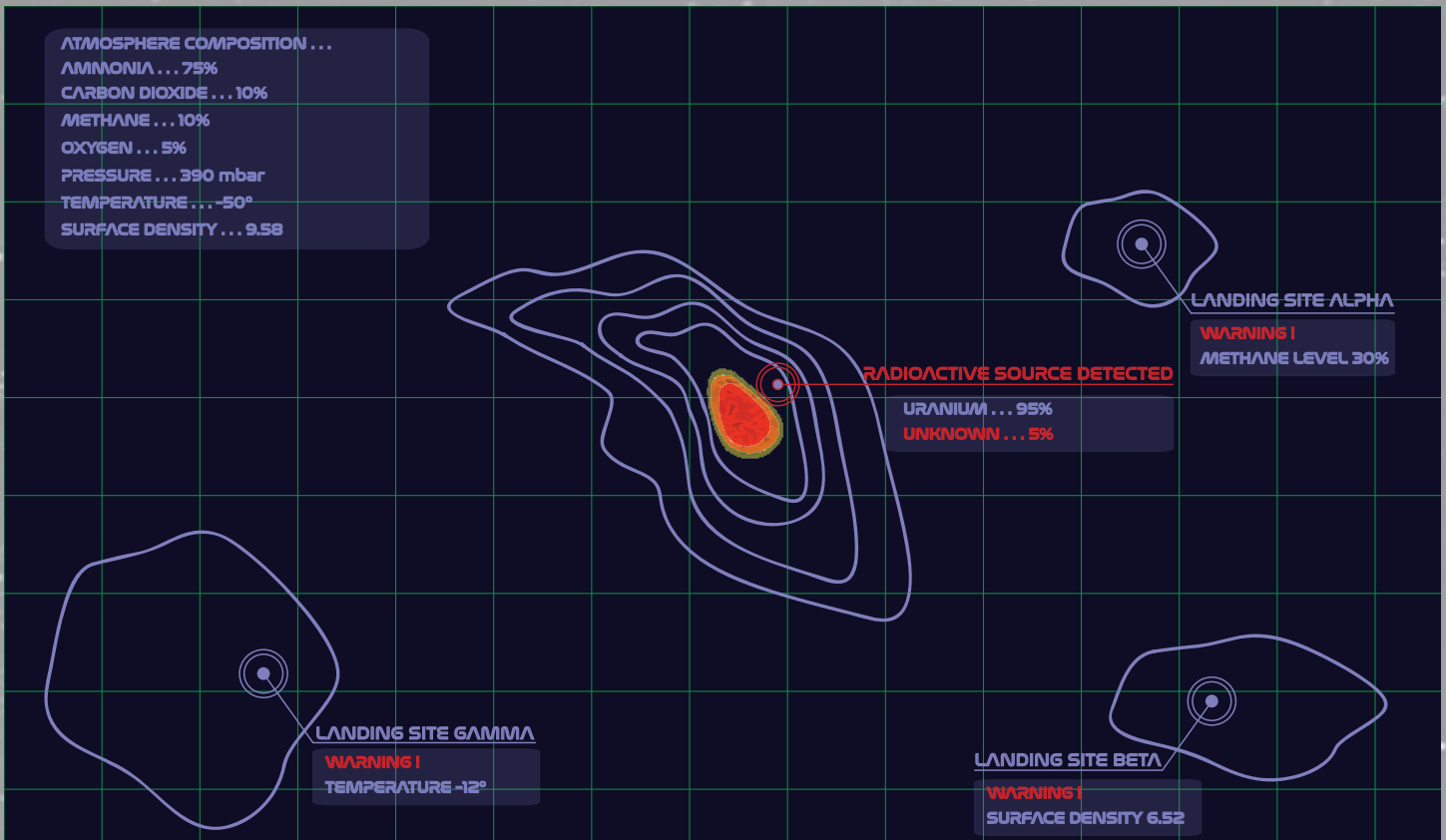
The first data the scanner transmits is the surface topographic lectures, which identify three optimal landing sites close enough to the radioactive source. These landing sites are plain enough for the Sawshark to land safely without jeopardizing the hull.

The ICS marks the three landing sites as **Alpha**, **Beta** and **Gamma**, so the pilot has to choose which landing site he wants to land on.

Scanning the landing sites

Numa: *Captain, I suggest to scan the landing sites to get more information about the environment.* Numa suggests to conduct a deeper scanning in order to collect more data and discover more details about each landing site.

Roll a DC 10 **Program** skill check for each landing site, the higher the result the more information the scanning reveals. Scanning the landing sites all at once require one round. Of course if the computer check fails then the PC does not discover more details than those provided by the topographic scan.



Landing site ALPHA

7 or less: The scanning does not reveal any detail.

8: The scanner reveals the landing site is 1,650 feet far from the radioactive source and covers a surface of around 107,000 square meters.

9 to 11: the scanner reveals presence of methane with a concentration level higher than the average detected in the planet's atmosphere.

12+: the scanner reveals presence of methane with a concentration of 30%, it means 3 times more than the average detected in the planet's atmosphere.

If the skill check is 10 or more read the following NPC tip to the PCs.

Numa: *Captain, if we land on this site I'm pretty sure the engine will set the methane on fire. I can't say nothing about the consequences but for sure the blast will be strong.*

Landing site BETA

7 or less: The scanning does not reveal any detail.

8: The scanner reveals the landing site is 2,300 feet far from the radioactive source and covers a surface of around 968,000 square meters.

9 to 11: The scanner reveals a lower surface density than the average density detected on the planet. This could indicate the surface is not completely solid or as hard as ordinary silicate formations.

12+: the scanner reveals a surface density of 6.52 extending up to 5 feet in depth, lower than 9.58

which is the average density detected on the planet surface.

If the skill succeeds is 10 or more read the following NPC tip to the PCs.

Numa: *Captain, the lower surface density makes me believe we will land on a terrain that may resemble mud or quicksand. The good news is that it's not deeper than 5 feet, so we should be able to cross it.*

Landing site GAMMA

7 or less: The scanning does not reveal any detail.

8: The scanner reveals the landing site is 1,970 feet far from the radioactive source and covers a surface of 3,873,000 square feet.

9 to 11: the scanner reveals a temperature higher than the average temperature detected on the planet.

12+: the scanner reveals a temperature of -12° which is higher than the average temperature of -50° detected on the planet's surface. The presence of an acid chemical compound is detected on the surface of the landing site and density drops to nearly zero 100 feet below the surface.

If the skill succeeds is 10 or more read the following NPC tip to the PCs.

Numa: *Captain, I suppose the higher temperature marks the presence of a geothermal activity of some sort. I presume we'll find acidic geysers.*

Scanning the radioactive source

The radioactive source lays under a mountain, in the middle of the three possible landing sites.

Numa: *Captain, I have just scanned the radioactive deposit and I found something anomalous. It's not a natural formation at all. The sensors detect an artificial subterranean structure. The high radiation level doesn't come from a natural formation but most likely from a fission reaction. The lectures mark a radioactive source composed by 95% uranium and 5% unknown origin!*

While the initial survey conducted by the Cerberus indicated something like a natural highly radioactive deposit, the close scanning from the Sawshark shows a radically different outcome. First it is not a natural deposit, it is instead an artificial structure. The scanner clearly reveals the presence of metal structures under the mountain.

The heterogeneous underground density means chambers of various sizes are also present. The ICS then classifies by default the radioactive source as a fission nuclear reactor due to both high uranium concentration and radioactivity leaks located right around the source. However, the uranium radiations emanating from the reactor represent 95% of the radioactive source, indeed the ICS indicates a 5% of unknown energy source.

METHANE GAS EXPLOSION (round 8 to 10)

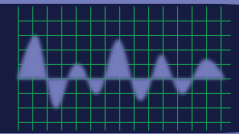
The atmosphere is composed by a 10% of methane which form clouds at a low altitude. In the last three rounds of the descent, the engines ignite these gas clouds causing explosions and strong airflows. The gas density increases as the Sawshark gets closer to the surface, so the damage received varies depending on the altitude. As we said, the descent lasts 10 rounds, so during the last three rounds apply damage as stated below:

Round 8: the gas explosion causes 1 damage to the hull.

Round 9: the gas explosion causes 1d3 damage to the hull.

Round 10: the gas explosion causes 1d6 damage to the hull.

CHAPTER 3-THE LANDING



At last the PCs discover that the deposit is not natural but an artificial underground complex and the scanner reveals the presence of nuclear fission technology.

This discovery has important implications, the drilling machinery is not essential to recover radioactive metals, however, the team has to find an entrance to the underground complex and reach the radioactive source.

Now it's time to land and it's up to the PCs to decide which landing site is the most appropriate.

Tzaru: *Captain, I have improved the ICS algorithm that regulates the combustion engines. I think it is now more efficient.*

Improved Combustion Engines: After the landing you can consider the Sawshark combustion engines improved (see Appendix: The Sawshark). This reflects the fact that the ICS has stabilized the algorithm which balances and regulates the engine thrust.

This improvement increases the extra thrust given by the engines and optimizes the fuel consumption.

LANDING SITE ALPHA

This landing site has a flat surface, good for landing a ship like the Sawshark. Its surface measures approximately 968,000 square feet and it's around 1,650 feet far from the mountain which hides the subterranean nuclear plant.

Once the ship gets close to the landing site the methane reacts immediately with the heat of the combustion engine and explodes. The explosion is devastating, amplified by the thick atmosphere which causes a violent airflow. This causes 1 damage to the hull and 1d4 damage to the shields. The hull literally quakes, roll a random **Ship Crisis**.

The airflow is violent enough to move the ship's axis requiring the pilot to take control of the situation and react with lightning fast reflexes.

Roll a Pilot skill check and consult the result below for the consequences, the higher the roll, the better.

15+: the ship lands safely without any consequence.

12 to 14: the ship becomes slightly unbalanced by the explosion, suffering 1 damage to the hull and 1d4 damage to the shields.

9 to 11: the ship becomes unbalanced by the explosion, suffering 1 damage to the hull and 1d4 damage to the shields, Engine Backfire occurs also (see above Engine Backfire).

8 to 10: the ship becomes seriously unbalanced by the explosion suffering 1 damage to the hull and 1d4 damage to the shields, an **Engine Backfire** occurs also (see above Engine Backfire). Roll a random **Ship Crisis**.

7-: the ship completely loses balance suffering 1d4 damage to the hull and 1d4 damage to the shields, an **Engine Backfire** occurs also (see above Engine Backfire).

Roll a random **Ship Crisis**.

Then the combustion engines shut down completely leaving the ship in free fall, crashing on the ground and thus suffering 2d4 damage to the hull and 2d4 damage to the shields.

Story Award: 4 XP

LANDING SITE BETA

This landing site has a flat surface, good for landing a ship like the Sawshark. Its surface measures approximately 990,000 square feet and it's around 2,300 feet far from the mountain which hides the underground nuclear plant.

The ground surface is composed of a **Mud Pools** no more than 5 feet deep, the PCs can move in it but not easily (see Mud Pools)

In order to leave the mud pool the PCs have to cover around 500 feet before reaching a rocky surface, this task is not easy for two reasons.

First, the mud constitutes an obstacle to movement.

Second, the pool is actually inhabited by an indigenous life form, the **Mud Stalker**.

This solitary predator waits for its preys floating a few centimeters under the mud and senses their presence thanks to its blindsense. When a life form gets close enough it spontaneously activates the spell-like ability transmute rock to mud to trap the prey.

The PCs meet this alien at any point while crossing the mud pool to reach the shore.

Creature: Mud Stalker.

LANDING SITE GAMMA

This landing site is a geological active area formed by geyser fed by underground acid gases. The radiation leaks coming from the nuclear reactor are agitating the chemical compounds.

The area measures approximately 3,500,000 square feet and it's around 2,000 feet far from the radioactive source. Crossing the geyser field can be risky, because the acid jets could damage the protective suits.

In order to leave the geyser field the PCs have to cross around 1,000 feet. Every round, the risk that an acid jet randomly strikes one of them is 10%. If a character passes close to a geyser jet she has to roll an **Evasion** saving throw or the space suit will get the

damaged condition. If the damages space suit is hit again by an acid jet and the character fails the saving throw then the space suit receives the **broken** condition.

A **damaged** space suit loses the environmental protection in 1d6+12 hours.

A **broken** space suit loses the environmental protection in 1d6 hours.

Story Award: 3xp

TO THE MOUNTAIN (required time 2h)

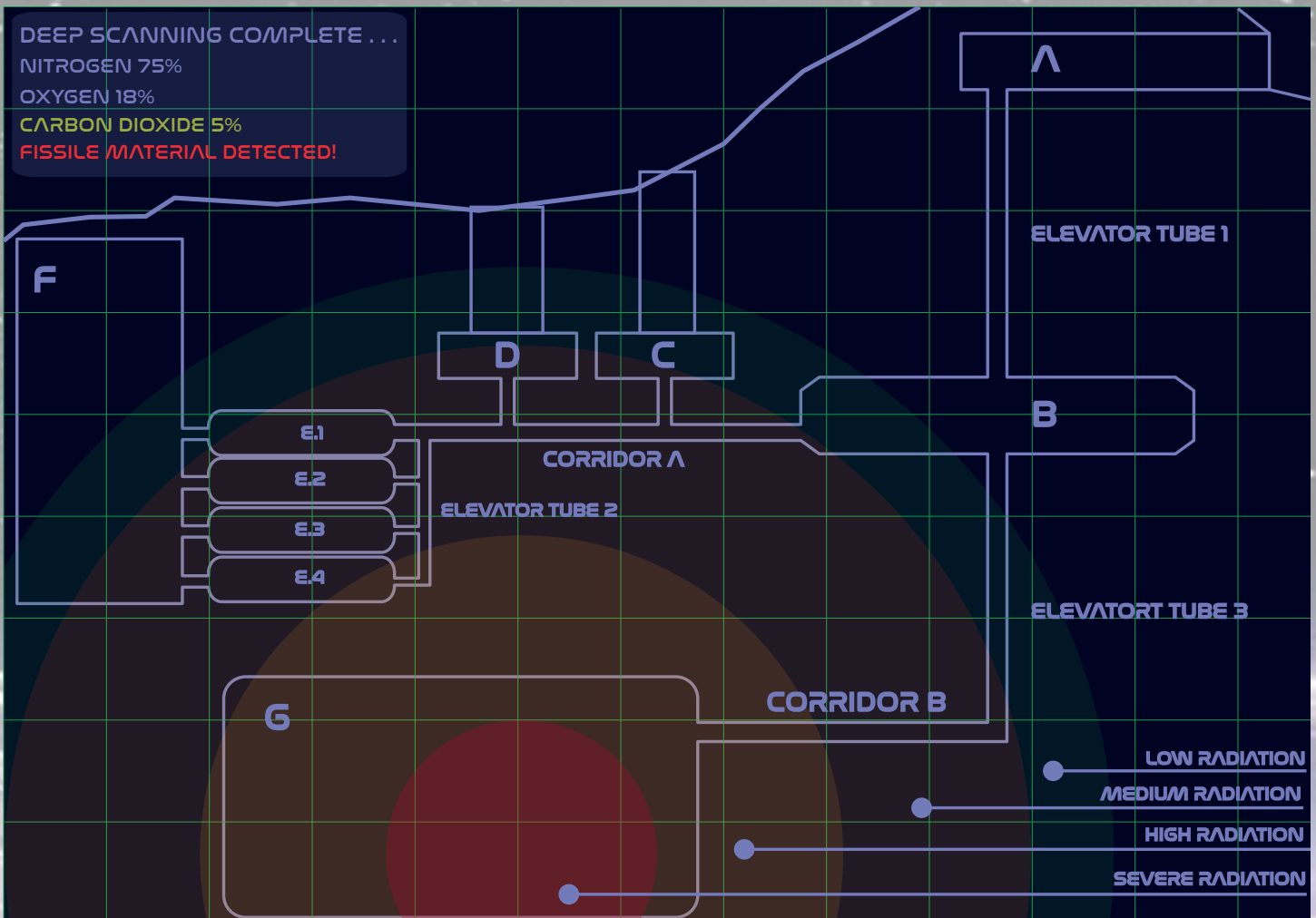
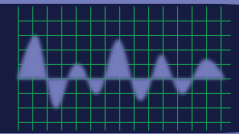
The PCs leave behind the landing site and reach the mountain which hosts the artificial radioactive source. The terrain is rocky and in many points covered by liquid ammonia and methane, making the trek quite uncomfortable.

If the Sawshark had landed on a surface like this the damage would have been serious. It takes 2 hours to spot the gate placed on the north-east side of the mountain, and to reach it they have to climb the 1,000 feet mountain side.

Roll a DC 8 Exert skill check DC 14 every 250 feet, if the check fails the PC slip back 250 feet.

Story Award: 2 XP

CHAPTER 4-UNDEGROUND



Once the PCs get 500 feet close to the gate their radios start to receive signals at multiple frequencies. Every second a different frequency is broadcast from the runic gate (see below The Gate) and at first glance it is impossible to discern a path. After 94 seconds however, the frequencies repeat, beginning a new cycle, so determining a recurring pattern.

What the PCs don't know yet is that each radio frequency emission represents one of the basic elements on the periodic table of elements. Each radio frequency is specific to a basic element, with the first signal representing hydrogen, the second helium, the third lithium and so on.

The PC can discover this clue if they try to compare at least one signal with their radio frequency database (provided they are carrying a portable computer with them) which in a matter of a few minutes matches the radio frequency properly.

If the PCs get stuck, have one of the NPCs intervene (provided at least one of them has joined in the exploration in the subterranean complex).

Karsk: *I think I've found a sort of recurring pattern while listening to these frequencies. Every 94 seconds they repeat and considering that each one of the 94 frequencies is different I was able to match each one of them to the frequencies I have present in my database and I found out something really interesting. I can state with a high degree of certainty that these are the specific footprints of the periodic table of elements!*

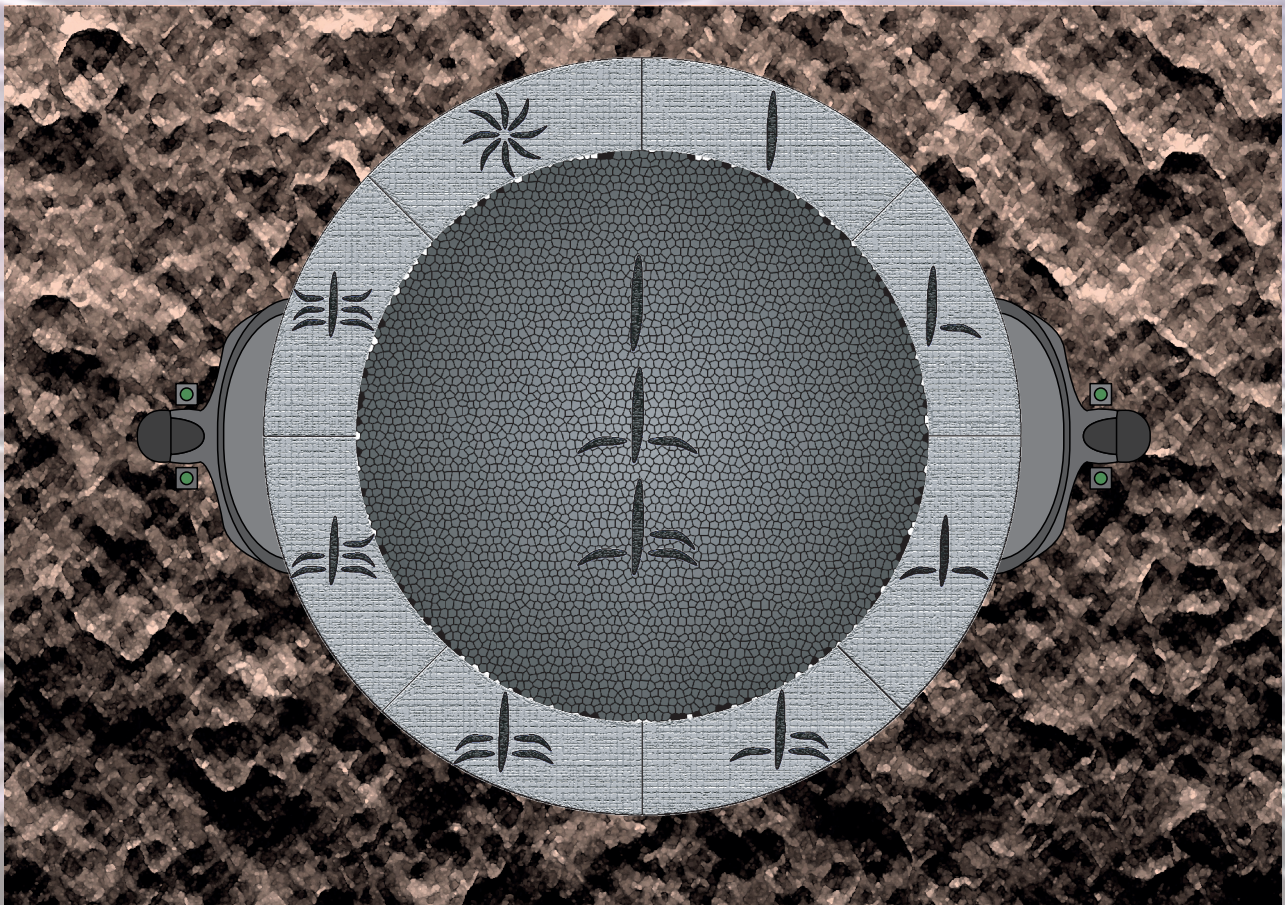
At this point the PCs proceed until they reach the gate which leads inside the mountain and into the subterranean complex.

Story Award: award 1 XP

THE GATE

The gate is a 10 foot diameter door, made of solid stone, with eight green runes carved around the border and three runes at its center. The eight different runes represent the numbers from zero to seven, in other words an octal numeral system. This represents the numeric base employed by the Duergars for their mathematics and calculations.

Here the PCs have to solve a difficult riddle, because first they have to figure out that the runes represent numbers, then come to the conclusion that these numbers are the Duergars numeric base.



The three runes placed at the center represent the number 134 and if you translate the number 134 into the decimal numeral system you get 92, which is the atomic number for Uranium. This means the stone gate will open only if a radio signal replicating the uranium frequency is sent toward the gate.

Karsk: *Looking at the runes, it seems logic to me that they represent the numbers from zero to seven.*

Story Award: 1 XP

If a PC figures out that the eight runes represent an octal numeral system award 1 XP, otherwise one of the NPC intervenes to help the PCs.

Karsk: *I presume those numbers are not just random. They go from zero to seven, just as our decimal numeral system goes from zero to nine. This is an octal numeral system! I've heard of species who adopt this numeral system, like the Draelik and the Haan.*

Story Award: 2 XP

If a PC figures out that the runes placed at the center of the gate represent the octal number "134" award 1 XP, otherwise one of the NPC intervenes to help the PCs.

Karsk: *It's quite obvious. The number written at the center of the gate is 134, if we consider an octal numeral system of course.*

Story Award: 2 XP

If a PC figures out that the octal number 134 can be translated into the decimal number 92 award 1 XP, otherwise one of the NPC intervenes to help the PCs.

Tzaru: *I've converted the octal number into a decimal number and the result is 92. I'm still wondering what this could mean however.*

Story Award: 4 XP

If a PC figures out that the number 92 can be the atomic number for Uranium, thus making the connection with the radio frequency, award 1 XP, otherwise one of the NPC intervenes to help the PCs.

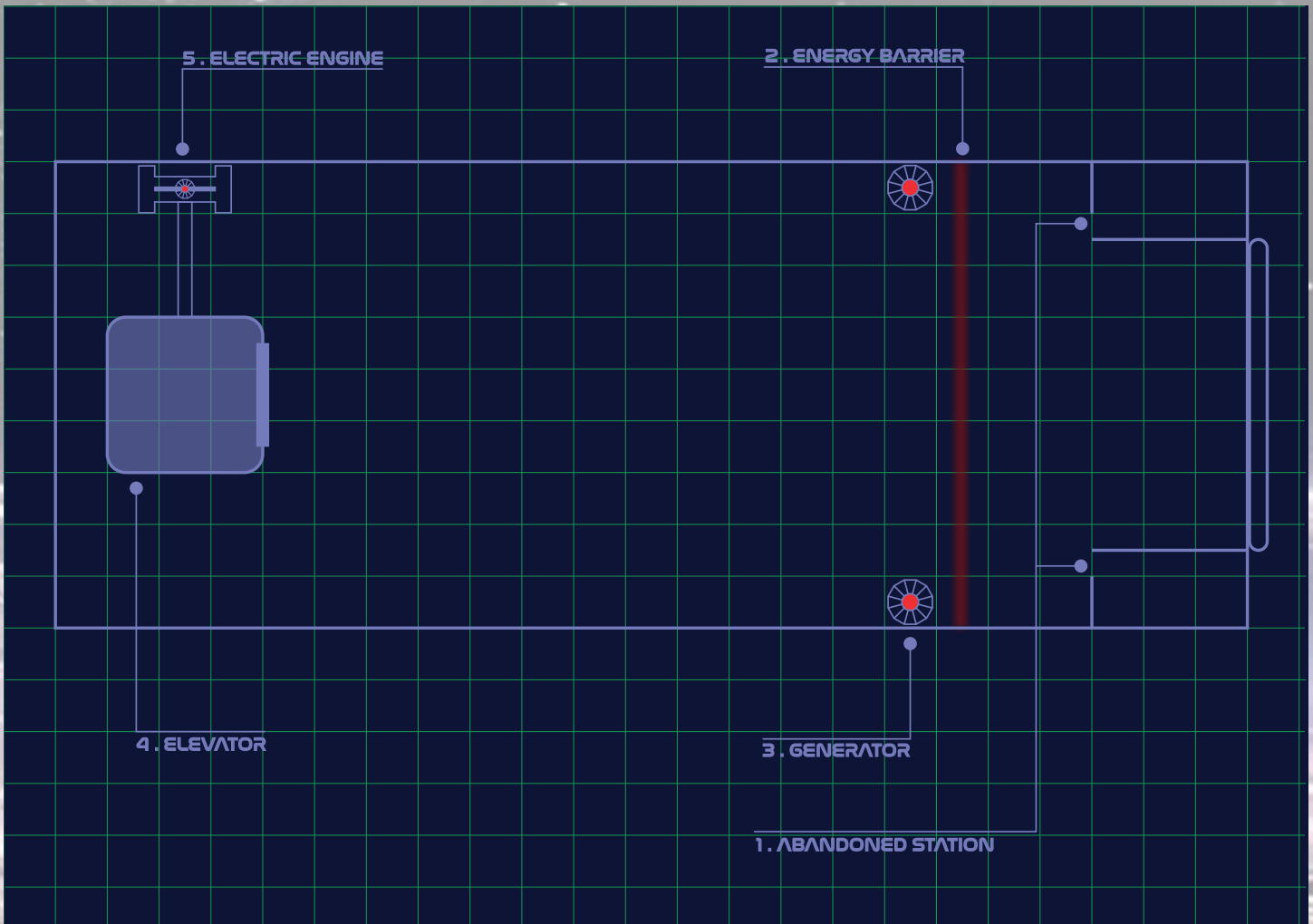
Tzaru: *I'm pretty sure I have figured out the riddle. If this gate emits signals in different frequencies, each one representing one element on the periodic table, it can eventually receive signals too. The number 92 represents the Uranium atomic number on the periodic table of elements, so what could happen if we send a signal representing that frequency?*

Story Award: 6 XP

Once the PCs send the correct radio frequency, the gate opens letting them in.

Note for the GM: the players may eventually decide to open the gate by other means other than solving the riddle. As a GM you should expect such an unpredictable situation and manage it properly. If the players decide to blow up the gate for example, then the elevator and the energy barrier placed beyond the gate will probably be destroyed. Of course the PCs would easily gain access to the subterranean complex, but will have to figure out how to descend in it.

A. ENTRANCE



I. ABANDONED STATIONS

The two rooms are covered by dust and dirt, it is evident that no one has been here for years and there is no trace of anything useful. Each room contains a mechanical lever.

The stations once hosted the guards who controlled the main gate, now they are abandoned since the incident happened decades ago. The two levers open or close the gate from the inside. There were metal furniture but the Duergar, who are now occupying the complex have looted them. However, if a PC decides to search for more clues there is a chance he may find something. Roll a DC 12 **Notice** skill check, if

successful the PC spots hairs laying on the floor. The hairs can be analyzed to obtain some trace of DNA by means of an advanced medical kit and a successful DC 6 **Know** skill check.

The analysis reveals that the DNA is highly compatible with the dwarf specie. Of course the DNA belongs to one or more Duergars who are dwelling in the lower levels of the complex.

Story Award: award 2 XP, only if the PCs actively decide to analyze the DNA.

2. ENERGY BARRIER

A red energy barrier stand along the path and it seems to block the passage. It does not irradiate heat but it emits a constant buzz. Through it you can see the rest of the room. At the bottom you spot what looks like a chamber and an electric engine to which it is connected.

The barrier actually separate the outer from the inner atmosphere, but it is harmless to living creatures. If the PCs try to analyze the barrier composition roll a DC 9 **Know** skill check.

If successful they discover the source of energy is similar to the force fields employed on space ships. If detect magic is cast then the spell reveals a moderate source of transmutation magic. The scanner confirms the lectures of the deep scanning, in other words the air beyond the barrier is breathable.

Story Award: award 2 XP only if the PCs successfully analyze the energy barrier.

3. GENERATORS

Two metal columns stand one in front of the other and on their capital a red light is pulsating at a constant pace.

These ancient generators supply energy to the energy barrier and both can be employed to recharge weapons or other technological equipment. However, this action leeches the energy required to feed the energy barrier. It takes 10 minutes for each charge (remember to keep track of time) but there is 10% chance that the energy barrier collapses (see below for the consequences). If two PC attempt to recharge their weapons at the same time the probability rises to 50%.

If the energy barrier collapses and the PCs close the gate nothing happens. If the gate is still open then the inside atmosphere and pressure, being higher than the outside, suddenly and violently sucks the PCs outside. The force of the pull ejects each character 2d6x10 feet beyond the gate and for each 10 feet they suffer 1d4 of falling damage, half of this damage is applied to the space suit and half to the character.

4. ELEVATOR

The elevator suffers the signs of time but the structure looks like it is intact. The two sliding doors are closed.

This elevator leads to the lower levels of the subterranean complex. It works because the Duergars are carrying out maintenance. However, the electric engine (see below **Electric Engine**) must be turned on for the elevator to work. No more than nine people can use the elevator at once and its load capacity is enough to lift no more than 3 tons of weight.

5. ELECTRIC ENGINE

The electric engine looks old and stressed and has been repaired several times. The technology and the design is minimal but it has enough power to do its job. A column shaped generator, resembling those close to the energy barrier, supplies the necessary power for the engine to work but the red bulb at the top of it seems to be turned off.

The engine looks fine at a first glance but it has been operational for too many years and has not received enough maintenance.

While the elevator can hold up to 3 tons the engine can't tolerate such exertion. If the PCs revise the engine, roll a DC 7 **Fix** skill check DC 10.

If successful they discover that the engine can't move more than 4 people at a time and excessive weight simply blocks the mechanism by activating the safety countermeasures. So, if the PCs decide to enter and use the elevator without checking the engine status, they have a 20% chance each round of getting stuck inside the elevator tube 1 (see below **Elevator Tube 1**).

Keep in mind that the elevator, due to its old age, moves at a speed of 5 feet per round.

Story Award: award 1 XP only if the PCs successfully check the engine status.

ELEVATOR TUBE 1

The elevator tube is 125 feet (25 squares) deep and leads to the quarter's section. Keep in mind that due to the electric engine condition which moves the elevator, it takes 25 rounds to reach the quarter's section.

It is possible that the PCs took with them one or more NPCs, this implies that more than one travel is required to move the entire party if the PCs are aware of the engine condition. Once the PCs start the descent read the following paragraph.

The elevator starts moving. Cracking and buzzing noises of the metallic mechanism fill the air and the echo resonates through the old elevator tube like an old bronze bell. The descent is slow and you know it will take a while before reaching the next underground level. The light

bulbs above you, which emit a dim light due to the old age, turn on and off at every tremor until one of them explodes.

At some point during the descent something happens. As a GM it's up to you to decide when this event occurs. Choose one of the PCs at random and read him the following paragraph.

You are waiting for the elevator to reach the bottom. The incessant buzzing noise bothers your ears as well as the malfunctioning lights which keep turning off and on, forcing you to protect your eyes. You suddenly spot someone at your side, but whoever or whatever it is, disappears in a blink of an eye. It's a moment, an instant and then again. A shadowy shape, vaguely humanoid, is standing there, a few inches from you. You just have the time to hold your breath and call the attention of your comrades when the shadow stares at you with its black and empty eyes.

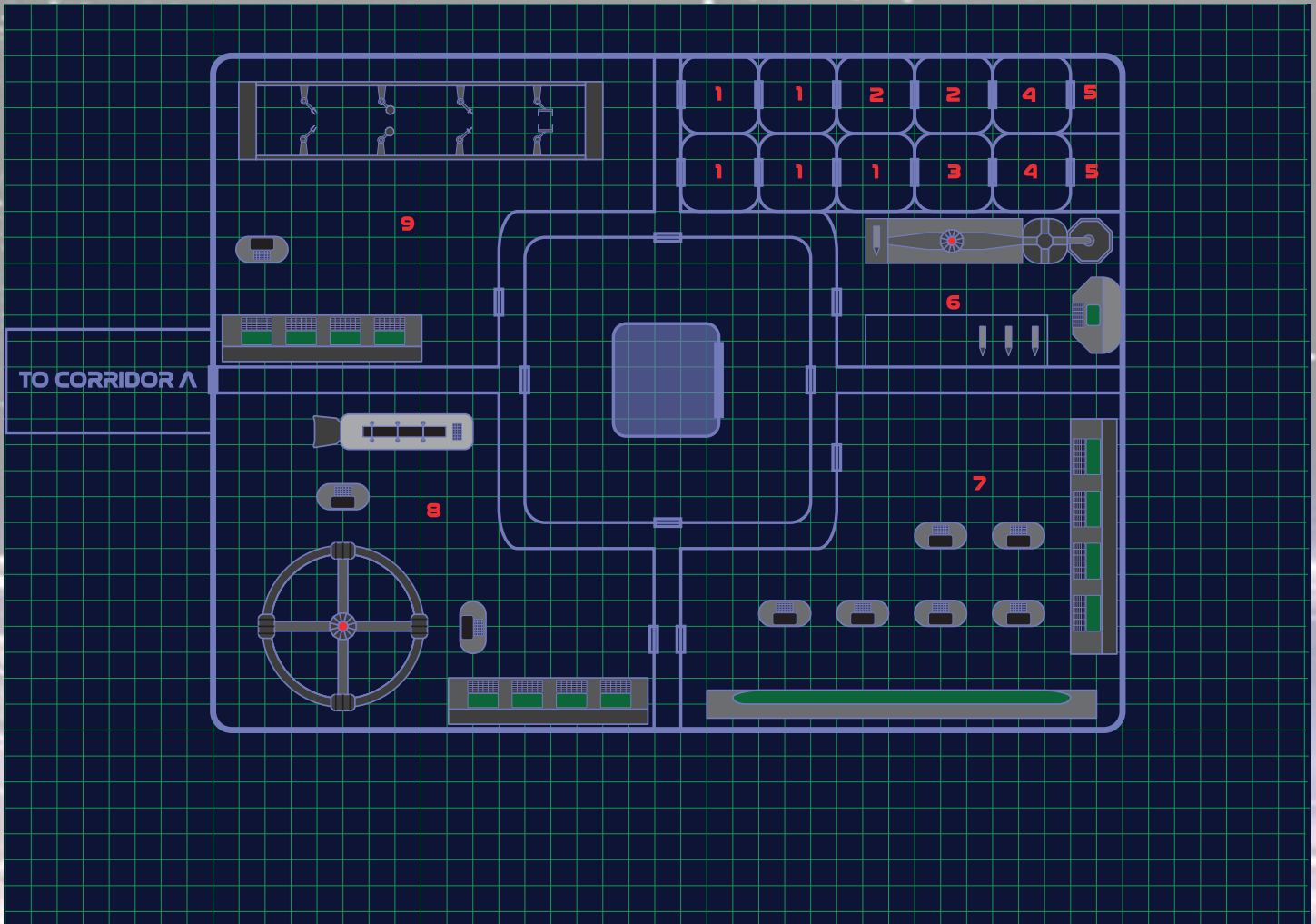
Creature: a Shadowsoul (see Appendix: **Shadowsoul**) is lurking in the elevator tube waiting for the newcomers. The undead chooses one of the PCs (or NPCs at GM discretion) in order to establish a **Soul Link** with the victim.

Once the link is established the Shadowsoul disappears from sight. Remember that being incorporeal allows the undead to leave the elevator without hindrances.

Keep note of the Soul Link and use the Shadowsoul's ability with the purpose of putting his victim in serious trouble. There can be moments and situations dangerous enough where an attack of panic can be deadly. It's up to you, as GM, to decide if the other PCs spot the Shadowsoul or not, just keep in mind that it takes seconds for the Shadowsoul to use its abilities.

B. QUARTERS

On this level the PCs find the quarters once inhabited by the Duergars. There are ten **Rooms** where the personnel slept, two **Storage Rooms** where supplies were stocked, an **Armory** where weapons and bullets were assembled, a **Control Room** where the engineers controlled the **Nuclear Reactor**, the once operational satellites, the **Research Lab** for experimental technologies, and the **Factory** where components were produced.



I. ROOMS

The first four rooms all look the same and contain almost the same features. This section of the dormitory appears abandoned and no one has slept here for years. Beds and furniture were removed however, and there is nothing but the empty metal walls. Even the electronic devices that once controlled the automated doors had been removed long before, leaving nothing but empty socks and some cut wires.

The Duergar survivors looted the rooms years ago in order to recover any possible material and components useful to them. So the PCs won't find anything interesting here, unless they want to make this section of the dormitory their base of operation. Keep in mind that the Shadowsoul could assault them, especially while sleeping.

2. ROOMS

Something resembling sealed metallic crates are lying stockpiled inside these rooms. There are eight of these objects and each bears carved inscriptions that resemble a runic alphabet.

The metal crates are actually coffins where the bodies of the first Duergars expedition lie. The second expedition found their bodies left rotting after decades and put what was left of them inside these crates, adapted as coffin.

If the PCs open the coffin they find the Duergars' personal effects, mostly jewels and other mundane items.

Equipment: silver rings (4) 200 credits each, steel pendants (3) 200 credits each, mithral bracelet (1) 500 credits.

3. ROOMS

A body lies on the ground. It is smaller in size than an ordinary human and was no more than 5 feet tall. He died years ago and now bones are that is left. In his left hand he's holding what looks to be a pistol.

The body lying on the floor belongs to a Duergar from the second expedition. He went insane after years of waiting for someone to rescue him and his comrades. He came here to end his life by putting a bullet in his head. A closer inspection reveals the hole on the left side of the skull. The Duergar do not bury those who commit suicide so, his surviving mates, left him there.

4. ROOMS (required time 1 hour)

These rooms are empty except for one weird detail. The metal walls are covered with inscriptions, diagrams, and geometrical figures. You clearly recognize the runic symbols representing the octal numeral system together with other symbols not yet known to you. Another clear drawing, representing the star system, is placed on one of the walls and it shows the brown dwarf star, the orbit of the four planets you already know plus a fifth unknown planet which has a completely different and more elongated orbit.

Duergars spent much energy in an attempt to survive and trying to leave the planet. At some point they faced an energy blackout that forced them to extreme conditions. Eventually they restored the energy output but some engineers, driven more by desperation than rationality, kept on making calculations employing anything they could. One of them came here and started to make the calculations, writing on the walls. He was the same Duergar the PCs found dead inside **Room 3**.

Here the PCs discover for the first time the existence of a fifth unknown planet which is actually the Duergar home world.

If a PC (or a NPC) wants to know more about this fifth planet by studying the calculations they must succeed a DC 12 **Know** skill check.

If successful they discover that the fifth planet requires 190 conventional years to complete a cycle around its star. Other details are impossible to discover without a proper study of both the mathematical system and the alien alphabet.

Story Award: award 2 XP only if the PCs discover the existence of the fifth planet.

5. STORAGE ROOM

The room contains a chest and some rusty iron closets. All the furniture drawers were opened and looted years ago. Only a dozen of old space suits remain. The suits are completely different from yours, both in size and technology, resembling those employed centuries ago.

The storage room seems to be empty but it is not. A close inspection, DC 9 **Notice** skill check, reveals a hidden hole under a movable tile on the floor.

Inside the hidden hole, wrapped in a dirty rag, the PCs find some ingots, made of precious metals. Some Duergars of the second expedition took advantage of the smelter in the armory to smelt valuable ores and get some gold and mithril.

Equipment: gold ingots (2) 150 credits each, mithral ingot (1) 400 credit.

6. ARMORY

Inside the room you see a big machine and you clearly recognize one of its components as an ore smelter. One meter long cannon warheads are lying on a shelf. On the other side of the room you spot a big computer, like those you have seen only in history books of antiquities. That relic must be the control panel which activates and programs the whole machine.

The machinery on the north side of the room is composed by three modular components, **Smelter, Crucible** and **Assembler**.

The ore smelter obtains metals from ores, the electric crucible melts the refined metals, and the assembler automatically shapes metals into warheads or other components.

The warheads placed on the shelf serves the **Coil Cannon** in **Area D**. If the PCs analyze the warheads have them roll a DC 9 **Know** skill check.

If successful they discover that the warheads are made completely of metals and they lack any chemical explosive. A deeper analysis with the scanner, DC 9 **Know** skill check, reveals the warhead composition; each warhead has a core of depleted uranium covered by a layer of lead, while the external cover is made of tempered tungsten. The Duergars used to fire the warheads to potentially dangerous meteorites that were about to hit the planet's surface.

If **Karsk** joined the group read to the PCs his opinion about the warhead composition.

Karsk: *The engineering behind these warheads are pretty fascinating, considering that whoever built this complex was not as technologically advanced as we are. They lack any chemical explosive so I can't yet figure out their purpose, but I'm sure that the external tungsten covering has been placed to resist extremely high temperatures, the lead protects any loader from the harmful radiation coming from the depleted uranium core. I must say that this kind of warhead, if properly accelerated, would have a devastating effect on whatever it hits.*

7. CONTROL ROOM

A giant screen covers the south wall in front of six control panels. Cables and wires are scattered on the floor, some of them were cut and others are not connected. On the eastern wall a big computer stands silent. None of the electronic devices seem to be turned on or be working in any way.

The giant screen on the wall monitored the atmosphere and the closer outer space thanks to a couple of satellites orbiting around the planet. While the satellites are potentially operational they are not sending any data from the surface because the whole control room is shut down.

The control room can be easily repaired and reactivated by the PCs. The Duergars could not fix the damages provoked by the first radioactive incident, so they left the control room abandoned.

Have the PCs, or the NPCs, roll the following skill checks if they want to repair and put online the control room.

Repair the main computer (Dc 10 Program, required time 2 hours)

This action completely restores the functionality of the main computer.

Story Award: 2 XP

Restore the control panels (DC 9 Fix, required time 1 hour)

By restoring and fixing some cables the PCs restore the electrical connection of the control room.

Story Award: 1 XP

Repair the screen (DC 7 Fix, required time 1 hour)

Most of the screen was damaged by an electrical overload generated by the radioactive burst caused by the reactor. By repairing the damages the PCs partially restore the screen even if the quality is not the same as it was originally.

Story Award: 1 XP

Let the PCs repeat the check if the first fails, however they have to spend the required time before realizing that something went wrong, only then they can repeat the task.

Once they succeed all the required skill checks, the control room is once again operational,

it only requires enough energy to work and have the operating system reloaded.

Once the control room becomes operational

The control room is the hearth of the subterranean complex and from this place almost everything can be remotely controlled. Each of the six control panels at the center of the room grant access to a different system inside the complex. Have the players decide which system each panel controls.

Here comes a list of the systems that can be remotely controlled:

Doors & elevators: you can open or close any door provided it is operational (see **For the Game Master: Doors**), you can move the elevator and close their sliding doors.

Gate & energy barrier: you can open or close the gate and activate or deactivate the Energy Barrier located at the **Entrance**.

Shuttle bay: you can open or close the sliding door on the ceiling (the shuttle bay ceiling works like the **Rocket Launch Pod**) of the shuttle bay and elevate the launch platform to the surface thus allowing the shuttle to take off.

Coil cannon: you can open or close the sliding door on the ceiling of the Coil Cannon battle-station (the coil cannon ceiling works like the **Rocket Launch Pod**) and elevate the platform to the surface thus allowing the coil cannon to aim and shoot.

Rocket Launch Pod: you can open or close the sliding door on the ceiling of the Rocket Launch Pod and activate the rocket launch procedure.

Nuclear reactor: you can control the **Nuclear Reactor** by shutting down the radioactive core. However this action is now no longer possible due to high radiation interfering with the electrical plant and a heavy damage to the containment chamber. Inform the PCs that the shutdown procedure is blocked by the computer due to this structural damage.

The main computer

While the six control panels control the systems, the main computer on the eastern wall controls the satellites and the communication system. Once the control room is activated, the main computer automatically reinitializes and sends a radio signal to establish a connection with the two satellites orbiting the planet which in return, begin to transmit data. The radio signal attracts the attention of the Hobgoblin battleship which is listening for any frequency coming from any point in the system. Once the Hobgoblins receive the radio signal they'll set a course to the planet, sure to have finally identified and located the transmission sent instead by the Cerberus outpost. The PCs become aware of the signal reaching outer space too late, but it is possible they suspect the

Hobgoblin had received it. They will not detect the presence of the Hobgoblin battleship until it reaches the planetary orbit, at that point the satellites spot the battleship and if a PC or a NPC is inside the control room or has remote access to the control room data then he is warned of the Hobgoblin's presence.

How long it takes the battleship to reach the planetary orbit is up to the GM, however 12/24 hours could be appropriate. This event should occur before the PCs have the chance to leave the planet. For more details see **Hobgoblin Assault Squad, Coil Cannon** and **Hobgoblin battleship in orbit!**

8. RESEARCH LAB

A large circular machine is in this room, many cables of different sizes and diameter are connected to a main computer. It closely resembles a particle accelerator at its experimental phase. On the other side you spot another component which at first glance looks like a pulse engine prototype.

The stuff inside this lab represent the Duergars technological peak, however, to the PCs this technology has already been discovered centuries ago. The lab itself does not have too much to offer unless the PCs or the NPCs want to improve the technological devices they find inside.

Improve the pulse engine (DC 9 Fix, required time 4 hours)

This device is not fully operational yet and requires many adjustments in order to function properly. Any PC or NPC can fix and improve the engine to make it work as a nearly modern pulse engine. If the PCs eventually decide to improve the shuttle (see **Shuttle Bay**) propulsion system they could decide to mount the improved pulse engine on the vessel. The improvement turns the pulse engine into a basic engine for a shuttle.

Story Award: 2 XP

Improve the particle accelerator (Dc 12 Fix, required time 6 hours)

Improving the particle accelerator is possible but tricky and requires time. If the skill check is successful the PCs get a rudimentary, but operational power core. The improvement turns the particle accelerator into a power core with an output of 3.

Story Award: 4 XP

9. FACTORY

You see a huge assembly plant composed by a rail and eight mechanical arms. The plant looks like it is in good condition. Like the other technological devices you have seen so far, it looks like more of a piece from a museum than something useful.

The assembly plant works normally if powered. It is capable of assembling, cutting and

soldering almost anything but it has to be programmed. Consider this relic as a support to any **Fix** check, granting a +1 circumstance bonus for any task that requires to work on mechanical parts.

CORRIDOR A

The corridor is wide, dark and silent. Even the slightest noise is amplified by the echo. According to a deep scanning, the corridor is 250 feet long. After a few steps inside, your radiation detector starts buzzing and detects a raise in the radiation level. The deep scanning revealed two potential elevators leading to two respective chambers.

The corridor is dark and without any source of light, contaminated by radiation (medium radiation level) caused by the nuclear reactor leak. If the PCs are not wearing a protective suite they suffer the effects of radiation unless they succeed at a **Physical** saving throw. A damaged suit may impose penalties on the saving throw.

Two separate elevators are placed at 100 feet and 200 feet respectively, leading to the **Shuttle Bay** and to the **Coil Cannon** (see **Deep Scanning Map, Area C and D**).

The end of the corridor leads directly to **Storage Area 1**. The entrance to **Elevator 1** is placed at the end of the corridor, on the left wall. If the PCs reactivated the control room they already know about the shuttle bay and the coil cannon. If the group decides to explore the corridor read to them the following paragraph.

You are walking through the corridor when you clearly feel the floor tremble. At first it is a light vibration tingling your feet, few seconds later the tremor becomes stronger. A few meters in front of you the floor is torn into pieces and your sight is blocked for a moment by the concrete dust. Whatever is coming out of that hole is alive and you soon realize it is getting closer.

The PCs have just encountered a **Xenoworm**. As GM you decide where and when the Xenoworm (see **Appendix: Xenoworm**) appears exactly, it should appear before reaching the elevator leading to the shuttle bay.

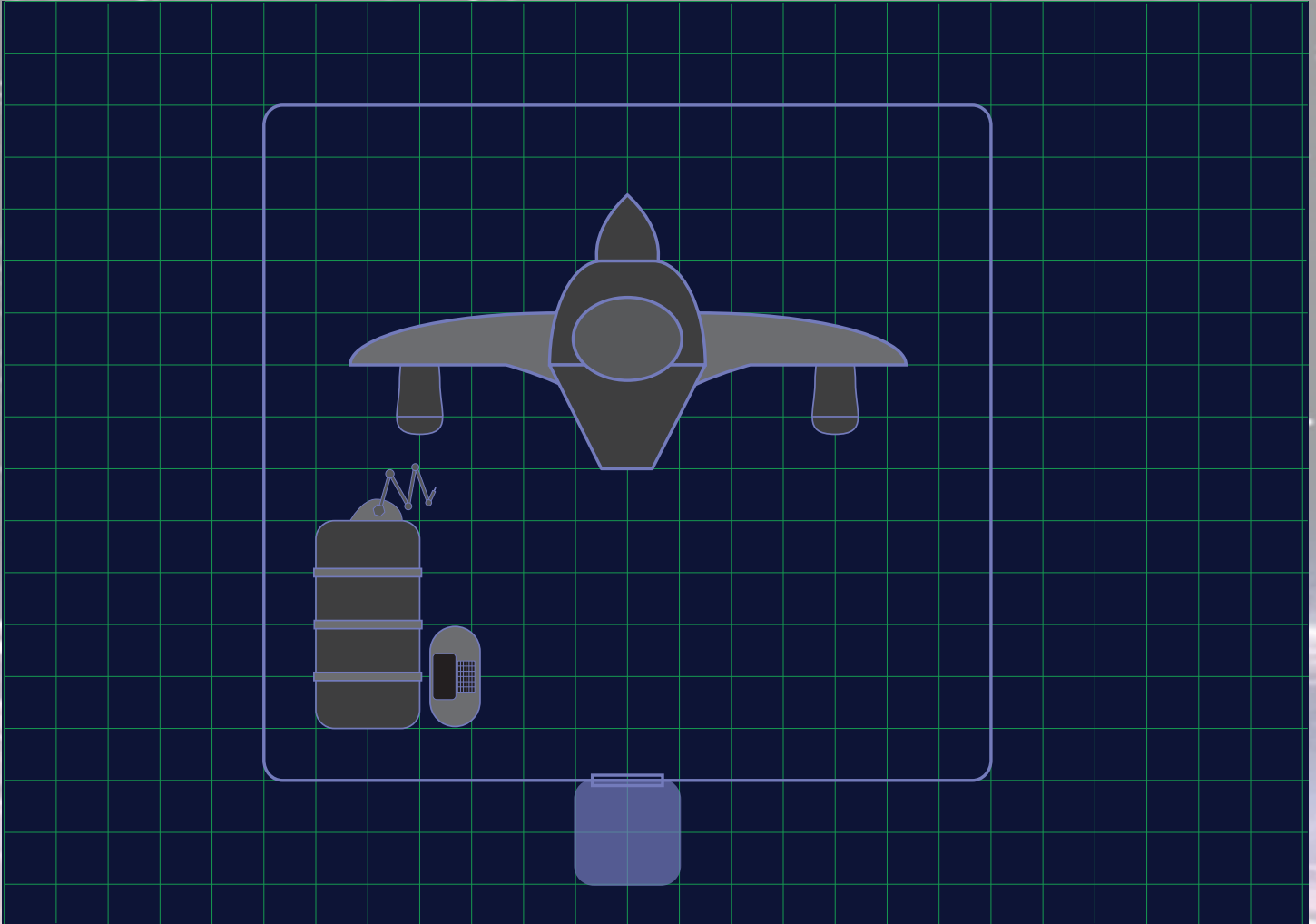
The more distant the PCs are from the door leading back to the quarters, the more dangerous this encounter is. Place the Xenoworm 2d4x10 feet distant in front of the group. The Xenoworm doesn't leave the low level radiation area, so if the PCs plan is to retreat, consider them safe once they reach the quarters.

Don't forget that if one of the PCs are affected by the Soulshadow soul link ability, this could be the proper moment to employ it.

Creature: Xenoworm

C. SHUTTLE BAY

An old fashion shuttle is stationed at the center of a platform. On the left you spot a control panel and a big metal tank, probably containing propellant, and a mechanical arm attached to refuel the shuttle. The bay is nearly 60 feet high and opens on the mountain flank. The ceiling opens by means of a sliding floor.



The Duergar shuttle is fueled by liquid propellant and does not rely on any kind of pulse engine. It can host one pilot and was used mainly for reconnaissance missions on the planet's surface. The engine status is not good due to oxidation, so any attempt to repair them will fail. However, the PCs can easily employ the experimental pulse engine they found in the **Research Lab** to replace the combustion engine and the particle accelerator to mount as a power core.

If the PCs don't figure out that they can improve the shuttle, have one of the NPC propose the idea.

Karks: *I think I can fix this piece of scrap and turn it into a flying machine. Maybe we have a chance to fly it in outer space.*

One or more engineer, PC or NPC, can work on the fitting. If the check succeeds, the

new systems fit perfectly on the shuttle. If the check fails, the engineers realize that something went wrong only after the required time passes. They can however, try again until successful. After mounting both the engine and the power core they have to update the on-board computer so that it can operate with the new components.

Fitting the Pulse Engine (DC 9 Fix, required time 2 hours)

Story Award: award 2 XP

Fitting the Power Core (DC 10 Fix, required time 3 hours)

Story Award: 4 XP

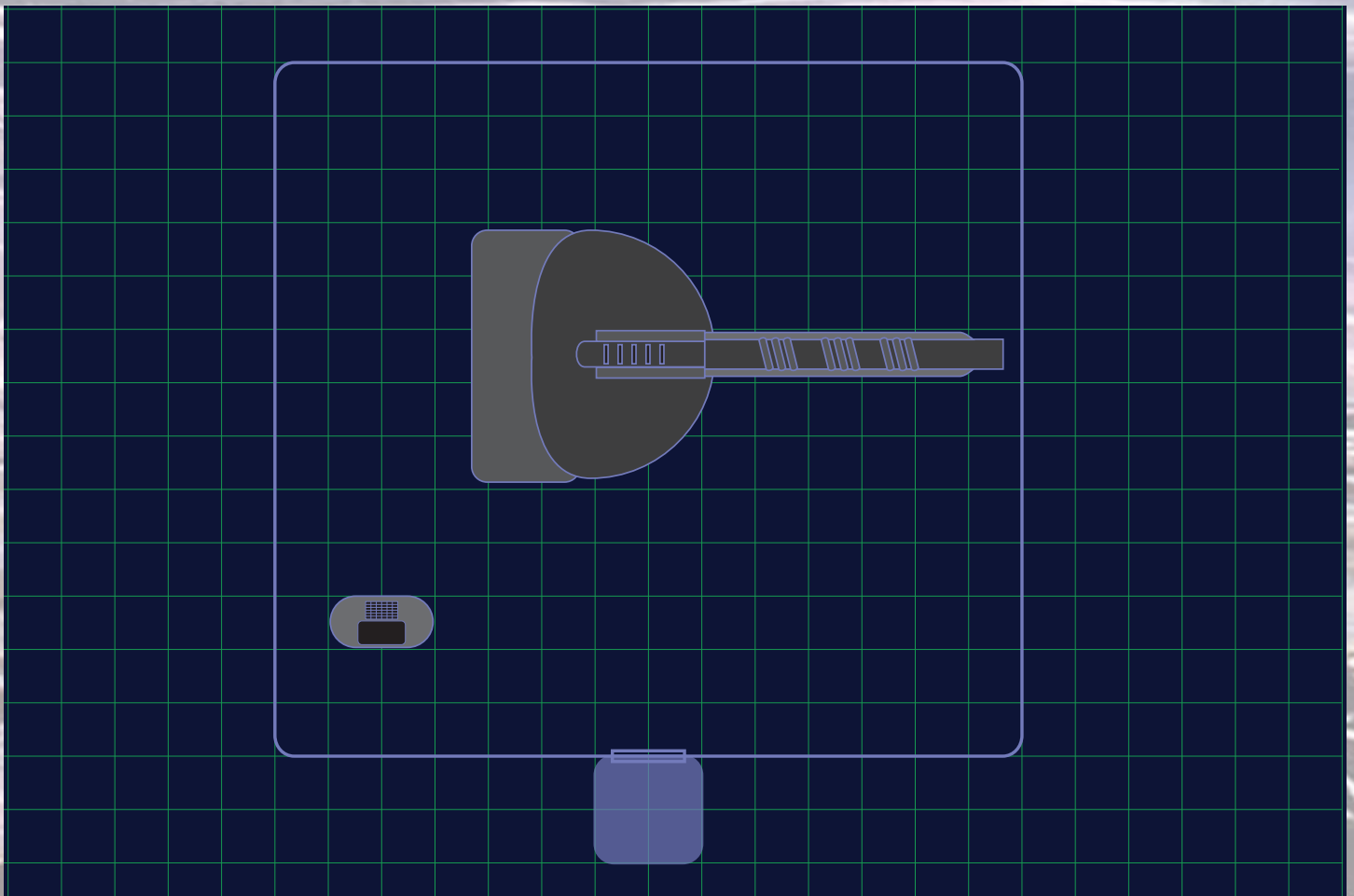
Improving the on-board computer (DC 12 Program Fix, required time 2 hours)

Due to lack of proper technological components it is not possible to assemble an ICS better than a basic computer. Once the fitting is complete treat the shuttle as a basic shuttle frame.

Story Award: award 3 XP

D. COIL CANNON

A huge coil cannon stands before you, the gun barrel measuring nearly eighty feet. Coil cannons are not unknown to modern warfare but became obsolete when energy beam weapons were adopted for large scale warfare.



This massive weapon works with electromagnetism and is capable of shooting a warhead at tremendous speed. The coil cannon needs no repairing except some lubrication to the inner mechanism, besides that, it is fully operational. The control panel allows an operator to control the cannon.

The Coil Cannon will prove to be useful once the **Hobgoblin assault squad** lands on the planet (see **Hobgoblin assault squad**) and invades the subterranean complex.

In that moment the Hobgoblin battleship will be orbiting the planet (see **Hobgoblin battleship in orbit!** for more details) remaining straightly aligned to the subterranean complex coordinates, thus allowing the coil cannon to aim and shoot with considerable precision.

Once the Hobgoblin battleship reaches the planetary orbit.

The Coil Cannon is the only weapon the PCs can use against the **Hobgoblin Battleship** in order to bring it down and subsequently leave the planet in safety. The weapon is able to aim and shoot once per round thanks to the satellites triangulation and computer calculations.

COIL CANNON STATS

Dmg: 6d10; **Hit roll bonus:** +10

Special properties: the coil cannon gets a +10 **hit roll** to hit the target due to triangulation with satellites and thanks to computer calculations.

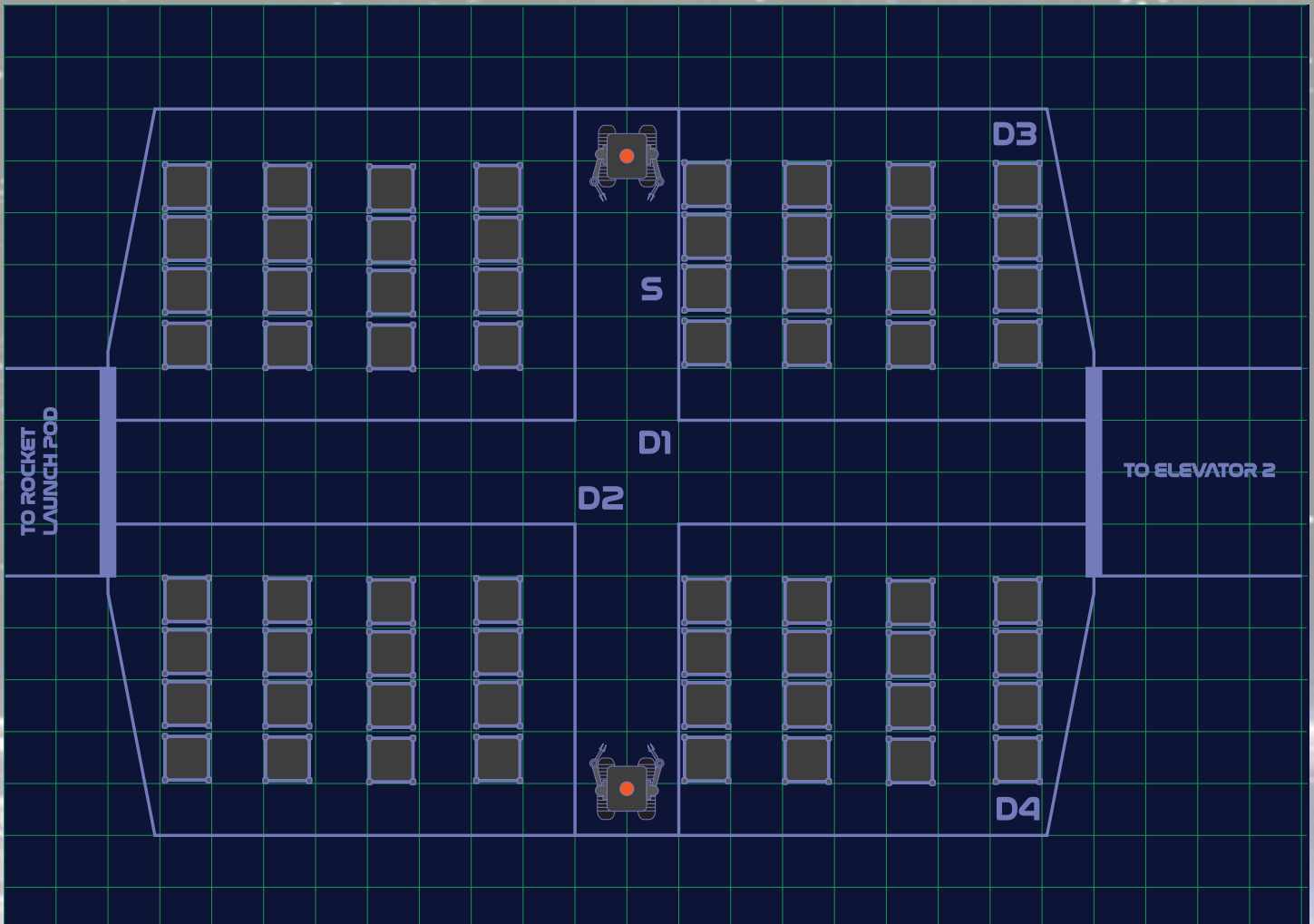
Firing the coil cannon: firing with the coil cannon is like firing with a weapon mounted on a spaceship. It takes 3 rounds for the warhead to cover the distance between the surface and the target. This means that the PCs have the chance to fire three times before the Hobgoblin battleship even realizes someone is shooting at them. But, at the same time it is highly probable that the battleship will have fired 3 times before the PCs can counterattack.

Damaging the Hobgoblin battleship: the Hobgoblin battleship has its own armor class, hull points and shield points. For more details about these values see **Hobgoblin battleship in orbit!**

ELEVATOR 2

This elevator is exactly the same as **Elevator 1**, so it can hold up to 9 passengers and moves up to 3 tons of weight. The engine is perfectly operational because the Duergars are constantly maintaining it in efficiency. This elevator is required to access the three

storage areas located on the lower levels, respectively **Storage Area 2**, **Storage Area 3** and **Storage Area 4**. Keep in mind that close to **Storage Area 4** the radiation level rises to high. The elevator requires one round to travel from one level to another.



EI. STORAGE AREA I

A huge 20 feet wide metal door stands before you. The control panel that manually opens the door is opened and has gone through maintenance many times.

The 20 feet wide automatic door is now closed but can be remotely opened from the **Control Room**. If no one is in the control room then the PCs have to digit the code in order to open the doors or attempt to hack the control panel, DC 7 **Program** skill check. Beyond the door there are the five Duergar survivors and when the PCs arrive they are resting, so it is possible they caught them by surprise if the PCs do not make noise. Once the doors are opened and the party enters inside the storage area, read to them the following.

The huge metal doors crack and slowly open. Through the breach you immediately spot two humanoid figures lying on the ground, and apparently they have spotted you too. One of them attempts to stand up but he seems to suddenly freeze as the doors open completely, leaving a

clear line of sight between you and them. The humanoid screams in terror when he sees you, trying to sneak away but is too panicked to coordinate his movements properly. The light is too dim so you can't classify what kind of being you are looking at, for sure they are shorter than you and appear to be wearing an armor and a helm.

The Duergars were resting a while in what they now consider their home. When the doors open they wake up wondering what is going on considering that no one else should be down there with them. The Duergars have never met any intelligent alien life form so, besides being scared and astonished, they are reluctant to start any kind of hostility. However, if the PCs become hostile and open fire the Duergars fight to the best of their capabilities.

If the PCs do not become hostile, then all the Duergars inside the storage area slowly show themselves.

D1, D2: the two Duergars (soldier) at the center of the storage area were supposed to mount guard.

D3, D4: the two Duergars (soldier) rapidly changed their position when the doors opened and hid behind the crates to ambush anyone or anything that was about to enter. When they understand they are facing a humanoid life form they quickly realize they have just made first contact with another intelligent life form.

S: this is the Duergar scientist and he immediately finds a position out of the line of fire. His name is Thurmwall and he is the Duergar that will show interest in peaceful communication with the PCs (see **Appendix: Duergar Survivors** for more details about this encounter).

The PCs, by observing the Duergar's physiology, immediately figure out a close resemblance to the dwarf race.

As a GM you now have to manage this encounter properly, avoiding, if possible, any attempt to start a fight. The Duergars trapped here can be useful to the PCs and may eventually join them on the Sawshark. Make use of diplomacy skill if you think it is appropriate for this encounter and for your game-mastering style.

The first obstacle to overcome for the two groups is communicating.

If **Tzaru** is present he attempts to establish a telepathic link with Thurmwall, which he recognizes as the leader of the group.

Tzaru: *Captain, I can easily communicate with these humanoids and I can state with a certain degree of certainty that we are witnessing a sort of parallel evolution. They resemble in many ways, our Karsk!*

If Tzaru is not present, advise the PCs they should request his presence as an interpreter (keep in mind that the **Contemplative** race can communicate by means of telepathy),

otherwise both the groups have to communicate by gestures, expressions, drawings or whatever is necessary to understand each other.

Each sentence or concept, no more than a dozen words, requires a DC 8 **Know** skill check DC 16 in order to be properly translated or understood and takes 10 minutes (don't forget to keep track of time). Another interesting role-playing solution is having both you and the PCs effectively "talk" by means of gestures and drawings.

Once the PCs establish peaceful communication with the Duergars, they can obtain interesting information about the subterranean complex, its purpose, the incident, and so on.

In any case the Duergars are reluctant to provide information about their home-planet and will not reveal intelligence that could endanger their species.

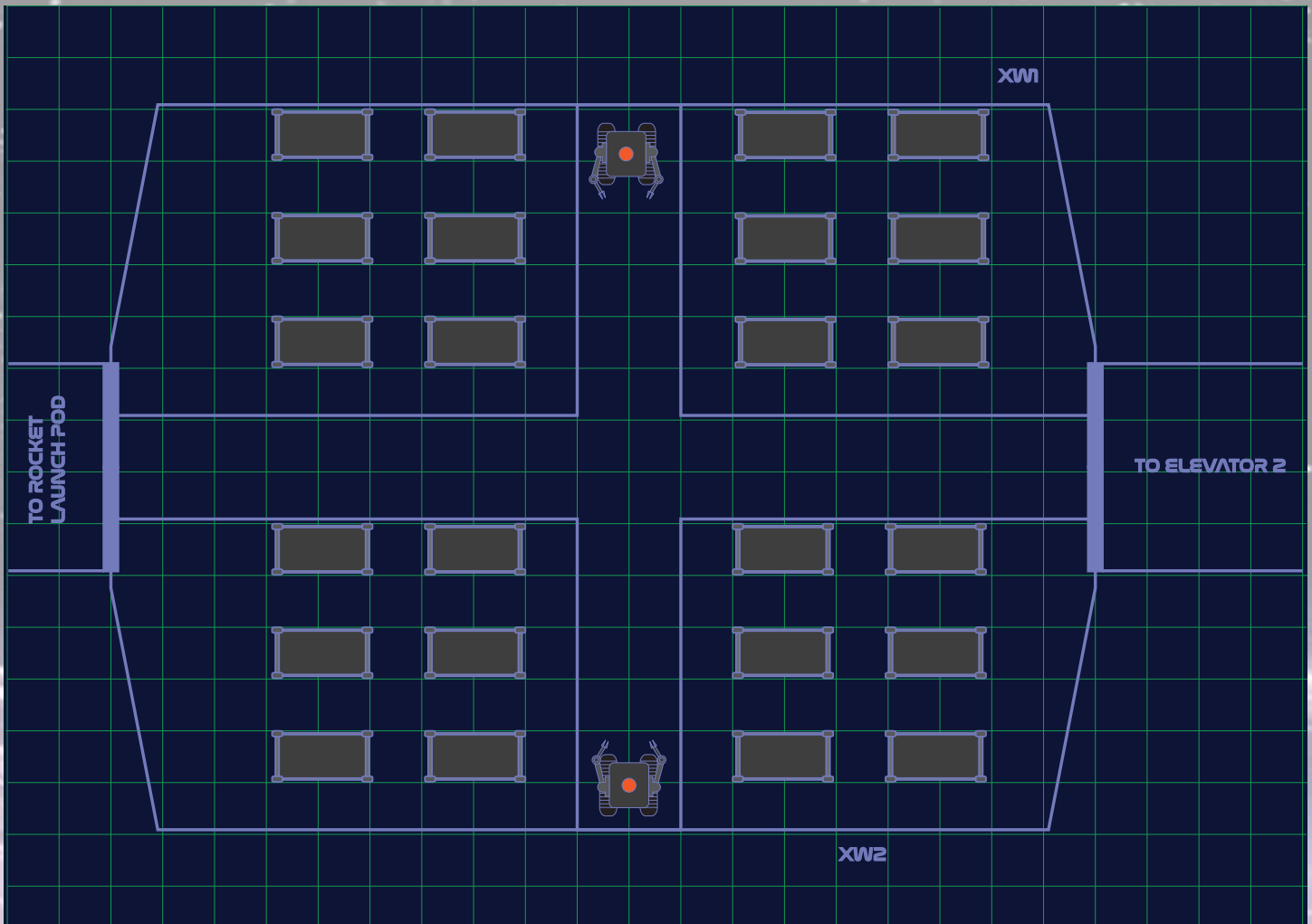
Story award: 20 XP (only if the PCs manage to befriend the Duergars).

Equipment: 64 crates containing 2,000 credits of materials and components useful to craft **weapons, armors, augmentations, computers, technological items**

Heavy duty robot: two manual robots are stationed inside the storage area. They are

not equipped with any AI, so they need a driver in order to function. If the PCs want, they can mount weapons on each robot, maybe weapons they craft by employing the materials found inside the storage area.

E2.STORAGE AREA 2



Storage Area 2 contains other crates and more materials the PCs can employ to produce more items, together with a couple more **Heavy Duty Robots**. However, the area is not safe because two **Xenoworms** (see **XW1** and **XW2**) are lurking beyond the walls. If the PCs enter the storage area then the xenoworms appear and attack shortly after by opening a breach into the concrete walls. Being attacked in this area is more dangerous than being attacked in **Corridor A**.

Here radiation is stronger (medium level radiation), thus the xenoworms pursue the PCs to the elevator doors if necessary. For this encounter, the PCs probably require to employ the modified robots because facing two xenoworms at the same time represent a higher challenge.

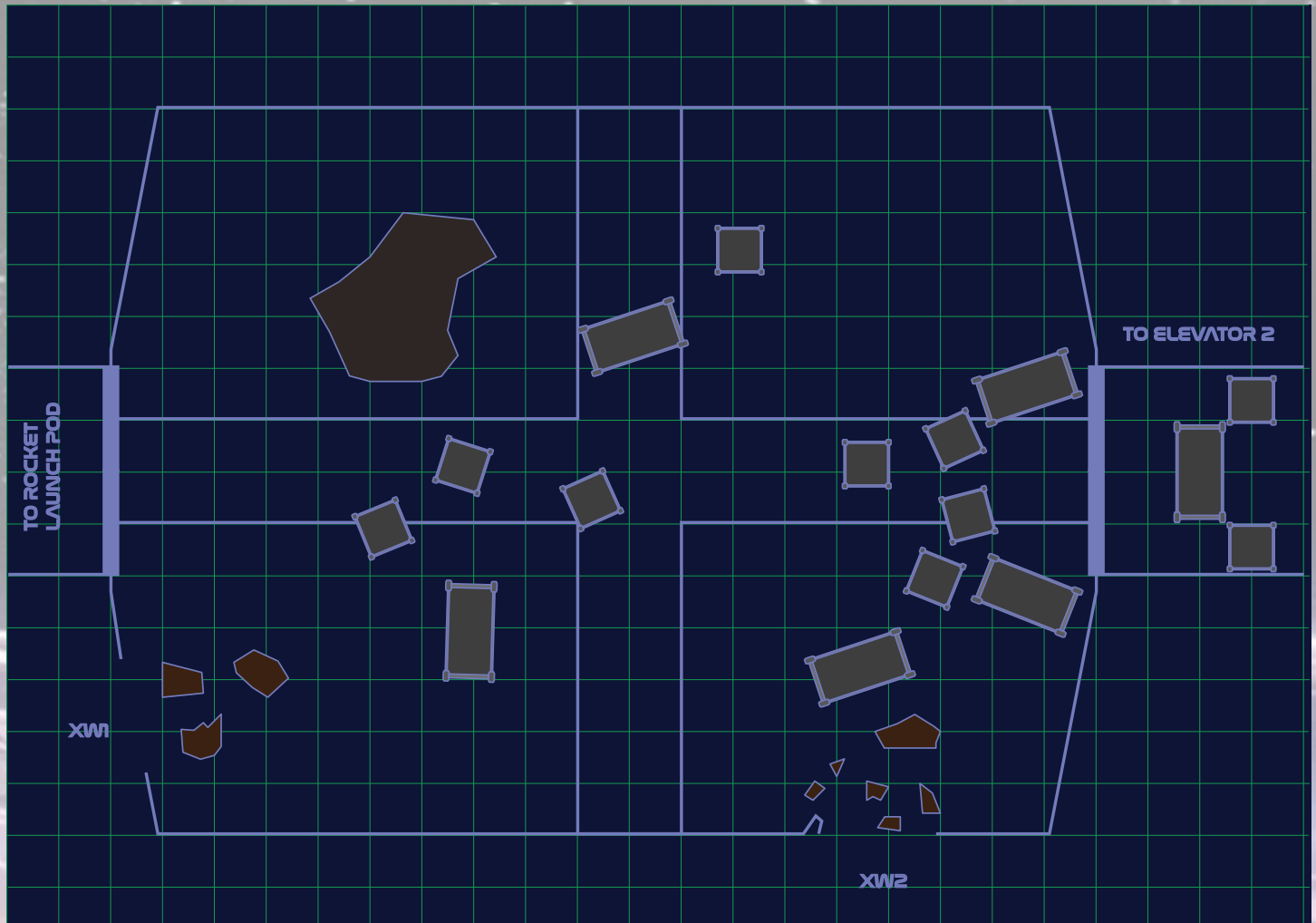
Creature: Xenoworm (2) hidden beyond the concrete walls.

Equipment: 24 crates containing 750 credits of material and components useful to

craft weapons, armors, augmentations, computers, technological items.

E3.STORAGE AREA 3

When the elevator doors open you see in front of you an improvised barricade made of crates which block the way to the storage area. The door leading inside is closed except for a small 3 foot wide opening.



Storage area 3 has already been invaded by xenoworms that use this place as nest. The Duergars tried to retake control of this area but they are too few to defeat the worms alone. When the PCs arrive the xenoworms (XW1 and XW2) are sleeping inside holes dug through the concrete walls. If the PCs have already met the Duergars then they are probably informed about the xenoworms presence. In this encounter the PCs have the chance to take the “sleeping” xenoworms by surprise .

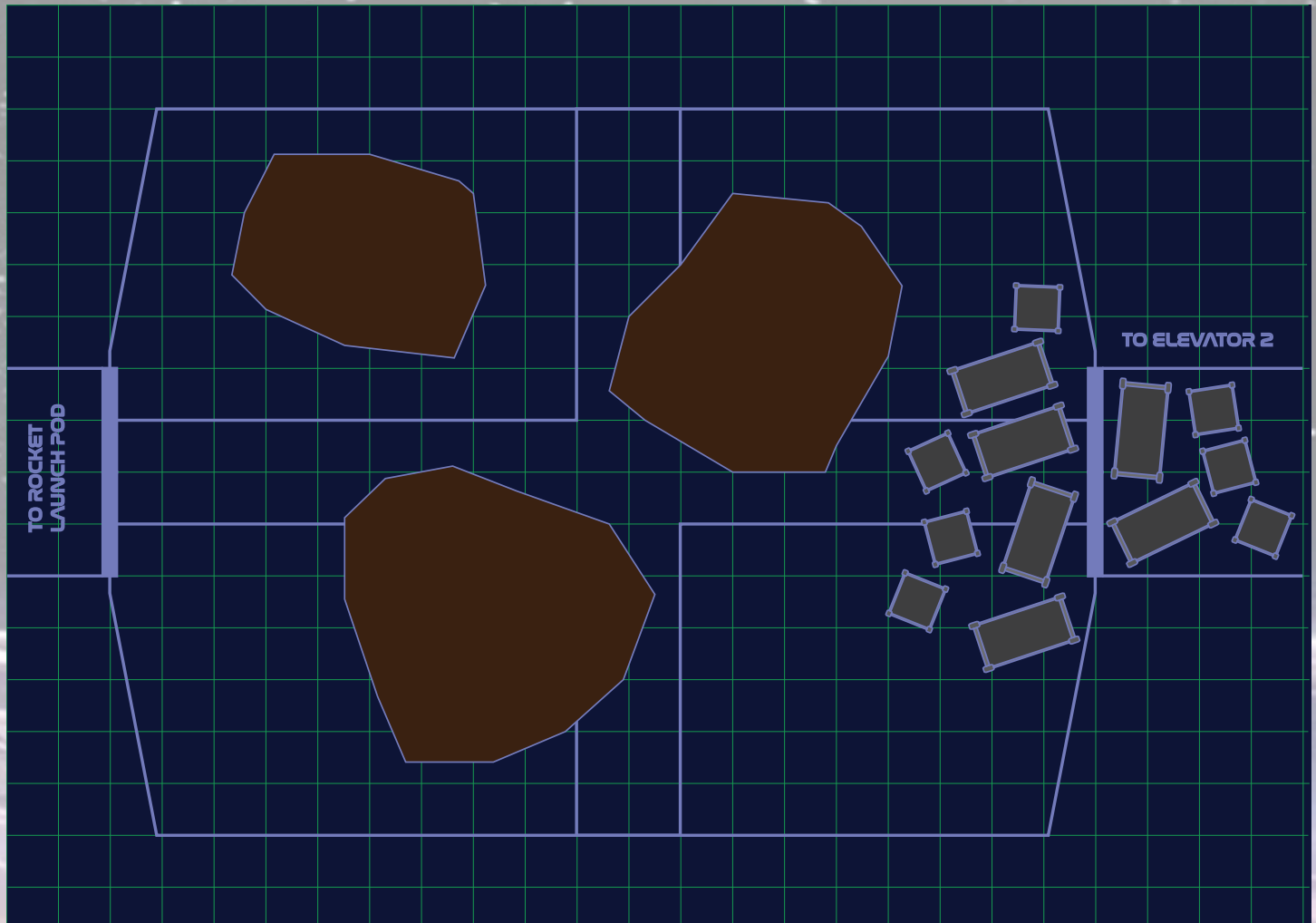
If the PCs defeat the xenoworms have them roll a DC 10 **Notice** skill check to spot signs of burns on their skin. Further analysis, DC 9 **Heal** skill check, reveal severe wounds caused by a bludgeoning blow. What the PCs don't know is that these wounds have been caused by the Earth Elemental that is occupying the nuclear reactor.

Creature: Xenoworm (2)

Equipment: 17 crates containing 3,500 credits of materials and components useful to craft augmentations and technological items.

E4.STORAGE AREA 4

Many crates are scattered and block the way inside the last storage area. It seems they were placed here in a hurry. The corridor walls bear marks of gunfire, you clearly spot bullet



holes on the surface. Apparently the Duergars undertook a harsh fight to defend their last perimeter. The radiation indicator rises to severe.

The three brown spots are barrows of soil, where the xenoworms emerged from. Each barrow hosts a xenoworm and a tunnel that leads directly to the nuclear reactor below. Each tunnel emerges to the reactor ceiling and is 40 feet long, not in a straight line. If the PCs plan to reach the reactor by other means, the tunnels are a valid option.

Note for the GM: the tunnels that connect **Area E4** to **Area G** (the ceiling of the Nuclear Reactor) are not marked on the map. Feel free to place these tunnels where it is the most convenient.

Only two tunnels are occupied by xenoworms, the third one hosts just the corpse of the creature.

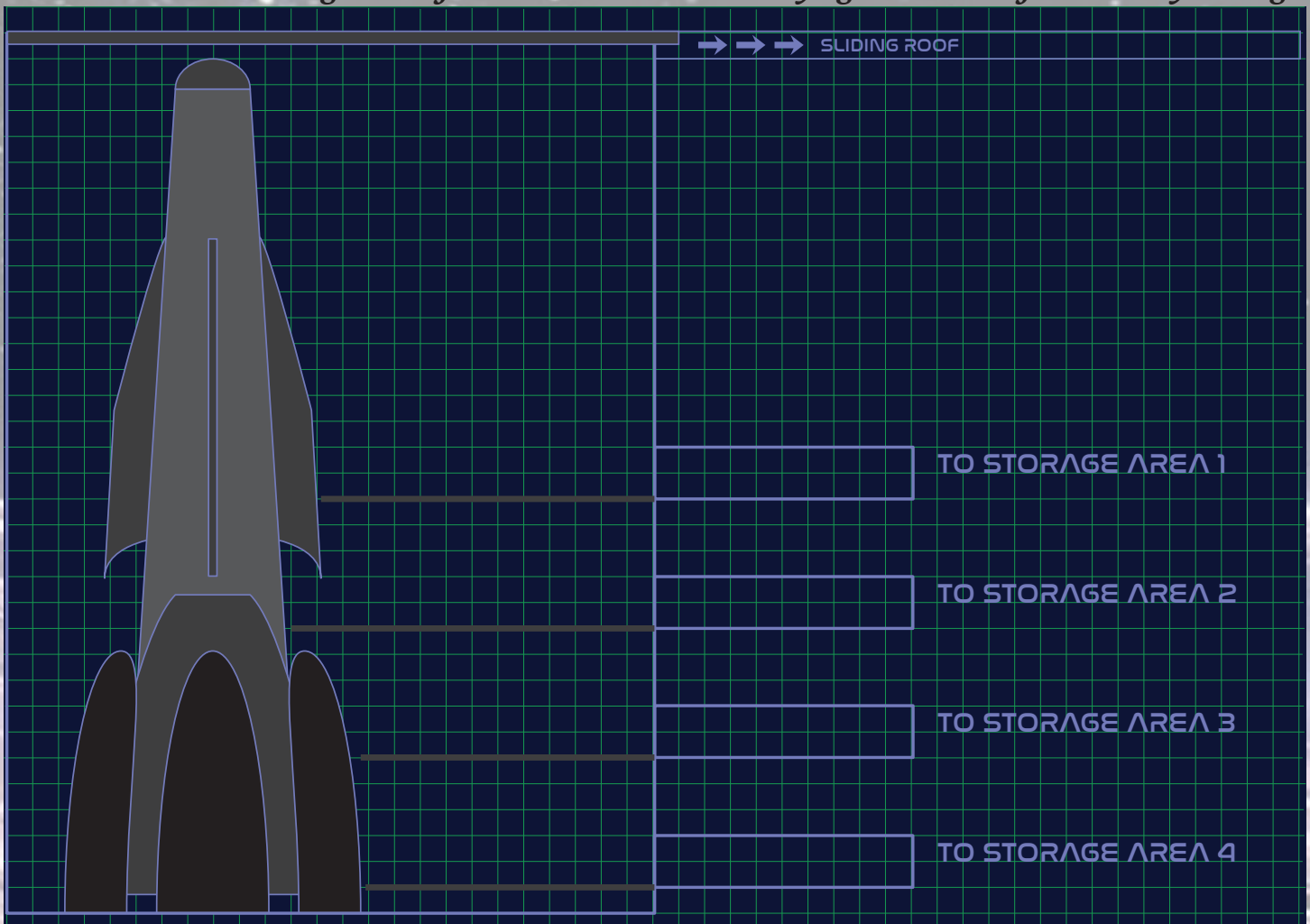
Once the PCs reach the door, have the xenoworm roll a DC 12 **Notice** skill check, or set a DC according to any **Sneak** check the PCs may roll

Creature: Xenoworm (2)

Equipment: 13 crates containing 500 credits of materials and components useful to craft augmentations and technological items.

F. ROCKET LAUNCH POD

The launch pod looks immense and when you take a look inside you feel dizzy. A 120 foot long rocket dominate the sight and four retractable walkways grant access from every storage



area.

The rocket had the purpose to launch crew, equipment, gears and satellites into orbit. It is reusable, so it is projected to land back on the surface.

The rocket requires a lot of hydrogen/oxygen fuel and the compounds produced by the Sawshark are easily compatible with the rocket requirements. Keep in mind that the Sawshark possesses the technology to split water into hydrogen and oxygen, the machinery that does so are on the third deck.

1) If the PCs lost their ship, this rocket could be an obsolete but worthy alternative to leave the planet and get back to the **Cerberus**. Apply the **Setting Course** procedure

as explained in **Chapter 2** or just consider that the rocket relies only on combustion engines and that it can travel only by inertia once it leaves the planet's orbit.

2) If the PCs want to send a big load of crates, of which the Sawshark has no room, into outer space, the rocket has enough capacity to carry all of the crates found inside the storage areas together with the **Modified Robots**. Keep in mind that the rocket requires at least one pilot.

ELEVATOR TUBE 3

This elevator descends to the lower level of the subterranean complex and opens into **Corridor B**, once the PCs reach the bottom the radiation level rises to medium. It is as long as **Elevator 1**, in that it is 125 feet deep, and can move 5 feet per round.

CORRIDOR B

The corridor leading to the nuclear reactor looks creepy and abandoned, you can feel that the radiation has wiped out any living matter. It is nearly 100 feet long and at the end you spot a dim luminescence, at the same time your radiation scanner is going crazy due to radioactivity rising every step you get closer.

The corridor is completely abandoned and there are no signs of xenoworm passages.

G.NUCLEAR REACTOR

The reactor lies 60 feet below you and the stairs leading down are wrecked or oxidized. It is immense compared to the other places you have explored inside the complex. You distinguish five different modules that compose the reactor. In the center there is the containment chamber which contains the fissile material, on the right you spot what should be the generator, on the left there is the condenser, and at the bottom is the turbine. What you don't recognize is another odd component connected directly to the containment chamber. What is certain is that the 5% of the unknown detected energy source is coming from that strange machinery.

Read the **Nuclear Transmutator** description for more details.

The Nuclear Reactor provides electricity to the whole subterranean complex.

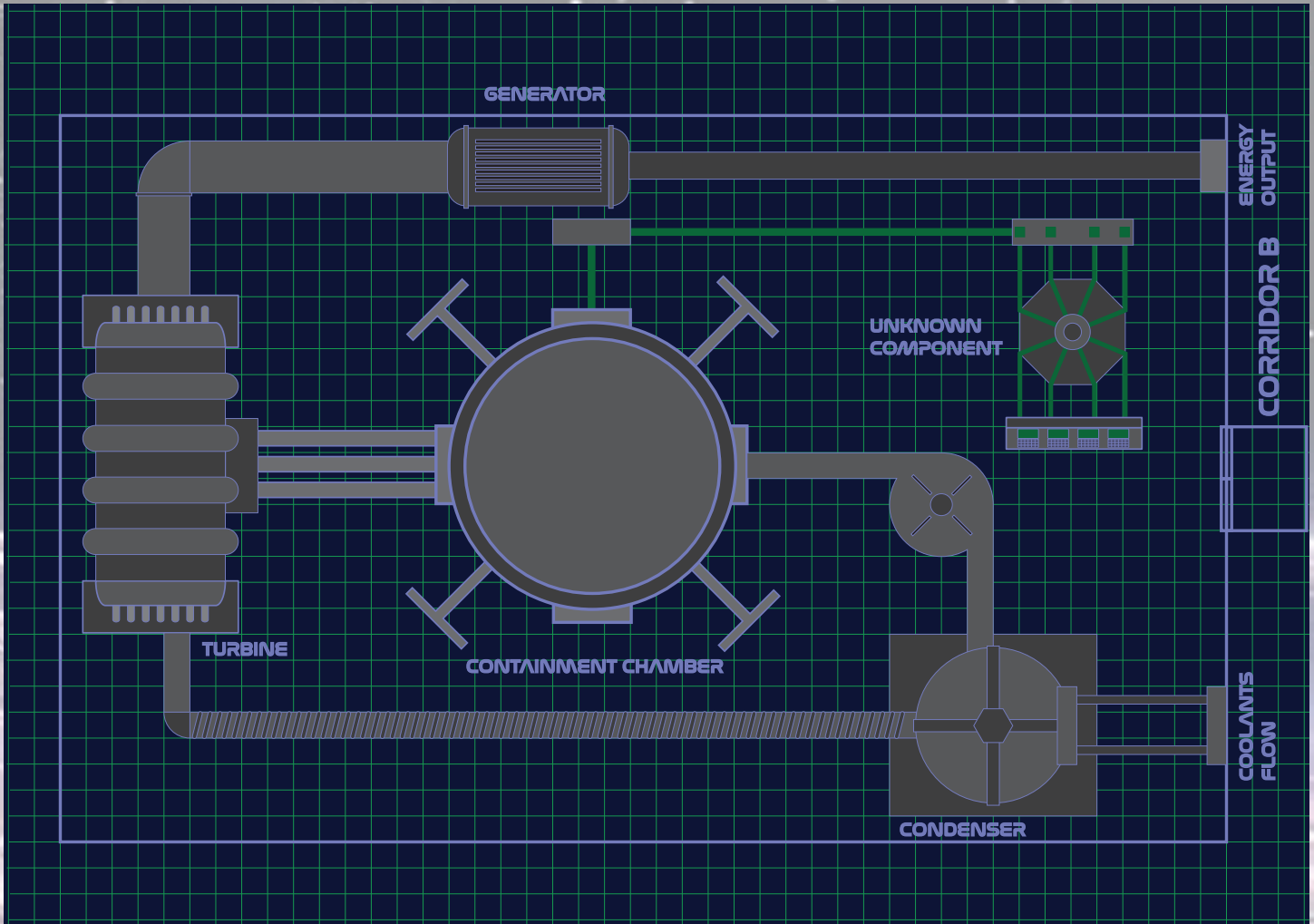
However, the **Containment Chamber** is suffering a serious structural flaw causing a dangerous radiation leak. The PCs immediately detect something wrong is occurring inside the nuclear reactor. The lectures clearly mark that the reactor has already gone out of control and in some inexplicable way the core is under a constant suspended nuclear meltdown.

However, this energy is being absorbed and redirected elsewhere, even if they can't yet figure out what is preventing the core from exploding and where all that energy is

flowing. In order to discover what is happening they have to climb down and analyze each component.

The whole nuclear plant is actually an open portal to the **Elemental Plane of Earth**, and the **Earth Elemental** that came in long time ago is still around.

To safely access the nuclear reactor the PCs must defeat an Earth Elemental first, who is protecting the extra-dimensional opening, preventing anyone from reaching its native plane. The stairs leading down to the reactor are damaged, so it is necessary to climb



down by other means.

RADIOACTIVE EARTH ELEMENTAL

The Earth Elemental appears once the PCs try to climb down into the nuclear reactor. The gate leading to its home plane is constantly open and the Elemental is lurking close to it. If the PCs want to analyze and fix the nuclear reactor they first have to defeat or neutralize the Earth Elemental. Once the creature is defeated, the PCs have free access to **Area G**.

Tactics: the Earth Elemental's only concern is to guard the portal and will fight until the PCs flee or are dead. If, after the first assault, the PCs withdraw, then the Earth

Elemental won't chase them. However, the creature remembers what happened and if the PCs return for the second time the Earth Elemental eventually goes after them. Just consider that its size is obviously an obstacle.

Creature: Radioactive Earth Elemental (1).

UPGRADING THE NUCLEAR REACTOR

Before the PCs can safely extract the **Nuclear Transmutator**, they have to update the technology of all the reactor's modules and, once the reactor is updated, the artifact can be extracted without causing a chain reaction. Only one person can oversee a single component of the nuclear reactor at a time.

Upgrading the Condenser (required time 2 hours)

This 30-foot high giant tank receives steam from a 135 foot long pipe and turns it into liquid so that it can be reused by the **Containment Chamber** which, thanks to the nuclear reactions, turns again the liquid into steam.

Upgrading the condenser requires a successful DC 9 **Fix** skill check.

Story award: 1 XP

Repairing the Containment Chamber (required time 8 hours)

This is the core of the nuclear reactor and from here the steam is directed into the **Turbine**. Green cables connect to the octagonal platform that host the **Nuclear Transmutator** and pass through a couple of electronic interfaces.

It seems that raw nuclear energy is flowing through the green cables. At the moment the Containment Chamber is suffering a flaw that occurred decades ago and was responsible for the death of the first exploratory mission.

The rift present on the metallic structure of the containment chamber must be repaired in order to control the nuclear meltdown.

Repairing the containment chamber requires a successful DC 12 **Fix** skill.

Story award: 3 XP

Upgrading the Coolants Flow (required time 2 hours)

These pipes regulate the coolants flow output and input, draining cold liquids from subterranean sources.

Upgrading the coolant flows requires a successful DC 8 **Fix** skill check.

Story award: 1 XP

Upgrading the Generator (required time 3 hours)

The Generator transforms the raw energy that is produced but the turbine into usable electric energy to feed all the subterranean complex.

Upgrading the generator requires a DC 9 **Fix** skill check.

Story award: 2 XP

Upgrading the turbine (required time 3 hours)

Steam coming from the Containment Chamber moves the powerful turbine and produces raw electricity.

Upgrading the turbine requires DC 10 **Fix** skill check.

Story award: 2 XP

Once all the upgrading and repairing are accomplished, the level of radiation returns to normal. Reduce the radiation level of one factor after one hour.

UNKNOWN COMPONENT AND THE NUCLEAR TRANSMUTATOR

The device apparently receives raw nuclear energy from the Containment Chamber, the energy is carried by glowing green pipes and passes through two technological interfaces before reaching the Nuclear Transmutator. A local computer is monitoring the whole device. The artifact is absorbing the uncontrolled energy produced by the fissile reactions and is redirecting the flow into the Elemental Plane of Earth.

The PCs easily figure out what is occurring because lectures on the computer and analysis of the electric connection are easy to understand. However, they do not have a clue of how the artifact is exactly doing this.

The Nuclear Transmutator is placed on an octagonal pedestal, if the PCs have undergone the upgrading process they can safely remove the artifact from the platform.

HOBGOBLIN BATTLESHIP IN ORBIT!

This event occurs once the control room has been activated and at least 12/24 hours have elapsed.

Once the **Hobgoblin Battleship** reaches the planetary orbit (see **Control Room** for more details) it starts a bombardment at the subterranean complex coordinates.

Probably at this point, the **Hobgoblin Assault Squad** has already landed and invaded the complex (see **Hobgoblin Assault Squad** for more details).

The Hobgoblin commander could decide to open fire, even if his assault squad is still

inside, taking advantage of the confusion generated by the skirmish. The only means the PCs have to avoid being buried under the rocks is firing back with the **Coil Cannon** (see **Coil Cannon** for more details).

Keep in mind that a shot from the Coil Cannon requires three rounds to reach the target, this is because the coil cannon's warheads are fast, but not as fast as the more modern energy weapons.

Details about the Hobgoblin battleship are stated in the table below, like shields points, hull points and armor class. Remember the PCs are not supposed to directly engage the battleship which, for the sake of this episode plays more the role of a background actor.

HOBGOBLIN BATTLESHIP STATS

HP: 100; **Shield:** 36; **AC** 15.

COIL CANNON STATS

Dmg: 6d10; **Hit roll bonus:** +10

These statistics are what the GM needs to know in order to manage the long range skirmish between the Hobgoblin battleship and the coil cannon.

THE BOMBARDMENT STARTS

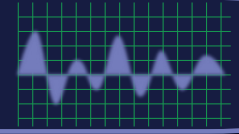
The bombardment hits the mountains but can hardly penetrate the rocky surface. It lacks of precision due to the thick atmosphere and the magnetic field interfering with the battleship sensors. However, the warhead explosions make the earth tremble thus affecting the subterranean structure. Every round the battleship fires its batteries, three warheads hit the mountain. Choose randomly from the table below which part of the subterranean complex is affected and what effects the hit produces due to underground earthquakes. If a hit affects an area more than once, both in the same round or in subsequent rounds, **Table 1.10** states the effect by a sequential number, 1st, 2nd, 3rd.

As a GM feel free to create different effects as appropriate. Keep in mind that consecutive hits on the same area can lead to permanent structural damages.

Example: during the first round you roll 2 so the entrance receives one hit from the battleship and the occupants suffer 1d6 damage. The second round you roll a 1 and the occupants suffer again 1d6 damage, but this time the electric engine explodes and **Elevator 1** stops working.

D20	AREA	EFFECTS
1-2	ENTRANCE	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: the electric engine explode, Elevator 1 stop working 3rd hit: Energy Barrier collapse; see Generators for more details
3	ELEVATOR TUBE 1	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 P damage 2nd hit: Elevator 1 is stuck inside the tube 3rd hit: Elevator 1 falls, occupants suffer 10d6 damage
4	QUARTERS	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: occupants suffer 2d6 damage 3rd hit: occupant suffer 3d6 fire damage
5	CORRIDOR A	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: occupants suffer 2d6 damage; one xenoworm appears 3rd hit: occupants suffer 3d6 damage; corridor is blocked by debris
6-7	SHUTTLE BAY	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: sliding ceiling collapse; occupants suffer 3d6 damage 3rd hit: shuttle explode; occupants suffer 5d6 fire damage
8	COIL CANNON	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage; -1 penalty on hit roll 2nd hit: occupants suffer 2d6 damage; -2 penalty on hit roll 3rd hit: occupants suffer 3d6 damage; -4 penalty on hit roll
9	ELEVATOR TUBE 2	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: Elevator 2 is stucked inside the tube 3rd hit: Elevator 2 falls, occupants suffer 4d6 damage
10	STORAGE AREA 1	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: occupants suffer 2d6 damage 3rd hit: occupant suffer 3d6 fire damage
11	STORAGE AREA 2	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: occupants suffer 2d6 damage 3rd hit: occupant suffer 3d6 fire damage
12	STORAGE AREA 3	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: occupants suffer 2d6 damage 3rd hit: occupant suffer 3d6 fire damage
13	STORAGE AREA 4	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: occupants suffer 2d6 damage 3rd hit: occupant suffer 3d6 fire damage
14-16	ROCKET LAUNCH POD	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: sliding ceiling collapse; occupants suffer 3d6 damage 3rd hit: Rocket explode; occupants suffer 10d6 damage; explosion extends to all storage areas causing 5d6 damages to any occupant.
17-18	ELEVATOR TUBE 3	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: Elevator 3 is stucked inside the tube 3rd hit: Elevator 3 falls, occupants suffer 10d6 damage
19	CORRIDOR B	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: occupants suffer 2d6 damage; one xenoworm appears 3rd hit: occupants suffer 3d6 damage; corridor is blocked by debris
20	NUCLEAR REACTOR	1st hit: occupants suffer 1d6 damage 2nd hit: occupants suffer 2d6 damage; the condenser sprouts high temperature steam causing 2d6 heat damage to any occupant 3rd hit: occupants suffer 3d6 damage; the coolants flows become breached and liquids invade the nuclear reactor submerging the entire area in one hour

CHAPTER 5-COMING BACK!



If the PCs survive the bombardment it means that the Hobgoblin Battleship has been defeated and the Hobgoblin Assault Squad wiped out. The road is clear and now they can come back to the Cerberus and save the day. The only issue the PCs could face is the lack of fuel to take off and leave the orbit.

TAKING OFF (fuel units -30)

The take-off of the Sawshark is now safer but consumes much more fuel. As we said, the ICS has already assembled an algorithm that optimizes the combustion engine so that no engineers are required to stabilize the ship.

If everything went fine during the **Setting Course** and **Landing Protocol** the ship should have consumed 20 fuel units, more if one or more **Pilot** skill checks went wrong.

TARGET LOCKED!

Sometimes a wounded lion is more dangerous than ever. Once the Sawshark reaches the planetary orbit, and before the crew can set the course back to the Cerberus, some Hobgoblin survivors on board the battleship make a last attempt to take revenge on those who destroyed their home. If the PCs are employing any other means other the Sawshark to leave the planet, then the Hobgoblin Battleship will not open fire.

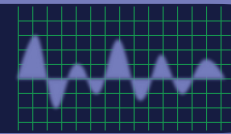
Two waves of **Micro-Missiles** are fired by the battleship at the Sawshark. Consider the micro-missiles have a flat +4 hit roll, 2d4 damage.

After the Hobgoblin battleship shot its last bullet the PCs spot an explosion sprouting from the enemy hull and then the wrecked battleship ceases to work.

WAY BACK HOME (required time 24 hours)

It is over. The PCs can start the journey and go back to the Cerberus. Exhausted, wounded, burned and with some broken bones but at least alive to see another day. Communications with the Cerberus are now safe and there is no point in relying only on the combustion engine. The pilot can now employ the pulse engine at full power and bring everybody at home. Maybe the PCs decided to take the Duergars with them, who in return join the crew and will help the PCs in their next steps. Maybe some of the NPC died, so they will have time to celebrate funerals in the most appropriate way. What matters most now, is that the road to home is clear.

ENDING



The adventure ends with the PCs and their allies docking at the Cerberus and delivering the Nuclear Transmutator. The outpost will be operational in a few days, seven days before the arrival of the freighter with fresh supplies, personnel, provisions and spare parts.

THE SUBROUTINE

While the Cerberus crew is mounting and adapting the artifact to the power core, other events are occurring inside the Hobgoblin battleship. The drones that escaped from the Sawshark during the first episode, **Distress Call**, finally emerge.

The **Subroutine** has now evolved and has learned. It is employing the battleship materials and assembling new drones, reprogramming them for fighting.

Inside the battleship there is a star-fighter also, which the Subroutine is reprogramming to be auto-piloted. The wreck of the battleship is not totally useless, its cannons and engines can be repaired and the Subroutine is preparing the dead ship to move again into battle.

POSSIBLE ENDINGS

If you are running your own campaign or you just prefer a different ending that fits with your goals, we propose some options:

Explore the wreck of the Hobgoblin Battleship

If your players do not care about saving the Cerberus, or you have prepared another base of operations for your campaign, then you may want the PCs to explore the battleship wreck. They surely make their way inside the ship, but they will have to fight some of the Hobgoblin still alive inside, and later fight against some drones or whatever you wish to place inside the ship.

Stuck underground

The PCs and their allies will not go anywhere. Their ship was accidentally hit by the bombardment and it is now a pile of molten metals. They have to rely on their knowledge to survive enough time to assemble a new ship from scratch...or eventually dig underground and make new discoveries.

ADVENTURE AWARD

Once the adventure is over, it's time to award something to the player. As a GM feel free to award them XP or anything else you find appropriate for your campaign goal. As an adventure award we propose a bonus traits for all PCs and NPCs as well (except the Duergars if they joined).

TEAMWORK (BONUS TRAIT)

PCs and NPCs crew have learned to coordinate their actions and improve their efficiency.

Prerequisites: to be a crewmember of the Sawshark. Having survived the underground complex during the course of this adventure.

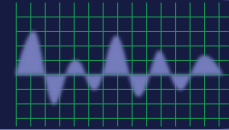
Benefits: when characters are using a skill and are on the same spaceship they get a +1 circumstance bonus on all their skill checks.

THE NEXT EPISODE

One week later the Cerberus is repaired, the freighter finally arrives, carrying fresh provisions, equipment, and some new personnel. The PCs and their allies will have to defend their position and their lives against a massive assault from the Subroutine, which, by that time, has assembled numerous self-replicating drones that will try to infiltrate both the Cerberus and the Freighter. Its purpose is to reach the Federation borders and spread its viral code to every federation controlled star system.

The Subroutine's long term plans become more evident at this point and apparently lurking the Hobgoblin battleship into the star system was not a coincidence.

APPENDIX



NPC

The NPCs described here do not contain any reference about their home planets. Details are left to you as a GM and creator of you own setting. More details will come when the specific setting of this adventure path will be published. Feel free to use any content inside this module to enrich and expand your own setting.

DJERGAR, THURMVALL

HD	2 (11 hp)
AC	16 (Plated Armor)
Attack	+0 (Combat Rifle)
Damage	1d12 (Combat Rifle)
Move	6 meters
ML	9
Saves	Physical 14, Evasion 15, Mental 15
Skills	Fix +3; Heal +3; Know +2
Stats	Str 10 Dex 12 Con 15 Int 13 Wis 10 Cha 5
Special	Thermal Vision, Resistance to Radiations
Equipment	Combat Rifle, Medical Tool Kit, Plated Armor

BACKGROUND

Thurmvall is the only high ranking officer still alive inside the underground complex. Specialized in biology and medicine he represents the one who has always believed in the existence of other intelligent species besides his own.

When first contact with the PCs occurs, he is probably the one to take the first step in an attempt to establish peaceful communication.

DJERGAR, SOLDIER

HD	2 (14 hp)
AC	16 (Plated Armor)
Attack	+2 (Combat Rifle, Survival Knife)
Damage	1d12+2 (Combat Rifle); 1d4+2 (Survival Knife)
Move	6 meters
ML	8
Saves	Physical 14, Evasion 15, Mental 15
Skills	Shoot +2; Punch +2; Work +1
Stats	Str 13 Dex 11 Con 16 Int 9 Wis 12 Cha 4
Special	Thermal Vision, Resistance to Radiations
Equipment	Combat Rifle, Survival Knife, Plated Armor

HARSH

HD	2 (10 hp)
AC	11 (Environmental Suit)
Attack	+1 (Laser Pistol)
Damage	1d6 (Laser Pistol)
Move	10 meters
ML	9
Saves	Physical 15, Evasion 15, Mental 15
Skills	Fix +3; Program +2; Know +1
Stats	Str 10 Dex 12 Con 13 Int 13 Wis 10 Cha 7
Equipment	Laser Pistol, Environmental Suit, Advanced Engineering Tool Kit

BACKGROUND

Karsk had been hired by Basirius Corporation a few weeks before the Sawshark departed for the DLB01 star system.

Karsk left his community and specialized in xeno-technology, mostly due to boredom by the lack of innovation among his people. He is sophisticated when it comes to talking about technical specifications, but once completing his duties he likes to relax and spend his free time in good company.

NUMA

HD	2 (8 hp)
AC	11 (Environmental Suit)
Attack	+1 (Laser Pistol)
Damage	1d6 (Laser Pistol)
Move	10 meters
ML	7
Saves	Physical 15, Evasion 14, Mental 15
Skills	Fix +2; Program +2; Work +2
Stats	Str 8 Dex 12 Con 13 Int 15 Wis 8 Cha 9
Equipment	Laser Pistol, Environmental Suit, Advanced Engineering Tool Kit

BACKGROUND

Numa is an engineer specialized in designing and crafting technological items. Her field of study is biotechnological engineering which requires knowledge in both anatomy and mechanical devices. She voluntarily implanted her prosthetic left arm to improve her skills. She has an open aptitude toward almost any issues and her critics tend to be as much as constructive as possible. Renowned in Basirius Corporation for her loyalty, she always puts mission goals above anything else.

SAH'AH MAL

HD	2 (7 hp)
AC	11 (Environmental Suit)
Attack	+1 (Laser Pistol)
Damage	1d6 (Laser Pistol)
Move	10 meters
ML	6
Saves	Physical 15, Evasion 15, Mental 15
Skills	Fix +3; Program +1; Survive +1
Stats	Str 8 Dex 12 Con 13 Int 13 Wis 10 Cha 9
Equipment	Laser Pistol, Environmental Suit, Advanced Engineering Tool Kit

BACKGROUND

Sah'ah Mal is specialized in reverse-engineering. However, she has never finished her career of studies. Basirius Corporation hired her due to her merits in analyzing and replicating hi-tech discoveries produced by market competitors.

She is supposed to work in team with Karsk, but the woman is too taciturn and introverted to for a dwarf. She spends most of her time at the lab, studying devices and executing security protocols.

TZARU

HD	2 (9 hp)
AC	11 (Environmental Suit)
Attack	+1 (Laser Pistol)
Damage	1d6 (Laser Pistol)
Move	10 meters
ML	7
Saves	Physical 15, Evasion 14, Mental 15
Skills	Fix +4; Lead +1; Program +4
Stats	Str 8 Dex 12 Con 11 Int 17 Wis 8 Cha 11
Equipment	Laser Pistol, Environmental Suit, Advanced Engineering Tool Kit

BACKGROUND

Tzaru is specialized in repairs and maintenance beside being a talented telepath. He is considered the team leader among all the other engineers on board. Patient, kind, and brilliant he is the one who makes the whole machine working.

Besides being a good engineer and computer expert, he always and openly recognizes that Sah'Ah Mal is the best engineer on his team. He tends to be very talkative when relaxed and spends his free time with the Sah'Ah Mal, trying to compensate her introverted personality. He loves to tell stories and anecdotes.

WASSILY

HD	2 (12 hp)
AC	11 (Combat Suit)
Attack	+2 (Laser Pistol)
Damage	1d6+1 (Laser Pistol)
Move	10 meters
ML	10
Saves	Physical 15, Evasion 15, Mental 15
Skills	Heal +2; Survive +2; Work +2
Stats	Str 10 Dex 12 Con 11 Int 13 Wis 14 Cha 12
Equipment	Laser Pistol, Combat Suit, Advanced Medical Tool Kit

BACKGROUND

Wassily is a 30-year-old man and a close friend of Captain Tibb. He served in the army of his homeland planet as a war medic with a specialization in emergency surgery. Captain Tibb wanted him aboard when he received the contract proposal from Basirius Corporation. He has no family left behind and has worked as a generic doctor in some secondary outposts since being dismissed from the army. He is committed to his job and a tenacious man. He will prove to be a valuable companion to the PCs if they give him the opportunity.

NUCLEAR TRANSMUTATOR

When the Duergars built the nuclear reactor inside the subterranean complex they were planning a second experiment. Mixing the force of nuclear power and that of arcane magic. Their civilization was intensively researching energy sources to master faster than light travel and start their own conquest of space.

Theoretically they knew it was possible to achieve such goal, but practically they were aware of the tremendous amount of energy required to accomplish such travels. Nuclear energy was not enough.

So, in their attempt to speed up their advancement they decided to rely on the power of arcane magic. The Duergar civilization has always been capable of mastering the mysteries of the Arcane, but never decided, until that moment, to mix the two disciplines. They thought that in this way they could achieve their goal and so they took the big step. They decided to set up their first experiment on the fourth planet of their solar system, the closest to their home-planet.

Engineers and scientists projected and built the underground complex, which would have hosted a nuclear reactor, while wizards were crafting the artifact. Both the nuclear reactor and the artifact were supposed to work together.

The Nuclear Transmutator was finally born. A team of fifty Duergars composed of the best scientists, engineers and wizards made this project possible and in few years of hard work the project was finally completed. Then came the Day. The nuclear reactor was online and the artifact was only waiting to be connected to the nuclear energy source. Their plan was to feed the Nuclear Transmutator with nuclear energy, then the artifact would have converted and amplified this massive amount of energy into exotic energy, much more powerful and capable of energizing any kind of engine, capable of warping the fabric of space-time thus opening the doors to space travel.

Even if the theory behind the project could have worked, their technological advances in other fields, essential to control the exotic reactions, were not yet complete.

Once the reactor started to energize the Nuclear Transmutator they lost control. The artifact was absorbing more energy than expected and was generating an exponential energy output beyond the safety countermeasures. The artifact, instead of converting nuclear energy into exotic energy, started to transmute matter at atomic level.

The atmosphere of the planet was broken apart and reassembled while exotic radiation polluted every corner of the planet. This first event killed most of the Duergars inside the complex, those who survived knew that if they didn't stop or contain the energy produced by the transmutator the consequences would have been catastrophic. Things got worse when the excessive energy backfired and crippled the integrity of the containment chamber.

At that point they became aware that an uncontrolled nuclear reaction was imminent. In a last desperate effort the wizards made achievements, where the scientists didn't. If it was not possible to stop the artifact then they had to create a vent to somewhere else. They opened an inter-dimensional gate into the Elemental Plane of Earth and redirected all of the energy produced by the transmutator inside the plane.

Since that day the Nuclear Transmutator has never stopped functioning and the breach is still open.

When the PCs discover the Nuclear Transmutator: the artifact at the moment can't be disconnected from the nuclear reactor, the backfire will generate an explosion strong enough to incinerate the whole subterranean complex and possibly jeopardize the planet's geological stability. First the PCs have to fix the breach in the containment chamber and only then they will be able to handle the energy flowing from the reactor to the artifact. While this task was out of reach for the Duergars, it is possible for the PCs thanks to their more advanced technology and knowledge.

The Nuclear Transmutator in this adventure: the Nuclear Transmutator is capable of generating enough energy to restore the Cerberus systems and can help the PCs to reactivate the power core. During this adventure the powers of the artifact won't be explained because more details will be described in the following episodes. The PCs will slowly uncover the potential of the artifact by means of research and experimentation.

The Nuclear Transmutator in your adventure or campaign: if you wish to play just this adventure and want your players to find an ancient relic capable of mixing the power of technology with the power of Arcane magic, this could be an interesting option.

ALIEN DATABASE

BLUE OOZE

HD	1 (2 hp)
AC	5 (-2 Dex, -3 Morphology)
Attack	-2 (slam)
Damage	1d4-2 (slam) + 1d4 (cold touch)
Move	9 m. (climbing), 15 m. (flying, only at zero gravity)
ML	12
Saves	Physical 15, Evasion 16, Mental -
Skills	Exert -6, Notice +2, Sneak +2
Stats	Str 2 Dex 3 Con 10 Int - Wis - Cha -
Special	Immune to Cold, Vulnerable to Fire, Blindsenses, Amorphous

DESCRIPTION

A blue ooze is a primitive life form which exists in the outer belt of the DLB4.01 star system. It's a methane based organism which feeds on carbon compounds and uses low levels of radiation to activate its bio-chemical processes.

It is encountered lurking within asteroids facing toward the brown dwarf star where it recharges by absorbing radiation. However, it is attracted by the radiation emitted by a ship's defensive shields. When one comes within reach of these creatures they swarm toward the radiation source. Of course, this action can kill them, but it can happen that the shields are down and some of these pests manage to slip inside the ship.

Carbon-based life forms represent an unprecedented food source for these alien oozes which usually feed on extremely low quantities of carbon compounds. Even if they need low heat emitted by radiation they can't tolerate extreme heat like fire which ignites them instantly if oxygen is present in the environment.

Immune to Cold. Blue Ooze are not harmed by effects related to cold or extremely low temperature.

Vulnerable to Fire. The chemistry of a Blue Ooze makes the creature very vulnerable to fire and sparks. Fire damage trigger the methane contained in its metabolism and destroys the ooze immediately.

Blindsenses. Blue Oozes can detect radiation and micro gravity fluctuations in order to orient their movement.

Amorphous. Blue Ooze do not have a solid structure. They can slip through tiny fissures and small cracks without reducing their speed.

BLUE OOZE, mutated

HD	3 (20 hp)
AC	8 (+1 Dex, -3 Morphology)
Attack	+2 (slam)
Damage	1d6+1 (slam) 1d4 (cold touch)
Move	9 m. (climbing), 9 m. (flying, only at zero gravity)
ML	12
Saves	Physical 13, Evasion 13, Mental -
Skills	Exert +1, Notice +2, Sneak +1
Stats	Str 14 Dex 14 Con 15 Int - Wis - Cha -
Special	Immune to Cold, Vulnerable to Fire, Blindsenses, Amorphous

DESCRIPTION

Mutated ooze are a direct mutation of a blue ooze, usually this mutation occurs when the creature come in contacts with artificial radiations, by assimilation of alien organic compound or living being.

Immune to Cold. Blue Ooze are not harmed by effects related to cold or extremely low temperature.

Vulnerable to Fire. The chemistry of a Blue Ooze makes the creature very vulnerable to fire and sparks. Fire damage trigger the methane contained in its metabolism and destroys the ooze immediately.

Blindsenses. Blue Oozes can detect radiation and micro gravity fluctuations in order to orient their movement.

Amorphous. Blue Ooze do not have a solid structure. They can slip through tiny fissures and small cracks without reducing their speed.

EARTH ELEMENTAL, radioactive

HD	12 (100 hp)
AC	18
Attack	+10 (slam)
Damage	2d6+8 (slam)
Move	6 m. (walking, can pass through rocky formations)
ML	11
Saves	Physical 2, Evasion 14, Mental 9
Skills	Exert +8, Notice +2, Sneak +2
Stats	Str 20 Dex 18 Con 18 Int 3 Wis 8 Cha 8
Special	Tremorsense, Radioactive Aura

DESCRIPTION

Radioactive earth elemental is exactly like an ordinary earth elemental but its mineral composition is highly enriched of radioactive materials or isotopes.

Tremorsense. Earth Elemental can detect small vibrations propagating on the ground.

Radioactive Aura. This specific version of Earth Elemental emanates strong radiation in an average radius of 6 meters.

ELECTROVORE

HD	2 (8 hp)
AC	14
Attack	+1 (tail slap)
Damage	1d4 (tail slap)
Move	5 m. (sneaking), 10 m. (flying)
ML	6
Saves	Physical 14, Evasion 12, Mental 15
Skills	Exert +1, Notice +2, Sneak +1
Stats	Str 13 Dex 18 Con 12 Int 1 Wis 10 Cha 4
Special	Electric Discharge, Syphon Energy

DESCRIPTION

Electrovores are serpent-like creatures with wings that feed on electrostatic energy and electric impulse. They live in clusters in environment with very low gravity and thin or completely absent atmosphere pressure.

Electric Discharge. If the Electrovore score a 1 when rolling for damage with its tail slap, then it discharges an electric impulse that deals 1d4 damage. The target is entitled to roll an **Evasion/Dexterity** saving throw to avoid the effect.

Syphon Energy. For every point of electrical damage dealt with the tail, the Electrovore gain one point of energy. The electrovore can convert these points as follows.

- 1 point: +1 damage to the next attack.
- 2 points: +1 attack in the next round of combat.
- 3 points: regenerate 1d6 wounds.
- 4 points: all previous bonuses.

HOBGOBLIN, MARAUDER

HD	3 (20 hp)
AC	15 (+1 Dex, 14 Security Armor)
Attack	+5 (Combat Rifle), +4 (Flame Pistol), +5 (Long Sword)
Damage	1d12+1 (Combat Rifle), 1d6 (Flame Pistol), 1d8+1 (Long Sword)
Move	9 m. (walking)
ML	8
Saves	Physical 13, Evasion 13, Mental 14
Skills	Exert +3, Notice +1, Sneak +3
Stats	Str 16 Dex 16 Con 17 Int 9 Wis 12 Cha 8
Special	Thermal Vision, Resistance to Cold, <i>Grenade Launcher (1 per Assault Squad)</i>
Equipment	Combat Rifle, Flame Pistol, Long Sword, Frag Grenade (1), Shock Grenade (1), Security Armor

DESCRIPTION

Hobgoblins are disciplined and fierce fighter that coordinates their attacks with elaborate tactics. They prefer to soften the enemy with range weapons and then launch a final assault.

Thermal Vision. Hobgoblins can see thermal variations in living and non living matter. Although this vision does not allow to distinguish details like standard vision, it favors them in total darkness. Hobgoblins possesses standard vision also.

Resistance to Cold. Hobgoblins have adapted to space travel and harsh environment. Their metabolism can tolerate freezing temperatures as low as -20° C without suffering any harmful effect.

MODIFIED HEAVY DUTY ROBOT

HD	10 (70 hp)
AC	17 (-1 Dex, 16 armor)
Attack	+5 (by weapon x2), +5 (Slam)
Damage	By Weapon, 2d6+6 (Slam)
Move	6 m. (walking)
ML	-
Saves	Physical 5, Evasion 19, Mental -
Skills	Exert +10, Work +4
Stats	Str 24 Dex 4 Con - Int - Wis - Cha -
Special	Integrated Weapons
Equipment	Weapon slot (2)

DESCRIPTION

Heavy duty robots serve industrial and construction purposes. An expert engineer can modify these machines and transform them to the closer thing to a mech.

Integrated Weapons. The robot can mount a maximum of two weapons, except heavy weapons. Both weapons can fire simultaneously but they must aim at the same target.

MUD STALKER

HD	3 (30 hp)
AC	13
Attack	+3 (bite)
Damage	1d6+1 (bite)
Move	3 m. (walking), 6 m. (swimming)
ML	8
Saves	Physical 13, Evasion 16, Mental 14
Skills	Exert +3, Notice +2, Sneak +2
Stats	Str 14 Dex 6 Con 18 Int 1 Wis 14 Cha 3
Special	Resistance to Cold, Amphibious, Electric Field, Transmute Rock to Mud, Blindsense

DESCRIPTION

Mud stalker are passive predators with a behavior resembling those of crocodiles. It has a flat limbless body capable of floating on mud and liquids. Its large tentacles are employed to detect preys by feeling their electric field. His mouth is made of four bony and sharp mandibles.

Amphibious. Mud Stalker can survive out of their moist environment for a number of hours equal to their constitution score, however they lose one point of constitution every hour.

Blindsense. Mud Stalker can detect small electric charge as those usually emitted by living beings. Their blindsense has a reach of 30 meters and it is their only form of sighting.

Electric Field. Once every other round the Mud Stalker can release an electric shockwave that deals 1d4 points of damage in a 3 meters radius.

Resistance to Cold. Mud Stalker can resist cold temperatures enough to freeze ammonia.

Transmute Rock to Mud. Once per scene the Mud Stalker can transmute ordinary rock into mud. The area of effect is 10 meters centered on the Mud Stalker. This supernatural ability has been inherited after the incident with the Nuclear Transmutator.

SHADOWSOUL

HD	3 (12 hp)
AC	20
Attack	-
Damage	-
Move	9 m. (walking), 3 m. (flying)
ML	12
Saves	Physical 15, Evasion 12, Mental 14
Skills	Notice +3, Sneak +5
Stats	Str - Dex 18 Con - Int 14 Wis 12 Cha 10
Special	Life Sense, Incorporeal, Immunity to Cold, Fear Gaze, Soul Link

DESCRIPTION

Shadowsoul forms when a the soul of a recently dead sentient creature enter into contact with the negative energy plane before having the chance to reach his assigned place in the afterworld. The soul is destroyed and what remains is corrupted, making the process irreversible even with a resurrection spell.

Shadowsouls exist both in the negative and prime material plane, making them incorporeal and thus capable of crossing solid matter. This horrific undead stalks a victim by using fear and by creating a link which allows the undead to reach the mind of the victim wherever he is.

Fear Gaze. When the shadowsoul manifests to a victim it does so by staring him directly in the eyes in order to instill fear and panick. The target must succeed a **Mental/Charisma** saving throw or be panicked for 1d4 rounds. Once the subject is panicked and shacking for fear, the shadowsoul attempts to establish a **Soul Link**. This ability can be used once per scene.

Immunity to Cold. Shadowsoul, being a supernatural creature, is immune to any cold harmful effect.

Incorporeal. A Shadowsoul exists in a different and supernatural reality, and they manifest in this reality as shadowy and incorporeal shape. They can pass through solid matter as if it were air.

Life Sense. A Shadowsoul can detect the life that pulse in any being.

Soul Link. When the Shadowsoul succeeds in instilling panick and fear into a target, it can employs its soul link ability.

The target must succeed a Mental/Wisdom saving throw to resist. If the saving throw fails, then the shadowsoul can manifests to the victim and instill fear by using the Fear Gaze. This ability can be used once per day.

XENOWORM

HD	12 (80 hp)
AC	9
Attack	+9 (bite)
Damage	1d10+5 (bite)
Move	5 m. (sneaking), 6 m. (burrowing)
ML	9
Saves	Physical 12, Evasion 18, Mental -
Skills	Exert +5, Notice +2, Sneak +0
Stats	Str 20 Dex 18 Con 16 Int 0 Wis 10 Cha 3
Special	Blindsight, Radiation Dependency, Ferocity

DESCRIPTION

Xenoworms are in most cases the natural evolution coming from more basic biological species. They are creature extremely versatile and capable of adapting their biology to any environment that allows the presence of organic compound.

Xenoworms exist in many size and this mostly depend on how much they can feed on the planet they inhabit.

Blindsight. Xenoworms can detect small vibrations on the ground and in the atmosphere to locate preys.

Ferocity. When a xenoworm reaches zero hit point it can release a last burst of life and make a surprise attack. This ability triggers within 1d4 rounds after the xenoworm is dead.

Radiation Dependency. This xenoworm has been modified by the disaster of the Nuclear Transmutator, and now must rely on radiations in order to maintain its metabolism working.

NEW WEAPONS

Weapon	Dmg.	Range	Cost	Magazine	Attr.	Enc.	TL
Electrovore Gloves	1d6	3	500	20	Dex	1	4
Flame Pistol	1d6	6/9	100	5	Dex	1	3
Grenade Launcher	- (by grenade)	+30/+60	250	1	Int	3	3
Frag Grenade	2d4	10/30	25	-	Dex	1	3
Incendiary Grenade	1d4	10/30	50	-	Dex	1	3
Shock Grenade	1d4	20/40	30	-	Dex	1	3

Electrovore Gloves. Electrovore gloves prevent from using any hand-held item when used in combat. They produce an electrostatic discharge that deals 1d6 electricity damage. They can be recharged by leaving them close to a source of electricity.

Flame Pistol. Flame pistol uses hydrocarbons or other incendiary chemical compounds. Its precision quickly falls beyond 6 meters, but it affects an cone-like area.

Grenade Launcher. Grenade launchers allows to extend the range of ordinary grenades and add precision to the attack.

Frag Grenade. Frag grenades has the right explosive strength to spread small fragments of hard and incandescent metal fragment within 10 meters of the point of impact. Each target affected must make a successful **Evasion** saving throw or suffer 1 damage every round, until the saving throw is successful.

Incendiary Grenade. Incendiary grenades release a flammable liquid in a radius of meters that can burn after the detonation occurs. Each target affected must make a successful Evasion saving throw or suffer 1 damage for 1d10 rounds. The chemical that compose the flammable liquid cannot be quenched by water.

Shock Grenade. Shock grenades produces, upon detonating, an extremely loud sound in a radius of 10 meters. Each target affected must make a successful Physical saving throw or be deafened for 1d10 rounds. Deafened target barely maintain the balance while walking. If deafened target attempts to walk it must make a Physical saving throw or fall prone for the rest of combat round.

SAWSHARK

Federation Ice-miner Patrol Boat

Hull type (patrol boat)

Class (frigate)

DEFENSE

Speed 4; AC 14; Armor 5; HP 35

Power 15/0 free

Mass 10/0 free

OFFENSE

Hardpoints 4

Weapons

Light Particle Beam #1 (1d8, AP 5, power 3, mass 1)

Light Particle Beam #2 (1d8, AP 5, power 3, mass 1)

Torpedo launcher #1 (1d6, AP 5, power 2, mass 1)

Torpedo launcher #2 (1d6, AP 5, power 2, mass 1)

FITTING

Automation Support (power 2, mass 1)

Cargo Space (power 0, mass 1)

Hardened Polyceramic Overlay (power 0, mass 1)

Point Defense Lasers (power 3, mass 2, +1 AC vs small asteroids)

Combustion Engines (special fitting, see below)

Warp Drive 1

Crew 3-6

Cost 4.350 k

DESCRIPTION

The Sawshark is a high-tech mining ship with the only purpose of harvesting ice. The refinery machines located in deck 3 are capable of splitting aqueous liquids into hydrogen and oxygen and both elements can be stored inside special pressurized tanks. Usually the hydrogen is then compressed by high pressure and extremely low temperatures in order to be turned into deuterium or metallic hydrogen.

The oxygen is sometimes stored to fuel the four powerful combustion engines. Even if the vessel comes with armaments, they are employed mainly to break huge asteroids.

Combustion Engines. Maneuvering inside asteroid fields and debris is dangerous and requires fast movement. When the combustion engines are activated the Sawshark receives a +2-speed bonus. The engines can work in this way for 10 minutes in 1-minute increments.

